



HAUNTING OF BEGGAR'S CREEK

A Shadow of the Weird Wizard Quest for Expert Heroes



People travel Towers' Track all the time, either coming from or going to the city of Four Towers. The town of Beggar's Creek has done good business catering to these travelers and opening their homes and shops to all. The welcoming atmosphere, however, has withered and died considering the four dead bodies discovered on the road. Since the bodies show no signs of molestation, locals expect some supernatural threat but lack the means to confront the darkness casting a shadow over their lands. What does this malevolent entity want? How can the killings be stopped? In *Haunting of Beggar's Creek*, the characters have a chance to right a terrible wrong and put an angry spirit to rest, but only if they have the courage to face the evil that claims these lands.

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BETRAYAL AND MURDER

A terrible evil, one born from grief and rage, haunts the lands around Beggar's Creek. The story begins about a year ago, when adventurers passed a night at Muggen's Rest as so many travelers are wont to do. Among this group were Silena and Paden. Although friends only, the two were inseparable. Paden supported Silena's work to join the bards, while she helped patch him up at the end of a fight. What Silena failed to realize was that her friend had a different idea about their relationship. He loved her and hoped to evolve their relationship into something more than friendship.

That night, a local man caught Silena's eye, and the two slipped away. When Paden noticed she had gone, he went to look for her and found her in the man's embrace. In a sudden, uncontrollable rage, he killed the man and then strangled Silena even as he tried to explain that he loved her. Paden dragged the bodies off into the woods. He buried them both in shallow graves.

When the group discovered that Silena had disappeared, Paden mentioned he saw her go off with a local man. The group searched the area, but they found nothing. Everyone believed the man had killed her and run off. Half the group set off to find the man and bring him to justice, while the rest, including Paden, moved on to Four Towers.

A YEAR LATER

Paden did his best to forget, but guilt gnawed at him. He took up with various companies in Four Towers, but he was drummed out each time. He had to make peace with what he did, make amends for his crimes, so he quit the city and returned to Beggar's Creek to give Silena a proper burial. Unfortunately, he cannot remember where he buried her. Thus, he spends each day scouring the woods, looking for anything familiar.

Silena's spirit never descended into the Underworld; the shock over her friend's betrayal and the grief at losing her life trapped her in the mortal world. She's wandered the woods ever since, clawing at her throat and silently wailing. She sensed Paden when her killer returned to the area and his proximity to her awakened feelings of uncontrollable hatred and anger, feelings that stripped away the last of her innocence and transformed her into a **banshee**. Now, she roams through the forest, searching for Paden so she can drag him to hell. Until she finds him, any man will do.

GETTING STARTED

The troubles affecting Beggar's Creek began about a week ago, so there's not time enough for a call to go out for aid. Instead, the quest works best if the characters stumble into the plot. The quest expects the group to help of the goodness of their hearts, but if this seems unlikely, the characters could be recruited by a ranger too busy to investigate the matter who pays the group whatever you deem appropriate to carry out an investigation.

The quest occurs in a small, constrained area, but it requires the characters to talk to many different people and tease out the truth from these interactions. As a result, much of what happens occurs through roleplaying. A few opportunities for combat do come up, but, usually, from stumbling through the investigation or seem bored by all the social interaction, you can build the tension by introducing bandits, marauders, or some other threat to raise the tension.

BEGGAR'S BRIDGE AND ENVIRONS

The quest features a few important locations the characters might explore. A light forest called the Near Wood covers a few hundred acres. On the southwestern border, a dirt road called Towers' Track follows the forest edge, while abandoned fields dotted with a few ruins extend away from the other side of the road. The Track follows the forest edge, extending south and east until it comes to a stone bridge, known locally as Beggar's Bridge, which spans Beggar's Creek. Near it stands Muggen's Rest, a roadside inn with plenty of outbuildings to see to travelers' needs. About 500 yards west stands the old cemetery, where locals bury their dead. Finally, on the other side of the bridge, the road passes between several farms that grow sorghum, corn, wheat, and potatoes, with a few pastures beyond for domesticated curlbeasts and cattle.

A GRUESOME DISCOVERY

As the characters follow the road south and east to Beggar's Creek, they spot the body of a young man lying on the side of the road. Blood crusts his nostrils, ears, and face. He wears simple peasant garb—shirt, trousers, rope belt, with a knife tucked in a sheathe. A few paces up the road lies his wide-brimmed hat.

The man has bluish-white skin, feels cold to the touch, and has no obvious injuries aside from the blood on his face. Inspecting the dirt road reveals plenty of prints. Anyone with professional knowledge of tracking can pick out the marks left by his bare feet, but the other tracks seem a bit older and unrelated to whatever drama befell the man. Also, his stride lengthened at about the spot where the hat lays, suggesting he tried to run.

If the characters ask about possible destinations, the character with the highest Intellect score recalls spotting an old barn about a quarter mile back the way they came that lays in the direction the young man was walking.

Any characters inspecting the woods or the tall grasses growing along the side of the road find obvious game trails, but no other signs.

If the characters backtrack and investigate the barn, go to the Old Barn. Characters investigating the field find nothing of interest unless you choose otherwise. If the characters go into the woods, they might come upon the Tower. Finally, if the group pushes on, they come to Muggen's Rest after about a half mile.

OLD BARN

A backtracking group finds the old barn about where they remembered seeing it. The building's face remains intact and upright, but the back half has completely fallen. Tall grass surrounds the place, while creepers climb the building. An obvious trail of trampled grass leads from the road to the front of the barn, where more trampled grass leads to a stinking rubbish pit.

Just inside the barn, investigators find the remains of a camp, suggesting that someone has been squatting here for some time. Characters find a small, cold fire pit a few paces inside with an unrolled bedroll spread across the ground. A few pieces of clothing hang from old nails, while empty wine bottles stand in a row on a low beam. Characters also find a bucket, a well-used and somewhat hairy bar of soap, and a brush. Riffling through the bedroll turns up a lock of blonde hair tied with a pink ribbon. Finally, if the group spends an hour or more thoroughly searching the barn, they come upon the man's meager savings, a bag containing 12 cp.

NEAR WOODS

Thin woods cover the lands north of Beggar's Creek before giving way to scrubland about two miles or so. The trees include a mix of eucalyptus, oaks, kapok, and various nut-bearing trees. Grass, brambles, and weeds grow between the trunks, with spoor showing routes animals have taken. Animals have emptied out of the woods, heading west, away from the dark spirit lurking at the center.

THE TOWER

It takes little effort for the characters to spot the tower rising above the forest canopy. A grim edifice, icons dedicated to Lord Death appear all over its surface, while headstones crowd the tower's base. A staircase climbs up to an open entrance. During the day, a silent stillness reigns. No animal sounds, not even the wind breaks the prevailing quiet. At night, witch lights appear in the air, faint, glowing globes that drift about in an ethereal breeze.

Characters entering the tower find the structure hollow from base to pinnacle. Inside, an altar of black basalt festooned in skull bas-reliefs suggests people might have used this place to perform ceremonies important to Lord Death. Stone scrolls on the walls that display archaic prayers to Lord Death to speed the spirits of the dead to his kingdom confirm this idea.

Though long dead, the caretakers remain to watch over the place. At night, 5 **phantoms** materialize inside the tower and perform the rites they did in life. Lord Death cursed them to watch over the tower for their failures to guard a relic that had been held here. The phantoms attack anyone they find inside the tower during the night hours.



MUGGIN'S REST

Off to the side of the road where it ends at Beggar's Bridge stands Muggin's Rest. A low wall surrounds a courtyard, multistory inn, barn, forge, and storehouse. The inn has an L-shape, with the longest arm standing three-stories and comprising accommodations for staff and guests. The shorter arm holds the dining area, bar, kitchen, and some storage. Guests can secure lodgings in the dining hall. Rooms on the main floor are small, but tidy, while the second floor offers more spacious rooms and a common room. The third floor houses the owners and their staff. The outbuildings appear old, but well-maintained, each with a fresh coat of paint and free from creepers.

Not far from the inn there flows a clean, brisk creek that travels southwest from the northeast. At its widest, the creek measures 15 yards across and, at its deepest, about a yard. Silvery fish, crayfish, frogs, and turtles are common here and make up an important part of the local diet.

Towers' Track ends at a stone bridge, older by far than the inn, which stretches some 20 yards over the creek. On the other side, the road continues toward Four Towers. People fish from the bridge or from the banks. The bridge is wide enough for a wagon or two horses walking side by side.

If the characters look under the bridge, they find, amid large slimy rocks, an old metal box. A lock holds the lid shut, though it can be forced open, or the lock picked. Inside, the box holds 55 sp and a copper plate on which has been etched a map. The map could lead somewhere, perhaps for a future quest, or just be a curiosity.



ROOM AND BOARD

The prices for renting rooms, meals, drinks, and the like are negligible for expert characters. A group can gain lodgings for themselves and their animals, if they have any, for 3 sp. If they gorge themselves on food, drown themselves in drink, increase the price to 6 sp.

IDENTIFYING THE BODY

If the characters bring the body or a description of it, they can learn the man's identity from the staff, regular bar patrons, and long-time guests. They reveal the man is Trace MaGlaven, a hired hand who pitches in to help on the farms across the creek. He enjoys drinking more than laboring; he holds up his corner of the bar daily. Some say he fell on hard times and has been living out in the woods somewhere. He was pretty drunk the night before and the innkeeper, Allain, offered to let him sleep it off in the dining hall, but Trace refused and left.

Plenty of people have things to say about him. They describe him as a drifter who came to the area about a year ago. He was

popular with the young ladies, being a handsome, charming fellow. Recently, he was chased off by a farmer after the man discovered Trace in the farmer's daughter's arms. That happened about a week ago and, it seems, the farmers have all closed their doors in Trace's face.

If the characters bring the body in or tell the locals where to find it, the Three Brothers (see below) take possession of the body (during the day only) and bring it to the sexton who maintains the graveyard. Anyone can direct the group to this place.

RUMORS AND GOSSIP

The characters can learn more about the situation by talking to the locals. The locals guard their words, but they loosen up when in their cups or if the characters try to befriend them. Through roleplaying and eavesdropping, the characters can gain the following facts.

- Locals have been finding dead people on the road for the last few weeks.
- Five people, including Trace, have been found dead in the area.
- Trace and one other man, Ben, worked as farmhands.
- The third was a charcoal burner who had paid for a room, but he left during the night.
- The fourth was a mercenary. Boorish and loud, no one liked him. He sensed the atmosphere and decided to leave in the night.
- The last was a ranger who patrolled this area for years.
- All the victims had grimaces on their faces and blood around their eyes, nose, ears, and mouth.

NOTABLE PEOPLE

As the only inn for miles around, Muggin's Rest stays busy all year long, so when the characters arrive, they find the place crowded with folks who might know something of use. Of these people, only a few have information pertaining to the quest, and each receives their own entry below. Unless mentioned otherwise, everyone uses the rules for **peasants**.

MUGGIN FAMILY

Allie (50) and her husband Bobert (55) bought the inn 20 years ago from an old couple who were ready to retire. Allie and Bobert look a bit alike, being both short, round, and florid. Allie's red hair has gone to gray, while Bobert has lost all his hair. Both share innkeeper responsibilities, but Allie often works in the kitchen while her husband tends bar.

The pair have seven children, six of whom help run the place: Kris (23), Mallo (19), the twins Green and Frad (16), Mike (14), Dena (12), and Vor, who receives his own entry below. The children work at the inn, carrying out various tasks that need doing, from tending the animals to cleaning the rooms. They all have bright red hair, milky complexions, and a fierce loyalty to one another.

VOR

Everyone agrees that there's something off with young Vor. From a difficult pregnancy, he almost died before he could come into the world. The child, who has the same red hair, has bright blue eyes and he uses them to watch people in the inn. Most nights, he awakens screaming about the Lady in the Woods, though he usually forgets the dream's details a few minutes later.

Vor knows Paden killed Silena. Though only six years old, he watched the man strangle the pretty lady. He fears the man, who has come back, will hurt him and his family, so Vor keeps the knowledge to himself. If the characters befriend the boy, they might get him to confide what he knows.

CORMA

Corma came to Muggin's Rest six months ago to find her missing sister, Silena. Traveling disguised as an itinerant minstrel, she has settled into the inn in hopes of discovering some clue about her sister's fate. She has discovered little, other than what everyone else knows, but has convinced herself that her sister died here and that her killer will return.

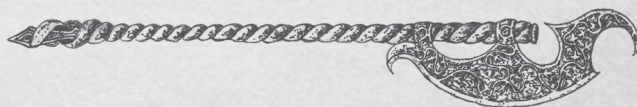
Even though she approaches her twenty-fifth year, Corma still looks to be just out of her teens. She wears patched and darned clothing, stained from travel. Her lute, that she plays most evenings, has a crack in the side. She has plenty of coin, though, thanks to inheritance, and she lodges in one of the small rooms on the main floor.

The minstrel suspects Bobert Muggin might have killed her sister, but she has put together the arrival of the man named Paden and the rash of recent killings. She thinks the spirit everyone talks about might belong to her sister, but she doesn't know for certain and she's in no hurry to find out.

PADEN

What a difference a year can make. Once a tall, strapping, physically fit man, handsome, in his way, Paden (**knight**) now has a stooped posture, a face scarred and pitted from delving into the dungeons below Four Towers, and a pot belly thanks to heavy drinking. A few people think him familiar, but no one, outside Vor, makes the connection between this wreck of a man and the adventurer who stayed here a year back.

Paden returned to the inn almost three weeks ago, and he has a cot in the common room for a month, all paid in advance. He heads out into the woods each day to scour them for the place where he buried Silena, but he has had no luck, owing to all the drink he has consumed since he killed her. Just before sunset, he comes back, muddy, with leaves and twigs in his hair. He explains away his presence and appearance as looking for an old treasure that was buried here by his ancestors. He offers no other explanation.





UNMASKING THE KILLER

Paden wants no friends; he believes he doesn't deserve them. He brushes off anyone who tries to talk to him and he becomes insulting if pushed. Characters make rolls with 2 banes to improve his disposition from unfriendly to indifferent. Even if made friendly, he doesn't reveal his secrets. He must be interrogated or compelled in some way.

The characters might capture Paden so they can interrogate him. Using questioning or magic to break his mind, he confesses what he did and explains why he came back. He does not believe, though, that his presence has anything to do with the spate of killings.

THREE BROTHERS

Almost every night for the last couple years, the Three Brothers (**patrollers**) take their place at their preferred table, where they drink and play games of whist. They'll sometimes let others play, but they make do with just the three of them. The Brothers earn their pay working as farmhands. They too live in the inn, having cots in the common room upstairs.

The brothers all look alike and never give their names, referring to each other as Brother or Eldest, Middle, and Youngest. They have bodies muscled from hard work, grime under their nails, and closed expressions. They wear simple clothing, patched in places, stained from their sweat.

The Three Brothers were around when Silena died and they know the story, though not the killer's identity. They see it as their duty to tend to the dead, so they have been helping the sexton with the burials. The Three Brothers prefer to keep things the way they are and can be relied upon to deal with troublemakers.

NEWCOMERS

The inn has rented out three rooms to their current stable of guests.

GERY GERTON

A peddler (**cozener**) of cure-alls and remedies, this fast-talking young man has stopped here for a few days before pressing on north with his wagon and trusted mule, Showman. He landed himself in trouble selling "healing potions" to adventurers over in Four Towers and slipped away before the authorities could string him up. Gerton has thinning blonde hair, a big beard, and bright green clothing.

ENIS AND GINA

A pair of adventurers (**soldier** and **fire mage**) stopped here on their way to Four Towers, where they hope to join a company and make their fortune. Enis is a big, bald man, while Gina is short, round, and with a mop of curly black hair on her head.

HUMBLE THE DWARF

Another traveler bound for Four Towers, Humble (**deep warden**) hunts one of his own people, a dwarf who killed the

thane's eldest son. The death plunged their enclave into chaos. Humble was charged with guarding the victim but failed in his duty and thus tasked with bringing the killer to justice. Lean for a dwarf, Humble wears no facial hair, shaving each morning until he can make amends.

THE GRAVEYARD

Not too far from the inn and in sight of the creek there stands a small cemetery surrounded by a low stone wall built from river stones. Headstones go back one hundred years and many lean to one side or the other. Graves have sunken as the boxes rotted away. In the center, rising from a pedestal, is an idol of a skull-headed angel wielding a scythe. Four fresh graves mark the places where the recent corpses were interred.

A wooden shack stands to one side. Wooden boards on which have been painted hourglasses, winged skulls, and the ouroboros hang on its outer walls.

The shack belongs to the sexton, an old, withered man, blind in his left eye, and with a long, pointed nose. He wears filthy black robes of his order—he's a devotee of Lord Death. Despite his advanced age, he digs all the graves himself, something he brings up with no little pride.

The spirits haunting the woods terrify the sexton. He believes the people have forgotten the old ways and now Lord Death punishes them. He hides in the shack, drinking spirits, and passing the night hours in prayer. He can confirm that the bodies brought to him were as the locals described—no obvious wounds, blood on the faces.

FARMS

A few independent farms claim the lands beyond Beggar's Creek. Although self-sufficient for the most part, they rely on hired hands during planting and harvest, recruited from the towns and villages surrounding Four Towers, as well as from travelers passing through. The farms have little to do with the quest and the farmers have suffered no harm from the banshee, yet. In time though, her nocturnal excursions might see her influence reach across the river and blight their crops.

The group might believe one or more farmers responsible for the killings. Such a conclusion might arise when the characters learn about the circumstances surrounding Trace's death. The quest absolves the farmers of any guilt, but you can decide otherwise.

UNNATURAL DEVELOPMENTS

The characters might happen upon the disembodied spirits of the banshee's victims or even the banshee herself if they venture out of doors at night. Also, other dangerous things have come to the region, drawn here by the growing evil born from the banshee's hatred.

ROAMING SPIRITS

Not long after the sun sets, the spirits of the banshee's victims stir and prowl the Near Woods, Towers' Track, and the graveyard. Characters outside might spot one or more of these spirits. Each of the 5 **ghosts** appears as they did in life, though with tormented expressions on their ethereal visages. If the characters attack any of the ghosts, the rest show up a round or two later, coming from different directions. Even if the characters manage to destroy them, the ghosts return the next night, along with those of anyone else the banshee kills.

RESTLESS DEAD

Silena's accursed influence seeps into the cemetery grounds and desecrates it. Each night, starting on the night after the quest begins, 2d6 **zombies** dig themselves out from their graves and menace the people at the inn. The zombies continue to emerge from the graveyard until a total of 48 have crawled free from the ground.

THE BANSHEE

The characters can encounter the banshee at night when you choose. To build tension, foreshadow the encounter by having the characters see fog roll in from the woods to cover the ground in milky mist or hear a high-pitched scream. If the characters have difficulty tracking down her remains, more people might die, their spirits joining the other ghosts.

Eventually, the banshee attacks the characters, either while they are out in the woods or encamped in the inn. She wants no one to disturb her bones, at least not until she kills Paden. If the characters draw close to the place at night, she shows. If she becomes injured, she flees for the tower, where she rests to recover from her injuries.

SILENA'S REMAINS

Silena's remains lay at the bottom of a shallow grave about 30 yards south of the tower. A year in the ground reduced her body to bones and rotten clothing. Paden buried Silena's lover a dozen paces away, but he was found by local children six months back. Locals unearthed him for proper burial at the cemetery.

Characters find it impossible to locate the bones without help. If they talk to the sexton, they might learn the place where the children found the other body, in which case a thorough search eventually turns up the bones. Magic might avail the characters too, if they have access to a spell capable of discovering such things as mortal remains. Finally, Paden remembers where he buried his friend, eventually. If enlisted, he can lead the characters to the location after a few days of searching.

PUTTING THE SPIRIT TO REST

Releasing Silena's spirit requires interring her remains in sacred ground and performing a ritual. The characters find sanctified ground only in the cemetery.

Once the characters have her remains, they can begin the work of putting her spirit to rest. Doing so requires the characters to bring the remains to the cemetery and have a character with professional knowledge of religion perform a ritual to release the spirit.

CONCLUSION

The quest ends whenever the characters quit Muggin's Rest, whether they succeed in delivering justice for Silena or not. However, depending on what the characters accomplish, determines the fate of the community.

Silena's spirit descends to the Underworld only if she is properly buried and her body receives the sacred rites. Failing to accomplish both prevents her from moving on. She haunts the community for years to come. The other spirits become freed from the world only when Silena is put to rest. Thus, they continue to vex the locals.

As for Paden, if he confesses, he tries to flee the first chance he gets. His attempt could lead the characters across the countryside, back to Four Towers, or wherever you choose. Paden could become a nemesis, or a minor villain easily dispatched. If captured, Allie and Bobert agree to hold him at the inn until a traveling judge of Blind comes to settle disputes. When the judge does arrive, a few weeks later, with evidence and his confession, the judge sentences him to death by hanging, an execution carried out by the Three Brothers.

Defeating the banshee in combat does not end the threat to Beggar's Creek. The banshee returns after 24 hours. Each person killed by the banshee rises up as a ghost and joins the others. Furthermore, the banshee's lethal influence spreads 2d6 yards each day, bleeding across the creek and poisoning the fields. After a few months, the whole area becomes uninhabitable.

