

LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE MODULE

FIFTH EDITION FANTASY #14

BENEATH THE KEEP

BY CHRIS DOYLE



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COVER ARTIST: DAVID GRIFFITH • EDITOR: TIM WADZINSKI

INTERIOR ARTISTS: CHRIS YARBROUGH

CARTOGRAPHER: KEITH CURTIS • DESIGN: EDWARD LAVALLEE

INTERIOR LAYOUT: JAMIE WALLIS



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BENEATH THE KEEP

By Chris Doyle

Beneath the Keep is an adventure designed for use with the 5th edition of the first fantasy roleplaying game. It is intended for four to six 1st-level characters and can be completed in a single session. A variety of character classes is suggested to tackle the challenges of solving the murder mystery presented herein. A cleric would be very beneficial to overcome

several of the undead challenges, and silvered or magic weapons are crucial to have a chance against the final foe. The adventure is set in several finished chambers and natural caves below a remote keep or outpost, and can easily be dropped into a similar setting or a more urban location of the GM's own design.

BACKGROUND

Situated in the wilderness is a fortified keep, sitting atop a natural flat-top hill. The keep is a bastion of good people, eking out an existence in the untamed wilds, but surrounded by evil on all sides. Thick stone walls patrolled by able-bodied men-at-arms provide protection to a thriving community. Roving bands of bloodthirsty humanoids, ravenous wild beasts, and vile brigands are but a few of the constant threats that face the inhabitants of the keep. Even from beneath the very foundation of the keep do the forces of evil oppose the good folk residing within.

Garan is a simple man, the proprietor of a small provision shop located in the wilderness keep. He sells all manner of mundane items such as cookery and building supplies, and adventuring equipment such as rope, flasks of oil, and backpacks. Although a few spears and long knives are for sale in the shop, Garan sends those seeking arms and armor to a nearby blacksmith. His prices are fair, and he is always interested in tales from beyond the wall, or is quick to offer his pessimistic view on the local leadership. Garan lives alone in a small apartment at the back of his shop, unaware that a secret door conceals passage to a long-forgotten cellar. But agents of evil are aware of those secret underground chambers, and use them to further their nefarious plots in the region.

A few miles from the keep is a hidden temple of unspeakable evil and ultimate chaos. The secluded sanctuary is dedicated to a foul deity of chaos, manned by an active congregation of foul priests and acolytes. The god requires frequent blood sacrifices to appease and grant its followers evil spells. This requires a steady supply of captives and slaves, which the local bandits (and some-

times humanoids) are more than willing to provide—for a price. The easiest source of these slaves is the keep, a popular stop-over for travelers, adventurers, and merchants.

Illyana Tatanova is one of the agents of chaos, a former acolyte that succumbed to the curse of lycanthropy while questing in her god's name. She came to the hidden temple a few years ago and pledged her service. Due to her curse, she was never truly accepted by the clerical hierarchy and often was outright shunned. Attracted to the hustle and the bustle of the nearby keep, it was a natural landing spot. She soon discovered the natural honeycomb of caves beneath the keep, and a few finished chambers under Garan's shop, apparently long-forgotten. These chambers were a perfect hideout, complete with an abandoned shrine, a winding escape route, and plenty of monstrous rats.

Today, she is an agent, spy, and slaver for the nearby temple of chaos. Using stealth and her ability to assume the form of a rat, she gathers information on easy targets visiting the keep (those that would not go missing). Using trained carrier pigeons, she communicates with local bandits on target appearance, group composition, and departure/arrival schedules. Once captured by the bandits, captives are transported to the nearby temple of chaos for eventual sacrifice. The bounty paid to the bandits is shared with Illyana, although her motivation is less material wealth, and more for the thrill of the mark, and the devotion to serve her dark god.

But last night, by chance Garan located the secret door in his apartment (installed by the previous owner for his own nefarious motives), and cautiously crept down the

stairs to a dusty cellar. He triggered a trap on the stairs set by Illyana, which summoned her rat allies to investigate. She had no choice but to slaughter the fool before he fled back up the stairs to summon the night watch. She hastily staged a murder scene in the shop, and moved the body deeper into her lair, before pondering her next move. Not willing to so easily give up her lair, she prepares for an eventual investigation.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

This adventure begins with the characters already present at the wilderness keep. It's up to the GM to decide why the characters are at the keep, and how they can get involved in the investigation of a missing local shopkeeper. A few suggestions are presented.

- The characters are hired by a friend or family member of Garan to investigate his disappearance. The patron lacks confidence that the garrison troops can or will conduct a comprehensive investigation.
- The characters are getting ready to embark on a wilderness adventure, and head to the provisioner's shop early in the morning to pick up a few supplies needed for overland travel. Once there, they encounter the town guard, who have sealed off the shop as a crime scene. Since the town guard have little appetite to conduct an investigation, the natural curiosity of the characters gets the best of them, and they look into the matter.
- The night before, the characters get in trouble with the local authorities, likely while carousing at the local tavern. To pay for damages, or avoid legal action, the characters agree to investigate the crime scene.

Quest: Investigate Garan's Disappearance and Bring the Responsible Party to Justice. Regardless of the hook used, the characters' goal is to investigate Garan's disappearance, and determine Illyana's motivation and connection with the hidden temple of chaos. Depending on the hook used, the GM needs to determine what an appropriate award (if any) would be for the completion of this task.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins when the characters agree to investigate an obvious crime scene. Read or paraphrase the text below, adjusting the text based on the particular hook employed by the GM:

As you approach the provisions shop, you are greeted by a gathering of town guard. Two guards stand at attention, blocking entrance to the shop door with a pair of crossed spears. The morning sun glints off their shiny helmets. Several other guards, adorned in chain mail and carrying halberds, mill about, most of them looking bored. Another guard, wearing plate armor, appears to be in charge, and is questioning a portly man in priestly garb.

If the characters interact with the guards, they are motioned to talk to the corporal of the watch (the guard wearing plate armor). Assuming the characters agree to investigate the crime scene, continue with the description of area 1.

GENERAL FEATURES

The Shop. Areas 1 and 2 are above ground, located in the courtyard of the wilderness keep. The building is constructed of stout timbers with a peaked slate roof. A single locked wooden Dutch-style door provides access to the shop. Garan had the only key. The door can be forced open with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check, or can be unlocked with a successful DC 22 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. A guard is fetching a master key from the garrison. The door is AC 15 and has 20 hit points. The building has but one story with a 10-foot-high ceiling. There are two small windows, one of them smashed open (see area 1 for details).

Finished Chambers. Areas 3 through 7 are all about 30 feet below ground. These chambers are dusty but mostly dry. Areas 4 and 7 see quite a bit of traffic from Illyana and her rat allies. Areas 5 and 6 have gone unused for many years and are coated with a thick layer of dust. The walls of these chambers are smooth hewn stone, with ceilings averaging 8 to 12 feet high unless otherwise noted. Climbing one of these walls requires a successful DC 17 Strength (Athletics) check.

Natural Caverns. Area 8 is a set of twisting passages, created by water flow through soft limestone. The passages gradually slope east to west. These walls are damp, and vary in width (typically 3 to 7 feet) and height (typically 6 to 8 feet, unless otherwise noted in the text). These walls sport many interesting flowstone structures and the occasional stalactite or stalagmite. The floor is uneven, and strewn with small rubble and scree. The walls are easier to scale, requiring a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check to climb.