Vault of Infernal Machines

"Vault of Infernal Machines" is an adventure scenario for 6th level 5e characters set in vaults containing powerful war machines of the Nameless King. This scenario is intended to work with any 5e-based system including *D&D 2014*, *D&D 2024*, *Level Up Advanced 5e*, *Tales of the Valiant*, or other 5e variants. It can also be modified to support other fantasy RPGs.

This scenario is part of a series following the Key of Worlds campaign arc in the *City of Arches* sourcebook. This series begins with the *Scroll of Akrave* scenario.

This scenario is the second of three scenarios leading to the Brazier of the Betrothed – one of three braziers locking the extradimensional vault of the Key of Worlds.

You can, instead, modify this scenario to run as a stand-alone adventure in any campaign or setting.

This Isn't a Typical Adventure

This scenario isn't laid out like a traditional adventure. Instead, it presents ingredients and a scaffold around which to build your own adventure, campaign, and story. This scenario offers adventure hooks, histories, secrets and clues, notable NPCs, potential encounters, locations, and potential treasure.

Use these components to build your own adventure and customize them to best suit your campaign, the situation in the adventure, the interests of your players, and the pacing of your game.

Each section in this scenario suggests how to use these components.

Paths to the Blackfire Braziers

This scenario is the second of three scenarios leading to the Brazier of the Betrothed. Two other three-scenario paths lead to the other two Blackfire Braziers – the Brazier of the Nameless King and the Brazier of Grayon.

At this point in the campaign, the characters possess one of the two Blackfire artifacts – the *Sword of Irixthius* or the *Staff of Servlyn* – each of which can ignite the Blackfire Braziers. The characters also learned the locations of the three braziers in the *Lake of Monoliths* scenario and traveled through the trap rooms of the *Theater of Whispers* scenario.

While the characters seek the Brazier of the Betrothed, another rival group of nefarious explorers, such as the Children of Ibraxus or the Knights of the Nameless King, might seek one of the other two braziers. Thus, the characters likely complete *two* of these Blackfire Brazier paths while skipping the third after their rivals lit one of the other braziers.

If this is the first brazier the characters seek, they're likely 6th level. If they've already found and ignited another brazier, they may be 9th level. In the latter case, you may want to increase the difficulty of combat encounters with bigger monsters, more monsters, or both. Alternatively, you can leave it as it is and give the characters an easier series of encounters. Decide what's right for you, your players, and the pacing of the game.

It's expected that the characters gain a level when they complete this scenario.

Scenario Summary

After dealing with the curse of the trap rooms of the Theater of Whispers, the characters find a huge shaft leading into forgotten vaults containing war machines of the Nameless King. The characters navigate these vaults, face monsters feeding off the fel energy of these machines, and hear the voice of the creator of these terrible machines – the artificer Xin – ordering them to open the vault's massive archway so the machines may roar into this world or the next. This voice is actually an imp named Brevet who, bound to the vaults, seeks his own escape.

After choosing how to deal with Brevet and navigating the chambers, the characters find the entrance to the Crypts of the Betrothed – the final step in finding and igniting the Brazier of the Betrothed.

Scenario History

For his thousand-year reign, the Nameless King sought to conquer all worlds – this one and hundreds of others. In some cases, he was quite successful. Artificers and mechanists of the Nameless King known as the Order of Black Iron used hellish magic to fuel powerful war machines that stormed over the worlds he sought to conquer – spewing hellfire and destroying the lands across which they crossed.

Several vaults of these infernal machines lay hidden in vaults across this world and others. One such vault lies beneath the Theater of Whispers. There, the artificer Xin and his fellow mages of Black Iron built two powerful war machines: Legion's Doom and Ashsnarl. After devastating countless armies and destroying the lands over which they crossed, both machines now lie in the forgotten vault below the Theater of Whispers.

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Secrets of the Vault

Deliver the following secrets and clues as the characters investigate the Vaults of Infernal Machines and explore its halls. Characters might discover these clues by studying lost notes of the Order of Black Iron, studying machinery and artifacts left within the vault, from discussions with lost explorers or their leftover notes, from afterimages of dead spirits reenacting moments from long ago, or from the trapped imp Brevet. It's not critical that the characters discover every secret – think of secrets like treasure uncovered as the characters explore the tomb

- Fifteen hundred years ago the Nameless King founded the Order of Black Iron to build infernal machines to fuel his thirst for bloodshed and power.
- An artificer named Xin led the Order of Black Iron. They sought terrible magic to fuel their war machines, caring not at all for the harm these machines did to the worlds they invaded.
- Various vaults contained these war machines, with huge archways acting as conduits to let these machines invade other worlds.
- Black Iron mages found much of their fel magics and twisted knowledge in the mechanized infernal world of Maphotar.
- The Order of Black Iron and the Nameless King forged a pact with the archdevil Klamas of Maphotar. The archdevil showed the Order how to harvest souls as fuel for these machines.
- During the construction of the vault of Infernal Machines, the builders discovered a roughly carved staircase leading down to a primeval crypt. After losing several explorers down in the vault, they bricked it up and ignored it.
- Across the years, various tectonic shifts damaged the vault, isolating the machines and reopening the staircase to the primeval crypts – now known as the Crypts of the Betrothed for the two vampires who now reside in its unhallowed halls.
- Cracks in the walls of the vault lead to side passages emptying into the outskirts of the Lower Reaches.
- The infernal mages of Maphotar showed the Order of Black Iron how to store tormented souls into glass cylinders able to fuel infernal machines.
- Damaged soul cylinders led to spirits now haunting the vaults, reenacting and recreating moments of history over 1,500 years ago.

Key NPCs

The following is a list of key NPCs for this adventure.

- **Xin.** The artificer and leader of the Order of Black Iron, now a shattered vengeful spirit bound into a **construct fire giant**. His twisted spirit seeks to devour souls of the living with little understanding of the machines he once built.
- **Brevit.** The **Imp** familiar of Xin, bound to this vault by Xin and who seeks his release. He pretends to be Xin and hopes to convince explorers to fuel the two war machines – Ashsnarl and Legion's Doom – and open the archway so he can once again ride into war. Brevit recognizes that Xin now haunts a construct fire giant but has been unsuccessful in getting the twisted spirit to release his bond.

Integrating Fantastic Lairs and Fantastic Locations

The two machines mentioned in this scenario – Ashsnarl and Legion's Doom are fully developed in the books *Sly Flourish's Fantastic Locations* in the chapter "The Infernal Machine" and in *Sly Flourish's Fantastic Lairs* in the chapter "Ashsnarl's Secret". *Legion's Doom* is the name given to the infernal machine from *Fantastic Adventures*. You don't need to have those chapters to run this scenario but if you wanted to fill out these two war machines, those two books and chapters can help you do so.

Scenario Start

Use one of the following hooks to draw characters into this scenario:

- After eliminating the haunting of the trap rooms of the Theater of Whispers, the characters find access to the Vault of Infernal Machines through a large seal covering a one-hundred-foot-deep shaft leading into the vault.
- Nightmares of war machines roaring across the lands surrounding the City of Arches haunt one of the characters who awakens having seen the seal guarding the vault and recognizing it as being beneath the Theater of Whispers.
- Danvon of Duskwater, sage of Kartan, hires the characters to delve into the Vault of Infernal Machines beneath the Theater of Whispers to find the hidden stairwell to the Crypts of the Betrothed. While they explore the vault, Danvon would like them to return to him a sample of the energy source used to fuel those machines.

Encounters in the Tomb

While the characters explore the chambers of the Vault of Infernal Machines, they may run into one or more of the following encounters. Select from or roll randomly on the table below to add inhabitants to locations found throughout the tower.

If the characters face this scenario at level 9 instead of level 6, you may want to add monsters, select bigger monsters, or both.

1. Several **gray oozes** animate from vile runoff.
2. Several **ochre jellies** drip from the ceiling.
3. **Wraith** remnants of the Order of Black Iron seek mortal souls.
4. An armored **flesh guardian** stomps through the halls on a repetitious duty.
5. Suspicious but non-hostile **gnoll** treasure hunters from the Silver Claw clan seek treasures in the vault.
6. A **wraith mage** and several **wights** stalk the halls on long-lost orders of Xin.
7. A small pack of **hell hounds** escaped from a nearby unstable rift.
8. A lost **scout** hides from the dangerous denizens of the vault.
9. The floor collapses into a pit containing a **black pudding** swimming with screaming souls.
10. Several **specters** recreate their meeting with Xin and a voiceless herald of the Nameless King named Grave.

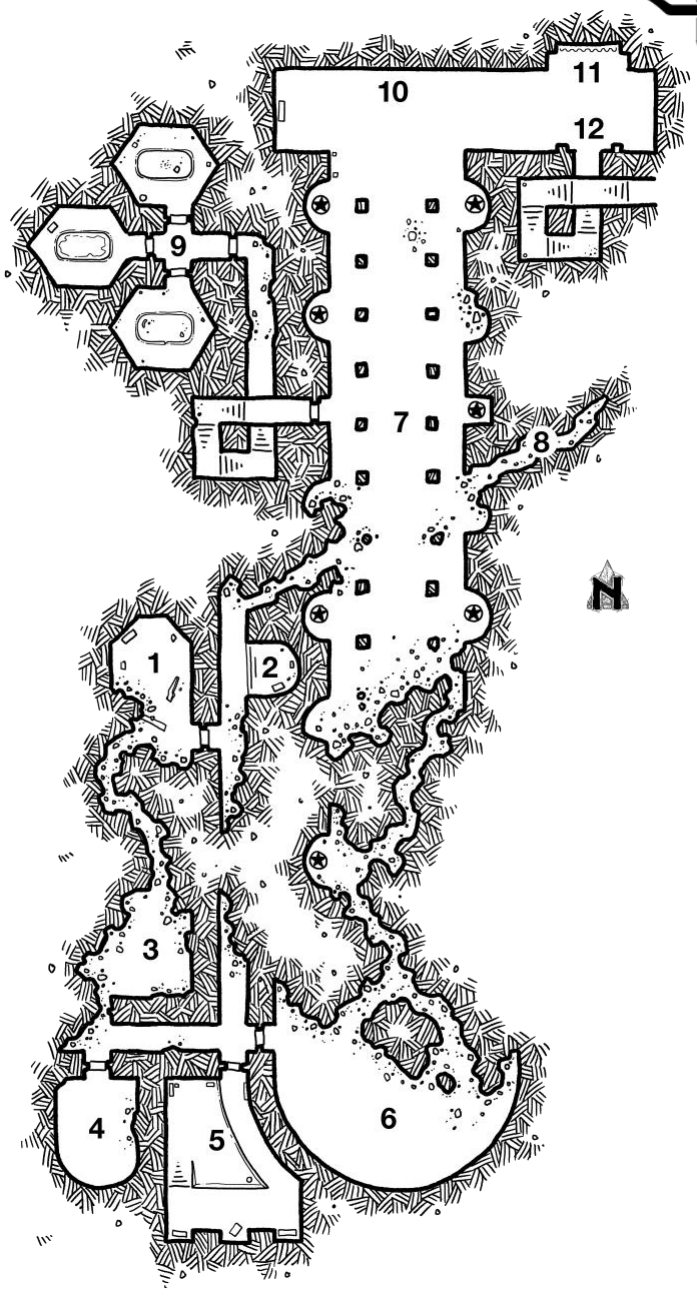
DCs, Damage, Traps, and Hazards

The Vaults of Infernal Machines contains several defenses and hazards – mostly magical. Traps reset after one hour.

DCs for detecting or disarming these hazards are all DC 15. Damaging hazards inflict 21 (6d6) for single-target traps and 16 (3d10) for multi-target hazards.

1. A necrotic glyph draws souls out of the living.
2. Remnants of soul fluid inflicts psychic damage to mortals who get too close.
3. An unstable wall collapses.
4. Lightning arcs from a nearby wrecked machine.
5. A bladed sphere flies through the area.
6. Black-iron claws slice out of the walls.

The characters may come across other once-living beings who have succumbed to these hazards. They may be dead or have returned as **specters** with faint memories of their former lives.



Locations

The vault of Infernal Machines is massive in scale, with main halls sixty feet wide and hundreds of feet long. Area 4, for example, is 30 feet wide and roughly 50 feet long. Ceilings of smaller chambers are 12 to 16 feet, and the larger halls have 60 foot ceilings.

The walls of the vault are worked stone. In several areas, tectonic shifts caused the vault to collapse into rough narrow stone passages.

The blue-green glow of leaked chemicals from soul vessels illuminates most halls in low light.

1. Vault entrance. A two-hundred-foot-high shaft leads to the trap rooms of the Theater of Whispers. Debris from the shaft above has collapsed down here.

2. An alcove of this hall contains a shattered statue of Xin, the architect of the Vault of Infernal Machines.
3. A storage room of soul vessels has collapsed, leaving pools of green glowing soul fluid on the ground.
4. This intact chamber contains several canisters of soul fluid used to fuel infernal machines. Collapsing stone on the eastern wall shattered one of the larger soul vessels.
5. Audience hall of Xin and the Order of Black Iron. Spirits here recreate a meeting with one of the Nameless King's psionic heralds, defending their expensive projects.
6. The half-collapsed hall trapping the infernal war engine, Legion's Doom in the south of the chamber. Brevit the imp uses Legion's Doom as his lair, using a voice amplifier to command intruders to do his bidding lest they be destroyed. A small chamber to the north, buried in the collapsed chamber, contains an intact statue of Xin.
7. The pillared hall containing the war machine Ashsnarl. Statues of members of the Order of Black Iron stand in the alcoves.
8. A narrow passageway leads to a network of tunnels that empty out into the Lower Reaches. The Silver Claw gnoll band discovered this entry point into the hall.
9. Three chambers contain vats of raw soul fluid swimming with the screaming souls of the damned.
10. A huge dormant archway once led to worlds beyond, including Arkas, the World of Dead Temples where the two war machines destroyed a great deal of the planet and its people.
11. A large tapestry on the northern wall depicts the war machines in action, slaying hundreds with their toxic gasses, whirling blades, and flames.
12. An ancient door leads to primordial stairs spiraling down deep into the Crypts of the Betrothed.

Brevit and the War Machines

Having been summoned as Xin's familiar over a thousand years ago, Brevit has been trapped in these halls following orders long forgotten. Brevit uses the voice amplifiers in the two war machines (along with flames, poison clouds, and other scary displays) to take on the role of Xin. His goal is to scare a group into locating a key to open the portal so he can ride the war machines across the lands. Such a key might be found in several locations – leading to new quests should the characters decide to see how things play out.

The war machines likely don't work anymore after so much time. They still spout flames, poison gas, acidic sprays, and beams of life-draining necrotic blasts but likely can no longer move. One might, however, break into the war hulks and locate Brevit inside.

Brevit might summon **animated armors**, and construct **veterans**, **ogres**, and perhaps even call the haunted **fire giant** of the real Xin to harry the characters.

If discovered, Brevit might be freed from his bond, becoming a grateful or shady ally of the characters. Breaking the bond might be a simple matter of superseding his previous orders or casting a *remove curse* or a similar spell. He might also be tricked into speaking the name of the Nameless King and destroying himself in the process.

Treasures

Several areas in the Vault of Infernal Machines might contain treasure such as area 4, 5, in the war machines in areas 6 and 7, or behind the tapestry in area 11. Split up the treasure parcels however desired.

Monetary Treasure

- 113 SP, 2,509 GP, 88 PP
- 4 × 100 GP jade gemstones

Consumable Magic Items

You can also include the following consumable magic items somewhere in the tower.

- Spell Scroll (3rd-level, *Mass Healing Word*)
- 11 × +1 bolts or arrows

Permanent Magic Items

Choose one of the following permanent magic items to reward:

- *Helm of Telepathy*
- *+1 glyphed draconic ringmail armor* called Rimeghast's Kiss. A creature attuned to this armor can use an action to cast the spell *fire shield* using the cold option only. This ability resets at the next dawn.

Further Adventures

Once the characters have discovered the entrance to the Crypt of the Betrothed, they can travel down into the primordial chambers and locate the Brazier of the Betrothed.

Should they desire, they can use the passage in area 8 to return to the Lower Reaches and City of Arches to recuperate or find other quests to accomplish.