

THE BONEWRIGHT'S BARGAIN



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Title: *The Bonewright's Bargain*

Theme/Genre: Gothic Fantasy with elements of Horror and Mystery

Tone: Dark and Creepy, with moments of Heroic triumph

Target Level for Players: Level 4

Expected Duration: 2 hours

Player Focus Preferences:

- Combat: Medium
- Roleplay: High
- Exploration: Medium

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

WORLD OVERVIEW

In the desolate lands of Atherwyn, shadows stretch long over windswept moors and fog-choked woods dotted with ruins of ancient grandeur. Once, powerful wizards and clerics bound the land to the gods' divine will, serving as a bulwark against the forces of decay and death. But as ages passed, this connection weakened, and rifts between the mortal and necrotic realms tore open. Villages teeter on the brink of despair, plagued by echoes of an undead past, yet few have the courage to investigate these dangerous openings.

LOCAL AREA: HOLLOWGRAVE

Hollowgrave, a weather-beaten village, lies in the menacing shadow of *Wyrnwood Mire*, an ominous swamp. The heart of Hollowgrave is occupied by the *Chapel of Saint Veyona*, now dilapidated, once offering solace to the hopeless. An eerie visitor haunts Hollowgrave—*The Bonewright*, a skeletal figure in tattered robes, rumored to whisper trade offers as chilling as its appearance. The sinister sound of bone clatter fills the night with dread.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Generations past, Saint Veyona's Chapel created powerful artifacts for protection, the mightiest being the *Guardian Reliquary*. Hidden deep beneath the chapel, it cast a protective enchantment over the land against necrotic abominations. The Bonewright, a lich claiming betrayal by the chapel's clerics of yore, plots to capture the Reliquary, fueling both vengeance and personal power.

IMPORTANT NPCs

- **Father Theo Ramsden:** The chapel's aging priest, a man of exhausted faith and hidden regrets, seeks heroes to safeguard Hollowgrave.
- **Maris Quickstep:** A rogue with a talent for hunting, she possesses knowledge of the mire's secrets and whispers about the Bonewright.
- **The Bonewright:** This skeletal lich, draped in shadowy rags, speaks with haunted eloquence. It desires twisted bargains, forever motivated by a perceived human betrayal and its own warped sense of justice.

PLOT HOOK

OPENING SCENE

Arriving in Hollowgrave, the adventurers are greeted by a biting chill, made colder by whispers of dread gravitating around the streets. Father Theo, with eyes that speak of sleepless nights, approaches the party near the neglected chapel, beseeching help to counteract a growing dark presence—the Bonewright.

“May the gods guide you,” Theo speaks in a voice that quivers with fear yet is steeled by hope. He describes livestock turned to brittle husks and villagers lured into the swamp by the Bonewright’s offers of perverse exchanges. He fears the Reliquary beneath the chapel may soon fall into the wrong hands if the party does not act.

THE CALL TO ACTION

Theo’s plea gives the adventurers a critical decision: to negotiate peace with the Bonewright or strive to destroy it. Their ultimate task is to protect the relic—the *Guardian Reliquary*—from being seized.

Primary Objective:

- Prevent the Bonewright from stealing the *Guardian Reliquary*.

KEY LOCATIONS

LOCATION 1: HOLLOWGRAVE (STARTING AREA)

Atmosphere: The stench of fear mingles with the mist that slithers across cracked cobblestones. Windows are shuttered and barred, with suspicious eyes casting glances at the newcomers. In the square stands a shrine to Saint Veyona, its offerings long since absent.

NPCs & Encounters:

- **Father Theo:** Shares his knowledge of the Bonewright and its unholy ambitions.
- **Maris Quickstep:** Hesitantly offers navigation through the mire’s treacherous pathways.
- Exploring the village might yield rumors about the chapel’s secrets, the Bonewright’s cryptic visitations, and hidden paths through the swamp.

Possible Encounter:

- **Skeletal Hounds Attack:** A pack of skeletal hounds emerges, vicious but brittle. The Bonewright might taunt the adventurers mysteriously from the shadows before retreating into the night.

LOCATION 2: THE WYRMWOOD MIRE (INTERMEDIATE AREA)

Atmosphere: Foul vapors twist through gnarled trees and murky waters. Skeletal limbs occasionally claw at the swamp’s murky surface, and an eerie green glow suffuses the air.

Puzzle/Challenge:

A ruined altar stands marooned in muck, engraved with a riddle. Solving it grants the party temporary protection from necrotic forces:

- “*Her light redeems the bone’s marrow; her grace shelters fragile tomorrows.*”

Encounters:

- **Swamp Undead:** Skeletal and zombie creatures, marsh servants of the Bonewright, attack suddenly.
- **Environmental Hazards:** Bog traps and cursed thorns serve as natural dangers, testing caution and skill.
- **Roleplay Challenge:** The wandering spirit of *Pale Gareth* requests the favor of burial for critical intel about the Bonewright.

LOCATION 3: THE CAVERN BENEATH THE CHAPEL (FINAL AREA)

Atmosphere: A sanctum of forgotten glory, now breached by darkness. Defiled clerical symbols and scattered bones speak of battles lost. The heart of this sepulchral domain pulses with the glow of the *Guardian Reliquary*, bound by chains of magic.

The Climax:

- **The Bonewright’s Offer:** With chilling calm, the Bonewright proposes, “Let me have what is mine by right, and riches—or suffering—shall be yours.”
- Players can choose to fight, where the Bonewright summons towering bone golems, or attempt a deadly negotiation to determine the outcome.

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

COMBAT

- **Bonewright (Modified Lich):** It uses necromantic spells and dark magic with deadly efficiency, aiming to weaken and subdue foes.
- **Skeletal Giant Golems (x2):** These massive constructs deliver crushing blows and can bombard foes with bone fragments.

ROLEPLAY

- Players who learn about Father Theo's past dealings with the Bonewright can exploit this knowledge in dialogues. The truth might be needed to sway the Bonewright or redirect its vengeance.

PUZZLE

During the confrontation, the Reliquary's chains must be unraveled by answering:

- *"I am life taken, but grant life eternal. What am I?"*
 - *Answer: Bone.*
Inserting a skeletal piece into the mechanism will free the Reliquary.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

FINAL CHALLENGE

- **Victory or Vengeance:** Defeat the Bonewright and restore the Relic's protection, or halt the bone lich with compelling persuasion based on Theo's secret past. Failure will see Hollowgrave consumed by darkness.

CONCLUSION

- **Success:** Adorning the victorious, Maris expresses loyalty, and the chapel's light revives.
- **Failure:** Should the Bonewright prevail or the relic be left unsecured, dread overtakes Hollowgrave, spreading despair.

REWARDS

- **Guardian Reliquary:** Bestows radiant damage enhancement and resistance to necrotic energies.
- **Treasure:** 250 GP within the Bonewright's chamber.
- **Allegiances:** Favor with Father Theo and possible guild ties through Maris.
- **Experience Points:** Gained from exploration, encounters, and roleplay exchanges.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

STAT BLOCKS

- **Bonewright (Modified Lich):**
 - HP: 105
 - AC: 17
 - Unique Abilities: Necrotic Burst, Bone Teleportation, Dark Bargain
- **Skeletal Giant Golem:**
 - HP: 85 each
 - AC: 15
 - Unique Abilities: Slam, Bone Shard Burst

HANDOUTS

- **Cryptic Letter:** Found in the chapel ruins, a faded plea by a fallen cleric.
- **Map of Wyrnwood Mire:** Maris provides a crudely drawn map marked with dangerous paths.

ATMOSPHERE SUGGESTIONS

- **Music & Soundscapes:** Play haunting violin music and ambient swamp sounds to enhance immersion.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

- **Negotiation Results:** Players can offer other artifacts in exchange for peace, leaving room for alternate endings and future quests.
- **Unconventional Tactics:** Destroying the reliquary or misleading leads to mixed outcomes, seeding new narrative paths.
- **Escape Consequences:** If the party chooses to retreat, the Bonewright claims victory, magnifying its threat for future encounters.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- Which encounter was most engaging for you?
- Did the mix of combat, roleplay, and exploration satisfy your expectations?
- Would you seek to further explore Hollowgrave and its mysteries?

EPILOGUE OPTIONS

- **Extended Campaign:** Unravel deeper threads of necrotic corruption spreading across Atherwyn.
- **Relentless Pursuit:** Hunt the Bonewright if it escapes, tracking down its lair for a more significant adventure.