

SECRETS OF THE OLD CITY

An urban dungeon scenario for Normal tier players

Secrets of the Old City was originally written as a system-neutral dungeon for the inaugural One Page Dungeon Contest in 2009 and was selected as the overall Best of the Best entry in that competition. The following revision of the original entry has been prepared specifically for use with Delving Deeper and other Oe games.

Background

Everyone has heard a dozen tales that hint the City was built over the ruins of an older place. Tales they may be, but evidence of the fabled Old City is easy enough to find; the old architecture mixed with the new, the deep basement levels and sunken boulevards, and the eerie noises that come by night. And rumor of buried treasures make persistent tavern talk, even now...

The Old City is the bedrock upon which the City is built; its dilapidated streets now serve as an underground drainage system. The stink of sewage and rubbish pervades the Old City's dank tunnels, as do rats and centipedes.

Most of the Old City buildings are collapsed or filled with rubble; however, a few buildings and unexplored crawlways may yet be entered.

The two principal causeways of the sewers are being shored-up by City Engineers with new stoneworks and are dimly lit through the overhead sluice grates and by torches maintained by the City Guard. The remainder of the Old City network is of far older stonework and is unlit.

Map Legend

(*) Torch (1-2 lit, 3-4 guttering, 5-6 spent).

(S) Secret Door hidden by collapsed/broken stonework.

(?) Unexplored Crawlway (an opportunity for the referee to extend the dungeon).

(#) Sluice Grate; drainage from the City's streets 20-30ft overhead. A narrow grate that admits sewage, storm water, and a dim shaft of daylight (or moonlight).

(&C) Yellow Mold [AC 9 MV - HD 3 N]; a hazardous growth that is almost indistinguishable from other filth in the dim sewers.

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Delving Deeper

Keyed Areas

[1] **ENTRANCE** A spiral stair descends from the surface to a locked door. A sign on the door says “Keep Out”.

[2] **GUARD HOUSE** Seven (or 2-16) bored City Guards [AC 6 MV 12” HD 1 L] are here shuffling work rosters, cleaning gear, drinking coffee, and playing cards (treat as lawfully aligned brigands without prisoners). Officer Bram is a 1st level fighter [AC 6 MV 12” HD 1+2 L] and has a key to the door at #1. They will object to anyone trespassing the sewers and may try to arrest them. Each man has 2-12 sp on his person.

[3] **CAUSEWAY** A foul slick of 1ft deep City waste crawls toward #16. A 2ft wide ledge runs along either side a few inches above the filth. Alas, it is poorly kept and treacherous. Haphazardly placed rocks make unsteady stepping-stones amid the awful flow.

[4] **SUBMERGED PIT TRAP** The ledges are badly broken hereabouts. A number of slippery stepping stones may tempt explorers; however, hidden beneath the filthy runoff is a 10ft deep, 7ft wide fissure. Anyone slipping into it will vanish into the foul muck and risk drowning.

[5] **WORKS DEPOT** This large area is mostly cleared of rubble. Tools and equipment suitable for shoring-up the stonework are stored in a locked, dilapidated building. A stockpile of newly cleaned stones is adjacent.

[6] **THIEF’S ENTRY** An unsteady stair hidden within a ruined building leads right up to a loose sluice grate. By shifting the grate aside an unencumbered figure may access the sewers.

[7] **TOAD’S GROTTO** The boots of a recently eaten Goblin stand near a filthy, stagnant pool. A Giant Toad [AC 6 MV 6”/6” HD 2+4 N] lays in wait, submerged in the pool, and will likely attack by surprise and possibly swallow whole. It will submerge itself again for protection if retreat is necessary.

[8] **GOBLIN FOOTHOLD** A band of ten (or 1-19) Goblins [AC 7 MV 9” HD 1-1 C] have recently infiltrated the sewers and have already sent word to their cousins. They are aware of the Giant Toad at #7 and of the thieves at #9. Each Goblin carries 1-6 gp.

[9] **THIEVES’ DEN** A gang of nine (or 2-16) Thieves makes their hideout here in a ruinous knot of free-standing Old City buildings. Jimmy Able is their cunning leader and a 2nd level thief [AC 7 MV 12” HD 1+1 N] (if these are used), or else a 1st level fighter [AC 7 MV 12” HD 1+2 N]. He wears a gambeson and carries a magical dagger +1, +2 vs goblins & hobgoblins. Treat the remainder as Bandits with no prisoners and without shields [AC 9 MV 12” HD 1 N]; each carries a purse of 1-6 gp.

The thieves may feign cooperation but will betray and rob the players given half a chance. They have amassed a modest hoard which is hidden in two separate stashes:

#1 A locked chest containing 600 cp, 330 sp and 90 gp is hidden beneath a pair of loose floor boards. Jimmy has the only key.

#2 A velvet-lined large sack containing stolen silverwear is hidden up a chimney chute. It contains a dozen (or 4-24) individually wrapped plates, bowls, goblets, cutlery settings, and so on burgled from the City. Each piece is worth 3-18 gp. However, one large (and fragile) crystal bowl is worth 100 gp.

The thieves know of and avoid the Ogre at #18, but may lure the players there.

[10] **RENEGADE'S STASH** A double-crossing thief stole the gang's most prized loot and smuggled it here, only to fall prey to a dozen (or 2-24) Centipedes [AC 9 MV 6" HD ½ N]. The Centipedes now nest inside the corpse which clutches a lockbox containing a coin purse of 30 gp and a Wand of Detecting Secrets with 31 charges remaining.

[11] **TRIP WIRE TRAPS** Trip wires have been set by the Thieves (see #9) to warn them of visitors. These cause stone piles to topple off a high wall with a clatter, possibly causing minor injury.

[12] **SPIDER ANTE** The spider ante is a web-strewn cave littered with skeletal remains. Four (or 1-10) Large Spiders [AC 8 MV 6"/15" HD ½ N] are hidden in dark recesses overlooking this area, guarding the batch of unhatched eggs that crowd the ground. One of the dessicated corpses wears a silver ring worth 20 gp, but an alluring gleam is visible ahead, in #13.

[13] **SPIDER LAIR** The spider lair is a web-strewn feeding ground where a Giant Black Widow [AC 5 MV 3"/12" HD 4+4 C] awaits. She will likely surprise from above or behind, possibly dragging her luckless victim into a dark tunnel to be devoured before anyone can respond. The gleam visible from #12 is from a steel helmet worth 10 gp.

Former victims' goods make up the loot amounting to 1,000 cp of old trinkets, packs, tools, and coins. One of the dusty corpses is clad in serviceable mail (worth 35 gp), but access to #14 is the main prize.

[14] **GEM CUTTER'S WORKSHOP** Forced entry into this Old City building may reveal a small trove of Old City vintage coin—some 4,000 sp. There are 30 uncut stones to be found worth 10 gp each, nine gems worth 30 gp each, five gems worth 100 gp each, and two gems worth 300 gp each. Locating them all will require a thorough search.

[15] **OLD WATCH TOWER** The only access to the old watch tower is via an open window some 14ft above (reachable by an Ogre). The tower contains a dark stair up to a condemned ruin in the City's poor quarter where children sometimes play. Optionally, the stair also leads down to dungeon level 2.

[16] **DROP HOLE** The causeway filth drops some 30ft into a wretched cesspit. Welcome to dungeon level 2.

[17] **FUGITIVE'S HIDEOUT** A terrified girl has escaped the Ogre's cook-pot (see #18) and hides in this tiny cave. A single shaft of light falls from an awkward crack between street cobblestones, 30ft above. Her parents will pay a modest reward (3-18 gp) for her rescue.

[18] **OGRE'S LAIR** A narrow ledge overlooks a grisly cave occupied by an Ogre [AC 6 MV 9" HD 4+1 C] and his pet Warg [AC 6 MV 18" HD 3+3 C]. A giant cookpot in the middle of the cave is surrounded by children's shoes and bones. Two terrified boys are penned in at the rear. The Ogre wears a stout mail shirt and carries a great mace, while the Warg wears a spiked collar of Protection from Good.

If attacked by numbers the Ogre will kick over his boiling cauldron, scalding anyone within 1" and creating a Fog Wall that lasts 2-4 turns. Scalding will cause a man-type to immediately recoil 1" suffering 1-6 hit points of damage and to drop whatever is carried on a throw of 1-2 on a six-sided die.

The Ogre's loot includes 2,000 sp and 400 gp in four large sacks, as well as a keg of sour ale, a side of lamb, a quantity of children's dolls and toys, and a wheelbarrow of hardware taken from City Guards. The boys' parents will pay a modest reward (3-18 gp) for their rescue.

[19] **EMPTY ROOM** The many empty rooms were formerly (1-4 homes, 5 stores, 6 civic places) but are now (1-2 clear of, 3-4 littered with, 5-6 full of) rubble.

Random Encounters

2-12	Encounter
2*	1 frightened girl aged 3-8 years escaped from #18.
3*	2-16 boys aged 3-8 years; 1-2 fleeing for their lives, 3-4 lost and afraid, 5 looking to become brave adventurers, 6 looking to join the thieves at #9.
4*	2-16 thieves [AC 9 MV 12" HD 1 N] 1-2 heading out on a job, 3-4 setting a tripwire trap, 5-6 returning from a job with loot.
5	2-16 City Guards [AC 6 MV 12" HD 1 L] 1-4 on patrol, 5 returning with wounded, 6 making dirty deal with local thieves.
6	2-24 Large Centipedes [AC 9 MV 6" HD ½ N].
7	2-12 Giant Rats [AC 7 MV 12"/6" HD ½ N].
8	1-10 Large Spiders [AC 8 MV 6"/15" HD ½ N].
9	2-20 Goblins [AC 7 MV 9" HD 1-1 C] 1-3 scouting, 4 setting a trap, 5 disarming a trap, 6 hiding loot.
10*	2-16 City Engineers [AC 9 MV 12" HD 1 Variable] apparently surveying the state of the City's sewers, but actually 1-2 as they appear, 3-4 digging for treasure, 5-6 undermining City defenses.
11*	2 (or 1-8) Ogres [AC 6 MV 9" HD 4+1 C] 1-3 checking the surrounds, 4-5 heading out child-snatching, 6 returning with 1-3 children.
12*	3 (or 1-12) Wights [AC 6 MV 9" HD 3 C] tormented spirits of the Old City.

* Encounters 2, 3, 4, and 10, 11, 12 should only occur once each.