

THE CRIMSON COVENANT



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Title: *The Crimson Covenant*

Theme/Genre: Dark Fantasy, Horror, Mystery

Tone: Ominous, Thrilling, Intense

Target Level: Level 5

Expected Duration: 2 hours

Player Focus Preferences:

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

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

Long ago, a blood ritual bound an ancient fiend to the village of *Scarhollow*, a secluded settlement nestled at the edge of the Crimson Veil woods. For centuries, the fiend remained dormant, kept in check by an unbroken line of blood-pacts between the townsfolk and a secretive order known as *The Crimson Covenant*. However, the last Covenant leader was slain under mysterious circumstances, and with no heir to perform the ritual, the fiend's power begins to seep into the land. Scarlet mists now curl through the forest, people disappear by the day, and the villagers whisper of strange shapes stalking the treetops. Desperate and terrified, the town's mayor has summoned the adventurers to investigate the situation and prevent an ancient evil's return.

SETTING DETAILS

- **Scarhollow:** A gloomy village surrounded by dark pine forests and perpetually cloaked in a crimson mist. The eerie quiet is broken by the distant howls of creatures that shouldn't exist.
- **The Crimson Veil:** A sprawling forest of towering redwood trees whose bark seems to bleed sap like thick blood. Legend says the forest grows upon cursed ground, its roots nourished by the fiend's corruption.
- **Shrine of the Covenant:** A foreboding stone temple hidden deep within the woods, sacred to the ancient Crimson Covenant. Its halls are layered with occult carvings and signs of a hastily-abandoned ritual.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Crimson Covenant was established centuries ago to protect Scarhollow from the fiend's power. Through forbidden blood magic, they kept it sealed beneath the Shrine. With their leader dead and their doctrine shattered, the delicate protections have fallen apart.

IMPORTANT NPCs

- **Mayor Gresham Wren:** (Lawful Neutral) A gruff but sincere human leader, attempting to hold his town together while keeping the fiend's existence a secret to prevent full-blown panic.
- **Wrenna Voss:** (Neutral Good) A hesitant sorceress and apprentice of the last Covenant leader, confused and fearful of the magic she inherited. She knows pieces of the ritual but is afraid to act alone.
- **Katrak the Whisperer:** (Chaotic Evil) A demonic wyrmling twisted by the fiend's power, serving as the fiend's emissary. It's clever, manipulative, and wickedly sadistic, poisoning the minds of villagers.

PLOT HOOK

Opening Scene: The adventurers are summoned to *Scarhollow* under the guise of solving “an unusual local disturbance.” Upon arrival, they find the town in chaos—villagers argue in the streets, one swears they saw scarlet eyes in the mist, and others mourn their missing loved ones. Mayor Gresham ushers the party into his cabin, hurriedly locking the door behind them. “We don’t have time for pretense,” he growls, slamming a ritual dagger onto the table. “If you don’t help us seal this... thing, none of us will make it until sunrise.”

Primary Objective: Unravel the mysteries of the Crimson Covenant’s downfall, locate the Shrine of the Covenant, and stop the fiend from breaking free – either by invoking the ancient ritual or destroying its growing manifestation.

KEY LOCATIONS

LOCATION 1: SCARHOLLOW VILLAGE (STARTING AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** A windswept, frostbitten village littered with signs of despair. The red mist rolls lazily through the streets, clinging to the air like a living entity.
- **Key NPCs:**
 - *Mayor Gresham:* Wants the ritual completed.
 - *Wrenna Voss:* Reluctantly shares fragmented knowledge of the ritual.
- **Encounters:**
 - A frightened villager claims their child has disappeared into the forest. If questioned, they mention seeing strange, clawed shadows moving in the mist.
 - The village square is accosted by a pack of corrupted wolves (use Dire Wolves with additional necrotic damage on attacks).

LOCATION 2: THE CRIMSON VEIL (INTERMEDIATE AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** This dense, labyrinthine forest blocks out most light, leaving only faint crimson hues and the hoarse whispers of wind. Signs of twisted wildlife abound—gnarled roots, bloodied claw marks on trees, and animal carcasses drained of blood.
- **Challenges/Events:**
 - *Puzzle Trap:* A “blood gate” blocks the path deeper inside. The gate has intricate carvings that hint at a solution: the blood of an honest leader, a conflicted sorceress, or the already innocent (players can interpret these in different ways).
 - *Combat Encounter:* As players solve the gate puzzle, they are attacked by corrupted Dryads (Dryads with increased AC and necrotic attacks).
 - *Roleplay:* Katrak the Whisperer appears in shadowy form and offers tantalizing promises of power if the party lets the fiend free instead of binding it.

LOCATION 3: SHRINE OF THE COVENANT (FINAL AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** The Shrine trembles under an oppressive aura. Its once-holy halls are defiled with torn banners and overturned ritual altars. The scarlet mist is dense here, making visibility difficult. A deep pit at the center of the shrine emanates a guttural pulse—where the fiend stirs beneath.
- **Final Challenge:**
 - *Boss Fight:* The fiend begins manifesting as an Infernal Aspect (homebrew; think of an Incubus but stronger with lair actions like creating zones of necrotic fire).
 - The fiend also summons swarms of corrupted bats and two minor “shadows” (Shadow stat blocks) to harass the party while it charges its true form.
- **Ritual Interaction:** Players can delay the fiend’s form by completing portions of the interrupted blood ritual. Several NPCs’ blood is key: (1) Mayor Gresham’s decision to sacrifice himself, (2) Wrenna’s power as an heir, or (3) one of the party members choosing to channel the ritual themselves (taking permanent physical or emotional scars).

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

CUSTOM PUZZLE: THE BLOOD GATE

- **Mechanics:** The gate has three carvings, each inscribed in Abyssal (translated with magic or skill checks):
 - *The leader's duty, the sorceress's legacy, and the innocent's promise*
 - Placing the appropriate blood type into a basin opens the gate. Players can misinterpret or debate this grim choice. The "innocent's promise" can be solved through persuasion using kind-hearted words rather than literal blood.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

- **The Stakes:** If the fiend manifests fully, it will break free of its binds, unleashing infernal corruption and a deadly plague of nightmares upon the region.
- **Success:** The fiend is sealed (though at great personal or moral cost), Wrenna vows to rebuild the Covenant, and the scarlet mist slowly dissipates.
- **Failure:** The fiend is unleashed, leaving the party to flee a cursed land or attempt a final, desperate last stand.

REWARDS

- **Loot:**
 - *Covenant Amulet* (Rare): A magical necklace that grants resistance to necrotic damage and a once-per-day blood magic ritual.
 - *Fiend's Core Shard* (Uncommon): Used as a crafting component or sold for profit.
- **Story Rewards:** Earn the mayor's eternal gratitude, gain the trust of Wrenna, or further the influence of Katrak (if the party took darker offers).

SUPPORTING DETAILS

- **Stat Blocks:** For Katrak (Wyrmling with spellcasting), Infernal Aspect (custom Incubus-style boss), and Corrupted Dryads.
- **Map Suggestions:**
 - Scarhollow: A small village map with central meeting house and spread-apart homes.
 - Crimson Veil: Forest with narrow, twisting paths and secluded clearings.
 - Shrine: Multi-level dungeon map with an altar and wide pit for the final battle.
- **Player Handouts:**
 - A sketch of the Crimson Covenant's broken ceremonial dagger.
 - A blood-stained ritual scroll detailing parts of the sealing incantation.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

- If players refuse the ritual, they can still kill the fiend outright by severing its connection to this plane, though this will leave lingering corruption in the land.
- If one of the party members sacrifices themselves fully, they may gain a permanent fiendish "boon" or subclass features.
- If persuasion or deception is used with Katrak, the party might turn the wyrmling against the fiend.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

- **Debrief Questions:**
 - How did you feel about the moral choices in the adventure?
 - Was the balance between combat, roleplay, and puzzles satisfying?