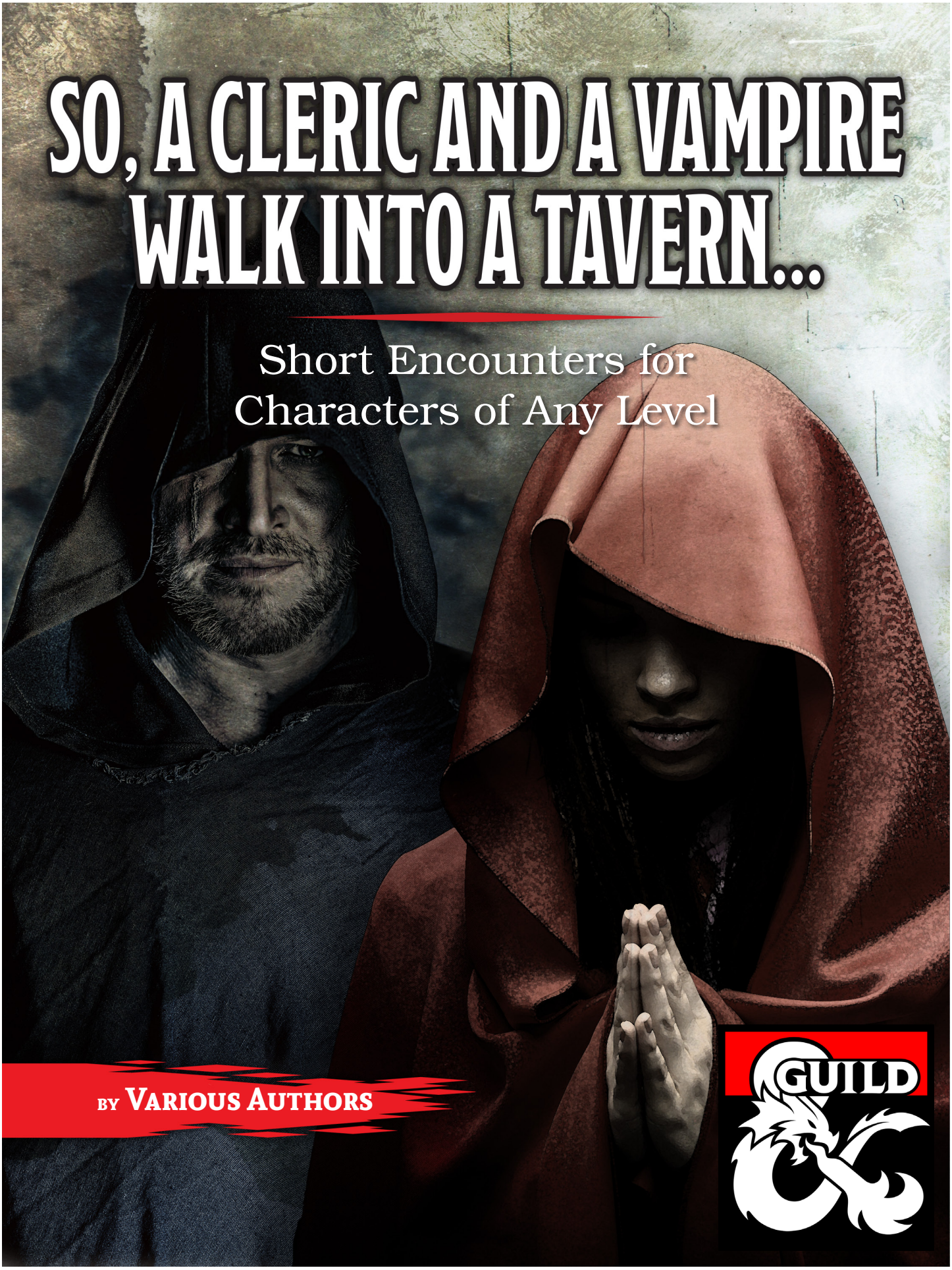
SO, A CLERIC AND A VAMPIRE WALK INTO A TAVERN...

Short Encounters for Characters of Any Level



BY VARIOUS AUTHORS

GUILD

SO, A CLERIC AND A VAMPIRE WALK INTO A TAVERN...

A series of short encounters and story hooks
that may cause your party
to question the safety of their local tavern...

Designed for characters of all levels

BY ALAN TUCKER, R P DAVIS, ALEX CLIPPINGER, AARON M. LOPEZ, MICHAEL LIPPERT,
BEATRIZ T. DIAS, TIM BANNOCK, JEROMY SCHULZ-ARNOLD, EDDIE GIOFFRE, TONY PETRECCA,
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There's Always a Tavern...

Inevitably, the party will end up in a tavern. But how can you make *this* tavern different from all the others? Make it memorable with an out of the ordinary encounter.

Within are several unusual circumstances, highlighted by some unlikely tavern visitors. Designed for many different levels of play, these encounters are built to intrigue and perhaps puzzle your players. In any case, they will be encounters your party is sure to remember.

Note: For each of the encounters, text within a box is intended to be read aloud or paraphrased. Where necessary, book and page references are given for monster stats and specific items.

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So, a Cleric and a Vampire Walk into a Tavern...

by Alan Tucker

Party Level as Presented: Any

Can be adapted to Party Levels: Any

> You enter the tavern late— most of the regulars have already made their way home. As you sit down, hands clutching a mug of ale, a hooded patron walks in. They, however, ignore the bar and go directly to a secluded table in a dark corner. You notice the glint of a holy symbol peeking out from their robes as they sit down, casting nervous glances about the room. Seconds later, another cloaked figure enters, darkness embracing them like an old friend. They survey the tavern in an instant, then move with grace and purpose to the table occupied by the agitated holy person. The two immediately begin a hushed, intense discussion.

The newcomers to the tavern are a **cleric** and a **vampire**. They were lovers, early in life, but tragic circumstances forced them down vastly different paths since.

The vampire— formerly human— was bitten and turned shortly before the two were to run off together and start a new life away from their families who didn't approve of their relationship. Distraught, the cleric turned to the church for solace and the newly-minted vampire spawn went about the business of adjusting to its new circumstance and mourning its losses.

Years passed and the spawn eventually became a fully fledged vampire, though a part of it still ached for its life once-planned. Curious about their former lover, the vampire used its power and influence to discover how their other half fared in life since their separation and managed to locate them within the town where the party currently resides.

The cleric recently grew disillusioned with their faith after many years of devotion and prayer failed to produce comfort, or dampen the pain of their loss. After hearing rumors of vampiric activity around the town, the cleric began an investigation of their own.

Now, the two meet for the first time since their separation and the cleric has hatched a desperate plan: become a vampire themselves so the two may be together forever as they'd intended. The vampire, however, understanding the true consequences of such a course of action, is reticent to doom their lover to an immortal, undead existence.

Make it clear to the party that the discussion the two are having is whispered, but contentious. A successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check** can reveal snippets, such as, "This is folly!" or "You don't understand the gravity of what you intend."

If anyone in the party approaches, the two will abruptly quiet their conversation and ask to be left alone. Either because of intrusion, or simply after a few tense minutes pass with no resolution to the argument, read the following:

> Suddenly, the first figure stands, tucking their holy symbol beneath their robes. "I've chosen my path and nothing you say can dissuade me." They exit the tavern with a stiff back and slam the door behind them.
>
> Moments later, the second person grimaces and stalks out after them, into the night.

If the party follow the mysterious couple outside, they can discover them in a seemingly sinister embrace in an alley next to the tavern. The vampire has given in to their former lover's pleas and is beginning the process of turning them into a vampire spawn. This act, of course, will look much less loving to the party members.

Depending on the party's level, this may lead directly to combat *(MM page 295 for vampire stats)*, or an awkward, frightening stand-off. The vampire is only concerned about the safety of the cleric and doesn't wish to call more attention to the situation.

Alternatives:

The narrative is written gender neutral on purpose so the DM can decide the nature of the two lovers for what suits the campaign and setting. Possibly the cleric is someone the party recognizes, or the vampire might be an antagonist they have tangled with in the past.

If the vampire manages to spirit the cleric away, it could lead to a chase and search for the vampire's lair. Or, if it feels unthreatened by the party, the vampire may tersely explain the situation, leaving the players with an interesting moral dilemma which you can explore.

So, a Dwarf and an Elf Walk into a Tavern...

by R P Davis

Party Level as Presented: Any

Can be adapted to Party Levels: Any

The tavern is filled with people. It is the prime of the evening, and the place is heaving. The noise is almost deafening. Excited conversation combines with roars and peals of laughter to nearly drown out the bard by the fire who valiantly tries to entertain more than the three closest tables with a bawdy ballad. The barmaid can barely squeeze through the mass of people, but she does, tray filled with foaming tankards hoisted high over her head. The tang of unwashed people mixes with sour beer, wood smoke, bacon grease, and halitosis.

The door slams open, and a dwarf voice bellows, "Ale! Bring ale! This elf needs schoolin'!"

A dwarf, who more closely resembles a broad-shouldered beard with a helmet than anything else, is dragging a tall, sandy-haired elf into the tavern like a determined tugboat towing a sleek schooner. The elf, who is wearing green and brown leathers and a bemused grin, appears willing to accompany the odd dwarf.

The dwarf shoves a couple of humans off barstools and plops the elf, then himself, onto the now-empty seats, stonily ignoring the outraged complaints of their former owners.

"Here's the deal, elf," the dwarf growls. "We drink. We each put five gold on the bar before each drink. Last one standing keeps the pot. Deal?"

The elf grins and nods.

The dwarf glares around. "Any o' you biggers want to get in on this? Five gold per drink, you pass out, you lose. Who's with me?"

The newcomers are old friends who enjoy having legendary nights of carousing in town when they aren't adventuring. This is a traditional competition for them.

Those who wish to compete are welcome to do so. The rules are simple: Bet 5 gold pieces per drink that you won't be the first to pass out drunk. The last drinker standing keeps the pile of gold.

Each round, each drinker must succeed on a **DC10 Constitution saving throw**. With each failed save, the DC increases by 2 for the next round. When a drinker has failed three saving throws, he or she has lost consciousness and is out of the competition.

Contestants who use magic are angrily dismissed from the competition by the dwarf and elf. Consider the dwarf's passive Perception score to be 16 for the purposes of determining whether or not he notices a contestant, or one of her comrades, using magic to assist her during the competition.

The dwarf's Constitution saving throw bonus is +7; the elf's is +6.

If the dwarf loses, read or paraphrase the following:

The dwarf rocks back and forth on his stolen barstool. "Whoa," he burps. "I shoulda stuck to water... How many o' you is there? Three? I need to... to..."

His voice trails off, his eyes cross, and he not so much falls over as loses structural integrity and oozes onto the sticky floor.

If the dwarf loses before the elf, the elf concedes with a smile, picks up his companion, and weaves out the door, singing a rather interesting song about a badger and an amorous gnome. If the elf loses before the dwarf, the dwarf ignores the elf and goes on drinking to the end.

Alternatives:

At your option, characters who lose in the competition wake up either in prison or in a strange place. In both cases, they have no memory of how they got there. Choose one of the first two entries on the Carousing table *(DMG page 128)*. If you choose the first, the character has been arraigned after trying— and failing— to punch a watchman's horse. The character can pay the fine or do the time. If you choose the second, the unconscious character has been dragged out of the tavern by the **half-ogre** bouncers and dumped in an alley, where he or she was despoiled by a mugger who thanked his lucky stars for such an easy mark.

So, a Dragon and Some Kobolds Walk into a Tavern...

BY ALEX CLIPPINGER

PARTY LEVEL AS PRESENTED: ANY

CAN BE ADAPTED TO PARTY LEVELS: ANY

The tavern is tame tonight; the low murmur of conversations at the bar and tables is only punctuated by the sharp clink of glasses or the occasional guffaw of laughter. When the tall, bearded man and his throng of companions enter the establishment, their cacophonous presence disrupts the peaceful atmosphere like a brick being hurled into a tranquil pond. The man is broad-shouldered, a thick russet beard doing little to disguise his pained grimace, and the powerful frame doesn't hide the weary sag to his shoulders. His entourage, for their part, appear to be dwarves wearing heavy, hooded cloaks. Though you've probably seen plenty of dwarves in your lifetime, you can't remember a time when you saw any that were this excitable and this talkative—and certainly not in the sibilant sounds of what's almost certainly Draconic. The man sits down heavily at a table in the far corner, the odd dwarves clamoring around him with an apparent air of concern.

The newcomer is actually a **young bronze dragon** *(MM page 108)* surrounded by a throng of **kobolds** *(MM page 195)*. The bronze dragon recently entered the lair of an arrogant young red, who was attempting to establish a long-term lair in the region. Though the bronze was successful in his battle against the red, the fight has left him badly injured. The red dragon kept a number of kobolds as slaves and servants, many of them living in abject terror under the chromatic dragon's cruelty. When the red dragon was defeated, this group of kobolds displayed such genuine (and pathetic) gratitude, the bronze was surprised to feel a pang of sympathy for the sad little creatures. Summoning its strength, the bronze dragon disguised the kobolds with a *seeming* spell and altered its own appearance to that of the man now slumped at the table.

Noise in the tavern gradually increases, as the other patrons slowly begin increasing the volume of their own conversations to be heard over the yammering of the (apparent) dwarves. Players who understand Draconic and who make a **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check** overhear bits of their inane chatter, such as "They'll catch up to us soon," or "Gee, fella, you don't look so hot."

Other kobolds, still loyal to the fallen red dragon, have found it easy to track the injured bronze dragon and the 'traitorous' kobolds to the inn. Like their companions, they're heavily cloaked and hooded as a disguise, but these kobolds don't benefit from the bronze dragon's *seeming* spell. The kobolds are seeking to kill the bronze dragon, who is too weak to effectively fight back.

The red's loyalists are looking for a fight; when they burst in, the few other remaining patrons of the tavern run for cover. If the party intervenes, the evil kobolds can be convinced to give up their quest for revenge with a **DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check**, frightened off with a **DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation) check**, convinced to look elsewhere (or that the bronze dragon can destroy them all) with a **DC 20 Charisma (Deception) check**. Unless the newcomers can be convinced to back off, a wild brawl ensues. The small group of kobolds loyal to the bronze dragon attempt to protect their new, injured master as they engage in a vicious slap-fight with the red dragon's remaining loyalists.

ALTERNATIVES:

The pack of evil kobolds are made up of common kobolds for lower-leveled parties, or the group can include **kobold dragonshields** and **kobold scale sorcerers** for higher-level adventuring parties *(VGtM pages 165 and 167, respectively)*.



So, an Insensitive Bard Walks into a Tavern...

by Aaron M. Lopez

Party Level as Presented: Any

Can be adapted to Party Levels: Any

> The tavern has its usual crowd for this time of evening. As you sit at the table, mulling over terrible ale and fighting your stomach over the decision as to whether or not the plate in front of you contains something that could be called food, in walks an elderly gentleman with a lute. He quietly moves a stool to an open space on the opposite side of the tavern and, after a brief moment of tuning, begins to play.

The bard begins with some local favorites and then he changes his material. The songs begin to take a derogatory tone. His lyrics devolve into insulting the players directly. If the characters are not actively listening to the musician, any character with a **passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 11** will hear their name mentioned in one of the songs.

A successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** will reveal that none of the other patrons in the room are taking any notice at all of the bard or his music. The DM should feel free to elaborate on the strength of the Bard's insults. The point of this is to provoke the characters into action.

> As you continue listening, your blood boils as disgusting tales of your family, clan, class, faction, and more specifically about you, are played out for everyone to hear. Specific details about your private life that nobody else should know are being twisted into the songs in the most derogatory and insulting manner.

Further Wisdom (Perception) checks will reveal that none of the other patrons are taking any notice of the events. The party can choose to act in any manner they see fit. Should they engage the bard directly, the following will happen.

> As your limit for this type of behavior has been reached and you move to act, a group of well-armored soldiers emblazoned with *(a seal or crest of the DM's choice)* enters the tavern and among a shower of insults, surround the musician and then bind and gag him before dragging him out of the tavern.

After the guards exit and seemingly vanish, the characters notice a slim dart embedded into the middle of their table. Impaled by the dart is a piece of paper with a note on it.

Should the characters try to stop the guards or approach the bard, a group of drunken patrons, completely oblivious to the events, choose this moment to stand up and burst into drunken song, preventing the party from getting to the bard before the soldiers take him out of the building.

Any inquiries about the bard or the soldiers will be met with blank stares as none of the other patrons or staff in the establishment will have seen or heard anything. Indeed, apart from the note on the table, there will be no physical evidence of the bard or soldiers. A *detect magic* spell will reveal that powerful magic was present, but is now gone.

If some, or all, of the characters choose not to act, ignoring the commotion altogether, the drunken crowd can be made to crash into the table where the party is seated, knocking it over. When the table is put upright again, the dart with the note will be embedded in the table. If the party just leaves the tavern after the event (and doesn't straighten out the table), one of the members will find the note and dart stuck in their pack.

The note can be an adventure hook for players to start your new campaign, or perhaps a clue that can help characters along in the current adventure. The guards listed above can be uniformed to fit your campaign as well.

Encounter Notes:

The bard and guards are a powerful and clever illusion designed to distract the party so the note can be delivered unnoticed. Who delivers the note and how it gets to the table are really up to the DM. It could be thrown by an invisible person (creator of the illusion), who then disappears after delivering it. Or a drunken patron can stab the dart into the table while the party is distracted, escaping notice by blending in with the other patrons.

How information about each party member is known by the bard in this encounter is also up to the DM. He could be a former colleague/party member, or someone from the characters' past. The tidbits may have been collected by magical means or perhaps the creator of the illusion has a spy network that has been used to gather information on the party.

So, a Darkling and an Eladrin Walk into a Tavern...

by Michael Lippert

Party Level as Presented: Any

Can be adapted to Party Levels: Any

> The door to the tavern swings open and a slender figure enters. The pointed ears and fine features inform you that this is an eladrin, though the lean muscular build and the worn travel clothes might otherwise have fooled you. The eladrin slumps down in a chair facing the door, and orders a glass of wine.
>
> Moments later, the door swings open once again, and a shrouded, gaunt silhouette of a person enters. Cloaked and hooded, all light seems to evade his face, leaving it in darkness. He sits down across the table from the eladrin and says, "Hail, Fife, Thane in the court of King Glamis!" They start a conversation in hushed voices.

The newcomers to the tavern are an **eladrin noble** *(MM page 348)*, and a **darkling elder assassin** *(VGtM page 134)*. Fife, the eladrin noble, has fled the Feywild court of King Glamis, and the darkling assassin has come to kill Fife.

King Glamis killed the old king, covering it up by blaming and killing his drunk guards. With feigned reluctance he claimed the throne. Fife, however, suspected the truth and fled, fearing the now paranoid King Glamis. Glamis sent the darkling assassin to end Fife, before Fife has a chance to rally with the old king's sons and plot revenge.

The assassin has been pursuing Fife relentlessly, from the eladrin court in the Feywild to this tavern. Tonight they will fight, and only one will live to see the dawn.

Let the party know that the two are talking in whispered voices. A successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check** will give them snippets of their conversation, such as:

Darkling: "The king sends his regards, on this, your final night."

Fife: "The blood is on the hands of Glamis, as it is on all of us who did naught that fateful night!"

Darkling: "You deserted your rightful King, I bring you your just reward."

Fife: "Aye, I failed my king, and for that I should be punished."

Fife: "He who you call King I will never!"

The face of the darkling is impossible to read, but a successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check** will reveal the resignation, mixed with sparks of rage, in the face of Fife.

The darkling will try to send anyone approaching their table away, as they are having a private conversation. If the players insist on interfering, or offer help, Fife will gain resolve and fight the darkling right then and there in the tavern, starting the fight by brandishing a sword and uttering, "Enough talk, snake of the usurper, let's settle this!" If not, Fife will resign himself to his fate and agree to go outside, where he is stabbed to death by the darkling in a short, unsporting duel, and his body left in the gutter.

If Fife survives the encounter through the help of the party, he will thank them and tell them the whole story.

Alternatives:

Depending on the party's level, there could be more than one darkling elder. Ideally they just sent in one, but on his signal **darklings** and **darkling elders** will swarm in through doors and windows.

If Fife survives, and you want to expand on the story with a possible trip to the Feywild, Fife might ask the party to help locate the sons of the old king. Or he may call on them for aid at a later time to defeat King Glamis. It is rumored that Glamis has made a deal with a coven of hags, to become undefeatable in combat: *His castle walls will not fall until the forest around it comes to life, and none born from a woman's womb may harm him.*

Inspired by Shakespeare's Macbeth

So, a Werewolf and its Prey Walk into a Tavern...

by Beatriz T. Dias

Party Level as Presented: Any

Can be adapted to Party Levels: Any

> It's early morning at the inn; both locals and travelers eat their breakfasts calmly. A light breeze comes in from an open window, and the rays of sun warm everyone they touch.
>
> Then, someone new enters the inn: a human, with a bleeding left arm. Some travelers look at him with worry, but not one of the locals bats an eye. The person just moves to sit in a corner of the inn, ordering an ale.

This person is a **werewolf**, once human, but now they fight against their lycanthropy. And last night they almost killed an innocent person. They got control back at the last second by biting their own arm, crushing it horribly, but leaving their potential prey unharmed. Without the possibility to cure the wounds, the troubled werewolf just wants to drown the pain in alcohol and hope to live through it. The locals are already used to the injuries the quiet person always carries, and just assume they like picking fights.

If approached, the werewolf will try to dodge conversation and claim the wound was the result of a hunting accident.

With a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check** a player can see the injury is clearly too severe to be from any type of "normal" game.

A successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check** will allow a player to understand that the "hunter" is hiding something.

The werewolf only came to the inn to relax and drink their sorrows away. If they sense tension they will leave hastily, or try to.

If fleeing is impossible, they will explain how injuring themselves was the only way to not harm someone else, and the werewolf prefers any type of self-inflicted wound to injuring others.

Now, be the werewolf sitting in their corner and talking to the party, or about to leave the inn, a group of **commoners** enters the tavern. The werewolf recognizes one of them as the person they almost killed— last night's prey. Before the commoner catches sight of the wounded werewolf, they will try to leave the tavern and run away.

If the commoner recognizes the werewolf, they will try to get them arrested or killed, believing the creature nothing more than a ferocious beast that needs to be put down.

The commoners can, however, be reasoned with, if the party chooses to intervene, and maybe even come to understand the werewolf and help them. The cursed human, though, really just wants to run away before more harm can be brought on anyone.

If combat ensues, it may become apparent the werewolf is not fully in control of themselves. If dropped to below half hit points, they will shape-shift to their hybrid form and go into a frenzy.

Stats:

Werewolf *(MM page 211)*
Commoner *(MM page 345)*
Guards and **Knights** *(MM page 347)*

Alternatives:

The party can be more involved in this conflict if instead of the commoner, one of the players was last night's prey.

If the party cannot achieve a peaceful resolution and you want a more challenging fight, guards and/or knights can be in the inn and interfere when things get out of hand.

The prey's initial stand can also be different. Maybe it's looking for the werewolf already and trying to help it before the others find about it. Maybe both of them already know each other. The story can also be expanded into a quest to help the werewolf finally control itself.



So, Some Adventurers and *You* Walk into a Tavern...

by Tim Bannock, inspired by Glen Cooper

Party Level as Presented: 1-10

Can be adapted to Party Levels: 1-16

> [Insert Party Member (PC) name here] had a rough night recently. While going about their normal business, they were jumped and knifed. Their attacker employed a poison called Oil of Taggit, and as it coursed through their veins, they were driven into unconsciousness before being stabbed again and again. Believed to be dead, their body was about to be tossed into the river when the attacker was serendipitously spotted by a local gravedigger, who'd been walking off his nightly "spirits" (the kind you find in a cup rather than a graveyard). The thug ran off, and the boozy gravedigger hauled the unidentifiable, barely clinging-to-life body of [PC] to some deathpriest buddies. They were able to pull [PC] back from the brink of death over the course of a couple days, and by then the poison had wound its way out of their system.

The rest of the players' party has just convened at the local tavern, where deathpriest Hargrem Dasal— a man in heavy midnight-blue robes and skull-like face paint— sits with [PC], who looks like death warmed over, complete with baggy, bloodshot eyes.

> In a hoarse whisper, Dasal greets you coldly. "I apologize that we were unable to identify your ally until they awoke. As you know, the deathpriests are not often welcome among polite society, nor are we a welcome face to adventurers and scoundrels."
>
> Before another word is exchanged, a band of rowdy adventurers burst through the tavern doors, mid-song. At first, it's the cringe-inducing howls they attempt to pass off as singing that catches your attention, but then it's the fact that among their numbers is [PC], looking hearty and hale, unlike the version next to Hargrem Dasal!

It turns out the PC has a **doppelganger** *(MM page 82)* replacement that has joined up with the other adventuring party and made friends with them, gaining their loyalty through a couple nights of carousing. It believed the PC to be dead, so it didn't worry if it stumbled upon the party...but now the jig might be up!

Deathpriest Hargrem Dasal (LN male human **cult fanatic**, *MM page 345*; cold, calculating, speaks in a hoarse whisper) is not a particularly nice fellow, but he also doesn't have a dog in this fight: he healed the PC as a favor to the gravedigger, and that's the extent of the involvement he wants in the proceedings, if at all possible. The doppelganger will attempt to prove it's the real thing based on its access to the character's property and personal belongings, as well as what it knows about the party via rumors and stories of their exploits, and lastly its (relatively short) time shadowing the party, which is what led to it ultimately picking the PC off in the first place.

The doppelganger isn't stupid, though. It'll use the fact that the PC was missing for a couple days (in the care of the priests) as a means to cast doubt on the PC himself; the doppelganger and the adventuring party can account for its whereabouts, but the priests and the PC were cloistered up in a less-than-trustworthy minor temple, after all! If the PC party presents a convincing argument, you can use the interaction rules *(DMG page 244)* to gauge the reaction of the NPC adventuring party: they start as indifferent but can turn hostile almost immediately if accused early on of being liars.

If the NPC party doesn't believe the player characters, they'll join the doppelganger in fighting them! That said, only the doppelganger will fight to kill; the NPC adventurers will subdue or knock out the PCs unless one of their members is killed outright. A fight presents a second opportunity for the NPCs (and otherwise unsure player characters) to figure out something is truly wrong with the doppelganger, because the doppelganger uses the same poison *(***Oil of Taggit***, DMG page 258)* that put the PC they replaced in this predicament in the first place. **A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception)** or **DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check** as an action will reveal this fact during the fray.

NPC Adventuring Party

You don't have to use all of these NPCs; choose the ones you feel the most inspired by! Feel free to make them whatever alignment(s) best serves

the roleplay opportunities of this encounter, and change them to other NPC stat blocks if you wish to increase or decrease the encounter difficulty.

Gabriel Swiftfingers (male half-elf **bandit**, *MM page 343*; sociable, pretentious)

Lokas (male dragonborn **thug**, *MM page 350*; neat, impatient)

Morael Elruss (male mountain dwarf **guard**, *MM page 348*; liberal, frivolous)

Monalyn Timoj (female forest gnome **apprentice wizard**, *VGtM page 209*; helpful, stoic)

Taeneka (female tiefling **spy**, *MM page 349*; stubborn, hedonistic)

Nimrag (male half-orc **tribal warrior**, *MM page 350*; religious, graceless)

Hewban Sirboc (male human **scout**, *MM page 349*; humble, restrained)

Running the Deception

The doppelganger's con may fall apart awfully easy on the side of the player characters because one of the players is the primary subject of it. This may be fine for many groups, but it may not work for others, and it may be more fun if the other players know there's an element of surprise involved. To achieve this, here's a few tips and options you can employ to cast doubt on who's the doppelganger.

Shared Backstory. Write down a few one-sentence bits of shared backstory between a few of the PCs, always including the switched-out PC. Make sure that there are at least a couple true statements, a couple rumors/legends others might have heard, and at least one outright false statement. You can use these as signals as to who might be telling the truth, and if you get the players to write these individually, without other players seeing what each other writes, it can create some arguments (especially if you hand them over to the switched-out player when using some of the other options).

Mix Up. Ahead of the session or scene, talk it over with the player who gets switched out whether they'd like to play their PC or the doppelganger during the scene. Let the other players know that you had this discussion, but don't tell them the final decision: they won't know if the player is playing their PC or if they are playing the doppelganger!

Secret Doppelganger. Write "PC" and "doppelganger" on separate pieces of paper. Have another player (not the switched-out PC one) mix them up and hand one to the DM and one to the switched-out PC's player, face down. The PC and DM look at their cards in secret and cannot confirm which they received in any way until after the encounter ends. Alternatively, don't reveal the cards— don't even look at them!— until combat, Wisdom (Insight) checks, or some other logical change to the scene occurs: the player and DM won't know which of them is the right one, and therefore none of the players will know either! (This one's very hard to roleplay and will lose its momentum fast if the players resort to Insight checks and dice rolls very quickly.)

Alternatives:

Doppelbuddies. Keep in mind that doppelgangers are Challenge 3, and if they fail at their deception, they'll need some support to provide a challenge to the PCs plus the NPC adventurers (and maybe the deathpriest, too). Consider having a few monsters in hiding that'll jump in:

Tier 1 parties: 1d4+4 **goblins** *(MM page 166)* or 1d4+1 **wererats** *(MM page 209)*.

Tier 2 parties: 2 **displacer beasts** *(MM page 81)* or 1d6+4 **hobgoblins** (use a mix of the various stat blocks for hobgoblins from *MM* and *VGtM*).

Tier 3 parties: **Invisible stalker** *(MM page 192)*, a **spirit naga** *(MM page 234)*, or 1d4 **wraiths** *(MM page 302)*.

Pod People. One of the NPC adventurers has been replaced by a doppelganger, too! The two creatures are working together to create conflict among both parties in order to distract from one of them pickpocketing something important from one of the player characters. During all the arguing, one of the doppelgangers steals something from a PC; a successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check** catches them in the act and turns the argument into a battle!

So, a Group of Adventurers Walk into a Tavern...

by Jeromy Schulz-Arnold

Party Level as Presented: Any

Can be adapted to Party Levels: Any

Background Information:

The founders of the town suffered a harsh winter each year for many years. Many left, more died, and, in a final act of desperation, the founders contacted a "granter of wishes" to hear the people's plight in hopes that a deal could be made. The well was built by the "granter of wishes" as a monument to the covenant entered into by the founders. As long as the well stands, the town will be spared. In return, the townsfolk are not to interfere with anyone seeking to use the well.

Unfortunately, the "granter of wishes" is a fiend named Jubilex who delights in bringing woe and misfortune to the proud.

> Things are slow tonight at the Wishing Well: a tavern built around the old town well. The fire crackles, but one log warms the room fully. The winter night is mild and, even as the patrons file in and out, the breeze that enters is not more than a chill. The still-functioning well, which patrons are free to drink from, is said to be the source of the town's good luck. Few seek it for its water but more for its supposed powers to grant wishes. Patrons drop coins into the well in hopes that their wishes come true.

The barkeep and the maid do not deny that the well has been known to grant wishes in the past but only rarely. They mention folk tales of people having their wish granted but in odd, indirect ways, with unintended consequences, or even getting just the opposite of what they wished for. They strongly urge the PCs not to tempt fate, for only the most desperate accept the capricious gifts of the well. They do not, however, as keen PCs may notice, impede anyone from trying their luck and tossing a coin in. They even are willing to give people a coin if they have none to offer to the well.

It goes without saying that if any of the PCs use the well (and DMs should definitely goad them into doing so) their wish will be granted. At first, nothing appears to happen and for the rest of the evening the PCs continue about their business and go to sleep. When they awaken they will discover the effect of their wish. Jubilex will most likely not grant the wish as stated or even implied, using any vague wording as a way to pervert the desire into a curse. He is not without a sense of irony. His dark humor is usually apparent in his capricious boons.

For instance, a player asking "to be smarter" may awaken to find their room full of books (if they are illiterate) or discover the tomes are written in a language they can't decipher. After all, don't smart people read a lot?

Sometimes his boons are more malicious than funny. Only rarely does he grant a wish in the exact terms given. If he does, it is usually to an evil character and often sets them up for a fall. Jubilex is jealous and wrathful; he is not afraid to remind even the like-minded of his power and dominance. He feeds on the misery of others and loves to cause suffering and woe.

DM Advice:

This is a less mechanically driven scenario, so don't get lost in the weeds looking for "Jubilex" in the *Monster Manual* and trying to determine his powers. Don't worry about playable results so much as how to use the statements of the players to introduce the events of the following morning. This is a great way to end a night of play; you can plan the next session over the break. Perhaps even ask players to write their wish down as a direct transcript of what was stated aloud in the wish. Listen very carefully to what the players say; not only when they make the wish but during play. It is likely they will also give one ideas on what might occur as a result: "Yeah, I'm sure since I asked to be able to breathe underwater I'll wake up a goldfish!" Many times they will plant the seeds for the next adventure without even realizing it!

Alternatives:

1: The "granter of wishes" is a minor, benevolent water spirit and the PCs get a minor boon like *Inspire Competence* until their next long rest.

2: The well is a hoax. Every night the barkeep and maid go down to a secret chamber and take the coins, splitting the profit of this quaint folktale.

So, a Rat Walks into a Tavern and the Serving Girls Run Out...

by Eddie Gioffre

Party Level as Presented: 2

Can be adapted to Party Levels: 2-4

It's the end of another night at the local rough and tumble dockside tavern, and the party is finishing up their last drink of the evening when one of the serving girls screams from the tavern cellar. She comes running up calling out to the bartender, breathless.

> "I just saw a pair of huge red eyes staring at me from out of the darkness." She puts her hand to her chest as she gathers her wits, "I'm not going back down there until you do something about it."
>
> Just then, one of the other girls comes up. "I saw two rats, biggest you ever seen, just last week. You better do something about it." She throws a dirty rag on the bar and escorts the first girl out of the tavern.
>
> That's when the bartender comes over to your group.
>
> "I know it's late, but you folks seem to be the only ones here who haven't drunk themselves into a stupor or beaten each other into a pulp. I can't pay much, but if you can go down stairs and clean out the rats, I'll make sure you eat and drink for the next week here on the house."

What the party doesn't know is that back in the day, a former owner of this tavern was an ally of the local thieves guild. There is a secret passage in the basement that connects the tavern to an abandoned warehouse next door. The current owners of the tavern, along with all of its current staff, are unaware of this connected passageway. The local thieves guild however, hasn't forgotten. They recently began a fencing operation out of the abandoned warehouse, and have even taken to stashing particularly "hot" property in the cellar of the tavern. The guild master's thinking is that if the stolen goods are found in the basement of the tavern, the guild can't be held responsible.

Right now, the thieves guild is storing something very valuable in the tavern's cellar, in an old small cask hidden among other crates and debris. Note: the exact nature of the item is left up to the DM. This could range from a valuable spell book, expensive jewelry, or a map or some other hook into a future adventure.

When the PCs go down to investigate, they encounter 4 **giant rats** *(MM page 327)*. The rats are hiding throughout the basement— behind barrels, under the stairs, or among the debris where the thieves' cask is hidden. The rats should be an easy encounter for the PCs, regardless of level. What makes the rats special is that they are trained by the thieves guild. If anyone gets near the hidden cask of treasure, the rats start squealing, alerting members stationed in the basement of the warehouse next door. On the following round, 3 **bandits** *(MM page 343)* and 1 **spy** *(MM page 349)* come out from the hidden passage. To scale this up for slightly higher levels (or larger party sizes), swap out the bandits for **thugs** *(MM page 350)* and/or the spy for a **bandit captain** *(MM page 344)*. The thieves brandish their weapons and prepare for a fight.

Alternatives:

Depending on how the party deals with the thieves, they may have made enemies of the guild, or find themselves trying to broker some kind of truce between the guild and the tavern. If they are found in possession of the stolen item, they may be pursued by the guild and/or the original owner of the item. Creative DMs can extend the storyline beyond just this initial encounter.



So, a Party of "Victorious" Adventurers Walk Into a Tavern...

by Tony Petrecca

Party Level as Presented: Any

Can be adapted to Party Level: Any

> The tavern door bursts open, revealing a proud, tall woman, her long, dark locks flowing freely down armor stained with dirt and blood. She saunters through, followed by a similarly bloodstained, armored dwarf, and a purple-robed elf. You almost don't notice the leather-wearing halfling amongst them.
>
> "Huzzah and well met!" declares the woman, her voice commanding the attention of this evening's crowd of patrons. "The Cursed Tomb of the Archmage Accertep is breached and looted, and tonight we celebrate! Food and drinks for all!" The crowd erupts in cheer as she tosses a bag of coins to the bartender.

The woman is Kyra Bay, a human **veteran** *(MM page 350)*. She is accompanied by dwarf **priest** *(MM page 348)* Miitho Greystone the Third, elf **bard** *(VGtM page 211)* Aerendyl Leoralei, and halfling **spy** *(MM page 349)* Halrik Longleaf. They are a band of adventurers who just yesterday plundered the aforementioned Cursed Tomb. They are eager to tell boastful tales of their recent exploit, which involved profound puzzles, terrible traps, lethal beasts, and a final confrontation with the mummified corpse of Accertep himself! They brag about the wealth they've looted, and eventually Kyra will show off a glorious, fist-sized ruby they found buried with the mummy.

What Kyra and her crew don't know is that the Archmage Accertep, who is most certainly alive and well, enjoys toying with adventurous types. He has constructed several dangerous tombs and dungeons about the land whose real purpose is to provide himself with entertainment. He seeds taverns with rumors of their whereabouts, and scries upon those who attempt to plunder their depths. In this particular dungeon he deposited a **Ruby of Recklessness**, a magical ruby enchanted with a powerful, specific, and amusing two-part curse.

When Kyra removes the **Ruby of Recklessness** from her belt pouch, read or paraphrase the following:

> The beautiful, braggadocio Kyra pulls from her belt pouch an impressive find. A fist-sized ruby that glows a beautiful, burning crimson. As she does so, she begins to dance, leaping onto the table and cutting quite the jig. Nearby, a fight breaks out between two patrons, whilst at a corner table the dwarf priest breaks out in belly-busting laughter. More fights break out, while the innkeep screams in terror and flees into the kitchen.

The PCs must make a **DC 15 Wisdom saving throw** or succumb to the Ruby's effects. Revealing the **Ruby of Recklessness** releases its curse amongst the tavern's populace and the PCs. Patrons will continue to fight, flee, dance, and laugh uncontrollably until the ruby is destroyed, breaking the curse.

Accertep's Ruby of Recklessness

Wondrous Item, very rare

This beautiful, fist-sized ruby reflects a deep red radiance in any light. The ruby has an AC of 10 and has 10 hit points. Creatures who touch the ruby must make a successful **DC 20 Wisdom saving throw** or be cursed with the desire to flaunt their accomplishments and wealth, including the ruby, and to recklessly spend their wealth until their only remaining possession is the ruby.

When the ruby is revealed by its possessor to a crowd of five or more, a secondary curse is enacted. Each creature within a 60-foot radius while the ruby is revealed must succeed on a **DC 15 Wisdom saving throw** or be affected by the secondary curse. An affected target rolls a d4 and suffers one of the following effects:

1. Attacks the closest creature, fighting until that creature is unconscious, then chooses a new creature to attack.
2. Suffer the effects of *Tasha's uncontrollable laughter*
3. Suffer the effects of *Otto's irresistible dance*
4. Suffer the effects of the *fear* spell.

At the end of each of its turns an affected creature can make a **DC 15 Wisdom saving throw**. If it succeeds, this effect ends for the target.

So, a Girallon Wearing a *Headband of Intellect* Walks into a Tavern...

BY Jeff C. Stevens

Party Level as Presented: Any

Can be adapted to Party Level: Any

The tavern is bustling this evening. Several patrons fill the center floor, swaying and spinning to the upbeat tune being played by a bard on the corner stage.

The waitstaff smile and greet customers as they carry their platters of ale and mead to the tables. It should be a grand night for tips!

Suddenly, the bard stops playing. A sullen look comes over her as she stares at the entrance. Several sighs are let out by patrons near the door, and the dance floor begins to clear.

Two men sitting at the bar scream while jumping from their stools and bolting out of the tavern through the open entrance as a four-armed, white-furred massive beast wearing red leather armor and a silver headband takes a stool at the bar.

The stool groans and creaks under the beast's weight. "I'll take a mug of mead," it says in a deep voice as it pulls out a gold coin and places it on the bar.

The wide-eyed barkeep slowly moves to collect the coin, pulls a mug from under the bar, and fills it with mead, never removing his gaze from the beast.

The creature is a **girallon** named Walbash. While out doing his girallon thing one day, he stumbled upon a ruined tower. Walbash had always been a curious girallon, so he decided to explore the ruin. In doing so, he discovered a locked wooden chest hidden in the cellar of the tower.

Walbash struggled to open the chest and became frustrated, leading him to throw it against the cellar wall. The chest broke open, spilling its contents on the floor: a silver headband, a set of red leather armor, and a small pouch containing 50gp.

Intrigued by the silver headband, Walbash fiddled with it— sliding his arm through it, hanging it from his nose, and twirling in on his finger. Eventually, the headband ended up on his head which caused the magical item to activate. Walbash's intelligence increased, he knew how to speak, read, and write Common, and he knew that he was naked, which caused him to don the red leather armor (**+1 leather armor** with resistance to slashing damage).

Walbash was ridiculed and outcast by his fellow girallon. They didn't understand why he was wearing red leather, or the metal headband. Walbash tried to remove the headband, but it was stuck fast.

Shunned, Walbash decided to enter the humanoid villages, hoping to find either a new clan, or a means to remove the headband.

If confronted, Walbash states:

- He means no harm
- Ever since he donned the headband, he's been shunned by his other girallon
- He misses companionship and wants a new clan
- He's outcast from his girallon family
- He'll take work if he can find it
- He really wants to remove the headband
- He found the headband and armor locked in a wooden chest in the ruins of a tower

Walbash could be used as a continuing NPC, as long as he's wearing the headband. Once it is removed, he loses all knowledge of the events that occurred after he donned the headband, which leads him to blink for a moment as he finds himself in unfamiliar territory with unfamiliar creatures, and then attack the nearest creature.

The Headband:

In addition to being a **Headband of Intellect** *(DMG page 173)*, this item also grants the ability to read, write, and speak Common. The item is also cursed.

Curse: once donned, the headband can only be removed by means of a *remove curse*, *wish*, or similar spell or magic. In addition, any humanoid who dons the headband must pass a **DC (see scaling table) Constitution saving throw**.

- Success results in the donning creature being immune to the curse for that day, but

the save must be made after each long rest until the result is a failure.

- Failure results in the humanoid being transformed into one of the creatures listed below for as long as they wear the headband. Consult *Chapter 9: Dungeon Master's Workshop NPC Features*, applying the statistic adjustments and abilities to the character who donned the headband.

  1. Bullywug
  2. Kenku
  3. Lizardfolk
  4. Gnoll
  5. Kobold
  6. Troglodyte
  7. Zombie
  8. Orc

These adjustments remain in effect until the headband has been removed. Once removed, the cursed creature reverts to its previous self, but retains all memories if the creature's original intelligence was 9 or higher.

If a *detect magic* spell is cast, both the headband and the leather armor appear magical. However, a curse is not revealed by *detect magic*.

Removing the headband in the tavern could become a very complicated situation. If this occurs, Walbash immediately notices he is in an unfamiliar setting, roars, and attacks. His roar causes all the patrons to quickly vacate the establishment – leaving only the PCs, the barkeep, and the bard.

For Walbash's statistics, refer to girallon in *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, page 152, and increase Walbash's Intelligence to 19, his AC to 15, and give him resistance to slashing damage (from his armor and the headband).

Scaling Suggestions:

Walbash:

Party Level 1-4: Walbash attacks one creature or PC and then flees

Party Level 5+: Walbash fights and acts as a girallon normally would

Headband:

Party Level 1-4: save DC is 14
Party Level 5-8: save DC is 16
Party Level 9-10: save DC is 18
Party Level 11-13: save DC is 20
Party Level 14+: save DC is 23



So, a Barbarian Walks into a Tavern...

by Matthew Gravelyn

Party Level as Presented: Any

Can be adapted to Party Levels: Any

Barbarians are never more dangerous than when they are consumed with blood rage. Except maybe when they're consumed with celebrating after.

> The tavern door slams open, rattling pictures on the wall. In steps a mountain of a man so big you'd swear he was part giant. He's clad in furs and carries a large axe, stained with blood. The room grows silent in anticipation. The barbarian surveys the room, resting his bloody axe on his shoulder. After a tense moment, he bursts into a jovial laugh and moves for the bar.
>
> "Several beers and keep them coming! Tonight, I celebrate the death of my foes!" he declares. He shoves past patrons, displacing several at the bar to accommodate his large frame.

Allow time for the players to conduct their business, interjecting with impolite or rude comments and behavior from the barbarian. He's loud, inconsiderate, and an all-around jerk. Once you feel the players are fed up with the barbarian, or if they indicate they want to take matters into their own hands, move to the next phase of the encounter.

Bouncing the Barbarian

The barbarian has become quite drunk and overstayed his welcome.

> The barkeep looks over to your party.
>
> "You there! I'll give you your drinks for free and a gold each beside to help me take care of this man. What do you say?"
>
> The barbarian turns and surveys you. He snorts and returns to his drink, appearing unconcerned.

If the party assists the barkeep, they can do so in a variety of ways. Fighting the barbarian, however, isn't really an option. He's drunk and surly, but not looking to hurt anyone.

Sleep, *charm*, and similar spells seem to have no effect on the barbarian. One of his baubles is actually a magical charm.

Carrying

The barbarian is clearly not done with his drink and will resist expulsion. To restrain a limb, make a **DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check**. On a success, the limb is held tight. On a failure, the limb swings wildly. If the barbarian has become emotional (see below) the DC for restraining the barbarian is increased to 15.

After a failed attempt to restrain a limb, make an attack with disadvantage against the closest character or NPC. On a hit, they take 1d4 bludgeoning damage. Once all four limbs are restrained, the players can carry him outside the bar, completing the encounter.

Soothing

A character may attempt to convince the barbarian to leave of his own accord. This could be an invitation to another bar or convincing him someone stole from him. This requires a **DC 15 Charisma check** and can utilize Deception, Persuasion, or other relevant skill.

On a success, the barbarian follows your lead. On a failure, the barbarian devolves emotionally. Roll on the following table to see how he responds.

d6	Emotional State
1	Melancholy, weeps uncontrollably
2	Stubborn, clings to the bar
3	Paranoid, convinced a character stole from him
4	Hurt, asks how he can be better
5	Repentant, seeks forgiveness for his deeds
6	Angry, everyone's against him

Bribing

The barbarian isn't taken with coin but has a penchant for magical items. This may come up in conversation or with a successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check** to notice the numerous baubles hanging from his belt. The barbarian will leave peacefully if the party gives an interesting trinket or a convincing forgery.

Just Rewards

After successfully removing the barbarian, the bar erupts into cheers. The barkeep brings you another round, on the house of course, and comps all your bills for the evening. He does withhold the extra 1 gold each until reminded. An honest mistake, I'm sure.

Appendix: Tavern Names

For those in a particular rush, or who just have a bad case of writer's block, here is a list of tavern names to use in your encounter. Enjoy!

Humble Count Inn
The Surging Elemental
The Falling Piercer
The Tricky Axe Inn
The Wizard Arms
The Margrave Tavern
Ebony Spider Inn
The Bawdy Herald
The Diplomat Arms
The Quartermaster Inn
The Stingy Engraver Pub
The Tall Fairy
Greedy Swineherd Tavern
The Prancing Roebuck
The Forgetful Advocate Tavern
Black Aristocrat Pub
The Horseman Inn
The Boisterous Swordsman
The Den Tavern
The Hammer Arms
The Jaunty Mortician
The Boatman Inn
Red Ghost Pub
The Perfumer Arms
The Greasy Dagger
The Whip & Wagon
The Prancing Dinosaur Tavern
The Gargoyle & Horns
The Curved Polearm Tavern
The Rose & Reed
The Flute Pub
The Lighthouse Tavern
Slapdash Cartographer Inn
Tricky Tick Inn
The Rearing Cobra
Silver Jongleur Tavern
The Merry Jackal Inn
The Handy Masseur Pub
The Pantry Inn
The Painter Pub
The Absent-Minded Lich Inn
The Arrogant Artisan
The Weaponsmith & The Tabard Inn
Gobbling Plasterer Inn
The Morose Jester
The King's Respite
Good Potter Arms
Brown Viper Tavern
The Stout Footman Inn
The Tiny Abbot & The Heron Pub
The Whistling Harpy
The Yellow Sickle Arms
Icy Diplomat Pub
The Touchy Shipwright Pub
The Chandler & Captain
The Quill Inn
Pouty Unicorn Arms
Chubby Worm Tavern
Simple Mate Pub
The Baroness & Carriage
The Sleeping Yeti Tavern
Eager Raven Arms
The Disgruntled Shaman
The Lord Inn
The Weaver Arms
The Big Statue
The Putrid Pigkeeper
Lucky Tinker Inn
Round Slave Inn
The Upright Commander
The Cymbal Pub
The Crawling Diver Tavern
Free Herbalist Inn
Teeny Alcove Inn
The Yeoman Tavern
Modest Scribe Pub
Sleeping Miller Tavern
The Barmaid & Priest
Crooked Fishmonger Arms
The Limping Sailor Tavern
Staggering Zombie Tavern
Thick Footman Arms
The Felonious Fletcher
The Leaning Architect Tavern
Saucy Shadow Arms
The Glass Sailor & The Marquess Inn
The Empty Quiver
Salty Slug Tavern
Amorous Cardinal Inn
The Strutting Tiger Pub
The Amorous Wraith Arms
The Ivory Ant Tavern
Strong Fish Inn
The Slithering Serpent Tavern
Moody Lady Tavern
The Clumsy Minstrel