



**CASTLES
& CRUSADES**

THE SHATTERED HORN

A5

BY DAVIS CHENAULT



THE SHATTERED HORN

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A5: THE SHATTERED HORN

The adventure presented in the following pages possesses appeal for the ever more foolhardy, umm, I mean brave, adventurer. The locale within which the adventure occurs is far from civilized lands and borders upon those realms ruled entirely by evil, malign, and vile creatures who once ruled the entire world. The adventurers must travel far away from the world of men and, laws to that of the Blighted Screed and thence, to an ancient administrative center named Festung Akt. Here, they discover an ally of the Witch Queen and her erstwhile lord, Balonakalon, as well as other bizarre and maleficent creatures.

The Shattered Horn is designed for a single walk-through by 3-5 characters; it has a challenge rating of 5-8. This may take several gaming sessions to complete. Having run this adventure and playtested it, I should impart upon the Castle Keeper to somehow convey upon their players that time is of the essence, curiosity can kill the cat, there are two peas in this pod, and, as Steve mentioned, if the character's don't settle down and quit acting like "a fart in a frying pan," they'll end up, "happier than a dead pig in the sunshine" (he really did say that, and no, I do not understand it fully).

The Shattered Horn is the most recent adventure in a series beginning with *Assault on Blacktooth Ridge*, and continuing through *Slag Heap*, *The Wicked Cauldron*, and *Usurpers of the Fell Axe*. However, this adventure has been designed such that it can be played independently of the series. The Castle Keeper would only be responsible for creating a reason for the characters to come to such a remote and deadly place (discussed in *Involving the Characters* below). In case this adventure is used as a stand-alone, any storylines or plot arcs referred to can easily be ignored or modified without impacting the play of the adventure in your hands.

INTRODUCTION

Festung Akt was constructed ages ago during the early Winter Dark, when Unklar reigned over the world. Originally a way station that marked the final drainage of the great system of canals that sprawled out from the roots of Aufstrag, Festung Akt only later became the tower and fortress it is today. Here, the wastes of Aufstrag slowed to a crawl and emptied onto the fertile plains, the source of their original blight. The distance from the city being as great as it is, the flushed filth only arrived in a slow-moving slag. After a while, the canal (along with its many sister canals) became clogged and its upkeep forgotten. In time, the lords of Aufstrag tore down the small way station and built a fort in its place. The new masters of the tower forgot the canals, if indeed they ever knew of them. At first, Festung Akt served as little more than an outpost overlooking the Avishean Ridge, but as



Unklar's empire expanded ever outward, it became an administrative center for much of the Blighted Screed. Eventually, its utility as such declined, and it has been used variously as a prison, military headquarters, and for other similarly mundane purposes.

In the last century of the long Winter's Dark, Festung Akt had become a prison where criminals, traitors, suspected traitors, those who had fallen out of favor, and others were bound, tortured, interrogated, and then killed. The fortress earned a new name from its ungern commanders: Iggh Nag Teerg, the Torture Gardens.

In the declining decades of Unklar's rule, Festung Akt received little attention as other wars and battles required his attention. The post languished, troops and administrators dispersed or were withdrawn to other realms and few were left to watch over the fortress and the country about. The minor lords who concerned themselves with the management of Unklar's vast empire sought a mere lieutenant who might manage the region without much assistance, for there were few aides to spare in these latter years, as the wars to the north and west were costly. Festung Akt's new lord would need knowledge of the very lands and animals to serve his needs and make the fortress a realm of its own. A druid of dutiful mind, Deuranimus the Crow, was ordered to Festung Akt and told to manage the affairs of the castle and region. Deuranimus took his post shortly before the final collapse of Unklar's realm.

Deuranimus had served as a minor assistant to a troop in the Blighted Screed for a number of years, and his assignment to Festung Akt surprised him as much as his immediate superiors. Perhaps it was a sign of the decline of Unklar; a portent really, for such a person as Deuranimus would never have been offered a position like this in times past or perhaps a more spiritually influential Unklar would have kept Deuranimus' one small personality defect in tow. Deuranimus, it must be known, had a conscience and was capable of feeling guilt. For many long years, he buried these emotions and acted faithfully to the cause which bound him. Once in charge of Festung Akt, however, the sheer volume of his heinous deeds got the better of him. Remorse, guilt, and an effort at repentance guided his actions over time.

For years Deuranimus had been torturing people for information and executing them for the slightest of wrongs. After a time he quit "completely executing" the prisoners and he saved many whom he felt were not deserving of such a punishment. He even began seeing that the goodly-minded men of the world might do a better job at ruling than had Unklar.

To wit, Deuranimus began taking the souls of those to be executed and placing them in gems which were subsequently placed on medallions and hung from the necks of the crows which flocked about him and aided him in his various undertakings. For several years, Deuranimus managed to do this and, in part, it assuaged the guilt he felt for so many murders. By placing the souls in the gems, the intended victims of the headman's ax or the torturer's suffering were bound in time. Instead of eternal banishment to the nether realms to languish in a state of slow decay, they remained in a world that was neither here nor there, but rather one that lay between "this one and that one." He knew that with the proper spells, those souls were fully capable of redemption and a second chance at life. They could be brought back into the world of Aihilde.

It just so happened that at the moment Setiva, the elven lady, carved the Unklar's horn from his own brow and banished him from the realms of man, Deuranimus was in the process of placing the soul of a great paladin into a gem. In the ensuing spiritual eruption of Unklar's passing, the gem shattered and the spell went awry. The paladin's soul and body were bent and twisted, and the paladin emerged as a powerful shadow. Seeing this, Deuranimus went entirely mad. The guilt of a lifetime's evil overwhelmed him when he realized that he altered someone so good into something so evil. He threw his servants out, closed the doors to Festung Akt, and escaped to its highest tower. He remains there to this day, raving and screaming mad.

In the ensuing decades, the binding forces of Unklar's empire simply eroded and chaos engulfed the Blighted Screed with ungern, orcs, goblins, trolls, and the other creatures who resided there. They wandered aimlessly about, slaughtering one another and all who entered the region. From the chaos, several surviving lieutenants or generals had stepped forward and attempted to unify the area. None succeeded. One of the latest of these efforts is from a man named Balonakalon.

Balonakalon, whose single significant redeeming quality is having survived the collapse of Unklar's reign, was an unimportant underling in the administration of that long-dead empire. He found Festung Akt nearly abandoned (Deuranimus never leaves the high tower of Festung Akt), took up residence in the Tower, and has slowly gathered about him those willing to do his bidding. This is a motley collection of evil humans, a displaced and leaderless ungern battalion, slavish orcs, nasty goblins, and other foul beasts. Some reside in Festung Akt with Balonakalon and others are out doing his bidding.

Balonakalon intends to unite the disparate groups of ungern, ogres, orcs, and goblins of the Blighted Screed into one huge army and conquer those realms south of the Hruesen River. The characters are headed to Festung Akt, to put an end to his machinations-or not.

FOR THE CASTLE KEEPER

The Shattered Horn takes place almost entirely in Festung Akt. The several encounters leading to the place are designed to set the "environmental" tone of the adventure. Make the characters aware that they are far from civilization and what this implies. There is no place nearby to go for safety. The characters must face this trial on their own and by their wits. Outside aid is simply not available. There is no going back to town to heal up and try again.

When or if the characters should ever return to civilization, the road back should be as hard as the one leading from it.

Once the characters arrive at Festung Akt, they must contend with several factors. The first is time. There is a troop of 1,000 ungern who are leaving the Festung Akt upon the characters' arrival. They should witness this. Further, in the course of the adventure, the characters should become aware that the troop of ungern is returning in short order, perhaps within 48 hours or so. This is discussed in more detail in the appropriate section. Once the troop of ungern return to Festung Akt, the probability of the characters' survival is significantly reduced.

There are also two powerful non-player characters in Festung Akt, Balonakalon and Deuranimus the Crow. Both are very powerful and present a real challenge if fought. Balonakalon is a coward, though, and if allowed, escapes to avoid a fight. Deuranimus is good at heart but insane. If the players act accordingly, a fight with him could be avoided.

The dungeon is divided into four distinct areas of activity. There is the post outside the tower itself where the ungern legion is billeted and in which only a few ungern remain. The troops stationed there are returning shortly. The main portion of the complex is occupied by Balonakalon and his cohorts. A large cavern underneath the main complex contains a powerful shadow and several other creatures as well. This portion is never entered by Balonakalon or his allies. Finally, the upper portion of the tower is occupied by Deuranimus and his crows.

The upper portion of the tower and the caverns beneath it are independent of the other two areas and can be dealt with separately and can even, should it be necessary, offer a short respite for the characters.

INVOLVING THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

Should the players continue the adventure as part of the "A" series of modules, then finding out about Festung Akt should be easy. Any number of the non-player characters in Ludensheim, as presented in *A4 Usurpers of the Fell Axe*, know of the place and many knowledgeable people may as well. During a routine interrogation or encounter, have the characters learn of the place and even hear the name Balonakalon. The characters should, of their own accord at this point, move forward to Festung Akt. If they seem unwilling, have the town elders offer a reward for locating the place and finding out about the inhabitants therein. The reward should be a town house and citizenship-perhaps some gold if the characters seem unwilling to do so without monetary compensation.

As part of Balonakalon's plan to overtake the region, he has planted spies and minions throughout the Blighted Screed and even south of the Hruesen River. One such agent of Balonakalon's is the Witch Queen found in *A3 The Wicked Cauldron*. He was in contact with her on a fairly regular basis. Should she no longer be in contact-for whatever reason-he will suspect that his machinations are being uncovered in the south and may be more wary of interlopers.

Further, should the Witch Queen have escaped the Wicked Cauldron, she would have come here and would be located



somewhere in the tower near Balonakalon (Area 25). The Witch Queen would recognize the party and inform Balonakalon of their abilities. It might also be the case that attacks on her presage attacks on Festung Akt. Balonakalon would act accordingly. It is up to the Castle Keeper to determine what Balonakalon would do, but minimally he would not allow as many of the ungern to leave Festung Akt and would post more guards and increase regional patrols.

As for running the adventure independently of the “A” series, consider the following options:

1. The characters hear about Festung Akt at a local tavern, read about it in a library (from a dungeon or perhaps some place they are plundering), or from some learned scholar. In general, the description remains (old outpost of a collapsed empire, etc.), but the rumor of a treasure house should be the enticement.
2. The characters hear about a mad druid living in an ancient tower. It is rumored that he has learned the secret of turning rocks into gems and has festooned many a crow with this adornment as an insult to those who value such things.
3. As the characters are wandering across some strange or poorly explored area, they note the tower in the distance. In this manner, the whole event comes off as a surprise.

THE BLIGHTED SCREED

The area of the Blighted Screed stretches west from the left bank of the Hruesen River, across the open country to the Uduinlay River; in the north it is hemmed in by the Grausamland, and in the south by the Kellerwald and the Northern Marches. It is a barren land with but a few small rivers running through it; rocky soil with slate and shale outcropping dominates the topography. Blasted by the icy cold during Unklar’s reign and the massive run-off which occurred after the sudden melting of the various snow fields and mini-glaciers to the north, it has yet to recover and grow to its naturally lush state. Only small scrub oaks, cedars, scrub brush, and weeds grow here and those primarily near springs and the few small lakes found in the region.

Not much lives here-or can live here. Ground squirrels, moles, chipmunks, rabbits, and their like can be found here. There are grey deer, small antelope, and wild sheep, though in no great numbers. Occasional bobcats and mountain lions adapted to the region hunt along its periphery. Wolves are found in its interior, and rarely, bears that have wandered in from other lands in search of greener pastures. None of these pose dangers as all are wary of man, humanoid and demi-human. Even the least of them can sense the coming of death and make to hide or run away. Catching food here is no small feat, as the region is overhunted by the inhabitants of the fortress. Any hunting checks are made at CL 7.

There are dangers, though. The remnants of Unklar’s various cohorts roam the land, warring with one another and all who come into this realm. There are ogres, orcs, goblins, ungern, giants and many other rare beasts who have survived the wars. Some wander freely across the lands, and others have holed up in one of the many hundreds of camps, forts, palaces, treasure houses, guard houses, dungeons, castles, and caves dotting the land. This was once, one

must know, a staging area for the countless legions that poured out of Aufstrag that headed to war in the south and east and lands beyond. For many centuries it served this purpose alone.

Finding Festung Akt can be a task, though not terribly so. A road leads north along the left bank of Hruesen River, at the feet of the Blacktooth Ridge and into eastern plains of the Blighted Screed. This old road was once well-paved and marked for the armies of Unklar with giant stone markers. Large stones jutting forth from the ground, some stretching nearly 40 in height, were placed along the road’s length at 2000-yard intervals. Simply finding the stones (many of which have fallen) and then locating the remnants of the road, gets one very close to Festung Akt. Festung Akt is notable several miles away. It sits on a high point of rugged shale and towers up into the sky. On the topmost tower is a balcony upon which burns a bright blue fire visible for many miles.

After 100 miles of travel (usually taking 5–6 days) the road passes within a few miles of Festung Akt. At this point (or some time therein) a faint blue glow can be seen in the distance. This is the fire on the balcony at the uppermost level of the tower. Here are also several recent and well-used trails heading off the road to the tower as well.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE BLIGHTED SCREED

Encounters are rare in the Blighted Screed, though deadly. All encounters are, of course, optional, but it is suggested the Castle Keeper roll for an encounter at least once a day and once during the night. Roll a d10. A “1” indicates an encounter has occurred. Roll on the appropriate chart below.

Lighting a fire at night increases the likelihood of an encounter. Roll twice during the evening with a “1” or “2” indicating an encounter has occurred.

Each encounter can only occur once, except the ravens which occur as many times as rolled. Further, should the same encounter be rolled twice, it is ravens rather than any of the others. Both special encounters can occur once.

- 1–2. **Wild animals:** These are any of the various animals described above. They make haste to leave the area.
3. **Screed Ogres (3–9):** These are described below.
4. **Orcs (4–16):** A band of wandering orcs in search of easy prey and loot.
5. **Goblins (3–30):** This is a band of nasty goblins making a hasty movement across the Blighted Screed. If the number of goblins encountered outnumber the party by at least three to one, the goblins make an attack; otherwise, they attempt to avoid the party.
- 6–8. **Raven pack (60–600):** Though harmless, the packs of ravens fly across the Blighted Screed in massive numbers, looking for something to eat. Once used as messengers for the various armies encamped here, their numbers have grown significantly since the fall of Unklar.
9. **Trolls (2–3):** These wily creatures are simply seeking something to eat, or just something to kill.
10. **Special:** Use either the gorgon, or ogre magi encounter described below.

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

THE FLESH PITS

On the northern fringes of the Blacktooth Ridge, where that line of hills meets the Blighted Screed, are the ruins of a fairly modest laboratory-of sorts. Here, in a vast round chamber open to the sky sits a flesh pit. In it, some wizards of a particularly foul nature, dumped the remains of the dead-the dead and the near dead. The pit was named the Flesh Pits after a time by the ungerm and orcs who lived in the region. It was avoided by all living things excepting those who were required to come and those foul priests.

The priests gathered what remains they could, and with them built grotesqueries of nature-flesh golems. These golems were bid to do their tiding or that of whomever they were giving. For a time, the Flesh Pits produced many of these things and they went out into the world.

However, as time moved on, the Flesh Pits were used less and less, such that even during the waning year of Unklar's reign they were rarely producing golems. The Flesh Pits were essentially forgotten by all but those who remained there. With the fall of Unklar, the Flesh Pits fell into disuse, as the priests who lived there moved on.

They left several flesh golems in their wake. The area around the Flesh Pits has several dozen flesh golems wandering around killing things and throwing them into the pits. The characters, should they happen upon the northern end of the Blacktooth Ridge, should encounter a Flesh Golem in the woods thereabouts, or even upon the escarpment above the ridge as it wanders in search of prey.

The flesh golems leave a trail of stink behind them that is easy to follow. They can also be smelled a fairly good distance off. They shamle and wander the wastes in search of any living thing to kill. They then bring it back to the Flesh Pits. They also travel in packs, so more than one can be encountered. A trail back to the pits should be easy to follow as well.

The pits themselves consist of a large circular wall with one opening in it. Outside the wall are two broad stone buildings, both completely abandoned. The entire area has the stench of a slaughterhouse to it. The golems do nothing but kill things and throw them into the pit.

It is up to the Castle Keeper to devise an appropriate number to be located at the pits when they arrive there and the number encountered along the way. There is treasure in the pit of rotting flesh but it would be difficult to get as it is buried in decades' worth of rotting bodies and animals.

GOLEM, FLESH (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 7d10, AC 18, HP 49. It slams opponents with its fists for 2–8 damage. It can be struck only by magical weapons with a +2 bonus or better. It is immune to nearly all magic; see M&T for specific details*)

GORGON: Use this encounter with caution, as it can be very deadly, and note the weakened breath weapon in the stat block.

This gorgon has wandered the Blighted Screed since the fall of Unklar. It was once a part of Unklar's army, trained and encouraged to kill, maim, and slaughter upon command. It traveled with the

armies of Unklar and was under the command of frost giants. The gorgon still has the markings of its previous life. Its horns are tipped with iron, and several partial plates of black iron are still strapped, by solid chain, around its back, neck, and rump. The battle training and years of war have left the gorgon with a particularly foul temperament (even for its kind) and it now wanders the Blighted Screed killing, eating, or turning everything it can to stone.

The encounter occurs at dusk or just before dawn to late morning – this gorgon rests most of the afternoon and late at night. It was taught to hunt all manner of fey, and, as such, has an uncanny desire and ability to locate them and kill them. The gorgon focuses its attacks on any elves or fey in the party. First, it charges them in an attempt to trample them underfoot or gore them. When unable to charge, it then uses its breath against those fighting it in an attempt to get away. Should it get away, it runs far off, rests for a few moments, then charges back into battle. Fearless, the gorgon fights until dead or it has managed to kill one or more opponents and all others run away.

The gorgon has no lair. Backtracking the beast only results in frustration, as it has wandered rather aimlessly about for many years. Occasionally, stone squirrels, birds, rabbits and even deer are found along its trail. These are rare, though, as the gorgon prefers eating these animals to turning them to stone.

The value of several of those stone animals can be fairly high. To one who collects such things, a perfect statue of a squirrel can fetch several hundred gp or more. The value of these items and the location of those willing to purchase them are up to the Castle Keeper to decide.

On a side note, once combat is over and if the gorgon has turned anyone to stone, it proceeds to knock the statue over and ram it until it is broken into many small parts.

GORGON (*This neutral-evil creature's vital stats are HD 9d10, HP 67, AC 22. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a weakened breath weapon acting at half the challenge level, gore attack for 2d6 damage and trampling. If a gore attack is successful, the iron tips deliver an additional 1d4 points of frost damage. A constitution save at CL 0 reduces that damage by half.*)

The iron tips on the gorgon's horns are of a special black iron forged in the smithies of a clan of warrior frost giants. They are imbued with the magic of these mighty humanoids. Should the tips be removed and reforged as usable weapons, they cause 1d4 frost damage when a hit is scored. Opponents make a constitution save with a challenge level of 0 to half the damage. There is enough metal to make three spearheads or two daggers, a small war hammer, or similarly sized item.

OGRE MAGI: This lone ogre magi was once part of a clan of ogres before being kicked out for breaking with traditions holy to them. It now seeks redress in the form of 100 human/elf/dwarf heads. It is only on kill 54. The magi is headed south to the lands of man, where it intends to quickly gather the remaining lot of heads from farmers, herdsman or other easy prey.

There are two possible methods of encountering the ogre magi: the magi is surprised, or the players are surprised. If the magi is surprised, it attempts to avoid combat with such obviously superior foes and/

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or numbers and turns invisible, only to fly away. In this case, the ogre magi flies far away and attempts to track the characters for a few days launching an ambush at some point. The magi is patient enough to follow them all the way to Festung Akt and even to wait until the players exit place before attacking them.

Should the magi surprise the characters (or the encounter occurs at night), it changes itself into human form, acts like a wounded knight and wanders up to the characters, seeking aid. It then travels with the players or sits by their camp for up to 1 hour (the polymorph spell's duration), waiting for an opportune moment to strike. If that moment does not arise, it excuses itself prior to the spells dissipation (perhaps on a bathroom break), turns invisible, and flies away, only to follow the characters and find a more opportune moment to strike them (see the previous paragraph).

The ogre magi carries well-made banded armor and a large magical bardiche. It is frosty white/blue in color and heaves in mighty muscles. He carries, in a large bag, the jaw bones of his 54 victims as well as other sundries listed below.

OGRE MAGI *(This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 5d8, HP 34, AC 18, lawful evil. Its primary attributes are mental and physical. It attacks with a +2 bardiche or dagger and/or with its special abilities. It carries three potions of healing, a potion of heat resistance, a ring of freedom of movement as well as 1000gp worth of coin and jewelry.)*

SCREED OGRES There are many names for the ogres which live in this region, the kindest being rock ogres but, in order to distinguish them from the "true" rock ogres found far to the east of this land, we shall call them screed ogres. These are truly hulking creatures with massive shoulders, bent backs, thick muscles wrought tight as iron, and skin tanned to a tawny ochre shade. Once members of the cohorts gathered near Festung Akt, they now wander the wastelands in search of food and sport, for these screed ogres truly love to torture and tease all manner of living things. If encountered camping, they almost always have some poor animal hobbled or caged and are beating it, throwing rocks at it or in some manner having sport with it. Although uncommon, it is even possible they are doing so to a humanoid, human, or demi-human. The latter is entirely at the Castle Keeper's discretion.

Screed ogres carry an assortment of weapons gathered from their fallen foes or plundered from the many armories located in the abandoned fortresses found in these lands. Unlike most of their brethren, these ogres have been trained to fight and are capable of using a variety of weapons skillfully and are not above rudimentary tactics. These ogres do not use shields of any kind considering them the mark of cowards or less.

Being nomadic in nature, screed ogres rarely have lairs. However, it is rumored several of the fortresses in the Blighted Screed are home to that most unusual and terrifying of screed ogres-shamans.

SCREED OGRES (4-11) *(These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 5d8, HP variable, AC 16-18. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with normal weapons with a +4 to all damage rolled or a slam attack for 1d10 damage. Each ogre carries 100-1000gp worth of coin, gems and jewelry. There is a 10% chance a rock ogre carries an expert weapon.)*

FESTUNG AKT

Festung Akt sits upon a substantial uplift of shale, and its towers and domed chambers, rising in a step-like formation, one above the other, dominate the skyline. A blue light emanates from a balcony near the pinnacle of the topmost tower. Many hundreds of crows circle around Festung Akt, making a horrible racket. Just south and east of the main structure is Camp Orojon. This large area is enclosed by a palisade of wood. Several towers are located about its perimeter, and many red banners with black markings upon them extend up from its interior.

SPECIAL NOTE: THE UNGERN OF FESTUNG AKT

The ungern who reside here are a fairly disciplined group of soldiery. Many fought in the armies of Unklar and, as is their nature, retain the vestiges of their military training. However, time, defeat, inactivity, and poor leadership have left their mark. They are not as keenly observant as in times past, nor as willing to sacrifice themselves for their leaders. Their morale is not as high as it could be. As such:

1. When in combat and facing obviously superior foes, the ungern must make a charisma check or flee. Superiority can be measured by the number killed in combat or sheer numbers. The "morale" check is a numbers crunch. For each ungern killed a -1 is incurred; for each party member killed a +2 is added. If the ungern outnumber the party members, they get to add a +1 for each member more than the party (i.e. if the ungern have 3 more than the party, a +3 is added to the roll). If the party outnumbers the ungern, they receive a -2 per less member. Checks should be made at the beginning of an encounter and at least every four rounds of combat, though more often if the Castle Keeper so desires or massive losses ensue.
2. Those ungern on patrol or at Camp Orojon and in the halls of Festung Akt tend not to pay much attention to their surroundings, as they have never been attacked here and do not fear anyone nor expect an attack of any type. They are simply going through the motions of their patrols. Each spot check to notice any party members attempting to hide is made at -3.
3. Surprise checks on the ungern are made at +2.

Unless otherwise described, all ungern fall into one of the three types below:

UNGERN, x4 *(These lawful evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 16, and HP 13, 12, 12, 9. Their primary attributes are physical. They can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 points of damage or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage. They each carry a +1 chain coat, bardiche, dagger, and 4-40gp worth of jewelry and coin.)*

UNGERN SERGEANT *(This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 14, and HP variable. Its prime attributes are physical. It can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 points of damage or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage. It carries a chain coat, morningstar, dagger, and 2-20gp worth of jewelry and coin.)*

UNGERN SUB-CHIEF *(This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 16, and HP 20. Its primary attributes are physical. It can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 points of damage, or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage. It carries a +1 chain coat, bardiche, dagger, and 200gp worth of jewelry and coin.)*

CAMP OROJON

Outside the tower proper is a large rectangular palisade constructed of logs, brambles and branches. Within, are the makeshift houses and structures used by over 1000 ungern soldiers. A tower is located at each corner of the compound, and two larger towers are near the entry.

When the characters arrive (no matter the timing), they should witness the process of an ungern battalion leaving the fortification. There are nearly 1000 ungern in this patrol, and the site is mesmerizing. The ungern are organized, marching in tight formation, and carrying war banners. At the front of the procession are six ungern mounted upon massive black war horses.

Luckily for the characters, there should only be several dozen ungern outside the tower within half an hour or so after their arrival.

The characters should learn, in short order, that the patrol is returning within 48 hours. This information should be imparted to the characters as soon as possible. Primarily, because it is important for the characters' survival but, secondarily, it creates a tension for the players, knowing they have to get in and out quickly or face slaughter at the hands of over 1000 well-armed ungern. This can be managed in many ways. For example, the characters could overhear the ungern talking to one another about it or from any of the various encounters inside Camp Orojon or the tower. It is easiest if two scouts pass by the characters (if necessary fake a die roll for the ungern to "detect" the party). The scouts are talking to each other. The first says, "Ul-Ion, how long is the battalion out this time?" The other responds, "A short time only, two days I think when we return to our coves from the screed!" This would be an opportune time to describe the ungern in all their horror.

Each tower at Camp Orojon has two ungern guards in it, armed with heavy crossbows. At night, the same number of guards are on duty. The gate is closed and three guards are located just inside it. There are only 30 other ungern, one sergeant, and two lieutenants remaining inside the compound.

Importantly, there are also ungern guards on **Level Three** of Festung Akt and on the roof in **Level Two, Area 8-9**. Any *obvious* shenanigans by the players attract their attention; otherwise, it is unlikely they even pay attention to Camp Orojon. Those guards are allowed a spot check (CL 4 minus the number of guards on patrol) should the characters be involved in an open brawl or obvious movement in Camp Orojon. Should the ungern succeed, they note the characters' presence and begin gathering the forces within the tower to go and confront them.

The majority of the structures in Camp Orojon are barracks for the ungern. These are long wooden structures with entirely open interiors strewn with hay. They are largely empty, as the ungern are trained to carry their weapons, gear, and food on their backs. The barracks themselves have only a little of the bric-a-brac of their daily lives left in them.

There is a smithy near the center of the compound where weapons are made and repaired. There is a large forge with bellows, fire pit, coal, and other tools sitting about. A large pile of spears, pole arms, swords, cleavers, and buckets of arrows are located here. Little else of value can be found there. There is a stable for the horses, though



no horses are in it. A small temple area is located at the north end of the compound. Nearby are several dozen casks of mead.

Those ungern remaining at Camp Orojon make their way to the temple area and begin drinking and gambling. Eventually, they wander to their barracks and doze off, as their duties are done. The entire camp goes quiet fairly quickly.

Very little of any value remains at the camp. Should the area be ransacked and searched thoroughly, 10–100gp worth of coin, jewelry and other assorted items per ungern in the camp can be found. It takes time to do this. It takes 1–20 minutes to locate that first 10–100gp and 1–20 minutes for each effort to produce 10–100gp more. Other than that, there are plenty of weapons, lots of cookware, all manner of camp equipment, food, barrels of mead, some shields, and odd pieces of armor.

FESTUNG AKT

Festung Akt proper is a series of interconnected towers and chambers built in a step-like formation. The towers become smaller as one ascends. The uppermost towers stretch far above the surrounding lands and are an imposing site to those who first lay eyes upon them. Once covered in a gleaming white limestone veneer, it has now decayed so much that the structure is a dark gray-brown color. Only the uppermost tower has an unblemished veneer, and it veritably shines at night and gleams during the day. This, along with the blue light emanating from the patio outside the uppermost tower, creates a magnificent site. This tower is visible from several miles off, appearing as a light slash of white rock, capped in a sharp blue light against the darker, morose background.

The walls of Festung Akt are constructed of large blocks of granite and as noted, were faced with white limestone. When examined closely, some areas of the façade are still splashed with the bright white rock. No mortar was used in the construction of the fortress. Every stone has been carved and precisely fitted for its location. The architecture is stunning and its art known to only a few. Even dwarves can admire the architectural feats in the creation of the domed roofs. For all its uses and oft financial neglect, Festung Akt was well maintained over the centuries such that, even to this day, the structure is sound and, other than a thick layer of dust and debris over portions of it, shows few signs of decay. Those familiar with architectural history suspect its age to be nearly five centuries and magic appears to have been used in its construction.

The roofs of the towers all have domes in the center and parapets around their length. The Level 3 parapet always has a patrol of 2–8 ungern on it watching over the area. These guards are visible to those who take the time to look.

This is important. Magic was used in its construction. Many of the architectural features were built with spells and the use of reforming rock and mud and vice versa. The domes are all imbued with a little lingering magic and are NOT stable in and of themselves. The Castle Keeper should be aware of two things. A *detect magic* spell cast near any large columns, the domes, several doors, portion of the floor, the balconies, and other areas, reveals the stones to be magic. Further, a *dispel magic* spell cast within the domes or near the columns can cause them to COLLAPSE. These are generally noted in the text, though the Castle Keeper must keep his head about him and make decisions as to whether a portion of the architecture is magic or not. As a final note on this, if a collapse occurs, it can be substantial and weaken the entire edifice. Injury can range from falling masonry causing 1–6 damage to large sections of roof and wall collapsing causing 10–100 points of damage. Much of this is at the Castle Keeper's discretion.

LEVEL 1 (See Map p. 168)

AREA 1 ENTRY CHAMBER:

This spacious, circular room is constructed with thin blocks of stone stretching up to a painted ceiling. A marble staircase, without railing, spirals up from the center of the room. Shaped in a gentle U shape, it rises from the floor, leading to the second floor of the tower above. The ceiling here is open, exposing the tall ceiling of the room above. Thin, triangular columns set at regular intervals around the room, support the ceiling. Six apertures are evenly spaced around the chamber, each containing a tall, ceiling-high, thin statue of a crow.

The ungern and all those who stay here are very wary of these statues and do not go near them or even approach them.

NOTE: A special note for the Castle Keeper. There is a 1 in 10 chance the characters will be observed entering this room by some ungern from the room above (Level 2, Area 13).

An examination of the room reveals a clear trail running through the center of the rooms to an exit beyond the other side of the staircase. Dust and debris have collected in all the apertures, on the statues of the ravens, and along the rim of the room. Other than movement through the room, nothing in here has been touched in many long years.

Close examination of the raven statues reveals that each is slightly different than the other, though on the whole they are quite similar. These statues were constructed under the direction of Deuranimus the Crow. There is a guardian spirit in each statue representing some aspect of death. These spirits impart a curse upon those who gaze into their eyes. The occupants call this curse the Black Curse of the Crow.

NOTE: Deuranimus had the previous statues, representing war and battle, removed. All six were placed in a perfect circle one



mile north of Festung Akt. A plan to build a temple specifically to those deities was underway, but imperial collapse rendered the construction impossible.

These crows are the speakers of the dead and serve Festung Akt as guardians, cursing those who enter them. Deuranimus had a special priest set at the door whose sole task was to tend these statues. The priest was specially rendered blind with hot brands in order to keep him from constantly succumbing to the Black Curse. Prisoners who were brought into this place were all forced to pay homage to the birds by looking into their eyes. They were then cursed with each of the following curses (see below).

In all cases, as soon as a character looks into the eyes of one of the statues they begin to feel a little light headed and nauseous. That is the first effect of the curses. The characters should be made aware that they are feeling nervous, tired, demoralized, etc. Each raven has a specific curse described below. The effects last for 24 hours. A *remove curse* can be used to remove all the effects placed on a person:

- 1a: **The raven who sees death:** An extra 1-4 points of damage is received each time the character is on the receiving end of a damage roll-no matter the source.
- 1b: **The raven who carries the message of death:** The character is demoralized and makes all charisma checks at -4.
- 1c: **The raven who carries the dead:** The characters' movement is halved.
- 1d: **The raven who eats the dead:** This causes seeping lesions around the eyes, nose, ears, and mouth of the cursed, making hearing, seeing, and smelling things difficult. A foul odiferous smell of decayed flesh envelops the character as well. All checks involving the use of those senses receive an additional -4. Characters so cursed also find it more difficult to hide since their stench is so pervasive. This gives the characters a -6 to their hide/conceal checks or a +6 to the checks of those trying to find them.
- 1e: **The raven of lost hope:** This raven causes a malaise to descend upon the character, making decisive action difficult. A charisma check must be rolled whenever the character must make a bold or decisive action (charging into combat, sneaking into a room etc). If they fail the save, they are overcome with doubt and either hesitate or refuse to take the action. All checks should be made at a -2, as well as attacks and initiative roles. The Castle Keeper is at their discretion as to how best to implement this curse. It is not meant to completely inactivate the character, rather to hinder them.
- 1f: **The raven who buried the dead:** This curse causes the character to sleep. At any given moment when given the chance, the character goes to sleep. Should they stop for a rest, to eat or even a breather, they go to sleep. They cannot be awakened for at least ten minutes once a character falls asleep; unless, of course, *remove curse* is cast upon them.

AREA 2 GUARDS' CHAMBER: This room was once used by guards for resting and storage. It has not been used in many long years and was thoroughly ransacked in times past. The current inhabitants stay away from this room as well as Area 3. Primarily, this is a result of fear of the raven statues in Area 1. They simply make haste through the entry area.

The room is currently empty except for old weapons racks, broken boxes and crates, broken beds, and a litter of useless debris scattered about the floor. It is obvious that it has not been used or entered in many years.

AREA 3 ACOLYTES' CHAMBER: This chamber was once used by acolytes when on duty near the entry. Once sumptuously decorated, the room has been completely ransacked and all items of value taken from it. There is a litter of broken furniture, obviously of fine make, scattered around the room.

A character with keen observation skills (wisdom, CL 5) may note that this room is smaller than Area 2 though in all other construction details, identical. Around the room runs an interior wall. Between the exterior and interior is a series of rooms accessible by a secret door located on the wall. These rooms were emptied when the previous inhabitants fled.

Both Areas 2 and 3 can be used by the characters as temporary hideouts. The guards, fearful of this area, will not search these rooms until they have cleared all other routes of escape or hiding places. Should the characters locate the secret rooms in Area 3, they can hide in there for a long time since no one knows of its existence. Unless, of course, the characters do not bother to cover their trail and leave drops of blood or scrapes in the dust leading up to the secret door or make it appear as if they left through the front door. Unless convinced of the characters' departure, any ungern who may be alerted continue to search the tower. It will take a while (perhaps 2-8 days), but an ungern or someone else eventually locates the secret door; then, assuming they are hiding, the characters are trapped.

AREA 4 HALL OF THE MOUTHS OF THE DEAD: Above the entryway to this room are the words, carved in stone, "Where the Dead Speak." The central portion of this room has a large well in it filled with a brackish looking liquid. Each of the alcoves contains a statue of a large, amorphous creature with many mouths. Above each statue is an inscription written in the ancient and vile tongue of the Horned One. An intelligence check (CL 10) must be made for a literate person well versed in ancient tongues to know the inscription. It reads, "Three times their Name to call." (Deuranimus knows the inscription.) Several torches in sconces are alight in this room.

The statues are conduits for speaking to the dead. The dead, however, speak their own tongue, and listening to them can drive one insane! One must simply cast a *speak with dead* spell to activate the mouths of a statue. To talk to a specific person, that person's name must be spoken three times at the end of the spell's casting. They can talk to that person normally. As a side note, the dead perceive and remember things differently than the living. The statues (each one) can be activated once every seven days.

If someone is not specifically named during the casting, then the hosts of undead souls begin to speak in their strange tongues all at once. For each round the character who casts the spell remains in the room, a charisma check must be made with a cumulative -1 modifier per round. A failed check indicates they have been driven somewhat insane. The screams of the dead should forever be heard in the character's head (making him sort of quirky and not good company). The CK should be careful to avoid ruining the character and the fun of play. A gibbering idiot is no fun to play, and more of a bother for the CK to work with, whereas giving the character some mental

hurdles could be very fun. For instance, describe things backwards to the character. “The door is hinged on the bottom, not the side,” or “Out of the corner of your eye, you see something clinging to the back of your comrade; when you look, it is gone.” A cure is left up to the Castle Keeper (*remove curse*, drinking a magic elixir, etc.), but the idea is to turn the curing process into an adventure.

5A: WELL AND STAIRCASE: The material in the well is actually not a liquid, but rather a viscous material, concealing a set of steps that lead down to the Lower Halls (*see p. 163*). One must walk up the side and descend into the pool, through the viscous material which is only several inches deep. Once through, characters can see the cavern below. Looking at the rim of the well, one notes a solid silver circle stretching around its entire circumference.

The ungeri and others know the steps lead to caverns below the keep; however, they never go down there, for those who have, have either never returned or have come back with horrible stories of the creatures which live down there. It is altogether avoided. The ungeri melted some silver and dropped it around the rim of the well in the hopes it would keep all the creatures down there from coming out. Although this did not actually work, the creatures in the caverns beneath cannot come up for entirely different reasons, but the ungeri believe the silver ring to have worked and are, therefore unafraid of the inhabitants of the lower hall coming forth.

AREA 5 HALL OF THE UNGERI: This series of small rooms houses several ungeri guards and servants.

There are 10 ungeri who live in this area. Though they are supposed to be on permanent guard and patrolling the rooms on this level, they rarely ever do, spending their time gambling, fighting each other, visiting Camp Orojon, hunting on the Screed, or whatever else it is creatures of this ilk do to enjoy themselves when not out pillaging and plundering.

At any given time, there are 1–6 ungeri in this room, with a 25% chance of an ungeri sergeant and an acolyte being in here as well.

UNGERI, x9 (*These lawful evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 16 and HP 13, 12, 12, 9. Their primary attributes are physical. They can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 points of damage, or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage. They each carry a +1 chain coat, bardiche, dagger, and 4-40gp worth of jewelry and coin.*)

UNGERI SERGEANT (*This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 14 and HP 16. Its primary attributes are physical. It can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 points of damage or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage. They each carry a chain coat, morningstar, dagger, and 2-20gp worth of jewelry and coin.*)

CLERIC (*She is a lawful evil, human, 5th level cleric whose vital stats are HP 17 and AC 18. Her primary attributes are wisdom, intelligence, and dexterity. Her significant attribute is wisdom 17. She wears a full suit of chain mail, a +2 ring of protection, carries a +2 mace, scroll of curse, potion of healing, and 240 gp worth of jewelry and coin. Her spells are 0 level: create water, detect chaos, etc., detect magic, endure elements. 1st level: curse, invisibility to undead, protection from good, shield of faith. 2nd level: aid, darkness, hold person. 3rd level: animate dead. One of her favorite tactics is to cast sanctuary on herself, then to raise a fallen ungeri and cast invisibility on it.*)

Here, characters find 10 well-organized packs hanging on pegs on the wall, minus any number of ungeri not in the room. Each pack has the following items tucked into it: sleeping mat, one flask of water, four days of dried meats, roll bandages, small hatchet, small lodestone, and a metal repair kit with pliers and wire in it. In the room is a bit of straw and other bric-a-brac and detritus of an ungeri's daily life-like an overflowing chamber pot.

AREA 6: TOWER STAIRS: Access to this room is gained through room 5. There is no door, only an opening. The room is empty other than a staircase leading up. The staircase is walled in and dominates the center of the room, basically representing a room in and of itself. The room is lined with statues of heroes of the Winter Dark's empire. A successful legend lore check (CL 7) reveals one of the statues to be of a young Coburg the Undying, the present lord of Aufstrag and a warrior priest of Unklar's. Coburg served the Dark Lord for the whole length of his reign, surviving the final Battle of the Tree to eventually rise to power in the upper reaches of that dreaded fortress Aufstrag. The statue leans upon a large lucern hammer. Its part of the statue and not magical, but can give the party clues as to the weapon that Coburg favors.

These stairs lead up to **LEVEL 2, AREA 14**.

LEVEL 2 (See Map p. 168)

AREA 7: OBSERVATION CHAMBER: This wide chamber resembles, in structure, the chamber below it, though it is somewhat smaller. The staircase from below ascends to a platform. The central portion is open, with a stone railing around it, allowing observation of Area 1 on Level One. The floor is a complex mosaic depicting trees, mountains springs, and a whole slew of creatures belching fire and carrying massive whips. Six triangular columns support the ceiling above. The room itself consists of six semicircular rooms, or apertures.

There is a 1-in-10 chance there is an ungeri patrol in this chamber when the characters enter the complex, or when they come in the room (**SEE LEVEL 1, AREA 1 ABOVE**).

UNGERI, x5 (*These lawful evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 16 and HP 13, 12, 12, 11, 9. Their primary attributes are physical. They can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 points of damage or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage. They each carry a +1 chain coat, bardiche, dagger, and 4-40 gp worth of jewelry and coin*)

UNGERI SERGEANT (*This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 14, and HP 16. Its primary attributes are physical. It can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 points of damage or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage. He carries a chain coat, morningstar, dagger, and 2-20gp worth of jewelry and coin.*)

Sharp, angled walls flank the six apertures. Where these two walls meet, are openings in the floor (marked with a X on the map). These openings look down onto the tops of the heads of the crows. On top of each head is a small opening. A normal man can reach down into this opening (the crow statues stretch this high). There is a black ichor inside of them that smells atrocious and sticks to the hands like molasses. This material is the essence of the crow. The liquid has no effect or seeming purpose unless someone attempts to eat it. It does radiate magic.

Eating the liquid has several effects. First, eating a whole handful heals 1d8 hit points of damage. For each handful after that, the person eating it begins to change. The characters hearing and vision become sharper. This is a good side effect. However, their eyes start to darken and their ears shrink in size. This change is slight, but noticeable. The next imbibing witnesses a narrowing of the nose and a shrinking of the teeth. By the fourth drink, the addictive qualities begin to take over. The character must make a charisma check or imbibe again. For each failed check, the character goes out of their way to get some of this ichor and drink it.

In essence, the character is being changed into a crow. For each person the process is different and the Castle Keeper must decide on how the change occurs, but they do occur. The character literally begins to shrink, stoop, grow small hairy protuberances grow all over (eventually to become feathers), and sprouts wings from the character's back. With time the character's mind goes and they become a crow. In general, it should take about 12–16 servings for the character to become a crow.

The addictive qualities are so pervasive that the character leaves the party to come and get more. They sneak off or steal it from other characters, etc.

Reversing the effects are fairly simple though time consuming. A *minor restoration* erases the effects of one serving. This can only be done once per 24 hours. It also causes 1d8 points of damage. Once addicted, the character always yearns for the ichor. A *cure disease* spell, however, cures the addiction.

AREA 8–9: ROOFS: These are the domed roofs over Area 2 and 3 on Level One. There is a parapet with battlements running the circumference of both. Occasionally, a group of ungeru guards find their way here. There is a 1-in-6 chance for 2d4 ungeru to be patrolling here. If ungeru were encountered in Area 7 then they will not be encountered here. There is only one patrol as well, so if they are encountered on one roof there will not be any more on the other roof. Should no guards be present, lots of crows are gathered on the roof. If the crows have not been seen before, the characters note that many of the crows on the roof wear a necklace from which dangle a small red bauble.

UNGERU, x5 (These lawful evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 16, and HP 13, 12, 12, 11, 9. Their primary attributes are physical. They can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 points of damage or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage. They each carry a +1 chain coat, bardiche, dagger, and 4-40gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

UNGERU SERGEANT (This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 14, and HP 16. Its primary attributes are physical. It can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 points of damage or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage. He carries a chain coat, morningstar, dagger, and 2-20gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

The crows wearing the gems are those who carry the souls of the dead. Should the characters take their time with the crows and not act belligerently towards them, the crows flock about and begin squawking their story. The souls speak through the crows.

Of course the characters cannot understand them (unless someone speaks crow). The crows know not to talk to the ungeru. Should the characters listen or make the effort and not treat the crows poorly, Deuranimus finds out. This can act in the characters favor in any encounter with Deuranimus (see below **Level 7, Area 35–36**).

AREA 10: TEMPLE CHAMBER:

The center of this room has a large statue of Unklar in it. On the bottom of the statue, is one word "OBEY." The three apertures each contain smaller statues with men, heads bowed and weapons pointed to the ground; each faces the statue of Unklar.

A figure lies prone in front of the statue of Unklar. This is an acolyte deep in meditation and does not hear any commotion. He must be physically interrupted for him to break meditation. This can be dangerous, as he is in ritual communication with the spirit of Unklar. Striking a killing blow upon the acolyte while he is in this state causes a magic reverberation that thunders through the room. No damage is caused, but all characters must make a constitution check (CL 4) or lose their hearing for up to 30 minutes. It also alerts the ungeru and priests in the surrounding levels.

Waking the acolyte from the trance slowly has less detrimental effects. It takes him a full 10 minutes to recover, during which time, he is completely defenseless and can be killed without any negative impact (unless one considers guilt to be negative). Once he regains his senses and realizes his predicament, he tries to fool the characters. He explains that he is a rogue from Ludenshiem and has come to Festung Akt to steal its riches. He has disguised himself as a cleric of Unklar in order to pass the guards. While he is talking, he sizes up the characters and recovers his strength. If at any point he can escape, he will do so by fleeing out the door in Area 7 and drinking his fly potion. On the other hand, if he thinks he can attack and win, he does that as well. If all else fails, he surrenders and acts to aid the characters; but, when the opportunity presents itself, turns on them, or leads them into a trap. He answers questions to the best of his ability, but he reveals nothing about the druid. He is actually in search of the horn fragments located in the **LOWER HALLS, AREA 10** (see below).

TIERN (He is a lawful evil human, 6th level cleric whose vital stats are HP 30 and AC 18. His primary attributes are wisdom, constitution, and intelligence. His significant attribute is wisdom 17 and constitution 15. He wears +2 scale mail and has a +1 buckler. He wields a +1 lucern hammer. He has a potion of flying in his pocket, and 100gp in coin in a pouch. His spells are 0 level: create water, detect chaos, etc. detect magic, endure elements, first aid. 1st level: command, cure light wounds, sanctuary, sound burst. 2nd level: aid, darkness, paralysis (opposite of remove), spiritual weapon. 3rd level: dispel magic, cause blindness (opposite of remove). Tiern is a battle priest and uses his spells offensively.)

AREA 11: ELITE GUARD CHAMBER: The door leading to Area 11 and beyond is closed and locked. It is made of wood and very stout. The lock can be picked (CL 5). Picking it will not alert anyone in the next room, as they simply think someone with a key is coming in. That is, if the lock picking is successful on the first try. On the second try, those in the room come over to investigate

and are angered that someone does not know how to use the lock and get up casting obscenities about—i.e., they will not be totally surprised, and, of course, the characters won't either, recognizing the guttural shouts of the unger.

This area is reserved for the elite guard for Festung Akt. The unger in here have higher hit points, better armor, weapons, and higher morale than the rest in Festung Akt. They are all battle-hardened warriors, capable of skillful tactics. They are not averse to fighting, retreating, then attacking again, etc. Play them smart.

Currently, they are all sitting around drinking some brew and gambling or eating. Only if alert to someone trying to enter do they get up. Should a character open the lock and door on the first try, they look into the room and see a group of unger huddled around an area on the floor playing dice, eating, and drinking. None are watching the door nor even care to. This situation does not last long, but it will give the characters one round to act before being noticed.

A battle follows, no matter the approach, as the unger have little fear of humans or demi-humans and are not going to give up their post. They use the tight quarters to their advantage, the toughest getting in the front to block the characters while the weaker standing in the rear stab over their shoulders. They throw furniture, hurl dead bodies, food, or anything else they can think of to defeat the interlopers. This should be a battle royal.

A battle in here attracts the attention of the sergeant in Area 13.

There are 11 unger in here. This chamber is used as a common room. There is a large table pushed up against the wall, several chairs, a pile of freshly cooked meat on the table and other sundries in the room.

UNGERN, x11 (*These lawful evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 17 and HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They can attack with weapons or with 2 claws for 1-2 points of damage or gore for 1-6+2 points of damage. They each carry a +1 chain coat, heavy long sword, dagger, and 4-40gp worth of jewelry and coin.*)

AREA 12: GUARDS' CHAMBERS: The guards have divided these three rooms into sleeping chambers, each fitting six unger. The door between the two rooms has been removed. Weapons, armor, sleeping rolls, and other personal items are located in these two rooms. The six other unger are on patrol above in **LEVEL 3, AREA 25**. If the characters search the unger is personal items for half an hour or so, they find 80 gp worth of coin and jewelry as well as many serviceable items. Their backpacks are well taken care of and filled with the following: sleeping mat, one flask of water, flask days of dried meats, roll bandages, small hatchet, small lodestone, and metal repair kit with pliers and wire in it. There are 17 packs in all.

AREA 13: UNGERN SERGEANT'S CHAMBER: This chamber and the adjoining closet have been taken by the unger sergeant in charge of the tower. This is a large, battle-hardened unger veteran. Any noise from the adjoining room brings the sergeant into the fray. He attempts to keep his fellow unger focused and in line through brute force and terror (something that generally works for unger) yet, he is aging, and the scars of many wars are telling. He has grown physically weak and fears his demise at the hands of his troops.

As such, the sergeant attempts to avoid combat and prefers directing his minions in battle. If his troops seem to be failing in their battle with the characters, and given the chance, he escapes upstairs to join the lieutenant, acolytes, and Balonakalon. If forced into combat, he uses a magical weapon gained many years ago, a +3 mace of minor disruption (which he always carries).

UNGERN SERGEANT (*This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 20, and HP 27. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with its mace of disruption or with 2 claws for 1-3 points of damage or gore for 1-6+4 points of damage. It wears a +1 bronze breastplate and a heavy iron +1 shield. Along with its mace of disruption it has a short gladius and a double-edged, large dagger.*)

This room is sparse, with but a bed and table with a chair. There is always food about. Several spears, a halberd, mace, sword, three large shields (emblazoned with the symbol of Unklar upon them) sit in one corner of the room. The closet contains his personal items and treasure. Here, in a locked chest are 300 gp in coin, 500 gp in jewelry and sundry small items, several maps of the region (showing locations of various storehouses and forts), some old war records, two potions of healing, and one potion of protection from good.

AREA 14: STAIRCASE: This chamber contains the staircase leading up to **LEVEL 3, AREA 15** or down to **LEVEL 1, AREA 6**.

LEVEL 3 (SEE MAP P. 169)

AREA 15: STAIRCASE: This chamber contains the staircase leading up to **LEVEL 4, AREA 21** or down to **LEVEL 2 AREA 14**.

AREA 16: COOKING ROOM: Several goblins tend this room. It is sparse, as generally baked foods come up to the tower from Camp Orojon. However, per Balonakalon's instructions, the unger keep the room stocked. There is a ham here, some dried venison, potatoes, and other sundry items. All the foodstuffs are fresh. Often, a stew is brewing over a fire for morning and afternoon meals, while the solid foods, the goblins keep for the evening meals.

Balonakalon has brought with him several goblins whose sole duty is to cook. Reviled around the camp, they tend to stay in here and only go out to gather the foodstuff's necessary for their master. The food seems to be plentiful for them (another reason to stay). They are all fat and greasy, even for goblins. They are not great cooks but serve their purpose well enough.

The goblins do not fight for anything and run if they have the opportunity. They have no loyalty to their master and simply have no manner of escaping this place. If the characters give them even a slight chance to talk, they buy their freedom with information, warning the party of the ogres in **AREA 19** of this Level and of the glyph of warding in **LEVEL 4, AREA 21**. They freely give the password of "OBEY" as well. Conversely, if spared and they encounter any unger, they squeal about the presence of the characters.

AREA 17: SMELTING CHAMBER: This room has several worktables, fireplaces, and other items used for smelting. The floor of the room is awash in silver and gold shavings. The place literally shines and glitters. Someone has stacked piles of silver and gold coins on one side of the room. An old goblin is sitting on a high workbench going over some paperwork. He only looks up when the characters enter the room. The goblin is completely impassive and stares at

the characters while eating a juicy peach. The goblin picks up a fruit jar, opens it, and offers it to the characters.

The goblin has a jar with rochun fiends in it. When he opens the “peach jar,” he releases two rochun fiends. (See Appendix A for a description of the rochun fiends.)

ROCHUN FIEND (*These chaotic evil creatures’ vital stats are HD 8d10, AC 17, HP 49. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with 6 tentacles for 1d8 points of damage each. These creatures have an SR of 7 and are able to strike their opponents with a bolt of electricity for 1d4 points of damage. They can fly and have extra-sensory abilities.*)

The ungern bring all the treasures gained from raids to this room. They catalogue the treasure and decide whether to smelt it, keep it intact, or to dole out appropriate portions to the leadership and troops. After everyone has been given their due, 99% of the time the choice is to smelt everything possible, including coin, and restamp the metals as new coins. The new coins resemble old Unklarian imperial coins, except the image of Balonakalon is on one side and Unklar on the other.

There is some 2,000 gp in new coin in this room in unlocked boxes and crates. In general, use of this coin would not be well received in the southern realms—it does have an image of Unklar imprinted upon one side. Even taking the coin to be melted down would raise eyebrows. Bringing it in as ingots (should the characters melt it) would not bring in as much as 1,000 gp, perhaps less than that amount (it is not pure).

AREA 18: STOREROOMS: Once a storeroom, this series of small rooms housed all the sundry items necessary for the efficient running of this administrative center. Most is now gone. There are some vases, containers, boxes, pulleys, a few tools (mostly old and broken, or rusty). Of interest is a large crate full of vellum and another full of quills and glass ink wells. Several of the ink wells (they have to be tested) were sealed well enough that they have not dried and are still usable—or sellable, as the ink is made from rare fruit juices found only in the fetid swamps to the north.

Sadly, the some of the ink was of an odd nature (bats’ blood, toad stools extract, juice of the rare “suk” tree, and such) and has congealed to form a blood ooze that only needs oxygen to bring it to life (see description at the end of the module).

It takes several minutes for the ooze to come to life once exposed to oxygen and several more minutes for it to become active. For the most part and in most circumstances, the blood ooze is harmless because one can just walk away from it (it can only move as fast as a snail), brush it away, or stomp it to oblivion, or even burn it. When it gets on the skin, though, it becomes demonstrably more difficult to remove (see description below).

Importantly, should the characters be testing the ink and get any of the ink (blood ooze) on them, they will be in trouble, as the blood ooze leaches through the characters’ skin and starts eating and replicating.

BLOOD OOZE x4 TO INFINITY (*These neutral creatures’ vital stats are HD neg, HP 1, AC 10. They have no primary attributes. They can drain blood for 1 hit point a round. They have the ability to replicate.*)

AREA 19: OGRES’ CHAMBER: There are five ogres who dwell on this level. The ogres variously wander from room to room, but most often, to the kitchen and back here. Occasionally, they are found on the roof (Area 25). If they hear any commotion on this floor, they immediately go to investigate. Otherwise, 2-4 are in here with the remainder in Area 25. If those in Area 25 hear any commotion in here, they arrive to investigate 1-2 rounds later.

The room is large with heaps of bedding, poorly-tanned furs, bits and pieces of half-eaten meat, bones, broken crates and kegs, and the detritus of these slovenly, filth-ridden creatures. A fire is usually burning in the center of the room. Large spears, axes, bardiches, shields and some chest plates are piled against one wall.

The ogres grab whatever is immediately available if a fight erupts. They do not take the time to don armor unless given at least 20 minutes’ warning (i.e., someone comes and gets them for a fight).

One of the broken crates contains some of the treasure the ogres have accumulated. There are several obsidian holy items (worthless except to a collector), bones from exotic animal kills, the skull of a massive bat (the bat would have measured 10 feet from wing tip to wing tip). A ranger or druid may note the nature of the skull with a successful wisdom check. These bats are found in the swamps around Aufstrag, some silver necklaces, and a small pile of newly minted Unklarian coins (around 500 pieces — see above **LEVEL 3, AREA 17**).

OGRES x5 (*These chaotic evil creatures’ vital stats are HD 4, AC 16, HP 13, 17, 22, 22, 28. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a weapon for 1d10+3 points of damage or their powerful fists for 1d10 points of damage (one attack, one damage). They have dark and twilight vision.*)

AREA 20: ROOF: This domed roof covers **LEVEL 2, AREA 7**. A narrow parapet surrounds it. The ogres wander out here occasionally to keep an eye on things. They are notoriously bad-sighted, so are ill suited to the task and spend most of their time just looking at the stars. There are also many crows here as well, many of them hounding the ogres and squawking their life’s sad tale to the ether.

LEVEL 4 (See Map p. 169)

AREA 21, STAIRCASE: This chamber contains the staircase leading up to **LEVEL 5, AREA 27** or down to **LEVEL 3, AREA 19**.

There is a *glyph of warding* half way up the staircase that detects anyone who does not worship Unklar. Unless it is detected and dispelled, a worshipper of Unklar passes over it, or the password of “OBEY” is uttered (which can be learned from the goblins in **LEVEL 3, AREA 16**, a blast of freezing air engulfs the staircase with a massive crackling sound causing 5d4 damage (1/2 with a successful constitution save). The crackling sound notifies Balonakalon of the presence of intruders.

AREA 22, THE LIBRARY: The library circles **AREA 21, THE STAIRCASE**. Stone shelves line the walls of this chamber. Much of the library was ravaged by looting when Deuranimus scattered those who once resided here. Some of the shelves are shattered or fallen down; piles of burned book debris are scattered across the floor. The shelves are almost all bare except on the southwest end.



Balonakalon has gathered what books he could and placed them here, adding those few volumes he has gathered over time. Balonakalon is not a book collector and not much of a reader, so he has not bothered thumbing through most of those books he has gathered. There are books about the flora and fauna of Airhrde, some geography books, but mostly books on the lineage of several noble families. Other books include those dealing with spells and alchemy (common knowledge to spellcasters but the books are worth 200gp each and there are 12 of them) and one describing battle tactics. Balonakalon envisions himself a general in the style of the great lords of Unklar's time, yet, he is simply incapable of such.

There is one book that may be of great interest to the characters. This is a book on engineering: *The General Alignment, Cutting, and Placement of Stones And Material for the Construction of Curtain Walls and Block Towers. Appendices Detailing Stone Types*. This book details the construction methods for building curtain walls and block towers used by Unklar's best engineers when making a fortress. Using the book as a guideline, anyone building curtain walls or block towers should add 10% above normal value to all construction values. So, for example, should a wall have a HP value of 1000, using the methods described herein, the wall would have 1100 HP. It also describes methods for increasing fields of fire and such, adding great tactical value to a fortresses' construction. The book is worth about 5000 gp or more. Many, should they find out about the book, may simply try to take it rather than buy it-so the characters need to use caution when trying to sell it-if they sell it.

The library contains a small heating stove and chair as well. A small stack of fresh-cut wood is set next to the stove.

AREA 23, SECRET CHAMBER

The entire perimeter of this tower room is a secret chamber. There are two entries to it through a secret door a on the wall of the library. One must first locate the section of wall upon which the door rests and then press the appropriate stone to open the door. Balonakalon knows that it is here. It was not completely ransacked, so contains many of the items that were placed here many long years ago. Some have been removed by Balonakalon, and others by Deuranimus, before he locked himself in the tower above.

There is a wide range of alchemical materials, weapons, treasures, and trophies. Mundane items of interesting make are located here as well. Records and important documents are stored here. In fact, these "stacks" fill much of the room. None of the items in here are magical and much is of common use (well as common as alchemical practices are) so does not offer much use to the characters. It is, however, a good place for the Castle Keeper to allow some characters a chance to replenish spell components or locate items that a character may find interesting (scales, grinders, measuring spoons, weights, etc.). It is up to the Castle Keeper to decide what is in here. It should take 1+d4 minutes to locate one item and then another 1+d4 minutes to find the next, etc.

There are narrow windows that stretch nearly three feet in height, but are only two inches wide placed along the walls at two-foot intervals around its perimeter. They are almost impossible to note from the outside but, they offer an invaluable view of the lands about.

Balonakalon uses this room to hide in if the interlopers make it this far and he is able to escape to it. As the characters go in one door, Balonakalon escapes though the other, if possible, and makes his way out of the camp to gather his troops-if any remain.

AREA 24, VAULT OF THE MIRROR

This is the mirror room, which drew Balonakalon to the fortress. Here he sits and communicates with others who have similar mirrors.

A mirror is located in the center of this room. It is large, about five feet in height, with an ornate silver frame encasing it. It does not appear to be secured to the floor in any way. One large ornately carved ivory chair studded with opals and emeralds sits in front of the mirror. To either side of it are braziers for light.

In the shadows roam four large shadow mastiffs set here to guard the room. They attack anyone who enters the room other than Balonakalon or those who accompany him.

SHADOW MASTIFFS x4 (*These neutral evil creatures' vital stats are HD 4d8, HP either 23 or 22, AC 14. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack for 2-8 damage with a bite. Their special abilities are bay, trip, blend, darkvision and sunlight vulnerability.*)

Knowledge of the mirror brought Balonakalon to Festung Akt. Finding the mirror unused and unsecured, he at first tried to move it. This, however, was not possible by any device he could manage so Balonakalon decided to make Festung Akt the fortress from which he would command his armies. He uses it to communicate with the Witch Queen (*see A3 The Wicked Cauldron*).

MIRROR OF THE WITCH QUEEN: The mirror is one of 12 created in the pits of Aufstrag by Nulak-kiz-din in ages past. They are oval shaped, tall, narrow, and framed in ornately-carved cherry.

Each mirror is a communication device allowing the users to speak and hear as if in the same room. Powerful creatures can cast spells through them as well as walk through them. Though the latter can end in death as often as not.

To activate the mirror, the user must sprinkle fresh blood upon its surface. The user must inflict a minimum of 5 hp of damage in order to activate it. At the same time one is spilling the blood, the incantation writ upon the frame must be intoned. Once done, one can peer through the glass to any other mirror.

Spellcasters of 10th level or higher can cast spells through them with a successful intelligence check. Any 15th level or higher hit dice creature can move through them with a successful intelligence check. Failure means instant death.

The mirror is magically secured and it is nearly impossible to move. A *knock* spell can cause the magical seal on the mirror to release (CL 12). It weighs 5000 lbs. It is worth quite a sum of gold. Selling, storing, and using this item (should the characters try to take it) is best left up to the discretion of the Castle Keeper.

The braziers light when Balonakalon enters the room and intends to use the mirror. Otherwise, the room is bathed in dark shadows. Incidentally, and for those who care about such things, the opals and emeralds on the chair are worth 100gp. There are 16 of them.

AREA 25 PERSONAL CHAMBERS: Balonakalon has taken up residence in the three rooms on the east side of the tower. If Balonakalon has not been encountered yet, there is an 80% chance he is encountered in here. If not, he is in **LEVEL 5, AREA 30**.

The smaller room to the north is simply a storeroom and closet containing some clothes, packs, and other sundries of daily living.

The room to the south is a sleeping chamber containing a bed, small table and chair, a washbasin, and large chair. A lit brazier is in here as well.

The central chamber is the largest and is Balonakalon's workroom. He casts his spells and practices incantations in here as well as makes his plans and sits and ponders-a lot. This room is littered with debris and items used for his sorcery. Shelves and tables and chairs are piled with, papers, scrolls, casting materials, devices, vials of fluids, and other bric-a-brac. It would take a long time to go through all this stuff, and most of it is useless junk or commonly found in cities elsewhere. The Castle Keeper can make up whatever they care to and place in this room. However, the following items can be found.

A spellbook with 26 spells in it (determined randomly all level 1-3), a spellbook with 12 spells in it (determined randomly all level 4-5), a *staff of frost*, a *tome of leadership* (used to prop up a desk leg and left unfinished by Balonakalon), eight scrolls containing randomly determined wizard spells of level 1-4, and stuck behind a pile of beakers are the *eyes of doom*.

There is also some magical yarn sitting on a table. This yarn can be used to mark a path. It is infinite in length but can only be seen by the person laying the yarn. Nothing can destroy it once laid other than the person who has laid it. If he clips the yarns, it all goes away.

BALONAKALON (*This 6th level, lawful evil wizard's vital stats are HP 14, AC 15. His primary attributes are intelligence, wisdom, and charisma. His significant attribute is intelligence 18. He uses a +5 ring of protection, staff of frost, and a +3 dagger. He uses the following wizard spells: 0th-5, 1st-3, 2nd-3, 3rd-2.*)

Balonakalon fights if cornered and he cannot escape. He has no desire to die and offers to pay a big ransom from monies he has stored to the north in Utring Akt (*see A6 Banishment & Blight*) if they are interested. If all else fails, he does fight, but does so with the intention of fleeing at the first opportunity.

AREA 26 ROOF: This is the domed roof over Area 19. Balonakalon uses the parapet occasionally.

LEVEL 5 (See Map p. 169)

AREA 27 STAIRCASE: This staircase opens up to an empty hall and continues up. The staircase leading up is encased in rooty tendrils and narrows as it goes further up. It leads to **LEVEL 6, AREA 32**. The chamber contains one door and an exit onto the roof (Area 30).

A secret door along the north wall leads to **ROOM 29**. It is well-hidden (CL 5), locked, and magically trapped. Three tiles in the floor must be tapped in the right order to open the door, otherwise, it cannot be opened. The tiles are located as if searching for a secret door (CL 5 for each).

If the tiles are not tapped in order on the first try a gentle humming sound begins. The humming can be heard everywhere on this level. On the second try, a sphere begins to emerge in the center of the room. If the correct order is not managed on the third try, a creature steps out of the sphere and attacks all who are in the room. The creature vanishes when everyone who was in the room at the time the monster appears has 0 hit points or less (essentially, it has to be killed). The correct order for the three tiles are 2–3–1 or middle–east–west.

ALLIP X1 (*This neutral evil creature's vital stats are HD 4d12, HP 27, AC 15. Its primary attributes are mental. It attacks with an ability drain touch attack. The allip is incorporeal, and has the ability to hypnotize through its babble. It has mental protections.*)

AREA 28 SHRINE: There is a secret door leading to this chamber. It is well hidden (-2 to all detection checks) but opens with an easy push. This room still contains an intact shrine to Unklar. Balonakalon uses it every day. A large black marble statue of Unklar placed in an alcove jutting out from the wall dominates the room. A sacrificial altar stands in front of it. A mistaken belief has arisen amongst many of Unklar's surviving followers that enough sacrifices will bring him back. It won't, but the belief is growing, and several cults have formed. Balonakalon is one person adhering to such a belief and perhaps one of the reasons he has not gained more power than he already has as he spends far too much time on sacrificial rites than pursuing more useful methods of bringing Unklar back.

The altar is obviously new, with a wood base and stone slab atop it. Sacrifices are generally humanoid but particularly members of the fey races. The floor is stained dark and the room stinks of death. The Castle Keeper can make this room as macabre as they like.

A stone pedestal has three long knives placed upon it. Each is used in sacrificial rites. Each is magical. One paralyzes its victims for 1d4 rounds (constitution save). One bleeds the victim (causing a seeping wound that, until magically healed, causes 1d4 damage a round following an initial strike). And one "aims" at the heart (every fourth round of use and if a hit is successful on that round, the victim must make a constitution check or die instantly). Each of these knives are very evil in nature. The character carrying or wearing any of these knives automatically registers as lawful evil to any detection spells, glyphs or and any other magic used to detect such things.

A large silver bowl is lying beside the pedestal. It is used to catch the blood from the sacrifices.

The statue of Unklar actually "drinks" blood by absorbing any that touches it. The blood magically teleports to the "Well of Blood" in the Klarglich pits of Auftrag. A scrying or similar magic used upon the statue itself allows the viewer a glimpse of the Well of Blood.

They see a large stone chamber with a massive vaulted ceiling. Through the chamber's center is a river of blood flowing out of a portal or well. The ceiling drips blood. A gigantic humanoid dips a broad gold platter in the blood river and carries it away through a brass door.

There are hundreds of these statues placed throughout Aihrde. Each transfers blood to this chamber in Auftrag. The blood is used to feed various creatures who live therein.

AREA 29: TREASURE CHAMBER: Balonakalon has collected a lot of treasure since moving in here. Mostly, the ungern raid and pillage from others in the Blighted Screed. The fortune he has amassed is, or so he thinks, to be used to pay and feed the numerous tribes and such going off to war once united.

There are a lot of gold coins and gems in here. The 10,000 newly minted Unklarian coins are simply stacked up in neat little rows. A small table with a ledger upon it sits along one wall. Several chests with gems in it are placed along another wall. There are 300 gems in the crates with an average value of 10gp. See the mint above for coin value.

AREA 30: INVIGORATING POOL: The domed roof over **LEVEL FOUR** is not quite a complete dome. The construction of the room below may be an indicator. On the dome, at its pinnacle, is a small pool area no more than a few feet deep and perhaps 10 feet wide. This pool of water is magical. The water steams and smokes, creating small tendrils of vapor that dissipate quickly in the breeze. The water is invigorating. For every 10 minutes spent in the pool, 1 HP of damage is healed, and it is the equivalent of getting 1 hour of sleep. One feels fully refreshed after spending 90 minutes in the pool. As an interesting note, should spellcasters need to sleep to get spells, the invigoration offered by the pool can allow such. For example, sitting in the pool for 90 minutes is the equivalent of 8 hours of sleep.

The pool was used by the many leaders of the tower for cleansing, healing, and refreshing themselves. Balonakalon uses it daily. In this way, he can stay awake and refreshed for a very long time.

AREA 31: THE ENDLESS CORRIDOR: A simple wooden door opens onto a slightly curved corridor with another door at its end some 30 feet away.

This is a magical room. Once entering the room and closing the door, the magic comes into effect and the characters have entered a pocket dimension. The door at the far end of the corridor opens into a nearly identical corridor with a door at its end. This goes on forever. Each time the room and corridor are entered, they change slightly in color. It is somewhat random. The color of the walls is slightly different, the pattern of flagstones, the shape of the door, etc. It is random, so just make it up as you go. One can go forward forever. Those in the room never feel the effects of time, never get hungry or thirsty. Aeons could pass in here and have for some individuals. The way out is simply to return and go back.

One must go back an equal amount of space one went forward. When going back, the rooms change slightly as they did going forward—no two corridors are the same. The characters should note this. Also, any markings left in a corridor are erased whenever a door closes on it. Two doors cannot be opened at the same time. As there is no direction in this pocket dimension, no character can sense which way is which. Even up and down do not exist. The latter can only be discovered should the characters try to walk on the walls. They can. They can also walk on the ceiling. The doors always appear right side up no matter where the characters are located in the corridors.

Should the characters split up, they enter different pocket dimensions and cannot come back together until exiting into the tower.

If the characters travel forward 20 corridors they find a corpse. An initiate priest came in here and got disoriented and could not get



out, as he kept going back and forth and back forth. He eventually went mad and slit his wrist. As time does not pass in here in a normal sense, he has not decayed, and it appears as if he has died only recently, but he has actually been dead several years. He was not wearing much so only his cloak is left and the knife he used to slit his wrists lies on the floor beside him.

Should the characters forget the number of doors they passed through or get disoriented and forget which way is which, the Castle Keeper must keep up with what is going on. A lot of time can pass on the outside.

One method of marking one's way is with the magical yarn found in the Balonakalon's room in **LEVEL 4, AREA 25**.

LEVEL 6 (See Map p. 169)

AREA 32: CROWDED STAIRWELL: The druid has accidentally blocked entry and exit to his tower.

Before you lies a staircase that leads to the upper towers of the fortress. The steps leading up twist ever tighter and narrower. Tendrils of roots extend down from the tower above, growing thicker very quickly until they choke the entire staircase, allowing no movement upwards whatsoever. The roots also have small red gem shards dispersed amongst them.

Deuranimus had cast a spell in the room above to grow a pear tree. He did not get what he wanted, see below, **AREA 39**. For now, the characters need to move through a tangle of thick roots which cover the entire stairwell. The gem shards stuck in the roots are the remains of thousands of shattered gems Deuranimus brought up here, which then got caught up in the sudden growth of his magical root ball.

The roots are not sentient, cannot defend themselves, and do not attack. However, they do not burn. They can be hacked through, but several simple spells will cause them to move aside.

Hacking the roots to bits to open a space in the stairway takes several hours of time. The following druid spells cause the roots to move aside: *entangle* (*disentangle*), *warp wood*, *plant growth* (*shrinking*), *freedom of movement*, *control plants* or similar spells.

AREA 33: ROOTING CHAMBER: This is where Deuranimus spends most of his time. The room is dominated by a massive, leafless tree, or rather, a root ball all bathed in blue light (the light emanates from a glowing orb on the balcony, **AREA 34**). The roots stretch and wrap around the entire room, covering every surface. The roots glitter red with the many thousands of red gem shards caught up in their growth.

Walking in here is very difficult as the room is little more than a gnarled bundle of roots. Because the roots are meshed with the shards of gems, movement in the room is difficult without getting cut. Walking barefoot in here causes 1 hp of damage a round. Any exposed flesh that scrapes the roots has the potential for being shredded by the gem shards. An unsuccessful dexterity check indicates 1 point of damage (for example, when a character falls over and attempts to get up there is a check).

A portal opens onto a balcony at the far end of the room with a large blue light drifting in it. The roots have been formed into an uncomfortable-looking bedding area with several tattered blankets on it and a single sitting area like a throne near the balcony.

Deuranimus is in this room should the characters have entered it by chopping their way through the roots. Otherwise, he is upstairs (see **Area 35**). There is nothing of interest in here. The gem shards are worthless except in bulk (1 pound would bring 1gp).

AREA 34: BALCONY: This is a roofed balcony. Upon it is a large stone, perhaps 10 feet in diameter with a blue sphere floating above it. Upon the stone are scribed two concentric circles with words etched into the space between them. The orb is a beacon and nothing more. The magic used to keep the orb in place is contained within the stone. Should the stone be broken, the orb disappears.

An enterprising magician might note the concentric circles and scribbling upon the stone, copy them into a book and attempt to replicate the magic here. It is possible. The only limitation is finding the correct type of rock to scribe the spell onto. Obsidian, carved and sanded to a near perfect disc, is the only stone that can be used in such a spell.

LEVEL 7 (See Map p. 169)

AREA 35: THE MADDENING CHAMBER: This chamber is where Deuranimus spends most of his time. A portal opens onto the roof of the balcony (see below). The room is full of crows, all of which have a necklace with a gem hanging from it. Deuranimus is in here when the characters enter the tower.

Deuranimus had gathered a few items which he considered valuable when he first came up here. Only two items remain, as he has thrown the rest off of the balcony. There is a water clock, but it has no water to run it. It sits still as if time has stopped. Also,

there is a small pendulum in the center of the room. Often he sits in front of it and pushes the silver ball, watching it swing back and forth. He can spend hours doing this until he loses his temper and kicks it across the room (only to gingerly pick it up again later). A pile of old moldy and rotting clothing are heaped in one corner of the room, and several large gems lie about.

Upon the wall is etched a spell, *redemption* (see **New Spells** at the end of the book). The spell describes how to revive a person's bound soul, in this case, those imprisoned in the gems. The spell, however, is not complete. The intonation portion of the spell is not writ upon the wall. However, the cryptic words are on the wall:

"Utring-Akt et Oonmakling-where the Screed meets the Gray Pools upon the River Road."

There is a rough map as well, etched in the stone, which shows a great forest in the south (the Kellerwald) and a road that stretches from it to some marshes (the Gausumland). Anyone familiar with the area, as the character should be now, also notes the far western edge of the Blacktooth Ridge intersecting with the forest.

NOTE: This map is presented in full in *A6 Of Banishment & Blight* already published.

Deuranimus explains (if he is able) that an Oonmakling who lives in a castle far away (*A6 Of Banishment and Blight*) knows the intonation. Deuranimus becomes very cooperative and helpful if the characters are interested in freeing the souls from the birds.

Deuranimus offers the characters a small scroll case with a map inside. The map shows much of the region of the Blacktooth Ridge. The map is relatively new, as Deuranimus took it from an ungern soldier. The location of the Oonmakling fortress, Utring Akt, is easy to discern. (See map on page 167).

Writ upon the map is the following arcane reference: "Utring Akt. The Oonmakling may reforge it."

The "it" refers to the *horn of opening*, that magic item that many believe when once restored, can summon Unklar back to the plane. The characters may have gathered parts of the *horn of opening* on their travels.

AREA 36: BALCONY ROOF: On the balcony and the dome above the topmost tower are hundreds and hundreds of crows, all cawing, telling their stories in the language of the crows. The crows can also, in a creaking voice, speak in the tongues of the souls of those entombed within the gems they wear. If one listens, they will tell their tale. Deuranimus often sits here listening to the tales of those he placed into the gems.

DEURANIMUS

Deuranimus is an aged man, far older than his crinkled skin, balding head and gray scraggly beard suggest. So much has his guilt consumed him that he can no longer die until it is assuaged. He is tall, emaciated, has large bulging brown eyes and stoops when walking, as if carrying a massive weight upon his shoulders. He yells and screams when he talks and makes no pretense whatsoever to polite conversation. Not having bathed in decades, Deuranimus does not smell at all delightful. He really, really stinks.

He is crazed, of course, and consumed by his guilt and seeks nothing more than to undo the wrongs he has enacted over time. But he knows no way to do such. His madness is all-consuming, leaving him with little control over his emotions, which range from the suicidal to the homicidal to the passive and forgiving. Only during very short periods of time does he come to his senses and realize the depths of his madness. In his sane moments, he does not want to kill, but he knows those moments are far and few between, so stays hidden up here.

Characters interacting with Deuranimus take a great chance of being killed. There is only a 10% chance that he will be lucid when they arrive. There is a 45% chance he will be on the homicidal side of the coin. Otherwise he is on the guilt side of his personality and only thinks of suicide and is full of self-loathing. The CK should check for his mood every 10 minutes. He switches to homicidal quickly.

There are only a few methods of ensuring that he does not attack the characters. The first is if the characters spend any time talking with the crows or listening to their stories—which may not happen, considering the imminent return of the 1000 or so ungern on patrol. Deuranimus always takes time to talk to the crows. However, if the characters have taken the time to listen to one of the crow's stories at any point in the adventure, there is a 50% chance Deuranimus is aware of the event. Should he learn of it, when the characters arrive, his chance of being homicidal upon the first encounter is reduced by 5%. Should eight or more crows tell Deuranimus of their encounters with characters in which a whole story was told in full, there is a 99% chance Deuranimus recognizes them when they approach and stays in a neutral/normal mode for 2d6 x 10 minutes.

LOWER HALLS (See Map page 170)

The Lower Halls are where the druid practiced his craft of binding the souls of his prisoners in gems and the gems to the crows of Festung Akt. Areas 6–12 are inhabited by a band of shadows, a one-time paladin and his victims (see **Area 8 below**). These shadows freely wander the halls and rooms of all the Lower Halls, hunting they know not what. The lesser shadows do not stray far from the great one, the paladin. They do not hinder the otyguh, nor molest the fey. If the characters should encounter one of the shadows, it flees back to Area 8 where the greater shadow dwells. The characters should see a shade moving in the shadows, but nothing more.

Several ungern and Balonakalon have recently entered the Lower Hall. The ungern were slain by the greater shadow in **Area 8**. The rest of the ungern avoid these halls unless they suspect the characters are down here and the ungern are chasing them. It is one of the places the characters may find refuge should the ungern troops return and they find themselves inside the tower. It is also a very dangerous place, for several shadows dwell in here as well as many other creatures.

There are many empty areas in this level. Small alcoves and cave offshoots dot the area. They were used for storage and sometimes as sleeping quarters. They are not detailed, as nothing of value remains here unless otherwise noted. Also, the three dots indicate the presence of a metal grate door. Unless otherwise noted, none are locked.

AREA 1: ENTRY CHAMBER

The stairs from above (**Level One Area 5A**) descend into a large cavern consisting of natural walls. Some sections have been carved to give the room a nearly round appearance. Several openings lead from this chamber.

You are greeted by a round, cavernous room. The central area of the cavern is dominated by a dozen metal cages dangling from the ceiling. They are suspended by massive chains and pulleys. The whole lot of them (cages, chains, and pulleys) are old and rusted. Three of the cages contain the skeletal remains of unfortunate prisoners. Their bones hang between the cage bars like alabaster vines. The cages are large enough to hold humans. Scattered about the room are several tables, chairs, pails, casks, and a shelf. All have been overturned and knocked around.

A low whistling sound can be heard. It is coming from the east side of the room. Very cold air is coming from the west side of the chamber. The further one moves in that direction, the colder it becomes. There is nothing of value in the area.

AREA 2: GEM ROOM

This room contains seven, medium-sized chests, a table with one chair, and a shelf with several tools on it. A leather apron hangs on the far wall and two small buckets lie on the floor beneath it.

The tools on the shelf were used for cutting and shaping the gems. There are several small drills, chisels, hammers, and a small monocle used for magnification. The buckets contain shards of worked gems (this total debris has a value of 5gp). The tools are in good shape.

Each chest is made of wood and padlocked. The dampness has caused the wood of the trunks to decay and the mechanisms in the locks to corrode and rust. The chests can simply be broken open with a strong hammer or rock but not picked or otherwise opened normally. Once the chests are broken open, red gems spill out onto the floor. The baubles Deuranimus gathered in which the souls were placed were not rare and only of moderate value. There are, however, a lot of them in here. Each chest contains around 300 gems, each about $\frac{1}{4}$ the size of a small egg and have a value of 5gp a piece.

Busting open the chests attracts the shadows from Area 8, if they have not already been encountered.

AREA 3: BROKEN ANVIL

This room has a small forge in it. Nearby is a workbench and table with tools of that trade spread around. Many have been knocked to the floor. Several ungern corpses in the early stages of decomposition lie on the floor. In the center of the room is an anvil which has cracked apart, both sides lying on the floor next to the table upon which it once sat. A massive metal table rests against another wall. Shackles hang from it. On the floor near the broken anvil, two gems are clearly visible, glowing as if imbued with a dim light.

In a pile of debris along the wall is a long, unfurled parchment. Written upon it is a ritual spell for the transferring of a soul to one of the gems. It takes 12 hours to transfer a soul to the gem. The person must be dead for at least an hour but no more than 24 hours. The process requires an anvil, hammer, the corpse, a



gem, and silver powder. The latter must be sprinkled over the body prior to “hammering” out the soul. An action followed by hammering the soul into the gem.

This area was used by Deuranimus to take the souls of those he was supposed to execute and transfer them into special gems. These gems were then placed in medallions and hung from the necks of crows and, ostensibly, scattered to the four winds.

At the moment of Unklar’s banishment from Airhde, the anvil cracked at the same time Deuranimus was transferring the soul of a paladin to a gem. The paladin was caught in the dead zone between the realms of the living and the dead. His body died, but his soul lingered, aware of an aching agony that he could not relieve. He became a shadow of himself and began haunting the room, tethered to the room that played witness to his last waking moment. He now wanders these few rooms seeking to kill anything it can. It has even turned a few others into its thralls. As with many undead of this nature, the shadow is confined to certain areas of the Lower Halls and should he try to leave simply reappears near the anvil.

If the characters approach the anvil, one of the lesser shadows appears to their rear and approaches. After two rounds, another appears as if emerging from a wall; in two more rounds, another, then another in 2 more rounds, when finally, the greater shadow forms near the anvil and attacks.

The two gems near the anvil are actually the two halves of the broken gem. Bringing the two halves together in the presence of the greater shadow causes it to turn away and wail. It lingers 20 feet from the gem, wailing the whole time.

Casting a *minor restoration* spell on the gems, as they are held together, causes them to fuse. Should they fuse, the greater shadow dissipates, as do the lesser shadows. The gem is worth 1000 gp.

GREATER SHADOW (This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD 5d12, AC 16, HP 35. His primary attributes are mental. He attacks with an incorporeal touch for 1d4 points of damage. He causes strength drain with a successful hit, doubling the amount of loss that a normal shadow causes. He can also blend into the darkness and has a vulnerability to sunlight. He can create other spawn as well.)

LESSER SHADOWS x4 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 3d12, AC 13, HP 14, 17, 18, 18. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with an incorporeal touch for 1d4 points of damage. They cause strength drain with a successful hit. They can also blend into the darkness and have a vulnerability to sunlight. They can create other spawn as well.)

AREA 4: HEATED HALL

Like much of the Lower Halls, this room has been chiseled to resemble the above tower.

This huge, round room has several large tables braced against a pillar of rough-hewn rock that seems to hold up the ceiling above. Casks, crates, piles of chain, metal hooks, and heaps of manacles are all lying about. Shelves line the walls with small boxes filled with bolts and metal wires. Above the tables, hanging from hooks on the pillar, are a number of iron key rings. You can clearly hear a wheezing from across the room. The air here is slightly warmer than the rest of the Lower Halls you've explored. A slight glow comes from the far side of the chamber.

There is a glow coming from the north end of the room. In no time at all, the characters see three large snake like creatures, glowing red hot, curled up in a writhing pile at the north end of the room. They are three tavis wyrms.

No one knows much about the tavis wyrms. They travel from the elemental plane of fire to the material worlds in search of sustaining material. They eat their way through veins of volcanic debris left in the cracks and fissures of the earth. When full, they rest, either here or in the world from which they emerged. Several have found themselves in the Lower Halls of Festung Akt, curled up like great snakes, resting in the far corner of the room. This rest could last an hour or a decade, since time has no meaning for tavis wyrms.

The tavis wyrms are, obviously, sleeping and pay no immediate heed to the characters. However, movement in the room may disturb the wyrms. If one skirts the south side of the room away from the wyrms, the movement may not wake them. Unless the party is able to move silently, such as a rogue, the wyrms must make a wisdom check to determine if they wake up or not. Should they succeed, they awaken and consider anything in here to be an enemy and go for the kill. Otherwise they stay asleep. The wisdom check is offset by the sneaky roll bonus of rogues and rangers. If the party approaches the wyrms, they automatically wake up.

TAVIS WYRMS (These neutral creatures' vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 16, HP 20, 21, 21. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a bite for 1d8 points of damage. They are also able to launch a heat attack that can destroy non-magical weapons, or cause a further 1d6 points of burn damage.)

The wheezing sound is air rising up through holes in the chamber's floor (see Area 7 below).

AREA 5 PRISON CHAMBERS: This entire area is where prisoners were once kept prior to being taken to the main entry chamber for questioning and execution. Shackles and chains are randomly pinned to the walls along these halls and alcoves. There are hundreds of them. Skeletons still dangle from many of the chains. These are the remains of the last prisoners of Festung Akt; they were abandoned and left to starve. There is nothing of value in this entire area and, unless one has a particular fascination with skeletons, nothing of interest. Except that is, **AREA 5A**.

AREA 5A FEY: There is a small cage, about the size of a bird cage, hanging from the ceiling in this room. Within are three small fey. Unless one looks closely, they look just like the twigs from a small tree with leaves attached to them.

These fey are immortal. But, to thrive, they need sunlight. Without it, they linger as if in a deep sleep. They can exist like this for many hundreds of years before eventually perishing. With some sunlight, they can live forever. They are not near the end of their lives, but if left here for another century or so, they will die.

If a little light is shined upon them, from a torch or lantern (not magical light), they begin to stir after 10 minutes or so. For them to truly revive, they need to be brought out in the sunlight. Even then, it takes a month for them to reach full health.

The fey do not speak any common tongues, but they do have one. A *comprehend language* spell reveals their language as one of the fey tongues. Their value to the party lies in future adventures, should the Castle Keeper bother to keep track of such things. They are forever indebted to the characters and seek to help them however they can. The fey can speak to many woodland creatures, including treants. Please use these creatures at your discretion. They are not powerful, but are very interesting. They will not become "members" of the adventuring party, but can follow them and or offer up help in specific settings.

FEY x3 (These chaotic good creatures' vital stats are HD 1/2, AC 22, HP 1/2 of 1. Their primary attributes are physical. They have no ability to physically attack or harm other creatures. They know the languages of the woodland creatures, and as such can speak to gnomes. They also have the ability to cast *web* spell. It takes 10 fey to cast as a 3rd level wizard; 20 fey to cast as a 4th level, and so on.)

AREA 6: WEAPONS STORAGE

This was once a storeroom for some very well made weapons of war. A large metal door set into a metal frame blocks entry to this room. Locked these many years, the locking mechanism has rusted over, making it very difficult to open. A rogue can pick the lock though (CL 5). The hinges are old, rusted, and not a little bent, so a loud grinding and squeaking occurs upon opening it. It produces enough noise to automatically awaken the tavis wyrms in **LEVEL 2, AREA 5**. If the characters can prevent the noise by use of oil or magic, then it is unlikely the wyrms awaken.

The room beyond has not been touched in many years. Though at one time, the room was a mass of weapons, the ungern removed most of them some time ago when they abandoned the complex. Of the few which remain, the weapons wooden parts and leather straps and other material of that nature have decayed over time, such that they

are useless in the short term. However, if the metal of the weapons is taken to a master smith or woodworker of the proper type, they can be repaired and made usable again. Of the weapons in here, there are two expert crossbows (+1 to hit and +1 to damage with an increased range increment of 20 feet) and four expert swords and polearms (each conferring a +1 to hit and +2 damage). Bear in mind these are non-magical weapons. The cost to repair them is high. There are dozens of other weapons as well. Again, none of these weapons are usable as of this moment, as they are in need of repair.

AREA 7: THE WATERS OF FILTH AND TREASURE VAULT

This area includes a main chamber and several interconnected chambers (10A–10D). Access to them is gained from **AREA 1**. The secret door is exceedingly difficult to locate (CL 7). The chamber can also be accessed through underground, water-filled corridors from the Canals.

There are several large pools of water in this room. These are not spring waters. This is water carried here from the fetid pools beneath Aufstrag, far to the north, by a series of slow-moving, underground canals. The pools actually sit above these underwater caverns and corridors, which themselves are filled with this thick, viscous, soupy water. These corridors and chambers all connect and lead through many miles of canals to the feet of Aufstrag. Festung Akt was built upon the drainage of these canals years ago. Little comes from the north anymore, but the canals are clogged and thick with debris, which has pushed the waters up and into the Lower Halls of the fortress here in **AREA 7**.

The inhabitants of Festung Akt have long since forgotten about these canals. Even the druid remained oblivious to their existence, assuming that the pools beneath his fortress were nothing but natural waterways. If the characters should explore the pools, swimming down into them, they may discover the hewn rocky walls of the canals. Following them for the best part of a quarter of a mile north will bring them out and into a long, dark, narrow, and very straight tunnel. The tunnel is the canal itself. It has two walkways, wide enough for a single individual, that lead on and to the north. The canal itself still has a thick, wet, damp mud along its floor. Only once in a great while, it floods and fills the canal bed. The tunnel itself is about eight feet wide. The CK should discourage immediate exploration of these tunnels, as they lead to Aufstrag. But some indication should be given that these are long, old tunnels. Should the characters persist, then an opening exists, where the tunnels have collapsed some 8 miles north of the fortress. The characters can exit there.

Many corpses were thrown into the pools in this chamber over the centuries by Unklar's servants for the otyugh to consume. This monster is now quite hungry. It can hear well and is very active-being magical in nature-and often comes to the surface seeking something to eat.

There is nothing of value in the pools. The water itself, though filthy and seemingly valueless, is a major ingredient for summoning the spawn of the shadow realms, and is, therefore, valuable to magic users and others interested in such stuff. A vial can fetch as much as 500 gp. It may take some research and time to figure this out, if ever.

Also, weapons smeared in this liquid can cause disease if they strike someone. The person so struck must make a constitution check.

Failure indicates they suffer from a disease, which saps their strength over time. Every 12 hours after being inflicted, the person struck loses 1 point of strength. After another 12 hours a point of constitution is lost. A flip-flop loss occurs until a *cure disease* is cast upon the character. The lost attribute points can be restored with a *minor restoration* spell. The 'goo' remains on the weapons for up to seven days. Wounded characters entering the liquid must make a constitution check, -5 with an open wound, or they will similarly become afflicted.

As for the otyugh, it travels from chamber to chamber randomly. Once the characters get near any pool and disturb it (especially entering it), the creature makes haste to locate them. This should take from 11-22 (d12+10) rounds.

Should the characters enter the waters and travel through the chambers, there is a 40% chance they notice a faint glow in the water in an alcove. A magic user who crept his way in here some 10 years ago was killed by the otyugh. All that remain are some remnants of clothing the otyugh spit up and an *ever-burning torch* tucked away, half buried in silt in this alcove. The otyugh just could not stomach it.

In the far east corner of **AREA 7** is a treasure chamber (marked with a T on the map). It contains several unlocked chests. There is very little in the way of treasure here, as most of the material and coin collected in taxes at Festung Akt the lords had sent to Aufstrag. Some does remain, however; in sum, both chests contain the following; 4000 gp in coin, 7000 gp in jewelry, and 1000 gp in statuettes and other small items. Inside one of the chests is a small wooden box. Within the wooden box is one half of an ivory horn about 1 and ½ feet in length. This item resonates magic. It is useless however unless the characters have brought together all the parts of the horn and the item fashioned. It is part of the horn of opening (when all parts are assembled, it can be used to open the lower gate of Aufstrag.)

OTYUGH (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 6d8, AC 17, HP 32. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with two tentacles for 1d8 points of damage and a vicious bite for a further 2d4. It has an improved grab and cause diseases as well.*)

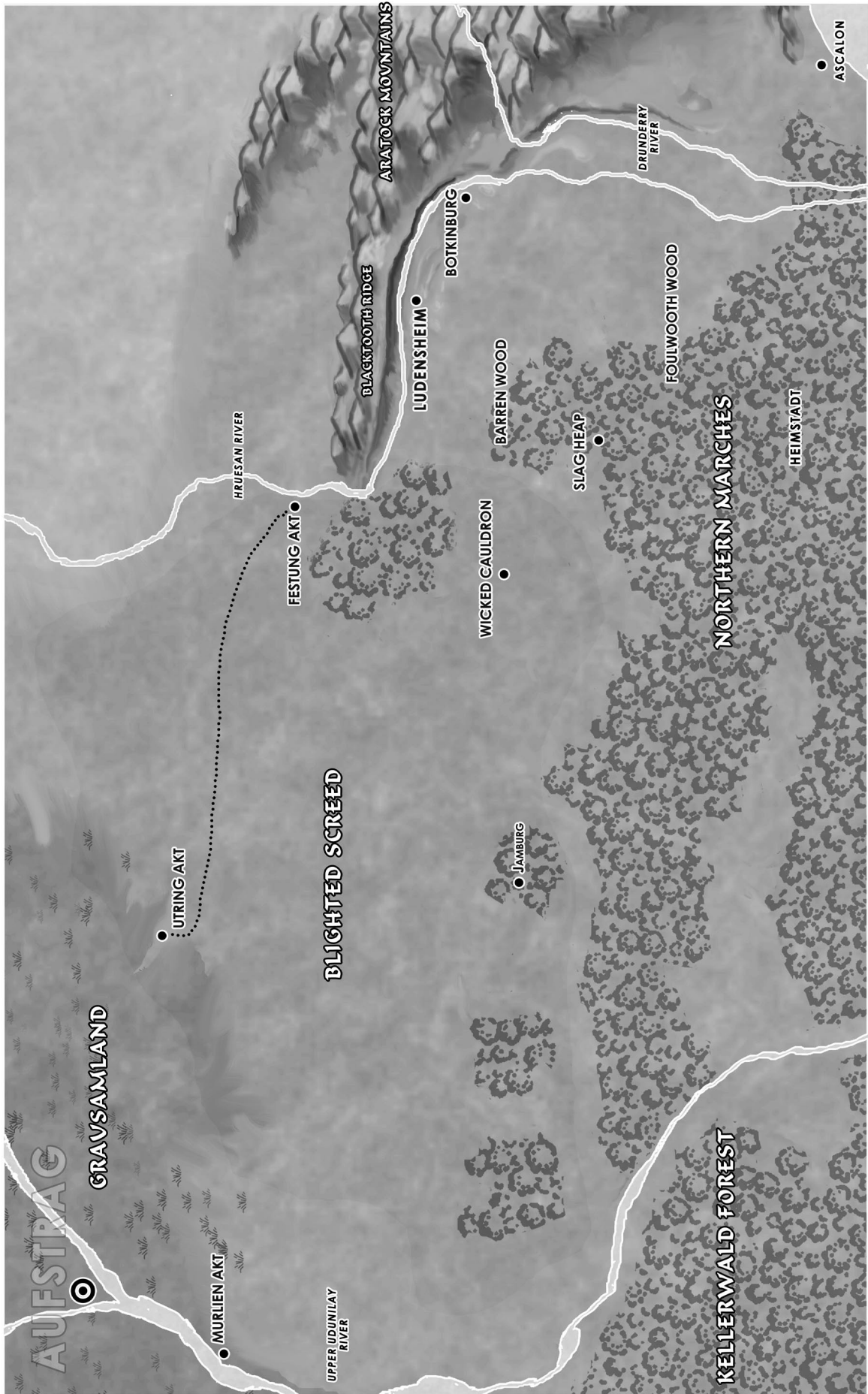
CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

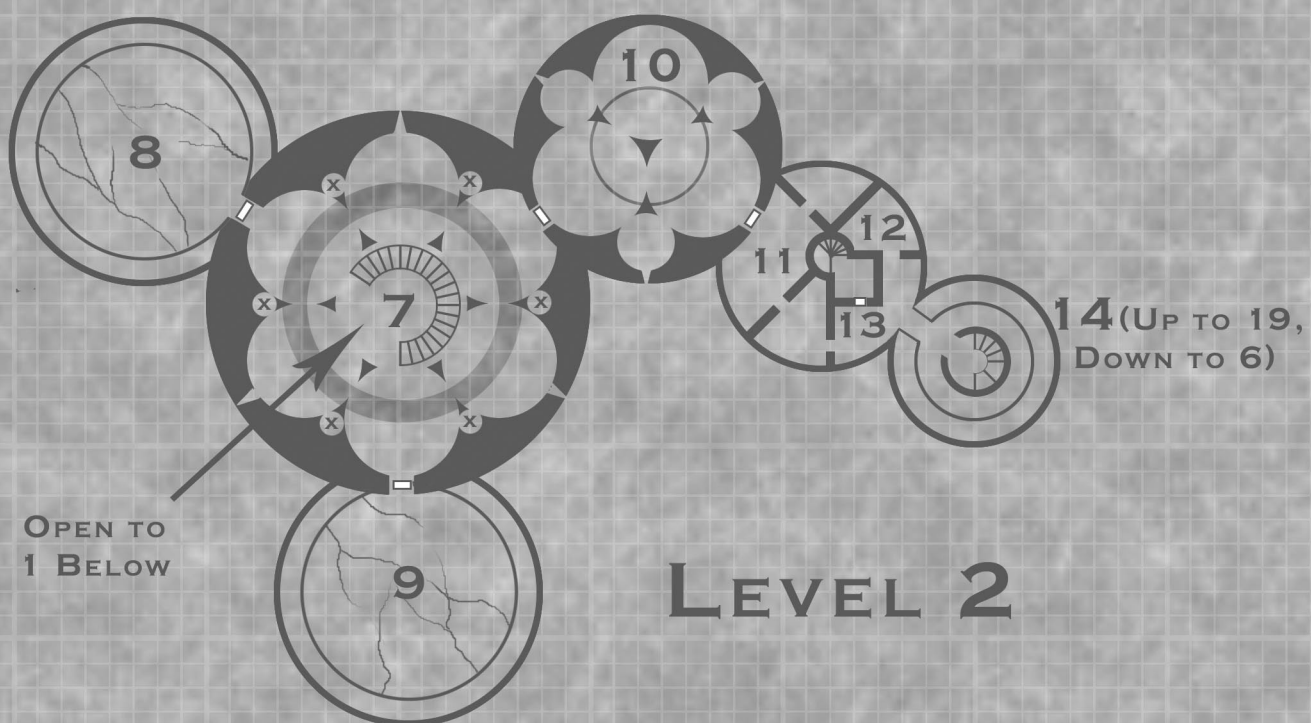
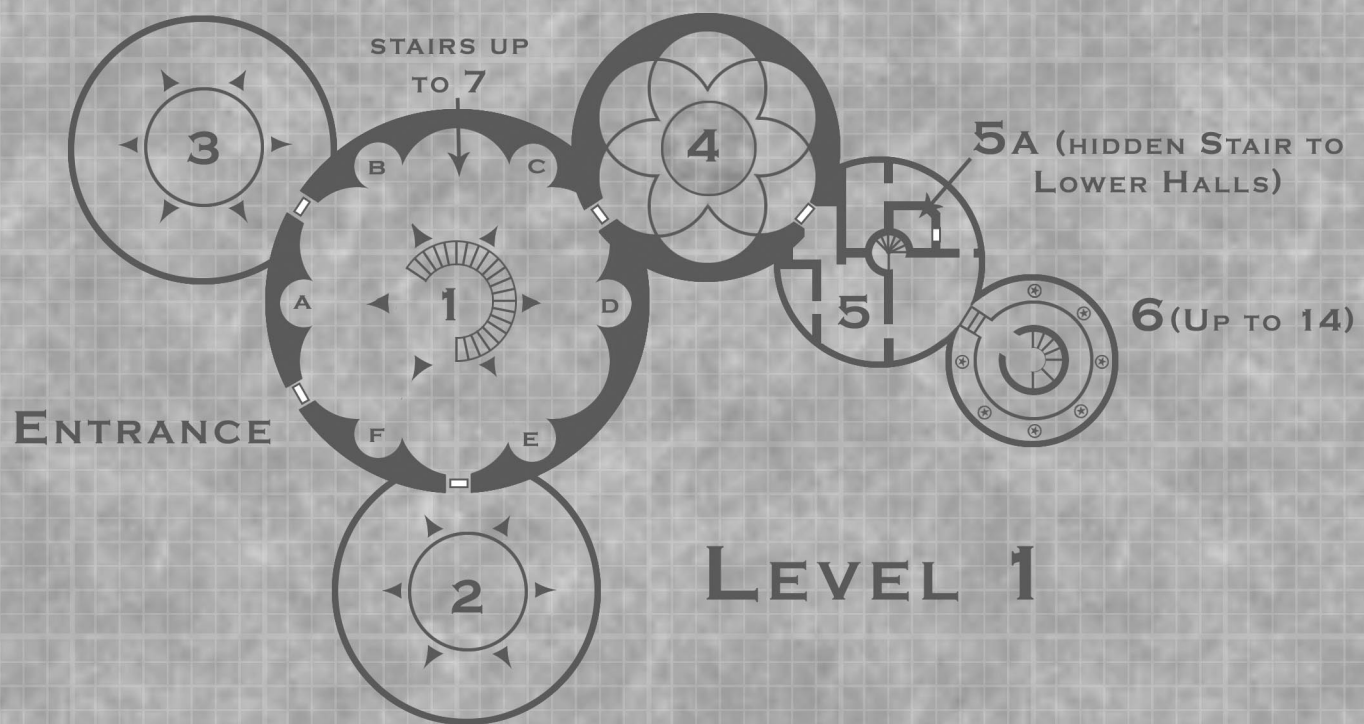
Thus ends the characters' adventures within the walls and environs of Festung Akt. The adventure to A6 can continue in several manners. The first and best method is for the characters to attempt to free the souls of those trapped in the gems by adventuring to Utring Akt as mentioned in Area 35 and 36.

As there is no direct linking of plots and devices between A5 and A6 (the creatures in A6 are not allied with those in A5), the characters must be encouraged to find the place.

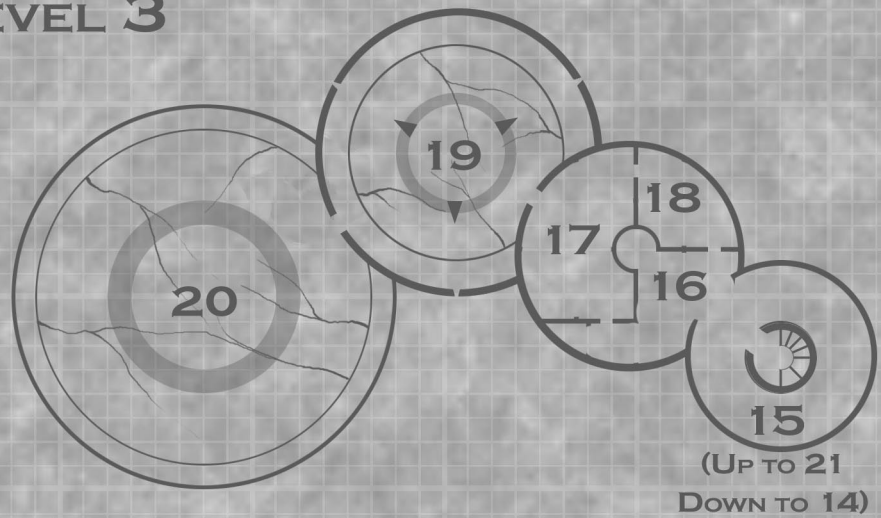
If this fails, the Castle Keeper may encourage the party to follow one of the trails leading from the place. A ranger or druid would note its recent use by a small group of men and unger. The trail leads to the Oonmakling fortress.

The third, final, and perhaps most interesting method is by use of the ogre magi the characters may have encountered earlier. If the ogre magi survives, he approaches the party about traveling to Utring Akt to aid him in settling an old score; he would like the party's help in killing of an ogre frost magi that dwells there. The ogre magi here will, once the party has slain the frost magi, turn on them and try to kill them at an opportune time.

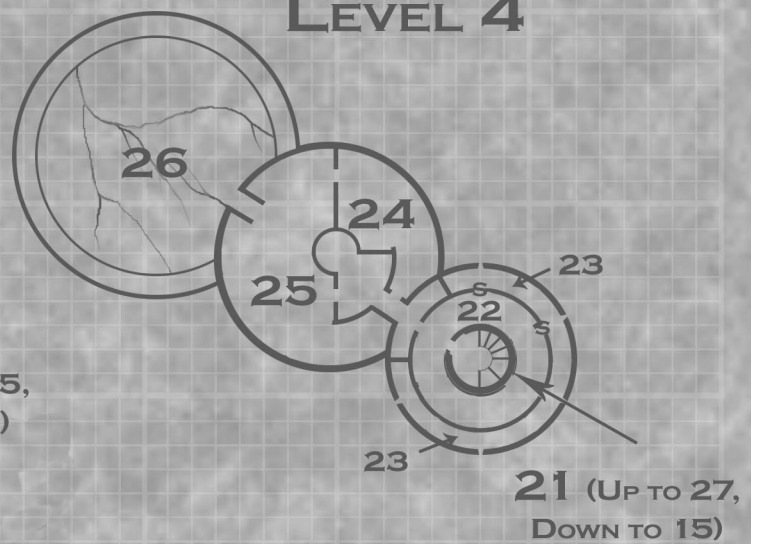




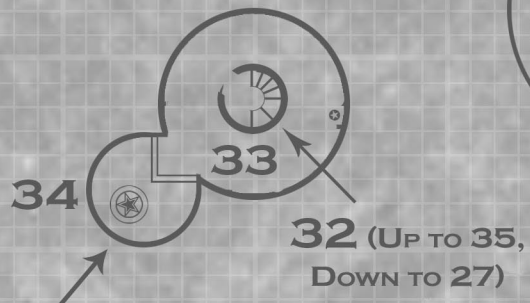
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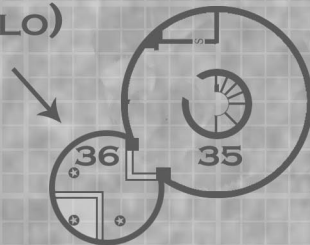
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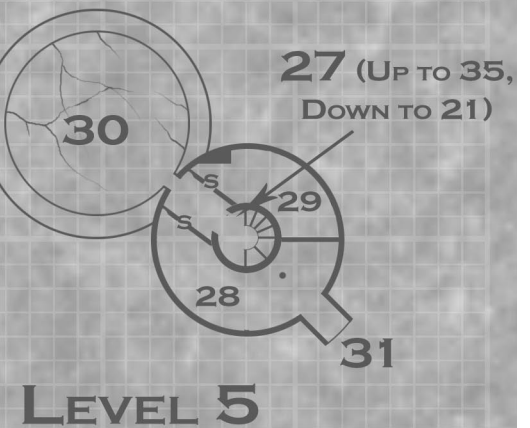
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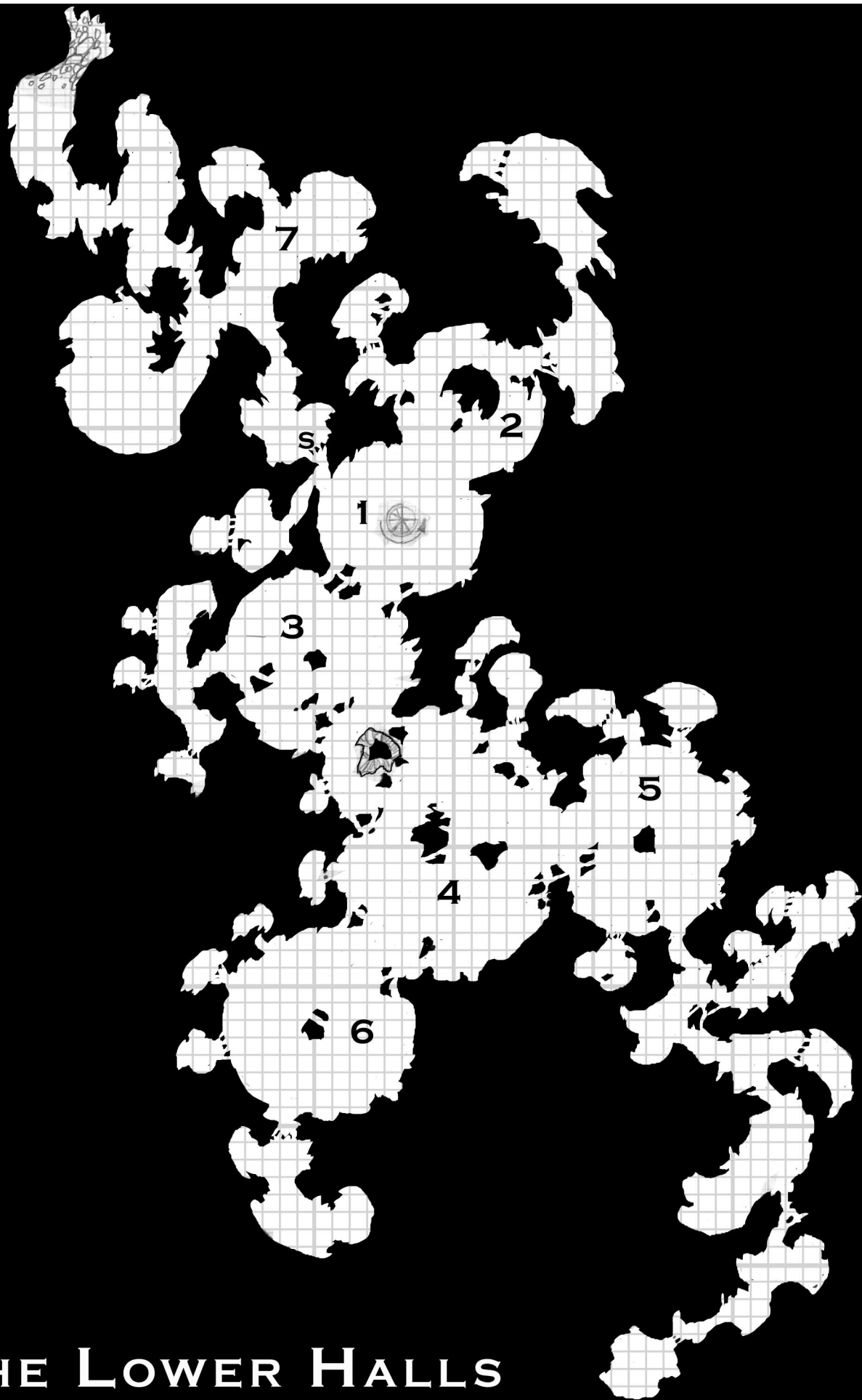
THESE TWO AREAS
JUT OUT OVER TOWER
(SEE COVER ILLO)



LEVEL 7



LEVEL 5



THE LOWER HALLS

BLOOD OOZE (LEACH)

NO. APPEARING: 1–4

SIZE: S

HD: 1 (1 hp)

MOVE: 1 ft.

AC: 10

ATTACKS: Blood drain (1 hp)

SPECIAL: Replicates

SAVES: Nil

INT: Nil

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Magical beast

TREASURE: Nil

XP: 10

Blood ooze are small, worm-like creatures roughly one inch in length. They are fat to the point of looking as if they will explode and segmented like maggots but colored a distinct dark red. Upon either end of the worm are small, teeth-lined apertures which they use to bite their victims. They move by sliding and pulling themselves along. Their skin is thin, almost translucent, allowing one to see shadows of veins within the creature. They are pulpy and smash very easy. When they do, they explode with a pop and splatter tissue and blood everywhere.

Blood ooze are dangerous creations, for when they strike a victim and cause damage, they instantly replicate, splitting into two. The second blood ooze immediately attacks. In this way, a few blood ooze can turn into scores and threaten even the most powerful person or creature. They are highly susceptible to flame, cold, or any temperature variant.

The blood ooze is a magical creature formed in the laboratories of evil wizards. These creatures are created to cause pain and suffering, serving many an evil lord as a plague upon their victims. The worms reproduce so quickly that any region afflicted with only a few can suddenly find itself swamped with thousands of them.

COMBAT: The blood ooze attacks by biting a victim and releasing it. As soon as it scores a hit it drops to the ground immediately. It attacks immobilized victims if it can or attaches on to anything that passes by as they move very slowly. Its whole purpose is to score a successful bite so that it can replicate. It does not care if it dies after that or not. But it will release and bite again in order to create more.

REPLICATE: If the blood ooze scores a successful hit, it automatically does 1 point of damage; the worm then releases and moves to bite again. The wound sprouts a second blood worm, replicating from the first one almost immediately.

THE BLOOD OOZE IN THE WORLD OF AIHRDE

The Umbrian wizards created the blood ooze in the pits of Aufstrag in the latter days of Unklar's rule. The worms were unleashed on the dwarves, goblins, and halflings in the Trench War under the roots of the great city fortress. There, they spread like a plague, as the tunnel fighters tended to ignore them, at first. After that, they became one more danger in the long list of dangers in that horrid long war. The goblins eventually found a way to keep them at bay with various incantations and minor sorceries.

But the plague of the creatures spread beyond the confines of the dungeons beneath Aufstrag. Some enterprising merchants took them and began to peddle them on the markets of the east. They were much liked by assassins and others of that ilk, but they were used by evil wizards and others as well. After the Winter Dark Wars ended, the blood ooze became scarce, but they are still sold on the black market to the highest bidder and are encountered in deep dungeons long hidden from the gaze of men.

ROCHUN FIEND

NO. APPEARING: Special

SIZE: L

HD: 8 (d10)

MOVE: 20 ft.

AC: 17

ATTACKS: 6 tentacle attacks (1d8)

SPECIAL: Electrical Bolt,
Extra-Sensory Perception, Fly, Invisible, SR 7

SAVES: M

INT: Very

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Magical Beast

TREASURE: Nil

XP: 1350+8

Consisting of magical energies drawn from the negative planes, the Rochun fiends are invisible, appearing to the naked eye only when they attack. When visible, usually only for several seconds, they appear as huge, translucent, jellyfish-like creatures. They have hosts of tentacles dangling from an overarching dome. The dome protects their sensory organs, which are located on a large bulb in their center mass and consist of millions of small organs sensitive to electrical activity. These allow them to “see” almost anything within a short distance, usually about 30 to 40 feet.

Created by wizards of extraordinary power, Rochun fiends are used as guardians of treasure and other magic. Their highly aggressive nature makes them dangerous to employ and they require careful management. Wizards keep them in vials, jars, or other receptacles in order to contain them and release them when needed. The container must be glass, as this substance makes them docile.

Though they possess a definite shape when they attack, the Rochun fiend has no actual shape or form. It consists of energies, only, and usually occupies extraordinarily small spaces. It can pass under doors, through the cracks in windows, and so forth. The fiend is usually contained in glass jars. These jars appear empty to the casual observer, however a *detect magic* spell will expose them as powerful magical items. When opened, a cold gas rushes out of the jar as the creature escapes. A command word, usually known only to the wizard who created the creature, sends the fiend back into the jar.

COMBAT: The Rochun fiend attacks anything within reach. It can move slowly through the air, remaining invisible until it strikes its victim. Whenever it scores a successful hit, the electricity arcs back up through the creature, briefly revealing it as described above. It fights until it is killed or forced back into its prison.

ELECTRIC SHOCK: A Rochun fiend can discharge electricity from

any one of its six tentacles. It must successfully strike an enemy to discharge the electric shock. There is no save, and the recipient takes 1d4 points of damage.

EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION: The Rochun fiend is not restricted by what it can see or hear as it has no ability to see or hear anything. It perceives everything around it by sending out short electrical bursts that bounce back to the creature, allowing it to “see” that creature. It can see in any environment.

THE ROCHUN FIEND IN THE WORLD OF AIHRDE

These creatures were brewed in the depths of Aufstrag during the long Winter Dark. They were creations of that priesthood of wizards, the Umbra. High ranking members of the Guild found it necessary to guard their own laboratories against the intrusions of their surrogates and minions. What they created were the Rochun fiends. Using what little of the Paths of Umbra they understood they opened portals to the deeps of the Void and farmed from it tiny vestiges of magic and brought it back to Aihilde. There they coaxed it into life and drew from it its natural properties. They discovered, through trial and error, that glass was the only property that could safely contain the creatures and so it came to pass that many of these creature were stored away, eventually becoming lost amidst the chaos of collapse of the Unklarian Empire.

Powerful magi in Aihilde still venture in the Void to create the Rochun fiend. However, the spells to create the fiends continue to be very complex and draining, so that only the boldest and powerful wizards dare to meddle with them. Many have fallen victim to the confusion of the Paths and become lost in the Void. The spell is a 9th level spell.

KASDA R.

CASTLES & CRUSADES

BLIGHTED SCREED

ANS R.

ON THE SKIRTS OF THE BLIGHTED SCREED



In the wild wastes of the northern Marches an evil is gathering. Raging storms are flooding the rivers and black clouds darkening the daylight hours. Ravens and bats have gathered in great hordes near an ancient fortress long abandoned. This bastion of the Horned God served his minions as a way station in days of old; since his fall nothing but the ravages of time have occupied the keeps. Fetunk Akt men called it and they cursed its memory. But now it seems the first of its forges light the evening skies and something there is bending its will upon the Horned God's houseless servants.

Travel to this place is perilous and the guardians of those lands are spread too thin to make the trip. They seek the aid of powerful champions to brave their way north and uncover the happenings here. For if the Horned Gods minions are gathering under a single banner, then surely that banner must have a greater purpose.

Traveling through the tangled escarpments and rugged hills of the Blighted Screed is dangerous work but little compared the creatures and evil lurking in the burned out husk of the fortress of Festung Akt. In the deep halls beneath the ancient keep is an evil so great as to gather the storms of winter and call forth the Speakers of the Dead, the Ravens of the Blasted Heath. Stopping the coming storm will be trying to even the most stalwart of heart.

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