Tangible Taverns: The Bull & The Bear

By

dire rugrat publishing



Tangible Taverns: The Bull & The Bear

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Foreword

ANN

Why taverns? While I rarely begin RPG campaigns in them these days, (it is quite cliché after all) without fail the first thing my players do when they visit a new community or return home is stop in at the local tap house. If this is a first visit, they want to know what it looks like. How the food smells. How good the ale tastes. Is there a game of cards or dice they can join? Are the patrons friendly? Is there music? Is the tavern mistress thin or fat? If they've visited umpteen times before, they may still ask those questions but they will also want to know which other regulars are around and what they've been up to. Why is this?

I think it all comes back to the idea that the local tavern, or public house, is the beating heart of its community. In many ways, the tavern *is* the community in shorthand. Whether you're in the noble district of a teeming metropolis or are stumbling into a crumbling borderland village of a scant few dozen souls, the local tavern will, in most cases, be reflective of this.

So why start with taverns? Because, as a bard will tell you, whether you have just finished a hard day in the fields or have returned victorious from dispatching the local tribe of gnolls and taking their stuff, sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name... or will soon enough.

Enjoy. And tip your server well.

Ken Pawlik

The Tavern

The interior of this tavern is decorated in a bull and bear motif, with various knick-knacks and paintings placed on shelves, hanging from walls, and occasionally sitting on a table. While the animals are in abundance, paying homage to the name of the inn, the décor stops just shy of making the place feel cluttered. Small and large tables fill the space to the right while on the left a roaring fire burns in a large stone fireplace, an assortment of large comfortable looking arm chairs and a few bookshelves arranged nearby. In the corner, along the interior wall, there is a large stage. At night the vacant space in front of the stage and, in fact, any vacant space in the tavern, becomes a dance floor and patrons show their appreciation to the night's bard with cheers and good tips. The far wall of the tavern has two doors and a set of stairs, with a long bar stretching in front of one of the doors, which appears to lead to a kitchen. The tavern has a very comfortable feeling and the number of patrons indicate it sees regular business. The private dining room, which is through the second door, has its own fireplace and comfortable furnishings. It is sometimes rented for special events, but otherwise it generally sits empty.

On the upper floors tables with fresh flowers and knickknacks in the bull and bear motif decorate the hallways and landings. The rooms on the second floor are of an average size and feature comfortable beds and desks. The rooms on the third floor are substantially larger and more luxurious, and feature large claw-foot tubs in addition to regular amenities.

As the PCs walk into the tavern, two guards inside the



door appraise them. Evie is a young human female, wearing a longsword at her waist, Durgul is a young halforc with a hand axe at his belt. If there are any females in the group, Durgul will take note, and possibly make a comment if he likes what he sees. If Evie hears him, and she likely does, the two of them will begin bickering as the PCs find a seat in the tavern. When the PCs leave, and for a few visits following, Evie will flirt with any male PC in the party who returns to the tavern. Despite appearances, these two are quite devoted to each and both are unlikely to do anything but flirt with anyone else. For more information on this pair, see "A Strange Pair of Guards" on page 7.

The Food

While The Bull & The Bear's head cook is known to be one of the best in the city, the tavern brings in unbaked bread from the city's most notable baker, then bakes it in batches throughout the day, serving fresh hot bread with Louisa's delicious home-style cooking. There is no set menu, and generally only one dish is made for each meal, but those wishing to complain will find themselves looking for a new tavern once Louisa gets wind of the complaint. Daily specials vary from hearty soups and stews to roasted meats with potatoes, gravy and root vegetables to sandwiches stuffed with a ground meat and various toppings. Breakfast will often be eggs on bread with a creamy sauce made from butter and lemon or fresh pancakes with bacon. All of the food always has two things in common: it is delicious and there are always vegetables (or fruit for breakfast). Louisa prides herself on taking care of people through their stomachs, ensuring that anyone too skinny has an extra helping on their plate, and anyone caring a little too much weight has more vegetables than their companions.

The bar serves a variety of beverages typical of most taverns, but they will quite often have a drink special, the most popular being the cold ale and the cold wine, made possible by the magical cold storage in the cellar. In colder weather, mulled wine and steaming apple cider are frequently served, and smell draws many patrons in from the bitter cold or pelting rain.

Map: The Bull & The Bear



The Brothel

The second floor of the tavern plays host to The Bull & The Bear's other business: a very successful brothel. Use your discretion to determine how many rooms are dedicated to this purpose; we recommend using the third floor as an upscale inn (the floor is remarkably sound proof!), but you can incorporate these rooms into the brothel and reserve some on the second floor for lodgings should your PCs be looking for less expensive accommodations.

It should be noted the brothel is run discreetly, especially in a city or town where such activities would be frowned upon or just outright illegal. Indeed, the manager of the tavern prides herself on discretion which is why, in addition to providing regular brothel services, Hepziba runs an escort service utilized by several of the notables around town who are looking for a beautiful but discrete women to serve as a companion to one of the many dull events they are to attend. We have provided names and descriptions for several courtesan's in "Faces at the Tavern" on page 5.

While the basic furniture is the same, each of the brothel rooms is decorated a little bit differently, and seems to reflect the courtesan's personality or tastes. All of the rooms are immaculately clean and the décor of excellent quality.

Rumours

Taverns are both an excellent source of and for rumours. Some of these rumours can be heard around town, while others might be heard inside the walls of the tavern itself. Adjust the wording as necessary. You can chose a rumour from the table to the right (Table 1-Rumours), or roll a d6 and use the corresponding number.

Events

Taverns are generally a hub of activity, and no evening at the local watering hole would feel complete without a little excitement. Some of these events may take on a life of their own, or may be a part of the tavern backdrop one evening. Chose an event from the table below, or for a little randomness, roll a d8 and use the corresponding number.



Table 1–Rumours

1. "Theodus Iversen (a local politician) is a regular at The Bull & The Bear, but he goes there for a little more than just the drinks, if you know what I mean." (*True- He enjoys spending time with Kent,* one of the lads of the brothel upstairs.)

2. "Those inquisitors of Asmodeus must be looking for someone, but they ain't sayin' who. Got a real bee in their bonnet, if you ask me. Wouldn't wannna be the one they are tracking down."

3. "Did you hear about the beating Evie gave Durgul over at The Bull & The Bear? Guess she caught him looking a little too long at some girl who came in."

4. "Augustus Marlowe's latest play is his best yet, so funny... the way he made fun of the nobility about town. And that Corrah does an incredible job as the female lead. I couldn't stop laughing."

5. "The cook at The Bull & The Bear, Louisa, she's a feisty thing... I heard she was seeing some musician about town. I can't figure out who it is, but I bet he works up an appetite keeping her happy!"

6. "Only one place in town you can get a cold ale or a cold glass of wine: The Bull & The Bear. Not sure what sorts of magics they use, but that stuff is incredible." (*True- The tavern has a magically enchanted cold storage in the cellar, keeping chilled beverages colder than anywhere else in town).*

7. "Benjamin has commissioned a play from Augustus Marlowe! I bet it'll be full of adventure!" (*True– Benjamin has commissioned a tragic love story– with a little adventure–and Corrah will be the star.*)

8. "Evie is still talking about that piece of jewelry she lost while she and Durgul was off adventuring all them years ago. Better the ring than her hand you ask me." (*True - Evie lost her grandmother's ring* several years ago when she and Durgul were making their way though a cave complex and ran into a Roper. They realized it was more than they could handle and fled.)

Table 2–Events

1. Notable celebrity and playwright to the crown, Augustus Marlowe, and his lover and muse, Corrah, have arrived at the tavern for a meal. Following the meal, Marlowe buys a round of drinks while loudly regaling the patrons with tales of his adventures.

2. The local Duke has bet that he bakes a better chocolate cake than Louisa, The Bull and the Bear's cook; a fierce bake-off has ensued to the amusement and benefit of the current customers.

3. Tired of the (nearly true) rumours that her husband is a frequent admirer of the "upstairs ladies" at The Bull and the Bear, Essa Iversen is loudly demanding that he be hauled down for a reckoning. Evie and Durgul are holding the scorned woman back, but she is making everyone uncomfortable. Her husband is currently hiding on the second floor, having been mid-tryst with Kent, his favourite "upstairs lad."

4. The city watch have come to arrest local cutpurse Eel Flanagann (male halfling rogue 1), who is spending his most recent take on a pint. Having noticed them, Eel is attempting to flee through the kitchen door, if he can avoid Louisa's frying pan.

5. Local laborer Sten Millmason has taken a shine to one of the servers and has brought a quartet of friends to run interference with Durgul and Evie while he gets the disinterested girl alone to proclaim his love.

6. A teahouse has opened in town, but it doesn't just serve tea. The brothel at The Bull & The Bear has seen a downturn in business since the new establishment opened. Hepziba and most of the staff aren't too worried and think business will return to similar levels soon, but Laella is furious. She asks one of the PCs to take care of the problem for her, directing them specifically to two of the girls she is certain are luring away most of her clients. While she doesn't offer money, on account, she says, of the fact that "those terrible girls" took all her clients, she assures them she would be ever so grateful and will make it worth their while.

7. As a pair of Asmodean clerics enter the tavern, Vita, the bartender, quickly and discreetly adjusts her clothing to cover her tattoos. The pair scan the establishment, but they don't appear to be looking for her, and instead take a seat in the corner.

8. Louisa wants to make one of her much loved pasta dishes, but shipments of one of her favorite ingredients (a dense brown mushroom) keep disappearing before they can make it to town. Louisa is getting frustrated, not a good thing with her fiery temper. She asks the PCs to investigate the missing shipments and assures them she will cook them up something extra special for the trouble, on the house, of course.

Faces at the Tavern

Like any interesting tavern, The Bull & The Bear employs a variety of colorful characters. Most of them are more than happy to help any patrons and some even have an interesting tale or two to share.

Vitarielle (Vita) Dhodararn

This statuesque elven woman walks with amazing grace, and physically, only the quiet thumping of wood on wood as she walks may alert the patrons of the tavern to her peg leg. While her face remains unmarked, the rest of her body is more or less entirely tattooed, so even those who don't notice her pegleg may get the impression there is more to her than meets the eye.

Vita loves a quick word with visitors as she fixes them a drink, though despite her obviously excitable personality and adventurous spirit, she speaks quite slowly. A question about her tattoos or peg leg will likely launch her into a short but entertaining story of her pirating life and how she acquired her peg leg. Unfortunately for those looking for the truth, her stories vary on her mood and are usually far more entertaining than true, including losing it to some flying sharks, chopping it off herself to impress a fellow sailor and



Vitarielle "Vita" Dhodararn

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral Armor Class 14 Hit Points 22 (5d8) Speed 10 ft. (peg leg) Climb 20 ft. Swim 20 ft.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
11(+0)	19(+4)	10(+0)	14(+2)	10(+0)	14(+2)

Saving Throws Dex+7, Int +5

Skills Acrobatics +7, Deception +5, Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Language Common, Elven, Thieves Cant

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Peg Leg. Vita Has disadvantage on all Dexterity (Acrobatics) skill checks. Her long jump and high jump distance is half the normal rate.

Sea Legs. Vita can Climb and Swim 20 ft. per round. She has advantage on all Strength (Athletics) checks to climb a slippery vertical surface and to gain distance in rough water.

Repel Boarders. Vita can take a bonus action on each of her turns in combat to move 30 ft. She may only use this movement to swing from rigging to other rigging or to a horizontal deck surface.

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, Vita can deal an extra (10) 3d6 damage to one creature she hits with an attack if she havs advantage on the attack roll or if another enemy of the target is within 5 feet of it, that enemy isn't incapacitated, and you don't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Actions

Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

Cutlass (Scimitar). Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 7 (1d6+4) slashing damage

being born with it. One thing is certain: she makes good drinks and is an excellent bartender.

If need be, she is also more than capable of keeping most patrons in line, either with words, or with the tricks she picked up in her pirating days.

Louisa Greene

The head chef, Louisa, will occasionally venture out of the kitchen to see how people are enjoying the food. She is a soft, plump middle aged human woman who seems very motherly. Louisa's chestnut hair is pulled back into a bun and she wears a white apron overtop of her plain dress. Faint wrinkles surround her eyes which have an obvious spark to them. Despite how hard she works in the kitchen, it is uncommon to find any evidence of food on her. Those who compliment her on her cooking will receive a warm, genuine smile, and though she will brush off the compliment, it pleases her greatly to hear acclimations. Though generally quite cheerful, Louisa has been known to have a temper, which generally presents itself when someone strays into her kitchen at the wrong time, or says something negative about her food. Once someone is on Louisa's bad side, it's almost impossible to earn her favour again. Unfortunately, this means any PC who offends her may receive smaller portions of the food they like while their companions' food remains as piled high as ever. Any attractive male that flirts with Louisa will likely receive extra portions of his favorite food. That said, Louisa takes it upon herself to look out for the patrons by moderating their diets and those who carry a bit of extra weight may find their plates lighter on fried potatoes than their companions'.

The kitchen runs seamlessly with four additional kitchen staff working under Louisa, preparing food per her instructions. Fellow tavern staff can always tell Louisa's mood and when to keep their distance by how chatty the kitchen staff are.



A Strange Pair of Guards

Many years ago, a foul tempered man made a move on Evie, she rebuffed him, and he started to make a scene, calling her all sorts of foul names. Durgul, who had been admiring her from afar all evening, stepped up to the table to intervene and defend Evie. The man became enraged and Durgul, grabbing a nearby bottle, started a brawl. While the odds appeared in his favour at first, he didn't account for the man's travelling companions at a nearby table. Evie, finding Durgal's actions chivalrous, was immediately impressed. As the chaos began, and before the city guards could arrive, Evie pulled Durgul outside and the two of them left town.

Evie has developed an attachment to her travelling companion, though it's hard to know if it's because of all the scrapes they've been through together or the slightly green skin and rippling muscles. Durgul admires Evie's skill in battle and her cunning nature (and finds her incredibly attractive), as a result, he hasn't left her side since the tavern brawl.

After several years out adventuring and finding the reward wasn't worth the risk for the two of them, Durgal and Evie signed on as guards at The Bull & The Bear.





Durgul Rampant

Durgul believes winning is everything and will do whatever it takes to beat his opponents: dirty tricks, disarming, and stealing are part of his repertoire. While he's proficient with the hand axe at his side, you never know if he'll be using it, the weapon he's snatched from his opponent's hand, or a nearby halfling when conflict arises. His only weakness is for his long time companion Evie who has become skilled at keeping him in line.

Evie Longheart

Cunning and sarcastic, this 28-year-old human woman has scars crisscrossing her arms, and a very faint one on her left cheek. Only a fool would think she needs Durgul to protect her; the longsword on her hip has taken the lives of many. Evie will always give Durgul a hard time for eyeing up another woman, and will happily give him a taste of his own medicine, flirting mercilessly and more successfully with tavern patrons simply because she delights in seeing Durgul get worked up over her.

Illustration by Gary Dupuis

Durgul Rampant

Medium humanoid (human, orc), chaotic neutral Armor Class 16 (scale mail) Hit Points 37(5d8+15) Speed 30 ft.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
14(+2)	15(+2)	16(+3)	13(+1)	7(-2)	13(+1)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +6

Skills Athletics +5, Intimidation +4

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Language Common, Orc

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Savage Attacks. When Durgul scores a critical hit with a melee weapon attack, he can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit.

Barroom Brawler. When fighting in a tavern or inn, Durgul has advantage on attack rolls made to grapple or shove his foe. His movement speed is unaffected by difficult terrain created by the tavern environment or its patrons.

You Hold Him, I'll Hit Him. Durgul does an additional 3 points of damage whenever his foe has the grappled or restrained conditions. This additional damage is doubled on a critical hit.

Actions

Multiattack. Durgul makes two melee attacks.

Handaxe. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6+2) slashing damage

Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.

Hepziba Newport

This young woman looks like she means business. Appearing in her early 30's with an old fashioned beauty, Hepziba appears to know all that goes on in the tavern. Patrons and employees speak to her constantly, and those paying attention will notice she occasionally leads someone upstairs. She can quite often be found sitting at the lone table not far from the stairs with a large notebook, which she never leaves unattended. This book

Evie Longheart

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral Armor Class 18 (breastplate, shield) Hit Points 52(8d8+16) Speed 30 ft.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
16(+3)	12(+1)	15(+2)	8(-1)	13(+1)	12(+1)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +5

Skills Athletics +6, Intimidation +4

Senses passive Perception 11

Language Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Second Wind. On her turn, Evie can use a bonus action to regain 1d10+8 hit points. She must finish a short or long rest to use this ability again.

Action Surge. On her turn, Evie can take one additional action on top of her regular action and possible bonus action. She must finish a short or long rest before she can use this ability again.

Actions

Multiattack. Evie makes two longsword attacks or one longsword attack and one shield bash.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) slashing damage

Shield Bash. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. *Hit*: 8 (2d4+3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

holds a complete schedule of appointments for the brothel as well as all of the accounting records, including a dummy set of numbers in cities where the brothel would be illegal. As manager of the tavern and the one responsible for making appointments for the men and women on the second floor, she is always friendly and courteous, but she can be quite firm when she thinks someone is getting out of line. Hepziba won't hesitate to call Durgul and Evie in if someone starts to get rough with her or one of her employees and more than one person has been escorted from the premise. With years of experience running a brothel, she conducts business discreetly and efficiently, and has an eye for sourcing potential customers.

Kairn

Of indeterminate age, this striking and petite woman is easily The Bull & The Bear's most sought after employee. She has been trained in all manner of social skills and can speak with authority on matters such as art, politics, and religion. Kairn is often hired as a companion by notable figures about town which frequently sees her interacting with the city's social elite.

Kent

As a very attractive and confident man in his late twenties, Kent's company is eagerly sought after by The Bull & The Bear's female clients though he will happily book appointments with patrons of any gender. With such a large rotation of repeat customers, Kent is often booked months into the future.



Opal

Tight, nearly sheer tops paired with long flowing skirts made of red and orange silks and short bright scarlet hair styled into soft spikes create an effect like flames dancing on her glassy, ash coloured skin. Accompanied by the wafting scent of lapsang, Opal, the brothel's most recent hire is clearly something special and she exudes an aura of passion and a love of life. Hepziba was thrilled when Opal inquired about joining the brothel staff and the fiery woman has developed a large base of regular clients. There is no telling how long she will stay at The Bull & The Bear, but the patrons are enjoying what time they have.

Laella



An attractive brunette with bright red lips and light brown eyes, Laella seems eager to please; she can sometimes be found in the common room flirting with guests in the hopes they will book an appointment. Laella is not above using trickery, deceit, and blackmail to get what she feels is her due, which often puts her at odds with her co-workers.

Paul Cotillard

A handsome, but serious looking dark-haired man, Paul has been frequenting the tavern for years. No one knows exactly what Paul's occupation is, but he seems to have some degree of wealth. Whatever his life story, he is not forthcoming on the details prior to his arrival in town. Most evenings, Paul can be found reading in one of the large chairs by the fireplace. He talks with Hepziba on occasion, but mostly keeps to himself. Anyone paying attention will see he tips quite well. While he is never seen going upstairs, Paul seems to know all the employees, including the ones who work upstairs, by name. Those that strike up a conversation with Paul will find him curt, but quite knowledgeable, particularly about current events, history, and religion.

Corrah Bousaid

Long dark hair cascades down Corrah's back and her eyes, almost the colour of coal, are sultry and seductive. A notable actress a the local playhouse, Corrah appears to be in her early thirties and her skin is a dark brown, her figure curvy. She has a musical laugh and her voice is pleasant to listen to. Corrah's dedication to her craft has taught her to excel in pretending to be what she isn't, but she is generally a pleasant and down to earth woman who appreciates the adoration of her fans. As such, she sometimes frequents the tavern after a performance. Corrah has become quite taken with the city's notable playwright, August Marlowe, and some people say she is his muse.

Benjamin Igurt

Around the time the local theatre closes its doors for the night, Benjamin can often be found sitting at one of the tables enjoying a glass of cold white wine. His facial hair is closely shaven and his dark hair, which has a widow's peak, is cut short. Moderately good looking, but with a sort of arrogance about him, Benjamin is always well dressed in trousers and a fine shirt, and appears to carry no weapons. A relative new comer to town, Benjamin is becoming known as a bit of a theatre lover, having been spotted there at least twice per week since his arrival. While Benjamin does enjoy the theatre, it is Corrah is secretly loves. He sits at the tavern most evenings, happily watching the young actress, and all the while plotting ways to win her love, and remove the notable playwright from her heart.

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<u>Also Available</u>

Tangible Taverns: Simon's Dinner Theatre

In The Bull & The Bear we mentioned Augustus Marlowe and his local playhouse. If your players are looking to check out this establishment, rest assured it is elusive no more! Our latest release is Simon's Dinner Theatre, which details the venue where Corrah, the sultry siren, performs. The food and drink is excellent and we have provided a brief synopsis of various plays so you have an answer ready when your players ask what the show was about.

Give your PCs a chance to explore and interact with the city around them; let them hear tales of other adventurers (be they entirely fictional or inspired by local heroes); give them a chance to use those Persuasion or Performance skills; or allow the weary travellers to just be entertained by amusing actors.



Join us as we embark on an entertaining evening at the local dinner theatre.

Coming Soon for 5th Edition

Tangible Taverns: Trio of Taverns

Give your players the chance to explore what happens when a capable barbarian known for beheading his opponents falls in love with jam making and settles down to open his own shop, or let your players try to seduce a city noble by taking her to the classiest and most romantic tavern in town, or just stick with the basics and let them dance the night away with great entertainment and delicious food while avoiding the shadier elements.

This book also includes "More Faces at the Tavern", a section with several colourful NPCs including "Dizzy Izzy" the not so loveable grifter, Sir Kristoff Ingram Packard, the delusional

> aristocrat and man about town, and the freakishly chipper, future sausage eating champion, Daledalae. The NPCs are at a variety of challenge ratings and are ready to be dropped into any of our taverns, or yours, for a little added role-playing.

Tangible Taverns: Tuffy's Good Time Palace

Tuffy's Good Time Palace details a dilapidated tavern filled with the city's least desirables. The drinks are terrible, the food is limited to the pickled variety, and not a soul would bat an eye at stealing your coin purse.

So... Why would the pcs visit this a derelict tavern? Perhaps it is the only one in town, perhaps the PCs offended a server or owner of a more reputable establishment and are no longer welcome, maybe they need to get their hands on something only the city's criminal element can get for them, or maybe they fancy themselves the city's criminal element. There could also be the slim chance they like bad beer and pickles. Regardless of the reason, we think every GM will enjoy giving their players an evening they won't forget at Tuffy's Good Time Palace.

Tangible Taverns: Tuffy's Good Time Palace is packed with more NPCs, rumours, and events than ever. The only question is: are your PCs brave enough to try the pickled pig's feet or will they just turn tail and leave a dingy dive like Tuffy's for greener pastures (or cleaner glasses)?

