

The Inn At The End Of The Multiverse

Keith Hackwood

The Inn at the End of the Multiverse is an archetypal *place*, and though its specific appearance and name frequently change, inside it remains basically the same. In truth, it appears but rarely, wherever and whenever there is a suitable cause (see below) and it *always* appears to adventurers in dire need of rest and refreshment. The sign accompanying the Inn is also unchanging (in theme at least, though in practice it may be rendered differently depending upon the Inn's outer appearance at the time) - it depicts an ornate pen or quill next to an inkwell, which is also a heart. This is the only clue that what lies beyond the entrance is anything but an ordinary hostelry. Please note that the Inn is constantly changing and what is presented here is merely a flavour of what is possible.

Why bother?

From the CKs point of view, the Inn is a chance to shine and show off your roleplaying skills, and to bend your players' expectations to your will, and the will of the story. More prosaically, you may choose to drop the Inn on players when:

They need reinvigorating and re-inspiring as to the potential of roleplaying - e.g. to shake them up or knock them out of a rut; or the evolving story needs a crescendo, a place for various campaigns to intersect or different worlds to meet; or the CK desires to create a bridge between pantheons, major NPCs, game-worlds, or even entire role-playing systems. The Inn can function as that interface. Or, perhaps the PCs in question have had it really rough and need a time-out, a place to connect with their more mythic sides - a chance to meet future plot hooks, be given specific missions or information, have their inflated egos pricked, or whatever you feel is necessary.

Some examples of encountering the Inn might be: the party gets chatting to a trader in a street-market who cleverly steals something from them, then disappears into a nearby pub that none of the PC's had previously noticed - they follow, it's the Inn. Inside the rogueish trader has already passed the stolen item to Mograxx, the space-pirate - she won't give it back unless the party do something for her in return. Or, winding up-river the party encounters a tent pitched by the river bank, a stall selling trinkets and wine; Stopping to ask directions, they encounter an ancient dwarven fence (the legendary Hulaf Grentis), who eventually offers to sell any interesting items they may need to be rid of. He arranges to meet them at the next full moon in a nearby town, at an inn he calls 'the Eye'. If the party follows through, they will meet him in the Inn. He has their money, but he thinks he was seen - anyone in this inn could be an assassin sent to eliminate them all. Or, after a great battle the party finds itself tracking the remnants of a humanoid horde. The trail is going cold when a PC notices a metallic glint from the edge of a cavern or dungeon corridor. Investigating, it turns out to be a dirty pub sign (a heart and quill if the PC's rub it clean to find out). If they clean the sign the cave transforms into the frontage of a pub, and they may step inside. There at the bar is the leader of the humanoid horde, grinning away and chatting with Abba Menrax, the renowned chronomancer.

Each character class may gain something from the experience of the Inn – whether it be meeting their heroes or arch-enemies, or something more specific (learning a new spell, or skill or trick, maybe even levelling-up whilst here). Some suggestions are:

Rogues – hone their skills, meet a master-thief, gain in stealth and deception

Fighter types – gain honour, become inspired by tales of glory, marvel at the weapons of others and aspire to find their own, make connections to orders of chivalry

Magic Users – gain knowledge and perhaps arcane experience, borrow books

Druids – enjoy the experience of perfected balance, check out the garden

Clerics – have an experience of another realm, meet a deity, find themselves ‘closer to the gods’

Bards – well, the Inn is heaven for bards!

It is important to note that there is no way of a PC summoning, invoking or wishing for the Inn to appear – contact with this place is at *its* discretion, and no other force pertains to that process (CK notwithstanding).

However it appeared outside, once inside the players find themselves in a spacious bar, oval in shape, accommodating up to **fifty** customers. Everyone inside (including the PCs) will be pristine, in their full, vital and exuberant light-body form. The interior will shimmer appearing to be much more than it is. Players will soon discover that no magic is possible inside (for this Inn exists in a pocket of planar space and time outwith the usual laws of operation; this is the Immateria, the Place behind place), and neither will any weaponry be effective (so arrows turn to feathers, blades become rubberised, cudgels are suddenly made of bread, poisons become delicious nectars etc). **All** languages are understood here, and all communication is fluent. To all intents and purposes, the Inn exists as in a dream – a collective, multiversal dream.

Conflict in here is possible, since opposition and polarity exist, playfully; yet no physical violence may occur beyond a highly stylised form of wrestling (known as *Butoh*, and involving no contact). This is a place characterised by storytelling, the exchange of information, gossip, discussion of quests, the issuing of challenges, arguments and the taking of positions. Since all food and drink here are free, hospitality is the signature of the Inn. And more subtly, it is clear that here value is placed not on *things* (gold, gems, treasure, artefacts etc) but on lived experience. This is a place where any ‘I’ may meet any ‘Thou’, and any who seek to make the other into an ‘It’ will waste a unique opportunity, or perhaps attract unto themselves a negative geas.

What’s Inn A Name?

Some names by which the Inn is known to have manifested include –

Roll d12

1 - The Namtok Inn

2 - The Spontaneous Play

3 - The Bright Emanation

4 - The Transitional Object

5 - Kaya’s Arms

- 6- *The Ebola Virus*
- 7 - *Young Vanish*
- 8 - *The Chymical Wedding*
- 9- *Klingon For Dear Life*
- 10 - *Snuffers Paradise*
- 11- *Who'd A Think It*
- 12 - *Q*

Possible outer appearances of the Inn

Roll 1d8

- 1 - a mediaeval style tavern
- 2 - a half-timbered Tudor inn
- 3- a redbrick emporium in the gothic style
- 4 - an ice bar, carved from glacial chunks
- 5- a Bedouin style tent, beside an oasis
- 6 - a great wooden mead-hall in the Norse tradition
- 7 - An homage to Mos Eisley Cantina
- 8 - a vast post-industrial warehouse

Drink!

The Inn serves, freely, the following drinks:

Hyle, Nectar, Amritar, Soma, Mead, Homebrew, Aqua Vitae, Uisge (whisky) and all manner of Homebrew. Each will heal 1d8HP of actual physical damage per measure.

Food is at the CKs discretion, and will relate (directly, or at a bizarre tangent) to that which is desired by the PCs. Food eaten on the premises will bestow +1 to all physical saving throws for the next week, before fading.

There is a sign, prominently displayed behind the bar, which reads (in multiversal common) *'Over-excitement turns bliss into kaka'*. Various guests have their own interpretations of this riddle, such as that it holds a deep alchemical truth, or that if read aloud it will manifest a curse upon the reader. PCs may be intrigued or fearful or just choose to ignore it. (Actually it refers to the coding of the Immaterialia itself, a code of conduct, if you will. The nature of the Immaterialia is bliss - however, 'over-excitement' will turn the experience of the Inn into something wasteful or revolting).

Bar staff at the inn are all natives of the Immaterialia - benign, discreet and wise doppelgangers dedicated to service and pleasure, having long since satiated every personal desire. They may offer a PC a triangular ceramic token bearing the Inn's sign of the quill and heart. This makes returning to the Inn at some future point, more likely, though by no means certain.

PCs will notice that the interior is shifting, sometimes very slowly, other times very rapidly - and that the wooden bar may become chrome or earth or jelly. Similarly, the windows heal up and then reappear elsewhere, in different shapes and sizes - though the view through them is always the same - a vast empty blackness, and the impression

of a gigantic storm raging across space-time. Attentive players may notice that their moods affect the décor and lighting almost instantaneously (thus they may see how their lust, hope, fear, joy, delight, escapism, brooding vengefulness and so on, play out in shape, colour, tone, lighting and, even in the music being played by the Inn's own polymorphous band). None of this is illusion, or rather everything is illusion – but there is no master illusionist. The Inn is a sentient node, an expression of the multiverse's will for encounter, for cross-fertilisation of the imagination. The Inn is one way by which the multiverse comes to know itself, and hence all are native to this place, and are equally welcome.

PCs will soon become the focus for the other guests of the inn – they may be engaged in conversation, or offered seats in one of many private booths. These 'other guests' could potentially include anyone or anything the CK deems fit – the Inn is entirely beyond concerns of law and chaos, good and evil – it represents a transient station, a place that any existent being can call home – *everyone* is indigenous to the Inn at the End of the Multiverse.

So, maybe you're sat next to Orcus, Loki and Philip K Dick listening to the Sandman telling tales of Faerie. Or perhaps you're playing cards with El Cid and Walt Whitman, and behind that Orc king at the bar, Promethea is winking at you as she serves someone called Gord with a pint. You get the idea. Here anything is possible. Anyone, potentially, might drop by (mechanically, this is a place where the scale of a campaign can be placed in context with other campaigns, myths, 'real-world' heroes or events, cross-genre coincidences and any other consideration you so choose. There is no limit but what you can imagine.)

The storm beyond the Inn is real, the multiverse is shifting and resettling, and whilst it does, no-one may enter or leave (other than traumatically, as mentioned regarding weapons). All the Inn's guests become equals – visitors awaiting their cue to move on, killing time with tales, good food and drink, jokes and rapt attention. There is only the Inn's present while one is there, as the Immaterialia reforms around the place the Inn functions like a gateway, simultaneously linking the ancient and the futuristic, the contemporary and the timeless. One minute the feeling is star wars, the next its mediaval jazz. Are we in a Picasso painting, watching Spartacus arm-wrestle a cyberman? No, because in the next booth a Troll Lord is weeping into his ale, so moved is he by Pocahontas's song, (and she in turn sees the world turn green as she flirts with Gandhi, both listening avidly to Magister Imhotep's discourse on the intricate geometries of time).

Smoking Room

The Inn offers its guests a pleasant smoking area (and freely provides pipes, specific tobaccos and all manner of appropriate paraphernalia), just beyond the bar, alongside the privies. Here spectacular and impossible plants thrive in a garden that bestrides autumn and spring at once. Lotuses bloom, red leaves fall, insects and birds chirp and buzz, as overhead the vast black shifting formlessness of the Immaterialia wheels away. Here visitors may pull on a tangerine hookah-pipe (granting +1 to Charisma), and watch for the emergence of any signs or portents, or simply observe the passage of Charon's ferryboat, Phaedra's chariot, the sun-boat of the Pharaoh or the Wild Hunt.

Leaving the Inn only occurs when the barman calls *“Time at the bar, ladies and gentlemen”* - whereupon the storm slowly abates, windows and walls clear and dissolve into light, the other guests move in a slo-mo blur until they are no longer there, and the players find themselves ‘back’ in some new place or time, or ‘back’ where they were before they entered, but changed somehow (for example, the Constitution of a character may drop by 1d4 for 12 hours after ‘returning’ from the Inn, or they may have depleted Hit Points at the CKs discretion; equally, their Wisdom may increase in certain ways - perhaps by 1d4 points for the duration of one week, or their Charisma may rise temporarily when they recount tales of their experience). Otherwise, returning from the Inn is like waking from the deepest and most intense of dreams.

Here are some ideas to start you off:

Potential weapon effects (signs in the Inn make it plain that combat is impossible here, and will not be tolerated, but if a PC insists on trying...)

Roll d20

- 1-3 the weapon backfires and deals subdual damage to the wielder;
- 4-6 any metallic components of the weapon become electrically charged and cause the wielder’s hair, clothing and so on to smoke, stand on end or frazzle - other components break apart uselessly;
- 7-9 the weapon starts to speak and complain virulently about being abused, shouts warnings to the intended victim of the attack, and begins to share highly disrespectful opinions about its owner;
- 10-12 the weapon becomes impossibly heavy and falls to the ground where it dematerializes and is lost into the Immaterialia (CKs call if it is ever recoverable, or eternally lost);
- 13-15 the sight of the weapon draws everyone in the vicinity to admire its form. All other guests want to touch it, hold it, kiss it or try it out. They won’t take no for an answer;
- 16-19 weapon becomes weightless, as if in zero gravity, wielding it is like wielding a feather, and has the same effect;
- 20 the weapon pierces the fabric of the Immaterialia as it passes through ‘space’ - a rip opens up, and the PC falls through this rent space into the maelstrom outside (CKs call as to the full consequences - e.g. they are lost eternally, or wash up in some future or past place, or suffer many mental and physical damages, or undergo a major transformative experience, such as an alignment change)

Potential effects of magic use (signs are placed around the Inn noting that magic use is both ineffectual and forbidden, but some will go ahead anyway...)

Roll 1d8

- 1 - the spell reverses and has an opposite effect at a micro level;
- 2 - the spell succeeds but the effect is delayed indefinitely (and randomly);
- 3 - the spell becomes visible as a ball of ectoplasm following the spellcaster around - everyone who notices this laughs at the spellcaster and humiliation results;
- 4 - as the spell is cast a vast magic mouth appears over the bar and begins to croon in its best Frank Sinatra impression, naming and shaming the spellcaster in the process;

- 5 - the spell succeeds but at a sub-atomic level and the spellcaster's appearance changes to that of a cartoon version of themselves (CKs discretion as to how long this lasts etc);
- 6 - the spell fizzles out and produces a supernaturally disgusting stench - above the spellcaster a giant finger appears pointing down upon them - everyone present notices and thoroughly disapproves;
- 7 - the spell succeeds in waking the Inn's huge pet dog Entis, who bounds across and begins to lick the spellcaster incessantly, pinning the figure to the ground for as long as the CK sees fit;
- 8 - the spell cracks the ceiling of the Inn and a tendril of the vast black Immaterialia reaches into the spellcaster's mind, before the ceiling heals up. The specific effects are up to the CK, but are unlikely to be good.

Potential events at the Inn

Roll d20

- 1-2 the PCs will be challenged in some way (to a game, a test, a pub quiz, a duel)
- 3 important treaties are being negotiated by some of the guests, mediated by others - somehow the PCs are vital to the process;
- 4-6 teachings are being given by one or two notable guests (named warriors, high level religious types, arcane masters, statesmen of great note etc);
- 7-9 a great tournament is underway (darts, poker, dominoes, shove ha'penny etc) and the winner gains a level in experience in their class;
- 10-12 deals are being struck by various parties regarding great treasures, properties and holdings - the PCs are invited to mediate, as neutral parties, and ensure fairness;
- 13-15 a troupe of players and actors is entertaining the guests with a new story - it seems uncanny to the PCs however, since it is *their* story - and it has a different ending;
- 16-19 a competition is underway to find the best party-trick - a stunt, trick, story, song, joke or other amusement is required of all present;
- 20 - all the other guests are role-playing and their PC's are your game's players

All things being equal, I hope the Inn offers you an interesting and memorable new venue for some of your gaming. Feel free to make it your own in any way. Please enjoy!

KH

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