



Phelantar's Guide
to
The Raven's Nest
for
The 13th Age Roleplaying Game



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History of Ironhaven

The history of the Raven's Nest begins hundreds of years ago, in an earlier age of kings, conquests, and expanding frontiers. Raven's Nest began its existence as a small border fort called Ironhaven. At the time, the long-forgotten queen was preparing to expand her sphere of influence, pushing out barbarian tribes, rival royals, and dangerous monsters. Ironhaven was one of a dozen forts raised at the same time, each roughly a day's ride from one another. From Ironhaven and the rest of the forts, soldiers and rangers would push outward and pacify the countryside.

Roads were built to each of the fortresses and beyond, laying the infrastructure for the kingdom's expansion. Small villages sprung up nearby, though given the rough terrain they generally remained small and geared towards ranching or woodcutting rather than typical farming communities.



Ironhaven survived for decades, in no small part because of how effective it and her sister forts had been in expanding the kingdom's frontiers. Unfortunately, what battle didn't do to Ironhaven, neglect and disuse slowly did. As the fort was no longer on the borders of the kingdom, there was little need to maintain it or even keep it manned. The money being spent would be better used elsewhere, or so the thinking went. The villages nearby, deprived of the commerce originating from the forts, were frequently abandoned in turn.

It's not difficult to imagine that the rather small, but still formidable, fortresses would immediately attract unwelcome attention once they were vacant and so they all did. Bandits, monsters, cultists, and worse things were quick to take up residence in Ironhaven and the others. Ironhaven in particular was infamous as the headquarters of a group of rebellious nobles attempting to overthrow the then-queen. Their plot was uncovered and they fled to Ironhaven with their retainers, holding out against the queen's forces for nearly two months before earth elementals summoned by the queen's wizards tunneled under the walls and collapsed one of them. The siege was quickly ended after that.

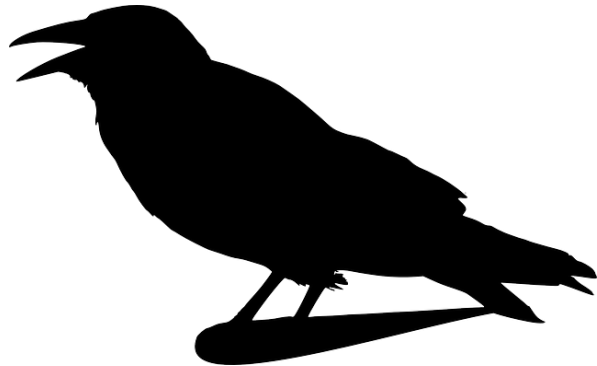
Ironhaven's sister fortresses fell into similar ruin as time, nature, and the occasional battle took their toll on the abandoned structures. For hundreds of years, they deteriorated even further, though they still found occasional use by travelers, monsters, or bandits as the borders of civilized kingdoms waxed and waned greatly.

Ironhaven was little more than a couple of somewhat intact basements, the remains of three walls, and a partially collapsed tower when it, and the surrounding land, was gifted to the remains of a mercenary company known as the Dusk Ravens. At the time, Ironhaven was once again on the frontier. Beyond the borders, in truth, despite what the king gifting it had to say. The Dusk Ravens took possession of Ironhaven and renamed it The Raven's Nest.



History of the Dusk Ravens

The Dusk Ravens originated as a mercenary company of a couple of dozen soldiers, their families, and their hangers-on. They were, at the time, nothing special. No different than any of dozens of other mercenary groups or adventuring guilds found across any kingdom or country. What made them different in the end was longevity. The Dusk Ravens were founded almost 200 years prior to taking possession of Ironhaven. They lived and worked in an era where any such group would be lucky to make it 25 or 30 years without dissolving, being destroyed, or being incorporated into another force, such as a king's armies.



Such longevity was possible only through the extraordinary *esprit de corps* that they showed, with the group being as much of an extended family as a mercenary company. Even through successive generations and recruiting of new members, the Dusk Ravens managed to retain that sense of comradeship. It typically made them a more effective fighting force, knowing that they were fighting alongside their friends and family.

The fortunes of the Dusk Ravens typically waxed and waned over the two centuries of their existence. At their most successful, the Dusk Ravens numbered nearly 150 fighting members and roughly three times that in terms of various dependents. At their worst, they numbered less than 10 fighting members and 30 others. It was at this down point, almost 20 years ago, where they were given Ironhaven. After extended campaigning against resurgent orcs, devils, and other creatures, the Dusk Ravens were ground down, losing many of their members to the fighting.

As reward for their extended and dangerous service, the Dusk Ravens were gifted Ironhaven and a considerable sum of gold. This was something of a booby prize for the Dusk Ravens and both they and the king knew it. At the time, Ironhaven was a ruin on a dangerous frontier and the Dusk Ravens would have to both rebuild the fortress and defend their new home. If they succeeded, the king will have secured his borders from threats and put the financial burden largely on the Dusk Ravens. And if the mercenaries failed, it was a relatively small price to pay from a monetary and political standpoint and the Dusk Ravens could be counted on to set the groundwork for further pacification and expansion of the border area even as they were driven out or destroyed.

Despite the somewhat mixed nature of the prize, the Dusk Ravens accepted control of Ironhaven and the surrounding 100 square mile area. Renaming it The Raven's Nest, they set up camp with their followers nearby in an abandoned village. After clearing the fortress and the surrounding area of any lingering monsters and beasts, they claimed their new home.



The Raven's Nest

The Dusk Ravens immediately began rebuilding their new home. They hired masons, carpenters, and smiths, purchasing thousands of gold worth of materials needed for such a monumental undertaking. Their war chest dangerously depleted, some of the Ravens hired themselves out as adventurers to continue bringing in money to fund the rebuilding. Even once the fortress was rebuilt, the nearby village (by now named Ravenshome) would need extensive repairs so that it could be useful again. The Dusk Ravens began recruiting heavily, mostly from the ranks of experienced soldiers and adventurers, and were approaching nearly 30 fighting members and almost 100 other members.

The influx of money and people began something of an economic boon to the region. Adventurers, merchants, explorers, scholars, and ordinary villagers began to stream to the area over the course of several years. Though still a frontier area and frequently beset by bandits and monster attacks, The Raven's Nest and nearby Ravenshome represented an opportunity for hardy folk to make a name for themselves or to make a fortune. Roads were repaired, villages founded (or refounded), caravans streamed back and forth.

At the heart of this growth was The Raven's Nest. The Dusk Ravens could have kept it their personal domain, a watchtower from which they patrolled and worked. They did do this, but they also kept the fortress open to adventurers and mercenaries working in the area as a roadhouse. The fortress was bigger than the Dusk Ravens could fill themselves and the income from the people staying would help with repairs and maintenance. Further, it would allow for the Dusk Ravens to make contact with potential recruits and keep up on the latest news about dangerous or profitable activities in the area.

The Raven's Nest has two floors reserved entirely for Dusk Ravens members to live or stay, but there is still room for up to 30 other patrons, to say nothing about space on the common room floor for those travelers too poor or cheap to afford something more comfortable up above. At any given time, there are between 10 and 15 non-Dusk Raven people staying at The Raven's Nest, with at least one adventuring group calling themselves the Broken Crowns making it their semi-permanent base of operations for months on end. A Dusk Raven officer remains on station at the fortress at all times to work as a recruiter and adventurer liaison.

The Dusk Ravens themselves have around 40 people at The Raven's Nest on most days, with about 15 of them being soldiers and a further 15 out on patrol or escort duty nearby. The rest of their members and their families live a few miles away in Ravenshome. At the current day, the Dusk Ravens in total number about 75 members capable of fighting, though some of them are in semi-retirement in Ravenshome. There are about 400 family members, friends, and other associated people such as merchants and craftsmen living in Ravenshome as well.

The Raven's nest itself is a fortress comprised of four distinct areas, all surrounded by stone walls 12 feet high. The four areas are the tower, the gatehouse, the stables, and the courtyard. The fortress is on a tall hill overlooking a forest a mile away to the north and the east. To the south is the road leading back towards the rest of the kingdom and to the west three miles away is Ravenshome. Ravenshome is visible from the top of the walls, the gatehouse, and the tower.



The gatehouse is a two story structure surrounding the main entrance into the fortress and is where the majority of Dusk Raven soldiers are stationed while in the fortress. The east room on the groundfloor is the common room, where soldiers spend much of their time while not actively dealing with traffic coming into the fortress. There are several tables for resting and eating as well as a fireplace to keep the room warm. The west room is the secondary armory, enough to equip any troops within the gatehouse in case of an emergency. The second story is secondary storage of consumables like arrows, pitch, and medical supplies. There are also several cots and beds for soldiers to sleep and recover from injuries (or hangovers). The main gate is made thick oak, reinforced with bands of steel, and is kept open between dawn and dusk. It opens outward, lowering down over a spike lined pit. The Raven's Nest doesn't have a full encircling moat, just this pit at the entrance. A portcullis made of scrap steel and iron is at the main gate as well, despite the gatehouse not being designed to take advantage of this feature.

The courtyard is covered half in cobblestone and half in grass, with training dummies and a blacksmith's hut near the stables and a hand-cranked well near the tower. Supplies for both the stables and the smith are kept in small lockable buildings the courtyard as well. The stables are well constructed and stocked, but are intended to hold only ten animals at most. There are posts for animals to be tied up near the stables, but these are exposed to the weather and are used infrequently. A second story to the stables is largely kept empty, but can be stockpiled with more supplies if need be.

The tower is the central area of The Raven's Nest. It has six stories above ground, with three basement levels. This is larger than the original design of Ironhaven and is more room than the Dusk Ravens themselves need, though they freely admit that in case of an emergency, they can bring in their dependents and allies into the fortress for safety. The first floor of the tower is the common room, kitchen, and pantry. This is the center of fortress activity, both for the Dusk Ravens and for travelers and there are people here day and night. The food and drink served is not high end, but it's not bad and comes in good quantities for a reasonable price. After midnight, the tables and chairs are cleaned and moved so that people who can't, or aren't willing to, rent a proper room can sleep on the floor.

The second and third floors are full of rooms for travelers, with a dozen small rooms on each floor. The rooms aren't luxurious, but they are comfortable enough for two people and can hold as many as four in a pinch. There is also a small room for baths and cleaning to be shared by each floor. In the event of an emergency, these rooms would be taken by the Dusk Ravens for their own use. The fourth and fifth floors are for Dusk Raven use, though on some occasions travelers are permitted to stay there. These floors four have larger barracks-like rooms with bunk beds and little other furniture aside from footlockers holding, or waiting to hold, belongings.

The sixth floor is the command center for the Dusk Ravens and few travelers are welcome here. There are two large rooms that make up the majority of the floor. The first is the war room, also called the map room. It's here that Dusk Raven commanders, and any allied forces, would command any nearby battles from. There are detailed maps of the surrounding region on the walls and there are bookshelves loaded with texts on war, strategy, and tactics. In the center of the room is a large round table which has been magically enhanced to show areas around the Raven's Nest as large as one square mile and as far away as twenty miles. This table is a piece



of loot taken from a long ago campaign and has been credited at times for saving the Dusk Ravens from complete destruction.

The second large room is the accounting and management office. Although settling down, the Dusk Ravens still are a mercenary company and need to keep close track of their costs and income. There are several desks, cabinets full of papers, bookshelves stuffed with records, and writing equipment. Every fortnight, the active members of the Dusk Ravens march through this office to receive their pay.

The remaining area of the sixth floor is taken up with two rooms. The first room is the vault, where gold, silver, copper, and other portable wealth like gems is stored. Most magical weapons and equipment are also stored here. As one would expect, this room is extremely heavily guarded, as well as warded with a variety of spells, and great care is taken to limit access even to approved members. The second room is the meeting office, where Dusk Raven commanders can meet with people about employment opportunities. Both where the Dusk Ravens are being hired and in those circumstances where they themselves are doing the hiring on a permanent or temporary basis.

The roof is manned constantly and there are a number of flag, smoke, and light signals available to the lookouts stationed there. A bonfire is lit every night at midnight and burns until dawn, acting as a sort of inland lighthouse for travelers and patrols. Waterproofed chests and boxes keep communication supplies ready regardless of the weather. There are an equal number of chests containing crossbows, bolts, and other combat supplies in the event of an attack on the Raven's Nest.

The first basement is the armory proper and non-Dusk Ravens are usually not permitted within. In here are suits of armor, weapons of all sorts, arrows, shields, and other sort of personal equipment a soldier might need. Although Dusk Ravens own and care for their own equipment, the armory carries enough weapons and armor to double or even possibly triple their available forces in an emergency. The equipment is all mundane, with few magical resources, but nevertheless is in good shape and well maintained.

The second and third basements are all food and drink storage. Raven's Nest can potentially withstand a siege of two to three months or as many as four with proper preparation. As with the armory, people who aren't members of the Dusk Ravens are rarely allowed down into this area. The Dusk Ravens emphasize supplies which will last a long time in storage, which leads to the merely average food served in the common room. Fresh meat and produce from Ravenshome or other nearby villages are brought in on a regular basis, but they're often eaten quickly to prevent spoilage.



People of The Raven's Nest

Captain Angas Nelekmeth - This aged dragonblooded is the overall leader of the Dusk Ravens... at least on paper. The truth is that he's semi-retired and spends as many days out fishing or reading as he does with day-to-day operations. Nelekmeth feels that he's just too old for adventuring or fighting, too slow with a sword or shield and too tired for any kind of extended activity. His once-silver scales are more grey than ever and he knows he has far fewer days ahead of him than behind. This sense of approaching the end has only increased his already gruff and glum demeanor. Still, his many years of tactical, strategic, and political experience have kept him from retiring completely and he stays in the Raven's Nest where that knowledge is most useful.

Commander Elebeth Liladottir - This dwarven woman of striking looks and young age does not look like the sort of person who would be a talented leader of mercenaries, but looks can be deceiving and Liladottir is currently the de-facto leader of the Dusk Ravens. Liladottir doesn't talk about her past, but she joined the Dusk Ravens with a wealth of combat and command experience already under her belt. Despite her mysterious background, she is an upbeat and friendly person who cares deeply for the people under her command. She doesn't get to go into the field as much as she would like to because of her responsibilities and is often coordinating tasks with Captain Nelekmeth in Raven's Nest.

Master Sergeant Eldor Redleaf - Eldor has been a mercenary since before the Dusk Ravens were even founded and it shows in his scarred and battered face. A long ago victim of elven court intrigues, Redleaf was forced into exile and found himself selling his blade skills for a living. He joined the Dusk Ravens after a nasty siege where he fought alongside them for several months. Despite his aristocratic heritage, Redleaf enjoys getting his hands dirty and playing the hard-nosed NCO. He can be coldly pragmatic and swears enough to make even veterans uncomfortable, but there's no denying his effectiveness as a soldier and trainer. The Dusk Ravens might not even exist if it weren't for his deft handling of personnel above and below him in rank.

Mistress of the Home Fire Nama Aeswef - This elderly halfling woman was originally one of the dependents, as her husband was a scout for the Dusk Ravens. Even then, she tended to be one of the camp leaders, keeping the camp orderly and the people within it cared for as best as possible given the conditions they sometimes found themselves in. When her husband died, she began to take over even more camp responsibility to keep herself busy and her mind occupied. Eventually Captain Nelekmeth created an official position for her, Mistress of the Home Fire, and set her in charge of keeping the guests and Dusk Ravens staying in The Raven's Nest well cared for. She organizes the cooks and maids and has a keen mind towards keeping the fortress well provisioned.

Cadet Karuba - This strange creature is a bird-like humanoid which showed up at the Raven's Nest one day and asked, in rather broken Common, to join the group. Commander Liladottir was reluctant, but ultimately relented. It seemed that rejecting a raven-like creature from a group called the Dusk Ravens would be an ill omen. The cadet has been around for several months



and is becoming a capable scout to augment his already impressive skills with magic. The other mercenaries aren't sure what to make of him, as he seems somewhat naive and very strange in his thinking and customs, but they are gradually warming up to him despite those concerns.

Forgemaster Candaal Bailen - Bailen is a short, but muscular, human woman with short brown hair and a noticeable difficulty with walking. She used to be a regular trooper with the Dusk Ravens before a fight with hill giants mangled both of her legs to such a degree that even magic couldn't restore their full use. Denied any other way of making a living, she became an apprentice to the former Forgemaster at the age of thirty and has now been a master smith for almost 4 years at the age of 39. She took over Forgemaster duties a year ago and has been keeping the equipment of the Dusk Ravens in good working order since. Bailen has been a stoic and reserved person since her legs were shattered and is prone to grunts, nods, and other gestures in place of speaking when possible. Her lone wolf tendencies have other Dusk Ravens concerned, but they plan on keeping out of her way unless it causes a problem.

Magus Prime Matthias Blackmoor - Blackmoor is a classically trained wizard and alchemist of considerable power and talent, which makes him something of an oddity as a mercenary. Wizards of his caliber could make more money as an adventurer or be much more comfortable and safe working for wealthy nobles or merchants. Blackmoor is an unashamed thrillseeker, however, and revels in the danger and excitement of mercenary work. As a result, he's seen as rather unhinged by his compatriots. Even the ones who live for fighting don't openly talk about the beauty and purity of combat like Blackmoor does. However, even with his disturbing approach to the mercenary life, few in the Dusk Ravens would complain about having him at their side in a scrap.

Scout Leader Sarkye Dragoncrown - Dragoncrown is a grizzled human man of middle years who has been training and leading scouts and rangers with the Dusk Rangers for almost 25 years. Many expected him to step into a leadership role when Captain Nelekmeth semi-retired, but were surprised when now-Commander Liladottir was chosen instead. Those who work with him have quietly explained to others that despite his undeniable skill in the field, Dragoncrown has an abrasive and cruel personality and is unsuitable for larger command. Dragoncrown himself hasn't spoken on the topic and continues to wander in and out of The Raven's Nest as his duties dictate.

Paymaster Akarn Conandir - Conandir used to be one of the scouts for the Dusk Ravens, but found that he was better suited to serve with a quill and a ledger than with a shield and a crossbow. He's played a key part in keeping finances in order while taking control of, and then rebuilding, Ironhaven and the nearby area. This chaotic and expensive situation could have been the financial ruination of the company, but Akarn helped ensure it has gone smoothly. As a reward, he was promoted to the highest administrative position within the company when the former paymaster retired 3 years ago and has ensured that the Dusk Ravens remain financially stable since.



Plots of The Raven's Nest

Use these to kickstart adventures, complicate things, or otherwise spice things up around the area. You can decide how many (if any) are actually true.

- Rumors abound that the real reason that the Dusk Ravens took control of Ironhaven was that the basements supposedly contained passages into forgotten underground ruins full of unknown treasures. Stories say that trusted allies have been venturing into those passages as long as the Dusk Ravens get a percentage of whatever comes back up with them.
- Scout Leader Dragoncrown wasn't nearly as accepting of being passed over for leadership as he appears. He's recruiting what loyal allies he can within the company to either kill the current leadership and take over or to raid the coffers and set out on their own.
- Nobles of the lands surrounding those that the Dusk Ravens now control are unhappy about the situation. Both because the land was gifted to mercenaries and the fact that those mercenaries are going a surprisingly good job in developing the area and pushing the frontier. Plots abound to put the Dusk Ravens in their place and who knows when the conspirators might strike...
- Magus Prime Blackmoor's reckless enthusiasm has gotten a squad of Dusk Ravens into a great deal of trouble with monsters out in the frontier. Lacking available Dusk Raven forces, Commander Liladottir has hired the party for a daring rescue out in the wildlands and time is wasting.
- The Dusk Ravens have been pushing back monsters, barbarian tribes, and other dangerous creatures since they took possession of The Raven's Nest almost twenty years ago. A stellar conjunction and vaguely worded book of prophecy suggests that the monsters might be pushing back in force during the upcoming full moon. The party is caught up on the the Dusk Ravens preparations, being hired on as scouts or auxiliaries,





to find out more about the prophecy, or merely being unfortunate bystanders as monsters lay siege to the fortress.

- The past has come back to haunt Master Sergeant Redleaf. Although he's been out of the great game of politics in the elven court for almost two-hundred years, one of the factions has taken an interest in him again. One faction sees him as a renewed threat and wants him dead. Another faction wants him alive and returned to the court, whether he wants to or not. A third needs him alive, but far far away from the court. Redleaf needs the characters to venture in his place to the elven court and find a way to get them to leave him be.
- Someone has been committing acts of sabotage in and around The Raven's Nest for several weeks. Subtle things at first, like jamming the gate controls in the open position in an "accidental" manner, but increasingly the sabotage has been more overt and dangerous, like poisoning all the barrel beef and pork. Commander Liladottir isn't sure who she can trust within the company and has hired the party as outside observers to find the saboteurs and capture them.
- Unbeknownst to most people, Ironhaven and its sister fortresses weren't just physical fortifications to guard the old kingdom, but part of a magical defense system as well. The defense system was a combination of a pool of magical energy that mages could draw upon as well as mystical weapons to foil sieges. Captain Nelekmeth is one of the few who is aware of this and he wants to reactivate the magical protections. There are numerous complications with this, however. Several of the other fortresses are lost, some of those which remain are on lands controlled by nobles who don't like the Dusk Ravens, and almost all of them are probably inhabited by monsters of some sort. As outsiders, the party can move in secrecy to find the other towers and reactivate them.
- Paymaster Conandir has been kidnapped by a rogue group of Dusk Ravens who were attempting to break into the vault and steal as much as possible before fleeing. Now they're holding Conandir hostage, but Nelekmeth suspects that they might have supporters still within the Dusk Ravens feeding them information. While Nelekmeth negotiates and stalls for time, the party needs to find out where he's being held and rescue him.
- Some of the Dusk Ravens senior officers have been dabbling in strange arcane rituals and fell creatures have been glimpsed in the shadows around The Raven's Nest. Outside groups (of which the party belongs to or has connections with) have heard the rumors and have asked or hired the party to visit the fortress and secretly investigate.
- The Dusk Ravens, as a whole, have been struck by a terrible magical curse. Their stores rot and go rancid, their wounds fester within minutes, their luck has been abysmal, and their magical spells continually go awry. They need to know who is responsible for the curse as quickly as possible before more catastrophic situations occur. The curse prevents any of the Dusk Ravens from taking care of it in-house, so the party is hired to help.



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