

BLOOD ON THE VINE



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

- **Theme/Genre:** Gothic Horror Mystery
- **Tone:** Dark and Suspenseful, with occasional grim humor
- **Target Level for Players:** Level 4
- **Expected Duration:** 2 hours
- **Player Focus Preferences:**
 - Combat: Medium
 - Roleplay: High
 - Exploration: Medium

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

WORLD OVERVIEW

The land of Varimor is steeped in ancient curses, harrowing folklore, and a deep gloom that clings to every dark corner. By day, the realm's rolling hills and vineyards are sunny and picturesque, but at night, a haunting silence falls. Winding roads disappear into overgrown woods, and whispers of shadowy creatures abound. The common folk speak of gods long forgotten and sins buried in the soil that refuse to stay dead.

LOCAL AREA: THE VILLAGE OF REDHAVEN

Nestled in a narrow valley, Redhaven is a village famous—or perhaps infamous—for its exceptional wine harvests. The dense mist that rolls in from the nearby Wraithwood Forest has always been seen as a blessing, nourishing the grapes. But there are whispers that the vineyards are cursed by something deeper, something darker. Recently, these whispers have turned into screams, as local villagers and workers have been vanishing, leaving behind only bloodied tools... or worse.

The streets of the quaint village are eerily empty tonight. The center of town holds the *Blooded Vine Tavern*, a hushed establishment where the last hints of community life simmer under a layer of fear.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Nearly 200 years ago, the wealthy Ravencourt family, renowned for their influence and terrifying presence, vanished mysteriously. Rumors speak of betrayal and bloodshed, and a curse laid upon Redhaven and its bountiful vineyards. Since then, the locals have lived in unease, attributing their strange misfortunes and the persistent mist to the Ravencourt's lingering wrath.

IMPORTANT NPCs

- **Matilda “Mattie” Harlowe (Innkeeper):** Stern and skeptical, Mattie owns the *Blooded Vine Tavern*. She has heard all the tales of the manor and remains cautious. Despite her tough exterior, she secretly worries about the village's safety.
- **Father Lorian Graves (Town Priest):** An older cleric of Lathander, Father Graves holds secrets regarding the Ravencourt curse. He actively discourages anyone from venturing near the manor, knowing more than he reveals.
- **Gideon Thorne (Vintner and Widower):** A guilt-ridden winemaker, Gideon survives the vineyard's collapse and feels responsible for failing to protect his workers. Desperate for answers, he constantly seeks help to solve the mystery.

PLOT HOOK

OPENING SCENE

As the Party arrives in Redhaven late one misty evening, the *Blooded Vine Tavern* is their only source of light in the encroaching gloom. Inside, a few wary locals huddle around tables, speaking in hushed tones. Mattie Harlowe wipes the bar methodically, absorbed in her musings.

The Party's entrance coincides with a sudden burst of wind, thrusting the door wide open. In steps Gideon Thorne, his clothes ragged, his face pale. He throws a desperate glance around the room:

"It's not just the vineyard anymore! They're coming for *me*! They took Fredrick, and they'll be back for the rest of us! You have to help—please, before we all vanish into the mist like the others!"

Gideon's finger, shaking with fear, points towards the vineyards and the dark mass of Ravencourt Manor, where no villager has dared to set foot for over a century.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Investigate the disappearances, uncover the dark secret haunting Ravencourt Manor, and potentially put an end to the ancient curse once and for all.

KEY LOCATIONS

LOCATION 1: BLOODED VINE TAVERN (STARTING AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** Warm candlelight contrasts sharply with the cold unease seeping in from outside. The air smells of aged wood and spilt wine, undercut by whispers of fear.
- **Notable NPCs:**
 - Mattie Harlowe offers cautious greetings and warns the Party of village superstitions.
 - Father Graves might drop by to plead for caution, revealing the depths of his worry about the manor.
- **Encounters/Challenges:**
 - Gideon Thorne, frantic and in need of guidance, provides directions to the vineyard.
 - Roleplay options to delve into the manor's dark past and local superstitions.

LOCATION 2: RAVENCOURT VINEYARDS (INTERMEDIATE AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** The vineyard feels trapped in another realm, vines knitting themselves into dense corridors obscured by heavy mist. Sickly grapes glow faintly, casting eerie reflections. An unsettling sense of being watched washes over the Party.
- **Challenges:**
 - **Combat Encounter:** Encounter 2-3 *Mist Wraiths*, elusive specters of fog eager to drag intruders into the depths of the vineyard.
 - **Trap/Puzzle:** At the center lies a rusted grape press, adorned with an ancient puzzle lock (DC 15 Investigation + DC 14 Arcana). Solving it reveals an old journal hinting at the manor's secret: blood sacrifices believed essential for the vineyard's prosperity.
 - Steadily mounting tension with Gideon, whose nerves fray with each delicate step deeper into the cursed rows.

LOCATION 3: RAVENCOURT MANOR (FINAL AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** Ruin and grandeur intertwined, the manor commands a regretful stoicism. Encasing it are sinewy vines, as if attempting to strangle the stones. Rotting decay scents the cold air as time itself seems to pause in the grand hall, the heart of the curse's dark reign.
- **Challenges:**
 - **Boss Encounter:** Confront the *Bloodbound Vine Beast*, a grotesque fusion of rampant plant life and cursed undead flesh, embodying Lady Ravencourt's trapped spirit.
 - **Tactics:** Utilizes strangling vines, calls upon spectral ravens, and can shift between spectral and physical existence.
 - **Stats:** Use a modified Shambling Mound with added lair actions like "Hall of Screams" or "Crimson Rebirth."
 - Engage with Lady Ravencourt's tragic spirit—will the Party grant her redemption, or sentence her to eternal damnation?

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

MIST WRAITH MECHANICS (CUSTOM MONSTER):

- **AC:** 13 | **HP:** 28 | *Special Ability: Struggle in the Fog:* The Wraith can cloud an area, forcing a DC 14 Constitution save or taking 2d6 necrotic damage from the choking haze.

PUZZLE: WINEPRESS RUNES

- **Description:** Intricate family symbols nestle amidst vines on the grape press. Pressing sequences unlocked only through deciphering Ravencourt's journal will reveal hidden runes near the manor.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

FINAL DECISIONS

The Party reaches a critical juncture:

1. Destroy the *Bloodbound Vine Beast*, dispelling the curse and its profound darkness in a fiery confrontation.
2. Choose to commune with Lady Ravencourt's tortured spirit, learning the desperate truth of a self-placed curse designed to prevent a more sinister fate.
3. Retreat, abandoning the mission, preserving their lives but allowing the curse to fester.

OUTCOMES

- **Success:** The oppressive mist recedes, and the vineyard flourishes anew, with spirits finding closure.
- **Failure:** The curse deepens its roots—flags of dark mist now threatening adjacent lands.

REWARDS

- **Loot:**
 - *Ravencourt Signet (Rare Magic Item):* Enhanced Persuasion and Intimidation when dealing with nobility.
 - *Bloodburst Gauntlet:* This cursed weapon bestows bonus necrotic damage, at the risk of weakening the wearer's Constitution over time.
- **Story Rewards:**
 - Gratitude and favor of Redhaven's people, their renewed vigor preserving the village tradition.
 - Introduction to a grander Gothic campaign concerning the spreading curse.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

- **Custom Maps:** Provide meticulously drawn maps of the vineyard and the ominous Ravencourt Manor.
- **Player Handouts:** A journal excerpt from Lady Ravencourt, replete with cryptic warnings and historical insights.
- **Atmospheric Music:** Haunting violin harmonics, distant peals of thunder, and the rustle of foliage, enveloping players in an immersive soundscape.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

- Players opting to ignite the vineyard spur combat against resilient *Vine Hulks*.
- Attempts to save Gideon hinge on addressing or exacerbating his despair.
- Utilize Mattie or Father Graves for nudging if players lose their way.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

- **Debrief Questions:**
 - What aspects of the mystery resonated most with you?
 - Did combat, roleplay, and exploration achieve a satisfying equilibrium?
- **Epilogue Options:**
 - Delve deeper into the tale of the curses—Ravencourt Manor could be merely the prelude to myriad haunted estates across Varimor's shadowy expanse.

The adventure concludes as the last echoes of the vineyard mist settle, leaving the Party pondering their profound mark—or lack thereof. For in every secret, there may lie a darker truth yet untold.