

RUINED CASTLE



Ruined castles dot the landscape of every campaign.

OUTSIDE THE CASTLE

1. Thick stands of brambles and bushes ward the ruin's approaches. Here and there, game trails force their way through the dense undergrowth.
2. Tracks in the dried mud betray the presence of animals—perhaps deer, foxes and wolves—along with other more dangerous bipedal predators.
3. Partially hidden by thorny bushes, and the boughs of two youngish saplings, a tumbled pile of moss-covered stones hints at an ancient burial.
4. The mouldering remains of a brown cloak are snagged on a thorny bush. They flutter in the breeze; inattentive—or paranoid—characters may assume the cloak is a lurking enemy.
5. A decaying arrow, its fletching long since rotten away, juts from a tree trunk.
6. A humanoid's yellowing bones sprawl among the weeds. A crushed skull and the total absence of the unfortunate's legs hint at a violent and grizzly death. Rusting fragments of equipment lie scattered around the remains.

IN THE COURTYARD

1. Moss and lichens grow in patches across the castle's crumbling walls. In places, the growths entirely obscure the stonework.
2. A scattering of rubble mars the mud and weeds of the castle's courtyard. Here and there stands of taller grass, tangled brambles and small bushes complete the look of decrepitude.
3. The blackened, crumbling carcass of a cart lie amid the rubble and ruin. One of its wheels is missing. Perceptive characters find the wheel's shattered remains a short distance away, languishing in a patch of thick weeds.
4. The battlements atop this section of wall look to be in particularly bad repair. Moss grows thick across the wall here—and could be the only thing holding the crenelations in place!
5. Weeds grow thickly between the pitted, tilted flags comprising the floor. Some of the flagstones have shifted and moved as a result of subsidence, and rock gently when walked upon. Paranoid PCs may suspect a trap.
6. Doorways and windows gape wide—their doors and shutters rotting away. Deep shadows cluster thickly beyond; perhaps within lurk the castle's hungry, feral denizens...

INSIDE THE CASTLE

1. Scratches and marks on the wall record the names of the folk that once dwelled here. Some of the names appear with a date alongside. Some are surprisingly recent.
2. Charcoal smudges on the wall show where someone once stubbed out a torch.
3. The faint smell of mould and rot hangs in the air. Shortly thereafter, the party discover a pile of rotting wood and fabric mouldering away against a wall. (It looks like a tapestry fell over a piece of furniture).
4. The flagged floor is rough and uneven—some of the flagstones have shifted with the passing of the years.
5. A dry, rust-coloured stain on the floor and one wall show where someone lost a lot of blood long ago. It is doubtful the injured person could have survived such a terrible wound without magical aid.
6. Crumbling mortar has made the archway above this doorway dangerously unstable. Incautious movement through the opening could result in several stones falling (onto the unfortunate passing through).

UNDER THE CASTLE

1. Water oozes through the wall—from the cracks between the faced stone blocks—to collect in a small pool on the floor. The air is musty.
2. Dusty cobwebs festoon the ceiling, obscuring it from sight. In places, they hang from the ceiling and drift gently in the breeze.
3. The sound of water dripping into some far-off pool or puddle reaches the party's ears.
4. The skeletal remains of a warrior lie sprawled across the flagstones. A spear rammed through the unfortunate's ribcage pins the remains to the floor. One skeletal hand still clutches the spear's shaft as if he tried to pull the spear free before succumbing to his wounds.
5. A rotting wooden door hangs from its upper hinge at a crazed angle. Soft shards of damp, rotten wood and the remains of the door's missing hinge lie on the floor nearby.
6. A patch of white and dull brown fungi grows in a damp corner amid the bones of some previous unlucky explorer or denizen. Water oozes down the wall, behind the remains.

CREDIT

This is a short system-neutral extract from *20 Things #27: Ruined Castle* by Creighton Broadhurst.