

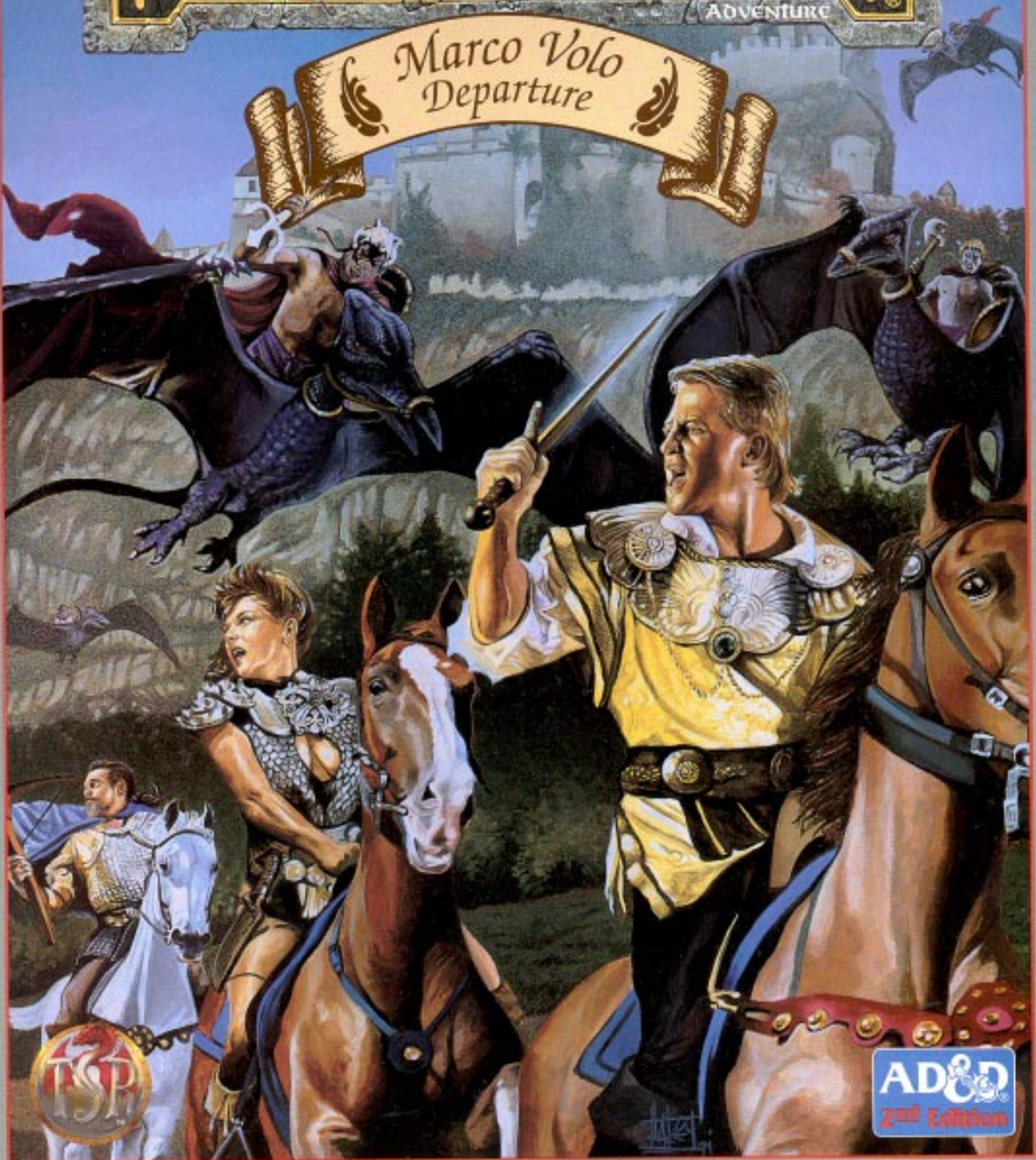
FOR 4 TO 8 CHARACTERS OF LEVELS 6 TO 8

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FORGOTTEN REALMS

ADVENTURE

*Marco Volo
Departure*





Marco VoLo: Departure

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INTRODUCTION

In which the humble author attempts to acquaint the reader with what is, by his own admission, a somewhat complex and convoluted, if stirring, tale of adventure and intrigue.

Marco Volo: *Departure* is the first volume of the Marco Volo trilogy, a series of adventures that takes FORGOTTEN REALMS® game player characters on an intrigue-laden journey from Waterdeep to Shadowdale, and throws them into the company of one Marcus Wands (also known as “Marco Volo”), a bothersome if somewhat likable rogue.

The adventure is designed for a group of four to eight characters of 6th to 8th level. Fighters, as always, are necessary for success, and thieves will be of use in many situations. Wizards with spells of combat, deception, and detection will find good employment for themselves, while a priest or two is always useful to heal the hurts of daily adventuring.

Marcus Wands (that is, Marco Volo) is a somewhat lawless individual, willing to bend and, in extreme cases, even break the law. Lawful characters will find themselves in something of a bind deciding whether to help Marco or to behave in an unlawful manner. Chaotic neutral and good characters will probably be most at home in this free-wheeling adventure.

As the trilogy begins in Waterdeep, and involves several prominent locations there, one or more of the products describing the city would be useful to the DM. These products include *City of Splendors* and *Volo’s Guide to Waterdeep*. These products are recommended but not necessary for full enjoyment of the following adventures.

In the first part of the trilogy, the characters meet Marcus in the guise of Marco Volo and unintentionally help him escape from his enemies. Later, Marcus’s grandfather, Maskar, approaches the characters, asking for their assistance setting the young wastrel on the correct path. Maskar Wands proposes that the

party carry a letter to Shadowdale for him, and to hire Marcus as their guide. Although they are to make a great pretense of hiring Marcus, the adventurers will actually be well paid by Maskar for playing watchdog over the youth while at the same time, trying to give his grandson a lesson in both life and humility.

Unfortunately for the characters, things are nowhere near as simple as they seem. Unknown to Maskar, Marcus has stolen the artifact known as the *Dragonking’s Eye* from the wizard Sabbas and, in desperation, magically hid it in the Spiderhaunt Woods near Shadowdale. He then sought to pin the theft on Volothamp Geddarm, author of *Volo’s Guide to Waterdeep* and the infamous (and unpublished) *Volo’s Guide to All Things Magical*. (More details may be found in the Cast of Characters section following, under the entries for Marcus, Sabbas, and Volothamp.)

Marcus’s ruse succeeded, but only partially. Long believed dead or lost on the outer planes, and now hopelessly mad, Sabbas believes that Volothamp is indeed the thief. However, he is deluded that Marcus actually is Volothamp. Unknown to Marcus, Sabbas has hired the wizard-assassin Felibarr Blacklance to dispose of this “Volothamp” and retrieve the lost artifact.

Now Marcus wants to return to the Spiderhaunt Woods to retrieve the Eye, secure in the belief that he has eluded pursuit and is no longer suspected of the theft. He plans to take the trinket back to Waterdeep and sell it, even though the city watch is constantly paying him unwelcome attention because he is known to be a petty criminal. (Besides being a rogue, Marcus is a bit naive.) For all these reasons, Marcus views the adventurers’ offer with enthusiasm.

The party leaves Waterdeep, bound for the Way Inn, one day’s ride distant, and faces various opponents along the way. To further complicate matters, Maskar was not entirely honest with the party about the letter they are asked to carry to Lord Mourngrym of Shadowdale. Sealed inside a scroll tube, this letter is accompanied by a rare enchanted item that Maskar





is giving to Mourngrim, Several other wizards and fortune hunters want it as well.

Marco Volo: Departure introduces Marco and his grandfather to the player characters. The party then becomes involved with the city guard, and various ne'er-do-wells hoping to cash in a 10,000 gold piece reward being offered by the mad wizard Sabbas for Marco's apprehension. Sabbas is constantly in the background of the story, but in *Departure*, he does not appear in person. His hired assassin, Felibarr Blacklance, does put in an appearance, however, causing the PCs some trouble after they leave Waterdeep. *Departure* takes the adventurers from Waterdeep to the Way Inn, by which time they will doubtlessly suspect there is more to Marcus than meets the eye.

The second volume of the *Marco Volo* trilogy, entitled *Journey*, follows the party from the Way Inn to the Goblin Marches, where the adventurers must deal with treacherous monks; the bureaucratic intrigues of Cormyr; and King Azoun's Purple Dragons, who are also seeking the wayward Marcus. The adventure con-

cludes in *Arrival*, in which the party reaches the Spiderhaunt Woods for the final confrontation with the various parties who have taken an interest in the matter, including the demented Sabbas himself.

Marco Volo is written as a picaresque adventure, light-hearted but never farcical or slapstick, in the manner of such authors as Alexandre Dumas and Raphael Sabatini. The DM is encouraged to play the adventure fast and loose, not wasting a lot of time on exposition. The action should carry the players along, never leaving them enough time to speculate about exactly what is going on.

DMs might consider reading such works as Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* or *The Man in the Iron Mask*, or Sabatini's *Scaramouche* to get in the mood, or view the various films based upon these works. Director Richard Lester's 1974 *The Three Musketeers* and its sequel, *The Four Musketeers*, are especially recommended. The contemporary works of author Steven Brust, such as *Jherog*, *Yendi*, and *The Phoenix Guards* (a fantasy homage to Dumas) would also serve the DM well.





Cast of Characters

In which the major players in our drama are introduced, for the enlightenment and amusement of the reader, and also for the purposes of reference should their true role in the unfolding story be inadvertently forgotten.



As may be gathered, Marco Volo is a complex tale with an extensive cast of characters. The most prominent of these participants are listed below, along with their histories, motivations, and likely roles in the adventure.

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 is a ne'er-do-well son of the noble house of Wands, a venerable Waterdeep family. Young and full of energy, Marcus rebelled against family responsibilities and took up a rogue's life, much to the chagrin of his grandfather, Maskar.

Marcus likes to think of himself as a dashing and handsome outlaw, beloved by the ladies, but constantly on the run from the law. Unfortunately, Marcus did not prove an efficient thief. After some

unsuccessful capers, he found himself sought by both the Waterdeep city watch and several outraged ex-girlfriends.

Recently, however, Marcus's fortunes seem to have taken a turn for the better, starting when he stumbled on the hidden residence of the wizard Sabbas. Seeing a chance for a quick profit, Marcus grabbed a likely-looking item from Sabbas's study and escaped. A short time later, he sent an anonymous note to the wizard asserting that the real thief was the infamous Volothamp Geddarm.

Unknown to Marcus, however, several developments have taken place, and none bode him well. First, the Lords of Waterdeep have grown weary of Marcus's antics, and want him brought in for questioning about some suspicious crimes. His grandfather's influence can no longer protect him. Second, the item he stole is the *Dragonking's Eye*, a powerful artifact from another plane. Sabbas is determined to get it back, which will create dire consequences for Marcus.

Currently, Marcus is on the lam, living it up in Waterdeep, and blissfully unaware of the brewing storm. He spends most of his time at Sailor's Corner, a filthy dive on Fishgut Court. He wants to retrieve his ill-gotten trinket, now hidden in the Spiderhaunt Woods, if he can find companions for the trip. The PCs first make his acquaintance when he crashes the yearly adventurers' ball at Mother Tathlorn's.

Playing Marcus will be a challenge for the DM, and requires play-acting. Beneath his brave talk and affectations, Marcus is a timid, uncertain young man who wants others to like him. His primary method of winning acceptance is to spin wild stories and exaggerate his adventures. As can be seen from his statistics and description, Marcus is quite a skilled bard with many abilities. However, he always feels insecure, suspecting that any recognition he receives is really due to his family's status.





Sabbas

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: 1-4+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, yug-goth

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*

Sabbas 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 travels, however, he did manage to obtain one important item—an artifact known as the *Dragonking's Eye*. Settling in Sembia, he prepared to use the Eye for his own gain, only to have it stolen by a lucky sneak-thief.

Sabbas is convinced that Volothamp Geddarm is the culprit, that worthy having made himself unpopular among Faerûn's wizards by trying to publicly reveal their secrets. Although the thief was actually Marcus Wands, Sabbas has decided *Marco Volo* is the elusive Volothamp.

Sabbas has offered a general reward of 10,000 gold pieces for "Volo's" apprehension. Whether Marcus is

dead or alive is irrelevant to Sabbas, who can use *speak with dead* to learn where the thief hid the *Dragonking's Eye*. To ensure that the thief is caught, Sabbas has also hired Felibarr Blacklance, an infamous wizard-mercenary. To Blacklance he has paid 5,000 gp up front, and promised another 15,000 if he completes the job.

This mad wizard does not appear in person in *Departure*, but his hand is in many of the encounters, keeping tabs on things through Felibarr. As the PCs escape the traps laid for them, Sabbas will take a more personal interest, showing up for the final confrontation in *Marco Volo: Arrival*.

Felibarr Blacklance

CE hm W12

Str 14; Dex 12; Con 17; Int 17; Wis 12; Cha 4

Armor Class: 7 (*amulet of protection +3*)

Move: 12

Hit Points: 35

Number of Attacks: 1

Damage: 1-4 (dagger)

THAC0: 17

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, staff

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Etiquette, heraldry, engineering, herbalism, reading/writing, spellcraft

Languages: Common, elvish, drow, goblin, orcish

Magical Items: *Amulet of protection +3, wand of fireballs (16 charges), gem of seeing*

Spells: First Level (4): *burning hands, detect magic, feather fall, magic missile*; Second Level (4): *improved phantasmal force, invisibility, knock, Melf's acid arrow*; Third Level (4): *blink, dispel magic, fireball, slow*; Fourth Level (4): *Evard's black tentacles, minor globe of invulnerability, phantasmal killer, polymorph other*; Fifth Level (4): *blacklance* (see below), *passwall, summon shadow, teleport*; Sixth Level (1): *shades*

This evil mercenary wizard is one of the most notorious bounty hunters and hired killers in Waterdeep. Skeletally thin, sporting a small black beard and deep-set eyes, he associates with many evil forces, including tanar'ri and fiends.

Like most evil individuals, Felibarr's cruelty results from a life of abuse and misfortune. His father, a small-time con man, was slain by the Waterdeep





watch; his mother starved to death soon after. Swearing vengeance, Felibarr apprenticed himself to the black wizard Shakkarn, eventually acquiring great skill in magic. When his master died in a mysterious accident, Felibarr inherited his wealth and secret writings. Not surprisingly, rumors circulated that Felibarr was responsible for Shakkarn's death, although these mutterings are never repeated to Felibarr's face.

Since then, Felibarr has made his living as an assassin whose magical abilities help him avoid detection. Lord Khelben Arunsun believes Felibarr is involved in illegal doings, but lacks proof. For now, Felibarr acts with impunity, his magic permitting him to avoid the watch. He is found in the lawless Dock Ward, glowering lustfully at the barmaids of the Blushing Mermaid, or, when his purse is flat, slumming at the Thirsty Sailor.

To ensure Marcus's death or capture, Sabbas has hired Felibarr, offering him a substantial bonus over the general reward he has offered for Marcus's apprehension. Felibarr prides himself in never having failed a contract, and will go to any length to fulfill it. He has no qualms about sacrificing his minions, nor does he care about those accompanying Marcus. Felibarr will ruthlessly dispose of anyone who interferes.

Felibarr has developed the *blacklance* spell, a powerful blast of magical energy.

Blacklance (Evocation)

Level: Fifth

Range: 10 yards + 10 yards/level

Component: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 7

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: 1/2

Felibarr's prized spell, from which he chose his surname, is a spear of pure black energy tapped from the Negative Material Plane. When cast, it visibly streaks from the wizard's fingertips, inflicting 1d4 points of damage on its target per level of the caster. After it hits the first target, the spell leaps to the next closest target, inflicting half the damage done

to the first. It continues leaping, halving damage each time, until the damage is reduced to 1 point or less. If only one target is available, the *blacklance* discharges into the ground. It never doubles back to strike the caster unless some other effect such as *spell turning* takes place, nor will it strike a given target more than once.

Dhylmorre

CN hm W12

Str 10; Dex 14; Con 13; Int 16; Wis 12; Cha 9

Armor Class: 8 (*ring of protection* +2, 5' radius)

Move: 12

Hit Points: 20

Number of Attacks: 1

Damage: 1-6 (staff)

THAC0: 17

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, staff

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient history, cooking, reading/writing, spellcraft

Languages: Common, elvish

Magical Items: *Wand of magic missiles* (20 charges), *ring of protection* +2 (5' radius)

Spells: First Level (4): *color spray*, *detect magic*, *magic missile*, *sleep*; Second Level (4): *blur*, *darkness*, 15' radius, *ESP*, *knock*; Third Level (4): *clairaudience*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *invisibility*, 10' radius; Fourth Level (4): *confusion*, *fear*, *ice storm*, *monster summoning II*; Fifth Level (4): *cloudkill*, *cone of cold*, *passwall*, *wall of stone*; Sixth Level (1): *disintegrate*

A Waterdeep native, Dhylmorre is an unimaginative wizard who desires ranking with such luminaries as Elminster, Khelben, and Sabbas. Unsuccessful at creating his own spells, Dhylmorre has found it easier to steal them, increasing the contents of his spellbook at the expense of his honest colleagues. He has gotten wind of Maskar's *wand of wonders*. Accordingly, he made a deal with Winestab the thief for the two of them to shadow the party, looking for an opportunity to steal the scroll tube and the wand.

Dhylmorre prefers to lurk in the background, letting Winestab take the chances. He will cast a few spells to help his hireling, but will flee if detected. He is not above abandoning Winestab.





Wineſtab

CE hm T6

Str 10; Dex 18; Con 11; Int 13; Wis 8; Cha 9

Armor Class: 6 (studded leather)

Move: 12

Hit Points: 20

Number of Attacks: 1

Damage: 1-6 (short sword)

THAC0: 18

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, short sword, short bow

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Appraising, disguise, forgery, reading lips

Languages: Common

Magical Items: *Elven boots*

Psionics (wild talent): Psychometabolic Devotions: *catfall, displacement*; Telepathic Devotions: *contact, ESP*

PSPs: 62

This psionic thief is fairly well known in Waterdeep, and a fixture at dives like the Midnight Sun, the Thirsty Throat, and the Dripping Dagger. He is a typical thief: Small, quick, and a bit rat-like, with virtually no sense of loyalty.

Wineſtab's psionic abilities account for much of his success as a thief. He uses *ESP* to find out where valuables are hidden, and the devotions *catfall* and *displacement* to escape his pursuers.

The wizard Dhyllmorre hired Wineſtab to assist him stealing the scroll tube containing the *wand of wonder*. Wineſtab will do his best to steal the wand—Dhyllmorre pays well—but he won't hesitate to betray the wizard to save himself.

Maskar Wands

NG hm W23

The patriarch of the noble house of Wands, Maskar is an imposing figure who values his privacy and the respectability of his household above all. Maskar is conservative and disdainful of the outside world. He is a stern man who would control every aspect of his family's lives.

He disapproves of the unrestrained use of magic, and thinks it more proper to use spells for their intended purpose, when needed. Let the outward-

looking wizards save the world; he is content crafting a new spell or device. Besides, he must ride herd on his numerous and widely dispersed family; that's work enough.

In particular, his grandson Marcus Wands has caused Maskar much distress. The young man's boisterous, free-living, and sometimes illegal activities are completely at odds with Maskar's conservative philosophy. He has used his family's influence to shield Marcus so far, but the situation is growing out of control.

To regain control, Maskar wants Marcus out of Waterdeep for a few weeks. He hopes to let things blow over, and to have time to deal with his grandson's legal entanglements. He also hopes that the company of experienced adventurers will teach Marcus a lesson in maturity.

Maskar finds dealing with outside talent (such as the adventurers) quite unpleasant, but he currently sees no other way to extricate Marcus. While he is a sour, relatively humorless man, Maskar does have his good points, including loyalty to his family. Despite the trouble Marcus has caused, Maskar will stand by him, and wants him back on the "right" path.

VoloThamp Geddarm

CG hm W5

A roguish magician recognized for his neatly trimmed beard, stylish beret, and acid tongue, Volo is a feature throughout the Realms. Perhaps too honest about his activities and knowledge, he is usually at odds with merchants, wizards, and the constabulary. He has written a number of works, including a popular series of guides to various cities. He is also the author of *Volo's Guide to All Things Magical*, a work whose publication was suppressed by powerful wizards who were loath to share their secrets.

Volo does not personally appear in the current volume, but he is important to the story as the person Marcus Wands framed for the theft of the *Dragonking's Eye*. Eventually, VoloThamp will get wind of the affair. There are already several contracts on his life, and the one offered by Sabbas would be just one more. However, VoloThamp will eventually realize that the description on Sabbas's contract does not match his own, and will start to investigate.





Chapter 1

In which our characters encounter the infamous Marcus Wands, aka Marco Volo, and engage in a grand fight with the Waterdeep city watch, which proves an amusing diversion, and provides an introduction to many famous adventurers, although under less pleasant circumstances than most of our heroes would like. Much exotic food and drink is sampled.



An Invitation

The Marco Volo trilogy begins inauspiciously enough, with an invitation to a party. Each of the characters receives the following message, written in a flowery and beguiling hand, and delivered by a comely individual of the opposite sex. (This person will, incidentally, be quite resistant to the character's charms.)

Dear (Character Name):

In light of your recent adventuring success and the notoriety you have achieved, you are cordially invited to a gathering of adventurers at Mother Tathlorn's House of Pleasure and Healing. Festivities begin tomorrow night at sunset. Activities will include feasting, dancing, gaming, and entertainment in a variety of appealing forms. The cost to you is nothing save the pleasure of your presence, and your friendly conversation with various notables from the city of Waterdeep. Please send your response back to me with the messenger.

Best wishes,
Mother Tathlorn

Characters familiar with social life in Waterdeep will know that once a year, Mother Tathlorn invites members of prominent adventuring companies to her festhall so that they might socialize and rub elbows with the wealthy and noble Waterdhavians, who pay well for the privilege. In exchange for a night of feasting and other diversions, the adventurers need only tolerate the chummy company of bored nobles and tell a few suitably embroidered tales.

Most DMs should have few problems persuading their players to go along with the scheme. If any characters prove reluctant, Mother Tathlorn is willing to offer a token payment of up to 100 gp for their company. The DM might also encourage cooperative players to persuade reluctant individuals to attend.





AT Mother Tathlorn's

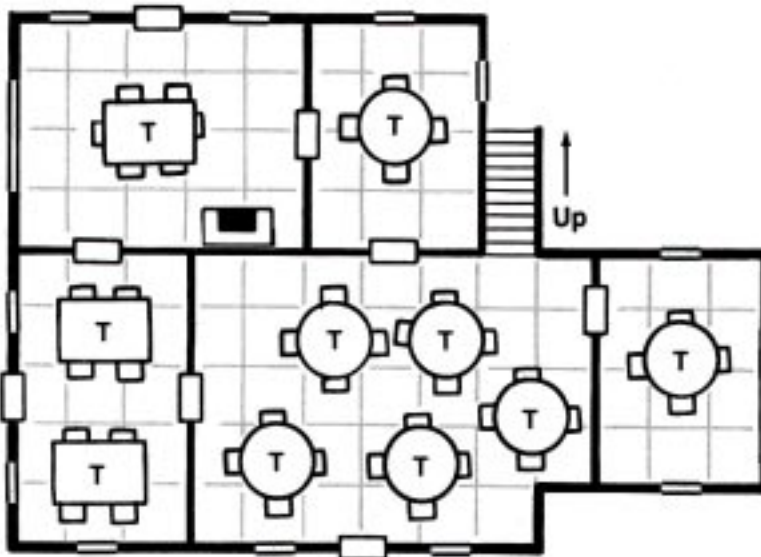
The characters should arrive at Mother Tathlorn's without incident. Hopefully they are arrayed in their finest garb, although some may prefer to dress in their normal adventuring clothes. The nobility will find such a choice suitably "quaint."

When the characters arrive at Mother Tathlorn's (Waterdeep location number C43), read the following text out loud.

Mother Tathlorn's House of Pleasure and Healing is probably the most famous of Waterdeep's several festhalls. A baroque, five-storied structure, Mother Tathlorn's establishment has been hung with garlands of flowers and greenery for the occasion. The way along Gem Street leading up to the house has been lit with torches that provide soft light, reflecting off the towering walls of Castle Waterdeep, which stands nearby.

You are not the first to arrive. Several parties of well-groomed nobles, resplendent in rich velvets, brocades, and cloth of gold, walk along Gem Street or loiter around the house's entrance, attended by servants of many races. You see other adventurers arriving. You recognize the beautiful Loene of the Company of Crazy Adventurers; the stern Velkor Minairr, leader of the Bloodaxe Mercenaries; and Darrstul, a rogue in service to the Hunt. Some of you feel somewhat slighted that such insignificant individuals have been invited to the same feast as yourself, while others feel incredibly humble to be in such distinguished company. Marshaling your resources to meet the cream of Waterdeep society, you enter the building.

A stout, mature, and charming woman, Mother Tathlorn greets you all by name and urges you to partake of the available refreshments. The interior has been completely redecorated. The bar has been removed, and tables added to accommodate the crowd. Servants scurry here and there, and everywhere is the muted din of conversation.



Note: The interior has been changed due to the nature of the evening's entertainment.



Map 1: Mother Tathlorn's House of Pleasure
(Main Floor)





Allow the characters to enter and socialize for a time. Various fussy nobles approach and ask for details of the party's various adventures. Some are marvelously impressed, while more pompous nobles look down their noses at the adventurers before going off to seek more "famous" individuals. Give the characters ample opportunity to indulge themselves in the various refreshments, flirt with members of the opposite sex, or socialize with other well-known adventurers. Eventually a bell rings, summoning the gathered notables to dinner. Have the characters select a table on Map 71 (page 9).

A Guest at Dinner

Once the characters have seated themselves, read the following paragraph.

As you prepare for dinner, a jaunty individual approaches. He is tall and spare, moving with the grace of an acrobat. He is dressed in fanciful doublet and hose, and carries a lute on his back and a slim poignard at his side. At first you can't tell whether he is a nobleman or a fellow adventurer.

"Hail, fellows!" he declares, bowing elaborately. "Marco Volo, bard and traveler, at your service. I'm afraid all the seats at the other tables are taken. Mind if I join you? Thanks so much."

Before you can respond, Marco has seated himself at your table.

If the characters consider ejecting Marco from the table forcibly, point out that Mother Tathlorn will not look favorably upon a brawl. Moreover, the room is full of tough adventurers who won't like their feast interrupted, either.

Marco is talkative and friendly—to the point of severe annoyance. As the courses arrive, he holds forth on virtually every subject imaginable. Courteous enough, he asks characters about themselves, but always interrupts with his own anecdotes, spinning tales of adventure in far-off lands, stories of the women he has romanced, the prisoners he has rescued, the famous songs he has composed, the various

monarchs and noblemen he has charmed, and so on. Requests or demands that Marco pipe down are obeyed for only a few moments; then he starts up again.

While Marco prattles on, allow the characters to feast upon the many dishes the servants bring—roast meats, exotic cheeses, unusual vegetables, and the like—and drink their fill of wine, ale, and beer. Once the characters are well settled, and thoroughly disgusted with Marco's unflappable exuberance, read them the following.

Marco takes a long swig of wine from a golden goblet. "Oh, my friends, this is a grand night, is it not?" Picking up his lute, he declares, "I must share my latest work with you. It's called 'The Glorious Death of Sir Trolivus.'" He strums on the lute and launches into his song:

"Sir Trolivus was a noble bold
Of him were many stories told,
He was brave as the knights of old,
His exploits brought him lots of gold."

DMs do not need to sing the song if they don't want to, of course! Simply inform the players that it is truly awful, and the diners at adjoining tables look somewhat sick while listening to it. Allow the characters to express their personal reactions, then continue with the following text.

Thankfully, before the song can go much further, Marco breaks off with a squawk, looking behind you with wide eyes.

You turn to look, and see a squad of city watchmen approaching, clubs at the ready. One points toward your table and shouts, "There he is! You! You're under arrest in the name of the Lords of Waterdeep!"

With that, Marco leaps onto the table, smashes the lead watchman over the head with his lute, then bounds to the floor. "Delay them while I escape, friends!" he shouts over his shoulder to you. "I'll be back for you!"

With that, he leaps for a door.



Although he doesn't make it out on the first leap, Marcus's energetic reaction draws every eye toward your table. Several of the watchmen take his words as proof positive that the party is in league with Marco, and they will attempt to capture the characters. Other members of the watch chase Marco while hired guards try to keep order.

The nobles in the room have a splendid time, provided their drinks aren't spilled. They egg on the combatants, and bet each other on the brawl's outcome. Some of the nobles are very intent on winning their bets: they are not above tripping a PC, strategically spilling a mug of ale, clobbering a combatant with a plate or a tray of drinks, and similar antics.

To further complicate matters, the room is full of powerful adventurers, some of whom join in the attempts to capture Marco or the characters, while others try to help him escape. Still others relish any excuse for a good brawl, and attack everyone who comes near. Fighters pull out enchanted weapons and begin hacking, priests brandish holy symbols and call upon their gods, wizards set off destructive spells, and

rogues try to rob any likely targets.

The overall result is an all-inclusive, highly destructive brawl, with lots of fighting and flashy special effects. The characters themselves must fight a variety of opponents while Marco Volo himself bounds around the room, running up stairs, swinging from the chandelier, dashing along tables, and finally escaping out a window or open door. If desperate, he will cast a *stinking cloud* spell to befuddle pursuers. DMs should note that it is important for Marco to escape. If the characters manage to corner him, another group of opponents should interfere to frustrate them.

Play out the party's role in the brawl, having the characters fight various opponents. Describe the mayhem occurring in the background as famous adventurers battle each other and the city guards, and everyone loses track of exactly what is going on—but probably doesn't care.

Likely opponents for characters and their tactics include the following individuals. DMs may also throw in other famous adventurers from elsewhere in the Realms if they so desire. Note that most opponents fight to capture the characters, not kill them. Likewise, most opponents will not fight to the death but will flee if wounded. The DM may treat "killed" opponents as only wounded and let no one die in the brawl: Murder charges this early in the adventure will unnecessarily complicate matters and slow the pace.



City Watchmen or Festhall Guards (1st-Level Fighters): Int Average; AL Varies, usually NG; AC 7 (leather armor); MV 12; HD 1; hp 6 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (club or short sword); SZ M; ML 14

These are typical hired guards—professional but not exceptional. They try to capture characters, holding weapons threateningly and calling for their surrender.

City Watch Armar Sydar (NG hm F3): Int Average; AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (long sword); SZ M; ML 15



The **armar** (sergeant) is simply an experienced watchman. His presence adds muscle to any effort to capture the characters.

City Watch Civilar Lusker (NG hm F5): Int Average; AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8 (broad sword); SZ M; ML 15

Anticipating that the apprehension of Marco Volo would be a relatively simple operation, only one civilar, or captain, has accompanied the guards. Unfortunately, the man is overwhelmed by the furor of the brawl and spends most of his time running about bellowing orders no one can hear.

Shasslan Timtrane (CG hf F10): Int Average; AC 4 (chain mail and shield); MV 12; hp 40; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8+2 (*sword +2, flame tongue*); SZ M; ML 16

Shasslan is leader of the band of adventurers known as the Hunt. She did not witness the scene with Marco but believes the characters started the brawl. She is upset with them for ruining a perfectly good evening. She confronts them, brandishing her *sword +2, flame tongue*, and demands their surrender.

Dorn (CN hm T7): Int High; AC 8 (leather); MV 12; hp 28; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+3 (*short sword +3*), SZ M; ML 14

This small, skilled thief of Mane's Band lurks about, picking pockets or taking valuables as opportunity presents itself. While the characters are fending off the city watch and other foes, Dorn chooses them as targets of opportunity. He will try to lift a few of the party's purses or enchanted items.

Mhair Szeltune (NG hf W18): Int Genius, AC 1 (*ring of protection +3, bracers of defense AC 4*); MV 12; hp 32; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (staff); SZ M; ML 18

This famous wizard is head of the Watchful Order of Magists and Protectors. A serene, efficient, petite lady of iron will, she is an uncommonly good judge of character. She saw the whole thing as it took place, and she realizes what happened. However, she thinks the characters should surrender gracefully, and simply explain the situation to the city watch. If they do, she will speak on their behalf—but they will still be imprisoned. If they do not, she reluctantly attempts to subdue them with nonlethal spells such as *sleep, web, and hold person*.

Captured

The ultimate result of all this mayhem should be the capture and arrest of one or more player characters. With so many high-level adventurers and guards running about, such an event is almost inevitable. However, if the PCs appear on the verge of escape, or if damage to the festhall becomes too extreme, throw in some particularly high-level mage such as the grim Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun. (See his description in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting*.) Arunsun will cast some non-lethal high level spells such as *power word, stun, or forcecage* to render the party helpless.

Captured, unconscious, and in irons, with all weapons and equipment confiscated, the party is transported to cells in Castle Waterdeep. There they will await trial, nurse their wounds, and—most likely—brood on how much they dislike Marco Volo.





Chapter 2

In which the doughty adventurers make the acquaintance of a most influential individual, who makes them an offer of employment – one they are all well advised to accept – in addition serving them fine wines.

Read the following to the players.

After two days enjoying Castle Waterdeep's hospitality, you know all the rats on a first-name basis and you may be starting to develop a taste for gruel. Unfortunately, with a rattle and a squeak, the door grinds open, interrupting your holiday.

A grim-faced man in wizard's robes stands in the doorway. He leads a party of Waterdeep guards—not watchmen—who are all clad in scale armor and well armed.

"Charges against you have been dropped," he says. "Come."

Of course, the characters have little choice in the matter. They are unarmed, faced by armed and obviously powerful fighters. Should any characters be reluctant, however, the wizard first attempts to reason with them. However, if it becomes necessary, he renders them unconscious and has them carried out.

You are led up winding dungeon stairs until finally you arrive outside the castle. It is night and a light rain is falling. Waiting nearby is a covered coach drawn by a half-dozen black horses.

"Get in," snaps the wizard. "Your possessions are inside. Now get out of my sight."

The wizard makes certain the characters enter the coach; then he leaves. Any characters who refuse to get in are rendered unconscious, or bound by the guards, and thrown inside.

Read the following to the players.

As soon as you are all inside, the coach lurches forward, picking up speed until it is fairly hurtling down the slick paving stones of Waterdeep Way. It's a bumpy ride. Between one reeling pitch and the next, you find your weapons and other possessions on the floor of the coach.

Suddenly, the coach lurches left, slewing around to rumble down the High Road. With another wild turn, you are on Suldown Street—you think. Finally, the coach rattles around yet another corner and clatters to a stop before an impressive walled mansion, throwing you to the floor in an undignified heap among your belongings.

You hear the driver shout "Last stop! Everyone out!"





Those characters familiar with the mansion recognize this as the home of the famous and influential Wands family. The banners flying from the walls depict a well-known sigil: three gold stars and a black sleeve on a purple field.

The massive oaken gates of the mansion creak open as you stand there, getting drenched in the rain. A tall, dark-haired woman walks out, wrapped in a long, dark cloak against the falling rain. She is accompanied by a pair of armored figures.

"I am Olanhar Wands," she says in a voice full of authority and confidence. "My father, Maskar, wishes to speak with you."

The two armored figures are iron golems, there to discourage any unwise moves by the party. Olanhar is also a 14th-level wizard, fully capable of defending herself should the party be so foolish as to try anything impulsive. Hopefully, the characters will decide to accompany her, impelled by curiosity and the desire to get out of the rain if by nothing else.

Olanhar leads you through the courtyard and past several outbuildings to the main structure. The Wands' palatial manse rises at least five stories, and sports twin towers over a large central chamber. Wordlessly, she opens the front door and ushers you inside.

You follow her through a vast marble entry hall, up a sweeping staircase, down a short gallery, and finally to a small room containing several couches and chairs.

"Make yourselves comfortable," she says. "My father will be here in a few moments." As you sit down, servants take your wet cloaks and offer you refreshment.

The characters are offered food and drink, and Olanhar sees to their needs until her father arrives. After a few minutes, a wizened, balding man with a ring of white hair enters and sits.

The man looks at each of you in turn, and you feel somewhat like a prize horse being appraised by a potential owner.

"So, you are the individuals involved in the brawl at Mother Tathlorn's two days ago. My name is Maskar Wands. You remember, perhaps, an individual who called himself *-hmp-* 'Marco Volo'?"

In response to your chorus of condemnation, he raises his hand and asks for quiet.

"He is known to me. His real name is Marcus Wands; he is my grandson. Olanhar here is his aunt."

Olanhar speaks. "He shames our family with his foolishness."

Maskar nods in agreement with her. "He rejects his responsibilities to our family in favor of a life of *-hmp-* 'adventure.' Adventure! Leave adventuring to the likes of the Harpers and that peacock Elminster." Maskar stands and begins to pace.

"I tolerate Marcus and his youthful indulgences, but he goes too far. He wanders Faerûn, singing his songs, romancing his women, drinking his wine—such things I accept, though I do not approve. But I cannot accept that he steals. He cheats. Even my influence cannot save him from the Lords of Waterdeep, who have ordered his arrest."

He fixes you with an intense stare.

"Your exploits are known to me. You are competent individuals, and are the sort my grandson enjoys associating with. I have a proposal for you.

"Things are too hot for Marcus in Waterdeep. I suspect that one of his victims wants him dead, or perhaps it is one of the women he romanced and abandoned. It will take me much time and all my influence to find his enemies, whoever they are, and persuade them to call off their dogs. I would like you to carry a letter to Lord Mourngrym of Shadowdale for me, and hire my grandson as your guide on the journey."

Maskar pauses to let his words sink in. "In exchange, you will each receive 1000 gold dragons from my agents in Shadowdale. If you agree, I will give each one of you 250 dragons as an advance, as well as providing horses and supplies for the journey. If you refuse, however, I am perfectly capable of having all charges against you reinstated, and seeing to it that you spend a great deal of time in Castle Waterdeep's cells. Or worse..."



The characters may negotiate with Maskar. He is willing to go as high as 1500 gold pieces per person. (Gold coins are known as “dragons” in Waterdeep.) Maskar will go up to a 500-dragon advance, but he makes it all too clear that the characters’ refusal will result in a long stay in the dungeons. Eventually, Maskar and the characters will reach an agreement and he offers drinks all around to seal the bargain.

Maskar Wands drinks his wine, then speaks again. “Marcus is to be found at the Sailor’s Corner. It’s a pathetic little dive on Fishgut Court near the waterfront. He has a room on the second floor. Go see him there and persuade him to be your guide. At this point, he probably won’t take too much convincing; even he knows he would do well to disappear for a time. Above all else, you must never reveal to him that you are working for me or he will doubtlessly give up on the entire matter.”

Maskar insists that the characters prepare to leave as soon as they can make contact with his grandson, and get on the road. He gives them their agreed-upon advances, as well as a wax-sealed tube containing his letter to Lord Mourngrym. He and his daughter offer their thanks to the characters for their cooperation, and then escort them from the mansion. In the front courtyard, the characters are given horses, two weeks’ supply of food, and whatever additional or miscellaneous equipment the DM thinks might become necessary.

Maskar also gives the party maps of their route. He tells them to seek shelter with his friends at a Chauntean monastery near Berdusk. There they can replenish supplies and the monks will provide them with healing and fresh provisions. This particular location will be important in the second volume of this trilogy, *Journey*, in which the PCs run afoul of the monastery’s new, less savory inhabitants.

The characters are now on their own. Logically, their next move is to meet up with Marcus at Sailor’s Corner. The details of this scenario are laid out in the next chapter.





The Letter

The letter Maskar Wands has given the characters is kept in an oiled leather tube, sealed on each end with wax and stamped with the Wands family crest. If the characters are the sort who might be curious about the contents, Maskar cautions them not to tamper with it.

Although Maskar's assertion that the tube contains "a letter", is true, it is only partially true. If the PCs make an effort to open the tube, they will discover a number of interesting things about the tube and its contents. (This is true whether they figure out a way of opening the tube without disturbing the seals, or if they are foolish enough to open it without worrying about whether or not the seals are broken.)

First, the tube is magically protected. Unless the words "For Shadowdale and Waterdeep, and in the name of Torm" are uttered just before it is opened, a *magic mouth* screams loudly, "Thieves! Thieves! Thieves!" It will continue doing so until magically silenced or until the tube is well and thoroughly destroyed.

Inside the tube is the letter, just as Maskar Wands had promised. What the patriarch failed to mention was that the message tube also contained a black, polished wand. This valuable item is a *wand of wonder*, given to Maskar by Lord Khelben in gratitude for unspecified services rendered by the Wands family.

The letter reads as follows:

My dear Lord Mourngrym:

Greetings. Things are well in Waterdeep, although the execrable antics of my grandson Marcus continue. You will, I think, remember him from our last visit, when he nearly burned down the Old Skull Inn while

performing his fire-breathing trick. His behavior still gives me great cause for concern, and I am having to take more drastic measures than I had heretofore expected to ever be necessary.

I have hired the bearers of this note to act as his protectors and guides on the journey to Shadowdale, although they pretend to hire him as their guide. He will be away from Waterdeep for some time, I expect, and thus I will be able to deal with the situation.

The tribulations visited upon the House of Wands by its younger member are not the primary purpose of this missive. More to the point, you will find enclosed the item I promised you, the enchanted wand that was given to me by Lord Khelben Arunsun. I hope it is of use to you in your duties as Lord of Shadowdale, and that it aids in the defense of your settlement. Let this be further proof, if any is needed, of the close relationship between your family and mine, and of the importance and affection in which I hold Shadowdale and all its inhabitants.

*With respect,
Maskar Wands*

The words that open the scroll tube are known by most members of the Wands family, including Marcus. If Marcus finds the tube, he will open it and read the letter; then he will confront the characters. If Marcus learns the secret in this manner, he blusters and shouts at the characters for deceiving him. Still, he agrees to accompany them to on to Shadowdale, since the *Dragonking's Eye* has been hidden nearby and he wants companions for the trip.

Complicating matters is the fact that several of the Wands family's rivals have learned of the wand's existence, and that it is being transported to Shadowdale by the party. These individuals wish to steal the tube, or rather what the tube contains. Their desires will create encounters that will take place along the adventurers' route.





Chapter 3

In which the adventurers make contact with the elusive Marcus Wands and, after a few misunderstandings, obtain his services as a guide. Afterwards our heroes, with their new employee in the van, attempt to leave the bustle of Waterdeep for the pastoral pleasures of the Way Inn. Before they go, however, they cross paths with Felibarr Blacklance, a villain of deepest dye. No food or drink is consumed, but the chapter is exciting nonetheless.

AT SAILOR'S CORNER



he characters must locate Sailor's Corner on Fishgut Court, and make their way there through the darkness and rain. The DM may liven up the journey with a few minor encounters, or may simply allow the party to reach the establishment without further incident.

Sailor's Corner is the sort of inn that changes owners, names, and purposes so swiftly that few people are even aware of the shift. The filthy dead end street known as Fishgut Court, where the inn is located, is so named for the fact that certain fishmongers dispose of their debris in its alleys. Given such a setting, Sailor's Corner is frequented by only the most destitute mariners and ne'er-do-wells. Even the city watch pays little attention to the place. They poke their heads in every half hour or so, as they are obliged to, but mostly to make sure none of the bodies littering the floor are actually dead.

The rain has washed away much of the street filth, so Fishgut Court does not smell as vile as usual when the party approaches. There are neither stables nor hitching posts, so a character or hireling may be left guarding the horses.

Read the following text when the party enters Sailor's Corner.

The interior is smoky and dim, with the only light provided by a pair of oil lanterns. The clientele is what you'd expect: Rough, scarred mariners and thugs, hunched at the bar or tables, nursing mugs of vile brew or talking in hushed tones. They all look up as you enter, casting suspicious eyes upon you.

The innkeeper is a thin, grizzled, old man with only one good eye. He wears a leather cap, battered shirt, and stained trousers. As you approach the bar, he looks you up and down and asks, "What's your business here?"

If the characters are careful and don't offend anyone unduly, there should be no trouble: After all, they've had one barroom brawl already. The innkeeper tells the party where to find Marcus, if encouraged properly (2-8 gold pieces is just right—although more is welcome). He will look the other way if mayhem erupts.





Meeting with Marcus

The hallway outside Marcus's room is narrow and cramped, and the roof leaks overhead; there is a substantial puddle in the corridor. The characters have two logical choices on how to proceed: They can knock politely on Marcus's door, or they can bash it down and barge inside.

If the party knocks, they hear a feminine-sounding voice (it is Marcus) asking who is at the door. However the characters respond, Marcus says (still in his disguised voice), "Just a minute 'til I get decent!" Immediately, the characters hear him dragging things across the floor, frantically throwing things into his pack, and finally wrenching the window open (if they're that patient). This should be enough to persuade the party to simply smash the door down and confront the wayward Marcus.

Once the characters have crashed into the room, they see the following.

You see your quarry, Marcus, clad in breeches and a shirt. He is in the process of throwing a bag of possessions out the open window. When he catches sight of you, he utters a cry of dismay and babbles, "I'm sorry! It was all a misunderstanding! I spoke without thinking! Please don't kill me!"

Marcus carries on in this manner for some time until the party can convince him that they are not out for his blood, after which he returns to his affected, devil-may-care persona.

If the characters refer to him as "Marcus Wands," he will be curious about how they found him out, but he won't press the matter, especially after the party reveals that they wish to hire him.

Once the offer of employment is made, Marcus demands 2000 gold pieces to act as guide, although he will accept as little as 500 since he is secretly intent on getting out of Waterdeep as quickly as possible. He is pleased that the party is heading to Shadowdale, since that is near where he hid the artifact he stole from Sabbas.





Marcus wants to leave immediately, which is fortunately in keeping with the orders the party has from his grandfather Maskar. Marcus throws any remaining possessions into a knapsack and several bags, and says, "What are we waiting for, friends? Time's wasting! If we leave now we can be at the Way Inn by tonight!"

If the characters delay to gather possessions for the journey, Marcus reluctantly agrees. He asks to meet the party at Sailor's Corner just before dawn. If this is the case, let things proceed without incident, and have the following encounter take place as the party is leaving.

ENTER Blacklance

The gloomy sky to the east is barely lightening with approaching dawn as the party mounts up outside Sailor's Corner. Overhead, rain still pours from the sky, lightning flashes, and thunder peals. As they ride out of Fishgut Court, read the following.

A dozen horsemen in black cloaks appear in front of you. The leader is a tall, spare man with a lean face and a black beard. He points a gauntleted finger at you.

"Turn over the criminal to us and you will live!" he barks in an icy and merciless voice. "This is your only warning!"

The leader is Felibarr Blacklance, accompanied by 12 mercenary cavalry. If the party hesitates, or tries to bluster or bargain, Felibarr promptly casts his *blacklance* spell on the party and orders his mercenaries forward.

Felibarr himself hangs back during this battle, sniping at the characters with appropriate spells as opportunities arise. He is overconfident, however, and content to let his mercenaries finish off Marcus and the "scum" with him. By the time he realizes he is dealing with seasoned adventurers, the watch will be on its way and he will have to flee. The mercenaries have the following statistics.

Mercenaries (N or NE hm F3), 12: Int Average; AL N or NE; AC 5 (chain mail); MV 18 (medium riding horse); HD 3; hp 20 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (sword); SZ M; ML 14

The half-light and shadows, combined with wind and rain, cause a -2 attack penalty unless artificial or magical light is used. The sound of thunder masks the noise of battle, allowing the fight to go on without swift intervention by the city watch.

Any combatants who fight on foot—either voluntarily or as a result of being knocked off their horses—have a 10% chance each turn of slipping in the fresh fish guts and offal dumped in the court in the pre-dawn hours.

The fight goes on until one of several things takes place: The PCs defeat the mercenaries; the PCs are able to escape; or the PCs are on the verge of being defeated themselves. If the party looks as if it is going to be defeated, the DM should bring on several squads of city watchmen to interrupt, thereby saving the characters. The horns sounded by the watch will be heard two or three rounds before the watchmen's actual arrival. The watch arrives after 15 rounds of combat, regardless.

At this point, Felibarr orders his mercenaries to break off fighting and follow him away. He casts a furious glance back at the adventurers, clearly promising "This is not the last we shall see of each other!" This should not make the PCs feel cheerful.

The party should also be able to slip away before the watch can catch them. After all, the watchmen are afoot, while the PCs should be mounted (barring utter carelessness on their part). Marcus urges them to ride for the South Gate, and thus the party leaves Waterdeep.

Characters who are familiar with life and society in Waterdeep may recognize the villainous leader of the mercenaries as Felibarr, an infamous mage-assassin. They might wonder what interest such an influential and expensive mercenary has in a relatively minor criminal, but this must remain a mystery for now.





Chapter 4

In which our adventurers, having left Waterdeep in some haste, cope with the nefarious schemes of others, fight another engagement with the diabolic agents of the wicked Felibarr, and enjoy the cheeses of the world.



The map on page 21 follows the party's trip from Waterdeep to the Way Inn. Several locations for planned encounters are noted on the map, which the DM can use in addition to random encounters along the way.

Between the planned encounters, the characters will have an opportunity to talk with Marcus; in fact, they have no choice since he is talkative to a fault. If he has not found the scroll tube or discovered the party's deception (see Chapter 2), he spins wild tales, averring that he has sailed with raiding Northmen; fought the Beast in the Moonshaes (the Beast was slain 20 years ago); entertained the merchant-kings of Amn (he has a bounty on his head in Amn); and lifted his enchanted rapier from Dragonspear Castle (he actually stole it from a Sembian nobleman). The DM can pull out all the stops on Marcus, and should re-read page 4 for more ideas.

Despite his overly-companionable manner, Marcus should be made as likable as possible: helping out around the camp, sharing food, and sticking by the party in combat. The young man may be annoying, but he is relatively courageous and has begun to develop a fondness for the characters—even those who overtly dislike him.

Encounters on The Road

The adventurers have escaped from Waterdeep, but their troubles are just beginning. The agents of the wizard Sabbas, led by Felibarr Blacklance, are scouring the area. Guessing that the group is headed for the Way Inn, Felibarr has dispatched a homunculus to speed ahead. Its instructions, to contact his ally Rhyssa Greyblade and stop the adventurers, will cause the party serious difficulties.

Moreover, several wizards covet the wand the characters unknowingly carry in Maskar's scroll tube, and their hirelings are on the prowl. Personal enemies of Marcus, as well as other more obscure antagonists, wait in the wings. Yet despite the trouble ahead, only these encounters will necessarily trouble the adventurers—for now.

The planned encounters involve the party with their different pursuers. The DM may add to or subtract from these encounters as appropriate, but make sure the party faces at least one. The DM might bring on the usual caravans, bandits, and thieves typically met with on such journeys, but the party should have its hands full.

The planned events are keyed to the map by letter. They are described in the order they occur, along with the time of day the encounter takes place.





A. Spies (early morning)

Unsavory sorts are after Marcus, and the Lords of Waterdeep have started wondering what he has done to merit the attentions of such folk. Accordingly, they have dispatched some of their best agents to follow the party and report back.

These NPCs serve several purposes. They can be mysterious “men in black” lurking behind bushes, or briefly glimpsed in alleys. They can be unexpected allies whose intervention helps the party escape when hard pressed. The agents’ identities should not be revealed here; allow them to slip away without being caught.

In this encounter, the agents are simply hiding by the roadside, watching the party pass. An Intelligence roll at a -6 penalty is required to notice the agents. Even if the roll is successful, the characters only see dark-cloaked figures slipping away into the undergrowth. If they investigate, the PCs might find crushed grass and a few footprints, but nothing worth following.

Scouts (LG hm R2): Int Average to High; AC 7 (studded leather); MV 12; hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (short sword or long bow); SZ M; ML 15

B. A Challenge to Duel (late morning)

As the party travels down the road, read the following out loud.

The day is pleasant, if cool. Clouds blow across the sun, and a damp breeze ruffles the grass; you draw your cloaks tighter. As you top a rise, you see horsemen approaching. They are leading a fancifully gilded carriage, drawn by six jet-black, richly caparisoned horses. A goblin sits on the driver’s bench, cracking his whip with unrestrained glee.

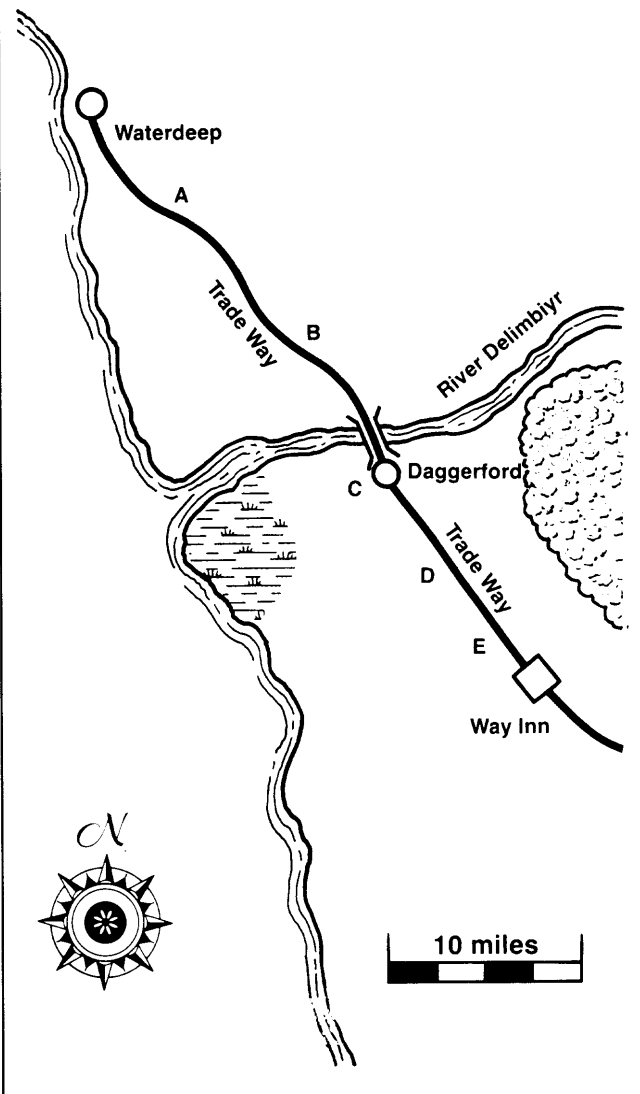
The lead horseman is clad in a breastplate, red cloak, and a plumed helm. He rides forward and shouts imperiously, “Make way for the carriage of Sir Rivaldo!”

The ensuing events take place regardless of the PCs’ actions: if they refuse to step aside and let the carriage pass, Sir Rivaldo challenges them for their impudence; if they get off the road, he upbraids them for doing so too slowly. Regardless of the cause, read the following.

The door of the carriage flies open and an expensively-dressed man steps out, his face red and contorted. Inside the carriage you see two tawdry-looking women pointing at you and giggling.

“Ignorant bumpkins!” he shouts. “You need a lesson in manners. You! Peasant!” He stabs a finger at Marcus. “I’ll teach you respect for noblemen! Show me your steel!” He slaps one hand on the dagger he wears at his right hip, and wraps his fingers around the hilt of the rapier hanging against the other.

Map 2: The Road from Waterdeep to the Way Inn





Of course, Marcus cannot tolerate the insult. Unless the characters stop him, he will fight the man, who is Sir Rivaldo. If the party restrains Marcus, Rivaldo calls them cowards and demands satisfaction. If another party member agrees to fight, Rivaldo will do so. If the party refuses, Sir Rivaldo orders his guards to “thrash the peasants” and still tries to fight Marcus.

The DM can choose Sir Rivaldo’s motivation. He may be a bounty hunter after the reward; or a wizard’s hireling looking for the scroll tube and the wand within. He may be an agent of Sabbas sent to delay or pare down the party or he may be just what he seems—a hot-headed dandy spoiling for a fight to impress the ladies.

Sir Rivaldo (N hm F10): Int Average; AC 5 (studded leather, plate breastplate—equivalent to chain mail); MV 12; hp 60; THAC0 11 (+3 due to enchanted weapon); #AT 3/2 rounds; Dmg 1-8 (*longsword* +3); SZ M; ML 14

Guards (N hm F2), 10: Int Average; AC 5 (breastplate and studded leather); MV 18 (medium riding horse); hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (light horse lance) or 2-8 (broad sword); SZ M; ML 13

Eventually the PCs will drive off their opponents, as Sir Rivaldo’s guards are not enthusiastic about being slaughtered. When his guards run, Rivaldo flees rather than face the party alone. Doing so, he abandons his carriage and goods, and deserts the ladies he was escorting. To distract the PCs from continuing their attack on his person, he throws down the things he carries: his *long sword* +3, and a *Bucknard’s everfull purse*. To get a lead, he throws the purse as far as he can in the opposite direction he runs.

The goblin coachman runs off at the very first sign of trouble. Inside the carriage are two tawdry-looking women who at first are fearful, then coquettish if the PCs treat them well.

Tana (CN hf T1): Int Average; AC 10; MV 12; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (poignard); SZ M; ML 14

Zennara (0-Level Human): Int Average; AL N; AC 10; MV 12; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SZ M; ML 12

If questioned, the two women say that Rivaldo picked them up at the Way Inn and seemed intent on impressing them with his prowess. Of course, they insist, since the PCs set him to flight so swiftly, he couldn’t possibly be what he claimed, and the adventurers are the true heroes.

Tana and Zennara are innocent of involvement in the plot, regardless of what motivation the DM assigns to Sir Rivaldo. The women ask to be escorted back to the Way Inn, since the PCs are traveling that direction anyway. Furthermore, if any of the player characters pursue them romantically, they will prove agreeable. Once such characters’ guards are down, however, the two women will not hesitate to lift whatever valuables they can get and make their escape.

The coach’s contents are many and varied. A small chest contains 500 gp and 500 sp of various origins, a scroll containing three third-level spells, and a *hat of stupidity*. A hamper contains bread and several bottles of Chessentan Winter Wine of inferior vintage. There is also a fine selection of cheeses from many lands: Loudwater mist, Turmish black, Chessentan lotus, Damarite red, Elturian gray, green Calishite, common Waterdhavian holed cheese, and the rare and expensive Cormyrean death cheese made from the milk of the deadly catoblepas.

The dray horses are a matched pair, and will sell for 3000 gp. The carriage will sell for 5000 gp, but the nearest buyer who might be interested is in Waterdeep. The wines and cheeses are tasty, but won’t bring much profit.

The Way Inn will stable the horses and store the carriage for 20 gold pieces a month in advance. If the characters stay longer than the amount paid, Dauravyn Redbeard will feel free to confiscate the items and sell them.

C. The Bridge at Daggerford (midday)

Felibarr’s homunculus passed this way while seeking the mercenary Rhyssa Greyblade (an event that will culminate in Encounter E, below). In accord with its instructions to cause problems for the PCs, the little being left word with some thugs in Daggerford to delay the adventurers, if possible. Around noon the



players approach the river Delimbiyr and the bridge that leads to the village of Daggerford.

These thugs, working as Felibarr's agents, spread word in town that they had been assaulted by bandits on the road; their description of the attackers matches that of the party. The four thugs hide under the north end of the bridge, waiting for the villagers to intercept the party. Characters who say they are watching for traps and ambushes may make an Int check at a -3 penalty to see the thugs lying in wait. If the PCs find and attack the thugs, the villagers assume that the party members are indeed the bandits described, and come to the thugs' aid.

1. Villagers (0-Level Humans), 20: Int Average; AL Varies, mostly N; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (various improvised weapons); SZ M; ML 12

2. Hidden Thugs (1st-Level Humans), 4: Int Average; AL CE; AC 7 (leather); MV 12; HD 1; hp 8 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (long swords) or 1-4 (slings); SZ M; ML 13

If the PCs do not spot the hidden thugs, read the following as they cross the bridge

As you reach the middle of the Daggerford Bridge, you hear angry shouting from over a low rise ahead. Almost immediately, a gang of peasants appears, armed with sickles, pitchforks, rakes, and other farm implements.

"There they are!" shouts one. "The bandits!" The mob surges forward.

At this point, the hidden thugs run onto the bridge behind the PCs and shout, "This is them! They're the ones who attacked us!"

The PCs might have a hard time dealing with this one. Lawful and good characters may be reluctant to kill innocent villagers, especially when they obviously have the party members confused with someone else. Bards or other characters with communication skills or the ability to influence NPCs can attempt to do so, while normal PCs can try to reason with the mob.

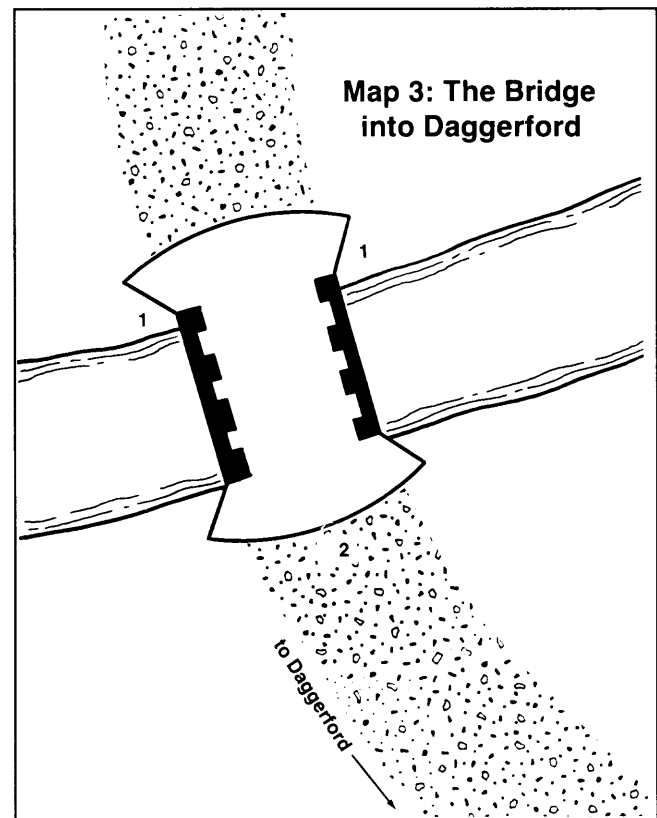
While the party tries to calm things down, the thugs

will be shouting and egging on the villagers from behind the party: "Go on! Attack them!" "They tried to kill us!" "We don't need their kind here!" and so on.

The DM might wish to roll on the Encounter Reactions table (*DUNGEON MASTER Guide*, Chapter 11), and assess bonuses or penalties to the roll based on the PCs' eloquence. If the villagers' reaction is "Cautious" or better, then they stop their attack and allow the adventurers to explain. The DM then adjudicates whether the party succeeds in talking the villagers entirely out of their hostility. If the PCs do so, the thugs try to sneak away; if caught, the thugs whine and claim it was a case of mistaken identity. They will not betray Blacklace or explain their role in the conspiracy unless they are put in genuine fear for their lives.

If the PCs fight the villagers, things could get nasty. The villagers are no match for the party, but they might do some damage. Attacking from behind, the thugs will use their slings to harass the adventurers. Blood may be shed on all sides.

The results of the fight should have consequences, particularly if the PCs actually kill some villagers.





The DM might use rumors about the fight against the party at some later point, thereby increasing the overall level of threat the adventurers must cope with. The possibility of arrest or the existence of murder warrants can make things very difficult for the PCs.

On the other hand, the DM is advised to remember that a lot of adventure is still ahead. Unless the players bring the trouble on themselves by being deliberately malicious, it will be better to keep the story moving by not making things more complicated than they are already.

Should the incident pass without violence, the party can eat lunch in Daggerford. Marcus is in a hurry, though, and urges them to do so quickly or simply to buy food to eat on the trail.

D. A Friendly Meeting (early afternoon)

Read the following to the players.

As you round a bend in the road, you see a pair of travelers: a bearded man in wizard's robes and a younger man dressed in stained traveling clothes. Two horses stand nearby, cropping the grass.

"Hail, travelers!" calls the wizard. "Where are you bound?"

If the characters respond in a friendly way, the wizard asks to ride with them as far as the Way Inn. The wizard is Dhylmorre, and introduces himself by his own name. His companion, whom he identifies as his apprentice Wik, is the thief Winestab. (See the Cast of Characters for details about these NPCs.)

Should the party initially refuse Dhylmorre's company, he persists, claiming the road has been infested with bandits lately. He wheedles, saying that the party's company would truly be appreciated. If they still refuse him, Dhylmorre gives up, shrugs, and bids them good day. Later, possibly at the Way Inn, Winestab will attempt to break into the PCs' rooms to steal the scroll tube and the *wand of wonders* contained within.

If the characters let Dhylmore join them, he will be friendly and talkative. Between him and Marcus, the PCs won't get a word in edgewise. While Dhylmorre's chatter occupies the party's attention, Winestab scans the characters' minds using his *ESP* ability to determine

where the scroll tube is kept. If he does locate it, Winestab bides his time, waiting for the party's attention to be diverted before trying to lift the scroll tube.

Neither Dhylmorre nor Winestab are foolish enough to prompt a direct attack by the party. They try to steal the scroll tube on the road only if they are fairly sure of getting away with it.

If he is caught in the act, Winestab tries to grab the tube and ride off, while Dhylmorre casts a nuisance spell to help him escape. Dhylmorre then tries to flee in another direction.

If a good opportunity to steal the tube never arises while they're traveling, the pair waits until the party comes to the Way Inn. Then they will try to break into the PCs' rooms, as noted in the section "A Good Night's Rest" in Chapter 5.

Should the DM wish to complicate matters still further, Winestab's *ESP* scans of Marcus and the various characters may reveal the secret of their mission, as well as Marcus's true identity. The DM may decide that this leads to further plotting by the pair—the possible kidnapping of Marcus for ransom, for example. Dhylmorre may also learn about the contract on "Marco Volo" and the pair may join the hunt, hoping to collect Sabbas's 10,000 gold piece reward on top of acquiring the *wand of wonder*.

Dhylmorre and Winestab are relatively cautious. If they are frustrated in this attempt to gain the wand, they will return later and try to steal the item by stealth.

E. Ambush (late afternoon)

Felibarr Blacklance learned the direction of the adventurers' journeyings, and dispatched a homunculus to alert his allies near Way Inn to intercept the party. The homunculus carried its instructions to Rhyssa Greyblade, and it is she who set up the trap. The map below shows how they wait in preparation for the ambush.

The plan is for the archers to begin shooting as the PCs ride past. Once the missile attack has begun, the adventurers will either stop to fight the archers, retreat back down the road, or gallop forward to escape the hail of arrows. The footmen are positioned to move onto the road to block any retreat, and the horsemen will ride out to intercept the PCs if they try to advance. Meanwhile, the archers' attack continues, and the two wizards support it with *magic missile* spells.



1. Footmen/Scouts

These individuals are concealed in the undergrowth or in shallow trenches. They will wait until the archers begin to shoot at the party, and then emerge from hiding. Their orders are to cut off the party from making an escape back down the road.

Footmen (Nor NE hm F1), 8: Int Average; AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; Dmg 2-8 (broad sword); SZ M; ML 14

2. Archers

The archers will shoot at the party as the characters pass by, and will continue to rain down arrows on them as the footmen attack from behind and the horsemen ride in from the front.

Archers (Nor NE hm F1), 8: Int Average; AC 7 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; Dmg 1-6 (short sword) or 1-8 (long bow); SZ M; ML 15

3. Wizards

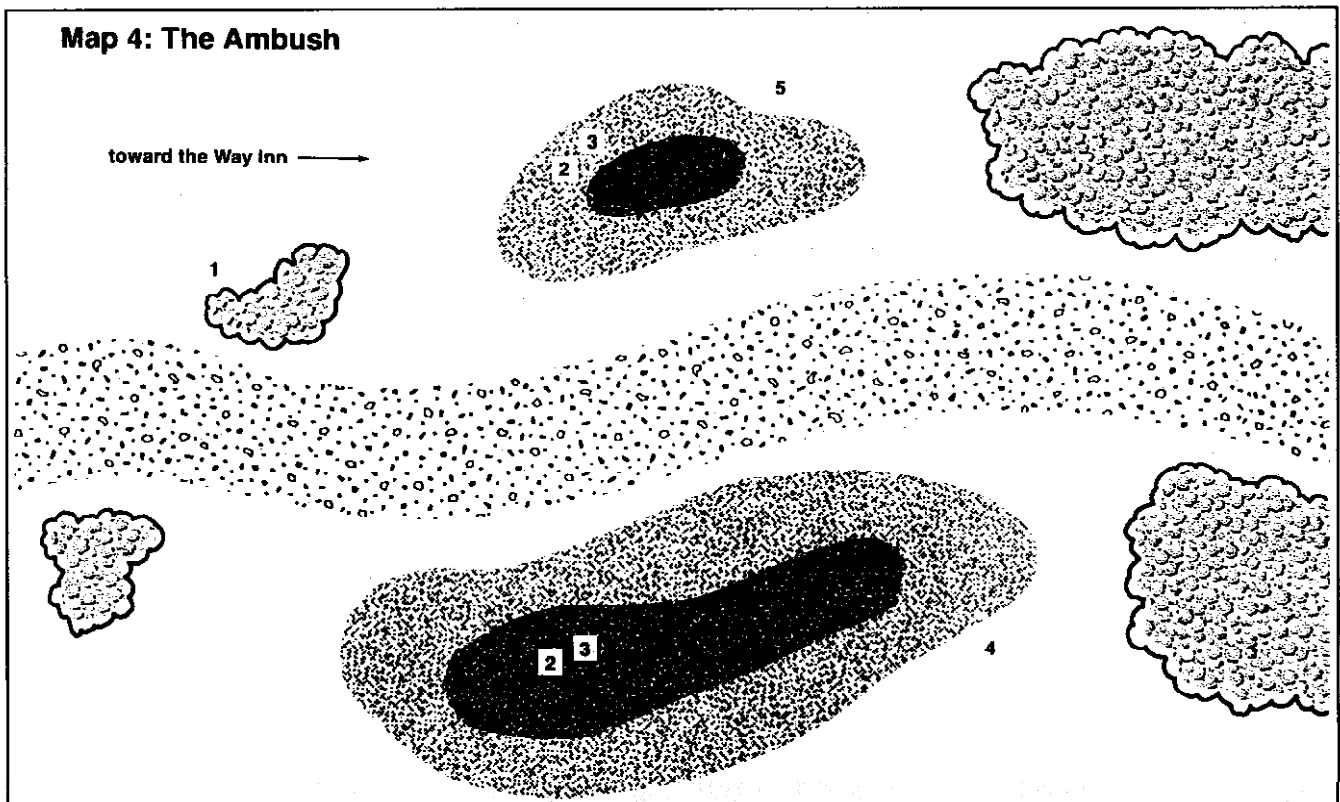
Accompanying the archers are two low-level wizards, one in position on either side of the road. They add their *magic missile* spells to the archers' attack.

Wizards (TCE hm W3), 2: Int High; AC 10; MV 12; hp 6 each; THAC0 20; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SZ M; ML 15; Spells: *magic missile* (x2), *Melfs acid arrow*

4. Horsemen

A squad of cavalry hides behind the rise. As soon as the archers attack, they will ride onto the road and charge the PCs.

Horsemen (NE hm F3), 6: Int Average; AC 6 (ring mail and shield); MV 18 (medium riding horse); hp 15 each; THAC0 18; Dmg 1-6 (light horse lance) or 2-8 (broad sword); SZ M; ML 14





5. Rhyssa and Thorvold

Rhyssa Greyblade and Thorvold are the attackers' hole card. Mounted on twin wyverns, they attack from the air as the cavalry charges.

Rhyssa Greyblade (CE hf F8): Int Average; AC 0 (plate armor +1 and shield); MV 12; hp 42; THAC0 13 (+2 due to weapon); #AT 3/2 rounds; Dmg 2-8 (broad sword +2); SZ M; ML 16

Rhyssa is a mercenary who rode with the hordes of Dragonspear and helped destroy Way Inn. She fled the destruction of Dragonspear Castle and has been a mercenary and bandit since. She sells her mercenary services to the highest bidder, falling back on robbery when employment is scarce. She is Felibarr Blacklance's sometime-lover and frequent ally, although she has little loyalty to anyone.

Rhyssa lost an eye at the siege of Dragonspear and now wears an embroidered eyepatch. It is known she has several tattoos, portraying a dragon and artistic knotwork patterns, although she shows them only to her friends.

Thorvold (CE hm F5): Int Average; AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 20; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SZ M; ML 15

Thorvold is a renegade Norlander and Rhyssa's second-in-command. He is tough and ruthless, but addiction to strong drink has sapped his ambition.

Wyverns (2): Int Low; AL N(E); AC 3; MV 6, Fl 24 (E); HD 7+7; hp 32; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2-16/1-6; SA Poison; SZ G; ML 14

These ambushers are tough, well-paid mercenaries with orders to delay the party, or at least injure them severely. They concentrate their attacks on Marcus, hoping to capture or kill him, and turn the body over to Felibarr.

If the PCs get in trouble here, the DM should relent and enact a rescue. Allow the Waterdhavian scouts from Encounter A to attack, driving the mercenaries off; or have a rival bounty hunter interfere to keep

Felibarr from getting the bounty. Either one of these is capable of disposing of a few of the party's opponents, and in doing so, even the odds against them.

Each mercenary carries 1-8 gold pieces. Rhyssa has a letter from Felibarr, sent to her by the homunculus. The letter reads as follows:

Dearest Rhyssa:

Greetings, my dearest—I have a matter that demands your immediate attention. A party of ruffians is currently traveling from Waterdeep to the Way Inn. They include. . .

(Here the DM should throw in some insulting descriptions of the player characters.)

. . . and a foppish bard who calls himself Marco Volo. ("Foppish?" exclaims Marco. "Cross swords with me, swine, then we'll see who's 'foppish!'") Stop them from reaching the Way Inn, in any manner you choose, but I want Marco Volo. It is of no consequence if he is dead or alive. Do this and I will pay you 5,000 gold dragons, and express my gratitude in my usual fashion, too.

With affection, Felibarr Blacklance

This should alert the PCs that something is up. Felibarr would not spend 5,000 gp unless Marcus is important. If questioned, Marcus says he has no idea why anyone would consider him worth so much. He speculates that some woman he romanced has gone mad, her love turned to hatred, and has contracted for his death.

Marcus himself is troubled by all this, but does not suspect that Sabbas is behind it. He remains silent about the theft of the *Dragonking's Eye*. The remainder of the journey progresses without incident, with the party arriving at the Way Inn around sunset.

Meanwhile...

Felibarr is organizing a pursuit of the characters. They have a full day's lead on him, so he sends word to his agents to watch for the party; he will show up later. For now, however, the PCs have managed to shake him.



Chapter 5

In which our heroes find welcome respite at the Ways Inn, only to be again disturbed by the forces of evil, which they (hopefully) drive off in disorder. Before their exertions, the adventurers dine on pheasant and roast venison.

Way Inn is a village named for its most famous and important establishment, the Way Inn. Although destroyed by the hordes of Dragonspear some years ago, the settlement has been completely rebuilt with help from many sponsors and adventurers, most notably Mirt the Moneylender, a famous Waterdhavian merchant.

When the characters arrive, read the following out loud.

The sun sinks low on the horizon as you approach the settlement of Way Inn. Clouds gather overhead and a chill wind blows, so you are glad at the prospect of shelter for the night.

Way Inn is a village named after its most prominent establishment. Recently destroyed in battle, the town has been rebuilt with a stout stone wall surrounding about 20 small buildings arrayed about the vast manor house known as the Way Inn. The gates of the village are open, and you see other travelers entering in the gathering dusk. A guard leans on his spear and waves you through.

A layout of the village, Map #5, is provided should the PCs wish to scout around. Additionally, there is a floor plan of the new Way Inn (Map #6, page 29). This map shows the rebuilding and renovations made since the inn's destruction, although the interior details are minimal in the interest of space. The following areas of the village and the inn may be of importance to the characters.

The Village

The village of Way Inn is supported by various farms and ranches in the surrounding region. There are a few homes and other buildings within the village walls, many of which are the residences of retired adventurers, merchants, or minor nobles.

1. Way Inn (see following entry)
2. Shrine to Mielikki (Priest Artemis Collin; NG hm P12)
Wounded PCs receive healing at Mielikki's shrine. A donation of 100 gold pieces for each *cure light wounds* (or equivalent) is expected.
3. Home of Lord Sparhaver (nobleman; N hm F5)
4. Home of Thyra Nightraven (adventurer; CG hf R6)
5. Home of Garnus Thombold (merchant; LG dm F3)
6. Barracks (25 spearmen, 20 archers; NG h F1)
7. Home of Glamrallow Sharp (retired wizard; LN hm W15)





The Way Inn

Besides providing rest and refreshment to travelers, the inn is home to the lord of Way Inn, Dauravyn Redbeard. Maps of the manor house are provided on page 29, as well as brief descriptions of the areas likely to be visited.

1. Antechamber

Cloaks, baggage, and other personal goods can be stored here even by those not staying at the inn. A 0-level human clerk named Tharmon accepts items and provides tokens. The PCs are not required to check baggage or weapons; the room is simply for patrons' convenience.

2. Main Room

This spacious room contains many tables and a long bar. Its dark exposed beams are hung with pictures, weapons, horse tack, armor, and other mementos, including items scrounged from the armies that besieged Way Inn. At least a dozen patrons are always here—travelers or locals who come to unwind, drink, and socialize.

Servants are recruited from nearby farms and homes. Three of Dauravyn's daughters serve as barmaids, and Dauravyn himself tends bar on alternate nights. Other times the bartender is Warvyn, a burly, talkative man.

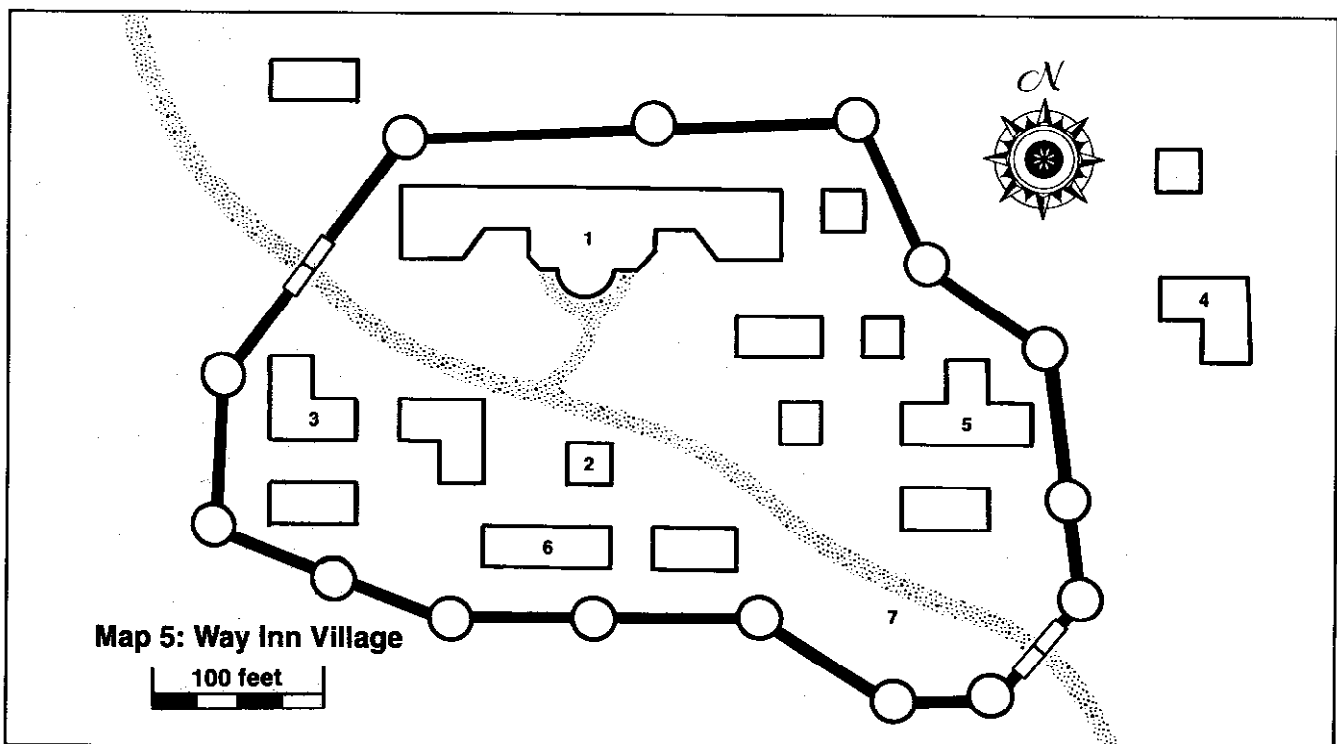
Food is good and fairly priced. Standard meals of greens and inferior meat, such as mutton, are 3 sp per person, while the Inn's famous roast pheasant is 5 sp. A platter of venison costs 6 sp. Way Inn ale is distilled in the manor's outbuildings; it is tasty and costs 1 sp for a pint.

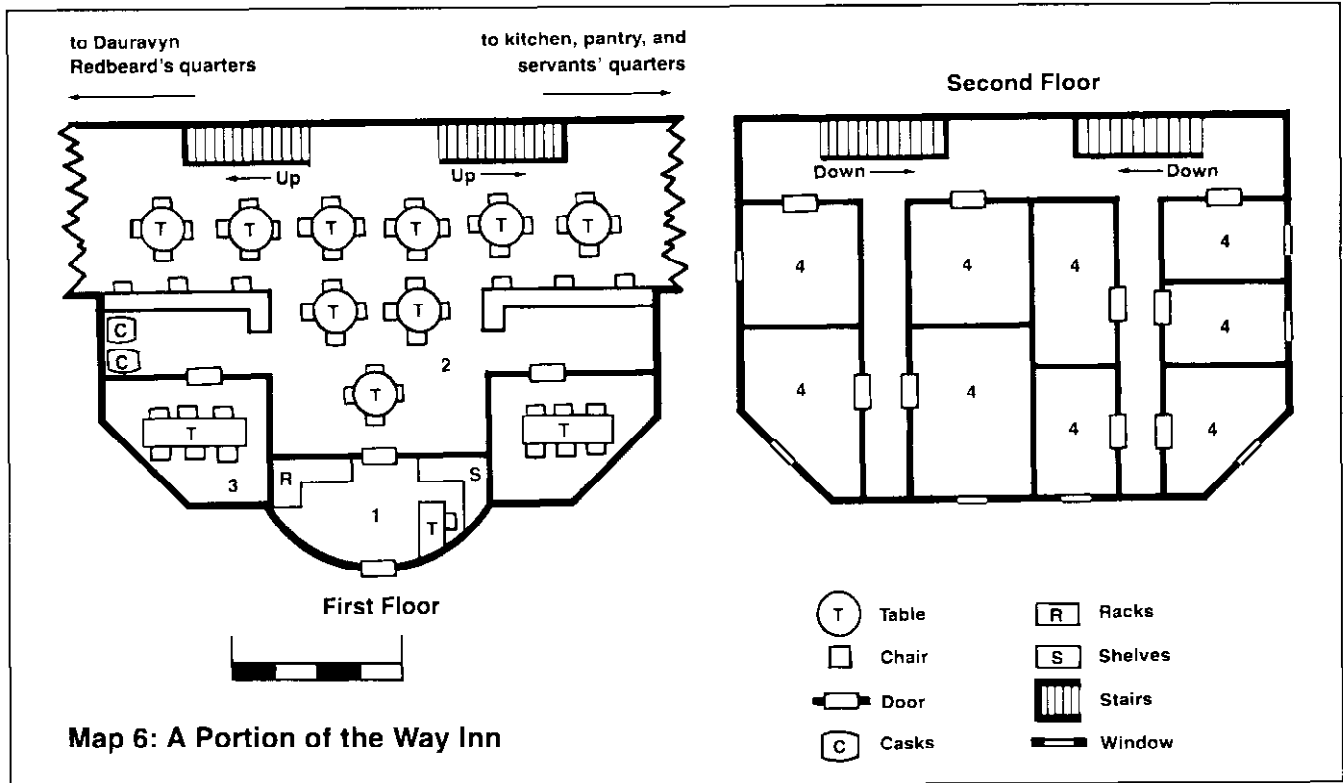
3. Meeting Rooms

These rooms are available free on a first-come, first-served basis. In each is a table and a dozen chairs; more can be brought if necessary. These rooms are private, and Dauravyn's staff sees to it that no one eavesdrops or sneaks in.

4. Sleeping Rooms

These rooms are comfortable, provided with one to three beds that can sleep up to six human-sized individuals. Dauravyn frowns on smaller folk overstuffing





a bed. The rooms are available for 5 sp per night per bed. Thus, a triple room costs 15 sp per night whether there is one person in the room or six.

In preparation for Encounter C, detailed below, the DM will need to know in which rooms the PCs choose to stay and also to determine where Marcus sleeps. (Marcus is not inclined to sleep in a room alone.) The PCs should want to keep an eye on Marcus, but if not, the DM should have the young man plead poverty or night frights, and persuade someone in the party to share a room with him, if possible.

Encounters at The Way Inn

The evening at the Way Inn is hardly restful for the tired adventurers, as several events enliven the party's visit. They are described below in the order they occur, and the DM may add to or subtract from each as necessary. If the party is tired or wounded, the more dangerous encounters can be eliminated or toned down.

A. The Jolly Innkeeper

Dauravyn Redbeard is tending bar this evening. After the characters are seated, he comes over to their table. Read the following.

A stout middle-aged man with a long red beard approaches your table. He wears decent clothes, although they are plain, and a clean white apron.

"Good evening," he says. "I'm Dauravyn, proprietor of this place. They call me Redbeard, though I've always wondered why." He grins. "What can we serve you this evening? Our specialty is roast pheasant, and the venison is especially good tonight."

Dauravyn doesn't mention that he is also the lord of the settlement. Despite his servile mein, he is a canny man, inclined to keep a watch on these strangers. Several locals have passed along gossip about the PCs' melee with Felibarr's mercenaries. Accordingly, he checks out the party to make sure they're the type he wants around.

It behooves the party to behave well here. Once Dauravyn is convinced that the party doesn't represent



a threat, he subtly asks them if there is “anything else” he can do for them. If the party proves resistant or particularly thick, he grows more direct with statements like the following. (The DM should not read this text directly, but work the sentences into conversation until the players get the idea.)

“Is there any information I could get that might help you in your journey?”

“Bandits have been active hereabouts of late, you know. I could ask around for the latest news, and let you know about traveling conditions.”

“I understand there was a fight between two bands of ruffians earlier today. I hear it wasn’t far from town. You wouldn’t know anything about that, would you?”

Eventually, he addresses the characters confidentially, in a low voice.

“Listen, I don’t mean to press you, but I know that you are the ones involved in that fight today. I’m willing to help in any way I can. Just ask.”

Dauravyn can send for Artemis Collin, the local priest, to provide healing, and can persuade Artemis to do so for half the usual fee. Dauravyn can get fresh horses for characters, and will mislead any strangers who ask too many questions.

B. Marcus Gets in Trouble

Marcus threatens to use up all of Dauravyn Redbeard’s good will by letting his libido get the better of him. Once the PCs have established a good rapport with the innkeeper, it is time to read the following.

“Hm,” says Marcus, casting his eyes on an attractive, red-haired barmaid who seems to have just come on duty. “Pretty thing, isn’t she? Don’t you think she looks lonely?”

Before you can reply, Marcus stands up. “Excuse me,” he says, “but I see work to do.”

As you watch, Marcus approaches the woman and speaks earnestly, offering to take the tray for her. She ignores him and, with a flip of her hair, walks off carrying the tray.

Unless the characters intervene and prevent Marcus from pursuing the matter, the following events occur.

Marcus follows the barmaid, dancing around, talking continuously, finally standing in her way. He brushes against the tray, knocking it to the floor with a crash.

“Oh gods!” Marcus declares. “Please accept my apologies, fair one! Is there anything I can—”

At this point, the barmaid punches Marcus in the stomach, sending him sprawling.

“You can drop dead, I think,” she replies. “Father! Get rid of this pest!”

To your horror, you see Dauravyn Redbeard approaching, looking grim. He stands over Marcus, who lies on the floor groaning.

“I see you’ve met my daughter,” he says mildly. “Now, perhaps you’d better seek lodging elsewhere.” He looks at your group. “You are friends with this scoundrel? Perhaps I was wrong about you; perhaps you should all go.”

It takes some doing to smooth Dauravyn’s ruffled feathers, but if the party can convince him that they will keep Marcus under control, his former friendliness can be regained. Suitably chastised, and in some pain, Marcus sits at the table quietly for the rest of the evening.

C. Fangs in the Night

Once the PCs have retired for the night, they are plagued by one of Sabbas’s extra-planar minions. It has been sent here to spy on the characters, and possibly dispose of one or two.

Rat-Fiend: Int Low; AL CE; AC 0; MV 18; HD 7; hp 35; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 2-12/1-8/1-8; SA Paralysis, command rats; SD Immune to sleep and cold, never surprised; SZ M; ML 12; XP 3000

The creature enters the inn through the window of an unused room, and creeps down the hallway to one of the PCs’ chambers. Select a room for it to enter.

Sleeping PCs must make either Hear Noise or Int tests to detect the creature and wake up. Int tests are



at -6, while HN tests are at -20% due to the rat-fiend's stealth. Characters who are awake may make these tests at -3 and -10% respectively.

If Marcus is not in the room, and if no characters detect the fiend's entry, it begins to rifle through the party's belongings, stealing the scroll tube if the chance presents itself.

If it manages to search the items in the first room without being detected, the rat-fiend moves on to the next room, searching for Marcus.

Once the rat-fiend reaches the room Marcus is in, things get interesting. The creature attacks Marcus first if it gets the chance. It will try to paralyze or kill him, and escape out a window with his body. The DM should not let this happen, of course, since the loss of Marcus would be disastrous to the party, not to mention ruining the remainder of the adventure. A paralyzed Marcus might be easier to deal with, however.

If Marcus is not a logical first target, the creature attacks the PCs with surprise, attempting to use its paralysis ability to silence them quickly. The DM should determine whether the attacked characters have a chance to call for help, and whether the other party members hear them.

To Dauravyn's chagrin, the Way Inn's inhabitants do include a few rats, enough for the fiend to summon 2-12 normal rats to fight the party.

Rats: Int Animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 15; HD ¼; hp 1 each; THAC0 20; Dmg 1; SA Disease; SZ T; ML 4; XP 7

If the fiend is killed, its body immediately begins to disintegrate since it cannot exist on this plane without life force. Within a few minutes, the PCs have no evidence except for their own wounds that the thing ever existed.

A Good Night's Rest?

More encounters may disturb the adventurers' sleep, as the DM sees necessary. In particular, there could be a follow-up robbery attempt by Dhylmorre and Winestab if they failed to achieve their desires when they traveled with the characters on the road.

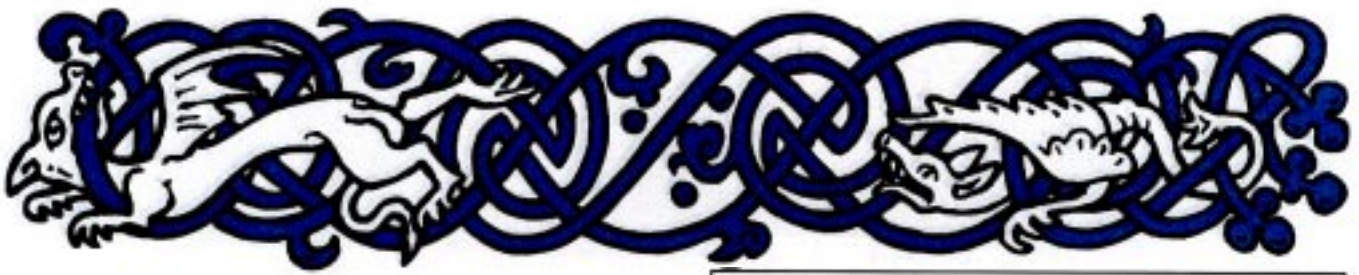
Once the party's misfortunes have been dealt with, they can rest without further interruption. They are awakened early the next morning by the innkeeper, who tells them the following.

Dauravyn looks concerned. "I'm sorry to wake you so early," he says, "especially after you've had so little sleep. But I've done some checking with my friends in the Fellowship of Innkeepers in Waterdeep, and someone has offered a great deal of money for you and your companion's capture. I'm told that your deaths will do just as well. I think you'd best get out of here quickly."

The PCs only have time for a hurried breakfast although Redbeard puts together a rather tasty repast for them. Then the party must swiftly decide on its next course of action. Dauravyn informs the player characters that a coach leaves for Scornubel within an hour. Alternatively, they may decide to ride out of Way Inn on horseback, or they may travel in Sir Rivaldo's coach, if they acquired it after the meeting with him.

This ends *Marco Volo: Departure*. The story continues in *Marco Volo: Journey*, in which the characters face more deadly pursuers, learn more of Marco Volo's secrets, and encounter a roguish band of traveling players.





Tanar'ri, Rat-Fiend

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	The Abyss and Material Planes
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (6)
TREASURE:	See below
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	18
HIT DICE:	7
THAC0:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-12/1-8/1-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Paralysis, command rats
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Never surprised, immune to sleep and cold-based spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Steady (12)
XP VALUE:	3,000

Rat-fiends are hulking, man-sized creatures resembling leprous, muscular hunch-backed rodents walking on two short legs. They inhabit the Abyss, where they serve the various tanar'ri. Highly resistant to the effects of other planes, rat-fiends are often sent on errands by powerful tanar'ri. Their services may also be awarded to favored allies on other planes, or they may be compelled to service by powerful wizards. On occasion, they are stranded on the Prime Material Plane, where they can terrorize entire communities.

When encountered in the Abyss, rat-fiends have no treasure. Those rat-fiends that set up lairs on the Prime Material Plane accumulate treasure, both from victims and in the form of loot brought by their rat-servitors. Rat-fiends' lairs on the Prime Material Plane contain Treasure Type B.

Marginally intelligent, rat-fiends are capable of carrying out simple commands, and are bright enough to change tactics or flee if they are threatened with destruction. A rat-fiend's body is maintained on planes other than the Abyss by its life energies. If killed on another plane, a rat-fiend's body will completely disintegrate within five minutes of its death.

Combat: Rat-fiends slash with their claws and bite with their sharp incisors. Victims struck by a rat-fiend's bite attack must save vs paralysis or be paralyzed for 2-8 hours. Paralyzed victims may be carried off by the rat-fiend, who will then take them back to its home plane.

Although they are vulnerable to other attacks, rat-fiends are completely immune to sleep spells and cold-based enchantments such as *cone of cold*, *ice storm* and the like. In addition rat-fiends never roll for surprise.

Apparently created from magically-mutated or particularly ferocious rodent-like creatures of the Abyss, rat-fiends retain a connection to the rats of the Prime Material Plane. A rat-fiend can command 2-12 normal or 1-6 giant rats to do its bidding, but only in areas



where rats are normally found; in other areas, a rat-fiend is on its own.

Rat-fiends are highly vulnerable while returning to their home plane, for they must remain stationary for 3-12 turns and not be disturbed. For this reason they usually arrive on or leave the Prime Material Plane at an isolated area where they will not be disturbed.

Habitat/Society: Rat-fiends serve higher-level tanar'ri such as balor, succubi and glabrezu as slaves, servitors, messengers, and assassins. They are very low on the Abyss's social ladder, abused and tormented by other tanar'ri. Particularly accomplished rat-fiends are treated well by powerful tanar'ri lords as long as they continue to be useful. Old or unsuccessful rat-fiends often find themselves served up as dinner by their masters.

Because they are so ill-treated on their home plane, rat-fiends prefer traveling to other locales such as the Prime Material Plane, where they are sometimes found as familiars or servants of powerful spellcasters. Tanar'ri sometimes loan rat-fiends to mortal servants or allies, but such individuals are often incompetent or quarrelsome.

Ecology: Rat-fiends are unnatural creatures, and act as predators or scavengers when on the Prime Material Plane, sometimes setting up lairs in urban areas and preying on local animals and unfortunate inhabitants. In such cases, they usually dwell in ruins, cellars, slums, or other regions with large numbers of rats, using their rodent-control abilities to command local creatures to do their bidding. Such rats act as scouts and bodyguards for their masters, scavenging for their own food.

In the Abyss, rat-fiends who do not serve other tanar'ri are scavengers by nature, filling a niche similar to that of ordinary rats on the Prime Material Plane. They are a constant nuisance, lurking in shadows, grabbing scraps of food and attacking rutterkin, dretch, and other low-level tanar'ri.



by ANTHONY PRYOR

Marco Volo: *Departure* is the first volume of the Marco Volo trilogy, designed for four to eight player characters of levels 6 to 8. This free-wheeling adventure begins with an intrigue-laden journey from Waterdeep to Shadowdale. The party is thrown into the company of one Marcus Wands (also known as "Marco Volo"), a bothersome but likeable little rogue. In his guise of Marco, he gains unintentional help from the party members, leading only to their own arrests. To remedy that predicament, the characters are strong-armed into carrying an important letter to Shadowdale, and taking along Marcus as their "guide."

Of course, things are nowhere near as simple as they seem.

There's this little matter of the *Dragonking's Eye*, a powerful artifact from another plane. Naively, Marcus thought he could steal the thing and pin the theft on Volothamp Geddarm, the roguish author of many popular books about cities in the Realms. The notorious mage-assassin Felibarr Blacklance has been hired to hunt for the thief, and he is a man grimly determined to earn his fee.

Then, there's the business about this letter that's on its way to Shadowdale. It is accompanied by a rare enchanted item that wizards and fortune hunters want to obtain at all costs.

A series of adventures ensues that takes the adventurers from Waterdeep to the Way Inn, by which time they will doubtless suspect there is more to Marco Volo than meets the eye. Amid the brawls and mistaken identities, the wild rides and the glowering villains, the characters never have a chance to slow down or catch their collective breath. What results is a light-hearted, picaresque adventure in the manner of Dumas and Sabatini, and a good time is had by all!

(Except by the bad guys, of course. They're never happy with how things are turning out . . .)

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