

Masks of Lankhmar



A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE

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BKM 2015



Welcome to the fantastic city of Lankhmar, the greatest and oldest metropolis in the world of Nehwon and the creation of legendary author, Fritz Leiber. This adventure is the third release in Goodman Games' new Lankhmar line of supplements for the Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG. This adventure, *Masks of Lankhmar*, provides the judge with a starting scenario to begin a campaign in the City of Sevenscore Thousand Smokes. Further information concerning Lankhmar and staging campaigns in Nehwon will appear in the DCC RPG Lankhmar boxed set to be released in the months ahead.

Masks of Lankhmar is a starting adventure for DCC RPG Lankhmar and is designed to be played with a small group

(2 to 3 players). However, the adventure contains alternate descriptions for running the adventure with larger groups (4 to 6 players), allowing for its enjoyment regardless of group size. *Masks of Lankhmar* can be run at any point during the timeline of *Fafhrd* and the Gray Mouser as it is not tied into events in Leiber's stories. The PCs should have both a wizard and a thief among them or a character with some training in both sorcery and larceny.

In this adventure, the PCs meet while in the midst of a late-night burglary and are forced to pool their skills in order to retrieve a treasure trove of long-forgotten golden masks from an abandoned Lankhmar temple. Before they recover these gilded relics, however, deadly rivals must be overcome and the masks' tainted magic defeated.

BACKGROUND



Two hundred years ago, the city of Lankhmar was home to the Mysteries of Djil, a sect of worshipers faithful to the goddess of that name. The Mysteries of Djil espoused a creed that relieved the religion's faithful of their worldly sins and thereby assured the devoted a place in the paradisaical afterworld of the Sixth Heaven. With a single kiss by one of the masked priestesses of Djil, the unseen sisters would draw the sins and guilt of another away from the penitents' souls, leaving them unblemished and worthy of paradise.

The sect was a popular one among the well-to-do of Lankhmar, as the faith's rites cleansed the wealthy of their numerous sins accumulated in the quest for pecuniary solvency, leaving them free to acquire more in the name of greed. The Mysteries of Djil's coffers swelled from the tithing of Lankhmar's upper crust and the sect built a large temple near the River Hlal. The temple not only served as the religion's bastion of faith in the City of the Black Toga, but also as the repository of the Mysteries' most revered relics: the Gilded Masks of Djil. These seven gold and jewel-encrusted visors were worn when imparting the Kiss of Djil, the sacred rite that removed worldly sins.

One hundred years ago, the priests of the Great God, in collusion with a number of Lankhmar's mercantile-nobles, grew jealous of both the Mysteries of Djil's influence over Lankhmar's people and the sect's expanding wealth. Through means both fair and foul, this conspiracy of secular and ecclesiastical power convinced the Overlord to outlaw the faith and drive the unseen sisters from the city. Their expulsion was a rapid one, sped by the pike points and swords of Lankhmar's soldiers and the hurled torches of cloaked arsonists in the employ of the Mysteries' rivals. Many of the unseen sisters either died in the flames or where rushed from the temple without time to rescue the holy relics secreted in a sanctified vault concealed within the temple. The Gilded Masks remain locked away inside the temple and the unseen sisters of Djil, nearly exterminated in the wake of events, unable to reclaim them.

Now, a century later, the means to recover this forgotten

bounty has emerged.

Igrik of the East is a wealthy caravan-master dwelling in Lankhmar. A native of the Eastern Lands, Igrik has lived in Lankhmar for two decades, accruing a fortune thanks to a lucrative business of running trade caravans between Lankhmar and Horborixen. But Igrik's status as an Easterner has deprived him of social acceptance amongst the City of the Black Toga's noble families and he remains determined to buy his way into the city's innermost upper class circles. To this end, Igrik has accumulated a collection of rare objects d'art and unique treasures to display in his manor. Among these riches is an odd key of gold, adorned with strangely-cut gems. Unknown to Igrik, this key opens the secret reliquary of Djil.

Tonight, Igrik is holding a masque at his manor to celebrate the acquiring of another treasured piece of artistry. While the owner and attendees are distracted with this new diversion, a group of thieves – working independently of one another – chooses to slip into the manor and acquire the bejeweled key for themselves. But they're about to learn that there are yet others who desire the key for their own purposes.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

Masks of Lankhmar is intended to be run at the beginning of a Dungeon Crawl Classics Lankhmar campaign. It is, in the parlance of this line of game supplements, "The Meet," an event that throws the PCs together and gives them both an origin story as a band of adventurers and a common goal to work towards. By the end of the *Masks of Lankhmar*, the PCs should have forged a bond and earned both some riches to spend and some enemies to give them a reason to continue their relationship.

Meet adventures in DCC Lankhmar are intended to capture the tone and style of Fritz Leiber's *Fafhrd* and the Gray Mouser stories: fast paced, frolicking, and fun. As such, the action begins *in media res* with the PCs dropped into the action from the get-go. The players shouldn't worry about the details of how they got themselves into their predicament.

ment just yet, but the judge is encouraged to allow them to flesh out the details in character and perhaps gain a point of Luck in the process.

Masks of Lankhmar is an urban-based adventure and thus more open to player innovation and unexpected actions.

PART ONE: THE ROBBING OF IGRIK



The first section of *Masks of Lankhmar* sees the PCs meeting for the first time. This event occurs as each character independently decides to rob the caravan-master's vault on the night of a grand masque celebrating the acquisition of a new piece of valuable art. The PCs must work together to breach the vault and to defeat those who would rob them of their ill-gotten booty. Once this chapter is concluded, hopefully the PCs will realize a more valuable treasure trove awaits them if they continue their alliance.

EVENT 1: THE MEET

This encounter drops the PCs into a pitched battle, forcing them to cooperate to overcome the hired guards of Igrik of the East. Read the following then have the players roll for initiative.

It is the midnight between the Day of the Snake and the Day of the Catamount, an exquisite time for larceny in the City of the Black Toga. Tonight, the wealthy caravan-master, Igrik of the East, is throwing a lavish masque in his stylish manor adjacent to the aristocratic quarter in Lankhmar. The purpose of this masked party is to unveil another one of the objects d'art he has accumulated in a desperate bid to buy his way into Lankhmar's polite society. With the eyes of the host, his guests, and more importantly, his house guards occupied by this new glittering bauble, it is the perfect time to raid his vault for another treasure: the so-called Key of the Unwitnessed Sisterhood. This electrum-and-gold item is said to be encrusted with curiously cut gems, jewels that could fetch a small fortune if pried loose and sold in the shadowy underworld of Lankhmar.

Unfortunately, it seems that each of you wasn't alone in realizing that tonight is the perfect time to steal the Key. You now find yourself standing in the cellar antechamber leading to Igrik's vault, not alone as you'd hope, but in the presence of one another. Quick glances make it obvious that you're here on similar business and hands rest on dagger hilts warily and spells are being prepared under your breath.

However, before you have a moment to respond to each other's unexpected presence, yet another party makes their appearance on the scene. The thunderous tread of booted feet down the cellar stairs announce the arrival of hired bravos from Lankhmar's Slayers Brotherhood, likely employed by Igrik to bolster his security on this night. "Thieves in the cellar!" one leather-clad hired sword exclaims upon sighting you. "Let's earn our coin, brothers!" he cries as he and his comrades in steel bare blades and charge!

Some of the events detailed in this scenario may or may not occur based on the PCs' action and decisions, and no less than three possible climaxes are provided for this adventure! It's not necessary for the players to experience all the events in this adventure, only that they have a rip-roaring time reaching the scenario's end.

The hired guards are low ranking members of the Slayers Brotherhood, desperate to earn both coin and respect among the organizations upper ranks. As such, they intend to kill or capture the PCs single-handedly and do not bother to raise an alarm.

Before the battle begins in earnest, make sure the players are familiar with both the rules for Luck in a Lankhmar campaign (especially its role in healing) and the layout of the cellar (refer to area 1-1 below).

Hired Slayers (3): Init +0; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d6); AC 12; HD 1d8; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

Alternate Encounter for Larger Group: The number of hired slayers is equal to the party's size minus one.

The bravos fight wildly, without coordinating their tactics or demonstrating martial creativity beyond hewing away at their opponents. They should prove little threat to the PCs.

AFTER THE BATTLE

Once the Slayers are dispatched, take a moment to allow each of the players to describe both what their PCs look like and to recount how they arrived in the cellar. The judge should give each player the freedom to briefly describe their scheme to rob Igrik and award a point of Luck to players who regale their new comrades with interesting accounts. If the player seems stuck for ideas, the judge can suggest some of the following options to help them out:

- The PC stole an invitation destined for one of Lankhmar's nobles and arrived in a costume hiding their identity. He later slipped away into the cellars. Ask the PC to describe the costume and whether they're still wearing it (this may be to their advantage when they encounter the thieves in Event #2).
- The PC slipped into the manor under the cover of darkness, scaling the estate wall and sneaking inside Igrik's home. He barely avoided detection by the caravan-master's house guards, and managed to creep into the cellar.
- The PC impersonated one of the numerous deliverymen bringing foodstuffs, alcohol, or other party favors to the estate. When nobody was looking, he hid in a closet or similarly concealed position until the masque was fully underway. He then snuck into the cellar.



Once the introductions are complete, the PCs hopefully realize the benefits of pooling their abilities at least in the short term. Hint that there is likely to be other treasures in Igrik's vault beside the Key should the PCs argue over ownership of that item.

Area 1-1—The Cellar Antechamber: A flight of stout wooden stairs access this low-ceilinged room of mortared brick. Crates and barrels are stacked along the east and west walls, dusty and disused. Niches in the walls contain thick, sputtering candles that lend dim light and far too much smoke to this room. In the north wall is a large circular iron door. A complex-looking lock is integrated into the portal's face. Strange symbols ring the circumference of the door.

The vault door is made of solid 6" thick iron. The symbols around the edge of the door are magical glyphs from the Eastern Lands that interfere with sorcerous attempts to open the door. Spells such as *knock* suffer a -2 die penalty to spell checks when cast upon the vault door. A DC 12 Intelligence check identifies the symbols and their properties. Spellcasters roll 1d20 when making this check, all others roll 1d10 as per DCC RPG p. 66.

The lock is also of cunning, Eastern manufacture and Igrik has the sole key. Picking the lock requires a DC 20 pick lock check, likely requiring the expenditure of Luck by the PCs to accomplish. The judge should remind the players of the fast and furious nature of Luck in DCC Lankhmar if they appear hesitant to spend Luck in this endeavor.

Listening at the door requires a PC to roll a d30 when making his Luck check due to the thickness of the door. If suc-

cessful, the listener faintly hears the growl of a large cat (the desert jaguars in the next room).

The crates contain moth-eaten table clothes, spare goblets and dinnerware, vinegar, and similar ordinary and worthless household goods.

Area 1-2—Cat Guardians: Low, angry growls and hissing rings through this stone chamber as a number of large spotted cats slink towards you, their tails whipping the air furiously. Beyond the tawny beasts stands a forbidding-looking door.

The cats are desert jaguars imported from the Eastern Lands to guard Igrik's wealth.

Desert jaguars (2): Init +1; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4+1) or claw +1 melee (1d4); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 10 each; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP none; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

Alternate Encounter for Larger Group: As above.

The room contains only scraps of bloodied meat, a low sand-filled box containing cat scat, and a clay bucket with a rope handle filled with fresh water.

The ceiling of this room has a 3' square shaft running 20' to the first floor of Igrik's manor. The bottom of the shaft is 10' above the floor and the upper end of the shaft is sealed by a locked metal grate (DC 15 pick lock check to pick). The grate sits in the floor of the manor's pantry and Igrik's staff lowers down meat and water to feed the jaguars once per day. Although a weakness in the vault's security, Igrik believes the jaguars and the inner vault door are sufficient to keep anyone from plundering his treasury.

The shaft may come in handy should the PCs be trapped in the vault when the Thieves' Guild arrives (see Event #2). Climbing the shaft without a rope requires either a DC 10 Strength or climb sheer surfaces check. The grate can be either picked (see above) or broken open with brute force (DC 20 Strength check).

Area 1-3—Inner Vault Door: A stout bronze door of curiously crimson tint bars further passage into Igrik's vault. The face of the door is inscribed with flame-like patterns and strange sigils line the edges of the valve. A single keyhole set in the middle of a circular plate rests in the dead center of the door.

This door was specially created by the fire sorcerers of the East. It can be opened safely with the proper key (which Igrik possesses) or by a combination of larceny and wizardry.

Picking the lock requires a DC 15 pick lock check, but opening it without a key triggers a second protective measure. The bronze door vanishes, replaced by a wall of searing flames. The round key plate remains floating in the center of the burning fire. Inserting the proper key dims the flames, but without that, wizardry must be invoked or the flaming gauntlet braved.

A DC 14 Intelligence check (wizards automatically succeed) causes a PC to realize that the door's flames can be extinguished by unweaving the magic that created them. Doing so is similar to counterspelling. A spellcaster must

successfully cast any non-offensive spell to build a magical conduit. Due to the modification of the spell, the spell check suffers a -1 die penalty, but any result of 12+ regardless of spell level is successful. Once established, the caster can attempt to unweave the magic holding the flames intact.

Unweaving the door's magic is accomplished by both the PC and the judge rolling dice and comparing the result. The PC makes a spell check as normal and the judge rolls d20+2. If the wizard rolls higher than the judge, the flames are reduced in intensity and their damage potential reduced by 1 die (see below). Three successful attempts extinguishes the flames. These success need not be consecutive.

If the judge rolls higher than the PC, the wizard suffers 1d4 burning damage (DC 12 Fort save for ½ damage). If the PC is reduced to zero hit points, the conduit fails. All accrued successes are lost. A new conduit must be established and the unweaving process begun again. If the result is a tie, no progress is achieved, but no damage is suffered as well.

The flames inflict a base 3d6 points of damage if anyone enters them. A DC 10 Reflex save reduces the damage by half. Each successful unweaving attempt reduces the flames' intensity and reduces the damage by -1d6. The flames also reduce in strength for each person that passes through them by -1d6. Three PCs running the fire gauntlet extinguishes the flames.

Throwing a significant quantity of water on the flames (such as the cat's water bucket) reduces the base damage by -1d6, but this measure only affects the flames once. Their magical nature burns too hot to be extinguished completely by mere water.

Area 1-4—The Inner Vault: *Beyond the bronze flame-inscribed door is a surprisingly small chamber measuring less than 10' square. Rows of mostly bare shelves line walls. A small coffer, a chain-link bag, and a wooden box are the only objects apparent.*

A close inspection reveals there are clean patches on the dusty shelves, indicating most of the vault's contents have been removed (some are on display for the party, others have been sold to pay for the fete and to acquire Igrik's latest treasure). While sorely lacking in riches, the items present do have some value.

The wooden case contains deeds, contracts, and other business records pertaining to Igrik's caravan operations. Although lacking inherent value, the records could be useful to rival businessmen and blackmailers. A PC finding a buyer would earn 100 gold rilks...assuming the buyer doesn't attempt to double-cross him.

The chain mesh bag holds household funds for the manor. Depleted by the masque's expenses, the bag contains 50 gold rilks, 157 silver smerduks, 186 copper pennies, and 14 iron tiks.

The coffer holds the Key of the Unwitnessed Sisterhood, nestled in a bed of ebony satin. The Key is fashioned from gold and bears three unusually cut amethysts of darkest purple along its length. These stones are in lozenge-, cres-

cent-, and trapezoidal-shaped cuts. The Key measures 8" long and is worth 100 gold rilks.

Anyone examining the Key and making a DC 10 Intelligence check (thieves succeed automatically) notices that the item is actually composed of three interlocked parts, cunningly designed to be unnoticed (Igrik hasn't realized this). Once detected, the Key can be disassembled, revealing a hollow cavity inside containing a small rolled piece of vellum that smells faintly of temple incense.

The vellum page bears writing in both a foreign script and High Lankmarese.

The foreign text is in Ottishif, an obscure desert tongue used in the Mysteries of Djil's rites. The PCs might be able to deduce something about the script:

- A DC 12 Intelligence check identifies the script, but not its meaning.
- If the writing is identified, a DC 15 Intelligence check recalls that the language has a connection with an Eastern religion dedicated to the goddess Djil, but no other specifics.
- A DC 10 Intelligence check or an appropriate Benison allows a PC to remember there is a scholar and scribe known as Semrik who deals in the Plaza of Dark Delights. Consulting him may shed some light on the message and its contents (see Part Two below).

The High Lankmarese reads:

Beneath neither Cup nor Chain nor Moon do I stand

But under the gaze of visage face, secret and awaiting the touch of hand

Is where our resting place is to be found

Safe from thief, heretic, or sniffing hound.

This doggerel indicates the location of the secret entrance to the Spire (see Part Three). The rhyme means nothing to the PCs now, but in context with the symbols in the temple-tene-ment, it reveals where the Reliquary's entrance can be found.

EVENT 2: ESCAPE!

Once the PCs acquire the Key, they'll need to leave undetected. This is more difficult than reaching the Vault. Unknown to them, a group of low-ranking Thieves' Guild operatives also intended to rob Igrik's vault while the masque was underway. These burglars arrive just as the PCs are leaving.

The party might spot the thieves if they are being attentive. As the party approaches area 1-1 on their way out, have the PC with the best Luck score make a Luck check to notice the thieves. If the PC succeeds, he spots movement in the shadows in area 1-1 as the party reaches area 1-2, alerting him to the thieves. The party is surprised if the PC fails the check and are ambushed as they enter area 1-1.