



HAUNTED CASTLE

H *Haunted Castle* is a Fifth Edition plug-in adventure for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 1, 3, 5, or 8**. This document offers details for each level and makes adjustments accordingly. While hunting for a long-lost treasure hoard, the characters enter a wintery keep with a dark history.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

To run the adventure, you need the three Fifth Edition core rulebooks. If you don't have a copy, you can access a free basic ruleset from the official source.

Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters first arrive at a location or under specific circumstances, as described in the text.

When a creature's name appears in **bold** type, that's a visual cue pointing you to its stat block as a way of saying, "Hey, game master, make sure you get this creature's stat block ready—there's going to be an encounter!" If the stat block appears in the Appendix of this adventure, the text tells you so; otherwise, you can find the stat block in the core rulebook.

Spells and nonmagical equipment mentioned in the adventure are described in the core manual for players. *Magic items* are described in the core manual for game masters unless the adventure's text directs you to an item's description in the Appendix.

LEVEL SELECTION

Before play, be sure to know the level at which you wish to run the adventure. Overall, the locations and their descriptions in the adventure remain unchanged throughout the levels. However, most of the encounters, hazards, traps, and treasure scale with each level of the adventure. The keyed locations will present the differences between each level.

Also, the adventure works for more than just the listed levels. If you wish to run this adventure for levels other than 1st, 3rd, or 5th, or 8th, the chart below shows you which version of the adventure you should select for each level. A given version of the adventure might be easier or harder for a given party. It's not recommended that you run this adventure for characters with an average party level greater than 10 as it may not pose enough of a challenge.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

Average Party Level	Recommended Adventure Version	Relative Difficulty
1	1st-level	Hard
2	1st-level	Medium
3	3rd-level	Hard
4	3rd-level	Medium
5	5th-level	Hard
6	5th-level	Medium
7	5th-level	Easy
8	8th-level	Hard
9	8th-level	Medium
10	8th-level	Easy

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

This section serves as a basic rundown of how the adventure should play out, including the adventure hook/introduction.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure should play out as follows:

1. The characters meet Baron Leo Wilson and agree to help him recover his family's lost wealth.
2. Entering the castle, the characters learn immediately that there's something strange about the castle. It doesn't take long for them to meet one of the castle's many ghosts.
3. Eventually, the characters get through to one or more of the Merritt family ghosts. The ghosts explain that their uncle Ferim knows where the vault is located.
4. The characters use *Speak with Dead* to communicate with Ferim's skull. Ferim reveals the location of the portal mirror and how to enter it.
5. Once into the secret vault, the characters must convince Lord Brycen to end the curse. This can be done by handing Brycen the ghostly letter that they find in the dungeon.

ADVENTURE HOOK: MEET BARON WILSON

While the characters are passing through a town or while traveling on the road, they witness a young man wearing filthy noble livery engage in a fight with four **bandits**. He begs the characters to intervene. If they do, the bandits fight until at least one of them is killed or knocked unconscious, then they flee.

The young man introduces himself as Baron Leo Wilson. A gambler and heavy drinker, Wilson's fallen on hard times as of late. The bandits were rolling him, hoping to collect debts owed. He fears that if his debts aren't paid off, they'll surely kill him next time.

Wilson shares that his family was once one of the wealthiest families in the Kingdoms of Man. Then, ten years ago, his uncle, Lord Brycen Merritt, went insane and poisoned everyone in his estate—including the servants, guards, his three children, and even the horses. The controversy ruined the reputation of all related to him.

Then, just last year, Leo heard a rumor that Lord Brycen and his father, Ferim, both had access to an insane fortune—millions, if not billions, in gold coins. If this fortune did exist, it was never recovered from the castle.

Although Wilson doesn't have two copper coins to rub together, he makes the characters an offer: they explore the old Merritt castle and find the treasure. If they do, he'll pay each one of them 1,000 gp for their trouble. Once they agree, he gives them directions to the castle. It's approximately five miles west of Mount Camor in the Amber Forest.

Wilson refuses to go with the characters. He's already been to the castle once and claims he saw the ghosts of his nieces and nephew lurking around the old walls.

He tells the characters to meet him at a spot called the Venerable Swordsman in the city of Knotside once they have completed their mission.

BACKGROUND

Twenty years ago, Brycen Merritt, a tailor of some skill, lived within a modest house in the village of Camor. He lived there with his wife, Noell, his three children, Radella, Farant, and Jalyn, and his brother, Ferim.

A would-be adventurer, Ferim had just returned from a trip exploring ruins in Karnione. Within those ruins he discovered a strange iron cube. After studying the cube for some time, Ferim discovered that it contained an efreeti who'd been imprisoned by a lich for ninety years. Bound to the cube by a powerful enchantment, the efreeti could only become free after granting whoever held its cube three wishes.

Brycen and Ferim's first wish was for wealth beyond their wildest dreams, which the efreeti immediately granted in the form of billions of gold coins. Unsure where to put this newfound wealth, Brycen asked the efreeti to create a hidden vault for the wealth. The efreeti granted the wish, creating a pocket dimension that could only be accessed via a mirror portal. Brycen placed the mirror in his bedchambers.

Fearful that the third wish would free the efreeti and invoke its wrath, the brothers decided to hide the cube. Angered, the efreeti swore vengeance upon the brothers, cursing them for their reluctance to free it.

Ignoring the efreeti's threats, the Merritt brothers enjoyed their wealth for the next few years. Brycen built a grand castle atop a hilltop near the village Camor, where he lived with his family and brother. However, the land was cursed. A thousand years before the manor was built, a great battle between the humans and the dark elves of the north occurred on that very hill. During this battle, one of the elven necromancers dropped a special dagger, one made from material pulled from a realm of true evil. While building the castle, Brycen discovered the dagger and decided to keep it. Although the magic within the dagger was dormant, its evil still seeped into the castle. The evil amplified dark emotions. It turned frustration into rage, happiness into ecstasy, and sadness into prolonged depression.

The first one affected by the dagger's evil was Ferim. During a fit of rage regarding the hidden treasure, he tried to kill Brycen. Before he could, Brycen's guards killed him. Spiteful of this confrontation, Brycen claimed his brother's skull and stored it inside a fishbowl in the keep's southeastern tower.

Next, Brycen's wife, Noell, felt the effects of the dagger's evil. The dagger turned her boredom into ennui which grew into a period of depression from which she could not arise. After a few months, Brycen found her dead, poisoned. When local priests tried to raise her from the dead, her spirit refused to return.

Brycen descended into madness. Believing that the keep hid assassins, he poisoned the keep's water and wine supply. He then held an event commemorating his wife. Brycen watched with glee as everyone who worked and lived in the keep drank the poison, including his children. Even after their deaths, Brycen was not reassured. He started to question himself—what if *he* was the assassin? Brycen took the last poisoned bottle of wine and hid himself in the vault. He cackled madly, cursing himself as he drank the poison.

From that day forward, Merritt Castle became cursed. Ten years later, locals still steer clear of the location, citing that abandoned manors near Camor are prone to hauntings.

MERRITT CASTLE

Merritt Castle stands atop a hill surrounded by a snow-draped forest. Despite being abandoned for a decade, the grounds are still relatively well-kept—even under the snowfall—and the inside is clean and organized. The castle *wants* people to come inside.

GENERAL FEATURES

Unless stated otherwise, the haunted castle has the following features.

CEILINGS, FLOORS, AND WALLS

The keep and its curtain walls are made from dressed stone. Sturdy timbers brace the keep's walls and ceilings. The curtain walls are 15 feet high. Ceilings are 15 feet high on the ground floor, 12 feet high on the first level and tower (area 26), and 8 feet high in the dungeon.

DOORS

Normal doors are constructed of thick oak planks bound by iron and hung on iron hinges. These doors have AC 15, 20 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. A locked door requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools to unlock, or a successful DC 18 Strength check to break open.

ILLUMINATION

At night, fires burn throughout the castle in the form of torches, braziers, or fireplaces. The fires are nonmagical, but there doesn't appear to be anyone who's lighting them. If the characters extinguish a flame and exit the chamber in which it was burning, it's relit the next time they enter the chamber.

PORTCULLISES

Portcullises throughout the castle are made from sturdy iron bars. Winches using chains set into the walls allow the portcullises to rise 90 degrees flush with the ceiling. A portcullis has AC 19, 40 hp, resistance to piercing damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. A character can lift the portcullis or bend its bars with a successful DC 21 Strength check.

COLD WEATHER

This adventure takes place during the winter. Although there is not currently a storm happening, creatures in the exterior locations are still subject to the effects of extreme cold. When exposed to these conditions, the creature must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour or gain one level of exhaustion. Creatures with resistance or immunity to cold damage automatically succeed on the saving throw, as do creatures wearing cold-weather gear and creatures naturally adapted to cold climates.

SLIPPERY ICE

Many of the outdoor surfaces are covered in slippery ice. The ice is nearly invisible. Spotting the ice requires a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. A creature with proficiency in Nature makes this check with advantage. A creature moving across the ice must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. A creature moving

through the area at half speed doesn't need to make the saving throw.

GHOSTS

Various spectral undead haunt the old castle. Four of the undead were once members of the Merritt Family. The rest of the spirits were servants at the castle.

The castle's master is a dangerous wraith, **Lord Brycen Merritt**. Driven insane by the death of his wife at the hands of assassins, he poisoned his three children and all of his servants. Although his taint is felt throughout the entire castle, he is only encountered in area 36.

His oldest child was **Radella**. Now a **ghost**, Radella is obsessed with ridding the castle of intruders.

Next is Brycen's son, **Farant**. Although Farant doesn't completely understand that he's now a **ghost**, he recognizes that something is horribly wrong at the castle. He helps the characters in any way he can.

Finally, the youngest, **Jalyn**, was only 10 years old when Brycen killed her. Jalyn knows many of the castle's secrets and even understands that she and her family members are undead. However, she's terribly afraid of the characters, thinking they wish to destroy her and her family. Jalyn is a **ghost**.

Optional Encounters. Throughout the adventure, the characters will have multiple opportunities to interact with the manor's spirits. Most of the spectral servants and guards are deranged and attack on sight. However, Brycen's three children can be coaxed to help the party put their father's angry spirit to rest, thereby lifting the curse on the castle's undead.

When an "optional encounter" is listed in a keyed location, you are free to run the encounter with the ghost at any time you feel is appropriate, or completely avoid it. Use discretion when running these encounters. Too many encounters with the ghosts will water down their effectiveness. These optional encounters are best used when things slow down or the players lack leads or direction.

Rejuvenation. Until the curse is lifted from the keep, the spirits of the four Merritt family members—Lord Brycen, Radella, Farant, and Jalyn—cannot be permanently destroyed. If their hit points are reduced to 0, they disincorporate. An hour later, they reappear in another part of the castle, with all of their hit points intact, with no memory of who or what destroyed them.

WHAT THE GHOSTS KNOW

The three Merritt children hold the secrets to solving the mysteries of this adventure. However, to get them to speak openly about these secrets, the characters must bring them something in the castle that helps them reconnect to their past.

Radella. In life, Radella loved her fluffy, orange cat Hobart. If the characters catch Hobart (see area 21) and bring him to her ghost, she tells them what she knows.

- Shortly before her mother died, her father and her uncle got into a mortal brawl. Her father's guards killed Ferim. Her father had Ferim's skull removed and stored in a jar at the top of the southwestern tower.

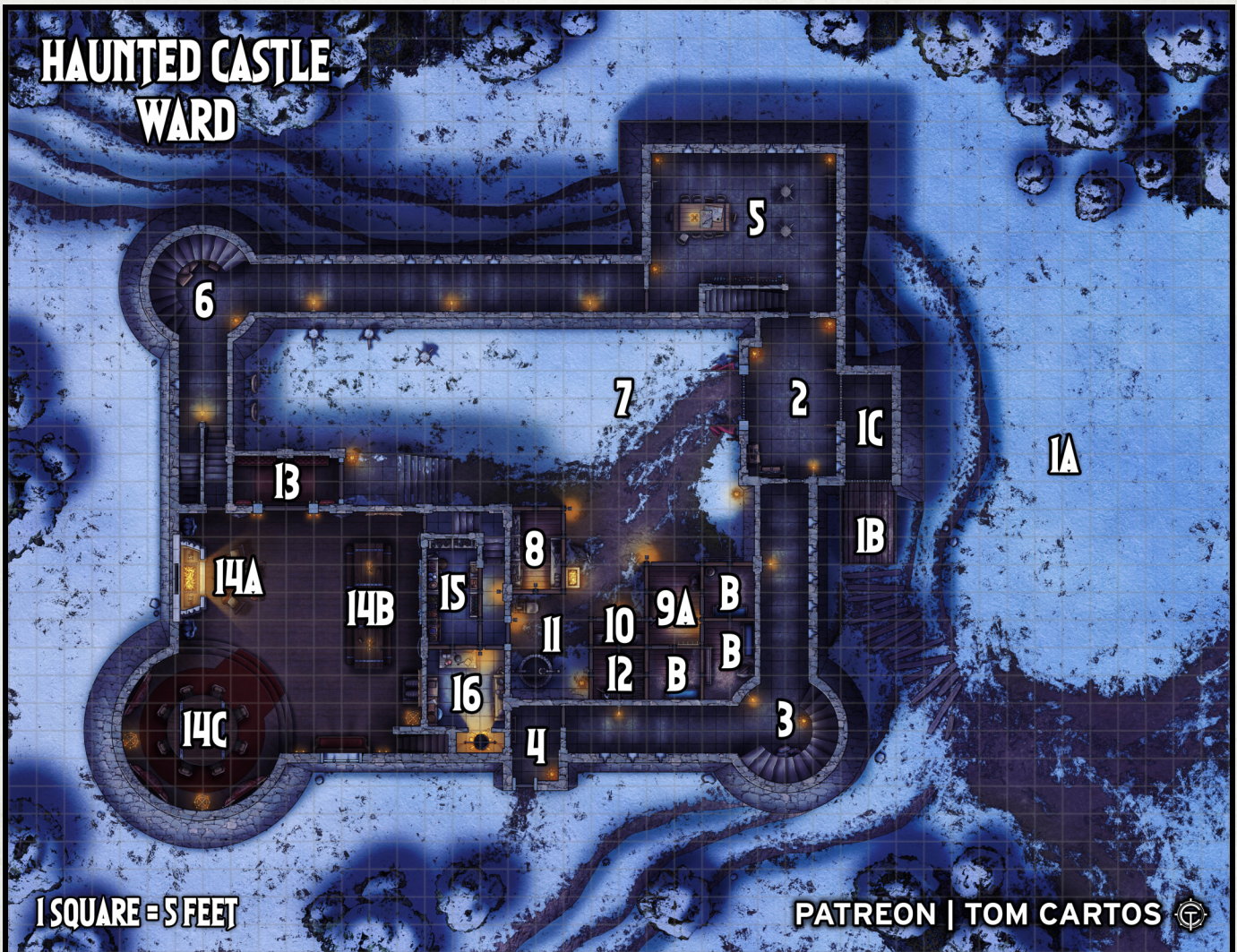
- Radella knows that there's a vault hidden somewhere on the grounds, but she's not sure where it's located. She suggests that the characters find a way to communicate with Ferim's spirit.
- Radella suggests that they speak with Farant for more clues. Farant loved to read. Perhaps if they bring him his favorite book, he will talk to them.

Farant. Farant's ghost refuses to believe that he's a ghost. But if he's brought his favorite old book, *Kings of the Dusk*, from his bedroom (area 23), he snaps out of his stupor long enough to help the characters. Here's what he can share:

- Farant knows all of the things Radella knows (see above).
- Farant knows that there is a strange black dagger hidden in the dungeon's vault. He believes that this dagger is the cause for the curse on the manor.
- An ice mephit periodically sneaks around the grounds. Farant believes that this mephit is searching for the dagger. The mephit can usually be found on the northwestern tower (area 17d).
- Farant doesn't believe that his mother was killed by assassins. He thinks that if the characters can find proof and present that proof to his father, it might lift the curse.
- The youngest Merritt child, Jalyn, probably knows more secrets than he and Radella combined.

Jalyn. Of the three, Jalyn knows the most about the castle and its secrets. However, she's the hardest one to catch. If she's given a lollipop from her father's library (area 20), she will cooperate with the characters, sharing the following information.

- Jalyn knows everything that Radella and Farant know.
- The old guard room (area 5) contains a hidden jar with something awful inside of it. It's hidden below the floor.
- There is a ghostly messenger imprisoned in the dungeon below the keep. Whatever the messenger was carrying frightened her father enough to imprison the man there. She suspects the messenger knows something about her mother's death.
- The dungeon is one of the most dangerous places in the house. Not only does it contain the traps her father created, but the evil that permeates the grounds is at its strongest down there.
- The command word "Compunction" opens the door to the vault in the dungeon.
- Lord Brycen's ghost is hidden in his vault. The vault is hidden through a portal accessible through their bedroom (area 22). Unfortunately, she doesn't know the right word to access the portal.



KEYED LOCATIONS

The following locations are keyed to the maps of the haunted castle, as shown on pages 4, 8, 11, 12, and 15.

1 - EASTERN FACE

Thick snow covers the grounds of the castle's eastern face. A ramshackle path made of broad timbers climbs up to the keep's drawbridge (area 1b), which is currently down.

However, both portcullises leading past the barbican (area 1c) are shut. The levers in area 2 open these portcullises.

Encounter: Hungry Wolves. Two **wolves** hide amid the trees to the north. In the 5th- and 8th-level versions of this adventure, the wolves are **dire wolves**. The wolves are hungry, but will run if the characters pose too much of a challenge.

Hazard: Slippery ice. The ice over the drawbridge (area 1b) is extremely slippery.

Investigation: Dummy. A character who searches the area around the drawbridge and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers an abandoned target dummy made of linen and stuffed with straw. There are two arrows sticking out of it.

Optional Encounter: Murder Holes. Characters who enter the barbican might come under attack from the **ghost** Radella. Standing in area 17b, she pours scalding water through the murder holes above. When this happens, each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one. As she pours the water, she shouts, "Long live House Merritt!" She then turns ethereal and flees. If Farant helped the characters enter the castle (see area 2), he screams, "No, Radella! They are our allies! They will find Mother's assassin!"

Optional Encounter: Ghostly Help. The **ghost** Farant might help the characters open the portcullises here. See area 2 for details.

2 - GATE HOUSE

This cold room offers a few handaxes, bows, and loose arrows. Two levers on the wall operate the portcullises in area 1. The portcullis that connects this area to area 7 is closed. The levers on the other side of the portcullis in area 7 opens it.

Optional Encounter: Ghostly Help. The first time the characters approach this area and before they've entered it, a voice from within calls, "Please, allow me to get the gate for you." Whatever portcullis is currently preventing the characters from entering the area then raises. When the characters go to look for whoever helped them, there's no one there. The portcullis was raised by Farant's **ghost**, who then turned ethereal and vanished.

Optional Encounter: Radella's Tricks. While passing through an open gate, the **ghost** Radella, in her ethereal state, triggers the portcullis to close. Any character standing in the portcullis' spot must make a DC 15 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (the character's choice). On a successful saving throw, the character avoids the gate, and steps into the area where they wish to be. Otherwise, the character is hit with the portcullis; they take 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and are pushed 10 feet back into the room from which they came. Radella then shouts, "Out, damn you, out!"

3 - SOUTHEAST TOWER

Thick magical mist heavily obscures this area. Treat the entire area as if it was under the effects of *fog cloud*. The mist can be dispelled or dispersed as normal. Until the mist is removed, its own aura of conjuration obscures the magic shield's aura of abjuration (see below).

Investigation. Four shields rest against the stone staircase at the south end of the room. One of the shields looks particularly decrepit. However, it exudes an aura of abjuration magic. Despite its crumbling and fail appearance, it is actually a *+1 shield*. The shield's frail appearance has no effect on its properties.

Locked Door. Although the door that leads to area 4 is locked and trapped from the other side, the door can be opened from this side without any issue.

4 - SOUTH ENTRANCE

This simple entranceway is lit by a warm brazier. An empty weapon rack stands against the western wall. A single arrow lies on the ground.

Locked Door. The door that connects this area to the outside is locked.

Locked and Trapped Door. The door that connects this area to area 3 is both locked and trapped. It also appears to lack any sort of door handle. The door has been carved to look like a team of six mounted hunters surrounding a rabbit. Each hunter carries a shortbow. A character who inspects the rabbit sees that it has a tiny slot at its center. If the tip of an arrow is placed into the slot and turned, the door opens and the trap is disarmed.

If the trap isn't disarmed before the door is opened, the hunters fire tiny arrows from their bows at the character trying to open the door. The hunters attack with a +5 to hit. On a hit, the tiny arrows deal 1 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw, or become poisoned for 1 hour. If the target fails its saving throw by 5 or more, the target falls unconscious for as long as they remain poisoned in this way or until another creature uses its action to shake or slap the sleeper awake.

Spotting this trap requires a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Once spotted, a character also knows how to unlock the door using an arrow. Alternatively, the trap can be disarmed with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools. This check is separate from the one needed to unlock the door.

5 - GUARD ROOM

A broad, wooden table dominates the east end of this room. Maps depicting nearby cities lie unrolled on the table's surface. Two martial arts training dummies stand near the eastern wall. Stuffed weapon racks adorn the south and eastern walls.

A dartboard hangs on the western wall. A dagger sticks out of the board's 1's double ring.

Encounter: Specters. The first time the characters enter this room, specters materialize and attack. The number and types of specters that appear depend on the level of the adventure as shown in the table below. The specters were all guards of the old castle until Brycen poisoned them all. They now serve him in undeath.

AREA 5 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	1 specter
3rd	2 specters
5th	6 specters
8th	4 specters led by 1 wraith

Investigation: Training Dummy. A character who observes the northernmost training dummy and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices that one of its handles can be pulled downward. However, the effect it causes is not immediately obvious—it actually unlocks and opens the secret door hidden in area 33. The door only remains open as long as the handle is being pulled down. Hanging an object weighing 30 pounds or more from the handle—such as the training dummy discovered in area 1b—keeps it in the down position.

A character who has observed the secret door in area 34 and this handle understands their connection with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Investigation: Hidden Jar. A character who searches the area and succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a loose stone on the floor. This check is made with advantage if the characters learn of its location from the ghost Jalyn. The stone masks the presence of a hidden compartment, within which a small, opaque glass jar is hidden. The jar contains a *spell scroll* of *speak with dead* made from human skin.

6 - NORTHWEST TOWER

This old tower is used for storage.

Investigation. Old crates are stuffed under the stairs leading up to the ramparts. The crates contain religious iconography—stone statues, vestments, hymnals, and other paraphernalia—all dedicated to the goddess Tholona, the regional Goddess of Life and Dawn. Lord Brycen removed all of these objects from the keep after his wife died. If characters look through the items, they find the following letter addressed to him.

"My dear Lord Brycen,

Again, we express our deepest condolences for the loss of fair Lady Noell. As I explained in my previous letter, and at the altar the day of your wife's death, there was no issue with the magic or our Goddess Tholona's might. But the invocation we attempted only works if the spirit is free and willing. Therefore, it was the decision of Lady Noell's spirit not to return to life.

I understand that this news is difficult for you to hear. As a consolation, I've included in this letter the 1,500 gold pieces paid to us to revive your wife. And again, we offer our humblest apologies and well wishes for you and your family.

Please, Lord Brycen, think of your children: Radella, Farant, and Jalyn. They need you now more than ever.

High Priestess L. Hodgins Temple of Tholona, Camor"

Hazard: Slippery Steps. The stairs that lead up to the ramparts are covered in slick ice (see General Features).

7 - COURTYARD

Most of this courtyard is dedicated to archery and martial arts training, as telegraphed by the targets and dummies at the northwest end of the courtyard. A throng of wooden buildings clutters the south end of the courtyard.

Hazard: Slippery Ice. All of the stonework out here is covered in slick ice (see General Features).

Optional Encounter: Ghostly Help. The **ghost** Farant might help the characters open the portcullises here. See area 2 for details.

Optional Encounter: Jalyn. When the characters enter this area, any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or better spots the **ghost** Jalyn running over the ramparts. Before they can target her with a spell or ranged weapon, she vanishes into the keep's area 19.

Locked Gate. Unless the characters already found a way to open it, the gate that leads to area 2 is locked. A lever by the wall opens the portcullis. See area 2 for further details.

Locked Doors. The double doors leading to area 13 are barred from inside. The doors' locks can't be picked, but can be broken open with a successful DC 21 Strength check. The doors can also be destroyed; they have AC 17, 50 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Spectral guards might be standing above this door. See area 18 for details.

8 - TOOL SHED

This small shed contains all of the servants' and guards' old tools.

Encounter: The Armorer. The spirit of the keep's old armorer lurks in this area. It is aggressive and attacks the characters on sight. In the 1st- and 3rd-level versions of this adventure, the armorer is a **specter**. And in the 5th- and 8th-level versions of this adventure, the armorer is a **wraith**.

9 - STABLES

This old structure was once the keep's stables. The main area (9a) serves as a place to store saddles, bridles, and other riding tools. The building includes three seemingly empty stalls (areas 9b).

Encounter: Farant. If the characters haven't yet encountered him, the **ghost** Farant can be found here brushing one of the spectral horses. Farant is the friendliest of the three ghosts but does not yet realize he's dead. He suspects that there's something strange happening around his old home. If the characters question Farant, he refuses to believe that he or his siblings are dead, regardless of any proof the characters show him. He doesn't remember the events that led to his death, or why the keep seems to be empty. However, he does remember that his mother was supposedly poisoned by assassins and that his father has had trouble coping with her death.

If the characters attack Farant, he uses his Horrifying Visage feature, then flees through the floor. The next time the characters encounter him, he has no memory of ever meeting them.

Encounter: Spectral Horses. The servants and guards weren't the only ones Brycen poisoned; he killed the horses, too. Each of the stalls (9a) holds a **spectral horse** (see the Appendix). The horses only attack if their stalls are opened. Otherwise, they remain docile.

Investigation. A character who examines the riding equipment in the area discovers a particularly expensive saddle (worth 100 gp). A plaque on the saddle reads "Sky Blossom." The northernmost stall's door also reads "Sky Blossom." This was the name of Lord Brycen's own prized horse.

10 - PRIVY

This outhouse offers two privy stalls.

Treasure. A character who looks into the leftmost privy stall's chamber pot and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers a small coin purse decorated with a symbol of Tholona, Goddess of the Dawn. The purse contains 150 pp.

11 - WELL

An old well stands at the end of the courtyard.

Trap: Swarm of Maggots. A character who looks into the well sees only darkness. But before they can pull their head away, a **swarm of maggots** (use the **swarm of insects** statblock) rises out of the well and attacks. The number of swarms that attack are equal to the level of the adventure (1 swarm for 1st level, 3 for 3rd, and so forth). After the maggots attack, the well vanishes.

Spells and abilities that detect evil, such as the *detect good and evil* spell or a paladin's divine sense, reveal an aura of desecration around the well. A character who inspects the well recognizes that it's an illusion with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

An effect that turns undead or the casting of a *dispel evil and good* spell eliminates the spectral well.

12 - WOOD SHED

Stacks of chopped logs crowd this small shed. Multiple sharpened axes sit in an iron holder at the south end of the area.

Investigation. A character who searches the area and succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check finds a trap door hidden under the shed's floorboards. The trapdoor hides a treasure, the nature of which is determined by the level of the adventure.

AREA 12 TREASURE

Adventure Level	Treasure
1st	1 <i>bag of tricks</i> (rust)
3rd	1 <i>boots of striding and springing</i>
5th	1 <i>medallion of thoughts</i>
8th	1 suit of <i>adamantine scale armor</i> sized for a Small creature

13 - ANTECHAMBER

The doors connecting this area to area 7 are barred from the inside, but can easily be lifted from this side.

This area offers two couches and serves as the antechamber to area 14.

Encounter: Radella. Unless she's already been encountered elsewhere, the **ghost** Radella stands guard here. Driven insane by the death of her mother—and herself—she fights any humanoid who enters this area. At the start of

combat, she attempts to divide the party by shutting one or both of the doors leading into this area with spectral telekinesis. The doors remain shut until she is destroyed, flees, or a character uses its action to break open the door with a successful DC 13 Strength check. If Radella is destroyed, she rejuvenates 1 hour later in her bedroom (area 21), regaining all of her hit points. She has no memory of encountering the characters.

A character with a passive Wisdom (Insight) score of 13 or higher can tell that Radella is deeply troubled. Her spectral face is stricken with tears and she continually references the death of her mother at the hands of assassins. She refers to the characters as assassins, and warns, "You may have killed my mother, assassins, but you won't get the rest of us!"

14 - AUDIENCE CHAMBER

The lambent flames of a broad stone fireplace (14a) illuminate this colossal audience chamber. Two gargantuan tables dominate the floor; a 22-foot-long, rectangular table along the eastern wall (14b), and a 12-foot-diameter, round table atop a stone dais in the chamber's southeastern corner (14c).

Trick: Spectral Diplomats. When the characters first enter the room, they hear the voices of three nobles speaking to each other. It seems that they're sitting in the chairs by the fire. When the characters go to examine the chairs, they find only empty seats.

Encounter (5th- or 8th-Level Only) One round after the characters examine the chairs, the spirits attack. The spirits are **specters**, except they are invisible, and they can throw tangible objects at the players. They gain the following action:

Throw Object. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1d4 + 2 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (GM's discretion depending on the object thrown).

In the 8th-level version of the adventure, the specters are joined by a **flame spirit** that leaps from the fireplace and joins the fight. The flame spirit uses the **fire elemental** stat block except its type is undead and it is neutral evil.

Hazard: Smoke. The spirits aren't the only thing the characters have to worry about. At the start of combat, the candelabras and torches around the room begin to emit hazardous smoke. The entire area becomes heavily obscured (the spirits and fire elemental can see through the smoke without issue). Each time a creature starts its turn in the smoke, it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 1 necrotic damage and starts coughing; it is incapacitated until the start of its next turn. Creatures with resistance or immunity to fire or necrotic damage automatically pass their saving throws.

Optional Encounter: Hidden Under the Table. The **ghost** Jalyn is hiding under the large, round table (14c). A character can spot her with a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check. She refuses to come out from under the table, but if the characters talk to her, she might be persuaded to chat. A character who spends at least a minute questioning her and succeeds on a DC 11 Wisdom (Insight) check recognizes her grief and knows it's the best way to get through to her. The character can then convince her to answer questions with a successful DC 11 Charisma

(Persuasion) check. If either of these checks fails or if the characters try to attack her, she turns ethereal and floats into the ceiling.

Treasure: Signet Ring. A character who searches the fireplace and succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check discovers one of the diplomats' old signet rings hidden near the stonework. The ring is worth 50 gp. However, if it's returned to the diplomat's family, they pay a 500 gp reward for its return.

15 - PANTRY

The food in this well-stocked pantry appears to be in perfect condition, despite having not been touched in a decade.

Optional Encounter: Vegetables. Unless he's been encountered elsewhere, the **ghost** Farant can be found here searching for carrots. He hopes to bring them back to the horses (area 9). Although Farant isn't aware that he's dead, he does recognize something is unusual about the keep. He tells the characters that he hopes to feed his father's favorite horse carrots. Farant remarks that his father's been in a terrible mood since his mother was poisoned by assassins. Strangely, he doesn't remember the name of his father's horse. If asked about the gaps in his memory, he comments that he's been "a little out of it" since his mother's death.

If the characters attack Farant or continue to ask him questions he is unable to answer, he uses his Horrifying Visage action, then flees through one of the walls or floors.

Investigation. Characters who search the pantry and succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spot a painting tucked behind one of the shelves. The painting depicts the young girl Jalyn holding a green lollipop.

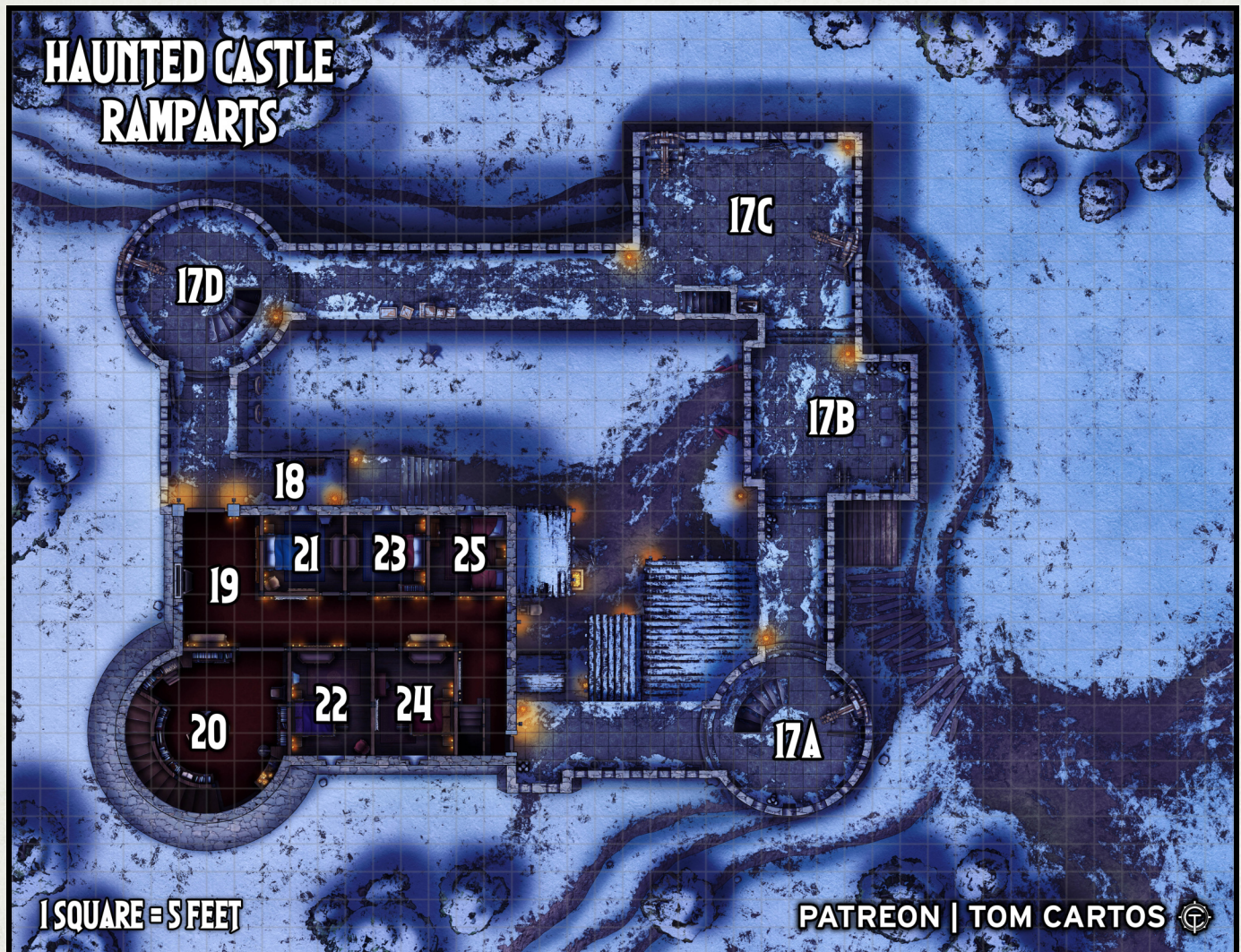
16 - KITCHEN

As the characters approach this area, they hear the sounds of servants working and cooking in the kitchen. Once they open the door, however, they discover a room devoid of people. A pot filled with stew burns in a cauldron in the large hearth at the south end of the room. Sharp knives lie strewn about the counters amid piles of freshly diced vegetables.

Encounter: Spectral Staff. If the characters touch any of the cooking utensils or food in this kitchen, the spectral staff appears and attacks. The nature of these apparitions depends on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table below. These spirits won't leave the room, but will fight until destroyed.

AREA 16 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	1 specter chef
3rd	1 specter chef and 2 shadow servants
5th	1 wraith chef and 2 specter servants
8th	1 wraith chef and 3 specter servants



17 - RAMPARTS

These icy ramparts offer a clear view of the wintry hill and forest surrounding the keep. Ice-encased ballistae stand at three of the ramparts' four corners. The weapons are unusable so long as they remain covered in ice.

Hazard: Slippery Ice. All of the ramparts' stonework is covered in slippery ice (see General Features).

Encounter: Radella and Spectral Guards. Unless she's already been encountered elsewhere, the **ghost** Radella stands atop the castle's gatehouse (area 17b). Perpetually weeping, she claims that she's keeping the castle safe from assassins. When she sees the characters, she calls for guards to take them out. The nature of these guards depends on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table below. They fight until they are destroyed, but will not leave the ramparts. Radella does not enter combat but instead commands the spectral guards from her post. If she's attacked, she turns ethereal and flees.

AREA 17 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	3 shadows
3rd	4 specters
5th	8 specters
8th	12 specters

Encounter: Larry the Ice Mephit. A curious creature stands near the brazier in the northwestern corner of the castle (17d). The creature is an **ice mephit** and its name is Larry (or at least that's what it claims its name is). Despite his frosty nature, Larry is infatuated with the flames, which causes him to sweat profusely. Of course, due to his vulnerability to heat, he keeps plenty of distance. Larry has lived on the hill for over 1,000 years. Whenever it snows, he reappears and walks the grounds. Therefore, he remembers everything that's ever happened in the area. This includes the events that led to the castle's haunting.

Larry is willing to share what he knows about the castle, but only if the characters bring him a special item. The weapon is a dagger made from stone taken from a realm called The Nether. The dagger looks like a jagged, black icicle. He's not sure where it's stored, but he knows it's somewhere in the castle. The castle's perpetual warmth prevents him from entering. He shares that a deep chill radiates from the dagger and it burns mortals to the touch. The dagger is on display in area 30.

Once Larry has the dagger, he tells the characters what he knows.

- Larry was at the hill long before the castle was built. It was the site of a great battle between humans and elves who were joined by dangerous creatures from The Nether.
- A human—Lord Brycen—built the castle atop the hill. While excavating the area, he discovered the dagger and kept it hidden.
- As the years passed, Lord Brycen started to develop a dark attitude. He mostly kept to himself working in his study in the southwestern tower.
- Eventually, assassins found their way into the castle and poisoned Lord Brycen's wife, Lady Noell.

- Driven mad by her death, Lord Brycen poisoned the keep's water supply.
- At a dinner commemorating his wife, Lord Brycen made sure everyone—including his children—drank the poison. Everyone died. Brycen then vanished.

That's all the mephit knows about the keep.

Once Larry is finished fulfilling his end of the bargain, he takes the dagger and vanishes back to his home realm.

18 - GUARD POST

This small guard post overlooks the main entrance to the keep.

Hazard: Slippery Ice. The stonework here is covered in slippery ice (see General Features).

Encounter: Spectral Guards. Spectral guards might be standing in this roost, depending on the level of the adventure as shown on the table below. These guards only appear when a creature approaches the doors leading to areas 13 or 19.

AREA 18 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	No encounter
3rd	1 shadow
5th	1 specter
8th	2 specters

19 - UPSTAIRS PASSAGE

This well-lit hallway connects all the upstairs rooms.

Investigation. Five paintings hang in the hallway. From the largest painting near the door to area 18 going clockwise these paintings depict:

- The entire Merritt family gathered together.
- Radella Merritt holding a fluffy orange cat.
- Farant Merritt reading a book titled *Kings of Dusk*.
- Uncle Ferim standing beside an empty fishbowl.
- Lady Noell Merritt sitting at a desk writing a letter.

A plaque bearing the name of each paintings' subject is pinned to the wall just below its respective painting. There appears to be a missing painting at the end of the hall, directly in front of the stairs that lead down to area 14. The plaque below it reads "Jalyn Merritt."

Jalyn removed the painting and hid it in the pantry behind the shelves.

Locked Door. The door to rooms 20 and 22 are locked.

20 - LIBRARY

The door to this room is locked.

Hundreds of books fill tall mahogany shelves in this portion of the tower. The room also features a semicircular desk covered in papers and ledgers.

Investigation: Ledgers. A character who spends 30 minutes reading the ledgers can make a DC 15 Intelligence using proficiency in forgery kits. On a success, the character recognizes that the Merritts were laundering money through a series of small businesses around Knottside and Camor.

Investigation: Green Lollipops. A glass jar on one of the shelves close to the desk holds a variety of green lollipops. Giving these lollipops to Jalyn will convince her to speak with the party.

Treasure. Lord Brycen's library contains an impressive collection of books on history, nature, and warfare. A character who spends their downtime researching these subjects in this library gains advantage to related checks. The books remain even after the castle's curse ends.

Optional Adventure Hook. If you wish to continue this adventure, use this hook. The book on Lord Brycen's desk is titled *Famous Haunted Locations in Northern Omeria* by Arrow Diamond. Currently, the book is turned to a page that references a tower haunted by a banshee. Supposedly, there is a substantial treasure cache hidden somewhere within the ruins of the keep. This adventure is described in greater detail in the adventure *Dungeons & Lairs #5: Banshee Tower* by DMDave.

21 - RADELLA'S CHAMBERS

The window at the north end of the room allows in the cold. It's also a way for Hobart (see below) to escape.

This lavish bedroom is in perfect condition. The wardrobe against the eastern wall holds an assortment of adult women's clothing.

Encounter: Hobart. A fluffy orange cat hides in the room. He wears a name tag that reads "Hobart." This cat was Radella's. He has lived alone in the castle for ten long years, kept alive by eating food prepared by the spectral staff and hunting mice. Skittish, Hobart runs from the characters as soon as they try to grab him. Hobart won't leave the castle grounds, but knows plenty of good hiding places. To determine which area he flees to, roll a d20. The result is the area in which he hides. Eventually, he returns to Radella's chambers.

Capturing Hobart and presenting him to Radella's ghost gets her to calm down and speak with the characters.

Optional Encounter: Radella. If the characters encounter Radella somewhere in the castle and she is destroyed or chased away, she rejuvenates here. When the characters enter the room, the ghost Radella is trying to pet Hobart with her incorporeal hand. Hobart continually hisses at her, which causes her to weep. Hobart flees when the characters enter the room. Radella, angered by Hobart's absence, calls the characters assassins and attacks. If destroyed, she returns here an hour later with all her hit points intact and no memory of the encounter.

Investigation: Radella's Flamberge. If the characters look under the bed, they discover a long, narrow, black wooden case. Inside the case are a sword and a note. "To my beloved daughter, Radella. Happy birthday. Please don't tell your mother about this. Love, your father." The sword is a flamberge, a unique weapon with the same properties as a longsword except it deals piercing damage instead of slashing. In all versions of the adventure except for 1st, the sword is a +1 weapon.

22 - LORD AND LADY BRYCEN'S CHAMBERS

The door to this room is locked.

These comfortable chambers were Lord and Lady Brycen's. An ornate mirror stands against the western wall.

Mirror Portal The mirror is a two-way portal connecting these chambers to the castle's secret vault (area 36). The only way to open the portal is to speak aloud the phrase "Sky Blossom." The portal stays open for 1 minute and then closes

again. As part of the wish used to create the mirror, the efreeti's magic protects the mirror from all divination spells that would reveal its true nature.

23 - FARANT'S CHAMBERS

This lavish bedroom includes a shelf choked with romance novels and books on poetry. The wardrobe against the western wall holds an assortment of adult men's livery.

Investigation: Missing Book. A character who examines the bookshelf along the southern wall notices with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check that there is a book missing. Any character who looks under the bed or succeeds on a follow-up DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the book under Farant's bed. The book's title reads *Kings of Dusk*, a book of gossip regarding the love affairs of Pressonian nobles. If this book is given to Farant, he realizes that he's a ghost and decides to help the characters.

Treasure: Farant's Clothing. The clothing inside Farant's wardrobe are impressive pieces hand sewn by his father. There are sixteen outfits in all, each one worth 50 gp.

24 - FERIM'S CHAMBERS

A fine layer of dust covers everything in this bedroom.

Brycen's brother, Ferim, once lived in this room. After Ferim died, they kept the door shut and never used the chambers again.

Investigation: Ferim's Chest. The chest at the foot of Ferim's bed is locked. Once opened, the chest seems to contain nothing more than blankets and pillows. However, a character who uses their action to thoroughly examine the chest discovers a false bottom with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Within the hidden compartment, the characters find an iron cube measuring no more than 3 inches on a side. The cube exudes powerful magic from all schools, particularly conjuration and transmutation.

If the word "Ignoble" is spoken in the presence of the cube, the cube glows red hot. Whoever is holding the cube when this happens takes 1 fire damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or drop the cube. The cube then vanishes and an efreeti appears. The efreeti introduces itself as Vure and demands to know what the characters wish of it. Vure will grant the characters a single wish (as the spell). However, this is the third of three wishes Vure has granted (Ferim used the other two). Once the third wish is fulfilled, Vure is free from his captivity. When he senses that Ferim is dead, he turns his wrath on the characters. He will spare them, but only if they agree to serve him for one hundred years each on the Elemental Plane of Fire. Speaking the command phrase "Ignoble" before Vure grants the wish restores the cube in which he's held.

Optional Adventure Hook: Lich Tower. If the characters awaken Vure and use the last wish, Vure offers them one alternative to enslavement. The creature who actually trapped Vure in the iron cube was a powerful lich he fought centuries ago. The lich lives on a mysterious island off the northern coast of Omeria. Vure will give the characters one year to destroy the lich. If they are successful, not only will he waive the enslavement penalty, but he will offer the characters three new wish spells with no strings attached. If they fail, he doubles their sentence to two hundred years. If

you wish the characters to become involved with this hook, be sure to read the DMDave adventure *Dungeons & Lairs #20: Lich Tower*.

25 - JALYN'S CHAMBERS

This room features two small beds and it is decorated for children.

Optional Encounter: Jalyn. The characters might encounter **ghost** Jalyn in this room. Unless they are particularly quiet approaching the door, Jalyn hides under the northernmost bed. If cornered, she screams and flies through the window into the courtyard beyond.

Encounter: Toy Chest. The chest at the foot of Jalyn's bed is unlocked but contains a dangerous creature inside—a **marionette golem** (see the Appendix). The golem uses its Hypnotic Dance to distract the characters. While keeping them distracted, it steals a valuable item from one of the characters and flees.

26 - STUDY/AVIARY

This open-air study is extraordinarily cold. A large desk stands near the stair railing. A bookshelf cluttered with random knick-knacks adorns the south end of the room. Birdcages—all empty—stand against the northeastern wall.

Encounter: Shadows. Dangerous shadows lurk in this section of the castle. They hide in the dark corners of the room and attack any living creature that enters the area. The

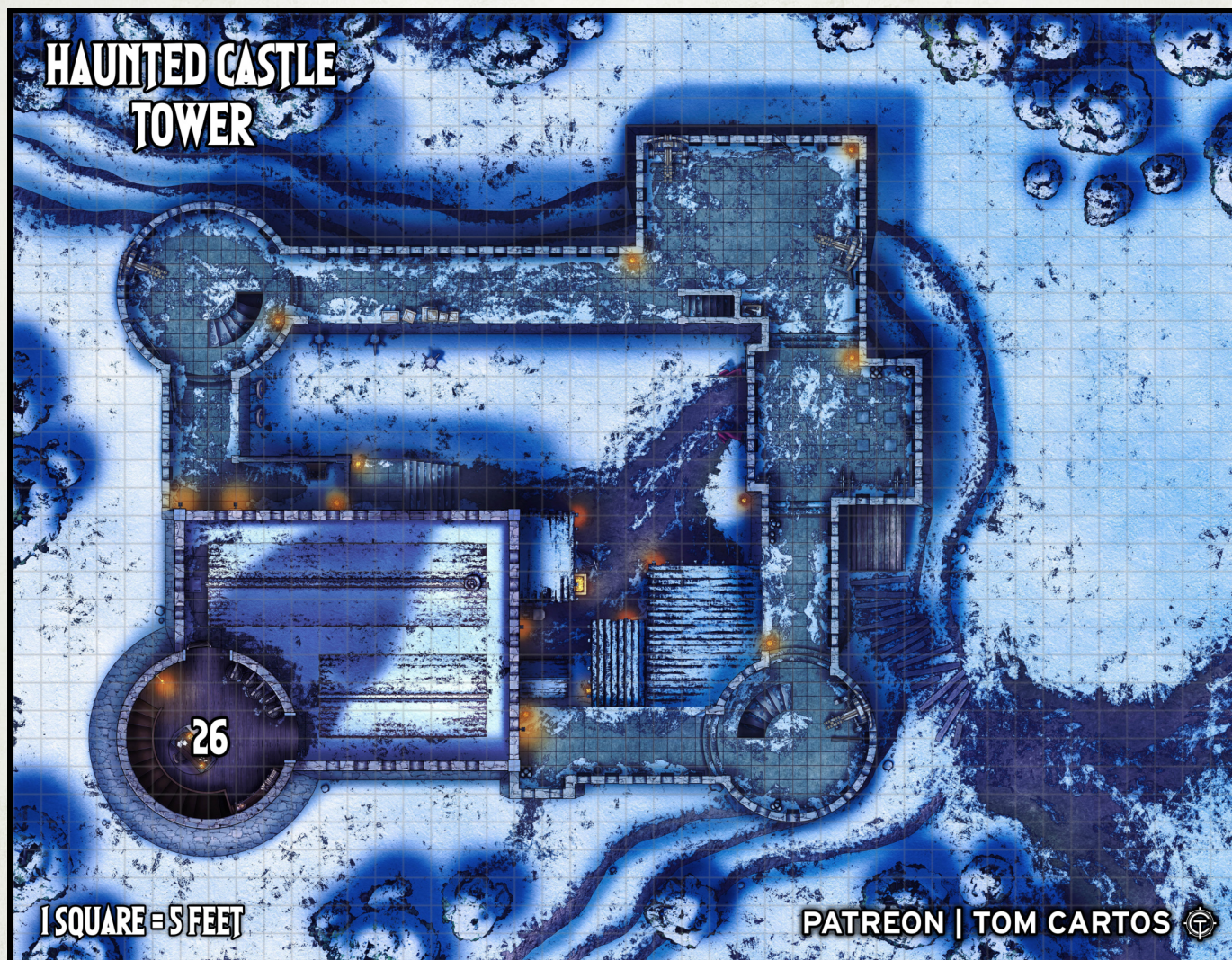
number of shadows here depends on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table below. The shadows fight until they are destroyed but will not leave the area.

AREA 26 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	1 shadow
3rd	2 shadows
5th	5 shadows
8th	8 shadows

Investigation. While most of the items in this part of the castle are fairly weather-worn, there is something curious on the bookshelf. Crammed between a number of heavy volumes detailing the gnoll skirmishes at Malembia in Aspaeth rests a goldfish bowl that holds a human skull. The skull belonged to Lord Brycen's brother, Ferim. Ferim and Brycen discovered the genie box in area 26. The genie offered three wishes. The brothers used their first wish to create the incredible fortune hidden in area 36. They then used the second wish to create the pocket dimension and connecting portal mirror into which it was stored.

If the characters use a *Speak with Dead* spell to speak with Ferim, he will answer what he knows about the castle.



The Lost Treasure. Ferim reveals that the vault is hidden behind the mirror in Lord Brycen's room (area 22). He isn't entirely certain what's the most recent password used to protect the mirror portal, but assumes that Brycen named it after something he loved dearly—if not his wife and children, then possibly one of the horses in the stables. Ferim doesn't remember the horses' names.

The Genie. Ferim warns that there's a genie box in his room that contains a vicious efreeti named Vure. The efreeti still has one wish remaining, but Ferim and his brother were afraid to use the last wish, thinking (correctly) the genie would be freed and attack the pair. He openly shares that the password used to open the box is the word "Ignoble."

Ghosts. Ferim died before Noell was poisoned; therefore, he doesn't know anything about the ghosts in the castle or why they are cursed. However, as a student of the occult, he suggests the characters learn what they can from the other ghosts in the castle. The best way to get a ghost to help is to give it something that reminds it of its former life, whatever that may be.

Afterlife. Ferim currently enjoys his time as a petitioner in The Prism and has no interest in returning to life. None of his family members are with him there.

Optional Adventure Hook. If you wish to have the players learn more about Ferim and his unusual life, when asked about who he is, Ferim shares that he was once the assistant to a dangerous archmage named Idamonar the Lude. Idamonar lives in a pocket dimension. The only portal to this dimension is hidden in the ruined city of Qola in the Tadju

Confederacy. If any of the characters truly wish to learn about magic and its power, he suggests they seek out Idamonar. If you wish to use this adventure hook, check out the DMDave Adventure *Dungeons & Lairs #3: Archmage Stronghold*.

27 - DUNGEON ENTRY

The stairs south of area 6 lead down to the castle's dungeon. It's extremely cold in this area, supernaturally so. Even characters wearing protection against warm clothing will be subject to the extreme cold effects described in the General Features section on page 3.

Locked Portcullis. The portcullis that connects this area to area 28 is locked.

Warning. When the characters first approach the portcullis, a huge, glowing skull appears over the door and screams at them. Then, as it fades away, it warns, "Turn back. Lest ye find death." The skull is only an illusion and cannot harm the characters. If it is attacked, it immediately vanishes.

28 - TRAPPED CORRIDOR

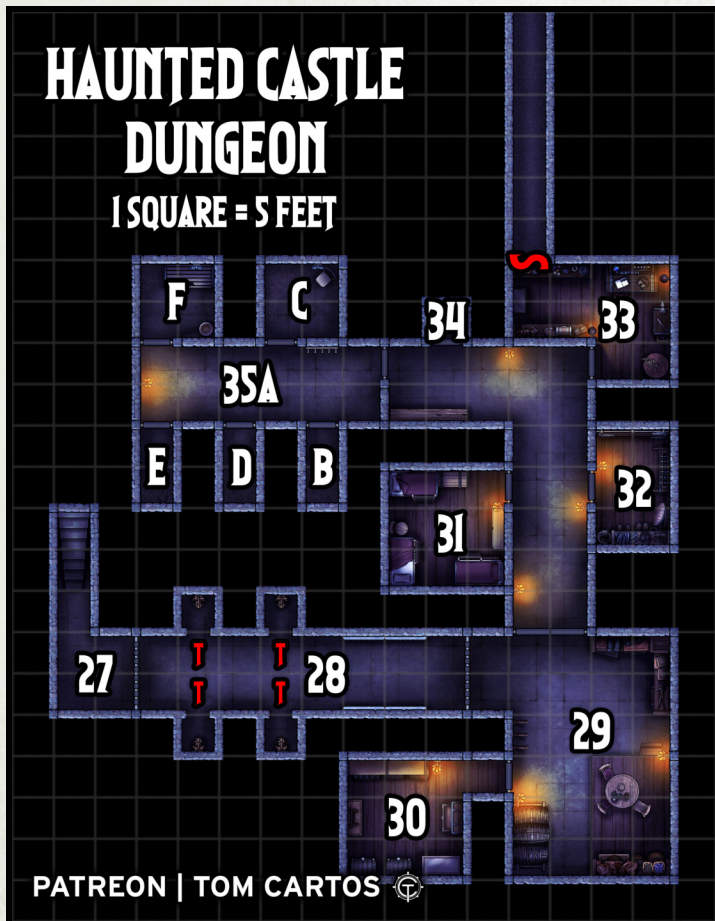
Both ends of this long hallway are blocked by locked portcullises.

Trap: Hallway of Death. Various traps line this hallway, as detailed below. Speaking the phrase "Sky Blossom" aloud in the hallway stops all of the traps from working for 10 minutes or until the phrase is spoken again.

Firebreathing Gargoyles. There are two alcoves in the north side of the hallway and two alcoves to the south. All four alcoves' far walls contain brass gargoyle heads. There are four pressure plates on the floor that trigger the gargoyles (as shown on the map). When 50 pounds or more of pressure is placed on a plate, the plate's respective gargoyle head is triggered and it breathes fire in a 10-foot line that's 5 feet wide. Each creature in the line must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one. The fire stops as soon as the weight is removed from the plate. Finding the pressure plates requires a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. A single pressure plate can be disarmed with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools. Each gargoyle head can also be destroyed (AC 18, 10 hp, immunity to fire, poison, and psychic damage).

Concealed Pit Trap. A 5-foot-long, 10-foot-wide, 20-foot-deep pit hides on the floor between the pressure plates for the gargoyles and the pressure plate for the stone wall trap. A trapdoor disguised to look like the floor conceals the pit. The trapdoor breaks open whenever 50 pounds of weight or more is set atop it. It then snaps back into place. Any creature standing on the trapdoor when it opens falls 20 feet into the pit and takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall. The pit's trapdoor can be found with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. A character that spends an action jamming a piton or similar wedge into the trapdoor keeps it from opening with a successful DC 12 Strength check.

Crushing Walls (5th- or 8th-Level Adventures Only) The final trap in this hallway of death is a crushing wall trap at the east end of the corridor. The trap is motion activated by an invisible glyph. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check spots the glyph, as does a *detect magic* spell. If a



living creature steps between the walls, the walls immediately slam together; any creature in the 10-foot-square area must make a DC 15 Dexterity or DC 20 Strength saving throw (target's choice). On a successful Dexterity saving throw, the creature moves to the nearest unoccupied space. If it can't or won't move to a space, it suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw. On a successful Strength saving throw, the target catches the walls and holds them open. So long as the creature continues to hold the walls open, creatures can treat the space and the creature as difficult terrain as they shimmy around it to reach the other side. The creature holding the walls open can't move and must use its action on each of its turns to keep the wall in place. If the creature cannot or will not hold the walls open on its turn, it suffers the effects of a failed saving throw. The creature can use its action on its turn to make a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to move to an unoccupied space within its movement range before the wall closes on it. If the check fails, the creature suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw. On a failed saving throw, regardless of the ability used, the target takes 55 (10d10) bludgeoning damage from the crushing walls. The wall can be disarmed by dispelling the glyph. Alternatively, a character can use their action to hammer a piton or similar wedge into the floor by the wall followed by a successful DC 16 Strength check.

Optional Encounter: Jalyn's Run. As the characters approach this hallway, the **ghost** of Jalyn appears in the middle of the hallway. As an incorporeal spirit, she cannot set off any of the traps. As soon as she sees the characters, she flees across the hall and through the portcullis at the eastern end.

29 - STORAGE

A wooden deck dominates the southeastern corner of this large storage room. Huge casks of wine stand against the eastern wall.

Three levers jut from the wall just by the portcullis that leads back to area 28 (the southern lever controls the gargoyles and pit trap, the center lever controls the crushing wall, and the northernmost lever opens or closes both of the portcullises in area 28. Up means activated or closed, and down means deactivated or opened. All three levers are currently in the down position. Once moved up or down, a given lever remains in that position until it is shifted again.

This secret storage area was used as a place for Brycen and his brother to meet, drink wine, and chat.

Hazard: Poisoned Wine. The wine in the casks is poisoned with midnight tears. A creature that ingests this poison suffers no effect until the stroke of midnight. If the poison has not been neutralized before then, the creature must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 31 (9d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The poison is tasteless, but it darkens the wine to the point where it looks almost black.

Locked Door. The door to area 30 is made from solid iron and locked with an impressive lock and *arcane lock* spell. A character with proficiency in thieves' tools can pick the lock with a successful DC 28 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. Alternatively, the door can be broken down with a successful DC 31 Strength check. Otherwise, the door is impenetrable.

The room beyond is protected by a permanent *private sanctum* and a *forbiddance* spell with all options included for both spells. The command word "Compunction" releases the *arcane lock* on the door. The only person in the entire castle that knows this secret command word is Jalyn.

30 - VAULT

This small room is a vault, but not *the* vault. Still, it contains an impressive collection of valuables, the nature of which depends on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table below.

AREA 30 TREASURE

Adventure Level	Treasure
1st	10,000 sp and 500 gp
3rd	20,000 sp, 1,000 gp, and 50 pp
5th	35,000 sp, 3,000 gp, and 100 pp
8th	55,000 sp, 5,000 gp, and 150 pp

Ginorola's Nether Ice Dagger. Regardless of the adventure's level, a shelf standing against the eastern wall displays a strange weapon that looks like a dagger carved from black ice. The dagger exudes an aura of necromantic magic, but doesn't appear to have any benefits aside from being magical. This is the dagger Larry the ice mephit seeks (see area 17d). The true purpose of this weapon is detailed in a future adventure.

31 - BARRACKS

This cold room hosts three bunk beds. A wardrobe against the eastern wall contains tunics emblazoned with the Merritt family crest (two ravens facing opposite directions). A chest on the north wall holds blankets and books written on the subject of battle tactics.

Trap: Ethereal Arm. Any character with a passive Perception score of 13 or higher catches a whiff of freshly dug dirt emanating from the room's western wall. When a humanoid that can smell the earth comes near, an ethereal arm reaches out of the wall and tries to grab the creature. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (target's choice). On a failed saving throw, the target takes 2 (1d4) necrotic damage and the hand grapples the target (escape DC 13). Until the grapple ends, the target takes 2 (1d4) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns and the ethereal arm can't attack another target. The arm can be attacked (AC 13, 3 hit points, immunity to all damage except radiant damage and damage from magical weapons). It can also be turned with an effect that turns undead, with a +3 to its Wisdom saving throw. If the arm's hit points are reduced to 0, or the creature escapes the grapple, it retreats back into the wall.

This haunted trap can be detected with a *detect evil and good* spell or a paladin's Divine Sense, and disarmed by an effect that turns undead or the *dispel evil and good* spell.

32 - ARMORY

The door to this room is locked.

Weapon-filled racks and suits of armor crowd this small armory. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that the leather straps binding the armor have been eaten away by something.

Encounter: Leather Eaters. A swarm of leather eaters lurks in the armory, hiding among the armor and weapons. When a creature wearing leather armor or carrying leather goods enters the area, the insects emerge from hiding and attack.

The swarm of leather eaters uses the **swarm of insects** stat block, except when it hits a creature wearing nonmagical leather armor with their bite attack, the armor takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. Armor reduced to an AC of 10 is destroyed.

Treasure: Arms and Armor. This room contains a wide variety of arms and armor, although all of the leather armor and any weapons or armor that incorporate leather have been heavily damaged or completely destroyed by the swarm.

33 - WORKSHOP

A sign over the door reads: "Dangerous! Flammable Contents Inside."

Tools, beakers, baubles, spell components, and arcane books filled with schematics jam-pack the shelves and tables of this small space.

Hazard: Flammable Contents. The contents of this room are highly flammable. The first round an open flame enters the room, it flickers wildly and expands. The second round, it glows green and expands again, filling the room with light. In the fourth round, it explodes. Every creature in the room must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. A target takes 17 (5d6) fire damage on a failed saving throw or half as much damage on a successful one. The explosion destroys most of the room's contents.

If a spell that deals fire damage is cast in the room, the room immediately explodes.

Magic Lights. A character who inspects the two hanging lamps and succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes that the lights from the lantern are not created by flames, but by permanent instances of the *light* cantrip. If a character capable of casting the *continual flame* spell spends 30 minutes observing these lights, then succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check, they can alter the *continual flame* spell to use non-burning light instead of flames.

Secret Passage. A character who succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a secret door in the north wall. This passage is a way to escape via a hidden entrance in the side of the hill (not pictured on the map). The door is locked, but it opens if the secret lever in area 5 is held down. A character who saw the lever in area 5 understands how the secret door opens with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

The door can be forced open with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools, or a successful DC 22 Strength check.

Treasure: Kits and Components. This room contains enough contents to cast every wizard spell of 3rd-level or lower exactly once. It also contains at least one complete set of each of the following tools: alchemist's supplies, carpenter's tool, jeweler's tools, leather worker's tools, and tinker's tools.

34 - PRIVY

This toilet is haunted.

Trap: The Worm Bride. When a character opens the door to this privy, an eyeless ethereal worm wearing a bridal veil

leaps out from the toilet and attacks with a +6 to hit. On a hit, the target takes 3 (1d6) necrotic damage and is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and blinded as the ghost worm's toothless maw wraps around the target's head, and the worm can't target another creature. At the start of each of the target's turns, the worm tries to pull the target into the chamber pot from which it emerged. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw, or take 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage. A creature whose hit points are reduced to 0 by this attack is gruesomely shredded to pieces as its body is dragged into the chamber pot. Any character witnessing this must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw, or gain a form of short term insanity.

The worm can be destroyed by an effect that turns undead (it adds a +6 to its saving throw), or through the casting of a *dispel evil and good* spell. The worm itself is immune to all damage, but if the chamber pot from which it emerged is destroyed (AC 13, 6 hit points, immunity to poison and psychic damage), the worm vanishes. If the creature escapes the worm's grapple, the worm hisses and retreats back into the chamber pot, whining, "But I loved you..."

This haunted trap can be detected with a *detect evil and good* spell or a paladin's Divine Sense, and disarmed by an effect that turns undead or the *dispel evil and good* spell.

35 - PRISON

The door to this prison, as well as all of the doors inside, are locked. All of the doors here are made from iron, with AC 18, 25 hit points (damage threshold 5), and immunity to poison and psychic damage (same checks to pick locks or break open). A small, barred window near the top of each door allows a character to see what's inside a given room.

Trap #1: The Banshee (Area 35a) The first time the characters enter 35a, a spectral woman appears at the center of the passage. Her face contorts into one of horror and she emits an ear splitting howl. Each creature within 60 feet of her that can hear her must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed saving throw, a creature's hit points are reduced to 0. On a successful saving throw, a creature takes 3 (1d6) psychic damage. The banshee then disappears.

This haunted trap can be detected with a *detect evil and good* spell or a paladin's Divine Sense, and disarmed by an effect that turns undead or the *dispel evil and good* spell.

Encounter #1: Jalyn (Area 35b) Despite having a room upstairs, the **ghost** Jalyn likes to hide in this small dungeon cell. She's a little more willing to parley with the characters here, recognizing that they might be powerful, especially if they've made it this far. Still, unless the characters give her one of the green lollipops from her father's library (area 20), she flies through the ceiling and escapes. Having greater awareness than her siblings and the other creatures that haunt the castle, she knows most of its secrets. See the section "What the Ghosts Know" on page 3 to learn more about Jalyn.

Encounter #2: The Messenger (Area 35c) Shortly before Brycen killed everyone in the castle, he imprisoned a messenger in this jail cell. Although the messenger wasn't poisoned like the other inhabitants of the castle, he eventually wasted away from lack of food and water. His bones still litter the floor of the cell.

When the characters enter the area, the messenger appears as a **ghost**. Although angry at its fate, it shares its

frustration instead of attacking. Holding up a translucent letter, it tells the characters that all it wanted to do was deliver the message it's holding. Brycen refused to read it and instead imprisoned the messenger. The messenger asks that the characters deliver the message to Brycen. The characters can take the letter, but they can't open it. Giving this letter to Lord Brycen ends the curse on Merritt Keep.

Trap #2: Weeping Man (Area 35d). As the characters approach the door to area 35d, they hear a man weeping from within. If any character glances inside the area or opens the door, they discover nothing within. However, they must immediately make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a successful saving throw, a creature openly weeps for 1 minute. On a failed saving throw, not only does the creature weep, but its eyes begin to bleed profusely, too. Until the creature receives magical healing, it takes 1 necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns. If this reduces the creature's hit points to 0, the creature is stable, but permanently blinded. Only a *regeneration* spell returns the creature's eyes and its sight.

This haunted trap can be detected with a *detect evil and good* spell or a paladin's Divine Sense, and disarmed by an effect that turns undead or the *dispel evil and good* spell.

Encounter #3: Vengeful Spirit (Area 35d). A lone shadow haunts this cell. It attacks any creature that enters the area.

Trap #3: Room Askew (Area 35e). At a glance, this cell appears to be unaffected by the evil that pervades the house. However, when a creature enters the area, the door immediately shuts behind them. The only way to open the door is to dispel the haunted trap as detailed below, or to force it open with a successful DC 16 Strength check. The room's gravity changes, making it seem like the entire cell is rolling on its side. Creatures viewing the room from outside of it don't see the room move; however, they see that characters inside are being affected. A creature inside the cell must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw at the start of each of its turns. On a failed saving throw, the target is flung against whatever the cell's current "floor" is and takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage. On a successful saving throw, the target stops itself before it is flung away, but must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become dizzy until the start of its next turn. A dizzy target has disadvantage on Dexterity ability checks and saving throws as well as Dexterity-based attacks. A creature without a flying or climbing speed that tries to move in the room must first succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check in order to do so. Otherwise, the target falls prone against whatever surface it is currently up against.

This haunted trap can be detected with a *detect evil and good* spell or a paladin's Divine Sense, and disarmed by an effect that turns undead or the *dispel evil and good* spell.

36 - SECRET VAULT

This hidden room can only be accessed by speaking the phrase "Sky Blossom" before the two-way portal mirror in area 22.

This 45-foot-diameter room is filled to the brim with gold coins, gems, and other treasures. Treat the ground in this area as



difficult terrain. But that's not all—there are also undead creatures lurking here.

Encounter: Lord Brycen Merritt. Lord Brycen is found here in this area, where he continues to mourn the loss of his beloved wife, Noell. Having killed himself along with the rest of his family, servants, and pets, Brycen is now an undead creature himself, the nature of which is determined by the table below (the greater wraith is detailed in the Appendix).



Lord Brycen viciously attacks any creature that enters the chamber.

Like his children, destruction is not the end for Lord Brycen; he rejuvenates 1 hour after he's destroyed, reappearing in the vault with all his hit points returned.

LORD BRYCEN'S STATBLOCK

Adventure Level Statblock

1st	specter (40 hp)
3rd	wraith (99 hp)
5th	greater wraith (no legendary actions)
8th	greater wraith

Lord Brycen's Lair Actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Lord Brycen takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects. Lord Brycen can't use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- A number of skeletons equal to up to twice the adventure's level rise from the pile of treasure. The skeletons take their turns on Lord Brycen's initiative count, follow his commands (no action required), and remain until they or Lord Brycen is destroyed. Lord Brycen can have a maximum number of skeletons equal to twice the adventure's level.
- Lord Brycen creates a telekinetic whirlwind of gold coins in the vault which lasts until the next initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties). Until the whirlwind stops, the area is lightly obscured and ranged weapon attacks are made with disadvantage. If a creature moves through the area, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage from the coins. Lord Brycen and his skeletal servants are unaffected by the whirlwind.
- Lord Brycen targets one creature or unattended object that he can see in the vault with a telekinetic thrust. The creature must be Medium or smaller to be affected by this magic, and an object can weigh up to 150 pounds. If the target is a creature, the target must make DC 15 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 30 feet in any direction, including upward (the ceilings here are 15 feet high). If the target then comes into contact with a hard surface or heavy object, the target takes 1d6 damage per 10 feet moved. If the target is an object that isn't being worn or carried, Lord Brycen hurls it up to 30 feet in any direction. Lord Brycen can use the object as a ranged weapon, attacking one creature along the object's path using his normal attack bonus for his Life Drain feature. The object deals 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage per level of the adventure.

Stopping Lord Brycen's Attack. Lord Brycen is designed to be very difficult to fight in combat. The characters' best bet is to convince him to stop his tirade or to flee before he kills them.

If he's presented with the messenger's letter from area 35c, he stops his attack and reverts to a less frightening state. When this happens, read the following:

The apparition blinks, staring in disbelief at the ethereal letter in his hands. "This handwriting," he says. "It's Noell's." The apparition floats gently over the coins at his feet, quietly reading the note to himself. When he's finished, he looks back up at you with tears in his hollow eyes.

"By the Goddess—I made a terrible mistake. She did it to he —" he can't bring himself to say the words.

"I'm so sorry for what I've done. Will you please forgive me?"

With that, the ghost slowly starts to fade away. Suddenly, the chill surrounding this room lifts. It feels as if some of the color and warmth have returned to the world.

Brycen never shares the contents of the letter. Whatever it was, it was enough to allow Brycen to depart to the afterlife, thereby lifting the curse from the Keep. When the characters return to the manor, they discover that all of the lights have gone out. Dust and cobwebs cover everything in the manor. There are no ghosts, specters, or any other undead anywhere to be seen. The sun finally breaks through the clouds and shines its rays on Merritt Castle for what feels like the first time in a decade.

Treasure: The Merritt Fortune. The vault holds an impossible amount of treasure. If the characters avoid telling Baron Wilson that they've discovered the vault and keep it for themselves, the characters suddenly find themselves rich beyond reason. But just as a certain notorious bard once sang, "Mo' money. Mo' problems."

JUST HOW MANY COINS ARE THERE?

If you need an actual value for the coins other than just a handwave solution, let's assume that the gold pile averages 6 inches off the floor throughout the entire room. The room is 50 feet in diameter. This creates 1,696,460 cubic feet of gold coins. Assuming a cubic foot holds 25,000 gold coins (an estimate based on the number of silver dollars it takes to fill a similar volume), that's a total of 42,411,500,000 gold coins. Give or take a few, of course. This means the treasure in this area would weigh approximately 42,411.5 tons.



WHAT'S NEXT?

This adventure offers a few hooks for future adventures. In case you missed them, here they are along with the links to the adventures themselves.

- [Banshee Tower](#) is a Fifth Edition plug-in adventure for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 1, 3, 5, or 8**. In this adventure, the party enters the ruins of an old, overgrown keep in the forest, from within which a spirit's mournful wails can be heard for miles around. To stop the spirit's incessant keening, the adventurers must discover her remains and give them a proper burial. Until then, her presence will continue to endanger life in the forest. A book in area 20 details the banshee tower and shares a rumor regarding treasure that's supposed to be hidden there.
- [Archmage Stronghold](#) is a Fifth Edition plug-in adventure for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 11, 14, 17, or 20**. The characters must enter the stronghold of a powerful mage, where their might and survival skills are put to the test. The characters might learn about this adventure after speaking with Ferim's skull in area 26.
- [Lich Tower](#) is a Fifth Edition plug-in adventure for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 14, 17, 20, or Epic**. The characters must enter the black tower of one of the most dangerous beings in the world, a lich. The characters learn about this hook after they anger the efreeti, Vure, in area 24.

For more adventures by DMDave, be sure to check out DMDave's full adventure catalog on Patreon. Ω

CREDITS

The following creators made this adventure possible:

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Art. Paper Forge, Shutterstock

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APPENDIX: NEW CREATURES

SPECTRAL HORSE

Large undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 22 (4d10)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Ethereal Sight. The horse can see 60 ft. into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The horse can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Actions

Spectral Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) necrotic damage.

Etherealness. The horse enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

GREATER WRAITH

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 19

Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +8, Cha +10

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +5

Incorporeal Movement. The wraith can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Innate Spellcasting. The wraith's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). It can cast the following spells, requiring no material components when it does:

At will: *chill touch* (as an 11th-level spellcaster), *hold person*

3/day: *dominate person*, *telekinesis*

1/day each: *banishment*, *feeblemind*, *finger of death*

Magic Resistance. The wraith has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Psychic Defense. The greater wraith gains a bonus to its AC equal to its Charisma modifier (included).

Actions

Chill Touch (Cantrip). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +10 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) necrotic damage. The target can't regain hit points until the start of its next turn. Undead creatures hit by this attack have disadvantage on attack rolls until the start of their next turn.

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 49 (10d8 + 4) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0

Create Specter. The wraith targets a humanoid within 10 feet of it that has been dead for no longer than 1 minute and died violently. The target's spirit rises as a specter in the space of its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space. The specter is under the wraith's control. The wraith can have no more than seven specters under its control at one time.

Legendary Actions

The greater wraith can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Greater Wraith regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Necrotic Blast. The wraith casts *chill touch*.

Drain Life (Costs 2 Actions). The wraith makes one life drain attack.



MARIONETTE GOLEM

Tiny construct, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 36 (8d4 + 16)

Speed 0 ft. or 30 ft. with its strings cut

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	13 (+1)	5 (-3)

Skills Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +5

Damage Immunities poison, psychic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with adamantite weapons

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Immutable Form. The marionette is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The marionette has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The marionette's weapon attacks are magical.

Strings. All of the marionette's limbs hang from strings connected to a wooden cross. So long as the marionette's strings are attached, its movement speed is 0 and it has disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws. The strings can be attacked (AC 13; 2 hit points; immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, poison, and psychic damage). The strings can also be broken with a successful DC 10 Strength check. Destroying the strings deals no damage to the marionette, but instead frees it. If the marionette is freed, its movement speed becomes 30 feet.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 bludgeoning damage

Hypnotic Dance. The marionette performs a dance from which most creatures find it impossible to turn away. Each creature within 30 feet of the marionette that can see it must make a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature becomes charmed for as long as the marionette continues its dance. While charmed by this effect, the creature is incapacitated and has a speed of 0. The marionette must take a bonus action on its subsequent turns to continue dancing. It can stop dancing at any time.

The effect ends for an affected creature if it takes any damage, if the marionette moves more than 30 feet away from the creature, the target can no longer see the marionette, or if someone else uses an action to shake the creature out of its stupor.

Reactions

No Strings on Me. When a creature the marionette can see targets it with an attack, the marionette chooses its strings to become the target instead. If the marionette's strings are destroyed, it can't use this reaction



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