

1ST LEVEL



THE DM TOOL CHEST

# THE SWAMP KING

FIFTH EDITION ADVENTURE

A normally peaceful swamp tribe has risen up, crowning a new King

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## ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

This is a one-shot or side-trek adventure that can be fit into an existing campaign to help space out a story arc or to help introduce new characters join an existing group. While the lore that is mentioned in the adventure comes from the Freelands campaign setting, it can be adjusted and fit to any existing campaign quite easily.



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This adventure module was created with the help of all of these talented people:

- Production & Design:** The DM Tool Chest
- Cover Illustration:** Dreamstime
- Maps:** TJ Phoenix, [Forgotten Adventures](#)
- Interior Illustrations:** Dreamstime

**Thank You!** To all of the awesome patrons who supported this work!

# RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

In order to run this adventure, you will need the Fifth Edition core rulebooks.

Boxed text like this present descriptions meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players. These are just prompts and may be used or not at the DM's discretion.

In this adventure you will come across references that point to information that is presented outside of this module.

*Magic Items, Spells, and Equipment* will be italicized and will be found described in either the core DM guidebook or the core player's rulebook.

**Monster** names will be in bold and the appropriate stat block will be found in the core fifth edition monster guidebook if not already presented in an attached Appendix.

# ABBREVIATIONS

Common abbreviations used in this adventure:

pp - Platinum Piece(s)	LG Lawful good
gp - Gold Piece(s)	CG Chaotic good
ep - Electrum Piece(s)	NG Neutral good
sp - Silver Piece(s)	LN Lawful neutral
cp - Copper Piece(s)	N Neutral
NPC - Nonplayer Character	CN Chaotic neutral
DC - Difficulty Class	LE Lawful evil
AC - Armor Class	NE Neutral evil
xp - Experience Points	CE - Chaotic evil
hp - Hit Points	



## ADVENTURE PRIMER

**T**he Swamp King is an adventure made for a party of **four to six adventurers of 1st to 2nd level**; it's optimized for **five adventurers with an average party level (APL) of 1**. It's been written using the Freelands campaign setting but is designed to fit into any setting with only a few changes. Feel free to use the content as is or plug-and-play with it in your own campaign! You have ultimate control of how this story will be played out so, as always, have fun with it!

## STORY BACKGROUND

Penshaw is a small village in the Proudmore Woodlands just north of Hopewell Harbor, one of the main port cities in the Freelands. Recently they've been experiencing attacks by the Bullywug tribe that lives in the nearby swamp called the Hillsmere Bowels. They normally don't cause trouble but now people are being attacked and disappearing. Lany Krenshaw owns the local apothecary and her brother, Erik, has recently disappeared while on a trip to the swamp to gather supplies. She's desperate to find him and has asked Bart, her husband, and the village Mayor, to seek out help from outside the village.

The Brass Rats, a quasi-militia group of smugglers and slave traders, have moved into an abandoned keep deep in the swamp and made an alliance with the local Bullywug tribe, getting them to do the dirty work of kidnapping people for them. They are working on building a base out of an abandoned keep and are using the slaves for labor until they're sold off.

## BULLYWUG TRIBE

The Grogwater Bullywug tribe is usually reclusive and avoids contact with civilization. Chief Muglik, leader of the tribe, has entered into a bargain with the Brass Rats. The bullywugs are now attacking and kidnapping travelers in the Proudmore Woodlands and from the nearby village of Penshaw in exchange for goods and weapons. He believes this makes the tribe stronger and styles himself the new King of Hillsmere Bowels.

Although the tribe is small, they've built a village in the heart of the swamp. With the weapons provided by the Brass Rats, they've now cleared the area of most, but not all, threats to them.

## THE BRASS RATS

The Brass Rats are former soldiers who were kicked out of the nearby Holy Ignis army for various different reasons. Their leader, Haelik, was a former sergeant who was dishonorably discharged for a drug habit; he's constantly chewing on mild psychedelic plants. Between these plants and his already short fuse, Haelik is almost always on the edge of violence. He now arrogantly refers to himself as Captain.

Arlene Tyne is Haelik's Lieutenant and right hand; a former soldier, she was also dishonorably discharged for stabbing her superior officer over a drunken dispute over cards. She takes extreme pleasure in killing anyone who crosses her; cruelty and causing pain in others are her passions in life.

Disgruntled and bitter about being kicked out of the service, the Rats are now preying upon those they were once sworn to protect. Hiding in the Hillsmere Bowels, they are building up their strength and base of operations.

Even though they were not the best soldiers, they still adhere to a strict military protocol in the way they operate. They made their own uniforms of blackened leather armor with a brass ring inset over the left breast and consider themselves a militia more than a gang.

## **PENSHAW VILLAGE**

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Penshaw is a small village of only about fifty residents. The people here are simple country folks and mainly trade in lumber from the woodlands and alchemical ingredients from the nearby swamp. They know of the bullywog tribe that lives in the swamp but are careful to stay clear of them in order to keep the peace between the two settlements. For years they have not had a problem until they've started attacking gathering parties who venture into the swamp for supplies.

Bart Krenshaw, the village Mayor, is also the owner and operator of the local tavern and Inn, the Lily Pad. He is distraught at the disappearances but they simply do not have the manpower to take on the tribe head-on. With everyone now too afraid to enter the swamp for supplies, he's also afraid that the town will lose trade income. He's also concerned for his brother-in-law who disappeared along with the most recent group of supply gatherers.

He and his wife Lany are desperate for help and will pay the adventurers their entire life savings of 50gp if they will help them.

## **ADVENTURE HOOKS**

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Here are a couple of ways you can hook your adventurers into this story:

### **DISTRAUGHT VILLAGER**

A distraught villager is in the tavern of the adventurers main location, begging anyone who will listen for help. His villagers are being attacked by a tribe of Bullywogs in the nearby swamp. The other patrons laugh him off and dismiss bullywogs as being a serious threat but he persists in begging for help.

### **PATRONAGE**

The adventurers' patron or mentor has been keeping an ear out for anything interesting that they might be able to get involved in to gain them some experience out in the world. They've heard about a small village in the Proudmore Woodlands who are looking for some help with an issue they are having with a local tribe of Bullywogs.

### **TRAVELLING THE WOODLANDS**

While traveling the roadways through the Proudmore Woodlands, the adventurers find themselves in a small village. A frightened and angry crowd is gathering in the center of town and the Mayor is trying to calm them down. He tells them all to stay out of the swamps while he looks for help in dealing with the problem. Noticing the adventurers, he will call them over and seek their help.



# PART 1: A KING OF TOADS

## COMMON FEATURES

**Recommended Ambiance:** Michael Ghelfi - [Swamps](#)

**Environment & Terrain:** The Proudmore Woodlands envelope the entirety of the Hillsmere Bowels. Green trees give way to swamplands and decaying foliage. The swamp is considered difficult terrain and will give disadvantage to all Dexterity checks made while wading through it.

**Sounds & Smells:** The swamp is filled with the scent of sulfur and decaying plant matter. Insect and animal noises fill the air and the loud splashes of predators in the distance will mix with the cries of their prey.

**Lights:** The swamp is exposed to the air and the sun will provide plenty of light; if traveling at night, there are phosphorus plants and bugs that light up the swamp but not well enough to see by.

## INTO THE SWAMP

Bart and Lany know the rough location of the bullywug tribe's village but warn the adventurers that the trip into the swamp will be dangerous and there are other creatures than the bullywugs to worry about. The tribe is located about five miles east of Penshaw and will take roughly three hours to travel to. During each of those hours, the adventurers have a chance of running into unexpected encounters in the swamp. Roll 1d6 and use the table below to determine what the adventurers run into.

1	2 constrictor snakes
2	2 Swamp crocodiles
3	1d6+1 giant rats
4	A patrol of 1d4 bullywugs looking for victims
5	A young boy fishing in the swamps that has an oddly ancient look to his eyes. He won't say where he's from or what he's doing and will vanish into thin air when a splash in the waters behind the adventurers distracts them.
6	An elderly elven druid picking mushrooms can point to the tribe, taking an hour off the travel time

## THE GROGWATER TRIBE

Eventually, the adventurers will come upon the bullywug village deep in the swamps. There is a rough wooden palisade almost twelve feet tall surrounding the village. Huts made from sticks and swamp mud rise out of the swamp waters on stilts, with the center of the village being muddy but solid earth. The village has twenty villagers, including females and younglings, with a fighting force of ten **bullywugs** with shields and spears, Chief Muglik (treated as a normal **bullywug** armed with a spear +1 and double the hp), and his **Giant Toad** mount.

The bullywugs have already been warned of the adventurers' approach by their communication network of toads and swamp creatures. The gates to the village have been left open and the villagers have hidden for safety as the Chief and his warriors are using their *Swamp Camouflage* ability to hide in ambush.

Once the adventurers enter the village, the trap will be sprung with the entire bullywug fighting force surrounding them. Chief Muglik speaks a croaking form of common and will laugh at the "foolish pale skins". Demanding they drop their weapons and grovel before the "king", he will gloat in triumph. He will threaten to have his Giant Toad mount eat them if they do not respond.

## NEGOTIATIONS

Chief Muglik, while simple, is also very greedy. He sees the adventurers as new slaves to sell to the Brass Rats but he can be persuaded to release the adventurers and give up the location of the missing people with a series of successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) checks.

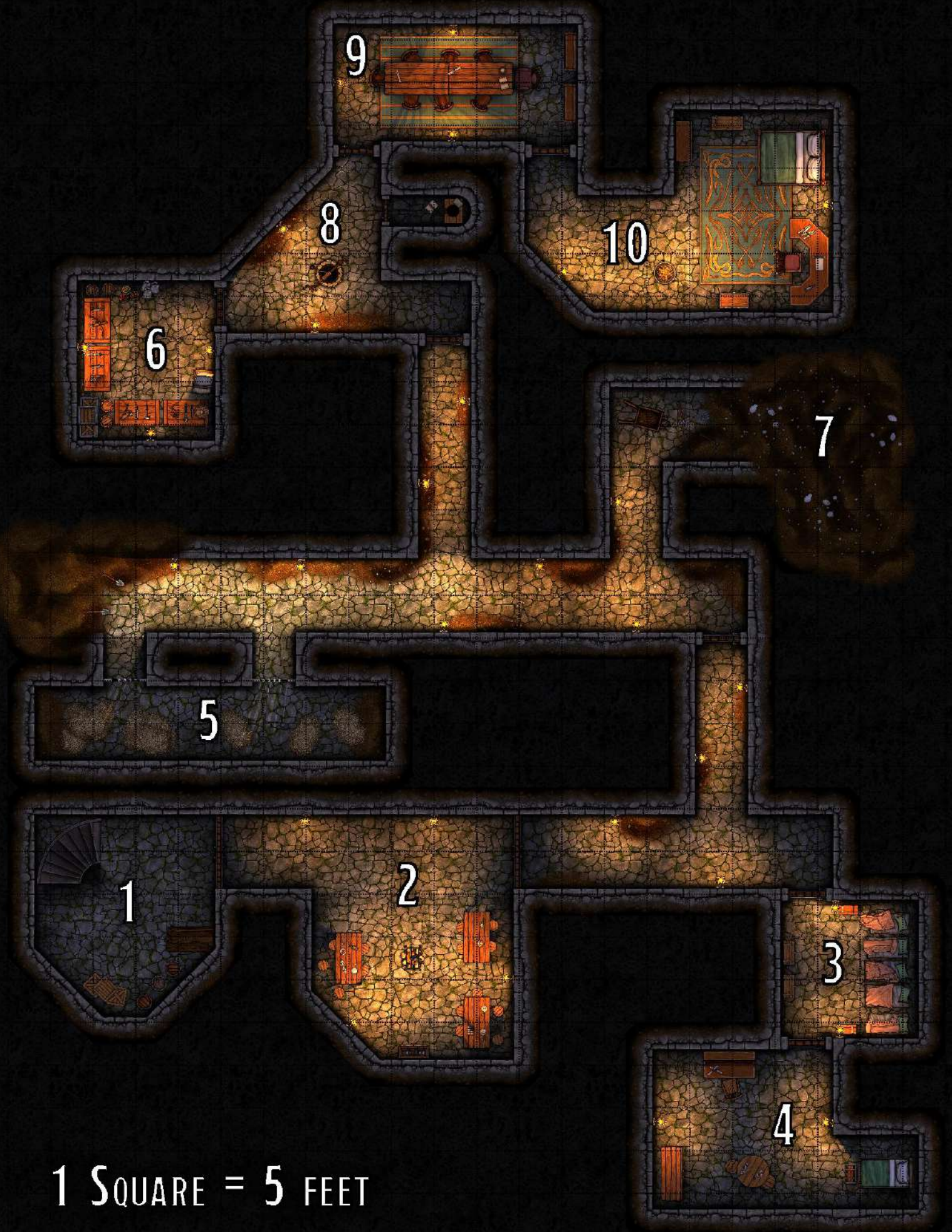
Throughout the course of the negotiations, three successful checks must be made before he will agree to their proposals. Three failed checks will result in the negotiations failing completely and end them. He will need promises of "shiny metals and stones" (coins and gems) as well as "metal shells and sharp sticks" (armor and weapons) for his warriors.

If the adventurers are able to persuade the Chief, he will give them the location of the "smelly soldiers" (the Brass Rats) and tell them the "other pale skins" are with them in the "sunken stone house" (the abandoned keep). He will warn them to bring the promised goods and "no betray king" because he is "mighty king of all swamp" and will eat them.

If the adventurers are not able to persuade the Chief to release them, they can either fight the bullywugs or surrender. If they fight the bullywugs and are able to kill off half of the force or severely injure the Chief, the rest will cowardly run away and the Chief will cower in fear and beg for his life. He will eagerly give up the location of the abandoned keep and tell the adventurers about his deal with the Brass Rats.

If the adventurers surrender or are defeated in combat, the bullywugs will strip them of their gear and knock them unconscious. They will bind them and put them in a cart, intent on selling them to the Brass Rats.





1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

# PART 2: THE SWAMP RATS

**H**idden deep in the Hillsmere Bowels lies the ruins of an ancient abandoned keep. This keep collapsed into the swamp centuries ago as the weight of its stones were too much for the land to support any longer. The upper walls have crumbled long ago but much of the interior has survived, sunken deep into the ground. Only the upper ramparts of the once tall towers remain above ground, the walls long since collapsed and taken over by growing vines and local flora.

The stairwell leading down into the keep was once the entrance to the top ramparts, now at almost ground level. The Brass Rats do not keep a guard at this entrance, preferring to maintain the illusion that this keep is still abandoned while they work below. The trap door leading down into the stairwell is hidden with a thick covering of vines and foliage attached to a wooden pallet. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check will reveal the hidden stairwell.

## CAPTURED!

If the adventurers were captured by the bullywugs, they will wake up in shackles in the slave pen (Area 5) stripped of all of their gear and weapons. Unfortunately, these have all been lost to the bullywugs.

The missing villagers, including Erik, will also be here in the slave pen. They're dirty and malnourished, some sporting injuries from the abuses of the slavers. They will tell the adventurers all they know about the situation, namely that slavers calling themselves the Brass Rats made a deal with the bullywug tribe to kidnap people. They've been using them as labor in the abandoned keep to dig out the collapsed sections and reinforce them. The guards beat them and barely feed them, laughing as they tell them how they will be sold as slaves in the Muhar Desert far away from their homes.

The villagers are terrified and weak from the treatment, unable to fight back. The slavers will come in the mornings with a bowl of gruel to feed them before taking them to the collapsed room (Area 7) where they will be tasked with digging out the dirt and muck, using shovels and buckets to haul the waste to the keeps well that went dry centuries ago.

The adventurers must devise a way to remove their shackles (Arlene has the key but someone proficient with Thieves' Tools can pick the lock with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. The shackles have 15 Hit Points.), find weapons and gear, take down the slavers, and escape the keep.

## COMMON FEATURES

### Recommended Ambiance:

Sword Coast Soundscapes - [Damp Cave](#)

**Environment & Terrain:** The sunken keep is mostly structurally sound but dirt and muck have torn down some walls and spread out onto the ground. Otherwise the stone floor is smooth and easy terrain, if damp.

**Sounds & Smells:** There is the faint smell of the swamp pervading the keep. The sound of picks and shovels can be heard echoing down the halls from the prisoners working in Area 7. Water can be heard dripping everywhere from cracks.

**Lights:** The keep is well lit through torch sconces.

**Doors:** All of the doors in the keep are newly made wood bound in iron on iron hinges. They are DC 15 and have 20 hp.

## KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correlate to the map on Page 6:

### 1 - KEEP ENTRANCE

The entrance to the keep is kept dark so light doesn't peak out from the concealed doorway at the top of the stairs. The room is filled with building supplies and tools. The doorway into the main hall is trapped with a Falling Net with bells attached to it. The net covers a 10 foot section directly in front of the door and those in the area are restrained and must make a successful DC 10 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. The bells will alert the Brass Rats in the Main Hall (Area 2) and they will come rushing to the defense of the keep.

Anyone trapped in the net is within reach of the net can use an action to make a DC 10 Strength check to free themselves or others. A 5 foot section of the net can be destroyed by dealing 5 slashing damage to it (AC 10); otherwise the net has 20 hp.

The net can be noticed with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check and disarmed by someone proficient in Thieves' Tools with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check; a failed check will result in the trap being triggered.

### 2 - MAIN HALL

This section of the keep has been converted into a makeshift mess hall and gathering area for the Brass Rats. When not guarding the prisoners while they work on the collapsed room (Area 7), they gather here to eat, drink, and entertain themselves.

There are four Brass Rat **bandits** in this room at any given time.

### 3 - BARRACKS

While the collapsed room is being dug out and reinforced, this room is currently being used as a barracks for the Brass Rats. Bedrolls are lined up in the corners while chests and wardrobes are filled with personal effects and clothing. Most of the Rats keep their treasures on their persons but with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, the adventurers can find a pouch in a false bottom of one chest containing 5gp, 20sp, and *dagger +1*.

There is a Brass Rat **bandit** sleeping here who can be taken by surprise by stealthy adventurers. If not taken by surprise, the Rat will yell out in alarm, alerting the Lieutenant in Area 4.

## 4 - LIEUTENANT'S QUARTERS

Lieutenant Tyne (**spy**) is doing reports here in her quarters. As one of the leaders of the Brass Rats, she was granted her own room and was second to only the Captain in getting it properly furnished. If alerted by the Brass Rat in Area 3, she will attempt to sneak out of her room to use a *sneak attack* on the adventurers. A search of her desk will reveal reports detailing out the ongoing efforts to reinforce the sunken keep and convert it into a base of operations for a smuggling and slavery operation. A rough map of the keep will also be among the documents. With a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, the adventurers will find a hidden compartment in the desk holding a stack of love letters written back and forth between "S" and "A".

A search of her personal chest will reveal an iron lockbox that can be unlocked by someone proficient with Thieves' Tools with a successful DC 15 check. Inside the adventurers will find a pair of erotic romance novels and a small pouch containing a small gold wedding ring (20gp) and silver locket (5gp) with tiny portrait of a woman inside.

## 5 - PRISON CELL

The prison is dank and musty from the muck of the swamp that has collapsed the wall just outside of the cell. Flickering torches just outside provide the only light source and the prisoners are forced to sleep on old, wet hay piles.

If the adventurers were captured by the Bullywug tribe, they wake up here among the rest of the prisoners during the night. They will then need to plan their escape as outlined in the **Captured!** section on Page 7.

Otherwise the adventurers will find Erik and the rest of the missing villagers here in shackles. The key to the prison can be found on one of the guards in the collapsed room (Area 7).

The prisoners here are all **commoners** without any fighting skills. They will want to escape the keep, either leaving with the adventurers or waiting nearby for them to clear out the keep of the Brass Rats.

## 6 - ARMORY & SUPPLY ROOM

This room holds all of the weapons, armor, and supplies for the Brass Rats. With a large assortment of weapons and armor available, the adventurers can equip themselves with new gear if needed. If they were captured by the Bullywugs, they will also find their backpacks here containing their missing spell components, holy symbols, etc.

There are two Brass Rat **thugs** in here keeping a watch over the supplies.

## 7 - COLLAPSED ROOM

This room has been completely collapsed in by the swamp and is filled with dirt, roots, rocks, and muck. The Brass Rats use the prisoners here to dig out the dirt and then dump it into the deep well in Area 8. They intend to turn this room into the main barracks for the rest of the Rats.

If captured, three adventures will be taken here in a group to work and dig out the room, guarded by two Brass Rat **bandits**. Otherwise, those same two Rats will be here guarding three of the villagers working on the room.

## 8 - WELL

The well in this room was completely dried up centuries ago and is now used as a dumping hole for the prisoners digging out the collapsed room in Area 7. There is a small latrine off to one side but otherwise this room is empty.

## 9 - MEETING ROOM

Captain Haelik and the Brass Rats still keep to a military style way of doing things. This includes having regular meetings and planning sessions on their operations. A large table dominates the center of this room while cupboards filled with maps and books on military history and tactics line one wall.

There are four Brass Rat **bandits** seated at the table going over maps and documents.

## 10 - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Captain Haelik (**bandit captain** wearing a set of *studded leather armor +1*) will be alerted by the sounds of combat in the adjacent meeting room and will be ready for the adventurers as they enter his quarters. He's deep in the throes of the psychedelic roots he is chewing on and sees the adventurers as some sort of demonic creatures.

"A blazing brazier fills this room with dancing firelight, giving a well lit view of the man before you. A tall, dusky skinned man with short cropped blond hair, his bright blue eyes dart around the room as if seeing things that you cannot. Clad in the same blackened armor adorned with a brass ring, he appraises you for a moment, chewing slowly on something. He nods and pulls out the curved blade belted to his waist and points it at you. His grin exposes blackened teeth and he barks out a laugh.

"I don't know what you demons are but you'll never take me alive! I'll send you back to whatever hell you came from!"

### TACTICS

Captain Haelik will use his daggers to attack casters at range and his scimitar for upclose work. He will be in a constant state of insanity, laughing in a crazed manner as he strikes. His insanity will cause him to fight to the death.

Documents in Haelik's desk detail the plan to use the Bullywugs to gather slaves to sell in the black markets in the Muhar Desert to the north and build an outpost here in the Freelands to avoid scrutiny by the Holy Ignis empire. A journal will be found that tells the tale of how he and the rest of the Brass Rats were "wrongfully discharged" and banded together to form a new militia, one that will take whatever it wants, whenever it wants. Lists showing potential buyers for the prisoners will also be found here.

Buried in his personal chest will be a pouch containing 22gp, 106sp, 213cp, and a small emerald (10gp).



# CONCLUSION & WRAP-UP

With the defeat of the Brass Rats and the rescue of the missing villagers, the adventurers will be hailed as heroes and showered with praise, and free food and drinks at the Lily Pad back in Penshaw. Bart and Lany will rush to Erik's side and thank the adventurers with tears in their eyes, gladly giving them the promised reward. The families of the other missing villagers will also thank them, offering them services like repairing their clothes, cooking them a meal, or offering them a place to stay whenever they need one.

## THE SWAMP KING

While the villagers are happy at the return of their people, there is still the threat of the now riled up Bullywug tribe in the swamp. Even with the Brass Rats defeated, they are now armed and the King is wanting to expand his dominion over the area. This will cause trouble for the village in the future and something must be done about the Grogwater tribe. This could be another adventure opportunity for the party. Perhaps they take over the sunken keep, turning into a new dungeon filled with Bullywugs and swamp creatures.

## SLAVE TRADERS

There is also the matter of the potential buyers for the slaves that the Brass Rats were promising. One of these buyers could be the Black Skull Brotherhood, a cabal of necromancers with their sights set on the nearby port city of Hopewell Harbor. This adventure could be used as a tie-in to the **Rise of the Black Skull** series available to [The DM Tool Chest patrons](#).

Thank you so much for playing **The Swamp King!** If you want to check out more of our content, please visit [www.theDMToolChest.com](http://www.theDMToolChest.com)!

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