

LEGENDS OF THE HOLLOW CROWN



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Theme/Genre: Fantasy-adventure with shades of mystery and political intrigue

Tone: Heroic with moments of suspense

Target Level: Level 3

Expected Duration: 2 hours

Player Focus Preferences:

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

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

WORLD SETTING

The one-shot is set in the Kingdom of Aurivale, an ancient realm with a storied past. Ruled by a monarch whose emblem is the Hollow Crown, a relic said to be blessed by an old god of wisdom. This artifact represents divine favor and the legitimacy of the monarchy, yet its power and significance have eroded over generations, mirroring the people's waning faith.

LOCAL AREA

The adventure kicks off in Glenwick, a quaint riverside city nestled in the Valley of Rimewood. Known for its captivating festivals and renowned storytellers, Glenwick holds a clandestine truth: the Hollow Crown has been stolen, and tensions rise as the kingdom verges on rebellion. Queen Alarion Telva, a newly crowned but unproven ruler, struggles to silent whispers of conspiracy within her court.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1. The Hollow Crown is said to bind the spirits of previous monarchs, assisting their heirs in times of crisis.
2. Legends warn that if corrupted, the crown can consume the wearer's soul, replacing it with an ancient, power-hungry entity.
3. The theft occurred two weeks ago during Queen Alarion's coronation, with rumors suggesting an insider perpetrator.

IMPORTANT NPCs

- **Queen Alarion Telva:** The young queen, determined yet untested, seeks the party's help in secrecy to prevent political scandal.
- **Eliwyth Varn:** The queen's stoic spymaster, harboring more secrets than she reveals. Her true intentions remain ambiguous.
- **Mavos Creed:** A scholar-priest from the Temple of Ancestral Guidance, eager for the crown's return, but concealing past misdeeds.
- **The Iron Fox:** A notorious, enigmatic thief seen at the crime scene, rumored to be linked to the Gray Talons, a powerful underground syndicate.

PLOT HOOK

OPENING SCENE

Players find themselves at Gideon's Hearth, a bustling inn celebrating the city's annual "Festival of Voices." In the midst of merry festivities, a cloaked figure approaches—the disguised Queen Alarion. Hearing of their exploits, she implores their discreet assistance in recovering the stolen Hollow Crown.

OPENING EVENT

Before details can be shared, a shadow crashes through the window—a raven with blazing red eyes, clutching a cloth scrap. Emblazoned with the Gray Talons' mark and bearing a cryptic message, "He who treads old thrones wakes buried foes."

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

The party must recover the Hollow Crown, uncovering the truths behind its theft and the ancient danger it harbors.

KEY LOCATIONS

LOCATION 1: GIDEON'S HEARTH (STARTING AREA)

Atmosphere:

The inn hums with warmth and life as revelers share stories and laughter. After the raven's ominous delivery, tension thickens like a suddenly stilled wind.

Notable NPCs and Encounters:

- **Innkeeper Gideon Szar:** A congenial and hearty old soldier, adept at overhearing useful scraps of information.
- A traveling bard with cautionary tales of the Hollow Crown's curse.
- A gray-cloaked figure hastily slipping out the back—a potential lead into a chase through Glenwick's labyrinthine alleys.

Possible Challenges:

- Skill checks (Persuasion, Insight) to unearth local rumors or build trust with key NPCs.
- A swift chase or minor combat should a spy threaten the queen's safety.

LOCATION 2: THE RIMEWOOD CATACOMBS (INTERMEDIATE AREA)

Atmosphere:

Moss-covered tunnels echo with legacy, the air cool and thick with history. Shadows dance on walls, and faint whispers rise above the stillness.

Encounters and Challenges:

- **Puzzle Challenge:** A stone door, immobile without solving a riddle of lineage. Brass tokens must align with a family tree, hints etched upon surrounding carvings.
- **Combat Encounter:** Animated stone guardians, eternal sentinels to ward off defilers.
- **Roleplay Opportunity:** A restless royal spirit, seeking an understanding soul, offers cryptic guidance if engaged with respect.

LOCATION 3: THE GRAY TALONS' HIDEOUT AT HOLLOW SPIRE (FINAL AREA)

Atmosphere:

The cliffside spire looms, remnants of a once-grand fortress now swallowed by shadow and ruin. Flickering green torches reveal a maze of splintered corridors.

Encounters and Challenges:

- **Combat Encounter:** Gray Talons' loyalists patrol vigilantly, employing crossbows and hidden snares.
- **Boss Encounter:** The Iron Fox, employing guile and enchanted traps, seeks to harness the crown's might to upend the royal order.
- As they combat the Iron Fox, the Hollow Crown's spectral wrath manifests, summoning vengeful spirits of monarchs past. Players must decide: cleanse the crown via skill tests (Arcana, Religion) or obliterate it through force.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

FINAL CHALLENGE

Success in purifying or destroying the crown protects Aurivale's future. Failure unleashes a malevolent, ancestral fury upon the kingdom.

STAKES

- **Success:** Queen Alarion solidifies her rule, the monarchy restored.
- **Failure:** The kingdom plunges into turmoil, spectral kings sowing chaos.

NARRATIVE CONCLUSION

Victorious or defeated, the queen offers gratitude, rewards, and positions of prestige—or, should they choose a rebellious path, a pact to reshape the kingdom.

REWARDS

LOOT

- 500 gold pieces
- *Cloak of Shadows:* Provides +1 AC and advantage on Stealth checks.
- Fragment of the Hollow Crown, granting advantage on History checks.

STORY REWARDS

- Queen's favor, enhancing influence and social standing.
- Potential alliances with the Gray Talons if negotiation prevails over combat.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Rewards from combat, puzzles, and roleplay placing the party halfway to Level 4.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

CUSTOM STAT BLOCKS

- **Iron Fox:** 10th-level Rogue, excels in Dexterity and Charisma, able to disengage and disappear into shadows.
- **Haunted Monarchs (Final Spirit):** AC 15, 75 HP, spectral strikes, “Wail of Legacy” confounds opponents.

MAPS

- An inviting inn layout.
- Linear catacombs with branching side passages.
- A tiered spire increasing in peril with each level.

PLAYER HANDOUTS

- Cloth scrap bearing the Gray Talons’ insignia and message.
- Illustrations of Hollow Crown myths.

ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC SUGGESTIONS

- Tavern: “The Bard’s Tale” (light lute melodies).
- Catacombs: “Echoes in the Dark” (ambient echoes and whispers).
- Final Area: “Battle of the Ancients” (orchestral crescendos).

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

ALTERNATE PATHS

- Aligning with the Gray Talons opens paths to court infiltration or insurrection.
- Crown’s destruction can incite favor among discontented factions within Aurivale.

IMPROVISATION TIPS

- Use sudden events, such as street ambushes, to redirect playful wandering.
- Adjust NPC intentions if players unveil secrets ahead of schedule.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- Which adventure aspect was most enjoyable (e.g., combat, puzzles, roleplay)?
- Did your character enjoy ample spotlight opportunities?
- Share any suggestions for future adventures.

EPILOGUE OPTIONS

Encourage continuation either as champions of Aurivale or as insurgents vying for a new regime.