

THE FESTIVAL OF MASKS



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Title: The Festival of Masks

Theme/Genre: Mystery with touches of Fantasy and Intrigue

Tone: Lighthearted with dark undertones

Target Level for Players: Level 4

Expected Duration: 2 hours

Player Focus Preferences:

- Combat: Medium
- Roleplay: High
- Exploration: Medium

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE WORLD

In the Kingdom of Lelvaris, magic and tradition intertwine in vibrant festivals to honor the gods and protect the land from harm. Unknown to most, the festivals also serve a deeper purpose — they seal ancient, malevolent forces that threaten to surge into the mortal plane.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL AREA

The one-shot takes place in the small but lively town of **Verridor**, decorated from end to end for the annual **Festival of Masks**, a jubilant celebration where everyone dons elaborate masks and costumes. Lanterns cast warm, flickering light across the cobblestone streets, and music spills into the air from street performers and open-air taverns. Amid the merriment, whispers of “vanished townsfolk” begin to circulate, disrupting the excitement.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Centuries ago, a mysterious masked entity named **Umbra Veil** terrorized the region, draining the life essence from the people of Lelvaris. He was banished to a plane of shadow after the townsfolk performed an ancient ritual. The masks worn at the Festival of Masks are enchanted to reinforce the veil between the planes, preventing Umbra Veil’s return... ..but someone—or something—is tampering with the tradition.

IMPORTANT NPCs

1. Mayor Illona Brightsong

- Enthusiastic event organizer, seeks to ensure the festival runs smoothly.
- Motivated to keep the townspeople safe, but refuses to acknowledge the disappearances as anything more than accidents.

2. Veydan Thornquill

- Mysterious, wandering historian who researches ancient rituals.
- Knows a troubling amount about Umbra Veil and has cryptic motives.

3. Jestra “Flare” Briarrun

- Tavern performer with a sharp wit who has noticed odd occurrences during the festival.
- Wants to help uncover the truth.

4. **Umbra Veil** (the antagonist)

- A shadowy, masked entity seeking to break free from his imprisonment.
- Delightfully sinister with an unsettling, charming demeanor.

PLOT HOOK

As the festivities are in full swing, the party arrives in Verridor as travelers or festival participants. The session opens with the masked townsfolk cheering as a fireworks display illuminates the evening sky. But tension simmers beneath the surface. Amidst the music and laughter, a town crier nervously announces:

“Another villager vanished last night: **Elric Dawnhallow**, the candle-maker, is nowhere to be found!”
The masked mayor, Illona Brightsong, gazes anxiously at the party from the podium and then approaches them.

“You look like capable adventurers. Something strange is happening, and I fear it may disrupt the festival—and worse, put our people in danger. Can I count on you to investigate?”

The objective is clear: uncover the cause of the disappearances and protect the Festival of Masks from falling into ruin.

KEY LOCATIONS

LOCATION 1: THE FESTIVAL SQUARE (STARTING AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** The square is a dazzling mix of colors, music, and aromas from food stalls. Townsfolk in glittering masks dance and laugh. However, amidst the revelry, paranoia and fear bubble below the surface.
- **Possible Encounters:**
 - **NPC Roleplay:** Jestra’s performance includes veiled warnings hidden in her lyrics. A successful Insight check (DC 12) reveals that she may know more about the disappearances. If approached, she hints at strange lights flickering near the old chapel at night.
 - **Event:** A young child claims they’ve seen a “man made of smoke in the shadows.”

LOCATION 2: THE ABANDONED CHAPEL (INTERMEDIATE AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** Dark and foreboding, the chapel is covered in ivy and crumbling with age. The air feels unnaturally cold. Sinister shadowy swirls flit across the walls.
- **Challenges:**
 - **Combat Encounter:** As the party investigates, Umbra Veil’s shadow minions (3 *Shadow Spawn* variants) rise from the floor and attack.
 - **Puzzle:**
The altar holds an ancient riddle etched in stone with glowing glyphs. It reads:
“By the light of the moon and the masks we don,
The planes align; the shadows are gone.
Commune to guard, or all shall decay—
Reveal their seal to keep Umbra at bay.”
Solution: The party must place masks from the nearby statues onto specific symbols carved into the altar (Arcana or Investigation DC 14 to sort the masks correctly). Solving the puzzle suppresses a magical barrier, allowing access to the underground crypt.

LOCATION 3: THE SEALED CRYPT (FINAL AREA)

- **Atmosphere:** Shadows seem to pulse and writhe along the cold stone walls. A faint, disembodied laughter echoes, sending chills down the party’s spines. At the center of the chamber lies Umbra Veil’s cracked, glowing prison.
- **Final Challenge:**
 - As the group arrives, Umbra Veil manifests as the barrier weakens. He taunts the party before unleashing his true form.
 - **Boss Fight:** Umbra Veil (Homebrewed Shadow Knight with unique mask-themed abilities) summons shadow constructs to aid him in combat, creating a dynamic encounter where the party must deal with multiple threats while trying to destroy his lifeforce tether on the altar.
- **Environmental Hazard:** Wards around the crypt occasionally flicker, releasing blasts of shadowy energy. At the end of each round, all creatures must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d8 necrotic damage.

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

1. Shadow Spawn Minions (at the Chapel):

- HP: 22 each | AC: 14 | Attacks: Shadow Claws (+4 to hit, 1d6+2 necrotic damage)
- Tactics: Attempt to flank the party and drag weaker NPCs into shadowy corners.

2. Umbra Veil (Final Boss):

- HP: 120 | AC: 15 | Legendary Actions: Shadow Step (teleport 15 feet), Mask of Fear (force a group Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 round)
- Attacks: Shadow Blade (+6 to hit, 1d8+4 slashing + 1d6 necrotic damage)
- Tactics: Focuses on separating the party and creating an overwhelming sense of dread. His shadow constructs keep the party on their toes.

PUZZLE

At the chapel, the mask riddle requires critical thinking, and incorrect placements trigger minor traps (poison darts, DC 12 Dexterity saving throw).

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

- **Success:** If Umbra Veil is defeated, his essence disperses into the shadows, and the balance is restored. The Mayor rewards the party handsomely, and the Festival of Masks continues with newfound appreciation for the traditions.
- **Failure:** If the party fails, Umbra Veil breaks free, starting his conquest by draining the souls of Verridor. The session ends ominously, leaving space for a potential sequel.

REWARDS

- **Loot:**
 - Necklace of Shadows (grants +1 to Stealth checks).
 - 300 GP split among the party.
 - Custom magical mask: Mask of Dread (When donned, makes wearer immune to Fear effects).
- **Story Rewards:** The admiration of the townsfolk and honorary titles as festival guardians.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

- **Stat Blocks:** Provided for Umbra Veil and the shadow minions.
- **Maps:** Simple maps of the Festival Square, Chapel, and Crypt with major locations and hazards marked.
- **Player Handouts:** Copies of the riddle, carved symbols, and legends of Umbra Veil.
- **Atmosphere:** Creepy ambient noises (e.g., howling wind, distant laughter) shifting into heart-pounding battle music for the final crypt.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

- If players refuse to follow typical paths, introduce another disappearance mid-session that redirects them.
- Improvised clues, like finding torn pieces of festival masks near vanished citizens' homes, can guide them back to the planned narrative.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

DEBRIEF

- What was your favorite part of the story?
- Who/what surprised you the most?
- Would you change how things turned out?

EPILOGUE OPTIONS

If Umbra Veil is defeated, perhaps the party is invited to unravel a deeper conspiracy linked to his return. This could lead to further adventures in the Kingdom of Lelvaris, delving into the secrets and hidden threats of this magical land.