

THE INN WITH NO MORNING

Some nights are better left unfinished.



LEVEL 1–3 | ROADSIDE INN, WILDERNESS | GOTHIC HORROR, MYSTERY, SUPERNATURAL

ADVENTURE HOOK

A violent storm forces the characters off a lonely road. Beyond the trees, a lantern sways before a timber inn: The Last Lantern. The fire is warm, the stew is hot, and the innkeeper, Osric Bell, has rooms ready. He asks only that they stay until morning. The characters sleep. When they wake, it is the same rain-lashed evening. The same stew is served. A guest begins the same story. The clock reads 5:47. Outside, something knocks three times, though no one stands at the door.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Thirty years ago, a forbidden rite at the nearby gallows called a thing known as the Dawnless Guest. It could claim anyone who saw the first light of dawn within the inn. Osric's wife, Mara, bound the inn to the last hours of night, buying safety at the cost of her life. The original guests died over the years, but their memories remain as echoes, reenacting the evening of the spell.

Osric is alive, held unnaturally old by the spell. He has kept the lantern burning and the clocks stopped. The storm, the repeating supper, and the locked front door are parts of the ward. It has begun to fail. Worse, the Guest slipped inside in the guise of a traveler when the party entered. It wants them to break the spell and welcome sunrise.

GM truth: The Guest cannot fully manifest until dawn is permitted. It can impersonate one echo at a time and whisper through mirrors or walls. It cannot simply force the front door open or extinguish the lantern while Osric lives.

KEY LOCATIONS

1. The Common Room. Seven places are set, regardless of the number of guests. The same log splits in the hearth each time the hour repeats. One patron, a cheerful drover named Halven, repeats his tale word for word. After the third repetition he coughs up cold, black water and whispers, "It remembers us."
2. The Guest Rooms. Damp footprints lead to a room no one has rented. Scratching comes from inside the walls, moving in time with the rain. A mirror briefly shows the room in daylight, with all its occupants lying dead.
3. Mara's Locked Room. Osric keeps his wife's room barred. A DC 12 DEX check opens the lock, or Osric gives the key if persuaded. Her journal explains the ward and records its three anchors: the lantern, the clock, and the name of the Guest, written beneath the chapel floorboard. Her last entry: "Never answer when it knocks from within."
4. The Cellar. A circle of salt and old iron surrounds a cracked foundation stone. Rain seeps upward between the stones. The circle can be repaired with fresh salt, an iron nail, and a successful DC 12 INT check; a failed attempt advances the countdown.
5. The Abandoned Chapel. A covered walkway leads to a ruined shrine behind the inn. Beneath a loose board lies Mara's ritual page and the Guest's binding name, Veyr-of-the-First-Light. Reading the name aloud alerts the Guest. The chapel bell has no clapper, yet rings whenever an anchor fails.

NOTABLE NPCs OR MONSTERS

Osric Bell — LV 0 human. AC 10, HP 5, ATK knife +0 (1d4), MV near, AL L. Kind but exhausted. He knows the danger of dawn but not that the Guest is already inside. He will surrender the journal if convinced the characters seek to mend the ward rather than destroy it.

Echo Guests — LV 0 spirits. AC 10, HP 1, no attack, MV near, AL N. They cannot leave the inn and are harmless. An echo that remembers its death can answer one truthful question before fading until the next repetition.

THE DAWNLESS GUEST — LV 3 outsider. AC 13, HP 18, ATK shadow claw +4 (1d6+2), MV near, S +2, D +2, C +1, I +3, W +2, Ch +3, AL C. Borrowed Face: Mimics one echo perfectly until confronted with a fact that echo could not know; then its shadow moves independently. Cold Invitation: DC 12 WIS or target loses its next action listening to a loved one's voice. Unfinished Night: Before the ward breaks, it can make only one attack per countdown step and cannot leave its borrowed body. First

Light: If dawn comes, it sheds the disguise and gains advantage on its first attack. True Name: Hearing its binding name forces it to recoil and lose its next action once per encounter.

TIMERS, TWISTS, & TERRORS

The 5:47 Countdown. Start at step 1 when the party first wakes to the repeated evening. Advance one step after a major investigation scene, a failed attempt to tamper with an anchor, or roughly ten minutes of indecision. Do not advance merely because players ask questions.

1. A clock strikes once though its hands never move. 2. Rain crawls upward on the glass. 3. A guest recalls dying and leaves a wet handprint on the table. 4. Three knocks sound from inside the walls; an upstairs mirror fogs with the words LET IT IN. 5. The hearth burns black. Osric's lantern sputters, and the disguised Guest tries to turn the party against him. 6. The clock ticks forward. A thin gray line appears at the horizon. The characters have one final meaningful action before dawn unless they restore an anchor.

Identifying the intruder: Each real echo repeats a fixed memory. The Guest can improvise and remembers conversations from previous loops. An observant player can catch the contradiction without a roll; otherwise DC 12 INT after collecting two clues.

Fright without helplessness: Players can always move, investigate, and choose. Do not trap them in repeated scenes. The looping evening is a backdrop, not a requirement to replay every action.

NOTABLE LOOT / ODDITIES

Mara's Silver Locket: Worth 15 gp. Inside is a portrait of Osric and Mara beside a little girl who never appears among the echoes. Holding it while reading Mara's journal grants advantage on the next check to repair the ward.

The Last Lantern: An ordinary brass lantern while the ward stands. If the inn is freed, its flame burns pale for one final night and reveals invisible spirits within near distance.

Forgotten Guestbook: Lists thirty years of arrivals in the same handwriting. The party's names appear on the last page before they write them.

ENDING THE NIGHT

Strengthen the ward. Repair the cellar circle (DC 12 INT), wind the clock backward to 5:47, and rekindle the lantern using Mara's ritual page. A spellcaster must complete the final binding with a DC 12 spellcasting check; the true name grants advantage. On failure, the Guest attacks before the caster may retry. The party may depart by the chapel walkway before the next loop; Osric remains.

Let morning come. Smash the clock, quench the lantern, or erase the cellar circle. The Guest fully manifests and attacks. Defeating it ends the loop, but the echoes vanish and Osric ages rapidly. He has enough time for a final conversation.

End the curse. Discover Mara's page and true name, repair the circle, then confront the Guest at the chapel threshold. A spellcaster may speak the name and succeed on a DC 15 spellcasting check to banish it permanently; other characters can assist by keeping the lantern lit and protecting the caster. On failure, the Guest attacks and the attempt may be repeated after a round. With the Guest gone, dawn comes safely. The echoes fade, and Osric is freed to live out the time he has left.

Remix: The disguised Guest may be the most helpful person in the room. Or the child in Mara's portrait might be alive elsewhere, now older than Osric remembers. Either detail can lead into a larger adventure.