

THE BOOK OF TAVERNS

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Introduction

A Publican's Life

Werner Tonk stood almost seven feet high and weighed close to four hundred pounds with all that fancy, etched armor he liked to wear. The publican whipped a filthy rag from his belt and swiped at a wet spot on the table beside him. "Evenin', Master Tonk," he said.

Tonk, who filled the doorway of the Brass Buckle, nodded congenially. "Evening, Ron." As he squeezed through the doorframe, armor and wood scraping against one another quite loudly, he added, "Can I trouble ye for a pint of black?" The man's boots left gigantic divots in the floor as he strode across it. Ron bristled. That'd be the fifth time in as many weeks he'd need to replace those floorboards.

"Er..." he said. He hated when Tonk put him on the spot like that. The other patrons in the tavern's common room, all seven of them, watched the exchange with no small degree of amusement.

Tonk pleaded with him. "Come now, Ron. Ye knows I'm good for it. Just a pint, that's all I ask. A measly little pint."

Ron could not bring himself to tell the disgraced nobleman to sod off. If he'd been any other man.... "Sure, Master Tonk. I don't see why not."

Laughing heartily, Tonk clapped Ron on the shoulders. "Good on ye, Ron, good on ye!" He reached for his silk coin pouch, "Lessee 'ere," he mumbled, "I think I've a half sovereign. For me tab, ye ken."

The ritual was a tired one, but one to which Ron was accustomed. He waited patiently while Tonk fumbled for his coin. Embarrassed, the warrior pulled out a dingy copper token. He said, "'S'truth, Ron, I'm good for it. Ye knows I am. It's just, well, I'm having a bit o' bad luck of late."

Ron sighed, resigned to the loss he would take tonight. "I unnerstan', Master Tonk. This one's on the house, to be sure." As he made for the barrel to pour Tonk his pint, he overheard Old Smey cackling, "'Ere, now, Tonk, you gonna treat us all to a round or three?" The others laughed and Tonk replied, "Aye! Ron knows I'm good for it!"

The publican winced. He would definitely lose his shirt tonight.

Introduction

The tavern abides as a staple of fantasy literature and even more so of fantasy gaming. Who can count how many times player characters have visited the local tavern for information or to seek the seeds of adventure? DMs often

rely on the tavern to kick-start stories, using them as convenient starting points to bring itinerant characters together for the first time. Despite its often crucial role in moving a story forward, the tavern often gets relegated to background scenery.

This book is designed to change all that.

The first in **The Book of Taverns** series of aids for the overworked DM, **The Book of Taverns** assists DMs by providing ten new taverns, each one highly detailed and rich in history and character. They can be used on the fly, pulled from the book at random and inserted into a gaming session without forethought and preparation, or employed as foundations for something decidedly more permanent. And each tavern is appropriate for a range of PC levels.

These taverns need not be used as written. DMs should feel free to mix and match NPCs, creatures, encounters, and maps. Some of the establishments are designed with a specific environment in mind, such as a city settings or a rustic countryside, but should not be limited to such environments. With a few tweaks, any tavern here can be adapted to other locales. Similarly, the local cultures that describe the taverns and their inhabitants, while already rather generic, can be easily modified to suit the DM's campaign.

Using this Book

Each entry in **The Book of Taverns** is divided into six sections, as follows:

Introduction: A brief overview of the tavern, describing the general atmosphere and theme.

Background: A detailed description of the tavern's origins and history, along with the major players associated with it. Each tavern's background contains numerous plot hooks for creating adventures derived from its origins.

Dramatis Personae: Detailed descriptions of the non-player characters (NPCs) that inhabit or own the tavern.

The Establishment: This is the largest section, describing the individual rooms in the tavern and their contents.

Goods & Services: Lists the available food, drink, lodging, and any other services that the tavern provides, as well as prices.

Adventure Seeds: This section offers ideas DMs can use to create adventures in and around the tavern. Not all are necessarily related to the tavern's back-story.

The Witch's Teat

Its reputation precedes it. It is a place of violence, a refuge for the damned and a gathering place for world-weary adventurers to swap stories and trade information. The Witch's Teat is most famous, though, for the gladiatorial fights that occur there on a nightly basis. The blood of those who have died in the tavern's fighting pit stains its walls. Not only do patrons fight each other when the urge or the incentive overcomes them, they also fight the hellish creatures summoned to the pit by a faulty magic portal spawned by the tavern's long dead, titular witch.

Background

For nearly 50 years, the building that The Witch's Teat now occupies functioned as a temple for an obscure coven of northern barbarian cultists. They hewed its logs with just their bare hands and the axes they brought south with them. Their leader, a rail-thin man named Gunter Griefbow, claimed their god had come to him in the form of a black moose one night while he hunted wolves, commanding that he take the faithful into heathen lands to spread the sacred word. A week later, he and two hundred of his most devout followers began a long trek that would culminate, after many years, in the loss of more than half their number and the construction of this building. The residents of the land they chose to settle did not mind just as long as the barbarians kept their primitive religion to themselves. Unfortunately, that sentiment ran contrary to Griefbow's purpose here, and ultimately the barbarians came into grievous conflict with the locals. After half a century, the locals finally sent their militia — under the leadership of Red Henrickson — after the cultists, killing every last one of them. The temple was left standing, however, because the locals did not want to push their luck. Killing the cultists was one thing, but destroying a god's sacred altar was altogether another. Years passed, the town grew, and the temple remained vacant except for dust and rats.

Eleven years ago, Kaliban of Ustran Pazeel claimed the lot for his own, paying a modest fee to the town burgher for his blessing despite the fact that many people thought it best to leave the temple alone. They saw no sense in taking chances. Kaliban did not care. If the temple meant that much to the god to whom it was consecrated, he argued, this god would have sent his devout back to reclaim it. After spending months refurbishing the temple, Kaliban opened "The White Wolf," a tavern named for the stained glass window on the building's second floor, a remnant of the former inhabitants' religion that depicted Griefbow slaying the legendary rival of their god and the northern symbol of universal good, the White Wolf. Otherwise, he left the building more or less intact, removing just the altar and other religious accoutrements.

The tavern prospered. In the early days, the townsfolk frequented it until it gained a reputation for attracting criminals, mercenaries, and seedy adventurers. Before long, the townsfolk wished Kaliban and his public house would go the way of the cultists. Red Henrickson decided to take matters into his own hands and "persuade" Kaliban to take

his business, money, and clientele elsewhere. He led 30 of the town's best soldiers and warriors to The White Wolf, armed to the teeth and thirsty for blood. He called Kaliban out and set forth the town's demands: leave, or else. Kaliban spit contemptuously and went back inside. Red's temper snapped and he gave the order to kill everyone inside the tavern and hang their heads from both entrances as a warning and a lesson. The townsfolk charged — but in their zealousness they never considered that Kaliban's patrons were better armed and better trained than the cultists from so many years before. Three townsfolk survived the battle. Their dead were piled up outside the burgher's house and a message written in blood was pinned to one of their corpses' with a dagger. It read: *Yew owe me five and ten gold fore six broke chaires and two broke tables* — signed, *Kaliban of Ustran Pazeel*. From that point on, the townsfolk begrudgingly tolerated the tavern, though they never forgave Kaliban or his friends for the slaughter. Yet they can blame only themselves, for they took the fight to him, as the burgher is so fond of reminding them any time complaints resurface.

Four years ago, the northern cultists returned. They were a party of four burly warriors and one haggard, cataract-blinded witch. Word had reached them that their brethren had been viciously murdered and their temple desecrated. They did not know at whom to direct the most anger for their role in the tragedy, the townsfolk or Kaliban. As they sat in the tavern, discussing their options, looking around at a once beautiful temple dedicated to their lord now named for his adversary, their rage blossomed. Finally, the warriors lost control, unsheathing their weapons and attacking the patrons. The witch cast her blind gaze directly at Kaliban and uttered a curse. He would not die — no; that would be too kind a fate for him. Rather, for the next nine generations his kith and kin would suffer. Where crimes were committed, they would be blamed and punished regardless of their innocence. Where they settled, cattle and sheep would be rendered barren and their milk sour. Where they did business, their coin would be forever worthless and their crafts eternally flawed. As her warriors fell under the patrons' steel, Kaliban unsheathed his weapon — a glorious magical artifact acquired in his youth — and charged the witch. She opened a portal, a wicked gash in the floor from which foul demons and beasts climbed to defend her. Kaliban and his cohorts hacked them to pieces as they fought to close in on her. Fireballs, burning streamers of acid, and razor sharp spears of ice flew from her fingertips. With a flash of light, Kaliban's sword pierced her breast. Blood and spittle flew from her lips as she released a bone-chilling cry of anguish. The foundations of The White Wolf rocked as she died at Kaliban's feet, reminding him of the curse as she coughed out her last breath.

Kaliban knew the curse was real. It was also extremely potent; he could feel it clinging like oil to his soul. The following day, he sold the tavern for a pittance to a good friend and regular, an ugly ex-mercenary everyone called "Dogface," and quit the town for parts unknown. Dogface shut down the tavern for a week while he fixed the hole in its floor, filling it in and covering it over. Unfortunately,

the witch's legacy remained, and the magic she called upon to summon her monstrous guardians would not dissipate. The portal hissed open for a second time, collapsing the repairs into a new hole and releasing a fresh wave of creatures upon the patrons. For weeks this situation continued. Each time Dogface sealed the hole, the magic re-opened it at seemingly random intervals. A local priest told him the witch's magic had been corrupt and that, short of a miracle, he would never be rid of it. Resigned, Dogface turned the portal hole into a fighting pit and put out word that he would reward any patrons who slew the beasts emerging from it. Of course, no one knew for certain when the beasts would come through, so many of his patrons made a regular ritual out of coming to the tavern "to watch the hole," as they put it. Not long after, patrons used the pit for more generic gladiatorial matches while they waited for the portal to spit out the next creature.

To spite the memory of the witch who left the tavern with this accursed pit, Dogface renamed the place after her most unflattering piece of anatomy: the withered, dried-up breast Kaliban severed when he killed her.

Dramatis Personae

The Witch's Teat is owned and operated by **Dogface**, a gristly human whose temper matches his nasty appearance. Upstairs in the kitchen works an old adventuring friend of his, **Qaddiq al Yusef**, an exotic half-elf from remote lands. **Thana Jotsdottir**, an emigrant from the north, works the second floor common and private rooms. A strong, broad-shouldered woman, she is more than capable of fending off the stray hands of the drunkards who spend their coin on the courtesans upstairs. When business is slight, she goes downstairs to join **Danal** and **Danille Green**, the young twins who work on the first floor.

Dogface

One cannot say much about Dogface other than he is ugly as sin and owns a disposition to match. He barely clears 5 feet in height and epitomizes stocky with a chest and shoulders like an ale barrel, arms and thighs like tree trunks, and a neck that would make a bull proud. He keeps his salt-and-pepper black hair cut so short it makes him look nearly bald. Lately, he is growing a beard, but it makes him look too much like a dwarf so he may shave it off. Though he absolutely loathes dwarves, he will not deny them service; their money is as good anyone else's.

He spent 23 years serving in the military, both as a professional soldier in the king's army and as a mercenary serving under Captain Madrock Fist with the not-so-renowned *Company of Severed Steel*. While with the Company, he met Kaliban when the other man was recruited after being the only one to emerge from the lair of the great blue wyrms *Haesepthenessokkon*. Kaliban's entire company died while trying to bring the wyrms down. How he alone made it out alive is anyone's guess. The wyrms were never slain, but he could not his hair for many years after the raid. Madrock offered Kaliban command of an entire platoon and the other man accepted. Dogface served under Kaliban for many years before their friendship blossomed in the aftermath of a failed assault on a city

of human-sacrificing mages. With barely 20 men left in the platoon, Kaliban promoted Dogface to second lieutenant. Dogface soon became his most trusted aide and advisor.

When they retired from the Company, Kaliban and Dogface went their separate ways. Kaliban disappeared until the time he bought that old barbarian temple, while Dogface traveled to another continent. In a remote desert kingdom there, he helped to depose an undead pharaoh and started a war with a race of sand dwarves, who captured him and held him prisoner for five years. The dwarves forced him to work in the water mines buried deep beneath the surface of a desert oasis. He eventually escaped with the assistance of another slave, a half-elf named Qaddiq. They became fast friends and together made their way to the jungle kingdoms in the south. They wasted years searching for a mythical city of gold, a place so wondrous that the streets were supposedly paved with diamonds. When they emerged from the jungles, both were severely battle-fatigued. Dogface hired the next available ship he could find to carry him home, where he hoped to retire from the adventuring life for a while. Surprisingly, Qaddiq elected to go with him. When they arrived, word of Kaliban's whereabouts reached Dogface and he was overjoyed at the prospect of seeing his old friend again. So, he and Qaddiq spent six months getting to the tavern, where a warm, friendly welcome awaited them.

Dogface's long, adventurous life has filled him with a great weariness. When Kaliban said he needed to see an elf queen about removing the witch's curse, he gladly accepted responsibility for the tavern during the other man's absence. And it cost him only 7,000 gold. Of course, Kaliban retains half of the ownership and profits, but Dogface is not complaining, not in the least. Happy to retire, he enjoys the patrons' company and the "quiet" life.

For a while, he thought that the witch's magic would be the tavern's end. Fortunately, it increased business considerably instead. Adventurers and thrill seekers from all over come to fight in the pit, inspired by greatly inflated stories of its strange summonings and the incredible money to be gained in dispatching them. Dogface lets the gladiators keep whatever valuables the pit-spawned creatures have on them in addition to paying them a flat fee out of his own pocket, ranging from 100 gp to 15,000 gp, depending on the nature of the beast. For most fights, whether between people and beasts or just between two people, he charges a small commission on bets brokered through the house and then pays out the prize purse from that money. While private bets are not entirely disallowed, they are discouraged. Most private bets do not pay as well as the house and so really are not a problem. Only twice in the tavern's history have creatures escaped the pit. In both instances, they almost destroyed the tavern and the town. Needless to say, the townsfolk were not too happy with Dogface, asking him to make a hefty "donation" to three temples and the burgher in restitution. Moreover, the money he spent on repairing the tavern almost put him out of business for good. Dogface truly fears the day something no one can handle emerges from the pit. As of yet, he has proven rather lucky in that regard. Who knows how long his luck will last, though?

THE WITCH'S TEAT

Dogface, Male Human Ftr11: CR 11; SZ M (5 ft., 1/2 in. tall); HD 11d10+11; hp 77; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 armor); Atk +18/+13 melee (1d6+6, +2 *short sword*, crit 17-20/x2) or +16/+11 melee (1d3+1, +1 *handaxe*, crit x3); AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 19, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +8, Handle Animal +6, Jump +8, Profession (innkeeper) +8, Ride (horse) +12, Swim +6.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (short sword), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (short sword).

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

Possessions: *Breastplate of invulnerability* (damage reduction 5/+1), +1 *handaxe*, +2 *short sword*, 2 *potions of cure serious wounds*, *potion of gaseous form*.

Qaddiq al Yusef

Qaddiq's father was an elf noble named Jaesof who, along with his entourage, had become lost in the desert. Wira, a human woman and the leader of a tribe of desert nomads called the Sahoduin, subsequently rescued Jaesof. She and six of her best warriors were on their way to an inter-tribal conclave when they happened upon Jaesof at an oasis watering hole. The last survivor of his group and on the brink of death, Jaesof lay mere feet from the life-saving water. As Wira and her warriors nursed him back to health, rivals of the Sahoduin attacked. The watering hole

was in the other tribe's territory; Wira, her men, and Jaesof were trespassing by being there. They were also thieves for drinking the precious water without first asking for permission. The battle was short, with Wira and her men making quick work of the enemy warriors. They took Jaesof back to the Sahoduin, where he lived for the remainder of his days. He and Wira eventually fell in love and married. Qaddiq was born three years after their marriage and given his father's name as a surname, as is customary among the desert cultures: al Yusef, or "of Jaesof," a rough approximation of the elf's name in Wira's language.

Qaddiq inherited the best features of both his parents. From his father, he received his emerald green eyes and golden hair, and from his mother he received his dusky skin and wiry, muscular body. While one might think his physical grace signals his elven heritage, Qaddiq actually inherited this trait from his mother's people. The Sahoduin are renowned in the desert kingdoms for their whirling dervishes, warrior-priests who spin and dance in combat to achieve an ecstatic high in order to acquire amazing powers. A patient people, the Sahoduin are slow to anger and take offense, especially at the social inadequacies of outsiders. Other tribes claim this makes them soft, but anyone who faces them in battle knows otherwise. If one aspect stands out about Qaddiq, it is that he is truly a product of the Sahoduin — his patience is legendary, as well as his martial prowess.

When he was 22, his people discovered sand dwarves undermining three of their territorial oases. Wira sent emissaries to inform the dwarves of their encroachment. The



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dwarves sent the emissaries back without their heads and animated by necromantic magic. This response set off a war that would last almost 20 years and involve every nomad tribe in the kingdoms. Qaddiq fought for seventeen years before the dwarves captured him in a raid against his group's encampment. They enslaved him in their water mines, where he met a gnarled, heavily scarred human named Dogface who had toiled there for many years. The sand dwarves had captured him as well, but not in their battles against the nomads. Rather, they captured him farther to the north, where they also warred against the undead pharaoh's people. Qaddiq enjoyed the other man's irreverent sense of humor, his implacable will, and the wonderful tales he told of his homelands half a world away. By the time they escaped, Qaddiq and Dogface had become very good friends. Life in the tribes seemed so small and inconsequential to Qaddiq, now. He had never realized before the war, and especially before meeting Dogface, just how much there was to see and do out there. So, he decided to travel with his odd foreign friend, to see with his own eyes the world the human had described during their imprisonment.

He has traveled with Dogface ever since. Like his friend, Qaddiq has finally grown tired of the constant travel — of never knowing where he might find his next meal, where they would bed down for the night, or whether he would even live to see the next day. When Dogface told him of Kaliban's offer, he quickly agreed. Dogface would run the day-to-day operations and manage the common rooms, while Qaddiq would work in the kitchen. Qaddiq is not the most versatile cook, but he gets by. Besides, patrons do not come to The Witch's Teat for the cuisine. So far, the job has not been so bad. The patrons are his type of people, the weekly fights are entertaining, and the women in these lands are beautiful beyond his wildest dreams. He is especially fond of Thana, though she absolutely detests him for reasons he has yet to determine. Not that he really cares; he knows she will succumb to his charm one of these days. They all do, in the end.

Qaddiq al Yusef, Male Half-Elf Ftr2/Mnk7: CR 9; SZ M (5 ft., 9 in. tall); HD 2d10+2 plus 7d8+7; hp 72; Init +8 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 50 ft.; AC 17 (+4 Dex, +2 Wis, +1 Mnk); Atk +6/+2 melee (1d8+1, unarmed strike) or +9/+4 melee (1d6+2, +1 *quarterstaff*); SA unarmed strike, stunning attack; SQ evasion, still mind, slow fall (30 ft.), purity of body, wholeness of body, leap of the clouds; AL LN; SV Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills: Craft (cooking) +8, Escape Artist +16, Handle Animal +7, Jump +11, Listen +7, Move Silently +12, Search +4, Spot +7, Swim +5.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Jump), Weapon Focus (quarterstaff).

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnome.

Possessions: +1 *quarterstaff*.

Thana Jotsdottir

Thana is a typical northern woman: tall (over 6 feet), stocky ("built like a brick icedhouse" is a more apt description), and so blond her hair borders on white. With icy blue eyes, ruddy lips and cheeks, and a laugh deeper than

most of the tavern's male patrons, she is quite a sight to behold. Many people encountering her for the first time often find themselves staring until she politely informs them to look elsewhere lest they end up in the pit with whatever snarling, drooling creature from Hell pops in for company this week.

She hails from a remote village in the north called Ayce Loch, where the favored trades are ice fishing and whale hunting. With half of the year spent either in twilight or darkness, practically the only activity to do for fun is getting cozy under the bearskin blankets with a neighbor or three. Is it any wonder she came south looking for a more interesting life?

At least, such is the story she tells anyone who asks. Of course, she is not who she claims. Tavern regulars speculate she is another cultist witch come to spy on the town while her cohorts make ready for an all-out assault. Dogface thinks she might be related to one of the cultists who died all those years ago but that she is not necessarily one herself. Qaddiq thinks she is just plain gorgeous and cannot wait to infiltrate her bearskin undergarments. The truth, however, is hardly as glamorous as the rumors might lead one to believe. She actually comes from Glesgin Loch, near Ayce Loch, banished from those territories for being suspected in the murders of 12 young men and women over the last four years. No one could prove it, though, so the elders from both villages ruled for exile instead of the lynching intended by the villagers. They did not want to risk having innocent blood on their hands if Thana had not, in fact, committed the murders, but they also did not want her around in case she was really guilty of the crimes. Let someone else deal with her, was the unanimous sentiment.

Word preceded her wherever she went. Armed villagers intercepted her at village boundaries, driving her away. She finally had no choice but to move south, where no one would know her or the atrocities she supposedly committed. A year ago, she arrived at The Witch's Teat looking for work. Dogface hired her on the spot, desperate for reliable help. Her wages are adequate, and Dogface allows her to sleep in the private room upstairs without charging her or docking her pay. Unlike most tavern masters, he has not tried coercing sexual favors out of her in return for room and board or other "niceties." Then there is Qaddiq, whose not-so-subtle overtures have gone unanswered. While she finds him charming (who doesn't?), he is just not her type. She prefers them younger, truth be told. Currently, she has her eye on the new ones, the twins. Danal has so far proven unresponsive, but Danille has expressed obliquely that she might be interested in a rendezvous... for a price. That makes her nothing more than a filthy whore, in Thana's opinion. She cannot abide that kind of immorality, that lasciviousness, and that utter disrespect for the beautiful body and soul with which the gods blessed her. If given the opportunity, Thana intends on teaching the girl a lesson in morality. Perhaps after their liaison.

Thana Jotsdottir, Female Human, Adp2/Com2: CR 2; SZ M (6 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 2d6-2 plus 2d4-2; hp 10; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 9 (-1 Dex); Atk +2 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2); SA spells; AL LE; SV Fort -1, Ref -1, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 12.

THE WITCH'S TEAT

Skills: Concentration +1, Craft (leatherworking) +7, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (nature) +4, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +6, Sense Motive +5, Spot +6.

Feats: Extend Spell, Run, Scribe Scroll.

Languages: Common, plus one regional dialect.

Adept Spells Prepared (3/2; base DC 13 + spell level): 0 — cure minor wounds, ghost sound, light; 1st — command (x2).

Possessions: Dagger and 34 gp.

Danal and Danille Gren

Danal and Danille are 17-year old twins. Orphaned eight years ago, they have lived on their own ever since. When they can manage it, they secure passage with cargo caravans traveling between towns and cities, always moving from one place to the next. Both have pudgy bodies; long, jet-black hair they wear tied back in ponytails; and black eyes.

They love to eat, especially sweet meats when they can afford them, hence their relative bulk. Any chance they get, they swipe leftovers from the plates of patrons or from Qaddiq's kitchen. Dogface tolerates their gluttony only because they are the best servers he has hired in a long time. They are always polite, friendly, and timely. The only cause they give his patrons for complaint is that they are not for hire like the courtesans working the second floor commons. Dogface does yet know, however, that Danal has been twanging his sister — hiring her out behind the boss' back like a common "buttock-and-file" girl. He takes the fees from patrons; she takes their valuables when they sleep off the romp. None of this happens inside the tavern's walls and never with regulars. Many patrons have complained to Danal about losing items to the girl, to which he offers to let them search their belongings: when suspicious patrons take Danal up on the offer, they find only a few changes of clothes, a handful of coppers, and little else. The twins actually stash their loot in a secret spot in the woods outside town.

Dogface intends to let the twins sleep in the second floor storage room until they can find a place of their own (which will never happen, as they will rob him blind first then move on when they tire of the work and the lifestyle, as is their habit). Complaints regarding the kids have reached Dogface, implying that he is colluding with them in thievery. While he does not believe they are up to as much mischief as some suggest, he dislikes the disparaging remarks made about his integrity. Danal and Danille ensure that he trusts them implicitly by going out of their way to be attentive to his desires. When they are not hustling, they also spend time taking care of minor business matters on his behalf, reinforcing his favorable opinion of them. So far, the ruse is working like a charm. Not even Qaddiq suspects, and he is as wily as they come; however, he does reprimand them frequently for pinching food from the stove pots.

Danal Gren, Male Human Com1: CR 1/2; SZ M (5 ft., 3 in. tall); HD 1d4-3; hp 1; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk -1 melee (1d4-1, dagger, 19-20/x2); AL CE; SV Fort -1, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 5, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +3, Hide +2, Listen +3, Profession (innkeeper) +3, Ride (horse) +3, Swim +2, Use Rope +4.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Use Rope).

Languages: Common, plus two regional dialects.

Possessions: Dagger and 4 gp.

Danille Gren, Female Human Com1: CR 1/2; SZ M (5 ft., 2 in. tall); HD 1d4-3; hp 1; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 9 (-1 Dex); Atk +0 melee (1d3, unarmed strike); AL NE; SV Fort -3, Ref -1, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 5, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Craft (sewing) +6, Listen +3, Profession (courtesan) +7, Spot +3.

Feats: Skill Focus (Craft [sewing], Profession [courtesan]).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Silver earrings (2 gp), a silver necklace (3 gp), and four silver bangles (4 gp total).

The Establishment

The Witch's Teat is a square, two-story wooden structure that once functioned as a temple. It looks like a big log cabin, with walls, doors, roof, and shingles all cut from the massive pine and oak trees for which the region is famous. Two stone hearths run up the south wall through the second floor and out the roof. The tavern has two ground floor entrances. On the west side, just above the entrance and set in the second floor wall, is a beautiful stained glass window showing a scene of the barbarian cultist Gunter Griefbow killing a snarling, white-furred wolf. Other windows are shuttered, with neither oiled parchment nor glass, and closed in the winter to keep out the chill.

The tavern's inside is just as rustic and charming as the outside, with the pelts and heads of many animals (such as bears, wolves, and moose) and unnatural creatures (such as demons, ettins, ogres, and bugbears) adorning the walls and floors. A young adult red dragon's head hangs prominently on the south wall between the fireplaces in the first floor common room, even. The first floor ceiling is 30 feet high, supported by thick wood columns carved with the visages of totem spirits. The wood floors of The Witch's Teat are heavily stained and stuffed, as is the furniture. At the center of the common room, which constitutes the entirety of the first floor, is the Pit, descending 15 feet into the ground and lined with hellishly black stone.

Unless otherwise noted, stats for The Witch's Teat are as follows:

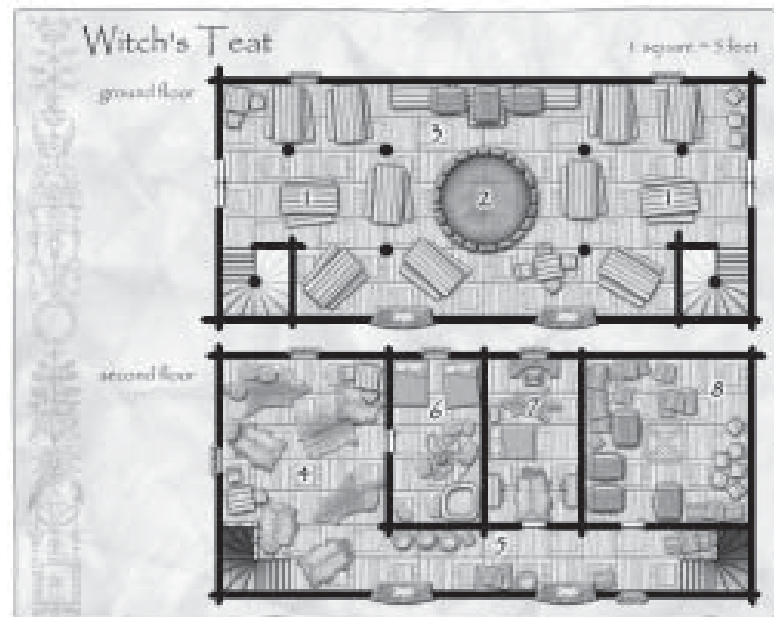
Doors: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break (DC 23).

Walls (Outer and Inner): 1 ft. thick; Hardness 5; hp 120; Break (DC 23).

1. Common Room

This was once the chapel of the barbarian cultists. The entire first floor is open, with numerous long tables and benches occupying most of it (with a few smaller tables and chairs). Thick wood columns to support the second floor and roof are spaced regularly down the center length of the common room. The tavern's notorious fighting pit is in the exact center. Along the south wall is a pair of stairs and a pair of stone hearths. Some say that the cultist's altar once sat between the hearths in the spot that a red dragon's head claims as its own now.

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As with all the other rooms in the tavern, the walls bear a bevy of trophies taken over the years from pit duels (not from patrons, though, just those from creatures that come through the portal) — heads of all manner of strange beasts, multi-colored pelts, racks of tree-tined antlers, and anything else Dogface can think to put up there. Of course, the most prized trophy is the aforementioned dragon's head. The dragon it belonged to did not come through the portal. Instead, a former regular — a professional dragonslayer named Niobe of Star River — donated the head to the tavern. Unfortunately, an ancient black wym got the better of Niobe a month after she made the donation.

The common room, and by proxy the rest of the tavern, never shuts down. If people stay late enough, they are allowed to sleep on the tables and floors downstairs, though Dogface and Qaddiq do shut down the second floor when it looks like business is waning. Part of the reason for Dogface's generosity is that he does not really want to leave the pit unattended. At the very least, he has one duel master (a skilled fighter in his or her own right) remain behind if no patrons appear willing to take the night watch.

2. The Pit

It is 15 feet deep and almost as wide. The stones of the walls are black from the portal magic and the blood of the slain. Heavy, rune-encrusted stones line the rim. Centered perfectly in the open space of the pit is a purplish-blue, crackling eye of eldritch energy: the portal itself, the

remnant of the witch's magic from five years earlier. No one knows what fuels it or how long it will last. All they do know is that at least once a week the portal awakens. It expands outward and, moments later, *something* comes through it. The duel master (hired by Dogface to run the gladiatorial matches) chooses the gladiators who will fight that night, either against one another or against whatever foul beast the portal spits up. He marks them with colored spots painted on their tunics. If a gladiator forfeits the match, perhaps because his opponent or the creature proves too powerful for him, he cannot fight for a month. Fortunately, the duel masters are rather adept at picking matches and so few forfeits occur. Duel masters also take house bets and handle payouts to the winners, receiving 2% of the house take for their work.

To determine whether the portal "awakens" on any given day, roll 1d20. On a result of a 1, something comes through it; this check should be made only once in a single 24-hour period. Roll another 1d20 and consult the table below to determine the type of creature that comes through the portal. Generally, creatures with 8 HD or less come through the portal most frequently, as the witch originally cast a *summon monster VIII* spell. The corruption of the magic fueling it occasionally brings higher HD creatures through, however. The portal is one-way, allowing transit only into the tavern. Creatures arriving through the portal, regardless of their HD, immunities, and resistances, are immediately stunned for 2 rounds, providing the duel

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