

Valkenburg Castle



A TASK FORCE GAME

(1.0) BACKGROUND

In the 532nd year of the Age of Heroes, the powerful Sorcerer Draxnahr tricked Lord Keven Van Valkenburg into fighting a duel. Lord Keven never had a chance — Draxnahr killed him in the first seconds of the duel with a fireball. That the weapon was proscribed did not hinder the evil Sorcerer from seizing control of Valkenburg Castle and the lands around it. Lord Keven's family escaped into a bitter exile hundreds of leagues away.

Draxnahr himself fell to trickery three years later, and the castle (along with the lands, and the peasants, around it) changed hands several times over the next half century, though somehow always remaining in evil hands. During some periods it was not even formally occupied by its "owner", but garrisoned only with a handful of untrustworthy Orcs. The peasants began to look on the castle not as their protection and place of refuge, but as the home of whatever evil Lord or Sorcerer was tormenting them at the moment. All of them knew, however, that one day the Van Valkenburgs would return, throw out the evil ones, and regain control of the lands, castle, and of course, the peasants themselves.

That return, however, was long in coming. Keven's son Albert was a sickly child (some said it was from exposure and deprivation in the first days of the exile), who did not grow noticeably stronger as he reached manhood. Those who knew him felt it was a shame, for Albert was a good man whose body had betrayed him. In the words of his sister, Gwenyn: "He never had his chance."

Albert (even though he was technically "Lord Albert"), being from an impoverished and deposed family, was unable to secure marriage with a noble family, and married a commoner; Anne McFerrish. Anne was a strong and proud woman, and bore a strong son; Hobart. Though Albert was too sickly to see to the training personally, Anne made sure that her son had the best of training, and against Albert's wishes encouraged the boy when he was eighteen to enlist in the Army of King Edward. Hobart found a world that he could enjoy. Being noble (if only nominally) Hobart was soon offered the command of a small detachment. Through his personal fearlessness (and his robust frame) Hobart gained the confidence of his men and was successful in several small operations. Gaining a larger command, his powers of leadership reached their peak (along with his physical strength) in his 25th year. Hobart returned to his father's bedside in the spring of that year, responding to his mother's urgent message. He arrived only in time to bid his father the last farewell.

Leaving his mother's house, he confronted a small army. Men of his old battalion stood with the handful of family retainers that had waited out the years, and with his uncle Rogier. Some were there because of their personal loyalty to him, and one, the Dwarf Thorvold, was there because of friendship. Hobart silently counted their numbers: seven score and seven. He decided it would be enough.

"Saddle the horses," Hobart, now Lord Hobart, called to his men. "I am going home!"

(2.0) INTRODUCTION

VALKENBURG CASTLE is a game of fantasy combat, as players explore and fight for the possession of an old castle. As is mentioned in the background, the castle has been occupied by "evil" forces for several decades.

(2.1) Players should unfold the map and place it on a flat surface. It can be made to lie flat by backfolding the creases, or by securing the corners with small pieces of tape, or by placing a sheet of glass or plexiglass over it. Players should generally familiarize themselves with the map, the die-cut playing pieces, and the various charts included with the game before proceeding further. It is not necessary to completely understand these items at this time.

(2.2) One player will represent the forces of "Good". He will use the "Good" playing pieces (which are generally colored blue) and will be referred to as the "Good" Player. (It should, perhaps, be noted that this designation does not necessarily bear any relationship to that player's skill with this or any other game.) The other player will use the "Evil" playing pieces (generally colored black) and represent the forces of "Evil". He will be referred to as the "Evil" Player.

(2.3) PARTS INVENTORY. A complete copy of VALKENBURG CASTLE includes a rule-book, a 16 x 20 inch mapsheet and 54 die-cut playing pieces. Not included but necessary for play are six sided dice and writing materials.

(2.4) GAME MAP. The mapsheet represents an interior "floor plan" of the lower levels of the castle, where the action of the game takes place. (It is not necessary to clear the upper levels of evil forces, as they prefer the lower and darker areas.) The map is divided into five areas,