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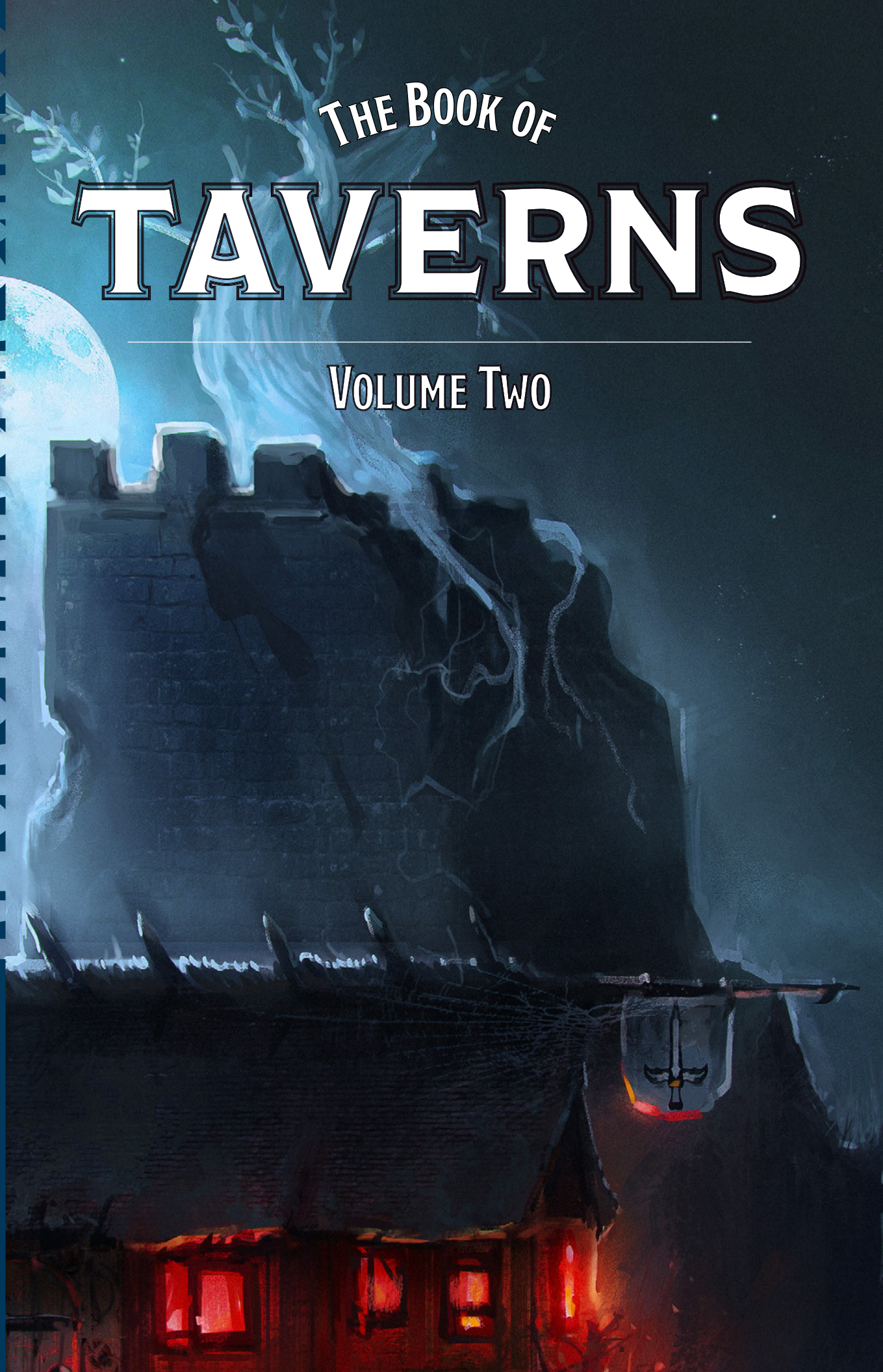
THE BOOK OF

TAVERNS

VOLUME TWO



SYSTEM
NEUTRAL



THE BOOK OF TAVERNS VOLUME TWO

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------|----|
| INTRODUCTION..... | 3 | CAER DIRE..... | 16 |
| USING THIS BOOK..... | 3 | 1. DEMESNE..... | 16 |
| THE WITCH'S TEAT..... | 4 | 2. WALLS..... | 16 |
| BACKGROUND..... | 4 | 3. GATEHOUSE RUINS..... | 16 |
| DRAMATIS PERSONAE..... | 5 | 4. NORTH GUARD TOWER..... | 16 |
| DOGFACE..... | 5 | 5. SOUTH GUARD TOWER..... | 17 |
| QADDIQ AL YUSEF..... | 6 | 6. WATCHTOWER RUINS..... | 17 |
| THANA JOTSDOTTIR..... | 6 | 7. PRISON..... | 17 |
| DANAL AND DANILLE GREN..... | 7 | 8. EAST BAILEY..... | 17 |
| THE ESTABLISHMENT..... | 8 | 9. WEST BAILEY..... | 17 |
| 1. COMMON ROOM..... | 8 | 10. GREAT HALL RUINS..... | 17 |
| 2. THE PIT..... | 8 | 11. LESSER HALL RUINS..... | 17 |
| 3. ALE ALTAR..... | 8 | 12. BARRACKS RUINS..... | 17 |
| 4. UPPER COMMONS..... | 9 | 13. LIVERY RUINS..... | 17 |
| 5. KITCHEN..... | 9 | 14. SAPPER'S TUNNEL..... | 17 |
| 6. PRIVATE ROOM..... | 9 | THE QUINTAIN'S TOWER..... | 18 |
| 7. DOGFACE'S QUARTERS..... | 9 | 1. COMMON ROOM..... | 18 |
| 8. STORAGE ROOM..... | 9 | 2. GOBLIN VILLA..... | 18 |
| THE WITCH'S TEAT MENU..... | 10 | 3. BRAZZER'S STILL..... | 18 |
| GOODS & SERVICES..... | 10 | 4. THE RED CROWN..... | 19 |
| ADVENTURE SEEDS..... | 10 | 5. THE SOLAR..... | 19 |
| THE QUINTAIN'S TOWER..... | 11 | GOODS & SERVICES..... | 19 |
| BACKGROUND..... | 12 | THE QUINTAIN'S TOWER MENU..... | 19 |
| DRAMATIS PERSONAE..... | 12 | ADVENTURE SEEDS..... | 20 |
| BRAZZER MANDRAGORA..... | 12 | APPENDIX A: RUMORS..... | 20 |
| HAMMER FALL TRIBE..... | 13 | | |
| STEEL RING TRIBE..... | 13 | | |
| BLACK IRON TRIBE..... | 14 | | |
| THE WOOD WARDS OF ST. SOPHIA..... | 14 | | |
| JON OAKBORN, WOOD WARD SHERIFF..... | 14 | | |
| SARA OF WESTMACHE..... | 14 | | |
| RIDERS OF WESTMACHE..... | 15 | | |
| FREESIFOOT'S POOTOON..... | 15 | | |
| PATRONS & POSSIBILITIES..... | 15 | | |

THE BOOK OF TAVERNS: VOLUME TWO

BY CHRIS JONES

A FANTASY ADVENTURE SUPPLEMENT DETAILING 2 DISTINCT TAVERNS OF ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF ALL LEVELS!

Book of Taverns Volume Two presents two taverns, Witch's Teat and Quintain's Tower. Each tavern is given a full description of its layout, important NPCs, and history. Witch's Teat is a rough bar where patrons can watch blood fights between local champions and the strange beings that come out of the cursed portal in the bar's common room. Equally rough is Quintain's Tower, the sole remaining tower of a fallen castle that is home to a tavern serving ogres, orcs, and goblinoids, but welcoming to all who can navigate the wilderness and keep the peace.

A PUBLICAN'S LIFE

"Last call!" the publican roared out. Ron didn't really need to shout tonight, but it was tradition. The lone patron sat hunched in his corner booth nursing a pint of Brass Black. In response to the bellow they held up five fingers.

"Now see here, you can't have one, er, four for the road friend..."

The door creaked opened and four figures clad in cloaks, their hoods pulled up high to shadow their faces crept in. They scanned the room and began making their way across the empty room for the person in the corner booth.

"We're closing up." The person in the corner booth held up five fingers again. "Fine, but I'm putting out the lantern and you all have to leave when you're done drinking, and no taking your time."

After sitting out five tankards of Brass Black, Ron stepped outside to put out the lantern that hung over his tavern's sign. When he came back in the five had already spread a ragged map across their table, pinning one corner down with a dagger. Something important was being debated in hushed tones, plans were being made, tactics considered.

Adventurers, thought Ron, gods damned adventurers.

INTRODUCTION

The tavern is a staple of fantasy literature and even more so of fantasy gaming. How many local taverns do characters visit for information or to seek the seeds of adventure? GMs often rely on the tavern to kickstart stories, using them as convenient starting points to bring itinerant characters together for the first time or even to introduce new characters to an established party. Despite its crucial role in moving a story forward, the tavern is often relegated to nothing more than background scenery.

This supplement is designed to change all that.

The Book of Taverns provides an assortment of highly detailed taverns rich in history and character. They can be used on the fly, pulled at random and inserted into a gaming session without forethought and preparation, or employed as foundations for something decidedly more permanent. Each tavern is appropriate for a range of levels.

These taverns need not be used as written. 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 setting or a rustic countryside, but don't feel limited to these environments. With a few tweaks, any tavern here can be adapted to other locales.

USING THIS BOOK

Each tavern presented is divided into six sections:

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

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

Patrons & Possibilities: A quick glimpse at some other colorful patrons to be found inside the tavern and events surrounding them, for instances where the GM needs a shadowy figure in the corner who might have much-needed information to pass on.

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

Assorted Patrons:

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

Goods & Services: A list of available food, drink, lodging, and any other services, as well as prices.

Adventure Seeds: This section offers ideas to create adventures in and around the tavern. Not all are necessarily related to the tavern's backstory.



THE WITCH'S TEAT

The Witch's Teat's reputation precedes it. It is a place of violence, a refuge for the damned, and a gathering place for worldweary adventurers to swap stories and trade information. It is most famous, though, for the gladiatorial fights that occur on a nightly basis. The blood of those who 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, but 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 conclave of northern barbarian cultists. They hewed its logs with bare hands and axes they brought south with them. Their leader, a rail-thin man named Gunter Griefbow, claimed their god came to him in the form of a black moose one night while he hunted wolves and commanded he take the faithful into heathen lands to spread the sacred word. A week later, he and 200 of his most-devout followers began a long trek that culminated 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 as long as the barbarians kept their primitive religion to themselves. Unfortunately, that sentiment ran contrary to Griefbow's purpose, 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 many people thinking it best to leave the temple alone. They saw no sense in taking chances. But 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 followers 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 White Wolf, the legendary rival of their god and the northern symbol of universal good. 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

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

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. Unfortunately, in their zealotry 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 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 anytime complaints resurface.

Four years ago, four burly warriors and one haggard, cataract-blinded witch — the northern cultists — returned. Word had reached them that their brethren had been viciously murdered and their temple desecrated. They did not know who to blame for the tragedy, the townsfolk or Kaliban. As they sat in the tavern discussing their options, their rage blossomed as they looked around at a once-beautiful temple dedicated to their lord now named for his adversary. The warriors finally lost control and unsheathed their weapons and attacked the patrons.

The witch cast her blind gaze directly at Kaliban and cursed him. 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 the 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 wicked gash in the floor from which foul demons and beasts climbed out 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. Finally, Kaliban's sword pierced her breast with a flash of light. 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 felt 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. This situation continued for weeks. Each time Dogface sealed the hole, the magic reopened it randomly. 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." 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.

Dogface owns and operates The Witch's Teat. He is a gristly human whose temper matches his nasty appearance. An old adventuring friend of his named **Qaddiq al Yusef**, an exotic half-elf from remote lands, works upstairs in the kitchen. **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 light, she goes downstairs to join **Danal** and **Danille Gren**, 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 that it makes him look nearly bald. Lately, he is growing a beard, but it makes him look so much like a dwarf that he may shave it off. Though he absolutely loathes dwarves, he won't deny them service; their money is as good as anyone else's.

He spent 23 years serving in the military 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 in the Company, he met Kaliban when the warrior emerged from the lair of the great blue wyrm *Haeseptenessokkon*. Kaliban's entire company died trying to bring the wyrm down. How he alone made it out alive is anyone's guess. The wyrm was never slain, but it would not be able to leave its lair 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 eventually bought an old barbarian temple, while Dogface traveled to another continent (Libynos in the Lost Lands setting). In a remote kingdom within the Maighib Desert, he helped depose an undead pharaoh and started a war with a race of sand dwarves who 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 the half-elf slave Qaddiq.

They became fast friends and together made their way to the Seething Jungle. They wasted years there searching for a mythical city of gold, a place so wondrous that the streets were supposedly paved with diamonds. When they emerged from the jungle, both were severely battle-fatigued. Dogface hired the next available ship he could find to carry him home to Akados, 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. He and Qaddiq spent six months getting to the tavern where a warm friendly welcome awaited them.

Dogface was weary from his long, adventurous life, and was ready to slow down, and Kaliban offered the perfect excuse. Eager to rid himself of the witch's evil, Kaliban offered Dogface partial ownership of the tavern while he sought out an elf queen to remove the curse. Dogface paid 7,000 gold coins for an equal share of the tavern's profits and ownership and was happy to do so. He is now retired and thoroughly enjoys the patrons' company and the "quiet" life.

For a while, he thought that the witch's curse would be the end of the tavern, but instead business increased considerably. Adventurers and thrill-seekers alike visit to fight in the pit, inspired by greatly inflated stories of strange summoned monsters and the incredible money to be gained dispatching them. Dogface lets the gladiators keep whatever valuables the pit-spawned creatures bring with them and pays them a flat fee 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 outside. Needless to say, the townsfolk were not too happy with Dogface and asked him to make a hefty "donation" in restitution to three local temples and the burgher. Moreover, the money he spent on repairing the tavern almost put him out of business for good. Dogface truly fears the day when something no one can handle emerges from the pit. He has been lucky in that regard so far, but who knows how long his luck will last?

QADDIQ AL YUSEF

Qaddiq's father was an elf noble named Jaesof who, along with his entourage, became lost in the Maighib 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 lifesaving water. Rivals of the Sahoduin attacked as Wira and her warriors nursed him back to health. The watering hole was located in the other tribe's territory, and Wira, her men, and Jaesof were trespassing by being there. They were also thieves for drinking the precious water without first asking permission. The battle was short, however, 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 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 is 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 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. Both of Qaddiq's parents died in the war, and he fought for 17 years before the dwarves captured him in a raid. They enslaved him in their water mines where he met a gnarled, heavily scarred human named Dogface who had already toiled there for years. Qaddiq enjoyed Dogface's irreverent sense of humor, his implacable will, and the wonderful tales he told of his homeland half a world away. By the time they escaped, Qaddiq and Dogface had become very good friends. Life in the tribes now seemed so small and inconsequential to Qaddiq. He had never realized before the war, and especially before meeting Dogface, just how much there was to see and do outside the desert. He decided to travel with his odd foreign friend to see with his own eyes the world the human had described.

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, Qaddiq 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 some as-yet-unknown reason.

THANA JOTSOTTIR

Thana is a typical Northlander woman: tall (over 6 feet), stocky ("built like a brick icehouse" 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 Northlands called Ayce Loch where the favored trades are ice fishing and whale hunting. Is it any wonder she came south looking for a more interesting life? At least, that's the story she tells anyone who asks. Tavern regulars speculate she is another cultist witch spying on the town while her cohorts ready 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 a witch herself. Qaddiq thinks she is just plain gorgeous.

The truth, however, is hardly as glamorous as the rumors. She actually comes from Glesgin Loch, a small village located near Ayce Loch. After 12 young men and women were murdered over four years, suspicion finally settled on her. No one could prove she had anything to do with the murders, however, so the elders simply exiled her. They did not want to risk spilling innocent blood, but they also didn't want her roaming free if she was the guilty party. Their unanimous sentiment? Let someone else deal with her.

Word of her possible deeds preceded her wherever she went in the Northlands. Armed villagers met her at each village, ready to drive her away with force if necessary. Finally, she had no choice: She had to head farther south where no one would know her. She arrived at The Witch's Teat a year ago 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 for free. She spurns Qaddiq's affections simply because he's not her type.

DANAL AND DANILLE GREN

Danal and Danille are 17-year-old twins. They have lived on their own ever since they were orphaned eight years ago. 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 are pudgy with long, jet-black hair they wear tied back in ponytails. They have black eyes.

They love to eat, especially sweetmeats when they can afford them, hence their relative bulk. They swipe leftovers from the plates of patrons or from Qaddiq's kitchen any chance they get. 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. However, the pair are small-time burglars who frequently steal items from drunk or unconscious patrons. Many patrons have grumbled about losing items and a few blame the twins. However, Danal always politely allows accusers to search their belongings, but all they find are a few changes of clothes and a handful of coppers. The twins actually stash their loot in a secret spot in the woods outside town.

Dogface is letting the twins sleep in the second-floor storage room until they find a place of their own (which is unlikely to happen, as they plan to rob him blind then quickly move on, as is their habit). Some patrons have begun to complain to Dogface, and some even whisper he might be behind the thefts. Danal and Danille ensure he trusts them by working hard in the tavern. So far, the ruse is working like a charm. Not even Qaddiq suspects them, and he is as wily as they come; however, he does reprimand them frequently for pinching food from the stove pots.



PATRONS & POSSIBILITIES

The following table includes some interesting patrons and events to be found in The Witch's Teat. Roll randomly or select one of the unique individuals to fill out the tavern's nightly clientele. Rumors can be sprinkled into conversations as needed.

1d6 Patron or Event

- 1 A burly warrior deep into his cups finally has had enough with the "mouthy bard" playing his lute on the stage. He stands up, toppling his table and chair, and loudly shouts his name "**Otato!**" before rushing the stage. Any patrons in his way are cast aside by the drunken barbarian, possibly thrown into the pit just as a random creature scrambles through the portal.
- 2 The extremely unlucky magic-user **Barnabix Huld** (who was once cursed to sit in a tree for weeks collecting tolls for a hag) has again run into trouble. His newest curse is minor compared to the last one: Whenever he is in a building, all the doors and windows open of their own accord. But the minor annoyance is a major problem when Barnabix visits The Witch's Teat. His presence opens the portal — which remains open. Assorted creatures suddenly begin pouring into the bar. And the doors and windows keep clattering open and closed during the ensuing fight ...
- 3 A nearly catatonic adventurer sits in a corner booth, his hands shaking so badly that the drink he holds sloshes and spills across the table. He sometimes shrieks "The Root Run Tunnel!" and "It's hunting me!" He eventually flees, but anyone following him sees a monstrous tentacle swoop out of the air to wrap around the man's body. Its squeezes, crushing the man in its grip before it fades out of existence.
- 4 A hide-covered, bent-over shaman with straggly hair and rotten teeth pulls up a chair and asks, "Do you have more broken flesh of the chaotic one?" If **Gorbane the Rock Collector** is asked about the heavy sacks he carries, he pulls out a dark stone that might once have been part of an ebon statue. He eagerly shows how other stones he has collected fit together like a puzzle.
- 5 Late one night, three zombies stagger into the tavern. Each one wears battered armor from a battle most thought a mere legend. The zombies wield glowing longswords but keep them down at their sides. They sidle up to the bar as if to order. The patrons in the bar push back away from the new arrivals, unsure what might happen. The zombies wait patiently for a drink (any drink will do) but become agitated if nothing is offered. If attacked, they defend themselves. If a kindhearted soul buys their drinks, each zombie opens its mouth to reveal a small diamond sitting on its rotted tongue. The jewels are worth 200 gp if anyone is brave enough to take them.
- 6 A black-cloaked wizardess named Selmago Alix asks rather angrily for a table for six, but sits alone for most of the night, which rather upsets the staff. Near midnight, she reaches into a bag and pulls out five perfectly sculpted stone icons of a grizzly bear, two giant hyenas, an ogre, and a wild boar. She sits them at their places around the table, and then sits back to wait a little longer.

THE ESTABLISHMENT

The Witch's Teat is a rectangular, 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. Set in the second-floor wall above the wester entrance 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 adorning the walls and floors. A few unnatural creatures such as demons, ettins, ogres, and bugbears are also present. A young adult red dragon's head even hangs prominently on the south wall between the fireplaces in the first-floor common room. Thick wood columns carved with the visages of totem spirits support the first-floor ceiling 30 feet overhead. The wooden floors of The Witch's Teat are heavily stained and scuffed, as is the furniture. The common room fills the entirety of the first floor, and surrounds the Pit, a 15-foot-deep hole lined with hellishly black stone in the center the room.

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 supporting the second floor and roof are spaced regularly down the center of the common room. The tavern's notorious fighting pit is in the exact center. A pair of stairs and a pair of stone hearths are along the south wall. Some say that the cultists' altar once sat between the hearths in the spot that a red dragon's head now claims as its own.

As with all the other rooms in the tavern, the walls bear a bevy of trophies taken over the years from creatures that have crawled out of the pit. These include the heads of all manner of strange beasts, multi-colored pelts, racks of antlers, and anything else Dogface can think to put up there. Of course, the most prized trophy is the aforementioned dragon's head, even though it did not come through the portal. Instead, Niobe of Star River — a professional dragon slayer and a tavern regular — donated the head. Unfortunately, an ancient black wyrm 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 as if 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 who remains behind if no patrons appear willing to take the night watch.

2. THE PIT

The pit is 15 feet deep and almost as wide, with stone walls that 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 years earlier. No one knows what fuels it or how long it will last. All they know is that at least once a week the portal awakens, the eldritch energy expanding outward moments before something comes through. 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 — because the opponent or the arriving creature might be too powerful — that warrior 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's take for their work.

After a powerful demon nearly destroyed the tavern, Dogface hired a traveling wizard to enchant the stones rimming the top of the pit in case of an emergency. Twelve of the stones form a teleportation circle that Dogface, Qaddiq, or the duel masters can activate with a command. Once activated, the stones teleport anything in the pit to a location hundreds of miles away. Removing a single stone breaks the enchantment until the stone is returned. Fortunately, Dogface had the stones embedded permanently in the floor to prevent people from wandering off with them. Few people know about the stones, as they have seen them used only twice since their installation. The stones can be pried loose with great effort.

A powerful wizard created the teleportation stones — for which Dogface paid handsomely — in exchange for a magical iron flask taken from the corpse of a summoned efreet. Each teleportation stone has 48 charges left and activating the teleportation circle expends one charge from each stone.

THE PORTAL WAKES

To determine if the portal wakes, roll 1d20 once per day. On a result of 1, something comes through. Roll 1d8 and consult the table below to determine the type of creature. The portal is a one-way journey into the tavern. Arriving creatures are stunned for a few seconds, providing the duel masters ample opportunity to call out the "colors" of those who expected to fight them.

Usually only one creature appears, though you can roll 1d6 if you wish to increase the number.

| 1d8 | Creature |
|-----|-------------|
| 1 | Abberation |
| 2 | Beast |
| 3 | Elemental |
| 4 | Fiend |
| 5 | Giant |
| 6 | Monstrosity |
| 7 | Ooze |
| 8 | Undead |

3. ALE ALTAR

Along the common room's north wall is the tavern's official "altar" as Dogface jokingly refers to the collection of huge ale barrels and shelves laden with flagons. Three of the barrels contain tavern favorites: Pazeel Wanderer, a hearty golden ale possessed of a distinct musty odor, and Silver Cloud, a sour-tasting brew patrons swear becomes urine if left out overnight. Smaller barrels contain either Darkdale Bogwheat, a dense black ale with a rich earthy flavor, or Bellowforge Bock, a wickedly potent drink made by a family of local brewers in the business for more than 300 years. What the barrels contain depends on availability and if Dogface had any particular brand brought in with the biweekly shipment from the ale merchants. When the common room is crowded, regulars are encouraged to serve themselves so long as they pay; those caught cheating are either banned or thrown into the pit depending on the night and whether or not the portal is awake. Most people would not think of cheating Dogface, though, as they respect him and the tavern too much. The few who do cheat are most often outsiders ignorant of local customs.

4. UPPER COMMONS

This common room is one-third the size of the first floor and darker, with fewer torches and candles. It also contains fewer tables and chairs; instead, plush animal skins and filthy pillows cover the floor. Courtesans from town ply their trade here, handing over 60% of their earnings to the house each night. Thana Jotsdottir waits on second-floor patrons, but when the night is slow, she is often found either downstairs working with the twins or in the kitchen chatting with Qaddiq. Like the rest of the tavern, the upper commons sport a plethora of trophies on the walls. The most prominent trophy hangs next to the hearth: the head of a storm giant who believed he was actually a halfling trapped in a body 10 sizes too tall.

5. KITCHEN

This cramped room was once a hallway, but Kaliban converted it into a kitchen when he rebuilt the temple interior. Qaddiq spends much of his time here preparing dishes for patrons. The twin hearths are used to cook the majority of the food, though there is also a small clay oven and braziers for grilling meats. Cupboards, shelves, tables, crates, and barrels make the kitchen even narrower. Food is taken to the common room using the stairs, though Qaddiq has been trying to talk Dogface into installing a dumbwaiter.

6. PRIVATE ROOM

This large room is reserved for patrons willing to pay the steep prices required to rent it. Like the upper commons, more pillows fill this room than anything else. Two double-sized beds occupy the north wall, and a towering hookah currently claims the center of the room. A bathing tub, large enough to hold at least three people, is in one of the southern corners. Tavern employees can use the room only on the condition that they keep it clean.

7. DOGFACE'S QUARTERS

Dogface resides in this private room. This very well-appointed room contains expensive furniture, an imported writing desk brought to this continent by a proud cleric who lost it on a bad bet, a wardrobe, and, of all things, a garderober. While no trophies adorn the walls, Dogface has spread a couple of nice bear- and wolfskins across the floor.

A heavy, extremely well-locked travel chest contains the following items: 3,886 gp, a small silk sack with 4,500 gp in loose gems, and a platinum diadem worth 1,340 gp.

8. STORAGE ROOM

One week's worth of ale, mead, and other beverages are kept in this room. A large trapdoor in the center of the storage room's floor opens into the common room below. A pulley and ropes allow items to be raised or lowered. The room is used to store dry goods and food used by the kitchen.

WITCH'S TEAT

1 Square - 5 Feet

Ground Floor

Second Floor



The large room is incredibly crowded with crates, barrels, sacks, and anything else Dogface and Qaddiq can fit in here (including spare furniture). One corner, however, has been cleared to allow Danal and Danille a temporary place to live. They are extremely protective of their “room” and set up numerous traps to discourage interlopers (even though they don’t keep their stolen treasures here). All three traps are rigged with tripwires and easy to disarm. The first trap is across the threshold to the twins’ hidey-hole behind the crates. If triggered, it drops a chair. Should this nefarious trap be penetrated, the next tripwire sets off an alarm bell that rings loudly once. The third trap is a bit more sinister, as the tripwire is attached to a loaded crossbow tipped with a poisoned bolt, though beyond this deadly barrier the twins purposefully keep nothing worth taking. All that can be found are some dirty blankets and some half-eaten bread and hardtack. The thieves hide their stolen loot in the woods outside town.

GOODS & SERVICES

The Witch’s Teat offers a good selection of alcoholic beverages — unlike many other places in town — with at least three always on tap. It even offers an adequate non-alcoholic beverage selection. Food is run-of-the-mill pub grub prepared by Qaddiq. It is not really that good, but the drunkards in the common rooms have not complained so far ... or become ill.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around The Witch’s Teat:

Stolen Stones: Jora, the daughter of Red Henrickson, late one night replaces the spell stones around the pit with counterfeits. She spiked the ale barrels with a potent soporific to ensure that late-staying revelers and the on-duty duel master would fall into a deep, dreamless sleep. This allowed her the opportunity to freely switch the stones. Dogface offers a reward of 15,000 gp for their return.

The Rogue’s Offer: One afternoon, a severely wounded planetar staggers through the portal. Moments later, a half-elf dressed in midnight black leathers wielding a silver sword follows. The half-elf slays the planetar without hesitation. Before gladiators can jump into the pit to challenge him, he explains that he is Senjick Wael and that he knows the source of the portal’s power and is willing to shut it down ... for a fee. Dogface cannot decide if he wants the portal closed — after all, it has brought him more wealth, in one form or another, than he ever dreamed possible. Unfortunately, he recognizes the danger inherent in letting the portal continue to function. Meanwhile, word of the rogue’s offer reaches the burgher and the town elders. They want the portal closed and will stop at nothing to raise the money Senjick requires.

Bounty Hunters Arrive: Five bounty hunters come to the tavern seeking Thana Jotsdottir’s head, but Dogface, Qaddiq, and the tavern regulars refuse to let them have her. She is considered a part of their family now, despite the accusations the bounty hunters present, and they refuse to give her up without a fight. The bounty hunters retire to the forest outside of town to formulate a plan. Meanwhile, Danal and Danille Gren plan to double-cross Thana and Dogface and turn her over to the hunters in exchange for a portion of the reward money.

Private Reserve: A vampire lord exits the portal to feed late at night while everyone sleeps, making the tavern his own personal watering hole. When he finishes, he steps back through the portal, something considered impossible to do. At first, only a few deaths occur each week, but then corpses start piling up. After a few weeks, regular patrons transform into vampire spawn and rampage through the tavern. When the vampire lord arrives each night, sleeping patrons experience surreal dreams, milk and cheese curdle, ale goes horribly sour, and vermin and supernatural creatures (bats, rats, a gargoyle on the roof, wolves, and so on) infest the tavern.

THE WITCH’S TEAT MENU

| Ale & Mead | Cost |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| Bellowforge Bock | 1 cp |
| Darkdale Bogwheat | 2 cp |
| Pazeel Wanderer | 3 cp |
| Silver Cloud | 1 cp |
| Other Beverages | |
| Acorn coffee | 1 cp |
| Darkdale burgundy | 3 sp |
| Rum cider | 1 sp |
| Willow bark tea | 2 cp |
| Food | |
| Cabbage soup | 1 cp |
| Lizard kabobs | 2 cp |
| Fried eggs and hardtack | 3 cp |
| Barley cakes | 2 cp |
| Meat of the day | 6 cp |
| Unleavened bread, day old | 1 cp |
| Unleavened bread, fresh | 4 cp |
| Other Services | |
| Courtesan, low-ranking | 8 sp |
| Courtesan, high-ranking | 6 gp |
| Private room, per person, per night | 6 gp |



THE QUINTAIN'S TOWER

Established in the ruins of a once-mighty castle, Quintain's Tower caters to the ogre and goblin tribes inhabiting the region and houses a conclave of rangers devoted to the memory of the manor's lady. Hundreds of years ago, the castle was known as Caer Dunaven, named for the duke and duchess who resided there with a contingent of ever-loyal knights. Today, people call the castle Caer Dire, the nobles' memory having crumbled into so much dust along with the stones that once made up its walls. The great tower stands at the heart of the ruins. Its hollowed-out ground floor, the tavern itself, is known as The

Quintain's Tower after a peculiar tale of love and madness set in the castle's remote past. Its upper floor functions as the rangers' roost, a strange, mysterious world unto itself where a tree can be sainted.

Ogres annually hold a trade-meet on the castle grounds, with all manner of humanoid caravans buying and selling wares of the licit and illicit variety. Brazzer Mandragora, the tavern's owner, ensures that Caer Dire remains neutral ground through an impressive combination of cunning and might. Those who violate the laws or break the tenuous peace soon regret their actions.

BACKGROUND

Caer Dunaven fell 500 years ago, meaning it's been half a millennium since its walls felt the laughter and merriment of Lord and Lady Dunaven. Lord Utrec Dunaven was a prominent duke in his king's council, while Sophia Dunaven (née Westmarche) came from a highborn family deep in the king's debt thanks to considerable loans for war efforts against a neighboring kingdom. Unlike the majority of arranged marriages between noble families, Utrec and Sophia were very much in love. They traveled frequently between the kingdom's capital where they kept their winter home and the countryside where they held court in the summer. Caer Dunaven was their summer home, a rustic manor and frontier fort combined.

Many years passed, and Lord Dunaven fell out of the king's favor due to the rival Dragul family's machinations. At the queen's behest, Utrec forfeited his manor near the capital and permanently moved his household to Caer Dunaven. Many more years fell by the wayside and Lord Dunaven's holdings shrank; each year he lost a small portion to the king's treasury only to see it awarded a month later to Lord Dragul. Finally, after 10 years in exile, the king issued an edict that Caer Dunaven's demesne would become a vassal county of the Dragul, to whom Lord Dunaven and his wife would swear oaths of fealty. Angered and dishonored, Lord Dunaven refused. He was promptly labeled a traitorous outlaw, and his lands were officially ceded to Lord Dragul. With the war officially engaged, Lord Dragul's armies began their long siege of Caer Dunaven.

During the months that followed, hardship became a way of life for those in the castle. Supplies ran low, the remaining loyal knights grew weary, and the castle walls gradually weakened under constant assault from Lord Dragul's siege weapons. Sophia sent many messages by carrier pigeon and homing falcon to the Westmarche family, pleading for help of any kind. Dragul's archers shot down most of the carriers, but one finally managed to get through. Sophia's mother, wed to Lord Haring since Lord Westmarche's unfortunate hunting accident 10 years earlier, convinced her latest husband to talk to the king on Lord Dunaven's behalf.

The plea was in vain, however, as the king refused to change his mind. Help still came thanks to a large mercenary army Lord Haring hired, but it came too late. When the troops arrived, the castle had fallen to Lord Dragul's men and had been sacked. All that remained were the shell of the walls, a few stone buildings jutting up like rotten teeth from the blackened remains of wooden structures, and the keep's main tower. Even the conquering army had left, the soldiers unnerved by happened in the closing hours of the siege and needed elsewhere to further Lord Dragul's ambitions.

Few survived the siege, but they passed their tale on to others, and the mercenary army spread it far and wide as they traveled across the land on their bloody business. As the walls came down and Dragul's troops flooded in, Lord Utrec led his remaining knights in a desperate countercharge and fighting retreat to the main keep. At first there were a hundred, then a few dozen, and finally Lord Dunaven and seven knights. Up the steps of the tower they fought, never able to hold their ground but just barely managing to keep the foe at bay long enough to take one more step back.

Lady Sophia stayed nearby, just out of sight of the fighting but near enough to encourage her husband. But stories must end — the same with lives — and this tale reached its conclusion on the tower's broken battlements. As Lord Utrec stood panting, blood streaming from the joints of his armor, Lord Dragul stepped forward to confront the lord, his wife, and the last loyal knights. Dragul was fresh and unharmed, having spent most of the battle in his tent enjoying fine wines and listening to minstrels ply their strings.

As one final triumph, he offered the seven remaining knights a choice: Die with their liege lord or surrender and be rewarded with gold, silver, and gems, enough money to start a new life. At first they refused, but one by one all seven broke their oaths and took Dragul's

offer, abandoning their lord and lady and the tower itself. They fled from the expected tragedy. Finally, to end the tale, Lord Dragul stepped back behind his soldiers and ordered waiting crossbowmen to kill the Dunavens.

Lord Utrec died in a bellowing charge, cut down before he could break through Dragul's bodyguards and exact any vengeance. Sophia, mortally wounded, grasped the quintain and teetered over the edge of the battlements. From her dangerous perch, she saw the seven disloyal knights fleeing and cursed them and their progeny for seven times seven generations as cowards and worse. She called out loudly that the quintain had more honor than any of the knights, for at least it had stood by them until the end. She then threw herself from the tower.

After this, none wanted to live in Caer Dunaven. The castle was left a shattered ruin, the lands around burned during the long siege, and the people largely dead or fled. Lord Dragul abandoned it to the elements.

Slowly over time, the name Caer Dire replaced Caer Dunaven, for it was now an accursed place no one would inhabit — or so it seemed, until a tribe of goblins unaware of the castle's history moved in. Later, human rangers also took up residence, claiming descent from the knights who had betrayed their lord. Finally, an oni by the name of Brazzer Mandragora showed up and turned the great tower into a tavern.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Of the numerous residents of Caer Dire and the surrounding lands, none is more colorful than the tavern's owner, **Brazzer Mandragora**, an oni of no small repute. Three ogre tribes living in the area — **Warhammer**, **Steel Ring**, and **Black Iron** — allow Brazzer to serve as the final arbiter of local laws and customs, mostly out of fear of his magical might. The **Wood Wards of St. Sophia** and **Sheriff Jon Oakborn** are the highest human authority in the land, wielding their power sparingly yet brutally. His rival, **Sara of Westmarche**, was once a Wood Ward, but she quit the group when Oakborn ordered her death. She now leads a breakaway group of rangers who call themselves the **Riders of Westmarche**. Finally, a tribe of goblins living under the tavern stairs call themselves **Freesifoot's Pootoon**. They often help Brazzer with his publican duties, especially when business booms.

BRAZZER MANDRAGORA

Brazzer Mandragora is surrounded by stories: He was the seventh son of a seventh son; his mother was a witch, and she was burned alive; his father was an infamous warlock who challenged the gods themselves with his power. These are just a few of the tales swirling around him. None are true, not even remotely. In reality, his parents were unexceptional, his tribe was typically mundane, and all he could really look forward to was a future at the top of a very small food chain. Onis are rare in ogre society, so he received a little more respect than his siblings, most of whom died in brawls before they reached puberty. As he grew older, Brazzer became increasingly dissatisfied with his life — raiding villages, killing innocents, and selling prisoners into slavery just was not his mug of ale. In fact, he preferred life away from his brethren as much as possible, spending time in the deep woods exploring ancient ruins or sneaking into the human villages late at night to steal books, scrolls, and anything else he could find to read (having taught himself years earlier while his moronic playmates contented themselves with pulling the legs off bobcats).

On one such excursion, Brazzer discovered a half-submerged temple in the heart of a swamp so large it took two weeks to reach the ruins. The temple was older than time; he could feel it in his bones. Arcane glyphs covered every square inch of its walls, bristling with raw magical power and shedding a cold, argent light into brackish water. It looked as if the moon herself had drowned there.

The temple called out to him.

Brazzer spent the next 50 years there, using every waking moment to decipher the mysterious language on the walls when he was not traveling back to civilization to purchase rare historical tomes. One day, it finally happened. The years he spent studying paid off when he at last recognized a single word. He remembered seeing a similar word many years ago in a book he had purchased from a wandering party of dungeon-delving adventurers. That one word eventually unlocked the wall's mysteries. The temple was not a temple at all, but a prison built in an age long forgotten. The words on the walls detailed an imprisoning enchantment designed to hold the most powerful wizards of the time. Learning the enchantment opened wide the doorways in Brazzer's soul to the arcane mysteries of the world, and he suddenly found himself on the sorcerer's road.

Eventually, he learned all he could from the sunken prison's walls and moved on. He traveled for another half century, seeing the world and uncovering ancient secrets of sorcery wherever he went. In some places,

civilized peoples reviled him as a hideous, blue-skinned freak; in others, they accepted him at face value for who and what he was. Unfortunately, as his magical powers continued to grow, the years began to weigh heavily upon him. One hundred and twenty-some odd years were a long time for ogres to live — supernaturally long actually. He decided finally to retire from the adventuring life. A decade earlier, he had heard the story of Caer Dire, and so he went to find it, thinking it would make a nice place to spend the rest of his days. He found the castle in utter disarray, except for the great tower at its center, which had, of all things, a tree growing through its roof. Goblins lived in the north wall, while humans lived inside the great tower. This made for a strange arrangement, to be sure, but not one without its charm. The goblins were “tame” by the humans' standards, while the humans could care less about whom they shared the castle just so long as the tower's solar was left alone. Brazzer moved into the tower's ground floor, happy to have such . . . unique . . . company. He rebuilt the tower's stairs — out of courtesy to the humans upstairs more than anything else — and they brought him food and drink when they could manage it. The goblins feared him at first, but gradually grew accustomed to him. He built an alcohol still for himself; while he was happy for the rangers' contributions, they did not come quite frequently enough for his tastes. One thing led to another, and within a couple of years of Brazzer's arrival, an impromptu tavern had evolved.

That was nearly 50 years ago. The goblins moved into the stair infrastructure not long after Brazzer rebuilt it. The humans have seen another generation and have not changed one iota in their outlook on life, which suits him just fine. They leave him well enough alone, though they are certainly not above drinking his ales when the mood overcomes them, and he is more than happy to leave them to their trees upstairs. The ogre tribes roaming the land have never learned to trust him fully, yet they do accept him and The Quintain's Tower as a permanent part of the landscape now (or, at the very least, until his death). As barbaric as ogres everywhere tend to be, Brazzer has needed repeatedly to encourage the local tribes to behave properly while on the castle grounds. The rangers take this request one step further and similarly encourage “proper conduct” within 50 miles of the castle. At first, the ogres resented Brazzer's intimations of authority over them, but a well-timed display of his considerable magical powers quickly swayed them.

For reasons nobody knows, Brazzer fears cattle, and he often goes out of his way to kill the poor beasts. Normally, he throws their carcasses into the sapper's tunnel (where a few of them return from the grave as undead zombie cows for reasons no one can decipher). Strangely, he is not above using their meat to cook up pub grub if other supplies run low. Some of the rangers think he carries a curse that he does not know about. They don't tell him about their suspicions, however, finding it more amusing to watch him go crazy whenever ranchers drive their cattle past the castle as they migrate to new feeding grounds or when wild cattle wander into the region (wild forest buffalo are particularly maddening for the oni). Others suspect the phobia runs deeper than a simple curse, perhaps something he has held since childhood.

HAMMER FALL TRIBE

This tribe of ogres owes its fame to its ruthlessness in making war against the orc and hobgoblin tribes to the north and west. Its members stop at nothing to kill their enemies, willing to take the hunt all the way to the heart of the orc cities if need be (though they first must find an orc city). The tribe is the second largest of the three inhabiting the region surrounding Caer Dire. Its warriors wield massive warhammers from which the tribe gets name. Hammer Fall ogres are physically impressive, being significantly stronger than the average ogre from other tribes. Their choice in weaponry might have something to do with this difference.

The tribe's leader is **Fenner Packweasel**, a towering specimen who rarely speaks; when he does, he uses calm, measured tones and carefully chosen words. While not the shiniest coin in the box, Fenner is nevertheless extremely patient and cunning. He and his warriors fight in small groups, preferring hit-and-run guerilla tactics over direct confrontation.

Of the three tribes, the Hammer Falls spend the least amount of time in The Quintain's Tower since they are usually out on the warpath. The times they return to the Tower, they often bear the spoils of war and more cured orc meat than Brazzer knows what to do with. The Hammer Falls bristle the most under the Wood Wards' totalitarian governing of the forest and seek one day to bring them down for good. Fenner particularly hates Jon Oakborn.

STEEL RING TRIBE

This is the largest ogre tribe in the region, though not the most powerful. Poor organization and leaders addicted to natural drugs keep the Steel Rings from achieving dominance. Their name comes from the peculiar weapon they like to wield: a large, broad-headed scimitar with a thick steel ring looped through its point. Tribal in-breeding has caused most of its members to bear some sort of genetic flaw, resulting in diverse effects ranging from severe intellectual disabilities to missing limbs and stunted growth to an infant mortality rate exceeding 70%. How the Steel Rings maintain their high population is a mystery to everyone.

One genetic anomaly that virtually all Steel Rings share is a high susceptibility to addiction. In the case of the tribe's current crop of leaders, the addiction responds primarily to somaberries, a wickedly potent narcotic that can be found growing in the nearby forest. When eaten, the berries induce a near-catatonic state of bliss and hallucination that lasts for more than six hours per dose. **Zurgadin Treelayer**, the Steel Ring's chieftain, is reportedly so addicted to somaberries that he spends all his waking hours in a drug-induced stupor, leaving management of the tribe to **Odekkor Blueblood**, his second-in-command, who is curiously immune to the drug's effect.

SOMABERRIES

Somaberries are glossy red poisonous berries that grow in clusters of 10 or 12 on thin parasitic vines that wind around oak and willow trees. A creature eating any of the berries is unaffected until he consumes 1d4 berries, at which point they become immune to fear, but somewhat clumsy and slow in their actions. Those who eat too many somaberries are known to hallucinate and become easily agitated.

BLACK IRON TRIBE

The smallest of the area's resident ogre tribes, the Black Irons are also, all told, the most intelligent of the entire lot put together. Perhaps this is because they are not entirely ogres. Instead, they are orogs, a mix between orc and ogre. Their name, Black Iron, comes from the distinctive black iron armor they favor, forging it themselves with ore pulled from an "abandoned" dwarf mine in the south. Physically, their broad flat noses, their relatively tiny ears, and their high foreheads set them apart from the other tribes. Also, unlike the other two tribes, Black Iron ogres are fastidious and clean.

Their leader is a proud female named **Wolfbone Deathrattle** a shaman famous for the innumerable bone piercings she sports. She and Brazzer once engaged in a brief love affair, but he cut that off for reasons neither of them talk about. She currently has her eye on the sub-chieftain of the Hammer Fall tribe.

Rumors tell that the Black Irons are the least likely to enter direct combat with the ogres' orc and hobgoblin enemies. Some attribute this reluctance to cowardice, others to treachery. Some even believe the Black Irons look strange because they have orc blood in them.

THE WOOD WARDS OF ST. SOPHIA

The Wood Wards claim descent from the original knights who betrayed Lord and Lady Dunaven (whom they call St. Sophia). The families' shame was great, and they never let their children, or their children's children, forget the betrayal. Over the years, the families broke up and moved on, but some of the children remembered and in turn taught their descendants. Many generations later, few of the knights' descendants learn the tale of their awful family history. Those who do and hear St. Sophia's "calling" eventually find their way to Caer Dire where the Wood Wards adopt them.

The Wood Wards are primarily guardians of the tree growing from the top of the great tower. Tales claim that the tree grew from the quintain immediately upon Sophia's death, supposedly a reincarnation of the woman who died so horribly. How or why she became a tree remains a mystery, though each Wood Ward has a theory. The tree is about 500 years old, and it does grow within Sophia's original chambers, so already the evidence weighs in the Wood Wards' favor. They believe one day she will return, perhaps emerging from the tree trunk like a dryad or maybe transforming the tree altogether. When the day comes, the Wood Wards hope to be prepared. The land will be cleared of Sophia's enemies, and she will rebuild the kingdom in her name and with her ideals. Already, the Wood Wards control about 50 miles of the land around Caer Dire. Because their liege lady is a tree, they have learned nature's ways over the course of many decades, respecting the land as they respect her (and her saplings).

Unlike the average rangers of other lands, the Wood Wards do not bear any malice toward goblinoids. In fact, they tend to get along pretty well with them — although they and the ogre tribes are not necessarily best friends. Rather, they have reached a mutual understanding. The Wood Wards actively go after orcs and hobgoblins, sharing the ogres' enmity toward those races. The Wood Wards also hunt down members of the so-called "good races" if they violate in the least the laws the rangers and Brazzer Mandragora have issued. Brazzer's an odd one, in their estimation, but certainly not intolerable. They have become quite fond of the tavern in recent years, actually visiting it when their duties do not keep them otherwise preoccupied.

Some Wood Wards are prone to "visions" that allegedly come directly from St. Sophia. Such Wood Wards are called "greensouls" and are the most respected members of Wood Ward society. Most greensouls become druids, though such a choice certainly is not mandatory. Whether the visions are genuine remains a matter for debate (namely outside Wood Ward society; among the Wood Wards, no one questions their validity or authenticity).

JON OAKBORN, WOOD WARD SHERIFF

Jon Oakborn, the current leader of the Wood Wards, is a tough, sometimes ruthlessly vicious man with no patience for meandering. He was born into the Wood Wards (unlike many who find their way into its ranks), the child of a prominent greensoul who died during childbirth and the group's former sheriff who died three years ago in an orc ambush. Jon is tall and fit, with raven black hair, crisp blue eyes, and ghostly white skin. He favors black armor and silver weaponry to accent his natural pale coloring. All told, he presents quite a dramatic, almost theatrical image.

In the years since assuming the mantle of authority over his brethren, Oakborn has brought to them a stronger sense of purpose and focus. Utterly convinced of the Wood Wards' "divine right" to the land, Jon believes deeply that they will be absolved of the crimes their forefathers committed when St. Sophia returns. They plan to help her reclaim the lands and titles that are rightfully hers. Oakborn imagines himself at her side, siring the Westmarche heirs and leading her army against the kingdom (what remains of it) that so horribly used her for its political machinations. Jon hopes to restore the pride, name, and honor of the knights' descendants. Slowly but surely, he is turning the Wood Wards into an organized fighting force.

While he enjoys Brazzer Mandragora's company, Jon knows that one of these days he must kill the oni. According to the greensouls, the Reckoning is almost at hand. On the day when St. Sophia emerges from the tree, the Wood Wards will kill Brazzer and the ogre tribes; the castle must be purified and restored to glory, and the ogres are not part of the equation. If Oakborn detests anyone, it is Sara of Westmarche, a former Wood Ward turned rebel and highway robber. Her blasphemous claim that she is St. Sophia's direct descendant sets his nerves on edge and makes him want to kill something, anything — especially her.

SARA OF WESTMARCHE

Born to a family of merchants 27 years ago, **Sara of Westmarche** discovered the Wood Wards when her father brought her to the trade-meet at the age of nine. The following year, she ran away to join them. At first, their leader balked because she did not descend from one of the founding bloodlines. Yet the fire in her eyes and her sheer determination, already evident despite her age, convinced him to let her join. He adopted Sara into the Oakborn family and raised her as Jon's stepsister, which the boy clearly resented.

The visions started in her 17th year. No one understood how she could have them since she wasn't a true Wood Ward, yet they could not deny their validity. The group's greensouls admitted the girl must share a link with St. Sophia. Initially, the role of clan oracle did not fit her well, but she soon grew accustomed to it. Unlike the other greensouls, though, she did not cease her training as a ranger to become a druid. On her 20th birthday, the last vision she was ever to experience came to her: St. Sophia, beautiful and young, stood before her in a white gown and haloed in a holy green light. The woman spoke without words directly to Sara's heart. She awoke, the ghostly words echoing in her mind that she was Sophia's heir apparent.

She went to the Wood Wards' sheriff and clan elders straight away, conveying the gist of what she had seen. To prove the vision's reality, she revealed which of the seven founding knights first betrayed their lord and lady, and she singled out that knight's descendants — Jon Oakborn and his father. The elders had always known this information, and the Oakborn family's shame was especially great. Jon's father left the meeting. The boy just stared at her, wishing her dead, hand on his longsword and ready to kill her himself. Fortunately, the elders stayed Jon's hand. The greensouls in attendance affirmed the vision's reality but suggested that Sara's claim must have another meaning. It was impossible that Sara was a descendent of Lady Sophia Dunaven as she was not pregnant when she died. Nonetheless, Sara remained firm in her conviction. She had heard the calling even though she was not a descendent of the first families. She had experienced visions like the greensouls. She knew, in her heart, that Lady Sophia was her mother.

PATRONS & POSSIBILITIES

The following table includes some interesting patrons and events to be found in The Quintain's Tower. Roll randomly or select one of the unique individuals to fill out the tavern's nightly clientele. Rumors can be sprinkled into conversations as needed.

1d6 Patron or Event

- 1 A group of 12 gnolls from the Jagged Finger Tribe bring their wares into the trade-meet under the pretense that they are legitimate merchants. Instead, they plan to set off a wagon of fireworks to sow confusion as they break into the tavern to steal a gold crown of controlling humans they think is hidden inside the walls.
- 2 The magic-hunting bounty hunter **Koll Mange** slumps at a table, propping his ash-handle axe against a chair. The wooden handle is scratched and marred, each notch carved after Mange killed a magic-user. He scratches his red beard and furrows his brow when he sees anyone who might be a spellcaster. He gets a bounty for each "robe" he brings to justice. Marl and Stump, his 2 warhounds, wait on the porch but rush to their master's side if needed.
- 3 Food and drink spoil suddenly in a 10-foot radius around a nondescript little halfling named **Gustave Fildewick** who seems to get more jovial with each bite of food he consumes. After a few more bites, food and drink (and even potions) within 20 feet of him go bad. Maggots crawl through meat, and drink takes like rancid milk. Only the halfling is still enjoying the evening, which has degenerated into vomiting and disgust.
- 4 A thief hired by enemies of the Wood Wards was paid well to bring a box of what he believes is dung pellets to scatter about the bar. Unfortunately, each pellet is a giant termite that grows quickly to monstrous size once it is tossed on the floor. The termites begin chomping on the wood, and even climb upward to get at St. Sophia on the tower.
- 5 **Chalaz the Pummeler** is a malformed bugbear of the Cyst Fist Tribe who has come down from the mountain to find a cure for a virulent disease running rampant through his people. Chalaz has an oversized right arm and fist that serve him well if a fight begins. He takes offense quite quickly.
- 6 Four young villagers from the raft-city of Twain are celebrating their first foray into civilization, a rite of passage among those of their small community before they return to trap the giant turtles on which the floating city prospers. The men and women are naïve to the ways of the world, and ripe for the picking for the thieves and cutthroats of the region. They direly need someone to protect them from the evils of the world.

The next day, orcs ambushed Jon Oakborn's father. The sheriff was so careless and distraught that the orcs had little trouble catching him unaware. Jon's first act as the new sheriff was to order Sara killed and hung from the Red Crown inside the great tower for her blasphemy. She escaped, however, along with a few loyalists whom she previously converted to her cause. Today, she leads a separate group of rangers called the Riders of Westmarche. Because they are less numerous and less skilled than the Wood Wards, they confine themselves to the fringes of Wood Ward territory, attacking the Wood Wards and passers-by with hit-and-run tactics, always fading into the forest before retaliation finds them. Sara plans one day to destroy the Wood Wards, holding all of them accountable for the crimes of their ancestors. She hopes to convince the ogres to aid her.

RIDERS OF WESTMARCHE

While they all claim descent from the seven men who betrayed St. Sophia, the Riders of Westmarche sympathize with Sara's cause and gave their fealty to her. Conveniently, she overlooks their blood relation to the Wood Wards and gladly rides as their captain. Most of the Riders were already on the fringe of Wood Ward society when they followed her flight: Some were criminals whose slight blood connection kept them barely alive; others resented the Oakborn family and the elders loyal to them, and so eagerly jumped at the chance to side with Sara.

Lately, Sara and her top lieutenants started recruiting warriors from abroad, promising them great wealth should they help the Riders bring down the Wood Wards. So far, 10 have signed up. The mercenaries are especially useful because they are unknown in and around Caer Dire. Sara uses them primarily as spies, sending them to The Quintain's Tower as wandering soldiers and adventurers to gather information from Wood Wards not on watch or out on patrol. Soldiers first and foremost, Sara's current mercenaries are not too good at spying. She has put out word in less reputable circles that she wants rogues, bards, and wizards to join the cause.

The Riders of Westmarche live in a network of abandoned ogre caves about two days ride from Caer Dire. The ogre tribes tolerate them as much as they do the Wood Wards, essentially viewing them as two sides of the same coin. Certainly, relations are not hurt by the Riders' aid to the ogres in their war against the orcs and hobgoblins.

FREESIFOOT'S POOTOON

The goblins have lived in Caer Dire for as long as anyone can remember, some say even before the Wood Wards. **King Freesifoot** claims he is the 300th ruler in an unbroken chain of goblin nobility. His followers, the pootoon (a goblin word literally meaning "helluva bloody lot," but also variously meaning "tribe" and "big military unit"), live inside the tavern among the timber crossbeams supporting the giant stairway. They did not always live there, though — the stairs were rebuilt only 50 years ago after Brazzer Mandragora showed up. Before then, they lived in the castle wall and tower ruins. Since Brazzer's arrival, their lives have improved considerably.

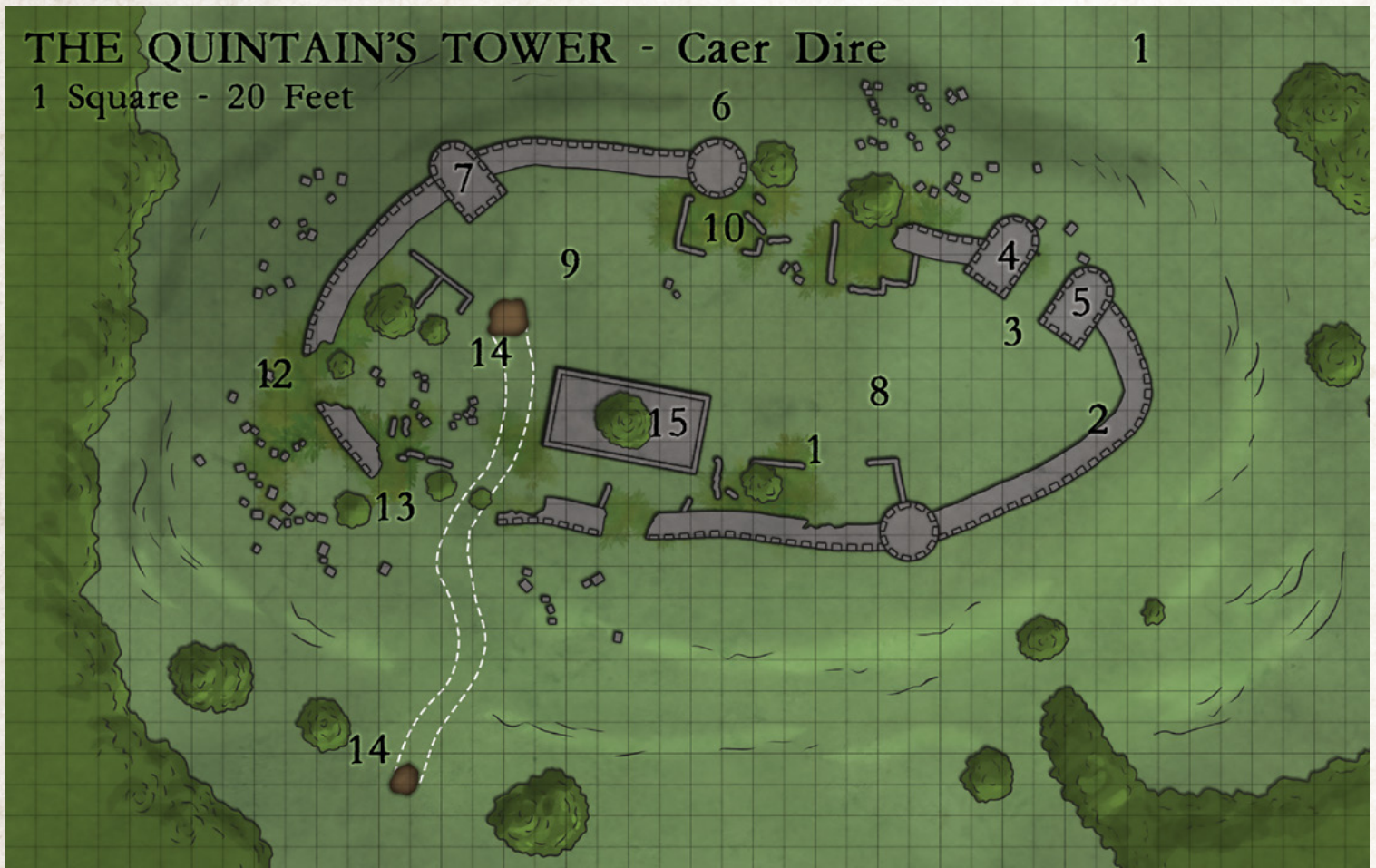
Their incredibly red eyes and the white bands marking their skin make Freesifoot's goblins stand out. These natural stripes give them a tiger-like appearance, but having never seen a tiger, none of the goblins would know this. They prefer to call the stripes "beauty marks." The more stripes on a goblin, the more highly the others regard him or her.

They do not much like the humans living in the solar above them, finding them too stuffy and serious for their own good. The ogres can be good fun, especially after they get a couple of buckets of ale in them. Unfortunately, the members of Black Iron Tribe seem to think throwing goblins across the common room for sport is utterly hilarious. The goblins admit the flight itself is quite fun, but the landing hurts like hell. As such, they tend to avoid the Black Iron ogres whenever possible. Of all the ogres, though, they like Brazzer the best. He even pays some of them to help manage the brewing still and to serve patrons when the tavern gets crowded.

THE QUINTAIN'S TOWER - Caer Dire

1

1 Square - 20 Feet



CAER DIRE

The castle and the lands surrounding it are in a remote wilderness area relatively free of civilization. Ogre and goblin tribes rule the area immediately around it, along with the small population of human rangers with whom they more or less co-exist peacefully. The forests of Caer Dire are generally regrowth, so the trees are not as old or as tall as those in other similarly isolated areas. The Wood Wards keep the animal populations in balance, allowing the three ogre tribes to hunt within a 50-mile radius of Caer Dire as long they do not exceed certain quotas. The ogres comply for the most part, as the rangers otherwise leave them to their own devices, which is quite unusual. Beyond the 50-mile border of the Wood Wards' territory, one encounters dense clusters of orc and hobgoblin tribes, the descendants of military units from a war all but forgotten these days.

1. DEMESNE

While the land about Caer Dire is heavily forested and lightly inhabited by humanoid races, the hill the castle sits upon — called the motte by the Wood Wards — is mostly devoid of trees, though more appear at its base. From atop the hill, the denizens of the ruins have an excellent view of the forest in all directions, especially from the top of The Quintain's Tower, the crown of which rises higher than the tallest tree. Despite the presence of so many ogres and goblins, deer run freely through the wood, as do numerous other mundane animals. The Wood Wards allow limited hunting by the humanoid tribes, in part to keep the animal populations stabilized but primarily because they recognize the need for the others to eat. When they can manage it, the Wood Wards hunt animals in more remote territories and bring their dressed carcasses back to the castle to supplement the tribal hunting. They also donate fruits and vegetables grown in the solar of The Quintain's Tower to Brazzer's gigantic stew pots.

2. WALLS

The castle walls, of course, no longer stand as high as they once did. Nevertheless, the portion that remains offers quite a formidable barrier to overcome. Standing 20 feet tall at its highest and a mere 5 feet at its lowest, the walls are built out of roughhewn stone and earthen mortar. In places where they have not collapsed, the walls are hollow with tight walkways. A few sections have flared arrow loops set into the wall 15 feet up, the wooden planks that once allowed archers to fire through them rotted away. The top of the wall is broad, almost 25 feet across and large enough to allow for carts, catapults, and ballistae. It is serrated along the outer face with toothy battlements.

3. GATEHOUSE RUINS

This gap between the two guard towers once contained the guardhouse and barbican. Now, just a pile of rubble remains. On warm, sunny days, King Freesifoot likes to picnic here with his two handmaidens and watch the goings-on in the forest below, such as they are.

4. NORTH GUARD TOWER

This tower once housed Lord Dunaven's gatehouse guards. It used to have three floors joined by a narrow timber staircase, and it accommodated 15 men. Now, just a hollow shell remains. The tower roof is gone, exposing the interior to the sky above, and bird and squirrel nests fill the arrow-loops. A single, recently cut wooden beam crosses the roof gap. Thick hemp rope dangles from the beam. Goblins use it for a lookout post when they remember to post lookouts.

5. SOUTH GUARD TOWER

Much like the north guard tower, this one housed some of the gatehouse guards, namely the officers. It, too, once had three floors, though now only the ground floor and the uppermost floor remain. The stairs disintegrated into dust centuries ago. A wooden ladder ascends to the top floor.

6. WATCHTOWER RUINS

Lord Dunaven's men used these two watchtowers to keep an eye out for enemies. Each tower stands 45 feet tall. The north tower is half-collapsed and completely uninhabitable, its stones constantly shifting and its walls on the cusp of falling over completely. The Wood Wards use the south tower. Inside, a string of ladders ascending through trapdoors links together four sturdy wooden floors. If threatened, the Wood Wards can pull the ladders up and seal the trapdoors with stone weights. At any given time, two Wood Wards have watch duty, taking station on the roof or the fourth floor when the weather turns foul. The first three floors are uninhabited, used instead for storing weapons found in the forest on the bodies of those unfortunates waylaid by Sara's bandits or by woodland beasts.

7. PRISON

Brazzer imprisons those who break the castle peace here, as well as orc prisoners taken by the three ogre tribes. The tower has two stone floors above the ground floor and stairs strong enough to allow the massive ogres to ascend. The second and third floors have six stone cells each. The cell doors are made from three black iron plates and locked with heavy chains and padlocks. Inside each cell are a brass chamber pot, a stone sleeping tablet, and hay. Prisoners must empty their own chamber pots and rid their cell of food waste and other detritus, usually by tossing it through the narrow square windows of their cell. The ground floor contains fresh hay, crates of iron rations, and barrels of semi-stagnant water. An ogre guard from one of the three tribes stands watch only when prisoners are held upstairs.

8. EAST BAILEY

In the castle's glory days, this was a pleasant grassy courtyard. The grass is long gone, however, replaced by dirt and mud. In the spring, the trade-meet sets up camp here, sometimes spilling over into the West Bailey (only as a last resort owing to the stench) or into the motte if more caravans than usual show up during a given year.

THE TRADE-MEET

Originally, the trade-meet took place every spring when ogre tribes returned to the castle to gather and exchange the spoils of their war against the orcs and hobgoblins. Over the years, it has changed considerably, becoming the largest mercantile rendezvous in the region. Caravans from all over show up for the four-week event, carrying people of all races — elves, halflings, humans, goblins, lizardfolk, and so on. Everyone is welcome, even very limited numbers of orcs and hobgoblins despite their tensions with the ogres. (The trade-meet is the only truce the ogres ever honor with their enemies.) Most merchants use the trade-meet for the opportunity to move their goods to other countries without going to those places themselves, working out complex but highly profitable trade agreements with trusted merchants who come from such countries, and vice versa. The trade-meet has become a midway distribution center for exotic goods.

During this time, the Wood Wards and the ogre tribes are especially quick to enforce the laws set down by Brazzer and Oakborn. Violators receive no mercy whatsoever. As a lesson to any who would copy their crimes, their bodies are strung from the Red Crown inside the great tower. The most common crime, naturally, is highway robbery. Fortunately, those keeping the peace are exceptionally good at what they do, and so the castle and its surrounding lands are probably safer during the trade-meet than at any other time of year. Yet because

tensions run high (they are bound to when so many races from so many conflicting alignments get together), the Black Iron ogres hold Brazzer-sanctioned "death matches" down the hill, near the sapper's tunnel entrance. Grievances are worked out in fights or duels to the death.

9. WEST BAILEY

This area appears the same as the East Bailey, except that it was not so much a courtyard as a training ground for Lord Dunaven's knights. Its most notable feature is the massive hole at the center of the yard, the exit of the sapper's tunnel winding through the interior of the castle hill. Considerable foot traffic passes between the tunnel mouth and other parts of Caer Dire because everyone dumps their garbage here. The smell coming from the tunnel is nauseating at best.

Freesifoot's goblins often sit along the rim of the hole and "fish" for rats. Rat fishing involves one goblin rubbing a length of hemp rope with especially rancid bits of cattle fat, dipping it in the hole, and carefully drawing it back up when a giant rat climbs aboard for a sniff and a lick. A second goblin then clubs the rat to death as soon as it clears the hole. The goblins typically go rat fishing late at night when the filthy vermin are most active.

10. GREAT HALL RUINS

This is the shattered remnants of the castle's Great Hall where Lord and Lady Dunaven took their meals, received guests, heard reports from the village reeves, sat in judgment over the affairs of their vassals, and generally conducted their business. All that stands now are rotten timbers, crumbling masonry, and shards of the wall that once buffered it from the outside world.

11. LESSER HALL RUINS

Like the Great Hall, the Lesser Hall lies in ruin. It once contained Utrac Dunaven's private quarters, dining rooms, parlors, and a private chapel. The Wood Wards assigned to duty in the south watchtower use the Lesser Hall for their horses now, tying them to timbers and letting them graze on the grass growing between the rubble.

12. BARRACKS RUINS

Rubble from the old castle barracks that housed Lord Dunaven's knights, squires, and men-at-arms litters the ground here. While the ruins have long been picked clean of valuables, rusty weapons and armor may still be found here. A 30-foot-tall spruce-wood pole bearing Brazzer's standard — a rook and a broken lance — rises from the center of the barracks.

13. LIVERY RUINS

Even less remains of this part of the castle than the barracks. The most notable feature is a skeleton that appears to be crawling from the debris. Otherwise, nothing is left except for aging wall stones and petrified timbers.

utting from the siege weapon's heart is a 30-foot-tall spruce-wood pole bearing the Wood Wards' standard: a tree mounted atop a rook.

14. SAPPER'S TUNNEL

A remnant of the last real battle at the castle, this tunnel begins at the base of the motte and terminates inside the west bailey. It was originally tall and wide enough for two or three ogres to stand comfortably upright within, shoulder-to-shoulder. Much of it has collapsed, while rock debris and all manner of humanoid garbage fill the portions still intact. An unusual number of cattle carcasses fill the tunnel's southern end, deposited there by Brazzer. Hordes of vermin and other scavengers infest the tunnel, ranging from Tiny to Large. Bears often rustle around in the tunnel's south exit, feeding on putrefying cow flesh.

The stench of rot is so awful that any non-goblin or non-ogre standing within 20 feet of either opening must make a save against the poisoned condition until they reach clear air.

Late at night, an unearthly, spine-chilling lowing can be heard drifting out of the tunnel's darkest depths. This is the castle's great tower, which once rose nearly 100 feet tall. Currently, it stands approximately 70 feet high, 100 feet wide, and no longer has a roof. Instead, a 60-foot-tall tree grows from its upper floor.

SAPPER'S TUNNEL WANDERING MONSTERS

| 1d20 | Result |
|------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | 4d8 dire rats |
| 2 | 1d4 black bears |
| 3 | 1d4+1 fire beetles |
| 4 | 1d4+1 large monstrous spiders |
| 5–20 | No encounter |

THE QUINTAIN'S TOWER

In its heyday, the great tower constituted the heart of the castle's defenses, with hundreds of arrow loops piercing the walls and great ballistae occupying its upper floors. Later, it became Lady Dunaven's private abode, with all but the upper four floors cleared out. Today, just the solar remains — now home to the Wood Wards — as well as the tree they call St. Sophia and her saplings. The tower's walls are 5 feet thick, and the sole entrance is located on the north side facing the west bailey. The doors are solidly built from a pair of thick oak-wood slates. When the sky is clear, hundreds of beams of golden sunlight stream through the tower's hollow windows and arrow loops, casting an almost holy light into the interior.

1. COMMON ROOM

Coming in through the tower's arched doors, the first sight one notices is the gargantuan staircase winding its way around the inside wall. An extraordinary network of timber crossbeams — which are inhabited by King Freesifoot's goblins — supports the stairs in their ascent to the solar some 50 feet above. Debris litters the room's stone floor, and enough haphazardly constructed tables and chairs are placed about the tavern to seat 200 patrons comfortably while still leaving plenty of room for moving about. Five fairly-sizable cooking fires burn in various places, becoming tiny islands of orange light as the sun sets outside. Quite disconcerting to newcomers are the ochre-stained buckets placed around the room to catch blood falling from the ceiling (see **Area 4: The Red Crown** below). Brazzer Mandragora, the tavern's current owner maintains a massive ale and mead still in the southeast corner. Supplies packed into crates, barrels of fresh ale and mead, empty barrels waiting to be filled, and sacks of hops and barley are stacked high on either side of the impromptu brewery. Woodchips of oak, hickory, and spruce are piled behind the still.

A huge wooden chandelier hangs from the ceiling by a rope as thick as a human's arm. Yellow-gray wax drips from it like so many pasty stalagmites. The chandelier has not been used for generations, though the goblin children find it fun to play on.

In times when business is booming (such as when a neutral army passes through the area or during a trade-meet), Freesifoot's goblins (male and female alike) assume the roles of "saucy serving wenches" and wait on patrons, much to the patrons' chagrin.

2. GOBLIN VILLA

The stairs leading to the solar above begin on the east wall and wind their way around until they terminate at the floor above on the west wall. The staircase and the crossbeams holding it are collectively called the "Goblin Villa" for the tribe of goblins inhabiting them. King Freesifoot, the tribe's leader, pays rent in the sum of 20 gp a month to Brazzer. In addition, the goblins provide Brazzer with other services such as a steady supply of Goblin Mead, keeping watch when the ogre tribes are out of the territory making war against the orcs and hobgoblins, and attempting — at the very least — to keep the common room clean (by goblin standards).

Built into the crossbeams are dozens of nests, platforms, and huts. Whole goblin families live here, some of them having never once set foot on the ground below. At night, when the cookfires cast their feeble light into the tower's darkness, the Goblin Villa looks like a dim field of stars for all the candles burning up there. Larger fires are not permitted to keep the stairs from accidentally igniting.

The constant chatter of goblin voices permeates the villa, regardless of the hour. People climbing the stairs are often subjected to an unending stream of abuse as their footsteps thunder in the ears of the goblins living directly beneath their feet. King Freesifoot's throne is located below the stairs' terminus on the west wall. The platform on which it rests is large enough to support 10 goblins or 5 humans or 1 ogre (roughly half a ton). It juts 15 feet out from the staircase, with bracers and additional beams attached to the wall or rising from the floor to help support its weight. The goblins' diminutive mead still is built into the base of the stairs on the east wall, behind a stack of crates belonging to Brazzer. When he is absent, goblin youths love to monkey down the hemp rope from which the chandelier dangles and set it to swinging.

3. BRAZZER'S STILL

Brazzer used this rough collection of vats, tubes, ovens, and other miscellaneous clockwork devices to brew his "distinctive" alcoholic beverages. He built it himself — in four days if one believes the stories he tells about it — and it shows. Only he can make sense of the machine, apparently. The smell of fermenting hops and barley that fills the common room is not entirely unpleasant, just rather strong. Truth be told, after a couple of hours and many rounds of the pub favorite, few even notice the smell.

The most common drink available is Cracked Claw, an extremely bitter barley ale so thick it is practically chewable. Goblin Mead brewed by Freesifoot's brewmasters is a rich amber color and light on the tongue. Once a month, Brazzer brews two special drinks: Knuckle Bones, which gets its distinctive musty flavor from the bones of slain orc warriors used in lieu of wood chips in the fermenting vats; and Spruce Ale, a lighter version of Cracked Claw that uses, as per the name, spruce wood chips to give it flavor. The Wood Wards also contribute something to the tavern: Lord Fern's Bitter, a mossy green ale that they acquire from a highly secretive conclave of druidic mendicants in return for hunting services rendered. The bitter has a heady, earthy flavor and an aftertaste reminiscent of hay. Finally, if a group of patrons would rather buy ale by volume instead of by the flagon, there is the Bøtte Av Harsk, a literal bucket filled to the rim with a rancid, low-quality ale brewed from flavor-depleted wood chips, rotten barley, and bad hops. This drink is always available since any given shipment of fresh supplies is bound to contain material that does not make the grade, as it were.

Every fourth day at approximately dusk, a brass whistle atop the still blasts a piercingly shrill toot that can be heard all over the castle compound. The sound signifies that the most recent batch of brew is ready. When the whistle blows, 15–20 goblins descend from the villa and spend the next two hours “barreling the booze.” While much of it gets shipped out, most gets consumed on the spot over the following two or three days. Goblins also help with “chipping” — shoveling wood chips from the piles behind the still into empty vats after removing the used chips. They dump the used chips in the sapper’s tunnel. Most patrons have the good sense to leave the still alone. If anyone other than the duly authorized goblin assistants touch it, Brazzer pummels him then throws him in the sapper’s tunnel. No exceptions.

4. THE RED CROWN

The roots of St. Sophia pierce the floor of the solar to dangle above the common room like a druid hierophant’s crown. They are collectively called the “Red Crown” because the corpses of those who violate the Wood Wards’ laws are impaled upon them, their blood staining the roots red. Blood dripping from the crown puts a considerable crimp in Brazzer’s business. In fact, some tables and spots on the floor are permanently stained as a result. He has repeatedly asked the Wood Wards to consider hanging criminals from the tower’s exterior walls, but they refuse, claiming the blood soaking the tree’s roots helps to keep it alive.

5. THE SOLAR

The stairs of Goblin Villa end at a hole in the second story of the great tower that opens into this room. Once it was the Lady Dunaven’s solar. It still retains the name but now serves as the Wood Wards’ home. Growing out of four feet of the blackest imported dirt available is a 60-foot-tall tree the rangers call St. Sophia and her four saplings. There is no roof, so the trees and the room are exposed to the elements. When the Wood Wards are not out wandering, hunting, or taking watch duties, they can be found here worshipping at the tree’s base during their waking hours. They keep no huts or houses: just the ground, the tree, and the open sky.

At any given time, **2d6 Wood Wards** are in the room. Outsiders, including the resident ogres and goblins, are explicitly not welcome unless invited. A trapdoor can be closed over the stairs. The floor itself is a good 4 feet thick and has been enchanted to support the weight and life of the trees growing atop it. Despite the enchantment, the trees’ roots have somehow managed to grow through the floor seams.

St. SOPHIA

This oak tree constitutes the center of the Wood Wards’ world. They firmly believe she (not “it”) is the reincarnation of the Lady Sophia Dunaven, otherwise known as St. Sophia. For all intents and purposes, the tree is as ordinary as ordinary can be, other than the fact that she grows on top of a tower. The dirt in the solar nourishes her, as does rain from the sky and blood from the criminals soaking her roots. The Wood Wards constantly recycle the dirt, carting in fresh shipments every two or three months. Acorns harvested from the tree are given to Brazzer for the tavern, which the oni uses to make acorn coffee (a Wood Ward favorite).

Four times a day, the Wood Wards present in the solar hold prayer ceremonies at St. Sophia’s base. They leave offerings and ask for blessings at a small, primitive-looking altar erected there.

THE QUINTAIN’S TOWER MENU

| Ale & Mead | Cost |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Bøtte Av Harsk | 1 cp |
| Cracked Claw | 2 cp |
| Goblin Mead | 1 cp |
| Knuckle Bones | 4 cp |
| Lord Fern’s Bitter | 4 cp |
| Spruce Ale | 1 cp |
| Food | |
| Bailey rat stew | 2 cp |
| Beef stew | 3 cp |
| Black bear steaks | 1 sp |
| Black bear stew | 6 cp |
| Fire beetle crunch | 1 cp |
| Grilled orc | 2 sp |
| Steamed giant spider legs | 3 cp |
| Zombie cow steaks | 1 cp |
| Other Services | |
| Goblin nest, per night | 2 cp |
| Goblin courtesan, per night | 1 sp |
| Wood Ward guide, per day | 5 gp |
| Wood Ward hunter, per day | 12 gp |

GOODS & SERVICES

The Quintain’s Tower offers more to drink than anything else. Food is served on the basis of availability, with the most common dishes being beef-based or those made by the villa goblins using whatever they get from the sapper’s tunnel. The tavern has no rooms, though patrons are welcome to sleep on the floors and tables if they wish. Rafter nests may be rented from King Freesifoot’s brewmasters, which are slightly more comfortable than the alternative.

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around The Quintain's Tower:

Into the Unknown: A section of the sapper's tunnel collapses one day, revealing a hole that leads to an underground network of rooms and corridors beneath the castle ruins. The musty odor of death wafts from it, as does an almost palpable sense of dread. Brazzer offers a reward for anyone who descends into the dungeon and returns alive to tell about it. Why he does not go himself is unknown. Perhaps an ancient, powerful evil awaits the curious, one that even Brazzer fears despite his formidable magic. Or, maybe he does not care what lies down there and just wants to see if anyone takes him up on the offer.

Doomed to Repeat It: Lord Dragul's descendants return to the castle to claim it as their own. Surprised to find it inhabited by barbaric beasts such as ogres, goblins, and wild humans, they give the order that everyone — and everything — must vacate the castle before sundown the next day. When the deadline arrives, the Dragul soldiers find the ogres, humans, and goblins united in their stand against them. Thus, a replay of events from 500 years earlier begins anew. Can the castle denizens hold out inside a ruined fortress against a professional army?

The Treants' Song: During the trade-meet, a small army of treants emerges from the surrounding wood to gather at the base of The Quintain's Tower. For three days they do nothing except stand silently in vigil. The Wood Wards take their presence and behavior for an omen and similarly gather to kneel, pray, and attempt to pry information and blessings from the silent tree people. The ogres, always suspicious of the humans, keep careful watch on them for signs of treachery. As the trade-meet winds down, the treants start singing a deep, throaty hymn that reverberates through stone, steel, wood, and bone alike. This song lasts for three days, and then something wonderful happens.

Dark Clouds on the Horizon: Every autumn, a flock of rocs migrates south from their roost 300 miles away, always stopping for a couple of days at the castle to rest and feed in its demesne. This year, they arrive earlier and in fewer numbers. Something is clearly wrong. After a week, they still have not left, and their alpha male is gravely ill. A dark cloud gathers on the northern horizon. The rocs are obviously afraid of it, and each day it comes closer to the castle. When it arrives, can the patrons, the Wood Wards, or the ogre tribes stop it? More importantly, are they willing?

APPENDIX A: RUMORS

Need a few extra rumors to sprinkle into tavern conversations? The following rumors are good for any tavern the characters visit. Use them to spark new adventures, tailor them to fit your ongoing adventure, or simply offer them up as red herrings.

1d20 Rumor

- 1 "Someone keeps lookin' in the windows round town. You can just see the eyes. Like burning gold, they are, and wide. They just stare and stare until you blink and then they're gone."
- 2 "There's a secret altar in the church's basement. That greedy holy man don't want you to know about it, but I seen it with my own eyes. It's black rock and bleeds when it gets dark."
- 3 "You see the symbols carved into the trees? That cult we got rid of years ago is back, I tell you."
- 4 "Cold is coming, I can feel it in my bones. Gonna be a bad one. Cold so bad your spit'll freeze on your lips."
- 5 "I just came for the music, my friends. I just can't get enough of it. Makes me want to dance!"
- 6 "If you pay for the round, I'll tell you what you need to know. And a few things you won't want to hear."
- 7 "I seen the little people dancing down in the mushrooms the other day. But I swear, I thought they had that missing girl with them. And then I woke up. Don't remember fallin' asleep in the woods, though."
- 8 "Me and Beryllic saw the Gray Man walking up the hill through the ruined mausoleums. He was going slow, so me and Beryllic took off running. Only ... Beryllic never made it home."
- 9 "Someone's putting up those posters for that circus, but no one ever sees them."
- 10 "The rats got into the grain bin outside town, but those weren't normal rats. Unless rats can walk through walls."
- 11 "The dogs and cats all go to hide when the medicine man's wagon rolls through town. Mothers don't let their babies get out of their sight, too. Somethin' about that man, I tell you."
- 12 "Don't sleep in the inn unless you want to wake up poorer. Thieves run through those walls."
- 13 "I saw the dragon swoop low over the field, two sheep clutched in his claws. And the shepherd boy is missing, too. I sure how he didn't get eaten."
- 14 "Ett and Chunk are spoilin' for a fight. Watch yourselves."
- 15 "We all saw the blood. It was spilled all over the floor, on the chairs, even on the kegs. But no bodies! It just appeared right in front of us!"
- 16 "These dwarves from the Ashenchisel clan showed up with this rock. It had this glowing blade stuck right through it! Said they were looking for the king, but I didn't have the 4 silvers they wanted to try to pull it out."
- 17 "You with the mourners? Saw them go through town this morning, right up to the graveyard. Must still be up there."
- 18 "The guards are watching everyone coming into town. Don't be surprised if they shake you down."
- 19 "I saw Old Man Scobee's daughter sneakin' out late last night. Must have been headed to the dance. But you should have heard the shoutin' this mornin'! Guess she didn't come a'home last night."
- 20 "Watch your change. That thievin' barman knows how to turn copper into gold ... until you get home with it."

THE BOOK OF
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Your heroes are going to be stopping at a tavern sometime; make it an interesting experience. With Book of Taverns Two you have a choice of two exciting places to stay the night and find adventure. Both offer NPCs to interact with, history and descriptions to add verisimilitude to your world, as well as hooks for adventure.

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Quintain's Tower by Chris Jones presents a tavern off the beaten path and with a bizarre clientele: ogres and goblinoids! The ruins of this once mighty human fortress have become a drinking spot, meet-up, and trade bazaar for the many dangerous humanoids that dwell in the area. The old castle holds many secrets, not the least of which is the Wood Wards cult who tend a tree that grows from the top of the tower. If you can stomach eating and drinking alongside bugbears, goblins, ogres, and others, stop in and try the steamed giant spider legs!

A fantasy adventure supplement detailing 2 distinct taverns of adventure for characters of all levels!

