

VALHELLEN CASTLE

As the intrepid adventurer rides from town to town, his road watched by shadows walking the ramparts of distant ruins, he often wonders what secrets yet lie hidden in those old castles and towers. The crumbling walls and ancient flagstones each have a tale to tell, and sometimes the silent trumpets of their mysteries invite the brave, the clever and the foolhardy to give their ancient walls and forgotten garrison one more challenge. Who will answer the call to adventure?

PREPARING TO PLAY: When you are all gathered to play, and every one of the Players is prepared, begin the adventure by following the steps given below.

Background: The Adventure will begin with your reading the following narrative, thus setting the stage for the adventure that is to follow.

Nestled deep in the dark, tangled woods outside of town is the ruined castle of the fabled Blood Duke of old. Legend has it that centuries ago Lord Valhellen went mad, sealed his castle and so turned it into a tomb, hunting down each and every one of his servants and soldiers until none but shadows walked the halls. The locals live in fear of the castle and the surrounding woods.

The first thing you hear upon entering the Golden Arrow Tavern is the innkeeper telling his young daughter “I want you staying away from those old willow trees. Only Ghosts walk those woods.” You mind your business and sit at a table by the fire, where you are promptly tended to with good, wholesome food and drink.

As the evening wears on, the innkeeper’s daughter, an awkward lass of only twelve years, goes out of her way to tend your table more often than any others, besides giving you the largest cut of the roast. At last, while taking the time to refill your rather large tankards, she whispers “I think there’s treasure up there . . .”

Rumors: At the Golden Arrow Inn many rumors abound concerning the old castle. Using the normal rules for rolling rumors, the party may learn 2 of the following stories. If the party makes an effort to befriend the innkeeper’s daughter, Heather, she

will speak freely of what others fear so much, increasing the value for what dice they use by 4 points. If any roll duplicates what the party has already heard, it should be re-rolled.

Rumors

Value	Rumor about Valhellen Castle
8	The Duke plundered his own castle and laid all it’s treasure atop the tallest tower, so that Heaven may see the true faith of all Mortal Men (true)
4	Those who enter the castle at night are said to pass unnoticed (partially true)
3	Within the castle are horrors no minstrel can water down enough with taletelling to leave listeners anything but drunk with the utmost fear (misleading)
1	The castle is haunted by vengeful Ghosts, the most terrible in all the land (false)

EXPLORING THE CASTLE: Once the party sets out to explore the castle, the following Encounters will tell the tale. Play these Encounters one and all and in the order they are presented.

1) Gatehouse

Just outside the village the forest grows thick. Passing through the golden canopy of weeping willow trees, the breeze seeming to sing in their branches, you strike the old road, which winds it’s way into depths of the forest. The road ends before a crumbling old castle surrounded by a dry moat. A wide drawbridge remains lowered. Beyond it is a raised portcullis. It is a lonely and quiet place. Too quiet, in fact—there are no birds or the sounds of any living things.

Entering the castle requires a Simple Courage Check. At night this is a Challenging Check. If someone walks across the bridge it will break, causing him 1-4 Damage. The 8’ deep moat has a steady slope on both sides and is easily traversed.

Just beyond the bridge, inside the gate, there is a pressure plate. Each passing Character stands a 5 in 6 chance of tripping it. If one sets it off, he and the person immediately in front of him will plunge 20’ into a foul dungeon that has no exits.

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2) Sir Carl

You enter into a room that appears to have once been a Nobleman's chambers. Thick cobwebs stretch from wall to wall, binding together an old canopy bed, a standing mirror, and the skeleton of a warrior standing in one corner. Large spiders inch along the heights of the webs.

The skeleton in the corner was once the Duke's Champion, Sir Carl. If anything in the room is disturbed, the Skeleton will awaken, and attack with his rust-spotted longsword, all the while cursing the party, declaring his oath to slay all thieves, for it is they who drove the Duke to fear, to greed, and to madness.

3) Hall of agony

You stand at one end of a great hall. On either side, massive, square pillars rise between standing suits of armour. Your every breath echoes with disturbing resonance. You cannot shake the feeling that you are being watched. This great hall is the only way to the heart of the castle.

This hall is haunted. Anyone passing through will hear a storm of screams, indeed all the torture suffered in the last days of the Duke's madness. One must either sing, play music or conjure some other beautiful volume to drown out these cries of agony, lest passing through this hall suffer him 1-6 Damage (against which there is no protection). Discovering this merits 300 Experience Points.

4) Empty treasury

You have found your way to the castle's treasury, yet the chamber is empty, save for a three tall, stone urns standing against the far wall. Thick cobwebs stretch from floor to ceiling. The air is musty and difficult to breathe.

If anyone looks into the urns, a Bholia of black 'pudding' will overflow from the second one, a surprise attack that requires a Challenging Intuition Check to avoid. What little treasure can be found here is all that remains of past victims.

5) Booby-trapped secret door

A long, narrow corridor ends suddenly, with no doors or adjoining passages for the last sixty feet or so. All that is here you is a life-size portrait of the Duke himself. His long, golden hair and dark, deeply set eyes suggest either great beauty or hidden power.

If this area is searched (no roll necessary) the party will easily discover a secret door behind the portrait—but it is trapped (which a Searching Check must be made to find, though this trap cannot be disarmed), the heavy, stone door opening to a passage filled with poisonous gas, immediately inflicting Level 1 poison on everyone present. The gas will clear after 3-6 Rounds.

6) The tall tower

Beyond the secret door, a narrow stairwell spirals upwards, climbing what can only be a tower. A tall tower. The stairs never seem to end. But then at last they open onto a battlement high above the rest of the castle. Almost the entire floor is covered with a pile of treasure. The skeleton of a long-dead warrior lays half buried in the coins, sinking in the depths of avarice, watched over by loathsome gargoyles.

Of the six gargoyles perched on the battlement here, 4 of them are Oradon, which will come to life and fly about the tovertop, seeking to destroy anyone that tries to leave. These magical monstrosities will not be able to fly far, indeed never out of sword's reach, and will not pursue anyone who escapes down the stairs. The treasure here has become their own, the skeleton once that of the Duke Valhellen himself. A successful Searching Check will discover on the Duke's body a ring which gives it's wearer 2 Nobility Points.

FINISHING THE ADVENTURE: If they return with the Duke's treasure (or even his bones), the party will each gain +1 to their Legend Scores, and one day the offer of marriage to the innkeeper's daughter, Heather, who is destined to become (by that time) a Sorceress.