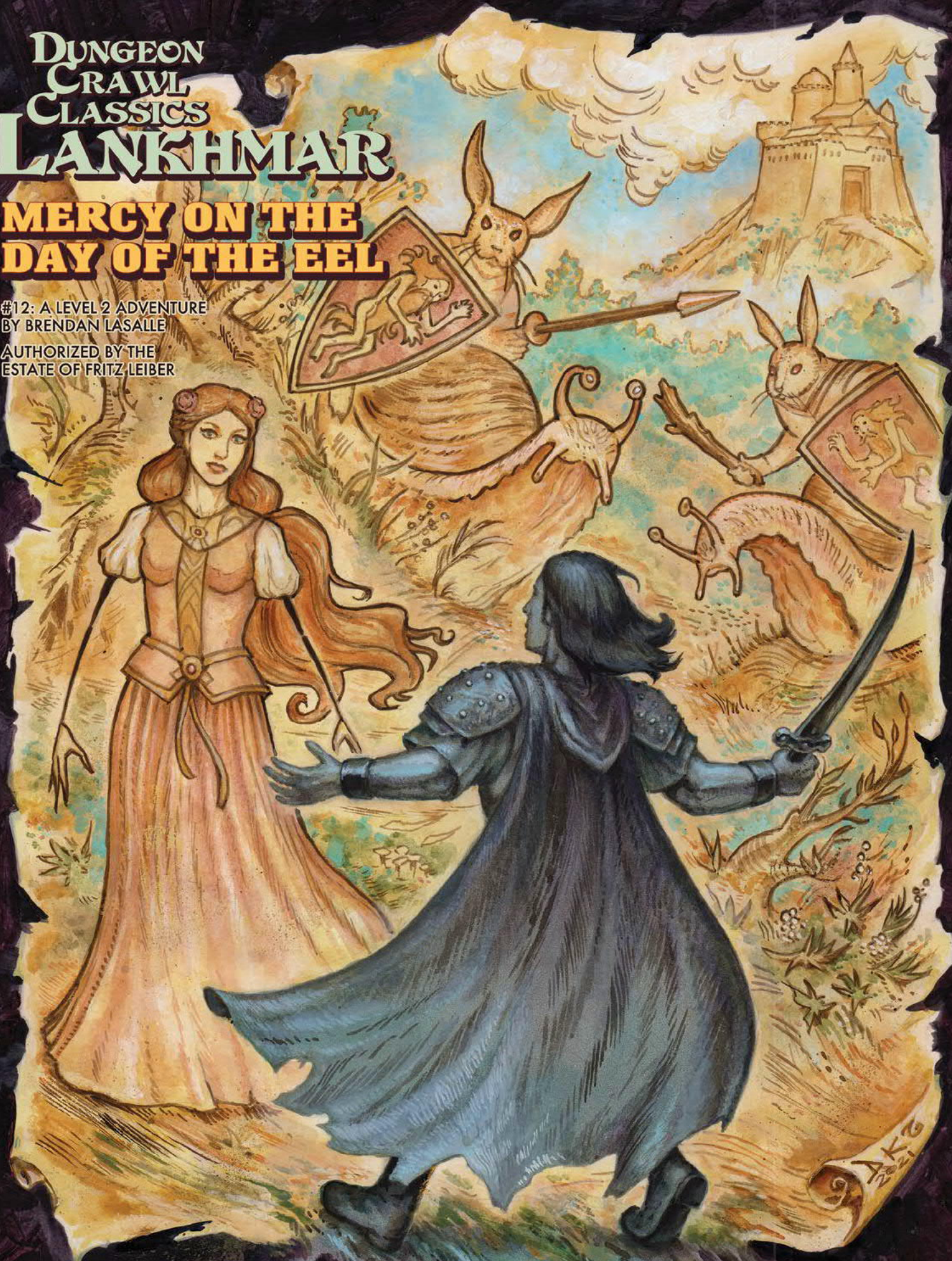


DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS LANKHMAR

MERCY ON THE DAY OF THE EEL

#12: A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE
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AUTHORIZED BY THE
ESTATE OF FRITZ LEIBER



MERCY ON THE DAY OF THE EEL

A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE

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INTRODUCTION



elcome 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!

Mercy on the Day of the Eel is an adventure for DCC Lankhmar designed for 3 to 4 2nd-level characters. The adventure can be run as part of an ongoing campaign, or as a meet up that brings a group of disparate would-be street legends together for the first time. As written, the adventure takes place over one extremely eventful day in Lankhmar, when a crime lord gives the PCs an opportunity to get back in his good graces by undertaking what initially seems like a challenging but workable heist. As one might expect in Lankhmar, things are never as straightforward as they seem, and the adventurers may find themselves transported to a magical world that exists within a single scrap of enchanted parchment. Successfully navigating the twists and turns and surviving to see another sunrise over the City of Sevenscore Thousand Smokes could see the band on the run for their lives, or laden with riches and an amazing tale to brag of over wine at the Silver Eel!

BACKGROUND



he true origin of the enchanted map, variously called the Illuminated Gateway or Giacaro's Map, is lost in time. Some claim that it was a gift from the moon goddess Skama to a scribe she fell in love with while watching him toil over his etchings through his lonely window. Others assert that an ancient cartographer of unsurpassed skill drew a map of an imaginary place to delight his daughter, and that his skill and love were such that the map became a gateway to a real place created by the child's imagination. Whatever its origin, the map's power is undisputed; it is a gateway to another world, a world at once utterly unlike our own but also a strange mirror of our world.

The Illuminated Gateway eventually came to be in the possession of Lord Esselmar, the patriarch of one of the oldest aristocratic families in Lankhmar. After a few failed experiments, he finally decided the item's best use was as a perfectly secret vault. He learned the map's secrets and discovered that it has been used as a hiding place for treasure by many beings from many worlds. For decades he kept his most treasured possessions there, safe from Lankhmar's many thieves. Lord Esselmar found a way to befriend the Woman with the Thin Arms and was able to walk around in the world of the map freely without danger. The map itself became the nobleman's most prized possession, and he would often visit the world behind the Illuminated Gateway



simply to wander through the illustrated land away from his normal life and responsibilities.

One of Lord Esselmar's retainers eventually gossiped about his master's magical map, and the story got back to Hammumel, current master of the Thieves' Guild. Hammumel instantly began the process of stealing the item, which sounded to him like the perfect way to hide his wealth from his fellow thieves.

After weeks of gathering intelligence and planning, he sent two of his best thieves to take the map. Lord Esselmar surprised the two just as they finished opening his vault and attacked, unhinged at the thought of losing the map world. In the ensuing melee Esselmar and one of the thieves slew one-another while the remaining thief, a veteran second-story man called Shubo, ran away with the map. Shubo fled across rooftops, chased by the city watch as well as Esselmar's household guards. Out of desperation, he smashed a window in a nearby house and hid inside. Knowing he was about to be captured, he stashed the map where he believed no one would ever find it – inside a taxidermy behemoth head. Shubo was captured and ultimately executed, but not before he got word back to Hammumel on the location of the map.


Getting to the map a second time proved to be more difficult than the guild leader expected. Shubo had happened to hide

it in the home of Twudo Zwieller, a rich grain merchant. The break in terrified his wife, who insisted that they start taking their house security much more seriously. Zwieller hired builders to install window bars, hired some brothers of the Slayer's Guild to watch over his home, and most importantly upped his bribes to both the city watch and the Thieves' Guild, the most efficient way to prevent break-ins in Lankhmar.

This puts Hammumel in a tricky spot. He desperately wants that map but can't make an overt move to steal it. Robbing a citizen who consistently pays their tribute on time is counterproductive, unprofessional, and sure to incite the curiosity of the guild. Plus, all the new layers of protection at the Zwieller villa will make a conventional break-in nearly impossible for all but his best thieves, and he can't use his best thieves because his best thieves are the ones whom he needs the enchanted map to hide treasure from.

And then comes a stroke of Luck so profound it can only be the work of whatever Gods look out for crime bosses: Hammumel finds out that the behemoth head is going to be moved on the same day he is to decide the fate of a group of talented non-guild bravos who have wronged him. Why not give them an opportunity for mercy on the Day of the Eel?

MEET-UP ON THE DAY OF THE EEL

ercy on the Day of the Eel can be run as a meet-up to introduce new parties. In this case, the characters begin play bound, gagged, hooded, and tucked away in cells deep in Thieves' House. Hammumel assembles them and promises that he will let them go and vow not to take vengeance against them for affronts in the past as long as they do this one job for him exactly the way he says it should go. The PCs all earn 1 point of Fleeting Luck for coming up with the reason their characters are in trouble with Hammumel. The judge should work with the players to ensure the details of the affront don't derail the story ("Hammumel is jealous that Kos chose to give me seventeen points of Fleeting Luck!").

Meet-up adventures are traditionally for 1st-level PCs. If you want to run *Mercy on the Day of the Eel* as a meet-up adventure you can either reduce the challenges to make it suitable for a lower-level group (lowering hit dice and attack modifiers where appropriate, reducing the DCs for necessary skill checks, etc.), or you can simply allow your players to create new 2nd-level characters. In this case consider letting them begin at 2nd-level with zero XP, extending their careers at their starting level a bit.

If it suits your campaign better, you can remove the revenge factor and just run this as a standard Lankhmar adventure. Hammumel could simply contact the PCs and ask for their assistance. He meets them in some dark place the night before the heist needs to happen and asks their assistance, using a disguise and false name to keep his identity a secret. If the PCs agree to a share of the spoils for performing their part in the heist the scenario unfolds the same.

HAMMUMEL'S PLAN



ammumel has a plan to secure the map without alerting the Zwieller family that anything is amiss, using cat's paws ripe for disposal if they err or deviate from his instructions in any way.

He means to give the PCs a choice: do his bidding or face the consequences, which will include every guild thief in the city hunting them until all are dead.

Assuming they accept, he introduces the PCs to Smot and Frith and gives his orders:

You are to go to the Platinum Pelican, a rich man's club off of Carter Street. I'm sending you with a cart and horse to carry the loot away.

Sometime after dusk a taxidermy behemoth head will arrive at the Pelican. That's the target.

You will find a way to sneak the head out of the Platinum Pelican without being detected. Take the head and only the head.

Bring the head to Levikitcho's Fine Silks on Immigrant Street. Do not let the behemoth head be seen.

Smot and Frith will be waiting for you at the shop. Give them the behemoth head and then go and wait while they do what they need to do. Once they are done, take the head back and return it to its place at the Platinum Pelican and exit, without being detected. None must be the wiser of our deed. You have to have the head back to the Pelican before midnight – it's to be used in some daft initiation rite.

Do this for me and all shall be forgiven.

Smot and Frith have secured Levikitcho's silk shop on Immigrant Street for the extraction. Levikitcho owed Smot several months in back protection, having spent every last copper piece on his youngest daughter's wedding feast. To pay off his debt, he has allowed them to use his shop while telling his clientele he's shut down for a few days due to a bad cold.

According to the plan, once Smot and Frith have the head they will remove the map case and send the PCs back to the Pelican with the head. Once the pair is sure the PCs are gone, they mean to get the map to Hammumel as soon as possible.

The complication: another party means to have the map. Kalleb the Roach, a Lankhmarian wizard, heard the story of Esselmar's maps from the same gossipy retainer as Hammumel. The story enthralled him: a magical map that his master would disappear into carrying riches, then re-appear from with none! Researching every story of magical documents he could find he eventually realized that the old fool had possessed Giacaro's legendary magical map!

Kalleb understands the power and potential represented in the Illuminated Gateway and means to possess it. His source in the Thieves' Guild lets him know that the vessel containing the map will be brought to a certain silk merchant's shop on the night of the Day of the Eel, and the wizard means to have it.

PART I: THE HEIST



he actual taking and returning of the behemoth head can be accomplished in many ways, leaving the middle section of this adventure fairly open. The adventurers could try any combination of stealth, disguise, distraction, bribery, or sorcerous chicanery. Smart players will case the joint, seek out information, then formulate a plan for how to abscond with the behemoth head undetected.

Keep in mind that the players have less than 12 hours to decide and enact their plans: at midnight, the Ool Hruspian Valiants will have their ceremony, after which the behemoth head will return to Zwieller's villa with all the protection that local gives.

Due to the open nature of *Mercy on the Day of the Eel*, there are many possible outcomes for our questionably virtuous heroes.

If the PCs succeed in extracting the behemoth head undetected, defeat Kalleb and his toughs, and still get the map to Hammumel, the guild master is ecstatic. He forgives his new favorite independents for all transgressions, and even sees fit to pay them 50 gold rilks, to be divided as they see fit.

If the PCs fail – if they are detected stealing the head, resort to violence and slay a socialite or one of the servers, or simply hand the taxidermy head over to Kalleb and his men without challenge – then Hammumel gives the kill order, and every guild thief in the city will be out for their blood, along with many independents trying to earn the favor of the guild master. The PCs will likely have to flee Lankhmar to survive.

The ultimate complication is the Illuminated Gateway. If the PCs find and enter the map's secret world, they may find the treasure for themselves or succumb to the map's guardians. If they escape the map, the adventurers may just decide that this is too fine a prize to turn over to the likes of old Hammumel. In this case the guild master sends assassins who are prepared to chase their targets to the ends of Nehwon. The PCs will need to take extraordinary measures to keep both their prize and their lives!

THE PLATINUM PELICAN



he Platinum Pelican is a fancy private club just off Carter Street in the Rich Men's Quarter. Its membership is composed almost exclusively of the idle offspring of Lankhmar's *nouveau riche*; courtiers, merchant princes, shipping magnates, and the like.

When the players first arrive:

The building is well-maintained but unadorned except for the silvery pelican silhouette painted on its front door. The Pelican is a two-story free-standing building flanked by a meat pie shop on its left and a glassblower's studio on its right. A rank garbage-strewn alleyway runs behind the building which eventually intersects with Carter Street.



There is a front door that leads to the main hall, a back door that leads to the kitchen, and a single large, shuttered window on the second floor in the back room. A careful inspection will discover that a block-and-tackle pulley system has been installed on a sturdy arm three feet above the back window.

The Pelican is partially owned by Twudo Zwieller's natural son Temos and his adopted son Tendo. Temos and Tendo are idle pleasure-seekers, who invested in the Pelican largely to host lavish parties for their social club, the League of Ool Hruspian Valiants. The club is dedicated to alcohol-fueled debauchery, meeting once a month for a night of revelry and song. The celebration they plan for this Day of the Eel is special as it is new member initiation night, a once-a-year party of special magnificence. The initiation rite is the reason for bringing the behemoth head, which will be paraded about the bar at midnight while the club's new initiates drink and make their besotted oaths.

If the PCs ask around for information regarding the Platinum Pelican, give them a Personality check to see what information they can wheedle from their underworld contacts.

DC 11 or better: The tavern is mostly ignored by thieves and scam artists because very little coin is exchanged there. Platinum Pelican members pay monthly dues to avoid the vulgarity of handing currency to a server.

DC 13 or better: The Valiants are always looking for beautiful young people for their revels. Their go-to connection is a guild-connected pimp named Merry Jando.

DC 15 or better: Marsel the manager had a rope-and-pulley system installed on their back wall to hoist large items up into their storeroom.

DC 17 or better: Whenever the Ool Hruspian Valiants have their event at the Platinum Pelican they always hire the same band: Lindella, a sultry singer and dancer, and her piper, drummer, and harpist.

THE PLATINUM PELICAN



CASING THE PELICAN

The PCs will likely want to reconnoiter the Platinum Pelican and the neighborhood before the job.

If the PCs set a watch on the Pelican during the hours listed below, they witness the following comings and goings:

Time	Event Witnessed
1:00 PM	Marsel the manager and Kermot the bouncer arrive, unlock the door, and start their working day. Three staff members arrive within the half-hour.
3:00 PM	Two workmen with a cart arrive in the alleyway to deliver the behemoth head. After checking in with Marsel, they drive the cart around back, then use the block and tackle over the large rear window to hoist it up and into the storeroom (see Area 1-3: The Storeroom)
6:00 PM	The first guests arrive. After this, 1-6 guests arrive every hour. By 9 PM there are 30 guests, with any remainders all showing up in a group. Guests all stick to the main hall where they carouse, dance, and sport with one-another.
6:30 PM	Temos and Tendo arrive in their litter.
9:00 PM	Lindella and her band arrive, start playing twenty minutes later. Once the band starts to play the DCs for any checks to sneak in or around the Pelican are lowered by 3.
9:30 PM	Merry Jando and a few of his professional partygoers arrive and join the revels.
Midnight	The Honor Guard of the League of Ool Hruspian Valiants retrieves the behemoth head from the storeroom and the ceremony begins. They carry the taxidermy head around at the head of a procession of all the members while the band plays the club's song and the initiates drink cup after cup of Ool Hruspian Old Wine and pledge their fidelity to the League.

Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, the party starts to break up around 2 AM, and by 4 AM Marsel locks up and goes home, escorted by Kermot.

While watching the Pelican, every character can make a DC 13 Intelligence check. If they succeed, they notice that there is a larger than average number of cats hanging around the alleyway and up on the roof of the Pelican, all of them yowling and acting as if they were searching for something. They are reacting to the magical map concealed in the behemoth head (see A Song of Lands Unseen, p 9).

Area 1-1 — Main Room: *The scent of spilled wine, sweet smoke, and leather passes over you as you open the door. Beyond is a richly appointed public house. There are a dozen small tables with narrow leather-backed chairs set about the room, one set be-*

neath a stairway leading to a balcony set with a few more tables. A riser is built out of the west wall, and upon it stands a hand-drum wrapped in cords and hung with beads. Several tapestries and paintings decorate the walls, all of which depict either behemoths, beautiful women, or beautiful women cavorting with behemoths. At the far end of the room is a long service bar, covered in an asymmetrical pattern of expensive looking tile. Behind the bar there is a long table set with dozens of bottles. A wide-bellied hookah with four hoses hung in hooks along its neck sits among a nest of seating cushions on the floor. The back wall behind the bar has a relief carving of a pelican eating a fish, set among dozens of mirror fragments that bounce beams of dusty light into unexpected angles around the room.

If the PCs attempt to enter the Platinum Pelican while it's occupied, they are told that this is a private club which is currently not accepting new members. If they balk or try to force or intimidate their way in Kermot the bouncer gets involved. For larger parties, consider giving Kermot a cousin or two with the same stats if a fight breaks out at the Pelican.

Kermot the Bouncer (1): Init +1; Atk unarmed strike +2 melee (1d3+2) or improvised weapon +2 melee (variable+2); AC 11; HD 2d8; hp 14; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP improvised weapon proficiency; Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L; Crit III/1d8.

Muscle-bound Kermot has the easiest job in the city, watching over a bunch of mostly good-natured drunk namby-pambies. He rarely needs to do more than flex and say a few choice words to diffuse situations. Even so he takes his charge extremely seriously, always hoping to eventually find better paying work as a house guard of one of the Valiants. Kermot previously worked security at a truly dangerous tavern, and has become adept at fighting with chairs, bottles, and other easy-to-hand bar objects, taking no penalty to his action die for using improvised weapons.

Area 1-2 — Kitchen: *The kitchen is a cramped space in the back of the Pelican. There is a single hearth oven with a swinging pot arm, a long trestle table with a butcher block full of knives and cleavers, and wall full of cabinets.*

During opening hours, Depa the cook prepares fancy tidbits for the Pelican's guests. Depa is a prodigious gossip, and bribes to get her to discuss her wealthy clientele will nearly always work.

Area 1-3 — Storeroom: *This room is cluttered with shelves holding cups, dishes, bottles of wine and spirits, linens, dried and fresh foodstuffs, cleaning supplies, and other bar essentials. A tall form supported by two tasseled poles leans against one wall, draped with a grey tarp.*

The form under the tarp is the behemoth head. It is mounted on two poles so that it can be carried easily. The head itself is that of a smaller specimen, weighing about seventy pounds. Purple and gold ribbons festoon the entire thing, along with a crowning laurel of silk flowers.

In a crate on one shelf is a sturdy rope with a hook and carry-straps, which is normally used along with the pully system to bring heavy items up from the alleyway.

The large back window has shutters with a simple latch lock (DC 13 Pick Lock check from outside, can be opened automatically from the inside).

Area 1-4 — Office: This tiny windowless office has two chairs, one behind and one facing a small table covered in desk miscellanea. Several wine crates are stacked against the walls to make improvised shelves, which are crammed full of spare glasses, scrolled paperwork, and a wooden carving of a pelican devouring a fish.

There is a long cudgel (club) just behind the door and a sharp knife close at hand in the top of a crate of folded napkins. Hidden in the back of the same crate is a pouch holding the shop's petty cash: 67 copper pennies, 41 silver smerduks, and 12 gold rilks.

THE GETAWAY AND THE PRIZE

Give any PCs handling the behemoth head a Luck check. If successful they hear something inside the head thumping off its insides as it is moved. This is, of course, the scroll case containing the map. If they investigate, they can find a slit in the base of the taxidermy that allows one to snake a hand inside and find the scroll case. The case is cleverly crafted of bone, waterproof with a tight screw-on top.

If the PCs get the behemoth head into the cart without detection their ride to the silk shop is uneventful (unless enroute complications better serve your story or campaign, naturally). As long as they keep the head itself hidden from view, they do not arouse suspicion.

The PCs may notice that yowling cats appear from everywhere to follow the cart (DC 12 Intelligence check, automatic success if they state they are watching for pursuers). Arcane spellcasters (including those with the Former Wizard's Apprentice benison) riding along with the behemoth head begin to hear the music of the map (see A Song of Lands Unseen, p 9).

LEVIKITCHO'S FINE SILKS

As the PCs approach:

As you make your way down Immigrant Street you finally see the shop. It is a one-story building in good repair, with a barred front window hung with silk drapes. A hanging sign over the front door reads LEVIKITCHO'S FINE SILKS.

Levikitcho imports silk, mostly from the Eastern Lands, and sells to dressmakers and drapers throughout the city. When the PCs arrive, the front door is locked and barred but a dim light can be seen behind its barred window's heavy silk drapes.

If the PC scout the area out before going to the door, give them a DC 17 Intelligence check, with success meaning they see three toughs loitering in a dark alcove a ways down the alley. These are members of the Mud Gate Takers, hanging back and listening for Kalleb's call. If the PCs challenge them, they walk off sullenly, but double back as soon as things are clear.

Area 2-1 — At The Back Door: The alleyway is quiet but for the stirring of cats. There is a door leading to the back of the silk shop. You can see faint light shining from underneath the door.

If the PCs knock for entry, Koffe and Aleyere answer. Once they see the cart, they call for Kalleb.

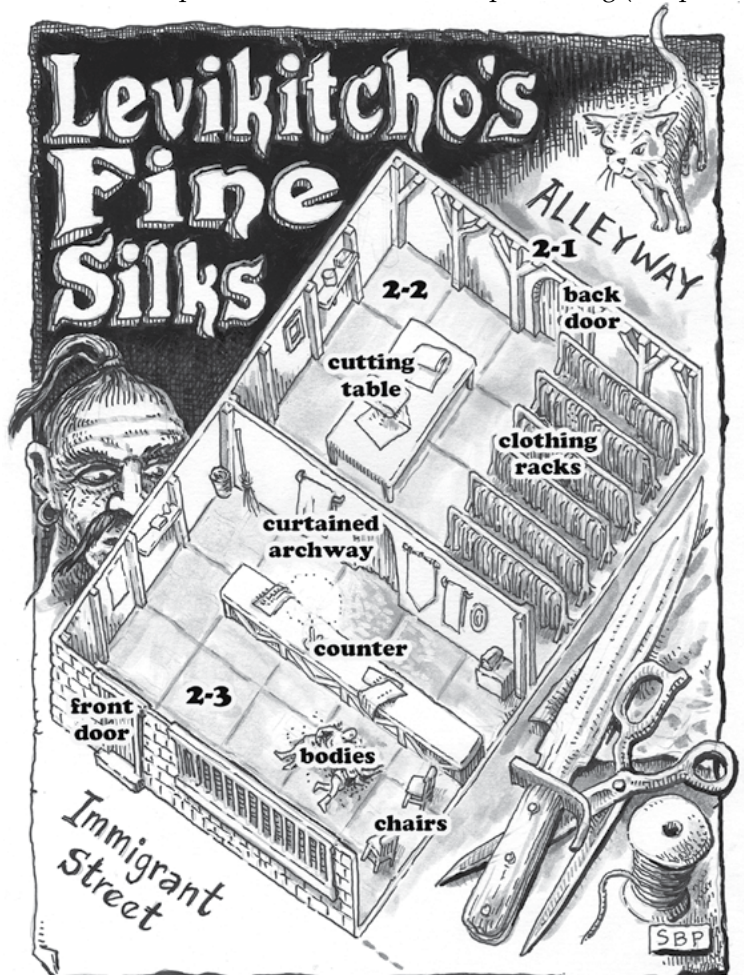
When Kalleb arrives have any wizards make two Luck checks. If they succeed at the first, they recognize Kalleb the Roach and know that he is an independent. If the second Luck check succeeds, Kalleb does not know their names, meaning he cannot cast his *magic missile* spell against them.

Kalleb says the plans have changed. He claims that Ham-mumel recalled his agents and sent him instead, and that the PCs should just report back to Thieves' House and leave the rest to him. If they balk, he asks their names (so he can use his *magic missile* spell against them – he is good at this gambit, having had done it often, so play him as smooth as you can), and tries to convince them to hand over the behemoth head and leave.

Unless the players acquiesce, there will be a fight. When the fight breaks out, Kalleb immediately yells for help, and his hired Mud Gate Takers thugs show up 3 rounds later.

For larger groups consider adding another bully boy, a few more gang members, or even giving Kalleb another hit die and an additional 1st-level spell.

Kalleb the Roach: Init +2; Atk dagger +1 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 2d4; hp 8; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP spellcasting (+4 spell



check): spells (1st) *confounding glamor* (must wear 13 bracelets to cast), *detect magic* (requires a glass of water), *magic missile* (must know target's name), *ropework*, *tear* (*mending* spell reversed, requires wearing a copper amulet); SV Fort +0, Ref +3; Will +2; AL C; Crit III/1d8.

Kalleb the Roach is a Lankhmar-born spellcaster that lusts for arcane power and the wealth he believes it will bring. He is a gaunt middle-aged man in a grey toga, who wears 13 bamboo bracelets, seven on one arm and six on the other, and a copper amulet. Kalleb walks with a distinct limp, the result of a knife fight with a fellow sorcerer during a particularly exciting disagreement over the co-ownership of magical texts. He carries two daggers, and a slip of paper with a drawing of a key (which he wrongly believes will open the treasure chest in map world Area 3-7).

Kalleb's bully boys: Init +0; Atk longsword +3 melee (1d8) or sling +2 missile fire (1d4); AC 14; HD 1d8; hp 7 each; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N; Crit III/1d6.

Kalleb employs two Mingol bruisers, Koffe and Aleyere, to watch his back. He has promised them a sweet cut of the proceeds from selling the map but has no intentions whatsoever of actually selling. They each carry 2d6 silver smerduks. Aleyere has a ring of keys that open the front and back doors of the silk shop as well as the hidden strongbox in Area 2-2.

Gangsters (3): Init +1; Atk club +1 melee (1d4); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 4 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N; Crit III/1d6.

Kalleb hired three members of the Mud Gate Takers as back up. Their real purpose is to protect him from Koffe and Aleyere long enough for the wizard to cast a spell or two if the Mingol's come to suspect a double-cross. They each carry 3d6 copper pennies.

Area 2 - 2 — Back Room at the Silk Shop: *The back room of the silk merchant's shop has the dusty, pleasant smell of cut fabric, but you also smell blood. There is a long rack here holding dozens of thin boards wrapped in of silk of every variety, a cutting table with a long tablecloth that touches the floor. On the table are several sizes of sheers, a metal straight edge, measuring cords, a cushion bristling with pins, and a single glass of water. There is a passageway to the front room of the shop, covered with a colorful silk curtain depicting sea birds on a blue sky.*

This is Levikitcho's storage and work room. The blood scent is from the corpses of Smot and Frith in Area 2-3.

Hiding underneath the cutting table with his hands over his mouth is Artha Kmit, a translator and scribe from Kvarch Nar. Kalleb hired him in case the map's inscriptions were in a language the wizard didn't know. Kmit was disconcerted to see that Kalleb's work seemed to require armed warriors, and utterly shocked when the pair slew Smot and Frith. As soon as he heard the fight outside, he hid underneath the table, hoping to escape and travel home, happy never to experience the insanity that is Lankhmar ever again. If he is discovered, he pleads for his life and tells all. He knows nothing of the plot or the map: Kalleb hired him to translate an "ancient document," with no questions asked. Kmit is



happy to translate anything the PCs have for him as long as they agree not to hurt him.

Artha Kmit is a scholar with a genius talent for language, speaking 14 fluently and having some talent in a dozen more. He has a sheaf of blank foolscap, a tattered copy of the *Praxis Tome* (an artfully rendered book of philology and educational theory), and a fancy writing quill and ink set in a painted wooden case.

If the PCs search the area, they may find a loose floorboard near the silk racks (DC 15 Intelligence check). Hidden below is a locked strongbox (DC 15 Pick Lock check) that holds 7 gold rilks, 54 silver smerduks, and 144 copper pennies.

Area 2 - 3 — Showroom: *This is the shop's showroom. The walls are covered in silk swatches of every description. There is a counter table hung with a dozen measuring cords. The front door is barred from this side. There is a barred window shrouded with heavy drapes. The blood scent is much stronger here, and there are two corpses on the ground, shoved over to one side.*

The two corpses are Smot and Frith, slain by Kalleb's bully boys. Each has a belted guild dagger and 4d6 silver smerduks.

Underneath the counter is a box of crinkly wrapping paper, a clew of twine, and a pair of tiny sheers.

HEIST AFTERMATH

It is possible that defeating Kalleb and his thugs effectively ends the adventure. If the PCs return to Thieves' House with the bad news about Smot and Frith, the guild master extracts the map from the taxidermy, then sends the crew back to the Platinum Pelican to put the head back before anyone knows what happens. As long as they successfully put the behemoth head back and escape without being detected the guild master is satisfied and the PCs are in no danger of reprisal from the Guild – at least for the time being.

If, however, they discover the scroll case and investigate it, the adventure moves onto Part II.

PART II: THE ILLUMINATED GATEWAY

When the PCs first investigate the map:

This is a beautifully rendered map on ancient velum. The edges crumble a bit at your touch, but once it unrolls it stays very flat like only the highest quality velum can. The map depicts a fantastic turreted castle set deep in the woods. The map's border is crowded with tiny, delicate illustrations, shocking in their detail. There is an inscription in tiny writing at the bottom of the map, woven into the illustrations along the map's edge.

There is no need to understand the language of the inscription. Any mortal that attempts to read the inscription is suddenly drawn into the map world, along with any adjacent mortals – as long as they are within 10' of one another the map takes the entire group.

Suddenly your stomach flips and you have the sensation of falling. You feel at once like you are being drawn into the map and shrinking. As the world gets closer and closer its details grow sharper and sharper. At some point the world you left grows dim and the map world becomes everything, and you begin to hear a song sung in a far-off ethereal voice that grows closer and closer.

The PCs land in area 3-1, standing at the crossroads by the Woman with the Thin Arms.

PHYSICAL LAWS OF THE MAP WORLD



he map world is a demi-plane, a world of living illustrations with its own physical laws. Obviously, a world made of paper, ink, and magic is going to have too many unique properties to list here. Let these rules be guidelines for the physical laws of the map world.

Denizens versus Visitors: All of the creatures, objects, and features of the map world are stylized illustrations and yet are real in this place. Walking around eyeing objects from all sides changes the perspective, as if they were constantly being redrawn from new angles. When the creatures of the map world move it is a shock to the eye, as if an artist faster than any in all the world constantly erases them from their old positions and redraws them in the new. Every object and creature touched here has the feel of painted velum. The scent of ancient paper and ink is the only scent, as if one wandered through the oldest library in the universe. Visitors do not themselves become illustrations

Combat: Fighting map world denizens is the same as combat with any creatures. All the creatures here are vulnerable to mundane (not magical) fire (x2 damage), but lose this vulnerability if they somehow cross over into the real world.

Quiet: The creatures in the map world are silent, save the Woman with the Thin Arms. When map world creatures speak, roar, hiss, etc., wavy lines briefly appear to issue from their mouths, representing sound. The supernatural quiet of the map world makes stealth very difficult (-1d on all Sneak Silently attempts in the map world).

Magic: The visual effects of magic cast by wizards visiting the map world appear as illustrations. For example, a wizard casting *flaming hands* would produce illustrated flames, which work normally against targets but do not cause mundane fire damage as described below under **Damaging Map World**. Magically summoned creatures appear as illustrated versions of themselves, patrons appear as scowling portraits, etc. One special case is *mending*, which can be used to repair damage to the Illustrated Gateway, and thus the map world. A casting of *mending* specifically to repair the map world/Gateway has the following effects according to the spell check result:

Spell Check	Effect
12-17	Not enough power to affect the map world
18-19	Repairs a small hole in the map
20-23	Repairs a large hole in the map
24-27	Repairs any size hole in the map
28-29	Repairs entire map, including its crumbling edges (see Area 3-2)
30-31	Repairs entire map as above, fully heals all map denizens
32+	Repairs entire map and heals denizens as above plus caster becomes a friend to the map world whom no creature of map world would harm

Damaging Map World: The map world is a delicate place. Real non-magical fire is the bane of the map world. Visitors creating mundane fire start a blaze that begins to spread almost immediately. They must make a DC 13 Agility check every round to keep the fire from growing out of control. If the fire gets out of control the PCs must make an DC 14 Agility check to put it out. If they fail, they can try again but the

A SONG OF LANDS UNSEEN

The Woman with the Thin Arms sings her song at the touchdown point of the map. The power of her music is such that she can be heard by some creatures outside of the map.

Wizards and magical beings that come within 10' of the map can faintly hear the song.

Cats that come within 30' of the map hear the singing and find it troublesome, a thing to be sought out and perceived. They will follow the map unless they feel doing so would be dangerous.

Children within 30' of the map start to hum or sing along or dance to the unheard music, without realizing why.

flames grow quickly, with the DC to douse them jumping by +2 every round. The DC 20 check is their final chance to douse the flames – failing that check means the map world burns out from underneath them, causing visitors 2d6 damage and ejecting them into The Void. Water from the real world is nearly as dangerous as fire. Water (or wine, etc.) poured on creatures or objects first soften the landscape, then weaken it until the map world begins to tear, causing a small hole.

Holes: It is very possible to rip a hole in map world. Any fire that grows out of control creates a small hole (3-5' diameter), which grows into a large hole if not gotten under control in 3 rounds (15-20'). The Void beneath the map creates tremendous suction. Anyone within 5' of a hole must make a DC 13 Strength check, with failure meaning they are sucked in. If the hole is a small one, they are merely partially stuck in the hole, and it takes a DC 13 Strength check to extricate oneself or an ally. Characters sucked into a large hole must make a DC 14 Reflex save. Failure means they cling to the edge and must make a DC 14 Strength check every round to hold on or be sucked into The Void.

Drawing: Visitors to the map world may attempt to create objects and creatures by drawing them. Those attempting to draw something into map world reality make either a DC 15 Personality check to create inanimate map world objects or a DC 23 Personality check to create living map world creatures. If they use improvised art supplies (i.e. finger as stylus, blood or ashes as ink, cloth as paper, etc.) the check is -1d. Thieves can substitute a Forge Document check for a Personality check. On a successful check the item is real for all intents and purposes while in the map world. If living creatures are created the PCs must make a Luck check, with failure meaning the creature is hostile to its creator and their allies. A natural 1 on the Personality or Forge Document check should be a calamity (judge's discretion what form it takes). The judge can rule that PCs can't create extremely complicated or large objects or increase the difficulty for creating such objects.

The Void: Outside and beneath the map is The Void, the space between world bubbles, a darkness so complete it is like the night of night itself. The Void is a vacuum that would devour all. If PCs are sucked down into The Void they disappear from the current adventure. Give them a final Luck check: success means they are mystically transported to some other location the judge decides: they burst from a wall-mounted tapestry map in a secret library in Quarmall, appear in a cavern leading to Ningauble's cave in the Ilthmar Mountains, or even arrive in some strange world unheard of by any in Nehwon. Failure means they are lost in the space between worlds forever.

Destruction: If the Illuminated Gateway is destroyed the map world is destroyed, with any visitors being cast into The Void. In this case the demi-plane attempts to take revenge. At some point when the destroyer's guard is down three border guardians on snail mounts (see below), now without their vulnerability to mundane fire, find them alone and attack to kill, becoming lifeless illustrations on the walls or floors after the deed is done.

EXPLORATION

The PCs may simply explore the map world, straying from the path and exploring the woods. For every hour they spend exploring there is a 1 in 3 chance for a wandering encounter. You can choose what they meet or roll on the following table. For larger groups consider rolling a higher die for the number of creatures encountered.

Roll	Encounter
1-6	1d3 S-snakes, attacking from the trees (see below)
7-9	1-2 border guardians on snail mounts, patrolling the forest (see Area 3-2)
10	The Stalking Beast, hunting the PCs (see Area 3-4)

If the PCs have fought with border guardians before, their wandering fellows attack on sight.

S-snakes (1d3): Init +2; Atk bite +1 melee (1d2 plus venom [DC 11 Fort save or suffer 1 Stamina loss]); AC 11; HD 1d4; hp 3 each; MV 20' or climb 30'; Act 1d20; SP venom, vulnerability to mundane fire (x2 damage); Fort +0, Ref +1, Will+0; AL N; Crit M/1d4.

S-snakes are rampant on the map world, possibly because whatever cosmic artist created the place found them extremely easy to draw and so put them all over the place. S-snakes stand upright even when they move, balancing on their lowest curve so they are nearly always shaped like the letter S. They have simple wedge-shaped mouths with two tiny fangs. They climb fast as squirrels, hiding in trees until victims pass by then dropping down to attack.

On a successful bite the victim must make a DC 11 Fort save or take 1 point of Stamina loss from the creature's venom. The veins of envenomed targets swell and grow purplish, as if injected with ink.

The judge should feel free to expand on the map world, adding new creatures or even entire new encounter areas. The map world could have secret areas no flesh-and-blood mortals have ever seen, and creatures beyond imagining!

AREA 3: THE WORLD BEYOND THE ILLUMINATED GATEWAY

Area 3-1 — The Woman with the Thin Arms: *You fall down and down, past illustrated clouds, down towards the painted world below. The singing grows louder as you drop. Your decent slows down as you get closer until finally you touch down gently. You are standing in an illustrated world, as if the map you gazed upon became a real place before your eyes. You are standing at what appears like the edge of a vast painting of a forest become real. Painted limbs sway in the soundless breeze. As you look around you see an animated illustration, a woman fairly realized except for her arms, which are little more than stick representations. She holds her thin arms out to you and sings wordlessly, just vocalizing in her ethereal voice, perhaps welcoming you to this place.*

The Woman with the Thin Arms is the only native of the map world that can make sounds perceivable to visitors. She

AREA 3: THE WORLD BEYOND THE ILLUMINATED GATEWAY



3-2



3-5



3-6

3-2

3-2

3-4

3-3

3-1

3-2

THE VOID

SBP

smiles and sings to the players but cannot otherwise communicate. If asked questions she attempts to answer them by varying her song. The Woman with the Thin Arms is a non-combatant who attempts to flee if attacked (0-level peasant stats).

If the PCs ask the Woman with the Thin Arms how to get to the castle, she sings a new song and gestures, making it clear that they can either walk along the path through the woods, or travel along the river.

Area 3-2 — The Edge of the World: The PCs may try to find their way to the border of the map. On the northeastern edge the PCs can look up and see the illustrated sun smiling down at them, radiating waving lines of heat. On the southwestern edge they can see a similar smiling crescent moon, looking just a bit sinister.

This description and the encounter with the border guardians take place no matter where on the map's edge the PCs visit.

You pass a few lone trees and find yourself looking across a vista so unexpected it is difficult to credit. From where you stand you can see the end of the world and beginning of . . . what? You see the land comes to a rough and jagged edge some three bowshots away from where you stand. The ground begins its furling even at your feet, and grows darker, more pitted, and ever more split by sectioning chasms until the farthest edges are a fringed chaos, barely visible as they blend into the absolute darkness beyond. A slow, continuous disintegration takes place as specks and shards and wheeling plat-forms of the world break away and drift into blackness.

The map world is aware, and it works to keep its inhabitants within its borders. Once the PCs have reached this proximity to where the map world ends and The Void begins, 1d3 border guardians on snail mounts ride up. They appear to

speak, with lines representing sounds issuing from their mouths. A DC 10 Intelligence check lets the adventurers know that the rabbit humanoids warn against going any further towards the end of the map world. The guardians move to bar any further passage, as they know that moving too close to the edge both accelerates the erosion of their world and eventually will drag the visitors to their doom in The Void.

The border guardians attack any PCs that attempt to go any further towards the edge.

If the PCs defeat the guardians and make their way to the edge, they start to feel the pull of The Void. If they get as close as 300' to the edge of the map world they must make a DC 11 Strength check, with failure meaning they begin to slide towards the edge of the map world, involuntarily moving 50' a round. They must make a Strength check to stop their movement (DC 12 + 1 per 50' they travel from the 300' mark, with failure meaning they travel another 50'). If they can arrest their movement it takes a DC 13 Stamina check to claw one's way away from the edge (make a check for every 50' of movement with the DC increasing by 1 for each check), with failure meaning they can make no more forward progress and must make another Strength check or be dragged 50' further towards the edge and The Void.

Any PC who comes within 50' of the edge must also make a Luck check, with failure meaning the chunk of ground they disturbed while walking over it flies off into The Void, taking the PC with it.

Border Guardians (1d3): Init +2; Atk lance +3 melee (1d12) or tree branch +3 melee (1d4); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 14; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP heightened senses, vulnerable to non-magical fire (x2 damage); Fort +1, Ref +3, Will+0; AL N; Crit III/1d8.

Border guardians are living illustrations of 5' tall humanoid rabbits. They are silent, communicating with a sign and facial expression language that their fellows and mounts can somehow clearly understand from up to 60' away, even if they cannot see one another. Border guardians make any hearing or scent perception checks at +1d.

The border guardians wield lances and carry tree branches which they wield as clubs. Each wears an armored jerkin and carries a jousting shield embossed with an image of a naked bearded human, *rampant guardant*.

Riding Snails (1 per border guardian): Init +1; Atk bite +0 melee (1d4); AC 15; HD 2d8; hp 16; MV 45'; Act 1d20; SP full vertical move, vulnerable to non-magical fire (x2 damage); Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +3; AL N; Crit M/1d6.

Riding snails are bizarrely realized illustrations of snails the size of ponies, whose shape belies how swiftly they can travel with a rider. Their mouths have been greatly emphasized by whatever cosmic illustrator created them, giving them a vicious bite. Riding snails can cling to surfaces while maintaining their full movement rate, allowing them to charge along vertical surfaces or even upside down. Each is equipped with a saddle and riding tack designed to let riders sit securely even if the snail inverts itself.





Area 3-3 — The River King: *As you make your way along the ever-flowing river's blue-green brush strokes you come to a bend in the river you must navigate your way around. As you do you see a disturbance in the water. A few bubbles rise to the surface. Then an instant later some 300 statuesque humanoids rise from the river and step onto land, each holding a two-pronged fishing spear at parade rest. Painted droplets of water shake from their curly hair as they step on land as one. All wear togas that ripple as if they were still underwater. One bearded man in the center is clearly their leader, wearing a driftwood crown and rings on every finger. A lieutenant at his side gestures for you to approach.*

This is the River King and his loyal retainers, herald, and army. They were drawn as one and act as one. No statistics are provided for the River King and his troops, as defeating them would require an army. If the PCs are so rash as to attack, the River King's troops quickly subdue, disarm, and bind them. The PCs will have to find a way to escape from imprisonment before they continue exploring the map world.

The River King loves nothing more than games of chance but, wise as he is, he realizes that no one in his lockstep court will give him the challenge he craves; out of tedious respectfulness they always let him win.

The King's Herald approaches, bows, and then, using gestures and silent vocalizations, lets the PCs know that the River King invites them to roll dice with him. If the PCs refuse, the River King insults them in a way highly amusing to his court; all three hundred point and laugh in silent uproar, and every visitor loses a point of Luck from cosmic humiliation.

If the PCs agree, the herald has servants carry up a table, benches, plates of fish and ornate goblets of wine (palatable but unpleasant to visitors, the nothing flavor of paper and bitter tang of ink). A pipe and drum combo provide music visitors can only perceive as brief wavy lines in the air.

A servant brings the River King's dice bag. Each PC must make a DC 12 Intelligence check. Success means the adventurers realize that while his dice have strange pips (koi fish, tadpoles, etc.), he is essentially offering a game of rat-snake. The River King has 50 coins, and will wager them against whatever the PCs offer, happy to gamble for visitor coin or bits of equipment.

To simulate the contest, you can either handle it with a single roll (the PC with the lowest Luck makes a Luck check, where success means they take all 50 of the King's illustrated coins and failure meaning the River King wipes them out), or it can be resolved with an actual game of rat-snake (see Rat-Snake: A Lankhmar Wagering Game with Dice, Goodman Games GenCon 2016 Program Guide for complete rules).

Regardless of outcome, the River King is delighted at the game. He makes gestures of friendship to the PCs and orders his herald to escort them to the doors of the castle then disappears into the river with his retainers and army. The PCs cannot find the River King and his court again on this visit to the map world.

The illustrated coins become paper discs in the real world, but if the PCs escape the map world at some point in their adventures, they randomly find a large gold coin embossed

with a two-pronged spear on one side and a king with a driftwood crown on the other.

Area 3-4 — The Beast: As the PCs make their way down the path to the castle have them make a DC 13 Intelligence check. If they are successful, they can tell by the movement of tree branches that something is following them. If they fail the check, the beast springs out silently from the woods, attacking with surprise.

The beast considers the entire forest to be its territory and attempts to chase outsiders away. If the PCs flee back in the direction of the Woman with the Thin Arms, it will not chase them but will hunt them if it sniffs them returning to the woods.

The Stalking Beast (1): Init +2; Atk 2 claws +5 melee (2d6) or hurled spine +3 missile fire (1d6, range 20'/40'/60'); AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 21; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP spines, enhanced senses, vulnerability to mundane fire (x2 damage); Fort +5, Ref +2, Will+1; AL L; Crit M/1d8.

The Stalking Beast is an animated illustration of a giant hedgehog with the face of a bearded human. Its countenance appears almost beatific, like a painting of a martyr, until it opens its mouth to roar and displays its predator's teeth. The creature exists only to protect its territory, an imagined personification of a dangerous area of a map.

The beast is covered in long spines everywhere except its belly, making an automatic spine attack at creatures attempting to bite, make an unarmed strike, or grapple it (Atk spines +3 melee (1d6, free attack every round it is grappled)). The creature draws two spines from its back per round and hurls them as missile weapons, occasionally hurling an intentional near miss, hoping to frighten enemies away with a warning shot. The beast has a very powerful sense of smell and can track intruders in its territory by scent.

Area 3-5 — The Rose: *Beyond the tree line you see a vast empty valley, divided by wide, dark lanes. It looks almost as if someone created looping roads to nowhere, all seeming to bend sharply back and meet up with themselves again and again, all in the middle of this vast valley in the illustrated forest.*

The lines, of course, are the map rose seen up close. Give the PCs a DC 13 Intelligence check to recognize what they are looking at when they stare down the valley.

The denizens of the map world sense that this area is sacred and fear to trespass upon it. This area is free from wandering encounters, and the PCs can safely rest here.

Touching the lines of the map world rose imparts a special power to visitors – from that moment forward they always know which way they are facing, like a living compass.

Area 3-6 — The Doors to the Castle: *The castle looms ahead as you step out of the woods. You are looking at an impossibly magnificent structure, an artist's fantasy of a storybook stronghold. The crenelated walls are 100' tall and hung with flags depicting a scrolling map. There are seven towers, each with a banner fluttering from its top. The double doors are immense.*

The castle is tall, and wide, but not much more than a façade. If the PCs walk around the outside of the castle, they see that while it's hundreds of feet wide it's less than 60' deep, and the towers are so thin as to be practically two dimensional.

The walls are not terribly difficult to climb (DC 13 Climb Sheer Surfaces check). If the PCs search the walls near the castle's entrance, they may find a secret door (search DC 15) – with the touch of a brick, a 5'x 8' section of wall collapses into individual bricks, then reforms when the last person passes through. The secret door has a trigger on the interior side as well, allowing the PCs to leave as they came.

Area 3-7 — The Castle Grounds: *The castle grounds are wide and narrow. From here you can see that the castle is little more than a facade, which only looks like it has depth due to tricks of perspective like one might see on a mummer's stage. The towers are one brick deep, and the entire vast-appearing castle is less than a spear's throw in depth. The entire courtyard is one long narrow open area. Your eyes fall upon an incongruous sight – in the middle of this entirely illustrated world you see something from the outside world, a wooden coffer nestled in a great pile of coins. The money and the coffer are clearly not illustrations.*

This is Lord Esselmar's treasure, hidden away from his family in this magical place. The map world loves the late nobleman so well that it makes an effort to protect his treasures from would-be thieves. Once the PCs approach it, the map world searches their minds for the most fearful image it can find, then draws and animates it. Somewhere in the subconscious of at least one of member of the party is an image of the Gods of Lankhmar.

When the PCs are close enough to start gathering coins a black dot appears on the wall behind the treasure. An instant later it sketches a line of 13 mummified forms, all connected as one. These animations do not have the details of most of the denizens of the map world, instead being composed of harsh angular lines more suggestive than descriptive. The creature attacks and fights to the death, although it will not pursue the PCs if they flee the castle.

The Guardian of Map World (1): Init +0; Atk grapple +9 (1d6 automatic on pinned target) or hurled scribble +5 missile fire (1d8, range 30'); AC 15; HD 5d8; hp 37; MV 20'; Act 2d20; SP grapple crush, poor maneuverability, vulnerable to mundane fire (x2 damage); Fort +4, Ref -1, Will+ 3; AL L; Crit M/1d10.

The Guardian is a quickly sketched living illustration suggestive of the Gods of Lankhmar. While it has the rough appearance of 13 skeletal figures standing side by side, it is actually one being, with all the figures attached at ankle, waist, and shoulder like paper dolls. It exists only to protect Esselmar's treasure.

The Guardian retains a bit of the creative power of the map world. It attacks by quickly drawing a scribble, then hurling the scribble at targets up to 30' away. At close range the creature attempts to grapple opponents. Every round that the guardian maintains a grapple on a target it does an automatic 1d6 damage.

The Guardian has two action dice. It can use one to hurl a scribble and one to grapple on the same round, but it can neither grapple nor throw twice.

The creature is awkward. It cannot reach far enough to the ground to lift an object up without toppling over. It takes a full round to rotate itself 180° to face a target behind it, and if knocked prone it takes a full action for the creature to right itself.

The pile of money consists of 380 copper pennies, 145 silver smerduks, 51 gold rilks, 17 star-shaped electrum pieces from another dimension, and two dozen bronzed crickets.

The coffer is locked (DC 14 Pick Lock check) and trapped (DC 14 Find/Disable Trap). If the coffer is opened before the trap is disarmed a puff of poisonous gas expels from the

lock. Creatures within 5' of the side of the coffer with the lock must make a DC 13 Fort save. Failure means their trachea begins to swell, potentially cutting off their air. They take 1d3 Stamina loss and must save every round at a DC increasing by 1 every time (i.e., 14, 15, etc.), only ending if they either make a saving throw or die of Stamina loss.

There are two items inside the coffer: a pencil and paper map and an exquisite toga. The toga is exquisite cream silk set with pearls and malachite, worth 100 gold rilks to the right nobleman. The map seems to be a sketch of the area where the PCs entered the map world. For example, it could show the front room of the silk shop, complete with the sketched bodies of Smot and Frith. Staring into the map for one round transports the viewer back to the place in the real world where they first entered the Illuminated Gateway.

PART III: THE AFTERMATH

Returning PCs eventually realize that time must work differently in the map world, as they arrive back only an instant after they passed through the Illuminated Gateway.

If the PCs escape the map world, they have choices to make. They might simply decide to run and find a buyer for the map or keep the map for further exploration. In this case, Hammumel sends thieves to kill them if they remain in Lankhmar or hired assassins if they flee the city.

The PCs may opt to stay in the guild master's good graces by bringing him the map. In this case they still need to sneak the behemoth head back into the Platinum Pelican by midnight or the plan is spoiled, in which case Hammumel still means to see them all dead. This outcome could work to the failed heist team's advantage, because in this scenario the Thieves' Guild eventually finds out that Hammumel was

dealing dirty with both the Guild and some legitimate tribute paying clients; this could eventually lead to his disposal, which would take the heat off the PCs.

The PCs may attempt to forge a copy of the exquisitely detailed map. To make a decent forgery, one that could pass an inspection with a chance of fooling anyone who knows what they are looking for, would require a weeks' worth of work, 20 gold rilks worth of art supplies, and a DC 25 Forge Document check.

If the PCs survive the ordeal, they will have an amazing story to tell, one which eventually reaches the ears of Ningauble of the Seven Eyes. The gossip of the gods might even offer his patronage to the adventures on the basis of this adventure, so long as they swear to tell them the whole story without leaving out a single line or brush stroke.

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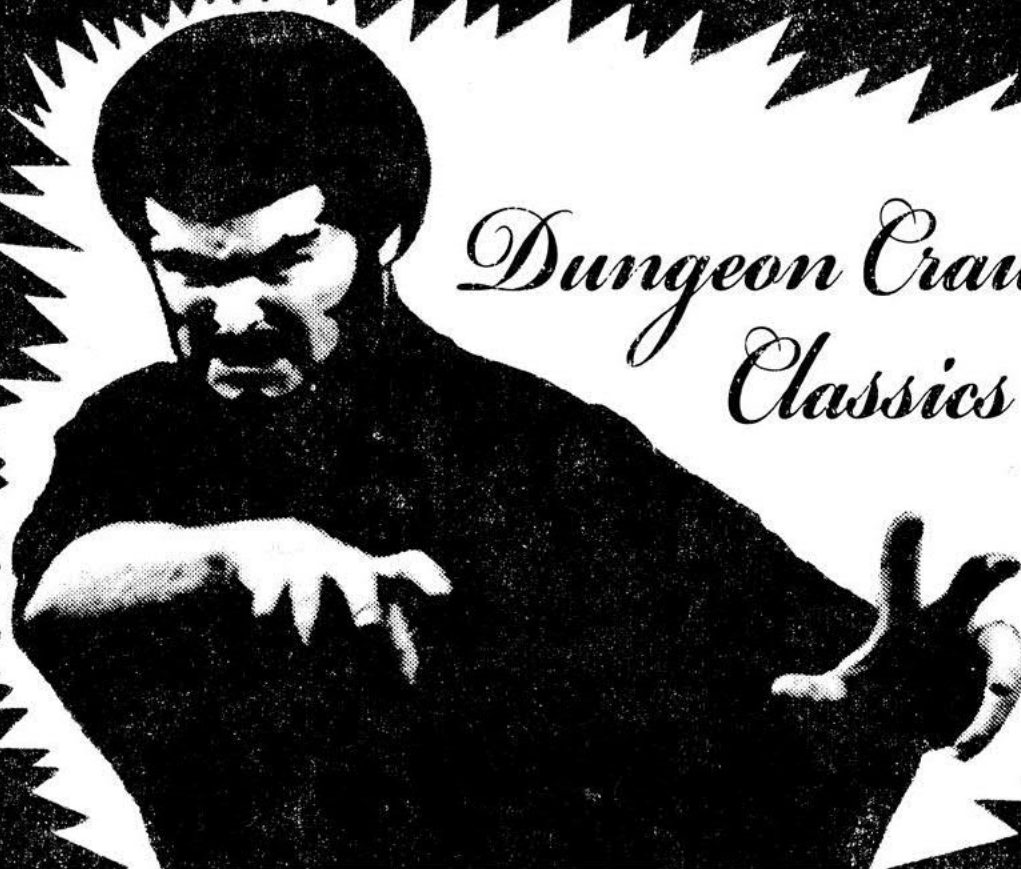
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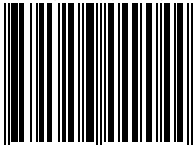
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