

## INFILTRATION

The first step in setting up a spy ring in a foreign country is to get into the country. One way to do this is to pass yourself off as a citizen. To do this, you should first determine a local town to be “from”. This town should be isolated enough and small enough that you won’t run into anyone that is actually from there. On the other hand, it should be close enough to one of the trade routes that you could realistically end up in your target city and close enough to your entry into the country that you can look like you actually from there. As an example, if you’re an Ivianian spy in Orbaal that wants to infiltrate Kaldor, choosing Setrew or Baseta is a bad idea since, being large towns on trade routes, you could be revealed by someone from there who is visiting Tashal. Choosing Setanlin or Dabell is also not a good idea. They are small and relatively isolated but, being hundred moots, its possible to run into one of their officials in Tashal. Much better choices would be Loban or Bazine. They are small, located close to the northern border and isolated.

After choosing the town, you next have to learn the dress, dialect, and customs of the area. This can take some time and making mistakes later could be fatal. If you have any wilderness survival skills then a good way to learn these lessons is to camp in the woods outside the town your later going to be from. You may even learn a few names and stories to make your identity more authentic. (“I can still remember the year that Hakon of Ersat died and his son, Vunder, took over the family’s virgate. That lad hasn’t the brains that Save-K’nor gave a goose.”)

A quicker way to infiltrate a country is to be a obvious foreigner with some low profile business. To do this you need a reason you left your old country (religious persecution, political refugee, small scrape with the law, etc.) and a business that is unguilded but will allow you to make contacts later. (The guilds have other reasons to test your authenticity and the punishments for being found false are just as severe). Cook is bad (no contact with the public) but night bartender is good. At first and until people get comfortable with your presence, it is best to socialize as little as possible. At first, people will assume you’re a spy and anyone you associate with is immediately suspected as well. (“My neighbor, Geldane of Dysel, must be a spy since he’s always talking to that foreign bartender.”)

## TARGETING

Once you’ve infiltrated the country, the next step is to determine who has the information you need. It’s all very well to throw money around and hope someone will tell you something of value but this usually results in spending a lot of money and being captured anyway (with fatal consequences). Even worse, if you’re too obvious, you could be fed false information (with fatal consequences when you return home). (Nobody ever said being a spy is easy or safe.)

This initial information will usually come from servants, clerks, scribes and low level laborers. It will usually cost you a drink, some time listening to their troubles and a few sad stories of your own (real or imaginary). Always keep in mind, at this point you don’t want the information. You want to know who has the information and anything you can gather about their likes and habits. (“My master is much like you say yours was back in Orbaal. He’s always waking me in the middle of the night to make him some food after his all night planning sessions with the Lord Warden of Oselmarch.”)

## ASSESSMENT

Now you know who has the information and a little about them. At this point, you should verify that they really have the information and weren’t just puffing themselves up to look important to the peasants.

You should also start thinking about how and where you’re going to contact them and stay in communication. Taverns and brothels are obvious choices, obvious to you and obvious to the king’s officers who are paid to catch spies. Better choices are architect to a noble who wants to build a chapel, jeweler for someone who wants custom designed jewelry, musician for a music lover, fashion designer to someone vain about their clothes, herald to someone interested in their lineage, etc. If you actually know these skills, you can use them. If you don’t, you can pass yourself off as a fellow aficionado or know the lingo and have a reason you no longer practice the profession (“I was an accomplished flutist until I got the gripe and wasn’t able to move my fingers like I used to.”)

## TYPES OF SPIES INTERPRETERS

Interpreters on their own soil attached to a group of visiting foreign dignitaries, translate for them when they are meeting with the nobility and, afterwards, when they are arranging lodging, shopping, and site seeing. By doing small favors for the group, the interpreter can become friendly with them and, when they’re relaxed, the foreigners often discuss details of their mission, preconceptions they have about the country and their personal interests. When they return to their own country, the interpreter can keep on friendly terms and gather more information through informal messages.

The major disadvantages deal with the speed of establishing friendly relations and considering the source of the information. When the interpreter first meets the group, they will usually believe they are dealing with a spy. The interpreter must slowly change this attitude to one of casual conversation between friends. The other thing to consider is that foreign dignitaries are usually nobility and don’t necessarily represent the opinions of the common population.

When an interpreter is sent to a foreign country with a delegation, they can test the country’s security by attempting to draw views of the castle or taking late night walks to see who tries to prevent it. The problem is that

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the delegation needs the services of the interpreter continually and a group of any size leaves the interpreter with little free time. The best situation is to translate for a single, rather lazy individual that secretly knows the language and has been briefed on the intelligence gathering nature of the mission.

### SQUIRES

When accompanying a knight on a foreign mission, a squire often gets the opportunity to speak with servants and common people during any free time. Retainers can also take advantage of the relative invisibility of all servants (nobility attempt to ignore the “lesser people” and, sometimes, forget they are there). Local citizens are sometimes curious about these foreigners and will approach a squire to learn more about them.

Often the intelligence gathering abilities of squires is recognized and it is arranged that they are accompanied by a local squire (or local lady of supposed ill repute) at all times to ensure they don't learn anything they aren't supposed to. Other times, situations are arranged that discredit them so local citizens won't contact them or help them in their espionage.