

# Assassins

There is a rumor.

Of course, rumors in Hell are about as common as flies around rotten meat (and as about as hard to get rid of), but this particular one is noteworthy, not least because repeating it aloud is a good way to have your Forces scattered. This type of reaction merely gives it legitimacy, of course.

The rumor goes that every Prince -- every Prince -- has, somewhere in his, her or its organization, a traitor to Hell itself. These are not the normal types of traitors, however: they do not spy, they do not sabotage, they do not even provide undercover assistance to angels that find themselves trapped in Hell. Indeed, these traitors are, outwardly and even inwardly, perfect examples of what demons of their particular Words should be. However, should they ever be given a particular sign (and *many* things have been suggested as being The Sign), each and every one of those Assassins will immediately turn and attempt to assassinate his or her particular Prince.

Now, on the face of it this seems absurd: even with

complete surprise, how could any mere demon hope to destroy a Prince? Well, the rumor goes on to suggest that all Assassins are highly (very highly) placed (Higher Distinctions and actual Words of their own, at the very least). It's also said that they have all taken care to prove themselves over and over again, allowing themselves to sink into depravity and sin, so that they may pass unsuspected through the legions of Hell. It's even said that they know *things* taught to them by Heaven (Michael's name usually crops up at this point): things that will give them the power to fuel one good strike. They certainly would have to know things that would allow them to hide effectively.

If these Assassins really exist, then they must be among the maddest entities in existence, and certainly the most fanatical. The problem is, of course, that no Prince quite dares to treat their Dukes as they would mere Servitors -- and certainly none of them are willing to have the Game handle the matter for them (after all, according to the rumor there's a Assassin in the Game, too). Demon Princes are not fools, for the most part: they know that a too-vigorous exhibition of suspicion will create plots where none existed before.

Each Prince has quietly looked through his, her or its

organization, of course, and none of them have found a likely suspect. But that's more or less the point, right? It would be the one that you *wouldn't* suspect. The usual conclusion drawn is that there may be one organization (or two, or three) that harbors a waiting Assassin, but not theirs. So the Princes brood, and watch out of the corner of their eyes, and usually manage to convince themselves that the entire thing is probably just a particularly good piece of psychological warfare on the part of the Host. No other explanation makes sense, really.

Still, there's that last part of the rumor: the bit where it's said that at least one Assassin has not only already achieved the mission, but even managed to survive it. And that the Assassin may now even be a Prince, and ready to betray all of Hell, come the Day. This is really the most disquieting bit. After all, forget about Haagenti: no one's really sure where Valefor came from.

Or Kronos, for that matter.

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- Moe Lane

- <http://www.moelane.com>