



VATHAK SIDEQUESTS

Accusation from Beyond

Complexity: Medium

Reward: A merchant ally, the gratitude of an inn, or some gold

Location: Inn

NPCs: Wolfram Tilsburger (merchant), Astrid (ghost)

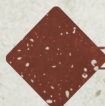
BACKGROUND

The Silver Crossroads Inn is a landmark known for many miles around for its large tankards of ale, its generous portions, and welcoming atmosphere. Small wonder that travelling merchants make up a large part of the clientele, and the Crossroads has benefited greatly over the years and has become an unofficial meeting place where business deals are made.

One of these regulars is a normally jovial up-and-coming young merchant named Wolfram, who

usually plans his schedule around meetings at the Crossroads... until recently. One night during a visit over a year ago he received a visit from a spectral, angry-looking young woman who stood at the foot of his bed and whispered harshly, "Why did you do it?" He wrote it off as a weird encounter, until she appeared again during his next visit. Every visit since, she has harassed him every night, and the last time he was staying at the inn she started appearing in the corner of his eye wherever he was. It is disturbing him greatly and his business is beginning to suffer, but he can't afford not to come to the inn because of his business contacts.

The party may notice Wolfram — who now has a haggard and hunted look about him — if they are staying at the inn, or he might approach them if they have a local reputation or performed services for the inn at some point in the past. He will describe all of his past encounters with the ghost, and insist he has never seen her before, and that she appears only when he is alone.



TASK

Wolfram is telling the truth. What he doesn't know is that he bears an uncanny resemblance to the man who killed a young woman named Astrid at the inn more than 10 years ago, whose restless spirit now seeks justice. While Wolfram's agitation may spur the party to act, the owners of the Crossroads also want the problem solved because rumors about hauntings are bad for business. Some sort of investigation is needed.

The Gamemaster should determine who the party should speak with, and where they should look, to learn more. Some suggestions are below:

- ☛ **Interviewing staff.** Many people come and go, but long-serving staff may remember the murder, as well as a detail or two about Astrid, including her name. Money or favors may help them recall what they saw, too.
- ☛ **Never forget a face.** Wolfram can describe Astrid accurately enough to draw a reasonable likeness and show it around.
- ☛ **Spiritual help.** Priestly characters may call upon their deities for more information, or they can go to local temples for such aid.
- ☛ **Legal records.** A ghost points to a murder, which means there may be a record somewhere with added details — including suspects.
- ☛ **Shadowing.** One or more characters can follow Wolfram discreetly until the ghost appears — regular or magical attempts at concealment will work normally, as Astrid is focused on her quarry. They can try talking to her directly.

Once the party has enough information to reconstruct what happened, they can try to convince Astrid that Wolfram is not the man she is looking for. Although she is angry and distraught, Astrid is still intelligent and will consider a reasonable argument; although the Gamemaster may require good role-playing — or a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) roll — to convince her.

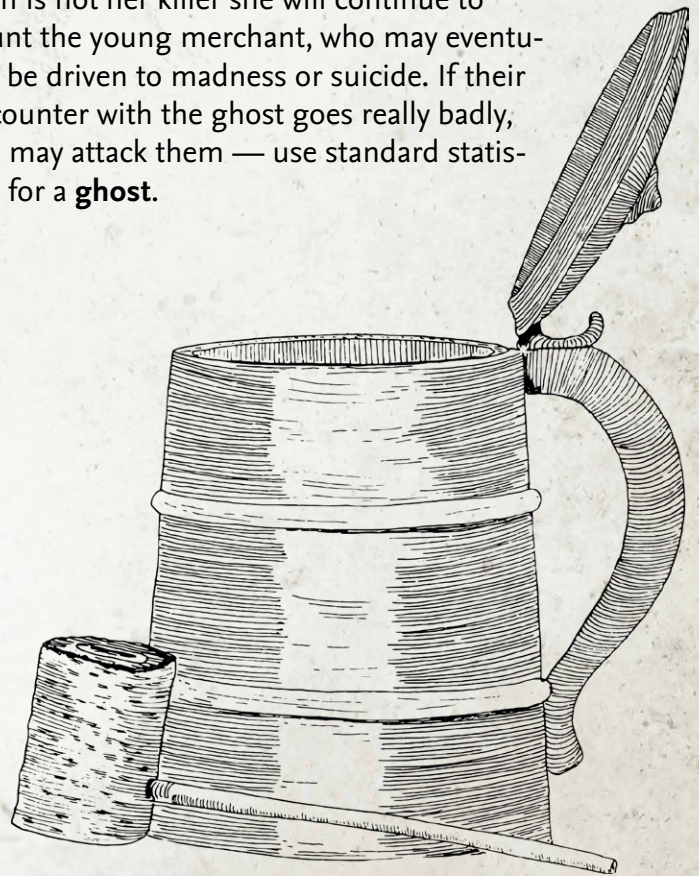
CONCLUSION

If the PCs convince Astrid that Wolfram is not her killer, the hauntings will end and the young man will be extremely grateful — and a merchant's gratitude is no small thing. For saving his business, Wolfram is more than happy to offer the party favorable rates on all future transactions (a 10% discount or bonus is not unreasonable), and should he need caravan guards they will be his first choice. Alternatively, if the party insists on a cash payment he can offer them 50 gp per person.

The Silver Crossroads will be equally grateful, and will offer the party a complimentary meal and night's accommodation.

While Astrid may stop bothering Wolfram, if the party has even the smallest clue who her killer might be she might start haunting them until they do something about it. The Gamemaster will need to decide if the killer is still alive, and if so, how powerful an enemy they would be.

If the party fails to convince Astrid that Wolfram is not her killer she will continue to haunt the young merchant, who may eventually be driven to madness or suicide. If their encounter with the ghost goes really badly, she may attack them — use standard statistics for a **ghost**.



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