

THE FORBIDDEN FEAST



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

- **Title:** The Forbidden Feast
- **Theme/Genre:** Dark Fantasy, Horror, Mystery
- **Tone:** Suspenseful and eerie with moments of heroism and grim discovery
- **Target Level:** Level 4
- **Expected Duration:** 2 hours
- **Player Focus Preferences:**
 - Combat: Medium
 - Roleplay: High
 - Exploration: High

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

WORLD OVERVIEW

In a small corner of a dark and ancient forest lies the village of **Värloch**, enveloped in a shroud of mystery and perpetual twilight. Gnarled trees tower with twisted branches that obscure the sunlight, casting long shadows. Legends abound of primordial entities, beings of ancient power, hidden deep within the woods, often worshipped and feared in whispered tales passed through generations.

LOCAL SETTING

Värloch possesses an unsettling charm. Cobblestone streets wind through ivy-smothered cottages, and while it's picturesque, an undercurrent of fear permeates the village. The villagers live under the looming shadow of the **Gloaming Estate**, an abandoned manor situated imposingly on a hill. It serves as the foreboding site of the decade-old tradition known as *The Forbidden Feast*.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Centuries ago, the villagers of Värloch made a desperate pact with an eldritch being known as **The Forgotten One**. This pact traded portions of their souls in exchange for prosperity, with the arrangement renewed every decade through *The Forbidden Feast*. The Forgotten One's influence has twisted the surrounding land, creating a space where time is distorted and escape is elusive. Many villagers are oblivious to the true cost of their prosperity, convinced breaking the pact would lead to their demise.

IMPORTANT NPCs

- **Elira Verdane:** A young, curious villager with a spark of defiance. Her skepticism of the feast tradition stems from her grandmother's tales. She becomes an early ally and moral compass.
- **Eryndor Lyne:** The pragmatic village elder, charged with preserving the feast ritual. Although he prioritizes village survival, his knowledge of the forgotten lore is invaluable.
- **The Forgotten One:** An otherworldly entity formed from shadows and whispering darkness. It seeks expansion of its dominion through binding pacts and has an alien, unfathomable appetite.

PLOT HOOK

OPENING SCENE

The adventurers receive an urgent missive from Värloch:

"Beware! The forest stirs with ancient unrest. Doom threatens our village, and we beseech your assistance for our safety during a vital tradition. Seek Eryndor Lyne in Värloch and safeguard us through The Forbidden Feast."

Upon arriving, the trail is shrouded in an ethereal mist. Whispers strain against the silence of the forest, and the air feels charged with unease. Elira Verdane greets the adventurers, her eyes alight with a mix of anxiety and hope. In cryptic tones, she warns:

"The villagers are guarding secrets. Beneath the feast's veneer lies our true nourishment."

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Disrupt *The Forbidden Feast* to break the Forgotten One's grip on Värloch.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

- Save Elira from the clutches of the Forgotten One.
- Uncover the origins of the pact through exploration and investigation.

KEY LOCATIONS

1. THE VILLAGE OF VÄRLOCH (STARTING AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** Both welcoming and unsettling; rustic beauty is marred by furtive glances and an air of quiet dread. Lanterns flicker unpredictably, casting unsettling shadows.
- **NPCs:** Eryndor Lyne remains wary, urging discretion and warning outsiders against meddling.
- **Encounters:**
 - **Creeping Feelings:** PCs may sense the supernatural through subtle phenomena—distorted reflections in water or disembodied whispers.

2. THE GLOAMING ESTATE (INTERMEDIATE AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** Heavy and oppressive, the manor exudes an uncanny presence. Dust chokes the air with memories of decay.
- **Encounters:**
 - **Exploration Challenge:** Investigate locked rooms and uncover ritualistic clues. Diaries reveal the village's covenant with the Forgotten One.
 - **Puzzle:**
 - **Feast Preparations:** Arrange specific ingredients on an enchanted table. Incorrect items trigger hallucinations (Constitution check required).

3. THE GREAT BANQUET HALL (FINAL AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** A lavish hall with an unreal feast; every dish is unnaturally enticing. Once inside, walls of shadow seal exits, and the air hums with forbidden magic.

Final Encounter:

- **Combat:** Face the Forgotten One—a spectral mass of tendrils (use modified **Shadow Demon** stats). Shadow Thralls (Shadows) aid it.
- **Environmental Hazards:** Stepping into void-like darkness risks necrotic damage.

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

COMBAT ENCOUNTER

- **Forest Ambush:** Encounter shadow wolves on the approach to Värloch. Use Dire Wolves with shadow stealth qualities.

ROLEPLAY ENCOUNTER

- **Interrogating Eryndor:** Coax or coerce the truth about the village pact from Eryndor through skillful dialogue or intimidation.

PUZZLE/TRAP

- **Seal of the Forgotten:** Unlock the banquet hall door by solving an ancient riddle etched in gleaming runes. The riddle revolves around themes of hunger and sacrifice.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

FINAL CHALLENGE

The Forgotten One offers insidious bargains, promising players their deepest desires. Those who succumb face charming enchantments. A duel of wills ensues, with the stakes high for the soul of Värloch.

STAKES

- **Victory:** The Forgotten One's defeat dissipates its influence, liberating the village and its people but depleting their prosperity.
- **Defeat:** The villagers' pact endures, reinforcing both Värloch's prosperity and the party's ruinous allegiance.

RESOLUTION

- **Victory:** With the Forgotten One vanquished, Elira pledges to restore Värloch, free from dark pacts.
- **Defeat:** Shadows cling to the adventurers—harbingers of future reckonings.

REWARDS

LOOT

- **Feasting Blade:** A shortsword dealing additional necrotic damage against cursed creatures.
- **Vial of Abyssal Wine:** A drink granting enhanced saving throws for an hour, at the cost of haunting dreams.

STORY REWARDS

- Gain favor among nearby communities for dispelling dark energies.
- Unveils future campaign hooks involving eldritch pursuits.

XP REWARDS

- Award sufficient experience to reach Level 5.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

STAT BLOCKS

- **The Forgotten One:** Modify the **Shadow Demon** stat block to reflect a unique challenge.
- **Shadow Thralls:** Use standard Shadows (MM pg. 269).

OPTIONAL HANDOUTS

- Fragments of an ancient ritual diary.
- A hand-drawn map of Värloch and the estate.

ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC

- For ambiance, consider *Tabletop Audio - Eldritch Horror* and *Forest of Shadows*, enhancing the air of suspense.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

- Siding with the villagers traps the party within an intricate web of eldritch intrigue.
- Disrupting the ritual brings the Forgotten One's vengeance to the party, leaving future confrontations inevitable.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- Which elements of the mystery and horror were most compelling?
- Did the adventure provide meaningful choices? How so?
- Would you like to encounter the Forgotten One in a future campaign?

EPILOGUE OPTIONS

- Investigate further repercussions of breaking the pact.
- Delve into the forest's mysteries, seeking more ties to eldritch beings akin to the Forgotten One.