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CASTLES OF THE INNER SEA

Castles of the Inner Sea



Castle Kronquist



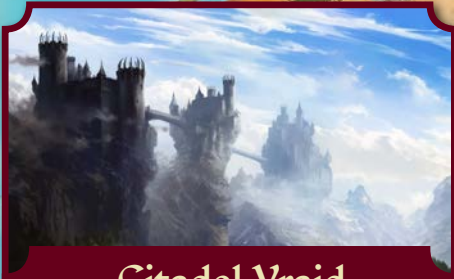
Icerift Castle



Skyborne Keep



Castle Everstand



Citadel Vraid



Highhelm



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Reference

This book refers to several other Pathfinder Roleplaying Game products using the following abbreviations, yet these additional supplements are not required to make use of this book. Readers interested in references to Pathfinder RPG hardcovers can find the complete rules of these books available online for free at paizo.com/prd.

<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Humans of Golarion</i>	HOG
<i>Bestiary</i>	B1	<i>The Inner Sea World Guide</i>	ISWG
<i>Bestiary 2</i>	B2	<i>Paths of Prestige</i>	POP
<i>Bestiary 3</i>	B3	<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC
<i>GameMastery Guide</i>	GMG	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM

On the Cover



Sajan and Alain confront a merciless Hellknight defender of Citadel Vraid in Lars Grant-West's foreboding cover.



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OF CASTLES AND KEEPS

Perhaps no extant structure of days long past excites the imagination of the fantasy enthusiast as much as a castle. Just as these monolithic fortresses once served to house and defend important peoples during the ages of knights and swords, they now play a vital role in the hearts, minds, and games of GMs and players the world over. Castles permeate lore and legend—after all, few can tell tales of King Arthur’s deeds without at the very least mentioning his storied holdings in Camelot. From the imposing fortress of Helm’s Deep in *The Lord of the Rings* to the fantastical mobile stronghold in *Howl’s Moving Castle*, castles have become a mainstay of both popular culture and folklore.

Within this book, we present write-ups on six of the Inner Sea region’s most iconic and evocative castles, keeps, and fortresses. Each section includes a brief history of the structure, an overview of its grounds and holdings, details on the various inhabitants and dangers that lurk within the castle (including a full stat block or rules elements for one of the stronghold’s most important or iconic denizens), and finally a fully detailed, ready-to-run adventure location and map to use during adventures set in the castle.

How to Use This Book

Obviously, the details for the castles presented in this book are by no means exhaustive—an entire volume could be written for any one of these locations! Rather, the descriptions and sample denizens described herein are designed to inspire GMs and provide a good starting point for those hoping to run adventures that take place in a castle. For those who simply want to take the castle layout and morph it to suit the needs of their own campaigns, the maps can easily be extracted for just this purpose; the stat blocks are similarly easy to drop into a game at a moment’s notice.

At the end of each castle entry is a sample adventure location not visible on the main map of the city. These adventure locations are laid out in the same way as full adventures, and are designed so that GMs can run them as is with little preparation or extra work. Each sample location is designed for characters of a certain level, which is called out in the introduction to the respective adventure location.

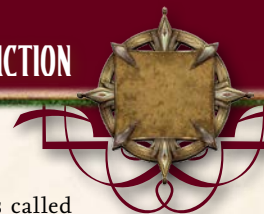
Below are the castles featured in this book. While each castle is written with a certain character level range in mind, some (notably Highhelm and Skyborne Keep) contain dangers suitable for characters of various levels of experience.

Castle Everstand: On the northwestern border of Lastwall, between the noble Knights of Ozem in Vigil and the hordes of orcs who pledge allegiance to the Hold of Belkzen, Castle Everstand serves as a beacon of goodness in an area otherwise beset with violence and chaos. The soldiers of Everstand have served the nation of Lastwall as the first defense against the orc hordes to the west since the castle’s inception, when a famous Lastwall sergeant summoned the fortress’s keep from nothing using a lucky draw from his *deck of many things*. Now, the legacy of Everstand lives on in the form of its current garrison. That the soldiers here have been able to continue fending off the orc armies is no doubt thanks to the luck that has historically graced Everstand and the knights’ own righteous perseverance. Castle Everstand is a suitable adventuring location for characters ranging from 1st to 5th level.

Castle Kronquist: Vampires and all manner of other undead terrors still haunt the barren halls and basilica of Castle Kronquist in Ustalav. Since the fall of the Whispering Tyrant, the great gothic citadel of the vampire lord Malyas has been silent except for the eerie tolling of its imposing clock tower. The building remains untouched by time, its stones and wood healing damage and erosion every night. With his armies reduced to just a few stalwart commanders, Malyas bides his time, even as the ambitious upstart Cvogtar Haas—a vampire hunter turned vampire himself—now lurks under the castle. The dread Castle Kronquist is a suitable adventuring location for characters ranging from 13th to 16th level.

Citadel Vraid: The Hellknight castle of Citadel Vraid represents the epitome of modern Chelish engineering, though the mysterious accidents that constantly assail the castle lead many of its unsavory occupants to believe its cursed by ancient magical energies. Since the castle’s construction, the Order of the Nail has seen two lictors of Citadel Vraid die through strange and violent means. Though the Hellknights at Vraid continue to vigilantly scour the surrounding Mindspin Mountains of their indigenous peoples and other supposed blights to the natural order of things, signs indicate that the haunting magic plaguing Citadel Vraid has no intention of letting up. Citadel Vraid is a suitable adventuring location for characters ranging from 6th to 12th level.

Highhelm: The cavernous mountain-city of Highhelm is the capital of the dwarven world, and its importance to dwarven history and culture is known throughout the entire Five Kings Mountains region. Trade is vital to Highhelm, and the city encourages outsiders to come



and peruse the markets of both the architecturally fascinating Inner City and the daring ledges of Outer City. The metropolis-fortress of Highhelm is a suitable adventuring location for characters ranging from 3rd to 8th level.

Icerift Castle: Originally meant to serve as a frontier fortress near the Crown of the World north of Mendev, the half-finished stronghold known as Icerift Castle was abandoned when its workers were all found dead in the snow with their hearts torn out. Since then, sinister creatures have moved into the partially finished keep and made it their den of murder and cannibalism. Called to the spot by the monstrous shaman who oversees Icerift, an otherworldly beast consumed with hate and hunger haunts the icy grounds. Icerift Castle is a suitable adventuring location for characters ranging from 10th to 14th level.

Skyborne Keep: A corrupt storm giant stole this magnificent flying castle, whose origins remain wrapped in mystery, from its perch high in the Stormspear Mountains. Now she and her cloud giant minions soar through the skies in their massive fortress, swooping down like the rocs they keep to steal great wealth from treasure-laden merchant vessels in the Arcadian Ocean and raid sites known to protect powerful magic items. The soaring Skyborne Keep is a suitable adventuring location for characters of 17th level and higher.

Castle Terminology

For those well versed in castle architecture, terms like parapet and portcullis are hardly worth batting an eye over, but for the uninitiated, it can be hard to remember the difference between a battlement and a bailey. The following list of commonly used terms and phrases can be a boon to readers who have not yet mastered stronghold slang.

Bailey: Also called a ward or a courtyard, the bailey is an open area within the castle complex, typically built upon a motte. An inner bailey is a courtyard surrounded by the fortification's curtain wall, while an outer bailey occupies a space outside of the castle walls, but still within its holdings.

Barbican: A barbican is a small, defensible structure built outside of the castle walls, typically just outside a bridge or gate to the castle. It serves as a position where troops can protect potentially vulnerable points leading into the castle.

Bastion: A bastion is a tower or extension of the curtain wall. Bastions are built in strategic positions that allow garrisoned troops to repel attackers assaulting the castle's blind spots, curtain wall, or other bastions.

Battlement: Battlements are notched parapets built on top of castle walls. They are crenellated (designed with alternatingly higher and lower barrier points, known respectively as merlons and crenels), allowing defenders to use ranged weapons from behind their

cover to repel attackers. Creating a battlement is called "embattling" something.

Curtain Wall: The curtain wall is the outermost defensive wall that surrounds a castle's inner bailey and important structures. It may feature a wall walk, battlements, turrets, and other defensive structures.

Gatehouse: Built into the curtain wall, a gatehouse allows occupants to enter and exit a castle, and varies in size and function from a simple wooden door to a complex series of reinforced doors, portcullises, and murder holes.

Keep: The keep is typically the final means of protecting important occupants of a castle—a large, heavily fortified tower that serves as a residence for nobles, favored servants, and high-ranking military personnel. It is usually built upon a motte or other defensible location within the castle.

Machicolation: These projecting galleries are built on top of curtain walls or towers, and are constructed with openings in the floor so that the castle's defenders can rain havoc on attackers from above, dropping heavy stones, boiling water, or other harmful items on assailants.

Moat: A moat is a wide ditch dug outside of the curtain wall. It is meant to provide additional security during sieges, and can be filled with water, sharpened stakes, or other simple means of deterring attackers.

Motte: A motte is a large, sometimes artificially built mound of land upon which the keep of a castle is constructed. It affords the castle's occupants a certain advantage in that it typically places them on higher ground than potential invaders.

Murder Holes: These narrow slits in a castle's walls allow archers or crossbow-wielding soldiers on one side to assail enemies on the other side with arrows or bolts.

Oubliette: An oubliette is a dungeon whose only entrance and exit is a trap door in the ceiling.

Parapet: A parapet is a wall-like barrier that occupies the edge of a roof, balcony, wall walk, or other castle structure. This barrier allows the castle's occupants to move behind it while offering them some measure of protection from outside attack. Parapets on outer castle walls are typically embattled.

Portcullis: A portcullis resembles a grate made of iron (or other materials) that slides down from inside a castle wall and blocks entry to a corridor, room, or other area of a castle. Most castles sport two portcullises in key defensive positions, enabling defenders to trap attackers between the two before assailing them with burning wood, hot oil, or other harmful weapons.

Turret: Any sort of tower or tall structure used primarily by defenders and lookouts can be referred to as a castle's turret. Such structures can also be called tourelles or simply towers.

Wall Walk: The wall walk is the protected walkway behind a castle's battlement, allowing soldiers to move from point to point within the castle with ease.





CASTLE EVERSTAND

“This is more than a garrison, more than a sentry post. Everstand is the lynchpin for the entire border, the banner around which all the frontier rallies. Without Everstand, there is nothing to stop Belkzen from pouring in and burning all of Lastwall.

“We are not stationed here; we are born within these walls and ready to defend them with our lives. We live, we fight, and we die here. Not for glory, not for coin—but because we are the only light against an ever-encroaching darkness.”

—Lieutenant Arryn Fallowfield to a platoon of new recruits



In a land born of honor and light in the shadow of great evil, Castle Everstand signifies the very spirit and code of Lastwall. Like a shield wall bristling with spears at the ready, Everstand stands shoulder to shoulder with its sister forts along the northwestern border of Lastwall, and together they act as their nation's first defense against the encroaching hordes of Belkzen. While no border fortress is regarded as more important or stately than the others, Castle Everstand is perhaps the most respected. Founded on the banks of the Kestrel River nearly 200 years ago, Everstand inspires the other border forts with its defenders' wisdom and spirit, and its own rallying presence. The castle's central position along the Kestrel River makes it a critical anchoring point for Lastwall's entire western border.

The castle's importance is not lost on Everstand's occupants or the villagers of nearby Squirestone. Proud of their success at keeping the orc hordes at bay for almost 2 centuries, the people here are hardy, serious folk, but they are ready to extend a friendly hand to outsiders (especially if such visitors have come to help against the Belkzen threat). Recently, however, Castle Everstand's strong defensive posture has begun to shift. The chapels of Iomedae and Gorum are well attended, but Our Lord in Iron has subtly grown in favor in Everstand, and talk of "defense" and "walls" has been replaced with "cavalry" and "conquest" among lieutenants and soldiers no longer content to wait for the orcs of Belkzen to come to them. Everstand's brave commander, Captain Thaum Gauntwood, is often seen atop the Iron Tower, gazing far to the west in deep thought. Tension—always high among the soldiers of "the wall"—is quickly reaching an all-time high among the knights of Castle Everstand, putting much strain on the leash of a war dog eager to be set loose.

History

When Lastwall's defensive barricade, known as the Hordeline, fell in 4515 AR, the avalanche of rampaging orc war bands was difficult to stem. Rather than wage a fragmented and costly extended battle, Watcher-Lord Rader-Seve decreed that the line be abandoned and drawn anew not far west of the Kestrel River and Ghostlight Marsh. It was here, on the shores of the Kestrel River, that the fight would reach its most desperate moments, yet it would also result in the founding of one of Lastwall's greatest fortresses.

On the evening of 17 Arodus, 400 orc berserkers under the command of Haskodar Warpriest Tulkuk-Thruul were set to descend upon Sergeant Strom and 40 of his soldiers the following morning, where the Voulge Bridge crosses the Kestrel River. The knights of Lastwall were fatigued, wounded, and ill equipped to face such a force. Yet Strom knew that to lose the bridge would open up the entire center

of the wall, split their defenses in two, and lay bare the heartlands of Lastwall. So Strom devised a daring and risky plan that would pit him and his soldiers not against the orcs of Belkzen, but against the very hands of fate itself.

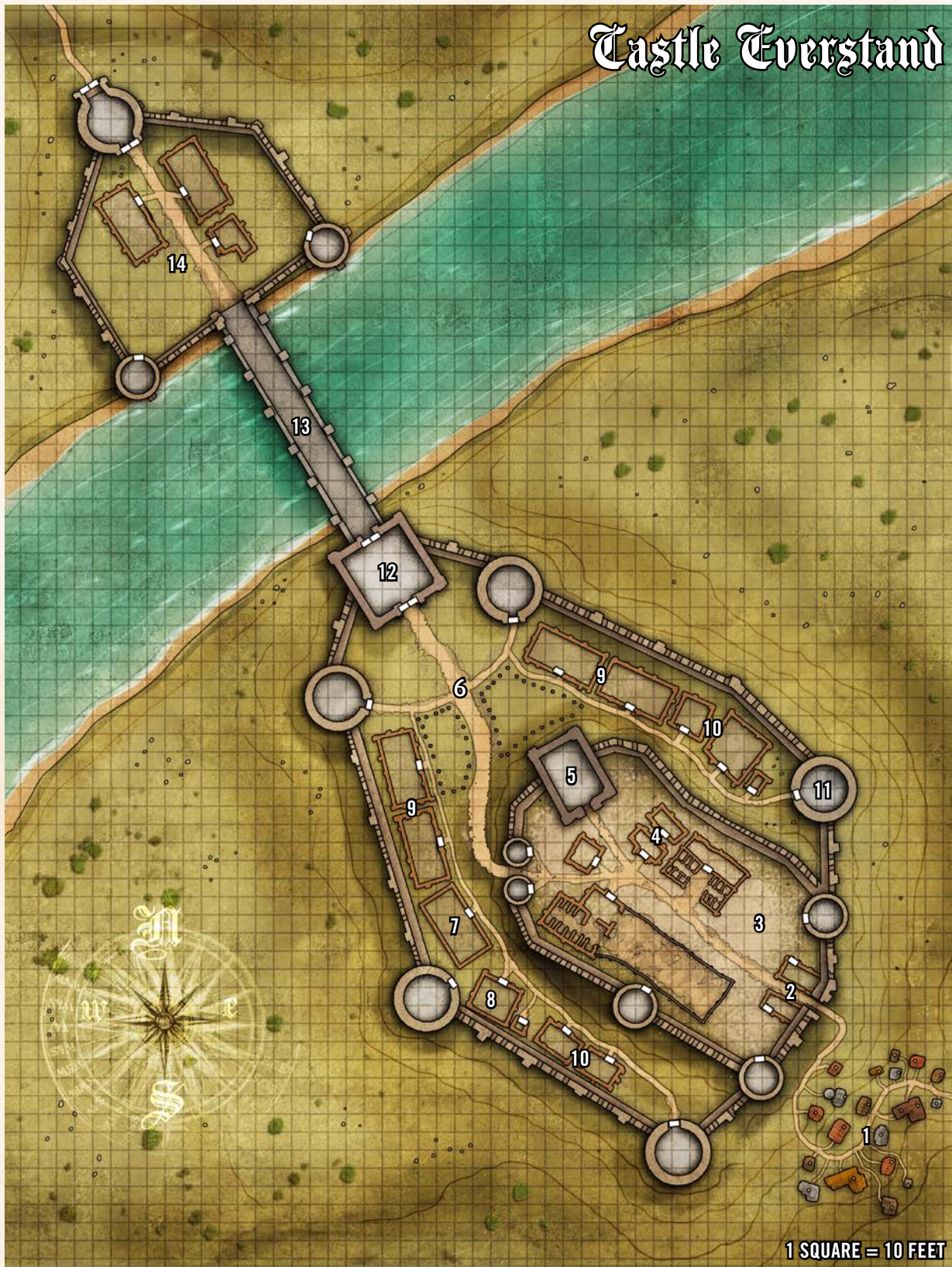
There was no valiant stand on the bridge, only a solemn meeting held around a dwindling campfire just south of the Kestrel River. There, Sergeant Strom and two of his lieutenants examined their only hope—a *deck of many things* Strom had acquired from his cousin years before but never thought to use. Their plan was simple: Each of the soldiers agreed to draw two cards from the wondrous deck in hopes of drawing the Throne card to instantly build a keep for their troops to rally behind. Once they had drawn the desired card, they would put the deck to rest for good.

As his soldiers looked on with bated breath, Strom drew a Moon card, thus securing him a single *wish* spell, and with this he wished that his second pull would be the much-needed Throne card. His wish came to pass, and the enormous, solid stone keep of Castle Everstand rose out of the rocky bluff adjacent to the Voulge Bridge in but a moment, its interior complete with weapons, armor, and rations and its walls bristling with ballistae and catapults. Within these halls and atop the castellated tower, Strom and his troops fought and held their ground long enough for reinforcements to arrive, and the orcs of Tulkuk-Thruul were utterly shattered and defeated beneath the hooves of Lastwall's heavy cavalry.

Sergeant Strom went on to the War College of Vigil, where his bravery and resourcefulness earned him praise, admiration, and a larger command. Meanwhile, the newly named "Everstand Keep" fell under the control of the Precentors Martial, and Strom's own daughter, Hale Gauntwood, was appointed commander of Everstand in 4533 AR. Command of the castle has been granted to the Gauntwood lineage ever since.

Positioned near the Belkzen border and a major crossing point over Kestrel River, Castle Everstand is of the utmost strategic importance to Lastwall's military leaders. It serves as a vital garrison, a central reinforcement location for neighboring keeps, and a watchpost ready to respond to any orc warbands coming from the west. Yet Everstand's importance belies a growing gulf between the current commander, Captain Thaum Gauntwood, and leaders in Vigil. Volunteers for the border keeps are slowly dwindling, yet those in Vigil seem content to maintain a defensive posture rather than rallying to drive back the ever-growing hordes of orcs in Belkzen. Captain Gauntwood believes the status quo cannot be maintained, and that this slowly weakening position could become a lethal fracture in the nation's defense. While Castle Everstand has a long history of providing a stalwart defense to the region, in recent years visitors report an ambiance akin to a shield being lowered and a sword being raised. War is in the air.







Description

Castle Everstand is situated on a rocky bluff overlooking the Kestrel River. The original keep magically summoned by Sergeant Strom almost 2 centuries ago still stands in the center of the primary bailey, while the addition of myriad walls, towers, and auxiliary buildings has transformed Everstand into the castle it is today.

In 4603 AR, the first major expansion of Castle Everstand was completed when its occupants added a curtain wall off the keep along the surrounding bluff. Constructed from native siltstone, the walls are not nearly as impressive as those of the original keep, but are mortared together in a traditional Lastwall style that eases the minds of homesick soldiers stationed in Everstand. Forty feet tall and 10 feet thick, the walls now sport several much-needed turrets and allow plenty of room for additional internal buildings.

During the winter of 4640 AR, a small orc raiding party managed to swim across the Kestrel River, evade the guards, scale the walls, and enter the inner compound before being slain. This blatant example of Everstand's inadequate defenses prompted the castle's second major expansion: the addition of a second outer wall, this one at the base of the bluff and complete with heavily fortified towers. This outermost wall continues to serve Everstand well, with taller and thicker walls made from large stones cemented with mortar, including glacis to give defenders an improved line of sight while warding off incoming foes.

The last major expansion to Castle Everstand was completed under Captain Arald Gauntwood's supervision in 4701 AR, when workers undertook the rebuilding of the Voulge Bridge as well as the construction of a large, three-towered keep on the northern side of the river. This significant accomplishment gives Castle Everstand the look of a single fortification that straddles the river.

Wooden buildings within the outer wall on the south side of the river provide barrack accommodations, training facilities, stabling, and workshops, while a veritable plethora of outbuildings and support structures has grown into a small 50-building village with some outlying farms clustered around the southeast gate.

1. Squirestone: Squirestone is an accidental village, born from the endless baggage trains, supply caravans, and opportunistic merchants that have visited Castle Everstand over the centuries. It is a collection of over 20 simple stone houses with thatched roofs, occupied by a variety of artisans and crafters who make themselves useful to the knights of Castle Everstand. In addition to a blacksmith, a baker, a beekeeper, a cartwright, and a miller, a handful of farmers make their homes here in almost a dozen longhouses. The tavern known as "Strom's Tankard" is the only two-story building outside of the castle proper.

2. Southeast Gatehouse: One of the oldest sections of Everstand, the southeastern gatehouse sits atop the rocky bluff where a short, switchbacked road winds through Squirestone. Standing 50 feet tall, the towering barbican looms over the village. A thick double-door gate and portcullis stand at the mouth of a 40-foot-long corridor, at the end of which is another portcullis. During the day, the gate and both portcullises are typically left open for patrols and villagers entering and leaving the castle.

3. Main Bailey: As the highest area of the castle and the oldest (save for the Iron Tower itself), the oval-shaped inner bailey is the first area most visitors to Everstand see. Aside from the daunting structures on the southeast and northwest sides of the bailey, the interior is mostly made up of single-story stables and officers' quarters. To the west, a small gate with two rounded towers leads into the lower bailey. The garrison's cavalry practices daily on the muddy field in the southern section of the main bailey, and at day's end, horses are sheltered in the two expansive stables on either side of the dirt path that winds through the center of the bailey.

4. Kennels: Under the leadership of Captain Arald Gauntwood, Everstand started a breeding program for Hagarn war hounds that has survived to the present day. **Houndmaster Basril** (NG male half-elf ranger 5) currently has nearly 30 Hagarn war hounds, each bred specifically for sentry duty (where their silence and keen senses are most prized) or for patrol duty (where the partnership between hound and scout is a potent combination). Visitors to Castle Everstand note the kennels' eerie quiet, for where one might expect constant barking and pacing from the dogs, there is only silence and stillness. Truly, Everstand's hounds are as obedient and attentive as the castle's humanoid soldiers.

5. Iron Tower: Named for its dark gray walls and unnatural form (which some liken to that of a slab of iron ore), the Iron Tower is the home of the castle's commander and has therefore been the ancestral home to the Gauntwood lineage for the last 200 years. Its appearance is intimidating, and visitors to Everstand frequently remark upon the Iron Tower's dominating presence and mysterious aura.

During the first decades of its existence, the Iron Tower served as a garrison and turret from which to defend Lastwall's border, but the massive keep has since been converted into personal quarters for Everstand's commander, Captain Thaum Gauntwood, and his family. Servants' quarters, storage areas, and barracks complement the residential floors and war rooms above, while the uppermost floors serve as lookout posts for the keen-eyed scouts posted there at all hours. Outside and on the parapet, a small detachment of guard-sentries ensure that no one enters or approaches the Iron Tower without permission. While the Iron Tower's most striking features are aboveground, the magical keep also came into being with

a sturdy foundation riddled with cellars and catacombs, which were later improved upon and extended during the second expansion of Castle Everstand. This sprawling under-layer (detailed starting on page 11) is accessible only via well-hidden entrances within the Iron Tower and at several other strategic locations in the castle.

6. Lower Bailey: The lower bailey runs along the edge of the Kestrel River and wraps almost all the way around the older, higher section of the castle. Round towers dominate the outer wall, while in the northwestern section, a large gateway opens to the fortified barbican that leads to the Voulge Bridge. During the day, the lower bailey is always alive with a clamor of shouting, officers barking orders, and steel clashing against steel. Unescorted or unrecognized visitors are challenged and escorted towards the main bailey, as only those with official sanctions are permitted to walk among the troops occupying the lower bailey.

7. Temple of Iomedae: After Castle Everstand was firmly established and work on the second main expansion had begun, priests of Iomedae from the nearby city of Vigil came to lend their aid to the valiant knights garrisoned there. They constructed their temple out of the same siltstone used to create the walls of the main bailey, and thus the chapel almost seems to be an extension of the castle rather than its own independent structure. **Father Lodmor Osther** (LG male human cleric of Iomedae 6) holds frequent gatherings at the church and reads aloud from his gilded copy of *The Acts of Iomedae* to Everstand's squires and youths, but the aging priest is growing progressively more worried that his teachings are falling on deaf ears as more devotees seek enlightenment at the adjacent temple of Gorum, foregoing their prayers to the Inheritor in favor of the stimulating war chants of Our Lord in Iron.

8. Temple of Gorum: Though worship of Our Lord in Iron is commonplace throughout Lastwall, Gorum's presence is particularly strong within Castle Everstand, especially in recent times. The warlike fervor of Everstand's troops is made all the more apparent on Sundays, when **Lady Eldia Vesan** (CG female human inquisitor 1/cleric of Gorum 4) preaches the word of Gorum to a congregation that includes nearly all of Everstand's population. Those who frequent Gorum's chapel believe that the answer to the Belkzen threat is a matter of offense and not defense, which in turn breeds impatience and a lust for war. Several among the castle fear that Vesan's rousing speeches may incite a premature

charge or other foolish course of action. Chief among the personalities in opposition to the temple of Gorum's calls to war is Father Osther of the temple of Iomedae.

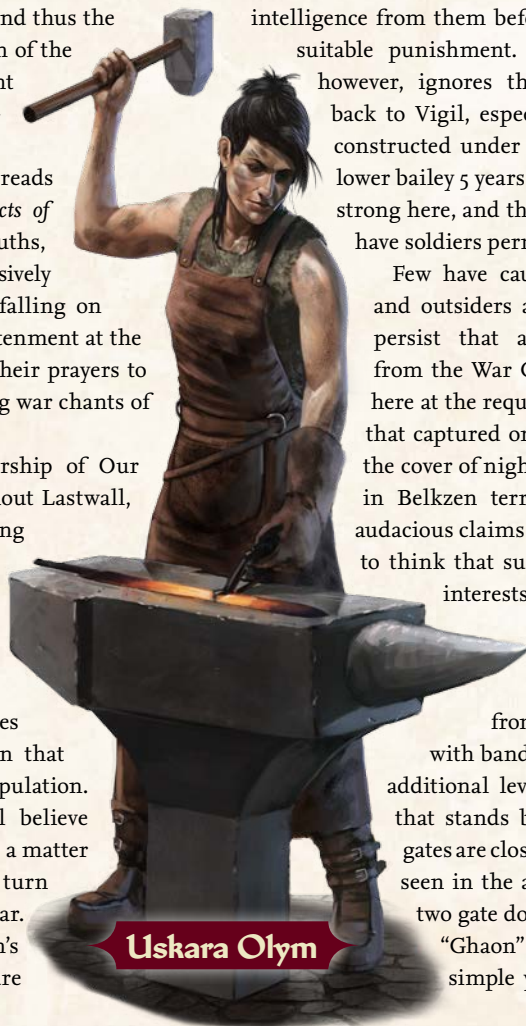
9. Barracks: Everstand plays host to four barracks, each capable of housing up to 40 soldiers. Guards posted around the barracks at night ensure that no one sneaks in while the majority of the castle's defenses are asleep, while during the day soldiers practice in the training yards outside, go on patrols beyond the castle's walls, or perform sentry duty.

10. Workshops: Castle Everstand has grown increasingly self-sufficient since its founding, and now the fortress boasts an entire workforce dedicated to upholding the line against Belkzen. Everything from horseshoes to siege weapons is manufactured in the workshops built along the perimeter of the lower bailey. Even more mundane woodworking and leatherworking is available, though such crafts obviously take a backseat to the blacksmithing and ironworking necessary for equipping Everstand's warriors.

11. Holding Cells: Until recently there was no means of holding prisoners within Everstand. Prisoners of war were shipped back into the heartlands of Lastwall, where skilled interrogators from the War College would extract battlefield intelligence from them before issuing a prompt trial and suitable punishment. Captain Thaum Gauntwood, however, ignores the policy of sending captives back to Vigil, especially since holding cells were constructed under the northeastern tower in the lower bailey 5 years ago. The guard detail is always strong here, and the tower itself is the only one to have soldiers permanently barracked there.

Few have cause to visit the holding cells, and outsiders are strictly forbidden. Rumors persist that an outcast interrogator-priest from the War College has taken up residence here at the request of Gauntwood himself, and that captured orcs are being brought in under the cover of night as a result of ranger missions in Belkzen territory. Few would speak such audacious claims aloud, however, and most seem to think that such tactics must be in the best interests of Everstand if they're actually being performed at all.

12. Northwest Gatehouse: Massive gates constructed from Avistani darkwood and bound with bands of nexavaran steel provide an additional level of security to the barbican that stands before the Voulge Bridge. The gates are closed only when hostiles have been seen in the area. To the local garrison, the two gate doors are affectionately known as "Ghaon" and "Mizir" (the names of two simple yeomen who showed immense





bravery in protecting the bridge alongside Sergeant Strom in 4515 AR).

The gatehouse itself has four internal floors, battlements, and three levels of cellars beneath. Forty soldiers and their respective commanders have lodgings here, and there are always sentries at both gates and two patrols of six crossbow-wielding knights on the walls above.

13. Voulge Bridge: The old bridge that crossed the Kestrel River was demolished and replaced in 4701 AR as part of the latest expansion of Castle Everstand. The Voulge Bridge is a two-span crossing 20 feet wide, 40 feet above water level, and 150 feet long. Constructed from large blocks of imported Highhelm ash-granite, the bridge pales to an almost pure white when wet (such as in the rain), inspiring the moniker “Snow Bridge” among the locals.

14. Northwestern Keep: Commonly referred to as “Northwatch,” this section of Everstand sits on the opposite side of the Kestrel River and serves as the castle’s first line of defense from attacks to the west. It is in many ways a keep unto itself, with a permanent garrison of 60 soldiers, knights, and rangers. Sentries stationed in the southern turrets keep watch over the river, while the most northwesterly tower serves as a gateway into hostile territories for Everstand’s patrols of rangers and scouts.

In many respects, the purpose of Northwatch is not only to protect the Voulge Bridge and Kestrel River, but also to be the eyes and ears of Everstand toward Belkzen and the orc hordes. Because of this, the keep’s walls are always alive with soldiers, scouts, and rangers, especially at night, when the cover of darkness affords would-be orc raiders a distinct advantage.

Denizens

Though Castle Everstand was initially built as little more than a border fort meant to hold the line between Lastwall and the Hold of Belkzen, over the last 2 centuries the castle has almost developed into a microcosmic nation of its own. With the castle’s garrison largely born and raised within the bailey walls, serving shoulder to shoulder in the defense of their noble cause, it’s no wonder that many of these men and women have become so deeply connected and bound together that what they are protecting has become distant and abstract in comparison to daily life in the fortress.

Garrison members have developed a tremendous sense of pride and identification with their duties. Perhaps because entire generations are born and trained to serve and die within Everstand’s walls, this fervor and zeal runs deeper and stronger than usual, even by Lastwall standards. Everstand citizens have a strong appreciation for history and the sacrifices of their ancestors, and few are

To Arms!

Though goodly heroes are unlikely to inflame the ire of Everstand’s troops, less scrupulous PCs might attract the attention of the fortress’s noble knights. Of course, the dread orcs of Belkzen are a constant threat to any who visit Castle Everstand.

Everstand Patrol (CR 1): At any given hour, paired Everstand guards (LG human fighters 1) patrol the walls, station all tower battlements, and stand sentry at the gates. The first line of defense for Castle Everstand, these guards question visitors, direct traffic, test doors and locks, and watch for suspicious activity. If they encounter anything untoward, the patrols raise the alarm via whistle, shouts, and sentry bells, then move in to take on the threat while waiting for reinforcements.

Orc Raid (CR 4): Orcs from Belkzen attack—3d6 orc warriors (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 222) besiege Northwatch beneath a veil of darkness and catch the Everstand sentries unaware, sending the castle into full lockdown and necessitating the aid of all within—even the PCs.

afraid to die in battle to protect their families and friends. Indeed, because death is such a stark reality for so many in Castle Everstand, the churches are among the most frequented establishments within the castle walls, and the doors to the lower bailey open up every holy day to allow worshipers free access to either the temple of Gorum or the temple of Iomedae. Here, Lady Eldia Vesan and Father Lodmor Oster treat their respective congregations to stirring sermons and soaring hymns. Father Oster has begun to grow worried over the loss of his own church’s members to the more warlike teachings of Gorum, though in the interest of maintaining cordial relations between the two churches, he has refrained from speaking his qualms aloud to all but his most trusted acolyte, **Kelbie** (LG female human cleric of Iomedae 1).

Uskara Olym (NG female human fighter 4/expert 2) is the master blacksmith for the castle, and can often be found among the various workshops on the south side of the lower bailey. She directs the blacksmiths, carpenters, armorsmiths, weaponsmiths, and apprentices. Born and raised in the castle, Uskara is in her mid-thirties and commands a great deal of respect from the knights because of her wisdom and bravery. She was once a frontline fighter, but after her leg was permanently crippled in a borderline skirmish gone terribly wrong, she committed herself to the art of the anvil.

The current commander of Castle Everstand, **Captain Thaum Gauntwood** (LG male human cavalier 8), is one of the castle’s most vocal advocates for independent action. Standing well over 6 feet tall and with eyes that



betray the constant planning going on inside his head, Gauntwood is an imposing figure to behold, and his dark hair and pallid complexion further lend him an air of broody contemplation. The soldiers of Castle Everstand more than respect him—they follow him unerringly, as if he were about to lead them into the light when no other could. Under his command is a garrison of 220 soldiers—a mixture of archers, foot soldiers, mounted knights, battle clerics, and more specialized combatants.

Threats

Most visitors to Castle Everstand have little to fear as long as they mean the fortress's occupants no harm. During the day, the current castle custodian—**Heinrich Fairstone** (LG male human bard 4)—guides visitors to their correct destinations from within a small stone building just inside the main gate. It is not unusual for unknown faces to be assigned an escort of one to four guards (depending upon the perceived threat level of the visitor), and trying to evade this protocol unflinchingly provokes a hostile response from the keep's militia.

Travelers roaming the plains between Lastwall and Belkzen may accidentally encounter scouts from Everstand sent to watch the borderlands, though such border rangers are masters of stealth and are rarely seen unless they wish to be.

LASTWALL BORDER SCOUT

CR 3

XP 800

Human ranger 4
 LG Medium humanoid (human)
Init +6; **Senses** Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +2 Dex, +1 shield)
hp 38 (4d10+12)
Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee mwk longsword +7 (1d8+3/19-20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +8 (1d8+2/x3)
Special Attacks favored enemy (orcs +2)
Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 1st; concentration +2)
1st—*longstrider*

TACTICS

During Combat While scouting at night, a Lastwall border scout is sure to imbibe her *potion of darkvision* and stay close to her allies.

In combat, she uses her bow to strike down foes from a great distance, taking to melee only as a last resort. Smokesticks allow the rangers to send signals to one another while split up, and alchemist's fire ensures that they can make short work of any trolls or other nasty foes they encounter.

Morale If pressed by a force they cannot hope to defeat alone, Lastwall border scouts do their best to evade and lose any enemies following them before returning to Castle Everstand or another nearby Lastwall border fort.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8
Base Atk +4; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 18
Feats Deadly Aim, Endurance, Far Shot, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (composite longbow)



Captain
Thaum Gauntwood



Skills Climb +8, Handle Animal +6, Heal +8, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (geography) +7, Perception +8, Stealth +8, Survival +8

Languages Common

SQ favored terrain (plains +2), hunter's bond (companions), track +2, wild empathy +3

Combat Gear *potion of darkvision*, +1 *orc-bane arrows* (5), alchemist's fire (2), antitoxin, smokesticks (2); **Other Gear** mwk studded leather, light wooden shield, mwk composite longbow (+2 Str) with 20 arrows, mwk longsword, 49 gp

Everstand Crypts

Death lingers heavily in the air around Castle Everstand. War is always just over the horizon, and orc raids, border skirmishes, and failed scouting ventures make death an imminent reality for many of Everstand's occupants. Because safely burying the dead is costly and time-consuming on the border, Everstand's fallen heroes are typically burned on funerary pyres and their ashen remains are entombed beneath the Iron Tower. The more whimsical soldiers say that it is the ashes of their allies that make the Iron Tower gray, but few wax so poetic while visiting their friends and loved ones in the crypts.

The crypts beneath the Iron Tower began as little more than a series of dark hallways magically conjured by the *deck of many things* responsible for Everstand's existence. Following the castle's second expansion in 4640 AR, workers began to expand the catacombs even further and arrange the ancestral remains more formally. Unfortunately, the construction crew miscalculated the extent of the water table beneath Everstand and accidentally breached a wall they ought not to have. Tens of miners and engineers were killed in the subsequent flood and cave-in, and an entire section of the catacombs was lost. The accident was devastating to morale, and the project was all but abandoned.

Rumors about the accident have persisted and grown over the generations. Stories claim the spirits of the miners still scrape at the walls below and the restless dead haunt the chambers seeking eternal rest. Others say that the failed project broke into an area that predated the Iron Tower by hundreds—if not thousands—of years, and that an encounter with some malevolent force within caused the collapse. The deepest levels of the catacombs have been sealed off to prevent further accidents, but in recent years, however, visitors to the crypts have reported strange noises, distant moans, and an aura of unadulterated dread where there should be only stillness. The commander, however, has dismissed these reports as the imaginings of idlers.

Unless otherwise noted, the marked entrances to the various chambers in the Everstand crypts all have simple

Adventure Hooks

Located on the border between two warring nations, Castle Everstand is rife with perils and plots.

Combatting the Orc Threat: Castle Everstand has eyes and ears deep within Belkzen nearly all of the time, but what its commander does not have is permission from the War College to take overt action. However, the general sentiment and mood along the border forts right now is to do exactly that. Enter a dauntless band of adventurers seeking nothing but coin and fame, and the knights of Everstand might see these strangers as a useful band of mercenaries without political affiliation. Commander Gauntwood is always interested in hiring such mercenary talent to perform reconnaissance or rescue missions, and sometimes even assassinations and raids against the orcs. Perhaps—if they were truly capable—the very same mercenaries would be useful in performing diversionary actions while a larger force of Lastwall knights slipped across the Belkzen border elsewhere.

Restless Ancestors: The ancestral halls beneath Castle Everstand have become increasingly dangerous to explore in recent years. Rumors abound of restless spirits, monstrous vermin, and even foul undead lurking in the corridors, and many knights of Everstand would be glad to have their catacombs cleared out and reclaimed.

wooden doors. The ceilings average 10 feet in height, and the floors are all made of sturdy flagstone.

This section of Castle Everstand is a suitable adventuring location for a group of four 1st-level PCs.

E1. Halls of the Ancients (CR 1)

The narrow corridors and low ceiling of this expansive honeycomb of tunnels mean visitors must walk single file and hunch slightly to proceed, creating an oppressive and claustrophobic ambiance. Periodic alcoves are lined floor to ceiling with shallow stone shelves, each cluttered with the remains and belongings of Everstand's less notable warriors and servants. Stairs to the northwest allow egress to the northwest gatehouse above (area 12).

Creatures: The soldiers of Castle Everstand are no strangers to rats, but the behemoth vermin that wander these halls may give fright to even the most battle-seasoned warrior. A pack of four dire rats wanders the halls of the ancients, searching for food amid the dank remains of the dead. Failing to find scraps for dinner, the rats may decide a party of adventurers will suffice.

DIRE RATS (4)

CR 1/3

XP 135 each

hp 5 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 232)



Treasure: Anyone who spends 2d10 minutes searching the shelves, urns, and strongboxes throughout the halls of the ancients can find jewelry, common gems, and small art pieces worth 300 gp.

E2. Castellan's Gate

The shelves of this wide chamber are adorned with urns of more lavish make than those in other parts of the crypts, though the vessels are still of relatively mundane quality. Castellans and honored servants to the Gauntwood family are buried here so that they may watch over their lieges in death as they did in life. The portcullis to the west is lowered at all times, as beyond lie the remains of members of the Gauntwood family.

In order to raise the iron portcullis here, characters must insert a pair of identical keys into the mouths of each of the statues watching over the passageway. The keyholes can be spotted with a successful DC 20 Perception check, and with a successful DC 25 Disable Device check, a PC fools the statues into thinking that the keys are in them, raising the portcullis until the locks are picked again.

E3. Gauntwood Crypts

These large crypts are dedicated to the lineage of Castle Everstand's commanders and their most honored knights. Among the inscriptions on the stone doors leading to individual crypts are the names of distinguished individuals such as Sir Peran Gauntwood, Captain Gretta Gauntwood, and Commander Entwy Gauntwood.

Each crypt is nearly identical: a square room that features a central sarcophagus housing the cremated remains and possessions of one of Everstand's deceased commanders. Brass plaques on the columbarium walls indicate where the ashes of family members have been interred beside an honored leader. The westernmost chamber, however, differs from the others in that the ashes of two people are interred here in side-by-side urns—the once-joint commanders Kelle Gauntwood and her wife Derrin Gauntwood.

Treasure: In all, the eight crypts along the northern and southern walls of this hall contain eight broken breastplates and eight masterwork longswords. In the western chamber are two suits of half-plate and two greatswords.

E4. Heart of the Beetle (CR 3)

Here a multitude of corridors and passageways converge on a central room that once was home to half a dozen sarcophagi, but is now covered in a carpet of bright blue and yellow-green mold and fungi. Shriekers encircle the perimeter, while toward the center a cluster of ever-denser semi-translucent eggs culminates in the queen beetle.

Creatures: No fewer than a dozen shriekers occupy the perimeter of this room. The colorful fungi in the room's

center are harmless, but atop the layer of slime sit almost 100 newly laid, semi-translucent beetle eggs and piles of rotten flesh. The eggs haven't yet hatched and are actually considered a delicacy in some lands, though their slicer beetle mother would likely have something to say about that. She keeps a stern watch over her brood at all times, only leaving them unattended to find more food in the crypts to pile on top of her nest. She rushes to the chamber if the shrieker mushrooms make any noise, having learned that trouble is soon to follow when they emit their ear-piercing cries.

YOUNG SLICER BEETLE

CR 3
XP 800
hp 27 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 44, 293)

Treasure: Amid the debris the slicer beetle has collected to make her nest are several inedible baubles and trinkets gathered by accident. PCs who succeed at a DC 22 Perception check while searching the nest find a cloth sack containing 54 gp and 230 sp, a piece of amber worth 90 gp, and a *wand of cure light wounds* (caster level 3rd, 14 charges remaining).

E5. Crypt of the Unnamed Hero

A spiraling and uneven passageway leading from the basement of the Iron Tower terminates at a chamber called the Crypt of the Unnamed Hero. This octagonal room is one of the few rooms adorned with engravings on all of the walls. Some of these are the names of soldiers who once stood on the walls of Everstand, while others tell of the brave deeds of friends, comrades, and siblings in arms. Taken collectively, the inscriptions record almost the entire history of Castle Everstand, and a PC who spends a few hours studying the writing can gain an understanding of the people, places, and events that have helped define Castle Everstand as it is today.

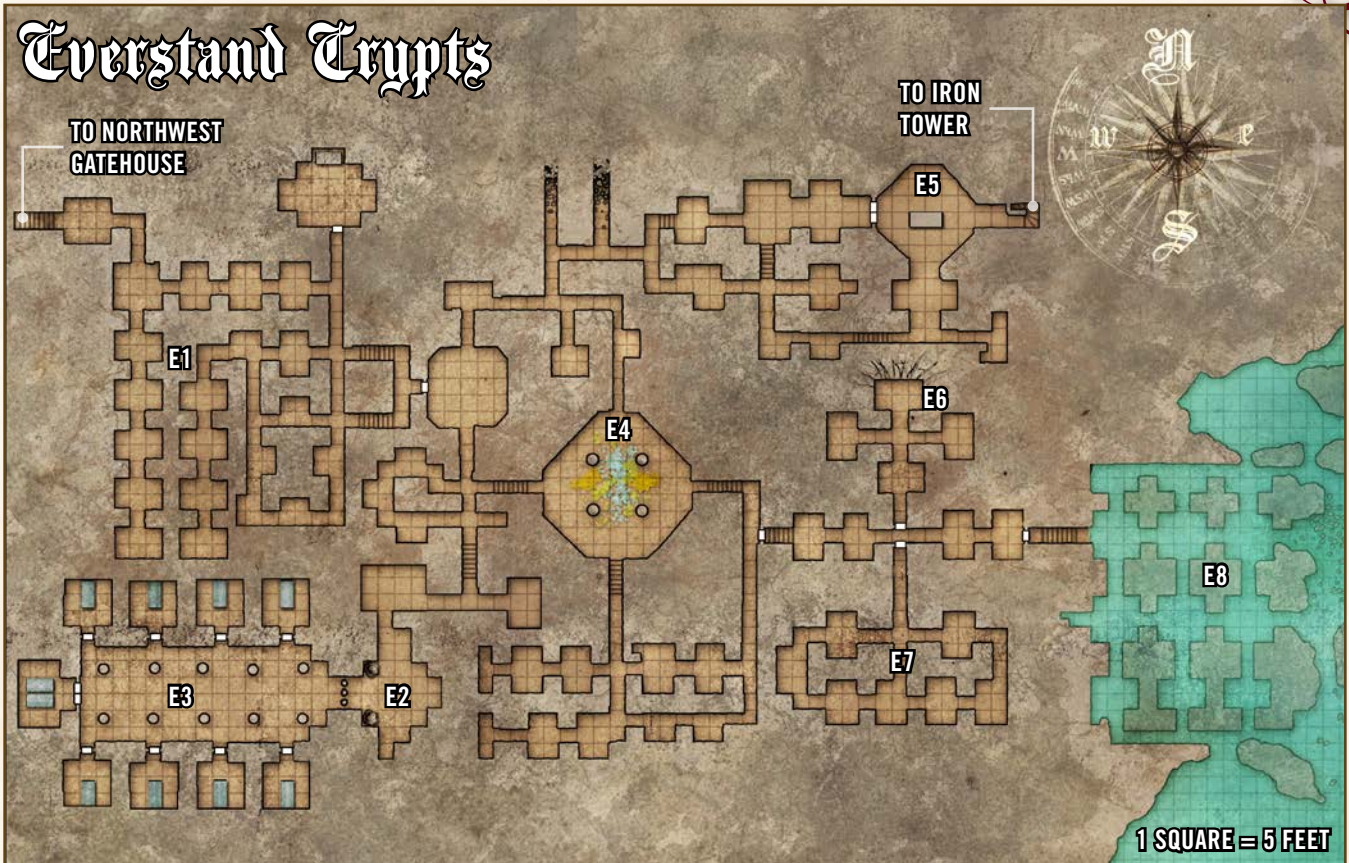
E6. Infested Graves (CR 2)

Creatures: Shoddy craftsmanship in the northern chamber of this section of the crypts has caused the walls to begin crumbling, allowing various vermin and other unwanted pests into these halls. In particular, beetles from a previous brood of the matron in area E4 have made themselves quite comfortable here.

MINING BEETLES (4)

CR 1/2
XP 200 each
hp 6 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 33*)

Development: Among the various busts of deceased soldiers lining the shelves of this section of the crypts is one of a beautiful elven woman. The inscription below it reads "Atriana Felmark." Wrapped around the statuette is



a silver locket with a pair of portraits—one of Atriana and another of a young man. The locket is the key to destroying the haunt in area E7.

E7. Haunted Crypt (CR 3)

Haunt: A portion of the hallway south of the door leading into this section of the crypts has been haunted for some time now. A Lastwall artisan by the name of Weiren Felmark is the cause of the haunt; the poor man was never able to fully recover after the brutal death of his wife, Atriana Felmark, a famed knight of Everstand who was killed by orcs in 4688 AR. Weiren committed suicide shortly after his lover's burial, and when his ashes were interred here with those of the other artisans of Everstand rather than with his wife's in the chambers to the north, his spirit could bear it no longer. His shattered spirit now haunts this area of the Everstand crypts, forever pining for but a glimpse at his dead lover.

SLEEPING SAND

CR 3

XP 800

CE haunt (15-ft.-long hallway)

Caster Level 3rd

Notice Perception DC 15 (to hear a distant wailing)

hp 6; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 day

Effect Triggering the haunt causes a thin layer of dust to fall from the ceiling, afflicting all in the area as though by a *deep slumber* spell (Will DC 14 negates).

Destruction Move the locket from area E6 to anywhere in this part of the crypts.

E8. Flooded Crypts (CR 3)

This area flooded when the miners miscalculated the depth of the water table and accidentally burrowed into it. The subsequent rush of water collapsed many of the tunnels and killed numerous workers. The partially flooded chambers are difficult to traverse (treat as difficult terrain) and believed to be cursed. However, the cause of these rumors is more sinister than mere superstition.

Creatures: Unbeknownst to the garrison above, two ghouls have made their home in these flooded passages. They devoured the corpses of the miners long ago, and now content themselves by supping on the ashes of the dead heroes throughout the crypts. If not encountered elsewhere in the crypts, the ghouls lurk in the flooded portions and attack any intruders on sight, eager to feast upon them.

GHOULS (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 13 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 146)





CASTLE KRONQUIST

The skull's jaw worked unsteadily, rattling in the cradle of the vicar's hands, moving in the memory of how a mouth shaped words, not with any cooperation of tongue and breath. We'd asked it nothing, the Pharasmin had merely loosened death's gag, but the sound that issued forth clawed on the brink of screams. "No, not here! Not more! Any Hell but this! If my bones truly still lie where they fell, run! Run far and fast. He's waiting—watching! And if mercy didn't survive his first death, surely nothing will weather his second!"

—Ailson Kindler, "Case of the Dreaming Dead"

Castle Kronquist, the enigmatic stronghold of the infamous vampire lord Malyas, stands amid the fog-wisped woods of northern Odranto. The castle's gates have remained closed during the long centuries following the fall of the Whispering Tyrant, but few believe that the dead rest easy within its sheltered walls. Though tangled vines climb its walls, and the surrounding properties lie hidden beneath overgrown thickets and brambles, the estate hasn't deteriorated nearly as much as such an ancient site should have. Even more suspiciously, each month on the night of the new moon, the dark and hollow chimes of Kronquist's great iron-horned clock tower ring out into the air.

Though Kronquist has languished for centuries, rumors persist that something still lurks within—rumors sparked by sightings of swiftly moving shadows and strange lights flickering from the castle's lonely towers. Age-old fears ensure that few take the time to investigate. Instead, locals give the castle and its surrounding lands a wide berth, especially when the new moon rises and the clock's terrible chimes echo through the darkened forest.

History

During the early years of his reign, the Whispering Tyrant entrusted the conquest of Ustalav's northern reaches to a viciously powerful Kellid vampire lord called Malyas. From the Senir River north, Malyas and his band of deathless raiders scourged the land, mowing down the nation's knights and other defenders. Countless thousands fell in his army's relentless march, whole towns were scoured and burned to ashes, and every burial place between the Hungry Mountains and the Moutray River became a conscripting point to fuel the undead war machine. Among the most successful of the Whispering Tyrant's commanders, Malyas subdued the north and cemented his lord's dominance. He then raised a black fortress at the loneliest edge of the Keldenwood, a grim bastion he named Kronquist—"Crown of the Forest" in an archaic Kellid dialect. From here he oversaw the final subjugation of the lands under his rule and ensured that no living thing fled into the north.

Malyas served the Whispering Tyrant throughout his reign, earning a reputation as the lich's cruelest, most devoted general. In reward for Malyas's efficiency, the Tyrant granted him dominance over all vampires in his realm—a bittersweet boon, as many of the arrogant undead refused to bow to a would-be vampire king. Malyas waged a shadow war against the vampires and their spawn who refused to acknowledge him as the greatest of their kind in a series of massacres remembered by vampirekind as the Blood Drought. Among those who defied him was the vampire patriarch Luvick Siervage, an aged vampire who

still rules his kind in the city of Caliphas. An outraged Malyas was en route to Caliphas to personally confront Siervage when his designs were interrupted by the Shining Crusade conquering the city of Vauntil.

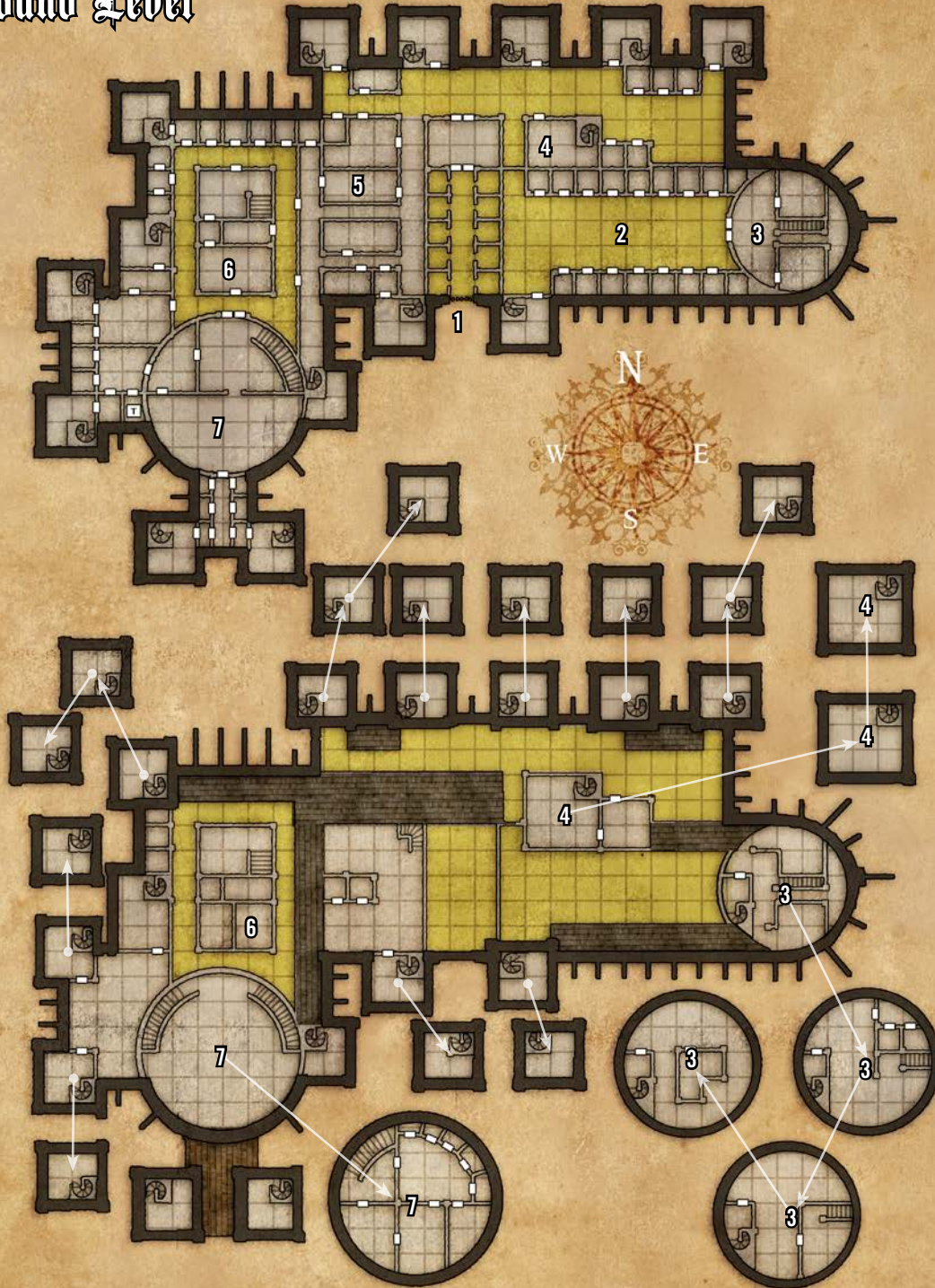
Had Malyas been with his armies at Castle Kronquist when the Whispering Tyrant called upon him, the Shining Crusade might not have been able to hold Vauntil. As it was, the crusaders were able to entrench and reinforce before the Whispering Tyrant's most fearsome army could take the field against them. In the months and years that followed, the combined strength of the Shining Crusade's nations gradually pushed deeper into Ustalav, fighting on multiple fronts against the Whispering Tyrant's generals. Malyas's armies in the north were among the most resolute, and the vampire murdered two Shining Crusade generals sent against him—the Taldan Sir Omoroy Cheveith and the paladin Aenlyn Devvers—but his forces were ultimately cut off from the Whispering Tyrant's western armies.

When Gallowspire fell, Malyas was forced to retreat to Castle Kronquist. The forces arrayed against him pursued, but their siege was ill prepared to breach the walls of Kronquist. For months the soldiers of the Shining Crusade threw themselves against the castle's walls—battering doors, shattering towers, and dodging hails of arrows that rained from unseen bows within Kronquist's darkened towers. Yet every morning new brick would be laid, fallen towers reconstructed, and splintered doors repaired. The siege became a battle against frustration and failing morale. Few desired to throw their lives away against a faceless, invulnerable enemy. After nearly a year, the crusaders' attack faltered.

For a time a garrison was kept outside Kronquist, but after more than a century, the rulers of the reestablished Immortal Principality of Ustalav judged that Malyas had somehow escaped and deemed the continuing "siege" not worth the soldiers. So the castle—and whatever survived within—was left to rot.

In 4356 AR, after Kronquist had been dormant for over 500 years, the renowned vampire slayer Cvotgar Haas came to Odranto to launch an extensive exploration of the castle. Funded by the Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye, Cvotgar sought a definitive answer to resolve the unknown fate of Lord Malyas. Cvotgar claimed to have found a secret passage into the dreaded castle, and his reports described much of the castle's grim keep. But then his reports abruptly ended. While many among the Palatine Eye believe Cvotgar was a fraud—for how could he, after centuries, have finally breached the castle's walls—others speculate a darker fate befell him. Perhaps he roused something amid the shadows of Kronquist's spired towers... something for which the passing of centuries and mortal lives means little.

Castle Kronquist Ground Level



Upper Levels

1 SQUARE = 20 FEET

Description

Built from the dark gray stone common to the surrounding lands, Castle Kronquist stands as a masterpiece of early Age of Enthronement-era Ustalavic architecture. It consists of over a dozen narrow towers that surround three larger buildings. These structures rest within the shelter of a precipitous wall composed of row upon row of dramatic, pointed arches. The square towers rise higher than the castle walls, and their slate-shingled roofs are trimmed with rows of spiked cresting forged from hard-hammered iron. From beneath the eaves peek entire platoons of hideous, winged gargoyles, and flying buttresses arch from the perimeter to add to the castle's architectural complexity. Within the arches, the stone tracery of the windows forms stepped layers that protect individual panes from storms. Broad windows on the ground floor stand nearly 12 feet tall, and several are topped by arched windows set with intricate patterns of red and purple stained glass. Some strange quality of this thick, colorful glass increases the amount of moonlight let through yet blocks out sunlight.

Castle Kronquist's interior is equally magnificent. During the day, the chambers linger in perennial gloom, and at night the moon limns them in silvery light. Elegant rows of braced arches line the high-vaulted ceilings of the castle's lengthy corridors. In the broad and spacious chambers, crisscrossing stone lattice, arches, and columns create an ambience both decadent and ominous. Many rooms have several levels of overhanging balconies connected by catwalks. The ceilings in most chambers rise to a height of 20 feet, contributing to Kronquist's impressive stature. In addition to dozens of stairwells, secret passages within the castle walls connect various floors, allowing occupants to seemingly vanish, only to unexpectedly reappear in different locations throughout the fortress.

1. Fang Gate: The Fang Gate consists of an immense barbican flanked by a pair of imposing, three-story towers. The ramparts between the towers house the mechanical workings for a pair of massive iron gates. Constructed of hundreds of barbed prongs, the gates interlock like a set of gruesome fangs when closed. Lord Malyas once possessed a ring that allowed him to scry through the eyes of the gargoyles above the gate, but none know what became of this ring when he vanished. Beyond the Fang Gate runs a long, open-air corridor. On either side rise tiered steps, each of which is inset with an arch filled with ancient and badly weathered human skulls.

2. Bailey: This section of the castle consists of a large bailey lined with a single row of low stone cells. Here Malyas once stationed hundreds of undead troops, who his commanders could quickly muster in the courtyard.

Domain of the Dead

Castle Kronquist is a fortress constructed by the dead, for the dead. There are no kitchens, no latrines, no bedrooms, no places for rest, leisure, or light. Additionally, the castle and its grounds are permanently under multiple magic effects, the most fearsome of which originate from an amalgam of numerous bodiless undead. These spirits, called the essence of Kronquist, serve Malyas and manifest in multiple ways, the best known being the following effects.

Create Undead: Any creature that dies within Castle Kronquist returns to life at midnight as a wight (as if by a variant of the *create undead* spell). Wights are under the control of the castle itself. There is no limit to the number of undead the castle can control.

Deathless Bastion: Every minute the sun doesn't shine upon the spires of Castle Kronquist, its walls, structures, and other defenses heal 1 point of damage as stray stones and splinters creep back into their original shapes. By the end of one night, the castle heals almost any damage it has suffered.

Unhallow: The entire castle is affected by the spell *unhallow*, with the spell *deeper darkness* fixed to it.

Today, 10-foot-tall heaps of bones lie scattered about this area—the slumbering corpses of Malyas's waiting troops. Twenty-five skeletal lords can animate from each heap of bones at a rate of two per round.

3. Midnight Spire: Over 100 feet in diameter and twice as high, the tower known as the Midnight Spire is divided into five floors. The top floor provides a stunning view of all of Castle Kronquist and the rest of the estate. The Midnight Spire also houses several undead war machines magically fashioned from the bones and sinews of Malyas's damned enemies. These mindless creations, mostly variant bone golems and necrocrafts, face eastward, eternally vigilant.

4. The Clock Tower: The infamous clock tower of Kronquist looms over the rest of the castle from the center of the bailey, endlessly ticking away like a great, diseased heart. The great gears in the clock tower's upper chambers click softly as the elaborate machinery is moved not by precisely arranged clockwork, but by marching lines of skeletal slaves. Some even crawl, their leg bones worn away after so much ceaseless toil. Despite this, the clock has kept perfect time for centuries. The second and third floors house a vast library and the clockwork workshop of Dr. Aryne Ornislovna (see *Denizens* on page 19). Designs and drawings hung on the walls depict her horrifyingly gruesome works, and several of her half-animal, half-clockwork inventions prowl the halls in various states of assembly.

5. Hall of Victims: On the ground floor, narrow corridors run between several large, stone-walled chambers. Near the end of the Shining Crusade, Malyas crammed these massive, windowless holding cells with human prisoners for his vampires to feed upon, and the walls are still black with their blood. Several of the vampire's riders, heavily armored mohrgs known as the Bloodseekers (CE mohrg fighters 5) lurk here. Their past barbarism is legendary, but after so long without any battles to engage them, they're half mad with boredom. They pass each uneventful day telling one another the same old stories about their past murders, each time embellishing their tales with increasingly fantastical and gory lies.

6. Kronquist Hall: The facade of this two-story granite building consists of twin arcades separated by decorative triforia. Tall arches inset with black and purple glass panes run the perimeter, though during the daylight hours these block any light from entering. A 20-foot-wide, open-air walkway surrounds the entire building, and is flanked by four stone pillars topped with gargoyles carved to resemble bat-winged skeletons. In the north end are more abandoned cells, and doors to the east lead to a long corridor connecting to the Hall of Victims.

7. The Blood Basilica: A huge, copper dome tops this diabolical tower of dark reddish marble. A narrow projection encircles each floor of the basilica, and a great ring of gruesome gargoyles hangs from each one. The dome culminates in a metal-shod tourelle in the form of a dreadful gargoyle (actually a winged iron golem). One of Malyas's more comfortable crypts rests on the basilica's top floor, sequestered behind a maze of deathless servants, vicious traps, and maniacal haunts that recreate a number of the vampire's worst atrocities. The defenses of Malyus's favorite crypt include the corpses of his five most worthy defeated adversaries, each returned to life as a blasphemous, unique undead thrall. In the lowest level of the basilica, a nondescript trap door leads down below the ground into Cvotgar Haas's hidden crypt (see page 20).

Denizens

Even after centuries of inactivity, **Lord Malyas** (CE male human vampire antipaladin 17; see *Pathfinder Adventure Path #48: Shadows of Gallowspire*) remains the undisputed ruler of Castle Kronquist. After the defeat of the Whispering Tyrant, Malyas returned here, seething as he watched the living unmake his clean, quiet, domain of the walking dead and besiege his citadel. Though every furious fiber of his vampire being bade him to strike back against the living who so unforgivably offended him, he obeyed the final command sent by his lich master: "Withdraw. Wait."

For almost 900 years Malyas has waited. In coffins within Castle Kronquist and its catacombs he has slept, sometimes for centuries, awakening only for brief periods, either to gauge the state of the world beyond his fortress's walls or when trespassers have demanded his attention. During this time, his army has languished. For the most part, the undead of Malyas's legion have disincorporated into scattered heaps of bone and steel, or tirelessly hold rank in subterranean vaults.

His more intelligent troops have been left to their own devices, but more than a few have deserted their master over the centuries—like the impetuous vampire Resiamona Reyald and the three dullahans remembered as the Silent Stampede. Others have gone mad, but several have occupied themselves with pet projects that turn darker and more obsessive with each passing year. Among Malyas's still sane advisors and lieutenants are two icy graveknight sisters:

Svalodnis and **Tennagradi** (NE female human graveknight fighters 13), the nosferatu swordmaster **Ov** (LE male human nosferatu fighter 13), and the ghost of **Pastor Bromon Shy** (LE male human ghost cleric 14), a well-known priest of Erastil who turned diabolist, and is now a ghost bound to his copious sheaf of notes for his most infamous book, *Witch-Cults of Northern Avistan*.



Lord Malyas

Currently, the most active of Malyas's servants is **Dr. Aryne Ornislovna** (LE female zombie lord alchemist 16). She looks like an Ustalavic human woman in her prime, and is quite unclear on exactly when she made the transition to undeath. A masterful surgeon, the doctor helped create many of Malyas's most insidious war machines with the aid of her lover and assistant **Cordavo** (NE male vampire cleric of Urgathoa 15). Dr. Ornislovna was a living human while in Malyas's service originally, but as she aged she replaced failed organ after failed organ until little of her original body remained. Though she still appears as she did centuries ago, the ghoulish surgeon has literally retained everything she's lost, suspending and reconnecting her aged, excited biology in a crypt filled with alchemical fluids. Ultimately she created a half-working double—or rather, original—of herself.

Dr. Ornislovna recently found her work interrupted by the intrusion of the explorer Cvotgar Haas. After capturing him in her lair, she brought him before Lord Malyas. The vampire lord, never emerging from his armor-shaped coffin, thoroughly questioned the terrified man over the course of weeks, learning much of the world beyond his castle walls. When he had learned all he could, leaving Cvotgar little more than a mewling husk, he consigned the broken thing to the doctor's laboratory. Elated with the fresh mortal materials and intrigued by what Cvotgar had said about the centuries of discoveries in nearby Numeria, she set to work.

Threats

Lord Malyas is undisputedly the most powerful denizen of Castle Kronquist, but he and his deadliest servants spend much of their time waiting in states of meditation, torpor, or diversion, awaiting the call of their fallen lich master. The recent intrusion of the vampire hunter Cvotgar Haas caused some commotion in the usually crypt-like fortress. Given her way with the crazed remains of Cvotgar after his weeks-long interrogation by Lord Malyas, Dr. Ornislovna dissected and recreated the trespasser's body, having her vampire assistant Cordavo transform him into a vampire when his body started failing during one of her more invasive experiments. Ultimately, even after successfully grafting numerous prosthetics and prototype clockwork augmentations onto Cvotgar, Dr. Ornislovna grew bored. Seeing the value of keeping Cvotgar in Lord Malyas's service—and acknowledging that she might one day seek to revisit and elaborate on his clockwork additions—she directed the new vampire to the disused crypts of Resiamona, a former servant of Malyas.

Cvotgar did as he was ordered and claimed those halls. As the youngest of Malyas's servants, he's currently the most active and ambitious, and has gathered several other

To Arms!

The following encounter options can be used to add further danger to adventures set in Castle Kronquist.

The Old Guard (CR 12+): Although Malyas can call upon thousands of lesser undead, skeletons and ghouls are little threat to most who would intrude upon Castle Kronquist. When faced with true threats, three baykok assassins^{B3} activate to hunt down interlopers. If they're defeated, a group of four rises the next night, five the night after, and so on until either the threat has been killed or driven off, or 13 baykoks are defeated in 1 day.

Death from Above (CR 14): The spiked gargoyle at the pinnacle of the Blood Basilica is actually a unique winged iron golem. Its wings grant the golem a fly speed of 40 feet (clumsy), and any creature affected by its breath weapon is also afflicted by the curse of ages (*Core Rulebook* 557).

Blackwake (CR 16): Although the defenses of Castle Kronquist are largely held in reserve, enough determined intruders and would-be trespassers have approached the fortress upon the Moutray River that the castle's overseers finally pieced together a vicious guardian. Mimicking the powers of a hollow serpent^{B3}, but with a swim speed of 50, this undead amalgam of hundreds of snakes lurks in the depths of the Moutray. The serpent has been spotted by travelers enough times to have earned the name Blackwake because of the foul pollution its passage leaves in the water. The creature is controlled by the castle's haunted consciousness and is typically used as a reactive last strike against interlopers who think they've escaped the castle.

stray undead from about the castle to serve him. He even half-broke his master's order against leaving the castle by sending letters to former colleagues, asking them to assist him in his work, then luring them to the castle gates and either preying upon them or turning them into his servants. Currently none of the castle's older undead have noticed that Cvotgar is attracting attention to the sleeping fortress, but if they did, they would be beyond furious—Malyas most of all.

Cvotgar focuses his petty ambitions on gorging on blood and sating his own ego by commanding servants. But in the back of his mind, he eyes the dominions of his peers within the castle and, in his most brazen moments, even the crypt of Lord Malyas. Since he knows he's not powerful enough to overcome them yet, he's turned his lair into a retreat for the dead and actively courts many of the castle's other bored denizens, telling stories of the world beyond the castle walls, flattering them, and suggesting that some treats can be attained only beyond the castle walls.



CVOTGAR HAAS

CR 17

XP 102,400

Male dhampir vampire fighter 9/monk 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 89, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 270)

LE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, dhampir)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +35

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 22, flat-footed 24 (+4 armor, +7 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 monk, +3 Wis, +6 natural)

hp 180 (15 HD; 9d10+6d8+99); fast healing 5

Fort +16, **Ref** +17, **Will** +11 (+2 vs. fear); +2 vs. enchantments

Defensive Abilities bravery +2, channel resistance +4, evasion;

DR 10/magic and silver; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses light sensitivity, vampire weaknesses

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft.

Melee +2 *unarmed strike* +27/+22/+17 (1d10+13/19–20), bite +17

(2d6+4/19–20 plus energy drain) or

+2 *flurry of blows* +25/+25/+20/+15

(1d10+11/19–20 plus tri-scythe blades) or

+2 *bite* +24 (2d6+11/19–20 plus energy drain),

+2 *slam* +25 (1d4+11 plus energy drain)

Special Attacks blood drain, children

of the night, create spawn, dominate

(DC 22), energy drain (2 levels, DC 22),

flurry of blows, stunning fist (8/day,

DC 20), weapon training (monk +2,

close +1)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th;

concentration +20)

3/day—*detect undead*

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 24, **Con** —, **Int** 12,

Wis 16, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +24

(+30 disarm, +28 grapple);

CMD 44 (46 vs. disarm or

grapple)

Feats Alertness^B, Bleeding Critical,

Body Shield^{UC}, Combat Reflexes^B,

Critical Focus, Dodge^B, Greater Grapple,

Improved Critical (unarmed strike),

Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple,

Improved Initiative^B, Improved Unarmed

Strike, Lightning Reflexes^B, Monastic Legacy^{UC},

Nightmare Fist^{UC}, Nightmare Weaver^{UC}, Power

Attack, Rapid Grappler^{UC}, Scorpion Style,

Staggering Critical, Stunning Fist, Stunning

Pin^{UC}, Toughness^B, Weapon Focus

(unarmed strike)

Skills Acrobatics +25 (+43

when jumping), Bluff +15,

Intimidate +20, Knowledge (religion) +9, Perception +35, Sense Motive +13, Stealth +28; **Racial Modifiers** +10 Bluff, +10 Perception, +8 Sense Motive, +8 Stealth

Languages Common, Necril

SQ armor training 2, change shape (dire bat or wolf, *beast*

shape II), clockwork augmentations, fast movement,

gaseous form, high jump, ki pool (6 points, magic),

maneuver training, purity of body, shadowless, slow fall 30 ft.,

spider climb

Other Gear *amulet of mighty fists* +2, *belt of physical might* +2

(Str, Dex), *bracers of armor* +4

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Clockwork Augmentations (Ex) Because of the various mechanical parts fused to Cvotgar's body, his ability scores are built using 20 points. In addition, these augmentations grant him a number of unique abilities. Altogether, these augmentations increase Cvotgar's CR by 1.

Mechanical Jaw: Cvotgar's metal jaw grants him a powerful bite attack that deals 2d6 points of damage and threatens a critical hit on rolls of 19–20. Special tubes that run the length of his throat allow Cvotgar to use blood drain as a free action on a successful critical hit with his bite attack, regardless of whether he has established or is maintaining a pin that round.

Mithral Legs: Cvotgar's mechanical legs increase his base speed by 10 feet. Once per minute, Cvotgar can sprint up to two times his base speed as a move action, and doesn't need to move in a straight line when sprinting.

Tri-Scythe Blades: Whenever Cvotgar attacks with a flurry of blows, he can use the adamantine blades jutting from his forearms to deal an additional 1d6 points of slashing damage as long as he hits with at least one attack from his flurry. This extra damage is not multiplied on a critical hit. In addition, the blades grant him a +4 bonus on combat maneuvers to disarm opponents.

Crypt of Cvotgar

Since Cvotgar claimed the crypt of Resiamona, he has established this lower level as his personal court, making it a haven for the castle's most dispirited dead. Here he seeks to win favor and allies for future plots so ambitious even he hasn't yet fully dared to develop them in detail. The crypt entrance lies beneath a wooden trap door in one of the cells in the west wing of the Blood Basilica (area 7).

The following adventure site is a suitable challenge for a group of four 15th-level PCs.

K1. Entrance Stairs

Beneath the trap door, a shaft drops 25 feet to a stone floor and flight of stairs. At the end of this first corridor stands a nondescript, moldering wooden door scribed with an ancient warning. It reads, in Kellid, "Death is but a Dream."



Cvotgar Haas

K2. Abandoned Cellar

Cvotgar renovated this room to appear as if nobody has ventured through it in centuries. Broken caskets lean against the walls, each holding a dusty skeleton with a wooden stake driven through its chest. Everything else has been ransacked or stripped of valuables, giving the room the appearance of a looted vampire tomb.

The room has no visible exits, though a successful DC 25 Perception check made while searching the walls reveals a secret door in the northwest corner.

Trap: A dusty decoy crossbow trap with a rotted bolt is set up on the far wall from the door (Perception DC 20), but is already disabled as though a looter had found it.

K3. Pool of the Banshees (CR 15)

Black pillars line this long, narrow room. In the center of the room lies a shallow, rectangular pool, its stone bottom carved to resemble a knot of intertwining, life-sized human skeletons. What looks like a misty blue vapor fills the pool.

Creatures: If any creatures come within 5 feet of the pool, the vapor swirls into two ghastly humanoid forms. Their horrific cries identify them as banshees as they attack any non-undead that enter the hall.

BANSHEES (2)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

hp 161 each (*Bestiary* 2 41)

K4. Escaped Feeder (CR 15)

The marble columns in this room depict the tormented visages of Resiamona's greatest enemies. When she left, she chipped off their faces.

Creatures: A disturbingly gaunt man wrapped in tattered robes writhes behind a column, wildly scratching at his flesh. He is one of Cvotgar's many nameless feeder humans—one the vampire lord sadistically refused to let die, and kept separated from the other slaves in area **K11**. Completely mad, the emaciated thrall babbles wild prophecies if approached, and begs the PCs to leave him be. Also in this room is one of Cvotgar's most trusted agents, a dybbuk named Anorag, who amuses herself by keeping watch over the shriveled man. When the PCs arrive, she immediately possesses the stricken human and uses his flesh to attack the intruders before reverting back to her ghostly form.

PRISONER

CR 2

XP 600

hp 26 (currently 12; *Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 270)

ANORAG

CR 15

XP 51,200

Dybbuk (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 108)

hp 207

Adventure Hooks

The following adventure hooks can get PCs involved with Castle Kronquist.

Searching for Cvotgar: The Esoteric Order of the Palatine Eye has many questions concerning the unresolved fate of their former agent Cvotgar Haas. Fearing foul play from within their organization, members of the order hire outsiders to investigate Castle Kronquist for clues that might shed light upon the mystery of his disappearance.

Vampire Rivals: Although Cvotgar hasn't been flagrant in his activities around Castle Kronquist, there are those who watch the castle closely. Among them is Malyas's ancient enemy, the vampire lord of Caliphaz, Luvick Siervage. He's caught word of the dissension in Malyas's castle, and the thought of encouraging such betrayal pleases him greatly. Either through living proxies or his own undead children, Siervage offers the PCs some secret they've long hunted for or a fabulous magic treasure, if only they carry a message from him to Cvotgar Haas in Castle Kronquist. He has little hope for Cvotgar's survival in his enemy's house, but when Malyas does eventually purge the traitor, Siervage wants his mark to be found amid the wreckage.

K5. Ghoul Troughs (CR 12)

This long chamber houses several crude wooden troughs filled with large piles of dung, refuse, and slop. An appalling fecal stench instantly assails any who step over the threshold, and lingers in their clothing for hours after they leave.

Creature: This lair was created to host ghouls and other filth-hungry undead, and for a time it did. But those lesser creatures didn't realize they were invited to Cvotgar's lair only to attract another, more powerful being to the vampire's side.

An omox demon has long dwelled in the cesspits beneath Kronquist, and Cvotgar managed to coax it here, where it has slaughtered more than a dozen ghouls and ghastrs. When Cvotgar attempted to converse with the disgusting creature, however, he found it frustratingly distracted and random. Currently, he lets the demon feed here and soak within the disgusting slurry. It longs for the taste and feel of live flesh, and Cvotgar has promised to provide some—though he's done nothing to fulfill that promise. If living creatures enter the room, the demon assumes they are meant for it to enjoy, and eagerly rises from the slop to attack.

OMOX

CR 12

XP 19,200

hp 162 (*Bestiary* 2 79)

K6. Horrors of the Past

A short hallway leads to this locked, 10-foot-by-10-foot chamber. The lock is built into the sturdy door and requires a successful DC 40 Disable Device check to pick.

Treasure: Inside the chamber, the mutilated bodies of eight Iomedean paladins hang from iron hooks fastened to the stone walls. Though the corpses are badly desecrated and horrific to look upon, their weapons and armor remain in good condition. All in all, four masterwork breastplates, three broken suits of half-plate armor, and one +1 *spell resistance* (15) *full plate* can be taken from the bodies. The weapons scattered about the room and plunged into the chests of the decaying bodies include one +1 *greatsword*, two +1 *holy longswords*, three masterwork longswords, and a broken composite longbow (+5 Strength).

K7. The Void Mausoleums

Each of these identical rooms houses a large sarcophagus that sits on a raised platform. Anyone peering inside a sarcophagus sees only a swirling mass of dense, black smoke. Although they resemble the resting places of vampires or interred dead, these sarcophagi were built for neither purpose, and instead give the occupants of Castle Kronquist a quick means of traveling between the crypts and the castle proper.

Anyone who succeeds at a DC 28 Spellcraft check can identify the magic of the swirling black smoke within the coffins as conjuration (teleportation) magic, though only by stepping into the casket can one determine where it leads. This acts as a *dimension door* effect (caster level 12th). The sarcophagus in area **K7a** leads to the upper levels of the Blood Basilica (area 7), and the sarcophagus in area **K7b** leads to one of the rooms in the lower levels of the Midnight Spire (area 3). Replacing the lid on a sarcophagus disables the portal temporarily on both sides, and destroying a casket permanently disables its magic.

K8. The Ecstasy Parlor (CR 15)

This broad chamber reeks of exotic incense, and decadent furnishings fill the room. To the east lies a half-partitioned chamber, and all the walls are lined with alien-looking mechanisms crafted from what appear to be bronzed husks of splayed humans. These unholy devices store stolen human memories that bring vampires ecstasy—not love, but pain and pleasure in their most carnal forms. These memories are preserved in serum, and the vampires of Castle Kronquist attach themselves to the room's devices by dozens of tube-fed needles that tap into these memories, allowing the undead to once again relish the sins of mortal flesh.

Creatures: Seven vampiric minions of Cvtogar occupy this chamber, their bodies attached to the

serum-distributing devices. The vampires are oblivious to anything else in the room, and the PCs can pass through unnoticed unless they harry or interact with the vampires, in which case the undead snap out of their stupors and attack the intruders.

VAMPIRES (7)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 102 each (*Bestiary* 270)

K9. Feast of Worms (CR 16)

In this room, a score of beautiful humans, elves, and other healthy, civilized folk enjoy a decadent banquet, gorging upon deep-purple wine and roasted meat at the long table in the middle of the chamber. Whenever living creatures enter the room, the diners welcome them and offer them seats so they may also partake in the rich wine and grandiose helpings of food.

Creatures: The banquet and most of the people are an illusion: a *permanent image* projected by one of the worms that walk residing in this room (CL 13th, Will DC 21 to disbelieve). While PCs who fail to see through the illusion attempt to discern what's going on in the room, the worms that walk (who have cast *alter self* on themselves to take on the appearance of human diners sitting at the table) move into tactical positions and ready to attack the mortal intruders.

WORMS THAT WALK (2)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 113 each (*Bestiary* 2 286)

K10. Torture Chamber (CR 13)

This room has all the trappings of a medieval torture chamber. A rack in the northern half of the room is attached by rough ropes to machinery at either end. In the southwestern corner, a spherical metal cage dangles precariously above a pit of burning coals.

Creatures: Three monstrous vampires occupy the torture devices in this room, reveling in the ecstasy of self-inflicted pain and torment. One allows herself to be pulled apart on the rack, and another is fastened into the quickly spinning sphere above the burning coals. The last vampire watches over the two self-mutilators and laughs maniacally at their pain.

If any living creature enters the room, the free vampire hurries to release the entrapped vampires (taking a full-round action to release each one). He then rushes directly into combat, followed by his freed allies.

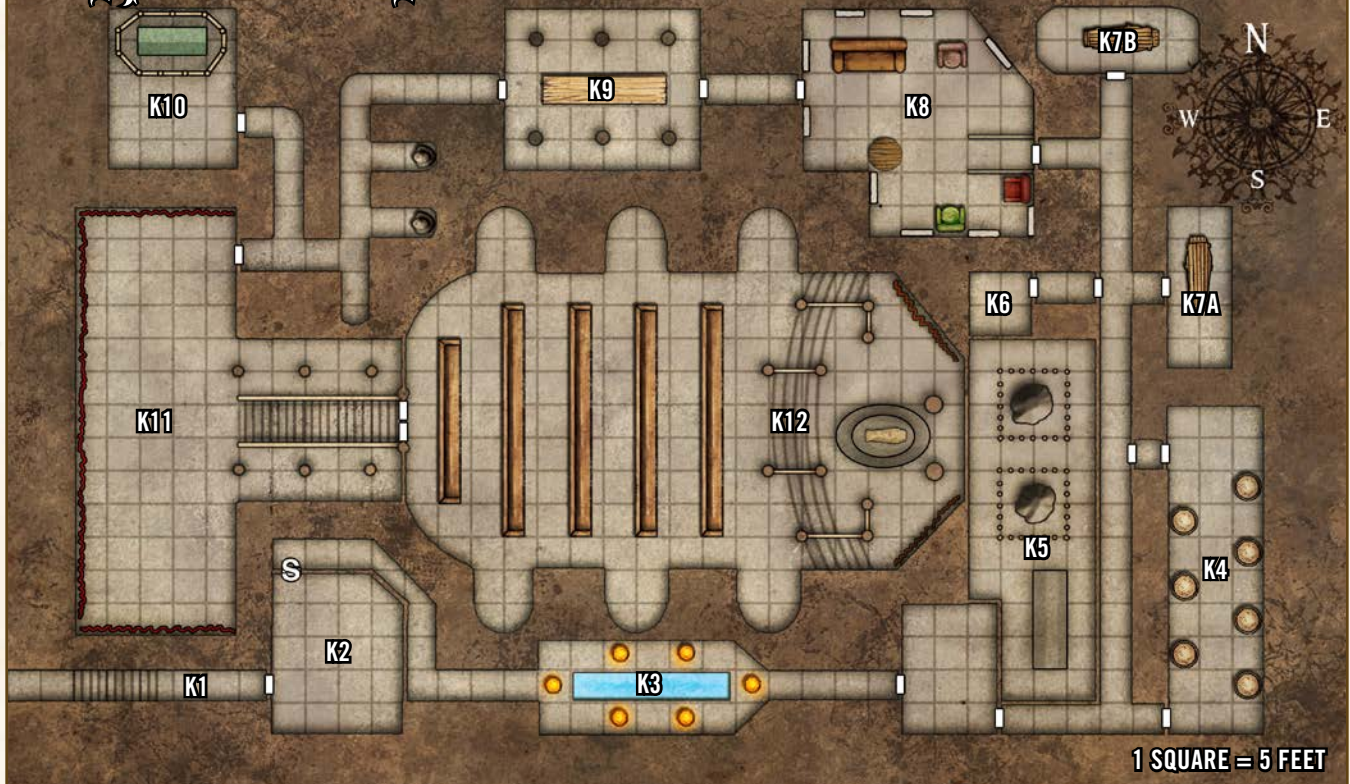
ADVANCED VAMPIRES (3)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 118 each (*Bestiary* 270, 294)

Crypt of Cvotgar



K11. Assembly Hall (CR 16)

Broad crimson curtains cover most of the walls in this vast, lavish ballroom. A series of crystal chandeliers with golden candlestick holders and brightly burning candles light the room, casting macabre shadows on the 20-foot-high, arched ceiling. Cvotgar uses this chamber to hold debauched soirees and orgiastic rituals when entertaining guests.

Creatures: Three graveknights and eight spectres guard the hall, stoically awaiting orders from their master, Cvotgar, and ready to attack intruders on sight. They watch over eight feeder humans, all near death from blood loss.

GRAVEKNIGHTS (3) **CR 11**

XP 12,800 each

hp 139 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 138)

ADVANCED SPECTRES (8) **CR 8**

XP 4,800 each

hp 69 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 256, 294)

K12. Cvotgar's Hall (CR 17)

Rows of pews fill this temple area, and the ceilings soar almost 30 feet before terminating in ornate arcades of

bone-like marble. The dark wood of the pews has been carved into hundreds of screaming faces that jut from the seats in twisted, swirling patterns. Piles of gagged skulls spill into the aisles from the apse at the end of this hall, where staircases of bone climb to an elevated pulpit with a massive stone sarcophagus atop it.

Creatures: Six of Cvotgar's favorite monstrous creations occupy the alcoves set into the north and south sides of this hall. These flesh golems move to attack any living intruders as soon as they enter the room.

The stone coffin belongs to Cvotgar. When not orchestrating his mad plans, he meditates within this elaborate sepulcher. As soon as the flesh golems animate, Cvotgar turns gaseous, slips from his resting place, and moves toward the ceiling to observe his attackers. Once they weaken or prove too much for his construct minions, he swoops in from above and attacks.

ADVANCED FLESH GOLEMS (6) **CR 8**

XP 4,800 each

hp 79 each (*Bestiary* 160, 294)

CVOTGAR HAAS **CR 17**

XP 102,400

hp 180 (see page 20)





CITADEL VRAID

“Vraid has more secrets than the damn Nail-Knights know, secrets the common armigers can’t even imagine—secrets that would freeze their souls with terror. DiViri must be one haunted son of a hag. I’m sure he dreams himself pitted upon the spires of his damned tower, or perhaps he doesn’t dream. Perhaps he no longer sleeps. We don’t sleep down here in the trenches. The secrets manifest and feed upon our dreams, our pain, our suffering. Ever meet someone trying to starve herself to death? You will. Soon enough, it might even be you.”

—Nameless Shoanti prisoner of Citadel Vraid

Derched in the rocky crags of the Mindspin Mountains, Citadel Vraid grimaces down upon Conqueror's Bay to the north and the city of Korvosa farther east, a stinging monument to the failed efforts of an ambitious queen. Citadel Vraid was founded as a gift to the Order of the Nail, and its Hellknight inheritors have never bowed to Varisia's rulers or its laws. Though many Korvosans view the Order with disdain, the colonists remain indebted to the Hellknights for providing protection against indigenous Shoanti barbarians angry at the loss of their lands and bloodthirsty orc raiders. Since its inception, the Order of the Nail has scoured the surrounding lands, slaughtering thousands of native people in a quest to force the heavy yolk of civilization around Varisia's neck.

The story of Citadel Vraid's construction remains awash in mystery—many of those who plotted, built, or oversaw the raising of the fortress have died or disappeared, along with the castle's original floor plans. Over the past few decades, a rash of inexplicable murders has taken place within Vraid's walls. Some Hellknights blame these killings on vengeful Shoanti spirits, while others suspect the influence of long-dormant Thassilonian rune magic. Nearly as strange, during the most violent mountain storms, faint spidery shocks of mysterious emerald energy trace Vraid's outer walls. For these reasons and others, many within the Order—including the current lictor, Severs "Boneclaw" DiViri—believe the castle is haunted.

History

During her reign over the then-Chelish colony of Korvosa, Queen Domina Arabasti sought to secure her position by petitioning for the support of several of Chelixa's most powerful Hellknight Orders. She offered to commission a massive and impregnable fortress as a reward for any order that would relocate to Varisia. Korvosa's proximity to the native Shoanti lands offered the perfect place to enforce the order's prime directive: the destruction of the indigenous "primitives" who plagued the area. The Order of the Nail's high commander at the time, Lictor Voltarios the Scourge, accepted Domina's offer in the spring of 4682 AR. Along with his acceptance, he insisted on complete control over the design for the castle's construction. He then assigned his most trusted paralictor, Saem-Kyrs, to oversee the project.

Saem-Kyrs was considered a paragon of incorruptibility, making him an ideal choice to oversee construction of the Order of the Nail's new fortress. At first, the paralictor's draconian leadership guaranteed the project stayed on time, but as Saem-Kyrs spent increasingly longer hours amid the foundations of the growing citadel, he grew gradually more erratic and excessive. He began openly deriding his superiors, insisting they lacked the courage to enforce a rightful Hellknight rule, and soon many of his underlings began to

question his sanity. However, a small cadre of Hellknights shared his fervor, and together they plotted to seize the castle.

The project fell further and further behind schedule, and workers fled the site in droves. Finally, driven beyond reason by unknown forces, Saem-Kyrs rallied his allies and tried to seize Vraid by force in the attempt to create a new Hellknight kingdom. Ironically, Lictor Voltarios not only anticipated the rebellion, he secretly encouraged it. The very evening that Saem-Kyrs declared his coup, Voltarios's assassins quickly slew him along with several dozen renegade Hellknights who had rallied to his support, crushing the incipient rebellion with ease. Shortly after the incident, Voltarios burned all records of Saem-Kyrs, as well as the castle's floor plans, blaming the destruction on the insurgents and ensuring Citadel Vraid's layout remained a secret.

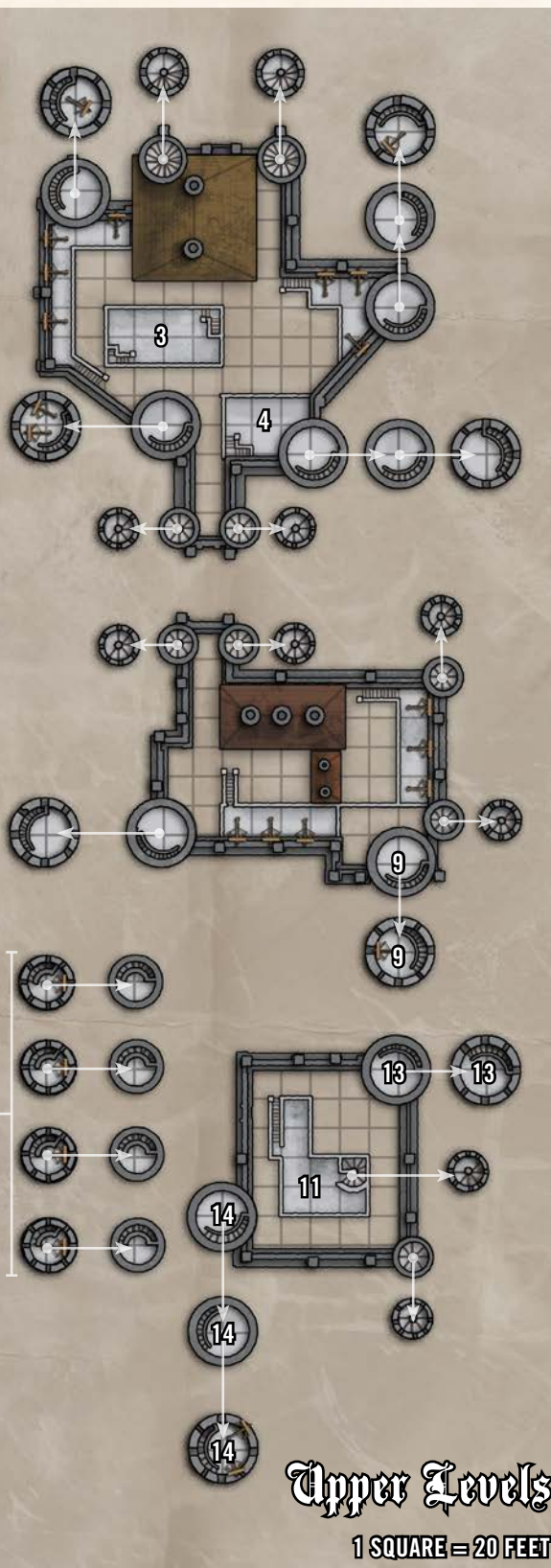
After the death of Saem-Kyrs, Voltarios came to Vraid to oversee the final phase of the castle's construction. The work was plagued by frequent and deadly accidents, and it took workers nearly 3 more years to complete the citadel. Rumors surfaced that construction of the citadel's foundation revealed remnants of a long-buried Thassilonian temple, and that the project was corrupted by the rune magic of the priests buried there. Others suspected an ancient curse was behind the endless delays as well as Saem-Kyrs's madness. Yielding to pressure from others in his order, Voltarios commanded his signifers to purge Citadel Vraid of any latent magic.

Meanwhile, Voltarios grew increasingly paranoid, believing a secret rebellion sympathetic to Saem-Kyrs caused the project's delays and banishing all suspected insurrectionists to the Hellfast, one of the expansive dungeons beneath Citadel Vraid. Soon, many whispered that Voltarios's mind was poisoned by the same Thassilonian magic that had driven his former paralictor to rebellion. Whatever its cause, Voltarios's investigation threatened to tear the Order of the Nail apart.

Voltarios's purge ended abruptly in 4685 AR, on the eve of the citadel's inaugural ceremony. On that night, tremendous bolts of storm-borne lightning struck the citadel's metal-clad spires, shaking Citadel Vraid's very foundations. The armigers guarding the walls reported strange, glowing crackles of energy flickering up the exterior of the castle's bastions. The next morning, guards found Voltarios's battered corpse skewered upon the spire of Lictor's Keep. Following Voltarios's grisly death, the Order of the Nail appointed Sever "Boneclaw" DiViri as the new reigning lictor.

DiViri believed that Vraid had indeed fallen prey to ancient rune magic. He immediately called off Voltarios's investigation, insisting those with sufficient dedication to the Order of the Chain had nothing to fear from barbarian sorcery or the dormant magic of long-dead cultists. Yet for all of DiViri's noble intentions, the legacy of Voltarios continues, and the dungeons of Citadel Vraid remain the source of an ancient and mysterious corruption.

Citadel Uraid Ground Level



Upper Levels

1 SQUARE = 20 FEET

Description

Rising from the precipitous peaks of the Mindspin Mountains, Citadel Vraid stands about 50 miles southwest of Korvosa, on the border between Varisia and Nidal. The near-impregnable fortress-citadel owes a great deal of its defensibility to its treacherous location, its sheer stone ramparts, and impressive array of siege weaponry.

Citadel Vraid is divided into three distinct castles, connected by walkways that bridge steep and treacherous chasms. The three castles—Bastion Dominus, Bastion Tyrannous, and Bastion Ferox—represent the ideals of Lord Asmodeus: slavery, tyranny, and pride. Between the three bastions and the sprawling under-cellars, Citadel Vraid houses nearly 400 occupants. Approximately 300 armigers and common Hellknights live in its barracks. These individuals serve under the command of some 40 veteran Hellknights, signifers, and other Hellknight officers who in turn answer to high-ranking Hellknight paralictors and paravicars, the Mistress of Blades, Paravicar Acillmar, and Lictor DiViri. The remaining population consists of slaves, prisoners, and indentured servants who live in the gulags and slave-trenches around and beneath the citadel.

BASTION DOMINUS

This heavily fortified keep provides the citadel's primary point of entry. It consists of a barbican, a thick siege wall, four armored war towers set with ballistae, and pots of mud mixed with poison into which Hellknight archers can dip their ballista bolts.

1. Main Gates: Carved from black stone and crowned with steel spikes, a pair of spindly towers shadow the precipitous stair that climbs to the foot of Vraid's steel gate. The outer gate opens into a heavily guarded atrium sealed by thick wooden doors that lead into smaller adjacent chambers. The north chamber serves as the citadel's entrance; the south serves as the exit. Both doors connect to large hallways used by commanding officers to rally troops.

2. Lictor's Bailey: The siege walls of Bastion Dominus create a small bailey around Lictor's Keep, and rows of barracks line both the south and north walls. These barracks are occupied mostly by paralictors, while the lower-ranking commanders and common soldiers reside at Bastion Tyrannous. Each barrack is a 20-foot-by-20-foot room that serves as living-quarters for eight soldiers. Hellknights sleep on bunk beds with battle partners and store their personal items in lockers stashed beneath the bunks. Stairs allow archers to stand on the barracks roof and shoot over the walls to fend off invaders.

3. Lictor's Keep: This two-story building is also known as the Keep of Tyranny. The ground floor serves as the Hall of Edicts, a large court used for tribunals and formal functions. The second floor is the private residence of

Lictor DiViri. The building maintains separate entrances on the ground floor, each heavily guarded by Hellknight sentries. Hellknights often jostle for this position since it's a great honor to serve as the Lictor's personal guard.

4. Paralictors' Keep: This two-story keep houses a dozen of the citadel's officers. On the ground floor, iron-shod gates provide an egress to the base run. The keep also connects to the heavily armored Paravicar's Tower, which is the residence of one of the Order of the Nail's highest-ranking officers, Paravicar Acillmar. He keeps a staff of both slaves and signifers on hand at all times to meet his endless demands. He also keeps the tower well guarded to protect the secret entrance to the Hellfast hidden within the tower's basement.

5. Base Run: Between the edge of the mountain and the castle's ramparts, a gravel pathway provides an alternate passage between the keeps. It begins at Paralictors' Keep and runs along the cliff face, connecting to the armory and continuing on to a pair of huge double doors that allow secondary access to Bastion Ferox. Outside each of these heavily armored gates stands a well-manned guardhouse.

6. First Chasm: A narrow walkway spans the chasm between Bastion Dominus and Bastion Tyrannous. On either side, small barbicans set with adjacent watchtowers allow guards to block off the passage with heavy portcullises.

BASTION TYRANNOUS

Also known as Armiger's Hold, Bastion Tyrannous consists almost entirely of rank-and-file barracks centered in a small yard. Peering over the cliffs of the fortress's east wall are two war towers, the Tower of Blades (see below) and Tower Victus (which holds Vraid's armory, forge, foundry, and treasury). It also has four smaller watchtowers, including the two flanking its barbican.

7. Keep of the Nail: The first floor of this keep is divided into a dining hall and a common area, while the second floor functions as both a storage area and a commissary.

8. Garrison Block: This area consists of an open courtyard surrounded by more single-story barracks. Stairs allow access to a platform equipped with a row of swiveling ballistae. Huge banners hang neatly around the courtyard, proudly displaying the insignias of the various Hellknight squadrons stationed throughout Citadel Vraid.

A rickety structure in the garrison block's far corner covers the entrance to the Bastion's under-cellar, a warren of crude living alcoves used by the Indentured—former slaves who have opted to buy their freedom from the Order by working as the citadel's tenders, groundskeepers, and dung sweepers.

9. Tower of Blades: A heavily guarded tower in the northeastern corner of Bastion Tyrannous is the headquarters of military operations and the primary residence of Mistress of Blades Maidrayne Vox.

10. Bridge of Eagles: This long, narrow walkway spans the wide and dizzying chasm that separates Bastion Tyrannous

from Bastion Ferox. The bridge was named for Paralictor Kaan's brutal execution of Tungar Oxslayer, jothka of the now-extinct Lamokra tribe of the Sklar-Quah and leader of the Ten-Tribe's Rebellion. To make an example of the Shoanti war-chief, the paralictor blood-eagled him upon the bridge—slicing his ribs from his backbone and pulling out his lungs to flap like a pair of wings—before throwing him into the chasm so all could watch him fly.

BASTION FEROX

Also known as Signifer's Keep, Ferox is the smallest and most isolated of the citadel's bastions. The largest of Ferox's three towers stands in the southeast corner, and is topped with siege weapons that point in every direction. It also has a huge gate in the north wall that leads to the base run. At the eastern end of the bailey, a row of 20-foot-deep, grate-covered trenches are dug against the wall. These crude holding pens, called the Hives, house the citadel's many slaves and other captives. No physical route allows access into the Hives—Hellknights simply throw slaves in or pull them out using nooses. Similarly, guards feed captives by dumping slop through the grates into the trenches.

11. Ferox Garrison: The bailey centers upon a two-story fortified keep topped with a narrow watchtower. The bottom floor is predominated by a block of barracks that house seasoned Hellknights as well as a few signifers. The second story contains a huge library and a well-stocked alchemist's lab. Both are run by **Paralictor Myrkrina Delfiero** (LE female human alchemist 5/fighter 2/Hellknight 2), who is also charged with overseeing the Hives below Bastion Ferox.

12. Four Towers: A narrow stone walkway extends from Bastion Ferox, across another deep chasm, to a slender plateau. On the plateau stand four identical, fluted towers, each capped with a gleaming steel spire. A low, hollow rampart runs between all four towers, connecting them at the ground level. The Hellknights of Citadel Vraid use these towers to watch for would-be runaways and potential invasions from the south.

13. Warlock Spire: This three-story tower is the headquarters of the signifers and the primary dwelling for many paralictors. It also houses an athenaeum, where signifers study the arcane arts and detailed histories of Golarion and other Hellknight orders.

14. Signis Watch: The upper portion of this tower serves as a martial defense structure, while the lower levels hold nearly 50 cells, all filled to capacity with prisoners of war. The detainees are mostly Shoanti, orcs, and individuals of questionable ethnicity. Life here is short, and these captives are often beaten or starved to death, while others are blood-eagled as examples to their kin. The least fortunate are dragged to the Hellfast for use in the Order of the Nail's elaborate devil-summoning rituals.

Denizens

Lictor Severs "Boneclaw" DiViri (LE male human fighter 4/rogue 2/Hellknight 6) lords over Citadel Vraid, mercilessly imposing the strict authority of his position upon his troops and commanding the castle's various paralictors and other commanders. Most of the Hellknight battalions fall under the command of **Maidrayne Vox** (LN female centaur fighter 3/ranger 3/Hellknight 2), the order's Mistress of Blades, or **Paravicar Acillmar** (LN male sorcerer 6/Hellknight Signifer^{POP} 3), commander of the Signifers of the Nail. The Mistress of Blades and Paravicar Acillmar are equal in rank, both being masters of their own bailiwicks, and they answer only to Lictor DiViri.

Armigers compose the order's largest population and can be encountered throughout the citadel. Though the armigers in Citadel Vraid report to their respective squadron leaders (typically undecorated Hellknights on the path toward an officer's station), the undisputed master sergeants of the armiger forces are **Maralictor Pechov Sterenor** (LN male human fighter 5/Hellknight 2) and



Lictor Severs "Boneclaw" DiViri

Maralictor Treloria Regennof (LN female human cleric 6/Hellknight signifer 1).

The second largest population in Vraid comprises the seasoned Hellknights, the mid-ranking maralictors, and the high-ranking paralictors. These individuals are further divided into two categories of soldiers determined by their respective skill sets. The first are standard Hellknights, who specialize in martial combat, intimidation, and hunting fugitives. The second group is the masked signifers, who are the magic-wielders of the order. Signifers of the Nail are particularly adept at summoning devils, a skill they frequently utilize in the secret underground ritual chambers known as the Hellfast. **Paralictor Duness Ennekiel** (LE female human wizard 5/Hellknight signifer 2) is one of the order's most prized devil summoners, and some of the more loose-lipped Hellknights of Citadel Vraid whisper that she made a pact with a contract devil to attain such power.

As daunting as the Hellknights are, they are still less terrible than the infernal denizens summoned by the order's signifers. The gloomy, labyrinthine depths of the Hellfast are populated with devils pulled from Hell during bloody and arduous arcane rituals. The most commonly summoned fiends in Citadel Vraid are the lesser devils, which are easier to bind and subdue than their more powerful brethren. An especially skilled signifer may occasionally attempt to summon a greater devil, though the risk associated with failure usually deters such attempts.

Fiends that are summoned and then bound to serve Citadel Vraid for an extended period of time are relatively rare, and tend to remain locked in the expansive dungeons beneath the bastions proper. Lemures, imps, zebubs, and barbazus are the most common fiendish minions to serve the Hellknights of the Nail, though occasionally erinyes, osyluths, and even phistophiluses are pulled from the Pit.

Threats

Citadel Vraid is a hostile place for virtually anyone but the Hellknights who rule it. Since armigers make up the bulk of Citadel Vraid's denizens, intruders often encounter these rookie Hellknights before rousing the attention of higher-ups. Most armigers have up to 4 or 5 class levels in fighter or ranger, though some pupils have backgrounds as cavaliers or even rogues. Citadel Vraid's Hellknights and signifers are significantly more challenging than their greener associates, and possess at least 1 level in either the Hellknight or Hellknight Signifer prestige class (see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide* and *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Paths of Prestige*, respectively). The following is an example of a typical Signifer of the Nail from Citadel Vraid.

SIGNIFER OF THE NAIL

CR 6

XP 2,400

To Arms!

Those wandering the halls of Citadel Vraid uninvited should prepare to meet heavy resistance. From Hellknights to infernal outsiders, none within the castle's walls are afraid of a fight.

Armiger Patrol (CR 5): Patrols of Hellknight armigers wander the halls regularly, stopping at set locations to verify the citadel's security. A typical armiger patrol consists of three such uninitiated but eager squires (LN human fighters 3).

High Commander (CR 8): A Hellknight maralictor (LN human fighter 5/Hellknight 2) marches a unit of six entry-level armigers (LN human fighters 2) through a series of drills and formations. Similar units train throughout the entire citadel and can be encountered anywhere in the three bastions or along the battlements.

Devil-Summoning Ritual (CR 10): Deep in the bowels of the Hellfast, a signifer (LE human cleric of Asmodeus 5/Hellknight Signifer^{POP} 2) is summoning a barbazus (*Bestiary* 73) in preparation for an armiger's (LN human fighter 5) admission trial. A short time after the summoning completes, a Hellknight paralictor (LN male human fighter 5/Hellknight 4) arrives to witness the trial. Should intruders stumble upon the ritual in progress, all involved redirect their attention toward the foolish interlopers.

Human sorcerer 6/Hellknight Signifer 1 (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Paths of Prestige* 28)

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +1

Aura aura of law^{POP}

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20 (+10 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 51 (7 HD; 6d6+1d8+24)

Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +7; +2 vs. poison, +2 vs. visual effects

Resist fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 *halberd* +5 (1d10+2/x3)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +5 (1d8/19–20)

Bloodline Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +9)

6/day—corrupting touch (3 rounds)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 6th; concentration +9)

3rd (4/day)—*hold person* (DC 16)

2nd (6/day)—*bull's strength*, *flaming sphere* (DC 16), *scorching ray*

1st (7/day)—*charm person* (DC 16), *magic missile*, *protection from good*, *shield*, *summon monster I*

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *bleed* (DC 13), *daze* (DC 13), *light message*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*

Bloodline infernal

TACTICS

Before Combat A Hellknight signifer casts *shield* on herself if she senses she may soon enter battle.



PATHFINDER CAMPAIGN SETTING: CASTLES OF THE INNER SEA

During Combat Should their charms and safeguards fail them, Hellknight signifers use evocation spells to deadly effect, zealously launching *scorching rays* and *magic missiles* at their foes.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 8, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 15

Feats Arcane Armor Training, Eschew Materials, Light Armor Proficiency, Medium Armor Proficiency, Spell Focus (evocation), Toughness

Skills Intimidate +9, Knowledge (planes) +4, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +7

Languages Common

SQ bloodline arcana (+2 DC for charm spells), signifer mask^{POP}

Combat Gear *potions of cure light wounds* (2), *scroll of fireball*, *scroll of invisibility*; **Other Gear** +1 full plate, +1 halberd, mwk light crossbow

Should adventurers inspire the ire of some of the more powerful occupants in Citadel Vraid, they may have to contend with the Order of the Nail's strongest maralictors



Mistress of Blades Maidrayne Vox

and paralictors, or even Paravicar Acillmar or Mistress of Blades Maidrayne Vox. The Mistress of Blades is personally responsible for killing more than 20 would-be trespassers and escapees, and her ruthless, pragmatic disposition allows no room for mercy in her heart.

MISTRESS OF BLADES MAIDRAYNE VOX

CR 11

XP 12,800

Female centaur fighter 3/ranger 3/Hellknight 2 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 42, *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide* 278)

LN Large monstrous humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 11, flat-footed 23 (+11 armor, +1 deflection, +1 Dex, +2 natural, -1 size)

hp 128 (12d10+63)

Fort +13, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11 (+1 vs. fear)

Defensive Abilities bravery +1

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee +1 halberd +18/+13/+8 (1d10+8/x3), 2 hooves +11 (1d6+2)

Ranged heavy crossbow +12 (1d10/19-20)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks favored enemy (humans +2)

TACTICS

During Combat Mistress of Blades Maidrayne Vox uses her halberd to deadly effect on the battlefield, and can easily lay into a number of foes at a time with Cleave. While she's fighting atop the steep battlements and towers of Citadel Vraid, she is quick to bull rush enemies toward the edge, either forcing them to surrender or sending them spiraling to their quick deaths.

Morale The Mistress of Blades is vigilant to the end, and couldn't stand to see her domain fall under the rule of unlawful miscreants. She fights to the death to defend the citadel and her order.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 12, **Con** 21, **Int** 13, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +18 (+20 bull rush); **CMD** 30 (32 vs. bull rush, 34 vs. trip)

Feats Cleave, Combat Expertise, Critical Focus, Endurance, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Run, Weapon Focus (halberd)

Skills Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (nature) +8, Knowledge (planes) +6, Perception +17, Sense Motive +9, Survival +15

Languages Common, Elven, Infernal, Sylvan

SQ armor training 1, favored terrain (mountain +2), track +1, undersized weapons, wild empathy +5

Gear +2 *Hellknight plate*, +1 halberd, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *belt of giant strength* +2, *ring of protection* +1

The Hellfast

Beneath Citadel Vraid lies a labyrinth of cold and lightless cellars. The entrance to these cellars consists of little more than a steep, unlit stairway hidden behind a wall in Paravicar Acillmar's private chambers (spotting it requires a successful DC 30 Perception check). Known as the Hellfast, this subterranean devil-locker acts as the venue for the Order of the Nail's most secretive and specialized rituals.

This section of Citadel Vraid is a suitable adventuring location for a group of four 8th-level PCs.

V1. The Receptacle (CR 8)

Creatures: A flock of five accuser devils guards this room. The putrescent insect-cherubs accost anyone descending the stairwell and demand to know whether they have come to commune with the infernal forces. The devils know all the Order of the Nail's signifiers, and assume anyone arriving unaccompanied is an intruder.

ACCUSER DEVILS (5)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 30 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2 84*)

V2. Charnel Room (CR 8)

The iron-faced doors leading into this room are adorned with a string of small funerary bells; a *glyph of warding* (caster level 6th) painted upon the threshold wards it against undead, targeting such trespassers with a *searing ray* effect.

Creatures: The bones of Shoanti warriors and oracles fill the chamber. Their lost and angry spirits are bound to the Material Plane in the form of six horrid lemures. Hellknight signifiers frequently throw troublesome prisoners or slaves into the room to punish them or to prepare them as sacrifices.

ADVANCED LEMURES (6)

CR 2

XP 600 each

hp 13 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 79, 294*)

V3. Hall of Dictums

Several ancient statues that represent various famous figures from Hellknight lore ominously gaze down on the room. Numerous stone tablets adorn the walls, displaying dozens of the sacred laws of Asmodeus.

V4. Hall of Iron Thorns

Within this chamber stand four statues of naked, mummified humans wrapped in spiked chains.

A secret door set in the southern wall of this room allows egress into area V5. In order to activate the door, the agony-filled eyes of the adjacent statue must be pushed back, shifting the wall aside and revealing the portal. Characters can spot the secret entrance with a successful DC 30 Perception check.

Adventure Hooks

Citadel Vraid can play host to dozens of exciting adventures, including encounters with vengeful Shoanti spirits, ancient Thassilonian curses, and rampaging devils.

Mapping the Past: The Hellknights are known for their brutal execution of justice and exacting adherence to laws and details—so to have the floor plans for Citadel Vraid destroyed by vagrants is not only an insult to the deceased Lictor Voltarios, but also to Hellknights everywhere. At least one commander of another Hellknight order isn't content with the explanation provided for the disappearance of Vraid's building plans, and the high-ranking officer tasks the PCs with discovering what really happened during the construction of the infamous castle.

Whispers of the Shoanti: The Shoanti of the Storval Plateau have held the Hellknights of the Nail in enmity since the earliest stages of Citadel Vraid's construction, and their wrath has only grown over time with the organized execution of their clans throughout southern Varisia. Though the Shoanti thundercallers would enjoy nothing more than to skewer the heads of their enemies on their own citadel towers, they know the Hellknights would easily foresee such a plot. Unaffiliated adventurers, however, are not as blatant, so one Shoanti leader enlists the PCs to penetrate Vraid's depths and release any imprisoned Shoanti from the Hives. If the PCs can slay some Hellknights on the way, all the better.

V5. Chamber of the Flayed (CR 6)

A concealed passage leads to this small, oddly shaped cell. Cut from unfinished stone, it holds a coal furnace and several human-sized cages.

Creature: Torture specialist Lathari Crothos, also known as the Mistress of the Flayed, practices her diabolical craft in this room. A true sadist, she delights in preparing prisoners for participation in the signifiers' diabolical rituals. The walls of her chamber are adorned with a slew of unsettling charts that detail the tortures she practices along with the pain and death thresholds for each punishment.

LATHARI CROTHOS

CR 6

XP 2,400

LE female human signifer of the Nail (see page 29)

hp 51

V6. The Sinner's Nave

Within this small alcove stands a shrine displaying the preserved remains of several Hellknight champions standing in armor and clutching their weapons. A golden basin sits before the shrine. Out of respect, anyone passing the shrine is expected to offer a sorrowless tear, a drop of blood, or a single gold coin. A permanent *alarm* spell wards the door to the north, which leads to the Chamber of

Whispers, though making an offering to the golden basin deactivates the spell for 5 minutes. If triggered, the silent *alarm* immediately alerts the Hellknight signifer in area **V7**.

V7. Chamber of Whispers (CR 8)

Shelves holding tomes and glass vials filled with viscous, oily fluids and colorful powders line the walls of this L-shaped room. In its center stands a workbench littered with candles, holy symbols, chalk, and similar ritual materials. A marble basin filled with holy water occupies the alcove to the east.

Creatures: A lone signifer stands at the worktable, busily reading materials for a summoning. Her pet dracolisk lounges beneath the central workbench.

SIGNIFER OF THE NAIL

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 51 (see page 29)

DRACOLISK

CR 7

XP 3,200

hp 73 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 170)

Development: A successful DC 25 Perception check reveals the secret door leading to area **V9**. A concealed good lock (Disable Device DC 30) holds it fast; the signifer in this room wears the key on a string around her neck.

V8. Cleansing Rooms

Hellknight signifers come to this area, also known as the Sheds, to prepare themselves for lethal summoning rituals. The signifers' methods of preparation vary, though almost all involve some sort of self-injury or purgation. Each shed is filled with cleansing tools, including scourges for self-flagellation, saltwater for oral enemas, and knives for self-scarification.

V9. Safe Room

Only accessible by secret doors and protected by layers of specially designed wards and enchantments, this room represents the signifers' last means of protection from the devils they deal with. The entire room is protected with a *greater glyph of warding* keyed with a *banishment* spell (caster level 11th), and any creature with the devil subtype that enters the safe room potentially triggers the trap. The room is also abjured against any attempts to scry or locate objects placed within the room (creatures who attempt to do so must first succeed at a DC 21 caster level check).

V10. Armory

Treasure: This room contains several racks of stylized Hellknight armor and weapons. The weapons racks are locked with a good lock (Disable Device DC 30), though most of the signifers in the Hellfast carry a key to open them.

The racks hold five suits of masterwork Hellknight plate, three +1 *light steel shields*, a +1 *halberd*, and an assortment of masterwork weapons (including short swords, longswords, halberds, lances, and crossbows), worth a total of 4,000 gp.

V11. The Stratagem (CR 8)

The signifers use this room to plan their diabolical rituals. Twin statues of an erinyes bearing a flaming sword flank the entrance. A desk and bookshelves line the walls, and a large onyx table dominates the center of the room.

Creatures: A single Signifer of the Nail sits at the table, studying a catalog of the lesser devils. If she spots intruders, she snaps her fingers to activate the erinyes statues (actually caryatid columns) and presses to attack her foes.

ADVANCED CARYATID COLUMNS (2)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 36 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 46, 290)Melee +1 *flaming longsword* +10 (1d8+7 plus 1d6 fire/19-20)

SIGNIFER OF THE NAIL

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 51 (see page 29)

Development: A successful DC 20 Perception check reveals the secret passage leading to area **V9**. The door is locked with a masterwork lock. The key on the signifer in area **V7** also unlocks this door.

V12. Tribunal Hall (CR 9)

The Order of the Nail's paralytics meet here to debate controversial bindings. Each summoning must be approved by the Paravicar, and when the viability or necessity of a ritual is in dispute, the hall is used as a forum for debate.

Creatures: Unless they were alerted earlier in the Hellfast, three Hellknight signifers sit here recounting former deeds.

SIGNIFERS OF THE NAIL (3)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

hp 51 each (see page 29)

V13. Lesser Summoning Chamber (CR 8)

Hellknight signifers use this room to bind lesser devils like lemurs and imps. The room is equipped with a pentagram scribed upon the floor in bone dust and tallow and a small altar for blood sacrifices.

Creatures: Two novice signifers working in this room have just summoned a bearded devil. Should they spot the PCs, they immediately sic the bound devil on the intruders.

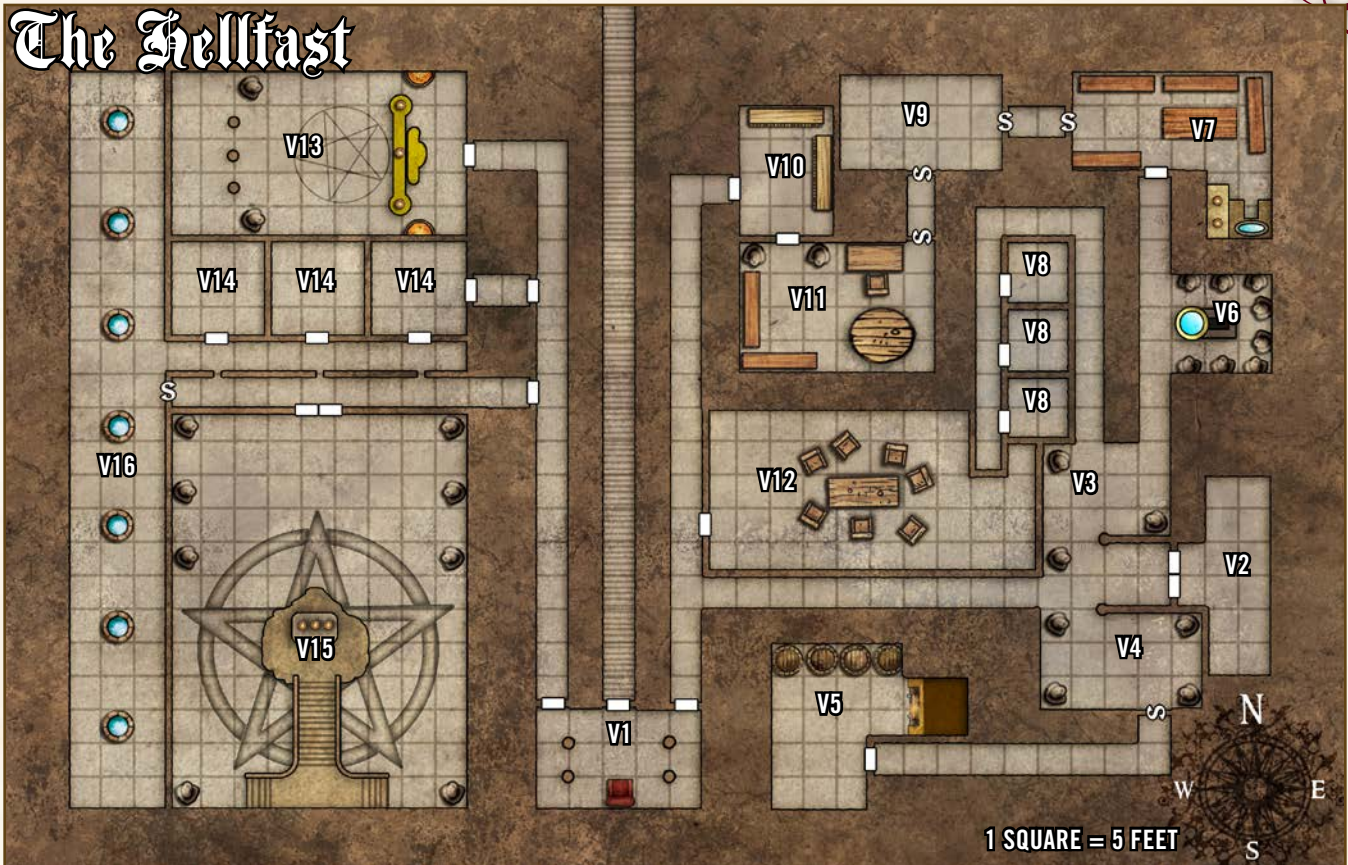
BEARDED DEVIL

CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 57 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 73)

The Hellfast



SIGNIFERS OF THE NAIL (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

hp 51 each (see page 29)

V14. Confessionals

Within these small and private chambers, Hellknights confess their sins against their order or Asmodeus to a paralictor, who then ritually admonishes them. From here, signifers often go directly to the cleansing rooms to display their penitence.

A single hallway connects all three confessionals. The south wall has several murder holes, which allow signifers and paralictors to keep watch over the chapel entrance (area V15) in times of siege.

V15. Greater Summoning Chapel (CR 9)

A vaulted passage leads into this chapel, its giant stone arches covered with intricately patterned rosettes that conceal several murder holes connecting to area V14.

The inner chapel is used for summoning influential devils and for Asmodean religious services. A pentagram-shaped trough covers much of the floor, and a raised dais cut from a giant stone pillar sits in the center of the pentagram.

Creatures: Currently, a paralictor named Aboliet Rast works within the chapel, preparing his next service. He

lectures about the dangers of possession by infernal forces during his sermons. Rast is currently assisted by an erinyes who also serves as chapel guardian.

ABOLIET RAST

CR 7

XP 3,200

Advanced Signifer of the Nail (see page 29)

hp 65

ERINYES

CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 94 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 75)

V16. The Sink Tanks

Down the center of this long corridor runs a series of 15-foot-deep pits that seal shut with iron grates. The paralictors punish slaves and Hellknights alike by tossing the guilty into the pits and then filling the pits with scalding oil until the individuals confess their crimes, after which the victims are sent to area V5 to suffer the attentions of Lathari Crothos.

Creatures: At present, only five of the tanks hold occupants, all of them dressed and chained as slaves. The prisoners are three Hellknights armigers, an armless Shoanti priest, and a maddened Andoren who claims to be an Eagle Knight.





HIGHHELM

“You think this place is something? This doesn’t even compare to what you’re going to see when we get to Highhelm. Why, the whole city is a tremendous castle carved out of a mountain! From the edge of its walls, you can see half of Druma and most of the Verduran Forest. We’re going to sell our entire load in Highhelm, and then we’ll blow half our coin before we leave. Just don’t wander near the Ledge after we break out the fire ale. That first step’s a doozy.”

—Jesper Queg, Drumish trader,
to his apprentice while traversing Grakodan Pass

High atop the Five Kings Mountains, the indomitable towers of Highhelm emerge from within the imposing Emperor's Peak. The massive dwarven capital—carved from the mountain itself—is one of the largest and most ancient of the dwarven Sky Citadels. Since its inception during the late years of the Age of Destiny, Highhelm has grown from a formidable fortress-city to a sprawling metropolis of nearly 40,000 dwarves. Highhelm's lengthy history, nigh-impregnable defenses, and intimate ties to dwarven art and society make the city a symbol of pride and honor for dwarves throughout the Inner Sea region. While numerous smaller settlements and cities pervade the dwarf-ruled Five Kings Mountains, none would argue that Highhelm is anything less than the center of dwarven culture throughout all of Avistan. In recent years, High King Borogrim the Hale has also helped the city grow into a mainstay of trade throughout the region, and neighboring nations recognize the dwarven metropolis's important role in Avistani economics.

Easily the most heavily fortified Sky Citadel still controlled by the dwarves, Highhelm also is responsible for protecting eons of dwarven lore and secrets, including the design and use of their sacred fire cannons and other dwarven war machines. Perhaps Highhelm's most impressive feature lies within the mountain itself, however; thousands of years of dwarven culture and history remain buried just beneath the city, and from the massive martial complex known as Deeplock, the city's numerous skyseekers frequently launch missions into the lightless depths from which their ancestors first emerged.

History

Highhelm's history is almost synonymous with the history of the dwarves of Avistan. When Torag's chosen finally tore their way to the surface and completed their long and bloody Quest for Sky, they constructed 10 fortified Sky Citadels in remote and defensible locations throughout the Inner Sea region. In the highest reaches of Emperor's Peak in Avistan, the Sky Citadel of Highhelm quickly became the crown jewel of the dwarven empire of Tar Taargadth in the late years of the Age of Destiny. It retained this honor for centuries before Tar Taargadth eventually collapsed beneath the waves of orc hordes in 1551 AR.

Soon after the fall of Tar Taargadth, the baron-mayor of Highhelm, Torheim Gardrick I, founded the Mighty Kingdom of Gardadth, naming Highhelm as his empire's capital. Four other dwarven kings claimed kingdoms in the region, and infighting was quick to follow, eventually spawning the legendary Five Kings Wars, 18 of which directly involved Highhelm in some manner. After centuries

of bloodshed, dwarven revolutionaries backed by Drumish emissaries brought the kingdoms to their knees and compelled their rulers to sign the Kerse Accord in Highhelm's Council Building. After the leaders agreed to the terms of the treaty, Highhelm again resumed its key position as the center of dwarven culture and power. Delegates from all five kingdoms remained at Highhelm year-round, forming a strong and collective political council that ushered in a new era of peace for the dwarven people—for a time.

The old kingdoms of the Five Kings Mountains eventually fell to the orc hordes in the twenty-sixth century, though Highhelm endured because of its nigh-impenetrable defenses. A hero named Khadon the Mighty eventually reclaimed the Five Kings Mountains for the dwarves and founded the kingdom of Tar Khadurrm. The importance of Highhelm fell by the wayside for several centuries as new powers deigned to recognize various other cities as capitals of the new kingdom.

Then, in 3980 AR, everything changed. In an event now known as the Rending, the nearby mountain of Torag's Crag erupted, sending lava and rock soaring for miles around and leaving the Five Kings Mountains region in chaos. Entire settlements were wiped out, and homes and families were buried beneath tons of hot ash. The destruction forced droves of refugees to seek the shelter of Highhelm, and loss and starvation beat the once-proud race into hopelessness, despair, and apathy. In the wake of the cataclysm, a treacherous cleric known as High Priest Talhirk Ordrik broke from the traditions of his ancestors and began soliciting younger priests in the worship of Droskar, a brutal and domineering dwarven god. Before long, the high priest's swiftly growing power allowed him and his converts to conquer all of Tar Khadurrm in the name of Droskar.

Ordrik's victory and the theocratic government he put into place ushered in an era of unending toil for the people of the Five Kings Mountains. The dwarves suffered a century of hard labor building temples and towers in Droskar's name—shoddily built works, because the endless travail mandated by Droskar's clergy exhausted even dwarven stamina. In the end, mass defection caused the theocracy to collapse upon itself in 4466 AR. Highhelm and a few of the old dwarven cities in the region withstood the nation's downfall, but in the end the kingdom of Tar Khadurrm was no more.

The last 250 years, known as the Collapsed Era, have seen the dwarves work tirelessly to restore their fractured kingdom to its former splendor. Highhelm has played a central role in maintaining what remains of the dwarves' once-great legacy—though to many in the city, the dwarven capital seems to be but a vivid dream amid the twilight of a fallen people.

PATHFINDER CAMPAIGN SETTING: CASTLES OF THE INNER SEA



Description

Highhelm's incredibly massive structure rises above ancient dwarven holdings in the Darklands. When the dwarves burrowed their way to the surface during the Quest for Sky, they built extensively within Emperor's Peak, which gradually formed the foundation for what would become the city of Highhelm. The sprawling metropolis winds through an entire mountain before its tunnels finally enter the massive, sweeping fortress-city most people refer to when they speak of Highhelm.

This fortress-city, also known as the King's Crown, is the most populous part of the city, though it represents only a fraction of the settlement. The Crown consists of two parts: Inner City and Outer City. Inner City remains within the shelter of the mountain, carved into a tremendous cavern with 100-foot-tall ceilings supported by grand pillars and arches. A broad, open walkway carved into the shape of a low siege wall encircles the perimeter of the cavern and connects to the actual siege walls that surround Outer City. Almost all of Inner City's sprawling cityscape is carved from the stone of the mountain, the only exceptions being newer establishments and reconstructed buildings. The majority of Highhelm's citizens dwell within this vast section of the city, where neatly organized streets connect rows of private dwellings, shops, and alehouses. From these streets, a fanning arch of long staircases spreads across the great stone hill known as King's Motte. Tiers cut into this sharp incline support a half-dozen or so impressive-looking stone keeps, including the Council Building, the Scepter Building, and the Trade Consulate Building. Most splendid of all these structures is Stonehall, the carved palace from which High King Borogrim the Hale reigns.

In the east wall of Inner City, a large hole known as the dawnhole allows sunlight to enter the cavern from dawn till just before noon, while a similarly carved duskhole in the west wall allows light into the cavern in the latter part of the day. For a brief period, when the sun hangs directly overhead and pierces neither the dawnhole nor the duskhole, the entire cavern goes almost completely dark. The dwarves of Highhelm call this time of day blacknoon. On nights when the moon is visible, a similar phenomenon takes place.

Beyond the siege walls of Inner City, the dwarves cut a broad plane into Emperor's Peak that extends several hundred feet to the edge of the mountain. This area is known as Outer City, or the Ledge. Here the dwarves carved numerous structures into the mountain face, hoping to expand their hold to meet the needs of Highhelm's ever-increasing population.

Beneath the King's Crown, a tangle of tunnels weave almost seamlessly through the earth and stone and connect to thousands of halls and chambers. The dwarves of Highhelm commonly refer to these passages as the Depths.

The labyrinthine nature of these lower levels makes them irresistible targets for goblins, orcs, and other enemies hoping to invade Highhelm proper. The dwarves send groups of skyseekers—dwarves specially trained to locate their ancestral holdings and defeat their ancient enemies—into the lower passages to map unknown sections, recover artifacts, and keep the area secure from would-be invaders.

1. Plummet Wall: This 40-foot-thick stone battlement rests at the end of the Ledge, and serves as a broad defensive platform for both Outer and Inner City. The rampart is permeated every few hundred feet by arrow slits and siege towers. The latter are carved to resemble the faces of ancient dwarven kings, and hang precariously over the precipice around Outer City. At all times, guards patrol the baileys and keep steady watch from the towers.

2. West Face: The area of the Ledge along the west face of Emperor's Peak gets the least amount of sunlight, making it one of the coldest places to settle in Highhelm. Still, West Gate Passage is one of the primary entrances into Inner City, making the district prime real estate for merchants and newly forged guilds. Formidable battlements flanked by huge stone towers separate the district into numerous smaller sectors and funnel caravans directly toward the immense, hundred-foot-high gates leading into Inner City. Residents of this ward consist mostly of gruff mercenaries, hardworking artisans, guides, muleskinners, and dwarves who simply find living in sunlight to be uncomfortable.

3. South Face: The walls of West Gate Passage create a distinct divide between West Face and South Face; members of the public travel between these two wards via the passage's sizable barbican. A similar structure separates South Face from East End, though it isn't nearly as well guarded, as South Face rarely attracts visitors. The section's most prominent structures include Old Keep, where the city's famed Order of the Mantle is garrisoned, and the Broch, a large tower converted into a prison that is overseen by its grim warden, Baelim the Black.

4. Second Wall: This stout wall, built 20 feet above the base of the Ledge, encircles the inner face of the mountain. Second Wall was initially built so Highhelm's warriors could hold the Ledge should it ever be compromised. Flights of stairs connect to Second Wall's bailey, which winds through small arches and allows soldiers to rapidly travel from one end of the Ledge to the other without running through the streets. At present, the bailey is lightly guarded.

5. The Out-Towns: Though none own their holdings, numerous foreign shipping houses have set up shop on the Ledge. Those without the sponsorship of a dwarven trade-house must rent their properties from the high council, placing them at constant risk of eviction if they can't pay their dues every month. Caravan masters of these foreign trade houses frequently take on risky or outright dangerous jobs that can land them quick fortunes if

successful. Such entrepreneurs travel the quicker, more precarious routes through risky and violent regions of war-torn Galt and Iser, provided it means bigger profits.

6. East End: The most desirable property of Outer City, East End receives the most sunlight and offers a spectacular view of nearby Mount Kla and the Verduran Forest. The gates of its barbican mark the head of the Stone Passage, the most heavily trafficked of all the city's trade routes. Two keeps just inside the gates hold nearly 200 dwarven guards ready to defend the pass with their lives.

7. Gatebreach: This neighborhood consists of a mix of common folk, city merchants, purveyors, and tradespeople whose work creates the backbone for Highhelm's small but thriving local economy. The location provides excellent opportunities for sellers to target those entering and exiting the city, and thus competition can be fierce. Dozens of exotic and local food market stalls line the streets leading up to Gatebreach, while numerous artisans' shops perform services and repairs at relatively low rates.

8. New Stonewrought: A strip along the wall of the eastern half of Inner City forms a small district of merchants and day workers. It supports numerous

restaurants, taverns, and inns that have helped draw money into the once-struggling district. New Stonewrought's streets are the cleanest in the city, a point of pride among its residents.

9. Helmskeep: The grand estates found in this sector of Inner City belong to Highhelm's oldest and most influential families. Most of these families can claim uninterrupted ancestry to the Darklands dwarves who founded the city. In recent years, however, a growing number of empowered merchants have purchased property in here, much to the ire of Helmskeep's more firmly rooted aristocrats.

10. Deeplock: This huge, fortified stone castle sits atop a gaping hole that drops into the Depths beneath. Several lifts descend into a small cave hundreds of feet below, used by the dwarven skyseekers and adventurers who excavate the lost relics of the Depths. A score of elite dwarven guards keep a 24-hour watch over the cave.

A wall of barracks, officers' quarters, and other military structures surrounds Deeplock. Soldiers of Highhelm's militia typically either join for life or are conscripted via Highhelm's strict but fair draft, which mandates that all dwarven citizens must enter a 20-year term of military service when they come of age. This service can be divided into four 5-year tours that needn't be served consecutively.

11. The Hollow: Various communities of artisans work in this section of the city, gathering in small collectives to work cooperatively on larger projects that require a variety of skills. Often these cooperatives pool resources to make larger purchases of materials, food, and property. As a result, many artisans who dwell in the Hollow share living spaces, and a single company may well own half a city block.

12. Helmslore: This neighborhood centers around the Hall of Ledgers, the Iron Archives, the Academy of Lore, Deepstone House, and other institutions dedicated to preserving knowledge, history, and financial records. During most days, the district bustles with politicians and historians, as well as skyseekers researching their finds.

13. Helmsborough: Smiths, innkeepers, and ex-soldiers own a fair number of the homes and businesses in this neighborhood, which also plays host to over half a dozen large public drinking halls called communals. Mercenaries, merchants, and other boisterous parties often convene in the communals to drink, settle deals and contracts, air gripes, and rally over various political issues.

14. Runnerton: Here muleskinners occupy a good portion of the homes. In addition to raising and selling mules and grayhorns (local mountain rams that the dwarves long ago domesticated as draft animals), these hardy and hardworking folk run draft teams for various mercantile companies. One advantage over foreigners that these folk possess is the right to raise animals within the city, though this can cause some problems given Highhelm's space limitations.



Baelim the Black

Denizens

As one might expect, the majority of Highhelm's occupants are dwarves, who typically belong to one of several loosely defined castes as appropriate to their profession and lineage. Middle-clans—artisans, laborers, mercenaries, merchants, muleskinners, and stoneworkers—compose over half the populace. The high-clans—descendants of the oldest and noblest families along with a growing number of the newly rich profiting from Highhelm's booming trade industry—constitute another quarter of the population. The remaining residents consist of lower-class laborers, servants, and the increasing number of foreigners who have begun to settle in small ghettos along the Ledge.

Foreigners can make good money in Highhelm if they're willing to risk transporting goods for one of Highhelm's dwarven trade companies. Under city law, noncitizens are exempt from paying many of the city's stifling taxes and tariffs, though they have few other rights and no say in any of Highhelm's political forums. Still, small bands of noncitizens have begun forming caravans that move cargo to and from Highhelm.

Because most of Highhelm's merchants shy away from using foreign caravans, muleskinning—the job of leading teams of mules or grayhorns—has become a profitable business for dwarves. With over 2,000 official members and an equal number of peripheral supporters, the muleskinners' guild forms a significant lobbying block in Highhelm under the steady leadership of guild master **Lygras Ironhorn** (LN female dwarf expert 4/fighter 3).

The current High King of Highhelm, **Borogrim the Hale** (LN male dwarf fighter 8/aristocrat 5), rules from Stonehall in King's Motte. Borogrim keeps a circle of elite dwarven knights that serve as his protectorates and trust council—these include **Athmord Hammerbind** (LN male dwarf fighter 5), **Eirjana Giltbrand** (LG female dwarf paladin 6), and **Efirum Axenose** (LN female dwarf fighter 7). Other frequent visitors to his court include **Grand General Kaltan the Pike** (LG female dwarf cavalier 8), commander of the city's military forces, and **Chief Helmsman Mugholt Grom** (LN male dwarf ranger 7), head of the defensive units responsible for guarding the Ledge.

Threats

The legendary war machines of Highhelm are among the most impressive siege weapons to be found throughout all of Avistan. Numerous trebuchets, ballistae, catapults, and arrow-launching springals adorn Plummet Wall on the Ledge, and the dwarven soldiers stationed there are quick to fire at anyone or anything that looks like a threat.

Dwarven smiths have invented a number of ingenious weapons to use during sieges and other confrontations.

Adventure Hooks

The following adventure hooks can help GMs involve their players with Highhelm.

Depths Delvers: Frori Thurisson, a wealthy dwarven trader and gambling man, seeks to hire a group of trained adventurers to explore a series of caves that he believes to be a backdoor entrance into the Depths. He has bet a fair amount of money that his hired troop can use the passages to get into King's Crown undetected, though his gamble is auxiliary to his true motives—in truth, he hopes to use the passages for himself to transport goods and skip out on taxes for his importing business.

Jailbreak: After a night of careless debauchery, the son of a wealthy spice merchant now lies in the jail of Baelim of the Black, a ruthless dwarven jailor who assumes custody of petty criminals—particularly foreigners—by purchasing their legal fines. He jails his prisoners in a large stone broch on the Ledge and makes his money off the interest he charges victims' relatives when they finally arrive to purchase their loved ones' freedom. Knowing the merchant's wealth, Baelim set an exorbitantly high price for the release of her son. Angered and insulted by Baelim's deliberate extortion, the merchant hires adventures to orchestrate a jailbreak and free every prisoner in Baelim's Broch, leaving the unscrupulous dwarf broke.

The inventions detailed below can be used by GMs to add excitement and peril to adventures set in Highhelm.

Item	Price	Weight
Powder ball, empty	400 gp	4 lbs.
Powder ball fuel	300 gp	1 lb.
Sky mine	1,000 gp	500 lbs.

Powder Ball: This steel sphere is about the size of a standard cannon ball, though it's significantly lighter. Small holes pock the surface of the sphere, which can be unscrewed into two hemispherical pieces. By filling the intricate hollows in an opened powder ball with a specific mixture of volatile chemical reagents (which can typically be purchased in Highhelm for around 200 gp) and inserting a proprietary fuse, an individual can use the weapon as a time-delayed explosive device, throwing it as a splash weapon or simply placing it where she wants it to explode. The fuse can be ignited as a move action; 1d4 rounds afterward, the powder ball explodes, dealing 2d6 points of fire damage to anything in a 10-foot-radius burst (DC 15 for half). A powder ball explodes in this way three times—the second explosion occurs 1d3 rounds after the initial explosion, and the third explosion occurs 1d2 rounds after the second. After the third explosion, the empty powder ball can be refilled and used again.



Sky Mine: The dwarves of Highhelm fill these 20-foot-diameter cloth balloons with a secret and highly flammable gas (included in the price) and then release them into the sky over their enemies. To transform the balloons into decoys, dwarven siege warriors place dummies in cargo baskets beneath the balloons to look like balloonist scouts or snipers. Whoever releases the balloon can attempt a DC 15 Profession (driver), Knowledge (nature), or Wisdom check; if the check is successful, the balloon can be guided out to a maximum range of 300 feet, a far enough distance for archers to safely shoot the balloon with flaming arrows, causing it to explode in a devastating ball of fire. A detonated sky mine creates a 50-foot-radius burst of flame that deals 10d6 points of fire damage to anything in the area.

Deepscar Keep

Deepscar is an abandoned keep in the Depths, several hundred feet below the city. The dwarves of Highhelm blocked and barricaded the road to Deepscar in ages past when they vacated the keep and continued their destined Quest for Sky. In their haste, however, they failed to block all

entrances to the keep, and in recent years a tribe of mysterious dark folk has moved into its forgotten halls.

This sample section of Highhelm is a suitable adventuring location for a group of four 4th-level PCs.

H1. Landing Cave (CR 4)

Toward the back of this cavern lies the primary entrance of Deepscar Keep. A flight of stairs leads to a pair of stone doors, their faces carved with a pair of crossing hammers. Iron statues of dwarven lords flank the doors. Immense iron bars laid across the doors hold them fast and are further secured with iron chains fastened with an oversized padlock (Disable Device DC 30). After the lock and chains are dealt with, prying the bars loose requires a successful DC 18 Strength check. Adventurers who fail to use stealth when approaching this entrance attract the attention of the creatures in area **H5**.

West of the landing here stands a small courtyard where a fresco depicts a stylized map of the nearby underground tunnels. The fresco obscures a secret door hidden in the stone wall that leads to area **H5**; it can be spotted with a successful DC 20 Perception check.

Creatures: Three darkmantles lurk among the stalactites of this cavern, waiting to drop on whatever living things climb the staircase toward Deepscar's entrance.

DARKMANTLES (3)

CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 15 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 55)

H2. The Watcher's Arch (CR 2)

A pair of octagonal watchtowers stands on either side of the great stairs leading to Deepscar. On the second level, narrow archers' windows ring the tower perimeters. At this same level, suspended between the towers, a high curved arch crosses above the staircase. The arch is carved with hundreds of thick and ancient inscrutable runes, along with the faces of six dour-faced dwarven kings, three to a side.

Creature: There is a 50% chance that a dark creeper occupies this tower, watching over the outer cavern for signs of intruders. If he catches sight of invaders, he immediately rushes to tell the dark stalker in area **H23**. If he's not there, the creeper lurks in area **H8**.

DARK CREEPER

CR 2

XP 600

hp 19 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 53)

H3. Atrium (CR 3)

A hall lined with six stone pillars leads to stone doors carved with the image of crossed hammers, as well as a single line of Dwarven runes. Above the door is an arch embossed with the faces of six dwarves, which match those on the arch in area **H2**. The central block of each pillar is also ringed

with these faces. Anyone who fiddles with one of the central blocks discovers that it can be rotated.

Trap: The doors are locked from the inside by an iron drop bar rigged to a complex gear mechanism inside the walls. The doors can be opened with a successful DC 25 Disable Device check, but doing so triggers a trap. The trap targets any creature that attempts to open the door without first correctly rotating the faces on the central block.

The runes on the door read, “Enter in the order of our elders,” providing a clue to bypassing the trap. Rotating the faces on each stone pillar so the correct face looks toward the corridor—they should match the order of the faces above the arch—unlocks the door and disables the trap.

SPONTANEOUS IMMOLATION TRAP

CR 3

XP 800

Type magic; Perception DC 27; Disable Device DC 27

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (*alarm*); **Reset** none

Effect spell effect (*spontaneous immolation*^{uc}, 3d6 fire damage and target catches on fire, Fortitude DC 13 for half and target doesn't catch on fire)

H4. Long Hall

This hall is similar in design to area H3 but longer, and has stone double doors exiting on either side. The doors open into this room, but drop bars keep them held fast. The drop bars can be lifted with a successful DC 13 Strength check.

Treasure: At the far end of this hall, a huge geode rests on a dais. The geode weighs nearly a ton, and most of the valuable green garnets inside of it have already been removed. Still, for every 10 minutes a PC spends salvaging the inside of the geode, she can attempt a DC 15 Craft (stoneworking) check to scavenge tsavorite scraps worth 2d4 × 10 gp from the rock. After three successful scavenges, the geode is depleted.

H5. Muster Room (CR 5)

This room once served as a mustering area for Deepscar's guards.

Creatures: Currently, three dark creepers keep watch over this section of the keep, using old crossbow murder holes to keep watch over the main entrance. If they spot anyone, they immediately rush to their leader Enat in area H23, placing the rest of their kinfolk on high alert for intruders.

DARK CREEPERS (3)

CR 2

XP 600 each

hp 19 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 53)

Treasure: The keep's current occupants shoved piles of old gear into a corner of this room, including some rusted suits of armor and a strange spherical device that turns

To Arms!

The following encounters can be used to add excitement or intrigue to an adventure set in Highhelm.

Burner Patrols (CR 5): Visitors flying into Highhelm may inadvertently catch the eye of burner patrols if they fail to send prior notice of their arrival. Each burner patrol consists of a trio of dwarven soldiers (LN dwarf fighters 3) who patrol the Ledge at all times, keeping a sharp lookout for any dangerous creatures flying toward the city. On a large pull cart, the soldiers drag a heavy ballista and plenty of ammo. If they spot anything strange approaching, they work together to hoist and load the ballista before firing first and asking questions later.

Baelim's Hunters (CR 7): If the PCs have gotten themselves in trouble with the law in Highhelm and they haven't made amends with the appropriate authorities, they'll likely find that a bounty has been placed on their head. In this instance, the notorious Baelim the Black has set out a band of four urban bounty hunters (LE dwarf rangers 4) to hunt down the PCs, capture them, and bring them back to the Broch.

out to be an empty Deepscar powder ball (see Threats on page 39).

H6. Courtyard (CR 3)

Creatures: The dark stalker now in charge of Deepscar ordered her underlings to capture a pair of gryphs and let them loose here.

GRYPHS (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 15 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 150)

H7. Priest's Room (CR 5)

Creatures: This room once served as the private quarters for Deepscar's high priest of Torag, but a pair of dark slayers recently seized it when their clan took over the dwarven keep.

DARK SLAYERS (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 22 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 75)

Development: While they serve the keep's current ruler, the dark slayers here eagerly seek to overthrow her and take command of the keep for themselves. For this reason, the slayers refrain from fighting the PCs and instead offer them a deal—all of the treasures of Deepscar in exchange for the death of Enat. Of course, the dark slayers have no plans to keep their end of the bargain.

H8. Antechamber

This room served as an antechamber to the watchtower.

Creature: If the dark creeper wasn't encountered in the watcher's arch (area H2) earlier, he can be found here, lurking about. As soon as he spots intruders, he attacks.

H9. Chapel

Three wooden benches face a small stone altar resting on a slightly raised dais in this room. A stone statue in the northwestern corner depicts a forge with a brace of hammers hanging above it.

H10. Storage Room (CR 4)

Once a storage room, this chamber now contains only a few empty barrels and crates. The door to the room is locked with a simple lock that can be opened with a successful DC 20 Disable Device check.

Creatures: As the dark folk were clearing out Deepscar to claim it for themselves, they came across a pair of blindheims lairing in this abandoned chamber, and they quickly locked the creatures in here before they could be blinded by the blindheims' luminous stares. Now the hungry blindheims attack anything that comes into their lonely domain.

BLINDHEIMS (2)

CR 2

XP 600 each

hp 22 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2 46*)

H11. Fungus Cultivation Room

Stagnant, putrid-smelling water coated with a fungal slime covers this room's sunken floor. Once used to cultivate edible fungus, the room has long since fallen into disrepair. Anyone who wades through the 2-foot-deep morass or otherwise touches the water risks contracting filth fever (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook 557*).

H12. The Forge (CR 3)

At the far side of this room stands a large forge beside a filthy coal box. Two anvils stand before an empty tool rack, which in turn face a large metal statue of a dwarven smith.

Creature: The statue in this room is actually a forge guardian built by the dwarves in case intruders made it this far into the keep. It animates and attacks if any non-dwarves enter the room.

MEDIUM ANIMATED OBJECT

CR 3

XP 800

hp 36 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 14*)

SQ construction points (metal)

H13. Common Barracks

Rows of old wooden bunks line the walls of this room. A few chests lie bashed open and have been emptied of their contents.

H14. Commander's Quarters (CR 3)

Mold-spotted tapestries partition this room, one side of which holds a bed and an old dresser, while the other side contains a work desk and a small bookshelf.

Creature: A single dark slayer occupies this room. At night, the slayer sleeps in the rickety bed, while during his active hours he works over strange, mostly nonsensical arcane writings on the work desk.

DARK SLAYER

CR 3

XP 800

hp 22 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2 75*)

Treasure: As with the other rooms in Deepscar, most of the personal contents in here were taken long ago. Characters who succeed at a DC 16 Perception check while searching the work desk locate a false bottom in one of the drawers. Beneath the false bottom hides a forgotten *ring of maniacal devices* (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide 292*).

H15. Armory

Treasure: Weapon and armor racks occupy most of the space within this room. While the dwarves carted away the majority of their equipment, they left behind two suits of dwarven scale mail, three heavy steel shields, 12 warhammers, three battleaxes, and an unfinished cold iron dwarven urgrosh. A successful DC 25 Craft (weapons) check is needed to complete the urgrosh; otherwise, it's worth only its weight in cold iron.

H16. Alchemy Lab

The labels on the empty jars on the shelves lining this room indicate they once held samples of edible fungus, though any content appears to have turned to dust long ago.

Treasure: Beneath a stone basin along the northern wall of this room lies a case holding six flasks of alchemist's fire. A powder ball sits on a bench in this room, and tacked on a nearby panel hangs a roughly drawn diagram describing the process for operating the dwarven war device.

H17. Feast Hall

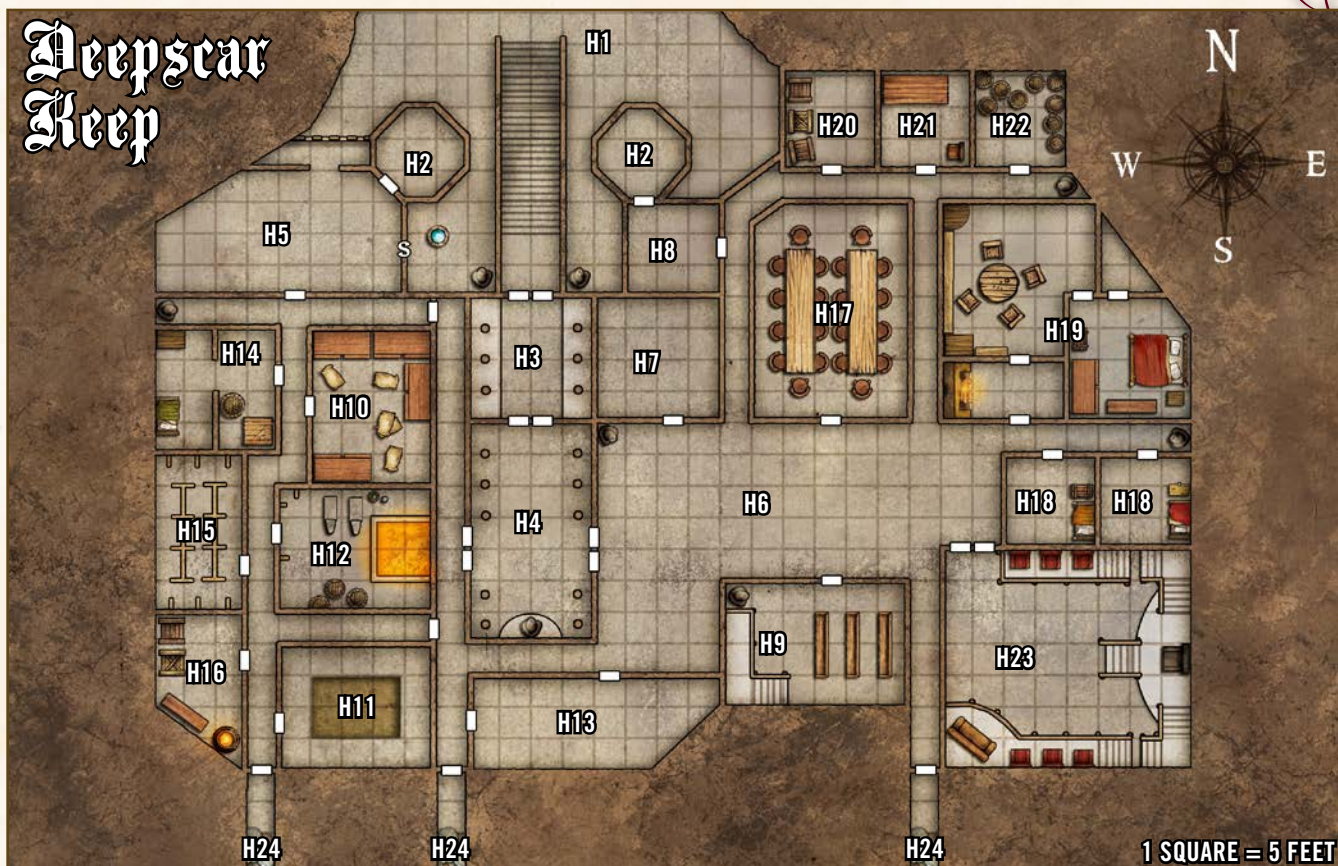
Long wooden tables, scarred and stained from centuries of festivities, fill this former feast hall.

H18. Lord's Guard's Chamber

These rooms once housed the lord's personal guards. Each now contains only a bed frame and small empty chest with the top smashed open.

H19. Lord's Chambers

This large room once served as the private chambers of the dwarven lord in charge of Deepscar. It is partitioned into three sections, the first of which served as a waiting



room used to screen guests or hold conversations outside the lord's personal space. The second room functioned as a lounge area, where he could entertain guests or hold a secret council. The last area served as the lord's inner, private quarters, and connects to a sizable (but empty) closet. The room contains only a large bed and some shelves; everything of value taken with the dwarves when they left to found Highhelm.

H20. Kitchen

This room holds three stone cooking hearths. One contains a large roasting spit, another is simply an open cooking fire, and the third is fitted with a sizable cauldron. Smaller pots and utensils hang from pegs on the walls.

H21. Prep Room

The northern wall of this room is occupied by a butcher's table scarred with cleaver marks and stained with old blood. A sharpening block holds a small collection of skinning, boning, and carving knives.

H22. Ale Room

Empty ale barrels fill this room. From pegs on the walls hang wooden tap mallets and shunts, along with a small collection of old tankards and chipped drinking horns.

H23. Throne Room (CR 6)

Short flights of stairs climb to the 5-foot-high skyboxes that line the sides of this throne room. The throne is carved from a single chunk of gray granite, and has a glyph of crossed hammers carved in its headpiece.

Creatures: A dark stalker named Enat has claimed the throne of Deepscar and lords over her clan of dark folk from the throne here. At all times, a pair of dark creepers follow her around, acting as her personal bodyguards.

ENAT CR 4

XP 1,200

Dark stalker (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 54)

hp 39

DARK CREEPERS (2) CR 2

XP 600 each

hp 19 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 53)

H24. Outer Doors

The dwarves collapsed these doors when they left to prevent the beasts of the Darklands from following their migration to the worlds of light. How much effort it would take to unearth one of the passages and where it might lead is left to the GM's discretion.



ICERIFT CASTLE

“If it’s answers about Icerift you’re looking for, don’t even bother asking the crusaders. You’ll be lucky to find a one of them that even knows what you’re talking about, and that one will tell you Icerift’s just a tale. After the massacre, the crusaders removed all mention of it from their records. You know when the reinforcements finally arrived they found all of Icerift’s occupants dead, right? Even the horses... even the dogs. Those who remember blame demons, but it wasn’t. If it had been a demon, they’d have killed it. Their killer was far worse.”

—Iobarian Lorekeeper, Vjnnor

Fierce, algid winds scream down the scarred glacial ice cliffs from the Crown of the World like a pack of rabid, savage dogs. Nearly year-round, darkness swallows the mountains, shrouding them beneath a frigid blanket of ice and death. Lost within the tallest peaks of this desolate world lie the shattered remains of Icerift Castle. This forbidding stronghold was built during the First Mendevian Crusade and abandoned thereafter. The knowledge of its existence has nearly been expunged from recorded history. Icerift Castle stands tall and threatening, a fortress of the damned infested with primal, white-furred goblinoids that hunt humans for sport and offer up their gory remains to a dark and powerful winter spirit.

Much of what the xenophobic tribes who live in the region claim about the castle remains suspect. They frequently tell tales of Icerift's horrific inhabitants to drive foreigners from their holy lands or to scare away swindling traders. Other times, they fabricate dark and murderous fables to cover up their own grisly crimes—the tribes have few resources and no qualms when it comes to raiding the caravans of wealthy southlanders.

History

In the early spring of the year 4629 AR, Lord Pernigrais, the second blessed commander of the newly founded city Drezen, received orders to take his battalion, the Griffon's Watch, to establish a new fortress in northern Mendev. The new castle was intended to be one link in a chain of fortresses along Mendev's western border, each one housing and protecting a *wardstone*—a magical, rune-emblazoned menhir that's used to hold back the Worldwound's demonic scourge.

In addition to his own 200 soldiers, Pernigrais was accompanied by small crew of architects and nearly 40 stalwart stonemasons, all left to his charge. Pernigrais and his charges arrived during the spring thaw, and their initial attempts to construct a cliff-side fortification met with disaster when the construction triggered a rockslide. Undeterred, they waited until the weather warmed, then relaunched their efforts. By early fall, they had progressed quickly on the structure, but again tragedy struck. The winter snows fell early, slowing construction and cutting off their supply routes. Though their stores of food were full, enough to last the winter at least, there was no way to finish the construction. They were forced to secure what they had and tie down what they could before the full wrath of winter fell upon them. The winter came long and hard, and Pernigrais lost almost a third of his troops to sickness and the biting cold.

During the same winter, authorities in Nerosyan concluded that Icerift was too remote and the weather too

unpredictable to be safely supplied and maintained. That spring, Queen Galfrey sent a small patrol to Icerift to help Pernigrais close down the castle and escort the remainder of his troops and building crew back to Kenabres.

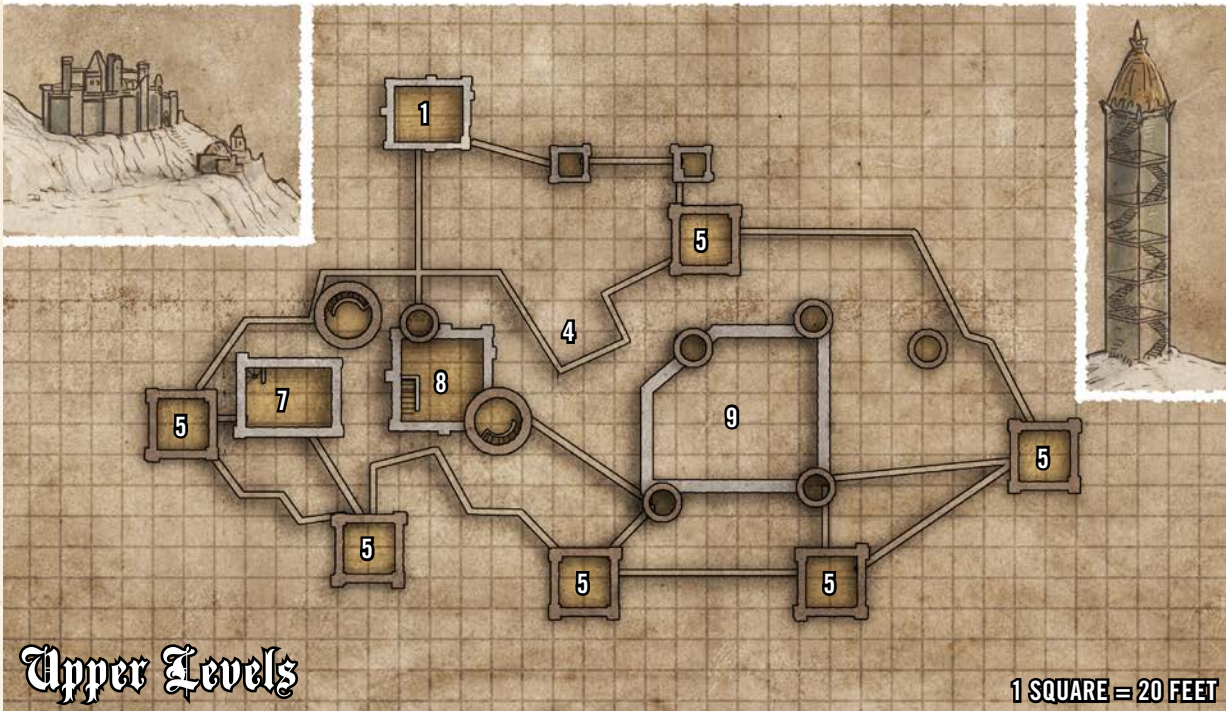
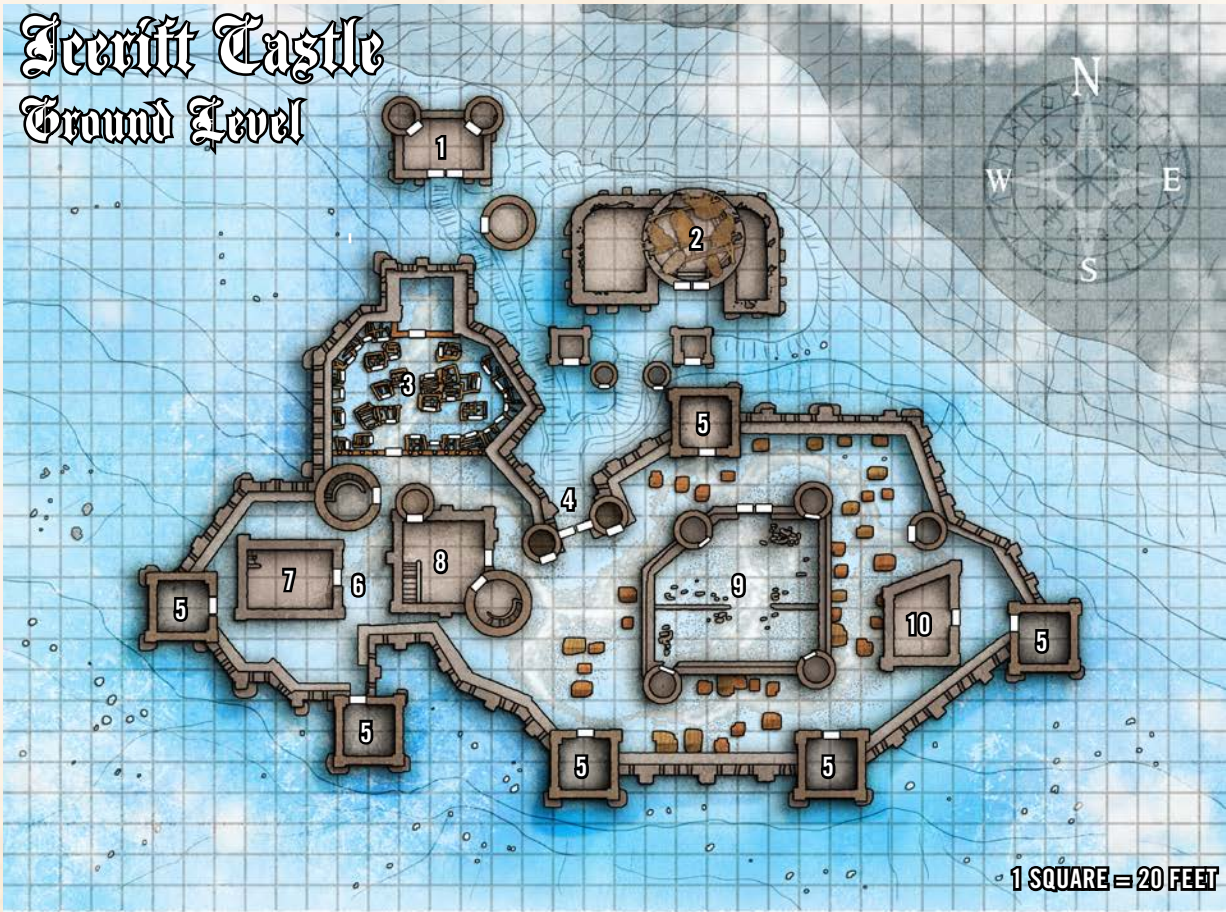
Upon their arrival, the queen's soldiers found the gates locked, and no guards came to receive them. They called out, and after receiving no answer, decided to send a few climbers to scale the walls. The climbers were unprepared to face the sight of the horrific slaughter within. Frost-rimed corpses were scattered everywhere, even lying in the bailey and impaled upon towers and ramparts. Entrails streamed from the brutally hacked-up carcasses, and jagged, broken bones poked through the savaged flesh. Great arcs of gore were splattered across the courtyards and the keep's buildings, staining the snowdrifts almost black with blood.

Before the soldiers could investigate further, a low and doleful howl rose from the distance—one that crept into their flesh and nearly burst their hearts with terror. The soldiers leaped from the wall, one officer plummeting to his death on the stones below, another breaking both his legs. The party's healers tried to help the latter, setting his limbs and giving him strong drink to ease the pain.

Eventually, the injured man passed out, though only hours later he began convulsing in his sleep. One of the priests tried to calm him, but the officer awoke in a crazed state and viciously bit the priest's face, tearing out a chunk of his right cheek and falling upon him in a cannibalistic frenzy. The screams drew others to the cleric's aid. Though they tried to pull the crazed soldier from him, by the time they pried him loose he had devoured nearly half the cleric's body. In a burst of unnatural strength, the frenzied man hoisted himself up on his broken legs and began running at full speed, suddenly lifting into the air as his legs burned off, leaving only charred and blackened stumps. The remaining troops raced back to Kenabres. Upon hearing their reports, their leaders branded Icerift a taboo area and expunged all records of their failed attempts to erect the castle.

For the next few decades, Icerift Castle remained abandoned. Only recently has it again crept back to life. Under the tyrannical and domineering leadership of their sadistic shaman, Ugmitok, a tribe of arctic bugbears known as wikkawaks recently claimed Icerift Castle as their own. Ugmitok saw Icerift in a dream bestowed on her by the malevolent monster she worships—the wendigo spawned from the horrible massacre at the fortress nearly a century before. Ugmitok demands that all in her tribe worship the wendigo, and she has discovered she can call the wendigo down from the icy mountains by sounding a great horn. She enforces her authority through terror, sacrificing all who oppose her to the creature's voracious hunger.

Deeritt Castle Ground Level



Upper Levels

Description

Though Icerift Castle is less than a century old, the brutal conditions of the far north have beaten much of it to ruin. Howling winds and freezing temperatures make the surrounding lands inhospitable, and natural resources there amount to little more than ice and rock. Only the summer brings faint respite, and even then permafrost prevents any considerable vegetative growth. The leaders of the wikkawaks primarily stay in the ice caves beneath the castle, where they also keep a number of vicious polar bears.

Hideous cracks from the expansion of thawing ice and glacial protrusions scar Icerift's walls. Great blocks of stone lie torn from the ramparts, especially in those areas where the architects failed to finish the construction, leaving much of the work without crucial structural reinforcements. Buildings and siege walls also suffer from similar deterioration. The castle's current residents, the primitive wikkawaks, use whatever materials they can scrounge to fill in the holes. They mix blood, mud, and urine into a vile concretion that they shape into crude bricks that harden once the putrid fluids freeze. Other sections of siege walls have other macabre repairs, such as piles of skulls cemented to the rocks with frozen gore and covered in layers of ice.

A series of skywalks connects the siege walls of the Upper Castle, set 20 feet off the ground to avoid the heavy snows. Years of environmental deterioration have left most of the original skywalks badly damaged. Many no longer connect, lying broken and crumbled. The wikkawaks have set to repairing the skywalks using their most plentiful resources—the bones, hides, and flesh left behind after the wendigo's feasts. Macabre footbridges of bone woven together with entrails span gaps in the stonework. Though the towers remain standing, their stability remains questionable. Those lacking roofs have suffered the most damage. Precariously cracked, these towers have large gaps in sections where floors have collapsed beneath the weight of heavy snows.

1. Barbican: This heavily fortified barbican was built to serve as the primary gatehouse for Icerift Castle. Its great wooden siege gates lie sundered, the iron bars behind the gates bent and torn, permitting anyone to squeeze into the ruins. One of the few structures that saw completion, the barbican remains in somewhat decent shape, though its current residents have defaced most of the walls with primitive and disturbing paintings of a hideous, rotting anthropomorphic stag and people attacking and devouring each other. A few feet above the battlements, a wide, arched platform spans the barbican's two reinforced watchtowers. A patrol of wikkawak guards stationed in this area rains down huge chunks of ice upon anyone approaching. A great stairway connects the barbican to both the Lower Castle and Upper Castle, though throughout most of the year snow and ice bury the stairs, keeping them out of sight.

2. Lower Castle: Upon his arrival at the site that would become Icerift, Lord Pernigrais erected this small fortress to serve as his base of operations. Resting on a small ledge that projects from the mountain's face, the fortress consists of a small, single-story dome surrounded by a massive bunker. The crumbled remains of a large, round tower sit closer to the edge, though the top of the tower has been refitted with bone frames stretched with skins to serve as a crude roof. Two square siege towers stand between the Lower Castle and the Upper Castle, and connect to the massive siege towers in sections of the Upper Castle. When Pernigrais and his men constructed the Lower Castle first, they spent a good deal of time making sure it was secure against both the region's brutal climate and any attackers. When Ugmitok (see page 50) took over, she claimed the Lower Castle for herself, and converted twisted passages beneath the Lower Castle to serve as her private sanctuary when she calls forth the wendigo.

3. The Pens: Once the Upper Castle's outer fortification, this area has been walled off from the main structure by the wikkawaks. Here they erected over two dozen oversized, open-topped pens, poorly assembled from bones and gut. When the wikkawaks capture local tribesfolk and caravaneers, they imprison them in these structures. The wikkawaks force the prisoners to partake in a ceremony that Ugmitok calls "the Gorging." During the ceremony, the maddened sacrifices attack and eat each other until only a lone survivor remains to be transformed. Victims that don't transform are eaten by the wendigo. The only intent of the pens is to corral sacrifices, not contain them long-term. The wikkawaks fully expect their victims to break apart the pens during the ceremony, once the wendigo's madness takes them.

Ugmitok also constructed a strange stone device here that looks like several massive, outward-facing funnels, all of which channel into a single central pipe. Part of this contraption passes through the walls of the tower's top level. The device serves as a sort of amplification tube that projects the call of her horn for miles. After sounding her horn, Ugmitok heads directly back to the Lower Castle—and then into her sanctum in the ice caves—before the wendigo arrives.

4. Upper Castle Arch: A great stairway leads from the barbican to the Upper Castle's sole entrance, a half-finished gatehouse. The structure isn't fitted with a portcullis. Instead, the huge, gaping stone archway opens directly into the inner bailey. The wikkawaks decorate the arch by hanging ravaged corpses from the parapets.

Small towers flank the arch. As a tribute to the wendigo, Ugmitok had her wikkawaks carve hideous faces of decomposing elks and other creatures into the facades of both towers to create unnerving, leering totem poles.

5. The Siege Wall: Six immense, square-framed siege towers surround the siege wall. They ascend six floors, and are topped with stone-shingled spires. Most of the upper levels of these towers show extensive damage. Skywalks, originally set just below the height of the outer walls, connect the towers and act as a network of ramparts. Ramparts also run the length of the siege wall. These fortifications remain in comparatively good shape.

6. The Bailey: Since the Upper Keep's construction halted before workers erected any retaining walls, the bailey stretches the length of the entire siege wall. Snow covers the bailey much of the year, leaving deep drifts along the walls, tower bases, and the ruined remains of builders' encampments to the south. Except for the armory and the sentinel keep, the western yard remains entirely empty. The deep drifts can prove treacherous, so whenever the wikkawaks have an overabundance of prisoners, they release some of them into the bailey and set the polar bears upon them for sport.

7. The Armory: The ground floor of this building served as an armory, and the second floor as barracks for an elite group of paladins. The barracks connect to

the adjacent towers by skywalks. Much of the top floor has collapsed, leaving a precipitous drop to the armory below. When the wikkawaks first discovered the armory, they raided most of the crusaders' valuable armor and weaponry. Currently, four CR 7 wikkawaks (CE wikkawak rogues 4) watch the armory.

8. Sentinel Keep: This small keep served as the private quarters of the Iomedaen knights. Crusaders used the tower's ground floor as a council room and the top floor as an observatory. Since the wikkawaks moved in, they have destroyed everything inside, scrawling profane graffiti on the walls and carving vulgar images throughout the keep. Many of the wikkawaks living in Icerift Castle that don't reside in the ice caves below make their homes here.

9. Pernigrais Keep: Centered within the eastern portion of the bailey stands the unfinished skeleton of Pernigrais Keep. With over 10,000 square feet per floor, the keep was built to be the seat of Mendevian power in the north. Much of the second floor collapsed, leaving chunks of rubble strewn across the hallways. On the first floor, something has bashed a huge hole through the central interior wall.

10. The Wardstone: This squat, single-story stone building with a steep stone roof lies unoccupied in the southern end of the bailey, its two outer doors halfburied in the snow. Rather than dig the structure out, the wikkawaks ignore it. Within this building, the Mendevian crusaders hid Icerift's most precious treasure, one of the *wardstones*. Thankfully, the stone remains functional, and for the last century has kept demons from venturing into this region. The *wardstone* has no effect upon the wendigo, and ironically might even protect him by driving off demonic rivals.

Denizens

The wikkawak shaman Ugmitok (see Threats on page 49) currently lords over Icerift Castle, subjugating her followers through fear and the brute force of her elite cadre of wikkawak barbarians, the **Krogmot guards** (CE wikkawak barbarians [armored hulk] 3). Nearly a dozen of these warriors normally reside in the sentinel keep, though they could be encountered anywhere within the castle. They named themselves Krogmot, which loosely translates to "those who paint the snow red with gore." The Krogmot dress in piecemeal heavy armor made of hides and pieces of finely crafted armor scrounged from the plate mail the crusaders left behind in the armory. When not using scavenged armaments, they craft their weapons in a similar fashion, creating morningstars with wicked pieces of broken bone instead of spikes and javelins with heads made from the shards of daggers. Three apprentice shamans support Ugmitok: **Grith** (NE female wikkawak druid 5), **Kuumo** (CE male wikkawak oracle 4), and **Nathru**



(NE male wikkawak druid 3/ranger 2). A mangy wikkawak called **Troag One-Eye** (NE female wikkawak ranger 5/rogue 2) acts as the Krogmots' de facto commander. A sadistic creature who delights in collecting heads, Troag is slightly more disciplined than the rest of the Krogmot, making her far more manipulative and dangerous.

The wikkawak druids live in the outer chambers of the Lower Castle and in the caves below the complex. As a group, they distinguish themselves by wearing the bones and skins of their sacrifices. Ugmitok keeps a close watch on her druids, because if they decided to turn on her, they would pose a significant threat to her authority. For this reason, she rarely lets any of her druids gather much power, and if one does, she immediately sacrifices him. Brainwashed acolytes desire to be sacrificed, and consider it a great honor to finally face the terrible destruction of the wendigo. Ugmitok teaches that if they accept the wendigo's madness and consume all others, they will rise above mortality, make the cloud run, and transform into wendigos themselves.

The eldest of the current shaman acolytes, Nathru, has been preparing for his upcoming windwalking. He spends most of his time up by the pens. In contrast, Grith and Kuumo rarely leave the Lower Castle, and occupy themselves with their primary task: helping Ugmitok train polar bears as trackers and hunters.

Ugmitok uses the polar bears to rout small settlements and track caravans. Shamans fit the great beasts in gory harnesses, and let the beasts' fur become matted with dried blood. Though the creatures are natural hunters, they must be trained not to eat their prey. Instead, Ugmitok incorporates them as part of her hunt for sacrifices. Once the bears locate a target, the tribe rallies and attacks with clubs and nets, beating down their prey and dragging it back to Icerift to be sacrificed while angry winds and deep snows erase all evidence of their savagery. Seemingly fearless, the wikkawaks target anything from small villages to armored trade caravans, and even raid large, fortified human settlements. Ugmitok has no love for her own kind, and she frequently raids nearby wikkawak tribes, or—when necessary—claims sacrifices from among her own people.

The remainder of Ugmitok's tribe consists of about 30 wikkawaks. Most wikkawaks are largely untrained in the art of war, but their brutish strength makes them formidable foes nonetheless. Most often, they gang up and fight in groups, sneaking up on targets, and then surrounding and flanking them. The results are devastating, especially when the wikkawaks use these tactics against their typical targets, such as caravans and small tribal villages. The tribe members primarily live in the Upper Castle or in the ice caves below, though some individuals and couples claim personal dwellings in the ruins of the smaller buildings in the bailey, and use Perngrais Keep as a sort of common room.

To Arms!

The following encounters can be used to add excitement or intrigue to an adventure set in Icerift Castle.

The Babblers (CR 7): In a lonely section of the castle dwell the spirits of three sacrificial victims. Tortured to madness and slain by the brutal gnashing bites of their own kinfolk, these unfortunate souls rose as advanced allips (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 12). The allips haven't yet moved beyond their haunt, and thus haven't attracted the attention of the wikkawaks. If they sense living creatures approaching, the allips hide in the shadows and try to lure their prey into the ruins, where they can lead the victims astray, corner them, or get them to enter areas that are structurally unsafe before attacking.

Escaped Prisoner (CR 9): A lone prisoner hides within the upper floors of one tower. An lobarian sellsword, **Variska Slovrini** (CN female human fighter 9) managed to escape from the pens weeks earlier. After stealing a sword and a suit of chainmail from the armory, she made her way to the abandoned tower, where she's been biding her time until she can find a way to escape. To survive, she's pilfered meat scraps from the pens and from the bears—meat that happens to be human flesh. Eventually, she succumbed to wendigo psychosis. Now completely mad and almost to the point of undergoing the final transformation, she attacks and attempts to eat any living thing she encounters.

Death from Above (CR 12): Troag One-Eye and a patrol of four Krogmot guards stalk the skywalks, peering down on the baileys, counting prisoners, and urinating into the pens. If they spot intruders, they sneak along the ramparts until they can get directly above the trespassers. Once in position, they rage and drop down onto their victims in an attempt to rip them apart.

Threats

The main dangers in Icerift Castle are the wikkawaks, their polar bears, the wikkawak shamans, and potentially the fearsome wendigo Ugmitok can summon. Ugmitok herself is described below.

Wikkawaks are variant, white-furred bugbears that inhabit the frozen regions of northern Avistan. They're suited to survival in the cold wastes, and can disappear in the snows with uncanny ability. Wikkawaks are CR 4. They have 6 Hit Dice, cold resistance 5, and the following spell-like abilities: at will—*pass without trace* (self only); 3/day *quench*. They also have a special ability that replaces stalker called thuggery, which says that Intimidate and Perception are always class skills for wikkawaks. Wikkawaks gain a +4 racial bonus on Intimidate, Perception, and Stealth checks.

PATHFINDER CAMPAIGN SETTING: CASTLES OF THE INNER SEA

UGMITOK

CR 12

XP 19,200

Female wikkawak druid (arctic druid) 10 (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Classic Monsters Revisited* 8 and *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 98)

CE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent, snowcaster; Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 21 (+7 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 146 (16 HD; 6d8+10d8+74)

Fort +13, **Ref** +12, **Will** +13

Resist cold 5

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +2 spear +17/+12/+7 (1d8+8/x3)

Ranged +2 spear +17/+12/+7 (1d8+6/x3)

Special Attacks wild shape 3/day

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +6)

At will—*pass without trace* (self only)

3/day—*quench*

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +14)

5th—*animal growth* (DC 19), *control winds*

(DC 19)

4th—*air walk*, *ice storm*, *spike stones* (DC 18), *strong jaw*^{APG} (DC 18)

3rd—*greater magic fang*, *dominate animal* (DC 17), *sleet storm*, *stone shape*

2nd—*barkskin*, *chill metal* (DC 16), *flaming sphere* (DC 16), *fog cloud*, *soften earth and stone*

1st—*faerie fire*, *frostbite*^{UM}, *hide from animals*, *longstrider*, *snow shape*^{HOG}

0 (at will)—*create water*, *detect magic*, *light*, *spark*^{APG} (DC 14)

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 19, **Con** 18, **Int** 12, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 30

Feats Augment Summoning, Improved Initiative, Natural Spell, Nimble Moves, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Spell Focus (conjuration), Vital Strike

Skills Climb +8, Fly +8, Handle Animal +10, Heal +17, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (geography) +13, Knowledge (nature) +16, Perception +17, Stealth +15, Survival +15;

Racial Modifiers +4 Intimidate, +4 Perception, +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Giant, Goblin

SQ arctic endurance, arctic native, icewalking, nature bond (polar bear animal companion), nature sense, snowcaster, thuggery, wild empathy +12

Combat Gear *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of invisibility*; **Other Gear** +3 *hide armor*, +2 *spear*, *ring of protection* +1, 633 gp

Driven by belligerence, the monstrous shaman Ugmitok dominates Icerift Castle's denizens, enforcing her demented religion and damning her people and prisoners alike to the wendigo's foul curse.

Though the shaman has figured out how to call the wendigo, she wields no control over the beast. Once she sounds her horn's summoning blast, she flees to her sanctum in the ice caves below the castle.

The Ice Caves

Beneath the Lower Castle, the wikkawaks carved out a series of catacombs to shelter Ugmitok and her inner circle of warriors and shamans when she calls forth the wendigo. The passage and cave walls consist of frozen, rocky soil, and in most areas the floor is composed of packed earth and bedrock. During midsummer, the walls sometimes thaw and soften, causing occasional collapses. The catacombs run from the Lower Castle's cellar, and lead to a natural cavern in a cleft in the mountain face. After their raids, the wikkawaks take the spoils to this cavern and bring the sacrifices up the great stair to the pens. Ugmitok posts three Krogmot guards at the external cavern entrance.

The ice caves are a suitable adventuring location for a group of four 10th-level PCs.



Ugmitok

11. The Cellar (CR 8)

Within the Lower Castle, a concealed doorway hides a short flight of stairs that leads to a small, stone-lined cellar. A masterwork lock keeps the sturdy oaken door leading to the cellar secure. Ugmitok, her three shaman acolytes, and Troag One-Eye each have a key.

Creatures: At all times, four wikkawaks defend this chamber. Most of the time, they play a game called “gouger,” in which they take turns trying to poke out each other’s eyes while blindfolded. A second door leads to area **I2**.

WIKKAWAKS (4)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 33 each (see page 49)

Treasure: Anyone who searches the room can find the wikkawaks’ stash—an iron lockbox with 1,000 gold coins, 2,500 gp worth of gems and jewelry, a jug of strong liquor, and some wooden cups. Anyone looking over the cups who succeeds at a DC 18 Perception check finds a crudely carved phrase on the bottom of one of the cups. It reads, in Goblin, “The night winds scream open,” and is the password that gets the guard in area **I4** to open her door.

12. Cellar Stairs (CR 9)

A locked, reinforced door seals off this room. It opens with the same key that opens the door in area **I1**. Beyond lies a room just big enough to accommodate a long flight of stairs leading down into the ice caves below. Anyone attempting to move down the ice-slickened stairs faster than her base speed in a single round must succeed at a DC 20 Acrobatics check to avoid tripping and tumbling into the door of blades (see area **I3**).

Trap: Anyone opening the door without the key triggers a hail of arrows trap (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 421).

13. Door of Blades (CR 4)

A gruesome metal door blocks the main passage leading into the ice caves. It looks like an amalgam of old weaponry reforged into a drawbridge-like structure. From the opposite side, Grot the Deranged (see area **I4**) controls the door and can cause it to slam down quickly to crush intruders. A sliding panel serves as a peephole so she can see anyone approaching. A collection of sharpened steel blades lines the exterior surface of the door. A drop bar on the opposite side holds it fast. Grot lowers the door safely for anyone who speaks the password (found in area **I1**) in Goblin.

14. Guardian Chamber (CR 12)

Within this room stand three large stones, each sacred to one of the tribe’s shaman apprentices. Crude markings such as whorls and notches cover each stone. These markings record the acolyte’s sacrifices and the number of

Adventure Hooks

The following adventure hooks can help GMs involve their players with Icerift Castle.

The Crusade Continues: A brash fledgling knight has recovered a lost text hidden by a long-dead priest who opposed to the church’s decision to expunge it from the records. The scroll sharply criticizes the church’s superstitions and derides the utter waste and foolishness of leaving the *wardstone* unprotected. This text has left the church in an uproar, as officials argue over the scroll’s validity and whether to explore Icerift or just burn the scroll. Now one of the church’s higher-ranking priests has decided to resolve the issue himself, before his colleagues reach a final decision. To avoid complications, he decides to hire adventurers to make a covert strike raid on Icerift Castle, recover whatever artifacts they can, and ensure the *wardstone*’s safety.

Howl of the Wendigo: The hearty Erutaki who live at the Crown of the World have been fleeing south, looking for shelter in the wake of several brutal and gory attacks on their small, isolated communities. At first, people started disappearing, but more recently many have become stricken with madness and have attacked and devoured each other. Each time, the haunting sounds of a strange horn precedes the attack. The people believe that a powerful shaman lurks within the northern wilds and has mastered the ability to summon the dreadful wendigo.

days remaining before the acolyte must sacrifice herself in order to undergo the transformation into a wendigo.

A strong wooden door blocks the only visible exit. The unlocked door leads to area **I5**.

Creature: Within this small chamber lurks an eerily hunched wikkawak known as **Grot the Deranged** (CE female wikkawak rogue 6). Half of her face is paralyzed, making her speech an indecipherable mumble, and strands of drool leak constantly from her lower lip.

Trap: If alerted or alarmed, Grot peeks through the door to area **I3**. If she spots anyone directly on the other side, she immediately pulls a lever that causes the outer door to slam down on anyone directly in front of it. Then she resets the lever, raising the blade-door back to the ready position as a full-round action.

DOOR OF BLADES

CR 10

XP 9,600

Type mechanical; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger manual (see above); Reset manual

Effect slamming metal drawbridge door covered with sword blades (3d6 bludgeoning and 6d6 slashing damage; Reflex DC 25 half); multiple targets (all targets in front of the door)

15. The Ice Hall

Hard rime covers the entirety of this long, stone passage. On either side, more passages branch off. The easternmost end of the hall empties into a small alcove. Within the alcove, rickety stairs leads down a curved and icy slope to lower, uninhabited natural caves.

16. Lower Watch

A gate of wooden spears tied shut with a cord blocks this passage. Beyond, a short flight of very steep steps climbs to a small cave. A cask of beeswax sits on the floor. The wikkawaks use the beeswax to plug their ears when the wendigo begins its doleful moan.

17. Store Room

A strong wooden door locked with a masterwork lock protects this cold store room. Assorted spoils seized from hundreds of raids on caravans and small villages sit in piles against the walls. Much of the booty—such as grain, blankets, and clothing—is useless to wikkawaks, and has been pushed toward the back so ale casks, tusks, rope, steel tools, and similarly useful items can sit more to the front. Against another wall lies a large wooden crate. Its open top reveals its gruesome contents: piles of frozen, severed heads.

18. The Grotto of Ice

The door to this area is locked. Though they're rarely here, this room is where Ugmitok's apprentices sleep. Only those tribe members within Ugmitok's inner circle are permitted beyond this hallway.

19. Ice Stairs (CR 8)

Ugmitok had this staircase protected with a trap.

Trap: About halfway down the steps, a hidden plate triggers a massive block of ice and stone that falls onto the ice-carved stairs, crushing trespassers and turning the passage into a slick, debris-filled chute. After the trap is sprung, the stairs are considered difficult terrain. In addition, anyone navigating the stairs after the trap goes off must succeed at a DC 20 Reflex save to avoid slipping. A bypass was built into the trap: pressing a stone embedded into the wall prevents the trap from going off for the next 4 rounds, giving plenty of time to navigate the stairway safely.

ICE BLOCK TRAP

CR 8

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 25

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** repair; **Bypass** stone in area 19

Effect Atk +15 melee (10d6 bludgeoning damage and 2d6 cold damage); multiple targets in a 10-foot-by-20-foot area in the middle of the stairway

110. The Armory

A large stone blocks this passage, serving as a primitive door. Moving the rock aside requires a successful DC 25 Strength check. This is where the wikkawaks use rocks to hammer apart old half-plate to fashion into suits of piecemeal armor.

111. The Carrion Effigy

Within this antechamber stands a hideous statue of the wendigo, sculpted entirely from hacked-off parts of decaying animals.

112. The Hornsman

A Krogmot guard keeps watch over this cave. A mask sewn from layers of animal fur covers his nose and mouth to protect him from the carrion golem's odor. Tasked with sounding alarms, the guard carries a trumpet carved from a hollowed-out human thighbone. As soon as he spots intruders, he sounds his horn, alerting the rest of the occupants of the ice caves.

113. The Crafters (CR 9)

Four Krogmot guards work busily at cleaning a huge pile of bones, sharpening them, and fastening them onto bands of leather to make gore harnesses for the polar bears.

Creatures: Working with bone tools, the wikkawaks sit on hide-covered stones and hold sheets of tanned skin in their laps. If the alarm sounds, they roll the stone stools in front of the door, then flank the entrance, readying to throw the skins over intruders. Also within this room is a rope switch that connects to the gates in area 115.

WIKKAWAKS (4)

CR 4

XP 1,200 each

hp 33 each (see page 49)

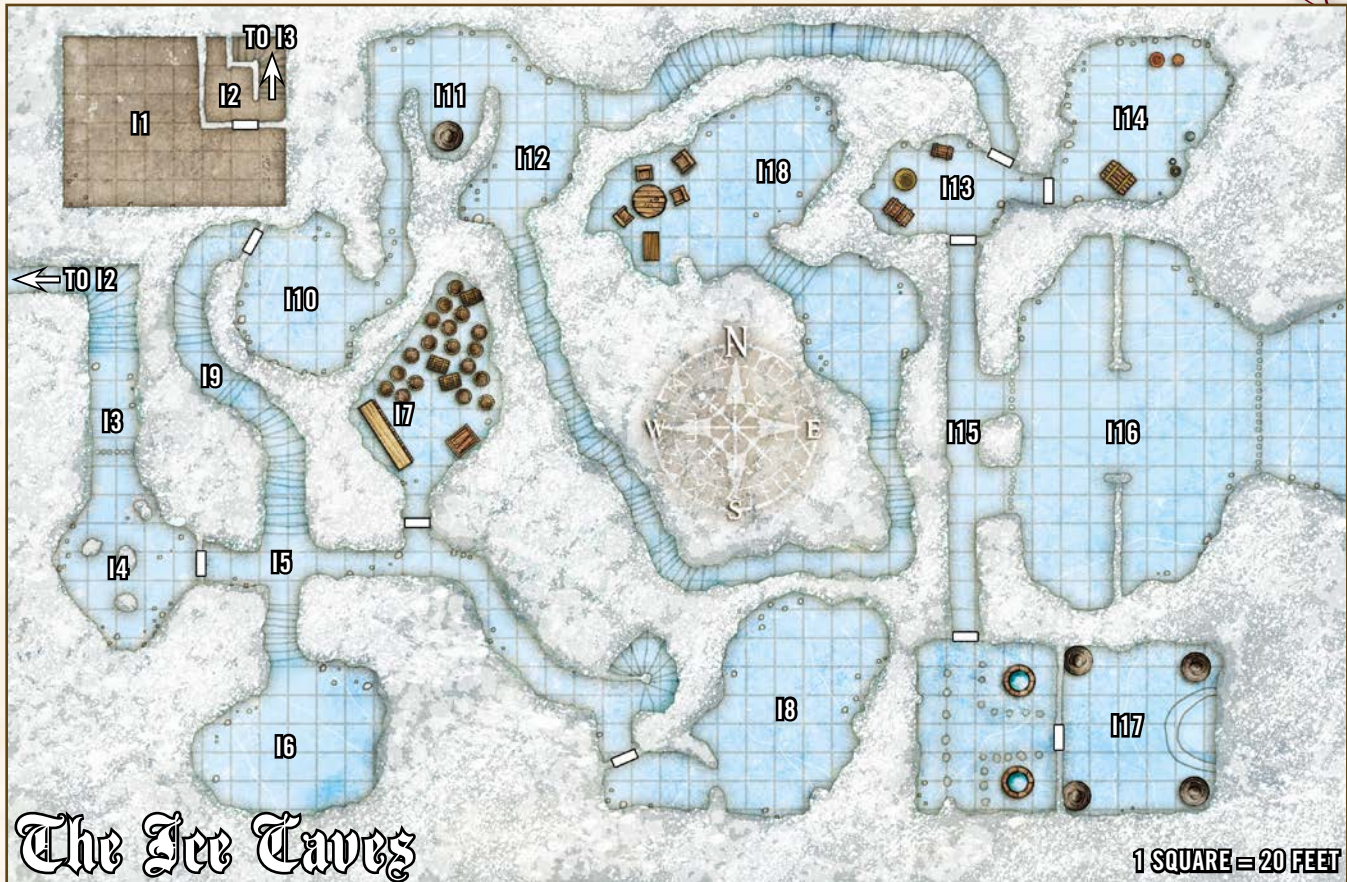
114. Bear Speaker (CR 7)

The private chamber of apprentice shaman Nathru is sparsely furnished, containing only a sleeping pallet, four large clay urns, and a flat-topped rock Nathru uses as a table. The urns hold Nathru's personal possessions, which include his robes, a helm fashioned from a bear's skull and rows of bear claws, a sack holding a few semiprecious gems, and the gnawed remains of several human bodies.

Creature: When encountered, Nathru (see Denizens) wears bone-spiked hide armor and wields a stone-headed +1 *mace*. If Nathru hears any commotion, he rushes to back up the guards in area 113.

115. The Cage Hall

The wikkawaks reinforced this passage with boulders and blocks of ruined stone taken from the siege walls. Two



The Ice Caves

1 SQUARE = 20 FEET

side alcoves with 5-foot ceilings lead to the adjacent polar bear cave. Gates made from tightly bound logs reinforced with bits of scrap metal block these passages. The gates can be opened with a latch pin, or by the emergency switch in area I13. The builders deliberately carved the passages with dimensions that would be cramped for the polar bears to make it more difficult for them to enter the rest of the compound, though the beasts can squeeze through in a round if someone releases them. At the extreme southern end of the passage is a locked, sturdy wooden door. Only Ugmitok and her shaman apprentices have keys that grant access to the area beyond.

I16. The Polar Bear Cave (CR 10)

This large natural cave smells of blood and animal feces.

Creatures: Five polar bears, each fitted with a gory harness, reside in this large cave. Short stone partitions divide the cave into two sections. The cave empties into a larger cavern, providing an exit to the cliff face below the Lower Castle.

POLAR BEARS (5)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

Advanced grizzly bear (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 31, 294)

hp 52 each

I17. Temple

The temple includes two rooms: an entryway and a sanctum. In the entryway, scores of cracked skulls illuminated by candles line a well-maintained path. This path passes between two large clay urns filled with bones, and then terminates at the arched, open doorway to the sanctum.

I18. Shaman Lair (CR 12)

This cavern is the home and sanctuary of Ugmitok. Half-eaten corpses of numerous humanoids, including some of the very wikkawaks she leads, lie piled in the corners of the room. Decorated with furs, skins, and various pieces of furniture stolen during raids on caravans, the room also contains Ugmitok's most prized possessions: her wendigo-calling horn, scores of offerings, grisly tokens of her kills and sacrifices, and stashes of gold and precious gems.

Creature: Ugmitok spends her time in her chambers gently caressing her treasures and dreaming of the next time she can call the wendigo.

UGMITOK

CR 12

XP 19,200

Female wikkawak druid (arctic druid) 10 (see page 50)

hp 146



SKYBORNE KEEP

“A violent storm loomed on the horizon, dark as night. Lightning arced in all directions. A shadow encroached upon us. I knew it could only be those brigand giants. We sounded alarms; brave soldiers and commoners together mustered defenses. Hordes of winged creatures blackened the sky above us. Everyone was thinking the same thing: What could we do against that floating fortress? And yet we stood strong... until their second wave crushed all hope.”

—Selegar, Pathfinder

Disguised as a gray, roiling storm cloud, Skyborne Keep floats above the Inner Sea, raiding settlements and shipping vessels alike. From its earliest days as a mysterious castle up in the mountains to its first appearance floating above a human settlement, it has instilled both wonder and fear in the hearts of even the bravest adventurers. Since giants seized control of the castle 10 years ago, they've raided the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, northern Varisia, and expanses of the Arcadian Ocean like behemoth pirates in a stone fortress ship. Those sailing along Avistan's west coast with artifacts and wealth in their holds have learned to keep an eye on the horizon, watching for this dreadful storm and harbinger of doom.

History

Little more than 100 years ago, the first reports of Skyborne Keep began flowing in. Nestled high up in the Stormspear Mountains, the castle was hidden away, far from the eyes of any mortal creature. Then one day, an adventuring party seeking a pass through the mountains to escape the fury of a white dragon caught a glimpse of the structure through the clouds. What astounded its discoverers, beyond it being shrouded atop such a remote mountain, was that it appeared to be well kept—it wasn't the typical half-collapsed ruin one would expect to find in the wild.

Decades later, the Pathfinder Society caught wind of this interesting discovery, and promptly dispatched a group of researchers and chroniclers to the site to uncover the castle's secrets. Given its massive size and scale, the castle was clearly made for giants, and the statues and marble-and-ivory architecture in the clearing surrounding the castle pointed toward cloud giants in particular. Though the Pathfinders sent numerous expeditions to the castle to learn who built it and how long it had been there, its origins remained a mystery.

Ten years ago, word of the mysterious Skyborne Keep finally reached the ears of the evil storm giant Lona Orames. Having recently overtaken a tribe of evil cloud giants through force and manipulation, she jumped at this new opportunity: an ancient cloud giant castle from which she could rule her tribe. Orames knew she could solidify her leadership of her new tribe and gain the respect of her peers if she obtained this treasure. Riding in on roc mounts and accompanied by a hundred harpy allies, the cruel giants flew into the Stormspear Mountains and assaulted the Pathfinders as they studied Skyborne Keep. It was a difficult battle—while the men and women of the Pathfinder Society had the defenses of a large castle to protect them, the giants had superior

strength and numbers. In the end, the small group of Pathfinders fell, and the giants seized control of Skyborne Keep.

In the control room of the castle, however, lurked Bastian Saloni, a half-elf scholar. In his blind desire for power, Saloni had decided to betray the other Pathfinders at the site and take the castle himself. Saloni believed he had discovered how to operate the control room's mechanisms and the secrets to activating the cannon golems atop the structure's towers. So absorbed was he in his work that the half-elf ignored the battle and remained deep in study of the controls of this magnificent castle.

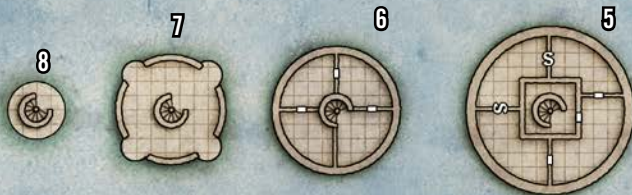
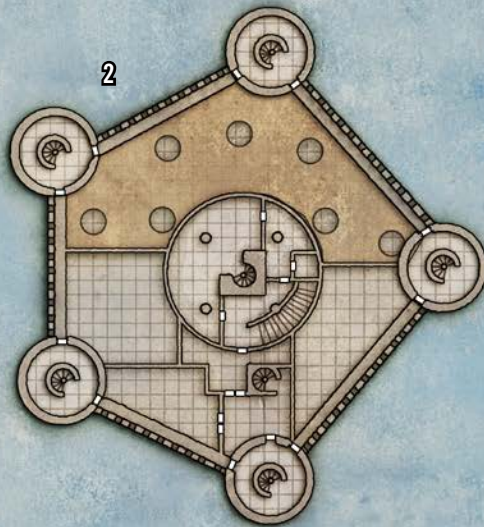
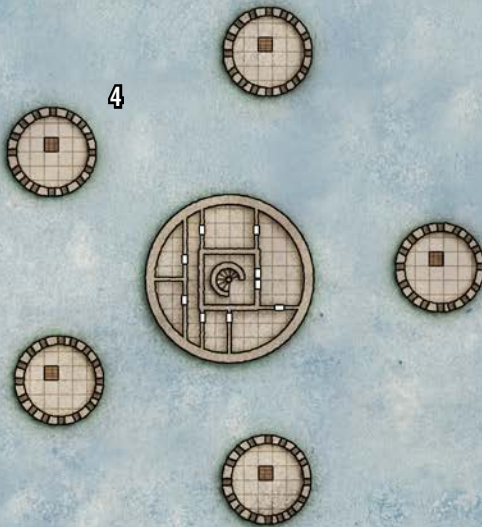
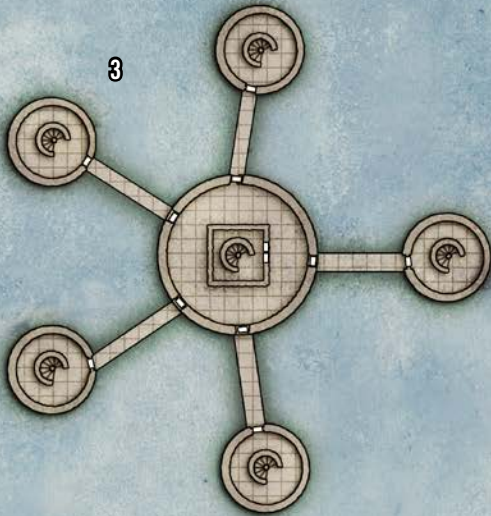
When Orames entered the control room, having already slain Saloni's companions and caring little for a creature of a lesser race, she grabbed the half-elf to crush him with her bare hands, but when Saloni screamed out that he knew the secrets of Skyborne Keep, the giant spared him to hear him out. The scholar said that the castle was more powerful than it seemed, that it could pull itself out of the mountaintop and take to the sky—it was nothing less than a flying fortress! Begging for his life, Saloni revealed one of the last things he discovered: the castle had to be piloted by a giant. Saloni offered to teach what he knew about how to control the fortress if Orames let him live. To sweeten the offer, Saloni said he would also share with the giant his knowledge of the shipping lanes of the Arcadian Ocean and the location of dozens of other rich treasures—gold, magic, and artifacts that would in turn make Orames much more powerful. The giant agreed to Saloni's proposal and thus their alliance began.

As the surviving giants and harpies took up residence within the castle walls, Orames activated the long-dormant castle. It slowly lurched into the sky, but soon built up speed and gained stability as it sailed off into the clouds.

Over the last decade, Skyborne Keep has been seen a dozen times, each sighting leaving destruction in its wake. The sky castle strikes sites rumored to possess powerful artifacts or tomes of knowledge, and tracks down vessels that leave port with full holds. Years of traveling with the giants have caused the half-elf to lose interest in his original profession and to become even more arrogant and hungry for power. He cares little for the preservation and lore of artifacts, focusing only on what can lead him to greater and greater wealth, and Orames and her giants are all too happy taking what they as "superior beings" believe should be theirs in the first place. Skyborne Keep has no set location. It travels without pattern and can turn up anywhere, a trait that keeps those who preserve great artifacts and treasure wary of every passing storm cloud.

Skyborne Keep

1 SQUARE = 20 FEET



Description

Skyborne Keep is a spectacular and imposing structure, with walls so tall and thick that they are clearly intended to keep fantastic creatures at bay, towers so wide that the occupants must be true behemoths, and a soaring central keep like a gigantic sentinel watching over all things below. But the most intriguing feature of all is that this colossal structure floats atop a carpet of dark clouds intermittently lit by flickering lightning and electrical squalls. Skyborne Keep sails high over the land as effortlessly as a ship slices through water, passing over mountain ranges and forests without ease.

To those on the ground—cast into its shadow as it drifts silently overhead—Skyborne Keep looks like nothing more than an isolated and particularly vicious thunderstorm. Dark clouds roil and growl, thunder shakes the heavens, and lightning violently lashes out in all directions.

Within this angry maelstrom, a floating chunk of blue-black rock some 600 feet across can be found. Atop this sits Skyborne Keep itself. The keep is a five-walled pentagon standing 40 feet tall; the walls are all black stone streaked with veins of blue and white. There is no obvious means of entry: no gate, no barbican, and no doors. In each corner, a 150-foot-diameter tower soars from the castle's base to a flat-topped battlement. (The storm itself is only slightly larger than the base of the rock.)

In the heart of the compound is an enormous keep standing over 200 feet across and 320 feet tall. The keep is constructed from a dark blue stone, and magnificent bridges arc from its sides to the towers in five different directions. At the top, four balconies offer clear views of the surrounding countryside.

1. Ground Floor: The floor of Skyborne Keep is laid out much as a castle would be on the ground, but it's clear that the buildings and walls here were built with larger creatures in mind. All of the walls are hewn of dark blue stone, though some portions are flecked or marbled with lighter blues or white. Because of the height of the surrounding walls and buildings, open areas tend to be almost perpetually in shadow unless the sun is directly overhead. The ground floor of the castle bears a dark and ominous ambiance.

The outer wall hems in a courtyard and marshaling area, one of only two truly open spaces on this level. Paved with fist-sized stones, the courtyard is devoid of any interest save for three sets of double doors of huge dimensions. A secret door in the outside wall is the only ground exit in the castle; a successful DC 35 Perception check is required to notice the door.

The garden on the ground floor is the second open area of the castle. While enshrouded in shadow much

of the time, the area is beautiful and grand, and has a peaceful air about it. Sweeping pathways twist between large flower beds and swaying trees, from the branches of which hang dozens of elegantly constructed, gilded birdcages. In the cages, small, multicolored birds sing throughout the daylight hours.

Taking up nearly half of the ground level are the stables and animal pens, a massive area wrapping around the central keep and extending to the outer wall. Seven 60-foot-square cages dot the area. Wide walkways run between the cages, and 40 feet above each cage a large opening leads to the roof above. Orames' giants stable 14 rocs in these cages, and while not all of the pens are occupied at all times (it's typical for the rocs to be on patrol, raiding the land below, or hunting for food), the noise here can be deafening and the smell overwhelming. The rocs only have animal intelligence, and they react to unfamiliar visitors with vociferous agitation; their squawking and thrashing about are likely to alert one or more guards or handlers. The stables exit into the main keep, the courtyard, and two of the corner towers.

A two-story structure adjoining the central keep overlooks the courtyard and garden areas. It contains the officer quarters and main barracks, and is a highly trafficked area where the castle's occupants move about from the different areas and levels of the keep.

The ground floor of the main keep is situated in the center of the compound. Large double doors lead in from the stables, garden, barracks, and courtyard. Within, a huge grand hall occupies the entire interior, with dark marble floor, brightly lit chandeliers, a central raised fountain, marble columns, and a 20-foot-wide staircase that sweeps around the perimeter of the room, leading both up and down. Large and incredibly intricate gilded cages are regularly spaced about the room, each home to a multicolored songbird. Within such a huge hall, each lone bird is barely audible, but as an avian choir, they provide soft and pleasant music. The grand hall connects to the guard quarters, the prisons and throne room below, and the higher sections of the keep above.

2. Second Floor: This level of the castle, 40 feet above the ground floor, is largely utilitarian. All of the corner keeps connect to the battlements, and the barracks take up the only second floor structure adjoining the keep. The flat roof of the stables below is just below this level, and can easily be traversed. Thirty-foot-wide circular openings drop into the stables—egress points for the rocs below.

The keep's second floor comprises the kitchen and feasting hall. Food is stored in rooms below ground level, but a large pantry abutting the kitchen is always stocked with the finest of foods. Both the kitchen and feasting hall are nearly always occupied, even if just by a lone giant guard looking for a tasty midnight snack.

PATHFINDER CAMPAIGN SETTING: CASTLES OF THE INNER SEA

The barracks can house 24 giants, although only eight to 12 are found here; the rest are on patrol, on guard duty, or performing other activities about the castle.

3. The Sky Bridges: Five sky bridges of black and blue stone rise 80 feet from the castle's base. All of them are intricately carved and highly ornate, with sweeping scenes of exotic flying creatures intertwined with billowing clouds and thunderstorms. Each bridge is 20 feet wide, with one end connecting to the central keep and the other to one of the five corner towers.

Twenty-four harpies occupy each tower (see *Denizens* on page 59). The third floor of the keep serves purely as access to the bridges and as a thoroughfare to the second and third floors. Two giant guards are assigned to this area, although they leave the bridges to the harpies and only watch the inside of the keep.

4. Tower Battlements: Rising 120 feet above the ground level, the tower battlements look down on the storm below like quiet sentinels, each with an ever-vigilant cannon

golem on watch. From each of the towers, the main keep stretches even farther skyward. At this level, the floor is dedicated to the officers and leaders among the giants.

5. Mage Quarters: Plagued by the nearly constant howl of high winds whipping about the stone walls, this part of the keep is seldom visited by anyone besides Lona Orames and Altaresh Xisira. The entire fifth floor is dedicated to the Altaresh's quarters: three opulent rooms surrounding the main central staircase. Keen observers notice that the rooms don't take up the entire floor, hinting at a hidden room. The concealed area is accessible via two secret doors (Perception DC 35 to notice), and contains magical items, treasure, jewelry, and other spoils from raids. Of course, such treasures don't come without adequate protection—the area immediately beyond the doors is warded by dangerous magical traps that spew lightning.

6. The Labs: This floor narrows to 160 feet across from the wider tower beneath it and composes a simple arrangement of four rooms, each cluttered with long tables, beakers, glass equipment, scrolls, and shelves burgeoning with magical ingredients and material components, dissected animals, jars filled with strange liquids, and all manner of unusual devices. If not in her quarters on the floor below, Altaresh is likely to be found in one of these rooms performing magical experiments.

7. The Control Room: From here is where Skyborne Keep is piloted above the lands of the Inner Sea. It's a simple circular room measuring some 140 feet across. In the center, a 20-foot-wide staircase winds down to the lower floors and up to the observation deck. Four large balconies are symmetrically positioned around the outer walls. Between two of the balconies, a raised dais with deep and tall steps rises 6 feet off the floor, on top of which is an open pool of a silver-colored, viscous liquid.

Through hand motions, the application of magic, and a thorough knowledge of how the control pool works, the castle's overlord—who must be a giant—can draw up the silver liquid to form a shimmering mirror whose surface continually runs like a thick waterfall. By looking into the mirror, the controller can visualize the area around the castle for miles in all directions and mentally cause the castle to drift in that direction. The viewing point is always centered on the control room, so it is not possible to remotely view a place not visible from the castle. However, on a clear day, if the castle has enough altitude, a skilled controller can bring into focus and set a course for areas up to 30 miles away. With the destination set, the castle drifts unerringly in that direction without further control required. If a path is not set or once a destination has been reached, the castle floats in a static position.

8. Observation Deck: This deck is the highest point of the castle, rising a lofty 280 feet above



Altaresh Xisira

the raging electrical storm below. Eighty feet across and capped with a conical roof, it's open on all sides and provides a stunning view for miles in all directions. The castle occupants rarely frequent the observation deck, but standing here is Iceman, a cannon golem sentry. Blasted by the wind and weather, his metal exterior is highly polished and often covered in ice. To the unwary he appears to be inert, but his eyes constantly watch the skies for incoming danger and his cannon is always ready.

Denizens

The overall atmosphere within Skyborne Keep is calm and serene, like that of a monastery. A clan of 20–30 cloud giants inhabits the compound. Between raids, the giants enjoy a relatively quiet life of luxury within Skyborne Keep, drinking and eating to their hearts' content and enjoying the luxuries they've acquired. They all eagerly await the next destination chosen by their leader, as they relish the combat that accompanies their sorties outside of the castle. The cloud giants are typically found in the grand hall, the feasting hall, and the garden. When preparing for a raid, the giants assemble in the staging area and await direction from either their captain **Enmeskial** (LE male cloud giant samurai 11) or the mage **Altaresh Xisira** (NE female cloud giant evoker 11). Only rarely does Lona Orames herself (see below) address the other giants before a battle.

As beings that respect birds and other winged creatures, the giants carefully tend the 14 rocs in their pens. These creatures are more than mere pets or mounts; they're true companions. The rocs also enjoy and appreciate the company of the giants and fight alongside them.

Each of the five towers of Skyborne Keep's exterior wall is home to a colony of harpies. They all live on the third floor of the five outer towers, with roughly 20 harpies occupying each tower. The harpies, like the rocs, respect the cloud giants and gladly offer their services as scouts, guards, and defenders of the flying fortress.

A tribe of advanced gargoyles was already in residence at Skyborne when the giants arrived; Orames has persuaded them to join the castles' defenders in exchange for the broken bodies of prisoners on which to feast.

A handful of mihstus allies live in the lower levels. These cruel outsiders keep to their dark corners until they're called upon for assistance with a raid or when the giants are finished with a prisoner. The mihstus do not ask for any material possessions, only that they be allowed to take part in any battle that involves Skyborne Keep—whether a raid by the inhabitants or an attack upon the castle.

Because of his deal with Orames, **Bastian Saloni** (NE half-elf bard 7/Pathfinder chronicler 3) is often at Orames' side, providing her with stories of powerful artifacts. Saloni has access to the entire castle, but unless

Adventure Hooks

Skyborne Keep poses a severe threat to any place it lands, but it can go many months between attacks. Whether it's spotted en route to another target or found perched in a mountain range, there are countless reasons an adventuring party might cross paths with the flying fortress.

Defend a Target: The vicious Lona Orames and her cloud giants have targeted an isolated keep known to house an *orb of dragonkind*. For the past week, the keep's caretaker has had divinatory dreams of a thunderstorm reaching down into her vault with hands made of lightning, a portent she believes means a blue dragon is coming to steal the orb. She has hired adventurers to defend the keep from what she thinks is a dragon—hopefully the PCs will be able to face Orames and her cloud giants when they appear instead!

Evacuate the Ruins: The PCs receive word that Skyborne Keep has been spotted miles away, headed toward a small village and the old ruins nearby. It's a race against the clock as the adventurers have to help scholars and excavators escape the booby-trapped ruins they were exploring before it is too late! Can the PCs find the artifact the giants are coming to get?

Rescue the Captives: Skyborne Keep recently landed in a nearby mountain range after capturing dozens of prisoners from an ancient dwarven city on their last raid. An old dwarven noble approaches the adventurers to rescue his kin before they are all tortured and killed.

his presence is demanded by Orames, he keeps to himself in one of the labs or down in garden area. The cloud giants view him as an inferior being, and only grudgingly acknowledge that much of their recent wealth and prosperity came from their alliance with him.

Threats

Lona Orames, the current ruler of Skyborne Keep, is calculating and ruthless in her quest for power and knowledge. Her tribe respects her rule and appreciates all that she's given them, and she commands their undying loyalty. With equal zeal, Orames trains her body for battle and expands her mind with the tomes of knowledge and lore her giants steal. She spends the rest of her time meditating and plotting out flight courses for her castle.

LONA ORAMES

CR 20

XP 307,200

Female storm giant monk (monk of the four winds) 13

(Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 152, Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide 112)

LE Huge humanoid (giant)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +43

PATHFINDER CAMPAIGN SETTING: CASTLES OF THE INNER SEA

DEFENSE

AC 39, touch 27, flat-footed 33 (+2 deflection, +6 Dex, +3 monk, +8 Wis, +12 natural, -2 size)

hp 476 (32 HD; 19d8+13d8+333)

Fort +29, **Ref** +20, **Will** +24; +2 vs. enchantments

Defensive Abilities improved evasion, rock catching; **Immune** disease, electricity, poison; **SR** 23

OFFENSE

Speed 90 ft., swim 40 ft.

Melee +4 unarmed strike +42/+37/+32/+27 (4d6+29/19-20) or 2 slams +42 (1d8+21)

Ranged +2 *composite longbow* +29/+24/+19/+14 (3d6+19/x3)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks elemental fist (3d6 electricity; 3/day), flurry of blows, slow time

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +16)

Constant—*freedom of movement*

2/day—*control weather, levitate*

1/day—*call lightning* (DC 14), *chain lightning* (DC 17)

STATISTICS

Str 45, **Dex** 22, **Con** 30, **Int** 16, **Wis** 26, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +23; **CMB** +46 (+48 bull rush, +48 sunder); **CMD** 73 (75 vs. bull rush, 75 vs. sunder)

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Deflect

Arrows, Elemental Fist, Gorgon's Fist, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (unarmed strike), Improved Sunder, Improved Unarmed Strike, Improved Vital Strike, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Scorpion Style, Snatch Arrows, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (longbow)

Skills Acrobatics +37 (+74 when jumping), Climb +22,

Diplomacy +27, Intimidate +52, Knowledge (engineering) +20, Knowledge (geography) +18, Knowledge (nature) +18, Perception +43, Sense Motive +30, Swim +29; **Racial**

Modifiers +37 Acrobatics when jumping

Languages Auran, Common, Giant

SQ abundant step, diamond body, diamond soul, fast movement, high jump, ki pool (14 points, lawful, magic), maneuver training, militant, purity of body, slow fall 60 ft., water breathing, wholeness of body

Combat Gear *potions of cure*

serious wounds (2), *potions of fly* (2), *iron bands of binding*;

Other Gear +2 *composite longbow*, *amulet of might fists* +4, *belt of physical perfection* +4, *ring of feather falling*, *ring of protection* +2, *ring of retribution*, 400 gp

Orames' advisors and officers are detailed below.

Altaresh Xisira: Altaresh is an advisor to Lona Orames and the resident mage of Skyborne Keep. She's a cruel and vicious giant who desires power almost as much as Orames. Though she has aspirations to one day seize control of Skyborne Keep, Altaresh bides her time waiting for the right moment. The mage accompanies Enmeskial on raids, raining down arcane destruction on any opposition and ensuring that stolen items and artifacts make it safely back to the keep. While on Skyborne Keep, she keeps to her personal quarters.

Duranna Alnurris (NE female cloud giant ninja 10): Protege and occasional lover of Lona Orames, Duranna is a ruthless killer and master of stealth and assassination—quite an achievement for one so large. She has taken a Vow of Silence, and communicates with others using a ring of telepathy. This allows her to keep in touch with the other giants throughout the castle as well as with her harpy students. While Duranna is in Skyborne Keep, she can be found in her quarters or in one of the towers housing the Silent Maidens, her elite harpy ninjas.

Enmeskial: This massive giant is the first officer of Skyborne Keep. He has followed Orames loyally for 100 years, and obeys her orders without question. Never out of his armor or without a weapon in hand, he's the first to respond to alarms that sound within the castle walls, and he leads the other giants during attacks. Enmeskial feels great enmity toward Saloni, as the half-elf has Orames' ear and is able to sway her thinking, often in direct opposition to Enmeskial's own views. He awaits the day that his commander will grow tired of the little man. Unless an alarm is raised, Enmeskial is found in his quarters.

Lower Levels

Viewed from afar, Skyborne Keep appears as a dominating structure rising from an island of rock, but the true heart of the castle lies deep below, as honeycombed throughout the rocky island are corridors, rooms, vaults, prisons, and a throne room. Accessed via the sweeping staircase in the grand hall of the main keep and by the smaller stairways under the



Lona Orames

barracks, the dungeons and rooms beneath are split into three main sections: the prison and torture chamber, storage rooms and guardrooms, and the majestic throne room and private quarters of Orames.

The lower levels of Skyborne Keep are a suitable adventuring location for a group of four 17th-level PCs.

C1. Prison Cells (CR 14)

The castle's current overlord has a great need for this area. Her raids are never random or without objective, and often the target prize is someone who holds clues to great riches, magical mysteries, or lost artifacts, or who can be ransomed off. The 12 cells in the area are rarely empty.

The prison area is dark, dank, and oppressive with the miserable moans of prisoners echoing about the halls and spacious rooms. Generations of misery exudes from the roughly hewn walls, and the everburning torches present do little to penetrate the gloom.

The main entrance room has a low ceiling by cloud giant standards. The double doors opposite the stairs are constructed from thick mahogany beams bound in iron and 15 feet off the floor, each with a metal sliding hatch that is partially corroded.

Creatures: Only accessible via a 40-foot-wide staircase leading from under the barracks, the prison has additional security—six mihstu guardians. Anyone entering or leaving this area who isn't one of the castle's denizens or who isn't escorted by one of the occupants is immediately subject to attack, and the noise and commotion alert Egak the jailor and any guards above.

MIHSTU GUARDS (6)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

Advanced mihstu (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 190, 292)

hp 112 each

Trap: The double doors here are locked (Disable Device DC 30 or unlockable via the jailor's key) and trapped with a bank of long blades that scythe out from the wall and cut a path on both sides of the door at the same time.

SCYTHING BLADE TRAP

CR 10

XP 9,600

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 28; **Disable Device** DC 28

Bypass hidden switch (Perception DC 30)

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** automatic (immediate)

Effect Atk +20 melee (3d8+3/x4); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft. square)

C2. Jailor's Room (CR 15)

The jailor's room measures some 60 feet by 40 feet. Unkempt and filthy, it has the appearance of an overused

To Arms!

As one might expect, Skyborne Keep is heavily fortified and populated by an assortment of devious creatures. Here are a few possible opponents the adventurers might encounter.

Harpy Sentries (CR 8): Harpies patrol the exterior of the castle in groups of four. With their powerful wings, these creatures are able to travel from the topmost tower down to the underside of the flying structure with ease, always on the lookout for any potential threat. The most common patrol encountered consists of standard harpies (*Bestiary* 172), though specialized harpies with class levels also join in patrols.

Watcher Ambush (CR 10): No matter where the players are within Skyborne Keep, they're at potential risk of being spotted by a group of protectors called the Watchers. These advanced gargoyles (*Bestiary* 137, 294) perch in their frozen state, ever on the lookout. Watchers congregate in groups of six, and take turns dive-bombing their foes to minimize their own risk.

Cloud Giant Patrol (CR 13): While the giants are confident that their harpy and gargoyle allies will alert them to approaching enemies, they still maintain regular patrols throughout the castle's corridors and rooms, as well as the grounds outside. These patrols consist of a pair of cloud giants (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 147).

bear's den complete with bones, furs, and broken debris scattered about in complete disarray. In one corner, the furs have been piled high in a makeshift bed, and over this, crude hooks and nails in the wall are draped with tattered clothing, chains, manacles, and loose keys.

Creature: The jailor is a hunchbacked ettin named **Egak** (CE male ettin rogue 6/fighter 6). He is shunned by the cloud giants and not well liked, so he often retreats to this room or torments prisoners in the torture chamber.

C3. Prison Cells

The prison holds 12 prison cells, each large enough to house dozens of occupants. Each door has a separate key for its lock (Egak from area C2 carries all of the keys for the cells with him at all times). Somewhat crude in manufacture, the locks are slightly corroded and difficult to manipulate; unlocking one without the correct key requires a successful DC 35 Disable Device check.

Creatures: At any one time, dozens of prisoners may be held within these cells. Captives of all races, genders, professions, and occupations might be found here, although typically each prisoner has something in particular that Orames wants: Pathfinder Society members are captured for their knowledge of lost artifacts, rich nobles and merchants are questioned about the secrets

of their wealth or simply held for ransom, and friends and loved ones of high-value prisoners are sometimes held to give Orames more leverage during interrogations. A few prisoners, however, simply had the ill fortune of striking her fancy while she was taking prisoners.

C4. Torture Chamber (CR 17)

Designed purely to inflict pain and suffering, this massive chamber is crammed with torturous devices: racks, iron maidens, flickering braziers, coal pits, and hanging chains. Every implement, scalpel, and crushing device comes in multiple sizes in this frightening labyrinth of metal, fire, and shadow.

Creatures: At least one dead prisoner can always be found here (typically still strapped down in some twisted, torturous machine as an example to others), as well as two to four weakened prisoners in various states of consciousness, along with typical signs of violence, dismemberment, and graphic torture.

Two jotund trolls also inhabit this level and frequently visit the torture chamber, particularly if the jailor is here with a prisoner. The trolls were enlisted early on in Orames' pirating career, and when they aren't being used as shock troops during sieges they enjoy the pleasure of finishing off prisoners in this macabre chamber.

JOTUND TROLLS (2)

CR 15
XP 51,200 each
hp 216 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 272*)

C5. Storage Rooms

The giants of the castle have a voracious appetite for the finest cuisine, and make regular raids on choice targets and frequent trips to trusted bases throughout the Inner Sea region. Orames is aware that such missions are risky, and knows that if a pattern were to emerge, her forces could be anticipated and ambushed. The castle's storage rooms are therefore kept stocked with enough provisions to last for months.

The storage rooms are accessible from the grand hall and the spiral staircase descending from the barracks; they are built into the cool rock of the island itself, so they stay cold and dry. They are each crammed with wine, mead, dried and potted meats, preserved fruits and vegetables, and rare seasonings that would make the wealthiest of kings envious.

C6. Main Hall (CR 17)

This central room of the main hall is an extension of the keep running through the rock base, and provides the only means of access to Orames' throne room. Four massive white marble columns rise 30 feet to the domed ceiling above. A gilded handrail runs along the

descending white marble steps, and along the outside wall a fresco depicts Skyborne Keep drifting through the skies of the Inner Sea.

Creatures: A large guardroom from the west opens into this main hall and serves as a temporary barracks for eight cloud giants. Four of them patrol the storage rooms (area C5) to keep pests and vermin at bay, and the other four guard the main hall, where a sweeping staircase to the north leads down into the throne room.

CLOUD GIANTS (8)

CR 11
XP 12,800 each
hp 168 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 147*)

C7. Throne Room (CR 20)

The lowest level of Skyborne Keep is the most magnificent, not only because it houses Orames' throne room and private quarters (and is therefore ostentatious in its rich splendor). Here, the corridors break through the bottom of the rock island and balconies look down on the eye of the electrical storm, providing a breathtaking view of the maelstrom below the castle.

In the heart of this level lies the throne room. Two hundred feet across and crowned with a huge vaulted ceiling 60 feet above, the room is decorated in a dazzling array of color, gilding, and statues of the purest white stone. At one side, deep marble steps climb 10 feet to a raised dais, upon which a truly dominating stone throne gazes down upon the room. The throne itself, hewn of white marble shot thorough with veins of gold, is carved in the shape of a gigantic roc with outstretched wings. Its head forms the pinnacle of the chair back, and its legs and talons form the arm rests.

Creatures: The twisted storm giant Orames holds court here, accompanied by a unit of six cloud giants, who guard the room whether their leader is present or not. A secret door behind Orames' throne allows discreet passage to and from her personal quarters.

ORAMES

CR 20
XP 307,200
hp 476 (see page 59)

CLOUD GIANTS (6)

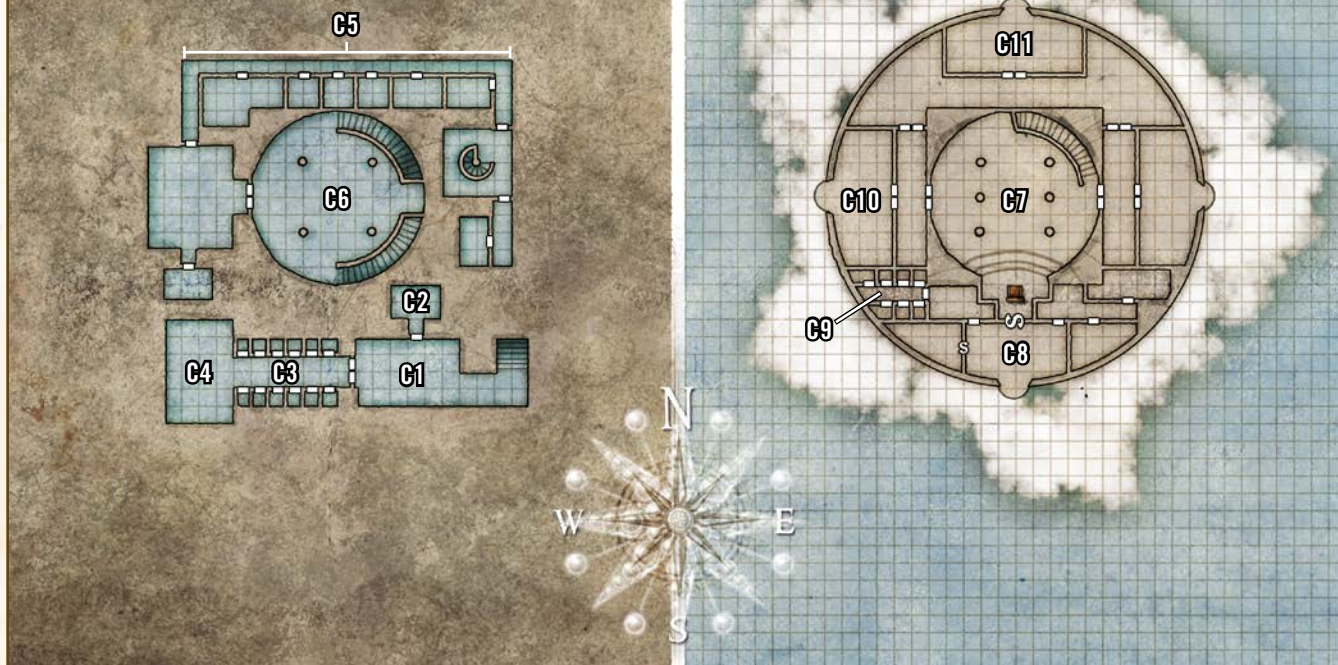
CR 11
XP 12,800 each
hp 168 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 147*)

C8. Orames' Private Quarters

Orames keeps her private quarters secured, and only the closest of confidants are permitted inside. A private balcony looks out over the electrical storm under the castle. The suite is also equipped with a lounge, a bedroom, and a dining area.

Skyborne Keep Lower Level

1 SQUARE = 20 FEET



Treasure: A secret door hidden in the western wall (Perception DC 35 to locate) is the only way to reach Orames's true treasure vault. The cornucopia of magic items, arms, gems, and other loot in here is worth well over 70,000 gp, though the exact makeup of the treasure horde is left up to the GM to determine.

C9. Treasure Vaults (CR 19)

These vaults are meant to befuddle and trick would-be treasure hunters, since they actually contain nothing of any real value. The treasure vaults' foyer just north of area C8 is a dark stone room, at the center of which lies a concealed pit trap intended to drop the unwary through the storm to the ground far below. The trap has no bypasses—Orames relies on her ability to levitate to avoid the trap.

EYE OF THE STORM TRAP

CR 19

XP 102,400

Type magic; Perception DC 35; Disable Device DC 35

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset automatic

Effect spell effect (heightened *lightning bolt*, 8d6 electricity damage, Reflex DC 20 half); 20d6 falling damage; Reflex DC 20 avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 40-ft.-square area)

Seven individual vaults, each locked with a finely crafted padlock (Disable Device DC 30 to unlock), line a hallway beyond the pit trap. Despite the apparent security and wealth here, the vaults are actually a ruse, for Orames' most treasured possessions are kept hidden behind a secret door in her private quarters.

C10. War Room

A long table surrounded by high-backed chairs sized for giants dominates this room. A map of the Arcadian Ocean and western Avistan and Garund—on top of which sit carefully positioned jade miniatures, markers, and flags—is draped across the table. This chamber is where Orames plans her raids, determining future targets and tactical approaches.

C11. Observation Balcony

This room's moniker is a misnomer of sorts, as it has the same view as the other balconies at this level. Respected dignitaries and visitors are brought here to conduct business that doesn't require Orames' presence. This lavishly appointed room is decorated with intricately carved wooden furniture, several highly polished tables, and a drink cabinet carved from rare woods and stocked with the Inner Sea's finest libations and refreshments.

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STORMING THE CASTLE

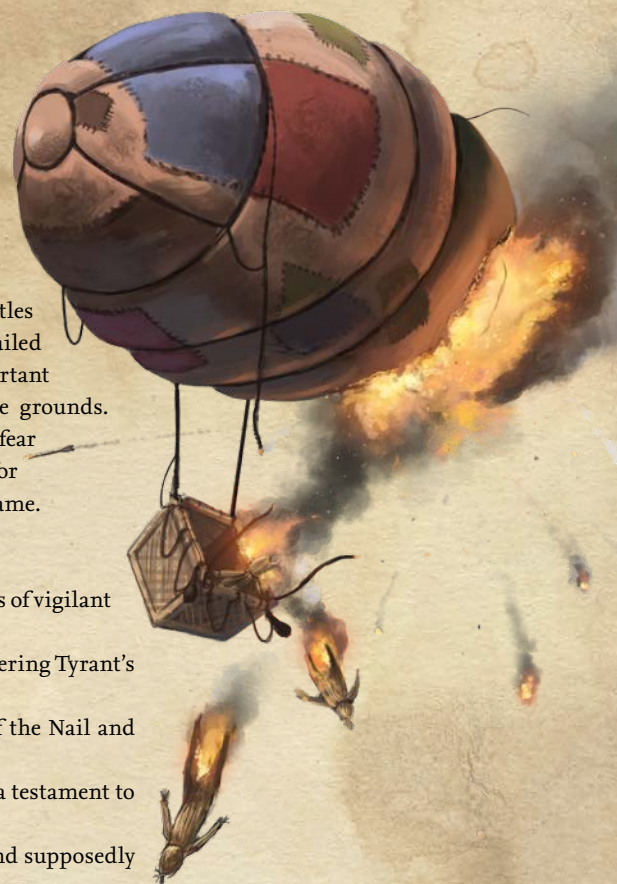
Whether they are knights of chivalrous causes or nobles scheming nefarious designs, the movers and shakers of Golarion need strongholds to host their forces and to serve as a headquarters for launching their various plots and goals. Perhaps no strongholds are more suited to this challenge than the mortar-and-stone castles, keeps, and fortresses that dot the world, whether they are entrenched on grassy baileys or built into the sides of sheer mountain ranges.

Castles of the Inner Sea provides a thorough exploration of six different castles set throughout the Inner Sea region of the Pathfinder campaign setting. Detailed descriptions of the castles examine their histories as well as their most important features and structures, breathing life into fully realized maps of the castle grounds. Rundowns of castle denizens and stat blocks for key NPCs give players reasons to fear the dangers of these soaring fortifications, and a sample adventure location for each castle makes it easy for Game Masters to drop castle encounters into any game.

This book contains details on the following castles:

- ▶ **Castle Everstand:** A borderland stronghold standing between the pastoral lands of vigilant Lastwall and the vicious orc hordes of Belkzen.
- ▶ **Castle Kronquist:** A haunted Ustalavic fortress that is home to one of the Whispering Tyrant's most dreaded vampire minions.
- ▶ **Citadel Vraid:** A wicked castle founded as a gift to the Hellknights' Order of the Nail and rumored to be cursed by ancient magic.
- ▶ **Highhelm:** A cultural and trade capital of the dwarven empire that stands as a testament to the glorious achievements of this industrious race.
- ▶ **Icerift Castle:** An unfinished keep, ruined by the frigid winds of the north and supposedly haunted, that plays home to monstrous arctic denizens.
- ▶ **Skyborne Keep:** A floating cloud castle ruled by a malevolent storm giant, who uses it as a vessel to plunder various merchant ships and trade caravans.

Castles of the Inner Sea is intended for use with the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game and Pathfinder campaign setting, but can easily be used in any fantasy game setting.



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