

EMBERS OF THE FORSAKEN CROWN



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Theme/Genre: Fantasy, High Adventure, Mystery

Tone: Heroic with shades of intrigue and ancient tragedy

Target Level for Players: Level 5

Expected Duration: 2 hours

Player Focus Preferences:

- Combat: Medium
- Roleplay: High
- Exploration: Medium

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

WORLD OVERVIEW

The world of **Ashandar** was once the domain of the *Cinvaris Dynasty*, kings and queens who harnessed the power of the *Forsaken Crown*. This artifact was both a source of unimaginable might and a harbinger of doom. A millennium ago, **Queen Selyara**, the last monarch, mysteriously vanished with the crown amid a devastating civil war. The once-glorious kingdom splintered into bickering factions, leaving behind ruins of a bygone era. The Forsaken Crown's legend persists, shrouded in myth, a relic of dread and sacredness for the people.

LOCAL AREA

The tale begins in **Black Hollow**, a secluded village enveloped by the perpetual mist of *Ashwood Forest*. This once-bustling trade hub has faded into seclusion as legends of ghostly apparitions around an ancient tower deter travelers. Recently, the village has been abuzz with odd happenings—a crimson comet illuminating the night, anxious whispers from its inhabitants, and fleeting glimpses of phantoms.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Ancient songs and etchings recount Queen Selyara's flight to the tower in Ashwood, driven mad by betrayal and the crown's seductive malevolence. Her return, marked by the crown's resurfacing, may spell catastrophe or herald peace.

IMPORTANT NPCs

1. Elder Marla Ravencroft

- **Role:** Respected village elder of Black Hollow.
- **Motivation:** Desires to maintain peace, fearing the crown's awakening.
- **Description:** A serious demeanor, silver hair, and eyes that peer deeply behind spectacles. Often leans on a rune-engraved walking stick.
- **Secrets:** Possesses knowledge of a ritual to neutralize the crown's influence, though fearful of using it.

2. Karlin Whelk

- **Role:** The village's eager blacksmith.
- **Motivation:** Aims to demonstrate valor, partly to impress a secret love interest.
- **Description:** Ruggedly built, with a cheeky smile and arms darkened by soot.
- **Secrets:** Plagued by nightly visions of Queen Selyara's ghost, driving his insistence to act.

3. The Wraith of Selyara

- **Role:** The malevolent spirit tethered to the ruin.
- **Motivation:** Yearns for freedom through a new host to revive the crown's force.
- **Description:** An ethereal presence with a fractured crown hovering over her ghostly visage.

PLOT HOOK

OPENING SCENE: THE RAVAGES OF THE PAST

Upon reaching Black Hollow, the party finds itself in the midst of a discordant festival, the joy muted by an undercurrent of dread. Elder Marla seeks the players' assistance, hurriedly confiding in them about the reawakening of the legendary Forsaken Crown and the impending threat of Queen Selyara's spirit.

At her urgency, an ominous clangor echoes through the square as shadowy beasts materialize at the village's fringes, bathed in the ruddy glow of the comet. Marla beseeches, *"You must quell the crown's corruption before the specter breathes anew!"*

- **Primary Objective:** Traverse the Ashwood Forest to seal Queen Selyara's specter within the ruined tower.

KEY LOCATIONS

BLACK HOLLOW VILLAGE (STARTING AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** Moist trails weave between moss-clad abodes, festooned with strings of lanterns from the festival.
- **NPCs and Encounters:**
 - Gossips exchange tales of looming curses and fleeing kin.
 - Elder Marla provides a cryptic map requiring skillful roleplay or Intelligence checks to decrypt.
 - Karlin offers his guidance, yet stubbornly refuses to stay behind, inviting persuasive dialogue.
- **Encounter:**
 - **Shadow Spawns (CR 3):** These ephemeral threats besiege the village outskirts, serving as an introductory skirmish.

THE WHISPERING GLADE (INTERMEDIATE AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** Ensnaring trees and swirling mists abound, carried by whispers without discernible origins.
- **Features:**
 - The ghost's influence warps the surroundings, causing inexplicable phenomena.
 - **Puzzle:** A pedestal concealed within conceals slots for runestones. Esoteric clues inscribed in archaic tongues such as Elvish require decryption (linguistic skill checks).
- **Encounters:**
 - **Dryad (Non-hostile):** Suspicious guardian of the wood. *"What stirs you, strangers, in this sacred glade?"*
 - **Animated Trees (CR 4):** Stirring upon failures or instigated by disrespect.

THE CURSED RUIN (FINAL AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** A dilapidated sentinel, caught in the forest's reclaiming embrace. The chamber mutates with phantasmagoric light and the ghostly scrapes of unseen chains echo ominously.
- **Features:**
 - The ruined sanctum where the *Forsaken Crown* resides, safeguarded by Selyara's ghost.
 - A trap sealed with arcane spikes is triggered, necessitating appropriate weight placement on intricate pressure pads.

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

COMBAT ENCOUNTER—SHADOW SPAWNS (VILLAGE AND FINAL)

- **Stats:** Based on Shadows (CR 1/2); adjusted HP to 30.
- **Tactics:** Tend to recede into obscurity if overwhelmed, leading the players unknowingly closer to the crown.

THE WRAITH OF SELYARA (BOSS)

- **Stats:** Unique entity derived from a Wraith (CR 5), able to enlist Shadow minions.
- **Abilities:** Possesses mind control to pit adventurers against comrades (Wisdom saving throw).
- **Tactics:** Oscillates between ethereal and solid forms, altering her defense according to her vitality.

PUZZLE—RUNESTONES OF THE GLADE

- **Mechanics:** Players must align runestones with elemental markers on a dais. Statues bearing cryptic messages guide correct placement. Mishaps invoke an enraged spirit (combat penalties).

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

FINAL CHALLENGE

The Wraith entices one adventurer toward the *Forsaken Crown*, extolling forbidden might. Their rejection electrifies the final confrontation. Acceptance fomented a moral conundrum as the wearer yields to malevolent whispers.

- **Stakes:** The forest shall succumb to Selyara's conquest, yet shattering her essence unleashes perilous energies from the crown.
- **Narrative Options:** If players decipher Marla's ritual, they can diminish the crown's threat, binding its powers anew.

REWARDS

1. **Loot:** The accursed keep-sake sigil of Selyara grants a +2 Charisma bonus but erodes Wisdom saves, alongside a buried +1 weapon.
2. **Story Rewards:**
 - Gains in stature across Ashandar.
 - Elder Marla may become a staunch ally in ensuing escapades.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

1. **Stat Block Adjustments:** Customize Wraith and Shadows proportionate to Level 5 strength.
2. **Maps:** Simple maps of forest expanse and ruin layout (two levels).
3. **Atmosphere:** Shift to haunting Celtic harmonies in the Glade and stirring orchestral themes at battle's pinnacle.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

- Should players weaponize the crown, let its sinister whispers corrupt each member in turn, escalating drama.
- Encourage inventive resolutions: forming a compact with the Dryad or invoking Marla's safeguard mid-battle alter the denouement significantly.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS:

- Was the balance between combat, dialogue, and puzzles satisfying?
- How did players respond to the ethical dilemmas posed?

EPILOGUE OPTIONS:

- New machinations of courtly treason unfold if the crown is surrendered to nobility.
- Investigations into the crown's past could extend into a deeper narrative.