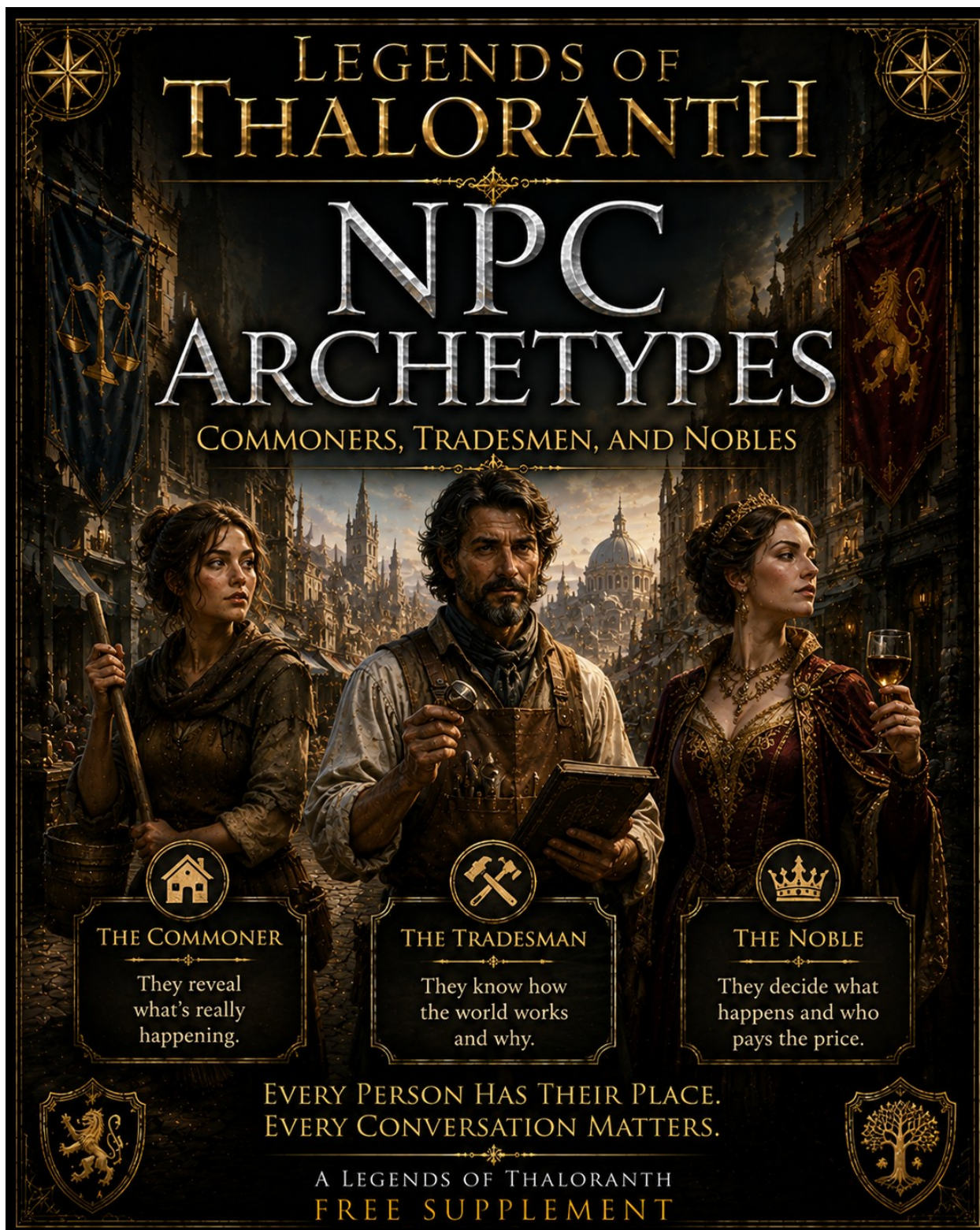




NPC ARCHETYPES OF THALORANTH

Commoners, Tradesmen, and Nobles

A Legends of Thaloranth Free Supplement

This guide introduces the three social archetypes that form the backbone of NPC interaction in Legends of Thaloranth, demonstrates how they function differently in play, and shows how Radia's social tier system makes every conversation a piece of a larger political landscape. The complete NPC construction framework, motivational architecture tools, and the full Obligation Economy are documented in the Game Master's Guide.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Social Encounters in LoT.....	3
The Three Archetypes.....	4
The Commoner.....	5
The Commoner in Radia's Districts.....	5
Example Commoner: Tomren, Dockworker.....	6
The Tradesman.....	7
The Tradesman in Radia's Districts.....	7
Example Tradesman: Maret Voss, Scribes' Guild.....	8
The Noble.....	9
The Noble in Radia.....	9
Example Noble: Lady Aelindra Caeth, House Caeth.....	10
Running NPCs in Radia.....	11
Information Flows Through the Tiers.....	11
Radia's Districts as NPC Behavior Zones.....	12
Power in Relationships, Not Stat Blocks.....	12
The Missing Factor: A Worked Example.....	13
The Situation.....	13
First Encounter: Tomren at the Harbor.....	13
Second Encounter: Maret Voss at the Scribes' Guild.....	14
Third Encounter: Lady Aelindra Caeth.....	15
What This Shows.....	16
Where to Go Next.....	17
The Game Master's Guide.....	17
The Player's Guide.....	17

INTRODUCTION: SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS IN LOT

The investigator had interviewed hundreds of witnesses over her career. She had learned that the ones who lied most convincingly were never the ones who had something to hide.

They were the ones who had something to protect.

“Everyone in this city wants something,” she told her apprentice. “Your job isn’t to catch them wanting it. Your job is to figure out what it is before they tell you something that isn’t true.”

Most roleplaying games treat social encounters as a secondary activity, the thing you do between fights, the skill check you make to get information, the obstacle you clear before the adventure continues. The outcome is pass or fail. The NPC is a function: they give you what you need, or they don’t, and either way the encounter is over.

Legends of Thaloranth was designed around a different premise. Social encounters are not obstacles between the party and the story. They are the story, the mechanism through which the world reveals itself, the arena where Reputation and Renown accumulates or erodes, the place where the Obligation Economy creates relationships that persist across the entire campaign.

The NPCs of Vaeloranth are not functions. They are people with histories, competing interests, and lives that extend beyond their interaction with the player characters. The guard at the gate has a family in the Commons. The guild master has a rival she has spent fifteen years outmaneuvering. The fence who buys stolen goods has a line he will not cross regardless of the price offered. These details are not flavor, they are the machinery that makes social encounters work and the raw material from which memorable campaigns are built.

This supplement introduces the three social archetypes that form the backbone of NPC interaction across Thaloranth. They are not the only kinds of people the party will encounter. They are the framework through which the social landscape is understood, the tiers that every significant NPC occupies, the roles those tiers create, and the specific way each tier engages with the party and with each other.

Radia, the Jewel of the Heartlands, is the primary example throughout. It is the city where all three tiers are most visible, most distinct, and most politically charged. What the archetypes look like in Radia's Commons, its Artisans' District, its Noble Quarter, and its Harbor is the clearest demonstration of the system. The principles that govern Radian social dynamics apply, with appropriate local variation, across every city and settlement in Thaloranth.

THE THREE ARCHETYPES

Three archetypes form the social backbone of Thaloranth's narrative structure. They are not character types in the mechanical sense, they are social positions, each with a distinct relationship to power, information, and the world's events.

Commoners reveal problems. Tradesmen diagnose problems. Nobles create or control problems.

This is not a statement about intelligence or importance. A commoner who has lived in the same street for thirty years knows things that no noble or guild master knows, because she is in the right place to observe them. A tradesman who has spent a decade building expertise in a specific domain has analytical capability that raw social power cannot replace. A noble who controls which factions have access to the Council chamber controls outcomes that no amount of street-level information or technical expertise can override.

The three archetypes rarely meet as equals. They rarely need to. Each one operates with a different kind of power, a different set of tools, and a different relationship to the truth. Understanding how they differ is what allows a GM to run them in ways that make Thaloranth feel like a place where social position is real, where information flows through specific channels, and where the party's ability to navigate those channels determines what they can accomplish.

THE COMMONER

Hard-working, overlooked, and often holding the clue no one else sees.

Most citizens of Thaloranth fall into this category: laborers, fishers, servants, porters, vendors, messengers, dockworkers, farmers, and the enormous population of people simply trying to survive another day in a city that was not designed with their comfort in mind. Commoners know their neighborhoods intimately. They notice things their betters ignore, because their betters are not paying attention to the same things. They move through spaces that nobles and guild masters rarely enter. They talk to each other constantly, in the specific register of people whose primary intelligence network is conversation with other people who live the same life.

What commoners know is granular, local, and often misunderstood by the people who know it. A porter who saw something strange at the east warehouse two nights ago does not know what it means. She knows exactly what she saw, with the precision of someone whose survival has always depended on accurate observation. Interpreting it is someone else's job.

Running commoners convincingly means understanding that their reticence is not stupidity or obstruction. It is rational self-preservation. Radia is a city where knowing the wrong thing and saying it to the wrong person has consequences. Commoners who talk to strangers about strange things they have seen are commoners who have calculated, correctly, that the benefit outweighs the risk. The party's job is to make that calculation come out right.

The Commoner in Radia's Districts

Radia's Commons is the district where commoner culture is most concentrated and most itself: practical, suspicious, fiercely loyal to immediate community, and deeply attentive to anything that might affect the fragile stability of daily life. A Commons commoner who has decided to help the party is genuinely helping, and a Commons commoner who has decided not to is a wall that social pressure will not move, because Commons residents have long experience with people who want things from them.

The Harbor District produces a different flavor of commoner: direct, worldly, transactional, and significantly less deferential than the social hierarchy might suggest. Harbor workers deal with strangers constantly. They have calibrated filters for who is trustworthy and who is not, built from years of exactly that work. The Harbor commoner does not need to be managed. She needs to be given a reason that makes sense in her terms.

Example Commoner: Tomren, Dockworker

Tomren, Harbor District Dockworker

Core Statistics

Power: 2

Agility: 1

Insight: 0

Social: 0

Derived Values

Vitality Points (VP): $(2 + 1) \times 2 = 6$

Armor Rating (AR): Agility 1 + 5 = 6 (no armor)

Key Skills

Athletics (Dockwork): Power 2 + Athletics 2 = 4

Perception: Insight 0 + Perception 1 = 1

Persuasion: Social 0 + Persuasion 0 = 0

Motivational Architecture

Want. To keep his position at the east docks. He has held this job for eleven years and cannot afford to lose it.

Fear. That whoever he saw unloading the unmarked crates will find out he noticed.

Line. He will not give a name he is not certain of. He has seen people ruined by false accusations and he will not be responsible for that.

Secret. He recognized the insignia on one of the crates. He has not told anyone because he does not yet know if telling someone would help or make things worse.

Narrative Role

Tomren is the first door. He has the raw observation that starts the investigation. He will not open that door for strangers who make him feel like a source. He will open it for people who make him feel like someone whose safety matters to the outcome.

THE TRADESMAN

Expert, positioned, and aware that their expertise is a resource with a value.

Tradesmen are the middle tier: guild members, craftspeople, merchants, scribes, apothecaries, physicians, scholars, and the broad population of Radia's professional class. They have invested years in developing specific knowledge, and that knowledge gives them a relationship to information that commoners and nobles both lack. Where the commoner sees an event, the tradesman sees what the event means in the context of their domain. Where the noble sees a political opportunity, the tradesman sees the technical reality that the political opportunity is built on.

Tradesmen are not neutral. They have guild affiliations, professional rivalries, patron relationships, and ongoing concerns about reputation that make every interaction a potential asset or liability. They will help the party when helping serves their interests or when the party has established sufficient trust and obligation to make helping the right calculation. They will withhold information when sharing it would cost them something they are not willing to pay.

The Obligation Economy documented in the Game Master's Guide is particularly active in tradesman interactions. A tradesman who does the party a significant favor is owed a significant favor in return, and they track these debts with the precision of professionals who understand that professional relationships are the foundation of everything they have built. The party that treats tradesmen as information dispensers will find them closing off. The party that treats them as people with ongoing interests will find them considerably more forthcoming.

The Tradesman in Radia's Districts

The Artisans' District is the heart of tradesman culture in Radia: proud, craft-focused, opinionated about politics in the specific way of people who know exactly how the economy actually works and have watched political decisions make it worse. Artisans' District tradesmen have strong opinions and will share them with people they respect. Earning that respect requires demonstrating competence, not just status.

The Scholar's Ward produces a different tradesman profile: precise, curious, and often emotionally oblivious in the specific way of people whose primary relationship is with ideas rather than people. Scholar's Ward tradesmen respond to intellectual engagement. The party that approaches a Scholar's Ward expert with a genuinely interesting problem

will find a more cooperative interlocutor than the party that arrives with a social approach built for a different audience.

Example Tradesman: Maret Voss, Scribes' Guild

Maret Voss, Senior Scribe, Scribes' Guild

Core Statistics

Power: 0

Agility: 1

Insight: 3

Social: 2

Derived Values

Vitality Points (VP): $(0 + 1) \times 2 = 2$

Armor Rating (AR): Agility 1 + 5 = 6 (no armor)

Key Skills

Scholarship: Insight 3 + Scholarship 3 = 6

Persuasion: Social 2 + Persuasion 1 = 3

Deception (detecting): Insight 3 + Deception 2 = 5

Perception: Insight 3 + Perception 2 = 5

Motivational Architecture

Want. To locate a specific contract that went missing from the guild archive three months ago. She knows it was removed deliberately and she knows the removal was authorized at a level above her.

Fear. That her investigation into the missing contract has already been noticed by whoever authorized its removal.

Line. She will not fabricate documentation. She will shade an interpretation. She will not create a false record.

Secret. She has a copy of the contract's index entry, which she made before the contract disappeared. It lists the second signatory as someone who publicly denied involvement in the relevant transaction.

Narrative Role

Maret Voss is the interpreter. She cannot tell the party what the missing person was involved in. She can tell them what the documentation patterns mean, who authorized what, and what the absence of a record implies about who wanted it absent. The party that brings her a genuinely interesting problem and treats her expertise with respect will find an ally who has been waiting for someone she could trust with what she knows.

THE NOBLE

Power wrapped in silk, running three conversations at once.

Nobles shape outcomes through influence rather than labor. They command estates, guard intergenerational wealth, manage alliances with the particular care of people who understand that alliances are the only form of security that cannot be stolen, and pull strings whose existence most people in the other tiers do not know about. From the Vinebound Lords to Radia's elite houses, their presence transforms simple problems into political fires, because every noble interaction is embedded in a web of relationships, obligations, and factional considerations that the party may not be able to see.

Running nobles convincingly requires understanding that they are performing three conversations simultaneously: what they say aloud, what they imply by saying it, and what they actually intend. A noble who gives a direct answer to a direct question has either decided that directness serves their purpose in this specific moment, or something has gone wrong. Noble communication is built around plausible deniability, conditional commitments, and the specific art of making someone feel that they have been told something without anything having been said that can be held against you later.

This is not malevolence. It is the specific competence of people whose social environment makes ambiguity a survival skill. A noble who commits explicitly to a position has given up leverage. A noble who implies the same commitment has achieved the same practical effect without the exposure. The party that learns to read the gap between what a noble says and what they mean is the party that can work with nobles effectively. The party that takes noble communication at face value will consistently be surprised by the outcomes.

The Noble in Radia

Radia's Noble District is where this dynamic is most concentrated and most refined. Noble District interactions are curt, polite, and layered in a way that makes the Commons' directness feel almost restful by comparison. Every meeting has a stated purpose and a real purpose, and the gap between them is the thing that matters. The stated purpose is what the noble is willing to acknowledge publicly. The real purpose is what the meeting is actually about.

Noble power in Radia is not primarily physical. It is institutional: who controls access to the Council chamber, which guild masters owe which houses favors, what information the noble house holds and what they have agreed not to use. A noble who wants to harm the

party rarely does so directly. They send consequences: a letter to the right guild official, a word to the right watch captain, an invitation that implies what will happen to people who decline it.

Example Noble: Lady Aelindra Caeth, House Caeth

Lady Aelindra Caeth, Third Daughter, House Caeth

Core Statistics

Power: 0

Agility: 1

Insight: 2

Social: 3

Derived Values

Vitality Points (VP): $(0 + 1) \times 2 = 2$

Armor Rating (AR): Agility 1 + 5 = 6 (no armor)

Key Skills

Persuasion: Social 3 + Persuasion 3 = 6

Deception: Social 3 + Deception 3 = 6

Insight (reading people): Insight 2 + Insight skill 2 = 4

Politics: Insight 2 + Politics 3 = 5

Motivational Architecture

Want. To identify who within the city's merchant network has been moving information to a rival house without her knowing. She suspects someone in the Scribes' Guild. She has no proof.

Fear. That the information leak has already produced consequences she has not yet discovered. She is operating under the specific anxiety of someone who knows they are behind the situation.

Line. She will not move against a member of her own household staff without proof she could show her father. Accusation without evidence is the kind of mistake that defines how people remember you.

Secret. She already knows who it is. She is waiting to understand why before she acts, because the why determines what she does with the information and who else gets implicated.

Narrative Role

Lady Caeth is the door that controls the door. She does not have the answer. She has the access that leads to the answer, and she will extend that access only to people who can help her solve a problem she cannot solve through her own channels. The party that brings her something useful will find a powerful ally. The

party that tries to pressure or deceive her will find that she was several steps ahead of them before the conversation began.

RUNNING NPCS IN RADIA

Radia is a city where every alley whispers, every noble smiles with intent, and every tradesman guards their livelihood. It is a place where stories breathe through people rather than dungeons or monsters, and where the party's most consequential decisions are often made in a conversation rather than a combat scene.

The three archetypes function as a social tier system. Interactions rarely cross tiers without a specific reason, permission, desperation, scandal, invitation, or the specific kind of obligation that overrides social convention. When they do cross tiers, the crossing itself is significant information about what is happening in the story.

Information Flows Through the Tiers

Commoners observe. They see what happens at street level: the unmarked wagon, the unfamiliar face, the conversation that stopped when someone walked past. They rarely know what they are seeing. They know what they saw.

Tradesmen interpret. They have the domain knowledge to understand what the commoner's observation means in context: the insignia on the crate belongs to a merchant house that publicly withdrew from that trade two years ago. That absence is meaningful. A commoner might notice the insignia. Only a tradesman with the right knowledge base knows it should not be there.

Nobles decide consequences. They control what happens once information has been gathered and interpreted: which institutions respond, which factions are alerted, which outcomes become possible. A noble with the right information and the right motivation can transform the party's investigation into a political event, or bury it entirely. That control is their power, and they are acutely aware of it.

Running this chain correctly means letting each tier do its specific work without asking it to do another tier's job. The commoner who suddenly has the full picture of what is happening is doing tradesman or noble work. The noble who gives the party a direct factual answer without political calculation is not behaving like a noble. Each tier has a specific function in how information moves, and that specificity is what makes Radia feel like a place with a real social structure.

Radia's Districts as NPC Behavior Zones

Where an NPC lives and works shapes how they engage. The Commons is practical, suspicious, and community-oriented: favors move laterally through neighbor relationships, not upward through formal channels. The Artisans' District is proud and craft-focused, with strong opinions about who deserves respect and a tendency to withhold it from people who have not earned it. The Scholar's Ward is precise and curious, responsive to intellectual engagement and relatively indifferent to social pressure. The Harbor District is direct and transactional, with a worldly skepticism of anyone who approaches them as if they need managing. The Noble District is the most layered, the most formal, and the most dangerous to navigate carelessly.

A party that adjusts its approach by district will find Radia considerably more navigable than a party that applies the same social tools to every interaction. The approach that works in the Harbor District will not work in the Noble District. The approach that works with an Artisans' District craftsman will not work with a Scholar's Ward scribe who has spent thirty years developing contempt for people who treat expertise as a commodity.

Power in Relationships, Not Stat Blocks

NPC power in Radia rarely comes from combat capability. It comes from who they know, who owes them, what they control, and what they can deny. A baker who has fed the Commons neighborhood for twenty years can make the party unwelcome in ways that no stat block captures: a quiet word, a warning passed through the network, a shift in how every door on the street responds to the party's knock. A guild clerk who controls the flow of documentation can freeze a transaction, delay a permit, lose a record. A noble can ruin an ally's livelihood with a single letter to the right address.

This is the social pressure that the LoT system is built to make tangible. The Reputation and Renown system tracks how these interactions accumulate, how the party's decisions in social encounters compound over time into a position in the city's social landscape that the city responds to. The complete framework is documented in the Player's Guide and Game Master's Guide.

THE MISSING FACTOR: A WORKED EXAMPLE

The following scene demonstrates all three archetypes in play across a single investigation. The party is trying to locate a missing scholar named Davan Merce, who vanished three days ago from his position at the Scholar's Ward. The three encounters below happen in sequence, each one revealing a different layer of what happened, the observation, the interpretation, and the political reality underneath both.

The Situation

Davan Merce is a junior scholar at the Scholar's Ward who specialized in pre-Collapse commercial records. Three days ago he failed to appear for his morning work. His rooms are undisturbed. No one reported him leaving the city. The senior scholar who supervised his work contacted the watch, who filed the report, and then quietly declined to investigate further without being told exactly why.

The party has been asked to find him. What they are walking into is a situation where three tiers of Radia's social structure each know a different piece of the picture, none of them know they know it, and none of them would tell the party what they know under normal circumstances.

First Encounter: Tomren at the Harbor

The party has traced Davan's last confirmed movement to the Harbor District, where a colleague saw him heading two nights before his disappearance. Tomren, the dockworker whose stat block appears above, works the east docks where Davan was seen.

Tomren's default attitude is Neutral, the baseline for strangers in a district that sees a lot of strangers. His Moderate DC social check reflects this: he is not hostile, but he has no particular reason to talk, and he is carrying a secret that makes him more cautious than usual. The party's approach determines how this goes.

A direct approach, who are you, what did you see, tell us, produces nothing useful. Tomren has calibrated instincts about people who want things from him and the direct approach puts him on the wrong side of that calibration. His attitude does not improve. His answers become shorter.

An approach that makes him feel like someone whose safety matters, that acknowledges the risk of being a witness to something in a city where witnesses sometimes have

problems, shifts the calculation. The party that demonstrates they understand why he might be cautious, and what it would mean for him if whatever he saw becomes something he is publicly associated with, has given him a reason to engage. His DC drops to Easy. He talks.

What Tomren saw: a man matching Davan's description met with two individuals at the east dock's secondary cargo platform. The meeting was brief. Davan left with them. The crates being unloaded nearby had an insignia he recognized but did not think was significant until afterward.

What Tomren does not know: what the meeting was about, who the two individuals were, or why the insignia on those crates matters. He has the observation. He has no interpretive framework for it.

Second Encounter: Maret Voss at the Scribes' Guild

The insignia Tomren described means nothing to the party until they bring it to someone with the right knowledge base. Maret Voss, the senior scribe whose stat block appears above, has that knowledge base.

Maret's default attitude toward people asking questions about merchant insignia is Unfriendly, not because she dislikes the party, but because she has been investigating something connected to exactly this kind of question for three months and has learned that the wrong conversation with the wrong person makes her situation worse. Her DC baseline is Challenging.

The party's leverage is their problem. They are looking for a missing scholar. That is, for Maret, a genuinely interesting piece of new information, because Davan Merce was one of the scholars she had identified as having accessed records connected to her missing contract. She did not know he was missing. The party has just given her something she did not have.

An exchange is possible. The party tells her what they know about Davan's movements. She tells them what she knows about the insignia. The GM rules this as a Minor Obligation established in both directions, each party has provided something of value, each owes the other continued engagement. Maret's attitude shifts to Friendly. Her DC drops to Easy.

What Maret knows: the insignia belongs to a merchant house, House Vennick, that publicly withdrew from Radian commercial activity two years ago following a guild

dispute. Publicly withdrawn houses do not have cargo on the east docks. The cargo's presence, and its bearing of a House Vennick insignia, means either the withdrawal was not genuine, or someone is using the House Vennick mark for transactions they do not want attributed to their actual house.

What Maret does not know: which noble house would have both the motive to use a withdrawn house's mark and the access to arrange dockside cargo handling without guild oversight. That question requires information that exists at a tier above her reach.

Third Encounter: Lady Aelindra Caeth

The party now has an observation and an interpretation. The third piece, who is doing this, why, and what it has to do with Davan Merce, sits at the noble tier, with Lady Caeth.

Lady Caeth's default attitude toward the party is Neutral, which in Noble District terms means precisely calibrated and waiting. Her DC is Moderate, but that number is misleading, a successful social check does not give the party information. It gives them access to a conversation where information might be exchanged, on terms that Lady Caeth controls.

She already knows who the party is and why they are asking questions. She has known since Tomren's conversation was reported to her through a Commons contact she maintains for exactly this kind of monitoring. The party does not know she knows. She will not tell them she knows, because that would reveal the contact, and that contact is more valuable than the information it protects.

The party's approach must navigate three simultaneous conversations: what they say to Lady Caeth, what Lady Caeth implies in response, and what Lady Caeth actually intends. A party that misreads the implication layer will come away from the conversation believing they have received a commitment that was never made. A party that successfully reads all three layers will understand that Lady Caeth is offering to solve their problem, Davan Merce returned safely, in exchange for the party not pursuing what they have learned about House Vennick's continued Radian activity.

She does not say this directly. She never says anything directly. What she says is that she has heard the party is looking for someone, that she occasionally has access to information about people's whereabouts, and that she finds it useful to develop relationships with people who know when to follow a thread and when to set it down.

The party has a decision to make. Accept what Lady Caeth is offering, get Davan back, end the investigation, absorb whatever she has just implied about their discretion, or decline and continue pursuing the House Vennick question without her cooperation, in a city where she has already demonstrated the ability to monitor their movements.

Neither choice is obviously correct. Both have consequences the Reputation and Renown system will track. The GM does not decide for them. The social tier system has delivered the party to exactly the kind of decision that Radia is built to produce: not a fight, not a simple check, but a political moment where what they choose defines who they are in this city and what this city will think of them.

What This Shows

Three encounters. Three archetypes. Each one doing exactly the work its tier is designed to do.

Tomren revealed the problem: a meeting happened that should not have, involving cargo that should not be there. He knew what he saw. He did not know what it meant.

Maret diagnosed the problem: the cargo's insignia places it in a context that only makes sense if someone with significant resources and motivation is conducting activity they cannot formally acknowledge. She knew what it meant. She did not know who was behind it.

Lady Caeth controls the problem: she is either connected to the House Vennick activity, or connected to whoever is behind it, or positioned to be the party's only path to a resolution that does not cost them more than the answer is worth. She knows who is behind it. She has chosen what she will and will not say.

The party moved through all three tiers, adjusting their approach for each one, and arrived at a decision that has real stakes and no clean answer. That is what social encounters in *Legends of Thaloranth* are designed to produce.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

The Game Master's Guide

Chapter Four of the Game Master's Guide covers NPC construction in full: the complete stat and skill framework, Path investment for significant NPCs, the motivational architecture tools (want, fear, line, and secret), the Obligation Economy and how it functions in practice, and the NPC Construction Worksheet in Appendix B. The Attitude System and its DC modifiers, the complete framework for how attitude affects social check difficulty, is documented there alongside the Institutional Reputation system that tracks how the party's standing with Radia's factions accumulates over time.

The Player's Guide

The complete social encounter system, including the skill framework for social checks, the Reputation and Renown rules, and the full DC reference for attitude states and modifiers, is in the Player's Guide. Understanding the mechanical framework that governs social encounters gives both GMs and players a clearer picture of what is at stake in every interaction the party has with Radia's citizens.

The complete NPC construction framework, Obligation Economy, and social encounter system are documented in the Legends of Thaloranth Player's Guide and Game Master's Guide, available as part of the Legends of Thaloranth Core Line at thaloranthpublishingllc.com.

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