

Title and threat



SCÉNARIO FLASH SHADOWDARK

The Crypts of the Black Moon

Shadowdark RPG · Level 3-4 · 3-4 hours · English

When the moon is erased, the dead go looking for fresh eyes.

For three nights, the candles of Valcroissant have blackened without burning, dogs have growled at empty corners, and several villagers swear they saw their own shadows stand still while they kept walking. On the hilltop, the ruined abbey of Saint-Lazaire, condemned for a century, has split open beneath its collapsed choir. A spiral stair once more leads down to the lunar crypts built by a funerary order obsessed with eclipses and chosen death.

At the bottom of the complex lies the tomb of Sire Albric de Noirelune, a warlord buried with his guards and an obsidian mirror able to drink light. A small local cult led by the fallen chaplain Malveen intends to use the alignment of the Black Moon to offer Albric a living body and raise his knights. If the rite reaches its height, the whole valley will be struck by a sickened night: flames will choke, the recently dead will answer the bells, and shadows will learn how to lie.

- Phase 4: the rite reaches the Null Zenith. Albric manifests fully in the final chamber even if Malveen is already dead, and a clean retreat becomes impossible.

- Recommended level: 3-4
- Players: 3-5
- Estimated time: 3-4 hours
- Tone: cold catacombs, lunar symbolism, old-school tension, darkness that thinks
- Play promise: a readable mini-mortuary complex, simple time pressure, real exploration choices, an ending that can be bargained for or fought through

Immediate hooks

Choose or roll 1d4.

1. The provost of Valcroissant offers 180 gp if the PCs end the phenomena before the next moonless night.
2. A young novice from the old hospice claims her brother was dragged toward the abbey by figures carrying unlit lanterns.
3. An antiquarian pays in advance for any noble insignia or astrolabe recovered from the crypts, but expressly forbids anyone from touching the obsidian mirror.
4. One PC wakes with a crescent of soot on their palm and dreams of a sarcophagus opening from the inside.

Black Moon clock

For every 30 minutes spent hesitating, resting, taking a noisy detour, or allowing the cult to act without pressure, advance one phase.

- Phase 1: shadows slip out of place. Checks to spot movement or deceitful silhouettes in the crypts are made with disadvantage.
- Phase 2: the funerary guards within the tilted sarcophagi half-awaken; add 1d2 sentinels to area 4.
- Phase 3: the obsidian mirror gives off sticky darkness; the first torch lit in each room lasts only half its normal duration.

Synopsis, background, and areas 1 to 3

Read aloud

The air grows colder with every step. Your lights cut across stone arches coated in a whitewash that is almost intact. Lower down, flakes of tarnished silver glint in the mortar like teeth. The smell is clean, dry, too clean for a crypt. Something recently swept away the dust. Then you see the first reflection move before you do, though none of you has yet raised an arm.

Synopsis

The PCs descend into a funerary sanctuary where an eclipse cult seeks to wake a buried lord. The complex has five zones and plays as a compact descent: find the right path, understand the rite, exploit the factions, and decide whether the obsidian mirror should be broken, stilled, stolen, or used. The cult is small, but the place itself defends the tomb.

Truth of the place

The crypts were built by the Canons of the Last Crescent, a brotherhood convinced that perfect death should come only when the moon vanishes from the sky. They embalmed the valley's great ones beneath a wash of lime, salt, and powdered silver, then guided their souls toward dreamless rest with the Mirror of the Null Zenith. The artifact does not resurrect the dead: from among the living, it selects bearers capable of receiving a share of their night and will.

When the order was accused of prolonging the local war by sending noble revenants back into battle, the abbey was burned and the crypts sealed. Malveen, last chaplain of Saint-Lazaire, found fragments of the ritual in the archives of a nearby hospice. He believes he can summon Albric as protector of the valley. In truth, he is only feeding bodies and memories to a dead man already starving.

Playable structure

- 1. Stair of the White Litanies: clean descent, first signs of the rite, possible meeting with a survivor.
- 2. Atrium of Dead Reflections: crossroads chamber where light becomes as much a tool as a trap.
- 3. Ossuary of the Watchers: place of information, negotiation with the dead, and access to resources.
- 4. Gallery of Tilted Sarcophagi: tactical zone, partial awakenings, procession traps.
- 5. Crypt of the Null Zenith: final scene beneath the obsidian mirror, negotiation, battle, or counter-rite.

1. Stair of the White Litanies

A stone spiral descends around a dry shaft. The walls are covered in prayers painted in lime, nearly erased except where recent fingers have wiped away dust to reread certain lines. Three steps bear traces of dried blood. Halfway down, a niche holds a blackened silver lantern, still warm if Phase 2 or higher has been reached.

- Careful search: a torn purse with 16 gp, a small ivory key, a curved ritual knife worth 18 gp.
- Danger: a brittle slab gives way under sudden weight; DC 13 DEX check to avoid slipping into the side shaft, otherwise 1d6 damage and a crash heard in area 2.
- Encounter: Tovin Tremblepelle, a wounded looter, crawls behind a fallen pillar. He saw Malveen descend with three faithful followers and a young captive. He wants to leave alive more than he wants treasure.

2. Atrium of Dead Reflections

An octagonal chamber with a lunar mosaic floor. Eight polished metal plates are still set between the columns, though four are cracked. Any bright light here produces delayed reflections: a figure may seem to remain standing for a second after moving, or walk down a corridor other than the real one. Two stone doors lead to the ossuary and the gallery, plus a low hatch opening onto a service passage choked with rubble.

- Understanding the chamber: a PC who watches in silence and succeeds on a DC 12 INT or WIS check notices that only one mirror returns torchlight without delay; if turned toward the central emblem, it reveals footprints and a hidden phrase: "Salt soothes what the moon calls."
- Effect: in a fight here, the first attack by any creature exploiting a false movement or deceitful reflection is made with advantage.
- Secret: behind the mirror without delay is a wall coffer opened by the ivory key. Contents: 28 gp, a vial of blessed salt, a canon's engraved ring worth 35 gp.
- Enemy presence: 2 of Malveen's faithful intermittently watch the atrium. Above all, they want to delay intruders until the next phase.

3. Ossuary of the Watchers

A long vaulted hall lined with niches of bleached bone. Hundreds of skulls stare toward a low altar covered in black dust. At times a collective sigh can be heard, never strongly enough to be certain of it. A twisted iron gate leads into a storeroom of dry bandages, incense, and jars of lime. Farther on, a narrow corridor joins the gallery of sarcophagi.

- The dead here are not immediately hostile. If overturned bones are put back in place, a pinch of salt is poured upon the altar, or the PCs speak low and respectfully, the spectral priestess Dame Ysendre manifests.
- Dame Ysendre, last lucid keeper: a translucent figure beneath funeral veils stiff as parchment. She explains that the mirror must not be looked at head-on during the rite and that Albric can only take flesh if a living being willingly gives him their name or blood before the sarcophagus.
- She offers concrete aid if the PCs promise to seal the crypt again: a countersigil of ash and salt that protects one bearer against the first attempt at possession or charm coming from the mirror.
- Resources: 3 doses of sacred lime. Thrown at an animated shadow or revenant, they deal 1d6 damage and reveal its true position until the end of the round.
- Complication: if the PCs loot the ossuary brutally, 1d4 gaunt watchers animate and chiefly try to shove the defilers toward the gallery.

Areas 4 to 5, creatures, and key NPCs

4. Gallery of Tilted Sarcophagi

A monumental corridor where twelve stone sarcophagi stand at a slant in alcoves, as though slowly sliding out of the wall. Processional tracks score the floor. Silver hooks meant to carry ritual hangings dangle from the ceiling. A platform of rotten wood crosses half the gallery above a ditch filled with shards, bandages, and black water.

- Pressure: any loud noise, fall, or suddenly exposed light awakens 1 additional funerary guard.
- Procession trap: two dark slabs still trigger the old hanging mechanism. DC 13 DEX check to avoid it; on a failure, a curtain weighted with chains drops, deals 1d8 damage, and pins the target to the floor until a DC 12 STR check succeeds.
- Exploitation: the wall winch can tip a sarcophagus over. Against a nearby enemy, make an opposed STR check; on a success, the slab crushes for 2d6 damage. On a failure, the sarcophagus opens anyway and releases its occupant.
- Visible loot: each alcove bears a small coin of tarnished silver; 60 gp total if the PCs take the time to pry them loose.

5. Crypt of the Null Zenith

A sunken circular chamber, half chapel and half war tomb. At the center, Albric's sarcophagus rests upon a basalt dais. Above it, hanging from three black chains, the Mirror of the Null Zenith slowly turns without any breath of air. Rings of soot mark out an incomplete rite around the tomb. Extinguished candles float in shallow bowls of cold oil. If Phase 3 or 4 has been reached, the walls seem to breathe in torchlight.

Malveen prays on his knees beside the circle, flanked by two exhausted faithful and the captive if that victim was not rescued earlier. He prefers to talk for a few seconds, especially if he thinks the PCs are divided. He promises he can calm the valley, return a beloved dead one, or grant a PC the strength of a buried knight. He lies about the exact price, but not about the power.

- The mirror: anyone who looks straight into it for more than one round must succeed on a DC 13 WIS check. On a failure, they see a victorious version of themselves crowned in shadow and act with disadvantage on their next check to refuse a bargain, an offer, or an easy escape.
- The counter-rite: pour the vial of blessed salt or the sacred lime upon the circle, turn the mirror aside with the chains, then close the sarcophagus using living blood laid upon the outer seal, not inside it. This wounds Albric, breaks the ceremony, and lets the dead fall asleep again.
- Brutal destruction: if the mirror is shattered without care, the whole chamber suffers 2d6 necrotic damage and 1d4 hungry shadows burst free for one last melee before fading at dawn.

Shadowdark encounters and creatures

- Faithful of the Last Crescent: AC 13, HP 8, MV near, curved knife +2 (1d6) or blinding powder +2. Morale 7. Alcove fanaticism: while fighting near a wall, tomb, or pillar, its first successful hit deals +1 damage.
- Gaunt watcher: AC 14, HP 11, MV near, claws +3 (1d6). Morale 9. Threshold guardian: if an enemy turns their back to flee the area it guards, the watcher immediately makes one attack.
- Noirelune funerary guard: AC 15, HP 16, MV near, black-bone spear +4 (1d8) or shield shove +4 (1d6). Morale 10. Lime armor: reduce nonmagical piercing and slashing damage by 1; vulnerable to open flame and sacred lime.

- Shadow of the Zenith: AC 13, HP 12, MV near fly, freezing touch +4 (1d6). Morale 12. Light-eater: on a successful hit, the torch or lantern carried by the target loses 1 additional duration step.
- Sire Albric de Noirelune: AC 16, HP 28, MV near, funerary sword +5 (1d10) or tomb gaze +4. Morale 11. Tomb gaze: instead of damage, a nearby target must succeed on a DC 14 WIS check or remain frozen until the end of its next turn, overwhelmed by the weight of an alien memory. Lord of the chosen night: if the mirror remains intact and turned toward him, Albric gains +2 damage. If the mirror is turned away or fouled with salt, he loses this bonus and suffers 1d6 damage at the start of each round.
- Malveen, fallen chaplain: AC 12, HP 14, MV near, black-silver dagger +3 (1d6) or reflection invocation +4. Morale 8. Reflection invocation: instead of attacking, Malveen creates an illusory double in the chamber; the next attack against him is made with disadvantage unless the attacker has already seen his true reflection.

Key NPCs

- Dame Ysendre, prioress of the crypts: lucid, austere, without hatred for the living. Motivation: seal the tomb without destroying the memory of the dead. Secret: she would allow the PCs to leave with a noble reliquary if they swear to seal the mirror.
- Tovin Tremblepelle, wounded looter: nervous, opportunistic, not wholly a coward. Motivation: get out of the crypts with something he can sell. Secret: he stole from Malveen a secondary seal that allows the sarcophagus to be opened or closed more quickly.
- Malveen, fallen chaplain: once keeper of a hospice, now convinced that a noble dead man is worth more than weak living folk. Motivation: give the valley to a protector who will owe him everything. Secret: he knows Albric will take his own face first if no stronger volunteer presents himself.

Useful treasures

- Mirror of the Null Zenith: too large to carry away intact without preparation. If a flake of obsidian is broken from it, it is worth 120 gp to an occultist. Worn as an amulet, it allows its bearer once per day to see secret doors and invisible creatures within near range for 1 round. Curse: for every night it is worn, make a DC 13 WIS check or the bearer dreams of an open tomb and starts the day with 1 fewer HP.
- Lantern of the Last Crescent: found on the stair or near Malveen. Lit from any flame, it shines like a normal lantern but also reveals reflection-based illusions within near range.
- Noble reliquaries: funerary jewels, a heraldic medallion, a silver clasp, and blackened pearls worth 140 gp total if the PCs dare loot the dais.

Ending, aftermath, and license

Running the final scene

When the PCs reach the crypt, choose the state of the rite according to the phase reached.

- Phase 1: Malveen has not yet given blood to the seal. He negotiates, stalls, and hopes to turn the PCs against Ysendre.
- Phase 2: the sarcophagus has already shifted. Albric speaks from within, promising order, riches, and righteous war.
- Phase 3: a Shadow of the Zenith already circles the mirror; the faithful are ready to die if that will suffice.
- Phase 4: Albric stands, or will stand within a round. The walls shed black dust and every exit becomes a fighting withdrawal.

The PCs can succeed in four main ways: kill Malveen before the height of the rite, complete the counter-rite, strike a limited pact with Albric and then imprison him again, or flee with a shard of the mirror while accepting that the valley will pay the rest of the price.

Possible endings

- Clean sealing: the mirror is turned aside, the sarcophagus is shut, and the circle is fouled with salt. Shadows return to their rightful places. Valcroissant is saved, and the dead remain silent.
- Bad peace: the PCs make an agreement with Albric. He gives up rising in exchange for a noble name, a future oath, or a fragment of the mirror carried into the world. The valley survives, but a funerary debt is born.
- Dirty victory: Malveen and Albric fall by force, but the mirror is broken. The PCs survive with the treasure while scattered shadows haunt the following weeks.
- Black dawn: the rite succeeds. Albric emerges with a body or an escort of guards and first withdraws into the hills rather than starting an immediate slaughter. He then becomes a wandering lord for your campaign.

1d6 table - What the mirror briefly shows whoever dares stare into it

1. A future battlefield where the PC marches beneath a moonless banner.
2. A dead relative smiling with someone else's teeth.
3. A crypt door sealed beneath the foundations of a palace.
4. Malveen's face replaced by the PC's own.
5. A crown of black iron set upon an altar of salt.
6. Three knights in pale armor already waiting in another tomb.

Hooks for what comes next

- The canon's ring found in the atrium also opens an abandoned stronghold where the records of voluntary dead were kept.
- A scholar learns that Albric was not the only great lord entrusted to the Mirror of the Null Zenith; other lunar crypts exist in the region.
- If a PC accepted a pact, obedient shadows begin appearing around them at the next absent moon.

Compatibility and ORC license note

- Compatible with Shadowdark.
- Independent third-party product designed for Shadowdark RPG, with no official affiliation to The Arcane Library.
- Published by MythCore for the wider ORC-compatible range.

Credits

- Design and text: MythCore
- Line development: Flash Shadowdark Scenarios
- Line direction: MythCore

Notes for the illustrator

- Cover: ruined abbey on a bare hill, split choir, stair descending into the crypts, absent moon behind carved clouds, silhouettes of torchlit adventurers.
- Interior 1: octagonal atrium with cracked mirrors, lunar mosaic, delayed reflections of a group advancing warily.
- Interior 2: gallery of tilted sarcophagi, dark slabs, chain curtains dropping, funerary guard stepping from an alcove.
- Finale: circular crypt, hanging obsidian mirror, Malveen praying, half-open sarcophagus, Sire Albric rising in light being devoured.

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