

THE SPECTRAL TOURNAMENT



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW:

Theme/Genre: Fantasy, Mystery, Competitive Ghostly Combat

Tone: Heroic with a hint of Dark Mystery

Target Level: Level 5

Expected Duration: 2 hours

Player Focus Preferences:

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

BACKSTORY AND SETTING:

Centuries ago, a world-renowned annual tournament known as the “Ethereal Crown Games” ended in tragedy. A terrible magical accident consumed the arena, killing all participants and spectators in a flash of arcane energy. The spirits of those who perished now haunt the abandoned tournament grounds, unable to pass on due to an ancient curse. Every hundred years, the cursed champions rise again to participate in a ghostly version of the tournament. Victory offers the spirits temporary respite—losers, however, are bound tighter to the arena.

The town of **Fathmire**, nestled next to the remains of the arena, has borne the brunt of the hauntings. Now, tremors of magical energy and whispers of eternal rivalry hint at the tournament’s return. Desperate for peace, the town’s mayor seeks brave outsiders to disrupt the cycle by winning the tournament and breaking the curse.

IMPORTANT NPCs:

MAYOR ESTRA MORVEN

An anxious leader of Fathmire who believes winning the tournament can free the town from its haunted plight. She has gathered clues about the curse and offers wealth and a rare magical artifact as a reward.

- **Motivation:** Save her town and her son, whose ghost is trapped in the arena as one of the “cursed champions.”

Dialogue Hook:

“Adventurers, Fathmire suffers under eternal night! Win the tournament, and lay these souls to rest. I’ll reward you with our town’s last hope, the Radiant Lance.”

SPECTER HERALD VELON

The ghostly announcer of the Spectral Tournament, who manifests in a glowing suit of ethereal armor. Looming and theatrical, he runs the games like a spectral master of ceremonies.

- **Motivation:** See the tournament continued—no matter the cost—but secretly yearning for freedom himself.

Dialogue Hook:

“Welcome, flesh-bound souls, to the Ethereal Crown Games! Prove your worth, and perhaps the veil will lift... for one of you.”

ERYNDOR THE FALLEN CHAMPION

The spirit of the tournament’s final victor in life, now corrupted by the curse into a hulking spectral knight. He acts as the tournament’s final boss.

- **Motivation:** Gleeefully lock others in this endless game to alleviate his loneliness.

Dialogue Hook:

“Join our ghostly ranks or face oblivion. Here, in the endless arena, everyone is a contender...and a captive.”

PLOT HOOK:

The campaign begins in Fathmire, a town shrouded in magical mist and ghostly whispers. The party hears about the Spectral Tournament either through troubling visions, rumors of a lucrative reward, or personal vendettas against the undead.

As the party enters the town square, Mayor Estra Morven approaches them and pleads for their help. She describes how a sense of doom has overshadowed Fathmire. She offers gold and a **Radiant Lance (a +1 weapon that deals bonus damage to undead)** as a reward if they can win the ghostly tournament and free the trapped spirits. To compel the party further, spectral tremors suddenly crack through the ground, and misty figures begin to rise, beckoning them toward the ruined arena.

- **Primary Objective:** Compete in and win the Spectral Tournament to break the curse and free the trapped souls.

KEY LOCATIONS:

1. FATHMIRE (STARTING AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** A foggy town on the edge of desolation. Pale, ghostly lights flicker in windows, and the streets are eerily quiet except for the distant sound of spectral cheers and clashing steel.
- **NPCs:** Mayor Estra encourages the party to act quickly, while terrified townsfolk warn them of the arena's terrors.
- **Encounters:**
 - **Skill Challenge:** Calming down panicked townsfolk or finding a lead on how to enter the tournament arena.
 - Use Persuasion (DC 13) to rally frightened NPCs, Arcana (DC 15) to analyze the lingering magic, or Perception (DC 14) to find faint ethereal footprints leading to the arena.

2. THE SPIRIT'S REST (INTERMEDIATE)

- **Description:** A decrepit bar just outside the arena gates, operated by ghostly barkeep **Karrick**, who serves spectral drinks ("Phantom Ale") and offers cryptic advice. Nearly every object in the bar is worn and translucent.
- **Roleplay:** Karrick, a melancholy but witty ghost, knows secrets about the tournament. He will share juicy rumors, including Eryndor's weaknesses, for the price of answering riddles or some humor.
- **Challenge:** Karrick presents the party with a **riddle-based puzzle gate** to enter the tournament:
 - "I have towns, but no houses. I have mountains but no trees. I have rivers but no water. What am I?"
 - Answer: A map.

3. THE ETHEREAL CROWN ARENA (FINAL AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** Grand ruins of spectral obsidian rise into the mist. Flickering ghostly crowds cheer the contestants, while bonfires of blue flame illuminate the haunting splendor.
- **Encounters:**
 - **Combat Encounter 1:** The **Champion's Gauntlet**, a three-stage trial against spectral warriors:
 1. **Spirit Duelists (4 Will-o'-Wisps)** that zip around while delivering high-damage bursts.
 2. **Arena Beasts (Matching CR undead creatures, like Shadows or a Wight)** released mid-arena as "entertainment."
 3. The final fight: **Eryndor the Fallen Champion** (see Climax).

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES:

1. **Puzzle Encounter:** The riddle at the Spirit's Rest unlocks entry to the tournament. Failure means a ghostly trap triggers, surrounding the party with spirits that drain their vitality (Dex save DC 14 or take 2d6 necrotic damage).
2. **Combat Encounter:** A staged challenge against spectral opponents.
 - **Spirit Duelists (4 Will-o'-Wisps):** Tactics involve staying airborne and attacking with hit-and-run electrical bursts.
 - Stats: AC 19, HP 22 each (MM p. 301).
 - **Arena Beasts:** A CR-appropriate hurdle depending on party size.
3. **Roleplay Opportunity:** Convince Velon, the Spectral Herald, that the curse harms even him. A successful Persuasion (DC 16) could distract him or provide additional information for the final fight.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION:

The boss fight is against **Eryndor the Fallen Champion**, a spectral knight (custom monster). **Eryndor** wields a ghostly greatsword that can deal both slashing and necrotic damage, and he periodically summons ghostly minions to harass the party.

- **Environmental Challenge:** The arena itself is unstable, with collapsing platforms and cursed energy zones dealing area damage (Dex saves DC 14 at the top of every round).

Upon defeating Eryndor, the crowd of spirits fades, and the party has a choice:

- **Set the spirits free:** Destroy the Ethereal Crown, breaking the curse; this pleases the mayor.
- **Take the Crown for themselves:** Gain the **Ethereal Crown item** (Grants spectral invisibility 1/day).

Stakes of Failure:

If the party fails, the curse remains, and the players' spirits might even be bound to the arena as new champions!

REWARDS:

1. Gold & Items:

- Radiant Lance (+1 weapon) from Mayor Estra.
- Ethereal Crown, if chosen (+1 Will and 1/day teleport).

2. Story Rewards: Reputation as the saviors of Fathmire.

3. Optional Experience Points: Award based on combat milestones and roleplay creativity.

SUPPORTING DETAILS:

• **Stat Blocks (Custom Monster):**

- **Eryndor the Fallen Champion** (AC 17, HP 120, attacks with ghostly greatsword and necrotic aura).
- **Spirit Duelists** as Will-o'-Wisps.
- **Atmosphere Enhancements:** Play spectral-themed music (e.g., eerie string or choir tracks like "*Dies Irae*") during the arena scenes. Ghostly crowd sound effects can also add immersion.
- **Handouts:**
 - Crumbling map showing the tournament grounds.
 - Karrick's riddle written on ghostly parchment.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES:

- If the party tries to bypass the tournament, Velon appears to coerce them, raising the arena gates himself.
- Should the party ally with Eryndor, they fall under suspicion in Fathmire and face a new arc where they act as reluctant champions of the cursed arena.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP:

1. Debrief Questions:

- What moment stood out to you the most?
- Was there a balance between combat, puzzle-solving, and roleplay?
- Would you have made different decisions with more information?

2. Epilogue Options:

- The party could delve into discovering who first cursed the arena if they wish to extend the campaign.
- The Crown's corruptive powers could lead into a larger arc about undead armies or cursed artifact recovery.