

MASQUERADE OF HORRORS

A Short Adventure for *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*



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Masquerade of Horrors is a short adventure designed for characters in their first or second careers. It can be adapted for weaker or stronger parties by adding some wreckers to Von Barbe's Players (see below).

The action begins when the party finds the wreck of a boat drifting slowly down the Reik. On board, they encounter a deranged witch hunter and discover a strange mask - a cursed item, an artifact of Slaanesh. Meanwhile, a Chaos cult masquerading as a river-borne theater troupe discovers that the party has the mask. They arrange to intercept the party in the next town and give them a performance they'll never forget...

This adventure is set in the vicinity of the village of Halbherzig, a tiny settlement on the Reik halfway between Grissenwald and Kemperbad. The adventure could just as easily be set almost anywhere else in the Empire, as long as there is a village and a river nearby.

The adventure also assumes the party is traveling by boat, but they could just as easily be traveling by road alongside the river. A possible hired boat is briefly described in "Von Barbe's Players" on page 15.

Background

The Von Barbe family is a minor noble family of Averland with an estate in Streissen, where they are patrons of the local university and are known for their artistic bent. The family has a black mark on its name due to its involvement in the revolution there in 2502,

but have since managed to ingratiate themselves with the powers-that-be in Averheim.

By all accounts the Von Barbés were an attractive, intelligent, well-bred bunch; when the handsome young Gustav wed Gretchen, a ravishing but demure young woman with immense musical talent (and a third cousin by marriage to the elderly Grand Countess Ludmilla, no less) the family rejoiced and placed much hope in the offspring of their union. Given the exceptional beauty and talent of the young couple, everyone was certain their child would be something very special.

Some ten months later, Hermann Von Barbe was born, and he was indeed a special child - but not in the way his parents had hoped.

Whether by Chaos-inspired mutation or by some more natural fluke of nature, Hermann was born a hermaphrodite, having both male and female sexual organs. Gustav was devastated, and in a rage, strangled Gretchen, who he accused of consorting with demons and bringing mutation into his family.

Luckily for the child, Vera Hungus, the midwife who attended his birth, spirited him away before his distraught father could have him destroyed. Vera was extremely close to Gretchen - she was also a hedge wizard, She was determined that young Hermann should be spared. She stole away to the small village of Aussen near Grunburg, where she managed to live in secret.

Vera was burnt at the stake by witch hunters a few years later, and Hermann grew up on the roads as an orphan. Very early on he became attached to a theater troupe and fell in love with the life. Over the years, he became the leader of the troupe.

During his travels, Hermann picked up all sorts of knowledge, both wholesome and unwholesome. Realizing the benefits of magic to his stage show, Hermann took some time off to study in Altdorf, and became well-versed in the Gray Order of Magick. Unfortunately, he also became exposed to secret whispers, dark rumors of a greater power to be had through the gifts of the Chaos Gods. When he learned more about Slaanesh, Hermann considered the condition he was born with and became convinced that he had been marked from birth to serve the Lord of Pleasure.

When Hermann left his studies in Altdorf, he had enough coin to pick up a small river boat, which he converted to a floating theater and called the *Paradise*. He recruited some talented but morally ambiguous thespians and began to travel the waterways of the Empire, seeking out fellow cultists and spreading as much decadence and sin as he could. Von Barbe began brazenly using his real name, but so far no one has voiced any suspicions about his parentage - after all, many theater folk use stage names.

Eventually, several small cults of Slaanesh came to Hermann's attention. These formerly isolated groups began to communicate, using Hermann as their go-between to exchange messages and useful items, with the theater troupe as a cover. Hermann became a close associate of one Vanessa Haut-Gropus, a minor noble who was the head of a small Slaaneshi cult based in Grissenwald. Rather taken with the young man, and perversely interested in his special condition, Haut-Gropus showed Hermann an artifact she possessed - a fabulous theater mask, the right-hand side of which was male and the left-hand side female. Haut-Gropus hinted that the mask was an artifact fashioned by the Lord of Pleasure himself, and that it possessed unholy power. Hermann became obsessed with the mask. To possess it, he felt, was his destiny, because it seemed

to represent his own secret affliction. He began to lay down plans to take the mask from Haut-Gropus - but he never had the chance.

A Sigmarite witch hunter from Altdorf named Gunnar Krauthosen discovered Haut-Gropus' cult in Grissenwald, and captured or scattered its members. He confiscated the mask, but found that he could not destroy it - it resisted the blows of his hammer and was unaffected by flame. After setting the night ablaze with captured heretics, including Haut-Gropus herself, Krauthosen decided to take the mask to Altdorf, so that officials of the cult of Sigmar could determine if it could be destroyed.

He never got there. Hermann Von Barbe and his minions ambushed Krauthosen's boat, slaughtered his crew, and critically wounded Krauthosen, leaving him for dead. Unfortunately for Von Barbe, he could not find the mask - Krauthosen had hidden it too well. In a towering rage, Von Barbe stormed away to search elsewhere for the wicked artifact, leaving one of his henchmen to keep an eye on Krauthosen's boat.

Enter our party of bold adventurers...

Beginning the Adventure

Masquerade of Horrors is best suited as a one-shot adventure played as a break during an extended period of river travel. If the party is traveling by road, the adventure can still take place as long as a river is nearby.

As the party travels through the region, they may hear some of the rumors listed on the next page. The river traffic around them is typical - trading vessels bringing goods down from Nuln and beyond; fishermen plying the shallows; peddlars and pilgrims traveling along the banks by road.

The GM is free to improvise whatever encounters he wishes - this is a well-traveled route, and there are plenty of folks to interact with.

All in all, it is a typical and uneventful journey - that is, until the party crosses paths with Von Barbe.

RUMORS ON THE WATER

d10 Rumor

- 1-2 "Did you hear about Grissenwald? Witch hunters dug up a cult there, yes they did. Burnt 'em all - and good riddance, I say! The gods love the smell o' burnin' heretics in the mornin'."
- 3-4 "Times are hard up north. One o' my cousins - third cousin by way of marriage, understand - had a nice mill near Krudenwald, but it ain't there now. Burned down by Archaon, they say. Too bad. My cousin was a nice chap - for a Hochlander."
- 5-6 "I hope you're not planning on staying on yer boat in any of the towns up ahead. Ol' Count Bruno of Grissenwald and the Town Council in Altbad passed a law that says you can't sleep on yer boats no more. Gotta stay in town. Dirty coin-grubbers. They don't care about folks like you and me."
- 7-8 "Have you seen the showboat? It stopped through here early yesterday. What a show! Jugglin', tumblin', comedy, tragedy...by Sigmar, us common folk need some good entertainment in these dark times."
- 9-10 "Watch out for wreckers near Kemperbad! There was some trouble in the Belladonna family recently - don't ask me how I know - and a bunch of them dirty Stirlanders they were usin' as muscle got the sack...now they're loose on the river! It's too bad the nobility don't look after us more."

While all of these rumors have some element of truth to them, few have a direct bearing on this adventure. The wreckers mentioned in the last rumor are actually nearby in Halbherzig, but serve as a red herring and have nothing to do with the main plot.

The Wreck

On a cool, clear morning as the party is traveling, they encounter the drifting wreck of the *Divine Retribution*, a small river boat that has seen better days. It is listing heavily to one side, having taken on water, and is slowly but surely sinking.

Such sights are not uncommon on the waterways of the

Empire, but this particular wreck is special. A Very Easy (+30%) Perception test reveals a large number of coins scattered upon the blood-stained deck. Unfortunately this is not all the PCs can see - a successful Perception test reveals a savagely mutilated corpse half-hidden behind some broken crates. Several crows pick at the corpse's eyes. Depending on the party's background and experience, the GM may wish to impose a Willpower test at this grisly sight. Those who fail gain an Insanity Point as they ponder what creatures will some day feed on their remains...

As the party gets closer to the *Divine Retribution*, they will clearly hear a tortured moan coming from the deck house. If the prospect of looting the boat does not prompt the PCs to investigate, perhaps the desire to rescue survivors will.

The GM should use any means at his disposal to ensure that the party boards the vessel, as this is imperative to the adventure.

If the party is traveling by land, getting to the boat might prove to be tricky. The GM may wish to have the craft close to the riverbank, perhaps snagged on a sand bar or some overhanging branches.

If the party is traveling by boat, a simple Row test will allow them to draw up alongside and tie on.

Moving about on a tilted, blood-spattered deck shouldn't be easy. The GM may wish to impose Agility tests from time to time during the investigation, where dramatically appropriate.

Once on the *Divine Retribution*, the first thing the party will notice, aside from what they've already seen from afar, is more evidence of a pitched battle having taken place here. A few severed limbs lie here and there about the deck in the drying pools of blood. Several crates and casks have been broken open, their contents carelessly strewn about. Most of these items are mundane, but the GM should feel free to place whatever items he wishes among the unclaimed loot. The coins the PCs noticed earlier can be picked up, but it will take time - about half an hour and a Hard (-

20%) Perception test to get every single one. If any one wishes to root through the blood and gore to find the coins, he'll be rewarded with a blood-stained, but serviceable, 15 Crowns, 3 Shillings and 6 Pennies.

The corpse on deck is missing an arm, which can be found far to stern if anyone cares to put the pieces together. The body wears the tattered regalia of an initiate of the cult of Sigmar. He has nothing of value beyond a small wooden holy symbol about his neck. The poor soul still clutches a broken sword in his death-grip.

Most likely, the party will first be drawn to the moaning from the deck house. Upon entering, they see pieces of another initiate scattered about among the remnants of what appears to be a hasty search. Several crates lie smashed open and empty, their contents scattered just as on the deck. Again, there is nothing here of exceptional value, but the GM should have no qualms about letting PCs dig through the blood-soaked tatters looking for loot.

The Witch Hunter's Last Stand

From a further, curtained doorway - most likely the captain's quarters - the moans continue. Pushing through the curtain, the party sees a small room that looks as if a storm struck it. A big man in black lies writhing in a pool of his own blood on the floor. His left arm hangs limply; his right clutches a massive war hammer. Through his long black overcoat, the party can see his chain shirt is badly gashed. This room, too, shows signs of a search, but several relatively valuable items lie in the wreckage - perceptive PCs may realize the motive of this attack was clearly not simple robbery.

As the party enters the cabin, the man in black tries to stand, a weird light in his eyes. He screams, "*What! More vultures come to pick my bones! I tell you, by the Hammer, you shall never find it!*"

This, of course, is Gunnar Krauthosen, the witch hunter. The "it" he refers to is the Mask of Slaanesh, which he has hidden by putting it in an old valise and hanging it out of the cabin window on a string, so that it is submerged in the Reik.

Unfortunately for Krauthosen, his fate has run out; his last critical hit gave him one Insanity Point too many, and he now suffers from a particularly insidious case of *Profane Persecutions*. At best, he's convinced the party are opportunists come to loot his boat. At worst, he sees them as minions of Chaos come to reclaim the Mask. Combat with Krauthosen is inevitable.

Gunnar Krauthosen

Race: Human

Career: Witch Hunter (ex-Judicial Champion, ex-Mercenary, ex-Sergeant)

Main Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
67	61	43	50	55	41	63	49

Secondary Profile

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
3	17	4	5	4	0	6	0

Current Wounds: -2

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Magick, Theology); Animal Care; Charm; Command; Common Knowledge (The Empire) +10%; Dodge Blow +10%; Follow Trail; Gossip +10%; Intimidate +10%; Navigation; Outdoor Survival; Perception +20%; Ride +20%; Search +10%; Secret Language (Battle Tongue); Silent Move; Speak Language (Classical, Reikspiel)

Talents: Marksman; Public Speaking; Quick Draw; Rain of Blows; Scary; Seasoned Traveler; Sixth Sense; Specialist Weapon Group (Crossbow, Fencing, Gunpowder, Parrying, Throwing, Two-Handed), Street Fighting, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Stun

Armor: Chain Shirt, Leather Jack, Leather Leggings (Head 0, Arms 1, Body 3, Legs 1)

Weapons: War Hammer, Pistols (2)

Trappings: Good Craftsmanship Clothes; Tatty Hat; Overcoat; Holy Symbol (Hammer)

Krauthosen is an experienced NPC. At full strength, he would probably be more than a match for the party. However, he is critically wounded, so the party should have no trouble dispatching him rather quickly. Even if the party entertains thoughts of healing and rehabilitating Krauthosen, this will only make him

THE MASK

The Mask of Slaanesh is one of several artifacts said to be created by the Lord of Pleasure long ago. These were given to favored worshippers to help spread the cult throughout the Old World.

Wearing the Mask is like wearing a second skin. Once someone actually places the Mask on his or her face, it appears to be subsumed into the flesh. The wearer does not appear to be wearing a Mask at all. Rather, they suddenly appear to be more attractive and more charismatic than they actually are.

Anyone who wears the Mask gains a +20% bonus to Fellowship tests (and test of all related skills). However, there is a down side.

Every time a character tries to remove the Mask, he must make a Challenging (-10%) Willpower test. If this is failed, the character permanently loses 5% from his Fellowship score. If someone persisted in wearing the Mask, his ultimate fate would be to be hideous without it – a victim of his own vanity.

For every 24 hours the Mask is worn, the Willpower test to remove it becomes more difficult – from Challenging to Hard to Very Hard. If anyone should decide to wear the Mask permanently, they would soon find that their minds could not stand the Chaotic forces that surge through the Mask. For every 48 hours a person wears the Mask, they must make a further Willpower test or gain 1 Insanity Point. For every 48 hours thereafter, the Willpower test becomes more difficult, as described above.

stronger. His insanity has firmly taken root. It is important to the story that Krauthosen not survive this encounter, so the GM should ensure his death (which is likely in any case).

The purpose of this fight is not necessarily to provide the party with a challenging combat encounter, but to set a disturbing tone as they are forced to kill a Sigmarite witch hunter to save their own skins.

The Hidden Artifact

Upon dispatching the unfortunate Krauthosen, the party will most likely wish to search for the “it” he referred to - after all, someone was willing to kill for it. A Hard (-20%) Search test reveals a thin string tied to the outer hinge of the shutter of the cabin window. The string runs down the side of the vessel into the Reik, dragging something that is submerged (the valise that contains the Mask).

If the party does not manage to find the string, the GM should take pity on them and have the valise bang against the hull a few times to draw their attention to it. At this point the Search tests will become easier until they find it. It is not absolutely necessary that they locate the Mask for the rest of the adventure to take place, however.

Pulling the string will reveal a waterlogged valise, which can easily be pulled on board. Inside the small piece of luggage is a bizarre mask. The right-hand side is carved in the fashion of a male face; the left-hand side, a female face. It appears to be constructed of simple materials and might not seem particularly valuable but for the fact that Krauthosen took such great pains to hide it, and someone else was willing to commit murder to obtain it. PCs with Magical Sense might feel that there is something odd or vaguely unwholesome about the thing, but they will be unable to determine exactly what.

It is likely that the party will take the Mask. Since a Sigmarite witch hunter was in possession of it and was willing to die to protect it, they may wish to deliver it to the cult of Sigmar or some other authority. They may, of course, wish to sell it or otherwise profit from it.

Someone may even decide to try it on. If a PC puts on the Mask, it seems to those watching that it is subsumed into his face - within a few seconds, the character doesn't appear to be wearing a mask at all! His companions will soon notice, however, that their friend has never seemed as charismatic, attractive, and brilliant as he does at this moment. In fact, the Mask raises a character's Fellowship, but ultimately, it has dire consequences (see the sidebar on this page for details).

The rest of the *Divine Retribution* consists of the cargo hold, where several boatmen lie dead. Some crates and barrels of trade goods are here, and the GM may allow the PCs to loot some of it for resale (but not much - these, too, have been searched and mostly ruined).

Eventually the party will have to move on. If they seem to be taking too much time poking about the wreck, an approaching patrol boat of the Riverwardens might serve to get the party moving...

The Watcher In the Woods

Little do the PCs know they have not gone about their tasks unobserved. Well-hidden on the riverbank nearby, Heinrich Weikal, a low-ranking member of Hermann Von Barbe's dark entourage, has watched their every move. He was stationed here by Hermann to keep an eye on the *Divine Retribution*, to ensure that it eventually sinks and to report any strange goings-on. As soon as the party leaves the wreck, Heinrich will rush to his hired mount, which is hitched up nearby, and rush to Halbherzig, where he will report everything to Von Barbe. He will also be sure to give Von Barbe a detailed description of the PCs.

It should be noted that even if the party does not find (or take) the Mask, Heinrich still reports their presence on the *Divine Retribution*. Von Barbe will assume they have the Mask; at the very least, he'll want to learn whether they found anything he missed. He will therefore move to intercept them in Halbherzig. Von Barbe is a monster, but he is also shrewd and subtle, and will try to steal the Mask before resorting to out-and-out violence.

A Quiet Little Village

The village of Halbherzig is neither prosperous nor well-known. Situated roughly halfway between Grissenwald and Nuln, its primary importance is that of a "boat-stop," and there are very few permanent residents.

At this particular time, there are not many visitors at Halbherzig, either. As the party approaches the village,

they can see that the dock area is sparsely populated. They do note a small but outrageously decorated showboat in a berth at the far southern extremity of the docks, and a few other trade boats, but in general it's a quiet day in a quiet little village.

As the party (or their crew) are tying up the boat, Richard Blitzzen, the so-called Harbor Master, approaches.

"Hoy there, travelers. Welcome to Halbherzig. Just passing on a bit of information by way of a friendly reminder - them as knows what's best for us - that bein' the nobility and the local councils, y'understand - have decreed that no visitors are to sleep on boats, but must patronize the local merchants. Hope you enjoy your stay, and try not to cause any trouble!"

If the party is traveling by road, they will not encounter the Harbor Master, nor have any need of his warning unless they try to camp within view of Halbherzig.

Places to Stay

Halbherzig boasts two inns, the Shooting Star and the Muskrat. The Shooting Star is of better quality, but the master of the house, Herr Schlueter, has upper-class pretensions and likes to "price out the riff-raff." The GM should apply a 5% mark-up on all costs. The Muskrat, operated by Herr Bergwand, is much seedier and less appealing, but has the benefit of being cheap. Times are hard, and Bergwand is letting private rooms go at half normal rate for the time being.

It does not matter which inn the party chooses. The following text refers to the inn and innkeepers in a generic manner, so the GM can simply substitute the appropriate names.

Wreckers and Gamblers

Most of the patrons of the inn are local folks - fishermen, charcoal burners, peasants, and the like. Besides the adventurers, there are two other groups in the inn tonight who are definitely not locals...

At a corner table sit a loud and obnoxious group of four burly men. One has an eye patch, another a peg leg, and they have various other scars and physical blemishes resulting from violence. These are indeed the wreckers referred to in the rumor table, but they have no direct involvement in this adventure.

They are, however, rude and not above picking a fight for almost no reason. If things are moving slowly, the GM may wish to have them start a brawl with the characters (it will be broken up in 10 rounds by the local watchman). The wreckers will draw off and leave the inn if the fight isn't going their way, but they're not above attacking the party later on down the river (or road).

Louis-Phillipe Cheauteau is a Bretonnian gambler who is passing through the region. He may offer the party a game, and he may well cheat. If he is caught, he will try to laugh it off and offer to buy the party a round of drinks. If they insist on delivering justice (in the form of a beating), the wreckers may decide to intervene if the fight looks unfair. As above, the fight will be broken up by the local watchman in 10 rounds if necessary. No one is interested in prosecuting Cheauteau for cheating; they'll just run him out of town.

A Pretty Visitor

During the evening, a gorgeous girl will enter the inn. She wears an emerald-green dress and has long raven-black hair, and her skin is the color of fresh cream. All eyes turn when she enters.

After looking about in confusion for a moment, she locks eyes with the most attractive male PC and hesitantly approaches the party's table.

"May I sit with you for a bit?" she asks. "I need a good stiff drink and would prefer not to keep company with any of the others in here," she adds with a sniff of distaste as she glances side-wise at the wreckers, peasants and other locals.

This is, in fact, Fran Poppenbutel, a member of Hermann Von Barbe's entourage (see "Von Barbe's

Players, Page 15). Her mission tonight is to ingratiate herself with the party so that at the very least, Von Barbe will know what room they are staying in - he hopes to burgle the Mask before resorting to violence.

Fran will use her real name, but will say she has come to Halbherzig to marry a local wine grower, Rutgar Helstrom. She is staying in his house in the "widow's quarters" he built for his deceased mother until the wedding, which is in two days.

Over the course of a few drinks, she will begin to appear a bit giddy (she's not), and lean in closer to the PC she fixed her gaze on earlier. "Rutgar is such a brute," she says. "I wish my father had seen fit to arrange a marriage for me with someone like you."

The GM will have to handle this encounter carefully, depending on the roleplaying style of his group. Fran will not want to arouse the PC's suspicions, but she is determined to find out what room the PC is staying in. Her "ace in the hole" will be to arrange a pre-dawn meeting with the PC. She will pull him aside and whisper, "I so long for one moment of real passion before my lifetime of drudgery! My betrothed will go out to check his vineyards before dawn, so I will be able to get away for several hours. Tell me what room you are staying in, and I will meet you here!"

Failing this, Fran will leave, looking as if she feels utterly rejected. She will then bribe the information out of a maid or some other minor functionary at the inn (she will automatically succeed). If the PC accepts her offer to meet him later, she will smile shyly and tell him she cannot wait. She then says she had better get back before she is missed, and leave the premises.

Of course, she'll go right around the corner into the alley behind the inn and sneak back in through the kitchens and the back stairway. Using her skill as a contortionist, she will enter the PC's room through the open transiom over the door (or some similar opening - the point is that she does not pick the lock, and is only able to get in due to her special talents).

Once in the room, she'll go through everything in an attempt to find the Mask. If the Mask is actually there,

she'll take it and run! If it is not, she will return to the *Paradise* and report as much to Von Barbe.

The Cuckold

To make sure the party is distracted while Fran is busy upstairs, Rutgar Helstrom, another member of Von Barbe's entourage, bursts into the inn and glowers at everyone in the room. His eyes fix on the same PC Fran attempted to seduce earlier. In a rage, he approaches and begins to castigate the PC:

"What kind of a man are you? How dare you shamelessly flirt with my beloved little flower! I should cut you in half, you rascal!"

Rutgar is huge. He does not look like a wine grower, even if he is dressed like one. He will use his Intimidate skill to best effect, but has no intention of actually attacking. If the PC denies any involvement with Fran, the wreckers (if they are still there) will happily chime in, reporting that they "saw the whole thing."

Just as the situation looks like it might actually erupt into violence, Rutgar's face will twist from rage into a pathetic sadness, and he will burst into tears. Where just before he seemed ready to kill the PC Fran was flirting with, he now sinks down to his knees, weeping, and hugs the PC instead.

"Why doesn't she love me?" he wails. "I'm a hard worker... I'm honest...she is smitten with wild men who have no home, who seek their fortune over the next hill...she has read too many silly romances...oh my little Fran! My dear little Fran!"

The GM should play this up for laughs, but not for too long. Soon, Rutgar will stand up and run out into the night, weeping. He only needs to give Fran ten or fifteen minutes to go through the room. He is also new to acting (see "Von Barbe's Players," Page 15) and Von Barbe has warned him not to "overdo it."

The Invitation

As the night winds down, but before the party goes off

COMPLICATIONS

It is possible that one or more members of the party are foolish enough to actually have the Mask sitting on their table, or to try to put it on to seduce Fran, or follow some other unforeseen course of action. If Fran can clearly see that they have the Mask, she will not bother to burgle the room, and Rutgar will not appear. Simply move forward to "The Invitation," below.

If Fran actually managed to steal the Mask, Von Barbe will be elated - but he will decide that the party must die, regardless. They could be a potential thorn in his side that might prevent or complicate his plans to work further dark mischief along the river, and therefore they should be eliminated. The GM should move to "The Invitation," below.

to bed for the evening, Hermann Von Barbe himself will enter the inn. An extremely charismatic and handsome man, he is done up to the hilt in his theatrical regalia. The wreckers may tease him a bit if they are still present, but he simply laughs off their comments. After ordering a drink from the innkeeper, he will mosey over to the party's table.

"Greetings!" he says. "I hope you don't mind if I join you for a moment?" Assuming he is allowed to sit, he comes quickly to the point. *"My name is Hermann Von Barbe, and I am the master of ceremonies, director, writer, and lead actor of Von Barbe's Players, whose boat, the Paradise, you no doubt saw earlier this evening. I have a bit of a problem, however. We have a performance in Silberwurt in a few days, - but we are woefully under-prepared! You see, we have a new piece, a farcical little romp entitled 'Sigmar's Folly.' It's quite entertaining. It's about the real reason Sigmar left no heirs. We're just a little out of practice, you see, and some of our troupe have fears that it might be a little...well, controversial. A bit of a stretch for these local folks, I fear. I don't suppose you'd be willing to come out to the Paradise tonight and preview the performance, and let us know what you think? We routinely do a preview show, but there is no time and - well, look around you. I think you're the only folks in Halbherzig who could even begin to appreciate High Art!"*

If necessary, Von Barbe will offer free refreshment

during the performance. As a last ditch effort, he will say that the *Paradise* often comes across salvageable wreckage, and they have collected some well-preserved trade goods they have no intention of actually selling. He will offer these to the party if they are hesitant.

If the party flat-out refuses to go with him, Von Barbe will not have to do much acting to show his disappointment, but will leave graciously and activate his last-ditch effort (see “Plan B” below).

If the party accepts his invitation, Von Barbe will be delighted, and ask them to meet him at the *Paradise*, which is berthed at the south end of the docks. “We don’t want to bother the locals with our shenanigans,” he winks.

The party may, by this time, suspect that something is amiss. They may make whatever preparations they wish before they attend the showing of *Sigmar’s Folly*.

Plan B

If the party has refused to accept Von Barbe’s invitation, he does not simply give up. At some point after Von Barbe has left the inn but before the party retires for the night, a cry comes from just outside the door to the inn, and a young man (Heinrich Weikal) enters in a flurry.

“The boats! They’re stealin’ the boats!” he yells. He points at the party members. “They’re stealin’ your boat! You’d better hurry!”

Of course, if the party did not arrive by boat, it is their horses that are being “stolen.” If they do not have horses, Von Barbe will attempt the “damsel in distress” trick, having Fran be “beaten” by Rutgar until the party rushes outside. Almost any ruse the GM cares to construct would work.

Once the party is outside, Von Barbe will order his minions to attack, very put out that he did not get a chance to indulge in his morbid dramatics. Other than the change in location the fight will progress in more or less the same fashion.

Sigmar’s Folly

As the party approaches the *Paradise*, they see it is decked out magnificently, and well-lit with attractive paper lamps that blow back and forth gently in the slight breeze. Comfortable chairs have been set out for the party on the dock itself, and the whole starboard side of the *Paradise* has opened to reveal a stage.

A young man (Heinrich, who reported the party’s presence on the *Divine Retribution*, although they won’t realize this) welcomes them and asks them to be seated, providing them with wine and snacks of tiny cheese squares and wafers (Von Barbe considered poisoning the party at one point, but his flair for the dramatic got the best of him).

No one else can be seen on the *Paradise*, as the performers are all below decks waiting to go on. Soon, Heinrich takes up his position to stage left and opens a bulls-eye lantern so that a serviceable spot light brightens the stage.

The party sees a magnificent bedchamber – a four-poster bed, a chair, and a table with some books, papers, and writing instruments on it. A chest sits next to the table. A backdrop behind the set features a painting of a window looking out on the spires of Altdorf.

At this point a disembodied voice rings out from behind the scenes: “Ladies and Gentles, please make yourselves comfortable for a tail of darkness and delight! Von Barbe’s Players present for your edification and amusement the story of *Sigmar’s Folly*.”

The GM may wish to gloss over or paraphrase the action of the play, but those with a dramatic flair may wish to actually “perform” it for their players as follows, as Von Barbe cannot help but work the dialogue of the play into a scathing diatribe against the players before he launches his attack:

The action begins. Von Barbe, dressed as Sigmar, enters from stage right, followed by his scribe (played by Leopold Magnus – see “Von Barbe’s Players” on Page

15). The scribe comically juggles ink bottles, a pen, and a sharp letter-opener.

Von Barbe walks to the window and gazes out over the city. “*Jocephus, my loyal scribe,*” he declaims. “*Look at the progress we have made! I tell you, I have no doubt that I have founded an Empire that will last for thousands of years, one that will withstand the many lashings sure to be brought upon it by the forces of Chaos in time to come.*”

The scribe snickers, and continues to juggle as Sigmar goes on.

“*If only I had an Empress to stand by my side,*” Sigmar laments. “*For a man without a woman is only half a man. How I long for a woman to be the baldric in which I hang my bugle,*” he sighs.

The scribe looks at the audience and silently guffaws at the innuendo.

“*But alas,*” continues Von Barbe as Sigmar, “*I am surrounded by a bevy of mindless courtesans. They are pleasing to the eye, but I dream of a sturdy peasant woman like my dear mother. A strong woman, who will rule beside me, not under me.*”

Again, the scribe guffaws.

“*Scribe, take a letter,*” says Sigmar, moving to the table. His scribe sits, juggling the letter-opener and ink with one hand while he writes with the other.

“*To all my loyal subjects,*” Sigmar begins. “*The time has come when I must secure the future of our Empire by begetting an heir upon a woman who is worthy in my eyes. I must now search high and low throughout this great land, from the sturdy Teutogen girls of the north to the sun-brown Brigundians in the southlands, for a woman to be my bride and to rule over you all as Empress. But alas, I fear no suitable woman shall ever be found. I ask of you all, please help your beloved Emperor find a loving hilt in which to rest his mighty hammer. Sincerely, Sigmar, Emperor of everything, ruler of the heights and depths, et cetera, et cetera.*”

The scribe finishes the letter with a comic flourish, all

the while continuing to juggle. Sigmar says, “*Now put that letter with the rest of my missives and proclamations and decrees and let it be distributed throughout the land!*”

At this point, Sigmar stoops to pick up the chest that is lying next to the table. Perceptive characters may notice Von Barbe struggles a bit with the weight. The scribe – still juggling with one hand – opens it, and a Daemonette of Slaanesh leaps out, doing a full flip over Sigmar’s head to land behind him.

Obviously, it is not a real Daemonette, but a woman in a costume. An Easy (+20%) Perception test reveals that it is, in fact, Fran Poppenbutel!

“*Look no further than me, Lord Sigmar!*” the Daemonette cries. “*I will take you to the heights and depths of pleasure!*”

At this point in the performance, even party members who are not in the least bit pious might begin to feel uncomfortable – after all, this play borders on outright blasphemy.

Von Barbe holds a warning hand up to the Daemonette as the scribe, still juggling, backs away to the window in mock fear.

“*Stay away, foul spawn of Chaos!*” says Sigmar. “*Do you not know that I am a man of the utmost integrity?*”

“*Indeed,*” cackles the Daemonette. “*I have heard it said that you will become a god in ages hence! But what of your progeny? Love me, and I will give you fine sons and daughters!*”

Sigmar stands firm. “*I cannot!*” he says. “*For you are from that nefarious pit to which all evil things eventually descend; I cannot risk the future of my Empire by loving such a foul creature as you! Be gone from my bed chamber, or I shall be forced to hammer you harshly from now until dawn!*”

The Daemonette replies, “*But my lord, am I not pleasing?*”

“*Nay!*” Sigmar yells. “*You are a lie, and you travel with*

liars. You and all foul beasts like you would slay all good men! You would even kill a weak and defenseless witch hunter, would you not? Would you not kill such a man, then loot him thoroughly?"

If the party has still not figured out something is not well, they are not thinking.

Von Barbe continues, but he now turns to the audience. "Would you not take whatever blood-stained treasure you could find? Would you not seek to profit from it, instead of handing it over to HE WHO TRULY DESERVES IT?"

At these words, Leopold Magnus throws the sharp letter-opener at the PC closest to the stage. Unless the party specifically said before this point that they were setting up a defensive position or were expecting trouble, Leopold gets a surprise attack, and so do the rest of Von Barbe's players.

The rest of the fight should be a real challenge to the party. Von Barbe himself will stay at a distance, using his spells to the best effect possible. Leopold will continue to throw knives from range. Meanwhile, Fran leaps from the stage and attacks the party hand-to-hand, while Rutgar Helstrom – who the party will surely recall from the inn, if they met him earlier in the guise of Fran's "betrotted" – will attack from the shore end of the docks, hollering like a bull elephant and swinging a great axe. Heinrich, meanwhile, will also attack with a sword, but will mostly just serve to get in the way...

If the party looks like they will win the fight too easily, the GM can have some extra hands emerge from below decks (use the Wrecker profile from the main rulebook).

If the party looks like they might be defeated, the GM may wish to take pity on them. One of Von Barbe's spells could "accidentally" backfire, or the GM can fudge Leopold, Rutgar, or Fran's attack rolls.

If the party is defeated, but the GM doesn't want to kill them off just yet, the townsfolk can be alerted once the party has taken a few critical hits and is close to death, and come blundering down the dock to see what is

amiss. If this happens, Von Barbe will attempt to seize the Mask and get the *Paradise* out of there.

If the party fights wisely, they may well defeat their opponents. Von Barbe himself will attempt to run away, using one of his minions as a distraction or cover. If he escapes, he will surely swear vengeance upon the PCs, and may turn up again some time in the future. Whether he is killed or not, it is unlikely he can escape with the *Paradise*, in any event.

If the fight goes on for many rounds or is exceptionally loud, the villagers will hear, and the village watchman will arrive in d10 rounds. However, he will be totally unwilling to interfere, knowing full well that he is out of his element.

Looting the *Paradise*

In case any local authorities do give the party trouble for the events on the docks, a quick search of the *Paradise* will reveal that Von Barbe and his minions were thoroughly steeped in the worship of Slaanesh.

If the GM does not wish to give his players the opportunity to loot the *Paradise*, simply have the local watchman and harbor master rush in to explain that the property must be disposed of according to law. If the characters decide to fight the whole village, that's their problem... Alternatively, the GM could decide that a stray sword-swipe cut a vital line, and the whole vessel begins to drift down the river.

If the party does get to explore the *Paradise*, (or even if the fight spills into it) this is what they find:

Almost all of the space on the main deck has been given over to the "stage." Several multi-purpose pieces of furniture, a small table and chair set, and several boxes of various props (wooden swords, an hourglass, an old skull, etc.) lie in a small room to stern of the stage. A small fore-house holds what appears to be a combination "green room" and make-up area; a mirror hangs on one wall, and two bright lanterns are still lit in this room when (and if) the party arrives here. Dozens of make-up tins, brushes, wigs, and several trunks of

clothes are here. The clothes are of course costumes, and any PC who takes the time to search through them will find an outfit for almost any occasion, past or present.

Below deck, things get more sinister.

A large common area takes up most of the hold. There are traditional boat-bunks along the sides, over-large and screened off with curtains for as much privacy as possible. In the center of the room is a pile of pillows upon a well-worn but once-valuable rug from far Cathay. The floor certainly looks comfortable, and seems a suitable area for the indulgences inherent in worship of Slaanesh. Beyond the central floor area is a curtained doorway.

Within the individual bunks, the party will find what personal items Von Barbe's entourage possessed. The GM is free to improvise here, based on the items listed in their trappings (see "Von Barbe's Players," Page 15). It is likely that each of them would have collected at least a few valuable items over the course of their activities. Exactly what is up to the GM based on how much loot he wants the party to have.

Beyond the curtained doorway lies Von Barbe's inner sanctum. Here, a blatant representation of Slaanesh – a small statue – sits on the headboard of Von Barbe's feather bed, which is draped with valuable silks and other fabrics. A wardrobe is affixed to the wall. Inside are several suits of Best Craftsmanship clothing and a small iron box. The box is locked with a standard lock, and it can easily be broken open. Inside the box is a spectacular mirror – clearly Von Barbe spent a great deal of time gazing into it. It is encrusted with jewels of various types, and is made of solid silver. Surely such a treasure will bring a pretty penny from the right buyer!

Beyond Von Barbe's room lie the fruits of the Von Barbe Players' foray into Chaotic piracy. Depending on the nature of the overall campaign, these might be valuable trade goods – silks, oils, spices, and the like – or something more mundane, in the form of supplies or basic staples. There should be at least one truly rewarding item here – perhaps a golden candelabra taken from some costly riverboat, or a rare

illuminated manuscript, or even a cask full of gold crowns. Defeating Von Barbe and his fellow cultists was probably not easy, and the party should be allowed some tangible reward.

Beyond the Masquerade

At the GM's option, the story of the Mask need not end here. After all, if the party is successful, they still possess the Mask. Will they turn it over to religious or secular authorities? Or will they keep it, and try to profit from it, either by selling it or using it (if anyone persists in using it, remember its negative side-effects!).

If Von Barbe lived, surely he will attempt to reclaim the Mask at some later time, perhaps after having recruited a new cast of minions. Von Barbe himself was well-regarded within the underground community of Slaanesh cultists; perhaps they will get wind of how he died and pursue the PCs.

It is also possible that the silver mirror the party found in Von Barbe's boudoir is, in fact, yet another Artifact of Slaanesh. Perhaps the tale of the Mask is merely the first chapter in a much larger, and much darker story.

"MASQUERADE OF HORRORS"

Is Dedicated to the "Children of Gonen"
Kansas City, Missouri

Written by Seann McAnally & Colin Campbell

Playtesters: Andrea Ashmore, Ryan Ashmore, Desiree Bilbrey, John Bilbrey, Teresa Biswell, Jason Cotterel, Colin Campbell, Cole Cummings, Connor McAnally.

Page border borrowed from the good folks at Black Industries - thanks for resurrecting WFRP!

If you enjoyed our adventure please let us know by writing seann.mcanally@gmail.com

This is not an official WFRP Product.

DON BARBE'S PLAYERS

Hermann Von Barbe

Race: Human

Career: Journeyman Wizard (Ex-Apprentice Wizard; Ex-Entertainer)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
31	41	33	31	44	46	56	50

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	12	3	3	5	2	5	0

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Magick); Animal Care; Charm +10%; Common Knowledge (The Empire); Gossip +10%; Perception +10%; Blather, Channeling +10%; Magical Sense; Performer (Actor); Performer (Singer); Read/Write; Speak Arcane Language (Classical); Speak Arcane Language (Magick)

Talents: Mimic; Public Speaking; Aetheric Attunement, Petty Magic (Arcane); Savvy; Arcane Lore (Shadow); Fast Hands; Meditation.

Armor: None

Weapons: Dagger

Trappings: Best Craftsmanship Clothes, 37 Crowns, fine jewelry, theater make-up, pouch of various components, river boat (The Paradise) and contents.

Leopold Magnus

Race: Human

Career: Outlaw (Ex-Rogue; Ex-Entertainer)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
41	47	34	32	45	33	30	32

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
2	15	3	3	4	0	0	0

Skills: Swim; Blather; Charm +10%; Common Knowledge (The Empire); Evaluate +10%; Perception +10%; Performer (Actor); Performer (Juggler +10%); Search; Sleight of Hand

Talents: Quick Draw; Specialist Weapon Group (Throwing); Flee!; Sixth Sense; Public Speaking

Armor: Leather Jerkin (Head 0, Arms 0, Body 1; Legs 0)

Weapons: Throwing Daggers (6)

Trappings: Costume; Good Craftsmanship Clothes; 18 Crowns.

Fran Poppenbutel

Race: Human

Career: Thief (Ex-Entertainer)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
35	41	27	34	51	35	32	54

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	15	2	3	4	0	2	0

Skills: Animal Care; Charm +10%; Common Knowledge (The Empire); Evaluate; Perception +10%; Performer (Acrobat); Performer (Actor); Scale Sheer Surface +10%; Concealment; Disguise; Pick Lock; Silent Move.

Talents: Lightning Reflexes; Quick Draw; Alley Cat; Trapfinder; Contortionist.

Armor: Leather Jerkin (Head 0, Arms 0, Body 1; Legs 0)

Weapons: Rapier

Trappings: Costume; Good Craftsmanship Clothes; 12 Crowns; Silver anklet.

Rutgar Helstrom

Race: Human

Career: Entertainer (Ex-Seaman)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
50	34	47	32	35	21	29	38

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
2	15	4	3	4	0	2	0

Skills: Common Knowledge (The Wasteland); Consume Alcohol; Dodge Blow; Row; Sail; Swim; Charm; Gossip; Perception; Performer (Actor); Charm Animal.

Talents: Street Fighting; Seasoned Traveler; Strike Mighty Blow; Public Speaking; Wrestling

Armor: Leather Jerkin (Head 0, Arms 0, Body 1; Legs 0)

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Axe)

Trappings: Costume; Poor Craftsmanship Clothes; 2 Crowns; Furry hat.

Heinrich Weikal

Race: Human

Career: Entertainer

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
32	35	27	31	45	30	35	28

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	12	2	3	4	0	5	0

Skills: Swim; Charm; Common Knowledge (The Empire); Gossip; Perception; Performer (Clown); Performer (Dancer); Mimic; Wrestling

Talents: Street Fighting; Seasoned Traveler; Strike Mighty Blow; Public Speaking; Wrestling

Armor: None

Weapons: Hand Weapon (Sword)

Trappings: Poor Quality Clothes.

Captain Sigmund Spule of the *Happy Traveler*

If the party needs a ready-made boat ride, Captain Sigmund Spule is always happy to provide room for travelers who need it. Captain Spule is not the most successful river boat captain on the Reik, but he's an agreeable, affable fellow who is happy to cater to the party's demands. There is nothing particularly noteworthy about either Captain Spule or the *Happy Traveler* – if stats become necessary, simply use the Wrecker stats on Page 235 of the *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* rulebook.