

SECOND EDITION

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Bastion of Blasphemies

ADVENTURE PATH

Player's Guide

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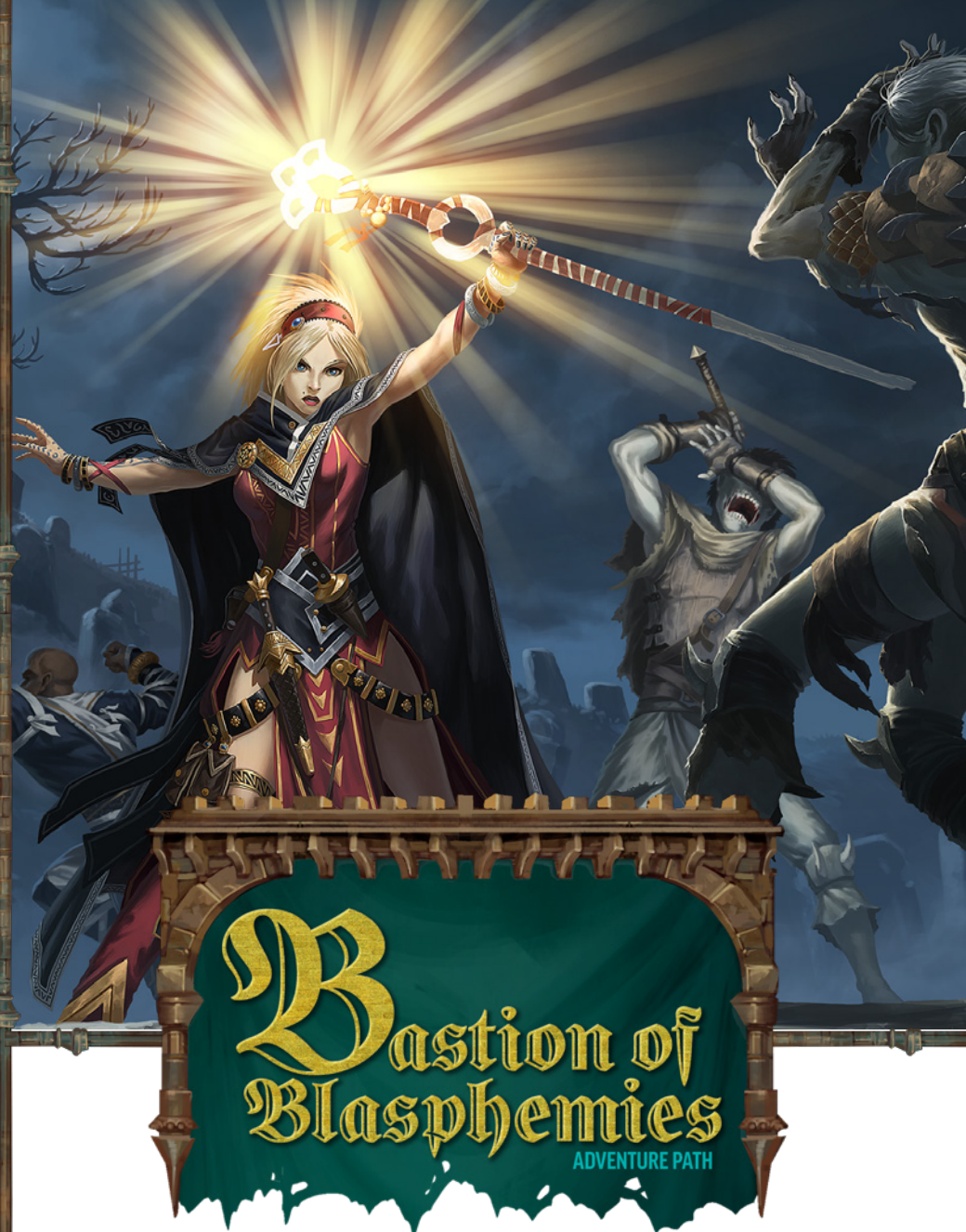
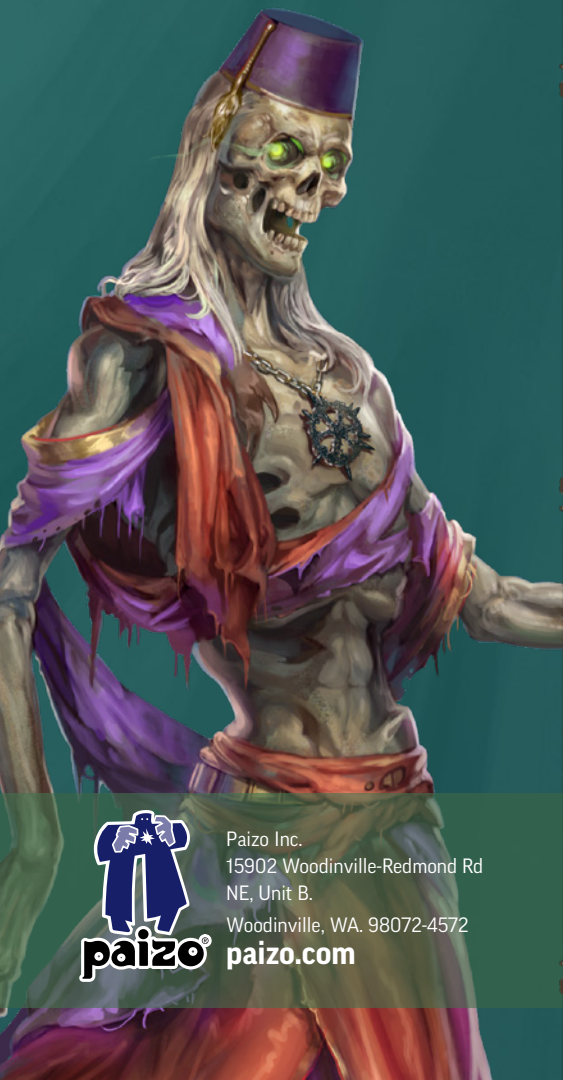
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CONTENT WARNING

Bastion of Blasphemies is a horror-themed Pathfinder Adventure Path, and as such, it includes themes some might find troubling, including body horror, confinement, dismemberment, family violence, gore, spiders, and torture, as well as certain encounters that may be evocative of experiences with disordered eating. Additionally, recurring nightmares meant to represent common fears (of open water, open spaces, crowds, and fire, among others) are present throughout. Before beginning this campaign, understand that player consent (including that of the Game Master) is vital to a safe and fun play experience for everyone!



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Bastion of Blasphemies

Player's Guide

How to Use this Guide

Welcome to the Bastion of Blasphemies Adventure Path!

This Player's Guide will help you prepare for a campaign where you become trapped in a sprawling, cursed castle filled with horrors and nightmares. You begin at 5th level, and by the time your adventure ends, you'll be 13th or perhaps even 14th level.

This campaign uses Pathfinder's remastered rules, so all you need to play is *Pathfinder Player Core* (or *Pathfinder Player Core 2*) and a character sheet. With your Game Master's permission, you can also use other Pathfinder rulebooks, campaign setting books, and accessories to customize your character. In particular, you should be familiar with the Research subsystem rules presented on pages 190–191 of *Pathfinder GM Core*.

On the following pages, you'll find specific advice to help you create a new character for *Bastion of Blasphemies*.

- **The Legend of Bastardhall (page 3):** This section introduces you to the cursed castle of Bastardhall, where this entire Adventure Path takes place, and describes why you've come to this legendary location.
- **Character Suggestions (page 4):** This section provides guidance for creating a 5th-level character that fits seamlessly into this campaign.

The Legend of Bastardhall

Known to some as "the Bastion of Blasphemies," Bastardhall is a sprawling castle located on an island in Lake Laroba in eastern Ustalav. It isn't far from the West Sellen River, the main river trade route that links northern Ustalav, western Numeria, Sarkoris, and western Mendev.

Known historically as Castle Arudora (named after the influential family that once dwelt in its halls), Bastardhall is a notorious haunted castle that is the subject of many stories told throughout the Inner Sea region. Over five centuries ago, in 4213 AR, the arrival of an unexpected guest who carried a swaddled bundle was followed by the sudden spread of a perpetual shroud of mists and the fall of a dreadful curse that cut Castle Arudora off from the rest of the world. Since then, the mists surrounding Bastardhall clear only once per century to reveal a castle that has grown larger in size. At this time, a sinister black coach rides across a spectral bridge to the mainland in search of unlucky passengers. Those who board the coach are brought back to Castle Arudora and are never heard from again, while those who deny the coach's invitation invariably end up dead not long after refusing its call.

The black coach last crossed to the mainland not too long ago, in 4713 AR, and the locals who vanished during that night are still missed and mourned in

BEFORE BASTARDHALL

As touched on later in this Player's Guide, *Bastion of Blasphemies* can be played with PCs who have already gone through previous published adventures set in Ustalav, starting with "Secrets of the Unlit Star" from the new *Pathfinder Beginner Box* and following those in *Pathfinder Adventure: Troubles in Grayce Adventure Anthology*. Playing these first will bring your PCs up to 5th level—perfect to begin their long stay in a cursed, haunted castle!

nearby villages and hamlets. The daughter of one of those missing people has since grown up, becoming an obsessed woman named Florin Kindler. Florin has spent the few years since she came of age relentlessly researching Bastardhall, its curse, the Arudora family line, and those who have been taken by the black coach over the past five centuries. Her efforts recently paid off.

Florin believes she's found a way to enter the cursed castle without being carried into its misty halls by the black coach, yet she is no adventurer willing to brave its dangers alone—and that's where you come in. Setting out from Grayce, she's chosen your group of PCs to accompany her on a trip to the far side of Ustalav, where she hopes to explore the ruins, uncover the castle's secrets, and maybe give herself—and countless others—closure by discovering what happened to all those who have been taken over the years.

WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT BASTARDHALL

When this campaign begins, your group has already joined up with Florin Kindler to serve as guards, advisors, and traveling companions on her journey to the mysterious ruins of Bastardhall. During your travels, she's shared what she knows about Bastardhall with you, though your PCs might already have heard some of these legends themselves.

For most of each century, Bastardhall stands in ruins on an island in the middle of Lake Laroba in eastern Ustalav, but it mysteriously rebuilds itself for a short period of time exactly once per century. On these occasions, a mysterious black coach rides out from beneath its shadow in search of passengers to bring back to the castle. Those who accept the invitation vanish, while those who deny it soon meet horrible fates. Florin Kindler lost her parents during the most

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recent manifestation of the castle's curse a few years ago, and she's eager to explore the ruins to see if she can put a reason to the family tragedy that has defined her life.

Your PCs also know that Bastardhall was once known as Castle Arudora, and that it was named so after a family of retired adventurers (turned aristocrats) who lived there. They dwelt there until a mysterious event just over 500 years ago brought a mysterious and devastating curse down upon the structure and all those inside it.

Each PC should have their own reasons for accompanying Florin on her quest, be they purely mercenary, motivated by curiosity, or perhaps simply their bond of friendship with Florin. The custom backgrounds that appear on page 8 of this Player's Guide provide built-in reasons, but even if your PC isn't using one of them, check them out for inspiration. They may help you decide why your character has agreed to accompany Florin on her quest!

NAMES AND PLACES

The following are important people and places mentioned in this guide.

Arudora Family: The family who once dwelt in the sprawling castle known now as Bastardhall.

Bastardhall: A legendary cursed castle on an island in the middle of Lake Laroba in eastern Ustalav.

Florin Kindler: An obsessed woman who hopes to find answers about what happened to her parents after they were visited by the black coach of Bastardhall.

Character Suggestions

Though you're free to make any kind of character you like, taking the following suggestions into consideration will help you get the most out of this campaign.

ANCESTRIES

Any common ancestry from *Player Core* is appropriate for *Bastion of Blasphemies*. While the uncommon ancestries in *Player Core 2* should all work fine in this campaign as well, keep in mind that none of these ancestries are particularly well-represented or well-known in Ustalav. Still, since this entire Adventure Path takes place in and around Bastardhall, uncommon choices like these won't have many issues in play—chat with your GM if you want to play one of these uncommon ancestries.

Thematically, certain versatile heritages fit better than others in *Bastion of Blasphemies* due to the campaign's horror-heavy themes. Changelings, dhampirs, and duskwalkers are all in this category, as are certain

BASTION OF BLASPHEMIES TRACKING SHEET

Bastardhall is a complex place, and there are a lot of things to do in it—and a lot of situations that can change and adjust the fundamental nature of the castle as you explore its many rooms. A handy tracking sheet is provided in *Bastion of Blasphemies* to help your GM to keep track of these changing conditions, many of which your group will also need to pay attention to. The sheet's contents are spoiler light, but your GM should be the one to decide when to reveal this tracking sheet to the group, so it isn't printed here as well.

lineages of nephilim. Talk with your GM if you want to play one of these versatile heritages—they may have additional advice or know of certain options that might not be appropriate to choose based on events to come in the Adventure Path.

Bastardhall is a sprawling place that features many wide-open chambers and hallways. Large ancestries will still periodically find themselves inconvenienced by doors as well as some halls that were built with the expectation that those who'd traverse them would be human-sized, but none of these inconveniences are insurmountable.

The majority of *Bastion of Blasphemies* takes place on land, so ancestries who depend on water may face additional challenges. Aquatic ancestries will struggle in this campaign and may even be frustrated by the fact that Lake Laroba is used as a barrier that keeps the PCs trapped on the island atop which Bastardhall sprawls. Though it might seem fun to play such an ancestry near a lake, and though "swimming to safety" might seem like a wise move, your PCs swiftly learn that it isn't.

Finally, fully undead ancestries are not appropriate for this campaign. If you're eager to play an undead ancestry, consider instead playing a dhampir or a duskwalker—or simply set that concept aside for a different campaign.

CLASSES

Most classes are appropriate for *Bastion of Blasphemies*, particularly those that are self-sufficient and don't require external support. Still, some are more thematically relevant than others.

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SUGGESTED CHARACTER OPTIONS

	Ancestries	Classes	Languages	Skills
Strongly Recommended	Human or horror-themed ancestries	Champion, cleric, investigator, rogue	Common	Crafting, Occultism, Religion, Society, Thievery
Recommended	All others but those listed below	All others but those listed below	Varisian	Deception, Diplomacy, Intimidation, Nature
Appropriate	Large ancestries	Druid, gunslinger	Aklo, Elven, Fey, Hallit, or Thalassic	Medicine, Performance, Survival
Not Recommended	Aquatic or undead ancestries	—	—	—

Clergy: Bastardhall is a haunted and cursed castle, and that means you can expect to face plenty of undead foes, a fair number of fiends, and other unholy terrors. **Champions, clerics, druids, oracles, witches,** and others who excel at opposing such supernatural forces will find plenty to do in most encounters. Likewise, their abilities to aid other PCs in recovering from battle or handling afflictions—particularly curses—can be an important resource. Of special note to druids and other nature-themed classes is that there's not a lot of wilderness exploration in *Bastion of Blasphemies*. Early in the campaign, the ability to subsist in the wild can be helpful, but as the Adventure Path progresses, you'll want to focus more on your role as a healer or as one of the following categories.

Infiltrators: In addition to the numerous foes that lie in wait in the castle, there are many haunts, traps, and secrets to uncover. Characters like **rangers, rogues,** and others who excel at handling hazards or at exploring the unknown are always useful when navigating yet another section of Bastardhall's halls. Note that there isn't a lot of terrain variance in *Bastion of Blasphemies*, so terrain-based options like Favored Terrain aren't great choices for this campaign.

Researchers: A central premise of this campaign is the discovery, and subsequent research, of many seemingly disparate clues. One of your goals is to piece together the hidden history of Bastardhall, but it's also crucial that you arm yourselves with the knowledge you'll need to escape the cursed castle. Characters like **alchemists, bards, investigators, sorcerers,** and **wizards** will have the skills, resources, or raw intellect needed to help untangle these mysteries. This includes characters skilled at diplomacy or who are prepared to face other such Charisma-based challenges. While these aren't quite as common in Bastardhall as haunts and traps, you'll still encounter many NPCs who might be better served by conversation rather than fighting.

Warriors: Lastly, there's quite a lot of combat awaiting your group in Bastardhall. Characters who excel in battle, such as **barbarians, fighters, monks,** or **swashbucklers,** are incredibly helpful in dealing with the monsters that lie in wait in *Bastion of Blasphemies*! While melee builds are always a strong choice, builds based around ranged strikes or high mobility do have ample opportunities to shine as well—Bastardhall is a sprawling structure, and there are several large areas where one might take advantage of ranged or mobile superiority within and outside the castle walls. That said, though there are also a few places in this campaign where having a mount could add a very fun additional element to play, a mount-focused character will mostly find it difficult, awkward, or even impossible for their steed to come along on the adventure.

ARCHETYPES

Since you're creating a 5th-level character, starting out with an archetype is a solid choice for your PC's build, especially if your choice helps you focus on one of the specific thematic categories detailed under Classes.

Thematically appropriate archetypes from *Player Core 2* include (but are not limited to) Archaeologist, Blessed One, Herbalist, Linguist, Medic, and Scrounger. Use these suggestions to help guide your choice if you decide to pick an archetype from another source. Archetypes that work best in urban or wilderness campaigns that would be somewhat awkward to play in *Bastion of Blasphemies* include Celebrity, Dandy, Gladiator, Scout, and Vigilante. Likewise, those that would be far better suited to aquatic adventures, like Pirate or Viking, are poor choices.

LANGUAGES

While there are a wide range of languages spoken by the creatures dwelling in Bastardhall, there's no situation where knowledge of a specific language is required to complete an encounter. Of the regional

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languages listed on page 34 of *Player Core*, Varisian is the most commonly spoken in Ustalav, and knowledge of it is often helpful. Beyond this, most of the common languages listed on page 89 of *Player Core* can be useful on occasion, but Common will almost always be an option when interacting with NPCs or while reading texts found in the castle.

That said, there are a few encounters where being able to speak a specific language can open up additional context, clues, or opportunities for roleplay. These languages won't be used all the time, but picking one of them could give your PC a chance to learn something that the party might have otherwise missed: Aklo, Elven, Fey, Hallit, or Thalassic.

FAITHS

The Arudora family traditionally favored the faiths of Shelyn and Pharasma, so either of these gods would be strong thematic choices for worship in *Bastion of Blasphemies*. Otherwise, any deity that allows a cleric to become sanctified holy or allows for a *heal* divine font is a solid pick. Consult the section on skills below to determine what divine skills would make the most sense and be most useful.

Deities whose edicts or anathemas clash against the acts of fighting fiends and undead, battling curses, or seeking to rebuild or explore ruins are poor choices for *Bastion of Blasphemies*. In particular, worshipping any of the fiend-related or undead-related deities is not a great choice, but if you have a compelling idea and wish for your PC to do so, consult with your GM first to see if your choice would be a particularly bad one for story reasons.

SKILLS AND FEATS

All skills are useful in this campaign, particularly those that have constant applications in combat or for recovering from combat, such as Acrobatics, Athletics, Medicine, and Stealth. In addition, the large number of Research topics that you'll encounter will often call on the use of skills that aren't normally associated with reading through books and looking for clues.

Crafting: There'll be chances to pursue downtime activities during *Bastion of Blasphemies*, and being able to use Crafting to build your own gear could be quite useful at times. Furthermore, this skill is also called on several times while Researching Bastardhall's many mysteries, and it is also useful in other unique situations.

Environmental: Society and Thievery checks come up very often, particularly in the context of learning about the site's history or in handling the numerous

hazards that lie in wait. Survival is less commonly used throughout, but in the early parts of the campaign, it is still quite useful.

Magic Skills: Of the four skills associated with magic, all are useful, but Arcana is perhaps the one that you'll be called upon to roll the least often.

Medicine: Medicine checks outside those made to recover from battle or overcome afflictions (which will be significant) are rare in *Bastion of Blasphemies*, but the skill is still immensely helpful.

Social Skills: Deception, Diplomacy, and Intimidation are used often in this campaign, even beyond standard encounter uses such as when you attempt to Feint, Request, or Demoralize—all three of these are excellent choices to lean into. Performance is only slightly less useful in this regard, but it still remains a solid choice.

Lore Skills

Lore skills aren't particularly load bearing in encounters throughout Bastardhall. Library Lore comes up the most often, followed closely by Games Lore and Architecture Lore, and after that, any food-related lore. Lore skills that specifically get called out only once include Genealogy Lore, Heraldry Lore, Labor Lore, and Theater Lore.

Lore skills associated with Shelyn and Pharasma may be helpful, as these are the two religions associated with the Arudoras.

Bastardhall Lore can potentially help with Recall Knowledge checks, but this specific location-based skill isn't a substitute for exploring and discovering deep lore about the castle—it's more one you'd use early in the campaign to figure out if your PC knows anything more about the site's legends. Still, your GM might find other uses for this specialized Lore skill in your game.

Beyond this, Lore checks about specific types of creature categories could be helpful, but revealing which of these skills are particularly useful can delve into spoiler territory. Nonetheless, Bastardhall is a legendary site and there are certain types of creatures and creature categories that, logically, would be useful in this campaign, including the following horror-themed monster categories: Daemon Lore, Demon Lore, Ghost Lore, Ghoull Lore, Mummy Lore, Sakhil Lore, Phantom Lore, Vampire Lore, or Werecreature Lore. All of these and more are represented in *Bastion of Blasphemies*, although not in even numbers. If you want to take a Lore about a different creature or creature category, work with your GM to determine if the choice is supported by the campaign.

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Feats

Feats that bolster combat options, methods of dealing with traps and hazards, or enhance your ability to be self-sufficient are quite useful in *Bastion of Blasphemies*. Less helpful are feats that are better suited for play in large wilderness or urban areas. Keep in mind that the entire campaign takes place in a single sprawling castle and the island it looms on when selecting feats. You won't have the opportunity to spend any time in true wilderness or in urban centers at all.

Ride and other feats that support mounted combat may help in certain situations, but as mentioned on page 4 under Classes, while there are opportunities for mounted combat in *Bastion of Blasphemies*, they're few and far between.

There are many secrets to uncover in Bastardhall, and that means you'll spend a lot of time Searching—Expeditious Search will let you search these areas much more efficiently and quickly. On the other hand, Thorough Search (*Player Core* 2 234) is a great choice if you aren't worried about taking your time when Searching for clues!

Prescient Planner and Prescient Consumable are solid feat choices, although Prescient Planner is a bit more complex—when the campaign begins, you won't immediately have a place where you can purchase goods. Once that restriction is lifted, however, you'll be able to “recharge” Prescient Planner more easily, which could potentially be quite helpful. Prescient Consumable is even more useful as there are a lot of dangers and monsters in Bastardhall capable of hurting you and inflicting afflictions on you. Being able to whip out an antiplague or a healing potion to face an unexpected peril can make the difference between life and death—or at least life and agony!

Since many of the opportunities to Research information in Bastardhall employ a wide range of different skills, the Untrained Improvisation feat can help keep you in the game if you're otherwise starved for skill training.

The nature of life and death is strange and distorted in Bastardhall in ways you'll soon figure out. That said, Consult the Spirits (*Player Core* 2 228) is an exceptionally strong thematic choice for this campaign—speak with your GM if you're interested in taking this feat, as they may wish to do some preparation work before you start opening your PC's body, mind, and soul up to the beyond!

Finally, one feat in particular may well be a requirement for this campaign due to the strong presence of curses in this adventure. Having at least one PC with Break Curse once you reach 7th level could be immensely helpful while navigating a cursed castle, so you might want to plan to select it!

DAY AND NIGHT

It's something of a spoiler, but as *Bastion of Blasphemies*'s story progresses, more of the Adventure Path's action takes place during the night. As such, options that require daylight hours to function will become increasingly less viable as the campaign continues. With so much of the Adventure Path taking place after the sun sets, PCs who lack darkvision or low-light vision should look into options to combat the darkness, even if that simply means being ready and able to carry a torch or lantern in one hand when things grow dark and spooky!

GEAR

If you're starting *Bastion of Blasphemies* with established characters, you'll likely already have gear appropriate for 5th-level PCs, but this is also a great time to work with the GM to adjust existing PC wealth as needed so that no one PC has a disproportionate amount of gear than another.

If you're creating a brand-new 5th-level character, though, you'll need to purchase your PC's gear. To ensure fairness for each one, the entire group should work together to choose one of the following methods to generate their gear.

Lump Sum: This method grants a lump sum of 270 gp to each PC for them to spend as they wish on any common items of 5th level or less. With the lump sum method, the total value of your gear may end up being less than what you'd get with Pick your Items or if you organically gained treasure by playing through levels 1 through 5, but you'll have greater control over the specific levels of items you can gain and can load up on larger numbers of lower level items if you so wish.

Pick Your Items: This method helps players who struggle to decide how to efficiently spend every single coin avoid potential decision paralysis. When you pick your items, you select the following permanent items from any of the common treasures from the *GM Core* or *Player Core* 2.

- One 4th-level item
- Two 3rd-level items
- One 2nd-level item
- Two 1st-level items

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- 50 gp to spend on consumable items of 5th level or lower, or on permanent items of 3rd level or lower, as you see fit.

SUBSYSTEMS

Bastion of Blasphemies is relatively light on the various subsystems presented in *GM Core*, with one exception. The research subsystem (*GM Core* pages 190–191) is incredibly important to understand, as your characters will be using this system extensively to learn about Bastardhall's complex history as well as its many inhabitants.

BACKGROUNDS

At the start of this campaign, you and your party members are 5th-level adventurers who have only just started to make names for yourselves. The six custom backgrounds created for this Adventure Path present various reasons your PCs might have been chosen by Florin Kindler to accompany her on her quest to Bastardhall. While you aren't required to choose one of these backgrounds, your character backstory should give your character a reason for Florin to choose you as a traveling companion.

Standard Backgrounds

If you prefer to choose a standard background from *Pathfinder Player Core* or *Player Core 2*, appropriately thematic choices for *Bastion of Blasphemies* include Acolyte, Artisan, Artist, Astrologer, Cook, Detective, Field Medic, Fortune Teller, Laborer, Noble, Pilgrim, Raised by Belief, Root Worker, Scavenger, Scholar, Teacher, Tinker, or Ward.

If you want to take one of the rare backgrounds from *Player Core 2*, both Cursed and Haunted could be fun options, but make sure to get permission from your GM before taking one of these options!

Bastion of Blasphemies Backgrounds

The following new backgrounds are designed specifically for the *Bastion of Blasphemies* Adventure Path. You can use these backgrounds to inspire personality traits and details that tie your character to Florin Kindler and her quest to investigate Bastardhall.

Note that these rare backgrounds each grant a little bit more to your character than a standard background!

Also, if you're starting *Bastion of Blasphemies* with an established character, speak to your GM about potentially swapping out your previous background for one of these choices. Provided you, your GM, and the other players are willing to stretch verisimilitude a bit in ret-conning this element of your character's

history, swapping out the background you chose at 1st level (perhaps as part of playing through "Secrets of the Unlit Star" in the *Pathfinder Beginner Box* and/or *Troubles in Grayce*) for one of these more thematic options can go a long way toward making your *Bastion of Blasphemies* experience more fun. You can even use these backgrounds as selections when making your character for the previous adventures, with your GM's approval. In which case, your association with Florin Kindler can carry through those first four levels of adventure in the background, only to step up to center stage as you begin this Adventure Path!

ART "COLLECTOR"

RARE

BACKGROUND

Art has always delighted you. Interested you. Compelled you. To collect it. Art, you think, is best when it's being appreciated on a personal and up-close level. Museums and galleries are fine for the masses, but the real fix? It's having a piece of art all to yourself. But art is expensive. And so, you've kind of made something of a habit, a career even, of "collecting" art during your adventures. This might mean looting some interesting looking piece in a dungeon, but just as often it means flat out burglary. Whether the person you're stealing the art from is an innocent or a villain is up to you if you're looking for qualifiers for when it's okay to steal art, but you're never comfortable when you don't have some sort of work of art on your person to bolster your morale. Unfortunately, the longer you keep a special piece of art, the less inspiring it gets, and so you've found yourself having to constantly swap out new works for your personal "one at a time" collection. This has, as a side effect, helped you hone your skills at thievery and bolstered your knowledge of architecture (either as works of art to admire, or structures to seek weakness in for burglary attempts). You're not particularly interested in the hows and whys and histories of art (and thus don't have any Background-granted insight into Art Lore) and have grown increasingly fond of "redistributing" art you collect. To those you favor, these are gifts. To those you don't, selling "collected" art is a good side hustle. It's this side-hustle that attracted Florin's attention—she contacted you for several "collections" of rare books and illuminated scrolls kept in private collections by corrupt politicians or other unsavory types in Ustalav and beyond. She needed these books and scrolls to research Bastardhall, but you were just happy to redistribute several pieces of hoarded art to someone who was more appreciative of them. Florin seems to have been impressed with your skills, in any event, since she's hired you to come with her on her first boots-on-the-ground investigation of the ruins of Bastardhall. The idea of all the artwork doubtless tucked away in the old ruin gathering dust and admired by none

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is a compelling-in-itself reason to go with her—nobles like the Arudoras always collect art, and Bastardhall's been abandoned for so long that who knows what treasures await liberation within?

Choose two attribute boosts. One must be to Dexterity or Intelligence, and one is a free attribute boost.

You are trained in the Thievery skill and the Architecture Lore skill. Whenever you do your daily preparations, select an art object (including any magical item that qualifies as jewelry or something artistic in nature, but not including gemstones, coins, or raw but valuable materials) you carry and that is worth an amount of gp equal to at least 10 times your level to be that day's inspiration for you. For the next 24 hours, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to saving throws against mental effects if this is the first time you've chosen that piece of artwork as your inspiration, or a +1 circumstance bonus if you've chosen this artwork more than once.

BLOODED BY THE DEAD BACKGROUND

RARE

Ustalav is a land of horrors, but for you, it's those who drink the blood of the living that are particularly nightmarish. At some point in your past, you were attacked by the worst of all the world's blood-drinkers—a vampire. Fortunately, you survived the attack, even though the vampire did drink some of your blood. How you survived is up to you, but you were certainly not skilled enough to defend yourself or affect self-rescue from the situation. Either luck had a strong role in your escape, or you were rescued by someone just in the nick of time. Since then, you've devoted much of your adventuring career to the study and defeat of vampires and know much of their strengths and weaknesses. You may or may not have yet faced a vampire in combat, but with the adventuring companions you've grown to trust, you're sure that the next time you do, you won't need to rely on luck to survive. As a side effect of your interest in vampires, you've also grown to become quite the scholar on religious matters as well, and it's this, plus your knowledge of vampires, that is responsible for your long-lasting friendship with Florin Kindler. You may have first met Florin in the orphanage, or perhaps it was later in life. Your fandom of her famous relative Ailson Kindler's books about (among other things)

vampires ensured your interest in her friendship from the start. Whatever Florin saw in you as a potential friend was enough to forge fast bonds, and so when she approached you about accompanying her to Bastardhall to investigate the site and help her track down what happened to her parents, you agreed at once. Especially since you suspect that there just might be vampires lurking in the old castle somewhere. That's usually the case with these old castles in Ustalav, after all.

Choose two attribute boosts. One must be to Strength or Wisdom, and one is a free attribute boost.

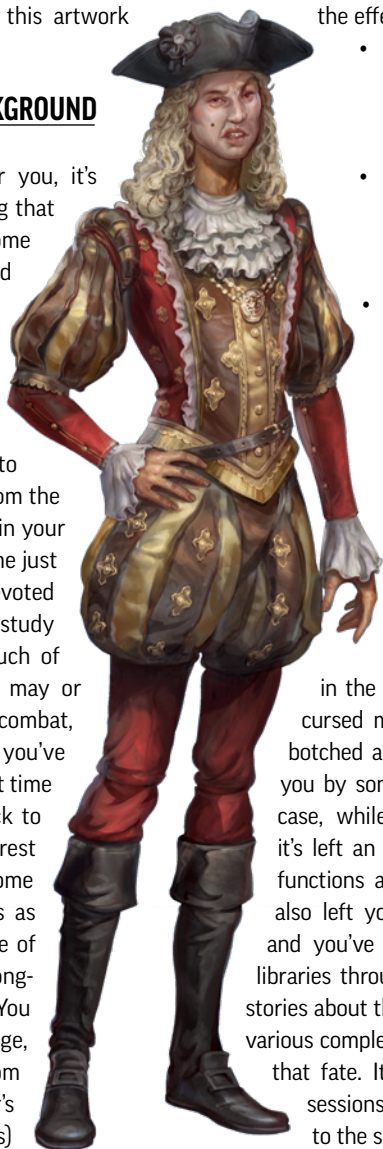
You are trained in the Religion skill and the Vampire Lore skill. Every morning as you do your daily preparations, you can focus on one of the following three morning routines of meditation and spiritual centering to bolster your body and mind against your vampiric enemies—once chosen, the effect persists for 24 hours.

- **Bolster the Blood:** You gain resistance to persistent bleed 2, and whenever you attempt a flat check to end persistent bleed damage, reduce the DC of the check by 2.
- **Bolster the Fury:** You deal 2 additional damage with melee Strikes that deal piercing damage against vampires or creatures that drink blood.
- **Bolster the Mind:** You treat your level as 2 higher than it is to determine the effects of mental effects with the incapacitation trait utilized against you, and gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Will saving throws against a vampire's *dominate* ability.

CURSE-MARKED BACKGROUND

RARE

You're not cursed now (unless you carry a curse from a different source, such as the oracle class), but you were at some point in the past. This could have been brought on by a cursed magic item, could have been the result of a botched adventure, or might have been brought upon you by some sort of supernatural force. Whatever the case, while you've since recovered from that curse, it's left an invisible mark upon your soul—a mark that functions almost like scar tissue. Your experience has also left you with a lifelong fascination about curses, and you've spent countless hours squirrelled away in libraries throughout the land researching curses, reading stories about those who endured curses, and examining the various complex ways one who becomes cursed can escape that fate. It was during one of these marathon study sessions you first met Florin Kindler, who had come to the same library as you to research a curse you've



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long been interested in—the curse of Bastardhall. Through this shared interest you've built something akin to a strong professional relationship that could even have grown into actual friendship. You were one of the first she contacted for assistance when she finally made the decision to mount an expedition to the notorious ruin.

Choose two attribute boosts. One must be to Intelligence or Wisdom, and one is a free attribute boost.

You are trained in the Occultism skill and the Library Lore skill. As long as you are not cursed yourself (barring a class-based curse, such as that granted by the oracle), you gain a +2 circumstance bonus on checks made to counteract curses, on saving throws to resist curses, and on any skill check to disable a hazard capable of inflicting a curse. If you are cursed, you instead gain a -2 circumstance penalty to these rolls.

FRIEND OF A FRIEND

RARE

You've long taken pride in your health and physique, and a big part of maintaining this is making sure that what you put in your body isn't going to undermine your regimen. You're talented at cooking food or preparing drinks and take delight in helping others get healthy or to enjoy a good meal. This has made it easy for you to make friends, of course, but it has also helped to protect you from poisons and diseases—a talent that's served you well in your career as an adventurer. Ironically, you've never previously met Florin Kindler—but you happen to be friends with one or more of the other PCs who she approached to join her expedition. Once you met her, you managed to impress her on the first night of the journey east by including one of her favorite foods or drinks in the night's meal. Just a knack you've always had. Food is a great way to make friends. Or, in the case of certain unpleasant and even dangerous repasts (such as the pre-rotted Nidalese Shuddercheese), a great way to test friendships—or even end them.

Choose two attribute boosts. One must be to Constitution or Strength, and one is a free attribute boost.

You are trained in the Athletics skill and a Lore skill associated with any sort of food or drink. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to saving throws against poison and disease, and to any checks made to counteract poison or disease.

ONCE POSSESSED

RARE

Some of your friends may have survived attacks by vampires or have recovered from being cursed, but you feel that your own harrowing past is perhaps the most horrific, for at one point in your life, you were possessed by a fiend. While the nature of the possessing fiend is left

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to you to decide, as is the method by which you escaped that possession, you've never fully escaped the memories of that time you spent under the control of a fell influence from beyond. You still sometimes have nightmares about the experience, and now and then you're convinced that the evil entity that manipulated and controlled you is still out there, watching and waiting for a chance to reclaim what they lost—your body. Nonetheless, you've done your best to make this harrowing experience into a strength and have studied the nature of fiends extensively. Now you're sure that the next time you encounter a fiend, the resulting conflict will go very differently indeed! Your path crossed with Florin Kindler only recently, as she contacted you as a local expert on fiends—she had a lot of questions about potential fiendish manipulation and involvement in the doom that came to Castle Arudora so many centuries ago. You'd never considered the possibility that fiends may have had something to do with the creation of Bastardhall's curse and legacy, but the more you investigated it, the more certain you became of it. You made Florin promise that when she finally decided to mount an expedition to Bastardhall to include you on the trip—and now, here you are, heading east to help her explore what you suspect might be one of the most fiend-haunted locales in Ustalav!

Choose two attribute boosts. One must be to Charisma or Constitution, and one is a free attribute boost.

You are trained in the Intimidation skill and a special Lore skill focused on all fiends—not just a specific family like demon, rakshasa, or sahkil. This Fiend Lore skill can be used whenever you'd need to attempt a check against any fiend. In addition, the spiritual “scar tissue” you endure has left you with increased protection against such attacks. You gain a +2 circumstance bonus to saving throws against mental effects from fiends. In addition, you gain the following reaction.

Spiritual Scar ☞ (concentrate) **Frequency** once per day;

Trigger You would take spirit damage from a fiend; **Effect**

You gain resistance to spirit damage equal to twice your level plus your Charisma modifier against the triggering damage. If this resistance prevents you from taking any damage at all, the spiritual backlash against the fiend who attempted to damage you forces them to attempt a Will save against your class DC to avoid being slowed 1 for one round.

TRUSTED RIVAL

RARE

For some people, life on the edge of society isn't a choice. Forced by circumstances to become a criminal, or a bandit, or merely a troublemaker, these folks might turn to their unfortunate upbringing as an excuse to justify their life choices. This isn't something you've ever had to consider,

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as for you, the life of a troublemaker has always been a preference. You may not be an out and out criminal—you might only be a rabble-rouser at court, or an anarchist who's devoted their life to opposing a corrupt power. Or you might just be a criminal. Regardless of the nature of your agency-forward choice to live life as a disruptor, there's one group of allies whom you'll never voluntarily betray—your fellow adventurers. Whether or not they believe you when you say you'd never steal from them or reveal their secrets or otherwise give them reason to distrust you is irrelevant. Your life may be one you chose, but it's impressed on you the value of having some people that you can count on. Florin Kindler sort of falls into a gray area between "trusted friend" and "target." You've been a rival of sorts of hers for years—be it a scholastic rival, a professional rival, or even a romantic rival. Work with the GM to determine the exact nature of this rivalry, but over the years, for whatever reason, the two of you have come to accept that for all of the rivalry between the two of you, you're both forced to admit that what the other does is significant and worthy of respect. For the past several months, your rivalry has engendered a competition of sorts, and you've become

convinced you can crack the mystery of Bastardhall before she does. What better way to one up your trusted rival than to provide her with the answers she seeks before she can have the satisfaction of discovering them herself? You may have self-invited yourself into this expedition to Bastardhall, but in your defense, Florin didn't say no when she learned you were tagging along.

Choose two attribute boosts. One must be to Charisma or Dexterity, and one is a free attribute boost.

You are trained in the Deception skill and the Games Lore skill. The time you've spent studying up about Bastardhall has more than prepared you to plumb the legendary castle's secrets, and whenever you attempt any check to Research a topic associated with Bastardhall using the Research subsystem, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus on the check. When you do your daily preparations, you can choose one skill to hone up your Bastardhall knowledge on. For the next 24 hours, you treat that skill as if you were expert in its use when attempting checks to Research any topic associated with Bastardhall. If you're 7th level, you treat this skill as if you were master instead.



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