

**BASEMENT ADVENTURE #1**  
**Pits & Perils**  
**THE CELLARS OF CASTLE KEEP**

**An Adventure for 3-5 Characters of 1-3rd Level**

by  
**James & Robyn George**



**D** the  
House  
Rules



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**W**ide  
House  
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## INTRODUCTION

This is a Basement Adventure designed exclusively for Pits & Perils, so named because it emulates the homebrew look and feel of the earliest published scenarios. Often, these were typed in someone's basement, Xeroxed off, stapled, and sold in Ziploc baggies when the hobby was not yet an industry. But this is more than just a clever recreation, these scenarios are fully playable and meant to be enjoyed...

Note that these adventures may use material from any of the various rulebooks, and the referee is encouraged to obtain them. However, they are just as free to make substitutions, etc.

## BACKGROUND

Fifty years ago, the Orc Wars had reached their peak, striking at the boundaries of the Western Kingdoms. Such wars had happened before, only this time, the orcs were commanded by a powerful and mysterious master known only as The Sorcerer. With the aid of his magic, the orcs were almost unstoppable, signaling doom for the Kingdoms unless something could be done to stop the seemingly endless orcish raids.

One final, climatic battle took place at Castle Keep, the westernmost fortress of the Kingdoms. The castle was demolished and defeat inevitable when, suddenly, the orcs panicked and fled. Some say The Sorcerer was vanquished by a high-level party of adventurers, but whatever the reason, the orcs were no longer a threat...

Now the King wishes to reclaim Castle Keep, but fears what might still linger in the cellars below, and not wanting to endanger his own soldiers, has recruited the party to do this instead.

## TO CASTLE KEEP

While the castle has long since collapsed, the opening to the cellars remains intact and heavily guarded by the King's men, who will refuse to go beyond area 3, below. The surface level is otherwise secure, however, with a military camp to sleep and purchase standard equipment (anything short of armor, mounts, and/or vehicles, etc.). And they will need it, for the cellars are dark and filled with things that never sleep...



The Cellars of Castle Keep is designed for 3-5 characters of 1-3rd level, noting that referees can adjust enemy numbers to suit the size or strength of the party exploring it. Alternately, human henchmen can be made available, possibly mercenaries seeking glory for themselves, choosing from the following henchman table:

NAME	TYPE*	SIDE	NOTES
Dale	Archer	neutral	also a fine bowyer
Fritz	Archer	neutral	shuns melee combat
Harvey	Footman	chaotic	drinks heavily
Jake	Footman	lawful	wise and very loyal#
Mortimer	Porter	neutral	easily frightened
Otto	Porter	chaotic	hopes to become rich
Seamus	Torchbearer	neutral	dexterity (will steal)#

\*Cost and statistics per the basic rulebook(s)

#Specialists will command double normal payment

Note that henchmen are treated as being employed by the entire party, although some will gravitate to the charismatic depending on the treatment they receive, etc. In any event, there should never be more than enough available to raise party numbers beyond six, although others might become available with attrition.

#### RECOMPENSE AND REWARD

The King has "generously" allowed the party to keep any treasure recovered from the cellars below, although once fully cleared, the level will be sealed and become property of the Crown.

#### THE KING'S MEN

For simplicity, there will be 20-30 of the King's Men (all treated as 1st level fighters in chainmail with spears) and 10-20 commoners, mostly merchants, tradesmen, and camp followers of various types. A cleric might also be made available if the party has none.

Some important figures include:

BETH-ANNA (CLERIC/L/INT) AK: 1 (staff) LL: 3/+0 (12 HP) ME: 50' (---)

ROWAN (FIGHTER/L/CHA) AK: 1 (long sword) LL: 2/(\*) (12/+2 HP) ME: 30' (chainmail)

TYBALT (FIGHTER/N/CON) AK: 1 (short sword) LL: 5/(\*) (18/+3 HP) ME: 20' (plate)

Lawful (L)	Strength (STR)	Wisdom (WIS)
Neutral (N)	Dexterity (DEX)	Constitution (CON)
Chaotic (C)	Intelligence (INT)	Charisma (CHA)

Beth-Anna is the company's chaplain. She is friendly to Rowan, the sergeant-at-arms, but less charitable with Tybalt, the stern and humorless captain of the King's Men. The latter avoids the party if possible, being preoccupied with his own military and political ambitions.



## CAMP RUMORS

Obviously, many rumors abound, and smart players will ask questions around camp. The referee should roll three times on the following table, ignoring duplicate results in most cases:

3d6	RUMOR
3	An orc tribe still occupies the old cellars (TRUE)
4-5	Baby dragons, or firedrakes, live below (FALSE)
6	Colonies of bats are sometimes seen after dark (TRUE)
7-8	Cultists gather to worship in the caverns (FALSE)
9	Damage to the cellars is substantial in places (TRUE)
10-11	Dwarven miners refused to enter the cellars (FALSE)
12	Mechanical traps were set by the builders (TRUE)
13-14	Reputedly, advanced scouts were found dead (FALSE)
15	Some magic items were lost in the cellars (TRUE)
16-17	The Sorcerer maintains a laboratory below (FALSE)
18	Vast sewers lead from the cellars to the hills (TRUE)

The above rumors are designed mainly to excite and/or frighten the players, who may find themselves preparing for risks that do not really exist or exploiting some lead, etc.

## SECRET OF CASTLE KEEP

A company of orcs was ordered to take the cellars and await further instructions. When this never happened, the orcs dug in and established a thriving tribal presence below. But these are highly organized, being driven by their fear of The Sorcerer they follow.

## THE CELLARS

Except where noted, the referee should describe the cellars as having standard brick and mortar construction. In all cases (except for unworked areas) there are still-intact wooden doors (4' x 6') that are otherwise difficult to open (assume 1-2 rounds), with a 1 in 1d6 chance of alerting the occupants of adjacent rooms.

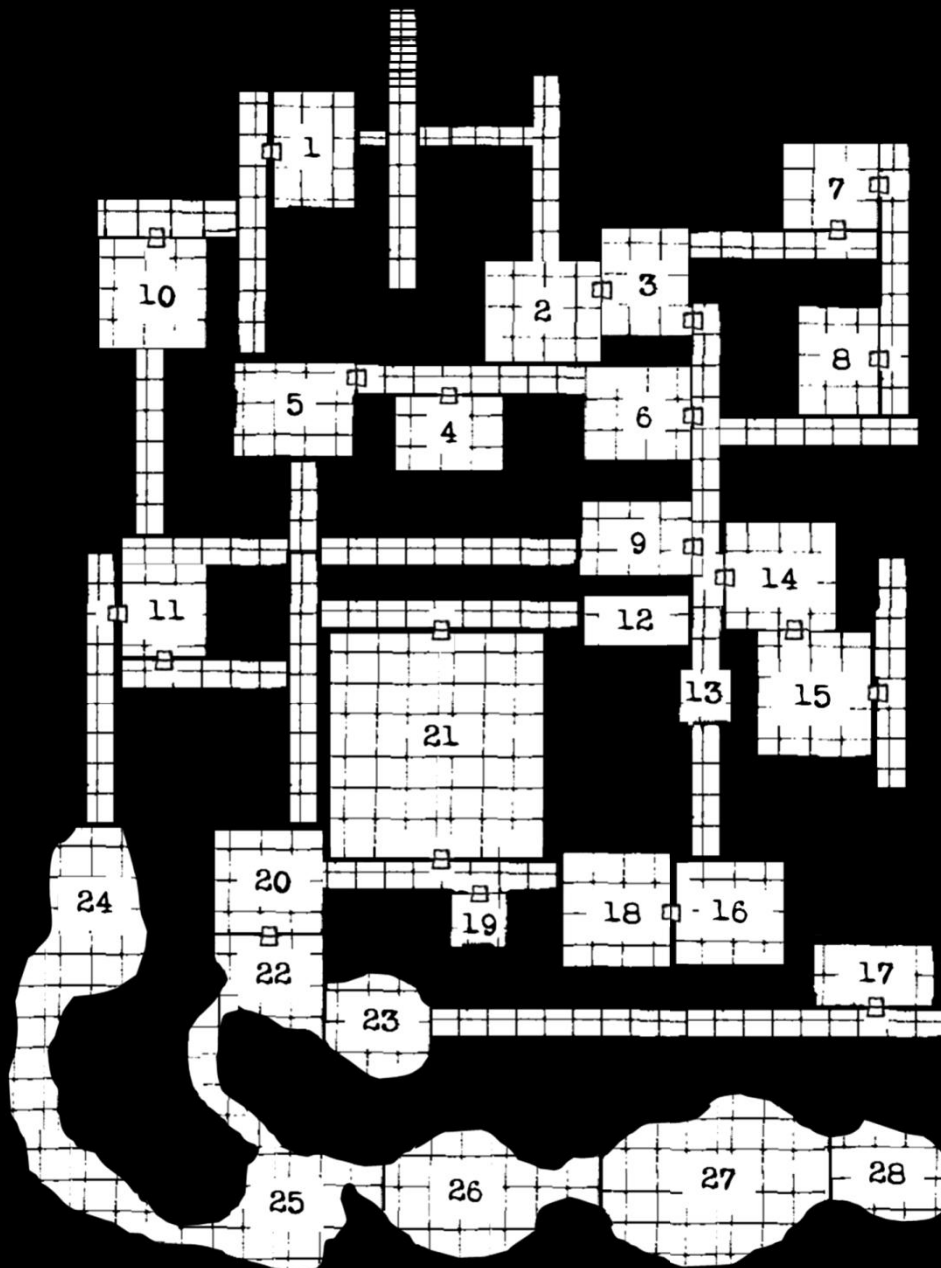
## REINFORCEMENTS

Once areas 1-10 are fully cleared, the orcs will not return. However, reinforcements will be called in to retake areas 11-19, although once these are beaten, the orc forces are exhausted:

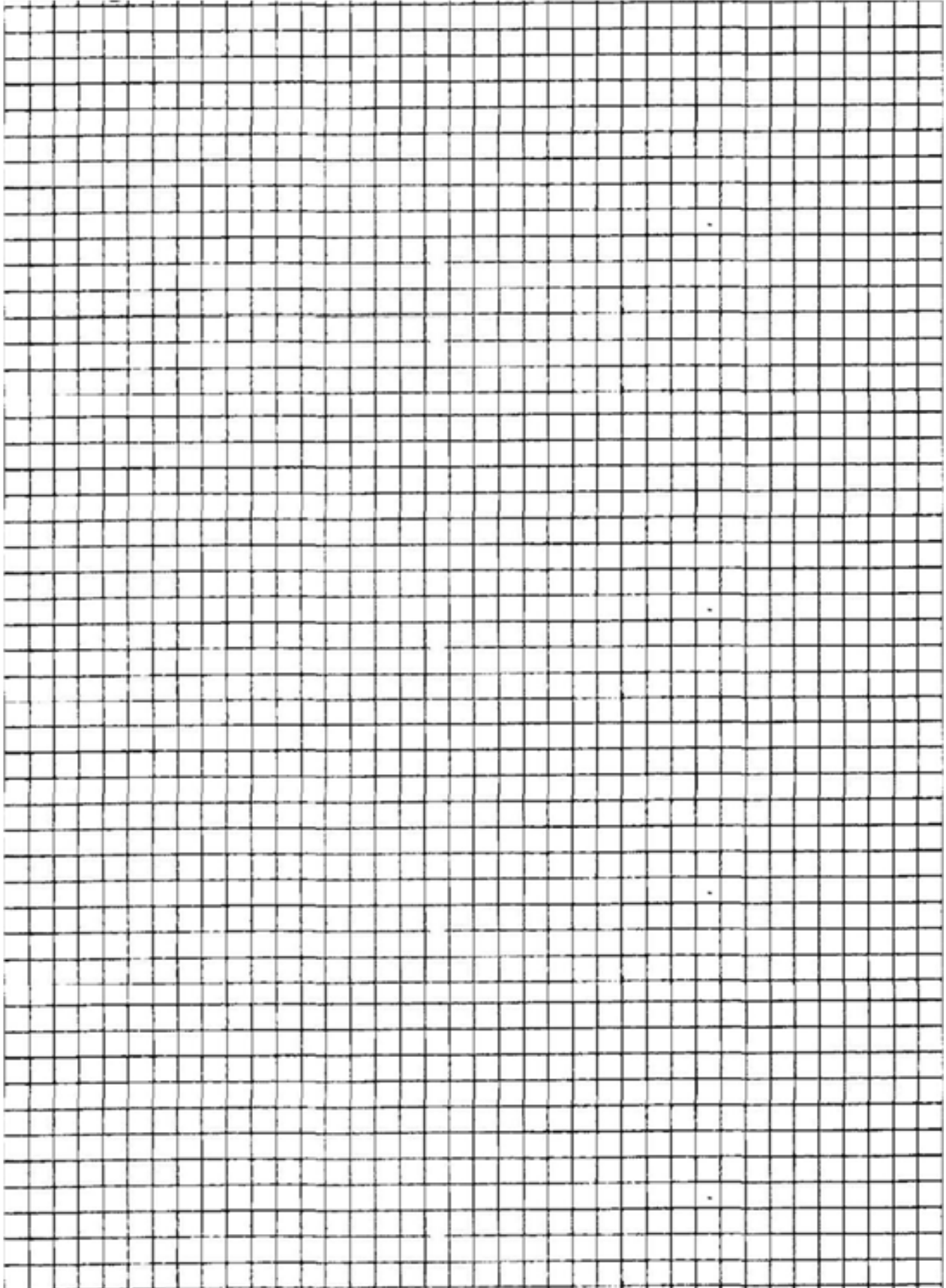
2d6	REINFORCEMENTS
2-5	Indicates no reinforcements placed and/or stationed
6-9	2d6 CONSCRIPTS (AK: 1 (clubs) LL: 1/+0 (1 HP) ME: 50' (---) SE: M/+0)
10-11	1d6 TROOPERS (AK: 1 (spears) LL: 1/+0 (3 HP) ME: 50' (---) SE: M/+0)
12	Referee's option, possibly a random encounter or some monster

Note: The referee can refer to the following for enemies listed in this adventure: Attacks (AK/type used), Level (LL/attack bonus/HP), Move (ME/armor worn), Size (SE/damage bonus), by class/weapon (\*) if applicable.





THE CELLARS OF CASTLE KEEP



## LEVEL 1: THE CELLARS

The cellars served mainly as a storage area and, occasionally, prison space, etc. Given the violence of the siege, damage here is widespread, and many areas are caved in and impassable without lengthy detours and/or other efforts by the characters. Ambitious referees might even introduce additional damage as the adventure progresses, posting changes to the map provided here for that very purpose.

AREAS 1-6, except where noted, are thick with cobwebs and ancient dust, suggesting no explorers from above and/or creatures from below, although wise parties will never take this for granted:

1 - EMPTY

2 - The high, vaulted ceiling is fractured in several places, with thin cracks leading to the surface. A BAT COLONY loiters above and may be disturbed by smoke from torches 1-3 in 1d6 of the time. These are treated as being a single organism capable of attacking 1 target per every 2 total hits remaining. They transmit no disease:

AK: 6 (bite/special) LL: 4/+1 (12 HP) ME: 30' (---) SE: M/+0

There is nothing else of interest here.

3 - EMPTY

4 - A visibly old skeleton, possibly dating back to the siege, is being gnawed by what appears to be 6 small rats. These are hungry DRATS, easily mistaken for the ordinary sort, with only a 1 in 1d6 chance of detection outside 10'. Ravenous, they strike:

AK: 1 (bite/flare) LL: 1/+0 (2 HP) ME: 20' (---) SE: S/+0

The drats breathe a fiery pitch (5' range) that may ignite scrolls and similar items, requiring saving dice at +2. A search of the remains turns up a silver ring worth 20 GP on one skeletal finger and 3d6 SP scattered carelessly around the body (1d6 rounds to collect).

5 - Anything useful and/or worth taking has already been looted from this once well-stocked place. However, more observant players will notice what looks like a weapon rack (spears) on the western wall covered in an immature FUNGI. Disturbing this disperses a cloud in a 10' radius that requires saving dice to avoid inhaling its poisonous spores and suffering from a weak poison (1d6 damage):

AK: 3 (poison) LL: 1/+0 (6 HP) ME: 0' (---) SE: M/+0

Only flame, magical or otherwise, can destroy this, although once the colony suffers at least 3 total hits, the spores are scattered in a 30' radius, dealing 1 hit (no saving dice) per round for 1d6 rounds. The spears held within are of the normal sort, with 3 in still-usable condition, although otherwise unremarkable. There is nothing else of value here.

6 - EMPTY

AREAS 7-11 are more heavily travelled, although this should not be obvious unless observant players question the point. The referee should describe the construction as plain:

7 - A patrol of 3 ORCS is waiting here, armed with spears, but otherwise unarmored. Depending on the events in area 5, above, these will be ready for the characters, adding +1 to initiative dice:

AK: 1 (spears) LL: 1/+0 (3 HP) ME: 50' (---) SE: M/+0

These orcs are robust and painted with a white ochre that might be ceremonial or a sign of rank. They will attack any obvious fighters in the party, using their spears as two-handed weapons and going to the bitter end with an almost religious zeal.

Searching the bodies yields no treasure, but only a strange fetish consisting of a mummified human hand on a simple leather strap around the neck, perhaps for good luck.

8 - EMPTY

9 - An orcish SHAMAN is passing through this area, seeking after the shimmering mold from area 5, above. She is dressed in a coat of specially cured human flesh that is treated as leather:

AK: 1 (staff) LL: 1/+0 (5/+1 HP) ME: 40' (leather) SE: M/+0

The shaman is a 1st level magician, knowing the Heal, Ruin, and Stun spells and carrying a SCROLL OF HEAL. She is accompanied by 4 guardians attired as the orcs in area 7, above, and quick to act.

AK: 1 (spears) LL: 1/+0 (3 HP) ME: 50' (---) SE: M/+0

Searching the bodies will turn up 60 CP.

10 - The ceiling is partially collapsed here, and beams of daylight (or moonlight, depending on the time of day) streams through, falling upon a strange black anvil that clearly fell from above.

The anvil was fashioned by the court magician and radiates a powerful magic such that elves have a 1-3 in 1d6 chance of detecting this, and even humans have a 1 in 1d6 chance. This was a vain effort to mass-produce enchanted weapons, although it was not a total failure, for placing any bladed weapon on its surface causes 1-3 glowing runes to appear somewhere on the item that emits the same magic.

Each rune, in fact, carries an enchantment that allows the wielder to automatically strike a single target for maximum damage, after which the corresponding rune vanishes. Any elves and/or magicians in the party will immediately see how the runes work such that they can instruct their companions, allowing them to choose when to apply this boon.



Once spent, the runes are gone, and characters who attempt to recharge their weapons find the anvil drained of its power. Optionally, the anvil recharges every full moon, which should always be far off to preserve a sense of game balance. It takes 5 persons moving 10' per round to transport this, noting that it has no monetary worth...

### 11 - Empty

AREAS 12-16 are more heavily occupied by the orcs, and although its construction remains solidly human, there are many signs of a nonhuman presence here. The referee should describe strange orc-totems and other signs of habitation to set the mood.

Observant players will begin to notice that these orcs are unusually well-organized, being divided into several distinctive castes by rank and easily identified by their appearance and function:

TYPE	NOTES
Conscripts	common orcs, all unarmored
Troopers	trained, marked by white ochre*
Sergeants	clad in rusty chainmail (+2)
Shamen (female)	wear hides of human leather (+1)#

\*Identical to the orcs in areas 7 and 9, above

#Treat as area 9, above, spells known will vary

The shamen have great autonomy. Otherwise, the sergeants are in firm command, although trooper patrols might act alone. Note that conscripts may flee without any leadership present.

12 - A patrol of 7 CONSCRIPTS and an armored SERGEANT is patrolling here, closing to do battle immediately:

AK: 1 (clubs) LL: 1/+0 (1 HP) ME: 50' (---) SE: M/+0

The sergeant gives the orders, being feared by the others:

AK: 1 (dagger/spear) LL: 1/+0 (3/+2 HP) ME: 30' (chainmail) SE: M/+0

Of course, the conscripts carry no wealth. However, their sergeant's simple chainmail is useable, and he has 25 SP in a cracked leather pouch.

13 - This long corridor is trapped, having a pressure plate that will be activated should anyone heavier than an elf step on it. Doing so opens a pit trap 10' deep filled with spikes for 1d6 damage (being otherwise too shallow for falling damage). The pit is large enough for up to 3 victims and requires 1d6+1 rounds to escape, nothing that tripping this alerts the conscripts and orc hounds from area 16, below.

Note that this was originally set by the castle's human occupants to prevent enemies from exploiting a then-exposed opening. The orcs are, of course, aware of this and avoid the place.

14 - Empty

15 - Again, the ceiling has collapsed here, dumping the contents of the chamber above among the rubble. A section of the castle wall has fallen to form a new ceiling, making it very dark and avoided even by the orcs living on this level. Two mated (and hungry) BASILISKS have made a nest here, feeding on careless intruders:

AK: 3 (bite/claws/poison) LL: 3/+1 (6 HP) ME: 20' (---) SE: S/+0

Engaging these in close combat requires saving dice to avoid meeting their gaze and suffering a weak (1d6) poison. If properly identified, steps can be taken to avoid this, often at some penalty.

Debris found among the rubble suggests the collapsed chamber had once belonged to the court magician, hiding 1 ELIXIR and a POTION OF GROWTH in copper vials and a strongbox holding 500 SP. Additionally, slitting the belly of one basilisk turns up a RING OF PROTECTION.

16 - Once a makeshift prison for drunken soldiers, this area has been converted into a kennel of rough sorts for 5 powerful ORC HOUNDS and their handlers, 12 armored CONSCRIPTS:

AK: 1 (clubs) LL: 1/+0 (1/+1 HP) ME: 40' (leather) SE: M/+0

The handlers are specially trained and, therefore, more competent and fearless than most. Their charges, pale and ravenous orc hounds, make any stealth difficult at best (roll at -2):

AK: 3 (bite/claws) LL: 2/+0 (4 HP) ME: 40' (---) SE: L/+1

Note that should a party trigger the pit trap in area 13, above, a patrol consisting of 5 handlers and 2 hounds will investigate.

All handlers carry 2d6 SP on their persons, attesting to their greater status and authority, for the care and breeding of orc hounds is considered essential to full control of the cellars.

Old cells line the southern and eastern walls, although the rusty doors have long since fallen off their hinges. One holds the skeletal and gnawed remains of some forgotten prisoner still clad in an overlooked suit of LEATHER ARMOR +2, indicating a rather hurried incarceration!



AREAS 17-22 were originally designed as (and used for) storage space, constituting as they do the bulk of the cellars. They now serve as living quarters for the orc population, and while this includes any so-called non-combatants, it is a dangerous place.

17 - Empty

18 - This was formerly a place for dried goods and salted meats, as the hooks in the ceiling will surely attest. It now serves as a barracks with filthy cots for at least 20 adults and housing 1d6+6 at any given time, although these might be caught off guard, losing initiative, if the party plans well and/or uses stealth, etc.

The orcs are treated as CONSCRIPTS armed with clubs:

AK: 1 (clubs) LL: 1/+0 (1 HP) ME: 50' (---) SE: M/+0

Note that if at least 10 orcs are present, there will be an armored sergeant, driving them on relentlessly:

AK: 1 (dagger/spear) LL: 1/+0 (3/+2 HP) ME: 30' (chainmail) SE: M/+0

Searching the straw-covered floor turns up 5,000 CP in a woolen sack, perhaps hidden by some fleeing soldier or thieving servant and forgotten when the castle fell. Otherwise, any sergeants carry 25 SP as previously described, usually in a pouch around the neck.

19 - The sergeants and troopers quarter here, although this is usually empty unless a party remains for at least 1 turn, after which 1d6 troopers return from duty (assume 1 sergeant per 6 encountered):

AK: 1 (spears) LL: 1/+0 (3 HP) ME: 50' (---) SE: M/+0

Sergeants, if any, have the following:

AK: 1 (dagger/spear) LL: 1/+0 (3/+2 HP) ME: 30' (chainmail) SE: M/+0

Unless numbers are evenly matched, any returning orcs will retreat at full speed to area 21, below, and evacuate all non-combatants through the sewer pipe per a standing order.

The barracks are otherwise tidy by orc standards, meaning the trash is piled against one side. Here, the party finds a SINGING BONE, notable for having odd runes along its side. It should take 1d6+4 rounds to locate this, noting that there is nothing else of value. Otherwise, all orcs carry wealth comparable to previous encounters.

20 - Empty

21 - This impressive area houses the general population, consisting mainly of females and young. Accordingly, there are nearly a dozen cook fires burning, with smoke escaping through cracks in the ceiling when not otherwise staining the walls here with black encrusted ash.

Normally, there are 30 FEMALES and 20 YOUNG living here, and all will retreat to area 24, below, when confronted. These are worth no experience, being easily slain in retreat (and requiring no real skill). Even so, certain individuals may fight if cornered, rolling at +1 from desperation and/or when defending their young:

AK: 1 (bite/claws) LL: 1/+0 (1 HP) ME: 50' (---) SE: M/+0

Searching among the heaped straw and piled furs, the party will find little of real worth except, perhaps, some barely edible rations of unknown origin and foul taste. Optionally, they may find scattered baubles and primitive jewelry worth 20 GP.

Note here that lawful characters who attack fleeing orcs may suffer alignment repercussions, especially if otherwise sworn to some standard of chivalry and/or fair and honorable conduct.

AREAS 22-28 are largely unfinished, being made of rough-hewn stone bordering on natural caves. Given its isolation and nearness to the sewers in area 24, below, the orcish leadership has made their base here, keeping watch over its people and escape routes.

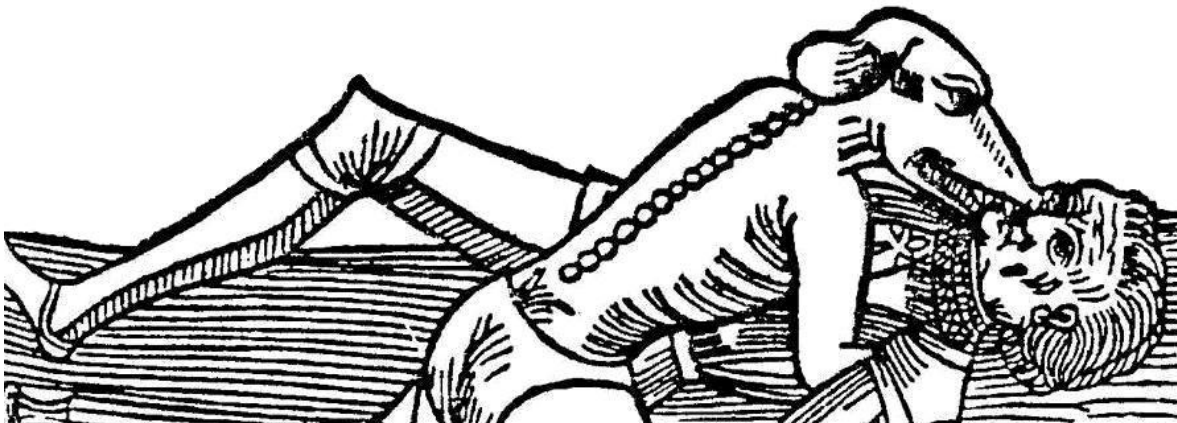
22 - Empty

23 - A large (20' diameter), circular opening leads to a vast array of underground sewers that should be considered too dark and/or convoluted to allow for effective pursuit. It will take 1d6 turns to evacuate here, barring some intervention by the characters, etc.

24 - The dead are cast aside here, possibly for religious reasons, and the air is most foul. Searching this disturbs 2 orcish PLAGUE ZOMBIES covered in pulpy and oozing green spores:

AK: 1 (claw/spores) LL: 2/+0 (5 HP) ME: 20' (---) SE: M/+0

Successful melee attacks require saving dice to avoid inhaling spores unless steps are taken to avoid this. Otherwise, anyone slain will become a plague zombie in 1 round. In life, one of these was obviously important, wearing a gold necklace of exquisite design worth 100 GP.



25 - The remaining 3 SHAMEN reside here, huddled around a great black cauldron spewing noxious (magical) smoke. Should the party behave aggressively, the shamen overturn the cauldron, filling the chamber with black smoke and reducing player visibility to 10' such that any attacks are rolled at -1 and all movement cut in half.

Rising out of the mist is a summoned GARGOYLE that attacks the party without the above restrictions, noting that this is a special power given only to orcish shamen. This is otherwise like the ordinary sort, being impervious to non-magical missiles:

AK: 3 (bite/claws) LL: 3/+1 (9 HP) ME: 30' (---) SE: M/+0

The shamen wear cloaks treated as leather:

AK: 1 (staves) LL: 1/+0 (5/+1 HP) ME: 40' (leather) SE: M/+0

All shamen are 1st level magicians, knowing the Heal, Rout, and Wink spells and using the latter to distance themselves should the party gain the upper hand, making their way to area 27, below.

If the gargoyle is slain, the smoke clears to reveal a filthy living chamber lined with stinking furs and mostly worthless effects, like bones and tribal fetishes, etc. A grey flat stone covers a hole hiding a secret hoard of 6,000 CP, some DUST OF VANISHING, and a DAGGER +1.

26 - Empty

27 - The ORC CHIEF, Ghurk, holds court here, sitting on a primitive makeshift throne flanked by 2 ORC HOUNDS and 3 TROOPERS armed with spears and faithful unto death. These will act only on command or when their chief is attacked or otherwise hurt.

Ghurk is a 1st level fighter armed with a mace treated as two-handed, although only in his hands. His hounds attack only to defend themselves or when their master is engaged and/or injured:

AK: 1 (mace) LL: 1/(\*) (10/+1 HP) ME: 50' (---) SE: M/+0

The troopers attack on command:

AK: 1 (spears) LL: 1/+0 (3 HP) ME: 50' (---) SE: M/+0

Ghurk's hounds will never leave his side:

AK: 3 (bite/claws) LL: 2/+0 (4 HP) ME: 40' (---) SE: L/+1

The chief is wise and will attempt to negotiate in a halting common speech, explaining that his ancestors were ordered to take the cellars and await further instructions. These never came, and Ghurk's predecessor carried out their charge with almost religious fervor. That said, smart players might be able to convince the orcs to leave, either by proving the feared sorcerer dead or convincing them the order has changed, etc.

Note that convincing Ghurk will require more than a charisma check, perhaps fabricated evidence that The Sorcerer is dead, with success based on the cleverness and effort made. These details are left to the individual group, however, any hostile action towards the females and children makes such agreement impossible to achieve.

28 - This is Ghurk's personal living quarters, piled high with opulent furs (by orc standards) and gnawed bones, etc. Optionally, 1-2 females loiter here and defend themselves only if attacked or otherwise threatened, biting and/or using claws:

AK: 1 (bite/claws) LL: 1/+0 (1 HP) ME: 50' (---) SE: M/+0

Searching the furs turns up an iron box having 100 SP and 3,500 CP held with a silver pin worth 5 GP. There is also a fine amulet worth 150 GP, clearly of elven make, but non-magical. Obviously, this goes unclaimed if negotiations are successful and the orcs depart.

#### EPILOGUE AND AFTERWORD

Should the orcs go peacefully, the King's men will occupy the cellar, close off the sewers, and bar the party from further entry. If hostilities are necessary, the party will need to offer proof of their victory, with similar results as the King's men close off the cellars and seize unclaimed treasure for the Crown under pain of death!

#### ORIGINAL ENEMIES

The following new enemies are included here, noting that they need not be limited to the ruins of castle keep:

NAME	ATTACKS	LEVEL	MOVE	SIDE	SIZE	NUMBER	TREASURE
Colony, bat	6(*)	4	30'	N	M	(*)	---
Orc hound	3(*)	2	40'	C	L	4-6	---

Note that the referee is completely free to modify these for use in their own campaign and/or world setting, etc.

BAT COLONIES are bats of the usual sort, but in numbers large enough to require special treatment. These are considered a single organism, rolling once and hitting a single target per every 1-2 HP remaining. For game purposes, the colony rolls saving dice at +1 when reduced to less than half total hits, with success letting them disperse. Like all bats, some might carry disease, etc. Of course, enterprising referees can apply this rule to rats and similar pests that appear in large numbers.

The terrible ORC HOUND is specially bred for fierceness, appearing pale, hairless, and powerfully built. These stand 3' at the shoulder, attacking as large with a bite and two powerful claws and having a keen sense of smell in addition to being able to see in the dark. This makes them valued hunters and trackers, although only specialist orcs can breed and, more importantly, command these monstrous dogs. Given their keen senses, any attempts at stealth will be rolled at -2 unless magic is used.



