Castle in the Storm

An early winter storm rages across the barren north, forcing villagers and farmers to take shelter in Castle Faunel. The storm traps everyone, including the characters, inside the castle's protective walls. All is well, until people begin to disappear. In order to survive the storm, characters must confront an ancient evil, or create a new one.

> Suggested Level: 9

Background

The Faunel family lands are known for their safety. Over the years, they have gained and maintained a reputation that keeps criminals, bandits, and even rival noble families at bay. It is said that a lone peasant woman could walk from one end of Faunel lands to the other with her eyes closed, and arrive without a scratch on her.

The secret to this safety lies in a mouldering crypt underneath Castle Faunel. Until sunset, that is.

Ileana, ancestor and family secret of the Faunels, is an vampire. After an agreement with the then-current Lord Faunel, she agreed to become the land's immortal protector. To safeguard family lands, Ileana would hunt down and feed upon only those who meant the land or its people harm. In exchange, she would lair underneath Castle Faunel in secrecy, known only to whoever is the current lord of the land.

All was well, until Ileana's protection began working too well for her own good. Centuries ago, bandit bands were a nightly find. Now, the vampire's meals are months apart. In her growing blood starvation, Ileana's desire to honor her part of the bargain has begun to wane.

It is during the storm in which this adventure takes place that she finally breaks her end of the deal and begins to attack those taking refuge from the storm.

Running This Adventure

This adventure is divided into three chapters:

Chapter I: Out of the Storm. The characters are caught in an early winter storm ravaging the northern landscape. They must aid a caravan of local refugees, and battle a pack of vicious winter wolves, as they make their way to shelter in Castle Faunel.

Chapter II: Castle Faunel. The characters arrive in Castle Faunel, where they meet Lord Hessel Faunel and his heir, Koren. The group is granted a moment's reprieve until people begin to disappear. You can use befriended NPCs from Chapters I and II to build emotional investment. Finally, a group of vampire spawn abduct Koren Faunel.

Chapter III: Into the Catacombs. The characters enter the catacombs under Castle Faunel to confront Ileana and rescue any missing NPCs. The characters must decide whether to kill Ileana, force her to leave the locals be, or replace her with a younger vampire.

Vampiric Changes

Vampires in this adventure work differently than the base rule set. Characters with background knowledge on vampires, or who succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check know the following:

- There is a distinction between vampire masters and vampire spawn.

- Masters (such as Ileana) can turn mortals into vampire spawn and compel their "brood" to obey. Meanwhile, vampire spawn lack the blood potency to turn others.

- Vampires can act during the day, though they are sluggish and remain vulnerable to sunlight.

- A freshly turned spawn can become mortal again if their master is destroyed and the vampire spawn greets the next sunrise.

Dealing With Taken NPCs

During the adventure, several NPCs are taken away by Ileana and her vampire spawn. Aside from Koren Faunel, it's up to you to decide the fate of any NPCs taken by the vampire spawn. Turning them into vampire spawn is a dark fate, and your players may enjoy that tragedy. You can even have the new vampire spawn be among those attacking the characters in Chapter II and Chapter III for extra emotional impact. If your group doesn't like to lose NPCs, however, Ileana could keep them alive as food. Alternatively, you can time their abduction late in Chapter II so they can still meet the next sunrise and become mortal again.

Extreme Cold

As the storm sets in on the Faunel domain, the temperature drops dramatically below freezing. During the night time, the ambient temperature hovers around -15 degrees Fahrenheit, or -26 Celsius.

Characters exposed to these temperatures must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour or gain one level of exhaustion. Characters with resistance or immunity to cold damage automatically succeed on the saving throw, as do those wearing cold weather gear (thick coats, gloves, and the like), as well as characters naturally adapted to cold climates.

Adventure Hooks

Use one of the following hooks to pull characters into this adventure.

- While traveling through the frigid north, a once-in-a-lifetime storm catches the adventurers unaware. They are forced to join a caravan of weather refugees and take shelter in the lord's castle.

- A neighboring lord is curious about the level of safety within the Faunel lands. Bandits and other miscreants learned to stay away from there years ago, but no one is sure why. The adventurers have been tasked as spies to investigate the nature of the protection over the Faunels' lands.

- A traveling priest heard rumors of demons plaguing the Faunel family, and asks the adventurers to investigate.

CHAPTER I

OUT OF THE STORM

This chapter sees a once-in-a-century snowstorm ravage the north and leave Castle Faunel as the only viable shelter. The characters aren't alone in making for the castle, and a caravan of local refugees is out on the roads. The group can interact with these locals to learn more about the Faunels, aid a family in need, and prove their mettle as veteran adventurers against a pack of winter wolves.

THE NORTHERN TUNDRA

When you are ready to begin the adventure, read or paraphrase the following:

> The dirt road ahead stretches out across the frozen tundra towards a towering castle in the far distance. A caravan of carts and villagers on foot reaches towards the horizon as people flee before the approaching storm. Howling winds make it hard to hear each other, and the snow front coming in from the north stands poised to obscure your sight within hours.
>
> As you near two walking travelers, you hear them talk about the castle and its ruling family, the Faunels.
>
> Meanwhile a distraught family of orcs and humans stands next to an overturned cart with a broken axle. Their attempts to right the cart have failed, and they're picking through their possessions to decide what to carry by hand.
>
> In the distance, the howling of the wind is pierced by a sharper sound that bodes danger.

The procession of weather refugees stretches for two miles and consists of several hundred people who are seeking shelter from the storm. There is a mix of wagons, carts, mounted riders, and walkers. The travelers right ahead of the characters is

Jake (NG half-elf **commoner**) and Marty (CG halfling **commoner**); farmers who got the last harvest off the land just in time for the storm. Listening to their conversation, or talking to anyone else in the procession reveals the following information:

- The Faunels are a ruling family that genuinely takes care of its people. The castle's stores are filled with tithed produce, which the Faunels hand out generously during emergencies like this.

- The north is overrun by brigands every winter, yet they steer clear of the Faunel domain for some reason. "A maiden could walk from one end of the domain to the other with nary a care in the world."

- Marty jokes that the Faunels must have made a deal with devils to keep the lands so safe. The joke is quickly waved away by Jake who refuses to hear ill of the Faunels.

EVENTS

Run the following events during this chapter to introduce players to the world and its NPCs.

FAMILY IN DISTRESS

The distraught family with the overturned cart are the McLeons. The family consists of parents Hedy (NG orc **commoner**) and Clair (NG human **commoner**), two older children Nel and Hilga (NG half-orc **commoners**), and toddler Tinus (CG half-orc noncombatant).

Should characters stop and try to assist the McLeon family, there are two notable courses of action they can take:

- There is no time for a proper axle replacement, but a temporary fix can be done with a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) or appropriate tools check. In this case, roll 1d6. On a result of 1, the cart breaks while being pulled back on the road; on a 2-3 it keeps half the journey; and on a 4-6 the cart actually makes it to Castle Faunel.

- The characters can help carry the family's possessions. This ties the characters to the family's slower pace, causing them and the McLeon to face the "Winter Wolves" encounter alone, as the rest of the caravan moves on.

Treasure. The family gives the characters a pair of antique silver candle holders (10 gp each) for any worthwhile aid.

Developments. If the characters choose to leave the McLeon family behind without aid, skip the "Winter Wolves" event and move on to "The Frozen River." The McLeon family falls prey to the winter wolves and is never seen again.

Winter Wolves

The snowstorm carries **winter wolves** with it, equal to the number of player characters. They harass the caravan, especially any people on foot or NPCs the characters seem to care about.

Characters with a passive Perception of 16 or higher spot the pack at a distance, allowing them to be intercepted before they reach the caravan. If they go unnoticed or unchallenged, the pack surprises the caravan and attacks an unarmed family, redirecting their attack to the characters once they prove a threat.

The wolves do not fight to the death, instead fleeing if half of them are near death or dying. If the characters make no effort to intercede within two rounds, the winter wolves drag two people off into the storm and disappear.

Treasure. The characters can skin the winter wolves. A tanner in the castle (Chapter II) can turn each hide into a cloak at an expense of 8 gp and 1d6 days per cloak. The resulting winter cloak is a mundane item that provides an automatic success on saving throws against the effects of extreme cold, and grants advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made in arctic circumstances.

The Frozen River

Between the refugees and Castle Faunel is the Kaerbroch river, which has frozen over. Normally, river crossing happens by ferry, but the craft is currently stuck in the ice just offshore and is useless until the river thaws. The nearest crossing is several hours away; too far to travel with the oncoming storm. Those who wish to make it to the castle must brave the surface of the river.

The entire line of refugees has stopped at the river's bank, and no one is yet willing to cross. They are wise to pause, as only the river's surface is frozen—ice cold water still rushes by underneath. The icy surface is thicker in some places than others and, where the ice is thin, one wrong step could be lethal. The river, at this point, is 300 feet wide.

The storm will arrive in three hours, and the castle is yet another hour's journey away. In the meantime, characters have an opportunity to help the refugees cross the river by any means they can devise, either magical or mundane. Some examples include:

- Characters can plot a path between the thickest points of ice by succeeding on a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check for the first 100 feet, DC 12 for the next 100 feet, and DC 14 for the final 100 feet. Do not communicate the DCs or the results to the player. Failure on any check results in several refugees falling through while crossing.

- Casting spells that deal cold damage can thicken the ice on the river and make it safe to cross.

Developments. After crossing the Kaerbroch river, the characters and surviving refugees arrive at Castle Faunel. If they stood out from the crowd at all, for example by helping the McLeons or by driving off the winter wolves, or by coming up with a way to cross the river safely, one of the villagers personally introduces them to Lord Hessel Faunel.

Chapter II

Castle Faunel

This chapter spans several days, beginning with the characters' arrival at Castle Faunel and ending when they decide to venture into the catacombs. In this time, the characters meet Lord Hessel Faunel and his son Koren, may rise as leaders in the makeshift courtyard encampment, and finally ward off an attack by vampire spawn. The storm rages outside the castle walls, making it impossible for anyone to leave.

The timing of this chapter is up to you. You can jump all the missing persons cases and move straight to the "Night Attack" event, or you can take time to slowly increase the number of missing people and ramp up tension before the vampire spawn attack.

The Courtyard

When the characters arrive at Castle Faunel, read or paraphrase the following:

> Castle Faunel is a towering fortress of ancient stone, clearly built to hold against the worst the north might throw at its walls. There's little beauty here, but there is warmth as the courtyard is filled with tents and campfires. Banners whip in the wind to show the Faunel family crest: A single blazing candle against the backdrop of a silhouetted castle.
>
> A young man dressed in finery points people towards indoor shelter, while an older man—just as richly dressed and with a silver circlet on his brow—welcomes the leaders of the caravan. The family resemblance between the two men is clear.

If the characters stood out in Chapter I, an NPC of your choice takes the time to introduce them to Lord Hessel Faunel (NG human **noble**) and his adult heir Koren (LG human **noble**). Alternatively, the characters may introduce themselves.

Lord Hessel welcomes the characters warmly, and invites them to pitch a tent in the courtyard with the rest of the arrivals or take refuge in the great hall of the castle. Seeing that they are seasoned adventurers, Lord Hessel asks them to aid in setting up the other refugees and keeping the peace. He can pay them each 100 gold pieces for this service.

Stocking Up

The courtyard and castle carry all the mundane services the characters may require at this point: a smith, a chapel, fletcher, tailor, tanner, and so on. Give the characters time to look around and stock up on anything they might need. Use the prices in the *Player's Handbook* for reference.

Treasure. If the characters seek to purchase a magic item, a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) check identifies a magic trader named Hubert (LG dwarf **commoner**). Hubert has one item of the group's choice up to rare rarity, which he'll trade against one item of comparable rarity. A successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check coaxes Hubert into accepting double the items of lower rarity instead, e.g. two common magic items for one uncommon item.

Koren Faunel

Though one of several siblings, Koren is the last surviving heir to the Faunel family name. Because of this, Lord Hessel has kept his son close at hand, safe within the walls of the family castle. This has inspired no shortage of resentful feelings in the young man, who desperately wishes to see the world before assuming his rightful place as lord of the Faunel domain.

Koren is aware of the vampire slumbering below his family's castle, and her role in ensuring the domain's safety. He will not share this information with outsiders under any circumstance, however.

Arbitrators

Several issues arise around the castle. Characters may deal with these issues or ignore them. However, if they accepted Lord Hessel's job offer, these issues would certainly fall under their duties.

Rations

Castle Faunel holds stores of food, but no one planned for such a harsh winter or this many people within the castle walls. Koren, overwhelmed, asks the characters to help set up rations. Various NPCs around the camp have their own opinions on how rations should be divided.

If the characters choose to help, they can divide rations in the following ways:

- **Standard rations for all.** This has no special effect, and Koren worries that food may run out before winter's end.

- **Tight rations for all.** This ensures the food will last through the winter. Charisma (Persuasion) checks against Lord Hessel and Koren are made with advantage from here on out, but with disadvantage for everyone else.

- **Tight rations for most.** "Important" people get more food than others. Charisma (Persuasion) checks against Lord Hessel and Koren are made at disadvantage from here on out, but prices of goods from NPC merchants are reduced by 25 percent.

A Long Way From Home

Everlin Market (NG gnome **noble**) and her nephew, Nilus Market (LG gnome **commoner**), are sellers of fine cloth from a far off land. They came here seeking a rare flower, and had expected to leave before winter set in. Now trapped by the weather, they will miss out on sales and will be missed by Everlin's spouse and two children.

Everlin is put at ease if the characters can contact her spouse. She can describe her spouse in sufficient detail that they qualify as "familiar"

for the *sending* spell. Otherwise, calming her requires role playing and a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, or a *calm emotions* spell. Consoling Everlin in any of the above ways sees the characters gifted with fine fabric in a color of their choice.

Treasure. Any fine fabric from Everlin Market is worth 5 gp. A tailor can turn it into a set of fine clothes at the expense of 8 gp over the course of 1d8 days.

The Drunkard

Daniel Tothsun (N human **veteran**) has been in his cups ever since he arrived at the castle. His inebriation has reached a point where he has become loud, belligerent, and volatile. He is raving about his experience in a past war and is taunting others for not taking part. Several of the castle guard have already tried to subdue him, but have been knocked unconscious by Daniel.

The characters can choose to intervene how they would like, but here are several ideas:

- **Fight him.** The party can fight Daniel and either kill him or knock him out. Killing him causes Lord Hessel to dismiss the characters from his service if they agreed to work for him.

- **Arrest him.** If characters can grapple and restrain Daniel, the castle guards can put him in manacles and lock him away. This keeps Daniel safe from the vampire attacks.

- **Outdrink him.** Characters can drink with Daniel and make three contested Constitution checks against him. If Daniel fails the contest, he passes out and is taken away by the castle guard. If not, he proceeds to fight the characters.

- **Talk to him.** Daniel can be calmed with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion or Performance) check. Once someone commiserates with him and listens, he goes to bed to sleep off his intoxication.

Treasure. Daniel carries 25 gp and a veteran's war medallion worth 100 gp.

The Missing

As the storm rages on, people begin to go missing. Use known NPCs, other than Lord Hessel or Koren, to raise the emotional stakes. The circumstances surrounding the first missing person are not immediately alarming—the castle is overflowing and hectic, and they may simply have gotten lost. As more people go missing, however, a sense of dread settles over the castle. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals the missing are not outside the castle walls. Meanwhile a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check confirms they're not inside the castle either. Succeeding at this check by 5 or more finds a passage inside the kitchen wall. This passage merely leads to the cellars, where nothing nefarious goes on, but it does alert the characters to secrets within the castle.

The Night Attack

Begin this event during a night when you are ready to wrap up Chapter II. Koren Faunel must not be with the characters during this event.

When you are ready to begin, read or paraphrase the following:

> Screams break the night's silence. Panic spreads almost immediately as people wake from their slumber. A group of people passes you running—they're fleeing from something. Behind them follow deathlike creatures with pale skin, red eyes, and gleaming claws. Their incisor fangs, sharp and elongated, gleam in the moonlight.

A group of 3 **vampire spawn** attack the characters in the courtyard. Sounds of battle elsewhere reveal that more people are under attack, but the Faunel guards seem to be handling it—the characters need only focus on the vampire spawn nearest to them.

The vampire spawn's goal is to drag as many people as they can into the catacombs and back

to their master, Ileana. If the fight goes badly for the characters, the vampire spawn grab a nearby NPC and retreat. The vampire spawn fight to the death, otherwise.

Aftermath

Koren Faunel and several NPCs were taken during the vampire attack. Lord Hessel, distraught at the loss of his child, asks the characters to find and bring Koren back. He can share the following information:

- He and Koren knew their ancestor, Ileana, is a vampire and has been the one keeping the land safe for centuries.
- He had no idea there was more than one vampire under the castle, or that there was a risk of attack.
- Spawn whose master is destroyed, and who greet the next sunrise, may become mortal again.

Lord Hessel insists that the characters find Koren as quickly as possible. Lord Hessel offers the characters 500 gold pieces and one *potion of superior healing* each, as well as two heirlooms: a magic shield and weapon.

Treasure. A magic shield and weapon.

- **Faunel shield.** Grants a +2 bonus to AC, and Darkvision up to a range of 60 feet. It is emblazoned with the Faunel family crest.
- **Faunel weapon (any).** Grants a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it, and advantage on Initiative checks.

Developments. Following the vampire's trail requires no skill check and leads to the family chapel, where a loose flagstone holds the entrance to the catacombs in Chapter III. This flagstone was wedged firmly in place before the vampire spawn used it as an exit, explaining why any earlier searches did not discover it.

Chapter III

Into the Catacombs

The catacombs hold their fair share of traps and ambushes. The characters must pass three of them to get to Ileana. A fourth combat encounter with a **Behir** is presented as optional. The catacombs have no natural light, and characters will need darkvision or some light source to continue.

3A. Crypts

The following sections detail areas of the Faunel crypts. Each area is keyed to the map at the end of this adventure.

When you are ready to begin, read or paraphrase the following:

> A loose floor tile, pried up in the family chapel, yields entrance to the underground catacombs. The spiral staircase down is steep, and wide enough for just one person. The underground world is eerily quiet, and darkness envelops you as you descend.
>
> At the bottom of the stairs, a stone archway leads into a long and dusty hallway lined with coffins on either side. Footprints and drag marks in the thick dust on the floor reveal the path of your quarry.

Glyph Traps. Several tiles in the floor are inscribed with glyphs, which the characters can find with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation or Arcana) check. Once they're found, a successful DC 11 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check navigates the crypt without triggering the trap. Stepping on a glyph unleashes a wave of psychic energy, whereby each creature in the room must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) psychic damage on a failed save, or taking half as much damage on a successful one.

Treasure. The coffins contain a total of 956 gp, 354 sp, gems and jewelry worth 5,000 gp.

3B. Chasm

> The crypt ends abruptly in a yawning chasm some fifty feet long. Looking down reveals a shattered floor and coffins thirty feet below, likely dragged down by an earthquake centuries ago. A discerning eye picks out movement, writhing and swarming, in the depth. The path continues on at the other side of the chasm.

The characters can just make out the other side 50 feet away. The vampire spawn use their Spider Climb ability to cross the chasm, but the characters will likely need to find a different way across.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the remnants of jagged flooring still hanging from the wall, which creates a small ledge. Crossing on this ledge requires a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

Spikes and bugs. The bottom of the chasm is lined with spikes. Victims have been tossed down to attract a **swarm of rot grubs**. Any character that falls into the chasm takes 5 (2d4) piercing damage from the spikes, in addition to 10 (3d6) falling and is attacked by the grubs.

Treasure. One of the vampire's victims carried a *potion of supreme healing*, which now lies at the bottom of the chasm. A character who has the misfortune to fall down can see the glint of the glass vial easily. Spotting the potion from above requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

3c. Behir Lair

This is an optional encounter. The characters can backtrack and go around the behir's lair to reach the shrine in Area 3D. If they engage, however, this encounter offers a chance for a reward in the form of treasure. Read or paraphrase the following:

> You enter a maze of natural caves and ancient rooms, once part of the Faunel catacombs. Finally the turns and twists take you to an ancient tomb. It's partially collapsed, the ceiling caving in on stone coffins and gleaming burial treasure alike. A flash of quick, sleek movement in the dark reveals the presence of a creature.

A successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check gets eyes on the creature long enough to see a many-legged serpentine body, part centipede and part crocodile, pressed up against the ceiling. Meanwhile, any character taking a moment to observe the room can see several coffers of burial treasure, burst open and spilling their contents onto the floor. Among the treasure lie three potion vials.

A single **behir** makes its lair here. It is highly territorial, and attacks the characters without retreat. Sneaking past the behir requires a successful DC 16 Dexterity (Stealth) check. This allows a character to grab the potions without a fight. Taking the entire treasure horde is too much of a disturbance to go unnoticed, however.

Treasure. The coffers hold 300 gp in various ancient coins, and another 300 gp worth of jewels. They also hold one *potion of superior healing*, one *potion of heroism*, and one *potion of resistance (necrotic)*.

3d. Bone Shrine

> The floor, ceiling, and walls of this room are covered in bones laid out in intricate designs. The bones on the north, south, and western walls frame elegantly painted murals.
>
> The mural on the north wall depicts a tall woman wearing a silver circlet. She is leading an army against invaders, her proud banners blowing in the wind. The mural on the south wall shows the same woman delving deep into a cave where she encounters a sleeping shadow, but defeats it and inhales its darkness into her mouth. The mural on the eastern wall shows the woman seated on a throne of bone. Her eyes are two black opals sunken into the wall. She holds a blazing candle in one hand and a silhouetted castle in the other. Fawning sycophants scrape and bow at her feet. There is an odd shadow to her throne.

The north mural. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check recognizes the circlet as the one Lord Hessel currently wears. Her banner carries the blazing Faunel candle, but without its current silhouetted castle.

The south mural. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals minuscule symbols embedded in the sleeping shadow. Translating the symbols with an appropriate spell or successful DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check deciphers their meanings as "deathless", "eternal", and "blood-stealer."

The eastern mural. The silhouetted castle in the woman's hand matches the current Faunel banner. Investigating the shadow on the throne, with no need for a roll, reveals it's made of real bones pressed into the wall and holds a door. The door is locked, but shows no keyhole or opening mechanism.

Developments. Pressing the woman's left opal eye opens the door harmlessly, while pressing the right eye unleashes a storm of arrows. Evading the arrows requires a successful DC 11 Dexterity

saving throw from everyone in the room. They inflict 7 (2d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The characters can discover this through trial and error, or identify the mechanism and the safe eye with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

Treasure. Each opal eye, pried out of the wall, is worth 1000 gp.

3e. Spawn Warrens

> A short passage leads from the shrine to a large natural cave. Small alcoves dot the cave all the way to the ceiling to create a beehive effect. A set of large stone doors at the opposite end marks the way forward. Dark shadows in several of the alcoves hold a human shape, and their nature is quickly revealed when three undead creatures rise, hissing.

This room contains ten **vampire spawn**—more than is wise for the characters to confront head-on. Fortunately, most of them are currently in a deathlike slumber. Opening the door in the shrine woke three of them, who attack the characters. The vampire spawn have disadvantage on their initiative checks, having just roused. Any attempt by the characters to keep the noise down, for example by retreating back into the passage, is sufficient to keep the other vampire spawn dormant.

One of the attackers is Koren (now using a vampire spawn stat block), who tries to hold back despite being compelled by Ileana to attack intruders. Describe Koren's movements as halting, as if he's fighting his own body. Whenever Koren would initiate a grapple to make a bite attack, his hands forcibly unclench to release the target. The characters should pick up on Koren's resistance with no need for a roll. They can help Koren break free from Ileana's control by reminding him of the things he values, such as his people's safety, or his father's approval. A successful DC 19 Charisma (Persuasion) check

lets Koren break free before his next turn. Otherwise, so long as the characters make the attempt, Koren breaks free after inflicting two successful attacks. The characters may attempt the same for any other vampire spawn who are known NPCs, with another successful DC 19 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

Koren, having met Ileana and growing up on family stories, fills the characters in on the history of the Faunels and Ileana's role in the safety of their domain. He is worried that removing Ileana will leave the domain overrun by bandits, and argues against killing her. Instead, Koren wants to force Ileana back on her best behavior—even if that means he can never become mortal again. If the characters argue that Ileana has clearly become untrustworthy, Koren suggests he take her position as vampire master. Note that the characters will miss this information if they made no attempt to help Koren.

3f. Ileana's Chamber

Beyond the double doors lies the chamber of Ileana herself. The doors are closed, but not locked.

> The stone doors open to reveal a once opulent room. Tapestries, now faded with age, line the walls and floors. A four-poster bed stands at the back of the room, flanked by a wardrobe on one side and a mahogany writing desk on the other. A closed door in the south wall leads beyond. The room holds no natural source of illumination, but the glint of blackened claws and ivory fangs reveal the agitated vampire standing in the center of the room.

Ileana Faunel is in constant mental connection with her vampire spawn, and the previous fight has already roused her. She does not immediately attack, however. Ileana is over-confident and evil, but didn't survive this long without ever striking a bargain. She's happy to pay the characters off if that means they leave her alone (see "Treasure," below, for what she can offer). Ileana also harps on her role as protector of the domain, as proven

by the lack of brigands. Apart from treasure, however, any bargain the characters make is meaningless. Ileana is an apt liar and plans to resume her ways once the characters leave. Her deception can be spotted with a DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check.

If the characters engage Ileana in combat, she telepathically calls upon the aid of any remaining vampire spawn in Area 3E, who will arrive on Initiative count 20 of the third round. Characters can barricade the door to Ileana's chamber to prevent vampire spawn from entering the room.

If the characters are faring poorly in combat, Koren breaks free of Ileana's compulsion not to harm her, and joins them. Otherwise, Koren stands by helplessly as the characters handle Ileana themselves. If she stands to be defeated, Ileana insists that she's kept the Faunel domain safe for centuries and again pleads for her existence.

Assuming they win the confrontation, the characters have three options:

- **Kill Ileana.** The characters kill Ileana over Koren's protest. The Faunel domain should still be safe this winter, but then word of its new and unexplained vulnerability will spread. By the time that becomes a problem, however, the characters should be long gone.

- **Make a deal with Ileana.** The characters strike a deal with Ileana to only attack bandits and other threats to the Faunel domain from now on. Unless they have a means of supernatural coercion, they have no way of knowing if she'll keep her word.

- **Replace Ileana with Koren.** The characters kill Ileana, but leave Koren—a young vampire spawn who's already shown remarkable force of will—as the castle's protector.

Treasure. Ileana carries a *cloak of protection* and Nightbringer, a *+2 greatsword*. Searching the room further yields six sets of fine clothes (15 gp each), an assortment of jewelry (1000 gp total), a magical lyre that creates music and sings all on its own, and an *amulet of health*.

Developments. If Ileana is dead, any newly turned vampire spawn have a chance to greet the sunrise and become mortal again. Koren, if he decides to take Ileana's place, deliberately remains in the catacombs to miss the sunrise. Still, the characters might return other NPCs to their loved ones.

3G. Food Storage

The door to this room is locked and trapped. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check spots the poison needle hiding in the lock. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools disarms the trap and opens the lock. Failure at this check, or attempting to pick the lock without disarming the needle, triggers the trap. The poison needle inflicts 1 piercing damage and 11 (2d10) poison damage. Additionally, the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour.

Any living prisoners are kept in this room, which is otherwise bare, save pools of blood on the floor and three hanging cages. Any named NPC who was taken and not turned into a vampire spawn can be found here.

Conclusion

The characters return to Lord Hessel. If they question him about Ileana, a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals he was aware of "a supernatural darkness" protecting the domain and family. He did not specifically know it was a vampire, nor did he particularly look into it.

If the characters killed Ileana and rescued Koren. Lord Hessel keeps his word and hands over the promised payment. He does question how he will defend his domain now, and asks the characters to enter his employ as guards. If they accept, Castle Faunel gives them a solid home base for adventures in the north.

If the characters made a deal with Ileana. This left Koren, and any other new vampire spawn, without a way to become mortal again. Lord Hessel is very displeased, and refuses to pay the characters since they never saved his heir. Getting the promised reward requires a successful DC 22 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check. Lord Hessel bans the characters from the Faunel domain as soon as the storm lets up.

If the characters replaced Ileana with Koren. Lord Hessel is very displeased. He initially refuses to pay the characters, but Koren intercedes on their behalf. Lord Hessel commands the characters to leave as soon as the storm lets up, and Koren agrees it would be wise not to antagonize their father further. Eventually the centuries will turn Koren fully evil, as any vampire, but until then they serve as a supernatural contact for the characters.

The travelers and merchants can leave once the storm lets up, which should happen once the characters fully conclude their business (including waiting on any commissioned items). If the characters befriended Everlin Market in Chapter II, the gnome is happy to give them a lift back south. The gnome then continues to act as a traveling contact for the group in future adventures. Otherwise, the characters can go on their way as they please.

Castle Faunel Crypt

Adventure Stat Blocks

Behir
Huge Monstrosity, Neutral Evil

Hit Points	AC	Prof. Bonus	Pass. Perc.
168	17	+4	16

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23	16	18	7	14	12
+6	+3	+4	-2	+2	+1

Damage Immunities: Lightning
Languages: Draconic
Senses: Darkvision 90 ft.
Skill Bonuses: Perception +6, Stealth +7
Speed: 30 ft.

Actions

Multiattack. The behir makes two attacks: one with its bite and one to constrict.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d10 + 6) piercing damage.

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage plus 17 (2d10 + 6) slashing damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 16) if the behir isn't already constricting a creature, and the target is restrained until this grapple ends.

Lightning Breath (Recharge 5–6). The behir exhales a line of lightning that is 20 feet long and 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 66 (12d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Swallow. The behir makes one bite attack against a Medium or smaller target it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target is also swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the behir, and it takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the behir's turns. A behir can have only one creature swallowed at a time.

If the behir takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from the swallowed creature, the behir must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate the creature, which falls prone in a space within 10 feet of the behir. If the behir dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 15 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Ileana Faunel

Ileana Faunel was once a noble and virtuous woman. As the founder of the Faunel family line, Ileana dedicated herself to the protection and prosperity of the lands she called home.

In her mortal years, Ileana led her people with wisdom and strength, fending off bandits, repelling invaders, and establishing a legacy of peace and prosperity. Her charisma and strategic brilliance earned her the respect and admiration of her subjects, who hailed her as a beacon of hope and a symbol of righteousness. As an echo of this, her banners bore the symbol of a single blazing candle.

Despite her efforts within her own lands, forces of evil piled up on Ileana's borders like a building wave, threatening to wash over all. The weight of her responsibility burdened Ileana's soul, and with a heart devoted to her people's protection, she faced the encroaching darkness that threatened to engulf her domain.

Driven by an unyielding determination, Ileana ventured into the bowels of the earth, seeking an alliance with the enigmatic beings that dwelt within the shadowed abyss. Desperation and the dire need to safeguard her lands guided her steps, leading her to make a pact with the very darkness she once opposed.

Through an arcane ritual, Ileana underwent a transformation; her mortal form intertwined with the essence of the shadow realm. The touch of darkness altered her being, imbuing her with otherworldly powers and an unnerving connection to the ebon depths. She emerged from the ritual, forever changed, a conduit of darkness driven by the power of blood.

With her newfound abilities, Ileana faced the looming threat that had plagued her lands. She clashed with the malevolent forces that sought to claim her realm, fighting with an unearthly grace, harnessing shadows as weapons, and commanding the very essence of the abyss. Her battles were a symphony of lightning, thunder, and the chilling whispers of the night.

With the battle won and blood on her hands, Ileana retreated to the depths of Castle Faunel. There she stayed, in a lair of her own making, continuing to protect her domain from threats inside and out.

Years crept on, and the living members of the Faunel family continued to rule the land. Stories of Ileana and her deeds faded from recent memory, only to be replaced by grandiose myths and whispered superstitions.

Now, under the influence of the darkness and the evil inside of her, Ileana's mind is all but gone. She no longer sees the people of her land as being separate from the threats that she once subdued, and her thirst for blood is only growing stronger.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing all ties), Ileana takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects. Ileana can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- **Shadow Hold.** Shadowy appendages emerge from the walls, floor, or ceiling, targeting creatures within 30 feet of Ileana. The tendrils attempting to grapple and restrain creatures within range. Each targeted creature must make a DC 18 Strength or Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is restrained by the tendrils until the end of its next turn. While restrained, the creature takes 4 (1d8) necrotic damage as the tendrils drain its life force, and Ileana gains temporary hit points equal to the damage dealt.

- **Umbra.** The area within 30 feet of Ileana is covered in magical darkness, per the *darkness* spell. Ileana can see through this darkness as if it were dimly lit. The darkness disappears at the end of the round, or when it is dispelled (DC 14).

Ileana Faunel

Medium Undead, Neutral Evil

Hit Points	AC	Prof. Bonus	Pass. Perc.
144	19	+5	17

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20	18	18	17	15	18
+5	+4	+4	+3	+2	+4

Damage Immunities: Lightning
Damage Resistances: Necrotic; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks
Languages: Common, Abyssal, Elvish
Saving Throws: DEX +9, WIS +7, CHA +9
Senses: Darkvision 120 ft.
Skill Bonuses: Perception +7, Stealth +9
Speed: 30 ft.

Features

Shapechanger. If Ileana isn't in sunlight or running water, she can use her action to polymorph into a shadow, or back into her true form.

While in shadow form, Ileana can't take any actions, speak, or manipulate objects. She is weightless and has a movement speed of 40 feet. In addition, if air can pass through a space, Ileana can do so without squeezing. She has advantage on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution saving throws, and is immune to all nonmagical damage, except the damage she takes from sunlight.

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

Regeneration. Ileana regains 20 hit points at the start of her turn if she has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If she takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of her next turn.

Spider Climb. Ileana can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Vampire Weaknesses. Ileana has the following flaws:

- **Forbiddance.** Ileana can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.

- **Sunlight Hypersensitivity.** Ileana takes 20 radiant damage when she starts her turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, she has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Actions

Multiattack. Ileana makes two Nightbringer attacks or one unarmed strike and one bite attack.

Nightbringer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 14 (2d6 + 7) slashing damage.

Unarmed Strike (Vampire Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage. Instead of dealing damage, Ileana can grapple the target (escape DC 18).

Bite (Vampire Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by Ileana, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and Ileana regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. A humanoid slain in this way rises as a vampire spawn under Ileana's control in 1d4 hours.

Bonus Actions

Telepathic Bond. Ileana telepathically calls out to one or more of her spawn that are within a 1 mile radius and issues them a simple command. The spawn are compelled to obey Ileana's command to the best of their ability, as if under a geas spell.

Legendary Actions

Ileana 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. Ileana regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Nightbringer. Ileana attacks once with Nightbringer.

Bite (Costs 2 Actions). Ileana makes one bite attack.

Shadow of Torment (Costs 3 Actions). Ileana commands the shadows within 30 feet of her to animate and attack nearby creatures. Creatures within range must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 14 (3d8) necrotic damage.

Swarm of Rot Grubs

Medium Swarm of Tiny Beasts, Unaligned

Hit Points	AC	Prof. Bonus	Pass. Perc.
22	8	+2	6

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2	7	10	1	2	1
-4	-2	+0	-5	-4	-5

Condition Immunities: Charmed, Frightened, Grappled, Paralyzed, Petrified, Prone, Restrained
Damage Resistances: Piercing, Slashing
Damage Vulnerabilities: Fire
Languages: —
Senses: Blindsight 10 ft.
Speed: 30 ft.

Features

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny maggot. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned. At the end of each of the poisoned target's turns, the target takes 3 (1d6) poison damage. Whenever the poisoned target takes fire damage, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. If the poisoned target ends its turn with 0 hit points, it dies.

Noble

Medium Humanoid (Any Race), Any Alignment

Hit Points	AC	Prof. Bonus	Pass. Perc.
9	15	+2	12

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11	12	11	12	14	16
+0	+1	+0	+1	+2	+3

Languages: Any two languages
Skill Bonuses: Deception +5, Insight +4, Persuasion +5
Speed: 30 ft.

Actions

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Reactions

Parry. The noble adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the noble must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Vampire Spawn

Medium Undead, Neutral Evil

Hit Points	AC	Prof. Bonus	Pass. Perc.
82	15	+3	13

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16	16	16	11	10	12
+3	+3	+3	+0	+0	+1

Damage Resistances: Necrotic; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks
Languages: The languages it knew in life
Saving Throws: Dexterity +6, Wisdom +3
Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.
Skill Bonuses: Perception +3, Stealth +6
Speed: 30 ft.

Features

Regeneration. The vampire regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If the vampire takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of the vampire's next turn.

Spider Climb. The vampire can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Vampire Weaknesses. The vampire has the following flaws:

- **Forbiddance.** The vampire can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.

- **Harmed by Running Water.** The vampire takes 20 acid damage when it ends its turn in running water.

- **Stake to the Heart.** The vampire is destroyed if a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into its heart while it is incapacitated in its resting place.

- **Sunlight Hypersensitivity.** The vampire takes 20 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Actions

Multiattack. The vampire makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage. Instead of dealing damage, the vampire can grapple the target (escape DC 13).

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by the vampire, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the vampire regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Veteran

Medium Humanoid (Any Race), Any Alignment

Hit Points	AC	Prof. Bonus	Pass. Perc.
58	17	+2	12

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16	13	14	10	11	10
+3	+1	+2	+0	+0	+0

Languages: Any one language (usually Common)
Skill Bonuses: Athletics +5, Perception +2
Speed: 30 ft.

Actions

Multiattack. The veteran makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

Winter Wolf

Large Monstrosity, Neutral Evil

Hit Points	AC	Prof. Bonus	Pass. Perc.
75	13	+2	15

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18	13	14	7	12	8
+4	+1	+2	-2	+1	-1

Damage Immunities: Cold
Languages: Common, Giant, Winter Wolf
Skill Bonuses: Perception +5, Stealth +3
Speed: 30 ft.

Features

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pack Tactics. The wolf has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the wolf's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Snow Camouflage. The wolf has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in snowy terrain.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Cold Breath (Recharge 5–6). The wolf exhales a blast of freezing wind in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.