



BLACKTOOTH RIDGE

# THE LAST RESPITE

LUDENSHEIM

A10



BY DAVIS & STEPHEN CHENAULT



ESPERDI

ASCALON

HEIMSTADT



# THE LAST RESPITE

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# THE LAST RESPITE



*A10 The Last Respite* is an adventure designed for 3–5 characters of 10th to 12th level. The adventure contains an array of challenges for the characters to overcome on their travels across the Defemlan. They will travel upon the Imperial Road to the town of Grafika in their pursuit of the Lady of Garun, the Vessel of Souls. This module contains a series of encounters during the character's overland travels. Once they arrive in Grafika, the characters pick up the trail of the Vessel of Souls and also encounter a host of villains and interesting adversaries.

The Vessel of Souls was stolen from the Lord of Aufstrag, Coburg the Undying, and carried into the wilds of the Dreaming Sea. The Vessel is not a regular item however, but the Lord's only love, a woman of surpassing beauty whose eyes charm those she faces, and whose kiss draws out the soul. The Vessel dwelt on the Sea for many years until happenstance allowed her to escape and she has for some time been attempting to return to her Lord. Only recently has she come to the town of Grafika, flying upon the back of a tamed vulture. But there her flight ended for one of the bandits lords of the town seized her for his own ends and has imprisoned her.

For those who know the Vessel is vital to the Coburg both personally and as a source of power. Any who face him, must face her, and she commands fear.

If the characters are coming from A9 they may be in hot pursuit of the Vessel of Souls. If they are not they can learn of the item's existence soon enough...whether they know it's a woman or not is up to the CK. Capturing the Vessel is vital for doing so will be a telling blow to Coburg and may force him to stop his war on the south entirely. Further, she may serve as a guide to the indomitable fortress of Aufstrag.

For more information on the Vessel of Souls see the end of the adventure.

*A10 The Last Respite* follows the adventures in the 'A' series developed by Troll Lord Games. This module can be used as a stand-alone adventure, as a series of set piece, or as random encounters. It can be used in any campaign or game setting without having used the previous adventures. For more details on this, please read *Involving the Player Characters* below.

## INTRODUCTION

*A10 The Last Respite* takes the characters along the Hardid Road, an old Imperial Highway that wanders through the Defemlan, a waste land that lies between the Grausamland and Plains of Achrothos. The road heads north until it runs into and through the town of Grafika.

## 2 CASTLES & CRUSADES

This long and arduous hundred mile journey takes the characters across a region completely barren of civilization. There are no towns, inns, forts, or civilized habitations. The region is fraught with dangers and hazards, for it sits within the edge of the Grausumlands and is near the worst portion of the Plains of Achrothos. Monsters and those of ill intent wander these lands. Ancient terrors and modern foes cross the landscape. Bandits and brigands of nefarious disposition escape into the lands, making trouble for each other and any other unfortunate who finds themselves there.

The land itself is a hazard as well. In between the Tower of Horesk and the town of Grafika is a humid mist of stench that rolls across that wretched bog, and lingers like a blanket of despair upon the ragged, torn region. All together, the characters are entering a forsaken land.

Once through this region, the characters come to Grafika, their destination. This town is little more than a den of thieves, bandits, and outlaws on the edge of the Great Swamp. No king or lord rules here and no army guards the town. The laws are as one wants and there are no authorities to turn to for aid. This is truly a lawless town that few care to go to; those who come to Grafika often wish they were elsewhere.

Once here, they must track the Lady of Garun and attempt to stop her from fleeing to her lover in Aufstrag. The characters also learn something of Aufstrag. Rumors abound of powerful men and beasts stirring in Aufstrag. Armies have been seen moving south on the Hardid Road but also down the Causeway. Many speak of the Undying One, he who rules in Aufstrag. It is said his strength grows and his evil tendrils are reaching out into the world beyond that fell city. And this is where the adventure leaves off. The characters are left in a place that gives them a choice to venture on into the Grausamland and even unto the Gates of Aufstrag or move on, to less dangerous lands and less glorious deeds.

## INVOLVING THE PLAYERS CHARACTERS

It should not be difficult to bring *A10 The Last Respite* to the table and involve the characters. Here are some suggestions:

- 1) After many wild and dangerous encounters, the party finds themselves in the town of Grafika. It promises to be a good point of resupply. While in town, they pick up leads about a powerful magic item, the Vessel of Souls, that the local powers (in Aihrede, this is Coburg the Undying One) desire in order to rebuild their tattered armies.
- 2) The characters discover information about a Vessel of Souls, either through common room chatter in a local tavern, from a sage, divine sending, or through someone attempting to purchase the Vessel. The last known sighting of the Vessel was in the town of Grafika.
- 3) While passing through this wild border town the characters enter into an engaging conversation with some locals. They speak of a woman of surpassing beauty having arrived in the town some night previous. The woman flew a giant vulture. It seemed to be her pet or servant. She has since vanished into the town's underworld.

- 4) Coming from the *A9 Helm of Night*, the characters are in pursuit of the Vessel of Souls. They have learned that the Vessel of Souls fled from the Tower of Horesk upon the backs of one of the giant vultures. They do not know her destination but the beast master Eurum believes that she is being taken to the town of Grafika to be sold by his master, Roderic. Unbeknownst to any in the Tower, the Lady of Garun slew her captor and tossed him into the swamp. She could not control the beast but it took her to Grafika anyway. She arrived in the town soon thereafter.

### TRAVELING TO GRAFIKA

If the party is not coming from *A9 Helm of Night* adjust the roadside encounters as needed.

If this module is being used as part of the 'A' series, the characters are picking up where *A9 The Helm of Night* left off. The characters are in the Tower of Horesk and may have spoken with Eurum from Area 40. If they have they have learned that the Lady of Garun has fled upon the backs of one of the vultures in the room, leaving four of the beasts there. Eurum answers any questions they have, even telling them of the Hardid Road that can be seen from these high battlements (spot check CL 6).

The characters can head north on the water-logged Imperial Road or they can attempt to take the vultures.

### USING THE VULTURES

There are four vultures in the stables at Horesk and the characters may attempt to ride them. Only those with some experience with horses have any chance of controlling them. Doing so requires saddling them first. If they have Eurum to help, it is no problem, otherwise the multitude of harnesses and hitches prove difficult to unravel (intelligence check 8 required to manage it).

Once saddled, the vultures respond to a rider by launching into the air immediately (if the doors to the stable are open). A rider must make a successful dexterity check (CL 4 for experienced riders, CL 12 for inexperienced) or they are thrown off the beast, plummeting 100+ feet down into the deep waters of the swamp for 10d6 points of damage.

Once airborne, unless specifically guided to a particular destination the vultures fly north, following the course of the Hardid Road through the Dafenlam.

They can fly about six hours before tiring and travel roughly 20 miles an hour. There are two "stations" set up in the Dafenlam where, unless forced to go elsewhere, they land.

If the characters divine the location of Grafika then the vultures head in that direction if spurred on. They must still rest once a day; once at each of the stations below.

## UPON THE IMPERIAL ROAD

From the Tower of Horesk, the characters are traveling north through the Defenlam. There is an old imperial road, the Hardid, running from near the Tower of Horesk to the north and on to Grafika. The road is easy to find and the characters can see it jutting from the swamps both from the tower and from the drier land in the plains. The road is still a highway for bandits and the like, moving north and south through the morass, they alone have kept it clear of the worst effects of the swamp.

The road was built on high ground, but suffers significant erosion. There are many abandoned towns, thorps and forts found along its stretches. Almost all of these have fallen into complete ruin or been obliterated in the wars of long ago. However, should the Castle Keeper care to design them, these are excellent places for more adventures.

The characters should be following this road for the duration of the adventure. Random encounter charts can be found below for travel along the road. Should the characters meander far off the road into the Blighted Screed or the Gausamland, consult random encounter charts in the *Castle Keepers Guide* or *Engineering Dungeons*.

Two encounter areas below occur at the stations on the road.

## THE JOURNEY

Travel to Grafika should take 2–3 days by vulture or 6–7 days by foot. The road leads through the Defenlam. Two encounters are outlined below. Both encounters are designed for travel on the road.

### THE GAUSAMLAND

The Gausamland, the Gray Pools, is a mire of stinking, fetid, rotting, swamps. Unklar created this grotesque bog to protect the citadel of Aufstrag. Once the land about Al-Liosh prospered, offering some of the richest soil in the world. Its people, contented with their lot, served the Lords of that city loyally and they thrived. All that ended with the horned god, Unklar's assumption of power. The city of Al-Liosh he pulled up from the ground and from its living contents created the towering citadel of Aufstrag. The lands about the citadel he mutilated, pulling the roots of them from the ground, twisting the soils and churning it so that the whole country lay mangled beneath the embers of the clouded sun. All those who dwelt there were caught in his storm and consumed by the land, their homes cast down and consumed, their bones crushed into the soft earth, their souls lost to haunt the gray land. He drained waters from the Uphrates and Undillay rivers into the deep holes and innumerable rifts caused by his machinations, filling the lands about with water. There it stood and grew pestilent with the filth that spilled from the vaults of the ruined city that towered over the land.

So the Gausamland came to be.

The swamps are dark and gloomy. The ground swells and bubbles, burping and spewing sulfurous odors through the red clay and black mud. Tangles of vegetation abound. Hulking trees grow out of the waterlogged land. They grow fast, evil things, feeding upon the dead that lay churned into the earth. They grow tall, reaching many hundreds of feet overhead. Their roots, like gnarled fingers dig deep into the earth, and their trunks grow like long spines out

of the muck. From their branches hang curtains of green moss and drapes of yellow lichen. The branches on-high leaf out into narrow, thin green needles as thick as a wasp swarm blotting out all light. When they fall, which is too often, they lay in the swamp like pillars of stone, slowly decaying.

A multitude of lesser plants abound; thick leafy brushes cling to the ground; saw grass grows in patches of shallow water; whistle and thorns tangle the trails; a vast tangle of moist, dark green, leafy plants crowd the muddy bogs.

The land abounds in sink holes, mud pits, quicksand, and slimy pits that suck down anything that happen to step upon them. The stench from the swamp is overwhelming, hanging over the land like an open crypt.

This place is crowded with denizens nightmares. Unklar's breath can still be smelled and the life he gave to so many foul creatures still persists in these swamps. They are cruel and wretched creatures. Their make is impossible to describe as they came in so many shapes and terrible forms. There are great bats that drink blood, lizards that breathe mud, snakes that fly, creatures of black earth that move under the ground and others besides. Dragons dwell in the swamps, great black beasts, the spawn of the creature that guards the gates to Aufstrag. Here, Ungern in great numbers, orcs and goblins from old, witches, hags, harpies and all types of the undead creep through the Gausamland.

What would bring a man here? Treasure... Treasure unlike any in the world. The plunder from a thousand years is stored in deep holes and massive treasuries in these swamps. Arcane magic too, found amid weapons from the wars at the beginning of time, for Unklar was a hoarder of all things.

### PLAINS OF ACHROTHOS

An ocean of green the Plains of Achrothos wash over and around the feet of the Grundliche Mountains in the north and spill into the Amber Sea to the south. They roll east for over 300 leagues until they lap the shores of the Channel Lakes and the Crenthul Mountains. They are dry steppes, with hardy grass that grows deep into the soil. In the spring the grasses are deep, wilting beneath the summer's sun; in fall the dry stalks remain until they bend beneath the cold winter snows.

The sun is ever present. There are no trees here except in the river runs, where they grow along the water's edge; cottonwood, red buds, buckthorn trees give refuge from the ever present sun. These plants provide sustenance for animals in the depths of winter.

The Plains of Achrothos are home to a wide variety of animals and other creatures. Large buffalo roam the steppes, mingled with herds of wild horses. Antelope, deer, rabbits and other game are plentiful as are wolves, winter wolves, foxes, and weasels. Nomads follow the game trails. Wild men with long black hair, mounted on long legged horses, wield spears and long swords. At times, they settle in homes of sod and thatch. Wild elves live here as well, including those who escaped the Winter's Dark. The elves stalk the grasses like summer shadows. Some Halflings live here, but few other folk wander these plains. Giants, trolls, steppe dragons, kimer devils, and other beasts haunt these rolling grasslands.

## 4 CASTLES & CRUSADES

Achrothos is a dangerous place that yields little, for there are few villages and little in the way of wealth.

#### DEFENLAM

The Defenlam is a dale that bridges the Plains of Achrothos and the Grausamland. It once housed the Habid Road, an Imperial Road of Aenoch. Here traffic moved from the south to the north, diverting to the capital when needed further on the way. But in the days of Unklar's ascendancy, he tore the land asunder, diverted rivers into the ground, and created the Grausamland (the Gray Pools). Much of the water diverted to make the Gray Pools flowed into the earth around the great rivers so that little remained for the parched lands of the steppes and the Dale of Defenlam. What water filled the long low valley failed to soak into the earth; instead, it stood upon the ground, making the whole of the dale a morass of bogs and mires.

The Defenlam is hot, the sun of the steppes beat down upon it. But the ground is moist and muddy. Hordes of flies, mosquitoes and other pests haunt the region, hounding whosoever passes through. The road, built several feet off the ground, stands a head above the water making traffic down the road possible. The land has attracted a strange assortment of creatures; eldritch creatures who feed on the few travelers that pass through the country. The elf's bane dwells here in addition to trolls, naga, manticore and the like.

Normally there is precious little traffic between the Punj to the north and New Aenoch to the south. The road plays host to bandits, miscreants, wanderers, adventurers and other misfits. However, with Coburg gathering armies for a war in the south, there is more traffic and the road has even seen some repair.

#### RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

The following charts should be used as a guideline for encounters the characters may have on their travel north. Use the chart for travel on the road or through the swamps. If a roll results in a creature that does not suit the environment, re-roll the encounter.

For travel on or within several miles of the road, roll a d10 for encounters three times for travel during the day and six times at night. For travel in the swamp, roll a d10 two times for travel during the day and six at night. A "1" indicates an encounter has occurred. Roll a d20 and consult the chart to determine the type of encounter or pick one from the list or monster books that best suites the adventure.

#### ENCOUNTER CHART

- |    |                        |
|----|------------------------|
| 1  | Elf Bane               |
| 2  | Naga, dark             |
| 3  | Naga, guardian         |
| 4  | Troll                  |
| 5  | Manticore              |
| 6  | Lizard Folk            |
| 7  | Werewolves             |
| 8  | Snake, Giant           |
| 9  | Alligator, Giant       |
| 10 | Wyvern or Shovel Mouth |

#### STATION ENCOUNTERS

Two additional encounters are presented below. Each encounter takes place at the stations that lie on the road between the Tower and the Town. These stations are places the vultures naturally travel to for rest, food and water. The characters cannot keep them from landing as by the time the birds arrive over them they are spent. If traveling by road the characters come to the stations regardless. If for some reason they wander into the swamps, the encounters can be moved to other areas with little difficulty.

#### WAY STATION #1: THE SCENT OF FAY

Upon a rise in the ground that hardly constitutes a hill a small walled enclosure guards a well. The walls are only about a dozen feet tall, 4 feet thick and have only one gate for entry and exit. The battlements are gone and no ladders remain behind.

The country opens up and not far in the distance you spy a hill whose top is crowned by the ruins of a small keep. The gray stone of the walls, covered in lichen and vines, stand in mute testament to a time that the road was better watched. The walls are in poor shape, the gate lies in ruins, and little remains of the buildings within. However, the structure is not devoid of life, for in the green grass a large four-legged beast, armored in folds of flesh, grazes. A ragged, blood-stained, chain hauberk clings to its side, clinking and jangling like a vision of death unchained from some arcane hell. A massive horn rises from its brow as it calmly shovels through the ground for food.

A massive bull elfbane, its mate, and five offspring have wandered out of the great swamp. They are searching the hillock for food. They are slowly making their way south in search of better fare. The creature grazing nearby is female. The others are deeper in the swamp, pushing about for food.

Elfbane's come by their name through reputation, for they have a great hatred for all elves and fey. They have a keen sense of smell and sight. When alerted to the proximity of fey they become enraged and pursue the target until they can kill it with horn or hoof.

Should the party contain an elf, half-elf or fey, the female elfbane smells them and becomes enraged, and attacks the party immediately. She always angles for the elf. If there are no elves or fey with the party, the elfbane ignores the characters unless the characters decide to engage the creature. They will see it wandering south.

The female elfbane is encountered first. If enraged, it lumbers forward bellowing loudly into the winds, calling its mate and warning the younger elfbane to keep back. The five elfbane young are nearby, close enough to watch the encounter but do not engage. The bull elfbane is able to hear the bellowing of its mate and begins to move in her direction.

The elbane smashes into the party, aiming for the fey with the highest hit points, ignoring all others in its first charge. It attempts to overbear and trample its opponents. It turns its attention away from

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its initial target only when struck for ten or more damage. It then focuses on that person nearest it for the next round. The elfbane's initial attack on any creature is always an attempt to overbear it.

If the elfbane dies, it bellows in a very deep tone that carries over the landscape. This is a combination of warning to the younger elfbane and a cry of anguish to the bull elfbane. The younger elfbanes move toward their dying mother and watch as she dies. Should the party make a move toward them they, move away as a group. They can be chased, trapped or killed if the party desires it. Each is about the size of a buffalo. The younger elfbane run for about half an hour before they begin to tire and turn to fight.

The bull elfbane, makes his way, as quickly as possible to its mate. It should take about ten minutes. It does not take long before it smells the blood of its mate and begins a mad dash to the body. If anyone remains at the body, the bull attacks (fey first). If the party has moved on, the bull tracks them down, following the scent of fey or the scent from its mate's blood. The bull cares little for the younger elfbane and may trample them in an effort to get to any party members.

The bull elfbane is about a third again as large of the female, its horn thrusts out a greater distance like a lance.

The female elfbane has a treasure tangled in the ragged chain hauberk still clinging to her side. There are 4 *arrows of piercing* enmeshed in the armor. The shafts have long since broken off the arrows, but the heads remain. The heads are razor sharp and slightly curved, causing them to twist upon impact causing 1d6 extra damage. The arrows are not magical, though they do radiate an obscure sense of other-worldly origin. They must have new shafts and be fletched to be useful.

**ELFBANE, FEMALE** (*This chaotic evil magical beasts' significant attributes are: HD 12, HP 78 and AC 22. Its prime attributes are physical. It attacks with its horn for 2d12 damage or with 2 stomp for 1d8 damage each. Special: the chain hauberk give the elfbane +2 to its normal AC 20. Its special attacks are: powerful charge, scent, and trample. It has a spell resistance of 5.*)

**ELBANE YOUNG** (*These chaotic evil magical beasts' significant attributes are: HD6, HP 28, 34, 38, 40 and 42, and AC 16. Their prime attributes are physical. They attack with a horn for 1d6+2 damage or two stomps for 1d4 damage each. Its special attacks are charge, scent and trample.*)

**ELFBANE, BULL** (*This chaotic evil magical beasts' significant attributes are: HD 16, HP 108 and AC 24. Its prime attributes are physical. It attacks with its horn for 2d12+4 damage or with 2 stomps for 1d8 damage each. Its special attacks are: powerful charge, scent, and trample. It has a spell resistance of 7.*)

## WAY STATION #2: A HORNED STEED

The second Way Station lies about 20 miles from Grafika. The ground here is much drier and closer to the plains of the north. The Way Station lies in a long wooden house, once a sprawling inn and tavern, but now more a ramshackle collection of tumbled down buildings. It is presently occupied.

## 6 CASTLES & CRUSADES

A troop of orcs, ungern, several troll lords, and other sundry creatures, marching out from Aufstrag have turned south on the Hardid Road. They are on route to their rally point in the shout at the Shattered Horn. While camped at the station, their hunters stumbled upon a unicorn. They pursued the beast into the swamp where they cornered and captured it. They brought it back to their captain as a prize.

Harvoth Blot, the ungern captain, commands the troop. This massive creature stands almost 7 feet high. His horns are long, coiling around his jaws to jut out from his face; these horns are capped in melted silver, and decorated with coils of the metal his is a site to behold. Fierce and bullheaded, Harvoth welcomed the unicorn, but quickly disappointed his troop when he announced that he would not eat it. Haryoth hopes to break its spirit and make it a steed for him to ride in battle.

To this end, he ordered his troop to set up camp upon the grounds and build a coral. They pulled down many of the buildings and built a huge coral about 100 feet diameter. To keep the beast within, they built the fence 12 feet high. The shaman placed shackles on the unicorn, dispelling its ability to magically move. They crafted makeshift armor, binding the unicorn and a helm to block its sight and restrict its neck from moving. Ferocious kicks to the creatures chest caused it to breath out, allowing the armor to be tightened such that the creature has not been able to take a complete breath since. With these accoutrements they set it in the coral for three days Harvoth has tortured the beast in his attempts to break it.

Presently the unicorn is beaten and starved, bleeding from a dozen wounds; its head hangs low and it labors for a breath. Unless Harvoth is in the ring the unicorn stands in the center of the coral, as far from the torments of its captors as it can get.

## FREEING THE UNICORN

As the characters approach the Way Station, they draw the attention of the Anteous the unicorn. The unicorn is aware of its surroundings and constantly on the watch for his tormentors. He takes note of the characters when they move within a mile of the Way Station, long before they are able to see it. He reaches out to them, (preferring a paladin, druid, or ranger) and reaches-out telepathically, appealing to their sense of compassion. He reveals an image of himself living wild and free, altering it after a moment with an image of himself bound in iron mail and in a coral; after that the image pans out to reveal the whole compound teeming with ungern and orcs, the image further pans out to reveal how close the characters are to the compound. With all of this comes a longing for freedom of which the characters can't help but take note.

Any character of good alignment who the unicorn attempts to contact is able to see what the unicorn projects. It is up to them to respond and attempt to save the unicorn, or travel around the encampment and abandon it to its fate.

### THE ENCAMPMENT

Harvoth runs a very disciplined troop.

Harvoth's Troop consists of the following:

- 8 Ungern Guard
- 75 Ungern
- 25 Orc Scouts
- 4 Trolls
- 4 Ogre Wagon Masters

The troop consists of a series of tents just to the east of the coral. Harvoth and his guard live in the remnants of the main building. The captain has set up four observation points, each about 1000 feet from the camp, one each on the road, north and south and the other two facing west. None have been placed toward the east. The Captain has no fear of enemies approaching from that direction.

As the characters approach, they can see the outposts with a successful spot check (CL 6). If they fail to notice the outposts, they may be spotted (see below) and the alarm is sounded with three short horn blasts.

Each outposts contains a band of 4 ungern. If they are attacked, they sound the horn (if possible) and defend the post at all costs. They attempt to slow the attackers while the camp gathers its strength. The other 3 outposts hold their ground unless attacked, assuming there may be more enemies approaching

**UNGERN, 4** (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 14 and HP 13, 12, 12, 9. Their primary attributes are physical. They can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1–2 or gore for 1–6+2 points of damage. They each carry a chain coat, bardiche, heavy crossbows, 12 bolts, dagger and 4–40gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

There are four large wagons laden with dissembled siege engines; there are 4 light catapults, 40 stones, 8 ballistae with 400 bolts, and the makings of a 24 foot siege tower. The wagons also contain bolts for the crossbows, barrels of pitch, torches, food, and similar supplies.

In one of the wagons, there is a large trunk, metal, bolted and bound to the wagon. Within it lies Harvoth's treasure. It includes 5,000gp, 100pg, a pair of boots of striding, a cloak of elvenkind, and 10 flasks of skun, an orc brew that tastes like burnt rubber smells, one flask can heal 1d10 points of damage.

There are 32 oxen, 6 each for the wagons.

He has stationed 75 ungern, the ogres, and the wagons along the western edge of the road within a hastily built palisade, constructed from the ruins of the inn. Their encampment lies within. He has set himself up in the main building of the inn and with him are the 8 guards. The orcs are arrayed in shallow trenches dug on the east side of the road in order to keep watch for raiders from the steppes. The trolls are camped on the eastern edge of the Way Station, overlooking the swamps. The 32 oxen are tied along the western edge of the palisade. The orcs take them out in the early morning to feed and water them. The coral lies just off the road and south of the main palisade.

**HARVOTH** (This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, AC 21 and HP 24. Its primary attributes are physical. He can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1–3 damage or gore for 1–8+2 damage. He carries a +3 large maul that causes 1–12 damage. He wears +1 barding chain and plate, an iron cap set between his horns and iron leggings. In his pouch is a potion of healing, an eye of the eagle and 120gp.)

**UNGERN GUARD** (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, AC 17 and HP variable. Their prime attributes are physical. They can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1–2 points of damage or gore for 1–6+2 points of damage. They each carry a chain coat, morning star, iron headed mace, or axe, dagger and 2–40gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

**ORCS** (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 12, HP variable. Their prime attributes are physical. They carry leather armor, short swords, javelins, 3 each, and 1–6gp in coin or ornaments.)

**OGRES, 8** (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 4, AC 16, HP 13, 17, 22, 22, 28. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a weapon for 1d10+3 points or damage or their powerful fists for 1d10 points of damage (one attack, one damage). They have dark and twilight vision.)

**TROLLS, 4** (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 6d8, AC 16, and HP 43 and 22. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1–4 damage and a bite for 1–6 damage or by weapon type. These trolls carry short-hafted battle-axes that cause 3–12 damage. They wear heavy plate armor, great helms and carry shields. Each has 4–40gp worth of coin or gems.)

#### ATTACKING THE ENCAMPMENT

If the characters boldly attack or if they are discovered, the ungern sound battle horns and immediately form up outside the palisade, in half moon formation, points backward, where they are joined by their Captain and his guard. Ungern captains always lead from the front, so he forms up at the head of the troop. The orcs array in front of the line as skirmishers, launching volleys of javelins. The trolls join the fray and the ogres move to protect the oxen.

It takes only 10 rounds for the ungern to form up with weapons in hand.

The ungern fight to the death, they do not negotiate and they do not surrender. The orcs, on the hand, break and flee if the battle appears to be going against them (as do the ogres). The trolls' lust for battle keeps them on the field until they are destroyed.

#### MOVING WITH STEALTH

If the characters elect to enter the compound secretly, they might avoid an all-out battle. This will not be easy however.

The ungern in the outposts keep a careful watch. Ungern are not as other humanoids. They are dedicated, careful, and live in a constant state of battle readiness. They are watching the northern and southern road as well as the eastern steppes. Passing them is difficult and anyone attempting to do so suffers a –4 to their hide checks.

## THE LAST RESPIRE 7





In the makeshift coral you spy a unicorn. It stands on blood-caked legs, where dark mud clings to wounds that fester with maggots. Encased in corseted armor, the unicorn staggers from lack of air. Little of the creature's hide is exposed, but a long, yellow-gold tail drags the ground. The tail is clotted with mud, blood, and feces. Hordes of flies hound the creature, buzzing around its open wounds, crawling in and out of the plates of armor. A stench rises from it, but from beneath all the horror, its eyes blaze fierce contempt and singular beauty.

Anyone looking at it must make a successful spot check to immediately recognize it as a unicorn (CL 7); those who do not see it as a tortured horse.

#### ANTEOUS

The unicorn is an ancient creature who has lived in the ruins of the Grausamland for centuries. It once dwelt in the deep valleys of the land, but men came and built their castles. Many of the fey fled, but the unicorn stayed. Even after the castles turned into towns and burgs, the unicorn stayed. When the towns merged into the sprawling city of Al Liosh the unicorn remained, roaming the wide countryside, haunting the gardens and temples of Al Liosh. When Darkness came and Al Liosh fell, replaced by the horrors of Aufstrag, the unicorn remained. He

gave aid to knights, to magi, and to rogues. Those who dwelt near the swamps called on him in times of need and paid homage to him when the dark became too cold. They named him Anteous the Blessed.

Anteous escaped capture a thousand times, but its luck at last, ran out. Anteous possesses an empathetic bond with the land around him. He understands what passes over it and through it. He understands many languages, the vulgate, the common tongues of men, and the languages of the fey. He can understand dwarf, halfling, gnome, and orc as well.

**UNICORN** (*This chaotic good creatures' vital stats are HD 8d10, AC 22, HP 54. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with hooves for 1d6 damage apiece or a horn attack for 1d12 points of damage. He has darkvision, twilight vision, is immune to poison, charm or compulsion, and has an empathy with the wild. Normally he creates a magic circle around himself and is able to dimension door, but these abilities have been blocked by the ungern.*)

#### FREING THE UNICORN

If the characters free Anteous they make a firm ally for all their adventures in Gray Pools. He serves as a guide, offering them travel advice. He comes when he is called and aids them when he

The western flank is heavily guarded by the four trolls, but they keep no watch to speak of; they have a large fire where they eat their roasted mutton. They do not look out or pay any attention to anything unless it comes within their field of vision. Moving past them is much easier and anyone attempting to do so gains a +4 to their hide checks. If by chance the trolls spot the characters, they attack immediately, but do not bother sounding the alarm.

If the characters sneak past the trolls, they may proceed to the corral and the unicorn. Although the orcs are relatively close, the characters are +6 to their hiding checks because the orcs maintain an undisciplined watch.

#### BARGAINING FOR ITS FREEDOM

This might be an option if the ungern do not see the humans as a threat. The characters would have to offer the ungern at least 10,000gp for the unicorn's freedom or some magic that makes it worthwhile. Otherwise, the Captain is not inclined to release the beast.

If they treat with him, Harvoth is arrogant and condescending. Humans are little more than rats with tongues and he treats them that way. If they insult him, he orders an attack immediately.

## 8 CASTLES & CRUSADES

can. He cannot travel directly with them, but will shadow their efforts, especially if he learns of their designs to interfere with the Undying One in Aufstrag.

### UNICORN BOUND

If the unicorn remains bound, he becomes the unwilling steed of the unger. Horvarth enslaves him, drives him mad with pain and uses him as a steed until he and the beast are slain. The steed makes Horvarth extremely powerful, and in the coming months, the unger gathers a great host around him.

## GRAFIKA

Grafika is not so much a city or town, rather it is a safe haven for bandits, outlaws, murderers, thieves, necromancers, traitors, and similar sorts. The place is, by all accounts, a brutish den. It was not always such a place.

During the reign of Unklar, Grafika was a large town, the last stop on the way to Aufstrag. Sitting only a score of miles from the Great Causeway, it was a safe haven. Wealth poured into the town. Coin from traveling merchants, smiths, and other skilled laborers and plunder from the outlands came on the backs of ox and horse. Wild beasts captured for the pits of Aufstrag and a wealth in tributes paved its roads. Its halls grew, and its citizens lorded over men. Many lived there in comfort, relatively safe from the malignant evil of Aufstrag and far from the constant wars that fueled the Empire. The town prospered and grew as such gateway towns are wont to do.

But in the end, the wars came to Grafika. The armies of Aufstrag marched forth but never returned, devoured by the Princes of the west. The horned god fell, his might cast down by sword and sorcery. In the end, the Princes came to the Causeway, the bridge that crossed the great swamps to Aufstrag. Grafika stood too close and the city that had known a thousand years of peace was sacked and burned. Many of its inhabitants were put to death. The smoking ruin then stood abandoned for many years.

Grafika is a shadow of its former self. Most of the buildings have fallen into ruin. Those that remain are almost never repaired or when they are, they are done so in the most lazy and minimalist manner. The streets are awash with dirt; debris and trash become muddy rivers during the frequent rains. Most of the cobbles that once lined the main streets of Grafika have been pulled up and are now used to shore up falling buildings. Most of the remaining buildings are made of stone, as the wooden ones have burned, rotted or fallen into a state of disrepair.

There is no city government. There are essentially five factions/groups which 'run' Grafika. Each faction has some control over an area of the ruins. The central portion of the town is controlled by Idius Branfeeter, the owner of the Impaled Griffon. He and his cohort of thugs maintain a semblance of order in this part of town. The northern portion of Grafika is held under the sway of a massive ogre, Gudgerot his tribe and associates control the Cudgel. Hirten von Dirbild and his band have taken up residence in a keep just outside of Grafika and maintain influence in the Dirbild, by both strength in numbers and location. The Old Man and his cohorts invest a small keep in the southern portion of Grafika and control that area; people call it Old Town. A relative newcomer to Grafika

is a powerful priest, Linderin of Grausamland. He has built a wall around several buildings in the west side of town and is attracting an ever-growing number of followers and slowly expanding his 'keep,' affectionately called Little Aufstrag. The areas in between these districts are veritable no-man's lands where mendicants, homeless, brigands, and monsters roam.

There are no laws in Grafiak, but there are understandings and traditions. As a general rule, each of the factions leave one another alone and pay little attention to one another. Disputes occur, however. These are, as often as not, settled with blood rather than agreements or arrangements. Few pay much heed to newcomers.

The town, being on the northern terminus of the great swamp and the southern terminus of those hills called the Withing Oaks receives a lot of rainfall throughout the year. During downpours the town is essentially separated into five parts that generally equate to spheres of influence for the various factions mentioned above. These rains rarely turn to snow in winter but become a slushy frozen mess. In spring and summer, rivers of mud and debris wash around the town eventually draining off to the south and are the only thing keeping the place half-way habitable.

## RUNNING ADVENTURES IN GRAFIKA

The Castle Keeper can run a number of adventures in Grafika. There are numerous NPCs and characters and places with whom the party can interact. As long as the party does not try to lay waste to the city or make enemies of everyone at once, the characters can survive here. The adventure can be organic and result simply from interaction with the NPCs or planned out based upon the information provided. The characters may even be enticed to go on a raid or two against some nearby humanoids or others.

For purpose of the adventure or plot, the characters need only find out what happened to the Vessel of Souls and the location of the causeway to continue with their adventures.

## THE VESSEL OF SOULS

The giant vulture brought the Vessel of Souls to the first Way Station where it rested. She then flew on to the second Way Station. She left that place, narrowly missing the troop of Ungern led by Harvorth. She arrived at the Bat Roost In Old Town. She was sold to Idius Banfeeter by one of the caretakers of the Roost (see below). Idius' guards took her to see him. She refused to talk to him, not knowing where his allegiance lay. Idius, having no idea who she was (the consort of the Lord of Aufstrag), placed her under house arrest. She was given her own rooms, but locked within and guarded.

To put people off her scent Idius made a public show of bagging the woman and selling her into slavery; her double was carted out of town. At the moment she is in the attic of the Impaled Griffon. Two guards keep watch over the attic. Traffic in and out of the Inn has led to many rumors as to what Idius is keeping in the attic.

Idius knows only that Coburg lost the Vessel of Souls. He does not know that that Vessel is actually a woman, much less the one he is holding. He keeps her, because he suspects she is someone important and he hopes to use her as a hostage or ransom her to the highest bidder.

If queried about the Vessel of Souls he speaks of its loss to Coburg and how many say that he will not march until he finds it. That is why, he remarks, there are so many of his minions in the lands, for the seek the item.

## ENTERING GRAFIKA

Grafika has no real walls and is surrounded by ruins. Entering the town is as easy as walking in and out. Finding campsites is easy as well. Enough wood remains in the rubble to provide a good sized fire. Many people move about the ruins of the town, including outlaws, thieves, destitute people, scattered orcs and the like.

The five districts of the town itself are only loosely connected in the Hubb, an extraordinarily violent and dangerous cesspool of humanity.

Encounters in the ruins are frequent. The town is a mixture of wildlife and human habitation. A large population of black bears stalk the ruins as do innumerable dogs and cats. Lycanthropy runs rampant in the town and there a number of these beasts stalking the ruins. Simple John (see the Bald Cap below) is the largest and most dangerous.

Consult the following chart. Roll a d6 six times during the day and 4 times at night. On a roll of 1 there is an encounter.

1. Mendicant
2. Gang of 2–12 Rogues (4th–8th level)
3. 2–12 Wolves
4. 1–4 Wights
5. Tinker/Tradesmen
6. 4–16 Ungern
7. 1–4 Gargoyles
8. Vampire
9. Orphan
10. Jules as a bum from Pulp Fiction
11. Bear, black
12. Simple John
13. Tinker
14. Werebear
15. Werewolf
16. Wererat

## DISTRICTS OF GRAFIKA

Grafika consists of 5 districts in Grafika, 4 small townships or districts loosely connected at the Hubb. The districts, who rules them, how they are organized, as well as notable persons are outlined below.

The population of Grafika fluctuates tremendously; though there are generally around 7,000 people living in and around the town. Caravans pass through frequently, causing a surge in population. Presently about 3000 mercenaries are encamped outside of the town, the beginnings of an army the Priest is building.

## 10 CASTLES & CRUSADES

## THE HUBB

The Hubb occupies the center of Grafika. It constitutes the market place, the old town hall, a litany of taverns, pubs, whore houses and the like. It has the largest market of the Five Districts and attracts the bulk of the caravans that travel along the east–west roads. Everything in the Hubb is centered around the town square. Its occupied streets sprawl out from there. The Hubb does not officially end, but rather peters out in the ruins. There are no fortifications.

The Hubb is alive night and day; people up drinking and carousing, murdering and filching. The Guards patrol to the four points (see map) and go no further.

It is filthy with no regular clean up nor any kind of order beyond that provided by the guards.

**Total Population:** 2500 +/-

**Human:** 2000 +/-

**Orc:** 150 +/-

**Hobgoblin:** 10 +/-

**Ogres/Giants:** 10 +/-

**Gnome:** 50 +/-

**Halfling:** 20 +/-

**Dwarf:** 200 +/-

**Elf:** 50 +/- (most of these elves come from the Plains of Achrothos)

**Government:** Idius Branfeeter rules the Hubb. He is a chaotic evil, retired 14th level knight. He carries a large iron headed +5 mace where ever he goes. It is named the Long Arm.

**Military:** Idius commands a guard of 50 mercenaries called the Fettermen, Branfeeter, the, each outfitted with chain, shields, swords and spears. He can call upon another 200 lightly armed individuals.

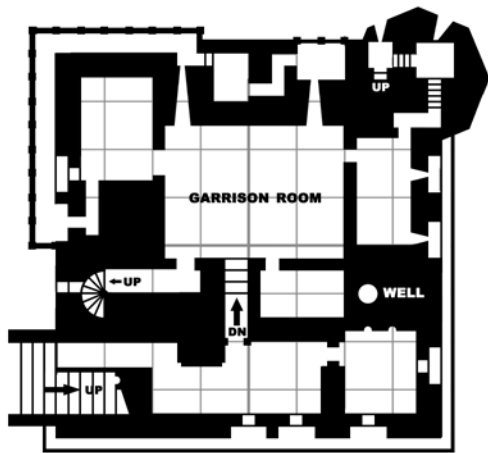
**Economy:** Nothing is manufactured in the Hubb, but everything is available. It has a thriving market place where armor, weapons, food and tac, harness, livestock, human and demi–human chattel and even some minor magics are available.

**Religion:** Idius is a member of the Cult of the Swords, a brotherhood of warriors. No other religion is noted.

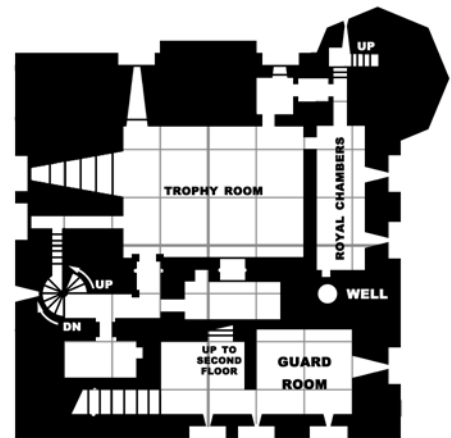
**Language:** Common or the Vulgate

**Major Guilds:** The Crna Ruk have a station house here. Several minor thieves guilds as well as Muddles Inc.

**FETTERMEN x 50** (These chaotic neutral 3<sup>rd</sup> level fighters vital stats are: HP 18 and AC 15. Their primary attributes are: strength, constitution, and dexterity. Their significant attributes are strength 13. They wear chainmail and carry a variety of swords, maces, spears and shields. They each have 40gp in jewelry and coin. They are distinguished by yellow and green tabards and shields.)



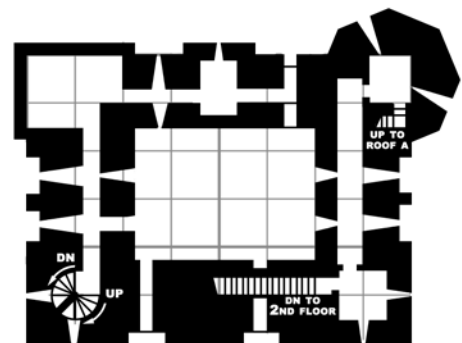
GROUND FLOOR



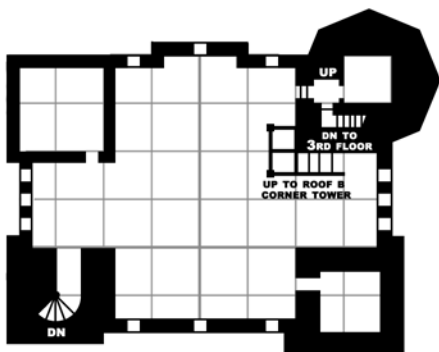
FIRST FLOOR



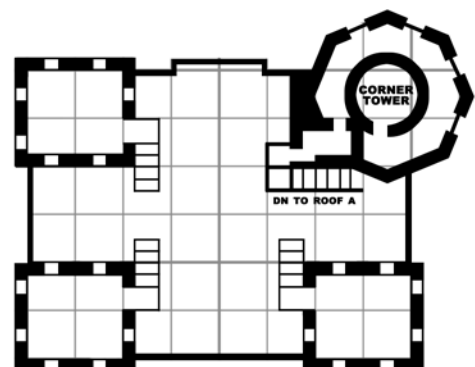
SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



ROOF A



ROOF B

# CASTLE DIRBILD

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET





WITHING O

TEN FIELDS

LAKE OF UL

THE WASTERING

GRAUSAMLAN

○ AUFSTRAG

RED HILLS

PETE BOGS

MURLIEN AKT

HEADWATERS OF DOBRA

● FORTRESS OF HUL

UPPER UDUNILAY  
RIVER

SERIT RIVER

JURA RIVER

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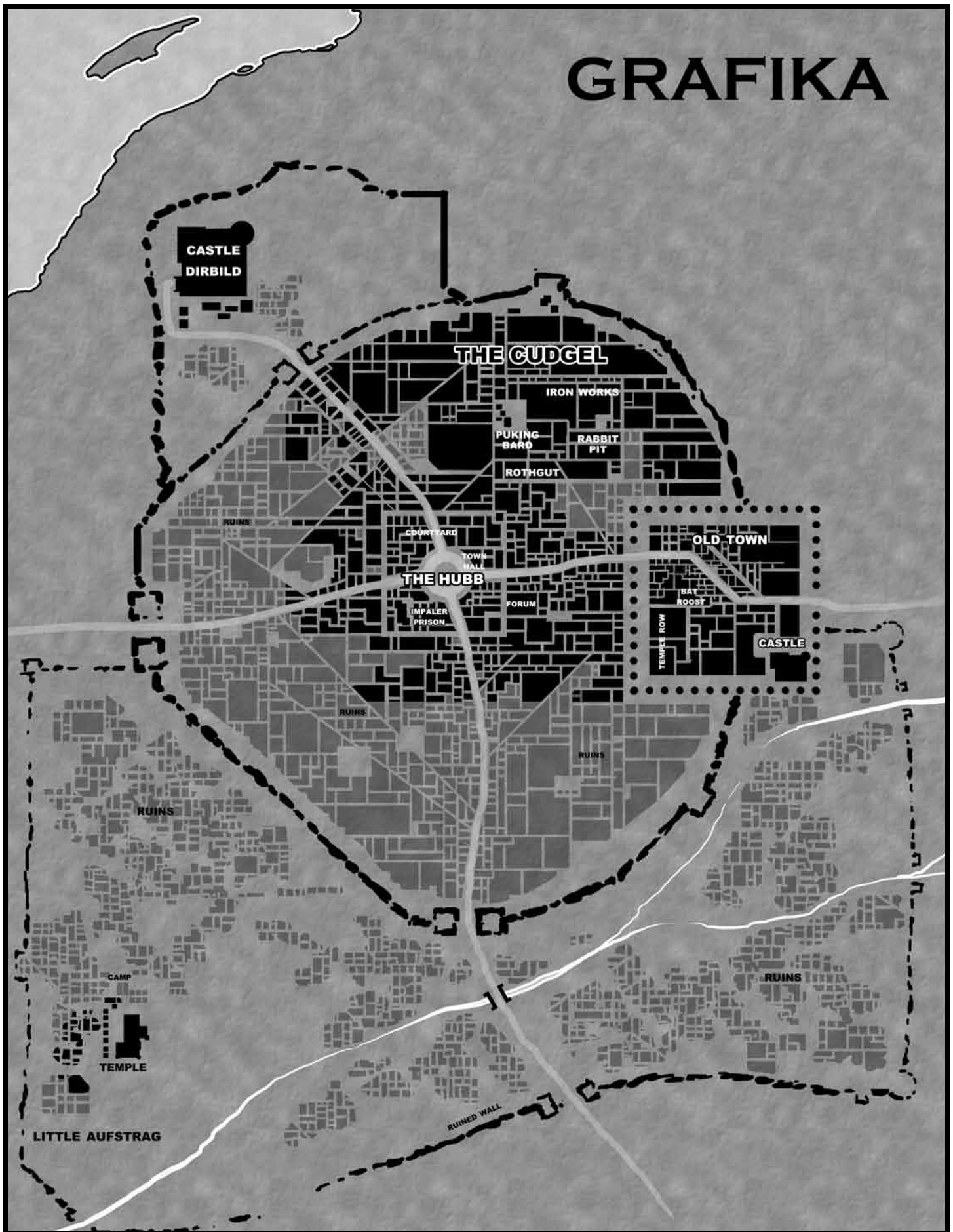
KASD

BLIGH

IAOLN



# GRAFIKA



The Fetternen are not honor bound, nor are they knights or even men of that class. They are mercenaries, some of them belong to the Cult of the Swords, most do not. They are not fiercely loyal to Idius, but are to coin.

### THE TRADING CENTER

There is no regular market or store in the Hubb, this place has come to replace that of a normal economic center. People come here to trade and sell goods. Most of this is purloined from once place or the other. Many things can be purchased here though the price might be somewhat inflated. Also, many deals can be struck and information can be found. The place runs by tradition. A tradition of basically sell what you can for what you can before someone takes it. Jibla Three Fingers has a strangle hold on the place as he acts as an intermediary for many who live here. His henchmen try to keep things in order and demand a small tax from others who sell here. He has several assassins who insure that those who disobey him or fault him pay a high price. Most people don't question him as the semblance of order brings respectability to Trading Center.

Jibla Three Fingers dwells on the edge of the Trading Center in a ramshackle 2 store house. Here his 12 henchman and several women dwell as well. He pays Idius a tithe each month to run the Trading Center.

**JIBLA THREE FINGERS** *(This chaotic neutral 7th level rogue's vital stats are AC 17, HD 7d6, HP 38. His primary attributes are dexterity, intelligence and wisdom. His extraordinary abilities are dexterity 15. He wears +3 laminar armor and uses a +2 bull whip to control people. He is adapt at poison as well, often putting a thick gel on his daggers. The jel causes 1d12 points of damage upon a successful hit; constitution save for half. Jibla keeps his wealth in gems. These he keeps in a strong box in his house.)*

**HENCHMEN X 12** *(These neutral evil thugs vital stats are AC 15, HD 3d8, HP 18. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with swords and cudgels for 1d8 points of damage. They wear leather armor, iron shot boots, and dark green cloaks. They have 2d12gp.)*

### THE TOWN HALL

This place was once the town hall and seat of power. It consists of a large palace, a walled courtyard and several rooms that abut the courtyard. Now it is a shell with little left standing. Idius makes all official ruling here, using the Court Yard to do so.

The powers that be in Grafika meet here every once in a while to hammer out differences. As often as not, the differences are hammered out with sword and axe. In front of the place is a gallows and execution site, gallows and chopping block. There are also several bodies here and usually a pile of heads heaped in one of the corners of the courtyard, the Forum.

### THE FORUM

It is often called the Corpseyard because executions, duels and fights often occur here. There are also weekly 'gladiatorial bouts' where prisoners are forced to fight one another. The courtyard is surrounded by many buildings, most of which have fallen into

the ruin. There are a number of punishment devises set about the courtyard, a corpse hanging from a hanging pole and several men in a tub of water, left here as punishment for some wrong.

### THE IMPALED GRIFFON

The Impaled Griffon is a massive four story building with two wings extending to either side; beyond that is consists of a series of houses and store rooms arranged in a haphazard manner at its rear. A large sign in front has a drawing of a griffon with a lance through it. Windows stretch all around the tavern, including the lower floor and on the dormers of the attic. The central portion of the tavern is open for the first three floors, allowing patrons to see up and down to the other floors. Noise and light spills out of the place and the revelry inside can be heard blocks away.

This is Idius' establishment; he keeps "court" here on the 2nd floor. There are always six guardsmen on the floor as well as his personal body guard, a large sallow faced man called Gnat.

This is an unsavory place and quite unsafe, attracting a wide range of people, both those passing through as well as local patrons that come in every night. There are no rules here and fights are common throughout.

Inside the place is always crowded, full of people drinking, smoking, eating, gambling, whoring, thieving, singing and all other activities that make a bar come alive. It is open 24 hours a day. There are a regular crew of bouncers that keep the establishment safe . . . they do not interfere with personal fights.

### VESSEL OF SOULS

Idius has placed the Vessel of Souls in a corner room on the attic of the building. This low cut chamber is accessed by a ladder step from the fourth floor. Two of the Fetterman stand watch at the foot of the ladder at all time. The Vessel has been bound and gagged and tied to a bed in the attic above. She is fed and given water three times a day and checked on by Idius himself often.

The attic itself is dirty and filled with all manner of debris, furniture, crates, old mattresses, stacks of rotten linen and so forth.

If the characters encounter her and attempt to free her she treats them like rescuing heroes. She attempts to charm them with her gaze, holding off a kiss or any other affection unless threatened. She has no idea that she is being pursued by anyone, only possessing a desire to return to Coburg and the towers of Aufstrag.

She plays ignorant, calling herself only Wendith, a slave of Aufstrag.

If the characters interrogate her, she confesses that she is indeed the Lady of Garun, the Vessel of Souls. Her master, Coburg the Undying possesses her soul.

She explains her story thus:

"I am indeed the Vessel of Souls, slave of Aufstrag and mistress of Coburg the Undying. He has bound me to him oh these many centuries for he keeps my soul in a talisman that he wears around his neck. He uses me for many purposes, not the least as a Vessel for the souls of men he sends to the Wretched Plains."

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Nothing she says is untrue, but rather half trues so that a *detect lie* reveals no deception. She offers to guide the character back to Aufstag if they promise to return her soul to her.

**NOTE:** Her purpose is to get back to Coburg. She will do whatever it takes to get there. She freely allows them to bind her if they do not trust her. She aids them whenever she can, attempting to ingratiate herself to them, knowing full well when she returns to the her love, they will be put to death.

**THE LADY OF GARUN, VESSEL OF SOULS** (*This evil creature's vital stats are HD 14d8, AC 21, HP 88. Her primary attributes are physical and mental. She attacks with a gaze, charm attack and a kiss that drains the souls of her victims. She possess nothing but rags. See full write up below.*)

#### THE FLEEING VESSEL

Idius does not take her escape lightly. Unless the characters have covered their trail carefully, he pursues them with a force of Fettermen and the ogres.

**GNAT** (*These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 14, AC 16, HP 82. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with two open handed slam attacks for 1d10+3 points of damage each. Gnat is always naked, wearing not a stitch of clothing. Idius does force him to bathe. He is extraordinarily stupid and easy to fool. Any non-magic based, intelligence checks he is forced to make are at a -4.*)

**BOUNCERS (6-12)** (*These neutral to neutral evil human's vital stats are HD 5d10, AC 17, HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. Their significant attributes are strength 17, dexterity 14, constitution 14. They attack with a variety of weapons, pole axes, swords and the like. They have mixed ensembles of armor, pieces taken from there and there that hobbled together like gladiators. Three of them have +1 chain shirts in their ensemble and all carry master work swords and axes. Any other weapons and equipment is normal.*)

#### NURGLE'S HEAD TAVERN

This massive stone building is located on the courtyard. A bar over the front door has the head of a troll hanging from it; its spiked to the board and burnt at the edges, so that only the head regenerates. Its mouth is perpetually open and it howls groans of pain throughout the day and night. When it does grow beyond its burnt head someone from below comes out and lops off the growth. Nurgle's is a rough tavern, with fights occurring day and night. More often than not a body or three lies in the alley next to the tavern. The bouncers here are mean and foul tempered and, encourage the peace with the threat of violence.

The tavern is full most of the time with various people from around town. The men of the Hirten are often found here. There are prostitutes aplenty and other pleasures of the body to be found. Beer and food are cheap, but not very good. One can also rent a room – for what it's worth.

The establishment is run by a half ogre, named Urgidtrempt, who is fat and mean. He and his retinue of surly louts keep the place running and everyone on their toes. Should fights erupt they either join in or just watch and take bets. Should the fights become too destructive, they intercede and throw everyone outside and force them to fight (but continue to take bets).

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**Persons of Interest:** One of the prostitutes/slaves is Emma, a daughter of the Mardocs Ascalon. This wealthy merchant family is a major pillar of the Imperial network in the south. Her safe return would bring the party a reward of 20,000gp. She lives in a small room with four other girls behind the kitchen. Should the characters become known to her, she attempts to befriend them and says a reward is in the offing should she be returned. She is shy and scared, 22 years old and uncommonly attractive with long dark hair and dark, round eyes.

## THE CUDGEL: GUDGEROT

The Cudgel is a filthy cesspool of ramshackle buildings, rubble-strewn streets, and moss covered walls. Weeds and bramble dominate. The Cudgel is home to about 1200 miserable souls. It possesses no market place, only a central square called the Rabbit Pit, a smattering of nasty gut-rotting taverns, some iron works and a plethora of buildings where people make hovels and call them homes. Not a single streets winds through the Cudgel that is not carpeted in debris. Maneuvering a wagon through here is next to impossible; small carts and hand carts are the norm.

This area of town has a group of misfit ogres, orcs and ungerms as well as some goblins. They raid and pilfer, several hundred strong. They are generally used as mercenaries or hirelings for dirty jibs. Few people go to this side of town because it is so filthy and dangerous. As a general rule, everyone here is simply ignored. The ogres are useful as mercenaries and are quite willing to join in any raid or fray which sounds even remotely promising. Most of the building are abandoned and burnt out and the characters can rest in a building, should they desire.

Gudgerot runs the Cudgel. He rules as a tyrant. He has no council or advisors. Any announcement is called "Gudgerot's Law." To violate Gudgerot's Law is punishable by death. Many of the denizens use the battle cry of Grudgerot's Law as an excuse to justify murder or theft. There are constant brawls in the streets and murders in the ruined houses.

Business is carried out by migrant tinkers who come from the other districts with carts carrying items to sell. These range from dirty clothes to highly prized wine, weapons, bits of armor, foods stuffs, maps, information and just about anything else. It is against Grudgerot's Law to bother or harm a tinker. This is very common knowledge and if anyone is seen doing so, shouts for Gudgerot rise from all quarters. He comes personally with his gang to punish those who molest the tinkers.

**Total Population:** 1200 +/-

**Human:** 200 +/-

**Orc:** 700 +/-

**Ungern:** 200 +/-

**Hobgoblin:** 100 +/-

**Ogres/Giants:** 100 +/-

**Gnome:** 50 +/-

**Halfling:** 0 +/-

**Dwarf:** 000 +/-

**Elf:** 0 +/-

**Government:** Gudgerot is a gigantic 12HD ogre. He rules as a tyrant.

**Military:** Gudgerot commands a troop of some 40 ogres, a mad giant and a motley collection of some 300 orcs and other humanoids.

**Economy:** There is small trade by tinkers; armor and weapons manufacture.

**Religion:** None.

**Language:** Common or the Vulgate

**Major Guilds:** The Tinkers Guild

### THE PUTRID BARN

Gudgerot the ogre owns the Barn that lies within a stone building, two stories high. A ladder leads down 15 feet into the common area; the first floor of the building collapsed long ago and the tavern sprang up in the hole it left behind. The second floor is gutted and all the windows blasted out. The roof is covered in blackened soot.

A large beer keg that holds up to 15000 gallons of beer dominates the back wall. It offers the only drink served in the Barn. It is served by half a dozen gnome barkeeps. The common area is a pot load of tables, chairs and debris heaped randomly about the room. A huge fire pit dominates the center of the room whose filth belches up and out the second floor windows.

The tavern is always crowded, packed with people of all races. It is noisy, smoke filled, and has garbage on the floor. A number of finely worked statues set around the tavern, and many lie broken on the floor. The statues are mostly of orcs, ungern and the like.

A small door leads to the kitchens. It lies behind the keg. The kitchens are owned and run by a family of gnomes, the Crowbills. They are fierce, angry lot who do as much fighting and gut cutting as any rogue or thief. Their chief is Jeckle Hacksaw. He's also the main cook and provides the patrons with whatever the gnomes have bought from the tinkers. A wide variety of meat is offered on the menu. Jeckle owns a small basilisk that he keeps on his shoulder. It is usually hooded. however, whenever a patron gets out of line, he pulls off its hood, exposing anyone nearby to the petrifying power of the basilisk.

### PERSONS OF NOTE

#### The Good Beggar and Guild

The Barn is home to the Good Beggar. A human, old and wizened, he dwells by the fire pit on a three legged stool. He rarely leaves the tavern, sleeping there on the floor. He is a friend of Chief Jeckle Hacksaw, who gives him the floor.

The friendship is not accidental, for The Good Beggar is master of the Beggar Thieves. This guild roams the Grafika ruins. The Good Beggar holds court here, seeing to the administration of his guild. There are always four 8th level rogues in the tavern with him and a dozen more of varying levels the can call on in short order.

## THE TOWER OF ROTHGUT

This large tower is located in the Cudgel. Once part of a larger structure that has fallen into ruin, the tower now houses little more than a brass bell. At least once a week, the bell mysteriously sounds, ringing loud and clear across the Cudgel. Few know what dwells within the tower, though it is widely believed to be occupied by the ghosts of the priests who lived in the adjacent temple. The sounding of the bell, it is said, is their moaning for their lost gods.

The tower itself is 120 feet high and about 40 wide at the base. It consists of one long flight of stairs that wind around the inner tower until they come to a hatch in the ceiling above. The center of the tower is not hollow but rather it consists of multiple lateral and horizontal supports that hold up the stairs. The beams are in relatively good shape and anyone who attempts to climb them can do so with ease (CL 4).

But the tower is occupied. In years past when the city was sacked the priests of Unkar gathered here in the tower in a last ditch attempt to save themselves. They failed, as knights and paladins broke through the door and put them all to the sword.

As priests of a banished god, their souls had no house to which they could flee. So they lingered, evolving into a morass of twisted nightmare known as a shelkerow. This creature attacks anything that enters the tower within 1d8 rounds. It looks like a black smoke and occupies the crevices and dark corners of the tower. When it attacks, it coalesces into a huge tendril of black smoke. Any *detect evil* cast in the tower reveals evil everywhere.

**SHELKEROW** (*This neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 10d8, AC 19, HP 65. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a slam for 2d10 points of damage. Its special abilities include energy drain, detect good, and immunity to normal weapons. Once the creature successfully strikes its victim it gains an automatic hit from that point until the victim has broken free with a strength check. It is able to forgo the slam attack and drain the victim's levels; each round the victim is allowed a dexterity check. Success means they avoid the attack, failure means they lose a level and the creature gains 1d4 hit points. See below for more.*)

The creature's treasure is hidden in the bell tower above. It consists of a set of +3 leather armor, +4 thieves tools, a flame tongue short sword and a pouch with 200gp. The ringer of the bell is made of iron and brass that is held to the stem with a small peg. Noticing this requires a successful intelligence check (CL 6). Pulling the peg drops the bell from the stem and reveals a hidden compartment. The gem in the compartment is worth 4,500 gold pieces.

## IRON WORKS

The iron works is a 20000 square foot stone warehouse turned smithy. Here are some of the best craftsmen in the region, the make just about anything one could want, from weapons to wagons. The building's floor plan is open, with half a dozen fire pits, numerous counters, work tables and benches, chains from the ceiling hooked to pulleys hold all manner of arms and equipment. It is noisy and hot.

The Iron Works are busy outfitting Coburg's army. They have orders for thousands of weapons and have hired extra help. Most of their goods go to the Priest and his gathering mercenaries.

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There is no one central person in charge, but any number of smiths to speak to: MacCune, Herne, Dennehy, Canning, Regan, Carlin or Dedrem. They are all humans here, and employ mostly humans as assistants.

They can make any kind of armor and will do so, despite their large orders from Aufstrag. They charge 5% higher than the normal price. Masterwork weapons can be made here as well as silver coated weapons and armor.

If questioned about the armor and gathering mercenaries any one of them speaks plainly (because they are under the protection of the ogre). They speak of a number of camps spread throughout the north where the Undying One is gathering troops for his invasion of the southlands.

There is one inner building within the Iron Works, it's a large structure, its where the Tinkers Guild is located.

#### THE TINKERS GUILD

The Tinkers Guild consists of 74 tinkers. These humans, half orcs and gnomes have banded together to keep an eye on who is where, selling what and when. They travel throughout Grafika, carrying a great deal of equipment and supplies.

Their main house is in the Iron Works and is about 3000 square feet. Here the tinkers gather to discuss matters important to them, mend carts, trade goods amongst themselves, and store goods. The office is run by a thickly muscled man with thinning hair named Kite. He wears thick eye glasses and talks slowly. Despite this, Kite is very smart and knows just about everything that goes on in Grafika. He knows about the Vessel of Lost Souls and her whereabouts. He never gives out information unless paid handsomely for it.

#### RABBIT PIT

The Rabbit Pit is where Gudgerot holds court. In the center of the Pit lies a large heaping pile of stone work and masonry upon which his chair sits. Here the Ogre sits and rules over all those in the Cudgel. He can be found here most days and nights; he is usually drunk. He likes to eat, drink, and cause pain.

With him are a band of his giants and ogres. They are filthy, foul-mouthed, mean-spirited and evil-tempered.

**NOTE:** Gudgerot hates Idius with a passion.

**GUDGEROT** (*This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 10(d8), HP 54, AC 24. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with a slam for 2d8 points of damage. If he wields a weapon, he strikes opponents for 2d6+6 points of damage. He is able to throw rocks, has twilight vision and dark vision.*)

**OGRES, 20** (*These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 4, AC 16, HP 13, 17, 22, 22, 28. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a weapon for 1d10+3 points of damage or their powerful fists for 1d10 points of damage. They have dark vision and twilight vision.*)



**GIANT, STONE, 4** (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 10(d8), HP 54, AC 24. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with a slam for 2d8 points of damage. If he wields a weapon he causes 2d6+6 points of damage. He is able to throw rocks, has twilight vision and dark vision.*)

**Treasure:** Gudgerot's treasure consists of 350gp, 12,000sp, gems worth 1000gp; a cloak of the manta ray, a +2 shield, boots of climbing, and a vorpal spear (that acts as a vorpal sword), His drinking has hindered his accumulation of wealth.

#### PERSONS OF INTEREST

A paladin, captured by some goblins and sold to the Ogre, hangs on a crossbar in the middle of the Rabbit Pit. His hands and feet have been cut off and his eyes gouged out. He hangs on by a thread of life. No one pays much attention to him anymore so the characters can ostensibly get away with talking to him for some time before getting the attention of someone. The paladin is free to speak.

The paladin's name is Albern of the House Lambrick and his tale is a sorrowful one; he is a knight in the service of the King of Augsburg, holding lands and title in the River King's domain. He traveled with a band of crusaders across the Luneberg Plains to the Gray Pools in quest of the Unicorn. Legends relate of a magnificent beast that dwelt in those swamps. They skirted north until they came to a great, long causeway that stretched across and into the swamp. There lay a dragon who questioned them and wondered at their purpose. He did not like their answers and attacked, killing everyone but himself. He fought on but the

## 18 CASTLES & CRUSADES

dragon lifted him on high and dropped him in the swamps. There the goblins found him, broken and wounded. They brought him here and sold him to the Ogre. Here he sits, waiting to die.

The paladin is not seeking aid or help as he considers his position to be just punishment for his sin of vanity in thinking he was powerful enough to find the unicorn. He will pass—on any information that he can to help others.

If queried about the dragon, he can tell them it is an old white dragon, mildly tempered, and fond of talk. It dwells upon the steps of the Causeway that leads to Aufstrag. The dragon has a great love of silver and may take that for payment to cross into the swamps.

#### CASTLE DIRBILD

Castle Dirbild is just outside of the ruins of Grafika. Its massive stone walls and looming square keep dominate the rubble of the district. Few live here, and those who do crowd around the castle itself, making homes for themselves out of the rubble. This whole region of Grafika contained the long barracks that housed the towns soldiery. The paladins of old ordered the walls pulled down and the streets torn up. The bodies of the fallen were piled along the streets, where they sank slowly into the mud. The burned husks of houses and the rubble of fallen walls remain, lining the muddy streets. On occasion, the bones of the dead are uncovered.

Dirbild built the castle some years ago, much of it from the stone of the roads. The structure is plain and undecorated. Around this edifice, various inhabitants gather, clinging to their miserable lives in the shadow of their master. There are two areas of interest here: Dirbild Castle and the Bald Cap Tavern.

**Total Population:** 1000 +/-

**Human:** 800 +/-

**Orc:** 0 +/-

**Hobgoblin:** 0 +/-

**Ogres/Giants:** 10 +/-

**Gnome:** 70 +/-

**Halfling:** 50 +/-

**Dwarf:** 200 +/-

**Elf:** 50 +/- (most of these elves come from the Plains of Achrothos)

**Government:** Hirten von Dirbild rules here. He is a 17th level human fighter. He styles himself Lord.

**Military:** Dirbild commands a mercenary troop, the Baldheads, a mixed force of 320 archers, spearmen, and warriors. All are mounted. His personal guard, the Irontops, consists of 25 heavily armored fighters.

**Economy:** None.

**Religion:** None.

**Language:** Common or Vulgate.

**Major Guilds:** Baldheads

#### CASTLE DIRBILD

The castle is small, consisting of a four story donjon, several small outbuildings, and three round towers. All this is contained inside an 18 foot high wall and surrounded by a moat. The moat is dry, but it is 10 feet deep, 20 feet wide, and lined with stakes.

The Donjon is an open structure and each of the four floors are open to the one below. Rooms are built to the sides and aside from the top floor. The first floor houses the guard. The second floor houses equipment and more guards. The third floor is the kitchen and storage. The fourth floor is Dirbild's residence. All 320 men can crowd into the structure in an emergency, but it normally only houses a garrison of about 50 men. There is a well in the inner bailey.

Guard is sporadically kept, as no one ever bothers the Balders when they are in residence. When raiding, about 50 Baldheads remain within the castle.

Outside the keep, a large series of stables and outbuildings have been erected to house the 400 horses they use for traveling and raiding. A series of low barracks have been built just outside the castle against the wall. These house the men and their equipment. The whole area is filthy with human debris and waste.

#### HIRTEN DIRBILD

Hirten is not an evil man. He simply cares nothing for the authority of others. He cares for no one other than his own men and has absolutely no concept of property ownership other than his own. "Why does that lout have my gold," he is oft heard to say. Grafika is, for Hirten, a place of safety. The authorities and armies of the east, north and west do not travel this far in search of anyone. It is too close to the Great Swamp. When in town, he and his men generally keep to their own.

Hirten can be approached by the characters. They must do so with respect and must not show weakness in his presence. If Hirten senses some utility in the characters, he may be willing to pass along some information about Grafika or the Great Swamp. He might even suggest a place to rest or provide some protection from others in town.

Hirten has a grudge against the Old Man on the Hill (see below). After some discrete inquiries, Hirten asks the characters to rob the Old Man on the Hill. He has, so Hirten explains, "an object of mine. A small piddly thing of little value, but mine anyway and I want it back." The object is a crown encrusted in gems. Should the characters retrieve this for Hirten, he will be very grateful.

He knows very little about the Vessel of Souls. He knows a woman of surpassing beauty came to town not long ago. He does not know her whereabouts, though he heard she was sold into slavery. He suspects Idius has her holed up somewhere. He does not know any connection to Coburg.

He doesn't care for the Idius Branfetter. If for some reason the characters go to war with Idius, he will join them for the right price.

Should the characters be dismissive, rude or otherwise ungracious to Hirten or his captains, he most likely try to have them killed. If the characters appear weak or dim-witted, he will most likely have them killed for their goods.



## THE BALDHEADS

Hirten von Dirbild is the leader of a group of bandits called the Bald Heads. They are called such because Hirten is bald and requires all his followers to shave their heads, though not their beards. They are a rough band of soldiers, career criminals and outlaws. They raid far to the west and east and only hole up in Grafika between major raids and during the winter. When the characters arrive, the Balders are in residence after a very successful sacking of a small town a hundred miles away. They are enjoying the fruits of their labor.

The Baldheads number 320 men and about 100 followers.

**BRIGANDS X250** (*The chaotic neutral/evil men's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 12–15 and HP are determined by a d4+4 with an average of 6. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon type. Most carry ranged weapons and have access to a horse. They carry type 2 treasure.*)

**BRIGAND LEADERS X50** (*These chaotic neutral/evil men are 1st–4th level fighters/barbarians/rangers. Their minimum HP per level are 1/2 the possible hit points. They carry various weapons and all have access to war horses. They carry type 3 treasure.*)

**BRIGAND CAPTAINS X25** (*These chaotic neutral/evil men are 5th–8th level fighters/barbarians/rangers. Their minimum HP per level are 1/2 the possible hit points. They carry various weapons and all have access to war horses. They carry type 4 treasure.*)

## THE BALD CAP

The Bald Cap is a long low house built half underground. The main door is found down a flight of steps. It opens into a long, straight hall. The center of the hall consists of a half dozen fire pits where various creatures and foods are cooked. The back of the hall dips down into another room, accessed by two flights of steps. Here are the beer vats and storage for the hops and other ingredients.

Long tables and benches mark the hall's only sitting. About 100 can easily sit in the hall.

It is run by a local named Simple John. Simple John is not so simple but rather quick witted and knows much of all that goes on in the area. A thin fellow, he grew up an urchin in Grafika, working his way slowly through the Beggar Guild and later into the graces of Dirbild. He owns and runs the establishment.

He knows of the whereabouts of the Vessel of Souls, though he does not know who she is (the consort of Coburg the Undying). He parts with this information for gold; his price for risking the enmity of Idius is 200gp.

Simple John's real secret is that he's a wearbear. He hunts people who leave the city if they appear weak. He will hunt a character if they go out alone. If captured and not killed, the wearbear reveals himself to be rather honorable. He would like to be cured of his lycanthropy.

**SIMPLE JOHN** (*This chaotic neutral creature's vital stats as a man are HP 19, AC 10. As a werebear he is HD 9d8, AC 18, HP 88. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks by weapon or by bite for 1d4 or 2 claw attacks for 1d3 points of damage. He is able to alternate his form, changing into a bear or human. He can cause disease, regenerate 3 hit points per round, and has bear empathy. In bear form, he can call 1–8 black bears to him.*)

## 20 CASTLES & CRUSADES

## OLD TOWN

Old Town gained its name, not from being an old part of town, but rather from the man who runs it, an old bandit chief. The town is much like the Hub, consisting of a courtyard and surrounding buildings where people make a living as best they can. Old Man ordered much of the wreckage and ruin of the town removed some years past and ordered a small wall constructed around the township. For this reason the streets are clean, relatively safe, and echo the normal patterns of most small towns. The streets are regularly patrolled by the Old Guard.

It is here that the Vulture Roost stands, and the vultures from the Tower of Hostek, Aufstrag and other locales come and go. Old Man allows this to go on as it is his desire to keep peace in his locale and wishes to keep the Lords of Aufstrag appeased.

Old Town sports the only religion in Grafika. A whole street has been devoted to the worship of various gods. It is called Temple Row and possess well over a dozen small and large temples to various gods.

**Total Population:** 1500 +/-

**Human:** 1000 +/-

**Orc:** 0 +/-

**Hobgoblin:** 0 +/-

**Ogres/Giants:** 0 +/-

**Gnome:** 100 +/-

**Halfling:** 120 +/-

**Dwarf:** 75 +/-

**Elf:** 200 +/- (most of these elves come from the Plains of Achrothos)

**Government:** Old Man and his Council of 5

**Military:** Old Man commands 67 knights, fighters and barbarians of 4–8th level. They are called the Old Guard.

**Economy:** Local goods made, some food stuffs, armory

**Religion:** Temple Row

**Language:** Common or Vulgate

**Major Guilds:** None

## THE OLD MAN ON THE HILL

This old and wily mercenary has a tower and small fort that he calls home. He controls a small, but very loyal and experienced group of brigands. Once highly paid in the south in the Blacktooth Ridge area, he turned on an employer, by disobeying orders to burn a village. His employer immediately attempted to slay him. In the ensuing action the Old Man slew the Lord and scattered his troops. His honor ruined, he moved from one less lucrative job to the next, with most of his men leaving along the way. He eventually turned to brigandage, finding it very lucrative. When a bounty was placed on his head, he came north to find refuge.

The Old Man's real name is Lord Wils Shurleon. He comes from a minor family in the lands of Dundador. He does not use that name and few beyond his trusted friends know who he is or that there is a bounty on his head. He is calm, reserved and quiet. He encourages others to talk, listening carefully to what they say.

### THE BAT ROOST

On the south end of Grafika are four large wooden towers stretched several hundred feet above the squalid huts and disintegrating buildings. One might more aptly describe these towers as scaffolds. There are numerous beams and poles branching out from the tower's central portions, like branches from a tree. Upon many of the beams rest gigantic vultures, some strapped to the poles, some free, others with saddles upon their backs. The ground is strewn with the carcasses of old meals and the stench of a slaughterhouse fills the air like a misty fog.

These towers house a retinue who watch over the vultures. The vultures are used as transport for select individuals. If the characters have come this far on vultures obtained in the previous adventure, the vultures alight here.

The towers each have eight to ten floors and a dungeon beneath. Each floor contains one room. The dungeon has half a dozen rooms or so. All but the lower three floors have a few windows in them. The rooms contain supplies, leather working equipment, a work room, foodstuff, living quarters, etc. There is little particular order to these arrangements except that the dungeon areas are used as sleeping quarters and food storage.

Ten men and 22 ungeren reside in each tower. They care for the vultures as well as guard the place from interlopers. The overseer of the Bat Roost is a priest named Widegill. This agent of Coburg is quite an evil character given over to snobbery and arrogance. He delights in the petty pains and suffering of others. So vile is this person that many in Grafika would as well see him dead and it would be so were it not for his open allegiance to Coburg and the Old Man's tolerance. Widegill is unwilling to allow anyone use of the vultures unless they arrived on one. Widegill's second hand man is Fith Lee Azshhet.

**WIDEGILL** (*This chaotic evil, human cleric/rogue's vital stats are 7<sup>th</sup> level cleric/9<sup>th</sup> level rogue, HP 71, AC 20. His primary attributes are wisdom, dexterity and charisma. His extraordinary attributes are constitution 16, dexterity 16 and wisdom 17. He carries a large +4 iron shod magical hammer of crushing in battle. Upon a successful natural 20 he deals double damage. He also possesses a +2 shadow dagger, this peculiar weapon allows him to throw magical shadows of the dagger, while still holding the dagger. The shadows strike as +2 weapons. So long as there is light to cast a shadow, the dagger can cast a shadowy version of itself. He wears +5 ringmail of protection. Widegill carries little wealth on his own person, and possessing a modest amount of coin, 25gp. The rest of his treasure, over 1200gp in coin lies buried in mounds of vulture manure.*)

There is also an elf living here. His name is Ordon and he works for Widegill. Ordon has come to this place in an effort to get closer to Aufstrag and has hidden his true intent behind lies and illusions for so long that they have blurred and Ordon really does not know his own self. He spends much of his time at one or the

other drinking establishments in town. He is also willing, should the characters be amenable, to travel with them into the swamps and on to Aufstrag. To manage this, Ordon presents a personality one or more of the characters may find likable.

**ORDON** (*This chaotic neutral, elf rogue/illusionist's vital stats are 9<sup>th</sup> level illusionist/6<sup>th</sup> level rogue, HP 55, AC 18. His primary attributes are intelligence and dexterity. His extraordinary attributes are intelligence 18, dexterity 16. He wears a longsword of dancing at his side and a long dirk. Ordon wears +2 elvin chainmail beneath his clothes and possesses a +2 ring of protection. His spells are kept on a series of small scrolls, bound in a plain iron scroll case. It is small, barely 8 inches long and an inch in diameter. They contain all 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> level illusionist spells.*)

### THE VESSEL OF SOULS

Widegill does not know that the Vessel of Souls arrived. However, Ordon greeted the lady upon her arrival and instantly knew her for what she was. He could not kill her, but he promptly wove magics about her, confusing her and then he bound her and sold her to Idius Banfetter. His sorceries were benign and did not summon the wights. He speaks nothing of this. Too many inquiries about the Lady raises Widegill's suspicions and he begins probing to find out what actually happened. If he discovers the treachery he kills, (or attempts to kill) Ordon and the characters to boot.

Ordon does not know where she went after he sold her. It only occurred to him later that she could guide him through Aufstrag. For this reason, he helps the characters if asked, but will not reveal her true identity or her connection to Coburg. His intent is to enter Aufstrag.

### THE COURTYARD

This area lies near what used to be the southeast entry Grafika. The south spur or old highway begins here. The courtyard is broad and covered in well laid but time worn and abused flagstones. It was obviously once a marvel to behold. Surrounding the courtyard are all manner of stone buildings in various states of disrepair. These are occupied, however, by traders and craftsmen. There is a tannery, carpenter's shop, furrier, herbalist, and a block printer.

### TEMPLE ROW

This area has over 15 various temples built along both sides of the streets. The deities range from good to evil, law and chaos. If playing in the world of Aihirde there are temples to the following deities: Frafnog, Narrheit, Toth, Unklar, Burasil, Grotvedt, Imbrisius, Ore-Tsar, Aristobulus, Crateus, Utumno, and Kain.

Castle Keepers should adjust for their own campaigns.

### LITTLE AUFSTRAG

Little Aufstrag is a large encampment built around a ruined temple of Unklar. It consists of a host of tents and hastily built long houses. Its occupants are the beginnings of army being assembled for the invasion of the lands of New Aenoch. The tents and buildings are built in an orderly fashion, horses are picketed or corralled, wagons, supplies and other material are stockpiled.

## THE LAST RESPITE 21

It is ruled by Linderin, a priest of Unklar in the service of Coburg the Undying. Sent forth to gather mercenaries, rally local orc bands, collect giants and trolls, Linderin is the vanguard of the army. His camp is one of several set up on the northern fringes of the Grausumland.

Entry to the camp is forbidden unless one has a pass. To attain a pass, they must see the captain of the guard. However, the camp's sentries are not nearly as dedicated to their tasks as the priest would like. Entering in the enclave is easy if one is careful.

**Total Population:** 3000 +/-

**Human:** 700 +/-

**Orc:** 1500 +/-

**Hobgoblin:** 400 +/-

**Ogres/Giants:** 10 +/- (hill giants)

**Trolls:** 50 +/-

**Ungern:** 200 +/-

**Government:** The priest rules, but there is a clear military chain of command

**Military:** 3000 soldiery

**Economy:** None

**Religion:** Unklar, Cult of the Swords amongst the mercenaries.

**Language:** Aenochian and Common

**Major Guilds:** None

## THE GREAT TEMPLE

At the heart of Little Aufstrag stands a large temple. The temple itself is a ziggurat built much in the fashion of all the temples of Unklar. Its exterior is burnt in places and in need of repair neglect. The inside is largely abandoned and burnt out. The rooms are in horrible shape, the stairways are clouded with debris. Linderin the priest is slowly rebuilding it, but does not live in it.

The temple sits on the edge of the encampment, and functions as the southern wall. A watch is kept on top of the temple at all times by two cunalrur; the watchers are able to see great distances and make note of any coming and going from the encampment as well as any threats that might be coming. They possess a telepathic link with the priest, communicating with him at all times. Any threats to them or the camp are broadcast to their master.

**CUNALRUR** (*These lawful neutral beasts vital stats are HD 5d8, AC 14, HP 32, 35. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 4–6 claw attacks for 1d6 points of damage or a bite for 1d8 points of damage. They are skilled climbers, are able to see invisible things, telepathic abilities and are unaffected by illusions. See below or refer to Monsters & Treasure of Ahrde page 22.*)

### THE PRIESTS' TOWER

This priest's tower lies in a walled compound with a mansion, tower and outbuildings. The tower has been converted to living quarters. The mansion is three stories tall with windows all

around it. The lower floor is constructed of stone while the upper two stories are constructed of wood and plaster. The roof is red slate. On the north side of the building, a large tower 80 feet high stretches up and above the surrounding area. Several small buildings have been encased within the compound. A stable and several small peasant huts are currently used to house troops. A large warehouse provides a gathering point and storage area for the priest. A temple has been constructed in the inner courtyard. A tall 15 foot high stone wall wraps around all the buildings. A wooden parapet stretches along the interior of the wall and several small watch posts have been placed here as well.

The priest, 10 acolytes and 50 troops are here. The perimeter is fairly well guarded. Large dogs roam the interior courtyard.

The priest is an agent of Coburg. He is trying to establish some base of operations in Grafika for invasion of the south. He has gathered several thousand mercenaries but has failed to make any traction in Grafika itself, as the bandits are most disagreeable. He would pay a mighty sum to have some of them killed. If he can find a manner of doing so, he would use the characters to this end. The characters may also find an unlikely ally in the priest if they are set upon by any of the other town masters.

## ENCAMPMENT

The encampment itself sprawls south and west of Grafika. It is huge, housing some 3000 soldiery, orcs, ungern, men and others. The camp itself is rectangular with a large ditch and short palisade surrounding it. Guard towers, short, wooden platforms stand on each corner. Guards keep watch night and day. Inside the encampment is built much like a planned town, with streets between tents and the soldiers huts. Planks of wood and stone line the streets, keeping wagons clear of mud and water.

On the west side of the camp an area has been cleared and a scaffolding constructed. Here men, orcs, ungern who break the camp rules are drawn and quartered at the commander's orders.

There is a small township inside with bar, tavern, eateries and a mercantile. Entering the camp is possible but anyone going in is given a pass or a guide and must have a reason for entering. The gate guards are not very intelligent, so fooling them isn't a terribly difficult task.

The organization of the camp is largely due to its commander, Sir Gareth Murloin, a seasoned veteran of many campaigns. He is an older, portly man with a full head of hair and full white beard. He is a member of the Cult of Swords and honor bound to treat with fellow members. He is congenial to visitors, but rather loyal to the priest, for he has sworn his oath to him. He is slow-spoken, calm and unassuming. He rarely shows anger but deals out death to any infraction. He detests orcs.

Sir Gareth hails from the River King's domain where he served until the King's son turned on him due to some slight to his honor. Stripped of title and land, Gareth wandered the southern kingdoms serving as a mercenary for some time. He is well acquainted with the lands of New Aenoch and as such, leads Coburg's armies to the south. He dwells in a commoner's tent in the camp's center.

## 22 CASTLES & CRUSADES

There are 2800 foot soldiers in the camp, 200 horsemen, and 50 worg riders. These are commanded by a variety of offices, chiefs and sub-chiefs.

## THE CRNA RUK

The Crna Ruk are nameless assassins feared throughout the known world. There are several in Grafika, working for and spying on the Priest.

Should the Cra Ruk discover the characters' desire to travel to Aufstrag, they attempt to kill them. The assassin is cunning and more than willing to bide his time. He shadows the party's every move, following them, waiting for the proper moment to pounce. He will seek out one party member at a time and attempt to dispatch them by knife, poison or magic. The characters may become aware they are being followed, in which case, a serious game of cat and mouse ensues. The crna ruk is under no time pressure. He willingly follows them into the swamp and beyond. Any such NPC should be used as a near permanent foe, a lingering danger and a reminder to be wary at all times.

## THE CAUSEWAY

A half dozen mile or so south of Grafika is a large stone arch. It is set at the end of the paved road leading out of the southern side of Grafika. The arch is one hundred feet tall at its apex and spans 80 feet across at the bottom. Beneath the arch is a raised stone causeway. A slight stone incline leads up from the road. Here begins the causeway leading south into the Grausumland and thence to Aufstrag. The causeway rises twenty feet or more off of the ground. Its alabaster stone is of an otherworldly quality and its construction rivals that of the greatest dwarven stonemaster. It stretches down and into the dark swamp.

The causeway served to ferry hordes of armies out of that fetid heap, Aufstrag and across the great swamp and into the lands about. Now, it lies unused, abandoned and little more than a symbol of the evil that once lurked in the heart of Airdhe.

**THE LADY OF GARUN, VESSEL OF SOULS** (*This evil creature's vital stats are HD 14d8, AC 21, HP 88. Her primary attributes are physical and mental. She attacks with a gaze, charm attack and a kiss that drains the souls of her victims. She possess nothing but rags. See full write up below.*)

## NEW MONSTERS

### THE LADY OF GARUN, VESSEL OF SOULS

**NO. APPEARING:** See Below

**SIZE:** M

**HD:** 14d8

**MOVE:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 22

**ATTACKS:** None

**SPECIAL:** Charming Gaze, Kiss, SR 10

**SAVES:** M, P

**INT:** Genius (21)

**ALIGNMENT:** Evil

**TYPE:** Fey

**TREASURE:** None

**XP:** 13 (in lair only)

The Lady of Garun hails from the meadows of the deep prairies, the beautiful bud of a long lost flower. Her skin is white and smooth, her hair long and dark, her eyes hold dark motion in them, like the wind at night. She is beautiful and hard for mortal man to gaze upon for long.

The Lady of Garun dwells alone in the deep grasslands. She has a wide understand of the world around her, but no love of it. She takes pleasure in causing pain and ending happiness. For this reason she seeks out those who pass through or dwell upon the wild steppes. Once encountered, she befriends them, using her looks and magical charms.

She sleeps frequently, usually in the sun, somewhere visible. If she is attacked, the wraiths will fly to her defense.

**COMBAT:** The Lady of Garun first attempts to charm her victim into being friendly. When she feels the time is ripe, she delivers a long and passionate kiss, drawing out the soul of her victim. Those who lose their souls turn into wraiths and follow her wherever she goes; the wraiths are rarely nearby (for she despises them). If she is attacked, they arrive within 8 melee rounds. There are 4–12 of them. They do not come for any reason, she must be under duress; she does not summon them, but rather they come of their own will.

**NOTE:** The wights do not come to free her, because she is not being attacked. When Ordun captured her, his illusions captivated her, and she did not feel as if she was being attacked.

**GAZE:** Anyone whom she desires to charm must make a successful charisma save or be charmed. She never asks her victims to do anything that might threaten the magical bond. Elves suffer as well as others, their natural +10 reduced to a +5.

**KISS:** Her kiss drains souls. Victims must make a successful constitution save or have their soul drawn out. For each round she kisses the target, a portion of the soul is drained. The attack takes 1d4 rounds +1 round per wisdom bonus of the victim. Once a character's soul is withdrawn, they turn into a wraith.

#### THE VESSEL OF SOULS IN AIHRDE

In the early days of Unklar's rule, when the world had not yet

succumbed wholly to his rule, the men of Al Liosh rose against that mighty lord. Led by the Baron Kul they stormed the Ahargon Den, the gates of Aufstrag. Long ago fashioned by Dwarves, the gates could not be opened by mortal means. But Baron Kul possessed a horn of wondrous power, the Horn of Opening. And with it, he blasted notes from the horn, and the gates fell wide. Entering Aufstrag upon a furious wind, the Baron overcame all defenders in the lower halls.

The slaughter was so great that the citadel was washed in blood. The Baron's power was such that he carried the battle even to the throne room, hewing down his foes with his great sword or crushing their skulls with the base of the horn. Here, Baron Kul faced the Horned God and sought to overcome him. Unklar, not yet waxed in his power, quailed before the towering rage of the Baron, but before Kul could attempt the feat, his own squire turned upon him, stabbing him in the back with a cruel blade. Kul fell to the ground, stricken unto death. Coburg lifted the Horn of Opening from his dead master and gave it to Unklar. Kul cursed Coburg with his dying breath, "May you live forever."

Unklar awarded the evil act of Coburg with the lordship of the Ahargon Den and the Undying One set about making the citadel impregnable. He filled all the lands with fetid swamps, later called the Gausumland; it consisted of league upon league of this sodden morass, fog covered, and populated by monsters of darkness. Crossing the swamps proved an almost impossible task. Only one bridge spanned its width, a causeway, named by men the Wasting Way, for those who must cross it do so with the grim towers of Aufstrag even in their vision, and the evil weight of that place wastes lesser men so that they fail and perish. The Causeway ends in a broad portico, a patio before the great Ahargon Den, the Great Maw, and the Gates of Aufstrag. Over this, Unklar set Coburg to rule; a lieutenant in the service of the Horned God. There he ruled, watching all who came and went from the Fortress.

It was there, many years later that Coburg found the Lady of Garun; bound in chains, her mouth capped by a plate of gold. Tribute from some eastern tribe, Coburg saw her as she crossed the threshold of the gates. Desiring her, he wrested her from her captors and bore her into his chambers, not knowing his danger. There he gazed upon her and loved her and swore she would be his own.

He did not know that the Lady of Garun used her wondrous gaze and lustrous lips to capture the hearts and minds of others, binding them to her so that she could devour them. With a kiss she drew forth their souls and slew them, men, and women, children and beasts; she harvested the souls for her own evil intent, harboring them her within her own bosom. These souls fed her, giving her immortality and a great power over men. Thus her captors had bound her mouth with a plate of gold.

Undaunted Coburg removed the plate and drew him to her and stole a kiss. But to her amazement her kiss did not fell Coburg! For the curse of the Baron Kul hung upon his brow; it had driven his soul from his body and cast it into the Wretched Plains. Staggered and amazed, the Lady of Garun loved Coburg from that day to the end of the world and he named her the Vessel of Souls.

The Lady of Garun bore a beauty beyond mortal kin, an echo of

creation itself. Her long dark tresses, streaked with white played upon her narrow, delicate shoulders. Her eyes like pools of night and skin of alabaster shone in the dark halls of Aufstrag, the fortress of the dark god Unklar. She turned the eyes of all Unklar's court and many coveted her but she only had a mind for Coburg. They bore a dark love between them that not even the Horned God understood. They lived in Aufstrag for many centuries. He, keeping the keys of Aufstrag, and she standing by his side. So they believed they would live for all eternity.

But such endings were not theirs, for in time the tides of war lapped over the towers of Aufstrag and the power of the Horned God fell away beneath the iron heels and blood red axes of the western kings. Coburg seized control of Aufstrag and sought to hold it against the might of the west but they drew him forth, for even then they could not force the gates, and engaged him in a titanic battle. It raged for days upon the causeway and around the gates, in the swamps and in the lands beyond. All the while some brave souls climbed the great walls, breaching Aufstrag through hidden paths and secret doors, bringing the war to the inner sanctums of evil.

Thus it was that a Knight of Confession came into the very high halls Coburg claimed for his own.

There he found the Lady of Garun and her beauty struck him a fool. He bore her up in his arms and thought to spirit her away. His men called him to arms, to take the great throne room so that none could hold against them; the dread Mogrl stood there and they needed the power of the Confessioners. But the Knight cared not for his task, he abandoned the war and carrying the Lady of Garun upon his shoulder, fled to the high towers of Aufstrag. There, his own men, thinking some vile sorcery had taken him, set off in pursuit. The chase carried them to the very heights of the citadel, a thousand feet or more above the raging battle below. There the Lady called out for her love and far below at the gates, Coburg looked up and with that glance a blow struck him down and he fell to the earth, trampled and beaten. The paladin at last saw a harpy of gigantic girth perched upon a high precipice. He leaped upon it and forced the cawing madness to bare him and the lady away into the gloom and far from his men and duty.

Below, madness took the tattered army of Coburg and it fled or fell beneath the hosts of the west while the harpy, with the Knight upon its back, bore the Lady of Garun away from all the toil even to the outer planes and to the edge of the Dreaming Sea.



KASDA R.

# CASTLES & CRUSADES

## BLIGHTED SCREED

ANS R.

### WHERE CARRION FLIES

Upon the edge of the Gray Pools lies the town of Grafika, a squalid heap of cobbled roads and ruined buildings where the washed up remnants of a shattered empire gather. Here the wealth of the empire's ruin passes through the small hands of small men; here the echoes of its glory ring hollow.



Over a morass of pools and mired swamps the Vessel of Souls fled, carried upon the wings of a black-hearted vulture. To look upon the Vessel is to know desire; to hold the Vessel overlong in one's grasp invites madness. Desired by wizards, sorcerers, the men of gods and princes, the Vessel is worth untold riches. But more, the Vessel serves the Undying Lord of Aufstrag; without it he is bereft of power.

The Vessel of Souls has wound its way to Grafika and the PCs must track it down and find it before the agents of the Undying Lord of Aufstrag. But the town is as much a part of the wilder-ness as the morass that surrounds it, getting to Grafika is no easy task, and navigating its ruins even harder.

*The Last Respite* is an adventure designed for 3-5 characters of 10th-12th level. It is designed for modular play or as an area to explore. Play with your homebrew game or in the world of Aihilde. Contains multiple encounter areas

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