

CROWNFALL: THE SHATTERED ASCENSION



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW:

- **Theme/Genre:** Heroic Fantasy with elements of Mystery and Political Intrigue.
- **Tone:** Dramatic with a mix of suspense and epic moments of heroism.
- **Target Level for Players:** Level 5.
- **Expected Duration:** 2 hours.
- **Player Focus Preferences:**
 - Combat: Medium.
 - Roleplay: High.
 - Exploration: Medium.

BACKSTORY AND SETTING:

THE WORLD OF ELARION

Elarion is a kingdom once united under a legendary crown, blessed by divine powers, that secured peace and prosperity. However, the sudden death of King Alric III shattered the realm's unity. With the crown, known as "Elarion's Light," reportedly broken into fragments and scattered, noble houses and power-hungry factions are poised to plunge the land into chaos. Shadows lengthen over the kingdom, with whispered schemes and clandestine alliances threatening its very foundation.

THE LOCAL AREA: THE RUINED CITADEL OF AELTHAR

Set between jagged cliffs and ominous forests, Aelthar is a once-thriving town now steeped in anxiety. Its heart—the citadel's ruins—serves as the eye of a brewing storm. Legends claim the citadel was the original home of Elarion's Light, a place now brimming with ancient power struggles and potentially catastrophic secrets.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Aelthar's citadel stood proud in a bygone era as the capital of a forgotten kingdom. Folk tales speak of its concealed vaults, housing relics and forbidden secrets. Seismic tremors have recently disturbed these hidden depths, awakening dormant forces and perhaps hinting at the means to reforge the shattered crown.

IMPORTANT NPCs:

1. Lady Elodra Velkris

An ambitious noble whose words promise restoration but whose actions suggest a greater hunger for power. Her influence in Aelthar is substantial.

2. Thorin Blackbarrow

The head of the local militia, Thorn is wary of strangers yet offers help to those he deems worthy. Unbeknownst to many, he holds a personal connection to Elarion's Light.

3. The Whispering One

An enigmatic presence within the citadel, offering cryptic guidance at a price. Its true motives remain shrouded in mystery, steering players towards uncertain paths.

PLOT HOOK:

OPENING SCENE:

As thunders rumble and torrents of rain cascade upon Aelthar, the players gather in the central hall. Lady Elodra Velkris stands before them, her presence commanding despite the storm:

“Heroes, the fate of Elarion may rest upon your shoulders. Beneath the ruins, a fragment of Elarion’s Light lies, pivotal to quelling the storms and unrest that plague us. Retrieve it, and glory, wealth, and my boundless gratitude are yours.”

Her declaration is punctuated by a sudden tremor that jolts through the hall. A scout rushes in, breathless, exclaiming shadowy figures have breached the citadel. The urgency is palpable—a race against time has begun.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE:

Retrieve the fragment of Elarion’s Light hidden in the citadel’s vault before rival forces seize it.

KEY LOCATIONS:

LOCATION 1: THE FORSAKEN TOWN SQUARE

- **Atmosphere:** The plaza is swept with mud, sporadically illuminated by lightning. Market stalls lie deserted, and wary glances sneak from behind closed windows.
- **NPCs:** Thorin Blackbarrow and his militia maintain a watchful vigil. Players can engage in dialogue to earn trust, extract rumors of the ruins, and discover clues about the fragment’s location.
- **Possible Encounters:**
 - A frantic townsman accuses the party of impending doom, sabotaging their equipment.
 - A militia challenge to defeat a lone shadow spawn, showcasing the magical disturbance’s threat.

LOCATION 2: THE OUTER WALL OF THE CITADEL

- **Atmosphere:** Time-worn stone walls, damp with moss, loom large. A chilling mist swirls within, hinting at unseen threats.
- **Challenges:**
 - Navigate a crumbling wall section, requiring a skill challenge (Athletics, Acrobatics, Dexterity) to avoid injury.
 - Mercenaries, sworn to a rival noble, scout ahead. Players may choose diplomacy or engage in combat.
- **Puzzle:**
 - Solve an Old Elven-inscribed riddle to open a mystical passage, or face a spike trap as penalty.
 - **Riddle Example:** “What walks on gold and whispers of light, yet fades at the break of dawn?” (Answer: A star.)

LOCATION 3: THE VAULT OF LOST LIGHT

- **Atmosphere:** A vast, circular chamber suffused with an unearthly glow emanating from a central pedestal. Magic hums faintly in the air.
- **Climactic Encounter:**
 - The party finds the fragment on the pedestal. As they approach, a dark knight wielding the Whispering One’s power challenges them.
 - **Boss Stats:** The knight employs radiant and necrotic attacks, symbolic of the crown’s dual nature, along with summoning shadow spawn.
 - **Environmental Hazards:** The vault quakes with instability, scattering debris and testing the party’s agility to evade falling hazards.

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES:

1. **Combat Encounter:** A band of shadow spawn (CR 3 each) within the town square.
2. **Roleplay Encounter:** Negotiate with citadel mercenaries. Persuade them, garnering allies, insights, or procure stolen supplies.
3. **Puzzle:** Decipher the doorway’s Old Elven riddle.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION:

FINAL CHALLENGE:

Conquer the dark knight to capture the shard, all while the Whispering One tempts the party with promises of power for surrendering the fragment.

STAKES:

- **Success:** Retrieve the shard, earning Lady Velkris’s reward and tipping power in her favor—leaving uncertain whether her intentions bode well.
- **Failure:** The shard is lost, exacerbating Elarion’s disintegration, with future feuding inevitable.

RESOLUTION:

As the storm’s fury wanes, the shard’s retrieval hints at mending Elarion’s fate. Yet, uncertainty clouds the horizon. Is this peace or merely a pause before greater tribulations?

REWARDS:

- **Gold:** 500 gp per player.
- **Magic Items:**
 - **Blessed Amulet of Light:** Grants necrotic damage resistance.
 - **Fragment of Elarion:** A campaign-specific artifact, brimming with plot significance.
- **Story Rewards:** Lady Velkris’s trust, favor, and an enhanced regional reputation.

SUPPORTING DETAILS:

1. Stat Blocks:

- Unique “Dark Knight of the Whispering One” stats, featuring abilities like “Cursed Strike” and “Shadow Guard.”

2. Simple Maps:

- Illustrations of the town square, citadel’s outer defenses, and the vault chamber.

3. Player Handouts:

- A fragmented route map through the citadel.
- Torn pages from the Whispering One’s diary, hinting at its motivations.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES:

- Should the party ally with mercenaries or delay, the dark knight begins a ritual to siphon the shard’s energy, modifying the battle’s stakes.
- Rejection of Lady Velkris sees Thorin championing an independent quest, complicating alliances.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP:

1. Debrief Questions:

- What aspects of the adventure resonated with you the most?
- Did the balance between combat and roleplay satisfy your expectations?
- Are you eager to delve deeper into Elarion’s mysteries?

2. Epilogue Options:

- Unravel the Whispering One’s identity or seek other crown fragments.
- Explore escalating political intrigues, potentially expanding into a campaign of royal and magical machinations.