

NIGHTMARE BENEATH THE WAVES



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

- **Title:** Nightmare Beneath the Waves
- **Theme/Genre:** Horror, Mystery, Nautical
- **Tone:** Dark and suspenseful, with moments of high tension and eerie discovery.
- **Target Level:** Level 5
- **Expected Duration:** 2 hours
- **Player Focus Preferences:**
 - Combat: Medium
 - Roleplay: High
 - Exploration: High

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

THE WORLD:

The campaign unfolds in a mysterious coastal region where the ocean is both a vital resource and an enigmatic expanse. Legends speak of primordial beings slumbering beneath the waves. These eerie tales have resurfaced as more villagers experience the “call of the deep,” bringing unease and fear to the fishing communities.

THE LOCAL AREA:

The adventure begins in the seaside village of **Eryntide**, precariously perched atop jagged cliffs. Constant mist shrouds the village, and its structures cling desperately to the cliff’s edge. Below, **Shipwreck Cove** serves as a moody graveyard for broken vessels. The **Beacon of Gwyrn**, now defunct, looms ominously over Eryntide, casting shadows of mistrust and foreboding since it went dark.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Eryntide once thrived under the protection of ancient undersea structures, the **Seals of Caldrieth**, believed to ward off oceanic horrors. Whispers of their weakening echo through the village, causing divergent theories: some fear forgotten rituals have weakened the Seals, while others dismiss the tales as mere superstition.

IMPORTANT NPCs:

1. **Captain Maerys Veil** (*Human Female*): A retired sailor hardened by mysterious encounters at sea. She provides the initial narrative hook and valuable advice on surviving the ocean’s allure, motivated by a desire to reclaim her courage and banish her fears.
2. **Irontusk Uros** (*Tiefling Blacksmith*): A gruff blacksmith whose wares bear cryptic carvings, believed to repel “the whispers” of the deep. Although outwardly stoic, he harbors a deep fear of the ocean’s mysterious call.
3. **Priestess Naeryth Lin** (*Half-Elf Cleric*): Devotee to an oceanic deity opposing the deep-sea horrors. She holds knowledge of rituals to reinforce the Seals and serves as a beacon of hope against the encroaching darkness.

PLOT HOOK

OPENING SCENE:

It’s a stormy night in Eryntide; wind and rain lash against the village. As the party gathers in the seaside tavern, they overhear fearful murmurs—tales of eerie shipwrecks, strange chanting near the cliffs, and locals inexplicably drawn into the depths. A soaked villager bursts in, panicked, claiming his friend was dragged into the lighthouse by unnatural hands.

At this tense moment, Captain Maerys approaches the adventurers, seeking their aid. Her eyes carry the weight of the ocean’s mysteries, and she offers a plea: unravel the threats surrounding the Beacon of Gwyrn and protect Eryntide from unraveling entirely.

PARTY'S OBJECTIVE:

Investigate and resolve the sinister occurrences linked to the Beacon of Gwynn. Delve into the mysteries of the underwater horrors and strive to thwart any impending threats to the village.

KEY LOCATIONS

LOCATION 1: ERYNTIDE (STARTING AREA)

- **Description:** Eryntide cloaked in a thick, oppressive fog, is haunted by the roiling ocean crashing against its cliffs. The villagers remain ensnared in trepidation, wary in the wake of recent disappearances.
- **Atmosphere:** Heavy mist drapes the village, and each wave echoes the sense of impending doom.
- **NPC Encounters:**
 - **Captain Maerys** offers a tattered map depicting the lighthouse's surroundings.
 - **Irontusk Uros** provides enchanted harpoons, bestowing temporary defensive abilities against oceanic foes.
 - **Priestess Naeryth** divulges cryptic lore on the Seals of Caldrieth if engaged in conversation.
- **Encounters/Challenges:**
 - **Social Interaction:** Persuade wary villagers to disclose vital information.
 - **Combat Encounter:** Defend against a sudden raid by **Abyssal Fish-Things** (CR 2) at the shore, critters of the deep testing the party's resolve.

LOCATION 2: BEACON OF GWYNN (INTERMEDIATE AREA)

- **Description:** A brooding, derelict lighthouse overlooking the tumultuous sea. Inside, damp, spiraling stairs creak underfoot. The very walls are overtaken by seaweed, almost yearning to reclaim the site.
- **Atmosphere:** A claustrophobic space where silence reigns but for whispers breezing through the gaps.
- **Encounters:**
 - **Puzzle:** Coral-like protrusions hinder the lighthouse's mechanism. Restore function by correctly aligning reflective crystals, guided by obscure lighthouse journal entries. Misalignment summons weaker abyssal beings (CR 3).
 - **Roleplay Opportunity:** The wraith of a former lighthouse keeper haunts this place with urgent, possibly maddened pleas for salvation or hints of submerged truths.

LOCATION 3: THE ABYSSAL TEMPLE BELOW SHIPWRECK COVE (FINAL AREA)

- **Description:** The eerie, half-submerged temple, relic of a bygone civilization, lulungs beneath Shipwreck Cove. Its stone walls, adorned with eldritch imagery, resonate with power. The oppressive monolith pulses with a dark, omnipresent force at its core.
- **Atmosphere:** Enveloped in darkness, with a faint glow cast from bioluminescent algae. A steady, physiological pulsing can be felt, like a monstrous heart beating within.
- **Encounters:**
 - **Minor Combat:** Navigate through patrolling **Corrupted Merrow** (CR 4), cunning servants of the darkness.
 - **Boss Encounter:** Confront the **Herald of Caldrieth** (CR 6), an unholy amalgamation of deep-sea horror and eldritch might, wielding psychic assaults and summoning aquatic subordinates to challenge the party.

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

1. Combat Encounter Suggestions:

- **"Abyssal Fish-Things" (CR 2):** Amphibious aggressors attack in relentless packs.
- **"Corrupted Merrow" (CR 4):** Stealthy hunters capable of laying ambushes.
- **"Herald of Caldrieth" (CR 6):** Deploys area control through tangled tentacles and mind-warping murmurs.

2. Roleplay Interaction Examples:

- **Priestess Naeryth:** "The ocean cradles memories ancient and inscrutable. Should the Seals fall, we'd be impotent before their return."
- **Lighthouse Keeper's Ghost:** "I saw it rise... countless eyes... surveying me even here in death..."

3. Puzzle Mechanics (Beacon of Gwynn):

- Locate hidden crystals in various chambers and align them to channel magical luminescence, guided by riddle-like hints etched into the structure.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

FINAL CHALLENGE:

Quell the **Herald of Caldrieth** and reactivate the ancient Seal crowning the temple's monolith. Preventive success averts an impending transdimensional cataclysm.

STAKES:

- **Success:** Restores the Seal, dispelling the malevolent forces back into the abyss for another millennia.
- **Failure:** Portends doom, as the calamitous hold of the deep tightens its grip on the coast and beyond.

CONCLUSION:

With the Herald vanquished, serenity returns to the seas, albeit with eternal vigilance in the hearts of Eryntide's townsfolk, who will henceforth watch the horizons with trepidation and honor the adventurers as their saviors.

REWARDS

- **Loot:**
 - **Harpoon of Eryntide:** A +1 spear dealing an additional 1d6 radiant damage to aquatic adversaries.
 - **Necklace of the Seal:** Confers resistance to psychic assaults.
- **Story Rewards:**
 - The party is lauded by Eryntide and its guardians, with tales of their heroism weaved into the village's legacy.
- **Experience Points:** Earned through roleplay depth, puzzle solutions, and vanquishing adversaries.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

- **Stat Blocks:** Include custom specifications for Deep Sea Abomination; reskinned Swarm of Quippers as Abyssal Fish-Things; Merrow adapted with psychic resistance for Corrupted Merrow.
- **Simple Maps:** Provide sketches of the lighthouse and submerged temple to aid navigation.
- **Handouts:**
 - A drenched, scribbled journal from the lighthouse keeper with abstracts and symbology.
 - Archival Seal inscriptions from Priestess Naeryth.
- **Atmosphere Suggestions:**
 - **Music:** Employ environmental soundscapes—crashing waves, resonant breezes, and subterranean rumbles—for mood establishment.
 - **Sound Effects:** Echoing shrieks, telepathic whispers, intertwined with the ocean's rhythmic cadence.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

Should players inadvertently dismantle the Seal, they risk catalyzing the intertwining of dimensional worlds, paving the way for future chaos. This choice ensures unexpected consequences ripple beyond their control, shaping the narrative's expanse in unanticipated directions.