

THE HAUNT OF HIGHTOWER

BY JACKSON HYDE

The Haunt of Hightower is a Ravnica one-shot designed for a party of four 6th-level characters, who should advance to 7th level by the adventure's conclusion.

This adventure can also be used in a wider Orzhov-styled campaign, and if the Orzhov are antagonists, the menacing Haunt could be used as an excuse to case Hightower.

This adventure could also be used in a "Villain of the Month" style campaign, with the Haunt just being another pawn in a larger villain's schemes.

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RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The Haunt of Hightower is more of a collection of adventure notes than a full story. Those notes detail six encounters, five for the five levels of the Grand Basilica map on page 148 of *Guildmaster's Guide to Ravnica*, and one, of course, for the encounter with the Haunt. It also contains advice for changing the adventure to suit your players' needs.

As you run the adventure, play upon tropes of horror. Have lightning flash through the stormy sky (an Izzet experiment, perhaps), and describe to the characters how they can feel something *watching* them.

PLOT HOOKS

The renowned Orzhov pontiff Goriv Koba (a LE loxodon **mage**) has called upon your aid to deal with malignant spirits believed to be haunting the basilica of Hightower. He has promised a reward of 240 GP to the group and 1 renown in each character's chosen guild to destroy the Haunt.

GUILD-SPECIFIC PLOT HOOKS

Guild Plot Hook

Azorius	There are <i>quite a few</i> laws against having malignant undead in your chapel.
Boros	The Boros officers sent to deal with the threat have not yet returned.
Dimir	You were trying to sneak into Hightower when all this started.
Golgari	The Swarm feeds off of death, and the Haunt refuses to die.
Gruul	You want to see if your renowned strength is enough to best this monster.
Izzet	In exchange for letting you run an experiment close to Hightower, Koba has asked you to help him with this problem.
Orzhov	Koba is your superior in the guild, and has called upon your aid.
Rakdos	You don't know <i>why</i> Rakdos is so interested in this creature, but when your guildmaster asks you to do something, <i>you do it</i> .
Selesnya	You must exorcise this unnatural creature.
Simic	Admit it, you're a <i>bit</i> excited about what this creature could be.

THE BASILICA

The Basilica is ornate, with stained glass windows and is dimly lit, its candles no longer tended due to the Haunt.

ENCOUNTERS

1. BASILICA

Three **indentured spirits**, souls of Boros enforcers killed by the Haunt, lie in wait here.

As you move closer to the altar, you hear moaning. Three spirits float through the walls around you, their withered arms, still clad in broken Boros armor, reaching out to claw you through a veil of drifting chains.

If the spirits are slain, their souls can finally go to rest.

2. CRYPTS AND VAULTS

One of the tombs here contains 193 GP and an *Orzhov guild signet*. These treasures belong to a **wight** who will attack intruders, and who can call upon his armor, transforming it into a suit of **animated armor**.

As you feel the coins in your hands, you hear a raspy breath behind you. An undead warrior rises, its armor standing up with it.

If the party takes any of the treasures, they must succeed on a DC 10 Charisma (Deception) check to still get paid.

3. SPIRE LEVEL 1

Two human Orzhov **priests** whose minds have been dominated by minions of the Haunt are here.

Two Orzhov priests stand here. "Good," you say. "Helpers!" But the priests simply turn to you with blank expressions, weapons raised.

The weapon of the second priest is actually a *+1 mace*. Koba understands if the players had to kill them.

4. SPIRE LEVEL 2

This room contains two **winged thrull** servants of the minion priests below, which call upon a **rug of smothering** to aid them.

The two winged, fleshbag servants, thrulls, in this chamber have clearly been alerted by combat below. One of them uses a powerful ritual, calling the carpet at your feet into a writing semblance of life.

Koba will indeed make the party members pay 3 GP for "rug repairs."

5. SPIRE LEVEL 3

Two **gargoyles** lie in wait here. The gargoyles are dark progeny of the Haunt, and are undead, not elementals.

This room appears to be empty. As you open a window to check for surprises, the two stone gargoyles on the patio animate and attack!

The door into the belfry is inscribed with a *glyph of warding*, which takes a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to spot. Any creature who goes within 5 ft. of the door triggers the glyph.

When triggered, the glyph erupts with magical energy in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on the glyph. The sphere spreads around corners. Each creature in the area must make a Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 5d8 radiant damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one.

THE HAUNT OF HIGHTOWER

The belfry is a 20 ft. by 20 ft. square, with a 5 ft. by 5 ft. bell in the middle and 3 ft. tall ornate fences connecting the pillars of the pagoda-like chamber. **The Haunt of Hightower**, a unique breed of vampire, waits here, using its turn to either push people into the bell or fly away after clawing and biting at them.

It takes several minutes to climb up the winding staircase that leads to the belfry. When at last you open it, nothing is there but a large bell and flickering candles. You get the feeling that you're being watched...

The Haunt is waiting for them up here, surprising any character with passive Perception 14 or lower.

THE BELL

Any creature can use an action to make a Strength Check, with the DC being equal to the Armor Class of the target, which must be within 5 ft. of both the creature and the bell.

On a success, the target is pushed into the bell, which is considered Difficult Terrain. Any creature in the bell takes 1d4 bludgeoning damage and 1d4 thunder damage on the start of each of its turns. Creatures in the bell also take this damage whenever damage is dealt to the bell, which has AC 14 and 20 hit points. If the bell is destroyed it stops being difficult terrain.

OTHER ENCOUNTERS

The encounters detailed here are all combat oriented, and also leave a lot of the Grand Basilica empty. This makes social and puzzle-oriented encounters easy to insert.

You could also shift the locations of encounters, or have the party first encounter the Haunt in its coffin in the crypts (it is a vampire, after all) then have it flee for the belfry.

EXAMPLE PUZZLE-ORIENTED ENCOUNTER

One of the tombs in the "Crypts and Vaults" section belongs to an advokist with a sense of humor who wanted their riches to be available to smart treasure-seekers.

A gold plaque decorates the vault door.

I SEE THAT YOU HAVE FOUND MY TOMB.

ANSWER A RIDDLE AND MY TREASURE SHALL BE YOURS:
WHAT LOSES ITS HEAD IN THE MORNING AND GETS IT
BACK AT NIGHT?

With the correct answer ("A pillow") the vault door swings open, revealing a trove of 97 GP, a *skyblinder staff*, and a *spell scroll of prayer of healing*.

EXAMPLE SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

The party finds the janitor (N goblin **commoner**), who warns them about the dangers in the spire with a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

CONCLUSION

When the Haunt dies, the spirits in Encounter 1 fade into the afterlife, Encounter 3 and 4's Orzhov members cease to be hostile, and Encounter 5's gargoyles are petrified. Koba is good on his word, paying the party members the promised rewards.

THE HAUNT OF HIGHTOWER

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 73 (10d8 + 28)

Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	13 (+2)	15 (+3)	13 (+2)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Abyssal, Common

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Feast on Fear. Whenever the Haunt moves, if at least one creature within a 30 ft. radius of it is frightened, it regains 2 (1d4) hit points.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the Haunt can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

Sunlight Weakness. While in sunlight, the Haunt has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

Actions

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

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by the Haunt, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (6d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the Haunt 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.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) slashing damage and 2 (1d4) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened and is considered grappled by the Haunt.

THE HAUNT OF HIGHTOWER

The Haunt is a Ravnican vampire that "drains vitality from those that it touches." The creature's card can be found in the *Ravnica Allegiance* set of the **Magic: the Gathering** card game.