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FORSAKEN MOUNTAIN

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MOUNTAIN

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By DAVIS CHENAULT



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HEIMSTADT

ASCALON

THE FORSAKEN MOUNTAIN

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**The Forsaken Mountain is a module
designed for 3-5 characters
of 8th to 10th level**

The Adventure continues!



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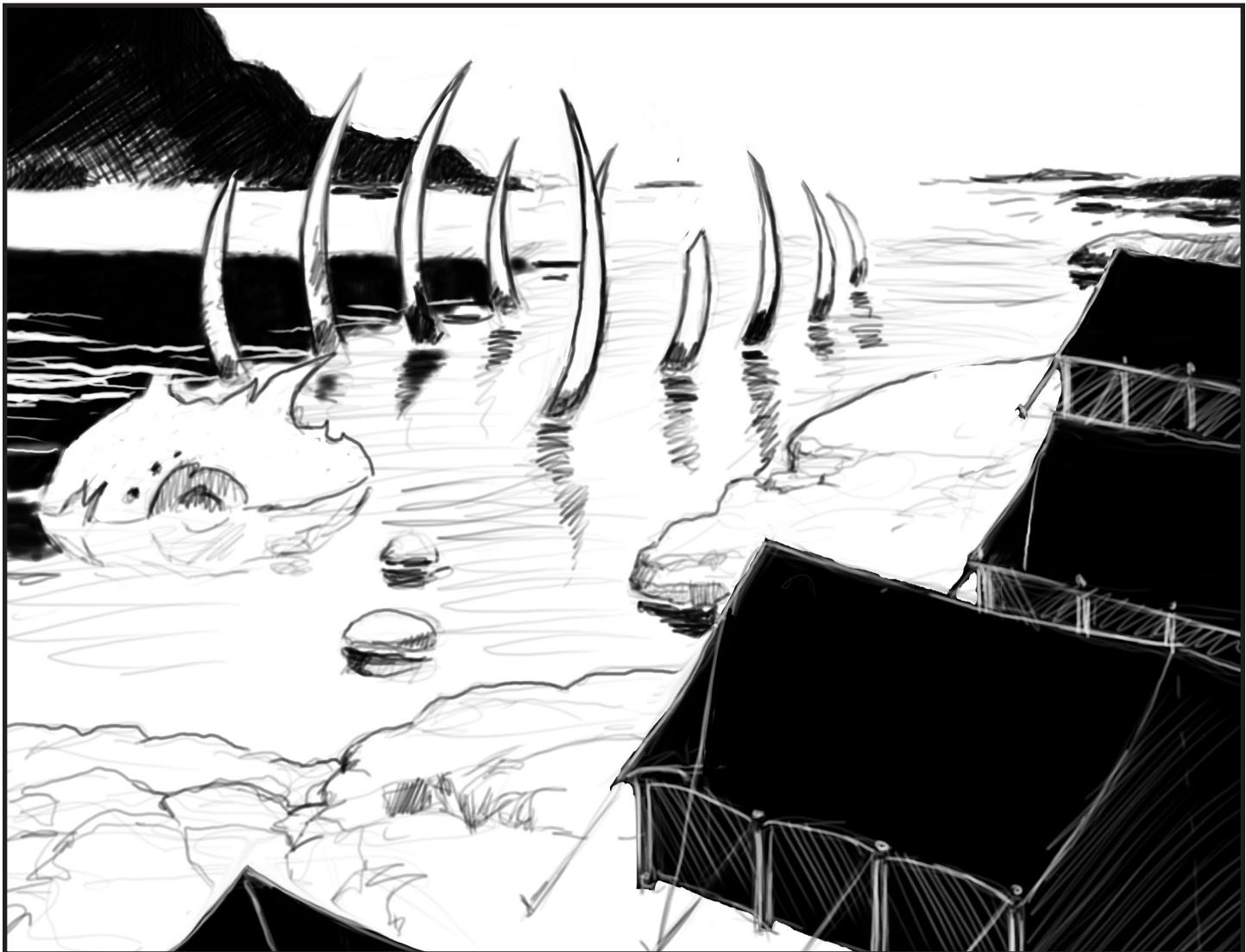
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THE FORSAKEN MOUNTAIN



The Forsaken Mountain is a module designed for 3-5 characters of 8th to 10th level and follows the adventures in the 'A' series developed by Troll Lord Games. However the adventure can be used without reference to the previous adventures should the Castle Keeper desire (see Involving the Player Characters for more details on this option).

The epic undertaking in Forsaken Mountain sets the adventurers on a fantastic journey. Leaving behind the world they know, the characters travel far beyond the realms of man and cross over into the land of dreams and thence into the realms of the forever dying, where creatures both horrifying and ambrosial dwell. Only the bravest can survive in that land as one's fear will certainly be one's undoing. This module is designed for those characters that are truly leaving behind the mundane and entering those fantastic and heroic worlds of adventure where death lingers behind every door and doom follows every misstep.

Creatures in this and the following adventures in the 'A' series are very powerful and aged beyond knowing. By now, the characters

should realize that events are occurring outside of and without reference to them, but through their actions they may influence, in a major way, the outcome and may even come to be enmeshed in the great happenings of the world. It is here and in the following adventures that heroic characters are made or broken and the adventures they have may be remembered ever after. Ultimately, through their actions, the characters are going to influence the destiny of their world, for better or worse. The hero must simply step forward and affect that outcome.

INTRODUCTION

For the first time in many long years a cold wind blows from Aufstrag. The Ahargon Den, The Great Maw, the gates of Aufstrag, has opened and a host issued forth. Lord Coburg the Undying, Master of Aufstrag, self-appointed heir to Unklar, Dark Heart has sent forth his servants. Rumor spreads across the land, far and wide, that they seek the Vessel of Souls. But all know the legend of the vessel of souls, stolen by a Confessor Knight before the Winter Dark War's end and borne upon a wind of desire across the Dreaming Sea, there the thief set it at the base

of the Forsaken Mountain, safe from all hands and all those who would misuse it. This vessel, possessed of wondrous power, must never fall into the hands of the enemy, for if it does, the power in Aufstrag must surely bend its will into the lands of the Empress to shape the destinies of man, dwarf and elf once again.

In the early days of Unklar's rule, when the world had not yet succumbed wholly to his rule, the men of Al Liosh rose against that mighty lord. Led by the Baron Kul they stormed the Ahargon Den, the gates of Aufstrag. Long ago fashioned by Dwarves, the gates could not be opened by mortal means. But Baron Kul possessed a horn of wondrous power, the Horn of Opening, and sounding notes, clear and strong the gates fell wide. Entering Aufstrag upon a furious wind, the Baron overcame all defenders in the lower halls.

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

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

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

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

Undaunted Coburg removed the plate and drew him to her and stole a kiss. But to her amazement her kiss did not fell Coburg! For

the curse of the Baron Kul hung upon his brow; it had driven his soul from his body and cast it into the Wretched Plains. Staggered and amazed, the Lady of Garun loved Coburg from that day to the end of the world and he named her the Vessel of Souls.

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

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

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

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

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

FOR THE CASTLE KEEPER

If this module is used in conjunction with the 'A' series, the CK must note that this adventure distracts the characters from their purpose of bringing the broken shards of the Horn of Opening to the Oonmaukling so that they may mend it as laid out in A6 and A7. In effect, The Forsaken Mountain introduces the characters to Coburg's struggle for power in Aufstrag and brings the characters to

their attention. Coburg, or for that matter most anything in Aufstrag, has no knowledge of the characters, their possession of the Horn of Opening, their attempt to mend the horn nor the character's intent. This adventure lays the groundwork for the inclusion of those powers in Aufstrag in the adventures of the characters.

The Forsaken Mountain entices the characters to set off after the Vessel of Souls (the Lady of Garun) via an "accidental" encounter while traveling through the Blighted Screed. The characters are encouraged to give chase to some powerful servants of Coburg the Undying who is attempting to retrieve the Vessel of Souls. Coburg intends to bring the Vessel of Souls back to Aufstrag, as she has too long been preying upon his mind and he has recently discovered how to retrieve her. The characters must make a choice, at the beginning of the adventure, to continue on with their own quest to repair the Horn of Opening or turn aside and combat this new evil that, if left untouched, may come back to haunt them.

The adventure begins with the characters coming across an encampment of Coburg's men by a lake. After defeating them, they discover a note outlining a mission and a portal. The characters should pass through the portal and arrive on the Dreaming Sea. After which, they must make their way to an island. This is where the Witch of Ways lives. She should give them directions to the Vessel of Souls or at least open the path. The path leads to the Forsaken Lands and thence, by a magical bridge, to the Forsaken Mountain. At the Forsaken Mountain, the characters witness the agents of Coburg freeing the Vessel of Souls and spiriting her away. There is also a portal nearby which takes the characters to the Castle Keeper's preferred location. This, in short, is the adventure. Wrapping up the adventure is discussed at the end of the module.

INVOLVING THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

If this adventure is being run as a continuation of the 'A' series, the characters should be traveling across the Blighted Screed to locate the Oonmaukling to have the Horn of Opening repaired. In so doing, they come to a low lying river valley with a slow moving broad river snaking its way through a morass of swamps, bogs and lakes. It is while crossing this area that the characters come upon the encampment described in "To the Dreaming Sea" below.

If this module is not being used in conjunction with the "A" series, any of the following reasons could be used to entice the characters to go to the lake in question and, the lake can be located anywhere in Airdhe (or other world for that matter). Should this module not be used with the rest of the 'A' series, be sure to read the alternate endings at the end of the module.

- Random encounter:** Have the characters randomly wander upon the encampment described below. The only proviso is that the characters be located in a region where there are a lot of lakes.
- Rumor of activity:** The characters could learn of a troop of men and humanoids in a certain region and be asked to check out what they are doing. The characters would have to find the tracks and location of the encampment – something that should not be easy to manage. Alternately, the characters could be traveling and simply come upon the tracks.

3. **Learn of Vessel of Souls:** In the various 'myth telling' moments of play, let drop the story of the Vessel of Souls (perhaps from a bard in a tavern, a book found on an adventure, a sage etc). Only supply enough information to indicate the Vessel of Souls is an actual vessel of some type and not a person. Armed with this myth, some few adventures later, give the characters reason to believe that someone has found a way to retrieve the vessel and lead them to the lake.

4. **Scroll:** The characters come across a scroll during an adventure. The scroll describes a ritual for removing a mask that hides the Vessel of Souls. The scroll also provides the location of a lake and a portal that transports the travelers to the Vessel of Souls. Supply the players with what information they may know of the Vessel of Souls or that information which may entice them to try and retrieve it.

TO THE DREAMING SEA

After a tortuous journey through the uplands of the Blighted Screed, the land changes as it drops in elevation and descends into a river valley and a lake region called the Thousand Chimneys. This thermally active area is dominated by hot steaming lakes, geysers and hot vents. It is thick with undergrowth and tall trees as well as wild predators and dangers of various sorts. After several days of travel in this area, the character come upon a clearing around a staggeringly large, steaming lake with a site that immediately takes their attention. There are some large black tents pitched on the lake's shore next to the bleached out rib bones of a creature the size of a small whale.

There are four broad tents set in a square. Their black canvas is decorated with crimson patterns and glitters along the edges as if interlaced with gold and silver threads. In the center of the encampment a large pole has been set and atop it, gently flapping in the breeze, is a black banner bearing the curved silver bands and red lines of Coburg the Undying, Lord of Aufstrag. Several large figures can be seen moving about the encampment carrying bardiches. These appear to be ungern, though frightfully large for their kind. Nearby the tents are two large wagons and a tethering post with eight oxen tied to it.

One or more of the characters may recognize the device upon the banner though they would have to have had some knowledge of it beforehand (intelligence check, CL 5). A bard has a decent chance of recognizing the device (+4 to check) while any sufficiently aged dwarf or elf would likely recognize it (+5 to check). Should it be recognized, the characters should also be aware that it has not been seen in decades.

The tents are pitched less than 50 yards from the shore. On the shore are the bones of some giant lake creature that has crawled up or was hauled up to the shore and where it lay dead. The rib cage stretches some 30 yards before disappearing into the lake's steaming waters. A massive long and narrow jaw lies agape at the other end. Rows upon rows of sharp dagger like teeth are still attached to the jaws jutting hither and yon in a grotesque fashion. Upon closer inspection and even at a great distance, a circle of greenish-blue light can be seen shining from within the ribcage at the shore's edge.

There are a dozen ungern guards, a priest, the priest's retainer and four hell hounds remaining in the camp. At any given time six of the

ungern are asleep or in repose while two others walk the perimeter of the camp and the other four are inside the encampment but otherwise ready for battle. Two of the hell hounds quietly walk further out than the uncern while two are always chained near the banner. The priest sleeps late in the evening to early morning but is otherwise active though not prepared for a fight. His retainer and bodyguard generally sleep during the mid afternoon and early evening while staying awake most of the night and into the early morning and is generally prepared for any eventuality. Should the hell hounds or uncern detect the characters, they alert the others.

All the tents open to the center of the camp and the location of the banner. There is a large fire with a pot hanging over it near the pole holding the banner. Four large logs have been loosely arranged about the fire and pole and are used by those gathering around the fire to sit upon. Food, mostly fish, is being boiled in the pot. A scattering of small fish bones and animal parts are scattered around the logs and fire. There are usually four uncern within close proximity to the fire. The priest or his assistant may or may not be there. The pot is removed from the fire at nightfall and then built up to provide enough light to see within the perimeter of the tents.

PRIEST (*He is a lawful evil, human, 12th level cleric. His vital stats are HP 61 and AC 17/20. His primary attributes are: wisdom, intelligence, and strength. His significant attributes are wisdom 17, intelligence 14, strength 14 and dexterity 17. He carries a Brooch of shielding, a gem of brightness on a small staff with 16 charges left, a +3 ring of protection, +5 leather, a ring of telekinesis, stave of conjuration with 25 charges, a +3 mace and potion of extra healing. He wears 2000gp worth of jewelry. He can cast the following spells: 0-level: first aid x2, purify food and drink x2, endure elements, light, 1st level—Bless, command, protection from good, fear, sanctuary, shield of faith; 2nd level—aid, darkness, silence, spiritual weapon, hold person; 3rd level—cure serious wounds, dispel magic, magic circle, prayer; 4th level—control water, freedom of movement, sending; 5th level—flame strike, true seeing; 6th level—blade barrier, find the path.*)

RETAINER (*He is a lawful evil, human, 9th level assassin. His primary attributes are intelligence, dexterity and wisdom. His significant attributes are dexterity 17, wisdom 15 and strength 13. He carries a +2 ring of protection, +3 leather armor, +1 bracers of defense, a +3 dagger, a +1 short bow, 12 +2 arrows, dust of appearance, boots of elvenkind, a jar of poison that does +1d6 damage, +2 broadsword, and a potion of extra healing.*)

UNGERN x12 (*These creatures' vital stats are: HD 5d8, HP [20, 24, 24, 26, 31], and AC 16. Their primary attributes are: physical +1. They attack with 2 claws [1d3], gore [1d6+3], or by weapon [+1 to damage]. They wear banded mail, carry a bardiche, long bow and hook sword and 3d8 gp value in coin and jewelry.*)

HELL HOUNDS x6 (*These creatures' vital stats are: HD 4d8, HP [16, 18, 19, 25, 27, 27], and AC 16. Their primary attributes are: physical. They attack with a fiery bite [1d6 +1d6]. Special: breath weapon, fiery bite, tracking, darkvision and immunity to fire.*)

There is a lot of material in the camp though little in the way of treasure except a few very valuable pieces taken from inside the belly of the fish skeleton. The latter are located in the tent with the priest.

The three tents used by the uncern are large. They each contain eight sleeping areas consisting of reed mats and a blanket. Four of the mats have piles of personal gear piled around them such as metal pots, spoons, packs, some dried meat, tinder, small knives, clothing etc. The remaining four mats in each tent are otherwise bare. In the center of the tents are several large casks filled with water, several sacks of arrows, a stack of four bardiches, two long bows and two satchels of 200 arrows each. In the bric-a-brac of material scattered about the tent, a thorough search (at least half an hour) uncovers 1-100gp worth of coin, jewelry or gems for each tent.

The tent housing the priest is arranged differently from the others. There are interior spaces within the tent created by curtains. There are eight separate compartments with a narrow walk down the middle. All but two of the spaces are unoccupied. Each space contains a cot with some bedding. A small trunk or sack is within each space as well. These contain odds and ends of personal gear from those who were here but have traveled on to the Dreaming Sea. The two occupied spaces are different. One belongs to the priest and the other to his aid.

The priest's space contains a cot, two trunks, a small table with papers and a lamp upon it and a rack with a chain hauberk, a lucern hammer, mace and a shield hanging from it – the priest only dons weapons and armor in case of attack. The papers on the table detail the location of the fish along the river as described from some unfortunate soul during an apparent brutal interrogation. A map is provided at the end of the text. Another piece of writing details the goal of the trip. It is written as a letter:

"My Lord Instabulus and Faithful Servant of the Undying:

I have been instructed by the Undying Master, our Benefactor, our Holiness the Uniter, to usher you on your way and gather what you need to acquire the Vessel of Souls. I have placed the Cantor Orsirius and the Uncantor Herdonium under your command. Take what few aides you might find necessary for the undertaking must be made in the utmost secrecy.

A map has been provided by the Senators. The map indicates a lake near the Untrag River. At the lake you will find a portal to, it is our understanding, the realm where the Witch of Ways resides. The Witch of Ways is able to give you assistance in finding the Vessel of Souls.

Deredius Manseflenin"

One of the trunks is unlocked and contains robes, clothing, incense, an incense burner, tender sticks, writing instruments and ink as well as other personal items.

The second trunk is perfectly square and has no apparent lid, as no hinges are readily visible. It is wood and bound in metal straps with nine rivets to a side holding the straps in place. Only by pressing nine of the 54 rivets in the precise order will open the trunk without mishap. One rivet on top and two on each side of the trunk are the ones to be pressed. It is possible the characters will figure out the order, but it may take some time, as there are 387,420,489 possible combinations. Only one is correct. By an oddity, a simple knock spell suffices to press the rivets in the correct order. The trunk's side pops open on interior hinges.

The trunk has ten glass vials containing various potions and concoctions in them (see list below). There is a sack of 600 gold coins, a scroll of resurrection, scroll of teleportation circle, two candles of invocation aligned to lawful evil, gem of true seeing, eyes of the eagle and a boat of folding. If the trunk was broken open, then all the potion bottles are shattered (see below for effects). The scrolls are in sealed bone cases and are not harmed.

If the trunk is beaten apart, the glass vials in the trunk break, releasing the vapors of various potion mixes into the air. In and of themselves the vapors of each individual potion are harmless. It is the combination of the potions that can be murder (though there are some beneficial effects). After 50 points of damage have been delivered to the trunk it breaks. Also, the liquids from the potions have mixed and the vapors begin leaking out of the trunk. Roll a d10 and consult the following chart for each person within 10 feet of the trunk. The round after this, the effects extend to 20 feet and thence to thirty feet before dissipating. However, the affected 30 foot area remains toxic for several hours. A successful save (default everything to constitution) halves the damage and duration of any effects.

| Potion | Affects if Broken |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 Gaseous Form | The vapor causes $\frac{1}{2}$ the body to become gaseous. After one round this is very painful causing 1d6 damage per round thereafter. It last 2d6 rounds. |
| 2 Invisibility | This vapor cause random portion of the recipient to become invisible. This effect last for 2d6 days but is otherwise harmless. |
| 3 Cause Disease | This vapor causes black blisters all over the body that, while there, heal 1d6 damage an hour. The effect lasts 4-48 hours. |
| 4 Fly | This vapor cause a person to float about 10 feet above the ground for 2-24 hours and paralyzes the victim for the entire time. |
| 5 Paralysis | This heinous vapor mingles with the most malign effects. The recipient takes 1d12 damage, is blinded for 2-16 hours, is paralyzed for 2-8 hours and develops a deadly disease that saps the recipient of 1 point of constitution a day until cured. |
| 6 Cause Serious Wounds | This vapor causes blindness and deals 1-2 hp of damage a round for 2-16 rounds. It also prevents the character from aging for one year (natural as well as unnatural aging is prevented. The only possible manner for the person to age is by a spell from a divine figure.) |
| 7: Cure Serious Wounds | This vapor causes sleepiness. The recipient falls asleep for 1-2 days and lies as if comatose. Additionally, for 1-4 days after waking up all climb checks are made at +3 and all jump distances are increased by 1/3 and falling damage is reduced by one half. |

8: Longevity

This vapor causes the person to immediately age 1-4 years and lose their eyesight for 1-4 days.

9: Blindness

his vapor causes the recipient to double their vision for 4-48 hours and levitate one foot off the ground for 1-2 days.

10: Spider Climb

This vapor cures any disease the character may have but cause 1-12 damage at the same time.

Inspection of the camp area reveals a trail leading to the fish skeleton. The skeleton of the fish is huge. The mouth of the creature is agape and is easily ten feet tall and 20 feet long. The jaws are lined with all manner of short and tall teeth with jagged edges. The rib cage, which expands to 20 foot in diameter, extends from the mouth 30 yards before dipping into the water of the lake and another 20 yards before disappearing beneath the lake. About 30 yards down the ribcage, a blue shimmering disc roughly 8 feet tall rests upright and partially submerged in the water. Tracks indicate many people have moved in the direction of the disc. Several spades lie near a pile of muck and sand about a quarter way down the ribcage. Many bones of various sizes and nature and states of decay litter the sand and muck inside and just outside the ribcage.

The shimmering blue disc appears much like a double-sided mirror such that peering into it reveals the image of those looking in. However, the image is a little blurry and may look different than how those looking into it actually appear. The reflection is that of the dream self. It is an image of how the character dreams they are viewed. This disc is a portal to the Dreaming Sea. One must simply step through it and one enters the Dreaming Sea. The disc weighs about 450 pounds, is 8 feet tall and 4 feet wide. It can be carried. The disc attempts to right itself at all times and levitates about 1 foot above solid ground once at rest.

The disc is what ultimately killed the fish carrying it. Most of its meals passed through the disc to the Dreaming Sea and it starved.

ACROSS THE DREAMING SEA

The Dreaming Sea (sometimes referred as the Sea of Dreams) is a plane juxtaposing that of the prime, or Aihrde. The sea is a watery plane of chaos, each drop a physical manifestation of a dream. These droplets of the dreams and nightmares of the living creatures of Aihrde, past and present, have accumulated over the millennia to form this great ocean. They are infinite in number, and the Dreaming Sea has no bottom. Few know of it, fewer still have traveled upon it, and fewer still have returned from the Dreaming with their sanity intact.

When the world of man, elf, and dwarf is calm, so is the sea, and when the world suffers, the Sea becomes more tumultuous. Scholars refer to these accumulated dreams as the Dreamscape. Those with power can travel upon and through it.

In the Age of Heroes, the gods chose Luther the Paladin, the lawful and good King of Kayomar, to rule the sea and to bring order to its madness. This was before the coming of Unklar. Luther set sail in the magical boat, Evening Swan, and sailed the timeless Sea of Dreams, mastering

its currents and eddies, learning to seek out one amongst the infinite many and read that mind's dreams. He learned of the plight of the world during the Age of Winter Dark and used the avenues afforded to him upon the Dreamscape to send thoughts of himself into the world, and during the long Winter's Dark, to maintain the fire of hope.

In time, Luther came to be known as the Dreaming Paladin, or Dreaming Knight. His presence upon the Sea calms it, even when war, famine, or plague engulfs the world. St. Luther shares his domain with the god Utumno, Lord of Nightmares. The two bear no ill will toward one another, the latter but the darker shade of the former. Others dwell upon the Sea but their names do not enter these tales. They bear the sobriquet collectively, The Dreaming Lords.

Regular travel upon the Dreaming Sea is rare. Only two magical craft are known to exist which can sail upon the Sea unimpeded. These are the ships Evening Swan and Dream Horn. Powerful creatures can summon the Dreaming Lords and bid them to port them onto the sea, and the Confessor Knights of St. Luther come and go at their master's will; but aside from these, travel upon the sea is difficult.

If one does not have access to the boats, then some type of sorcery is a must. In this case the characters should be reminded of the *boat of folding* found in the encampment. The magic boat is able to cross the dangerous waters of the Dreaming Sea.

However, getting there is only half the problem, as the sea is not real water and the plane reacts to the material world and not to forces within the Dreaming, so travel there is exceedingly difficult. There are magical craft, as in the boats, but these must be specifically made for the Dreaming or they sink into the Sea as if it were quicksand. Some magical creatures, because of their very nature, are able to travel upon the Sea. Dream warriors, nightmares, to name a few can travel upon the plane.

ENTERING THE DREAMING

As soon as the characters step through the disc found in the belly of the fish, they find themselves on a vast expanse of rippling sand. There is no vegetation to be seen. The sky is wide and blue but lacking clouds and no shiny orb lingers anywhere. No wind blows or shifts the sands. It is a barren and lifeless landscape with naught but the faint sound of rushing water. The characters also note that they feel well rested, refreshed and energized. Any damage the characters may have taken is healed. Also, all their equipment is as if fresh; swords are sharpened, clothes clean, food good. This latter effect does not replenish anything used or lost.

There is little the characters can do at this point other than walk - which is what they should do. There are no tracks in the sand. No direction can be determined by natural or unnatural means. No single point in the dreaming sea has a real reference to any other point making directions rather pointless anyway. Where one ends up is where one desires or dreams to end up. As such, should the characters be actively figuring out how to find the agents of Unklar, they will find them - or at least where they were.

No matter which direction the characters travel, they end up on the edge of the waters of the Dreaming Sea and the remains of an encampment. The characters should wander for several hours

or more. As they wander, the sound of the surf hitting the sand increases in volume and a slight hot breeze begins picks up. This breeze turns into a wind as the characters move closer to the Dreaming Sea itself.

As the characters approach the edge of the Dreaming Sea they see a limitless expanse of ocean before them. Read or paraphrase the following:

The sandy dune gives way to a broad expanse of blue green water; an ocean, broad and deep. It washes up upon the sandy beach, driven by strong winds perhaps, or some other unseen force. It appears to be a rough water with waves as high as a man. Sand is shifting in the wind making it difficult to see at times and its gritty particles begin to sink into everything. Nearby, on the shore, lies an abandoned camp. The encampment consists of little more than a tattered tent, its few remaining sides flapping wildly in the wind.

The tent was set up to protect the servants of Unklar from the wind and sand as they devised their next move. There are no footprints left in the sand and no items close to the tent.

However, some 50 yards down the beach is the mangled corpse of a man. Although recognizable as a human, little else can be determined from the remains. This was one of the bodyguards to the priest who was mangled and shredded along with the material he was wearing. There are bits and pieces of chainmail scattered around, a shield with the banner of the Undying emblazoned upon it is interspersed with six large puncture holes, a few shreds of clothing, a broken spear and mace sticking out of the ground. This guard was killed by one of his nightmares. He became focused on a fear and nightmare about a particular creature and it materialized and killed him. His companions did not come to his aid but rather let him die.

The characters now must figure out where to go. Specifically they must think about or actively engage in conversation about the Witch of Ways which they should have learned about from the letter taken from the priest's cot.

On the other hand, should the characters/players not actively discuss or ponder the location of the Witch of Ways, they might sit upon the shore for all eternity awaiting some sign as to where to go. Further, travel around the Dreaming Sea with no knowledge of where to go and how to get there could last forever. A destination, actively thought about or discussed is the only manner of finding that which is sought.

As soon as one of the players or characters focuses upon the Witch of Ways, a band of glittering green mist much like a curtain shifting in a slight breeze, begins to appear across the water stretching away as far as the eye can see. This is a manifestation of the characters dream or desire to find the Witch of Ways. The misty curtain leads directly to the island of the Witch of Ways. The characters must now cross the water. They can use the boat of folding (should they have taken it) to float across the water; they could fly should they have the means to, or even enter the water and swim. All manners are fraught with danger.



Crossing the dreaming sea is fairly easy if the characters remain within the vicinity of the shimmering mist. Outside the vicinity of the mist, the characters encounter strong winds and must fight high swells and countercurrents. The characters can quickly become lost and driven by the winds and waves for a very long time before getting back on track. Any such occurrence should last 1-4 hours during which each character should make one strength check (CL 5) and one dexterity check (CL 5) to prevent being thrown overboard. At the end of the time interval the mist appears again if the characters are thinking about the Witch of Ways. If not, after the first 1-4 hours pass, the seas calm for 2-16 hours. Then the cycle repeats, the characters remaining lost until such time as they think of the Witch of Ways or call upon her.

Finding one's way is easy as well. As long as the characters stay within eyesight of the glittering mist and follow it, they come to the shores of the witch's island. Again, should they leave the vicinity of the mist, they can lose sight of it in the choppy sea. For the mist to reappear, they must actively desire it to do so but only after 1-4 hours have passed. Without some magical guide that the characters can follow, they can row endlessly and never encounter anything. Bear in mind, directions do not exist here and there is no sun, moon or even stars which the characters can use to guide themselves. The Castle Keeper is of course encouraged to create interesting encounters for the lost. Other islands, perhaps other travelers and anything else the players may find interesting.

ENCOUNTERS

There are normal encounters on the Dreaming Sea but there are also dream encounters (see the encounter section below). The characters can be the instrument of their own demise or at least no end of trouble for themselves. Dreams and nightmares become reality here. Should any of the characters or players focus on certain fears, dreams, nightmares or anything they conjure out of their imagination, it may appear much as they expect or desire it. For example, a character could have a fear of some voracious sand worm coming up through the ground to attack the party or of a band of unghen coming to attack them. In both cases, it just may happen. The Castle Keeper should secretly roll a charisma check for the character at CL 8. Should the check fail, the monster appears as dreamed. The monster or creature is not necessarily bad as the character may be thinking of a good creature.

It would be remiss of me to not mention that the Castle Keeper can have no end of fun and excitement using these types of encounters while the players travel upon the Dreaming Sea. Thoughts, fears, goals and all manner of character concerns, dreams and nightmares can be conjured while traveling here. It is ultimately up to the Castle Keeper how to manage these. They can, should one choose, be ignored, or they can be used to generate interesting and potentially terrifying encounters.

DREAM ENCOUNTER

Should the Castle Keeper decide to use a dream monster as an encounter, I can but offer a few pieces of advice, as the nature of the encounter will be entirely up to the Castle Keeper. Ask each player to jot down character concerns, fears, hopes, desires on a sheet of paper before running the adventure. If an encounter occurs, choose

or randomly roll one of the encounters for one of the characters, or all of them. Choose a creature or event the player or characters fears – be it octopus, drowning or becoming lost. Also, the encounters need not always be deadly. Dreams can be beneficial encounters. The beneficial nature of dreams should not extend to the giving of items or treasures but perhaps hints and clues and a 'helping hand' can be offered the character.

Then devise the encounter appropriate to the level. The first dream encounter should not be so difficult as to kill the character or party but rather to offer as a warning to not let one's mind wander. Several 5-6 HD creatures, falling into the water and getting sucked away by a wave, or current or similar events should suffice. Beneficial encounters should likewise be minimally helpful at first but become ever more helpful. With each following dream encounter, the challenge should become greater as the Dreaming Sea is actively seeking out those hidden fears and nightmares. One might also make the encounter somewhat bizarre and unusual rather than mundane. For example, a fear of an orc or similar creature may not be a regular orc but a giant orc with the equivalent HD and damage of a hill giant.

RANDOM ENCOUNTER

There is the possibility for random encounters on the Dreaming Sea. Since time is of no relevance here, rolling for random encounters should occur every 15 minutes of real time once the Dreaming Sea is entered. Roll a d10. A '1' results in an encounter. Roll a d10 and consult the chart below for the encounter type. Suggestions for a dream encounter are given at the end of this section.

| | |
|-----|----------------------------|
| 1: | Aboleth, 1-2 |
| 2: | Belker, 1-2 |
| 3: | Arrowhawk, 2-4 |
| 4: | Water elemental, 3-6 (6HD) |
| 5: | Air elemental, 3-6 (6HD) |
| 6: | Merperson, 20-200 |
| 7: | Sahuagin, 16-25 |
| 8: | Shark megalodon, 1 |
| 9: | Giant Squid*, 1 |
| 10: | Dream Warrior* 1-2 |

WARRIORS UPON THE DREAMING

The waters give way before you, slipping into a deep trough. The silvery mist you've followed for so long rises above the water's turbulence as each passing second brings you deeper into the bowels of the trough. Before you have time to react towering walls of water surround you and foam lashes the crest; from this a dense cloud of fog descends, blotting out the natural light and the guiding curtain of mist. The trough does not follow the guiding mist and following it into the deeps leads you from your destination.

The trough is a natural occurrence on the dreaming, caused by the wild imaginings of those on the prime. This particular trough is occupied with a four dream warriors; denizens of the Dreaming Sea, bound here by their creator. Unliving creatures they hate all living things and party's boat has attracted their ire. They have come,

attracted by the living creatures, in hopes to wrest their minds from them and destroy their living spirits.

The Dream Warriors attack immediately, even before the characters see them. The first two, slipping beneath the waters like fish take hold of the bottom of the boat. They are almost invisible in the water requiring a mental check (highest prime or highest secondary) to notice them (CL 10). If seen they appear as water apparitions beneath the surface. The first warrior grasps the rudder, attempting to guide the boat up the trough and off the line of the guiding mist. The second warrior grasps the bow of the boat and tries to push it in the same direction.

Turning the boat is very possible; it steers like any other craft on any other ocean. To combat the dream warriors however, whoever mans the rudder must make a successful strength check (CL 10). In the second round they must make a successful strength check (CL 12) to account for the second warrior joining the first. Failing this the boat begins to move up the trough.

Meanwhile, a third warrior attacks the occupants of the boat with his dreaming mist. He picks one character (at random) and mentally assault them, calling upon their fears and/or desires to ensorcell them. While this is happening the fourth warrior spills over the side in a watery formless masses, turning into the shape of an armored warrior to fall upon those characters not already engaged.

Eventually all the dream warriors attack the boat, especially if one of their number is slain.

DREAM WARRIORS (*These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 10d10, AC 22, HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical and mental. They attack with any weapon for +4 points of damage. They are able to cast the following spell-like affects: dreaming mist, fear, limited-esp, and mist form. Refer to the Monsters & Treasure of Ahrde or the back of this adventure for the full write up.*)

If slain they have no treasure, but the water from their misty bodies allows those who drink to control their own thought and they gain a temporary bonus of +4 to all mind altering spell or spell like affects.

THE WITCH'S ISLAND

The amount of time the characters spend on the Dreaming Sea is up to the Castle Keeper. As time has virtually no meaning here, measuring it in days or hours is pointless. It is suggested that the Castle Keeper use game time to determine how long they must travel. If the players are getting bored then have them arrive at the Witch's Island swiftly, but if the encounters and dream encounters are interesting, play it out a bit but probably not more than one session of play. After the characters have traveled for some time on the Dreaming Sea read or paraphrase the following:

The mist trails on across the water, but in the distance it gives way to a break in the water; eventually the break takes shape, growing into a mountain that rises from the sea. Its huge, covered in palms, and festooned with broad leafy plants surrounded by brilliant white sands.

The characters have come to the island where the Witch of Ways resides. As they approach the island, the silvery mist begins to

dissipate; it disappears entirely upon reaching the shore. As soon as the characters step ashore they recuperate all wounds, equipment wastage, etc that occurred on the Dreaming Sea, in the same manner they did upon entering the Dreaming Sea.

There are no trails or breaks in the jungle along the beach to indicate where the characters should go, although this does not matter because the island is small, taking little more than 30 minutes to cross. The island essentially consists of a mountain surrounded by 100-500 yards of beach and jungle. There are no sounds coming from the jungle and no indication of any living thing upon it. Should the characters go directly up the mountain, they can attain a view of the Dreaming Sea and the island. It is small. There is a clearing near the base of the slope of the mountain with a single structure in it. The characters must go to the clearing and speak with the Witch of Ways. Only after having spoken with the witch does a path open up leading to the burial vault of the paladin who stole the Vessel of Souls. Through this vault they can find the entry to the Forsaken Lands and thence travel to the Forsaken Mountain.

The clearing is where the Witch of Ways resides. A single wooden hut on stilts sits in the middle of the clearing. The hut is made of palm tree planks laced together by vines and the roof is a covering of dead and dying palm fronds. All around the hut are poles with heads fixed to the top of them, perhaps two dozen or more. All seem to be fresh and the hot sticky air in the clearing is thick with smell of rotting flesh.

The witch comes out of the hut after the characters have been in the clearing for a few minutes or if they call to her. She is tall, emaciated with skin burned to a brown muddy color and wrinkled like old bark and covered from head to toes in dark berry colored tattoos. She wears a palm frond skirt and a vast assortment of bird feathers attached to strings and necklaces. In her long fingers she carries a tall, thin, crooked staff festooned with many objects bearing obnoxious and nauseating symbols and devices.

"Interlopers, foul dreamers, seekers of death, who are you and what brings you to my island?" She croaks and stares with burning bright green eyes.

The Witch of Ways is an agglomerated dream of many thousands of people who have tried to navigate the Dreaming Sea. The Castle Keeper should feel free to amend her description somewhat to fit the expectations of the players but not too much as the witch is also other's dream come to life. The Witch of Ways exists solely because people have dreamed her into existence. But, for all this, she is a menace as well, for the dreams of the people traveling here are mingled with nightmares and fears as well.

The witch is aggressively inquisitive as to the purpose of the character's visit and asks numerous questions, demanding honest answers to all her inquiries. She has the ability to detect lies (see below) and know once lied to or even answers that attempt to obfuscate the purpose of their visit. She is attempting to discern the character's goal and the reason for it.

There are essentially only three responses the witch has to the line of questioning. First, should the characters continually lie about their purpose of trying to hide their real reason, she becomes increasingly angry and eventually attacks the characters (see below). If the characters are honest in their response, the witch

begins to mingle her questions and commentary with threats and warnings of dangers ahead should the characters pursue their goal. The worst of all outcomes would be if the characters neither cause the witch to attack, or attack the witch or attempt to gain her trust. If she remains neutral to the characters responses, the path leading up the hill never appears and can not be found. It would be difficult for the characters to remain neutral to the witch but all things are possible.

For example, should the characters have illusions and spells in place that disallow her to detect their lies or discern their true motives yet they appear to be telling the truth. If the truth is not outed or the characters do not anger her, the 'dream' to find the Vessel of Souls is lost.

Any paladin, cleric or druid in the party may discern the nature of the witch and understand that she must trust them in order to aid them. A successful wisdom check (CL 7) reveals her nature. A bard may make a legend lore check for the same purpose (CL 12).

In two cases, the Witch of Ways reveals the path. If a fight ensues, once the witch is dead, a stone walkway appears in the bush and jungle behind the hut. If the characters do not fight her and provide honest answers, she eventually relents in the questioning and points to a path leading up the mountain, now visible, behind her hut.

THE WITCH OF WAYS (She is a human, 10th/6th level druid/cleric. Her vital stats are HP 54 and AC 22. Her primary attributes are wisdom, dexterity and intelligence. Her significant attributes are dexterity 18 and wisdom 17. She wears a feathered cape of resistance conferring +4 to AC and reduces damage from any slashing/stabbing weapons by points and carries a staff of conjuration with 40 charges. She can cast the following druid spells: 0 level – Detect neutrality x2, endure elements x2, light; 1st level – entangle x2, fairie fire x2, obscuring mist; 2nd level – barkskin, cure light wounds x2, heat metal, warp wood; 3rd level – call lightening x2, protection from elements; 4th level – cure serious wounds, sleet storm; 5th level – cure critical wounds, wall of thorns. She can cast the following cleric spells: 0 level – detect evil, detect good, detect law, detect chaos, detect magic; 1st level – fear, sanctuary, shield of faith, sound burst; 2nd level – darkness, hold person x2, silence; 3rd level – cure serious wounds x2. Special Powers – Time Stop: twice a day for 2 rounds each time; Detect Lie: acts as any detect alignment spell but allows for detection of lies. This ability is constant. Summon Belker: one 6hd belker can be summoned once a day; Tattoo of Protection: these tattoos confer a +5 to AC.)

As the characters head out and up the path, the witch, assuming she still lives (though even if slain she returns to the hut within a few hours) follows the characters to the trail's head.

As they disappear from site, vanishing into the thick foliage she remarks, loud enough for them all to hear:

"Others have taken this forsaken path and the mountains beyond. Be wary for their motives too were pure, but perhaps time has dulled their edge."

PATH OF THE PALADIN

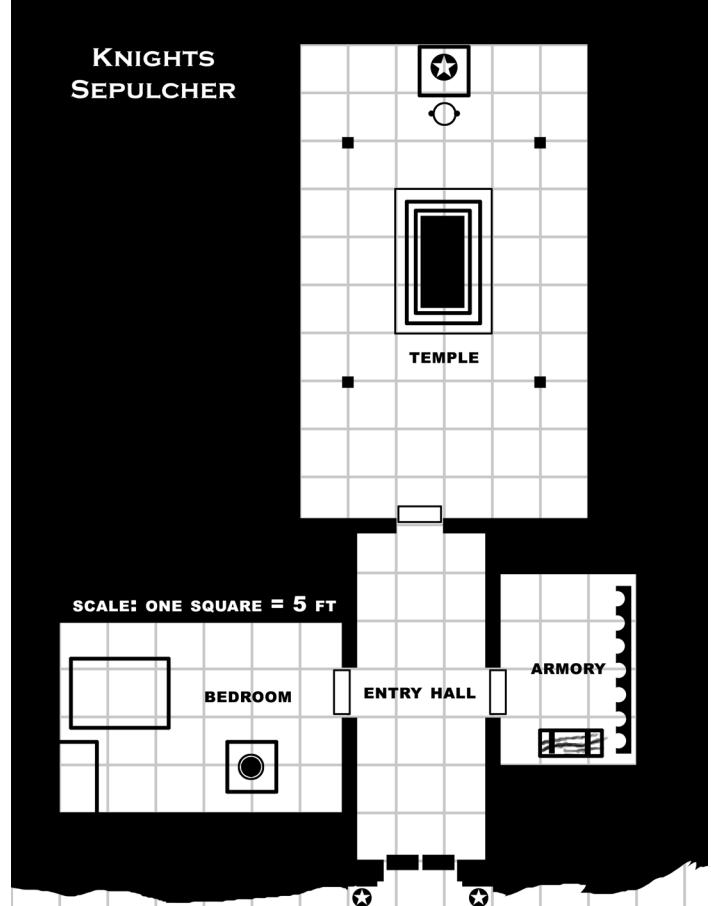
The path that leads away from the witch's hut only appears once the witch has given permission for it to or the witch has been killed. There is no other method finding or locating the path. The previous encounter must be drawn to a conclusion before this portion can even begin.

Should the above occur, the path appears in the jungle behind the hut.

The jungle gives way to perfectly aligned marble flagstones that mark a path through the impassable vegetation and head straight to the mountain. The path is laced over with jungle threads, deep green vines, and an umbrella of large trees with thick broad leaves. Though beautiful, it all stands shrouded in shadows.

The path goes straight to the mountain side where it climbs, in a zigzag pattern, up to the hillside. The trees and vines are as thick on the mountainside as in the jungle. The path is clear of debris and the detritus one otherwise might expect to be on it. In fact, other than the vines growing across it, nothing is on it. The path is nearly a mile long and ascends around 1000 feet.

The vines are, of course, dangerous. Intermingled within the vines are assassin vines. The ability of assassin vines to camouflage themselves has made them virtually indistinguishable from the others vines on the path. There are eight assassin vines (two encounters) growing along the path. They are separated by at least one hundred yards and in pairs (male and female). They attack whenever the party moves into their area.



ASSASSIN VINE x4 (These neutral creatures vital stats are HD 5d8, HP 30 each and AC 15. Their primary attributes are physical. They have 8 attacks with vines doing 1d4 damage each. Their special attacks are: improved grab and constrict.)

KNIGHT'S SEPULCHER

Near the top of the mountain the path ends at a small ledge on the hillside.

Here, a tall and narrow brass double door is placed in the rocky hillside. The right side of the door is embossed with the figure of an armored knight kneeling with sword held high to a bright burning orb. In relief behind the figure is an army of knights with banners flowing in the breeze. On the left door is engraved a standing figure, helm at his feet, sword on the ground and a sun dipping behind his horizon. Behind this figure is an open and empty trunk, or coffin, the engraving is not distinct.

This is the entry to the sepulcher of the knight who stole away the Vessel of Souls. The images depict the knight (on the right) as an honorable person who has taken an oath to lead an army and the other image (on the left) is of a fallen knight who has abandoned his oath. The empty trunk/casket is left indistinct. It symbolizes the loss of one's greatest treasure (honor) as well as the absence of a final resting place. The knight died on the Forsaken Mountain at the foot of the Lady of Garun.

The doors to the sepulcher are easily opened by pushing inward. Within is a narrow and long room with three doors in it. The room has red marble floors and blue tiled walls. The doors are golden and glint in the light spilling in from the outside. There are no engravings upon any of the doors. One door is located on each side of the room.

Left Door: The door to the left opens onto an ornately adorned bedroom. There is a large bed with silk covers upon it, a wide oak closet, a table with legs carved to resemble the legs of a dragon, with a single crystal bowl upon it, a high backed chair pushed underneath it, and a thick and intricately woven carpet lies in the center of the room. There is little of interest in the room other than the liquid in the crystal bowl. The closet has clothes in it and, though sumptuous, dissolves once returning to Airdhe. The bedding is nice and obviously expensive and well made but, as with the clothing, dissolves upon returning to Airdhe.

The water in the crystal bowl is cursed. Drinking it, washing one's face or hands in it or likewise results in the character being cursed. The water does not resonate evil, but rather good (it was once holy water). Initially it feels good when used. It is refreshing and heals 1d8 hp to whoever drinks it or splashes it upon their face or hands. Its real effects do not occur for 10 rounds. At the end of ten rounds the character begins to feel a little dizzy, then nauseated, then they begin to lose hit points. Any character who used the water in the aforementioned methods loses 1d12 hit points at a rate of 1 per round after the effects of the curse take place. After this, the character losses 1d4 total attribute points, randomly determine (roll a d6 to determine the attribute that the point is taken from). A *remove curse* spell (CL 10) halves these results. These effects last until the lid of the coffin found at the top of the

Forsaken Mountain is shut. The coffin contains the remains of the knight. See the end of the module for more details on remains.

Right Door: The door opens easily, read or paraphrase the following:

At the far end of this room is a weapon rack made of fine mahogany with intricately carved decorative touches resembling flames and wind. The rack is holding a mace, ranseur and a bow with a quiver of arrows hanging beside it. Behind the rack is a thick cotton tapestry depicting a knight slaying a many headed monster. To the right side of the room is an open trunk. To the left is a rack where one would hang one's armor. There is a helmet on the rack. Behind this rack, a shield hangs on the wall. The shield has no decoration and is rather plain in appearance.

As with the other room, the objects in here are what they appear to be except the ranseur. This ranseur was favored by the knight in many contests and feat of arms as he, when possible, disarmed and subdued his foes rather than killing them. The ranseur fitted this method of fighting very well. The knight chose not to take the ranseur to his last battle, as he was not intending to take any prisoners or subdue anyone.

The ranseur is magical. It resonates evil and has a foul nature about it. Should anyone touch it, they must make a charisma check (CL 5) and feel compelled to pick it up and keep it. The character is allowed a charisma check each round thereafter to relieve themselves of it (CL 6). Each round the character holds the ranseur, one hit point of damage is taken. After a successful check, the character can release the ranseur, the hit point loss stops and the character is able to use the weapon as normal. It has a +4 to hit bonus. The character can choose to add a +1d6 to damage with the weapon or it can be used to disarm (disarming attempts receive a +5 bonus).

Opposite Door: This door opens onto a large room that stretches back some 50 feet and is some 30 feet wide.

In the center of the room is a large iron coffin with the relief of a knight in repose upon its top. The sides are carved intricate relief with images of a knight undertaking various deeds of valor. Behind the coffin, set against the far wall is a marble statue upon a pedestal. The statue depicts a breathtakingly beautiful woman with long tresses, wide eyes and wearing silken robes. The face is unusual in that a plate is wrapped around the lower portion covering the lips and the cheeks. At the foot of the statue is a small golden vessel.

Only at the base of the statue does the true artistry of it become apparent. It is unlike anything found in the world of Airdhe, so perfect is its rendering. It is as if a hyper-idealized figure of an ideal figure was immobilized and a sheen of stone lay across it. There is a golden vessel at the foot of the statue studded with magnificent gems and jewels. It stands about a foot tall and has two handles on it. The vessel is valued at nearly 10,000gp. However, it would not survive the trip from the world of dreams to that of Aihrde as it is little more than a fragment of a dream.

The sarcophagus is the final resting place of the knight's dream spirit. It is made entirely of iron - one, solid hunk of iron. There is

no interior space for a body to rest. It weighs 10,000 pounds. There are graceful engravings and decorative touches on the casket with an unnatural beauty and fluidity to them.

The longer one stares at them, the more one wants to stare at them.

Should anyone examine these engravings for more than several minutes, they actually appear to be moving and, in fact, move in the eyes of the beholder. The character may become transfixed. A charisma save at CL 5 must be made or the viewer becomes transfixed in the story depicted upon the casket, ignoring all that happens around them for 10 minutes. The story relates the attack on Aufstrag and up to the last moments of the knight's life as a knight (that is, just prior to taking the Lady of Garun). The characters see enough to know the knight abandons his men and mission. Should a character become transfixed on the story on the sarcophagi, the dream ghost of the knight appears.

Several rounds after any character becomes transfixed on the images engraved on the sarcophagi, a ghostly visage rises out of the figure embossed on the top of the casket. First, a transparent hand, followed by a body armored in plate, carrying a shield in one hand and sword in the other. A voice booms and echoes in the chamber:

"Who dares to walk in my hall, to lay covetous eyes upon my property? Who dares STEAL WHAT IS MINE?"

The spectral figure does not initially attack those in the room but does aggressively approach each member of the party asking questions about what the characters intend to steal or take for a few rounds. It pays little attention to the answers. Those transfixed by the story on the coffin can not hear nor see the figure so are not able to react to it. The ghost does not pay the slightest attention to anyone transfixed by the sarcophagus.

The knight then asks many questions in very short order. It wants to know the characters' names, what are they doing, where are they going, where are they coming from, etc. As it asks the questions, the ghost gives less and less time to provide answers and then begins insulting the characters with comments such as, "Only a coward would take from the dead" and "a vile, cretin once attempted to steal from me" or "men of honor do not bear such weapons" (pointing to a weapon some character is wearing). The questioning only lasts for several rounds to a minute.

Ultimately, all this ends in a fight. The ghost attacks the characters and attempts to slay them because it believes the characters are there to try and steal the Vessel of Souls (and it would be right). There is nothing to be done to stop this.

This malevolent creature has, during the questioning period, been sizing up the characters, trying to determine who has the greatest strength, the quickest movements, holy powers or magical abilities. The apparition is very smart as it retains all of the cunning of its past life. It attacks clerics and druids first, trying to render them



less effective with silence and stun abilities. It then tries to do the same to the wizards or illusionist. Afterward, it turns its attention to the fighters and thieves or others primarily focusing on that person which delivers the most damage. The apparition is a very powerful and intelligent creature. Up against so many opponents, it tries to immobilize or render as many as possible ineffective prior to focusing its most powerful attacks on one individual.

KNIGHT'S SPECTRAL SELF (*This specter's vital stats are HD 8d12, HP 78 and AC 16. Its primary attribute is mental. It attacks with incorporeal touch. Special attacks include energy drain, create spawn.*)

Once the apparition has been killed, the statue of the Lady of Garun cracks and fractures in a million places. It is now little more than fragments held together by the force of the dream. Should anyone touch the statue, it shatters and falls apart into tiny slivers of marble on the floor.

Behind the statue, in the wall, is a small rotting wooden door. It appears as if it is about to fall apart. A simple metal handle is nailed onto one side of it.

When pulled open, a waft of fetid air rolls into the chamber. Hot and stinky, humid and foul, the air from beyond the door smells like a mixture of churned earth and corpses. Beyond the door is a dark tunnel, carved out of the rock. It goes straight into the hill for only a few dozen feet before descending. A narrow staircase with steps poorly made and of differing sizes descends, twisting and turning, into the deeps of the earth.

THE FORSAKEN LAND

The characters must go down the narrow staircase to get to the Forsaken Land and thence to the Forsaken Mountain. The trip down the stairs seems interminably long as it stretches on for hours. It is cramped, hot, humid, and the air reeks of decay and death and something even more foul. After a great time, the characters step out of the staircase and onto a small stone landing to behold a horrid and astonishing sight.

Stretching as far as the eye can see, in every direction are contorted and writhing bodies. They are clinging to one another and hang like tendrils and vines not unlike a great ivy forest of people hanging from some unseen height and dropping down into some bottomless pit. Moans, yells and screams permeate and reverberate in the wind. The stinking, wretched, smell of rot and decay sits heavy in an atmosphere so thick with sweat it feels like a mist.

A narrow stone causeway extends outward from the platform upon which the characters stand. It twists and turns between and betwixt the thousands of clumps and tendrils of moaning bodies. The causeway is suspended in midair and moves gently in a wafting breeze of deathly moans. Small pieces of brick and mortar crumble occasionally falling off it to tumble into the bottomless morass or writhing souls below. Occasionally, a body drops from the tendrils or vines and falls into empty space like a drop of water. When this happens large humanoid creatures with four long arms and giant bat like wings (Keeper of the Dead, see Vimmel, at the end of the

module for details) swoop out of the distance and swirl about to catch the body and fling it back onto a vine.

The causeway is about 10 feet wide, though it seems smaller considering the vast distance the characters can see. There are no rails, banister or fittings along the side. It floats magically in place and has no arches or suspension to hold it up. It sways to and fro just slightly akin to a boat rocking in calm water. Time does not pass while on the causeway, though things do happen. The characters feel as if they are making no time and travel 'feels' like it is taking forever. The characters feel no thirst or hunger but their internal clocks keep telling them to eat and drink – whether they do or don't is immaterial.

The souls that linger here are not quite dead. These are those souls that have not been sent to the worlds of the dead. These souls can be resurrected or reincarnated and taken back to the material plane or wherever they come from. Once they leave this realm and go into the Roots of the Mountain, they are forever lost to the world and can no longer return except as ghost or apparitions.

The moans of the souls are the last fearful drawings of their being. It can be both terrifying and beautiful. The sounds act as a *suggestion* spell. All characters must make a check against a *suggestion* spell as if cast by a 7th level cleric (CL7). Should the character fail, they either jump (50%) or turn and must try to leave the place (going back up the causeway). A more powerful *suggestion* spell can counter the effects as can a bard's song. Should the characters be prevented from hearing the sounds of the dead (i.e. a *silence* spell), they need not make the check in the first place.

Should someone jump off the edge of the causeway they begin to fall, though somewhat more slowly than they would normally. Immediately one of the Keepers of the Dead flies off in the direction of the party member and attempt to grab them and throw the person onto a nearby vine. In so doing, the monsters realize the person is not dead and is an outcast. It lets out a blood curdling scream to bring others of its kind to come and kill the outsider. The Keepers of the Dead then rend the body and toss it back and forth to one another in an effort to kill it.

KEEP OF THE DEAD, VIMNEL (*These chaotic evil creatures are a vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 28, and AC 15. Their primary attributes are physical. It attacks with 2 claws for 1d4 ponits of damage each and a bite for 1d4 points of damage. Also by weapon. They are very aggressive but rarely fight to the death, fleering when badly wounded. They are able to howl or moan and anyone within 10 feet must make a successful wisdom save CL 4 or suffer -4 on all their rolls.*)

ERRANT SOULS

While crossing the causeway an errant soul may fall upon the path near the characters. The characters note that souls come close to the causeway as they fall and some hit it and bounce off. On some occasions, a soul will land square on the causeway near the characters. The soul can do nothing but writhe and moan and plead for help (though they are not specific as to how or what, just moans for help). It has an AC of 10 and 4hp. If the characters kill the soul, it withers and that person is actually resurrected on



the material plane (or wherever it is from) and that person will remember its time underneath the world and the character's life saving actions.

Should the characters ignore the soul, a Keeper of the Dead arrives within a few rounds and swoops it up to throw it back on a vine. Should the characters attempt to intercede, then the Keeper of the Dead notes the characters as outsiders and begins to wail and screech for help in killing the interlopers. A number of the creatures equal to the number of party members show up within 2-8 rounds.

THE FORSAKEN MOUNTAIN

After what seems an interminable length of time, the causeway begins to ascend and the characters see a gray mountain looming up amongst the jungle of souls draped hither and non all about the causeway. It is not until one is closer does the true horror of the mountain presents itself. It is a pile of gray stone coffins. It is as if some great flood washed up all the coffins from the world and piled them in this wretched place in one great cacophonous heap. From within the coffins come the muffled moans and cries of those damned to spend eternity in this empty region.

The mountain is made of a pile of gray stone coffins. It extends up to a peak and down as far as the eye can see. It is massive beyond knowing. The muffled groaning and moaning emanating from within the coffins can be heard far from the mountain and once nearby, the noise bothers the souls and bones of the living. The souls in the coffins are those that the Lady of Garun has captured over the many thousands of years of her life. They are neither dead nor alive, but permanently locked in these coffins until the Lady of Garun is killed. The sound acts as a powerful *bane* spell. The characters must make a charisma check (CL 8) or suffer a -2 to their to hit rolls, saving throws, attribute checks and damage rolls.

Atop the mountain of coffins, the characters witness a ritual, already underway.

A woman faces away from you, standing with alabaster arms outstretched and hair flowing freely in a breeze whipping about her. In front of her, a tall man with a short cropped beard dressed in purple and red robes, is intoning loudly in a forgotten tongue. He holds a golden chain in one hand and a shining key in the other. To his left and right are two others in similar robes each speaking in a loud voice completely out of sync with one another and the central figure. One holds a decanter upside down while a silvery mist pours out of it and the other is swirling a small object on a chain.

Nearby are four other individuals and 12 massive untern. Upon seeing the party, the untern move forward, one well armored man begins loading a crossbow, another immediately draws arrow to string while the final two step between the party and those performing the ritual and begin gesticulating and intoning dark magics. In the blink of an eye a silvery portal appears at the apex of the mountain in front of the women. The ritual is complete one round after the characters get close enough to see it being performed (300 feet or so).

After this, the Lady of Garun's mask drops to the ground and she turns to the party, as do Lord Instabulus and the other two high

level priests. Everyone noted below with an exclamation point moves in to attack while the others finish the ritual. The ungnern charge while the others attempt to fight from a distance for a few rounds. The illusionist and priests cast spells. The Crna Ruk waits until the Lady of Garun, Lord Instabulus, and the two priests enter the portal before doing so himself. If the battle is going poorly for the others he joins the fray; otherwise he leaves.

LADY OF GARUN (*discussed below*)

LORD INSTABULUS (*He is a lawful evil, human 12th level wizard. His vital stats are HP 32 and AC 19. His primary attributes are intelligence, dexterity and wisdom. His significant attributes are; constitution 14, dexterity 15, intelligence 17 and wisdom 13. He carries a cloak of displacement, bracers of armor +5, a ring of protection +3, a ring of shooting stars, a helm of telepathy, a mantle of spell resistance, rod of absorption, three potions of extra-healing, and a +4 dagger of venom a scroll of teleportation and wall of stone. He wears 4000 gp worth of gem and jewelry. He can cast the following number of spells; 0-6, 1st-7, 2nd-6, 3rd-4, 4th-3, 5th-3, 6th-2.*)

CRNA RUK, BODYGUARD (*This lawful evil creature is a Scholar whose rank is Purger. Its vital stats are HD 10, HP 80, and AC 17. Its prime attributes are mental. This creature carries a +1 dagger of venom, poison that deals 2d12 damage and paralysis for d12 rounds (constitution save for half effect), boots of speed, +3 mace, a ring of invisibility and a ring of force field.*)

PRIEST (*This lawful evil human is a 9th level cleric. His vital stats are HP 51 and AC 19. His primary attributes are wisdom, strength and charisma. His significant attributes are strength 13, constitution 14 and wisdom 14. He wears +3 banded mail, carries a +2 mace of disruption, a robe of useful items, ring of evasion, rod of withering, a scrolls of raise dead x2, speak with dead x3, animate dead x3 and carries a heal. He also carries 2000gp in coin and jewelry. He can cast the following number of spells; 0-5, 1st-5, 2nd-4, 3rd-3, 4th-2, 5th-1*)

PRIEST (*This lawful evil human is a 9th level cleric. His vital stats are HP 61 and AC 20. His primary attributes are wisdom, strength and charisma. His significant attributes are strength 16, dexterity 13, constitution 13 and wisdom 15. He wears a +3 brigandine, +2 ring of protection, carries a +4 morning-star, a phylactery of undead turning, rod of the python, scrolls of silence, spiritual weapons, magic circle, sending, flame strike and insect plague. He also carries 3000gp in coin and jewelry. He can cast the following number of spells; 0-5, 1st-5, 2nd-4, 3rd-3, 4th-2, 5th-1*)

ILLUSIONIST (*This lawful evil human is a 7th level illusionist. His vital stats are HP 31 and AC 16. His primary attributes are intelligence, charisma and wisdom. His significant attribute is charisma 17. He wears bracers of protection +2, a diadem of protection +3, a +2 dagger of returning [comes back 1 round after cast], a necklace of feather tokens with 6 feathers [randomly determined] a wand of illusion and 1500 gp worth of gem and jewelry. He can cast the following spells 0-5, 1st-5, 2nd-3, 3rd-2, 4th-1.*)

PRIEST (*This lawful evil human is a 5th level cleric. His vital stats are HP 29 and AC 17. His primary attributes are intelligence, wisdom and strength. His significant attributes are wisdom 15 and*

strength 17. He wears +1 scale male, +3 footman's flail, a +1 shield, a potion that automatically casts aid [4 droughts], a scroll with cure serious wounds x3, dispel magic and glyph of warding. He wears 1000 gp in gems and jewelry. He can cast the following spells 0-4, 1st-4, 2nd-3, 3rd-2, 4th-1.)

FIGHTER (*This lawful evil human is a 9th level fighter. His vital stats are HP 77 and AC 22. His primary attributes are strength, dexterity and constitution. His significant attributes are strength 17, dexterity 16 and constitution 15. He wears a +5 bronze breastplate, a +1 shield, +3 mighty fists, +2 flaming sword, potion of healing, and 3000 gp worth of gem and jewelry.*)

ROGUE (*This lawful evil human is a 8th level rogue. His vital stats are HP 36 and AC 17. His primary attributes are dexterity, and wisdom. His significant attributes are dexterity 17, charisma 16 and wisdom 14. He wears +3 leather armor, +2 bracers of defense, cloak of the bats, rope of climbing, brooch of damage absorption [36 hp left], +2 shortbow, 20 +3 arrows, a +3 short sword of defending, a potion of invisibility, a potion of ethereal jaunt, a potion of healing and a +2 dagger of wounding and 2000 gp worth of gem and jewelry, scroll with plane shift spell on it.*)

UNGERN WARRIORS x12 (*These creatures vital stats are: HD 5d8, HP [20, 24, 24, 26, 31], and AC 16. Their primary attributes are: physical +1. They attack with 2 claws [1d3], gore [1d6+3], or by weapon [+1 to damage]. They wear banded mail, carry a bardiche, long bow and hook sword and 3d8 gp value in coin and jewelry.*)

The characters might get a quick glance at the Lady of Garun as it is entirely likely they will be engaged with those attacking them. Should any one of the characters note her, they see a woman captivating beyond all measure turn to face them. The Lady focuses upon those who are looking and the eyes seem to implore them to, as a gift, soak in her beauty and forget all else and bask in its glory. She is using her charm ability. The characters must each make a charisma check (CL 10). Should they fail, the characters are stunned into inaction for 2d3 rounds. A successful save negates the effect.

This glare lasts for moments before a greenish mist begins forming between the characters and the Lady of Garun. The Lady of Garun is summoning a monster to help defeat the party. After this, she steps through the portal followed in order and one round at a time by Lord Instabulus, the two priests, and randomly the others if not engaged or dead. Within three rounds the mist, akin to an impenetrable fog, blocks the view of the mountain top and from within, several large tentacles twirl and whip, reaching out to grasp and grab. These are followed by many more tentacles, a dozen or more, each the length of several men and covered in rows of tiny small twig like features that grasp and grab. This is a naerlulth.

NAERLULTH (*This lawful evil creature's vital stats are: HD 12d10, HP 95, and AC 24. Its primary attributes are: physical and mental. They attack with 14 tentacles for 1d10 damage each and special attacks include; ash cloud, devouring assimilation, rock throwing [coffins], engulf.*)

The Lady of Garun: The characters should not be allowed to prevent the Lady of Garun from leaving the Forsaken Mountain. The Lady of Garun is the Vessel of Souls is, and is in part, a plot device and not meant to be fought or encountered yet. She is meant to escape after the characters spot her and become a nemesis in later adventures. It is especially important that the characters have some knowledge of her prior to going to Aufstrag and carry the Mask of Usedto with them (as she is immortal and the Mask is the only manner of taming her).

The only thing remaining on top of the mountain where the ritual was performed and the Lady of Garun once stood is the Mask of Usedto. This was the mask used to bind the Lady of Garun so that she could not steal any souls.

Mask of Usedto: Fashioned in the far north by the shamans of the Aathuk the mask serves only to bind the Lady of Garun. It holds fast to her face, covering her mouth and silencing her. Its magic is powerful and tune to her, keeping her lips, the source of her soul draining power from touching any around her. Once place upon her lips it requires powerful magic to remove; only Coburg the Undying and the Knight who stole her have managed to remove the mask from the Lady's lips. One suffered her love, the other an untimely death.

The mask itself is fashioned from a single pearl, shaped to fit her face and has no form or decoration. It is priceless and an artifact of unimaginable power.

It has few practical applications apart from what it was designed for; possessing it gives one a power over the Lady. Wizards and illusionists who cast spells within 10 feet of the mask must make a successful intelligence check (CL 20) or suffer a 10% chance of losing their spell. Clerics and druids must make a similar wisdom check. Its one power, aside from binding the Lady, lies in its ability to enhance binding spells. Any binding spell such as hold person, geas, etc. cast with 10 feet of the mask increases ten fold in strength, duration, power, etc.

The character must, upon defeating the guardian, find a manner of returning to Airdhe or the plane from which they came or desire to go. The portal though which the Lady of Garun and Lord Instabulus traveled is still open. Traveling through this takes the characters back to Airdhe, but not to where the Lady was ported. Rather it lands them near, upon the edges of the Gausumland. If the characters enter the portal at roughly the same time, they end up together. If not, they are scattered over several miles. .

Should the characters have it in their mind to travel to where the Lady and Lord Instabulus have gone, they will come close, but not quite to that location. This will take them near to the location of A9 The Tower of Night. The two have traveled near that location as well but to a spot wherein awaits them some winged beasts to take them to an upper balcony in Aufstrag. Ultimately, it is up the Castle Keeper to decide where the characters go to further the adventure or move the characters into another adventure. Finally, the Castle Keeper should allow the characters to devise another method of traveling to the material plane should all else fail. For instance the rogue has a scroll of *plane shift*, and they could use this to return home (if they slay the priest).

With the mask of Usedto in hand, the characters can travel to any number of sages found in Airdhe to learn of the mask, its nature and the history surrounding it. Not every sage knows the true history of the mask and the Vessel or Souls/Lady of Garun.

The common understanding in Airdhe claims that the Vessel of Souls is actually a vessel. Some claim it is a large cup, others a vase, and others an urn. The story changes from place to and from time to time. There is a 1 in 10 chance that the sage consulted knows the truth. Whatever the case, have the initial sage give a story different than that the characters know. If more than one sage is consulted, have each provide differing tales and stories. This should indicate to the players that some research is necessary to find the truth of the matter. The mask can be used to enslave the Lady of Garun and make her powers inert as they are all locked up in her lips and the whisperings she can make.

The adventure ends on a fairly big cliffhanger. The Vessel of Souls has not been captured, few treasures acquired and much pain suffered all, for what appears to be little in return. The characters may have failed in their mission to capture the Vessel of Souls, but what they have achieved is of fair importance. The characters should recognize the Lady of Garun in the future and this alone may save them heaps of trouble should they ever venture to Aufstrag, but they have also managed to acquired one of the few items in existence that can bind the Lady of Garun; the Mask of Usedto. With this item, they can also discover the nature of the Lady of Garun and her past. This should give the characters some clue as to a weakness of Coburg's and help in outwitting that master of Aufstrag should they ever encounter him, which, in light of the events in the Forsaken Land, may be sooner than the characters care.

The Undying Lord now knows of the characters and their intent and of their knowledge. He would likely find it in his interest to silence them. Forever.

The adventure ends on an open note, an empty canvas if you will. The Castle Keeper is now free to follow his own whims and desires and design adventures for himself. The gateway mentioned previously should be viewed as a gateway to adventure and should things ever slow down or become moribund, take note, the agents of Coburg are fast on the characters trail and only the demise of the Undying One will bring an end to the characters suffering.

NEW MONSTERS

CRNA RUK

NO. APPEARING: See Below

SIZE: M

HD: See Below

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: See Below

ATTACKS: By weapon

SPECIAL: See Below

SAVES: M

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

TYPE: Unholy (can be turned)

TREASURE: See Below

XP: Special (see page 6 of the Monsters & Treasure)



The crna ruk are members of the crna ruk Guild of Assassins. In all outward appearances, they are human, or in some rare cases demi-human, but within them boil a twisted malevolence. They serve a higher order, and work toward the domination or destruction of anything that opposes them or their dark religion. They walk among the kingdoms of men as would any normal person, disguised as merchants, soldiers, peasants, nobles, priests, etc. The only distinguishing mark they bear is a tattoo of geometric symbols upon the inner left wrist. It is the symbol of the wizard-god they serve. The brand is magical (see Illusory Mark below for the nature of the brand and the effects of reading it.)

Few openly join or actively seek to join the crna ruk. The Order is very secretive and always kills those who attempt such a feat. It has ever been the practice of the guild to take the sons and daughters of men at an early age and raise them under the direct guidance of the guild. They choose these children for a variety of reasons; some, because they seem to possess an evil nature, others because particular guild members have "dreamed" of them, still others for their bloodlines. Initiates kidnap these children from the houses of the wealthy or the shanties of the very poor. Some they discover in the slave markets; and purchased, they are brought to the Order houses. Those taken are always very young, toddlers or the like. But, no matter the age or background, all these children carry an affinity for evil; they are "touched." The victims were predisposed at birth for evil, marked by the gods. The Order simply encourages and channels their natural inclinations. These victims spend the rest of their lives in the Order. Once considered humans, or demi-humans, these Initiates become twisted by their service to evil that they have lost all ability to empathize with suffering, or to feel remorse or sympathy. The crna ruk are the incarnation of evil.

All crna ruk are lawful evil. They believe that the only way to return "peace" to the world is through the order and control. They can only attain and maintain control through terrorizing the world. The crna ruk know little life beyond the guild and the evil worship of their dark deities. There are no members of their guild who believe in a different path. They are irredeemably evil.

The guild itself is highly structured and follows a strict hierarchy. Those chosen for the guild become Initiates. Those Initiates who are gifted and highly skilled become crna ruk Scholars. A very few

of the Scholars possess the necessary skills and abilities to become Inquisitors. The Inquisitors are few in number, very powerful and rule the order with an iron discipline. To break with the guild or defy or even question its law is an instant death sentence for any member. Though such action never happens for they are all dedicated to the rule of law and the order it brings.

Crna ruk never do anything for personal gain and never work with or for others without strict instructions to do so from the Order. If the Order does find such a reason, it is with the express purpose of finding a particular item or destroying a particular enemy. They never wander without purpose, as they must follow the strict guidelines of the guild and hierarchy.

The Order consists of Chapter Houses. Each House commands a city, town, district, duchy or any other number of political regions. Each House is different in size, some very small and others very large. Each House consists of a Deacon, an Executioner, several Scholars, and an indeterminate number of Initiates.

TABLE 1-1: THE CRNA RUK HIERARCHY CNR(S)

| RANK/ORDER | AC | HD |
|--------------|-----------|--|
| Initiate | 15 | 1-9 (d12) |
| Scholar† | see below | 72+1d10 hit points (acts as a 10 HD monster) |
| Inquisitor†† | see below | 96+5d6 hit points (act as a 15 HD monster) |

† There are 10 ranks of Scholars. They are ranked from the weakest to strongest: Quill, Rune, Scholar, Master, Philosopher, Purger, Blood Letter, Waylayer, Assassin, and Herzlos (the soulless). Each serves the Order in his own capacity. They have no particular task but the ranking usually denotes time and experience.

†† There are 5 orders of Inquisitors: Executioner, Deacon, Inquisitor, Grand Inquisitor, and He Who Wears the Shroud. A Deacon and Executioner are appointed to a House. The Inquisitor has no Chapter House association, but serves the order as a Judge, traveling from one House to the next, investigating infractions by guild members, and meting out punishment. There are only 9 Inquisitors at any given time. The Grand Inquisitor is the temporal leader of the crna ruk. He organizes his own Chapter House, always the most powerful, as well as all the other Chapter Houses. There is only one Grand Inquisitor. He Who Wears the Shroud is the spiritual leader of the Order, the one who speaks to the wizard-god. He is the conduit between the other world and this. There is only one and he always dwells in the main temple usually not far from the Grand Inquisitor.

COMBAT: Crna Ruk are assassins fit for little else. They use stealth, guile, sorcery, and deception to destroy the enemies of their master. Though they can fight if cornered, they do not wear armor and are not skilled in general combat, relying upon daggers, garrotes, poison, and the like to achieve their means.

ASSASSIN ABILITIES: Each Initiate gains the following assassin class abilities: special, climb, death attack, hide, listen, move silently, poisons, and sneak attack. Their hit dice is equivalent to their level. Example a 4 HD crna ruk acts as a 4th level assassin. They are, however, subject to the class restrictions in armor and weapons.

CHANGE SELF: Once a day, the Initiate is able to magically change their appearance, including clothing, armor, weapons, and equipment. The crna ruk can seem one foot shorter or taller, thin, fat or in between.

The character cannot change the character's race. Otherwise, the extent of the apparent change is up to the caster. The spell does not provide the abilities or mannerisms of the chosen form. It does not alter the perceived tactile (touch) or audible (sound) properties of the character or any equipment. Creatures get intelligence save to recognize the glamour as an illusion if they interact with it.

ILLUSORY MARK: A Scholar brands each initiate of the crna ruk using illusory script. This magical illusion places a tattoo of the order's symbol, the sickle and wolf paw, upon the inner left wrist of the initiate. The tattoo is magically hidden however, appearing as a simple, common tattoo of geometric symbols to anyone outside the order. Anyone who attempts to decipher the tattoo, or looks at it very long, must make a successful intelligence check (CL 12) or succumb to a suggestion that commands him or her to leave the assassin alone. Any member of the crna ruk is able to see it for what it is. Each assassin's illusory mark is unique to him, though the actual mark of course is the symbol of the order. A true seeing spell or read magic unveils the nature of the script.

MINOR IMAGE: This ability acts as the 2nd level illusionist spell. The hit dice of the crna ruk serves as the caster level.

ABILITIES FOR THE SCHOLAR: A Scholar possesses all the abilities of an Initiate, as well as those listed below. The abilities increase per rank of Scholar so that a Herzlos Scholar possesses all the abilities of the previous rankings. For example, a Blood Letter can Cast Target, Shadowwalk, Haste, and gains a Martial attack for 1d8 damage and a bonus of 4d6 damage on sneak attack as well as the Initiate abilities of Illusory Mark, Minor Image as a 12 HD caster, change self and assassin abilities as a 12th level assassin.

TABLE 1-2: CRNA RUK (SCHOLARS)

| RANK | AC | ABILITY |
|----------------|----|--|
| 1 Quill | 16 | Sneak Attack +1d6 damage |
| 2 Rune | 16 | Martial Powers for 1d4 damage, Haste |
| 3 Scholar | 16 | Sneak Attack +2d6 damage |
| 4 Master | 17 | Martial Powers for 1d6 damage, Shadowwalk |
| 5 Philisoph | 17 | Sneak Attack +3d6 damage |
| 6 Purger | 17 | Martial Powers for 1d8 damage |
| 7 Blood Letter | 19 | Sneak Attack +4d6 damage, Cast Target |
| 8 Waylayer | 19 | Martial Powers for 1d10 damage |
| 9 Assassin | 19 | Sneak Attack +5d6 damage, Major Image |
| 10 Herzlos | 20 | Martial Powers for 1d10 damage, 2nd hand for 1d6 damage, Summon Soul Thief |

CASE TARGET: As the assassin ability.

DEFENSIVE STUDY: If a crna ruk faces off against an opponent by fighting defensively for two full rounds, he may make a sneak attack against the opponent on his next action as if the target was denied his AC bonus due to dexterity. Any attacks of opportunities the crna ruk might enjoy are denied during this time. Alternately, he can choose to attempt to disarm his opponent (see Chapter 3 of the Players Handbook) with a +10 competency bonus to the roll. While studying the opponent, he may take no other actions except to fight defensively.

HASTE: A crna ruk Rune Scholar is able to move with extreme speed, doubling his movement rate and number of attacks per round. The Rune Scholar is only able to use this ability once per week for a maximum of 13 melee rounds.

MAJOR IMAGE: This ability acts as the 3rd level illusionist spell. The hit dice of the crna ruk serves as the caster level.

MARTIAL PROWESS: A crna ruk fighting unarmed gains the benefits of the monk's Hand to Hand combat. Consult Table 1-2 for the proper damage.

SHADOWALK: As a standard action, a crna ruk can take on the two-dimensional form of a shadow along with any gear he carries. From this vantage point, he may walk about flat along the ground or travel up walls and around corners as a dark shadowy shape resembling his own shadow. He retains his general size, but in a two-dimensional state and can therefore fit where he normally could not (under a door for example). While in this state, the crna ruk gains a +10 bonus to Hide and Move Silent skill checks. The crna ruk cannot make attacks of any kind while in this form, and in this form he is immune to non-magical weapons. The crna ruk can perform this ability up to 3 times per day for up to 10 rounds each time.

SUMMON SOUL THIEF: Once a week, the Herzlos is able to summon a soul thief. The creature does the Herzlos' bidding until killed or dismissed.

ABILITIES FOR THE INQUISITOR: An Inquisitor possesses all the abilities of an Initiate and a Herzlos Scholar, as well those listed below. As with the Scholar, the abilities stack with each more powerful Inquisitor. They act as a 15th level in any class ability. For instance the Grand Inquisitor's assassin ability is as a 15th level assassin.

TABLE 1-3: CRNA RUK (INQUISITORS)

| RANK | AC | SPECIAL |
|------------------|----|------------------------------------|
| Deacon | 20 | Unholy Word |
| Executioner | 22 | Finger of Death |
| Inquisitor | 24 | Exude unholy aura |
| Grand Inquisitor | 25 | Improved Shadowwalk, Read Magic |
| Shroud | 27 | Create Unholy Place, Cleric spells |

CLERIC SPELLS: (he who wears the) Shroud is the spiritual link between the order and the wizard-god. He possesses limited cleric abilities and as such is able to cast 1st-4th level spells. He can cast, as a 15th level caster, 6 0 level, 6 1st level, 5 2nd level, 4 3rd level, 4 4th level spells.

EXUDE UNHOLY AURA: Which behaves like the spell holy aura as cast by a 15th level caster, but it affects good and evil creatures.

FINGER OF DEATH: Acts as the wizard spell of the same name. The crna ruk casts as a 15th level caster.

FOG BANK: The crna ruk may cast each of the following spells once per day as a 15th level caster: obscuring mist, fog cloud, cloudkill.

IMPROVED SHADOWWALK: As shadowwalk, the crna ruk may employ any of his attacks while in the form.

UNHOLY WORD: The crna ruk can cast the Holy Word spell as a 15th level caster. It affects good and evil creatures.

CREATE UNHOLY PLACE: This is strictly for the grand inquisitor to create a temple or such into which he could summon the wizard-god.

THE CRNA RUK IN AIHRDE

The crna ruk (Kerna-Rook), in the Vulgate, “those whose hands pass through the dark,” are predatory assassins who lust for the rebirth of the horned god. They worship the rule of Law as symbolized in the Winter’s Dark. They pay homage to Unklar, the horned god Unklar who ruled by keeping the world in a continual winter and who brooked no rebellion. The crna ruk served as his cohort of assassins, rogues, and spies.

The wizard Nulak-Kiz-Din founded the order in the early years of the Winter Dark to serve him and the horned god. Nulak used them primarily to control the minions of the horned god, to gather information on their activities and report back to him. The crna ruk rose to great prominence as Nulak gained power and were instrumental in helping his rise. The information they supplied him served him well, when he needed it. Next to the Trolls of Gotland the crna ruk were Nulak’s most powerful allies and servants.

After the fall of the horned god, they attempted to bolster the power of the archmage in the power vacuum that followed. But in doing so they ran afoul of the Lord of the Halls (that is Aufstrag), Coburg the Undying. Coburg himself was in the process of consolidating his own power over Aufstrag after the horned god’s fall, and set about a ruthless campaign of exterminating the crna ruk (along with many others). He put many of them to death, bound others in Klarglich, and others to the walls of Aufstrag itself. Coburg slew (He Who Wears the) Shroud with his own hand by choking him to death upon the dais of the throne. He fashioned a drinking cup from his skull, which he called Shrouded Vessel for drinking and it made him hallucinate (Michael Bagelton, a rogue of great renown, later stole the Shrouded Vessel from Coburg, and it was subsequently lost).

Few now know the Order’s true origins, only that they thrived during the Winter Dark and practiced an eldritch sorcery. Since the Winter Dark Wars, they have lived on as legends, as demons to haunt the nightmares of the people of the world. For this reason the crna ruk are universally feared.

In recent years however, the crna ruk have grown in power. They have formed small, independent units in towns and cities, paying homage to the wizard and the horned god. There is a new, powerful Grand Inquisitor and (He Who Wears the) Shroud, both of whom were servants during the waning days of the Winter Dark. Their one great quest is to find the missing spells of the Blood Rune sorcery. This sorcery, they believe, offers the crna ruk the greatest opportunity to return Unklar to the plane. They detest Coburg and consider him a mortal enemy and a heretic who they see, rightfully so, as someone who does not wish the return of the Dark God Unklar. Their main guild hall is in the Punj where they have found staunch allies. They have begun spreading throughout the Lands of Ursal however, searching for the pieces of the missing horn, or any other device that they feel will aid them in their mission and bring back the Winter Dark.

GIANT SQUID

NO. APPEARING: 1

SIZE: Large

HD: 6d10

MOVE: 25ft

AC: 15

ATTACKS: 4 tentacles (1d6), mouth (1d2)

SPECIAL: Constrict, capsizes, twilight vision 40ft, ink cloud

SAVES: P

INT: animal

ALIGNMENT: neutral

TYPE: animal

TREASURE: none

XP: 1100+6

The giant squid is a massive sea creature with eight 20 foot long tentacles and a blob shaped central body. It can use four of its limbs to capture and submerge prey while the other four tentacles are used to propel it through the water. It attempts to capture and drag its prey into the deeps and then begin the eat it. It only begins eating its prey once it has been immobilized or is dead.

THE DREAM WARRIOR

NO. APPEARING: 1 2

SIZE: Large

HD: 10 (d10)

MOVE: 30 ft., 40 ft. (fly)

AC: 22

ATTACKS: Dreamscape weapon (by weapon +4 to hit and damage)

SPECIAL: Dreaming Mist, Fear, Limited-ESP, Mist Form, Twilight-Vision

SAVES: P, M

INT: High

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

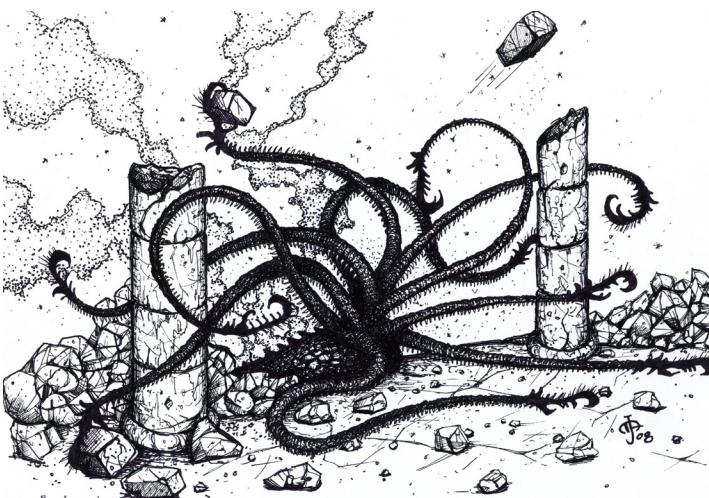
TYPE: Magical Beast

TREASURE: 10

XP: 2425+11

Dream warriors appear as swirling columns of white mist, having no corporeal bodies of which to speak. In this form, they are hard to distinguish from smoke or fog, but as they engage in combat they take on more corporeal forms. They assume the shapes of knights and warriors, with armaments and weapons. They often scry their victims briefly, pulling memories from their subconscious and casting themselves in the images of those memories. They twist these memories into horrible apparitions, pained and sorrowful. In this way they confront their victims with someone they thought long dead or gone and made to believe they suffer woefully in the great beyond. However, dream warriors can never assume real shapes and there are always tendrils of mist coiling about them.

Dream warriors do not bleed, nor can they have limbs chopped off or the like. Nor can they drop their weapons, slip, or fall. They are creatures of mist and fragments of a mad god’s musings. They are, however, real and they can slay and cause damage as with any other creature. Those weary in spirit or troubled in mind attract the dream warriors. There are, in fact, many of these creatures, and they linger on the edges of civilization, or in forgotten places where men once dwelt,



latent and powerless. When encountered, their victims give their malice shape and form and they manifest and attack those nearest.

COMBAT: Dream warriors use any variety of weapons in combat, preferring swords, axes, and lances. They can fight two handed as if they have 17 dexterity. Their weapons act as +2 to hit and damage, or, if they use two weapons then +1 to hit and damage. They are not particularly clever or crafty in battle, and in all respects, battle as fighters.

DREAMING MIST: They use dream mist to trap their prey. This spell plays upon the victim's own desires, creating minor illusions of them. The illusions react upon the opponent's weaknesses and needs: food and water, or gold for example. In all respects the spell works as a confusion spell.

FEAR: They can cast fear as 10th level wizard (3/day).

LIMITED ESP: The dream warrior has the ability to read the thoughts of those within 100 feet of its location. It can do this only while in its mist shape and even then only in a limited capacity. It can read latent memories of its target. This is instantaneous. However, upon a successful intelligence check, the target can detect that a hostile mind is scrying them. Unless a victim takes extraordinary measures, such as a false vision spell to counteract this, the target can do nothing to prevent it. The dream warrior uses this ability to create its shape as noted above and to weave its dreaming mist.

MIST FORM: A dream warrior is incorporeal most of the time; however, three times a day, at will, the dream warrior may assume a more corporal form. It takes up to four rounds to alter its shape. A dream warrior may move 40 ft. in its mist form. The ability is otherwise similar to a gaseous form spell. This shape almost always takes on the form of someone close to the one they are fighting. This often disconcerts their foes and unless a successful charisma save is made they suffer a -2 to all attacks, attribute checks (made against the dream warrior), and damage rolls.

IN AIHRDE

When Unklar discovered the Dreaming Sea and became aware of Saint Luther's presence, he cast himself upon that wild expanse and fashioned warriors from his own dreaming. Saint Luther called them "slivers of Unklar's imagining," and they traveled the dreamscape hunting the paladin. Saint Luther and the dream warriors battled on many occasions.

While the paladin proved too strong for them, the dream warriors gained some of his powers and came to understand him better.

The warriors have since scattered across the far and wide expanse of the Dreaming Sea, haunting only the unwary. Having gained some of Luther's power, they can affect another's dreams. They haunt the prime material world, occasionally enticing people onto the Dreaming Sea and then destroying them or upon a rare occasion taking advantage of a powerful victim and coming to the world of Aihrde itself, where they stalk the unwary and feed upon them.

Though not entirely conscious, they have, since the Horned God's fall, become aware of their existence and this has emboldened them. They have come to hate all living things, for they know themselves as figments of the Horned God's imaginings and remnants of his evil will. Their malice is palatable to those sensitive to such things.

Their weapon of choice is fashioned from the Dreamscape, when the creature alters itself from its mist form. Any victim, other than a Confessor Knight or resident of the Dreaming Sea struck by such a weapon, is plagued with nightmares and sleepless nights. A remove curse can cure this ailment. Otherwise they suffer from constant exhaustion; their constitution is reduced by 1 point each month that passes.

NAERLULTH

NO. APPEARING: 1

SIZE: Large

HD: 12 (d10)

MOVE: 30 ft., 40 ft. (swim), 20 ft. (climb)

AC: 24

ATTACKS: See below

SPECIAL: Ash cloud, Devouring Assimilation, Engulf, Fear/Inspire, Incorporeal, Reg, Rock Throwing, Spawn, SR 12, Telepathy

SAVES: P, M

INT: Supra-Genius

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

TYPE: Magical Beast

TREASURE: 20

XP: 9950 x 12

Naerlulth are creatures from the nether planes fashioned of ash, smoke, and the dust of burnt things. The naerlulth's body is generally oblong in shape, though crusted over as with scabs and the like. It is possessed of long ashen colored tentacles; they sprout from the creature's upper torso, are long, thin, and adorned with thousands of tiny appendages. These appendages run the length of the tentacles and allow the creature to grasp almost anything. The number of these tentacles ranges from a few to a dozen or more, depending on the age of the creature. They constantly shed, fall off, and re-grow if they are damaged. A naerlulth possesses no bones or cartilage, and its shape changes with its mood. It can flatten its body, spreading it out, or it can contract itself, making its bulk look truly imposing. It has no legs, but rather uses its tentacles to pull itself along or to climb or swim. They have no head, eyes, or ears, but sense vibrations in the ground or movement in the air through long hairs on their skin. Their ashy skin itself is constantly peeling or flaking off, leaving trails of ash behind them and forever floating around them.

Naerlulth devour any living creature, plant or animal, by engulfing it with their body and secreting acid through their soft underbellies. The acid breaks down armor, clothes, skin, and bone in a matter of minutes, and what remains of the items is turned to ash and left on the ground. The naerlulth feed constantly and the residue of their meals are discarded through their shedding skin in the guise of more ash. Huge flakes of skin are constantly, falling off replaced by regenerated skin and tissue. These creatures settle in almost any environment, but prefer regions of lush vegetation, where they can pull themselves across the ground, destroying all they pass over. They poison the land, for nothing grows in their wake but for a thorny vine of their own making.

They devour the wealth of the land, burn off its vibrancy, and shed the ashes of its remains in ever growing clouds of ash. Given time, these creatures can poison whole landscapes, burning rock into jagged slag, destroying all plant life, turning soil to ash, and constantly shedding clouds of ashy skin into the air and on the ground. They occupy deep holes or dark waters, constantly coming forth to feed in fields ever farther away. Whole mountains, valleys, or regions become poisoned fields of death after only a few years. For this reason, their lairs are generally huge fields of blackened, dead earth, with clouds of burnt dust hanging over them.

Naerlulth are very intelligent and can communicate with most creatures telepathically. They hate all living things and are possessed of the singular drive to destroy life. They tend to avoid civilized or settled areas, preferring to nurture their hatred in the peace of their ruin. They do, however, attract creatures of a like disposition and alignment, so much so that some of them command large armies. At times their minions bring them food, living and otherwise.

COMBAT: Naerlulth attack with their many tentacles, hurling boulders, trees, bodies, or anything else they can reach at their enemies. Simultaneously, they attempt to grapple their foes and drag them into the morass of their flesh to be destroyed by acid. Each tentacle possesses its own hit points (3d4) separate from the monster's hit points. Tentacles can be hit or even destroyed, but damage done to a tentacle does not translate to damage done to the creature's 12d10 hit dice. Any tentacle destroyed immediately starts re-growing (see below). Whenever any creature approaches too near, the naerlulth belch clouds of burning ash on them to disorient and cripple their opponent. They can assume a frightful presence as well as inspire their own minions. They are very intelligent and very hard to actually kill. If defeated, or are near defeat they flee, shedding much of their form to slip into whatever crevice or crack they can manage to squeeze into.

ASH CLOUD: Naerlulth can spray a cloud of ash from any one of their tentacles. The tentacle snaps forward, disintegrating into a jet of burning ash up to 30 feet away in a line 10 feet high and 10 feet wide. Any target caught in the cloud is successfully hit and takes 3d8 points of acid damage, half damage with a successful constitution save. Furthermore, the victim must make a dexterity save or be blinded for 1d6 rounds. The tentacle is rendered useless until it regenerates. It takes 12 hit points of regeneration to grow one back.

DEVOURING ASSIMILATION: When the naerlulth's underbelly comes into contact with any material it secretes an acid that begins to

break down the object or creature. They devour stone, wood, and metal, as well as flesh, but the harder the substance, the harder and longer it takes to consume. It consumes such matter at different rates, but because of the creature's great size, it can destroy more than might be expected. It will feed on a patch of earth for a day or so, reducing 10-15 square feet of trees, metal, or earth to ash. Flesh and softer substances are almost instant. Metal is slow, but is generally reduced to nothing in about 6 melee rounds (if enchanted armor is attacked by the creature, an additional round per magical plus is necessary before the equipment is turned to ash). Flesh that comes into contact with the creature's underbelly takes 1d10 points of damage a round.

ENGULF: If an opponent is struck by 3 or more tentacle attacks in the same round, the naerlulth will attempt to pull that victim to the ground and flow across it. The victim is allowed a strength save (CL 5 + 1 per successful tentacle) to avoid this effect. If the save fails, the target is slammed to the ground near the creature and pulled under it. The naerlulth attempts to smother the victim and devour it, and the victim is held in the equivalent of a Challenge Level 15 grapple.

FEAR/INSPIRE: A naerlulth can put forth its frightful presence and strike fear in its enemies. It does so by projecting itself as a huge, monstrous minion of the nether planes. Any enemy within site of the creature must make a charisma save or suffer a -1 on all combat rolls (initiative, to hit, and damage), attribute checks, and saving throws. Conversely, any creature allied with the naerlulth is inspired to fight greater and gains a +2 to all rolls. If the creature is destroyed or driven from the field, its loss is catastrophic to its allies, who must make a charisma save (CL 12) or flee the field in terror.

INCORPOREAL: They can, if necessary, become incorporeal, but doing so reduces them to shadow creatures, and they must find a new lair to rebuild their strength, a process that can take years. They generally only do this when on the verge of destruction. In this form, it can move up to 100 feet per round.

REGENERATION: Immediately after suffering damage, the naerlulth begins to regenerate itself. It can control what it regenerates. It will always heal wounds on its body first, and tentacles after that. They regenerate at a rate of four hit points per round. They cannot heal damage to their body caused by magical attacks, including magical weapons. A naerlulth reduced to 0 or less hit points sheds its physical form and becomes incorporeal and flees the area immediately. For all intents and purposes the creature is dead; however, it can, as already mentioned, return, but only after many years.

ROCK THROWING: Naerlulth can hurl boulders or other similar objects up to 350 feet. Successful attacks inflict 1d12 points of damage.

SPAWN: Creatures killed and devoured by naerlulth are often cast into limbo, and their tormented spirits are left to occupy the lands the creature has devoured and laid waste. These spawn are often undead, but have no shape or form until they assume one.

NAERLULTH IN AIHRDE

In the early days of the Winter Dark when Klarglich, the Pit of Woe-which was Unklar's forge in the bowels of his fortresses-

was newly made, Unklar set himself the task of making creatures of his own design. There were many foul beasts and fantastic creatures that he labored upon. These came to haunt the world of the Winter Dark, as many still do. Some were small and without purpose; others were great and possessed of his will and mind. The naerlulth were of the greater order of these creatures. Shaped from the ash of burnt sentients and other ancient trees, and scorched with fire, they took on the shape of blackened coal. Made in mockery of the trees that the All Father loved so greatly, the naerlulth were given long tendrils, or tentacles to mimic roots. The creature was not given a hard shape, however, only a shell that it could alter and change with only little effort. It was filled with a thick, sap-like acid that it secreted wherever it went; indeed, naerlulth's meaning in the ancient Dwarven tongues is "The Bleeding Ash." They were given minds of their own, and in time of years, became possessed of great wisdom. But this has always been offset, for Unklar filled them with an utter disdain for all living creatures, and set them the task of unmaking the beauty of the world. This task they took up readily, and Unklar gave them dominion over many of his other minions in order to further their designs. When he fell from the world and returned to the Void, the naerlulth did not suffer as did others of his creations. Rather, they thrived, settling in wild places and devouring the world. To them, many of the refugees of Unklar's rule have gravitated, so that many of them lord over small kingdoms of ash and desolation peopled by orcs, trolls, and the dreaded ungnar.

VIMNEL

NO. APPEARING: 1-8

SIZE: Small

HD: 4(d8)

MOVE: 30 ft., 60 ft. (fly)

AC: 15

ATTACKS: 2 Claws (1d4), Bite (1d4), By Weapon

SPECIAL: Howling

SAVES: P

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Aberration

TREASURE: 4

XP: 40+4

These gaunt humanoids range in color from deep blue to a light purple. With broad reptilian wings, they are able fliers, though usually their flights are erratic, with a great deal of up and down motion. Arms and legs, like sticks, protrude from their emaciated torsos, which in turn are topped by round heads cut by a wide gash of a mouth. Fangs line their dry, cracked, swollen lips, and yellow eyes bulge from their sallow faces.

The vimnel are social creatures, traveling in small bands of up to eight. They travel great distances until they find refuge in abandoned buildings, dungeons, towns, and ruins of any kind; in short, anywhere they can find some security from the elements. They build nest-like houses in high places, where they gather their treasures.

They have no ability to speak any languages. Nor are they able to fashion any type of clothing, weapons, or armor. They do wear jewelry and other trinkets they scavenge from the battlefield.

COMBAT: The vimnel are vicious in battle, swooping down on their prey and attacking with claws and fangs. They use simple weapons when they have them. As soon as they engage, they howl at their prey in an attempt to disorient them.

HOWLING: The howling of the vimnel carries echoes of their long suffering. It is terrible to hear, and drives most who hear it into short-term madness. From a distance, it conjures memories of darkness and pain; but up close, the howl is deadly, for it seeps into the subconscious mind, disrupting the victim's mental state. Anyone within 10 feet of the vimnel when it howls must make a successful wisdom save or suffer -4 on all their rolls: to-hit, damage, saving throws, and attribute checks. The effect lasts for 4 full rounds, until the memory of the howl recedes.

IN AIHRDE

Unklar fashioned the vimnel upon the forges of Klarglich. In those pits of terror, he twisted men into malformed shapes, torturing them into a madness from which none could recover. They hobbled around the Pit, howling their pain until the distraction became too much for him, so he fashioned them wings and gave them the gift of flight. They fled then, throughout the wide halls of Aufstrag, haunting the tunnels and terrorizing the denizens of that fell place.

In later days, some fled the halls, spreading throughout the world. Their lonely, pain-filled howls are now heard throughout the world, and the creatures, though uncommon, are known to all the lands. They are drawn to the empty houses of men, for it is there that memories of their pasts draw them; they long for something they do not rightly remember, that being the light of their own humanity. **MOVE:** 30 ft., 60 ft. (fly).

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The Forsaken Mountain follows the adventures in the A series developed by Troll Lord Games, however the adventure can be used as a stand alone should the Castle Keeper desire. The characters must travel far beyond the realms of man and cross over into the land of dreams and thence into the realms of the forever dying, where creatures both horrifying and ambrosial dwell. Only the bravest can survive here for one's fear will certainly be one's undoing.

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