



UNMASKED

A short adventure for five players

By Corwin Riddle

4 Difficulty
5 Complexity

Unmasked is a short adventure for five 3rd to 5th-level players, taking place during a masquerade festival in a crowded city.

The players will engage in a fast-paced chase through the city's streets, facing a series of short skill challenges and quick encounters in an attempt to keep up with and apprehend a masked villain.

BACKGROUND

The city of Illodaunt has always been a strange town, shrouded in mystery. Founded centuries ago by an assortment of exiled magical folk and creatures, the city quickly exploded into a haven for exiled or displaced wizards, sorcerers, and unusual creatures. Nothing is quite what it seems when traveling through Illodaunt, and that's how its residents like it.

The crooked streets and winding alleys reflect the features of such inhabitants; arcane-powered lamps float above the cobbled roads, buildings twist and turn as they move and change each day, and alleys seem to vanish as fast as new ones appear. Accompanying these oddities is an assortment of illustrious and mysterious merchants known as the bazaar; no magical item is too rare or expensive for them to offer.

But for all its wonders, the city is rarely visited by the curious folk that might most appreciate it. The majority of Illodaunt's residents were ostracized or discriminated against by non-magical beings, and are quite unfriendly toward such visitors; those stubborn enough to ignore the warnings and enter the city have often been attacked, killed, or disappeared entirely.

However, once a year, Illodaunt opens its gates to the whole world, inviting both magic and non-magic folk into its streets for a week-long celebration known as *A Thousand Masks*. For one short week, everyone in the city is considered equal; both residents and visitors are given festive masks and together they revel in the streets with drink, dance, and—of course—magic.

During this time, the outsiders are permitted to buy and trade with the bazaar, a privilege that draws in all manner of interested parties. The bazaar, aware of this, saves many of its best items for the festival; its carts line the streets, offering a taste of magic to the eager buyers. One can find nearly anything among their wares, though—more often than not—they will wish they hadn't.

USING THE ADVENTURE

Unmasked is designed as a short, one-shot adventure that guides the players through a series of short skill challenges and encounters as part of a thrilling chase that culminates in a showdown with their quarry.

The adventure is broken into five chapters, each one containing a short skill challenge or encounter that advances the chase to the next chapter. The party's performance in each chapter represents their speed and efficiency for keeping up with the masked man, and though they cannot fail the chapters or lose track of him completely, there are bonuses and consequences for succeeding quickly.

Chapter 1: *The Man in the Mask*

Skill Challenge 1: The players witness a murder and run after the culprit, chasing him into the crowded festival streets.

Chapter 2: *The Ambush in the Alley*

Skill Challenge 2, Encounter 1: The players enter a narrow alley, where they must fight through debris and a group of thugs.

Chapter 3: *The Mass in the Market*

Skill Challenge 3: The players see the masked man slip into a crowd and must disperse it to flush him out of hiding.

Chapter 4: *The Path to the Park*

Encounter 2, Skill Challenge 4: The players are ambushed by several thieves as they enter the park. Afterwards, the players must find the masked man within a crowd of revelers.

Chapter 5: *The Race on the Rooftops*

Skill Challenge 5, Encounter 3: The players chase the masked man across the roofs of Illodaunt, engaging him in combat.

USING THE MAPS

Each of the encounters has a map you can cut out and use:

Encounter 1: *The Ambush in the Alley*

Maps: M1a, M1b (pages 13 and 14)

Encounter 2: *The Path to the Park*

Maps: M2a, M2b, M2c (pages 15, 16, and 17)

Encounter 3: *The Race on the Rooftops*

Maps: M3a, M3b, M3c (pages 18, 19, and 20)

CHAPTER 1: THE MAN IN THE MASK

Skill Challenge Level 3

As the players arrive in Illodaunt, they'll be directed through the gates and toward the center of the city where the festival is taking place. Almost immediately after entering the city, they'll hear a scream and witness a murder, which starts an epic chase through the masquerade festival.

When the players enter Illodaunt, read the following:

Following a steady stream of visitors, you are swept under a formidable gate and into the crowded city of Illodaunt. Laughter and cheering can be heard echoing throughout the streets, which are covered with lavishly-dressed merchants and their carts, welcoming patrons with simple magic tricks and flashes of light. Small children skip through the crowd, handing out clay and paper masks, which seem alive as the colors swiftly change and dance across the surface.

Perception (DC 10): *It's extremely crowded, and nearly every reveler has already donned a mask, hiding their true identity.*

Arcana (DC 10): *It's impossible to focus on the arcane properties of a particular item—the magical energy in the city is overpowering.*

To start the chase, read the following:

All of a sudden, a high-pitched scream rises above the ambient noise. In front of you, the crowd begins to panic and flee, slowing your progress as you move through the commotion. A man lies on the ground in a growing pool of blood, a short, woman holding his head and weeping. "Murderer!" a passerby yells, pointing his finger.

You follow his direction and see a tall, lanky man in dark clothes pushing his way through the crowd, trying to escape. He turns back for a moment and grins before donning a black mask, and it suddenly seems incredibly difficult to keep him in focus. "Don't just stand there," someone says, looking at you as they gesture to your weapons. "He's getting away!"

STARTING THE SKILL CHALLENGE

Allow the players to rush after him, pushing through the crowd to catch up. They will finally get through the bulk of the crowd, but the man in the mask seems to have disappeared. They will need to take a minute to figure out where they are and which way he could have gone.

When they decide to pursue, read the following:

You and your allies make your way through the crowd, following the man in the mask deeper into the streets of Illodaunt. As you break through the bulk of the revelers, you find yourselves in an open square filled with merchants and several narrow alleys.

Scanning the area, you realize that you've lost track of your mark. You'll have to quickly search the area for clues if you're to discover his escape route and keep up with him. There isn't much time—a few more seconds and he'll be out of your reach.

SKILL CHALLENGE 1: FINDING YOUR BEARINGS

You lost track of the man in the mask, but he has to be close. Scanning the area should yield clues as to which direction he fled.

Setup: The players must determine which way the man in the mask is headed before he gets too far ahead and they lose him entirely.

Level: 3

Complexity: The skill challenge continues until a player makes a successful **DC 25 Perception** check. Each time a player makes a successful check with one of the primary skills below, the Perception check DC is permanently reduced by 3. Only one player per round may make this check.

To Succeed: If they make the Perception check before having made 6 primary skill check attempts, the players succeed at the skill challenge.

Failing: If the players make more than 6 primary skill check attempts before making the successful Perception check, consider the skill challenge failed, though they still continue to **Chapter 2**.

Primary Skills: Athletics, Diplomacy, Insight, Perception, Streetwise (no maximum successes for each skill)

- **Athletics (DC 14):** You push several revelers aside, clearing your vision as you study the surrounding area.
- **Diplomacy (DC 14):** You gain the attention of several nearby merchants, who quickly point you in the right direction.
- **Insight (DC 14):** You notice several revelers talking excitedly and looking in the direction as if intrigued by something; you scan the area they seem to be watching.
- **Streetwise (DC 14):** You are no stranger to dark alleys and avoiding a crowd, and quickly isolate the most likely escape routes.

Secondary Skills: Endurance, History

- **Endurance (DC 10):** You try your hardest to maintain focus on the man in the mask, directing your allies in the right direction. Add a +2 bonus to an ally's primary skill check.
- **History (DC 10):** You're somewhat familiar with the layout of Illodaunt, and relay helpful information to your allies. Add a +2 bonus to an ally's primary skill check.

Success: *Following the direction of the clues, you catch a glimpse of the man in the mask as he dodges behind a series of merchant carts. He turns and notices you, cursing as he frantically leaps into the street and slips into a nearby alley. You enter soon after, close behind him. Continue to **Chapter 2**; the players only need 3 successes in the following skill challenge (**Skill Challenge 2**).*

Failure: *Finally, you catch sight of the man in the mask, far ahead. He turns back, giving a mock salute, before casually walking into a nearby alley. It takes you a short while to fight through the crowd, but you reach the alley soon after and enter, chasing after him. Continue to **Chapter 2**.*

CHAPTER 2:

THE AMBUSH IN THE ALLEY

Skill Challenge Level 4 Encounter Level 3 (160 XP)

The players enter the alley, hot on the heels of the man in the mask. The man runs ahead, dodging debris and piles of crates, which the players must pass through. On the other side, a group of thugs wait to ambush the players, who may or may not be surprised, depending on their success in the skill challenge leading up to it.

When the players enter the alley, read the following:

The narrow alley winds crookedly between several tall buildings, their windows shut or boarded up. Several magical lamps float overhead, giving off just enough light for you to notice the piles of debris in your way. Ahead, the man in the mask dashes nimbly over the tops of piles of crates and festival garbage, bouncing effortlessly off the walls as he nears the other side.

Perception (DC 10): The debris in the alley is both cumbersome and unnaturally dense, as if someone had intentionally set it up.

Perception (DC 14): The end of the alley winds out of view, though the lights of the festival reflect off its walls.

SKILL CHALLENGE 2: PASSING THROUGH THE DEBRIS

The man in the mask has another head start, but you're not far behind—the only thing standing in your way is an alley full of crates, barrels, and piles of garbage.

Setup: The players must make their way through piles of debris and garbage before the man in the mask escapes.

Level: 4

Complexity: The skill challenge continues until the players reach 4 successes, but if it takes them more than 7 attempts, consider the skill challenge failed, though they still continue to **Chapter 3**.

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Arcana, Athletics, Perception, Streetwise (no maximum successes for each skill)

- **Acrobatics (DC 15):** You nimbly hop onto a pile of crates, balancing yourself as you follow the man across the top of the debris.
- **Arcana (DC 15):** You focus on several of the floating magical lamps, brightening them temporarily and making it easier to navigate through the garbage.
- **Athletics (DC 15):** You force your way through the debris, knocking crates and barrels to the side and clearing a path.
- **Perception (DC 15):** You watch the man in the mask and his route through the alley, imitating his steps to avoid the trash and debris.
- **Streetwise (DC 15):** You easily recognize which crates can support your weight, stepping carefully but quickly as you hop across them.

Secondary Skills: None

Success: Breaking through the last of the debris, you round a final, crooked corner and see the alley's end. Beyond the alley is a crowded square full of dancers and entertainers. The man in the mask stands at the end of the alley for a moment, looking back with an annoyed sigh as you close the distance. He lets forth a sharp whistle, and several thugs step into view, grinning as they crack their knuckles. Begin **Encounter 1**. The players do not give up a surprise round, and have one additional round (3 total) to defeat the thugs before **Chapter 3**.

Failure: It takes longer than you thought to break through the debris, and as you near the last turn, you hear a sharp whistle cut above the sound of the festival. Standing at the end of the alley is the man in the mask, who turns his back and strolls casually toward the end of the alley. Suddenly, a group of thugs jump out from several alcoves, brandishing clubs. Each player loses a healing surge. Begin **Encounter 1** by giving the thugs a surprise round against the players.

ENCOUNTER 1: THUGS AND CLUBS

The man in the mask has called in some friends to hold you up while he tries to escape. You'll have to dispatch them quickly if you expect to keep up with him.

THE MAP

Use maps **M1a** and **M2b** (pages 13 and 14).

SETUP

4 Illodaunt Thugs (T)

SPECIAL FEATURES

- If the players failed the previous skill challenge, have the thugs surround the players and gain a surprise round.
- If the players defeat the thugs in 2 rounds or less, they only need 3 successes for the next skill challenge (**Skill Challenge 3**). If the players succeeded at the skill challenge before this encounter, they have 3 rounds to defeat the thugs and gain the bonus.
- Each thug can take two separate hits before dying. A missed attack deals no damage and does not count.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Height: There is no ceiling.

Illumination: The alley is well-lit by the lamps and nearby festival lights.

Crates and Barrels: Marked as such on the map, a player or thug can make a **DC 10 Athletics** check to throw or push one of these into an enemy, dealing **1d6** damage and pushing them back 1 square.

ILLODAUNT THUGS IN COMBAT

The thugs are goons hired by the man in the mask and left in the alley to ambush any that tried to follow his escape. The thugs will try to gang up on players and stay close to make use of *Mob Rule*, and will try to knock over barrels and crates if players are adjacent.

The thugs will try to kill the players, but their only objective is to slow the player's progress with *Force Club*, giving the man in the mask enough time to escape.

*The man in the mask should already be far out of range during this encounter, but if your players insist on trying to engage him, read the tips called **Keeping the Man in the Mask Alive**, on page 12.*

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Use your discretion to end the encounter. The players could eliminate a couple of the thugs right away, scaring the others off and ending combat. Or they could assume the thugs would accept an appropriate bribe (50g) and offer it to pass. The thugs don't know anything about the man in the mask. He approached them and offered a decent amount of gold to wait in the alley for his signal (the whistle).

Regardless of how combat ends, the encounter itself is a quick brawl that takes no more than 15-20 seconds, leaving plenty of time to keep an eye on the man in the mask as he makes his escape. If the players ended the encounter within the allotted number of rounds, they gain a bonus to the next skill challenge.

Illodaunt Thug		Level 3 Minion
Medium natural humanoid (human)		XP 40
HP two hits; a missed attack deals no damage	Initiative +1	
AC 16, Fortitude 15, Reflex 12, Will 13	Perception +1	
Speed 6		
TRAITS		
Mob Rule		
An Illodaunt thug gains a +2 power bonus to all attack and damage rolls while at least two other thugs are within 5 squares of it.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓢ Force Club (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: +7 vs AC		
Hit: 5 force damage and the target is slowed.		
Str 15 (+3)	Dex 11 (+1)	Wis 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 10 (+1)	Cha 12 (+2)
Alignment Evil	Languages Common	
Equipment club		

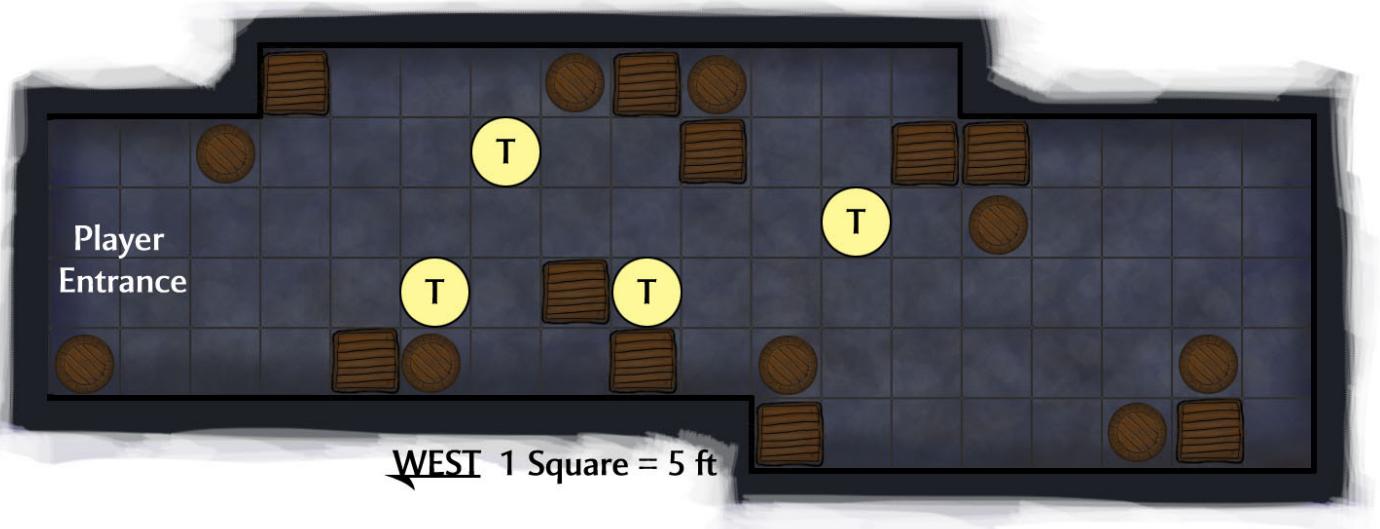
If the players end the encounter in time, read:

You make quick work of the masked man's thugs, leaving just enough time to catch a glimpse of your quarry as he dashes out of the alley's narrow exit. Continue to **Chapter 3**; the players need only 3 successful skill checks (instead of 4) for the next skill challenge (**Skill Challenge 3**).

If the players do not end the encounter in time, read:

The thugs were more trouble than you expected, and fatigue is already starting to set in. You know the man in the mask is getting away; as the last enemy falls, you look up, catching a quick glimpse of him as he leaves the alley. Each player loses two healing surges; continue to **Chapter 3**.

Map 1 (M1a, M1b)



CHAPTER 3: THE MASS IN THE MARKET

Skill Challenge Level 4

The players exit the alley and see the man in the mask flee into a dense crowd of people watching entertainers and auctioneers. The man in the mask is somewhere within the crowd, but the players will need to disperse the group of revelers to flush out and apprehend their target.

When the players enter the market, read the following:

The alley opens into a wide street filled with dancers, entertainers, and stages covered with merchants showing off their wares. Countless people have gathered around, making it almost impossible to pass. The man in the mask looks back with surprise, then ducks into the mass surrounding the stage. The crowd is too dense to enter, but causing a commotion and dispersing it should flush out your quarry.

Perception (DC 10): *The street only has a few escape routes; the alley, toward the gate, and another gate leading into the park—the heart of the festival.*

Perception (DC 14): *You notice several strands of light shooting overhead, followed by loud pops. They seem to be coming from the park—some sort of magical fireworks.*

FLAVOR TEXT

Read the following flavor text during the skill challenge to alert the players as to their progress.

When they gain the first success:

You inspect revelers as they leave the area, but there's no sign yet of the man in the mask in those groups or the crowd itself.

When they gain the second success:

Even more people are leaving the area, making it easier to see through the breaks in the crowd and scan the area.

When they gain the third success:

The market crowd is thinning out enough that you can move through the revelers, giving you a better chance at locating your mark.

When they gain the fourth success:

There are few groups left, and you've kept a keen eye out for those leaving the area. The man in the mask will have to reveal himself soon as he tries to escape, or risk being captured.

SKILL CHALLENGE 3: BREAKING UP THE CROWD

The man in the mask is weaving through the market crowd, hoping to lose his pursuers. You'll need to disperse the mass of people before your mark has a chance to disguise himself or slip away.

Setup: The players must scare, bully, and convince the crowd to disperse, revealing the man in the mask's location.

Level: 4

Complexity: The skill challenge continues until a player makes a successful **DC 26 Perception** check. Each time a player makes a successful check with one of the primary skills below, the Perception check DC is permanently reduced by 3. Only one player per round may make this check.

To Succeed: If they make the Perception check before having made 6 primary skill check attempts, the players succeed at the skill challenge.

Failing: If the players make more than 6 primary skill check attempts before making the successful Perception check, consider the skill challenge failed, though they still continue to **Chapter 4**.

Primary Skills: Athletics, Diplomacy, History, Intimidate, Streetwise, Thievery (no maximum successes for each skill)

- **Athletics (DC 15):** *You move into the crowd and start pushing people aside, causing others to notice and back away in an attempt to avoid the violence.*
- **Diplomacy (DC 15):** *You plead with nearby revelers, convincing them that the area is so densely populated as to be dangerous. Several groups heed your warning and leave the area.*
- **History (DC 15):** *You're well-versed in the history of Il-lodaunt and its enemies, and yell warnings of an imminent dragon attack. People start to look to the sky as they leave the crowd and run for cover.*
- **Intimidate (DC 15):** *You pretend to pick a fight with several weak-looking revelers, scaring them into leaving the market.*
- **Streetwise (DC 15):** *You recognize several of the remedies being sold on stage, heckling them and calling their products a hoax, enticing people to walk away in disgust.*
- **Thievery (DC 15):** *You start snatching purses, crying out that there's a pickpocket in the crowd. A number of people reach for their coin purses and back away from the crowd, warily.*

Secondary Skills: None

Success: *The bulk of the crowd has left the area, only a few scattered groups remain. As you inspect the revelers, one man breaks away from the group and heads swiftly toward the park. As he nears the gate, he looks back for a second before breaking into a sprint—it's the man in the mask. Continue to **Chapter 4**. The players are hot on the masked man's heels, giving them more time to defeat the illusion in **Encounter 2**; it fades at the end of the fourth round (instead of fading at the end of the third).*

Failure: *It took longer than you had hoped, but the crowd has finally left the area. Unfortunately, you didn't notice the man in the mask among any of the revelers. As you begin to scan the area again, you hear a shout near the park entrance—the man in the mask is pushing revelers out of his way, slipping past the park gate. Continue to **Chapter 4**.*

CHAPTER 4:

THE PATH TO THE PARK

Encounter Level 4 (200 XP) Skill Challenge Level 4

The players continue after the man in the mask, heading towards the heart of the festival, held in a grand park filled with tents, fireworks, and loud music. As they head down the path toward the park, a group of gnomes appear to assist an illusion of the man in the mask (though the players think it's really him), engaging the players in combat.

When the players pass through the park gate, read:

Passing through the gate to the park, you step onto a stone pathway, lined with pillars and statues. Up ahead, you can see fireworks and magic tricks—the sound and music makes it difficult to hear. Suddenly, the man in the mask steps out from behind a pillar, grinning. “You’d best give up the chase,” he says, looking bored and adjusting the cuffs on his shirt. “The only thing you’ll manage to catch is your last breath. Allow me to help.”

Perception (DC 14): *The statues seem to be turning their heads slightly to watch you, their arms beginning to move.*

ENCOUNTER 2: GNOMES AT THE GATE

The man in the mask stops and faces you, but it doesn't look like he's ready to give up just yet. Several gnomes appear out of nowhere, brandishing magical wands and eyeing you in anticipation of battle.

THE MAP

Use maps **M2a**, **M2b**, and **M2c** (pages 15, 16 and 17).

SETUP

4 Gnome Sorcerers (G)
1 Mask's Illusion (I)

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Each gnome sorcerer can take three separate hits before dying. A missed attack deals no damage and does not count as a hit, even if a power says otherwise.
- The man in the mask's illusion fades a little each round, and disappears completely at the end of the third round (or end of the fourth round, if they succeeded on the previous skill challenge).
- If the players can end combat before the illusion disappears, they gain a bonus to the next skill challenge (**Skill Challenge 4**). Read the flavor text that corresponds with their success or failure to advance the story.

Gnome Sorcerer		Level 4 Minion
Small fey humanoid		XP 44
HP three hits; a missed deals no damage		Initiative +5
AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 15, Will 14		Perception +3
Speed 5		Low-light vision
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓢ Forked Blast (weapon, force) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: +10 vs AC, two targets		
Hit: 7 force damage and slide both of the targets 1 square		
IMMEDIATE INTERRUPTS		
A Helping Hand ♦ At-Will		
Trigger: an enemy moves adjacent to a statue		
Effect: the sorcerer		
Str 10 (+2)	Dex 16 (+5)	Wis 13 (+3)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 11 (+2)	Cha 14 (+4)
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Common, Elven
Equipment wand		

Mask's Illusion		Level 4 Minion
Medium magical creature (illusion)		XP 44
HP does not take damage		Initiative +2
AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 15, Will 14		Perception +2
Speed 4		Low-light vision
TRAITS		
Illusory Presence		
If the illusion is hit by an attack, it becomes insubstantial until the end of the round.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓢ Shadowy Reach (psychic) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: +10 vs Will		
Hit: 1d6 psychic damage		
Str 10 (+2)	Dex 16 (+5)	Wis 13 (+3)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 11 (+2)	Cha 14 (+4)
Alignment Evil		Languages Common, Elven

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Height: There is no ceiling.

Illumination: The park is dimly-lit.

Pillars: Marked as white pillars. These are 20 feet tall.

Statues: Marked as grayish-white statues, a sorcerer can make the statue attack a player as an immediate interrupt if a player moves adjacent to it. +9 vs. AC, 1d6 damage and the target is pushed 1 square. A player can use this ability by making a **DC 14 Arcana** check when a gnome moves adjacent to one. A statue can only attack once per round.

GNOME SORCERERS IN COMBAT

The gnomes are working with the man in the mask to stall the players, and since they are magical natives of Illodaunt, they can control the statues with *A Helping Fist*. They will use *Forked Blast* to damage multiple adjacent players when possible.

The gnomes know some information about the man in the mask and if defeated or forced to surrender, they will reveal his name is Visil and that he warned them that outsiders might come looking for him. The gnomes themselves are not evil, but were tricked into thinking Visil was the victim.

MASK'S ILLUSION IN COMBAT

The mask's illusion attacks with *Shadowy Reach*, but deals only very slight psychic damage. It will use *Illusory Presence* to turn insubstantial immediately after taking damage. This is to force the players to focus on the gnomes and not waste their time attacking the illusion, which cannot die until it disappears at the end of the appropriate round.

Allow your players to make checks to determine that the illusion is not real. Although they will still need to deal with the gnomes by killing them, talking them down, or forcing them to surrender, the players should be able to get a head start on the next encounter if they use a check to figure out that the illusion is merely a distraction:

- **Insight (DC 16):** You see through the facade. This man in the mask is a mere illusion—the real one must have left it to stall your pursuit. Time to end this fight while you can still catch up.
- **Arcana (DC 16):** The man in the mask is giving off a strong magical energy, which you recognize as an arcane illusion. He must have left it here in hopes of tricking you into stopping.
- **Perception (DC 16):** The man in the mask seems to move slowly and with hesitation, a delay normal to illusions. He must have created this illusion to slow you down while he escapes.

FLAVOR TEXT

Read the following flavor text during the encounter to alert the players as to their progress.

When the illusion uses Illusory Presence, read:

The man in the mask seems to disappear for a split-second, before

At the end of the first round, read:

The man in the mask seems to disappear for a split-second, before reappearing—his movements now seem slower and less effective.

At the end of the second and third rounds, read:

The man in the mask seems to fade slightly, becoming more translucent as its movement slows even more.

When the illusion disappears, read:

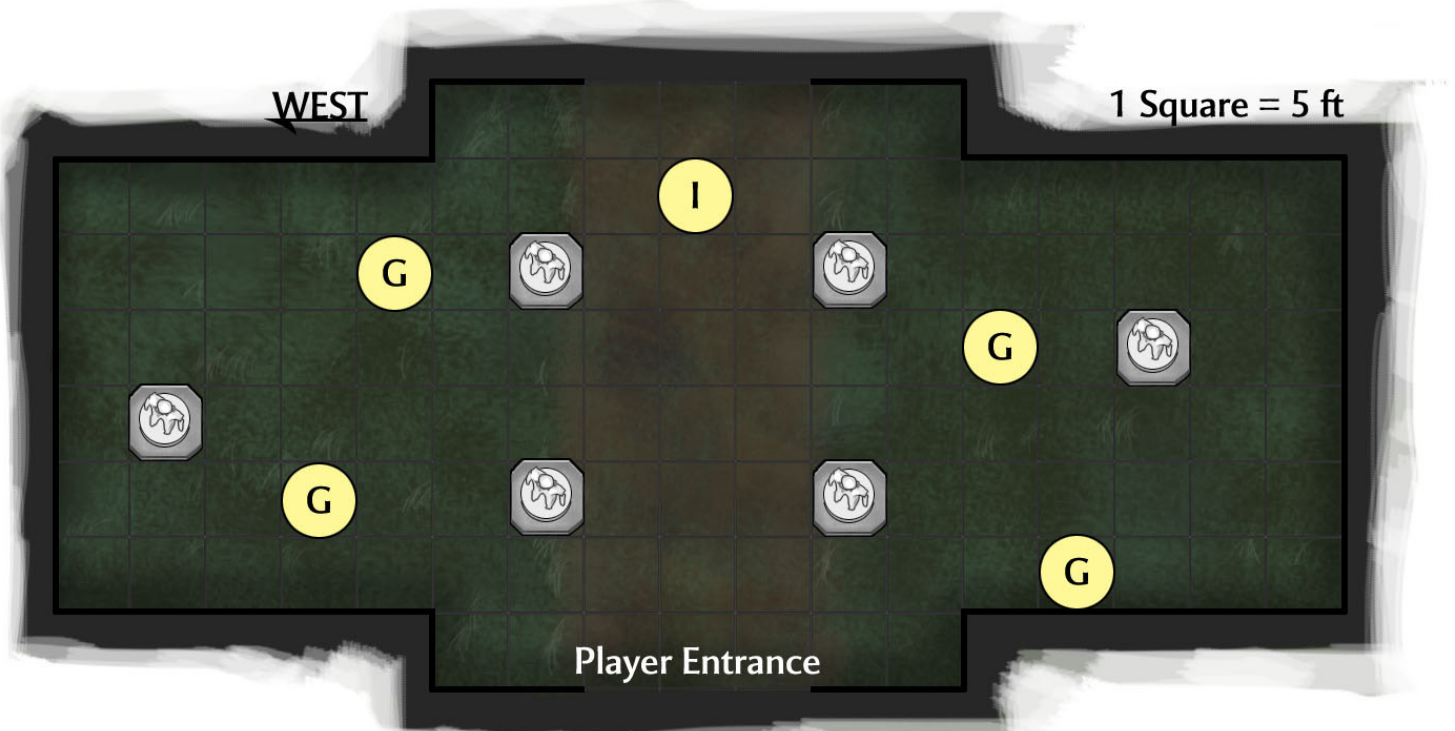
The man in the mask disappears in a quiet burst of arcane energy, revealing itself to be no more than an illusion.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

If the players defeated the gnomes before the illusion disappeared, then they probably figured out it wasn't really the man in the mask. If they have figured it out but still need to defeat the gnomes, consider allowing them to force the gnomes to surrender, run away, or hold off their attacks as the players explain.

Regardless of how the encounter ends, the timing is important. Read the appropriate text below and apply the corresponding bonus or penalty.

Map 2 (M2a, M2b, M2c)



If the players end combat before the illusion disappears, read the following:

As you dispatch the last of the gnomes, you look down the path toward the park, catching a glimpse of the man in the mask before he pushes through the crowd. The park is the heart of the festival, where the majority of Illodaunt's visitors have gathered to watch the evening's fireworks—it will be difficult to find him among the other masked revelers, especially as the sun begins to set. Continue to **Skill Challenge 4**; the players need only a **DC 22 Perception** check (instead of the normal **DC 25 Perception** check).

If the players do not end combat before the illusion disappears, read the following:

The gnomes took up more time than you were able to spare, and the man in the mask is nowhere in sight. You can assume he headed into the park, where most of the festival's masked revelers have gathered to watch the evening's fireworks, though finding him will be quite difficult. Each player loses two healing surges; continue to **Skill Challenge 4**.

DEVELOPMENT

The man in the mask has fled into the park, hoping to hide among the other masked revelers long enough to escape from the players. The players will need to enter the park and mingle with the crowd, searching each area to locate him.

Read the following as the players enter the park:

Passing through another stone gate, the path opens into a marvelously green park. Fireworks shoot overhead, exploding into shapes of dragons and monsters as the blasts light up the ground in violent flashes. Several bands are playing music during the display, which, combined with the explosions, makes it almost impossible to hear each other.

Most of the park's revelers have donned masks for the evening's festivities—you'll have to enter the crowd if you expect to identify your man in the mask. Fortunately, the gate you passed through is the park's only entrance—and exit—you've finally cornered your quarry.

SKILL CHALLENGE 4: NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

The man in the mask is somewhere within the crowd before you, and it's too loud to hear each other or disperse the celebration. You'll need to pass through the revelers and identify him before he manages to slip away.

Setup: The players must pass through the crowd and find the man in the mask before he manages to escape.

Level: 4

Complexity: The skill challenge continues until a player makes a successful **DC 26 Perception** check. Each time a player makes a successful check with one of the primary skills below, the Perception check DC is permanently reduced by 3. Only one player per round may make this check.

To Succeed: If they make the Perception check before having made 6 primary skill check attempts, the players succeed at the skill challenge.

Failing: If the players make more than 6 primary skill check attempts before making the successful Perception check, consider the skill challenge failed, though they still continue to **Chapter 5**.

Primary Skills: Arcana, Athletics, Insight, Nature, Stealth, Streetwise (no maximum successes for each skill)

- **Arcana (DC 15):** Having sensed the magical energy from the man in the mask's illusion, you focus on it and follow it through the crowd.
- **Athletics (DC 15):** You make use of your strength and easily push through the crowd, covering ground quickly as you scan the area.
- **Insight (DC 15):** You scan the faces of revelers, quickly assessing who belongs and who seems alone and out of place.
- **Nature (DC 15):** You're an expert at reading tracks, and even with such a large crowd you find familiar marks to follow.
- **Stealth (DC 15):** You move swiftly and quietly through the crowd, staying low enough that the man in the mask won't notice you and move away.
- **Streetwise (DC 15):** You're used to reading people and crowds; any unusual movement catches your eye immediately.

Secondary Skills: Acrobatics, Religion

- **Acrobatics (DC 10):** You grab a lamp post and pull yourself up, using hand signals to guide your allies through the crowd quickly and efficiently. Add a +2 bonus to an ally's primary skill check.
- **Religion (DC 10):** You call upon your god to guide you and your allies in pursuit of your goals. Add a +2 bonus to an ally's primary skill check.

Success: As you sweep through the final corner of the revelers, you see the man in the mask. He turns and slowly backs up against one of the park's outer walls, looking desperately for a way out. "Look out!" a voice yells, warning against a stray firework, which lands between you and the quarry, exploding in a ball of smoke.

Stepping through the confusion, you lose sight of the man in the mask—until a small piece of stone falls from above. Looking up, you see the masked man pull himself over the wall and onto the roof of the adjacent building. He blows a kiss, before turning to run. Continue to **Chapter 5**. The players are close behind the man in the mask, and need only 3 successful skill checks to succeed the following skill challenge (**Skill Challenge 5**).

Failure: It seems like you've swept through the crowd multiple times, but have yet to catch sight of the correct man in the mask. As you head back toward the bulk of the crowd, you hear a sudden yell, and a stray firework shoots past you. You turn to watch it detonate into the park's outer wall, and notice someone atop the wall, climbing up the adjacent building—the masked man, and he's getting away! Continue to **Chapter 5**.

CHAPTER 5: THE RACE ON THE ROOFTOPS

Skill Challenge Level 5 Encounter Level 5 (200 XP)

The players see the man in the mask climb up a building near the park and make his escape across the rooftops. The players must chase the man in the mask from rooftop to rooftop, cornering him and defeating him in a final showdown.

Allow the players to make an easy climb up to the rooftops by using hanging lamps, rope, or stepping stones protruding from the wall.

When the players reach the rooftops, read:

As you reach the rooftops of Illodaunt, you can easily make out your quarry, leaping from building to building. The masked man's pace has slowed—you need only to keep up with him or impede his progress to catch up; there's nowhere else for him to hide.

Perception (DC 10): Between the buildings are several wires, planks, and magically-suspended lamps.

SKILL CHALLENGE 5: CROSSING THE ROOFTOPS

The man in the mask is within reach, you need only close the distance as he tries to outrun you above the streets of Illodaunt.

Setup: The players must catch the man in the mask by crossing over the rooftops of the city.

Level: 5

Complexity: The skill challenge continues until the players reach 5 successes, but if it takes them more than 9 attempts, consider the skill challenge failed, though they still continue to **Encounter 3**.

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Arcana, Athletics, Endurance, Intimidate, Stealth (no maximum successes for each skill)

- **Acrobatics (DC 15):** You try to cut the man in the mask off by running across a narrow beam between two buildings.
- **Arcana (DC 15):** You focus on the magical floating lamps nearest the man in the mask, brightening them and temporarily blinding him to slow his progress.
- **Athletics (DC 15):** You make a long jump over a wide alleyway, closing the distance between you and the masked man.
- **Endurance (DC 15):** You forgo leaping shortcuts to sprint after the masked man, following his easier path and knowing you can outlast him.
- **Intimidate (DC 15):** You yell after the masked man as he begins to leap, causing him to flinch and lose his balance long enough for you to close some distance.
- **Stealth (DC 15):** You take an alternate path, moving so quietly and swiftly that the masked man doesn't realize you're gaining on him.

Secondary Skills: None

Success or Failure: The man in the mask drops onto a lower rooftop surrounded by taller buildings. As he realizes his mistake and tries to double back, you close the final steps. He looks around frantically for somewhere to go, but he's cornered—there's no escape. "Very well," he says, drawing a pair of glowing daggers.

Suddenly, the man in the mask disappears, reappearing in five places at once, surrounding the players. The masked men laugh confidently. "It appears," they all say in unison, "that you were under the impression that I was the quarry, and you the hunters. An easy mistake, I know—but I'd expect no more from such meddling outsiders." Begin **Encounter 3**.

ENCOUNTER 3: THE SHOWDOWN

The man in the mask has turned the tables on the players, ambushing them on the rooftops. It's time to end this chase, once and for all.

THE MAP

Use maps M3a, M3b, and M3c (pages 18, 19, and 20).

SETUP

- 1 Man in the Mask (M)
- 4 Mask Projections (P)

SPECIAL FEATURES

- The man in the mask and the mask projections look identical to the players, and at the end of each round, the man in the mask and all remaining mask projections disappear. Immediately after this, place the man in the mask at one of the 5 starting points indicated on the map, and place 4 new mask projections at the other 4 starting points.
- A player can use a minor action to check whether a specific enemy within 5 squares is the man in the mask with a **DC 16 Insight** or **DC 16 Perception** check.

REWARD FOR A SUCCESSFUL CHASE

If the players succeeded on at least 4 of the 7 total skill challenges and combat challenges, then they've been close behind the man in the mask all along, and gain an advantage.

Read the following as the encounter begins:

You've kept close to the man in the mask all evening, and you know he's exhausted from the close pursuit. His heavy breathing gives him away, and his movements look weak.

The following effects take place:

- All of the man in the mask's defenses are reduced by 1, he starts with 40 hit points, he deals 5 less damage with each attack, and he takes a -5 penalty to his initiative.
- The check to determine which enemy is real is reduced to a **DC 12 Insight** or **DC 12 Perception** check.

Visil, Man in the Mask Medium natural humanoid (human)	Level 5 Skirmisher XP 200	
HP 60; Bloodied 30 AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 18, Will 17 Speed 6	Initiative +7 Perception +4 Low-light vision	
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓣ Cheap Shot (weapon) ♦ At-Will Attack: +11 vs. AC Hit: 2d6 + 10 damage. If Visil has combat advantage, this attack deals an additional 1d6 damage.		
Ⓣ Phantom Dagger (force) ♦ At-Will Attack: Ranged 5/10, +9 vs. Reflex Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage and the target is pushed 1 square.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
Ⓣ Detonate Illusion ♦ Recharge [4] Effect: A mask projection within 5 squares becomes immobile. At the end of the round, it explodes instead of disappearing, dealing 1d6 psychic damage to all enemies in an area burst 1.		
MOVE ACTIONS		
Ⓣ Changing Masks (teleportation) ♦ Recharge [4] Effect: Visil and a mask projection teleport into each other's spaces, switching positions. All of the projections momentarily disappear when this happens, so the players are not alerted to the teleport.		
Str 15 (+4) Con 11 (+2)	Dex 17 (+5) Int 15 (+4)	Wis 12 (+3) Cha 16 (+5)
Alignment Evil		Languages Common, Elven
Equipment Daggers, mask		

Mask Projection Medium magical creature (illusion)	Level 5 Minion XP 0	
HP 1; a missed attack deals no damage AC 16, Fortitude 14, Reflex 15, Will 14 Speed 4	Initiative +5 Perception +4 Low-light vision	
TRAITS		
Presence of the Mask The mask projection deals 1d4 additional damage with <i>Illusory Strike</i> if it is within 3 squares of Visil.		
One in a Crowd When more than one mask projection is damaged by a single attack (area, blast, burst, etc.), only one of the mask projections takes damage.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓣ Illusory Strike (psychic) ♦ At-Will Attack: +9 vs Will Hit: 2d4 + 6 psychic damage.		
Str 10 (+2) Con 15 (+4)	Dex 16 (+5) Int 11 (+2)	Wis 13 (+3) Cha 14 (+4)
Alignment Evil		Languages Common, Elven

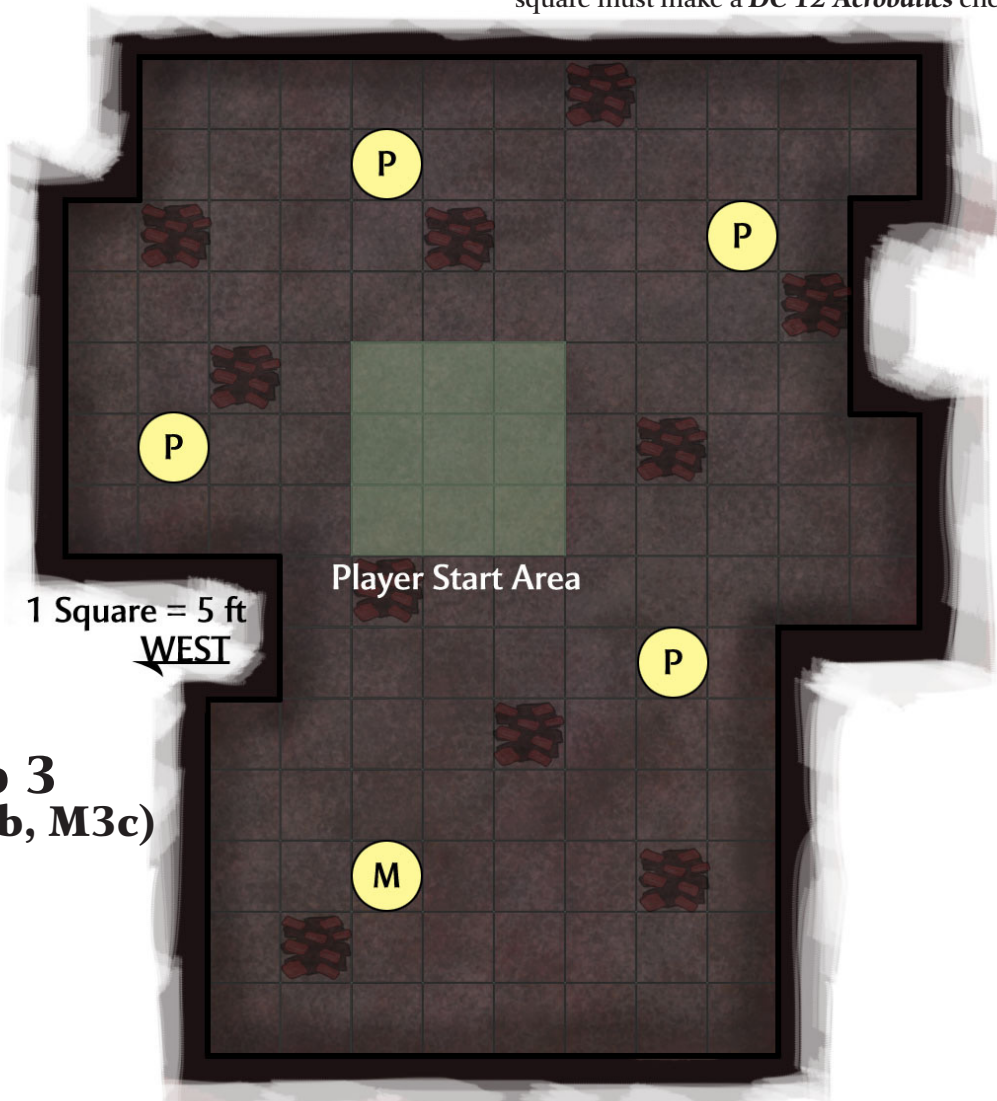
FEATURES OF THE AREA

Height: There is no ceiling.

Illumination: The rooftops are dimly-lit by the setting sun and intermittent flashes from fireworks.

Loose Roofing: Several of the roof's tiles are loose, marked as dark purple, broken shingles. Any creature that enters the square must make a **DC 12 Acrobatics** check, or falls prone.

Map 3
(M3a, M3b, M3c)



VISIL IN COMBAT

The man in the mask (Visil) is cowardly, but clever. He will hang back and let his illusions take the brunt of the player's attacks, moving in to deliver *Cheap Shot* when he'll have combat advantage with an illusion against a player. If he has some distance from the players, he will use *Phantom Dagger* at range to slow a nearby target. He will use *Detonate Illusion* whenever possible, as long as it won't leave him open to many attacks that turn.

Visil gets to choose which spot he appears in after vanishing with his illusions, and will always take the most advantageous position nearest to the most vulnerable player. He will also make use of *Changing Masks* when in trouble, moving out of danger.

Although he might normally have surrendered under such circumstances, he knows that the gallows await him if caught, and will fight to the death.

MASK PROJECTIONS IN COMBAT

The mask projections are different from the previous mask's illusion; these projections, although they can only take one hit, they deal a dangerous amount of damage with their attacks. They are completely controlled by the man in the mask, who will move them to block players from attacking him if they figure out where he is.

The projections will use *Illusory Strike* each turn, which grows more powerful if they are close to the man in the mask, due to *Presence of the Mask*. Clever players will realize this mechanic and use it to determine which masked man is real, and that's fine.

To encourage the players to detect which projection is Visil and not spam area attacks, the projections are protected by *One in a Crowd*—only one projection in an area attack will take damage, though Visil will always take damage as well if he's in the area (a projection can't take it for him).

FLAVOR TEXT

Read the following flavor text during the encounter if you'd prefer to describe effects instead of saying their names.

At the end of each round, read:

All of the remaining masked men disappear briefly, reappearing again as a group of five. They laugh simultaneously before re-engaging you in combat. There's no telling which one is real.

When Visil gains a bonus on *Cheap Shot*, read:

Taking advantage of his combat position, the man in the mask deals a crushing blow.

When Visil uses *Detonate Illusion*, read:

One of the projections begins to pulse and glow, shaking violently.

When a mask projection is hit by an area attack, read:

As the attack strikes multiple masked men, you notice one is completely unaffected—the other absorbed the damage for it.

When a player successfully identifies Visil, read:

You notice one of the masked men breathing slightly heavier than the rest, a dead giveaway that the enemy before you is mortal.

CONCLUSION

Once Visil is killed, the mask projections immediately disappear, ending combat. Read the following as he dies:

The man in the mask falls to his knees, gasping his final breaths. The black mask drops from his face, clattering to the ground and turning a bright, glowing white. You each notice your vision begin to clear, though you weren't aware it was even clouded before now.

"My life, my history," the man gasps. "They are not yours to take." He makes one final reach for the mask, but collapses before it, dead. On the back of his hand is a strange stamp showing several letters and numbers: "I A H 33."

On Visil's body is the mask, a level 6 magical dagger, 100g, and folded parchment advertising the sale of magical items during the festival.

FINDING ANSWERS

If the players are curious, they can ask around about the advertisement or the initials I.A.H. 33, and will learn it stands for *Illodaunt Auction House*, and the stamp and number is given to each potential buyer. The auction house is easy enough to find, and if the players visit and ask about the ticket and the mask, they will learn that the stamp #33 was assigned to Visil Idriel, a long-time resident and sorcerer of Illodaunt.

The mask was one of the items for sale at the auction that day, and Visil tried his hardest to buy it, but the festival brings in many rich outsiders, and an old, rich noble from a nearby city outbid Visil to buy the mask for his art collection.

VISIL AND THE MURDER

By asking around, the players will be able to discover that the mask was an ancient heirloom of Illodaunt, created by Visil's great grandfather. He was trying to reclaim it, but a rich outsider bought it as mere decoration—an accessory—an act that sent Visil into a rage. He quickly hired some goons to assist him and went after the noble, hoping to steal the mask back.

Unfortunately, the man caught him and fought back, and Visil killed him in the struggle. Some people in town will be able to tell the players of Visil's discontent with the festival and the outsiders, who come to buy the city's rich culture and history as if they were mere amusements and toys. Losing the mask was just enough to push him over the edge.

THE MASK

Visil's mask has magical properties that help to conceal the wearer, and can be kept and used by the players if they choose to keep it.

The Mask of a Thousand Faces

Level 4+

When this ivory mask is worn, it turns a mysterious, abyssal black. Those nearby have a difficult time trying to focus on and locate its wearer.

Wondrous Item

Property: If you do not attempt an attack on your turn, you gain partial concealment until the start of your next turn.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. Until the end of your next turn, gain total concealment against targets not adjacent to you.

TIPS FOR USING THE ADVENTURE

Below are suggestions for dealing with unexpected changes and adjusting the adventure to suit your own needs.

KEEPING THE MAN IN THE MASK ALIVE

It's not unusual to have at least one player that enjoys—more than anything—trying to be a badass by cheating, breaking, or destroying your story or fight mechanics. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but a chase scene through a crowded city can come to an abrupt end when one of your players uses his ranged attack to slow and or stun Visil the second he comes within range. You don't have to tell them no, because they shouldn't feel like they're on rails, but there are multiple ways to keep the chase going even though the players are trying their hardest to end it immediately:

- **Keep Visil out of range:**
No matter where the players are, always have Visil slightly out of reach of their ranged attacks. This is the easiest and my recommended way to keep him alive; have him far away, barely within sight.
- **Let them catch an illusion:**
If they do manage to cheat and snatch Visil, have that man in the mask be an illusion left to distract them. They might be annoyed, but it fits thematically with the spirit of the story.
- **Have ranged attacks miss due to his mask:**
Visil's mask makes it hard to focus on him, which explains why he can get away so easily and slip through the crowd. If a player uses a ranged attack on him and you're worried it will end the chase, have the player lose focus and miss.

PERCEPTION DURING SKILL CHALLENGES

The idea behind the one high Perception check needed to end the skill challenges is that the players are trying to locate Visil, but because of his mask, can't quite get a grasp on him without using their other skills to hone their perception.

SHORT RESTS BETWEEN ENCOUNTERS

The adventure is designed to be run without any short rests, as time is of the essence and Visil might get away. The first two encounters reflect this in their low damage and simplicity, and should leave your players with plenty of health, healing surges, and powers for the final showdown with Visil.

If your players desperately need a short rest, consider giving them back hit points and healing surges as rewards for succeeding at the skill challenges, or allow them to drink healing potions while giving chase.

TIME CONSTRAINTS DURING CHALLENGES

The first two encounters and all of the skill challenges have a soft limit to gain success, usually a number of attempted primary checks (assuming you let your players make one check each during a round of a skill challenge), or a set number of rounds to defeat their enemies.

The players aren't expected to get every single bonus, and need only succeed on 4 of the 7 challenges to gain a significant bonus against Visil in the final showdown. The bonus won't drastically change the mechanics of the fight, but will make them feel rewarded for keeping up with Visil and tiring him out.

Depending on their classes and chosen skills, the players might have too little or too much trouble with some of the challenges. If this is the case, simply adjust the number of required successes or rounds during the adventure to make it move smoothly, but not too easy.

OTHER ADJUSTMENTS

Here is some advice for common adjustments:

- **Too few or too many players:**
For 4 players, lose an add from all of the fights, and reduce the number of needed skills successes by 1 (or reduce the DCs of each skill). For 6 players, add an additional enemy of the appropriate type for each fight, and require one more check during each skill challenge.
- **Not the right level:**
See the updated Dungeon Master's Guide to set the appropriate DCs for each skill check and update the enemy's damage.
- **It's too complicated:**
It's a little linear, but not that complicated. Just print it out and follow it page by page, keeping track of their successes as you go.

