

CASLES[®] CRUSADES

BLACKTOOTH RIDGE THE WASTING WAY

A11



BY DAVIS & STEPHEN CHENAULT



HEIMSTADT

ESPERDI

ASCALON

THE WASTING WAY

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Printed in the United States of America

All *The Wasting Way* is an adventure designed for 3-5 characters of 10th to 13th level.



OGL

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THE WASTING WAY

A11- The Wasting Way is an adventure designed for 3-5 characters of 10th to 13th level. The adventure takes place upon an elevated causeway that spans some 80 + miles of swampland. The majority of the adventure takes the characters overland, either through the swamp, or preferably, upon the causeway. There are several way points, however, that serve as dungeon-type adventures. The adventure is not far from the town of Grafika, (*A10 The Last Respite*) where the characters can resupply or equip as needed.

A11- The Wasting Way follows the adventures in the 'A' series developed by Troll Lord Games. This module can be used as a stand-alone adventure or as a series of set piece or random encounters in any campaign or game setting without having used any of the previous adventures. For more details on this, please read *Involving the Player Characters* below.

INTRODUCTION

Many years past, Unklar the Horned God lifted up a mighty fortress; a citadel thousands of feet high and over a mile in girth. He named the fortress Aufstrag. The land about the fortress he rent and tore, so that the two great rivers, the Udunilay and Uphrates, poured into the broken land. The waters filled the fissures and chasm, and flooded the plains, sinking into the soft earth. Where lush farmlands had once sprouted well-manicured fields now stood a gray mire of swamps, marshlands, bottoms, bogs, sluggish creeks, and deep pools. Those who dwelt there in the past died in its making or fled the country to parts distant.

The Grausamland (also known as the Gray Pools), sprawled hundreds of miles, creating a barrier to Aufstrag. Creatures great and small occupied the wasteland- wild animals, fowl, snakes, lizards, alligators, even water buffalo and other such creatures. Beasts long of tooth and claw came to find these mires a welcome place to hide and to hunt. It also became a refuge for bandits and other desperate men, orcs, trolls, giants and other similar creatures. Undead haunted the land, kept from their rest by the evil of the land's making. Even dragons found a welcome home in the wilderness of the Gray Pools. The Grausamland made the trek to Aufstrag a nightmare. Few could make the journey, for the swamp swallowed them or its denizens devoured them.

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Unklar eventually found that his minions suffered a fate similar to his enemies, so in time he decreed that a causeway be constructed across the Grausamland, one that rose from the portico of his great halls and ended at the swamp's edge 80 + miles to the north.

It took many years to construct, but in the end, a stone causeway 80 + miles in length opened traffic from Aufstrag to the northern plains. Where the causeway met the plains, the soldiers of Aufstrag constructed a gatehouse. Two mighty bastions flanked the iron gate, so that any who passed must contend with the garrison within. The causeway wound its way across the marshland, held above the water and muck upon mighty pylons of stone that were shaped like the gods of dwarves- slaves, to Unklar's mind. Way stations were set up every 20 miles, offering travelers a place to stay, safely out of reach from the creatures that hunted in the swamps.

Even in the days of Unklar's might the road proved dangerous. Many who set out upon it vanished into the swamps, carried there by some flying beast or drug into the muck by some thick tentacled monstrosity. Whatever the case, in short order the causeway earned its name, and men called it the Wasting Way.

After Aufstrag's fall, the Wasting Way fell into disrepair. The gatehouse was abandoned and the way stations were taken over by creatures from the swamp. A whole section of the causeway collapsed, consumed by the marsh from which it had stood so aloof.

It is this road that the characters must travel in order to arrive at Aufstrag. It is the safest way across the Grausamland, but not without its own dangers.

INVOLVING THE PLAYERS CHARACTERS

The Wasting Way continues the adventure set out in the earlier A series modules, most recently *A10 The Last Respite*. Coming from that adventure, the characters arrive at the lake where the causeway begins, and start their journey south to cross the Gray Pools. However, if you are running the adventure independently of the A series, *The Wasting Way* can easily be placed in any large swamp. The following are several suggestions to help set the adventure in your own campaign, with one to refresh from where *A10* left off.

- 1) The causeway is an ancient ruin that the party stumbles across while traveling overland. From the rise that overlooks the Sump, the first gatehouse is plain to see. Even at this distance the gatehouse seems abandoned. However, the sun catches some light on the roof of the left tower, its reflection promising some polished item in the least, if not gold or magic.
- 2) The causeway is an ancient road that spans a vast swamp. A merchant by the name of Gerald Greentoes hires the party to guide him safely across the Wasting Way. He pays them each 500gp upon beginning the journey, and promises a further 500gp in gems per character when they arrive safely at the other side. He does not have any of the gems with him, but must get them from the town on the far side. Gerald carries a scroll case of ancient exquisite design which contain the love sonnets of the bard Seriel the Black. They are worth a fortune to those who care about such things.
- 3) As the characters pass the vicinity of the causeway and gatehouse, a lashing storm of pelting rain and gale force winds pick up and pummel the characters. In short order they are soaked to the bone. The ground is saturated and creeks are quickly flooded. Any horses the characters have become fearful and restless. Shelter is a necessity, and the gatehouse, looming across the Sump, promises just that.
- 4) Picking up from *A10 The Last Respite*, the Lady of Garun has enlisted the characters to conduct her to Aufstrag, there to confront Coburg the Undying and win back her soul. She travels with them, and though powerful in her own right, remains in the background. Coburg the Undying, Lord of Aufstrag, continues to marshal his armies, sending them down in small and large formations to cross the causeway and join the several encampments north of the Grausumland. These troops rest en route at several of the barbicans, and the signs of them are on the bridge.

THE JOURNEY

Whatever brings the characters to the Wasting Way, the journey takes them over 85 + miles of bridge and through five gatehouses. Unless the causeway is moved to a locale convenient for a night's play, the causeway ends at the gates of Aufstrag.

THE GRAUSAMLAND

The Grausamland (The Gray Pools) is a mire of stinking, fetid, rotting swamps. The swamps are dark, cast in thick fogs and smokes. The ground swells and bubbles burping forth and spewing sulfurous odors and red muds. The land is virtually

waterlogged and abounds in sink holes, holes, mud pits, quicksand, and slimy pits that suck down anything that happen to step upon them. Huge skeletal remains of long dead trees crowd the lower reaches as time and water have worn them to nothing. The stench from the Gray Pools is so overwhelming that it knocks lesser men to their knees. The smell carries far beyond the swamps, so that even those who travel on the plains to the north, west and east or the hills to the south must travel beneath the depressing blanket of its stench.

The Gray Pools are home to great hulking trees that stand many hundreds of feet tall. Called by the locals "The Grunlere Trees", the name translates to "the arms of the earth." Their roots are like gnarled beasts. Their branches, both high and low, droop with curtains of green moss and drapes of yellow lichen. Their bark is thick and gray, constantly peeling off and falling to the muck below to slap the water, the echoes of which carry far and wide. The branches on high leaf out with narrow, thin leaves as thick as a wasp swarm crowning the whole. Other trees grow in the shadows of these monsters; cypress, prickly ash, and swamp willows.

Other plants grow in abundance. Saw grass cuts the flesh that rakes against it. Eelgrass, horsetail, sedge, and cane crown knolls of mud, and line the trails that meander through the swamps. Mixed with the swamp grasses are arrowhead weeds, devil's thorn, knotweed, and skunk cabbage. Hosts of other plants crowd the swamp, from chokeberry to greasewood, from milwort to bridal wreath.

This place is crowded with the denizens of one's nightmares. Unklar's breath lingers, and the life he gave to many a foul beast echoes in the cruel and wretched creatures that stalk the waters. There are many and more besides; most hidden from the eyes of the world, left to find their way in these swamps and stop any would be interlopers. There are great bats that drink blood, lizards that breathe mud, snakes that fly, and others besides. Dragons are said to be here, as well as ungern in great numbers, and orcs and goblins from old.

The plunder from a thousand years is stored in deep holes and massive treasuries in these swamps. Arcane magics can be found along with weapons from the wars at the beginning of time. The swamp rests upon the ruins of Al-Liosh and all the treasure contained therein.

THE CAUSEWAY

In centuries past, giants bound to the horned god and guided by dwarven masters constructed the causeway. With hammers as large as trees they pounded great stone pylons into the marshy ground. Bracing their shoulders against the stone, one held the stone while two drove it into the loamy earth. The sound of the hammer blows echoed throughout the swamp as the causeway took shape. More giants worked upon the bridge itself, spanning the distance between the pylons with long tree trunks cut square, each over 40 feet long and designed to overlap between the 30 foot bridge spans. These beams they hardened with fire and covered in saps to seal them. Master smiths crossed over the beams, etching sorcery into them to give them strength against water, fire and time. Once set, granite flagstones were cut to squares and rectangles and set upon the beams, covering the bridge in stone.

THE WASTING WAY 3

Construction began in the north, on a large rise of land upon shores of the Gray Pools. The rise overlooked a shallow lake of murky pools and sucking mud, later called the Sump. They built the causeway over the lake, where it entered the deeps of the swamps. Where the lake ended and the swamps began they constructed a large two-towered gate house, so that any who entered the causeway must first cross over the lake to come before the gates.

Beyond the gatehouse, (or barbican), the causeway inched its way across the Gray Pools. After 16 miles they constructed a second set of gates. A third they built 18 miles further, a fourth 15 miles after that, a fifth gate they set 14 miles beyond, and 17 miles from the Portico, the gates of Aufstrag.

The causeway covered over 80 + miles of swamp. Built 30 feet above the marsh and 45 feet wide, it offered safe travel to any who crossed. In the days of its glory, patrols walked its length keeping travelers, merchants, supplicants, lords and their ladies, vans of wagons, and all manner of folk safe from the dangers of the swamp.

Despite all this, dangers persisted and creatures crawled from the muck to terrorize those who dared its passage, particularly at night. Those that hunted the Gray Pools learned fast that food crossed down the causeway, and they attacked at the times when it was easiest for the picking. In a strange twist of roles, men found armored orcs fighting beasts out of the nightmare, providing safety to those served their dark master, heroes to none but those who served the dark. Travelers found true safety only in the gatehouses, where they could recoup, rest, eat and drink, and plan the next stage of their journey. Few parties could boast that they began the journey at the first Gatehouse and arrived without casualties. Thus the causeway became known as the Wasting Way.

THE SUMP

The Sump is a deadly dangerous place to find oneself in. The ground here is utterly saturated, the water turning the clay filled earth into a vast patch of thick, clinging mud. The water is rarely over a few inches high, even during the rainy season. What water the ground cannot drink runs off in rivulets to the south. This makes boat travel impossible.

The ground itself is broken and pockmarked. Some areas are relatively flat, with the earth just beneath the surface of the water. However, the water does cover deep holes and gulches filled with a murky, muddy liquid. Falling in one of these holes is dangerous, as mud lines them from their bottoms to the top edges. Falling in means getting stuck, and getting out is not as easy as going in.

Some paths exist through the lake, but these only lead to the swamp, and are known by only a few rangers and animals. Otherwise, entering the mud is dangerous. The mud is thick, clinging to boots, feet, legs, cloaks and anything else it touches. The weight of the thick, clingy mud serves to drag one into the Sump where they are likely to remain until the end of days.

Anyone crossing the mud must make a dexterity check (CL 7) every 100 feet to see if they become mired. Once they fail a check they are immobilized. To pull themselves out, they must make a strength check (CL 9). Any equipment or armor (such as shoes,

cloaks, weapons, etc.), that enter the mud can be lost. Anytime someone becomes mired in the mud, a second strength check must be made to see if the item is ripped from their grasp (CL 5).

Unless the characters approach with caution there is a 1 in 8 chance every 100 feet that they fall into a deep hole or pit. If this occurs, roll the depth of the pit on a d20. Escaping the pit is done as above, unless the victim is weighted down and sinks. At that point they risk drowning and must be rescued.

After the first 100 feet traveled in the Sump, the clinging mud begins to build up, slowing movement by half. If the characters stop to pull the mud from their boots and gear, it begins again. Eventually, the mud becomes so thick that it's impossible to avoid becoming mired. For every 300 feet traveled from the beginning, unless the mud is cleaned off, add 1 to the CL above.

TRAVEL UPON THE CAUSEWAY

Travel from Gorth Nopt to the portico should take 5 days. Each barbican is set at a day's travel from the next. However, certain sections of the causeway have collapsed, while others are overgrown, and the barbicans have fallen into disrepair. Travel may take a few more days for the party to actually reach the portico.

The Causeway passes through each barbican on the first floor.

WEATHER

The Grausamland is an unnatural swamp, built upon the ruins of a large city by the rage of a god and the power of sorcery. The water spawned plantlife grows across deep pools. It fills the hollows of collapsed houses, the ruins of sewers, underwater caverns of old buildings, and a land once rich in life and abundance. The natural decay of the swamp mingles with the rotting foliage of the old world to create an unnaturally warm environment. Gases that have been captured in the deeps explode skyward from time to time, sending the filth of rot into the air and adding a noxious mix to the whole area. The unusual heat and decay of the swamps makes odd weather patterns. Storms whip up suddenly and lash the swamps in small squalls, pummeling all who travel in the open with rain and wind. The rains that rise are violent, fast moving storms. Visibility during these storms is reduced to only a few feet. Flesh is pummeled, often leaving welts where small chunks of swamp debris hit the skin. Every 12 hours a roll of 1 on a d20 results in a squall raging across the party and their path. Everything they own, unless doubly protected, is soaked.

ENCOUNTERS

The causeway has always been more than a road to those creatures that dwell in the swamp. It also serves as a game trail. Creatures watch the road, waiting for prey to pass by, then attacking when it does. Some cling to the bottom of the causeway, others perch in the trees in the area, still others leap upon the causeway in pursuit of prey.

Roll a d12 four times daily and 6 times nightly. If a roll of 1 results, there is an encounter. Each encounter should be gauged as to its ability. Flying encounters come from nearby trees, while beast attacks come from the swamp below or on the causeway, etc.

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RANDOM ENCOUNTER CHART

- 1) **SHOVEL MOUTH:** This beast hunts alone.
- 2) **DOOM BAT:** Doom bats can hunt singularly or in packs of 4-16.
- 3) **GRIFFONS:** These creatures are always on the hunt. They number from 3-12.
- 4) **CATOBLEPAS:** There are 1-2 of these beasts grazing in the swamp muck.
SMALL PATROL: This patrol consists of 1 orc sergeant, 12 heavy infantry and 2 runners. The runners move at 40 ft. per rd. If anything extraordinary is seen, a runner is sent back to Aufstrag.
- 5) **TROOP:** The troop consists of 100 orcs, 25 ungern, 2 giants, and 100 porters. There are an additional 20 goblins mounted on wargs. The porters are zero level, 1 hp, 10 AC orcs that have no will or ability to fight. They carry supplies and they die.
- 6) **WERERATS:** These creatures travel in packs of 4-24. They are led by one large wererat (max hit dice and hit points). There is very little left of their human shape and they only change into it upon great need.
- 7) **ELEMENTAL:** They are either air, water or earth elementals. The CK should tailor the encounter as per their needs. The encounter should be with one very powerful elemental, or several 8-9 HD elementals.
- 8) **WYVERNS:** These creatures inhabit the high reaches of Aufstrag and hunt the whole length and breadth of the swamp. The causeway is a particularly good hunting ground. There are 3-6 of these in a flight. Occasionally they even hunt in great flocks.
- 9) **BELKER:** These creatures linger on the edges of the ruins of the swamp and have done so for centuries, trapped by the sorcery of Aufstrag. They hate the light of day and hunt only at night. They hate the living as well.
- 10) **ALLIP:** Thousands of souls were put to death upon or died while traveling the causeway. Some never gave up the road and haunt it still as Allips. These creatures are often found in groups of 3 or 4, holding on to the shade of their lives.
- 11) **COUATL:** A race of couatl dwells in and about the causeway. They are the manifestations of divine spirits worshiped by the old Aenochians. If encountered or called upon, and some sacrifice is made to them, they often help travelers, especially any who wish harm on those that dwell in Aufstrag.
- 12)

GORTH NOPT, THE FIRST GATE

Gorth Nopt, or the First Gate, stands one mile down the causeway on the far side of the Sump. It is a barbican- a fortified gatehouse. The barbican is huge, consisting of two giant round towers, each flanking the causeway, and connected by a covered walkway. The gate itself is 60 feet long, and protected by a portcullis with an adjoining iron-bound wooden gate. The far end of the gate is protected by a second iron-bound wooden gate. The gateway is protected by murder holes that line the ceiling and the walls, allowing defenders to achieve enfilade fire.

A large, shallow lake stretches out before you. The water is still and black, with little vegetation. Patches of mud glisten in the sunlight, proving the whole to be little more than a morass of waterlogged land. The causeway stands out in stark contrast. Its white stones shine in the sun as its span stretches from your feet all the way across the lake to a massive gatehouse. The gatehouse consists of two large round towers connected by a walkway. A tunnel between the towers holds the bridge and beckons to travelers with offerings of safety before the beginning of a long journey.

GORTH NOPT: THE FIRST GATE

The barbican has not been occupied by any organized force for some time. It is largely deserted. However, in the west tower, a painted devil has taken up residence. He serves Coburg the Undying as a gate warden, lifting the portcullis when troops pass to the north. He lowers it back again after they have passed out of Gorth Nopt. He watches the road north and south, and will almost certainly know of the party's approach.

THE FIRST MILE

The first mile across the causeway takes place with no event. Nothing hunts the region as very little crosses the causeway here. Nothing lives in the Sump.

The massive barbican looms before you. Two massive stone towers flank a gate into which the causeway vanishes. The stone of the fortification stands in stark contrast to the murky swamp and the dulled white road before you. Vines have climbed up the towers in places, but most are dead, withered upon the stone and mortar. The east tower of the barbican is torn, with a massive rent in its flank. The west tower seems in good shape, as does the gate.

THE PORTCULLIS

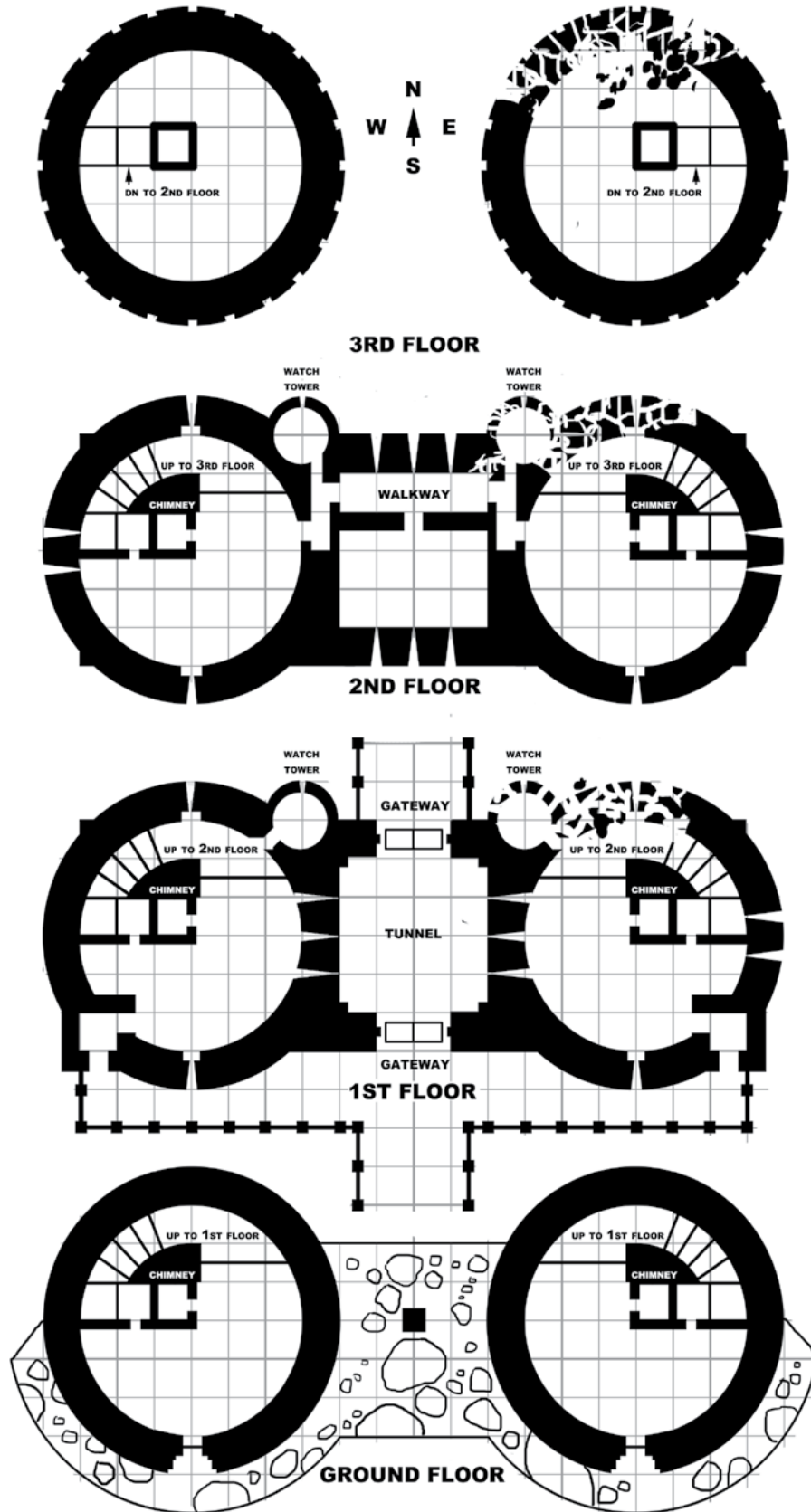
The portcullis braces have rusted through and the portcullis has fallen, effectively blocking the entrance to the tunnel between the towers. In its fall it broke away a large section of the walkway above, the ruins of which lie upon the causeway. This has left an opening above that is several feet wide.

The characters have several options that they can take. They can climb the portcullis, which is easy enough to do, and enter into the room above the gate. They can attempt to climb one of the towers and enter through the roof or through the collapsed portion of the east tower. Or, they can attempt to lift the portcullis, or cut through it.

Lifting the portcullis is very difficult without magic. It weighs an immense amount and is partially jammed in the opening, so that a strength check (CL 18) must be made to lift it even a few feet. Cutting through it must be done with magic. Otherwise, it cannot be cut through.

THE WASTING WAY 5

GORTH NOPT



THE TOWERS

Both of these towers are in relatively good shape. They each consist of three floors, a dungeon, and a roof. The dungeon sits level with the swamp below. It climbs 40 feet to the first floor, which is level with the causeway. Each floor after that is roughly 20 feet high, until it reaches the roof, which is roughly 100 feet above the swamp and 60 feet above the causeway. A flat roof caps each tower. Both towers sit in the swampy muck of the Sump.

The rooms have wooden floors and are all intact. The dungeons of both towers are covered in muck and mud. Stone stairs lead down into the dungeon and in turn, into the swamp. Similar stairs wind up the side of the towers until they reach the roof. The stairs between the floors are set at intervals, allowing each section to be closed by a trap door.

Each tower has two smaller watch towers (noted on map). These are unoccupied, and accessed separately from the first and second floors. There are no steps or ladders in these small rooms connecting the two floors.

WEST TOWER

This tower is identical in construction and layout to the east tower, though it has not suffered any structural damage.

Dungeon: The dungeon is level with the swamp, and partially submerged in the muck that has crept through the grate of the door. The grate itself is completely rusted through, the magic that protected it from time and the elements long since spent. A good solid push on the door (CL 4) breaks its hinges free and sends it falling into the swamp with a plop.

The door that leads from the dungeon to the first floor is solid and seems in pretty good shape. It has rotted a little around the edges, especially along the bottom. It is made of fire hardened oak and banded in brass.

Trap: The door is trapped. The painted devil that dwells above has set a *symbol of pain* upon the door latch. Any who handle it trigger the symbol and unless they make a successful constitution save (at CL 13 with a further -4) they suffer intense pain which reduces their dexterity by 2 and imposes a -4 penalty on all attacks and attribute checks. The pain's duration lasts 2d10 for 10 minutes.

1st Floor: The double doors that lead to this room from the causeway are closed and locked from the inside. The door that leads down to the dungeon is closed but not locked, but does have a symbol (see above). The door that leads to the 2nd floor is locked as well.

The room is largely empty, except for a multitude of bones that lie scattered everywhere. They are bleach white in color, picked clean of all flesh and showing few signs of decay. They do not show signs of being gnawed. Closer inspection reveals that there are bones of humans, ungern, orcs, goblins, and some animals.

These are the leavings of the painted devil that dwells above. He sucks the decay from the bones, cleaning them so well it is as if they had been left in the sun to bleach.

2nd Floor: The devil dwells on this floor. He has cleared the room

of all debris, and spends his days sitting upon the floor or writing upon the walls, floor, ceiling, and steps that lead to the 3rd floor.

The door opens easily to a single room that dominates the whole girth of the tower. It is empty, save for steps leading up to the next floor, and the figure of a man, sitting cross-legged upon the floor on the far side of the room. Upon the walls, stairs, floor and ceiling are hundreds- if not thousands- of small glyphs. The man is short with long, dark, curly oiled hair. His dress is simple, though outlandish. He wears a red jacket with gold cuffs. His pants are light blue and seem over large. He is barefoot. But his face is the oddest, for when he looks up at you with slate green eyes, you see that his jaw is wired shut and brass plates seem to hold the jaw in place. A long spear lies at his feet.

This is the lair of the painted devil. He knows of the party's approach and has been listening to them rummage around. He is not at first overly aggressive and engages the party, asking them their names, business upon the road and destination. His speech is halting.

If asked his own name he explains "I am lost and far from home. I have taken refuge here and until I can unravel my own mystery. Perhaps if you are three torn between the two you may learn this of us when we gather beneath the wildwoods."

His last sentence contains the words of a *confusion* spell. He casts it while speaking to the characters. The hand gestures are subtle, though any spell caster has a chance of detecting the workings of the spell and may take action if they can. An intelligence save (CL 12) reveals that a spell is being cast.

As soon as the spell is cast he alters to his true form, turning into a faceless devil with a massively distorted and disconnected jaw. Lifting his essunk spear, he attacks, attempting to swallow whole the first person near him. He attacks until he is killed or all the party destroyed. If he summons undead they arise from the swamps around the keep, clawing and crawling up the battlements. It will take them 5 rounds to get to the room.

The Lady Of Garun: If the party is traveling with the Lady of Garun, the devil pays no more attention to her than the other party members. He recognizes her, but understands that she is trying to get back to Aufstrag. For her part she will not become embroiled in any battle with the devil, neither to aid nor hinder the party, as she does not trust him any more than she does anyone else.

Glyphs: The glyphs are written in the tongue of Aufstrag, a mixture of ancient Aenochian and the Vulgate. They repeat the same three phrases over and over again.

Suffer Not the Tyranny of Fear

Embrace The Dominion of Law

The Yoke Shall Set You Free

These are the words etched into the doors of Aufstrag. Anyone with legend lore or some historical background has a chance of reading the glyphs (CL 8).

THE WASTING WAY 7

PAINTED DEVIL (*This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 13d8, AC 24, HP 82. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with his magical essunk spear for 1d10+3 points of damage or with a bite for 1d12 points of damage. He can summon wights from the spear, expending 1 charge per wight. He does this only reluctantly. The painted devil has dark, deep, and twilight vision. His spell resistance is 11. He has true seeing, and spell like abilities: confusion 3/day, darkness 3/day, insect plague 1/day, symbol 1/day, summon undead 3/day, and vision 6/day. He casts as a 12th level caster. He is able to swallow his victims whole. Upon a successful bite attack the victim must make a wisdom save, with failure meaning the painted devil swallows them, trapping them in a trap the soul spell. The devil must be slain to free those within.*)

Treasure: The painted devil's treasure lies within its guts. It eats almost everything it comes into contact with. When slain, the body swells and bursts, scattering what valuables it has stolen across the room. The treasure consists of: 19pp, 700gp, 1400sp, a master work battle axe, a +2 glaive, a +1 breast plate, a cube of force, and gloves of swimming and climbing. There is also a gem within the ruins of the devil. It is blue in color, and warm to the touch. If held in the hand for 10 full minutes, the holder heals 2 hit points.

3rd Floor: In this room the painted devil used to hold creatures. He has put hooks into the ceiling and set chains into them. There are 12 in all. Dangling from 7 are the dead bodies of his victims; 5 humans, the remnants of an orc, and what looks to be some type of dog. The corpses are swollen and distended.

Anyone who examines the corpses closely detects a slight movement beneath the bloated skin (intelligence CL 4). If the skin is touched even slightly the corpse explodes, sending an ichorous wash of rotted tissue and a belly load of worms within a five foot radius of the corpse.

The worms are actually ear seekers and immediately begin crawling toward the nearest person's ear.

EARSEEKER (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 1d2, AC 10, HP 1. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by climbing onto their victims and making for the ear, where they burrow in and lay eggs. The target must make a successful dexterity save (CL 5). Failing the save means that at least one enters the ear. In the following round, the target takes 1d3 damage and is deafened in the afflicted ear. The creature lays its eggs in the canal and can only be killed with a cure disease, remove curse, limited wish, heal or similar spell. If the larvae aren't killed, they hatch and burrow into the host's brain. They must make a successful constitution save or die (CL 5). If they succeed they suffer a permanent -1 intelligence point. (See Classic Monsters for full stats on the Ear Seeker.)*

THE WALKWAY ROOM

The room above the walkway is about 40 feet long, and about 50 feet wide. It has connecting doors to the two towers to the left and right. The room is devoid of any items. However, there are a number of metal plates on the floor, in two rows, and evenly spaced every 6 feet. The metal plates slide off, exposing a hole beneath. These are murder holes, where defenders can dump

burning oil, water, etc. on those below. Many of the plates' hinges have rusted away. Moving them breaks what remains of the hinges, and they come loose in the hands.

There are 12 murder holes in all. They are all empty, save for the one closest to the south side of the room. It is closed and held with a *hold portal* spell. Within lies a small leather-wrapped package, tied with string. It appears to be very old. Within are five arrow heads, and each are made of magical iegild metal. When properly attached to arrows, they impart +5 to hit and damage.

EAST TOWER

Over time, the east tower has suffered some damage. A portion of the wall facing the causeway has collapsed, leaving a hole some 20 feet tall and roughly 15 feet wide in the facade. The gap lies about 8 feet up and 10 feet out from the causeway, opening up in the top of the first floor and the bottom the second. The roof has also collapsed into the third floor.

Ground Floor: The ground floor lies at swamp level. It opens to the marsh through a grated door that remains locked and chained. The floor itself is covered with all manner of tangled vegetation; vines, weeds, swamp grass and the like. The floor is wet too, as water has seeped in over the years. The chains on the door are easy to break, requiring a successful strength check (CL 3). The locks can be picked as well (CL 5). A set of stairs leads from the ground floor to the first floor. It is made of stone and winds around the wall. There is nothing of value here.

1st Floor: A double door facing south and toward the bridge gives access to the tower's first floor. There is also a door and a set of stairs from the ground floor. Inside, the room is large but empty. Some debris remains scattered about the floor.

The room shows signs of recent use. There are packages of spent rations lying about, piles of dung along the south wall, and some rolled up bedding that's been left in the middle of the room. Blood stains are on the floor in the center of the room. The blood belongs to an orc from one of the troops passing down the causeway in recent days. He was killed by one of his companions and eaten on the spot. His bones were then thrown in the swamp. A detailed tracking check can reveal this (CL 9).

The large double door on the south side of the tower is large enough to accommodate small wagons. The room was used at one time to house travelers using the causeway. Men, equipment, wagons and even livestock were allowed free room on the 1st floor.

2nd Floor: Access here is gained either via the stairs, or through a door that leads to the covered walkway. This room served as a garrison for troops stationed here. The remnants of old beds, tables, chairs, a few trunks, etc. litter the room. One wall has pegs and shelves with a few old boxes of supplies, long since spoiled.

This room reeks of burnt flesh. It has recently been occupied by some of the Flesh Lords of Aufstrag. These strange beasts mortify their flesh with whips and chains, and then allow small carrion beasts to chew upon it as it oozes and flakes off their bodies. Four Flesh Lords occupied the room recently. They moved south along the road. If a ranger attempts to track them,

8 CASTLES & CRUSADES

he can pick up the trail of torn/flaked flesh (CL 10) and follow it down the stairs and out the double gates and onto the road (CL 8). On the road it becomes lost in the damp, windblown flagstones. But the trail definitely leads to the south.

3rd Floor: This floor is divided into several rooms. The stairs lead to a small hallway and three rooms are set aside. They served for traveling dignitaries, as well as providing quarters for several sergeants, officers and the captain of the barbican.

The ceiling here has collapsed as well, bringing down the walls of the rooms. Some years past a stonehorn lit upon the roof and brought the whole upper structure down, which in turn tore the gap in the front of the gate house.

There is nothing of value here. However if a careful search of the debris is made (CL 10, or 5 if a ranger) it becomes clear that the collapse of the roof was not slow, nor due to rot, but very sudden, as if a great deal of weight struck the tower roof all at once.

TRAVEL TO UELICH NOPT

It is 16 miles to the second barbican, known as the Uelich Nopt - the second gate. The causeway between these two barbicans is in reasonably good shape and travel is easy enough. Where the party runs into trouble is with the weather. After they have traveled about 6 miles, a storm front begins building off to the west. It builds quite suddenly, and after a few more miles it begins to pound the swamp.

Eight miles down they first feel the winds change. A damp, heavy wind rolls across them. It picks up and slacks off in tempo, but carries with it the damp, decayed smell of the deeper swamp. 10 miles down, the clouds overhead darken and the rumble of distant thunder promises a violent storm. After 12 miles of travel the clouds open up.

There is, of course, no shelter on the causeway.

To the west, beyond a wall of trees, the darkened clouds unleash their frenzy. Sheets of water roll across the swamp and over the causeway, drenching you from helm to boot. The wind driven rain pelts you with such force that wherever flesh is exposed the skin stings. Small welts pop up here and there as swamp debris, picked up by the fierce winds, join the rain. Visibility drops to only a few feet. Where before your companions were walking, you see only shadows. The sound of your voice is torn from your mouth and hurled into the maelstrom of the storm. The distant rumbles become shattered roars as thunder follows blinding bolts of lightning.

There is no shelter, only the small lip of the roadway. These lips are only a foot or so high, and while they can certainly break the wind, they do nothing for the rain. Attempting to build, or construct a temporary shelter is futile, as the wind tears tents, blankets, and other such material from the grasp of characters.

There are several choices to avoid the storm (beyond some magical solution such as *rope trick*.)



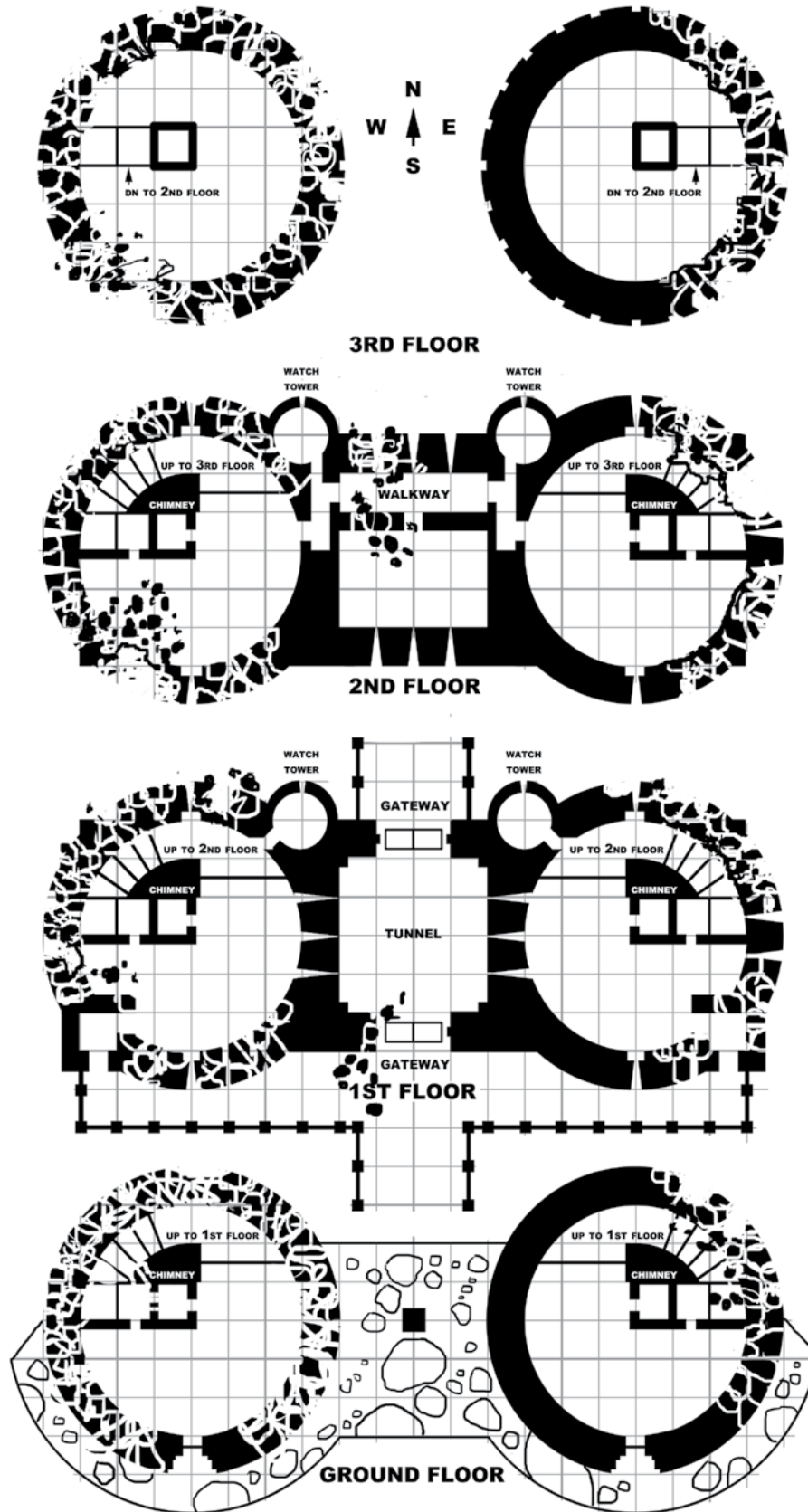
TRUDGE ON

The characters can brave the wind and rain and plunge on, pushing for the next shelter about four miles down the road. They are pummeled by wind and can easily lose directional sense.

Wind: For each mile traveled, each character should roll a dexterity check against the wind (CL 10). For every 50 lbs of weight (body and equipment) over 100 lbs they possess, they gain a +1 to their roll. If they fail and are knocked over, they suffer 1-2 points of damage. The wind begins to push them, and the rain slick bridge offers precious few handholds. Standing back up is very difficult (dexterity CL 10, for each 50lbs of weight over 100 lbs, they now suffer a -1). If they do not make it to their feet within a few rounds, they are pushed to the edge of the causeway. There is a railing here about 18 inches high. The railing stops any topple over the side, and gives them a better chance to stand up (CL 5, no weight problems). If they fail this roll, another gust of wind strikes them, and they slip and fall over the causeway to the swamp below. They land in muck and water, suffering 3d6 damage from the fall.

Direction Sense: The wind and rain come in deep gray sheets, effectively obscuring vision to 5 feet. The driving wind constantly pushes the characters toward the east side of the causeway. Unless they have direction sense (such as a ranger), or have taken some precaution such as roping themselves together, they may not know they are being pushed in that direction. Twice per mile each character should make an intelligence check (CL 10). If they fail, they do not realize they have been pushed until

UELICH NOPT



they are at the rail of the bridge. The rain and buffeting wind, combined with running into the rail, require another dexterity check (CL 8). If they fail, they topple over the side, landing in the swampy muck for 3d6 points of damage.

Falling Off The Causeway: Those who fall suffer 3d6 damage and are now in the swamp. The rain instantly abates for those characters, as the causeway affords them cover. However, anyone left on the bridge cannot hear the shouts of their fallen party members, as the wind and rain are too loud. Unless someone is specifically looking for the character that fell over, they are not likely to know the person is lost. Allow those above to make a spot check every mile to determine whether they realize that someone is missing.

Random encounters are twice as common for anyone in the swamp.

SHELTER UNDER THE BRIDGE

Climbing down to get beneath the bridge is not impossible. Tying ropes and lowering people down is easy enough. Anyone who falls from over 20 feet should take 3d6 damage from the fall.

Once in the swamp, the pylons offer shelter from the wind and the worst part of the rain. The characters would be crowded around the pylons, however, as they are only a few feet wide. They can seek shelter further in the swamp, behind trees in the deep foliage and so forth.

Again, random encounters are twice as common for any characters that enter the swamp.

UELICH NOPT: SECOND GATE

The second gate is largely in ruins. The west tower has completely fallen into the swamp, taking a huge chunk of the causeway with it. The walkway was pulled to the west with it, and it ripped the mooring beams out of the east tower. The remnants of the walkway and chunks of the west tower lay scattered all over the causeway. The portcullis and the doors also lie on the stone of the Wasting Way.

The east tower is in better shape, but the shock of the walking beams being pulled out weakened it so that fully half of the tower broke free and slid into the marsh, leaving a giant pile of rubble behind. The 3rd floor remains half intact with a small amount of roofing. The second floor is half gone as well, but covered in debris from the 3rd floor.

The 1st floor affords some cover from the rain, though getting to it is difficult, as the double doors on the south side are gone along with part of the causeway. Getting inside the tower is not easy but can be done by climbing around either edge. Anyone attempting to do so must make a successful dexterity check (CL 4) to get around. Once there they find themselves out of the wind and rain, as well as sheltered from sight from anything passing down the causeway. It is the perfect camping spot.

THIRN NOPT: THIRD GATE

It is 18 miles to the next barbican, Thirn Nopt. The causeway here is in reasonably good shape and travel is relatively easy, pending weather. The journey should have fewer random encounters due to the flock of griffons who have taken up partial residence upon the causeway.

DETOUR

Seven miles down the causeway the characters stumble upon an unusually muddy area of the road. The mud thickens the further south one goes. If a track check is made (CL 7) a ranger can determine that the tracks are boots, tracking mud, going north up the causeway. There are too many to count. An experienced ranger may detect that the trail contains orc and unger tracks.

Three hundred feet further on, the trail of mud veers to the west, to the edge of the causeway. Here on the rail and around it is a giant patch of mud, old saw grass, swamp muck and the like. It is all visible to the eye. It looks like a mighty and large doorstep. Looking over the side reveals a wide platform and stair leading down to the swamp. There it connects to a trail that winds off to the west until it is lost in the marsh.

The stair has been constructed by the orcs of Aufstrag. In their passage through the swamp they have learned that the griffons who poach food further down the causeway are particularly dangerous. Though large bands of troops can travel the road unmolested, small bands attract the attention of the griffons which hunt them mercilessly, often killing them on or around the bridge and eating them on the spot. The orcs blazed a trail through the swamp that circumnavigates the griffon's killing fields. They constructed stairs that take one off the causeway both on the north and south sides of these killing fields.

The characters can continue on the causeway or take the trail. If they scout on the causeway they cannot help but notice the treasure lying about the killing fields. The trail on the land leads deep into the swamp.

TRAIL

The orcs constructed the trail so that it leads into a murky portion of the swamp, away from the eyes of the griffons. It leads 4 miles due west into the marsh. This section of the trail is on dry land, winding along muddy but solid ground. A line of willows and gnarled, moss covered oaks line the trail.

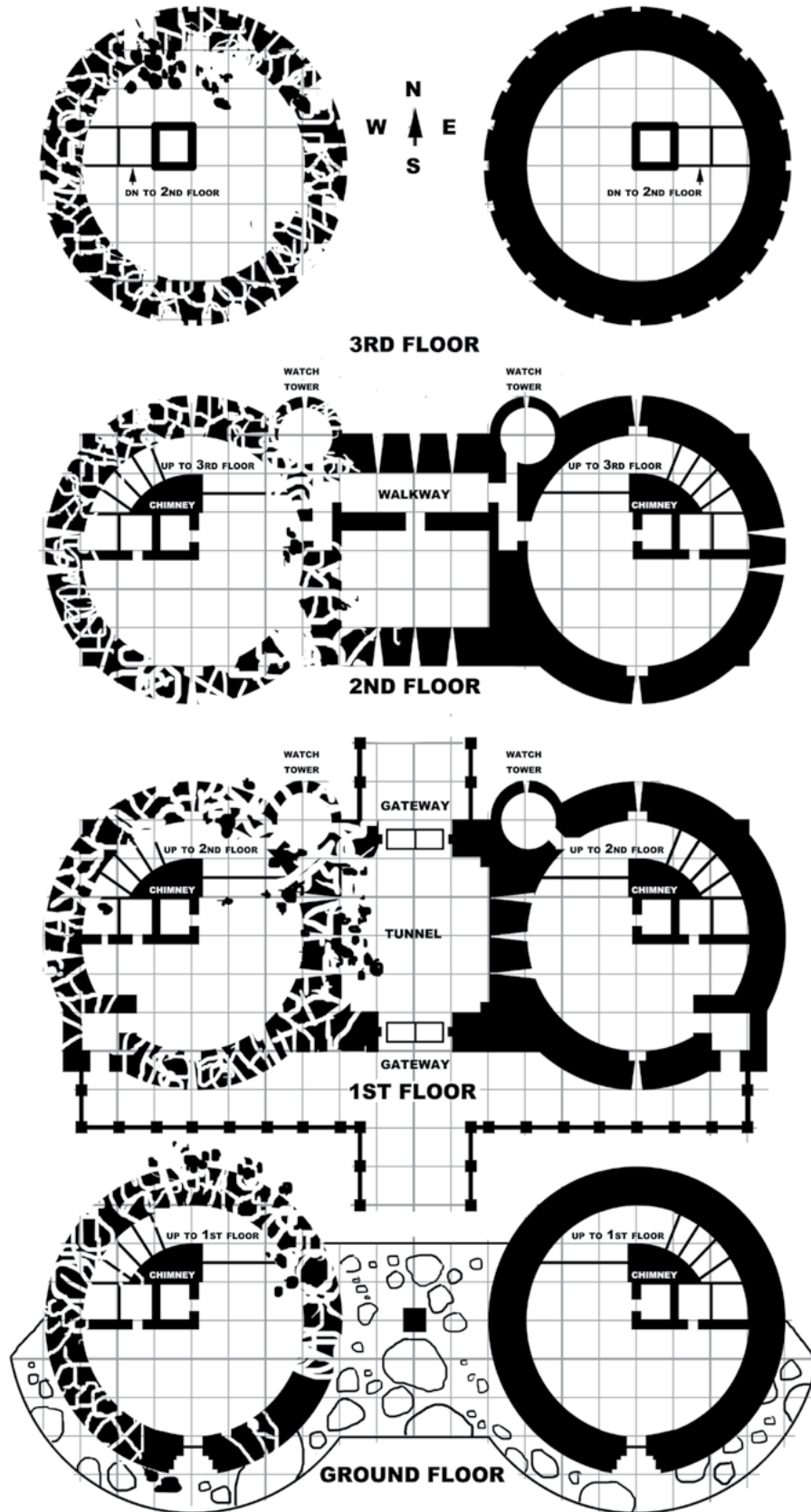
After four miles, the trail veers south through a mile of open country until it hits a shallow lake covered in small squat trees. The lake is about 8 inches deep. The trail nose dives into the water and reemerges due south on the far end. The lake is about 2 miles wide.

On the far side of the lake lies an old sunken wall that runs south. It clearly serves as the trail for any passing through. The wall, made of carefully set blocks of stone, is very old (over a thousand years old). It follows an irregular path to the south east, back toward the causeway. Again the small trees shroud most of the way.

About a mile down the length of the wall, the characters cross over a deep set of pools. From the wall's height they can see into the

THE WASTING WAY 11

THIRN NOPT



grayish water, where they can see the roofs of buildings. The trees do not cover this section of the wall, but the griffons do not hunt it for fear of knocking their prey into the water, or being knocked into the waters themselves and becoming meals to the sahuagin.

The wall of white stone, covered in many places by vines and swamp grass, snakes its way through the sea of green for a long while, until at last it crosses a series of deep pools. The sky is open as you cross over them, but the wall itself vanishes into the murky water. Looking down, you clearly see the roofs of buildings; reddish shingles upon a house of some long forgotten lord or freeman. More structures greet you as you realize you are crossing over the ruins of an ancient town. Shapes catch your eye and for a moment a human like visage looks up at you from the gloom, but long arms and webbed legs propel it into the deep water.

The wall was once the bastion wall of a town north of Al Liosh. The town, Karenelb, was very prosperous, housing many wealthy families and industrious artisans. It fell and the swamps consumed it. Below are the ancestors of those who dwelt in the ill-fated town, twisted by evil sorcery and damned to the murky depths. They are a type of sahuagin.

Note: Assuming the characters have the ability and desire to explore the ruins of Karenelb, it is outside of the main storyline of this module, and the CK must prep the town and underwater adventure on their own.

The final three miles or so of the journey runs to the causeway uneventfully.

The makeshift steps bring the characters up to the walls of Thirn Nopt.

KILLING FIELDS

After several more hours of travel, the characters spy a lone griffon in the air, flying in broad circles centered on the causeway. They should be about 8 miles down the causeway from the second gate. The griffon clearly spies them, circles several times at a height of roughly 1000 feet and then flies north.

As noted, the causeway has become a killing field for a large flight of griffons. They dwell in large trees to the east but hunt throughout the marsh. The causeway plays a peculiar role in the lives of the griffons. It offers them a place to hunt, but more than that, it is a place to feed, mate, and fight. Several generations past the griffons began using the causeway; it is now part of the habitat. It is dry, elevated from the normal dangers of the Grausamland, rarely used (until recently), and large enough to accommodate a large number of the beasts.

The area they use extends about a mile down the causeway. It is readily apparent to any who approach it as they have made a recent kill.

Several hundred feet down a large murder of crows rises and descends upon the causeway, their squawking and cawing carrying over the swamp. A large griffon walks upon the causeway itself. Its gait is strange, with its eagle legs lifting high, and its lion hind quarters moving more methodically. The beast's giant wings beat the air, giving it only a little lift. Its beak is held high as it drags the mangled bloody rags of what must be a corpse down the causeway. Two smaller griffons chase the larger, snapping and clawing at the kill, attempting to get their share. All along the causeway the debris of countless feedings mark the spot where these griffons feast upon their prey. Mangled carcasses of man and beast mingle with old bones and discarded gear. More griffons fly in the air to the west of the causeway, drawn it would seem, by the feast on the Wasting Way.

The characters have several options here. They can fight their way through using sword and sorcery. However, doing so attracts griffons from far and wide. The entire flight numbers 43 griffons, but only 12 are in the vicinity.

NOTE: The CK should beef up or stand down the encounter as they deem necessary.

GRIFFONS (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 7d10, AC 17, HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 claws for 1d4 points of damage and a bite for 2d8 points of damage. They have twilight and dark vision. The griffons attack from the air, taking flight and swooping down upon their targets, attempting to claw or bite them. They fight from the ground only under extreme circumstances.*)

The griffons attack until a third of their numbers is destroyed. Seriously wounded griffons break from the battle and return to the nests. Characters should receive full experience for these griffons, treating them as if they killed them. The large griffon on the causeway is an adult male. The griffons continue to harass the characters until they make it to Thirn Nopt. They attack, swoop and attempt to carry off anyone light enough, such as gnomes, halflings, lightly armored elves, etc.

Note: If the characters are lucky enough to survive into A12, they may find several bands called The Companion's Harnesses that may allow them to subdue and possibly ride the griffons.

Treasure: The griffons have recently slain two men- a ranger and a wizard- both of whom traveled the causeway in an attempt to capture several of the griffons and subdue them for use as mounts. The ranger was slain and has been utterly devoured; the scraps of his mangled body lie all about the bridge as does his equipment. The griffons killed the wizard as well. His is the body that the large male was dragging down the causeway. He has not been eaten, however.

All along the causeway are the remnants of their feeding. With little effort the characters find their gear. A ragged suite of +2 chain mail (the mail mends itself in about 1 hour), a small +1 helm, a heavy sealskin jacket, a masterwork heavy crossbow and



1 INCH- 16 MILES

PLAINS OF ACHROTHOS

GRAFIKA

RUINS

EASTERN OPENS

RUINS

HRUESEN RIVER

STONE RIDGE

BLACKTOOTH RIDGE

LUDENSHEIM

WINDEE RIVER BOTKINBURG

FESTUNG AKT

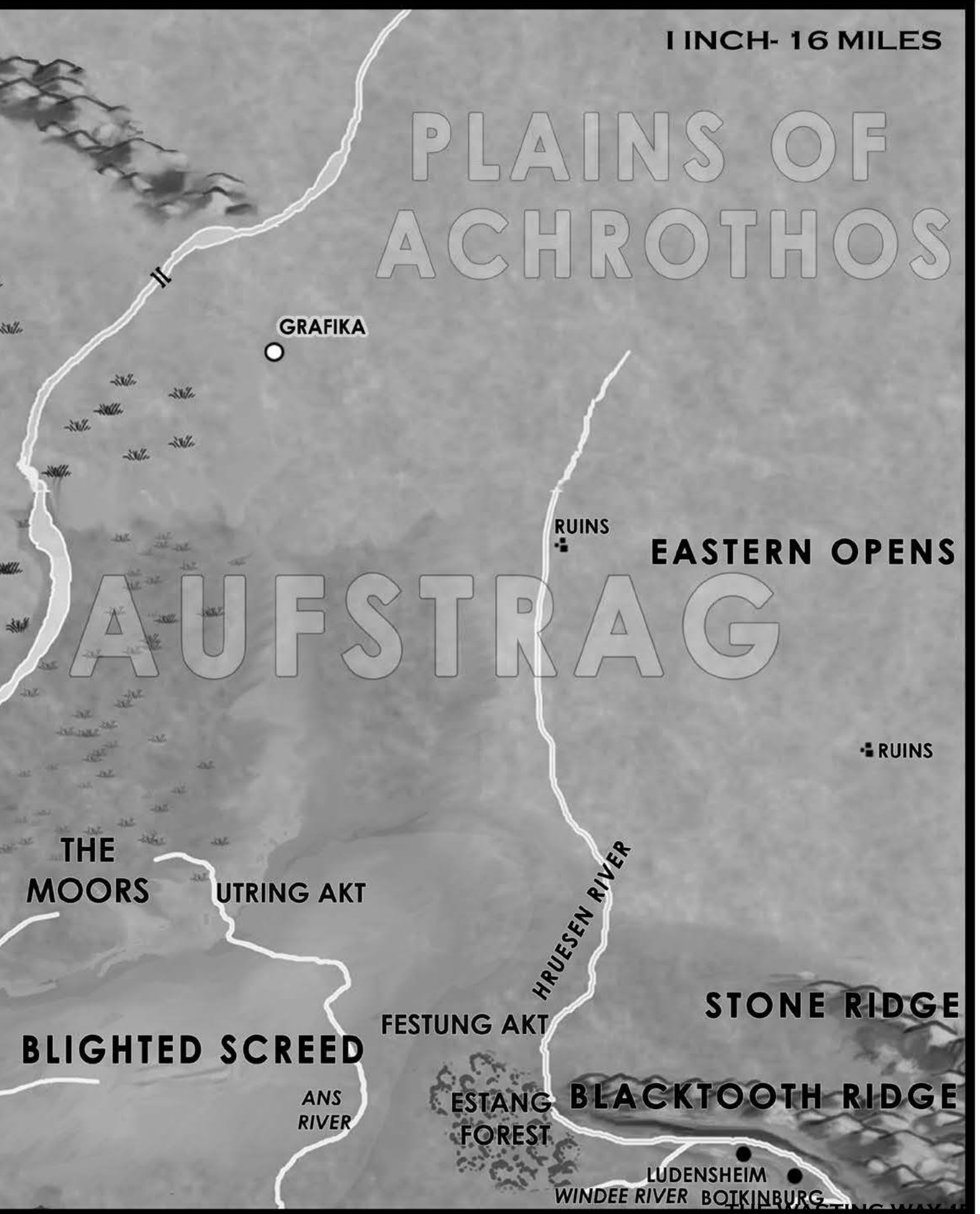
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THE
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BLIGHTED SCREED



a quiver of 14 bolts. A +2 *bearded axe* lies in the wreckage. There is a backpack with 21 days of dry rations, a wine flask, a tinder box, a knife, an extra pair of boots and clothes in it. The wizard's gear was kept in a satchel. It lies on the bridge and contains 7 days of dry rations, a water flask, an extra cloak, a small knife, a set of *chimes of interruption* and a *priest's alb* (see New Magic Items below). His *staff of striking* (with 13 charges in it) lies upon the bridge, next to his traveling spell book. The spell book contains the following spells: 12 first level, 9 second level, 6 third level, 6 fourth level, 5 fifth level, and 5 sixth level (the Castle Keeper should roll as needed for the player).

The remainder of the journey to the next gate, Thirn Nopt, is uneventful as the griffons keep this section of the causeway largely clear of other creatures.

THIRN NOPT

The third gate serves as a refuge for the troops coming up from Aufstrag. They have constructed a makeshift wall from the rubble of the barbican and they have manned it with a score of ungern, some trolls and other creatures. The wall itself stands amidst the rubble. The stair from the trail leads up to and behind the wall.

The causeway ends several thousand feet in front of you in a third barbican, built much as the other two. There are two large flanking towers with a wall and gate between. But here the west tower is in utter ruin, and has slid into the swamp. The east tower stands intact but seems to lean to the east. The gate and wall have collapsed, and in their place a make-shift walls stands, a rough gate carved from it. Smoke, obviously from some camp fires, rises from behind the wall.

Should the characters take a moment to investigate their surroundings before they approach the wall, a quick survey will reveal several options they can take.

1) THE CAUSEWAY: There are no sentries on the makeshift wall. The gate consists of the iron barred portcullis taken from the original barbican. Anyone can see through the bars. There are at least two and probably more sentries on the top of the tower. There is nowhere to hide on the causeway itself.

Sneaking down the causeway is next to impossible, even if invisible. There are two cunalrur upon the tower. These beasts are bred as watch dogs. These six legged beasts have superior vision, and are able to see through illusions and even invisibility. Anyone who attempts to do so must make hide and sneak checks at CL 25. Approaching day or night they must make this check every few hundred feet.

2) TO THE EAST: A long, broad, flat bog of deep saw grass stretches for several miles in all directions. The saw grass is about five feet high from the water's surface. Several trails wind haphazardly through the grass, no doubt marking where deeper water is. The trails are obviously used by alligators and other swamp creatures.

The grass here is deep and the water is infested with alligators. In the deeper currents are giant alligator and snapping turtles. Crossing through the grass is difficult. The water is about 3-4 feet deep and the grass is another 5 feet tall. Any exposed flesh will be riddled with scratches from the razor edged grass. For every 5 minutes crossing through the grass, characters take 1 point of damage from cuts and bleeding. For every hour spent in the grass, there is a 1 in 3 chance of an alligator attacking from beneath.

ALLIGATOR (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 15, HP 18. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 2d4 points of damage or a tail slap for 1d12 points of damage. They are able to roll a victim; once they score a successful bite, in the following round they spin their prey, pulling them underwater. They gain automatic bite damage and in 2-5 rounds will incapacitate the victim.*)

The saw grass of the east gives way to a series of muddy flats with an abundance of low growing trees. Vines and moss hang from the trees, dragging the ground. A wall cuts through the mud, snaking to the south and east. It stands about 4 feet above the mud. This is the wall from the trail as noted above. The wall vanishes beneath the causeway about 200 feet behind the guards and their makeshift fortifications. Where the wall disappears from sight are a set of wooden steps rising from the swamp to the causeway, the beginning of the trail that circumvents the **Killing Fields**.

There is plenty of cover on this side of the bridge, but crossing the muddy flats poses its own dangers. There used to be a town here, now sunken beneath the marsh. The houses, rooms, streets, etc. have created scores of sink holes. Crossing the ground is dangerous. For every 100 feet crossed (depending where they enter the swamp), roll a d12. On a roll of 1, a sink hole is encountered, and the unfortunate victim must roll a successful dexterity check or fall into the hole and risk drowning. Note that this is not quicksand, but the ground giving away to deep water. Swimming is possible but difficult. If using the swimming/drowning rules in the Castle Keepers Guide consult page 145 and treat the water as strong current (CL 8).

Once the party is on the wall or to the steps, they can attempt to sneak down the causeway or attack the wall from the rear.

MAKESHIFT WALL

As noted the west tower is in ruins. A 12 foot wall connects the east tower to those ruins. The east tower is itself wholly collapsed on the back side, leaving only the various floors intact with no walls. The orcs holding the gate have set up ladders to climb up and down the tower for the sentries.

The wall is held by a motley collection of troops from Aufstrag; ungern, orcs, trolls, several giants, and cunalrur comprise the "eye upon the road." They have a makeshift camp set along the base of the wall and sprawled about. Five camp fires burn and smolder. The ungern remain separate from the rest, keeping watch upon the tower itself. They camp there and are the ones on watch.

The ungern command the wall, and the fire giants and trolls are reluctant to obey the chief's orders. They keep a fair watch

on the road behind them so that if the characters come up the stairs or climb back onto the causeway within sight, there is a fair chance they will be seen. The CL for hide and sneak remains high, but is reduced to CL 14. At night this is reduced further to CL 8.

If attacked, the ungern fight to the death. If the ungern are destroyed, the orcs and trolls break and run. The fire giants may wish to treat with the characters if the party is willing. In exchange for their lives they tell the party about the collapsed causeway further down, and that Coburg has posted no guards on the gates of Aufstrag, which is true.

UNGERN CHIEF (*This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, AC 15 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. It carries a cleaver that causes 1-8 damage. Additionally, the chief is very good at cutting meat, so he causes an extra +4 damage to each damage roll with the cleaver.*)

UNGERN, 12 (*These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 16 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 +1 chain coat, a bardiche, a dagger, and 4-40gp worth of jewelry and coin.*)

CUNALRUR, 2 (*These lawful neutral creature's vital stats are Hd 5d8, AC 14, HP 38, 40. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 4-6 claw attacks for 1d6 damage each. Their bite inflicts 1d8 points of damage. They can see invisible objects and gain a +5 on saves against illusions. They can see through fog or mist; they have twilight vision. They possess six legs and run swiftly at 40 ft. per round. They can glide at great speeds, up to 80 ft.)*

ORCS, 32 (*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, clubs and 1-6gp in jewelry.*)

GIANT, FIRE, 2 (*These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 12d8, AC 23, HP 61, 62. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a large iron sword for 5d6 points of damage or 2 fists for 2d8 damage each. They are able to throw rocks for a further 2d10 points of damage up to 450 feet. They are vulnerable to cold but immune to fire.*)

TROLL, 4 (*Its vital stats are HD 6d8, HP 40 each, AC 16, and its chaotic evil. Its prime attributes are physical. Its special abilities are darkvision, twilight vision and regeneration. It attacks with 2 claws that do 1d4 damage each (x3) and a bite that does 21d4+1 damage.*)

Treasure: There is no treasure kept here, however there are several months' worth of hard tack, casks of water, cooking utensils, fire wood and a wide variety of tools. There are also two small catapults with piles of stones next to them.

KRUANOPT: THE FOURTH GATE

It is 15 miles from Thirn Nopt to the fourth gate, Krua Nopt. This section of the causeway suffered more damage than any

other during the battles for its control. A whole section- roughly 7 miles of the highway- collapsed when set upon by a black dragon. The beast's acidic breath destroyed whole sections and caused much of it to collapse. The host of knights and soldiers upon the causeway fell into the swamp in a tangled chaos of limbs, weapons, armor, horses and gear. Many drowned. The dragon fell upon the rest. The battle raged amidst the broken stone work and a host of men and elves died. They at last overcame the beast when a knight named Maegor Redbane drove his enchanted wolf spear into the beast. There it died in its own ruin.

The first four miles run smoothly, assuming the weather holds and there are no encounters.

CAUSEWAY RUINS

A heavy mist hangs over the section of collapsed causeway. The mist blankets the area and extends from the causeway, starting about 1000 feet before the ruins begin, to cover the whole seven mile stretch of ruin, and another 1000 feet beyond where the causeway picks back up. It also extends several miles out into the swamp, both east and west.

The mist seems almost alive. It moves, avoiding you, coalescing in front of you, leaving a cold air behind. A smell of scorched iron lingers too, and once you take it in you can't seem to shake it off. Visibility is so poor that when you step the edge of the causeway, you are amazed, for it has fallen into the swamp in a great tumble of stone and plaster. You can see huge chunks of it thrust up from the gray waters and deep grasses. Alabaster stones seem to reach for the bridge they once belonged to.

Movement is halved while moving through the swamp.

The troops coming to and from Aufstrag have made a makeshift trail that winds through the ruins, around the deep pool where the dragon lays, and on to the other side. Their trail traces the fallen causeway wherever it can. Tracking the trail is very possible as hundreds of troops have moved through the area. With a successful track check (CL 6) a ranger can pick up the trail and follow it. They should make a check for every mile they cross over the ruins. If they lose the trail, getting lost in the swamp is rather easy. Consult the *Castle Keeper's Guide*, page 97.

The orcs and ungern have stacked stones against each other and made a makeshift stair that goes down into the swamp, so the characters should have little trouble. It gets slippery in places, and a successful dexterity check (CL 6) is necessary to navigate to the bottom. A small bridge leads to a long portion of the fallen causeway. This can be navigated for some distance. After a thousand feet or so it angles down and vanishes beneath the water.

The journey winds through the rugged swamp. Movement is half normal speed, and the area is dangerous. There are a large number of catoblepas in the area. These beasts are not aggressive. They do feed in and around the shallow waters of the ruined causeway, so seeing one with at least its head underwater is very common. If they are molested they defend themselves.

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CATOBLEPAS, 1-4 (These neutral creature's vital stats are HD 6d8, AC 13, HP 38. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a tail swipe for 2d4 points of damage; a successful hit requires the victim to make a successful constitution save or be stunned for 2d6 rounds. If anyone looks on the head of the beast they must make a successful constitution save or be turned to stone.)

DRAGON WELL

The dragon fell about 3 miles from the north section of the causeway, his body crashing into the bridge and bringing it down for miles in either direction. As the causeway gave way, the dragon fell upon the dome of a temple that lay beneath the swamp. The dome gave way and collapsed, and the dragon sank into the deep water beneath. From his body the acid burned out the flora in the entire area, destroying plants and swamp creatures alike. It poisoned the water so that nothing could live there in the future.

Now the pool, called The Dragon Well by the denizens of the swamp, is wide and deep and crystal clear. No fish, snakes, turtles or other wildlife enter the waters. No plants, algae or other swamp flora can grow there. The water itself is no longer acidic and is cool to drink, though it has a metallic taste to it. The Dragon Well is wide, about 1000 feet from end to end and long, about another 1500 feet. It is some 80 feet from the surface of the swamp to the bottom.

The trail winds on the south side of the clear water pool. The

ruin of the temple and dome are clear to see, as if one were looking through a mirror. The dragon remains as well, its carcass partially decayed, and the hide and scales stretched across the bones beneath. Clearly the creature is long dead, but has not fully decayed. Around the dragon, gems glitter in the ruins, catching any light from above and casting it back up to the surface. These gems once lined the inside of the dome. Small patches of steam rise from the pool, drifting up into the air. Large bubbles rise from the carcass, occasionally breaking the surface.

A fey dwells here. His name is Gaelun, and he lives on the western shore of the Well in a turned over boat, hidden amongst the weeds. It can be seen from the trail and ruined causeway, spot check (CL 9). Grass grows over and around it, but the shape of it is squarish and not natural. Rangers and druids or experienced woodsmen gain a +3 to any checks. His fishing boat lies tied up in the saw grass around his house.

Gaelun has dwelt in the swamp for hundreds of years and has lived upon the Dragon Well for over 50. He is well versed in the surrounding area, fishing the streams, pools and bogs for carp and other bottom feeders. He hides from the orcs, knowing they steer well away from the pool in order to keep free of the dragon. For their part they know he dwells in the turned over boat and do not care.

Getting to his house is difficult as it is surrounded by the pool on the one hand and saw grass on all the other sides.



If the characters make contact and befriend him, easily done with offerings of food, spices, wine or beer, he invites them to a rest in his home. To enter, one must crawl under the boat and through the boats stern. From there it is a rocky climb down into a large stone hall with a roof. The boat sits upon the top of a huge building long sunk into the swamp. Access is gained through the roof and down some rubble.

Here he has room to spare. His horde of artifacts are a motley collection of things he's found in the swamps: door frames, windows, panes of glass, trunks, wheels, tools, etc. He has nothing of real value to anyone but himself, mostly bits and pieces of the old world.

NOTE: He does not care if the characters explore the room. If they do, they find two doors, both leading down steps and corridors into a deeper, darker labyrinth beneath the stone hall. It is beyond this adventure to map it, but if the Castle Keeper wishes to take the party off on a side adventure this is the opportunity.

Gaelun allows the party to remain for a few days to rest and heal up. After that he leaves, and won't return until they are gone. If they ask to use his house to fish the Dragon Well, he refuses them politely, not wanting to attract the attention of the catoblepas.

If the characters are kind he will answer what questions he can. The most common questions are the following:

1) DIRECTIONS AND WHAT LIES AHEAD: He will tell them of the strength of the fifth gate. The portico is locked and can only be opened by a magic horn. Otherwise entry must be gained by climbing in. He has never been within, and advises the characters to not go further, calling the place Hell on Earth.

2) CAN ONE PLUNDER THE GEMS FROM BELOW THE DRAGON'S WELL?: Many have tried, he says, but the water is toxic down below, killing all that swim through it. The scales of the dragon would bring him great luck, as they would for the characters.

DIVING DOWN

If the characters choose to attempt to swim to the bottom of the pool, they find the swimming easy going. But after the first 50 feet the water begins to burn the skin. After that, every round spent in the water causes 1d4 points of damage unless the character has some type of magical protection. If they do, they are allowed a constitution saving throw. If successful they suffer 1d2 points of damage. The gems are scattered everywhere, each one worth 50gp. The dragon scales are different. Still attached to the beast's skin, they are difficult to remove and must be cut out. It takes 1d4 rounds to cut one small shield sized scale out.

If the characters linger around the pool too long, they attract the catoblepas, who become very aggressive in defending their territory and attack the party. They begin by lifting their heads and bellowing, followed by slapping their broad jaws down into the water. They do this as they approach the party. At first they move slow, bellowing and slapping. If after 10 rounds the party has not moved on, the catoblepas rush, plowing their heads through the water, lifting them out to attack the party when they get close.

KRUA NOPT: THE FOURTH GATE

Two stonehorns occupy the gate here. Both crawled from the swamp onto the bridge about 500 feet from the barbican. Four days previous they destroyed the garrison in the tower and settled on the bridge in front of the gate waiting for more prey to come out. They have assumed the shapes of statues.

The fourth gate is plain to see some 500 feet in front of you. It seems largely intact, both towers in good condition as is the walkway that connect them. Unlike the other barbicans, two statues adorn the road in front of the gate. The statues are the likenesses of two large frog-like humanoids crouching on their haunches.

As they approach the tower, they cross a large swath of mud and muck upon the causeway. Something clearly crawled from the swamp, shook itself off and moved either up or down the causeway. The mud is about 2 days old. Any ranger can detect this with a successful track check (CL 8). The trail ends rather quickly however as the stonehorns cleared their bodies of mud and leapt toward the towers.

Approaching the towers the characters notice the statues but may not notice they are living creatures. The stonehorns assume a statue-like appearance, so much so that they are able to regulate their breathing. They attack anyone that passes between them. If the characters should work around them the stonehorns remain still and do not attack.

STONEHORNS, 2 (*These lawful evil creatures' vital stats are HD 13, AC 21, HP 88, 89. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by leaping upon their victims and attempting to pin them to the ground. They rend them with 2 claw attacks for 1d8 points of damage or a bite for 1d10 points of damage. They can head butt for a further 2d12 damage.*)

THE TOWERS

Both of these towers are in relatively good shape. They each consist of three floors, a dungeon, and a roof. The dungeon sits level with the swamp below. It climbs 40 feet to the first floor, which is level with the causeway. Each floor after that is roughly 20 feet high, until it reaches the roof, which is roughly 100 feet above the swamp and 60 feet above the causeway. A flat roof caps each tower. Stone stairs lead down to the dungeon and swamp. Similar stairs wind up the side of the tower until they come to their end on the roof. The stairs between floors are set at intervals allowing each section to be closed by a trap door.

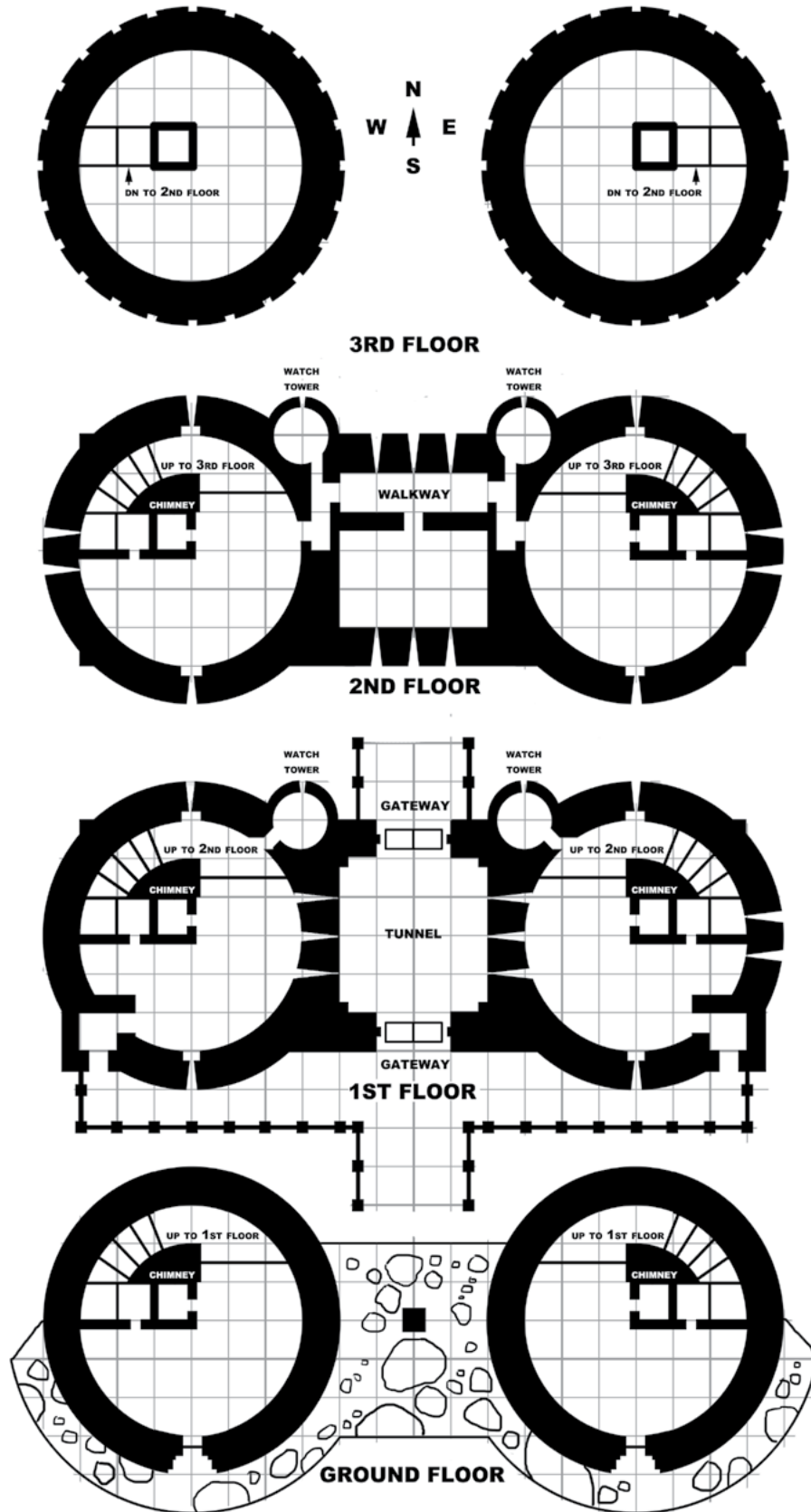
The barbican is deserted. Recently a troop of orcs had taken over the gate house, stocked it with food, and were in the process of repairing it when the stonehorns set upon them. Their attempts to drive off the beasts failed, and most were killed or fled back down the causeway to the fifth gate. The towers now lie deserted, though well stocked with food and supplies.

PORTCULLIS

The portcullis is open, as are the gates. The orcs were unsuccessful in their attempt to drive off the stonehorns. When they failed, they fled without closing the gates behind them.

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KRUA NOPT



WEST TOWER

This tower has been thoroughly cleaned. The doors are shut, though not locked. The barbican is built exactly as the others (refer to the main map for details).

Dungeon: The dungeon is half submerged, but the door here has been refitted and is locked. Opening it requires a successful pick locks check (CL 8). A great deal of debris lies in this room, old ruined furniture, food stuffs etc. that have been tossed down here from above.

If the characters conduct a detailed search they find a small bag of platinum and a large key that was tossed accidentally- it is in the drawer of a ruined desk. There are 38pp; the key opens a secret postern gate that leads into Aufstrag.

Level 1: The double doors that lead to this room from the causeway are closed, though one is slightly ajar. The room itself is where the orcs set up a barracks. It is lined with bed rolls. They sprawl across the place in a semi-orderly fashion. Packs and satchels abound, and there is some weaponry. It appears as if the inhabitants left quickly. There is little of value here other than the weapons: 14 shields, 36 spears, 4 heavy crossbows and 200 bolts.

Level 2: The door to this room is open and left ajar. A foul stench greets anyone who enters. Here the orc captain made his residence. A large though makeshift bed dominates the center of the room. Chained to a round ring on the wall is a goblin, the captain's slave.

The room's stench is like a wall. Pushing through into the room, the smell of it floods your nostrils and throat, it's taste spreading into your mouth. The room itself is largely empty, except for an overturned trunk with some clothes, a large bed of straw, and a makeshift frame. But the stench emanates from the corner of the room. There sits a goblin, his malnourished body curled into a ball, his eyes wide and staring. As you look upon him, he blinks once very slowly and croaks out a word in goblin.

The goblin is chained to the wall. He can only move a few feet from where he sits. He's defecated a number of times, and urinated as well. His attempts to break the chains have failed and left his wrists and fingers torn and bloody. His real plight lies in lack of water; he has not drunk in four days and is on the brink of death.

If the characters kill him he dies quickly enough. He is weak and unable to defend himself.

If they offer him friendship he is ready enough to take up the offer; he stands upon the edge of death and needs water. If they give him some he croaks out many thanks in his native tongue. The goblin's name is Buelix. If the party makes a deal with him he will work with them for a short time; he wishes to return to Aufstrag and has no desire to be left in the swamp. If they offer to spare him he offers to guide them the rest of the way to the citadel. He remains true to his word, at least until they enter Aufstrag

BUELIX (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d4, HP 2, AC 12. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with his claws for 1d2 points of damage. He has twilight vision.)

Note: He does not know the Lady of Garun, nor does she know him. She pays no heed to him, hoping that he is able to hurry the journey along.

Level 3: This room is untouched, relatively clean, and offers an amazing view of Aufstrag, which now towers upon the horizon.

Roof: There is nothing here but an old catapult and 14 rounded stones. The catapult works, though each time it is shot it requires a strength save (CB 15). If the save fails, the catapult shatters.

WALKWAY

The walkway, overlooking the gate and tunnel below, has been cleared of debris and set into working order. A dozen barrels of watery oil are stacked in the corner. Next to each of the 12 murder holes are 12 tripods and cook pots, clearly to boil the oil before dumping it down the murder hole. There is a large amount of wood stacked against the south wall.

EAST TOWER

This tower mimics the other in design, but is abandoned.

Dungeon: The dungeon is half submerged, but the door here has been refitted and is locked. Opening it requires a successful pick locks check (CL 8). A great deal of debris lies in this room, old ruined furniture, food stuffs etc. that have been tossed down here from above.

Level 1: The double doors that lead to this room from the causeway are closed, though one is slightly ajar. The room itself is where the orcs set up a barracks. It's lined with bed rolls. They sprawl across the place in a semi-orderly fashion. Packs and satchels abound and some weaponry. It appears as if the inhabitants left quickly. There is little of value here other than the weapons: 9 shields, 22 spears, 2 heavy crossbows and 100 bolts, 4 suites of scale mail and helms.

Level 2: Here the orcs stored their food stuffs. Crates, baskets, barrels and sacks are neatly stacked in the room. All the food is good, edible food.

14 crates of dried meat

9 crates of dried roots

10 50 lb. sacks of flour

1 50 lb. sack of sugar

4 crates of yeast

15 barrels of light beer

There are also cooking utensils, pots, pans, etc. Baking and cooking was clearly done in the fireplace.

Level 3: This room is empty, though it shows clear signs of passage as orcs went to the roof above.

Roof: Some signs of the orcs remain here, as they obviously kept watch, but there is nothing upon this tower.

Beyond the gate there are obvious signs of a large cook fire, not abandoned.

FRUTH NOPT: THE FIFTH GATE

The road beyond the Krua Nopt is open and clear. The orcs have worked hard to clean and repair the structure up to their garrison at the fourth gate. They patrol this section regularly. The Flesh Lord who dwells in the Fruth Nopt has already dispatched a heavy troop of ungern, orcs and a basilisk to drive the stonehorns from the Krua Nopt.

Aside from weather or the regular encounters rolled on the chart, the characters should cross the 14 miles of causeway to the Fruth Nopt with only encountering the aforementioned troop.

RELIEF FORCE

The Flesh Lord has dispatched a large, heavily armored troop to clear the Krua Nopt of the stonehorns. They make no pretense at moving quietly. They march to the beat of a heavy drum and the characters can hear them from a great distance.

DOM . . . DOM . . . THOM . . . DOM . . . DOM . . . THOM! The echo of a drum carries far and wide across the Grausamland. It's slow, methodic beat denotes a troop on the move. And so it is. On the edge of your vision a large force is marching. A huge troll leads the vanguard; in his arms is a drum. Behind him, a captain of the orcs rides a shaggy horse in chain barding. Beyond that are ranks of armored orcs, taller ungern, and several stone giants pulling a large wagon. They are moving slowly and have no scouts.

The characters can fall back to the fourth gate and slip over the side of the causeway, or attempt to stand and fight the troop. Whatever action they take must be done within 20 to 30 minutes as the troop will overtake them at that point.

NOTE: If the characters observe the troop carefully they might determine (spot CL 9; any experienced commander or knight gains a +2) that the stone giants are very reluctant in responding to the Captain or anyone in the troop. They are pulling the wagon against their will. They can be convinced to turn on the troop if the price is right: freedom, wealth, etc.

The Relief Force consists of the following:

- 1 Troll
- 1 Ogre Magi
- 80 Orcs
- 20 Ungern
- 4 Stone giants
- 2 Fire giants
- 1 Gorgon

The stone giants are pulling a wagon. Within the wagon is a gorgon. They keep it on a chained leash and intend to allow it to go through the tunnel of the gateway to destroy the stonehorns.

NOTE: If an all-out battle ensues, the stone giants have no interest in fighting the party. They fall back to the wagon and take no part.

22 CASTLES & CRUSADES



They do not attack the characters unless the party attacks them.

OGRE MAGI (This creature's vital stats are HD 5d8+5, AC 18, HP 33. It's primary attributes are physical and mental. It attacks with a slam attack for 1d10 points of damage. The ogre mage is able to regenerate 1 HP per round. They have the following spell like abilities: fly, invisibility, darkness, polymorph self, charm person, sleep, and gaseous form. They are able to cast a blast of rime (like a cone of cold) for 8d8 points of damage. He carries a rod of snakes and uses it as a last resort.)

ORCS, 80 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 12, HP variable. Their prime attributes are physical. They carry leather armor, short swords, clubs, and 1-6gp in jewelry.)

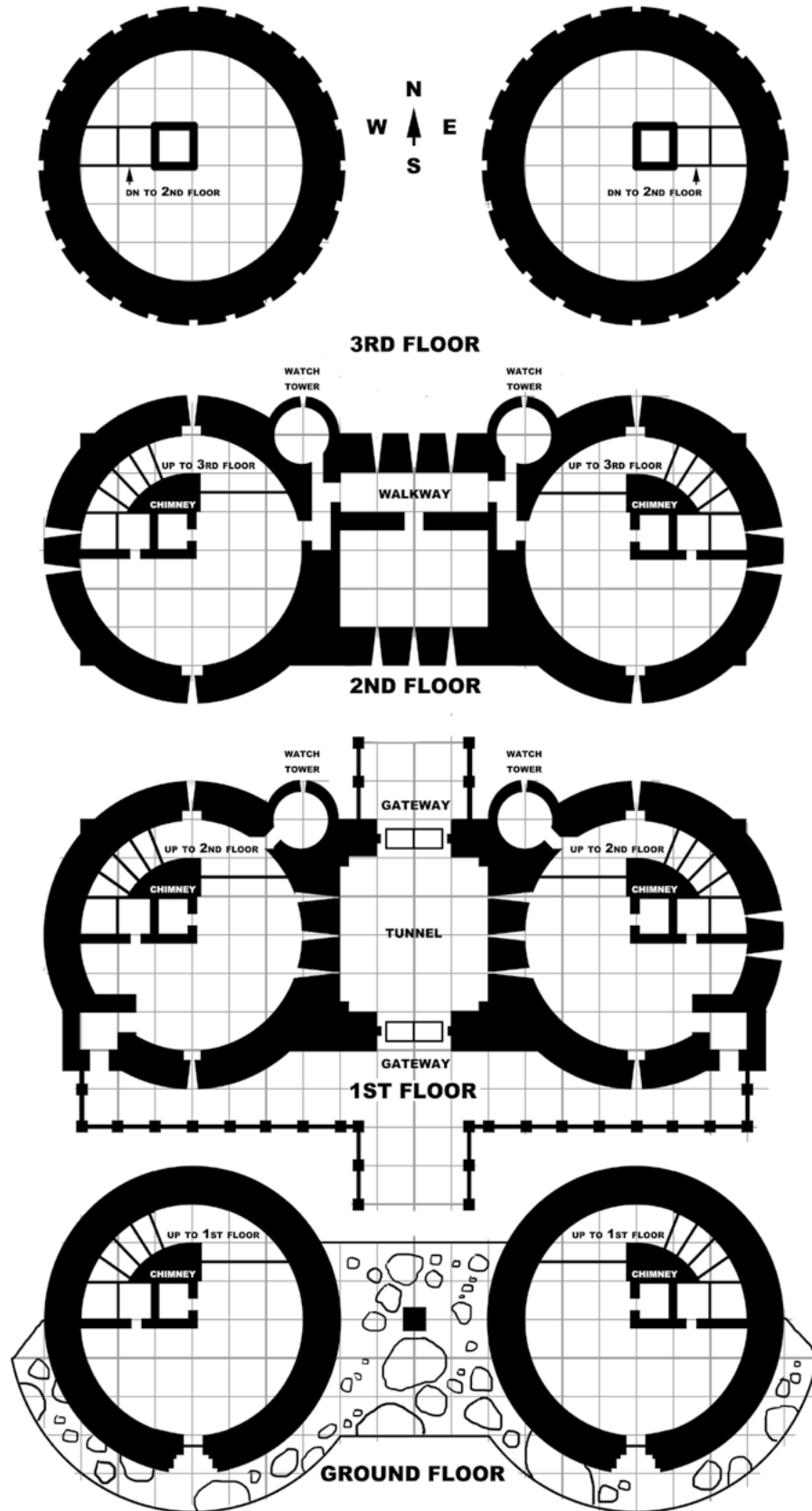
UNGERN, 20 (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 16 and HP 13, 12, 12, 9. Their primary attributes are physical. They can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage. They each carry a +1 chain coat, bardiche, dagger and 4-40gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

GIANT, FIRE, 2 (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 12d8, AC 23, HP 61, 62. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with large iron swords for 5d6 points of damage or 2 fists for 2d8 damage each. They are able to throw rocks for a further 2d10 points of damage up to 450 feet. They are vulnerable to cold but immune to fire.)

GIANT, STONE, 4 (These neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 10(d8), HP 54, AC 24. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a slam for 2d8 points of damage. If they wield a weapon, they use it with deadly proficiency, striking opponents for 2d6+6 points of damage. They are able to throw rocks, and have twilight vision and dark vision.)

TROLL, 1 (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 6d8, HP 40, AC 16. It's prime attributes are physical. Its special abilities are darkvision, twilight vision and regeneration. It attacks with 2 claws that do 1d4 damage each (x3) and a bite that does 2d4+1 damage.)

FRUTH NOPT



GORGON (This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 8d10, HP 58, AC 20. His primary attributes are physical. The gorgon attacks with a gore for 2d6 points of damage. He can trample a smaller creature for 3d6 points of damage. He also has a breath weapon that turns victims to stone).

Treasure: There is no communal treasure, but collectively the troop carries 300gp, 450sp and 1 500gp ruby necklace (the ogre magi). The drum that the troll beats upon imparts +1 to all morale checks or fear saving throws. The ogre magic wears +1 scale and carries a *rod of snakes*. The fire giants have some wealth they have carried with them. Each carries a large bladder of fire water. (See **New Magic Items**).

FRUTH NOPT

The Fruth Nopt, the fifth gate, is the final gate before the Portico and the Ahargon Den, the Maw of Darkness, the Gate of Aufstrag. The Fruth Nopt is fully fortified, rebuilt, and occupied by a Flesh Lord, a servant of Coburg the Undying. The Flesh Lord is set to watch the road and pass that intelligence back to his master. The Flesh Lord is feared by all. He has only a few servants to watch with him- some miserable orcs, some goblins, and a nest of spiders.

The Flesh Lord has set himself up in the east tower. From there he watches the road day and night, unless he has found some victim to torment. He has set a host of spiders in the towers and these wait only for prey to enter.

WEST TOWER

Here is the heart of the spider nest. They have occupied all three levels, leaving only the dungeon free of their webs.

NOTE: The spiders' webs are very sticky, and anyone passing over them has their movement halved. Further, every 4 rounds they must make a dexterity save, or risk a limb or their whole body becoming ensnared. Once caught the victim must make a strength check to break free (CL 3). The webbing is not very flammable, but if persistently set on fire it will burn up. It takes a full round to burn out a 5' x 5' area.

Dungeon: The dungeon is half submerged, but the door here is open. A great deal of debris lies in this room, old ruined furniture, food stuffs etc. that have been tossed down here from above. The room is muddy, but the door to level 1 is open.

Level 1: The double doors that lead to the tower are stuck, spider webbing holding it fast to the wall. Opening the door requires a successful strength check (CL 9). The door from the dungeon is open, however, allowing prey to enter the room easily.

There are four large spiders in the room. Three of them are hidden in the webbing on the ceiling; the fourth is presently wrapping a large swamp rat that it recently paralyzed. Upon seeing the party it backs up the wall, raising its forelegs and exposing its long fangs.

SPIDER, LARGE, 4 (These neutral evil creatures' vital stats are HD 5d8, AC 16, HP 25. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a poisoned bite for 1d8 points of damage. If bitten, a victim must make a successful constitution save or suffer 1d10 points of damage. In the following round they must make a successful constitution save or suffer paralysis for 3d6 hours.)

Meanwhile the other spiders begin to attack. They fight until they are 50% wounded, at which point they retreat into the webbing or upstairs to **Level 2**.

Treasure: The room has a number of bodies in it, many wrapped in spider silk. All told 72gp, 114sp and a masterwork broadsword are found. There is also one *potion of flying* (3d8).

Level 2: This floor is much like Level 1. However, there are only 3 spiders in this room. The entire room is covered in webbing and movement is halved.

SPIDER, LARGE, 3 (These neutral evil creatures' vital stats are HD 5d8, AC 16, HP 25. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a poisoned bite for 1d8 points of damage. If bitten, a victim must make a successful constitution save or suffer 1d10 points of damage. In the following round they must make a successful constitution save or suffer paralysis for 3d6 hours.)

Treasure: Hanging from the ceiling is the body of a dwarf. The dwarf wears chain mail and a breastplate. The armor has been stained red. His beard too is dyed red. He belonged to the Blood Guard, those dwarves who guarded Unklar, and who even now occupy the higher floors of Aufstrag. This particular dwarf was captured by Coburg and sold to the Flesh Lord who guards the gate. He flayed him and gave him to the spiders. He carries a ring on his finger. It's a signet ring that belongs to a powerful family of dwarves who dwell in Aufstrag. It can be sold back to them for 5000gp or traded for a favor.

Level 3: This room is a wedge of webbing; giant, thick, huge webbing. One monstrous spider dwells here. The hatch to the roof is open, allowing him to rush out on any prey that may crawl onto or cross over the roof.

SPIDER, LARGE (This neutral evil creatures vital stats are HD 8d8, AC 17, HP 45. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a poisoned bite for 1d8 points of damage. If bitten, a victim must make a successful constitution save or suffer 1d10 points of damage. In the following round they must make a successful constitution save or suffer paralysis for 3d6 hours.)

There is no treasure here.

Roof: The roof is covered in spider webs. It is a trap set by the monstrous spider below on Level 3. The spider does not attack immediately but waits until the interloper crosses over the web or becomes stuck. The spider from Level 3 then rushes out to inject poison in the victim.

WALKWAY

This space is unoccupied.

EAST TOWER

The Flesh Lord has taken command of this tower, and nothing dwells here save for himself and his two goblin and two orc servants. These dwell on the second level, while their master lives upon the third.

The entrance from the swamp is almost completely buried in bodies and bones. There are fresh bodies, half decayed bodies and bones in a large mountain rising up the side of the tower on the south side.

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All of them are skinned. Rats and other vermin crawl over them, eating and chewing at the bodies. The orcs from above toss the bodies from the window when the flesh lord is finished with them.

Dungeon: This room has been cleared, and there is a small well that the orcs have dug into the swamp where semi-fresh water is pooled. The orcs use it for themselves. The door is completely blocked by the mountain of bodies there.

The door to **Level 1** is unlocked.

Level 1: This room is vacant. The door to the causeway is locked, as is the door to **Level 2**. The door to the dungeon is unlocked. There are tracks, showing recent traffic up and down the steps, out onto the causeway, and down to the dungeon.

Level 2: These are the quarters of the Flesh Lord's servants. The two orcs and two goblins live in utter terror of their master, waiting only for their turn to be skinned and tortured. They have built for themselves some squalid mattresses of swamp grass and old, ruined clothing taken from the Flesh Lord's victims.

The orcs attempt to warn their master if they can, shouting for aid. They attempt to flee up to Level 3. If not, they attempt to exit through a window, or as a last resort, they attack the party.

ORCS, 2 (*These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 10, HP 3, 2. Their prime attributes are physical. They carry leather armor, short swords, clubs and 1-6gp in jewelry.*)

The goblins on the other hand do nothing to warn the flesh lord. If the characters come in quietly the goblins make no effort to move or stop them. They do not help the orcs in any way. When approached, they curl up against the wall, clearly scared, but far preferring a quick death to what awaits them at the hands of their master.

The characters can attempt to speak to the goblins. They can also use Beulix if he is still with the band. They can attempt to befriend them through spell or their own charisma. If they attempt to do so they must speak goblin or have Beulix with them. They do befriend the goblins on a successful charisma save (CL 4). The goblins desperately want a friend.

If befriended, one of the goblins lifts up some dirty cookware and begins banging it really loud; he starts to stomp up and down the room, singing some wild goblin song. "Hickory Adorn! Water Horn! The water run down the wooden town! Hickory Adorn! Water horn!", and so on.

The other goblin begins to whisper in earnest and says the following, "Above is a great evil. A foul creature from the Hall of Chains! He skins his prey living and makes webs of their flesh. A Flesh Lord they call him in the Trenches. He cannot see, but he hears better than an eagle sees with its eyes. Silence and speed is the price of victory."

The goblins are smiths, brothers named Engt and Arcg, taken in battle and sold as slaves.

If the characters harshly question the goblins, they will only whisper their responses, motioning upward and saying that something listens to them, "a lord of Aufstrag."

There is nothing of value in the room.

Level 3: The room is locked and the orcs have the key. The trap door to the roof is not locked. The flesh lord clings to the ceiling away from the steps. He does not move until he is spied. His white skin blends with the many shreds of skin hanging from the ceiling.

The room is cold, far colder than the swamps outside. It is dark as well, but not so dark that you cannot see the thousands of shreds of white and dark paper-like webs hanging from the ceiling. They cling to each other only reluctantly. For the most part they move gently in the breeze of an open window. It is difficult to see, for the webbing is so thick. But not far from the entrance you spy a body hanging upside down, a wide swath of dark stain on the floor beneath it, and strips of skin missing from his arms and face.

The Flesh Lord is well hidden and requires a successful spot check (CL 10) to see him. He does not move but waits. As soon as a character gets within a few feet of him he casts hold person and in the following round he attacks.

The Flesh Lord fights to the death, sending no call or plea to the towers of Aufstrag.

FLESH LORD (*This lawful evil creature's vital statistics are HD 16, AC 23, HP 91. His primary attributes are mental. He attacks with a fleshing dagger for 1d6+3 points of damage. The dagger causes immense pain, forcing a victim of a modified hit to make a constitution save or suffer the temporary loss of a hit point. They can claw for 1d8 points of damage. They can climb, regenerate 3 hit points per round, SR 2, have spell-like abilities and are vulnerable to silence. For more see **New Monsters** below.*)

Treasure: The Flesh Lord brought precious little with him from the Hall of Chains in Aufstrag. But he carries with him a *mirror of life trapping*, which he keeps his more interesting victims in. It is a small hand-held mirror, set within a platinum frame with four topaz stones set around it. The handle is steel with platinum wrapped around it. He carries it in his left hand. The mirror has 13 occupied spaces, and can only take two more or it ejects one of the occupants at random.

NOTE: Assuming the Flesh Lord is slain, the goblins offer their friendship and tell the characters that if ever they come into Aufstrag and find themselves in the Trenches fighting goblins, send for the brothers Engt and Arcg and they will come to repay the debt.

JOURNEY TO THE PORTICO

There is nothing abnormal about the trip from the fifth gate to the Portico. The distance is 17 miles. The orcs have cleared the road and rebuilt it where necessary. Roll for wandering monsters and weather as usual.

WRAPPING UP

If *All The Wasting Way* was played as a stand-alone adventure, then allow the causeway to end upon the other side of the swamp and the characters may carry on to adventures of their design. If it was played with the goal of arriving at Aufstrag, the characters come to the Blasted Heath, the region around the Aragon Den, the Maw of Darkness

THE MAW OF DARKNESS

This is the broad doorstep of Aufstrag. Here stands the Aragon Den- the Maw of Darkness. It is guarded by a foul tempered and very old black dragon, and contains a host of mysteries. If used as part of the A series the adventure picks back up with *A12 The Blasted Heath* and the beginning of the plundering of Aufstrag.

NEW MONSTERS

FLESH LORD

NO. APPEARING: 1

SIZE: Large (9'+)

HD: 16

MOVE: 40ft.; 20ft. (climb)

AC: 23

ATTACKS: 2 Claw (1d8), by 1d6+3

SPECIAL: Climb, Skinning, Regenerate, Spell-Like Abilities, SR 2, Vulnerable to Silence

SAVES: M

INT: Genius

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

TYPE: Extraplanar

TREASURE: 16

XP: 8800+16

Flesh Lords are devils of Aufstrag. They are tall, emaciated creatures with long arms and long legs. Their hands and feet are also long, slender and capped by wicked claws. Their pale skin clings to bones that jut out in painful outline. The skin itself is dry, cracking at the touch and constantly peeling. The Flesh Lords encourage this with the long, fleshing knife they carry and constantly drag across their hides. They have no mouth, eyes, nor nose. Where their mouths should be are scars. The eye sockets remain, but are covered with smooth flesh and the nose is a gash. They have two small holes above either cheek that allow them to hear the world around him.

The Flesh Lord moves very quickly, running in a long gait, or crawling like an insect. They prefer to cling to the ceiling, dropping down on unsuspecting prey. However, their continually shedding skin places them at a disadvantage. Anyone keeping a watch on the floor is likely to notice the loose skin laying all about.

They cannot see, smell or talk. They do however have superior auditory skills. The openings in their skulls allow them to hear even the slightest sounds, from the echo of moving wind to whispers. From these sounds they derive a clear picture of what is going around them.

Flesh Lords prefer to use their four foot long fleshing dagger. The u-shaped blade is very sharp, is able to cut through most mail, and carves off long slivers of flesh. The peeled skin is harvested by the flesh lord after any encounter. They wrap the strips of skin together, making long, web like ropes. The ropes are tough and cling to whatever they touch. The Flesh Lords often hang their victims with their own skin.

COMBAT: The Flesh Lord is an accomplished spell caster, preferring to batter his victims with spells before filleting them alive with his long knife. They wield hold person spells to grab a

victim, and as they are held, fillet them alive, cutting off strips of flesh off that cause tremendous pain if little damage.

CLIMB: The Flesh Lord is able to cling to almost any surface. Their long limbs allow the creatures to crawl, their limbs bent high, their torsos pressed close to the ground. Any rough surface, such as a stone wall or a tree, the creatures climb with no effort. Surfaces such as ice or glass are a little more difficult, requiring a dexterity check; the challenge base for glass surfaces is 8, for ice it is 16.

FLESHING DAGGER: The knife of the Flesh Lord is designed to peel the skin off its victims. When they attack, the blade's sharp edge grants the devil a +3 on all attacks made with the knife. A successful hit deals 1d8+3 points of damage. Upon a successful modified hit of 19 or 20 the knife peels the skin back in 5 inch long, 1 inch wide strips. The wound causes 1d4 points of damage, but such severe pain that the victim must make a successful constitution save, or suffer a temporary loss of 1-2 points of intelligence. If a victim is reduced to 1 intelligence, they can no longer function and fall to the ground, gibbering.

SPELL-LIKE ABILITIES: *Hold Person* (5/day), *Hold Monster* (3/day), *Levitate* (5/day), *Ray of Enfeeblement* (1/day), *Scare* (2/day), *Shatter* (3/day), *Summon Monster* (large spider), 1/day, *Telekinesis* (2/day).

VULNERABLE TO SILENCE: They are extremely vulnerable to silence spells however, as they are instantly blinded if they fail their save and find themselves in a bubble of silence. In such circumstances they cannot focus on a single target to cast spells, suffer a -5 in hitting and their opponents gain a +5 to hit.

IN AIHRDE

The Lords of Al-Liosh were powerful and wealthy. Though many bore noble sons and daughters and ruled lands in kindness and with a fair hand to judgment, others were not so good. Others ruled in spite of their wealth, with cruel mouths and twisted minds; they tortured their serfs, paying them in evil's wage. When Al-Liosh fell, Unklar harvested these Lords and put them to his own purpose. He gave them power over his armies and set them up to torture the victims of the long conquest. And when the wars ended, he made them masters of the Hall of Chains in Aufstrag's lower regions, feeding them all those who passed through his court.

The Flesh Lords grew great in power and arrogance as they lorded over the minions of the dark.

As is known, Unklar's power waxed and waned, and for many years he slept upon his throne while the kingdoms of his making unfolded as they would. So it came that in the 400th year of the Winter Dark the Flesh Lords rose against their master, who had slept these many years. They crowded the Torture Gardens and the Pits of Woe with the victims of their torment and assailed the upper halls with great force. The wailing of the damned echoed in the deep chambers and roused the Mogrl, devils of Unklar's rage. These rose to do battle with the Flesh Lords. The clamor of the war carried far and wide, so that men in the Punj could hear it. The towers of Aufstrag shook, and flights of wyverns took to the air from on high. The slaves of the Trenches deep in the bowels of the Great Tree rose in rebellion and flooded the lower halls in violence.

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All of this roused Unklar from his sleep. His roar tore the air around him and shattered walls and floors. He descended the towers and came upon the great battles raging below. His presence sent the Flesh Lords fleeing to the chambers below, and the Mogrl hounded them. But Unklar, once roused, could not sate his anger so easily. He entered the Hall of Chains and crushed them beneath his cloven hoof. He stripped the Flesh Lords of their tongues to end their blasphemy. He removed their mouths to stop their wailing. He sliced off their noses so men would hate their shapeless forms. And he pulled the flesh of their brows over their eyes so that they could never see again. He plucked their souls from their bodies, bound them in balls of iron, and hurled them across the world. At the last he drew breath across them, and pulled the life from their flesh, so that it curled and dried and fell in flakes. They grew so fearful that ever after, the Flesh Lords listened for the slightest movement of their master. In this way, they came to hear all things, great and small.

Thus ended the Flesh Lords War.

STONEHORNS

NO. APPEARING: 1-4

SIZE: Large (16'+)

HD: 13

MOVE: 40ft.

AC: 21

ATTACKS: 2 Claws (1d8 each), Head Butt (2d12), Bite (1d10)

SPECIAL: Crush, Immune to Fear, Stone Skin

SAVES: P

INT: Animal

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

TYPE: Magical Beast

TREASURE: 10

XP: 3600+13

Stonehorns are huge creatures, with massive arms and barrel chests. When they stand, they are some 16 feet high. With grey skin, long arms, and a huge belly, the stonehorn crouches on two long frog-like legs. Beady eyes peer out from beneath a broad head crowned by massive horns. The stonehorn's eyes are hollow pools of gray indifference. Their lipless mouths, lined with thousands of tiny, sharp teeth remain clamped shut unless they feed.

The stonehorns prefer to dwell in swamps or marshy areas where their height and strength give them an advantage. Scholars maintain that the beast was born of the toads and frogs to which it bears a slight resemblance.

They move very quickly for a beast so large, lunging forward on their legs. This allows them to leap great distances, up 40 feet. The stonehorns travel alone or in pods of 2-4. They lay eggs when they breed; these are dropped in deep pools and left to grow until they are mature. This generally takes 3-5 years. The stonehorn hatches fully grown and hungry.

COMBAT: In combat, the stonehorn leaps much as a frog does, attempting to land upon its victim. While crushing it, they rend it with claws and fangs. They do not fear death and attack without any morale. They cannot be affected by fear or any similar spell.

CRUSH: When a stonehorn leaps at a victim it attempts to land upon them. The target must make a successful dexterity save or be crushed and pinned for 2d12 points of damage. They are considered prone until they break free with a successful strength check.

STONE SKIN: Stonehorns hunt by surprise. They assume a statue-like appearance wherein their skin becomes hard and stone-like. They do not blink, and their breathing slows such that it is hardly noticeable. Anyone who sees a stonehorn that is under the stone skin must make a successful wisdom save (CL 18) to notice that it is living. If they fail, it seems to be a statue. Anyone who has encountered the creature in the past knows the creature for what it is and does not need to make a successful check.

IN AIHRDE

The wizards in Unklar's service practiced all manner of vile sorcery in the pits of Aufstrag. They bound many creatures together, making unwholesome beasts. They bred them, fused them, tortured them; from the lowest orders of things to the highest, none escaped their attention. How the stonehorns came to be few now could say, but they came from Aufstrag with no purpose or high command. They wandered into the world ignorant of their existence. Thus it is that the stonehorn dies as it lives, with an indifference that is truly epic.

They spread far and wide, wandering across the world slowly; but their favored swamp remains the Grausamland.

NEW TREASURE

FIRE WATER: Fire giants brew this potent gel to cleanse wounds, heal themselves, or to torture their enemy. The liquid is thick, much like syrup, and heavy. When exposed to air it heats up, sometimes catching on fire. Fire giants smear the gel over wounds and let it cook the wounds shut, at which time they heal 1d6 points of damage. Non-fire using creatures can attempt this, but the gel can have an adverse reaction. Anyone who smears the gel on must make a successful constitution saving throw (CL 12). If successful the fire water heals 1d6 points of damage and restores 1 lost attribute points. If they fail their save the gel burns them severely and they suffer 1d4 points of burn damage. Typically the giants carry it in bladders that hold up to 10 applications of the gel. The giants use it to torture others as often as they put it on themselves.

PRIEST'S ALB: This long-sleeved, knee length garment is made of light wool. It's woven in careful patterns and blessed by a high priest or prelate. The cloth is soaked in holy water and allowed to dry upon the temple's altar. When worn by a cleric it grants the cleric one extra 1st, 2nd and 3rd level bonus spells. They cleric must be able to cast the spell before they can pray for it. For example, a 1st level cleric would not be able to cast a 3rd level spell. However, a 5th level cleric would gain an extra 3rd level spell. The spells stack with normal spells per day, including any other bonus spells gained. The alb can be worn over normal garments or under armor without any penalty.

KASDA R.

CASTLES & CRUSADES

BLIGHTED SCREED

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THE LONG WALK

The Grausamland - a gray mire of marsh, bogs, sluggish creeks, and deep pools - stands a barrier to those who would enter the giant fortress of Aufstrag. A thousand square miles of impenetrable swamp peopled by monsters great and small; with fang and claw, upon dusky wings, or slithering through the filth they stalk the Gray Pools. So great was the danger that in ages past the Lords of Aufstrag ordered a bridge constructed, a causeway; the causeway stretched 3 score miles over the swamps from the doors of Aufstrag to the Withing Uplands.

Even this did not wholly protect those supplicants of the horned god from the terrors of the Pools and such were the losses that travelers suffered in the trek over the swamp that men took to calling the causeway The Wasting Way



All that has fallen to the hand of time and war; now the Wasting Way stands abandoned and in ruins, and travel upon it an even greater nightmare. Whether the journey carries you across the swamp upon the long abandoned causeway, or the Lady of Garun calls upon you to free her tormented soul from the grasp of the evil devil-lord Coburg the Undying, travel upon the Wasting Way is a journey fraught with peril. It is one only the stout of heart dare. But the unplundered wealth of a thousand years waits on the other side. Conquer the Wasting Way and come at last to the door step of Aufstrag!

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PRINTED AT CHENAULT & GRAY PRINT
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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