

HIGH KING'S DECREE

ROYAL SUMMONS

READ ALOUD

The incredibly heavy oak doors to the throne room swing open, revealing a vast, sunlit chamber adorned with golden banners depicting the Royal Griffon and pristine marble columns soaring towards a vaulted ceiling. At the far end, raised on a dais of polished white quartz, sits the High King. Thirty royal guards in gleaming plate armor flank the room, completely motionless, their halberds reflecting the stained-glass sunlight. The air is thick with expensive incense and the sheer weight of absolute political power.

The Kingdom of Aethelgard has finally recognized the party's recent, highly public exploits across the eastern provinces. An official summons to the capital city is a rare, unprecedented honor, usually reserved strictly for noble lords, high priests, or foreign dignitaries. For a band of wandering mercenaries to receive a writ bearing the King's personal seal means that whatever tasks lies ahead cannot be handled through official, heavily scrutinized military channels.

Court Etiquette and Law

DM NOTES

Presenting arms before the High King is considered an immediate act of high treason. The players must surrender all visible weapons, arcane focuses, and suspiciously large backpacks before crossing the threshold of the throne room. Any attempt to smuggle weapons requires a contested Sleight of Hand check against the Royal Guards' passive Perception (20). A failure results in immediate arrest and imprisonment in the royal dungeon.

The courtiers watch the party closely as they walk the long carpet, whispering behind gilded fans and silk handkerchiefs. Every eye in the room is dissecting the party's armor, heraldry, and general demeanor.

Political Maneuvering

Navigating the royal court is often significantly more dangerous than exploring a dragon's lair or delving into an ancient lich's tomb. In those places, the danger is obvious. Here, an improper bow, a misplaced word, or an accidental slight regarding a noble's lineage can result in the entire kingdom quietly turning against the party overnight. The court is a spiderweb of favors, debts, and ancient grudges.

SKILL CHECK

DC 18 Charisma (History or Insight) to recognize the unbelievably complex social dynamics at play across the room. Success reveals exactly which nobles are currently vying for the King's favor, which are secretly funding the rebellion out east, and which are planning an imminent assassination attempt on the Chancellor.

THE NOBLE HOUSES

Four major noble houses hold absolute influence over the King's decisions and the kingdom's economy. Earning the support of these houses is absolutely vital for any long-term political goals the party might have, as the King frequently delegates regional governance to them.

THE NOBLE HOUSES

Key Players in the Capital

D4	FACTION	INFLUENCE LEVEL	MOTIVATION
1	House Valerius (Military Command)	Very High	Total expansion and border security. Believes in martial law.
2	House Oakhaven (Agriculture & Mining)	Medium	Profit margins and maintaining the serf populations in the south.
3	The Silver Guild (Merchants & Banks)	High	Absolute monopoly over trade routes and eliminating pirate operations.
4	The Arcane Assembly (Mages & Scholars)	Low but Secretive	Preservation of ancient Netherese artifacts and controlling magical education.



THE ROYAL MANDATE

The High King has not summoned the party simply to offer congratulations on their recent monster-slaying exploits. The kingdom is facing a crisis that the standard military simply cannot handle quietly without sparking widespread panic.

READ ALOUD

The King leans forward, resting his chin heavily on a jeweled gauntlet. His eyes are deeply tired. "Your reputation precedes you. I have a task that requires... extreme discretion. The Royal Heir has vanished, and the nobles smell weakness. If you recover my child quietly, you will be named Lords of the Realm. If you fail, or if you breathe a word of this to anyone outside this room... you will hang as traitors to the crown."

THE ROYAL MANDATE

The party is tasked with investigating a potential succession crisis before the news breaks to the public and the kingdom spirals into a horrific, bloody civil war. The King suspects that one of the four Noble Houses orchestrated the kidnapping to leverage political power, but he has no concrete proof.

THE KING'S CHAMPION

If the party arrogantly refuses the mandate, attempts to extort the King for vastly more gold, or generally behaves incredibly disrespectfully toward the crown, the King will not dirty his own hands. He will simply signal for his personal champion to deal with the insubordinate commoners.

READ ALOUD

The murmuring court falls dead silent. A towering figure steps from the deep shadows directly behind the quartz throne. Clad in full plate armor forged from entirely black steel, carrying a greatsword that seems to physically swallow the ambient sunlight around it, the King's Champion draws their weapon without uttering a single word. The temperature in the room drops noticeably.

Royal Champion

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class: 21 (plate armor +3) **Hit Points:** 153 (18d8 + 72) **Speed:** 30 ft.



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws: Str +9, Con +8, Wis +7 **Skills:** Athletics +9, Intimidation +8, Perception +7

Senses: passive Perception 17 **Languages:** Common, Elvish

Indomitable (3/Day). The Champion can reroll a saving throw it fails. It must use the new roll.

Second Wind (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action, the Champion can regain 20 hit points.

Action Surge (1/Day). The Champion can take one additional action on its turn. On that extra action, it can use its multiattack.

Legendary Actions. The Champion can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn.

Fighting the Champion directly in the throne room is incredibly foolish, regardless of the party's level or confidence, as the thirty Royal Guards will immediately join the fray on the second round of combat, sealing the doors behind the party. Escape will quickly become impossible.

The Kingdom's Reach

However, if the party wisely accepts the mandate, investigates the conspiracy, exposes the treacherous nobility, and succeeds in their secret mission to rescue the Royal Heir, the King's gratitude will manifest in legendary, kingdom-shifting rewards. The King is not merely a figurehead; he outright owns the vast majority of the continent's most lucrative trade routes, magical academies, and adamantine mines.

If the loyalty of the party is proven beyond a shadow of a doubt, they are often immediately inducted into the "Silent Griffons," an elite, deniable operations unit answering exclusively to the crown. Members of the Griffons operate essentially entirely above the law of local magistrates, possessing the royal authority to requisition troops, command naval vessels, and demand the absolute cooperation of the local clergy.

The final reward is not merely gold, but a permanent, unshakeable shift in the party's socioeconomic status across the entire mortal realm. They will no longer be mere adventurers; they will be the unyielding right hand of a sovereign empire, respected, feared, and constantly targeted by political assassins.

The True Cost of Power

Those who join the Silent Griffons quickly realize that absolute authority is an incredibly heavy burden. Members are required to swear a completely irrevocable oath of loyalty in the presence of an incredibly powerful Imperial Inquisitor, under the effects of a Zone of Truth and a specialized Geas spell.

Beyond the magical compulsions, the Griffons are routinely tasked with missions that severely test the limits of traditional morality. They are the individuals sent to preemptively eliminate promising leaders of opposing factions, silence journalists investigating the royal family's darker secrets, and deliberately sabotage the supply lines of allied nations to maintain the empire's economic supremacy.

Retirement is not an option. A Griffon who attempts to step away from their duties is immediately declared a threat to national security and hunted down by their former comrades. The only true exit is martyrdom in service to the crown, or a highly precarious life constantly on the run, hiding from the most well-funded intelligence agency in the world.

TREASURE

Royal Bounties

- Official Titles of Nobility (Lords/Ladies of the Realm), granting immense diplomatic immunity and land rights.
- A fortified, fully staffed keep located in the strategic northern provinces.
- *Sun Blade* (Given from the royal armory, an ancient heirloom of the original King).
- 25,000 gp in solid gold bullion, stamped with the royal seal.
- Perpetual free lodging and completely untaxed trade rights throughout the kingdom.

