

KALLISTA'S FLOATING KEEP

A 5E adventure for 5th-level characters

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“Fear the mists, fear the tides, fear the seagull’s call! A sea witch from a bygone age has returned to exact revenge, her floating keep spelling doom for surface dwellers!”

Adventure Background

Two centuries ago, the seaside town of Foamton was held in thrall by a powerful sea hag called Kallista the Heartless, who demanded tribute and living sacrifices to be brought to her magical floating keep. A knight-errant only remembered as The Wavecrest ventured into the keep and slew the witch, freeing the town from the terrible tribute. The keep sunk under the waves, and all was calm again in Foamton for many a year. A week ago, thick mists surrounded the town, disrupting sailing and fishing, its livelihood. Frightful travelers speak of a palace rising through the mists and sea winds whispering the name “Kallista”. Has the ancient hag returned to exact revenge?

Adventure Hooks

- The town authorities are alarmed and willing to pay a goodly sum to adventurers that would investigate the mysterious palace.
- An ancient chivalric order offers membership and land grants to anyone who would match The Wavecrest’s exploit and defeat Kallista once more.
- Kallista is rumored to have possessed a powerful magical item or forbidden knowledge that the PCs require.

Getting There

Local guides are willing to escort the PCs to the place where the palace was last sighted for a 30 gp fee. The journey on boat through the mists is slow by necessity (2d4

hours). During the journey, the PCs encounter foreboding omens (a lone albatross with a broken wing moaning Kallista’s name, shapes of enormous fish appearing and vanishing underwater, seas turning blood-red, etc.).

Alternatively, the party can try to get there by themselves. If they succeed on a group DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check, they locate the palace in 1d4 hours. Failing that, they spend 2d4 hours and gain each PC gains a level of exhaustion.

At the end of their journey, the PCs glimpse a majestic keep rising out of the mists, its towers and battlement seemingly made out of everflowing black water.

Dungeon Features

- The outer walls of the keep consist of dark water, a foreboding ever-flowing black liquid that has the density and solidity of stone. All attempts to swim through the dark water are effective as bashing oneself against a stone wall. The walls can be damaged, but any holes or fissures close with an onrush of water after 1 round.
- The inside of the keep is actually located on a different plane (in the Feylands), doesn’t match its outward layout, and doesn’t obey conventional laws of physics. Most interior walls and floors appear to be made of mother-of-pearl, coral, clam shells, and other exotic materials (which have the hardness of stone). Doors appear as enormous clam shells (also as hard as stone) and are closed but unlocked unless explicitly mentioned otherwise. Assume ceilings are 10 to 30 feet high, depending on the size of the rooms.
- Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all rooms are dimly illuminated by phosphorescent algae and other microorganisms (treat everything as areas of dim light).

- Some rooms are flooded. The water and sea life are kept in a state of suspended animation, meaning, for example, that the water does NOT flow outside if the doors to such a room are opened. Rules for underwater combat apply.

A1. ENTRANCE

Overview: The entrance to the keep is barred by two massive clamshell doors, placed at the waterline. They are unlocked but unwieldy, requiring a group Strength (Athletics) check (DC 15) to open; even if the check fails, the PCs open the doors but gain a level of exhaustion in the process. Saying Kallista's or The Wavecrest's name near the doors causes them to swing open on their own.

Inside is a lobby with mosaics on the wall, depicting sea creatures (such as sea elves, merfolk, tritons, sahuagin, etc.) paying obeisance to a floating throne carrying an imposing blue-skinned woman dressed in a robe of anemones, her face concealed by a veil of kelp.

Three sets of doors lead to the north, east, and west.

A2. PIRATE GALLOWS

Overview: The floor is covered with the rotten detritus of broken ships (treat as difficult terrain). A soggy sea-chest overgrown with barnacles sits in the center of the room, with a tricorne-wearing skull with an eyepatch covering its left socket resting upon it. Fourteen human skeletons in tattered sailors' clothing, cutlasses tucked behind their belts, are suspended on ropes tied around their necks. All of them have placards saying "PIRATE" nailed to their bony chests. A set of doors is on the north wall.

Development: Once a living creature enters the chamber, the hanged skeletons jitter in a semblance of a dance, their bones cracking in the rhythm of a sea shanty, and the skull on the chest starts glowing with a

sickly green light. If the creature doesn't leave in 3 rounds or makes any aggressive overtures, the skeletons grab their cutlasses and cut their ropes, landing on the ground, and the skull flies up, yelling "Beware the Dread Pirate Pellervo!". The flameskull then uses *mage hand* to open the chest and commands the party to put all their gold and valuables inside, attacking together with the skeletons if the PCs refuse, attack preemptively, or grab something from the chest.

The hanged pirates are **skeletons** (AC 10 and no ranged attacks, deal slashing damage, treated as restrained until their ropes are cut), and the skull on the chest is a **flameskull**. If destroyed, both the flameskull and the skeletal pirates reassemble and regain all their hit points in 1 hour unless holy water is sprinkled on Pellervo's remains or a *dispel magic* or *remove curse* spell is cast on them.

Treasure: The treasure chest is unlocked. It appears to be normal in all respects and doesn't radiate magic but it is immune to fire damage. The chest contains 895 gp in ancient barnacle-covered coinage, a jeweled harmonica (worth 120 gp), a bottle of bootleg rum (50 gp), and a magical golden cutlass (treat as scimitar) that floats on water and deals 2d6 extra slashing damage to creatures with a swimming speed. In addition, Pellervo's eyepatch acts as *goggles of night*.

A3. CALYPSO ROOM

Overview: Muffled sounds of joyful calypso music can be heard outside the room's doors by anyone with passive Wisdom (Perception) of 13 or higher. Opening the door reveals what resembles a natural grotto, with dozens of oysters nested in its niches. They open and close rhythmically to the sounds of calypso, produced by a tin pan and drumsticks, hovering in the air and playing seemingly by themselves. Thirteen enormous crabs are gamboling in a round dance around the instrument. A set of doors is on the eastern wall.

Development: Attacking or otherwise harming any of the **giant crabs** causes all of them to stop dancing and start fighting back. The oysters shut themselves if approached or manhandled.

After listening to the music for more than 5 minutes, creatures with an Intelligence of 4 or lower are magically charmed by it (no save). More intelligent creatures can make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw and are immune to the effect for 24 hours on a success. While charmed in this way, the creatures spend all their time prancing and capering, as if affected by an *irresistible dance* spell. While locked in the dance, they require no sustenance, stop aging, and are immune to exhaustion. Dealing any damage to a charmed creature or targeting it with a harmful spell ends the effect.

The pan and the drumsticks are objects with AC 17, 17 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Destroying at least one of the objects stops the music, ends the charm on the crabs (who quickly scuttle away), and a roaring storm spirit (**air elemental**) emerges from inside the pan, attacking the PCs. Any surviving objects join the fight as **flying swords** that deal bludgeoning damage.

Treasure: 1d4 hours spent opening the oysters yields 4d10 pink pearls, each worth 30 gp on the average.

A4. SUNKEN GARDEN

Overview: This room is flooded (see **Dungeon Features** above). Bioluminescence fills the room with bright light. Hundreds upon hundreds of fabulous underwater plants of many colors fill every nook and cranny of this chamber that resembles a natural grotto, with tiny fish and sea life floating around them. There is a door on the western wall.

Treasure: Apart from its aesthetic value, the sunken garden houses some rare plants and shellfish useful for adventurers. A PC can make a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) or

Wisdom (Medicine) check, representing 1d4 hours of work (don't forget you need to breathe water!). Success means extracting the following specimens: 2d4 doses of dark anemone venom (treat as oil of taggit poison); 2d4 sprigs of soothing kelp (treat as a dose of *restorative ointment*); and 1d4 inky regenerating mollusks (treat as a *potion of superior healing*). Failure means extracting only one specimen of each, as well as causing 12 plants to animate and attack as **violet fungi**.

A5. TROPHY ROOM

Overview: This room is stacked up to the ceiling with dozens of mounted taxidermied fish of all shapes and sizes. Seven strangely alive-looking exemplars are suspended from the ceiling on wires: a blowfish, a catfish, a clownfish, a devilfish, a jellyfish, a surgeonfish, and a swordfish. An Elvish inscription chiseled on the western wall reads, "Plant a kiss on your favorite hanging fish and see what happens".

Secrets: Manhandling, defacing, or destroying any of the taxidermied fish inside the room causes the entire collection to animate and attack the PCs. They fight as seven **swarms of quippers** that have 20 ft. flying speed and no need to breathe.

Kissing one of the seven suspended fish produces the following magical effects:

Blowfish: The character grows gills and gains the ability to breathe water for 1 hour. However, over the course of 1 minute, the PC gradually loses the ability to breathe air, becoming increasingly uncomfortable on dry land and finally starting to suffocate. This effect also ends after 1 hour.

Catfish: For 24 hours, the character grows whiskers, cat ears and a cat tail, gains darkvision out to 120 feet, the ability to see in magical darkness, and advantage on all Dexterity checks. This effect only works for a single character at a time.

Clownfish: For 1 hour, the PC gains the following flaw: “I can’t take anything seriously, and the most mundane actions make me laugh out loud”. Before this effect ends, the PC can cast *hideous laughter* at will (save DC 15).

Devilfish: For 1 hour, the PC gains a sinister appearance, growing horns, hooves, a pointed tail, etc. Once before this effect ends, the PC can use an action to summon a **bearded devil**, which appears in an unoccupied space within 30 feet that they can see and obeys all commands for 1 minute, vanishing afterwards. This effect only works for a single character at a time.

Jellyfish: The PC takes 22 (5d8) poison damage, or a half as much on a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw, and transforms into an **ochre jelly** that lacks the Split reaction, as if they had cast *polymorph*. This effect only works for a single character at a time.

Surgeonfish: The PC regains 4d8+4 hit points. This effect only works once per character.

Swordfish: The character is overcome with a yearning for furious battle and wanton destruction. For 1 hour afterwards, the PC deals double damage to objects and has advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls, and all attacks against the PC have advantage.

Treasure: 2d10 fish trophies survive or more less intact after the fight, each of them worth 2d6x10 gp to a discerning connoisseur of angling.

A6. ARENA MOSAIC

Overview: A majestic mosaic covering the eastern wall of the room depicts a vast underwater colosseum. Throngs of underwater creatures such as sea elves, merfolk, tritons, and merrow are watching a spear-wielding triton warrior combat a tentacled monstrosity. In the center of the room stands a statue of a mermaid with flowing hair and dreamy eyes, extending

her arm towards the battle scene and clutching a branch of blood-red coral in her stony hand. An Elvish inscription on the pedestal says, “A branch of scarlet for the victor”.

Secrets: Taking the coral branch and placing it on the ground under the image of either the monstrosity or the warrior, or touching one of them with it, causes the branch and the mermaid statue to disappear. A moment later, the respective creature springs from the mosaic into the room to battle the PCs. The monstrosity fights as a **roper** and the warrior as a **gladiator**; they count as constructs, can’t be charmed or frightened, and are immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition. Once the mosaic creature is reduced to 0 hp, it vanishes together with its equipment, if any. Moments later, the mosaic wall disappears as well, allowing alternative access to area **A7**.

Treasure: Taken to the surface, the coral branch can be sold for 200 gp.

A7. THE WAVECREST’S MONUMENT

Overview: All doors leading to this room are locked, requiring a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves’ tools to open (the check is made with disadvantage due to the exotic nature of the lock). Uttering “Damned be the murderous Wavecrest” in Elvish causes the doors to swing open. There is also an alternative entrance through **A6** (see the area description for details).

The vast hall is bathed in bright light. A human-sized golden statue of a faceless spear-brandishing warrior in a breastplate and a Corinthian helmet dominates the space. A grotesquely misshapen black heart the size of a human head, overgrown with pustules, is impaled on the spear, still beating. An Elvish inscription at the base of the statue reads, “The Wavecrest and Kallista’s heart”.

Secrets: Attempting to tamper with The Wavecrest's statue, pull the spear from its hands, or remove the heart from the spear causes a pillar of light to descend upon it, dealing 22 (5d8) radiant damage to all creatures within 30 feet (succeeding on a DC 15 Constitution save halves the damage). Immediately afterwards, luminous wings sprout from the back of the statue, and it animates to fight as a **deva**, dealing piercing instead of bludgeoning damage. When reduced to 0 hp, it vanishes in a nimbus of light, leaving the spear and the heart behind.

An evil-aligned or a fey creature (including one with the Fey Ancestry feature) is singed when touching the heart or the spear, taking 22 (5d8) radiant damage, and is physically unable to pry the spear or detach the heart. Any other creature can try to do so, requiring a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check and gaining a level of exhaustion in case of failure. The heart is unusually dense and heavy (15 pounds) and is thus unaffected by *mage hand*.

Treasure: The Wavecrest's spear requires attunement by a non-evil creature, sheds bright light in a 40-foot radius and dim light for an additional 40 feet, and deals an extra 2d6 radiant damage to any target it hits. When it hits a shapechanger, the creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or instantly revert to its original form and be unable to assume a different form until the start of its wielder's next turn.

When in a character's possession, Kallista's heart protects them from magic, granting advantage on all saving throws against spells and magical effects. As long as it beats, it whispers dark secrets and loathsome thoughts into the bearer's mind. Once per day, the character must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma save or gain the following flaw: "I must indulge in my most depraved desires, no matter the cost". Crushing or otherwise damaging the heart causes it to explode in a blast of negative energy, dealing 36 (8d8) necrotic damage to all creatures within 30 feet (succeeding

on a DC 15 Constitution save halves the damage).

A8. HONOR GUARD

Overview: This room is flooded (see **Dungeon Features** above). Bioluminescence fills the room with bright light. Mosaics on the walls depict rows upon rows of sea elf warriors armed with spears, sharktooth swords, crab carapace shields, and nets.

Three guardians float in the water, blocking the path to set a massive clam doors. They have pale-green skin, elven features (with gills and webbed feet), milky-white eyes, and hair the color of rotten seaweed. The creatures wear scale mail and helmets made of magically reinforced nautilus shells and wield sharktooth swords and elaborate nacre crossbows.

Creatures: The guardians are undead sea elf warriors, loyal beyond death to Kallista. They have **wight** statistics, except they have AC 16 and a swimming speed of 30 feet.

The wights are polite but stern, demanding the PCs to state their business. They don't say much if probed with questions, claiming that Kallista is back from the dead, has returned to exact vengeance, her throne room lies beyond the doors, and her wrath can only be sated with enormous tribute. They let the party proceed if they show proper deference to Kallista, or, even better, bring her heart with them. The guardians attack if the characters behave aggressively, besmirch their ruler's name, or fail to come up with a good excuse for requesting her audience.

Treasure: Each of the warriors carries a pouch made of seaweed, containing 3 small pearls (worth 15 gp each) and 3 small coral branches (30 gp). Their swords and helmets are worth 30 gp each to antique dealers.

A9. THRONE ROOM

Overview: This room is flooded (see **Dungeon Features** above). The doors to the throne room are locked, requiring a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to open (the check is made with disadvantage due to the exotic nature of the lock). Uttering the words "I pledge my service to thee, Kallista" in Elvish causes the doors to swing open.

Mosaics on the wall depict terrible storms and gigantic waves wracking seaside cities. The floor resembles the sea-bottom, with rocks and debris scattered around. Two abominable fish-elf hybrids armed with harpoons flank a squid-shaped throne sculpted from pumice and overgrown with seaweed, surrounded with broken sea-chests filled with gold. On the throne sits an utterly hideous woman in a robe made of living, breathing anemones, her skin sickly-blue, hair like the tendrils of a jellyfish and her eyes like black whirlpool. A curved cicatrice is visible on her upper chest. She utters in a voice loud as a crashing wave, "Who dares enter the halls of Kallista the Heartless?"

Creatures: Who claims to be Kallista the Heartless is actually Gwynnon Cliffspear, a sea elf adventurer from the deep oceans in the Feylands. Driven by an unhealthy obsession with hags and other sinister fey creatures, in her travels she discovered an ancient and forbidden spell that allowed her to raise the wreckage of Kallista's Floating Keep and reshape it into a feeble semblance of its former glory. Assuming Kallista's identity and likeness, she embarked on an ambitious quest of recreating the hag's deeds and creating an undersea empire worthy of her predecessor. Quite comely in her natural form, Gwynnon spends all her time disguised as Kallista and has grown to enjoy her newfound ugliness.

Gwynnon has the statistics of a **shadow fey enchantress**, except she has the fey type and the shapechanger subtype, can breathe both air and water, and has a swimming speed of 30 feet and the following action option instead of the Leadership feature:

Illusory Appearance. Gwynnon covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like another creature of her general size and humanoid shape. The illusion ends when Gwynnon takes a bonus action to end it or if she dies.

The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up to physical inspection. For example, Gwynnon could appear to have callous flesh, but someone touching her would feel her smooth skin. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that Gwynnon is disguised.

"Kallista's" servants have the statistics of **merrow**, except they are undead, have no need to breathe, and are immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition.

Development: "Kallista" is haughty and condescending with the PCs. She claims that she is back from the dead and wants revenge on Foamton. The "hag" threatens to utterly destroy the town with storms and tides unless her demands are met. She claims that the only way to placate her fury is bringing back her heart, impaled on The Wavecrest's spear (see **A7**), and explains that a "terrible curse" makes her unable to touch it (which is partially true). Succeeding on a Wisdom (Insight) check against her Charisma (Deception) (modifier +7) gives a PC an inkling that "Kallista" might not be who she really is. Should the characters agree, "Kallista" instructs them where to find the room and tells them the phrase that opens the doors.

Irreverent behavior quickly causes "Kallista" to attack. She relies on her spells (such as *animate objects* – there are more than enough Tiny rocks and clams on the floor) while her servants use their harpoons to drag melee attackers away from her. Unless previously destroyed, the **wights** from **A8** join the fray on the second round. "Kallista" cannot lose face before her minions, so she fights to the bitter end. The merrow and the wights abandon their loyalty to "Kallista" if Gwynnon's true nature is somehow exposed.

Treasure: The broken sea-chests contain a booty worth 1,435 gp in exotic coinage from far-off corners of the world, as well as coral beads (250 gp) and a set of dolphin statuettes (worth 75 gp). The anemone gown counts as a *robe of scintillating colors*.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

- Once Gwynnon is slain, she reverts to her true form. The Keep begins to fade, its interiors and outer walls dissolving into nothingness within 1d6 minutes. If the PCs flee the keep into the mist before this, they find themselves on a sea cliff near Foamton, where they can observe the Floating Palace fade into the void. If they don't, they are briefly surrounded by total darkness, then find themselves in a random location in the Feylands. In either case, crisis averted, adventure over!
- Capturing Gwynnon alive and taking her out of the keep causes it to dissolve, as described above. Gwynnon confesses to her charade and promises to reveal ancient secrets and locations of fey treasure in exchange for her freedom.
- Bringing Kallista's heart to Gwynnon makes her emit a maniacal cackle and then give the PCs her heartfelt thanks. Moments after, they find themselves back on the coast near Foamton. The mists are gone, so is the palace. The threat to Foamton has been averted, and the adventure is over. However, Gwynnon, with Kallista's heart in her possession, will pursue more ambitious and diabolical schemes and might come back to haunt the party later...

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