

THE ETERNAL COURT

STARTER SCENARIO

THE BUTCHER OF KERESKEDO

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THE ETERNAL COURT
FILE · EC · STARTE · EDITION I · MDCCXCIII



Starter Scenario

The Locksmith's Daughter

A first night in Kormor Kirak: a missing girl, a Lich-marked door, and a city that already knows the company's faces.

KORMOR KIRAK · VIDEK · ANNO 1793

FORMAT	LENGTH	SUSPICION
Scenario · A5	One Evening	○ · at start

This is a complete, ready-to-run introductory adventure for The Eternal Court campaign setting. It serves two purposes:

1. As a playable scenario that introduces players to Kormor Kirak, its key NPCs, locations, and the tone of the setting.
2. As a proof-of-concept template that shows GMs how every future Olivia's Field Report can be deconstructed into a full adventure using the same structural approach.

The scenario is written system-agnostic in its narrative sections, with clearly marked sidebars for D&D 5e and Daggerheart mechanical notes. GMs should adapt difficulty and stat blocks to match their table's system and level.

NOTE FOR OTHER CLAUDE INSTANCE: This document is built from the established worldbuilding, characters, and locations of The Eternal Court setting, originally developed as “Reign of Blood.” The existing product line includes: a Prose Novella (16 chapters), Campaign World Guide, Castle Guide (88-page room-by-room breakdown of Torony Piros), City Locations Guide (district-by-district guide to Kormor Kirak), Character Sheets (dual 5E and Daggerheart stat blocks for six main characters), and an Enemy Bestiary (dual stat blocks, encounter tables). Where this scenario needs to connect to that existing material, sections are marked with [INTEGRATE] tags. The narrative and encounter design is original and ready to use – the integration points are about making sure this connects to the existing supplement material rather than contradicting it.

CAPITULUM

HEADER BLOCK

CASE DESIGNATION: “The Butcher of Kereskedo”

DATE FILED: *[Set to early in the campaign timeline, shortly after Olivia’s arrival in Kormor Kirak]*

CLASSIFICATION: Elevated — Olivia’s report to Barron Whitehallow omits certain details about Szeret’s involvement and the full nature of what was discovered beneath the market.

SCENARIO TYPE: Murder / Supernatural Disturbance / The Queen’s Influence

RECOMMENDED PARTY LEVEL: D&D 5e: Levels 1-3 | Daggerheart: Tier 1

ESTIMATED PLAY TIME: 4-6 hours (one long session or two shorter ones)

NUMBER OF PLAYERS: 3-5

CAPITULUM

PART 1: THE REPORT (Player-Facing)

This section is written in Olivia’s voice as her official field report to Barron Whitehallow. It can be read aloud to players as a framing device, or printed and handed out as a physical prop. The report describes events that have already occurred – the players will then “live through” a version of these events during play.

OLIVIA’S FIELD REPORT – CASE FILE: THE BUTCHER OF KERESKEDO

TO: Sir Barron Whitehallow, Foreign Minister, Albion Imperial Delegation

FROM: Miss Olivia Faren, Aide-de-Camp, Albion Imperial Delegation

RE: Incident at Kereskedo Market – Preliminary Findings

Sir,

I write to inform you of a disturbance at the Kereskedo Market that I believe warrants your attention and, should you find it appropriate, a formal inquiry by the delegation.

Three days prior to the date of this report, a merchant by the name of Tomas Brekk was discovered dead in his stall at the eastern arcade of the market. Brekk dealt in preserved meats and cured provisions, a trade he had practiced for some years, and by all accounts he was well known to the regular vendors and patrons. His body was found by a neighboring stallkeeper at first light. The cause of death appeared to be a single wound to the chest, though the condition of the body suggested something beyond ordinary violence. I will

spare you the details in this summary but have documented them in my field notes, which are available upon request.

What compelled my investigation was the market overseer's reluctance to report the death through official channels. Rozito Vallikozo, who holds the royal appointment of market fixer, attempted to have the stall cleaned and the body removed before midday. When I arrived — having heard of the incident from Eppy Flinder at the Bastion Inn — Rozito was visibly agitated and insisted the matter was “a merchant's quarrel, nothing more.”

My investigation, conducted with the assistance of Jack Winbow and a local guide, revealed the following:

First, that Tomas Brekk had recently taken delivery of several unmarked crates from a supplier outside the city walls, the contents of which were not consistent with his declared trade goods. Second, that a section of the market's lower storage vaults — which I was told had been sealed for years — showed signs of recent access, including fresh torch marks and disturbance of the dust on the flagstones. Third, that Brekk's wound bore markings consistent with descriptions I have read of ritualistic practices, though I confess my knowledge in such matters is limited.

I was unable to gain access to the sealed vaults, as Rozito claimed the keys had been lost and the Queen's Red Guard would need to authorize entry. I have submitted a formal request through the appropriate channels.

My preliminary conclusion is that Tomas Brekk was killed in connection with whatever activity is taking place in the lower vaults, and that Rozito Vallikozo either knows more than he is sharing or has been instructed to contain the situation. I do not believe this was a merchant's quarrel.

I await your guidance on how to proceed.

Your obedient servant,

Olivia Faren

GM Notes on the Report

The report above is Olivia's official, sanitized account. She is being honest about what she observed but cautious about what she speculates. Several details are deliberately omitted or understated:

- She does not mention that Szeret accompanied her to the market on the second day of her investigation
- She downplays her own fear and the genuine danger she was in
- She does not describe the symbols she found on Brekk's body in detail because she doesn't yet understand what they mean
- The "local guide" she references is deliberately vague — this is a slot where a player character can be inserted into the narrative

CAPITULUM

PART 2: WHAT OZJIVA LEFT OUT (GM Eyes Only)

This section reveals the full truth behind the report. Read this thoroughly before running the scenario. This is your complete picture.

What Actually Happened

Tomas Brekk was not simply a meat merchant. For the past several months, he had been receiving deliveries of alchemical components disguised as trade goods — bone ash, rendered fat infused with grave dust, and sealed clay jars containing organic material that defies easy identification. These supplies were being smuggled into Kormor Kirak from outside the city walls, delivered by night via a route that avoids the main gates.

Brekk was storing these materials in the sealed lower vaults beneath the Kereskedo Market, which have been quietly reopened by agents of the Lich Cult. The vaults, which date back to the city's founding, connect to a network of older tunnels that predate the current market structure. The cult has been using this space as a staging area for necromantic rituals — small-scale workings that test the boundaries of what's possible under the Queen's nose.

Brekk was killed because he got greedy. He opened one of the sealed jars, hoping to sell its contents to a private buyer, and what he found inside horrified him enough that he threatened to go to the Red Guard. The cult couldn't allow that. A cultist named Vael Morik — who poses as a spice merchant two stalls down from Brekk's — killed him using a ritual blade that leaves necrotic scarring around the wound. The symbols carved into Brekk's

chest are a warning to other cult members: this is what happens when you break faith.

Rozito Vallikozo is aware that something dark is happening beneath the market. He doesn't know the full extent of it, but he knows enough to be terrified. His position as market fixer was a royal appointment from Queen Kiraline's court, and he suspects (correctly) that certain powerful figures want the lower vaults left alone. He is caught between self-preservation and his growing horror at what's been going on under his watch. He is not a cult member, but he has been looking the other way and profiting from the bribes.

What Olivia Suspects but Can't Prove

Olivia noticed that the symbols on Brekk's body resembled illustrations she saw in a reference text at the Albion Consulate — a partial catalog of Lich Cult iconography from an earlier era. She suspects the cult is active again but has no direct evidence linking the murder to a larger organization.

She also suspects Rozito is being paid to keep quiet, based on his expensive new coat (notably finer than anything a market fixer could afford) and his evasiveness when questioned. But she has no proof of bribery.

She noticed that Szeret seemed to recognize the symbols on Brekk's body but said nothing about it. This bothered Olivia, but she chose not to press the issue in her report to Barron.

What Olivia Doesn't Know

The Queen is aware of the cult's presence beneath the market. Not because she opposes them — but because she is using them. Kiraline has been quietly allowing the cult to operate as a test of their capabilities. She wants to

understand the current state of necromantic practice in her city, and she finds it more useful to observe than to crush them immediately. The cult believes they are operating in secret. They are not.

The sealed lower vaults connect, through a collapsed but passable tunnel, to a chamber beneath Torony Piros. This connection is ancient and was sealed generations ago, but someone on the castle side has cleared enough rubble to allow passage. Whether this was done on Kiraline's orders or by someone else in the castle remains unknown.

Vael Morik, the killer, is a mid-level cult operative who genuinely believes in the Lich's eventual resurrection. He is fanatical, precise, and willing to kill again. He has already selected his next target: a Red Guard patrol leader who has been asking too many questions about deliveries to the market at odd hours.

CAPITULUM

PART 3: ENCOUNTER DESIGN BREAKDOWN (GM Toolkit)

This section deconstructs the journal entry into a playable adventure. It provides everything a GM needs to run the scenario at the table.

Setup

STARTING SITUATION: The players are newcomers to Kormor Kirak, either arriving with or shortly after the Albion delegation. They may be hired guards, independent adventurers, or specialists Barron Whitehallow has recruited for security during the theater construction. On the morning the scenario begins, Eppy Flinder mentions at breakfast that something happened at the Kereskedo Market overnight — a merchant was found dead and “the fixer is in a state about it.”

Barron, still recovering from his latest bout of coughing, asks the players to look into it quietly. He doesn’t want the delegation officially involved yet, but he wants to know if there’s a threat to the construction project. Olivia accompanies the players as Barron’s representative (and as the investigation’s organizing mind).

[INTEGRATE]: If your table is using pre-generated characters or has established character hooks for why PCs are in Kormor Kirak, slot those in here. The scenario works regardless of the players’ specific reasons for being in

the city — the only requirement is that they have a reason to investigate on behalf of or adjacent to the Albion delegation.

OPENING READ-ALoud

The morning air in Kormor Kirak carries the smell of wet stone and woodsmoke. The Bastion Inn is quiet at this hour, the common room still bearing the ghost-warmth of last night's fire. Eppy Flinder sets a pot of tea on the table without being asked and leans against the bar, arms crossed.

"Something happened at the market last night. Tomas Brekk — he sells cured meats from that stall near the eastern arcade — found dead in his shop. Rozito's been running around like a man whose hair is on fire trying to keep it quiet. Red Guard hasn't been called yet, which tells you something."

She pauses, pours herself a cup.

"Might be nothing. But nothing in this city stays nothing for long."

TICKING CLOCK: Vael Morik plans to kill the Red Guard patrol leader, Captain Dara Szofi, tonight at sundown, when she makes her regular rounds through the market's eastern arcade. If the players don't uncover the cult's presence in the lower vaults or identify Morik by then, they'll arrive at the market to find a second body and a city on the edge of panic.

Key NPCs

NPC	ROLE IN SCENARIO	WHAT THEY KNOW	WHAT THEY WANT	WHAT THEY’LL LIE ABOUT
ROZITO VAL- LIKOZO	Market Fixer / Reluctant Witness	Knows the lower vaults have been accessed. Knows someone powerful wants them left alone. Has seen Morik coming and going at odd hours.	Wants the whole thing to go away. Wants to keep his position and his life. Can be turned with enough pressure or a promise of protection.	Will claim the vaults are sealed and inaccessible. Will deny knowing about any unusual deliveries. Will claim Brekk had gambling debts (a lie to deflect).
VAEL MORIK	The Killer / Cult Op- erative (posing as a spice merchant)	Full knowledge of the cult’s local operation. Knows the vault layout and tunnel connections. Knows where the next delivery is coming from.	Wants to protect the cult’s operation and complete his next kill. Will attempt to flee if exposed, fight if cornered.	Everything. His entire presence in the market is a cover. He will seem helpful and concerned about the murder if approached casually, pointing suspicion toward Brekk’s “debts.”
EPY FLINDER	Innkeep- er / In- formation Broker / Ancient Blood	Knows the market’s social dynamics. Knows Rozito is scared of something. Knows Brekk’s stall was receiving	Wants to protect the Bastion Inn and its guests. Genuinely cares about the safety of the Albion	Won’t reveal the full extent of her ancestry, her connection to the old world, or what she really knows about the

late-night deliveries. Her people predate humanity in this region. Her Trompe l'Oeil ceiling at the Bastion, with its alien constellations, is a map of a history nobody else can read.

delegation. Will share information if she trusts the players — but her knowledge operates on a longer timeline than human concerns.

land under the market unless deep trust is established over multiple sessions.

CAPTAIN	Red	Knows her patrols	Wants to do her	Nothing — she’s
DARA	Guard	have noted in-	job properly.	one of the few
SZOFI	Patrol	creased activity	Frustrated by	straight shooters
	Leader /	near the market	the bureaucratic	in this scenario.
	Potential	at night. Has filed	stonewalling.	That’s what
	Victim	reports that were	Open to work-	makes her a tar-
		ignored by her	ing with out-	get.
		superiors. Sus-	siders if they	
		pects corruption	seem compet-	
		in the market ad-	ent.	
		ministration.		

SZERET	The Wild-	Recognizes the	Curious. Drawn	Won’t reveal
VERESZ	card	cult symbols.	to the investiga-	what she knows
		Knows the his-	tion because it’s	about her moth-
		tory of the Lich	interesting and	er’s possible in-
		Cult from her	because Olivia is	volvement. Will
		mother’s ac-	involved. Will	play dumb about
		counts. Suspects	help but on her	the symbols if
		her mother is	own terms and	pressed directly.
			timeline.	

aware of cult activity.

OLIVIA FAREN	Investigator / Party Anchor	Brilliant with numbers and patterns. Notices details others miss. Operates by logic and evidence.	Wants to solve the case, protect the delegation, and prove her value to Barron.	Nothing deliberately, but her report to Barron will omit certain details about Szeret's involvement, reflecting her growing personal loyalty to the princess over strict professional protocol.
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[INTEGRATE]: For each NPC above, cross-reference with the Character Sheets document (dual 5E/Daggerheart stat blocks) for Olivia, Jack, Szeret, and Eppy. Cross-reference with the City Locations Guide for Rozito's established personality and role. Vael Morik and Captain Dara Szofi are new NPCs created for this scenario — they'll need full stat blocks and physical descriptions consistent with the setting's visual language. Use the Enemy Bestiary as a reference for power level and formatting conventions.

Key Locations

LOCATION	SCENE PURPOSE	SENSORY DETAILS	HIDDEN ELEMENT
THE BAS-TION INN	Home base / Briefing / Social hub	Warm hearth, smell of black tea and bread, creaking floorboards, morning light through thick glass windows. Eppy's presence is steady and grounding — pointed ears, earthy aesthetic, a calm that suggests she's seen far worse. Above the common room, a Trompe l'Oeil ceiling painted with unfamiliar constellations in a language that isn't human.	Eppy keeps a lockbox behind the bar with information she's collected about strange happenings in the city. The ceiling is a map of a history predating human settlement — players who study it may find it connects to deeper mysteries in later scenarios.
KERESKEDO MARKET — EASTERN ARCADE	Crime scene / Investigation / Social encounters	Ancient stone arches, dense with vendor stalls, the competing smells of spices, smoked meat, leather, and something underneath it all — faintly chemical, faintly sweet. The crowd thins near Brekk's stall. Flies.	Morik's spice stall is two stalls down. From his position, he can watch everyone who approaches Brekk's shop. He's been doing exactly that all morning.
BREKK'S STALL	Crime scene investigation	The stall is half-shuttered. Inside, the meat hooks are empty. A dark stain on the flagstones has been partially scrubbed. The air smells of copper and lye. Brekk's per-	The chest contains Brekk's delivery ledger, written in a crude personal cipher. An Intelligence check (DC 13 / Daggerheart moderate difficulty) reveals recent

sonal effects are in a wooden chest beneath the counter. entries don't match his declared trade goods. One entry reads: "3 jars – DO NOT OPEN – from the outside man."

ROZITO'S OFFICE

Inter-
roga-
tion /
Social
pressure

A cluttered room above the market's main entrance. Ledgers, contracts, foreign trade permits stacked on every surface. A new coat hangs on a hook – clearly expensive, at odds with the worn furniture. The window overlooks the eastern arcade.

A hidden drawer in his desk contains a bag of coins stamped with a mark players won't recognize – payment from the cult. If confronted with this, Rozito breaks.

THE LOWER VAULTS

Explora-
tion /
Discov-
ery / Po-
tential
Combat

Cold. Damp. The ceiling is low and arched, older construction than the market above. Torch sconces have been recently restocked. The air smells of earth and something else – a faint ozone-like tang that makes the hair stand up. Sounds echo strangely. The tunnels branch.

The main vault chamber has been converted into a ritual workspace. A stone table at the center is stained dark. Against the far wall, a partially cleared tunnel leads deeper – toward the castle. This passage is not meant to be explored in this scenario – it's a hook for later.

THE EAST- ERN ARCADE AT SUNDOWN

Climax /
Combat
or Res-
cue

The market is winding down for the day. Vendors are packing up. The light is amber and fading. Long shad-

If the players haven't identified Morik by this point, they witness his attempt on Szofi's life

ows from the stone arches. in real time. If they
 Captain Szofi makes her have identified him,
 rounds, stopping to chat they can set a trap.
 with vendors. Morik watches
 from his stall, hand beneath
 the counter.

[INTEGRATE]: The Kereskedo Market and Bastion Inn have established descriptions in the City Locations Guide. Use those as the primary reference and supplement with the sensory details provided here. The Lower Vaults are a new sub-location — cross-reference the Castle Guide (88-page Torony Piros breakdown) for any established underground geography or tunnel systems that connect to the castle.

Clue Trail

The investigation follows a web of discoveries. Players don't need to find them all or find them in order — but each clue points toward others, and there are always at least two paths to any critical revelation.

DISCOVERY I: THE BODY AND THE STALL

- **WHAT:** Brekk's body (if still present) or the crime scene (if removed). The necrotic scarring around the wound. His delivery ledger with the coded entries.
- **WHERE:** Brekk's stall in the eastern arcade.
- **HOW:** Basic investigation. Perception, Investigation, or Insight checks depending on what the players focus on.
- **LEADS TO:** Questions about who supplied Brekk, what was in the jars, and why Rozito is trying to cover it up.

DISCOVERY 2: ROZITO'S NERVOUSNESS

- **WHAT:** Rozito is scared, evasive, and recently wealthy. His story about Brekk's "gambling debts" doesn't hold up under pressure. He knows the lower vaults have been accessed.
- **WHERE:** Rozito's office above the market, or in the market itself if the players corner him.
- **HOW:** Social pressure, Persuasion, Intimidation, or catching him in a contradiction. Finding the cult coins in his desk is the hard proof.
- **LEADS TO:** The existence of the lower vaults and the fact that someone powerful wants them left alone. Rozito can be convinced to provide the keys (which he claimed were lost) if threatened or promised protection.

DISCOVERY 3: THE HELPFUL SPICE MERCHANT

- **WHAT:** Vael Morik approaches the players, offering help. He confirms Brekk had "trouble with some people outside the city" and suggests the murder was likely a debt collection gone wrong. He's polished, sympathetic, and completely lying.
- **WHERE:** His stall in the eastern arcade, or he approaches the players as they investigate.
- **HOW:** Players who actively observe the market may notice Morik watching them before he approaches (Perception DC 15 / Daggerheart high difficulty). If they investigate his stall, the spices are real but his supplier records are fabricated.
- **LEADS TO:** A false trail if players trust him, or suspicion if they catch his inconsistencies. A Wisdom/Insight check (DC 14) reveals that Morik's sympathy feels performative — his eyes don't match his words.

DISCOVERY 4: CAPTAIN SZOFI'S FRUSTRATION

- **WHAT:** The Red Guard patrol leader has been filing reports about irregular nighttime activity at the market for weeks. Her reports were “received and noted” but nothing happened. She’s convinced someone in the administration is blocking her.
- **WHERE:** She can be found making rounds in the market, or at the Red Guard station near the main gate.
- **HOW:** Asking around about Red Guard presence at the market, or Eppy can point the players toward her as “the only guard worth talking to.”
- **LEADS TO:** Confirmation that Rozito isn’t the only one being pressured to look away. Also establishes Szofi as a person worth protecting, which creates stakes for the climax.

DISCOVERY 5: THE LOWER VAULTS

- **WHAT:** The sealed vaults beneath the market have been reopened and converted into a ritual workspace. Evidence of necromantic practice. Unmarked crates matching Brekk’s delivery descriptions. A partially cleared tunnel leading deeper underground.
- **WHERE:** Below the Kereskedo Market, accessed through a locked iron door behind the western storage rooms.
- **HOW:** Getting the keys from Rozito (by persuasion, intimidation, or theft), or finding an alternate entrance through the old drainage channels (requires exploration and a Survival/Investigation check, DC 14).
- **LEADS TO:** The full picture. The cult is here, they’re working in the dark, and they’re connected to something larger. The tunnel toward the castle is the campaign-level hook.

THE REVEAL

The pieces come together when players connect Morik to the vaults. His stall's proximity to Brekk's wasn't coincidence — he was the handler. If players find the ritual blade in the vaults (hidden in a hollowed-out crate, Investigation DC 12), it matches the wound pattern on Brekk's body. And if they compare Morik's handwriting (from his fabricated supplier records) to notes found in the vaults, it's a match.

Encounter Beats

The scenario unfolds across three acts, roughly corresponding to morning, afternoon, and evening of a single day in Kormor Kirak. GMs should pace according to their table's energy and preference.

ACT 1: "A Merchant's Quarrel" (Morning)

BEAT 1: BREAKFAST AT THE BASTION

- **TYPE:** Social / Briefing
- **WHAT HAPPENS:** Eppy shares the news about Brekk. If Barron is present, he asks the players to investigate quietly. Olivia joins the party. Players can ask Eppy questions about the market, Brekk, and Rozito before heading out.

SYSTEM NOTES: No checks required. This is pure roleplay and information gathering. Eppy shares freely but doesn't volunteer everything — players who ask smart questions get better answers.

GM TIP: Establish the tone here. The Bastion Inn should feel safe, warm, and human. The darkness is outside. If Jack Winbow is present, observant players

may notice his scarred back (visible if he stretches or reaches), that he sleeps with his window open even in winter, and that Eppy seems to know something about him that the rest of the delegation doesn't. Jack is a lycanthrope — he disappears on full moon nights. This isn't relevant to the scenario's plot, but it's a character thread that pays off later and sharp players will start to notice the signs early.

BEAT 2: THE CRIME SCENE

- **TYPE:** Exploration / Investigation
 - **WHAT HAPPENS:** Players arrive at the Kereskedo Market and investigate Brekk's stall. The body may or may not still be present depending on how quickly they moved. They encounter Rozito, who is agitated and unhelpful. They may also encounter Morik, who is helpful and watchful.
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SYSTEM NOTES

- **D&D:** Investigation DC 12 to find the ledger. DC 13 to decode the cipher. DC 10 Perception to notice the stain was recently cleaned. DC 15 Perception to notice Morik watching from his stall.
- **Daggerheart:** Standard difficulty for most checks. High difficulty to spot Morik's observation.

GM TIP: Let the players drive the investigation. Don't rush them. If they get stuck, have Olivia notice something ("Those symbols... I've seen something like them before, in a book at the Consulate") to nudge them forward.

ACT 2: “Following the Thread” (Afternoon)

BEAT 3: PRESSURING ROZITO

- **TYPE:** Social / Interrogation
- **WHAT HAPPENS:** Players confront Rozito, either at the market or in his office. He lies, deflects, and begs. If cornered with evidence (the expensive coat, the cult coins in his desk, the inconsistencies in his story), he cracks and reveals that someone told him to keep the vaults sealed and to not report anything unusual. He doesn’t know who – the instructions came through an intermediary. He can provide the vault keys.

SYSTEM NOTES

- **D&D:** Persuasion DC 12 or Intimidation DC 10 to crack Rozito without physical evidence. DC drops to 8 if players have the cult coins or other proof.
- **Daggerheart:** Low difficulty with evidence, moderate without.

GM TIP: Rozito is sympathetic despite his complicity. He’s a small man caught up in something too big for him. Play his fear as genuine, not theatrical. If the players threaten him too hard, he shuts down entirely and they’ll need to find another way to the vaults.

BEAT 4: INTO THE VAULTS

- **TYPE:** Exploration / Discovery / Potential Combat
- **WHAT HAPPENS:** Players descend into the lower vaults. They navigate old tunnels, find the ritual workspace, discover the crates, and see the partially cleared tunnel toward the castle. If they search carefully, they find the ritual blade and the cult notes.

SYSTEM NOTES

- **D&D:** Investigation DC 12 for the ritual blade. DC 10 Arcana or Religion to identify the ritual markings on the stone table. DC 14 to match Morik's handwriting to the vault notes. Perception DC 13 to notice the tunnel toward the castle shows signs of traffic from both directions.
- **Daggerheart:** Standard difficulty for most discoveries. Arcana/lore check at moderate difficulty for identifying the ritual nature of the workspace.
- **POTENTIAL COMBAT:** If the GM wants to increase tension, a minor guardian can be encountered in the vaults – perhaps an undead rat swarm or a minor necrotic trap left as an alarm system. This should be a low-stakes fight that signals danger without draining resources before the climax.

GM TIP: The vaults should feel wrong. Not just dark – wrong. The air is too still. Sounds don't echo the way they should. The torches burn a slightly different color. Lean into the uncanny rather than the overtly horrific. The scariest thing in the vaults isn't a monster – it's the realization that someone has been working down here, methodically, for weeks.

[INTEGRATE]: Cross-reference the Campaign World Guide for established Lich Cult iconography, ritual descriptions, and supernatural mechanics. Cross-reference the Enemy Bestiary for Lich Cult Necromancer stat blocks and encounter design conventions. The key narrative beats are: (1) this space has been used for necromantic work, (2) the supplies match Brekk's deliveries, and (3) the tunnel toward Torony Piros exists but is not fully passable yet.

BEAT 5: SZERET'S VISIT (OPTIONAL)

- **TYPE:** Social / Wildcard
- **WHAT HAPPENS:** At some point during the afternoon – perhaps as the players emerge from the vaults, or as they're connecting the pieces at the Bastion – Szeret appears. She may have been following Olivia, or she may

have her own reasons for being near the market. She recognizes the cult symbols if shown them but deflects with a mix of curiosity and studied ignorance. She offers to help, on her own terms.

SYSTEM NOTES: No checks needed unless players try to read her (Insight DC 18 to sense she knows more than she's saying — Szeret is very good at this).

GM TIP: Szeret's presence should be exciting and destabilizing. She brings energy, danger, and the faint smell of vampire royalty into what has been a human-scale investigation. She is not the players' friend yet — she is interested. There's a difference. Play her as charming, a little predatory, and genuinely intrigued by Olivia and the investigation.

ACT 3: "Sundown" (Evening)

The climax depends on what the players have uncovered and what choices they make.

SCENARIO A: PLAYERS HAVE IDENTIFIED MORIK

If the players have connected Morik to the murder and the cult operation, they can set a trap.

BEAT 6A: THE TRAP

- **TYPE:** Planning / Combat
- **WHAT HAPPENS:** Players know Morik is the killer and that Captain Szofi is likely his next target. They can warn Szofi, stake out the market at sundown, and confront Morik when he makes his move. This is a planned engagement where the players have the advantage.

SYSTEM NOTES

- Morik is a dangerous opponent in close quarters. He fights with the ritual blade (which deals necrotic damage on top of piercing) and carries two vials of alchemical smoke that create heavily obscured areas.
- D&D: Morik's stat block should reflect a CR 2-3 threat. He is fast, precise, and fights to escape rather than to the death. If reduced to half HP, he attempts to flee toward the lower vaults.
- Daggerheart: Moderate-to-high threat solo enemy. Emphasize his willingness to use dirty tactics and environmental advantage.
- If Szofi is present and warned, she fights alongside the players and is competent but not a full combatant for party-balance purposes.

[INTEGRATE]: Create a full stat block for Vael Morik for both D&D 5e and Daggerheart, using the formatting conventions established in the Character Sheets and Enemy Bestiary documents. He should be a rogue/assassin archetype with minor necromantic abilities (perhaps a single-use necrotic burst or the ability to animate small dead creatures as a distraction). His ritual blade should be a notable loot item with flavor text connecting it to the Lich Cult. Reference the Lich Cult Necromancer entry in the Bestiary for power-level calibration — Morik should be less powerful than a full necromancer but more dangerous than a common thug.

SCENARIO B: PLAYERS HAVE NOT IDENTIFIED MORIK

If the players are still piecing things together at sundown, the scenario shifts to a rescue.

BEAT 6B: THE ATTACK

- **TYPE:** Combat / Rescue

- **WHAT HAPPENS:** As the market closes for the day, the players hear a commotion in the eastern arcade. They arrive to find Captain Szofi on the ground, wounded but alive. Morik is fleeing through the market crowd, using the chaos to cover his escape. Players must choose: pursue Morik, or stabilize Szofi first?

SYSTEM NOTES

- **IF THEY PURSUE:** This becomes a chase scene through the market stalls, with obstacles (overturned carts, panicking vendors, narrow alleys). D&D: Use chase rules from DMG or a series of Athletics/Acrobatics checks, DC 12-15. Daggerheart: Escalating tension rolls.
- **IF THEY STABILIZE SZOFI FIRST:** Medicine DC 10 to stabilize, DC 14 to get her back on her feet. Morik escapes to the vaults but the players now know who they're looking for.
- **IF THEY SPLIT UP:** Both can happen simultaneously. This is the most exciting option and should be rewarded rather than punished.

BEAT 7: RESOLUTION

- **TYPE:** Aftermath / Narrative

Regardless of the specific climax, the scenario ends with the players having exposed (at minimum) the cult's presence in the lower vaults and Morik's role as the killer. What happens next depends on the outcome:

Branching Outcomes

RESOLUTION A: BEST CASE — MORIK CAPTURED, VAULTS EXPOSED

The players catch Morik alive and reveal the cult operation to Barron and the Red Guard. Szofi survives. The lower vaults are sealed (officially this time), and a formal investigation is launched. Barron is impressed. Olivia writes her report, omitting Szeret's involvement.

CONSEQUENCE: The cult loses a mid-level operative and a staging area. They will regroup and be more cautious going forward. The tunnel toward the castle remains undiscovered by authorities (unless the players specifically report it), leaving a major thread dangling.

RESOLUTION B: PARTIAL SUCCESS — MORIK ESCAPES, VAULTS EXPOSED

The players discover the vaults and save Szofi, but Morik escapes into the tunnels. The cult knows they've been found. The immediate threat is contained, but a dangerous operative is now underground and angry.

CONSEQUENCE: Morik becomes a recurring antagonist. He will resurface in a later scenario, likely with backup. The cult accelerates their timeline, making the next few weeks in Kormor Kirak more dangerous.

RESOLUTION C: FAILURE — SZOFI DIES, INVESTIGATION STALLS

The players don't uncover enough in time. Szofi is killed. A second murder in the market causes panic. Rozito is arrested by the Red Guard as the most obvious suspect (he's not the killer, but he looks guilty). The real culprits tighten their grip on the market's underworld.

CONSEQUENCE: The players carry the weight of a preventable death. Rozito, if he survives Red Guard interrogation, may become a future ally driven by guilt and desperation. The cult grows bolder, believing themselves untouchable.

Consequences & Threads

IMMEDIATE

- The Kereskedo Market is destabilized. Vendors are scared. Commerce slows. Rumors spread.
 - Rozito's fate depends on the players' actions. Protected? Arrested? Left to hang?
 - Captain Szofi (if alive) becomes a reliable contact within the Red Guard — one of the few the players can trust.
-

ONGOING

- Who cleared the tunnel from the castle side? This question will haunt the investigation going forward.
 - The cult lost a node but not the network. Other operatives in the city will be harder to find now that they know someone is looking.
 - Szeret's interest in the investigation (and in Olivia) deepens. She begins appearing more frequently, always on her own schedule.
-

CAMPAIGN HOOK

- The tunnel beneath the vaults points toward Torony Piros. This is the thread that, when pulled, unravels into the larger story of Queen Kiraline's involvement with the cult and her long game for power.

- Barron's reaction to the players' findings will be telling. He seems genuinely alarmed – but is he alarmed because of the cult, or because of what the cult's exposure might reveal about the Queen? Players paying attention to his behavior will note that his concern seems disproportionate to a dead meat merchant.

CAPITULUM

PART 4: HANDOUTS & PROPS

Materials the GM can prepare or print for table use:

- **OLIVIA'S FIELD REPORT** (Part 1 of this document) — hand to players as the scenario framing device, either before play begins or as a post-session wrap-up that sets up the next session
- **BREKK'S DELIVERY LEDGER** — a prop showing the merchant's records with coded entries. Can be created as a simple handwritten page with entries like “3 barrels — salt pork — Miklo” mixed with suspicious entries like “3 jars — SEALED — the outside man” and “5 crates — NO LABEL — night delivery, east dock”
- **CULT SYMBOL SKETCH** — a drawing of the symbols found on Brekk's body and in the vaults. Should be abstract and unsettling rather than overtly occult. Think geometric, precise, wrong.
- **ROZITO'S HIDDEN COINS** — a description or illustration of the cult payment coins, stamped with an unfamiliar mark (a jawless skull, perhaps, or a broken circle)
- **MAP OF THE KERESKEDO MARKET** — showing the eastern arcade, Brekk's stall, Morik's stall, Rozito's office, and the entrance to the lower vaults

[**INTEGRATE**]: The product line includes 58 pieces of original art. If illustrations exist for the Kereskedo Market, Bastion Inn, or relevant NPCs, reference those here for GM handout use. If maps have been created for the City Locations Guide, the market district map is the highest priority for table

play — even a rough sketch helps enormously with the investigation and climax scenes.

CAPITULUM

PART 5: OM QUER REFERENCE

Print this page and keep it behind your screen.

ONE-SENTENCE PITCH: A dead merchant in the oldest market in the city leads to a cult operating in the tunnels below – and something worse in the tunnels below that.

TONE: Slow-burn investigation with a sharp, tense climax. Think noir in a gothic setting. The horror is in what people are willing to ignore.

ESSENTIAL NPCs

- **ROZITO VALLIKOZO** – Nervous market fixer. Knows too much. Can be cracked.
- **VAEL MORIK** – Spice merchant. Cult operative. The killer. Helpful until he's not.
- **EPPI FLINDER** – Innkeeper. Information source. Trustworthy.
- **CAPTAIN DARA SZOFI** – Red Guard. Honest cop. Target.
- **OLIVIA FAREN** – The brains. Player anchor. Drives the investigation forward if it stalls.
- **SZERET VERESZ** – Wildcard. Knows more than she says. Appears on her own schedule.

ESSENTIAL LOCATIONS

- **BASTION INN** – Safe. Home base. Briefing.

- **KERESKEDO MARKET, EASTERN ARCADE** — Crime scene. Morik's hunting ground.
- **ROZITO'S OFFICE** — Above the market. Where the money trail leads.
- **LOWER VAULTS** — Below the market. Where the truth is.

THE SECRET: The Lich Cult is operating beneath the market with the Queen's quiet awareness. The tunnel connects to the castle.

THE DANGER: Vael Morik will kill again tonight if the players don't stop him.

TICKING CLOCK: Sundown. Captain Szofi's patrol route through the eastern arcade. Morik has been watching her for days.

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PART 6: RUNNING MODES

Three ways to run this scenario, depending on your GM style:

RUNNING IT STRAIGHT

Use the full encounter design breakdown as written. Follow the clue trail through all three acts. Hit the beats. Let the branching outcomes play out based on player choices. This gives you a structured 4-6 hour session with clear pacing.

RUNNING IT LOOSE

Read Olivia's report, the "What Actually Happened" section, and the GM Quick Reference. Know the truth, know the NPCs, know the ticking clock. Then just react to whatever your players do. The structured beats are guardrails, not rails.

RUNNING IT AS A COLD OPEN

Skip Olivia's report entirely. Start the players in the market when Brekk's body is discovered. No briefing, no Barron, no context. They're just there, they see a dead man, and Rozito is trying to make it go away. Let them decide whether to get involved. This is harder to run but creates the most organic investigation experience.

RUNNING IT AS A ONE-SHOT

If you're not running a full Eternal Court campaign, this scenario works as a standalone adventure. Ignore the campaign hooks (the tunnel toward the castle, Kiraline's involvement, Barron's secret). Focus on the murder mystery and the cult operation. The scenario resolves cleanly with Morik's capture or escape and the vaults' exposure.

CAPITULUM

PART 7: DESIGNER'S NOTES

This section explains the structural choices behind the scenario so GMs can apply the same approach to future Olivia's Field Reports.

Why This Scenario Works as an Introduction

This scenario introduces players to Kormor Kirak through action rather than exposition. Instead of telling players about the city's complex power dynamics, it drops them into a situation where those dynamics are in play: the Red Guard's compromised command structure, Rozito's position as a pawn of larger forces, the Queen's invisible hand, the cult's ambition, and the fragile human presence represented by the Albion delegation.

By the end of the scenario, players have:

- Explored two major locations (the Kereskedo Market and the Bastion Inn)
- Met NPCs from multiple factions (the market, the Red Guard, the Albion delegation, the vampire aristocracy, and the cult)
- Made choices that have consequences for the ongoing campaign
- Glimpsed the deeper threat (the tunnel, the Queen's awareness) without being overwhelmed by it

How to Build Future Scenarios from Field Reports

Every Olivia's Field Report follows this pattern:

1. The surface story (what Olivia reports) gives you the hook and the player-facing framing
2. The hidden truth (what she left out and what she doesn't know) gives you the GM's full picture
3. The ticking clock (what happens if the players do nothing) creates urgency
4. The NPC web (who knows what, who wants what, who lies about what) creates social gameplay
5. The clue trail with redundancy (multiple paths to each revelation) prevents stalls
6. The branching outcomes (best, partial, failure) make player choices matter
7. The campaign thread (consequences and hooks) connects each scenario to the larger story

Apply this structure to any incident Olivia investigates and you have a playable adventure. A haunting at the theater construction site. A poisoning at a diplomatic dinner. A creature sighting in the Hallaset Fields. A political assassination attempt during a public event. Each one is a self-contained mystery that also advances the larger narrative of Kormor Kirak's descent toward crisis.

The Van Richten's Principle

Taking a page from Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft, the best gothic horror scenarios aren't about the monster. They're about the people who live in the

monster's shadow. Brekk wasn't killed by a supernatural horror — he was killed by a man standing two stalls away, someone he probably said good morning to every day. The cult isn't terrifying because of necromancy. It's terrifying because it's operating in a market where people buy bread. And the Queen isn't threatening because she's a vampire. She's threatening because she already knows everything and is choosing to watch.

Let the mundane and the monstrous share the same space. That's where the fear lives.

CAPITULUM

APPENDIX A: RANDOM ENCOUNTER AND CONDITION TABLES

These tables can be used during this scenario or in any session set in and around the Kereskedo Market.

Market Weather and Atmosphere (Roll d6)

ROLL	CONDITION	GAMEPLAY EFFECT
1	Heavy fog rolls in from the valley	Visibility reduced. Disadvantage on long-range Perception checks. NPCs are harder to track through the market. Perfect cover for a pursuit or ambush.
2	Cold rain, steady and grey	Market stalls under tarps. Fewer vendors, fewer witnesses. Water pools on flagstones, making footing treacherous. Sound is muffled.
3	Overcast, still air	The city feels like it's holding its breath. Smoke from chimneys hangs low. Sounds carry further than expected. Conversations can be overheard at unusual distances.
4	Pale winter sunlight	Crisp visibility. Shadows are sharp and long. Good for observation, bad for stealth. The castle looms clearly against the sky.
5	Unseasonable warmth	The market is busier than usual. More NPCs, more noise, more chaos. Easier to get lost in the crowd. Harder to have a private conversation.
6	Wind from the mountains, bitter and sharp	Vendors pack early. Tarps snap and flap. Pages blow from open books. The market empties by late afternoon, leaving the streets to the Red Guard and the desperate.

Market Random Encounters (Roll d8)

ROLL	ENCOUNTER	NOTES
1	A vendor accuses a customer of theft. A crowd gathers. The accusation may be legitimate or a distraction orchestrated by someone who wants the players' attention elsewhere.	Social. Can be resolved quickly or escalated.
2	A Red Guard patrol stops the players for identification. Their papers are checked. If Captain Szofi is with the patrol, she vouches for them. If not, the process takes time and draws attention.	Social/Bureaucratic. Time pressure.
3	A stray dog follows the party. It's friendly but persistent. Later, it growls at a specific NPC or location, giving the players a subtle warning.	Atmospheric. Potential clue delivery.
4	A group of children are playing a game that mimics a recent real event in the city (a murder, a monster sighting, a rumor about the Queen). Their game reveals details that adults wouldn't share openly.	Social/Information. Requires careful listening.
5	A vendor offers the players a "special item" – something that shouldn't be for sale in an ordinary market. Could be a minor magical trinket, a stolen object, or something connected to the cult without the vendor's knowledge.	Shopping/Investigation. Potential loot or lead.
6	The lights go out. Torches in the arcade gutter and die simultaneously for a few seconds. When they relight, something has changed – a stall is empty that wasn't before, or a person is standing somewhere they weren't a moment ago. A faint smell of grave dirt hangs in the air. A Necrotic Bulk may be glimpsed in	Supernatural/Atmospheric. Horror beat. Reference the Enemy Besti-

a dark alley before it collapses into component pieces and scuttles away.

ary for Necrotic Bulk stats.

7

A courier delivers a sealed message to one of the players. The message is cryptic and unsigned. It may be a warning from an ally, a taunt from the cult, or a summons from Szeret.

Plot hook.
Customizable by the GM.

8

A mechanical clicking sound echoes from a rooftop above the arcade. Players who investigate find scuff marks and a small pool of machine oil. An Automatic Assassin — a brass-and-clockwork construct with dead, precise eyes — was observing the market. Built in the Terrassian Consulate's attic lab, it may be scouting for Devorlen Koss, or it may have escaped its handler's control.

Atmospheric/
Foreshadowing.
Reference the Enemy Bestiary for Automatic Assassin stats if combat occurs.

The Queen's Dark Activities (Roll d6)

These events happen in the background and may be noticed by observant players or referenced by NPCs. They represent Kiraline's ongoing machinations affecting the city.

ROLL	ACTIVITY	OBSERVABLE SIGNS
1	A prominent citizen disappears overnight. The Red Guard investigates briefly, then stops. No one talks about it after a few days.	Empty house. Neighbors who won't make eye contact. A name that causes conversations to die.
2	New Red Guard officers appear, replacing ones the players recognized. The new officers are efficient, humorless, and seem to report to someone other than their stated commander.	Changed patrols. Unfamiliar faces in familiar routes. Orders that contradict previous protocol.
3	A section of the city is temporarily sealed "for maintenance." No one goes in or out for a day. When it reopens, residents seem shaken but refuse to discuss what happened.	Barricades. Silence. Fresh paint on walls that didn't need painting.
4	Animals in the market district behave strangely. Dogs howl at nothing. Birds avoid a specific building. Rats pour from a sewer grate and immediately scatter in one direction, away from the castle.	Unease. NPCs mention it offhandedly. "Bad air from the mountains," they say.
5	An unusually lavish gift arrives for a member of the Albion delegation — fine wine, imported food, a piece of jewelry. The gift is anonymous. It is also, on close inspection, ancient. Far older than it should be.	Generosity that feels like surveillance. A reminder that someone is watching.
6	Nothing observable. But Szeret seems agitated if the players encounter her. She won't say why.	The absence of evidence. The feeling that some-

If pressed, she changes the subject with more force than usual. thing happened behind closed doors.

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APPENDIX B: STAT BLOCK INTEGRATION NOTES

[INTEGRATE]: This section should contain full stat blocks for the following NPCs in both D&D 5e and Daggerheart formats. Role descriptions and combat behavior are provided below to guide the stat creation.

Vael Morik – Cult Operative

ROLE: Primary antagonist of this scenario. Mid-level Lich Cult operative posing as a spice merchant.

COMBAT BEHAVIOR: Morik fights smart, not brave. He opens with alchemical smoke to obscure the battlefield, strikes with the ritual blade for high single-target damage, and attempts to flee if outmatched. He will use the environment (market stalls, crowds, narrow alleys) to his advantage. He does not fight to the death unless cornered with no escape route.

SUGGESTED ABILITIES

- **RITUAL BLADE:** Piercing + necrotic damage. On a critical hit, the wound leaves necrotic scarring that resists magical healing for 24 hours.
- **ALCHEMICAL SMOKE (2 USES):** Creates a 15-foot radius of heavily obscured area that lasts 1 minute.
- **CULT DEVOTION:** Advantage on saving throws against being frightened or charmed. The cult's conditioning runs deep.
- **SLIPPERY:** Can Disengage as a bonus action.

ESTIMATED D&D CR: 2-3

ESTIMATED DAGGERHEART TIER: 1 (high end)

Captain Dara Szofi – Red Guard Patrol Leader

ROLE: Ally NPC. Potential combat companion in the climax.

COMBAT BEHAVIOR: Szofi is disciplined and defensive. She uses a spear and shield, fights in formation habits (even alone), and prioritizes protecting civilians over personal glory. She follows the players' lead in combat but will not take suicidal risks.

SUGGESTED ABILITIES

- **SHIELD WALL:** Can use a reaction to impose disadvantage on an attack against an adjacent ally.
- **RED GUARD TRAINING:** Proficient in Perception and Athletics. Advantage on checks to maintain formation or hold a position.

ESTIMATED D&D CR: 1

ESTIMATED DAGGERHEART TIER: 1

Vault Guardian (Optional Minor Encounter)

ROLE: Environmental hazard in the lower vaults. A minor undead presence left as an alarm system by the cult.

OPTIONS

- A swarm of necrotic rats that attacks anything living that enters the main vault chamber

- A glyph trap on the vault door that triggers a burst of necrotic energy
- A single animated corpse (perhaps a previous victim of the cult, pre-dating Brekk) that shambles to life when the ritual table is disturbed

ESTIMATED D&D CR: 1/2 - 1

ESTIMATED DAGGERHEART TIER: 1 (low end)

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APPENDIX E: ADAPTING THIS SCENARIO FOR DIFFERENT TABLE TYPES

For Players Who Love Investigation

Expand Acts 1 and 2. Add more NPCs to interview (other vendors, a regular customer who noticed Brekk acting strangely, a delivery driver who can describe the “outside man”). Add physical puzzles to the vault exploration (a locked door requiring a found key, a collapsed passage that needs creative solutions). Downplay the combat climax in favor of a tense social confrontation where the players unmask Morik publicly.

For Players Who Love Combat

Abbreviate the investigation. Have Olivia do the detective work in the background and brief the players on what she’s found. Focus on the vault exploration as a dungeon crawl with traps and a guardian encounter. Make the climax a full tactical fight with Morik and 2-3 cult thugs in the market at sundown, using the stalls and architecture as cover.

For Players Who Love Roleplay

Expand the social encounters. Give Rozito a more detailed backstory and make his cracking point more emotional. Have Szeret’s appearance be a full

scene with subtext and tension. Let the players negotiate with Szofi about jurisdiction and protocol. Make the resolution a courtroom-style scene where the players present their evidence to Barron and the Red Guard, and the political fallout plays out in conversation.

For Mixed Groups

Run it as written. The scenario is designed to offer investigation, social pressure, exploration, and combat in a natural progression that gives every player type something to engage with.

This scenario is the first entry in the Olivia's Field Reports series for The Eternal Court campaign setting.

Future entries will follow the same structural template, each presenting a new case that Olivia has investigated,

which GMs can deconstruct into playable adventures using the methods outlined in Part 7.

EC · STARTER SCENARIO · EDITION 01 · MDCCXCIII
FILED · EC · STARTE · FORMAT · A7 · STATUS · ACTIVE