

SCRYING INTO HIS HANDKERCHIEF



Waterdeep Faction Adventures: Scrying Into His Handkerchief

An adventure introducing a shady benefactor

Expanding on the first Bregan D'aerthe faction mission
in chapter 2 of Waterdeep: Dragon Heist

Adaptable to other factions in Waterdeep
or an intriguing character in any campaign setting

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Cover illustration on dmsguild.com depicting Jarlaxle Baenre as "J.B. Nevercote" by Edgar Degas (1834-1858). Public Domain. Digital Image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.

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Scrying Into His Handkerchief

Adventure Background

The adventurers have recently attained a bit of notoriety in Waterdeep, causing the eccentric haberdasher J.B. Nevercott to take interest. He issues a simple challenge to test the party's mettle: obtain a personal item from a certain young Waterdhavian noble; perhaps his handkerchief.

In truth, J.B. Nevercott is a false identity of the drow swashbuckler and secret lord of Luskan, Jarlaxle Baenre. He is attempting to forge a relationship with the current Open Lord of Waterdeep, Laeral Silverhand. His spies have of yet been unable to breach her inner circle, but they report that a young noble with political ambitions of his own, Regnet Amcathra, recently rose through the ranks to become one of her closest advisors.

An orphan Tiefling girl named Advertence lives in homeless squalor near the wharf, her face baring only scar tissue where her eyes once were. When cultists worshipping Asmodeus ripped her eyeballs from their sockets in a twisted ritual, they unwittingly bestowed a powerful blessing from the archdevil upon her: uncanny powers of divination. Far from blind, she has thus far eked out a meager existence on the street as a fortune teller.

Her own fortune is about to change. Jarlaxle has ascertained the possibility of her true nature and seeks to test her as he is similarly testing the adventurers. If she is able to use the personal item taken from Amcathra to scry upon the young noble, thus learning Laeral Silverhand's secrets, he will incorporate her into his shadowy cabal of drow mercenaries, the Bregan D'aerthe.

If the adventurers are able to deliver Amcathra's handkerchief to Advertence, Bregan D'aerthe might have further work for the party: Breaking into newspaper offices. Guarding prisoners. Ignorantly executing innocent men. Stuff like that.

Waterdeep: Dragon Heist

This adventure is based on the 1st Bregan D'aerthe mission (for 2nd level characters) on page 34 of the hardcover campaign *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist*.

Rather than limit the Bregan D'aerthe missions to drow or particularly unscrupulous characters, I suggest that Jarlaxle approach any non-lawful character. He need not reveal anything about his organization to them in order to engage their services as outlined in the chapter.

Since the characters won't be learning anything interesting about the Bregan D'aerthe faction by completing this particular mission, it would also be a fine introductory mission for another non-lawful faction like the Zhentarim or the Xanathar's Guild (or maybe even Force Grey). Contrive a different alter ego for your antagonist to replace J.B. Nevercott.

This adventure gives the characters a chance to explore a bit more of Waterdeep that I had a great time learning about from old source material like *FR1 - Waterdeep and the North*, *City of Splendors*, and Ed Greenwood's fantastic *Volo's Guide to Waterdeep*.

Look for more expanded chapter 2 faction adventures from [Paul Metzger on dmsguild.com](https://dmsguild.com)

This adventure could also be used to introduce a shady benefactor in any campaign setting.

Overview

The adventure consists of these sections:

Are You Daring Enough? Under the guise of potential benefactor J.B. Nevercott, Jarlaxle challenges the party to obtain Regnet Amcathra's handkerchief.

Finding the Way. The characters determine who their target is and where they can find him.

The Gentle Mermaid. Gambling, drinking, and pilfering. Perhaps a back-alley fight to cap things off.

The Virtue of Advertence. If the characters were able to obtain the handkerchief, they deliver it to the tiefling girl and receive a glimpse into their future. But not before dealing with a more unseemly side of the Dock Ward.

Are You Daring Enough?

After Jarlaxle Baenre (under the guise of J.B. Nevercott) makes contact with the characters and engages in some small talk and flattery, he offers a challenge:

"I value bravery and quick thinking. With my connections, I could become a valuable patron." He smiles a sly grin and you see a twinkle in his eye. "Humor me one simple test. I dare you to do something wild!"

"Nevercott" (*"Please, Call me J.B."*) directs the characters to pilfer a personal item being carried by the young nobleman **Regnet Amcathra**, preferably his pocket handkerchief.

As a further test of their fortitude, the handkerchief should be delivered to a hideously deformed tiefling girl who lives in a crate on the corner of Net Street and Dock Street.

Jarlaxle tells the party that Regnet is known to socialize and gamble most nights at the **Gentle Mermaid**, a luxurious spot near his family's villa.

The rationale Jarlaxle gives for the strange request is twofold. First, he shares a jocular relationship with Regnet and would relish in waving the stolen handkerchief in Regnet's face upon their next meeting. Second, such an assault on a noble is at least a minor crime, raising the stakes in testing of the party's bravery.

Asking Jarlaxle exactly who Regnet Amcathra is and where he resides, or where the Gentle Mermaid is located draws is scorn. "Perhaps I thought too highly of you," he derisively remarks.

If the party asks compensation for competing this bizarre task, Jarlaxle gives them 50 gp upfront ("I suppose you'll have expenses... like game and drink") for the pleasure of showing up Regnet, but not without first feigning offense at the mere prospect of his patronage not being reward enough.

He further instructs that he requires complete discretion. If the adventurers are caught in the act he will consider it a test failed and disavow ever having met the party.

Finding the Way

Mission in hand, the adventurers now need to locate the Gentle Mermaid and find Regnet Amcathra.

Yeah, I know stuff. Anyone who has spent the majority of their life in Waterdeep knows that the Gentle Mermaid is an exquisite gambling parlor situated just west of the High Road, bounded by Sulmoor and Hassantyr's Streets (no check required). Otherwise a character who as lived in Waterdeep at least a year has probably at least heard of it, requiring a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check to recall the same information.

The Amcathras are no less famous, but the details of their family and abode are less widely known.

A character familiar with some history of Waterdeep can recall the following information with an Intelligence (History) check:

- DC 10. The Amcathras are known for their businesses in horses, cattle, wine, and weaponsmithing.
- DC 15. The family has a large villa on the east side of the High Road between Hassantyr's and Tarnath Streets; and an estate in Undercliff. Their coat of arms shows silver crescents on a blue flame against a red backdrop
- DC 20. Regnet is the youngest son of the family patriarch Mourngrym Amcathra. Regnet recently married Galinda Raventree, who hosts Waterdeep's annual costume ball.
- DC 25. Regnet Amcathra is the silent financier partner of the Deep Delvers adventuring company.

If any of the characters has the Waterdhavian Noble background, they make the check at advantage. Their roll is automatically at least a (modified) 20 if they themselves are of House Amcathra.

I can ask around. If the characters didn't happen to remember what they needed to know, someone else might be able to help them out

Volo has all of the above information above and happily shares it with the party. He waxes nostalgic about the Gentle Mermaid and wonders aloud if the spicy sausage rolls are as good as ever. The players are advised to show up in their finest garb and with plenty of gold in hand.

Volo has never heard of a "J.B. Nevercott" and finds the whole endeavor juvenile and distasteful, though he doesn't try to dissuade the characters ("but don't expect me to visit when they have you working Amendsfarm!").

As they part ways, Volo amends "Mind you don't draw the Death Card!", chuckling. If pressed he just mutters to himself. "A whole generation lost. I really must update that guidebook!"

Anyone else the characters ask have the same chances outlined above to recall the information. For each person asked about Regnet Amcathra there is a 20% chance that rumor of the characters' interest gets back to Regnet's bodyguards (a roll of 1-4 on 1d20). If so, run **Encounter A** when the party leaves the Gentle Mermaid.

If the party is asking someone they have not yet become friendly with for the information, this chance increases to 40% (1-8 on 1d20), and even if that person knows the information a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check is required for them to share it with a stranger.

How many villas can be nearby? The players might know where the Gentle Mermaid is and recall they were told the Amcathra's villa is nearby. If they wander the neighborhood, they find the villa after 1d4 hours.

In addition to its location, any character who knows they are walking past the Amcathra's villa along the High Road also takes note of the Amcathra family coat of arms.

Find a way to say yes. Reward your players' creative methods of figuring things out, or barring that, find a creative way of telling them what they need to know.

Dice Game: Eights Bluffs

Eights Bluffs is the popular poker-like game that Regnet spends most of his gambling time at the Gentle Mermaid playing. The rules are similar to Texas-Hold'em:

Each player antes 2 of the table minimum bet, one of which goes to the house. At the Gentle Mermaid, the table minimum on the main floor is 1sp. The table maximum is always 8 times the table minimum.

Each player rolls 4d8 in secret. The privilege of betting first goes to any player choosing to reveal a rolled 8.

If nobody reveals an 8, then the opening number moves to 7, then 6, and so on.

If nobody is willing to reveal an opening number, the round is forfeit and all ante goes to the house.

If more than one player reveals the same opening number (e.g. two 8s), they can choose to reveal another die. If neither player does so, their ante is forfeit and they are removed from the round and opening play continues as though that number had not been revealed.

Checking, betting, raising, and folding occur as in most poker games. A raise must always be of at least the table minimum, and the total bet per player in any one round of betting can not exceed the table maximum.

After the 1st round of betting, the house rolls 2d8. A 2nd round of betting follows. The house again rolls 2d8 with a 3rd round of betting after. The same opening bettor determined in the first step is allowed to open each round of betting.

Now a total of 8d8 per have been rolled. Each player reveals their secret 4d8.

After one final round of betting, the remaining players may re-roll any number of their original dice.

The winner is determined by the largest straight, then set. For example, 3-4-5-6-7 (a straight of 5) beats 88888 (a set of 5). A set of 5, however, beats a run of 4. In the event of a set or run the same size, the highest number prevails (i.e., 8-9 beats 7-8 and 99 beats 88).

In the event of a tie, the pot is split by those players. Any dice not used in the straight or set are irrelevant.

The game is popular with the young nobles of Waterdeep because it is high variance, and skills in card counting give no advantage. Any edge in the game is pure deceptive prowess, and losses can simply be attributed to bad luck.

The Gentle Mermaid

The Gentle Mermaid, a huge balconied and turreted 4-story stone structure, occupies the entire interior of the city block on which it is located. It reeks of wealth, if not sophistication and taste. The interior is lushly decorated with carpets and tapestries on nearly every surface. In addition to being magically lit, the interior of the building is also magically heated and cooled, providing a welcome comfort no matter which season your campaign takes place.

Weapons are not permitted inside the Gentle Mermaid, so characters will be expected to check any they are carrying with the coatroom attendant. As the parlor is protected by a number of bouncers and two powerful wizards, guests are not searched for or even asked to remove any but openly worn weapons.

Any person not wearing fine clothes is turned away per the establishment's dress code. A character may still gain entry with a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check, but even on a success they will draw sideways looks and snide remarks from the other patrons and any Charisma checks made inside the establishment will be at disadvantage.

In addition to the relatively high house rake in all games of chance, 1 gp is charged upon taking a seat at a table. The guest is immediately poured a tall flute of chilled sparkling wine and offered exquisite snacks from silver platters intermittently served table to table by attractive servants dressed in impeccable livery.

Locating Regnet Amcathra

Regnet is playing *Eights Bluffs* at a large table near the center of the room, and he's on a hot streak. Several other young nobles have just busted out of the game when the characters arrive, leaving enough open seats at the table for the party to join him.

Flying the Family Flag. If the characters are aware of the Amcathra family colors and crest, Regnet is easy to spot. In addition to sporting the latest Waterdhavian high fashion, he wears an ostentatious silver-fringed red cape embroidered with a blue flame containing three silver crescent moons.

Where Everybody Knows His Name. Regnet is well known at the Gentle Mermaid. If a character simply asks of him they will be directed to his table. His body guards take notice of the characters' interest if they do so. Run **Encounter A** when the characters leave the Gentle Mermaid.

No Shortage of Gossip. Any character looking for clues as to the identity of Regnet will overhear Myrna Cassalanter and Elise Urmbrusk gossiping while pointing towards him on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. "Can you believe he married that tart Galinda?", one asks. "Oh, I know," the other commiserates, "You are so much prettier. When I saw you two dancing at the Moonstar Ball I was sure you'd bagged him."

Stealing the Handkerchief

Regnet Amcathra is a gregarious young man, and a little bit drunk. When the characters locate him, he is happy to make new acquaintances and invites them to join him at *Eights Bluffs*. Have the characters roll Wisdom (Insight) checks. A 10 or higher reveals that Regnet is a genuinely friendly fellow. If the party's investigation has drawn the attention of Regnet's bodyguards, they also notice that the human and tiefling sitting at Regnet's right hand eye them suspiciously.

Hand in His Pocket. A character who can get close to Regnet can nab his handkerchief with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Slight of Hand) check. If caught, Regnet mistakes the action for an overtly sexual gesture - something he's uncomfortably welcoming of. Despite being a married man, Regnet is plenty amorous and doesn't have a strong preference towards any specific gender. Regnet's bodyguards take notice however. If the characters didn't already have their attention, they do now. If the characters are caught a second time, a bodyguard nods and the characters find themselves suddenly unceremoniously ushered outside by two burly bouncers each. Proceed directly to **Encounter A**.

The Hooded Death. Soon after the party is seated at Regnet's table, a middle aged man at a table nearby draws the Death Card foreshadowed by Volo. Screams ring out from shocked guests as a **wraith** (MM 302) appears from the card drawn and promptly lops the man's head off with its scythe. Two **archmages** (MM 342) materialize and subdue the smoky shade with explosive magical spells. One then places the poor victim's head back on his shoulders, mutters an incantation, and the man is good as new. The other calls out, "Next hour, drinks on the house! All house antes go to the winner!" A band that wasn't there a moment ago begins to play lively music. After a minute it's like nothing horrifying ever happened. Hopefully one of the characters grabbed the handkerchief during this distraction. If so, the DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check is made at advantage.

A Clever Ruse. There are any number of other ways the characters might attempt to obtain Regnet's handkerchief. A sneezing fit, bloody nose, spilled wine, etc. Regnet is a gentleman and won't hesitate to provide aid. If your players come up with a creative or entertaining solution, award inspiration as well as the handkerchief.

Not So Gentle Outside the Mermaid (Encounter A)

Run this encounter only if the party attracted the attention of Regnet's bodyguards. The encounter occurs when the characters leave the Gentle Mermaid, either having achieved their objective or having been tossed from the establishment.

A tiefling man and human woman you recognize from Regnet's table approach you in the back alley of Gentle Mermaid. "The lot of you are up to something fishy," the tough looking woman says. "Yeah", adds the tiefling, "we don't take kindly to those who pry into Master Regnet's business".

Drakius and El'odis are Regnet's **bodyguards** (use the stats for **bandit captain** on MM 344). Renet Amcathra is serial philanderer, a secret the discreet and loyal pair of bodyguards go to great lengths to protect. Avoiding attention from the city watch is part of this mandate.

The adjusted difficult rating for this encounter is 1350XP, making it potentially deadly for a party of five 2nd-level characters.

If the party engages in combat and is defeated, they wake up 1d4 hours later in an alley off of The Breezeway in the far eastern part of the Field Ward; bruised, bloody, and stripped of any weapons and any possessions of value, but stable at 1 hp. Not all is necessarily lost, however. If a character successfully obtained Regnet's handkerchief, it remains safely tucked away in the character's pocket.

If the characters are victorious, remind them that they have just committed a serious crime and may want to do something about the evidence.

The party can explain their way out of a fight with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If your players concoct a convincing story rather than simple denial, allow the check to be made at advantage.

Virtue of Advertence

The tiefling girl Advertence lives in a crate just tucked into Keel alley at the corner of Net Street and Dock Street. Formerly containing a shipment of rum, the crate is just large enough for the 9 year old girl to comfortably sleep inside. Aside from two threadbare blankets, the crate appears empty. 1d4 copper nibs and a bright green feather are hidden a hole dug under a loose board in the back corner of the crate.

The girl spends her days sitting atop the crate, earning her dinner by telling the fortunes of passers-by. The fact that she can shout descriptions of the passing strangers despite being obviously blind attracts enough customers to keep herself fed.

You Brazen Little Urchin! (Encounter B)

The characters reach Advertence just in time to overhear her finish telling a fortune before two swarthy human women. "You shouldn't say that about him," the young girl says to the rougher looking of the pair. "After all, he seems to please that one plenty... and frequently."

"You brazen little urchin!" the woman roars, making contact with a ham-fisted swing that knocks the poor orphan from her crate.

Margot (the violent one) and Amée (**Thugs MM 350**) are part of an all female crew of marins from the Dragon Coast whose ship is currently docked in Waterdeep Harbor. When the characters come to Advertence's rescue, two more of the marins' crew, Sedilla and Dorian, join the fight on the third round of combat. Remind the players that the Dock Ward is still in Waterdeep proper and they probably should attempt to subdue, not kill the attackers.

After the end of the sixth round of combat, the City Watch appears to break things up. If the fight doesn't go that long they show up moments after.

Advertence tells the story of her rescue, including descriptions of her attackers and saviors. Sargent Barnwell isn't surprised by this occurrence. He's quite familiar with the homeless girl on his beat and the trouble she invites, but he doesn't care for her or her supernatural powers. He gruffly thanks the party for intervening, and then he and his men go about their business.

When the characters give Advertence the handkerchief, she replies in a monotone voice: "He's not who you think he is." She points out towards the harbor where *The Eyecatcher*, Jarlaxle's flagship, is moored among many others. "The dark man lives out there".

Advertence doesn't seem interested in discussion of any kind and quickly grows bored of the adventurers and and curls up in her crate.

She calls after the party as they leave. "You'll be inside when it happens, but others will die. Too bad the wood man strayed from Gond". (Granting a clue for chapter 3 of Waterdeep: Dragon Heist).

The following day Jarlaxle visits Advertence, and she leaves with him to become his personal diviner.

What if they failed?

If the characters are unable to deliver Rennet's handkerchief to Advertence, Jarlaxle/"J.B." writes them off as failures and they never hear from him again. They might still go see Advertence however. If they go within 2 days of being issued the mission, they arrive as the scene below unfolds and could still receive Advertence's vague augury regarding the nimblewright. Without the handkerchief to trigger the thought, she tells them nothing about Jarlaxle. If more than two days pass, Advertence and her crate are gone.

Roleplaying Advertence

Advertence is the young tiefling girl's chosen virtue name, meaning the process of turning ones attention to something. She has no idea what her given name is or who her parents are.

Her first memory is as a toddler, the searing pain of her eyeballs being gouged from her face turning to a vision of a fiery, many faced monster being shouting "No! It has seen me, you fools!"

Beyond that she has never know a life outside of her crate near the wharf. Amidst all manner of dangers, she has never been seriously harmed or fallen ill since.

Though her eyes are missing, she possesses blindsight out to 120 feet. One with her divination skill could live lavishly were it focused. She does not aspire to be a fortune teller; it is a byproduct of circumstance. A few times a day she sees something in a passer-by and shouts out to them. Usually it earns her a few coins; often it earns her a slap across the face.

Advertence approaches everything in a slow, cautious manner, and her monotone manner of speech reflects that. She is clever, capable, and resourceful when needed, but she has yet to break out of the pattern of her life.

Ideal: "I know I see things as they are, and others deserve to know what I see."

Bond: "This crate, this alley, this corner is my home."

Flaw: "This is the life I am destined to live forever. I accept it and hope for nothing better"

Rewards

The adventurers earn 1 renown with Bregan D'aerthe, although at this point they know nothing of the organization beyond "J.D.".

Jarlaxle visits them the following day, gloating of how bewildered Regnet was when he produced the forgotten handkerchief. He awards the party an additional 50 gp as a "deposit towards future endeavors," and as an additional token of appreciation an eight-sided *Charlatan's Die* (*Xanathar's Guide to Everything 136*), which he assures you (with a wink) "has never been in the possession of Regnet Amcathra."

Encounter A - Not So Gentle Outside the Mermaid

Bodyguard (Bandit Captain MM 344)

Challenge: 2 (450 XP)

Armor Class: 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points: 65 (10d8+20) **Speed:** 30

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+2	+2	+0	+2

3 Melee Attacks: *2 scimitar, 1 dagger*
or 2 ranged dagger attacks

Scimitar: +5 to hit, damage 6 (1d6+3)

Dagger: +5 to hit, damage 5 (1d4+3)

Tactics: Keep the fight in the alley, don't let the characters flee

Flee: Fight to the death if necessary

Treasure: 4d10 gp, keys to Amcathra villa:
 Outside, main house, Regnet's room, own room

Initiative and Monster HP

20

15

Overview: The bodyguards will attempt to subdue the characters and then dump them in an alley in the Field Ward

Environment: Walkway, 20 ft wide around 3 sides of Gentle Mermaid

Difficulty: CR 4, 1350XP. Party of 5 2nd - Deadly

XP Award: 900 XP on success, 500 XP if the characters at least make it a contest

10

5

Round: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Encounter B - You Brazen Little Urchin!

Marin (Thug MM 350)

Challenge: 1/2 (100 XP)

Armor Class: 15 (breastplate)

Hit Points: 71 (13d8 + 13)

Speed: 30

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA

+0 +1 +1 +4 +3 +3

Two Melee Attacks

Mace: +4 to hit, damage 5 (1d6+2)

Heavy Crossbow: +2 to hit, damage 5 (1d10)

Tactics: The Marins will attempt to square off with individual characters

Flee: 1/2 HP. If any die, all flee. If half of them flee the others disengage and do as well

Treasure: 1d12 gp

Initiative & HP Tracking

20

Overview: Two Marins at the start of the fight, two more join on the 2nd round of combat.

15

Environment: Streets, 30 ft wide. Alley, 10 ft wide. The Dungsweeper's Guild has't been around yet today, so many full chamber pots are set out in the alley awaiting pickup.

Development: City Watch arrives to break up fight after 6 rounds of combat.

Difficulty: CR 3, 800XP. Party of 5 2nd - Hard

XP Award: 400 XP

10

5

Round: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10