

THE REVENANT KING'S GAMBIT



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Title: *The Revenant King's Gambit*

Theme/Genre: Dark Fantasy, Mystery, Political Intrigue

Tone: Grim and Heroic, with flashes of Morbid Humor

Target Level for Players: Level 5

Expected Duration: 2 hours

Player Focus Preferences:

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

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

The *Kingdom of Fannadel* is a realm of haunting beauty and dark shadows, where the veil between life and death is perilously thin. A century ago, King Cedhor II fell into despair, consumed by fears of betrayal and the inevitable decay of mortality. In his madness, he embraced necromancy, transforming himself into a revenant—a deathless monarch sustained by ancient, forbidden magic.

Cedhor's rule was long and tyrannical until a coalition of sorcerers rose against him. They locked him within the black iron vault of *Ethren's Keep*, sealing away his casket with powerful wards. To this day, Cedhor's tale echoes as both legend and warning—a testament to unchecked ambition's ruinous ends.

Now, necromantic whispers once again stir across Fannadel. The wards that bind Cedhor are failing, and his feared return looms. The adventure begins in the hamlet of *Rowanwatch*, near *Ethren's Keep*. Recent tremors and spectral occurrences forewarn of darker things to come.

IMPORTANT NPCs

WARDEN KELLEN HAWTHORN

- **Description:** A stalwart and seasoned guardian of Rowanwatch, Kellen is gruff and commanding. He bears the weight of recent events with a mixture of frustration and determination, seeking to protect his people at all costs.
- **Motivation:** To maintain peace and prevent Cedhor's revival. He harbors a deep distrust for anyone dabbling in necromancy.
- **Quote:** "Whatever's locked in that keep should stay locked. Rowanwatch stands because we have no other choice."

MOTHER VERDA

- **Description:** An enigmatic figure wrapped in layers of shawls and mystery, Verda resides in a secluded cottage filled with herbs and arcane trinkets. Her eyes seem to see beyond the present.
- **Motivation:** Her loyalty lies with the spirits that commune with her. She offers cryptic guidance, rooted in her visions.
- **Quote:** "The spirits do not lie, child. The earth speaks of the old king's stirring. Listen well, and heed its warnings."

ARDAN MALCER

- **Description:** Charismatic and cunning, Ardan is as much a performer as he is a sorcerer. His charm masks darker intentions, as he secretly serves as the necromancers' willing instrument.
- **Motivation:** To gain power through allegiance with Cedhor, believing it could secure his position within the reshaped realm he envisions.
- **Quote:** "Power is a dance, my friends. Sidestep the mundane and embrace the rhythm of our age."

REVENANT KING CEDHOR II

- **Description:** Once proud and regal, Cedhor's undead form is twisted by centuries of confinement and vengeance. His spectral gaze burns with a desire to reclaim his forsaken throne.
- **Motivation:** Vengeance, reclamation of his kingdom, and the spread of his undying rule.
- **Quote:** "From the shadowed depths, I shall rise anew. All shall kneel, and my kingdom will never fade."

PLOT HOOK

OPENING SCENE

The scene unfolds in *Rowanwatch's Stone Hearth Tavern*, a haven for weary travelers and locals alike. Inside, the air buzzes with uneasy chatter. The flicker of firelight casts long shadows that dance across the wooden walls. The adventurers sit amidst this lively tension when the door slams open. Warden Kellen strides in, a grim expression etched across his features.

Slamming a black, ornate key onto the table, Kellen addresses the party with urgency:

Warden Kellen: *"The tremors are getting worse, and strange lights were seen over Ethren's Keep last night. The realm can't afford another war—we need someone brave, or foolish, enough to uncover what's happening. Track down whoever stole the key's wards before it's too late, and make sure the Keep stays sealed. Will you take the job?"*

Suddenly, a villager bursts into the tavern, eyes wide with panic:

Villager: *"The stone bridge to Ethren's Keep—it's gone! Collapsed into the chasm during the tremors, it did!"*

The adventurers have no time to waste. Duty calls them to solve the mystery and protect the realm from an ancient evil stirring once more.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

- Recover the missing wards stolen from Cedhor's black casket and ensure the Revenant King remains contained.

KEY LOCATIONS

LOCATION 1: ROWANWATCH (STARTING AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** Rowanwatch is enveloped in a moody fog, where trembling ground seeds anxiety. The blend of rustic charm and impending dread unsettles both locals and travelers.

NOTABLE NPCs

- **Warden Kellen:** Issuing orders, consulting maps, and organizing militia to fend off potential undead threats.
- **Mother Verda:** Lurking near the edge of town, she offers riddles and glimpses into the future to those brave enough to seek her counsel.

ENCOUNTERS

- **Undead Attacks:** Recent necromantic rituals have animated low-level undead—zombies or skeletons—attacking farms on the outskirts. The party can choose to eliminate the threat or investigate its origins.
- **Spy Intrigue:** An NPC, perhaps a local merchant, is secretly in league with Ardan Malcer. Their actions aim to discredit the adventurers, perhaps by planting evidence or spreading false rumors.

LOCATION 2: THE SHATTERED BRIDGE (INTERMEDIATE AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** Once a sturdy passage to Ethren's Keep, the stone bridge now lies in ruin above a swirling misty chasm. Spectral shapes occasionally flicker within the mists below, hinting at the unrest in the realm of spirits.

ENCOUNTERS

- **Environmental Puzzle:**
 - *The Spectral Path:* The spirits of the chasm respond to those who understand them. Players may negotiate with the phantoms to form a temporary spectral bridge using successful Charisma checks.
 - *Resourcefulness:* Players might also employ magical items or summon arcane solutions to traverse the chasm.
- **Ethereal Wraithlings:** These nimble spirits arise from the mist:
 - *Combat Stats:* AC 14, HP 22, Speed 50 ft, resistant to non-magical damage.
 - *Tactics:* They attempt to draw characters into the mist, utilizing hit-and-run tactics.

LOCATION 3: ETHREN'S KEEP (FINAL AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** This foreboding castle of charred stone and malice exudes an ancient menace. Bones from past battles litter the passageways, unsettled by mortal footsteps. An eerie, glowing seal pulsates over Cedhor's casket.

ENCOUNTERS

- **Social Interaction/Puzzle:** Ardan Malcer awaits, eager to manipulate the situation:
 - *Negotiation:* He offers power, territory, or wealth. Players can attempt to sway him from his purpose with insight or deceit.
- **Combat:** Failing negotiation, Ardan summons undead minions and unleashes his arcane prowess:
 - *Ardan Malcer Stats:* AC 13, HP 45. Spells include Fireball, Counterspell, Animate Dead, and Darkness.
 - **Battlefield Tactics:** Ardan utilizes the terrain and shadows to separate and overwhelm the party.
- **Final Confrontation:** Cedhor's spectral form challenges the party before the last ward:
 - *Cedhor Revenant Stats:* AC 16, HP 110, Legendary Resistance 2/day. Features a Fear Aura (DC 14 Wisdom).
 - **Abilities:** Uses ghostly sword strikes coupled with devastating necrotic blasts.

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

- **Ethereal Wraithlings:** Nimble, ghostly adversaries that attack at the bridge.
- **Ardan Malcer (Necromancer):** A cunning spellcaster supported by undead minions.
- **Cedhor Revenant Form:** A formidable opponent commanding fear through necromantic might.

PUZZLE OR TRAP

- **The Spectral Path Puzzle:**
 - *Spiritual Communication:* The pathway across the chasm requires resonating with the spectral realm. Skill checks (Arcana, Insight) or offerings (symbolic tokens like gold or blood) can ensure safe passage.

ROLEPLAY ENCOUNTER HINTS

- **Ardan's Persuasion:** Attempts to sow discord about Kellen's motives or the monarchy's reliability, serving his narrative that Cedhor's return is the realm's salvation.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

CLIMACTIC PATHS

1. **Seal Cedhor for Good:** Destroy the revenant king's key and reconstitute the seal, banishing Cedhor's soul permanently.
2. **Aid Ardan:** Collaborate in Cedhor's resurrection, ushering a new undead age in exchange for personal power.
3. **Betray Both:** Use cunning and magic to trap both Cedhor's soul and Ardan, averting immediate disaster.

STAKES

- Cedhor's revival heralds open war and chaos across Fanndel.
- Restoring the ward secures a tenuous peace, though it doesn't solve the region's rising darkness.

REWARDS

LOOT

- **Gold:** 400 gold pieces.
- **Amulet of Warding:** Grants a +1 bonus to Saving Throws against necrotic damage.
- **Scroll of Abjuration:** Provides a one-time spell use to banish undead.

STORY REWARDS

- **Alliances:** Potential long-term partnerships with Warden Kellen or Ardan Malcer, shaping future narrative arcs.
- **Reputation:** Enhanced standing with noble houses that oppose necromantic forces.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

STAT BLOCKS

- **Cedhor Revenant Form** and **Ardan Malcer:** Detailed statistics are crucial for combat tactics and narrative impact.

MAPS

- **Rowanwatch:** Includes key landmarks like taverns, guard posts, and rural locales.
- **The Shattered Bridge:** Detailed terrain features to enhance environmental interactions.
- **Ethren's Keep:** Central prison chamber, halls with ancient traps, and Cedhor's sepulchral prison.

PLAYER HANDOUTS

- **Cedhor's Letter:** A call to arms from the revenant king, rich with dark promises to his last serving soul.
- **Torn Map:** Indicating breaches within Ethren's Keep, perhaps leading to hidden treasures or traps.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

- Collaborating with Ardan permanently alters Fanndel's political landscape, offering further narrative depth.
- Encourage players' creativity and adaptability, particularly when traversing the shattered bridge or engaging in critical dialogues.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- Reflect on favorite experiences during the session.
- Discuss the impact of decisions on the overall storyline.
- Identify whether combat, roleplay, or exploration provided the greatest enjoyment.

EPILOGUE OPTIONS

- Investigate Cedhor's lingering followers or Fanndel's royal intrigue for longer campaign potential. Expand into full-scale adventures beyond Rowanwatch, delving into themes of redemption, betrayal, and legacy in a kingdom at the precipice of a new age.