

THE HAUNTING OF THE INN

By Donald MacVittie

A STOPOVER FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 1-3



“Please help! Something terrible happened at the Inn last night... No one who goes in comes out, and all of the ale in town is inside!”

The wind whistles through the gables, a shutter on the second-floor bangs regularly. The door is closed, and no light shows through the ground floor windows. A miasma of rotten meat mixed with the scent of turned earth drifts through the door. A sign showing a stocky dwarf with a bushy beard creaks as it sways in the wind. Do you dare to enter The Dwarf’s Beard, or do you go without ale tonight?

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The Dwarf's Beard Inn would look normal enough, if not for the stinking fog rolling out of it. But it definitely doesn't smell normal. No spilt beer, roasting lamb or fresh bread smells coming from this inn. Instead, the scent of the grave intertwines with rotten meat to make a sickening miasma.

Players, you know this by now. Stop here or the contents will haunt your dreams. That or the fun of the adventure will be lost because you already know what will happen. One or the other.

Game Master Introduction

This module was written with a party of five 2nd level characters in mind. Powerful 1st level characters should be able to navigate it, and weaker 3rd level characters should find a challenge.

Last night was a normal night at The Dwarf's Beard. Local customers, staff, and those just passing through intermingled in the taproom, having ale and talking. It was just getting to the part of the night that the owner Itram Bilentian hated – when just enough ale had been consumed that a local might take it amiss if one of those passing through said something off color, or looked appreciatively at the wrong person, or looked at a table, or breathed wrong. Hurtender – commonly called 'Ox' – could always be counted on to pick just such a fight, whenever he had enough coin to buy ale. Like last night.

Yesterday they were digging out a new cold storage area in the basement and found a strange glowing blue idol surrounded by bones, buried in the dirt under the inn. Itram stopped them all from digging so that no one touched it, and sent to the village of Hartsend for the priest. He paid off the workers, including Hurtender, and set about preparing for the night's business. But last night, instead of picking a fight, Hurtender took someone down to show off the idol. Itram was just about to send one of the staff down to get them out of the basement when everything went dark.

Anyone in town can tell the party about the glowing idol surrounded by bones, and if it comes up, they will discuss Hurtender, and how he is both as strong and as headstrong as an ox. When asked about the idol, townsfolk will mention that a message was sent to Hartsend, two days away, this morning. So a priest should be here in four, maybe five days.

What's Going On?

Hurtender was showing off, and took hold of the idol to pull it out and give his guest a closer look. Unfortunately, when he touched it, it touched him back. He is in the basement, totally transformed by the experience, and everyone in the inn was changed into a random... thing. Everyone who has gone in since then has been similarly impacted. The party's primary goal should be to get in, fight their way to Hurtender, and make him drop the idol. That will break the idol's contact with the world, and all will return to normal. Those the party killed on the way here will also return to normal, but still be very dead, which might make townspeople less appreciative of the party's efforts.

For every ten minutes that the party is in the inn and Hurtender still holds the idol, a DC 5 Charisma save must be made by each party member. Those who fail will start to turn into a random monster of a power similar to those used here (e.g.: Lower CR/level). If the PC fails its next save, the PC fully becomes that monster. Should the GM not wish to track time that closely for the entire module, checks after each room is explored will approximate without the extra record-keeping.

Throughout the inn there are noises. The rhythmic chopping coming from the kitchen, the squeak of rats from the nursery, the claws scraping wood coming from the common room...

To meet space/time constraints, this module does not include creature statistics or boxed text. All monsters are SRD.

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Area Key

1. Taproom

This entire room is magically dark as if under the effect of a Darkness spell. If the party has a way to see through it, they will see the **Gibbering Mouther** located in front of the door to the hallway, rather than happen on to it, but it will also see them, allowing it to both babble and spit. Any babbling the Mouther does will be things commonly said around an inn. The Gibbering Mouther is Itram, the innkeeper. Or was Itram... As the party nears him, the wooden floor will become softer, then mushy, then party member's feet will actually sink into the floor when they are within 10 feet.

2. Servant Bunkroom

This is where the servants normally sleep. They were all working hard when the trouble started, but three ran back into here when all the chaos broke out. As they ran they transformed into **Zombies**.

3. Storeroom

The storeroom holds the steps to the basement, and is protected by a **Ghast** and a **Ghoul**. These were two of Hurtender's fellow construction crewmembers, now serving him.

4. The Kitchens

This room is pandemonium when the party enters. The kitchen crew were driven violently insane, and this gives them strength. We will count them as a **Bandit Leader** (the chef) and five **Bandits**. (replace weapons with common kitchen implements – meat cleavers, fire pokers, iron skillet, etc.). Fortunately for the party, the sudden change has left them disoriented. One has pushed another into the northern fireplace, and pushes them back in every time the first comes out. The bandit leader is chopping at the southernmost table, and the others are ripping out foodstuffs – flour, sides of beef, cornmeal –and tossing them around. They will rally to attack those who haven't "Made the change" yet, with a goal of subduing them and waiting for the idol to transform the subdued. Meanwhile, they will continue to rant and do totally inappropriate things like cutting off fingers – theirs, the other kitchen staff, the party's...

5. Food Locker

Commonly used foods are stored here – cheese wheels, flour, dried meats and berries. On one of the meat hooks hangs a person, the hook through their back. This person is a **Zombie**, and if a party member gets within five feet, it will come to life and attack them.

6. Stairwell and Upstairs Hall

Pillows and bedding have been strewn about the hallway, someone seeming to have ripped them open and kicked them around. There are two Dwarves in the hallway in full armor, still slashing at pillows and sending feathers flying. These Dwarves have been turned into **Duergar** by the Idol's magic, and when they look up they will offer a twisted, horrific visage and then charge to attack. The dwarves were a master smith and his apprentices, delivering a *Longsword +1* to a customer in a remote city, and just passing through.

7. Guest Room

This room has been destroyed. The bed has been hacked to pieces, the chest has the lid ripped off, and all of the drawers of the room's dresser were pulled out and tossed around the room. In the room is a **Berserker**, formerly a caravan guard. He will attack on sight, and if he can get through the open door will wander the halls looking for anything to fight thereafter.

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8. Guest Room

A minor noble left his pampered Chihuahua in this room, and now it is a **Death Dog**. It is looking for its “master”, and will rush to attack if the door is opened. Once it tastes blood, it will fight to the finish, but if the party immediately gets out of the way, it will bound past them into the hall and go looking for its master.

9. Guest Room

The bedding in this room has been piled into a circle, and a female elf with large, greasy wings sits in the middle of this bedding. This was Feria, a Half-Elf who the idol has transformed into a **Harpy**. She will immediately start to sing when the door opens.

10. Guest Room

This room appears empty. If the party has bright lights, it will continue to appear empty while they search it. If the party has normal torches or equivalent for light, the shadows cast by this light source will give the room’s denizens heart, and three **Shadows** will attack the party. This was a group of prosperous traders before the idol was invoked.

11. Common Room

There are five **Zombies** in this room, clawing at the walls. As soon as the door is opened, they will turn to the party and attack. Prior to the idol’s transformation, these were a couple on a pilgrimage, two mercenaries, and a messenger taking a small package of jade between traders as part of arranging a trade deal.

12. Guest Room

This room is empty, the door smashed in and the room ripped apart.

13. Guest Room

A feminine figure sleeps in the bed as the party opens the door. It is not, of course, asleep, but rather waiting for someone to get close. This high-elf was transformed into a **Drow** by the idol, and is using the guise of sleep to let others get close to her. She will explode from the bed, blade swinging when the first person gets close. *Note, she was transformed, but not her gear. She does have a light crossbow, but normally would never use poison, so it is not poisoned.* Before the idol transformed her, she was on her way to tutor a noble’s daughter in self-defense.

14. Store Room

There are linens, clothes suitable for the inn’s staff to wear, and bundles of firewood in this room. An open barrel in the southeast corner holds water, and has three buckets hanging from hooks around the lip.

15. Swarm of Rats

There are six empty cribs around this room, and a mass of wriggling, squirming rats climbing over and around them. The mass heads for the party the moment the door is opened. It is a **Swarm of Rats**. These were the children of the inn’s employees and the innkeeper’s mother-in-law before the idol changed them over.

16. Parent’s Room

This well-kept room appears to be untouched and empty. In reality, the father-in-law of the innkeeper was here, and has been transformed into a **Gelatinous Cube**. It sits directly across the doorway, and is just waiting for any creature to come along, open the door, and step right in.

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17. Daughter's Room

The daughter of the innkeeper ran back to this, her bedroom, when things got scary. And here the idol turned her into an **Ettercap**. She has spent the time since alternating between preparing a lair and freaking out, depending upon how lucid she is at that moment. When the party opens the door, the room will have webbing all about it, and she will be in the webbing over the bed. Roll D100, on 1-50, she will attack the party immediately. On 51-100 she will plead with the party to kill her for one round, and then attack them.

18. Innkeepers' Sitting Room

This room has cabinets, a woodstove, a table and a fireplace in it. There are three smashed chairs, but nothing else in the room.

19. Innkeepers' Bedroom

This is Itram and Esalia Bilentian's bedroom. They own the inn, Itram caring for the taproom, and Esalia taking care of the guest rooms. That is until last night. He is the Gibbering Mouther in Area #1, and she is here, having been transformed into a **Wererat**. She is confused and scared, and will attack anyone that opens the door.

20. Private Meeting Room

Town meetings, paid for events, and inn staff get-togethers are the primary uses of this room. There is a door on the far wall, and a large rug in the center of the room. The rug is actually a stable-hand who was transformed into a **Rug of Smothering**. He is positioned in front of the door in the east wall, such that special precautions will have to be taken to avoid stepping on him. He will attack the first person to step on him.

21. Private Prep Room

When area #20 is used for a private meeting, this is where the staff prepares food and sets up ale. There are three kegs of high-quality ale here, a cold cooking fireplace, some basic cooking stores, and a **Darkmantle** hiding in the chimney of the fireplace. The Darkmantle will jump out and attack if a PC gets close enough.

22. Cold Storage

It is chilly down here – significantly cooler than upstairs. The floors at the foot of the steps are hard packed dirt, the eastern end of the room has been cleared, and the door on the eastern wall is slightly ajar. The western end of the room has hanging fresh meat, a wine rack with 30 bottles of wine ranging from cheap (most of them) to super-rare (one of them). Seven kegs and dozens of grain sacks fill out the western end of the room. In the clear space by the door stand two **Ogre Zombies**. These were Hurtender's fellow construction workers, now his guards. They will prevent anyone from going through the door on the east wall, but will not attack unless the party attacks them, or tries to go through the door.

23. New Construction

This area is apparently in the process of being dug out. There are timbers along the walls, holding the dirt back, and shovels, buckets, and a hammer lying on the floor. The eastern wall has hundreds of shining white bits sticking out of it that close inspection will show to be bone. Standing in this space, crowding it in every dimension, is what used to be Hurtender, now a **Chuul**. He holds the glowing blue idol in one pincer, so only gets a single pincer attack each round, and is too big to fit through the doorway, so cannot reach creatures more than five feet down the hall. His only focus in the world is to keep the idol safe and active. Because he has a Chuul's intelligence, he will not think to shut the door if attacked with ranged weapons, and he cannot get out of line-of-sight because he really is too big for this tiny room.

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Once he is killed, or the idol somehow removed from his grasp, everyone in the inn will return to normal, and any magical effects around the inn will be dispelled.

Aftermath

These monstrosities are actually people, most of them locals. If the party killed everything they found, when the bodies return to normal, the townsfolk will not be pleased. If the party managed to get to Hurtender and get the idol away from him while killing five or fewer locals, they will be deemed heroes. The further above five that number goes, the less welcoming town will be. Should they do something horribly destructive like burn the inn down, they will be branded outlaws and a delegation sent to the ruling authorities to demand they be brought to justice. Note that anyone in a “guest room” or the “common room” is not a local, and doesn’t count for the purposes of angering the townspeople.

If the party is deemed to be heroes, the town will scrape together a 100 gold piece reward. Should the dwarves have died, the town will also hand over the *longsword +1*, which the party may wish to return to the dwarves, or keep for themselves. Of course, the party will have the *Chaos Idol*. The townsfolk certainly don’t want it left laying around. In some campaigns, perhaps the party will research the rituals required to set it up for activation. Note that if those rituals are discovered this is a powerful item, so such research should require a lot of adventure.

CHAOS IDOL

Usually a statuette of pale blue stone depicting a horrifying humanoid with tentacles coming from its mouth, some of these idols are designed to look more innocent.

A Chaos Idol is a remnant of a long-lost religion that thrived on chaos. Used in their religious practices, those found today are dangerous leftovers of a civilization that destroyed itself.

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement- priest)

Once attuned, the stone can be activated via ritual. Once activated, the next person who touches it spews forth a chaos field in a sphere 100’ in radius.

This field transforms all living creatures in the sphere into random abominations. Some “abominations” are relative to the recipient – Elves can be turned into Drow, Dwarves into Duergar – others are truly abominations.

This effect lasts for as long as the person who activated it remains touching the object, something that anyone other than a priest of chaos will feel compelled to do.

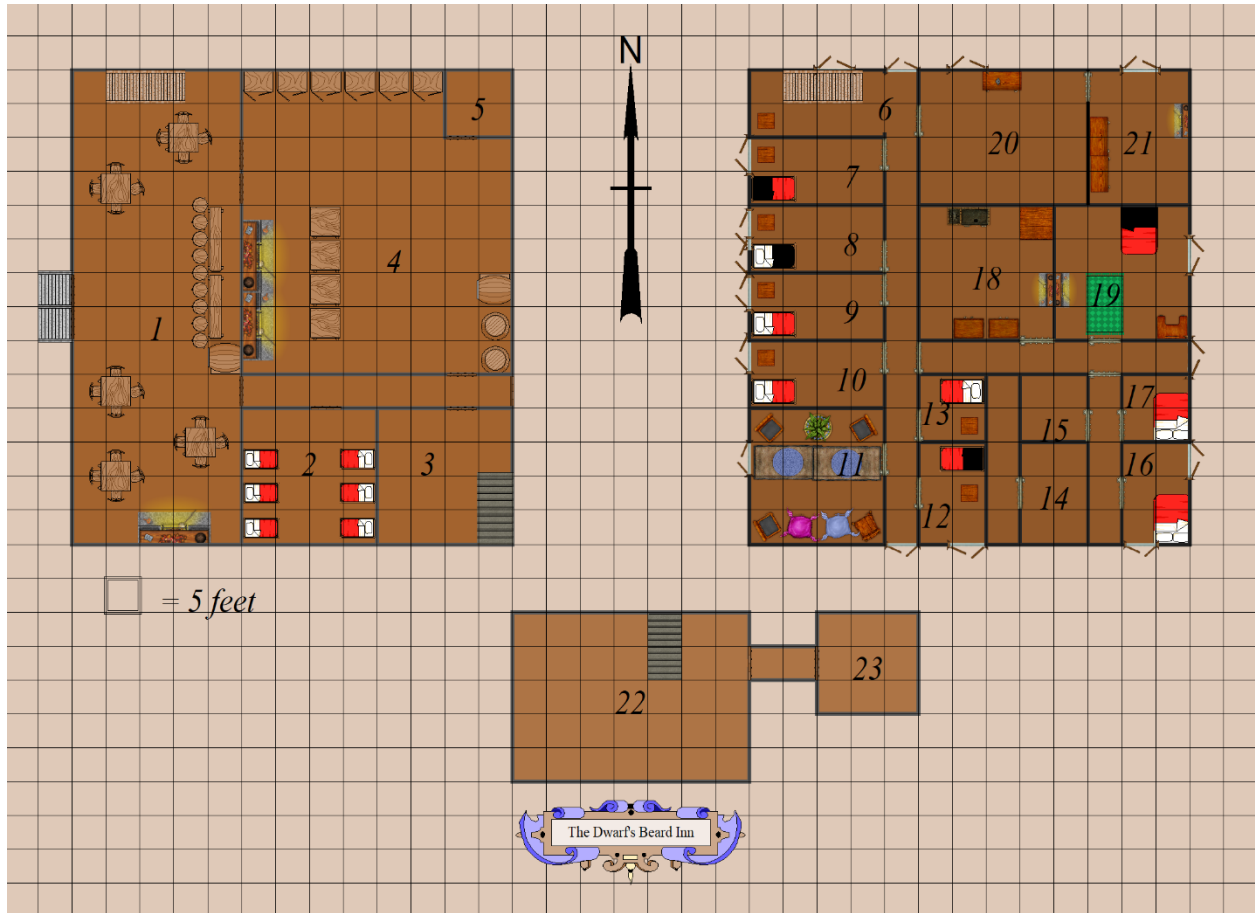
Once de-activated, the idol must be ritually prepared for activation again.

The secrets of the ritual of activation have been lost in the mists of time, making these truly rare items practically worthless.

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Maps



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