

THE PHANTOM GALLEON



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Title: The Phantom Galleon

Theme/Genre: Nautical Mystery, Ghost Story Adventure

Tone: Suspenseful with Bits of Humor

Target Level for Players: Level 5

Expected Duration: 2 Hours

Player Focus Preferences:

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

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

WORLD OVERVIEW

In the world of Thalassa, vast oceans stretch endlessly, dotted by scattered islands and shrouded in countless maritime legends. The tides are said to hide both unimaginable treasures and sinister secrets. One such tale speaks of the **Phantom Galleon**, a ghost ship cursed to roam the oceans after a treacherous betrayal by its crew.

LOCAL AREA

Port Saltmarrow, a bustling coastal town, serves as the campaign's starting point. Known for its clam chowder and dockside flea market, the town harbors whispered fears of glowing lights and phantom sails haunting Deadman's Reef. Ships vanish here, and the townsfolk murmur of the Phantom Galleon dragging vessels to a watery grave.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A century ago, pirate captain **Erasmus Tidebreaker** betrayed his crew over treasure, unleashing a curse that doomed them to an eternal ghostly voyage. Their spectral ship wanders between life and death, yearning for release.

IMPORTANT NPCs

1. **Captain Marlana Vane:** Saltmarrow's harbormaster, a retired officer who lost her brother to the Galleon. No-nonsense, she seeks an end to the curse and offers aid to those brave enough to try.
 - **Motivation:** Stop the Phantom Galleon before it threatens Saltmarrow.
2. **Old Jory Seamoss:** An eccentric fisherman, dismissed as mad, who knows of the Phantom Galleon. His knowledge, often seen as ramblings, holds truths.
 - **Motivation:** Vindicate his warnings and recover proof from the ship.
3. **Irelia the Siren:** A spirit bound near Deadman's Reef by Erasmus's betrayal. Naturally ghostly, she provides reluctant guidance to repay her own grievances.
 - **Motivation:** Seek revenge against Erasmus for his faithless escape.

PLOT HOOK

OPENING SCENE

Misty evening descends upon Port Saltmarrow, where town criers warn of vanishings near Deadman's Reef. Among these turbulent settings, the adventurers are hired by Captain Marlana Vane to uncover the truth of the Phantom Galleon and end its curse.

Primary Objective: Track and resolve the Phantom Galleon's curse, freeing the tortured souls aboard.

KEY LOCATIONS

LOCATION 1: THE SALTMARROW DOCKS

Atmosphere: A thick fog cloaks the docks as boats sway under the moonlight. Cryptic murmurs of fearful townsfolk blend with the distant calls of seabirds.

NPCs:

- Captain Marlana Vane (mission briefing).
- Old Jory Seamoss (hands party a “lucky charm,” oddly reassuring).

Possible Encounters:

- Roleplay with townsfolk sharing varied legends of the phantom ship’s curse.
- An optional skirmish with dock gangsters mistaking the players for rivals.

LOCATION 2: DEADMAN’S REEF

Atmosphere: The tumultuous sea crashes over black jagged rocks as the spectral glow reveals Deadman’s Reef. Faintly haunting, a siren’s melancholic song drifts through the air.

Encounters:

- **Combat: Drowned Souls**, ghostly figures, rise from the depths eager for battle. Immune to non-magical strikes, they rely on abilities like “Spectral Grasp” for hindering foes.
- **Roleplay: Irelia the Siren** surfaces post-combat. Cryptically assisting, she demands a vow against Erasmus. Persuasion or emotionally significant gifts gain her trust.
- **Puzzle: Glowing Lights Maze** requires aligning twisted symbols to create a safe passage to the galleon.
 - **Mechanics:** Solve riddles to correctly align luminescent markers.

LOCATION 3: THE PHANTOM GALLEON

Atmosphere: The chill intensifies as the foreboding galleon appears. Its luminous, torn sails and laughing timbers chill to the bone, echoing the phantom commands of old.

Encounters:

- **Combat:** Haunted sailors strike the instant the party boards. Fighting leads to boss battle.
 - **Boss Fight: Erasmus Tidebreaker**, captain of spectral dread, wields ghost hooks for oppressive combat and fights with an acidic ghostly cutlass. His ethereal shifts demand tactical innovation.

- **Puzzle:** Cursed chest lock, Erasmus’s heart key, requires resolving innermost greed by placing corruption-touched items.
- **Roleplay:** Intimidated, Erasmus might share the burden of his betrayals under persuasion—weakening his resolve.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

FINAL CHALLENGE

Destruction of Erasmus’ heart lifts the curse, yet precipitates the ship’s collapse. Frantic escape ensues as the adventurers dodge menacing grasping spirits while fleeing back to their vessel.

Success: The Galleon dismantles with a ghostly groan, relinquishing its souls. Saltmarrow breathes free, welcoming the party as saviors.

Failure: Shadows still hazard the seas if players evade but fail their quest. Saltmarrow’s danger persists.

REWARDS

- **Loot:**
 - **Purified Cursed Cutlass:** Now a boon with +1 to attack and extra necrotic impact.
 - Stashes of golden glories aboard the Galleon.
- **Story Rewards:**
 - Time-honored respect from Saltmarrow residents.
 - Serenity thanks from Irelia, dissolving into the mists.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

STAT BLOCKS

- **Erasmus Tidebreaker:** A fearsome ghost leader with spectral chains and ethereal evasion capabilities.
- **Drowned Souls:** Fluctuating entities using ghostly hindrance powers.
- **Irelia the Siren:** An atypical bardical spirit—non-threatening and cryptic guide.

SUGGESTED MUSIC/SFX

- Ambient oceanic breezes mixed with soft stormy crescendos.
- Eerie violin strings enacting mystical ghostly atmospheres.
- Sporadic chuckles of spectral origins for atmospheric disruption.

PLAYER HANDOUTS

- Rugged treasure maps from the Ghost Ship quest.
- Enchanted luminescent nautical trinket, hinting future adventures.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

UNEXPECTED PATHS

- **Bargains with Erasmus:** If players hear his pleas, they might strike a sneaky bargain—inclusive of dire magical bargains or ship treasures.
- **Improvisation Techniques:** Enhance tension through unexpected stormy weather challenges, employing fog mystery over brute force narratives.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- Engagement of the ghostly narrative?
- Enjoyment and balance across roleplay, combat, and exploration?
- Curious queries about the fate or details?

EPILOGUE OPTIONS

- Potential rumors stir across the tavern of another spectral vessel, fueling broader conspiracies and infinite oceanic mysteries if players embark once again on the high seas!