

THE HAUNTING OF BRIGHT HOLLOW



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Title of the Campaign:

The Haunting of Bright Hollow

Theme/Genre:

Gothic Horror, Mystery

Tone:

Dark and atmospheric with moments of eerie tension and creeping dread.

Target Level for Players:

Level 4

Expected Duration:

2 hours

Player Focus Preferences:

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

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

WORLD/SETTING OVERVIEW

The land is steeped in ancient traditions and isolated settlements, where superstition is intertwined with daily life. Villages conceal dark secrets, and ancient standing stones mark places where the fabric of reality is thin.

LOCAL AREA

The adventure unfolds in **Bright Hollow**, a fog-laden hamlet on the edge of a desolate moor. Once vibrant, the village is but a shadow, plagued by lingering mists. Crops fail and villagers rumble about figures in the fog. At town's edge looms **Ashwick Manor**, abandoned after Lord Geoffrey Ashwick vanished a century earlier.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Bright Hollow thrived under the Ashwick family's wealth, despite whispers of dark rituals. Lord Geoffrey's disappearance marked the town's decline. Locked doors at dusk became tradition, and knowledge of both manor and lord is scant among the current generation.

IMPORTANT NPCs

- **Elias Thatcher (Human, Village Elder):** A fragile elder with memories of the Ashwick legends. Shares tales with reluctance, believing the manor holds the village's salvation.
- **Selene Valrick (Human, Apothecary):** A shrewd herbalist whose suspicions tie the mists to a traveler's disappearance near the manor.
- **The Phantom Bride:** An apparition in a tattered bridal gown, her lantern glowing in the night. Her song echoes through the fog.

PLOT HOOK

OPENING SCENE

The party arrives in Bright Hollow at twilight, feeling the village's palpable unease. As night envelops the square, villagers scurry inside, leaving whispers in their wake. In the tavern's warmth, a scream shatters the uneasy calm.

Elias Thatcher, flanked by anxious villagers, shares grim news—a shepherd boy has vanished. His shattered lantern was discovered near the manor, and shadows were seen prowling in the fog. Desperate, Elias implores the party to investigate before more lives are lost.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

End the haunting and lift the mist shrouding Bright Hollow by uncovering the truth within Ashwick Manor's dark history.

KEY LOCATIONS

LOCATION 1: THE VILLAGE OF BRIGHT HOLLOW

- **Atmosphere:** The village lies cloaked in perpetual mist, its silence fermenting an unsettling ambiance broken only by muffled whispers.
- **NPCs:** Elias and Selene provide vital lore on the Ashwick family and their dark legacy. Villagers offer fragmented tales of spectral figures in the moors.
- **Encounters:**
 - An animated scarecrow (use animated armor stats) threatens the square, attacking indiscriminately until subdued.
 - Roleplay: Engage in local superstitions about the Ashwick family. The party may quell panicked debates with persuasion or insight.

LOCATION 2: THE MOORS LEADING TO ASHWICK MANOR

- **Atmosphere:** The boggy grasslands and cairns breathe with whispered secrets, the Phantom Bride's lantern flickering in the mist.
- **Encounters:**
 - Shadow mastiffs patrol the moor, using teleportation to harry intruders.
 - A puzzle at a runic standing stone: Solve the inscription ("Return what was taken") to lift a localized curse affecting Wisdom.
 - Roleplay: The Phantom Bride may impart cryptic guidance, questioning the party's resolve in matters of love and sacrifice.

LOCATION 3: ASHWICK MANOR

- **Atmosphere:** The decrepit structure is a testament to faded glory, its silent halls alive with shadowy threats.
- **Challenges:**
 - Rogue suits of armor and animated furniture attack in unpredictable bursts.
 - A puzzle in the ballroom involves an enchanted organ—correctly played, it pacifies possessing shadows.
 - In the master bedroom, Lord Geoffrey's diary reveals a ritual that cursed his late bride's spirit, causing the ongoing hauntings.

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

BOSS ENCOUNTER

The Phantom Bride (Custom Ghost):

Harnesses horrifying abilities such as frightening presence, incorporeal movement, life drain, and summoning spectral allies in the manor's cemetery.

PUZZLE ENCOUNTER

An enchanted organ requires the correct melody to quell its animating enchantment. Clues etched on the wall suggest a musical solution; failure summons vengeful shadows.

ROLEPLAY ENCOUNTER

Returning the Phantom Bride's wedding ring (from Lord Ashwick's desk) offers a chance to negotiate peace. Convince her through Charisma (Persuasion) and high emotional appeal.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

Final Challenge:

A conclusive battle with the Phantom Bride occurs in the manor's eerie cemetery. If pacified, the bride reveals her bondage and guides toward destroying the ritual altar—a delicate task risking spiritual backlash.

Stakes of Failure vs Success:

- **Failure:** The fog intensifies, sealing Bright Hollow's doom.
- **Success:** The curse lifts, shadows disperse, and village life can flourish once again.

Narrative Conclusion:

Timid but heartfelt, villagers celebrate the restoration. Selene gifts a powerful elixir, while Elias offers the remnants of his crestfallen wealth.

REWARDS

- **Gold:** 200 gp as village gratitude.
- **Magic Item:** *Lantern of Revealing* from the Phantom Bride's spirit.
- **Story Rewards:** Status as adept ghost hunters, opening future paranormal possibilities.
- **Optional XP:** Derived from combat, ingenuity in puzzles, and critical roleplay achievements.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

STAT BLOCKS

- **Phantom Bride (custom ghost):** Uniquely tailored to the campaign's tone and challenges.
- **Shadow Mastiffs, Wraiths, Animated Armors:** Core antagonists enriching encounters.

MAPS

- A haunted, hand-drawn map of Bright Hollow and its environs.
- Floor plans for Ashwick Manor detailing key locations like the ballroom and cemetery.

HANDOUTS

- A dire excerpt from Lord Geoffrey's journal.
- Artistic sketch of the Phantom Bride, captured by a local amateur.

ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC

- Somber violin tunes for Bright Hollow.
- Eerie winds and whispered voices for the moors.
- Imposing organ chords for the climactic confrontation in the manor.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

Player ingenuity may lead to the manor's collapse over the altar or attempts to forge a pact with the Phantom Bride, developing her as a future advisor in further adventures.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- What resonated most during the session?
- Was the balance of combat, exploration, and roleplay effective?
- Would you envision further adventures in this world?

EPILOGUE OPTIONS

Continuing the tale, delve deeper into the Ashwick lineage or explore other haunted locales, expanding upon the realm's eerie narrative fabric.