

# THE SWAMP DRAGON CULT

By Elven Tower and Maps 'N' Quests

Designed for use with

**ShadowDark RPG**



**LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE**

**AN INTRODUCTORY SHADOWDARK ADVENTURE ABOUT BATTLING A DRACONIC CULT**



# ADVENTURE PRIMER

“We do not have an actual purpose for that building. But we cannot have criminals making use of it, can we? Make sure it remains abandoned, empty.”

General Makillan

**I**n a world filled with magic and mythical creatures, it is not uncommon for simple people to fear what they do not understand. Thus, most parents in small settlements tell their children cautionary stories about dragons and hags, even if they have never seen one in the flesh. The ability to imagine these incredible creatures sparks great things within the heart of a child. For instance, the sentiment could become what motivates them to become a knight and protect their kingdom. But even the slightest tint of corruption or evil can deviate a child's thoughts.

Those unfortunate children that become traumatized or obsessed with something tend to isolate themselves away from society. Their loneliness and their weakened state of mind are the perfect hosts for evil thoughts and schemes. Harold Jade is an example of this. A poor child who spent his childhood hearing stories of foul dragons.

## HAROLD'S BACKGROUND

**THE CHILD GREW** up into a dangerous man. Harold became a master of disguise and persuasion in the streets. During his life, he learned everything he could about dragons and how to understand their complex character. He climbed his way through a world of crime and evil. And one day, his resolve was enough to gain followers. In a matter of months, he formed his cult within the walls of Straster City, a place surrounded by numerous smaller settlements, forests, and a massive swamp.

## THE SWAMP DRAGON CULT

**HAROLD'S RESEARCH DURING** the past decade was successful. He learned that a young black dragon found its new home within the Dark Pools, the large swamp region a few days away from Straster City.

Thus, six months ago, Harold led a score of men into the swamp to promise the dragon their loyalty and show it their devotion. Alas, it was a massacre. The dragon had no interest in their company and resorted to violence to stop the humans' persistence on the spot. Seven men died that day. Still, Harold managed to convince the others that it was their fault; that they were unworthy of the dragon's favor. The Swamp Dragon Cult left the city and built a new hideout close to the swamp.

Harold's cult took over an empty fortification, abandoned after the war. The cultists have done several raids and well-planned robberies. They amass resources to build a shrine to honor the dragon and earn its respect, or at least its acknowledgment. They have not succeeded, though. The dragon cares not for the cult's efforts.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

### Level 1

**Agents of Good.** The cult has stolen too much from the people. Straster City authorities hire the characters to put a stop to the cult and recover the goods (20 gp, 1 XP).

**Military Op.** General Makillan requires the characters to recover the outpost that the cult uses as a hideout. The man cares not about the stolen goods (30 gp, 2 XP).

**Rescue Mission.** Lord Gilbert hires the characters. He informs them that his daughter Sonia Gilbert joined the Swamp Dragon Cult. He wishes to see her back home. He cares about nothing else (40 gp, 2 XP).

### RUMORS

#### d10 Details

- 1 Cows have gone missing. The strange thing is that the locations where they disappear are separated by miles.
- 2 A month ago, three people were killed by a burning acidic substance. They were found next to a stable. All of the animals were missing. There was blood everywhere.
- 3 Word is that a man named Harold leads the Swamp Dragon Cult. Villagers claim that he has scaled skin.
- 4 The Swamp Dragon Cult hit the jackpot two weeks ago. They attacked a merchant caravan and left nothing.
- 5 It is said that dragon hide is stronger than steel. It cannot be pierced by simple weapons. Magic is necessary. The cult leader has convinced good people to join him with lies and empty promises. A wealthy man's daughter, named Sonia, is one of them (see **Adventure Hooks**).
- 7 The dragon in the swamp is a myth. There is no dragon.
- 8 The Swamp Dragon Cult befriended the dragon and receive power from it. The cult members breathe fire.
- 9 The cult plans to attack Eight-Towers Keep. Taking over this location is paramount for their goals (see page 6)
- 10 The dragon in the swamp has a band of faithful draconic followers. A kobold clan lives there to protect it.

# STRASTERTON

That bloody cult must disappear at once! I bet they control the damn dragon! They have killed our game, stolen our stuff... I'm tired of being small...

Concerned Villager



This town is one of the several settlements and villagers around Straster City. Consider that the map below only shows a small section of it. There are individual descriptions of the places that the characters are most likely to visit.

The characters are ready for a life of adventure and their first stop is Strasterton. Due to their gear and their looks, their presence does not go unnoticed. They are contacted by Straster City's Bailiff, General Makillan, or Lord Gilbert (**Adventure Hooks**). The heroes could be contacted by two hiring parties if the GM wishes.

During their time in Strasterton, the characters learn about the cult's plan to attack Eight-Towers Keep.

## Features of the Town

► **Atmosphere.** The people look worried. Villagers are jumpy and defensive. Check for **Random Events** every time the characters visit a new location on the map.

► **Smells.** The scent of flowers fills the air but it is contrasted with the piercing stench of manure.

► **Weather.** Warm. The sky is clear this time of the year.

► **People.** The cult's deeds have the entire town sleeping with one eye open. The characters' arrival in town is a soothing sight. The NPCs described in the area descriptions do not hesitate to approach the characters.

## SOME POINTERS

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING while the characters explore Strasterton or talk to the NPCs mentioned here.

► **The Truth.** No one knows what happened with Harold's group in the swamp six months ago. They do not even have proof that the dragon exists. They just know a group of hooded men that call themselves the Swamp Dragon Cult has been stealing from them. The villagers have all kinds of theories with some truth in them.

► **The Dragon.** The dragon does exist. The characters are free to seek Azmagolles if they wish (see **Azmagolles the Dragon** on page 9). However, Strasterton is not the place to learn whether the dragon is a myth or not. Most Strasterton townsfolk tells the heroes to visit Eight-Towers Keep if they want to know more. The keep is close to the Dark Pools, the dragon's territory.

## RANDOM EVENTS

### d10 Details

- 1 While in a tavern, the characters receive a round of drinks, courtesy of a well-dressed man in a corner.
- 2 A boy on the street yells 'Look! They have come to slay the dragon and destroy the cult! We're saved!' while pointing at the characters. He runs off afterward.
- 3 A man on horseback arrives to deliver a message. He claims he heard suspicious-looking men in the woods talking about an attack on Eight-Towers Keep.
- 4 While the characters are outside, they see the shadow of a large flying creature on the floor. When they look up, a black-winged being disappears within the clouds.
- 5 A farmer tells the characters he lost three sheep and a cow a week ago. He claims a beast from the sky came and took them all. He found lots of blood but no bones.
- 6 After some months in the area, strange things occur due to the dragon's presence. Two decrepit **skeletons** rise from the dead in the local cemetery (area 5).
- 7 In a tavern, three **bandits** and one **acolyte** stand up and demand everyone to hand over their belongings. They attempt to flee if badly injured. If the characters manage to arrest them, they crack under duress and confess about the incoming attack on Eight-Towers Keep in a few days.
- 8 A group of twelve people surround the characters and bombard them with questions. They want to know how they will help, and if they have come to stop the cult.
- 9 If the characters were only contacted by one person (see **Adventure Hooks**), an NPC from one of the other **Adventure Hooks** approaches and asks for their help.
- 10 An old man approaches the characters and says "Do not seek the dragon in the swamp... You'll die. Just like my son. The leader of that damned cult killed my only s..." His voice breaks while he walks off, sobbing softly.

## 1. STRASTERTON SPIRITS

*Several people playing cards and other tabletop games drink ale. The warmth from the hearth creates a cozy atmosphere within the establishment.*

► **Barkeep.** If the characters talk to Guy, the keeper, he confirms the existence of the cult. He claims, however, there is no conclusive proof of the dragon's existence.

► **Small Bets.** The characters may spend a couple of hours playing cards. The bets are small but there is good money to be earned in the end (5 gp). The GM is free to choose a high-stakes card game for this. Play no more than a few couples of hands, winner takes all.





## 2. DORMITORIES AND STABLES

Low-quality, cheap beds and the largest stable in town. Guy (area 1) handles these places as well. The characters may stay the night and leave their mounts if needed.

► **Stolen Horse.** Guy asks the characters for help. The merciless cult stole his horse, Bernard. He begs the heroes to bring his friend back safe (5 gp, 0 XP).

## 3. OWEN TULLY'S HOME

General Makillan's brother lives here (see *Adventure Hooks*). Owen begs the characters to visit Eight-Towers Keep. He claims that his brother overheard some cultists talking about an organized raid to take over the place.

## 4. STRASTERON INN

A much better option than the cheap dormitories (area 2). The characters' stay has been paid for if they were hired by Straster City's bailiff (see *Adventure Hooks*).

► **Ally.** A young man named Trent (**peasant**) approaches the characters. He wishes to meet the dragon in person and begs them to take him. Keep in mind that Trent will not respect the dragon's boundaries if he sees it.

## 5. CHURCH AND GRAVEYARD

Father Jules happily performs a mass to bless the characters' way. If the characters defeated the skeletons of **Random Event 6**, he gifts them two *potions of healing*.



## 6. IMPROVISED ARMORY

*Six men organize weapons inside the shed while some others work a small forge outside.*

The people in town have grown tired of being before the pointy end of blades. The city brought weapons but just a couple of guards. The poor villagers are no warriors and most of them are too scared to grab a sword, though.

► **Ambush.** While the characters explore this place and talk to the people, a pair of **cultists** try to sneak up on them from behind to steal all weapons available.

## 7. KEVIN LARSEN'S HOME

*A well-dressed man stands outside. He smokes from a wooden pipe, gray smoke comes out of his mouth.*

► **Veteran.** Kevin was a great soldier in his prime. He can still hold a blade and defend himself well, though. If the characters were hired by General Makillan, Kevin (**soldier**) wishes to come along and help them succeed.

## 8. LILY ANDERSON AND THE WAREHOUSE

A strong, tall woman named Lily takes care of the warehouse. She manages most of the exports of goods to other towns but mostly to the capital, Straster City.

► **Lost Goods.** Lily rushes to tell the characters about her stolen goods. The cult has intercepted her caravans one after the other. With tears in her eyes, she tells the characters that she suspects her son is part of the cult.

► **Traitor.** Bruno (**bandit**) has been informing the cult about her mom's routes. If confronted, he draws a blade but surrenders when harmed for the first time. Bruno confirms an attack on Eight-Towers shall occur soon.

## 9. VALERY'S PEST PROBLEM

*A woman covered in several pieces of clothing, broom in hand, behind a fence, strikes invisible enemies. She gives up after a few swings and runs away.*

► **Good Samaritans.** Valery needs help. A **swarm of locusts** has been eating her garden. But every time she gears up to try to stomp on them, the bugs gather, multiply, and overwhelm her. The cult situation makes it impossible for authorities to look after her insect problem. She has some money to offer the characters if they can help her exterminate the vermin (5 gp, 0 XP).



This adventure belongs to a series of collaborative projects that involve other Patreon creators. This one-shot adventure features work by [Elven Tower](#) and cartographer [Maps 'N' Quests](#). Check out his [Patreon page](#) for great cartography and inspiration!

## SWARM OF LOCUSTS

*A shapeless mass of oval-shaped insects. Their humming sound becomes almost intolerable up close.*

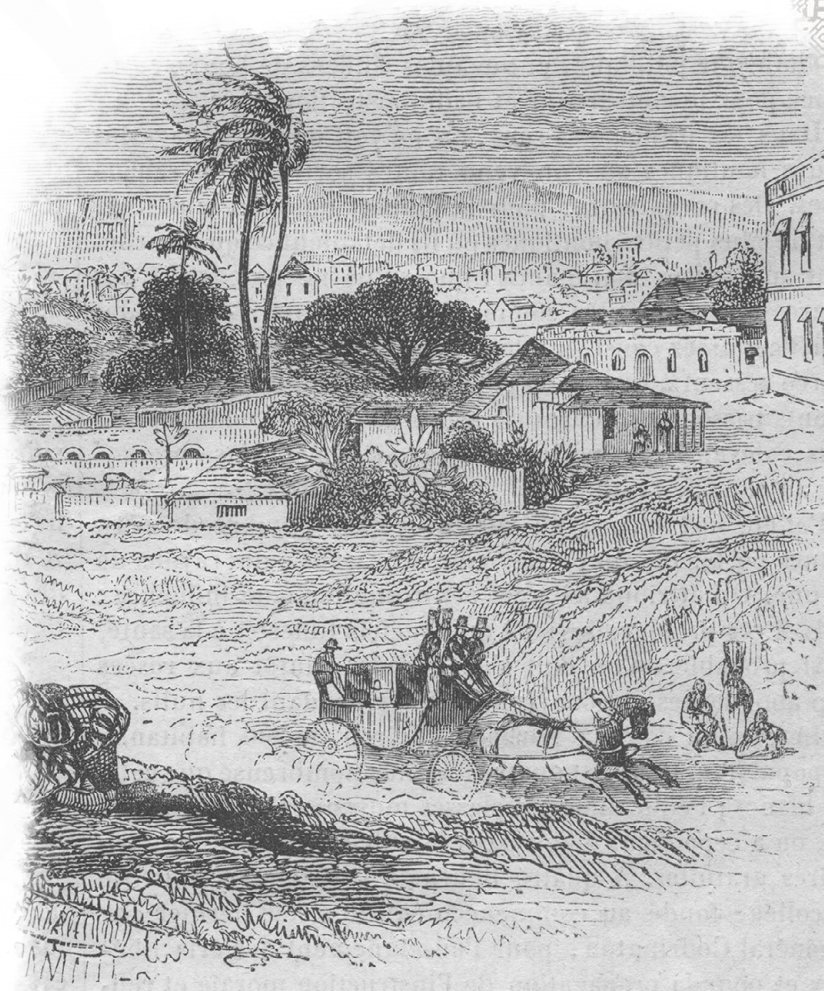
**AC** 13 **HP** 13, **ATK** 2 bite +3 (1d6) **MV** near (fly), **S** -1, **D** +2, **C** +1, **I** -3, **W** +0, **Ch** -3, **AL**, **LV** 3

## STRASTERION DEVELOPMENT

**THE CHARACTERS MAY** stay as long as they want, meet the NPCs, and experience the **Random Events** even if their presence is required in Eight-Towers Keep soon. It does not matter if they leave at once or if they take their time. The attack on Eight-Towers Keep is soon to occur but there is no definite deadline for it.

## TOWARD EIGHT-TOWERS KEEP

**IT TAKES A** few hours to reach the keep in the middle of the dense woods, even on horseback. A few minutes before reaching the keep, the characters see an injured man, grunting while limping closer to them on the trail. He crumbles to the ground and with his last strength says: "*They've come. The dragon men, they'll burn everything... Must warn... the towns...*". Having accomplished his mission of warning someone, the man's soul leaves his body. He cannot be saved with medicine or magic. As the characters approach area 1 of the keep, the trees are enveloped in scarlet flames and dark smoke...





# JUST A BIT TOO LATE

“... By the gods could we not use some help! Did Makillan send you? Bless his ass! We'll hold the bastards outside. Clean the keep, get inside. Go, go go!”  
Captain Burrows, during the attack at the keep

**T**he great war ended some years ago. There are not many reasons left to occupy this military outpost anymore or to spend the capital's resources here. Still, General Makillan convinced Straster City's authorities to maintain Eight-Towers Keep operational. It was the right decision in the end. Otherwise, the Swamp Dragon Cult would have taken it without resistance, like the swamp outpost (page 10).

## Features of the Keep

- ▶ **Danger.** Deadly. Check for **Random Events** every 1 crawling round and after a battle (1-in-6 chance).
- ▶ **Fire.** Some places are on fire. Thick clouds of smoke cover more areas of the keep as time passes.
- ▶ **Smoke.** Medium visibility. It is hard to breathe.
- ▶ **Sounds.** The screams of people fighting on both sides are distinguishable over the roar of the flames. The characters arrive at a crucial moment; the cult has the upper hand in the conflict. Perhaps they can make a difference.

## RANDOM EVENTS

### d10 Details

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | A soldier's screams mute everything else for a second.   |
| 2  | A horse on fire tramples everything in its path. A random character is run over (DC 13 DEX - 1d6 damage).<br>The fire causes a wooden beam to give up on its weight. Debris falls on a random character. The victim takes 1d6 damage and is pinned to the ground. A friend must lift the burning plank to release the trapped character. |
| 3  | A cultist ( <b>bandit</b> ) shoots an arrow from a rooftop at a random character (ATK 1 bow +0, 1d4).  |
| 4  | An allied <b>soldier</b> finds his way to the heroes. He helps during 1 crawling round and then returns to his post.   |
| 5  | Three <b>bandits</b> stand before the characters blocking their way. If two of them are defeated, the third attempts to retreat and regroup with allies in another area.   |
| 6  | If the characters are still outside, one of the cooks from area 5 calls for help from one of the windows.  |
| 7  | The fight brings two men close to the edge of the crenellations. They fall and crack their heads a moment later.   |
| 8  | The characters stumble upon one <b>cultist</b> and his two bodyguards ( <b>bandits</b> ). The thugs seem to follow the cultist's orders. They flee if their master is defeated.  |
| 9  | Heavy rain starts to fall. This mitigates the fire and keeps it under control. It rains for the rest of the chapter. The courtyard turns muddy and difficult to walk on.   |
| 10 |  |

## CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

**FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!** Those are the words that pierce the sky when the characters get to the scene. The drawbridge is lowered. It looks like the attack started from within the keep. Inside, some of the buildings feature uncontrolled flames that consume everything they touch.

Captain Burrows is in charge of the keep's defense. Straster City soldiers can be easily recognized thanks to their armor and sigils. Most cultists wear dark robes but some of them wear unmarked leather armor.

The characters must move quickly and cross the bridge to change the tide of things. With things as they are, it is clear that the keep will be lost without their intervention.

Keep in mind that chaos is the main ingredient of this chapter. Check for **Random Events** every time the characters visit a new location on the map to maintain the action going and the stress of being in the midst of a fire.

### 1. MAIN ROAD, THE WOODS

The characters come through here since the keep has only one entrance. The cultists hiding on the treetops expect them to rush to their friends' help (see below).

▶ **Ambush.** Two scouts (**bandits**) attack the characters by surprise when they turn their backs on them. The heroes could spot them on time, though (DC 12 WIS).

### 2. THE BRIDGE

There is no one fighting on the bridge at this moment. But people fight on the walls and the towers (area 7).

▶ **Alchemist Fire.** A cultist throws a flask of alchemist fire. The characters take 1d6 fire damage (DC 12 DEX) and the bridge starts to burn. For 4 crawling rounds, creatures crossing it take 1d6 fire damage per round of exposure. The damage increases to 2d6 after that for 4 rounds. Then, the bridge collapses into the moat.

### 3. ARMORIES

The north armory, close to the stable, is on fire. Two trapped soldiers suffocate within. If the characters approach, they hear their desperate calls for help. It requires two people to clear the debris blocking the entrance to help them come out safely. The saviors take 1d6 fire damage and cough for 1 minute (DC 12 CON).





#### 4. KEEP'S ENTRANCE HALL

The building is intact from the flames. A score of people fights in the courtyard. From among the clashes of blades and smoke, Captain Burrows spots the characters approaching. The armor-clad man, covered in blood and sweat, asks the characters to go inside the keep as some cultists have already gotten in. He and the rest of his men shall handle things outside.

► **The Hall.** Two allied **soldiers** fight two **bandits** and one **cultist**. The soldiers are injured. Straster guards perish in combat unless the characters intervene.

#### 5. DINING HALL

More than a dozen scared people sit and sob at the end of the room. Three shaking young men (**peasants**) stand before them, holding shortswords. They are the last line of defense for the cooks, stewards, and stable boys present when the attack started. One of the armed young men, filled with determination and fear, charges at the characters the moment they cross the threshold. The lad runs at them, blade thrusting, but with his eyes closed.

► **Innocents.** There is a total of seventeen people, including the three brave ones holding the swords. Considering the situation, this is the best place for them to stay. But the characters are free to take them elsewhere.

#### 6. LIBRARY

*Countless backs of books adorn the walls of this chamber. The L-shaped shelves cover all walls but the entrance of this luxurious library. The rugs, the chess board, the wooden chandelier... All the fanciness is ruined by the present scene occurring.*

The cult's second in command is here, and it is none other than one of Captain Burrows's men. Fooled by empty promises of greatness and wealth, the former captain's ally, a soldier named Wilhem, betrayed his nation.

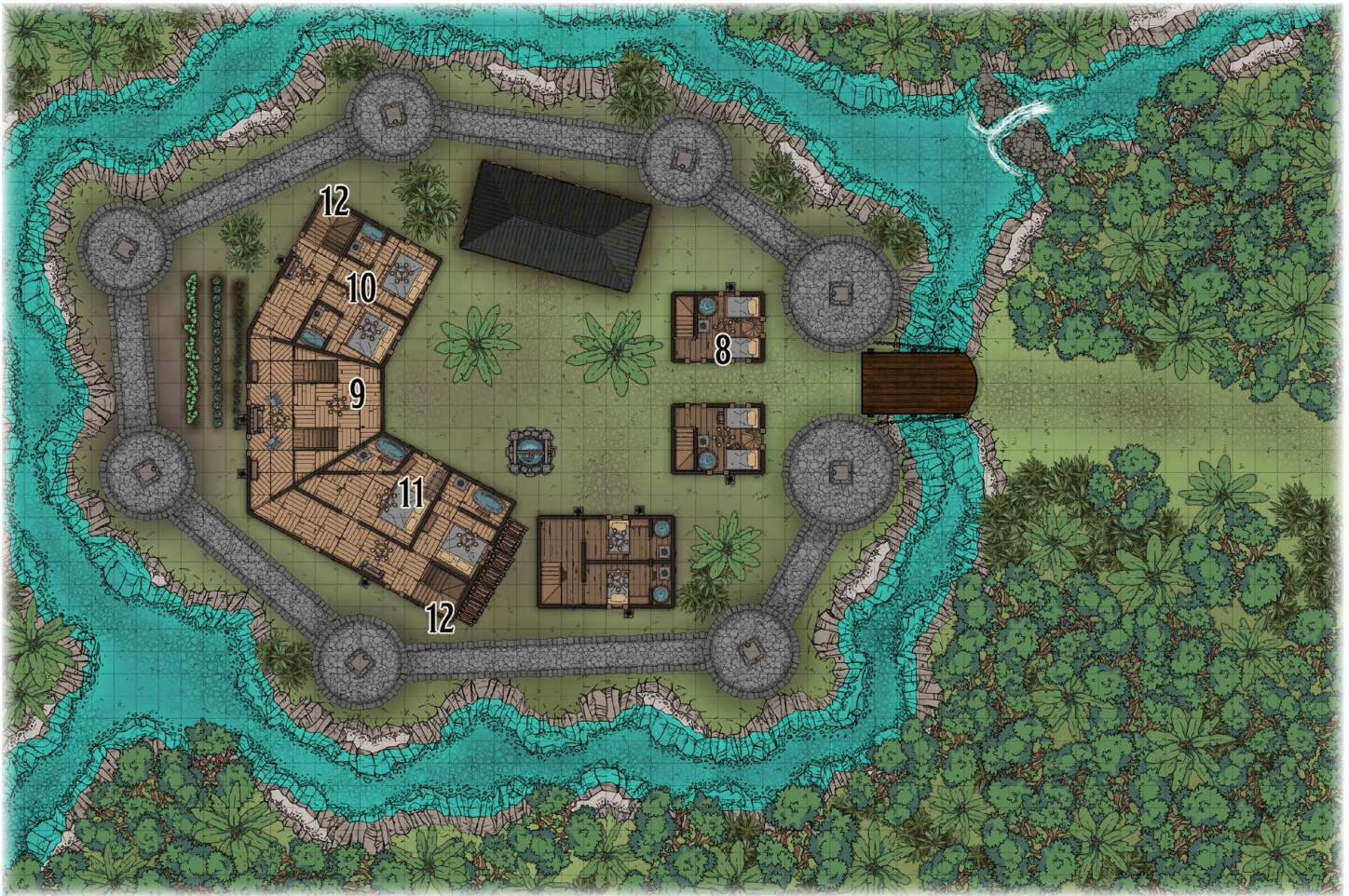
**Treasure.** The characters may spend a **crawling round** to recover books worth something (5 gp, 0XP).

► **Confrontation.** Wilhem (**soldier**), two **bandits**, and one **cultist** fight together. The former guard's mind is too corrupted. He and his new friends fight to the death. The characters have no way of knowing Wilhem is a traitor. However, he wears a Straster armor with an erased sigil.

#### 7. EIGHT TOWERS

Each tower has spiral stairs and a door below to access the crenellations. The characters are free to come up. However, Captain Burrows desperately asks them to get inside the keep to help his men there. Innocents shall die if they do not (see **Eight-Towers Keep Development**).





## 8. BEDROOMS

The flames have ruined the north bedrooms. The building south can still be explored. Two **peasants** holding kitchen knives hide here. They die from enemy arrows if, for some reason, the characters take them outside.

## 9. SECOND FLOOR

No one blocks the characters' path if they come upstairs. A woman's yelling can be heard coming from the north (area 10) once they reach the second-floor landing.

The characters hear the woman say: *"This has gone too far! I did not agree to this. You are mad! Mental! I should've listened to my father. Get away from me, I'm serious! HELP! HELP ME!"*. If the characters do nothing, the next thing is a scream, and then nothing.

## 10. HIGH-RANK CHAMBERS

*Two soldiers lie on the ground. Besides them, three cloaked men surround a brown-haired woman. She appears to be trying to negotiate with them.*

► **Saviors.** The characters don't stay with their arms crossed. Three **bandits** are about to slay an innocent lass (Sonia Gilbert, **peasant**). Sobbing and barely able to speak, Sonia thanks her saviors and asks to be taken to her father in Straster City (see **Adventure Hooks**).

## 11. CAPTAIN BURROWS'S QUARTERS

This is where the captain sleeps. Two **bandits** and one enemy **soldier** sack the place when the characters arrive. They drop the loot and attempt to flee when discovered.

## 12. ATTIC

The two sets of stairs lead to the attic. The place is crammed with crates, barrels, and containers with old fabrics, broken furniture, rusty weapons, and other useless paraphernalia.

## EIGHT-TOWERS KEEP DEVELOPMENT

**CAPTAIN BURROWS AND** the rest of his men are capable of dealing with the rest of the enemies in the courtyard. The captain recognizes Wilhem from among the bodies (or captives). He suspects he was instrumental in the attack. The captain must stay at his post, but he wishes the heroes luck.

► **Consequences.** If the characters do not get inside the main building the moment Captain Burrows asks them to. The enemies inside attacked the innocent people and there are nine deaths from the seventeen people in area 5.

► **The Cult.** Captain Burrows informs the characters that the prisoners confirmed the cult leader hides at the abandoned outpost (page 10). He begs them to hurry and put an end to the cult before the dragon gets mad or something.



# THE SWAMP DRAGON CULT HIDEOUT

“Understand that this cause is greater than you. And let it be known that the swamp dragon shall come forth to strike you down if you refuse to join us!”

Harold, Cult's Leader



he cult met Azmagolkellos's rage 6 months ago. They have tried to assess their strategy to prove themselves to the dragon. For that, they took over an abandoned military outpost.

## AZMAGOLLELLOS, THE DRAGON

FROM THE DARK Pools, Azmagolkellos hunts and looks for something to grow its horde, or it explores the region to know more about it. However, the indolent, slothful dragon rests and sleeps most of the time.

Consider the following if the characters make a small detour after Eight-Towers Keep to meet the dragon.

► **Awareness.** The characters cannot surprise the dragon in its lair, regardless of their planning. Their strategy or point of arrival does not matter. The dragon is fully awake, staring at the intruders when they get here.

► **Disposition.** The black dragon is evil. It shows its acid-dripping fangs as a last warning to drive off visitors. But if the characters address it with respect, the dragon allows one minute for the visitors to say whatever they came to say. Azmagolkellos does not comply with any request, though. It reacts aggressively if pestered beyond 1 minute. The black dragon does not show mercy.

► **Fight.** The **swamp dragon** is too strong to be defeated. The characters are certain to meet their deaths if they push the dragon's patience or play the hero.

► **Conclusion.** Azmagolkellos wishes to be left alone, unbothered. The only real threat from the dragon is the livestock it eats. But perhaps there can be a safer, more practical solution for that (see **Adventure Conclusion**).

## RANDOM EVENTS

### d4 Details

- 1 An ear-piercing roar mutes everything else. Azmagolkellos went out to hunt. If still present, Harold claims this is a sign that it favors his cause, the heroes are doomed.
- 2 One of the cultists (**bandit**) does not like how things look. He turns on his friends and helps the characters.
- 3 No one noticed the **brown bear** eating the crops near the gate (area 2). If startled, the bear charges at the nearest creature. It flees if reduced to half its hit points.
- 4 A foe throws a flask of alchemist fire (1d6, DC 12 DEX).

## AN EXPECTED ARRIVAL

THE BLACK DRAGON Cult and their leader are aware of what occurred in Eight-Towers Keep. A few of Harold's men escaped the scene when they saw the tide of the battle change after the characters' arrival. They retreated here and hope their leader can guide them to victory.

However, Harold knows that with his reduced numbers, the heroes could represent a real threat to his operation. Hence, when the characters arrive, he welcomes them with arms open and attempts to convince them to join the cult, claiming that he shall call forth the black dragon to strike them down if they refuse (see below). The cult leader is bluffing, though (DC 12 WIS).

► **Successful Bluff.** If the characters believe him, with a hand gesture, Harold takes advantage of their hesitation and orders the archers posted on the walls to attack them by surprise. However, the characters may convince him they want to join the cult (DC 13 CHA). This grants them the upper hand in the conflict and an opportunity to ambush or surprise him (see **Confrontation**).

## Hideout Features

► **Location.** The former military outpost was built on a hilltop. It can only be reached from the west, following the path of bridges. The gates are open, and the characters are unbothered when they approach (see above).

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for random events every 2 crawling rounds and after a battle (1-in-6 chance).

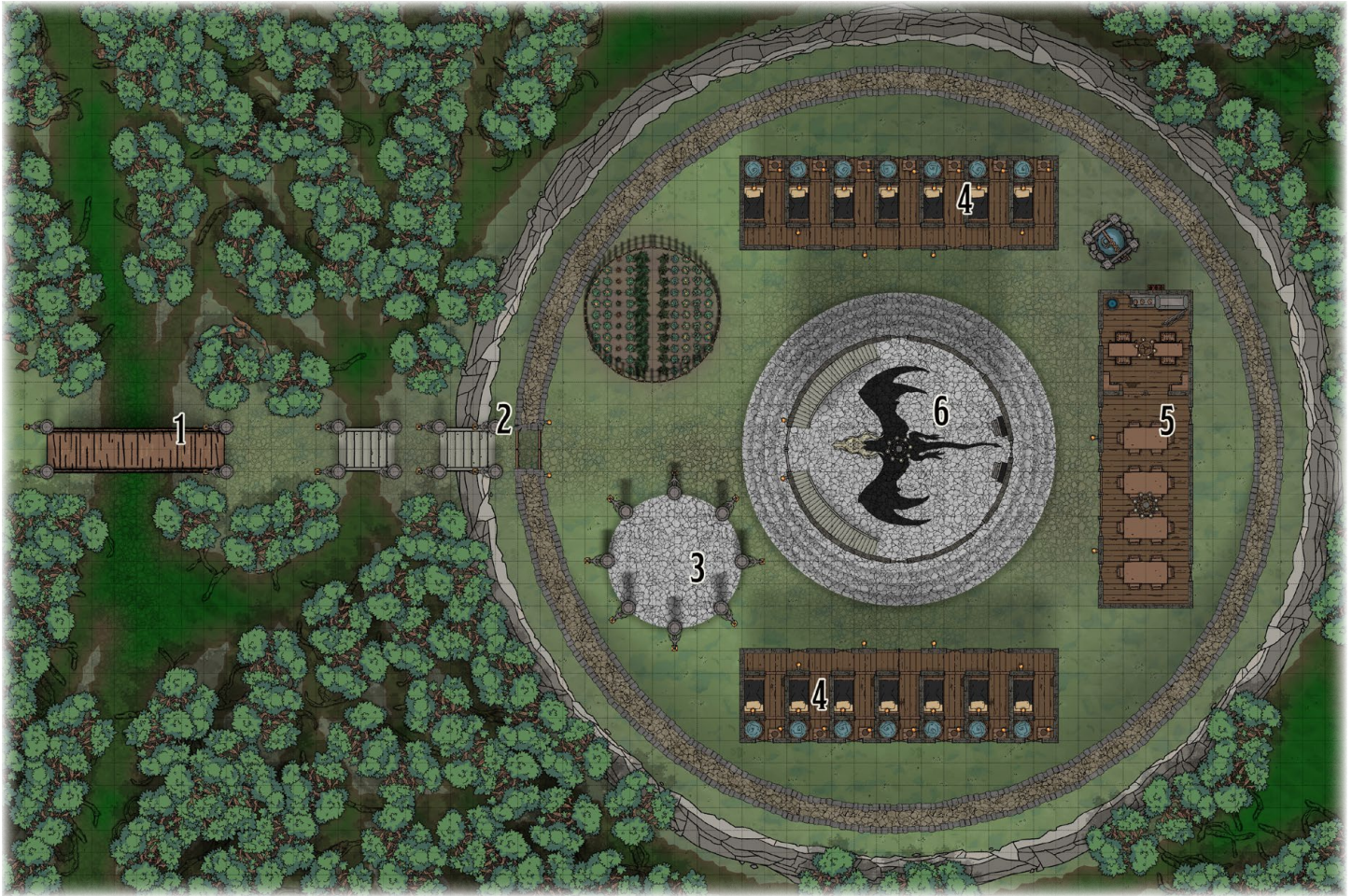
### 1. WOODEN BRIDGE

The vantage point at the bridge opens to a beautiful landscape. There are no enemies over the wall or any sign of danger. The characters may approach safely.

### 2. GATE

Two **cultists** offer to show the characters the way (see **An Expected Arrival** above). Inside, Harold says from behind his men (see **Confrontation**): *'We welcome you in peace. But this is but a temporary truce to grant you one last chance to redeem yourselves. Join us. Seek the dragon's favor. Understand that this cause is greater than you. And let it be known that the dragon in the swamp shall come forth to strike you down if you refuse.'*





### 3. MEDITATION CIRCLE

This area was used for fencing lessons and small tournaments during wartime when the outpost was occupied. The cult employs it as an area for meditation.

### 4. QUARTERS

The members of the cult live well. They sleep on clean sheets and each features an individual lavatory.

► **Treasure.** The characters must defeat the cult members to be able to take their belongings (20 gp, 1 XP).

### 5. KITCHEN AND LIVING ROOM

The cult has occupied this building for the past few months. Its members are inordinately organized and neat for a criminal organization.

► **Treasure.** If the characters search this place (DC 11 WIS), they find two glass vials with *potions of healing*.

### 6. BLACK DRAGON SHRINE

This is the first floor of a three-story tower. A fake dragon skull made with painted wood matches the silhouette of a winged creature on the stone flooring.

If a conflict did not occur after Herald's speech (area 2), the characters must go up the stairs within this chamber for their initiation. They may surprise their enemy there.

### 7. SECOND FLOOR - INITIATION

This is a circular ceremonial chamber. A hundred candles of varied colors burn on the east wall. An "X" shaped hand-carved library stands at the center of the room.

## CONFRONTATION

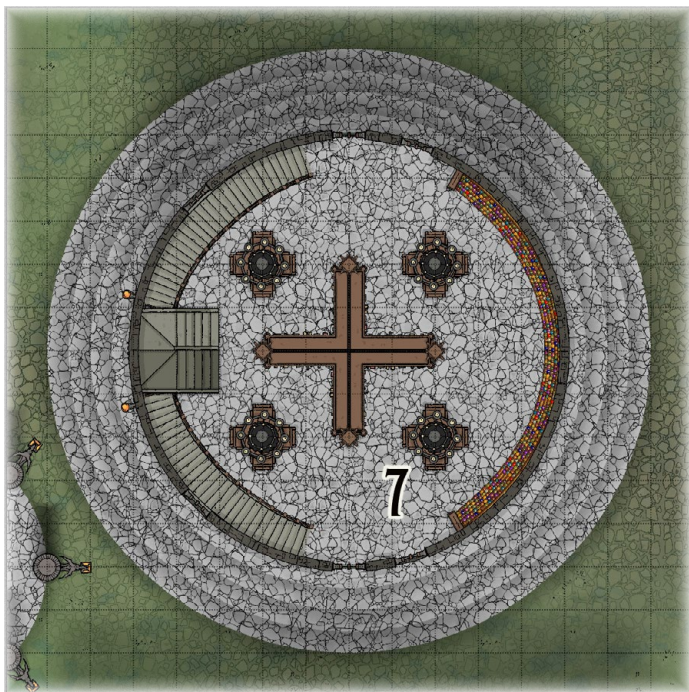
**THE CHARACTERS SEE** Harold (**cult leader**), one **soldier**, two **bandits** (posted on top of the gatehouse), two **cultists** (mentioned in area 2), and three **peasants**. Consider the following to rule out how things play out when the characters listen to Herald in area 2.

► **New Members.** If the characters convince the cult members they want to join them, they are taken to the second floor (area 7) for their initiation. They are free to attack their enemies by surprise along the way.

► **Naive Fools.** The characters did not meet Azmagollos. They believe Harold's claims and fear that the dragon could come. But they do not want to join the cult either. Amidst their confusion, Harold gives the signal for his men to attack the intruders and surprise them.

► **Encounter.** The cult members lose all morale and drop their weapons if Harold is killed or defeated. Otherwise, their leader's presence motivates them to fight!





## HAROLD, CULT LEADER

A cloaked, dark figure with a smoldering drive in his crazed eyes that cannot be from this world.

**AC** 13 (chainmail), **HP** 11, **ATK** 1 dagger +1 (1d4) or 1 spell +1, **MV** near, **S** +2, **D** -1, **C** +0, **I** +0, **W** +2, **Ch** +1, **AL** C, **LV** 2

**Fearless.** Immune to morale checks.

**Blast (INT Spell).** DC 11. Far, one target. 1d6 damage.

### 8. HALLWAY

The third floor of the central tower. Old, low-quality paintings adorn the walls. None of the wooden door locks work; they are too rusty, and some are broken.

### 9. NORTH CHAMBERS

The furniture in these chambers has seen better days. But the wood remains strong and they are still usable. Harold and some of his cult members sleep here.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** The characters may search this area after the battle (DC 11 WIS). They find a small emerald (15 gp), and a pair of *bracers of defense*.

### 10. SOUTH CHAMBERS

The place looks lived in and recently used. The furniture here is in the same condition as the one found in the northern chambers. A young man shakes by the corner.

► **A Coward.** Aaron (**bandit**) hides here. He could not gather the courage to fight and fled. He begs the characters for mercy. In exchange, he surrenders the treasure in areas 5, and 9, and the people's stolen animals tied to the well (see map, Guy's horse, Bernard, is among them).

## ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

**THE CHARACTERS REACH** the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their deeds.

### THE SWAMP DRAGON CULT

The characters kill Harold or deliver him to Straster authorities. The cult is no more and the villagers from Straster organize a nice feast to honor the heroes.

### MAKING FRIENDS

The characters made many friends along the way. General Makillan is glad to know the heroes recovered the outpost. Lord Gilbert is jubilant to see Sonia back. Guy, the keeper, thanks the heroes if they bring his horse.

Remember Trent, the boy who wanted to meet the dragon. Kevin, the veteran willing to help. And Captain Burrows, who fought side by side with the heroes.

### AZMAGOLLELLOS AND THE FUTURE

The dragon is real. The Dark Pools remain close to Straster and other small settlements. The attacks on livestock shall not stop. Getting rid of the cult does nothing to help on this matter. What are the options?

► **Negotiation.** The characters could strike some kind of deal with the dragon. The towns could gather a monthly food tribute, in exchange for not being attacked by surprise at night. The dragon is evil. Its demands shall be insulting and ruinous. But thus is the price of peace.

► **Slay the Dragon.** If the characters and their allies decide that Azmagollellos must be killed or driven off, how will prepare for this battle? How can they aspire to defeat this monster? That is an adventure for another day...

