

PLANE

SCAPE™

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HELLBOUND:

THE BLOOD WAR



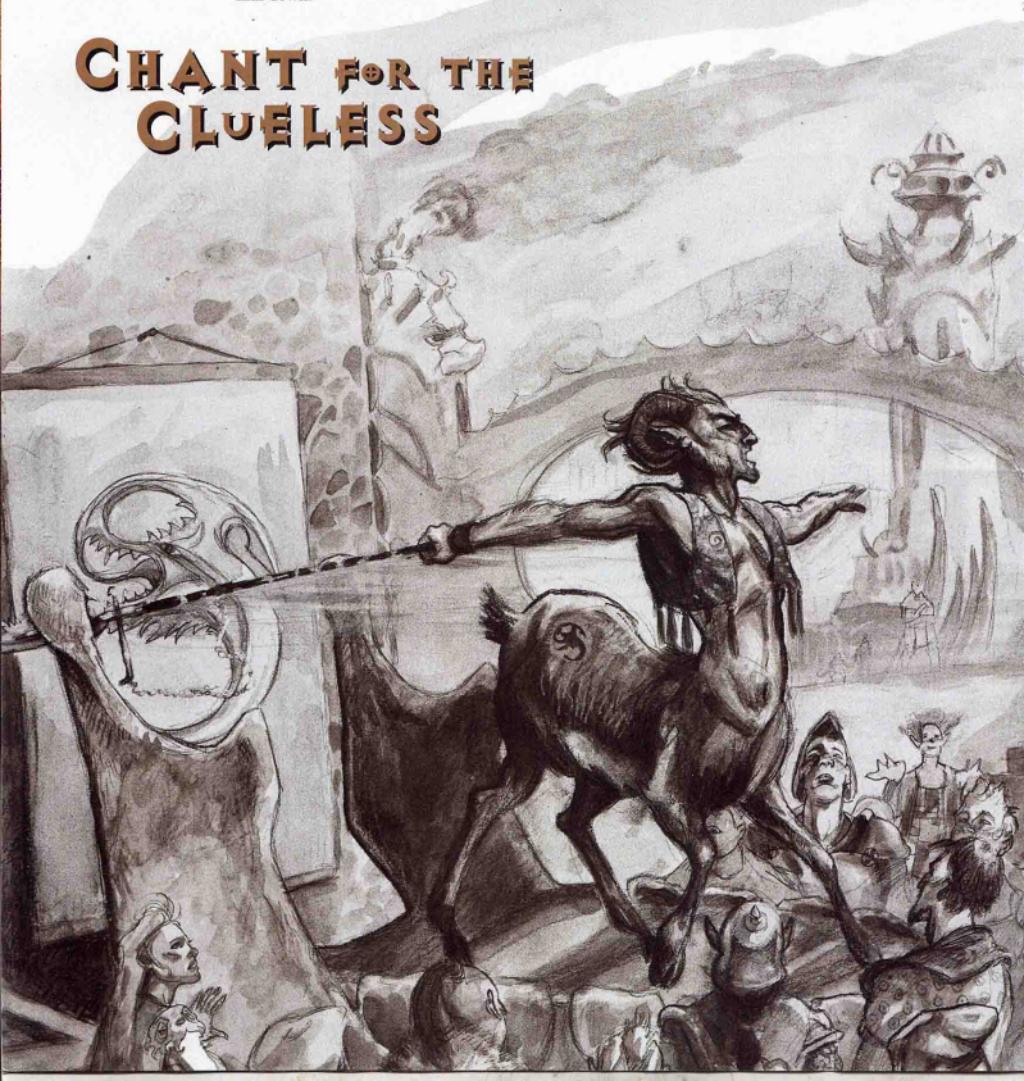
THE
CHAN
OF THE
WAR

A Player's Guide

This first chapter is intended for primes, also called the Clueless. Primes're player characters who hail from the Prime-Material Plane, folks who've not yet marveled at the full glories of the multiverse. The chant here fills 'em in on everything they need to know about the Blood War. 'Course, planars can read this chapter, too; it's just assumed that characters born and bred on the planes *already* know the information.

Because the chant was collected from a variety of planar sources, all with their own axes to grind, it's possible that a few inaccuracies've crept in here and there. A body shouldn't rely on it to pull his fat out of the fire too often. Most of the time the information'll save his life, but one day it might let him down.

CHANT FOR THE CLUELESS



◆ WELCOME TO THE WAR ◆

One of the most important mistakes a prime can make is just that: thinking he can make an important mistake. He can't. Sure, he can irritate some high-ups, and get himself put in the dead-book real easy. He can steal the hammer of Thor . . . well, at least he can give it a try. He can kill off a pit fiend and try to storm the fortress of Malsheem.

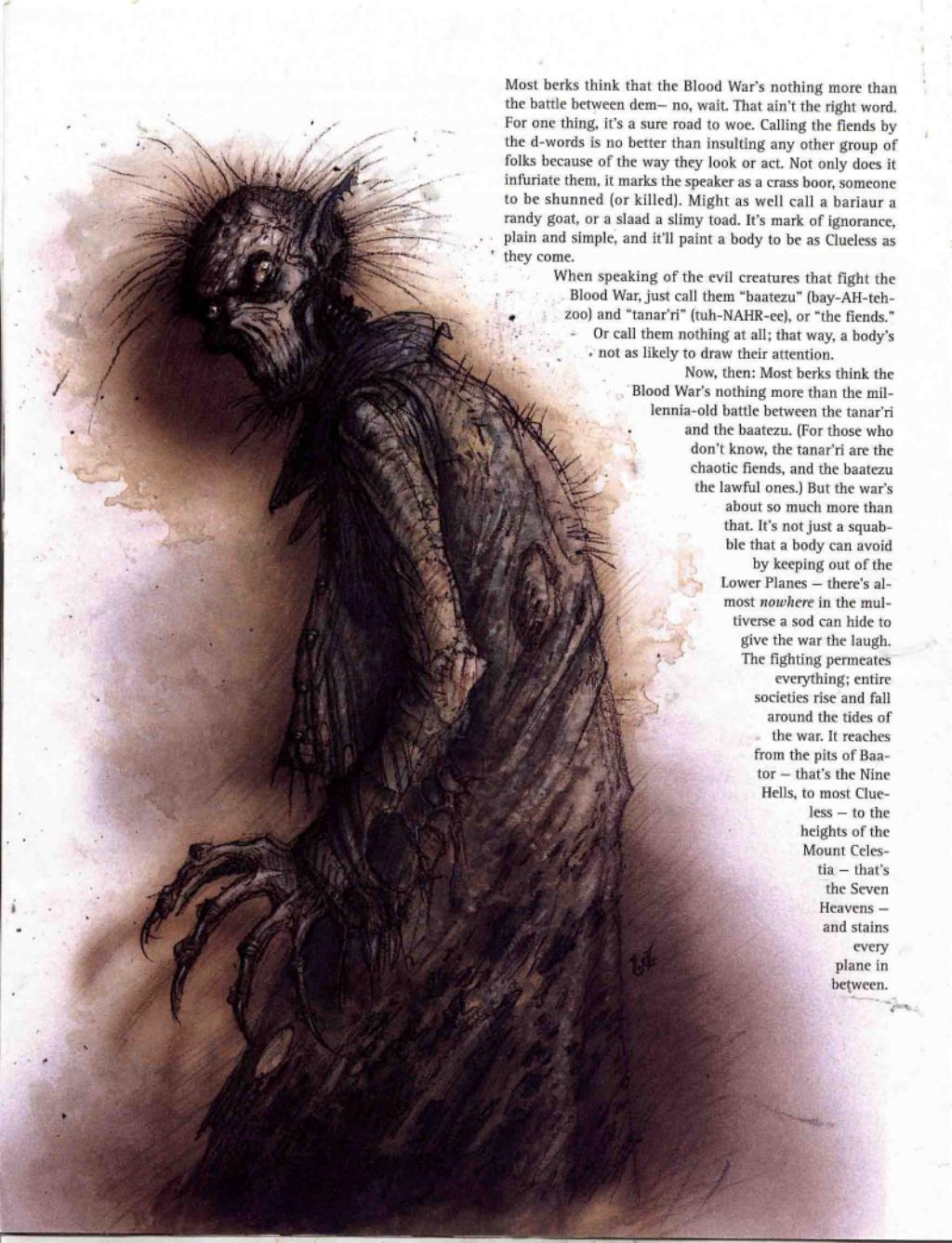
But is any of this important? No. A mortal can make precious little difference in the Blood War. It's too big, been going on too long. The most lasting impact a body can hope to have is — maybe, just maybe — to become a tiny little footnote in the annals of the war. But even that's something that powerful heroes, paladins and wizards and the like, haven't done in eons. It's that hard.

Now, with that said, is anyone discouraged? Any berks want to get up and go?

All right. For those who've stayed, let me give you some basic tips on the war. But don't think I can share the full dark of it with you. You'll find out the real secrets as you get better in your trade — whatever it is. Just remember: Life on the planes is about belief and knowledge. If you expect everything to be handed to you on a silver platter like it is on the Prime, well, you've got a good deal to learn, and you probably ain't going to like most of it. But if you've got enough moxie to make it this far, you might stay out of the dead-book — for a while, anyway.

— Altus Timblespiver, Indep guide, trying to explain the Blood War to a group of Clueless





Most berks think that the Blood War's nothing more than the battle between dem— no, wait. That ain't the right word. For one thing, it's a sure road to woe. Calling the fiends by the d-words is no better than insulting any other group of folks because of the way they look or act. Not only does it infuriate them, it marks the speaker as a crass boor, someone to be shunned (or killed). Might as well call a bariaur a randy goat, or a slaad a slimy toad. It's mark of ignorance, plain and simple, and it'll paint a body to be as Clueless as they come.

When speaking of the evil creatures that fight the Blood War, just call them "baatezu" (bay-AH-teh-zoo) and "tanar'ri" (tuh-NAHR-ee), or "the fiends."

Or call them nothing at all; that way, a body's not as likely to draw their attention.

Now, then: Most berks think the Blood War's nothing more than the mil-

lennia-old battle between the tanar'ri and the baatezu (For those who don't know, the tanar'ri are the chaotic fiends, and the baatezu the lawful ones.) But the war's about so much more than that. It's not just a squab-

ble that a body can avoid by keeping out of the Lower Planes — there's almost nowhere in the multiverse a sod can hide to give the war the laugh.

The fighting permeates everything; entire societies rise and fall around the tides of the war. It reaches from the pits of Baator — that's the Nine Hells, to most Clue-

less — to the heights of the Mount Celestia — that's the Seven Heavens — and stains

every plane in between.

Frightening, eh? That's what most planars think, too. But the Blood War's been a part of their existence for so long that they'd almost be lost without it. It's been a backdrop not only of *their* lives, but also the lives of their ancestors all the way back to before there *were* ancestors. Imagine having the sun disappear. It's something every prime takes for granted, something that's been around since before anyone can remember. And then suddenly it's gone. What's a sod to do then? How does he make peace with the disappearance of something integral to his view of the world and the cosmos?

That's how important the Blood War is to the stability of the planes. If it were to vanish, it'd leave a gaping hole in its place. And, no doubt, new cutters would spring forth to fill that void, and the multiverse'd probably be plunged into war again. Cynical? Maybe. But most folks hate change. When it looms, they usually do their level best to return things to the way they were before – even when dealing with something as horrible as the Blood War.

THE NATURE OF ♦ + THE FIENDS ♦

The fiends've lived for far longer than most any Clueless can appreciate. It's easy to imagine a millennium or two, years multiplying into decades and centuries. Now think of that as the time it takes for a body to draw one breath. Think a prime-material empire's lasted a long time? It's only a blink of an eye for the fiends. They claim that mortal existence barely spans any time at all for them, and who's to say otherwise?

All the while, the baatezu and tanar'i have hated each other. That's no secret. Fact is, chant says their mutual revulsion goes back to the very first time the races met – powers only know when *that* was. So they've had a bit of time to stew about their anger, countless years to plot traps and schemes, far too long for general devility and evil. Even the tanar'i lay plans – just because they're chaotic doesn't mean they're stupid. The best way for a fiend to look out for itself is to stay one step ahead of its opponents. That means any mortals who get involved had better watch out; chances are, the fiends'll welcome the opportunity to turn their plans into reality, to sink their plots into flesh. Only the very sharpest mortals have a hope of escaping, and not even they pull it off all the time.

The baatezu, especially, wait years to capitalize on a deal. They've been around this long; what's another century, let alone another decade? Sure, they act when the situation calls for it, but they far prefer to weave schemes until they hardly need to act at all. The tanar'i are too passionate, too hot-headed, to be that patient. They don't like to savor their vengeance over the years; they want it all at once.

Chant is that the yugoloths – a third group of lower-planar fiends – act only in order to grab themselves a piece of the pie. When they scheme, it's to amass power, jink, or both. Most graybeards say that the mercenary yugoloths have no real interest in the Blood War, other than in how they can line their pockets at the expense of the baatezu and tanar'i. It's no dark that they sometimes use mortals in their endless money-grubbing plots.

An attentive berk'll note how often the words "fiend" and "scheme" are used together. See, not all the battles of the Blood War rely on swords and spells. On the Outer Planes, belief is everything, and an army that puts on a good show of bluff and bluster can drive its enemy away without ever crossing blades once.



Truth is, a single well-placed word can push an entire troop, an entire town, or an entire layer of a plane over the philosophical edge. As long as the word's passed along and spread around, like a disease, it can have more power than the might of a million fiends. The baatezu and tanar'ri clash for more than just territory; they fight for the hearts and minds of every sod on the Outer Planes. Belief is power, and the fiends who best manipulate the beliefs of the planes can rule the multiverse.

◆ MOVERS AND SHAKERS ◆

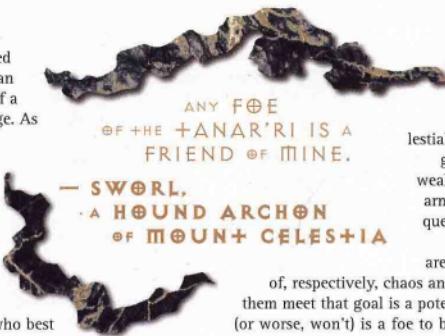
Asking who's involved in the Blood War is like asking how many stars fill the sky — it's an impossible question, but one with an easy answer: All of 'em. Who's involved in the Blood War? Everyone.

From the obvious players (the baatezu, tanar'ri, and yugoloths) to the less obvious (the celestials, like archons and aasimon) to the nearly inexplicable (the modrons and the slaadi), everyone who's anyone on the Outer Planes has a hand in the Blood War. It's too big an issue for any of them to ignore it.

Why? Well, the Blood War isn't just a battle between two evil races. It's a struggle for the control of evil itself, for the definition of what true evil really is. The baatezu represent law, the tanar'ri chaos — two of the most primal forces of the multiverse — and the clash of fiends is really a war to determine which is the right belief, which will now and ever more hold sway.

Those who can get past the simple straitjackets of good and evil, who cast the Blood War as law versus chaos, often end up fighting on one side or the other. Indeed, the strangest thing about the war is that it makes allies of the most unlikely parties. The lawful archons and modrons have been known to work with the baatezu, neutral aasimon occasionally aid the yugoloths, and chaotic aasimon and slaadi come down on the side of the tanar'ri. These other races have specific interests in the war that dwarf their own personal hatred for fiends, and they team up with their mortal enemies to accomplish those ends. 'Course, once the goals are reached, coalitions dissolve as if they'd never existed; the temporary allies once again work at cross-purposes.

As for the goals themselves, they're as different as night and day. The baatezu and tanar'ri, obviously, do their best to annihilate each other — they see genocide as the only solution to their problems. The yugoloths are along to make some jink; chant is that they want to prolong the war as



much as possible to make themselves rich beyond their wildest dreams.

Oddly enough, many celestials want to keep the Blood War going, too, so that the fiends'll weaken each other enough for the armies of light to fly in and conquer evil once and for all.

The slaadi and the modrons are in the war to see the triumph

of, respectively, chaos and law. Any berk who can help them meet that goal is a potential ally; any berk who can't (or worse, won't) is a foe to be crushed. At least, that's the modron way of thinking. The slaadi aren't quite as predictable; they do what they like. But no matter what they do, chaos seems to result. Their sheer randomness keeps them pure.

BATTLEGROUNDS ◆ OF BLOOD ◆

As noted earlier, the Blood War rages across all the planes of existence. However, certain spots — mainly, the Lower Planes — feel the sting of the fighting more keenly.

Getting to the war is, unfortunately, easy. Plenty of portals in Sigil, the City of Doors, drop a planewalker smack in the middle of the worst of it. And there's always the River Styx, which flows through the Lower Planes. A body who sails its waters'd better take the right forks and catch the right eddies; otherwise, he might well find himself in the midst of an incendiary battle, or fighting for his life in the lowest layers of a hostile plane. The river helps keep the war raging; without it, the fiends'd find it harder to get their claws on each other.

'Course, dangerous as they are, the big battlegrounds draw the most interest. Clashes there bring a quickening to the blood, and news of the frays strike fear into the hearts of denizens across the multiverse. These are the primary planes of contention, the deadly fields of violence.

BAATOR (BAY-AH-+OR)

The home of the baatezu and the plane of law and evil, Baator consists of nine layers, stacked like an inverted mountain. The ninth layer is unreachable except by heroic effort; the other eight are nearly unlivable. A body traveling there needs sharp steel and sharper wits.

Baator's one of the most important sites in the Blood War. It's from there that the baatezu launch their attacks across the Great Ring, and from there that they plot the best ways to destroy their hereditary enemies. See, the baatezu are creatures of rigid structure and order. They usually don't attack unless provoked, but a cutter's still advised to watch his back at all times — and to watch his tongue even more

so. The baatezu love to take words and twist their meanings, so that they get the best end of every bargain.

The lower baatezu are more disorderly than their betters; it's the rituals of promotion that purge the traces of chaos from their bodies. They're a bit easier to best in combat or wordplay, but they're still leagues tougher than most any mortal can handle.

GEHENNA (GE-HEN-ÚH)

More vile than Baator, Gehenna's been losing ground to both the baatezu's plane and its other neighbor – the Gray Waste – for years. It's commonly thought to be the smallest of all Outer Planes in actual physical size. Gehenna has four layers, though folks who've been there usually refer to them as the four furnaces. A plane of volcanoes and magma, Gehenna's viewed mainly as a mustering ground for baatezu and a skirmishing ground for tanar'ri who make it this far.

The yugoloths, the treacherous mercenaries of the Blood War, also make their home on Gehenna. A cutter with enough jink might be able to hire himself a 'loth guide or bodyguard, but they don't come cheap. Besides, it usually takes more than money to get 'em to agree to anything.

THE GRAY WASTE

The Gray Waste is by far the most popular battleground for the baatezu and tanar'ri, in part because it's the midpoint of the Lower Planes. The three layers (or glooms, as they're called) of the Waste leech life and color from anyone and anything that goes there. But the plane's said to hold the key to winning the Blood War. 'Course,

not a sage alive today seems to know what that key is, but the fiends fight over the Waste nevertheless.

Because the plane is considered the very nadir of evil, the interfering celestials of the Upper Planes like to go there to wreak their own havoc. It's strange that a place that fosters apathy would be so fiercely contested.

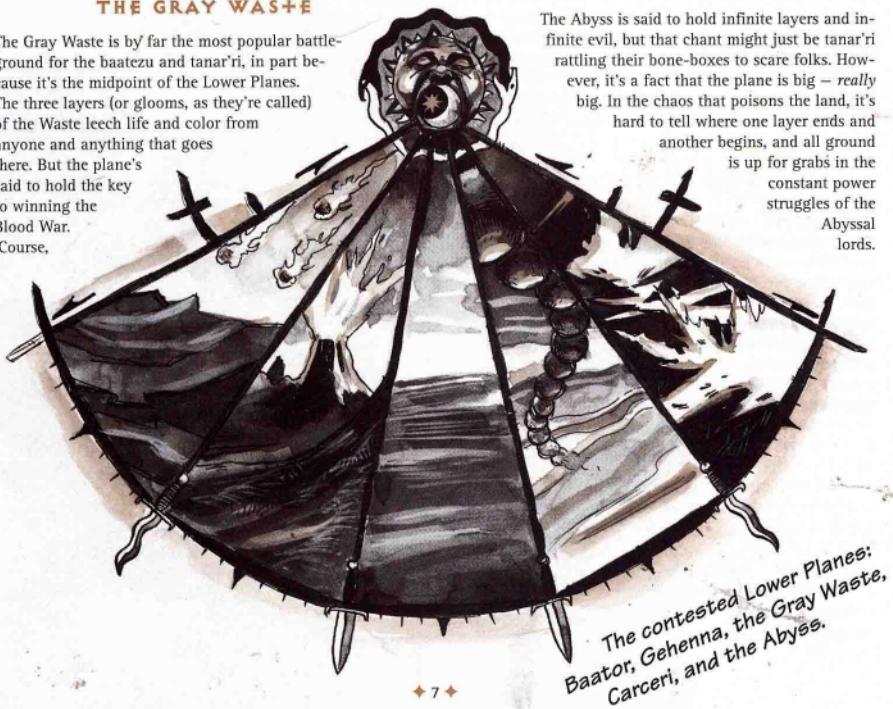
CARCERI (KAR-SEHR-EE)

Carceri is the home of the gehreleths – a small race of hateful fiends. It's a prison for anyone else. The six-layered plane is said to look like a great string of beads. The Red Prison, as it's called, serves the same purpose as Gehenna in the scheme of the war. It's the midpoint between the Gray Waste and the Abyss, a mustering ground for tanar'ri warriors and the final resting place for baatezu soldiers lucky enough to make it this far.

The sods unlucky enough to live on Carceri full-time have chips on their shoulders the size of Sigil. They can't leave the plane, and they don't take kindly to anyone who can come and go as he pleases. Carceri is a brutal proving ground, and most folks give it a wide berth.

THE ABYSS

The Abyss is said to hold infinite layers and infinite evil, but that chant might just be tanar'ri rattling their bone-boxes to scare folks. However, it's a fact that the plane is big – *really* big. In the chaos that poisons the land, it's hard to tell where one layer ends and another begins, and all ground is up for grabs in the constant power struggles of the Abyssal lords.



The many forms of tanar'ri spring up from the Abyss. Their burning hatred and rage seems born from the very plane itself; they've got to be tough to survive the horrors of their home. Any sod planning to visit the Abyss should know that the tanar'ri are capricious and cruel. The baatezu may like to twist words, but the tanar'ri like to twist necks. They're killers, plain and simple, and they do what they want, when they want, and to whoever they want.

THE REST OF THE PLANES

Though they're not the main battlegrounds, other planes still play roles in the Blood War. For example, the Outlands see almost constant traffic of fiendish warriors. Baatorian and Abyssal armies march across the land in hopes of catching their enemies unaware, each looking to make a furious sneak attack on the home plane of the other. The Astral Plane plays a role much like that of the Outlands — it connects the top layers of the Outer Planes, and is a handy method of travel.

The good-aligned Upper Planes spawn fanatical fighters prepared to give their all to combat the rise of evil. From Arcadia to Arborea, the forces of light align to prevent the fiends from having their way with the multiverse.

Only two planes are wholly free of the taint of good or evil: Mechanus, the home of the lawful modrons, and Limbo, the pond of the chaotic slaadi. These planes breed soldiers who believe only that law or chaos is the absolute and the ideal. The modrons aid the baatezu, the slaadi help the tanar'ri, and neither race has any dealings with the other side (though it's hard to say that for sure with the slaadi). The fiends usually welcome the supplies and reinforcements.

◆ THE CLASSES ◆

Naturally, folks of different walks of life are going to lean different ways about the Blood War. A body can't help but be influenced by his choice of profession — it can open or close doors to smiting evil, earning jink, or just making a name for himself. This section outlines how people of various classes feel about the war.

"Course, not everyone who falls under a certain group'll parrot the same line about the Blood War. The PCs are individuals, and shouldn't feel constrained to follow what others in their classes think.

JUST BECAUSE
I'M A FANATIC
DOESN'T MEAN I'M STUPID.

— THE PALADIN
BLANDER MUL.
REFUSING TO FIGHT
IN THE BLOOD WAR

FIGHTERS

The Blood War's a godsend to any bruiser willing to sell his sword. Both the baatezu and the tanar'ri are always on the lookout for mercenaries, and the celestials likewise swell their ranks with skilled warriors. But only the best need apply. A body's got no business wading into the fighting until he's powerful enough to take care of himself. For some, that day never comes, while others seem to think they're ready the minute they buckle on a blade.

A fighter can also try to make his living as a fortune hunter, raiding fiend palaces and secret storehouses to "liberate" as much jink as he can. Naturally, first he's got to smuggle the booty past all the fiends and their allies before they realize it's missing. But the staggering amount of coins, gems, and arcane magical items on the Lower Planes makes it worth the risk.

Finally, some bashers want to fight just so they can say that they've "been there, done that." They know that the Blood War's a no-win situation, but it serves quite well as a testing ground, a place to get noticed by the right high-ups. These kinds of fighters just focus on making it through their first battle, fully intent to walk away when done — only leatherheads stick around for more.

PALADINS

Paladins and the Blood War — an explosive combination, if ever there was one. Paladins are, by nature, fanatics. They've devoted themselves to an ideal and a god, all in the service of law and good.



And the Blood War — with its rank fiends and perversions — is the antithesis of all that, the gathering of all a paladin hates the most.

Thus, most paladins of the Outer Planes ride spitting and frothing into the battlefields of the war, sure that their faith will sustain them in their hours of need. Sadly, the berks often fall before they've been a day on the Lower Planes, their powers failing in the bastions of hate and evil.

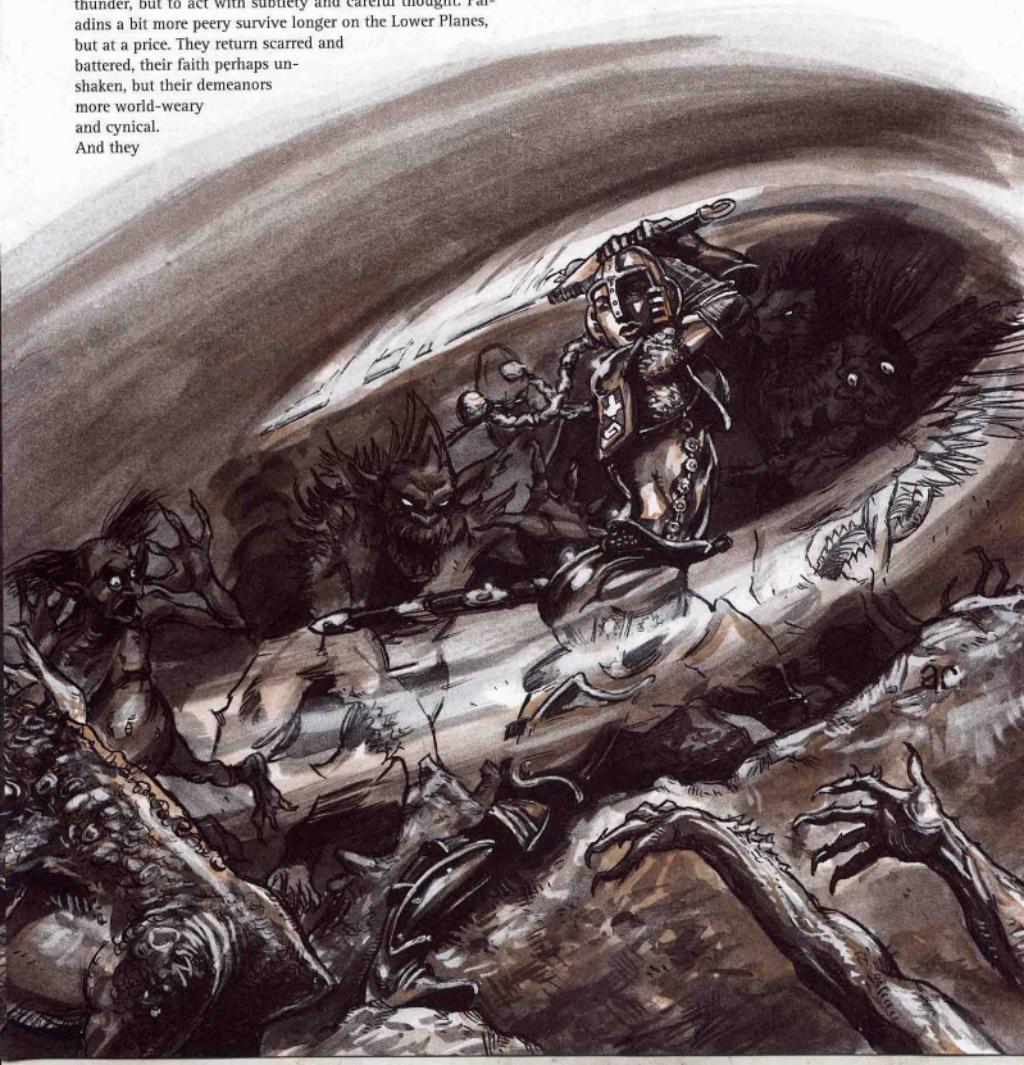
The trick is to not charge the fiends like lightning and thunder, but to act with subtlety and careful thought. Paladins a bit more peery survive longer on the Lower Planes, but at a price. They return scarred and

battered, their faith perhaps unshaken, but their demeanors more world-weary and cynical.

And they

rarely have such a burning fervor to take the war to the fiends again.

It's not unknown for a driven young paladin to take leave of his friends and venture into fiend-held lands, only to stride (or stagger) back a few months or years later. Some tell tales of might and valor, while others whisper of the pains of fiendish prison camps. Either way, paladins do the most good by rescuing poor, innocent sods who've gotten caught up in the war or captured by vile forces.



RANGERS

A ranger's reaction to the Blood War really depends on what plane he calls home. Some, far removed from the fighting, see the war as an unstoppable (and necessary) process of nature, and don't give it much more thought.



'Course, it's hard to hold such tenets when the fiends are close enough to smell, when they tear up the fabric of reality and crush nature in their paths, when they routinely slaughter any sods they encounter, when they defile a plane with their very presence. Most rangers don't accept that the baatezu and tanar'ri just fulfill their natural roles. They claim that the fiends are the most *unnatural* beings that've ever lived, and devote their lives to saving the multiverse from the monsters' destructive rampages.

Taking the fight to the fiends' home planes is risky; no ranger'll ever get in tune with Baator as much as a baatezu can. Many choose instead to defend their homeland (or other vulnerable places) against fiendish invasion. The more pastoral planes usually have hereditary defenders, but chances are they'd like nothing more than to have the aid of a ranger. Most such cutters are welcome wherever they go on the Upper Planes; the Outlands are favorable to rangers as well.

WIZARDS

Most wizards (whether mages or specialists) look on the Blood War as a boon – at least, most of the adventuresome wizards do. After all, the pursuit of magic is what makes them take to the road in the first place. And the war is an excellent place to learn and hone the wizardly arts – especially to acquire new spells. It's said that some baatezu and tanar'ri keep spellbooks whose pages drip with powerful, forbidden magic.

Wizards who stay at home tend to see the Blood War as reprehensible and wasteful (though others sneer that they're just jealous because they can't get to it).

Sure, it's an opportunity for learning, but the true path is to learn under their own merits, not the aegis of the fiends.

A few wizards take a middle tack, and choose merely to study the war's excesses and combatants.

Fact is, any given Blood War battle's likely to have its share of wizardly observers, each hoping to learn something new.

Certain groups and schools even try to steal

bodies of fallen fiends for dissection and study. Some want the organs for spell components, others want to learn how to defeat the fiends in battle, and some are just plain curious.

A wizard from the planes has a unique advantage over his prime-material counterparts. While primes struggle with incantations and sigils to summon and bind fiends, bartering their spirits for riches or power, a planar can go directly to the source. If he's canny enough to approach a fiend at the right time and make the right offer, he might walk away with new spells and magical items.

Naturally, a fiend'll throw a few catches into the bargain. For example, it might hand out a magical dagger that only works against its racial enemies — and that's a best-case scenario. At worst, an item might bond to the user and drag his unwilling spirit to the Lower Planes to serve as cannon fodder in the Blood War.

PRIESTS

When it comes to priests, their opinions of the Blood War are as varied as the critters of the Beastlands. A handful — particularly the priests of war gods — enjoy the fighting a bit *too* much, leading bands of followers into fruitless raids against the fiends and their strongholds. As they venture farther from their gods' realms, their power diminishes, but that rarely dims the zeal of fanatical priests.

They're the exception, though. Most priests steer clear of the war, recognizing it as one of the eternal fixtures of the planes. The more honest readily confess that they avoid the war simply because their gods can't grant succor in the contested planes — at least, not the kind that they're accustomed to.

Press a priest hard, though, and he'll admit that the Blood War is precisely the kind of meta-physical conflict that drove him to don robes in the first place. It typifies the struggle of law and chaos, good and evil, that brings the truly devoted into the folds of their deities. Fact is, the existence of many priests is defined by the Blood War.

Despite how a priest might feel about the war, he's always in the vanguard when his power decides to send a batch of followers to the fighting. As the spiritual representative of his god, he generally leaps to fill the need. Other times, a priest feels called to the Blood War in order to study the enemies (or, in some cases, allies) of his power. Though he's rarely commanded to do so, a priest'll usually make the journey to gain a fuller understanding of the forces behind the battles.

In essence, a priest is free to follow his own desires regarding the Blood War. But when his god calls, the cutter'd

better answer. Few powers are totally ambivalent about the war (or the fiends), and they all expect their priests to toe the company line.

ROGUES

Rogues may well have the easiest time of it in the Blood War. They've got so many options, a single rogue'd be hard-pressed to try them all. 'Course, that's partly because some of those options are deadly, even suicidal, and most rogues aren't so blinded by the promise of treasure as to risk life, limb, and sanity — *most* rogues, that is.

A thief can get rich fast in the war, if he plays his cards right. The tanar'ri might hire him to steal battle plans from the baatezu, the baatezu might pay him to bring false plans back to the tanar'ri, and the yugoloths might reward him to double-cross both sides. Every party in the war can use a thief's larcenous touch. Whether they trust him or not is another story.

What's more, the war's so full of mortals already that a thief can insinuate himself in most anywhere. He can slip close enough to a gabby lieutenant to pick up a few choice secrets, or creep into the enemies' tent and slit throats as they sleep, or filch an important piece of magic from the vault of a commander.

Bards, too, can make a good living as heralds, envoys, or diplomats — a fiend general would much rather send a slick-talking mortal to deliver a message than risk the life of an "important" soldier in its unit. And plenty of high-ups like to keep bards around, just so they can spin tales of the leader's greatness.

But a rogue's got to watch his back. Fiends are masters of deception. What's more, they've been peeled enough times to know better than to trust a mortal rogue. They'll watch a berk carefully, ready to devour him the minute he blows his cover or tosses off the wrong remark.

The tanar'ri in particular make bad bosses; they'll slay a body at the slightest provocation.

◆ A WORD + THE WISE ◆

This chapter doesn't give near enough chant for a sod to navigate the Blood War. But it's a good start for any Clueless looking to get a handle on things. A body who wants more'll just have to dig it out on his own.

Really, though, knowledge ain't worth a tailor's stitch if it's not backed up by solid experience. And sitting here isn't going to accomplish a thing. Go and learn.

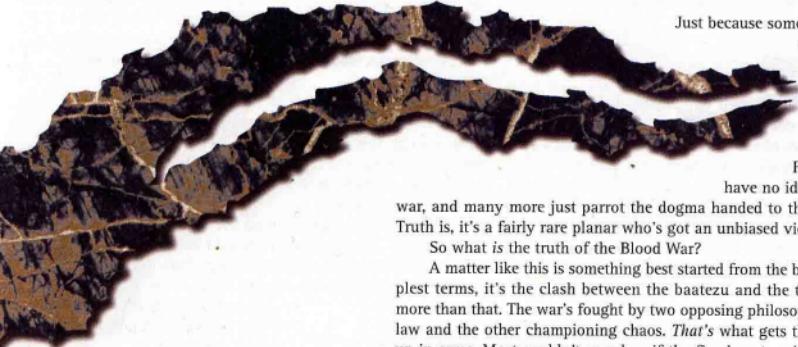
CHANT FOR PLANARS

This chapter is intended for planars, player characters who're native to the planes. Having spent their lives with the Blood War as a backdrop, planars naturally know more than primes about the conflict. What's more, the variety of new races and factions help give a slant to a planar's views.

Players of prime-material characters should *not* read this chapter right away. Wait until the characters have adventured on the planes long enough to learn who's who and what's what — until they're no longer considered Clueless. Come back and read this chapter then.

As with the chant for the Clueless, the information below is not necessarily accurate. On the Outer Planes, a body's got to be careful about what beliefs he holds near and dear to his heart.

◆ A NECESSARY EVIL ◆



Just because some planars know more about the Blood War than primes do, does that mean that *all* planars are experts on the matter? Hardly.

Plenty of planar sods

have no idea of the dark of the war, and many more just parrot the dogma handed to them by their factols. Truth is, it's a fairly rare planar who's got an unbiased view of the war at all.

So what is the truth of the Blood War?

A matter like this is something best started from the beginning. In its simplest terms, it's the clash between the baatezu and the tanar'i, yes, but it's more than that. The war's fought by two opposing philosophies, one espousing law and the other championing chaos. *That's* what gets the rest of the planes up in arms. Most couldn't care less if the fiends exterminated each other. In fact, they're glad it's happening — it makes the multiverse safer as a whole.

Even more, the Blood War is an event that weighs heavily on the multiverse. It's dragged on for so long, the very nature of the Outer Planes reflects its influence. Chant is that the war's raged since before the first humanoid sod ever crawled out of the muck, and it's likely to be around after the last one's dead. The war's even dragged in the celestials, the modrons, and the slaadi, each race with its own agenda. The celestials want to see the fiends obliterate each other, preferably dragging the treacherous yugoloths down as well. The modrons want nothing less than the imposition of law across the whole multiverse. The slaadi, agents of chaos, don't really seem to want much of anything, and they inadvertently foster the ends of chaos just by following their own whims.

Entire societies and economies revolve around the Blood War. It's so big that even the baatezu and tanar'i can't supply themselves entirely. They already rely on outside dealers for food and weapons, and they're always looking for mercenaries, spies, couriers, and the like. Some cities across the planes regularly get rich or go broke, depending on the tides of battle and the rise and fall of one side or another.

The war's become such an integral part of the Outer Planes that any major change in its fortunes shakes the very foundations of existence. Folks alive today have always lived in the shadow of the war. They don't know if it'll swallow them up any time soon, but they can't ignore it, either. To some, it's a blessing and a godsend, for it means life, glory, and honor, not to mention the chance to make a fast pile of jink. To others, it's the destruction of

THE WAR'S
GOT ITS FLAWS,
BUT IT'S GREAT
FOR BUSINESS!
— ARAM OAKWRIGHT,
MEMBER OF THE FATED



everything they know, the inevitable sword that'll one day fall across the neck of creation.

But they also know there's little they can do about it. No one expects the Blood War to end. It's just a fact of life, like the Spire on the Outlands and Sigil floating above it. The fighting is constant, and the sods just go about their lives as best they know how. They're survivors.

◆ THE RACES ◆

A body's race is one of the most important factors in his outlook on the war (assuming that he was brought up to cherish his culture's ideals). Likes, dislikes, loves, prejudices — a sod's wrapped in his racial attitudes like a caterpillar in a cocoon. This section outlines the general attitudes put forth by the major player character races of the planes. As with the views of the character classes (in "Chant for the Clueless"), the information isn't meant to force a PC down any particular path. Each character can decide for himself what to think.

BARIAUR

The typical wandering bariaur tribe despises the baatezu and tanar'ri. They see the fiends as creatures of unrepentant evil who exist solely to prey on the weak and helpless. Bariaur are a carefree bunch, but they don't much care for bullies who enforce their will by beating or enslaving others.

As for the Blood War itself, the bariaur tend to side with the forces of chaos. They're too free-spirited to accept the rigidity of law that the baatezu seek to impose on the multiverse. Bariaur believe that the cosmos would smother under a heavy blanket of conformity.

That doesn't mean they're going to run off to the Abyss and enlist with the tanar'ri. Fiends are fiends, and neither side is worth fighting for. In a dire, life-or-death pinch, the bariaur'd eventually settle on helping the tanar'ri, though it'd leave a foul taste in their mouths and they'd quit as soon as the forces of chaos got back in the saddle.

As a nonchalant race, the bariaur care little if one of their own decides to take part in the struggle.

If a body wants to go rot in the Gray Waste, more power to him — but he shouldn't expect much help from the rest of the herd. 'Course, a few bariaur have made names for themselves along the way. As long as they return untainted, they're welcomed.

BETTER + BE CARESSED
BY CHAOS
+ THAN STRANGLED BY LAW.
— BRIAUR PROVERB

GITHZERAI

The humorless githzerai of Limbo have little use for the Blood War. They've got their own problems: fighting off slaadi incursions, maintaining homes in the ever-shifting soup of their plane, and defending against the constant githyanki raiders. Still, the war's not something they can easily ignore. For the most part, githzerai stick to an isolationist policy and just watch from the sidelines. They don't want to involve their race in yet another imbroglio — their current fights are quite enough to keep them busy.

Some of the githzerai elders believe that the forces of chaos should be controlled, brought to heel — in essence, made to obey laws. Others, more wanton, go so far as to suggest that the race follow the lead of the slaadi and offer trots to the tanar'ri in the war.

Individual githzerai generally don't get involved. Most of their brethren frown on taking sides, fearing that it's a slippery slope to destruction — first one githzerai takes part, then five, then a hundred, then the whole race. Though there's little fear of ostracism, there's a palpable distrust of any sod who'd risk his whole culture for the sake of tinkering in someone else's war. Besides, who knows what secrets a weak-willed githzerai might reveal if he's caught by one of the baatezu, or if a tanar'ri takes an idle dislike to him? Why invite more raiders to Limbo? It's best, they say, to stay out of it.

HALF-ELVES

Half-elves don't have any particular society on the Outer Planes. Though bands of 'em gather and form towns or mercenary companies, the race has no central theme, no guiding principle — save the constant reminder that they don't fit into either elven or human society. As an outcast, a half-elf's likely to follow one of two paths: either throw in with the baatezu or the tanar'ri, or fight unceasingly against both. In other words, they either ally with the foes of those that rejected them, or they seek glory by trying to end the Blood War single-handedly. With most half-elves, there's

little room for compromise.

It might sound barmy, but it works. A number of half-elves have even achieved a measure of success. See, their drive to prove themselves is far fiercer than most folks suspect. That fire often pushes half-elves to extremes that other mortals wouldn't contemplate.

For the most part, half-elves remain loners. The irony of it all is that they've no real reason to feel like outcasts. Perhaps they don't have a society to call their own, but that's no crime. And few planars bat an eye when dealing with a half-elf; they see far stranger every day.

HUMANS

Unlike almost any other race on the Outer Planes, humans can't be nailed down by any central philosophy. They're scattered across the planes, making their homes where they will, and profiting how they like from the Blood War. Some humans build mercantile empires that supply the fiends' demands for arms and equipment, while others withdraw into mountain retreats and wait for the war to end. Still more declare personal crusades and go to fight the fiends — all fiends, with nary a care for law or chaos. There's no end to the diversity of humans.

Some races sneer that humans can't be trusted. That ain't entirely true, but there's *enough* truth to it that most nonhumans are peery around mankind. Fact is, some find it easier to trust a fiend — at least they have a clue as to how the creature's likely to respond. Not so with humans.

Two of 'em with similar backgrounds often have different opinions on everything under the skies.

TIEFLINGS

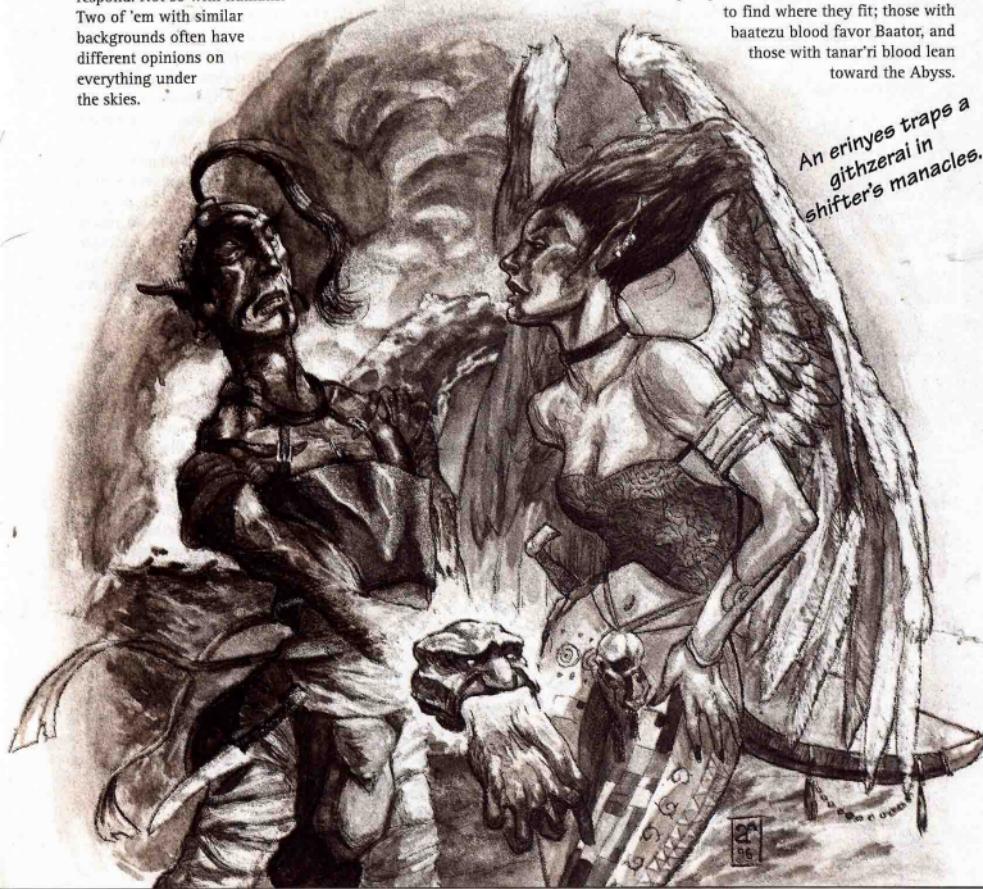
More lonely and bitter than half-elves, less trusted than humans, the tieflings walk the fringes of planar society. Because one of his ancestors — perhaps even one of his parents — was a fiend, a tiefling is never fully accepted by other planars. It's said that blood breeds true, and old prejudices die hard.

Of all the planar races, tieflings are probably the most split. Some relish their tainted blood; they seek out their immortal ancestors and beg for boons or chances to prove themselves in the creatures' eyes. Other tieflings carry a burden of shame; they spurn the evil of their forefathers and struggle to redeem themselves in their *own* eyes.

When it comes to the Blood War, tieflings fit in more directions than humans do. Some throw themselves in with whole-hearted abandon, seeking acceptance in the killing fields. Others distance themselves as much as possible.

Many experiment with their heritage, trying to find where they fit; those with baatezu blood favor Baator, and those with tanar'i blood lean toward the Abyss.

An erinyes traps a
githzerai in
shifter's manacles.



◆ THE FACTIONS ◆

Some folks believe that every mortal on the planes belongs to one of the 15 factions. That's barny nonsense – plenty stay away from those philosophical social clubs, but the faction boys do their level best to make it seem otherwise. And the fact is that they don't hurt for membership. Chant says that the factions control Sigil, and that those who hold Sigil control the Outer Planes. True or not, the factions do wield a lot of power in the City of Doors.

A berk's faction beliefs are probably the second-most influential beliefs he can have (or the first, for those who can throw off the pull of their race). That is, after all, the whole point of a faction – to adopt a particular view of the multiverse and work toward making it true.

When it comes to the Blood War, the factions definitely have things to say. Not every factioneer's got to follow the guidelines given below, but most sods do; it frees them of the onerous burden of forming their own opinions. Generally, only the more free-spirited take the time to form their own thoughts.

THE ATHAR

The Defiers, oddly, have no quarrel with the Blood War. The "powers" don't stick their noses in the conflict too much, and that suits the faction just fine. Thus, the Athar try to attend to more pressing matters – like discrediting other philosophies, tearing down the so-called deities, and defending against enemies of the faction.

On the other hand, the Athar *do* admire the very existence of the baatezu and tanar'ri. It's no dark that the fiends are born from the spirits of deaders, and this muddies the theory that all petitioners go to the realms of their powers. The Athar see it as more proof that the "gods" are ordinary pikers who've just managed to build up some muscle and magic.

The existence of the fiendish near-powers causes a bit more of a schism among the Defiers. Some see the Lords of the Nine as berks setting themselves up as gods over the baatezu, and strive to tear down their works. Other Defiers think the real problem is the Abyssal lords, and they push to defeat these up-and-coming "powers." Defiers who follow either track always look for help from the other factions to reach their goals.

For the most part, though, the Athar stays out of the Blood War. Any Defiers who meddle in the clash do so under their own initiative, without the faction's blessing or guidance.

THE BELIEVERS OF THE SOURCE

The Godsmen think along the same lines as the Athar – they see nothing wrong with the Blood War, as long as it stays on the Lower Planes. The faction's logged countless hours



I'LL GIVE YA
MY OPINION
AS SOON AS MY FAC+OL
+ELLS ME WHAT IT IS.

— A +TYPICAL
FAC+IONEER

discussing the significance of the war, and they recognize it as a force of nature and proof positive of their philosophy.

See, if a cutter does a decent job living his life – if he passes all the tests thrown at him – he moves up a level for the next time around. The existence of the baatezu and tanar'ri proves that. A complacent fiend simply can't improve – it's got to meet all challenges, push itself beyond its limits, if it wants to earn a promotion to the next racial rank.

In short, the Godsmen see the Blood War as a fiendish debate. It's a cosmic test to determine which method of ascent is more correct, which race's beliefs deserve to win out. When the dust all clears, whoever's won – baatezu or tanar'ri – has justified their philosophy.

A handful of faction members holds that if the Blood War ever ends, the multiverse will end as well. After all, if one entire race of fiends proves itself worthy of ascension, must not the rest of the planes follow suit shortly thereafter? Some Godsmen believe this is a noble goal, and they do their best to promote one side or the other. Others find it repulsive; they want everyone (even the fiends) to find his own path to godhood, with no outside aid.

Again, like the Athar, the Godsmen have no set policy on the war. They simply watch it with hawklike precision, hoping to catch a glimpse of the underlying true divinity. They haven't found anything yet, but that doesn't mean it's not there to find.

THE BLEAK CABAL

No surprises here – the Bleakers see the Blood War as a complete waste of time and life. Ultimately, they don't think there's any great answer worth fighting for, and the fiends are fools for believing otherwise. 'Course, no Bleaker's going to tell a fiend that to its face; faction members are unhappy, not barmy.

To the Bleak Cabal, the Blood War is a big cosmic joke played by no one at all, and the fiends are the butt of that joke. They've fallen for it hook, line, and sinker, and there's not even a punchline. The fiends're peeling themselves into killing each other off, and for what? Nothing. Nothing at all. The joke has no meaning.

Fighting's not going to solve anyone's problems. A body's got to look inside to find the dark of the multiverse, the truth of himself. Only a leatherhead takes out his ignorance on others. 'Course, most of the sods of the planes do it anyway, so the Bleakers aren't surprised that the fiends do it, too.

If push came to shove, the Bleakers would probably favor the tanar'ri. After all, the faction-bars lawful berks from its ranks – structure-loving fools can't accept the fact

that the multiverse makes no sense. Naturally, the baatezu can't either; in fact, they're actively trying to *impose* order on reality. That just won't do. Still, a body should remember that the Bleakers think all fiends are leatherheads, and don't care much for either side.

THE DOOMGUARD

The Sinkers love the Blood War. Everything falls apart — everything's meant to — and the war makes it crumble that much faster. The faction does anything it can to foster the continuation of the fighting. The conflict is entropy incarnate, and it spills over into so many planes and so many facets of existence that it's the perfect tool of decay. If the Doomguard could intensify the war, they would. But because they can't (at least, not in any way they can see), they settle for supplying both sides and reveling in the destruction that results.

Chant is that the Doomguard are working with the tanar'ri, using the vast power of the fiends to spread chaos throughout the Cage. After all, they put a cambion, Ely Cromlich (Pl/δ tanar'ri [marquis cambion]/F18/CE), in charge of the weapons of the Armory (the faction's headquarters in Sigil). But then why have so many cutters spied baatezu entering the building?

Two splinter groups in the faction aren't quite as rabid about promoting the Blood War. The first bunch has its sights set on a more gradual, natural decay of the cosmos — its members don't regard wanton destruction as

true entropy. A second, smaller group thinks that the planes're falling apart too fast, ahead of schedule, in large part thanks to the fiends' war. Both of these groups work silently (though not together) to oppose Sinkers who encourage the fighting.

Factol Terrance of the Athar discusses the evolution of the fiends.



THE DUSTMEN

All of existence is a progression toward the True Death. The Dustmen believe that death is good, death is desirable, but they despise anything they consider to be unnatural death – at least, as much as the clinical sods can despise anything. And the Blood War inflicts more unnatural death than the faction could ever keep track of.

Basically, the war's just a sign that the multiverse is full of those who're already dead and don't know it. The fiends hurry to waste their existences, never contemplating what it is they're rushing toward. Sure, they're made of the dead already – being formed from petitioners and all – but they don't understand that they've got to *know* what they're trying to accomplish. Then again, maybe they do and just aren't letting anyone know. But the Dead feel that the fiends are striving much too hard.

The Dustmen aren't much involved in the war, and they certainly don't fight in it. They might pass through the battlefield to give their respects to the fallen (or collect the bodies), but they're not particularly rabid about either baatezy or tanar'ri. They're one of the few factions that really pushes for an end to the fighting, though their efforts hardly seem like much of a push.

THE FATED

It should come as no surprise that the Fated see the Blood War as their beliefs in action. The baatezu and tanar'ri are two of the most powerful races in the multiverse, and they have every right to struggle for control – the conflict will determine which is fit to rule. The side

that ultimately wins is the side that deserved to win, plain and simple. And any fiend that schemes its way to promotion along the way must have been strong and canny enough to earn it.

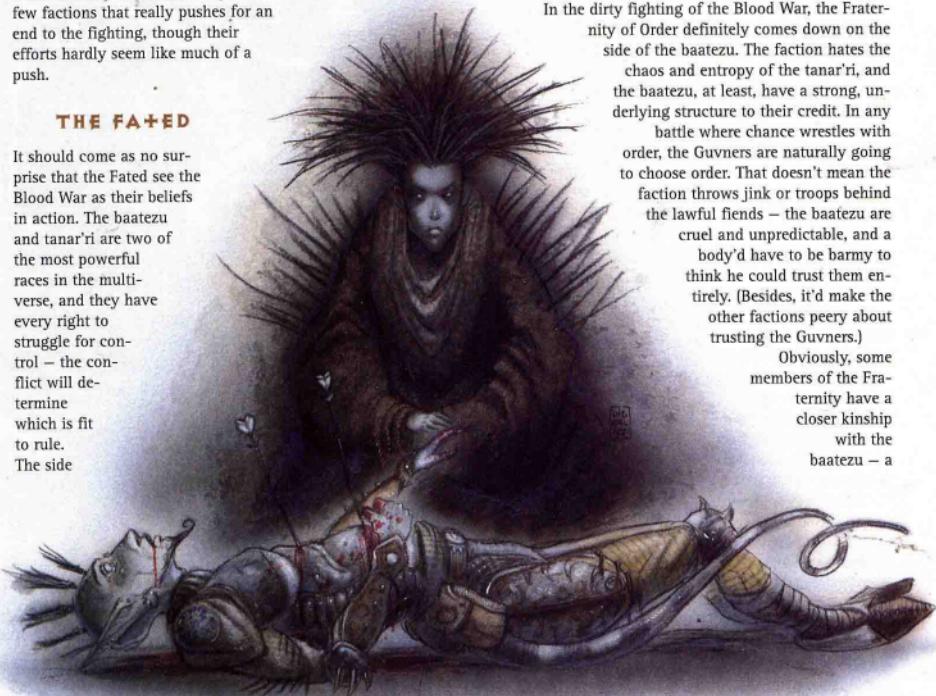
Of all the factions, the Takers tend to profit the most from the war. They seize any opportunity available to grab whatever they can for themselves. Many factioneers are in the business of supply, and they've got plenty of arms and equipment to peddle, seeing as they've taken goods from so many. They sell to the tanar'ri, they sell to the baatezu – whoever meets their prices can buy their wares.

Some Fated factotums have qualms about dealing with the fiends. Chant says the creatures (especially the baatezu) always try to stick a catch in whatever bargains they make. Who knows what sort of strictures they've put on the deals with the Fated? Still, many good-aligned faction members look the other way. What better way to profit from the war than to take from the fiends? If the creatures suffer in the process, so much the better.

THE FRATERNITY OF ORDER

In the dirty fighting of the Blood War, the Fraternity of Order definitely comes down on the side of the baatezu. The faction hates the chaos and entropy of the tanar'ri, and the baatezu, at least, have a strong, underlying structure to their credit. In any battle where chance wrestles with order, the Guvnors are naturally going to choose order. That doesn't mean the faction throws jink or troops behind the lawful fiends – the baatezu are cruel and unpredictable, and a body'd have to be barmy to think he could trust them entirely. (Besides, it'd make the other factions peery about trusting the Guvnors.)

Obviously, some members of the Fraternity have a closer kinship with the baatezu – a



few of the fiends even serve as judges in the Guvnors' courts — and they do what they can on the sly to give aid. They're in the minority, though; it's faction policy to stay aloof. Guvnors are meant to study and interpret the laws, not make them.

So how do factioineers sympathetic to the baatezu's cause lend a hand? Their support is intangible: they try to keep the streets of Sigil free of tanar'ri, they make court rulings that serve the baatezu in the long run, and they offer the power of their not-inconsiderable beliefs.

What's more, these Guvnors research the laws of Gehenna and the Gray Waste in hopes of helping the baatezu gain an edge there. They've also got their top wizards working on ways to eliminate chaos from an enemy's mind.

THE FREE LEAGUE

As the name suggests, the Free League tries to steer clear of the Blood War. Any Indeps who get involved do so as individuals, and they don't speak for the faction as a whole. 'Course, there really is no "faction as a whole," just a loose affiliation of cutters whose only common ground is their belief that folks should be allowed to think for themselves. The group's not organized, and they don't place any kind of restrictions on who can join.

That means that the warlike Indeps tend to be mercenaries, working for whatever side suits them at the time. Other Free Leaguers curse the war as a senseless waste of life. They've got good reason, too. Plenty of Indep villages litter the Outlands, and when a fiend patrol marches through, the monsters tend to slaughter everything in sight. Many Indeps lose families and friends this way.

If there were an overriding faction attitude about the Blood War, it'd have to be one of scorn. See, the whole battle concerns two races struggling for power. Power over what? Other folks, in the end. The fiends try to lift themselves up by stepping on the backs of everyone else, and Free Leaguers hate it. No matter who wins the war, everyone loses. Most Indeps want to see an end to the fighting, preferably in a way that'll get rid of the fiends, too.

THE HARMONIUM

The lawful Harmonium, naturally enough, are in business to promote peace and harmony. They believe that their duty is to pacify the multiverse — by whatever means necessary — and the Blood War throws a wrench into the plans. Thus, the Hardheads want to stop the war. 'Course, there's not much chance of *that* in a thousand lifetimes, so the faction doesn't wade into battle.

Instead, they're content to let the fiends fight it out among themselves. In any clash where evil turns on itself, good is likely to come out the victor. And the Harmonium's

THE DEATH-CRY OF FIENDS
IS MUSIC TO MY EARS.

— ANTON LEVELSKULL
OF THE HARMONIUM



main tenet is goodness for all (at least, goodness as defined by the faction). So, as long as the baatezu and tanar'ri keep smashing into each other, the Hardheads are sure that their own values will eventually win out.

Meanwhile, the faction tries to keep the war from spilling over into surrounding lands. They want it confined to the Lower Planes, where innocents are less likely to be hurt (for who on the Lower Planes is innocent?). Chant is that less ethical Hardheads let the slaughter sprawl as a way to weed out the Indeps of the Outlands. But the faction line says that such atrocities will not be tolerated.

In a pinch, the Hardheads'd probably support the baatezu, only because the faction recognizes the need to limit dangerous freedoms with strict laws. Too much freedom, and a society's got anarchy, which leads only to chaos and destruction — as evidenced by the ravages of the tanar'ri.

THE MERCYKILLERS

The Red Death aren't subtle about which way the wind blows — they support the baatezu in the Blood War, even going so far as to lend troops and supplies to the fiends. The Mercykillers feel that the lawful fiends are out to avenge crimes committed by the tanar'ri, and powers know the Red Death loves punishment more than anything else. 'Course, when it's all said and done, the baatezu will have to be brought to justice for their own atrocities, but for now, they've clearly got right on their side.

Like the Harmonium, the faction's main concern is that the Blood War inflicts needless suffering on anyone who happens to get in the way. No bystander's entirely innocent, but punishment should fit the crime — and the tortures of the war far exceed any reasonable punishment. Mercykiller factotums take their duties seriously, and they pursue any fiends that bring the war to folks who choose not to get involved.

Chant is that the more evil-bent members of the Red Death have worked out a deal with the baatezu. No one's tumbled to the dark of it, but lately a number of berks thrown into Sigil's Prison disappear forever. It's known that the Mercykillers run a hidden prison somewhere on the planes, but word now has it that they sell prisoners as slave labor. If that's true, then the faction's breaking the very laws it's sworn to uphold.

THE REVOLUTIONARY LEAGUE

The Anarchists want to tear down power and structure and rigidity, claiming that it leads to the corruption — or worse, the destruction — of freedom. This belief leads them (many of them, anyway; it's impossible to get two Anarchists to agree on anything) to lend a certain amount of aid to the Abyssal

end of the Blood War. After all, the tanar'ri are trying to tear down the oppressive order of the baatezu hierarchy, and the baatezu are trying to quash the individual expression of the tanar'ri. Granted, the chaotic fiends want to express their individuality in a way that most others consider evil, but still. . . .

The Revolutionary League doesn't really want to see the war end. Whoever came out on top would be in a position to let their newfound power and control corrupt them still further. Even the tanar'ri would no doubt give in to the siren song of strength, and they'd lose any purity they once had in their chaos.

Truth to tell, the League would like little more than to see the Blood War ravage the multiverse for a good long while. That'd tear down power structures all over the land, and let the Anarchists put up their own — which, of course, is what they all want to do in the first place.



THE SIGN OF ONE

More than any other faction (except, perhaps, the Free League), the Signers have no consensus on the Blood War. Each member has his own theories on how the multiverse works, and none of them meshes exactly with the ideas of another. Fact is, each Signer imagines himself to be the center of the multiverse, dreaming the whole thing, so it's a given that opinions differ radically.

They do agree on a single point: The Blood War is one brilliant dream. It must have taken an incredible amount of effort and creativity to invent and perpetuate something that rages so wildly across the planes. Unless the war threatens to trouble them personally, Signers are reluctant to interfere with such a work of art. Those interested in proving the power of their minds might try to influence the fighting — to add their own brushstrokes to the canvas — but most factioneers don't bother.

Chant is that the Signers have a Baatorian high-up in their debt; the rumors claim anyone from an army general to one of the Dark Eight themselves. If it's true, the faction likely won't jeopardize that relationship by throwing in with the tanar'ri, but again, it depends on each individual Signer.

A splinter group of the faction — known as the Will of the One — is pushing the rest of the Signers to imagine the dead portal-god Aoskar back to life. Other Signers want to see a more active power returned. There's no telling what effect a "resurrected" deity would have on the Blood War, but some Signers fear trumpeting their agenda too loudly. The baatezu or tanar'ri might try to force the faction to bring back a fiendish god of *their* choosing.

THE SOCIETY OF SENSATION

Despite the fact that they're constantly looking for new sensations and fresh experiences, the Sensates don't support the Blood War. They see it as the frivolous destruction of life, land, and wares that could instead be used to enhance the lives of folks across the multiverse.

On the other hand, the fighting does hold intriguing experiences for an adventurous Sensate who wants to go to the extremes. Unfortunately, the lures quickly pale when the sod either dies or realizes that the war offers only pain and suffering. Some Sensates enjoy that (though most prefer tamer pastures), and those who try to sample the Blood War



WHERE . . .
WHERE DO I
SIGN UP FOR . . .
FOR THE BLEAK CABAL?
— A SENSATE WHO
TASTED TOO MUCH
OF THE WAR

are admired by their fellows. It takes a special kind of resolve to accept what the war has to give. Most folks can't muster it.

When it comes to taking sides, Sensates are free to do as their curiosity dictates. Factioneers throw in with either army, but most end up supporting the tanar'ri — the dull sameness and inflexibility of the baatezu drives them away.

But really, enlistment is just for the addle-coves who can't imagine an experience for themselves.

THE TRANSCENDENT ORDER

The Ciphers, with their penchant for combining the many into the one, the disparate into the whole, and the clashing into the harmonious, don't really care one way or another about the Blood War. The conflict's not about the marriage of thought and action; it's about the pigheadedness of the fiends and their unwillingness to recognize that they've got to change things about themselves.

Yes, the Ciphers disdain both the tanar'ri and the baatezu. The lawful fiends think too much, planning everything in minuscule, crushing detail before they act; the chaotic fiends think too little, rushing blindly into trouble without ever letting reflection guide their response.

The only way a Cipher'd stick his nose in the war would be as a balancing agent, a mediator, between the careful plots of the baatezu and the irrational bluster of the tanar'ri. More likely, he'd stand back and watch, or just go somewhere else and do something worthwhile with his time. The fiends' feud holds little attraction for the Transcendent Order; the factioneers would rather partake of meaning in their meandering.

THE XAOSITECTS

Ha! To ask a Chaosman what he thinks of the Blood War is to try to change a leaf in flight. A body won't get a straight answer, and anyone who persists would have to be even more barmy than the Xaositects seem to be.

The faction embodies freedom in the truest sense of the word, not even allowing themselves the luxury of internal strictures. Perhaps they serve a higher purpose than even they know, but, on the surface, Xaositects have no interest in adhering to anything. That includes the Blood War. Just because the berks are chaotic doesn't mean they side with the tanar'ri — they're too unpredictable to have loyalty to anyone. And if a Xaositect got it in his head to take up arms and fight for one side or the other, no doubt he'd change his mind a little while later.

No, as always, the Chaosmen go their own way, and the rest of the multiverse can sod off.

THE CITY OF DOORS

Sigil's the city at the center of everything, right? So why ain't it one of the most fiercely contested battlegrounds in the Blood War? If the fiends aren't here fighting for it, it can't be all that important. If Sigil were really that valuable, you'd think the fiends would do more than roam around and drink with devas!

— Niroj de Hin, Clueless

Sigil goes by many names: the Cage, the City of Doors, and the City at the Center of Everything, among others. But that last one deserves special note — Sigil picked up that nickname for a reason. It's here that planewalkers from all over the multiverse gather to exchange secrets and depart to points unknown. As such, Sigil's one of the most important places in the cosmos — as well as the biggest cage folks're ever likely to see.

This chapter details the significance of Sigil to the Blood War. The chant's meant for both planar and prime-material characters. Naturally, most planars are familiar enough with Sigil to

dive right in and start reading. But players of prime characters shouldn't look through this chapter until their heroes have spent some time on the planes, or until they can charm (or bribe) the information out of a friendly Cager.

◆ CAPTURING SIGIL ◆

WE COULD CONQUER SIGIL
ANYTIME WE WANTED.
WE JUST DON'T WANT +®,
+THAT'S ALL.

— OS'SRUM +HE LOUD,
A SPINAGON

Plenty of folks remark that Sigil's location and its many portals should attract the worst of the Blood War. After all, whoever controlled the portals'd control, well, everything. They say the streets should be filled with fiends of every description fighting over the spoils, that no sod with any brains would ever want to come here — that the whole city should be nothing but a battlefield.

Theoretically, they're right. But there's one factor they're forgetting: the Lady of Pain. With her abilities to flay a berk with her gaze or spin him into an eternal maze, the Lady ensures that any fiendish brawling on the streets isn't reflective of the larger war outside. She's got remarkably short tolerance for fiends abusing their power in her city, though she's not always dead-on in her enforcement; the Slags in the Hive (ravaged in a six-week spillover of the Blood War) bear mute testimony to that.

Undeniably, the City of Doors is a prize that the fiends would kill to have. Fact is, hundreds of thousands (or more) have met their ends trying to take the Cage. Only those who arrive without aggressive intent have a hope of surviving — or those who learn to mask their hostility with a smile. It's a sure bet that half of the fiends in the city are looking for a way to drag it over to their side. But the Lady performs her balancing act too well, and it's unlikely that any fiend can tip the scales on its own.

Rumor has it that the baatezu have constructed a replica of the Cage on an infernal layer of their home plane, that they're doing their level best to build it complete in every detail. Once they have a working model, they can study it until they learn how to conquer the *real* city. And to make their model complete, all they need now are the folks who live in Sigil. Back-alley whis-pers say that bubbers and barmies have been slowly disappearing from the



city, day by day. And the occasional party of primes and planars turns up missing now and again, as well.

"Course, that's no sure proof of evil doings. Sods disappear from the Cage all the time. Some tumble through portals, while others wind up in the dead-book. Explanations abound as to why familiar faces aren't there anymore, but for some people, those claims don't quite ring true.

In any case, the latest game in the seedy dives of the Lower Ward is speculation: what would the fiends – baatezu or tanar'ri – do with Sigil if they nabbed it? Would they turn it into a great headquarters for their race, using its portals to strike at their enemies from a place of safety? Would they turn it into a prison camp, closing all the doors and relegating their foes to the grimy streets? Or might they try to destroy it, to teach the Lady of Pain the price of butting into their affairs?

Some believe that the Lady herself used to be an Abyssal high-up – 'course, once a fiend, always a fiend, others say – and that the tanar'ri want to take the city to punish her for turning stag on her own race. It's even bandied about that gaining control of the portals is just a secondary goal.

Now, if the tanar'ri could just produce the poor sod who's supposed to punish her . . .

DIPLOMACY ◆ AND DECEPTION ◆

The City of Doors is more than just the ring that the fiends are grabbing for. Sigil's the most truly neutral place in the multiverse, and it's become a waystation for the people of the planes.

Rivalries don't die in Sigil, but feuding visitors can set aside their differences for a moment while they pursue their own goals. Fiends hit the Cage to recruit allies; they tire of getting peeled by the treacherous yugoloths and are always on the lookout for other partners. Thus, a body can see a cornugon tipping a glass with a deva, and the two almost seem to enjoy the strange company.

What's more, the fiends have to tone down their tempers while in Sigil, or the Lady'll put them in the dead-book for sure. They just can't wantonly kill a berk who annoys them – at least, not in public. (A sod who hassles a fiend in a little-used alley probably won't walk out again.) Thanks to the enforced peace, a body can even spy a tanar'ri and baatezu sharing a table at a tavern in the Hive! It still ain't a *common* sight, but Sigil is one of the few places in the multiverse where the lawful and chaotic fiends don't automatically go for each other's throats.

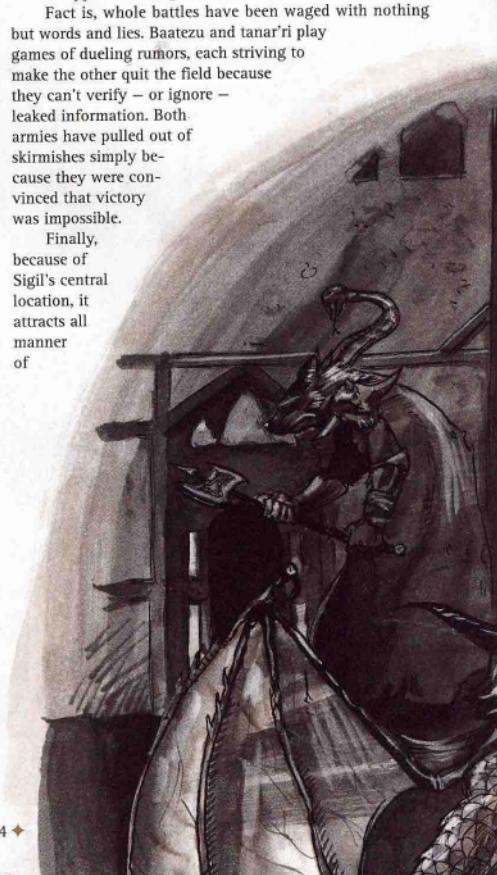
Eventually, though, that peace is what drives the fiends back out of the Cage. Most of them can't keep their violent natures in check for long, and they run home to purge themselves of the hatred that's been building without release. Thus, the fiendish population of the Cage is always in flux; only the strongest can stay in town for more than a few weeks at a time.

So, Sigil won't be a major staging point for the Blood War anytime soon. But it's still an ideal launching pad for spies, assassins, and strike forces. Moving in stealth through the darkened streets, squads of soldiers creep to portals that'll whisk them to their enemies' strongholds. The laws of the city prohibit such maneuvers, but what Harmonium patrol's tough enough to enforce them? The best bet for the watch is to point out any suspicious tanar'ri to the baatezu – and vice versa. Let the fiends do each other in. It might result in a little destruction, but the Hardheads and Mercykillers want to make sure the fiends know that Sigil ain't their playground.

Any mortal dealing with a fiend in the Cage ought to know this: the creatures see the city as a way to pass on misinformation to thwart their enemies. As the focal point of the Outer Planes, any rumors that spin out of Sigil take on the status of truth (or, at least, credibility), and they'll go far if dropped in the right ears.

Fact is, whole battles have been waged with nothing but words and lies. Baatezu and tanar'ri play games of dueling rumors, each striving to make the other quit the field because they can't verify – or ignore – leaked information. Both armies have pulled out of skirmishes simply because they were convinced that victory was impossible.

Finally, because of Sigil's central location, it attracts all manner of



bashers. Primes, planars, proxies, warriors, wizards, rogues, mercenaries, loyalists — all come to the Cage sooner or later, and all can be manipulated into serving some fiendish purpose in the Blood War. Many want nothing to do with the conflict, while others sign on as soon as they step through a portal.

◆ COMMON CHANT ◆

The Blood War is so sodding huge that it generates enough rumors, gossip, and news to drown a hundred snoops a day. 'Course, about half of what a body hears is barmy talk, and about half is outdated. It's the part left over that's the good stuff, and the best way to keep abreast of a situation is to keep an ear to the ground.

The rumors below were collected in Sigil, where chant of the Blood War is thickest. Only a leatherhead would bet his life on some of the gossip, but there's a

good chance that part of it's true. Still, true or false, the following rumors have the Cage abuzz, and it's always a good idea to keep up on the latest chant.

DIVINATIONS

Self-proclaimed seers and prophets flood the streets of Sigil. They make all sorts of forecasts about the near future of the Blood War, each claim more extravagant (and less accurate) than the last. Currently, a very amusing prediction's making the rounds. It seems a blind prime who lives in the Hive is spouting nonsense about how the war'll shift, and shift radically, right quick — something about how both the tanar'i and baatezu will fall, with unknown forces moving in to seize the whole ball of wax.

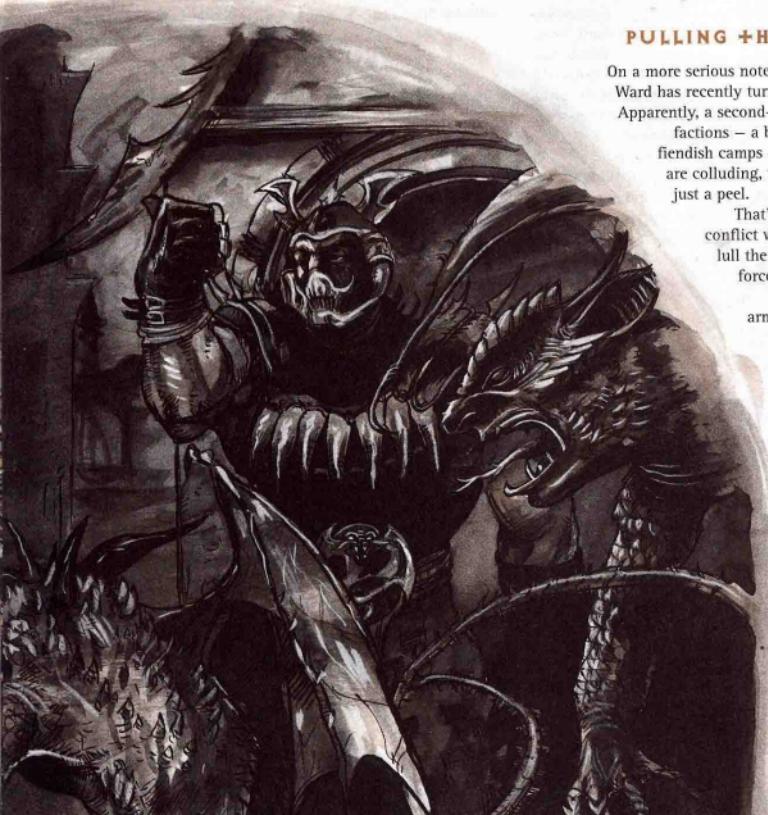
Even more laughable, the berk claims that dead and undead gods'll stride forth from the silver void to reclaim their titles. Sure, the chant's a tale for addle-coves, but it's a fine tonic for the troubled times. With all the gloom and doom of late, the barmy prime has provided the informants of Sigil with a rare smile.

PULLING THE WOOL

On a more serious note, speculation in The Lady's Ward has recently turned downright frightening. Apparently, a second-in-command of one of the factions — a blood with contacts in both fiendish camps — claims that the two sides are colluding, that the whole Blood War's just a peel.

That's right. The millennia-long conflict was nothing but a set-up to lure the celestials into thinking the forces of evil were incapable of working together. With the armies of light now busy with their own squabbles, the baatezu and tanar'i plan to join forces and strike at the strongholds of goodness.

In related news, chant says the celestials are scrambling to build up their defenses. Evidently, they've let themselves grow weak and fat while waiting for the fiends to destroy each other, and now the fiends are presenting a front stronger than the do-gooders ever dared imagine.



SAFE HOUSES

In a city as full of intrigue as Sigil, a body's got to know where he can hide. Maybe he's turned stag on a faction high-up, or he's on the run from a fiend and needs a safe case to bed down for the night. Unfortunately, safe houses ain't common in the Cage, thanks in part to the Harmonium — they've come down so hard on the Anarchists and Indeps lately that any berk with a secret is guarding it even more closely than before.



I SAY ARM
+ THE FIENDS + THE HILT.
GIVE THEM ENOUGH ROPE
+ HANG THEMSELVES.

— SPIRAL HAL'IGHT, AN AASIMAR MERCHANT

are welcome, as long as they abide by the rules of the kips. Fact is, one safe house — said to be a sentient building, the repository of an exiled god's spirit — is rumored to regularly host delegations from both Baator and the Abyss.

Chant is that the fiends who go there are looking to negotiate a Blood War cease-fire, for reasons unknown. Any-one barmy enough to want in on the matter should ask around in the Lower Ward. It's said a slim tiefling woman with bristlike hair (and a very sharp knife) can lead a body to the kip.

MINING + THE PRIME

Snoopy planars tend to deny it, but the Prime Material Plane is a choice jewel for anyone strong enough to take it. The Prime has resources, it's not really aligned, and the billions of mortals would make handy armies, servants, or cannon fodder for the Blood War. Gossip in the Great Bazaar has the fiends planning sneak attacks on magic-rich prime-material worlds, scheming to attract hordes of worshipers, and toppling the gods that mean so much to mortal sods.

Why are the fiends out to gain control of the Prime (or just a few of its crystal spheres)? Well, the baatezu and tanar'ri replenish their numbers with petitioners, and petitioners are the spirits of deaders from — that's right — the Prime. Each race hopes to grab the power's share of prime-material worlds, then convert them to lawful or chaotic evil so the spirits'll fly to the "right" Outer Plane.

Granted, it's a dangerous action and one that's likely to provoke the powers, but word is that the fiends don't give a toss — they're getting desperate and need more recruits.

HIGH-UP CORRUPTION

How could the celestials be sure that the fiends would never attack the Upper Planes? By playing them off each other until they did themselves in. And how would the celestials go about such a plan?

Well, disturbing chant in the Market Ward — the home of deals and peels — says that the upper-planar cutters fan the flames of the war by selling weapons, tips, and magic to both baatezu and tanar'ri. The bashers spreading this gossip have nothing to back up their claims but logic. See, the celestials can't afford to fight both races of fiends — they might not even be able to take on one. It only makes sense that they'd want to weaken both armies as much as they could.

Now and then, this or that deva is marked as getting a little *too* involved in the arms business, or an aasimor here or there is linked to a secret chain of yugoloth spies. Again, nothing's been proven so far. But those who believe the rumors don't know whether to be sickened by the duplicity, or grateful that the celestials are working against the fiends however they can.

THE SLIDING PLANES

The Blood War is finally taking its toll on the middle planes. Chant is that Mechanus and Limbo are getting ready to slip over into the Lower Planes — the fiends have finally converted (or destroyed) enough modrons and slaadi to tip the balance. The Great Ring's going to tilt off-kilter, and powers only know what it'll mean for the multiverse when it's all said and done.

Thanks to this rumor, hordes of do-gooders have descended on Mechanus and Limbo, doing their blessed duty to keep the planes mired in neutrality, if not drag them over to goodness outright. And evil berks have answered, flocking to the middle planes to make sure the descent goes off as "scheduled." What's most amusing is that neither plane was probably likely to slip in the first place.

RECRUITERS

Fiends in Sigil constantly rattle their bone-boxes, trying to talk everyone and his uncle into joining their armies. Each side dangles attractive lures, promising adventure and fame, gold and glory. It's no dark that the baatezu always attach secret riders to their contracts, and the tanar'ri rarely honor their word. But that doesn't stop young Cagers and primes — sure they can take care of themselves — from signing up.

One of the most successful recruiters is a nycaloth called Stammering Azarin (Pl/♂ yugoloth [nycaloth]/HD 11+22/NE). Azarin works for either side of the war, depending on who manages to get his bid that day. Each morning, one tanar'ri and one baatezu wait outside his black-brick flat in the Hive, each eager to convince Azarin to work for them that day. The two fiends are always on their best





Do you seek great adventures?
Great treasures?
Immortal fame?
Respect of your peers?

If you answered "yes!" to any of these questions,
you might have what it takes to enlist
in...

THE GLORIOUS BAATEZU ARMY

Benefits include:

Competitive pay!
Prompt payment — you'll always get
what you deserve!

Guaranteed promotions!
Excellent severance pay!
Travel and meals (all you can eat)!

Why wait? Enlist now! See the Lower Planes!

havior, too — any brawls, and Azarin goes recruiting for other parties.

Any berk who inks his name on one of Azarin's contracts had best know what he's getting into. Most are stuck in the Blood War forever; once their physical bodies fall, their petitioner spirits must continue to honor the deal.

When signing on with the baatezu, a body must specify his terms of service, outlining *exactly* what he expects from the fiends and *exactly* what is expected of him. The lawful fiends won't break their written word, and Azarin sends copies of all signed contracts to Gehenna for safe storage in the vaults of the yugoloths.

"Course, signing on with the tanar'i's a good deal easier — just mark an "X" and it's done. But don't expect any promises in return. The tanar'i pay better than the baatezu, but enlisting with the chaotic fiends is a huge gamble.

HO+ PROPERTY

This is a truth: Some cutters make a living by stealing weapons and equipment from Blood War battlefields, giving the fiends the laugh, and selling the items in marketplaces across the Outlands. Plenty of vendors end up paying the music, but many succeed and prosper. Word is that any blood interested in buying stolen fiendish goods should wear red striped boots to the bazaar in the gate-town of Tradegate. A runner'll make contact and set up an auction.

Just about anything created on the Lower Planes is for sale. Sometimes the scavengers get lucky and find a piece of *real* quality. Lately, they claim to have been finding more and more celestial equipment, though the bodies of the former owners are nowhere around.

THE RISING OF THE STYX

A wave of amnesia's passed through the volcanic gate-town of Torch. It's almost like a disease, but the people of Torch claim that the waters of the River Styx are rising up and flooding the marshes just outside of town. Most likely, the truth is that the town's food stores or wells've been spiked by some practical joker.

But if the chant's true, what would that mean for the Outlands? The Styx has never backed up before — what's the reason, and where will the waters reach next? Because the river's linked so closely to the tides of evil on the Lower Planes, it's possible that the flooding is a sign that the Blood War is about to enter a new phase.

THE BERK

♦ ON THE STREET ♦

Cagers have a vested interest in the outcome of the Blood War, and they follow news of it closely through the grapevine. With the fiends constantly eyeing the city and its inhabitants, folks there'd better keep up to date on what's happening.

WHADDAYA MEAN,
"S+OLEN"?
THIS ABYSSAL SKIN-FLAYER
BELONGED +O MY
DEAR OLD AUN+IE!

— A MERCHANT IN TRADEGATE

An enterprising group of cutters has even gone so far as to put together a press sheet with daily reports on how the war fares. It's called *Life in Wartime*. Established only a few years ago, the *Wartime*'s staff has increased to over 50 people — the sheet sells like crazy. Staff reporters use the portals of Sigil to visit the known battlefields of the war, in hopes that they'll pick up on a trend Cagers should be aware of.

Naturally, the baatezu and tanar'i aren't so keen on a mortal rag publishing their secret battle plans, and it's said that they've leaned on the staff quite heavily. In any case, the facts continue to see print, but the *Wartime* is now more useful for lurid accounts and sensationalism — which might help to explain its recent successes in the Cage.

That's just one example of how Cagers dabble in the Blood War. Many others earn their living from it, whether as participants, suppliers, or opponents. Arms dealers abound in the city; their palatial mansions in The Lady's Ward attest to how well they profit from the misery of the fighting. Recruiters also roam the streets, especially those of the Lower Ward and the Hive, searching for sods to fill out the fiendish armies.

And then there are the adventurers, bashers who span the spectrum of opinion and importance. They're the true wild cards in the Blood War, because no one's sure exactly what they'll do — or, indeed, what they're capable of doing. Powers know that hero-types have accomplished plenty of impossible things in the past. Chant is that no mortal fools could ever hope to affect the war on any important level, but adventurers always seem to tell the laws of logic and chance to pike it and get away with it.

Few Cagers agree on what stance to take on the Blood War — the cosmopolitan nature of the city sees to that. But the citizens unite on two points. First, the war's not likely to end or change any time soon, despite any sod's best efforts. It's simply lasted too long and gone too far to wrap up tidily in the next few years.

Second, they don't want the city to fall into the hands of the fiends. Even the powers'd shudder at that. Though they trust the Lady to repel any and all attacks — she has, after all, stood off the gods themselves for this long — Cagers are willing to defend Sigil against fiendish menaces that arise from the Blood War.

♦ BLOODS +O KNOW ♦

No matter how much a body learns about the Blood War, it's never enough. The folks described below are a few bloods

that many Cagers turn to when they need chant or favors. Someone with contacts or access to an information network should be able to get a hold of them without too much trouble. They don't provide their services for free, but then, who does?

TERL GOSSIP

Terl Gossip (Pl/♀ human/B8/Free League/N) devotes her days to uncovering the rumors of Sigil. As a Cager born and bred, she's all too aware that the city hides its secrets well from the average basher. It takes real digging, a snoop who's dedicated and tenacious, and Terl's that snoop. She's always wanted to be in on the chant, and now she's granted herself the status of know-it-all.

But knowledge ain't cheap. Terl needs to make a living, and she sells her information to anyone who can afford it. Something that's fairly well known goes for just a few coppers, while the secrets of the factions can run as high as 10,000 in gold.

The only reason Terl's still alive is that she's a master of disguise. Right now, she's wanted by the Harmonium, the Guvners, and the Mercykillers for selling some of their forbidden lore to the editor of an underground tome. So she's not easy to find. But a cutter who needs her services should poke around in The Lady's Ward for a while, pleasantly greeting every Harmonium watchman he sees. Terl will take notice and arrange a clandestine meeting.

Naturally, she finds out all she can about the basher who wants to meet her, and Terl usually winds up knowing more about her client than the client does. If she uncovers something that makes her uncomfortable — like maybe the "client" is really a bounty hunter out for her head — well, Terl has plenty of other customers. When the berk shows up at the meeting place, he'll find nothing but a note to let him know Terl's on to him (no doubt along with mentions of dirty little secrets that he'd rather keep quiet).

It's said that Terl never forgets any knowledge that enters her brain-box. Be that as it may, the woman's still mortal, capable of making mistakes. It's just that no one's ever caught her doing it. Then again, Terl doesn't guarantee the accuracy of her information. She just passes on what she hears.

MIRROR WILL

Mirror Will (Pr/♂ elf/M6/Sign of One/LG) is a prime who's lived in Sigil for at least five decades. His apothecary/alchemy shop, hidden deep in the Clerk's Ward, caters to folks who need rare minerals or hard-to-find spell components.

That's useful enough, but Will's more than just a shopkeep. He hasn't aged at all for the last fifty years. Granted, that's easily chalked up to potions (or elven blood), but

Will has one other feature that can't be explained away.

The cutter didn't pick up his name by accident. With a bit of concentration, he can split himself into two separate but identical bodies, each with its own mind and will. They share memories up to the moment of the split, and each body acts in accordance with the goals Will had in mind when he separated.

Once the deed's done, the two bodies step

into each other, and Will's whole again. He claims to retain whatever knowledge both bodies gained while they were apart. And he won't say *why* he can do what he does (though some think it's a result of his faction belief in the ultimate power of the mind).



Thus, one of Mirror Will's bodies is always out traveling and procuring, while the other minds the store. It's a handy arrangement, allowing him to make the most of his time. And if one of his bodies dies, a *resurrection* spell cast on the other will bring it back to life.

'Course, Will doesn't like facing death, so he's always looking for escorts for his traveling self. Most of his trips take him to the Lower Planes — often through Blood War battlefields — and he prefers to cultivate the acquaintance of good, tough bashers. He pays well, and offers discounts and free goods for those who do him right. Chant is that traveling with Will's a good way to see the Blood War without actually getting stuck in the worst of it.

ARTAGEL BOOTHLEGGER

Artagel Bootlegger (Pl/♂ tiefling/F4/Fated/CN) can get a body just about anything he needs. A short, powerfully-muscled tiefling with a quick laugh, Artagel works out of Tradegate, but he's got a booth in the Bazaar in the Market Ward. Then again, the blood travels so much that it's hard to say if he calls anywhere home.

Artagel's not ashamed to admit that he's a smuggler. Fact is, he boasts of his ability to get through any checkpoint, any customs, any inspection, with all his goods still intact and ready for immediate delivery to the client.

Those who go through Artagel should come prepared with deep pockets. If he merely arranges for goods to make their way into a client's hands, he charges a minimum of 500 gp per item. If he's hired to smuggle a person to a place of safety, the price goes up to 1,000 or more a head, depending on the level of danger.

Artagel charges a steep price, but he's worth every copper. He's never steered anyone wrong, nor delivered a sod into the wrong hands, and that's rare — especially for a tiefling.

ANTRALIUS AND BB'BRAY

Antralius (Pl/∅ baatezu [osyluth]/HD 5/LE) and Bb'bray (Pl/∅ tanar'ri [babau]/HD 8+14/CE) are as unlikely a pair as they come. Both are military enforcers for the Blood War, and though they serve opposite sides of the fence, they don't seem to hate each other.

Antralius is an osyluth that fled from the netherworld of Baator, claiming that its nagging conscience would no longer let it push other baatezu to certain death at the hands of tanar'ri troops. Careful and fastidious, Antralius speaks slowly, with a buzzing voice, and it always appears to be sensitive to the needs of others.

Bb'bray is a babau, a skeletal police officer of the Abyss. It, too, claims to have escaped from the bondage of



the
Blood
War, mak-
ing its way to
Sigil to find allies
who seek to stop the violence.

The story goes that the two met in the Hive and managed to put aside their racial hatred long enough to speak with each other. To their surprise, they found kindred spirits, and swore to work together to bring the Blood War to an end. Since that day, Antralius and Bb'bray are never seen apart, as if both were afraid the other's fall without constant guidance. Fact is, they've saved each other's lives on several occasions, sometimes at the expense of their former fellows. Antralius once slew a cornugon looking to start a fight, and Bb'bray killed a pair of rovoks out for the osyluth's blood.

The pair's often seen preaching in the Lower Ward against the evils of the Blood War, their voices rising above the hubbub in an effort to make themselves heard and understood. They've managed to turn a few of their brethren away from the war, and they try to stymie fiendish recruiting efforts throughout Sigil.

Peery folks say both fiends are double agents, working against each other in secret while proclaiming their friendship in public. Others think that one is playing the other for a sap, but can't agree which is the trickster and which the victim. In any case, everyone in Sigil agrees that they've never seen a stranger pairing come out of the Blood War.

THE CHANT OF THE WAR

◆ A PLAYER'S GUIDE ◆

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