

Session 1

This street is the same as any other in the city of Calaer:
tall sandstone buildings rising high over a bright cobbled street, the morning sun beating
down into every space shadows try to claim.

But at the end of the alley stands something... different.

A pair of blackened wooden doors, fourteen feet tall, rise like silent sentinels.
Carved, scorched, impossible to ignore.

As you approach, the engraved sigil comes into view:

N O R T H L I G H T
I N Q U I R Y

The iron handle groans as you twist it, and the heavy doors creak open.

Inside, the familiar noise of headquarters hits you like a wave.

The smell comes first — fresh bread from the morning delivery drifting through the air, mixing with the scent of ink, warm parchment, and old timber. The aromas cling to the very walls of this bureaucratic engine.

You step into the atrium, and the hum of activity surrounds you.

Just off to the left lies the Mess Room, and even from here you can already smell Aroli's Spiced Tea, that halfling's morning ritual that perfumes half the building. She adjusts her half-moon spectacles, nodding a respectful greeting as you pass.

Before you can speak, you hear it:

A deep, ogreish GRRNNNK-HAAAA reverberates from the couch.

Bartholomew.

The goliath is sprawled across the furniture again, snoring like an avalanche.
Burning the candle at both ends... again.

Aroli slips away while you're distracted, vanishing up the mezzanine stairs to the offices above.

You grab a warm roll from the counter, a cup of strong coffee from the pot, tuck a copy of The Calaer Collective newspaper under your arm, and find a spare seat in the atrium — hoping, maybe, to get through one paragraph before—

SCRAAAAPE.

The chair next to you drags back.
Without looking up, you bury your face in the paper.

A tap on your shoulder.
Of course.

Shian, the bright-eyed half-elf secretary, smiles down at you.
"Marlin's looking for you," she says, pointing up toward the mezzanine.

You follow her gesture to see a gaunt, exhausted human leaning over the railing — Inspector Thrieve.

Eyes like a man who died in service to paperwork years ago.

He sees you, nods once, and disappears back into his office.

"Best be going," Shian says with a wink. "Don't keep him waiting — poor soul."

You sigh, take one last sip of coffee, and make your way toward the stairs.

The iron handrail is cold under your fingers.
It smells faintly of rust and sweat — a thousand nervous hands gripping the same spot over the years.

A section near the bottom is worn smooth, polished by fear and anticipation.

The climb brings you into the mezzanine's halo of offices, a ring of glass panes and horizontal blinds that all overlook the Mess Room below.

Inspector Thrieve's blinds are partly closed... but angled just enough for you to see two silhouettes already seated inside.

Great.
Group assignment.

You open the door, and a wave of warm, stale air rolls over you.

Tobacco smoke.

Old paperwork.

Lantern oil.

And something that might once have been a sandwich.

The overhead light is never turned on.
Stacks of case files lean dangerously atop overflowing cabinets.

Two figures sit opposite the desk — your soon-to-be colleagues.
You take the final empty chair.

Thrieve doesn't look up as he strikes a match and lights another cigarette.
He pulls a folder from the pile and slides it across the desk.

"Missing kid," he says, exhaling slowly.
"EmberWatch are looking for her. Before you say anything—"
He raises a hand, tiredly.

"I know you're not a fan of them. None of us are. But the pay is good, and the job seems straightforward enough."

He stubs the cigarette out, finally meeting your eye.

His face is gaunt, his moustache sagging like it's given up, and his back is arched into the shape of a tired, defeated letter 'C'.

"Your passes are in there," he continues.
"Along with a lantern collection token and your supply numbers. The usual."

You stand, folder tucked under your arm.

"—One more thing."

You pause at the door.

Thrieve breathes out through his nose.

"It's in Staig."

ARRIVAL IN GALDAR

A day later, you find yourself packed into a rattling supply cart with your fellow investigators, travelling the High Road toward Galdar.

A country where guilds are unwelcome, where outside organisations are tolerated only under strict permission — and watched even more strictly.

The air itself feels heavier as you approach its borders, a quiet pressure settling in your chest.

The cart jolts violently over a dip in the road.

Silence fills the space between you and your colleagues — the kind of silence shared by people heading somewhere they know they're not wanted.

(Here, allow player character interactions.)

After some time, the front curtain of the cart flicks open, letting in a blast of cold air mixed with the earthy scent of manure-soaked fields, oak forests, and distant hearthfire.

Through that narrow gap, you catch your first glimpse of it:

Staig.

A mountainous silhouette against the setting sun —
a colossal fortress-city carved into the Banree Ridge.
Its walls rise like an ancient stone giant, blotting out half the horizon.

As the cart rumbles closer, the enormous gate dominates your view:

The Grain Gate.

Two portcullises.

Reinforced oak doors thicker than a man is tall.
Carved runic channels cut into the stone, humming softly in the evening breeze.

And waiting beneath it —
the soldiers of Clan Fergal.

The Valorfang.

Draped in blue, white, and gold,

Kilts flowing in the wind.
Plaid shawls pinned with iron clasps.
Spears and shields polished to a shine.

One of them steps forward, a snarling brute whose nose looks like it's been broken more than once — possibly by the axe still strapped across his back.

“Papers.”
He doesn't ask — he demands.

Another soldier circles the cart, checking wheels, crates, undercarriage.
A third gestures you out for inspection.

Even with permission to enter Galdar, it's clear:

You're not welcome here.
You're tolerated.
Barely.

The cart rolls on, passing under the first portcullis.
Above you, narrow arrow slits stare down from the inner wall like watchful eyes.

If anyone glances left, there's a small stone alcove — a weathered shrine with candles flickering in the wind.

The Traveller's Shrine.

A place where newcomers light a candle for safe entry.

Not many bother anymore.

After signatures are taken at the gatehouse, papers stamped, and your purpose confirmed, you're finally waved through.

The cart creaks forward into the city proper.

Darkness has fallen.

LOWTOWN — FIRST STEPS INTO STAIG

Lowtown is a world away from Calaer's bright sandstone streets.

Here, wooden beams protrude like ribs from old buildings.
Stone walls lean just slightly — not enough to collapse, but enough to make you wonder.

Shadows dance across the narrow streets, thrown by scattered braziers and torchlight.
Every alley looks like it has a story.
Every window looks like it's watching you.

Your eyes adjust just enough to make out the silhouette of a large timber-framed building ahead.
Its hanging sign creaks in the cold wind.
Orange firelight flickers over the carved lettering.

“The Broken Tine Inn.”

A place to rest, to eat, to drink...

...and to begin your first night in Galdar.

THE BROKEN TINE

As you walk toward the entrance of The Broken Tine, two burly men step into your path, arms folded across broad chests.

One of them cracks a grin — the kind that's friendly for about half a second, then turns sharp as a blade.

“New in town, fellas?”

He looks each of you over.

“Aye, thought so. Let me be the first to welcome you to Staig.”

He gestures behind him with a thumb.

“This here's the tavern entrance. If you're lookin' for a room, head round the back and speak to Darla — she'll sort you out.

If you're here for a drink, you're welcome inside.”

He leans in, lowering his voice to a growl.

“If you're here for trouble... you can piss off.”

He steps aside.

IF THE PARTY ENTERS THE TAVERN

The moment the door swings open, the smell hits you like a hammer:

stale ale, piss, sweat, and spirits that haven't seen proper regulation in decades.

The dim candlelight barely illuminates the chaos within:

A one-handed gnome throws darts wild enough to kill a man

A half-orc slumped across the bar snores like thunder

A rowdy card game in the back erupts with cheers, curses, and tankards slamming

A furbolg barmaid weaves through the tables with astonishing grace, balancing mugs of ale like a dancer. The tables themselves are round oak boards, bolted onto barrels for legs — no two sitting quite straight.

Behind the bar stands a mountain of a man:

Tall, ripped with muscle, black hair tied back, sleeves rolled, and a scowl that could blister metal. He polishes a glass so clean it practically glows, all while scanning the room like a hawk ready to dive.

This place is loud, grimy, alive.

A perfect place for information...
or a brawl.

IF THE PARTY GOES TO THE INN

The alley wraps around to a small courtyard lit by a single brazier.
A few ragged locals sit around it, warming their hands and muttering quietly.

The inn's entrance is a small wooden door, slightly warped by age.
Inside, you step into a modest hallway with a broad staircase rising overhead.
A small reception desk sits tucked beneath it, surrounded by cheap candles and peeling paint.

The smell of hot-pot stew fills the air — comforting and homely.

Behind the desk is a plump human female, sleeves rolled up, head buried in a ledger.
She scribbles furiously, muttering numbers to herself.

She doesn't notice you enter.

(Allow your players to interact here.)

UPSTAIRS — THE ROOMS

Climbing the stairs, you find three rooms, each door marked with a hand-carved number.

Inside, each room is identical:

A small single bed

A tired little hearth

A battered desk missing at least one drawer

A single window that refuses to open fully

The inn clearly has a communal washroom, judging by the faint smell of soap and the dripping noise coming from further down the hall.

If anyone strips the bed:

The mattress is old, lumpy, and stained with strange red, brown, and yellow marks.

Some stains look like spilled stew.

Others... don't.

It's not a luxury stay.

But it's dry, it's warm...

...and it's better than sleeping in Lowtown's streets.

1. NORTHLIGHT INQUIRY – JOB ASSIGNMENT OFFICER (NLI CONTACT)

Name: Marlin Threave

("Threave" = a Calav name meaning grit/stone; subtle nod to the Spine of the King)

Role: Assignment Officer, NorthLight Inquiry – Calav City Branch

Manages cases Tier 1–3, deals with clients, screens requests, and is very protective of his agents.

Appearance:

Mid-40s

Salt-and-pepper beard trimmed sharp

Spectacles constantly halfway down his nose

Permanent ink stains on his fingers

Wears a charcoal vest with the NLI lantern-pin on the lapel

Personality:

Gruff but not unkind

Gets straight to the point

Hates bureaucracy but has memorised all of it

Protective father-figure type to the agents

Calls all younger operatives "kid" regardless of age

Notable Traits:

Hums when thinking

Calls paperwork "the backbone of civilisation" ironically

Believes EmberWatch is shady as hell but pays well

Has a deep distrust of Galdari nobility

Takes pride in being "the filter" between operatives and bullshit jobs

How he gives the job:

He brings them to his oak desk, pulls out the file (your PDF), sighs like he hasn't slept, and says:

"Alright, listen up. EmberWatch came through one of their intermediaries again.

They want this done quiet. Girl's gone missing in Staig. Lowtown. Fragile type.

They're paying full fare, so we take it.

No grandstanding, no city guard, no heroics — get her safe, get her home.

Easy enough, aye?"

Secret (GM Only):

Marlin suspects EmberWatch is involved in something political but will never betray a client.

If the PCs press him too hard, he shuts down:

"Look, kid... some folk pay us to find the truth.

Others pay us to keep it buried.

This job?

Feels like both."

2. STAIG LEADS — NPCs THEY CAN QUESTION

These are your initial investigation points.
Each NPC gives one piece of the puzzle.

1. COLIN CARTWRIGHT

Occupation: Fence, EmberWatch intermediary
Location: Behind the Hollowgate Tavern, Lowtown

Personality:

Nervous
Talks fast
Good liar but cracks under pressure
Tries to avoid direct involvement in anything magical

What he knows:

He saw "Lass" a few days ago
She was running from someone
Didn't get a good look at her pursuer ("hooded, tall, Galdari maybe?")
She bought bread and vanished into the Old Alley Network

Hidden truth:

He was paid extra not to ask questions
He has a small EmberWatch sigil hidden under his stall

2. FRANS "RED EYE" MALDON

Occupation: Bouncer at the Hollowgate Tavern

Personality: Suspicious, sarcastic, doesn't like investigators
Hook: Drinks too much, surprisingly observant when sober

He knows:

He saw the girl weaving through crowds
She was terrified of something
She dropped a piece of cloth
A "strange shimmer of heat" appeared near her hands
A group of kids from Lowtown sometimes hide her

Evidence he gives:

A scrap of fabric (Lasair's red-tinted shawl)
Leads them to the Lowtown kids

3. "OLD NAIL" GARRIC

Occupation: Stablemaster

Personality: Old bastard, grumpy, but soft-hearted underneath

How he ties in:

He saw Lasair around the stables
She would sleep in the hayloft when it rained
He fed her once or twice
Thinks she "isn't normal" but won't say why

What he gives:

She was never afraid of fire
Once saw her staring at a lantern until it went out
She talked about "wanting to leave Staig soon"

4. LOWTOWN KID (NPC: "Tinder")

Age: 10

Role: Streetwise guide

Personality: Cocky, always hungry, secretly loyal to Lasair

What he knows:

Lasair protected him once from thugs
She has been hiding in an abandoned bakery
Men in dark cloaks were asking about her
She left a few belongings behind

What he gives them:

Leads them to the bakery
Tells them she said, "I can't stay here anymore. Something's coming for me."

5. BROKEN-TOOTH GOBLIN (Sex: Male, Name: Khurkh)

Location: Sewers entrance, same network Group A is in

Personality: Scared, twitchy

How he appears:

They can catch him scavenging

What he knows:

"Fire girl... burn-y... no touch... goblins afraid."
He saw her run into the sewers once
Strange "spider-ghosts" followed her
He saw a tall cloaked figure heading the same direction

3. KEY LOCATIONS IN STAIG FOR THE SEARCH

These locations move the investigation at the pace YOU choose.

1. HOLLOWGATE MARKET

Crowded
Chaotic
Good for pickpocket chases
Many eyewitnesses, but unreliable ones

Clues:

A scorch mark on a wall
Someone saw her climb into a fruit wagon
Rumours of "a girl who glows when angry"

2. OLD ALLEY NETWORK

Narrow maze-like alleys behind the market.

Clues:

One alley where the air feels warmer
Signs of a struggle
A burnt crate corner
A scrap of fabric (you choose if they find it here or via Frans)

3. ABANDONED BAKERY ("BRACK'S LOAF")

Where Lasair had been staying.

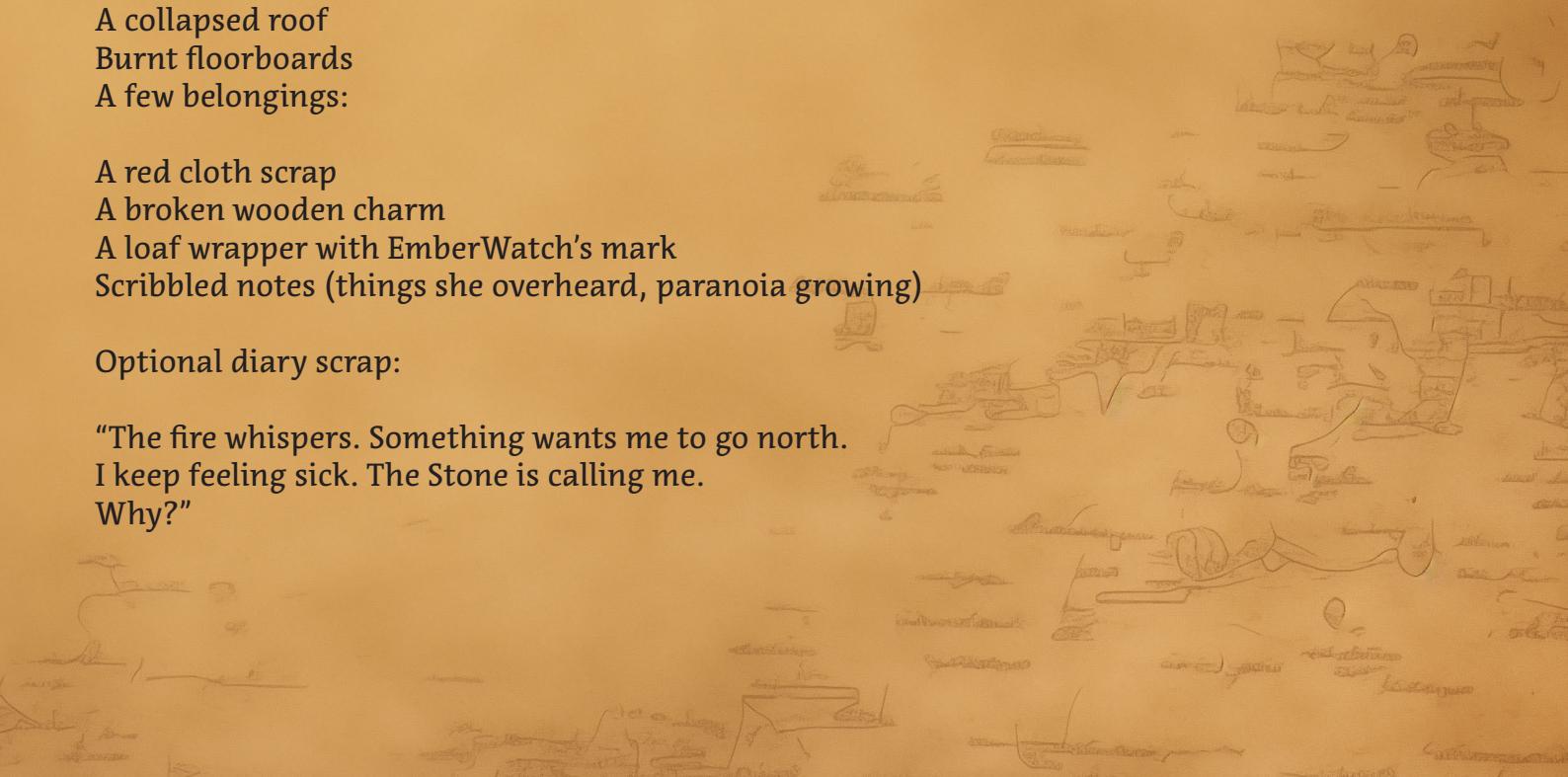
Inside:

A collapsed roof
Burnt floorboards
A few belongings:

A red cloth scrap
A broken wooden charm
A loaf wrapper with EmberWatch's mark
Scribbled notes (things she overheard, paranoia growing)

Optional diary scrap:

"The fire whispers. Something wants me to go north.
I keep feeling sick. The Stone is calling me.
Why?"



4. LOWTOWN CHAPEL OF CÀTHAIR

A corrupt priest might have seen her.

Clues:

She avoided the chapel like plague
Priest sensed "wrongness" around her
He tried to "purge" her once and she fled

5. SEWER ENTRANCE (THE CROSSOVER NODE)

This is where Group B can eventually intersect Group A, but not necessarily meet yet.

Here they find:

Goblin tracks
A dropped shoe
A faint glow on the stonework
A spider web with non-natural texture

And the final clue:

She fled into the sewers to escape her pursuers.



NPC LIST

LOWTOWN NPCs

(First people they'll meet around The Broken Tine & Old Nail Stables)

1. Darla Harthorn

Human • Female • Innkeeper / Broken Tine Rooms Manager

Warm but blunt, speaks quickly

Notices EVERYONE who stays at the inn

What she knows:

"A black-haired lass? Aye... saw one loiterin' outside the stables couple days ago. Looked cold. Looked scared."

Truth: Correct. She saw Lasair before she fled.

Attitude: Helpful if treated with respect.

2. Brann "Brickjaw" Molthan

Human • Male • 32 • Senior Bouncer at The Broken Tine

Sarcastic, unimpressed by outsiders

Loyal to the Tine

Good judge of character

Enjoys intimidating people but hates actual fights

The kind of guy who starts sentences with "Listen... mate..."

What He Knows About Lasair

Saw a thin, black-haired girl slip past the inn two nights ago

Thought she was "one of the Lowtown scrappers"

Noticed she kept looking over her shoulder

Didn't see who she was afraid of — but something was off

"Eyes dark as tar. Looked like she'd not slept in a week."

Truth: All accurate.

What He'll Tell the PCs

Straight if treated with respect

Defensive if pressured

Bribery works poorly — he prides himself on being honest

Useful Line:

"Aye, I saw a lass like that. Skinny thing, haunted look. Don't know who she was runnin' from, but she moved like a bloody shadow."

3. Durnan "Two-Stops" Kerrich

Half-Dwarf • Male • 44 • Junior Bouncer

Why "Two-Stops"?

He has to stop twice climbing the stairs due to bad knees.

Friendly enough
Loves gossip
ALWAYS tired

Will talk if someone buys him a drink
Takes his job seriously but not himself

What He Knows About Lasair

Claims he saw her twice:
Once passing the Tine at night
Once in Hollowgate Market

Thought she was:

"Lost" "Hungry" "Avoidin' the guard like plague"

Noticed:

She flinched when torches got too close
She kept tugging a red cloth around her shoulders
She was avoiding crowded spaces

Truthfulness
Mostly true.

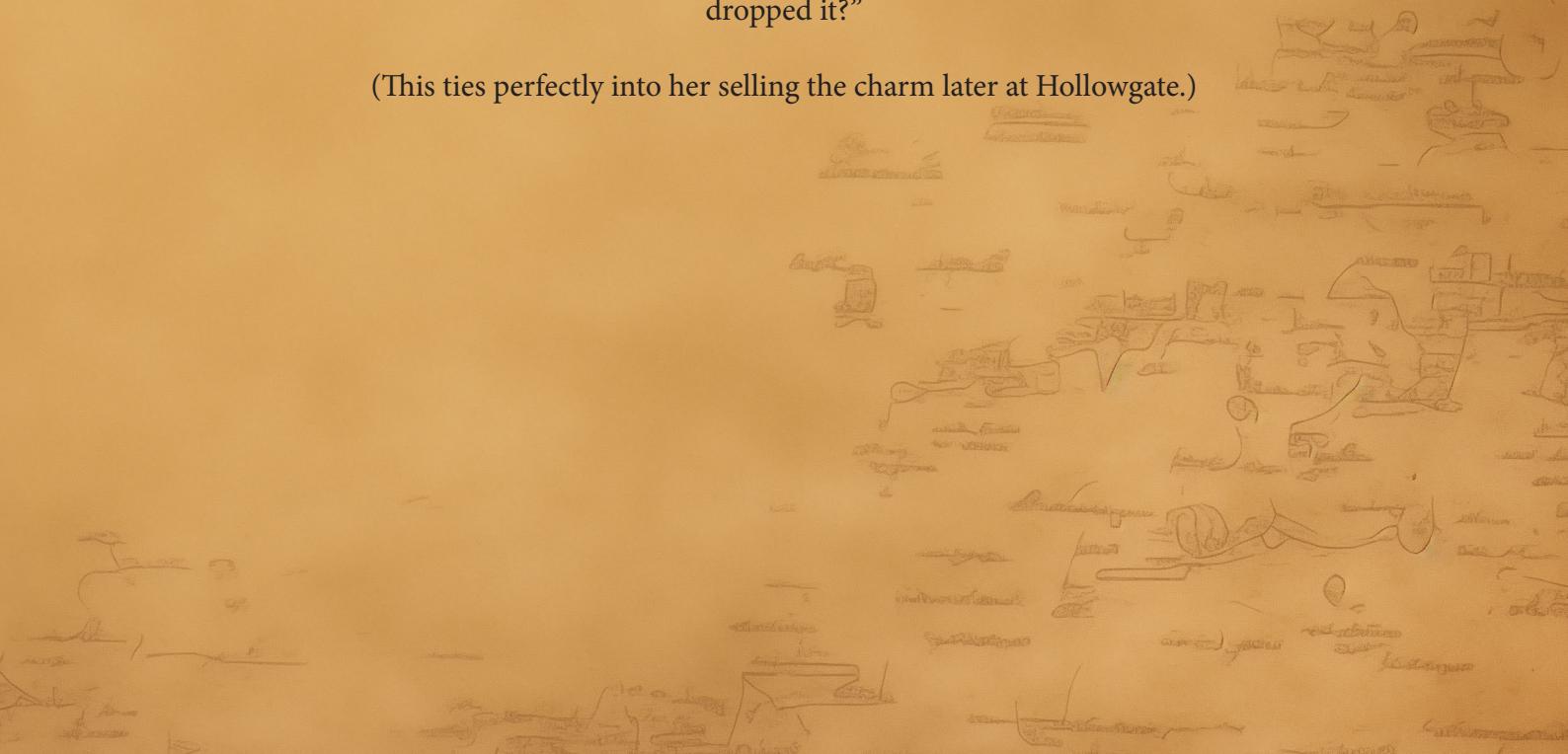
He exaggerates for effect but does not lie intentionally.

Clue He Can Give

If befriended or bribed:

"She had a wee charm on a string. Silver-like. I seen her clutch it like her life depended on it. Mibi she dropped it?"

(This ties perfectly into her selling the charm later at Hollowgate.)



4. COLIN CARTWRIGHT

Human • Male • Early 30s • Fence / EmberWatch Intermediary
Location: Behind the Hollowgate Tavern (Lowtown fringe)

Appearance

Thin, twitchy
Patchy beard
Too many pockets in his vest
Constantly scanning the alley

Personality

Nervous
Fast talker
Professional liar
Melts under intimidation
Loves to complain

What He Says He Knows

"Aye, aye — black-haired lass, thin like a twig. Came through here three days back. Bought some bread, bolted. Looked scared."

Truth

He DID see Lasair
He DID see her running
He DID notice a tall hooded figure following her
He DID take money not to ask questions

Hidden Detail (Players must push for this)

He has an EmberWatch sigil hidden under a loose floorboard in his stall.

What He Gives Them
Lead toward the Old Alley Network
Confirms she was scared and being followed

Clue: "She muttered something like 'I have to leave Staig'"

FRANS "RED EYE" MALDON

Human • Male • Late 40s • Bouncer at the Hollowgate Tavern
Location: Hollowgate Market, outside the main tavern

Appearance

Bloodshot eyes (hence the nickname)
Shaved head
Well-built but tired
Usually sober at work, drunk after work

Personality

Suspicious
Sarcastic
Very observant
Doesn't trust investigators
Proud of his ability to "spot trouble before it hits"

What He Knows

Saw a thin black-haired girl weaving through the crowd
She was terrified, glancing back often
She dropped a small scrap of red cloth
He saw "heat shimmer" around her hands

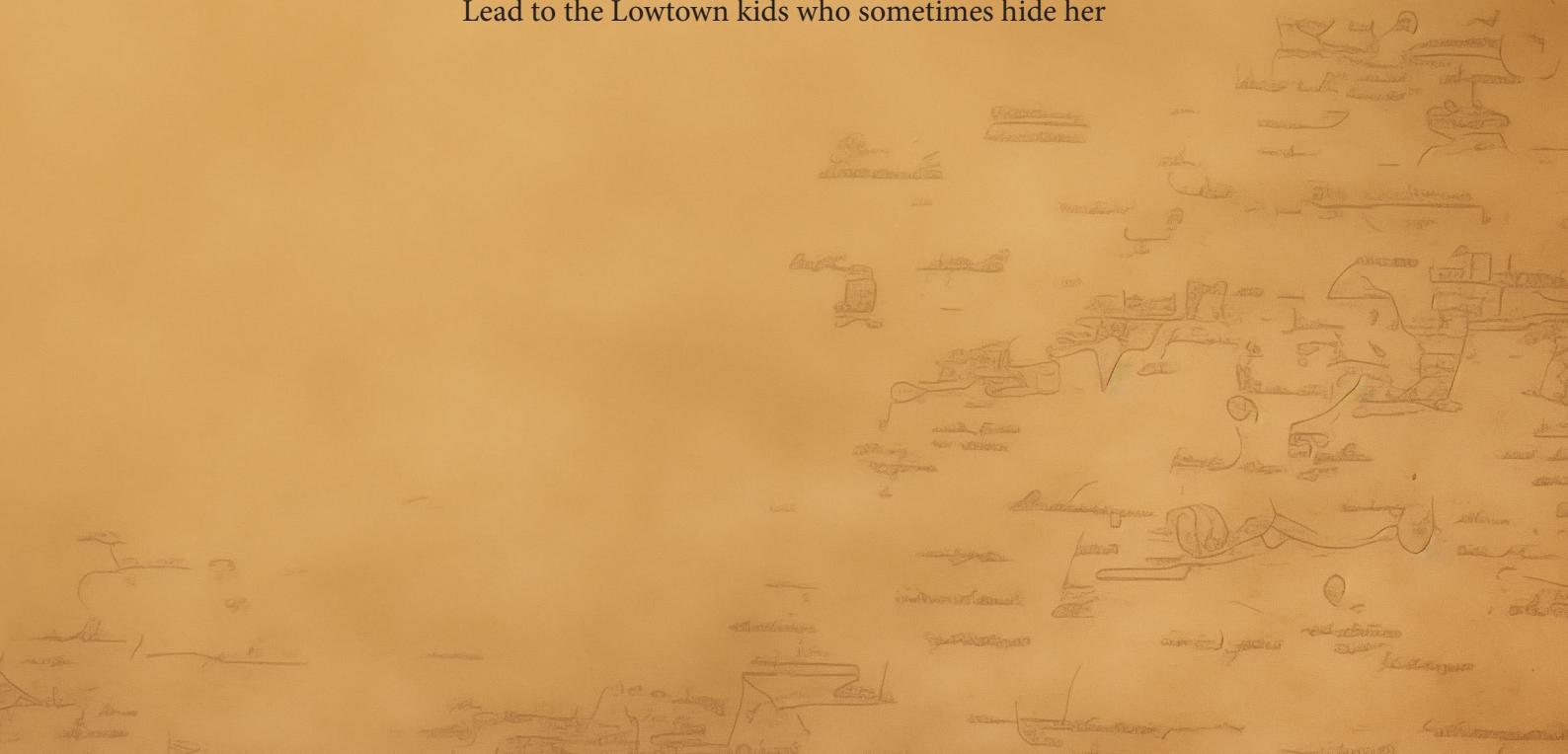
(He assumes she was nervous or torchlight tricking his eyes)

Truth

Everything he saw is true.

What He Gives Them

A red cloth scrap (Lasair's shawl fragment)
Lead to the Lowtown kids who sometimes hide her



3. OLD NAIL GARRIC

Human • Male • 60s • Stablemaster at Old Nail Stables
Location: Lowtown, behind The Broken Tine

Appearance

Lean but wiry
Missing several teeth
Straw permanently stuck in his hair
Hands like leather

Personality

Grumpy at first
Low tolerance for bullshit
Deeply kind under the surface
Protective of vulnerable kids and animals

What He Knows

Lasair slept in his hayloft during storms
He fed her when she was starving
She was never afraid of fire
Once saw her stare at a lantern until it flickered and went out
She said: "I won't be in Staig much longer."

Truth

Everything except the lantern bit (he misread it).
But it gives flavour.

What He Gives Them

Confirmed Lasair hideout
Confirmation she was preparing to flee
Directions to the abandoned bakery

4. LOWTOWN KID — “TINDER”

Human • Male • Age 10 • Street Runner

Location: Lowtown streets; can be found near Stonebraid Market

Appearance
Dirty blond hair
Clothes 2 sizes too big
Quick eyes
Always barefoot

Personality
Cocky
Mischievous
Always hungry
Completely loyal to Lasair

Why He's Important

Lasair saved him from getting beaten by thugs.
He sees her as a big sister.

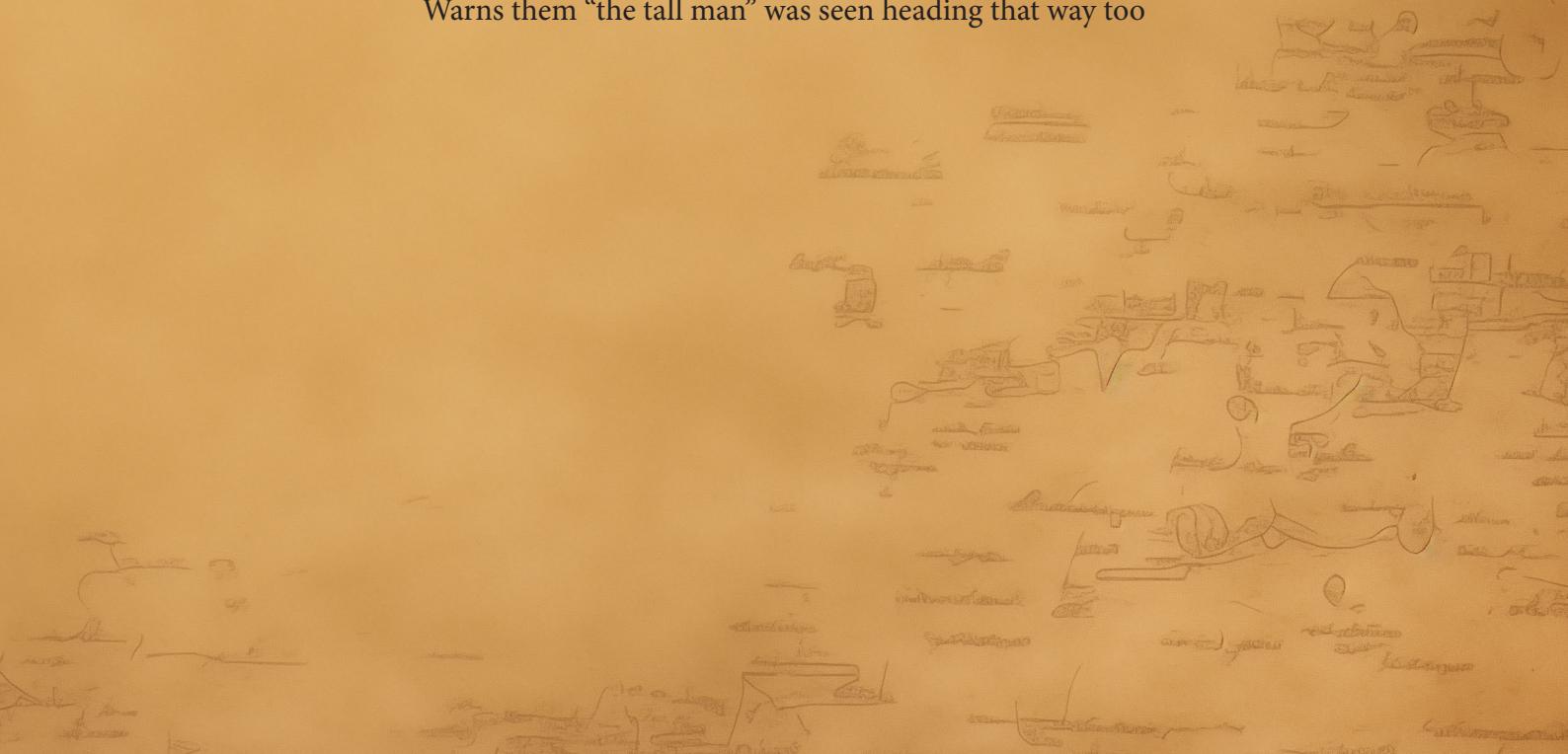
What He Knows

Lasair was hiding in an abandoned bakery
She said: “I can't stay. Something's coming for me.”
Two men in dark cloaks were asking about her

She left behind:
A scrap of cloth
A broken wooden charm
A bit of food
Notes she scribbled

What He Gives Them

Leads them to the abandoned bakery
Warns them “the tall man” was seen heading that way too



5. KHURKH "BROKEN-TOOTH"

Goblin • Male • Scavenger

Location: Near a sewer entrance in Lowtown

Appearance

Small, hunched

One missing tusk

Always clutching a satchel of junk

Eyes wide with fear

Personality

Nervous

Twitchy

Super superstitious

Easily bribed or scared

What He Knows

Calls Lasair: "Fire girl"

Claims she "burned the air" when she ran past

Saw her dive into the sewer network

Saw Phase Spiders lurking

Saw a tall hooded figure going the same direction

Truth

He DID see Lasair go near the sewers

But he mixes fear with exaggeration

The "fire" part = emotional heat shimmer, nothing supernatural visible

What He Gives Them

The sewer clue

Leads to the same network Group A explored

A possible cross-campaign link

2. Farlan Greyn

Human • Male • Owner of Old Nail Stables

Gruff, stoic, smells faintly of hay

Soft spot for strays but won't show it

Knows:

"Saw a thin wee girl pokin' about the hayloft last week. Thought she was just some Lowtown runner."

Truth: TRUE — Lasair slept in his hayloft.

Attitude: Suspicious at first; warms quickly.

3. Gora Rash

Half-Orc • Male • Drunk at The Broken Tine

Loud, emotional, overly honest when drunk

Knows:

“Saw her cryin’ in the alley behind the bathhouse... two cloaked figures watchin’ her.”

Truth: TRUE — he saw the Broken Crown scouts.

Attitude: Friendly, loose-lipped.

4. “One-Hand” Lembeek

Gnome • Male • Dart player

Exaggerates everything, loves gossip

Knows:

Claims she “stole a loaf from Stonebraid Market.”

Truth: FALSE — he makes things up for attention.

Attitude: Wants free drinks.

5. Maraidh Stonebrow

Human • Female • Bathhouse owner (The Warm Pit)

Stern, observant, no-nonsense

Knows:

“A girl matching that description bought a wash-token. Looked like she hadn’t washed in weeks.”

Truth: TRUE.

6. The Street Runners (Tick, Marn, Liza)

Human kids • 8–12 • Lowtown runners

Quick, suspicious, smart

The best source of information in the whole district

Knows:

“She ran. Someone chased her. We saw her climb toward Mid-Garden at dawn.”

Truth: TRUE (but they want coin).

MID-GARDEN NPCs

(Polite, quieter district — Lasair passed through briefly)

7. Hestera Windwick

Human • Female • Elder gardener

Peaceful, cryptic

Knows:

"Heard soft footsteps at sunrise... that wasn't a local child."

Truth: TRUE — Lasair crossed the terrace.

8. Caelric Fen

Elf • Male • Jewel-engraver

Fussy, pretentious, dislikes Lowtown folk

Knows:

"Black hair? Thin? No, I don't deal with street urchins."

Truth: Knows nothing.

9. Keela Mossfern

Firbolg • Female • Evening barmaid

Kind, thoughtful, soft-spoken

Knows:

"Saw a wee lass sittin' by the garden wall with a stray dog. Looked lonely."

Truth: TRUE — this was the night before she vanished.

HOLLOWGATE MARKET NPCs

(Where she was last confirmed seen)

10. Olan Harth

Human • Male • Owner of The Dragon's Hook Tavern

Loud, charismatic, merchant-friendly

Knows:

"A lass with black hair sold a wee silver charm here two nights back. Cheaply too."

Truth: TRUE — she sold her adoptive mother's charm.

11. Saren Maynforge

Dwarf • Male • Maynen-aligned trader

Paranoid, wary of outsiders

Knows:

"Heard whispers a girl's bein' hunted. Black hair. Silent sort."

Truth: TRUE but vague — he only overheard Broken Crown talk.

12. *Tali Rynde*

Tiefling • Female • Bard on the Amber Stage

Dramatic, nosy, loves gossip

Knows:

“Saw a lass runnin’ through the market lanes... looked terrified. Someone tall followed her.”

Truth: TRUE.

HIGH HOLD NPCs

(Less likely early-game contacts, but possible)

13. *Valorfang Sergeant Mearn*

Human • Male • Elite guard

Intimidating, professional

Knows:

“If a child’s missing, that’s a Lowtown matter. Not ours.”

Truth: He suspects something but won’t say.

14. *Sister Aedra*

Human • Female • Hearthfire Shrine

Gentle, wise, perceptive

Knows:

“She carries sorrow. That’s all I can say.”

Truth: Vague but accurate to Lasair’s emotional state.

15. *Archivist Kellen*

Half-elf • Male • Trade Hall Clerk

Nervous, meticulous

Knows:

“There were two cloaked men who arrived on the morning she vanished.”

Truth: TRUE — Broken Crown operatives.

Requires persuasion to reveal.

– Lowtown / Market Folk –

Brenna Coilfin
Tarn “Rope” Mardig
Lira Stonebraid
Jask Hollowen
Fenn Lasker
Morra Quinbrook
Tovis “Quickstep” Darn
Pella Wintrow
Jarrek Mott
Sella Crookshank

– Guards / Valorfang / High Hold –

Sergeant Halven Droth
Captain Marric Fain
Eira Valens
Goron Brackhail
Tholmar Fenwick
Caela Fergis
Odran Maelstrom
Rhea Donnall

– Hollowgate Traders & Craftsfolk –

Vornic Hillen
Tessara Muir
Jordak Bresh
Maelis Thornford
Rudgar Pennish
Seren Oldbarrow

– Mid-Garden Citizens –

Helene Marris
Tolan Rhedge
Isgrid Tallent
Marrek Solune

– General-use Extras (flexible anywhere) –

Durn Wicklow
Orlaith Kerrin

The Ember Watch

The Ember Watch is a secretive organisation operating from the shadows of Staig, hidden deep within the political heart of Galdar.

Their purpose: to locate Lasair, the prophesied Ember That Waits.

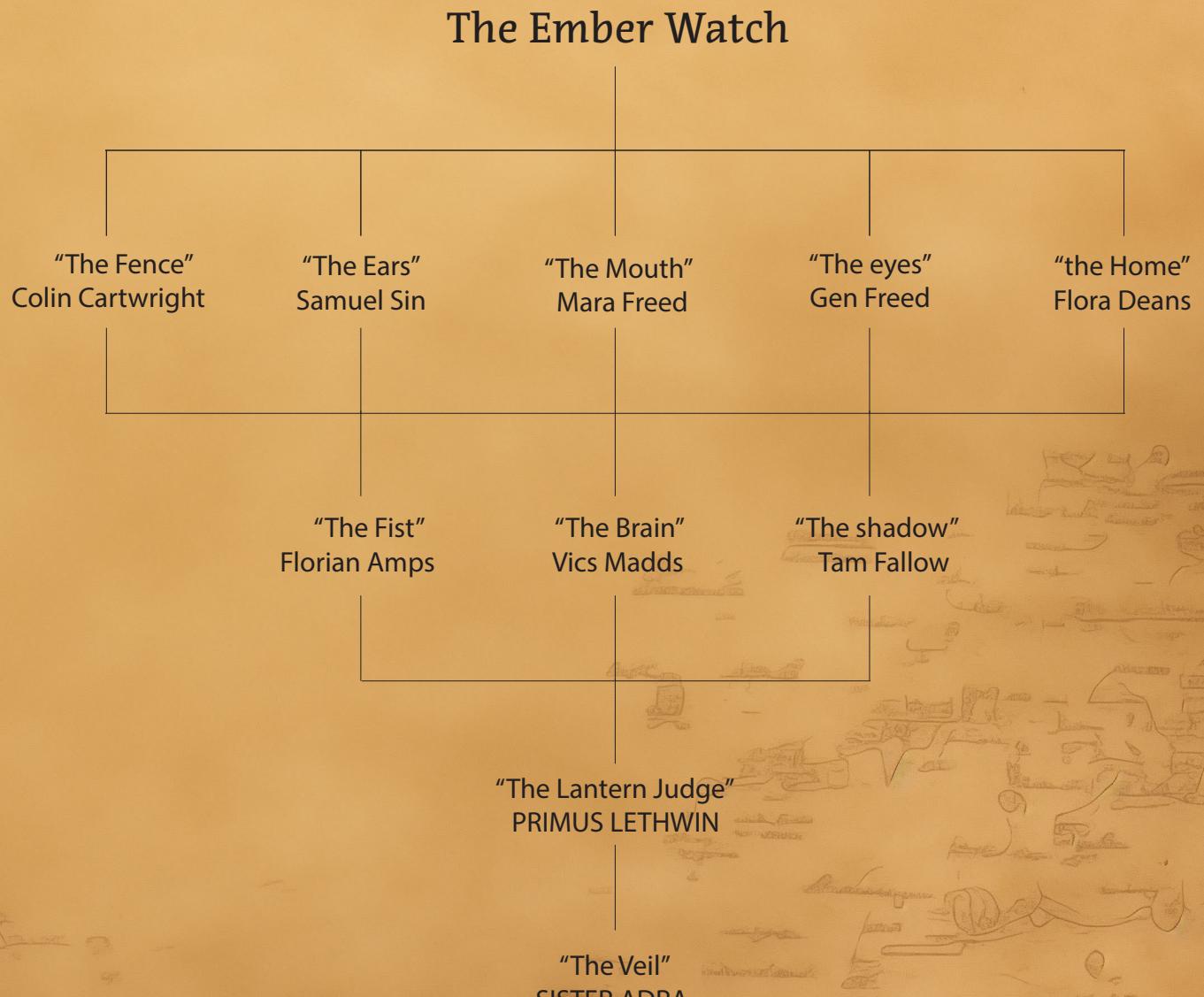
They believe she is one of the four children foretold in the ancient Drocha prophecies—children whose return will one day lead to the destruction of the Stone of Destiny.

If the Stone breaks, the lost power of the Drocha clan will be restored, reviving a lineage long thought extinguished and shattering the High King's divine hold over the realm.

To avoid exposure, the Ember Watch has enlisted the assistance of the NorthLight Inquiry, a foreign investigative agency known for discretion, independence, and—critically—its illegal status within Galdar.

This allows the Watch to act through intermediaries while maintaining absolute deniability.

Below is a flow chart of the members of the Ember Watch



Colin “The Fence” Cartwright

Alias: “The Fence”

Role: Ember Watch tier-three operative

Public Role: Market trader / bread-seller

Location: Hollowgate Market Strip, Staig (Lowtown)

Appearance

Colin is a wiry man in his late thirties with a permanently hunched posture, as though life has been slowly folding him in half.

He has thinning brown hair, a patchy beard, and deep-set eyes that constantly flick from face to face as though tracking invisible dangers.

His clothes are simple and practical: a wool cloak faded by Lowtown soot, sleeves rolled past scarred forearms, and a belt with far too many pouches.

He smells faintly of flour, cold sweat, and the lingering smoke from street braziers.

Personality

Colin talks fast — too fast — as if he’s afraid silence will say more than he wants to.

He always seems one heartbeat away from bolting, but when pressed, he becomes strangely stubborn and defensive.

He’s not a bad man.

He’s not a brave man either.

Colin survives by bending, not breaking.

Key traits:

Jumpy and twitchy; startles easily

Lies reflexively, even when the truth would do

Tries to look harmless (and usually succeeds)

Has a surprisingly kind streak toward children

Hates violence but will enable it if cornered

Respects outsiders — they’re “less tangled in Staig’s nets”

How he speaks

A soft, nervous Lowtown lilt.

Sentences run together.

He constantly glances over shoulders, down alleys, and behind stalls.

Examples:

“A-ah, aye, aye—bread, fine bread, best in Lowtown, don’t look at me like that.”

“I didn’t see anything, but I saw... something. Maybe. Depends who’s asking.”

“Look, friend, the walls listen in Staig. Let’s keep this quick.”

What Colin Knows About Lasair (Player-Discoverable)

She bought bread from him three days ago.

She seemed frightened, constantly checking alleys.

A tall figure in grey robes with a burn-scarred cheek was following her.

She vanished into the Old Alley Network afterward.

Her hands seemed... “warm.” Almost uncomfortably so.

Hidden Truth (GM-Only – do not reveal unless they dig hard)

He’s an Ember Watch contact who passes messages through coded notes hidden inside bread loaves.

He was warned not to ask questions about the girl, which terrified him even more.

The sigil behind his stall is intentional: a signal point for other Watch members.

Colin is being watched by someone in Staig’s underbelly — and he knows it.

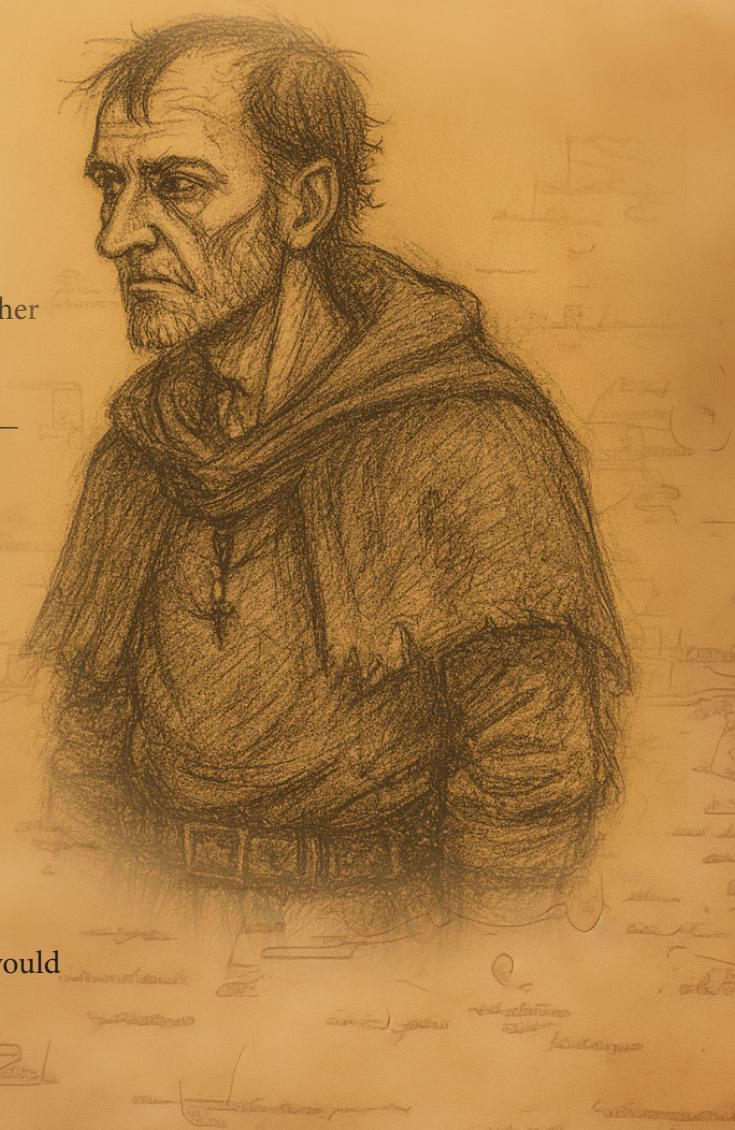
He genuinely fears the High King’s forces more than the Ember Watch.

Why he helps the party

NorthLight operatives look “untethered,” meaning they’re not part of Staig’s politics.

He feels guilty—he thinks the girl is in danger because he didn’t help her.

He believes the party might survive asking questions that would get him killed.



Samuel “The Ears” Sin

Alias: “The Ears”

Role: Ember Watch tier-three operative

Public Role: Tinker, repairman, and pawnshop listener

Location: The Crooked Alley Shopfront, Stonebraid Market Strip (Lowtown)

Appearance

Samuel Sin is a small, wiry human in his mid-forties with a pinched face and a perpetual squint, as if he's always trying to read lips from across a crowded room.

His hair is black and slicked back with far too much oil, revealing a widow's peak that gives him a slightly vulture-like silhouette.

His most notable feature is his ears:

large, protruding, asymmetrical, and constantly twitching.

He claims he can “hear a lie before it’s spoken,” and while that’s nonsense... he is unnervingly perceptive. He dresses in patched, practical work clothes—dark trousers, an apron bristling with small tools, and a heavy leather coat with pockets sewn inside pockets.

There’s always a thin sheen of brass dust on his sleeves.

He smells faintly of lamp oil, stale tea, and rust.

Personality

Samuel is calm where Colin is jittery.

He rarely raises his voice, rarely shows emotion, and rarely reveals more than he needs to.

He listens far more than he speaks.

Sometimes he listens instead of speaking.

He has the unsettling habit of turning his head slightly sideways, like a raven, when something catches his attention.

Samuel believes knowledge is the safest weapon.

And he hoards it greedily.

Key Traits

Speaks softly, but with sharp precision

Never answers a question without deciding who benefits

Excellent at reading tone, subtext, hesitation

Collects secrets, trades them sparingly

Extremely patient — can sit still for hours

Feels no guilt lying

Deeply loyal to the Ember Watch’s cause, but not its people

Has a strange fondness for broken machines and broken people

Samuel views the world as gears: everything turns because something else forces it to.

He just wants to know which gear moves which.

How He Speaks

Measured.
Quiet.

Every sentence has a weight to it, even when he's saying something mundane.

Example cadence:

"Mm. That's curious. You didn't look worried until I mentioned her name."
He rarely uses contractions, making him sound slightly formal despite being Lowtown-born.

What Samuel Knows About Lassair (Player-Discoverable)

He overheard her speaking with someone three nights ago in a side alley.
She was scared but determined — repeating the phrase "no more running."

He noticed she reacted violently to sudden noises.

He heard someone tailing her, boots scuffing deliberately behind her.

He identified the tail as the burn-scarred grey-cloak man.

He followed him, not her.

Lost him in the Old Alleys.

He found one thing at the spot Lass disappeared:

a faint warmth in the stone wall, as if someone pressed a hot object to it.

Examples (How to play him in dialogue)

"Your footsteps... heavy. Purposeful. You are not from Lowtown."
"Words travel strangely in Staig. They arrive before the mouths that speak them."
"I heard her, aye. I hear most things. What are you offering for what I heard?"
"Careful. You are being followed. Not by me."

Hidden Truth (GM-Only — do not reveal unless the players probe hard)

Samuel is the Ember Watch's de facto intelligence hub inside Lowtown.

He uses his pawnshop as a listening post:

hollow walls
resonating pipes
copper wiring
reflective dishes

and a network of informants who trade stories for coin

He has personally tracked all four prophecy-children for years, though only in fragments.

He believes Lassair is the most important — not because she can destroy the Stone,
but because he thinks she's the only one who might survive doing it.

He also believes the High King's agents are starting to close in on her trail —
and that the party may draw more attention than the Ember Watch planned.

Why He Helps the Party

He thinks the NLI is the only group that hasn't been corrupted by Galdar politics.

He wants the party to find Lassair before the other factions do.

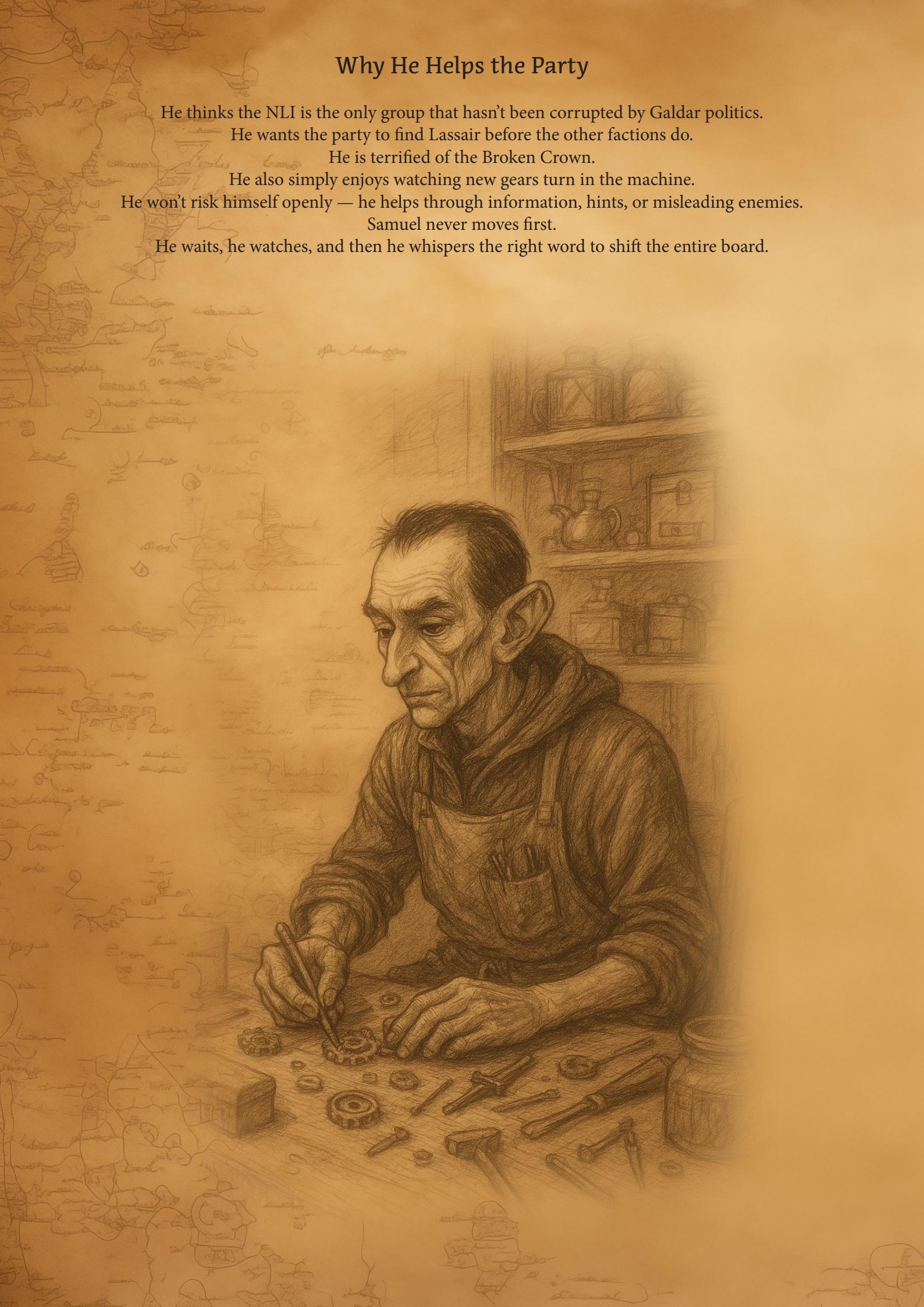
He is terrified of the Broken Crown.

He also simply enjoys watching new gears turn in the machine.

He won't risk himself openly — he helps through information, hints, or misleading enemies.

Samuel never moves first.

He waits, he watches, and then he whispers the right word to shift the entire board.



Mara “The Mouth” Freed

Alias: “The Mouth”

Role: Ember Watch tier-three operative

Public Role: Florist, bouquet-maker, event-arranger, and professional gossip

Location: Bloom & Brier, Stonebraid Market Strip (Lowtown)

Appearance

Mara is a woman in her mid-thirties with warm brown skin, sharp eyes, and a face made for smiling — which is convenient, because she rarely stops.

Her hair is a thick tangle of curling black coils, tied back with colourful ribbons that always match the flowers she’s selling.

Her hands are stained green from stems and dyes, and she often smells faintly of:
crushed lavender
sweet peat

and the iron tang of Lowtown’s ever-present smoke beneath it

She dresses in layered skirts, loose blouses, and a thick apron embroidered with flowers — real ones, somehow fresh despite the soot of Staig.

Her smile is bright.

Her stare is sharper.

She gives the impression of someone who knows everybody and isn’t shy about saying so.

Personality

Mara is everything Stonebraid loves and fears:

Warm, chatty, inviting...
but also relentless.

She is a conversational predator wrapped in charm.

People tell Mara things — even when they know they shouldn’t.

She remembers every name, every face, every argument, every rumour whispered too loudly after a drink.

Her greatest weapon is silence:
when Mara stops talking, people get nervous.

Despite her role, she has an unexpectedly motherly streak toward the children of Lowtown.

Her shop is a safe place for them —
with rules she enforces absolutely.

Key Traits

Speaks constantly, almost musically

Social chameleon — can be sweet, stern, dangerous, or soothing on command

Excellent liar; terrible at being lied to

Sharp judge of character

Natural performer, uses dramatic pauses and tone shifts deliberately

Surprisingly strong — flower buckets are heavy

Holds grudges with frightening patience

Fiercely protective of Gen Freed (her sibling)

Believes the Ember Watch's mission is righteous, even holy

Mara thinks in terms of stories.
Every person is a thread, and she is always weaving.

How She Speaks

Lively.

Playful.

Dangerous when she lowers her voice.

Example cadence:

"Oh, sweetheart, don't make that face — you'll wrinkle before your time. Now, start again... slowly."

She shifts tone mid-sentence, making people lean in.

Her laughter is genuine.

Her threats are not.

What Mara Knows About Lassair (Player-Discoverable)

She came to her in a panic the three days ago. Mara put a daisy in her hair — daisies, "something simple."

She had told Mara there was a man following her, Mara offered her a place to stay for the night but she refused, not wanting to "get Mara Involved"

She seemed exhausted, eyes sunken, voice shaky.

Mara noticed:

Lass flinched when someone dropped a crate behind her

She kept checking the rooftops, not the crowd

She asked if the market gates "ever close early"

Mara saw the grey-cloaked man too —
and noticed he never looked at the wares, only at the exits.

After Lass left, Mara found:

A crushed daisy on the ground,

Examples (How to play Mara in dialogue)

"Oh, love, come in, come in — you look like trouble wrapped in boots."

"Secrets? Flower, this whole market runs on secrets. The trick is knowing which ones to water and which ones to let die."

"Mm-hm. I saw her. Sweet girl, shaking like a leaf. And you're asking because...?"

"Listen closely now. Someone is hunting her. And he's not the sort that leaves footprints."

Hidden Truth (GM-Only — do not reveal unless they dig extremely hard)

Mara is the information broker of the Ember Watch's social network.

Samuel hears whispers through walls.

Mara hears whispers through people.

She is responsible for:

Maintaining relationships with dozens of Lowtown residents

Sourcing rumours

Vetting outsiders

Identifying threats to the Watch

Gathering emotional intelligence (who's angry, who's scared, who's desperate)

She keeps coded messages in bouquets —

certain flowers placed in certain arrangements tell different Watch members different things.

Her greatest secret?

Mara Like Lassair and doesn't want harm to befall the girl. She is the one who alerted the watch to the fact she may be the Ember that waits. This was about 2 weeks ago.

She believes Lassair is destined to shatter the Stone
and survive.

Mara would die before betraying her.

Why She Helps the Party

They are outsiders, unpredictable, unclaimed — useful pieces on the board

She genuinely wants Lassair protected

She was the contractor for the NLI

She believes she can manipulate the party

She hopes they'll draw fire away from Gen and Samuel

She thinks their presence will accelerate the prophecy

Mara likes them.

But she'll also use them.

With a smile.



Gen “The Eyes” Freed

Alias: “The Eyes”

Role: Ember Watch tier-three operative

Public Role: courier / message-runner / tower lookout

Location: Riverside Heights (Midgarden), Staig

Appearance

Gen Freed is a wiry, long-limbed man in his early forties, built like someone who has spent most of his life perched on rooftops or sprinting across uneven stone tiles.

He has ashen-blond hair, always wind-swept, giving him a slightly ethereal look. His skin carries faint sunburns and old scrapes — reminders of years navigating Staig’s rooftops.

His eyes are his defining feature:

sharp, icy blue, constantly scanning, almost never blinking.

People say Gen doesn’t just see things — he absorbs them.

He dresses in fitted leathers and light fabrics that don’t snag on tiles or gutters. His boots are soft-soled and silent.

Gen smells faintly of rainwater, cold stone, and chimney soot.

When he stands still (which is rare), there’s a coiled alertness to him — like a hawk deciding which mouse dies first.

Personality

Gen is quiet, observant, and painfully honest.

He doesn’t waste words.

He doesn’t sugarcoat anything.

He doesn’t know how to be gentle with the truth.

He reads people the way others read books — quickly, accurately, and sometimes a little cruelly.

He’s the sort who notices:

- who is lying
- who is afraid
- who is watching whom
- who has changed their routine by ten paces that day

Despite this intensity, he is not unkind.

Gen simply believes that seeing the truth is better than being comfortable.

Key Traits

Hyper-observant to an unnerving degree

Excellent with vantage points and long-distance tracking

Cannot lie convincingly

Speaks in short, clipped sentences

Loyal to Ember Watch but privately disagrees with parts of the mission

Protective of the Freed family (particularly Mara)

Moves with dancer-like precision

Gets restless indoors — needs height, space, wind

Gen often stands near windows, on roofs, or atop barrels without realizing it — he's always trying to get a better angle.

How he speaks

Gen's speech is minimalist and matter-of-fact.
He rarely uses metaphors, rarely embellishes, and never repeats himself.

Examples:

“Your eyes moved left. You’re hiding something there.”

“She ran. Faster than she should’ve. Fear does that.”

“He saw you. Too late to fix that now.”

“Do not stand in the open. Move.”

His voice is low, almost whisper-quiet, but somehow cuts through noise effortlessly.

What Gen Knows About Lassair (Player-Discoverable)

He saw her moving through the rooftops three days ago — unusual for a street urchin.
She was being tailed by the burn-scarred grey-cloak, but she noticed him before he noticed her.

She stopped twice to watch the guards instead of running from them.

Gen observed her hands glowing faintly, as if they held reflected firelight even in shadow.

She vanished near the Old Nail Stables, slipping into a vent too small for an adult.

Gen found scratched stone and faint heat where she disappeared.

He hasn't told Mara everything he saw.

Examples (How to play him in dialogue)

“Don’t pretend. I’ve watched people run for twenty years. You’re not running from, you’re running toward.”

“She looked back, twice. Fear makes people blind. She wasn’t blind.”

“If you go after her... take the high paths. Lowtown will swallow you.”

Hidden Truth (GM-Only — do not reveal unless the players push hard)

Gen has been secretly tracking Lassair for months, long before the Ember Watch officially sought her.

Not because of the prophecy.

Because Gen believes she reminds him of someone he failed to protect years ago — a sibling he lost when the Watch first rose.

He fears the Watch is underestimating the danger around her.

He fears the High King’s agents already know far more than they admit.

He fears the prophecy might be real.

Gen would betray the Watch if it meant saving her, though he hasn’t admitted that to himself yet.

He also suspects that someone inside the Watch — someone higher up — is leaking information.

Why he helps the party

He respects that the NLI are outsiders and therefore unpredictable.

He believes the party might succeed where the Watch would crush Lassair with pressure.

He sees potential in them that they don't see yet.

He hopes they can do what he can't: reach her without scaring her into the dark again.

More than anything, Gen helps because he refuses to let another child vanish while he watches from a rooftop.



Flora "The Home" Deans

Ember Watch Tier-Three Operative
Public Role: Lowtown Healer, Midwife & Medical Keeper
Location: Riverbed Commons, Staig (Lowtown)

Appearance

Flora Deans is a slim, elderly woman in her seventies, moved by routine rather than strength. Her skin is a washed-out, corpse-pale white — the kind earned not by sickness, but by years spent under lanterns, moonlight, and the cold glow of alchemical lamps in makeshift medical tents. Her hair, scraped into a functional ponytail, is mostly grey, but still carries threads of once-bright blonde that catch the light like old memory. Her eyes are deep-set, tired, and always watching, slightly sunken from decades of sleepless nights and emergencies that never let her rest. She dresses only in muted whites and greys, a patchwork of aprons, medical wraps, stained tunics, and practical skirts. Every layer carries the scent of her trade:

sharp cleaning chemicals
herbal disinfectants
boiled cloth
a faint underlying trace of riverwater

Her hands are calloused, scarred, and tremor-still, used to stitching flesh, holding crying newborns, and gripping the wounded through the night.

She looks brittle.
She is anything but.

Personality

Flora speaks softly, moves efficiently, and never wastes a second or a word.
She has no time for theatrics, ego, or excuses — only results.
Though her face is stern, her presence is grounding; she radiates a strange, unsettling calm, the kind carried by those who've seen too much and kept going anyway.

To Lowtown, she is:

its midwife, its medic, its counsellor, its confessor, its quiet sentinel
She has held more dying hands than she can count, and remembers every one.
She does not fear blood, suffering, or death — she fears failing those who depend on her.

Key Traits

Sharp, clipped tone
Moves with old, habitual precision
Constantly assessing: posture, breath, hidden pain
Sleeps only when forced
Emotionally restrained but fiercely loyal to those she protects
Treats everyone the same: beggar or noble, child or murderer
Collects medical and alchemical knowledge obsessively
Knows every birth, death, injury, and illness in Lowtown for the last forty years
Sees danger coming long before anyone else does



Flora is not kind in a gentle way.
She is kind in the tough, unbreakable way of someone who refuses to let her people die.

How She Speaks

Quiet. Precise.
Her sentences land like instructions — even when she's being friendly.

Examples:

“Sit. Breathe. Tell me where it hurts.”
“Do not lie to me. You are bleeding internally.”
“Sleep is not optional. Sit still while I fix you.”
“No, you are not dying. Not today.”
“Pain means you are alive. Good. Keep breathing.”

What Flora Knows About Lassair (Player-Discoverable)

Lassair came to her four months ago with malnourishment, bruising, and burns.
Flora treated her in silence, without questions.
She noted Lassair's unnatural body temperature, fluctuating between freezing and feverish.
Lassair came by five days ago — terrified, asking for bandages.
Flora watched her flee into the Old Alleys, clutching her arm.

Later, Flora found:
a streak of scorched stone
a scrap of burnt linen
and lingering heat

Hidden Truth (GM-Only)

Flora is the unofficial medic of the Ember Watch, but also its unofficial conscience.
She treats Watch operatives, stabilises injured children they rescue, and hides fugitives in her clinic.
She does not approve of everything the Watch does — but she understands why it must be done.
She is one of the few who knows the prophecy of the four children in full.
She believes Lassair is the most fragile of the four — and thus the most at risk.
She also believes Lassair will burn alive before any enemy captures her.
Flora has quietly prepared cold-salve mixtures and heat-resistant wraps in case the girl returns.
She does not know if they will help.
She will try anyway.

Why She Helps the Party

She sees the NLI as the only group not corrupted by Staig's politics.
She wants Lassair found before the girl collapses under her own burden.
She dislikes the Ember Watch's secrecy but understands the stakes.
She hopes the party can do what the Watch cannot:
protect the children, not just use them.



The Order Of The Broken Crown

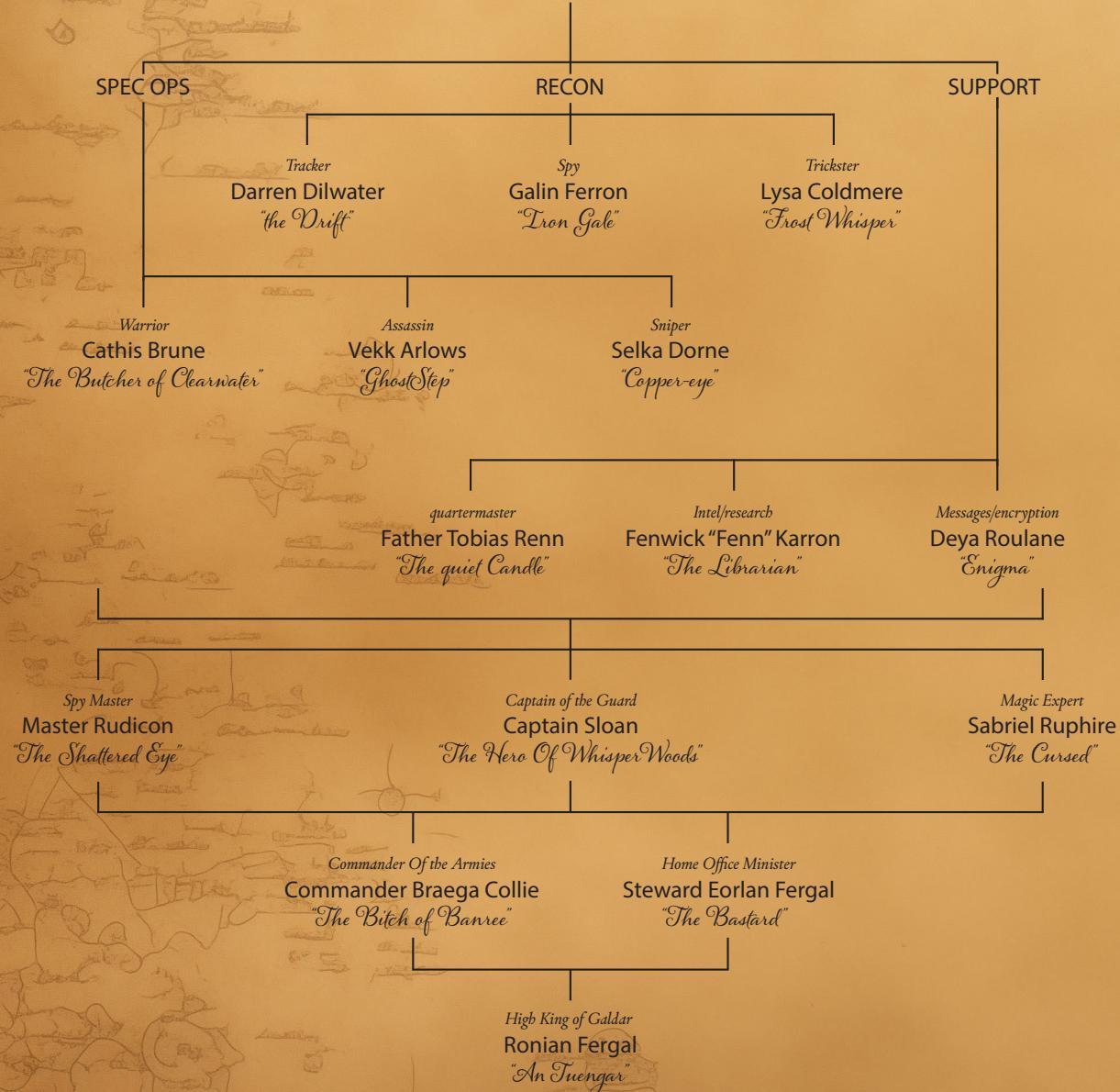
The Order of the Broken Crown is a covert paramilitary force operating beneath the notice of most of Galdar. Formed from former soldiers, spies, and specialists who willingly surrendered their official ranks, the Order acts as the High King's hidden blade—answerable only to the throne and unbound by law, jurisdiction, or diplomacy. To the public, the Order does not exist. To those who cross their path, it is already too late.

Their singular purpose is the eradication of the prophecy-born children—those marked by the ancient Drocha verses. Where the Ember Watch sees destiny, the Order sees apocalypse. They believe the destruction of the Stone of Destiny would unleash the suppressed Drocha magic in a catastrophic surge: a wave capable of annihilating Staig, poisoning the highland rivers, and warping the minds and bodies of every living soul caught in the fallout. To them, the Emberborn are not heirs or saviours—they are walking magical bombs waiting to detonate.

Driven by this belief, the Order hunts without hesitation. They infiltrate, observe, disappear, and strike with precision. Every mission follows the same doctrine carved into their oath: "If the Stone breaks, the realm breaks with it." Through their eyes, every kill is a mercy, every erased child a necessary sacrifice. They see themselves not as monsters, but as the final guardians standing between Galdar and arcane annihilation.

Their hierarchy, methods, and identities remain buried in shadow—but their resolve is absolute.

The Broken Crown



Northlight Inquiry Agents

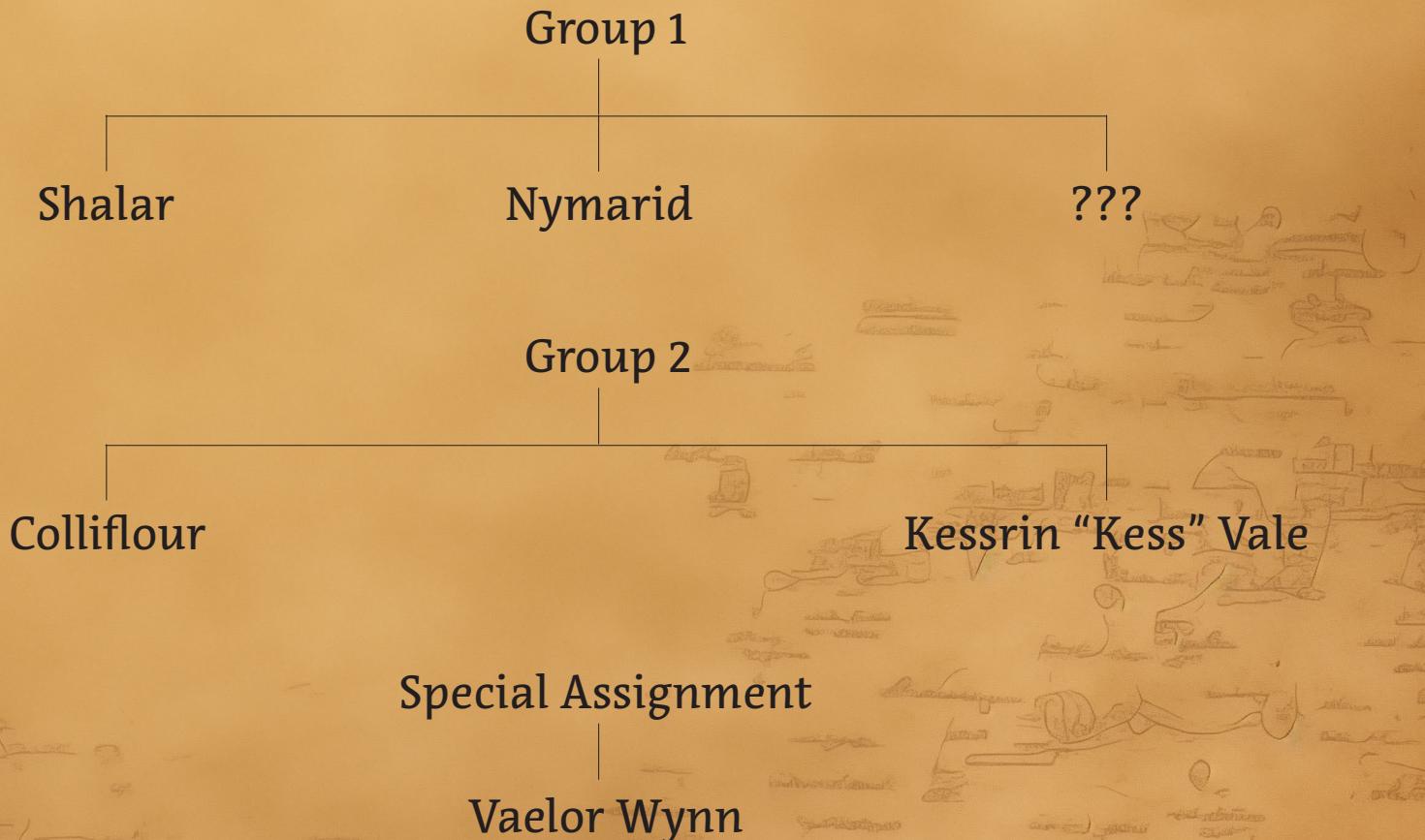
The Order of the Broken Crown is a covert paramilitary force operating beneath the notice of most of Galdar. Formed from former soldiers, spies, and specialists who willingly surrendered their official ranks, the Order acts as the High King's hidden blade—answerable only to the throne and unbound by law, jurisdiction, or diplomacy. To the public, the Order does not exist. To those who cross their path, it is already too late.

Their singular purpose is the eradication of the prophecy-born children—those marked by the ancient Drocha verses. Where the Ember Watch sees destiny, the Order sees apocalypse. They believe the destruction of the Stone of Destiny would unleash the suppressed Drocha magic in a catastrophic surge: a wave capable of annihilating Staig, poisoning the highland rivers, and warping the minds and bodies of every living soul caught in the fallout. To them, the Emberborn are not heirs or saviours—they are walking magical bombs waiting to detonate.

Driven by this belief, the Order hunts without hesitation. They infiltrate, observe, disappear, and strike with precision. Every mission follows the same doctrine carved into their oath: "If the Stone breaks, the realm breaks with it." Through their eyes, every kill is a mercy, every erased child a necessary sacrifice. They see themselves not as monsters, but as the final guardians standing between Galdar and arcane annihilation.

Their hierarchy, methods, and identities remain buried in shadow—but their resolve is absolute.

Active NLI Agents In Staig



CAULIFLOWER "CAULI"

THISTLEDOWN

Alias: Cauli

Role: NorthLight Inquiry – Tier 2 Operative

Specialisation: Fey reconnaissance, spellcasting support, charm-based social infiltration

Species: Fey-blooded elf (Seelie-touched)

Assignment: The Sloan Affair – Staig, Galdar

Appearance

Cauliflower is a delicate yet vibrant fey-blooded elf, appearing in her early thirties but radiating the uncanny timelessness of someone touched by the Seelie Courts.

Skin: pale gold with a faint shimmer in bright light

Hair: long, wild, pale-rose curls that look windblown even indoors

Eyes: large, bright mint-green, always moving

Build: small, wiry, but surprisingly quick

Clothing: mismatched layers of scarves, satchels, and embroidered vests — half practical investigator, half lost forest sprite

Smell: crushed mint, honey, and the kind of rain that doesn't touch the ground

Quirk: her shadow never quite matches her posture

She looks like someone who wandered into the city by accident
—and stayed because she found the chaos funny.

Personality

Loud where Kess is quiet.

Curious where Kess is cautious.

Chaotic where Kess is methodical.

She talks too much.

She charms too quickly.

And she lies terribly — except when she needs to lie very well.

Cauli believes the world is full of stories that simply need someone enthusiastic enough to listen.

She adores:

gossip

shiny objects

trouble

being right (even when she's wrong)

and poking dangerous things “just to see what happens”

Underneath the chaos?

She's sharp. Very sharp.

She just hides her intelligence behind whimsy.

Key Traits

fey instincts for danger (but not avoidance)
exceptional at blending into crowds
magically gifted at illusions and distraction
terrible at stealth (she hums when she sneaks)
irresistible to children; suspicious to adults
fearless to the point of idiocy
hates the Galdari clergy — they “smell wrong” to her

How She Speaks

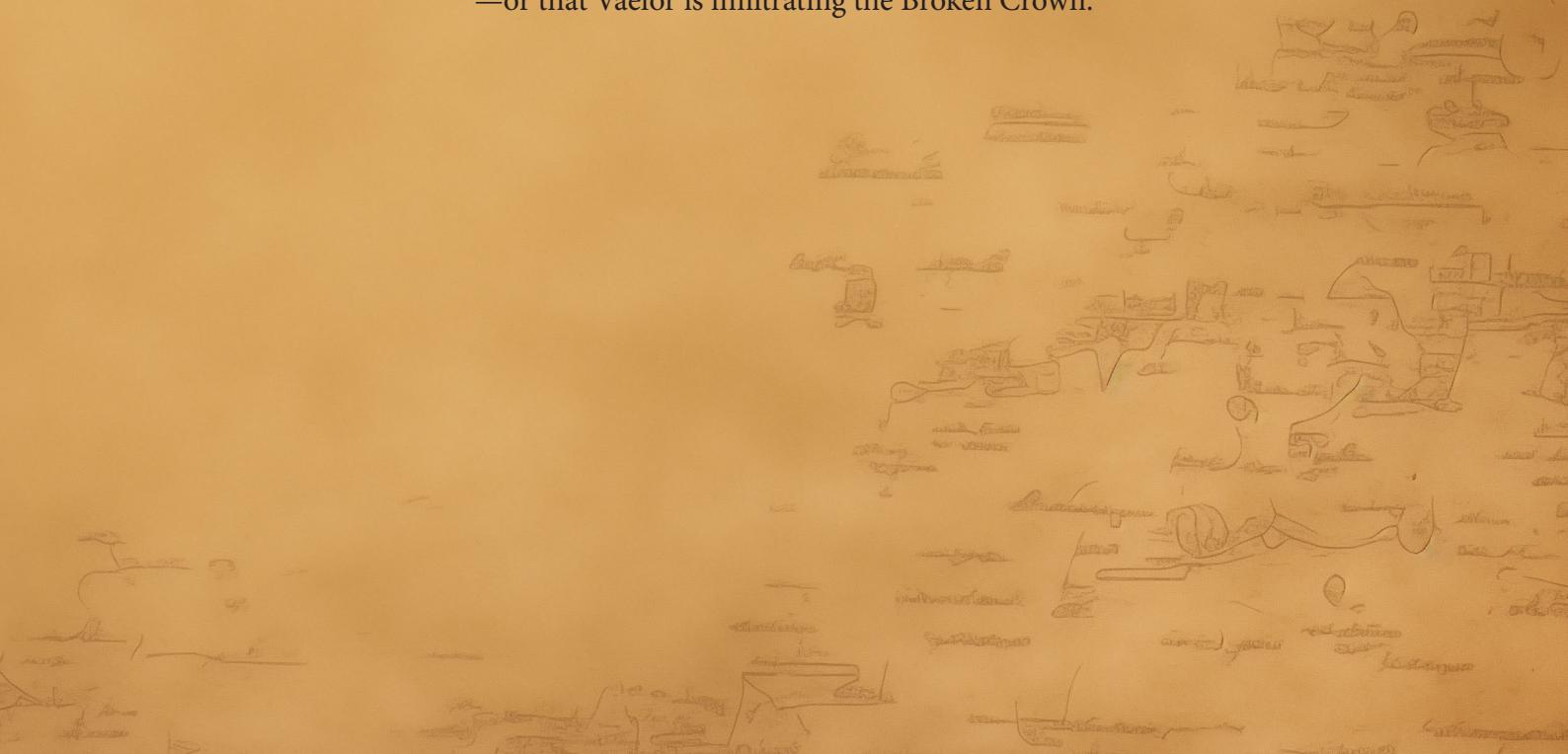
Rapid. Distracted. Musical.
“OH! You’re not cheating. You’re scheming. That’s MUCH worse.”
“Oh hello, nice shadow... why did it smile at me?”
“Want a sweet? It’s not poisoned. Probably.”

What Cauli Has Learned About Captain Sloan
disappears every night at 1:30am
sneaks through Midgarden like someone who’s done it for years
goes to the Chapel of Càthair after hours
meets a hooded man (Father Tobias)
returns with fear stuck to him “like smoke”
once carried a box that smelled of incense and cold iron
She thinks this is all affair-related.
She is spectacularly wrong.

GM Secret

Cauli accidentally saw Vaelor’s shadow detach from him
and smile.

She thinks it was a “midnight ghost of bad romance.”
She has no idea she witnessed a shadow monk at work
—or that Vaelor is infiltrating the Broken Crown.



KESSIN "Kess" VALE

Role: NorthLight Inquiry – Tier 3 Operative

Specialisation: Surveillance, tactical intelligence, threat analysis

Species: Human

Assignment: The Sloan Affair – Staig, Galdar

Partner: Cauliflower Thistledown

Appearance

Kess is tall, lean, and hard-edged — built like someone who grew up running on rooftops.

Skin: warm brown

Hair: short black curls, often hidden beneath a hood

Eyes: dark and unreadable, always scanning

Build: athletic, controlled, quiet in movement

Clothing: NLI-standard longcoat (grey), reinforced boots, concealed daggers

Smell: metal polish, ink, and rain-soaked leather

Expression: permanently stuck between “thinking” and “judging”

He wears a subtle sapphire charm at his collar —
a gift from an NLI handler he never talks about.

Personality

Calm.

Unflinching.

Professional to the point of irritation.

Where Cauli is chaos, Kess is discipline.

He:

trusts patterns

trusts evidence

trusts maps

does not trust people

speaks only when necessary

always has a backup plan

and never lets Cauli out of his sight for long because she “attracts calamity like honey attracts wasps”

Despite his seriousness, he respects her instincts —
and protects her fiercely.

Key Traits

razor-sharp observational skills

expert in reading body language

silent mover

cannot be bribed or flustered

carries three notebooks:

Crimes
People
Cauliflower's Mistakes

deeply, quietly loyal to the NLI
hates Staig (too many shadows, too many lies)
How He Speaks
Measured. Low. Direct.

"No, Cauli. That man is not flirting with you. He is casing us."
"Her husband is not having an affair. Affairs have patterns. This is not one."
"Someone else is watching him. We're not the only ones on this trail."

What Kess Has Learned
Unlike Cauli, he knows Sloan is NOT cheating.

He has deduced:

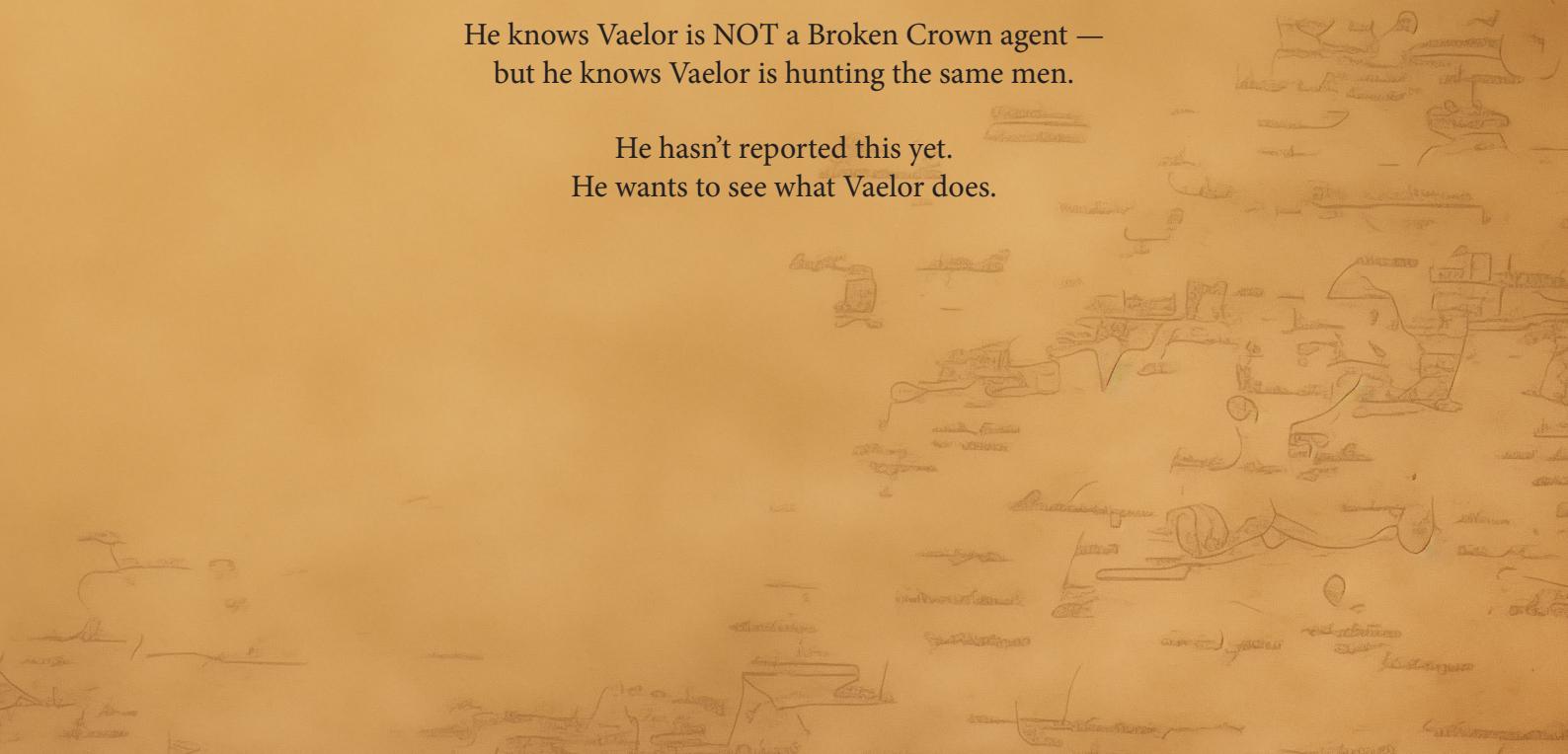
Sloan's routes follow counter-surveillance grids
His meetings last exactly 22 minutes
He changes shoes before leaving home
He carries paper on return but never leaves home with any
He once spoke to something that didn't breathe
He is reporting to someone above his rank
Kess is VERY close to uncovering the Broken Crown.

GM Secret

Kess has seen Vaelor three times.
Once on a rooftop
Once between torches in the Midgarden wall
Once reflected in a puddle behind Sloan

He knows Vaelor is NOT a Broken Crown agent —
but he knows Vaelor is hunting the same men.

He hasn't reported this yet.
He wants to see what Vaelor does.



How They Got Their Job

Lady Veronica Sloan wrote an elegant, furious letter to the NLI:

"Find where he goes.
Find who he sees.
Find why he lies to me."

She paid full price.
She paid in advance.
And she demanded non-local agents.

NLI sent Cauli and Kess.

They've been in Staig for 12 days,
and have built one of the most detailed surveillance maps the city has ever seen.



