

# CASTLES & CRUSADES<sup>®</sup>

**STAINS UPON THE GREEN**



STEPHEN CHENAULT

# STAINS UPON THE GREEN

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3-4 characters at 3<sup>rd</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> level.

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# STAINS UPON THE GREEN



*Stains Upon the Green* is an adventure designed for four to eight characters of mid-range level. A cleric is helpful, as the adventure does have several undead creatures in it. Some scaling of hit dice or hit points may be necessary. It is designed to introduce characters to the Rings of Brass, magical portals that lead to dwarven roads carved through the planes. It is specifically designed for use in bridging the Lands of Ursal in Aihrde with the Free City of Eskadia in the Haunted Highlands. It is modular however, allowing its use in any setting of the Castle Keeper's choice. The plane travel aspects are not germane to the adventure and can be discarded if desired.

The adventure is set upon the borderlands known as the Tar Kiln, a wilderness that lies beyond the northern marches of the Kingdom of Kayomar. Here the rolling hills and mixed pine and hardwood forests give refuge to creatures great and small; boars the size of ponies, giant wolves, and massive cave bears. There are also bull headed men and long toothed tigers, grim faced giants, and trolls. They come for the hunt, for the elk and deer are plentiful and large. It is a broken country, littered with tar pits that lay in bleak silence like stains on a canvas. *Stains upon the Green* thrusts the characters into the Tar Kiln, where the ruins of an old dwarven ring fort offers them refuge from the wilderness and its many dangers. Beyond the parapet's walls and the ruined barbican that breaches them stands a keep, built on these borderlands long ago. Abandoned now to the wilderness, its secrets are ripe for the taking. But within it lies a secret portal that others wish to use, to bridge the gap between worlds.

## 2 CASTLES & CRUSADES

### INTRODUCTION

In the Days before Days, the dwarves of Norgorad Kam opened many roads from their homelands in the Bergrucken Mountains, across the mighty forest of the Ethvold, to their kin who dwelt in the Rhodope Mountains in the west, in the land of Magdrul Hohle. Though these roads passed through the realms of the Ethrum, and were long friendly to the dwarves, they were dangerous to travel, for the Ethrum had not yet come into their own. The Ethvold, an ancient preserve of the Val Eahrakun, the gods of the All Father's crafting, harbored beasts of wild abandon and unknown dangers.

To offer travelers protection the dwarves built ring forts, set one or two days apart, whereby men with their wares could take refuge. The ring forts consisted of a dirt parapet 60 odd feet high, topped by a wooden palisade, interspersed with towers. Within, the dwarves built a large keep that housed a garrison of several score young beardlings seeking to make a name for themselves. For many long years these ring forts dominated the roads, offering safe traffic to all who used them.

But during the Goblin Dwarf Wars the forts fell into disuse, or were overwhelmed. When Magdrul Hohle fell to the goblins, the forts were all but abandoned. Hounded on all sides, the dwarves rallied only after they fashioned the Rings of Brass, portals that gave access to travel through the Maelstrom and

back to Aihrde. After they mastered them, they built them in many places, great and small, and used them to take the war to the enemy, entering at one point, traveling the roads through the Maelstrom, to arrive at another long distances away.

Thus it was that the dwarves destroyed the goblins, and the Rings of Brass offered the knowledge and egress to many places in the world. But the wars destroyed the dwarves as well, and only a shadow of them remained, so that many of their realms fell into decay and their outposts lay forgotten, untended.

But men followed in their footsteps and occupied the many spaces of dwarven design. So it was with many of the ring forts. As the Ethvold fell away, ruined by time, those ring forts that remained became bastions for men, and they rebuilt them and refortified their keeps. Few could be bothered to understand the power of the dwarves, and they built their own fortifications upon the ruins of the old with no regard for their value.

But time wreaked havoc here as well, and men came and went so that many of these bastions were lost, forgotten in the ever-retreating shadows of the Ethvold. So it was for one particular fort, called by its dwarven occupants Jurtenheim, but by men, Ringshead Keep.

Ringshead stands several days travel into the Tar Kiln. Its palisade is long gone; however, the 60 foot high berm remains, covered in grass and is in surprisingly good shape. The berm is breached by one barbican of dwarven make, but the whole fort is surrounded by a moat. This latter was added by the men when they occupied the fort, and crossed by a wooden bridge that connected the barbican and gate with the road beyond. The bridge is long gone, fallen into the moat. It is this feature that has kept Ringshead safe from many curious eyes and allowed it to sit unmolested for so many years.

## INVOLVING THE PLAYERS

Stains Upon the Green is easy to integrate into any campaign. Though set in the Tar Kiln in Aihrde, the adventure is modular and can easily be moved to any location the Castle Keeper desires. This should not impact the story of Ringshead Keep, nor in any way deviate from the Aihrde setting. The nature of the background easily ports into any homebrew setting. The following are several suggestions to help set the adventure in your own campaign.

- 1) The characters, on an overland wilderness journey, stumble upon the berm and breaching barbican of the ring fort. They easily spy the keep beyond the water and earthen wall.
- 2) One of the characters has a distant relative named Elgifu, rogue by nature. She disappeared some years ago, and the character determines to go find her as a favor to the woman's mother or out of curiosity. They know that she entered the wilderness area, heading to an old dwarf fortification named Ringshead. Elgifu is of course the dead adventurer in G1, slain by Corilyn as noted below.

- 3) A chance encounter with an orc reveals the location of the ring fort. The orc either confesses or paints a rough map in the dirt about the fort's location, and conveys his master's desire to go there and open some gate to the other worlds.
- 4) A local lord or magistrate, learning of orc activity in the area, hires the party to investigate. He points them in the direction of the ruins of Ringshead, of which he's only recently learned.
- 5) The characters are being pursued by a pack of large wargs. The wargs number in the scores and attack in small groups, hoping to cull one of the party members from the group and kill them. While fleeing, the party stumbles upon the moat and berm.

## APPROACHING RINGSHEAD

Ringshead lies on the floor of a long east-west valley. The valley itself is roughly five miles from shoulder to shoulder, her slopes gentle and covered with an even mix of black jack oaks and yellow pines. Mingled throughout are a number of sycamore trees, distinctive because of their white or silver bark. The valley floor is broad, about three miles wide. Aside from a few scattered copses, the valley floor is treeless. Her only distinctive features are gray rock formations ranging from two to 20 feet in height, jutting out of the green grass. There are several tar pits in the valley, clear to see from the rocky shoulders as black stains upon the green.

The most noticeable feature in the valley is the large fort, Ringshead, which lies in its center. The fort consists of a moat, a 60-foot high berm, a barbican and gate in the berm. The berm encompasses a dozen acres of ground, green and covered in grass, at the center of which stands a solitary stone keep.

*The trek leads up a rocky slope that you navigate with some difficulty. At the top, a rocky ridge marks the shoulder of a broad valley, the flanks of which are tree covered. But the floor, several miles wide and a dozen long, is covered with thick, green grasses. At the valley's center stands a large circular berm surrounded by a moat. The berm itself is grass covered, but broad enough to have supported a wall, though no wall stands upon it now. The berm encompasses a dozen acres or more. A square keep dominates the center, sitting in regal quiet upon this, the borderland. A small band of figures gathers around the southeast end of the berm where there appears to be gate. More are moving in the tree line a half mile off and some appear to be dragging wood planks over to the moat.*

The figures are orcs, though they are indistinguishable from where the characters are, unless they possess magic, a spyglass, or some tool that allows them to see great distances. An elf can see that they are orcs on a successful wisdom check (CL 5).

The orcs are attempting to get across the moat. They have been sent here to find the Ring of Brass. A magic coin was given to them by one of their shamans to allow them to use the Rings of

Brass and connect with their distant kindred in the north (the Haunted Highlands).

They are cutting trees with the intention of rebuilding the bridge that crosses the moat. Failing that they intend to make several rafts.

There are 58 orcs. They are led by one powerful chieftain and three sub-chieftains. They are presently scattered about the valley floor - a wood cutting party, a group hauling the cut trees to the moat, and the group at the moat. They spent several days scouting the valley and believe it is secure. Having no reason to doubt that anyone will stumble upon them, they have not posted sentries.

The Castle Keeper should scale the orc party down if the characters are lower level, or increase their number if it is necessary.

If left unmolested, the orcs will create the bridge across the moat in 3 days.

## COMBAT

If alerted to an attack, the orcs in the woods gather in a group and fall back to the moat party as a group. The hauler sub-chief attempts to gather the haulers, but they flee to the moat party as fast as they can. If an attack is witnessed, Pearl-Eye, the orc leader, starts throwing together a makeshift wall from the wood they have around them and preparing his archers to fend off any attack. If half the orcs are killed, their morale begins to suffer and the CK should roll a mental check (CL 5). The CL goes up by one point for each sub-chief that is killed. If the chief is killed, it goes up by 5. If all the chiefs and sub-chiefs are killed, the orcs break and run.

**PARTY ONE:** This group of 21 orcs, including the sub-chieftain who commands them, is scattered about under the eaves of the forest, all within 300 feet of each other. They are cutting trees down with broad axes and dragging them to the edge of the tree line for the haulers to pick up. This party is roughly one mile from Party Three and the bridgehead.

**ORC SUB-CHIEF** (This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 5d8, AC 18, HP 32. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with a large +1 maul that inflicts 1d10+1 points of damage. While using the maul he always swings last in a round. He also carries a tulwar for 1d6 points of damage. He wears a leather brigandine with iron plates sewn to it. On his arms are two golden armbands, each bearing the likeness of the goddess Tefnut on them. They are worth 50gp apiece on the open market.)

**ORCS X 20** (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 15, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear heavy leather and ring armor, and carry broad axes, short swords, and tulwars. They are burly and strong, each gaining a +1 to hit in combat. Each of the orcs carries little coin, if any, but sport their wealth in jewelry. Each possesses 1d12gp in rings, bracelets, necklaces, etc.)

**PARTY TWO:** This group consists of 13 orcs that travel in a group. Each group carries lengths of rope so that they can pick up several trees at once, three to a side, holding the ropes. There is one sub-chief with them.

**ORC SUB-CHIEF** (This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 16, HP 21. His primary attribute is physical. He attacks with a whip for 1d6 points of damage. He is particularly skilled with it, and can disarm an opponent upon a successful hit. Any hit requires the victim to make a successful dexterity save or their weapon is torn from their grasp, and thrown 1-6 feet away. He also carries a tulwar. He wears scale mail and a dozen rings on his hands, ears, nose and toes worth 20gp.)

**ORCS** (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 12, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They carry leather armor, short swords, clubs and 1d6gp in jewelry.)

**PARTY THREE:** This group consists of the 24 orcs, including the chief and one sub-chief. They have established a small base camp across from the barbican. They are in the process of constructing a bridge across the moat. At any time during the day, six of them are naked but for pants and are in the moat rebuilding the bridge.

**PEARL-EYE, CHIEF** (This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 6d8, AC 19, HP 45. His primary attributes are physical. He wears banded armor and uses a shield. His preferred weapon is a broken bardiche that has no reach but deals 3d4 points of damage. The edge is so jagged that it mangles flesh, doubling the heal time from rest or magic. For example a cure light wounds that heals 8 points only affects 4 points on wounds caused by the bardiche. He carries a pouch of gold worth 150gp and has a smooth pearl for a left eye. If extracted, it is worth 100gp. In a smaller pouch inside his pouch is the yorgach coin.)

**SUB-CHIEF** (This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, AC 16, HP 30. His primary attribute is physical. He wears chain mail and carries an iron shield. In combat he wields a thorn-headed iron mace that deals 1d8 points of damage. Upon a natural 20, one of the thorns breaks off in an opponent, causing an added 1d4 points of damage. It has 14 thorns left in it. Upon his neck and chest is a rope necklace through which he has strung a score or more of ears, each with a gold or silver ring in the lobe, collectively worth 45gp.)

**ORCS X 22** (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 15, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear heavy leather and ring armor, and carry axes, maces, broadswords, short swords, and tulwars. These are the rank and file of the orcs' band. Four of them are archers with short bows and 12 arrows apiece. Each of the orcs carries little coin, if any, but sport their wealth in jewelry. Each possesses 1d12gp in rings, bracelets, necklaces, etc.)

## THE MOAT

When the dwarves built the ring fort, they excavated a broad ditch around the perimeter using the dirt to build the earthen rampart, upon which they built the palisade. A stone bridge was



built crossing the ditch, from the valley floor to the barbican and gate. They kept the ditch meticulously clean.

After they abandoned the fort, the ditch slowly filled in with water and was soon little more than a muck filled, circular pond. However, the human occupants who took over cleaned it, broadened it and created a moat. This eventually proved disastrous, as the expanded moat breached an underground reservoir of tar, which began to slowly seep into the water. Over time it poisoned the water, creating oil slicks all around the moat, making the water toxic and at times flammable. A well-placed flame touches off the oil, causing the moat to burn for hours or days, depending on how much fuel is available. This is what eventually happened to the original bridge; it suffered fire damage and fell into the moat, leaving only the stone pylons behind.

These are the pylons the orcs are building a bridge upon.

*The water is brackish and unclean. Greasy oil slicks dot the water here and there, some trailing across the water for scores of feet. Nothing grows in the water but for some sickly green weeds that cling to the banks. Here and there sharpened iron spikes rise just above the water, some pointing out, and those closer to the berm pointing in. The bridge that spans the moat to the gate is in ruins, long fallen beneath the water. Only the pylons remain, a testament to the hands that built them.*

The moat itself is 15-20 feet wide, roughly 20 feet deep, and is filled with brackish undrinkable water. The water constantly bubbles and boils. Large bubbles of gas rising from the deep loudly pop and splatter hot water all about. It is very toxic,

subject to igniting, and very thick. There are eight pylons, two abreast. Each pylon is square and 12 inches to a side. They stand several feet from the water, rising in a gentle angle as they cross the moat.

The iron spikes are scattered everywhere. Once set in an organized manner, they have suffered from the wastage of time. Though many have fallen over, many more remain. Most of the spikes are set to angle out; however, those close to the berm are set to angle in, so that anyone falling off the berm falls upon the spikes.

Anyone that falls on a spike, jumps on one, or is pushed on one risks physical damage. Anyone who does so must roll a successful dexterity check or suffer 1d4 points of damage.

### CROSSING THE MOAT

Only the ranger Beorithc regularly crosses the moat, and he does so in secret, taking great pains to hide his trail. Unless they find his path, as noted below, they must try some other method of crossing the moat.

The characters can attempt several things to get across the moat. If any open flames are brought within six inches of the water, there is a chance it will ignite the water or air about it, causing 1d8 points of damage to anyone within 10 feet. The flame can spread around the moat, burning in patches.

- 1) WAIT FOR THE ORCS:** If they wait for the orcs to finish the bridge and then attack them, they can use the bridge without any problem.
- 2) SWIMMING:** Swimming is difficult but not impossible. Anyone entering the water must fight the tar and the weight of it pulling them down. Every round that someone is in the moat, they must make a successful dexterity check to see if they manage the moat (CL 7). If they fail their check they become stuck and must make another dexterity check (CL 7 + 1 per round in the moat) to start moving again. Three fails in a row and they risk drowning.
- 3) BUILDING A RAFT:** This is possible and generally takes 1 day. Crossing it takes only a few minutes. But if they have not liquidated the orc threat, the orcs will spot the characters building, transporting, or crossing in the raft unless the characters take extraordinary steps to hide their efforts.

If the characters kill the orcs, they can build a raft in half a day using the wood already cut by the orcs. If there is no one in the group who has the skill, the raft is not trustworthy. The Castle Keeper should allow one character to make a strength check for the raft to see if it falls apart when people climb onto it or when they cross the moat (CL 6).

- 4) FINISHING THE BRIDGE:** Attempting this is difficult, unless a character possesses some skills in engineering. This is entirely up to the Castle Keeper. Doing so should take about 3-4 days as dragging the wood from the tree line is a time consuming process.

## BEORITHC'S PATH

Beorithc is a ranger who hunts the Tar Kiln. He has dwelt here his entire life and knows the country well. He long ago discovered the ring fort, and where most passed it by as too hard to enter, he turned it into a depot for his supplies and a place to rest. He comes to the fort every few months, or when in need.

To cross the moat, Beorithc created a series of underwater steps. By carefully stacking rocks he created a path across the water. The top of the path is six inches beneath the water and invisible unless someone looks directly at it. Even then it is difficult to see (CL 5). He has taken great pains to mask the area around the edge where his bridge lies, but the ground here does show signs of stress. A good tracker can detect it with a successful track (CL 8). It looks very much like an animal slide where creatures would go to water, but no creature drinks the water in the moat.

On the other side of the bridge are carefully hidden rings, attached to pegs and sunk several feet deep into the berm, allowing one to climb the berm with ease. Detecting them is difficult, but can be done with a successful spot check (CL 9).

**NOTE:** The bridge and slide are not noticeable unless that area of the moat is searched and the characters are actively searching the water, shoreline and berm respectively. Only the rings may be discovered with a casual glance, but even then they are close to impossible to detect (CL 12).

## THE BERM

Dwarves constructed the berm long ago, and as with all such fortifications, it was built with the magic of a rune mark. Set into its foundations are magical runes of holding and fastness that keep the berm intact until such time as another power comes along and destroys it. As no one has taken the time nor spent the energy to do so, the berm is in astoundingly good condition.

It is 60 feet high from the moat and the yard beyond. Its outer wall is steep with nearly a 75 degree angle. The inner wall is much gentler, allowing easy access to those within. There are postholes on the top of the berm, set closer to the outer edge that mark what was once a stout palisade.

The berm is set against the moat, so that falling off sends one into the water immediately. The moat's wall is set at a 90 degree angle; falling into the water means going under the water.

Short grass clings to the outer edge and top, but longer grasses grow within the berm.

## CLIMBING THE BERM

As the berm rests on the moat's edge, it is plain for any to see that the water here is very deep. Therefore, climbing the berm is possible, but one must do it from a raft. There is no ledge. Climbing is difficult but not impossible. However, there are no natural hand holds, so anyone attempting to do so, including rangers, must make a successful dexterity check (CL 6), or risk falling into the water.

Falling off runs all the risks of falling into the moat as noted above. It also runs the risk of falling into the iron spikes as noted above.

Once on top of the berm there is no further danger.

## THE BARBICAN

When the dwarves first built the ring fort, they made only one entrance. The gate consisted of a large door set into a stone archway. Fearing that this would not offer enough defense, they constructed an outer fortification- a barbican, attached to but just out of the berm, and set into the ditch. The bridge crossed the ditch and entered the barbican. It once passed through the barbican, up to and through the gate.

The barbican consists of a short tower 35 feet high, with a ground floor, a first floor and rooftop with crenellated battlements. Within are two sets of doors and two portcullises. Some of the bridge remains, about four feet of stone work before the outer portcullis. Two arrow slits face the bridge, and two more face the moat to the left and right. One of the slits facing the bridge appears blocked by stone.

*The square tower stands over 30 feet high, and possesses well-worn battlements. The arched tunnel that passes through the towers enters the berm beyond. The tunnel's inner portcullis lies upon the floor, while the outer blocks easy access to the fortification. A small remnant of the bridge remains, giving you purchase before the closed portcullis, though only 12 feet across and four feet deep. Two arrow slits face the bridge, though one appears blocked by stone.*

The fortification is in amazingly good condition. Only the stone work on the battlements shows serious signs of wear, mostly through water erosion. The physical doors are missing. The inner portcullis is up, but the outer (the one the characters must enter first) is down, blocking easy access to the barbican. The stonework around the portcullis is somewhat decayed as well, though this is not readily noticeable.

## ENTERING THE BARBICAN

There are a number of methods the characters can attempt in order to enter the barbican. Upon a close investigation, someone may take note that the stone work holding the portcullis in place has suffered from age, probably due to the portcullis itself having come unmoored, allowing heavy winds to rock it enough to damage the frame.

Both portcullises are bound with rune magic and made to lift by command word alone. Anyone searching the tower discovers that there are no mechanisms for lifting the gates, only slots that allow them to rise and lower. In the long ago days the dwarves and the Ethrum who followed in their footsteps used magical command words to open and close them.

**MAGICALLY OPENING THE BARBICAN:** A *knock* spell raises the portcullis. The rune *open* unlocks the magical word of opening, Margdl, allowing the rune mark to open it. A detect magic

reveals the nature of the magic that operates the portcullis, and the magical word as well. Uttering the word opens it.

**CLIMBING THE BARBICAN:** There are no natural handholds, however, one can attempt to climb the surface with a successful dexterity check (CL 5). Throwing a rope and grapple is also possible with a successful dexterity check (CL 5). However if a grapple attaches to the battlements it runs the risk of pulling one loose. Anyone weighing 200 pounds or over (including equipment) might pull it down. The CK should roll a straight up Siege Check; with any roll of 12 or over, the stone breaks, and the grapple and all come tumbling down.

Those that tumble down, for whatever reason, run the added risk of bouncing off the four foot of bridge that remains and landing in the moat with all the necessary complications as noted above.

Clearly if someone mounts the tower, they can tie off the rope on stonework securely enough to hold the weight of the other characters.

**LIFTING THE PORTCULLIS:** Characters can attempt to lift the portcullis. If they do so, it is a straight up strength check (CL 10). Up to three people can lift the iron simultaneously, though only one dice roll is necessary. The party should designate who is going to roll. That individual adds their level and attribute bonus as per a normal Siege Engine Check. All others participating add their strength bonus only.

If the portcullis is lifted, it is pushed up into the barbican. However, the chains holding it are long gone, and the portcullis must be propped up. The iron weighs about 1000 pounds, so whatever the characters choose must be able to hold that much weight.

**BREAKING DOWN THE PORTCULLIS:** If the characters attempt this, they can batter the portcullis until it breaks the frame that holds it in place. Every hit, including the first, knocks pieces of mortar and stone from the frame. To break it down they must make a successful strength check (CL 15) with the same conditions as lifting the portcullis if more than one character attempts it simultaneously. However, each strike against the portcullis adds a bonus 1 in the following round, so that in five rounds of hitting it the characters gain a +5, 10 rounds a +10 and so on, until the portcullis collapses.

It should be noted that every time the portcullis is struck it rattles loudly in the frame, and when it falls, it crashes onto the ground with an echoing clang.

## GROUND FLOOR

The ground floor consists of the tunnel leading to the second portcullis, which itself is lying upon the floor. Nothing remains of the doors that once stood within the barbican; even their hinges have long since vanished.

There is a hatch in the ceiling, leading to the first floor. The hatch is eight feet from the floor. Two feet of a broken ladder remains attached to the hatchway, leaving six feet of open air between it and the floor.

The ladder is attached via several metal brackets. Age and time have weakened them. Any weight over 100 pounds threatens to break the ladder and send it tumbling to the floor below. The CK should roll a straight up Siege Check; with any roll of 12 or over, the ladder breaks free, tumbling down on whoever was attempting to climb it.

With any fall from over six feet, the character must make a successful dexterity save (CL 3) or suffer 1d6 points of damage.

## FIRST FLOOR

This small room is largely empty. Two stone cots that are built into the wall remain. Both show signs of tremendous wear, worn away in the center and where one's head should lay. Each is six feet long.

A stair leads up to the battlements above.

There are four circular embrasures with rotating stone cylinders adorned with arrow slits in them. Each cylinder can hold one person who, when the arrow slit faces outward can fire upon the bridge or the embankment. Turning the cylinders inwards blocks off the arrow slit, allowing none to see in or out. One of those facing the bridge is closed. The wheels for turning the cylinders are attached to the wall next to each cylinder.

## ROOFTOP

A set of stairs on the first floor gives access to the top floor, the roof, and the battlements. This large area is empty, with the battlements overlooking all four sides, the moat, the bridge and the berm. The battlements themselves are timeworn, but still offer solid defense from any missile weapons.

There are slots built into the floor of the roof, beneath the battlements. Two overlook the bridge and are open, revealing smooth tunnels about four inches high and eight inches wide. Here the defenders can pour burning liquids onto the heads of those on the bridge if the need should arise.

There is nothing of value here, but the view opens up as far as one can see. From this height the Yard, the ruins of the inn, and the keep are all plain to see.

## GATE

Passing through the second portcullis leads one directly into and beneath the berm. It is 50 feet wide at the base. The tunnel here is lined with stone and remains in relatively good condition. There is nothing of value or danger here, the doors long gone. Passing through, one emerges on the other side.

## THE YARD

Ringshead is circular, the berm walling in all 12 acres of the Yard. The Yard served travelers, allowing them a place to camp. Here is where individuals or groups, caravans and wagons, herdsman, merchants, or troops set up to rest and recuperate in the safety of the fort.



During its occupation the Yard possessed four wells and a dozen or so houses, as well as an inn, a blacksmith shop, open pavilions for traders, stables and similar structures. All but the inn and wellheads were made of wood and have long since vanished.

*Beyond the berm the Yard opens before you. The whole area encircled by the berm encompasses about 12 acres. A thick, inviting, green grass carpets the Yard. There are no trees or bramble. Four well heads jut up from the grass. There is a ruined frame of a building, and in the center of the fort, a tall square stone tower.*

### WELL HEADS

The well heads remain, lined with stone, thick grasses growing around them. No buckets or ropes or any devices to extract the water remain, aside from the one near the Inn as noted below. Each well is about 30 feet deep. The water has stayed amazingly good, free of tar or oil.

### RUINS OF THE INN

The inn consists of four walls, two doors and three rooms. The roof has long since collapsed and vanished in the rubble. The chimney is shorn off, only standing a few feet above the wall, the rubble of it lying outside the inn. The walls themselves are hardly walls at all for they are in horrible condition. The rooms consist of one large common room with an intact fire place, and what were probably a kitchen and a smaller pantry. Grass grows throughout the ruins.

The fireplace shows obvious signs of use. Someone has placed roughly a cord of wood next to it, enough to burn for 2-3 days. The grass here is slightly worn, though there are no obvious signs of tracks. A successful track check (CL 10) reveals that one person was here some time ago, how long ago cannot be determined.

This is Beorithc's hideout. He comes here to rest, cooking food in the fireplace, sleeping in the inn. He has hidden his supplies in the rubble of the chimney and set a wicked trap on them.

**TRAP:** Beorithc has set a dozen long, thorny vines within the rubble. The trap is cleverly hidden and requires a successful detect trap checks to discover (CL 9). Even then the trap must be disarmed with a second check (CL 9).

The thorns are laced with type III poison. Being stuck with even one thorn unleashes the deadly toxin. A successful constitution save reduces the damage to 1d4 points and -1 on all secondary attribute checks for 1d2 days. If the victim fails their constitution save they suffer 1d8 points of damage and suffer -2 on all primary attribute checks for 2-6 days.

**TREASURE:** Hidden in the rubble of the chimney are a number of items that Beorithc has set aside. There is 100 feet of rope coiled neatly inside a very large bucket. With the rope are the following items: water tight tinder box, 2 days dried rations, a folded up gallon sized water flask, fishing twine, 4 hooks, 2 and animal traps. There is a seal-skin canvas, wrapped tightly and bound with twine, containing two daggers and four iron spear

heads. There is also a pouch with four 25gp gems in it. There is a healing ointment that cures 1d4 points of damage per application (four applications).

### THE KEEP

The Keep is a large square tower standing in the center of the Yard. A ditch rings the Keep on all sides. There is a stone bridge that runs up to the stairs leading into the keep. The tower has no windows, only arrow slits and crenellated battlements. It dominates the Yard.

*The tower looms over the Yard. Her bleak stone facade bears no hint of decoration or comfort. The few arrow slits promise a dark interior, and the top is crowned with battlements, angled and broad. The whole of it is guarded by a shallow ditch, lined with iron spikes. The gate is closed, though the draw bridge that leads to it spans the ditch.*

### THE DITCH

The ditch was once 12 feet deep and steep, but it has filled in over the years and only a shallow depression remains. It is easy enough to cross over and through, coming to the walls of the castle itself.

### THE BRIDGE

The bridge spans the length of the ditch, connecting with a broad set of steps that lead into the castle. The bridge is in good shape and only a few feet above the ground.

### THE KEEP

The Keep is a square tower with six floors (or levels), including the roof. It is about 80 feet tall with straight stone walls, and arrow slits starting on the first floor, 12 feet or so above the ground. It has crenellated battlements on the top two floors. Climbing the side is possible, but there is no way to enter one of the arrow slits. The interloper would need to climb to the roof-top levels.

Inside there is little natural light, and none where there are no arrow slits. The characters will need some form of light to see. It is dark and damp throughout.

A barghest has dwells in the Keep, lingering here, on the edge of nowhere, waiting for prey to enter his lair. Some other creatures occupy the space, but have little interest in the barghest.

### PLAYING THE BARGHEST

The barghest dwells on the first floor in the trophy room inside a rope trick space. For full details about his lair, see **Room F4 Trophy Room**. He is hungry and constantly looking for someone to kill so that he can feed upon their soul, increasing his own power. He should not be played as a passive monster, waiting in his lair for the party to find him and attack.

As soon as he learns that there are intruders, he uses his superior knowledge of the keep to find out who and what the party

is, how many there are in the party, and any other information. He takes the shape of a dog if he needs to, to move more quietly and mask himself in case he is seen. He uses his misdirection ability to drive characters off course or separate them so that he can safely kill them.

The Castle Keeper should track the barghest's movements against those of the characters and use his *project image* and *misdirection* to mislead, fool and open the players up to his attack.

## ORGANIZATION OF MAP

Access to each level is not easy, as the keep was designed for defense. For instance, the entrance steps lead past the ground floor and up to the first floor, where a second set of steps lead up to the second floor. This is the only entrance, so the characters will find themselves on the second floor in short order. After that characters are able to go in about any direction. Because of this, the rooms of each floor are listed by their area and number. Ground floor rooms are G, first floor rooms are F, second floor rooms are S, and so on. This will necessitate the Castle Keeper flipping back and forth in the book, but it cannot be helped. It may be necessary to study the map carefully before play begins.

### ENTERING THE KEEP

There are three entrances to the Keep: the front gate and steps, the secret passage that leads from the tree-line, under the berm, under the keep and into the **Well** ladder and on to **Room S3** and up the outer wall to the arrow slit in **Room T3** where the climber will have to pull down the bricking.

**THE ARROW SLIT IN ROOM T3:** The wall here is weak and can be pulled down by anyone brave enough to climb up to the window. It is noticeable from the ground. Assuming the characters look around the castle before entering it they spy (wisdom check CL 3) that the bricking around that particular arrow slit has collapsed, and sags heavily, meaning the mortar has fallen away. A climb up and a hard pull on the bricking opens the arrow slit to entry.

### COMMON FEATURES

There are several features common to the whole castle. The following three areas pass through several floors. Their peculiarities are noted here.

#### WELL

The well is very deep, passing through the ground floor, the first floor and to the second floor. It is inaccessible from the ground floor. It is accessible through a small door on the first floor in **Room F6**. The main well head, where water was drawn for the bulk of the castle, lies in **Room S3**. The well has a metal-rung ladder built into the wall that goes from **Room S3** all the way to the water line, about 60 feet below the bottom of the Keep.

The allip from **Room S3** sits upon the edge of the well, looking down. It sees anything crawling up. If by chance a character begins coming up from below, the allip fades back into the room, attacking whoever comes over the lip of the well.

At the bottom of the well is a small stone room and a stone passage. The passage leads one out under the Yard, the Berm, and into the valley where it opens beneath a large stone. The stone itself must be lifted to exit the tunnel. The exit lies upon the edge of the tree line on the north flank of the valley.

#### CIRCULAR STAIR CASE

The circular stair case spans the tower from the ground floor to **Roof A**, giving access to all the floors. It is the main method of getting around the Keep. It is narrow and very steep. The steps are worn in the center from countless boots.

#### TOWER STAIR CASE

The tower stair mimics the circular stair, though it winds up in sharp 90 degree angles. It is set in the main defensive tower and passes through the Arrow Rooms on the first, second and third Floors. The stairs are easier to move up and down, being broader than the circular stairs, but they too are well worn.

#### AREA 1: ENTRANCE

The bridge runs into a set of steps that lead up into the castle walls. They are roughly as wide as the bridge (about 10 feet), but where they enter the Keep they quickly narrow to only six to seven feet wide as they climb up to the first floor, bypassing the ground floor, ending in **Room F1**.

The remnants of the door stand where the stairs first narrow, about 10 feet inside the Keep. It was once a wooden door with iron banding and hinges. But all of that has fallen away so that only the ruin of it remains. Passing on up the steps requires nothing more than walking.

There is nothing on the steps. However, if the characters are noisy, the barghest that occupies the keep may detect their entrance. He does so on an unmodified Siege Engine roll of 12 or better. If he detects them he quietly leaves the trophy room, **Room F4**, where he is hiding and heads to the top of the steps. He listens to the party. He shadows them if possible, but hides too, attempting to figure out how many and how dangerous the party is. For more on the barghest, refer to **Room F4** below.

#### GROUND FLOOR

The ground floor has no outside windows, arrow slits or any connection with the outside. By and large it is protected with 5-10 feet of stone. The ground floor contained the barracks for the occupants, but also the sealed up room that contains the Ring of Brass, **Room G8**.

#### G1 GARRISON

This is the barracks for the soldiers who occupied Ringshead.

*This large room is mostly empty. The remnants of wood bedposts and dust lie upon the floor. Several entrances lead from the room. The one thing of real note is the mummified body that lies against the wall, several arrows in its chest, one pinning its left hand to the breast.*

There is little that remains of the beds, most of them having long ago rotted away, turning to dust. Several wooden posts petrified over the years however and remain upon the floor. Several sconces adorn the walls.

The mummified body sits with its back to the wall, its right leg bent at the knee. This is the body of Elgifu who came here some years ago seeking the Ring of Brass. In her hand was a magic coin that she hoped to use to navigate the planes, taking her to the Highlands far to the north. Her pursuers, Corilyn and his three mercenaries, pursued her here. They found her, catching her unawares while eating in **Room G3** and killed here in the **G1 Garrison Room**.

There are three arrows in its chest, one pinning its left hand to the breast. A fourth arrow is lodged in the back of the leg, forcing the knee to bend. The body wears a leather jacket with a tattered shirt beneath it. Pants and boots are bare rags, but the broad belt around the body's waist is in unusually good shape. Her right hand lies next to her, flattened, with most of the bones in it broken, seemingly crushed by a boot or something heavy.

Upon closer examination (intelligence check CL 2) the body is revealed to be that of a woman, probably in her mid-30s or 40s (intelligence CL5). Either the characters deduce what happened to her naturally, or allow them an intelligence check (CL 5). Her hand was crushed so violently that the imprint of the coin remains on her mummified flesh. Anyone looking closely can see it. The shape is several rings within rings. Anyone with knowledge of the Rings of Brass may recognize (intelligence or

wisdom check CL 6) it as one of the symbols used to signify the magical portals.

In either case, Elgifu was shot in the back of the leg while fleeing from **Room G3**, fell against the wall, turned, slumped down and was shot three more times at very close range. She threw up her left hand to defend herself while holding the coin in her right hand.

The belt is magical, granting the user the ability to see through walls. For more, see New Magic at the end of this book.

## **G2 SUPPLY ROOM**

This room served the garrison for supplies. The walls are lined with metal pegs, well anchored despite the years, constructed by the dwarven engineers who set them there. What weapons and shields hung there none can say, for they are now long gone. The room is empty.

## **G3 DINING HALL**

Elgifu was in this room eating when she was discovered. Her plate and dish remain at the table.

*A stone table, built into the floor dominates the room. On the table are scattered dishes but at the head a plate and pewter mug, clearly set as if someone had been eating and drinking.*

A smattering of pewter dishes lie scattered about the room, mostly on the floor, though some are on the table. The dishes



on the floor are the same as the ones set upon the table. Elgifu simply picked them up.

The pegs that line the wall are all evenly spaced. A successful intelligence check (CL 3) reveals that they once held shelves that probably held dishes.

#### **G4 SERGEANT'S CHAMBER**

This room served as the sleeping quarters of the sergeant of the guard. A stone cot built into the corner dominates the room. A square stone shelf built into the wall sits opposite the bed.

Leaning against the wall tied in a bundle is a pick axe, maul, and four iron wedges. The handles on all the tools are old but still serviceable. If used for digging, every swing the tools make must make a strength check or break. The player should make the unmodified roll. If a 1-5 is rolled on a d20 the haft of the tool in question breaks.

#### **G5 STORAGE**

This room contains old, largely disintegrated barrels. One is intact enough to hold dirt or water.

#### **G6 DUNGEON**

This small room is closed and the iron door is locked, but the keys hang on a ring on the hallway wall. Inside are four manacles set on the floor. Each manacle is only a few feet long and each was used to secure a prisoner by the foot. The room could hold up to four prisoners.

#### **G7 TEMPLE**

This room served the dwarven All Father as a temple and a watch room where he could keep an eye upon the Ring of Brass in the next room. The humans had little use for the room, fearing it as a holy place, and largely left it alone.

The room is accessed by steps leading up from Room G1. Each of the six steps has a gargoyle carved into its front, noticeable to anyone who looks. They are horrid looking creatures. Entering the room unbidden, without the proper password that has been long since lost, activates these gargoyles. Once the creatures become aware they watch what the party is doing. If there are still people on the steps, they hesitate, waiting for everyone to enter the temple. They then detach from the steps, flying up and into the room, attacking everyone they see.

Note the gargoyles are smaller than normal and their HD are reduced to 3d8. Increase the number of gargoyles if necessary.

*The room is large, but oddly shaped. The back wall is dominated by a giant frieze of four panels, each panel part of a story of a single dwarf. In the center of the room stands an altar that looks much like an inverted hammer, the haft to the floor. A narrow corridor snakes off to one side, and in the corner is a wall that was clearly added long after the original construction.*

As the party is moving about and into the room, the gargoyles attack.

**GARGOYLE** (These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 16, HP 25 apiece. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two claws for 1d3, a bite for 1d3, or a gore for 1d2 points of damage. They fly at a speed of 75 feet per round. They have darkvision 60 feet, and are able to appear as stone statues by freezing themselves in place.)

**CORRIDOR:** This small corridor leads to a stone cot and table built into the wall. Here the All Father slept and tended his duties. Carved into the walls are a number of runes. If deciphered, they are magical runes, a prayer to the All Father. If a cleric reads them they gain an extra prayer spell for the day.

**ALTAR:** The altar is in very good shape. However, the hammer portion of it, at the top, is covered in countless cuts, scrapes and abrasions. It is very worn with use, though there are no signs that it was used recently.

**WALL:** The Keep is made of large blocks of stone. This wall is brick and poorly mortared. It is not connected with the doorway at all, but built against it. It was put here by the Ethrum to block off access to the Ring of Brass in Room G8. The brick and mortar are weak; however the wall itself is four feet thick. Unless magically moved, the pick axe and maul are the only ways through.

#### **G8 SEALED ROOM**

This room held the Ring of Brass, a circular pit, covered by a large wooden trap door. When the Ethrum occupied the Keep they sealed the entrance to the room with loose brick and mortar as noted in **Room G7**.

*As the last of the wall falls away, and the dust clears, your light spills across a large square room. The walls are unadorned and there are no furnishings. But the center of the room is dominated by a large covered well twelve feet in diameter, its stone lip raised four feet off the ground. It is covered with a large iron lid, upon which are carved many runes. The stone of the well is carved with runes similar to those on the lid. A chain hangs from the ceiling, connected on the one end to a large ring in the iron lid's center, and attached through a pulley to the link on the far wall. A set of low steps lead up to the top of the well head.*

They characters have discovered one of the fabled Rings of Brass. Anyone with historical, scholarly, or religious knowledge has a chance to know what they are looking at. A successful check against their primary attribute (CL 4) reveals the answer.

Removing the lid is easy enough. Pulling the chain lifts it effortlessly, for the lid has no weight.

The stairs on the outside of the well reflect similar stairs that lead down into the well. The stairs leading down vanish into the dark. They wind down the well 50 feet to a stone floor. That is the beginning of the tunnel. From there the Coin of Yorgach is usable.

The tunnel and stairs inside the well are carved with countless thousands of runes, many set in layers. They are unreadable

without magic or a rune mark, and even then, each rune is set upon other runes and joined with still others, making reading even a simple sentence a laborious, time consuming task. To read one step would take an individual at least a day.

Presumably the characters will have one of the Coins of Yorghach, either taken from the barghest or the orc chief beyond the berm. They can use it to pass on to the Haunted Highlands, or if familiar with other Rings of Brass, to those locations as well. If they take this route, read Ring Upon the Lake below and begin the adventure in the *Players Guide to the Haunted Highlands* or *Castle Keepers Guide to the Haunted Highlands*.

## THE RING OF BRASS

The world of Aihrde sits upon the Maelstrom. The roots of Eahrtaut, the Great Tree, break the surface of the world and grow throughout the Maelstrom, passing near or through many planes. Many return again by circuitous paths to the world of Aihrde. The roots are innumerable and the length of them uncountable.

During the Days before Days, a group of giants tunneled into the roots and attempted to come to Aihrde, but they failed and returned from whence they came (see *Codex of Aihrde*). Later, during the Goblin Dwarf Wars, the dwarves discovered these hollowed roots and began to explore them. Being distant relatives of the giants, they unraveled the maze, and in the space of many years, mastered their pathways. They created doors in the roots that allowed them to pass into and out of the world, using the hollowed roots of Eahrtaut as their pathways. These doors they called the Rings of Brass. They created many of these doorways and used them in their long wars with the goblins.

In time however, the dwarven realms fell away to war, plague, and sorrow, so that many forgot about the Rings and the tunnels through the world.

But some kept that knowledge close and sought to master them, giving them the ability to travel whither they would through the Maelstrom and the many worlds.

**TRAVEL:** Travel in the rings can be done by foot, which is a laborious prospect, or if one knows their intended destination, they can will themselves through the tunnels to that spot. Other magics, sorcery, runes, and spells also allow movement. For more details please consult the *Codex of Aihrde*.

## FIRST FLOOR

The first floor is roughly 12 feet above ground level. It has a few arrow slits but is largely blocked off from the outside. The steps from outside lead into **Room F1 Foyer**.

### F1 FOYER

The entrance steps lead up to the foyer and guard room. The foyer is empty but for a few torch sconces. It is well lit, however, by two arrow slits that look out over the Yard beyond. An open door leads to **Room F2** Guard Room and a broad set of steps lead up **Room S1** Great Hall.

There is nothing of further interest here.

### F2 GUARD ROOM

The room is a simple guard chamber with a stone cot built into the wall. The arrow slits look out over the Yard.

Piled in the corner of the room are four backpacks with bed rolls attached. These packs belonged to Corilyn and his men. When they entered the Keep they set their packs here while they searched the place. As noted below, they never returned.

All the packs are in terrible condition, but do have the supplies the men carried. Each of the bed rolls is rolled up tight in a ground cloth. Though the blankets are brittle to the touch, the seal-skin ground cloths are in amazingly good condition. Inside each pack are eight days of rations, a water flask, a rope, a grapple, flint and tinder, and personal affects that include a comb, a paring knife, some fish hooks, a deck of playing cards, scissors, some parchment, a dried ink bottle and lip balm.

The playing cards are a *deck of many things*, but this deck operates in a peculiar fashion. Pulling a card out has no effect. However, if someone sits down and plays any card game with the deck, the winning card played by the winning player activates the magic. Roll on the chart in the *Monsters & Treasure* to determine which card is pulled. Otherwise the deck looks and acts as a normal deck of cards.

### F3 STAIR CHAMBER

A monstrous spider has taken up residence here, preying upon the rare small mammal that wanders into the room. It is highly aggressive and very hungry. It lurks over the door, braced against the wall and lintel. The first person through the room suffers the spider's attack.

**WOLF SPIDER, LARGE** (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 5d8, HP 33, AC 14. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with a bite, for 1d4 points of damage. His special abilities are jumps 30 feet, and bite delivers poison. Anyone bitten by the spider must make a successful constitution save or become paralyzed for 48 hours.*)

*There is nothing of value here, as the spider has not had any victims.*

### F4 Trophy Room

This is the lair of the barghest, though it is unlikely that he is in the room, as he moves about the castle attempting to capture a character alone or unawares.

*Unlike much of the castle, this room retains a great deal of its luster. Heads of all manner of beasts, deer, wild cats, buffalo, a basilisk and others beside adorn the wall. They show some signs of decay; an eye missing here, some fur there, but whatever magic was set upon them to preserve them clearly remains. The rug on the floor, however, has enjoyed no such magical help, for it is tattered, stained dark in places, and reeking to the high heavens. Several exits lead out from the room.*

## 12 CASTLES & CRUSADES

Sometimes the barghest sleeps upon the ruins of the carpet, which itself was once bound with magic, but time and the violence of the dark-hearted fey has ruined it. The dark stains are his droppings, dried feces and urine.

The barghest possesses a magical *rope trick rope* that, whenever vertically suspended from any surface, acts the spell *rope trick*. He has suspended the rope from the buffalo's nose, hanging it there. He also stores his treasure there, and hides there if necessary. For more on the rope trick rope see New Magic below.

Anyone taking the time to investigate the trophies notices the odd rope hanging from the buffalo's head on a successful wisdom check (CL -4).

**BARGHEST** (*This lawful evil creatures vital stats are HD 7, AC 18, HP 49. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks with a bite for 2d4+6 points of damage, or two claws for 1d4+3 points of damage. He has darkvision 60 ft., can move 30 ft., or fly 60 ft. The barghest can change shape into a wolf and pass without leaving any trace. It has the following spell like abilities it can use at will: change self, levitation, misdirection, project image and once per day it can charm (any), dimension door, and use emotion. Once the barghest kills a foe, it feeds upon it, destroying the victim's soul.*)

The barghest's treasure and lair lies within the *rope trick rope*. He will never leave this item behind, and therefore fights to the death if it is found. Within he's piled his treasure.

**TREASURE:** The barghest has hunted for years, even beyond the confines of Ringshead Keep. He has collected a small treasure trove: 400gp in assorted coin, a ring with a blue sapphire in it, wrought in gold and platinum, worth 125gp. There are 4 gems stones each worth 25gp. He has a *peript of health*, a *feather-edged tulwar* taken from Corilyn and the *yorgach coin*.

### F5 ANTE-CHAMBER

This room once served the Keep as a preparation room. Here hunted creatures were stuffed, magically preserved, and made presentable for mounting on the wall. There is little left of this, save a stone cot in the corner that looks as much as a shelf as it does anything else. There is nothing of value in the room.

### F6 BED CHAMBERS

These served as the Lord's bedchamber both in the days of the dwarves and the Ethrum, for it is the only bed chamber with access to the well as noted below. There is a long, broad stone bed here, arrow slits that offer defense and fresh air, and access through a door to the steps above. There is access to the well through the alcove in the corner.

*The room is cool, filled with fresh air, but largely empty. It has one large, broad, stone bed set between the arrow slits. On the bed lies the skeletal remains of a man, with hands stretched before him, as if frozen in time. His ragged clothes have largely fallen to dust. A belt and scabbard, wasted away, circle his waist. All that remains of any value are his iron-shod boots.*

The body is that of Elgifu's slayer, Corilyn. Close examination of the right boot (intelligence CL 5 or tracking CL 5) reveals a small chunks of bone lodged into the sole where he stomped on her hand to get the *yorgach coin*. But her slayer did not live for long, for he fell afoul of the barghest who took the guise of the woman and fooled him into thinking she came back from the dead, then slew him by choking him. The barghest then devoured his soul, leaving the man caught in limbo, his soul unable to enter the Endless Pools and his body frozen as he died, the bones petrified in place.

If a cleric examines the body, upon a successful wisdom check (CL 3), they note that the body is hollow, and no echo of its soul remains. This means that burial would serve no purpose and more importantly, that the soul was ripped from the man's body.

There is nothing of value in the room.

**Alcove:** The alcove is simple embrasure that allows the occupant to open a small door in the wall, lower a bucket into the well and draw up fresh water. The door is three by two feet, large enough for someone to squirm through and into the well. Once in the well, they discover a ladder as noted above.

### F7 ARROW ROOM

This small room had no purpose except for defense of the Keep. Anyone in the room can fire arrows or crossbow bolts through the arrow slit into the Yard beyond. Stairs in the corner tower lead up or down to the adjacent floors. There is nothing of value in the room.

## SECOND FLOOR

The second floor consists of the old administrative offices of the Keep, including the *Great Hall* and the Lord's chambers. Access is gained from the first floor, **Room F1** or the stairs deeper in the Keep.

### S1 GREAT HALL

This is the Great Hall, the first significant room that guests entered whenever they entered the Keep. It is plain and unadorned. At the far end of the hall is a single stone chair, built into the wall. Here the dwarves of old, and later the men, kept court, feasted, entertained, and carried out all the normal functions of a Lord.

There is little of value in the room. However, one of the soulless victims of the barghest haunts this room. As noted, Corilyn brought three mercenaries into the Keep with him, and all died at the hands of the barghest. One turned into a wight and haunts the *Great Hall* and **Room S7**. There is a 1 in 2 chance he is in this room.

If he is, he clings to the ceiling, hiding in the shadows, watching the party. If light is shined his way he moves with extraordinary speed, crawling across the ceiling like a spider. He crawls over any character left alone or standing apart and drops upon them.

**WIGHT** (*This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d12, HP 32, AC 15. Its primary attributes are mental. It attacks*



with two claws for 1d6 points of damage each. A successful hit drains the victim of one level of experience for 1 full day. Its special abilities are create spawn, energy drain, and darkvision (60 ft.)

For the wight's treasure, see **Room S7**.

### **S2 ARROW ROOM**

This small room had no purpose except for defense of the Keep. Anyone in the room can fire arrows or crossbow bolts through the arrow slit into the Yard beyond. Stairs in the corner tower lead up or down to the adjacent floors. There is nothing of value in the room.

### **S3 WELL ROOM**

This small room is set off the **Great Hall** and is the main access to the well that supplies the Keep with water. The room is held by a large iron door that is still intact, set into its hinges by dwarves long ago. It has survived the ages.

The room is accessible from the well, if they climb into it from **Room F6**, as noted above.

The door is locked from the inside. The heavy key remains in the door. A rogue can attempt to pick the lock (CL 5), or if the characters are truly enterprising, they can slide a flat object under the door, such as one of the ground cloths found in **Room G2**, and attempt to push the key out of the key hole, onto the object and pull it back under the door. Success depends upon the size of the object they slide under the door. If too small the

key will bounce away. If large, it has a much better chance of landing on the object. The CK should set their own CL.

*The door gives way to a small hall that opens into a room only six feet across, but long. The air is heavy and still. It draws the air from your lungs. As your light chases the dark into the shadows a wave of exhaustion washes over you. You spy an arrow slot covered and jammed with debris, and down the room, a well-head. Crouched upon it is the figure of a man. His clothes are in tatters as he looks down in the darkness below.*

The room is home to a mindless allip, the hollowed soul of a second one of Corilyn's men. This unfortunate soul did not die as his companions did, but rather suffered the torment of the barghest, who drew his soul from his living body. So the man fled in torment, bolting himself in the well room. As his body died, it became the hollow form of an allip. He sits there now, a living husk of a man, with no soul, bereft of hope.

**NOTE:** The allip has a hit dice of 10d8. Scale this hit dice down to 5d8 if the party is lower level.

**ALLIP** (These extraordinary undead creature's vital stats are HD 4d12, AC 15, HP 36. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with a touch attack that causes ability drain. Failure to make a successful wisdom save causes a temporary loss of 1d4 wisdom points. If a victim is reduced to 0 wisdom they are driven permanently insane. The allip also has a babble attack in which it can cause victims to become hypnotized, as well as a madness attack. They can become incorporeal.)

The allip has little in the way of treasure, as he has slain no one over the years. He does however have what he was carrying in his last battle when he died. He wears it still, though he does not use any of it in combat. He is in tattered black clothing, shirt and pants, old boots and a broad cloak. Belted at his side are a +1 long sword and a pouch of gold. The cloak is magical, giving the wearer a +1 on spot checks.

The corridor that leads off to the outer wall is not an arrow slit but an actual window, closed with iron shutters. It too is locked with a simple bolt.

### **S4 LIVING CHAMBER**

One of the Keep's living chambers. It has a stone cot built into the wall though no other defining features. The room is open and airy as it has three arrow slits for windows.

This served any number of purposes depending on the age. Guests, relatives, children etc. dwelt here at one time or the other. The room is decently lit during the day due to its three arrow slits. The air here is fresh. There is nothing of value in the room. However scrawled on the wall, just above the cot where one's head lies are the words "Let me out of here." They are scrawled in Ethrum.

They are meaningless, carved by a noble child of Ethrum who sought freedom from her domineering father.

## 55 COMMON AREA

This area served as a common area for **Room S4** and **Room S6**. The long steps lead up to a small area where long ago people sat, studied, embroidered, or carried out whatever tasks or enjoyments occupied their space in time.

There is an altar frieze carved into the wall. It is of a faceless human with his held up so that the hands flank the head. It is the All Father and has heard the prayers of countless people over the long ages. Anyone who prays to the All Father heals 1d8 points of damage. A cleric can regain 1d4 levels worth of spells. The affect is good only once per week.

## 56 LIVING CHAMBER

These living quarters are large, 20 by 20 feet, and are one of the few with no arrow slits. Here the Lord of the tower dwelt.

The door here is iron and stuck in the frame. No one has opened it in long years, and to do so now requires a successful strength check (CL 6). Two people can push at the door, the second person adding one plus any strength bonus they may have to the roll.

*The door opens, grinding reluctantly against the floor. But fresh air assails you, carrying with it the smell of birds and bird droppings. As you enter, a large crow drops from the window and flies lazily away, cawing as he goes. The room is largely empty.*

A large, stone bed dominates the inner wall, easily big enough to fit two humans. Otherwise the room is empty.

There is a secret door in the corner that leads to a safe room, used by the occupants to hide from intruders if the Keep should be overrun. Within are several shelves, upon which sit 10 jugs of wine, with four packets of food set on the shelves next to them. A trunk sits in the corner.

The wine is drinkable, though tastes as much like vinegar as wine. The food is inedible.

The trunk is locked. The key is attached to the bottom of the trunk. Anyone who lifts the trunk and looks can't help but notice it. Opening requires a successful pick lock check (CL 8). Breaking the trunk is possible but takes some time and effort.

**TRUNK CONTENTS:** 300gp, 10 5gp gems, and a silver-coated dagger. There are also three sets of clothing. There are riding pants, a shirt and boots with a cloak, a wide brimmed hat (folded), a heavy wool dress with cloak and boots (clearly for a woman or elf), and a smaller dress and boots for a child. In a small leather pouch at the bottom of the trunk is a ring.

The ring is a *two-dimensional ring*. When worn, the user can, at will, make himself two dimensional. Doing so make it impossible to see the wearer from the side. For information on the two-dimensional ring see New Magic Items below.

## 57 ANTE CHAMBERS

This room served as a guard room and armory. But it is now the lair of the wight. He skulks in this room, crawling about the ceiling in tormented agony. If the characters have not met him in **Room S1**, they will meet him here. He spends much of his time on the ceiling and leaps on anyone who enters the room.

*As the door swings open, you are pummeled with an overwhelming stench. The reek of old earth and death fills your nostrils. Inside you see a long corridor of a room with several arrow slits, but these are packed with dirt and what appear to be tiny sticks.*

The wight has packed the windows full of dirt, dead animal carcasses (mostly birds), sticks, and other odds and ends it has scraped out of the Keep. The small white sticks the characters notice are in fact the bones of the birds and rats the wight has picked up and woven into a foul curtain. All this was done to block out the sun.

See the wight in **Room S1** for full stats. He attacks until killed.

**TREASURE:** His treasure consists of a leather bag on a leather rope that he hangs in the center of the corner guard area. Inside are a leather cloak in amazingly good condition, a pouch with 35gp, and a set of jade troll knuckles (the Aihrdian dice game) worth 250gp.

The corner room served as a guard post, and metal racks line the walls here. They are clearly designed to hold polearms, crossbows, bolts and the like.

## 58 LORD'S CHAMBER

This small room possesses a fire place, a small sitting area, and an open arrow slit allowing in fresh air and light.

An old chair lies in the sitting area, petrified with age. One of the legs is broken off and lies on the floor.

The fireplace is large, nearly three feet wide. A coal basket hangs on an iron peg next to it with coal still stacked in it. There is about 24 hours' worth of coal to burn here. Ashes in the fire place show that someone burned a fire but didn't clean up. It's been a long while, though impossible to determine how long.

There is a large key, four inches long, hanging inside the fire place. It hangs on the inside wall, over the opening and is only noticeable if someone looks up and at all sides of the chimney. It hangs on a chain black with soot. The key is brass, though it too is covered with soot. The key's purpose has been lost to time and has hung there unnoticed for countless years.

## 59 ARROW ROOM

These smalls rooms had no purpose except for defense of the Keep. Anyone in the room can fire arrows or crossbow bolts through the arrow slit into the Yard beyond. Stairs in the corner tower lead up or down to the adjacent floors. There is nothing of value in the room.



## THIRD FLOOR

The third floor houses the kitchen and living quarters.

### T1 AND T2 ARROW ROOM

This small room had no purpose except for defense of the Keep. Anyone in the room can fire arrows or crossbow bolts through the arrow slit into the Yard beyond. Stairs in the corner tower lead up or down to the adjacent floors. There is nothing of value in the room.

### T3 HALL AND ARMORY

This long narrow corridor is lined with racks built into the wall. Here the past inhabitants stored weapons, armor, shields, bows, and crossbows. There is nothing left here save for a heavy crossbow and a helmet lying on the floor.

Whatever peculiar happenstance of fate there was, it spared the crossbow from the ravages of time, and it is in reasonably good shape. The helmet too is in good shape, only its strap falling to the rodents that have passed through the hall from time to time.

### T4 ARROW ROOM (WEAKENED)

This small room had no purpose except for defense of the Keep. Anyone in the room can fire arrows or crossbow bolts through the arrow slit into the Yard beyond. Stairs in the corner tower lead up or down to the adjacent floors. There is nothing of value in the room.

The mortar around the arrow slit has given way and the stones here are very loose. Even a gentle push on them (or pull from the outside) will send part of the frame tumbling away, allowing access or egress as desired.

### T5 LIVING CHAMBER

This room served as a windowless living quarter or prison for guests. Both doors have long since rotted away, and only the hinges remain, so entering easy. There is a stone bed in the corner. It is large enough for two humans to use if needed.

But the third of Corilyn's men found his way here. After being mortally wounded, he fled up the circular stair and collapsed. Here he cut off the remainder of his leg and drug himself to the bed. He pulled himself up on it, but fell off, dying in a heap on the floor.

*The room is square without window or arrow slit. A skeletal body lies upon the floor in a heap of bones and old tattered clothing. His leg lies by the door, the remnants of a rat-chewed boot on the foot.*

The body is lifeless, but anyone approaching the leg feels a significant drop in temperature, and if they are within a few feet, they can see their breath in the air.

Though the body is dead, the spirit of the man remains. It is not attached to the body however, only the leg. In death the spirit did not know which way to turn and wandered to the leg, where it has hung ever since, looking down upon it, wondering what

happened. If the leg is touched or moved, the ghost materializes above the leg and begins to howl.

The characters have one full round to vacate the room or the ghost attacks. It will not pursue them out of the room.

**GHOST** (These lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 10d8, AC 20, HP varies. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with a slam for magical affect. Any successful hit ages the victim. Humans and half orcs age 1d4 decades, halflings 1d6 decades, and dwarves and gnomes 3d6 decades. Elves are immune. They also utter a frightful moan, and unless a wisdom save is made, anyone who hears it is subject to a fear spell. They are incorporeal and use telekinesis.)

**TREASURE:** The man's equipment was lost in his flight from the barghest. However, in the boot of the severed leg is a packet of +1 thieves' tools.

### T6 KITCHEN

Here food was prepared for the Lord and his garrison. There are two large ovens in reasonably good shape and a stone table built into the wall.

A good two dozen iron skillets and pots lay on the floor, on the table, or hang on metal hooks on the wall. A good two dozen ceramic jars line shelves on the walls. A large bin of coal remains along with a host of cooking utensils.

There is little of value in the room aside from a magic scroll hidden in one of the jars. Anyone searching discovers the scroll. The scroll should be for a spell caster of the Castle Keepers Choice and spells the character does not already have.

**SCROLL:** 2 1st-level spells, 1 2nd level spell, 1 -3rd level spell.

## ROOF A

Access is gained to Roof A only from above and the tower stair. The roof is unoccupied and long abandoned.

### R 1 ARMORY

This small chamber served to house any number of war implements. The door remains intact and has survived the ravages of time. Within are the following items: 12 halberds, 4 man catchers, 4 light crossbows, 120 bolts, 4 falchion forks, 8 iron shields, 4 suites of scale mail, 8 helms.

### R 2 RALLY HALL

This open room once housed a number of tables, chairs, and other sundries. All have long since vanished. Here, men gathered to defend the rooftop, wounded were tended, and they ate, drank, and prepared for battle.

### R 3 SMITHY

A small furnace with exhaust piping leading out to the roof dominates this room. Stone benches line the walls, crowned by a large number of iron pegs. A number of tools remain, rusted and aged. They are all blacksmithing tools. Any enterprising person can clean the tools and make them useful and ready.

## 16 CASTLES & CRUSADES

#### R 4 AVIARY

Built into the wall are a dozen large bird cages, all iron. Here the Lords of the Keep kept a flock of birds, allowing communication with other forts. There are no birds and have not been for some time.

#### ROOF B

The top of the tower is dominated by battlements on all four sides, each overlooking the Yard beyond. Four towers flank the battlements, each accessed by stairs.

#### RB 1 WATCH TOWER

The watch tower stands markedly higher than the other three. It is covered in a conical roof with dark colored shingles, only a few of which have fallen away. Access to the center portion of the tower is gained by the ramp that winds around it. The ramp is protected on the outer side by battlements.

This small tower room crowns the entire Keep. The room is only eight feet in diameter and possesses a single stone bench. Lying against the wall is a kite shield. Upon its face is carved the likeness of a buck deer with large antlers. The shield shines with a luster that only polished steel can carry.

It is a *shield of absorption*, left here long ago and forgotten by all but the birds. For more information on the shield see New Magic Items.

From here the whole valley unfolds to the viewer.

#### RB2-RB 4 TOWERS

Each of these towers are identical. Though somewhat worn, the battlements are in amazing condition for their age. Each at one

time had frames for holding large 25 gallon iron pots, enabling the defenders the ability to dump burning liquids on the enemy below. Few of these remain, but a large pot on RB 3 lies against the parapet.

#### RB 5 BATTLEMENTS

There is nothing here, just open to the air. Here men rallied and fought in days of yore.

#### RING UPON THE LAKE

The *Ring of Brass* found in *Room G8* connects to any other Ring of Brass set in the world of Aihrde. Travel is possible anywhere that the characters are aware of a Ring existing. However, usage of the Yorgach Coin creates the image of the Ring of Brass that is set in the hills overlooking Lake Ugashtan and, if the characters desire, it instantly transports them to that hillside in the Haunted Highlands (see *Haunted Highlands* books).

Here the Ring is mounted on the wall, set there by the Herald of Unklar, the demi-god Yorgach. Any passing to this ring first appear at a set of stairs, carved with runes that lead up. Following them reveals a circular opening in a cavern wall.

*The Ring is open before you. The dark earthy smell of a cavern pervades the air, covered only by the smell of burnt wood and charred coal. Peering into the rock hewn cave you see a band of orcs camped. A dozen strong, they sit sprawled upon a ledge overlooking a cliff, beyond which the blue skies reflect a gigantic inland lake.*



The orcs are utterly unaware of the characters' entry into the cave.

**SUB-CHIEF** (*This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d8, AC 16, HP 30. His primary attribute is physical. He wears metal breast plate of beaten brass and carries an iron shield decorated with the soles of halfling feet. In combat he wields a huge two-handed sword for 1d10 points of damage. He collects halfling soles and spends all his coin having them strung to his shield, and upon his belt. They are worthless to anyone other than a fellow orc.*)

**ORCS X 22** (*These chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 15, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear heavy leather and ring armor, and carry axes, maces, broadswords and short swords and tulwars. These are the rank and file of the orcs band. Four of them are archers with short bows and 12 arrows apiece. Each of the orcs carries little coin, if any, but sport their wealth in jewelry. Each possesses 1d12gp in rings, bracelets, necklaces, etc.*)

Welcome to the Haunted Highlands! For more, be sure to check out all the wonderful source material: **Players Guide to the Haunted Highlands**, **Castle Keepers Guide to the Haunted Highlands**, **Free City of Eskadia** and the Area Map.

## NEW MAGIC ITEMS

### BANDS OF TEFNUT

Golden arm bands that when worn by a cleric or paladin of Tefnut or any river god or goddess, or the Og Aust, grants a +1 to all spells that require a wisdom check.

**Value:** 500gp **Exp:** 1000

### THE MAGIC BELT

The belt is magical, granting the user the ability to see through walls. Upon a successful wisdom check (CL equal to 5+1 per foot of wall) the user can see on the other side of a wall. The vision is not clear, coming across as shades of gray, and it cannot detect motion of any kind, only items, animate or inanimate, that are sitting still.

**Value:** 2500 **Exp:** 1000

### ROPE TRICK ROPE

The magical rope is four feet long and weightless. When tied off to any vertical surface it creates a magical doorway to an extra-dimensional space. The space is 12 cubic feet in size, possesses breathable air and it completely invisible to the outside world. The door is invisible too; only those passing in ever offer an outsider the unusual view of seeing someone vanish as if devoured. The rope itself does not have any weight, nor does anyone climbing up it. For instance, if the rope were tied off on a branch, a 200 lbs man could climb the rope without the branch bending.

**Value:** 3000 **Exp:** 750

## TWO-DIMENSIONAL RING

This ring allows the wearer to disguise himself by folding himself into a 2 dimensional form. Anyone looking straight at the wearer sees them normally, but if the wearer turns to the side they vanish from sight, with not even a hint of where they were. For their part, the wearer cannot see to the left or right, meaning to say that they have no peripheral vision.

The ring has 10 charges on it and can be activated at will. Once activated, it remains so until deactivated. Anyone staying in a two-dimensional state for longer than 12 hours must roll a successful constitution save or they become two-dimensional permanently.

**Value:** 1500gp **Exp:** 3000

## SHIELD OF ABSORPTION

This magic shield absorbs the blow of any weapon. When struck it reduces the damage by half. It can only absorb 100-400 points of damage. Roll a d4 to determine the amount of damage it can take. Once it exceeds its maximum damage absorption, it shatters.

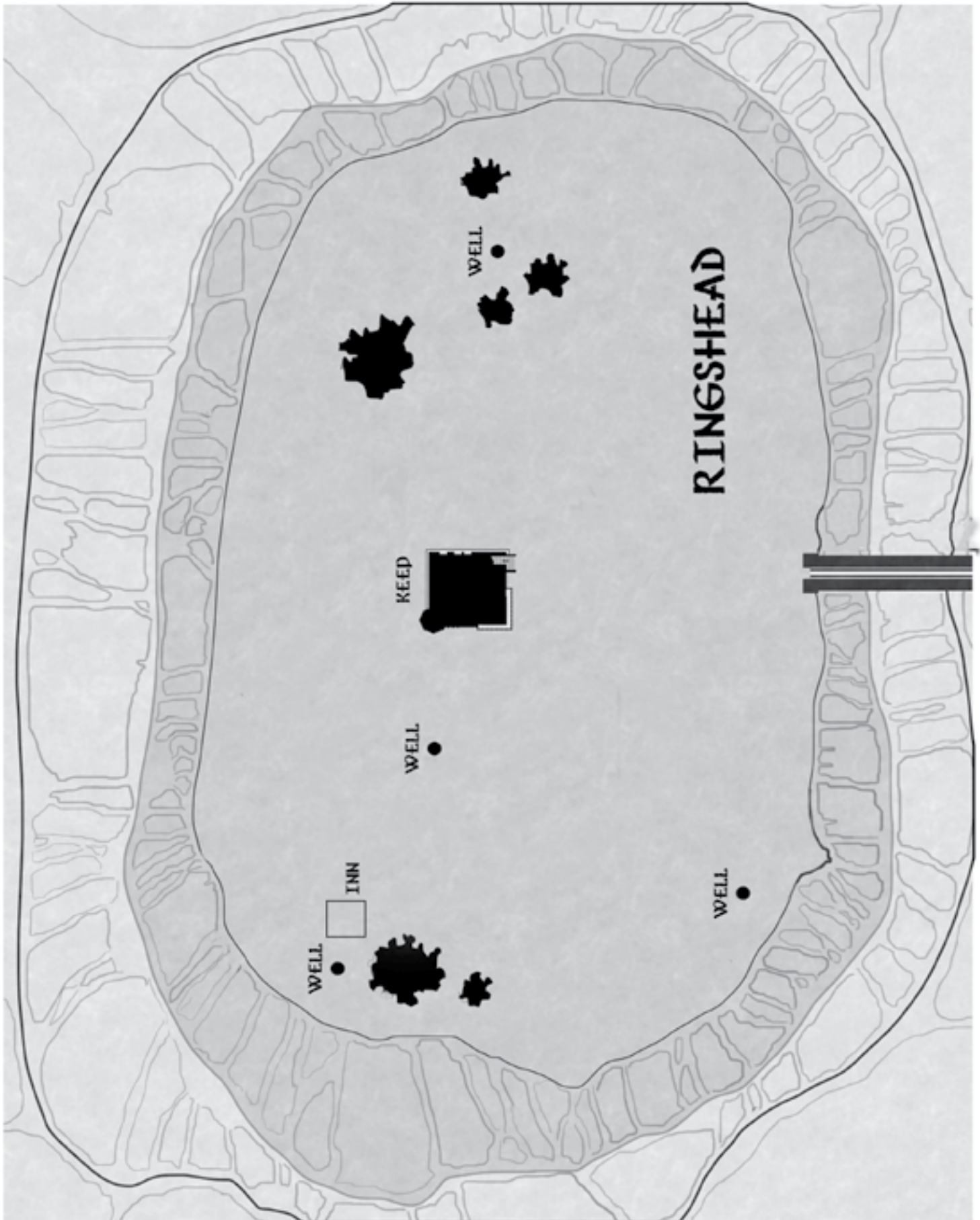
## YORGACH COIN

When Unklar fell and the Winter Dark ended, the orcs were bereft of their god, and returned to the worship of many lesser deities. Many of these sought to gather their scattered people together, to rebuild and regroup. One such was Yorgach, the Herald of Unklar, a mountain of an orc, and a god to his people. To this end he sought to take advantage of the Rings of Brass and fashioned four coins, each impressed with the memory of his lair, set in the far north of the Highlands.

Anyone holding the coin in their hand, squeezing it, conjures the image of a Ring of Brass set in the Haunted Highlands. This image allows one to move instantly to that gate, which itself stands upon a high cliff overlooking the southern shores of Lake Ugashtan. The Ring here is built into the wall of a cave, uncovered.

**Value:** 5,000gp **Exp:** 10,000

## 18 CASTLES & CRUSADES





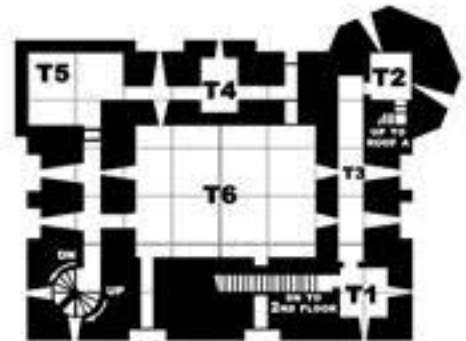
GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



ROOF A



ROOF B

# CASTLE RINGSHEAD

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET

# CASTLES CRUSADES

## STAINS UPON THE GREEN

Stains upon the Green thrusts the characters into the Tar Kiln, where the ruins of an old dwarven ring fort offers them refuge from the wilderness and its many dangers. Beyond the parapet's walls and the ruined barbican that breaches them stands a keep, built on these borderlands long ago. Abandoned now to the wilderness, its secrets are ripe for the taking. But within it lies a secret portal that others wish to use, to bridge the gap between worlds.

The adventure is set upon the borderlands known as the Tar Kiln, a wilderness that lies beyond the northern marches of the Kingdom of Kayomar. Here the rolling hills and mixed pine and hardwood forests give refuge to creatures great and small; boars the size of ponies, giant wolves, and massive cave bears. There are also bull headed men and long toothed tigers, grim faced giants, and trolls. They come for the hunt, for the elk and deer are plentiful and large. It is a broken country, littered with tar pits that lay in bleak silence like stains on a canvas.

It is designed to introduce characters to the Rings of Brass, magical portals that lead to dwarven roads carved through the planes. It is specifically designed for use in bridging the Lands of Ursal in Ahrde with the Free City of Eskadia in the Haunted Highlands. It is modular however, allowing its use in any setting of the Castle Keeper's choice. The plane travel aspects are not germane to the adventure and can be discarded if desired.

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SMALL DUNGEON.

