

A12

5TH EDITION
ADVENTURE

**THE PALADIN'S
LAMENT**



STEPHEN CHENAULT



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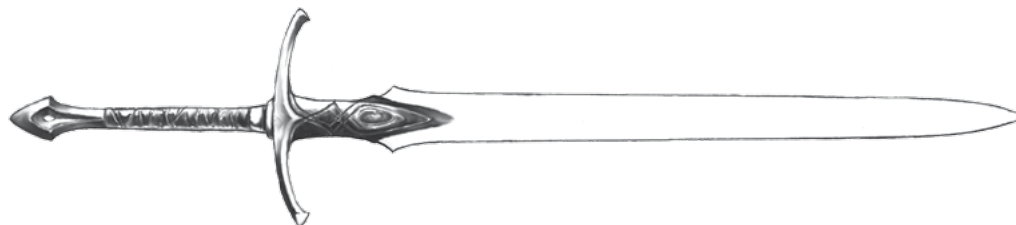
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PREFACE

A12 The Paladin's Lament is an adventure module designed for 3-5 characters of 13th level and higher. It follows the adventures in the 'A' series developed by Troll Lord Games. The adventure can be used without reference to the previous adventures should the Castle Keeper desire. For more details on this, please read *Involving the Player Characters* below.

The Paladin's Lament finds the characters safely across the ruins of the Wasting Way, the great causeway that crosses the Grausumland, and approaching the Portico, where the gates of the ancient towers of Aufstrag stand. These fabled towers are home to the remnants of an evil that plagued the world in centuries past, and one the world does not wish to see rise again. **The Paladin's Lament** comprises a series of adventures in and around the Portico which includes the Fetid Morass, the Haunted Ramp, The Kennel, and The Tower of the Horn. Once they have passed through, they have either entered Aufstrag, or solved the riddle to opening the great gates.

INTRODUCTION

Aufstrag stands near the center of the Grausumland, a massive marshland where the great rivers Udunilay and Ondavar meet. Surrounded by hundreds of miles of swamp, the fortress city is almost impossible to enter. Shaped by the hand of Unklar to mock the Great Tree of the west, Aufstrag stands several thousand feet high. It looms upon the horizon like a mountain; filled with the reek of evil, its echo carries far and wide across the mist shrouded desolate landscape. The towers are divided into a dozen domains, each of which comprises a small city, and the whole making a fortress that stands a testament to the law and order of the Horned God.

Her cliffs are unwittingly guarded by flocks of wyverns. Fogs cling to her flanks making visibility difficult. The ichor of the swamp clings to its rough-hewn edges, making climbing a perilous task. And those who seek entry upon the high terraces must climb the slick walls for hundreds of feet before ever they find an opening. A dozen or more entrances lie around the fortress's mighty girth, but many of these are hidden, others flooded by the swamps, some are collapsed and accessible to only the most skilled of cave crawlers, and still others, though visible, open only to those who have the proper keys.

In ages past the gates stood strong, fashioned by dwarven slaves and cast with magic by the Horned God. Coburg the Undying, Captain of the Gate, kept the watch over the entrance to that hellish place. And hell it was for all those who fell beneath the lash of the dark god within.

In those days a great stone dike held the swamp at bay. The dike stood six miles out from the gate and looped to the east and west around Aufstrag for a good fifteen miles in either direction, holding back the swamp and creating dry land all around the gates of Aufstrag. This area within the dike was called the Ebudeth Lich, the Feasting Pit, an amphitheater of sorts. In his day the Horned God set loose horrors unimaginable in the Ebudeth Lich, allowing them to feed upon all who fell from the



Causeway, Ramp, Portico or even the dike's walls, as well as those who were thrown from the high terraces above.

The Causeway, or the Wasting Way, passed through or over the dike at an Outer Gate, continued for several miles, and crossed over the Feeding Pit, ending in a Ramp. The Ramp lifted the road higher to the Portico, a broad porch a quarter mile wide that played home to the many supplicants who came to Aufstrag to cast themselves upon the mercy of the Horned God. The Portico housed the Gossera, the kennel that stood as home to the mogrl lords who watched the gate with their master's eyes. Upon the Portico stood the landing, and the gates themselves.

Here, upon Hell's Doorstep, the supplicants of Unklar waited. They gathered upon the Portico, waiting for the Captain of the Gates to grant them entry. And he watched over all from the Tower of the Horn, that building that climbed the flank of Aufstrag for several hundred feet. Beneath the tower and on the far side of the Portico stood the massive doors to Aufstrag - the Ahargon Den, the Maw of Darkness.

The gate's facade has dimmed over the ages. Neglect in the waning days of the Winter's Dark and the ravages of the wars that overwhelmed her took their toll years ago, but mostly the ravages of the swamp have battered the mighty edifice and left the Portico in particular a hazardous ruin. Though the dike remained in place, the marsh reclaimed the dry lands, and the Ebudeth Lich filled with the stink of the swamps. Worse,

a beast of foul design broke the bondage of Aufstrag, settled in the enclosed area, and poisoned the waters with its filth, so that men came to know it as the Fetid Morass. This beast haunts the Fetid Morass from the dike to where it laps the edges of the ramp. The waters that filled the Ebudeth rose to cover the Causeway as well. The Ramp that leads to the Portico is itself scrawled with the graffiti of a mad man. And the Kennel, though the dread mogrl are long gone, houses a pack of hellish creatures that lust for the joy of terror. The Tower of the Horn stands still, abandoned now that her master has claimed the upper Domains of Aufstrag as his own, though it looms over the Portico as a shadow of an ill-spent memory.

All this ruin stands before the great gates and entry to Aufstrag.

INVOLVING THE PLAYERS

The Paladin's Lament picks up at the Outer Gate, after the last seventeen miles of journey upon the Causeway, as told in **A11 The Wasting Way**. The characters have arrived upon the edge of the Fetid Morass, what used to be the broad open amphitheater, the Ebudeth Lich. It is not necessary to play **The Paladin's Lament** with the A series. The following are several suggestions to help set the adventure in your own campaign, with one to refresh from where **A11** left off. Or if desired, devise your own.

- 1) Any adventure in Aihilde wherein the high level characters wish to enter Aufstrag. Their journey should take them across the swamp to the doors themselves, or if magically transported via a *teleport* spell, they find themselves a few hundred feet from the Outer Gate.
- 2) If the campaign or game does not include Aufstrag, the adventure is easily transferable to any other setting. Place the adventure on a mountain, hill or similar piece of terrain; it serves as the entrance to any kind of ancient underground city, lost valley, dungeon complex, etc. The characters stumble upon it or are directed here as befits the evening's game.
- 3) The party, while fleeing the pursuit of a great host of orcs and giants, finds themselves penned in by a broad range of cliffs. Further exploration reveals a deep, narrow valley. Following its length they find the broad swamp before the ruins of a gate. The gate itself promises to breach the wall of cliffs in front of them and offer them a possible avenue of escape.
- 4) Coming from **A11 The Wasting Way**, the characters follow the causeway until it passes beneath the Outer Gate and vanishes into the waters of the Fetid Morass. The whole area of the gate is clearly visible. The Lady of Garun may still be with the party, and she is very desirous to enter the fortress. However, she fears the gate for she knows the dragon is no friend of hers, nor is the mad creature that haunts the ramp. It is her intention to continue using the party in order to get within the walls. She knows of the secret door that leads to the Tower of the Horn and will inform them of it. With any luck, the characters will have picked up the key to the secret door from **A11 The Wasting Way**.

HISTORICAL RECORD

Aufstrag was constructed upon the ruins of the ancient city of Al Liosh by the Horned God Unklar. It served as his seat of power for the thousand years of the Winter Dark. When the Horned God fell, command of the fortress fell to Coburg the Undying. He rallied the Mogrl and other servants and fought on for several years. In the waning years of the Winter Dark Wars, the Lords of Kayomar and Augsburg laid siege to the gates and managed to break into the lower halls. They slew Coburg and set to destroying the fortress. But the fortress proved too vast, and the leaderless minions of Unklar too great in number. Many of the best knights and nobles had already fallen during the battle around the Portico, so the two Kings called off the battle and left the city in its ruin.

When the gates closed, they remained so. In time, Coburg, cursed with eternal life, returned to Aufstrag and took up lordship there. But in his absence many others rose to take the mantle, so that in the interim, strife between the many factions was the order of the day. Coburg the Undying controls most of the Citadel. He has recently been gathering armies and sending troops south in order to conquer New Aenouch, hoping that if he does so, he can use that success to force others within Aufstrag to support his claim to the throne. He has recently been sidetracked, as his great love, the Lady of Garun, has gone missing. He has sent many servants to the south to find her.

Thus it remains, and has for many years. No power now watches the front gate, and it has fallen to ruin, returned to the wild.

APPROACHING AUFSTRAG

The massive fortification that is Aufstrag looms upon the horizon. It is visible, even in the murky, fog-clouded swamps, from many miles distant. The closer one gets, the larger it looms, until the 3000 foot high structure dominates the horizon.

The city of Aufstrag consists of one large tower complex. It is 3,260 feet tall and roughly 2000 feet in diameter. The city is shaped like a great tree, shorn of all its branches but three. These three crown its roof, hanging out and over the marsh. There are four recognizable wards within Aufstrag: The Trenches, Klarglich, The Halls, and the Citadel. The tower Wards themselves are divided up into 21 domains. Each domain is distinctive from the others in its overall purpose in Aufstrag. A domain is roughly 100 to 200 feet high, consisting of several floors. There are 21 distinguishable domains. These levels are connected through a variety of halls, stairs, ramps, elevators, dumb waiters, chimneys, shafts and ladders.

VIA GROUND

Travel over the swamps is possible, but unless an entrance has been found, one could spend weeks looking for a way into the fortress. Those entrances not underwater are cleverly hidden or blocked up. Those under water are often hidden. Entering below the gate levels means entering into the Ward of the Trenches, a vast network of tunnels hollowed out beneath

Aufstrag that merge in multiple areas within the ruins of the ancient city of Al-Liosh, upon which Aufstrag was constructed. If one finds themselves in the Trenches, becoming lost is a certainty.

VIA AIR

Any attempt to fly up to Aufstrag summons a host of highly predacious wyverns. The fortress is capped by the Citadel, which itself consists of several levels, but leads out onto three broad limb-like structures that protrude several hundred feet from the main structure. These house the wyverns- flocks of them. Well in excess of one hundred live, breed and nest here. Any attempt to fly up the slopes of Aufstrag brings at least a few of the wyverns. The commotion these cause when swooping for prey alerts others and summons any and all that see it. That commotion of course summons more, and so on, making the attempt via air perilous.

Any attempt to approach using magic to cloak one's presence suffers a similar fate. In the days of his youth, Unklar fashioned creatures to serve him. One such was the cunalrur, The Eye Upon the Road. These six legged winged beasts are able to see invisible creatures and see through illusions. Their ability to fly is limited, but they do attempt to intercept anything they spy. Again, as with any motion in the air, their flight attracts the flocks of wyverns. For more on the cunalrur, see **Monsters & Treasure of Aihrde**.

USING MAGIC

When Aufstrag was first constructed, Unklar did not control the plane in its entirety. Many foes hounded him and sought to unseat him. They came to his halls and chambers and fell upon his minions, or attacked Unklar himself. He sought to put an end to this. So when he fashioned the walls of the tower, he wove a net of magic into the city. The net snared any who attempted to come to Aufstrag without leave and cast them upon the doorstep, just beyond the archway of the Outer Gate.

The net deflects any attempt to enter Aufstrag magically via *teleport*, *dimension door* or similar spells..

THE LADY OF GARUN

If coming from **A11 The Wasting Way**, and assuming the Lady of Garun remains with the party, her sole desire is to reunite with her love, Coburg the Undying, Master of the Citadel. To do this she must get past the chaos of the gates. Though her husband's troops pass freely through the gates, they do so through payments to the guardians, or via out-and-out battle. For her to be taken into custody by any of the creatures in Aufstrag would be disastrous, even by lieutenants of Coburg's, for that creature would no doubt ransom her back to her lover, or kill or enslave her. She continues to aid the party when she can, for it is to her benefit to get inside the city. Outside she has precious few allies. She does not let on who she is, only that she desires the return of her soul, which she claims the Undying Lord keeps in a vial about his neck in the upper reaches of Aufstrag.

THE GOBLIN BUELIX

If the party passed across the Wasting Way they may have had the opportunity to encounter the goblin Buelix. If they did so, he most likely died. However, if he survived or was revived, he offers whatever assistance he can. He knows the following:

- He knows that some powerful creature dwells in the Fetid Morass, though he does not know what.
- A mad wizard haunts the ramp.
- He knows nothing of the Kennel but that a great evil once dwelt there.
- About the Portico he says only this "I have heard many say that it can only be crossed safely in darkness."
- He has no idea how to open the gates, but knows that they are magical.
- Climbing the tower is deadly dangerous, for there are flocks of wyverns that haunt its flanks.
- He has heard rumors of a secret door that the Captains of the Gate used in order to bypass the Ahargon Den.

The CK must keep in mind that Buelix is a chaotic evil creature, and in the end he serves only his own interests. However, his suffering at the hands of the orc Captain was extreme, and goblins, much like dwarves, take debt seriously, so he does not play the characters false until he feels the debt is paid. He flees if they are facing certain death, and does not in any way sacrifice himself to save the party. Whether the characters can change his ways, or in some way become his companion, lies utterly with them and the judgment of the Castle Keeper.

THE OUTER GATE & DIKE

The characters approach the Outer Gate and dike first. The Causeway is high above the swamp and as dry as it has been the whole way. But beyond the arch of the Outer Gate, within the dike, the Causeway is several feet lower than it is on the outside. This allowed the gate wardens to clearly see any and all who passed through the gate. However, it inadvertently created a dam for any water trapped within the Ebudeth.

As noted, the dike was built to hold the swamp out of the Ebudeth. But the drains that allowed the water to drain from the Ebudeth have been stopped up by the dragon that has taken up residence there. As the water filled up in the Ebudeth it eventually covered the Causeway, and the elevated archway conveniently blocked its egress. All this has turned the entire area into a giant murky lake, which the dike now holds in. It is the hunting preserve of the dragon. It extends from the wall and gateway to just beneath the ramp and the Portico.

Aufstrag looms upon the horizon, some half dozen miles from where you now stand. Fingers of mist cling to its dark cliffs of broken walls, and the fortress tower vanishes into the fog above. Approaching down the Causeway,

you see an arch and gate. They breach a wall that stands slightly higher than the Causeway, and extends from the causeway to the left and right, vanishing in the murky distance. The walls seem to circle back toward Aufstrag, but of this you cannot be certain.

THE OUTER GATE

The Outer Gate consists of a giant archway built over the Causeway. It has no doors, nor did it ever; it was built largely for show. The arch remains intact, though lichen grows upon the pillars, covering much of them. As noted, it is even with the Causeway on the outside of the dike, but elevated roughly ten feet from the Causeway on the inside of the gate. The Causeway itself is easy to see, going down several feet until it vanishes beneath the water of the Fetid Morass beyond.

The wall itself holds in a vast lake of brackish water that extends from the wall to the very towers of the fortress itself. It is miles wide, and at least as deep as the walls are tall. The Causeway dips beneath the water just beyond the arched gate before you. You can see its silhouette not far beneath the brackish water. Several miles in the distance you can see a ramp that seems to pull the Causeway back out of the water, rising to the gate beyond.

There are runes upon the arch that magically drain heat. Anyone passing beneath feels a biting cold that chills them to the bone. They immediately suffer 1 point of damage, no saving throw. If they remain under the arch they continue to suffer damage, 1 per round. The cold gives way as soon as one passes out from under the arch, but the memory and damage linger. Unless a successful charisma check is made (DC 17), anyone passing beneath the archway also suffers a -1 on all charisma checks for one full day. Each day after that, the afflicted is permitted another check. If successful, the penalty is removed. If not, they continue to suffer the -1 penalty until they leave Aufstrag entirely.

THE DIKE

From the floor of the swamp the dike is 35 feet high, slightly higher than the Causeway, which itself stands thirty feet above the floor of the swamp. The dike was originally designed to keep the swamp out, even during flood season, but now it holds it in. The walls are fifteen feet thick at the base, and six feet thick at the top. There is a walkway that extends all the way around the dike. The walkway is protected from the outside by a short two foot high wall, but is open to the inner wall. Following it, or rather walking on it, one can reach Aufstrag on either side of the Portico. Doing so might alert the dragon from the Fetid Morass.

The swamp has made massive headway on the dike's outer wall. Leafy vines, moss, lichens and all manner of plant growth cling to the walls everywhere; trees and brush grow in thickets along the base, and muck has built up in places, making hills against it. Climbing up the dike's wall from the floor of the swamp is an easy affair (strength (athletics) DC 15), for there is so much to hold on to.

Within the dike lies the Fetid Morass, a vast swampy lake some twenty to thirty miles wide and six miles deep, all contained within the dike. The water trapped within the dike covers the Causeway as well, so that the last six miles of the journey to the Ramp and Portico are done under about a foot of water. The water itself is murky, filled with the filth of the dragon that dwells within the morass.

There are twelve drains built into it (six on either side of the Causeway), but these have all been clogged by the dragon that dwells within. If a close investigation of the outer dike is made, the drains are plainly visible from without. The metal grates remain intact. However, the dragon has sealed them on the other side with her breath weapon.

SOUTH WALL

South of the Gate, the dike abuts Aufstrag in a makeshift fashion, built against it, unconnected by anything more than the bricks of the dike itself. Within and around the top of the dike, the dragon has used her acid, melding the dike to the wall. Anyone who investigates may detect the unusual scarring around the top of the dike where it abuts Aufstrag (intelligence (arcana) DC 17). It is also visible under the waters of the lake for any able to swim there and see in the murk.

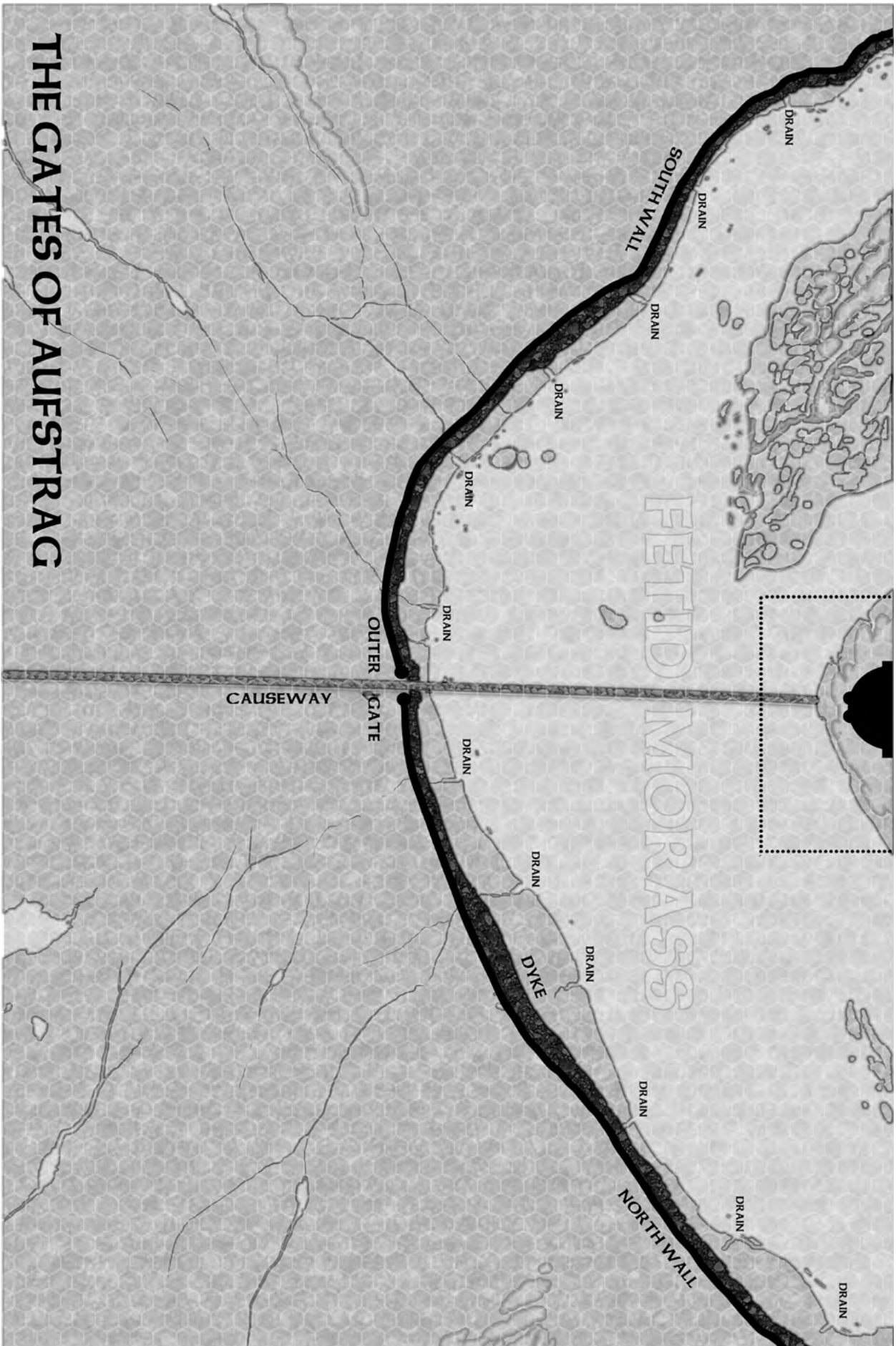
A metal rung ladder, attached to the side of Aufstrag, leads up from the dike, vanishing into the fog above. Though the metal is damp, slippery and covered with moss, climbing it is easy enough and done so with a successful dexterity check (DC 16).

The ladder climbs 300 feet up Aufstrag. There are no other handholds, no openings, windows, crevices, or anything for purchase. The sides were deliberately smoothed, shaped by the crafts of the denizens of Aufstrag to trap any foolish enough to climb the ladder. Dwarves and anyone with any experience in stone work, construction, siege craft, or knowledge of similar things may notice the wall around the ladder is especially smooth. They do so with a successful wisdom (perception) or other appropriate skill check (DC 15); without such experience or knowledge the DC is 18.

After 300 feet the ladder ends abruptly at a tunnel opening two feet wide and three feet high. The tunnel is deep but rough cut, it does not seem constructed but rather carved, or dug out, from the rock. A foul stink hovers around the mouth of the opening, bringing the filth of a cesspit to mind.

The tunnel extends fifty feet into the rocky wall of Aufstrag. A host of ear seekers dwell in the tunnel, lining its walls starting about twenty feet in. The ear seekers are dormant, but once a living creature passes them, they rouse within one round. They immediately begin dropping on the unfortunate victims and attacking them. Ear seekers are treated as a *hazard* as opposed to a creature. For details on dungeon hazards, see the fifth edition game master's tome.

EAR SEEKER: *These deadly worms fall from the ceiling, filling a fifteen-foot area. A successful DC 16 Dexterity saving*



throw will avoid infection; failure means the worms climb onto their victims ear, where they burrow in and lay eggs. The following round, the target takes 2 (1d4) damage and is permanently deafened in the afflicted ear, imposing disadvantage on all wisdom (perception) checks involving hearing. The creature lays its eggs in the canal and dies. After this, the afflicted character can only be saved with a cure disease, greater restoration, remove curse, limited wish, heal or similar spell before the larvae hatch within 4 (1d6+1) days and burrow into the host's brain. This requires a successful constitution save (DC 17) or the victim dies. If they succeed they suffer debilitating pain, are incapacitated for a full day as the larvae feed, and thereafter suffer a permanent loss of 3 (1d6) points of intelligence. After the larvae hatch, there is a 25% chance of anyone traveling with the character likewise becoming infected as the young ear seekers look for new food and hosts.

NORTH WALL

Here the dike connects to the wall in a great mound of broken stone, but the stone is fused with the wall through sorcery. Understanding this requires an intelligence (arcana) check DC 16. There are no traps or any entrances here.

THE FETID MORASS

Long ago the Ebudeth Lich, the Feasting Pit, served the Captain of the Gate as a giant arena for all those denied entrance to fabled Aufstrag. It was huge. The dike held out the swamp, the Causeway passed over it, and the Outer Gate stood six miles from Aufstrag. The dike extended a dozen miles in either direction from the Gate/Causeway, slowly curving back to Aufstrag itself, making a giant half-moon shaped fortification and courtyard.

Those supplicants found unworthy were thrown off the causeway or from the Portico, into the Ebudeth Lich. Those who did not die from the fall were devoured by whatever beast or creature dwelt within. Some few had the wherewithal to escape and flee, climbing the dike's 35 foot walls and fleeing into the swamps, to die or live of their own accord. Others died, feeding the morass of soft earth beneath the gates. The run off from rain and water was regularly drained, keeping the broad flat arena of the Ebudeth empty.

But that changed with the fall of Aufstrag, for none remained who cared to drain the Ebudeth. Very soon the grounds of the arena became covered in thick algae and mosses, fed by rain and run off from Aufstrag. Debris fell from above, feeding the growth, so that in time plants grew and died and a thick muck built up, covering the floor of the arena from the dike to Aufstrag. Soon plants grew in abundance until the pit became a morass of plants and water, much like the swamp it sought to keep out. No sign of the Ebudeth remained but for the Outer Gate and the walls of the dike.

Some years later, Umlet slipped from her bonds in the upper halls and came to the Ebudeth. An aged black dragon, Umlet spent her youth a slave in the Hall of Chains. Beaten and tortured by the devil lords who reigned there, she at last grew larger than her fetters. Rising in clouds of acidic ash, she ravaged her

tormentors and slew or scattered them. Devouring the corpses, she slithered through the Hall to the Red Fort and ravaged the halls there. After that, her passage through the Dungeons and God's Acre were a nightmare, and all fled before her, until at last she came to the Bone Pit. Forcing the doors wide she came to the Ahargon Den and slipped from the halls. All fled before her wrath, and the whole of the Gate was hers to command.

Seeing the vast, walled area that was the Ebudeth, she took up residence there, and settled in the collected muck. But seeking greater cover, she used her breath to seal the drains completely, so that no water could escape. This soon transformed the whole area into a broad, muck filled lake. She built her lair on the far west side, a mountain of debris piled and woven together like an alligator's nest.

Here she sleeps upon her heaps of treasure and all the wealth she's gathered as a toll from those passing to and from Aufstrag.

The Ebudeth, renamed the Fetid Morass, is a dark, polluted lake. The filth of the dragon mingles with swamp decay, creating a foul stench. Natural swamp gases escape through bubbles that rise from the deep, continuously and monotonously popping with an echo that carries across the mist shrouded waters. These mingle their stench with the steam of pollution that hovers in patches everywhere. Oil slicks dominate the brackish water, as Umlet's acidic breath is forever leaking into the water, making the whole a stench filled polluted, fetid morass.

CROSSING THE CAUSEWAY

It isn't necessary to physically enter the wider areas of the Fetid Morass to get to the Ramp and Portico. The characters may choose to continue to follow the Causeway. Beyond the Outer Gate (as noted above), the Causeway descends several feet, dipping beneath the lake so that water covers the Causeway as it passes through and over the Fetid Morass, until it reaches the Ramp which climbs out of the water and on up to the Portico, where the Causeway effectively ends.

The Causeway between the Outer Gate and Ramp is under about a foot of water. The water is cold, and filled with all manner of detritus. Movement is slow, as the mud, vines, leaves and the like clings to everyone's boots and equipment. However, because the water is so thick, travel through it causes few ripples.

Aside from the dragon and the nests of blood worms, nothing lives here. There is no danger of attack upon the causeway here from anything other than the dragon Umlet. There is no chance of Coburg sending out more troops, as he is only now putting together the next wave of them. Encounters on this section of the Causeway are either of accidental blood worms or the dragon (*see below*).

AUFSTRAG

When anyone approaches within 100 feet of the ramp, Aufstrag looms out of the murk, suddenly very clear in all its glory. The area here is enchanted, catching light and throwing it high and

reflecting back so that any who pass by cannot help but notice Aufstrag in all its horrible immensity, no matter the weather, fog, or mist.

Anyone standing on the Causeway, before the Ramp, must make a successful wisdom save at DC 20 or their eyes are drawn upward. Anyone who looks up notices the absolute immensity of the structure before them and are dumbstruck and stunned for 1d4 rounds.

This is when Umlet attacks.

UMLET

Umlet is a powerful adult black dragon, and one filled with an insatiable hunger. Years past, a dwarf, attempting to breach the gates found the dragon upon him. As she swallowed him he cursed her, pulling out his axe and attempting to cut his way from her guts. He died in the offing, but opened a great rift in her belly, so that from that day forward, much of her meals have seeped from her stomach, poisoning her organs. For this reason, her stomach is greatly distended and she drags it behind her, a mountain of scaly flesh.

This has made hunting a difficult process for Umlet. She no longer leaves the Fetid Morass. Where before she ranged far and wide through the Grausumland for food, she now waits for it to come to her. Whenever the water is disturbed by creatures crossing the Causeway, she slips beneath the black water and investigates. Often it is creatures coming to and from Aufstrag, and these, knowing the dragon dwells in the water, have the good sense to pay her a tribute in flesh. But occasionally, like the dwarf hero, it is someone that requires a little sport on her part.

Her favored hunting area is near the Ramp, just before the Portico, where creatures are struck dumb by the enchantments of Aufstrag.

When the water is disturbed by anyone crossing through the Outer Gates she slips beneath the lake and crosses to within sixty odd feet of the causeway, with only her eyes and nostrils above water. She moves in utter silence; to hear her, a character must make a successful wisdom (perception) check against her stealth. To see her is equally difficult unless light is cast in her direction. If this is done, it catches her eyes in the water, granting advantage on perception. Her eyes are huge, of course, as is the distance between them, marking her as a very large creature. After she watches the party for a moment, sizing them up for any dwarves in their presence, she slips beneath the water and approaches the Causeway.

She waits until they are standing before the Ramp, struck dumb by the enchantment, then she strikes.

NOTE: If the opportunity presents itself, Umlet can be bargained with, but it is not easy. Her massive distended belly is easy to see; anyone with any experience in battlefield injuries notes that her guts are infected. Offers to heal her might work, but the dragon must be flattered into believing that the parties' purpose is hers (charisma (influence) against her wisdom (insight) and she gets

advantage on her check as she is inherently distrustful). She can be paid off, but it must be with gold, not magic, and it must be a great deal of gold, at least 5000gp per person.

BLACK DRAGON (CE huge dragon) HP 195 (HD 17d12+85), AC 19, Spd 40ft, fly 80ft, swim 40ft. Str 23 Dex 14 Con 21 Int 14 Wis 13 Cha 17. Perception 21(+11). Insight +6, Stealth +7. Bite +11 (10ft, 2d10+6, plus 1d8 acid), claw +11 (2d6+6), tail +11 (15ft, 2d8+6), Acid breath (recharge 5, 60ft line, 12d8, Dex DC 16 half), frightful presence (120ft, frightened 1 minute, Wis DC 16 neg.). LA (3, end of opponent's turn): detect (perception check), tail attack, wing (10ft, 2d6+6 and prone, DC 19 Dex neg. Dragon then takes flight) SA blind-sight 60ft, darkvision 120ft, amphibious, auto succeed saving throw 3/day, multiattack (frightful presence, bite and 2 claws).

Umlet is huge, about 35 feet long from head to tail, with dark black scales upon her back and neck. The beast is lithe and lean, but for her belly, which is greatly distended and colored a bluish green. Here her scales, normally pale and thick, are broken, and the muscly flesh of her guts hangs between them like an open wound. Her AC on her belly is only 17.

TREASURE: 12,000gp, 36,000sp, 40 10gp gems, ring of force shield, periapt of wound closure, ever-smoking bottle, bracers of armor +3, feather edged axe and +4 dwarven chain mail.

EXPLORING THE FETID MORASS

The party is welcome to explore the Fetid Morass. The whole of it is roughly twenty miles wide and six miles across, from the arch to the Portico. The Morass is deep, 35 feet throughout, but much of it is clouded with muck and mire, dead plants, and the filth and waste of the dragon.

Crossing on a fabricated boat of any kind is the safest way and avoids the pitfall of falling into the muck.

Swimming or walking across the Fetid Morass is possible; however, the characters run the risk of becoming ensnared in the filth of the place. Any swimmer is able to move through the water, but every four rounds must make a successful DC 16 strength (athletics) check or become ensnared in the muck. Anyone attempting to walk across the lake must carefully pick their way over the morass, but they must make a successful dexterity save (DC 16) every two rounds or the muck-filled water gives way and they go under and into the lake.

Anyone who falls into water or gets stuck in the muck risks being pulled under. For each round they remain, they must make a strength save to pull themselves out (DC 16). For each round they fail the DC increases by 1. After four failed attempts they are pulled under. Once pulled under the DC increases by an additional 2. Attempts to escape can continue, with one more DC added per round, until the character drowns (see the rules for drowning and holding breath in the core 5th edition manuals).

The dragon's filth has spawned a host of bloodsucking wyrms. These creatures lie about the Fetid Morass feeding on anything,

great or small, that the dragon does not devour. Often those that make deals with the dragon and cross the morass are killed by the wyrms. Anyone stepping on or approaching too closely to a wyrm is attacked.

The creatures lie in the muck and mire of the Fetid Morass, looking much as would any twisted, gray, waterlogged branch. Anyone crossing through the muck has a 1 in 4 chance of encountering one for every 100 feet they cross.

BLOODSUCKING WYRM (*Unaligned Medium Monstrosity*)
HP 51 (HD 6d8+24), AC 16, Spd 15ft. Str 18 Dex 10 Con 18 Int 2 Wis 10 Cha 5. Perception 16 (+6) Stealth +6. Blood-sucking bite +8 (2d6+4, plus 1d4 acid; victim grappled and suffers 1d6 each round thereafter; escape DC 16 (strength only and deals 1d6 + 1d6 acid as creature ripped off); Tail swipe +8 (1d8+4; only while feeding and not against victim upon whom it is feeding). SA Blindsight 60ft, Immune to acid, vulnerable to fire, acidic bite (on touch attack, latches onto armor and begins damaging character next round; armor AC reduced by 1 permanently thereafter), Thrashing instinct (victim has disadvantage to attack feeding wyrm).

THE RAMP

The Ramp itself is thirty feet wide and set upon large arched pillars, each pair slightly higher than the preceding pair, climbing from the marsh. The pillars depict the peoples of Aihilde; a dwarf, an elf, a halfling, and so on. Each is naked and set in bondage, holding up the ramp. The first is a dwarf and only his head is visible above the waters, then an elf with head and shoulders visible, and so on. All of them are mired in the water below. Even the last, two human kings, are stripped with crowns upon their brows; the legs and feet vanish into the water below. These last depict King Luther and his son Robert Luther, the last of the Ethrum Kings of Kayomar.

The ramp climbs slowly from the cool, black waters. It is smooth, consisting of some form of concrete or plaster set upon the stone beneath. Its white facade is remarkably clear of swamp debris. However, the whole of it, from beneath the water to the end where the Portico begins, is covered in thousands of tiny glyphs and symbols. The markings are those of Thaddius the Mad.

Thaddius was born to a noble family in the lands of Rilth long ago. His father served as a minor captain in the Horned God's armies. When Thaddius was born it was assumed he would inherit his father's rank and post. But when Thaddius turned twelve and came of age, he turned his back on his father and refused any privilege of Aufstrag, for the blood of Paladins flowed through his veins. His line was ancient, and in ages past his people served the god Corthain, Lord of Justice. Even as a boy Thaddius knew this. Upon hearing the refusal, Thaddius' father cast him out and drove him from the house with a whip upon his back.

Thaddius took to the hills and there began a life of adventure. He apprenticed himself to a gnome warrior and learned the arts of battle and weapons. The two of them wandered the length

and breadth of the Lands of Ursal, plundering dungeons and holds, until their fame spread through the northern lands of the Empire. But eventually his comrade fell in battle, leaving Thaddius to his own design. So the young man began a war against the Dark, and savaged it wherever he could. In time they placed a price upon his head, though no wardens could capture him. He roamed as a bandit in the lands, famed, detested, feared and loved. So it was for many long years until at last, as age began to steal upon him, he decided to best the gates of Aufstrag.

When he approached the Wasting Way, he found it open to him. So he crossed the Causeway to find that the gates were open as well, and all the lower halls and stairs of the grim tower proved empty. He followed them up, ever higher, until his feet led him into the throne room of Unklar. There he saw the god upon his throne, and upon meeting his gaze he thought to best him. Few were the men who could look upon Darkness and not know fear, and Thaddius was not one of them. His mind broke, for he saw the impenetrable black of the Great Empty, the Void that birthed Unklar. His blade slipped from his hands; desire and hope left his body, and he stood there, dumbstruck. Demons rose and carted the knight to the Klarglich, and there Unklar unmade him. He tore his arms from his body and gave him the wings of a vulture. He took out his tongue and filled his mouth with a pestilence. And he ravaged his flesh in other ways; for days long and horrid he toyed with the thing that had once been Thaddius. In the end, he breathed into the nightmare and made it immortal.

For many years Thaddius occupied the throne room, perched amongst the high places of that great hall. But in the end, the darkness fell, and Thaddius was freed. His mind never returned, and he never understood his freedom, only that the darkness had ended. When Coburg ascended to power, he drove many of the atrocities from the hall. Thaddius fled, wandering in the deep places of that fell tower for many years. In the end he settled upon the slopes of Aufstrag, watching the gate. Madness was Unklar's gift to him, but shades of his former life came to him, spilling up in a wellspring of memories.

At these times, the thought of who he had been clouded his mangled reason. He settled upon the ramp, and with a stylus in his crooked toes, carved whatever madness of memory was in his head upon the stone there. Much of it had no meaning, but Thaddius was ever a servant of Corthain, and that god works beyond the understanding of mortal design. From his servant he grants a gift of strength to those who would fight the evil of the tower of Aufstrag. If anyone takes the time to study the writings, they may gain some small benefice of the Lord of Justice.

Written in the common speech of men in the center of the ramp are the following words, "Justice. All things come to one." A careful reading of all the runes reveals this expression. If the characters pay little attention, they might stumble upon it with a passive wisdom (perception) check (DC 17). It is one of the only coherent expressions written in the common, or vulgate, tongue. Set in two perfect lines to either side of the phrase are magical runes, the markings of a magical incantation. If read

aloud, everyone within fifty feet of the speaker receives the benefits of a *holy aura* spell. The effects of the spell remain for 24 hours.

The most common expression written upon the ramp is “Left to Secret Ways.” This is a reference to the secret door that leads to the Tower of the Horn. Go “left” to the “secret ways.” If Thaddius’ mind is read, it reveals images of people passing in and out of the secret door to the left of the gates (see below).

Thaddius lives upon a broken ledge high above the gate and ramp. He perches there, watching for the dragon. For its part, the dragon has attempted to catch and eat the mad paladin several times, but to no avail.

He is sitting upon his ledge, watching characters approaching the Outer Gate, knowing the dragon will come. He watches any battle, assuming there is one, with uncomprehending eyes. He now watches the characters. He does not move down until they have moved on, up the ramp and onto the Portico. Anyone looking up sees him on a successful wisdom (perception) check (DC 16). Thaddius cannot know if he is spied or not.

Thaddius does attempt to go to the ramp at dusk for his jumbled thoughts are tormenting him. He flies down and begins etching into the stone. As soon as he’s spotted, he flees.

If captured or ensorcelled, Thaddius becomes very docile. His wings settle upon the ground like arms lying before him, hands

upturned. His back bends, and he squats on his bone-thin legs. His head however is tipped back, his face toward the sky, exposing his throat. He cannot speak, for he lost his tongue. He does recognize the characters as good, or at least not evil, and tries to keep his mouth shut. Any observant character may notice his reluctance to open his mouth, (wisdom (perception) DC 15). If they force it open, the pestilence is released.

He can offer little in the way of aid to the characters other than what he has written. No amount of curing heals him or his ailment. However if *heal* is cast on him by a lawful good cleric, the pestilence is cleared from his mouth. No magic, no matter how strong, however, can restore his physical form, as its destruction and remaking were the work of a living god. Spells such as *greater restoration* simply fail, though the spell goes off and the slot is still expended.

If any form of telepathy or other mind connecting spell is cast upon him, his past, as noted above, is revealed, as is his wish is to ascend to the Wall of Worlds and meet the his god, Corthain.

If the characters take mercy and kill Thaddius (he allows this, and it is not necessary to beat on him until he suffers 104 hp damage), they witness the following:

The body slumps to the ground, a last breath slipping from its wrecked form with an audible sigh. His face never ceases to look up however, and from it rises the ghostly form of a young man, beautiful though hardened in his



face. The spirit breaks free, rising to the heavens above. It takes no note of you but vanishes into the skies above.

THADDIUS OF RILTH (LG fiend (devil) Paladin 18) HP 104 (HD 18d10), AC 13, Spd 30ft, fly 60ft. Str 10 Dex 10 Con 10 Int 14 Wis 10 Cha 15. Perception 5 (0; disadv.). Arcana +6, History +6, Religion +6. Sv Wis +6, Cha +6. Pestilence (recharge 4; 20ft. radius; 2d10; Con DC 16 half). SA cannot speak, nor hear. He has lost his Paladin abilities due to having been corrupted by Unklar. As he has no desire to fight the characters, he has no challenge rating, but see below.

Slaying him is worth 5,000 experience points, and a crusader's mantle spell cast upon the party, which lasts until they complete a long rest. If they take a long rest immediately after slaying Thaddius, the crusader's mantle spell is cast upon them when next they rise and lasts until their following long rest. In addition, each party member is the recipient of a *cure wounds* for 3d8 points of damage. All these are gifts from Thaddius and the god Corthain.

THE KENNEL

In days gone by Unklar set a mogrl to guard the gates. These were ever his greatest servants, made of his flesh. He hammered them into life with the aid of Dolgan the Dwarf King, thrall and hostage to his throne, and they served him in deeds great and small. He instructed one of the lesser of the mogrl to guard the gates to both watch over his other servants and to hold it against all the many heroes who crossed the Wasting Way to test their mettle against the gates of his hell.

The mogrl took up his watch upon the edge of the Portico and stood as stone. No breath of life escaped him, no movement betrayed his purpose. However, his very presence terrified many who came before the gate, and they fell to the ground in supplication or fled, falling into the Feasting Pit, or went mad and slew themselves. For this reason Coburg petitioned the Horned God to build a house over the mogrl, so that none could see him, though all would know he was there.

Dwarves came forth and constructed walls and a roof around the mogrl, and the dwarven thralls called it the Gosserra, which is "kennel" in their own tongue, for it housed the dogs of Unklar. Forty feet high, twenty feet wide, and 100 feet long, its entrance was open, with no door, was and was twelve feet wide. A stench of evil settled in that place and it drowned any light cast upon it. More than that, it consumed light as a hungry beast consumes raw flesh.

The ramp gives way to a broad landing over half a mile deep and even further wide. Above you the tower of Aufstrag rises into the fog and gloom. Before you, on the far side of the Portico, stands the Ahargon Den, the gates themselves, tall and wide. Immediately to the right, on the edge of the Portico, stands a large squat structure. Some forty feet tall and half again as wide, its large open entrance frames the dark within. An evil hangs over the structure, permeating the whole Portico, and settles on the edge of your mind like a cancer.

The mogrl that dwelt within the Kennel has long since departed. It is now occupied by a pack of six scaj. These magical beasts dwell within the lair, forever watching for creatures to pass in front of the door of the Gosserra. Whenever a likely target presents itself they creep out, fanning out of the darkness in a broad crescent, croaking in their horrible voices.

They attack the party as it climbs onto the Portico.

SCAJ (6) (LE Medium Aberration) HP 82 (HD 12d8+24), AC 17, Spd 40ft. Str 15 Dex 16 Con 15 Int 2 Wis 10 Cha 6. Perception 14 (+4). Roar (recharge 4, 1 target. Symbol of pain lasting 2d6 rounds; DC 16 con neg.; victims save end of each turn; save=immunity to this scaj's roar). Claws +8 (1d6+3), Bite +8 (3d12+3). SA Dust (explodes when killed; 10ft. cloud; 1d8 damage for 1d8 rounds; DC 16 con halves and ends further damage. Victims save each round. Multiple explosions extend duration, not damage).

Within the Gosserra it is pitch black, as the dark of the mogrl remains, affecting all light sources. No normal light such as a lantern or torch is able to penetrate the darkness. A *light* spell only works if cast by a lawful good cleric or paladin. Otherwise the spell emits only a weak light, 1/10th of its normal power. Any +1 or +2 magic item emits no light; +3 and +4 items are reduced by half. Holy items glow normally. Spells such as *dancing lights* do not illuminate the darkness.

Anyone entering the Gosserra suffers a gut wrenching fear. Characters or creatures 4 level/HD cannot enter for the fear. Other creatures may make a charisma saving throw (DC 17), or be frightened so long as they remain in the area. Characters who fall victim to this effect may repeat the save at the end of each turn, ending the effect on themselves on a success. Those who save are thereafter immune to the effect.

Any that enter the Gosserra are immediately aware of the dark as their light sources fade, flicker or struggle to stay alive. Just as quickly, they are assaulted by the whispering voices of lost souls, for the long corridor is filled with moving shadows - haunts of the gates of hell. They flee from any light, but in the darkness they crowd around living creatures, whispering their never ending lamentations.

Those who pass through the Gosserra cannot help but hear the haunts, and each must make a successful wisdom saving throw (DC 15) or suffer 1d4 levels of exhaustion, as if pulled and dragged down into the grave, as well as 1d6 points of necrotic damage. A *bless*, *remove curse* or similar spell removes the damage. The haunts cannot be engaged in battle, but a cleric or paladin may turn them as ghosts.

At the far end of the hall, heaped amidst many bones, lies the treasure of the scaj.

TREASURE: 4000gp in gems and jewelry; 2 potions of extra healing, 1 potion of speed, 1 potion of longevity, a spell book with fourteen spells (various levels, CK's choice), a wand of wonder, an iron flask, a periapt of wisdom, a +3 sword of wounding (CK pick as to size), a +2 dagger, +2 flail, a +2 helm, and +3 chain mail.

THE PORTICO

The Portico is broad, almost a mile wide, half a mile deep, and overlooks the Fetid Morass. Standing on the edge, one is several dozen feet above the lake that houses the dragon. The sides of the Portico are smooth, cut and shaped so that no living creature can cling to them. For this reason even the vegetation from the swamp does not find purchase on the walls of the Portico.

The Portico itself is covered by a single sheet of marble and set with many enchantments that the dwarven thralls who laid it set within it. Moreover, Unklar himself took up its final form, and he cast in it a *rune of mirrors* so that it caught the reflection of the tower of Aufstrag that stood so high above it. The Portico appeared to any who looked upon it as if they were looking into a deep hole, where the root of the mighty fortress stood. Only the most knowledgeable knew that they were looking at a reflection of Aufstrag. But into this mirror he set bone spurs, devils of his own design.

The stone is impervious to erosion, wear or tear. The moisture of the marsh finds no purchase upon it, nor do the clinging vines and morass of the swamps. It stands as a sheet of glass, flawless and secure from the ravages of time.

Those with a weak will cannot easily cross the Portico. Even when they do, they are taken by a sense of vertigo, or feel the world is opening up beneath them. And even the strong of will are often disoriented as they cross the wide porch before the Ahargon Den.

Anyone who steps upon the Portico cannot help but see the reflection in the marble. Aufstrag is shaped much like gigantic tree whose branches far above are huge and barren. These same branches, though only barely visible from the Portico, are caught in the reflection and seem to be the roots of the mighty fortress so many “thousands” of feet below.

The ramp ends upon a broad gulf that drops into the earth hundreds of feet. The body of Aufstrag, shaped like a tree, thrusts down into the earth, where far below, a huge root like aperture juts into the ground. Clinging to the edges of the deep pit are many fogs and mists, drifting deeper into the depths. Beyond the pit is a broad landing, upon which kneels the figure of a man, his head bowed, his shoulders slumped. Before him stand the mighty gates of Aufstrag.

The mists and fogs are of course those perpetually hanging around Aufstrag and they are rising, climbing the fortress walls; in the reflection they seem to be drifting further down.

To see the illusion for what it is requires a successful intelligence save (DC 17). To anyone who fails the reflection, it seems a real pit. They are able to cross, assuming someone shows them that it is in fact a reflection caught in the marble. However, they are not able to completely overcome the disorientation caused by the reflection and suffer a -2 penalty to their dexterity score (18 becomes 16, 14 becomes 12, etc.) as long as they are on the

Portico. If the intelligence save is successful, there is no affect beyond a mild nausea.

Disabling the reflection requires a simple *darkness* spell. If cast upon the Portico the marble absorbs the dark and turns it a deep gray, blocking the reflection and obscuring the bone spurs that dwell within it. In this way the denizens of Aufstrag pass across the Portico without mishap.

MONSTERS IN THE MIRROR

Within the marble Unklar set a number of bone spurs, creatures with no true form, who dwell within the reflection, and are able to pass through the marble as if it were nothing. They cling to the side of Aufstrag’s reflection, as if they were a part of the tower itself.

Anyone looking down into the reflection, attempting to study it (and not just overcome the effects of the reflective marble) has a small chance (wisdom (perception) DC 17) of noting the slight difference between Aufstrag as it towers above them, and the reflection caught in the mirror.

The bone spurs attack any disoriented creature crossing the Portico. They watch for the telltale signs, and assume any such creature is not a denizen of Aufstrag. When a *darkness* spell is cast upon the Portico, they of course cannot see those crossing.

NOTE: Anyone looking down who failed their save against the disorientation of the Portico, and who sees the bone spurs rising from the marble, naturally assumes they are coming from above, and looks up for the foe that is attacking. They automatically lose initiative as the bone spurs come through the floor. There is no such penalty to those who made their save.

BONE SPUR (LE Medium Aberration) HP 71 (HD 9d8+27), AC 18, Spd 40ft. Str 15 Dex 16 Con 16 Int 7 Wis 9 Cha 6. Perception 13 (+3). Claws +7 (2d6+3). SA Multiattack (2 claws), Mirror walk (at will; using 10ft. of movement as part of move, dimension door between two reflective surfaces. See *New Monsters*.

A GENERAL'S DREAMS

As noted earlier, there is a man, kneeling before the Ahargon Den. He is some 200 feet from the gate, not far from where the Portico ends and the landing begins.

The figure is that of the Sanjak Cors Khan, one of Unklar’s field commanders from the days of old. Cors is very old, well past his centennial, and possess little strength now. He is able to talk, though moving him would kill him.

The Sanjak wears ceremonial chain mail with the crescent moon upon his chest. His plumed helm rests upon the ground at his side. He has a nine-ringed broad sword strapped to the broad iron girdle around his waist. Dark boots and faded green loose fitting pants round out what was clearly once a great man. His face is lean, his bones protruding; his gray eyes are narrow, though when they open they reflect a keen intelligence.

If *detect evil* is cast upon him, it is easy to discern that he is neutral evil.

He kneels before a stand which faces the door. The stand is designed to hold a horn (see below); it has three legs that intertwine as they rise to a form a four-fingered bracket, into which the *horn of opening* should be placed.

The Sanjak holds a horn, broken, in his lap.

The horn resonates with a fading magic. It split when the Sanjak set it in the bracket and sounded a note.

If questioned, the Sanjak speaks freely, for he knows he is at the end of his days.

"I am the Sanjak Cors Khan and I served my Lord Unklar for all my long life. In the end I commanded the 14th legion, and at my command cities were razed and whole realms set to the torch. I have been ever loyal and even in this, my last act, I would set the world aright and bring back the God-Emperor, for now the world is consumed in chaos and the people suffer for it."

If asked why he has come here he says simply the following:

I have come to slay Coburg and lay waste to his treacherous kingdom.

THE LADY OF GARUN: If the Lady of Garun remains with the party, she avoids the Sanjak as best she can. She lingers in the background, for he knows her and may expose her for who she is. If perchance the Sanjak spies her, he will openly tell the party who she is. Only the CK and the party's reactions can determine the consequences of such a revelation.

The Sanjak cannot fight and will suffer death at the hands of the party with dignity. If they let him live, he lingers for only a few more days until he passes away.

He possesses a *nine-ring vorpal broad sword* named Ergon. The blade is heavy to wield, about 4 times as heavy as a normal blade of its type. Beyond the vorpal power of the blade, the sword passes the energies of those it slays to its master; for each creature beheaded the sword heals the wielder 1d10 hit points.

THE GATES: THE AHARGON DEN

In all of towering Aufstrag there is but one physical gate that affords entry, the *Ahargon Den*, the Great Maw. It is also called the *Art et Unklar*, the Mouth of Darkness, for all that entered there were devoured by the malice of Aufstrag.

The dwarves fashioned this gate for Unklar, for in those distant days he bound them to him by chains of servitude that they could not break. They put all of their skill into the project and made for Aufstrag an unbreakable set of doors.

They cast the doors of bronze, but laced that bronze with iergild, that magical ore from beyond the worlds of men. They scripted runes into the doors; runes of making, forged in the fires of the past, and these settled into the bronze, where the metal

consumed them. The runes enchanted the doors, protecting them against sorcery of all kinds. They set riddles into the bronze as well. These riddles captured sound and absorbed it so that none could speak words of opening to it. Thus protected, they ordered it set into the frame of stone. Trolls, huge and monstrous, came at the bidding of Unklar, and set the doors in place. There it stood, overshadowing the Portico, the Pit and the Wasting Way.

The Portico ends in a broad patio of flagstones, exactly 100 feet wide and sixty feet deep. Much like the marble of the Portico, the flagstones here are little affected by the traffic of time; only the telltale signs of rain and water have made a dent in the tiles. The landing stands before the great gates of Aufstrag, called by men The Ahargon Den, the Great Maw. The gates are set into two half-moon shaped towers, and are covered by a huge arch of stone. The two giant doors stand at their apex 36 feet high and are each twelve feet wide at the base. In sharp contrast to the gray stone, the doors have a green tint to them. The left door has a crack in it; the right is entirely intact. Beneath this, both doors have a relief of a crescent moon upon them. When closed, the moons come together in a large circle. A tangle of wrought iron tops the doors and arch. Shaped like thorns and brush, they are stained a rusty brown. The doors stand shut. At the foot of the door, beneath the apex of the arch, the tiles have a great divot in them, and here and all about the divot the tiles are stained red.

The green tint is from oxidized metal; it flakes off to expose the bronze beneath. If the doors are pounded upon, the green flakes fall off and expose the words carved into the doors by the dwarves at the Horned God's request:

Suffer Not the Tyranny of Fear

Embrace the Dominion of Law

The Yoke Shall Set You Free

The dwarves cast a permanent *silence* spell onto the landing that extends thirty feet out from the doors. They also have an SR 19 as the dwarven *runes* keep almost any spell from affecting them. They have a standard AC of 48 and 100 hit points per square foot. They are almost impossible to open with spell craft or siege craft. They are bound with dwarven runecraft and locked with magic.

STAINED MARBLE

After Unklar conquered the world only one bastion remained in defiance, the castle of Du Guesilon, commanded by King Robert Luther I and Jaren the Wise. When at last Unklar battered the doors open and pulled the walls down, Robert Luther rode forth and fought him in the ruins. For long hours they smote ruinous blows upon one another, but in the end the King fell in the wreckage and passed from the world. In those hours Jaren hid many magics from the Horned God, setting in place the keys to his torment and eventual fall.

In rage, Unklar took Jaren back to Aufstrag and there set him on the rack. For years the lords of the Pit of Woe tormented Jaren, until at last they took up his mangled body and pinned it above the freshly set gates of Aufstrag. They coiled iron around his arms and legs so that any movement he took, even a breath, caused him great agony. The blood from his many wounds ran down his flesh, onto the iron and dropped to the ground below where it slowly bore a hole, making a broad divot in the tiles.

There he sat, revived whenever death overtook him, for nine long centuries.

The denizens of Aufstrag taunted him, but too they came to curse him, for it was seen as a terrible mark of doom if a drop of his blood struck one as they passed beneath the gates. Conversely, others sought out his blessings, and stole in secret to the gates to harvest his blood for the holy good it imparted to any who drank it or used it as a salve. Others came simply to seek his blessing, which he gave to the good and brave.

So the Order of Jaren came to be, monks of extreme valor who braved all the damnation of hell to gather the blessings of Jaren.

BLESSED WATER: Though he is gone the power of his aura remains. Any water that has collected in the divot, or that is poured in it, once drank, heals the drinker for 3d8 points of damage and casts a *bless* spell upon them that lingers for 24 hours. A person may only partake of the water once a day.

OPENING THE GATES

Entering Aufstrag is a difficult but not impossible task. There are several options open to the players: using the *Horn of Opening* (assuming they have all the pieces), climbing the gates, or entering through the secret entrance.

NOTE: Aufstrag is a massive complex and utterly impossible to explore in a few gaming sessions. This adventure offers the characters the opportunity to enter the Turm-Un (see below), clear it out and create a fortress inside Aufstrag, wherein the characters can rest and recuperate during forays into Greater Aufstrag.

THE HORN OF OPENING: The men of Al Liosh fashioned a tool to open the gates - a horn, laced with the magic of dwarven runes. Shaped from the horns of a dragon, bound with bands of platinum and inlaid with thin strips of gold, the instrument's final shape resembled a long, curved horn, very narrow at the mouth, but with each of its three coils widened to the end. Upon the mouthpiece they carved ancient runes bound with the sorcery of the Rings of Brass. Upon the inner coils of the horn they carved more runes and these they set with a *chime of opening* so amplified that it could force the gates wide. The chime they set to the runes within the bronze so that it only ever opened the doors when blown with a clear and single note. This horn men called the Horn of Opening.

Only the very strong or clever ever mastered the horn and those who tried and failed activated the runes of the Rings of Brass

and were torn from the world and hurled them into the Void, where history forgot them. The horn was heavy and the men of Al-Liosh set it upon a stand before the Gate, a hundred or so feet back. There it stood for many long centuries.

To open the gates, one must set the horn of opening in the frame, where the Sanjak knelt or kneels. A single blast on the horn can open the gates. To successfully use the Horn of Opening, a strength save is required (DC 17).

NOTE: The Lady of Garun cautions anyone from entering through these gates, steering them rather to the secret entrance.

CLIMBING THE GATES: Nulak Kiz Din ordered the bastion extended into a walkway that crossed over the gate, just above the area where Jaren the Wise hung. In this way he could speak with the monk pinned there. The crosswalk is utterly invisible from the ground before the gate, hidden by the fence of wires that held Jaren imprisoned. Now time has eaten away at this fence and made it a wicked maze of jagged iron spikes.

There is a catwalk above the hedge of wire that held Jaren. One can attempt to climb the gate (strength (athletics) DC 18) to get to the hedge of iron. Climbing through or over this hedge requires six successful strength (athletics) or dexterity (acrobatics) checks (DC 17). Each check inflicts 1d8 damage to the climber from the difficulties; a successful check halves this damage.

Once they cross these barriers, they come to the catwalk which connects to the Turm-Un.

A SIDE ENTRANCE: Long before he ruled in Aufstrag, Coburg was the Captain of the Gates. His residence lay in the Turm-Un, the Tower of the Horn (see below). Coburg was ever a clever man and sought to hedge his bets whenever he could. In order to assure himself a ready means of escape from Aufstrag, he made a secret entrance to the Tower of the Horn.

In great secret he set several dwarves to labor upon the task. They crafted an entrance to his tower of such clever design that none who passed it could detect it. They cut a stair case through the rock of Aufstrag that took one to a hidden chamber in the Captain's quarters, which itself was hidden behind a secret door. They hid both doors with equal skill.

They made Coburg a set of keys, two each for each door. To open a door from the outside of the secret way required one of the keys; to open the door from within did not.

The door is located on the left side of the Ahargon Den, beyond the left hand of the gate and on the edge of the Portico. Finding it by searching for a secret door or looking for the keyhole is almost impossible (DC 20 wisdom (perception)). The key hole, in fact, is impossible to locate if the door has not been found.

However, the dwarves who created the secret door had no love for Coburg (or their other masters in Aufstrag), and they set in the door a secret script, a set of runes that reveal themselves and the outline of the door to any dwarf or goblin (as they are

kin to the dwarves), or any lawful or chaotic good character that looks upon them. If such a character is actively looking for a secret door and passes within 10 feet of it they can locate it with a DC 15 wisdom (perception) check.

The door leads to the Turm-Un, the Tower of the Horn.

NOTE: The goblin Beulix knows of the secret entrance and may have told the characters when they encountered him in **A11 The Wasting Way**. The Lady of Garun knows of it as well, and actively tells the characters of it. Also Thaddius the Mad may have revealed it.

THE SECRET WAY

The door opens to a two foot wide staircase that climbs up at an extremely steep angle. It leads up a narrow shaft for 150 feet, until it dead-ends in a wall. A door here, plain to see from inside the secret way, opens via a small latch into a tiny room only two feet wide and three feet long. The left wall of this room opens via a small latch, sliding to the side (toward the outer wall of Aufstrag) where it reveals another corridor only eighteen inches wide, but eight feet long. Mid way down this corridor is another secret door that opens into a room that is 5 x 5 feet wide.

A six inch wide hole sits in the center of the room's floor. There is one closed door in the room. It is clearly a privy. The door here opens to the Captain of the Guard's chambers, now vacant.

TURM-UN

A single bastion flanks the left side of the Ahargon Den. It is part of the overall structure and looks much like an irregularity in the overall wall, more so than an independent tower. It protrudes out onto the Portico several dozen feet and is sixty feet across. This is the Turm-un, the Tower of the Horn. From here the Captain of the Guard commanded the legion of orcs and ungern set to guard the gate itself, and the lower halls of Aufstrag, the Bone Pit. From his high seat the Captain watched over the Gate, the Portico, Ramp and Feasting Pit.

It consists of a series of rooms built in the bastion that served the Captain. They range from just above the gate to over a hundred feet up the tower flank. The secret door opens into the top most room, **Area 1 Privy**.

AREA 1 PRIVY

This is a small 5 x 5 foot room. There is a single hole in the corner, beneath the secret door. A bucket with a handled sponge in it and a door are the only items of note in the room. The stone around the hole is clearly a privy hole. It has not been used in some time.

The bucket is empty though the sponge is in relatively good shape; it is clearly used to wipe one's arse, once one's business is complete.

The door is unlocked and leads to the Study.

AREA 2: COBURG'S QUARTERS

This room served Coburg as his private quarters. The door is locked, guarded by a *glyph of warding*. It is heavy and very difficult to break down, requiring a strength check (DC 25) or a dexterity (thieves' tools) check to pick the lock (DC 20).

In order to bypass the glyph, one must say "My Lady of Garun." Any attempt to open the door or pick the lock without this phrase sets off the glyph. Everyone within 10 feet of the door must make a successful wisdom save or suffer 10d4 points of damage; a successful save reduces damage by half. It was cast by a 10th level cleric.

The room itself is lavishly decorated. In its arrangement it possesses a large canopy bed, a wardrobe, a large trunk, a weapons rack with an armor stand, several rugs, tapestries, a large brass tub, and two cushioned chairs. Everything in the room is aged. Four unlit lanterns hang suspended from the ceiling.

RED: This is a feather bed with dark black curtains. It sleeps two and has a mound of pillows at the head. Thick quilts, blankets and sheets are still on the bed, all in remarkably good condition.

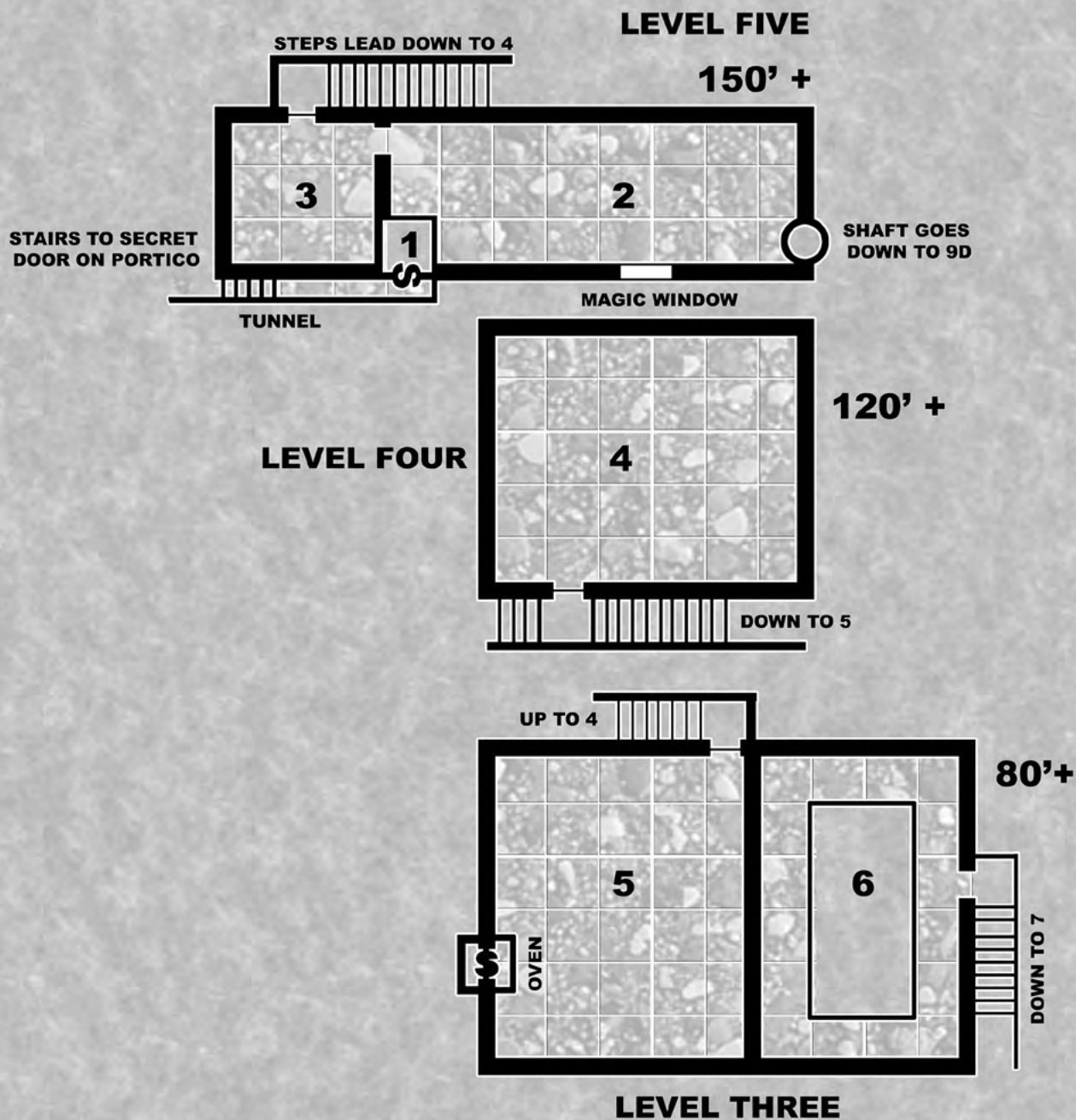
WARDROBE: This is filled with gowns for a woman almost six feet tall and slender. They are all silk, cotton or linen, and plain. There are a number of slippers and several boots in the bottom of the wardrobe as well as two drawers with hose, undergarments, and belts in them. In the bottom of one of the drawers is a small velvet pouch with draw-string. It contains a ring with a blue jewel set into it.

The ring is magical. It is a *ring of awe* (see below for details) that, once placed on the finger, casts the wearer as greater than they are, making others fear to harm them. The Lady of Garun wore this ring whenever she met with Coburg's acquaintances to help him control them or drive them away.

SECRET DOOR: Anyone investigating the wardrobe has a small chance (DC 18) of noticing scratch marks on the floor made as if the wardrobe was pulled out from the wall. Behind it is a cleverly hidden secret door, located with a successful wisdom (perception) check (DC 15; can only be found if the wardrobe is moved). If opened, it leads to a shaft that goes down. The shaft is only a few feet in diameter. Rungs attached to the wall offer purchase.

The shaft goes down past **Area 9d** where it suddenly opens up in a sinkhole (the whole shaft from this point having collapsed some years previous, taking the cell with it). See below, room **Area 9d** for access to the inner gate and the Trenches.

NOTE: This wardrobe belongs to the Lady of Garun, for she once shared these quarters with Coburg. In the tumult of his demise and rebirth, the items were left behind. If she is still with the party she attempts to avoid showing any signs of recognition. A skillful wisdom (perception) or (medicine) check (DC 18), however, and anyone watching her for reactions, notes a slight increase in her pulse or breathing.



TURM-UM

SCALE: 1 SQUARE = 10'

TUB: The tub sits in the corner of the room. There is a spigot above the tub, coming from the wall. If turned, fresh water comes out, filling the tub. The tub is brass and carved with designs of half nude women frolicking.

TRUNK & WEAPONS/ARMOR RACKS: These empty are all empty.

THE CAPTAIN'S WINDOW: This window overlooks the gate area below. It has shutters on the inside of the room. It is not actually a window, but rather a magical mirror allowing the viewer in the room to see, hear and feel all that goes on outside of the room and tower. The portal allows wind and rain, air and other environmental affects to come through into the room (though no living creatures may pass through the portal). The portal is impossible to see from the outside. From here the Captain watched the gate he guarded.

If dispelled, the portal becomes a normal window, open both ways. It was created by a 9th level dwarf engineer.

MIRROR: On the floor beneath the bed is a small hand held mirror. If looked into, it is initially cloudy; however, if the viewer stares into the mirror for four rounds, it clears and **Area 7 Waiting Room** comes into view. Coburg used the mirror to keep tabs on what was going on in the hall and who might be coming and going.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The fog clears from the mirror and two chairs come into view. Both are plush, each with arm rests. A small table separates the two. A metronome sits on the table, gently ticking back and forth. The sound of the metronome is as clear as a bell.

AREA 3 CAPTAIN'S STUDY

This room is twenty by thirty feet with two doors in it. The room is lavishly decorated, though the decor has long since faded with time and age. Dust covers everything in the room, with the exception of the quills in their velvet tray. This room served Coburg as his private study and guest room. When he spoke to his lieutenants or visiting dignitaries, he brought them here. Several lanterns hang from the ceiling and one above the desk.

The center of the room is dominated by a sitting area with a short table surrounded by six cushioned chairs, all set on a thick carpet. The chairs are wooden, lined with blue and silver cushions. The table is ornate with a geometric design carved into the center. A pipe holder sits on the table, as does a small box. The carpet is decorated with geometric designs as well.

ENCHANTED BOX: The box is filled with pipe tobacco, fresh and moist. The box is enchanted so that any tobacco placed in it remains fresh.

Sitting at the wall opposite the privy is a large ornate desk and equally ornate chair. The desk has no drawers. On top of the desk are a sheaf of papers, three quills lying in a velvet lined tray, and a metronome. A lantern hangs over the desk.

ENCHANTED QUILLS: The quills are enchanted. Whenever they dry out, once they are laid in the velvet box, their ink is restored. There are three, so that the writer may always have a tool to write with.

AREA 4 PERSONAL GUARD

The door leading from **Area 3** is closed but unlocked. However, it possesses a bar and lock. The bar, when used, is placed on the staircase side of the door, blocking access from **Area 4** to the steps that lead to **Area 3**. The key is actually in the door itself, and the bar itself is leaning against the wall.

The room served the Captain as a Guard Chamber. Here his personal guard kept watch, preventing any from attacking him in the rooms above.

Within the room is a long table that seats six. A cupboard on the far side of the room and a piss pot are the only other furnishings. There are no tapestries. Four lanterns offer the room light.

Within the cupboard are a number of items of everyday use: there are a half dozen steel mugs and plates, bowls and silverware, a stack of old rags, lantern oil (six days' worth), wicks, tinder, flint and steel. There is also a wooden box within which are a set of dice for playing Troll Knuckles, a game of chance.

On the wall facing the door that leads to **Area 5** is a weapons rack with four long swords in scabbards, a battle axe, two maces, two bags of twelve caltrops each, and four daggers in scabbards. Two small iron shields flank the weapons rack.

A spigot sits low on the southern wall. Turning it produces fresh water (fresh by Aufstrag standards), which is stale and warm.

Sitting next to the door that leads to **Area 5** is a coiled *rope of entanglement*. The rope was placed there in order to entangle, upon command, anyone entering the guard room that the guards wished to attack. It sits there waiting for the command word "bind."

AREA 5 KITCHEN

The steps to the dining hall end in a secret door. It is tall- six feet high and three feet wide, but hidden behind a large butcher block. When triggered the door and butcher block slide forward. Locating the secret door from the steps is easy (DC 13). Locating it from the Kitchen side is a little more difficult (DC 17).

The kitchen itself is rather small with a large baking kiln, a long shelf of skillets and iron pots, a tray of large cooking utensils set on a table, and a cistern. A long table dominates the center of the room where food was obviously prepped.

The kitchen corner is stacked with four crates all marked "Dried" on the side and four barrels marked "Heristat." With a successful knowledge (history) or similar check (DC 16), Heristat is known as a town in the western lands of Aenoch and part of the Kingdom of Aachen.

If investigated, the crates all contain carefully wrapped food parcels. Each parcel is 6 x 3 x 2 inches, containing a day of

rations. Each crate contains eighty days of rations. These rations are specially designed and prepared. Not only do they provide food for a day, but after a complete package is eaten (which generally takes three meals), the ration heals two hit points to whoever eats them.

The barrels contain ale, each barrel being twenty gallons. The ale is remarkably good.

CISTERN: The water in the cistern is as fresh as the rest of the water, being fed by a faucet.

KILN: The kiln sits against a wall and has an unusually large stove pipe rising from it to the ceiling above. If removed and investigated, the chimney above is revealed to be 36 inches in diameter. There is a ladder built into the chimney that extends up as far as any light source reveals. The chimney/ladder goes 200 feet before it connects with a larger chimney about twice as high. This chimney has similar rungs built into it and it snakes up into the greater heights.

NOTE: Aufstrag is laced with chimneys, hundreds of them. They were built to vent the tower's many hundreds and thousands of cook stoves, fire places, forges etc., but also to allow the spies of the Lords of the city to crawl about at will. The network of chimneys, vents, and cross piping is vast, and sprawls throughout the entire fortress-city. There are whole communities of creatures that dwell within the chimneys. The chimneys are best thought of as roads.

There is an absolutely monstrous spider lurking at the juncture where the chimney from Area 5 meets the greater chimney.

WOLF SPIDER, MONSTROUS (unaligned L beasts): HP 83 (HD 12d10+12), AC 18, Spd 40ft/40ft (climb). Str 18 Dex 16 Con 12 Int 2 Wis 11 Cha 4. Perception 10. Stealth +10. Bite +10 (2d6+4 plus 3d6 poison plus poisoned, paralyzed /1d6 hrs (Con DC 17 half and neg. conditions); Web +10 (5/6, 40ft, hp 5, AC 10. Target restrained. DC 17 Str neg.). SA blindsight 10ft., darkvision 60ft., multiattack (2 bites) spider climb, tremor sense on web, immune to webs, poison, bludgeon and psychic damage, fire vulnerable. Challenge 6 (2,300 XP).

AREA 6 DINING

The dining hall consists of one long table that seats twelve people. The walls have several tapestries on them, and a large fireplace sits on the north wall. A dish rack stands in the corner.

TAPESTRIES: There are three of these, all long and depicting battle scenes in Coburg's life. They are faded and somewhat worn. Each would bring a thousand gold in the collector's market . . . or immediate death if sold in the wrong Kingdom.

FIREPLACE: The fireplace is dominated by a large ornate wooden mantel. The carving depicts a ghastly scene. Men and women cling to one another in terror, their outstretched hands holding up the mantle itself. On either side of the fireplace, the



mantel's supporting buttresses depict devils climbing toward the frightened people. Some have been pulled down already and are seen tumbling down, mingled with the devils. Above it is a large steel shield. It is not magical but offers a perfect reflection.

DISH RACK: There are 24 plates, 22 mugs, and 24 each of spoons and knives on the dish rack. There are also ten two-pronged forks.

AREA 7 WAITING ROOM

This room served as a waiting room for anyone visiting the Turm-Un, specifically people involved in the interrogations. Later it was used by Nulak-Kiz-Din on his many visits to the tower to taunt Jaren, where he was nailed upon the wall. The room gives access to the catwalk over the gate.

NOTE: It is advised to have everyone make an intelligence and wisdom save before they enter the room. Mark the saves down so that if anyone should handle the cups below, the necessary saves do not reveal the danger.

The room consists of a large carpet, two chairs and a table between them, and a side board.

SIDEBORD: The side board holds six pewter cups, three mugs, and four bottles of unopened and one bottle of opened wine. The wine is very old, well over a hundred years, each worth about 100gp. The mugs are stamped with the crescent moon as are five of the six cups. The sixth cup is stamped with a crescent moon though it is set facing the opposite direction of all the others. A careful examination reveals this on an intelligence (perception) check (DC 16).

POISONED MUG: This particular mug is coated with a powerful laurel and rose, Type V, poison. Any liquid placed in the cup is immediately poisoned and anyone who drinks it as well. It is very difficult to discover, however with a successful wisdom (perception) check (DC 17) the user can smell it. Anyone drinking from it must make a constitution save (DC 15). If they succeed they suffer 1d10 points of damage and are poisoned until they complete a long rest. If they fail, the damage is doubled, they are poisoned as above, and they suffer 1d4 points of constitution damage which returns at 1 point per day. They must then make a second constitution save at the same DC. If they fail this second save they suffer 1d12 points of damage per day until they die, and are poisoned henceforth. If they succeed they suffer 2d12 damage, and permanent loss of 2 points constitution. A *protection from poison*, *greater restoration* or *heal* spell will immediately negate the ability loss and poisoned condition, will stop further damage, and will allow healing as normal. A *lesser restoration* spell will negate the poisoned condition.

Coburg used the mug to kill guests.

There are two tapestries in the room. One over the chairs depicts Unklar triumphant. The other, facing the first tapestry, shows the damned howling in pain and agony. It is through this second one that the mirror found under the bed in **Area 2** watches the room. A careful look at the tapestry reveals the eyes of one of the damned as the viewing point.

AREA 8 CATWALK

The catwalk runs the whole length of the gate. It is narrow, only four feet wide, walled on the left by Aufstrag itself and on the right by a short three foot wall and the massive wired entanglements. Though the catwalk is not viewable from below, it was to Jaren or anyone imprisoned here, for the head and the upper portion of his arms and shoulders lay pinned above the parapet and in plain view of anyone on the catwalk behind him.

It is from here that the arch mage Nulak taunted or questioned the monk. The whole area reeks of evil, the stench of it clinging to the barbs on the wire and the stone itself.

Anyone on the catwalk can see much of the Portico.

The barbed wire and tangled mesh here is spotted rusty with the blood of the monk. If any good character touches the wire and prays, they are blessed with a *cure critical wounds* spell. This is where the lawful good monk bled for so many years and his aura lingers still. They may do this once per day.

AREA 9 THE HOLDING PEN

Most anyone who crossed the threshold of the gates and who seemed suspicious to the guards was first brought from the Portico to the Holding Pen. Here they were questioned, detained, beaten, or tortured if necessary. Four cells connect to the Holding Pen, allowing for at least that many prisoners. Few remained here long. Any who needed greater attention were hauled up deeper into the towers of Aufstrag, to the Red Fort, or the Hall of Chains where their lives took a different turn.

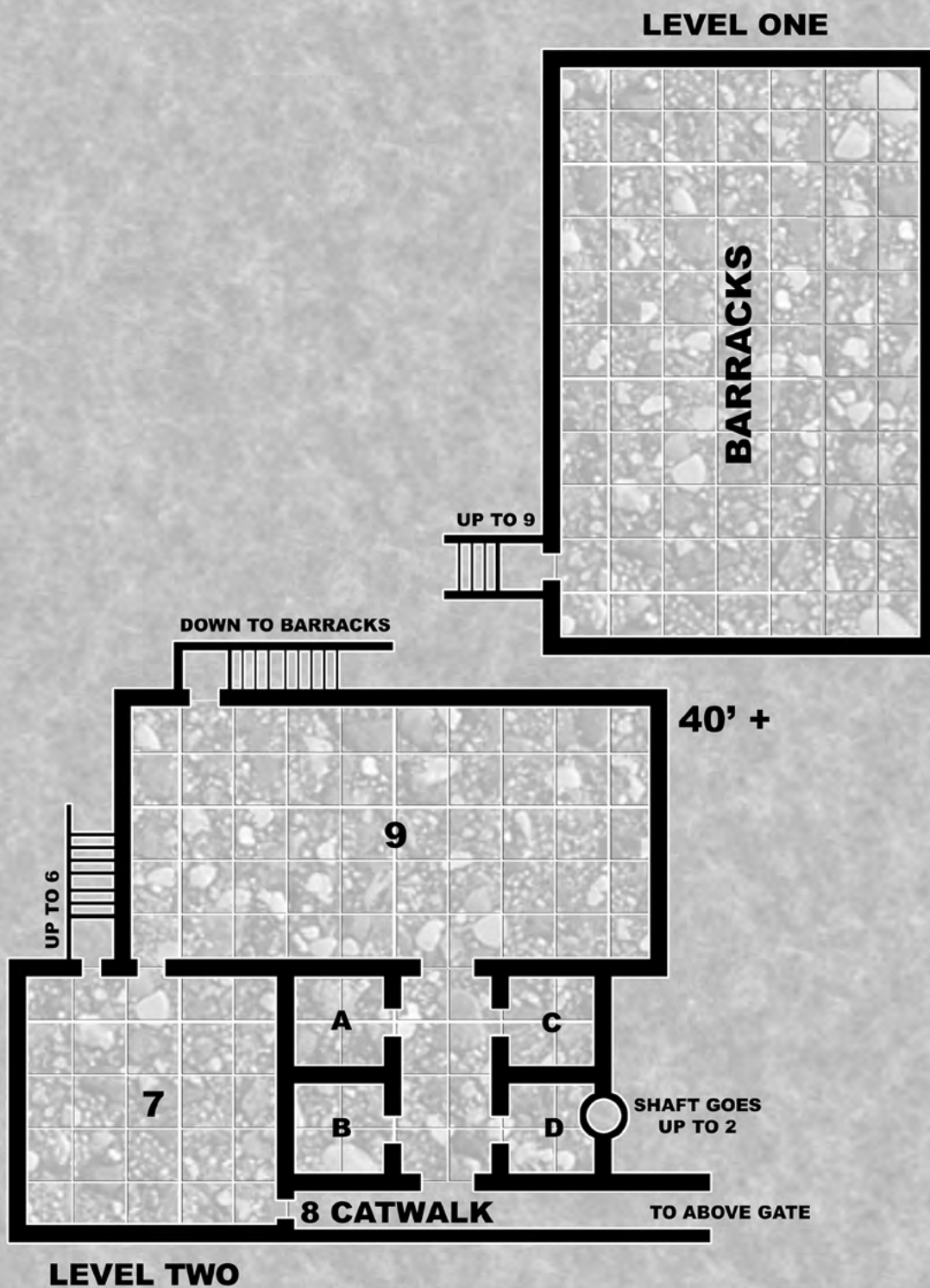
The room itself is long. A single chair sits in the middle of the room. It is attached to the floor. There are straps on the arm rests, legs and around the neck area. A table against the back wall and a rack behind it reveal a wide variety of straps, whips, saws, bone cutters, knives and other various and sundry tools of the trade.

CHAIR: The chair is attached to the floor through sixteen "L" brackets, four on each leg, bolted to the stone and secured through reinforced metal plates on the chair legs. It is heavy and immovable unless destroyed. There are claw marks on the arm rests where victims left their last statements.

TABLE: The table is undisturbed. Many torture devices sit on its surface. They are carefully arranged. All show signs of use.

COIN OF SOULS: One device on the table radiates magic, otherwise it is very nondescript. It is a simple coin, bronze in color and manufacture, faceless on one side, with the silhouette of a man on the other. The faceless side of the coin is very cold and if held to the ear emits a humming noise. This is the *coin of souls*, a powerful artifact (see below).

THE CELLS: Each of the cells is 10 x 10 feet. They have heavy wooden doors with a grated window about two-thirds of the way up the wall. The window can be closed off with a small latch. The doors open out into the hall. There are three sets of chains in each cell.



9A CELL

This cell is empty.

9B CELL

The door is locked. The bones of three men are bound in the chains, though some of the bones have separated and just lie on the floor in a pile. There are no clothes or equipment on any of them, nor design of any type. One has a two inch metal plate tacked into his skull. Written in the Vulgate on the metal is the following: "Lucky iron for an unlucky skull."

9C CELL

This cell is empty.

9D CELL

Coburg's escape shaft that leads down to the Trenches (see above) passed on the outer wall of this cell. The shaft below the cell gave way due to time and erosion, and the whole section opened and fell into ruin below.

Whoever opens the door is immediately assailed by the smell of dirt, stone, and water - all the smells associated with a cave. The floor is gone as is a good chunk of the back wall, leaving only rough stone in its wake. A pit has opened up where the floor should be, a weak wisdom (perception) below having given way, and the floor tumbled into the depths of Trenches below.

COBURG'S SECRET DOOR: Where the back wall of the cell was, if one looks up, they notice a shaft leading up. Ladder rungs make the climb easy. It brings them up to Coburg's room (Area 2) and the secret door he constructed there for his escape. Going up is possible with a successful dexterity (acrobatics) or strength (athletics) check (DC 16).

There is no ladder leading down, for it fell away when the whole area gave way. There is only a sinkhole 140 feet deep and some fifteen feet wide. It opens into a narrow cave and a deep underwater river. Climbing down is possible, but the sides of the pit are weak and will not support much weight. There are no natural handholds even for rangers or rogues. A rope or something similar is required. The pit, if followed, leads to the Trenches.

MORE SECRETS: About twenty feet down the sink hole is a very small landing. Much of it has given away. It is the remnant of a landing that Coburg used to watch the Inner Gate. This landing abuts a wall of thick stone, itself a secret door that opens to the Inner Gate. Standing on the landing, one can see through the wall as if looking through a portal. All is darkness however, for no light penetrates the Gate unless magical. Finding the secret door from this side is easy (DC 15). It opens, allowing one to step into Aufstrag.

THE TRENCHES: The Trenches are a vast network of caves and tunnels made by armies of escaped slaves, the weak who fled the upper halls, and other riff raff. They played witness to the opening salvo of the Winter Dark Wars when the Trench Wars began, as dwarves rose up against their tormentors and took to

the Trenches, and fought a decades-long war under the ground, beneath the roots of Aufstrag.

AREA 10 BARRACKS

The guard barracks sits above the first layer of the Bone Pit, where the legion of orcs and ungern who guarded the front gate was housed. The guard barracks housed Coburg's personal guard of 120 picked humans.

At one time the room was lavishly decorated, supplied with all manner of accoutrements for the occupants. Bunk beds, trunks, weapon racks, tables to eat and a kitchen at the halls end all supplied the men with all they needed. A cistern in the kitchen area supplied them with water.

All of that is destroyed now, as this room was overrun during the civil wars that broke out in Aufstrag after the fall of Unklar. The guard who survived moved to the Horned Gods Halls where Coburg eventually took up residence.

The room is now occupied by a five heavily armed trolls. They entered the room from below, using it as their own lair to terrorize the rest of the Bone Pit. They have set themselves up near the cistern (which still has water in it). Here they have their mounds of treasure, supplies and other pickings from their many raids.

The trolls are not inclined to die, and will not fight to the death unless pressed into a corner. They have long had a great fear of the Turm-Un, for that is where their hated rival Coburg the Undying ruled for so many years. So they avoid the end of the barracks where the door to the tower lies. It is possible to bargain with them, just not very likely. These trolls use the base troll statistics as follows, but each has special attacks and qualities, listed by name below the stat block.

TROLLS X5 (LE Large Giant) HP 84 (HD 8d10+40), AC 15, Spd 30ft. Str 18 Dex 13 Con 20 Int 7 Wis 9 Cha 7. Perception 11(+1). 2 claws +7 (2d6+4) and bite +7 (1d6+4) or by weapon (see below). SA darkvision 60ft, enhanced smell (advantage on smell-based checks), regenerate (10/rnd; acid attacks neg.).

Treebore wields a large iron-bound oak, roots and all, as a weapon. The branch deals 2d10 points of damage with each hit. Upon a critical hit he is able to pin his opponents with the tree, gaining automatic crushing damage for 1d12 per round and restraining the opponent, unless they break free through a successful DC 16 Strength check.

Rigon is a clever troll, for long ago he took a *helm of telepathy* and twisted and battered it until he shaped it into an armored gauntlet. It still retains its magical properties, even as a gauntlet.

Tylermo wields two wicked battle axes with no penalty for 1d8+4 each axe. He has mounted in his ear an *earring of spell resistance* which functions the same as a *mantle of spell resistance*.

Dracyian carries no weapon in battle, relying upon his claws and huge tusks to pummel and gouge his foes. Upon one of his

tusks is mounted a gold band that, once he successfully bites a foe, acts as a *sword of wounding*. If removed, this band could be mounted onto a finely-crafted blade to impart the effect to the weapon. Doing so requires blacksmith's tools and a CR 18 Intelligence (arcana) check to work out how to integrate the ring into the weapon properly.

Sir Ironside wears a mithral breast plate +3 and visored helm, giving him an AC 18. In battle he sports a magical +3 *two-handed frost brand* sword that he wields one handed and which deals 2d6 base damage, plus 1d6 cold. The blade itself is named *Omote's Iron*, is sentient and is chaotic good; it does not desire to be used by Trolls but unfortunately its sentience is a strange byproduct of its legacy and is limited in scope; it has no power to exercise its will; it can do little except impart a vague sense of its own feelings to the wielder.

Mgtremaine prefers two snake-headed +2 magical whips in combat. They each deal 1d6+6 points of damage, plus 2d6 poison damage (Con DC 15 halves poison). However, he is able to forgo a physical attack and snap the whips so powerfully that they cause disorientation. Any enemies within 20ft who hear the crack must make a successful wisdom save (DC 15) or suffer disadvantage on initiative and attack rolls until the start of Mgtremaine's next turn. These whips lose their magical properties if not used in tandem.

TREASURE: The major magical items they possess they carry in battle. However, the troll band has a great deal of loot. They have amassed a small mountain of gold, some 12,000 pieces, and a further 30,000 silver. The coin has all been minted in Aufstrag and bears the likeness of Unklar on it. They have it stored in a dozen or so trunks. In those trunks are a further thirty gems, collectively worth 2500gp. There is one gem, a large ruby, worth 5,000gp. There are three *potions of extra healing*, a *rope of climbing*, and a *chime of opening*.

EQUIPMENT: They have stored five crates of rations (eighty days per crate) and twelve barrels of beer (a further eleven barrels already empty and laying about in one mangled state or the other). There is 200 feet of rope, two grapples, ten iron spikes, a small barrel of lamp oil, a small cart, and a mound of bent and battered dishes.

AUFSTRAG

Aufstrag is a living monument of terror. Huge, evolving, and occupied by the living and the damned, its inhabitants are

constantly remaking the inner working of the tower, pulling walls down, digging new tunnels, plugging holes and the like. It is Hell in Aihrde. Here the damned reside, suffering the torments of its madness.

THE BONE PIT

The Bone Pit is the first of the great Domains of Aufstrag. It consists of the Inner Gate, the Bone Barracks, the Long Hall (flanking the monstrous Loggia), the Bone Lodges, as well as innumerable other rooms, halls and quarters. The Bone Pit's true purpose was to awe any entering Aufstrag as they entered the Hall, whose scores of giant pillars, each a hundred feet high and forty feet in diameter, were crafted from the bones of the conquered.

The characters have two areas to access the Bone Pit, if they enter through the Turm-Un - through the barracks in **Area 11**, or through the landing found in the cell in **Area 9d**. The former opens into the Bone Barracks Mezzanine area, the latter into the Inner Gate. Coming through the Ahargon Den of course brings one to the Inner Gate. Of course they may choose to enter through the chimneys from above.

The Bone Pit comprises several square miles of terrain and is occupied by all manner of creatures, from orcs and trolls, to the undead, to shadows, to packs of despairing hounds, and of course the dread bone devils (yes that bone devil).

THE FORGINGEN

This is the Inner Gate, the foyer. It is a large vaulted room, roughly sixty feet across and 100 feet deep. Unklar set a spell of darkness and cold upon the room, casting upon it an image of his own mind's eye. Only magical light can penetrate the darkness; no special vision cuts its inky black. Anyone entering the darkness must make a wisdom saving throw (DC 18) or suffer from the cold and fear. They become disoriented and hungry for the light; all attribute checks, saves and attacks are made at disadvantage while in the darkness and for the first four rounds after they have left the darkness. These effects continue even with a mundane light source. Magical light mutes the darkness, pushing it back and negating the effects, but the weight of it clings to the edge of the lights like water to a drowning man, and should the magical light go out or be extinguished, the effects return immediately.

Let the adventure begin anew . . .

APPENDIX A: NEW MONSTERS

BLOODSUCKING WYRM

The larger cousin of the blood worm, bloodsucking wyrms are medium-sized, snake-like wyrms generated from the filth, corruption and blood of evil dragons. As the corruption and filth of these dragons' bodily secretions falls upon mud and muck, the worms spawn from the mystical corruption generated. Once a single one is born, it quickly propagates, spreading over swamps and morass until it becomes a small army of deadly parasites. These wyrms lie in wait within swamps and muck, mindlessly waiting and driven by instinct to feed whenever the opportunity presents itself.

They are long and thick, and can grow from several feet up to 12 feet long or more-easily the size of a python. They are black, squamous, scaly creatures, reptilian in nature, and possessed of a leech-like mouth lined with thousands of tiny teeth. They look a bit like a cross between a black python and a lamprey.

MINDLESS PARASITES. Bloodsucking wyrms are instinct-driven parasites, largely mindless and waiting for victims to pass by. As soon as a potential meal passes within range, the parasite lashes out, latching on with impossible strength and draining the victim of blood. They are able to secrete an acid from their mouth which will eat through armor, clothing and other forms of protection, damaging the armor in the process of attacking.

METABOLIC REPRODUCTION. Bloodsucking wyrms reproduce from the act of feeding. The more they feed, the more larvae they produce. A single victim drained to death is enough to produce several dozen larvae; as such, these creatures can grow to plague-levels very quickly. Larvae mature within 1d4 weeks to full size, though as many as 50% of the larvae may be consumed and re-absorbed by the parents to sustain their ongoing metabolism. Larvae consumed in this manner do not result in additional spawn.

BLOODSUCKING WYRM

MEDIUM MONSTROSITY, UNALIGNED

ARMOR CLASS: 16 (Natural armor)

HIT POINTS: 51 (6d8+24 HD)

SPEED: 15ft.

STR:	DEX:	CON:	INT:	WIS:	CHA:
18(+4)	10(0)	18(+4)	2(-4)	10(0)	5(-3)

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES: Acid

DAMAGE VULNERABILITY: Fire

SENSES: Blindsight 60ft, Passive Perception 15

SKILLS: Perception +6, Stealth +6

CHALLENGE: 4 (1,100 XP)

Acidic bite. If a bloodsucking wurm misses on an attack, but would strike on a touch attack, it latches on to an otherwise armored part of a character and begins to secrete acid which dissolves the armor. On the next round the wurm breaks through and begins to deal bloodsucking damage to the

character. In addition, the armor's AC value is thereafter reduced by 1 point, unless repaired by a blacksmith, leatherworker or other armor smith. AC reduction is cumulative with multiple attacks by several wyrms. Armor whose AC is reduced to 10 is useless and irreparable.

Thrashing instinct. Victims grappled by a bloodsucking wurm are at disadvantage to attack the creature (but not to attempt escape DC) as it instinctively targets hard-to-reach areas and constantly thrashes about.

Actions

Bloodsucking Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +8 to hit, reach 10ft, 1 target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6+4) piercing damage, plus 2 (1d4) acid damage. If the bite strikes successfully, the victim is grappled thereafter until the bloodsucking wurm dies (Strength only escape DC 16; success deals 3 (1d6) slashing damage and 3 (1d6) acid damage as the creature is ripped off.) and the wurm deals an additional 3 (1d6) damage of blood drain every round.

Tail swipe. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +8 to hit, reach 10ft, 1 target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) bludgeoning damage. This attack is a defense mechanism; the wurm may only use the tail attack while feeding upon a victim, and may not attack the victim upon whom it is feeding.

BONE SPUR

The bone spur appears much like a shattered bone. Its torso is long, dirty white and consists of multiple layers of thick bone like skin. It crawls upon four thin legs that protrude from the body, much like an insect. These legs end in scythe-like apertures that make for poor feet, giving the beast a stilted gait when it walks. Its true form however is very different, for it is little more than reflected stain possessed of an intelligence that allows it to hunt.

For this reason the bone spur is only found in a reflective surface, a mirror, a highly polished shield, within a jewel, a piece of silver and so on. Their reflection has no particular size, so their lair may be any item of any description.

They bone spur is a creature of utter malice, dwelling in the filth of their own evil. They are semi-intelligent, following simple directions with ease. They desire direction in all their actions, seeking some affirmation in almost any task they undertake. For this reason they are often used as guardians by magi, evil paladins and the like. Once set in a role, they remain there until destroyed.

Mirror world ravagers. In combat the bone spur rises upon its hind legs and falls upon its victims with its fore legs, slashing with the jagged ends. If they are in danger of losing a fight, they will *passwall* from the material world into a reflective surface.

THE BONE SPUR IN AIHRDE

The bone spur is an ancient creature, of the order of the Val-Eahrakun, created as they were in the Void long ago. Tis said by those knowledgeable that the bone spur came to be when

splinters of the All Father's tools caught the reflection of his manifest thought. Being a reflection, the image of the thought turned, and the bone spur knew no goodness, but only evil. But because they stood in the presence of the All Father they longed for his direction, something he never gave.

So the bone spurs came to dwell in the deeps of the Void even at the beginning of time. They are summoned from time to time, hunted, captured and traded by those who are skilled in crossing the Wall of Worlds and able to plunder the wealth of the Void.

As guardians they are unmatched for their fearsomeness and desire to follow simple commands.

BONE SPUR

MEDIUM ABERRATION, LAWFUL EVIL

ARMOR CLASS: 18 (natural)

HIT POINTS: 71 (9d8+27 HD)

SPEED: 40ft.

STR:	DEX:	CON:	INT:	WIS:	CHA:
15(+2)	16(+3)	16(+3)	7(-2)	9(-1)	6(-2)

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES: Poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES: poisoned

DAMAGE RESISTANCE: Bludgeoning, piercing or slashing from non-magical or non-silvered weapons.

SENSES: Darkvision 120ft., Passive Perception 13

SKILLS: Perception +3

LANGUAGES: Abyssal, Common (understand but not speak)

CHALLENGE: 7 (2,900 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The bone spur makes two claw attacks.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +7 to hit, reach 5ft, one target.
Hit: 9 (2d6+3) slashing damage.

Mirror walk. The bone spur can travel between reflective surfaces. This ability functions at will and is in all ways like the *dimension door* spell, except the bone spur must step into a reflective surface (mirror, polished shield, still pool, etc.) and emerge from another reflective surface within range. It can do this as part of its move action, with each mirror walk comprising 10ft. of total movement.

SCAJ

The scaj are dog-like aberrations formed in the spaces beyond spaces, the most evil void outside of and separate from the presence of goodness. They are mutant monsters in every sense of the word, who walk, or rather crawl on four unshapely legs. Their hind legs are like any dog's, but their forelegs are twice as long as the rear, and much more like a bat's arms. Long, bone thin torsos reveal ribs and a spine that pushes up from the creature's back as to make it appear as if it has a ridge of plates growing along its back. The creature's head is short, with a wide

mouth and no face of which to speak. Its brow is flat, with a broad flat scale covering the brain pan. The mouth is filled with broad triangular teeth that run the length of the top and lower jaw. The scaj are made of thousands of scales, and have no guts, blood or any other earthly component. When struck only dust follows the arc of a blade, or rises from the shattered blow of a hammer.

They cough constantly, hacking up ash and clouds of dust. The hacking seems a warning, but as with their other actions, it possesses no purpose.

The scaj move with an awkward gait, with its hind legs pushing forward, and its forelegs protruding from its body at right and left angles, forcing the creature to move in a swinging motion. Its front quarters swing to the left and right, even as its rear legs simply push on.

The scaj live in dark places, where great evil once resided. The remnants of these creatures manifest into the scaj, though they possess no intelligence or even understanding of what or who they are, nor where they came from. They are possessed and driven by rage and hate. They cannot breed, nor do they possess any motivation to change their surroundings in any way.

Vicious renders. The scaj attack anything they see, moving toward a target slowly in a stalking manner, not through any design or natural caution, but rather from the unusual shape of their front and hind legs. They attack by first using their fearsome roar, followed by leaping in and grabbing an opponent with their claws, and then clamping down with their impossibly powerful jaws.

SCAJ IN AIHRDE

As is known to most men, the mogrl were created in the Klarglich by Unklar and dwarven smiths bound to his will. The mogrl embodied all the malice of their master, filled to overflowing with the filth of evil that drove his purpose. They rose from the ruin of creation as spirits of wrath, and fell upon the world as titans. These devils had no purpose but that of their master, no desires but to fulfill his will. Thus it was not given to them to create life, only to govern it or destroy it.

The mogrl however, are very much alive, and though they do not grow, their hide thickens, and dries and falls off in gray flakes. And wherever the mogrl settle, if they do so for any length of time, the flakes of their hide gather at their feet. Such is the will of these creatures that this chaff, what the dwarves call the scaj, gathers in heaps, and in time assumes a life of its own, devoid of all reason and filled only with rage.

The scaj are found wherever the mogrl dwelt for any length of time. As such, they are commonly found in and around Aufstrag, but exist through the kingdoms as well, for the mogrl served their master for many hundreds of years and took up residence throughout the wide world. And many of course, scattered after his fall, but dwell in forgotten realms even still.

SCAJ

MEDIUM ABERRATION, LAWFUL EVIL

ARMOR CLASS: 17 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS: 82 (12d8+24 HD)

SPEED: 40ft.

STR:	DEX:	CON:	INT:	WIS:	CHA:
15(+2)	16(+3)	15(+2)	2(-4)	10(0)	6(-2)

CONDITION IMMUNITIES: Frightened, Unconscious

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES: Sneak attack

DAMAGE RESISTANCE: Bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from non-magical or non-silvered weapons.

SENSES: Passive Perception 14, Blindsight 120ft

CHALLENGE: 7 (2,900 XP)

Dust. Whenever a scaj is killed, its body explodes into a 10-foot radius cloud of dust, enveloping anyone or thing within the area in a thick noxious cloud of pestilent ridden, gray-black dust which burns the eyes, mouth and nose, spreading a fire to the guts of those suffering in its wake. Those caught in it suffer 1d8 points of damage each round for 4 (1d8) melee rounds unless *cure disease* is cast upon them. A successful DC 15 Constitution save halves the damage and negates further damage. A victim who fails can repeat the save at the end of each round, ending the effect on itself with a success. If multiple scaj are killed, the dust cloud thickens. This extends the duration of the effect by an additional 4 (1d8) rounds, but does not increase the damage dealt.

Actions

Agonizing roar (recharge 4-6). The scaj chokes out a deep guttural sound infected with the essence of the Abyss. The roar affects a single target in the scaj's line of sight who can hear it. Victims must make a DC 16 constitution save or suffer the effects of a *symbol of pain* which lasts for 6 (2d6) rounds. The victim is entitled to repeat the save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a success. Victims who succeed at their saving throw are immune to the roar of that particular scaj thereafter.

Multiattack. The scaj attacks twice, once with its claws and once with its bite.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +8 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) slashing.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +8 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d12+3) piercing.

APPENDIX B: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

COIN OF SOULS

Wondrous Item, Extremely Rare

It is a simple coin, bronze in color and manufacture, faceless on one side, with the silhouette of a man on the other. The faceless side of the coin is very cold, and if held to the ear, it emits a humming noise. When the faceless side of the coin is pressed against the flesh of a living creature that possesses a soul it opens a gate to the Klarglich, the Pits of Woe. Worse, it draws out the soul, forcing it into those nether chambers of hell.

The coin pressed against flesh causes excruciating pain. The victim must first make a DC 17 constitution save or suffer the loss of 1 point from each attribute per round. The damage is not permanent, but the victim is incapacitated with pain. The victim may repeat this save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. The coin cannot be removed by anyone but the victim (who must first save against its effects) or the coin's owner. As soon as any one attribute has been reduced to zero, the soul begins to cross over. The victim must then make a DC 15 wisdom save, once per round; a failure means the soul is drawn out of the body and hurled into the Klarglich, where it wanders a homeless creature. In game terms, it becomes a **shadow**. The body that remains is reduced by half in all hit points, levels, attributes, etc., until such time as it is reunited with the soul or dies. It has absolutely no will of its own and will obey any commands put to it by anyone. The soul can be returned to the body by a cleric who successfully *turns* the shadow twice. The first turning subdues the creature, while the second places it back into the body. However, this process will only work upon the same shadow that was previously torn from the body.

ERGON

Weapon (Sword), Unique (Requires Attunement)

This nine-ring broad sword is a sentient vorpal blade. Forged in Klarglich, the Pit of Woe, it was given to Sanjak Cors Khan as a token of Unklar's favor. Crafted by dwarven smiths, the blade itself is not evil and is in fact *unaligned*, though the stain of its long history makes it seem evil. The blade is unusually

heavy, weighing almost 12 pounds. The blade is dark, thick and tinged in red. The pommel is round, and not easy to grasp, its wired grip tight and cold. It has a single jewel on the end of the pommel - a ruby mounted in gold. For each decapitation the blade heals 1d10 hit points to the wielder. Any hit points it heals beyond the wielder's normal hit point maximum are temporary hit points which disappear when the wielder completes a long rest, if they are not exhausted by damage before then.

RING OF AWE

Wondrous Item, Rare (Requires Attunement)

This item makes any wearer seem greater and more terrible than perhaps they are. Anyone wishing to do harm to the wearer must make a successful DC 15 wisdom save or become frightened and see all ability scores reduced by 2 until they complete a long rest. Such victims may not attack the holder of the ring. The frightened effect persists so long as the victim remains within 120 feet of the wielder and is within sight. Victims may repeat their saving throw at the end of each turn, ending the effect on themselves on a success. Victims who succeed in their save are immune to the effects of the ring for 24 hours.



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