

Hook, background, and rumors

SCÉNARIO FLASH SHADOWDARK

The Tombs of the Thunderstruck King

Shadowdark RPG · Level 1-3 · 2-3 hours · English

A cursed king still keeps the lightning that was meant to kill his realm.

Every summer, the people of Valeclair leave a jug of milk at the foot of the nine menhirs to soothe the memory of the Thunderstruck King, a legendary ruler whom the priests claim was struck by divine wrath for trying to steal the fire of the sky. Tonight, the storm came before its season. Three royal slabs burst apart in a single peal of thunder, and pale figures are already walking among the stones.

The PCs may be hired by the village, drawn by promises of royal relics, or driven by something more intimate: a dream of a broken crown, a burn mark appearing on a weapon, a missing kinsman last seen climbing the hill. Above ground, everyone believes this is a punitive tomb. In the crypts below, the truth still waits beneath an oath.

- Step 1: the smell of ozone fills the halls; the guardians grow restless.
- Step 2: the next exposed torch loses 10 minutes of duration.
- Step 3: the final chamber opens on its own; the Thunderstruck King awakens armed.
- Step 4: if the seal is broken at this stage, the lightning escapes and strikes the valley before dawn.

- Recommended level: 1-3
- Players: 3-5
- Estimated time: 2-3 hours
- Tone: cursed tomb, sacred storm, old-school tension, tragic revelation
- Play promise: six clear rooms, readable traps, possible negotiation, and a finale with weighty consequences

Immediate hooks

Choose or roll 1d4.

1. The reeve promises 90 gp to anyone who seals the tombs before the storm "takes someone else."
2. A shepherdess swears she saw her brother, dead for a year, walking toward the hill with a spear of light in his hand.
3. One PC recognizes the king's crest on an old family medallion said to ward off tempests.
4. A hermit begs the PCs not to break the royal crown under any circumstances, but refuses to say why.

Rumors of Valeclair

- The king was buried with a solid gold crown rich enough to pay for a war. False.
- Lightning follows blades, armor, and anything that gleams with metal inside the tombs. True.
- The three visible tombs are only decoys around an older chamber. True.

Exploration pressure

Whenever the PCs lose 30 minutes, take a long rest, or unleash a great crash, raise the storm one step.

Map and rooms

Text map

- 1. Vestibule of Split Stelae -> 2. False Crypt of the Hound-King and 3. Gallery of Copper Rods
- 2. False Crypt of the Hound-King -> 4. Ossuary of the Oath-Bearers
- 3. Gallery of Copper Rods -> 5. Chamber of the Three Slabs
- 4. Ossuary of the Oath-Bearers -> 5. Chamber of the Three Slabs through a narrow service passage
- 5. Chamber of the Three Slabs -> 6. Chamber of the Thunderstruck King

1. Vestibule of Split Stelae

Cold wind, rainwater in the seams, three stelae marked with the same symbol of a sundered crown. All light here takes on a blue cast.

- Search: 11 gp in a shattered urn, an intact tarred rope, and recent tracks from iron-shod boots.
- Clue: the stelae tell three contradictory versions of the king's death; none speak of divine punishment, only of an "oath sworn beneath the open sky."

2. False Crypt of the Hound-King

A colossal canine sarcophagus guards false jewels and a skeleton wearing a gilded lead crown.

- Readable trap: if someone takes the false crown without wedging the lid, copper javelins spring out. DEX check DC 12; on a failure: 1d6 DMG.
- Loot: 26 gp, two bronze rings worth 8 gp each, and a tablet stating that "the true chamber lies behind the bearers of the oath."

3. Gallery of Copper Rods

A corridor of metal rods hangs from ceiling to floor. The slightest touch makes them ring like dry bells.

- Crossing in metal armor or with a long weapon without precautions triggers an arc: 1d4 DMG to the creature carrying the most metal.
- Solution: wrap the rods in cloth, crawl flat beneath them, or lash them in place with the tarred rope.
- Secret: behind a blackened plate, a niche holds 1 flask of holy oil and an amber shard worth 20 gp.

4. Ossuary of the Oath-Bearers

Niches filled with bones bound in copper wire surround a stone chair. Here wanders the Amber Vestal, a pale ghost with a burned face.

- If the PCs show respect, she reveals the truth: the king was not punished, he willingly received the lightning to imprison it inside his sealing crown.
- She knows how the scenario can end: put the crown back in place and speak the old oath, or guide the charge into a prepared vessel.
- Profaning the bones or lying openly turns her hostile.

5. Chamber of the Three Slabs

Three bare funerary stones cover the floor. Each bears a rune: king, sky, key.

- Stepping on the wrong combination seals the exit and calls 1d3 copper sentinels.
- Clue: in the ossuary, three skulls stare toward the runes sky, king, key.
- Correct sequence: sky -> king -> key. The middle slab sinks and opens the final chamber.

6. Chamber of the Thunderstruck King

Round hall, a broken crown hanging from copper chains above a basalt throne. Upon that throne sits the desiccated king, pierced through by a vein of white light pulsing in time with the thunder.

- Any unprotected torch here loses 10 minutes after each combat round or major luminous spell.
- If the PCs enter without bright light, the king speaks first. He asks to be slain only if someone agrees to take up his burden.
- Visible treasure: storm scepter, royal seal, three black ambers. The true prize is the final choice.

NPCs, creatures, and treasure

Encounters and intentions

- Copper sentinels: ancient guards bound to the rods in the gallery. They drive intruders back, but do not attack anyone who advances wearing the lead crown and holding a lowered weapon.
- Amber Vestal: the last loyal servant. She would rather save the valley than the king himself.
- The Thunderstruck King: neither demon nor spotless hero. He is exhausted, lucid only in flashes, and wants his torment ended without condemning the innocent.

Shadowdark creatures

- Copper sentinel: AC 13, HP 7, ATK fulguric spear +2, DMG 1d6, Special: on a natural 18+, or if the target wears metal armor, it also deals 1 lightning DMG and makes one light source at near range gutter.
- Amber Vestal: AC 12, HP 9, ATK ashen touch +2, DMG 1d4, Special: never attacks first; if soothed, she blesses a torch or lantern that will not lose duration during the next storm effect and can absorb the first arc released in the final chamber.
- Thunderstruck King: AC 15, HP 22, ATK royal blade +4, DMG 1d8, Special: at the end of each round, an arc strikes the nearest metallic creature for 1d4 DMG; presenting the sealing crown or speaking the old oath suspends his attacks for 1 round.

The old oath

"Let the crown bear the lightning, let the kingdom bear remembrance, let no innocent pay my debt."

Spoken before the king with the sealing crown, or in the Vestal's presence, this oath allows negotiation, restoration of the seal, or the transfer of the charge into a vessel without a full battle.

Treasures

- Shattered sealing crown: a relic split into three segments. Once per day, its bearer may ignore one source of lightning or thunder DMG that would strike them. Raw value: 90 gp, but selling it quickly draws cults and scholars.
- Storm scepter: royal staff. Once per day, it can produce a brief spark that instantly lights a torch, brazier, or lantern at near range, or deal +1d4 lightning DMG on a successful attack.
- Black ambers: 3 stones worth 15 gp each.
- Seal of Valeclair: a royal ring worth 25 gp, or a lasting favor from the reeve if returned.

Resolution, complications, possible sequel

Possible endings

- **Resealing:** the PCs restore the sealing crown and repeat the oath. The king returns to his throne, unmoving but soothed for a few more years. Valeclair is saved, and the Vestal offers them the Storm Scepter.
- **Merciful release:** the PCs use the Vestal, the crown, or a copper vessel to draw off the charge, then strike down the king or help him dissolve away. The hill is lashed all night, but the curse ends.
- **Mad theft:** the PCs seize the crown and flee. The king collapses, but the lightning follows them out like a living debt. From the next leg of the campaign onward, someone will come seeking this relic.
- **Dread succession:** one PC agrees to take up the lightning and finally grant the king death. They immediately gain 1 luck token. So long as they bear this burden, their dreams speak in the voice of thunder.

Exit complications

Roll or choose 1d4.

1. The reeve wants the crown to legitimize his own authority.
2. A menhir opens and reveals a second, deeper vault never recorded in any chronicle.
3. The storm has raised 1d4 dead from the hill before moving on.
4. The PC carrying the most metal now bears a white lightning-shaped mark.

Possible sequel

- The royal seal mentions "the western tombs," hinting that another sovereign imprisoned a second celestial power beneath another barrow.
- An order of monk-collectors learns that the lightning has changed keepers and begins the hunt.

For the GM

- **Central twist:** the legend of the blasphemous king is a pious lie. He sacrificed himself to imprison a divine lightning meant for the valley.
- **For beginner players,** seed the truth gradually: contradictory stela, the false-tomb tablet, the Vestal's revelation, then the king's own words.
- **Torches:** remind them often that light matters. In rooms 3 and 6, the storm eats time and pressures them to act quickly.
- **Luck tokens:** grant 1 luck token to a PC who keeps faith with the king at the cost of treasure, tactical advantage, or an easier escape.
- **If the group simply wants to "kill the boss,"** let them, but make it clear that a broken seal without precautions releases a local catastrophe.

Compatibility and license

- Compatible with Shadowdark.
- Independent third-party product designed for Shadowdark RPG, with no official affiliation with The Arcane Library.

- MythCore publication for the Flash Shadowdark line, PWYW format with a suggested price of €1.

Credits

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- Editorial line: Flash Shadowdark Scenarios
- Source edition: FR version for translation and PDF generation

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