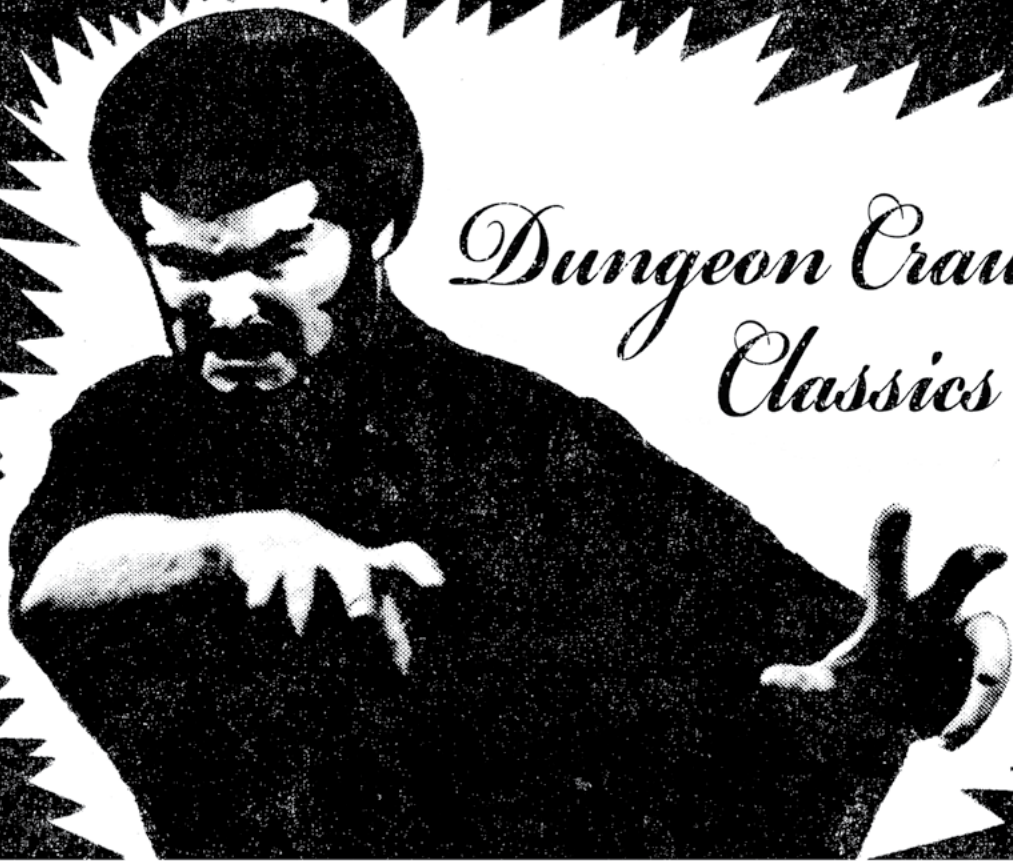


# DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS LANKHMAR

## ACTING UP IN LANKHMAR

#3: A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE  
BY MICHAEL CURTIS  
AUTHORIZED BY THE  
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# ACTING UP IN LANKHMAR

## A LEVEL 2 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!

*Acting Up in Lankhmar* is an adventure for DCC Lankhmar designed for four 2nd-level characters. Although intended for play by smaller groups, notes are provided to scale the adventure for up to six players. During the course of this adventure, the PCs find themselves working to protect a troupe of actors from the machinations of a slighted Lankhmart noble. Successfully helping the struggling players earns them both allies and enemies in the City of the Black Toga.



## BACKGROUND

Jallo of Ratskitter Court is the leader of one of Lankhmar's troupes of actors, mummers, dancers, and street performers, a band of troubadours known as the Dungsweep Players. Jallo and his fellow Dungsweeps eke out a meager living entertaining Lankhmar's lower class, providing an afternoon's diversion from the harsh realities of life in the slums. In addition to sheer entertainment—mostly in the form of comedic plays, sensual dances, and violent slapstick—the Dungsweep Players insert social messages into their works, seeking to expand the minds of their audience and take Lankhmar's aristocracy down a peg or two with satirical representations.

The Players' most recent subject of satirical skewering is a noble of moderate power in the city—Duke Borvat. The Duke earned Jallo's ire when the playwright observed the Duke command the leader of his house guard, Captain Dimman, to beat an elderly pushcart vendor to death for failing to swiftly move his cart out of the path of the Duke's litter as he traveled a crowded thoroughfare. Thus, the satirical comedy "The Fiascos of Duke Hogfat" was born.

Jallo, knowing little about the Duke's personal habits, packed the play with classic stereotypes of nobility as perceived by the city's poor—gluttony, incompetence, corruption, impotence, incest, murderous rage, etc. Unfortunately for Jallo, this portrayal, although drawn entirely from his own imagination, proved to be uncomfortably accurate in Duke Borvat's case. When word of the play spread to Lankhmar's upper class thanks to a few slumming nobles' sons, the city's aristocrats began attending the performances, bringing both cachet and money to the small troupe. The show is their most popular performance ever, allowing them to rent a ramshackle theatre on Mummers Court in the Plaza Quarter.

It wasn't long before Duke Borvat noticed the snickers and half-covered smiles directed towards him at social gatherings, and an investigation by Captain Dimman discovered why the Duke was the season's laughingstock. The Duke grew enraged and vowed to crush the Dungsweep Players and cancel the play permanently.

Unfortunately, the show's popularity amongst all social tiers of the city ties the Duke's hands. Although he'd love nothing more than to dispatch his house guard to the theatre with orders to slaughter every Dungsweep and post their head on pikes in Mummers Court as a warning to other play-writing wags, the Overlord would have no choice but to levy justice against the Duke for such a blatant display. The Duke must work much more carefully.

This morning, Captain Dimman and a squad of his men appeared at the theatre with a single order: cancel this evening's show and all subsequent performances of "The Fiascos of Duke Hogfat." He laid no consequences for failure to comply, but the unspoken threat was that failure to do so would result in the death of Jallo and the Dungsweep Players.

The performers vowed they'd resist the Duke and Jallo now seeks to hire a group of sellswords to provide security for the evening's show. His search brings him into contact with the PCs and the adventure begins.

## OVERTURE: MEETING JALLO



his adventure assumes the PCs' previous escapades in Lankhmar have earned them some renown among the less savory residents of the city, or that one or more of the characters has a benison that connects them with the street culture or lower class of Lankhmar. If this is not the case, the judge must adjust this introduction accordingly.

Jallo, having heard of the adventurers, seeks them out in a locale they are known to frequent; or, if they have no regular place of patronage, approaches them in a market or other public location. Jallo is dusky of skin and dark of hair, which he keeps oiled and braided. Physically, he is of average build but the manner in which he carries himself and his fine voice makes him seem larger than he actually is. Jallo dresses in a brown toga, the uniform of the Dungsweep Players.

*"Ho, good sirrahs and medames! Have you a moment to discuss a business matter guaranteed to swell your coin purses and alleviate the worries of a humble mummer?"*

*"My troubles are this, good friends: I am the leader of a noble troupe of mummery and actors known as the Dungsweep Players. We provide the less fortunate masses of our fair city with brief diversions from the cares of their daily lives while dispensing kernels of truth wrapped in pleasing guises. It is an honest living for an actor even if it is not an honorable one."*

*"As of late, my troupe and I have achieved an unexpected deal of success and renown thanks to our latest play, 'The Fiascos of Duke Hogfat.' The show has proven to be popular with not only the humble residents of Lankhmar's slums and tenements, but also amongst the craftsmen, merchants, and soldiery. In fact, our performances have even been attended by veiled and hooded nobles come to laugh at our mockery of a certain pompous noble whom we skewer like a forest boar with our barbs and observations. And it is there that my troubles lie."*

*"Duke Borvat, the noble the play deflates, has learned of our show and means to scotch it. His guardsmen visited us this morn with the ultimatum that unless we cancel all performances, the Duke intends to see both play and players ended – permanently. I have no doubt the Duke will attempt to make good on his threat."*

*"Having put the matter to my fellow performers, we've vowed that the show must continue! To this end, we seek valiant worthies to serve as our benefactors and spear-carriers, men and women fearless enough to watch over us as we entertain and prevent the Duke's men for carrying out their threat. Would you be those armed angels, those sword-bearing benefactors?" [pause] "We can pay."*

Jallo offers the PCs 5 gold rilk each for their security duties, with a 10 rilk bonus should violence occur. The PCs need only act as security during the evening's performance, working from late afternoon to midnight. Their task will be to keep an eye out for Duke Borvat's men and other unsavory characters working in his employ.

Assuming the PCs accept, Jallo offers to escort them to the Marshlight Theatre on Mummery Court so that they can familiarize themselves with the theatre and the neighborhood before they begin their work this evening.

## MUMMERS COURT

The Marshlight Theatre abuts a circular court down one of Lankhmar's many side streets. Only a single thoroughfare allows entry to the Court, but numerous alleys and buildings allow foot traffic. Decrepit-looking tenements, many former warehouses, encircle the plaza and the Marshlight Theatre stands on the northern edge of the Court. A public well is in the center of the Court.

During the day, many poor actors and performers busk around the well, earning a few coins and honing their art, hoping to attract the notice of more established troupes such as the Dungsweep Players. In the evening hours, pushcart vendors and street merchants set up around the fountain, selling their wares and providing food to theatre attendees during intermission.

### THE MARSHLIGHT THEATRE

Like most of the surrounding buildings, the Marshlight Theatre began life as a warehouse, but fell into disuse. An absentee landlord now owns the building, having refurbished it into a theatre. He leases the theatre to various acting troupes each season, forcing them to pay an exorbitant security deposit. This way, should the rowdy Lankhmart crowds or an errant spark destroy the building, the landlord still comes out ahead. It also means he won't step in to defend either his property or tenants from the Duke's vengeance.

On a whole, the theatre is in poor condition: hot and stuffy during the warmer months and abysmally cold and damp during the wintertime. There is little in the way of decoration aside from what the itinerant performers bring to their stage.

**Area 1-1—Lobby:** *Two doorways lead from outside into a bare hall. Sawdust covers the plank floor and shabby whitewash adorns the walls. Two sets of stairs lead up to a balcony overlooking the hall, while a wide corridor exits the room to the north, leading to the theatre's interior. A single door is set into the side of each staircase, possibly leading backstage or to other restricted areas of the building.*

Four members of the Dungsweep players man the doors on performance day, collecting admission and showing attendees to their seats depending on their payment of admission. The general, poor masses pass through the corridor to the pit (area 1-4) while those paying for seating are ushered up the stairs to the balcony and to their appropriate sections. During intermission, the lobby serves as an eating area with attendees purchasing food from the vendors outside.

During the daytime, all the doors in this area are unlocked to allow the cast and crew ready access to all sections of the theatre. At night, the doors to the backstage connectors (areas 1-5) are locked. Either the proper key (available for the asking from the Dungsweep Players) or a DC 10 Pick Lock check is needed to pass through the doors.

**Area 1-2—Nobles' Seating:** *Several rows of low-backed benches bearing faded, tattered upholstered seats overlook the pit below and provide an unobstructed view of the stage beyond.*

These seats are the most expensive ones in the theatre, being occupied by rich merchants and minor nobles attracted to the spectacle of the play. A single seat cost 5 smerduks—a paltry sum for the wealthy, but a nearly unimaginable fee for the rest of the show's audience.

**Area 1-3—Regular Seating:** *Three sides of the theatre's interior are occupied by backless benches crammed together on tiers. The benches are scuffed, splintered, and look generally uncomfortable to sit on. In places, support pillars obstruct the view of the stage. Aisles ending in short ramps lead from these sections to reach the noble's seating below.*

This is the preferred seating for craftsmen, the upper lower class, or anyone who can afford 5 iron tiks to avoid the crammed and often unruly atmosphere of the pit. The seats are indeed uncomfortable and any rioting that occurs in the theatre begins in this section.

**Area 1-4—The Pit:** *An open area of dirty timber floor stands in front of the stage. During performances, those purchasing the cheapest admission occupy this space. Their rowdy nature is attested to by the old blood and wine-stains that discolor the floorboards.*

The pit is filled to capacity by the poorest attendees (known as groundlings, as they stand on the ground rather than sit) during a show. Uncouth, filthy, and demanding, a performer in Lankhmar needs be tough-skinned—both figuratively and literally—to withstand the groundlings' disfavor if they find a performance lacking. Poor players are often met by a barrage of spoiled food, stones, and bottles.

A pair of doors lead backstage from the pit on either side of the stage. During performances, these doors are both locked (DC 10 Pick Lock check to open) and barred (DC 18 Strength check to break down). The Dungsweep Players take no chances with the groundlings.

**Area 1-5—Backstage Connectors:** *A long corridor leads straight towards the rear of the building. The hallway ends at a short flight of rising stairs that stop at a closed door. A line of windows set 15' up on the theatre's exterior wall allows wan sunlight to shine through the barred openings and light the corridor. At night, torches set in sconces banish the darkness. A number of faded and torn theatrical broadsides cling to the brick walls.*

The doors leading backstage are usually left unlocked during performances to avoid the noise of clanking keys and locks. However, if the PCs request the doors be locked for security purposes, the Players agree (after oiling the locks well). The PCs are given keys to the door locks as needed.

The windows are each 15' up and are 3' high by 2' wide. A pair of stout iron bars are set in each window to keep out thieves. It is possible to saw through the bars, but doing so would take at least 30 minutes of work and generate some noise. The Duke and his servants have ruled out infiltrating the theatre through the windows, but the PCs may be concerned about them nevertheless. Any reasonable plan to further block the windows automatically succeeds if time and materials allow.

**Area 1-6—Stage:** *A simple, well-worn stage dominates the end of the theatre. The plain curtain of old sail cloth dyed deep blue is currently raised by fraying ropes. At the rear of the stage are three doors, a common feature in Lankhmart plays, and used by the performers entering or departing a scene.*

A pair of trap doors on the stage lead to the cellar, allowing performers to suddenly appear or disappear from the stage if needed. The three doors of the postcaenium serve as entrances to various rooms of Duke Hogfat's manor during the perfor-

mance, with actors entering the stage either through those portals or from the wings as a scene demands.

**Area 1-7—Backstage:** *Dim, unadorned spaces on either side of the stage serve as waiting places for performers before their scenes. A network of ropes and pulleys line the walls, connecting to the theatrical rigging on the catwalk above. Doors and archways lead to other sections of the theatre.*

During the evening performance, the wings are crowded with actors waiting for their cues, stagehands performing their jobs, and other Dungsweeps watching their fellows. Any speaking in the wings while the show is occurring is met with a harsh "Sshh!" and a stern glare.

**Area 1-8—Wardrobe:** *A small room contains a variety of costumes in various stages of repair. Racks filled with actors' garb and wooden heads bearing wigs fill the rest of the room.*

The Dungsweeps' costumer, Torva the Mingoless, can be found here working during the day, mending and making garb for the performers. Although in her early sixties, Torva is still tough as Mingol jerky and can wield both her steel knitting needles and shears as terrible weapons if either she or the Dungsweeps are physically threatened.

**Area 1-9—Troupe Office:** *A battered, blackened iron lock seals this door tight.*

The lock is a crude one, requiring only a DC 12 Pick Lock check to open. Jallo owns the key to it. Beyond the door is the following:

*A cramped office holding a worn wooden desk, chair, and empty shelves stands beyond the locked door. The room shows signs of recent occupancy: a small pile of broadsheets advertising the play with comedic illustrations sits atop the desk.*

The broadsheets favor graphical embellishments over literary ones and are designed to appeal to the illiterate lower class of Lankhmar. Each depicts an obese, half-naked noble chasing farm animals about a grand manor's hall. The play's title and the theatre's name are emblazoned above the picture.

Inside the desk is a locked iron strongbox (DC 20 to Pick Lock check) holding the previous evening's box office: 237 iron tiks, 378 silver smerduks, and 21 gold rilks.

**Area 1-10—Flyloft:** *The various ropes and pulleys moored in the wings lead up to this open space 30' above the stage below. A single catwalk crosses the area, granting unobstructed access to both the stage and to the two roof-windows leading onto the theatre's flat roof.*

The roof-windows are propped open on performance nights to help alleviate some of the heat generated by the crowded house below. This hole in the theatre's security has been noticed by the Thieves' Guild and they intend to make use of it during Act Four (see below). Access to the flyloft is via the two ladders leading to the wings below or—for the more agile or daring—by shinnying up and down the theatre's rigging ropes (DC 10 Agility or Climb Sheer Surfaces check).

**Area 1-11—Cellar:** *A dusty, brick-walled cellar resides beneath the theatre. Thick wooden supports rise to meet the timber ceiling above. A pair of ladders connect to the stage trapdoors overhead and a*

flight of stone stairs leads to angled delivery doors exiting in the alley alongside the building. A second staircase leads to the backstage area of the theatre above.

The cellar contains a few pieces of old, dusty scenery and set dressing left over from previous occupants of the Marshlight. Unless removed, they'll be used to help kindle the fire in Act Two.

The delivery doors are thick wooden doors set at an angle in the base of the theatre's foundation, opening onto the basement stairs. These doors are chained and locked from the outside to keep out vagrants. The Dungsweep Players don't have the key to the lock (the landlord forgot to give it to them), but it can be opened with a DC 15 Pick Lock check. The lock is old and rusty, accounting for the higher DC. The arsonists use this entrance to get inside the theatre during Act Two. Increased security on the door might slow them down and give the PCs a chance of noticing them before they enter the theatre, but the firebugs will find the means to bypass most reasonable efforts the party might contrive.

## PREPARING FOR THE SHOW

The party has roughly four hours to make plans and/or increase security in the theatre. Some possibilities are mentioned in the text, but it is impossible to anticipate every conceivable stratagem the players might come up with. The judge will have to adjudicate any plans to the best of his ability, keeping in mind the time limits, materials, and other resources the PCs have on hand.

Mummers Court is filled largely with theatrical performers and entertainers, and as a rule this subsection of the city looks out for one another. The party can easily hire lookouts, message runners, and other assistants from the locals, but none of these performers are willing to take up arms and risk the Duke's wrath or his soldiers' steel. Generally, a DC 10 Personality check and 1d6 bronze agols will convince a local resident to lend the party some minor assistance for the evening. Treat them as Peasants (DCC RPG p. 434) if stats are required.

This planning stage is a great time to reward the players with fleeting Luck. Any good plan, interesting interaction with NPCs, or other entertaining development should result in fleeting Luck gains for the party. Keep the Luck flowing—they'll probably need it.

## THE DUNGSWEEP PLAYERS

The actors and crew are generally happy to have the party acting as security for the evening and will agree to any reasonable precaution or request the PCs have regarding the troupe or the building's safety. Each has the stats of Peasants if needed during the game.

The judge can further flesh out the actors and crew (there are about 20 Dungsweep Players in total) as he desires, giving them names, quirks, or personalities. The PCs might encounter wide-eyed ingénues fresh to the big city, divas with overinflated egos, curmudgeonly stage hands, drunken has-been actors, or anything else the judge devises to make the group memorable to the players.

## ADVENTURE MECHANIC: AUDIENCE MOOD

An evening at the theatre in Lankhmar is a far different experience than what we modern theatre-goers know. The crowds are rowdier, the drinks flow readily, and only the actors' performances and the audience's distraction by the play keeps them in line. Riots have broken out when a play proves not to the audience's liking. Add this fact of theatrical life to rumors of Duke Borvat's vendetta and the PCs might find that hired killers are the least of their worries!

To gauge the audience's mood and the chance of violence erupting, this adventure uses a simple five-stage tracking mechanic. The judge can either print out or make his own version of the following tracker:

Ecstatic	Pleased	Neutral	Annoyed	Surly

Use a marker such as a coin or simply make penciled tick marks to indicate the audience's mood as the play progresses and events occur. The PCs' actions and ability to thwart the Duke's attempts to stop the show will shift the audience's mood for the better or worse. Any changes in the mood tracker are noted in each of the adventure's acts.

If the audience's mood ever becomes worse than "Surly," a riot erupts and the show ends. Borvat has succeeded in ending the show. See **Curtain Call**, below, for the details of the riot and its consequences. Likewise, if the show ends successfully, Jallo rewards the party with additional coins and favors (see **Curtain Call** as well).

THE AUDIENCE BEGINS "PLEASED". The judge should place the marker there at the start of Act One. It is suggested that the judge keeps the mood tracker in view of the players as they will easily gauge the audience's current attitude and its presence increases the sense of pressure the PCs are operating under.

# ACT ONE: IT'S TIME TO GET THINGS STARTED

As the sun begins to descend behind the towers and tenements of Lankmar, Mummerys Court starts filling up with people. Some are residents seeking relief from their cramped homes, but the majority are people come to see tonight's performance. A glance notes that most are from Lankmar's lower class seeking an evening's diversion for a few iron ticks. However, mixed amongst these less fortunate souls are men and women of better means — tradesmen, merchants, priests, and similar folk — standing aloof from the poor. Furthermore, the occasional veiled or hooded figure, attended by a hulking bodyguard or three, waits in the shadows for the doors to open. A DC 8 Intelligence check allows an observer to notice the fine make of these mysterious bystanders' clothing, hinting that they are slumming nobles come to enjoy a night at Duke Borvat's expense.

Once the sun sets, the doors to the theatre open and the bystanders begin filing in, paying their admission to the two pairs of Dungsweeps manning the entrances. Admission occurs without incident, but a DC 10 Intelligence check notices the crowd seems extraordinarily rambunctious. Undoubtedly, some have heard of the Duke's threats and are hoping to witness bloodshed with their show, but the risk of being accidentally injured or killed adds the additional elements of excitement and foreboding to the evening.

The PCs are free to act as they desire during the period, taking whatever security precautions or actions they deem necessary. Some may wish to observe the crowd looking for potential trouble-makers or assassins, while other might stay close to the Dungsweeps, perhaps lurking backstage or in the flyloft. The following are a few brief incidents that can occur at the start of the evening. The judge can use as many of them as he deems fit or as time and interest allows.

## Unease In The Wings

If one of the PCs is backstage, they notice Jallo peering out from between the curtains at the house as it fills up. He mutters something ominous and sighs, shaking his head. If asked about what is concerning him, Jallo says the crowd seems skittish and a bit more rambunctious than normal. He's seen crowds like this before and they're unpredictable. Crowds such as these have been known to riot if not entertained or simply if they get too much wine in them.

At this point, the judge should reveal the Audience Mood tracker and the current state of the crowd. Explain to the players that if the attendees' mood ever gets worse than "Surly," a riot is likely, resulting in an end of the show and — even more troubling — probably no monetary reward for the party! This should put a little more pressure on the party to perform their duties well and make them aware that hired killers are just one of the difficulties they face tonight.

## The Noble and the Blacksmith

A PC inside the theatre notices an argument occurring in the Nobles' Seating (area 1-2) just prior to the play's start. A large man and his beanpole wife, both dressed in their best holiday clothes, are contending with a veiled woman wearing a fine silk and damask gown. A towering brute of

a bodyguard stands by her side with fist clenched. The two parties are arguing over the seats purchased by the man (a successful blacksmith) as a present for his wife. The veiled woman contends the seats are hers and the couple has made an error (they haven't; she was simply dissatisfied with the view from her real seat).

Unless the PCs step in, the blacksmith and bodyguard get into fisticuffs that results in a brutal beating of the blacksmith. The violence energizes the groundlings, who hoot and howl as the beating occurs, and enrages those in general seating. The crowd's mood shifts one step to the right.

If the PCs intervene and diffuse the situation, they prevent antagonizing the crowd. If they evict the noblewoman, they actually counter a single move toward rioting later in the evening, but earn the enmity of a minor noble who won't forget the slight.

A DC 20 Personality check will intimidate the noble and her bodyguard, causing them to back down. Less threatening compromises, such as paying off another pair of audience members to give up their seats, require a DC 14 Personality check to accomplish. Any other solution that allows the noble to get a seat while still retaining her dignity succeeds with a DC 10 Personality check. The roll might be modified further with the appropriate benison, such as Noble Birth or Good Reputation in Certain Circles (minor nobles).

If hostilities break out between the noble and the bodyguard, treat the bodyguard as a Man-at-Arms (DCC RPG p. 434) with a short sword instead of an axe, and the noble as, well, a Noble (DCC RPG p.434) with a dagger instead of a longsword. She will only fight in extremis, however.

## Lost Lucky Charm

One of the actresses, Etheb, is seen frantically searching the ground backstage prior to the start of the show. If questioned, she worriedly says she's lost her lucky token, a silver button with a theatrical mask etched onto it. She carries it on her every performance to ward off misfortune, and on a night like tonight, she feels especially in need of it. Unfortunately, she seems to have lost it.

Any PC can help her search for the lost token, which takes 1d3×10 minutes and keeps the searching character from performing other duties. At the end of that time, each searching character can make a Luck check. If any searcher succeeds, the lucky charm is found hidden behind a curtain where it rolled when dropped and Etheb rewards the discovered with her gratitude and a flirtatious kiss, with a wink of perhaps more to come after the show.

If no PC succeeds, the token remains lost and the imminent rise of the curtain prevents further search efforts. The loss of the charm has ramifications that mere mortals cannot comprehend. As a result, the audience's mood is worsened one step towards rioting as if the gods themselves are displeased.

A clever PC might try to allay Etheb's fears if the charm isn't found, offering to "cast a lucky spell" or give the actress a

replacement lucky charm. The gesture is quickly accepted by the superstitious actress with full confidence. This action counts as if the lucky charm was located and the audience suffers no loss of mood. Award the quick-thinking PC with a point of fleeting Luck as well.

## STARTING THE SHOW

After the completion of any and all of the potential above incidents, it is time for the curtain to rise on perhaps the final performance of "The Fiascos of Duke Hogfat."

*The houselights slowly dim as the Dungsweep Players' crew extin-*

*guishes the candles and lamps inside the theatre. The audience cheers in anticipation of the show that's about to begin. Whistles and shouts rise above the clamor and the sound of stamping feet on the floorboards fills the building with noise. Backstage, the cast exchanges looks mixed with excitement and trepidation. There is the sound of creaking pulleys as the curtain rises and the first players step onto the stage. The show has begun...but how will it end?*

The first act passes without incident. The audience remains in whatever its mood was at the beginning of the show and the PCs' presence seems to be warding off any attempts to end the play prematurely. Then, Act Two begins...

# ACT TWO: SCORCHING REVIEWS

With the play underway, Captain Dimman attempts to disrupt the production without evidence of Duke Borvat's involvement. To this end, the commander has hired a local street gang, the Rat Stranglers, to cause a diversion in front of the theatre while other agents slip into the cellar and set the building alight. The PCs will have to contend with threats at both ends of the theatre to prevent the play from being stopped.

## THE RAT STRANGLERS

If there are PCs watching the front of the building, they witness the following:

*The crowd is roaring with laughter as the second act of the play gets off to a rousing start. Despite the distraction, your eyes notice something troubling in Mummery Court just outside the theatre. A small mob of hard-looking men are gathering near the food vendors and street merchants near the theatre's entrance. Each of the men bears a cudgel, and several of them carry steel weapons as well.*

If the party doesn't intervene, the Rat Stranglers rush the vendors, their clubs flailing as they crack skulls and overturn carts and tables. PCs who immediately confront the assembling gang are met by jeers. One of the gang, a hulking, bearded man with a necklace of flayed rat pelts, growls that the characters had better abandon the theatre if they don't want to end up hurt... or worse.

Combat with the gang is the most likely outcome of the confrontation at the front of the theatre (although a *charm person* on the gang's leader or paying off the gang by giving them 50 rilks or more might defuse the situation). The PCs are probably outnumbered, but defeating the gang's leader and his lieutenant is sufficient to break the gang's morale and send them fleeing into the night.

**Rat Stranglers Gang Leader:** Init +1; Atk club +3 melee (1d4+1) or short sword +3 melee (1d6+1); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 16; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C.

**Rat Stranglers Gang Lieutenant (1):** Init +1; Atk club +2 melee (1d4) or short sword +2 melee (1d6); AC 11; HD 1d8; hp 7; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N.

**Rat Stranglers Gang Member (4):** Init -1; Atk club +1 melee (1d4); AC 9; HD 1d6; hp 3 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will -1; AL N.

**Alternate Encounter for Larger Group:** Add a second Lieutenant to the group and increase the number of gang members to six.

## THE ARSONISTS

While the Rat Stranglers are causing a diversion at the front of the theatre, two arsonists-for-hire are busy sneaking into the building's cellar, torches, oil, and kindling in hand. Unless the PCs reinforced the cellar entrance during their initial inspection of the building, the two firebugs break the lock and chain with hatchets, then descend the stairs and begin preparing a blaze beneath the central support timbers.

Any PC observing the alley automatically notices the two entering the cellar. PCs stationed backstage or in the cellar hears the lock and chain break with a DC 10 Luck check, allowing them to try and stop the arsonists before they set the fire.

PCs failing to detect the arsonists before they start the blaze can make a DC 11 Intelligence check each round to smell the smoke seeping up through the floorboards backstage. If no PC is present in the area (if they are all distracted by the Rat Stranglers, for example), one of the actors or stagehands notices the smoke and immediately seeks out the nearest character. The NPC smells the smoke on the fire's fourth round of burning.

**Arsonists (2):** Init +1; Atk club +2 melee (1d4) or short sword +2 melee (1d6); AC 11; HD 1d8; hp 8 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N.

**Alternate Encounter for Larger Group:** Increase the number of arsonists to three.

## THE SPREADING BLAZE

Once the fire is kindled and the cellar begins to burn, the PCs have but a brief time to contain and extinguish the blaze before it grows out of control. The sooner they realize there is a fire, the easier it is to put out.

After a certain point, the PCs must make Intelligence or Agility checks to extinguish the fire and more than one firefighter may be required. The PCs' actions or methods to fight the fire can impact their check, resulting in bonuses or negatives to their roll. For example, a PC who commandeers a keg of wine from the food vendors outside and smashes it over the blaze would receive a +3 bonus to his check, while one who tries to smother the blaze with gauzy cloth from the costumer's shop would suffer a -2 penalty. NPCs can be drafted to fight the blaze. They have +0 modifiers to their ability checks and saving throws and 1d4 hit points.



**Rounds 1 & 2:** The fire can be extinguished by a single PC spending an action to do so. The character battling the fire needs something to smother or beat out the fire (a cloak, shield, or bucket of sand will suffice), but he otherwise automatically succeeds.

**Rounds 3 & 4:** The fire has begun to spread, licking at the support beams and walls. A single character can douse the fire with a DC 10 Agility or Intelligence check. If the check fails, the PC suffers minor injury (1d4 damage). Multiple PCs can attempt to put out the fire and only a single success is required to do so.

**Rounds 5 & 6:** The fire continues to grow and is now beyond the means of a single person to extinguish. Two or more characters must work together to extinguish the fire, and both must succeed on a DC 13 Agility or Intelligence check. If the check fails, the character suffers 1d6 damage.

**Rounds 7 & 8:** The blaze has spread to several support beams and walls, threatening everyone in the cellar. Smoke begins to waft up through the floorboards into the backstage area and thin tendrils rise from the stage. Three or more characters are necessary to fight the fire and Intelligence or Agility checks are DC 15. A failed check results in 1d6 damage *and* the character must make a Luck check or catch fire, suffering an additional

1d6 damage each round until they put themselves out (requiring a DC 10 Reflex save and an action to do so).

**Round 9:** The characters have one last chance to contain the fire. Four characters must succeed in a DC 15 Intelligence or Agility check to extinguish the fire. A failed check results in 1d6 damage *and* the character must make a Luck check or catch fire, suffering an additional 1d6 damage each round until they put themselves out (requiring a DC 10 Reflex save and an action to do so).

**Round 10:** The blaze has spread throughout the cellar and flames lick through the floor backstage and on stage. Smoke is noticeable and the audience members panic, triggering a full-on riot. The play is ruined and the PCs have failed. The Marshlight Theatre continues to burn as the neighborhood rallies to form a bucket brigade. Lankhmar watchmen and soldiers arrive soon thereafter and contain the fire, but the theatre is destroyed. See “**Curtain Call**” below for further information on the adventure’s end.

Unless the fire rages out of control, the second act concludes successfully and a 20-minute intermission is called to allow the audience food and drink and for the cast and crew to change costumes and scenery.

# ACT THREE: POOR PLAYERS, STRUTTING AND FRETTING

The play recommences following the intermission. As the audience returns to the theatre, a frantic-looking Jallo seeks out the PCs. He approaches them when they are largely in one place, his powdered-face streaked with nervous sweat.

*"My guardians, your Jallo is in a most terrible predicament! Two of my players have been struck down by illness. They were fine before the intermission, but are now prostrate with chills and retching! I suspect the Duke has poisoned them! I need your aid now more than ever."*

Jallo pauses a moment, sizing up the PCs as if evaluating their measurements.

*"With my players laid low, I require two replacements in the next scene. Alas, there is no one available!"* Jallo points at two of the characters, announcing triumphantly, *"But you two are nearly perfect fits for the costumes! Can I count on you?"* He points a finger grandly into the air, declaring, *"The show must go on!"*

Which two PCs are chosen by Jallo as his replacement actors is left to the judge's discretion. He can randomly pick them, choose the two players most likely to ham up the opportunity to everyone's enjoyment, or pick characters that haven't had a chance to shine yet during the adventure. If possible, one of the replacement actors should be a warrior or otherwise muscular individual; he will play the role of Captain Dim-Mind and anger the real Captain Dimman, leading to a confrontation at the end of the adventure.

Jallo explains the parts are small ones and just needed for a brief pair of scenes in the middle of the third act. Each part has only a few easily-memorized lines and actions (or so he claims). The other actors are aware of the last-minute change and will cue the PCs when their lines occur. If all goes well, the audience will never notice. Assuming the two PCs agree, they are hustled off to be dressed in costume, hastily-scribbled lines shoved into their hands. Give the players the handouts from Appendix A and inform them which parts they'll be playing.

Jallo then asks the rest of the party to see if they can locate the party responsible for poisoning his fellow Players in case they are still about and have more threats in store.

## PACING ACT THREE

The events of Act Three splits the party, making it impossible for the replacement actors to aid their comrades in the search for the poisoner and the searchers to assist the novice performers. There is a potential to sideline half the group while the other group gets to act. The judge should do his best to wrap up the search for the poisoner as quickly as possible.

In playtesting, the best method of running this scene was to let the searchers canvas the crowd looking for the poisoner, then as soon as they spot him, to cut to the PCs actors' first scene. Once that scene is acted out, cut back to the showdown with the poisoner and resolve that. Then conclude the encounter with the actor PCs performing their second scene and have them roll their Personality checks to determine the scene's success. This method keeps everyone involved in the encounter without too long of a downtime.

## QUESTIONING THE VICTIMS

PCs wishing to question the two sickened actors find them backstage being tended by one of their fellows. They are in obvious pain, their lips caked with dried vomit and their bodies wracked by chills. Cold sweat covers their brows. A DC 10 Intelligence or Handle Poison check detects the faint smell of lilac to the actors' sweat, a sure sign they've been dosed with wrackweed, a common poison used to incapacitate its victim.

One of the actors is in no condition to speak, but the other Player, Denvas, being a larger man, can groan out answers to the PCs' questions. Denvas states that both he and Sulya, the other ill Player, were approached by a blonde man in his late 30s wearing an olive green cloak during intermission as they grabbed a quick meal amongst the vendors outside. The cloaked man paid for their meals, a gesture the poor actors greatly appreciated. The man also purchased a bottle of wine and gave it to Denvas and Sulya, telling them to give the drink to Jallo to share with the rest of the players before the play recommenced. Denvas and Sulya, a little jealous of Jallo's predominant part in the show, saw no reason he'd need to know of the gift and instead sampled it themselves during the rest of intermission. They quickly became ill and collapsed. Denvas can provide further details of the poisoner's appearance if asked, stating his blonde hair was going gray and he had a forked beard with two braids.

## POISONER IN THE PIT

The poisoner, Kurka, is inside the theatre, having orders to remain in the audience until he ascertains the poison wine has taken effect and interrupted the play. Kurka is in the pit (area 1-4), his presence obscured by the teeming mass of groundlings. PCs searching for him spot him with a DC 14 Intelligence check if attempting to pick him out of the crowd from backstage or in the higher seats, or with a DC 12 Intelligence check if actively walking through the crowded pit. If the PCs received further details about his appearance (graying hair and beard), the DC for either check is reduced by 2.

Once identified, the PCs can confront the poisoner, but unless they act surreptitiously, the groundlings in the pit view this as an assault on the city's poorest residents. If a fight breaks out between the PCs and Kurka, the audience hurls insults at the adventurers, challenging them to go after the rich and leave the honest, lowly city folk alone. The audience doesn't intervene in the fight, but an open fight with Kurka worsens the audience mood by one step. A more efficient means of taking Kurka out would be with a well-placed blackjack during a particularly entertaining moment on stage or via incapacitating magic.

**Kurka, Hired Poisoner:** Init +2; Atk dagger +2 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 1d8; hp 6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

If captured and interrogated, Kurka reveals the whole story, saying he was paid 10 gold rilks by Duke Borvas' commander, Captain Dimman, to get the wine into the Dungsweep Players' hands. He has no desire to die if he can avoid it, but knows nothing else about any other plans to interrupt the show tonight. He still has 6 gold rilks on him from his payment and will hand that over if he thinks it will help keep him alive.

# ACTING UP IN LANKHMAR



20' WIDE ALLEY

BASEMENT  
EXIT  
TO ALLEY

1-8

1-7

ladder  
up to  
1-10

1-6  
Stage

1-5

1-4  
Pit

1-2

1-2

1-3

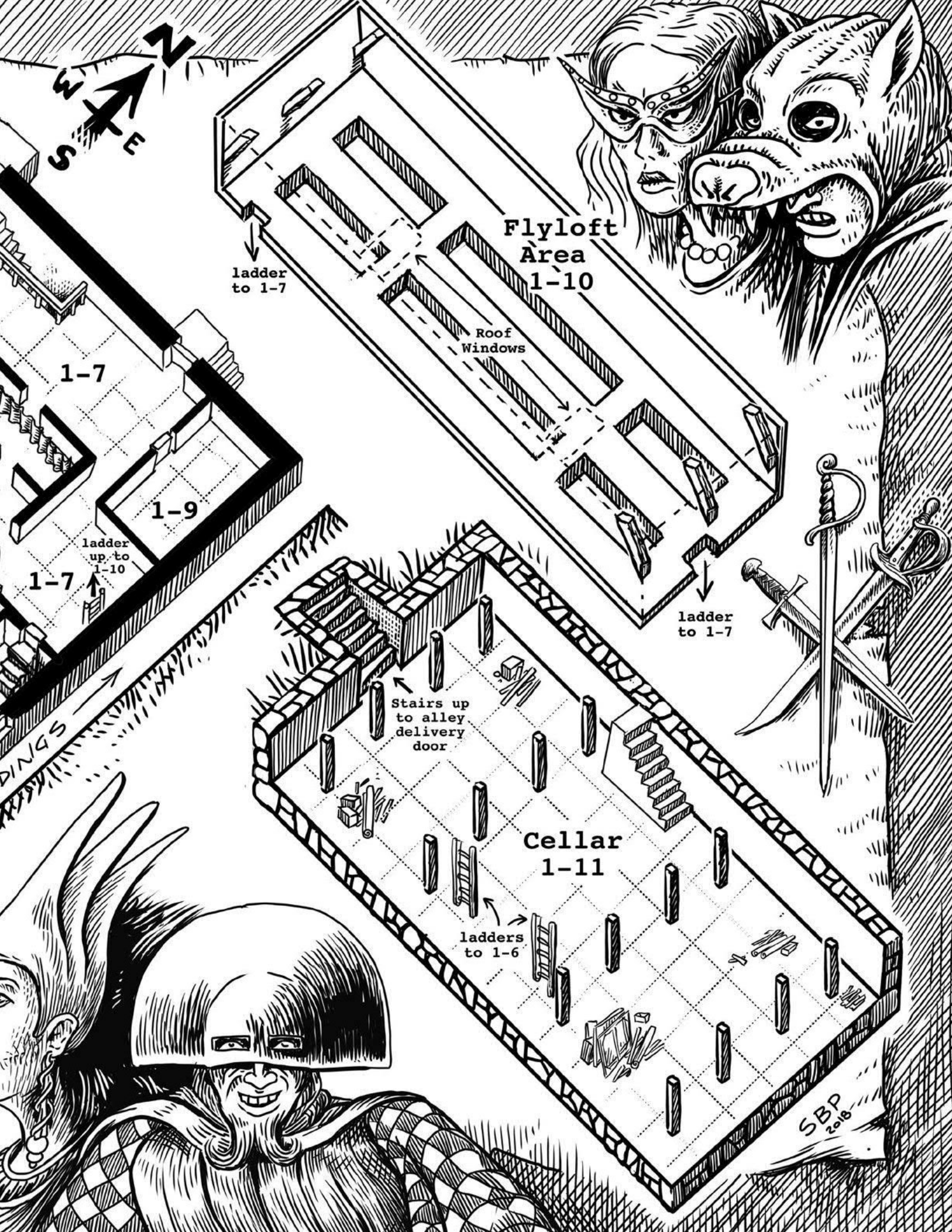
1-5

1-1  
Lobby

NARROW ALLEY BETWEEN BUILINGS

MUMMER'S COURT





Flyloft  
Area  
1-10

Roof  
Windows

ladder  
to 1-7

ladder  
to 1-7

Stairs up  
to alley  
delivery  
door

Cellar  
1-11

ladders  
to 1-6

SBP  
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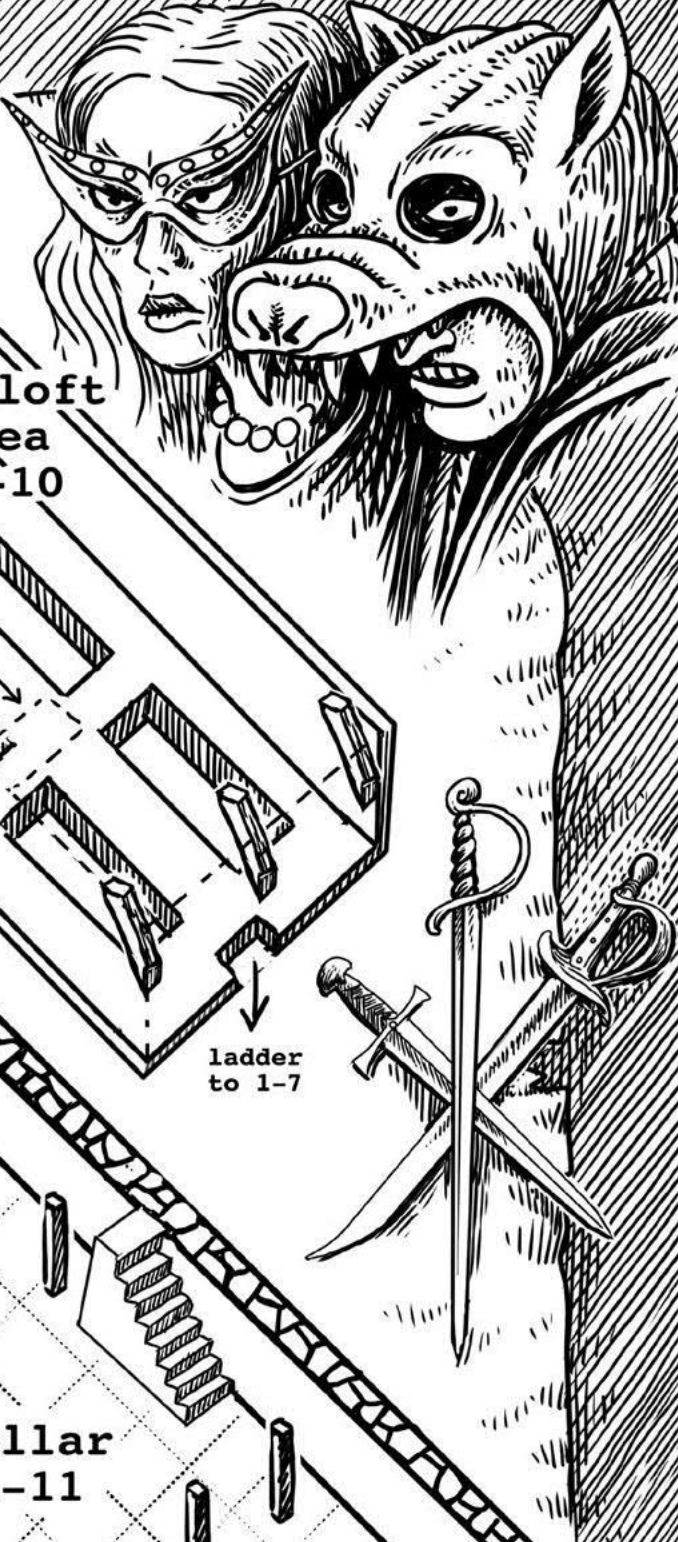
1-7

1-9

1-7

ladder  
up to  
1-10

DINGS



## STRUTTING THE BOARDS

While the rest of the group is dealing with the poisoner, the debut of the two novice actors occurs. Having been hurriedly dressed in their costumes—an obviously ostentatious suit of armor more fitting for an Eastern warlord than a lowly house guard captain, and a footman’s doublet and floppy hat sporting a huge feather—and swiftly coached in their lines, the two PCs are nearly shoved onto the stage through the postcaenium doors and onto the stage.

Both PCs must immediately make DC 8 Will saves. They may have faced down bravos in the mean streets of Lankhmar, but that’s nothing compared to the terror of public speaking on the stage! Failing the save indicates the PC comes down with a case of stage fright and is visibly nervous during the scene. The stage fright affects the PCs’ Personality checks when determining how the audience responds to the neophyte actors’ performances.

The judge can adjudicate the PCs’ performance in either one of two ways, depending on personalities of the actual players. If the players (not the PCs) aren’t comfortable reading and acting out lines in front of others, have them each make a Personality check and consult the table below, using the appropriate roll result depending on stage fright.

If the players are more outgoing and are eager to act out their lines, have them do so with the judge reading the other actors’ lines. If the players perform well, give them each a +2 bonus to their Personality check. Don’t penalize them if they’re bad actors in real life, however.

Regardless of the method used, each PC makes a Personality check with no set DC. If one or both PCs failed their Will save and suffered stage fright, use the worst of the two check results to determine the audience’s response on the following table. If both PCs succeeded in their Will save, use the better of the two Personality check results to determine the audience’s reaction.

If the misfortune has triggered a riot, see the **Curtain Call** section below for further details. If not, the act ends successfully and the replacement actors are quickly undressed and given their normal clothes and gear back. The play continues.



### ACTING PERFORMANCE TABLE

Personality Check Roll Result	Audience’s Response
4 or less	A calamity! The audience is appalled by the PCs’ horrible performance. The characters do such a poor job that the entire scene fails, triggering a hail of rotten fruit, stones, bottles, and other debris onto the stage. Each PC must make a DC 10 Reflex save or suffer 1d4 points of damage. In addition, the audience mood worsens by one step on the tracker.
5-9	Boo! The audience boos and jeers but doesn’t resort to throwing things. The audience’s mood worsens by one step.
10-14	Tepid applause. The PCs hold their own amongst the experienced players and the scene concludes without incident.
15-19	Enthusiastic applause. The PCs do an excellent job, rising to the occasion and even outshining some of the other actors. Award each PC 2 points of fleeting Luck.
20+	Thunderous applause! The PCs blow their fellow actors off the stage, earning the largest laughs and loudest cheers. Their tempers mollified by the stellar performances, the audience’s mood improves by one step and each actor receives 2 points of fleeting Luck.

# ACT FOUR: THIEVES IN THE RAFTERS

The success of “The Fiascos of Duke Hogfat” hasn’t just attracted the attention of the satirized noble: the Thieves’ Guild of Lankhmar has also noticed that the Dungsweep Players are doing landmark business, attracting even rich merchants and minor nobles to their performances. Given the sold-out crowd of tonight’s show, the Guild suspects the theatre’s proceeds to be sizable—ripe for plucking while attentions are set on the events onstage. A pair of skilled second-story men scale the theatre’s roof and enter through the roof-windows, left open to alleviate the stuffy interior of a theatre crowded with attendees. The thieves intend to climb down the catwalks and theatre rigging ropes and plunder the strongbox in the office (area 1-9). If they need to slit a few throats, so be it.

## ENTER THIEVES OVERHEAD

The thieves achieve the roof undetected unless a PC is watching the theatre roof or adjacent buildings. In such cases, a DC 12 Intelligence check notices the black-clad figures scrambling up onto the Marshlight’s roof.

Unless the PCs have secured the roof-windows as a security precaution (see Act One), the thieves slip into the flyloft (area 1-10) and onto a catwalk 30’ above the stage unnoticed. If the roof-windows have been secured, have the PC with the worst Luck make a check. If it fails, one of the stagehands, sweating in the rafters, opened the windows during the performance and the burglars enter easily. If the roof-windows are secured, the thieves break in using thieves’ tools, but this lets any PC backstage attempt a DC 14 Luck check to hear the window being forced, allowing them to intercept the burglars.

## FIGHT IN THE CATWALK

A PC noticing the break-in can climb one of the ladders at half speed to reach the catwalk. Unless the character is moving stealthily, the thieves automatically see him. One thief holds his ground on the catwalk, automatically winning initiative against a climbing PC and gaining a +2 bonus to their attack rolls while the character is climbing. The other one attempts to disappear in the gloom and shinny down the stage rigging undetected. He hides in the shadows with +4 to his check vs. Intelligence checks by anyone searching for him.

Fighting on the catwalk is precarious: in addition to tactical advantages of Mighty Deeds of Arms to knock enemies off the narrow plank walkway, any character struck for 6 or more points of damage must make a DC 10 Reflex check or fall 30’

to the stage below. An unannounced arrival onto the boards below interrupts the performance and worsens the audience’s mood by 1 step. It does automatically alert any PC in view of the stage that something is afoot, however.

**Thieves’ Guild Burglars (2):** Init +2; Atk dagger +2 melee (1d4+1); AC 13; HD 1d8; hp 6 each; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

**Alternate Encounter for Larger Group:** Increase the number of burglars to four.

## BACKSTAGE BRAWLING

Should the burglars enter unobserved, they quickly slither down into the darkened backstage. PCs stationed in the wings can make a DC 15 Intelligence check to notice the thieves. If they fail to detect the thieves, the burglars encounter one of the Dungsweep Players in the dark and are forced to slit his throat to silence him before an alarm is raised. Allow any PC backstage to make another DC 13 Intelligence check to hear the poor actor’s final, gurgling breath.

The burglars next proceed to break into the theatre office, easily picking the door’s lock and quietly ransacking the office. A PC backstage can attempt a final DC 12 Intelligence check to detect the thieves. If the check fails, the thieves escape out one of the alley doors and disappear into the night.

A PC who detects the burglars can engage them in combat, but due to the gloomy conditions backstage while the show is on, all attack rolls suffer a -2 penalty. A prolonged or exceptionally loud fight can also disrupt the performance, angering the crowd. If a fight with the thieves lasts more than four rounds, the noise leaks onto the stage and interrupts the action, worsening the crowd’s mood. Particularly loud noises or spells automatically disrupt the show and moves the crowd one step closer to rioting. These two mood shifts do not stack.

Should the burglars escape undetected, the PCs are directly affected by the crime. With the evening’s box office stolen, the Dungsweep Players cannot afford to pay the adventurers their promised wages and offer only 5 smerduks each. If the party has been acting particularly unpleasant towards their employers, they may even be suspected of conspiring with the Thieves’ Guild, leading to unpleasant rumors or perhaps even a play written about them!

# ACT FIVE: THE GRAND FINALE

Having failed to disrupt the play by arson or poison, the Duke, seething at the insults directed at him, abandons all caution—consequences be damned! He sets in motion a scheme to destroy the Dungsweep Players and ensure no other troupe ever revives “The Fiascos of Duke Hogfat.”

As the play rushes towards its close, a three-fold assault takes place. First, in the sewers surrounding the slums, a hired member of Lankhmar’s Sorcerers’ Guild enacts an *animal summoning* spell, conjuring a rat swarm to send through the theatre’s

cracked brick foundation and into backstage area, attacking the players and crew. As the swarm fills the backstage, a second hired sorcerer casts *choking cloud*, sending it through the open door of the theatre and into the house. This creates a panic in the audience, sending them stampeding towards the exit. In the midst of the chaos, Captain Dimman and a squad of house guards rushes the backstage, slaughtering any Dungsweep they discover. Duke Borvat watches the slaughter from a curtained litter positioned in the shadows at the far end of Mummers Court.

## FINAL ASSAULT TIMELINE

**Round 1:** Yesvin finishes his *animal summoning* and swarms of rats infiltrate the theatre through the basement.

**Round 2:** The rat swarm ascends the stairs and begins harrying the cast and crew backstage; Murnyar approaches the front of the theatre.

**Round 3:** Rat swarm continues to spread backstage; Murnyar confronts any opposition at the front of the theatre if detected.

**Round 4:** Unless prevented by the PCs, Murnyar casts *choking cloud* into the theatre; Captain Dimman and his troops assemble in the alley behind the theatre.

**Round 5:** First rats appear on the stage and/or choking cloud spell fills theatre. If *choking cloud* is cast, the audience panics (see Phase 2 below for details on a panicked crowd). If no cloud is cast, there is still a cumulative 1 in 6 chance each round that the audience/actors on stage notice the rat swarm and panic, causing hysteria as per the panicked crowd.

**Round 6:** If the crowd has panicked, Captain Dimman and his troops burst through the rear doors of the theatre and begin attacking the Dungsweep Players and the PCs. If the crowd hasn't panicked, they continue to listen for signs of calamity inside the theatre.

**Rounds 7-10:** Captain Dimman and his forces continue to wait, attacking the theatre if a panic or riot breaks out inside.

**Round 11:** Tired of waiting, the Captain and his men attack even if no panic has occurred inside the building.

## PHASE 1: THE RATS

Unless the PCs are monitoring the sewer tunnels beneath Mummies Court (unlikely but not impossible), a hired sorcerer moves adjacent to the theatre as Act Five begins. He casts *animal summoning*, causing hundreds of sewer rats (but no rats of Lankmar Below) to appear. He directs the swarm through the crumbling foundations of the theatre. The rats wriggle into the cellar, then scurry into the backstage, biting all they encounter.

**Yesvin, Hired Sorcerer:** Init +0; Atk dagger -1 melee (1d4-1) or spell; AC 10; HD 3d4; hp 10; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spells (+5 spell check: *animal summoning, cantrip, magic missile*); SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; AL N.

**Rat Swarm:** Init +4; Atk bite +2 melee (1 plus disease); AC 9; HD 4d8; hp 18; MV 30' or climb 20'; Act special; SP bite all targets within a 20'×20' space, half damage from non-area attacks, disease (DC 5 Fort save or additional 1d3 damage); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will -2; AL N.

Any PCs in the cellar, backstage, or the alley behind the theatre, either see the rats enter or hear the first muffled yelps as the Dungsweep Players encounter the swarm. Beginning on round five, the rats begin to spill onto the stage and the audience and/or actors have a cumulative 1 in 6 chance of noticing the vermin each round. If this happens, the actors or the audience (or both!) become hysterical, causing a panic as described in Phase 2 below.

Also, even if the swarm is contained in some manner, the sounds of battle backstage might have repercussions. As in Act Four, any fighting in the wings and backstage that lasts more

than four rounds is noticed on stage and stops the play, worsening the audience's mood by one step.

## PHASE 2: BURNING MIST

While the first sorcerer works his magic in the sewers, a second approaches the front of the theatre, mixing among the food vendors and drink sellers anticipating new business at the close of the play. He then enters the theatre lobby (using his *knock* spell if the doors are sealed) and prepares an incantation.

Three rounds after the rat swarm enters the building, he conjures a *choking cloud* and sends acidic vapors down the main corridor into the pit, then departs the building. The foul-seeming, searing fog causes panic, sending the attendees towards the exit. A full-blown riot erupts as people are trampled to death. Anyone seeking to leave the theatre by the main entrance encounters a teeming mass of frightened humanity and must either retreat or fight their way through the frantic throng. Doing so takes a DC 15 Strength check. In addition, each failed check requires the PC to make a DC 12 Fort save or suffer 1d5 damage from being crushed by the crowd. Two successful Strength checks are required to escape the theatre through the front door.

PCs stationed to observe the front of the theatre or the street outside may notice the sorcerer's approach. A DC 14 Intelligence check notices the robe-wearing, talisman-covered figure cutting through the crowd toward the theatre. If the check fails, the sorcerer enters the building and enacts his *choking cloud* spell. Only then does he turn his attention on any PC watching over the area. He wishes to flee more than fight, however, and attempts to escape the first chance he gets.

**Murnyar, Hired Sorcerer:** Init +0; Atk dagger -1 melee (1d4-1) or spell; AC 10; HD 3d4; hp 10; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spells (+3 spell check: *choking cloud, color spray, knock*); SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; AL N.

If captured, the sorcerer readily reveals all he knows about the Duke's plan, including the rat swarm and the squad of house guards set to attack from the rear. He is unaware that the Duke is watching the events unfold nearby.

## PHASE 3: NAKED STEEL

Chaos in the theatre is the cue for the final, most lethal phase to begin. Captain Dimman and a cadre of his soldiers gather in the alley behind the theatre. Any PC watching the alley automatically sees them assemble near the two backstage doors. They can choose to intercept the group or alert their allies.

On the second round after the cloud fills the pit and chaos erupts, Captain Dimman, leading a band of the Duke's guardsmen in two groups, bursts through the rear entrances of the theatre. They slash at anyone they see, turning the backstage and wings into a shambles if they aren't stopped.

If the backstage doors are barred or otherwise secured, it takes three rounds of battering by the Duke's guards to break them down. If the doors are somehow magically secured, the Captain's plan is thwarted and he waits until the crowd flees the theatre, then enters from the front to slay the Dungsweep Players.

If Captain Dimman sees the PC who portrayed him onstage earlier in the evening, he snarls at the character and advances

directly toward him. He shouts at the PC, *"Disparage me onstage, will you, cretin?! Let us see if you like my review of your performance, cur! I write it with naked steel!"*

**Captain Dimman:** Init +1; Atk longsword +3 melee (1d8) or dagger +3 melee (1d4); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL N.

**Duke's House Guards (5):** Init +0; Atk spear +1 melee (1d6) or dagger +1 melee (1d4); AC 14; HD 1d8; hp 5 each; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N.

If Captain Dimman or one of the house guards is captured, the PCs can attempt to interrogate them. Doing so requires a DC 14 Personality check (DC 16 for Captain Dimman). Imminent violence or offers of a bribe grant the PC a +1d bonus to the roll. On a successful roll, the captive guardsman reveals the Duke is outside in his litter, awaiting the success of his men. The PCs might desire to take matters into their own hands.

**Alternate Encounter for Larger Group:** Increase the number of house guards to eight.

## THE DUKE

The Duke sits in the shadows, peering between the litter's window curtains at the chaos of the theatre, chuckling gleefully. PCs can attempt to sneak up on the litter using the chaos and shadows as cover. Doing so requires a DC 12 Dexterity or Sneak Silently check. They may also approach openly, but unless disguised (say, in the Duke's house guards' uniforms), the Duke spots them and commands his litter bearers to carry him

away. A short foot pursuit easily catches up to the encumbered slaves. If caught, his slaves abandon their master and flee into the night.

**Duke Borvat:** Init +2; Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8) or dagger +2 melee (1d4); AC 11; HD 2d8; hp 15; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N.

Duke Borvat is an overweight Lankhmart male of about forty. He wears an oiled and perfumed wig to cover his baldness and dresses in a wine-dark toga. A scraggly mustache grows above a thin-lipped mouth and he expectorates when he talks. He blusters and preens when he has the advantage over others, but whines when things turn against him. The Duke is utterly unpleasant and deserves to be knocked down a peg.

If intercepted, the Duke initially fights for his life, swinging his sword wildly. As soon as he is injured, however, he drops his blade and surrenders, blubbering and pleading. He offers to pay the PCs if they'll let him live. He offers them his purse as incentive, but will readily surrender his jewelry if need be. The Duke carries 57 smerduks and 24 rilks in a silk (5 g.r. value) purse. He also wears a ruby ring worth 150 g.r. and a gold and diamond necklace worth 250 g.r.

Wise PCs might take this opportunity to wring other promises out of the Duke. If he is brought before Jallo at sword point, the actor seizes the opportunity. He agrees to suspend all further performances of the play in return for a sizeable payment to the Dungsweep Players and a donation to the lower class of Lankhmar to ease their lives. Given little choice, the Duke acquiesces and makes the necessary arrangements.



# CONCLUSION: CURTAIN CALL

The evening ends in one of two ways: a successful finale of “The Fiascos of Duke Hogfat” or utter chaos. Although a quick-thinking or lucky party might thwart every attempt to end the play prematurely, circumstances largely conspire against them and it is likely the night, in true Lankhmar fashion, ends with catastrophic excitement.

## ENDING 1: EVERYONE’S A CRITIC

If the audience mood ever worsens past “Surly,” the attendees riot. Disgusted with the performance and the constant interruptions, they begin tearing the theatre apart and rushing the stage. Most upper class attendees immediately flee, their bodyguards and/or personal weapons clearing a path to the doors.

Treat all mobs as a single swarm of angry humanity with the following stats:

**Angry Mob (1):** Init +0; Atk clubs, fists, feet, etc. +0 melee (1d4 subdual); AC 10; HD 4d6; hp 20; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP attacks all foes in a 20'×20' area, takes half damage from all non-area of effect attacks; SV Fort +3, Ref -2, Will +0; AL C.

There are three mobs to deal with in the riot. One charges the stage and works its way backstage. The second keeps to areas 1-2 and 1-3, demolishing the theatre interior. The third fills the lobby. Any PC attempting to leave the theatre through any of these areas must deal with the mob encountered there to escape.

A mob reduced to zero hit points loses morale and the survivors flee the PC(s), troubling them no more. If a PC loses all her hit points to the attacks of the mob, she is knocked unconscious but not killed. She awakens 1d6 turns later or if roused by an ally. She awakens with ¼ her hit point total at the time of the mob’s attack (rounded down).

If the riot erupts or the building burns down due to arson, the Dungsweep Players escape with some injuries, but no fatalities. In the chaos, Jallo was unable to save the troupe’s strongbox and he apologetically explains that the group’s money has been lost. He cannot pay the PCs, but he also doesn’t blame them for the evening’s misfortunes. “*Such is the life of the artist, my menacing friends. Truth is seldom desired by the masses and art – and the artist – suffers accordingly,*” he says with a shrug.

On the plus side, Jallo and the Dungsweep Players thank the group for trying and, assuming the party treated them with a modicum of respect, the troupe can be called upon for assis-

tance in the future. Each PC gains the benison, Trusted Contact (Dungsweep Players).

If the party gets aggressive and demands some form of payment, Jallo snaps at them and suggests that, “*If it’s satisfaction you seek, mayhaps you should take such matters up with Duke Borvat!*” He and the rest of the troupe walk away in disgust, leaving the PCs to find their own satisfaction.

Unless he was captured at the end of Act Five, the PCs may very well decide to seek revenge on the Duke, leading to further adventures of the judge’s devising.

## ENDING 2: A SMASH HIT!

If the play ends without a riot, the actors win back the audience in the final scenes and the show receives enthusiastic cheers and howls from the attendees. The Dungsweep Players have completed their performance of “The Fiascos of Duke Hogfat” both successfully and with a coin-filled strongbox from the take at the door.

Jallo seeks out the PCs as the curtain falls and the crowd departs the building. A bottle of wine in hand, he enthusiastically hugs and kisses each of the characters. He hands them the open bottle and says, “*My benefactors! I cannot thank you for your valiant efforts and bravery staving off the deprivations of the foul Duke! Without your aid, I fear both our show and ourselves would have ended badly before the final curtain. Please, come with me and we’ll attend to your payment.*”

He brings the party to the office (area 1-9) and pays them their promised reward plus a 5 gold rilk bonus each as a gesture of goodwill. If the party captured or killed Duke Borvat and the show concluded without a riot, the bonus is 10 gold rilk instead! He then invites them to the cast party, where the rest of the Dungsweep Players show their gratitude as the festivities last long into the wee hours of the morning. The players can carouse as part of the celebration if they wish, with the normal benefits and potential drawbacks.

In addition to the monetary rewards, each of the PCs gain two new benisons for helping the Dungsweep Players: Good Reputation in Certain Circles (actors) and Trusted Contact (Dungsweep Players).

The events of *Acting Up in Lankhmar* might easily lead to further developments in the campaign. If Duke Borvat or Captain Dimman have escaped, they will likely seek revenge – and both have the resources to make life hazardous for the party unless the group flees or slays the two. The Thieves’ Guild accepts the losses of their members in stride (occupational hazard and all), but might take further interest in the party if any of the PCs are illegal thieves and the Guild learns of it somehow. The Rat Strangler gang could resurface at some point in the characters’ adventures if the judge so desires.

Regardless of how things turn out when the final curtain falls, the party will undoubtedly remember their brush with the theatrical world of Lankhmar – and might find the demimonde of crime a much safer realm to operate in. Such is life in the City of the Black Toga and the world of DCC Lankhmar!



# APPENDIX A

## SCENES FROM ACT THREE OF "THE FIASCOS OF DUKE HOGFAT"

This handout includes a partial script of the play and is intended to be used by the judge and players pressed into the roles of replacement actors during Act Three of the adventure. One PC, a warrior or other muscular character, is assigned the role of Captain Dim-Mind. The other plays the Agent of Lord Boulder-shoulder. The judge reads all the other roles.

Two versions of Scene One are provided for the judge's convenience. The first version is quite funny (in this author's not-so-humble opinion) but is a little risqué without being outright

vulgar. It was the author's intent to capture the "earthy" tones of Elizabethan-era plays written for the lower class. It might not be appropriate for all judges or players, however, and an alternate Scene One is provided if the judge wishes a less risqué version.

Make three copies of each scene: one for each player and one for the judge, handing them out at the appropriate time. Don't let the other players see them. Let them enjoy the scenes as they are acted out by the performers.

Perform Scene One at the start of Act Three and Scene Two at the end, cutting to the other PCs' search for the poisoner in between.



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## SCENE ONE

**Duke Hogfat limps about his lavish parlor, in obvious physical pain.**

**Duke Hogfat (anguished):** Oh my loins! My poor, battered loins! Why did not the panderer warn me of the brutal caresses of the ape of sultry Klesh!

[Enter Servant]

**Servant:** My Duke! Lord Bouldersoulder's agent has come! He demands the levies paid from the orphan cobblers and a fresh shipment of live cuttlefish for the orgy!

**Duke Hogfat (wincing):** Oh, do not say "orgy"! Tell the agent to come hither and we shall dicker.

[Exeunt Servant]

[Enter Agent]

**Agent:** Good eve, Duke Hogfat! Why does thou clench thy nethers? Has thy shrewish wife entightened them as well as thine purse straps?

**Duke Hogfat:** Ah, 'tis the wages of dalliances with the hairy lovers of green-jungled Klesh.

**Agent:** Ah, my own Lord Bouldersoulder has suffered from such pains. But let us speak of business: I come for the cuttlefish!

**Duke Hogfat:** A-woe am I! Plagued on all sides by the demands of leeches and usurers and shrill-voiced houris! Will no one avail poor, beleaguered Duke Hogfat?! Is there no one to bring me fair news?!

[Enter Captain Dim-Mind]

**Captain:** My Duke! We have trapped the vicious beast in the garden!

**Duke Hogfat:** My lady wife?

**Captain:** Nay, the ape!

**Duke Hogfat:** Egads, Captain! This news is boon! I shall reward you for your bravery! To you, I shall give what few men have sampled in this world!

**Agent:** A cuttlefish?

[Enter Servant]

**Servant (loud aside):** Lankhmar knows 'tis not the Duke's wife!

[Exeunt Servant]

**Duke Hogfat:** Nay, nay, nay! You, Captain Dim-Mind, have long sighed that no woman in Lankhmar would take such an ugly man as husband. As no woman would have you, I grant you the ape's hairy hand in marriage! Congratulations, Captain!

**Captain:** Oh thank you, my Duke!

[Enter Ape]

**Agent:** And here's the blushing bride now!

[Exeunt Captain pursed by an ape]

## SCENE ONE (ALTERNATE)

**Duke Hogfat** paces nervously about his bedchamber, wringing his hands.

**Duke Hogfat (fretting):** Oh, woe is me. Soon a potentate from foreign lands arrives at mine humble manor and I know not if all is in the ready.

[Enter Servant]

**Servant:** My Duke! Lord Bouldersoulder's agent has come! He brings tribute for the King of the Eight Cities. (As an aside to the audience) His arrival at the Duke's home is imminent, thou knows.

**Duke Hogfat:** Drat! More interruptions. Send him in, but be quick, lest the King of the Eight Cities finds us in cahoots.

[Exeunt Servant]

[Enter Agent, bearing a beehive outstretched in his hands]

**Agent:** Good eve, Duke Hogfat! Lord Bouldersoulder sends his greetings and this present for the King of the Forest Land.

**Duke Hogfat:** Alack! What madness is this? Bouldersoulder sends a buffoon bearing bees before me?!

**Agent:** I'm not pleased with this, myself, good Duke. [He winces as the bees sting him]. Yet, my Lord Bouldersoulder claims the King is mad for the sweet syrup of the bee and would see this offering a kingly gift.

[A gong rings]

**Duke Hogfat:** Horrors! That clang announces the King. [loud aside] Mine hall is untidy. I must do something to win the potentate's favor! Aha! The bees!

[The Duke grabs at the Agent's beehive. The two wrestle for it, wincing and grunting. Their struggle takes them behind a large divan where they fall from sight with a crash]

[Enter Captain Dim-Mind]

**Captain:** My Duke! The King of the Eight Cities has arrived. He is a fearsome man, hirsute and large. [looking about] My duke?

[The Duke and the Agent arise from behind the divan. They are now both covered in honey and beestings]

**Duke Hogfat:** Here. We were...anointing ourselves to meet the King. 'Tis the way of his people, you know.

**Captain:** What wondrous customs they have in the Forest Land!

**Agent (sarcastically):** Indeed. Come anoint thyself as well, Captain.

[The Captain joins them, smearing honey over himself]

[Enter Servant]

**Servant:** The King comes, my lords. Never before have I seen such royal "bearing."

[Exeunt Servant]

**Duke Hogfat:** Prepare thyselfes for the King!

[Enter the King of the Eight Cities. It is a bear]

**Agent:** 'Tis no king! 'Tis a bear!

**Captain:** A bear! In the bedchamber!

**Duke Hogfat:** And beseeming hungry to boot!

[Exeunt all three pursed by a bear]

## SCENE TWO

**Duke Hogfat stumbles about, his head stuck inside a comically-oversized urn.**

**Duke Hogfat (muffled):** O, woe! The last dregs of the sweet nectar of the wine escaped mine lips and now I've been struck blind!

[Enter Servant]

**Servant:** You bellowed, your magnificent rotundness?

**Duke Hogfat (muffled):** Fetch me a physician! I cannot see!

**Servant:** The physicians shall not come. They claim your coffers have yet to pay them for their ministrations of your gaseous humors. And there is the outstanding laundry bill to clean their robes after your expulsions soiled them.

**Duke Hogfat (muffled):** Wretched physicians! Can no one aid this Duke?

[Enter Agent]

**Agent:** My lord! I can aid thee.

**Duke Hogfat (muffled):** Who speaks? Who comes to my rescue?

**Agent:** 'Tis, I, the agent of Lord Bouldersoulder. But I am more than mere servant. I have training in the weird arts of Far Kiraay! For my ministrations, I need the aid of your Captain.

**Servant (loud aside):** I cannot see how this could turn ill.

**Duke Hogfat (muffled):** Send for Captain Dim-Mind at once!

[Servant goes to exit, only to be interrupted by the immediate arrival of the Captain. An impossibly large and unwieldy sword dangles from his baldric]

**Captain:** You summoned me, Dukey...I mean, my lord Duke?

**Duke Hogfat (muffled):** I've been struck blind by the gods! But do not weep, good Captain. The Agent of Lord Bouldersoulder knows a cure.

**Captain:** My Lord Duke, you've not been struck...

[The Servant and the Agent shake their heads at the Captain and he trails off.]

**Captain:** How can I assist?

**Agent:** Lend me the aid of thy sword, Captain. For with it we shall sever the phlogistonal strands that afflict the Duke and restore his vision!

[The Captain draws his sword. It wobbles comically]

**Captain:** At last! An enemy I can vanquish!

[The Captain swings the sword and it smashes the urn into pieces...revealing a second, smaller urn covering the Duke's head]

**Duke (somewhat less muffled):** Well? What art thou waiting for?

[The Servant, the Agent, and the Captain all exchange looks of surprise.]

**Servant (loud aside to the audience):** Even I did not expect that.

[End Scene]

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