1 The Black Market

You are involved in one of the most crucial aspects of the Thieves' Guild's operations, the running of untaxed and illegal commerce for the Guild's profit -- and, of course, your own (the two are more or less synonymous, after all). Here, on the Castle where many rich and influential people are gathering from every portion of the World, is an ideal location for you to practice your trade.

There are, in general, three methods of running a black market and staying in business. You can attempt to keep it secret from the Guard entirely, attempt to bribe the Guard into leaving it alone, or attempt to fool the Guard into thinking it legal. The first is difficult if you aren't in your own territory, and the second is nearly impossible, given the Oathbound nature of Guardians. The third, for its part, requires a bit more cleverness and planning, as legal merchants are generally sanctioned by the House of Guilds and have paperwork to prove it.

Your biggest problem is usually competition from the established and guilded merchants, who can advertise with far more freedom. On the other hand, you have the advantage that your customers can transact with you anonymously, and you can offer far lower prices than the House of Guilds (after all, not only do you not pay taxes, you usually don't pay for the products themselves, either). Between your low overhead and the fact that most of your goods are stolen or purchased from people who stole them, you can mark up a substantial profit and still undercut the House of Guilds.

By far your most powerful advantage, though, is that the Black Market sells goods the House of Guilds can't, for the simple reason that they're illegal. The Market is the Realm's only outlet for poisons and blade venom, as well as for a number of alchemical products the Table of Peers has outlawed for various reasons. This weekend, it seems, you have an added advantage -- the Guard of the Realm and the Smith's Guild have both agreed to curtail the quantities of killing weapons available on the Castle; thus, the House of Guilds is stocked only with lipips and staves. The Black Market is the only available outlet of daggers and swords (not to mention bows), and undoubtedly sooner or later, *someone* is going to want one. Or three.

The Market on the Castle is being organized by one of the Shadow Cabinet, whose identity has remained a secret. He will be contacting you as soon as possible and arranging marketing strategies, and from the rumours along the underground grapevine you can be pretty sure that you are all going to have to work hard at keeping the Guild's finances in shape. In the meantime, you should discreetly scout out possible customers for what you're offering and keep an eye out for the activities of the Guard of the Realm. And of course, in a Castle lost to legend for centuries, you are undoubtedly going to find artifacts of great value to appropriate, even if they *are* currently in someone else's hands -- they don't call you the Thieves' Guild for nothing!

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