

## Council of Thieves



# Ecology of the Thieves' Guild

**T**hieves' guilds make great fantasy RPG institutions. They are the power behind the thrones of corrupt governments, the assassins slinking through lonely alleyways, and the keepers of dark secrets long buried. Yet despite their iconic status, many thieves' guilds tend to be somewhat underdeveloped on a conceptual level. Thieves steal things because they are bad people and they are bad people because they steal things, or so such circular wisdom goes, which works fine as a surface explanation for many adventures where such organizations don't take center stage. Yet in campaigns delving into the criminal underworld, certain questions begin to arise: What kinds of things do thieves steal? What do they do when they are not stealing? And, if a guild steals so much, why doesn't the city guard just kick in door of their guildhouse and cart all the members off to jail?

This article presents a framework to help understand and address these questions before PCs have a chance to ask them, investigating the basic ecology of fantasy thieves'

guilds. The information herein paints an overview of how such institutions operate, how they stay ahead of the competition, and what makes them different than a gang of common street thugs.

### THE BLACK MARKET ECOSYSTEM

The majority of criminals live hand to mouth, going from crime to crime without much in the way of forethought. Their misdeeds are random acts of violence, thefts of opportunity, or undertakings of desperate necessity.

These are the criminals that give thieves' guilds a bad name.

Thieves' guilds are groups of individuals who band together to approach crime as a business, instead of as an occasional hobby or desperate means to an end. To these elite few, the black market is a market just like any other. It obeys the supply-and-demand rules of economics and requires all the basic features of an otherwise legitimate business organization—respected

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"You want justice? In this city? Heh! You're barkin' up the wrong tree, bub. You think ol' cap'n Priss'n'Prim up at the gate cares a thing for you lost such-an-such or who's-a-who? Not a chance! And why should'e? What's in it for him 'cept the usual half silver a day and a 'nother chance to get his neck cut in the dark. Nah, you want justice, you come with me and I'll meet ya some folks who knows how to get business done. It'll cost ya—but then, ain't nothing worth havin' worth havin' for free."

—Seyd "Twin Tongues" Roatsoad, Cerulean Society Member, Korvosa



hierarchies, communication networks, codes of conduct, distribution channels, recruiting agents, and (perhaps most importantly) treasuries and cash flows. The only real disadvantage guilds face lies in the somewhat arbitrary fact that their operations have been deemed "illegal" by some governing body and thus must operate in shadowy places, discretely publicized and generally out of the public eye.

In general, this defines a thieves' guild as a group of individuals working together to approach crime as a business operating outside the boundaries of the established law. Such institutions can take a wide variety of forms. The quintessential fantasy thieves' guild, with its secret hideouts, spy networks and cloaked employees, certainly applies. In the same vein, an assassin's dojo established as a privately funded extension of the city's secret military can also possess several of the traits of a thieves' guild (as they are in the "business" of contract killing). So too can a group of monsters working from the sewers of a major city to secure a steady supply of slaves from the surface realm.

It's important to note that thieves' guilds need not necessarily be evil or amoral. Indeed, the morality of a thieves' guild depends largely on the context in which it operates and the laws it chooses to break. A secret cabal of chaotic good freedom fighters stealing from the corrupt Council of Visions in Razmiran can certainly qualify as a thieves' guild. Similarly, a network of spies put in place to ferry serfs and slaves out of the demonic fiefdoms of the Worldwound can also qualify.

Not all thieves' guilds are modeled off of businesses, though. Less conventional groups of like-minded criminals might be motivated by all manner of non-monetary goals—unearthing secrets, eradicating enemies, subverting areas for opposing countries, and so on. While such groups exist, their goals typically set them apart from more common criminal ventures, and thus operate in unique manners typically more similar to spy rings, cults, or secret societies. Ultimately, such groups may operate as similarly or differently as GMs

please, though many likely focus on areas that make up merely a fraction of a typical guild's concerns.

### RECRUITMENT & MEMBERSHIP

The primary reasons for thieves forming a guild is so its members can cooperate with each other against external enemies, pooling and directing their resources toward ends they could never reach alone. This creates the fundamental paradox of guild psychology, which is thus: members of a thieves' guild must trust each other to cooperate, but this trust is often complicated by the fact that thieves—by virtue of their very profession—engage in surreptitious and duplicitous acts on a regular basis. They must trust each other even though they are all professionally untrustworthy. This seeming contradiction fosters an acute awareness of loyalty (or lack thereof) within the guild.

Many thieves or members of organized criminal groups in fiction or film obsess over matters of loyalty to their organization. Most guild members, if captured, would rather go to jail for decades than betray their cohorts. This is because, in the business of organized crime, perceived trust is the currency that gets one respect and status within an organization. This is among the first factors GMs must consider when putting together a thieves' guild: how are the members able to trust each other even though they are thieves? Perhaps a group of thieves grew up together on the streets of Katapesh and have built their now-powerful organization up from nothing. Perhaps they are all vampires created by the same vampire lord who acts as their shepherd and guild leader. Perhaps members are related by blood and owe personal allegiance to their patriarchal guild leader. Or perhaps there is some elaborate initiation ritual that requires new initiates to prove their loyalty (such as murdering a law enforcement agent and giving the evidence to the guild master). All of these possibilities foster the "us against the world" mentality upon which thieves' guilds thrive. Although the details can vary widely, guilds only work if members have some established reason to trust each other.

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Of course, most thieves' guilds occasionally have to recruit outsiders to grow their organization and replace lost members. Thus, there must be a means for new members to enter the guild hierarchy as well. In this case, new members are often selected from the streets and given menial jobs at first—such as lookout or courier—before they can sharpen their teeth on crimes of greater difficulty and requiring greater responsibility. All in all, guild leaders prefer to recruit members who have few other options elsewhere in legitimate society. Orphans, street urchins, shunned minorities—such unsavory individuals are often deemed as the safest guild recruits because they are already disadvantaged in legitimate society, and thus less likely to betray a guild that grants them companionship, improved standing, and greater future possibilities.

When it comes to upward mobility within a guild, a guild leader often requires elaborate tests of an initiate's loyalty before he is allowed into the inner circle. For example, a guild leader might send an initiate on a mission for which failure is secretly guaranteed. If the initiate returns and honestly reports the failure to the guild leader, the initiate is then promoted for his honesty. But if the initiate tries to hide the failure or run away to avoid the consequences, then the guild leader knows the initiate cannot be trusted and responds accordingly. This level of manipulation is not uncommon in a business where leaders have to be absolutely sure of their underlings' unswerving loyalty.

Ultimately, the hierarchy of trust in the best thieves' guilds fosters an almost unbreakable bond between members. They are "brothers of the shadow" and members often regard their cohorts as their true family, regardless of actual biological relations. Nonmembers forced to deal with guild members often discover this loyalty swiftly in their dealings. The best guild members die before betraying their accomplices, and even low-ranking members go to great lengths to prove their allegiance.

That's not to say that guild members do not occasionally stray from the fold, but being caught doing so results in severe punishment, from ostracization to execution, their culling ultimately serving as an example of disloyalty's price to other guild members. "He just wasn't one of us" is a refrain often heard to describe guild members who suddenly vanish after a display of disloyalty or disrespect. As a career criminal, one must know first and foremost whom he can trust.

### ORGANIZATION & COMMUNICATION

The actual structure of a guild can be small and contained or wide and varied, depending on the guild's areas of expertise. Regardless of its size, an effective guild compartmentalizes its operations such that—should one

operation ever be compromised—the rest remain isolated and intact.

For example, a band of pirates could have a many-tiered operation, with one branch handling the actual piracy, another branch laundering the stolen goods through a nearby port, and a third branch promoting their services as elite maritime guards (who, strangely, never seem to be attacked by the pirates). Each branch works independently of the others, but all proceeds are channeled into one central location.

Despite the wide range of possibilities for thieves' guilds, most organizations share one thing in common: a preoccupation with maintaining secrecy. This is often a difficult objective to balance, considering guilds must also be able to readily transmit information and updates throughout their organization. In short, guild members must be able to share information with each other while keeping it safeguarded from outsiders.

This dual mandate results in the widespread use of codes by most thieves' guilds. One famous example of such a code—which appeared in the real-world Europe around the eighteenth century—is a dialect known as thieves' cant. Technically, thieves' cant utilizes a language shared by two speakers, but is so rife with slang and innuendo that it is virtually incomprehensible to the untrained ear. When using thieves' cant, thieves can talk openly about their day-to-day activities in crowded areas (a feature of the Bluff skill), and the only people who understand the conversation are other thieves (or those who make opposed Sense Motive checks). Many GMs might handle thieves' cant as a simple matter of out-of-character skill checks, though those who wish to research or create their own slang thieves' terms can add a distinctive flavor to their rogues. For example:

**Thieves' Cant:** "Ol' Gregor's got a fastner an' here comes one to pull 'em. Time we pike to the cackletub."

**Translation:** "Gregor has a warrant and a police officer is coming to arrest him. Let's retreat to the guildhouse."

Aside from thieves' cant, there are many other ways that guild members can openly communicate with each other without outsiders being aware of the actual message. A band of robbers could insert code words or symbols into graffiti to denote the locations of stash houses and weapons caches. Pirates could send carrier pigeons out bearing leaves indigenous to the various islands in the region to denote the place of their next meeting. Even magical correspondence might be used, with some groups with access to magical items resorting to tools like *crystal balls* for communication and never meeting in person.

Regardless of a guild's particular code, the best guilds are constantly evolving their communication habits and techniques. One year they might use a raven familiar perched on a church tower to designate a time to meet

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in the basement below, and the next year they might use the same raven to mark the hideout of a rival guild (which would bring the rival guild trouble if any law enforcement officers figured out the significance of the raven code the year before). At the end of the day, thieves' guilds that don't periodically change up their communication methods find their enemies and competitors eventually decoding their hidden meanings, adapting and exploiting them.

The primary reasons for all the secrecy is a guild's need to quarantine the legitimate side of its business from the illegal side. Even a guild comprised solely of the most hardened criminals won't last long without a means of effectively isolating itself from its own illegal income. One can only steal so much before people start asking questions about the origins of one's wealth. For this reason, most thieves' guilds run at least some kind of front operation to give the guild a legitimate reason to be hanging out and making money together. A front operation can be anything from a shipping company to a rowdy local tavern, and most guilds run multiple front operations at once, since each additional front makes the true source of their income that much harder to track. Front operations also give guild members a place to meet when they are not thieving, which enables them to better blend in as normal law-abiding members of society. Ultimately, a thieves' guild operating without a front operation is like a soldier going to war without armor. It can be done, but the survival of the venture proves far less likely.

### GUILD MEMBERS

Not all members of a thieves' guild need to be criminals (or have rogue class levels). Indeed, it is possible to run a highly effective guild with only a few members actively committing crimes of stealth and deception. Thus, characters of nearly any walk could make fine additions to a thieves' guild. Even those without PC class levels can make useful members, with experts and aristocrats often taking up places of influence in the area of white-collar crime or performing legitimate (or pseudo-legitimate) services for the organization.

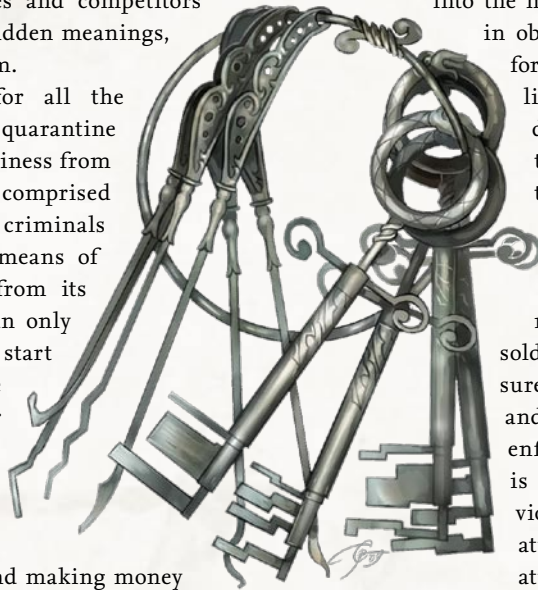
Numerous roles typically arise within a thieves' guild, each with a unique type of job to do. When designing a thieves' guild, GMs should keep these basic roles in mind, assuring that all members have a specific place and reason for operating within the guild.

**Cleaners:** Cleaners are specialists who focus on hiding crimes and making the operations of a guild appear legal, at least on the surface. This can involve many things, including melting down stolen coins, forging documents, or otherwise disguising the illegal origins of whatever ill-gotten gains the guild is ready to filter back into the market. Sometimes cleaners specialize in obfuscating and hiding evidence. They forge travel documents to make it look like a murder victim left town or plant deliberately misleading evidence to throw the authorities off the trail of the guild's latest heist. (Winston Wolf from the movie *Pulp Fiction* is a great example of a cleaner.)

**Enforcers:** Enforcers are the muscle of a thieves' guild. They are the soldiers, hit men, and assassins that make sure the guild's policies are maintained and its enemies are kept in check. Good enforcers know that the threat of violence is often more effective than actual violence, and so sometimes brutally attack their victims in public, so the attack serves as an example to anyone else who may cross the guild in the future. A hapless merchant is much more likely to pay his protection money to a thieves' guild if one of his colleagues has been "visited" by the guild's enforcers in the past. (Paulie "Walnuts" Gualtieri from the HBO series *The Sopranos* is an example of an enforcer.)

**Faces:** Faces manage the parts of a guild's business that are most visible to the public. They can be bankers, traders, merchants, or even politicians. Faces typically run the front operations of the guild and are almost always the individuals furthest from the actual crimes being committed. The best faces appear, at least on the surface, to be model citizens; they pay their taxes, go to church, and might even hold public office. It is only after hours, when meeting his lieutenants for drinks in some dark basement, that a face discreetly shares the security details of the guarded warehouse he toured earlier that day as a potential investor. (Al Swearingen from the HBO series *Deadwood* exemplifies the role of a face.)

**Pullers and Pushers:** Pullers and pushers are the individuals in charge of executing the core day-to-day operations of the guild. They are the workforce that plans robberies, acquires stolen goods, and subsequently sells the contraband for profit. Pullers (e.g., thieves, drug manufacturers, or slavers) generally acquire resources illegally, whereas pushers (e.g., fences, drug dealers, or slave traders) are usually the ones who sell



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those same resources back into the market. Note that a guild member can be both a pusher and a puller at the same time. For example, a slaver—someone who kidnaps slaves—can also be a slave trader who barter using slaves as currency. It's just easier to think of pusher and puller as two separate roles, since they often require very different skill sets. Examples of the crimes committed by pushers and pullers are described in the following section. (Neil McCauley from the film *Heat* is a fine example of a puller, while Mr. X from the film *Layer Cake* serves as a pusher.)

Note that these roles need not be mutually exclusive to single individuals. For instance, an assassin with the right skills can work as both a cleaner and an enforcer depending on the particular job. Also, not all thieves' guilds have a need for all five of the roles above. Indeed, the particular style of any given guild is often defined by its relative abundance or lack of one or more of the above roles. For example, a thieves' guild comprised of mostly enforcers likely operates as a band of brigands or highwaymen, whereas a guild of mostly faces might

structure itself as a cartel or consortium. Ultimately, the types of crime any given thieves' guild is involved in are often derived by the relative numbers of these roles within its ranks.

### TYPES OF CRIMES

Thieves' guilds might involve themselves in any number of criminal ventures, from petty but technically illegal acts to those both brutal and amoral. The following is a list of potential crimes thieves could be involved in. The list by no means exhaustive; it is simply meant to give you an overview of the breadth of opportunities available to a guild.

**Adventuring:** Adventurers and thieves' guilds have a lot in common: they both specialize in infiltrating places where they are not generally welcome. For this reason, thieves' guilds might employ adventurers as freelancers to work specialized jobs. A group of PCs who are hired to raid a rival guild's stash house as part of an ongoing turf war or the sacred tombs of a dynasty of near-mythical hero-kings are examples of adventurers.

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**Contract Killing:** The term “contract killing” is a bit of a misnomer, since contracts are almost never involved. The basic idea is that these criminals kill their victims in exchange for a bounty from a third party. A poison specialist who has a knack for making her kills look like heart attacks is an example of a contract killer.

**Counterfeiting and Forgery:** This category of crime involves the unsanctioned creation or duplication of false documents, coins, or other rare items. Commonly forged documents include licenses, birth certificates, deeds, and writs of passage. In worlds where magic can be bought and sold, an unscrupulous mage who uses *magic aura* to produce fake scrolls (that appear genuine but do not work when used) is an example of a counterfeiter.

**Drug Trafficking:** Drug trafficking involves the manufacture and distribution of illegal narcotics. In a fantasy world, “drugs” can mean many things, including euphoria-inducing cave spores, vials of sleep gas, or even consciousness-expanding magical spells (such as *dream* or *astral projection*). A grave digger who brews and sells potions of *speak with dead* to mourners in a nation where necromantic magic has been outlawed is an example of a drug trafficker.

**Extortion and Racketeering:** Generally speaking, extortion and racketeering involve the abuse of one’s power or authority to extract money or influence from victims. This can involve anything from the classic “protection” racket to bribery, loan-sharking, or obfuscation of justice. The exotic merchant who threatens to release deadly parasites into a market unless the local businesses pay him an exorbitant sum is an example of an extortionist.

**Gambling:** In regions where gambling is illegal, local thieves’ guilds often step in to run underground casinos and gambling rings. The games of chance upon which clients gamble can involve anything from roulette tables to beast-fighting pits, and are typically housed in secret locations that require special passwords to enter. A retired soldier that runs a hidden bare-knuckle boxing circuit and accepts bets on his prize fighters is an example of a gambling kingpin.

**Money Laundering:** Money launderers are cleaners in charge of diverting the incoming resources from a guild’s illegal operations and funneling them through the appropriate channels until they appear to be legitimately gained. This often requires a sagacious knowledge of the accounting regulations and loopholes of the local government, so money launderers are typically ex-bureaucrats, bankers, or financial consultants. A corrupt merchant who funnels money from the thieves’ guild through his overseas holdings in a far-off territory is a money launderer.

**Monster Trafficking:** Occasionally, individuals commission the capture of dangerous monsters to keep

### Typical Guildhouse

The adjacent map and following tags detail a sample thieves guild built into catacombs below a bustling city.

1. Stairs Down from The Kraken’s Ink Tattoo Parlor\*
2. Secret Passages to Sewer System
3. Barracks
4. Sergeants’ Quarters
5. Kitchen
6. Storage
7. Secret Passage to Westgate Flophouse\*
8. Mess Hall
9. Spider Stables
10. Prison
11. Torture and Interrogation Chamber
12. Spider Handler’s Quarters and Poison Distillery
13. Training Room
14. Balcony
15. Secret Passage to Shanty Town in Beggars’ Alley
16. Shrine of Norgorber
17. Trap Room
18. Guildmaster’s Quarters
19. Secret Passage to Hawthorne Family Locksmith\*
20. False Guild Treasury
21. Monstrous Spider Pits
22. Black Ooze Pits (for disposing of bodies)
23. True Guild Treasury

\* Front Operations

as pets, participants in beast fights, or particularly fearful enforcers. A monster trafficker can breed or find such monsters, typically for a hefty fee. A ranger who sells griffon eggs to adventurers in a nation-state where such beasts are strictly reserved for the king’s airborne cavalry is an example of a monster trafficker.

**Prostitution:** Also known as “the worlds’ oldest profession,” prostitution involves the sale of sex for money. At the low end of the spectrum, prostitutes are held against their will as slaves and threatened with violence should they ever try to run away or strike out on their own. Still, many guilds secretly employ willing, high-end prostitutes as spies or thieves, as these courtesans—due to the nature of their business—are often able to gain entrance to the personal quarters of rich or high-ranking individuals. A magically bound succubus that uses her unnatural charm to gather inside information on the guilds’ rivals is an example of a prostitute.

**Smuggling:** Smugglers specialize in sneaking contraband past the local authorities. A smuggler can smuggle just about any illegal item, from slaves to drugs to magical weapons. A rogue who has trained dire rats to ferry packages through the city sewers and past the city walls is an example of a smuggler.

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**Spying:** Since thieves' guilds typically deal in secrecy, it's no surprise that spies are often found in their employ. Spies are sent to retrieve information on just about anything from rival guild activities to government agencies operating in foreign nations. A wizard who sits in a tower full of *crystal balls* to keep constant surveillance on the guild's enemies is just as much a spy as an eavesdropping rogue.

**Thievery:** The most obvious crime a thief can commit, theft involves taking the possessions of others by force, subterfuge, deception, infiltration, or bribery. Generally speaking, individual thieves specialize in stealing certain kinds of items. A horse thief, for example, possesses a very different skill set than a thief that siphons a small percentage of money from the payments made to a magistrate's standing army. The classic fantasy rogue that

specializes in breaking into heavily guarded dungeons and opening trapped vaults is an example of a thief.

### ALLIES & ENEMIES

A thieves' guild does not exist within a vacuum. Instead, it operates within the larger context of its political and socioeconomic environment, which can mean anything: a bustling city, a remote trade route, a chain of island-states, or even the infinite and ever-turbulent layers of the Abyss. Through its dealings and interactions with the forces and political powers of its environment, a thieves' guild is likely to develop all manner of allies and enemies outside of the guild, depending on how it conducts its business.

The local government or law enforcement agencies seem likely candidates as enemies of a thieves' guild, as these groups must actively work to thwart the lawless activities of the guild, but this is not always the case. Clever guilds plant operatives within the hierarchies of the local government or provide the city guards with kickbacks to encourage "looking the other way." The guild could also secure all kinds of leverage on the local authorities through the use of blackmail and racketeering schemes, thus rendering the local government unable or unwilling to take political action against the guild. This is especially true in regions where political corruption is the norm. Indeed, in cases of extreme corruption, the thieves' guild and the government could be one and the same.

When designing a thieves' guild, consider how the local population feels about the guild's presence. Perhaps the merchants in the area pool their resources to offer a secret bounty on the head of a guild leader who has been cutting into their profit margins for years. Alternatively, maybe several key merchants are helping the guild steal from their competitors, thus giving the shady merchants an unofficial monopoly. In this case, other merchants likely go to great lengths to secure the guild's favor as well, thus turning the guild into a kind of economic gatekeeper of the region.

Similarly, the local population may fear and shun the guild as bullies and brigands, or they may honor and respect them as the heroes of an otherwise unfair world. This latter option might sound far-fetched for your average criminal thieves' guild, but interviews with police in the real world often reveal that the most troubling aspect of combating gang violence arises from the fact that many children of troubled neighborhoods idealize criminal lifestyle, and aim to join such groups themselves when they grow up. Ultimately, most guilds watch their enemies closely and seek to turn them into allies through leverage secured via bribes, blackmail, threats, or any other means at the guild's disposal.



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Strangely enough, the only group of enemies that thieves' guilds regularly engage in open warfare with is other guilds. Turf wars, barroom brawls, destructive sabotage, and bloody feuds are often the result of multiple guilds operating in the same market space for any given length of time. This is also what makes guild feuds last so long, as the local authorities are much less motivated to take action against a guild that is primarily killing individuals from another thieves' guild. "Let them fight it out, so long as they're not murdering citizens," is often the dismissive response of the city watch when they discover another victim of guild-on-guild violence.

## LIFE OF A THIEF

Thieves' guilds are not merely the domains of criminals and villains, and PCs might also prove interested in joining such a group. Whether an entire adventuring band decides to join up with criminals or merely a lone unscrupulous hero, thieves' guilds might offer appealing resources, information, and potential adventures to characters of all walks. Remember, not all thieves' guilds are necessarily evil (one could form as an underground resistance movement against a totalitarian government, or another could be comprised of Robin Hood-type individuals who channel most of their stolen resources back into the community), and joining does not necessarily mean a PC will need to commit vile or even evil acts on a regular basis.

## Joining

Gaining membership into a thieves' guild often proves difficult, but on the flip side, once you find a way in, you're usually in for life. The trick to gaining entry and moving up the ranks lies in continually demonstrating loyalty and aptitude, both of which slowly garner the trust of the guild's leaders and its members. This could involve many actions such as taking dangerous missions for the guild, hiding guild members from guardsmen, donating powerful items to the guild, alerting the guild of an incoming raid, and so on. All in all, entering a thieves' guild should be a gradual process where the PCs take small jobs at first, serving as lookouts, scouts, and couriers for a few missions before being gradually offered more and more important tasks.

Most thieves' guilds prefer to clearly delineate who is and who is not officially in the guild. Thus, if a character seeks to move from guild ally to actual member, there is likely to be some kind of initiation ritual. This could involve the would-be member getting tattoos of the guild's insignia or an elaborate test in the depths of the guildhouse. In any case, the guild should make it abundantly clear to the initiate that once he joins, there is no turning back. Entering a thieves' guild is a lifelong commitment and most guilds do not take kindly to individuals who shirk their responsibilities.

## Thieves' Guilds in History

Organized crime has been around since the dawn of history. A GM designing a thieves' guild need look no further than the closest history book or newspaper for inspiration. Without going into great detail, here are a few famous organizations from history that can be conceptualized as thieves' guilds. Note that not all of these organizations are comprised of "thieves" in the classical sense of the word, but they all ran (or still run) covert operations to acquire resources through unofficial channels.

- The Italian Mafia
- The Japanese Yakuza
- The Chinese Triad
- The Spanish Inquisition
- Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), one of the few legal cartels in the world.
- The French Resistance during World War II
- The American Revolutionaries in the days leading up to the Declaration of Independence
- The Vietcong operating in Southern Vietnam during the Vietnam War
- The Taliban operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan today

## Benefits

Most of what a thieves' guild has to offer arises from the guild's network of members and allies. Should the party need to launder all the stolen coins from their last raid, they can likely find a forger through the guild capable of melting down their stolen coins and recasting them as gold bars, complete with the official stamped seal of a far-away empire (for a nominal fee of course). Similarly, if a member is looking for a rare poison, the guild's poison specialist would be an excellent resource.

In addition to the human capital and specialists offered by a guild, members also have access to the guild's physical amenities, potentially including the guild house and anything else the guild may own, such as sailing ships, front operations, hideouts, and so forth. Furthermore, they likely receive discounts—or least friendly, knowing nods whenever they visit any of the guild's front operations.

## Responsibilities

Of course, joining a thieves' guild is not without its responsibilities and members are likely required to regularly contribute to the guild in some way. This contribution could be monetary, with the PCs providing some percentage of their income to the guild coffers, or it might require them to periodically go on missions for the guild. Ultimately, the PCs are expected to take an interest in furthering the guild's goals and objectives, whatever those shadowy activities may be.