

THE DM TOOL CHEST

WRATH OF THE BANSHEE QUEEN



DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF THE CURSED CHÂTEAU AND FREE
THE SPIRITS TRAPPED WITHIN



WRATH OF THE BANSHEE QUEEN

Wrath of the Banshee Queen is a Fifth Edition adventure intended for **three to five characters of 9th to 11th level** and is optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 10**. A banshee queen holds a court of trapped spirits prisoner within her cursed castle. This adventure takes place in the Bastion domain of dread setting that easily fits into any existing campaign. You can also easily change the names of the people and locations to place the adventure location into any setting that includes a ruined castle in a swamp.

BACKSTORY

The Nerinora family was once a highly respected noble house in the country of Bastion, known for their magical prowess and business acumen. The merchant wagons bearing their family crest of a white griffon on a blue field were recognized for miles in any direction of Château du Martillon, their ancestral home. Invitations to the galas and balls held at the Château—bursting with displays of magical entertainment and decadent meals—were highly sought after by nobility across the country.

Even more highly sought was the attention of the Marchioness Ashryn Nerinora, who was elevated to head of the noble house after the untimely passing of her husband, Marquis Matthias. A mage and shrewd businesswoman, the Marchioness quickly took the family reins in hand and expertly guided it to further wealth and power. The rise of the Nerinora family seemed to have no apex in sight until disaster struck the countryside.

While the Bastionese nobility enjoyed the privileges of their wealth, a magical plague began to spread through the commoners. The population was decimated as the people were unable to afford the magic needed to combat the disease. A rising tide of anti-magic sentiment rose among the people, giving power to the Iron Inquisition, a military force with a hatred of magic in all its forms. They burned their way through the country, putting any accused of witchcraft to the torch.

So it came to be that the Château du Martillon was hosting one of its famous galas when the iron inquisitors came bursting through the gates. The noble guests were rounded up and the magic users—the Marchioness included—were beaten and bound to stakes in the Château's courtyard. As the flames rose to consume her, Ashryn Nerinora raised her voice above the screams to call a curse down upon the inquisitors. Although there are no gods in Bastion, her curses did not fall upon deaf ears. It was at that time the Dark Powers sent the mists to pull the land and its people into the plane of shadow, turning Bastion into a domain of dread.

As the mists and flames rose, the Dark Powers granted Ashryn her desire, cursing the Château and all within it with undeath. The land began to rot, a fetid swamp rose, and the once luxurious manor began to burn and crumble. The spirits of the slain rose in service to Ashryn, who now rules them as their banshee queen. Château du Martillon is now home to a ghostly court, joylessly reenacting the galas and luxuries they once held so dear for all eternity. All the while, their Queen torments the souls of the inquisitors who put her to the

stake. The sounds of merriment mingle with their tortured screams and echo across the swamps.

ABOUT BASTION

The plane of shadow is mercurial, holding countless domains of dread under the control of the Dark Powers. Heavy mists define the domain's borders, and each is a personal hell for its Darklord. These mists reach across the planes of existence, and many adventurers find themselves engulfed by them and transported into a domain.

The characters have somehow found themselves in Bastion, a domain of dread residing in the plane of shadow. Swamps and flooded forests cover the realm, and the people within are drowning in despair and rotting away. The sun never rises or sets here—the land is forever gripped in twilight, giving free rein to the undead that stalk the wetland.

The Iron Inquisition makes its home here, hunting down magic users and burning alive those accused—regardless of their guilt or innocence—at the stake. Undead horrors and witch covens prowl the marshes, hungrily devouring those foolish enough to leave the false safety the villages provide.

The Bastionese live in constant fear of accusations of witchcraft, but their superstitious natures have led them to seek spiritual guidance through mediums and occultists. Gathering behind closed doors, the locals attend séances to commune with the dead, searching for hope in a hopeless land. Supernatural charms are

GM NOTE: THE IRON INQUISITION

The Iron Inquisition is built on fanaticism steeped in a burning hatred of magic and seeks to destroy it in all its forms. The inquisitors have a zero-tolerance policy for anyone who displays magic of any kind—arcane or divine—and the swift punishment is to be burned alive at the stake. Those characters new to the realm may need to learn this lesson the hard way (through an encounter with the inquisitors, thereby gaining a new enemy) or be lucky enough for a terrified citizen to warn them (and thereby gaining a new ally). Inquisitors hide their faces behind their *Inquisitor's Mask* (see Appendix) that helps protect their identities as well as them from magic users.

commonly carried for luck or to ward off the evil eye. Of course, all this must be done in secret because at any moment, a neighbor, sibling, or spouse may report them to the inquisition. So the citizens wear a veneer of politeness and surround themselves in the trappings of genteel society, their false smiles failing to extinguish the fear in their hearts.

MARSEAU

Marseau is a decrepit town on the northwestern edge of Bastion built from the stones of a sunken city in the swamps to the east. Stoic town guards protect the town's walls, each squad commanded by an ominously hooded and masked inquisitor. They are suspicious of newcomers but leave the characters alone as long as they do not show outward signs of magic. Lamp posts light the cobbled streets and cast shadows across the ever-flaking painted facades of the crumbling buildings. The oddly overdressed townsfolk hurry down the streets with purpose, instinctively preferring the perceived safety of indoors. They are quick with a smile and polite greeting, but even quicker to be on their way.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

These are a few ways to hook the characters into this quest:

A Message From Beyond. The characters are invited to a séance held in a secret salon in the basement of the Bienville House, the only inn with vacancy. Led by an occultist named Benjamin Thibeau, the séance calls upon the ethereal realm to deliver a message to the living. The elven spirit that arrives has a cryptic message for the characters before disappearing into the ether: "Seek ye the Queen of Château du Martillon."

A Family Affair. Anitta Nerinora is the great-grandniece and last living member of the once noble Nerinora family. She approaches the characters with her story and a request for their aid. She learned of the destruction the Iron Inquisitors brought to her family's door and the curse that traps the spirits within the walls of their ancestral home. As the last living Nerinora, she wishes for nothing more than for the souls of her





ancestors to be laid at rest and the curse lifted from Château du Martillon once and for all.

The Missing Inquisitors. The characters are summoned before Jacob Hellsmoth, the Lord Inquisitor of Marseau. A hulking brute with a razor-sharp military mind, Jacob has been coordinating his soldiers to clear any known ruins of the undead infesting them. A detachment was sent to the ruins of Château du Matillon, a cursed ruin that locals have shunned for decades due to its spectral inhabitants. It's been over a week with no word from the detachment, and he assumes they failed. Not able to afford to send more of his men, Jacob offers to pay the party 5,000 gp to determine the fate of the lost detachment and complete their mission.

GETTING TO THE CHÂTEAU

However the characters are hooked into visiting Château du Martillon, the exact location isn't known to whomever their patron may be. The patron recommends finding a guide through the swamps at Rene's Lookout, a hunter's lodge and waypoint 2 miles east of Marseau. While the travel ways are mostly clear, the creeping swamps and marshes shift the landscape and regularly wash out sections, making the entire domain difficult terrain. At a regular pace, the characters can travel at a normal pace of 1.5 miles per hour. Travelers also run the risk of being attacked by the various creatures and undead hunting the wetlands. For every hour spent traveling, roll a 1d6 and consult the Swamp Encounters table (see Appendix).

When the characters arrive at Rene's Lookout, read aloud the following:

The journey through the fetid swamps leads you to the base of a massive cypress tree standing guard over the banks of a large stretch of bayou. As you reach the water's edge, ripples begin to form on the surface just before

rotting figures lurch upwards, heading inland and right towards you. One of the walking corpses suddenly sprouts an arrow in its chest, and a voice calls out from above, "Hey, down there! What're you doing just standing there?" Looking up to the voice, you spot a cleverly camouflaged structure built high into the treetop, and an annoyed-looking young man standing on a small balcony with an arrow knocked on his bow. He calls out again, kicking down a rope ladder reaching down to the ground. "Are you coming up or what?"

Twelve **zombies** are making their way out of the bayou and towards the shore. The archer is André Chauvert (CN human **scout**), and he is standing on the balcony to Rene's Lookout, a structure that is 30 feet off the ground and built around the trunk of the cypress, hidden amongst its branches.

RENE'S LOOKOUT

The lookout is built around the 8-foot-wide trunk of a massive cypress tree and is cleverly hidden among the branches, providing a vantage point overlooking the nearby bayou. The circular structure is 25 feet in diameter and consists of a single room with a pair of simple wood-framed beds and a small table with mismatched chairs. Various hunting trophies adorn the walls, and wood carvings of various animals sit on small shelves.

Local hunters use the lookout for shelter during their treks into the swamps. It is currently occupied by the hunter André Chauvert and Jon Rambaut (LN human **knight**), the injured sole survivor of a squad of iron inquisitors sent to cleanse the Château du Martillon.

Once the zombie threat has been dealt with, and the characters enter the lookout with André, read the following:

The inside of the cleverly hidden lookout is built around the trunk of the cypress tree. A simple circular room holds various hunting paraphernalia and trophies adorning the walls. As you take in your surroundings, a low groan of pain comes from a figure on a bed set against the far wall.

THE HUNTER AND THE INQUISITOR

André Chauvert is a snarky young hunter from Marseau that prefers his solitude in the swamps. He's not happy to have to share the lookout with so many strangers and he chastises the characters for being foolish enough to enter the swamps. In particular, André is not happy at having to play nursemaid to the injured inquisitor he dragged half-dead out of the swamps two nights ago.

Jon Rambaut is a grizzled and stoic warrior in his forties, dedicated to the Inquisition and its cause. He was the officer in charge of a deployment of inquisitors sent to the Château over a week ago. Unfortunately, they were ambushed en route by undead, and Jon barely escaped with his life. He is now unconscious and fighting a fever from a disease he contracted from the wounds he received. A character who is proficient in Medicine and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Medicine) check will recognize the symptoms of swamp rot, a highly fatal disease. If Jon does not benefit from a *lesser restoration* or similar spell, he will die within the next 4 hours.

Both André and Jon know the location of the Château and can guide the characters there. André is reluctant to leave the dying inquisitor, but a character who succeeds on a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check may convince him. This check can be done with advantage if the characters cure Jon first or offer him a substantial amount of gold. André refuses to guide them if Jon succumbs to his condition, determined to bring the body back to Marseau. If he witnesses the characters use magic, André is shocked but stays silent. If Jon is cured, he eagerly joins the characters if they agree to complete his mission. If he learns he was healed by magic, Jon is wary but pretends to accept it, secretly planning to report the characters when he can.

Either man can give general directions to the Château. It will take 2 hours traveling southeast through the swamps if they travel alone and 1 hour with one of the guides. For every hour spent traveling, roll on the Swamp Encounters table (see Appendix).

ARRIVING AT THE CHÂTEAU

When the characters make their way to the Château, read aloud the following:

The muddy path through the swamp slowly turns into an old stone roadway. Leading through the trees, it ends at the crumbling front gates of an ancient Château shrouded in mist. Firelight flickers through broken walls, and shouting echoes from the courtyard beyond the gate.

If the characters arrive with André, he leaves the party and quickly disappears back into the swamps. However, if Jon guides the characters here, he insists on joining them. A character who succeeds on a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check can convince him to stay outside.

CHÂTEAU DU MARTILLON

Once the home of the fabulously wealthy and powerful Nerinora family, the Château du Martillon is now a crumbling ruin. The thick stone walls still bear the charred marks of the fire that ruined most of the structure before the swamps began to claim it. Spirits fill the rooms and halls, trapped under the curse of Ashryn Nerinora, the last head of the family who was burned alive. She is now a banshee who rules as queen of the Château, torturing the cursed inquisitors who burned her alive. As a result, the Château, famous for its galas and balls, is now host to tragedy and nightmare.

GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout the Château unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

Ceilings, Floors, and Walls. The Château is built of crumbling worked granite blocks with rotting wood panels on the interior. The floors are broken stone or marble tiles with the occasional moldy carpeting. Ceilings are 20 feet high throughout.

Doors. The doors of the chateau are oak bound in wrought iron. Each door has an AC of 15 and 4 hit points. They are immune to poison and psychic damage. Stuck doors can be opened with a successful DC 15 Strength check, and locked doors can be picked with thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check.

Lights. The Château is well lit by sconces enchanted with *continual flame* spells.

Cursed Grounds. The curse laid upon the Château has created desecrated ground, giving the undead in the area advantage on all saving throws (see environment hazards in the *DMG*). It also prevents any spirit from passing on to the next realm, and any undead reduced to 0 hit points will reform again in 24 hours. A character who dies in the Château cannot be resurrected, and their spirit is trapped there unless the curse is broken.

Ghost Stories. In certain rooms, there are spirits trapped in a repeating scene from the past. They are treated as illusions created by a *major image* spell with a spell save DC of 20. In certain scenes, as noted in the adventure text, if the characters attempt to interact, they must succeed on a group DC 20 Charisma saving throw, or the illusions become real—the characters becoming subject to the effects as described in that story. On a successful save, the illusions stay harmless to the characters. Once a scene has played out to its conclusion as described, it will reset and repeat 1 hour later.

Château du Martillon

1 Square = 5 Feet



Magical Servants. The Château was enchanted with *unseen servant* spells by the Nerinora family long ago. They are still active in some areas, cleaning and waiting to serve. Some of the furniture have permanent *animate objects* spells on them. Unfortunately, the curse has affected them to behave erratically, as noted in the adventure text below.

KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on the provided map of the Château.

1. COURTYARD

The crumbling gates open into a large enclosed courtyard partially flooded with swamp water. Thorny vines cling to the twenty-foot-high walls of what was once a majestic structure now fallen into ruin. Scattered throughout the courtyard are a dozen corpses dressed in finery lying in pools of blood. An anguished cry rips through the air as a group of hooded and masked figures burst from the front doors of the manor, carrying a bound elven woman with them. Ignoring your presence, the group heads towards a pile of stacked wood with a post in the center.

Ghost Story: The Curse. The figures and corpses are part of the ghost story (see General Features) of Ashryn Nerinora's burning and subsequent cursing of the Château. If the characters recognize the illusion for what it is or let the story play out, read aloud the following:

The masked figures work quickly and effectively, binding the struggling woman to the stake. One begins to speak as he lights a torch, his voice muffled behind the iron mask he wears, "For the crime of witchcraft and for bringing the plague upon us, we condemn you to the flame. May the light have mercy on you." Throwing the torch onto the oil-

soaked pyre, he backs away as the flames begin to catch and roar to life. Choking on the smoke, the woman stands proud as a queen as she screams defiantly, "You fools! Curse you all! You will never find peace in this life or the next! I swear it on my soul! I curse you!"

The scene ends with mists rising from the ground and the inquisitors choking, their skin melting as Ashryn screams in flames. In an instant, the fog, corpses, stake, and all spirits in the scene vanish, leaving the courtyard silent and empty.

Encounter: Executioners. If the characters attempt to rescue Ashryn and are drawn into the ghost story, the illusion of the scene is broken, and the inquisitors turn into six hostile **specters**.

2. GUEST ROOMS

Thick vines have forced their way down through holes in the ceiling of this corridor. Purple flowers growing on the vines give off a sickly sweet scent.

This hall opens into the rooms where noble guests would stay when visiting the Château. The remains of rotting furniture fill each of them.

Hazard: Noxious Flowers. Any creature who can smell the flowers in this corridor must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become ill from the scent. The affected creatures gain disadvantage on Constitution saving throws for 1 hour. A *lesser restoration* spell or similar magic ends the effect.

2A. NOBLE LOVERS

The once fine furniture in this small room is rotting away. A collapsed four-poster bed holds the charred remains of two skeletons locked in an embrace.

Treasure. A thick gold necklace has melted into the collarbone of one of the skeletons. A character



proficient with jeweler's tools who succeeds on a DC 18 Dexterity check can spend 10 minutes extracting the gold from the bone. The melted gold is worth 50 gp to a jeweler, and the gold-infused bone is worth 100 gp to an oddities collector.

2B. THE WEeping ONE

A character listening at the door to this room hears quiet weeping from inside. The room contains a small bed and the figure of a woman in a delicate ball gown sitting on a chair and crying into her hands. She can be determined to be a spirit by a character who succeeds on a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check. The woman will not react to anything the characters do or say, but if they spend more than one minute in the room, they witness blood begin to pour through the fingers holding her face.

2C. HUNGRY VINES

Vines dangle from holes in the ceiling of this small room. There is a small iron lockbox sitting on a molding bed.

Trap: Vampire Vines. The vines in this room are alive, and any creature walking under them must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or become grappled by them (escape DC 18). The characters must roll initiative, and any grappled creature takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage from the vines on initiative count 20. The thick vines have an AC of 18 and 10 hit points. For each point damage done by the vines, they gain an equal amount of temporary hit points.

2D. EMPTY ROOM

The southeastern corner of this room has collapsed into rubble, leading to a broad hallway. The wreckage is difficult terrain and climbing over it alerts the **ghasts** in the Collapsed Hallway (area 3).

2E. WASHROOM

This washroom has a cabinet sitting against the southern wall with an open toilet next to it. A gurgling sound rumbles up from it, and a whiff of rot wafts out.

The northeastern corner of this washroom has mostly collapsed outwards into the Collapsed Hallway (area 3) beyond. The rubble is considered difficult terrain and climbing over it alerts the **ghasts** in area 3.

Encounter: The Toilet Monster. A **roper** has made its home in the 15-foot-deep toilet pit and will attack any creature that comes within 5 feet of it. The roper prefers to pull its victims in to drown them in the 5 feet of rancid water at the bottom and eat them.

3. COLLAPSED HALL

Large portions of the ceiling and walls in this hallway have collapsed into rubble.

Encounter: Beauty Queens. Four **ghasts** dressed in filthy and torn ball gowns are in this hallway eating a deer carcass near the collapsed wall leading to the Ballroom (area 5).

3A. WASHROOM

A small silver mirror worth 25 gp sits on a washstand next to an open toilet.

3B. KITCHEN

Every surface of this kitchen is immaculately clean, and a claw-footed, pot-belly stove sits against the southern wall crackling with a fire burning inside.

Unseen servant spells have maintained the kitchen.

Encounter: The Angry Chef. The **animated stove** (see General Features: Magical Servants, it is a Medium animated object) throws burning logs that deal 8 (2d6+1) bludgeoning damage and 6 (2d4+1) fire damage. The stove chases out any creature that enters the kitchen, but will not leave it.

4. SERVANT QUARTERS

A few inches of swamp water has seeped into this long hallway and serving carts filled with cutlery and the remains of long-rotted food lie scattered around. Simple wooden doors line the eastern and western walls and ornately carved heavy oak doors exit to the north and south.

The doors to the servants' rooms are swollen shut and stuck (see General Features). Inside each room is simple furniture rotting away in the swamp water.

Treasure. A character who actively searches the carts and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check will recover a complete dining set of silver- and gold-chased cutlery worth 200 gp.

4A. THIEF'S ROOM

A framed charcoal sketch of a young woman cradling a baby in her arms hangs on the wall over a small bed in this otherwise bare room.

A character actively searching this room who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers a loose stone near the foot of the bed. Underneath is a leather satchel containing 100 gp and a black pearl worth 500 gp.

Encounter: Protective Mother. The **ghost** of Simoné—the servant who lived in this room—is hiding in the dark under the bed. If a character touches the hidden satchel, she lunges out from under the bed. She

screams, “Where is my baby?!” as she attacks them. She will attack only that character unless she can successfully possess them, after which she attacks the rest of the party.

4B. SHADOW ROOM

This room contains a tiny bed and a small nightstand with a leather-bound book sitting on top.

Encounter: Shadow Servants. Two **shadows** are hiding in this room and will pounce on the first character that opens the door.

Journal. The leather-bound book is the damaged journal of an elven servant named Gordon written in Elvish and code. A character who speaks Elvish and spends at least 10 minutes reading must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to decipher the code. The journal contains many entries filled with disdain towards the noble guests Gordon had to serve. Two entries stand out, stating, “I swear to the light that if she does not stop that miserable child from crying all night, I will take care of it myself!” in an angry scrawl, and “Finally! The incessant crying is no more, and I can sleep in peace at last.”

4C. THE CLEANING GHOST

Anyone listening at the door to this room can hear a voice humming a sad-sounding tune. Inside is the spirit of a female servant dressed in black and gold livery standing in the center of the room. She stands with her back to the door and rocks gently back and forth as she hums to herself. The ghost stops humming and rocking the second a character enters the room. She tilts her head and calls out, “Yes, m’lady, I’m on my way!” before turning toward the door, showing that half of her face is only mangled muscle and shattered bone. The spirit steps towards the door once before turning incorporeal and disappearing.

Library Book. A character who searches under the bed in this room will find a dull book entitled *A Treatise on Bastionese Nobility*. A character who spends 10 minutes reading the book and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (History) check will recognize the description of the Château and learn more about the Nerinora family’s wealth and famous galas (see Backstory).

5. BALLROOM

Anyone listening at the doors or peeking through the broken walls will hear the music and see the scene as described below. When the characters first enter the room, read aloud the following:

Music from a string quartet set on a small stage in the center of the southern wall fills this majestic ballroom. Crystal chandeliers cast multi-colored light from rainbow-

colored flames that dance and spin around them. The polished marble tiles gleam, reflecting the flames to bathe the room in color. Dancing around the room in a complex and synchronous dance are fancifully masked and elegantly dressed nobles. Laughter and conversation mix with the music from a crowd of gleeful onlookers.

The actual decrepit condition of the ballroom is hidden under the illusion of the ghost story and can be seen by characters who succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The chandeliers enchanted with a permanent *dancing lights* spell are the only genuine part of the illusion—the rest of the room is in crumbling disrepair.

Ghost Story: Let Them Eat Cake. If the characters move more than 15 feet through this room, the music, conversation, and dancers stop instantly, with all spirits in the room staring silently at the group. If the characters avoid being drawn into the scene (see General Features: Ghost Stories), they are instantly ignored, and the spirits resume their revelry.

Otherwise, each character is approached by a masked noble that bows or curtsies before offering their hand to dance. If any of the characters refuse, the scene dissolves into the encounter as described below. If the characters accept, they are each led to the center of the ballroom by their spirit partner and set in place as the music starts and they begin to dance. There are three steps to the dance, each requiring a different group DC 15 check as noted on the Dance Card table. Use the Dance Check Results table after each check to determine how many points the party earns or loses. There are 4 possible outcomes of each check: Total Success (every die rolled generates a Success), Success (More or equal Succeeded than Failed), Failure (More



DANCE CHECK RESULTS

Result	Effect
Total Success	The onlookers cheer, and the party earns 3 dance points.
Success	The onlookers politely applaud, and the party earns 2 dance points.
Failure	The onlookers murmur unhappily, and the party loses 1 dance point.
Total Failure	The onlookers jeer, and the party loses 2 dance points.

DANCE CARD TABLE

Step	Check
1	Intelligence (History) to know the dance.
2	Dexterity (Performance) to perform the dance.
3	Charisma (Deception) to maintain noble bearing

Failed than Succeeded), and Total Failure (All dice rolls failed). If the characters finish the dance with at least 3 dance points, the music ends, and the spirits applaud and bow before the scene dissolves. If the characters fail, the music comes to a screeching halt, and the encounter described below is initiated.

Encounter: Undead Ball. If the characters initiate the ghost story and fail to complete it successfully, the scene dissolves to show the actual condition of the hall while the remaining spirits turn hostile. The string quartet spirits turn into four **shadows**, and one noble spirit per character becomes a **specter**.

6. SALON

A filthy red carpet covers the marble floor of this salon. Ornate plush couches sit rotting against the walls next to fallen and broken furniture. There is a smell of rot and decay in the air.

7. HORROR HALL

The door to this room is locked, and the key is in the Study (area 17).

The coppery tang of fresh blood is the first thing you notice as the door swings inwards. The next is the pair of bloody bodies hanging from their chests by iron hooks chained to the ceiling.

The two bodies are **cursed inquisitors** (they use the **veteran** stat block, and they have 1 hit point remaining) that first attacked the Château decades ago. The curse has kept them alive for Ashryn to torture for eternity. They appear to be corpses unless a character touches them, at which point they groan in pain, showing they

are alive. Their minds have broken, and they know only pain and terror, even if healed.

If Jon Rambaut is with the party, he demands the characters do whatever they can to help the inquisitors, but if the inquisitors leave the Château, their bodies rapidly age and turn to dust.

7A. TORTURE CELL

A **cursed inquisitor** lays shackled to a table in this room with every bone in his arms and legs broken.

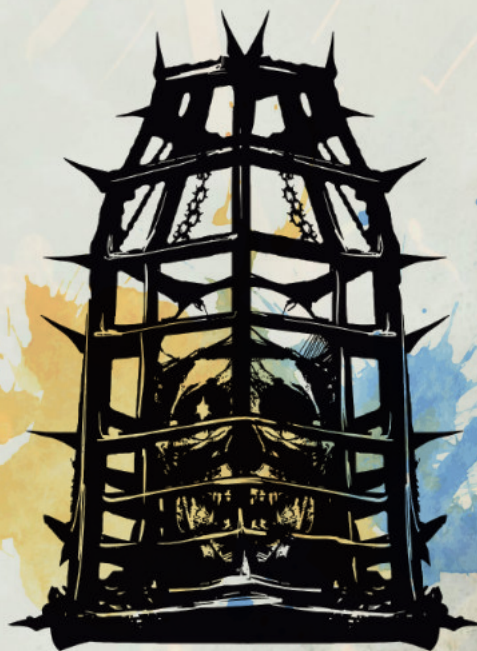
7B. TORTURE CELL

Chained manacles holding severed hands dangle from the ceiling of this otherwise empty room.

8. SUNROOM

The ceiling of this sunroom is made of large panes of thick, cracked glass. The eastern wall has crumbled into the swamp below, spilling rocks across the floor.

Trap: Goldberg Effect. Anyone walking across the loose rocks in this room must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to maintain their footing. On a failed save, they trip and fall, taking 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage. In the course of their fall, they knock into a bookcase that slams back into the wall, in turn shattering the glass ceiling above. Anyone in the room when this happens must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) piercing damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful save.



9. STORAGE ROOMS

Half a foot of swamp water floods this hallway. Doors leading to storage rooms line the walls to the north and south—rotting crates and barrels of long-perished foodstuffs and ruined supplies inside each of them.

9A. WELL ROOM

A rancid smell wafts from an open well sitting in the middle of this room. The sound of a baby crying can be faintly heard coming from the bottom.

If a character goes down into the 30-foot-deep well, the crying stops when they are halfway down. At the bottom is 5 feet of rancid swamp water with a bundle of tiny bones scattered in the muck. The sound of the baby crying starts again as soon as the well is empty once more.

9B. KENNEL

Two **undead mastiffs** (they use the **mastiff** stat block, and their type is undead) are absentmindedly chewing on the arm and leg bones of a human skeleton in this kennel. They growl in warning at anyone who opens the door but do not attack unless someone enters.

10. MASTER BEDROOM

The door to this room is locked (see General Features).

This once lavish bedroom contains a large four-poster bed covered in a dusty crushed velvet duvet. An intricately carved vanity sits opposite the bed.

Treasure. A character who searches the vanity finds a silver hairbrush with the word “beauty” in Elvish carved into the handle. A creature who speaks the command word while brushing their hair can permanently alter the length and color of their hair.

Diary. A leather-bound diary is under the bed with a *glyph of warding* (save DC 15) set to Explosive Runes (lightning damage) if anyone opens it. The book is reduced to ash if the glyph is triggered. Ashryn has written a series of awful poetry about the joys of the trade industry in her diary, mixed in with various unrelated business notes. The only helpful entry is a note where she believes a servant may have stolen valuables and hid them somewhere.

11. NAVARRE’S BEDROOM

A colorful circus scene adorns the walls of this bedroom. A broken trapeze hangs from a single rope above a small bed, and a rocking horse sits next to a large ragged plush lion in one corner.

The rocking horse begins to gently rock back and forth when any character steps into the room. The spirit of Ashryn’s youngest son Navarre sits quietly on the horse and will not show himself or engage with the characters unless they are with his brother Aeríc (see area 17). However, if a character can see into the Ethereal realm, he is surprised and hides behind the stuffed lion, refusing to talk to them.

If the characters have brought Aeríc with them, Navarre materializes and runs to hug his brother. Navarre is a five-year-old elven boy dressed in a ringmaster’s costume. After the brothers embrace, they will show the characters to the secret door in the Game Room (area 16) that leads to their mother. They refuse to follow the characters and the child spirits rush back to the safety of Navarre’s bedroom.

12. AERIC’S BEDROOM

The walls of this bedroom are painted to resemble a castle’s ramparts overlooking an idyllic country scene. Colorful dragons fly across the sky on the ceiling, and a unicorn rears on a hill in the distance. A large sackcloth doll with cloth knight’s armor and plush sword sits on a small bed.

The stuffed knight is an **animated doll** (see General Features: Magical Servants, it is a Small animated object and its plush sword deals 1 nonlethal bludgeoning damage, knocking a target unconscious if they reach 0 hit points from its attack), and it has the words “Sir Theodore” stitched onto its chest. The doll activates if its name is spoken and is deactivated by saying, “I yield.”

13. MOLDY CLOSET

This large closet is full of old sheets and other linen. The smell of mold and mildew is heavy in the air.

The mold in this room is harmless.

Toy Sword. A character searching through the rotting sheets will find a silver-painted wooden toy sword tucked under a pile.

14. READING ROOM

Stuffed couches and chairs sit molding against the walls of this reading room. A thick carpet covers the floor from end to end.

15. LIBRARY

Rotting leather-bound volumes fill bookshelves that ring

around the edges of this library. A set of chairs sit facing a cold fireplace, a small table holding a dusty bottle between them. An older man in servant's livery stands with his back to you at the far end of the room, placing books on the shelf from a cart standing next to him. He turns towards you at the sound of the opening door, showing a face blackened as if by fire. Placing a finger to his charred lips, he admonishes, "shhh!" before turning back to shelving books.

Château Information. A character that spends 10 minutes browsing the bookshelves who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check will find a book containing an old map of the Château. On this map, the Game Room (area 16) is a wine room with a trap door leading to a cellar below.

Encounter: Quiet in the Library. The ghost librarian ignores the characters unless they speak above a whisper. If a character offers the library book found in area 4c, he will be highly pleased and exchange it for a *manual of gainful exercise* before ignoring any other noise they make. Otherwise, he shushes a second time angrily in warning before turning hostile if they do not heed him. Then, he activates two **animated bookshelves** (see General Features: Magical Servants, they are Large animated objects with a speed of 0 and throw books with a range of 20 feet dealing 13 (2d10+2) bludgeoning damage).

16. GAME ROOM

Rotting stuffed animal head trophies adorn the walls of this room, overlooking a leather and felt table with a deck of cards sitting on top.

Any character that touches the table or the deck of cards activates an *unseen servant* enchanted onto the gaming table. The servant sweeps the cards up and deals them out to as many seats as there are characters. If the characters complete a round of a card game (any game at the GM's discretion) without cheating, a hidden compartment in the tabletop opens to reveal a pouch containing 1000 gp and a *helm of brilliance*. This compartment can be found with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check and unlocked with thieves' tools and a successful DC 20 Dexterity check. Any attempt to open it will be considered cheating.

Encounter: Cheater's Delight. If a character attempts to cheat at any time, the **animated gaming table** (see General Features: Magical Servants, it is a Large animated object) activates and attacks the cheater.

Secret Door. A character actively searching who succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers that pulling on the lower jaw of a stuffed cougar's head opens a hidden trap door under the gaming table revealing a ladder to the Cellar (area 20).

17. STUDY

Stacks of molding books and scrolls sit on top of heavy wooden tables and desks around the outskirts of this study. Searching through one of the desks is a young boy with curly brown hair dressed in a knight's costume. At the sound of the opening door, he turns around and tilts his head to the side, saying, "Hello. You shouldn't be here. Mother will be displeased."

The spirit of Ashryn's ten-year-old son Aeric is polite and willing to answer the characters' questions to the best of his knowledge. His spiritual nature can be



determined with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. Aeris knows the following helpful information.

- His mother is punishing the “bad men who hurt her.”
- He doesn’t know where Ashryn is, but his brother Navarre (see area 11) might know.
- He is looking for his sword to protect Navarre, but he is scared to leave the study.

If the characters bring him the toy sword from area 13, Aeris will come with them to Navarre’s Bedroom (area 11).

Treasure. A character searching the desks who succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check will find a spellbook containing all the prepared spells on the **mage** stat block.

18. WASHROOM

The marble tiling in this washroom is impeccably clean.

An *unseen servant* spell (see General Features: Magical Servants) keeps this room sparkling clean.

19. DINING ROOM

Tree branches extend through the large empty windows of this dining hall. They provide a canopy over a fifteen-foot-long table that dominates the center of the room. A lavish meal graces the table, with the delicious smells of roasted meats and freshly baked pastries filling the air.

Ghost Story: Last Meal. The prepared dinner table is part of a static ghost story (see General Features: Ghost Stories). If the characters are drawn into the story, the illusory food becomes real, and one chair per character is pulled back as if by an invisible servant. If the characters sit, *unseen servants* present plates of food to them, and each must choose an item to eat. The food and their effects are as follows:

Succulent Pig. Any creature that eats the pig must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, becoming poisoned for 1 hour and taking 16 (3d10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Roasted Duck. Any creature that eats the duck is targeted by a *levitate* spell (save DC 15) that lasts for 1 hour or until dispelled.

Fresh Apple Pie. Any creature that eats a slice of apple pie gains immunity to the frightened condition for 1 hour.

Garden Salad. Any creature that eats a whole garden salad gains 10 temporary hit points.

Liver Pâté. Any creature that eats the liver pâté has advantage on all ability checks and saving throws that use Strength for 1 hour.

Salmon Mousse. Any creature that eats the salmon mousse must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or instantly drop to 0 hit points and gain disadvantage on death saving throws for 1 hour.

Encounter: Dinner Party Crashers. If any character refuses to sit or eat, the scene dissolves, revealing rotting carcasses on the table where the meal once sat. The **animated dining room table** and **one animated chair** per character (see General Features: Magical Servants, the table is a Huge animated object and each chair is a Medium animated object) attack until destroyed. If the characters are sitting, the arms of the animated chairs will attempt to grapple them (escape DC 15) with advantage.

20. CELLAR

A ladder descends fifteen feet down into what appears to be an extensive wine cellar. Racks of dusty bottles line the walls, and broken glass litters the floor. In the center of the room is a regal elven woman dressed in a white, blood-stained gown standing with her arms crossed and chin in her hand and an expression of unadulterated hate on her face. She peers down at a man spread across the floor at her feet with wrists and ankles bound to iron pins. He stares blankly at the ceiling with bloody foam on his lips as a pile of rats eats their way into his stomach. Slowly raising her gaze to meet yours, she addresses you with the regality of a queen, “You have been in my home for some time. Why? What business do you have here?”

Encounter: The Banshee Queen. The Marchioness **Ashryn** (see Appendix) is calm and collected, reserving her rage for the inquisitor. She has little interest in the characters or their motives for being in the Château and demands they leave at once. If they refuse, or if Jon Rambaut accompanies the characters and Ashryn sees him, she flies into a rage. Ashryn uses her *Wail* ability first, and the regal illusion of her former self drops to reveal her banshee form. She focuses her attacks on Jon if he is with the party. If Ashryn is defeated, read aloud the following:

A soul-piercing scream erupts from the banshee as her form begins to tear itself apart in a burst of blinding light. As she begins to disintegrate, the sound intensifies, and the foundation of the Château starts to shake from the vibration. The building is beginning to collapse!

The inquisitor bound to the floor crumbles to dust at Ashryn’s defeat. The characters must escape the Château within the next 2 minutes before it sinks into the swamps and disappears forever.

CONCLUSION

If Ashryn is defeated, the curse of the Château is broken, and the trapped spirits are free to pass on to the other side. If Jon Rambaut survives and returns with the party to Marseau, he quickly informs the Lord Inquisitor of any use of magic on the characters' part, and they will now have to contend with his wrath. Any promised rewards are paid out otherwise. The citizens of Marseau breathe a little easier knowing that the spirits of the Château have been freed, giving them a small glimmer of hope in this hopeless land.

If the characters perish in the Château, their spirits are cursed to forever languish within its walls, never allowed to know peace or able to move on to the afterlife. Instead, they become trapped within a ghost story, endlessly repeating a scene for other adventurers to encounter. Ω

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APPENDIX

INQUISITOR'S MASK

Wondrous item (mask), uncommon (requires attunement)

This stylized iron mask fits across the wearer's eyes, obscuring their face but providing unobstructed sight. While wearing this mask, you gain darkvision out to 30 feet if you do not have it already. This mask has 3 charges and regains all expended charges at dawn. As a reaction, you can choose to expend a charge to cast *absorb elements* or *shield*, no components required.

SWAMP ENCOUNTER TABLE

1d6	Encounter
1	2 shambling mounds
2	2 giant crocodile
3	1d6+2 giant toads
4	1d4+1 swarms of poisonous snakes
5	1 young black dragon
6	1d4+1 wights

ASHRYN

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 143 (26d8 + 26)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +6, Cha +9

Skills Arcana +7, Perception +6

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

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus: +5

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If Ashryn fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Detect Life. Ashryn can magically sense the presence of creatures up to 5 miles away that aren't undead or constructs. She knows the general direction they're in but not their exact locations.

Incorporeal Movement. Ashryn can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

Innate Spellcasting. Ashryn's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

- At will: *chill touch*
- 3/day each: *bestow curse*, *vampiric touch*
- 1/day each: *blight*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ashryn makes two Corrupting Touch attacks.

Corrupting Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d6 + 3) necrotic damage.

Horriifying Visage. Each non-undead creature within 60 feet of Ashryn that can see her must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if Ashryn is within line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to Ashryn's Horriifying Visage for the next 24 hours.

Wail (1/day). Ashryn releases a mournful wail, provided that she isn't in sunlight. This wail has no effect on constructs and undead. All other creatures within 60 feet of her that can hear her must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature drops to 0 hit points. On a success, a creature takes 17 (5d6) psychic damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Ashryn can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Ashryn regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Detect. Ashryn makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Touch Attack. Ashryn makes a Corrupting Touch attack.

Ghost Step (Costs 2 Actions). Ashryn teleports to an unoccupied space she can see within 30 feet of her.

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