

DUNGEON
CRAWL
CLASSICS
LANKHMAR

**CHEATING
DEATH**

#6: A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE
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Sanjullian



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CHEATING DEATH

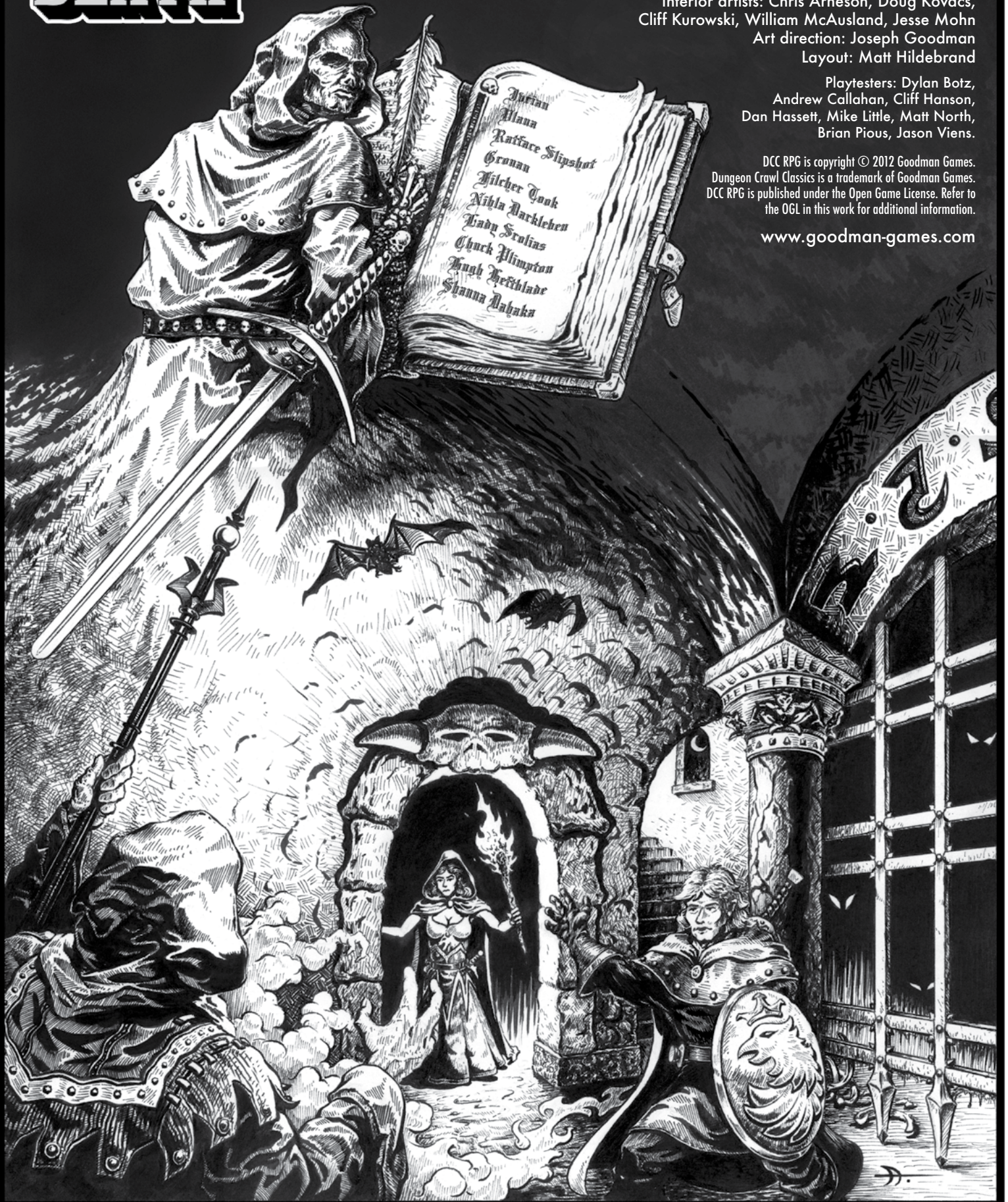
A LEVEL 1 LANKHMAR ADVENTURE

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the fantastic world of Nehwon, home to the crime-ridden metropolis of Lankhmar, the City of the Black Toga, and residence of its questionable heroes, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser! Based on the legendary works of Fritz Leiber, DCC Lankhmar allows judges and players to experience their own adventures in Nehwon, ones to rival the tales of Fafhrd and Gray Mouser. If you've ever dreamed of dueling in the foggy alleys behind Cheap Street, negotiating with supernatural mentors for scraps of forgotten lore, or merely trying to survive one more night in the criminal underworld, DCC Lankhmar is for you!

This adventure is designed for four to six players of 1st level. The perils and conflicts can be scaled to suit any party (see the two "Level Up" notes in the early sections of this adventure for more information), though after level 5, the judge may have to make situational adjustments, since spellcasting effects at higher levels are nearly impossible to predict. The urban investigation and supernatural dangers make this adventure suitable for any combination of character classes, benisons, and dooms, though survival may be particularly difficult without at least one cautious thief, one hearty warrior, and one clever wizard in the party. No matter the combination, Death is watching.



BACKGROUND

Lankhmar is a city of danger and opportunity, but it's particularly fatal when Death himself takes a direct interest. In the world of Nehwon, Death is a servant of the Lords of Necessity, and his job is to balance the books between the living and the dead. When it is time for someone to die, Death takes their life from afar, sitting in his lonely lair in the Shadowland, recording the death toll in his ledger.

In *Cheating Death*, the PCs become marked by Death, and when his reach doesn't immediately cause their demise, he becomes intrigued. While they were originally nothing more than numbers in his books, they become something more curious to him. He tests their mettle with increasingly deadly catastrophes, fully expecting to add their expired lives to his ledger. Should they survive, he pauses, reflects, and then dedicates his fatal attention to them. There is no escaping Death. Or so it might seem.

But there is a man nearby who escaped Death decades ago. This man, once named Selwynder but now known only as "the Burned Man," discovered arcane secrets in the Plaza of Dark Delights as a young adventurer. He was marked by Death, but he escaped using a ritual that captured a piece of the Shadowland and implanted it within his heart. No matter what Death threw at him—serpents, floods, flame—he survived. His body suffered, but his heart continued to beat.

The Burned Man retreated to his family home a block from Dim Lane, in an old mansion converted into a trap-filled temple glorifying his escape from Death. As Lankhmar grew, new construction built atop old in the spaces surrounding the Burned Man's temple mansion and most people in Lankhmar forgot about Selwynder. The Burned Man suffered as he aged. He hired exotics to help him build traps to protect him from those who might try to deliver him to Death. A piece of Selwynder even thought, in his vulnerable moments, that such deadly traps might appease Death and offer the Burned Man succor. It has not.

But surely one nigh-immortal Selwynder is worth more to Death than a band of adventurers might be. If the PCs should find and end the life of the Burned Man, stopping his heart from defiantly beating, perhaps Death's books might become balanced. Perhaps they may cheat Death at his own game, by giving him something he has long wanted. Then again, Death isn't known to be fair.

THE STREETS OF LANKHMAR



hough the encounter areas are numbered sequentially, the fun of a city adventure is that PCs can move about and investigate in almost any direction. Cheating Death provides some early hooks and avenues for exploration, but if the PCs follow other leads outside of the details of the areas outlined in this adventure, please refer to *Lankhmar: City of the Black Toga*, included in the DCC Lankhmar boxed set, for other interesting events and random locations to keep the PCs busy.

The important thing is to keep the PCs following a line of investigation and looking for connections — and possibly beginning to pit various factions against each other as they make or break their own alliances and escape undue attention. As they progress on those fronts, begin injecting Death's Reach (see "Death in Lankhmar," below) and increase the threat from Death whenever there is a lull in the exploration or adventure — or when the PCs remain unchallenged and need Death's wake-up call. The encounter areas provide indications of when to escalate Death's Reach, but if the PCs are off doing other things, use your best judgment about when to inject warnings and catastrophes to develop their growing suspicion that something supernatural is afflicting them. The more they think they are cursed, the more they will try to find ways to end the curse, which should lead them back to Sidrillon the Sage in area 4-2, and ultimately to the Temple of the Burned Man (areas 5-1 through 7-1).

LEVEL UP COMBAT

Most of the encounter areas involve investigation or traps (and increasingly deadly threats from Death himself) and do not need a statistical bump to challenge upper-level characters. If an encounter area is combat-heavy (for example, areas 1-2, 5-1, 5-4, 7-1, or any area where several enemies are actively fighting to try to kill the PCs) and you'd like to make the combat more balanced and less of a casual fighting stroll for the characters, use this formula to scale up the enemy combatants:

- Add +1 to attacks, damage, and saving throws per PC level.
- Double damage output (multiply damage result + modifiers by 2) vs. PCs of levels 3-5.
- Triple damage output (multiply damage result + modifiers by 3) vs. PCs of levels 6+.

Avoid the temptation to increase enemy hit points or armor class. That prolongs the combat and makes it less exciting. Increasing damage output is a more effective and interesting way to scale up the combat and make each salvo count, and the dramatic increase in saving throw bonuses will help enemies avoid some of the more potent spells that can make combat anticlimactic.



DEATH IN LANKHMAR



This adventure assumes that the PCs have become randomly targeted by Death, along with other nameless commoners who inhabit Lankhmar. It's only when the PCs avoid Death's Reach that Death begins to up the ante. Most commoners die when Death first makes (indirect) contact. The PCs will not, for even if they drop to zero hit points from Death's early warnings, their Luck will keep them alive longer than most.

As the PCs move through this adventure, various checkpoints call for rolls on the Death's Reach table (table 1-1, below). In playtesting, it became evident that the three different Lankhmar character classes were impacted by Death's Reach in different ways—what would have killed a wizard barely harmed a warrior, etc. Since Death is specifically targeting the PCs, it's appropriate that each character class is represented in the results to determine what potentially tragic events befall each.

As noted above, if the PCs do not follow the early leads in this adventure, use rolls on the Death's Reach table as it seems appropriate to give them the sense that something foul is afoot and, as they progress further on their path, that Death is stalking them.

Appropriate progress benchmarks for Death's Reach outside of the encounter areas in *Cheating Death* might look something like this:

- During their first investigation sequence, roll under Early Warnings for each character.
- During the resolution/epilogue to their first combat encounter, roll another Early Warnings result for each character.
- During a tense moment while on a chase or a stakeout, roll under Deadly Catastrophes.
- Roll a further Deadly Catastrophes result after another encounter or two if the PCs haven't started to look for ways to end the curse of Death's Reach.
- Roll a Fatal Attention result before they learn of the Temple of the Burned Man, or while they make their way to the front door outside area 5-1.

No matter what happens along the way, Death will withhold his reach once they enter the Temple of the Burned Man. One might even say Death begins to admire them at that point and secretly hopes they complete their quest and allow him to add the Burned Man to his ledger once and for all.



MAKING DEATH MORE DEADLY

This adventure is designed to bring characters to the verge of death, or push them off a metaphorical cliff right smack dab into death, depending on how the dice roll and how well the characters avoid minor trouble that would harm them before they reach the really major trouble that's coming their way. In playtesting, killing DCC Lankhmar characters was extremely difficult, because of the "Rousing Dying Characters" rules from the *Compendium of Secret Knowledge* in the DCC Lankhmar boxed set. Since PCs could spend 1 point of Luck to revive from zero hit points after an encounter, they could not die until both their hit points *and* their Luck were depleted. This can work well to disable the PCs (since only thieves regain Luck, and even they aren't likely to regain it at the level they will lose it in this adventure), but it makes permanent death less of a threat. This may not be a problem for you or your players, as they enjoy the exploration and adventure even if dying doesn't seem possible at every turn.

But if you feel like your PCs are brushing off the hands of Death even after Death's Reach escalates, include a moment in the adventure where the PCs see the thin, pale face of Death himself in a brief vision after rolling on a table 1-1, and from that moment onward, they may only use Luck one final time to revive themselves after they have reached zero hit points. Give them a clear warning first, making it explicit that "the rules of life and death have altered," through a profound feeling they get from Death's visage, and it will make the stakes higher for the PCs if they know that their life-sustaining Luck has effectively run out.

LEVEL UP DEATH

The Death's Reach table is designed to automatically scale the threat levels to any levels of adventurer. The asterisk (*) should read as "character level x." Thus, a roll of 3 under Early Warnings for a level 2 thief should read as "...take 2d6 damage," and a roll of 1 under Deadly Catastrophes for a level 4 thief should read as "...take 4d12 damage."

Some damage results may seem obscenely high, but remember that in DCC Lankhmar, PCs can revive from zero hit points to 1 by spending a point of Luck (unless the judge makes the final stages of the adventure deadlier, a possibility suggested in "Making Death More Deadly," above).

TABLE 1-1: DEATH'S REACH FOR THIEVES, WARRIORS, AND WIZARDS

* = CHARACTER LEVEL X

| Roll 1d6 | Early Warnings | Deadly Catastrophes | Fatal Attention |
|----------|---|--|--|
| 1 | <p>Trip on loose floorboard/cobblestone. DC 10 Ref save or fall and take...</p> <p>Thief: *d3 damage Warrior: *d10 damage Wizard: * damage</p> | <p>Indirect lightning strike sets fire to nearby linens. Luck check or take...</p> <p>Thief: *d12 damage Warrior: *d16 damage Wizard: *d8 damage</p> | <p>Vulnerable. All further normal hits against the PC in this adventure are...</p> <p>Thief: d12 crits on Table II Warrior: d16 crits on Table IV Wizard: d10 crits on Table I</p> |
| 2 | <p>Slick floor. DC 8 Ref save or roll...</p> <p>Thief: *d3 on fumble table Warrior: *d5 on fumble table Wizard: *d3 on fumble table</p> | <p>Flock of sickly birds knocks PC off ledge/into oncoming cart. Luck check or take...</p> <p>Thief: *d8 damage Warrior: *d12 damage Wizard: *d4 damage</p> | <p>Clumsy. All further missed attacks by the PC in this adventure are fumbles at...</p> <p>Thief: d12 Warrior: d16 Wizard: d12</p> |
| 3 | <p>Child's wooden toy slides under foot. DC 12 Ref save or fall and take...</p> <p>Thief: *d6 damage Warrior: *d12 damage Wizard: *d4 damage</p> | <p>Smoke impedes vision, causing PC to impale themselves on decorative ornament/wall fixture. Luck check or take...</p> <p>Thief: *d10 damage Warrior: *d14 damage Wizard: *d6 damage</p> | <p>Breathless. Lost breath for 1d4 rounds, incapable of taking action during this time, unless successful...</p> <p>Thief: DC 14 Fort save Warrior: DC 16 Fort save Wizard: DC 12 Fort save</p> |
| 4 | <p>Awning/window dressing collapses. Take...</p> <p>Thief: *+1 damage Warrior: *+4 damage Wizard: *+1 damage</p> | <p>Oil spilled on ground catches fire and burns the PC's boots. DC 16 Ref save or boots are ruined and PC takes...</p> <p>Thief: *d6 damage Warrior: *d10 damage Wizard: *d4 damage</p> | <p>Enraged. Sees Death's visage on nearest human target, attacks it with punch at...</p> <p>Thief: +2 for 1d4 damage Warrior: +4 for 1d4+2 damage Wizard: +0 for 1 damage</p> |
| 5 | <p>Jostled by overeager crowd. DC 10 Ref save or roll...</p> <p>Thief: *d6 on fumble table Warrior: *d12 on fumble table Wizard: *d4 on fumble table</p> | <p>Stone gargoyle/wall fixture falls atop PC. DC 16 Ref save or take...</p> <p>Thief: *d12 damage plus a d12 crit on Table III Warrior: *d16 damage plus a d16 crit on Table IV Wizard: *d8 damage plus loses memory of 1 random spell for the rest of the day</p> | <p>Unlucky. Spend 1 point of Luck or fall into sewer drain/broken floorboard and take...</p> <p>Thief: *d10 damage Warrior: *d16 damage Wizard: *d8 damage</p> |
| 6 | <p>Ladder/stair collapse. DC 12 Ref save or take...</p> <p>Thief: *d8 damage Warrior: *d14 damage Wizard: *d6 damage</p> | <p>Plank from new construction swings by rope and smashes a mirror near the PC. DC 16 Ref save to avoid plank, DC 18 to avoid mirror shards of mirror or take...</p> <p>Thief: *d8 damage for each and lose 1 point of Luck Warrior: *d10 damage for each and lose 1 point of Luck Wizard: *d8 damage for each and lose 1 point of Luck</p> | <p>Endless. Slain enemy or bystander rises from the dead with 1d8 hp and a thirst for vengeance vs. the PC and arrives in...</p> <p>Thief: 2d3 rounds Warrior: 2d6 rounds Wizard: 2d8 rounds Resurrected Agent of Death: Init -1; Atk claws +2 melee (1d8+2); AC 8; HD 2d8; hp 8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP immune to critical hits; SV Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +2; AL C.</p> |

PLAYER START

It is the Year of the Leviathan, the month of the Serpent, the day of the Vulture. Your band of killers, truth-seekers, pick-pockets, and strangers has sought treasure on the edges of the Great Salt Marsh and Mountains of Hunger. You found nothing but monstrous beasts and terrors from within the darkness. Robbing a caravan of schoolchildren would have been more profitable.

But you survived and honed your skills in the direst of circumstances.

You've bribed the guard at End Gate with your last remaining silver smerduks (or so you led your companions to believe) to let you enter Lankhmar, the City of Sevenscore Thousand Smokes, without registering your weapons with the constable. Ghenea the Butcher rented you a cramped room above her shop on Barter Street and assured you of her confidentiality for one gold rilk a week. Spending some of your last coin on sour wine at the nearby Feathered Behemoth tavern, you listen for leads and money-making opportunities. If you can make your fortune while avoiding entanglements with the Overlord, Lankhmar will open up its great pleasures to you. But it's difficult to concentrate on the future while the flies of the Feathered Behemoth buzz around your head and the scent of rancid meat and over-spiced perfume fills the air.

As you nurse your drink, you hear fragments of conversation that might lead to promising opportunities.

Share the following four rumors with the PCs (relevant adventure areas are noted in parenthesis):

- The sage at the Leather Library has hired some high-end protection. (area 4-1)
- The loss of so many messenger birds has the guilds scrambling for information. (area 3-1)
- Rathige the Gem Merchant has been spending an odd amount of time with a pathetic playwright on Cheap Street. (area 2-1)
- A band of outsiders has been seen at Ghenea the Butcher's place, and they look like they might be easy targets. (the PCs themselves)

If the players wait and say they continue to listen for more information at the Feathered Behemoth, they also hear two additional rumors:

- Many strange accidents have occurred in Lankhmar in recent days. (no specific area)
- The sage at the Leather Library says he has seen Death's ledger. (area 4-1)

Because of the dark and dirty atmosphere of the Feathered Behemoth, the PCs will have trouble identifying the specific scoundrels who said any of these fragments of conversation, but if the PCs specifically seek out more information on any of these leads inside the tavern, they may engage with one or more of the following NPCs:

Portmander: A middle-aged, spotty hulk of a man who has long ago lost his athletic frame. He's friendly but speaks only in short, efficient sentences. If he can answer questions in one word, he will. He's interested in gathering info on the PCs on behalf of the Thieves' Guild, but he will never reveal that. In-

stead, he will watch and listen, and occasionally interject to lead the PCs to reveal more about themselves.

Rika the Blue: A lithe, androgynous blonde figure with a collar highlighted by a blue-green brooch. Rika is a fence who quietly offers to help the PCs out with any sparkly items they may need to convert to gold rilk. Rika's left jacket pocket holds Sola, the field mouse, a familiar of sorts. Rika can see through Sola's eyes but has no other spellcasting ability.

Jongar the Sulk: A disfigured carpenter with melted skin over his eyes and web-like gray hair. He will provide slightly more information about any of the rumors (a significant, but perhaps out-of-context detail from each relevant area) but only for a price. He requires at least 1 gold rilk per detail, though if he is threatened he will lower his price to 1 silver smerduk—but will provide misinformation 50% of the time if he feels like his life is in danger.

Gisla: A flamboyant, jocular tapestry merchant who trades eagerly with Easterners and Mingols. She knows only the most superficial details about every rumor, but she will speak loudly enough to draw plenty of attention to the PCs, leading to all other NPCs being less willing to speak with them. She has already hired some low-level Slayers to dispatch the PCs later today and steal their supplies from the butcher's room, but she won't tell them that.

If the PCs don't follow up on any of the rumors or leads by leaving the Feathered Behemoth within the next five minutes of real time, they witness the following incident:

The door to the Feathered Behemoth bursts open. A well-dressed man, flanked by a balding ruffian with a glinting eye and a young girl, enters and calls out to the patrons: "Trouble at the aviary! I will pay three silver smerduks for assistance!"

If the PCs immediately offer their services, the well-dressed man, Hijmus, will offer them each three smerduks after they help him at the aviary. If the PCs don't offer their services, 1d6 other random NPCs will take Hijmus's offer and leave with him (along with the balding ruffian and the young girl) immediately. They are heading directly to area 3-1 by way of Carter Street (area 1-1).

If any PCs have a connection with the Thieves' Guild, the PC should roll a Luck check. On a success, the PC recognizes the balding ruffian as a jeweled-eyed thief known as Mongrel (see area 3-1 for his statistics).

Area 1-1 - Danger on Carter Street: *Carter Street is wide, but no matter the time of day, it's cluttered with Lankhmarts going about their business. Stone buildings with crumbling wooden facades line the eastern side, while new structures atop old line the western side, some of the three and four-story construction leaning inward over the street in almost threatening posture. Traveling merchants drag carts through the traffic, dirt-caked children play with broken wooden toys, and bearded men with cloaks dart into alleys to avoid watchful eyes.*

The PCs may pass through this street without any further investigation. They may follow Hijmus to the north, or they may be on their way elsewhere. If the PCs have not already gained Death's notice by now, they should begin to get some early,



dangerous warnings. Roll twice for each PC on the first column of table 1-1. Duplicate results are acceptable. For the first set of rolls, a bystander takes the damage and the PC sees what has happened (if 3+ damage is inflicted by the early warning, the bystander is killed). For the second result for each PC, the PC is directly afflicted by the early warning effect. This represents Death collecting lives to balance his ledger, in a relatively indiscriminant fashion, but the PCs just happen to get caught up in it. It's what they do in response that makes them PCs!

Judge's Note: In playtesting, players immediately assumed witchcraft was afoot and began searching for the culprit in the area. This is a great way to get them circling their own demise as they explore other possibly suspicious areas in this part of Lankhmar. Build upon the players' paranoia about witches by including crones and hags in background scenes, but make sure it's not a complete wild goose chase and eventually guide them in the direction of the secrets within the leather library to figure out that Death himself is stalking them. None of the playtesters made the inference that Death was involved in the strange accidents until an NPC directly identified Death's hand in their affairs.

If the PCs try to interact with any of the traveling merchants or the bearded men with cloaks while avoiding Death's early warnings on Carter Street, the PCs will land themselves in additional trouble with the Thieves' Guild. Continue on to the description of area 1-2. (If they don't engage, the PCs may continue on wherever they choose.)

Area 1-2 - Guild Business: *"You don't know what you're doing," the man says. He stares at you sternly, as if in judgment.*

Three traveling merchants pull their carts to the side of the street to avoid the scuffle. In unison, they reach beneath the blankets covering their wares, pull crossbows out with mechanical precision and begin to fire in your direction.

The PCs have drawn enough attention to themselves that they will be dispatched swiftly by low-level agents of the Slayers'

Brotherhood. If any of the Slayers are alive after the combat to interrogate, they will reveal secrets about who hired them (they work for Gisla, who will disavow all knowledge of their actions).

Slayer Agents with Crossbows (3): Init +2; Atk crossbow +1 ranged (1d6) or dagger +2 melee (1d4/1d10); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 3; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.

The bearded men with cloaks are independent burglars and cutthroats who have their individual reasons for not joining up with the Thieves' Guild. They are constantly on the lookout for places to rob and strangers to burgle. One to four of them will get involved in this scuffle, helping the side that seems most likely to prevail.

Cloaked Burglars (1d4): Init +2; Atk dagger +1 melee (1d4/1d10); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0; AL C.

Within 3d4 rounds of the first combat volley, the city guard and constable will hear of the violence on Carter Street and arrive to investigate. Wessim is an arrogant minor peace-keeper in Lankhmar, and he will make a grand show of keeping the streets safe. He is a buffoon, easily bribed, but he will command his guards to take anyone into custody who does not show deference to him. He will only personally engage in combat as a last resort.

Constable Wessim: Init +0; Atk metal-tipped blackjack +2 melee (1d4/1d10); AC 12; HD 2d6; hp 8; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; AL C.

City Guards (2): Init +1; Atk pike +1 melee (1d6); AC 16; HD 1d8; hp 4; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL L.

Award one point of fleeting Luck to any PC who concocts a ridiculous but plausible excuse that prevents Constable Wessim from taking members of the party into custody.

Area 2-1 - Ronjac's Retreat: The door to Ronjac's apartment is locked, requiring a DC 12 Pick Lock check to open silently or a DC 12 Strength check to kick open.

The door opens to reveal shabby living quarters with conspicuously ornate chests lining the wall to your right. To your left, the brickwork and metal grill appear to hold an unused wood stove. A plain bed fills the space at the end of the room, behind a wooden support post.

Two low-rent guards, servants of Rathige the Gem Merchant, stand at the base of the stairs leading up to area 2-2. They aren't watching the door to this room, but if anyone kicks open the door or otherwise makes noise while entering, they will come out to investigate. They have strict orders to warn Rathige of any trouble and push any fannish devotees of Ronjac the Playwright back out into the streets. They carry long, weighted wooden clubs that they use to crack the skulls of troublemakers, if needed.

If the servants yell to Rathige or if a loud fight ensues, both Rathige and Ronjac will descend the stairs to see what is going on. They will both try to flee if it looks like they are outnumbered.

Servants with Clubs (2): Init +0; Atk club +1 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.



The ornate wooden chests along the south wall – two large and three small – contain various theatrical supplies belonging to Ronjac. The larger two chests, resting on wheeled platforms for easy movement, are filled with assorted costumes and props for such plays as *The Vagabond's Scandalous Mistress* and *Glipkerio's Last Decree*. If a character peruses the latter play, they will discover references to the “undying burned man” who defeated Death itself. These references in the play are allusions to legends of the past, but in the play, Overlord Glipkerio asks a sage to bring the burned man to him, and the sage replies “he is protected by magicks that can only be undone by their maker.” If Ronjac is asked about this section of the play, he will say that he heard stories about a burned man who could not die when he was a child in Lankmar.

Two of the three small chests are locked *and* trapped, requiring both Pick Lock and Disable Trap checks.

Small Chest #1: DC 10 lock with a DC 10 poison needle trap (failure to disable this trap results in 1d4 lotus venom poison damage per turn until an antidote is administered). Inside are 32 gold rilks, 40 silver smerduks, and two red gemstones worth 50 gold rilks each.

Small Chest #2: DC 12 lock and a DC 12 clamp trap (failure to disable requires a DC 15 Reflex save or the victim loses 1d3 fingers). Inside are 37 parchment pages of earlier drafts of *Glipkerio's Last Decree*, wherein Ronjac criticizes all Overlords past and present. Ronjac considers these pages to contain some of his best verse, but he knows what he has written here would be politically dangerous if it was revealed to the public.

Small Chest #3: Broken lock, broken inactive needle trap, easily

swings open. Inside this velvet-lined chest are 3 vials of purple-red lotus blood, 1 vial of bright green lotus venom, and 1 vial of clear lotus venom antidote.

Lotus blood is a hallucinogen. Each vial contains two doses. For each dose, the imbiber must make a DC 12 Fort save and a DC 14 Will save or lose awareness of their surroundings for 2d6 rounds. After the effect wears off, they lose 1 point of Personality and talk of travels to other dimensions where everything was either enormous or tiny – or both.

Lotus venom is a poison. Each vial contains four doses. Each dose, when in contact with a target via imbibing or damage from a penetrating or edged weapon, will deal 1d4 damage per turn until the antidote is swallowed.

Lotus venom antidote is one dose per vial.

Area 2-2 – The Lotus Garden: This upper-level garret is well-lit during the day, with open windows and reflective mirrors to keep the flowers growing, and at night it is barely lit by a single lantern held by Ronjac. Adjust the description accordingly.

Wide arched windows fill the walls of this small upper room. Three tables hold glass-walled flower beds. The flowers look to be floating in the water. Tall ceramic cylinders stand between each window.

If Rathige and Ronjac have not yet responded to any commotion downstairs, they will also be present in this area:

A short, stout man with a frilled collar and comically-puffed sleeves peers at one of the floating flowers while a thin man with brown and tan robes nods and taps on the glass.

If the PCs are able to remain hidden in the stairway, they will overhear Rathige (with frilled collar) and Ronjac (in bland robes) discussing the details of their operation. Essentially, Ronjac the Playwright is beloved by the current Overlord, who commissions plays that perform weekly throughout Lankhmar. Secretly, Rathige the Gem Merchant finances the purchase of exotic lotus seeds and the two of them run an illicit lotus operation. Ronjac sells his lotus blood and lotus venom while he tours the city, and Rathige retains a significant cut of the profits. This operation is not endorsed by any city guild and the Overlord would have their heads if he knew they were selling Eastern narcotics without his approval or taxation. Rathige doesn't expect any trouble, since no one knows of their operation. Ronjac is nervous and complains vocally that Rathige visited Ronjac's own apartment so conspicuously.

Neither Rathige or Ronjac will fight unless they must defend themselves. They both flee if given the opportunity (Rathige downstairs out the front door, Ronjac climbing out into the alley through a window).

Ronjac the Playwright: Init -1; Atk rapier -1 melee (1d8-1); AC 9; HD 1d6; hp 3; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort -1, Ref -1, Will +2; AL C.

Rathige the Gem Merchant: Init +1; Atk dagger +1 melee (1d4/1d10); AC 12; HD 1d6; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C.

One ceramic cylinder is filled with lotus seeds, while another is filled with dried lotus petals that can be crushed and boiled and mixed with human blood to make lotus blood. The water of the glass flower beds may be ingested as an antidote to lotus venom.

After this encounter area is resolved, roll an Early Warnings result from the Death's Reach table for each PC.

Area 3-1 - The Aviary: *"He lives!" shouts the well-dressed man at the top of the stairs. The gruff, jewel-eyed man and the young girl stop you from making any further progress into the room.*

"You're hired protection," the gruff man says. "Stay outside and make sure we don't get snuck up on by no thieves."

Cassynth the bird-keeper has been injured from a fall from his small tower. The black smoke of Lankhmar has afflicted him, and it's been killing his birds. He has close ties with the Thieves' Guild, which uses his birds to carry messages to their members in the Eight Cities. The well-dressed man is Hijmus, a barely-skilled doctor. He relies on bloodletting and water immersion treatment. Here he drags Cassynth's still unconscious body down the steps toward the front door to jolt him physically so he revives.

The young girl, age 11, is Orellia, Cassynth's daughter. She has recently started tutelage with Mongrel, the gruff, jewel-eyed man whom she calls "uncle." Mongrel is a low-ranking Thieves' Guild member, but he's been assigned to watch Cassynth and keep him out of trouble. Orellia roused Mongrel from his sleep in the storeroom when Cassynth fell, and though he fetched the doctor immediately, Hijmus insisted on hiring some extra help at the Feathered Behemoth, primarily because he doesn't want to be alone with Mongrel and wants witnesses if Mongrel does anything suspicious.

Cassynth regains consciousness in three rounds, and tell of strange accidents he has seen from his perch up in the tower with the birds. He was not conscious to see any of the "Early Warnings" results that befell the PCs, but he will talk of similar strange events in the area and the increasingly black smoke above this area of Lankhmar and the growing death toll of his bird population. With the strange increase in the death toll, rumors of a "burned man" who escaped death have begun to spread and Cassynth knows of some of these tales. He has heard the burned man defeated death long ago, and can only be killed by magic or the kindness of someone he loves. Cassynth doesn't think these preposterous tales are true.

Neither Cassynth nor Hijmus will fight under any circumstances. They both can describe superficial details about the Leather Library (areas 4-1 and 4-2) and know Sidrillon the Sage personally, although they find him strange and distant and prefer to consult him only if necessary.

Mongrel will fight if challenged, though he prefers stabs in the back to front-faced combat. Orellia sneaks away if conflict ensues, though she can defend herself.

How the PCs handle themselves in this area could determine their future relationship with the Thieves' Guild. Around Cassynth's aviary there are a number of items worth stealing: 3 jewel-encrusted birds (100 gold rilks each), 2 rainbow lorikeets in golden cages (200 gold rilks for each bird plus the cages), and 4 large paintings by the master Vivenda from the Eight Cities (worth 300 gold rilks each on the black market of Lankhmar; double that in the Eight Cities).

Mongrel with the Jeweled Eye: Init +2; Atk short sword +2 melee (1d6) or dagger +4 melee (1d4/1d10); AC 13; HD 3d6; hp 11; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

Orellia the Young Girl: Init -1; Atk dagger -1 melee (1d4-1); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort -1, Ref +1, Will +1; AL N.

After this encounter area is resolved, roll a Deadly Catastrophes result from the Death's Reach table for each PC.

Area 4-1 - The Leather Library: *This galley-like narrow room is lined with shelves containing colorfully-bound leather books and strange artifacts: a crystalline globe with shimmering silver liquid swaying up one side and down the other; a black serpent-toothed worm racing inside a glass sculpture as if trying to escape; framed parchment fragments with burn-marks in alien letters; and two small obsidian statues that turn their heads to look at you as you walk in.*

Near the back of the narrow room, two angled bookcases hide a ladder ascending to area 4-2. Two hired bodyguards, Slayer Jaggory (a thick-necked warrior with hide armor and fur-fringed collar) and Slayer Weaver (a leather-clad assassin with spider-like markings on his bracers), stand at the base of the ladder and silently watch the PCs. They will brusquely tell the PCs to leave if the PCs touch any of the artifacts. If the PCs linger for more than a moment, Sidrillon will call from upstairs and demand they be brought to the upper level.

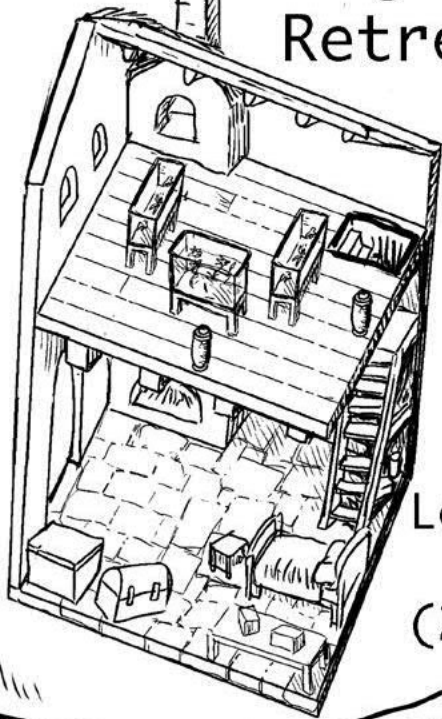
"I've been waiting for them to arrive!" he says, annoyed.

The Slayers will use force, if necessary, to prevent the PCs from lifting any of the books and artifacts from this area, but if any

CHEATING DEATH

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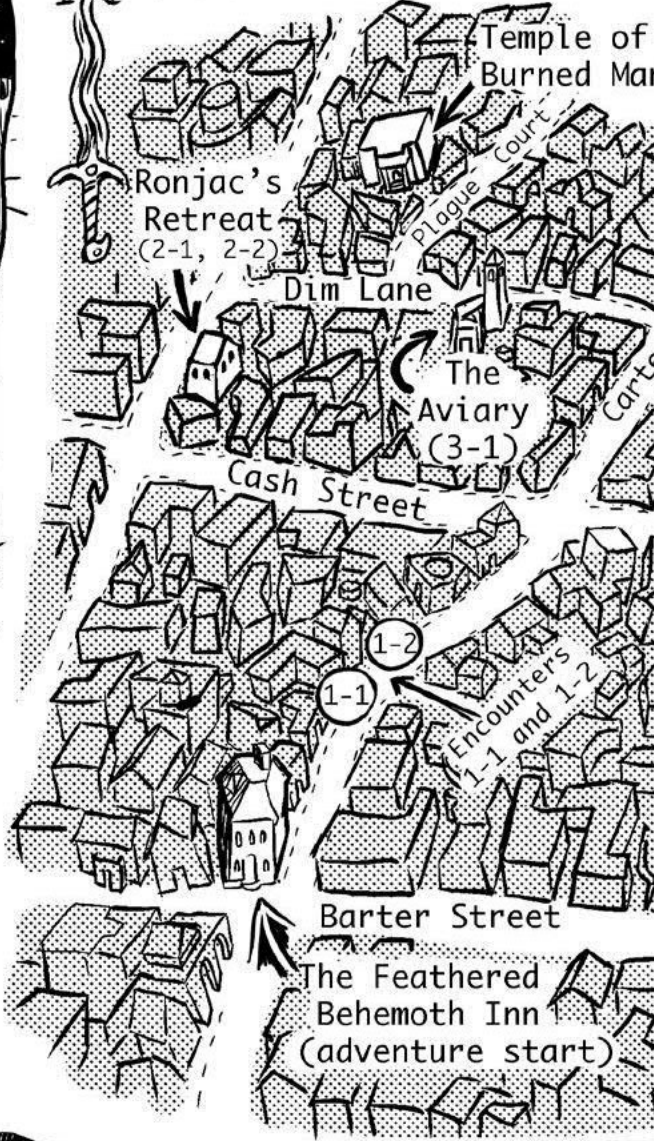
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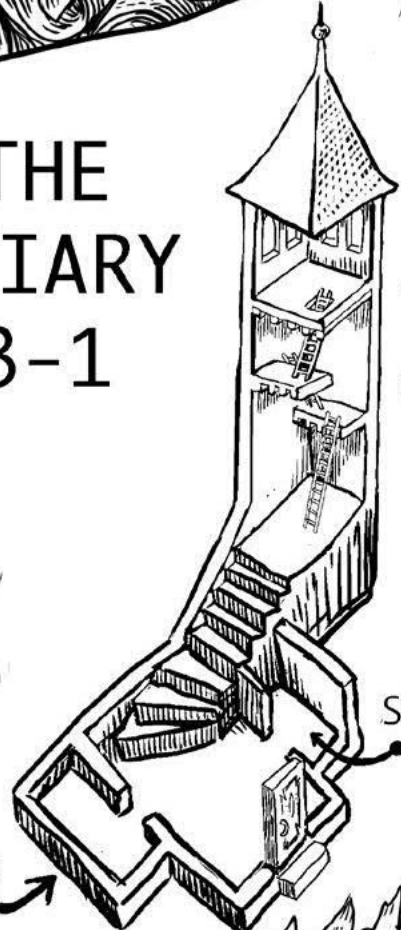
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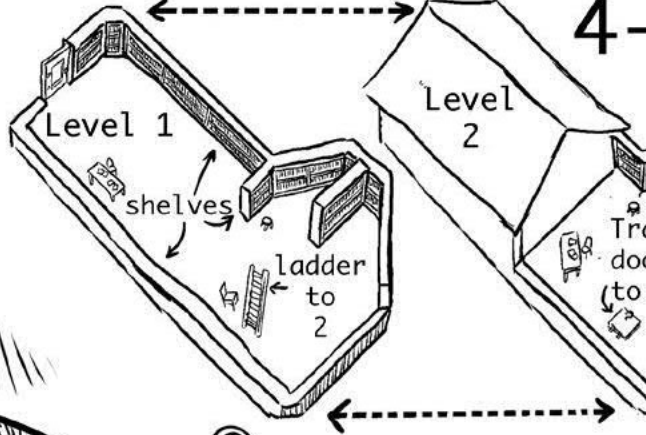


Tower of Birds

Bed Room

Storage

Leather Library 4-



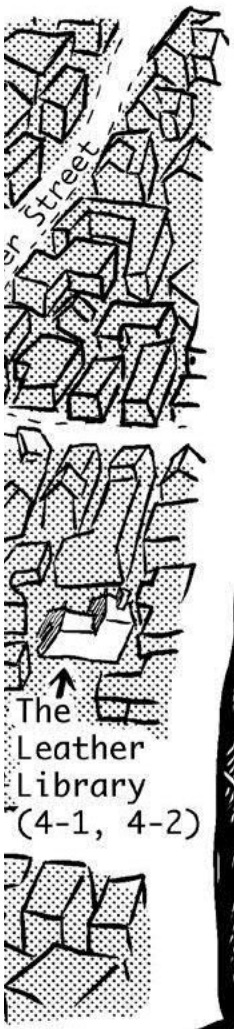
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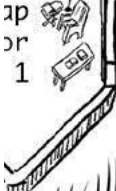
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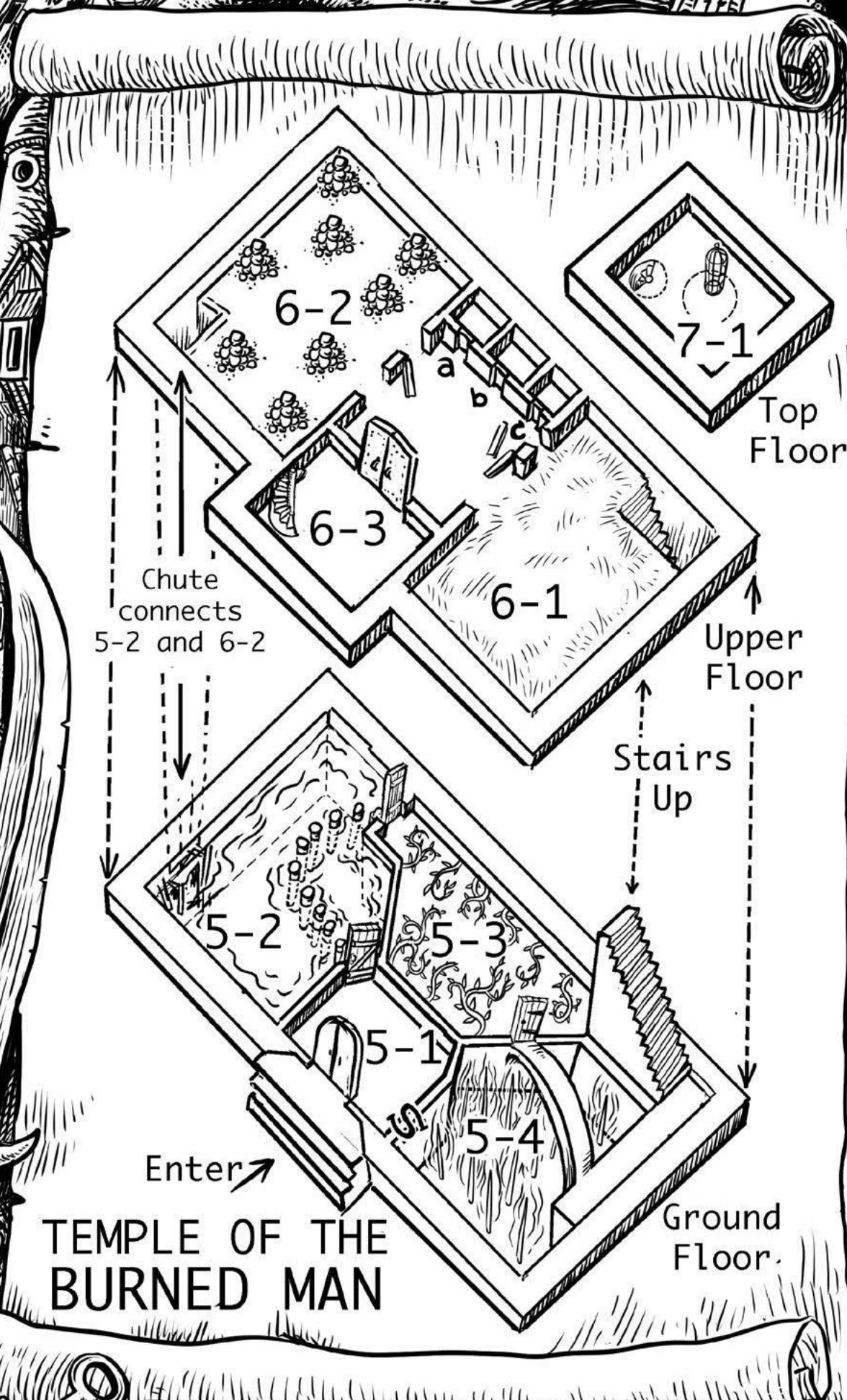
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PC successfully steals anything, here's what they might end up with:

- 10% chance that any book they steal has 1d3 random spells (as a scroll; determine level of each spell randomly using 1d4).
- **Crystalline globe with living silver:** Purely ornamental, but if the crystal is shattered, the living silver will attempt to slide into the ears and nose of the closest living creature (DC 18 Reflex save to avoid). Roll two Nehwonian major corruption checks. Victim also loses 1d4 Stamina and gains 1d3 Intelligence.
- **Black serpent-toothed worm in sculpture:** Harmless unless freed. If the worm escapes, it flees the area and hides at the closest exit. When anyone leaves the area by that exit, it flies up to bite the leg of the closest target, dealing 2d12 damage and embedding itself under the skin. It will remain there until sliced out, causing 2d12 additional damage to the victim. There is a 25% chance the worm has laid eggs inside the victim's leg by the time it is cut free. It will appear dead once removed.
- **Framed parchment fragments with burn marks:** Fortune-telling tools. Sidrillon can use these to simulate the casting of second sight (DCC RPG, p. 267) with a +3 spell check.
- **Two small obsidian statues:** These are transformed adventurers, trapped as statues affixed to metal bases. They can gesture and move their upper bodies, but their feet are immobile. They require neither food nor drink, but they are slowly dying inside their obsidian forms. They long to be freed from their curse, but Sidrillon thinks they are a wondrous curiosity and has no interest in finding relief for them.

The two Slayers have been hired to protect the collection and to keep Sidrillon safe from emissaries of Death, or the Thieves' Guild, or both. Sidrillon will provide both answers if pressed. Neither Slayer will fight unless commanded to by Sidrillon or unless they must to stop a thief in the area, or to save their own lives or that of Sidrillon.

Slayer Jaggory (warrior): Init +4; Atk handaxe +d5+1 melee (1d6+deed die+1); AC 13; HD 3d12; hp 21; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP d5 deed die, critical threat range 19-20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; AL L.

Slayer Weaver (thief): Init +1; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d6) or dagger +2 melee (1d4/1d10); AC 13; HD 3d6; hp 10; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP has 6 Luck to spend (d5 Luck die); SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +2; AL L.

If the PCs ascend to area 4-2, Slayer Jaggory will follow them up, while Slayer Weaver remains downstairs.

During their time in this area, or on the stairs to the upper level, roll a Fatal Attention result from the Death's Reach table for each PC.

Award one point of fleeting Luck to any PC who brazenly steals an item from this area while being watched by the Slayers.

Area 4-2 – Secrets and Lives: *"I nearly sent Jaggory to fetch you personally. It took you long enough to find your way here!" says the odd person in the very large chair. His voice seems almost ancient, but his face seems like that of a young man. He's dressed in colorful robes atop meticulous formal attire.*

"I'm Sidrillon. I have seen your names in the ledger. But you must hurry... if you want to live!"

Ironically, Sidrillon doesn't seem to be in much of a hurry. Notably, though, he will gesture for Slayer Jaggory to push the PCs back if they stand too close to him. He doesn't want to be collateral damage if Death reaches for the PCs here, but he's also excited about seeing Death's Reach in action, so he lingers with his stories and haltingly answers their questions. He knows Death is watching, but Sidrillon doesn't realize that Death is waiting. Death, too, wants to see the PCs succeed and his last "Fatal Attention" jolt in the previous area was to wake them up and motivate them to press onward with immediacy.

Sidrillon can answer the PCs' inquiries – though hesitantly – and within an hour, after recounting some of his favorite volumes of poetry and astronomy and criticizing populist writers like Ronjac "the Hack," he will get to the gist of why the PCs are here. He tells them the background of Selwynder, the Burned Man.

Sidrillon tells the PCs this story because he has seen the ledger of Death in a dream. He has seen the PCs' names and had visions of them surviving Death's Reach. Death is aware of Sidrillon's second sight and is using it as a back channel. Death wants the PCs to find out about the Burned Man. He wants the Burned Man to die. Sidrillon is a puppet, though that's not at all how he interprets the situation – he thinks his sage-like wisdom and obsessive study has connected him to great powers beyond the knowledge of mortals.

If pressed for a specific way to kill the Burned Man, Sidrillon will grumble and present the PCs with a bone scroll case. He directs them to the *ritual of kindness* written on the scroll, and points out the items inside the scroll case: a pile of wood shavings reputedly from Issek of the Jug and a pearl from the Sea King's domain. This, he says, will bring even the Burned Man to his final rest. (It requires a spell check result of 18+, but Sidrillon does not know that.)

Sidrillon does not know the exact layout of the Temple of the Burned Man but he can direct the PCs to the mansion and he knows that it is protected by both traps and guardians. He wishes the PCs well, but he refuses to provide any additional aid in the form of spellbooks, artifacts, or Slayer assistance. They must prove themselves worthy without any additional aid he says, though he is really just a compulsive hoarder who can't part with anything that belongs to him.

Sidrillon will not fight, except in self-defense, and even then he will hide behind his Slayers unless he has no alternative.

Sidrillon the Sage: Init -2; Atk slim knife +1 melee (1d4) or thrown book +0 ranged (1d3); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP his cloak provides +4 AC and +2 to saving throws vs. magic, can cast ritual versions of 2d4 random level 1 wizard spells at an additional 1 turn casting time; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3; AL N.



THE TEMPLE OF THE BURNED MAN

Area 5-1 – Entrance Hall: *Five armored guardsmen stand at the back of the entrance hall, blocking a door on the angled wall to your right. The room is well-lit, the décor stately, but the wooden floor appears discolored with a purple stain a few feet in front of you. The tallest of the guardsman points a crossbow at you.*

If the PCs broke down the door to enter, the guardsman fires immediately at the closest target (then roll for initiative).

If the PCs used a key or lockpick to enter (or otherwise entered in a non-destructive manner), the guardsman says, “He didn’t tell me we would have any deliveries today.”

Two pendulum scythe blades are affixed to the ceiling, visible to anyone who looks up. They trigger when anyone enters the room. If aware of the blades, a DC 10 Reflex save is needed to avoid them. If unaware, the DC is 16. The scythes slice down back and forth in front of the main doorway for 3d6 rounds or until manually returned to the ceiling using the guards’ halberds to hoist them back into place. The scythes do 1d12 damage to anyone hit.

If combat ensues, the guards attempt to push the PCs back toward the swinging scythes.

Guardsmen Marg has been in the service of Caretaker Jengus (area 6-3) for two years. He has never met the Burned Man, though he’s heard stories from before he was employed in this house. He is loyal to Jengus, and will not accept a bribe, though

he will surrender if it seems evident that he will die in battle. The guards are well-paid and not overly bright. A bribe of 50 gold rilkis or more would sway any one of them to leave their posts, but they would fight to the death otherwise. If the scythes are not working to kill intruders, Marg will open the door to area 5-2 and command the guards to force the intruders into that room (where they will fall into the dangerous waters).

Marg has limited information about the temple itself. He only knows that there is a secret door in this area leading to area 5-4 and that Jengus is carried in and out through that passage by a bizarre spider-lady. Marg also knows that Jengus protects a burned man somewhere on an upper level of this building, and Jengus has created wards and protections to keep his master safe. Jengus comes and goes and Marg does not know if the coin used to pay the guards is hidden in the temple or at an outside location. Marg does know how to open the secret door, but he is terrified to enter that portal himself. He has a small ring of keys that open the doors to areas 5-2 and 5-3.

Guardsmen Marg: Init +2; Atk longsword +3 melee (1d8+3) or crossbow +2 ranged (1d6); AC 16; HD 3d8; hp 15; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP when using longsword, may make an additional shield bash attack at 1d14+3 (1d4+3 damage); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

Guards (4): Init +1; Atk halberd +1 melee (1d10); AC 15; HD 1d8; hp 4; MV 20’; Act 1d20; SP on successful halberd strike,

may deal half damage to push the victim back 10'; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

If any PC successfully convinces Marg and the guards to assist the party or figures out a way to use the dead bodies of Marg and the guards to help bypass area 5-2, award the PC one point of fleeting Luck.

Area 5-2 – The Inside Pond: *The locked door opens to reveal a large, flooded room. A few inches below the doorway, murky green water laps up against black flagstones that seem to indicate a curved pathway toward a door on the wall to the right. Nothing about this room resembles the entrance hall. This looks like a lower, forgotten level, all gray, moss-encrusted stonework. Seven taut ropes stretch 20' from the ceiling to the flagstone path. A decaying wooden frame, like a ruined cabinet, rests in the far left corner of the room at water level. Four crude chandeliers dangle 5' from the ceiling, producing enough dim light to see the edges of the room as the water undulates.*

Anyone looking closely in this room will note the following details:

- Several candles in the chandelier are significantly taller and brighter than the others, indicating that they have been recently replaced. (A close inspection of the wall by the door to area 5-3 will reveal evidence of someone climbing the wall toward the ceiling—this is how Caretaker Leena maintains this area, and feeds the fish by dropping food from the ceiling.)
- Another rope can be seen inside the ruined cabinet in the left corner. This is the remnants of a rope-and-pulley system used when this was a working kitchen before its renovation into a trap room. (This provides an additional access point to area 6-2 but has not been used in years. A DC 16 Climb check is needed to climb this slick passageway. The rope will fall if pulled, and is no longer firmly affixed above.)
- The seven ropes that stretch from the ceiling to the flagstones are tied to the base of seven stones, in what are effectively stone columns rising up to water level. Because of the murky water, this is only obvious because the water moves up and down slightly. (These ropes are traps, as indicated below.)
- The water is moving without any visible reason, but its movement is coupled by an occasional splash, indicating several creatures swimming in the water. (These are translucent houndfish.)

The flagstones are slippery, but may be traversed with two consecutive DC 12 Agility checks. If a PC grabs one of the ropes stretched down to a flagstone, the rope coils around the character's lower body and springs in an elastic fashion, dipping the PC head-first into the murky water. The PC must make a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid the first dunk into the water, and a DC 12 Reflex save for each round thereafter to curl up and climb the rope to keep out of the water. The rope may be cut by dealing it 6 damage from a blade or equivalent. If a PC fails an Agility check or a Reflex save in this room, roll 1d6 on table 1-2 and add the character's Luck modifier.

The water is 20' deep and inhabited by 12 translucent houndfish with visible skeletons and long, toothed snouts. Each houndfish is 3' long, and not all of the creatures will be interested in any hairy, possibly-armored adventurers. Any time a

**TABLE 1-2: PC IN MURKY WATER
(ROLL 1D6 MODIFIED BY LUCK)**

| Roll | Result |
|------|--|
| 1-2 | You fail to hold your breath and get a lungful of murky green water. Your Stamina is reduced by 1d6 and the next check/save you make is at -1d. |
| 3 | Your disturbance of the water draws the attention of...something. You take 1d4 damage from a bite to your cheek and you begin to bleed. You are at -2 to your next check/save. |
| 4 | You swallow some murky green water and gag. Make a DC 10 Fort save or take 1d4 damage as you vomit into the water. |
| 5 | You bump something moving in the water. It feels like a long, slender fish. Its sharp fins slice your exposed skin for 1 point of damage. |
| 6 | The water is deeper than you would have imagined, but you are able to hold your breath and avoid drowning for the moment. Something brushes past you in the water. |

PC is immersed in the water (because they are attempting to swim through it, or paddle a raft with their arms, etc.) roll 1d8 – that is how many houndfish will attempt to feed off the PC. The houndfish initiative modifier accounts for their ability to surprise.

Translucent Houndfish (12): Init +6; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4); AC 12 (8 if out of water); HD 1d4; hp 1 each; MV swim 40'; Act 1d20; SP gain +2 to attach and damage rolls against any bleeding target; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will -2; AL N.

Area 5-3 – The Living Garden: *In this crumbling room, exotic furniture stands beside splintering tables and divans sprinkled with golden trinkets and glittering baubles. It looks to have been a living space decorated by a lord of the Eastern lands, but the plaster walls are cracked and moss and vines have burst forth from the crevices, revealing gray stone walls. The purple and gold carpet in the center of the room lies tattered in a heap. It moves as if something rests beneath it.*

This was once a reception room, and Leena still imagines tending to guests here, but those days are long gone. The carpet covers a large, bud-like brain of the semi-sentient vines that inhabit this area. The vines attempt to envelop and crush any living thing that enters this room (DC 12 Reflex save to avoid each round). If food (rat-sized or larger) is provided to a vine, a character will be able to avoid the need for a Reflex save for that round as the vine feasts. The vines live behind the walls and beneath the rotted wooden floor, and even if one is chopped up, another will reform to take its place. Most sensible PCs will move through this room without lingering, but the vines can be killed if 30 points of damage are dealt to the bud-like brain (AC 8) beneath the carpet.

A daring PC with an Agility check of 14+ will be able to leave this room with 10 gold rilks' worth of exotic ornaments, while on an Agility check of 14+ followed by a successful Luck check, the PC will snare an item worth 50 gold rilks to the right buyer.



Area 5-4 – The Dry Chamber: *The air is dry, the heat oppressive. A narrow stone bridge stretches across a wide pit speckled with clustered flames. The gray stone walls are dotted with the burned remains of banners and curtains. You can see indications of arched windows on the far wall, the portals blocked by crude masonry. Beneath the window ledges, at the terminus of the narrow bridge, a stone platform runs along the wall, leading to a passageway to your left. A slender woman in a soot-stained yellow gown crawls on the far wall, a curved dagger dangling from a chain at her waist. The glinting eyes of several soot-covered children look up at you from the floor of the pit.*

PCs must immediately make a DC 10 Fort save or lose 1 point of Stamina temporarily. For each 2 rounds of combat in this area, they must make an increasingly difficult Fort save (DC 12 after round 2, DC 14 after round 4, etc.) or temporarily lose Stamina points equal to the number of combat rounds completed. At zero Stamina, the character will fall unconscious. Anyone who takes an action to drink from a waterskin (or the like) will restore 1d6 Stamina points lost this way. All Stamina points lost in this area can be recovered after 1 turn of rest away from the intense heat.

The pit below is speckled with a dozen flaming poles, with liquid Kiraayan Fire pumping through a series of cleverly-laid pipes beneath the stonework. The intense heat can be modulated by a control wheel in the south east corner of the floor of the pit (DC 12 Intelligence check to locate). The inhabitants of this area, Caretaker Leena and her feral children, have become accustomed to the temperature and will only reduce the intensity of the flame if a trusted guest is in the area.

The narrow stone bridge will collapse if more than one PC (or more than 150 lbs. total) occupies the bridge at the same time. Anyone on the bridge when it collapses takes 2d6 damage from the fall to the pit below. A successful DC 12 Reflex save reduces damage by half, but victims remain in the 20' pit below, which is spiked with six patches of six-pronged flaming spears.

Any victim thrown or pushed onto the affixed flaming poles takes 1d8 damage (double if falling from a height of 20' or more) and an additional 1d6 fire damage per round until a DC 12 Reflex save is made to extinguish the flame.

Caretaker Leena, corrupted wizard-thief and disciple of Mog the Spider-God, is responsible for the intake of supplies from the entrance hall to the upper levels. Her ability to climb walls allows her to avoid many of the traps that would affect more floor-bound victims. In her early years of servitude to the Burned Man, she adopted street urchins to assist her in her magical rituals, and her adopted children remained stunted and have grown increasingly feral. She treats them like animals, throwing down slabs of meat from the butcher's shop (supplied weekly by the guards in area 5-1). The six remaining feral children live in the pit and only ascend to the "ground floor" of this area to protect their mother.

Leena and her children wait to attack the PCs when the bridge collapses, or if the PCs cross to the eastern platform successfully. If attacked at range, they will also attack in self-defense.

The stairway leading up to area 6-1 is trapped (DC 14 Find Trap check to identify; DC 12 Disable Trap check to deactivate). When any PC steps on the fifth or sixth step, the steps slide downward into a ramp, slick oil streams out of small holes beside each stair, and any PC on the stair or on the platform at the base of the stair must make a DC 14 Reflex save or fall prone and become drenched in oil. Flaming clay pots from the ceiling of the stairwell drop and set all oil aflame, dealing 1d6 damage per round to anyone covered in oil. PCs must remove their garments and make a DC 14 Reflex save each round to avoid taking continued damage. Anyone doing so on the eastern platform must make a successful Luck check or fall into the pit, taking 2d12 damage for landing on a flaming six-pronged spear.

Any surviving PCs must make a DC 14 Climb check (or use other means) to ascend the slick staircase (taking an additional 1d6 fire damage if the flaming oil still burns).

Caretaker Leena of Mog: Init +6; Atk curved dagger +4 melee (1d8) or web +0 ranged (40' special); AC 13; HD 3d6; hp 16; MV climb 40'; Act 1d20; SP spider-climb, immune to heat and flame while in this area, may use an action to emit web-like adhesive substance which can entrap up to two human-sized targets (DC 13 Ref save to avoid or DC 15 Str check to escape), may automatically stab any victim trapped in the web with her curved dagger as an action each round for 1d6 damage; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +1; AL C.

Feral Children (6): Init +2; Atk bite +1 melee (1d6); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 3 each; MV climb 30'; Act 1d20; SP spider-climb, immune to heat and flame while in this area, prey on helpless (gain additional +5 to bite, ignore all armor, and deal double damage if attacking victim ensnared in web or otherwise incapacitated); SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will -1; AL C.

Area 6-1 - Death's Fingernails: *This large stone room at the top of the stairs shows indication of abandoned structural work. Exposed wooden trusses line the interior, a framework for a series of incomplete rooms. Partially-finished wooden walls leave doorway-sized gaps for movement out of the room. The floor is covered with twigs, branches, and hay.*

Anyone taking time to examine this area from the top of the stairs will note that several human-sized bones (ribs, femurs, humeri) are partially hidden beneath the larger branches near the center of the room.

This area is double-trapped, with triggered bear-trap style snap traps obscured by the floor covering, and a rat's nest beneath the larger branches and bones in the center.

The snap traps may be avoided by walking along the eastern and southern edges of the room, or by a DC 14 Find Trap check for each 10' (after each success, the PC gains a cumulative +2 to the next Find Trap check in this room). The wooden beams and trusses may be climbed to avoid the traps as well, on a DC 16 Climb check.

The rats will only attack if a victim is caught in a snap trap. For each 10' of movement inside the room (not along the edge), have the PC roll a d5. On a 1-3, the snap trap catches the victim and deals 1d6 damage, and the victim is unable to move until a DC 15 Strength check is made by an ally to pry open the trap. On a 4, the snap trap closes, but misses the victim's leg. On a 5, the snap trap does not trigger, though the PC would know they stepped on something metal. PCs may use Luck to modify this d5 roll.

A victim caught in a trap cannot free themselves unless they make a DC 14 Disable Trap check or a DC 15 Strength check followed by a DC 15 Reflex save (failure on the save after a successful Str check results in an additional 1d6 damage as the PC becomes trapped again). Additionally, any victim trapped will be swarmed with rats who move beneath the branches and hay in 1d4 rounds. The rat swarm deals 1d6 damage per round to the trapped victim and the swarm can only be disbanded by loud sounds, extreme heat or cold, or if they are dealt 8 damage (AC 10). Anyone attempting to destroy the rat swarm to assist a swarmed ally inflicts half damage to the swarm and half damage to their trapped ally.

If a PC manages to execute a plan that circumvents the floor traps entirely or otherwise dispatches the threats without any harm, award the PC one point of fleeing Luck.

Areas 6-1(a)(b)(c) - Abandoned Guard Quarters: These closet-sized areas were once the quarters and stations of guards that would be alerted to intruders by traps in areas 6-1 and 6-2. As the traps in the lower level became stranger and the guards left or died off, these guard quarters have become abandoned. What remains in the three rooms are piles of blankets and mundane supplies, including lanterns, oil, rope, 2 daggers, 3 short swords, 2 spears, 1 metal breastplate (AC 15), and 2 wooden shields.

Area 6-2 - Thunderstone Chamber: *This dry, voluminous gray room is decorated with 6' mounds made of irregularly-sized stones of various shades of color. Each of these cairns seems precariously balanced. In the southwest corner of the room, a wooden framework protrudes over a rectangular hole in the floor.*

The hole in the floor is a shaft leading to area 5-2 (and the framework holds a rope and weathered pulley leading down, unless the rope had been pulled from area 5-2 already). The shaft drops 20' to water (and danger) below.

The floor of this room is covered with symmetrical flagstones, giving the appearance of a stable floor, but each flagstone is balanced atop small stones of various sizes. With each 5' of movement, a PC must make a DC 12 Agility check to balance on the flagstone or the wave effect of the moving floor stones will topple 1d3 cairns, resulting in 1d3 damage per falling cairn to each victim in a 10' area. Anyone who takes damage from a cairn will be thrown to the ground and take double damage from cairns triggered by other PCs this round. When one or more cairns collapse, each PC in this area must make a DC 15 Reflex save or fall to the ground. Any PC who falls this way must make a Luck check or trigger an additional cairn to topple.

A total of 12 cairns may be toppled in this area.

When the piles of stones crash to the ground, they make a thunderous sound and reveal human skeletons with bones connected via catgut and nails for display purposes. The skeletons are inert, but as the floor shakes and the cairns crash, they will flop around as if in great pain.

Area 6-3 - The Bells of the Temple: *The double doors open to reveal the living quarters of someone who has remained secluded here for a long time. Partially empty shelves line the walls of this chamber with jars of dried foodstuffs and cheaply-bound books. An iron-framed spiral staircase ascends upward in the center of the room. The air smells stale. It's colder here than in other parts of this house. A hunched old man rises from a ragged bed. "Is it time?" he asks.*

This is Caretaker Jengus, the oldest and most loyal servant of the Burned Man. He protects him and cares for him. Jengus knows these intruders are here either to kill the Burned Man, to rob him of his possessions, or both. Jengus will pretend to be the man the PCs seek, and offer his life up to them, if needed. He will try to kindly escort the PCs safely back downstairs and out of the building. If he still lives, and the PCs attempt to climb the spiral staircase to area 7-1, Jengus will frantically ring a pair of bells that rest next to his bed. This summons Caretaker Leena and her children from area 5-4 (if they have not already been defeated, they will arrive in 2d3 rounds to intercept the PCs).

Jengus will not willingly help the PCs do anything that would harm or disturb his master, but his assistance may be coerced through magical means.

If the PCs search this area, they find some of the poorly-bound books to outline the background and history of the Burned Man and how he gained his immortality. In one of the less-tattered books, the PCs find diagrams of the circle of protection around the Burned Man's cage. Notes in the margins indicate the strength of the circle but not that the stones beneath the circle are a possible weak spot. One of the books is also a ritual book that Jengus has used to protect his master. The circle of protection in area 7-1 can be found within this "spellbook" and the ritual may be used to counter its effects as indicated in the description of that area. The spellbook also contains ritual versions of the following spells (they may be cast as indicated in the DCC RPG core rulebook but with an additional casting time of 1d3 turns): *mending*, *fire resistance*, and *forget*.

Caretaker Jengus will not engage in combat, but if controlled by magic, or forced to defend himself, his abilities are provided below:

Caretaker Jengus: Init -4; Atk punch -3 melee (1 point); AC 8; HD 2d8; hp 8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP may cast ritual spells from his spellbook at a +4 spell check; SV Fort -2, Ref -4, Will +3; AL L.

Area 7-1 - The Burned Man's Rest: *Dangling ten feet from the floor at the center of this bleak stone room, a small, withered humanoid creature sits in an open-faced wicker cage. With charred and blistered skin, it looks like the burned remains of a human, yet it moves as if alive. You feel a cold chill, as if the temperature has dropped 30 degrees. Beneath the burned creature's feet, hundreds of hissing snakes slither atop each other. Around the shifting snakes, the stone floor is marked with a 20' circle drawn with strange symbols in what appears to be blue chalk. The burned creature slowly reaches out a blackened, blistered arm and gestures for you to approach.*

This is what remains of Selwynder, long known as the "Burned Man." The blue chalk circle of sigils is a ward of protection crafted by Caretaker Jengus of area 6-3 when he was a much younger man. Jengus created the circle partially to protect his master, but also to keep any wayward snakes from slithering down to his own living quarters. The chalk circle may be successfully disrupted via the following methods:

- Casting an enlarge or shatter spell on the stones any part of the circle is inscribed upon.
- A boon from a patron, or an *invoke patron* spell check with a result of 18 or higher.
- Pouring a magical elixir (or lotus blood/venom) atop any of the markings.
- Casting the circle ritual from Jengus's spellbook at a spell check result of 20 or higher.
- Convincing Caretaker Jengus to disable the circle himself.

More direct methods may be used for PCs to enter the circle, but they come at a cost. If a character touches the circle (directly or indirectly, say via a sword point), they take 1d16 damage immediately. The next character to touch it takes 1d14 damage, etc., reducing the impact by -1d each time until the circle is



broken after the final 1d3 damage is dealt. If a character leaps over the circle, or otherwise tries to enter without touching it (visualize the circle as a cylinder stretching infinitely upward), they take 2x the damage they would have taken if touching it and must make a DC 16 Will save or be pushed back outside the circle.

Any projectiles immediately shatter upon entering the cylindrical space of the intact circle, and any successful ranged magic spells cast into the area of the circle will result in an automatic failure and misfire unless the caster makes an additional concentration check (DC 16 Will save).

If the PCs bypass or disable the circle of protection, the slithering snakes form a guardian—a two-headed serpent made

of woven snakes, each snake head like a tooth in a cobra's maw. The guardian will not leave the circle of protection if it is somehow still intact. If the guardian is destroyed, it collapses into a snake swarm which will continue to attack until it takes enough damage (10 hp) to cause the remaining snakes to slither about aimlessly (leaving the area if the circle of protection is disrupted).

Serpent Guardian: Init +3; Atk bite +4 melee (1d12 plus special) or venom spit +2 ranged (1d6 plus special); AC 12; HD 4d8; hp 23; MV 20'; Act 2d24; SP victim of bite attack or venom spit must make DC 15 Fort save or take 2 damage each round until a Luck point is spent to heal or healed by supernatural means; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will-2; AL N.

Snake Swarm: Init +2; Atk bite +1 melee (special); AC 8; HD 4d3; hp 10; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP victim of bite attack must make DC 10 Fort save or take 1 damage each round until a Luck point is spent to heal or healed by supernatural means; SV Fort -2, Ref +2, Will -2; AL N.

The Burned Man wishes for nothing more than to be free from his curse of immortality. His throat is dry and he has lost the use of his tongue. He can only moan and gesture. He is only vaguely aware of who might be in this room and why they might be coming for him. He is tired of life. He will not fight back. He once sat in this room and watched the glory of Lankhmar rise

up around him. But the windows have long since been walled up, the smoke and decay of Lankhmar too much to handle. He has been alone, except for his snakes, for too long. He desires death. The Burned Man is immune to all normal damage, but he can be killed via the following:

- **Love:** Assume his curse by kissing him on his blistered lips and then taking his place inside a repaired circle of protection (without the circle, Death's Reach will strike every turn until the newly "immortal" character is dead).
- **Kindness:** Perform a spell check of 18+ on *ritual of kindness* from the scroll (gained in area 4-2) using the consecrated shavings of the receptacle of Issek of the Jug and the pearl from the Sea King's domain.
- **Violence:** Deal 30+ points of magical damage to him.

If any of these methods are used, the Burned Man will immediately crumble to ash as a shadowy tendril emerges from his slowly beating, then ossifying heart. The black-smoke tendril will whirl around the PCs before flying up into the sky and dissipating. Death's books will be balanced. Their indirect service to the Gods of Necessity will grant each of them +2 permanent points of Luck. The PCs will no longer face a series of random, deadly catastrophes, unless they go looking for such trouble.





CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs may not wish to (or may not be able to) put the Burned Man to rest, and thus the Burned Man may also be offered as tribute directly to Death by journeying to the Shadowland. Such a deed will delay Death's attempts to eliminate the PCs but will open the possibilities of hundreds of additional dangers. Should the PCs take such an extraordinary risk and succeed at reaching the Shadowland, the judge should consider rewarding the most risk-loving among the PCs with the possible patronage of Death himself and grant each PC +3 points of permanent Luck. They will need it.

Should the PCs fail to deliver the Burned Man to his final rest, and should the eyes of Death still be upon them, they will not live much longer. In 1d3 days, the entire party will be killed in a complicated – and seemingly random – violent tragedy.

Death's books will be balanced either way, the city of Lankhmar will see an uptick in births and a decline in mortality rates for a few months, and Death will continue to serve the Gods of Necessity for the rest of his days.

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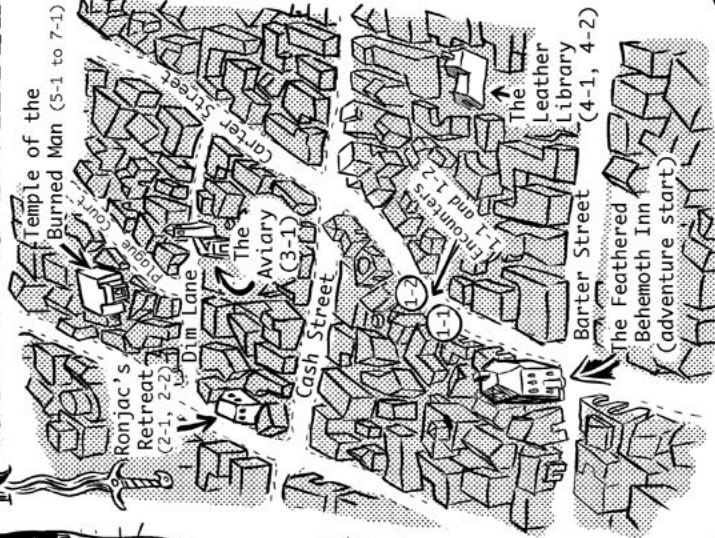
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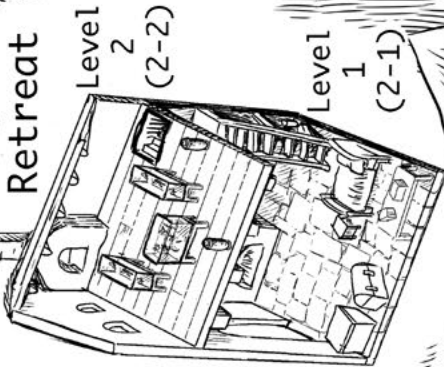
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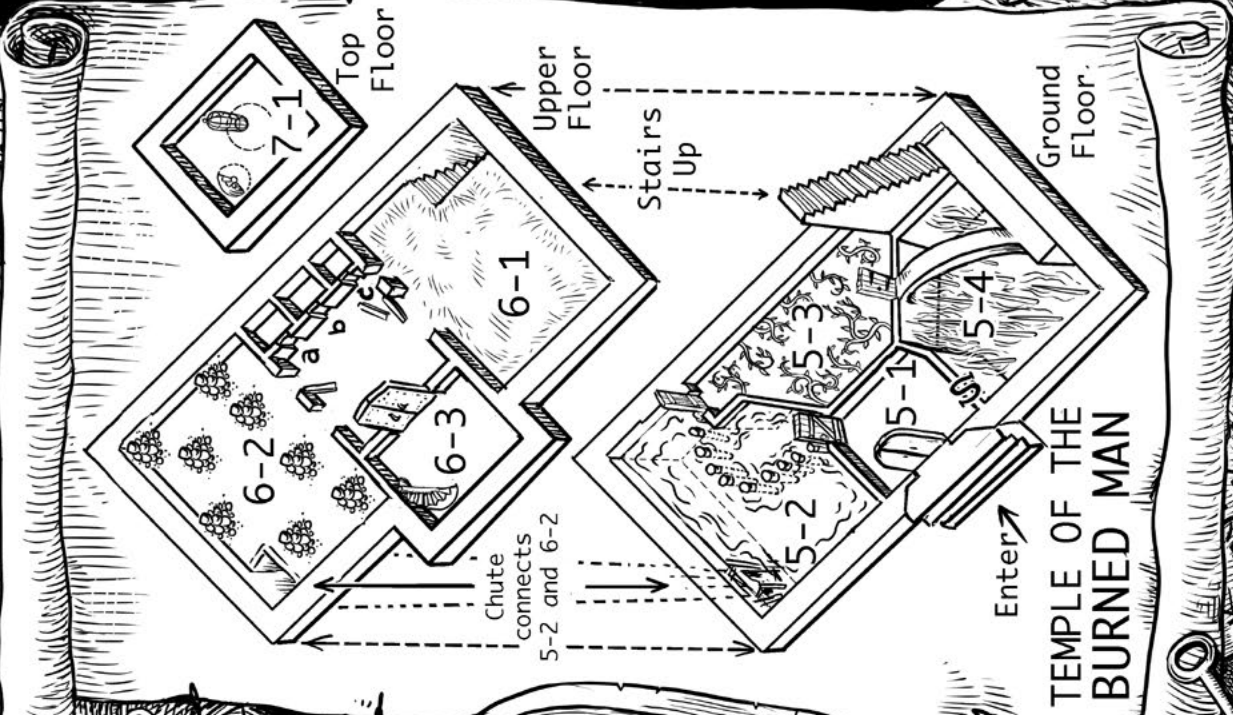
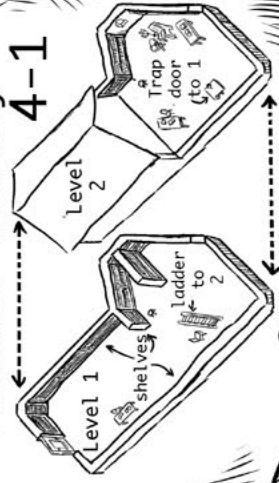
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