

SESSION 1

The King's Test

A Beginner-Friendly Traveller Teaching Campaign

REFEREE USE

The Travellers arrive at the court of Drinax expecting an offer. Instead, they are watched, questioned, and quietly tested. A missing sealed case gives the crew its first chance to prove discipline, judgment, and usefulness before Drinax risks trusting them with greater authority.

Field	Briefing Detail
Campaign	Book One: The Drinax Training Arc
Session Type	Adventure Session
Target Play Time	Three Hours
Audience	New Traveller players and a new Referee
Rules Goal	Teach basic Traveller checks through court roleplay and a small investigation
Campaign Goal	Prepare the crew to enter Drinax service without overloading the table

DESIGN NOTE

This is an original teaching session document for personal table use. It is designed to be compatible with the tone and campaign frame of Traveller and The Pirates of Drinax, but it does not reproduce or replace official rulebooks or published adventures.

2. Session Snapshot

Item	Session 1 Detail
Session Number	1
Session Title	The King's Test
Target Play Time	Three hours
Primary Teaching Focus	Basic 2D task checks, skill use, difficulty, Effect, and simple social or investigation play.
Primary Story Focus	The Travellers arrive at Drinax, meet the court, and recover a missing sealed case without embarrassing their hosts.
Main Traveller Mechanics	2D checks, characteristic DM, skill levels, difficulty 8+, Effect, simple opposed checks, and fail-forward outcomes.
Main Drinax Concept	Drinax is proud, theatrical, fragile, and divided. Patronage begins with observation and testing.
Expected Session End-State	The Travellers pass or complicate their first test. Rao is not fully trusting, but the court agrees they may be useful.
Recommended Prep Time	Forty-five to seventy-five minutes.
Difficulty for New Referee	Low. The session uses limited rules and avoids combat-heavy play.
CONTINUITY FROM PRIOR SESSION	
Session 0 should have produced characters, crew roles, a tone agreement, and a starting campaign ledger. Before play, check each character's Drinax motivation, any contacts or rivals created, and whether the crew already has an agreed command style. If Session 0 ended differently, begin by asking each player one question: why did you answer the summons?	

3. Referee Overview

This session is the first real play experience of the campaign. Its job is to teach the basic rhythm of Traveller without burying the table in subsystems. The players arrive at Drinax, see the contrast between royal spectacle and political weakness, and then face a small problem that can be solved through conversation, observation, judgment, and a few checks.

The missing sealed case is not important because of its contents alone. It is important because it lets King Oleb, Princess Rao, and the court observe the Travellers under pressure. Do they panic, accuse, threaten, flatter, investigate, or quietly solve the problem?

Emphasize choice, tone, and consequences. Avoid full combat, trade rules, ship operations, and deep sector politics. Players should leave knowing that Traveller checks are simple, but the results change how NPCs treat them.

The session builds directly from Session 0 by testing the crew identity the table created. It points toward Session 2, where the Travellers are shown the ship and begin learning shipboard roles.

REFeree NOTE

Do not make the sealed case a puzzle with only one answer. Use it as a social investigation. Every useful idea should move the crew closer to the truth, even if a failed check adds suspicion, delay, or embarrassment.

4. Teaching Goals

Player Learning Goals

- Learn how a basic Traveller check works at the table.
- Understand that skills and characteristics combine with the 2D roll.
- See that Effect measures how well or badly an action goes.
- Practice social and investigative choices without defaulting to combat.
- Understand that Drinax is interested in competence, discretion, and usefulness.

Referee Learning Goals

- Call for checks only when the result is uncertain and interesting.
- Set ordinary difficulties without slowing play.
- Use Effect to create better or worse outcomes.

- Run NPC reactions that change based on player behavior.
- Keep a simple investigation moving even when players fail rolls.

Campaign Learning Goals

- Introduce Oleb and Rao as different kinds of patron pressure.
- Present the Floating Palace as magnificent, fragile, and politically watched.
- Establish that Drinax rewards results but notices methods.
- Start tracking Drinax trust, court suspicion, and possible rivals.

5. Rules Introduced This Session

Rule or Concept	Why It Matters	How It Appears in Play	Teach Detail	Beginner Mistake to Avoid
Basic 2D Task Check	Core resolution method for Traveller.	Used when a character tries something uncertain under pressure.	Teach 2D plus skill plus characteristic DM versus target 8+.	Do not call for rolls when success is obvious.
Difficulty 8+	Gives players a default target.	Most session checks use 8+, with 10+ for harder court or stealth actions.	Teach ordinary checks only.	Do not overuse high difficulties early.
Effect	Shows quality of success or failure.	A high Effect may impress Rao or reveal an extra clue. Low Effect may succeed with suspicion.	Teach as "how much" the result matters.	Do not treat all successes as identical.
Simple Opposed Check	Lets an NPC actively resist deception, persuasion, or concealment.	Used if a courtier lies or a suspect tries to mislead the crew.	Use once or twice at most.	Do not turn every conversation into opposed rolling.
Fail Forward	Keeps the session moving.	Failed checks create delay, suspicion, wrong assumptions, or cost instead of dead ends.	Explain through play.	Do not hide the only clue behind one roll.

6. Rules Intentionally Avoided

Rules or Subsystem	Why It Is Delayed
Full Personal Combat	Combat is delayed so players first learn checks, social pressure, and consequences.
Starship Operations	The ship is introduced next session, after the crew passes the court test.
Starship Combat	The players do not yet know ship roles or ship procedures.
Trade and Cargo	Money pressure begins after the ship enters play.
Jump Travel	Travel is introduced after the players understand the ship.
Detailed Law Rules	This session uses court consequences, not formal law procedures.
Deep Faction Politics	Only hint at court factions. Major faction play comes later.

7. What the Players Should Learn

Players should learn that Traveller play often begins with a clear situation, a choice, and a simple check. The rules are not hard to start using. The harder part is deciding what risk is worth taking.

- A good plan can reduce risk before dice are rolled.
- Social pressure can be as important as physical danger.
- A failed check should change the situation, not end the adventure.
- NPCs remember whether the crew was discreet, cruel, clever, or reckless.
- The court of Drinax is an opportunity, but it is not safe.

TEACHING MOMENT

After the first major check, pause for ten seconds and explain the result aloud: roll, modifiers, target number, success or failure, and Effect. Do this once clearly, then keep play moving.

8. What the Referee Should Practice

- Open a session with enough description to inspire action, not so much that players become passive.
- Ask "what do you do?" early and often.
- Call for checks when a result matters.
- Use obvious clues, partial clues, and extra clues to avoid stalled investigations.
- Make court NPCs react to player style.
- Record ledger updates immediately after the session.
- End with a clean hook into the ship reveal.

REFeree NOTE

The goal is confidence. If the group understands how to make checks and sees that consequences matter, Session 1 has succeeded.

9. Three-Hour Session Timeline

Time	Segment	Purpose	Referee Notes
0:00 to 0:15	Opening recap	Reconnect Session 0 choices to arrival at Drinax.	Ask each player why they came.
0:15 to 0:45	Arrival at Court	Establish the Floating Palace, Oleb, Rao, and pressure.	Focus on impressions and simple checks.
0:45 to 1:30	The Missing Case	Introduce the problem and let players investigate.	Use basic checks and visible clues.
1:30 to 2:15	Suspects and Pressure	Let the crew question, follow, bluff, or search.	Use one opposed check if useful.
2:15 to 2:45	Resolution	Recover the case or expose the complication.	Update trust, suspicion, and future hooks.
2:45 to 3:00	Debrief and Hook	Rao assesses the crew and hints at the ship.	End with the words: "Now we see if you can use a ship."

10. Required Materials

Checklist	Checklist
■ Character sheets	■ Scratch paper or index cards
■ Session 0 campaign ledger	■ Player handout page
■ Crew role notes from Session 0	■ Referee notes for missing case clues
■ Dice	■ Ledger update sheet
■ Basic task check reference	■ Optional name list
■ NPC cards for Oleb, Rao, Varris, Lysa, and suspects	■ Optional token or marker for the sealed case
■ Simple palace sketch or room list	■ Optional court reaction tracker
■ Court rumor cards	■ Optional checklist of character motivations

A ship record sheet is not required yet, but it can be visible at the table as a teaser for Session 2.

11. Opening Situation

READ OR PARAPHRASE

The summons brings you to Drinax, a world that should not matter and yet refuses to be forgotten. The Floating Palace hangs above ruin and memory, all gold light, old banners, patched systems, and watchful servants. You expected an interview. Instead, you are escorted into a court where every smile feels like a test and every silence feels recorded. King Oleb wants to see daring. Princess Rao wants to see discipline. Before either speaks plainly of opportunity, a sealed diplomatic case vanishes from a guest chamber nearby.

The immediate choice is simple: do the Travellers wait to be told what to do, or do they act like useful people before the court asks?

12. Key NPCs

Name	Role	First Impression	Wants	Knows	Helps	Complicates	Skills
King Oleb	Royal Patron	Huge presence, grand voice, delighted by boldness.	Proof that the Travellers have daring.	The crew may be useful if they are entertaining and effective.	Can reward bold action and give status.	May push them toward reckless choices.	Carouse, Diplomat, Persuade, Leadership
Princess Rao	Political Patron	Quiet, observant, difficult to impress.	Proof that the crew can be discreet and controlled.	The missing case is a test as much as a problem.	Can offer trust, intelligence, and future access.	May restrict the crew if they embarrass court.	Diplomat, Investigate, Persuade, Steward
Varris Sen	Court Functionary	Formal, careful, worried about scandal.	The case recovered quietly.	Several people had access to the guest wing.	Can provide room access and servant names.	May block reckless searches.	Admin, Advocate, Persuade
Lysa Dorne	Visiting Trade Envoy	Tired, proud, offended by the disappearance.	Her sealed case returned unopened.	The case contains trade assurances and one private letter.	Can become a future merchant contact.	May accuse the crew if handled poorly.	Broker, Diplomat, Persuade
Marek Tain	Desperate Palace Aide	Nervous, overworked, trying not to be seen.	Money for a sick family member.	He moved the case but did not understand its full value.	Can reveal who bribed him.	May flee or panic if cornered.	Persuade, Investigate, Recon, Streetwise
Sable Courtier	Hidden Rival Agent	Charming, vague, always nearby.	Make the crew look crude or unreliable.	Marek was pressured by someone at court.	None openly.	May plant false suspicion on a servant.	Deception, Investigate, Recon, Streetwise

13. Key Locations

Location	Description	First Notice	Useful Details	Complications	Relevant Checks	Campaign Connection
Arrival Gallery	A broad ceremonial hall with old banners, patched grav plates, and a view of the world below.	Beauty over decay.	Good place for first impressions and court observation.	Courtiers watch the crew closely.	Recon, Steward, Diplomat.	Shows Drinax as spectacle and decline.
Audience Chamber	Oleb and Rao receive the Travellers here.	Grandeur, performance, and political tension.	Use this for introductions and early checks.	A bold player may impress Oleb and worry Rao.	Carouse, Persuade, Diplomat.	Introduces patron pressure.
Guest Wing	The sealed case vanished from a guarded room.	Servants, guards, polished doors, and quiet panic.	Main investigation area.	Too much noise creates court gossip.	Investigate, Recon, Steward, Stealth.	Tests discretion.
Service Corridor	Maintenance access behind the courtly facade.	Hum of old systems and hurried workers.	Useful for tracking Marek.	A courtier may misdirect the crew.	Recon, Streetwise, Electronics.	Shows the palace beneath the mask.
Quiet Alcove	A hidden conversation space near the guest wing.	A place made for secrets.	Good place for negotiation or confession.	Someone may overhear.	Persuade, Deception, Investigate.	Creates first court secret.

14. Scene-by-Scene Outline

Scene 1: Arrival at the Floating Palace

PURPOSE
Show Drinax as grand, fragile, and watchful.
SETUP
The crew is escorted through court spaces.
WHAT THE PLAYERS CAN DO

Observe, ask questions, size up officials, make first impressions.

RELEVANT CHECKS

Recon 8+, Steward 8+, Diplomat 8+, Carouse 8+.

LIKELY OUTCOMES

They learn the court is divided and the summons is real.

FAILURE COMPLICATIONS

They mistake a court rival for a friend or appear uncultured.

REFEREE ADVICE

Give one useful detail for free, then use checks for deeper reads.

TRANSITION

Varris brings them before Oleb and Rao.

Scene 2: Audience with Oleb and Rao

PURPOSE

Introduce patron pressure and let each character show a strength.

SETUP

Oleb asks broad questions. Rao asks precise ones.

WHAT THE PLAYERS CAN DO

Boast, be honest, flatter, remain cautious, or ask for terms.

RELEVANT CHECKS

Persuade 8+, Diplomat 8+, Leadership 8+, Deception opposed if lying.

LIKELY OUTCOMES

Oleb reacts to boldness. Rao reacts to judgment.

FAILURE COMPLICATIONS

They gain attention but also suspicion.

REFEREE ADVICE

Give every player one spotlight moment.

TRANSITION

The missing case is reported before the offer is complete.

Scene 3: The Missing Sealed Case

PURPOSE

Give the crew a small problem with multiple solutions.

SETUP

Lysa Dorne's sealed case vanished from the guest wing.

WHAT THE PLAYERS CAN DO

Secure the room, question witnesses, inspect routes, calm Lysa, or ask Rao for authority.

RELEVANT CHECKS

Investigate 8+, Recon 8+, Persuade 8+, Admin 8+.

LIKELY OUTCOMES

They learn the case left through service access.

FAILURE COMPLICATIONS

A false suspect is blamed or gossip spreads.

REFEREE ADVICE

Do not require one exact clue path.

TRANSITION

Evidence points toward staff corridors and court interference.

Scene 4: Suspects and Court Pressure**PURPOSE**

Teach simple opposed checks and NPC reaction.

SETUP

Marek is nervous. The Sable Courtier redirects suspicion.

WHAT THE PLAYERS CAN DO

Question, follow, deceive, bargain, or split tasks.

RELEVANT CHECKS

Recon 8+, Streetwise 8+, Persuade 8+, Deception opposed.

LIKELY OUTCOMES

They identify Marek or the rival influence behind him.

FAILURE COMPLICATIONS

Marek panics, hides the case, or accuses someone else.

REFEREE ADVICE

Keep the pressure social, not lethal.

TRANSITION

The crew finds the case or faces the person holding it.

Scene 5: Recovery and Choice

PURPOSE
Force a decision about discretion, mercy, and leverage.
SETUP
Marek has the case hidden, but the Sable Courtier pushed him into taking it.
WHAT THE PLAYERS CAN DO
Return the case quietly, expose Marek, pressure the courtier, open the case, bargain with Rao, or protect the aide.
RELEVANT CHECKS
Persuade 8+, Advocate 8+, Investigate 8+, Deception opposed.
LIKELY OUTCOMES
The case is recovered and the court learns how the crew behaves.
FAILURE COMPLICATIONS
The case is recovered late, opened, or publicly mishandled.
REFEREE ADVICE
Let the players define their reputation through their method.
TRANSITION
Rao gives a measured assessment and Session 2 is set up.

15. Core Checks and Suggested Difficulties

Situation	Skill	Difficulty	Success	Failure
Read the court mood	Recon or Diplomat	8+	Notice tension between spectacle and worry.	Misread performance as genuine trust.
Make a strong first impression	Persuade, Carouse, or Leadership	8+	Oleb is pleased or Rao takes interest.	One patron likes the crew while the other becomes cautious.
Answer Rao honestly without seeming weak	Diplomat or Persuade	8+	Rao sees discipline.	Rao records a concern for later.
Inspect the guest room	Investigate or Recon	8+	Find signs of service corridor access.	Find the clue late, after gossip spreads.
Calm Lysa Dorne	Persuade or Steward	8+	She cooperates and names who had access.	She threatens a formal complaint.
Question Marek without panic	Persuade or Streetwise	8+	He admits the case was moved.	He flees or lies badly.
Spot the Sable Courtier's influence	Investigate or Recon	10+	Notice the manipulation behind the theft.	The courtier remains a hidden future rival.
Lie convincingly to buy time	Deception	Opposed	Gain room to investigate quietly.	The lie creates suspicion if later exposed.
Recover the case discreetly	Stealth, Persuade, or Admin	8+	The court avoids scandal.	The case is recovered publicly and rumors begin.

16. Player-Facing Choices

Choice	Why It Matters	Benefit	Risk	Later Effect
Perform for Oleb or reassure Rao	Shows crew style.	One patron may approve quickly.	The other may worry.	Shapes first court reputation.
Investigate quietly or demand authority	Determines public exposure.	Quiet action protects Drinax.	Authority can create resistance.	Affects Rao's trust.
Protect Marek or expose him	Tests mercy and practicality.	May gain a grateful informant.	May anger Lysa or Varris.	Creates future contact or scandal.
Pursue the Sable Courtier or let it pass	Determines whether a rival is revealed early.	Could uncover court intrigue.	Could make an enemy too soon.	Sets up a recurring court rival.
Open the sealed case or return it sealed	Tests discipline.	Opening may reveal leverage.	Breaks trust with Lysa and Rao.	Affects merchant and Drinax reputation.

17. Consequences and Branching Outcomes

Clean Success

The Travellers recover the sealed case unopened, avoid public scandal, and identify that Marek was pressured. Oleb praises their decisiveness. Rao quietly approves of their discretion. Drinax Trust increases by 1. Court Suspicion stays at 0.

Mixed Success

The case is recovered, but gossip spreads, a servant is embarrassed, or the crew misses the deeper manipulation. Drinax Trust increases by 1, but Court Suspicion also increases by 1. The Sable Courtier may remain hidden.

Complicated Failure

The case is recovered late, opened, damaged, or publicly mishandled. Lysa Dorne complains, but the crew still demonstrates enough initiative to remain useful. Drinax Trust stays at 0 or increases by 1 if they showed courage. Court Suspicion increases by 1 or 2. The campaign continues.

CONSEQUENCE

No result should block the campaign. Even a messy outcome teaches Drinax something valuable: what kind of trouble the crew creates when tested.

18. Combat, Conflict, or Crisis Guidance

Combat is not the focus of this session. Use conflict as social, legal, logistical, and political pressure. If violence occurs, keep it small and consequential. Palace guards are not enemies to defeat. They are a sign that the crew has mishandled the situation.

- Enemy purpose: There is no combat enemy. The real opposition is suspicion, embarrassment, and manipulation.
- Enemy morale: Marek wants to escape blame, not fight. The Sable Courtier wants distance, not violence.
- When enemies retreat: Marek runs if cornered harshly. The courtier withdraws if noticed.
- Terrain or cover: Court spaces are public, monitored, and politically dangerous.
- Nonviolent exits: confession, bargain, quiet return, apology, or redirecting blame.
- Consequences of injury: Any palace violence sharply increases Court Suspicion.
- How to keep fast: If weapons appear, pause and ask the players if they truly want to escalate in the royal court.

19. Ship, Trade, Law, or Faction Notes

Category	Session 1 Use
Ship Operations	Not used this session. The ship is hinted at, then introduced in Session 2.
Trade	Minimal use. Lysa Dorne represents commercial interests and future merchant contacts.
Cargo	Not used this session. The sealed case is a diplomatic item, not cargo.
Passengers	Not used this session. Court guests foreshadow later passenger complications.
Fuel	Not used this session.

Category	Session 1 Use
Starport Procedures	Not used this session.
Law Level	Minimal use. Court authority replaces normal local law for this scene.
Local Authority	Palace guards and Varris represent internal control. Avoid treating them as generic enemies.
Drinax Reputation	Begins forming immediately through method, not just success.
Imperial Attention	None unless a character publicly claims Imperial status or authority.
Aslan Attention	Not used this session.
Pirate Reputation	Not used this session.
Merchant Reaction	Lysa may become friendly, wary, or hostile depending on how the crew handles the case.

20. Campaign Ledger Updates

Update the ledger immediately after play. This keeps early consequences visible and teaches the players that method matters.

Checklist	Checklist
■ Drinax Trust adjusted	■ Rao reaction recorded
■ Court Suspicion adjusted	■ Any public scandal noted
■ Lysa Dorne reaction recorded	■ Any favor earned noted
■ Marek Tain status recorded	■ Any future rival noted
■ Sable Courtier exposed or hidden	■ Player who impressed court noted
■ Case returned sealed or opened	■ Player who worried court noted
■ Crew method summarized	■ Hook to Session 2 recorded
■ Oleb reaction recorded	■ Session 0 motivations updated if needed

21. End-State of the Session

By the end of Session 1, the following should be true:

- The Travellers have arrived at Drinax.
- They have met or observed Oleb and Rao.
- They have used basic checks in social and investigative scenes.
- They understand that Effect changes the quality of outcomes.
- The court has seen how they operate under pressure.
- The sealed case has been resolved, even if messily.
- The campaign ledger has its first real consequence entries.
- The crew is ready to be shown the ship in Session 2.

22. Hooks into the Next Session

Hook Type	Hook
Direct Hook	Rao tells the Travellers they have passed the first test well enough to continue. They are escorted to a restricted hangar or viewing chamber where their future ship waits.
Optional Player-Driven Hook	A character who impressed Oleb is invited to speak privately. A character who impressed Rao is quietly asked what the crew truly wants.
Consequence-Based Hook	If the case was handled quietly, Rao grants more trust during the ship briefing. If mishandled, Varris or a court rival attends the briefing to supervise them.

23. Referee Quick Reference

Item	Reference
Session Goal	Teach basic Traveller checks through court roleplay and a small investigation.
New Rules	2D task checks, difficulty 8+, Effect, simple opposed checks, fail-forward outcomes.
Important NPCs	King Oleb, Princess Rao, Varris Sen, Lysa Dorne, Marek Tain, Sable Courtier.
Important Locations	Arrival Gallery, Audience Chamber, Guest Wing, Service Corridor, Quiet Alcove.
Likely Checks	Recon, Investigate, Persuade, Diplomat, Carouse, Steward, Streetwise, Deception.
Main Complications	Court gossip, false suspicion, frightened aide, hidden rival manipulation, opened case.
End-State	Case resolved and court reaction recorded. Crew is ready for ship reveal.
Ledger Updates	Drinax Trust, Court Suspicion, Lysa reaction, Marek status, Sable Courtier status, method summary.

REFEREE NOTE

If the players stall, have Varris ask them directly: "Will you assist, or shall I tell Her Highness you prefer to wait?" That makes action a choice without forcing a method.

24. Player Handout Page

PLAYER HANDOUT: ARRIVAL AT DRINAX

You have answered the summons. The Floating Palace is beautiful enough to be a myth and worn enough to be real. The court wants to know whether you are useful. King Oleb values daring. Princess Rao values discipline. Everyone else values information.

Known Situation

- You have been invited to Drinax under discreet circumstances.
- The court has not yet promised you a ship, money, or authority.
- You are being observed from the moment you arrive.
- A sealed diplomatic case has gone missing from a guest chamber.
- Solving the problem quietly may matter more than solving it loudly.

Known NPCs

Name	What You Know
King Oleb	The king is bold, loud, and eager to see daring.
Princess Rao	The princess is cautious, intelligent, and difficult to impress.
Varris Sen	A court functionary responsible for order and access.
Lysa Dorne	A visiting trade envoy whose sealed case has vanished.

Questions to Consider

Checklist	Checklist
■ Do we act before being asked?	■ Do we protect the guest, the court, or ourselves?
■ Who talks to the court?	■ What do we want Drinax to think of us?
■ Who watches the room?	■ What line will we not cross in a royal court?
■ Do we investigate quietly or openly?	■ What do we do if the culprit is desperate, not evil?

25. Appendix: Notes, Tables, and Optional Adjustments

Shorter-Session Adjustment

If time is limited, reduce the audience scene to one question from Oleb and one question from Rao. Move quickly to the missing case and use three clues: service access, nervous aide, courtier misdirection.

Longer-Session Expansion

If the group wants more roleplay, add a short reception before the case disappears. Let each Traveller meet one court observer, servant, or visiting official. Use those interactions as later clue sources.

If the Players Choose Violence

Pause and make the stakes clear. Violence inside the court will not stop the campaign, but it should increase Court Suspicion and may place guards or supervisors around the crew in Session 2.

If the Players Avoid Violence

Reward discretion. Let Rao notice. The crew may gain a small trust advantage when viewing the ship next session.

If the Players Ignore the Hook

Have Lysa publicly demand help, or have Varris quietly ask whether the Travellers are willing to be useful. If they still refuse, Rao notes their passivity and the court solves the problem poorly. Session 2 can still happen, but trust starts lower.

If the Crew Lacks a Key Skill

Use broad skill options. Investigate is useful, but Recon, Persuade, Steward, Streetwise, Admin, and Deception can all solve parts of the problem. Let good plans matter.

If the Referee Wants More Roleplay

Give Marek a sympathetic reason for the theft. Let the players decide whether justice, mercy, or leverage matters most.

If the Referee Wants More Action

Use a chase through the service corridor instead of a fight. Run it with two or three quick checks, such as Athletics, Recon, and Persuade, then return to social consequences.

Optional Rumors

Rumor	Use
Rumor	Use
The king rewards courage before wisdom.	Foreshadows Oleb's risky patronage.
The princess remembers every careless word.	Foreshadows Rao's caution.
Some courtiers do not want outsiders near Drinax's secrets.	Foreshadows court rivals.
The missing case was not stolen for money.	Points toward manipulation.
A ship waits below court, but not every crew deserves it.	Foreshadows Session 2.

Optional Complication

OPTIONAL COMPLICATION

The sealed case contains one private letter that implicates a minor court figure in trade negotiations. If the crew opens it, they gain leverage but lose trust if discovered.

Optional NPC Reaction

If the Travellers show mercy to Marek, he becomes a quiet palace contact. If they humiliate him, he becomes a frightened witness who may later be used against them. If they expose the Sable Courtier, that rival begins watching them openly.