Vault of the Key of Worlds

"Vault of the Key of Worlds" is an adventure scenario for 11th level 5e characters set in an extra-dimensional vault containing the Key of Worlds – a powerful artifact able to open any archway to any world. This scenario works with any 5e-based system including D&D 2014, D&D 2024, *Level Up Advanced 5e*, *Tales of the Valiant*, or others. It can also be modified to support other fantasy RPGs.

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

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 to use and a scaffold around which to build your own adventure for your own group, campaign, and story. This scenario gives you adventure hooks, histories, secrets and clues, notable NPCs, potential encounters, locations, and potential treasure.

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

Opening the Vault

This scenario begins after the characters and their rivals lit all three of the Blackfire Braziers, thus unlocking the vault of the Key of Worlds. When the final brazier is lit, the character igniting the brazier is fed a mental image of a doorway opening in a vault beneath the Library of Vassa in the City of Arches. If the character delay, it becomes a race for any remaining rivals who want to enter the vault themselves and recover the key.

During their adventures, the character learned that the extra-dimensional barriers of the vault are breaking and creatures from other worlds seek to pierce into the vault and recover the Key of Worlds themselves. When the characters explore the vault, they face some of these creatures including demons, devils, and other extraplanar hunters. Further, remaining members of rival groups such as the Children of Ibraxus or the Knights of the Nameless King might have entered the vault attempting to recover the key.

Throughout the vault, the characters might find the remnants of former protectors – celestial entities, now weakened after spending centuries in the vault. These celestials can provide information, or other benefits should they be convinced of the characters' motivations not to misuse the key.

Scenario Background

After the fall of the Nameless King, many of his most powerful artifacts become lost – one of these being the coveted Key of Worlds. A small sect of knights allied with the original Knights of the Blue Star who defeated and banished the Nameless King learned of the key, recognized its danger, and decided to make it their life's goal to hide and protect it.

Known as the Knights of Black Flame, these knights, along with a handful of celestial allies, built the vault of the Key of Worlds in a hidden pocket dimension. Fearing that the world might one day need the key again, they chose to lock the key in this vault and seal it behind three Blackfire Braziers which could only be lit by two powerful artifacts – the Sword of Irixthius and the Staff of Servlin. The braziers and the artifacts were hidden and protected for centuries.

Now the Children of Ibraxus learned of the key and hope to use it to open a massive portal to the abyssal realm of Choul where their demon prince Ibraxus waits to enter the City of Arches and claim it as his throne atop a world of subjugation.

For the past six centuries, the vault and the key within remained untouched but cracks have formed in the vault's extra-dimensional barriers and entities of other worlds can feel the power of the artifact within. It is only a short matter of time until the walls collapse and the strongest of these fiends takes the key for themselves.

Scenario Start

Beyond learning of the vault by lighting the third Blackfire Brazier, the characters may learn about and come to the vault in several ways:

- One of the characters trained in the ways of divine, arcane, or primal magic gets a premonition of the opening of the vault to the Key of Worlds, learns the danger the key represents, the vault's location, and the villains who seek to recover it.
- Danvon of Duskwater, sage of Kartan, comes to the characters with a mystical key long buried in the vaults of Kartan. He asks the characters to use it on the doorway of the vault and recover the powerful artifact within.
- Garland Willowmane learns that fiends seek to penetrate a vault containing the Key of Worlds and asks the characters to recover it before they do so. She gives them an ancient tablet whose words let the reader enter the fabled Vault of the Key of Worlds.

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Secrets of the Vault

Deliver the following secrets and clues as the characters delve into the vault of the Key of Worlds. Characters might discover these clues from bas relief carvings on the walls, golden statues adoring the vault, whispers from celestial spirits, golden plates enscribed with lore, or scrolls found throughout the vault. The characters need not discover every secret – think of secrets like treasure uncovered as the characters explore the crypts.

- Roughly fifteen hundred years ago, the Nameless King came into possession of a powerful artifact able to open any of the city's numerous archways to any world he wished.
- After his defeat, the key was lost until a small order of knights known as the Knights of Black Flame found it. The knights took it as their charge to hide the key in this vault and lock the vault behind the three Blackfire Braziers.
- The **planetar** Xevus Blackflame, leader of the knights of Black Flame, created the vault, building it within a pocket dimension hidden deep in the shadows of the multiverse.
- Over the centuries, Xevus's own hold on reality has fractured. This, in turn, has fractured the boundaries of the vault.
- The **marilith** Sylisa Sixblade, agent of Ibraxus, breached the boundaries of the vault and entered with a host of demons at her side.
- The **erinyes** Vether Voidwalker, a former ally of the Nameless King, likewise pierced into the vault, arriving with a host of devils to recover the key so they can restore the Nameless King to power.
- The key is a potential world-ending artifact in the wrong hands. Finding a way to destroy it may be as difficult as acquiring it in the first place.
- Two knights of Black Flame, Sir Jona Dawnborne and Sir Trebuous Ironcowl agreed to stay in the vault while the remaining Knights of Black Flame hid the braziers and protected the two artifacts able to light them.
- The key is an artifact as old as the primordials. It's said that when the primordial Ix the Sky Sunderer screamed and shattered the sky, the artifact came tumbling down to the lands below. Ancient humanoids revered the key for thousands of years until it fell into the hands of the Nameless King.
- The Knights of Black Flame feared destroying the key. They don't know what connection it has to the existing arches or whether they may need such a key in the future. Thus the knights hid it while attempting to protect it from the hands of villainy.

Key NPCs

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

- **Xevus Blackflame.** A **planetar archmage** who fought with the armies of the Blue Star against the forces of the Nameless King. Later, Xevus formed the Knights of Black Flame to protect the Key of Worlds. Time spent in the vault shattered Xevus's mind along with the walls of the vault, leaving Xevus unable to tell friend from foe.
- **Sylisa Sixblade. Marilith** artifact hunter of Ibraxus who leads the demon prince's forces in penetrating the vault and recovering the key. Sylisa commands a host of demons of Choul.
- **Vether Voidwalker. Erinyes** hunter from Arkus who formerly served the Nameless King and seeks his return. Vether believes the Key of Worlds can open the hidden antechamber in which the celestials of the Blue Star cursed and sealed away the Nameless King.
- **Sir Jona Dawnborne.** Wife of Trebuous and second in command of the Knights of Black Flame. Killed by Xevus and now wanders the halls as a ghost.
- **Sir Trebuous Ironcowl.** Husband of Jona and third in command of the Knights of Black Flame. He was twisted by the ethereal void leaking into the vault and now wanders as an undead **knight.**

Encounters in the Vault

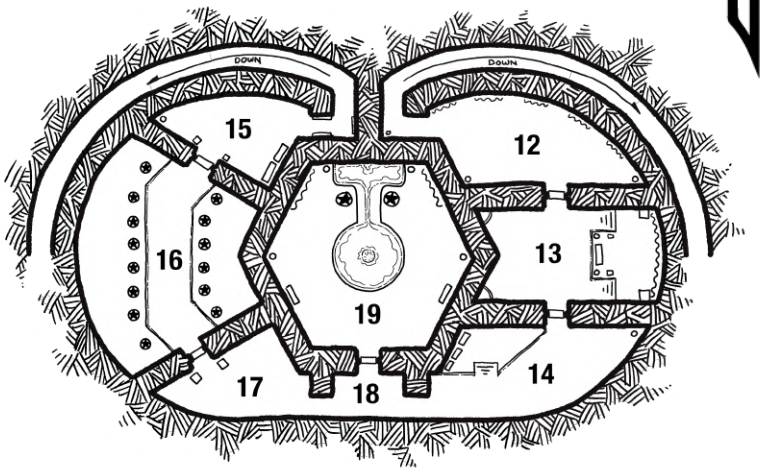
The cracked walls of the vault of the Key of Worlds caused several fiendish creatures to penetrate and wander the vault. While the characters explore the vault they may face one or more of the following encounters. Include encounters with the NPCs above as desired. Simulate big conflicts occurring in the vault by rolling twice and mashing up two encounters together.

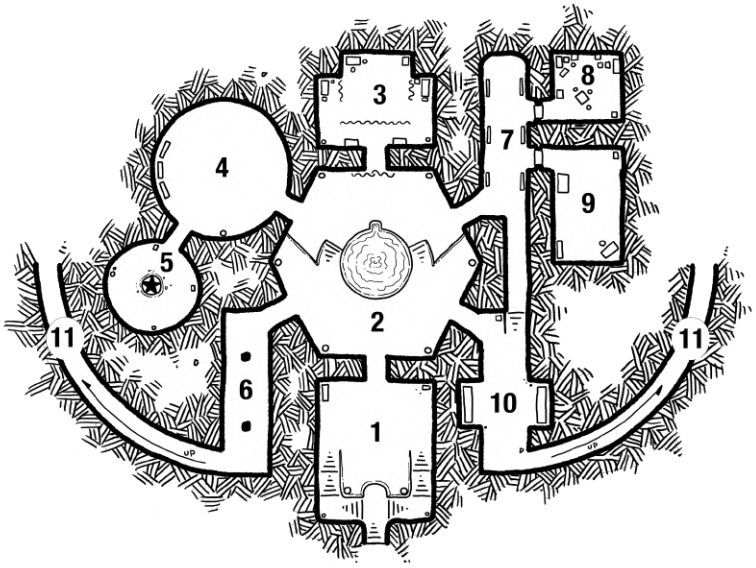
1. **Knights**, **cult fanatics**, and **mages** of the Nameless King hunt for the vault containing the key.
2. **Cult fanatics** of the Children of Ibraxus backed up by **hezrou** of Choul seek the vault.
3. **Specters** of dead knights of Black Flame mistake the characters for infiltrators.
4. A **horned devil** and several **bearded devils** serving Vether Voidwalker hunt for the key.
5. Two **glabrezu** of Sylisa hunt for the chamber holding the key.
6. **Cult fanatics** of either the Nameless King or Ibraxus lie dying after a run-in with another group.
7. Celestial **knights** loyal to Xevus hunt demons and devils throughout the vault.
8. A **scout** who wandered into the vault wants to go home.

Locations

The vault of the Key of Worlds sits in a pocket dimension outside of all known worlds. Its walls appear carved from solid granite with occasional narrow windows that reveal the swirling void outside. The whole area is lit with small white lights in glyphed sconces on the walls.

Hallways have 20-foot-high ceilings and are often 20 feet wide. Chambers have 40-foot-high ceilings.





1. Entry hall of the vault. The door leading out appears as a swirling mist. Statues in the corners of the hall depict two knights of Black Flame.
2. A pool of gray water flows upward into area 19. Humanoid bodies turned to ash kneel near the water, hands outstretched. Any creature or object that touches the water suffers the effect of a *disintegration* spell.
3. Armory of the knights of Black Flame and their celestial allies. It may be well picked over by invaders of the vault or might contain either powerful weapons or fiendish looters.
4. Summoning and scrying chamber. An arcane circle sits in the center of the floor. Before his corruption, Xevus would use this chamber to speak to his fellow celestials or observe matters in the city above.
5. A towering open sarcophagus served as Xevus's meditation chamber where he spent centuries in a trance-like state.
6. Two pillars arc lightning between each other and the walls of this hallway.
7. Mirrors here depict moving pictures of the formation of the Knights the Black Flame, the creation of the three braziers of black fire, the weapons used to light them, and the knights sworn to protect them.
8. Scattered tomes and scrolls little the floor of this looted library.
9. Chamber of the Black Flame knights, Sir Jona and Sir Trebuous containing a bed, desk, drawers, and paintings of their wedding.
10. Cases containing sets of celestial plate armor and weapons.
11. Long hallways with transparent curved walls that reveal the swirling mists and distant constellations of the outer realms of the pocket dimension in which the vault is hidden. Hulking alien creatures peer out of the mists.
12. Tapestries show the battle between the forces of the Nameless King and the armies of the Blue Star. Every image of the Nameless King has been burned out.
13. Shrine and altar to Sulin the god of Light. A large tapestry shows the celestials of Sulin standing next to the shining beacon of their god.
14. Audience hall for Xevus and the knights of Black Flame who served him in the vault.
15. Artifact gallery of items used in the war against the Nameless King by the armies of the Blue Star.
16. Hall of statues of heroes who fought in the war against the Nameless King. The statues float above an empty void with a suspended walkway leading from the south to north door. Any creature hurled into the void is forever lost.
17. Clay guardian statues guard the door – either intact or destroyed by invaders.
18. Holy glyphs on the northern door repel fiends and those who do evil.
19. Chamber of the Key. The key floats in a central column of water. Two celestial constructs stand at attention. Only one pure of heart or a Knight of Black Flame (one who wields the items that opened the vault) can pluck the key from the column of water. Otherwise, they suffer the effects of a *disintegration* spell and are repelled.

DCs, Damage, Traps, and Hazards

The vault of the Key of Worlds is heavily protected by physical and magical traps to prevent the wrong folks from acquiring the key. Many of these traps may have already been sprung by the fiendish invaders who infiltrated the vault.

DCs for detecting or disarming these hazards are all DC 20. Damaging hazards inflict 55 (10d10) for single-target traps and 33 (6d10) for multi-target hazards.

1. Radiant beams from the eyes of death masks.
2. Cracks in the walls howl from the depths of hell.
3. The holy blades of animated statues.
4. Sinkholes to the Outside.
5. Disintegrating glyphs.
6. Dragon heads spewing holy fire.

Treasures

The characters might find treasure in several areas throughout the vault particularly in areas 3, 8, 9, 13, and 15.

Monetary Treasure

- 13,586 GP, 610 PP
- 6 × 1000 GP emerald gemstones
- 2,000 GP celestial gold bangle
- 2,000 GP elven bloodstone and jade chess set

Consumable Magic Items

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

- 2 × *Potions of Superior Healing*
- 1 × *Potions of Supreme Healing*
- *Potion of Resistance (fire)*
- *Oil of Etherealness*
- *Arrow of slaying (fiend)*

Permanent Magic Items

Choose one of the following permanent magic items to reward:

- *Figurine of Wondrous Power (marble elephant)*
- *Sun Blade*
- *+2 Wand of the War Mage or Rod of the Pact Keeper*

Facing Xevus

Though several groups invaded the vault of the Key of Worlds, no group yet managed to get into the inner sanctum of the key itself which can only be opened by one possessing either the *Staff of Servlin* or the *Blade of Irixthius*.

When the characters step into the inner sanctum, area 19, they find Xevus, a **planetar**. The corruption of the vault has corrupted Xevus who no longer recognizes friend from foe. He may be served by Sir Trebuous, now a likewise corrupted knight (use the **fire giant** stat block) or two **clay guardians** or other guards of your choice.

Xevus attacks until defeated, only then recognizing that the characters may not hold malice in their hearts. He begs the characters to destroy the key lest it fall into the wrong hands.

The Key of Worlds

With Xevus defeated and the key of worlds in their hands, the characters must decide what to do with it. The key is a powerful artifact. Once per day, a character attuned to the key can use it to open any archway to any location they've been to, seen, or even heard of. In the wrong hands, it could open worlds containing hellish armies to invade the City of Arches.

Danvon of Duskwater, sage of Kartan, suggests giving the key to the mages of Kartan where it can be safely protected and studied. Roselyn Zeshe, spymaster of the queen, suggests she hold the key in a safe place and asks the characters never to speak of it. Garland Willowmane suggests the characters destroy the key lest it get into the wrong hands. Adel Rosethorn, fence of the Black Hand, offers a million gold pieces for the key or a legendary item of the characters' choice.

Should the characters choose to destroy the key, their allies might suggest speaking to Erna Ironhorn at Vathrex's Forge. She likewise might have a quest for the characters to undertake to find the right hammer able to destroy the key on Erna's hellfire forge.

Further Adventures

With the key either protected or destroyed, our heroes can continue their adventures. Here are two suggestions:

- The Knights of the Nameless King continue to seek the restoration of their dark liege. See the Ozymandias section of the Rise of the Nameless King campaign arc in the *City of Arches* sourcebook.
- The cult Apostles of End seek to bring the world-ending entity, Ourboran, into the world. See Act 3 of the Collision of Worlds campaign arc in the *City of Arches* sourcebook.