

A MASQUE AT MIDNIGHT!



A DUNGEON WORLD adventure by Joe Banner

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'TWTIXT DOWNS AND SEA, WE FLOURISH

You stand on a sandy beach in western Chalcedon. The calm sea breeze and gentle afternoon sun lie at odds with the chaotic hustle surrounding you: frantic crewmen setting up podiums and stalls; early revelers keen for a stolen drink; po-faced enforcers, their iron sabatons crunching softly on the sand.

This is Pewsey, a picturesque seaside resort on the social up-and-up. Mayor Tacitus' son has come of age and tonight there is to be a commemorative masque in the young lad's honour. You and yours are here after your last adventure, looking for an opportunity to celebrate victory - or commiserate defeat!

Who organised your last job together? Tell the group what it was then roll+WIS. On a 10+, the job went well! Everyone is a little richer in pocket and spirit right now. On a 7-9, the job was a success, but barely. After bed and board, you're no better off than you started. On a 6- the job was a wash - whoever rolled, strike off half your adventuring gear, rations and ammo (or the equivalent value in coin) right now.

Which among you is the best at hearing rumours? Since you arrived, you've heard murmurs from the townsfolk. Roll+WIS. On a 10+ the GM will give you two names; on a 7-9 three names; on a 6-, four. The townsfolk keep mentioning these names, along with words like 'assassination' and 'tonight!'

Who's the most likely amongst you to take advantage of all this poorly-guarded drink? Roll+CON. On a 10+, you're feeling merry! On a 7-9, pick one: you're outright drunk (-1 WIS) or an enforcer saw you swipe that last flagon and is heading your way. On a 6-, both.

The beach is packed with people, but just a moment ago you saw someone familiar in the crowd - one of the people you heard rumours about earlier. They had something in their hands... something from your last adventure! (Maybe a gem you failed to claim, a contract now signed with another adventuring party, or simply your due reward.) What do you do?

A MURDER MOST HORRID

At the stroke of midnight, as the entire town stands enraptured by the performance of the Masque players, one of the NPCs below intends to slice the throat of Mayor Tacitus. It's likely all of them will be close to the Tacitus table come midnight.

Duke Thorncombe: obese and dressed in an ill-fitting, expensive coat. It's rare he is seen without a goblet in hand and a worried expression on his face.

Reiner Cheapfields: estranged nephew and heir to the Cheapfields family fortune. Usually seen doing his best to mingle while decked out in his families' highly technical, ceremonial armour.

Sister Chumleigh: a simple friar in spare robes, kindly extolling the heresies of such a garish event to any who'll listen.

Madame Strigér D'Esrodine: master of the revels and stage manager for tonight's masque. She'll be laughed out of high society if things don't go perfectly tonight.

Sir Eastcastle: a down-to-earth man in simple garb. In spite of his noble bearing, he is well-respected by the local farmers.

Tedd: Sir Eastcastle's faithful manservant whose usual response to a question is "I wouldn't really know a lot about that, sir."

Lord Dominar: a "gentleman warlord". His regal bearing and noble silks stand in contrast to the wolfshead cloak pinned to his shoulders. His companions, dressed in goat hides and refusing to dance, don't look like locals...

WHODUNNIT?

In my playtests, I intended Lord Dominar to be the murderer. However, the GM should feel free to pick whoever they want before the adventure begins, or even someone from a previous adventure.

THE MASQUES & THE TABLEAUX

Before midnight, the masque performers will be putting on several tableaux - smaller scenes commemorating notable events and fictional tales, performed by a troupe of costumed actors carefully posed and theatrically lit.

Two crews take it in turns to perform. When they are not on stage, they are likely to be preparing with the rest of the troupe, or taking a quick glass of wine in the refreshments tent.

THE TABLEAUX

From 6pm and on the hour until midnight, choose a new tableaux from the list below that the players portray on the main podium.

Pre-imperium Chalcedon: A land of rolling hills, split between druidic covens and petty fiefdoms.

Chalcedon today: a depiction of the Chalcedon empire, a steam-fired continent at the peak of industrial revolution.

A city of ice and fire: The Mirkasan capital, Nosjad, wreathed in thick snows and overrun by witches and beastmen.

The Siege of Umberto: The recent demonic assault in Umberto, the desert city. (If you have played *Shadows of Umberto*, you will know whether this ended in victory or defeat.)

Savage Oppression: Tribal invaders in green and grey frog masks, tearing apart a Chalcedon airship. (If you have played *The Green Scar*, you may have some idea of the story from the frog's perspective.)

Civilisations of yore: A beautiful and ancient city (akin to ancient Rome) ruled by titans of obsidian and marble.

What lies below: The lands of Xi, the under-empire; a land of great riches, with stranger dangers lurking in the shadows.

WELCOME TO PEWSEY

Formerly a fishing market with good transport links to the capital, several nobles built lavish summer homes in Pewsey. This had the effect of drawing further wealth to the town and triggered a transition from simple fishery to a getaway for the rich and privileged.

PLACES IN PEWSEY

The market quarter: the market is about a mile from the coast and has changed little, despite the town's influx of cash. The market, inns and housing are mostly owned by local fishermen and farmers. Mead, mutton and a straw bed can be found at the College Arms for a fair price.

The coast: Pewsey's stone beach has been gentrified in the last few years; the discarded flagons and drunk fishermen have been largely replaced with bathing-houses and day-trippers from the capital. Tonight, the beach is in spotless condition and a bright red podium has been erected for the players.

The Tacitan terraces: Between the market and the beach lies these suites and apartments, mostly home to the rich and famous. Many are for sale, but cost a fortune. Doctors, dentists, barbers and beauticians can be found in the area in addition to fine dining, polite entertainment and a lavish aquarium.

Pewsey park: An acre of landscaped ground between the renovated coastline and older quarter. This has mostly been built in the traditional Chalcedon style, with prim hedgerows, trailing roses and bordered flowerbeds. The occasional oak tree has been planted as well. Much of the gardens have been covered tonight by the nobles' gaudy pavilions.

WHEN YOU SPOUT LORE, YOU MAY RECALL...

... the **Chalcedon imperium** fought and lost against the people of both Mirkasa and Umberto on two separate occasions.

... the **duke of Havenshine** has been unable to pay his dues to the capital in some time, and has been threatened with seizure twice already.

... the **Cheapfields estate** is still being heavily fought over following the death of family patriarch, Obadiah Cheapfield, in mysterious circumstances overseas.

... **Sir Eastcastle was passed over for mayorhood** in favour of Tacitus. Although he was respectful of the choice, it was unpopular with the locals.

... **Lord Dominar's estate** has been the target of mountain-man raids for years. The last you heard, he'd died defending his lands.

IF YOU'VE PLAYED DOMINARS MOUNTAIN BEFORE..

This document assumes you've *not* played my previous adventure, **Dominar's Mountain**. If that's the case, then without the PCs help Lord Dominar lost everything stopping the clans. In the end he managed to kill their leader in open battle, and claimed leadership of the clans by their ancient laws.

After recovering, Dominar is now looking to enact revenge against any who failed to answer his call for help. Top of the list is mayor Tacitus, but the list might also include the PCs themselves.

If you've played Dominar's Mountain already, then the lord will likely recognise the characters and act very differently. He might not even be alive any more... but then, when has a little thing like death kept a good NPC down?

FRONTS

DANGER: THE WAYFARER'S PERFORMANCE

The Wayfarer performers are one of the most famous troupes in the world. A bad review, no matter the circumstances, is considered utterly unwarrantable.

If someone or something is responsible for ruining the play, they have the money, means and connections to ensure a bitter and deadly revenge.

Impulse: to strike out at those that ruined them

Grim Portents:

- * The performance is disturbed (a performer dies on stage, the stage is destroyed)
- * Days or weeks later, the wayfarers track down the person responsible for ruining their performance.
- * Innocents linked to the target are found dead in increasingly gruesome ways
- * Months later, the wayfarer's target is killed in 'an unfortunate accident'.

Doom: Destruction (The wayfarer's revenge results in a trail of deaths and chaos as they track the target.)

DANGER: LORD DOMINAR'S LEGACY

When Lord Dominar called his banners, the (then-lord) Tacitus was in the middle of securing his position in Pewsey and declined to help. Lord Dominar has not forgotten nor forgiven this slight, and intends to ruin Tacitus' big night by way of making things even.

Impulse: to ruin his former allies' well-being

Grim Portents:

- * A cold reception between Dominar and Tacitus
- * Dominar spikes the fire-juggler's drink, sabotaging a tableaux
- * Dominar's barbarians start getting rowdy
- * The barbarians take offence at the nobles and draw swords

Doom: Usurpation (The event is ruined, people have died, and if Tacitus himself isn't dead then his career certainly is.)

FOES

LORD DOMINAR'S WOLFPACK:

Goathide-wearing savages with a selection of axes, swords and foul smells between them. Barely tolerated by the nobles, it's only a matter of time before one of them rubs someone the wrong way. Possibly literally. **Instinct:** to eschew conventions of the civilised world

6 HP 1 Armour d8 damage (war axe)

Group, Close, Intelligent, Organised

- * Claim something that's not theirs
- * Brazenly flaunt authority
- * Gang up on someone
- * Start a crude contest

DRUNKEN REVELERS: If you're looking for fun, you've got to expect to run into a few of these. Right? **Instinct:** to start trouble

3 HP 0 Armour w[d6] damage (bottle)

Horde, Close

- * Start a ludicrous drinking game
- * Make threats to someone dangerous
- * Make an embarrassment of oneself





PEWSEY ENFORCERS: Ah, the humble guardsman versus the slurring drunk. Never mind goblins, trolls and demons - this is what fantasy battle is all about! **Instinct:** to maintain order

3 HP 1 Armour d6 damage (spear)

Horde, Close, Intelligent, Organised

- * Form ranks
- * Make an arrest
- * Patrol an area

TREASURE

(Roll the damage die of the strongest attacker)

1. A pretty felt wallet, empty
2. Free bed and board at a local's home
3. Free drinks all night
4. The everlasting thanks of a lesser noble
5. A stuffed coin purse
6. A pair of silver cufflinks
7. A golden ticket
8. A valuable piece of objet d'art
9. A goblet inlaid with gold and jade
10. A magical potion or tincture