1 The Thieves' Guild

1.1 The Past

None of you, save perhaps Shadowlord the Undying who leads you (and who knows what he thinks?) can remember the days before the Holy Wars, when the Church of the Trinity ruled the land with the power of the Elder Gods. History teaches, however, that the Holy Wars set in motion the events that led to the very existence of the Thieves' Guild. Where the Church had strictly prosecuted and prevented illegalities, the monarchy of Rashid had other things to worry about, and the Wizard's Conclave was not a political organization and never worried about law enforcement -- the climate was perfect for an underground to spring up, and so criminal "families" proliferated.

Over time, factions within each family united and gained supporters, and a complicated structure of crime networks was created. It was into this environment that the Knights of the Crown were born, however -- and the ground rules were changed. The monarchy declared war on the crimelords, and over the course of the next few decades, the underground families had mostly destroyed each other and the Knights had picked off whatever was left.

It was then that Shadowlord appeared on the scene. He was known then as Avralon Krys, but has gone by many names in the intervening centuries, for the Shadowlord is of the immortals. Into the ruins of the underworld he came, weaving all the broken threads into a single unified tapestry and winning the loyalties of the families that preceded him. By the year 490 UR, Shadowlord the Undying had created the Thieves' Guild, a single operation that maintained and governed all illegal activity in the Realm under his organization, with a Shadow Cabinet of trusted lieutenants.

Over the last four centuries the Undying has defended the Guild from many threats, both internal and external. He was the only being ever to defeat Storm Bluemist, the Assassin; Storm, too, was a legendary figure, who created the Circle of Bloodletters from those who learned his Art as his students. The Assassin declared an oath that Shadowlord would die by his hands, and several years of battle between the two organizations ensued. But ten years ago, Storm acknowledged his defeat and withdrew from the Realm, leaving Shadowlord undisputed.

1.2 The Present

Shadowlord has maintained tight control over the organization. It is said that he uses powerful magics to spy on and record the activities of his agents, and that those who betray him find themselves regretting it. There have been cases of thieves who have attempted to betray Shadowlord, only to find themselves delivered to the Realm's law enforcers, along with a full record of their crimes, and their tongues slit open to prevent further betrayal.

But few such cases occur; none in the recent past. The Guild is a business, and it provides for its employees--as such, its employees have nothing to gain through betraying it and a great deal to lose by being caught. The Guild obtains its funds through the purchase and sale of unlicensed goods and services, commonly referred to as the black market, through the operation of untaxed gambling casinos, and through protection deals with the House of Guilds.

Lately, events have been moving rather quickly and oddly around the Guild, and the Realm's underworld in general. Sporadic violence has broken out, shops have been burglarized and vandalized, and in general a degree of chaos has begun to appear that hasn't been seen since the old days of warring factions and turf battles. The businesses that normally paid protection money to the organization have stopped doing so, accusing you of reneging on your contracts, and the underworld personalities you commonly deal with seem to have disappeared until the violence dies down. Worst of all, if this state of affairs continues much longer, the Guard of the Realm will have to crack down on your operations -- for years, the Guild has arranged things so that such a crackdown has never been worth their while. *Something* has to be done. Clearly, the Thieves' Guild has some enemies; whether these are internal or external remains to be seen. Whoever the enemy is, they must be found and dealt with before they interfere with your livelihoods, or your lives.

One possibility is the Circle of Bloodletters, which has had a grudge against the Guild ever since the Shadowlord defeated Storm. Rumour has it that the Circle is on the Castle, perhaps that ancient feud will be resolved this weekend. Another possibility is a rival Guild, perhaps based in the rural regions of the Realms or even in the Clans, . Yet a third possibility is a splinter group within the Guild itself; rumours regarding some kind of *coup* within the Guild's upper echelons have begun to circulate, and indeed, there have been some changes among the higher-placed members of the organization.

1.3 The Future

It seems very likely that the final resolution of this chaos will depend on the events of this weekend on Castle Kalerege. The word has come down from the Shadow Cabinet that the Guild has to increase its financial supply, by whatever means possible. Many merchants and businessmen from the House of Guilds are here on the Castle, and will be providing competition for your services -- but at the same time, they provide a source of weapons, armor, alchemical supplies and jewelery that you can exploit by thievery. For the bolder among you, there is the fact that Castle Kalerege undoubtedly possesses the greatest assortment of magical items and trinkets in the known world -- a good thief could make an unheard of fortune here, if he were careful and competant enough.

Of course, the Guild is also arranging for more certain profit. A casino night has been scheduled on the Castle as part of the entertainent being provided for its guests; unbeknownst to them, the Guild is running it. It is a legitimate service, and one the House of Guilds doesn't really provide, but it has its elements of risk -- it's up to the members of the organization on the Castle to insure that the event comes off the ground and makes a profit, and also that the Guard of the Realm doesn't become suspicious.

On a completely different note, the resolutions of this weekend's political aspects may have a tremendous effect on the Guild's future. The Table of Peers and the leaders of the Clans are meeting to discuss an end to the war that has been plaguing both countries for years; for the most part, that is a problem for the Guild. After all, so long as the war goes on, most of the Guards of the Realm will continue dedicating their efforts towards military action rather than law enforcement, and most of the guilded merchants will remain on wartime production -- leaving your organization with more customers and more freedom to move. Of course, you can't depend on this war lasting forever, but something needs to be done to make sure peace doesn't completely destroy your operations.

Some possible solutions are already in motion. Besides the proposed peace treaty, there are five other bills that the Table of Peers will be voting on at their meeting this weekend, some of which the Shadow Cabinet is actually responsible for proposing.

- **Prohibition** - If passed, this bill would make the production and distribution of mind and mood altering substances such as alcohol, opium, kathkusa and so forth illegal in the Realm, effectively preventing the Alchemist's Guild from dealing in them and destroying your competition for a very valuable commodity. It's already illegal for you to buy and sell the stuff, since you aren't guilded merchants, so the situation for you would be no worse.
- **Free Trade Ammendment** - If passed, this would allow Easterners to freely sell and buy goods within the Realm, without requirement of a House of Guilds license. This, in turn, would provide you your only real competition for the services you provide, and legal competition to boot. While on the one hand, it would be a

boost for the Realm economy (which in turn makes your jobs more profitable), for the most part it would severely damage your organization.

- **Magic Licensing Act** - This bill, on the other hand, could easily prove the best thing that ever happened to the Thieves' Guild. If passed, it would require that the Wizard's Conclave be made into a WIzard's Guild under the jurisdiction of the Guildmaster, and that all practicing mages obtain a license from the House of Guilds. Already, there is substantial traffic between the Conclave and the Thieves' Guild; such a move would bring many of them into your camp, increasing by an order of magnitude the power and wealth available to your organization. Besides that, it would open up one more avenue of licensed service that customers will be perfectly willing -- in fact, eager -- to do business with you for, in exchange for anonymity.

Normally, the Guild doesn't get involved in politics, but desperate times do call for desperate measures. If you can successfully lobby for or against these bills, you will be able to assure the success of your organization for years to come.

Of course, it may all be a moot point if you cannot discover who your enemies really are and destroy them by whatever means necessary. There are a considerable number of you on the Castle, more than enough to meet any threat, and each of you knows who to report to. Further, the rumours are that Shadowlord the Undying himself is here to supervise the operation, further indication of how important it really is.

Table of Contents