

Some Notes On An Alternate Conception of Hell for *In Nomine*

The first thing you must remember is that humans outnumber us by thousands to one. The Princes know this, but do not care; they could annihilate the entire mortal population of Hell without losing one of their number. That is of no comfort to us. A plane-wide slave rebellion would almost certainly kill or maim most of the unfortunates in its path, to say nothing of weakening us to the point where Heaven could swoop in for the kill. So, contrary to the propaganda, even in Hell humans have power of a sort; what they lack is the ability to focus it against us. We must ensure that they never gain that ability.

The second thing you must remember is that we are not here to do the will of the Tyrant. He has seen fit to throw His most flawed creations into our place of refuge? Very well. That is entirely His decision. We are still not His creatures. If the Tyrant wishes to have mortals needlessly tortured, let Him do it Himself.

The third thing you must remember is that while humans are less valuable than us, they still have value. A damned soul can generate Essence, develop new Forces, retain

useful skills until needed... and serve its betters, as we see fit.

The last thing you must remember is that we are at war. Wastefulness is not merely idiocy; it is treason to the Cause. We cannot afford the luxury of inefficiency.

In this (Backwards Bright) Hell, humans are thought of as resources. This is actually a vast improvement over their canonical status as commodities. The difference between the two attitudes is that resources are expected to have differing individual values, while commodities are assumed to be interchangeable and equivalent. In practical terms, this means damned souls are primarily valued according to their collection of useful talents, worth of their labor, and ability to function, instead of their ability to produce one Essence per 'day'. This, of course, still contemplates damned souls as being ultimately property - but it brings the concept of 'social mobility' into the system. Even a slave culture can have a hierarchy.

The framework for Hell's slave culture is based around the concept of who owns the slave. All damned souls are assigned to a Prince's Word upon arrival, with no official exceptions beyond Lucfier's ten percent (and nobody knows what he does with them). In reality, a

carefully-calculated number of damned souls are not assigned to a specific Prince (otherwise known as 'Un-Branded'), so as to give useful object lessons in the benefit of being owned.

Being assigned to a Prince's Word and nothing else is an awful experience. It's Hell, after all. But the damned soon note that their position at least protects them from the depredations of demons who do not serve their Prince; it is a crime to interfere with another Word's damned souls without either provocation or permission. More to the point, this crime is enforced. This is where the aforementioned object lessons come into play: Hell uses the contrast between 'Branded' and 'Un-Branded' to reinforce the lesson that It Can Always Get Worse.

Not all damned souls stay at this lowest level. The next step (really, more of a staircase) is to be assigned to one or another of the groups dedicated to furthering a given Prince's Word. This is officially random, but in reality the talented, the skilled and the ambitious are elevated as soon as they manifest themselves. Group-owned damned are the property of whatever department or group owns them, and may only be interfered with by that group; even a lowly cleaning crew is theoretically immune from being tormented by rank-and-file Servitors (although permission

to administer a suitable rebuke may not be difficult to get). As a general rule, the smaller the group or subgroup, the higher the status for the damned soul.

The goal for most damned souls is to become the personal property of a demon; or, ultimately, the direct property of a Prince. This is not assigned lightly. Both the damned soul and the demon must first demonstrate: a commitment to the War; high natural ability; and utter loyalty to the Prince's Word. Once that occurs, however, the damned soul may not be interfered with by any demon who is not his or her owner, that demon's own direct superior(s), or a Demon Prince.

Revised Infernal Status Chart

Below shows the Status of this version of Hell. Note that many of the Status Modifiers are not cumulative: use the highest value for Words, Assignments, and Harvestings. Also note that the maximum status of a damned soul in Hell is 6, they are all in Nybbas's service, and they are exceptionally rare even there. Smart damned souls try to stay around Status 0 or 1, which is enough to make actual demons thoughtful but not paranoid about the jumped-up talking monkeys.

Status

- 4 Un-Branded Damned Soul
- 3 New-Branded Damned Soul
- 2 Branded Damned Soul / Demonling
- 1 Respected Damned Soul / 7-Force Demon
- 0 9-Force Demon
- +1 Demon in good odor with Prince
- +2 Word Bound
- +3 Knight
- +4 Captain
- +5 Baron
- +6 Duke
- +7 Duke with Word
- +8 Demon Princes

Status Modifiers

- +1 Demon/Owner has Decent Word
- +2 Demon/Owner Powerful Word
- +1 Assigned to Specific Group (Damned only)
- +2 Assigned to Powerful Group (Damned only)
- +2 Assigned to specific Demon (Damned only)
- +4 Assigned to Prince (Damned only)
- +1 Voluntarily Subjected to 5 Harvestings (Damned only)
- +2 Voluntarily Subjected to 10+ Harvestings (Damned only)
- +1 7+ Forces (Damned only)

Harvesting

Hell has noted that damned souls may, in fact, acquire more Forces (to the human maximum of 15). Each Prince has an opinion on the 'optimal' number of Forces that its slaves may have, and actively removes those deemed superfluous. This is usually done with a ritual of some pomp, and the soul is rewarded afterwards; it cuts down on the discontent. Demon Princes will also typically tend to favor a certain type of Force in their damned souls. For example, Baal likes them tough and burly, while Beleth prefers that they be smart enough to be really afraid, and Nybbas wants the best of the damned in his organization to be able to keep his actual demons on their toes.

Demon Princes

No two Demon Princes treat their damned souls identically. Given the fractious and willful nature of Hell, this should be unsurprising. The Princes do not interfere much with each other's damned souls, though. It's generally considered impolite.

Andrealphus

Maximum Status of Damned: 3

Maximum Forces: 7 (Corporeal)

The Beautiful Prince has very strict standards for his humans; he prefers them pretty, complaisant, and not particularly intelligent. Damned souls owned by Lust are generally trained up in one specific activity; what little status they enjoy lies in being particularly good at it. That being said, at Status -1 and above their existence is reasonably pleasant enough. Lust's organization puts less emphasis on Harvesting than the average.

Asmodeus

Maximum Status of Damned: 2

Maximum Forces: 7 (Celestial)

The Prince of the Game's damned souls start off in Hades, where they work as informants, spies, honey traps, saboteurs, and whatever else Asmodeus needs them to do to keep the Infernal City from falling into chaos. The best of them either end up running their own networks of damned souls, or brought in to the Halls of Loyalty to be analysts, researchers, and prison guards. The Game does not allow damned souls to rise very far, and Asmodeus himself does not personally own any. There is nothing particularly noteworthy about how often the Game Harvests extra forces from the damned.

Baal

Maximum Status of Damned: 4

Maximum Forces: 8 (Corporeal)

Baal uses his damned souls to make his Servitors tougher. His highest-ranked damned souls are almost the equal of a full-fledged demon in raw power, and can smack around any number of mere 7 Force demons. It's a very brutal life in Gehenna, but the damned souls that thrive there can end up being some of the few humans in Hell that actually have some intrinsic loyalty towards the place.

Beleth

Maximum Status of Damned: 0

Maximum Forces: 6 (Ethereal)

It is not pleasant to be a damned soul belonging to Nightmares, particularly since Beleth has a habit of taking personal ownership of more souls than any other Prince. She typically strips her personal damned souls down to 1 Corporeal Force, immobilizes them, then uses them as Nightmare generators of various kinds. The ultimate goal for her other damned souls is to be made one of the servants who takes care of Beleth's personal slaves. That offers no advancement, but no punishment either. Beleth keeps very close track of which of her Word's damned souls currently require Harvesting.

Belial

Maximum Status of Damned: 1

Maximum Forces: 6 (No preference)

When it comes to damned souls, all Belial cares about is whether they like to burn. If they do, the Prince of Infernal Fire assigns them to a demon (or himself) in order for them to translate their new master's desires into terms that the regular damned souls of Sheol can understand.

Humans so favored do not get anything resembling actual respect from their masters, but they do avoid being tortured for no particular reason. Harvesting is merely a useful physical control mechanism in Belial's service, and offers no social benefit.

Haagenti

Maximum Status of Damned: 3

Maximum Forces: 6 (Ethereal)

Haagenti finds it impossible to personally own damned souls for very long. His demons, on the other hand, fight fang and claw to keep both their favorite cooks and their favorite meals. Service in Gluttony is considered highly hazardous, despite the opportunities for social mobility (a newly-dead demon's mortal cook is often a convenient gift). Harvesting is very common and made much of, for reasons that should be obvious.

Kobal

Maximum Status of Damned: 5

Maximum Forces: 5 (Celestial)

A damned soul who truly understands the nature and ways of comedy will find service in Dark Humor to be surprisingly easy. They act as windows to humanity for their demonic masters, giving valuable feedback. One way, or the other. Note that Status in Dark Humor is a double-edged sword where the hilt is also a sword blade; if Kobal thinks that your humiliation was funny, that's pretty much it. Damned souls owned by Dark Humor generally find Harvesting very terrifying: there's just too many opportunities for a really killing joke.

Kronos

Maximum Status of Damned: -1

Maximum Forces: 6 (Ethereal)

Damned souls owned by Fate are never assigned to groups or individual demons. They are there to shelve books in the Archives, and that is all. But as long as the damned souls do their jobs without incident, they are ignored. This can be profitable: highly dangerous, but profitable. Many demons know a damned soul that can look things up for them. Kronos does not permit voluntary Harvesting: the moment a damned soul develops a 7th Force, it is stripped from him.

Lilith

Maximum Status of Damned: 0

Maximum Forces: 15

The Princess of Freedom does not own slaves. She instead enters into a voluntary contract with Un-Branded damned souls where they agree to serve her in exchange for her personal protection. She has very, very few damned souls who are capable of living up to that bargain, and they are all uniformly powerful. Lilith also does not Harvest. Nobody has been willing to pay enough to find out why.

Malphas

Maximum Status of Damned: 1

Maximum Forces: 8 (Celestial)

The Prince of Factions does not personally own slaves, and does not allow his demons to individually own them, either. But he does permit damned souls owned by Factions a certain amount of freedom. That it invariably ends up serving his Word is likely a good enough reason to do it. Harvesting in Factions is something that regular damned souls do; humans assigned to groups do not do it.

Nybbas

Maximum Status of Damned: 6

Maximum Forces: 9 (Celestial)

Working for the Media is the brass ring for many ambitious damned souls. No other Prince offers as wide a range, or as high a level of achievement, as Nybbas does. The problem is that it is as easy to fall as it is to rise in Media's hierarchy; many damned souls serving the Telegenic Prince have done so several times. Fortunately, the common price of failure is merely a period of time watching the bouncing ball (or listening to the rising tone, or whatnot). Indeed, many damned souls swear that being Essence-sucked does wonders for their motivation later.

Saminga

Maximum Status of Damned: -4

Maximum Forces: 0

The damned are to be used as raw materials for Undead. This is how Saminga has always done it, this is how he will always do it, and the subject is closed. Saminga doesn't Harvest: he breaks down the damned into their component Forces.

Valefor

Maximum Status of Damned: 2

Maximum Forces: 6 (Corporeal)

Damned souls working for Theft do all the jobs that require someone to stay in one place for more than three days at

a time. That's most of the low-level stuff, although the damned are encouraged to specialize. The top humans can be touchy about saying that they 'work' for Valefor, even though they are of course slaves. Harvesting is 'voluntary' only in the sense that it's better to voluntarily give up your extra Forces before somebody steals them from you.

Vapula

Maximum Status of Damned: 5

Maximum Forces: 9 (Ethereal)

The Genius Archangel isn't a snob. Even the damned can come up with clever ideas, sometimes. And the ones who are truly geniuses themselves serve as great catalysts for demonic schemes. The only trick is to keep coming up with clever ideas, naturally. Vapula is the only Demon Prince that will actually try to graft extra Forces on damned souls. Why? ...Well, why not? It should prove to be an interesting experiment, yes?

Demonic/Damned Relationships

There are two, contradictory impulses at play. First, demons rebelled in the first place because Lucifer and the rest refused to accept that humanity was somehow special

in the eyes of God. While a demon can wrap its head around the idea that this talking monkey is objectively better than that pathetic excuse for a Servitor, generalizing that attitude is just a little too much. This is why damned souls are all officially slaves: even a jumped-up damned soul is still somebody's property, and that truly reassures most demons.

However, the best of these damned souls show traits that demons respect: willfulness, ruthlessness, dedication to their owner's Word that is all the more impressive for not being hardwired into them – and even the highest-ranked damned soul is incapable of going to Earth, getting a Word, or becoming a Prince, which makes them genuinely safer from an ambitious demon's point of view. So it is possible for a demon to have amicable relations with a sufficiently ranked damned soul. Possibly even a friendship. Which would of course also offer practical advantages, which is the rationalization that most demons might use.

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