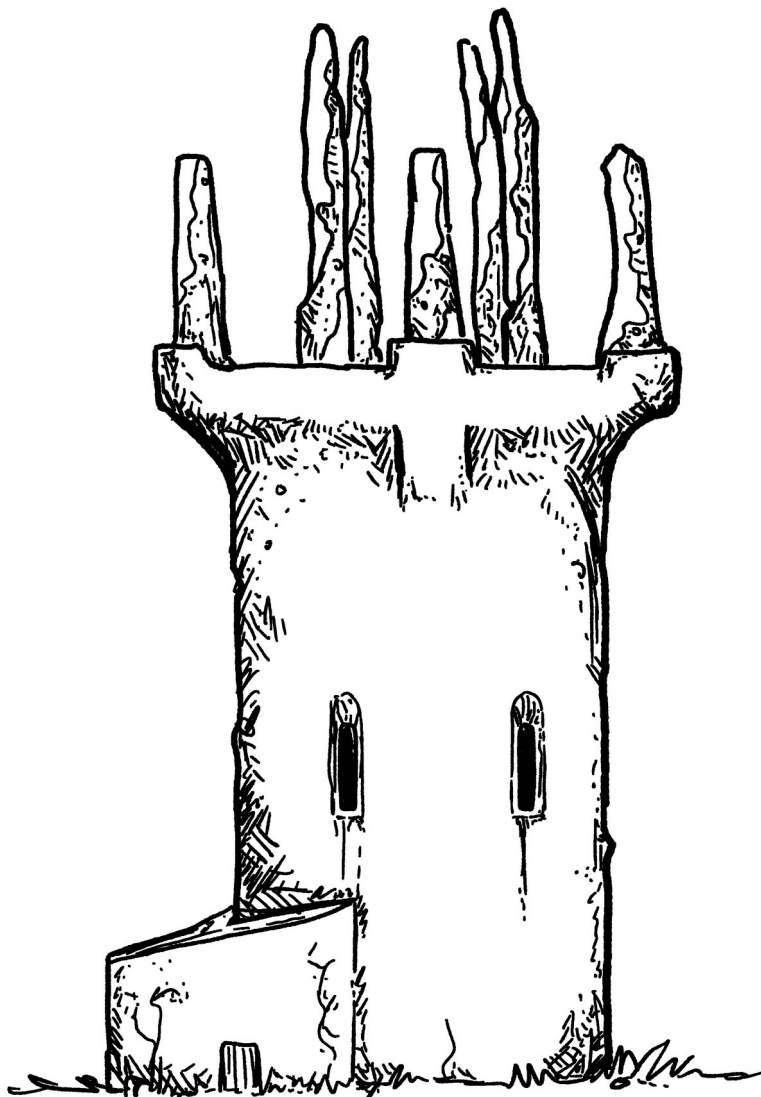


The Ashryn Spire



A Forbidden Lands One-Shot
By Andrew Nichols

As the old dirt road curves to match the bend in the river, you see a gray smudge on the horizon through the thick fog. After another few minutes of following the road, the smudge coalesces into the form of a stone tower, long abandoned, between the edge of the road and the banks of the river. The roof of the attached front building caved in long ago, and lush green vines climb their way up the tower's worn stone walls. The air is eerily quiet here. No birds or insects can be heard, only the soft rumble of the river, and faint whistling of the wind passing through the ancient tower.

Background

The Ashryn Spire was built during the Alder Wars (roughly 316 years ago) by Duke Ashryn, who once ruled the neighboring Castleacre, as a means of keeping an eye on the trade river that was the lifeline of the remote keep.

It stood, and was guarded into the era of the blood mists, with the aid of the magical Mist Beacon, which allowed those who watched under it's light to see in even the heaviest fogs, and incidentally, also prevented the Blood Mist from reaching the tower. However, with communication cut off to Castleacre, and a plague striking the small outpost shortly after, the tower was quickly abandoned, the Beacon left behind in their haste.

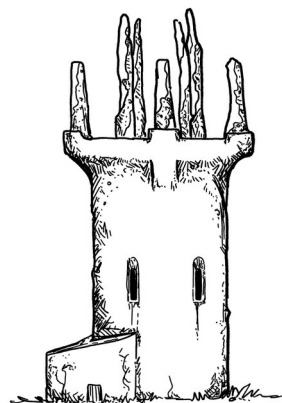
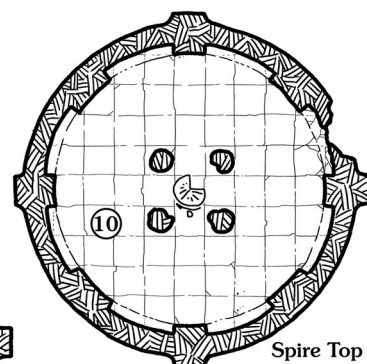
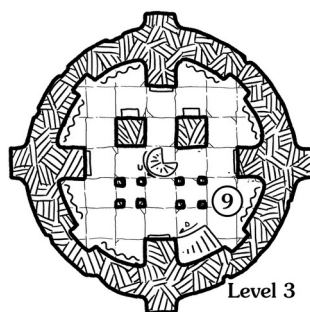
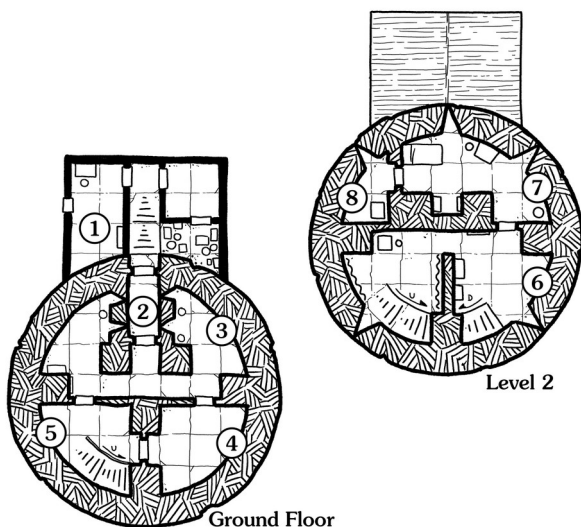
Now, with the Blood Mists rescinding, the town of Castleacre wants to reclaim this lost outpost, and reinstate itself as a trade hub. This is not an easy task, as a wyvern (GMG 124) has taken residence on the roof of the tower, and the last captain of the guard still haunts it's rooms.

Getting Here

When running this personally, I put Castleacre at F15 and Ashryn Spire at G20 of the official Forbidden Lands map, however these can go anywhere along a river, such as X15 and Z17. If the party has been to Castleacre, it's likely that they heard of the Spire through legends, if not, they may have encountered this event.

A Wyvern's Lunch

The party spots a boar, grazing in a clearing. As the party stops to watch the boar, and possibly kill it for food, the wyvern swoops down and plucks the animal from the ground and flies away. The party give chase after the large beast and watches it land in it's nest on top of the tower. If this is how the party finds the Ashryn Spire, treat the approach roll as a 1, as the wyvern is currently in the nest.



Legend

In the time before the mists, Castleacre was a trading hub of great renown, its roads and rivers flooded with merchants at every hour. Such wealth came at a cost however, river pirates and highwaymen could earn as much profit as the most talented merchants by plundering those same paths. After a decade of failed plans and lost profits, Duke Ashryn produced the Mist Beacon, a magical lantern who's light could cut through even the deepest fogs. Where this lantern came from, or how the duke gained possession of it are lost to time, but for this lantern, the duke had the Ashryn Spire built at the very edge of his lands. With this new outpost, no pirate or highwayman could profit on the lands merchants, and Castleacre became an even greater city. The prosperity of Castleacre came to an abrupt halt as the Blood Mists filled the land. The city quickly fell to ruin, but it is rumored that the Spire stood strong, lasting many years before finally succumbing to the mists, thanks to the power of the Mist Beacon. What dangers now face the tower are unknown, but its treasures may be of unfathomable value.

Locations

As you're running this tower, it's important to keep the wyvern in the front of your player's minds. Mention the sounds of it nesting on the roof when it's there, and make a production of it returning each time. If the party makes enough noise to alert the wyvern to their presence, or attempt to leave the tower while the wyvern is there, it should give chase as much as it can.

1 – The Entryway

The roof of the entry rooms collapsed long ago, leaving the floors of these rooms littered with rotting thatch and debris. The first room seems to have been cleaned up slightly, and burn marks in the middle of floor imply that someone camped here recently.

A large rubbish pile fills the back room, leaving it almost impassible, and the stench of the pile burns at your nose.

A set of narrow stone steps lead up to the entrance to the tower proper, where a once solid metal door hangs askew in its frame, succumbing to many years of rust.

A successful *Endurance* check will allow an adventurer to find a Waterskin (18 cp, light). Disturbing the pile at all will alert a rat swarm (dmg 127) and cause it to attack.

2 – The Antechamber

A small antechamber just inside the thick stone walls of the tower lays before you. A second door, a sturdy wooden affair with a large lock, stands at the end of the hall. On either side of you, arrow-slits in the walls give you the feeling of being watched.

A successful *Slight of Hand* check will pick the locks, or it can be broken down (6 hp).

3 – The Front Room

Once inside the tower proper, you realize that this tower was abandoned in a hurry. Stools tossed to the side, and torches left to burn out in their sconces. The air here is oppressive and thick. A dry must permeates your senses. The wings of this room reveal the nature of the antechamber. Two arrow slits on each side of the hall provide ample defense against unwanted guests.

A small footlocker sits between the arrow slits in the west half of the room. Two doors, at either end of the south wall lead into the back half of the tower.

The footlocker contains moth-bitten blankets and a small lockbox (locked) containing 11 copper coins. The west door is stuck, and requires a *Might* check to open.

4 – The Meeting Room

This rooms seems almost untouched, despite being abandoned for over a century. An old wooden table, surrounded by simple stools lays cracked in the middle of the room, having succumb to dry rot at some point. On the outer stone walls, faded maps of the surrounding area show ancient patrol routes. Several places of interest appear to be marked on the maps. Doors to the north and west lead to other parts of the tower.

It's up to the GM to describe these maps. Feel free to use these maps to tie this adventure into your wider campaign.

5 – The Armory

This small room seems to have been an armory of sorts for the tower. The inner wall is lined with weapon racks, and a barrel in the corner is filled with arrows. Doors in the east and north walls lead to other parts of the tower, and a set of stone stairs seem sturdy enough to climb to the second level.

The weapon rack in this room is filled with long spears, short bows and small shields, however all of them are broken. A Turn can be spent to sort through the arrows for 1 resource die per character.

6 – The Kitchen & Dining Hall

At the top of the stairs, a makeshift kitchen is set up. A ring of old bricks and a cauldron hung across a wrought iron spit sits in the west corner. A sawhorse table, now broken, is set up against the central stone wall. On the other side of a wooden dividing wall is where guards likely ate. Shallow shelves around the room seem to have been used as makeshift bar tables, with stools tucked neatly under them. Stairs lead up to the 3rd floor from the dining room, and a door leads north from the kitchen.

Through the north wall, you hear faint footsteps, and muttering, as if someone is pacing the length of the room.

All of the food remaining is spoiled but the cauldron (PHB 184) is still usable. The sounds they are hearing are of the captain's ghost in Room 7, if the party goes quiet to listen in, the sounds go away, but return if they talk to one another or make noise in the room.

7 – The Captain's Quarters

This room is the captain's quarters, and it appears that the captain is still here...

In a simple bed near a north facing arrow slit, a skull is visible atop what remains of a pillow. On the nightstand, an empty brandy bottle, a glass, and a few empty potion bottles sit in a bedtray. The captain's personal desk sits across from the bed, and a large wardrobe fills a nook in the south wall. There's another door to the west.

There does not appear to be a source for the noises you heard in the other room.

The captain died of the plague, which caused the morale of the remaining guards to falter, and the subsequent abandonment of the tower. In his desk drawer are instructions for how to fight the plague, old orders from the Duke, his personal journal and a love letter from home. In the journal, on the back cover, the combination to the safe in Room 8 is scratched into the leather. The clothes in the wardrobe are in too poor of condition for use, but a longsword in the bottom drawer rusted into its sheath. Breaking the leather bound sheath off of the sword reveals that only the hilt is rusted, so the sword is still usable.

If the party opens the safe in Room 8 or disturbs the bones, the captain's ghost will materialize. See The Captain's Ghost.

8 – The Safe Room

This small room contains single stool, facing an arrow slit that watches the road to the northwest. The southern wooden wall makes the room feel incredibly cramped.

The south wall is fake, and any investigation shows where it can be pulled open to reveal a small safe.

Behind the false wall sits a simple safe. On the safe, along with a brass dial and handle, is the Duke's crest, however it seems that one of the mounting points has failed, as the crest hangs at an angle from one corner.

The safe combination is in the Captain's journal in Room 7, and the safe contains 32 copper pieces, wages for the guards on staff. The safe is also trapped with a **potency 3 paralyze poison**, which is disarmed if the adventurers restore the angle of the crest (it locks into place.)

9 – The Bunkroom

The 3rd floor is a single, open space, acting as a bunkhouse and common area for off-duty guards. The central ladder leading to the open roof of the tower fell years ago, and the trapdoor similarly rotted away, leaving this room drafty despite having no windows.

The ceiling is 8 feet tall here, and any party member may climb up with the assistance of another, then may assist further party members up. Otherwise, this room contains nothing of value.

10 – The Top of the Spire

The open top of the tower grants a breathtaking view of the countryside, and the river. On the west side of the roof is a large nest, made of branches and what might be sailcloth. In the nest is a large lantern-like device. 3 feet tall and almost 2 across, the lantern appears to be made of iron and glass, but has no scratches or dents, despite being in the nest of a wyvern.

The lantern is the Mist Beacon of legend. If the party attempts to take the beacon, they realize that it is not iron and glass, but some kind of metallic stone and crystal. The beacon easily weighs 150 lbs, and must be carried by at least two people, who move at half speed while carrying it.

If the party spends a Turn exploring the rest of the nest, they can find a scrap of a sail that has an intact Gold Embroidery of the Duke's Crest (3 gp) and a Signet Ring inset with a large Garnet (8 gp)

The Willow by the River

At the shore of the river, a great willow tree reaches out into the water. Along the shoreline away from the tower, you see a row of marker stones, evenly spaced and standing tall, like soldiers at attention.

The markers show where the first victims of the plague that beset the tower were buried. This is where the captain wishes to be buried. Malcontents willing to dig up the existing graves will find nothing of value, and must make an *Endurance* check against a **Virulence 5** disease for each body unearthed.

Events

Arriving at the Spire

When the party arrives, roll a **D6** to see where the wyvern is. If the wyvern is not in it's nest, a resource die will be used to establish when it returns, otherwise it will leave the nest in **1d6** turns.

1-2	3	4	5	6
Nest	D6	D8	D10	D12

At the end of each turn that the players spend near the spire, roll the resource die. When the **D6** resource die is expended, the wyvern returns to it's nest. The wyvern will then rest for **2d6** turns before leaving again for more food. Whenever the Wyvern leaves it's nest, reset the resource die to **D12**.

The Captain's Ghost

Even beyond death, the captain is loyal to his duty, however he's confined to the room he died in. He will not materialize if called, but can appear if the safe is opened, or if the party disturb his bones.

If the party opened the safe, he materializes at the door of the room:

You hear a click of disappointment from behind you as the safe opens. A ghostly form of a grizzled man in immaculate regalia of the Ashryn guard stands in the doorframe. "What do you think you're doing stealing from your fellow men? Do you have shame?"

If the party disrupts the remains of the captain:

As you touch the sheets of the bed, a ghostly image of a grizzled man sits up out of the bed. He is wearing a chain shirt over a plain nightgown. "Are we under attack?" he asks you.

If the party can successfully inform the captain that he is in fact, dead, (a *Manipulation* roll against the captain's *Insight* of 4,) or inform him that he is being relieved of duty by the party, he will relax and ask you to put his bones to rest.

He wants to be buried under a willow tree by the riverbank outside the tower. This takes 3 turns and requires a shovel, but is otherwise not difficult. If the party does, they recover 1 in every attribute, as the captain passes on peacefully. If the party buries him elsewhere, or in a insufficient grave; he passes on, but with no benefit to the party. If the captain's remains are desecrated, used for necromancy, or buried insufficiently elsewhere, the party is plagued by the *Nightmare* critical injury (PHB 199) for **D6** days, or until he is properly put to rest.

Getting Away with the Beacon

If the party does not kill the wyvern before attempting to leave with the beacon, they are slowed to half speed, and are susceptible to being attacked by the wyvern. As soon as the party leaves the tower, start a new resource die at d12, and roll it once per hour. If the die comes up the max value, the wyvern finds the party and attacks. If the resource die is expended, the party gets away. The wyvern wants the magic item, but will flee if it takes 7 or more strength damage.

NPCs & Monsters

Captain Fairway

A handsome man with long dark hair, captain Fairway was the last captain of the Spire before the coming of the Blood Mists. He kept morale of the stationed guards for almost 2 years before a plague struck the outpost, killing most of the occupants, including the captain. He appears as he would have at the prime of his carrier, smartly dressed in the regalia of his station, and acts accordingly. He is cordial but cautious when spoken to, and acts in what he believes is the best interest of his men.

Captain Fairway has the stats of a Ghost (GMG 95).

The Wyvern

A wyvern has built it's nest on the roof of the spire, and stashed the Beacon in it's nest. Use the Wyvern (GMG 125) stat block.

The Mist Beacon

It is suggested that the the Mist Beacon was originally hung in the workshop of Huga, and used when he traveled the world on foot. At some point, after he lost interest in the mortal realm, he left the beacon behind for others to use.

Appearance

A massive 3 foot tall lantern, made of stone and thick crystal. One quarter of the circular wall is hinged to allow for a light source to be placed within it.

Effects

When filled with a suitable light source, such as a Schwedenfeuer (also known as a Swedish Fire Torch) the light emitted through the crystal provides perfect visibility of anything within 250 feet of the lantern, and prevents Blood Mist from appearing within that radius.

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