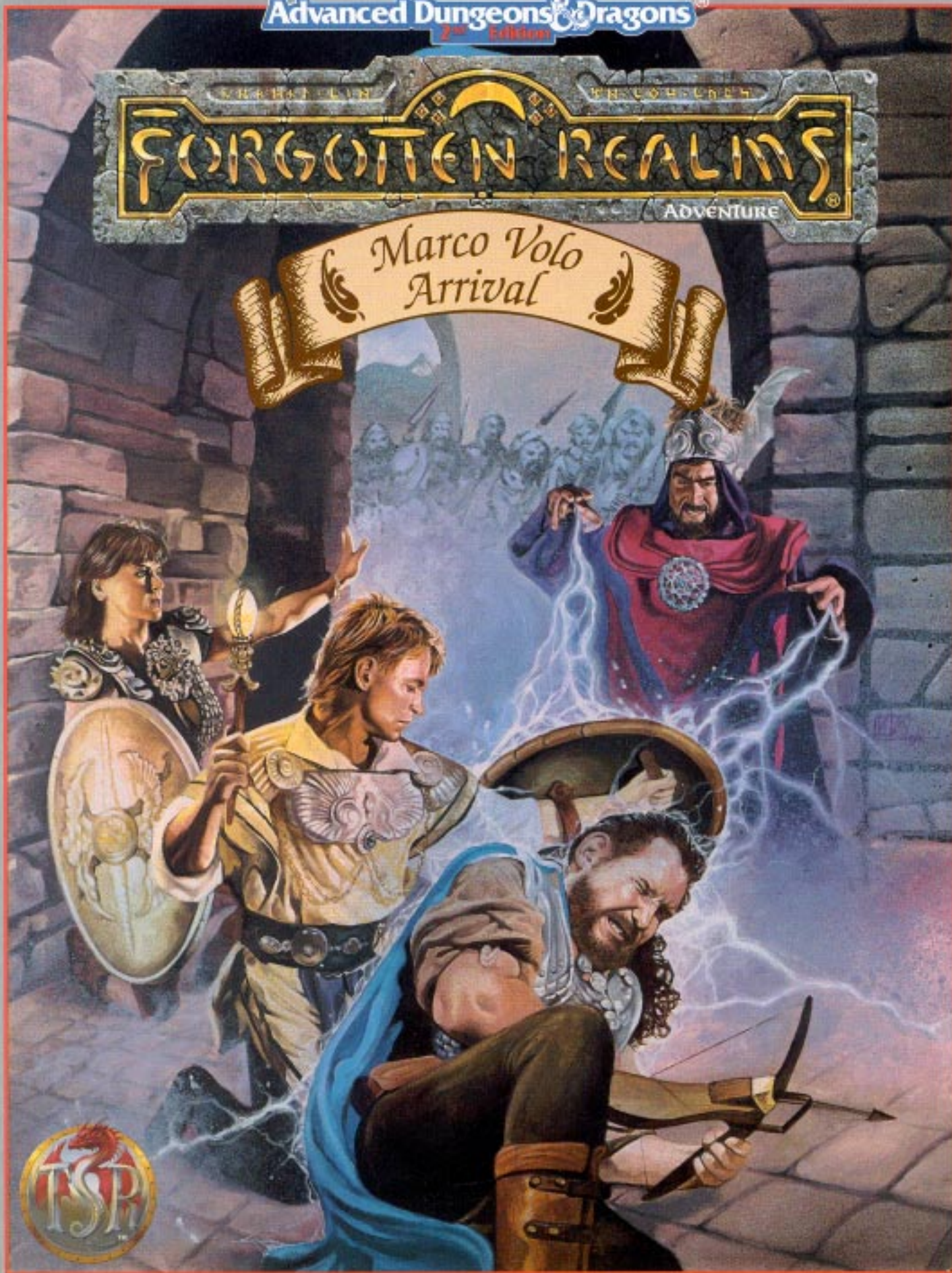


Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
2nd Edition

FORGET LUTIN THE CONQUEST
FORGOTTEN REALMS
ADVENTURE

Marco Volo
Arrival





Marco VoLo: Arrival

by ANTHONY PRYOR

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Credits

Design: Anthony Pryor
Editing: Elizabeth T. Danforth
Cover Art: John and Laura Lakey
Interior Art: Elizabeth T. Danforth
Cartography: David Sutherland
Typesetting: Nancy J. Kerkstra
Production: Paul Hanchette

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TSR, Inc.
POB 756
Lake Geneva,
WI 53147
U.S.A.



TSR Ltd.
120 Church End,
Cherry Hinton
Cambridge CB1 3LB
United Kingdom



Our Story So Far

In which, for hopefully the last time, the author updates the reader on a plot which has, by his own admission, grown excessively complex.

In *Marco Volo: Departure*, the PCs became acquainted with an annoying rogue calling himself “Marco Volo.” Marco subsequently proved to be Marcus Wands, the troublesome nephew of Maskar Wands, patriarch of the powerful Wands family. Concerned by his nephew’s troubles, Maskar persuaded the adventurers to hire Marcus as their guide to Shadowdale, to deliver a message to Lord Mourngrim.

Unbeknownst to his uncle or to the characters, Marcus is on the run from the wizard Sabbar, from whom he stole a rare artifact called the *Dragonking’s Eye*. Marcus framed the infamous Volothamp Geddarm for the crime, but he is still in hot water, since the demented Sabbar has decided that he (Marcus) really *is* Volothamp. Sabbar’s hired killers are now in pursuit.

Chief among these pursuers was the wizard-assassin Felibarr Blacklance, who attacked the party as it left Waterdeep. Later, the PCs faced more of Sabbar’s minions at the Way Inn, and then were almost undone by the evil Black Monks in Berdusk. Saved by Marcus’s timely intervention, the PCs fled Berdusk and fell in with Heino and his Woodland Troupe, a traveling band of entertainers.

Heino’s agent, Philip the Bard, uncovered the identity of Marcus’s nemesis, prompting the band to flee Cormyr. And finally, Marcus confessed his true identity.

Along the Stonebolt Trail, Felibarr and his band of followers ambushed the group. In the ensuing fight, Felibarr was slain and his minions driven off, opening the route to Shadowdale.

The Course of This Adventure

Marco Volo: *Arrival* concludes the Marco Volo trilogy. The story opens with the PCs just

south of Shadowdale, in the company of Marcus Wands and Heino’s Troupe.

Here, Marcus insists on diverting the group into the Spiderhaunt Woods, where he has hidden the *Dragonking’s Eye*. The PCs accompany him, and the party may include several NPCs from Heino’s band.

The demented Sabbar has grown even more frustrated and mad than he was to begin with. The wizard has also entered the Spiderhaunt Woods, hoping to intercept Marcus. Others have taken an interest as well: in particular, the roguish Volothamp Geddarm himself. After surviving two assassination attempts, he is quite interested in having a “little chat” with Marcus.

Beyond all this, the *Dragonking’s Eye* is an artifact with a mind of its own, and it has plans for Faerûn. It has created a crystalline fortress around itself, taken control of several of the Spiderhaunt’s more prominent creatures, and has *gated* in a few extra-planar assistants. At this point, the adventure takes on a more familiar dungeon-exploration style of play. However, the conclusion, which features the appearance of several prominent gods and the revelation of Marcus’s ancestry and destiny, might come as a surprise to jaded dungeon-crawlers.

Once the PCs’ enemies are disposed of, Marcus realizes that he has to face the world more responsibly. The party travels to Shadowdale for a command performance by Heino’s Troupe, and thus the adventure ends.

Other products that can be useful running *Marco Volo: Arrival* include the *Dalelands* accessory, the *Book of Artifacts* and, of course, the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting*, especially the *Shadowdale* booklet. The fiction previously recommended— *The Three Musketeers*, and the works of Karl Edward Wagner and Stephen Brust—are likewise appropriate to this adventure. Finally, certain motion pictures, such as Rob Reiner’s *The Princess Bride* and Terry Gilliam’s *Time Bandits*, are ideal for atmosphere. This last would be especially useful providing staging ideas for encounter H in Chapter 1.





Cast of Characters

In which the author introduces new players in our drama, and renews the readers' acquaintance with old ones.



The following characters are likely to be encountered in the course of play. Recurring characters such as Heino and Marcus are repeated here for convenience, but with limited description, while new characters are described in more detail.

Marcus Wands

(aka Marco Volo)

CN (G) hm B6

Str 11; Dex 16; Con 15; Int 14; Wis 6; Cha 17

Armor Class: 7 (-2 due to Dexterity)

Move: 12

Hit Points: 24

Number of Attacks: 1

Damage: 1d6+2 (rapier +1)

THAC0: 18

Weapon Proficiencies: Rapier, dagger, crossbow

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Blind-fighting, dancing, gaming, musical instrument, riding (horse), seamanship, singing

Languages: Common, elvish, dwarvish

Magical Items: *Rapier +1, boots of elvenkind*

Spells: First Level (3): *alarm, magic missile, taunt*; Second Level (2): *knock, stinking cloud*

Thief Abilities: CW 75; DN 35; PP 30; RL 25

Marcus was fully described in *Journey*, and the reader is encouraged to examine that volume if greater detail is required. Here, it is sufficient to remind DMs that Marcus thinks himself a dashing and handsome outlaw, beloved by the ladies. In truth, he is a headstrong, somewhat annoying member of the noble Wands family.

Marcus's life became much more complicated when an escapade took him to the hidden residence of the mad wizard Sabbar. There, Marcus stole a likely-looking artifact from Sabbar's study and escaped. Unfortunately, Sabbar is a vengeful wizard. While he is decidedly demented, Sabbar is equally persistent, and determined to retrieve his treasure.





Heino

CG gm 18

Str 10; Dex 17; Con 12; Int 18; Wis 10; Cha 17

Armor Class: 8

Move: 6

Hit Points: 20

Number of Attacks: 1

Damage: 1d6 (short sword)

THAC0: 18

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, short sword

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Animal handling, artistic ability, brewing, cooking, riding (horse), singing, ancient history, herbalism, reading/writing, religion, spellcraft

Languages: Common, gnomish, elvish, dwarvish, orcish

Magical Items: *Wand of illusion, chime of opening*

Spells: First Level (5): *cantrip, change self, color spray, Nystul's magic aura, phantasmal force*; Second Level (4): *blur, fool's gold, improved phantasmal force, invisibility*; Third Level (4): *clairvoyance, invisibility (10' radius), spectral force, wraithform*; Fourth Level (3): *fear, illusory wall, rainbow pattern*

Heino is a friendly and, at times, excessively jolly gnome. He considers himself a samaritan, helping those in need and looking after the welfare of his players like a doting father. He can be very serious if need be, however, and will not hesitate to use whatever means necessary to assist his performers and companions if they are in trouble.

Originally a traveling performer with his two brothers, Heino struck out on his own five years ago, leading a small group of gnomish tumblers and jugglers. His band has grown in size and influence since then, and his reputation as a master showman has spread. He was contacted by the Harpers two years ago, and he has worked for them on occasion. However, he feels that joining the order would limit his freedom, which he values highly.

The DM might allow Heino or a member of his troupe to accompany the party into the Spiderhaunt Woods. As the woods hide giant spiders, ettercaps, and other poisonous creatures, Heino can delve into his stock of potions and magical treasures for such

useful items as *potions of vitality*, scrolls containing *neutralize poison* or similar spells, or a *peript of proof against poison* to counteract toxic attacks. Unused potions and permanent magical items should be returned to Heino after the adventure if the PCs wish to remain in his good graces.

Sabbar

CE hm W17

Str 9; Dex 13; Con 5; Int 19; Wis 12; Cha 3

Armor Class: 0 (Bracers of Defense)

Move: 12

Hit Points: 30

Number of Attacks: 1

Damage: 1d4 + poison (poisoned dagger)

THAC0: 15

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Artistic ability, etiquette, riding (horse), astrology, reading/writing, religion, spellcraft

Languages: Common, elvish, orcish, tanar'ri, yuggoloth

Magical Items: *Bracers of AC 0, robe of stars, staff of power, amulet of the planes*

Spells: First Level (5): *feather fall, magic missile (x3), sleep*; Second Level (5): *darkness (15' radius), ESP, flaming sphere, fog cloud, ray of enfeeblement*; Third Level (5): *dispel magic, fireball (x2), haste, hold person*; Fourth Level (5): *confusion, fear, ice storm, polymorph others, wall of fire*; Fifth Level (5): *animate dead, cloudkill, cone of cold, conjure fire elemental, feeblemind*; Sixth Level (3): *anti-magic shell, death fog, stone to flesh*; Seventh Level (3): *finger of death, power word (stun), prismatic spray*; Eighth Level (2): *clone, incendiary cloud*

Sabbar is an infamous plane-traveler who vanished some years ago. Long thought dead, he returned to Faerûn after his extensive travels to alternate dimensions had turned him chaotic evil and driven him completely insane. In his travel, he obtained an important item—an artifact from another plane known as the *Dragonking's Eye*. After his return, he settled in Sembia and prepared to use the *Eye* for his





own gain—only to have it stolen by a lucky sneak-thief. The thief was Marco Volo (Marcus Wands), but Sabbar allowed himself to be convinced that Volothamp Geddarm was the real culprit. Unfortunately for Marcus, Sabbar was also convinced that Marco Volo and the elusive Volothamp are one and the same individual.

Sabbar has offered a substantial reward for “Volo’s” capture. Whether Marcus is dead or alive is irrelevant to Sabbar—he can easily use *speak with dead* to wrest from a corpse knowledge of the artifact’s hiding place.

Volothamp Geddarm

CG hm W5

Str 12; Dex 15; Con 15; Int 17; Wis 11; Cha 16

Armor Class: 8

Move: 12

Hit Points: 16

Number of Attacks: 1

Damage: 1d6+1 (rapier)

THAC0: 19

Weapon Proficiencies: Rapier

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Artistic ability, brewing, cooking, dancing, etiquette, heraldry, riding (horse), singing, tailor, ancient history, reading/writing, spellcraft

Languages: Common, elvish, dwarvish, halfling

Magical Items: *Beast-speaker brooch* (allows communication with animals; see *Elves of Evermeet*), *ring of resistance vs. necromancy* (see *Tome of Magic*), *boots of elvenkind*, *wand of enemy detection*

Spells: First Level (5): *cantrip*, *change self*, *color spray*, *Nystul’s magic aura*, *phantasmal force*; Second Level (4): *blur*, *fool’s gold*, *improved phantasma1 force*, *invisibility*; Third Level (4): *clairvoyance*, *invisibility* (10’ radius), *spectral force*, *wraithform*

A roguish magician known for his neatly trimmed beard, stylish beret, and acid tongue, Volo is a feature throughout the Realms. Perhaps only a *brief* feature, since his forthright reporting of others’ professional secrets often puts him at odds with the local merchants, constabulary, and wizards. He has written a number of works, including a popular series of city

guidebooks, and *Volo’s Guide to All Things Magical*, a work dealing with magic “for the common people.” Publication of this work was suppressed by powerful wizards loath to share their secrets.

Volo has remained invisibly in the background of our story thus far. Nevertheless, he has survived several attempts on his life prompted by Sabbar’s contract, and found that he was not truly the desired target—in this case, anyway. He has set about solving the mystery. After extensive investigation, he discovered the true identity of “Marco Volo” and arranged to discuss the matter with Maskar Wands. Despite the patriarch’s thorough dislike of Geddarm, Maskar was more concerned for his nephew’s safety than desirous of taking Geddarm to task for his writings, and explained the situation.

Volothamp has since used his continent-wide network of contacts to follow the party’s trail of destruction; he will meet up with them in the Spiderhaunt Woods. In the present adventure, Volo provides the PCs with vital information about Marcus Wands’s true ancestry, and some secrets of the *Dragonking’s Eye*. At the DM’s discretion, he can accompany the party as an NPC.

The Knights of Inescapable Justice

Paladins are known across Faerûn as champions of goodness and fair play. Unfortunately, they are also known as obnoxious do-gooders who never let anyone else have any fun. The Dalelands paladins known as the Knights of Inescapable Justice are typical of this stereotype.

Alerted to the evil growing in the Spiderhaunt Woods, Sir Talvis, who is leader of the Knights, and a group of his followers have gone to investigate. The PCs will meet them in the woods, and they can be expected to make the adventurers’ lives miserable. They might show up toward the end of the adventure to assist (inadvertently) but their presence is primarily intended to drive the PCs crazy.





Sir Talvis

LG hm P10

Str 18/76; Dex 13; Con 15; Int 12; Wis 16; Cha 18

Armor Class: 0 (-2 due to enchanted armor)

Move: 12

Hit Points: 60

Number of Attacks: 3/2

Damage: 1d8+9 (*broad sword* +5, *holy avenger*, +4 due to strength)

THAC0: 11 (+5 due to enchanted weapon, +2 due to strength)

Weapon Proficiencies: Broad sword (specialist), dagger, heavy horse lance, halberd, quarterstaff, warhammer

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Animal handling, blacksmithing, etiquette, heraldry, riding (horse), ancient history, reading/writing, armorer, weaponsmithing

Languages: Common, elvish

Magical Items: *Plate armor* +2, *broad sword* +5 (*holy avenger*)

Spells: Level One (2): *Cure light wounds* (x2)

Sir Talvis is an unusual man. Born in far Chult, he journeyed to Faerûn by a meandering route, learning different fighting styles along the way. From a highly lawful culture, Talvis chose the path of the paladin after he helped rescue a band of travelers from raiding drow along the Sword Coast. He has settled in the Dalelands and gathered a group of paladins and lawful good fighters. His symbol, a sword on a golden starburst, and his weapon, the holy avenger Sunblade, are famous throughout the surrounding regions.

Though admirable in many ways, Talvis typifies the stern, unyielding paladin. He brooks no unlawful behavior, insists that enemies always be given a chance to surrender, "fights fair" even if his foe fights dishonorably, and looks disapprovingly on luxuries or unnecessary pleasures taken by his companions. "Unnecessary" pleasures include drinking anything but water, sleeping in beds, eating any but the most basic food, wearing jewelry or fancy clothing, singing, dancing, etc.

Sir Talvis and his followers entered the Spiderhaunt Woods intent on exterminating the evil that now plagues the region, the result of the malign influ-

ence of the *Dragonking's Eye* (see below). The Knights will cross paths with the PCs on several occasions and, although they can be a royal pain in the neck, the Knights can also come to the party's rescue if the adventurers are in danger of being overwhelmed.

Talvis is accompanied by a dozen paladins and lawful fighters, of whom the following statistics are typical.

Knight of Inescapable Justice (5th-level Fighter): Int Average; AL LG; AC 2 (plate mail and shield); hp 25; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (sword); SZ M; ML 15

The Featherdale Dragons

Not every adventuring band is made up of stern veteran fighters, experienced wizards, crafty thieves, and the like. Some are less impressive—everyone must start somewhere, after all. The Featherdale Dragons are typical of this last sort, a group of sincere if inexperienced farm youths looking for adventure. They serve a dual purpose in *Marco Volo: Arrival*: to show up and annoy the PCs with their sincere attempts to be "real" adventurers and, more seriously, to invite disaster with their ineptitude and force the PCs to come to their rescue. The party may go so far as to try dissuading the Featherdale Dragons from continued pursuit of their intended profession.

Theruvan Whitefield

LG hm F2

Str 17; Dex 11; Con 15; Int 10; Wis 4; Cha 12

Armor Class: 2

Move: 12

Hit Points: 12

Number of Attacks: 1

Damage: 1d8 (broad sword)

THAC0: 19

Weapon Proficiencies: Battle axe, broad sword, long bow, knife

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Agriculture, riding (horse), hunting

Languages: Common





Theruvan is the son of a wealthy Featherdale farmer. Some months ago, he decided that life on the farm was too dull, and gathered a group of friends together into his own version of an adventuring band. Calling themselves the Featherdale Dragons, they set off into the Dalelands in search of excitement, treasure, and glorious battle. So far, they have acquired a false "treasure map" from a confidence man, gotten lost in the Velarwood, and nearly drowned trying to shoot the rapids near Feather Falls.

Theruvan is a tall, outwardly sincere young man with a somewhat vacant expression and a deeply-held desire for romance, excitement, and adventure. Unfortunately, all he knows about these things comes from reading books and hearing the tales of wandering bards. He has little real knowledge of how to go about finding them—or handling them, if he does.

He would normally be a likable fellow, but Theruvan possesses fatal personality flaws in his extreme overconfidence and inability to take others' advice. So far, none of his friends have been killed by his intransigence, but it may be just a matter of time until Theruvan's inexpe-

rience leads to disaster. If they wish to continue their efforts to become a genuine band of adventurers, Theruvan and his followers need education, competent mentors, and a great deal more patience. Of course, none of this will Theruvan readily admit. The example set by the PCs may lead Theruvan to rethink his approach to being an adventurer, but he will be very difficult to persuade. Worse, he may interpret friendly advice as "jealousy" or an attempt by one of the PCs to eliminate a potentially successful "rival adventurer."

Sydala Sunriver

CG hf W1

Theruvan's beloved, Sydala learned some spells from her grandmother, a village wise woman and herbalist near Featherdale. Sydala is devoted to Theruvan and follows him through thick and thin. Lately, however, she has begun to nurse some nagging doubts about Theruvan and his practices. Whenever she questions his decisions, he grows enraged or changes the subject.





Darial Pike

NG hm P1

Darial has picked up some minimal healing skill from the local priests of Chauntea, and some day hopes to join a Chauntean order. As it is, he functions as a 1st-level priest, and has had his hands full healing injuries brought on by Theruvan's enthusiasm. Like Sydala, Darial has begun to doubt his leader's competence.

Druvus

N hm F1

Druvus was Theruvan's best friend on the farm, and followed him on his search for adventure. He is not very bright (downright stupid in fact—Int 4) and defends Theruvan from all criticism. In his misguided loyalty, he will threaten to beat up anyone who disagrees with his leader.

Rynda Fallshadow

CN hef T1

The party's scout and "thief" is the daughter of a half-elven family. She is probably the most pragmatic and intelligent member of the Featherdale Dragons, and has completely turned against Theruvan. She stays with the group out of concern for Sydala, who is one of her closest friends.

At the DM's discretion, the Featherdale Dragons can contain additional young and enthusiastic farm kids. Most will be either 0-level humans or 1st-level fighters, although other classes are possible.

Turekana

This werebear has been appointed a "warder" of the Spiderhaunts by Lord Mourngrim. She is highly dedicated to keeping peace in the woods, although the place is a bit rough and generally considered a den of evil forces.

Turekana (werebear): Int Exceptional; AL CG; AC 2; MV 9; HD 7+3; hp 45; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-8; SA Hug for 2-16; SD Hit only by silver or +1 or better magical weapons; SZ L; ML 14

The Dragonking's Eye

The final major player in our drama is a truly unusual individual. The *Dragonking's Eye* is an intelligent artifact, taken from its home plane by Sabbar and then stolen by Marcus Wands. The following excerpt, written by the noted sage Elminster, discusses what is known of the *Eye* and its nature:

"The *Dragonking's Eye* is known through many different crystal spheres, and by a variety of names: the Eye of Doom, the Eye of Chaos, the Eye of Woe, the Eye of Sorrow, the Fiend's Eye, the Eye of Evil, the Eye of Darkness, the Eye of Night, etc., etc. The fact that nowhere is the *Dragonking's Eye* known as 'the Eye of Happiness' or 'the Eye of Joy' should tell the casual reader something about its nature.

"Physically, the *Dragonking's Eye* resembles a short wand or scepter, with a large yellowish gem set at one end. When the device's powers are activated, the gem acquires a black, slitted, pupil-like opening, from which it derives its name.

"The *Eye* appears to be possessed of a malicious intelligence, and may contain the surviving essence of an evil god, fiend, or some other powerful being. Apparently indestructible, the *Eye* grants its holder wondrous powers, but invariably corrupts and destroys. It attracts fell creatures to its service and eventually overcomes its owner's willpower. The possessor is left a burned-out shell subject to the whims of the *Dragonking's Eye*.

"Fortunately for Faerûn—and all of Toril, for that matter—the infamous *Eye* has appeared only in distant planes or other crystal spheres, and has yet to spread its wicked influence over our world. Given the evil that is presently abroad in Faerûn, it is best that no one adds to it by bringing the *Dragonking's Eye* here."

Of course, Elminster's worst fears have been realized. After finding the *Eye* on a distant world it had destroyed, the mad wizard Sabbar fell under its evil influence and brought it to Faerûn, hoping to unlock



all its secrets. Both Sabbar's and the *Eye's* plans were frustrated when Marcus Wands stole the artifact. Initially, the *Eye* itself did not object—although it would have preferred to dominate a powerful wizard over a disreputable bard. However, it found that, for some reason, it was unable to dominate or control Marcus in any way. For reasons it cannot fathom, the *Eye* soon grew deeply afraid of Marcus, especially after its failure to dominate him.

However, being hidden away in trackless woods was not the situation the *Eye* desired to find itself in. With Marcus no longer nearby, it began to take things under control, making the most of the circumstances in which it found itself. It is gathering monsters and evil followers in the Spiderhaunt Woods where Marcus hid it.

As for Sabbar, he had never been very stable to begin with. Contact with the *Dragonking's Eye* sent him completely over the edge. He is now thoroughly mad and driven to distraction by the obsessive desire to retrieve the *Eye*.

Secrets of The Eye

The *Dragonking's Eye* does, indeed, contain the soul of an incredibly ancient and evil god, whose very name has been forgotten. His popular nickname, "The Dragonking," lives on in the object's name. It is best that the god's true name is forgotten, for if it is ever learned and uttered, the god will be freed and his malignant influence once more unleashed upon the spheres. As part of his punishment, the god's own memory had all knowledge of his name expunged. Thus, he is unable to free himself, or to assist those who would do so.

Defeated by the forces of good and law, the god was nevertheless too powerful to destroy. He was imprisoned in the *Dragonking's Eye*, and the *Eye* itself was put in the keeping of House Sunstaff, the leaders of the struggle against the god. The deities of law granted a boon to House Sunstaff—the family and its descendants would be immune to the evil of the *Dragonking's Eye* and its occupant. As centuries passed, however, the *Eye* was lost to the Sunstaffs, and it vanished into wildspace, there to wreak havoc and destruction upon various crystal spheres.

As the alert DM has probably already surmised, Marcus and the entire Wands family are the last descendants of House Sunstaff, whose survivors migrated to Toril from their home world many centuries ago. The story of the *Dragonking's Eye* and its power have long since been forgotten, but chance has finally returned the *Eye* to its lawful warders.

The *Dragonking's Eye* is an artifact, as described in the *Book of Artifacts*. Due to its malign influence, the *Eye* should not be allowed to enter the campaign. However, this adventure ends with the *Eye* back in the hands of its designated guardians, which may provide the direction and driving force for future adventures.

Special Note. None of the powers listed below may be used by members of the Wands family. Members of this family are also immune to the *Eye's* curse, and to all negative magical effects arising from the *Eye's* possession.

The *Dragonking's Eye* has the following powers.

Constant. When the *Eye* is held, the owner gains 50% magic resistance, and gains 18 Charisma.

The *Eye* also attracts monstrous followers, depending on how long it has been in a given sphere. It attracts no monsters for the first three months. From three to six months, it attracts as *monster summoning I* once per week. From six months to a year, it calls up creatures as a *monster summoning I* spell once per day. From one to two years, it attracts creatures equal to *monster summoning II* once per day. From two to three years, it attracts creatures equal to *monster summoning III* once per day, and so on. This effect takes place whether or not the *Eye* is in anyone's possession. If the *Eye* has an owner, the monsters will serve the owner, at least until the owner is completely dominated by the *Eye*. If there is no owner, the *Eye* controls the monsters.

Invoked. When held and invoked, the *Eye* allows its possessor to cast *domination* three times per day, and *power word stun*, *blind*, or *kill* three times per day (a total of three times, not three times each).





Random. Two from **Table 10: Abjurations**; one from **Table 11: Cataclysms**; two from **Table 12: Combat**. Negative effects occur at random times as determined by the DM.

Curse. Each month that a character owns the *Eye*, he or she must save vs. wands. After the first month, these saving throws are at a cumulative -1 penalty (that is, an owner who has had the *Eye* for six months must roll at -6). If the throw is a failure, the owner loses 1 point of Constitution. All future rolls continue at the above progressive penalty, even after a failure. Once the owner's Con has been reduced to 0, he or she is a lifeless shell under the complete domination of the god imprisoned in the *Eye*. The god's alignment is CE and it is dedicated to nothing besides wanton destruction, conquest, and bloodshed. Only a *wish* or similar spell can restore an individual lost in such a fashion.

Suggested Means of Destruction. The *Eye* is probably indestructible, but it could conceivably be removed to a place where it cannot threaten the Prime Material Plane. Such places include the Negative Material Plane, or deep in such inaccessible planes as Baator or the Abyss. Unfortunately, the possibility that it will be found by a powerful being and used for destruction or conquest, or that the god will be released, still exists, so it is probably best that the *Eye* remains in the Wands's possession.

The only certain way to destroy the *Eye* is to unleash the god contained within and destroy *him*. As this is a difficult task at best, it is not likely to happen any time soon.

The Eye's Allies

Several creatures have joined the *Eye's* forces in the Spiderhaunt Woods—some voluntarily, some through the *Eye's* magical compulsion. Those allies and slaves most likely to be encountered by the PCs are listed below.

Thandraxx

This powerful lich has dwelt in the Spiderhaunts for several centuries, and became aware of the *Eye's* pres-

ence when Marcus hid it there. Too powerful for the *Eye* to dominate, Thandraxx instead became its ally, hoping to use it to further her own desire for conquest and power.

So far, she has been a valuable ally, although she has begun to wonder about the *Eye's* true intentions. If she can be shown that the *Eye* plans widespread destruction, Thandraxx may turn against her erstwhile ally. This is not out of any noble motivations on her part, but because her own desire is for conquest, control, and power—not obliteration. Besides, she doesn't really want the competition.

Thandraxx (lich): Int Supra-Genius; AL NE (L); AC 0; MV 6; HD 12; hp 55; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SA Special; SD +1 or better magical weapon to hit, spell immunities; SZ M; ML 18; Spells: *armor, magic missile (x2), sleep, blindness, flaming sphere, ray of enfeeblement, stinking cloud, fireball (x2), haste, Melf's minute meteors, confusion, dimension door, fear, ice storm, cloudkill, feeblemind, teleport, wall of iron, disintegrate*

Ettercaps

Several bands of these foul creatures have fallen under the *Eye's* control, and serve as enforcers and muscle in the forest. They band together in groups larger than usual, and have filled the woods with their infamous traps: webs, pits, deadfalls, and so on. Deep in the forest, ettercaps will stalk the party, shadowing it until one or more characters falls into a trap. Then they attack, using their venom to incapacitate those who are not trapped.

Ettercaps: Int Low; AL NE; AC 6; MV 12; HD 5; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-8; SA Poison; SD Traps; SZ M; ML 13

The Noble Cavaliers

This grand moniker is the name of one of the Spiderhaunt's most peculiar goblin bands, of which there are many. Their king, Artemis, apparently read a lot of human literary romances before deciding upon this name. King Artemis was easily dominated by the





Dragonking's Eye, and immediately put his entire tribe at the artifact's disposal. Most of the other Cavaliers joined in with enthusiasm. They have been wreaking havoc in the forest ever since.

The Cavaliers have affected a somewhat unusual attire—for goblins, anyway. They dress in human-style finery-plumed hats, velvet or satin tunics with lace collars, bucket boots, baldrics, etc. Most of these items were looted from travelers, and they do not all fit perfectly. The Noble Cavaliers also speak in a stilted, pseudo-literary style, and imitate the manners of foppish dandies, duelists, and adventurers. Typical dialogue from the Cavaliers includes:

"Ho, varlet! Have at you!"

"Stand and fight like a man, coward!"

"Is that the best you can do, me bucko?"

"Ha! You think I'm afraid? Well, think again, my man!"

"You killed my father; prepare to die."

The Noble Cavaliers are relatively honorable fighters. They shun bows and other missile weapons, preferring to cross swords with their opponents and test their mettle. They nevertheless retain several traditional goblin tactics, including ambush and sneak attacks.

Noble Cavaliers (goblins): Int Low/ Average; AL LE; AC 6; MV 6; HD 1-1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SZ M; ML 10

Bodyguards: Int Average; AL LE; AC 5; MV 6; HD 1+1; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SZ M; ML 12

King Artemis: Int Average; AL LE; AC 4; MV 6; HD 2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SZ M; ML 13

Githyanki

The *Dragonking's Eye* uses a number of these creatures, normally found on the astral plane, as bodyguards. Nominally loyal to their mysterious Lich Queen, these githyanki are almost completely under the *Eye's* control and serve it without question. Those githyanki encountered will have the following statistics.

Githyanki Fighters: Int Exceptional; AL LE; AC 3; MV 12; HD 3; hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8 (bastard sword used two-handed); SZ M; ML 13

Githyanki Mage: Int Genius; AL LE; AC 10; MV 12; HD 4; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (quarterstaff); SZ M; ML 13; Spells: *magic missile (x2)*, *wall of fog*, *darkness*, 15' radius, *invisibility*

Githyanki Fighter/Mage: Int Exceptional; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 4; hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8 (broad sword); SZ M; ML 13; Spells: *magic missile (x2)*, *sleep*, *pyrotechnics*, *web*

Githyanki Sergeant: Int Exceptional; AL LE; AC 2; MV 12; HD 6; hp 40; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8 (broad sword); SZ M; ML 14

Githyanki Warlock: Int Genius; AL LE; AC 10; MV 12; HD 6; hp 20; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (quarterstaff); SZ M; ML 14; Spells: *armor*, *magic missile*, *phantasmal force*, *sleep*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *stinking cloud*, *fireball*, *haste*

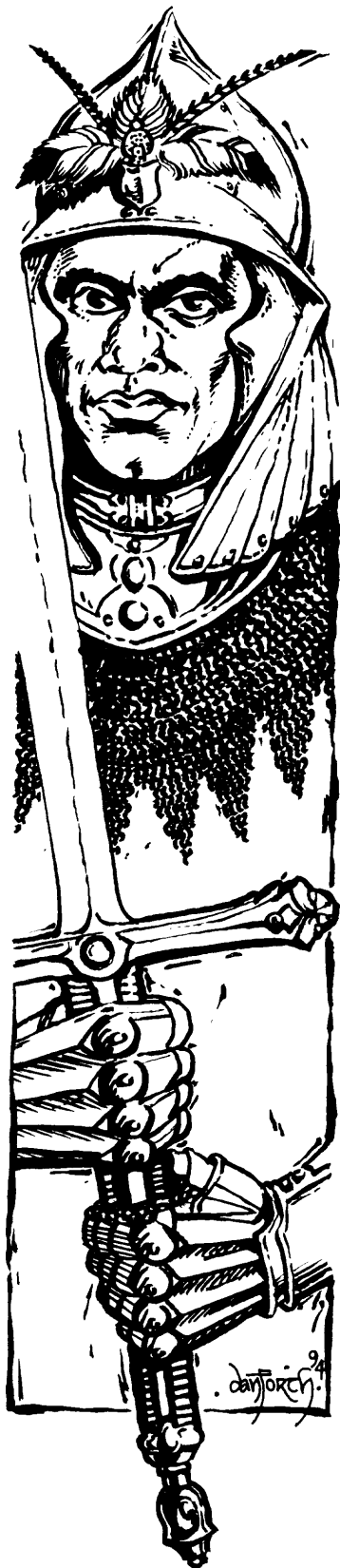
Githyanki Knight: Int Exceptional; AL LE; AC 0; MV 12; HD 8; hp 50; THAC0 13 (+3 due to weapon); #AT 3/2; Dmg 2-8 (*bastard silver sword* +3 used two-handed); SA paladinlike powers; SZ M; ML 17





Chapter One

In which the weary heroes finally approach the safety of Shadowdale. Unfortunately, dire rumors induce them to abandon this route, and enter the grim depths of the Spiderhaunt Woods. Along the way, the Spiderhaunt's dangers make themselves manifest. Young and sincere but relatively annoying would-be adventurers are encountered, and we find out why no one likes paladins. What little food is consumed is of only passable quality.



M*arco Volo:* Arrival begins immediately after the party's final fight with Felibarr Blacklance. The PCs, along with Marcus Wands and Heino's Woodland Troupe, are in the Shadow Gap, two or three days' ride southwest of Shadowdale. The next move should be to the Spiderhaunt Woods, a day or so to the north. If the players choose to go directly into the woods, fine. If the party debates its next move, Marcus speaks up.

"Excuse me," Marcus says, "but that wand I stole from Sabbar is in the woods north of here. If we go get it, we could offer to give it back. Then perhaps Sabbar will call off his dogs."

Hopefully this will be enough to send the party into the Spiderhaunts. If the adventurers ask Heino for assistance, he replies that his troupe must be in Shadowdale for its command performance, and that he is not willing to endanger the families and non-combatants of his troupe in the Spiderhaunts. If the DM chooses, Heino may permit one or more members of his troupe to volunteer to accompany the adventurers into the woods. These individuals can be chosen from the NPCs listed in *Marco Volo: Journey*. Heino himself might even accompany the party, temporarily turning the troupe over to Ina or Philip the Bard when the performers move on to Shadowdale.

What's in The Woods?

The Spiderhaunt Woods, not the most healthy of places at the best times, is in worsening shape these days. After stealing the *Dragonking's Eye*, Marcus secreted it deep in the woods. There its malevolent intelligence went to work, enthralling several of the area's powerful entities, and constructing a massive crystalline latticework around itself. The *Eye* is intent upon taking ever more victims and turning the full force of its destructiveness on all Faerûn.

Several bands of goblins and ettercaps serve the *Eye*, along with the lich Thandraxx, who is presently too strong for the *Eye* to enslave. The lich offers its alliance as one of convenience, and may turn against the *Eye* once its true





plans are evident. Reread the *Cast of Characters* for details on these and other allies of the *Eye*.

The *Eye's* plans are still in an early stage of development, but it is the artifact's intention to foster social and political conflict in the Dalelands while it marshals its forces. Later it would unleash its armies in a campaign of conquest. Whether it wins the conflict is irrelevant—such is the extent of the *Eye's* evil that it only wants destruction and bloodshed; victory or defeat does not matter.

The growing evil in the woods has not gone unnoticed by local authorities. The Dalelands are crawling with retired heroes, ambitious adventurers, and dogooders of all sorts, so it was only a matter of time before someone started to investigate the rumors of a new kind of evil in the Spiderhaunts. Presently, the Knights of Inescapable Justice, a fraternity of dedicated (and thoroughly obnoxious) paladins, are in the woods seeking out the source of the evil. They are very likely to cross paths with the PCs.

ENCOUNTERS

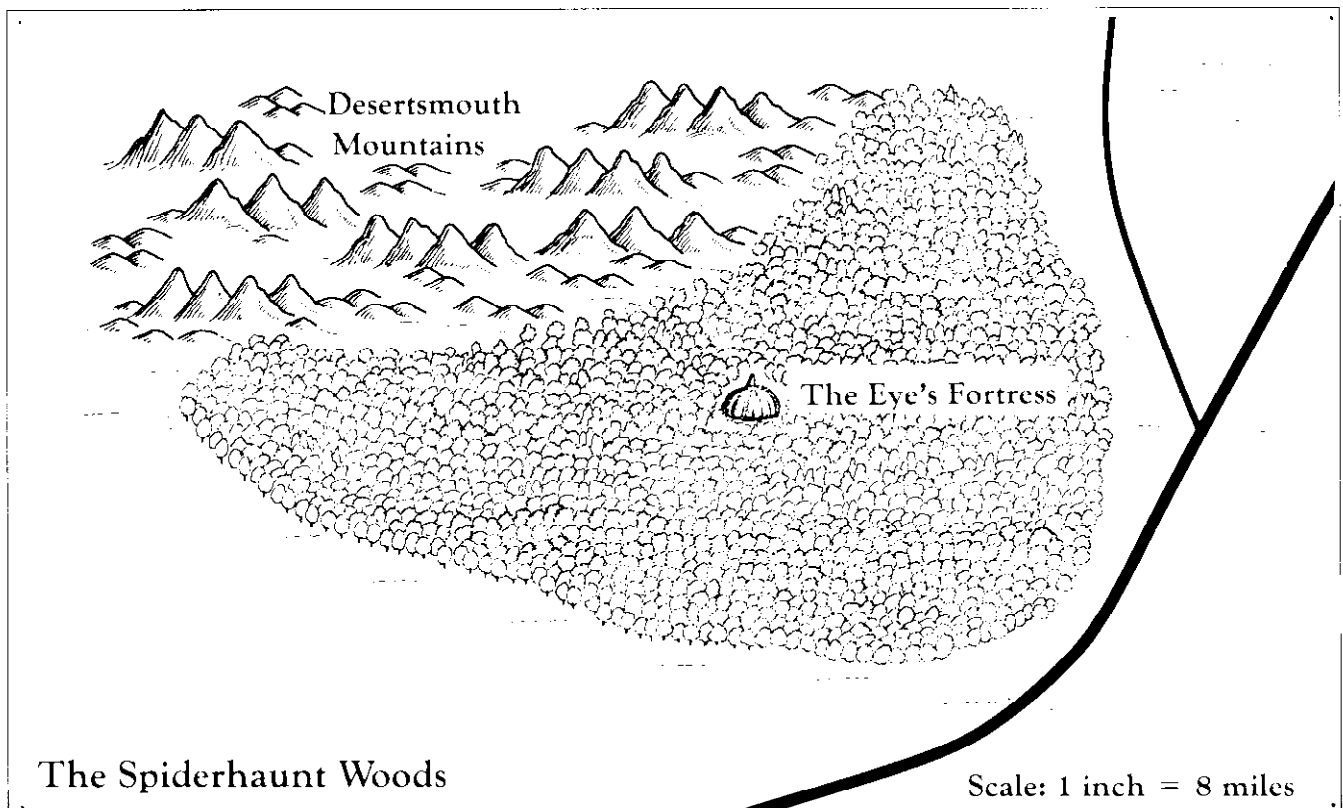
Map 1 shows the Spiderhaunt Woods and environs. The following encounters take place at various locations throughout the woods as noted.

A. Rumors (along the road)

As the party rides down the road toward the Spiderhaunts, they meet a group of travelers. As the party approaches, read the following.

Ahead on the road you see a small band of travelers. There is a merchant's wagon loaded with trade goods, two young priests mounted on ponies, and several peasants on foot. The merchant, a burly middle-aged man, hails you.

"Hello!" he calls. "Are you bound for Shadowdale? I'd be careful if I were you."





If the characters engage the travelers in conversation, they learn some of these rumors:

- Goblins and other creatures are raiding out of the Spiderhaunt Woods.
- An evil warlord or lich has occupied the Spiderhaunts, intent on conquering the Dalelands.
- A fortress made entirely of human and elven bones has sprung up in the middle of the woods.
- Several bands of adventurers have entered the woods searching for the source of the evil, and none have returned.
- A group of powerful paladins has gone to the woods.

The rumors may be repeated by any one of the NPCs, and may vary in small details. Some NPCs may actually argue over the rumors: “They say it’s a lich in the woods!” “Nah, it’s a sorcerer more powerful than Blackstaff hisself!” “It’s a lich, I tell ye!” “Yer full of it!” and so on.

The encounter will end with well-intentioned but forbidding warnings against approaching the Spiderhaunt Woods.

B. Tell-tale Evidence (near the woods)

When the PCs parted company with Heino’s caravan and left the road, they approach the woods warily. There the adventurers find signs of battle. Read the following.

Near a small grove of trees you see a patch of greensward that has been blackened and discolored. As you approach, you see several corpses lying on the ground. There are ten human bodies and four horses, all dead, feathered with arrows and dispatched by daggers or short swords. Armor and weapons have apparently been stripped from the bodies, but some broken swords and shattered spears lie about. You see goblin blood in pools, but no bodies.

Inspection of the battle site will reveal many tracks, of goblin, horse, and human. There are also several strange, unidentifiable footprints—those of several githyanki who accompanied the goblin party. Skilled trackers will be able to recreate the battle; the humans, mounted on horses, were ambushed by goblins in the grove shooting a rain of arrows. Then the goblins rushed out of hiding to attack. There is evidence of fire and destructive magical spells such as *magic missile* being discharged. The bodies of the travelers have all been thoroughly looted, and no goblin remains are in evidence. No useful equipment remains.

C. Woodcutter’s Cottage (edge of the woods)

At the very edge of the Spiderhaunt Woods, the party comes upon yet another site of tragedy.

You see the smoking ruins of a log cottage, a woodcutter’s or hunter’s home. Arrows sprout from the logs, the house has been ransacked, and the small outbuilding reduced to splinters. You see two dead horses and a dead cow in the ruins of a corral, while the family that once lived here—a woman, her husband, and a teenage son—lie cut to ribbons nearby. The woman moves feebly—she is still alive.

The woman has been reduced to -9 hit points, and will die in one round unless first aid or healing spells are administered. If she is healed, she will tell the following story.

“It was goblins,” the woman says, her voice racked with pain. “They usually stay deep in the woods—they haven’t attacked in years. Sometimes we even traded with them. But they attacked us. They were wearing strange clothes—like fancy nobles. And they were with some creatures I’d never seen before—tall, pale, in strange armor. Roland tried to get us away, but they shot arrows—oh, gods . . . They killed everything and destroyed the house . . .”



The woman, whose name is Elseth, will recover if cared for, but she should be sent to Shadowdale. If the PCs return to the road, they will find a party of travelers willing to escort Elseth to the Dalelands. The adventurers may also leave her here under the care of an NPC or two, or (if they are particularly uncaring) send her back to the road on her own. She will survive either way, although better treatment might earn the PCs some XP bonuses at the DM's option. Similarly, callous behavior may induce a DM to penalize the PCs.

The following encounters occur after the PCs have entered the Spiderhaunt Woods. Generally speaking, the events can occur in any order the DM desires. However, the chapter must end with the discovery of the *Eye's* crystal fortress.

D. Spies in the Woods

At the DM's discretion, the PCs might have a few conventional encounters to get things rolling once they enter the woods. After an hour or so of travel, they will have the following encounter.

Have the PCs make Int rolls. The DM can roll for NPC party members if desired. Those whose rolls succeed see a number of small humanoids hiding in a thicket ahead of the party. These are scouts from the Noble Cavaliers goblin tribe, under orders to observe but not to engage in combat. If they realize that they have been observed, the goblins will flee. They may escape or not at the DM's discretion, but if captured they will say only that they are "Noble Cavaliers" and are keeping a watch for intruders in "their" domain.

If no one sees the goblins, the party members might hear the scouts as they crash off through the undergrowth. In this case, the party will be unable to pursue before the goblins disappear.

E. The Featherdale Dragons

Theruvan Whitefield and the Featherdale Dragons have heard the rumors of great evil and greater treasure to be had in the Spiderhaunts. Fearing that he is losing control of "his" adventuring band, Theruvan has led them into the depths of the woods, heedless of danger. The PCs encounter the Dragons at a moment

of repose and discover the deficiencies of their encampment procedures. Read the following aloud.

Ahead, you see a human-sized figure. You move closer, and the figure does not respond. You realize that it is a young human in various pieces of mismatched armor, armed with a broad sword. He leans up against a tree, eyes closed. You hear him snoring.

The human is Druvus, supposedly on watch, but actually taking the opportunity to catch a few winks. The PCs have several options. If they awaken Druvus, he immediately draws his sword and tells the PCs that they are his "prisoners." If the characters go along with him, he escorts them into his encampment, where they meet Theruvan and the other Featherdale Dragons, as described below.

If the PCs just ignore Druvus and continue on their way, he awakes with a start, screaming "Orcs! Goblins! Help! To arms!" This brings Theruvan and the other Featherdale Dragons crashing out of their camp, intent on immediate battle with the PCs.

Once he realizes that the PCs are neither orcs, goblins, pit fiends, nor other malign creatures, Theruvan tries to take charge, delivering some of the following comments to the PCs.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here? There's terrible evil in these woods, you know."

"You should be more careful. We almost killed you all."

"You'd best leave exploring this forest to us experienced adventurers. It's dangerous for amateurs."

"Just what are you suggesting? Of course we're experienced adventurers. What do we look like: a bunch of farm kids?"

"Look, I'm getting a little tired of your superior attitude! Why don't you just leave us alone?"

Theruvan gets more and more flustered as it becomes obvious that he is, indeed, an inexperienced





farm boy who doesn't know what he's doing. If asked about the "evil" in the woods, he is vague and evasive, since he really doesn't know what it is. He thinks it might be a lich, though, or maybe a dragon.

The other Featherdale Dragons take this in various ways. Sydala agrees with Theruvan at first, but then suggests that he listen to the PCs and reconsider going into the dangerous woods. Darial remains quiet, but looks worried. Druvus agrees with everything Theruvan says, enthusiastically nodding his head at his leader's words, and disputing anything the party says. Eventually even Theruvan tells Druvus to be quiet. Rynda looks on with disgust, and ends up telling Theruvan that he's a complete idiot.

What happens to the Featherdale Dragons after this is up to the DM, depending on whether these inexperienced adventurers will be woven into the PCs' epic. Theruvan can decide that this Spiderhaunt expedition is a mistake and lead his friends back home; or the DM might defer a final decision by having him lead the Dragons off in disgust, never to be seen again in this story. The Dragons can repeatedly show up in this adventure to annoy the party with ill-timed intervention, perhaps being corralled by the Knights of Inescapable Justice or imprisoned in the *Eye's Fortress*, requiring rescue in either case.

F. The Knights of Inescapable Justice

Sir Talvis and his band of fanatical paladins have entered the Spiderhaunts and spent the last several days battling goblins, githyanki, ettercaps, and other members of the *Eye's* entourage. Understandably, they are on guard and watchful, and pretty fanatical in their pursuit of law and justice in any event. When they meet the party, they will make the PCs' job as tough as possible by the exceptional demands they make.

This encounter will occur during a moment of respite—after a fight or as the adventurers are making camp. Read the following to the players. The DM can allow the characters to make Int or Hear Noise rolls to detect the knights' approach, but the event still takes place regardless of their reaction to the situation.

A tall figure clad head to toe in shining armor appears from out of the brush. He carries a great silver sword etched with harsh, angular runes. He wears his visor up, revealing an expression of grim determination. Several more fighters appear, each one similarly clad.

"Who are you?" the man demands. "And what is your business in this den of evil?"

If the PCs attack, they have a serious fight on their hands. Statistics for Sir Talvis and the dozen paladins and fighters who accompany him can be found in the *Cast of Characters* section. In all likelihood, however, the PCs will take their cue from Talvis's appearance and statement, and hold off initiating combat.

The Knights of Inescapable Justice are in the woods to root out evil and are utterly convinced that the gods are on their side. The lack of any evil-aligned individuals in the PCs' party means nothing to them—they know that anyone can be corrupted by the forces of evil.

Accordingly, they cut the party very little slack, intensely grilling the characters on their experiences since entering the forest, and on their motives for being here in the first place. They refuse to provide any information about their own exploration, and instead tell the characters that if they don't wish to be considered part of the evil in the forest, they should leave immediately. Suitable comments for the knights include:

"What brings you to this place, save to do mischief?"

"Are you aligned with the dark forces in this forest? What hold have they over you?"

"Why should I believe you? Even the strongest of hearts can be corrupted by wickedness!"

"What are you hiding? Your kind cannot long escape the pure white light of truth!"

"Only fools or allies of darkness would remain in this forest. Which are you?"

"What evils have you seen here? Speak only the truth, varlet, or face the consequences!"





If any member of the party reveals the true mission—to locate and retrieve the *Dragonking's Eye*, the paladins will either not believe them (the easiest choice for the DM), or immediately demand to be led to the Eye so that they can “dispose” of this evil artifact. The second alternative is a bit trickier. Talvis will insist he be given leadership of the group, and will generally make a nuisance of himself. The best way to get out of this particular mess is to separate the knights from the PCs during a later melee, leaving the characters on their own once more. Finally, the knights may simply decide that the PCs are tools of evil and attack, which could result in a rather nasty melee. This might be a good opportunity to trim an overly-powerful party down to size.

G. The Jester

Some weeks ago, a hunting party of Sembian nobility entered the woods on a monster hunt. Within days, the proud and arrogant nobles were reduced to terrified, hunted animals by the constant attacks of the Noble Cavaliers, the githyanki, ettercaps, giant spiders, and other denizens of the woods. The sole survivor, a jester named Yulf, now wanders the forest, thoroughly lost. Not that it makes much difference—Yulf's sanity has snapped, and he has only vague memories of all that has happened to him. The party's meeting with Yulf is intended to increase their unease and foreboding about the woods and its evil denizens. Read the following out loud.

From a nearby thicket you hear a high-pitched, wild laugh and a frantic rustling.

“It is I!” shouts a voice, interspersed with giggles. “I am me! I am here to make you laugh and caper with delight! Am I not funny? Do I not please you? To please Master is my heart's desire. Feel free to thrash me if my capers and antics fall short of expectations, for I am your servant in all things!”

The party will probably want to investigate; if they do not, Yulf will shadow them, peppering them with similar remarks, attracting monsters, and generally making a pest of himself.

If the characters approach and try to flush Yulf out of the thicket, read the following.

With a rush and a cracking of branches, a figure emerges from the thicket. It is a human—dirty, battered, its eyes wide and staring. It seems to be male, but you cannot be certain. He is clad in filthy rags that might once have been rich garments. The tatters of a tri-horned hat, torn and dirty, list askew on his head. A single brass ball remains attached, gleaming in contrast to the human's soiled appearance. One of his hands clutches a short wand capped by a human face, leering comically.

“I am Yulf!” he declares, eyes darting first one way, then the other. “The finest jester in all of Sembia! I know this, for my master has told me often. I seem to have lost Master. He was somewhat distracted when last I saw him. I believe it was because he lost his head; it was missing. His friend, Sir Marvol seemed unhappy, as well You haven't seen them anywhere, have you?”

Attempts to talk rationally with Yulf will only meet with more nonsense. He is incapable of rational thought in his present condition. He will name various friends and companions, asking the characters if they know of them. Then he begins to babble about the “little cavaliers” who had a disagreement with Sir Marvol and Yulf's master, Baron Grunder. He will also mention spiders, “big 'uns” (ettercaps), and “those funny thin ones” (the githyanki). All in all, however, he can provide little useful information.

Yulf's madness is so severe as to require a clerical *heal* or similar spell to cure—in all likelihood, a spell of too high a level for the adventurers. If thus treated, however, he will regain rationality, although he will never again be the light-hearted jester that he was. If cured, Yulf tells the party of the disaster in the forest, and of how his companions were picked off one by one by the goblins, githyanki, ettercaps, and other creatures, and how he wandered the forest for days, the sole survivor. If cured, Yulf can serve as an NPC party member, acting as a 1st-level thief.

If he is not cured, Yulf will stay with the party only if physically restrained, rendered unconscious, or otherwise incapacitated. If he is not, he will eventually bound up





and dash off into the forest. The DM can have the characters meet him on their way out of the woods and take him to Shadowdale for healing, or might just assume that he disappears, never to be seen again.

H. Sabbar Attacks (sort of)

The DM should remember the evil wizard, Sabbar, and justifiably wonder what he has been up to while all the other events are going on. Insanely frustrated after the failure of his many agents to capture Marcus, he followed Felibarr Blacklance's trail to the scene of the battle with the adventurers. From there, he tracked the party into the Spiderhaunt Woods. Despite his dementia, Sabbar is still a deadly opponent, as several ettercaps, giant spiders, and others of the woods' denizens have discovered, to their discomfort.

As Sabbar plays an important role in the final confrontation with the *Dragonking's Eye*, his contact with the PCs will be limited, but should still make the players nervous. First of all, he has sent a number of illusory duplicates of himself wandering through the forest, moaning "Return what you have stolen!

Return what was not rightfully yours! Return it to me or be destroyed!" and similar statements. These duplicates are equivalent to improved phantasmal forces, save that they are "automatic," and wander about without Sabbar having to concentrate on them. The party will see one or more of these duplicates and, with some atmospheric role playing by the DM to enhance the experience, should come away somewhat scared when their ranged weapons, missile spells, and the like, are ineffective.

To further complicate matters, Marcus will panic at the first sight of the duplicate, screaming "It's him! He's come to kill me!" Marcus will panic and try to flee into the undergrowth. Ambitious DMs might want to work this into the adventure, having Marcus captured by githyanki or goblins, and imprisoned in the *Eye's* fortress from whence he would later need a rescue.

Sabbar might also attack in person, flinging distracting missile spells, screaming "Return what you have stolen!" and vanishing into the forest. By combining both such meetings, the DM can probably work the players into a frenzy.

Sabbar will not fight to the death, however, nor allow himself to be captured. He feels the siren call of the *Dragonking's Eye*, urging him toward the fortress. He will arrive there before the PCs, and be ensnared by the *Eye* once again. Sabbar must be on hand during the final battle.

I. The Eye's Enemies

The other denizens of the Spiderhaunt Woods have been victimized by the Noble Cavaliers and other allies of the *Dragonking's Eye*. The other goblin tribes, who have always intensely disliked the Cavaliers for their jumped-up and ungoblinish behaviors, are especially vexed and frustrated. With conditions worsening for them, they now are even willing to go so far as to offer assistance to the adventurers for their help. Read the following out loud:

A small voice echoes from nearby.

"Hello?" it says in guttural common, heavily accented. "We want to talk, please don't attack us. We promise not to hurt you . . ."





If the PCs respond, read the following out loud. If they do not, the goblins attempt to communicate several more times, and eventually give up.

You are approached by a nervous-looking goblin holding up a scrap of white cloth. "Hello," he quavers again, "You won't hurt me, will you?"

The goblin is a representative of several Spiderhaunt tribes: the Bloody Hands, the Broken Daggers, the Merciless Slayers, and the Small Unpleasant Ones. (Members of this last tribe are upset that all the good names were taken.) His name is Glix, and he asks the PCs to help drive out the "new boss." This "new boss" has powerful allies and has recruited the Noble Cavaliers—whom Glix refers to as the "Sissy Boys."

Glix offers to guide the PCs to the Eye's crystal fortress. He has access to several potions of healing, as well as several doses of a special antidote to ettercap poison, which the goblins brew up from local herbs. If the PCs agree to the offer, Glix will give them several potions and faithfully guide them to the fortress. The other encounters will still occur, however.

If the PCs reject Glix, he will throw a tantrum, begging, pleading, and whining for their help—even clinging to a sympathetic character's leg, weeping and wailing all the while. If the PCs still reject Glix, he will slink off into the bushes, sobbing and snuffling. The characters should be made to feel like the heartless brutes they are.

J. The Warder

As the characters venture deeper into the forest, they hear sounds of conflict—the clang of weapons, inhuman screams, and deep-throated roars. If they investigate, read the following.

You see a frightening sight in a nearby clearing. A band of eight goblins, all clad in silk and lace finery, is engaged in furious combat with a gigantic brown bear. As you watch, the bear swipes a massive paw at one of its attackers, sending the goblin smashing against a tree. But another goblin rushes in to stab the bear with a spear. The spear seems to do little more than enrage the bear, who strikes again, killing another goblin.

If the PCs intervene, the goblins flee. If the characters just watch, read the following.

Suddenly two strange creatures enter the clearing. They are tall and skeletally thin, with rough yellow skin and gleaming black eyes. They are clad in elaborate armor, and carry black two-handed swords. The first creature swings at the bear, and its weapon inflicts an ugly wound. The bear screams in pain and turns on its new attackers.

The creatures are githyanki fighters armed with *bastard swords* +1, capable of wounding the werebear. If the PCs do not intervene, the githyanki will kill the bear. Further, if the PCs attack now, the goblins prove to have been heartened by their allies' arrival, and all fight fiercely.

Once the goblins and githyanki have been dispatched, read the following.

The bear gazes at you with intelligent eyes, then abruptly shrinks, quickly transforming into a muscular, red-haired woman.

"Thanks," she says. "I could have handled them myself—but I appreciate your assistance nonetheless. My name is Turekana. I'm the warder of these woods."

See *Cast of Characters* for full stats on Turekana. She will be grateful, in the gruff manner of her kind, and provide the PCs with information on the Spiderhaunt situation. She knows the goblins and ettercaps are working together; and that a mysterious crystalline structure has appeared deep in the forest. She will give directions to the Eye's fortress, though she will not accompany the PCs there, since it "smells of sorcery," something she is only too eager to avoid.

K. The Noble Cavaliers

Since entering the forest, the adventurers have been under observation by the various allies of the *Dragon-king's Eye*. As they get closer to the center of the forest, the PCs will come under direct attack by the Eye's most





annoying associates, the goblin tribe known as the Noble Cavaliers. Read the following out loud.

Ahead of the party, you hear a rustling in the undergrowth and a strange figure emerges. You recognize it as a goblin, but it is dressed oddly—in a fine velvet tunic with lace at the collar and sleeves, silk trousers, high boots with spurs and a wide, plumed hat.

“Hail, travelers!” the goblin declares in foppishly-accented common. “What business have you in the domain of the Noble Cavaliers, the paragons of goblinish chivalry?”

In all likelihood, the characters will attack, but if they continue to converse with the goblin, he will go on at some length, using some of the following dialogue:

“If you’ve come to match swords with us, lass, you’re due a lesson in humility!”

“We Cavaliers are nothing if not honorable—I give you the chance to leave now, lest you face unpleasant consequences.”

“If you refuse to leave, I fear we must deem you most ungentlemanly and ignoble!”

“Ha! Vagabonds! Ruffians! Come, test your steel against us, if you have the courage!”

“CHAAAARRRRRGE!!!!”

The party will have to fight 20 or so Noble Cavalier goblins—the actual number may be adjusted up or down by the DM to provide a suitable challenge to the party. As noted previously, the Cavaliers prefer honorable fights, one on one with swords, but a few of their number may circle around and attack the party from behind as it engages their fellows. At the DM’s discretion, they may be accompanied by a few ettercaps.

The Cavaliers have very sturdy morale, but if the fight has turned against them, they will withdraw with taunts and verbal abuse—“You think you’ve

beaten us? Ha! Just wait, you varlets! We shall meet again, my bucko!” and such.

L. Ettercap Ambush

The evil ettercaps who serve the *Dragonking’s Eye* have fixed a number of traps and snares to catch the unwary who approach the crystal fortress. Rogue characters are allowed a detect traps roll before the party enters any areas containing ettercap snares. If the traps are not detected, then each party member must make a successful Dexterity check to avoid them. Those who fail are caught beneath falling logs, fall into deep pits, are trapped in ettercap webs, etc. Once all the PCs who fail are trapped, 2-6 ettercaps attack, attempting to incapacitate non-trapped characters with their poison. As ettercap poison can be fatal, the DM should provide access to anti-poison magical items or spells if PCs do not have these already.

M. What are THEY Doing Here?

This encounter should take place just before the PCs find the *Eye’s* crystal fortress. With the Cavaliers routed, the *Eye’s* allies realize the adventurers are a real threat. The *Eye’s* bodyguards are a band of githyanki, normally confined to the astral plane. Aware of the danger to their master, the githyanki have set out to attack the PCs, to destroy them or drive them away. The githyanki are commanded by the evil lich, Thandraxx.

Map 2 on the next page gives the layout of the battle terrain. The following key details the combatants involved, and their strategies.

a. Thandraxx

The lich will open the battle by casting a *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, or similar spell on the party, and then provide long-range firepower as the melee progresses. Thandraxx will not risk physical participation, relying on magical attacks.

b. Githyanki Mages

Two githyanki spellcasters will assist Thandraxx with *magic missiles* and other offensive spells, beginning with the opening round. Like the lich, they will stay out of melee combat.



c. Githyanki Fighters

Ten githyanki fighters will attack from all sides as the party is reeling from the magical assault. The number of fighters can be adjusted up or down depending upon the party's condition.

d. Githyanki Sergeants

The opposition is accompanied by two higher-level githyanki fighters, who stay back bellowing orders. If the PCs seem to be winning, the sergeants will enter combat to bolster the fighters' morale, and blunt any striking successes the PCs might have.

Each slain githyanki fighter carries a survival kit consisting of a pack of 3d8 food wafers (each provides nutrition sufficient for one full day), a silver knife, and a *potion of healing*. The sergeants' kits are the same, except they each contain one *potion of extra healing*. These potions are effective on non-githyanki.

N. The Crystal Fortress

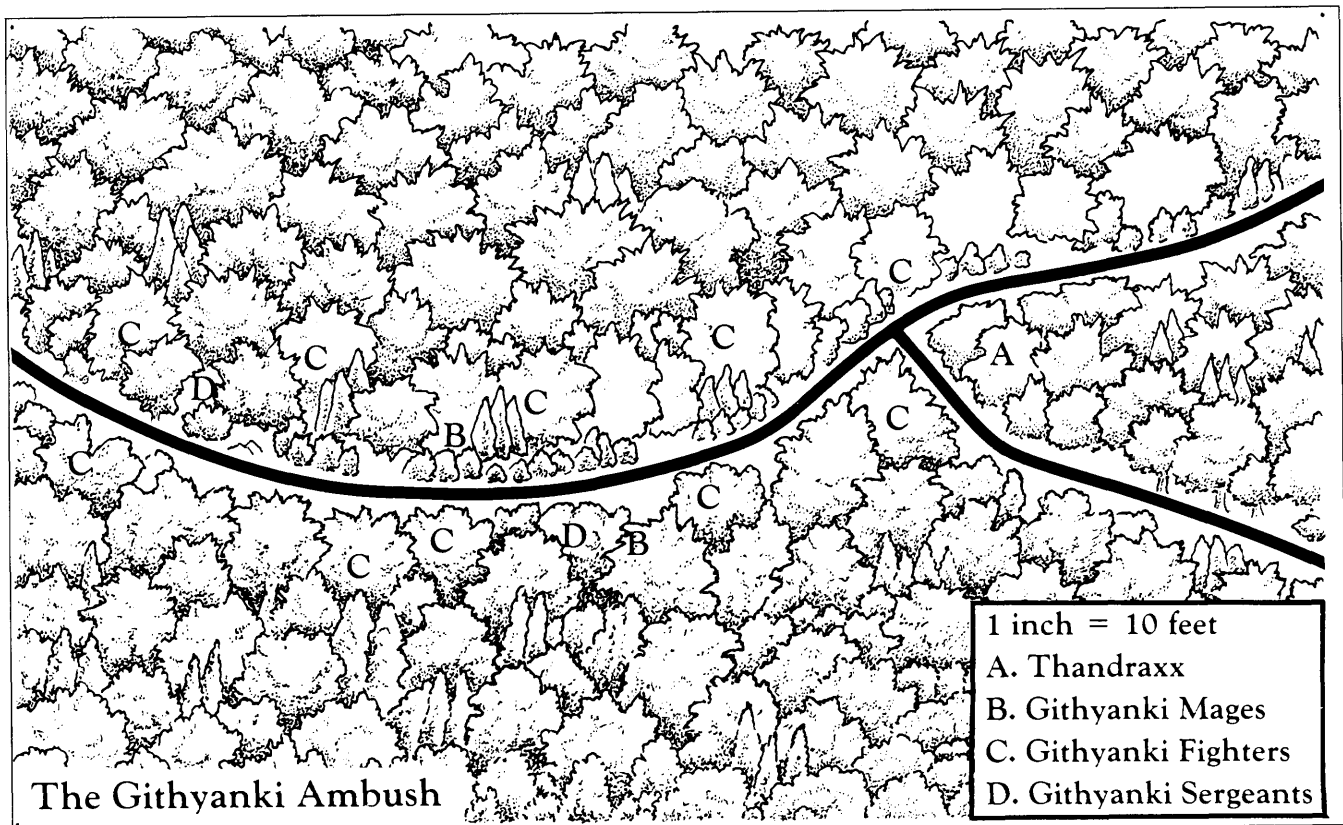
(center of the woods)

After the fight with the githyanki, the party will finally reach the massive crystalline construct the *Dragonking's Eye* has created. Read the following out loud.

Ahead, light shines out of the dark woods. As you approach, you see that numerous trees have fallen and splintered. In their place, an intricate, gleaming network of tall crystalline columns sparkles in a rainbow of colors.

The columns rise into the sky, as high as the surrounding trees. Among the columns you see low domes of shimmering material and, in the distance, you see several small humanoid figures scurrying about, then disappearing among the crowded columns. A miasma of fear seems to permeate your surroundings, and you feel a vague sense of unease and terror.

"It's here," says Marcus in a quiet voice laced with grim apprehension. "I can feel it. Don't ask me how. I know it's here."





Chapter Two

In which, through the assistance of the famous Volothump Geddarm, many mysteries are revealed – too many, in fact, to detail in this short synopsis. Though its intellectual content is considerable, this chapter features enough swordplay and magic to satisfy even the most jaded reader. Alas, there is little food or drink to be had in the crystal fortress of the diabolical artifact.

This chapter will proceed in a somewhat nonlinear fashion, depending upon the PCs' decisions. The party might attempt to scout around the fortress, sneak in, assault directly, or take any number of other options. The DM should be completely familiar with the layout of the fortress, and prepare for all eventualities. The chapter ends with the confrontation with the *Dragonking's Eye* and Marcus Wands's confrontation with his ultimate destiny.

Meeting Volo

An important element of this chapter is the party's actual encounter with Volothump Geddarm, the infamous traveler and writer whom Marcus tried to frame for the theft of the *Dragonking's Eye*. This meeting can take place in any one of several locations. They can meet him outside the fortress as the party scouts around; in the corridors of the fortress; or as a fellow prisoner in a storage chamber within the fortress' after the characters have been captured.

Regardless of location, the encounter must take place in order for the PCs to gain vital information about how to defeat the *Dragonking's Eye*. Read aloud the boxed paragraphs as needed.

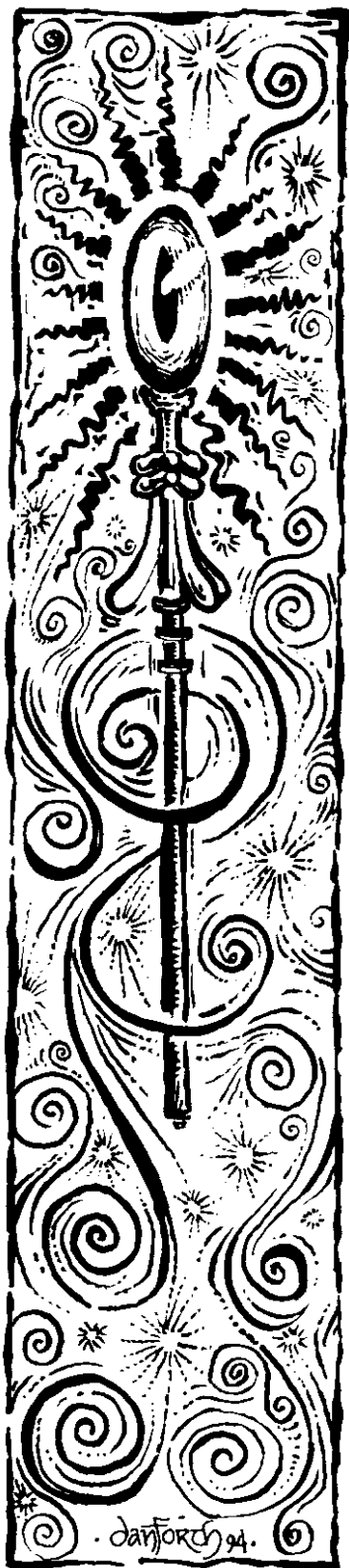
You see a handsome male human. He is dressed in a loose shirt that was white once, a leather vest, breeches, and a tattered velvet beret with a sad-looking feather drooping at one side.

"Hello," he says. "I've been looking for you."

He fixes Marcus with an irritated glare. "I am Volothump Geddarm. I believe, sir," he says, "that the last few attempts on my life are a result of *your* antics."

Marcus looks guilty. "I suppose they are, sir. I apologize; I'm terribly sorry."

Volothump rolls his eyes and speaks angrily. "Sorry doesn't pay the bills, boy! Don't you think I've got enough wizards after my scalp without you framing me for robbing that lunatic Sabbar? Give me one good reason why I shouldn't beat the living daylight out of you!"





The PCs may interact with Volothamp for a time, either letting him punch Marcus (who will take the punishment without a complaint), or restraining him and calming him down. Eventually, Volothamp will compose himself enough to discuss the matter.

“I found out that another wizard wanted me dead,” Volothamp says. “Not that that was so unusual, mind you, but I wasn’t familiar with Sabbar. I investigated a bit and found out that, for once, I was completely innocent. I had not stolen the Eye from Sabbar.”

At this point, the PCs will probably ask Volothamp what he means by “The Eye.” If they don’t, then Marcus will.

Volothamp glares at Marcus again. “The Eye? I mean that gods-blasted piece of rubbish you stole from Sabbar, you obnoxious little cutpurse! It’s called the *Dragonking’s Eye*, since you obviously didn’t even know what it was you were stealing!”

Marcus’ s eyes widen suddenly.

“The *Dragonking’s Eye*?” he says. “I’ve heard of it before. It was in a nursery rhyme my mother used to sing to me when I was a child.” He frowns, then recites from memory:

*Sing of white and sing of black
Three times forward, three times buck
Sing of knights and vengeance nigh
‘Round and ‘round the Dragonking’s Eye
Sky above you, earth below
Along the circle path you go
Call the gods to bind and tie
‘Round and ‘round the Dragonking’s Eye*

“I’ve never heard it since,” Marcus continues. “She said that only our family sang it, and had sung it for generations.”

“Ha!” says Volothamp. “I talked to Elminster about the Eye, and your family has nothing to do with it. He told me the *Dragonking’s Eye* had been given to a family called the Sunstuffs for safekeeping, and that they aren’t even native to Toril.”

Marcus’s expression grows even more confounded. “But the ‘Sunstaff’ is one of our family heirlooms! It’s normally kept in the vault, but my uncle takes it out for special ceremonial occasions. He said it has been in our family for centuries, the very symbol of our name.”

The PCs may now discuss the matter with Marcus and Volothamp and, hopefully, the awful truth will eventually dawn on them: The Wands are the lineal descendants of the ancient Sunstaff family, and they migrated to Toril centuries ago. This is, of course, the reason that Marcus is able to handle the *Dragonking’s Eye* without ill effects. If the PCs don’t figure out that Marcus must walk “the circle path” around the Eye, then Marcus and Volothamp will. It will not, however, be as easy as Marcus simply taking the Eye, as will become apparent later.

This encounter should lead to the final confrontation with the *Dragonking’s Eye*, as described in entry 8 below.

The Eye’s Fortress

After Marcus hid the *Dragonking’s Eye* in the forest, the artifact’s evil intelligence went to work. First it created a defensive latticework of enchanted crystal around itself, and then attracted various creatures to ally with it in its desire for conquest and bloodshed. The PCs will have to enter the fortress to defeat the Eye.

The DM may enliven the party’s exploration of the fortress by throwing in a few encounters with the Eye’s servants—Noble Cavalier goblins, ettercaps, githyanki, and various extra-planar beings such as those found in room 5 below.

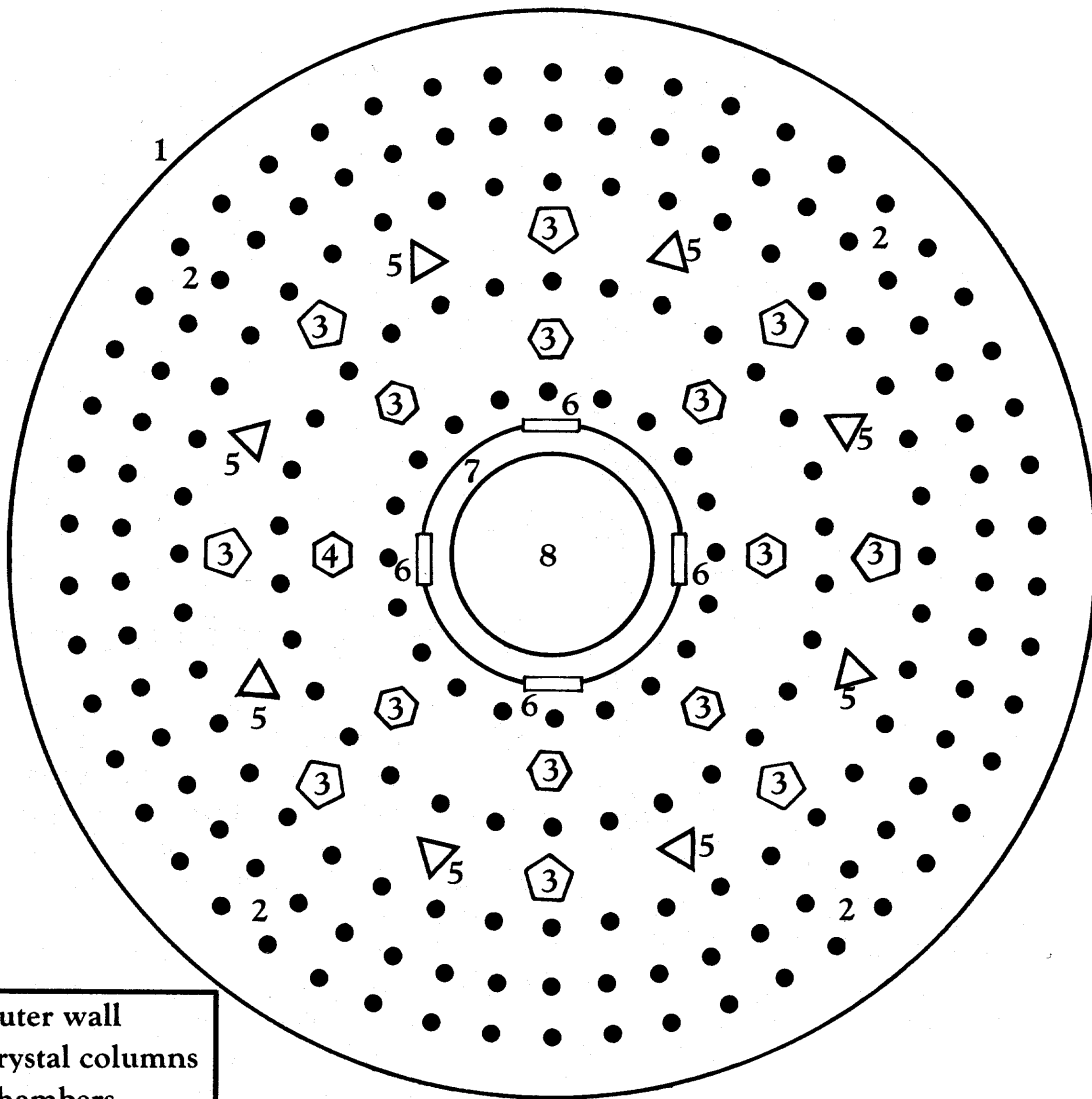
1. Outer Wall

The wall surrounding the fortress is deceptively thin. Made of a transparent crystalline substance, it requires an Int roll to be seen. Those who do not see the wall are likely to blunder into it, taking no serious damage, but probably embarrassing themselves.





The Eye's Fortress



- 1. Outer wall
- 2. Crystal columns
- 3. Chambers
- 4. Key room
- 5. Transport gem
- 6. Gem doors
- 7. Outer hallway
- 8. Inner chamber





There are no apparent gates nor openings in the outer wall. Only those creatures under the direct control of the *Dragonking's Eye*, or those that have sworn loyalty to it, may pass through without hindrance.

There are several ways of getting through the wall. It is 12 feet tall, and can be climbed or flown over. Thieves cannot use their climb walls ability on account of its slick surface. A grappling hook and rope may be snagged on the top of the wall, allowing characters to clamber over the top.

The wall is very strong, but a hole of a size sufficient for a human to crawl through can be created by inflicting 100 points of damage with any type of bludgeoning weapon. This will, of course, be noisy and attract defenders. The number and type of such creatures is up to the DM, although they are likely to be ettercaps and Noble Cavalier goblins.

2. Crystal Columns

The fortress is not really enclosed. It is an open latticework of crystalline columns, which rise up to jagged points among the trees. These columns shimmer and sparkle in many different colors, especially if any outside light shines on them. Like the wall, they are very strong, and will withstand more damage than the party should reasonably be able to produce. The columns can be broken, however, given time and considerable effort.

3. Chambers

Several rooms have been formed among the lattice of crystal columns. These are fully enclosed domes of opaque material similar to the floor. Each has one or more entrances resembling huge, multifaceted gems surrounded by rings of smaller gems. Most doors open freely if any of the smaller gems is touched. Others, including the storage chamber below and any others the DM desires to have secured, require a specific combination of gems to be touched, in a certain sequence, to be opened. Once the PCs have figured this out, the DM should assign a percentage chance for a given character to figure out the right "combination," then have the player roll percentile dice. The Int of the character who is attempting to open the door may be added to the roll.

The chambers have a variety of contents and occupants, the specifics of which can be determined by the DM. Some suggested contents are:

- 4-20 Noble Cavalier goblins. Each goblin will be carrying 3-18 silver pieces.
- 4-20 Noble Cavalier goblins, 2-8 bodyguard goblins and, at the DM's discretion, King Artemis himself. Artemis stores his tribe's loot here "for safe keeping." This loot includes 4,000 cp, 2,000 sp, a *manual of puissant skill at arms* (which none of the goblins knows how to read), and a *ring of fire resistance*.
- 2-8 ettercaps. Any room occupied by ettercaps will be strung with strands of webbing, which will slow or immobilize the PCs as they attack. Of limited intelligence, the ettercaps have no treasure to speak of.
- A githyanki barracks. This will contain 3-12 githyanki fighters and, at the DM's discretion, mages, fighter/mages, and sergeants. They will be carrying enchanted items appropriate to their levels, and each will carry 2-20 gp, 10-60 pp, and 2-8 gems.
- A githyanki knight, 2 warlocks, and 3-18 fighters. The DM can add sergeants, mages, and fighter/mages as desired. This is apt to be a nasty fight, and is appropriate only if the party is having too easy a time and needs to be cut down to size. Individual githyanki carry treasure as listed above; the main treasure-store is in the *Eye's* central chamber.
- Because the *Dragonking's Eye* has been attracting a variety of extra-planar beings, some of them might be found in different chambers within its fortress. The DM can generate random creatures using the table listed for room 5 below.
- The lich Thandraxx has been allied with the *Dragonking's Eye* for several months now, but has begun to wonder at the thing's motivations. If the PCs enter the chamber containing her living quarters, read the following out loud:





The interior of the chamber is spare, with only a small stone platform in the center. Lying on the platform is a withered robed form, which rises as you enter. With horror, you realize that it is the lich you fought outside the fortress.

The figure raises a hand.

“Truce!” it cries in a voice that might once have been female. “I wish to speak with you.”

Thandraxx genuinely wants to talk to the party. She has begun to suspect the *Dragonking’s Eye* motivations go far beyond the conquest of Faerûn. She now believes that utter destruction, pure and simple, is its ultimate goal—a goal Thandraxx finds quite distasteful.

If the party agrees to talk with her, Thandraxx asks about their quest, and what they know about the *Dragonking’s Eye*. If Volothamp is with the party, he can provide information similar to that in Elminster’s description. If the PCs convince Thandraxx that the *Eye’s* intentions are, indeed, simple destruction and, more importantly, that it sees her as a pawn and potential slave, then the lich will use her powers against the *Eye*. If the PCs are amenable, she will suggest a temporary alliance of convenience.

- A storage chamber used for stowing supplies such as food, weapons, clothing, and booty taken from travelers and caravans. If the PCs are captured and imprisoned, they will be kept in such a chamber, with a very difficult lock-gem combination. If the PCs have not yet met Volothamp Geddarm, he will be found here.

The Featherdale Dragons might also be found in such a chamber, after being taken prisoner in an ambush laid by the Noble Cavaliers. Theruvan remains just as arrogant as ever, but all his companions are thoroughly disillusioned.

4. Key Room

The doors to the inner dome, where the *Dragonking’s Eye* is located, require the gem-like “keys” found in this room. They resemble crystalline eight-sided dice, about the size of a human’s fist. These keys must be

obtained before the PCs can enter the central chamber. Each gem-key is worth 1,000 gp. This room is accessible through a combination gem-key (see above), and is guarded by five githyanki fighters. Besides the four gem-keys, the room also contains ten gold bars worth 250 gp each, and a sack of 16 gems (5x10 gp, 5x50 gp, 3x100 gp, 2x500 gp, 1x1,000 gp).

5. Transport Gems

These short, three-sided obelisks are magical “transporters” used by the Eye to bring its extra-planar allies to Toril. The DM may simply leave the transport gems as a mystery for the characters to solve, or may determine that a gem is active when the party approaches it. If the gem is active, it will magically gate in one of the following creatures, determined at random.

2d10 Die Roll	Creature
2-3	Baatezu, Black Abishai
3-4	Imp, Fire Mephit
5-6	Baatezu, Red Abishai
7-8	Imp, Ice Mephit
9	Nightmare
10	Githyanki
11	Slaad, Red
12	Slaad, Blue
13-14	Imp, Mist Mephit
15-16	Baatezu, Green Abishai
17	Elemental, Salamander
18-19	Baatezu, Spinagon
20	Death Knight

6. Gem Doors

The *Dragonking’s Eye* has completely enclosed itself in a crystalline cylinder at the heart of its fortress. Access to the interior is only through large gem-doors, as described above. Each interior door has a fist-sized niche in the center, into which the gem-keys (found in room 4) must be placed before the door will open. The doors can be opened one at a time—in other words, all four gems need not be placed in all the niches for any given door to open up. Once a gem-key has been placed in a door, however, it fuses to the surface and cannot be removed, except at the will of the *Dragonking’s Eye*.





7. Outer Hallway

This circular hallway surrounds the inner chamber. More gem-doors allow access to the Eye's resting place.

8. Inner Chamber

When the party enters the inner chamber, read the following out loud.

The chamber is a fully enclosed dome of yellow and black crystal, floored with a black, glossy substance. The interior glows with a golden light. In the center is a circular dais, and there, in a column of white light, floats a hollow-eyed man in wizard's robes, holding a scepter-like object horizontally before him.

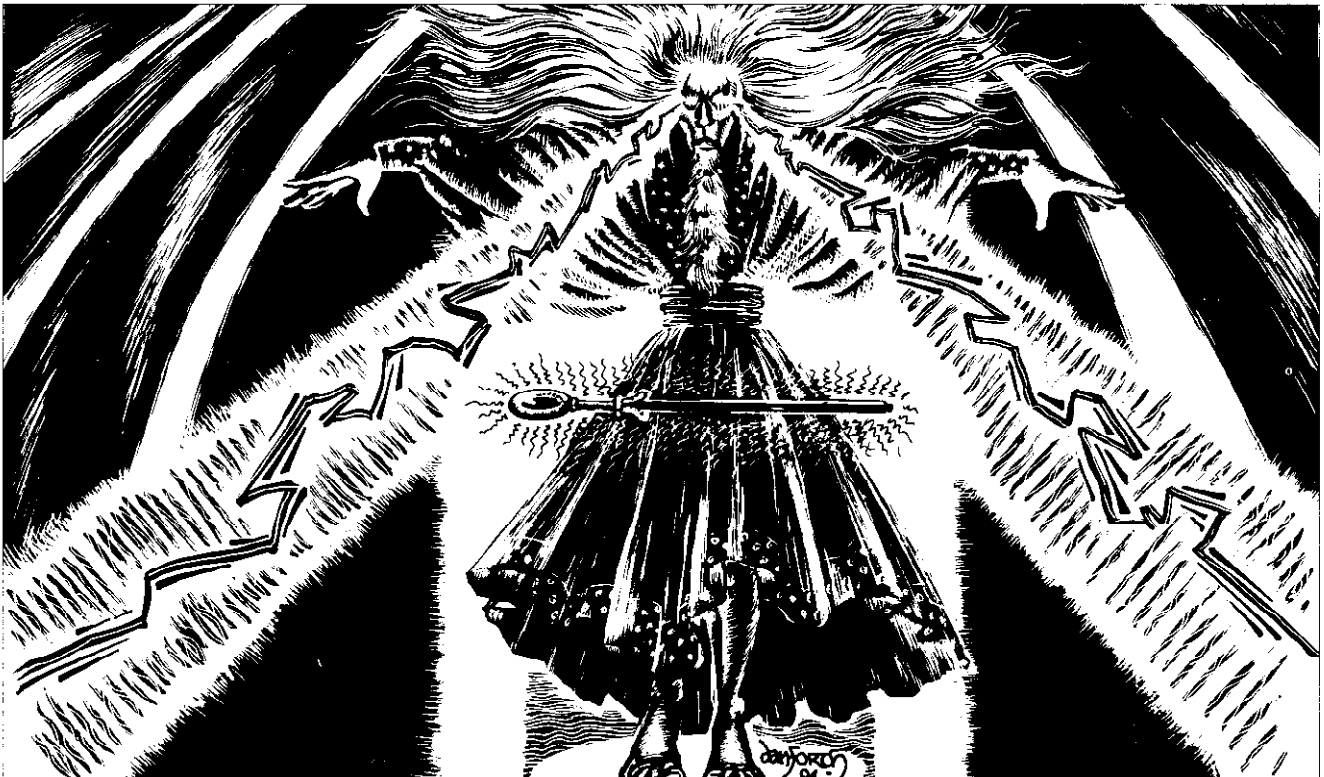
Marcus stares, and whispers loudly, "It's him! It's Sabbar!"

A booming voice replies, emanating from the wizard. "Sabbar no more! This foolish mortal is but a slave to my will! I *am* the object you call the *Dragonking's Eye*. You would destroy me, but now it is you who will die!"

The githyanki's treasure is also stored here, although the PCs may have to wait to collect it. It consists of 9,000 cp, 12,000 sp, 16,000 gp, 15 gems (4x10 gp, 4x50 gp, 3x100 gp, 2x500 gp, 1x1,000 gp, and 1x5,000 gp), an *elixir of health*, two *potions of healing*, a *ring of shooting stars*, a *saw of mighty cutting*, and a *stone horse*.

The column of light is the *Eye's* last line of defense: impenetrable, it can only be destroyed by 1,000 points of magical damage. It is unlikely the PCs can inflict so much damage in the time they have available, so they will have to fall back on Marcus's nursery rhyme, described at the encounter with Volothamp Geddarm, above.

The rhyme's meaning is that a descendant of the ancient Sunstaff family (such as Marcus) can nullify the *Eye's* powers and summon the gods who made it by walking three times forward and three times backward around the *Eye*, then calling on the gods in any fashion. The other lines (singing of black and white, and so on) are simple window dressing, and are not necessary for the completion of the ritual.





If the PCs are unable to figure this out, have Marcus or Volothamp suggest it. Marcus himself will have to walk forward around the *Eye* three times—taking three rounds—then backwards three times, taking six more rounds.

When Marcus begins to walk around the *Eye*, the thing instantly recognizes what is happening. The gem-doors of the inner chamber vanish, and all the *Eye's* allies are summoned to attack. The PCs will have to hold off the attackers for nine full rounds before the ritual is completed. If they have won Thandraxx over to their side, she will assist the PCs; otherwise, the lich will be among the attackers.

In addition, each round the *Eye* projects a lightning-like missile through Sabbar's eyes as he rotates like a carousel. He attacks as a 20th-level fighter, inflicting 10d4 points of damage. The *Eye* cannot harm Marcus, but directs its fury against the party while its allies try to reach Marcus.

The DM may choose the attackers from among the allies of the *Eye*, as described in *Cast of Characters*. These will mostly be the ettercaps and githyanki; the goblins are unlikely to be effective against the characters. It is possible that the *Eye* is able to attract even more powerful creatures, such as those produced by the transport gems in the fortress, and that these will also attack the adventurers.

If the PCs are in danger of being overwhelmed, the DM may bring on the Knights of Inescapable Justice, shouting heroic slogans such as "Back, Spawn of Evil!" "Right Shall Triumph!" "Death to Chaos!" and "Owww!" These reinforcements may be enough to distract the *Eye's* forces and allow Marcus to complete the ritual.

Once Marcus has successfully completed the ritual, read the following out loud.

You hear what can only be described as a scream of agony emanating from the *Dragonking's Eye*. The column of light seems to solidify, crack, and shatter like glass. A wave of blinding radiance washes over you, and you feel yourself torn by hurricane winds. You are borne into the air, and carried away from the confines of the *Eye's* crystal fortress.

How far do you travel? You cannot say. All you know is that you land with a jarring crash on a vast, silvery plain. All around you are towering cloud formations, and in the distance you see arcs of lightning leaping from one cloud to the other. There is no sun in the sky, yet it is as bright as day.

You stand in the same relative position to your companions as when you were in the *Eye's* fortress. Nearby is Marcus, painfully rising to his feet. As he does so, a powerful voice seizes your attention.

"FREE!" it bellows. "YOU FOOLS! YOU HAVE FREED ME! THE DRAGONKING IS FREE!"

Where the *Dragonking's Eye* once was stands a huge and frightening being. Vaguely manlike, it resembles a great, eight-legged dragon with vast, dark wings. At its feet lies the wizard Sabbar, moaning weakly. Evil and despair emanate in waves from the dragon-thing. It fixes you with a hateful stare.

"Pathetic worms!" it growls in a voice you hear in the depths of your soul. "I will make you beg me for death!"

Marcus looks up at the creature, then over at you.

"I think," he says, "we're in trouble."





Chapter Three

Have our heroes inadvertently freed a force of inestimable evil? Perhaps they believe so, but the author is certain that the reader knows better. In this penultimate chapter, many issues are resolved, among them the final fate of the evil Sabbar, the true nature of the Dragonking's Eye, and Marcus Wands's actual lineage. The gods play no small role in the outcome, though their infamous arrogance is obvious to all. Little food or drink is consumed, as our adventurers probably have little appetite.



et the Dragonking menace the PCs for a few moments. Hopefully, they will prepare weapons and brace for a last stand, or—better still—flee like craven cowards. After letting the players sweat it out, read the following out loud.

Another voice, even louder and more powerful than that of the Dragonking, thunders across the plain.

"SILENCE! YOUR JUDGMENT IS NIGH!"

Abruptly, the Dragonking looks up into the roiling sky.

"No!" it shouts. "No! I am free! You cannot! You will not! NO!"

Its protests are all for nothing. The mighty and fearsome Dragonking suddenly begins to shrink, surrounded by a shimmering golden sphere. Its screams of rage and agony grow fainter and fainter as it diminishes, finally reduced to a tiny, crystalline sphere affixed to a short rod. It is the *Dragonking's Eye*, returned to its former state.

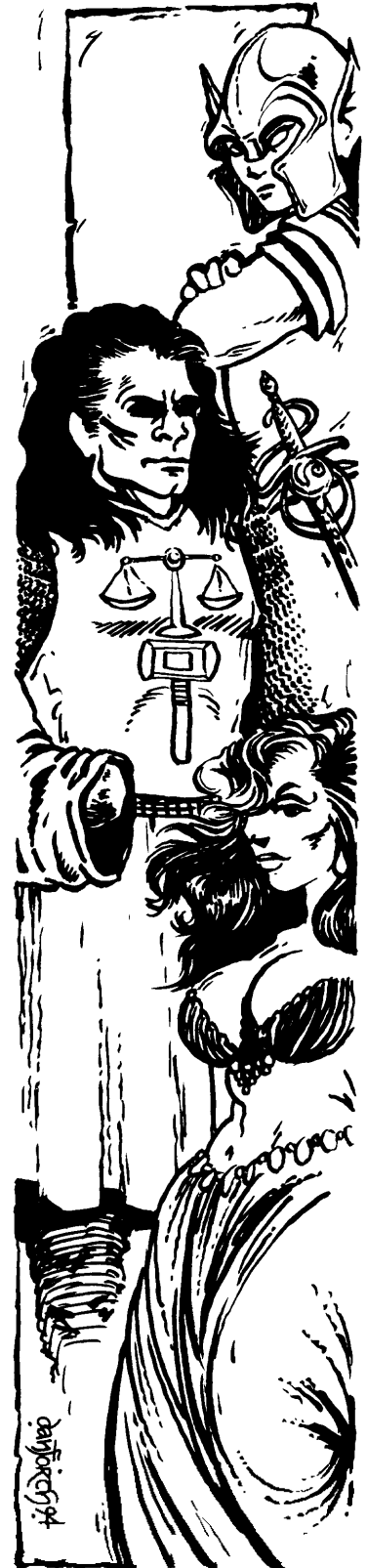
Abruptly, three gigantic figures appear, towering above you like mountains. Still lying prone, Sabbar, his robes filthy and tattered, cries out in fear and hides his face.

The first figure resembles a tall, handsome warrior clad in shining armor. His right hand is missing, and upon his breastplate is engraved a pair of scales balanced upon a warhammer. With astonishment you realize this is none other than Tyr, the Wounded God.

Tyr's companions are no less amazing. The second being is a tall and beautiful woman with flaming red hair: this is Sune, goddess of love and passion. The final visitor is unfamiliar—an elven figure of uncertain gender clad in silver armor, a slim long sword clasped at its side.

Elves and those familiar with the elven pantheon will recognize the third individual as Corellon Larethian, leader of the Seldarine.

The conclusion of the *Marco Volo* adventure is rather lengthy, and the DM should consider paraphrasing the following boxed copy, gleaned the relevant information to impart to the players. This will allow the PCs to participate in





the exchange, which is the more desirable result. Let them ask questions and interact with the gods.

Otherwise, the DM risks boring the players senseless by reading it straight through. (Don't forget the first principle of gaming is to have fun!) If Volothamp is still with the party, he can participate as well, bombarding the gods with questions, and frantically scribbling notes with a quill pen in a small notebook that he produced from who knows where.

Tyr holds out a hand, and the *Dragonking's Eye* rises up to hang in the crystalline air, suspended in space.

"Such is the fate of all those who oppose justice!" he thunders.

Sune makes a face. "Oh, do be quiet, Tyr." She addresses Corellon even as she winks at your party. "He can be quite tedious, can't he?"

Corellon does not speak but nods slightly. In response, Tyr glowers darkly.

Sune turns her gaze on Marcus, who falls immediately to his knees.

"You have done us a great service, Marcus of Wands, once Sunstaff," she says. "I reveal to you your destiny."

Marcus's eyes widen. He looks back at you with a delighted, almost silly smile on his face. "Did you hear that? Did you hear what she just said?" he asks. "I have a destiny!"

To bring everyone equally up to speed on the history and background, the DM can allow the PCs to see visions of the ancient events described by Sune in the following paragraphs.

Sune smiles on you, responding to Marcus's broad grin. "Countless generations ago, on a world far from Toril, the creature you know as the Dragonking—whose true name must never again be uttered by mortal tongue—threatened to destroy a great and peaceful civilization. The good creatures of that world united to defeat the Dragonking, with help from we three gods. His power was so

great he could not be destroyed. Instead, he was imprisoned in the artifact that is now before you. The *Dragonking's Eye* was given to House Sunstaff, the land's greatest defenders of law and justice. The Sunstuffs were to watch over the *Eye*, and to enable them to do so, they were granted this boon: that the *Eye's* evil powers were forever impotent against them and all their bloodline.

"Over the centuries, however, the *Eye* was lost to mortal knowledge. Enslaving beings great and small, it moved from world to world, wreaking havoc. Finally, through fate and providence, the *Eye* came to Toril. At last it has fallen into the hands of its rightful wardens. Descendants of the Sunstaff family came to Toril long ago, their name since changed to Wands. Nevertheless, the evil of the *Dragonking's Eye* is still powerless against them."

Sune fixes Marcus with a harsh stare. "You are now warden of the *Dragonking's Eye*, Marcus Wands-once-Sunstaff. Your family must keep the *Eye* where it can do no harm, and prevent it from ever again spreading death and despair through the spheres!"

The *Dragonking's Eye* floats through the air, coming to rest in Marcus's two outstretched hands.

"So it shall be," intones Corellon in a soft and melodic voice, "now and forever. Serve us well, Marcus Wands-once-Sunstaff, and know our gratitude."

He (or is it she? you cannot tell) extends a slender finger at the filthy, tattered Sabbar, who still lies quivering in terror on the ground. "You have committed many crimes, Sabbar the Wizard. Yet, we see some goodness in you. Your madness is lifted, but your magical abilities have been taken from you. Wizard you were, and wizard you might yet be again. But for now, you are once more an ordinary man."

Sabbar looks up, his eyes clear, and slowly rises to his feet. Around you, the landscape, and the gods themselves begin to fade.

"Remember well," rumbles Tyr, "the day when you fought at the side of the gods."

"Oh, do shut up, Tyr," Sune says, her voice growing fainter. "You can be so very tedious . . ."





Epilogue

In which the events of the past few weeks finally reach their conclusion. A triumphant performance in Shadowdale forms the backdrop for tearful goodbyes and leave-taking. Marcus Wands, his destiny revealed, returns home with a new sense of responsibility and a few new songs. Heino's band continues on its way, free of the onerous responsibilities of civilization, and our heroes return to their lives as freelance adventurers somewhat richer and, hopefully, wiser. All sample the wonders of Lord Mourngrim's table, and a splendid time is had by all.

Read the following out loud.

The real world returns as the gods fade away. You find yourself once again at the *Eye's* crystal fortress, but the place has fallen into ruins. The dome you occupied is now shattered, and sunlight comes slanting through the trees. The great crystal columns lie fallen around you. Of the goblins, ettercaps, and other creatures there is no sign. The treasure of the githyanki is scattered amid chunks of fallen crystal.

The tattered Sabbar rises to his feet, blinking like an owl in daylight. His gaze moves from Marcus to the rest of the party.

"I think I tried to kill you," he says. "I don't know why, but I'm terribly sorry."

Any interrogation, *know alignment*, or other spells will reveal that Sabbar is now a 0-level human of chaotic good alignment with little knowledge of his former life, save that he was not a nice person and that he wishes to make amends. He may yet return to his evil ways, but for now he seems friendly and contrite, expressing regret over his past excesses. His other statistics are intact, and he may be useful as a PC or NPC for future campaigning.

The PCs are free to gather up the githyanki treasure. All wounded characters have been healed by the gods and, if the DM wishes, any slain characters have been resurrected. Furthermore, each character has been granted one random magical item, which can be found among the party's possessions later.

The journey to Shadowdale is uneventful; the boon of the gods prevents any dangerous encounters. As the PCs arrive in the settlement, read the following.

The rustic beauty of Shadowdale surrounds you. Down the road somewhat, around the House of Plenty, the village's graceful temple of Chauntea, a crowd of cheering villagers has gathered. Hastening to the spot, you see Heino and his troupe performing to an enthusiastic response. On a raised viewing platform, you see Lord Mourngrim and Lady Shaerl, rulers of Shadowdale.





Heino and his band greet the PCs warmly. The DM may allow the characters to join in the performance, as before. After the performance, Heino introduces the party to Lord Mourngrym.

The stern-visaged lord of Shadowdale approaches you, his normally grim expression replaced with a look of laughter and delight. He wears the silver *pendant of Ashaba*, symbol of his office, and is richly dressed.

“My new friend Heino tells me that you’ve come quite a ways to see me,” he says. “I believe you have something for me?”

Hopefully, the PCs still have the message tube given them by Maskar Wands. If so, Mourngrym breaks the seal and reads the message with pleasure. He inspects the wand of wonder in the package, and smiles at the PCs.

“Master Wands is generous,” he says. “I haven’t the heart to tell him I already have one. You wouldn’t like to have it, would you? Consider it payment for your services.”

The PCs can accept the wand without qualm—Mourngrym has given it freely.

If the party lost the message, or opened it before coming to Shadowdale, Mourngrym will be displeased; he will not give the wand to the party. He will take no other action against them, however. If the characters were so foolish as to steal the *wand of wonder*, Mourngrym will order his guards to arrest them, and they will be forced to talk their way out of the mess.

The End of The Matter

If Mourngrym does not have the PCs arrested, he invites them to share the evening’s feast with him. The evening goes well, and the DM may play it out as desired.

The next day, Heino’s band takes its leave. Sabbar declares his intention to begin again his study of magic—this time in the interest of good and for the betterment of civilization. Marcus prepares to return to Waterdeep with the *Dragonking’s Eye* safely in his possession. The DM should make it clear that Marcus has acquired considerable maturity and a much more responsible outlook. Bonuses of 1,000-3,000 XP for all players, plus extra for good role playing, are appropriate at this point.

Many seeds for future adventure have been planted. Heino’s band can be continuing allies and friends of the PCs, requesting help or crossing paths with the adventurers as the DM desires. Sabbar can become a continuing NPC, or may be taken over as a PC 1st-level wizard. Marcus and the Wands family can remain friends and patrons of the PCs, and attempts by various evil powers to obtain the *Dragonking’s Eye*, now in Marcus’s possession, can form many future adventures. In fact, Marcus still needs an escort back to Waterdeep, so the DM might craft another series of adventures around his return.

In any event, the *Marco Volo* trilogy is over. Where it goes from here is up to the DM.

Envoy

*Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please. Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
And my ending is despair
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set me free.*

— Shakespeare, *The Tempest*





by ANTHONY PRYOR

Marco Volo—Arrival is the third and last volume of the *Marco Volo* trilogy, designed for four to eight player characters of 6th–8th level. When the characters first set off on an intrigue-laden journey to Shadowdale, they did not suspect how much trouble they would get into. Joined by Marcus Wands (also known as “Marco Volo”), they found him just a bothersome but likeable little rogue. No one suspected he was on the run from the crazy wizard Sabbar. The troublesome Marcus had previously stolen from him a rare artifact called the *Dragonking’s Eye*, and hid it in the Spiderhaunt Woods.

Now the party approaches the Spiderhaunts, and Marcus insists on diverting the group to retrieve the *Eye*. But strange things have been happening there. There are rumors: of an oddly constructed keep of bone (or is it crystal?); of a warlord out for conquest (or is it a lich?); of goblin tribes strangely clad, and extra-planar beings banding with the giant spiders of the aptly named Spiderhaunt Woods. Something evil has denned at the heart of the forest. It has a mind of its own. . . . and it has plans for Faerûn.

The last volume of the *Marco Volo* trilogy gives a DM the tools to run this free-wheeling, fast-paced adventure, and the secrets of the powers at work behind the scenes. The player characters must face—and deal with—the mad wizard Sabbar, the annoyed Volothamp Geddarm (who wants to have “a little chat” with Marcus!), and ultimately the *Dragonking’s Eye* itself. Even the gods themselves step in to have their say. In a dramatic denouement, this epic adventure draws to a close, but the memory of what transpired will live on!

TSR, Inc.
POB 756
Lake Geneva,
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U.S.A.



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