

1/GUARD: Marco Polo, your audience is gathering. Our jail is very different from most jails. We have people lining up each day to get in.

2/PRIEST: I do my best to keep people out of jails, guard. You must admit Marco Polo's imprisonment in this Genoa jail is political.

1/GUARD: Well priest, the cities of Venice and Genoa are at war, and Polo was captured with his ship. He'll stay here until the war is over.

2/PRIEST: That could be as long as three years.

1/GUARD: The time seems to pass quickly for him and Rustichello, the writer. Polo tells tales and Rustichello writes them down.

2/PRIEST: He's being called "Millions" Polo because of the tall tales he is spinning. I fear his soul is in danger for telling lies.

3/MARCO POLO: My priest and confessor, I tell the truth. I have not told half of what I saw, for I knew that I would not be believed.

1/GUARD: Get back, get back! The crowds get larger every day. You may as well start the day's entertainment.

4/RUSTICHELO: Yesterday, you told us about how your father and uncle, who were jewel merchants, had gone to Cathay and met Kublai Khan.

3/MARCO POLO: Ah, yes! Kublai Khan was an intelligent ruler who was eager to know about all religions. He wanted to make sure he was worshipping the right god. He sent my relatives back to Venice on a mission.

4/RUSTICHELLO: The mission was to ask the Pope to send one hundred missionaries to Cathay.

2/PRIEST: That was the time we were without a Pope. The election of a new Pope took a long time.

3/MARCO POLO: We had given up on getting missionaries and were on our way to Cathay when two friars sent from the new Pope joined our company.

2/PRIEST: Did the friars stay with you for the whole journey?

3/MARCO POLO: No. The friars changed their minds after a raiding party attacked our group. We managed to escape to a nearby village in the confusion.

2/PRIEST: Were the friars harmed?

3/MARCO POLO: No, but they decided not to go on a trip which had adventures like that!

4/RUSTICHELLO: You were 17 when you left Venice and over 40 when you returned, but you did take notes and make sketches from the beginning of your adventure to its end.

1/GUARD: How long was the actual journey to Cathay?

3/MARCO POLO: Three and a half years, but I didn't mind that. There were new wonders to behold every day. We had to cross a great desert. We crossed at the narrowest point and it still took us thirty days.