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WHERE YOU
CAN BE THE
FROG . . .
NOT THE FLIES

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— The Hidden Citadel, Part 4 — In the Belly of the Beast

By Greg A. Vaughan

The highest ranking of the Disciples and other vile followers of the Demon Prince were allowed into the belly of the great Citadel of Orcus. Only a one-time pilgrimage for those selected to live within the Citadel below permitted the lay followers to reach this level, and then only to swear their lives and souls away before the dreaded Oathstone. The greatest of Orcus's followers who were spared the indignity of animation as zombie or skeleton servitors upon their deaths were interred in a thousand-year-old burial vault in which even the Disciples of Orcus feared to tread. And the powerful and highly secretive wizards and warlocks that served in the laboratories of the Citadel and conducted their experiments in the name of Orcus resided in seclusion on these levels. Great catastrophe was unleashed from these haunted halls, and even greater secrets remain to be discovered within the belly of the Beast.

Chapter 5: The Belly of Orcus

Level 4: The Belly of Orcus (Regions 10, 11, 12 and 13) — Map 5-1

Difficulty Level: 15

Entrances: The Throat of Orcus (Area 281) and stairs down from the Dovecote (Area 322).

Exits: The Throat of Orcus (Area 281).

Wandering Monsters: Check on 1d20 (+5 in Region 13) every 30 minutes or after the party makes any significant noise:

d20	Encounter
1	1d6 Fear Guards and 1d2 Advanced Fear Guards
2	2d4 Advanced Black Skeletons
3	Devourer
4	1d6+3 Voracious Ghosts
5	1d4+4 Dire Bats
6	1d6 Greater Shadows
7	1d4 Dark Custodians
8	1d8 Spectres
9–20	No encounter

Fear Guards and Advanced Fear Guards: This group patrols the corridors attacking all they see that are not wearing or accompanied by someone wearing the garb of a Disciple of Orcus. They get a Sense Motive check opposed to the Bluff check of anyone wearing Disciple of Orcus garb to see through the disguise.

FEAR GUARD CR 5
XP 1,600
hp 51 (See Area 282)

ADVANCED FEAR GUARD CR 6
XP 2,400
hp 63 (See Area 293)

Advanced Black Skeletons: This group patrols the halls and also attacks anyone not wearing garb of the Disciples of Orcus, however, they do not get a Sense Motive check to see through the guise of PCs wearing such garb.

ADVANCED BLACK SKELETON CR 6
XP 2,400
hp 59 (See Area 306)

Devourer: This menace is all that remains of some ancient experiment in contact with horrific entities of the outer planes. It attacks anyone it sees and attempts to devour their souls.

DEVOURER CR 11
XP 12,800
hp 133 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Devourer”)

Voracious Ghosts: These are the remains of lost thralls or Templars that were left behind in the Great Retreat due to being too wounded to be able to keep or just being locked away when the retreat occurred. They eventually succumbed to their wounds or starvation and now wander the halls in packs seeking something to feed upon. They howl and attack with abandon whenever they spot living prey.

VORACIOUS GHAST CR 4
XP 1,200
hp 34 (See Area 318)

Dire Bats: These creatures wander the halls surviving off of the rats and other foul vermin they find. They avoid undead creatures and are likewise ignored by such but readily attack living PCs.

DIRE BAT CR 2
XP 600
hp 22 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Bat, Dire”)

Greater Shadows: Seemingly spawned from the very evil that suffuses the whole of the Citadel, these creatures quietly slip from room to room looking for life that they can shuff out.

GREATER SHADOW CR 8
XP 4,800
hp 58 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Shadow, Greater”)

Dark Custodians: Left behind by the Disciples to guard the Citadel, these creatures are never fooled by PCs disguised in Disciples gear. However, if a PC becomes the Chief Scribe of the Citadel, they will follow that individual's orders within reason (they can't be ordered to destroy themselves).

DARK CUSTODIAN CR 9
XP 6,400
hp 91 (See Monster Appendix)

Spectres: The remains of murdered members of the Disciples or other sects within the Citadel, these creatures emerged into unlife after the Great Retreat and have haunted the Citadel ever since, forever hunting those that wronged them in life. They always attack anyone in Disciples of Orcus garb.

SPECTRE CR 7
XP 3,200
hp 52 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary “Spectre”)

The Belly of Orcus sits fully 460 feet above the level of the surrounding plaza. It corresponds to the level of the Orcus image's arms on the armrests of the great throne and the great belly and is thus spread out over a large area. It consists of four different regions, one of which actually occupies several different levels of the citadel. The main regions of this level are the Inner Temple, the Upper Cloisters, and the Mausoleum. The fourth region is the Wand of Orcus and actually covers parts of the level below and the next three levels up. It is considered part of the Belly of Orcus because it is here that it actually connects to the rest of the citadel.

Region 10 — The Inner Temple (Map 5-2)

The Inner Temple served as the main worship center for the Disciples of Orcus. While they conducted services in the Great temple below where only the elite of the city were allowed to enter, they themselves enjoyed a more sanctified place of worship. Only the most favored outside of the clergy were ever allowed to participate in ceremonies here. Also it holds the *Oathstone* where all residents were brought to swear fealty before being allowed to reside in the citadel. The Disciples made the most of that single trip—one that most residents made only once in their lifetime—to sufficiently intimidate and overawe them during their visit in order to ensure greater obedience later.

281. Throat of Orcus

The stair continues to rise up the sides of this shaft into seemingly endless darkness. Whether a result of the small airshafts that pierce this massive edifice or perhaps from some more sinister source, a sporadic breeze flows down the shaft, almost like the citadel itself is breathing.

The Throat of Orcus serves as the main connection between the levels of the citadel extending from the Lap of Orcus all the way to Jowls of Orcus. The air current is a natural result of air pressure differentials caused by the many wind tunnels that open onto the shaft.

282. Waiting Chamber (CR 10)

An entry room opens off of the stairwell. Pillared alcoves open on either hand, and a wide hall extends to the east. Shadows swirl mysteriously among the pillars.

Here those who were fortunate enough to be allowed entry to the Inner Temple were kept waiting here to build proper suspense and tension. Ancient guardians summoned by the Disciples of Orcus still guard this chamber.

Creatures: There are 6 fear guards lurking in the alcoves, translucent figures that appear to wear ghostly robes over armor. Their faces constantly shift maddeningly from serene countenances to demonic visages twisted in rage and fear. These undead attack relentlessly unless rebuked or commanded by a cleric of Orcus. They loyally follow the commands of such an individual. They begin their attack by using their *deeper darkness* and then swarming to attack from all sides.

FEAR GUARDS (6)

XP 1,600

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CE Medium undead (incorporeal)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; **Perception** +10

Aura fear aura (20 ft., DC 17)

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 14 (+4 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 51 (6d8+24)

Fort +6; **Ref** +4; **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2, incorporeal; **Immune** undead traits

Weaknesses daylight vulnerability

Speed fly 30 ft. (good)

Melee incorporeal touch +7 (1d3 Wis damage)

Special Attacks create spawn

Spell-like Abilities (CL 8th):

At will—*darkness*, *ray of enfeeblement* (ranged touch +6, DC 15)

2/day—*deeper darkness*

Str —, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 21 (can't be tripped)

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (incorporeal touch)

Skills Fly +15, Perception +10, Sense Motive +10, Stealth +11 (+19 in dim light and darkness)

Create Spawn (Su) Any living creature reduced to Wisdom 0 by a fear guard is slain and becomes a fear guard under the control of its killer in 1d6 rounds.

Daylight Vulnerability (Ex) A fear guard exposed to natural sunlight (not merely bright light) suffers 2d6 points of damage per round of exposure and is *slowed* (as the spell).



283. Trapped Entry (CR 12)

Shallow alcoves open on either side of the hallway. Within each stands an iron statue of a halberd-armed warrior. The statues seem to be actually set into the walls behind them. Each is clad in mail and wears a full helm with faceplate completely covering its countenance. Strangely, these faceplates have no eyeholes. Somehow this makes the statues seem even more sinister.

The statues here are harmless. In fact they are part of an *illusory wall* spell that comprises them and the wall at the rear of the alcoves (DC 19 Will save to disbelieve if interacted with). They serve primarily as a distraction to prevent the unwary from detecting the **trap**, as well as, to mask the entrances to the guard chambers beyond.

Trap: When anyone reaches the point in the hallway marked with a T, a maximized *flame strike* is activated in the center of the hall in the 10 feet immediately west of that point. The trap resets itself after 1 hour.

MAXIMIZED FLAME STRIKE TRAP

CR 12

Type magical; Perception DC 30; Disable Device DC 30

Trigger proximity (*alarm*); **Reset** automatic

Effect spell effect (maximized *flame strike*, 15th-level cleric, 90 points of fire damage, DC 20 Reflex save half damage)

284. Guard Room

This chamber is featureless with only a small table and four rickety chairs. The *illusory wall* to the south is obvious for what it is from this side. This guard room once housed Templars assigned to the Inner Temple. It has remained undiscovered since the Great Retreat, and no wandering monsters will be encountered here unless somehow led here by the party.

285. Templar Billets

Rows of wooden bed frames line the walls of this room, the bedding long since removed. Engaged columns support the vaulting ceiling. The Templars guarding this temple were once quartered here. It has been stripped of valuables. Like Area 284, there are no wandering monsters here.

286. Sergeants' Quarters

Three wooden bed frames and a small table are all that remains in this former sergeants' quarters. Like the preceding rooms, no wandering monsters come to this area.

287. Guard Room

This room is identical in all respects to Area 284.

288. Templar Billets

This room is identical to Area 285.

289. Sergeants' Quarters

This room is identical to Area 286.

290. Captain's Office

Most of the floor space in this room is occupied by a large wooden desk sitting beneath a thick layer of dust. The surface of the desk is marked and scored like a butcher's block and bears many suspicious stains.

This served as the office of the captain in charge of the Templar contingent that was stationed here. The office has been stripped of all furnishings save the desk and a simple wooden chair. The surface of the desk is exactly as it appears; the captain had a strange penchant for butchering his own meat and carried out the task on this desk. Like the other rooms in this section, wandering monsters have not yet discovered its location.

291. Meeting Room

This room is completely empty. It once served as the meeting chamber for the captain and his non-commissioned officers, but its furnishings were of a higher quality and he elected to transport them with the Great Retreat. It is now dusty and empty. It, too, is devoid of wandering monsters.

292. Captain's Quarters

This chamber has a low ceiling—only nine feet high or so—its plaster chipped away in so many places as to barely be detectable, though a large portion lies in flakes long ago brushed into the room's corners. Several iron spikes have been hammered into the ceiling from which dangle short chains ending in meat hooks. Dark stains mar the dusty stone of the floor beneath these hooks. A steel bed frame is scooted against one wall.

Despite this room's sinister appearance, the eccentric captain merely used the meat hooks to temporarily hang the cuts of meat that he butchered. He had a reputation of always smelling slightly of rancid meat since he elected to sleep with these shanks of meat in this poorly-ventilated, uncooled chamber. Like the others, this room has yet to be discovered by wandering monsters.

Treasure: The iron rails of the bed frame are hollow, as can be discerned by knocking on them (DC 10 Perception check). A DC 18 Perception check is able to locate a cap that can be removed from the bottom of one of the legs. Hidden within is a pendant of beaten bronze inset with chips of chalcedony. Incised into its surface is a skeletal fist grasping a spiked flail—symbol of the Templar Guard. The pendant is worth 25 gp.