

INTRODUCTION

STORMING THE CASTLE

Whether you're looking for a stately castle to be the target of a clandestine infiltration, an imposing fortress to host your next battle between kings, a magically fortified lair for your players' newest arch-nemesis, or just something to put over top of your lovingly crafted dungeon, *Seven Strongholds* is the book you're looking for.

Seven Strongholds is a fantasy RPG sourcebook that details seven forts, castles, and other well-fortified locations for your fantasy roleplaying game. Described in full are the military entrenchments of gnome warriors, powerful elves, halfling adventurers, desperate humans, and dwarf metalworkers, as well as bloodthirsty orcs and strange bird-men. Each stronghold includes complete maps, perilous hazards, devious traps, and magical protections enough to make any would-be intruder quake.

But *Seven Strongholds* goes deeper than just the walls of these unique fortifications; the personalities behind the defenses are vividly depicted for each location. Dangerous intrigues, elaborate plays for power, and inscrutable secrets are sure to enthrall your players even after their first battle has been won.

Like all *Penumbra* RPG products, *Seven Strongholds* gives you material that's adaptable to any fantasy campaign, whether it be a published setting or a world of your own creation. You can use these fortresses straight out of the book at a moment's notice, or make them a foundation for strongholds of your own design. Either way, *Seven Strongholds* promises to reinforce your next game session with stalwart fortifications designed to captivate every player's imagination!

THE STRONGHOLDS

The seven strongholds included in this book cover a multitude of designs and construction types. Each was created by a distinct group with its own goals and motivations, and harbors secrets and dangers unique to itself.

The Barrows: A concrete bunker allows a determined troop of gnomes to hold at bay the misshapen monsters of the subterranean world, intent on breaking through to the surface.

Castle Briar: An elven warlord protects his living castle from jealous rivals.

Gloom Keep: Under a sunless sky, grim-faced humans protect their senile, maddened deity from the world.

Old Mound Fort: An Iron Age ditch-and-rampart fort, refurbished by halfling adventurers, offers a way station for treasure-hungry dungeon explorers.

Steelface Point: An imposing dwarven fortress protects the mouth of a mountain pass from the orcish horde and its war machines.

The Perch: Keen-eyed birdmen zealously guard their domed lair, from which they oppress the area's population of "walkers" — their contemptuous term for flightless humanoids.

Uthront Fort: Ambitious half-orcs occupy a newly built motte-and-bailey castle as an early stage of their effort to mold the local humanoid raiders into a mighty and unified army.

SECTION LAYOUT

For easy reference, each stronghold is described using the following headers. The index at the back of the book also lists all of the NPCs given in this book, as well as the new rules material, for quick referral.

AT A GLANCE

This section provides a quick rundown on the stronghold's history, construction, layout, and defenses. It also briefly discusses the group that built it and why, and describes a few of the primary people inhabiting it, as well as their basic goals and motivations. Finally, it gives an explanation of the primary uses for the stronghold at present.

PLACEMENT

Here we suggest the sorts of locations where the stronghold would work best. This usually gives you some choices designed to help adapt the stronghold into your campaign with minimal effort, and talks about the changes that might need to be made to the stronghold to make it fit in realistically.



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CHARACTERS

Here you can find statistics for the stronghold's most important NPCs. In addition, this section describes their personality traits, motivations, goals, and their potential interactions with other NPCs and the player characters. The larger politics involved in the situation are many times outlined in this section, as well.

THE INSTALLATION

The physical description of the stronghold is given in this section. This, of course, is the meat of the book: general layout, traps, hazards, fortifications, magical protections, design features, and all the crunchy bits that make the stronghold nigh-impenetrable are included here.

SCENES

This section contains ideas for ways PCs can become involved with the stronghold. This includes hooks for getting the characters to the stronghold and suggestions for involving them in the internal machinations

of its inhabitants, as well as larger plotlines to involve your players in.

ALTERNATE VERSIONS

Finally, we close with some quick ideas on modifying the personalities and goals of the stronghold's keepers to allow them to play different roles in your campaign. What if the residents are really evil minions of some dark god, and not kindly caretakers they would have the PCs think them? Or maybe those orcs have some higher purpose that makes their apparent evildoing morally virtuous? These are the kinds of variations that are suggested in this last section.

INTO THE BREACH ...

And so, with these basics in mind, we ask you to turn the page to explore these seven strongholds of might and wonder. Let your imagination lead you through the battles ahead!

THE BARROWS

AT A GLANCE

The Barrows is a two-story concrete bunker full of chambers and tunnels atop a much older subterranean complex leading deep into the earth, where terrible monsters dwell. It was constructed by members of a gnomish mercenary order. Their descendants are now paid by local citizens to keep the monsters from bursting from the underground world to raid their farms

and towns. In exchange for a hefty share of local taxes, the hard-bitten mercenaries continually patrol, reinforce, and trap their concrete bunker as well as any other possible exits from the underworld that may lay beyond it. They scour the countryside for previously unknown entryways to the underworld, so they can close them off forever. Without their aid, the nearby communities could not exist at all; the place would be a devastated, monster-haunted wasteland.

