

THE WITCHWOOD CONSPIRACY



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

- **Theme/Genre:** Mystery, Fantasy, and Intrigue
- **Tone:** Suspenseful with hints of dark humor
- **Target Level:** Level 3
- **Expected Duration:** 2 hours
- **Player Focus Preferences:**
 - Combat: Medium
 - Roleplay: High
 - Exploration: Medium

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

WORLD OVERVIEW

In the high-fantasy realm of Veldrin, where magic and ancient mysteries intertwine, the region of Grimlore Vale is veiled in perpetual enigma. At its heart lies the foreboding **Witchwood**, a forest known for its whispers, ghostly illuminations, and unexplained vanishings. Historians and the superstitious alike claim witches or curses lament in the Witchwood's depths.

LOCAL AREA: THE VILLAGE OF RAVENSHADE

Ravensshade, nestled on the outskirts of the Witchwood, is a superstitious village reliant on fishing and lumber. Here, chilling tales of foreboding shadows, swiftly decaying harvests, and wandering illuminations are widespread. The villagers' current scapegoat is **Old Mayra**, a loner herbalist, rumored to wield malevolent powers.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Fifty years ago, a tyrannical wizard ruled from the Witchwood, conducting dark, enigmatic experiments until his dominion crumbled. Legends say his downfall cursed the land itself, shrouding it in paranoia. Mayra's family, steadfast amidst the chaos, resisted leaving but with time, whispers of witchcraft resurfaced.

KEY NPCs

- **Old Mayra (Accused Hermit)**
 - **Role:** A misunderstood herbalist, unjustly vilified by the villagers.
 - **Appearance:** Silver-haired, cloaked in earthy tones.
 - **Personality:** Independent yet mysterious, with a compassionate heart for Ravensshade.
 - **Motivation:** Clear her name and protect the villagers, despite their misconceptions.
- **Warden Elda Vorn (Village Sheriff)**
 - **Role:** The pragmatic protector of Ravensshade.
 - **Appearance:** Stout, with sharp eyes, donning the sheriff's emblem.
 - **Personality:** Resolute but empathetic, shares hidden sympathy for Mayra.
 - **Motivation:** Uphold order and prevent bloodshed.
- **Gerald Mosswell (Frantic Farmer)**
 - **Role:** Plagued farmer whose livestock fall ill.
 - **Appearance:** Weather-beaten, always seen in his farm attire.
 - **Personality:** Desperate and suspicious, driven by fear.
 - **Motivation:** Ensure his farm's survival and security.

- **Elaris Ashgrove (Cloaked Stranger)**
 - **Role:** An enigmatic traveler with secretive objectives.
 - **Appearance:** Mysteriously adorned in scholarly robes.
 - **Personality:** Charming yet secretive, with a keen interest in arcane lore.
 - **Motivation:** Uncover the wizard's secrets for personal advancement.

PLOT HOOK

OPENING SCENE

Amidst the twilight shadows of Ravensshade Square, the villagers congregate under a pallid sky, their anxious mutterings accentuated by flickering lanterns. At the center stands Old Mayra, bound, the subject of wrathful superstition. The atmosphere teeters between her banishment into the Witchwood and a fiery demise.

As the scene precariously unfolds, Warden Elda Vorn, visage wrought with tension, turns to the adventurers:

"If we're to quell this hysteria and uncover the genuine threat, I implore your aid. Mayra is not the source—seek the truth in the Witchwood."

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Delve into the Witchwood to unearth the source of Ravensshade's haunting calamities. Vindicate Mayra or expose her guilt through gathered truths and evidence.

KEY LOCATIONS

LOCATION 1: THE VILLAGE OF RAVENSHADE

- **Atmosphere:** An air of suspicion cloaks Ravensshade, where whispers of curses and witchcraft permeate. The streets, wrought by generations of fear, are alive with anticipation and anxiety.
- **NPC Encounters:**
 - **Old Mayra:** Offers cryptic insights about her innocence.
 - **Gerald Mosswell:** Relates tales of his afflicted livestock and shadowy visions.
 - **Elaris Ashgrove:** Provides subtle allusions to the wizard's arcane remnants.
- **Possible Encounters:**
 - Navigate tense interactions with villagers inclined to violence against Mayra.
 - A sudden spectral illusion distracting or unsettling the crowd.

LOCATION 2: THE WITCHWOOD - GLIMMERBROOK CROSSING

- **Atmosphere:** The Glimmerbrook's mists weave through twisted trees, an ethereal glow painting a landscape alive with murmurs.
- **Challenge Options:**
 - **Puzzle:** Solve a mystical riddle etched into the ancient stone bridge, lest it shatter underfoot.
 - *Riddle:* "The more you take, the more you leave behind—what am I?"
(Answer: Footsteps)
 - **Roleplay:** Engage in obscure exchanges with a wandering will-o'-wisp promising guidance.
 - **Combat:** Battle through enchanted guardians—**Twig Blights** and a **Needle Blight**—opposing intruders.

LOCATION 3: THE WIZARD'S RUINED TOWER

- **Atmosphere:** A once-majestic, now-crumbling obsidian shard engulfed by the forest's grasp, pulses faintly with remnant arcana.
- **Challenge Options:**
 - **Trap:** Navigate a vexing sigil-guarded door that alters continuously.
 - **Combat:** Confront the **Hexbound Effigy**, a dark aberration wielding shadows and malice.
 - **Discovery:** Uncover a **Grimoire of Shadows**, key to the wizard's malevolent legacy, hinting at his spectral machinations fueling the forest's curse.

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

COMBAT ENCOUNTER: HEXBOUND EFFIGY

- **Stat Block:** Crafted as an eerie variation of a **Flesh Golem**.
- **Tactics:** Relentlessly pursues opponents; prioritizes spellcasters and summons spectral shadows at half health.

ROLEPLAY ENCOUNTER: MAYRA'S TESTIMONY

- **Prompt:** "I fend off darkness so that this village might live. And now, this is how they repay their protector?"
- **Skill Checks:** Insight to gauge sincerity, Persuasion to calm tensions, or Investigation to spot inconsistencies.

PUZZLE: RIDDLE AT GLIMMERBROOK CROSSING

- **Riddle:** “The more you take, the more you leave behind—what am I?” (*Answer: Footsteps*)
- Offer subtle whispering hints in the breeze for struggling adventurers.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

FINAL CHALLENGE

Confront and either dismantle the towering Hexbound Effigy or negotiate its purpose. Decide the fate of the **Grimoire of Shadows**:

- Destroy it, potentially prolonging the forest’s corruption.
- Employ it to dispel the curse, risking the wielder’s sanity.
- Conceal its existence, devising a scapegoat through subterfuge (e.g., Mayra or Gerald).

ENDING VARIATIONS

- **Triumph:** Deliver Mayra’s vindication, calming the Witchwood’s tempestuous heart. The village, albeit grudgingly, extends cautious gratitude.
- **Defeat:** The forest’s corruption spirals, engulfing more terrain. Mayra’s plight worsens as suspicion besieges her anew.

REWARDS

- **Loot:**
 - **Wand of Whispering Shadows:** Cast *Minor Illusion* thrice daily.
 - 50 gp per player.
- **Story Rewards:**
 - **Mayra’s Favor:** Access to potent herbal concoctions and unwavering support.
 - **Ravenshade Reputation:** Dictated by the party’s success or failure.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

- **Stat Blocks:** Adapted from **Flesh Golem**, **Twig Blight**, and **Needle Blight** designs.
- **Maps:**
 - Ravenshade layout with central plaza.
 - Witchwood’s river crossing with puzzle and traps.
 - Complex, tower remnant with strategic encounters.
- **Player Handouts:**
 - Torn pages from the wizard’s old journal, detailing his spectral ambitions.

- **Atmospheric Music:**
 - **Exploration:** “Forest of Mystery” (from *Sword Coast Legends*).
 - **Combat:** “Boss Fight 2” (from *Divinity: Original Sin 2*).

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

- Adapt to unexpected player aggression or shifts, perhaps through Elda’s intervention.
- Diversify encounters with recurrent shadowy apparitions, building suspense and continuity if the party divides.