



CHARACTER STORY: SNEAK

I hear smuggling used to be easy living. I'll be damned if it stayed that way.

If you believe the stories, in the old days – before it all went to hells with the Cataclysm, you could make a good living bringing in some innocent-looking load under the guards' nose. Spices, furs – that sort of thing. Sneak it into the city so that you don't pay the taxes and there you have it – saved some money to the merchant who buys them off you, and you are heading to the taverns, friend! Sure, time to time you would deal with something you're not supposed to bring in at all like a poison vial or two, but that was rare.

Now of course no one bothers with the taxes anymore. If a lord wants some money from you he'll just send his helmet-heads straight to your shop to knock on your door and get what he wants. No taxes, no easy smuggling money. There are still some wares the powers that be don't want within city walls though. We live in a scary time, friend, and you need something to take the edge off. And I don't mean the cheap tavern swill. Those who are looking for a real special experience – they want the good stuff, the Night's Kiss, the Coppers, White Lily extract if they can afford it. Sure, sometimes it takes you too far and they find you breathless and bloated in a gutter, but with death around every corner in the Scarred Lands – you may as well go feeling real good.

So that's the kind of packages I deliver. Sometimes it's something unique like an obsidian-reinforced blade or a pair of these rooster monsters that turn you to stone if you look at them too long. I don't ask questions. I bring the goods in and I get paid. And most importantly – I never get spotted.

Because many eyes are on the lookout for the wares I courier. Corruption – the verdict has been rendered in advance and anyone caught with these items is sure to hang for their involvement. Guess the Cataclysm has everyone a bit on edge with that, so the watchful Templar pay special attention that the wrong kind of trinkets don't get into the wrong hands. They say the Templar can feel it on you no matter how you conceal it – anything with slightest traces of the stuff they deem evil. That's what makes them so good at what they do. Well, I'm still here, aren't I? I guess that means they met their match in me.

Normally I only do the delivery for someone else, but I think all that is about to change. This one stupid bastard kept showing me a map he stumbled upon – blabbing on about how just beyond a mine by a tiny village lies a source of unimaginable riches. He talked too much – a knife in a dark alley made sure that didn't last enough to get annoying. But the map looked real. Bloodied and torn, it seemed to point to a passage from the mining tunnels into ancient ruins in a cavern complex under the Scarred Lands. The symbols that decorated the map were familiar to me – I've seen them on some of the more dangerous items I had to smuggle in. If I could get my hands on a load of these and find a buyer – I'd be set for life. I stood in that alley, under drizzling rain, barely able to contain my excitement.

The plan is simple. Travel to the little village, get a sense of things. Find some muscle, someone who knows about these caves and maybe a tracker to not get lost down there. Small team – down we go. Follow the map, get what we came for, make it out alive. Guess we'll see how many of us survive. I am certain I won't be in a sharing mood.