A GB ROAD GAME



THE Opportunity Auction



A one-shot adventure compatible with Dungeons & Dragons.

INTRODUCTION

This book is written for the Game Master (GM). It contains a compatible adventure designed for use with *Dungeons & Dragons* fifth edition (5e), released in 2014 or the 2024 updated version, and assumes familiarity with the basic rules. It introduces an accessible, linear story set in the city of MoTown, on the continent of Motopia.

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RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The Opportunity Auction is a one-shot fantasy adventure for three to four players, using characters at 4th level. It is designed for roughly three to four hours of play.

This one-shot adventure is meant to have a linear structure. However, the story is designed with various branching paths, ensuring your players are not always crowded together in one narrative. The variety of choices still allows player agency, and every path leads to a range of conclusions based on those choices.

This module is divided into the following sections:

- **The Plot** section informs you, the GM, of the overarching story that will be told.
- **The Beginning** section jumps right into the game and contains the first scenarios.
- **The Break** section can be used for a time-out and allows you, the GM, to recap the current state of the story.
- **The Endings** section contains the final confrontation and its repercussions.
- **The Farewell** section provides the wrap-up for the possible choices made throughout the game.
- **The Maps** section contains visual aids and layouts for use on tabletops or virtual systems.
- **The Crew** section includes all pre-made NPC descriptions and stat blocks.
- **The Huh?** section contains references to this book's functionality and other pertinent information.

As the GM, your role is to run the game. You will be narrating, refereeing, roleplaying the story's characters, and adjudicating or improvising when needed. Above all else, you are responsible for driving the story forward with your players. This is a collaborative process, after all.

Remember, this game has multiple pathways to explore, so let your players roam freely! The focus may switch between players at any time, but rest assured, the story brings everyone back together for the finale without letting them stray too far from each other. If the party is split across different areas, allow players to resolve scenarios in turns.

"The intended DC" — This phrase appears in many sections of the game and denotes the scenario's suggested DC for checks and interactions. Feel free to adjust it to suit your play style.

Before you begin your role as GM, it is important to read through this book. Chance plays a part in the storytelling, and having a clear idea of the narrative's progression will help you keep everything on track for your players.

Reviewing the accompanying maps and non-player character (NPC) stat blocks will likely be your most helpful tool in understanding the layout of the area and the characters in this game.

And if you dive right in before reading everything, don't worry: each numbered scenario follows a natural progression based on player choice, so this module will guide you along the way as the choices stack up.

THE PLOT

Below is a general summary of the plot, which, along with the rest of this book, will help you understand the flow of the game. Do not share this information with your players; the text below helps you, the GM, understand the story (and game) structure.

A private auction is being held at Seraphina Square in MoTown, one of the cities in the Bemo Empire, which spans northern Motopia.

The attendees are wealthy, and the items up for bid are legendary, guarded by members of the Bemo Empire army.

It's a lavish party, and the hiring of waitstaff for this illustrious event was outsourced to a local catering company that hires adventurers who are down on their luck.

A cheap and effective source of labor for the very wealthy and their various shenanigans. Taragun Hornlogger makes a good profit providing such staff in this city.

Usually, these events pass with little issue; however, a group of thieves has already replaced every Bemo Empire guard assigned to protect this auction, both inside the building and on the surrounding streets.

As it unfolds, these thieves are about to interrupt the auction, take hostages if needed, and make off with the prized item up for bid. The catch is that the item is locked up securely, and only the auctioneer knows the code to open the container, which contains a magic scimitar that the thieves' leader claims is a family heirloom. Whether that is true is left for the GM to decide.

Will the would-be adventurers rise to this occasion and save not only their own hides but also earn a boost in reputation by saving some prominent figures in the city?

Could the thieves convince the heroes to turn on the ones who hired them and instead help the thieves make off with the item that they claim belongs to them? The choice will be in the players' hands.

THE BEGINNING

The adventure begins at The Hope Lodge in MoTown, a bustling trade city that specializes in fish exports by day and has a subdued presence at night.

Your player characters have all arrived at The Hope Lodge, about to enter through the back kitchen to pick up the matching waitstaff uniforms for the night shift, chosen (and provided) by the employer. Everyone's almost ready to get to work and serve the upper-class individuals here for a night of good taste and auctioning.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *The district around Seraphina Square is shut down and empty for the night's festivities. Only The Hope Lodge is lit, where a bunch of overpaid, spoiled upper-class types are gathering for a private, well-guarded auction.*
>
> *A month ago, you saved a farmer's daughter from some bandits. Sure, the pay was good. Since then, the money has dried up, and everyone has moved on to the next flavor of the month. So here you are: a last-minute waitstaff job through local staffing agent Taragun Hornlogger.*
>
> *And you're late. A hero of your station. A few others in the alley look late too.*
>
> *Beyond the kitchen door, plates smash. Someone barks: "Any of you move, I'll be forced to cut each one of ya down. Line up against the wall!"*

This is a great moment to have your players introduce their characters and describe their appearance, class, and species, or if they have any personality traits or background notes they wish to share. Do their characters have history with the other player characters?

1. THE ALLEY

Have your players start outside the kitchen in the alley; there's not much here except for small trash piles and weeds growing along the side of the building.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *Behind the kitchen door, the voice keeps barking at everyone to line up against the wall. Boots scrape on tile. Someone whimpers. The other latecomers in the alley freeze.*
>
> *Above you, in the branches of a tree beside the building, a cat meows.*

Ask your players if they wish to attempt to open the kitchen door or look around the exterior of the building. Going through the kitchen brashly is an option, but there's no telling how many thieves are inside or whether they have hostages. A subtler approach could use the main entrance at the front, or another way in to the east or west of the building. Fame and fortune could await those who save the wealthy guests. **See map markers: 1. The Alley, 2. Kitchen**

It is important for players to make the choice about whether they explore the exterior or try to go inside immediately. Either choice will present ways to navigate the event.

The door to the kitchen will be closed by a simple lock.

The Hope Lodge hosting the event is the only building lit up, and any other buildings in the city have long closed for the day and hold nothing important.

Players can circumvent the building to the east or west if they decide not to enter the kitchen.

At this starting point in the adventure, the Bemo Empire guards have all been replaced by thieves. They have used their armor as disguises and are currently taking hostages in the kitchen. They have taken the auctioneer to the lockbox to unlock it and are taking hostages in the main ballroom, leaving more thieves guarding the front entrance.

The first time a "thief guard" is dispatched, one available "thief guard" relocates to that area to check on it. No other guards move after that.

From this point on, thieves are referred to as "thief guards" or "leader guards" in quotation marks.

Players who make their way around the building to the west will find the roof ladder and the main entrance. Those who go east will find the lavatories entrance and the tree in the alley. **See map markers: 3. Roof Ladder 4. Main Entrance 5. Lavatories**

The streets around this building are oddly quiet despite being in a well-built-up part of the city. Players who go east past the lavatories entrance will notice the bushes have been disturbed.

The gang of thieves taking over the event and posing as Bemo Empire guards have already made sure the local area is as quiet and undisturbed as possible. No one is coming to help.

Players who search the alley will find overgrown weeds and a tree hiding the corpses of two real Bemo Empire guards. The guards are dead and stripped of most of their armor, suggesting someone has taken out these individuals recently, maybe before the night started. The intended DC is 10 for this interaction.

- ✔ **Success:** Players will realize someone must have taken the guards' clothing and spot a cat that saw what happened sitting in the tree.
- ✘ **Failure:** The bodies here remain a mystery, as there is no way to discern who they are.

The cat in the tree may have seen the thieves dumping the Bemo Empire guards and can provide some information if players can communicate. If befriended, the cat can't speak, but it can show players things: leading them toward an area, or hissing at a disguised "thief guard."

Convey Choice—Did players try to head into the kitchen, toward the bushes hiding the corpses, spot the cat in the alley, or toward the main entrance? Did they go through the lavatories, or did they use the ladder to the roof?

2. KITCHEN

The kitchen door is closed by a crude, simple lock and can be picked or smashed in. The intended DC is 15 for this interaction.

Inside, two individuals in official Bemo Empire suits of armor hold three normal civilian waitstaff and a chef beside the ovens. The "thief guards" don't appear to be harming their hostages, but they are assertive.

A few spare waitstaff uniforms intended for the players are lying on a counter to the side.

How players enter the room will determine if the "thief guards" are alerted or not. If there was no attempt, or the attempt failed, confrontation is unavoidable.

- ✔ **Success**: Players can act first before being noticed.
- ✘ **Failure**: This will result in confrontation.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *You head into the kitchen and are immediately greeted with a troublesome sight.*
>
> *A Bemo Empire guard has his weapon drawn while another ensures the remaining four staff are tied up against the wall by the ovens.*
>
> *Naturally, guards aren't supposed to be this aggressive, and you're not sure what's going on. Before you can question anything else, the guard who's holding his weapon gives an order to the hostages tied up by the ovens.*
>
> *"Backs against the wall and no funny moves. We'll tie you up, and we'll be gone soon, okay?"*

These two fake Bemo Empire "thief guards" are only here to secure any stragglers and have brought all other staff working tonight into the kitchen and tied them up. These "thief guards" have the heavy kitchen door that leads to the ballroom closed behind them. It is not locked, but the sound is muffled.

If players attempt direct subterfuge or do not cooperate and are seen, the "thief guards" will become aggressive and will fight the players into submission. If players take too much time to act, the "thief guards" will start threatening the lives of the hostages. The intended DC is 15 for this interaction.

- ✔ **Success:** Players can extend any dialogue or plan to subdue the imposter guards.
- ✘ **Failure:** This will result in confrontation.

The "thief guards" here would be hard to surprise, as they are alert and observing the alley entrance into the kitchen. It's also unlikely to convince them to expose what they are doing, but not impossible.

When the "thief guards" are dispatched, the hostages can be freed. They will all run toward the alley exit, but not before one of the hostages mentions an important factor. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *"Thank you! Thank you! There are more in the main ballroom; I heard one of them talk before we got taken in here to the kitchen."*
>
> *"They have taken the place of all the guards! Please help; they are trying to unlock the container for the auction item!"*

Players can now enter the ballroom through the kitchen entrance or return outside to move around the building's exterior. **See map marker: 6. Ballroom**

If players listen as they approach the ballroom door, they will hear a "thief guard" pressuring the auctioneer. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *From behind the door leading to the ballroom, you hear, presumably, another guard aggressively asking someone to "open it."*

If players start a fight abruptly in the ballroom before hostages can be rescued, it will cause a panic and ensure casualties, causing the hostages to start running.

Players can always try to swap outfits with any "thief guards" they take out, or use the waitstaff uniforms.

Convey Choice—Did players defeat the "thief guards" subtly or harshly? Did they free the kitchen hostages, learn that the guards have been replaced by thieves, and disguise themselves?

3. ROOF LADDER

If players head toward the main entrance from the west side of the building, they will come across a ladder against the kitchen's smoking chimney. A forgetful roof tiler left the ladder here earlier that day.

Within view of the street in front of the building, the two "thief guards" can be spotted near the main entrance. Players may or may not already know these guards have been replaced by thieves in disguise.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *You notice a ladder that leads up onto the roof; maybe there's a vantage point up there that could provide more insight.*
>
> *By peeking around the corner, you see two guards near the main entrance, silently keeping watch.*
>
> *Occasionally, they break the silence to talk to each other in short sentences about how their plan is going okay so far.*

The roof contains very little of interest except for two glass-pane windows that provide a view down into the ballroom, auction podium, bandstand, and dining tables. **See map markers: 6. Ballroom 7. Dining Tables 8. Bandstand 9. Podium 10. Auctioneer 11. Staircase 12. Lockbox**

Players will hear the two "thief guards" occasionally chatter at the main entrance of the building.

If the "thief guards" at the main entrance have not been dealt with, they can be surprised by maneuvering above them. The drop is twenty feet down at this point.

Looking through the glass-pane windows down into the ballroom, players can hear the "leader guard" near the lockbox aggressively asking the auctioneer to unlock the container.

A few more "thief guards" are also watching over the hostages.

The band members are tied up, and the fancy guests are kept in their chairs by the "thief guards." Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *Moving onto the roof, there are only two windows looking down into the ballroom.*
>
> *You see several guards keeping two sections of hostages held, a band tied up on stage, and the fancy guests being watched in their chairs at their dining tables.*
>
> *A single, larger guard pressures the auctioneer to unlock the container that holds tonight's precious auction item directly below you.*

A set of tinker's tools and forty feet of rope remain here from the roof tiler. The window latch can be unscrewed with these tools and carefully opened to create an entrance. The drop is a steep thirty feet. Unless the "thief guards" below are distracted, they will see anyone attempting to climb down. However, a straight drop onto the "leader guard" can be achieved as a surprise. The intended DC is 18 for this interaction.

- ✔ **Success:** Players drop and surprise the "thief guards."
- ✘ **Failure:** Players fall 30 ft (3d6 Bludgeoning damage) and are noticed.

Unless the window is open, it is hard to hear anyone, but you can see the basic layout. Any player who jumps down can land on the table holding the auction item in the lockbox, but it will immediately start a fight.

If players start a fight abruptly in the ballroom before hostages can be rescued, it will cause a panic and ensure casualties, causing the hostages to start running.

The roof tiles here were also replaced poorly, so if too much movement is made, it will dislodge a few tiles, causing the "thief guards" at the main entrance to ascend the roof to investigate. Every time a player moves, they need to make sure no loose tiles fall. The intended DC is 10 for this interaction.

- ✔ **Success:** Players don't fall off the roof.
- ✘ **Failure:** Players fall 20 ft (2d6 Bludgeoning damage) and alert any "thief guards" outside.

This roof access is intended as a surveillance point, but as always, players can use it to surprise and start a fight.

Convey Choice—Did players climb the ladder, find the tools to open the window, survey the situation, jump down, and start a fight?

4. MAIN ENTRANCE

Once players reach the main entrance, the two "thief guards" will direct them away from the building, saying the party has already begun. They will do their best to pose as real guards and sound official.

Players may or may not already know these guards have been replaced by thieves in disguise. Players can always try to swap outfits with any guards they take out.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *The main entrance to the building is protected by two Bemo Empire guards. They stand atop a small marble*

> *staircase with a red carpet leading to a sturdy-looking, closed door decorated with silver leaf.*
>
> *The event has officially started, so they do not look like they will allow anyone to enter. They gesture to you to move along and leave the area.*

Players can interact here to try to gain entry through dialogue or other means. The intended DC is 20 for this interaction.

If players defeat these "thief guards," they will find a silver key to the main entrance on one of them and a bronze key to the lavatories on another. The door is too sturdy to break or pick the lock.

Opening the main entrance draws glances from the ballroom; players in disguise can bluff it (DC 17), or they are confronted. **See map marker: 6. Ballroom**

Additionally, the main entrance leads to a large staircase that descends into the ballroom in full view of anyone in this room. If players are coming through dressed as waitstaff or as guards, it may be possible to stall a discovery of their subterfuge. The intended DC is 17 for this interaction. **See map marker: 11. Staircase**

- ✔ **Success:** The "thief guards" will let players through the main entrance.
- ✘ **Failure:** The "thief guards" call out the intruders and draw steel. Panic breaks out, and in the chaos they turn on the nearest hostages.

If players listen as they approach the door, they will hear the "leader guard" pressuring the auctioneer by the lockbox. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *From behind the door leading to the ballroom, you hear, presumably, another guard aggressively asking someone to "open it."*

If players start a fight abruptly in the ballroom before hostages can be rescued, it will cause a panic and ensure casualties, causing the hostages to start running.

It is possible for the "thief guards" to be distracted for a moment while entering from the main entrance, but they are unlikely to yield easily and will ask the party to join the hostages and be restrained if they come in too unprepared.

Convey Choice—Did players remove the "thief guards" at the main entrance, find the key to the main door or the lavatories, enter the ballroom with a planned disguise, or rush in?

5. LAVATORIES

This entrance to the lavatories from the alley is accessed through a small, sturdy, bronze-laden door. The door is locked. At first glance, this room appears empty. The intended DC is 15 for this interaction.

- ✔ **Success:** The lock is picked, and entry to the lavatories is gained.
- ✘ **Failure:** The lock jams. It can still be forced open (DC 15 Strength (Athletics)), but the noise alerts the "thief guard" in the ballroom, who comes to check.

Players may have found a bronze key on a "thief guard" at the main entrance, or can pick the lock.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *The lavatory appears unoccupied; two stalls run along the back wall and lead to the city sewer. Across from them, sinks filled with magic self-cleaning water sit atop a stone counter with mirrors behind them for guests to check their appearance.*
>
> *This is one of the city's more modern marvels, and the restroom is often considered quite nice.*
>
> *From behind the door leading to the ballroom, you hear, presumably, another guard aggressively asking someone to "open it."*

A young lady is hiding in one of the stalls. She wears a fancy pink ballgown and looks scared. If players discover her, it will take some effort to keep her calm and console her.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *You notice feet peeking out of one of the stalls and the frills of a long ballgown resting above two ankles. The person is sobbing quietly.*

Players can help this lady as they see fit. She will have some information about what is happening in the ballroom, regarding how many "thief guards" there are and what their goal might be (trying to gain access to the auction item in the lockbox).

Before players can enter the ballroom (assuming a fight has not broken out yet), a "thief guard" will be overheard saying he is about to use the restroom and go check on the lady they let use it.

Footsteps will indicate someone is approaching from the ballroom.

If players have not yet checked the stalls and rescued the young lady after spending some time here, overhearing a "thief guard" about to enter this room will eventually lead to confrontation.

Players can take this opportunity to either confront the guard directly or hide and wait. If players take out this "thief guard," it will leave one less at the dining tables in the ballroom.

If players rescue this young lady, then she will leave through the alley.

Convey Choice—Did players hide from the "thief guard" and ambush him, or confront him directly? Did they talk with the lady in the stall or save her?

6. BALLROOM

This room contains two "thief guards" currently holding the guests at the dining tables and one "thief guard" at the bandstand. The "leader guard" is pressuring the auctioneer to open the container of the rare auction item. A total of four "thief guards" are in this room.

If players remove the "thief guard" in the lavatories, there will be only one "thief guard" at the dining tables. If the "thief guards" in the kitchen or main entrance are not dealt with and a fight breaks out, they will rush to help.

People disappearing from the assigned ballroom positions will eventually be noticed.

How the party enters this room matters. If players are **brash** or **subtle,** events will play out differently.

If players **burst** into the room from any vantage point OR an attempt at subterfuge fails, hostages will be killed as a fight starts.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *The grand centerpiece of the main event was supposed to be glorious but is currently soured by the fact that the fancy guests are held in place under threat of violence by various "thief guards."*
>
> *In addition, the band is bound near the stage they were performing on, with a single "thief guard" on watch.*
>
> *There is no entering with grace now. All eyes turn to you as you burst in, and panic erupts. Guests scramble from their tables. Across the room, the "thief guards" raise their weapons.*

At this point, combat begins, and every "thief guard" in the room will attempt to take on the party. The guests at the tables will attempt to flee while some are cut down at the start of combat. The same goes for the band members.

The "leader guard" will take the auctioneer hostage under the threat of death. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *As the fight starts, chaos erupts. Guests flee their tables in panic, chairs crashing over. On the stage, the bound musicians struggle against their ropes. By the podium, the "leader guard" hauls the auctioneer close.*

As combat begins, the "thief guards" turn on the hostages; describe fleeing guests and the bound band members being struck down at the end of the first round. Once the fight has started, players will need to deal with the "leader guard" holding the auctioneer hostage.

The party can steamroll the entire fight with no regard for the hostages, which will affect the ending and the players' reputation.

If players **subtly** enter the ballroom, hostages will remain unharmed, and no fight breaks out yet. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *The grand centerpiece of the main event was supposed to be glorious but is currently soured by the fact that the fancy guests are held in place under threat of violence by various "thief guards."*
>
> *In addition, the band is bound near the stage they were performing on, with a single "thief guard" on watch.*
>
> *No one has noticed your presence yet, so whatever plans you have are ready to put into action.*

If players avoid a fight, they will have time to save all hostages and potentially continue to investigate.

Players can traverse the area via the curtains on the north and south sides of this room.

The curtains can be accessed at any time and are best used from the staircase or lavatories.

If players can reach these areas, they can move along the top and back areas of the ballroom unhindered. The intended DC is 10 for this interaction. **See map markers: 13. North Curtains 14. South Curtains**

- ✔ **Success:** Players move stealthily between the curtains and remain hidden.
- ✘ **Failure:** Players are discovered and the "thief guards" confront the party.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *Light blue curtains fall from ceiling to floor along both sides of the ballroom, thick enough to slip between unseen.*

Convey Choice—Did your players enter the ballroom to fight, or avoid a fight somehow and buy more time to rescue hostages by exploring or hiding in the curtains?

7. DINING TABLES

If players start an immediate fight in the ballroom, this area becomes a mess of food and smashed furniture. As combat begins, the "thief guards" turn on the hostages; describe Taragun and some fleeing guests being struck down at the end of the first round. Whether Taragun lives or dies influences the ending.

During any fight, the "leader guard" will be holding the auctioneer hostage, threatening him and ordering him to open the lockbox, or he will be killed.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *The dining tables, made of fancy polished wood carved with intricate details and matched by the chairs, are smashed to pieces as chaos erupts. Guests flee in every direction.*
>
> *One VIP is familiar to you: your recent employer, Taragun Hornlogger, still trying to bargain with a "thief guard" whose weapon is already raised.*

However, if players avoid a fight, at least eighteen fancy guests are still seated at the tables under the watch of two "thief guards." One of the guests is Taragun Hornlogger, the players' employer.

One "thief guard" will be removed if encountered at the lavatories earlier.

Players can access the dining tables directly if they arrive from the lavatories or use the south curtains to hide. **See map markers: 5. Lavatories 14. South Curtains**

This pathway affects the ending and allows for a way to remove all "thief guards" without being detected.

How the players enter is important, as "thief guards" will notice free-roaming people in this area and attempt capture or questioning immediately. The intended DC is 17 for this interaction.

- ✔ **Success:** The "thief guards" will let players through.
- ✘ **Failure:** The "thief guards" will confront the party.

If players are not somehow disguised or quick-witted, the "thief guards" are primed to attack unless players slip into the curtains to hide.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *The dining tables, made of fancy polished wood carved with intricate details and matched by the chairs, hold the VIP guests.*
>
> *While these guests are not bound, they are too scared to move, as two (or one) "thief guards" keep watch, weapons drawn.*
>
> *One VIP is familiar to you: your recent employer, Taragun Hornlogger, who is currently trying to bribe and swindle his way out of this with one of the "thief guards."*
>
> *You've made it this far without an incident, but these guards could be moments away from questioning your presence; time to think fast.*

There is one individual who keeps trying to make deals and bargains with the "thief guards," but it appears to be falling on deaf ears. A curly-haired gentleman in a crown and fancy attire, this is the person who hired you for the event, Taragun Hornlogger. This scenario is only possible if players can move through the area without inciting violence.

Players can try to interfere with Taragun, who is currently groveling and pleading with his captors. If players can come up with anything plausible to either distract these two "thief guards" or make some form of deal, it is possible to save some hostages.

The "thief guards" here are the only two focused on the dining tables. The most obvious exit is through the lavatories to the alley, but these "thief guards" are unlikely to be convinced easily to let anyone go.

Taragun will recognize the party as recent hires and attempt to get in on any plans or deal struck with the "thief guards." This will require social navigation, as the "thief guards" do not like the arrogance Taragun exudes.

It's entirely possible for the players to distract the "thief guards" from their post, or use any other means to disrupt this scenario.

Whether Taragun lives or dies influences the ending.

If players start a fight abruptly in the ballroom before hostages can be rescued, it will cause a panic and ensure casualties, causing the hostages to start running.

Convey Choice—Did your players arrive at the dining tables pre-or post-fight? Did they convince the "thief guards" to look the other way, remove them and rescue hostages, or strike a deal with Taragun?

8. BANDSTAND

If players start an immediate fight in the ballroom, this area will be a mess of broken musical instruments as chaos causes guests to flee to the nearest exit. As combat begins, the "thief guard" here turns on the band; describe the band members being killed at the end of the first round. No more music will be played tonight.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *Among the broken instruments, the three bound band members lie helpless on the stage. Their lone "thief guard" turns toward them, weapon drawn.*

If no band members are alive, they will not be present to help unlock the auction lockbox.

However, if players avoid a fight, they can see a raised stage with a grand piano and other instruments strewn across the floor in the back corner of the ballroom. A single "thief guard" watches over the three band members tied up behind the stage curtain.

How the players enter matters, as the "thief guard" will notice free-roaming, undisguised people in this area and will attempt to capture or question them immediately. The intended DC is 17 for this interaction.

- ✔ **Success:** The "thief guards" will let players through.
- ✘ **Failure:** The "thief guards" will confront the party.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *A grand piano takes up most of the stage, and behind the curtain is a small area for setup. The band members are tied and placed just out of sight, watched by a single "thief guard."*
>
> *The "thief guard" has his back to the room, intently staring at the restrained musicians.*
>
> *You've made it this far without an incident, but these guards could be moments away from questioning your presence; time to think fast.*

Moving toward the bandstand from any area other than the main entrance will increase the chance of being spotted by "thief guards" at the dining tables.

Players can access the bandstand more easily if arriving from the main entrance down the staircase or using the north curtains. **See map markers: 11. Staircase 13. North Curtains**

This pathway affects the ending and allows for a way to remove all "thief guards" without being detected.

Any attempts at rescuing these hostages would need to be done as quietly as possible. If the "thief guards" at the dining tables have not been dealt with, it is likely they will notice hostages being rescued from across the room. The intended DC is 17 for this interaction.

- ✔ **Success:** The "thief guards" will let players through.
- ✘ **Failure:** The "thief guards" will confront the party.

It's entirely possible for the players to distract the "thief guards" from their post, or use any other means to disrupt this scenario.

If players start a fight abruptly in the ballroom before hostages can be rescued, it will cause a panic and ensure casualties, causing the hostages to start running.

Whether the band members live or die influences the ending.

If rescued, any of the three band members could be asked to play the music from the hidden music sheet found on the podium, which opens the lockbox. **See map marker: 9. Podium**

Convey Choice—Did your players try to save the band members, dispatch the guard here, or get a band member to play the musical sequence if they know about the secret sheet at the podium?

9. PODIUM

The unmanned podium contains the means to open the lockbox holding the auction item. Players cannot approach casually without some subterfuge, or Leader Nate will notice.

This podium remains unchanged regardless of how the players enter the ballroom, either subtly or aggressively.

Behind this podium, the "leader guard" holds the auctioneer hostage beside a table displaying the last auction item inside a translucent glass lockbox. **See map marker: 12. Lockbox**

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *A luxury podium stands ready for a speaker to address the audience in the lavish dining area. It's well crafted, and a few notes about tonight's auction items sit on top. Everything has been sold so far except for the last item. **T**he Dancing Scimitar is listed for 100,000 gold pieces. It apparently insults those it slashes.*
>
> *This is the only item left for the night.*
>
> *The documents here contain only a speech and the starting bids. At first glance, nothing else suggests a way to open the lockbox.*
>
> *There is also a note reminding the auctioneer that once an item is sold, or if there are attempts to tamper with the box, the item inside is teleported to a harmless demiplane for safekeeping.*

The podium remains unmanned, and only the auctioneer knows where the secret compartment is, which contains a sheet of music to open the lockbox.

Players can find the podium's hidden compartment from a thorough search. The intended DC is 20 for this interaction.

- ✔ **Success:** Players find the hidden compartment.
- ✘ **Failure:** Players see only a simple podium, nothing more.

The podium can also be broken open (AC 15, 15 HP), revealing the hidden compartment.

If found, players can use the hidden music sheet to bargain with, or simply access, the contents of the lockbox. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *A small indentation beneath the podium may go unnoticed by unsuspecting eyes.*
>
> *When pressed, a narrow compartment opens quietly, revealing a piece of paper.*
>
> *This paper contains a series of musical notes arranged in a particular pattern.*
>
> *No other words accompany it, so you're not sure what this corresponds to yet.*

The music sheet contains the notes that must be played in sequence to open the lockbox. If players don't have an instrument or someone who can play one, the correct musical sequence will be harder to play.

If players have somehow seen the lockbox (and the music notes on it) before this discovery, it will be obvious that the music sheet is the key to opening it. Players can also ask whether the band members can play the sequence.

Convey Choice—Did players find the hidden music sheet?

THE BREAK

Feel free to schedule a break or keep playing, depending on progression and pace. At this point in the adventure, players may have done the following while exploring The Hope Lodge. Use this list to affirm what has/has not been done in the adventure so far and what potential consequences will exist moving forward.

- ☐ *Found the corpses of the real guards outside.*
- ☐ *Spoke with the cat in the tree.*
- ☐ *Headed back to the kitchen and confronted the "thief guards."*

- ☐ *Went up to the roof via the ladder.*
- ☐ *Tried the main entrance and found the bronze key for the lavatories.*
- ☐ *Used the lavatories entrance in the alley.*
- ☐ *Discovered what the "thief guards" are up to.*
- ☐ *Realized there are hostages.*
- ☐ *Rescued the staff in the kitchen.*
- ☐ *Saved the girl in the lavatories.*
- ☐ *Removed the "thief guards" at the bandstand.*
- ☐ *Saved the band members.*
- ☐ *Dispatched the "thief guards" at the dining tables.*
- ☐ *Helped the players' employer, Taragun, and the VIPs at the dining tables escape.*
- ☐ *Struck a deal with Taragun.*
- ☐ *Found the hidden music sheet at the podium.*
- ☐ *Attacked all "thief guards," sacrificing hostages.*
- ☐ *Kept the peace for some time using subterfuge, allowing further exploration.*

Most early choices will determine how the players enter the ballroom and what they trigger.

The next scenarios will offer options for resolving the final lockbox challenge, dealing with any remaining hostages or "thief guards," and exploring other details in the building. **See map markers: 10. Auctioneer 12. Lockbox, 13. North Curtains 14. South Curtains**

10. AUCTIONEER

If players start an immediate fight in the ballroom, this area will contain a "leader guard" aggressively holding the auctioneer hostage. The intended DC is 20 to talk Nate into releasing the auctioneer, or to pull the auctioneer free (Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand)). Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *A large "leader guard" grabs the auctioneer as soon as the fight starts, holding his Might Sword to his throat.*
>
> *Above the panic, he yells: "One more step and I'll cut his neck!"*
>
> *With the "leader guard" using this poor soul as a shield, you'll need to think carefully about how to approach this.*

Players will note the "leader guard" knows he needs the auctioneer to open the lockbox, and it will be very hard to persuade him to release his prisoner.

If players avoid a fight, any player who makes it to the far left of the room will find the "leader guard" standing next to the auctioneer, examining a translucent lockbox that holds the auction item for tonight's event. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *A lone, large "leader guard" interrogates a young man with a long, white mustache, whose hands are tied behind his back.*
>
> *He keeps asking the young man (who you discern is the auctioneer given the line of questioning) to open the lockbox on the table next to them.*
>
> *Impressively, this young man has not broken and does not appear to be giving in just yet, if he even knows anything about how to open the lockbox. You notice his eyes dart toward the podium occasionally.*
>
> *Before you can interact with the table and lockbox, you'll need to deal with this situation.*

The auctioneer will plead with him not to open the lockbox, as it doesn't belong to anyone but the owner who is selling it, and the consequences of letting it be stolen would be worse than what these thieves could do.

At this point, the "leader guard" may try to convince the players to join him and split the reward. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *On the knife's edge between failure and success, the "leader guard" lowers his voice.*
>
> *"You're not one of them. Most of this room would sell you for a profit. Help me, and the gold that blade would fetch gets split. Cross me, and if the higher-ups lose out tonight, it won't just be my crew who pays. And that scimitar is mine. It's been in my family for generations."*
>
> *He pushes back his sleeve. Inked on his forearm is the same scimitar.*

Whether Nate's claim is true is left for the GM to decide (see The Plot). Nate rolls with the party's answer; if they refuse and he is not separated from the auctioneer, see below. The auctioneer will be murdered if the "leader guard" becomes aggravated and is not separated from him.

Convey Choice—Did your players help the auctioneer or dispatch the "leader guard"? Are the players now siding with the thieves?

11. STAIRCASE

If players start an immediate fight in the ballroom, the "thief guards" turn on the hostages as combat begins; describe fleeing guests being struck down at the end of the first round.

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *Heading into the ballroom, you announce your presence with no grace and immediately cause a stir among the "thief guards" on watch.*
>
> *The monumental staircase curves up and around, towering over the ballroom. The décor is ostentatious, with purple-carpeted stairs designed to create the grandest entrances.*
>
> *At its base, candelabras illuminate the center blue-carpeted area.*
>
> *Below, the "thief guards" turn from their hostages to you, weapons rising.*

However, if players avoid a fight and pass the main entrance unchallenged (DC 17), they will see the staircase rising high into the main entrance (or down toward the ballroom, depending on perspective), with a view of everything in the ballroom. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *Silently opening the main entrance silver door, you creep in unnoticed.*
>
> *The monumental staircase curves up and around, towering over the ballroom. The décor is ostentatious, with purple-carpeted stairs designed to create the grandest entrances.*
>
> *At its base, candelabras illuminate the center blue-carpeted area.*
>
> *The grand centerpiece of the main event was supposed to be glorious but is currently soured by the fact that the fancy guests are held in place under threat of violence by various "thief guards."*
>
> *In addition, the band is bound near the stage they were performing on, with a single "thief guard" on watch.*

There's not much else of note about the staircase; however, at the top it connects with the amazing light blue curtains that line the walls of the ballroom. **See map marker: 13. North Curtains**

> *These curtains line the north and south walls, providing amazing cover if any players sneak through the area or need to hide quickly.*

Convey Choice—Did your players enter with stealth, use the north curtains to hide, or descend the staircase?

12. LOCKBOX

If players start an immediate fight in the ballroom, this area will contain a "leader guard" aggressively holding the auctioneer hostage. The intended DC is 20 to talk Nate into releasing him or to pull him free (Athletics or Sleight of Hand). **See map marker: 10. Auctioneer**

Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *A large "leader guard" grabs the auctioneer as soon as the fight starts, holding his Might Sword to his throat.*
>
> *Above the panic, he yells: "One more step and I'll cut his neck!"*
>
> *With the "leader guard" using this poor soul as a shield, you'll need to think carefully about how to approach this.*

If players avoid a fight, any player who makes it to the far left of the room finds the "leader guard" standing next to the auctioneer, examining a translucent lockbox that holds tonight's auction item. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *A beautiful stone table supports a large, translucent glass container, large enough to hold what appears to be a scimitar. No doubt the auction item for tonight's event.*
>
> *The container appears to have no obvious openings or hinges, but it does have markings all over its casing.*
>
> *Several black marks cover the glass in a random arrangement, with each black dot having a short, single line extending from it in odd variations. They look like musical notes, but there's no obvious order.*
>
> *The glass appears thick and unbreakable.*

The marks on the container are musical notes. If any player tries to discern these notes, they will see no obvious order in which to play them. It would result in

a disordered melody. The intended DC is 25 for this interaction.

- ✔ **Success:** The correct melody is played, releasing the scimitar.
- ✘ **Failure:** The incorrect melody is played, banishing the scimitar.

The hidden musical sheet is only found at the podium. A band member can play it automatically, or can work out the melody without it with a DC 15 Charisma (Performance) check. Anyone else can play the sheet on the stage's grand piano with a DC 15 Charisma (Performance) check. Failure: a wrong note sounds; the fail-safe banishes the scimitar.

The auctioneer can possibly be persuaded to reveal where the hidden music sheet is; however, he has been silent so far, even with the "leader guard's" interrogation. The intended DC is 20 for this interaction.

The auctioneer will plead with him not to open the lockbox, as it doesn't belong to anyone but the owner who is selling it, and the consequences of letting it be stolen would be worse than what these thieves could do.

Players will need the correct musical notes; any wrong notes trigger the fail-safe and banish the item. If Nate is within 30 feet when the box opens, the scimitar attunes to him (see The Dancing Scimitar, page 18). At this point, the "leader guard" may try to convince the players to join him and split the reward.

The auctioneer will be murdered if the "leader guard" becomes aggravated and is not separated from him.

Convey Choice—Did your players learn the lockbox mechanics and manage to open it? Did they fail to open it, remove the "leader guard," or side with the thieves?

13. NORTH CURTAINS

Players attempting a more tactical approach when they arrive at the ballroom will notice light blue curtains along the walls—thick enough to provide cover to traverse the ends of the ballroom. The intended DC is 10 for this interaction. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *Light blue curtains trail from the very tall thirty-foot ceiling, reaching all the way up to the magnificent chandeliers.*
>
> *They are thick and overlapping, providing perfect camouflage if you could slip between them, letting you maneuver unseen for a while.*
>
> *A possible way to keep some assailants out of sight, too.*

The north curtains provide excellent access to the **Bandstand** as they reach the red curtains that line the stage.

This pathway affects the ending and allows for a way to remove all "thief guards" without being detected.

The north curtains also allow players to get closer to the **Lockbox**.

Players could be inventive and abduct or hide guards, bodies, or other things between the curtains. Too much careless movement increases the chance of discovery, though.

Convey Choice—Did your players use the curtains to move through the room?

14. SOUTH CURTAINS

These work exactly like the North Curtains (intended DC 10). Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *Along the south wall, the same light blue curtains fall from ceiling to floor, thick enough to slip between unseen, all the way to the band's red curtains.*

The south curtains provide excellent access to the **Dining Tables** as they reach the corner of the band's red curtains that line the stage.

Convey Choice—Did your players use the curtains to move through the room?

When players reach the lockbox by any means, it will come down to whether they found a clue to open it, refuse or agree to open it, save hostages, or deal with any remaining guards.

Use this list to affirm what has/has not been done in the adventure so far and what potential consequences will exist moving forward:

- ☐ *Rushed toward the ballroom, taking out the "thief guards," but sacrificing hostages.*

- ☐ *Approached in a stealthy manner, taking out "thief guards" quietly and saving hostages.*
- ☐ *Rescued other hostages beyond the ballroom.*
- ☐ *Found a way to open the lockbox.*
- ☐ *Continued to be a hero.*
- ☐ *Switched to the thieves' side.*

THE ENDINGS

The ultimate moment to trigger the ending is when any player reaches the lockbox and is about to choose how to use it. Some choices lead to conflict; others do not.

The final moment will come down to the players' choice between saving the guests/auction item and failing to do so.

The players' choices throughout the game will affect the ending. This section will outline what to do based on the possible choices made throughout the game.

It is very possible that players will not explore every scenario made available.

The players may have:

- *Removed the "thief guards" without notice.*
- *Rescued the dining table hostages.*
- *Rescued the band hostages.*
- *Rescued the kitchen hostages.*
- *Triggered a fight, sacrificing the lives of hostages.*
- *Found a way to open the lockbox with the hidden music sheet.*
- *Found a way to open the lockbox via a band member.*
- *Opened the lockbox to retrieve the scimitar.*
- *Failed to open the lockbox correctly, banishing the scimitar.*
- *Left the lockbox alone.*
- *Sided with the thieves instead.*
- *Made a deal with Taragun to rescue him for a reward.*

Regardless of where the players are positioned and what they have unearthed in The Hope Lodge, the final scene will play out.

If players aim to recover the auction lockbox and its contents and fight the "thief guards" head-on (sacrificing some hostages), the following finale exists. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *Steel rings out across the ballroom as you turn on the "thief guards." No one is walking out of The Hope Lodge with that scimitar tonight.*
>
> *Guests scatter for the exits. Whoever is still standing when this is over will remember your names.*

Any attempts to go in quickly and fight will cause the "leader guard" holding the auctioneer to shout for any reinforcements that were not taken down throughout the game.

If the auctioneer is not somehow separated from the "leader guard" holding him hostage, he will be murdered.

If players are preparing to steal the auction item and need to deal with the "thief guards," the following finale exists. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *The "thief guards" have set the stage, hostages and all. Now you take it over.*
>
> *Weapons drawn, you move on the thieves. Behind them, in its translucent glass case, the scimitar waits.*

Choosing to take the prize for yourself will lead to a fight with the "thief guards," ensuring more casualties, and putting the auctioneer at risk. This will cause the "leader guard" holding the auctioneer to shout for any reinforcements that were not taken down throughout the game.

If the auctioneer is not somehow separated from the "leader guard" holding him hostage, he will be murdered.

If no one remains alive to deal with it, the auction item will be up for grabs, and players must choose whether to hand it over to the authorities or take it themselves. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *The threat is removed, but so are all the partygoers... You're now left with a choice: do you seek out help and return what was almost stolen, or do you now turn the tide and become the thief with no witnesses around? After all, who could stop you? No one would know...*

Any players who attempt to leave The Hope Lodge with the auction item can get away completely.

If a stalemate happens in the final discussion with the "leader guard" holding the auctioneer, and other "thief guards" are in the area, he will prompt a fight. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *Attempts to talk down this "leader guard" or get the auctioneer to comply for his own safety aren't working; his patience is gone.*
>
> *He cries out for any of his remaining crew to show up and start a fight.*
>
> *You came close to saving the auctioneer's life; maybe you can at least avenge him.*

Failed attempts to defuse the situation verbally with the "leader guard" holding the auctioneer will force him to shout for any reinforcements not taken down throughout the game.

If the auctioneer is not somehow separated from the "leader guard" holding him hostage, he will be murdered.

If players can stealthily remove all the "thief guards" and keep everyone alive, there will be no fight. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *Somehow, you stayed a silent warrior.*
>
> *You've taken out the threat with little issue, with no loss of life and a precious item salvaged, never even slightly at risk of being stolen.*
>
> *This is more than a victory; the gods are smiling down on you. All that's left is to await a reward.*

No casualties and all "thief guards" captured or defeated is the hardest yet most ideal outcome for the guests.

If players convince the auctioneer to open the box and let Nate take the scimitar, no one is hurt and the thieves leave. Read the following text out loud to your players as narrator:

> *Despite your best efforts, you know saving lives is more important than an expensive scimitar.*
>
> *You convince the person in charge to give up the secret to opening the box; it works, but while you save a life, some wonder at the cost.*
>
> *A ridiculous notion that this item is more valuable than a life, but wealthy people sometimes don't see sense. A partial victory, at least, as the thieves run off into the night.*

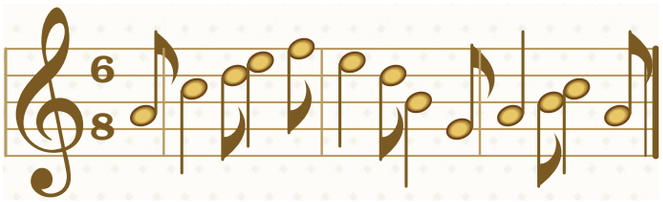
Allowing the "thief guards" to get away in some fashion is not ideal for the wealthy guests, but this does stop people from getting killed.

All roads lead to determining whether the players secured the auction item, with no loss (or total loss) of the guests' lives. Below are some environmental factors and the general flow of combat:

- Players can open the lockbox and use the scimitar if in a fight.
- If the lockbox failure mechanic is triggered, the Dancing Scimitar is lost.
- If a "thief guard" opens the box, they will have the Dancing Scimitar.
- "Thief guards" from the kitchen, dining tables, bandstand, and main entrance will join any fight if it is started in the ballroom.
- There may be a musician from the band in the final confrontation helping to unlock the box.
- If the scimitar is banished, or Nate drops below half his Hit Points with no "thief guards" left standing, he surrenders.

GM decides the truth: whether Leader Nate's story about the scimitar is true is entirely up to you, and it is purposely ambiguous.

At this point, however, the final moments occur; players can resolve the final social interactions.



The Dancing Scimitar

Magic weapon (Scimitar), requires Attunement. It functions as a Dancing Sword (Scimitar) and hurls insults at those it slashes. Listed at 100,000 gp.

Attunement. If Nate is within 30 feet when the lockbox opens, the scimitar attunes to him and can't attune to anyone else while he lives; until then, anyone else wields it as a plain magic scimitar. Otherwise, a character can attune to it as normal.

Fail-safe. Tampering with the lockbox, or playing a wrong note, teleports the scimitar to a harmless demiplane for safekeeping.

THE FAREWELL

While there are no right or wrong endings to this story, the following will help guide you toward which set of circumstances you end up with at the end of the game to wrap up the adventure. The main goal is to retrieve the auction item without losing any lives.

You may piece together fragments of several outcomes if your players made different choices.

If players rescued all the guests at the party:

You managed your way through the building without causing too much alarm or panic. The guests did not flee, and none were struck down by any of the imposter guards.

You're surrounded by the city's elite, thanking you; even your employer, Taragun, is offering to pay double your wage for tonight's work. On top of that, he mentions a contract as a bona fide adventurer in his employ!

Let's hope this bolsters your reputation as a hero for hire for some time!

If players triggered a panic by fighting and all/some of the guests were killed:

This will not reflect entirely well on you. Despite the situation at tonight's event, this is obviously not your fault. You were just trying to help, but a lack of care or a simple mistake has cost some of the city's elite their lives.

(Including your employer, Taragun—guess you will not be getting paid today either.)

If players opened the lockbox with the hidden music sheet but returned the item:

You found the correct musical notes to play thanks to the sheet you found. This opened the box with no issue, revealing the mighty scimitar inside.

While it was satisfying to open the box, you know you cannot risk the ruin of your reputation by taking it. You know the honorable thing to do is present it back to its guardian, the auctioneer (or, if dead, the local authorities).

Let's hope this bolsters your reputation as a hero for hire for some time!

If players opened the lockbox with a band member but returned the item:

You found a band member who could read the music and decipher what to play. This opened the box with no issue, revealing the mighty scimitar inside.

While it was satisfying to open the box, you know you cannot risk the ruin of your reputation by taking it. You know the honorable thing to do is to present it back to its guardian, the auctioneer (or, if dead, the local authorities).

Let's hope this bolsters your reputation as a hero for hire for some time!

If players opened the lockbox and ran off with the scimitar:

You found a way to open the box before anyone could react. Even if someone notices you, you hurry off with what the other thieves came for.

Maybe being a hero does not pay well enough, but this prize should do for a while. What's a good reputation anyway? Maybe there's more pay in being a hired thief. Plus, the scimitar feels good to wield.

If players kept any "thief guards" alive to hand over to the authorities:

As much as these people were here to rob, hurt, and steal, you found a way to avoid too much death on your watch.

These fake guards will be handed over to the proper authorities. Your reputation for a more pacifist approach is welcome and is a sure-fire way to let it be known that you are trustworthy heroes for hire.

If players were never discovered and returned the auction item:

Before the would-be thieves could even understand what happened or who was in their midst, you turned this tragic night into an easy victory.

You removed the threat undetected and retrieved the sacred auction item.

So impressed by this, the local city guards are calling on you to offer you a position in their ranks. This is more than temporary hero work; you're fully employed!

If players were never discovered and ran off with the auction item:

Before the would-be thieves could even understand what happened or who was in their midst, you turned this tragic night into an easy victory.

You removed the threat undetected and retrieved the sacred auction item. You then took advantage of the moment—maybe greed, or maybe you thought the people here were wealthy enough.

You absconded with the item, and hopefully you'll get a fine price for it on the black market somewhere. No one will know!

If players are defeated by the "thief guards" and let them take off with the auction item:

Try as you might, you just could not stop the thieves from accomplishing their goals. They've made off with the prized item.

What's some small moment of solace before it all goes dark? Any remaining VIPs will remember your efforts at least . . . but maybe not your name.

If players made some deal with Taragun and he lives to make good on it:

Good for you, the night is saved, and now Taragun owes you after such a public agreement earlier in the night.

He will have no choice but to pay up for whatever you bargained for.

If players sided with Leader Nate and helped him take the scimitar:

Nate doesn't thank you, and he doesn't need to. He closes his hand around the hilt, and the room goes quiet, as if even the chandeliers are waiting to see what he does next.

"My family has waited a long time for this," he says. "Walk out with me and you'll never have to beg a stranger for work again."

By morning the city guard will be hunting a gang of fake guards, and your names will be on the list. Whether you vanish into Nate's crew as heroes, thieves, or something in between is a story for another night.

If players failed to open the lockbox, banishing the scimitar:

A wrong note, a flash of light, and the Dancing Scimitar was gone, whisked away to the safety of its demiplane vault. It was not stolen, but it was not saved for anyone either. Whether it ever truly belonged to Nate's father, only its owner will ever know.

If Leader Nate surrendered:

With nothing left to fight for, Nate laid down his sword. He'll answer to the city guard for tonight, but you'll remember the look on his face when the box came up empty, and you'll wonder whether justice was done at all.

If players traded the scimitar for the hostages' lives:

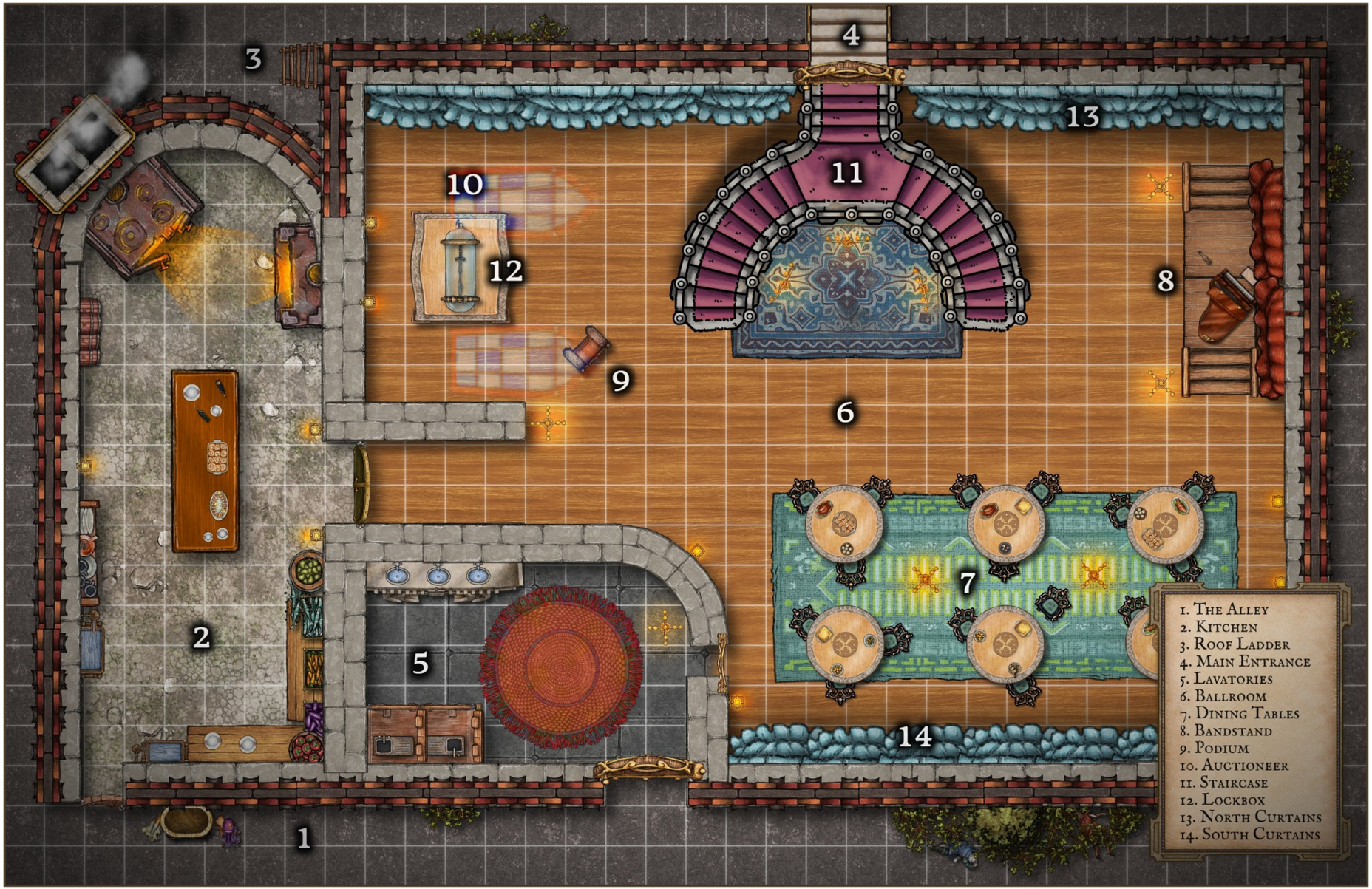
You talked the auctioneer into opening the box and let Nate walk out with the scimitar. No one else was hurt tonight.

Once you've resolved all outcomes, provide your players with congratulations, commiserations, or maybe something in between. Thank you for playing!

THE MAPS

THE HOPE LODGE 22 X 34

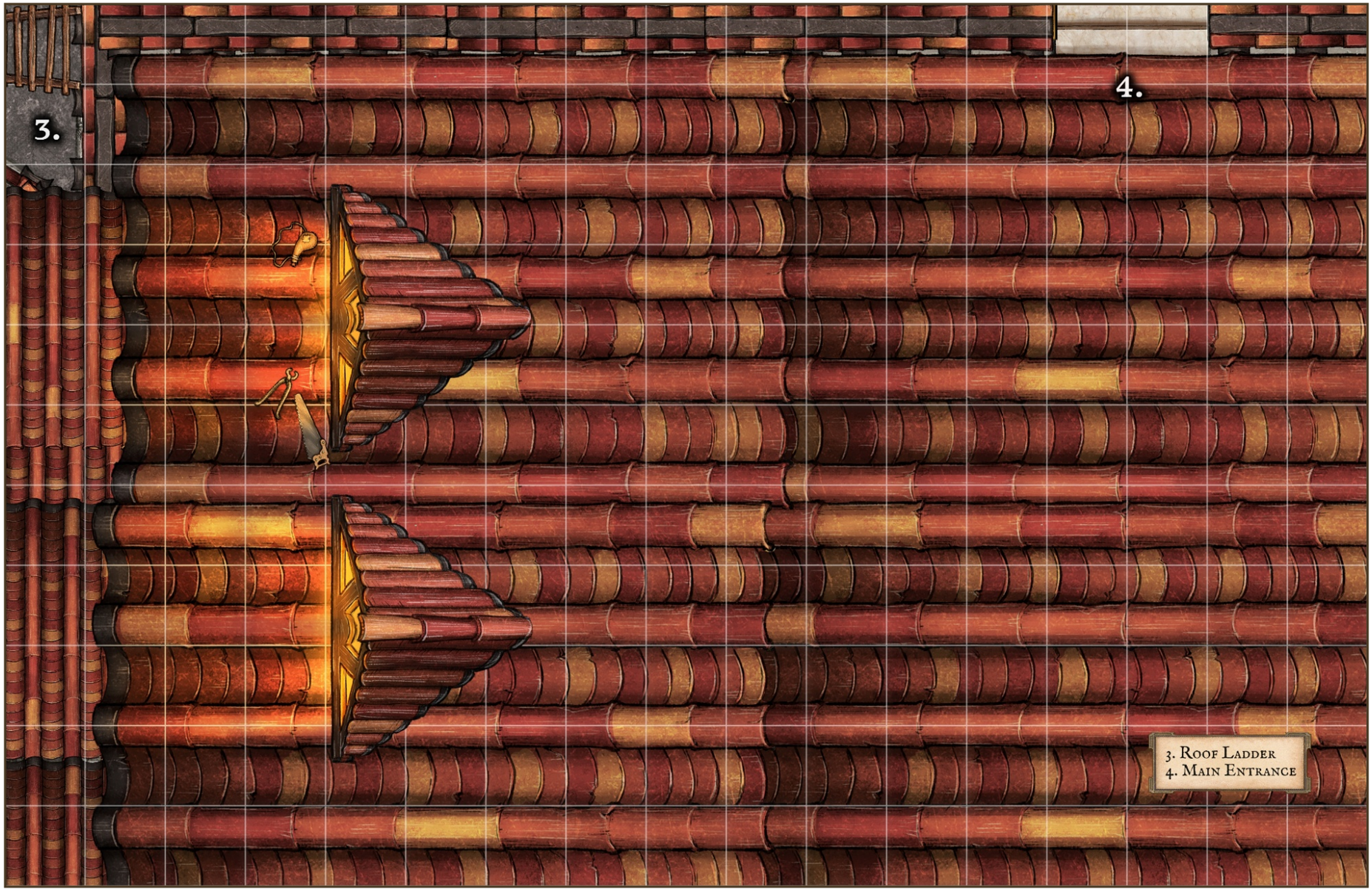
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THE MAPS

THE ROOFTOP 11 X 17

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Skills Perception +5, Stealth +6, Survival +5
Gear Breastplate Armor, Longbow, Shortsword
Senses Passive Perception 15
Languages Common plus one other language
CR 1/2 (XP 100; PB +2)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The thief guard makes two attacks, using a Shortsword or Longbow.

Shortsword. *Melee Attack Roll:* +4, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) Piercing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Attack Roll:* +4, range 150/600 ft. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) Piercing damage.

HP 16 **Speed** 30 ft. **Initiative** +2 (12) **AC** 16

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+2	+1	0	+1	0
12	*14*	*12*	*11*	*13*	*11*
Saving Throw modifiers					
+1	+2	+1	0	+1	0

NPC

ART COMING SOON

Original illustration by a human artist

THIEF GUARDS

A group of would-be thieves that have taken the place of tonight's Bemo Empire guards. Mostly interchangeable thugs who are in over their heads but certainly not to be underestimated.

NPC

ART COMING SOON

Original illustration by a human artist

AUCTIONEER

The person in charge of making sure the auction runs smoothly. They are paid very well, have tremendous resolve, and will not give up the goods easily for fear their actual employer could do worse.

Skills Perception +2
Senses Passive Perception 12
Languages Common and Draconic
CR 0 (XP 10; PB +2)

TRAITS

The auctioneer has proficiency in one skill of the GM's choice and has Advantage whenever it makes an ability check using that skill.

ACTIONS

Slap. *Melee Attack Roll:* +2, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) Bludgeoning damage.

HP 4 **Speed** 30 ft. **Initiative** +0 (10) **AC** 10

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
0	0	0	+1	+2	+2
10	*10*	*10*	*12*	*14*	*14*
Saving Throw modifiers					
0	0	0	+1	+2	+2

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +6, Survival +5
Gear Breastplate Armor, Longbow, Might Sword
Senses Passive Perception 15
Languages Common plus one other language
CR 4 (XP 1,100; PB +2)

TRAITS

Family Matters (1/Day). If Nate fails a Wisdom saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead. (He claims hired thugs murdered his father and stole the family scimitar; he offers no proof.)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The leader guard makes two attacks, using his Might Sword or Longbow.
Might Sword. *Melee Attack Roll:* +4, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 11 (2d8 + 2) Slashing damage.
Longbow. *Ranged Attack Roll:* +4, range 150/600 ft. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) Piercing damage.
Spellcasting. Nate casts the following spell, using Charisma as the spellcasting ability, requiring no Material components: **2/Day:** Invisibility
Vibe Blade (2/Day). When Nate hits with his Might Sword, he can wrap the target in thunderous energy (no action required) until the start of his next turn. If the target willingly moves 5 feet or more before then, it takes 4 (1d8) Thunder damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Cunning Action. Nate takes the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

REACTIONS

Riposte. When a creature within 5 feet of Nate misses him with a melee attack, Nate makes one Might Sword attack against it.

HP 75 **Speed** 35 ft. **Initiative** +2 (12) **AC** 16

NPC

ART
COMING SOON
Original illustration by a human artist

LEADER NATE

The clear leader of this group of imposters posing as Bemo Empire guards, focused on pressuring the auctioneer to unlock the loot they came for. Assertive, relentless, and volatile, he has invested too much to stop now.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+2	+3	+1	+1	0
14	*14*	*16*	*12*	*13*	*11*
Saving Throw modifiers					
+2	+2	+3	+1	+1	0

NPC

ART
COMING SOON
Original illustration by a human artist

TARAGUN HORNLOGGER

The richest and most eccentric of all the individuals at the function, and also your employer. Greedy, selfish, and ready to do whatever it takes, at least verbally, to fenagle his way out of a tight spot.

Skills Perception +2
Senses Passive Perception 12
Languages Common
CR 0 (XP 10; PB +2)

TRAITS

Taragun has proficiency in one skill of the GM's choice and has Advantage whenever it makes an ability check using that skill.

ACTIONS

Distract. Taragun targets one hostile creature within 30 feet. The next attack roll an ally makes against it before the start of Taragun's next turn has Advantage.

HP 6 **Speed** 30 ft. **Initiative** -1 (9) **AC** 9

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
0	-1	-1	+1	+2	+3
10	*8*	*8*	*12*	*14*	*16*
Saving Throw modifiers					
0	-1	-1	+1	+2	+3

THE HUH?

Why make this module?
The objective of this game was to make something players can engage with quickly and Game Masters (GMs) can run with little prep. The aim was neither a massive campaign that takes weeks to prepare nor a bare-bones one-shot that requires too much homebrew or improvisation to work. This was to be a single adventure with every step of the story planned out from the start. Players have a confirmed hook, and the location is somewhat confined while providing enough choice to keep players engaged without them running loose. It functions as procedurally as possible; there are multiple player interactions that affect how the game plays and ends, but each choice leads to the next.

Ideal for three to four players?
That's right. While this game can be run for more players, the idea is to keep the party small so there is less back-and-forth and less waiting between turns.

One-shot?
A game made to be run in a single session, taking roughly three to four hours to complete. Once started, each scenario builds naturally on the others.

NPC?
A non-player character controlled by the GM.

Player character?
A character in the game who is controlled and acted by a real person.

Branching paths?
Yes. The idea for this game was born out of wanting players engaged with choices, but not so open-ended that the game falls apart.

But it's still linear?
Absolutely! While this module encourages exploration and party splitting, the main story still comes together at the very end. There is a clear beginning and ending, with plenty of room to breathe within the structure, so player choice is present — even if you could argue it's an illusion of choice.

Railroading?
Players will always find something to do that you could never have imagined. Come up with something fun and unique that everyone can enjoy (even you, GM) and run with it. That said, making sure your players know which choices and story beats they are interacting with will help keep everything on track. This game does have a linear design, after all.

Convey Choice?
Each numbered scenario has a Convey Choice line that recaps exactly what your players' focus should have been at that moment. This gives you, the GM, an opportunity to understand what your players could be responding to.

Party splitting?
This story provides many scenarios designed to be explored by one player or several. We wanted every player to feel there is ample exploration to get stuck into. This will likely involve players moving through the scenarios separately or in groups, giving everyone at the table a chance to influence the story.

Scenarios?
Yes, each story beat of the game is bite-sized, so if certain players are not involved in a given moment, it won't drag on long enough to leave anyone out.

Session 0?
Before you invite players to join you, it may be best to describe the type of game you intend to run using this module. You could also review any characters your players make (4th level, three to four players).

Variety?
The aim of this story was to cover exploration, roleplay, and combat, which we believe sets the foundation for a great session of tabletop roleplaying games (TTRPGs).

Intended DC?
The scenarios mention a standard DC (difficulty class) for certain interactions. Certain plot points and moments are based around a DC, and it's okay when players miss — that is the element of chance! While this is a default, the DC can be adjusted to your play style.

Multiple endings?
Indeed, there are many NPCs and story beats that can be affected or missed. This offers excellent replayability and makes the players' choices feel impactful despite the linear structure.

Go wild?
As with so many roleplaying games, chances are you'll go off script. That's never a bad option. If players come up with something fun and different, there will always be room for improvisation in this story. The story is designed with enough choice that you won't veer too far from the ultimate goal, but if a new path develops in the wild, follow it through to its end. The NPCs' objectives stay the same, so think about how they would react.

Digital map?
You will find digital versions of the maps here:
www.gbroadgames.com/oa

GM QUICK REFERENCE

Print or copy this page and keep it beside your screen.

#	Scenario	Key checks	Outcome
1	**The Alley**	DC 10 to find the real guards' bodies; the cat in the tree saw everything.	First "thief guard" dispatched: one other relocates to check.
2	**Kitchen**	DC 15 to pick or smash the lock. DC 15 to talk or plan around the two "thief guards."	Failure: a fight. Freed staff reveal the plot; spare uniforms.
3	**Roof Ladder**	DC 10 per move on loose tiles. DC 18 to drop onto the leader by surprise.	Tile failure: 2d6 (20 ft), guards alerted. Drop failure: 3d6, noticed. Tinker's tools open the window.
4	**Main Entrance**	DC 20 to talk past the two "thief guards." Opening the door: DC 17 disguise bluff or a fight.	They carry the silver (main door) and bronze (lavatories) keys.
5	**Lavatories**	Bronze key, or DC 15 to pick the lock. The young lady is hiding in a stall.	A "thief guard" comes to check; ambush him or hide.
6	**Ballroom**	DC 10 to move behind the curtains. DC 17 to pass the guards in disguise.	Brash entry: panic; guests and band are cut down.
7	**Dining Tables**	Two guards (one if the lavatory guard fell). DC 17 to move freely.	A fight here kills Taragun.
8	**Bandstand**	One guard watches the three tied musicians. DC 17 to free them unseen.	A rescued musician can play the lockbox melody.
9	**Podium**	DC 20 to find the hidden compartment (or break it: AC 15, 15 HP).	The music sheet opens the lockbox.
10	**Auctioneer**	Nate holds him hostage. DC 20 to talk Nate into releasing him or pull him free, or to get him to reveal the sheet.	Aggravated, Nate kills him unless they are separated.
11	**Staircase**	DC 17 to descend in disguise unnoticed.	Brash entry starts the fight; overlooks the whole ballroom.
12	**Lockbox**	Band member: plays the sheet automatically, or the melody without it at DC 15 Cha (Performance). Others: sheet + DC 15 Cha (Performance) at the piano. Guessing: DC 25.	Any failure banishes the scimitar. Opened with Nate within 30 ft, it attunes to him.
13–14	**Curtains**	DC 10 to move unseen along either wall.	The quiet route to remove guards one by one.

THE CREW AT A GLANCE

Creature	HP	AC	Notes
"Thief guards"	16	16	CR 1/2. Multiattack. Two in the kitchen, two at the main entrance; in the ballroom, two at the tables and one at the bandstand.
Leader Nate	75	16	CR 4. Multiattack, 11 (2d8 + 2) Slashing; Riposte (Reaction). Holds the auctioneer.
Auctioneer	4	10	Knows the podium's secret; won't talk easily.
Taragun Hornlogger	6	9	The party's employer; bargains with anyone.

REINFORCEMENTS

When a fight breaks out, any "thief guards" not yet dealt with rush in, and the leader holds the auctioneer at sword point. For three players, have the main entrance pair stay at their post.

SIDING WITH THE THIEVES

Nate may offer to split the reward. Players who leave with the scimitar get away completely.

THE PRIZE

The Dancing Scimitar (Dancing Sword; requires Attunement; insults those it slashes), listed at 100,000 gp. Tampering or a wrong melody teleports it to a safe demiplane.

SURRENDER

Nate surrenders if the scimitar is banished, or if he drops below half his Hit Points with no "thief guards" left standing.

LOT NO. 17

THE

Opportunity

AUCTION

M

One ceremonial scimitar — reserve: priceless

MORE LORE

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