

Call of Business

Soundtrack

[HTTPS://OPEN.SPOTIFY.COM/PLAYLIST/6zXLZWKZBsV4KAQLRUMHXB?si=6BO563E37D87444C](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6zXLZWKZBsV4KAQLRUMHXB?si=6BO563E37D87444C)



Yndaros, Ambria — Summer, year 21 (present day)

A gull preens its wings and gazes out over **YNDAROS**. Palace towers bathe in the lingering evening sun. The day's final rays recede behind the **TITANS**, leaving the densely populated city under a blanket of cool shadow. The gull skips along the precipice of Fortress Doudram's rough-cut stone wall and leaps out over the river with wings outstretched, carried along on the river breeze. A few beats and the gull weaves past tall wooden masts of ships waiting to enter the **HARBOR DISTRICT**.



Ships queue up to exchange cargo at the docks.

Large trade schooners loom over fishing boats and ferry vessels, each one vibrant with activity. Dock workers hustle to unload cargo from a particularly large vessel, *Pride of KÜAM ZAMOK*, in order to finish the queue before hearing the ring of the closing bell.

Merchants and tradesmen holler over the din of an afternoon crowd in a last attempt to hock the day's inventory. Further south, artisans have already begun tidying their workspaces and storing their works-in-progress for the night. A potter gingerly tugs a cart stacked high with soon-to-be porcelainware toward a kiln he shares with the blacksmith.



Triumph Plaza hosts merchants and laborers from all walks of life.

The gull lazily follows the breeze inland toward the palace. The upper tower largely retains its ancient façade. Dark and irregular **LINDARIAN** stonework contrasts sharply against its less-weathered amendments. She finds her mark and descends. The royal baker's apprentice—a boy old enough to know the rules, but too young to follow them—is in his usual spot, tearing apart stale loaves bit by bit and scattering them along the sill of a tower window. The gull beats its wings a few times more, maneuvering gently to receive her evening feast.

“Gregooooor!” roars Baker Haas from down the hall. Gregor sweeps the remaining crumbs from the sill and shoos away the gull, stashing a handful of crust in his apron just in time. Baker Haas lumbers into the pantry, hands reaching around his wide belly to his hips. “How many times will I have to tell you to watch the hourglass, Gregor? The rolls will burn!”

Gregor slumps his shoulders and shuffles past Haas back to the oven. “Yes, master. I only wanted to get some air—ow!”

Haas's palm firmly dismisses the weak excuse with a clap across the back of Gregor's head. “Yes, of course, I'll just let the Queen and her court know their sweet rolls taste like charcoal because my idiot apprentice *needed to get some air*,” he scoffs.

Gregor carefully balances two trays of sweet rolls on his arm as he creaks open the heavy oak door to the **QUEEN'S COUNCIL** chamber. He narrowly avoids dropping the trays entirely, maneuvering around the animated arms of a white-bearded dwarf, trinkets of brass and gold dangling along his sleeves.

“This has gone on far too long. Unacceptable. Does the Queen expect us to stand idly by while **ALINARD** seizes the entire private arms market?”

An elderly man nods and strokes his chin. “I heard he’s selling weapons at loss just to gain market share! To arrive from the east and call himself *Master ALINARD*... has the *LEGATION* even verified his credentials?”

“That barbarian is just after our secrets,” the dwarf continues. “There’s a reason why the northern clans don’t enlist Pansars among their ranks—it won’t be long until they mount an attack using our own weapons against us!”

“Master *TARZIBCZIE*, *FATHER BRIGO*, please. Settle down.” Gregor recognizes the tired-eyed man now leading the discussion as *HERAKLEO ATTIO*, the Queen’s Key Master and second-in-command. *HERAKLEO* turns to a spectacled man in neatly pleated uniform. “*GRAND MASTER SELDONIO*, has the *ORDO MAGICA* corroborated any of these rumors?” He absent mindedly plucks a sweet roll from the tray as Gregor slides it onto the table.

“The Guilds have strengthened the rule of law across the whole kingdom,” begins the Ordo’s Grand Master. “Citizens trust the marks of Guild artisans, not to mention that it helps with bookkeeping. The *QUEEN’S LEGATION* traced a counterfeit potion-making ring to *BLACKMOOR* when trade manifests did not match *OLD KADIZAR* production reports, and that was in year 20—not even a season after the ordinance was established. There is a clear benefit to the burden the Guild ordinance places upon all of us. I think we all can agree on that. If you’d rather see for yourself, I’d be happy to have a page show you to the *ARCHIVES*...”

Gregor rounds the table once more, topping off each council member’s glass with fresh wine. He purses his lips in concentration. The conversations of old men does not interest Gregor in the slightest. Besides, the last time he spilled wine, Baker Haas nearly severed his ear between a meaty forefinger and thumb—next time his master is sure to not be so kind.

“If the *TIBZIBSEE* forge and armory are to uphold the Guild ordinance, then there must be concessions,” insists the dwarf with dancing intonation. “We must terminate the exclusivity contract with the *QUEEN’S LEGATION* and *KNIGHTS OF THE DYING SUN* if we are to continue firetube and ballistics production. It is simply untenable to sit with folded hands because of a contract predicated on fending off invaders when there hasn’t been a battle with the *IRON PACT* in years!” *TARZIBCZIE* complains.

“Two murderous elves were caught in an attic near *NIGHTHOME* just last winter,” *FATHER BRIGO* retorts. Gregor holds back a smirk, thinking to himself about how the First Judge apparently doesn’t need cathedral halls to be unbearably loud. Brigo’s aged face creases further, “Are you suggesting we allow the best Ambrian weapons to circulate freely and fall into unknown hands? Do you expect the City Watch to stand aside and let that happen? I presume you have considered, *PRIOS* forbid, another massacre like the *ATTACK OF ELOAN-EO*, except with *IRON PACT* Pansars storming *THISTLE HOLD*’s palisade instead of fire arrows shot from the treeline—”

“Enough—enough!” The Key Master rises to his feet and slams open palms onto the table in frustration. Wine glasses chatter alone in the tense silence. *HERAKLEO* hangs his head and lets out an exasperated sigh. After a moment, he opens his mouth to speak. Instead he watches the chamber door swing open, revealing *QUEEN KORINTHIA* herself.



Korinthia Nightbane carries herself with a resolute confidence that commands respect from all in her midst.

KORINTHIA strides into the chamber with a tall, white-haired man in tow. The councilmen, stunned, sit and bow their heads with bated breath. Gregor nervously bows his head too, but he can't help sneaking a glance up at the Queen and her associate. **KORINTHIA** walks with poise and strength. Her gown flows with each resolute step, the most brilliant scarlet Gregor has ever seen. The man trailing the Queen walks with an unsettlingly precise gait. Gregor's eyes trace the man's features: gray-blue skin like a brewing autumn tempest; ears long and tapered to a point... Gregor sharply inhales and tucks his chin back against his chest at the realization that this man is, in fact, an elf.

KORINTHIA takes her seat at the head of the table. Piercing eyes glare out from behind her porcelain mask. The elf takes a stance to her side. The councilmen lift their heads and give the pair their undivided attention.

"Envoy **ELORI** has news to share from the north. Whatever it was you were squabbling over can wait, I'm sure." She gestures for the elf to deliver his message.



Elori delivers news to the council.

ELORI's statuesque figure exudes an aura of dark antiquity, betrayed only by the movement of his mouth as he speaks and his fiery eyes moving from man to man. Although the elf's head gently follows his gaze, his wispy white hair seems eerily undisturbed. Gregor has never seen an elf in the flesh until now. Moody and foreboding—creepy for sure—though not nearly as wretched as his mother's stories made them out to be.

"**YELETA**, the *Huldra* at **KARVOSTI**, has been meeting with the High Chieftain at an unusually frequent cadence. As the leader of witches, the *Huldra* has great influence over all human clans across **DAVOKAR**, including the High Chieftain himself. **YELETA** rarely meddles in political endeavors. This activity is unusual."

FATHER BRIGO scoffs under his breath, "Coming from an *elf*..." The Queen turns to the heckler and glares. He stops, face flushed with embarrassment. A pit of dread grows in Gregor's stomach.



Queen Korinthia Nightbane wears a porcelain mask at all times since The Great War.

“Yesterday, two of YELETA’s envoys departed southward atop COLOSSI mounts,” ELORI continues. “I believe their destination is THISTLE HOLD.”

“Is this some kind of threat?” HERAKLEO interjects, cottonmouthed.

“I share this knowledge in good faith.” ELORI turns to the Queen. “Excuse me, your highness. It is clear I am unwelcome here. I trust you understand.” He reverses and walks unflinching past Gregor, who is paralyzed in fear, avoiding a collision by the smallest of margins. The only trace of his presence being the movement of air tumbling behind his alien form. The elf gracefully exits the room without a sound.

The Queen calls upon the [ORDO MAGICA](#) Grand Master. “So, [SELDONIO](#), how does one kill a [COLOSS](#)?”

Two witches stand thirty feet high on the backs of enormous, grotesque creatures—each a monstrous blend of wood and flesh whose stature rivals giants of legend. The witches tug at reins affixed to fifteen-foot tusks, calling out commands in a series of yips and whoops.

The [COLOSSI](#) lurch out of thick woods onto the pebbled bank of the [RIVER EANOR](#). The leader continues into the shallows, its thick trunk-leg crunches through a chitinous carcass that had washed up to shore. The carcass, vaguely the shape of a boat-sized prawn, degenerates underfoot into a collection of viscera carried away by the current.



Witches and their Colossi mounts trek across Davokar.

“Whoa-ho-ho!” the witch master halts her mount. She gazes down into the murky river. “*Anak’e tu’a kay! To-ma talo foroko,*” she calls to her partner in their native tongue. The second witch nods and leads her mount back into the depths of [DAVOKAR](#).

A moment later, the witch and [COLOSS](#) return with four freshly-felled timbers. The pair of witches deftly dismount and lash the timbers together. They direct their [COLOSSI](#) to position several large boulders in the

shallows and lay the timbers on top, firmly in place.

The witches mount up. With a sharp whistle and another *hip-yip*, the pair cross the makeshift bridge and continue onward across the woodlands of [DAVOKAR](#).