

Sample Fast Draft Pages Using the TK Placeholder
by **Leigh Robertson** (pen name for Carlyn Robertson)

I heaved the crate onto the countertop. "This months' supply, Sam, as promised!"

Sam pried open the wooden lid of the crate and opened one of the TK boxes nestled inside.

He tipped a tiny amount of the dark powder onto his blackened countertop, grabbed a pair

of TK firestones, struck them together, and sent sparks towards the powder. It ignited with

a *whoosh*, and he leaned back as it exploded a moment later with a small *crack*. Sam smiled.

"Our usual price, then?" he said.

I shook my head. "Captain's asking for an extra 10 TK for each box. Goods from TK fire territory are harder to come by these days with the new blockade."

"30 for each box? Come now, Mareyn, surely the situation is not so dire as that. I can pay 25 for each one."

"Can't do it Sam. What would the captain say if I let you haggle me down? It's 30 for each box, or we'll find another buyer."

"28 then, how about 28 and I throw in a few other items of your choosing, anything you like. I've just got a new shipment of TK *something from somewhere*, I know how the captain has a sweet tooth. What do you say?"

I sighed, trying not to smile. The captain would have been happy to get 25 for each box. I pretended to weigh Sam's offer. "Let me take a look around the back room, see if you have anything interesting today."

Comment [CR1]: Material? Also wood? Paper packets?

Comment [CR2]: TK technology and means of making fire, other than from fire dragons

Comment [CR3]: TK monetary system

Comment [CR4]: Or packet

Comment [CR5]: TK actual names of regions

Comment [CR6]: World-building TK

Sam nodded and moved the crate to the end of the counter, turning his attention to a broad young man who walked in the shop. I slipped through the curtained doorway behind the counter to his back room. The shelves were crammed with TK *some stuff*, and wooden crates were stacked floor-to-ceiling. I shifted aside a few bolts of beautiful cloth leaning against one wall to reveal a plain wooden door. While it looked like the entrance to a broom closet, this was the heart of Sam's business. The cluttered room I stood in now was full of everyday goods as any respectable merchant would have, but the true treasures were hidden in a second, concealed back room for people like me—the smugglers, the black-market buyers, and the high-risk traders. I pulled a small key from my belt and opened the door.

One of Sam's shop boys looked up from the stained desk he was perched at in the corner. He nodded to me and returned to counting TK *some cool item on the desk* as I shut the door behind me. TK *Describe back room.*

I browsed the shelves, looking for items I knew the crew would appreciate. I spotted a TK *something for someone, something for someone else.* A dark wooden chest on a shelf above my head caught my eye. **(TK: why does it catch her eye? Does it pull her in somehow, look familiar? Does she hear a humming and hone in on the source of the sound? Why now and not on previous visits?)**

I put down my armload of trinkets and gifts and heaved over a stool. My fingertips just reached the edges of the box if I stood on my toes. I teased it to the edge of the shelf, then lifted it down to my shoulder. I stepped off the stool and put the chest on it. There was a thick layer of dust on top. It was locked, but after a surreptitious glance to confirm the

Comment [CR7]: Describe regular goods one might find in a successful merchant's shop in this world

Comment [CR8]: Does she knock something over to reveal it, or move something? Needs to be a reason why she'd never seen it or noticed it before if it's been here long enough to be dusty

shop boy was engrossed in his accounting, I quickly jiggled it open with a pick pulled from my thick curls. The box was filled with TK *something of objectively little value that Mareyn or a crew member would appreciate*. But the box was far too heavy to be full of just TK *items*. I pushed the TK *items* aside to find a hard curved surface nestled below. Keeping my back to the shop boy, I gently shifted aside the TK *items* and revealed the object. **(TK exactly what she feels when she encounters the egg)** The object felt warm in my hands, and my fingers tingled strangely. It seemed too even and smooth to be a rock—it might be an egg, but I'd never seen a dragon egg that looked like this *(TK what it actually looks like)*. Besides, Sam wasn't involved in animal smuggling. He considered it too risky. *But if it was an egg, I knew we could find a buyer. There was a chance Sam didn't even know it was in the box.*

Comment [CR9]: TBD based on who put the egg in this box and how it ended up here

Comment [CR10]: Does she consider other types of animals, too?

Comment [CR11]: This can't be her only reason for taking it, she has to feel compelled to keep it