



WEIRD WAR I

RAID ON FORT DOUAUMONT



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WEIRD WARS!

Raid on Fort Douaumont

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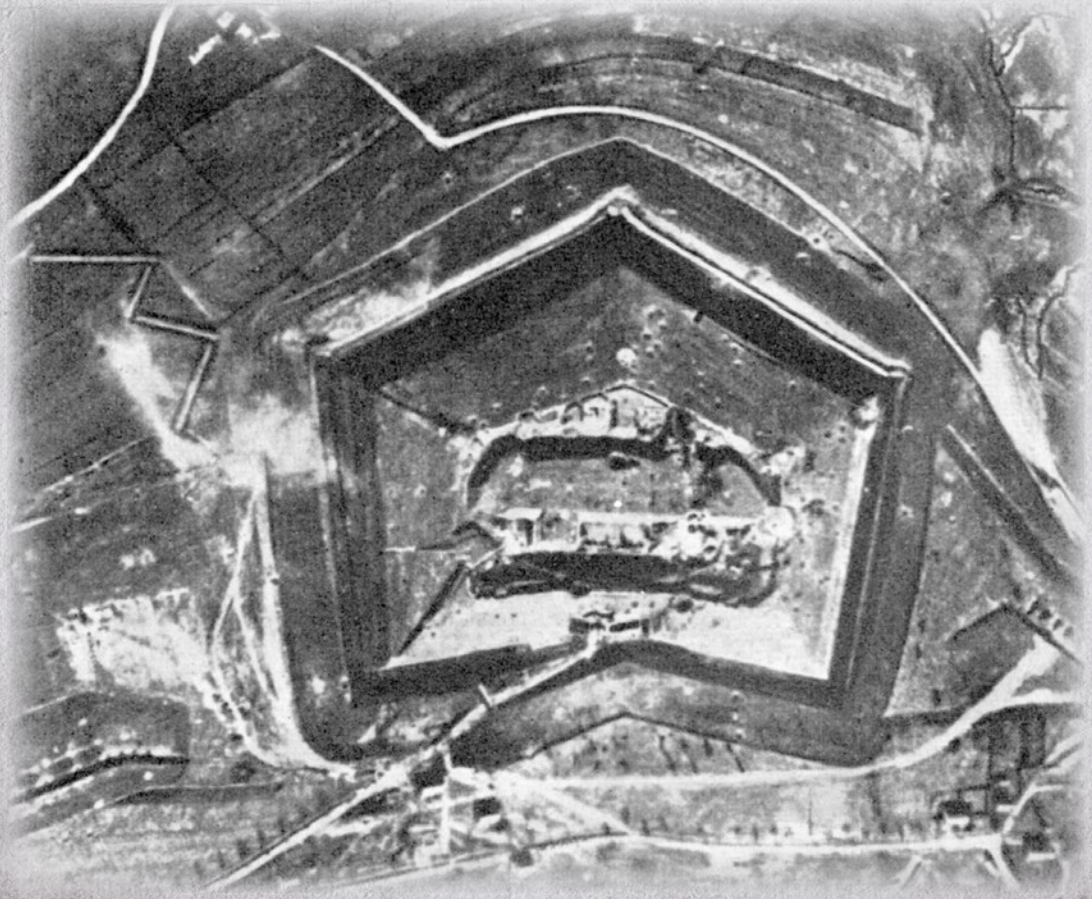


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Raid on Fort Douaumont

Date: 24 October 1916

Location: Verdun, France (The Western Front)

Fort Douaumont. Originally one of the largest and strongest forts protecting the city of Verdun in the northeastern part of France, it was scheduled for demolition in 1915 after the French authorities suddenly and mysteriously declared it outdated. Its guns were removed, and a token force of only 70 men were left to defend it when Douaumont swiftly fell to the German Army as part of their offensive to capture Paris. Once in German hands, it became the linchpin of their strategy to bleed the French army white, giving the invaders a secure position for a logistics hub, hospital, and command post.

The Kaiser's troops have successfully defended the fort despite a freak accident that killed hundreds of German troops in May 1916, followed by a partial French re-conquest that was thrown back after 36 hours. The seven-month French campaign to take it back has been bloody, costing hundreds of thousands of lives, but now, in October, the final offensive begins. A number of regiments ready themselves for the final attack to recapture the fort, but none of them are prepared for what they might find inside...

The Story So Far

An old and wicked faerie named Magotine made her home for millennia in a forgotten grotto deep in the Argonne Forest. Known as a creature of power dating back to the ancient Celts, she feasts on the sorrow, horror, and destruction of human conflict, leaving her hidden lair whenever her hunger for human suffering peaks. These appearances have left a catalog of cautionary tales in those areas in which she is remembered and spoken of in dread.

In recent times Magotine appeared during the first Battle of Verdun in 1792. The Prussians

marching on Paris slaughtered the French Revolutionary forces who attempted to stop them, and the dark faerie reveled in the death and destruction. Unfortunately for her, as she capered about the field of slaughter she was struck by a Prussian cannonball made of iron—anathema to fairies. It rendered her insensible, and she was mistakenly buried in the village of Douaumont as just another French civilian killed in the war.

The slow, steady stream of death and violence during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 allowed Magotine to regain a shred of consciousness, but the hallowed ground in which she was buried, along with the iron nails that sealed her coffin, bound her in place. She could only rage impotently in her grave while the battle swirled nearby.

Now war has again come to Verdun, but this time on an unimaginable scale. The titanic artillery barrages earlier in the year shattered the evil faerie's resting place, freeing her. Drawn to the power offered by the nexus of ley lines under Fort Douaumont, Magotine made her way there and offered her services to Colonel Markus Frentzen, commander of the 54th Reserve Infantry Division troops stationed in the fortress.

Too Good to Be True

The evil faerie offered the German soldiers talismans that would make them far less susceptible to injury. The only catch is that her talismans must be forged in the blood of the commander's own troops. The faerie convinced commanding officer Colonel XXX Frentzen that sacrificing the mortally wounded to preserve the strong was a worthy trade that would help the Germans win the war—and of course bring Frentzen great honor and glory.

Magotine's talismans are the soldiers' own metal identity discs, carved with a magical rune and filled with the blood of the wounded.

The discs have another power Magotine has not revealed—they make the wearer particularly susceptible to her own magical powers—including returning from the dead as her slave! (See page 26 for a complete description.)

The German soldiers' impressive performance soon after and the high mortality rate of its wounded soon attracted special attention—the *Abteilung zur Weiterentwicklung Spezieller Waffen und Truppen* (Department of Special Weapons and Troop Development or AbtWESpezWA/Tr).

The confrontation between the AbtWESpezWA/Tr team and Magotine's minions turned violent quickly. In the chaos that followed, most of the troops were slain and the dark faerie was imprisoned behind iron bars. This is a situation she hopes to remedy quickly. The iron burns and she has lain dormant for far too long to be trapped again.

It is into this confused situation our heroes blunder...

The Squad

The adventure begins in the French trenches southwest of Fort Douaumont in late October 1916. The heroes are all members of the elite *2e Escadron de Combat* (2e Esc for short), the second combat infantry squadron of the Regiment of Colonial Infantry of Morocco. Despite the name of the Regiment, the soldiers are exclusively of French extraction, drawn from troops serving in Morocco.

One character must be the officer (Lieutenant or Captain) and one must be the NCO (Sergeant or

Sergeant-Major). The rest of the squad is comprised of three to 10 *soldats de premier classe* or *soldats de deuxième classe*. Knowledge of German and a decent score in Stealth is encouraged, but not required.

It's recommended that the *poilus* (a French term of endearment for soldiers that literally means "hairy ones"), be of Seasoned or even Veteran Rank for this deadly mission. If the majority of the squad is Veteran, increase the number of non-Wild Card characters encountered by 25% or so (round up).

The War Master may fill out the rest of the squad with Extras, if desired, using the stats for **French Poilu** (see the *Weird War I Player's Guide*). The War Master may also allow Foreign Legionnaires from anywhere in the world to be assigned to the squad for the attack.

Raid!

The 2e Esc has been in a trench outside Fort Douaumont for several long, cold days under German artillery fire. Huge railway guns at Baleycourt are prepared to pound the fort in the hopes of stunning the Germans into submission. Over the past seven months, millions of shells and thousands of lives have been spent trying to retake Douaumont.

Once the last barrage of shells is finished, the main French assault starts. Prior to that, however, higher headquarters needs information, and it is up to the heroes' unit to raid the German trenches and bring back prisoners.



The trench the warriors are in is about half a kilometer to the southwest of Douaumont, with a German-held trench between the French soldiers and the fort. Since the poilus have been under heavy bombardment for a while, each player should make a Spirit roll to see if any characters suffer from shell-shock—failure means the individual gains a level of Fatigue (see **Shell-Shock** in the *Weird War I Player's Guide*).

During the bombardment, Lieutenant Colonel David Regnier, the Regimental Commander himself, visits the heroes' trench. He briefs their officer on the importance of getting information on the state of the Germans in front of their position in preparation for the upcoming assault. Intelligence believes that the Germans are short of shells, and the bombardment should end around 2100 hours. The trench raid should take place shortly after. He then wishes the squad luck, passes out cigars and brandy, and leaves them to prepare themselves. The War Master can use the time waiting out the bombardment as an opportunity to let the heroes talk among themselves, discuss tactics, or mentally prepare themselves for the upcoming raid.

Into the Wild Black Yonder

Once the guns stop shelling the area, read the following to the players.

As predicted, the German guns finally go silent around 2100 hours, and the ringing in your ears fades. A few drops of rain splatter on your helmet. You glance over the edge of the trench and you don't see anyone nearby. Silently, you slip over the rim and begin moving northwards across the shattered landscape.

It begins to rain as the raiders make their way across several hundred yards of No Man's Land. Since it's night with no active battle, the soldiers must only make three "sprints" despite such a long swath of mud, craters, and barbed wire (see the **Heavy Fire** rules in the *Weird War I Player's Handbook*.)

Once through the bulk of No Man's Land, the poilus are close enough to the German trenches to slip inside. They can either attempt to slip quietly inside a trench section using Stealth—crawling across the last few meters of No Man's Land through the mud—or dash hurriedly into the trenches to kill whoever they find there.

Unless something happens to tip them off, the intense shelling means the German sentries are inactive for purposes of Stealth rolls. Cover from the craters and mudpiles, plus intense darkness, subtracts 4 from the defender's Notice rolls.

If the Stealth roll is failed or the French decide to run to the trenches, they are met by 2d6 defenders. The distance to the trench on the table-top is d20" (twice that in yards, as usual), and the mud, loose earth, and bits of blasted barbed wire make the terrain Difficult Ground.

A dash without a failed Stealth roll gives the French one round to run before the Germans are active and dealt into combat.

If there is significant noise (gunfire, grenades, yelling), d6-2 reinforcements arrive each round. Roll a second d6, with 1-2 meaning they come from the left, 3-4 they come from the right, and 5-6 they appear from behind at the top of trench.

Fortunately for our heroes, the trench section happens to contain a small dugout with a wounded German officer and a single guard inside (in addition to the trench defenders). After the German infantry are dealt with, the raiders can capture the officer or grab his papers and retreat before reinforcements overwhelm them.

- **German Soldiers (3d6):** Use German Infantryman from *Weird War I Player's Guide*. One of them is a Wild Card Sergeant (treat as Seasoned with the Rank (NCO) Edge. These troops are tired and hungry, and surrender if half their numbers are Incapacitated.
- **German Command:** In the dugout is a wounded officer (3 wounds and Exhausted but can walk at Pace 4; otherwise use the German Officer profile from the *Weird War I Player's Guide*), and a single guard (use the same Infantry profile as above). The guard crouches in the shadows, ready to ambush anyone who enters.

Take All Prisoners

A trench raid is an intelligence-gathering operation, so the soldiers are supposed to take prisoners and gather any important-looking papers. If a German soldier is captured, the mission is a minor success. If the officer is taken alive or his papers are gathered, it's a solid success.

Once the 2 Esc has their required intel, it's time to scurry back to friendly lines. The squad must survive three more sprints across No Man's Land to reach the safety of their own trenches where the company commander anxiously awaits their return.

Unfortunately, in the dark they stumble into a huge shell crater which contains mangled corpses brought back to a semblance of life by the terrible energies released on the battlefield. The thing wakes as one of the poilus, chosen randomly, slides into the pit.

- **'Glom:** See the *Weird War I War Master's Guide*. This one has already incorporated three additional bodies into it, adding a die type to Strength and Vigor, and +1 to Size.

A Meeting With MI-13

The next day, the squadron is directed to meet with the General de Brigade Marcel Devriès (use the stats for French Officer in the *Weird War I Player's Guide*). General Devriès stands at a table displaying a large map of the Douaumont area, and on it are wooden miniatures that represent the various positions and fortifications in the battle. Next to him is an Englishman in a suit with a large mustache. The general introduces the man as Sir Arthru Conan Doyle.

The mustached man is Sir Conan Doyle (see the *Weird War I Player's Guide*). He introduces himself as the head of a British intelligence group nicknamed "MI-13," and says his group is tasked with learning as much as possible about happenings on the battlefield, as well as assisting the Bureau des Phénomènes Mystérieux Non Expliqués (Bureau of Unexplained Mysterious Phenomenon, or BPMNE) with such concerns whenever possible. He then explains why he's here at Douaumont.

Sir Conan Doyle speaks in heavily accented but fluent French. "Our codebreakers have received reports of a special, secret German unit entering the fort this morning. As General Devriès has mentioned, the BPMNE has also received strange reports of German activity inside the fort for months from soldiers on the field such as yourself. There's some kind of research lab set up inside, and they're conducting experiments that could influence the shape of this war. It seems from the reports you brought back last night that the German High Command is unaware of what is happening within."

General Devriès speaks up. "Whatever is going on inside Douaumont, it's making the Germans in the 54th Reserve Infantry Division fight like devils. I need a small team to sneak inside, find out what's going on, and do whatever it takes to neutralize it so the rest of the forces can reclaim the fort in a few days. If you can capture or kill this special German unit that just arrived, all the better. After that, we'll do a more thorough study of the lab and share our findings with our allies at MI-13."

"You are the squadron I need. Make use of the map we have of the current situation, and ask Mssr. Conan Doyle anything that will help you in your mission. Your infiltration will start under cover of darkness, at 0100."

At this point, the heroes are given a map of the fort as it appeared prior to the German conquest. Let the players see the map of the area (page 8) to use in their planning, and give them the information in the Fort Douaumont sidebar. The heroes are then sent on their way.

When the heroes arrive back at their trench they are given portable lanterns, along with any specialized equipment, ammunition, and other supplies they request for the infiltration (within reason). In addition, allied Extras killed in the previous encounter may be replaced with new ones at the War Master's discretion. They can rest for a bit as a light drizzle begins to fall over the battlefield (not long enough to recover any Fatigue or Wounds, but enough that they won't be exhausted) until the mission starts at 0100.

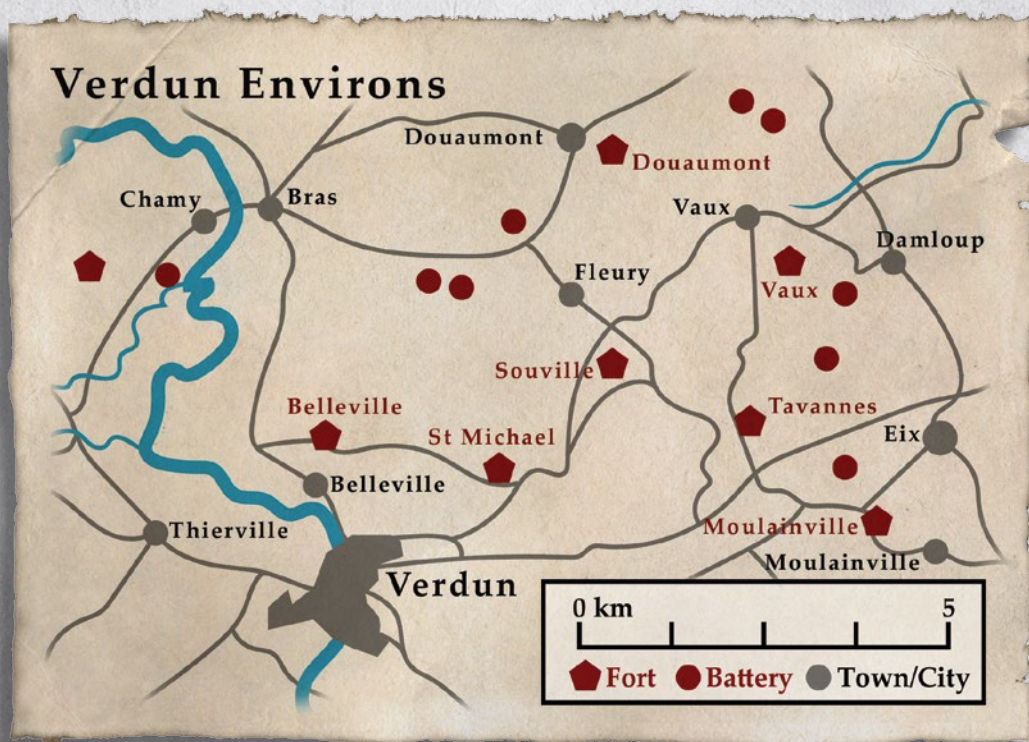


Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, head of the mysterious MI-13.



Aerial photo of the fortress during the battle.

FORT DOUAUMONT INTEL REPORT



HISTORY

Fort Douaumont was built in 1885, two kilometers east of the village that shares its name. By 1916, it was the largest and most modern of the Verdun forts, built to withstand contemporary artillery.

The fort is heavily reinforced throughout with concrete and stone masonry over a meter thick, with a layer of sand as a shock absorber in between. There's an underground gallery of tunnels deep enough to go under the moat, which the Germans have emptied and converted to a concrete trench.

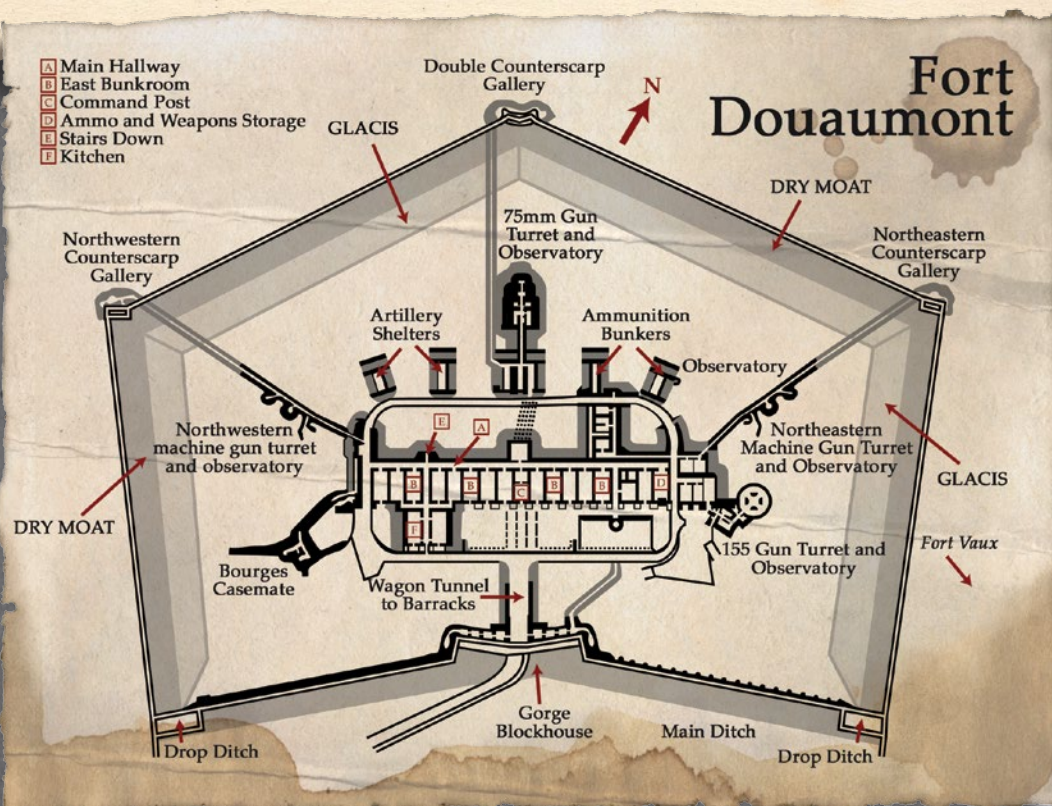
The barracks comprise most of the center of the fort. Consisting of a ground floor and a basement, it contains a command post, hospital, laundry, kitchen, bakery, and room for storage. The fort used to have a number of heavy armaments, but the French suddenly removed them in 1915 in preparation for the fort's demolition, allowing the fort's easy capture. They have since been replaced with German armaments, but the exact number of guns is unknown.

One thing the French know is that the south face has been pounded incessantly throughout the battle. The main entrance there is most likely destroyed, or partially collapsed, so military intelligence suggests they find an alternate route into the fort such as a casemate or turret.

INSIDE THE FORT

The Germans have occupied Fort Douaumont for months. It's been used as a safe haven and transit site for troops moving supplies up to the front lines, as well as troops moving back for a break from the fighting. With so many louse-ridden, mud-covered bodies passing through, the rooms and corridors are covered in dirt, debris from the shelling overhead, discarded equipment, trash, and rotten food. Rats scurry along the walls, lending a constant eerie rustling to the heaps of garbage.

The Germans have strung electric lights throughout, replacing the original system of oil lamps, but there is no ventilation system, and the air is stale and foul. Overlaying everything is a smell of death and burned rotten meat, a reminder of the huge explosion and firestorm five months earlier that killed over 600 troops. A variety of rooms also open off the main corridor that are not detailed in this adventure, but can be used to heighten the eeriness and general sense of antipathy that the fortress exudes.



Infiltrating the Fort

At 0100 hours Lieutenant Colonel Regnier once again arrives at the forward trenches to wish the heroes Godspeed. The light drizzle that has been falling all day tapers off at 0030 hours, leaving the battlefield covered in glutinous mud. Infiltrating the fort is difficult, but not impossible. Crossing No Man's Land again requires five sprints to avoid being hit by random gunfire or artillery strikes.

Once No Man's Land is behind them, there are two "checkpoints" where the raiders might be spotted. If the roll is successful at one checkpoint the heroes move on to the next one. The French have to cross the moat and glaxis no matter where they enter the fort, but beyond that they have several choices as to how they enter, as shown on their map. The most obvious points are the old main entrance, the observation turrets, or the Bourges casemate.

Dry Moat (Checkpoint 1)

Read the following as the squad approaches Douaumont:

You think you've reached the old moat that surrounded the fort, but the effect of millions of shells falling on it has transformed it into a slightly deeper depression in a moonscape. The outer edge is surrounded by tattered razor wire. You can make out movement inside the moat, but nothing too distinct. For some reason, there aren't as many German soldiers as you expected to find. The moat is wide and hard to hide near, but under cover of night it should be easy to slip past the sentries.

The poilus must make a cooperative Stealth roll to sneak past the German soldiers in the trench. The defenders are tired from the battle and previous bombardment and so are considered inactive for this roll.

The French need a standard success to stay unnoticed. Failure means the sentries become active and the Stealth roll must be attempted versus the Germans' Notice. If this second Stealth roll fails, the guards spot the heroes and open fire. There are two more defenders than there are soldiers in the heroes' unit, and they must be eliminated before the raiders can move deeper into the fort.

Should a fight break out, the attackers may realize the soldiers are tougher than normal. This is because they are "blessed" by the dark fairy's talismans, though the player characters shouldn't find that particular clue just yet (blame the darkness or bloody condition of the defenders if needed).

- **Magotine's Minions (2 plus 1 per hero):** See page 25.

Glaxis (Checkpoint 2)

Read the following passage when the group reaches the glaxis:

Once past the moat you are confronted by the "glaxis," the artificial slope leading up to the fort proper. The glaxis' surface is a series of overlapping shell holes filled with chunks of concrete, shattered and discarded equipment, and rotting bodies, and looks slippery from the rain earlier in the day. Beyond the glaxis rises the bulk of the fort proper.

If Magotine's minions were bypassed in the dry moat and are still inactive, each hero only has to make an Agility roll to get past this checkpoint. A failure on the Agility roll makes the guards active, as they hear noise and start to look for the culprit.

If the Germans are active, each hero must make a successful Stealth roll at +2 (for darkness) before attempting the Climbing roll to scale the glaxis. The Stealth roll is against the guard's Notice to avoid being spotted. If the contested roll fails, a sentry spots the hero that failed the roll, and opens fire. This alerts nearby Germans in the moat trench who have line of sight to the Frenchmen (as described under **Dry Moat**, above). The heroes need to dispatch these troops before the squad can move deeper into the fortress.

If one, some, or all of the characters are captured, they are taken into the barracks to be held—skip to **In the Belly of the Beast** on page 11.

Entering the Keep

Once over the glaxis, the squad finds itself in a vast field of churned earth. Chunks of concrete are mixed in the dirt, and concrete lines the bottom of many of the craters. Consulting their map reveals the presence of observation turrets and gun emplacements which might permit entrance to the interior of Douaumont. Of course, a particularly audacious squad could attempt to fight or bluff their way into the barracks at either the eastern or western entrance.

Turrets

The infiltrators may try to enter the fort through a turret. There are five turrets, one on each of the fort's corners, and they can be raised and lowered for protection from artillery bombardments. Each looks like an iron cylinder capped with a shallow dome with observation and weapons ports. Each has room for two people: one to operate a spotlight and act as an observer, and one to man the MG08 7.92mm machine gun. The lack of manpower

means the turrets are understaffed—there's only one soldier in each.

These isolated soldiers are unaware of the fight that raged in the barracks between Magotine's minions and the AbtWESpezWA/Tr team.

On a successful Stealth roll the guard is surprised and unable to use the machine gun in the turret to target the hero. If the Stealth roll fails, the guard makes an unopposed Notice roll to hear the noise and opens fire. If the gunner is disabled, a soldier on the outside can reach through the gun slit and unlatch the hatch to gain access to the interior. The MG08 is firmly mounted to the turret; it would take proper tools and a reasonable amount of time to remove it from its housing and take it.

Once inside the turret, a ladder leads 20 feet down to an iron door, which opens into a tunnel. This tunnel leads underground to the west or east entrance area of the barracks' ground floor.

- **Magotine's Minions (1 per turret):** See page 25. The turret machine gun is an MG08 7.92mm gun (Range 30/60/120, Damage 2d8, RoF 3), and the turret provides Near Total Cover (-6). These men are armed with Luger pistols (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6-1, RoF 1) rather than rifles.

Bourges Casemate

At the southwest corner of the fort, where the heroes' squad enters the perimeter, is a casemate (a fortified gun emplacement) used to hold heavy weapons to repel attacks from heavy armor. Normally this position held four 75mm guns, but they have been replaced with four MG08 7.92mm machine guns.

If the squad approaches the bunker, a successful Notice roll reveals the blast shutters over the gun ports are open. German conversation can be heard within, and the silhouettes of shadowy figures are seen in sputtering candlelight.

There are eight troops in the bunker—all inactive for purposes of Stealth. Anyone outside receives +4 to Stealth rolls due to the light inside and the darkness outside the bunker. The gun ports are large enough to climb through once the Germans are cleared away. A heavy iron door opens into a tunnel that leads to the western side of the ground barracks.

- **Magotine's Minions (8):** See page 25. The turret machine gun is an MG08 7.92mm gun (Range 30/60/120, Damage 2d8, RoF 3), and the turret provides Near Total Cover (-6). These men are armed with Luger pistols (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6-1, RoF 1) rather than rifles.

In the Belly of the Beast

Read this passage as the squad approaches the barracks:

The barracks are built into a long hill sitting in the middle of the fort. Thick gray masonry juts out from the hillside, cracked with black smears where the bombardment has struck. The west of the barracks shows new construction—a couple of thick, round walls built by the Germans that act as small-arms firing ports. There are two doorways—one at the west, and one at the east—with short staircases behind a thick wall of stone for protection.

WHERE ARE ALL THE GERMANS?

One thing the War Master should mention to the players during this scene is that there are a lot less Germans in the fort than anticipated. Casualties can explain a lot of the loss of numbers, but even the horrors of war can't completely account for how few Germans there are inside Douaumont. There are still plenty of soldiers to make the heroes' lives uncomfortable should they get caught, but otherwise the whole complex seems strangely empty.

There's a reason, but it's unknown to the players at this point in the adventure. The day before the heroes infiltrate the fort, the Abteilung zur Weiterentwicklung Spezieller Waffen und Truppen (Department of Special Weapons and Troop Development) arrived at Douaumont. This organization is charged with investigating strange occurrences and developing methods to either destroy or exploit the weirdness for the Kaiser. After the disaster in May, concern about the supernatural properties of the fort has prompted the AbtWESpezWA/Tr to keep a close eye on it. Recently, rumors of the unusually high mortality rate in Fort Douaumont's hospital, as well as neighboring units' reports of the strange behavior of the 54th Reserve Infantry Division's troops, prompted an investigation. The ensuing struggle killed the investigators along with many of the faerie's minions inside the fortress.

It shouldn't be a major detail, but something the War Master should casually mention as he describes the fort. That way, the impact of seeing the devastation in later scenes has a deeper payoff, and makes more sense to the players.

There are no guards at the entrances of the barracks—a fact which is highly unusual (see **Where Are All the Germans?**, see page 11).

If the Germans captured any characters in the moat or on the glacis, the prisoners are brought in through the western gate. When their captors notice the absence of guards at the entrances, the Germans assume that another force of Frenchmen has already infiltrated the fort and overcome the sentries. They ask the prisoners about the presence of other raiding parties, and if denied, then ask if they have been in the barracks already. The Germans are unlikely to believe anything the captives say, but they keep repeating the question until they get frustrated. The heroes are then marched through the west door and into the Main Hallway.



Main Hallway

Whether the characters enter through the west or the east entrance, they walk through one of two rooms the soldiers normally sleep in.

The iron door opens on a long, narrow room. On either side of the door are small windows that act as firing slits. The opposite end of the hallway is lost in the shadows of distance. Fitfully lit by electric bulbs strung along the cracked and pitted ceiling, the floor is covered in trash and discarded equipment. More disturbingly, bodies in German uniforms lay sprawled up and down the corridor. Heroes who make a Notice roll realize that the Germans wear two styles of uniform.

Many corpses wear a uniform with insignia identifying them as belonging to the 54th Reserve Infantry Division. A few wear uniforms with a strange runic device on the collar. Anyone who makes a Knowledge (Occult) roll recognizes the runes as protective devices from ancient Nordic mythology. These are actually *Abteilung zur Weiterentwicklung Spezieller Waffen und Truppen* (AbtWESpezWA/Tr) troops sent to investigate the strange reports filtering out of Fort Douaumont. The bodies appear to have been shot, many times in the case of the 54th Division troops.

While the 54th soldiers' corpses are armed with typical Gewehr 98 rifles and Luger pistols, the others are armed with MP18 submachine guns (see the *Weird War I Player's Guide*), a weapon never seen by the Frenchmen. These strange weapons look very advanced, having been issued to the AbtWESpezWA/Tr soldiers for this mission. Any individual trying to use one of these early submachine guns must make a Smarts roll to figure out how to use the weapon. Unfortunately, these weapons fire a unique round, and the few corpses armed with them only have 1d10 rounds each.

East Bunkrooms

On the south side of the main hall is a series of rooms used as barracks and depots by the Germans. Most of the rooms are bunkrooms for use by transiting troops or the various sections that made up the garrison. Each room contains rows of bunk beds crammed together along the side walls, with simple bedding. At the foot of each bed is a heavy trunk, presumably for each soldier's supplies.

Strangely, the bunks are unoccupied despite the late hour. Searching the trunks reveals ammunition (none for the MP18 submachine gun, though) and uniforms, if the heroes want to take them. The Geneva Convention does not yet exist, but donning foreign uniforms is still considered espionage.

Ammo and Weapon Storage

Along with the bunkrooms, inquisitive Frenchmen can also find several rooms dedicated to storage of war materiel. These include rooms filled with thousands of rounds of machine gun, rifle, and pistol ammunition, as well as grenades. There are also stores of rifles and machine guns (too heavy to be used in anything but a static defense) and equipment warehouses filled with web gear, helmets, backpacks, and other personal items. No special weapons like flamethrowers can be found.

If anyone spends any amount of time digging through these storerooms, a swarm of angry rats, agitated by an artillery shell striking the surface of the fort above the room, comes boiling out of various nooks and crannies to attack any Frenchmen in the area.

- **Rat Swarm:** Use Swarm stats in *Savage Worlds*. They begin as a Medium Burst Template, but can split into two Small Burst Templates.

Stairs Down

On the north side of the main corridor, an opening in the wall leads to a landing. On the left a stout set of concrete stairs leads into the bowels of the fortress. If the characters go downstairs, go to **Ghosts in the Barracks** on page 15.

Command Post

In the center of the upper floor of the barracks is a small command post. The room is dominated by a large table with a map and some wooden objects to represent troops and gun placements, with similar maps hanging on the walls. Near the table some low walls have been built, presumably for soldiers to hide behind in case the fort is infiltrated. There's a door at the opposite end of the room from the entryway. A single oil lamp, its flame slowly dying, sits on the table. Four corpses in 54th Division officer's uniforms are sprawled around the table, dead from multiple gunshot wounds. Another corpse dressed in a uniform with strange runic collar devices is also here.

Success on a Notice roll also finds a doctor's bag under the table. The satchel contains a silver crucifix, several buds of garlic, five wooden stakes, a bag of salt, a packet of holy wafers, a vial of water, and a bag of iron filings.

The door on the opposite side of the room opens into quarters for the duty staff, and contains several cots, a writing table, and footlockers. As the characters enter the unlit room, a disheveled German soldier cowering in the corner behind a cot attacks with surprise.

THE LOWER BARRACKS

The lower floor of Fort Douaumont consists of a major hallway with rooms to the south, similar to the upper level. On 8 May of this year, something catastrophic occurred in the lower level. A titanic explosion and firestorm engulfed these levels, killing hundreds of German troops. Soldiers outside the fortress opened fire on shapes crawling and shambling from the smoke and vapors belching from the entrances in what was later described as a tragic friendly fire incident.

The bodies of more than 600 troops killed in the event were dumped in an artillery shelter on the north side of the fort. The shelter was sealed with concrete, and a cross and other religious symbols were placed there by the chaplain corps in memory of those lost (so they say).

Now, five months later, a sulfurous smell still permeates the lower level. The air is foul, and heroes should make a Vigor roll or suffer a Fatigue level each time they enter a new room. This can cause Incapacitation. Anyone Incapacitated falls unconscious and does not revive unless taken outside or administered oxygen, which restores a level of Fatigue per five minutes provided.

The constant bombardment has shaken loose the plaster used to line the tunnels, exposing strange graffiti and symbols on the original masonry walls, some of which seems to be made of inlaid metal. Chunks of concrete fallen from the ceiling have been moved to the side of the main tunnel, lengths of iron rebar sticking out like compound fractures in shattered limbs. Strangely, the rats that infest the upper levels do not seem to be present in the lower barracks, even though a partially collapsed tunnel wide enough for a horse-drawn wagon leads directly into it from the outside.



Feldwebel Schwerin was part of the party who entered the fort yesterday. When the elemental attacked the group in the basement (see page 16), his mind snapped and he fled here, where he has been hiding ever since. If the heroes manage to subdue him and persuade him they are not part of the conspiracy—he might be coaxed into helping. If so, Schwerin tells the reluctant allies of the AbtWESpezWA/Tr's suspicions regarding Douaumont.

Schwerin also relates that something has caused the men of the 54th Division to act strangely, and that casualties have been disappearing. If the heroes can make him Friendly, he tells the incredible tale of the water elemental attacking his command as they approached the laboratory. In no case can he be persuaded to accompany them into the lower level of the barracks.

- **AbtWESpezWA/Tr Agent (1):** Use Seasoned German Officer stats in the *Weird War I Player's Guide*. Under normal circumstances, he's armed with an MP18 submachine gun (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 3). He's well-trained in its use and has the Rock 'n Roll Edge.

Kitchen

The kitchen is another long room. At each end are tables and chairs for over a hundred people. In the center is an island surrounded by a short wall, containing cooking appliances.

The entire area is otherwise empty—only the occasional overturned chair reveals anything out of the ordinary. Rats brazenly scamper across the tables, snatching up bits of food. There's no one in the area. The quiet and the lack of people provide a chance for the War Master to ramp up the tension and weirdness of the fort, similar to the **Hospital Suite** (page 16). There are adequate food supplies in storage around the kitchen area to feed about a hundred men for a few days, but they're all designed to be stored for a long time: honey, salt, tea, coffee, flour, dried beans, baking soda, and so on. (The rest of the food supplies are stored in the basement.)

The doorway to the right is a small bakery, complete with the rat-eaten crumbs of a few cold loaves of bread sitting on the counter. The doorway to the left leads to what appears to be an empty room with water on the floor—it used to be an icehouse, but the ice has all melted.

Ghosts in the Barracks

As the heroes walk down the stairs in the bunks, they notice something strange almost immediately.

As soon as you start to walk down the stairs, the smell hits you. Copper mixed with raw sewage that you can taste in the back of your throat. Unfortunately, you've been in this war long enough to recognize the smell of dead bodies in a confined space. Shining a light down the staircase confirms it. You see a number of corpses wearing German uniforms at the bottom.

Once the squad decides to descend and investigate, the smell becomes overpowering. Each soldier must make a Spirit roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from vomiting and nausea. All of the soldiers feel a cold breeze and spot something out of the corners of their eyes that they can never quite catch.

At the bottom of the stairs, Frenchmen who make a Notice roll at -2 see that most of the plaster on the ceiling has been dislodged, revealing strange runes inlaid in the concrete of the roof. Anyone with Knowledge (Occult) who makes a

check recognizes an interlocking pattern of ancient protective sigils. With a raise, an occult scholar realizes the signs are subtly shifted, instead forming a pattern that draws in and concentrates malignant energy.

If an investigator examines a corpse without touching it, he makes a Notice roll. If successful, he sees that while many of the corpses have wounds consistent with battle, a number of them dressed in the uniforms with the strange runic collar devices have white froth on their lips and a slight tint to their skin which looks almost like they drowned. If the hero mentions this fact, the team hears incoherent whispers. It's time for a Fear check at +1.

There's no way past the bottom of the staircase without disturbing the bodies. If someone does, the disturbed form suddenly opens its eyes.

The corpse starts to stand up, staring at you with dark eyes. "She has freed us," the dead man says in German. "She will free all of us." That's when you notice some of the other corpses dressed in the uniform of the 54th Division standing up as well.



The floor at the bottom of the staircase is covered in corpses, blood, and bodily fluids, and counts as Difficult Ground. The staircase itself is wide enough for two people abreast, but there's only room for one person to fight on the staircase. If the characters retreat from the staircase, the zombies follow, even outside the barracks.

After the first round of the battle, ghosts of German soldiers become visible—they look like translucent men watching the fight. These are the spirits of the men killed in the event of May, and are trapped here by the runic pattern in the ceiling. Sensing the power of Magotine and unaware of the cause of their unnatural existence, they fly around the melee and scream in insane rage, causing a Fear check at -2. Sensing the mark of Magotine in the zombies, the ghosts attack them with thrown rocks and debris, leaving the Frenchmen alone. As each zombie is defeated, one of the ghostly attackers fades from existence.

Those who search the zombies find they all wear Magotine's talismans and are equipped with Gewehr 98 rifles. The five AbtWESpezWA/Tr soldiers are armed with four MP18s and one Kleinflammenwerfer. See the *Weird War I Player's Guide* for weapon stats.

- **Zombies (2 per hero):** See the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook*.
- **Ghosts (2 per hero):** See *Savage Worlds*.

Exploring the Basement

Read this passage as the squad forges on into the lower level:

After you pick your way past the pile of corpses, you see that you're in a poorly-lit tunnel made from rough stone, heading west and east. A few feet away, there's a wall with a small hole on the left side of the tunnel, followed by another one on the right side a few feet after that, and so on.

These walls weren't in your original plans for the fort—they must have been added by the Germans. Bodies litter the hallway—some lean against the defensive walls while others simply slump to the ground.

All show signs of gunfire injuries, and some show what looks like a flamethrower's effects. Puddles of water throw weird reflections across the walls and ceiling.

If the heroes came down the west staircase, they can go west to the **Hospital Suite** or east to the **Empty Casemate**.

Hospital Suite

This series of rooms has been turned into a hospital complex. Two rooms are wards, one for seriously wounded, one for the lightly wounded. They contain cots lining each wall, and charts hang from the end of some of the beds. There are trunks, tables, and carts full of medical supplies scattered around the room.

The table and beds all have a patina of dust covering them. Some chunks of ceiling have fallen onto the beds. There's a door at the opposite end of the hospital, and an open doorway to the side.

If the heroes check any of the charts, they find the latest notations are several months old. Nothing unusual happens in this room, but the War Master can use the opportunity to spook the players a little. The soldiers hear a random noise that turns out to be a cat or a rodent, perhaps, or maybe a character notices something out of the corner of his eye, only to realize he's shot at a falling table. The heroes can take medical supplies while they are here, and attempt Healing rolls if they haven't already and are within the Golden Hour (see **Healing** in *Savage Worlds*).

The doorway to the side leads to a surgery area, with a surgical table, anesthesia apparatus, surgical instruments, and disinfecting agents. As in the main hospital, the equipment in here is covered with dust and looks to have last been used weeks ago. Another room is set up as quarters for stretcher bearers, and contains bunks and trunks with personal gear.

The last room is a combination office/living quarters for the doctors assigned to the fortress. Both the stretcher bearer and doctors' quarters have enough sets of breathing apparatus for the entire French squad. A successful Common Knowledge check allows anyone wearing this gear to avoid the Vigor rolls to resist the effects of the foul air on this level.

Anyone searching the doctors' quarters who makes a Notice roll finds a diary wedged between the bed and wall. Those who speak German can read the scratchy handwriting (or a German prisoner can translate). Give the players the handout on page 27.

Western Cisterns

Along the south side of the main hallway is a series of rooms that were once water cisterns. Age and the incessant pounding of artillery on the fortress cracked their walls, rendering them useless, and the Germans knocked holes in the walls to allow access to these spaces. They now serve as food and water storage areas.

Supply and Food Storage

This is a large room full of crates in a variety of sizes. Markings on the crates show they contain mainly construction tools, medical supplies, sacks of concrete, lumber, iron rebar, and food.

Many of the crates are empty, but there are still enough supplies for at least a few more weeks. More AbtWESpezWA/Tr soldiers, armed with MP18s (d20 bullets each) and a flamethrower, lie on the floor, clearly dead in a manner similar to the ones on the staircase. The floor is wet, as if someone spilled a lot of dirty water here.

The heroes can take any food or supplies they think they need. If they examine the corpses, a Healing or Knowledge (Medicine) roll reveals they died from drowning—similar to the corpses on the staircase, if the heroes examined those as well.

Water Storage

This large storage room is labeled “Wasser” (water). The old cistern is filled with a large number of wooden barrels. Strangely, the lids of the barrels are scattered about the floor, and the floor itself is obscured by a few inches of muddy water.

Magotine summoned a water elemental from the barrels yesterday to help destroy the AbtWESpezWA/Tr team. While no longer under her control, the creature is confused and angry at being unable to escape this arid, magically polluted environment it finds itself in, and attacks any intruders in a fit of rage. If it manages to knock out everyone in the squad, it deals a Finishing Move by drowning them as they lay unconscious.

After the raiders defeat the elemental, they can look through the barrels. A successful Notice roll discovers the corpse of a German curled up in the bottom of a half-full cask. If the Frenchmen try to remove his body from the barrel, the drowning attacks those who disturb its watery rest!

Once it's defeated, the waterlogged corpse can be searched. According to his identity card in his pocket this was Major Joachim Richter. In addition to his identification, a set of iron keys is also on his person. These keys open the padlock on the **Secret Laboratory** (see page 18).

Major Richter was the second in command of the fortress and along with Colonel Frentzen quickly fell under Magotine's sway. When Major Koch and his AbtWESpezWA/Tr troops entered the laboratory and engaged Magotine, her spell over him was broken. He fled the lab, locking the iron gate shut with an iron chain and iron padlock, before fleeing deeper into the fortress' bowels.

Trying to hide in an empty water barrel, he was discovered and killed by the water elemental.

- **Water Elemental (1):** See *Savage Worlds*.

Major Richter, Drowning

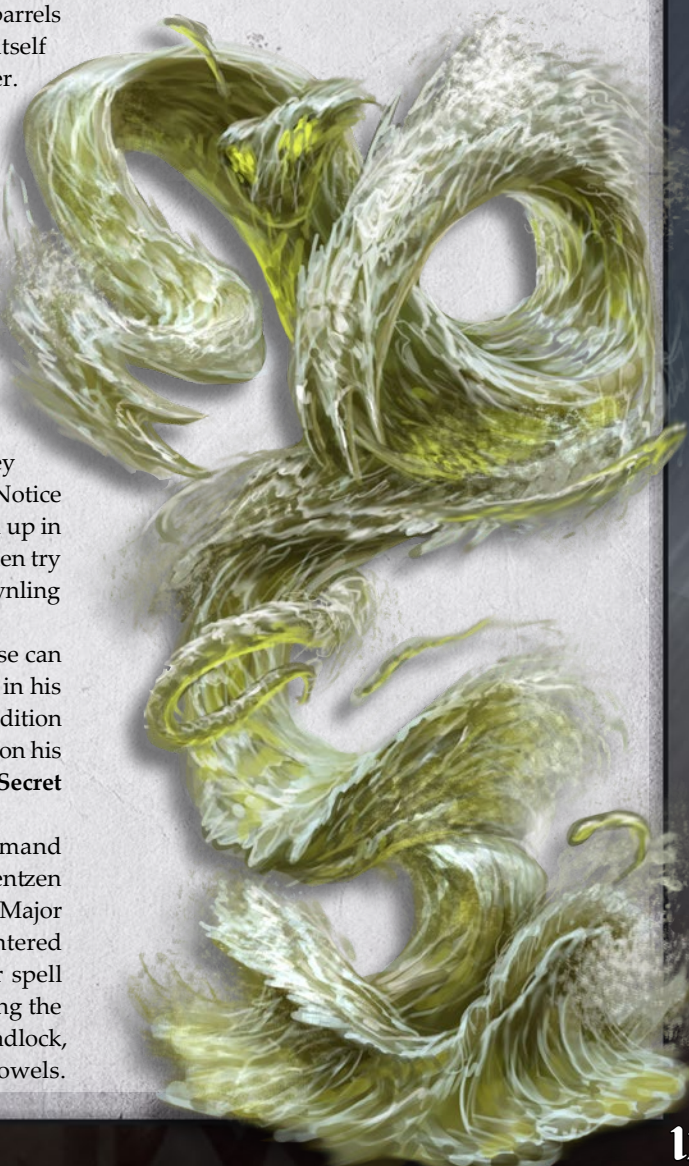
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Drown:** A drowning that succeeds in a grapple attack transfers water from its lungs to those of its victim, drowning them. Each round the grapple is maintained, the victim must make a Vigor roll at -2 or suffer a level of Fatigue. When he reaches Death, he drowns.
- **Undead:** Undead: +2 Toughness, +2 bonus to recover from Shaken, no additional damage from Called Shots, immune to disease and poison.



Lower Barracks Entrance Tunnel

This tunnel is wide enough to permit the easy passage of a horse-drawn wagon. It runs under the bulk of the fortress and out to the southern face, where the constant artillery bombardment caused a collapse. Now all that remains is a narrow tunnel wide enough for a man to crawl out on his hands and knees. Even this small opening has been closed with sandbags to prevent the entry of poison gas. Anyone who pushes aside the sandbags and crawls through the tunnel finds themselves at the base of the barracks' shell-pocked facade.

Eastern Cisterns

These large rooms serve as weapons depots and are full of crates. A cursory glance of the markings reveals ammunition and weapon boxes. Thousands of rounds of small arms ammunition, signaling rockets, as well as over 7,000 hand grenades fill these chambers.

The ammunition available fits German weapons. The heroes can take whatever they want or can carry to replenish their supplies or pick up new weapons. The crates contain bayonets, Luger P08 9mms, and Gewehr 98 rifles, as well as tripod mounted MG08 machine guns (see **The German Army** in the *Weird War I Player's Guide* for statistics).

One room contains stacks of 155mm artillery shells of French design, left over from before the German conquest of the fortress. An explosion in this room would trigger a devastating blast affecting both the lower and upper levels of Fort Douaumont.

Underground Railway

The main hallway has an opening in its floor that gives access to a short stairway that intersects with a long tunnel. Rail tracks go off into the darkness, where no electric lights are installed. The railway connects the various forts around Verdun and provides a way to ship supplies and soldiers underground. It looks unused now; the tunnel was blocked off by the French as soon as the fort was captured by the Germans. The heroes don't see any railcars, but a Notice roll at -2 reveals a faint clanging sound in the tunnel, which runs to the southeast.

Examining the railway itself doesn't yield much: The rails are a little rusty from disuse, and there isn't much to see with the bad lighting in the area. There's a lot of room on either side of the railway to unload supplies and personnel, but there isn't anything there now.

The tunnel runs for a little over a kilometer before it ends in a tunnel collapse. The clanging sound gets louder as the heroes approach, and the squad members can see a party of five German troops digging at the pile of rubble that blocks the passageway, lit by the feeble glow of several oil lamps, while one keeps watch down the tunnel.

These men are the remnants of the AbtWESpezWA/Tr unit that entered Fort Douaumont. When all Hell broke loose and the garrison attacked them, these troops fell back into the old rail tunnel in the confusion. Unsure of the situation, they retreated down the tunnel. Now the soldiers are trying to dig through the blockage and escape to Fort Vaux, which lies at the end of this passageway.

If the Frenchmen approach with no lights, they have a chance to surprise the Germans. The sentry is active, and if he spots anyone coming down the tunnel he first challenges them. If the Feldwebel in charge of the group has a chance to speak with the Frenchmen, he attempts to enlist them in his cause and declare a truce.

Feldwebel Hoffman is a grizzled veteran of weirdness on the Eastern Front, where he was recruited into the AbtWESpezWA/Tr. If he can speak to the heroes—he speaks French—he briefly outlines the weirdness that brought his unit into the fortress and suggests that it is in the best interest of both sides to join forces to eradicate whatever has taken over the complex. If a truce is implemented, the Germans become allied Extras of the squad..

- **AbtWESpezWA/Tr Troopers (5):** Use Veteran German Storm Trooper stats in the *Weird War I Player's Guide*. They are armed with MP18s, and have two hand grenades remaining between them. They have Low Ammo.

The Secret Laboratory

According to the map, this should be a powder magazine. Instead, all the squad sees is a heavy rusty iron gate, with a sign in German that reads "Laboratory. Restricted Access." The bars are thick, and nothing is visible beyond them. There's a chain around two of the bars, holding the gate shut with a thick padlock.

Through the bars you see tables all over the place, buried in files, books, and loose paper. One of the tables is loaded with glass tubes filled with a reddish liquid over cold Bunsen burners. A couple of blackboards are covered in strange, arcane formulae and equations. There are several

steel gurneys in one corner covered in what looks like dried blood. The far end of the room has a high wall made of gray stone that divides the lab in two—a similar construction to the smaller walls you saw in the hallway.

As the heroes try to assimilate what they see, a beautiful pale-skinned woman runs into view from the back of the room, chased by three men. She screams for help as the men begin to contort and shake. Before the squad's horrified eyes, the Germans shredding their uniforms and transform into hideous beast men.

"Please help me! These creatures mean to deny France what I have discovered!" the woman shouts, then runs out of sight into the back of the room, closely pursued by the gorillas. Feminine screams, breaking glass, and loud thuds quickly follow.

If the heroes recovered the keys from Major Richter in the **Water Storage** room (page 17), they can open the padlock with one of them. Otherwise, a character needs to make a Lockpicking roll to defeat the lock, or find some way to cut through it or the chain—such as the tools found in **Supply and Food Storage** (page 17)—using a Strength roll, or by shooting off the padlock (Toughness 8).

If the soldiers remove the lock and chain, the gate opens with a creak. The beast men attack as the squad opens the door.

The beast men cannot be reasoned with, and follow fleeing heroes anywhere inside the barracks complex. If one of the beast men is killed, it reverts back to the form of a German soldier.

Once all three horrors are dealt with, the squad can explore the laboratory.

- **Beast Men (3):** These German soldiers have been transformed by faerie magic into goat-like beings. See the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook* for stats.

Deciphering the Clues

Reading the paperwork or chalkboards requires an appropriate roll, such as Knowledge (Science) or Knowledge (Occult). With success, the hero understands that these are attempts to understand a force called "psychic resonance"—some kind of mental control or transference that comes from shedding blood. There are notes that a number of experiments have been conducted with zinc alloy, specifically identity discs.

On a raise, the hero gets all the previous information and finds notes about a captured woman named Magotine.

The details of her capture aren't mentioned in the reports. Any character born and raised in France who hears the name "Magotine" might know the information in the **Serpentin Vert** sidebar on page 23.

If the heroes explore beyond the large wall, move to **Talking with Magotine**. If the squad searches deeper in the adjoining magazine they find a horrific sight. Stacked like cordwood are the bodies of more than 50 Germans. A Healing roll reveals that although they all suffered grievous wounds from shrapnel, blasts, or small-arms fire, most were actually killed by a slit throat. Several are dressed in the uniforms of the AbtWESpezWA/Tr.

Talking With Magotine

As you go around the wall, you see a thin, pale young woman cowering in the corner. She looks like she was once fashionably dressed, but her clothing and stockings have been ripped and torn, and there are cuts and bruises all over her skin.

She looks up at you, her deep blue eyes wide, and asks in French, "Are you here to hurt me?"

Magotine uses her *disguise* power to try and make herself look as pitiable as possible. If the players suspect something isn't quite right with this scene, have each of them make a Notice roll at -4—otherwise, the check is made at -6. If any of the heroes succeeds, he sees an ugly old woman in a simple black dress. She looks unharmed.



Magotine claims her name is “Bridgette” and that she is a scientist sent to the front a few months ago to test out secret weapons. She was captured by the Germans and the rest of her party killed. The commandant and his staff were some kind of beast men, as evidenced by their transformation. She pleads for the gallant squad to take her back to French lines so she can reveal what she has seen.

If one of the heroes sees through her disguise, the faerie drops the illusion and admits to being called Magotine. (Any character born and raised in France who hears the name “Magotine” knows the information in the **Serpentin Vert** sidebar). If the heroes attack her, she uses her *puppet* power on the AbtWESpezWA/Tr troops if present, or any other allied Extras, forcing them to attack the heroes.

If allowed to speak, Magotine admits to being a faerie, but she claims not to be evil. The faerie story is just that—a story—but she claims it has a grain of truth in it. Magotine has always had a soft spot for France, and whenever invaders have attacked the country, she’s done what she could to defend it. However, she claims that she is bound by a “faerie code” which prevents her from being seen by mortals, or her magic fails. As such, her magic has always had to be subtle and discrete. This has caused her intentions to be misrepresented, such as in that awful story about her. Still, she fought when she could. She slips here, due to the strange rules of her fae background, and reveals she can’t stand the touch of iron.

When she found out about the horrible things happening in Verdun, she came to try and help the French, as she always has. However, when she arrived at Fort Douaumont, she didn’t realize how much time had passed between her world and this one, and didn’t recognize that the people in the fort weren’t French at all. By then, it was too late, and she was put behind the iron bars of the magazine.

She claims the commandant tortured her for her power, to try to use it against the French. She refused, of course, and once the Germans realized how much the iron hurt her, they kept her there. By combining arcane knowledge of their own and studying her and her powers, they were able to create the talismans that gave their troops incredible resilience and resurrected their dead.

Magotine points to her weakness against iron as proof that she couldn’t possibly be the one causing all of these terrible things to happen throughout the fortress. If she were let go, however, she would gladly fight alongside the French again to reclaim this fort and stop the senseless slaughter of good men.

If the heroes joined forces with the AbtWESpezWA/Tr troops in the **Underground Railway** (page 18), the Germans are extremely skeptical of “Bridgette’s” story. If Magotine reveals herself, they move to attack her, surmising that she is the cause of the troubles in the fortress.

Dealing With Magotine

At some point, whether the heroes believe Magotine’s stories or not, they have to make a decision about what to do with the faerie.

Leave Her in the Magazine

The heroes might decide simply to leave her there. Just because she’s in an iron cage, however, doesn’t mean she’s helpless—her ability to change the Germans into beast men is proof of that, even if she can’t do it again right away. Her power continues to grow, and it’s possible she eventually manipulates another German to free her.

If the heroes try to lock her in the cage, or never opened it in the first place, she uses her *puppet* power to get the group fighting among themselves, although any Spellcasting attempts against soldiers beyond the bars incur a –2 penalty. She attempts to slip out in the confusion when a puppet opens the door by shooting off the lock.

If the squad leaves her in the magazine and reports her presence to headquarters, both General Devriès and Sir Conan Doyle are adamant that she needs to be either recovered (if she can be swayed to work for the Allies) or destroyed (if not). If she grows in power, her control over the conflict increases. The whole point of the mission was to give the Allies an advantage in the final push.

The War Master can decide the difficulty or danger of a second mission into the fort. The Germans may still be unaware of the evil faerie underneath them, or more troops wearing her talismans may have moved into the fort in an attempt to free her.

Release or Attack Magotine

If the heroes and Magotine are on good terms, she thanks them for letting her go and makes her way out of the lab (to get away from the cage). If she thinks the squad may betray her, when she gets near some corpses she betrays them first, revealing her true colors as an evil faerie. Magotine uses the *zombie* power to animate nearby dead bodies to attack, then *confusion* or *puppet* to cover her escape.

If the heroes want to restrain her, she uses *Trick* to make it look like the bonds are tighter than they

appear, and if successful, slips her bonds at an opportune time.

If the raiders simply attack Magotine in the magazine, her goal is escape. If she doesn't feel iron is a problem, she focuses on getting some servants, either through using *puppet* on one of the Frenchmen or *zombie* on a nearby corpse. She doesn't have much in the way of direct attacks, choosing instead to have others fight for her. If the heroes get too close to her, she uses *confusion* to escape to a place where she can create more minions.

If Magotine manages to escape the powder magazine, she heads for the **Lower Barracks Entrance Tunnel** (page 18). Once free of the fortress she vanishes into the chaos of the battlefield, no doubt to find another willing servant on either side of the conflict. In a time and place so soaked in the delicious marinade of terror, suffering, and death, the evil faerie can't resist lingering in the area rather than returning to the boredom of her Ardennes grotto.

Epilogue

If the raiders defeat Magotine, her minions in and outside the fort suffer a psychic shock that renders them incapable of offensive action, allowing the squad to escape back to their lines. Any Germans they encounter are muddled and unsure of what's happening. They meekly surrender to the squad if the heroes are inclined to take prisoners back with them.

Thanks to Magotine's removal, the French attack the next day sweeps into the fortress almost unopposed, and Fort Douaumont is once again in Allied hands. The official story attributes the easy victory to the huge siege guns' strikes on the fortress, which penetrate deeply into the depths of the barracks, killing or stunning most of the garrison.

If the team decides to take Magotine back with them, she provides safe passage through her minions back to French lines. Alternatively, if the heroes ended up allying with the AbtWESpezWA/Tr and defeating the evil faerie, the Germans facilitate their return to French lines. They ask the Frenchmen to turn over the MP18s.

Once they have escaped, the soldiers' commander orders them to report back to headquarters for debriefing. If the heroes tell the truth of the strange encounters they had in the fort, General Devriès is shocked and confused by the report, but Sir Conan Doyle is intrigued and excited by the possibility. If the squad defeated Magotine and talk at all about it, Doyle utterly and

completely believes them and devotes his energy to the study of faeries.

If the squad brings Magotine back with them, she quickly insinuates herself with MI-13's leader, as well as General Devriès, who seem to be unnaturally attentive to her. The two men profusely thank the heroes for their contribution to the war effort. As they lead her away for interrogation, the faerie looks over her shoulder and gives the soldiers a smirk and wink. Within a few weeks they might be issued new identity discs...

No matter the outcome, the heroes are noted for their service and bravery, and Devriès submits them for medals (see **Awards and Medals** in *Weird War I Player's Guide*). The squad receives a +2 if they turned Magotine over to headquarters, and +1 if they turned over an example of the MP18—which the French quickly send back to Paris for reverse engineering.





THE LEGEND OF SERPENTIN VERT

Serpentin Vert (translated as "The Green Serpent") is a common fairy tale in France, which has been told to French children time and again for centuries. It's a story of a handsome king who was turned into a green dragon for seven years by a wicked faerie named Magotine. Any characters born and raised in France remember it with success on a Common Knowledge roll at -2. The story goes like this:

There was a princess named Laidronette (although in some versions, she had a twin), and the royal family held a celebration feast for her birthday. The King and Queen invited all the fairies to attend, but they forgot to invite Magotine, who is the oldest and most wicked faerie who ever lived. She was so angry at not being invited that she cast a spell to turn Laidronette into the ugliest woman in the world.

Laidronette grew up in a tower, lonely and unhappy with her life. One day, she saw a green dragon, and nearly died trying to run from it. She awoke to discover that she was in a faraway kingdom as the guest of an unknown king. She was visited every night by the king, but she only heard his voice and never saw him. Nevertheless, she fell in love with the king, and she asked to marry him.

The king said she needed to wait for seven years until his "terrible curse" was lifted. Laidronette discovered that the king was really the green dragon, and she fled. War broke out between the two kingdoms. Magotine used the war to her advantage, and grew more powerful as a result—she ruined both kingdoms, the dragon was sent to Hades, and the faerie took Laidronette as her prisoner.

Laidronette and the king then went through a series of trials, through which they broke their respective enchantments, and eventually defeated Magotine. Different versions of the story have more or less trials, depending on the telling, but they all involve Magotine gaining power from the conflict, and ultimately forced to undo her work by Laidronette and the dragon king.

Appendix: The Faerie's Forces

✠ Magotine

The events in the fairy tale “Serpentin Vert” are fictional, but Magotine really is an old and wicked faerie who gets more powerful as people fight and die around her. She’s left her grotto in the Ardennes for the world of men a few times, and she is drawn to areas in which she is remembered and spoken of in dread.

The last time she came was in 1792, during the first Battle of Verdun. The French Revolutionary forces were slaughtered by the Prussians on their march to Paris, and Magotine came to the area in order to gain enough power to conquer Verdun herself. However, the battle was over so quickly that Magotine never got the power she needed. Before she could escape back to her grotto, however, she was accidentally hit by a Prussian cannonball made of iron—her primary weakness. She was knocked unconscious, and mistakenly buried in Douaumont as a French casualty of war.

Magotine sensed the bloody Franco-Prussian War in 1870, but remained trapped and frustrated within her grave. When construction began on the complex of fortresses ringing Verdun, secret components in the government designed a ring of forts in a pattern designed to draw upon latent mystical energy in the area as well as drawing it from elsewhere. In addition, no one realized that the architectural firm contracted to upgrade the fort in 1887 added a variety of components to it which increased the supernatural aura surrounding the structure. The resulting flux in magical energy weakened Magotine’s bonds, and also drove the French away. When the Germans invaded the fort earlier in 1916, they were surprised to see it relatively empty, but they immediately set up fortifications to defend it.

As more and more French and German soldiers dug trenches and died near the fort, Magotine began to stir. An artillery barrage in August smashed the graveyard in which she lay and finally set her free. She made her way to Fort Douaumont, drawn by its mystical power like a moth to a flame. The faerie used her mental powers to confuse the soldiers that discovered her, but wasn’t strong enough to completely control them. All she could manage was to channel their curiosity and desire into a need to present her to the commandant, instead of killing her or transferring her somewhere else. Once inside the fortress, Magotine realized the tremendous

amount of supernatural power coursing through the structure.

Meeting Colonel Frentzen, she understood that he craved power and glory with no moral compunctions. By offering him a way to manufacture her talismans and strengthen his troops through blood sacrifice, she quickly insinuated her way into the garrison’s command structure. Unfortunately for her, not everyone in the fort fell under her sway, and messages found their way to higher authorities. These, combined with rumors circulating among neighboring units, finally prompted the *Abteilung zur Weiterentwicklung Spezieller Waffen und Truppen* to send a unit to investigate.

The day before the raid, a platoon of heavily armed investigators arrived in the fortress and quickly fanned out through the structure, finding it oddly undermanned. Colonel Frentzen welcomed Major Koch and invited him to the lab, where Magotine awaited. The scientist she controlled kept enough strength of will to take the key to her cell and the lab with him, however. He barely managed to lock the lab before her compulsion drove him to kill himself, but that act left her trapped with some of the other scientists. Her frustration in still being trapped bled over to the control links, and her fury was translated into the indiscriminate slaughter of the Germans in the barracks.

Her powers drained from the battle, and trapped behind the iron bars of the laboratory, the evil faerie simply bided her time until her energy replenished and someone came along who could be tricked into opening the gate. To a being thousands of years old, a few more days of waiting are nothing.

Magotine can assume any shape she wishes, but typically appears as an old French woman in a black dress or a beautiful young woman in fashionable clothes, but her skin is unusually pale. Whenever she uses her magic, a keen observer can see her eyes glow in a rainbow of colors just as the effect happens with a Notice check at -2.

As one of the fae, she is deceitful in the extreme. She feeds off the suffering and misery of humans, whether caused by her or of their own making.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d10, Fighting d8, Magic d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Spellcasting d10, Stealth d10, Taunt d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4

Hindrances: Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Improved Frenzy

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Faerie Code:** Magotine must abide by special rules of behavior. She cannot lie (but doesn't have to tell the truth, either!); she must always parley, if asked; if she agrees to a bargain, she must keep to the letter (but not the spirit!); she must always accept something offered.
- **Immunity:** Magotine suffers half damage from non-magical attacks.
- **Low Light Vision:** The faerie can see perfectly in all but Pitch Black conditions.
- **Shadow Magic:** Fae are magical creatures tied closely with darkness. In areas of darkness (at least -1 to attack rolls), they can cast *invisibility* and *slumber*.
- **Animal Urges:** Like her long-lost cousin Circe, Magotine can release men's animalistic side. Once per day she can turn up to five men into savage beasts such as wild boars, beast men, or other creatures that reflect their animalistic urges.
- **Low Light Vision:** Magotine ignores vision penalties in Dim or Dark lighting.
- **Magic:** Magotine knows *confusion*, *disguise*, *fear*, *obscure*, *puppet*, and *zombie*, and has 30 Power Points. Anyone wearing one of her talismans is at -4 to resist her magic.
- **Weakness (Iron):** Attacks using iron (such as the iron used in the cell bars, a length of rebar in the concrete of the fortress, or iron filings thrown in her face) gain a +2 bonus to damage. Further, even the touch of iron is incredibly painful for her and saps her

power—she suffers a -2 penalty to all her rolls while in contact with iron, surrounded by iron, or casting spells through iron (such as the gate). A thrown handful of iron filings deals her 1d6+2 damage.

Magotine's Minions

These German soldiers belong to the 54th Reserve Infantry Division and are equipped with Magotine's talismans. Under their influence, the soldiers don't seem to notice wounds they suffer, and fight to the last man, ignoring comrades who fall to enemy fire—who sometimes rise again to continue the battle.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Cha: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5; **Sanity:** 5

Hindrances: -

Edges: -

Gear: Uniform, steel helmet (+1), Gewehr 98 rifle, spade, gas mask, Magotine's talisman (see below).

Special Abilities:

- **Cursed Talisman:** Anyone wearing one of these specially prepared identity discs suffers a -4 penalty to resist Magotine's magic.
- **Hardy:** These troops do not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Faithful Unto Death:** Soldiers wearing one of Magotine's talismans (a marked identity disc) who are killed arise d4 rounds later as a Zombie (see the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook*).



Magotine's Talismans

These amulets appear to be German identity discs with some sort of strange symbol scratched into the surface of each side. The scored runes seem to be filled with a dark red, almost black ink. In reality this is the blood of German soldiers sacrificed to imbue these charms with their supernatural power.

Power: Anyone who wears one of Magotine's talismans around their neck believes they are immune to harm from their enemies, giving them

the Hardy Special Ability. They are also unable to see their comrades wounded or killed, causing them to fight to the death. Once killed, the wearer must succeed on a Spirit roll or rise as an undead minion of Magotine (use Zombie stats in the *Weird War I War Master's Handbook*). To other wearers of the amulets, they appear unharmed.

Also, anyone wearing one of these amulets is particularly susceptible to the faerie's magic, giving her a +4 bonus to affect the wearer with her magic.



Diary of Doctor Stefan Merkel

Here is the text of Herr Doktor Merkel's diary for the War Master's use. A handout suitable for players is on the following page.

29 May 1916: *Have just arrived in Fort Douaumont today. Thank God I wasn't here a month ago—hundreds dead, body parts strewn in a veritable carpet on the lower level. The smell is unbearable even three weeks later. I've been treating a steady stream of pioneers who participated in the cleanup who have cracked up from the strain and horror of picking up the pieces.*

4 June: *Sunday. The chaplains held a ceremony at Artillery Shelters I and II where all the bodies were placed. A contingent of troops arrived last night and seem to be overseeing the final preparations of the tomb. Maybe they're special masons or carpenters. Strange collar devices I've never seen before.*

5 July: *Continuing problems with foul air, especially in the lower level. Damn French and their gas shells don't help. The lack of oxygen has men seeing all kinds of strange things, which is driving them to acts of insanity. Before May troops on the front line used to refer to the fort as "Uncle Douaumont." Now they fear to come off the line to these accursed tunnels for a respite from the trenches.*

26 July: *Chaplain von Holle committed suicide today. He had been incessantly studying strange markings exposed on the ceiling by the French barrages. A mania overtook him in the last few days, and he came to me spouting nonsense about whispers he heard while studying the symbols.*

8 August: *The commandant has lost his mind! A strange woman arrived in the fortress yesterday. While she is quite a beauty, Colonel Frenzen has taken her into his confidence. In private he told me she is a scientist assigned to the fortress to study and deploy some sort of secret weapon. They have taken over the powder magazines at the far end of the lower levels.*

7 September: *Intolerable! The commandant has directed that all seriously wounded men be taken to the powder magazine, where the "scientist" ministers to them. As if I'm not competent to treat the wounded! It's been several days and I have yet to see any of these men brought into my recovery wards. I must speak to the sector command about this breach of protocol. A new directive regarding the wear of identity discs has come from on high—as if we don't have anything more important to worry about in this war than uniform regulations!*

8 September: *All is well. I spoke to the colonel and his pet Bavarian scientist. They clearly explained the new protocols for the wounded. What a fool I was—too short-sighted to recognize her competence and brilliance.*

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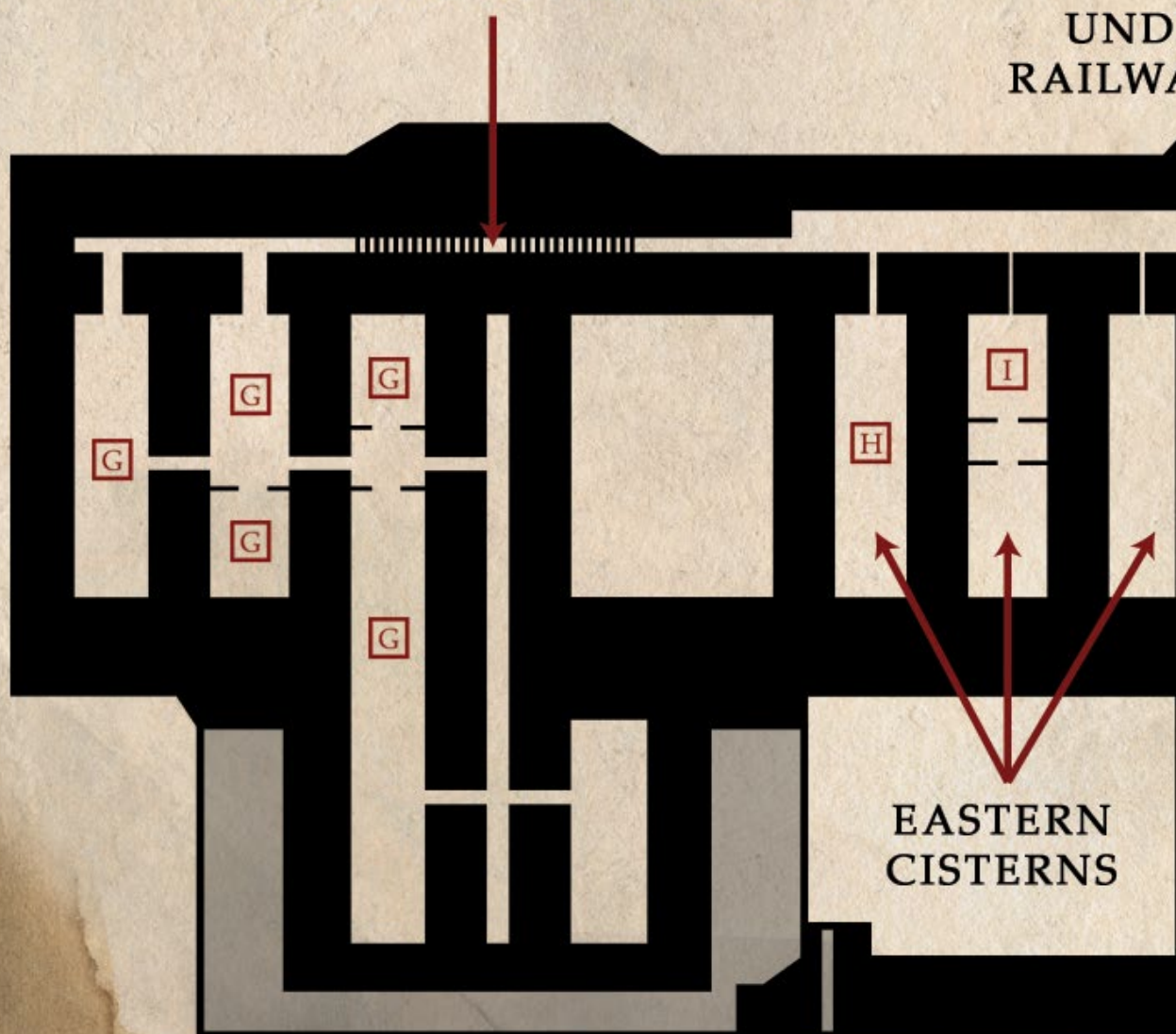
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FORT DOUAUMONT

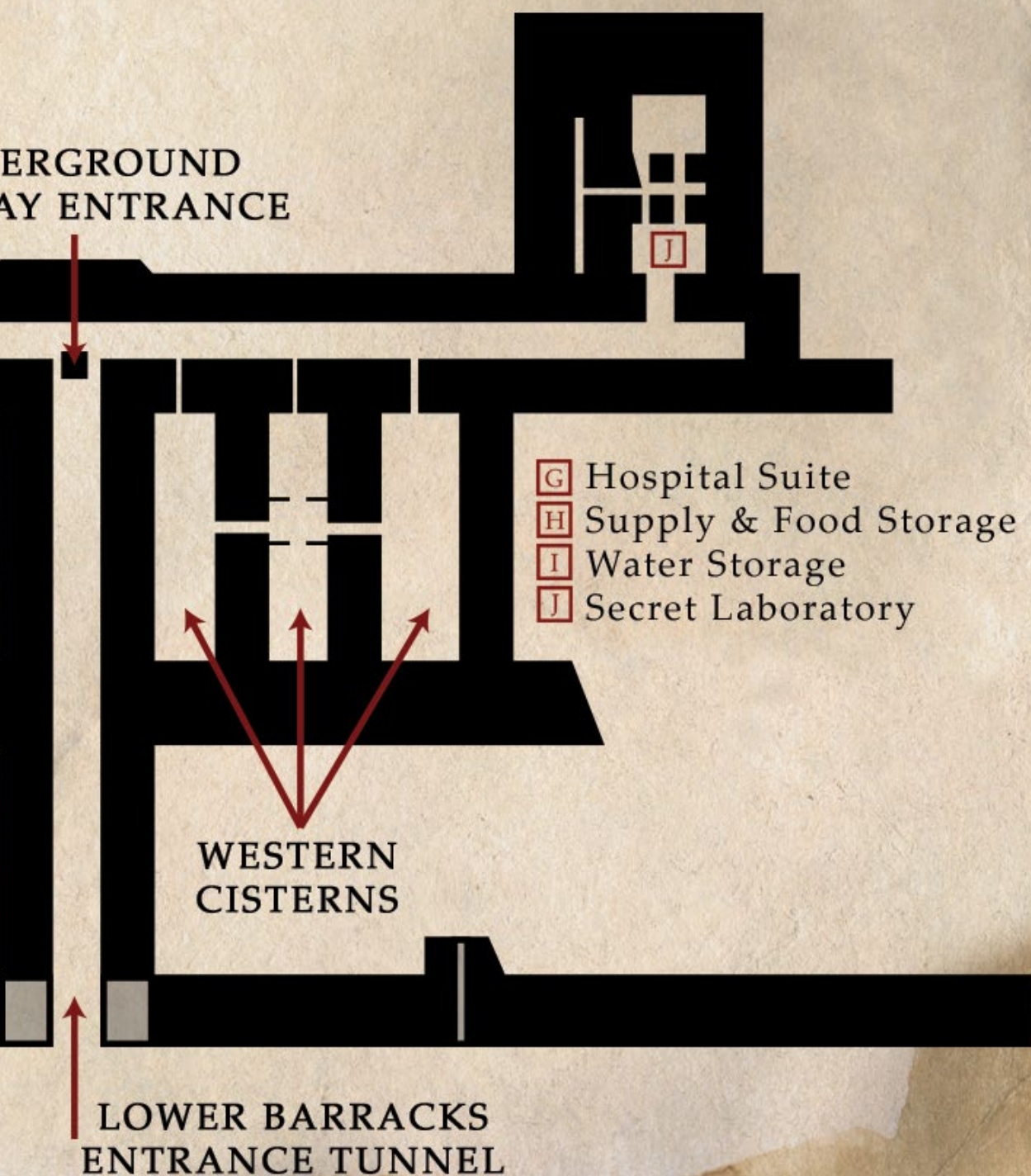
Barracks: Lower Level

STAIRS TO UPPER LEVEL

UND
RAILWA



UNDERGROUND
WAY ENTRANCE



- G Hospital Suite
- H Supply & Food Storage
- I Water Storage
- J Secret Laboratory

WESTERN
CISTERNS

LOWER BARRACKS
ENTRANCE TUNNEL

- A Main Hallway
- B East Bunkroom
- C Command Post
- D Ammo and Weapons Storage
- E Stairs Down
- F Kitchen

Northwestern
Counterscarp
Gallery

GLACIS

Double Counterscarp
Gallery

75mm
Turret
Observatory

Artillery
Shelters

Northwestern
machine gun turret
and observatory

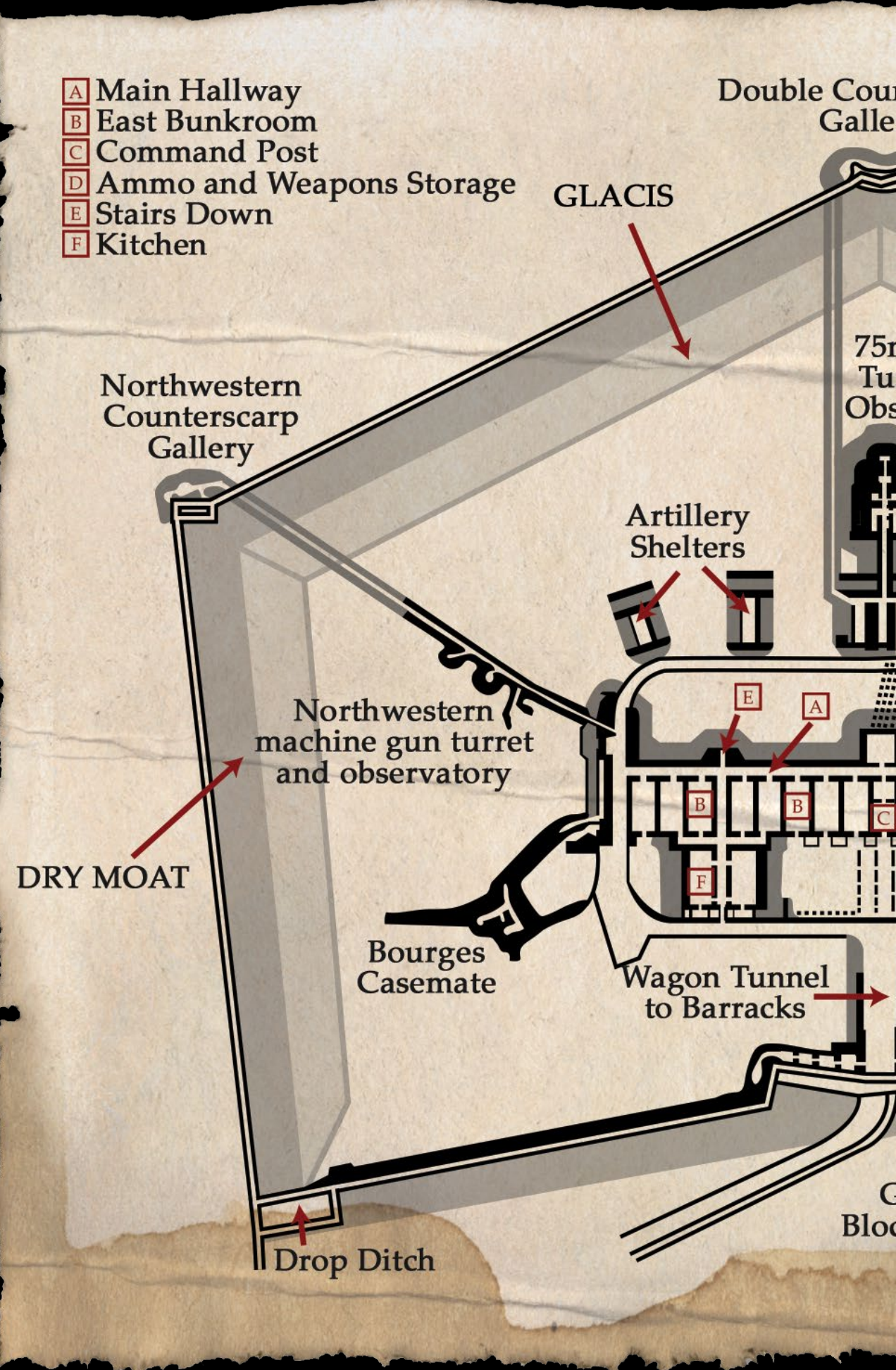
DRY MOAT

Bourges
Casemate

Wagon Tunnel
to Barracks

Drop Ditch

Block



Fort Douaumont

Counterscarp
Trench



mm Gun
Turret and
Observatory

DRY MOAT

Northeastern
Counterscarp
Gallery

Ammunition
Bunkers

Observatory

Northeastern
Machine Gun Turret
and Observatory

GLACIS

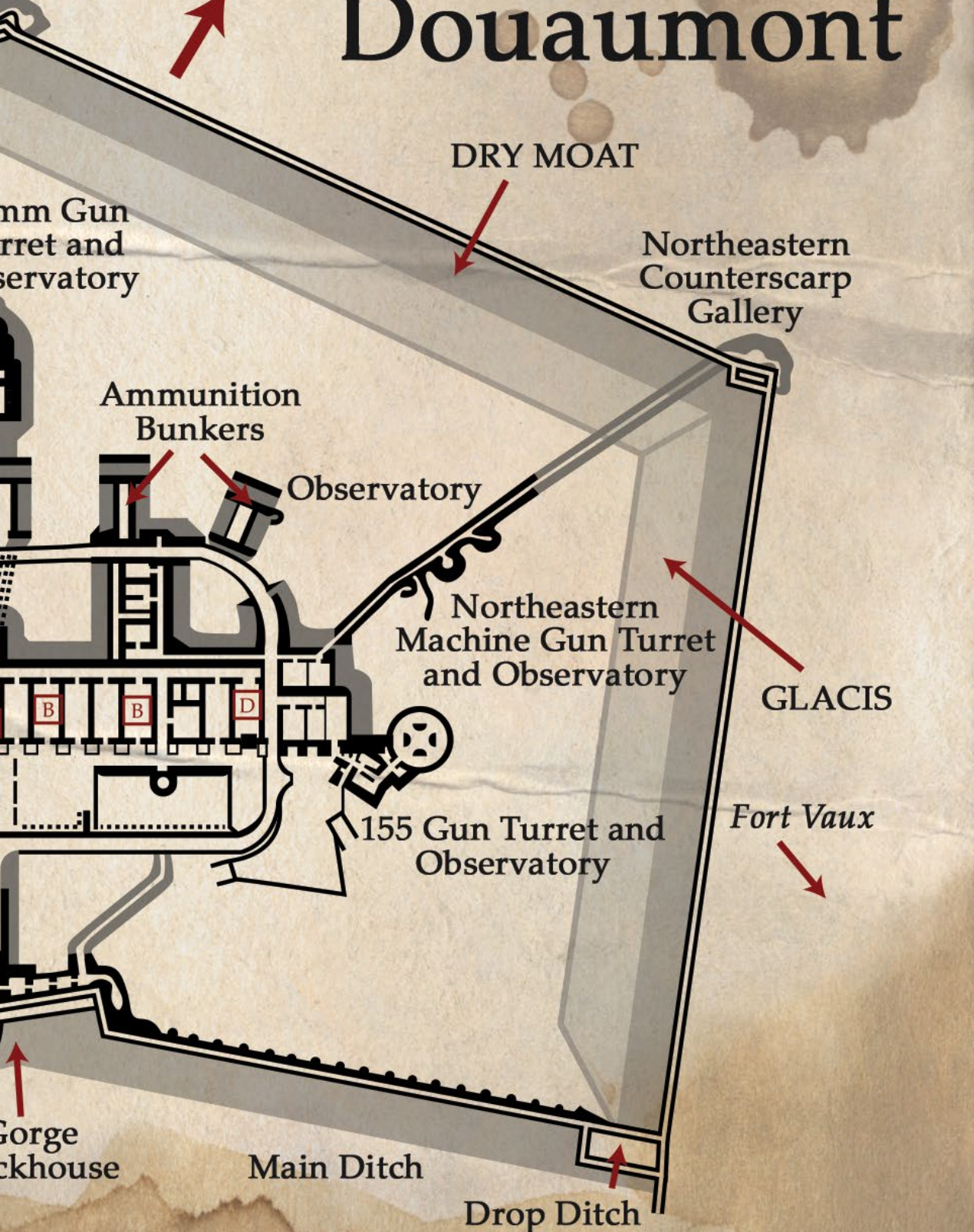
155 Gun Turret and
Observatory

Fort Vaux

Gorge
Barrackhouse

Main Ditch

Drop Ditch



THE MAY CATASTROPHE

Several weeks after the Germans took over Fort Douaumont in February 1916, a party of pioneers surveying the installation discovered a subbasement below the Lower Barracks. Unknown to the French government, the firm that renovated the fortress in 1887 dug these chambers to draw power from the confluence of ley lines under the structure. Using non-Euclidean angles and inlaid symbols made of esoteric materials such as selenium, magnesium-tungsten alloys, and gold plated bolts, this area acted as a node to focus and project dissonant psychic energy. This energy not only attracted spiritual entities, but slowly drove the garrison insane, with increasing incidents of violence, suicide, and madness the longer soldiers lived there.

Shortly after the discovery of the sublevel, a group of engineers led by Colonel (Dr.) Joachim Hutzler arrived at the installation. Presenting documents to the garrison commander authorizing whatever access they desired, Colonel Hutzler and his men entered the lower area, posting guards to the level to keep out any curious soldiers. These men were part of the AbtWESpezWA/Tr's "Technical Exploitation Division," and they quickly set about making subtle changes to the design of the psychic node, initially intending to disable the madness-inducing aspects of the construct. Over the next several weeks hundreds of troops toiled to bring strange electronic and scientific equipment through the storm of French shells now falling in the vicinity of the fort. Once inside, the gear was taken from the press-ganged infantrymen and shuttled down into the bowels of the installation. In the subbasement Colonel Hutzler and his scientists worked to build capacitors capable of storing the magical energy flowing from the ley lines and the negative spiritual energy from the fear and death of the battlefield. An antennae array was emplaced in one of the turrets on the surface, and large cables built from strange materials snaked through the corridors from the hidden laboratories to the emitter. Hutzler intended to break the French will to fight in this sector by blasting them with these energies. Within three months the weird scientist's psychic cannon was ready for field testing.

History records that on May 8, 1916 an explosion shook Fort Douaumont. Eyewitnesses reported that around 0430 panic broke out in the fort. Horrified screams and shouts of *"Die Schwartzen kommen"* (The blacks are coming) rang out from the Lower Barracks. A wave of panic rippled through the thousand or so troops occupying the underground installation, so horrific were the screams. Shortly afterward a series of explosions ripped through the Lower Barracks. The blast knocked out the lights and filled the halls with clouds of sulphurous fumes. Once the fumes cleared men were found torn to pieces, even in areas of the fort removed from the epicenter of the blasts. In the days following the event, the fort's surviving physician noted a spike in cases of insanity of all types, turning Fort Douaumont into a dark underground asylum filled with bedlam.

Was this a case of a thoughtless soldier heating his rations too close to carelessly stored munitions? Or did Colonel Hutzler's experiment fail catastrophically? After the blast no evidence of the subbasement remained, and those who would have known were either dead, missing, or insane. Perhaps the files of the AbtWESpezWA/Tr contain clues to what transpired in the bowels of "Uncle Douaumont" that changed the attitude of the German occupiers who once saw it as a place of refuge and afterwards regarded it with a kind of sick loathing.