



Pool of Radiance: Attack on Myth Drannor

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Sample file





Chapter 1: Cultists in Action

“And naught would be left save shattered thrones with no rulers. But the dead dragons shall rule the world entire, and . . .”

—from the Chronicle of Years to Come, a book of prophecy by the oracle Maglas, as translated by Sammaster the Mad, founder of the Cult of the Dragon

Pool of Radiance: *Attack on Myth Drannor* is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure suitable for a party of four average D&D® characters who begin the adventure at or near 6th level. It is recommended that at least one of the player characters have some clerical ability and at least one have access to arcane spells. The adventure can be adjusted for play with very large, very small, higher level, or lower-level groups.

Preparation

You, the Dungeon Master (DM), should have a copy of the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual* to use this adventure. Familiarity with the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting is recommended but not essential. The FORGOTTEN REALMS sourcebook *Cult of the Dragon* (#9547) provides additional background information and motivation for the main villains in this adventure but is not necessary, as details on the Cult are summarized in the sidebar at the end of this chapter.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information, which you can read aloud or paraphrase to players when appropriate. Unshaded boxes contain important background information for the DM. Monster and NPC statistics are provided with each encounter in abbreviated form, and full statistics appear in Appendix 5: Creature Statistics. Write-ups for new monsters (those not listed in the *Monster Manual*) are provided in Appendix 4: New Monsters.

Individual encounters possess an overall rating called the encounter level (EL). The encounter level is a tool for the DM to calculate total experience points for each encounter and as a point of information to the DM, allowing him or her to gauge the strength of any particular encounter at a glance.

Adventure Background

The Cult of the Dragon found a pool of radiance that recently formed in the fallen city of Myth Drannor. The Cultists' knowledge of dark arts allowed them to corrupt the pool, and it now reaches out to other pools across Toril, draining their life to feed itself. The Cult plans to immerse Pelendralaar, one of its allied dracoliches, in the corrupted pool, giving it incredible powers to be used on the Cult's behalf. Through explorations of nearby parts of Myth Drannor, the heroes discover tools and clues about the Cult's purposes here and have the opportunity to thwart the Cult's grand plans for the corrupted pool.





Adventure Synopsis

The heroes become involved when they track several disappearances to a small cell of Cult of the Dragon members that has apparently taken to capturing villagers as slaves. The Cult hideout contains an old gate, which the Cultists use to escape the heroes if they are outmatched. The gate leads to a location near a cemetery outside of Myth Drannor, which the Cult has secured and is using as a base of operations.

The Cult is digging extensively in that area, searching for magic items to feed to the corrupted pool in the hope of transferring those powers to the dragon, as well as keys to unlock other parts of the ruins. The heroes attack the Cult stronghold in that area and discover the Cult's real reason behind the recent slaving—they need workers to help them ransack the crypts in the cemetery. Once the heroes have learned more about the Cult's plans, they investigate some crypts of their own to prevent the Cult from acquiring key items. One of these items will allow them to strike at the center of the Cult's power under Castle Cormanthor, severely crippling the Cult's plans to its dracolich ally.

Note that there are a number of encounters in which Cultists could escape the PCs and regroup. They might then return to the scene and descend in force if the PCs are still present. Larger groups mean higher Encounter Levels—perhaps more than a 6th-level party can handle. The characters should be aware that they are in enemy territory, and tread carefully.

Character Hooks

The heroes can become involved in the beginning of this adventure in one of the ways described below. Each hook is an easy way to bring the characters to the Cult hideout and through the gate to the outskirts of Myth Drannor. Of course, you can always use a hook that is more appropriate for your campaign or your group's player characters. These adventure hooks can take place in any part of Faerûn, since the heroes will be magically transported to their next destination.

Investigators

Disappearances of four townsfolk over the past five days have convinced the authorities that something strange is afoot. The villagers went out to hunt, or collect roots, or catch stray animals, or to carry news to another town, but none of them returned. As one of the missing people is the nephew of someone important to the community (a prominent merchant, official, priest, or retired adventurer), the

townsfolk decide to solicit the help of people who might have more experience dealing with this sort of thing—a band of adventurers. While the town doesn't have much money to offer the PCs (50 gp, 75 sp, and a 100 gp amethyst), the local temple of Chauntea is willing to add two *potions of cure moderate wounds* to the reward. If this is not sufficient, an old retired adventurer named Fitsyll is willing to throw in her +2 *shortspear* for the safe return of the missing townsfolk (or proof that the source of the disappearances has been neutralized).

Should the heroes accept this quest, the town leaders explain that they believe it is nothing more than a group of bandits and they expect to receive a ransom note very soon, but pressure from one of the vanished people's relatives convinced them to try a more active course. They direct the heroes to the north of town, as that was the last place that most of the missing people were headed or seen. If the heroes question the town officials about possible hiding places for the bandits, they mention an old ruin a few miles northwest of town. However, the ruin has been leveled for over two generations, and most of its stones have been taken for use in other buildings, leaving only a few spots where the original walls were located. The officials guess that the bandits have set up a camp somewhere in a grove of trees or a depression to the north.

The missing commoners include Tren (the homely but strong son of a farmer), Wenta (the large but friendly daughter of the local brewer), Jorsh (the charismatic elder son of a cattle rancher), and Ristim (the nephew, carrying mail).

If the heroes explore north of the town, Search checks (roll once per hour) may reveal some clues: several sets of heavy bootprints intermixed with some common shoes (DC 15), a well-made but broken arrow (DC 15), and some three-day old bloodstains (DC 20). All three clues are within 100 yards of each other. Anyone who can track can try to follow the bootprints back to their source (DC 15). Otherwise, a Search check (DC 20) lets a character realize that the tracks lead vaguely northwest before quickly becoming too obscure to follow. The tracks lead to the ruin, which is 3 miles away. Following them requires two more tracking checks (DC 15 and DC 13), as other trails start to converge with the one being followed, all leading in the direction of the ruin.

There is a 25% chance that the heroes pass near (within 200 feet) some of the Cultists responsible for the disappearances. This group is trying to move without being spotted, but it is not attempting to avoid making undue



amounts of noise (the Cultists are not talking, but they are not trying to Move Silently). As they are moving at normal speed, they have a -4 penalty to their Hide checks. Once their Hide result is rolled, use that number as the DC for the heroes' Spot checks (or have them make a Listen roll at DC 20). Have the Cultists make Spot checks (DC 15 unless the heroes are hiding) or Listen checks (DC 20 unless the heroes are moving silently).

Depending upon the appearance, armament, and apparent competence of the characters, the Cultists try to remain unobserved, flee, or pretend to be a group of mercenaries from another nearby town looking for some missing people. Depending upon the reactions of the PCs, this encounter may turn into an ambush by the Cultists (see the "Bushwhacked" hook below) or they may express a willingness to join up in order to capture the heroes when they aren't expecting it (see the "Deceptive Employer" hook below). Regardless of the outcome of a possible encounter with the roving Cultists, the heroes probably proceed to the ruin, as the missing commoners aren't with the rovers. If the heroes defeat the Cultists, they can easily follow the fresh trail (DC 10) back to the ruin.

When the heroes reach the ruin, go to the "Cult Hideout" section below.

Absent Friends

Similar to the "Investigators" hook, in this scenario the heroes need to speak with an NPC known to them, preferably one with whom they have a friendly rapport. Unfortunately, the NPC has gone missing and nobody knows where he or she is. Inquiries reveal that the PC's friend had planned to be out of town for a few days and failed to return on the expected date.

The characters can look into the matter and find that the NPC needed to take care of a few business dealings in a nearby city or town, but never showed up. Searching the road on the way to the destination city reveals the same sort of clues on the sides of the road (although the bootprints and the broken arrow aren't entirely out of the ordinary along a roadway). They can attempt to track the trail of bootprints away from the road (DC 15). If they get stuck or lost, having them ambushed (as in the "Bushwhacked" scenario) can help realign them or give them some prodding in the right direction, allowing them to eventually reach the Cult hideout.

Deceptive Employer

In this scenario, the wizard Handragath commissions the heroes to investigate an old, nearly flattened ruin. The

wizard, who appears strangely gaunt and old for his youthful voice (which he attributes to the results of a witch's curse), asserts that the ruin is the site of a wizard's tower that was destroyed in a dragon's attack nearly fifty years ago. Handragath has a claim on the contents of the tower, as the wizard who built it was his father's uncle, who purchased the land from a local lord in need of currency. The wizard is unconcerned with most of the treasures of the ruined tower (his great-uncle, Darnarest the Bladesmith, concerned himself with creating magic weapons, in which Handragath has no interest) but would like to reclaim his relative's spellbook if possible.

He pays the heroes one 100-gp pearl each in advance and promises ten times that amount when they return with his great-uncle's spellbook; they can also keep anything else they want from the ruin, which ought to include several fine blades (some of which may be magical). He would consider searching for it himself but in his current condition he lacks the energy to do so, preferring a quiet life of study. He describes the book as being about a foot square, 3 inches thick, and bound in steel plates with gold inlay on the cover. He does not know what sort of traps or guardians his great-uncle may have placed in the bowels of the tower, but they probably involve magical or animated weapons. Darnarest was fond of such things. If they agree to the task, he presents them with a detailed map leading to the ruin.

Most of the story is hogwash. Handragath works for the Cult of the Dragon. His appearance is due to an *alter self* spell, and he is setting up the heroes to be attacked by the other Cultists residing in the ruin, which has been partially excavated and is now being used as a base of operations by the Cult. (The tower was once the home of Darnarest the Bladesmith, that much is true.) There are many potential reasons why the Cult has singled out the heroes—to avenge an old slight, to acquire an item the PCs own, or because they looked gullible and were in the right place at the right time. The map indicates that the ruin is about three days away, nestled in a flat space in a nearby set of hills or mountains. Should the heroes pursue this enterprise, the Cultists are prepared for their eventual arrival and somewhat familiar with their equipment and abilities (based on what Handragath can observe during their meeting). If he feels especially cautious, the wizard may try to soften up the heroes (or capture them outright) with the scouting group described in the "Bushwhacked" hook. Otherwise, proceed to the "Cult Hideout" section.



Bushwhacked (EL 7)

While traveling along a road or a relatively well-used trail, the heroes are discovered by a group of people working for the Cult of the Dragon. Thinking they've found a few new people to enslave for work within Myth Drannor, the roving band prepares an ambush.

Five figures wearing hooded half-cloaks, three in studded leather armor and two in chainmail, rise to a kneeling position from their hiding places. Four have readied shortbows. The fifth has a strange clawlike weapon attached to his left wrist that extends past his hand.

Creatures: Make a Hide check for the Cultists; the result is the DC for the heroes' Spot check. Any PCs who succeed at the Spot check may take partial actions during the surprise round. Those who fail are flat-footed and cannot act until the first regular round of combat.

- **Cult Soldiers (Ftr2) (2):** hp 17 each.
- **Cult Sentries (Ftr2/Rog1) (2):** hp 18 each.
- **Bishimzon, Cult Wizard (Wiz4):** hp 14.
- **Shurrs, Viper Familiar:** hp 7.

Tactics: The Cultists arrange themselves in a V formation (the open end toward the heroes) about 50 feet from the heroes. The wizard Bishimzon (the owner of the claw-weapon) stands in the middle of one of the wings of the V. During the surprise round, the soldiers and sentries remain kneeling, giving attackers a -2 penalty to hit them with ranged weapons while they fire their bows. The wizard (who has already cast *shield* and *protection from arrows* on himself) casts *glitterdust* on the heroes, hoping to blind some of them. The Cultists prefer to remain at range for as long as possible, entering melee only if they have to. In melee, the sentries attempt trip attacks to more easily strike their opponents, while Bishimzon uses his *charm person* and *shocking grasp* spells (possibly using his familiar to deliver the latter attack) or his *wand of magic missiles* if he feels particularly threatened. He uses his Concentration skill (and Combat Casting feat) to avoid attacks of opportunity when casting. The wizard casts *invisibility* and flees if the battle turns against him, abandoning the others.

Development: If the heroes succeed in killing, capturing, or routing the Cultists, it is an easy matter to follow their trail (DC 8). The Cultists have made little effort to conceal the trail leading away from their hiding place and have walked that path several times. Captured Cultists can

be bribed or intimidated into revealing the location of their hideout (partly because they'd rather not be executed for their crime, and partly because they're sure the other Cultists at the ruin can deal with a few adventurers). They claim to be bandits unless intimidated (or forced by magic) to reveal the truth. (See the What the Cultists Know sidebar in Chapter 2.) Less than half a mile away, the trail leads to an old stone tower that has been almost completely leveled. If the heroes investigate, go to the "Cult Hideout" section below.

Cult Hideout

This ruin was once the tower of Darnarest the Bladesmith, a moderately powerful wizard who specialized in creating magical blades. His tower was attacked by the adult dragon Kezzanamark in the Year of the Evening Sun (1303 DR), possibly because mercenaries who attacked (and were slain by) the dragon boasted that Darnarest's blades would bring about the dragon's downfall, leading the dragon to investigate the name. In any case, the wizard and the dragon had a short aerial battle that resulted in Darnarest being bitten in half. The dragon half-melted the tower and tore apart the remains in search of treasure, although it didn't bother to excavate the lower levels.

Today the tower is nothing more than a few short walls, piles of stones, and rocks scattered over a 100-foot-square area. Most of the useful rocks were carted away by other builders years ago, leaving only the split or partially melted smaller stones strewn over the small clearing. Much of the rubble collapsed and filled in the staircase leading to the subterranean levels, preventing those areas from being despoiled until recently.

Darnarest's tower was actually constructed on the foundation of an even older tower that was built by an unknown wizard over nine hundred years ago. This wizard had ties to Myth Drannor and had placed a gate in his basement that offered easy transport to a place near that fabled city (a gate in the basement of a friend there returned to this tower). The gate still functions, and although Darnarest didn't know how to activate it, the Cultists figured it out and now use this ruin as an easy way to conduct business without endangering their activities in Myth Drannor.

The Cultists dug out the rocks that blocked the stairwell and can enter or leave via the surface or use the gate in area 6 to reach Myth Drannor. Fresh supplies are brought to them every two days and they use the gate in the same