

DUNGEON  
CRAWL  
CLASSICS  
**LANKHMAR**

**CHEATING  
DEATH**

#6: A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE  
BY TIM CALLAHAN

AUTHORIZED BY THE  
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Sanjullian

# CHEATING DEATH

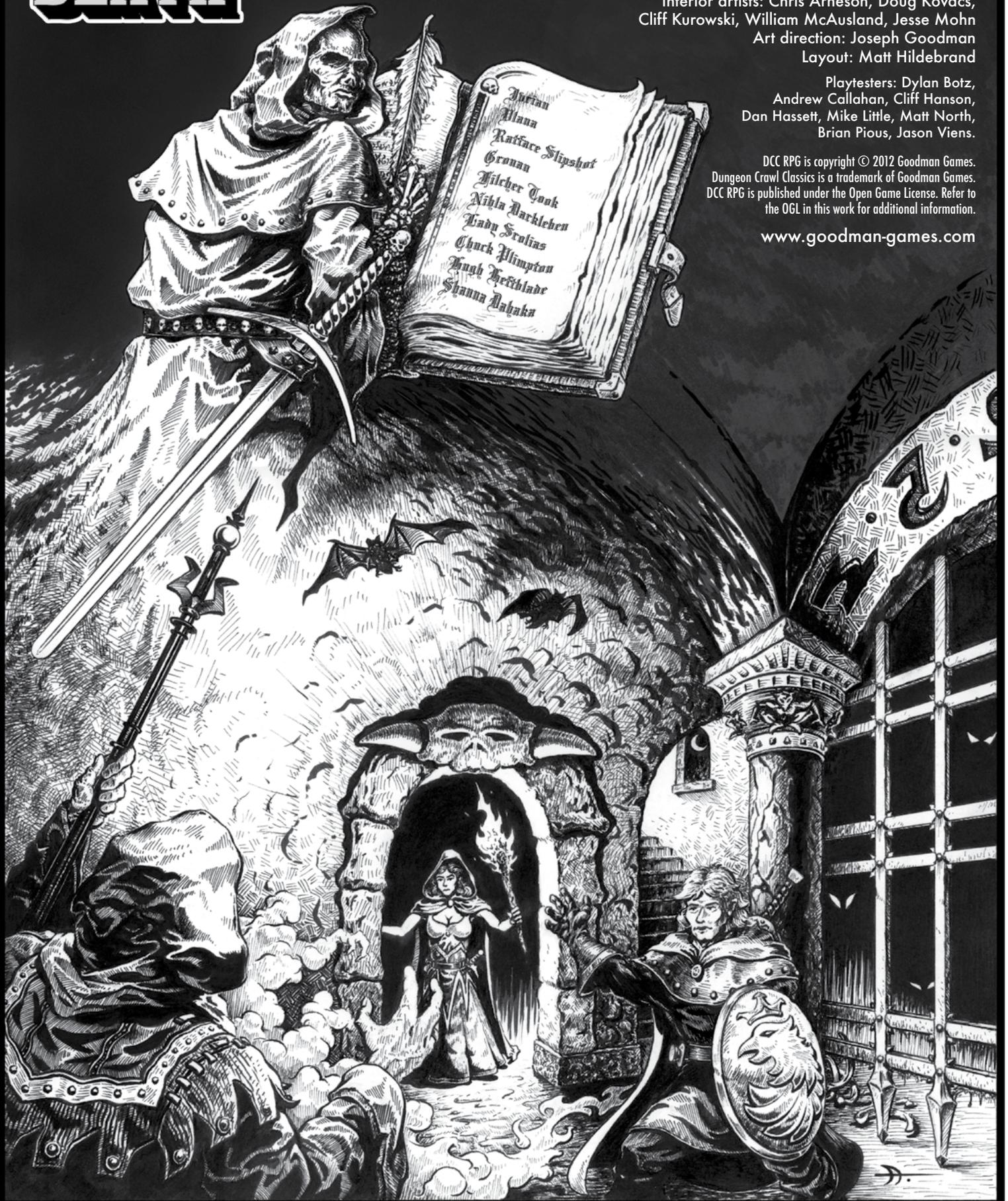
## A LEVEL 1 LANKHMAR ADVENTURE

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## INTRODUCTION

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

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



## BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

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

## THE STREETS OF LANKHMAR



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

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

### LEVEL UP COMBAT

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

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

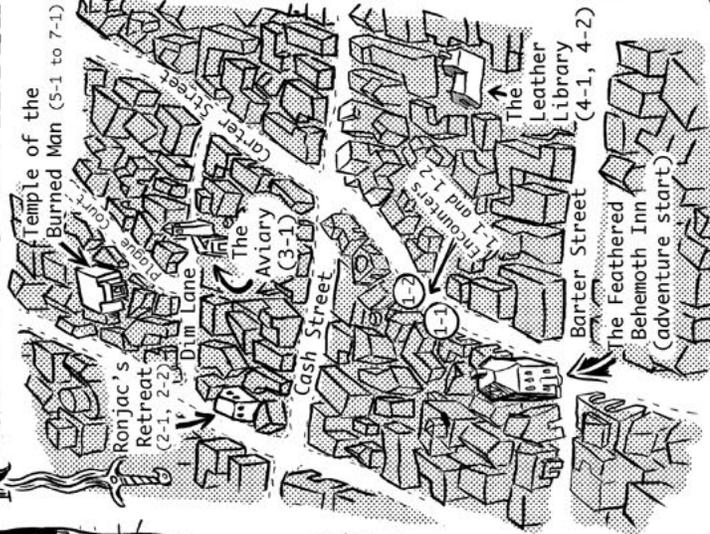
Avoid the temptation to increase enemy hit points or armor class. That prolongs the combat and makes it less exciting. Increasing damage output is a more effective and interesting way to scale up the combat and make each salvo count, and the dramatic increase in saving throw bonuses will help enemies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



# CHEATING & DEATH

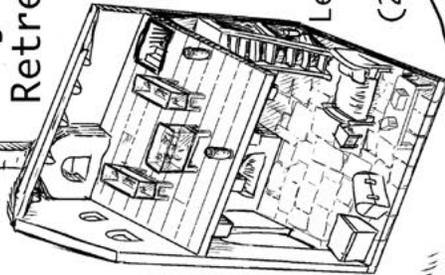
A Lankhmar Adventure

## N SECTION OF LANKHMAR



### Ronjac's Retreat

Level 2 (2-2)

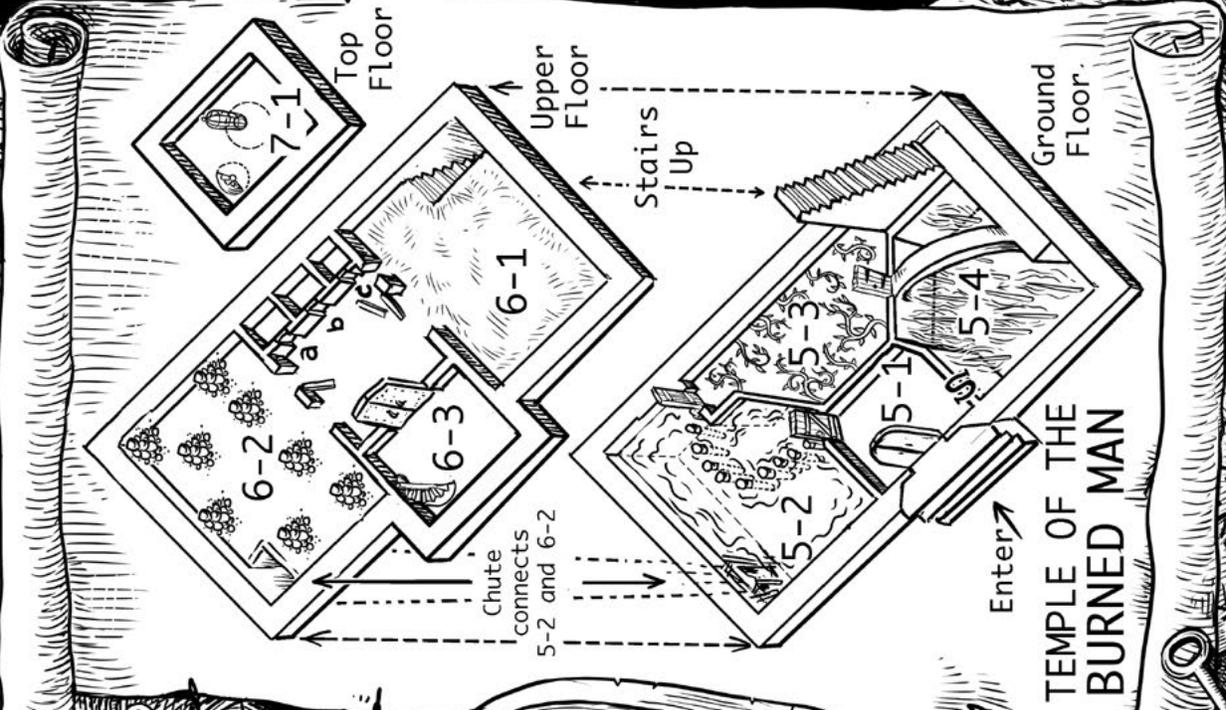
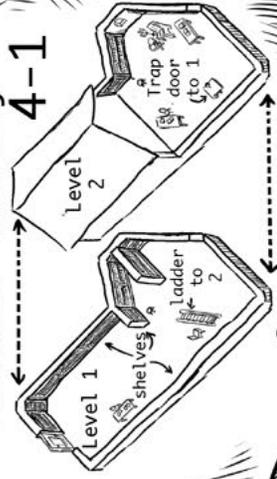


Level 1 (2-1)

### THE AVIARY 3-1



### Leather Library 4-1



### TEMPLE OF THE BURNED MAN

