

The Haunted Highland

Author: Casey Christofferson

Additional Materials: Scott Green

Designers: Peter Bradley, Davis Chenault

Editor: Nicki Chenault

Cover Art: Peter Bradley

Art Direction/Cover Design: Peter Bradley

Interior Design/Layout: Troll Lord Games

This module is designed for characters of varying levels and has a varying challenge level.



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The Haunted Highlands

Burtru looked from across the table of the raucous roadhouse to his companions and smiled slightly as the pretty elven barmaid brought their pitcher of ale.

"There is much wealth to be made here in the Karboskian Marches, and fame to be had here as well." He said assuredly. "For certain there is war to the south, but here, there are bandits whose bounties we can collect, and other wanted folk to be brought to justice."

Burtru curled the ends of his neatly waxed moustache and glanced at his companions with a wry grin as they smiled and nodded in agreement. "I understand there is plunder to be had as well, for many ancient ruins lay but a few short days travel from this fine roadhouse establishment." Burtru looked around with a smirk and a wink at the debauchery within the smoky chamber before again turning his gaze to that of his seated companions. As Burtru opened his mouth to say more, his eyes met the baleful gaze of a grizzled barbarian veteran sitting in the corner upon a chair made from the bones of ogres and the skins of beasts both strange and dire.

At length the wild-man held Burtru's gaze before he spoke with a grizzled accent, quite foreign even to this uncivilized stretch of the Duchy of Karbosk.

"Surely you Bowbes do suppose to find ye some wealth out here in the frontier, aye?" the wild man said, his voice gravely from many forays upon the field of battle. "Know you that there is also death. None of ye look as if ye have the winters under your girdles to be able to survive for long in the Witch Moors, nor the bravery to face the wicked spirits which hold sway over the Mythnoc Cairns. Perhaps I be wrong, as I been wrong afore." The heavily scarred warrior took a deep draft from his drinking horn before continuing.

There was something stormy and feral in his eyes that kept those seated around Burtru rapt.

"It makes no matter, if ye live ye will have proven me wrong and ye have more guts an' bravery than I would have expected from such finely heeled folk as yourselves. Thar be strange and weird things out there. If ye prove your mustard, ye may make heroes yet. I wager not all of ye shall return again to The Dirty Bowbe's, however. Those of you who do come back through my doors will be a sight different than ye are just now, so enjoy your drinks but be wary when you head out into these here haunted highlands." He paused then for effect, fixing his storm-wrought eyes upon each of the faces huddled around the table.

"Come ye again an' see me at the end of your adventure and I shall buy a drink for the survivors. We shall have a toast in memory of ye dead." With that last comment the scarred foreigner lifted his mug to the troupe and nodded to them, guzzling the remnants of his drinking horn in one pull. He then fixed them with a wide grin and let fourth a great gale of deep roaring laughter which sent shivers down the spines of those seated at Burtru's table. As his laughter subsided he wrapped his bearskin cloak about his heavily muscled shoulders and was almost instantly asleep.

Introduction

The Haunted Highlands is an adventure campaign setting and a Castle Keeper should find more than enough information to begin an adventure and campaign setting with the details provided herein. As such, the marches of the Haunted Highlands do not have a level of difficulty for their use. Instead, the various areas

within are detailed with a "suggested" level of play, and the Castle Keeper should adjust the appropriate stats as necessary to challenge players. The areas of adventure are considered fluid and ever-changing and are designed to be adjusted in order to reflect your style of play or needs of your gaming group. Thus, handicapping the encounter areas with level adjustments would prove foolish at best as you are likely to adjust the encounters anyway.

Certainly a hydra's lair may prove too difficult for low level characters, but may be thought of as "just right" for higher level play. Likewise, a warren of goblins may be considered too easy a challenge for higher level adventuring bands, but just right for low level parties looking to cut their teeth on high adventure.

In order to fully enjoy the adventures that await players exploring the Haunted Highlands, the party should have at least one cleric or character capable of casting divine spells, as well as a player character capable of using arcane magic. The party should also include at least one rogue, and be filled out with a compliment of characters with fighting skills such as fighters, paladins, rangers or bards.

The Haunted Highlands details with an five the areas of adventure and a fully detailed roadhouse intended to serve as a base of operations for the player characters. The areas of adventure are each designed to be small enough to fill out a single evening of enjoyable fantasy role playing. Adventure information such as the actual die number needed to overcome a challenge is provided to help give new Castle Keepers a simple understanding of the rules as they are used "in game". Such detail is initially important, and saves the Castle Keeper time in referencing rules.

Also found here is a brief history of the Karboskian Marches, information on how to use this book to establish a new Castles & Crusades® fantasy campaign, and various Castle Keeper tricks to keep the players interested, thus giving the product almost unlimited potential for utility and re-use.

Further, a comprehensive list of deities which may be used to enhance the flavor of your campaign is available at rpgnow.com as a \$1.00 pdf download. These deities are by no means a necessary part of your home brew campaign setting, but rather are intended as good substitutes or additions to be used as you see fit.

History of the Marches

The Karboskian Marches are named for the royal family of Karbosk, a hereditary duchy whose borderlands have consistently been plagued by wild beasts, humanoid armies and other foes both seen and unseen.

Ancient History: The Duchy of Karbosk was established 800 years ago when King Pieter II of Rodensia established the line, granting the hard won border territory to his most feared general, Leonid Karbosk. A great civil war amongst the nobles of Rodensia brought about its eventual decline. Now the former empire occupies less than 1/10th of its original holdings. Despite the collapse of King Pieter's empire, the Duchy of Karbosk has maintained virtual autonomy from its old masters due to clever diplomacy and the presence of Lake Veyona, separating it both geographically and militarily from its former masters. What is known to few save the

most educated sages is that what now stands as sprawling wilderness the Duchy of Karbosk was once home to an even greater civilization than the one King Pieter had established.

It was upon these wild highlands, broad lakeshores and clear rivers that the ancient empire of Umeshti once stood. Here, sorcerer kings and priests communed with the very gods at the beginnings of mortal civilization. All was lost one fateful evening 10,000 years ago when a meteor was cast down from the heavens by angry gods, leaving nothing but a great crater and cursed sinkhole reaching deep into the crust of the earth below.

Recent History: In recent times, the outer marches of Karbosk have become increasingly dangerous. Humanoid armies have always threatened the Karboskian frontiers, but now something more sinister has risen and war has erupted in every corner of the Duchy. A powerful and some say eldritch orc king has risen to power and driven every humanoid within reach of his bloody axe before him in a frenzy of slaughter and mayhem.

So rapid was the invasion of this foul chieftain, known to those who have survived his plundering as Yorgach the Ravager, that even the capitol city of Dro Mandras has suffered a heavy blow. East Dro Mandras lies in ruins, with only small walled sections of the town center left standing, but under constant siege. Luckily, the humanoid army's greed, infighting and ignorance of river navigation have staved off the tide of the invasion for now.

Unfortunately for the frontier citizens of Karbosk, Duke Mandras Karbosk V and his armies are fully occupied in the recapture of East Dro Mandras, leaving much of the frontier unguarded. Opportunists not yet conscripted into the ranks of Yorgach's horde now plunder the farmlands on all sides, leaving few places untouched, save Dirty's Roadhouse and The Magi Tower of Nesturon spared.

It is into this background of violence, warfare and mystery that the characters now find themselves. Their actions may have a direct impact on the world around them. They may rise to the occasion and carve a name for themselves as heroes, villains, opportunists or saviors. The choice is theirs. Enough information is included here to kick start their new adventuring careers. What happens next will be determined by role play and a few throws of the dice. Enjoy.

Chapter 1:

The Roadhouse on the Marches

Dirty's Roadhouse sits atop a small bluff some ten leagues (or 35 miles) from Dro Mandras. The square stone structure is surrounded by a wooden palisade which overlooks one of the major land roads between Dro Mandras and other settlements of the region.

Dirty's serves as a hub for merchants, soldiers, mercenaries and adventurers seeking wealth and fame within the area. The roadhouse has a somewhat rough edged reputation, especially in the more civilized areas of the region. In Dro Mandras, the roadhouse is frequently spoken of in scornful terms by members of the city's law enforcement as a place where bounty hunters, bandits and other undesirables go to hide from the long arm of the law.

Of course such talk is often squelched in the presence of Dirty's proprietor, a grizzled Bowbe worshipping barbarian known only as "Bull". Despite the foul reputation most "civilized" folk have for his establishment, he is well respected by military authorities, who have been known to call upon his sword and glaive in times of trouble. This is owed to the fact that his prowess and fearless thirst for battle bolsters the moral of their conscripted armies.

Bull and his squad of hard nosed bouncers are not above allowing a scuffle to last as long as it needs to. They do, however, step in to see that that noone actually dies, though this has been known to happen on occasion.

A. The Palisade

The palisade which surrounds the roadhouse is ten feet high and made from sharpened timbers. A three foot wide walkway surrounds the inner wall of the palisade, offering Bull's sentries an easy view of the travelers' road and the surrounding area. Trees from the surrounding woodland have been removed to a distance of 100 feet on all sides of the roadhouse outside the palisade to insure that the view is unobstructed. The palisade is typically patrolled by 1d2 sentries/bouncers in the employ of the roadhouse's owners.

A single gate opens onto the roadhouse grounds which encompass the roadhouse's outbuildings, including its stables, blacksmith and beer garden.

Sentries 1-2 (These are 2nd level, chaotic neutral, human, barbarians whose vital stats are HP 18, AC 16. Their primary attributes are strength, wisdom and constitution. Their significant attributes are strength 15. They each carry a chain shirt, large wooden shield, dagger, battle axe, longbow and 1-10gp.)

B. The Gate

A heavy wooden gate lies open during daylight hours when there is no trouble in the area from marauding bands of humanoids or bandits. Skulls and sometimes the fresh heads of trouble-makers, goblins, ogres and trolls are affixed high atop the gate. A sign posted below the severed heads indicates the profitable bounty offered by the roadhouse management for clearing the domain of undesirables.

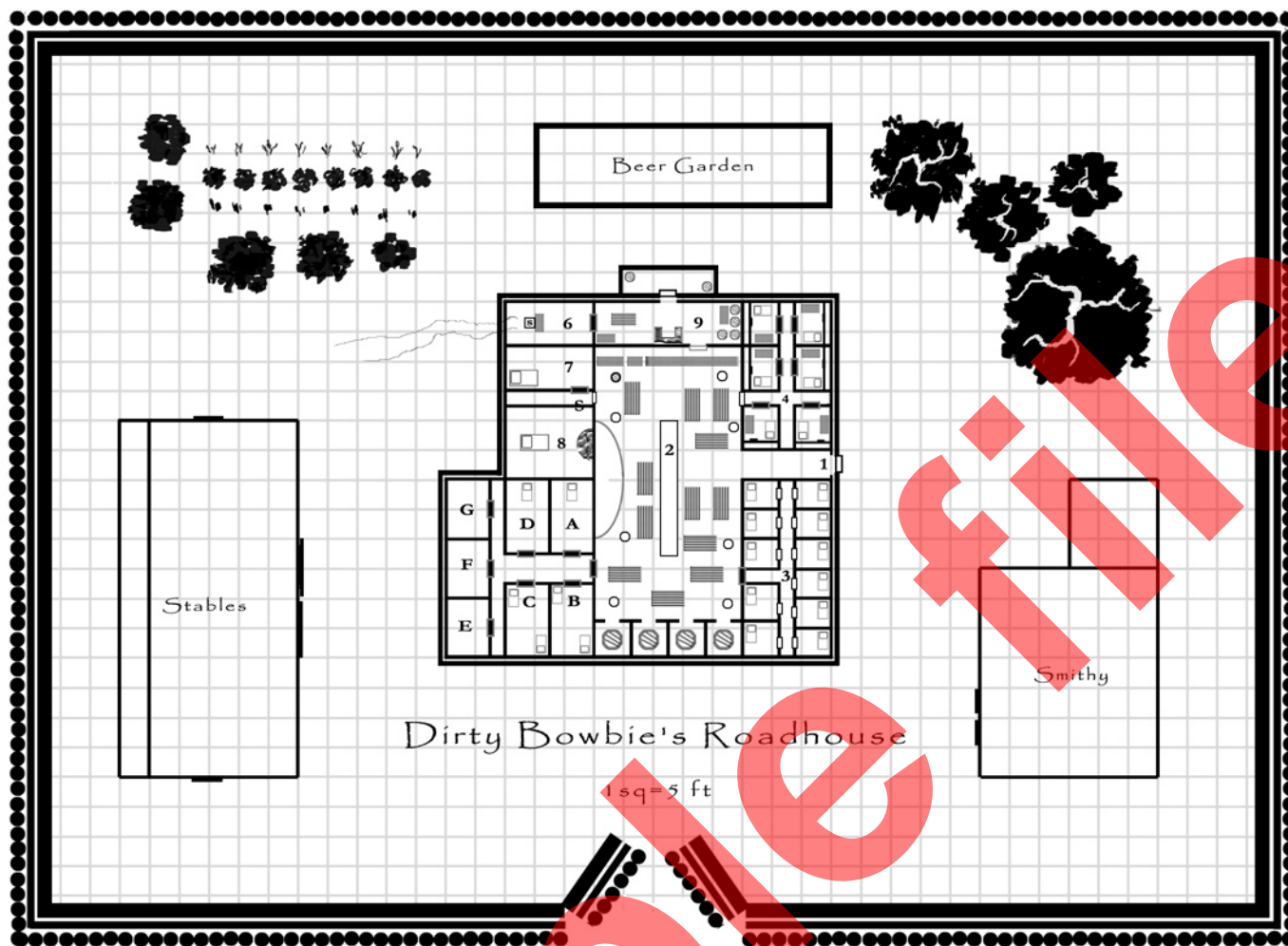
This grotesque display serves multiple purposes as Bull sees it. First off it sends fear into the hearts of foes who would seek to cause trouble in his establishment. Secondly, it keeps the majority of uppity paladins and noble knights off of his land as well, which suits him just fine. They don't drink or fondle barmaids anyhow.

Roadhouse Bounties!

Kobold Head: 2sp
Fresh Goblin Head: 5sp
Fresh Orc Head: 10sp
Gnoll Head: 15sp
Ogre Head: 2gp
Troll Head (scorched only): 5gp and a free drink

For bigger beasts or suspected bandits inquire within.

C. Smithy Udru Ironhammer runs the smithy for Bull and his silent partners. The red bearded dwarf is skilled in mending broken armor and can manufacture any metal weapons, armor, or metal



implement such as horseshoes or cooking implements at a 15% markup from the standard rate due to the often scarce supply of good quality iron ore. Udru is typically friendly and engaging as a businessman, but keeps to himself, having few true friends in the roadhouse other than Bull. The nature of Udru's relationship with Bull is a mystery to most, but it is expected that Bull once saved the dwarf's life, or that they had done time together in some far off prison. Others claim that Udru was wanted in foreign lands for some unknown crime and only Bull would give him a chance to redeem himself.

Udru Ironhammer (*He is a neutral, dwarf, 5th level barbarian whose vital stats are HP 38, AC 19. His primary attributes are strength and constitution. His significant attributes are strength 16 and constitution 16. He carries a +2 breastplate, large steel shield, warhammer. He owns smithy tools and 120gp.*)

D. Stables

Handle the Druid runs the stables for the roadhouse. The young druid finds peace and harmony seeing to beasts of burden, and often heals them from the wear and tear of the road with natural herbs and poultices and occasionally through the use of natural magic. Handle charges 5sp per day in stabling fees per beast which he splits with Bull. He charges 25gp for any healing that mounts or beasts of burden may need. He offers helpful suggestions on the care and treatment of animals. Handle has been known from time to time to become agitated with drovers and soldiers who treat their beasts poorly and is not above letting them know exactly how he feels.

Handle (*He is a neutral, human, 3rd level druid whose vital stats are HP 15, AC 13. His primary attributes are wisdom, constitution and charisma. His significant attributes are wisdom 17 and constitution 13. He carries leather armor, quarterstaff, sling, potion cure light wounds x2. He can cast the following spells: 0-detect poison, first aid, purify food and drink; 1st-calm animals, goodberry, entangle plants. 2nd-cure light wounds, heat metal.*)

The stables have sufficient space to hold up to a dozen large animals such as horses and oxen. Overflow generally grazes the land outside the palisade.

E. The Beer Garden

Open from the first thaw of spring until the first snows of winter, this large section of the yard is popular for folk who enjoy the outdoors yet still enjoy the safety of the palisade walls to keep the wolves at bay. A covered bar built along the north wall of the grounds has a door which attaches to the main building, where food may be brought in from the kitchens, and kegs rolled out to sate the thirsts of weary travelers. Forgutt, a halfling of middle years tends the bar here along with a couple serving maids and bouncers in Bull's employ. The chubby halfling is loaded with jokes and knowledge and was once a lesser guild master with the Back Alley Gang in Dro Mandras. After being passed over for promotions in the guild due to what he claims was abject racism on the part of his former boss, Azrael Lash (a co-owner of Bowbe's) he made his way to Dirty's where his skill as a brewer got him a job and his own stall behind the big house. As a side job, Forgutt is known to sell

“tools of the trade” to passing rogues, and may offer patronage in his various skills at a price of 20gp per level. During winter months, Forgutt moves indoors to help tend bar and is known to step in and help Holly with the cooking and cleaning (as this gives him an opportunity to check out some of the guests valuables).

Forgutt (He is a neutral, halfling, 6th level rogue whose vital stats are HP 18, AC 16. His primary attributes are dexterity and wisdom. His significant attribute is dexterity 16. He carries leather armor, +1 shortsword, sling, +2 ring of protection and 2d20+200 gp in gold and jewelry at any time.)

Bouncers (These are chaotic neutral, human, 2nd level barbarians whose vital stats are HP 18, AC 14. Their primary attributes are strength, wisdom and constitution. Their significant attributes are strength 16. They carry a dagger, greataxe, chainshirt and 1d10gp.)

For prices on the bill of fair for the Beer Garden, see the common room description in Area 2 of the roadhouse.

F. The Roadhouse

1. Entrance The roadhouse is built entirely of well cinched and fitted stone from its foundation to its rafters, suggesting the employ of dwarven architects and builders. The roadhouse is constructed in the square shape of a northern hill fort with walls roughly ten feet high coming to a peaked roof with a smoke slit that runs along the length of the common room along the western wing. The broad main door leading to the common room stands in the center of the western wall of the roadhouse. It is watched by a half-orc bouncer named Foog during evening hours, and his twin brother Moog during the day.

Moog and Foog (These are chaotic neutral, half-orc, 2nd level barbarians whose vital stats are HP 18 and AC 14. Their primary attributes are strength and constitution. Their significant attributes are strength 16. They each carry a dagger, two handed axe, chainshirt and 1d10gp.)

2. The Common Room The common room is the heart of the roadhouse. It is a large chamber with stone pillars carved with knotted dragons and the faces of fairies, skulls, giants and heroes supporting the roof. There are a dozen stout oak tables lining a long firepit which sits directly beneath the smoke slit which may be shuttered in winter months with buffalo skins to keep the chill out or keep rain from dousing the fresh game roasting over the pit. During summer months, most of the cooking is done outdoors and the fire pit is used for other more martial purposes.

The firepit is three feet deep, five feet wide and twenty feet long, easily large enough to burn entire logs. Out of respect for Handle, Bull sees that a tree is planted for every one that is cut to fuel his fires.

The north end of the common room consists of the bar, behind which are doors leading to the roadhouse office and stores. A plethora of beverages and foodstuffs are available, offering a dining experience seldom found upon the frontier. Food is hot, filling and delicious if not somewhat strange. The liquor is strong and warm, denoting the preference of the owners.

The western end of the common room has a small stage where dancing girls and bards are known to perform from time to time to the thrill or derision of the travelers.

The southern end of the common room has several alcoves hung with animal skins which offer privacy for those who wish to enjoy the comforts of the roadhouse away from the watchful eye of the common guests.

A pair of half elven twins named Syriel and Lorelia act as serving wenches under the direction of Holly, a human maiden who is an expert in managing the day to day affairs of running the roadhouse when Bull is adventuring or cannot be bothered. Holly also does the majority of the cooking and cleaning for the roadhouse. Much to the delight of the patrons, the twins are known to occasionally dance upon the stage if a skilled bard or traveling performer comes to call.

The common room is typically filled with 2d8 travelers of various races and nationalities. The Castle Keeper is encouraged to stock the tavern with whichever travelers and “story hook” contacts they feel appropriate for their adventure campaign. Likewise, it may be helpful to roll up a set of random patrons from the following list to add to the tableau of a boisterous roadhouse tavern and inn.

The Patrons of Dirty Bowbe's Roadhouse

Random Patrons: Roll d20

1	Merchant and Bodyguard	11	Wizard
2	Rogue	12	Illusionist
3	Fighter	13	Knight
4	Barbarian	14	Paladin
5	Woodsman/Hunter	15	Bard
6	Cleric	16	Commoner
7	Ranger	17	Commoner
8	Druid	18	Commoner
9	Bounty Hunter	19	Commoner
10	Soldier Patrol	20	Commoner

Patron Alignment: Roll d8

1	Chaotic Evil
2	Lawful Evil
3	Neutral Evil
4	Neutral
5	Chaotic Neutral
6	Chaotic Good
7	Neutral Good
8	Lawful Good

Patron Race*: Roll d10

1	Half-Orc
2	Elf
3	Half-Elf
4	Halfling
5	Gnome
6	Dwarf
7-10	Human

*Excludes paladins who must be lawful good, druids who must be neutral, or monks who must be lawful.

Encounter Descriptions

Merchant and Bodyguard: This encounter is with a traveling merchant (any player character class or commoner of 3rd level) and their bodyguard (typically a fighter of 3rd level). The merchant has common goods to sell as found under the equipment list in the *Castles and Crusades Players Handbook*. There is a 10% chance that the merchant is hiring adventurers to guard their caravan for a trek to Dro Mandras or some other settlement in the area.

Rogue: This wandering rogue is between jobs or hiding from law enforcement at the roadhouse. The rogue may be of any level but is typically of 1st - 4th level. The rogues services are for hire, however he may decide that the player characters look like the perfect target for a little burglary or pick pocketing.

Fighter: This fighter is a mercenary or professional fighting man who is currently looking for new employers or to join up with an adventuring band. The fighter may be of any level but is typically of 1st - 4th level. He may be hired by adventurers for a percentage of the treasure haul and often serves as a good meat shield for wizards and their ilk.

Barbarian: This outlander finds comfort in the familiar settings provided by Dirty's. The barbarian is typically of 1st - 4th level and may be looking to sign up with an adventuring band to plunder long forgotten riches. When the barbarian drinks, he likes to fight and bully smaller opponents, often coaxing them into the fire pit during summer months for some good old fashioned fisticuffs.

Woodsman/Hunter: This encounter is with a commoner or low level ranger who makes his living bringing fresh game to the roadhouse and staying around for drinks and frivolous times. The hunter is a decent enough guide and knows the way to The Crater of Umeshiti, but is reluctant to enter its cursed confines. For a nominal fee he offers to set the player characters upon their path to glory or ruin.

Cleric: This encounter is with a cleric of any faith who is on a religious expedition to retrieve artifacts and relics important to his church. The cleric may be of any level but is typically of 1st - 4th level. It is possible that the cleric may offer his services as a turner of undead and healer if offered a cut of any treasures found, specifically those of a religious nature. The cleric may be available for scrolls, potions or healing if the price is right and the alignments are complimentary to their faith.

Ranger: The ranger is typically a guide or tracker who has come out of the wilderness for a warm bed, a hot meal or with warnings of approaching enemies. The ranger may be of any level but is typically of 1st - 4th level. It is possible that the ranger may temporarily join the party as a guide and expert in taking out wilderness foes.

Druid: On occasion, druids make their way to the roadhouse to see what is going on and gain information from the world outside. As their animal companions are welcome in the roadhouse, and Bull is respectful of their faith, they feel more at ease visiting the roadhouse than making the trek to Dro Mandras. The druid may be of any level but is typically of 1st - 4th level.

Bounty Hunter: The bounty hunter may be a monk, ranger, rogue, wizard, fighter or assassin of at least 4th level. There is a 5% chance that the bounty hunter mistakes one of the player characters for

his quarry and waits for them after they leave the roadhouse to spring a trap with which to take their "target" dead or alive. Likewise, there is a 15% chance that the bounty hunter is spying on some other patron of the tavern. In this event, the bounty hunter's target may attempt to hire the player characters to protect them from the bounty hunter's menace. The bounty hunter may attempt to ingratiate himself with the party in order to gain information about their traveling companions or acquaintances.

Soldier Patrol: Ever unpopular at the roadhouse, this patrol of 1d6+2, 1st level fighters and their 3rd level officer (fighter or knight) are prowling Duke Karbosk's marches in search of bandits, humanoid foes or criminals who have escaped capture. Bull and his staff are polite to the "official" visitors, but see to it that their search is conducted quickly and without incident. Bull has been known to hide folks who are on the run from the law for a nominal fee, sneaking them through the trap door exit in his office well before the soldiers arrive.

Wizard: This encounter is with a wizard who may be of any level, but is typically of 1st - 4th level. The wizard is an itinerant spell caster and seeker of arcane lore, who may hire on with player characters if offered a cut of any treasures, specifically those of



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