

THE SHADOW BELOW SUNHAVEN



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Theme/Genre: Mystery, Dark Fantasy

Tone: Ominous with moments of awe and discovery

Target Level for Players: Level 5

Expected Duration: 2 hours

Player Focus Preferences:

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

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

WORLD OVERVIEW

The kingdom of Elarion thrives under a radiant sun blessed by the deity Solenara. Light temples ring bells at dawn, and glowing lanterns ward off the dark at night. However, beneath this facade of prosperity lies a hidden curse—a vestige of a past war with shadowfiends banished into the deep. Forgotten but not gone.

LOCAL SETTING: SUNHAVEN

Sunhaven is a picturesque coastal trading town nestled between golden beaches and emerald hills. Merchants bustle during the day, while an eerie hush falls during the nights. For the past few weeks, villagers have whispered of missing persons, strange dreams of darkness, and flickering lanterns failing to keep the night at bay. The townsfolk blame an old ruin that stretches deep below the cliffs, but no one dares investigate.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Sunhaven was built atop the remains of a shattered keep from the War of Shadows centuries ago. The shadowfiends were sealed in its dungeons with ancient wards. These wards are now dissolving, allowing the tendrils of a nearly forgotten horror to creep into reality.

IMPORTANT NPCs

- **Captain Fenrick Stormshard:** A grizzled former adventurer turned town guard captain. He believes the danger is real but is reluctant to act for fear of losing more townsfolk. He is motivated to protect Sunhaven.
- **Mother Lyara Vessandre:** Priestess of Solenara. She knows of the shadowfiends' legend but is unsure how to stop their resurgence. Sees the party as instruments of her god's will.
- **Rikket "The Whisker" Caerleth:** A halfling smuggler who operates in Sunhaven. Knows of secret passages to the deeper ruins. Will betray or help the party depending on the reward.
- **Umbrelux (final boss):** A Shadowfiend Sovereign who was imprisoned centuries ago. Now partially freed, it wants to gather enough energy to shroud the entire region in eternal night.

PLOT HOOK

A young girl, **Lanara**, runs into the village square in tears, claiming her brother **Tellis** went to play near the cliffside ruins and never returned. She found his lantern abandoned and heard unsettling whispers in the dark. Mother Lyara calls the adventurers to investigate, calling it a sign from Solenara that they must act on behalf of the town.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Descend into the ruins below Sunhaven, uncover the source of the growing darkness, and stop the resurgence of a terrible evil.

KEY LOCATIONS

LOCATION 1: SUNHAVEN TOWN SQUARE

- **Atmosphere:** Bustling during the day with cheerful townsfolk, but silent and fog-shrouded at night. Lanterns flicker nervously.
- **NPCs:** Captain Fenrick, Mother Lyara, and villagers with rumors about disappearances.
- **Encounters:** Social interaction with Lanara and the townsfolk. Investigation to gain clues about Tellis' disappearance.
- **Details:** Players may be able to purchase supplies or gather information. Skill checks (e.g., Insight, Persuasion, Investigation) reveal tidbits like shadowy figures seen near the ruins.

LOCATION 2: THE CLIFFSIDE RUINS

- **Atmosphere:** Crumbled stone walls descend into natural sea caves below. Water drips from the ceiling, and strange shadows move along the walls.
- **Encounters:**
 1. **Puzzle:** A warded door requires solving an ancient rotating sun-and-moon dial puzzle. Hints include weathered sun carvings along the walls.
 2. **Combat:** A pack of shadow hounds attacks once the ward is opened. Their tactics involve teleporting between patches of shadow.
- **Shadow Hound Stats:**
 - AC: 14
 - HP: 27
 - Bite: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.
 - **Abilities:**
 - **Shadow Step (Reaction):** When inside a shadowy area, the Shadow Hound can teleport up to 20 feet to another shadowy area it can see.

LOCATION 3: THE SHADOW CRYPTS

- **Atmosphere:** Dark, oppressive, and filled with shadowy mist. Pale light filters through glowing runes, while faint whispers echo everywhere. A central chamber holds an old stone altar stained with ichor.
- **Encounters:**
 1. **Trap:** A shadow tendril trap pulls players into a shadow globe unless they solve its weakness (Runes glow purple before activating; Dispel Magic or a DC 15 Perception to disable).
 2. **Boss Battle:** Umbrelx, the Shadowfiend Sovereign, partially freed from its prison.

- **Umbrelx Stats** (*Modified Shadow Demon*):

- **AC:** 16
- **HP:** 120
- **Shadowy Tendrils:** *Melee Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) psychic damage.
- **Darkness Aura:** Creates difficult terrain in a 15 ft radius around Umbrelx.
- **Legendary Actions:**
 - **Shadow Leap:** Umbrelx moves through shadows, ignoring difficult terrain and provoking no opportunity attacks.
 - **Mind Shroud:** Forces a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw on one creature within 30 ft., causing 10 (3d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

COMBAT:

1. **Shadow Hounds:** Engage players in the Cliffside Ruins (group of 4).
2. **Umbrelx:** Final boss encounter in the Shadow Crypts.

ROLEPLAY:

1. **Convince Captain Fenrick:** Persuasion or Deception check to gain assistance.
2. **Negotiate with Rikket:** Persuade/intimidate him for a map of secret passages, with gold as an alternative.
3. **Receive Blessings from Mother Lyara:** Grant Sunlight Charms with successful roleplay.

PUZZLE/TRAP:

1. **Sun-and-Moon Dial Puzzle:** Align symbols to create an eclipse pattern, unlocking the door. Scratched semicircles hint where pieces fit.
2. **Shadow Tendril Trap:** Identify the rune activators to avoid entrapment in magical darkness.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

FINAL CHALLENGE

The party must defeat Umbrelx in the crypt. The chamber's environment changes dynamically, with collapsing platforms and waves of shadow minions. Each platform collapse brings tons of stone from above, potentially sealing Umbrelx forever.

STAKES OF FAILURE

Failure means the seal shatters, allowing Umbrelux to spread eternal darkness across Sunhaven. Every light in the town flickers and dies.

CONCLUSION

- **Success:** The party vanquishes or seals Umbrelux, and Sunhaven celebrates their heroes. New hope fills the town, with players being rewarded.
- **Failure:** The town and potentially the region fall into despair as darkness spreads.

REWARDS

LOOT

- **Sunlight Charm:** Offers resistance against necrotic damage for 1 hour (1 use).
- **Blade of Solenara:** A +1 longsword that emits bright light in a 15 ft radius and deals an additional 1d6 radiant damage to undead or shadow creatures. Found on Umbrelux's altar.

STORY REWARDS

- Increased reputation in Sunhaven and nearby towns.
- Potential future favors from Mother Lyara and Captain Fenrick.

OPTIONAL XP

- Roleplay successes reward 150 XP per player.
- Defeating Umbrelux offers 2,000 XP across the party.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

STAT BLOCKS

- **Shadow Hounds:** Provided above for basic encounters.
- **Umbrelux:** Custom shadow demon boss with unique abilities.

SIMPLE MAPS

1. **Sunhaven Layout:** Highlights the town square and lantern-lit streets.
2. **Cliffside Ruins:** Illustrates overgrown ruins leading into the sea caves.
3. **Shadow Crypt:** Depicts a circular chamber with collapsing platforms and an ominous altar.

PLAYER HANDOUTS

- **Torn Journal Page:** Found in cliffside caves, mentions dark whispers and rituals.
- **Rough Map of the Ruins:** Drawn by Rikket, indicating areas of danger.

ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC

- **"Dark Horizons":** Perfect for cliffside exploration.
- **"Echoes of the Abyss":** Sets an eerie tone for the crypt battle.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

ALTERNATE PATHS

1. **Ally with Rikket:** Using a smuggler's route can bypass some shadow hounds.
2. **Mother Lyara's Aid:** Can assist in boss battle if things get overwhelming.

TIPS FOR IMPROVISATION

- Adjust NPC motivations based on player actions (e.g., Rikket might switch allegiance if mistreated).
- Use carved runes or phrases in Old Common along the ruins to provide hints for puzzles and the crypt's history.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- What was your favorite location/encounter?
- Did the balance of combat, roleplay, and exploration feel satisfying?
- Were you invested in the mystery of Sunhaven, and did it engage you as expected?

This campaign is designed to challenge players through an intertwining tapestry of puzzles, combat, and rich roleplaying. By the end, they should feel like true champions of Sunhaven or consider deeper alliances and plans for the spreading shadow.