



A9



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THE HELM OF NIGHT

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THE HELM OF NIGHT

The Helm of Night is an adventure designed for 3-5 characters of 9th to 11th level. It pits them against the grim power that lords over the Tower of Horesk. Sitting upon the edge of a huge swamp, the Tower stands upon a great outcrop of rock. The party must venture across the water to the isle and enter the tower undetected to plunder its holds and destroy the evil that dwells there. Beneath the Helm of Night is designed for a single night's play or at longest over several sessions. The Helm of Night is primarily an indoor adventure.

The Helm of Night follows the adventures in the 'A' series developed by Troll Lord Games; however, the adventure can be used as is without reference to the previous adventures should the Castle Keeper desire (see **Involving the Player Characters** for more details on this option).

INTRODUCTION

The Tower of Horesk is an ancient edifice built upon the edge of the Grausumlands. Its dark stones sit upon an island-anchorage in the midst of a deep morass of bogs, saw grass, and gray, stagnant water. The tower, jutting some 80 feet above the island, sits like an obelisk, jutting from the fog and waters. It is wholly out of place and viewable from many miles away.

The distance from the dry land, the Blighted Screed, to the island itself is little over 500 feet, but the waters are thick, in places very deep, and filled with deadly creatures. A smattering of boats always line the banks however, for supplies must at times be carted to the Tower and the locals leave the creaking crafts upon the shores.

Passage to the island is easy, though a little damp, as any one of the boats leak continually. The CK should make a single roll on a d20. If a 1 results, the chosen boat the characters use to cross the water develops a sudden fracture and starts taking on water. It sinks in a matter of minutes, leaving the characters to their own devices; to swim and walk, or drown.

INVOLVING THE PLAYERS

Integrating the Tower of Horesk into your regular game should not be very difficult. The adventure is designed for stand alone play or as a part of the ongoing Assault on Blacktooth Ridge series. The only challenging aspect of the integration lies in the Lady of Garum, the Vessel of Souls, that love interest of Coburg who is able to consume men's souls with a single kiss. She was taken here from the Forsaken Mountain, but fled when attacked by the Lord of the Tower. Merging these and any other that arises from the text should be easy.

- 1) The CK may want to run the tower as a simple random encounter, wherein the characters, traveling overland come to the landing upon the swamp, spying the tower; they are able to explore it. Alternatively, hearing of the tower upon the edge of a swamp in any inn or tavern works as well.
- 2) If a long running campaign is in the works, integrate the tower and Vessel of Souls into the game by turning its Master into a minion/servant of any antagonist that the CK is presently running.

2 CASTLES & CRUSADES

- 3) Allow a mage, noble, lord, or any wealthy NPC to hire the characters to fetch the Vessel of Souls from the Tower and bring it back to him. The bounty should be high as the task may prove dangerous. Disregard any larger themes or reference to them in the text below.
- 4) If coming from A8 Forsaken Mountain the story picks up exactly where it left off with the minions of Coburg having stolen the Vessel from the Paladin upon the Dreaming Sea and transported here to the Tower. Here she remained for a short while. Her stay ended before adequate transportation could be provided for her from Aufstrag. The Tower's Master, the seere devil (see below) had her guards killed and he attempted to seize her, hoping to use her as leverage. She fled to the priest's chambers on the 6th floor and took one of the bat creatures. Unable to guide the beast she cajoled one of the two handlers to take her to Aufstrag. He agreed and took her upon one of the beasts. In flight she grew weary of his advances and slew him, devouring his soul. The beast flew to one of its normal destinations, in the swamp-side town of Gafika. There she abandoned the beast and fled into the town seeking aid. Her story picks up in A10 *The Last Respite*. Her story can be deduced from several encounters in the Tower, notably **Area 3**, **Area 13**, **Area 14**, and **Area 40**.

APPROACHING THE TOWER

The Tower of Horesk sits upon a large island of blue-gray, fragmented stone, that itself sits in a deep bog of saw grass and swamp water. A channel has been cut through the marsh grass; it forks just before the island, one small, little used fork, going to the left, the other, more used goes to the foot of the island where sits a small landing carved into the stone. A narrow path winds its way from the landing, up the rocky slope to the tower itself. Two short, fat, wide bodied bundles of vines grow from the rocky ground next to the landing, capped by huge knobs of vines.

This landing is actually a ruse, the vines are guardians set there by the lord of the tower. They are moundule, semi-intelligent giants that imbed themselves into the earth, using their club-like appendages to attack anything that comes within their reach. Normal visitors to the island know to avoid them, taking the lesser fork to avoid the moundule and landing.

MOUNDULE (*These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 9(d8), AC 20, HP 54, 49. They attack with 2 slam attacks for 3d6 points of damage. They have darkvision up to 60ft.; fire resistance so that all fire based attacks are halved, quartered if they make their necessary saves; spell immunity making them immune to any type of spell that requires them to see it, such as dancing lights, and an SR 3. The moundule are highly predacious and attack anything within range. They devour their prey, pulling it into the earth. If the ground is excavated beneath them the following treasure is unearthed: 500gp in assorted coin, a topaz, gold, platinum ring of a snake devouring itself worth 1000gp, a horn of fog, 2 potions of extra healing, and a scroll with a dismissal spell on it. See New Monsters Below*)



Climbing the slope is possible but any who wish to scramble up the sides will find the footing treacherous though not impossible. Make all checks at a CL 4. A fall sends the clumsy adventurer down the slope 10 feet or so; it causes no damage but the noise of the sliding rock may alert the party's presence.

If the party takes the lesser channel around the island they quickly discover a second landing with a smaller, more used path. It winds up the island joining the other path about mid way and ends at the bottom of the stairs that lead up to the front gates of the Tower.

ENTRYWAY

Visitors gain access to the tower by climbing a broad set of stairs that lead up about 15 feet above the tower bottom, ending in a set of large double doors, guarded by a portcullis. The portcullis is presently open. These stairs lead to the 1st Floor.

There is a secret door on the far side of the Tower that leads to the Ground Level. Those who fashioned the door carefully hid the door with the stone of the tower itself. It is almost impossible to discern in passing (CL 15). If someone makes a detailed search of the area one has a better chance of finding the pressure points that open the door (CL 8). The door is small, opens in an irregular fashion, with uneven blocks of stone to frame it. It is only four feet high and opens into a narrow staircase that leads up and into a storage room.

TRAPPED STAIRWAY

The stair winds up the side of the tower. It is very narrow, less than 3 feet wide and extremely steep. The steps are worn smooth, with a long dip in the middle where countless feet have worn away the stone. It winds up the full length of the tower until it comes to a small door. This door faces out from the tower, but lies under the overhanging battlements. There is a small perch here, that if followed leads to **Area 40** where the vultures are housed. The stable doors are closed. But from the perch a whole great panorama unfolds.

From the perch, you can see the towers of Aufstrag. Below you the mires of the swampland stretch across the land, pulled taut across the flat terrain. Mounds of stinking mud jut from the swamp; channels of sluggish water track through the limitless stands of reeds and saw grass; stumped trees and troll glens dot the landscape; and black clouds of pestilence hang over the vast terrain until they crash against the iron base of the Towers of Aufstrag. Tall and stark, they jut from the swamp, climbing into the heavens, hundreds upon hundreds of feet; walls upon walls, stacked into the tower, minarets clawing from the surface, rending the sky line. Ever they rise until the tops of the great citadel loom upon the landscape like the dead limbs of some giant tree.

There is little chance of anyone climbing up to the battlement from the perch. However, a skilled rogue or someone with magic rope may wish to try. Any climb checks are made at CL 10 to achieve a grip on the underside of the battlements; if they manage that, a check at CL 14 must be made to overcome the difficulty of pulling themselves from underneath the battlement and a third check made at CL6 to pull themselves over the side and achieve the top of the tower.

4 CASTLES & CRUSADES

If the party manages this approach, refer to **Battlements** below.

Opening the stable doors is difficult and can only be achieved with a successful dexterity check (CL 12) and a strength check (CL 8).

GROUND FLOOR STORAGE

AREA 1: The stair leads down from the 1st floor into a large room. The room is well used, though dirty, with stacks of equipment, construction material, masonry and the like everywhere. The room is unoccupied at the moment.

Along the north wall are 14 large cedar beams, each about 8 inches square and about 10 feet tall. On the south wall are stacks of crates, many broken open and empty, some half filled with a variety of implements such as large nails, wooden pegs, rope, etc. Stacks of barrels line the east wall next to the archway that leads from the room. Under the steps is a jumble of broken tools, boards, stones, and other used materials.

The Chamberlain purposely keeps this area a mess, as he has his stolen treasure hidden here. Beneath the debris, wedged under the first step, is a small box. It hides 14 platinum pieces, 45 gold pieces and a necklace bearing a small, well cut ruby. The ruby is actually a *gem of seeing*. The Chamberlain stole the item from the Lord of the Tower some time ago and never wears it, though he pulls it out from time to time admiring it. If encountered and he sees one of the characters wearing it he attacks them immediately.

AREA 2: This room serves as the tower's food storage. Crates and barrels abound, the vast majority of them filled with foodstuffs, cereals, dried fruits, and the like. Several large 50lbs bags of hops supply the tower with enough to make beer. A large rack hangs on the western wall lined with jars of spices: salt, pepper, rosemary, garlic powder, etc. Several small barrels of pitch, used in the manufacture of torches, are in the northeast corner. Many empty barrels and crates are stacked on the southern wall, waiting for return to Aufstrag and replenishing.

The room presently contains stores to supply 30 men with roughly 3 months supply of food.

AREA 3: Racks line the walls of this cubby hole. These contain tools of various shapes and makes: sledge hammers, pick axes, saws of various sizes, tongs, shovels, etc. These tools serve the masons in time of need.

AREA 4: A sweet smell dominates the room, and the walls are black with smoke. Seeds and other cooking ingredients cover the floor. A large vat dominates the center of the room; connected to two cook stoves on the eastern wall through a variety of bronze pipes. A small two-man tent stands in the south-east corner. Barrels, lie all over the place, stacked against the walls, and along the edge of the vat.

The room serves as the tower's brewery.

The tent is home to the brew-master. He is presently asleep here, resting off a drunken stupor from testing his own brew. He always feels secure however, for the tent is actually a creature, a guardian in his command, much addicted to the brew he creates. The creature is a mimic that he calls Ox. If anyone threatens or attempts to harm the brew-master, it instantly attacks.

The brew-master's name is Eric of Luth, he comes from a small town in the Punj. A long series of adventures landed him here in the tower serving as the brew-master. He is not evil, but is extremely indifferent. If pressed or anyone threatens him with death or torture he speaks of the towers defenses; in truth he knows very little, being constantly inebriated. He does not call the mimic unless attacked.

He does know however that the guards of the Vessel of Souls have been slain and their equipment piled in **Area 14**. He doesn't know why or how but suspects that the master desired the Vessel for himself.

Note that the mimic attacks even if the brew-master does not call upon it if it determines that Eric is in danger.

MIMIC (*This neutral creatures vital stats are HD 7, HP 51, AC 15. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with a slam for 3d4 points of damage. The mimic is also able exude a powerful adhesive slime that allows it to grapple opponents and cause great damage. Any who succumb to the adhesive risk a crushing blow for a further 1d8+2 points of damage. The creatures treasure lies where Eric sleeps, in the space where the tent/mimic stood.*)

Eric and his mimic have little treasure, but what they do have is valuable. Years ago he served Coburg in the very Halls of Aufstrag. He brewed for that grim faced lord a vat of beer of such exquisite taste that he himself would not yield it until Coburg had given him some type of reward. The Master gave him a goblet of silver, the stem and bowl laced in coils of platinum, and the whole adorned with gems. The goblet is worth 900gp.

It is actually worth far more than that however, for unbeknownst to Eric, the goblet possesses a personal connection with Coburg the Undying. Any magic using class who holds the cup feels a faint sense of magic upon a successful check (always their classes' primary attribute, wizard intelligence, cleric wisdom, etc.), CL 9). If the cup is filled with wine or beer or any other liquid, the wielder, the one holding the cup, can see into the liquid as if it were a light shining upon Coburg himself. They can see what he is doing at that moment.

NOTE: Reference the appendix and cup for a description of Coburg. The goblet can be a powerful tool in future adventures as the party moves ever closer to the halls of Aufstrag. If looked at now, as in most circumstances, the cup reveals Coburg sitting upon a low backed chair at the foot of the throne of Unklar in the great hall of Aufstrag.

AREA 5: The hall and arch leading into **Area 5** is damp, with the slight smell of mildew permeating the whole area. Much of this moisture originates from the well in the room, which periodically overflows, spilling into the room and hall. Mold grows here and there on the walls.

This is the well room, used by the master of the dungeon, a neurog let, a breed of orc, the Hlobane, peculiar to the towers of Aufstrag. The Hlobane orcs relish battle, and rarely deviate from the task appointed to them. The neurog let is a "bone crusher;" these very powerful orcs possess little intelligence, but react aggressively to almost any situation. This particular beast serves only one of the masters upstairs, an uknau let, another Hlobane. His present instructions are to attack any stranger that enters the room. He does so with gusto as soon as the party enters the room.

NOTE: The neurog let does not respond to noises from outside.

NEUROG LET (*This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 8d8, HP 59, AC 19. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a ball and chain for 2d6 points of damage or his claws, each of which do 1d4 points of damage. They are immune to all mind altering spells such as charm, fear, etc. For more information see New Monsters below.*)

Sitting on the table in front of him stands a battered iron lantern. There is also a set of keys on the table that the neurog kept for the dungeon rooms. Other than that the room is largely empty but does have a large well in the northeast corner. The water is fresh.

Above the well is a tunnel that leads up to all the floors above. If anyone looks up the well they can see several floors above the present room; above is a bucket, hanging on a rope. The hole is only two feet wide and cannot accommodate even moderate sized humans. It does however lead all the way to the top of the castle.

AREA 6: This room serves as the dungeon for those unfortunate enough to find themselves bound in the Tower.

The room is oddly shaped, narrow but long. The stone walls and ceiling stand in sharp contrast to the damp dirt floor. Mosses creep up the wall and huge earth worms crawl about the rich, black earth. Lying in the middle of the room, half buried in the dirt are several piles of bones, some with the tattered remains of flesh clinging to them. Clothes too, molded and half dissolved, lie in the dirt. Upon the south wall are a dozen sets of chains, all but one of which are empty. Suspended upon the wall is a strange gnarled creature, his face to the wall.

The walls and ceiling are stone, but the floor is little more than a morass of mud and filth. It was never covered, or if it was, the present inhabitants removed the floor, opening it to swamps beneath. The soil here is rich, very damp, and thick with wide bodied earth worms that slither and crawl about. Some mosses grow up on the sides of the wall.

The creature imprisoned is a tomt. A fey, that under normal circumstances is able to transform himself into a giant. He was captured in the swamps that he calls home and bound here to the wall, spells cast upon his body forced his transformation half way but locked him in the twisted contorted shape that he now remains in, some of his limbs larger than others, his face twisted in pain, one eye large, the other small.

If rescued from the wall, the tomt is very grateful. He gives his name only as Gil and promises the party if they set him free into the swamps he will be in their debt. He knows nothing about the Tower other than it is an evil place. He explains that some orcs captured him and brought him here where he was tortured and ensorcelled, forcing him to shape shift. He cannot offer any physical aid because of his crippling wounds and only several days of rest and healing in the swamp can return him to normal, but he does offer himself as a guide through the swamps, bragging that he knows all the trails even to the dreaded Aufstrag itself. If they leave him in this condition, he does not hold it against them but will not aid them in any future endeavor unless generously paid.

To contact Gil, they have but to enter the swamp and call his name three times. This will actually only work three times, at which point the debt is considered paid by Gil and he will not answer, unless it fits the CKs designs.

There is nothing else of value in the room.



1ST FLOOR HALLS

The Tower sits upon a hillock of stone in the midst of the swamp. It has no outside wall, being built in the manner of a Keep. The ground floor is partially submerged in the ground and is accessible only from the secret entrance and the 1st Floor. There are no windows or arrow slits on the first or second floors.

The 1st Floor sits about 8 feet up from the ground and is accessed through a broad set of steps that rise from the hillock stone to the two large, iron bound, double doors. The doors remained closed at all times. Upon the stone arch above the doors are the words, written in ancient script: "Gonfod Rupt." This means simply Road's End.

NOTE: Characters may wish to climb the tower, noticeably heading toward the balcony. This is possible but extremely difficult. The tower walls are moist and the tower itself in relatively good condition. Any climb checks should be made at CL 8. A check should be made every 10 feet. The tower is 80 feet tall. The balcony itself is very slippery and even grapples attempts are made at CL 10.

AREA 7: The Doors of the Tower of Horesk are large, standing 8 feet tall, made of iron plates and bound in iron hinges. There is one large door ring on the left hand door; used to announce visitors, it is heavy and rings on the door with a loud thump. No visible key hole exists, nor any locking mechanism. The hinges themselves are inside the stone of the arched doorway.

There is a key hole in the right hand door. It is hidden in illusions and only revealed when a *true seeing* or similar spell is cast upon it. The door does not yield to any gentle push or attempt to physically push it open. To force it open is almost impossible, requiring a successful strength check of a CL 30.

6 CASTLES & CRUSADES

If the interlopers discover the keyhole, they can attempt to pick the lock (CL 10). Normal magic such as knock, chimes of opening, or similar devices can open the door, otherwise the characters must climb the tower to one of the windows on the third floor, the roof, or find the secret entrance that leads to the ground level.

If the interlopers are noisy or in any way draw attention to their actions they awaken the guardians that inhabit the Meeting Hall beyond the doors. These are Aghul Devils, filled with contempt for all living things and able when they desire to cast their minds out and read the thoughts of others. They do so upon hearing the characters scratch around at the door. Probing their thoughts with a *detect thoughts*, the Aghul swing the doors wide and launch an immediate attack.

See stats below for Aghul devils, **Area 8 Meeting Hall**. The horn to sound the alarm is in the hall, and if the devils are kept from it, no alarm is sounded.

NOTE: This is a perfect way to get the doors open if the characters cannot manage it through wits, magic or through just bad luck.

AREA 8: The doors lead to a wide, long chamber. Large pillars flank the wall and seemingly hold up the ceiling above. The pillars shaped like the Horned God himself stare down upon any who enter the hall, as if the ever watching eyes of the Beast of Aufstrag were in the very room. A long, green colored carpet stretches the length of the hall to a set of doors at the far end; benches line the walls, flanked by torch sconces. Pillows, decorated in green and yellow lay upon the benches in an orderly fashion. Only a few of the torch sconces possess burning torches, making the room dark and murky.

A large horn stands upon a dais at the far end of the room.

Here the Aghul guardians dwell, lingering in the shadows, watching any and all who enter or leave. They are extremely arrogant, priding themselves in their own abilities and fear little but the greater enemies of Coburg their master. Any characters that enter the hall, assuming they have not already been attacked on the doorstep, draw the attention of these creatures.

The greatest of the four is confused by the character's entry and approaches them to study them, casting *detect thoughts* on them. His companions linger in the shadow. At the moment of realization that the characters are interlopers he attacks, summoning his brethren.

Devils are prideful creatures and do not suffer ridicule lightly and because of this they attempt to drive the characters out on their own. Only if two of them fall does one of the remaining Aghul make for the horn to summon the tower soldiery. It is obvious what he is doing and the characters can attempt to stop him or not at their peril.

AGHUL (These lawful evil creatures' vital stats are HD 7d8, HP 52, 50, 49, 32, AC 17. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with a special weapon, the knoglen Blade for 1d10 points of damage that cause rot and extra damage upon a successful hit of 19 or 20. They also strike with their tusks for 1d8 points of damage each. They have darkvision 60ft, immunity to elements, regenerate 1 hit point a melee round, are able to shape shift and have spell like abilities: detect thought, control wind, spiritual though, magic circle, glyph of warding, air water walk, speak with dead. See Appendix for full details.)

If the horn sounds the occupants of the 2nd Floor, **Area 17** and

Area 18 as well as the Captain from the **3rd Floor, Area 25** are immediately alerted and ready themselves for battle, moving rapidly down the stairs to issue into the Meeting Hall within 2-4 rounds. They do not do so piecemeal, but as an organized group. They send messengers up to the Master of the Tower to alert him as well. They fight to the death, neither asking nor giving any quarter.

Within a matter of minutes, the entire tower becomes alerted to the combat raging on the 1st Floor and the CK must act accordingly, taking note that the occupants of the entire tower are preparing to defend themselves and may join their Master or even hunt down the interlopers as the circumstance dictates.

AREA 9: This small area serves as an annex to the Meeting Hall. Its staircase leads up to the 2nd Floor and the door to the right leads to the stairs going down to the Ground Floor. There is a small stone water basin built into the wall, but nothing else in the room. The small door beneath the steps leads to **Area 10**, it is wooden, iron bound, and unlocked.

The circle is the well pit. One can look up and down from here.

AREA 10: This room serves as a small hall annex and storage room for the servant's use. It contains several boxes of unused torches, 2 barrels of pitch and oil, tapers, candles, and on a shelf some flint and steel. In a large case leaning against the wall are a dozen long silk banners. There lay the emblems of Coburg the Undying and are used to decorate the Meeting Hall when he or other dignitaries visit. The banners are in immaculate condition and each worth 75gp on the open market. The door leads to a narrow hall that leads to the steps going to the Ground Floor.

AREA 11: This room serves as a spill over room for the Meeting Hall. There are benches along the wall, and a long table down the center of the room. Banners decorate the walls, giving the room some life, but otherwise it is quiet and unused. There is little of value in the room beyond the furniture. A small water basin is in the corner, presently full of cool, drinkable water.

Behind the banners on the north wall is a small secret door (CL 9). It is trapped (CL 10); if the trap is released a thin sheet of razor sharp metal falls from above, slicing into any appendages touching the door (a successful dexterity save, CL 8, to avoid). Anyone struck by the blade suffers 1d12 points of damage. If the failed save is a 1 or 2 they must make a successful constitution save (CL 8) or the trap severs their hand and or foot.

AREA 12: This small annex is empty aside from a ladder. The other door leads into **Area 13** the private meeting chamber. In the center, marked "L" on the map, is a hatch leading up into Area 17 on the 2nd Level. The hatch, hidden in Area 17 is easy to see here. The ladder reaches up to the hatch, its iron and attached to the wall

AREA 13: This is a private waiting room. Adorned with 4 large comfortable chairs, a long table and heated stove for a fireplace. Wall sconces for torches exist but a large oil lamp hangs from the ceiling. The room is presently unoccupied, but does see a great deal of use.

Recently the Lady of Garum, the Vessel of souls occupied the room. She ate a light meal and drank wine, the remnants of which are upon a small table against the wall. The food is half eaten, and several days old. The wine has an odd taste to it. It was poi-

soned with a sleeping draught, which she discovered. Anyone with knowledge of potions or poisons can detect the poison with a successful intelligence check (CL 7). She fled this room to find her guards, discovering them slain she fled to the upper chambers, bypassing the seere devil and fled the tower.

The CK should carefully construct his own time line when the Lady may or may not have been brought here. If any spell caster casts *detect magic* they notice a lingering scent of her magic on the seat where she sat and about the table ware she used. A *true seeing* or similar spell reveals the lingering essence of magic in and about the room.

AREA 14: This room serves as a weapons catch for the soldiers of the Tower. Here are stored a number of shields, swords, crossbows, bolts, spears, helms, daggers and axes. They line the walls in racks and carefully maintained, cleaned, and stored. There are 12 each of the items listed and some 500 bolts for the crossbows. The guards use them in defense of the hall as needed.

In the corner of the room are a number of discarded weapons and pieces of armor as well as normal supplies, such as packs, satchels, cloaks and the like. They are dirty and well worn. These are the accoutrements of the Vessel of Soul's guards who were all murdered by the seere devil. Their bodies he devoured, but the equipment he discarded in here. Anyone checking the gear with any magical acumen can detect the tell tale signs of the Dreaming Sea upon them with a successful intelligence check (CL 8).

On the back wall is the statue of a large man, standing at attention with a long sword grounded before him. This creature is a golem and attacks anyone entering the room without permission or who does not utter the appropriate password. It moves lethargically at first but rapidly, within 2 rounds, builds into a full attack, striking the nearest creature to him.

STONE GOLEMS (LESSER) (*These neutral creature's vital stats are HD 12d10, AC16, HP 40. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a slam for 2d6 points of damage. They can slow their opponents and are immune to magic. It takes magical weapons of +1 or better to strike the stone golem.*)

AREA 15: Once this room served as a secret chamber where the Masters of the Tower spied upon those in the meeting hall. It now serves as the lair of the Aghul who occupy this level. Spirited here from the Wretched Plains the Aghul took their service in stride, but when given this room they took it with pride, fashioning it into a dwelling of their own. The Aghul themselves are creatures of the Void, unable to fully fathom the physical world around them; they dwell in it uneasily. Through the use of their own sorcery, with some assistance from allies in Aufstrag, masters of the Paths of Umbra, those Rune Magics that allow passage to other planes, they have turned the secret door into a gateway to the Void.

As soon as the door gives way the room opens up to what appears to be emptiness,. The door itself being a ledge that overlooks the wide dark gulf of open space. There are no walls, floor or ceiling, just an infinite expanse of nothingness. There isn't darkness, or light, or the absence of both, just the empty. It is cool in the room, but there is no discernable smell. This emptiness batters the senses of those looking in, and goes as far as the mind can imagine.

Anyone entering must save versus intelligence (CL 10). A successful save reveals the true nature of the room, and the portal that it is; they understand that they are on the brink of the Void. If they fail they do not understand it, and enter at their own risk. They see the Void before them and if they enter, they quickly find themselves floating on an infinite expanse of the Great Empty with the door rapidly receding behind them.

Careful examination of the doorway (wisdom check CL 8) reveals 4 silken threads. These hang down from the bottom of the door and are not readily noticeable. They are the tethers upon which the Aghul must cling to in order to return to the world. When not on watch they take hold of these threads and hang from them, lingering in the timelessness of the Great Empty. The threads themselves tangle together, making something of a net hanging from nothing in the Void. Within that nest of thread is their treasure.

TREASURE: (The Aghul have taken plenty of bounty over the years and the room contains the follow: several small trunks and satchels with 5000gp, 123pp, 12,000sp, a handful of gems worth 1000gp; there is also a silver ring 25gp, a necklace 200gp and an iron rod 3 feet long. There is magic as well. A wand of illusion, ring of chameleon power, bird feather token, +2 shield, mace of terror, +1 dagger.)

If the characters become lost on the Void, and unable to return to the material plane, refer to **Appendix C, The Void** for basic rules; otherwise carry on with running normal ethereal plane rules.

2ND FLOOR

AREA 16: These broad stairs lead to the 1st Floor. This room is empty, however the archway has no door and any unusual noise here may alert the guards that are presently in the barracks. This carries over to the dining hall as well.

The circle is the well pit. One can look up and down from here.

AREA 17: The Tower of Horesk contains a fully functional garrison, occupied by its master and soldiery. However, it stands in the middle of nowhere and rarely is the garrison called to action. They content themselves with their mundane duties, but with raids as well, cutting across the Blighted Screed into the wilds, searching for nomads who may have wandered from the Plains of Achrothos; they hunt the edges of the swamps for wild buffalo to fill their cooking kettles, or they range further south into the settled lands in hopes of catching a wild elf or halfling.

NOTE: The Castle Keeper should determine whether they want Orange Hair in the building or not. Orange Hair is a wily leader and not inclined to place himself in danger and avoids getting killed if at all possible. For more on Orange Hair, refer to **Area 25** below.

The room itself houses a score of bunkbeds. It is crowded, but orderly. The beds themselves are iron with straw mattresses. Haversacks hang like hammocks from the ends of each bunk, filled no doubt with the property of the bed's owner. A number of oil lamps hang from the ceiling giving the room its bare light as well as a pungent smell that overcomes that of the orcs themselves. A greasy mixture of refuse and kerosene marks the ceiling above each lamp. A stair on the far side of the room hugs the wall, leading to the floor above.

Normally the garrison consists of 45 powerful Hlobane Orcs; 28 orc footman, 12 crossbowmen, and 2 scouts. A short, stout orc, serves as the garrison Captain. His men call him Orange Hair, for he dies his long black locks orange, sporting a huge tail of it. Two sub-chiefs serve as lieutenants, one commanding the footmen, the other the crossbowmen.

There is always a raiding party out. This consists of half the garrison, including one scout and one of the sub-chiefs. There is a 50/50 chance that Orange Hair will be out.

Note: If the alarm sounded earlier, then the orcs in both **Area 17** and **Area 18** will have already gathered with their Captain and attacked downstairs; what follows may no longer be relevant. The CK should adjust the combat accordingly.

Twelve orcs occupy this room, the rest are in the dining hall or on watch throughout the Tower. Any orcs in this room, when the party enters, attack immediately. They form up into a wall and work together. They do not throw themselves piece meal at the party. They call for their Captain, who comes down the steps at a double to see what is going on.

Any orcs in the Dining Hall, **Area 18**, attack the party from the rear.

Orange Hair marshals his men quickly into a battle line, if they have not done so already. Knowing that there is little other help that will come to his aid, he is very careful in what he does. If he sees the orcs being overwhelmed he falls back, orderly, up the stairs, waiting for those in the dining hall to attack the party from the rear. At this point, he begins throwing his javelins of lightening (see **Area 25** for Orange Hair's equipment). If defeat seems imminent he attempts to get his troops out of the Tower as quickly as possible, with the plan to regroup with the raiding party and come back and destroy the characters.

NOTE: Allowing Orange Hair to escape, with some of his men, creates a great antagonist for the party in later games.

If the part enters **Area 18** first and the orcs there call for aid, then the orcs here in **Area 17** form up and attack the party in the rear through **Area 16**.

If Orange Hair does not call a retreat, or is slain, these orcs fight to the death.

Beneath the stairs in the corner is a hidden hatch that leads to **Area 12** below. Finding it is not difficult, anyone looking under the stairs sees it with a successful wisdom check (CL 4).

ORCS, HLOBANE, FOOTMEN (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d10, AC 16, HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with weapon with a +1 to hit or damage. They wield halberds, axes and swords. They are very organized and never act independently, always working to support the troop with which they go to battle. Each Hlobane carries 2-12 gold and 5-20sp.)

ORCS, HLOBANE, CROSSBOWMEN (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d10, AC 16, HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with weapon with a +1 to hit or damage. They carry small axes for 1d8 points of damage and crossbows. Each has 24 bolts.. They are very organized and never act independently, always working to support the troop with which they go to battle. Each Hlobane carries 2-12 gold and 5-20sp.)

8 CASTLES & CRUSADES

ORCS, HLOBANE, SCOUT (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d10, AC 16, HP varies. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with weapon with a +1 to hit or damage. They carry 3 javelins, 50' coiled rope, bag of caltrops, short swords and daggers. They are very organized and never act independently, always working to support the troop with which they go to battle. Otherwise each Hlobane carries 2-12 gold and 5-20sp.)

AREA 18: The doors to the dining hall consist of thick oak, with iron bands upon them. The orcs keep them closed, whether they occupy the room or not. The garrison's disciplined troops eat in an orderly quiet manner, avoiding distractions and avoiding distracting others.

Nine orcs sit along a long table upon the south wall, eating stewed meats. They eat quietly, hearing them is possible but not as easy as might be expected. A successful hear noise check (CL 6) reveals the quiet sounds of wooden spoons hitting wooden bowls. These orcs wear their armor and carry their weapons.

If this room is entered before **Area 17** the orcs quickly determine that they are being attacked. Commands are shouted for a battle line, the table flipped and the orcs leap behind it. They then heft the table and charge the characters hoping to pen them in the doorway. All the while they call for their comrades from **Area 17**.

This noise brings the Captain from **Area 25**.

If **Area 17** is attacked before **Area 18**, these orcs heed the call of their comrades, form up and attack the party through **Area 16**, the stairway.

In either case they fall back only if and when Orange Hair, their Captain, calls for a retreat. If Orange Hair does not call a retreat, or is slain, these orcs fight to the death.

AREA 18A: This is an elevator shaft that leads up to the kitchens two floors above. The walls are enclosed and a series of pulleys and chains lift two separate boards up and down two separate shafts. Food is prepared in the kitchen and lowered to **Area 18a** where the occupants can receive it and take it to their table. The shaft itself is 3 feet by 3 feet, the chains can carry up to 200 lbs of weight. It leads up to **Area 28a** and **Area 33a** above.

AREA 19: This room serves the Tower as an infirmary. Two long tables dominate the center of the room. Blood stains the boards and the stone on the floor beneath them. Two heavy iron candle holders hang from the ceiling above, to afford what light they can on those unfortunate to end up beneath the saw-bone's knife. The north wall is lined with shelves and these contain bandages, jars of salves, small boxes of herbs, kegs of brew, etc. A large barrel sits upon a stand in the northeast corner. Beneath it stands a thick briny soup of thick liquid.

If a battle carried up from below, there may be someone in the infirmary who the saw-bones is working on.

This orc is a thin, filthy creature with long, snake-like fingers. These he's capped with sharpened nails in order to peel back the skin of his patients when he needs to dig deep into their wound. Few survive his pathetic attempts at surgery, most dying beneath his knife or finger nails. He is foul and smells of decay. In battle he carries a short sword, which he uses to ill effect.

ORCS, SAW-BONES (This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 13, HP 6. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with weapon with a +1 to hit and damage. He carries a short sword in battle but is a poor fighter. He is not a Hlobane orc. He keeps his treasure hidden in one of the jars of salve. It is a pouch with 78gp, 112sp and 4pp. Also a small magical ring of charisma, that carries the coat of arms of one of the great houses of the south; whomsoever wears the ring gains a +1 on all charisma checks and saves.)

There is nothing else of value in the room. The saw bones sleeps here, usually on one of his tables. There are several baskets in the corner filled with chunks of flesh and bones, along with the great horde of bandages, salves and other paraphernalia the orc uses to treat his foul patients. The barrel on the stand in the corner is filled with Brule, called bug juice by most humans. It is an orc brew that releases the adrenaline, allowing those who use it to gain back 1-4 hit points and adds to their stamina, usually a constitution point or two. Anyone can drink it but elves; though it tastes like rotted flesh and smells worse.

AREA 20: This small room is used for storing supplies for the infirmary. The door is locked and dual key's kept in the Captain's room (**Area 23**) and the Saw-bones room (**Area 24**). Shelves line the walls from floor to ceiling and contain a long list of materials:

Cotton bandages, 200

Alcohol, wood and drinking, 10 bottles

Spools of thread

Several boxes of sewing needles

Jars of salve

12 potions of cure light wounds

Tong

Scalpels

Magnifying Glass, 2

Gloves

Funnels

Beakers

4 Vials Acid, 1d8 points of damage

AREA 21: This second storage room is for wood and coal, used throughout the level. There are 2 full ricks of wood stacked against the wall, the wood is dry and very combustible. On the back wall are 12 sacks of coal, used to light the furnaces and heaters about the Tower. The room is dirty, unkempt and the door is not locked.

AREA 22: This room serves as general storage for the entire post. Food stuffs, combustibles, cloth, uncut and cut, empty water flasks, barrels, a variety of tools etc., are all stored haphazardly in the room.

Tossed into the room is an oddly crafted barrel; made of wood but bound in bronze (as opposed to the normal iron). It is small, about 2 feet high, and of a girth that might contain 6 gallons of liquid. There are no runes, or markings on the barrel. It does not make a noise when moved, nor does it emit any peculiar odors. The barrel itself is rather heavy. There are no clasps or handles to easily open

it, it must be smashed open to see what is within (unless some spell allows the viewer to see through the wood).

The barrel is a magical container, placed here years ago and long forgotten by its previous owner.

Within the barrel is ash, with a very peculiar smell to it; carrying the unpleasant odor of ancient decay, like mold on stone. The ash is very fine and if the barrel is opened violently is likely to spill out into the room and rise up in the air.

The ash however is not simply ash. The barrel contains remains of the leavings of the naerlulth, a vile creature that devours all that it touches, animate or inanimate, drawing the essence from it, leaving behind a blackened trail of foul ash. Any living creature so devoured transforms into a naerlulthut, an undead creature. These undead, the naerlulthut, inhabit the ash of the naerlulth; rising only when the living are near, who they haunt with threats of death and damnation.

The barrel is filled with the ash of the naerlulth and contains one of the naerlulthut, a very powerful one.

Within 2-4 rounds the ash begins to move, swirling into a small vortex, and a naerlulthut rises. This particular naerlulthut was a hero of some renown and very powerful. He has no reason left, his mind long rotted away, and he sees the party as an enemy that must be vanquished.

NAERLULTHUT (*These evil creature's vital stats are HD 8d12, AC 17, HP 72. Their primary attributes are mental. The naerlulthut attacks with a slam attack, in this case a huge sword for 2d8 points of damage. The naerlulthut attacks with a devouring assimilation attack as well; its touch turns the skin of its victim dry and cracked. They are also able to change form into dust. They have an SR of 5. For more details see New Monsters below.*)

There is no treasure in the room.

AREA 23: These are the quarters for the two lieutenants of the soldiery. One is a hlobane orc, the other a human from the Rhuneland. They share the quarters but do not trust nor care for one another. A heavy, and somewhat soiled curtain divides the room in two, laterally from the door. The left side of the room, the west side, serves the human, the other serves the orc.

Upon the human side there is a bed, neatly made, with clean linen. There is one nightstand, with a candle on it. A picture of a woman, in black and white pencil stands up against the candle. A footlocker sits at the foot of the bed, clean and locked.

Within the foot locker are two sets of clothes, clean and folded. A small satchel clasped and folded up. A separate small pillow and a dagger with silver laced into the scabbard. The satchel contains letters from a woman in his far off homeland. They are love letters, but contain a dark undertone of vanity and petty meanness. The woman's name is never mentioned, each of the letters being from a "M." The letters are addressed to "J."

Jul is presently out with the raiding party.

JUL OF THE RHUNELAND (*This lawful evil human's vital stats are Level 7 fighter, HP 56, AC 21. His primary attributes are strength, constitution, and intelligence. His attributes are strength 18, dexterity 16, and intelligence 16. He wears a suite of +3 chain mail and a +1 shield. He carries a +2 ring of protection. In battle he wields a short thick bladed +1 wolf spear and a broad sword. On his person he carries a small satchel with his money in it, about 200gp worth of gems and platinum.*)

The other side of the room has nothing of value in it at all. There is a pile of dirty straw on the floor. This is where the other lieutenant, the orc sleeps. The straw has a very heavy smell about it.

If the orc has not already attacked the party in **Area 16, 17 or 18**, he is in the room.

ORCS, HLOBANE (*These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d10, AC 16, HP 25. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with weapon with a +1 to hit or damage. They prefer cleaving weapons, such as axes, bardiches, and halberds. They are very organized and never act independently, always working to support the troop with which they go to battle. This orc carries a heavy golden arm band, worth 75gp. He uses a +2 battle axe in battle and carries a thick iron shield.*)

3RD FLOOR

AREA 24: These stairs lead up to the 4th Floor. There is no door to the hall beyond, only an open archway. The Captain's chambers are to the immediate left of the stairs.

In very small script there is an inscription above the archway, facing the stairs. They are dwarven runes. It reads simply: These stones set by "Dolgan, Son of Hirn." Dolgan was a dwarf who served the dark lords as a slave for many centuries and built for them many defensible locations, as well as weaponry, magics and the like.

AREA 25: The orc Captain, Orange Hair, is master of these and the lower Floors. His room lacks all decoration as he lives in a Spartan manner. He possesses no furniture. In the corner furthest from the door is a straw mat only, here he rests his head. A thick oak table sits in the middle of the room. He sits here with guests or others of the guards when he meets with them or must eat in his own chambers. A weapons rack on the far wall and a large chest containing his valuables stands next to his sleeping mat.

The weapons rack lines the western wall, between the two arrow slits. Here Orange Hair has his favored array of weapons displayed and ready for easy access. There are an assortment of polearms, two bardiches amongst them, one a *feather edged bardiche*; a heavy and 2 light crossbows with over 50 bolts for each engine; and assortment of swords, long, broad and one two handed; a host of dirks and daggers piled on one shelf; four shields of varying sizes, one a magical *sun shield*; he also has a suit of chain and a scale shirt on the rack.

The trunk is locked and trapped and opening the trunk without the key results in a clear, scentless gas releasing from capsules in the bindings. The gas is a poison that causes 2d12 points of damage to any who do not make a successful constitution save (CL 8).

The trunk contains Orange Hair's worldly goods, and they are pre-

rious little for most he keeps upon his person. Within the trunk is a small wooden keg. It is bound in silver and has a small spout upon it. There are runes laced around it. Next to the keg is a small sack with gemstones in it. There are four gems in the bag, three nondescript ones worth 15gp each; but the fourth gem is a large black stone with white platinum laced through out. Its value is beyond the normal, for such gems are crafted by the Dwarves. It is worth 1500gp on the open market, to a dwarf, over 10,000gp. The keg is magical. It too was stolen from dwarves. It always refills with a fine frothy dark beer. This possession Orange Hair prides above all else.

ORANGE HAIR (*This creature's vital stats are HD 9, HP 56, AC 26. His primary attributes are mental and physical. In battle he wields his favorite pole-arm, the feather edged bardiche blade. He also carries a longsword and dagger, several handaxes for throwing and a poisoned dagger in his boot (type IV poison). He always wears his +3 mail hauberk, rarely taking it off. He has four javelins of lightning and uses them to affect if the situation calls for it. He carries a war horn on his person, bronze and wood that when sounded plays a long deep note, though not magical any who hear it must make a charisma check (CL 2) or suffer -1 to all initiative rolls when in his presence. He wears thick leather breeches, high hard boots and arm bands on his forearms and wrists.*)

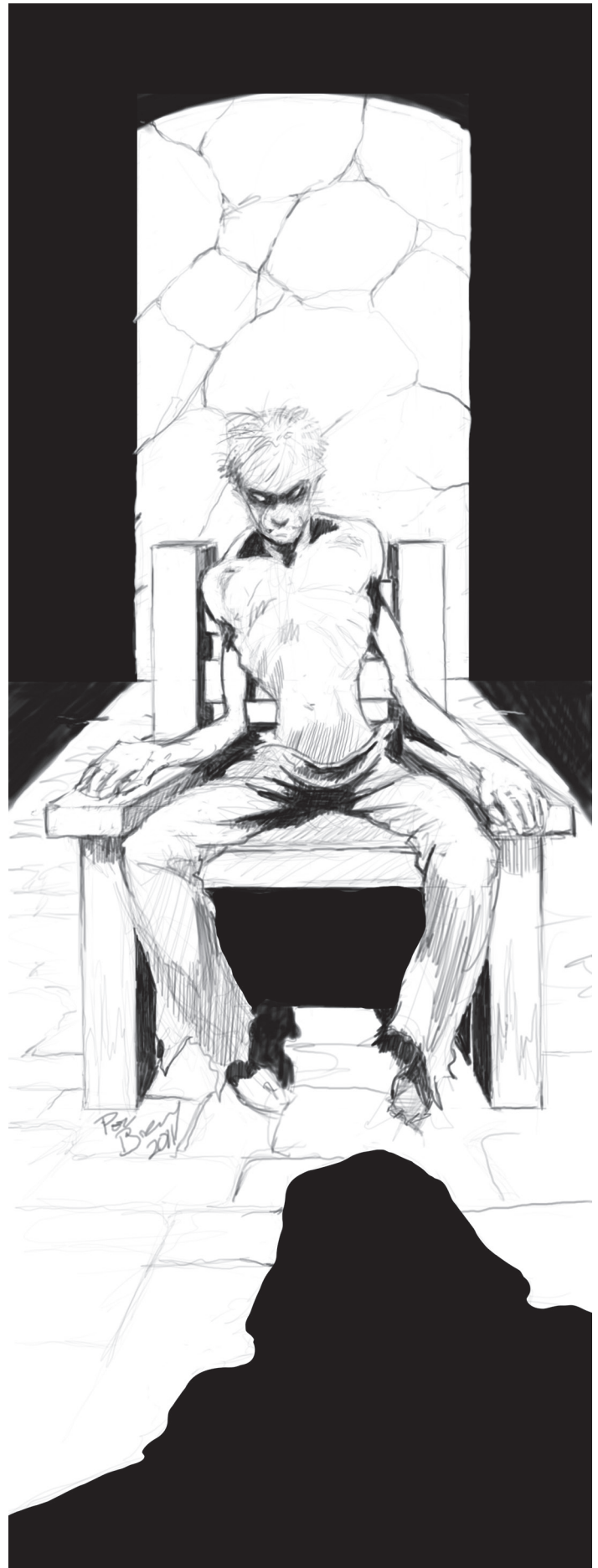
DESCRIPTION: Orange Hair is short for an orc, but stout. His arms are thick as are his legs and his bull neck. His head is more pronounced, with a huge snout and massive tusks jutting up from his lower jaw. His hair is long, coarse and naturally black, but the orc relishes dyeing it orange and pulling it back in a thick, stiff tail. His eyes are black. Though dirty by any reckoning, with blackened rot filled fingernails and toe nails, he is clean for one of his ilk.

Orange Hair is not a Hlobane orc, he commands this troop through his loyalty to Coburg the Undying. The Hlobane respect him for he is decisive and quick witted and extremely strong. However, as the Hlobane rarely retreat and always, when they can, fight as a unit, Orange Hair follows no such structured beliefs. His design is to live and gain power. Under these auspices, he flees if the battle seems to go against him.

AREA 26: This chamber houses a secret stair case that leads up to the 4th Floor and is used by the Captain and others to get up and down unnoticed. The room serves as a meeting area as well. Within it is a four person table and chairs to match. Tankards sit upon the table; a stand with a barrel of beer sits under the steps. The beer is fresh and drinkable. The steps lead up to an open room on the 4th Floor.

Area 27: This room serves as a guest chamber for passing dignitaries. It contains a large four poster bed, a stand for a lamp, a wardrobe, a clean fire place, rugs on the floor and several torch sconces. A large wall mural in the center of the south wall depicts the horned god upon his throne in Aufstrag. His massive red frame blots out all the dark trappings of his throne and his eyes burn with a deep hatred, watching all that goes before them.

The room is presently empty. It is well kept. The well in the south west corner has a small retractable metal rod above it, tied to which is a small rope and keg. Pulling the rod out places the keg over the well, enabling the occupant to lower it down by hand to the Ground Floor and fill it with water.



The mural on the wall is in fact more than a mural. It is connected with a crystal ball that resides in the high towers of Aufstrag, through which the priests of Unklar, servants now of Coburg the Undying, may spy upon what is happening in the room. Those who watch can see, hear, and project sound, though the magic will not carry recognizable voices, meaning they cannot speak.

There is a high chance that the priest in Aufstrag is presently watching the room, usually a low level priest. As Coburg is marshalling his armies he must also keep watch upon his minions. There is an 8 in 10 chance that someone is watching the room. If they see the characters enter the room they immediately report the incident to their masters, so that eventually Coburg will learn of it.

Covering the eyes of the mural is forbidden. If there are priests watching and the eyes are covered they cast their voices through the mural so that whosoever is in the room hears a lonely, pained wail rising from the wall, gaining in momentum until it echoes throughout the room and into the hall beyond.

Note: If you are not running the game in Aihilde and not following the Umbrage Saga story line, replace the mural with any dark god worshipped by the denizens of your world and use the wailing sounds as no more than a ploy to keep the adventurers on their toes.

There is a secret door (CL 8) behind the water that allows one to enter/escape into **Area 28**.

There is nothing of value in the room.

AREA 28: This chamber belongs to the Tower's Chamberlain. He sits here most days and nights, unmoving unless called to action by his master. The Chamberlain has dwelt in these halls for centuries being one of the nearly immortal humans, the Oanthuil, or doppelgangers.

The room is empty of decoration; it has only a plain, wooden chair with a small table beside it. Both stand in the center of the room. Sitting upon the chair is an extremely thin human, frail and broken, starved of food and probably water for the skin that clings to his bones is dry, parched of any moisture. He looks up at the intruders with hollow, pain-wracked eyes. He wears no ornaments, has nothing but a tattered pair of breeches upon his otherwise naked body.

The room itself possesses a pungent odor, much like that found with rotten fruit, or old soured wine.

OANTHUIL, DOPPELGANGER (*These neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 28, AC 15. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a slam for 1d12 points of damage. They possess twilight vision and have the ability to detect thoughts (as per the spell of the same name, they can change shape. This particular doppelganger has the abilities of a 5th-level cleric with the following spells: 0 detect good, endure elements, light, first aid; 1st curse, command, sanctuary, shield of faith; 2nd hold person, spiritual weapon 3rd cause serious wounds.*)

He has cast *sanctuary* upon himself. If attacked he defends himself but flees at the first opportunity.

DESCRIPTION: This particular doppelganger has cast himself close to his true form in order to garner pity from the intruders. If for some reason he is forced to assume his true form, he looks more like a wretched human than even he does now. His skin is a mottled blue, his pate is bald but for several strands of course black hair, his face is drawn so that his jaws protrude and his teeth, sharpened to jagged points protrude upon his lips. His arms are long and spindly as are his legs. He breathes in ragged gasps. Upon all this sit his cold, yellowish eyes.

The Oanthuil's name is Leonard. He hopes the party succeeds in their endeavors at destroying the forces that rule the tower and will aid them if he can do so without any harm coming to himself. He portrays himself as the tower's Chamberlain, a slave of the forces of Aufstrag even before the Winter Dark Wars. All this is true. In the course of him speaking about what is in the tower, he tells them the story of Christian, a noble knight from the south, who the Lords of the Tower hounded into the swamp some hours ago; he may use this as an excuse for why the halls are partially empty of their garrisons.

Here he deviates some from the truth for Christian, a knight from the south, attempted to take the Tower but was hounded into the swamp where he later died. It is the doppelganger's desire to rule the tower. He has been plotting how to do this for some time. The character intrusion has given him a good idea; it is why he insists on bringing up Christian. He is hoping to convince the characters to "free" him; after which, or so he tells the party, he shall flee into the swamp and try to find Christian. This knight he'll bring back to the tower and aid the characters in the conquest of it. He knows of course that Christian is dead and though he does plan to return to the tower, he shall do it disguised as the Knight Christian, offering himself up to the characters in liberating the Tower. After that, he hopes to come to rule the Tower for himself, with the party's blessing. It is his plan to leave the party for the swamp when and how he can. He will serve them faithfully so long as it does not endanger himself.

In order to gain their trust he warns them of the salamanders in **Area 32**, and supplies them with a password: *Erckt Tine Unklar*, "protect us Unklar"

AREA 28A: This is an elevator shaft that leads up to the kitchens one floor above and the dining hall below. The walls are enclosed and a series of pulleys and chains lift two separate boards up and down two separate shafts. Food is prepared in the kitchen and lowered to **Area 18a** where the occupants can receive it and take it to their table. The shaft itself is 3 feet by 3 feet, the chains can carry up to 200 lbs of weight. It leads down to **Area 18a** and up to **Area 33a** above.

AREA 29: The hallway here leads to a ramp that goes up to the 4th Floor, it is steep, allowing for easy defense of the upper floors from attacks from below. The ramp is open as well so that one can leap off the side down to the floor below with ease.

Several well hidden Murder Holes are set in the ceiling above the ramp. The ceiling here is irregular, unlike the rest of the Tower; the irregular stone patterns are designed to mask the Murder Holes (CL 12 to discover). Those occupying **Area 31** open the traps and pour hot oil or boiling water through and down upon any unsuspecting victims on the ramp, for more see **Area 31** below.

Upon the wall abutting **Area 27** is a small fountain, connected to the chambers above by a simple bronze pipe. The pipe is exposed, cool to the touch. A simple lever opens or closes the pipe's water flow.

4TH FLOOR

AREA 30: The ramp leads up to an open archway that leads into a small room with a high ceiling. Friezes of demons and other monsters from the Wretched Plains decorate the wall.

This room is a guard room, though not normally occupied. There is nothing of value here and troops occupy it only if the troops from below are forced up this high. Its design allows a small troop of men to hold the ramp with pole arms.

Generally 5-10 men group in the room, the forward men with halberds, spears and the like. These hold any invaders at bay in something of a shield wall, while men behind swing down and over the shield wall with their pole axes. Coupled with boiling water from above, the ramp becomes a very dangerous area to be for an attacker.

AREA 30A: Staircase that leads through the 5th and 6th Floors and onto the battlements above.

AREA 31: The room is empty, the walls clean and barren. An arrow slit looks west over the swamp. On the floor, evenly spaced are six independent loops tied into the flagstones of the floor. The stone around the loops is stained black and glistens in the light of a lamp, torch, or even magic item. Several large black funnels lie against the southern wall.

One gains access to this room through one of the two secret entrances. These are clearly marked on the inside of the room and easy to open. From the outside it requires a successful wisdom check (CL 9) from both the kitchen and the open room.

This room's purpose is defensive. Those occupying it can harass invaders coming up the ramp from **Area 29** below pulling on the loop ropes and removing the stone blocks that cover the Murder Holes. Each hole is about 4 inches in diameter, allowing a funnel of liquid to pour through; the funnels lie against the wall.

AREA 32: The guard room opens into a large chamber. A huge red, gold trimmed carpet lies upon the floor, stretching from one side of the room to the other. Two stout stone benches stand against the southern wall, next to the arrow slit. A chaotic pattern of runes covers a thick, stout, door on the far side of the room. Much as in other areas reliefs cover the walls. These represent creatures of indescribable horror, denizens of the Wretched Plains.

The room is a magical guard room. Unless the password, *Erckt Tume Unklar*, "protect us Unklar," it uttered four of the reliefs come to life. These are salamanders bound to the room through a portal to their ever burning plain.

SALAMANDER (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 5d8, HP 34 each, AC 19. Their primary attributes are physical. Their intelligence is high. They attack with a weapon or a violent tail slap for 1d6 points of damage. Two of these salamanders use long bows with quivers of +1 arrows (12 in each quiver). The other two use +2 swords, one long and the other broad for 1d8+2

points of damage. The salamanders are able to constrict victims after a successful tail slap for a further 1d4 points of damage plus 1d6 for heat damage. The beast permeates a massive amount of heat and any time their successfully strike with their tail they do another 1d6 points of damage. They are very vulnerable to cold, suffering double damage from any cold based attack.)

Any natural denizens of the tower, retreating through the room knows the password and shouts it as they pass into the room to avoid the attack of the creatures. When the salamanders destroy or chase off anything in the room they linger only for awhile. After one hour they return to their own plain. They cannot leave **Area 32**. Aside from what the salamanders possess, there is nothing of real value in the room.

The runes on the door are gibberish, the carved clattering of the goblins who occupy the kitchens as slaves. They are mostly Dwarven Runes, or a hybrid there of, speaking of simple things such as a slave's name, job, or simple witticisms such as "Go Swimming with Bow-Legged Women," and so on.

AREA 33: The kitchens serve the entire complex, both high and low and as such are well provisioned with all manner of foods and spices, wines and beers.

The room is large, one of the largest in the complex and very cluttered. Shelves, pegs and hooks line the walls, from the tops of tables to ceiling. Free standing cupboards and tables fill any open spaces. Two large tables dominate the center of the room and these are flanked each by one large butcher block. Hooks descend from the ceiling, many holding food both fresh and old; some hold meats of indeterminate origins. Boxes, jars, kettles and jugs jumble with a mixture of sacks, silk, cloth or leather on every shelf or open surface. Barrels stacked in the corners, mingle with crates, some open, some closed. A large variety of dishes and cookware fills cabinets or hangs from the ceiling with the meats and foods. The tables and butcher blocks are covered in half-prepped food.

The cook and his servants flee to **Area 35** at even a hint of the party entering the room.

There is little of value in the room, treasure wise. There is a cornucopia of foodstuffs, beer and wine. Most of it is fresh and very edible.

There is a trap door cleverly hidden in the ceiling of the northeast corner of the room. It is 10 feet from the floor. From the study in **Area 38b** above one can open the door and drop down on the table in the corner. To find it requires a successful wisdom check (CL 15). Once discovered it opens with a simple push upward.

AREA 33A: This is an elevator shaft that leads down to the chamberlain's room one floor below and the dining hall two floors below. The walls are enclosed and a series of pulleys and chains lift two separate boards up and down two separate shafts. Food is prepared in the kitchen and lowered to **Area 28a** or **Area 18a** where the occupants can receive it and take it to their table. The shaft itself is 3 feet by 3 feet, the chains can carry up to 200 lbs of weight. It leads down to **Area 18a** and **Area 28a**.

AREA 34: Ovens and storeroom. Here the inhabitants do much of their cooking. A fire place built into the wall, vents out of the front wall and overlooks the main entrance to the tower far below.

Two large fireplaces dominate the east wall. Fires sputter in them and large cooking pots hang on a variety of iron shod poles that run from one side of the fire place to the other. A variety of pots and cookware lie all about the chamber, hanging on hooks from the ceiling, or on shelves on the walls. The north wall is dominated by stacks of wooden crates and kegs.

Here the goblin slaves do much of their cooking. There are hundreds of cooking vessels of all sizes and for all purposes. The crates on the north wall are storage crates packed tight with iron and standard rations, all in good condition. They are stamped with "Karolotte's Barn, Rhuneland." The garrison uses them on their patrols. There are 22 crates stacked to the ceiling, 12 with 4 weeks standard rations each and 10 with 6 weeks iron rations each.

The large oven on the wall, sits directly above the main entrance to the tower (**the Entryway above**); it has a trap door in the back of it. There is an iron rod attached to an iron plate at the back wall of the oven that even a casual glance reveals (CL 2). Pushing the rod pushes the plate back and open, revealing a trap door that overlooks the entrance to the tower below. In times of siege fire and other combustibles are pushed through the fire place and down onto the heads of any would be attackers below.

AREA 35: This room serves the cook and his servants as sleeping quarters. In all 2 humans and 3 goblins dwell in the room.

Three small hammocks hang one on top of the other on the east wall. From them hang small haversacks. These serve the goblins as beds. A sleeping mat lies on the floor beneath the hammocks. This mat serves the human slave.

A bed juts out from the south wall, a large trunk standing at the foot of the bed. Here the cook sleeps and keeps what meager belongings he possesses.

The goblins all have a 10 AC and 1 hit point. They will not fight, only flee or surrender if cornered. The human slave has no tongue and has been so brutalized to be mindless. Not even the most powerful spells can unravel his madness. He is kept for his muscle and nothing else. He serves the cook with utter devotion.

Reinald the Cook is a foul looking human, portly with a balding pate. He is forever eating, sweating and wiping food off his chins. His eyes are beady and his breath as foul as death. He is mean and conniving; he grovels at the slightest threat but will murder someone in their sleep if given the opportunity. He has cooked everything at one time or the other and has no compunction or conscience about cooking anything else. If threatened he falls to the floor babbling and weeping, asking for forgiveness. He is well versed in the area coming south through the Defemlan, that border land between the Achrothos plains and the Grausumland. He is well versed in that country and if questioned the characters can learn several things about the north (a journey that they must take when entering *A10 The Last Respite*).

They are as follows:

A unicorn once dwelt in the lands the swamp now covers. It is said to still stalk the lands and many hunters come from far and wide, searching for it, for its horn, once delivered to Aufstrag would be priceless to the Undying One who sits upon the throne.

There is a witch that lives in the swamp. She is called the Fair Lady of Gilgum and she is immortal. Her hair is red and her eyes sea green. She is an enemy of all who serve the Tower.

A town lies upon the northern swamps, its occupants nothing more than miscreant, thieves, rogues and bums that washed up there. It is a dangerous place but most anything that is needed can be had in Gafika.

REINALD, COOK (*This lawful evil human's vital stats are HD 2, AC 10, and HP 14. He has no primary attributes and will not fight.*)

If attacked Reinald falls down screaming for aid or mercy and kicks at the feet of his tormentors until he dies.

BORIS, SLAVE (*This neutral evil human's vital stats are HD 7, AC 13, and HP 44. His primary attributes are physical. His extraordinary attributes are strength 18 and dexterity 18. He attacks by bludgeoning his victims with his fists or grappling them. He has no magic or treasure.*)

There is nothing of value in the room other than what lies in Reinald's trunk. It is filled with all manner of bits and pieces of rubbish he's picked up over the years to include 28gp worth of coin. But wrapped in a soiled, oily cloth, at the bottom of the trunk is a *gem of brightness*. He stole it years ago but does not use it for fear of retribution. He pulls it out from time to time to look upon it.

AREA 36: The door leading to this stairway is thick, iron bound and almost always locked from above, as the Lord of the Tower does not trust any of his minions, most especially the doppelganger Chamberlain.

Your light runs shadows before you as the door opens, revealing stone walls flanking a narrow staircase. The steps lead up to the corner of the tower where they angle sharply, leading on to the next floor. The area is dry, clean, and little used.

The stairs lead up and around the tower corner to the **5th Floor**, but they are trapped.

At the bottom of the stairs is a simple gas trap. The first step is slightly loose and gaps range about the bottom of it; these abnormalities are difficult to see but upon a successful spot check (CL 15) a character might see them; something that may warrant further investigation. Upon investigating the first step, the individual finds the trap on a successful trap check (CL 5).

Anyone who does not spot the gaps and places any weight upon the first step forces it to depress a small amount, which in turn releases a cloud of gas trapped in capsules from beneath the step itself. The gas is an acidic gas if breathed. Anyone on the step or within 5 feet must make a successful save versus gas (CL 10) or suffer 3d8 points of damage. A save represents a successful dodge and they suffer no damage.

Anyone who uses the stair regularly knows not to step on the first step.

5TH FLOOR

AREA 37: The door leading from the stairs is always locked from inside the room. It is barred as well. The Lord of the Tower has little trust in his servants. The door is thick and bound in iron, breaking it down is very difficult, and requires a successful strength check (CL 18). A battering ram may be required to get through the door, or something as simple as a *knock* spell.

The door opens to an almost empty room. A single chair sits in the middle of the room, facing the door. Next to it is a table, upon which sits a porcelain pitcher and a goblet. The walls, however, are far more lavish. Frescoes decorate them from top to bottom, carved into a thick layer of plaster that covers the stone beneath. The reliefs are painted in dark tones; they depict strange creatures from otherworldly places with no discernable pattern. The room is dark and gloomy.

The pitcher contains water. The goblet is empty. They are both placed here to torture the chamberlain as he is required to sit in the chair until summoned by the Lord of the Tower and he is not allowed to drink. There is nothing particularly valuable about the pitcher or goblet, and the water is drinkable.

The frescoes cover a wide assortment of subject matter but there is a pattern to them. Anyone who studies them for at least 10 minutes is allowed a successful intelligence check (CL 6) to determine the starting point. The frescoes portray the story of Coburg the Undying. Beginning to the left of the stair case door and ending to the right. In brief they portray the following:

His slaying of the Baron, his master.

Swearing service to the Dark Lord.

Building a tower within a tower (the main gates of Aufstrag).

Traveling the planes.

Meeting a beautiful woman with her mouth covered (the Vessel of Souls).

Seizing the throne after Unklar's fall.

Ruling from a throne in the sky.

The last is a wedge of dead rising from the Wretched Plains pleading to him on his throne.

The room, however, is not unguarded. Buried in the frescoes of the planes is a small dark patch. This patch is a gateway to an ethereal plane and within it dwells a gigantic phase spider. Anyone who stays in the room for longer than a few minutes catches the creature's attention and it comes forth (this is another way the Lord of the Tower tortures the Chamberlain as the Chamberlain knows that the spider will come out).

After the first 2 rounds in the room, every round that someone stays in the room there is a 10% chance the spider notices and

rushes out to the attack. The chances are cumulative, so that after 5 rounds in the room there is a 30% chance the spider notices. When it initially travels from its home plane it pulls itself out of the wall, coming from the small hole in the fresco, forward legs, face, more legs, etc.

PHASE SPIDER: (This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 7d10, AC 17, HP 56. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a bite for 1d8 points of damage. It has the ability to web and its bite is poisonous and leads to eventual death. The spider is also able to plane shift at will between the ethereal plane and the material.)

Reaching into the hole reveals the creature's treasure. It consists of a set of six *ioun* stones (Castle Keeper's choice).

AREA 38: This very large chamber is the Lord's chamber and dominates almost the entire 5th floor of the tower. It consists of several rooms within the main room, blocked off by half walls or partitions. Entering the room reveals a lush living space with carpets upon the floor and tapestries on the wall. Across the main chamber in **Area 38a** stands a large four poster bed with heavy bedding on it. Several braziers light the room.

The Lord of the Tower is a seere devil, a powerful creature that has dwelt in the bowels of Aufstrag for countless centuries. These devils served the Horned God during his reign and after his fall most of them scattered. Some few, however, such as the Lord of the Tower, took up with other masters, in this case Coburg the Undying. This creature has served Coburg loyally and he placed him in the Tower of Horesk to watch the southern lands and to prepare the ground for his coming army.

The Lord of the Tower has long been aware of the party's intrusion into the tower and is waiting for them. This is of course unless the party has entered the tower in complete secrecy which is at this juncture unlikely.

Upon a chair sitting lazily, with one leg thrown across the arm of the chair, amidst the splendor of the golden braziers and deep red carpets sits a stout looking, if short man. His clothes are lavish, almost brazen; his hair is long and black and spills around his white face to hang down to his waist. His face is somewhat covered by the hair, but plainly visible is a brass and wire clamp, that is attached to his jaw and cheeks. He is beautiful and obviously very vain. He holds a huge ebony spear in his hand. "And what can the Lord of the Tower do for you?"

He doesn't care what their answer is, unless they proffer some flattery, he is but delaying so that they enter the room. When they do so he points his spear and screams "Die Now! Curse! Vain!"

If the characters enter and within 2 rounds make some complimentary remark to the seere devil, he hesitates his attack. If the characters continue in this manner they can attempt to charm the devil and with a successful charisma check (CL 13) they lull the devil into not attacking. The effect lasts up to one hour, anything the characters do, such as looting the room, attacking the Lord of the Tower, etc. breaks the charm. They can gain access to the temple room above if they are careful.



The balcony is accessed via a door in **Area 38**. It overlooks the swamps, facing south. One can see for many miles, both the Blighted Skeed and the Guasumland. Climbing the wall from here can be done, but to access **Area 39** one would have to go through **Area 40**, climbing around the building. Any such attempt is perilous and the climb check is made at CL 10. The check must be made three times: once to get purchase, once to circumnavigate the building and once to get up to the doors of Area 40.

SEERE DEVIL: (This creature's vital stats are HD 13, HP 94, AC 24. His primary attributes are physical. He has genius level intelligence but is susceptible to charming. He has dark vision, deep vision, and twilight vision. He is able to use spell like abilities including true seeing. He has an SR of 11. He is able to swallow his victims whole. In battle he wields the *Essunk Spear*. For complete details see *New Monsters* below.)

38A DINING AREA: This area contains a large mahogany table with six chairs. Sumptuous lighting in the form of many candelabra stand upon the table and in each corner. The walls are covered in thick, warm tapestries depicting the Empress of New Aenoch. They track her career through the various stages of her life, from her crowning as a youth, through the middle years and on into her old age. The final tapestry shows her sitting upon a splendid throne, with what appears to be the Seere devil next to her; she is once more graced with youth.

The devil is obsessed with the Empress and wishes to possess her when the wars are over.

TREASURE: The candelabra are magical. By uttering the word “du” they light; utter the opposite, “chu” and they expire.

38B STUDY: The enclosure here is walled in tapestries and floored with a large red rug. An 8 foot long wooden desk dominates the room. It has two drawers, one on the left and one on the right. Across the table are a number of papers, maps and the like. An ink quill and jar of ink stand there as well.

The right hand drawer contains paper and a small gold chest with wax in it for stamping a seal. The left hand drawer contains a book, the *Imachithius*. *Imach* is a name, “*Ithius*” is dwarven that means “book of” or more loosely “written by.” It is the *Book of Imach*. It is a wizard's spell book and contains 45 spells, from 1st to 7th level. The Castle Keeper should choose these at befits the campaign.

The maps on the table depict the southlands and the Empire and have many notations about routes of march with further notes on what the scouts have discovered guard these routes and how easy bringing siege craft through will be. Anyone with even a mediocre amount of military experience recognizes them for what they are. The paper are mostly notes and setting up food depots and supply points on those routes for the army that must be gathered.

The carpet depicts steps winding down into the abyss of the Wretched Plains. Looking at it for very long can mesmerize the weak willed, stunning them for 1d4 rounds. A successful constitution save (CL 5) negates the affects.

16 CASTLES & CRUSADES

To the left of the desk and behind it is a trap door. It lies beneath the rug. It leads to **Area 33** below.

TREASURE: The quill and ink jar are magical. So long as they are kept together the jar never runs out of ink and the quill never dulls. If separated the ink jar dries up immediately; if brought back together the ink jar refills immediately.

38C BED: This portion of the room is elevated about 3 feet higher than the rest of the room. Two sets of small steps lead up to the landing. It contains a large four poster bed with sumptuous curtains. The bed itself is huge, 8 feet wide and 10 feet long. It contains a mound of very expensive, warm and comfortable bedding. A 12 point candelabra stands next to the bed, it is bronze with inworked silver designs depicting souls rising in torment.

TREASURE: The bedding is actually magical. Anyone who sleeps in it is restored to full hit points after a single night's sleep. It must all be used in concert with each other, i.e., the sheets, quilts, pillows etc.

The Seere Devil keeps the Tower treasure on his person in a *bag of holding*. It is as follows: 12,000gp in various coin, *cloak of charisma*, *gloves of dexterity*, *feather token: fan*, *efficient quiver*, +3 *chain mail*, a *long sword nine lives stealer*, a *tot-ring* that imparts a cleric with the ability to speak with the dead as the spell cast by a 10th level cleric, usable only by a cleric. The devil has a ring upon which is the seal of Aufstrag — Coburg's seal — used to stamp letters and the like.

6TH FLOOR TEMPLE

There is no noticeable entrance to the 6th floor, the sacradatum for the Tower of Horesk. The priests who serve the memory of Unklar, and the rule of Coburg the Undying dwell in the room, leaving it on the backs of the giant bats they house. The Lord of the Tower, or other visiting dignitaries, gain access via a *rope trick* that has permanency cast upon it. In the northwest corner of the Lord's chambers in **Area 38**, hangs a rope that if climbed leads up to **Level 6, Area 39** of the Tower. Otherwise entry is gained only through climbing up the side of the tower or on the backs of some magical creature.

A *detect magic* spell reveals the magical nature of the rope and the access point; any wizard can determine the nature of the spell and its permanency with a simple intelligence check (CL 5) for no effort has been made to disguise or hide the rope.

AREA 39: The characters can easily pull themselves up the rope and into the room.

Pulling yourself up through the dimensional space brings you into a cold chamber where the crisp air catches your breath. The room itself is as large as the tower and dominated by a single large pool where the water seems caught in the air's frozen embrace. Ice creeps up the walls like clawed fingers, patches of it cling litter the floor. The pool itself is shaped like two intersecting 8's and the middle is bridged by a short walk upon which sits a statue of the horned god himself. Standing in all its glory the statue grasps a staff of power and looks over all with disdain. Four large stone doors dominate the eastern wall.

The room is a temple dedicated to the Horned God. The temple is served by a priest of Unklar, now in the service of Coburg. He dwells in the room, never sleeping or taking sustenance, but rather bent upon his own thoughts pondering the mysteries of the multiverse. He sits unseen, wrapped in a magical cloak that blends his person with the icy stone surroundings around him. A simple glance in his direction reveals nothing but the stone wall he blends so carefully with. However, a closer examination and a successful wisdom check (CL 15) allow the characters to see a ripple effect where the wall is.

The priest is immediately aware of the interlopers, even if for some reason he has not heard their entrance into the tower. He watches them for a moment, attempting to size up who might be the greatest threat, or barring that, attempting to figure out if he needs to parlay with these men.

The priest, Childerbric, serves Coburg only out of design. His loyalty is to the memory of the horned god and as with so many of his ilk; his designs are to bring his dread master back to the material plane. So his service to Coburg is fleeting at best and his ultimate design does not involve the Undying One. With these machinations in mind he studies the characters to determine whether they might serve as tools to destroy or at least impede Coburg.

Use of the priest is entirely up to the Castle Keeper. A simple battle in which the two parties contest the dominance of the room may better serve the game; however, the priest could serve as conduit for a greater adventure that intertwines Coburg's desire to dominate the southern lands with the priest's desires to again summon the horned god with those of the characters. If bargains are struck the priest can offer information about entry into Aufstrag, Coburg's plans, and give them use of the giant vultures. He will only do so of course if he believes that the characters might be used as a tool to destroy Coburg.

If the priest attacks or they attack the priest, his ultimate design is to knock the characters one by one into the pool and attempt to freeze the water over them, casting them into the Void.

POOL: The pool itself is more than a simple pool. It is a sacrificial chamber in which Childerbric offers human sacrifices to Unklar by casting them into the pool, where the icy layer breaks and the victims fall through and risk being cast into the deeps of the Void, there to serve as food for the shadows of Unklar. For it was to the Void that Unklar was cast and where he presently dwells. If the water refreezes, over anyone beneath it, that person or thing is cast out to the Void. The water can only be frozen by the icy breath cast from the staff of the priest Childerbric.

Anyone who falls through the ice finds themselves floating on the expanse of the Great Empty where nothing but entropy exists. They hang in a realm between realms, in the middle of the ether, and in the deep pool simultaneously. Anyone so afflicted must make a successful intelligence (CL 7) save or be stunned for 1d4 rounds.

They are not hungry, nor filled with any earthly desires. In fact, their drive to live slowly leaves them until they are consumed by the nothingness that is the Void. Anyone falling through and not stunned is allowed to make another intelligence save (CL 12). If successful, they can come out of the water during the next round; if they fail, they succumb to the Void and require rescue from some other source.

In any case, if the water is frozen before the victim breaks free of the pool, they are cast onto the Void.

If they are cast onto the Void, the victim notices that in the distance there is a stain on the emptiness, it consists of a black gulf, like a stain on the eye after looking at a bright light. It begins to draw closer to the victim. This of course is Unklar, wrapped in the shadows of his own hate and rage. Anyone who looks upon the cloud, even if they do not know what it means, understands that it is a power beyond their abilities to understand or even to combat.

Once on the Void any number of plane shift type spells can rescue the character. Anyone who stays there for over 12 hours meets the shadows of Unklar that threaten to consume them. Use of this encounter is left entirely up to the CK.

The whole room acts as Hallowed ground for Childerbric, giving him a +2 to his AC (making it AC 23) and all the advantages of a *Hallow* spell against GOOD and LAW.

CHILDERBRIC (This 10th level, lawful evil, human cleric's vital stats are HP 72, AC 21. His primary attributes are wisdom, strength and intelligence. His significant attributes are strength 17, dexterity 18, constitution 15, wisdom 19, and intelligence 15. He attacks with spell use or his long mace that serves him as a staff of frost. He can wield this weapon as a normal melee weapon or as a magical staff. If someone falls into the pool, he taps the water with his staff and casts wall of ice in order to freeze the water. He wears no armor but has tattoos for protection upon his skin, granting him a bonus +8 on his AC. Spells: 0 detect good, first air, darkness, 1st curse, command, fear, protection from good, shield of faith, 2nd darkness, hold person x 3 silence, 3rd cure serious wounds x 2, dispel magic, curse, 4th water walk, freedom of movement, control water, 5th flame strike, plane shift.)

If bested, Childerbric attempts to flee via his plane shift, returning to his native Aufstrag and to Coburg.

Treasure: There is nothing else of value in the room.

AREA 40 STABLES: The five doors lead each to a stable where five, now four, greater vultures are housed. Each of these stables has all the accoutrements needed to saddle and ride the beasts. They are tame, though very aggressive. Two handlers dwell in stable 4; Roderic who has already left with the Vessel of Souls and Eurum, but he is harmless with 4 hit points. Any attempt to attack or threaten him leads to his utter collapse or suicide as he leaps off the tower.

He immediately starts babbling about the Fair Lady with the mask and how Roderic took a vulture and with it her. He confesses that Roderic wasn't taking her to Aufstrag but to the town of Gafika where he hoped to sell her into slavery. Beyond that he cannot say.

The stables themselves are small with large doors that open to the outside world.

The greater vultures respond to anyone who mounts them and rides much like a horse. Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of horsemanship can ride one.

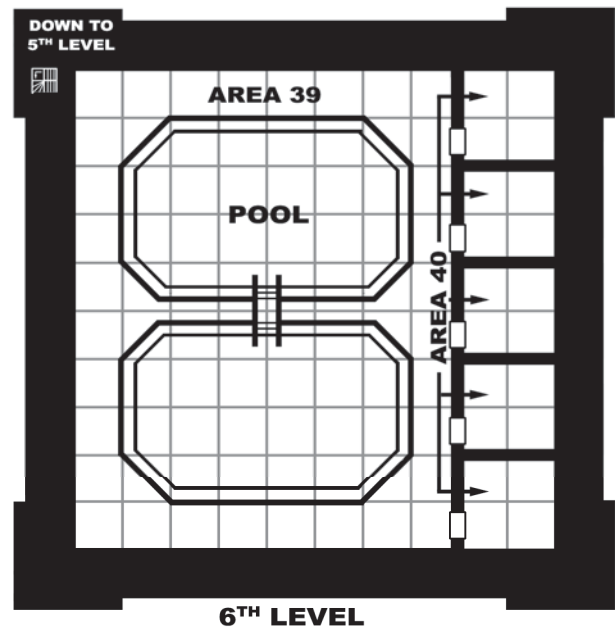
GREATER VULTURES (This neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, HP 28, 28, 31, 32, AC 15. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with 2 talons for 1d6 each, and one beak for 2d4 points of damage. They can fly 80f per round. They have improved sight, scent, twilight vision and the dive ability. Any dive attack gains the vulture a +2 to its attack, if the attack is successful the victim is allowed a dexterity check to avoid the grab; failing that the victim is picked up and carried into the air to be dropped later.)

BATTLEMENTS

There is nothing of value here, only a large, several ton, brazier for sending signals. Access is gained through **Area 30a on the 4th Floor.**

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

From this point the characters have several options. Assuming they have had the horn of opening assembled, the journey to the Causeway takes them into the swamp. That road will be arduous and fraught with danger. They can travel north along the edges of the swamp to the town of Grafika and place themselves on the road to the Causeway. Pursuing the Vessel of Souls takes them into the swamp and to Gafika as well. In any event the adventure picks up in *A10 The Last Respite*, it is largely overland adventure with several unconnected encounters.



NEW MONSTERS (FROM MT OF AIHRDE)

DEVIL, AGHUL

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: L

HD: 7 (d8)

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: 17

ATTACKS: 2 Tusk (1d8), knoglen blade (1d10)

SPECIAL: Darkvision 60 ft., Immune to the Elements, Knoglen Blade, Regeneration 1, Shape Change, Spell-Like Abilities, Twilight Vision, SR 3

SAVES: M

INT: High

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

TYPE: Giant

TREASURE: 8

XP: 1080+7

The aghul are large man-like creatures, possessed of long arms and short legs. They are entirely hairless but for their monstrous heads. Their bodies are thickly muscled, if at times disproportionately so. They wear little in the way of clothing as they are totally immune to any form of temperature, hot or cold. They have massive broad foreheads, a long trunk-like nose, two huge tusks that rise from their toothy maws. Their fur-covered heads are dirty and matted. Their tusks are long, ivory and often carved or covered in jewels and bands of iron, silver, gold or platinum. They are very fond of jade and cap theirs tusks in this precious metal. When disguised, they cast themselves as dwarves, decked in jade armor and beards of ivory, combed immaculately and curled, the curls held with oils and perfumes.

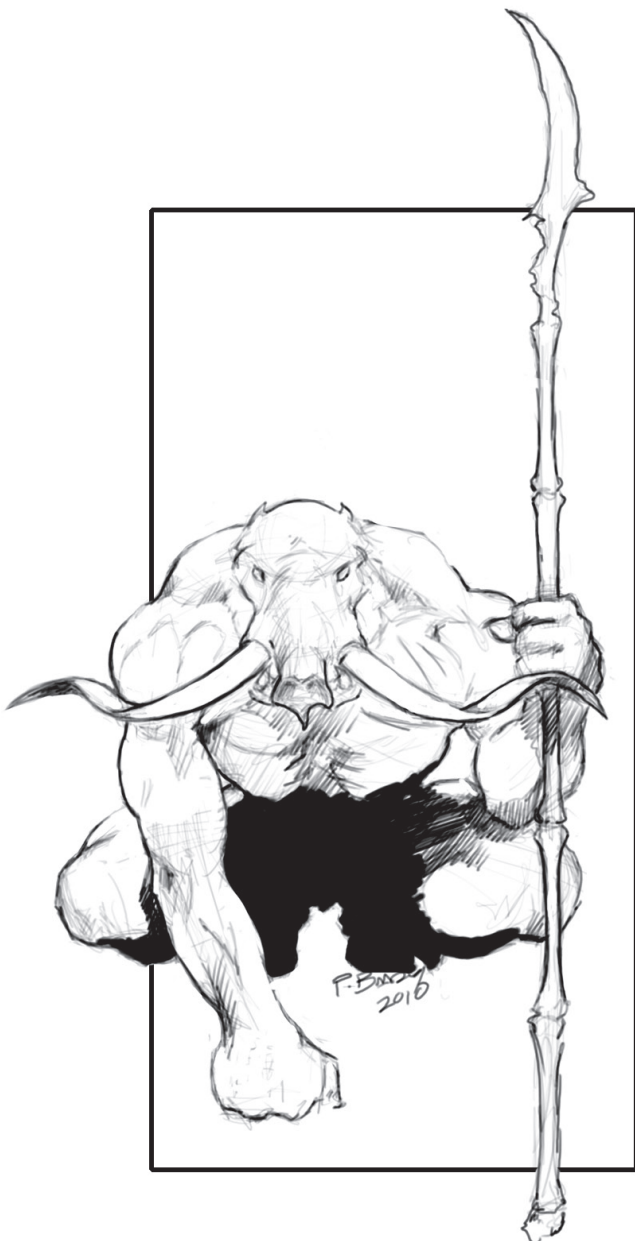
The aghul are a type of devil, extremely evil and filled with a burning hate for all things. Their own hideous forms lead them into solitary lives, though they do, from time to time, gather in a con-course for what purpose, few can surmise. Their solitude is usually spent in failed attempts at creation; for it is their desire to lord over lesser creatures and they are forever steeping themselves in arcane magic and the various sciences. These creatures are very intelligent, possessed of a natural ability to judge the value and reason of things. They possess some minor empathetic abilities.

COMBAT: The aghul are reluctant to fight and only do so if threatened, cornered, or made extremely wrathful. Generally, they attempt to cajole their slaves or servants into battle for them. When they are forced into battle, they do so using a combination of spells to disconcert their opponents and close using their weapon of choice, the knoglen.

KNOGLEN BLADE: This weapon is a pole-arm, fashioned from the living bones of the aghul's victims. Ranging about 8 feet long, it serves as a +3 weapon in both hit and damage. The blade(s) are razor sharp, self replicating bones. When the blade strikes a successful hit with a 19 or 20 (without bonus), flakes of the bone break off into the wound. These flakes are living bone and begin to meld with the victim. In the round following a successful hit, the victim feels an intense pain. The pain lasts for 4 melee rounds at which point the arm becomes numb and useless. If not treated, the wound begins to rot and the surrounding flesh begins to fall off in 1d4 days. There is no saving throw. Treatment can be with *cure disease*, *remove curse*, *remove disease*, *heal*, *restoration* or a cleric can attempt to turn the bones. They turn as a skeleton. If untreated, the rot spreads beyond the wound and the victim begins to take 1d10 points damage each day until they die. Unless buried in holy or consecrated ground, they reanimate as a zombie or skeleton in 1d8 days.

REGENERATION: The aghul is able to regenerate 1 hit point per round so long as he is in a cold environment.

SPELL-LIKE ABILITIES: *air/water walk* (twice a day), *animate dead* (once per day), *control wind* (once per day), *detect thoughts* (upon command), *glyph of warding* (3 times a day), *magic circle* (once per day), *speak with dead* (upon command), *spiritual weapon* (once a day). They cast as a 10th level caster.



IN AIHRDE

The Aghul are rare in Aihilde anymore.

Originally created by the All Father in the depths of the Void, these creatures thrived in that Great Empty. When Unklar called for aid in the War against the Gods they flocked to his banner. The Aghul rose to power in the horned god's world and lorded over armies of ogres, orcs, and men. Their intelligence led them into many posts of great repute, building castles, bridges, and weaponry. Their knowledge of the various sciences played well with Unklar and he used them as servants throughout his experimentations.

The Aghul were feared by almost all of the creatures that served and fought the horned god. They are wicked, cruel creatures who thrive on the sufferings of others. Few entered their domains and returned as they entered, tortured by what diabolical machinations only they could tell.

When the horned god fell, the Aghul were scattered, many consumed in the wars that followed. But some fled to various strongholds, towers and holes in the ground to live on until the day their master returned to Aihilde.

SEERE, DEVIL (PAINTED DEVIL)

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-2

SIZE: L

HD: 13(d8)

MOVE: 40 ft., 80 ft. (fly)

AC: 24

ATTACKS: Bite (1d12), By Weapon

SPECIAL: Dark Vision, Deep Vision, Essunk Spear, Spell-like Abilities, SR 11, Swallow, True Seeing, Twilight Vision

SAVES: P

INT: Genius

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

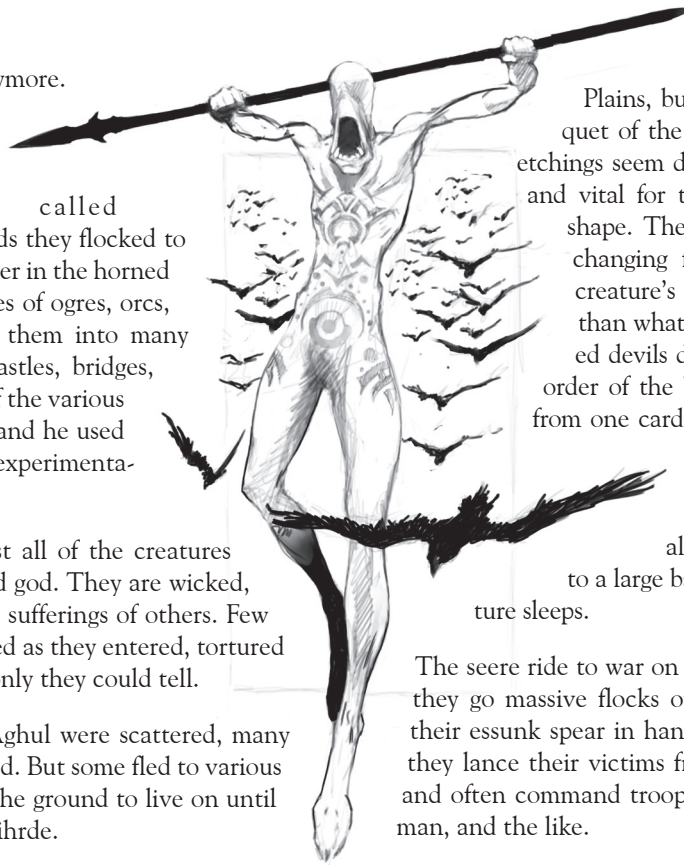
TYPE: Extra-Planar (Devil)

TREASURE: 14

XP: 6900+13

Seere devils, or painted devils, are tall and thin, lecherous looking creatures with emaciated bodies covered by dried flaking flesh. They walk on hobbled feet, shaped more like a giant marsupials than a man's. Long, drawn faces end in a dislocated jaw that hangs several feet down the creature's chest. The open jaw contains an impenetrable darkness. The seere devils have no eyes, only sockets that are both wide and deep. They have no ears, nor a nose; all their senses bound in the flesh of their jaw so that they "hear" the world around them. The etchings of multiple tattoos cover their skin, these they have carved upon themselves. Their favored form, however, is of a beautiful man, short and muscular, with long hair that hangs low upon their chests; but their deceptions possess a flaw, for their disjointed jaws defy the illusion and they must be wired together, so that the painted devil must always appear as a human with a brass casing bound to his chin and cheeks.

20 CASTLES & CRUSADES



Called by many names, the seere serve as guides in the Wretched Plains, but their etchings give them the sobriquet of the "painted" devil as well. Though the etchings seem disorganized, they are carefully placed and vital for the painted devil's ability to change shape. They reflect the skin they assume upon changing form; damage to them negates the creature's ability to appear as anything other than what it is, a horrid monstrosity. The painted devils dwell in long columned buildings; the order of the building is linear and rarely deviates from one cardinal direction. There are never turns in the creature's home. The heart of their lair is always an open room, tiled in immaculate rectangular tiles, almost always a sea green. The tiles lead to a large bath of steaming water where the creature sleeps.

The seere ride to war on the wind of undead crows; wherever they go massive flocks of the birds follow them. They carry their essunk spear in hand, preferring to battle from on high; they lance their victims from above. They are able organizers and often command troops of the lesser devils, Kain's Henchman, and the like.

COMBAT: The seere fight from above, never touching the ground unless forced or until victory is at hand. They lance their victims with their spears, leaving the stains of the dark soul in them. They breathe insects upon their prey before descending upon to devour them. Their massive jaws engulf any fallen foe, swallowing them, drawing them into the inky blackness of oblivion.

Essunk Spear: The spear of the seere acts as a +3 weapon. Fashioned from the souls of the damned, a shroud of dark shadow hangs over the spear. These snaking tendrils coil and wrap around the haft and the seere himself. They seem to have a life of their own; but in fact, their master guides them in their every move, unleashed only when he enters battle. Whenever the seere strikes the ground with the essunk spear, he summons 1d4 wrights. He is very reluctant to do this, for it frees the summoned souls from the spear. He replaces them by thrusting the spear into his own mouth and drawing them from his gullet, also something he is reluctant to do. The spear always has 1d20 charges; each wright summoned expends one charge.

The spear also causes disease, any creature struck with the spear must make a successful constitution save or become blind. A second strike and failed saving throw causes deafness.

Swallow: Whenever a seere feels that it has defeated an enemy, but before that enemy dies, it attacks it with its massive open maw, attempting to swallow it. Any creature struck by the bite attack must make a successful wisdom save; if they fail, they are swallowed by the seere devil. If swallowed they take no damage but suffer the effects of a trap the soul spell with the devil acting as the gem. Until something or someone destroys the seere devil, the unfortunate victim remains in the belly of the beast.

Spell-like Abilities: *Confusion* (3/day), *Darkness* (3/day), *Insect*

Plague (1/day), *Symbol* (1/day), *Summon Undead* (3/day), *True Seeing* (permanent), *Vision* (6/day).

IN AIHRDE

The painted devils followed the course of the cull in coming to the world of Aihrde. Fashioned in the deeps of the Void, they drifted in clouds of their own stench for eons until the world took shape. They came to it even before the sun and moon were set upon their courses and they lived in the darkness for time without count and as they watched the world unfold, their envy grew. It knew no bounds as they bore witness to the beauty around them. The hate of beauty germinated within them until it consumed them. They remained faceless though, fearful of the power of the world around them, that is, until the coming of the horned one.

Upon his arrival, the seere rose and entered the annals of the world as nightmares. Their immense knowledge, gained from long observation, proved a valuable conduit for the lords of Aufstrag and they used the seere as guides through the cosmos and in the governance of all things. All dreaded the seere for they lorded over both friend and foe.

Upon the fall of the Horned God, the enemies of the seere, and they were many, returned his arrogance in full measure. Driven from the halls they fled into the wilderness or to the Wretched Plains where they joined the detracted legions of devils that vied with power over the realm with tvungenos.

HLOBANE ORC: NEUROG LET, BONE CRUSHERS

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1

SIZE: L

HD: 8 (d8)

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: 19

ATTACKS: Ball and Chain (2d6), 2 Claw (1d4)

SPECIAL: Dark Vision, Light Sensitivity, Spell immunity

SAVES: P

INT: Low

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

TYPE: Humanoid

TREASURE: Nil

XP: 500 +8 (I, I)

The Neurog Let, called the bone crushers in the vulgate, are beastly orcs, bred for their sheer brutality. They are tall, powerfully built, though surprisingly lean creatures. With narrow eyes set beneath a thick brow line, it appears as if they are forever glaring. Their mouths are wide and their teeth filed and sharp. Like all orcs they have tusks that jut from the lower jaw, but the Neurog Let often grow the tusks back into their upper jaw where they cut the flesh, wounds which constantly seep pus and blood. Hairless but for a token lock they keep on their scalps, the Neurog Let ritually tattoo themselves, usually blending their horrific scars with the decorative nature of tattoos. The tattoos always reflect the dark crescent, or the horned god.

Neurog Let spawn other Neurog Let and are usually kept apart from the tribe, bound to the females of their particular breed.

These Den Mothers routinely beat them and torture them, teaching them the tools of their trade. By the time they reach maturity, a rage born of a long life of pain and suffering consumes them; for this reason the tribe binds them in chains, specifically designed for the bone crushers. Two chains, each independent of the other, are set on the creature's wrists. The chains attach to one or two spiked mace heads and placed inside a huge iron ball that weighs several hundred pounds. The Neurog Let must drag this ball wherever he goes. The Ukjanu Let, The Keeper of the Bone Crusher, looks after the ball. The ukjanu is the only orc allowed near the bone crusher. He feeds him, waters him, and mends his wounds. For these reasons they exercise some control of the Neurog Let. In combat, the ukjanu breaks open the large iron ball and releases the spiked mace heads, unleashing the Neurog Let onto the world. Generally the bone crusher only responds to the ukjanu. If the ukjanu is killed the Neurog Let rampages on all things living until he himself is killed.

By the time they reach maturity, the Battle Groups assume charge of them and use them for a variety of purposes. For the most part they are used to torturing prisoners and striking fear into those who do not yield to the questions put to them. They also unleash them in order to battle some champion or the like.

COMBAT: Neurog Let, once unleashed, attack with a brutal disregard to any suffering they may incur. They single out the largest or best armored opponent and attack until they have killed it or they themselves fall. They do not feel pain or suffer any wound to stop



them, fighting even after limbs have been severed. They attack with the ball and chain, swinging it in wide circles to smash their victims or using them to strangle opponents. If freed from their chains for some reason they take any weapon that is near.

Spell Immunity: Neurog Let possesses an immunity to all mind altering spells, such as *fear*, *charm person* etc. This does not include illusions.

IN AIHRDE

The Neurog Let, of the Hlobane orcs, hail, as all the whole of that orc tribe do, from the Red Hills. Descendants of the first orcs of the Marl and are held in high regard by the rest of the Hlobane peoples. To become an Ukjanu is a highly sought after, if dangerous, post in the tribal hierarchy.

During the Winter Dark, each Hlobane Legion took one of these creatures to serve in the noted purpose. In later years they Unklar favored them in his dealings with all peoples and used frequently by him to bring great suffering and humiliation on his victims. Their nature made them unreliable and they often turned on Unklar or his servants and were in their own turn destroyed. In latter years, the Neurog Let have become even more rare, but any large group of Hlobane, numbering over 100 has a good chance of possessing one of these fierce creatures.

They are most often encountered in the east; however an increased demand for these creatures in certain courts and by those who seek such protection has led to their spreading to the west. They are sometimes sold on the slave markets of the Confederation of Torrich, Eloria, the Gelderlands or other similar places, always with the ukjanu let in tow.

NAERLULTHUT

NO. ENCOUNTERED: Special (see below)

SIZE: Special (see below)

HD: Special (see below)

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: Special (see below)

ATTACKS: Slam (see below)

SPECIAL: Darkvision 60 ft.,

Devouring Assimilation, Dust, SR 5

SAVES: Special

INT: Average

ALIGNMENT: Evil

TYPE: Undead

TREASURE: NA

XP: 1 HD13+1 / 4 HD 150+4/8 HD 950+8

The naerlulthut are incorporeal creatures that dwell in the fields of ash left behind by the naerlulth. At times they appear as whirling balls of ash, rolling or twisting through the devastation without purpose. When roused they begin to transform, assuming something of the shape they possessed in life, but it is little more than a hollow echo of it. Gaunt, skeletal creatures, their bodies are elongated beyond imagining, their visages twisted with rage and madness, their clothes in tatters holding what weapons, if any, they held in life. But these are ghostly images

of what was once real, for the naerlulth, their mistress, devours all.

The naerlulthut are the spawn of the naerlulth, that dread creature of the darkness whose sole intent is to destroy the world about it (see Crusader No. 10). These, its children, are undead spirits whose bodies did the beast devour and whose souls were bound to it. These tormented spirits wander the ashen fields of the naerlulth's destruction, bound to the creature that made them. They have only faint memories of their former lives and these are usually haunting nightmares that do nothing but cause them the anguish of anticipation. Fear and hate consume these creatures.

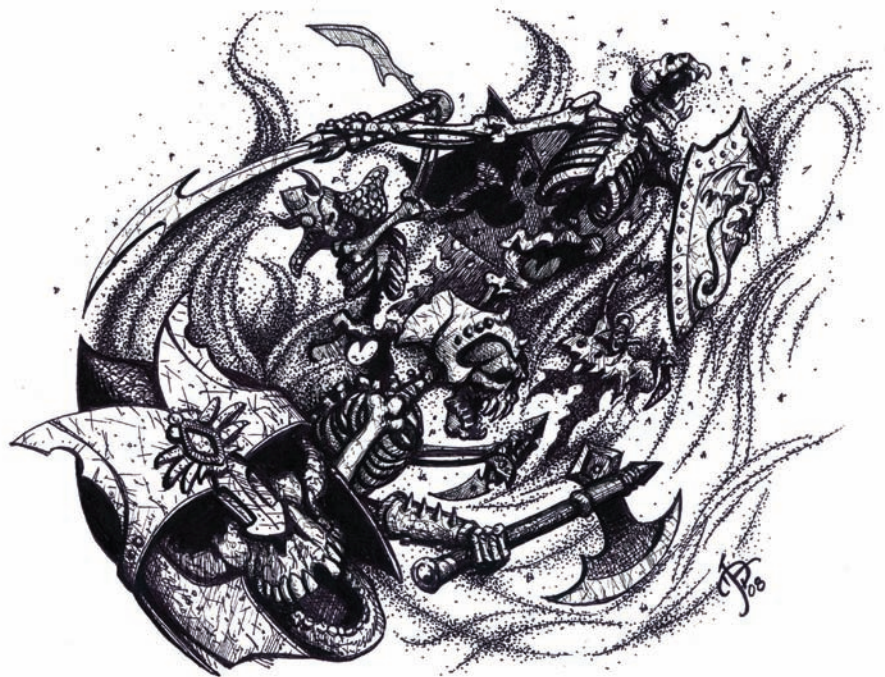
The naerlulthut's natural form is one of dust, the spirit of the devoured creature lingering in the refuse left behind by the naerlulth. If in life it used a weapon such as a sword, it will do so in death, but the weapon is actually a part of it and not considered separate. When the creature becomes corporeal, it takes the shape of what it was in life, for example an orc will appear as a gaunt or skeletal orc, a manticore as a gaunt and skeletal manticore and so on. No matter the shape, it is restricted to one slam attack per round. However, its size does determine its HD and AC.

Small Creatures: HD 1(d12), AC 13

Medium Creatures: HD 4 (d12), AC 15

Large Creatures: HD 8 (d12), AC 17

Combat: Naerlulthut appear as swirling clouds of dust drifting across the ashy fields. When living creatures (aside from insects or plants) pass near the creature they begin to change shape, turning into a vaguely corporeal form. They appear to be made of dust but with the shape of whatever they were in life. Once they have changed shape, they focus on the nearest living creature and attack it ferociously, even going so far as to pursue it if it should flee. It attacks until killed or turned. They do not leave the fields of dust and as soon as the creature they are pursuing leaves, the naerlulthut dissolves, vanishing into the dust once again. If the



naerlulthut is killed, it dissolves back into the dust from whence it came; it is not destroyed however, for after several days it regains its shape and terrorizes the wasteland once more. Turning the creature is the only way to permanently destroy them.

Devouring Assimilation: Whenever the naerlulthut touches living flesh, the flesh becomes dry and cracked, turning black almost immediately. The flesh is destroyed only a little at a time. The initial contact causes 1d8 points of damage. After the initial contact and damage and for each round that the naerlulthut continues to touch the victim, it causes 1-2 points of constitution damage. Alert victims can quickly break away to avoid this damage, no check being necessary. Those unable to break away continue to suffer constitution damage until they eventually die, as the effect spreads from the initial point of contact throughout and across their whole body, turning them into dust. The victim dies when they reach 0 constitution points. The damage is not permanent unless the victim dies and can be cured with a *restoration* spell. Also, victims regain 1 constitution point for every day of solid rest.

Dust: Naerlulthuts change shape, morphing from the dust that is their natural form into a more corporeal being. This change is triggered when a living creature (excluding insects and plants) passes near the naerlulthut and stays in the vicinity for any length of time. They begin taking shape from the dust of the desolation about them, slowly forming face, hands, arms and a torso until they have some semblance of a body. Once they have taken form, resurgent memories drive them to attack any creatures that they see. They keep the form until destroyed. It takes 1-4 rounds to change from dust to corporeal. Passing by a naerlulthut causes the creature to begin taking shape but if the creature continues to pass the naerlulthut loses its form, dissolving back into dust.

THE NAERLULTHUT IN AIHRDE

These creatures are very uncommon, only found where the naerlulth have dwelt for some time. They have no real connection to the Winter Dark or the Horned god, being entirely creations of the naerlulth. They hold no particular importance to the people's of Aihrde, as few have encountered them and even fewer have unraveled their origins. Those that have, such as the White Order, have noted them as yet one more horror that survived the Winter Dark. Some elves have taken to bringing their dead and feeding them to the naerlulth so that their souls or spirits linger on in the plane, this in hopes of defying the curse of old.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

THE CUP OF BIUL

Centuries ago during the height of the Long Winter and the rule of Unklar, Coburg served as the door warden of Aufstrag. Over the years he rose in prominence, wealth, and power. Coburg always possessed a penchant for wonderful things, often accosting them from those who visited the halls to pay homage to the horned god. But after his Lady joined him he sought to shower her apartments with items of great value. To this end, he enlisted the dwarves who slaved in the pits of Woe to craft him various objects. Amongst these were a set of six goblets made of silver with platinum laced about their stem and bowl, adorned with gems. Each depicted a scene from Co-

burg's adventures, as instructed by him. The dwarves being clever in their workings cast the image of Coburg in an unflattering light; on each goblet he stood always behind his allies and never in the front, never with a weapon in hand, only his cloaks. Coburg, being vain, never made note of the coward's stance in which the dwarves cast his image, or if he did, he never cared.

More insidiously the dwarves cast secret runes into the cups so that the cups became bound to the door warden. They made a secret seventh cup that they kept hidden in the Pit, and they used this cup to watch the door warden, hoping somehow to plot their own escape. Though they failed in this, the cups were forever bound to Coburg. Any who possessed one of the Cups could, through spell craft, see what the Undying Lord or any who possessed another of the Cups was doing at the time.

Over the years the cups became scattered so that Coburg only possessed three. One he gave to Eric of Luth in a desperate bid to gain access to the brew-masters greatest brew.

MAGICAL PROPERTIES: Anyone holding the cup, of any class, can see into the liquid (assuming the liquid is there) and view Coburg in real time so long as a divining spell has been cast in the vicinity. Any spell within 100 feet of the Cup activates its curious nature. Spells such as discern location, know direction, divination, etc. activate the magical affects.

The Cup radiates a slight magic if detect magic is cast upon it or even if anyone who uses magic as a class ability touches it (CL 9 against their classes' primary attribute). Any Dwarf who studies the Cup can discern its magical nature, recognizing the runes in-laid in the laced platinum (CL 4 on a constitution check).

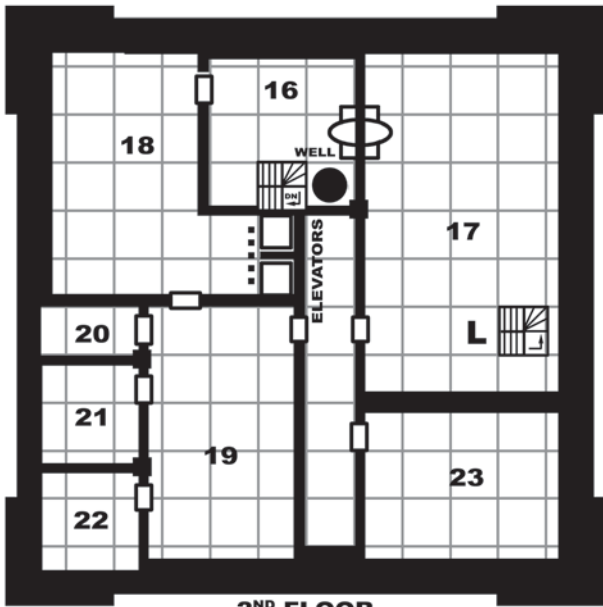
THE VOID

The Great Empty exists even where the Firmament lies, occupying the same space if not time. The Void surrounds all of creation, all of those planes that are bound in the Maelstrom. It consists of nothing tangible. However, the power of the Void is immense and infinite. For the Void itself is the source of the All Father's power, where the Language of Creation lies and consequently the source of all things which are, have been or will be.

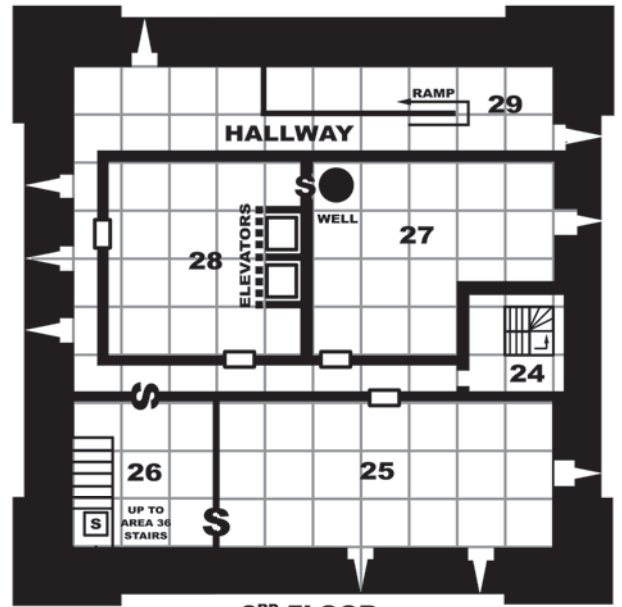
Time holds no meaning in the Void, there are no set limits on anything. Time relates to distance only, but as there is little or nothing to rank distance on, time has no foundation. Within the Void there is little need to eat or drink, though many who travel there feel the need to consume despite the lack of true hunger. Sleep acts in the same way. Only the most disciplined of plane travelers can balance what they actually need with what their subconscious perceives they need. Dying of privation is dangerous in the Void for many creatures will themselves to death, meaning that they believe they should be eating when they perhaps are not.

Movement on the Void is simple, very similar to swimming; those characters that act quickly enough can 'swim' back to the door and regain their foothold on the prime, re-enter the Meeting Hall and escape.

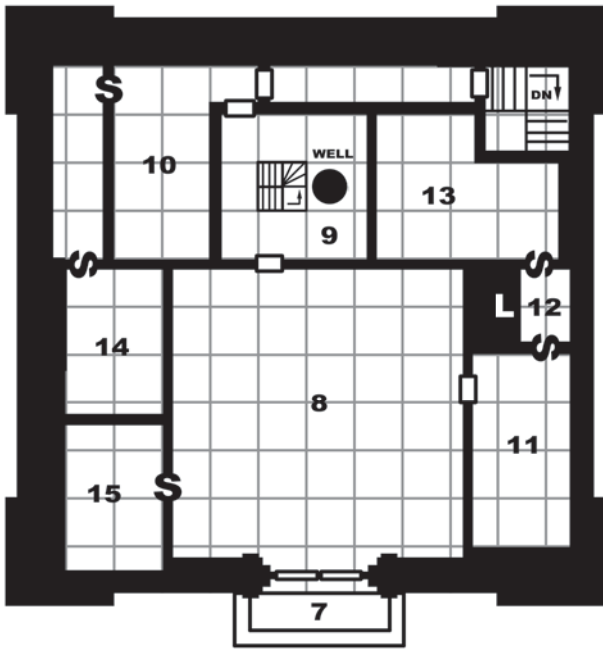
If the Void has no place in the ongoing campaign, it is easy enough to replace it with any suitable outer plane present in the existing game.



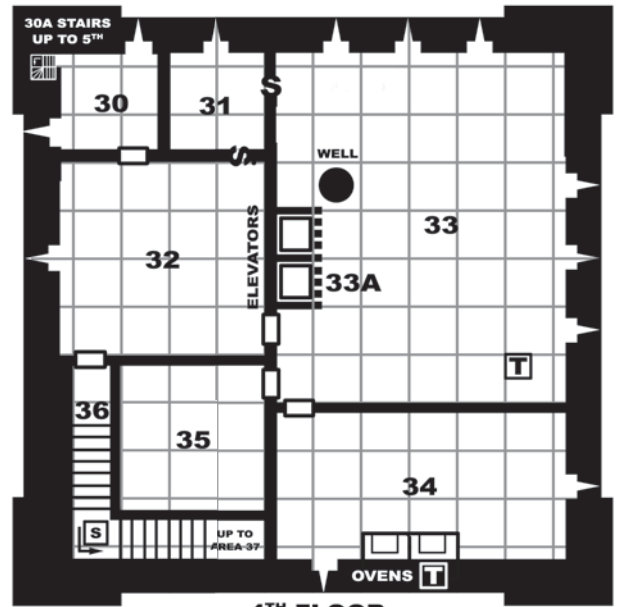
2ND FLOOR



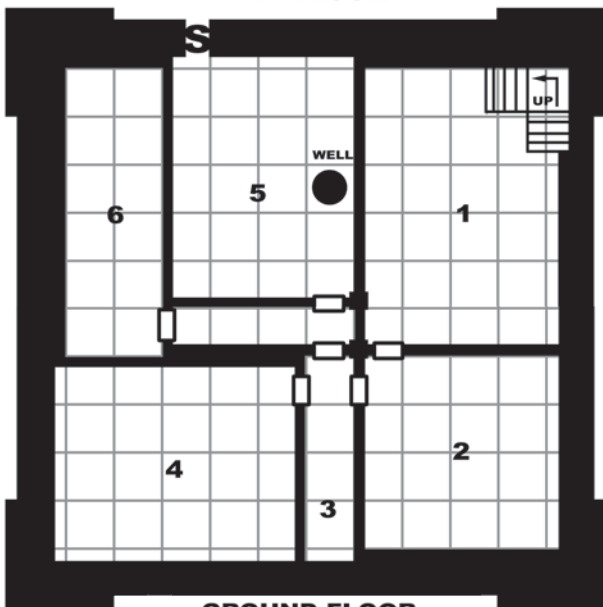
3RD FLOOR



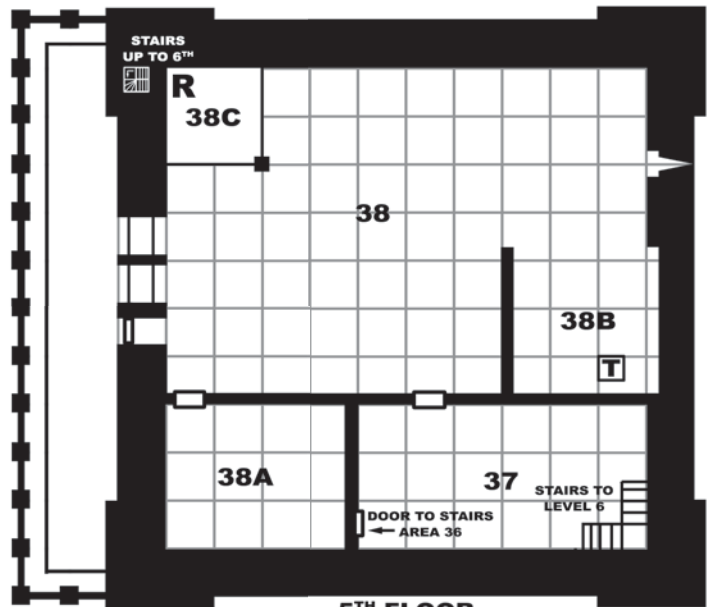
1ST FLOOR



4TH FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

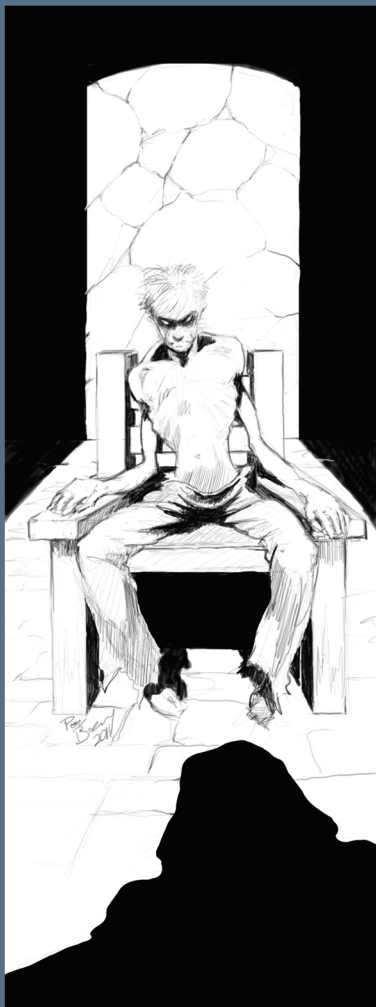


5TH FLOOR

CASTLES & CRUSADES

BLIGHTED SCREED

UPON THE BOG'S EDGE



The Tower of Horesk is an ancient edifice built upon the edge of the Grausumlands. Its dark stones sit upon an island-anchorage in the midst of a deep morass of bogs, saw grass, and gray, stagnant water. The tower sits like an obelisk, rising from the fog and waters.

Adventure's road brings those stout of heart to the Tower's iron bound gate. Whether brought here by the trail of the Vessel of Souls or by pure happenstance, the Tower, perched upon the edge of no-where, beckons, promising wealth and glory. But this is no abandoned dungeon. Fire-light spills from the windows that adorn its stark stones, and noise from inside carries over the still morass. Here is wealth and plunder, but danger as well and those who would pry open its doors must approach with some caution for inside lies ancient powers who reside upon the material planes to feed upon the weak and innocent.

Whether pursuing the Vessel of Souls as discovered in *A8 The Forsaken Mountain*, or coming upon the Tower through a regular adventure, *A9 The Helm of Night* offers characters plenty of adventure as they set out to explore, not an abandoned dungeon, but a tower filled with creatures most foul.

The Helm of Night is an adventure designed for 3-5 characters of 9th-11th level. It is designed for a single night's play or at longest over several sessions. It is fully compatible with any ongoing campaign game or played as part of the A series adventure modules. The Helm of Night is primarily an indoor adventure.

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EAN

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