

# ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE



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# ALDDIS

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# BLUE ROSE

THE AGE ROLEPLAYING GAME OF ROMANTIC FANTASY



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*“Never doubt, Your Highness, that all eyes point towards Aldis, at every hour. This is the oldest city in the known world that yet stands, and was once the capital of a powerful, sorcerous empire. Such legacies are not quickly forgotten. The rest of the world waits to see what comes of it; waits to see how we will use that, you can be sure.”*

*-Lady Dunhaella Virann, Noble Councilor and Emeritus Dean of History of the Royal College, to Queen Jaellin shortly after her coronation*



# INTRODUCTION

In the genre of romantic fantasy, many of the stories focus on a single setting, with only occasional excursions away from it. This is in contrast to the sort of “trekking fantasy” popularized by Tolkien and his literary descendants, in which the heroes journey far from home. This difference isn’t surprising: one of the important elements of romantic fantasy is the establishment and development of relationships, which requires some kind of stable setting where such relationships might be formed.

This book serves as precisely that kind of setting. The city of Aldis is a grand fantasy metropolis with an ancient history. It is the center of power for the Kingdom of Aldis and its high ideals, which paints a target on it—and all its defenders and citizenry—for those who would see that kingdom fall into ruin.

## INTRODUCTION

This **Introduction** provides an overview of the Aldin way of life in the City of the Blue Rose, presenting a look at the places and people that make the city what it is.

## CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF ALDIS

**CHAPTER 1** explores the city’s place in the history of the setting, from the glories of the Old Kingdom through its survival of the darkest days of the realm, and into its rebirth as the center of a new nation thanks to the arrival of the Golden Hart.

## CHAPTER 2: THE HIGH WARD

**CHAPTER 2** looks at the center of Aldis, particularly the Palace and its attendant buildings and institutions, the Temple of the Eternal Dance, and the various neighborhoods surrounding them.

## CHAPTER 3: THE LAKE WARD

**CHAPTER 3** provides a closer look at the eclectic and artistic Lake Ward, with its half-submerged buildings, gondolas, and the Academy of the Dance.

## CHAPTER 4: THE MIDDLE WARD

**CHAPTER 4** focuses on the cosmopolitan Middle Ward, with its dance halls, taverns, theaters, and other diversions for both day and night, where Aldin-folk from every part of the social spectrum mix and mingle.

## CHAPTER 5: THE LOWER WARD

**CHAPTER 5** covers the region that is home to a variety of shops and merchant townhomes, with tall apartment blocks and craft workshops aplenty.

## CHAPTER 6: THE OUTER WARD

**CHAPTER 6** details the ward that most travelers and visitors to the city occupy, with its ample accommodations and markets, as well as the living and working places of those folk who can’t afford to live elsewhere.

## CHAPTER 7: LANDS AROUND ALDIS

**CHAPTER 7** highlights the lands around the great city for approximately a day’s ride in every direction, from small settlements and fortifications to stretches of wild lands. Strange things lurk, even in the heart of the Kingdom of the Blue Rose.

## CHAPTER 8: PEOPLE OF ALDIS

**CHAPTER 8** talks about the folk of Aldis, including some basic stock Narrator character statistics, as well as detailed information and statistics for many of the important figures mentioned in the preceding chapters.

## CHAPTER 9: CHARACTER OPTIONS

**CHAPTER 9** discusses new mechanical options for players in a *Blue Rose* campaign, all designed with a focus on the city of Aldis.

## CHAPTER 10: NARRATING A CITY SERIES

**CHAPTER 10** provides some advice on running urban-focused fantasy roleplaying campaigns, discussing themes and presenting some tricks to make the Narrator’s job easier.

## THE CASE OF THE RHYDAN SWINE

This section presents an adventure in the City of Aldis in which our heroes investigate the disappearance of a human boy and a possibly newly-awakened rhydan from (of all places) a hog farm!

## THE APPENDICES

**The Appendices** include a variety of useful references for Narrators and players alike. *Aldis Encounters* gives Narrators a system for drawing cards from the Royal Road to provide “set dressing” to daily life in Aldis. *Aldin Names* provides a variety of names for both NPCs and player characters alike. *Narrator Characters* provides a system for using the Royal Road cards to detail NPCs’ personalities, motivations, and appearances with the draw of a few cards. Finally, *Aldis Locations* compiles all the city’s locations, divided by location type, into an easy reference list.

ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE

## INTRODUCTION

# A TOUR OF ALDIS

Though the pages that follow include a dizzying array of people, places, and events that bring the city of Aldis to life for the reader, we would be remiss if we did not address some of the city's broader features.

Above all, it is worth remembering that the city of Aldis, as mentioned elsewhere, is very old. It is as ancient as Rome was during the height of the Renaissance, and its history is even more enduring, thanks to Aldis' role as the seat of power for multiple great nations with the arcane arts at their core. Many of the city's buildings stand above literal layers of history, and many of those features were wrought by the powers of its adepts. Such creations tend to weather the passage of time, even when they're largely forgotten and buried by more recent construction.

Despite this age, Aldis is well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing. Its cleanliness is notable even in less fortunate parts of the city, and crumbling or ramshackle structures are inevitably repaired or replaced. The Crown maintains a system that assists even very poor landowners with such maintenance, often paid for by taxes and supplemented by the work of citizens charged with public service.

## THE BURIED CITY

In all historical texts that discuss the great city, mention is made of the network of tunnels and catacombs beneath Aldis' streets. No one is entirely certain how old these passageways are, and they vary from those just large enough to take two people abreast to those wide enough to allow two trading wagons to pass one another with room on either side. Some of them were clearly intended to be used as the resting places of the dead, whereas others seem to purely be a means of getting between one destination and another.

On the level above this all but forgotten labyrinth are the second kind of tunnels: ancient streets sunk beneath the ground, the levels above held up by great, earth-shaped pillars and arches of stone. Some are empty caverns, their

### ALDIS, CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE

DEMOGRAPHIC	POPULATION
ENTIRE CITY	500,000
HUMANS	400,000
VATA	50,000
SEA-FOLK	25,000
NIGHT PEOPLE	20,000
RHYDAN	5,000

Approximately 10% of the populace can wield arcane talents or are full-blown adepts.

structures long ago destroyed by disaster or simply decay. Others may still have the remnants of buildings on one or both sides of the former street, showing signs of war, fire, or other disasters that were the reason ancient arcane builders simply chose to bury them and start anew rather than painstakingly rebuilding.

There are even a few of these tunnels with largely intact buildings. When the city rediscovers them, they are sealed away, though it is often just a matter of time before the destitute and the criminal find their way into to these buried havens. The Silence and the Shadow Guild are known to ferret out such places, including secret ways into and out of them.

Closer to street level are the various basements, sub-basements, and other buried structures of the city above. Most connect to the buildings above them, but it is not unknown for a structure to be constructed atop the now-buried basement of the building that previously stood on that spot. Such "secret cellars" are a favorite topic of city folklore, which has dozens of tales of haunted, treasure-filled, monster-infested, and guarded secret chambers, found by hapless, adventuresome souls. In truth, they are far rarer in reality than in fiction, though it is not unusual to find secret passages between basements and neighboring cellars (usually the work of smugglers, thieves, or conspirators of one stripe or another).

Woven in and among this baffling knotwork of tunnels, catacombs, and basements are the city's sewer tunnels. By and large, the grate-covered holes, often placed at crossroads and similar junctions in the city's streets, descend a full story or more in depth, sending water from street level and the contents of waste-pipes from various buildings around them plummeting down an almost straight shaft to the sewers below. Because of the danger posed by such a drop, the grates are locked in place using bolts that require a key to open. The sewer tunnels follow the slope of the great hill on which Aldis is built, all eventually flowing through a series of locks, gathering chambers, and waterfalls of filth into one of the three Great Cesspits located beneath the Lower and Outer Wards.

Here, water-shaping adepts and those skilled in the use of arcane stones that mimic that talent use their abilities to separate the pure water from the ordure it carries. The now cleansed water is shunted into pipes to carry it to nearby irrigation canals for agriculture, with the excess emptied out into the lake. The nightsoil extracted from the water is gathered into wide pits in adjacent chambers. After a judicious application of flame (which helps break it down), the spores of a potent mixture of fungal blooms are applied to the waste and encouraged to grow quickly by plant-shapers (both adepts and those using stones imbued with the power). This mixture of ash, plant matter, and muck forms a nutrient-rich fertilizer that is sent by the wagonload to nearby farms as much as a week away, and by cargo barge to farms up and down the Rose River.



## THE STREETS & ALLEYS OF ALDIS

The streets of the city are some of the finest in the world. Even in the poorest parts of Aldis, all the thoroughfares are crafted of earth-shaped stone, melded seamlessly into place by earth-shaping talents in service to the city's bureaucracy. To either side of major roadways are garden swaths, rarely more than two or three feet in width, but extending the entire length of the roadway. These patches of green, set slightly higher than the road itself, are planted with flowers and shade trees up and down their length. In some places, these garden swaths are traded out for flowing water features, broken up by the occasional fountain.

These leafy boundaries are frequently interrupted by brick paths (or small footbridges for water boundaries) which provide access to the raised wooden walkways that serve as the entries to local establishments. Occasionally these breaks are wider, to allow carts access to the brick-paved alleyways between buildings. Many building clusters have a small central courtyard, frequently decorated in a style favored by the inhabitants of the neighborhood.

The streets are deliberately lower than the surrounding structures, permitting water to flow down toward their centers, where it is carried away to one of the many grated fall-pits and the sewers below.

## BUILDINGS & OTHER STRUCTURES

By and large, the buildings of Aldis are constructed in the same style, although there are some notable variations in one or two wards. Whitewashed brick and marble are often used in their fabrication, with wooden features such as doors, eaves, and shutters predominating. A great many buildings are designed with a shop or other workplace on the ground floor and living quarters above. Buildings in wealthier districts frequently include an interior corridor and stairwell granting residents access to these upper spaces, while those in other wards may provide an outdoor staircase and walkway, usually located on the alley- or courtyard-facing part of the building away from the street proper.

Single-story buildings are common in the furthest reaches of the Outer Ward, at the edges of the city. Elsewhere, buildings are a minimum of two floors in height, and many are an impressive four or five such stories, with five floors being the civically-mandated limit on non-specialized buildings. Aldin buildings always feature glass windows, even if the glass is the thick and bubbled panes of the poorest quality among those who can afford no better. Balconies are quite common on levels above the street, and Aldin-folk often hang banners, streamers, and

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## LOCATION ICONS

Throughout Chapters Two through Six, we use a set of location icons to denote the type of place described. Locations are divided into the following categories:

**RESIDENCES:** Buildings whose primary function is to provide a dwelling place for someone. These can be individual residences or boarding homes of the sort that offer rooms individually or in apartments to residents.

**NIGHTLIFE SPOTS:** Buildings that house entertainments of the sort that attract patrons at day's end, from restaurants to taverns to pillow houses (the genteel name Aldin-folk use for brothels).

**INNS:** Businesses that offer rooms for rent on nightly, weekly, or even monthly terms. They often include a tap room where both residents and locals might enjoy a pint and a meal, as well.

**GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS:** Buildings that either house the various functions of Aldin government, or are otherwise held in the public trust for use by Aldin-folk by the Sovereign and her government.

**TEMPLE:** A sanctified site where worship takes place, from the largest of cathedrals to small, out of the way shrines. Such places are frequently visited by the faithful, and may also be staffed by either volunteers or an ordained priesthood.

**BUSINESSES AND GUILDHALLS:** Buildings that in some way house a business or multiple businesses. This category of buildings also includes guildhalls, where guild members may come for meetings, socializing, and training.

**OTHER:** This is the catch-all for those sites that do not fall into one of the other categories.



RESIDENCES



NIGHTLIFE SPOTS



INNS



GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS



TEMPLES



BUSINESSES & GUILDHALLS



OTHER

other bright, merry decorations in accordance with the season and their residents.

## CITY WONDERS

Though many settlements throughout Aldis boast of small arcane works that make daily living easier, none can match the wonders woven into the city's very fabric. From the ancient arcane cityworks of the Old Kingdom to the tireless dedication of civic artificers, the city of Aldis is a shining jewel of arcane technology without equal.

## LIGHTING

Most sizeable settlements have globes of shas crystal set along their major thoroughfares and in gathering places, capable of generating light and/or heat at the touch of anyone who knows the technique for commanding that particular globe: a task usually apportioned to any and all civic servants with any measure of arcane talent.

In Aldis, however, their ubiquity is such that not only do all streets and most alleyways have them, but a great many homes do as well. The houses of the wealthy are unlikely to boast large hearths as a result, and the air quality and building facades of the city benefit from the

fact that its folk need not resort to smoky fires to help stay warm in the winter months.

Using these crystals is simple: it merely requires a touch and a moment of concentration to cause the globes to project light, heat, or both as the user desires. Besides this, a user must have the mental "password" instilled into the crystal as well as a modicum of arcane talent (although many glow globe crafters create rings instilled with the slightest mote of power, sufficient to allow those without talent to use them).

Because users must physically touch the globes, they are often mounted between chest- and head-height in a room or hallway. Inset in craftsman-wrought settings in the wall, they are frequently engraved with beautiful patterns, turning them into legitimate works of art. Some crystals are not inset into walls but instead left free-standing on torchiere-like pillars or stands, or simply set in a base on a table.

Of course, these globes do not generate enough heat to cook by, meaning kitchens and establishments that serve food do still need hearths and wood-fired stoves.

## FLOWING WATERS

An elaborate and interlocking system of subterranean aqueducts lies just beneath Aldis' streets, a network of

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finely wrought ceramic pipes through which fresh water flows. These pipes are inset with simple stones, each imbued to cause water to flow in a single direction as soon as it comes into proximity with that stone. Using this network, the city of Aldis manages a civic waterworks that does not rely on gravity or other mechanical means of generating water pressure.

Individual houses have plumbing systems that we would consider quite modern, with taps for access to the water and indoor jakes (toilets) that flush away waste with the pull of a small lever. All of this adds up to a very hygienic life for most Aldin-folk.

The very wealthy also have specialized stones installed in their own systems, permitting them to magically heat water for a variety of luxuries. Most other households must still make do with heating water for cooking and bathing the mundane way, although almost all but the very poor in Aldin society prefer to use civic bathhouses and laundry services for such chores.

## DISEASE PREVENTION

One of the least-known of Aldis' arcane works is a network of carved jade seals buried beneath major thoroughfares throughout the city. The network extends outward far beyond the city's boundaries, with other seals buried in country roads and, in more than one instance, on lone hills. This set of seals forms an interlocking arcane web whose existence suppresses the transmission of illness and disease.

Its power is subtle, so much so that only those very skilled with the Second Sight arcanum ever notice it in operation (TN 20 to detect). All folk within the web benefit from its effects, granting them a +3 to checks to resist disease and illness of all kinds, save those that are arcane in origin.

The Crown has been aware of this web since the days of King Issik; what they do not know is how to replicate it. The Royal College has determined it is likely a relic of the Old Kingdom, given the designs on the seals. The Crown maintains a careful watch on the network, with locals frequently recruited and paid a small monthly stipend to keep an eye on the seals, reporting anyone attempting to dig them up to the Sovereign's Finest.

## THE RHYDAN EXCHEQUER

One of the foremost civic projects of the Rhydan Council in Aldis established during Queen Jaellin's reign, the Rhydan Exchequer is uniquely Aldin. A small building in the High Ward houses the Exchequer, which employs a number of skilled clerks and money-counters. The Exchequer is responsible for tracking the personal wealth of rhydan in Aldis, whose bodies frequently prevent them from using actual coinage. Instead, their accounts are maintained at the Exchequer, with all their

earnings and expenses reported here, disbursed and collected accordingly.

Any merchant in Aldis is entitled to secure an *exchequer stone* from the Exchequer. By simply touching the stone and concentrating, a merchant may psychically contact one of the Rhydan Council's agents who help maintain the Exchequer. When a rhydan wishes to make a purchase or be paid for work, a merchant need only contact the Exchequer via the stone while in psychic contact with the rhydan in question. Once the rhydan's identity is verified by the Exchequer agent (usually just a matter of moments), their accounts are adjusted accordingly.

Some wealthy merchants and innkeepers outside of Aldis proper have begun to acquire exchequer stones as well, although they are rarer the further one travels from Aldis. Rhydan who wish to benefit from the service must have made contact with and set up a ledger with the Exchequer first. In general, it is fair to assume that all Aldin rhydan have already done so, save for a few who prefer life at the edges of civilization, or who are only recently arrived in Aldis from other lands. A few particularly trusted rhydan may carry a stone themselves, though usually only members of the Rhydan Council or senior envoys in the Sovereign's Finest do so.

## THE TOUCHSTONE

Perhaps the greatest of the wonders in service to the people of Aldis is the Touchstone, safely ensconced at the topmost chamber of the Tower of the Art in the Royal College. An ancient artifact from the Empire of Thorns—or perhaps even earlier—this brilliant golden crystal is capable of extending the use of normal arcana to anywhere in the city of Aldis.

For more information on the Touchstone, refer to **CHAPTER 6: The Kingdom of the Blue Rose** in the *Blue Rose* core rulebook.

## LIFE IN ALDIS

By nearly any standard, the people of Aldis lead lives of ease and comfort. While certain rural folk-tales like to paint the City of the Blue Rose as an untrammelled utopia in which everyone feasts at every meal, dresses in the finest silk and furs, and wields potent arcana that “simple country folk” can but dream of, there is a degree of truth to be found in them.

Even the poor of Aldis are still better off than the poor of other places. The city does boast more common-a-day arcana than anywhere else in the nation, thanks to the presence of the Royal College and its many arcane instructors. The Crown spends taxes lavishly to ensure a fine quality of life for as many as possible, and the wealthy know that civic-minded largess is one of the fastest ways to earn the respect and gratitude of the Sovereign, the nobility, and the people.

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# ECONOMIC CLASS & PROSPERITY

Unlike in so many nations, the distance between those who sit at the heights of wealth and those at its base is relatively slim. Aldis has neither slaves nor even serfs—freedom is the core tenet of the Kingdom of the Blue Rose, and no living embodied soul owes the whole of their existence to another, nor to the state.

Different economic strata certainly exist, of course. Some families enjoy the wealth that has come from generations of successful forebears, while others work hard to bring a few luxuries home to their families. Those who might otherwise live subsistence-based lives receive economic boosts from the Crown and nobility in the shape of inexpensive living quarters and light taxes. In contrast, those with more are likewise expected to contribute more.

In particular, the most heavily taxed are those who inherit wealth—Aldin society admires those who rise to success by virtue of their own ability, but has little interest in lauding those who did nothing but be born into the right family. The independently wealthy know they are under constant scrutiny to justify their lifestyles. Though the idle rich certainly do exist, they are regarded rather poorly unless they turn their ample time and resources to bettering themselves, their communities, and the kingdom as a whole.

Unlike other nations, there is no hereditary nobility in Aldis. Aldin nobles are bureaucrats and servants of the Crown who undergo extensive schooling and pass grueling academic tests—to say nothing of the Test of the Blue Rose Scepter—in order to be accorded the honor of nobility. While there are families that routinely produce nobles from each generation, these families know they cannot rest on the laurels of their ancestors. To this end, some also sponsor non-family members to the Royal College and testing for nobility, ensuring their family will continue to be regarded as a source of the finest Aldis has to offer, even if it is not in their direct lineage.

## THE GUILDS

The guilds of Aldis started out as crafts guilds, dedicated to formalizing the training those new to their vocation received, as well as ensuring two things: a minimum degree of quality in that craft and equitable prices across the profession. While the Crown has decreed that guilds do not have the authority to pressure all craftsfolk to adhere to their strictures or join their organizations, most do anyway. Techniques shared among members, the reduced costs from the guild buying production materials in bulk, to say nothing of the respect that comes from the guild's badge: all of these are strong motivators among crafters today. In addition, the concept of the guild has also bled outwards to other professions which might ordinarily be termed "service industries."

Apprentices do not need to pay membership fees; if their master is a member of the guild, they must only pay a fee upon achieving journeyman status. Many masters reserve as much as half the student's apprentice-fee in order to pay this when the time comes. In return for these dues, members receive a network of skilled tradesfolk and crafters to call upon, assistance from the guild in case of legal matters, and access to whatever deals and aid their guild has finagled for its membership. Guilds usually have a guildhall, although for many smaller guilds, this is simply a set of rooms above the guildmaster's shop.

Membership in one guild in Aldis also comes with the tacit assumption of alliance with other guilds. Guildfolk stick together, as can be seen in the founding of the Guild Council.

Some of the notable guilds in Aldis include the following.

### THE CARAVANEERS LEAGUE

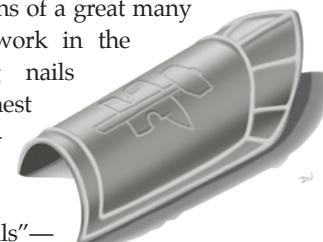
A guild made up of all levels of trading and mercantile caravan workers, from the teamsters who move and haul goods, to the caravan-masters who oversee extended trading missions, to the caravaneers who finance such mercantile routes.



The Caravaneers League is quite influential, as they almost have the power to cease all merchant caravans into or out of a location, should they be so moved. It is for this reason that the Crown mandated a separation between the guild for caravaneers and that for sailors and barge-masters, the Seaworthy Circle of Boat-folk & Shipmasters. The badge of the League is a heavy copper device in the shape of a wagon wheel, often hung on the side of traveling wagons or in an office.

### THE ORDER OF FORGEWRIGHTS

The Order consists of smiths of a great many types, from those who work in the average smithy making nails and horseshoes to the finest armorers and weapon-smiths. The Order does not include those smiths who work with "fine metals"—silversmiths, goldwrights, and jewelers—who make up their own Guild of Finesmiths & Jewelwrights. The Order's badge is a steel bracer engraved with a stylized forge-hammer.



### THE GUILD OF INTIMATES

In Aldis, the so-called "soft trade" or "pillow work" is perfectly legal. Indeed, it has been since the founding of the Kingdom of the Blue Rose. As a result, Aldin-folk

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don't view sex workers as contemptible or filthy, as too many other nations might. Instead, soft traders are a half-step between entertainers and healers, whether they work in one of Aldis' many pillow-houses, entertain patrons



in their own private boudoirs, or arrive at a patron's residence (accompanied by their bodyguard, paid by a Visiting Surcharge). Most such workers are part of the Guild of Intimates, which long ago did away with panders (pimps) and similar folk. The Guild also ensures that all soft traders receive the finest in medical care as part of their membership. The badge of the Guild is a string of opal beads, from which hang a number of small, gold baubles that depict their status and accomplishments in the order. The badge is usually worked into the soft trader's outfit.

## THE HONORABLE CIRCLE OF HOSTELLERS AND INNKEEPERS

Responsible for providing homes-away-from-home to travelers, the Honorable Circle is made up of perhaps half the innkeepers and taverners in the city of Aldis. Despite this fact, they wield the highest degree of influence over the trends in hospitality, priding themselves on constant improvements that drive even non-guildsfolk to keep up or be hopelessly outclassed. Inns and other establishments whose owners are part of the Honorable Circle display a simple wood-and-brass plaque depicting a circle of oak leaves around a stylized hearth-flame.



## THE GUILD OF STONEMASONS AND CARPENTERS

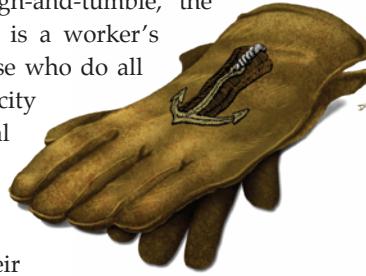
A thoroughly stolid association of hard laborers and workers, this guild is home to those who craft structures with any materials (not just stone and wood as its name suggests). There is a degree of internal strife throughout the guild, however, as it tends to be run by a small circle of architects, who form their own community outside the gruff company of the rest of their guild-mates. The symbol of the Guild is a builder's square, generally stitched into aprons and vests, although many of its tougher builders have the symbol tattooed on a forearm (the rest



of the Guild staunchly insists this doesn't count as proper possession of a guild badge).

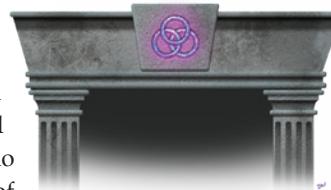
## THE DOCKHANDS GATHERING

Likely the most rough-and-tumble, the Dockhands Gathering is a worker's guild made up of those who do all manner of work at the city docks, from manual laborers to dock security. Even a few shipwrights, who do not have a guild of their own, have been accepted into the Gathering in recent days. Their mark is the anchor-and-post, worn embossed or embroidered into the back of workman's gloves.



## THE WISE SODALITY OF SHASWRIGHTS AND ALCHEMISTS

Likely the smallest of the guilds, the Wise Sodality is home to a variety of adepts and other craftsfolk who focus on the creation of alchemical goods, elixirs, shas devices, and other arcane items. The Wise Sodality has strict standards for its members, and is the most insistent of all guilds that those of their professions join its ranks. Because arcane devices can be dangerous, the Wise Sodality seasonally publishes a list of craftsfolk who are not in their guild as a general warning to the public at large, even when those crafters are perfectly capable at their handicrafts. Small shas crystal rings, usually affixed over the door to a shop or workspace, are the sign of the Wise Sodality's members.



## THE INDUSTRIOUS SOCIETY OF NEWSWRIGHTS, PRINTERS AND AUTHORS

A recently-founded guild, the Industrious Society is the home of those who make the printed word their vocation. Primarily a guild for those with access to printing presses, it includes many of the finest bookbinders in Aldis, as well as almost every news-sheet printer in the city and beyond. While it is technically open to authors, it is only so in order to include the rare author that owns their own printing press. Their sign is a silver amulet depicting a quill behind a single printing block.



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## EDUCATION

Every child in Aldis is not only permitted to receive an education, free of charge, but it is a legal mandate that they do so. Indeed, the Crown ensures that those families who might ordinarily need their children to help with labor during this period receive aid, whether in the form of convicted (non-dangerous) criminals assigned to work with them, or laborers hired by the Crown or nobility on their behalf. This extends even to residents who are not citizens.

Those who travel a great deal, such as the Roamers, are not required to keep their children in these classes, though the Crown does require Roamer clans and other nomad groups of a certain size to have an educated mentor among their number whose responsibility it is to teach their children. The Crown pays for the formal education of that figure to ensure that Roamer culture is uninterrupted in its traditions—the Sovereign would add to it, not change it.

### SCHOOLING

The city of Aldis maintains a number of schools throughout its wards. Some are simple multi-room buildings, while others may include a small playground for children and several buildings' worth of space. Regardless, they share a similar personnel structure: a dean who oversees the functioning of the facility and acts as mediator with the Crown's educational bureaucrats, along with a staff of educators.

An educator is usually assigned a single cohort of a dozen or so children, usually first-year children (who range in age from six to ten years old). Cohorts frequently bond

and form close friendships and relationships that often last them their whole lives. Children in a cohort are given frequent opportunities to interact with the other children in their school, however, as schools often hold athletic, artistic, and academic events meant to give them opportunities to socialize and excel at what they are skilled at.

A given educator remains with that same cohort year after year, teaching them as they grow. This allows an educator to learn the personalities, strengths, and limitations of their students early, and use that understanding to ensure they receive the specialized and specific educations they may require. An educator is not expected to do all the educating, however—they frequently bring in assistants and specialists who help teach the cohorts in small, individualized groups.

Each school is also assigned an adept with the skills necessary to teach youths who manifest arcane talents. This educator, referred to as a docent, forms a sort of meta-cohort made up of the students with such talents. If there are too many for one docent to instruct ably, the school may be assigned multiple docents, each of whom forms their own cohort. These lessons are primarily about control, although students with full adept potential may receive additional individual lessons intended to awaken their arcane gifts.

Basic education lasts for around six years, from the ages of six to ten until about twelve to sixteen. Formal apprenticeships are not legally permitted to begin until the apprentice has finished basic education, and those students who do may be eligible for part or all of their apprentice-prices to be paid for by the school itself, particularly if their parents cannot afford the price. Alternately, those who do well in school may find themselves eligible for admission into the Royal College, and those with great

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promise but economic limitations may find the Royal College willing to give them a space to learn despite the inability to afford it.

## THE ROYAL COLLEGE

Because the minimum age to attend the Royal College is fifteen, students who begin their educations young often receive a small break between the end of their basic education and the beginning of their time at college. Those whose parents can afford it sometimes fill this time with specialist tutors intended to sharpen their child's education and help them stand out in college. Most children who have this time, however, simply assist their parents with their own vocations or help out in other ways at home, or take on odd jobs for their families, friends, and neighbors.

Collegiate learning is individualized, without cohorts. Most professors teach small clusters of students at a time, offering lectures on a variety of topics. Such lectures take place regularly each week at the same time and day, but form only half of a student's education.

Each student is expected to secure themselves a mentor. New students must choose senior students for this task, and senior students vie for the favor of a professor. Every year, each student is expected to submit projects of various sorts, depending on their education. These projects are expected to encompass what a student learns from their lectures, and are put together with the guidance of their mentor.

At any time, a student may submit a request to be tested in a field of learning. There is no penalty for the student if they fail this exam, but it is always a mark against that student's mentor if this happens. Failure almost always results in the mentor asking the student to find a different mentor, and lackadaisical students can reach a stage where no mentor will accept them. At this point they will undoubtedly need to do something dramatic to gain the favor of a mentor, or simply leave the College altogether.

Fortunately, this is a rare occurrence. By and large, the system, while somewhat chaotic, fosters an environment where students are permitted to focus on the parts of their disciplines that most interest them, while still being expected to demonstrate a general grasp of the overall course of study.

## LITERACY

As a result of this broad education, literacy is higher in Aldis than in any other known nation. By and large, illiteracy is found only among those who have recently come to Aldis, or who have disabilities that impact their ability to learn to read.

Aldin-folk are among the most widely-read of populations. The library at the Royal College (which allows visitors to read but not remove texts) is not the only library in Aldis, either—several charitable organizations and wealthy sponsors have founded other reading libraries throughout the city, providing citizens with access to a larger body of written material than they might otherwise have.

Many of these libraries even provide memberships that permit books to be checked out, allowing them to be read in leisure hours at home rather than in the library proper. All of these memberships are acquired through sponsorship from another member, who is expected to take the lead in recovering any texts that are out for too long. Lost or damaged books that go unpaid for result in the library revoking the membership of the person who checked it out, plus the possible revocation of sponsorship rights from their sponsor. In some extreme cases, the sponsor's membership might be revoked as well. There is even a small College-sponsored cloister of so-called "knights-scrivener" who can be deployed by any of the city's libraries to recover particularly rare or valuable books from any borrower.

Besides the libraries, the prevalence of printing presses in Aldis and beyond ensures that much of the population has plenty to read. Even small villages often have at least one printer, who purchases manuscripts from authors with the right to print and sell them. The city of Aldis, in contrast, has literally dozens of these shops. Successful printers may maintain a shop or even several book-stands throughout the city, manned by shopkeepers who sell the books. Smaller printers frequently hire book-carts to travel through the city, hawking their wares. These publications are usually either small octavo-sized books or simple paper-bound folios. Gossip, news, and fiction are all favored contents, with steamy romances and tales of daring adventure at the top of the list of interests among Aldis' readers.

## MEDICAL NEEDS

Over and above the benefits of its disease-preventing jade seals, all residents of Aldis have the right to receive medical care—not just in the case of injury or illness, but on an ongoing basis. This is accomplished through the Compassionate Sodality of Well-Being, as the guild of physicians and healers is called in Aldis. The Compassionate Sodality maintains chapter houses throughout the wards of Aldis, which act as clinics and hospitals. There are almost two dozen of them, ranging in size from singular buildings with several examination rooms to large hospital complexes that allow comfortable care of the injured, diseased, and dying.

A few larger cities in Aldis have adopted this style of medical system, though most places still operate in the traditional way, with each physician or healer acting as their own agent and seeing those who come to them with their ills.

It is also worth noting that the medical treatment available to Aldin-folk reflects the society of Aldis. Women are granted full control over their reproductive health, with a combination of herbal, alchemical, and arcane methods to stymie or encourage pregnancies, alleviate the discomfort of menstruation, navigate the symptoms of menopause, and many other interrelated issues. Likewise, laevvel-folk have options in Aldis that may be lacking elsewhere, with plentiful means herbal, alchemical, and medical to help facilitate transition.

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Additionally, while Aldin medical knowledge has not yet reached the point of understanding of what we call the germ theory of disease, they do understand the connections between cleanliness and contagions.

### RECKONERS

The most common sort of Compassionate Sodality agents are its reckoners—healers skilled in using a combination of interview, physical examination, and in some instances arcana, to diagnose what is wrong with a patient. Reckoners are well-trained, but are considered to be at the earliest stage of healer training in the Sodality, since their diagnoses are almost always backed up by more experienced healers.

Reckoners are traveling healers, making appointments and journeying to the homes within their area of operation. The ideal is that each citizen receives a visit from a reckoner once a season, but in some areas this may be stretched to six months or so. The reckoners keep careful records, allowing them to recall who has or has not been visited in a while. As a result, they frequently know a lot about the folk in their areas. It is not uncommon for those who are feeling unwell to flag down their local reckoner or pop in to the reckoner's favorite tavern at day's end to steal a moment or two of their time.

Many reckoners go on to become full healers or physicks in the Sodality, but some remain in this position for the whole of their careers, whether due to an inability to pass the subsequent tests or a preference for being out in the middle of the city, rather than sequestered away. If a reckoner diagnoses a simple medical concern, they can recommend a treatment from an apothecary, but most only do this if it is abundantly obvious what the issue is. If there is any doubt whatsoever, the reckoner immediately arranges for a visit to a chapterhouse for the patient.

### CHAPTERHOUSES

The chapterhouses of Aldis provide a worthy concentration of those skilled in medicine and healing for those who truly need it. Though anyone may come to a chapterhouse if they feel ill, most folk are referred by their reckoners, meaning that most people are in attendance because their condition has been verified to require the attention of the resident healers.

Physicks are those who are trained in the knowledge of medicine, often with the aid of the apothecary's arts. Physicks can treat a great many illnesses and long-term ailments, and are even called upon to use their arts for patients receiving arcane healing—a broken bone must often be reset by a physick before a talented healer uses their art, to ensure the cleanest result possible.

All chapterhouses maintain a number of rooms, usually on the ground floor, for examination and treatment. Floors above usually have rooms for those who require long-term treatment or who need to wait for a specialist of some kind to arrive.

### LEGAL MATTERS

The rule of law is upheld as the foremost political virtue in Aldis, so much so that even the Sovereign is bound to follow it properly. All folk in Aldis—wealthiest to meanest, from native Aldin to those who are merely visiting—are considered to be bound equally under the law, and must answer for any violation of that law.

### ALDIN WATCH

The City Watch of Aldis is technically a branch of the Sovereign's Finest. It is led in its day-to-day operations by a small council of Ward Officers, made up of one senior envoy for each of the wards. Each Ward Officer commands a small group of Senior Watchfolk who act as detectives, focusing on individual crimes or criminal organizations. Each city ward has a dedicated Ward Office that serves as a "police precinct" for that part of the city, with offices for Watchfolk and the Ward Officer plus an armory, a patrol assignment room, and anywhere from a half-dozen to two dozen gaol cells, where lawbreakers are held when captured by the Watch.

Under the Senior Watchfolk are the Patrol Watchfolk, investigators with patrols in their assigned wards. Watchfolk frequently command divinatory talents, whether natural or from specially-enchanted Watch-badges. The specific visionary arcana they use vary widely by the job, but Watchfolk are quite skilled at employing them in surprising ways, and they do not rely solely on arcana. Part of their training is in reading people and assessing locations, often drawing extraordinary conclusions about them as a result. It is of little surprise that the Crown sometimes promotes experienced Watchfolk to act as spies thanks to their training and experience.

As part of their regular duties, three to seven members of the Aldin Guard are assigned to assist each ward's Patrol Watchfolk. These Guardsmen act as support and aides to the Watchfolk, a task which keeps them from the drudgery of being soldiers in want of a war, as well as broadening their general training. Most simply serve their patrol rounds and then go back to the Guard, but those who show an affinity for it may be permanently recruited as Patrol Watchfolk.

In addition to these patrols, Ward Officers and Senior Watchfolk are empowered to request additional or specialist assistance from the Sovereign's Finest. Such assistance is usually focused on solving a particular crime or undertaking a given mission to flush out a wanted criminal or organization.

### COURT MATTERS

One of the tasks Aldin nobility is charged with is the judgment of legal cases. It is for this reason that they must be well-educated in both law and history: precedent is important, as is understanding the philosophies by which

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Aldis' laws are formulated and codified. Within the city of Aldis and its immediate environs, each noble is expected to serve as a judge over criminal cases for five days out of every month, although many nobles with a talent and temperament for such tasks serve quite a bit more. Only those on the Noble Council are exempt from this service, although a few of them still serve the minimum five days as a worthy example to their peers.

When there aren't sufficient nobles to serve all the cases under examination, or when a case involves one or more nobles themselves, it falls to envoys of the Sovereign's Finest to act as judges. Unlike nobles, the Finest's envoys are not required to undertake any particular number of days of judicial service. Despite this, quite a few envoys are skilled at the task, and volunteer to oversee cases as part of their regular service.

Many outlying settlements use noble-appointed magistrates to arbitrate court cases, but the city of Aldis has a more-than-sufficient concentration of nobles and envoys to serve in this capacity. By and large, nobles preside over all cases involving murder, treason, or sorcery; magistrates are empowered to deal with all other cases. Rulings may be appealed to the local noble or, ultimately, the Sovereign (which is, in practice, overseen by a senior envoy).

While the law is held to be important, judicial cases do not always rule in accordance with it. Unlike in some nations, when the word of law is judged to be needlessly cruel under a given circumstance in Aldis, it is not followed to the letter in order that folk are not made to suffer in support of it. Nobles and envoys are empowered to declare an exception to a given law when enforcing it would clearly be detrimental to everyone involved.

## PUNISHMENTS

Philosophically, Aldin justice does not focus on retribution. It favors recompense, reform, and rehabilitation. A judge—be they noble, envoy, or magistrate—hears the details of a case. If it is not cut-and-dried, they may decide on the need for a trial. The judge ensures everyone involved has an advocate, a vocation made up of those who have studied the law extensively and are prepared to speak on their client's behalf.

During the trial, an adept truth-reads those who testify. Thanks to the ease with which the truth can be separated from lies, such trials are often swift. If the end result is a conviction, the judge determines both the compensation the aggrieved party is due, using a system of calculations encoded in the law, and the best method for aiding the convicted party's reform.

The convicted person is usually offered the services of the finest psychic adepts, willing to use their arts to plumb the criminal's psyche to find the source of their antisocial urges and so aid them in dealing with them. These services must be done with the criminal's consent, however—violation of this is an act of sorcery, after all.

## JUST THE FACTS, CITIZEN

Needless to say, the Watch can provide a street-level view of the ills that plague even the great city of Aldis. An entire campaign where the player characters are members of the Watch has tremendous promise, particularly for lower-level characters, who may then go on to achieve positions in the Sovereign's Finest or other Crown-sponsored organizations.

Because of the Watch's tendency to request aid from specialists in the Sovereign's Finest and other allied organizations, such a campaign isn't a requirement to tell some policing stories in Aldis. Envoys, priests, specialists from the Royal College, guildsfolk, and others may be drawn together by a particularly sticky mystery facing the Watch, and experienced player characters with well-established reputations may find themselves being called upon to aid the Watch in dealing with their particular specialties.



Violent criminals are kept confined during this time of treatment, while those who have committed lesser crimes may be kept under house arrest. Aldin justice recognizes that the criminal's surroundings can contribute to their return to crime just as readily as any internal impetus. Those who feel that their living conditions may incline them towards further infractions—whether out of poverty, the influence of their peers, familial stress, or other similar circumstances—are often offered an "out" from their current situation.

This is frequently an offer to take up a position or vocation in a settlement far from the criminal's former haunts, where they can get a fresh start, usually in the domain of a noble who needs such a position filled or is willing to provide one. The Crown has also founded a few small villages made up entirely of criminals seeking to start new lives for themselves, overseen by their psychic adept healers and a variety of skilled craftsfolk willing to teach them new vocations.

The system is not perfect. There are those who refuse a mind-healer's aid and who seek to escape the law they feel seeks to oppress them. Such folk are given time away in confinement, where they speak regularly with a mind-healer. After a period of confinement, they are released, with the understanding that they are now under careful observation. These folk often flee society altogether, ending up as members of the bandit gangs at Aldis' borders. It is considered a tragedy, but better an imperfect system that treats criminals with compassion and grace than a "perfect" system which brutalizes all of them.

Finally, those who simply cannot adapt their behaviors to Aldin society may be forced into exile, their bodies marked by the Hart's Hoof as a warning to Aldin-folk everywhere. More than a few of the bandits found on the periphery of civilization bear these markings.

ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE



# THE CITY OF ALDIS



# LAKE VASH



In many regards, the history of the city of Aldis is the history of the nation that bears its name, for Aldis has been at the center of civilization—and therefore the center of history—for more than a thousand years. The great triumphs and tragedies of generations are written upon the city's streets, facades, and monuments. They strive to remember not only the achievements of their ancestors, but also the terrible reign of the Sorcerer Kings when Shadow lay heavily upon the world, as well as the sacrifices and heroism of those who finally cast it off to restore light and hope to the world once more.

## THE FOUNDING & THE OLD KINGDOM

Most of the Old Kingdom's records and archives did not survive the reign of the Sorcerer Kings, or the Great Rebellion that finally overthrew them. Much of what is known of Aldis' founding and golden age is steeped in legend, gleaned from oral histories passed down through family lines during the dark interregnum. Scholars happily pore over unearthed artifacts from the time before the rise of Shadow in the hope of reconstructing and expanding knowledge of the ancient world.

According to tradition, about 1,500 years ago, small settlements along the great Rose River and on the shores of

Lake Vash founded a town on the hill overlooking where the river flowed into a deep lake. In the old language, it was named *Aldis*—“our home”—and it became a place of trade, exchange, and meeting between villages. Over the generations, more and more people relocated to Aldis, which eventually supported a variety of skilled crafters and artisans, and a council was appointed to govern the town's increasingly complex needs. The small town continued to grow over the slopes of the hill and down to the shores of the river and lake, becoming one of the first great cities. Although the people of Aldis heard occasional stories of fair Austium in far-off Faenaria, so far as they knew, Aldis the Beautiful was the greatest city in the world.

## THE GROWTH OF ALDIS

In time, Aldis became a city of learning, as the craft and artistry integral to its founding led to greater prosperity and opportunities for scholarship. In particular, Aldin-folk delved deeply into the arcane arts. What was once the province of simple village wise-folk and cunning-crafters became codified bodies of knowledge and training. Aldin adepts exceeded the powers and achievements of all others in the known world, save perhaps for the mysterious Seers of Austium.

Where the People of Fate excelled in the visionary arts, Aldis mastered nearly all the others, in particular the meditative, psychic, and shaping arcana. Aldis' standing as a city of learning spread, drawing students and scholars from far and wide to study there. Aldis' reputation as a city of prosperity spread as well, occasionally drawing bandits or would-be conquerors to its borders. But brave Aldin soldiers and powerful adepts fended off any such attacks, making it clear to those who saw Aldis as easy prey that they were sorely mistaken.

The council first formed to govern the town of Aldis became the renowned Council of the Wise, made up of the greatest minds from every discipline, tasked to implement learned decisions and to guide the continued peace and prosperity of the city and its people. According to legend, it was the Council that first created the envoys of Aldis, to extend the city's reach beyond its borders. They reasoned that a network of peaceful affiliations based on mutual trade, exchange, and protection would help secure Aldis and expand its achievements. So, envoys were sent out, carrying greetings and offers of alliance.

## THE ALDIN ALLIANCE

Much like the founding of the first humble town led to the creation of the great city, so the work of the envoys cast a wide net, turning a loose coalition of towns and villages into what would become a great nation. The influence of Aldis the Beautiful spread outwards like ripples, welcoming nearby settlements, towns, and even city-states into its fold. As new parts of the alliance prospered, their more distant neighbors were drawn to join them, or driven to attack out of fear. Aldin envoys sought to quell such misgivings and to offer the hand of friendship wherever possible. When it was not, they instead helped to defend the expanding border and to protect newfound allies.

Aldis also forged ties among the diverse peoples of the world. The sea-folk dwelling in the shallows of Lake Vash were the first; allies of the original small lakeside villages, and later a part of the founding of the town on the hill overlooking their homes. They helped Aldis to become a valued port along the Rose River. The more reclusive and mysterious vatazin and rhydan came later, although a scattered handful of rhydan were always present. Their natural affinity for the arcane arts enhanced the insights of Aldin adepts and scholars, while the rhydan and vatazin were in turn drawn to Aldis by opportunities to study and appreciate all that the enthusiastic human adepts were discovering.

In time, the Aldin Alliance spread across the peninsula, reaching out from Trident Bay in the west to Basketh Bay in the east and spreading out onto the planes of Rezea and Sanisan, with the city of Aldis ever at its heart. Alliance envoys even ventured north, exploring the sylvan depths of the Pavin Weald and the snow-covered passes of the Ice-

Binder Mountains. It was there, in the rocky and barren lands to the north, where they made a great discovery.

The first shas crystals were little more than curiosities, stones resonant with arcane energies, but Aldin adepts soon discovered the stones could focus their arts. Study and experimentation showed the crystals—found in many places across the world, but in greatest abundance in the cold northern mountains—had tremendous potential. Shas crystals could contain, amplify, and redirect arcane energies unlike any other medium. Soon, mining outposts and operations appeared all along the northern mountains as a great “crystal rush” flowed southward towards Aldis. With this resource at their disposal, Aldin adepts could achieve miracles to rival the legendary powers of the gods themselves!

Aldis and its alliance underwent a great arcane revolution through the use of shas crystals and more complex arcana. Master adepts built increasingly complex engines and devices, and learned the secret of tapping into well-springs of arcane energies within the land itself. For generations, the discoveries and artifice of Aldis seemed boundless. The master adepts created the means to purify and move water without any mortal agency, to fill homes and buildings with warmth and light, to purify and guard against disease and toxins, and many more wondrous gizmos and gadgets to ease the lives of the people. They raised structures shaped from stone, earth, and glass that flowed like water at their command, and extended arcane networks of communication further than ever before. They created wagons that moved without horses, ships that sailed without any dependence upon the wind and, in time, vessels able to sail across the skies themselves.

## THE KINGDOM OF THE ROSE

The tremendous growth and prosperity of the Aldin Alliance drew even more attention to its achievements, enhancing both the desire to become a part of it and concerns over the power of Aldis the Beautiful and its people. Envoys were kept busy negotiating new memberships and treaties, gathering information on new challenges, and fending off new menaces. However, few could now threaten great Aldis, whose sky-ships could rain down fire from above, and whose adepts could touch the minds of those an ocean away.

Under the increasing challenges of governing such a rapidly growing and changing nation, the Council of the Wise ordained a strengthening and formalizing of previously loose ties. The Aldin Alliance gave way to a new emblem and ideal: a red rose with rings of petals representing the lands and peoples surrounding the great central city, which lent its name to the new nation of Aldis, Kingdom of the Rose—no longer a loose alliance of interconnected places, but one great nation.

ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE



## THE FALL OF THE OLD KINGDOM

During the heady glory days of the Kingdom of the Rose, it must have seemed as if the expression “no shadow ever falls upon Aldis” was actually true. The citizens of the great city and its nation might have believed they would go on as they were forever. Certainly, there were fewer and fewer challenges to the kingdom’s continued growth and peace. Nearby lands like Kern, Jarzon, Rezea, and Drunac were incorporated into the Kingdom and emissaries forged peaceful alliances with more distant nations like Faenaria, Lar’tya, and Wyss. The masters of the arcane academies in Aldis delved deeper still into the secrets of nature, further than anyone had done before, and they made another great discovery.

Although Aldis’ sky-ships extended their nation’s reach further than any other, even those vessels had their limits. Then Aldin adepts discovered the principles of the shadowgate. These arcane constructions—rings of arcane dark-steel set with shas crystals—could bend and twist space itself. One could step between connected shadowgates, crossing a nation—perhaps even the world—as quickly and easily as stepping through a doorway from one room to another. What was more, there was potential in the shadowgates to open the way to *other* worlds, beyond Aldea itself! If any counseled caution in using the shadowgates or exploring the roads they opened, their words are lost in the depths of history and the chaos that followed.

## THE EMPIRE OF THORNS

Some mark the Old Kingdom’s use of shadowgates as the beginning of the end for the Kingdom of the Rose, but the truth of the matter is, those arcane wonders cannot be held responsible for their eventual misuse. True, the shadowgates opened up never before seen opportunities, but their use was initially benign, allowing people, goods, art, and lore from across the worlds to come to Aldis—the city at the center of all things—and for the wonders of Aldis to likewise spread across the world.

The true beginning of the end for the Kingdom was when the people—particularly the rulers—of Aldis fell out of harmony with the world around them. Seemingly endless prosperity and success led to complacency and arrogance. Although travel across the known world was swifter than ever, distant places and people became less and less important to the great, eternal city. It became ever easier to strip faraway lands and people of their goods, resources, and luxuries to satisfy Aldis’ endless hunger for the new and exotic, ignoring any protests as they did so.

Some of those protests came from the rhydan, never entirely comfortable with all the artifice and ambition of humans. The great and noble griffons warned against endless mining in their high mountains and filling the skies with ships, while the wise unicorns counseled that the wild lands be left untouched to preserve the balance

of nature. Their advice was not heeded, and tensions grew between the rhydan and the other peoples of Aldis. Likewise, many vatazin warned of visions clouded with darkness and filled with fire and the shadow of death. Their predictions were also ignored, or taken as yet more reason for Aldis to secure everlasting peace for the world, to prevent such tragedy.

The most learned of the great city's adepts, supposedly the most wise and powerful, failed to harken to the warnings of their peers and their own lore, and delved too deeply. What is more, they abused their arts, studying and experimenting with sorcery. Whether they began with the best of intentions, naively believing they could illuminate the Shadow itself, or were overcome with a lust for power, the end result was the same. Corruption seeped into the arcane academies like blood dripping into water, and the scent of it attracted predators to a feast. Darkfiends whispered in the thoughts and dreams of those ill-fated sorcerers, gliding half-seen through darkened chambers and halls. The rot at the heart of the Old Kingdom metastasized, growing deep roots.

## THE RISE OF DELSHA THE DARK

By the seventh century of the great city of Aldis, the Kingdom of the Rose was already showing its thorns. Dissent and rebellion in the outer provinces were brutally suppressed with both force of arms and the powers of sorcery, with such incidents used as a further excuse for conquest in the name of peace. *Enzaraldis*—“The Peace of Our Home” in the old tongue—became the ironic rallying cry of the kingdom’s war-mongering faction. Political alliances—and more sinister machinations like assassinations—became commonplace, with more than a few “mysterious” deaths attributed to poisoning, sorcery, or the work of darkfiends. Justice became increasingly lax though increasingly brutal when it was enacted (and then only in service to the powerful).

Onto this stage stepped Delsha Artanis, the leader of a secret cabal of ambitious sorcerers. With the aid of a legion of bound darkfiends, they staged a coup to overthrow the weakened and corrupt Council of the Wise and seized control of Aldis and the kingdom, particularly the network of shadowgates. These allowed Delsha’s coup to spread like a plague, taking control of nearly the whole of the kingdom within a matter of days. The victorious Delsha declared herself the Eternal Empress of the new Empire of Aldis, which became commonly known in history as the “Kingdom of the Blood Rose” or “The Empire of Thorns.”

Some elements of the once great Kingdom of the Rose opposed Delsha’s rise, notably the rhydan and the vatazin, but they were already weakened by years of being pushed to the outskirts of Aldin society. The Empress immediately

placed a bounty on the heads of all such “enemies of the Empire” and they were ruthlessly hunted throughout the lands controlled by Aldis, and beyond. Corrupt folk and darkfiends stalked and slew them and, within a generation, the rare vatazin were wiped out. The surviving rhydan fled to the distant and wild places of the world and concealed their true nature from the two-legged peoples to protect themselves. Within just a few generations, they became little more than folk legends, since no human could claim to have ever even seen a rhydan—at least not knowingly. The rhydan hid, watched, waited, and planned.

The city of Aldis became the heart and jewel of the new empire and was built up accordingly by its empress. Delsha ordered the construction of the great wall that now runs between the Middle and Lower Wards to protect the city against invaders, as well as the creation of more military barracks and a grand palace. Damaged and demolished parts of the city were built over and forgotten. No one knows for certain just how many other things the dread empress built or changed in the city behind the scenes, even to this day.

## THE SHADOW WARS

Delsha’s empire was built upon fear, and could not last. Although the so-called “Eternal Empress” sought every means to extend her life and ruled for nearly two centuries, death eventually claimed her. Her fellow sorcerers sealed her body in an arcane sarcophagus in a hidden tomb, both to prevent any chance of her return from death and to keep her grave from becoming a rallying point for her supporters. Delsha never intended to release her grip on power and so never chose a successor. Negotiations over who would take up the throne quickly broke down and the most powerful of the so-called Sorcerer Kings retired to their own domains to build up their forces and plot against their peers.

There was a long and drawn-out silence, like the inhalation of breath before a scream of terror. Then the Shadow Wars began.

The Sorcerer Kings forged alliances, then launched attacks against their rivals. The Empire of Thorns fragmented into individual kingdoms: brutal, totalitarian fiefdoms devoted to serving their ruler and conquering their neighbors. During the whole of the Shadow Wars, as different Sorcerer Kings waxed and waned in power, the city of Aldis remained largely outside the fighting. Seen as a great prize by all the sorcerers, none wished to risk uniting the others against them by overextending their reach in moving on Aldis. So, the city remained largely “neutral ground,” a useful place of truce and negotiation between the Sorcerer Kings. It also spared Aldis—and parts of the Central Valleys—the devastation suffered by places like Falzanoth (now the shattered ruins of the Leviathan’s Teeth).



## CHAPTER I: THE HISTORY OF ALDIS

Nevertheless, many of Aldis' great treasures were looted in the wake of Empress Delsha's death and the start of the Shadow Wars. Countless arcane treatises and grimoires vanished from its libraries, and priceless works of art and wonders of the Old Kingdom disappeared into the vaults and personal collections of the Sorcerer Kings. What marvels the sorcerers could not take, they destroyed to ensure they did not fall into the greedy clutches of their rivals. Centuries of achievement were wiped out in little more than a generation, and much more was lost in the decades that followed.

### THE GREAT REBELLION

So it was that Aldis, which had been the seed of the Empire of Thorns, became the only "free city" in a world endlessly at war; the sole haven where a rebellion against the Sorcerer Kings could gather strength. Small and ragged uprisings against the Sorcerer Kings cropped up with increasing regularity as the Shadow Wars dragged on endlessly, as people who had known only war and oppression for their entire lives felt they had nothing to lose in fighting back. These uprisings were brutally suppressed and only rarely successful, except as catpaws for the other Sorcerer Kings, who might support rebels against a rival only to crush their weakened enemy and the "victorious" rebels in one fell swoop. Aldis occasionally suffered damage when the forces of one of the Sorcerer Kings rooted out rebels with brutal efficiency, preferring to simply destroy entire buildings to ensure their enemies were no more, regardless of the loss of innocent life. No rebel movement survived long enough to become a true threat, not even in Aldis.

The turning of the tide came when a new rebellion began, not among the human subjects of the Sorcerer Kings, but among their darkfiend servants. Vast armies of darkfiends were summoned, bound, and set against the sorcerers' foes during the Shadow Wars. Now, many darkfiends suddenly broke their bonds and turned on their former masters. The devastation was massive, resulting in the complete destruction of strongholds like Veran-Tath (now the Veran Marsh) and the retreat of many Sorcerer Kings, leaving large parts of their domains ungoverned. The darkfiend uprising was the opportunity the beleaguered resistance movement against the Empire needed, and it began to draw strength from those now flocking to its banner.

The ranks of the rebellion swelled, not just with humans and the scattered half-human descendants of the vatazin, but also with the rhydan. The allied rhydan operated in secret in the Empire and the city of Aldis, making contact with rebel groups. The reappearance of the rhydan was no coincidence, as they arrived in time for the auspicious event that changed the course of the rebellion and the history of Aldis forever: the appearance of the Golden Hart.

### THE LIBERATION OF ALDIS

Although Aldis was not under the direct control of any of the Sorcerer Kings, the miraculous appearance of the Golden Hart in a plaza outside the old palace caused the people of the great city to shake off their lethargy and despair. Here was a spiritual power of shining goodness, arriving at the hour of Aldis' greatest need. The Golden Hart shrugged off any effort by those loyal to the Empire of Thorns to kill or subdue it and left them senseless on the ground, bearing gray hoofmarks on their faces and bodies. What's more, the rebels and the Aldin people quickly learned those in the Hart's presence were shielded against the baleful arts of sorcerers. The Hart's bright golden aura dissolved their foul arcana like ice in an inferno. Aldis was quickly liberated and became a free city in truth.

With the aid of the rhydan—including the noble griffons and unicorns—and the power of the Golden Hart on their side, the Great Rebellion rose up like a tidal wave and cast off the chains of the Sorcerer Kings. The rebel spark spread quickly, even to places far from Aldis, and the Golden Hart seemed to be everywhere at once. With darkfiends rebelling and a newly liberated army attacking on every front, the fiefdoms of the former Empire of Thorns fell quickly. Save for distant Kern, ringed and shielded by the high mountains, the Sorcerer Kings were no more.

Although Aldis was, in many ways, the heart of the Great Rebellion, the city saw little in the way of conflict once it was free. The remaining Sorcerer Kings were unable to launch an assault on the city itself, and it quickly became clear that the Golden Hart appeared wherever the rebels did and was not tied to the city. Thus, Aldis was spared the worst of the succeeding battles and survived, while not unscathed, certainly unbroken and unbowed.

### ALDIS RISES ANEW

The city of Aldis and the Central Valleys became a haven for refugees following the end of the Great Rebellion, and many returned rhydan also settled in the area. Seltha, a human leader in the city of Aldis, reached out to the rhydan and proposed a new alliance where they would have equal citizenship and voice in matters of governance, and where their wisdom would be heeded. The rhydan accepted, and the Golden Hart appeared once again. The Hart gifted the people with the Blue Rose Scepter and chose Seltha as the first Sovereign of the reborn nation of Aldis, which would become known as the Kingdom of the Blue Rose.

Queen Seltha established the essential framework of the new Aldin government, with a bipartite Sovereign's Council made up of representatives chosen from the rhydan and a new body of nobles. Through the power of the Blue Rose Scepter, Queen Seltha instituted a selection process whereby the nobles of the new kingdom would



undergo training and tests of their skills and abilities before taking the final test of worthiness, the touch of the Scepter itself, which glowed to show true devotion to the Light and service to the people. In Aldis, governance would remain a sacred calling to serve. Gan Falish, one of the leaders of the rebellion, became the first to undergo the Scepter's test and be accepted as a new noble of the kingdom, and his family would have a long history of service to Aldis and its people.

Seltha's successor, Queen Varti, known as "Varti the Builder," was responsible for much of the modern architecture of the great city, including the restored and expanded Royal Palace, the Azure Plaza commemorating the appearance of the Golden Hart, the Noble Assembly, and the sacred Temple of the Eternal Dance, to name but a few. With the arcane skills of shapers and the finest of crafters, great works were begun and accomplished during the twenty-one years of her reign. The first queens and kings of the Blue Rose were tasked with restoring the rule of law and peace in the lands surrounding Aldis, as well as rebuilding much of what had been damaged or destroyed by the Empire of Thorns and the battles to overthrow it.

## THE SOVEREIGN'S FINEST

More than thirty years after the Great Rebellion, during the reign of King Karthakan, the fourth Sovereign of Aldis, the legacy of the Sorcerer Kings stirred: Jarek, the Lich

King of Kern, launched an invasion across the Ice-Binder Mountains into Aldis. In a true test of Aldis' resolve and strength, the forces of the Kingdom of the Blue Rose were able not only to hold Jarek's army at bay, but also to infiltrate Kern and foment rebellion there. This resulted in the desertion of many of Jarek's troops and the recall of his forces to quell uprisings in and around Sarn.

The value of small, dedicated teams of envoys became clear during the Kernish Invasion, and Karthakan's successor, Queen Allia, formalized the practice of entrusting them with the safety of the kingdom. She ordered the formation of the Sovereign's Finest, "those with the skills and abilities to serve as Aldis' senses and our voice in the world and, when need be, as our shield and our sword as well." They were called envoys in recollection of the legendary emissaries of the Old Kingdom, and the Finest fired the hearts and imaginations of a generation of romantic young Aldin-folk, who dreamed of becoming worthy of joining their ranks.

The Finest quickly proved their worth when Aldis renewed contact with Jarzon, the part of the Old Kingdom that now lay beyond the almost impassable Veran Marsh. The theocracy that ruled Jarzon took Aldis' embrace of arcana and folk such as the rhydan and night people as a threat and launched an attack. The valiant efforts of the envoys and the unpredictable arcane nature of the marsh blunted the attempted invasion, and Aldis was able to establish an uneasy truce. A slow exchange of Jarzoni and Aldin merchants, traders, and envoys began crossing the vast swamp between the two nations. Aldis began to

contend with proselytizing priests from Jarzon as well as a small number of refugees fleeing the Theocracy, another sticking-point in ongoing diplomatic negotiations with their eastern neighbor.

## THE GUILD COUNCIL

King Rikin, often remembered as “The Seventh Sovereign,” had his work cut out for him when he was chosen. His predecessor, King Valin the Tainted, was the only Aldin Sovereign thus far removed from office, after a reign of only four years, due to his corruption by a tempter darkfiend. Rikin was responsible for rooting out malfeasance within the ranks of the Noble Assembly and amongst the bureaucracy, as well as restoring trust in the governance of the kingdom. Part of the process of doing so was addressing the concerns of the Aldin guilds, which protested poor treatment under King Valin and agitated for a greater voice in government by staging a general strike throughout the city. Rikin negotiated the expansion of the Sovereign’s Council, adding a Guild Council seat to be filled by a chosen representative of the kingdom’s economic and mercantile factions.

Some modern scholars refer to “the Shadow of the Seventh Sovereign” as the unintended outcome of King Rikin’s good works. Many trace the creation of the Silence to elements from King Valin’s reign, corrupted nobles and others who were never fully uncovered, but instead “went silent” and used their influence to maintain their criminal enterprises in secret. Similarly, they attribute the formation of the Shadow Guild to the formalization of the Guild Council, which ousted certain undesirable elements, forcing them (sometimes literally) underground, where they continued to do business outside the law.

Almost three-quarters of a century after Rikin’s rule, King Issik, a scion of the well-known Falish family, ascended the Aldin throne. After his sometimes troubled twenty-six year rule, Aldis enjoyed a century of relative peace and prosperity under the reign of Good Queen Hulja—a vata’an who held the Blue Rose Scepter for seventy-two years—and her successor, King Haylin, who ruled for thirty-one years before perishing in a tragic accident. Both were also members of the extended Falish clan. After over 150 years of the Aldin throne in

the hands of a single family, the people had almost come to expect a Falish Sovereign, until the unexpected reign of Queen Jaellin, a relative outsider to life in the city of Aldis and the fourteenth and current Sovereign of the Kingdom of the Blue Rose.

## JAELLIN’S CHALLENGES

The nigh-twenty years of Jaellin’s reign have seen many challenges, including Jarzon’s widely-preached “concern” for Aldis’ “corrupt ways” and the dangers they pose to the Theocracy, as well as constant diplomatic work to maintain friendly ties with Rezea and Lar’tya. Some in the Noble Assembly wondered if the new, young queen were truly up to the challenge of governing, but Jaellin surprised them, winning both the respect of her counselors and the affections of her people. She took up many of the interests of Varti the Builder in restoring and beautifying the city, as well as patronizing scholarship, the arts, and performance.

Queen Jaellin also proved a canny tactician when Kern rekindled hostilities with Aldis, launching a new invasion some three years ago with the help of Lord Sayvin, a traitor within the Noble Assembly. This allowed the Lich King’s forces to slip into parts of Aldis undetected and stage a sneak attack. Jaellin’s response, taking the fight directly to King Jarek, is now the subject of songs and plays, as is the dramatic battle and the destruction of the Lich King.

However, the Queen used questionable methods to reach Jarek’s stronghold in far-off Sarn: an ancient shadowgate, hidden beneath the palace. This revelation, as well as Queen Jaellin’s marriage to the Kernish vata’sha rebel leader Kelyran after Jarek’s defeat, led some to question Jaellin’s good judgment. For her part, the Queen admitted to not being as forthcoming as she could have been about the presence and secret study of the shadowgate, but she also challenged prohibitions regarding the study or understanding of sorcery. “Are not the arts of the physick equally able to poison and maim as well as to cure and heal? Yet we do not expect the physick not to learn the natures of herbs or how to wield a scalpel or lance. If we would protect ourselves against the Shadow, we must be willing to peer into it and face what is there.”



Located in the center of Aldis, the High Ward is the oldest portion of the city, dating back to its founding. The district serves as home for most of the wealthy and influential members of society, as well as the Royal Palace, various guildhalls, and the Temple of the Eternal Dance.

## H1

### NORTHPOINT

The area now known as Northpoint was completely wiped out during the Great Rebellion when a fire swept through the neighborhood. The wooden walls and thatched roofs of the old structures instantly went up in flames and the blaze spread quickly. During the early days of rebuilding, a tent city sprang up near the Old Wall and the North Tower. The population consisted of an equal mix of the newly homeless former residents and the recently-formed Aldin Guard. As Eastall was restored, nearly all of the previous residents moved there, leaving mostly just the Guard. It took several years, but Northpoint was eventually rebuilt with stone walls and slate roofs.

Currently, the neighborhood is dominated by

simple, blocky stone homes and the occasional modest but respectable tavern. Those living in the area are predominately current or former members of the Aldin Guard and Aldin Watch. On a related note, crime in Northpoint is lower than anywhere else in the High Ward.

## H2

### MIDDLETON

Middleton is a quiet and reserved neighborhood that has gone through something of a change over the last seventy years. Once the home of tradesmen and accomplished artists, this district was dominated by small neighborhood businesses, along with simple slate and timber homes. This style of home is still the most common in the north and east portions of Middleton. However, in the western and southern portions of the neighborhood,

these older homes are being torn down and replaced, typically with a miniature version of a manor home set within a walled garden area. Lately, as the children in Gentle Rest grow into adults and find they've outgrown their old neighborhood, they've relocated to Middleton.

*"The Highest Hill, crowned in Light,  
For this wonder, our forebears did fight.  
To rise against Shadow, its Kings all thrown down,  
That the Hart might gift us with Blue Rose's Crown."*

-Excerpt of the decidedly doggerel tavern song "*Crowned in Light*," sung throughout taverns in the High Ward

## CHAPTER 2: THE HIGH WARD

### MONEYLENDERS GUILD

#### GUILDHALL

A little over 125 years ago, the former guildmaster, Bosthen Llain, announced he was moving the Moneylenders' guildhall from Highmark to Middleton in order to give members and potential clients more space. In reality, his keen business sense anticipated the rise of the neighborhood businesses and wanted to be sure the Moneylenders Guild was front and center to provide services to these up-and-coming entrepreneurs. In the years since, his insights have proven to be worth quite a bit, as the Moneylenders Guild has prospered like never before, bringing them great amounts of wealth and influence to spend to their own benefit.



#### LAYOUT

The imposing guildhall was designed to give those entering the building a sense of strength and security. The three-story structure was built to complement the existing stone and timber buildings in the area, but with the basic floorplan of a small fortress. The first-floor walls are constructed of large granite blocks instead of slate, and the apparent plaster and timber walls of the second and third stories are actually a shallow veneer covering more blocks of granite.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The current guildmaster, **Marnetta Savahn** (see CHAPTER 8), is a polite, cultured, and well-respected woman with negotiating skills that could barter the scales off a snake. A former Knight of the Blue Rose, Marnetta's diplomatic abilities and keen sense of valuation were often relied on when working with village councils, setting up outposts, dealing with foreign military attachés, and even finding compromises between feuding nobles.

Though many found it odd at first when she joined the Moneylenders Guild after her retirement, the guild's prosperity leaves no doubt she made yet another solid deal.

#### STORY SEEDS

- Marnetta is deciding where security upgrades are most needed for the guildhall and is interviewing small groups with the right skills to determine possible ways to overcome the current protocols.
- Recently, the guild has detected highly realistic counterfeit coins circulating within Aldis. Is the purpose simply to falsely enrich their creator, or is there a more sinister goal?

### ROTHWELL MANOR

#### RESIDENCE

The Rothwell manor is currently the home of the youngest of Marcel Rothwell's three children, Reginald. His eldest brother is an envoy stationed to the south, and his sister serves as a regional noble near the Rezean border. Reginald spent his life training for the test of the Blue Rose Scepter and was quite confident he would follow in his father's and sister's footsteps. When his



## CHAPTER 2: THE HIGH WARD

fingers closed on the Scepter, there was only the barest flicker from within. That devastating moment brought his entire life crashing down. People are still polite to him but most avoid his company whenever possible now, including his father.

### LAYOUT

The Rothwell manor is like many of the newer homes in this neighborhood. A low brick wall topped with a wrought iron fence rings the property, and a brick walkway winds through the garden to the house. A half-flight of steps leads to the porch, which rings the entire first floor. White columns support the second-floor balcony, which mirrors the porch. A sitting room, kitchen, dining room, and study are located on the first floor, with bedrooms and private quarters occupying the second floor.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The bitter failed noble **Reginald Rothwell** (use the *Elite Noble*, CHAPTER 8) is the epitome of the tall, dark, and brooding cliché. His flowing, raven-black hair frames his delicate features and ice-blue eyes.

### STORY SEEDS

- Reginald has not been seen in weeks. Despite their falling out, his father, Marcel, is worried about Reginald's wellbeing, and has asked the characters to check in on him.
- A nefarious individual has slipped a corrupt relic, the Bitter Heart, into the manor. Feeding on Reginald's anger and growing hate, the relic is using it to birth spiteful shades (use the **Shade** from CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook), which are now feeding on the residents of Middleton.
- Orlette Rothwell is returning home for a short visit and Reginald has already sent out invitations to all the well-connected persons in Aldis. Rumors already fly that he is planning a lavish fete to celebrate his sister's accomplishments. Is this just as it seems: a transparent attempt to regain some modicum of societal standing? Or does Reginald have darker intentions? Attendance is sure to be high, if only to have a good seat for whatever happens.

### H3

## EASTALL

For decades leading up to the Great Rebellion, and for a brief time after, the neighborhood of Aldis known as Eastall was home to the city's fur traders and tanners. The fire that tore through Northpoint also heavily damaged the northern portions of this neighborhood, including

several residential sections. The aftermath of the fire, combined with Aldis' growing population, forced the city to expand its borders. Without many options, the traders and tanners followed suit and moved to the city's fringes. This allowed for easier trading with the trappers since they didn't have to travel as far into the city.

When the residential areas were rebuilt, quite a new mix of people relocated here. Eastall is now an eclectic neighborhood made up of artists and performers from all walks of life, as well as students and faculty from the Royal College and some of the younger members of both the envoys and the Guard.

Most of the buildings started off as whitewashed stone but, as Eastall is now a neighborhood filled with artists, the walls were quickly covered with murals depicting scenes from history, literature, and daily life in Aldis.

## THE NEST

### SECRET HIDEOUT

The Nest is not a place one finds by accident. There are dozens of tunnels and pocket areas located under the city. The Nest serves as home to a pack of rhy-rats who work with the envoys as a network of spies for the Queen. The Nest was established in its current location thirty-five years ago after the former nest flooded. Sinrus tends to work with the envoy Hexton Reyes (see **Highmark** in this chapter).



### LAYOUT

The Nest consists of four rooms of an inn which was swallowed by the earth during the Great Rebellion. The former inn had several other rooms at one point, but they were rendered inaccessible or destroyed by the earth-shaping event.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Sinrus** (see CHAPTER 8) is the main point of contact between the Nest and the envoys, and the one with the most experience dealing with non-rhydan. He is a quick-thinking and cunning rhy-rat. He has a tendency to show off his knowledge and be quite snarky with people, even after he has gotten to know them. His left ear has a notch in it due to a tussle with a cat in his youth.

### STORY SEEDS

- A powerful tremor caused by an awakening shaping gift has revealed an opening to the Nest. The rhy-rats need help concealing the way into their home.
- Someone has slipped poison into the water near the Nest and many of the rhy-rats are too sick to move. Someone with the healing gift must be brought to them, and the source of the poison removed.

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H4

## GENTLE REST

One of the oldest parts of Aldis, Gentle Rest is the home of the most affluent of the city's residents. The neighborhood serves as home to current and former members of the Noble Council, the wealthiest of merchants, and visiting dignitaries, as well as extremely high-ranking members of both the Knights of the Blue Rose and the Sovereign's Finest. The homes here range from grand estates to refined townhouses used by regional nobles when they travel to the Aldis. Sprinkled throughout the area are exquisite gardens, fine eateries, and entertainment venues.

Day or night, there is always activity in the neighborhood, as members of the court come and go throughout the day and attend social functions throughout the evening. Just as numerous are the family members of the well-to-do nobles who have been assigned regional positions. They might have been ostensibly tasked with the job of tending the family holdings, but that leaves them with a fair amount of idle time, which can lead them to find all sorts of entertainment—not all of which is considered proper for someone of their station.

## CERULEAN PLAYHOUSE

## THEATER

On the very edge of the neighborhood, abutting the original city wall, is the old Cerulean Playhouse. This structure was one of the very first buildings erected in the city after the Great Rebellion. While the playhouse was immensely popular for two centuries, it has been shuttered for the past sixty-five years. Beginning with the death of the original owner (the noble patron of the arts, Cantella Cander), the title and deed have been bequeathed many times through the years. By the time ownership passed to the current owner, the money, land, and any titles previously attached were gone and only the building remained.



## LAYOUT

Named for the luxurious blue curtain that shrouded the stage, the exterior of this building continues to be well maintained by the owner, Bronel Cander. Before it was closed, it held a combined audience of up to 400 people between the main level and the balconies. While the backstage area wasn't huge, there was enough room to store scenery and change costumes. There were also two small rooms for those who may have needed (or demanded) privacy to prepare for their performances.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

As long as you don't mention the playhouse, **Bronel Cander** (use the **Heroic Rogue**, CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook) is a pleasant, slightly balding man in his early forties. In his daily business, he manages a group of older children and teens who serve as couriers for hire. While not wealthy enough to live in Gentle Rest himself, he is still quite respected by the older residents for his family name and grandparents' connections.

## STORY SEEDS

- Why has such prime real estate remained unutilized for so long? Bronel has declined all offers to buy the place or even to renovate. The building was closed before he was born, so what keeps his silence on the matter?
- Where facts don't tell a story, urban legends will fill in whatever they can. The most enduring tale claims that the playhouse was cursed by an aging star who never got over being replaced and so the building will remain empty until her return to the stage. How much truth is even in this legend?
- On three different nights within the past month, flickering blue lights were reported in the upper windows just before dawn. There are no signs of forced entry or damage, so what could be going on?

H5

## THE COMMONS

The neighborhood known as the Commons is something of an eclectic blend, being situated between the very well-off area of Gentle Rest and the somewhat less prosperous areas of the High Ward.

On the east end, the neighborhood is composed of a mix of one- and two-room cottages, which sit so close together that neighbors can pass items to each other through their windows. The farther you make your way into the heart of the neighborhood, the more common townhouses become. Most of these have been remodeled to contain several individual rooms which can be rented out, usually to students at the Royal College. The few that have not been repurposed are usually owned by Royal College staff members or sages. As you make your way over to Gentle Rest, the townhouses give way to manor houses and small estates.

As the number of students attending the Royal College has grown, the school has outgrown its original space and began spreading into the Commons. Several of the old manor houses which lined the road leading from Scholars' Gate to Gentle Rest have been repurposed as auxiliary classrooms and offices. Most of the other buildings located in the immediate vicinity of the Scholars' Gate entrance



## THE BALLAD & BLADE

to the palace are small shops catering to the needs of the Royal College student body. The remainder of the neighborhood is predominantly home to the college staff, and additional students. Sprinkled in with the college crowd are guard members without families and other single youngsters starting off life on their own.

There are quite a few businesses in the Commons which are popular with the student body. Chief among them are the Ballad & Blade, Jeusole's, and the Stacks.

## THE BALLAD & BLADE

### TAVERN

The Ballad & Blade is the most popular night stop among the Royal College students and a few of the younger crowd looking to attend the prodigious center of learning. While there is nothing remarkable about the food or drink, the inn has two standout features in its favor. The first is the discount extended to all Royal College students by the owner, Evan Green. The second is the Nook. Six years ago, Evan started inviting bardic trainees to perform in the Nook during slower nights.



### LAYOUT

The Ballad & Blade is an L-shaped building which abuts the neighboring businesses, leaving a long and narrow

strip of grass which the regulars nicknamed "the Nook." Evan installed a small raised platform at the far end of the Nook and now it is common to find students performing there almost any night of the week. For the last two years, Evan has hosted a bardic contest for youngsters wishing to attend the Royal College, with a scholarship being awarded to the winner.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The owner and operator of The Ballad & Blade is **Evan Green** (see **CHAPTER 8**), who was an envoy of some renown in his younger days. Evan doesn't bring up his past and tries to change the topic if someone else does. Now middle-aged, the burly man's formerly chestnut hair has lost most of its luster. Though he may not be as quick as before, for now he's still more than a match for any would-be street tough.

There are several notable regulars, including **Reachell** (use the *Epic Rogue*, **CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook, with a Master-level Spy specialization). She is a small, mousy, and slightly timid young woman with straight brown hair which falls just past her shoulders. If pressed, no one would be able to recall her ever uttering an unkind word regarding anyone or anything. She claims to be a junior scribe, and is liked by all. If only that were all true; in actuality, she's a senior agent for the Baroness of Whispers (see **CHAPTER 8**). While she is small, Reachell is also quick with a blade, and fights with a passion unmatched when needed.

## CHAPTER 2: THE HIGH WARD

### STORY SEEDS

- Ghosts from Evan's days as an envoy have started haunting the tavern. The questions on everybody's lips are: how they are back, and why now?
- A young bard no one recognizes asks to sing one night. As they play a beautiful, haunting ballad about a tragic love affair, the patrons begin taking on the roles from the song.
- A cryptic note is left pinned to the stage in the Nook. It reads, "The heartstring has been broken, the voice has been stolen, and the song is no more, for the Silence has come to haunt the Ballad & Blade."

## JEUSOLE'S

### SHASWRIGHT SHOP

This shop is located three blocks from the Scholars' Gate on a small side street. The road is packed with small two-story buildings which serve as a combination of shop and living space for the owners. The shops on this road cater predominately to students from the Royal College, with Jeusole's sitting near the end of the block. While the shop sells all manner of creations made from shas crystals, Jeusole's specialty is crafting crystons.



### LAYOUT

Jeusole's business rests between an incredibly tiny cook shop on its left and a stationary supply shop on its right. The shop itself occupies the small front portion of the building and is crammed with racks and display cases; there is also a small counter. A doorway leads to the back room, which contains a workspace and storage area. A narrow staircase leads to the small living space above the shop.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Jeusole** is the owner and proprietor of a quaint little crystal shop. (Use the **Heroic Adept**, CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook, with the Shaping option and Master-level Artificer talent.) He is a small man, standing only 5' 4" tall and rail thin. He is mostly bald with just a small ring of gray hair circling his head, which matches his slate-gray eyes. He speaks with a quiet, reserved voice.

The other body often about the shop is young **Emerin**, a human boy of about 13. (Use the **Child**, CHAPTER 8, with the Wild Arcane talent to give him the following arcana: Move Object, Water Shaping, and Second Sight.) Though the boy has some minor gifts, his lackluster control of them means Jeusole isn't letting him anywhere near the delicate shas creations until he has gained a greater degree of mastery.

### STORY SEEDS

- The crafter summons the envoys to his shop to turn over a recent shipment of unworked shas crystals due to the whole consignment being Shadow-tainted. He is unsure of where it came from, and according to the slip on the crate, the crystals were meant for someone else.
- Someone has broken into the shop and stolen a case of crystons he was crafting for the new class of envoys. Jeusole would like them located and returned, so he can present them to the envoy trainees before they graduate next week.

## THE STACKS

### TAVERN

When this tavern was first built, it was called the Crock & Mug. It quickly became a popular spot for students to grab a bite to eat after classes. This inevitably lead to books being left behind, some never to be reclaimed. Over time, it became something of a tradition to leave your unneeded textbooks at the tavern, turning the east wall into an unofficial lending library. As the number of books grew, the students started referring to the tavern as "the Stacks." The name stuck.



### LAYOUT

The Stacks appears to be a run-of-the-mill, if quiet, tavern at first glance. Upon closer inspection, however, its unusual features begin to stand out. The main room is quite a large rectangle, with a long and narrow kitchen running the length of the building. The long tables in the tavern have a series of holes drilled into their centers that are designed to hold the inn's custom mugs, made to prevent spillage. Each table also has two small buckets mounted at the ends which are stocked with a variety of writing instruments. But the standout feature is the huge stacks of books piled haphazardly against the east wall.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

When the current owner **Olis Graff** (use the **Elite Merchant**, CHAPTER 8) inherited the tavern twelve years ago, he officially renamed it the Stacks. Olis is a stoutly built, middle-aged man with dark hair and features that show signs of a life full of demanding work. The oldest of a set of orphans, Olis started working at an early age to support his sister, Teris. When her gifts manifested, Olis got a second job at the tavern to cover the cost of paying a tutor to train her in her talents. The former owner, Nikeal, took a liking to the boy and promoted Olis, providing him and his sister with a room. Eventually, Teris completed her training and

## CHAPTER 2: THE HIGH WARD

joined the Sovereign's Finest. She is now serving in the eastern portions of Aldis. Having no children of his own, when Nikeal died, he left the tavern to Olis.

### STORY SEEDS

- Someone claiming to be Nikeal's daughter shows up stating she is the rightful heir and owner of the tavern.
- In the last three months, over a dozen texts from an extremist sect of the Church of the Pure Light have been left in the stacks, along with hand-written notes harshly condemning the use of arcana and anyone who is caria daunen.
- You hear a rumor that the night person student who always takes the corner table is secretly smuggling rare texts out of the Royal College and selling them here, but he won't even talk to you if you don't know the password.

### H6

## NEWSTEAD

After the Great Rebellion, the neighborhood of Newstead became home to several of the major guildhalls. While most of the buildings in this area are plain, they're also larger than those in the rest of the city, consisting of two- to three-story whitewashed stone buildings with terracotta roofs. The sounds of horses' hooves and carriages on cobblestone streets echo off the stone buildings, filling the neighborhood with an ever-present clacking from dawn to dusk.

During the day, Newstead is abuzz with people purposefully going about their business. At night, the atmosphere of the neighborhood reverses. As most businesses are closed, the streets empty out and the area becomes virtually silent. Even the residential area in the southwest tends to remain quiet from evening to dawn.

## BREWER'S GUILD

### GUILDHALL

The Brewer's Guild is one of the largest guildhalls in the neighborhood and is housed, appropriately, in a former distillery. A fire in 127 BR gutted the building, wiping out the former owner's fortunes, but there was still a silver lining. As the guild had been looking to move into a bigger location, they bought the building and repurposed it.

The current guild is a joining of three smaller guilds: the Brewers, Distillers, and Vintners Guilds, who merged over seventy years ago. Thanks to this, they were no longer considered as separate, minor guilds and were granted far more participation in guild relations. The guild has three guild speakers at a time, one for each of its major factions.



The guildmaster is chosen from the speakers with the position rotating every three years.

### LAYOUT

The guildhall is a large two-and-a-half-story stone building, which essentially forms one oversized room. Three small rooms constructed outside the original side wall are used for private meetings. Where the second floor should be is a spacious balcony level, which contains some offices and yet more meeting rooms. Access to these rooms is gained by spiral staircases in the building's corners, which lead to catwalks from the building's distilling past that act as the paths to these chambers. Above the balcony level, the whole building is ringed with leaded glass windows, and high rafters lead to the slanted roof.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The current guildmaster for the Brewer's Guild is **Eris Aryes** (use the *Heroic Merchant*, CHAPTER 8). Standing six feet tall with pale skin and bushy russet hair, Eris is a portly and mustachioed man, with a large, outgoing personality and the booming voice to match. He is always quick with a smile and ready to share a joke.

The current speaker for the distiller's faction is **Ventel Tor**, a young vata'an (use the *Epic Merchant*, CHAPTER 8). Standing a touch over six feet tall, with alabaster skin, Ventel keeps his hair cropped short. He is a quiet and reserved person, which comes across to some people as cold and distant. He is always dressed immaculately.

The representative of the vintner's faction is a night person called **Verona** (use the *Epic Merchant*, CHAPTER 8). At almost six and a half feet with an athletic build, she is an imposing woman. She prefers to dress in warm colors to compliment her jade-green skin. Her long black hair is usually kept braided, with the braids pinned up to form a crown-like effect; the pins are accented with pearls. Understanding that her appearance can be off-putting to some, she actively works on presenting a welcoming presence.

### STORY SEEDS

- All across the city, the various vintages of the wines and ciders from the Brudaris family are spoiling within days of delivery. What is causing it? Is someone targeting the family's business, or have they been cursed?
- At an outdoor brewer's festival, the drinks from Brewer's Guild stands are making folk sick! Their brews are found to have been tainted, likely here at the festival itself.
- During a meeting of the guild, Laylana, the current head of the unaffiliated Del Flode family, bursts in to charge the guild with underhanded business practices. Before she is done speaking, though, she mysteriously drops dead.

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### ADDITIONAL GUILDS

There are several additional guildhalls located within the district, including the following. See **The Guilds** section in the **Introduction** for an overview on these guilds.

- **The Order of Forgewrights**, a smith's guild.
- **The Guild of Intimates**, the guild of soft traders and pillow workers.
- **The Guild of Stonemasons & Carpenters**, a builders' guild.
- **The Wise Sodality of Shaswrights & Alchemists**, the guild for arcane artisans.

## GRAND GUILDHALL

### GUILD BUSINESS HALL

The Grand Guildhall service as a meeting hall for all the masters of the various guilds in the city. It houses all the public records for the various guilds, along with an archive of all contacts between members of different guilds, which can be reviewed at any time.



### LAYOUT

Located in the east corner of the neighborhood, the Grand Guildhall is a large V-shaped, two-story, whitewashed building. The lower half of the first floor's walls is covered with wood paneling stained caramel brown. Painted on the walls facing the wedge-shaped garden are the crests for the various guilds.

In the center of the first floor is a large meeting room, with the Grand Guildmaster's office directly above it. The north and south wings of the building form a 90-degree angle as they split off from the meeting chamber.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The current Grand Guild Master is **Aerci Deerdolph** (use the **Heroic Noble**, **CHAPTER 8**), the former leader of the Moneylenders Guild. She is a stern-looking, middle-aged woman with sharp features, standing just shy of six feet tall, with honey-brown eyes. The only feature betraying her age is her steel-gray hair, in contrast to the warm sepia tones of her skin.

### STORY SEEDS

- Recently, a significant amount of property has been stolen from various guilds. The guildmasters are demanding the matter be investigated by the envoys.
- When young independent tinkerer Aldritch Baker stumbles upon a process to speed up the distilling

of spirits, the discovery causes old resentments to boil up, as both the Brewer's Guild and the Wise Sodality of Shaswrights and Alchemists attempt to claim Aldritch as a member (and, in turn, ownership of this new distillation process). If someone does not intervene to settle this matter, sharp words and snide comments may quickly turn to violence.

### H7

## HILLCREST

Hillcrest is mostly a residential neighborhood, with rows of small, narrow, two- or three-story homes lining the streets, abutting each other. Most of the residents tend to be servants who work, but do not live, within the Royal Palace or the great manor houses of Gentle Rest. This means that the streets come alive just before dawn as the neighborhood becomes a hive of activity, with the smells of simple but hearty foods from the local bakeries and cook shops mixing with the scents of laundry from the nearby wash houses. The children in the neighborhood attend class early in the morning before heading off to jobs as pages, messengers, and the like. With the shas crystals used to illuminate the city being fewer and farther between in this part of the inner ward, the streets of Hillcrest are far less traveled after dark. The muffled sounds of singing and the smell of stale ale occasionally spill out from the local taverns.

### H8

## THE PALACE

The grounds of the palace make up more than just the palace proper, and include the Azure Plaza, the Noble Assembly, the Royal Archive, the Royal College, and the Royal Palace.

## AZURE PLAZA

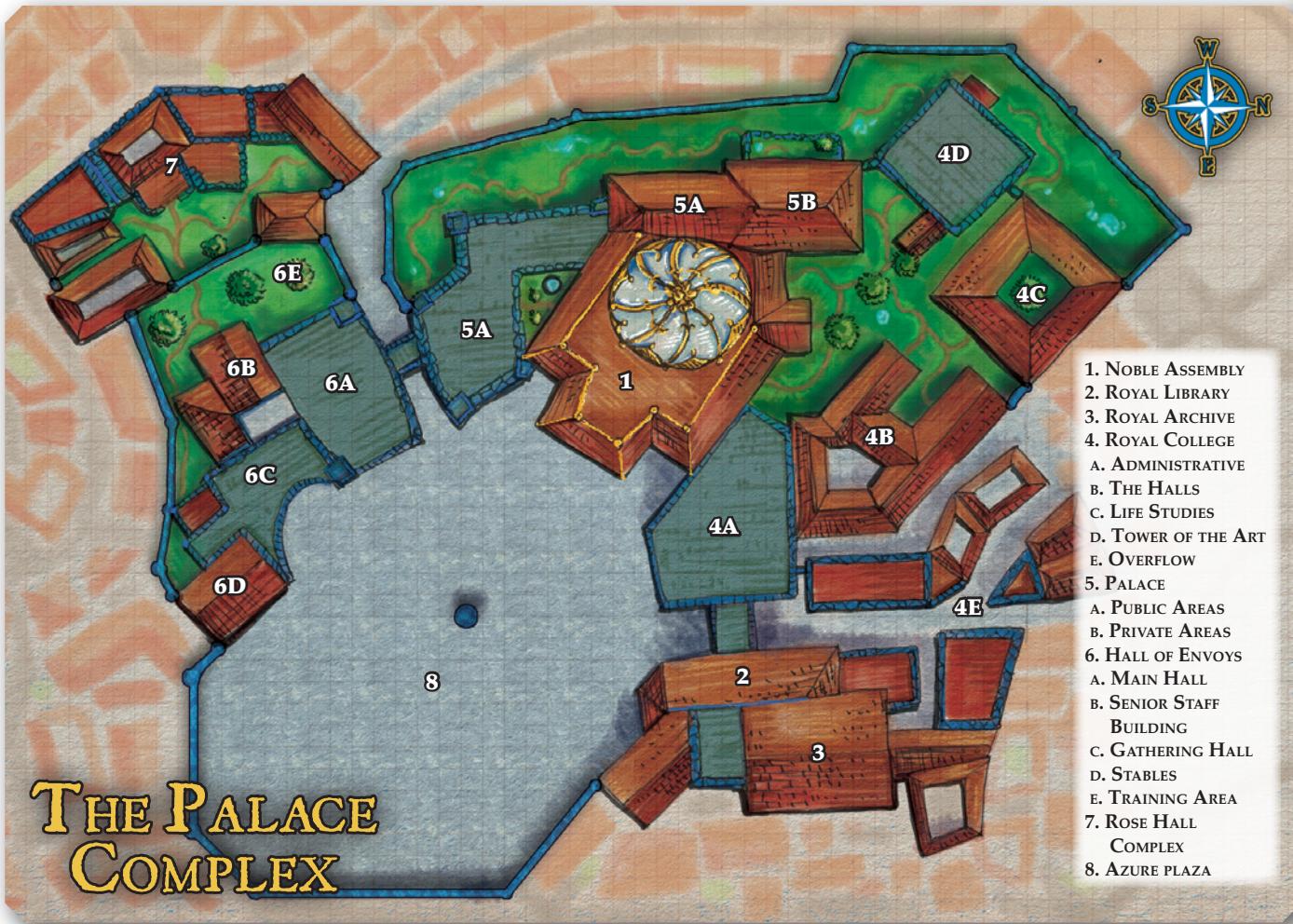
### CIVIC PLAZA

The Azure Plaza was built more for the people of Aldis than those of the royal court, and serves as a welcoming gathering place for the residents of the city. It is used for informal meetings, as well as hosting large gatherings during formal events, such as Hart Day.



### HISTORY

Like most of the palace grounds, the plaza was built after the Great Rebellion to visibly showcase the rebirth of Aldis. The original plaza was a simple open forum. It was during the reign of Queen Varti that the plaza took on its current features, with the great fountain being added during the last years of her rule.



The detailed stonework that makes up the plaza is designed to resemble concentric rings of stylized blue and white rose petals. In the center sits a ten-foot fountain crafted from white marble, and in the heart of the fountain is a large blue marble stone which has been shaped to resemble a blooming rose.

Half the great plaza is ringed by the Royal Palace, the Noble Assembly, and the Royal Archive, with the other half being enclosed by a marble wall displaying frescoes representing scenes from across the kingdom. There are two main entrances from the plaza to the palace which are large enough for wagons and carriages: the Emissary's Gate (which lies between the Royal Museum and the Royal Archive) and the Palace Gate (which lies between the north and south wings of the Royal Palace).

Additionally, there are five lesser gates connecting the palace grounds to the rest of Aldis. The Scholars' Gate is located near the Royal Archive and opens to the Commons neighborhood of Aldis; the Merchants' Gate leads from the plaza to the Highmark region of the High Ward; and the Dancers' Gate opens to the main road leading up the hill to the Temple of the Eternal Dance. The last two gates connect the Allspace neighborhood to the palace grounds, and these gates have been dubbed the "All East Gate," and the "All West Gate."

When weather permits, the Azure Plaza is used as an informal meeting area where you can find students working on assignments, nobles discussing minor business, and the like. On holidays, the plaza becomes a mini festival ground with the smells of food and the sounds of music filling the air.

The plaza is frequently the site of the so-called "outer gatherings" of royal holiday events, with nobles and those of high status receiving invitations to gatherings within the Noble Assembly, while important and interesting citizenry are invited to parallel festivities held in the spacious Azure Plaza.

### STORY SEEDS

- On the morning of Midsummer Day, people wake to find the entire plaza covered in ice. Was it just a prank from some of the Royal College students or a dark omen of things to come?
- A group of masked dancers and musicians gather on the plaza, acting out enchanting dances as part of some elaborate festival. Oddly, no one can remember a festival scheduled to take place today. Who are these masked celebrants and what are they up to?

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- In the dead of night, alarms ring out signaling a fire. Upon investigation, the envoys discover the fire is a burning effigy crafted to resemble the Queen's consort, Kelyran. It seems that someone is targeting the vata'sha, but who and why?

### THE NOBLE ASSEMBLY

#### CENTER OF GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY

Overlooking the Azure Plaza, the Noble Assembly houses the various offices for nobles who live and work in Aldis, as well as the grand meeting chamber for the Noble Council.



#### HISTORY

The Noble Assembly in its current incarnation was formed after the Great Rebellion. With the process of rebuilding proceeding slowly, it was over a year later when Queen Seltha called for the formation of the Noble Assembly. On Midsummer Day, the first of the would-be nobles gathered in the Azure Plaza for the test of the Blue Rose Scepter. It was on that day she announced the Noble Assembly would be built, and she intended to have it completed within one year. With just a few days to spare, the building was completed and the first session of the Noble Assembly officially convened.

#### LAYOUT

A half flight of shallow steps rises from the Azure Plaza to the two sets of ornately carved, wooden double doors of the three-story, white marble building that houses the Noble Assembly. The building's iconic azure and gold dome rises another two stories into the sky, making it one of tallest buildings on the palace grounds, and as such, in the whole of the city.

The main entrance opens into the vaulted lobby, with another set of double doors on the far side of the room leading to the main assembly chamber located directly under the dome. In the center of the amphitheater-styled seating is an area where speakers can address the assembled nobles, along with separate elevated seating for the Sovereign, who is permitted, but not required, to attend gatherings of the Noble Council.

The first floor also houses a formal meeting room, several small, informal sitting rooms, and the office for the traveling noble coordinator. Off the entrance lobby are two grand staircases which lead to the second and third floors of the assembly building.

The second floor contains the main public viewing gallery, along with offices for various nobles and their staff and a formal hall which is suitable for hosting small receptions for visiting emissaries. The third floor contains an additional viewing gallery, along with yet more offices and the assembly archives, where legal

records, commentaries, and the annals of assembly meetings are held.

#### DAILY OPERATIONS

Traditionally, the full Noble Assembly formally meets on Midsummer Day every two years. Those who are part of the Assembly who find themselves in Aldis on the first Sun Day of the month gather more informally on those days, as well. Other formal and informal sessions of the full or majority Assembly may be called if there are pressing matters which need to be resolved in a timely manner. In between the Assembly meetings, nobles spend their time meeting with those they represent, in committee meetings, and attending other court functions.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Jana Telford** (use the *Heroic Scholar*, CHAPTER 8) hails from the well-established Telford family and has served in the assembly for the last four years. Her extended family includes two other serving nobles, but they do not reside in the capital as one is a regional noble and the other a traveling noble. Jana is believed by most to be a bit timid; however, in reality, she is anything but. She plays to these preconceived notions to keep her opponents off-balance.

**Donko March** (use the *Scholar*, CHAPTER 8) has served as a noble for the last five years and was somewhat surprised when he was sent to take the test of the Blue Rose Scepter before his cousin Laytisha. Not one to question his good fortune, he has made the best of his opportunity. Quickly rising in the noble ranks, Donko was handpicked seven months ago by retiring noble Sasha Stermark to replace her in the assembly.

#### STORY SEEDS

- The well-connected and the powerful are common sights throughout the Noble Assembly building. Equally as common, but far less memorable to most, are the scores of staff directors, assistants, and functionaries that keep the Assembly running smoothly. What needs to happen behind the scenes to preserve the serene image of government? And what happens when one minor secretary catches the 'flu?
- Just before a momentous speech, an elderly councilor collapses. The healers say her heart is failing, but the councilor tells anyone who'll listen that someone is trying to kill her with sorcery.
- Through the vagaries of fortune, a particularly entrenched emissary has suddenly announced that she is stepping down and returning to her life at home. Even her trusted staff are taken by surprise at this announcement. Whispers are already stirring, wondering what other factors could be at work.

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- During a stirring speech to the full assembly by a well-loved and respected member of the council, the doors burst open and a woman claiming to be the real councilwoman storms in.

# THE ROYAL ARCHIVE & LIBRARY

## LIBRARY

Located within the royal palace grounds, the Royal Archive and the Royal Library contain a vast collection of lore and relics from all across Aldea. The collection includes information dating back to the Old Kingdom and the Empire of Thorns.



## HISTORY

The building which currently houses the Royal Archive started off as the home of the Royal College. When it became clear the college was quickly outgrowing its current home, King Karthakan ordered the construction of the new Royal College, but sadly did not live to see it completed.

Shortly before the completion of the new college, Emery Wells, a well-respected advisor of the former king, approached Queen Allia with a gift. Throughout his lifetime, he'd amassed an extensive collection of lore and relics, but with no heir, he wanted to gift them to the kingdom. The collection was moved to the old college building and he was named the first Custodian of the Royal Archive, a position he held until his death eleven years later.

## LAYOUT

The building that contains the Royal Archive and the Royal Library makes up a portion of the cluster of buildings sitting between the Emissary's Gate and the Scholars' Gate. More heavily guarded than the Royal Palace, the Royal Archive is the most secure building in the kingdom. Working in eight-hour shifts, a half dozen Rose Knights are on duty at any given time, with two stationed at the only entrance to the main archive.

## THE ROYAL ARCHIVE

The archive building is laid out with an Outer Ring that surrounds the Inner Archive. The Outer Ring contains storage rooms, two meeting rooms, and a small display room filled with trivial items, thoroughly examined and confirmed as harmless. The Outer Ring also holds several small offices for the archive's general staff, as well as Custodian Schack's office. Davos Schack was promoted to Custodian of the Royal Archive seven years ago. He is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Royal

Archive; anyone wanting access to the Inner Archive is vetted by him personally. In a small room adjoined to his office, Custodian Schack stores his meticulously maintained records of everyone granted archive access.

The Inner Archive is only accessible by one set of reinforced metal doors, which can be barred at a moment's notice. A pair of Rose Knights are always on duty and the entrance is fitted with a shas device imbued to sound an alarm if any enchanted items are brought into or taken out of the archive. The Inner Archive is a large, open two-story room ringed by a mezzanine. The first floor contains dozens of shelves and display cases filled with the larger artifacts, including various dangerous weapons that date back to the Empire of Thorns and the Shadow Wars. There are several nooks off the main room which grant a small amount of privacy for scholars as they work. The mezzanine level holds seating areas, study nooks, and additional displays of smaller relics.

When relics first arrive at the archive, they are sent to the sorting and cataloging room, which is located beneath the inner vault. In the sorting room, the relics are meticulously entered into the cataloging system, a process which includes adding a detailed description of the item, where it was uncovered when and by whom, along with any known arcana or other unusual properties the relic might have. A trusted artist from the Royal College is assigned to make sketches of the relic for the archival record. Once the cataloging process is complete, the relic is moved to the Inner Archive. Once a relic has been placed in the Inner Archive, it can only be removed again with the express permission of the Sovereign's Council.

## THE ROYAL LIBRARY

The Royal Library is housed in the same building as the Royal Archive. Sitting in the western portion of the building, the library contains copies of all the surviving books and records from the Old Kingdom up through the current era. The library is crammed full of heavy wooden bookshelves, which stretch up to the high ceiling of the room as well as taking up all the usable wall space.

Heavy wooden chairs with overstuffed cushions are scattered throughout the room in small clusters, along with low tables for study groups. There are additional chairs placed around the library for solitary reading. Off the main library room is a reinforced wooden door which leads to the restricted collection. For a Royal College student or independent scholar to gain access to the restricted collection, they must go through Custodian Schack's vetting process. All the truly dangerous tomes are kept in a secure case on the mezzanine level of the Inner Archive.

## DAILY OPERATIONS

The archive and library are open five days a week, being closed on Hearth Day. They open shortly after breakfast, close for an hour at midday for lunch, then reopen until dinner. The custodian's office accepts applications for

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admittance to the Inner Archive at the beginning of each week. Those with royal dispensation are given the right to study outside of these hours, with an archivist assigned to assist them as needed.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Promoted to Custodian of the Royal Archive seven years ago, Custodian **Davos Schack** (use the *Elite Scholar, CHAPTER 8*) is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Royal Archive. While Davos is somewhat friendly with his colleagues, he prefers to maintain a very professional relationship with anyone else that might need to access the Royal Archive.

The junior clerk of the royal archive, **Vedrick** (see *The Night Market* adventure, in the *Six of Swords* anthology), is a frail and sickly looking young man with muddy brown hair and pale skin. Vedrick is currently assigned to the Royal Archive sorting and cataloging room, having been transferred there from his previous job as junior quartermaster for the Sovereign's Finest. Behind his facade of quiet and reserved professionalism, Vedrick is a bitter man who keeps his contempt for his superiors to himself. He does occasionally let his true feelings slip out through his body language, especially when he believes no one is watching him.

A small team of scriveners and bookbinders works here as well, repairing books as necessary. **Ludmille Auber-grost** (use the *Elite Scholar, CHAPTER 8*) is the head scrivener, who sometimes checks in on guests to make sure they're not mistreating her books. Though she's been asked to refrain from outright scolding, the library staff tolerates her admonitions to avoid smearing ink and breaking book spines.

### STORY SEEDS

- The Library is closely guarded and well-secured, but even with arcane methods of bolstering security, a very small spot can easily be overlooked. Recently, signs of rodent activity have been detected in the outer rooms. Is this just a random pest looking for shelter or food? Or does it have a connection to the city's rhy-rats? Who would be working with them and why?
- Several books covering the darker aspects and uses of arcana have recently been rendered blank. Has someone uncovered a way to bypass security and steal the knowledge directly? Or have they decided this knowledge is too dangerous and scrubbed it from existence?
- After spending the past several days studying a strange bronze disk with odd glyphs carved on its surface, a scholar's words (spoken and written) are now only coming out as gibberish. Psychic communication is affected in the same way, but it is clear from their eyes they are still in there, just unable to communicate with the outside world.

## THE ROYAL COLLEGE

### CIVIC UNIVERSITY

The largest center of learning in all Aldea, the Royal College welcomes students from all the known lands. Students can study a wide variety of subjects ranging from the arts and politics to healing, along with the various branches of arcana.



### HISTORY

The Royal College didn't start off as a college but as a collection of tutors assigned to assist individuals gifted in the ways of the arcane, as well as those chosen to serve as nobles. With the growing number of students and subjects being taught every year, the need for a more formal structure was quickly identified. This led to the formal creation of the Royal College during 27 BR.

One of the constant challenges the college faces is space. In the earliest days, one small building could house all the classes, but by 51 BR, the college was moved to its current building. Since then, the campus has been expanded several times. Currently, the college occupies several buildings on the palace grounds, as well as additional buildings just outside the Emissary's Gate.

### CURRENT PROGRAM

The Royal College serves well over 2,000 students in any given year, with close to 300 of them studying the arcane arts. Students as young as fifteen are welcome to enroll. Upon completion of their first term of generalized, preparatory education, fledgling students are expected to choose a mentor from among the upperclassmen.

Most students spend two to four years studying at the Royal College, as determined by their chosen subjects. The programs offered fall under the various branches of academia and arcana. It is common for students to take classes under both main branches, depending on their area of focus.

The school year is broken into four terms, each starting the week after a solstice or equinox and lasting for one season. The curriculum consists of a mixture of lectures, projects, and self-study. Whenever possible, the lectures are kept to no more than a dozen students, but it is not unheard of for the first-year classes to be as large as twenty or so eager scholars.

### LAYOUT

Currently, the Royal College has four building on the palace grounds.

### ADMINISTRATION

To the right of the Noble Assembly sits the college's administrative building. This squat, two-story building

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of white and blue marble houses formal meeting rooms and dozens of offices, including the office of the Mentor-Advisor, Tasdar Karin, a fourth-year student under the tutelage of Myrst Larsar. Dean Nicodemus Wade's office is also located on the first floor of this building. In addition, the administrative building features the Great Timeface, the massive clockwork-and-shas timekeeping device that rings a certain number of bells every hour to keep time.

### THE HALLS

Connected to the administrative building is the white-washed, three-story classroom wing, better known as "the Halls" by most of the student body due to the building being laid out as a series of long, interconnected hallways. The classes held in the Halls cover purely academic topics.

### LIFE STUDIES

To the north of the classroom wing is the Life Studies building. Like the classroom wing, this large, four-story building is made of whitewashed stone with a ceramic tiled roof. Here, the focus is on medicine, herbalism, animism, healing, and some aspects of the meditative arcana. In the center of the building is a large garden where most of the nature-shaping classes are taught. The garden also has an area for cultivating the ingredients for the various medical and herbalism classes.

### TOWER OF THE ART

To the southwest of the Life Studies building is the Tower of the Art. This is a large, five-story marble tower, topped with a large bronze dome. Each of the floors is dedicated to the study of one of the arcane disciplines. The first floor hosts classes for the meditative discipline. The second floor contains the psychic department, while the visionary department is located on the third floor, and shaping on the fourth floor. The top floor of the tower houses the Touchstone. (For further details on the Touchstone, see **CHAPTER 6** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook.)

### THE ANNEX

In addition to the facilities located within the palace complex, there are a few old manor houses just outside the palace grounds in the Commons neighborhood that have been repurposed for use as classrooms. The classes held in these annexes focus on academic and art subjects; none of the classes for the gifted are taught outside the Tower of the Art and Life Studies buildings.

### DAILY OPERATIONS

The first lectures of the day start promptly at the eighth bell in the morning, with the last of them ending by the fifth bell. Just before the start of each term, the professors set their schedules, and once set, they are expected to

### ROYAL COLLEGE FOCUSES

The following is a list of focuses based on which curriculum the student is part of:

- **ARTS MATERIAL CURRICULUM:** Crafting, Cultural Lore, Evaluation, Heraldry, Writing.
- **ARTS SUBLIME CURRICULUM:** Bargaining, Cultural Lore, Disguise, Etiquette, Leadership, Musical Lore, Performance, Persuasion, Writing.
- **NATURAL PHILOSOPHY CURRICULUM:** Cryptography, Engineering, Natural Lore, Nautical Lore, Research.
- **HISTORY CURRICULUM:** Heraldry, Historical Lore, Military Lore, Religious Lore, Research.
- **ANIMISM ARTS:** Animal Handling, Animism, Arcane Lore, Natural Lore, Self-Discipline.
- **HEALING ARTS:** Arcane Lore, Brewing, Healing, Self-Discipline.
- **MEDITATIVE ARTS:** Arcane Lore, Meditative, Self-Discipline.
- **PSYCHIC ARTS:** Arcane Lore, Psychic, Remote Weapons, Self-Discipline.
- **SHAPING ARTS:** Arcane Lore, Self-Discipline, Shaping.
- **VISIONARY ARTS:** Arcane Lore, Natural Lore, Self-Discipline, Visionary.

maintain them. Professors are expected to give three to five lectures a week, with each being at least one to two hours long. They are also expected to make themselves available to their pupils in their capacity as student mentors for a minimum of an hour a day except on Hearth Day. During the warmer months, it is common to find students studying in the plaza, especially during the hour-long meal break at midday.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

In any given year, there are anywhere from 100 to 150 professors working at the college. Additionally, there are at least a dozen guest lecturers and forty to fifty upper-classmen assigned to mentor younger students.

The Royal College is overseen by the Dean. There are also four curriculum chairs for the academic branch and six chairs for the arcana branch. If stats are needed for any of the staff, use the *Elite Scholar* (**CHAPTER 8**) and add the appropriate racial traits and/or arcana as needed.

### DEAN OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE

The dean is **Nicodemus Wade**, an elderly man with shoulder-length, snow-white hair, who walks with a cane. Before taking on the role of the dean seventeen years ago, he served as the Dean of the Shaping Arts, with a specialty in fire-shaping.

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### CHAIR OF THE ARTS MATERIAL CURRICULUM

**Alles Eblin** has served as the chair of the arts curriculum for the last seven years. He loves good wine, good friends, and, of course, a good song. Standing a little over five and a half feet tall, he is a stout man with a square face and a close-cropped, sable beard. He has small, silver, wire-rimmed glasses which rest low on his button-shaped nose.

### CHAIR OF THE ARTS SUBLIME CURRICULUM

**Eldebos the Younger**—a man who, despite his name, is quite aged—has served as chair for the curriculum that oversees performance-focused arts. He is usually surrounded by a bevy of poets, actors, minstrels, and others seeking his approval on their latest work. Eldebos is a phenomenally even-tempered mentor and administrator, though woe betide those who bring “doggerel nonsense” to his attention.

### CHAIR OF THE NATURAL PHILOSOPHY CURRICULUM

**Grafton Price** is an older Aldin human with dark skin, white hair, and a neatly trimmed goatee. He is always impeccably but simply dressed (often in an alchemist’s smock), and has a pleasantly avuncular attitude toward anyone younger than he is. Though he only received his elevated status recently, he is one of the most published scholars of natural philosophy in the academy.

### CHAIR OF THE HISTORY CURRICULUM

**Nacklos Hirsh** is the youngest professor to be named as a curriculum chair and the only one of the chairs to be married to another faculty member. His husband on staff is Mathis Hirsh, while his other husband is a talented armwright named Drus Ferin. Nacklos is a big fellow with a bushy brown beard, whose friendly demeanor and younger age tend to make him the senior staff member that student mentors go to when they need assistance.

### CHAIR OF THE ANIMISM ARTS

**Charisse Ansson** has been the head of the animism department for the last sixteen years and looks younger than her actual years would suggest. She keeps her long black hair in a series of tight, thin braids, while her russet-brown eyes complement her umber skin. Standing nearly six feet in height, she has a solid frame and carries herself with confidence.

### CHAIR OF THE HEALING ARTS

**Willia Kay** is a middle-aged vata’sha with pale blue eyes and long raven hair worn up in a bun. She has a heart-shaped face and an impish smile that belies the seriousness with which she approaches her duties. On her own time, she is something of an iconoclast and very politically active.

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### CHAIR OF THE MEDITATIVE ARTS

The slightly-built **Myrst Larsar** tends to wear flowing clothing in soft earth tones, which pair nicely with their emerald green eyes and long blond hair. There are days when Myrst feels the “tugging of Braniel’s loom” towards one gender or the other and uses hairstyle and clothing to express this shifting inner tide. Myrst is of a reserved demeanor, carrying out conversations in a slow, comforting tone, completely avoiding slang terms or nicknames in addressing others.

### CHAIR OF THE PSYCHIC ARTS

**Theron** has the same fur coloring as most rhy-cats, while her eyes are a deep, storm cloud gray. She normally wears a small medallion around her neck embossed with the crest of the Royal College, along with a decorative leather vambrace on her right foreleg. The vambrace contains a sheath which holds her cryston and is designed to allow her to use it while sheathed.

### CHAIR OF THE SHAPING ARTS

The acting chair is **Mathis Hirsh**, husband to Nacklos Hirsh the History Chair. Mathis is also married to Drus Ferin, a talented armorwright. Mathis stands nearly six feet tall, with a thin build. His brown eyes are bright with an inner passion. As soon as he starts talking about the arcane arts, that spark ignites, animating him like a boy on a festival morning, which makes him one of the most popular professors at the college.

### CHAIR OF THE VISIONARY ARTS

**Oltel Vondeam** was granted his post five months ago. Standing at well over six feet tall and built like a masonry wall, the bald Rezean is an imposing sight. His brown eyes are so dark they are almost black. He has a few visible scars that hint that he’s seen his fair share of violence in the past. Not much is known about him, other than that the former chair very suddenly recommended him for the post before leaving.

### STORY SEEDS

- A young student with a powerful gift of vision is having a recurring nightmare of the coming of a black hart and a knight wreathed in briars. Is this just a strange dream or a portent of things to come?
- There is a rumor among the students that one of the boarding houses is haunted. It’s easy enough to dismiss it as typical gossip and superstition as these types of stories pop up all the time among students trying to scare the new intake. But lately, all the students who sleep there have been behaving strangely, apparently with no memory of their actions.

- One of the senior instructors is having regular extracurricular sessions with her favorite students. When some of the other senior faculty decided to have a word with her, she and her chosen students were nowhere to be found.

## THE ROYAL PALACE

### SEAT OF THE SOVEREIGN

Nestled between the Palace Gate and the Noble Assembly, the Royal Palace consists of two sections: the areas open to the public and the restricted areas which contain the Sovereign’s residence.



### HISTORY

The current Royal Palace was built during the Old Kingdom, and like most buildings from that time, it was heavily damaged during the Great Rebellion. It wasn’t until the reign of Queen Varti that it was restored to its former glory. The palace was expanded during the reign of King Rikin in order to add more public spaces, and then again during the rule of King Issik, who added more private spaces for the palace’s residents.

### LAYOUT

The facade of the palace is made of white marble accented with various shades of blue marble. On the east side of the build, facing the Azure Plaza, is the grand double door entrance. Sitting just above those doors is the stained glass window of the Golden Hart.

### PUBLIC HALLS

The Royal Palace consists of two sections. The first is open to the public and consists of an entry gallery, a formal reception room, a feast hall, and an outdoor space which is often used for performances when the weather permits.

The public entrance opens to a large vestibule that stretches up through all three of the building’s floors. Double doors at the far end of the vestibule lead to the rest of the palace, while two stairways lead to an oversized landing at the base of the stained glass window. In the center of this landing is another set of stairs leading to the third floor mezzanine. During large galas and balls, it is common for the festivities to spill over into the vestibule.

### SOVEREIGN’S HALLS

The palace’s private areas run north to a section which shares a wall with the Noble Assembly. This portion of the palace contains smaller meeting rooms and guest quarters for visitors of note; it also leads to the Sovereign’s residence. Understandably, this area is kept under strict guard by the Knights of the Blue Rose. Intruders will find themselves very, very unwelcome.

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### DAILY OPERATIONS

Daily operations in the Sovereign's offices and living spaces are focused primarily on assisting the Sovereign with her day-to-day routine and duties. Queen Jaellin maintains an extremely busy schedule, often working from early in the day until quite late in the evening. This work takes many shapes, from meetings with nobles (in and out of full Assembly), to seeing petitioners, reviewing laws old and new for approval or revision, meeting ambassadors and other foreign representatives, attending civic events, and any number of other exhausting demands on her time.

About the only time the palace's operations are thrown into chaos is when her consort, Kelyran, decides she has sacrificed enough of her time, intellect, patience, and good humor to the people and Crown of Aldis. At those times, he convinces her to steal away on an afternoon's ride or picnic, where they can be alone and she can be just a woman with her beloved, away from the weight of crown and scepter. Kelyran's tendency to throw the bureaucracy's schedules and routines into chaos in this fashion have earned him a tangible degree of dislike from palace functionaries.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The current ambassador from Jarzon is **Razza Ligmos** (use the **Epic Noble**, CHAPTER 8); his nephew, **Emer Ligmos** (use the **Noble**, CHAPTER 8), serves as his aide. Due to the Ligmos family's reputation as devout followers of the Church of the Pure Light, many in court circles expect Razza to be judgmental of those who do not share his faith. While he can occasionally come across as brisk and abrupt while talking about religion, the ambassador does love a spirited debate, and welcomes all points of view. His nephew Emer's behavior towards those of other faiths (Emer is an insufferable pedant, arrogantly judgmental with a mind seemingly as closed as a padlocked trunk) only reinforces the skewed opinion of the whole Ligmos family.

A puckish lad with sable-brown, curly hair and a slightly crooked smile, **Dalton** is the de facto leader of the palace pages. (Use the **Rogue** from CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook for Dalton, with the Journeyman-level Intrigue talent.) He also acts as an informant for Hexton Reyes (see CHAPTER 8). Dalton is quite aware he is outgrowing his role as a page but feels a responsibility to the other children who work in the palace, meaning his sense of duty hasn't allowed him to move on just yet.

**Amerial** (use the **Noble**, CHAPTER 8) arrived in Aldis from Lar'tya at the age of six with what meager belongings she could carry. Since coming to Aldis, though, she has made quite a life for herself. As a child she became a page in the palace and quickly worked her way through the ranks. Now, as an adult, she is head of the palace handmaidens.

### STORY SEEDS

- A group of tall, beautiful people wearing exotic garb arrive on the steps of the palace and claim to be emissaries from the faerie court. They wish to see the queen.
- During the festivities on the autumn equinox, all the shas lamps in the palace go dark at once. When they reignite, they are giving off an odd orange glow.

## THE HALL OF ENVOYS

### HEADQUARTERS OF THE SOVEREIGN'S FINEST

On the southern side of the palace grounds is the Hall of Envoys. While the name may lead one to believe it is a single structure, the Hall of Envoys refers to the main hall and the collection of buildings clustered around it. The hall functions as the command center for the envoys stationed within the city, as well as those in the field across Aldis.



### HISTORY

One of the palace's original buildings, the Hall of Envoys dates to the early days of the Old Kingdom, and like so many of the palace buildings, it was damaged during the Great Rebellion. However, this was one of the first to be repaired and served as a temporary stand-in for the Royal Palace while that building was being repaired and remodeled. In later years, the hall also served as an extension of the Royal Palace. It was Queen Allia who turned the building over to the service of the newly formed Sovereign's Finest. It has functioned as the organization's headquarters ever since.

### LAYOUT

What most people now call the Hall of Envoys is a cluster of buildings that make up the southwest boundary of the Azure Plaza.

### ENVOY BARRACKS

The two-story barracks are constructed out of the white and blue marble used throughout the rest of the palace complex. It is connected to the Royal Palace by a second-floor walkway which runs across the Palace Gate. The barracks house the sixty envoys who are always stationed at the palace. The majority of barrack housing is suite-based to accommodate all the envoys assigned to a team. The suites have a small living and dining space, with four to six sleeping quarters off the living area. Each of the sleeping chambers can accommodate two envoys. Along with the suites, there are a few single rooms for envoys not assigned to a team yet or those who are on special assignment and not traveling as a unit.

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### ENVY GATHERING HALL

Between the barracks and the rhy-horse stable is the large two-story gathering hall, also crafted from white and blue marble. The main floor is commonly used for dining but can easily be repurposed for other large gatherings. The second floor has a few rooms used as guest quarters for visiting envoys, as well as smaller meeting rooms for both formal and informal usage. The hall has its own kitchen off the southern corner of the first floor. There are also three sets of doors opening to the Azure Plaza, as well as an entrance to the stables. Both floors have entrances to the barracks and the adjacent Senior Staff Building.

### SENIOR STAFF BUILDING

The portion of the Hall of Envoys called the Senior Staff Building is a four-story, white-washed stone and ceramic tile structure. It is tucked behind the marble buildings of the hall, leaving only the roof visible from the plaza. The staff building primarily serves as the office and living quarters for the director of the envoys, who holds the title of "Sovereign's Envoy," along with their four lieutenants, who are called the "First Envoys."

The first floor is one large, open room, the southwest wall of which is comprised of nothing but doors that open to a field which sits between the building and the wall to the palace grounds. This floor, the adjoining field, and a small attached grove make up the training grounds.

The second floor is composed of offices and small meeting rooms, while the third floor serves as the living quarters for the First Envoys. The fourth floor is only half the size of the lower floors and is the living quarters of the Sovereign's Envoy, along with a rooftop veranda that is a favorite informal meeting place and training space for the five leaders.

### STABLES

A modest two-story building off the Azure Plaza, the stables certainly have space for the mounts of visiting envoys. By and large, though, this building is constructed with the comfort of rhydan envoys in mind, with a section of rooms for rhy-horses that allow them to control their own coming and going. A ramp leads up to the second floor, which features large, open windows that allow avian rhydan to come and go by air, with cleverly-constructed mews and pallets for other rhydan to relax on.

### TRAINING GROUNDS

Besides part of the Senior Staff Building and its attached field, the training ground also consists of a small, private grove wedged between the Senior Staff Building and the Rose Hall compound. The area is frequently used by envoys to train on the sorts of uneven ground they are likely to encounter while on missions. The grove is also excellent for learning the basics of woodcraft, as well as providing space for stealth and climbing practice.

Once a year, apprentice envoys and squires of the neighboring Rose Hall gather here to test their fighting skills against one another in the so-called "Fledglings' Contest" (sardonically named by Master Soot, a senior envoy and rhy-crow instructor at the Royal College).

### DAILY OPERATIONS

The envoys assigned to Aldis spend their days coordinating the activities of envoys in the field. They assist with the training of new recruits, as well as working with the Aldin Watch to investigate criminal matters in the city.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Peregrus** (see [CHAPTER 8](#)), is a slate-gray and white rhy-falcon. He is young and still a little on the naïve side. Having only moved to Aldis last spring, Peregrus still has much to learn about city life and people. He has become the unofficial go-between for the envoys and the various avian rhydan in the region.

Assistant Director **Emeris Telford** (see [CHAPTER 8](#)) hails from the well-established Telford family, whose extended ranks currently include three nobles, five lower-level envoys, and over half a dozen artists of note. Currently, she oversees a quarter of the field envoys, and is the envoys' liaison to the Royal College. Standing almost six feet tall, she wears her gray hair pulled back in a tight bun and has sharp facial features. Based on her striking appearance, most new envoys expect her to be stern and are happy to discover she is warm, welcoming, and even a bit overprotective.

New envoy recruit **Thedis Andros** is a deft hand at the art of earth-shaping, a gift for which he was recruited. (Use the **Rogue** from [CHAPTER 12](#) of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook for Thedis, with the Journeyman level Earth Shaping talent.) With bronze skin, wavy coal-black hair, and smoldering good looks, Thedis is a bit of a charmer, a fact he is well aware of. He is quickly getting a reputation for being something of a party boy, and has already broken a few hearts.

### STORY SEEDS

- An envoy recruit, the daughter of a chancellor, has disappeared in middle of the night. A search of her room turns up no sign of a struggle, but it does reveal several cryptic letters to someone named only as "M."
- A group of envoys return from investigating a major theft and give identical statements, to the letter, which also match their written reports verbatim. Are they covering something up, or is something strange going on?
- A series of harmless but odd and embarrassing mishaps have plagued the newest batch of rookie envoys. They claim that each incident is accompanied by giggles emanating from empty air.





## THE ROSE HALL

### HEADQUARTERS OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE BLUE ROSE

The newest addition to the grounds, the Rose Hall is located just outside the Palace Gate. The hall functions as both home and headquarters of the Knights of the Blue Rose. The grounds of the Rose Hall contain the main hall, the barracks, the stables, the gardens, and a training field.



### HISTORY

The Order of the Blue Rose once shared quarters with the Sovereign's Finest. It soon became evident the two organizations were quickly outgrowing that space and so, to remedy the situation, a new complex was needed to house one of the groups. After much consideration and debate, it was decided to gift the knightly order with a new home.

### LAYOUT

The main entrance to the Rose Hall faces the main road just outside the Palace Gate, with a striking marble statue depicting the Valiant Three (see **CHAPTER 6, Blue Rose** core rulebook). The statue sits on the east side of the entrance to the main building. The stone building is appointed with finely crafted banners, most depicting the rhy-horses and griffons which are famously associated with the

order. Exquisite stained glass windows accent the formal receiving rooms and offices.

Located in the corners of the hall are informal sitting areas, complete with small bookcases and window seats overlooking the rose garden courtyard on the east side, or the training yard on the west. In the center of the main hall is the grand dining hall, which is used for both formal receptions and more informal gatherings. To the east of the hall is the large, meticulously maintained rose garden, which also includes a low-cut hedge maze. There are strategically placed stone benches along the winding paths which meander through the garden, while statues of the order's heroes dot the gardens. At night, the gardens are lit by shas crystals in stained glass sconces.

On the west side of the hall sits the large training field. Although primarily used for melee weapon training, it is large enough to support archery training as well. The field can also be warded to support arcana and blade training for those Rose Knights gifted with arcane talents.

The barracks and stables are both located behind the hall. Constructed out of white-washed stone with ceramic tile roofs, both buildings have leaded glass windows and dark wood floors. The barracks is a squat-looking, L-shaped, two-story structure, which occupies the west side of the grounds. To a casual observer, the stables appear to be of a standard design, if slightly taller than necessary. On closer inspection, though, its innovations stand out clearly.

The large doors are all fitted with a rope pulley system on the inside as well as the outside, allowing a horse to

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open and close the doors by pulling on the ropes. There are also several holes cut into the building twelve to fifteen feet up which allow the avian rhydan access to the mini aviary area of the upper loft. On the inside, there are a dozen standard stalls along the south wall, and across from them are a dozen much larger stalls, reserved for the rhy-horse members of the order. There are two lofts above the stalls, with sets of ladders at the east end of the stable. The loft above the larger stable is the mini aviary for flying rhydan.

### DAILY OPERATIONS

Whenever possible, the Knights of the Blue Rose start and end their official day in the dining hall, sharing a meal and companionship with fellow members of the order. A larger portion of their day is spent in training. That training can take many forms, including sharpening one's mind as well as martial skills. They are also responsible for overseeing the training of the Aldin Guard, and spend a fair amount of time developing and carrying out those duties.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Knight Captain Kalynn Grayson** is a member of the Knights of the Blue Rose and is currently assigned to Aldis as a trainer and mentor for new Knight of the Blue Rose recruits. (Use the *Epic Warrior* from CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook for Kalynn, with Journeyman-level in the Knight specialization.) Standing over five and a half feet tall, she has reddish-brown hair with just a few hints of steel gray, which compliment her blue-gray eyes.

**Rhydan Captain Wiltell** (see CHAPTER 8) is a chestnut-brown rhy-horse, with a honey-colored mane and tail. Wiltell has served as captain of the rhydan members of the Rose Knights for the last seven years. He is a no-nonsense sort of commander, who possibly takes himself and his duties a bit too seriously.

Many are surprised when they learn the short and wiry **Quartermaster Gravis Quin** (use the *Elite Rogue* from CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook) is a member of the Knights of the Blue Rose. Standing just a hair under five feet tall, he serves as an example that in combat, skill can be far more important than size. Due to Gravis' outgoing personality, he is normally the first to befriend new recruits. He was promoted to quartermaster four months ago and is still working on becoming comfortable in the role. When out in the field, Gravis acts as his team's scout.

### STORY SEEDS

- A road-worn knight arrives at the doors of the Rose Hall, claiming to be Sir Kreytel and demanding to see King Karthakan. The problem is both Sir Kreytel and King Karthakan have been dead for almost 300 years.

- A mysterious knight garbed in full armor and helm arrives and challenges everyone present to a duel. When the knight is finally defeated, the envoys discover that the armor is empty. Who or what created the suit of armor, and why was it sent to test the characters?

### H9

## HIGHMARK

The Highmark area of the High Ward was once one of the most prosperous regions of town. The market center of the district drew people from all over the city. As Aldis grew, it became clear that Highmark Market could not support that growth. The guilds decided to move the market to its current home in the Junction neighborhood of the High Ward.

Highmark is still a center of trade but not to the extent it once was. The square that once held the market has since been filled by shops and other businesses. The last few years have seen a dramatic increase in the number of rambunctious taverns, game halls, and pleasure houses.

In turn, the streets tend to be active until the early morning hours, and there has been a slight uptick of petty crime in the neighborhood. In response, the Watch has already requested a greater number of glow globes to illuminate the area as they increase the number of their patrols.

## ALARIC'S HOUSE

### PILLOW HOUSE

Alaric's House is the standard by which all other companionship halls are measured. Renowned for having the finest food, talented performers, and attentive companions, those visiting the house know they will be pampered, whether they are seeking a fine meal and good conversation, a lively debate about politics, an evening filled with song and games, or a more intimate encounter. The one thing which makes Alaric's House unique when compared to other companionship halls is that it focuses its services on caria daunen folk. The shingle over the door reflects this: it is made of stained glass, showing a rising sun above a pastoral landscape, with the name in brass letters on the wooden frame around the glass. The taproom of Alaric's is also known for its "dawn-wine," a drink served in clear glasses that is layered in color from violet to rose to a cheery yellow-orange.



### LAYOUT

In the heart of Highmark, Alaric's House looks like any other two-story inn or tavern in the neighborhood. Anyone entering the house is greeted by the smell of fine wine and freshly baked bread. The main floor's common

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room has large, overstuffed chairs and more secluded sitting areas along the back wall. The customers span most age brackets, from those starting out their lives as adults to those enjoying the rewards of a life of hard work. The second floor consists of rooms for the staff, which are appointed with only the finest of furnishings.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The owner of the house is **Alaric Fajr** (use the *Epic Expert*, CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook), who stands a tad over five and a half feet tall and has the graceful and lithe body of a dancer. His mahogany-brown hair is kept cropped short, and Alaric always has a warm smile and a kind word for everyone he meets. His common attire while at the house is simply a pair of light linen breeches and a silk robe. He tends to wear the robe open, revealing a series of scars on his chest and stomach that stand out in contrast to the short hair which covers his abdomen. He is usually found lounging in the house's common room, ensuring that everything is running smoothly.

One of the house's regulars is envoy **Hexton Reyes** (see CHAPTER 8). Hexton serves as one of the queen's spies and has several different personas he can slip into. He frequents Alaric's House in his guise of Selin, who is known in court circles as the nephew of a retired merchant who has left Selin his holdings in Aldis. Hexton's build and features are of a sufficiently average nature that he can play them up or down based on what clothes and disguises he uses.

### STORY SEEDS

- A wealthy merchant has become obsessed with one of the house's employees, Stafvis. It started innocently enough with lavish gifts and bad poetry, but lately the attention has been escalating. Is it just infatuation or is there something more behind it? And will it turn violent?
- One of the house's soft traders, Jacob, has been accused by a client's wife of theft. Whether or not he did it, the real mystery is why the envoys are called to investigate a simple burglary.
- One of the newer staff members has been telling fanciful tales of something frightful he saw in a client's manor in Gentle Rest. Is something sinister afoot, or does the young man just need a lesson in discretion?

## THE SOVEREIGN

### RESTAURANT

Standing right up against the wall surrounding the palace, the Sovereign is a venerable dining institution. It claims to have the finest food and drink to be found anywhere other than on Queen



Jaellin's own table, and the boast might just be an accurate one. Naturally, prices are exorbitant, and only the very wealthy can dine here with any regularity. For well-to-do members of the middle class, a trip to the Sovereign might be a once a year treat, and those with lesser means must typically content themselves with a stroll past the heavenly smells wafting from the kitchen.

### LAYOUT

The Sovereign's floor plan is, for the most part, wide open, with only the kitchen and the offices in back out of the customers' view. There are no real accommodations for private dining in the restaurant, since part of the appeal of eating at the Sovereign is to be *seen* eating at the Sovereign. Naturally, everything is made from the finest materials, to enhance the establishment's sense of the utmost quality. Cheeses and cured meats, along with wine, ale, and other alcoholic beverages, are stored in the Sovereign's large cellar.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The current owner and master chef of the Sovereign is **Thevasto Prade**, who has traveled the known world seeking the finest techniques and ingredients and is famed for their gastronomic artistry. (Use the *Elite Merchant*, CHAPTER 8 for Thevasto, adding the Leadership and Taste focuses, as well as the Journeyman-level Contacts talent.) Due to Thevasto's influence, the restaurant takes in spices from as far off as northwestern Rezea and the Forest Kingdom of Wyss. Such consummate skill requires absolute dedication, of course, and Thevasto has little time for social engagements beyond the Sovereign, which is generally just how they prefer it.

### STORY SEEDS

- There has been a poisoning at the Sovereign! (Though, thankfully, not a fatal one, due to the timely intervention of a nearby adept.) Such a thing is, of course, unheard of, and, after making certain the victim is all right, Thevasto offers a hefty bounty to anyone who can find the poisoner. Naturally, the authorities are none too pleased with what amounts to an invitation to vigilante justice, and they must now work against not just the criminal, but also those willing to act outside the law to earn the promised payday.
- After accomplishing some notable task for a wealthy patron, or perhaps even the city or Kingdom of Aldis itself, the player characters are invited to dine at this esteemed establishment. Naturally, only the finest of manners are expected of guests at the Sovereign, and all manner of notables will be present at this meal in their honor. Might they find allies, patrons, or even the first stirrings of some new romance?

H10

## GRANDWATER

Encompassing the stretch of the High Ward closest to the Lake Ward, Grandwater is considered a posh neighborhood, even by the former ward's elevated standards. It is especially popular with affluent people of mixed sea-folk ancestry, as well as certain well-to-do rhydan—of types such as birds, crocodiles, and some kinds of snake—who are readily capable of moving both on the land and in (or over) the water.

## THE TROUT'S EYE

TAVERN

This big, friendly barroom is named for "Old One-Eye," who became something of a legend among Grandwater's more avid fishermen a few generations ago. A trout of especially magnificent size, with glistening bronze scales spotted with black and scarlet, he spent about ten years as "the one that *always* got away," to the apparent great amusement of local sea-folk. Old One-Eye seemed to like the area around the Grandwater docks, though he suddenly vanished one season, without ever being caught. Of course, most current-day patrons of the tavern dismiss the story as just another fanciful tale.



LAYOUT

The first floor of the Trout's Eye is large and open, supported by stout wooden beams positioned so as to keep the flow of foot traffic through the place moving as smoothly as possible. Many patrons choose either to sit along the curve of the bar or else stand near it, while others prefer the quieter and somewhat more private tables arranged around the perimeter of the main room. There's a small pantry in the back behind the bar, with access to the cellar, where all the casks and bottles are kept until ready for use.

The second floor consists of a smaller seating area and a deck, where patrons can mingle while overlooking Lake Vash and the Lake Ward. There is no sleeping accommodation at the Trout's Eye, not even for the owner, Siryna—staff have their own homes to which they return at the end of the night, when Siryna or Durkaro (her most trusted doorman) lock the place up.

NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Everyone knows that **Siryna** (see **CHAPTER 8**) isn't her real name, but it's what the willowy sea-folk woman who currently owns the Trout's Eye goes by.

**Durkaro** is a hulking brute, even by night people standards. (Use the *Elite Laborer*, **CHAPTER 8** for Durkaro,

adding the Sailing focus and the Novice-level Unarmed Style talent.) Despite the often raucous atmosphere in the Trout's Eye, there are never any fights, and Durkaro is the reason for that. When Siryna came to the city of Aldis, she brought him with her, and he's tended the door of the tavern ever since she bought it from the previous owner. He has a surprisingly soft voice for someone his size and a pronounced stutter, and so prefers to speak with his sheer, towering presence whenever possible.

### STORY SEEDS

- Old One-Eye has been spotted, again! But how can that be? He's just a story, right? And it's been well over half a century since even the wildest tales say he disappeared for good. Still, more than one Grandwater fisherman now claims to have beheld the distinctive bronze-colored giant with the missing eye. Is it a hoax? A coincidence? Or are stranger forces at work?
- Patrons return to the Trout's Eye as it opens early one afternoon, only to find the place has been broken into and ransacked in the night, and Siryna is talking with the city guard. She's awfully tight-lipped about her suspicions as to why someone would do this, and there's clearly more to the story than meets the eye. Might it have something to do with her and Durkaro's piratical past?

H11

## THE WENDING

So named for the way that even its major streets often zigzag on themselves, the neighborhood known as the Wending has a reputation as a fairly quiet and conservative part of the High Ward. Well-to-do Jarzoni immigrants often settle in this part of the city, and they've built something of a community that recalls just a small measure of the orderly stoicism of the nation they left behind.

Part of the local personality, however, is the wish to avoid any formal temples to the Lord of Light. Though each home has its own personal temple, many of the locals agree they came here to live as Jarzoni outside of ecclesiastical influence. "The Great Irony" is what the locals call the idea that, in order to live as true Jarzoni, they must leave Jarzon itself.

H12

## BLESSED HILLS

Nestled comfortably between those two exalted institutions, the Royal Palace and the Temple of the Eternal Dance, Blessed Hills is perhaps the most prestigious neighborhood within the city of Aldis. Many of the tree-

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lined thoroughfares winding through it are wide enough for three or four carriages to travel abreast. Naturally, only the very wealthiest can afford to reside in Blessed Hills, and the resplendent "city homes" of the aristocracy (most of whom also have far more expansive country estates) are a favorite of sightseers wandering around the capital.

### TARVENYL'S TOWER

#### RESIDENCE

A sumptuous manor house tastefully arranged around a central tower, the home of the vata'an Tarvenyl Ardrillon is widely rumored to be filled with arcane wonders from around the known world, and even beyond. However, ever since the war with Kern, guests are not entertained in this house as the tenant is home only a handful of days each year, before once again departing upon some errand or another of apparent great import.



#### LAYOUT

Much of Tarvenyl's Tower is what one would expect from the lavish home of a wealthy Aldin. The main body of the house has three stories above ground, with an extensive cellar below. In the middle of the property, however, stands the tower from which the house derives its name. An artifact of the Old Kingdom, around which the rest of the house was built, the tower extends an additional two stories up and an additional two down.

Tarvenyl's private quarters take up the top two levels of the tower, while its bottom two levels are where he conducts most of his arcane experimentation in the rare event he is at home. He alone has the keys that access both of these areas.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Imprisoned in a chamber deep below the central tower of Tarvenyl's home is what remains of his child, **Astirien** (see CHAPTER 8), taken from him by Kernish kidnappers in an attempt to turn him against the kingdom of Aldis.

Meanwhile, **Kasten Leffa** (use the **Noble**, CHAPTER 8), the elderly human woman who serves as chamberlain at Tarvenyl's Tower, worries because the master of the house has not been home in an unusually long time, even by his eccentric standards. With each passing day, she grows increasingly convinced that a terrible fate has befallen him. Worse still, Kasten suspects her master keeps some terrible secret in the bowels of his tower, behind doors that even her many keys cannot open. Even now, she is considering whether she should reach out for aid, to discover if whatever lurks below is connected to Tarvenyl's seeming disappearance, and—if so—whether it can somehow help point the way towards rescuing him from the peril into which he has likely fallen.

#### STORY SEEDS

- At her wits' end, with no way of ascertaining whether Tarvenyl is even still alive, Kasten makes inquiries to contact adventurers who might be able to solve the mystery of the powerful adept's disappearance. Doing so, however, may involve entering the subterranean chambers of the tower where the thing that was once Astirien waits, ready and eager to seize upon and manipulate the misplaced mercy of well-meaning rescuers so that it may once more be free to wreak havoc upon the living.
- In his all-consuming desire to free his child's spirit from the terrible prison of unlife, Tarvenyl went too far, delving into sorcerous arcana, and he perished while still searching for an answer to his dilemma. Even so, he is now returning home. Given his mastery of the arcane—including an artifact he found deep within the Bitter-Fang Mountains which enables him to hide his new "condition"—who knows how long it will be before someone is able to determine that the vata'an adept is now a lich?

### THE GREAT BANK OF ALDIS

#### BANK

Despite its grandiose name, the Great Bank of Aldis is not officially recognized by the Crown as having any direct affiliation with the Kingdom of the Blue Rose—at least, no more so than any other house of lending and investment. Still, it is a powerful and well-regarded financial institution, and many of the people and businesses of Blessed Hills (and several other parts of the capital city, besides) come here to keep their wealth in safety. The bank maintains at least eight expertly-trained guards at all hours of day or night. (Use the **Guard**, CHAPTER 8, with one **Elite Guard** for every three or four regular guards, and one **Heroic Guard** as the shift commander.)



#### LAYOUT

The bank's first floor gives an impression of blockish sturdiness, while simultaneously maintaining a certain aesthetic appeal. Most of this level consists of offices for the bank's employees, where they meet with clients to accept deposits, negotiate investments, and the like. These offices are neat, reasonably spacious rooms without being ostentatiously large, with maybe a few personal flourishes. There are also larger meeting rooms, a break lounge for employees, and a locker room for the guards. More or less in the center of the ground level is the manager's office, the largest room on the floor.

The lower floor, located beneath street level, is accessed by way of a long, narrow staircase descending from the

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back of the manager's office. This entire floor, behind its internal walls of white marble, is encased in foot-thick slabs of steel, rendered immune to all forms of shaping arcana by its artificers. At the bottom of the stairs is an equally narrow short corridor containing two solid steel security doors in close succession, before opening into a room containing the vault door, which is, itself, also a foot of solid steel in thickness. Within the vault chamber are shelves of removable strongboxes of various sizes, as well as smaller vaults anchored into the floor and walls.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

While the Great Bank of Aldis is owned by a consortium of some of the capital's wealthiest citizens, with seats on its board of trustees passed down from generation to generation for the past two centuries or so, **Runa Fallow** is its current manager, tasked by the directors with keeping the place safe, secure, and—above all else—profitable. (Use the *Elite Noble*, CHAPTER 8 for Runa, adding the Evaluation and Research focuses, as well as the Novice-level Intrigue (Etiquette) and Observation (Empathy) talents.) Perpetually harried by the demands of the job, Runa nevertheless keeps things running smoothly, and somehow manages to appear cool and collected, with a calm and reassuring demeanor, whenever meeting with clients.

**Skorok Vur** is the overnight shift commander of the guards. (Use the *Heroic Guard*, CHAPTER 8 for Skorok, adding the Bludgeons, Brawling, Leadership, and Searching focuses, the Journeyman-level Armor Training and Single Weapon Style talents, and the Novice-level Quick Reflexes and Unarmed Style talents.) Good-humored, with a booming voice and a big, powerful build that's equal measures muscle and fat, the night person commander is instantly recognizable by his gold right lower tusk, which he replaced after getting the natural one knocked out in a fistfight when he was young. A lifelong bachelor now into his middling years, he treats the other guards under his command like his children and younger siblings. He makes a point of knowing the names of their spouses and children, what their favorite foods are, and other such details that give the night shift a feeling of family.

### STORY SEEDS

- One morning, Runa opens the bank vault to discover a disheveled man within. Scared and unsure of where he is, he gives his name as Harald, and claims to have no knowledge of how he got there.



According to him, he fell asleep next to his wife in their bed in the Outer Ward of the city and then woke up in utter darkness, in unfamiliar surroundings, alone and afraid. Investigation by adepts confirms Harald's story, but uncovers no actual clues as to how a sleeping person was secretly and tracelessly transported into the vault. Is it a prank in bad taste? A threat against the bank's security? Or something else entirely?

- One of the player characters receives a letter from the Great Bank of Aldis, informing them that a distant relative has just died and has willed the contents of a lockbox to them. When they open the box, they discover just three items: an ornate electrum key; a spyglass etched with strange symbols around the edge of the lens; and a golden signet ring, the heraldry of which matches no known modern noble house, whether of Aldis or anywhere else.

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H13

## LILYFIELDS

Many-colored water lilies stretch far from the banks of this neighborhood out into the waters of Lake Vash. For years, they have been cultivated (and kept clear of the docks and traversable channels) to add to the local beauty and splendor. On sunny days, those looking down from high vantage points see a veritable rainbow rustling gently in the breeze over the water.

Some of these lilies almost always find their way into the businesses of the district, and the locals like it that way. Besides its flowers, the Lilyfields is also known for an impressive array of cosmetics crafters and perfumers, all of whom compete to find the perfect color and scent palettes for their clientele. More than a few of these establishments also employ “personal artists,” hired to arrive at a patron’s house with their kits and work their artistry upon their clients before balls and other big social events.

H14

## LENDRI'S NARROW

No one these days, not even the wisest of sages from the Royal Colleg, knows who Lendri was. Nor do they know why this part of the capital city was known as their “narrow” from even the earliest days of the Old Kingdom. Some speculate that they were a vatazin who was the beloved of some ancient king or queen, though that notion is based on the very scantest of evidence. In truth, it seems that this part of the city has always had the name, and that’s enough for most people.

THE COCKEREL  
AND ONION

RESTAURANT

A renowned eatery of the High Ward, the Cockerel and Onion is particularly noteworthy for the culinary skills of its owner and head chef, Grammen Krole, a Kernish immigrant. Krole named the establishment for the primary ingredients in the first meal served to him in Aldis after defecting from the Lich King’s army during Kern’s disastrous recent offensive. The quality fare draws diners from all over the capital, though patrons are cautioned never to request “authentic Kernish cuisine.” If anyone does, Grammen typically quips that he’ll be happy to boil them up an old boot in a pot of muddy water if they really want a taste of his former country’s “home cooking”.



## LAYOUT

A modest building by High Ward standards, the Cockerel and Onion is small, and popular enough that it gets crowded easily. Grammen and his staff have become very good at determining the right cutoff point at which to tell people that it’s probably not worth their time to wait for a table to open up. The kitchen leads to Grammen’s own modest accommodations, as well as a guest room with a couple of beds typically occupied by Kernish refugees who work for him and stay with him until they can get on their feet. Additionally, a hatch in the corner of the kitchen descends to the small storage cellar.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Grammen Krole** (use the **Laborer**, CHAPTER 8) owns the place and does much of the cooking, and yet still finds time to interact with his customers. He’s friendly, in a gruff, hard-edged sort of a way, though some initially find his looming height, wiry gauntness, and hawkish facial features to be off-putting. Even after a few years in Aldis and with the prosperity that’s come of the brief yet highly lucrative adventuring career that enabled him to settle down in the High Ward, he’s never managed to (as he says) “put any real meat on these bones.” Grammen still knows his way around a fight, but desperately hopes that he’ll never again be called upon to put that knowledge to the test. As far as he’s concerned, he’s seen more than enough bloodshed for one lifetime.

Doing a little bit of this and that around the Cockerel and Onion, **Lisaya Silán** (see CHAPTER 8) has been with Grammen for a little over a year, now.

## STORY SEEDS

- Based on her reports and her periodic interviews, Lisaya’s superiors are concerned that her objectivity has become compromised with respect to her work at the Cockerel and Onion, and she’s being reassigned. It’s not so unusual, of course, for a restaurant employee to move on after a year or so, meaning that no one will suspect anything. While loyal to the queen, however, she doesn’t *want* to go. Does she dare confess her feelings to Grammen, and risk the consequences?
- Late one evening, under the cover of a downpour, a dirty, desperate-looking man staggers into the Cockerel and Onion. Grammen immediately recognizes the shabby, haunted fellow as Sams, a member of the same Kernish squadron from which Grammen defected along with a half-dozen fellow soldiers. In plain view of all the customers still in the place, Sams starts ranting that someone—or something—is hunting down the defectors, and only he and Grammen now remain.

H15

## SILVERHILL

So named for the preponderance of wealthy merchants that reside within it, Silverhill actually rises and falls irregularly within its boundaries, though the most desirable spots are often found on the neighborhood's highest ground. Silverhill is patrolled not just by the city guard, but also by private security forces (some of whose members are retired adventurers and other highly-skilled specialists) hired by a consortium of the most affluent local businesspeople, ensuring that most would-be thieves wisely turn their attention elsewhere.

## SILVER SHIELDS BARRACKS

## SECURITY COMPANY

Despite its austere designation, this sprawling manor house looks nothing like the sort of grim, unlovely building one normally associates with a barracks. The Silver Shields, the neighborhood's private security company with a charter granted by the Crown, is based out of this structure, which those with an eye for such things will note as being rather sturdier and more defensible than it might seem at first glance. The distinctive company banner—an unadorned white shield on a black field—hangs at various points along the tallest parts of the barracks.



## LAYOUT

The Silver Shields' headquarters is an elegant, three-story edifice, with a cellar and a sub-cellars.

After ascending the half flight of stairs to the iron-banded double front doors, visitors pass through a foyer and into a large central chamber, overlooked by a mezzanine. Guards stand at the ready, armed with crystons. In addition to the kitchen and mess hall, the first floor contains several offices and sitting rooms, while the second floor holds the barracks' considerable library (containing not just books on military science and history, but also adventure stories, romances, mystic treatises, and just about anything else a company member or guest might be interested in perusing). Sleeping areas for the lower-ranking members of the company (either two or four to a room) are also found here, in addition to small private bedrooms for officers of middling rank.

The third floor contains the offices and personal quarters of the senior officers of the company, along with accommodations for the Silver Shields' occasional guests. Access to this area of the barracks is (obviously) strictly regulated, and even junior members of the company are not permitted onto the third level of the building without express permission from either the First Captain, the Second Captain, the

Adept Captain, the Master-At-Arms, or the Silver Chateaine, all of whom maintain apartments on this floor.

The cellar spans the entire area beneath the building and contains storage for food and drink, the armory, a gymnasium for physical conditioning and sparring, and additional sleeping space for more junior members of the company (again, with two or four to a room). In the sub-cellars of the barracks, which is about half the size of the cellar, the Silver Shields keep their (very well-guarded) vault, along with any important records not stored with the leaders of the company. Additionally, there is a mystically-sealed one-way door that accesses the capital's sewer system, in the event the Silver Shields ever need to send agents out unnoticed, or—in the highly unlikely event the barracks is ever completely overrun by some enemy—to escape through an exit virtually guaranteed to be safe.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**First Captain Alfric Benneck** (see CHAPTER 8), a man well-regarded all over the capital city, has led the Silver Shields for about ten years, now. The unassuming young **Corporal Anya Pell** (see CHAPTER 8) is, as far as she knows, one of the most steadfast and loyal of the Silver Shields. Despite being the youngest senior officer of the Silver Shields, **Adept Captain Dorrin Tyr** (see CHAPTER 8) may also be the most ambitious of them.

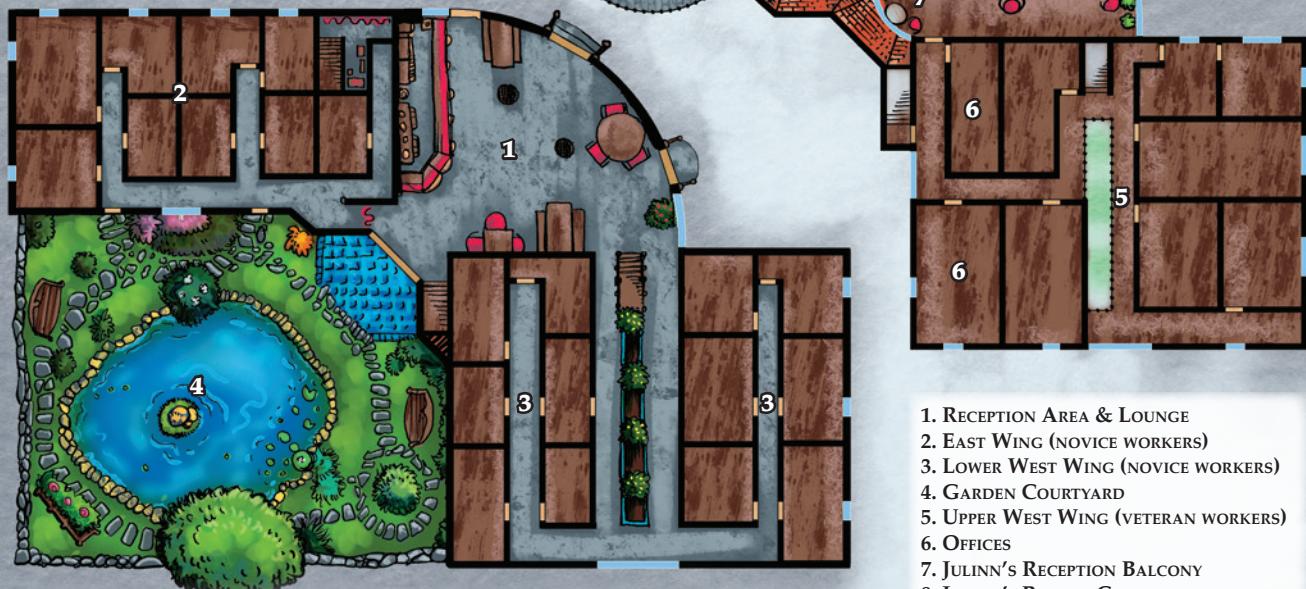
## STORY SEEDS

- Finally, after a few years of hemming and hawing about it, Alfric has decided to step down from his position as leader of the Silver Shields so that he can once again feel the thrill of real adventure. There's a problem, however: before he goes, Alfric must choose between three equally qualified potential successors, all of whom very much want the job.
- Anya Pell's hidden personality has determined that the time is right for her reign of chaos to begin throughout Silverhill. Using her extensive knowledge of the neighborhood, she begins a rash of cleverly-executed thefts and murders, and then allows her unknowing baseline personality (which is genuinely, wholly innocent of these crimes) to cover for her.
- Dorrin Tyr forces a vote over the leadership of the company. Technically, the charter permits this, but such a measure has never before been employed save in cases of dire emergency, and the move is not well looked upon. He has the votes to assume control of the Silver Shields, though his indelicate handling of the issue—an uncharacteristic misstep for someone so accustomed to patience in his schemes—threatens to break the company apart. Now a great many nervous citizens of Silverhill wonder who, exactly, is walking away with what information about their homes, their wealth, and their families.

ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE

# THE HOUSE OF THE THOUSAND WAYS



1. RECEPTION AREA & LOUNGE
2. EAST WING (NOVICE WORKERS)
3. LOWER WEST WING (NOVICE WORKERS)
4. GARDEN COURTYARD
5. UPPER WEST WING (VETERAN WORKERS)
6. OFFICES
7. JULINN'S RECEPTION BALCONY
8. JULINN'S PRIVATE CHAMBERS

## THE HOUSE OF THE THOUSAND WAYS

### PILLOW HOUSE

"There are one thousand right ways to love," reads the inscription over the door to the House of the Thousand Ways. The house caters to an all-encompassing spectrum of healthy sexualities, and to nearly every manner of erotic preference. All the sex workers have the right to accept or decline any client, and the policy of the house is that they need give no justification for their choice. Harm (outside of that consensually agreed-upon by all parties) and harassment (whether of staff or other clients) are *absolutely* not tolerated and, at the very least, result in immediate removal from the premises, with a probable ban on return for anything ranging from a year to a lifetime. Furthermore, the authorities are always contacted to deal with troublemakers—one plays strictly by the house's rules, or one pays the price.



### LAYOUT

The House of the Thousand Ways is spread out into various wings, with relatively small central areas on the

first floor for clients to get a drink or two and briefly socialize with one or more members of the soft trade staff, before retiring to more private accommodation. Security is subtly, though pervasively, scattered throughout the establishment, and has admittance to back corridors and stairwells allowing quick access to any part of the building within moments. Newer workers have their quarters on the ground level. Most of them only stay for a month or two, perhaps up to a year, before moving on to other prospects. The enclosed garden courtyard of the house, forever in bloom with some of the loveliest flowers from around the known world, is accessible from various points on the first floor.

More senior workers in residence (which is to say, those who combine time employed by the house and consistently solid earnings) have somewhat larger quarters on the second floor. The offices for all the support that goes into running the place are up here as well. Julinn hires the house's retired sex workers to fill these administrative roles whenever possible, both to ensure their continuing good employment and because they understand the business better than anyone. Security is based just next door to the main office. Julinn's own private quarters comprise the entire second floor of the east wing, and the rare visitors permitted within recall it as a place of exotic splendors and magnificent experiences for all the senses.

## CHAPTER 2: THE HIGH WARD

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The mysterious owner of the House of the Thousand Ways, **Julinn the Masqueless** (see **CHAPTER 8**) is a person of ever-changing face and form. Seemingly possessed of some marvelous trick of shapeshifting, Julinn changes to suit the moods, needs, and desires of the very few clients they personally deign to entertain.

The elderly **Sengzi** (use the **Merchant**, **CHAPTER 8**) tends bar in the main lounge of the House of the Thousand Ways. He and Julinn seem to be old friends, judging by their banter. To ease the difficulties posed by his missing legs, a rail-mounted sliding seat behind the bar accommodates Sengzi so that he can quickly move back and forth, pushing himself off regularly-spaced handholds to refill customers' glasses and chat with those who might be feeling talkative. He has a knack for not just remembering his regulars' favorite drinks, but also correctly guessing which one someone might be in the mood for at any given time.

### STORY SEEDS

- Someone roughed up one of the house's employees and has seemingly slipped out of the city to somewhere into the surrounding countryside. While the authorities are on the case, progress is slow, and Julinn also wants to hire some "independent contractors" to bring the culprit back for proper justice. The House of the Thousand Ways has a reputation to uphold, after all, and Julinn is adamant that all of their workers feel safe, valued, and appropriately cared for.
- A headstrong local noble has fallen madly in love with one of the house workers, showing up and making grandiose proclamations of love and demanding the object of their affections let them whisk them away to a life of leisure, which isn't something the worker wants. Worse still, the noble's political rivals are sniffing around for good, embarrassing dirt on the noble, whose only real crime is a passionate heart. A friend or contact of the player characters at the House asks for their aid.
- The truth of Julinn's identity comes to light, and the scandal threatens to bring down the House of the Thousand Ways. Both clients and civil authorities (and even many of the employees!) are deeply uncertain as to the best course of action, and persuasive voices will surely be able to sway the argument one way or the other.

H16

### RIVERWAY

Staking its claim along a particularly picturesque stretch of the Rose River, Riverway is renowned for the idyllic wooded parks along the water's edge. By day, these are

favored by picnicking families, both from the High Ward and elsewhere in the city, while by night they are considered auspicious places for lovers to stroll along the softly-lit paths wending through the trees.

### TEGRA'S SMITHY

#### WEAPON & ARMORSMITH

Those who know their steel come to the High Ward to seek out Tegra Fire-Eyes and the craft of her forge. While sturdy, beautiful arms and armor are available "off the rack," so to speak, those with the coin (or whom Tegra deems worthy, regardless of their ability to pay) can instead commission a custom piece, into which the master smith pours all of her skill and artifice. More than one Knight of the Blue Rose wields a weapon or shield, or wears a suit of armor, made for them by this renowned artist.



#### LAYOUT

Tegra and her family enjoy a home of the sort common to the middling wealthy class of merchant families in the capital city. Much of the first floor is taken up by the smithy and other necessities associated with the business. Tegra's wife, Ne'hua, for instance, has an office on this floor, and her husband, Haemon, keeps many of his books on ancient arms and armor, alchemy, metallurgy, and the like on this level, as well.

The second floor is the family's residence, with private bedrooms for all three adults, a nursery for the children, and spare rooms (presently guest rooms) into which the little ones can move as they get older. Additionally, the kitchen, dining room, and bulk of Haemon's library are here.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Proprietor and smith, **Tegra Fire-Eyes** (see **CHAPTER 8**) is a master craftsperson whose arms and armor are renowned not just across the city of Aldis, but also throughout the kingdom as a whole.

Tegra's human wife, **Ne'hua** (use the **Noble**, **CHAPTER 8**), originally hails from Ty-An, in Lar'tya. The daughter of an extremely traditional Hagini caste family, Ne'hua chafed even from an early age at all the rules and restrictions put upon her by well-meaning but hidebound relatives. She left home as a teenager, unwilling to be constrained by the ancient weight of traditions in which she had no say. She ably manages the finances of her chosen family's business.

Tegra's human husband, **Haemon Wythe** (use the **Adept**, **CHAPTER 12**, *Blue Rose* core rulebook), grew up right in the city of Aldis. In contrast to the relative youth of both Tegra and Ne'hua, Haemon is in his later middle years. Though an adept of some small skill, he finds little time for his mystical studies these days, much preferring to devote his

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## CHAPTER 2: THE HIGH WARD

attention to the care of Shahal, his little daughter by Tegra, and Kodee and Fane, his young twin sons by Ne'hua.

### STORY SEEDS

- Tegra's father, Azravel, a vata'sha weaponsmith still in the prime of his life, comes to the city of Aldis to visit his daughter, whom he has not seen in over a decade. It seems he's considering settling in the capital to be closer to his last surviving family. There's only one problem: Tegra remembers how finicky, overbearing, opinionated, and uncompromising Azravel can be, and she has her doubts that she and her father can peacefully coexist in such prolonged proximity to one another.
- Seemingly from out of nowhere, Tegra presents one of the player characters with a piece of armor or weaponry appropriate to them, claiming that she received a vision from Goia in her dreams directing her to create it and to whom it must be given. Tegra is as surprised by this as anyone, as—despite generally professing faith in the Primordials and the Seven—she is not that devout. Is this vision true, or are other forces at work? If the latter is the case, then to what end?

## RHYDAN'S REST

### RHYDAN GROOMING

Catering to the capital city's rhydan population, both residents and visitors, Rhydan's Rest is a place where these extraordinary creatures can receive massages, expert grooming, and other pampering services they might not normally be able to find elsewhere. Each member of staff is trained to work with at least several rhydan body types, and the establishment makes use of special instruments and herbal and alchemical preparations—to ease the molting of scales or feathers, to painlessly manicure claws that have grown unruly, to alleviate skin conditions particular to various kinds of beasts, and the like—in its treatments.



### LAYOUT

The entire atmosphere in Rhydan's Rest is one of tranquility and relaxation. All treatments are given in private rooms (some of which can be accessed directly from outside, for the comfort of particularly large rhydan), which are enhanced with plants, pools, and fountains to best simulate a natural environment. Obviously, a preference is given to larger rhydan for larger rooms, but requests from smaller types of rhydan for more spacious accommodation for a session are honored whenever possible.

The second floor contains still more rooms for treatments, as well as the private living quarters for Ashento and Shili, the proprietors of the establishment.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Ashento** (use the **Noble, CHAPTER 8**), who bears the distinction of being known as a Rhydan Friend, hails from the Forest Kingdom of Wyss, though she left as a youth for reasons she does not discuss. Those who know her best understand that the matter of her homeland is a painful one for her, for whatever private reasons, and they do not press the issue. Now of middling age, she still has the lean, strong, nimble physique of one who was raised among the towering lann trees. Her long-fingered hands can expertly find and soothe the aches and pains in almost any rhydan, while she sings beautiful old songs to them in her melodious voice.

Ashento's partner in the business, and her rhy-bonded dearest friend, **Shili** (see **CHAPTER 8**) is a rhy-cat of especially gorgeous appearance.

The tall, strong night woman **Elisenda** (use the **Elite Laborer, CHAPTER 8**) is one of the Rest's employees with a very specific set of skills: she is a dab hand with a curry comb and the establishment's foremost groomer, a favorite of the many rhy-horses to be found in and around the city of Aldis. Her large, deft hands are capable of working out the toughest of tight saddle muscles or digging stones out of hooves. Her eye for equine beauty is second to none, and she utilizes everything from simple shears to coat-dyes and exquisite braiding of manes and tails to flatter and enhance her clients' appearances.

### STORY SEEDS

- Kamuna, a woman roughly Ashento's age, comes to the city of Aldis, seeking her out and demanding that, as her wife, she return home to Wyss. In the years since Ashento fled her homeland, Kamuna has become a powerful and influential person in the Forest Kingdom, and her voice carries considerable weight in matters such as trade negotiations and treaties of alliance. Ashento has no desire to leave her current life, but Kamuna is thoroughly willing to apply political pressure in order to force the issue.
- A rhy-raven, Onyx, has gone missing from Rhydan's Rest. The attendant, Simon, stepped out of a room with no other doors or windows for just a moment to fetch a molting brush, only to return and find Onyx gone without a trace. No one has claimed responsibility for the disappearance and no one has demanded a ransom, making the vanishing all the more puzzling. Ashento and Shili both want answers, lest clients stop feeling safe in the establishment.
- Rhydan's Rest receives an unexpected—indeed, unprecedeted—guest: a young griffon! Having heard of this Rhydan Friend, Ashento, and the good work she does, the majestic beast has (perhaps unwisely) determined to avail himself of her services. The appearance of a griffon in the capital creates all manner of commotion and problems throughout the city.

H17

## TEMPLE OF THE ETERNAL DANCE

### TEMPLE OF THE PRIMORDIALS & THE GODS OF LIGHT

The grandest temple to the Primordials and the gods of Light in the known world, the Temple of the Eternal Dance stands on the highest hill in the capital city of Aldis, so that people all throughout the city and those approaching it might look upon its magnificence and remember that these gods of goodness have been kind, indeed, to the Kingdom of the Blue Rose. People come from everywhere in the kingdom, and from even further abroad, to worship here, where it can often seem as though the touch of the divine is more closely felt than anywhere else in Aldea.

### HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE

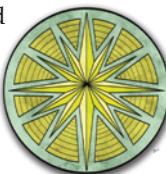
The temple stands at the precise site occupied by a similar structure during the reign of the Old Kingdom, for which it served the same function as it now does for Aldis. The downfall of that great nation, however, and the instigation of the Shadow Wars left the original structure ruined and defiled, its beauty defaced with a thing of horror raised to the glory of the exarchs of Shadow. Nearly every part of the earlier temple was destroyed—from the grandest statues down to the smallest artistic flourishes—and replaced with nightmarish imagery. When Queen Seltha began the painstaking process of rebuilding what had been destroyed by the Sorcerer Kings, she made a special priority of restoring the Temple of the Eternal Dance to its former splendor, an endeavor which continued under the next several monarchs of Aldis.

### LAYOUT

The Temple of the Eternal Dance is, in essence, an entire small neighborhood of the High Ward in itself. It consists of several buildings of the temple proper, grounds, outbuildings, ponds, walkways, and a great, central outdoor plaza.

### TEMPLE GROUNDS

Some of the loveliest landscaping in all of Aldis is here, with grasses, flowers, and trees all meshed together into a harmonious whole. Little ponds crossed with stone walkways dot the grounds. But this area is very specifically not maintained in a pristine state, and people are



welcome to gather, rest, play, and otherwise enjoy it, in keeping with the goodwill of both the Primordials and the Seven towards all of their creatures. Indeed, the priestly adepts who manicure the grounds tend to look upon the wear and tear of regular use as an opportunity to indulge their artistry and change things up, just a little bit, each day.

### GREAT PLAZA

Often a favorite spot for religious services when the weather cooperates (which is frequently the case in Aldis), the Great Plaza is a trapezoidal, open-air courtyard located directly west of the temple itself and crafted of the same pale blue marble, veined with silver and gold. Ceremonies in honor of the Primordials—associated as they are with nature, the elements, the heavens above, and the turning of seasons—are especially popular in the Great Plaza.

### THE TEMPLE

Standing taller than any other structure in the capital and likely one of the tallest buildings in the known world—if not *the* tallest—the Temple of the Eternal Dance looks like

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a blue-petaled flower from above, gleaming with flecks of silver and gold and a central dome of shining silver. Every last inch of craftsmanship within the temple is of the greatest quality to be found anywhere in the Kingdom of the Blue Rose. Priests and worshipers come and go at all hours of the day and night, and there are spaces in abundance for both public services and private meditation. As priests are members of a decentralized professional class in Aldis, there are no dedicated quarters within the temple for the clergy to reside in nor any throne rooms or audience chambers for anything like an arch-priest. Instead, the entirety of the structure exists for the common spiritual good of all people, whether Aldin or foreigner, who come in a spirit of loving friendship and altruistic goodwill. When members of the priesthood feel the need to meet, they do so in the various side chambers set aside for smaller gatherings, just like anyone else.

### TEMPLE OUTBUILDINGS

Scattered across the hill occupied by the temple and its grounds, these five outbuildings consist of two one-story structures directly abutting the temple, and three other, taller buildings west of the Great Plaza. They serve as both storage for the temple and (in the case of the larger structures on the far side of the plaza) as housing for priests without much in the way of material wealth.

### DAILY OPERATIONS

Other than during services for the holy days of the Aldin calendar (see **CHAPTER 6** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook), there really are no regular daily protocols at the Temple of the Eternal Dance. Priests preach and minister to the people as the spirit moves them, and congregants tend to gravitate toward the services of those priests whose methods and messages most speak to them as individuals. A service is just as likely to transpire during a leisurely walk around the temple grounds as it is in the temple building itself. Spirit dancers are known to put on regular performances in the Great Plaza, but these are just as often spontaneous exhibitions as they are planned events. Of course, Aldins also perceive worship in a wide spectrum of activities, so picnicking families on the grounds are seen as engaging the sacred in every bit as meaningful a way as those deep in spiritual reflection before the lofty statues of the Seven.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Perhaps the most respected member of the temple's clergy, **Mother Naya** (use the **Noble**, **CHAPTER 8**), is an elderly human woman who typically goes barefoot and dresses in the simplest of robes, ministering to the spiritual needs of all who seek her out. Her face is creased with the countless lines of long decades of loving smiles, and her gentle voice is a balm to those whose souls are troubled. She claims no power or authority whatsoever, but even the queen is known to seek her wise counsel from time to time.

**Adellon Koah** is another well-known priest of the Temple of the Eternal Dance. (Use the **Elite Scholar**, **CHAPTER 8** for Adellon, adding the Leadership and Religious Lore focuses, and the Journeyman-level Lore talent and Novice-level Oratory talent.) A human born in poverty on the outskirts of the kingdom, he used his keen wits to rise to a position of prominence within the faith, and can often be found offering impromptu theological lectures to small crowds on the grass of the temple grounds.

A vata'sha acolyte and groundskeeper, **Ayazrin** (see **CHAPTER 8**), is also a common sight around the temple's green spaces, and he always makes time to chat with friendly folks.

### STORY SEEDS

- In a truly remarkable move, Hylan Kerris, the Hierophant of the Church of Pure Light (see **CHAPTER 7** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook), is coming to the Temple of the Sacred Dance to discuss matters of theological diplomacy. Obviously, the inherently decentralized nature of religious faith in Aldis makes this a bit more complex than if he were to speak to a sole authority figure, but the fact that the Jarzoni high priest is even willing to undertake this journey could mark the beginning of an amazing new era of peace and understanding between the two nations—or it could prove the precursor to a falling out that may well lead to war.
- A band of adventurers returns to the capital city bearing a strange prize: an almost perfectly intact grand statue of Tyrexus, which used to occupy the profane cathedral to the exarchs raised during the Shadow Wars where the Temple of the Eternal Dance now stands. Cultists of Shadow managed to spirit the statue away, saving it from destruction, and now these adventurers wish to return it to the city as a cultural artifact of a dark time. People are divided as to whether it should be preserved as a relic of history, or simply destroyed as a perpetual affront against all that is good in the world.
- The priests of the temple are soliciting opinions from among both citizens and visitors from near and far in an ongoing dialogue as to whether or not to openly and formally (as formally as religious matters ever are in Aldis) add the veneration or even worship of the Golden Hart to the rites observed in the Temple of the Eternal Dance. The primary argument in favor is that doing so embraces the unique cultural role that the Hart plays in Aldin culture as a figure of divine guidance. The strongest stance against is over concerns that the temple will feel less inclusive to those from elsewhere in the world, who do not necessarily share in the favor of this explicitly Aldin being.
- A player character known for their faith in the Light is approached by a priest of the Temple of

the Eternal Dance, who alleges that one of their fellow priests is, in truth, a member of the Cult of the Crimson Eye. This priest has circumstantial evidence to go on, at best, and dares not seek out the authorities yet for fear of starting a panic. Is this claim true, misguided, or even a deliberate scheme initiated by the accuser (who may be the *actual* Crimson Eye cultist)?

H18

## ROSEWATER HEAD

Perched comfortably along the shore where the Rose River and Lake Vash meet, Rosewater Head ranks only just behind Blessed Hills as the neighborhood of choice for the capital's upper crust, and many actually prefer the former for its ready access to the water. Numerous families throughout Rosewater Head maintain pleasure craft in boat houses and at yacht clubs along the waterfront.

## THE FELLOWS OF LAKE VASH GUILDHOUSE

### SOCIAL CLUB

Sporting what's ultimately a very fancy name for an otherwise very ordinary (if prestigious) yacht club, the Fellows of Lake Vash have their "guildhouse" in a prime position where the Rose River widens out into the lake. The Fellows are known for their charitable works throughout the city and beyond, raising funds to aid with civil improvement projects, educational initiatives, and other public goods that greatly benefit from the coin of the wealthy. A royal seal of commendation honoring these works is proudly displayed in the anteroom of the guildhouse.



### LAYOUT

The guildhouse consists of two floors, the bottom of which is largely an open space, with a kitchen off to one side and a small meeting room on the other that overlooks the water. Through the back, members and visitors can access the guildhouse's docks. The second floor is rather smaller, with an office for the chairman and two rooms for private use by senior Fellows and their guests.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The current chairman of the Fellows, **Shai'if Abharisti** (use the **Merchant**, CHAPTER 8), grew up with just his human father for family after his sea-folk mother aban-

doned them to return to the west and her own people. He was already a young man when his father, by then a prosperous merchant, remarried, and his father set him up with sufficient funding to start his own business. Opting to settle in the capital, Shai'if indulged the yearning for water left in him by his mother's blood, and hired skilled craftspeople to make splendid pleasure craft for Aldis' well-to-do. The quality of his products earned him a reputation as the man to talk to for a sailboat that married both elegant form and useful function, and he was handily elected to his post among the Fellows earlier this year.

**Linnea Selder** (see **CHAPTER 8**) is one of the quieter Fellows, though she's always got a friendly smile and a word of greeting for the others. She likes to take long, lonesome trips out on Lake Vash—particularly on rainy days, or those most other boaters consider undesirable.

### STORY SEEDS

- The week of the Fellows of Lake Vash Regatta is at hand! Each day sees boat races out on the lake, and onlookers line the shores and pilot their own craft out to the designated areas for spectators to watch the various competitions. Naturally, there is food, games, performances, and other such activities suitable to the regatta's carnival atmosphere!
- People in the eastern Lake Ward have begun to sicken. Investigations turn up invasive, poisonous freshwater plants growing near the bend where Lake Vash narrows and turns west, and no one knows where they've come from. Linnea Selder has seeded these plants and encouraged them to grow, curious to test her first strategy for striking at the city of Aldis in the name of Ulasta. If she's not identified as the culprit in a timely manner and stopped, her next attack may be much, much deadlier.

H19

## TEMPLEHOME

While not officially a part of the grounds of the Temple of the Eternal Dance, Templehome is nevertheless the neighborhood where many of the capital's priests have traditionally chosen to reside. Priests are by no means the only residents of Templehome, nor even a majority of them, but their presence throughout this area is ubiquitous. Some are well-off and have homes entirely to themselves, while others (typically of humbler means) choose to pool resources to buy or rent buildings in which they live communally.



**B**uilt along the northwestern edge of Lake Vash, the Lake Ward contains several partially submerged neighborhoods, and heavy rains can cause flooding in the rest of the ward. The challenges of building near water make the Lake Ward visually distinct from the rest of Aldis. Along the shore, Lake Gate Street sports a perimeter of shas crystals mounted on short stone plinths to repel floodwaters. Most structures are built from *istria* (meaning “dry stone”), a dense, cream-colored limestone that naturally resists water damage. At the water-line, thick bands of enchanted ceramic tiles protect the ward’s buildings from rot and erosion. These colorful tiles cast a soft, romantic glow through the water at night, which mingles with the light from gondola lanterns to transform the Lake Ward into a shimmering mirage on the shore.

Aldis is not coastal, so sea traffic to the capital travels upriver and docks in the Lake Ward. Cultural mingling from the Rose River waterway has left its mark. Traders sell everything from Pavin Weald furs to Lar’tyan violet pearls. Gossip flows as freely as goods, in a dizzying variety of Aldin dialects with some Faento and Lar’tyan

thrown into the mix. Yet where there is beauty, light, and prosperity, there is also intrigue and adventure. The narrow streets and canals are the perfect environment for business deals (legal or otherwise), secretive liaisons, and hidden danger.

## LA1

### BLOOMRIDGE

For most of Aldis’ history, Bloomridge was a scattered collection of wealthy, secluded villas far from the bustle of the city center. That changed fifty years ago, when the Falish family converted their Bloomridge estate into a lavender farm. The flowers flourished in the mild Aldin climate, and soon enterprising farmers started planting new flower fields. Now the gentle green hills flush brilliant purple from late spring through summer. When the wind blows from the north, the smell of lavender carries all through the Lake Ward to the shore.

*You’re lost? My dear guest, lost is the only place worth going. Oh, don’t look so perplexed. If you’re ready to be found, I’ll row you home. But if you’re still lost, there is a beautiful little temple not two canals away...”*

- Master Connor Bartia of the Gondolier’s Guild

## LAKE WARD



## THE INSTITUTE OF ARCANOBOTANY UNIVERSITY

This Royal College offshoot is one of the youngest civic institutions in Aldis, founded fifteen years ago by Professor Kyra Emauri. The Old Kingdom's shapers grew potent medicinal herbs from all over the continent, using arcana to augment the properties of many different plants. The Sorcerer Kings later twisted the discipline to create razor-sharp bramble walls, toxic spores, and other brutal tools of war. Unfortunately, few historical records of arcanobotany survive, and modern arcanobotanists rely upon trial and error as much as past knowledge. They wear sky-blue jackets emblazoned with a forest green leaf over the heart, signifying their allegiance to both the Royal College and their own Institute. The Institute is still expanding every year, with new students arriving with each intake to try their green thumbs.



### PUBLIC GARDEN

Compared to the High Ward's neat, sculpted hedges, the Public Garden (1) is a downright mess, a labyrinth of clashing colors and scents year-round. The Institute uses this space as an open classroom to test out ideas. As long as a plant isn't dangerous or invasive, it's welcome in the Public Garden. Specific, easily accessible sites within the Public Garden are set aside as teaching areas for the students of **Loveridge Academy** (CHAPTER 4) as part of the two institutions' close collaboration.

### DORMATORIES

The student dormitories (2) at the Institute overlook the Public Garden, and tending the plants is part of every student's training. With constant care, some plants grow up to twice their natural size. The garden is also open to the public, as the name suggests, with community plots reserved for residents of the Lake Ward to grow their own herbs and vegetables. Despite the visual cacophony, or perhaps because of it, the Public Garden is a popular destination for young poets and artists.

# INSTITUTE OF ARCANOBOTANY



## GREENHOUSES

In stark contrast to the chaotic Public Garden, the greenhouses (3) stand in a neat row, with glass-covered walkways connecting them to one another. A complex system of shas crystals and air vents protects the delicate plants and prevents contamination of the outside environment. The greenhouses are divided into two categories: exotic and experimental. The exotic greenhouses breed plants from other climates, while the experimental greenhouses contain plants modified with arcana. Only Institute faculty members can access all the greenhouses, with students gaining limited access as they advance in their studies. Each spring, the Institute donates selected greenhouse sprouts to farmers in Cropwick, to see how the modified plants fare on Aldin farms. Rumor has it that the Institute has tried cultivating everything from Rezea's blue trumpet flowers to Lar'tyan tropical fruit.

## FALLEN LEAVES HALL

Professor Emauri recreated the academic environment of the Royal College in these joined buildings, which house the arcanobotany library (4), classrooms & faculty offices (5), and seed bank (6). Anyone can peruse the library, though most visitors find the books incomprehensible due to the highly specialized nature of arcanobotany. The seed bank is the Institute's most valuable resource, and only Professor Emauri has its master key. This repository stores seeds from all over Aldea, as well as from every modified greenhouse plant. As in the greenhouses, linked shas crystals regulate the seed bank's temperature and humidity

to protect the integrity of the seeds. For Aldis as a whole, the seed bank helps protect against long-term famine if disease devastates a particular crop.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The Institute's founder, **Professor Kyra Emauri** (see CHAPTER 8) knows every student by name, despite her busy schedule. Arcanobotany is a small field with a narrow focus, so she maintains a warm, almost familial relationship with her fellow scholars. The librarian **Paolo Arides** and his husband **Corso** (use the *Elite Scholar*, CHAPTER 8 for both) are the junior faculty members at the Institute. Paolo likes to think of himself as the linchpin of order among his exuberant peers. Corso has a reputation as a prankster, and spends the majority of his time out in the grounds and greenhouses with the students. During harvest season, Kyra travels Aldea in search of new and interesting specimens, leaving Paolo and Corso in charge of running the Institute.

## STORY SEEDS

- A young artist vanishes from the Public Garden, leaving only a trail of paint and blood behind.
- A Jarzoni envoy demands the extradition of a promising student, who turns out to be a Jarzoni heretic on the run.
- An accident in an experimental greenhouse releases powerful hallucinogenic spores into the air. Those exposed are driven into a violent frenzy. Can they be subdued before they hurt themselves or others?

## LA2

## PUBLIC FESTIVAL GROUNDS

When Aldins first began celebrating the Festival of Service, the capital couldn't handle a yearly influx of visitors from all over the kingdom. Unwilling to turn anyone away, citizens pitched tents between Wildflower Way and the northern edge of the Lake Ward to accommodate those who couldn't find a room. These makeshift roadside inns soon attracted food stalls, peddlers, and entertainers. Early in her reign, Queen Varti set the land aside for public celebrations.

On each major holy day, the Public Festival Grounds transform from empty land to a bustling tent village. Traveling priests set up temporary shrines along Wildflower Way. Acrobats, singers, and storytellers perform at all hours of the day and night. The wafting aromas of festival foods start early in the morning, and don't stop until well past midnight.

Roamer caravans also frequent these festivities, and often use these grounds for their own camps when visiting the City of the Blue Rose. They cherish the opportunity to reconnect with far-flung kin during the holy days, and often linger until the next full moon before departing.

## ALDIS DUELING CLUB

## INTEREST CLUB

Though dueling is not exactly a profession, the Dueling Club resembles a professional guild, complete with teachers, classes, and membership dues. Twice a month, members set up large tents in the Public Festival Grounds, gathering to spar with one another and learn from master duelists. Anyone who wishes to learn the blade can join, so the club has an eclectic membership: adventurers, street bravos, ship captains, and even foreign envoys. Tensions can run high. Duelists are notorious for their rivalries and inflated egos, so the Dueling Club has one inviolable rule: club meetings are always neutral ground. Even bitter enemies on opposite sides of the law must set aside their enmity until the tents come down, or leave the Festival Grounds to settle their score.



## LAYOUT

During most meetings, the Dueling Club sets up three tents: one for beginner and intermediate students, one for advanced duelists, and one for free sparring. But on major holy days, when the Public Festival Grounds overflow with people, the masters host spectacular exhibition duels on wooden stages constructed specifically for

the festival. These duels are consistent crowd-pleasers, especially during the Feast of Braniel. With love in the air and passions running high, duelists sometimes sell their services, crossing blades with a romantic rival on someone else's behalf.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

At first glance, **Bernaeus the Bold** (use the **Guard**, CHAPTER 8) doesn't seem like the leader of a Dueling Club. His light brown hair is thinning and he walks with a pronounced and painful limp. Yet Bernaeus is well-loved among the Dueling Club's students for his excellent teaching skills. Without the stereotypical duelist's ego, his patience and good humor can make a decent swordsman out of even the most hopeless novice.

His protégé **Bria Gryson** (use the **Elite Warrior** from the *Blue Rose* core rulebook) fits the stereotype of duelists far better, with her fiery red hair and equally fiery wit. But she is even more dedicated to the Dueling Club's success than to her own considerable reputation. Her efforts to recruit new blood have expanded the Dueling Club to its largest membership in over a decade.

## STORY SEEDS

- On the eve of Gravihain, two children vanish from the Public Festival Grounds. Rumors about a vengeful ghost spread like wildfire.
- A visiting Roamer caravan unknowingly harbors a Kernish spy. Rumors of this have reached the Sovereign's finest. Can the villain be rooted out before the caravan leaves Aldis?
- Guards find a famously hot-blooded duelist dead in his tent, with his own parrying dagger driven through his tongue. His list of enemies is a long one. Can his murderer be found?

## LA3

## GREATRING

Garlan Greatring was the most daring pirate of the Great Rebellion, raiding the Sorcerer Kings' ships up and down the Rose River. Even after his mysterious disappearance, his legend continued to inspire his fellow night people to fight against oppression. According to the stories, he gave most of his loot to the rebels, then hid his personal fortune beneath the cobbles of his childhood home in Aldis.

No one has ever found Greatring's treasure, but this neighborhood still bears his name and legacy. Greatring is more densely populated than most of Aldis. A single narrow building might house a young sculptor's studio, a Trebutane-inspired restaurant, and apartments for visiting envoys. The streets of Greatring bustle all day and night, fed by the energy of the youthful inhabitants.

## CHAPTER 3: THE LAKE WARD

## THE SLEEPY DRAKE

## TAVERN

Eldhel Aurane, the vata'sha owner of the Sleepy Drake, has a dozen different stories for how she founded the tavern. Perhaps she won it in a game of cards against a drunken merchant, or maybe a shaper passionately in love with her raised the building from the cobblestones. Whatever its origins, the Sleepy Drake is one of the most popular taverns in the Lake Ward, especially among young people. For a modest price, the wine flows freely, as do the stories and shameless bragging. Recruiters from the Sovereign's Finest sometimes spend an evening here, looking for promising talent—or potential troublemakers.



## LAYOUT

The drinking area is open-air, in a large central courtyard with a jumble of heavy round tables and low stools. Guests are encouraged to share tables and meet new people. The rough-hewn shelves in the corners of the courtyard carry well-worn dice, packs of cards, game boards, and even a deck of the Royal Road tarot. The kitchen, keg room, and pantry are enclosed and off-limits to guests. Eldhel and Xander live in small apartments attached to the opposite side of the courtyard. Twice a year, the Sleepy Drake teams up with the Dueling Club, clearing the tables to host an amateur tournament. The winner earns a week of free food and drink at the tavern, as well as all-important bragging rights over rivals.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Eldhel Aurane** (use the **Merchant**, CHAPTER 8) seems to know everything about the people in Greatring—every birthday, anniversary, and shred of gossip. A tall laevvel woman with an infectious smile and striking amber eyes, Eldhel has a knack for drawing tavern-goers out of their shells. She loves playing matchmaker, whether with her regular customers or a stranger who just walked through her door.

The Sleepy Drake hosts weddings during Midsummer, and Eldhel always brews her famous spicy ginger beer for those exuberant celebrations. Rumor has it that Eldhel's own nuptials aren't far away. She is being courted by a traveling poet named **Linesse Grana** (use the **Commoner**, CHAPTER 8), who stops by the tavern every Midsummer and Midwinters Eve. Linesse is famous for her extemporaneous recitals, the only performances that bring the otherwise unflappable Eldhel to tears.

The rhy-cat **Xander** (use the **Rhy-cat** from CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook) is the tavern's bouncer, and Eldhel's rhy-bonded companion. Serious and quiet, he couldn't be more different from Eldhel, and his intimidating appearance is usually more than enough to deter troublemakers. At nearly five feet long, Xander is consider-

ably larger than the average rhy-cat, with one missing ear and a jagged scar over his left eye. Despite his imposing demeanor, Xander has a soft spot for fellow rhydan, especially those unused to city life. He takes it upon himself to help new arrivals find their bearings, and offers them sanctuary at the tavern if they ever find themselves in trouble.

## STORY SEEDS

- Two poets vie for the love of a merchant's daughter, and the tavern's patrons start taking sides.
- A friendly drinking contest ends with one of the participants dangerously ill. Is this a tragic accident of immoderation, or is something more sinister at work?
- Construction of a new cellar unearths an unidentified relic from Delsha Artanis' early rise to power.

## LA4

## VARTI'S RISE

This quiet residential neighborhood is named for Queen Varti the Builder, who led much of the city's reconstruction after the Great Rebellion. Varti's Rise borders both the Middle and High Wards, making it a convenient home for well-to-do merchants and resident nobles. Life here is more relaxed than the frenetic energy of Greatring or the constant flow of trade along the lakeshore. The locals like to gossip and discuss politics on their balconies, often roping passersby on the street into their conversations. Many friendships between influential Aldins were born in Varti's Rise, and many political disputes resolved over a few glasses of wine.

## LA5

## STEELCOURT

Steelcourt has a long history of questioning—and resisting—the city's rulers, keeping them on their political toes. During the Great Rebellion, the blacksmiths of Steelcourt smuggled weapons to rebels and organized urban revolts, despite vicious reprisals from the Sorcerer Kings that decimated the smithing guilds. When the Guild Council agitated for more influence in Aldin politics, Steelcourt formed the heart of the merchants' strike.

To foreign visitors, Steelcourt is one of the most peculiar places in Aldis, openly inviting critique of the city's rulers. But Aldin civic culture values free speech and does not treat dissent as a threat. Nobles assigned to this storied borough quickly learn to be as passionate and quick-witted as the people they govern. The people, for their part, take fierce pride in their home's reputation, and remind all Aldis that power cannot be exercised without the people's consent.

## THE SOUL'S FLAME IN PLAY

Only master smiths who are also adepts can even operate the forge, and the Crown carefully controls access. When using the Artisan or Smithing focus to craft a masterwork item, the Soul's Flame grants a +3 bonus for workspace conditions instead of +1. If all the work is done at the Soul's Flame, halve the time it takes to craft the item.

Once in a lifetime, a smith might see visions in the facets of the forge's crystals, and emerge from a manic frenzy of forgework with a wholly unique arcane weapon. In these extraordinary circumstances, the weapon cannot be purchased for any price. It must be gifted by the smith who created it or, with the smith's permission, bestowed to a recipient by the Crown as a reward for some valorous deed or life of exemplary service.

## THE SOUL'S FLAME

## SMITHY

In the Old Kingdom, Steelcourt's famous smithing guilds produced arcane marvels of metal now lost to history. Tragically, most of the master smiths did not survive the most violent years of the Great Rebellion, and their knowledge died with them. Only one piece of their legacy remains: the Soul's Flame, the only known shas crystal forge in the kingdom. This massive construct of darksteel and shas crystals generates enough heat to forge even the most resistant metals.

The Soul's Flame produces a blistering heat, but neither smoke nor ash. It also resists scaling, and can infuse weapons forged or reforged in it with arcana, making it a priceless national treasure. Instead of belonging to any one smithing guild, the Crown administers the Soul's Flame. Guards tirelessly patrol the building's perimeter. Every five years, access to the Soul's Flame rotates from one set of master smiths to another. The air inside the Soul's Flame smells of ozone and heat, and metal rings against metal from sunrise to well after sunset.



## LAYOUT

The building that houses the Soul's Flame dates back to the Old Kingdom, and is a patchwork of modern restoration and ancient masonry. Stone workbenches and tables ring the perimeter, with the forge in the very center. Like the shadowgates, the Soul's Flame is made of darksteel: a gargantuan sculpted piece with forges, anvils, and quenching wells molded into its form, stretching from chimneys on the high ceiling down to the floor. Four large shas crystals power the main forges, with smaller crystals dotting the surface.

Adepts theorize that the combination of the crystals and darksteel redirect heat from the anvils back to the forges, making the whole system extremely efficient. A single fire-shaper can run the forge for many hours with minimal effort. A small shop of more recent construction juts out from the side of the building. Inside, a Crown-appointed noble supervises security around the building and sells some of the work from the Soul's Flame. Even

the least impressive weapons are masterwork in quality, and customers may wait years for an appointment to purchase a piece.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The **Stagmarr Siblings** (see **CHAPTER 8**) are the master smiths at the Soul's Flame, in the second year of their residency. Each sibling practices a different discipline, combining their skills to produce exquisite weapons and armor. The oldest brother, Kiren, works in precious metals and gemstones. His sisters Ilah and Magda are an armorsmith and a weaponsmith, respectively.

**Rosla Redwin** (use the **Noble**, **CHAPTER 8**), a veteran noble of Steelcourt, is the Crown representative who sells their work. She has relaxed security at the forge somewhat, allowing less experienced smiths onto the premises to learn from the masters at work. This practice has drawn criticism from more hawkish nobles, who consider the Soul's Flame a national security issue.

Outside the forge's walls, political tensions flare in Steelcourt, fueled by the rhetoric of **Dagen Vos** (see **CHAPTER 8**). Dagen once smuggled refugees across the Kernish border into Aldis. Now, as a politician, he's started agitating for more direct action against the Shadowed Seven. His sudden swell of popular support has earned him many enemies, including **Avoc Aramys** (use the **Elite Merchant**, **CHAPTER 8**), owner of the Pointed Quill news-sheet. The eldest son of the wealthy Aramys family, Avoc believes in Aldis' traditional defensive policy towards the border with Kern. He and his supporters label Dagen a dangerous warmonger in the press.

## STORY SEEDS

- An assassination attempt on Dagen Vos sends fingers pointing in every direction. Political interests compromise the official investigation.
- Demonstrations outside the Pointed Quill threaten to turn violent, but Avoc Aramys refuses additional security for unknown reasons.
- A failed heist at the Soul's Flame activates an ancient security system, trapping everyone—including the unfortunate thieves—inside the building.

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LA6

## MARLICEL'S CROSSING

In the geographical heart of the Lake Ward, cultures from every corner of Aldea mix in beautiful and unexpected ways. Most townhouses have businesses on the first floor, with the owners living above their shops. Many of these small shops belong to City Roamers, who find something familiar in the diversity of Marlicel's Crossing.

Grapevine Street, the main north-south thoroughfare through the neighborhood, hosts a daily bazaar. The street fills up with the smells of fresh bread in the morning, flowers and vegetables throughout the afternoon, and the Crossing's famous spiced, candied fruits before closing at sundown. The Crossing never sleeps; as the bars and taverns empty, the bakers start preparing the next day's bread.

## MATCHMAKER'S GUILD

## GUILDHALL

Matchmaking is a national pastime, but some Aldins go a step further and make their livings fostering love. The Lake Ward thrives on its exotic and romantic reputation,

and the Matchmaker's Guild plays an integral role in bolstering that image. Most Aldins think of matchmaking as bringing together new lovers, but the matchmakers spend just as much time on nurturing existing cariads.

To one trained in the art, love is like a garden, and requires both fertile soil and hard work to flourish. The matchmakers' services are highly individualized, ranging from private and informal chats to extravagant romantic galas. For these larger events, the Matchmaker's Guild often pools resources with the Guild of Intimates, with notable people from both organizations in attendance.

## LAYOUT

The Matchmaker's Guild started out on the second story of a modest townhouse. Now, it occupies the entire townhouse and a large hall next door. In the privacy of the townhouse's rooms, matchmakers offer personal consultations and therapy sessions. Appointments can be difficult to secure, especially during the spring and summer. The hall next door hosts public events like dances, etiquette lessons, and poetry readings; these events are open to everyone, for variable fees. The hall has a magnificent ballroom on the first floor and a terrace with balconies on

the second, perfect for taking in the view of gondolas gliding across the water.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Suna Marjan** (use the *Elite Adept* from CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook) is the current guildmistress, alongside her star marriage partners **Tristan** (use the *Merchant*, CHAPTER 8) and **Ari** (use the *Guard*, CHAPTER 8). She is well into her sixties, with black hair turning silver and kind brown eyes. Her family are City Roamers, with a long tradition of matchmaking; Suna uses the Royal Road tarot to give clients advice. Tristan is a trained matchmaker himself, but spends most of his time handling the Guild's finances and organizing public events. And wherever there is romance and passion, there is the potential for conflict. Ari acts as a bouncer, using his considerable skills with the sword to keep the peace if tempers flare.

**The Baroness of Whispers** (see CHAPTER 8) controls the Silence Dominion in Aldis, in the guise of



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a successful matchmaker. With so many clients coming, going, and pouring their heart's desires out to her, she doesn't need an iron fist to run her empire. She has something far more useful—secrets. In a culture where reputation is paramount, blackmail can be a devastating weapon. A single dark secret can forestall an investigation, buy a friend, or destroy an enemy. Crucially, the Baroness has realized that it doesn't always matter whether a rumor is true. Psychic arcana and gossipy lovers spread tales like wildfire, and by the time a lie is exposed, the damage has already been done.

### STORY SEEDS

- The ghosts of four tragic lovers haunt the Matchmaker's Guild, and need to be put to rest.
- Fire spreads through the Grapevine Street bazaar with unnatural speed, threatening citizens and businesses alike.
- The Baroness of Whispers blackmails two newly minted nobles, forcing them to look the other way while the Silence smuggles Kernish poisons into the city.

### LA7

## EVERLAMP

Before shas crystals were used for light, torches burned along Everlamp Way to guide ships into dock. In those days, Everlamp Way was a single street of lakeside fish markets and small docks. Over the centuries, it has sprawled north and east into a dense, confusing tangle of guildhalls, warehouses, merchant estates, and shops. Traders from the Rose River waterway land here daily. Every few weeks, boats arrive from more exotic places like Lar'tya or Fallen River, generating a flurry of excitement and activity. The major streets and establishments are marked in several different languages, and even the most far-flung visitors can find a trader or dockworker who can communicate with them. To maintain the city's public health and service the large volume of travelers through Everlamp, the Compassionate Sodality maintains a large chapterhouse along the waterfront.

## DORN & BYORN'S GOLDEN ALEHOUSE

### JARZONI ALEHOUSE

Dorn and Byorn were twin brothers from Jarzon, who founded the alehouse exactly 100 years ago. Dorn was a Hospitaler, but he suffered a crisis of faith when his beloved twin fell under suspicion of heresy. The two fled to Aldis,



where they found a home among fellow Jarzoni refugees. Byorn was always curious and outgoing, eager to make friends with his Aldin neighbors.

He soon discovered, to his horror, that the Aldins had a tragic lack of what he considered good beer. He convinced Dorn to pool their meager savings and open an alehouse in the Lake Ward; the rest, as they say, is history. Today, Byorn's grandson, Oswen, carries on his grandfather's passion for a good, strong brew. Jarzoni are still the most common patrons, but many sailors, traders, and local Aldins enjoy the warmth of a friendly hearth away from home.

### LAYOUT

Like most of the Lake Ward, the alehouse is built with *istria* and water-resistant alder. But the architecture is Jarzoni, with a steeped roof, narrow windows, and a prominent indoor hearth on the first floor. Long dining tables stretch across the main floor of the alehouse, and the bar runs the full length of one wall. Behind the bar, cooks, waiters, and bartenders stream through doors to the kitchen and brewery. The bartenders consider themselves the pride of the inn, outdoing one another with drinking songs while they perfect their pours.

Two sets of narrow stairs lead up to the guest rooms on the second floor. The individual rooms are small but comfortable, each with a shas crystal set into the wall in imitation of a Jarzoni hearthfire. The cheaper common quarters are popular with sailors, who enjoy volunteering new brew ideas.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Oswen Gryson** (use the **Laborer**, CHAPTER 8) and his wife **Valeria** (use the **Merchant**, CHAPTER 8) have left their unique mark on the Golden Alehouse, like every generation before them. Oswen met Valeria when her Roamer caravan stopped in Aldis for the Feast of Braniel, and it was love at first sight. Valeria now lives the settled life of a City Roamer, though she maintains strong bonds with her family. Roamer songs, food, and dance have become part of the Golden Alehouse, and the inn sometimes plays host to her family's caravan. For his part, Oswen leaves the business dealings to Valeria so he can focus on his life's passion: new and interesting brews. The current favorite is the Summer Hearthfire, a blond ale brewed with spicy red peppers, though the Jarzoni patrons prefer a heartier oyster stout.

**The Cuckoo** (see CHAPTER 8) prowls the docks of Everlamp, listening for juicy gossip and watching for vulnerable visitors. He is the Baroness of Whispers' most valuable agent, a sorcerer who specializes in tearing out secrets with psychic arcana.

A few brave nobles are trying to hunt him down, led by **Gabriel Arevar** (use the **Elite Noble**, CHAPTER 8). This gentle, idealistic young man was assigned to Everlamp six years ago. He's been an unexpected thorn in the Cuckoo's

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side, focusing his efforts on winning trust to convince the Silence's victims to talk. For now, the two are at a stalemate. The Cuckoo can't move openly against a noble, and Gabriel doesn't have enough information to identify and arrest the Cuckoo.

### STORY SEEDS

- A paranoid guard haunts the Golden Alehouse, convinced that some Jarzoni expatriates are plotting rebellion against Queen Jaellin.
- A previously unknown disease begins spreading through Everlamp, borne on the backs of trade ships.
- A Silence con artist turns informant for Gabriel Arevar. Two weeks later, she and her family all disappear without a trace.

### LA8

## LILYGLOW

The park on the eastern edge of the Lake Ward lends its name to this neighborhood, home to many artists, musicians, and writers. The building murals frequently change as new people move in and paint over the old ones. The townhouses themselves are a bit of an architectural hodgepodge inspired by many different cultures, with Jarzoni steeples alongside Faenarian onion-shaped domes. Painters practice their craft in the streets with colored chalk, which floods the cobbles with color after rain. There are fewer docks and businesses in Lilyglow, and Lake Gate Street slowly narrows into a pleasant footpath as it approaches the park. Artists stake claims along the edges of the street, using the natural beauty of the park and Lake Vash for inspiration.

## LILYGLOW PARK

### CITY PARK

Lilyglow Park is the Lake Ward's most visited location, and probably its favorite painting subject. Lovers enjoy the sunset over Lake Vash. Students from the nearby Academy of the Dance practice on the narrow foot bridges, their graceful sparring matches drawing crowds of onlookers. In the wide lagoons, white and purple water lilies spread their petals during the day. The night lilies open a few hours after sunset, glimmering with the light of submerged shas crystals, whose neat lines fan outward in concentric circles from the center of the park. These crystals also serve a more practical purpose: Lilyglow Park is part of the shas crystal network that maintains the city's clean water supply, purifying water before it flows out into Lake Vash. The roots and leaves of the lilies have natural filtering properties,



keeping the park smelling clean and fragrant. Regardless, at night, the crystals produce a breathtaking view as their light slowly fades into the depths of the lake.

### LAYOUT

Lake Gate Street passes through a set of tall, heavy bronze gates, shaped like swans taking flight. Traditionally, the Great Swan Gates are open as a symbol of peace. They only close when Aldis is under direct threat, like during the Lich King's last incursion. As land meets water, the park's lagoons and streams flow into Lake Vash. No boats are allowed near the park to protect the delicate flowers, and shapers maintain stepping stones and foot bridges over the lagoons for visitors.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Like any popular location, Lilyglow Park has its iconic personalities. Twelve years ago, an aged night person wandered into the park, and simply refused to leave. He lived off alms from visitors but never spoke to a single person; instead, he spent his days singing to a pair of swans who'd made their nest in a large lagoon. The park's gardeners decided that the **Swan Prince** (use the **Commoner, CHAPTER 8**), as they'd starting calling him, was essentially harmless. They built him a hut beside the swans' lagoon, and even established a working rapport with the old man. He calms the otherwise territorial and aggressive swans so the shapers can tend the park without upsetting the animals. Painters come to get a glimpse of the smiling Swan Prince with his magnificent birds, and composers pay his alms to hear him sing.

### STORY SEEDS

- The Feast of Braniel draws a flood of hopeful romantics to Lilyglow Park. The overworked staff need extra help keeping order and encouraging love to bloom.
- Rumors spread of pirate treasure buried under the park, but the gardeners refuse to allow digging for fear of damaging the water purification system.
- The Swan Prince discovers a notched dagger buried in a swan's nest; it seems ancient, and the obsidian handle is marred with fresh claw marks.

### LA9

## SILVERSTONE

The Guild of Finesmiths and Jewelwrights originated in Silverstone, and a few well-established families in the neighborhood still craft exquisite jewelry. But these days, Silverstone's wealth is measured not in gold or jewels, but in paper—huge sums of money, represented by contracts and debt records. As part of King Rikin's arrangement

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between the Guild Council and the Noble Council, several offices governing trade affairs moved to Silverstone, closer to where the merchants lived and worked. Silverstone soon became the financial heart of the Lake Ward, far more convenient than going to and from the High Ward.

Aldis' government strives to balance freedom for its merchants with fair practices for all citizens, and Silverstone has the highest concentration of nobles, guards, and government officials in the Ward. The Aldin Watch's Ward Office also straddles the border of Silverstone and Steelcourt.

### GOIA'S PLAZA

#### CITY BUREAUCRATIC OFFICES

A magnificent marble fountain of Goia forging the crown and sword for her cariad towers over the center of the plaza. The inscription on Goia's anvil reads, "Honest work bears a noble face." A mosaic calendar radiates out from the fountain, decorated with images of each Primordial or god of Light on their corresponding month.



The busy merchants and officials barely seem to notice their surroundings, hurrying from one government building to another. The three most important are the Tabularia records office, the Golden Hammer mercantile court, and Argent House, a private vault run by the Merchant Guild. Only the records office is open to the public, and guards patrol the rooms as vigilantly as the exterior to prevent anyone from tampering with important documents.

#### LAYOUT

The western tip of the plaza extends into the adjacent borough of Alder Walk, but most business is done in Silverstone. The Tabularia, Golden Hammer, and Argent House anchor the points of the plaza, and most people flow between these three buildings. The Tabularia and Golden Hammer were constructed at the same time and have very similar interiors. Clerks guide visitors to their destinations from a small entrance hall, with all the other rooms laid out in a neat rectangular grid. In the Golden Hammer, these are small courtrooms for hearing disputes. In the Tabularia, each room contains records on a different subject stored in chronological order. Only the regular Merchant Guild patrons know what Argent House is like on the inside, and the massive, blank facade discourages curiosity. The most outlandish rumors claim that Argent House extends for miles underneath the Lake Ward, and even has some submerged vaults.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

To a casual observer, **Nellia Aramys** (see CHAPTER 8) seems like a generous, well-connected woman with a grandmotherly smile. To those in the political know, it's better to owe her a kingdom of gold than a single favor. Suppos-

edly the richest person in the Lake Ward, Nellia regularly finances her fellow merchants, helping them with risky ventures in exchange for political favors. This network of favors and debt, built up over the last three decades, gives her a ruthless stranglehold over Merchant Guild politics in the Lake Ward. She prefers to exert influence behind the scenes, helping candidates in Guild Council elections in exchange for yet another favor. Her daughter **Felira Aramys** (use the **Merchant, CHAPTER 8**) has recently stepped up to help her mother manage the family's wealth. Nellia used a few favors to make her daughter the current manager of Argent House, giving the family yet another point of leverage in the game of intrigue.

#### STORY SEEDS

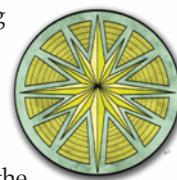
- Fire erupts inside the Tabularia, destroying many debt records. Is it a fortuitous accident, or arson?
- A Kernish spy masquerades as a merchant, depositing a dangerous arcane relic within Argent House's vaults.
- The heir to a trading fortune also inherits a terrible web of intrigue. His family owes money to Nellia Aramys, while his husband is being blackmailed by the Baroness of Whispers.

#### LA10

### ACADEMY OF THE DANCE

#### SPIRIT DANCER ACADEMY

Although the Academy's physical building has only stood for a century and a half, spirit dancing is as old as Aldis itself. In many ways, the survival and rebirth of the Society of Leaves and Grass after the Empire of Thorns mirrors the history of the Great Rebellion and Aldis' renewal as the Kingdom of the Blue Rose. The Academy draws in more than just spirit dancers; artists, philosophers, arcanists, and historians from the Lake Ward and beyond come to catch a glimpse of the Eternal Dance as interpreted by the school's masters.



#### HISTORY

King Rannath sponsored the construction of the Academy of the Dance, a historic act often overshadowed by his controversial legalization of studying sorcery. Rannath's sister, Mellara, was a spirit dancer who left the city to learn different techniques from far-flung masters. She returned several years into his reign with her wife, Iraine, a fellow spirit dancer who kept records of all they'd learned. The two women petitioned the Crown for land to establish the Academy, which King Rannath happily granted. Before the Academy of the Dance, spirit dancers in Aldis taught students wherever they happened to live. Some traveled

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# THE ACADEMY OF THE DANCE



the roads like Mellara and Iraine, while others set up small schools in the Aldin countryside. The Academy of the Dance drew both masters and students back to the heart of the kingdom, and the various sects began to mix and exchange techniques. Most spirit dancers employed by the Crown are graduates of the Academy, and some return to teach when they consider themselves true masters.

## LAYOUT

Twinleaf Hall is the Academy's heart (1), decorated with bas reliefs of the two founders. A large glass dome covers the central hall, since spirit dancers traditionally practiced and taught under the open sky. Moveable screen walls allow masters to separate the space into classrooms, or open it up for group practice, recitals, and exams. The dormitories in the building's wings (2) house students on the first floor and masters on the second floor.

Outside, elegant patterns in blue kyanite stone crisscross the front courtyard (3) and outer promontory (4). Students follow them to practice spirit dancing techniques, while visitors appreciate the courtyard's beauty and workmanship. Shortly after the Academy first opened, Iraine added a pair of walled courtyards with willow trees and high hedges (5) to give more shy and retiring students a comfortable practice environment.

The support buildings that flank the Academy on either side contain storage space (6), the kitchens (7), a communal dining hall (8), and the Academy's library (9). Written

records about spirit dancing are very rare, especially any dating from the Old Kingdom. Even though most historical documents are fragmentary at best, the library is a priceless trove of knowledge for visiting scholars, as well as the spirit dancers themselves.

## DAILY OPERATIONS

Twinleaf Hall's bells ring at dawn for meditation, followed by breakfast and chores. There are no support staff at the Academy; everyone is expected to help keep the Academy running smoothly. Classes start at nine o'clock in Twinleaf Hall, break for lunch at noon, then continue until five o'clock; evenings are free. Many students like to walk down Lake Gate Street to practice among the serene pools of Lilyglow Park, but they must return by the midnight curfew. Spirit dancing requires mental and spiritual discipline as much as physical prowess, and the masters know that late night wandering makes for poor learning the next morning.

## SPIRIT DANCERS

Even the oldest spirit dancer sects preserve traditions that are largely reconstructions of ancient techniques, painstakingly pieced together from rare surviving manuscripts, oral tradition, and folk dance. Most students focus their studies on one sect, incorporating elements of others to form a unique interpretation of the Eternal Dance.

## CHAPTER 3: THE LAKE WARD

Currently, three sects are on the permanent curriculum at the Academy of the Dance. Traveling masters who visit the Academy teach other sects as electives for a few seasons at a time. There is no formal timetable for a student to graduate. Instead, when students feel ready, they petition the masters to design a set of grueling physical and mental trials. These trials test whether students can truly bring the light of the Eternal Dance out into the world, and are often compared to Aldis' rigorous exams for nobility.

### SHRIKE'S FALL

**Master Reza** of the Shrike's Fall only accepts the most talented and disciplined students, and no student who has faced disciplinary action may ever study with his sect. (Use the *Epic Adept* from CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook for Master Reza.) While his policy seems harsh, his caution is well-warranted. Shrike's Fall is one of the hardest sects to master, born in the fiery crucible of the Great Rebellion. Practitioners use lightning-quick strikes and environmental advantages to end a confrontation as quickly as possible, like the shrike impaling its prey on thorns. Its origins make Shrike's Fall the most violent version of the Dance practiced in Aldis; a spirit dancer without the self-discipline to master the subtleties of this Twilight sect risks falling into Shadow. Some of the best Aldin spies are trained in Shrike's Fall, though of course, no one knows their names.

### WHISPERING WIND

Whispering Wind is the oldest sect taught at the Academy, and in many ways is the philosophical opposite of Shrike's Fall. It traces its origins back to the Old Kingdom, and gained popularity during the Great Rebellion for its philosophy of patience and forbearance. **Master Hallam** of the Whispering Wind teaches their students to be patient and conservative, avoiding an opponent's attacks and waiting for an opportunity to counterattack. (Use the *Epic Adept* from CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook for Master Hallam.) Motions are circular, fluid, and close to the body to conserve energy. The Sovereign's Finest recruit many spirit dancers from the Whispering Wind, since they make good diplomats and observers in addition to warriors.

### GIFT OF THE HART

Every student at the Academy learns from **Master Adara** (use the *Epic Adept* from CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook), even if they do not join her sect. This is because Gift of the Hart is a team style of spirit dancing, a perfect learning environment for novices. Two or three dancers acting in concert can spot for one another, create an impenetrable defense, and coordinate attacks. This wholly modern Aldin sect was created by the Academy's founders, a synthesis of everything their travels taught them. Thanks to the Academy's influence, the Gift of the

Hart has become the largest sect of spirit dancers in Aldis. A sub-school trains pairs of elite bodyguards, who can defend their charges against seemingly endless attackers without weapons or armor.

### STORY SEEDS

- A recently discovered manuscript contains techniques eerily reminiscent of Night's Embrace, practiced by the shadow dancers of Kern.
- Priceless records of ancient spirit dancers go missing from the Academy's library.
- Shortly after graduating, a spirit dancer returns to her homeland of Jarzon and begins teaching students there in secret.
- A visiting Sel-Shann master has a terrible vision; he collapses before a stunned audience, raving about the sun going dark over Aldis.

### LA11

## ALDER WALK

Settlement of the lakeshore spread east along Lake Gate Street, making Alder Walk the oldest neighborhood in the ward. It was named for the alder piles that form the foundations for the Old City Docks; centuries later, the docks are still in use. Commerce slowly migrated east to Everlamp over time, leaving Alder Walk as a collection of luxurious lakefront restaurants, museums, inns, and art galleries. The well-to-do Aldins who live here often cultivate reputations as patrons of the arts. They commission new talent to compose music for their salons, repaint their murals, or recite poetry to guests. These beautiful works sometimes double as political commentary at the patron's request, subtle pieces in the ever-shifting game of intrigue.

## MARZIM HOUSE

### ABANDONED RESIDENCE

This beautiful old manor house is still in pristine condition, yet large boards over the entrance declare it condemned, and the locals give it a wide berth. For several years, the late Theodore Marzim led a shadow cult called the Acolytes of Eternal Summer out of his own home. When an anonymous tip exposed the cult last year, Marzim and his followers barricaded themselves inside the manor house, choosing to die in a Shadow ritual rather than face justice. The Sovereign's Finest broke through the front doors, but the house itself sent an intense psychic scream reverberating across the ward. As the Sovereign's Finest watched in horror, the shattered front doors began to repair themselves, wood knitting together in grotesque patterns reminiscent of flesh and bone.



# CHAPTER 3: THE LAKE WARD

## PSYCHIC PRESSURE

An aura of oppressive dread permeates Marzim House. At the end of each full hour inside the house, a character must pass a TN 14 Willpower (Courage or Faith) test or gain 1 level of fatigue. In addition, the constant psychic oppression makes it impossible to rest. This means that characters cannot recover fatigue or heal by resting unless they leave Marzim House. And if they do leave, the rooms may not look the same when they return...

Royal College adepts believe the cult granted the house a degree of sentience and unlife through their deaths. Due to the strange arcana at work, no one knows how to destroy or purify Marzim House without endangering hundreds of residents in the powerful psychic backlash. Queen Jaellin quickly ordered the adjacent buildings and streets heavily warded as a precaution. Rotating guards watch the ward perimeter at all times, but everyone knows these are only temporary measures. Sooner or later, someone has to enter Marzim House, unearth its deadly secrets, and find a way to end the threat for good.

## LAYOUT

The walls of Marzim House shift and flex around intruders. Doors slam shut, then open into completely different rooms than before. A modular map represents the ever-shifting layout of Marzim House, with many potential configurations. The only “static” room is a two-story **portrait gallery**, and the **double doors on the first floor** are the only consistent entrance—or exit. The bloodshot eyes of generations of Marzims seem to follow every movement from their dusty portraits.

In addition to the gallery, three other rooms should be included in any configuration of Marzim House: **Marzim’s master bedroom**, the **library**, and the **Shrine of Eternal Summer**. Their locations may vary. The other rooms can be attached to the portrait gallery in any order, resulting in strange layouts like the den on the second floor, or the kitchen and dining rooms nowhere near one another. The Narrator may leave out rooms, move rooms during play, and use other creative means to make the environment suitably disorienting. The Narrator may also populate rooms with any thematically appropriate opponents or hazards, keeping in mind that exploring Marzim House is intended for level 13-17 player characters.

Theodore Marzim’s specter languishes in the **master bedroom**. Most of the magnificent ebony furniture has been smashed to splinters, and ropey shreds of velvet hang from the sagging four-poster bed. The tattered remnants of tapestries look like they were slashed with a kitchen knife. The **library** contains dusty records of the Marzim family’s business dealings and genealogy. Hidden among the innocuous tomes are Theo-

dore Marzim’s books on sorcery, as well as his personal journal.

Finally, the **Shrine of Eternal Summer** was the epicenter of the Marzim cult’s final ritual. The door is locked and securely boarded up from the inside. Anybody who does manage to pick the lock and force the door finds a bedroom, hastily converted into a shrine. The broken furniture looks like it was shoved to the edges of the room, and a painting of Marzim’s son Felix hangs on the far wall above a stone altar. The altar, ceiling, walls, and floor are all spattered red with blood, as fresh as the day it was shed. The darkfiend Nazyru who originally tempted Marzim to Shadow lives in Felix’s painting, biding its time.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Marzim House’s tragedy began with **Theodore Marzim** (use the **Elite Specter** from **CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook). His all-consuming grief over his son Felix’s untimely death attracted the attention of a whisperer darkfiend, who took possession of the young man’s portrait. To Marzim, the darkfiend sounded like his dead son talking from beyond the grave. He came to believe he could join his son by transferring his own soul to the painting through sorcery. Slowly but surely, the Acolytes of Eternal Summer grew from the seeds of his grief, drawing in others who couldn’t let go of their dead loved ones. Even in death, Marzim found no rest. In a supreme act of cruelty, the darkfiend revealed its true nature to Marzim just as he died. Maddened by guilt over his mistake and his hatred of the darkfiend, the specter of Marzim lingers. He lashes out at any who enter the house, in a misguided attempt to drive them away from the darkfiend who engineered his own ruin. His spectral face is ruined and gaunt, and his hands drip with blood.

**Nazyru** (use the **Whisperer Darkfiend** from **CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook) succeeded in tempting Marzim and his cultists to Shadow, never suspecting that it would also be trapped in the house by Marzim’s dying ritual. Irony, it seems, applies to mortals and fiends alike. But Nazyru is patient and cunning, like all of its ilk. In fact, the darkfiend assists anyone trying to cleanse Marzim House, up to a point. After all, freeing the spirits trapped inside frees Nazyru as well. If any would-be heroes arrive, Nazyru masquerades as one of the tormented acolytes, playing on sympathy to gain its freedom.

## STORY SEEDS

- A sorcerer disguised as a traveling adept gains access to Marzim House and frees Nazyru, unleashing a wave of terror across Alder Walk.
- A distant relative suffers nightmares of Marzim’s bloody specter, begging them to return and cleanse the family name.

LA12

## FIREFLY'S REST

A famous painting of Firefly's Rest hangs in the main library of the Royal College. In tiny dots of paint, the anonymous artist captured clouds of fireflies over the water, drawn to the flowerboxes on the neighborhood's rooftops and balconies. Every spring and summer, gondoliers row thousands of visitors through the canals to witness this dazzling sight firsthand.

Firefly's Rest was originally a trading post used by the Rose River sea-folk and the city of Aldis. The sea-folk taught Aldins how to shape *istria*, how to enhance waterproofing resin with alchemy, and how to craft boats as graceful as their rhy-fen companions. Eventually, enough sea-folk settled down to build permanent homes in the water, partially submerged with elevated second stories and balconies. The Aldins called these clusters of buildings "lake-towns," and the neighborhoods of Firefly's Rest, Shell Triangle, and Reedsong Village are still known by that name today. The majority of the city's sea-folk live in the lake-towns, though some enterprising families moved to Whalefin when it flooded, bringing their aquatic traditions to the rest of Aldis.

## GONDOLIER'S GUILD

### GUILDHALL & BUSINESS

The crimson gondola cab and its twinkling crystal lantern are icons of the Lake Ward. The gondoliers work hard to make their craft seem effortless, and all apprentices undergo years of rigorous training in piloting, navigation, performance, and history. Many gondoliers are also water-shapers, using arcana and oar to guide their boats. Though technically part of the larger Seaworthy Circle of Boatfolk and Shipmasters, the gondoliers' craft is so specialized that they function more-or-less independently from their parent guild. The guild also trains members of the Aldin Watch alongside their own apprentices to pilot the patrol boats unique to the Lake Ward.



In addition to their famous cabs, the gondoliers pilot other craft for the ward's merchants: large batellas for heavy cargo, and rounded caorlinas for fresh foodstuffs. Every year, the graduating gondoliers organize themselves into six-person teams and race caorlinas across Lake Vash. Hundreds of spectators crowd the docks to place bets and cheer for their favorite team.

### LAYOUT

The Gondolier's Guild owns three buildings, connected by bridges over the canals. If two gondoliers meet coming from opposite directions, the bridges are so narrow that

the junior gondolier must walk backward to make way for the senior. The largest central building, the House of Fireflies, is the hub for gondola traffic. It's a mostly-covered dock, with signal lights in its upper stories to guide cabs in and out.

Apprentices live in the House of Gaelenir, learning alongside master gondoliers. And finally, the House of Many Hands contains the workshop and shipyard for repairing boats. Each boat sports unique artistic touches from the gondoliers who built it: a rhy-fen figurehead, religious etchings on the oars, or whatever else strikes a gondolier's fancy.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Master Hansa Montain** (use the *Elite Merchant*, CHAPTER 8) represents the Gondolier's Guild on the Guild Council. No matter how the winds of politics blow, the boats must move. Master Hansa is a shrewd businesswoman who enjoys navigating the fickle eddies of Guild Council politics. Her exacting efforts leave her fellow gondoliers, like **Master Connor Bartia** (see CHAPTER 8), free to focus on their work. Like all sea-folk, Connor seems born to the water. His weatherbeaten face is full of many laugh lines, and his powerful singing voice soars over the canals. Despite many opportunities to advance within the guild, Connor is happiest with the day-to-day work of a gondolier: serenading young lovers, boasting of Aldis' beauty to visitors, or trouncing overconfident apprentices in caorlina races.

### STORY SEEDS

- Sailors discover an apprentice gondolier barely conscious in her training boat, with no memory of what attacked her.
- Master Hansa goes missing one moonless evening. She was last seen ferrying two passengers who covered their faces and never spoke.

LA13

## SHELL TRIANGLE

Above water, Shell Triangle looks very similar to the other lake-town neighborhoods. Below the waterline, neat rows of freshwater mussels cover the submerged masonry. The tradition of mussel farming started during the most dangerous years of the Great Rebellion, when Aldins faced starvation. A smuggler and a rhy-fen, whose names are lost to history, took freshwater mussels from upriver and brought them to Shell Triangle.

Today, Shell Triangle provides the Lake Ward not only with mussels and fish, but also freshwater pearls. Apprentice shapers from the Royal College sometimes spend a summer or two here, tending the mussel beds as practical

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experience for their arcana. They keep clean, fresh water flowing over the mussels, and encourage nourishing algae to grow.

### THE BELLWATER

#### TEMPLE TO GAELENIR

The Bellwater was once King Rikin's home, before the Golden Hart chose him to replace King Valin. The locals claim that after departing the palace, the Hart appeared in the doorway of Rikin's fishing hut before galloping across Lake Vash and out of sight. After Rikin's death, a sect of Gaelenir priests moved into the abandoned hut and consecrated it as a temple to both the Golden Hart and Gaelenir in his Great Sage aspect. The Bellwater's priests believe the Golden Hart chose Rikin to deliver Aldis from its tyrant, and Gaelenir granted him the wisdom to heal the nation's wounds. Adversity, opportunity, and wisdom are all spokes on a wheel the Great Sage steers in his quest for truth.



#### LAYOUT

King Rikin's childhood home is still the only building of the Bellwater Temple, painstakingly preserved for more than two centuries. A high priest and several acolytes live off fish and mussels from the lake, as Rikin did before his ascension. Visitors leave offerings floating in the water for the acolytes to retrieve. On either side of the fishing hut, two massive statues—one of the Golden Hart, the other of Gaelenir—rise up out of the water. The Hart's horns touch the point of Gaelenir's trident over the roof. Beneath the waterline, the temple contains a small but breathtaking underwater mosaic gallery. The ceiling, walls, and floor glimmer with scenes of Gaelenir watching over Aldis from the depths of the lake. Sea-folk pilgrims often come to meditate in the gallery, considering it an oasis of spiritual harmony in the bustling city.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Gwen Cutshaw** (use the **Elite Adept** from **CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook) is one of the Rose River sea-folk, with golden-green hair and eyes. She is also the youngest high priestess in the temple's history. During Lord Sayvin's insurrection, Gwen and her rhy-bonded companion **Cian** (use the **Rhy-fen** from **CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook) helped narrowly avert an assassination attempt on the previous high priest. When the high priest retired, he chose Gwen as his successor, despite her relative youth and inexperience. She threw herself into her new responsibilities with tremendous energy, building stronger bonds between the city folk and the local rhy-fen pod with Cian's assistance. For his part, Cian never seems to forget any detail of a person, making him an excellent source for gossip above or below the water. He is fiercely

protective of Gwen and the temple's acolytes, sometimes to the point of paranoia.

#### STORY SEEDS

- Fishermen haul a leaking rowboat from Lake Vash into Shell Triangle. The only passengers are an unconscious, unidentified soldier and a dead Aldin scout.
- While meditating in the gallery, Gwen has a mystifying vision of ghostly riders without saddles galloping across Lake Vash.
- Cian finds a body at the bottom of a canal, weighed down by a metal collar around its neck and shoulders. A single shas crystal adorns the collar, glowing like a fiery eye.

#### LA14

### REEDSONG VILLAGE

The sea-folk of Reedsong Village preserve a tradition from the Great Rebellion, when the rebels needed mobile refuges along the Rose River. A quarter of the population live on woven islands of golden reed, harvested from the shores of Lake Vash. Each island supports up to sixty people, their belongings, and houses woven from the same reeds. With help from water-shapers and rhy-fen, the islands are both home and transport, spending days out in Lake Vash to fish or harvest.

Once every five years, sea-folk from the lake-towns converge on Reedsong Village for the Festival of Golden Flutes. From Sun Day to Tale Day, the sea-folk repair damage to the woven reeds and renew the arcana protecting the islands against rot. On Hearth Day, they rest, feast, and carve flutes from the leftover reeds. The flutes' high-pitched whistling attracts freshwater dolphins and rhy-fen, who join in the chorus.

#### LA15

### VASH'S EYE

Vash's Eye is almost entirely covered in warehouses, shipyards, and docks. Due to limited docking space, water traffic follows strict rules. Civilian traffic moves at night, and mercantile or government vessels move during the day. Those who rely on the lake for their livelihood, like fishing boats, may come and go as they please. Signalling towers on the western and eastern ends of the island guide vessels through the bay to avoid collisions. The Rose River shipyard, which stretches along the southern half of the island, also serves as a temporary stopping point for any vessels waiting their turn. The anchor-and-post of the Dockhands Gathering is a common sight on the island, though the dockworkers are less boisterous than their seaside counterparts.



## THE FLASHGATE

### SUBMERGED SHADOWGATE

With the destruction of the shadowgate below the Royal Palace, the only known shadowgate near the city of Aldis lies beneath the surface of Lake Vash. It has become a source of fierce contention among the Sovereign's Council as its submerged location makes it difficult to study or defend. The only certain fact is that the shadowgate always activates after lightning strikes the surface of Lake Vash. For now, the Crown empowers a specialized team of sea-folk and rhy-fen to ward the shadowgate and drive away intruders. Whenever a lightning strike activates the shadowgate, the wards slowly dissipate the energy and force the gate back into dormancy.



### LAYOUT

The shadowgate sits on the lake floor, about half a mile east of Vash's Eye. There are also small stone obelisks at the cardinal points around the shadowgate, covered in strange markings. Three of these obelisks are relatively intact, but the one at the north point is nothing more than jagged shards of black stone. No one knows what the obelisks are for, or why the shadowgate was built so far beneath the surface. Though a few nobles proposed destroying the submerged shadowgate after Jarek's demise, Queen Jaellin refused. Shadowgates are notori-

ously unpredictable, and the vortex from its destruction could seriously destabilize the lakebed.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Inia** (use the *Elite Rhy-fen* from **CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core book) leads a rhy-fen pod living near Vash's Eye. During the day, the pod avoids the busy waters near the shore. They swim far into the lake with the fishing boats, then return to Vash's Eye during the evening. Inia is not rhy-bonded to anyone, seeing herself as a guardian of all the people living around the island.

Inia has a strong working relationship with **Galio Bartia** (use the *Elite Guard*, **CHAPTER 8**), who leads the team assigned to guard the shadowgate. Queen Jaellin herself appointed him to this role, and asked his team to try and study the shadowgate in greater detail despite the difficult conditions. Like many other laevvel, Galio has a keen awareness of supernatural energy, allowing him to sense minute fluctuations in the shadowgate despite not being an adept himself. He's kept careful records, which show the shadowgate's activity spiking more often since Jarek fell.

### STORY SEEDS

- Signals get confused on a particularly foggy morning, and two passenger riverboats collide.
- Galio begins dreaming about the markings on the obelisks coming alive with blazing white light. He's terrified of what that might mean.



**T**his crescent of Aldis curls around the High Ward on its inner border, while the Lower Ward hugs it from the outside. Coincidentally, this is a good analogy for the type of people who live here—folk who've risen to a solidly middle class, orbiting the circles of the wealthy and powerful without quite managing to join their ranks. They include skilled laborers and craftsfolk of every description.

The ward's central location and the variety of businesses it houses make it very much a melting pot of the surrounding wards. The renowned nightclubs, theaters, and public baths attract as many nobles as blue-collar workers. Townhouses line most streets, many with shops and boutiques on the lower floor with a familial residence or several smaller apartments above.

## M1

### THE RETREAT

The Middle Ward's northernmost neighborhood is one of the smallest, both in terms of geography and population.

Buildings occupy only two-thirds of the neighborhood, up to Wildflower Way, an east-west highway tracing the upper border of Aldis. Many of the buildings are situated on a gentle rise, providing stunning views of the pristine landscape beyond the road. Breezes sweep the bright scents of wild grass and sassafras trees through every open window, lending the neighborhood a sense of removal from the hustle and bustle of city life.

### SWALLOWTAIL INN

#### LUXURY COUNTRY ESTATE INN

The eccentric recluse Aellie Houdon built this country estate half a century ago. When she joined her wife on the Wheel of Rebirth, the Swallowtail was inherited by her enterprising nephew, Chaedys Poeson, who remodeled the estate into a luxurious inn. He put his aunt's unique architecture to good use, and the inn became a landmark beloved for its quirky nature. It is frequently rented out for weddings.



*"Oh, my dear, no. We may not have the grand palaces and temples and academies here, but rest assured—you are seeing the best Aldis has to offer! Fine foods, finer music, and the finest in delights both worldly and sublime! What would you like to try first?"*

*-Kelabelle Hemry, to her visiting sister*

## CHAPTER 4: THE MIDDLE WARD

and other celebrations, and often hosts a variety of noble and celebrity patrons. A famed bard passed away under mysterious circumstances in the Dahlia Room a few decades ago, but rather than damage the inn's reputation, it only added to its notoriety.

### LAYOUT

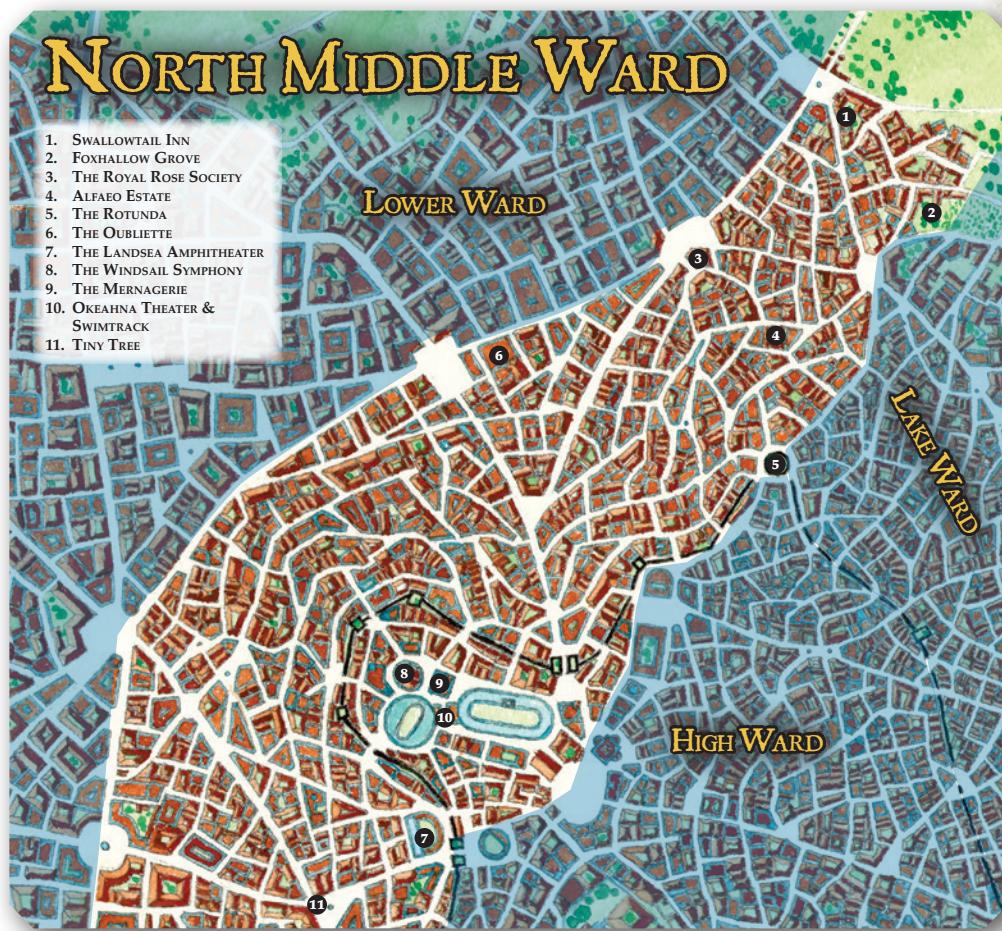
Houdon's wife, Reith, was a renowned swordmaker. Her razor-sharp blades minted the couple a fortune in steel. When Reith passed away, grief all but destroyed Houdon. She became convinced the vengeful spirits slain by her wife's weapons were trying to kill her; her home was designed to confuse them and keep her safe. The richly-decorated interior includes staircases leading nowhere, second-story exterior doors opening into thin air, and even a secret passage.

A sculpture garden occupies most of the inn's central courtyard. In an attempt to appease the spirits, Houdon dedicated its statues and topiaries to the various people and rhydan who died at the hand of Reith's blades. Whenever the sky grows overcast or the scent of rain hangs in the air, the garden takes on a funereal atmosphere, despite its stunning artistry.

The basement contains an ancient spring that allegedly connects to a partially-flooded system of catacombs.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Chaedy Poeson** (see **CHAPTER 8**) is a constant presence at the inn, favoring a hands-on management style that includes a great deal of hovering, explaining, and "friendly reminders," even with his most experienced staff. He insists on a strict hierarchy among employees; everyone receives an exacting list of duties, and woe betide the butler who imagines herself helpful by deviating from these tasks. In fact, Poeson has lost a number of butlers who insisted on aiding colleagues in times of crisis. The current butler, **Hasker Forthwith** (use *Elite Laborer*, **CHAPTER 8**), is largely a cold fish to his fellow employees, perfectly happy to let them sink or swim on their own. Few would guess the tenderness and affection he lavishes on his pet hedgehog, Archibald.



**Sage Fiera** (use the **Commoner**, **CHAPTER 8**) is a bright young maid who enjoys following Poeson's detailed orders. The Swallowtail is her first job away from the family farm, and she couldn't be more excited to be living and working in the city. She spent her childhood quite literally counting sheep and has developed quite an eye for detail. She's often the first to notice when anything is amiss, but lacks the confidence to speak up about it. Her pockets are always filled with raspberry penny candy, a rare confection growing up. She's willing to share it, but only reluctantly.

### STORY SEEDS

- The Dahlia Room's troubled relationship with bards is rekindled when a famous songster staying there disappears. Is it merely a hoax to bolster the bard's flagging reputation, or is there a secret cult operating out of the inn's suspiciously large basement?
- Strange noises plague the inn at night; some sound remarkably similar to a woman crying. Is it the spirit of Aellie Houdon, trapped in the bewildering house she created?
- When guests' personal items begin disappearing, sticky fingerprints are the only clue left behind.

## CHAPTER 4: THE MIDDLE WARD

### FOXHOLLOW GROVE

#### RHYDAN GLADE

Two hundred years ago, a rhy-fox took up residence in the southeast corner of what is now the Retreat. Moumhad was fascinated by the construction of Aldis, but also wary. He decided his life's work would be to build a sanctuary for rhydan near the city, envisioning it as a place they could visit if the chaos of city life became overwhelming.



Moumhad used shaping arcana to prune, graft, and bend trees into an elaborate, latticed fence around the edges of his tree-dotted meadow. The result was both strange and beautiful. Moumhad then began to graft other trees into shapes, using arcana to physically manipulate them, but not force their growth. He considered his creations *treetrunk topiary*. He bent and grafted branches into the shapes of hearts, diamonds, squares, and circles. He even bent two trees toward each other, then grafted the tops together. Now they grow as one, forming an arch topped by a single trunk.

The grove is no longer frequented by rhydan, save a small group of rhy-ravens. Though wildly intelligent, they commune very little with the two-legged species who visit the grove to wonder at its marvels.

#### LAYOUT

Moumhad started his venture using the site's existing trees, so the perimeter is haphazardly shaped. Recently, a developer built a number of apartments on the edge of the property. While she claimed her aim was to preserve Moumhad's grove, Marthe Kreri rebranded the area the "Arboreal Carnival" and began charging non-rhydan admission to the beautiful glen. She rents the apartments overlooking it for extremely expensive prices.

These apartments appear to be constructed of Aldis' traditional whitewashed brick, but closer inspection reveals they're built of wood and only faced with slabs of brick. The other architectural details, however, are real, from the crown molding to the hand-carved window shutters.

Kreri built a public bath over the spring in the park's southwestern corner. She likes to claim, with a wink and a nudge, the water holds some degree of arcane power—"blessed by the power of the moon and the rhy-fox." Though she charges a premium to bathe there, the water has never been shown to have any special effects.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Marthe Kreri** (use the **Merchant**, CHAPTER 8) isn't cruel or heartless; rather, she's practical. Her mother passed away bringing her into the world, and her fathers both fell victim to the seductions of drink in their grief. There was never enough money left over for food, and Marthe

survived through the kindness of strangers. She vowed never again to face that kind of deprivation. Her efforts to twist Foxhollow Grove into a for-profit venture arise from fear, not spite. She abhors alcohol of any kind and founded the Temperance Movement in Aldis.

Much to Kreri's dismay, a group of pertinacious protesters have taken it upon themselves to march in front of her apartments every day at suppertime. They are led by **Behr Dralong** (use the **Scholar**, CHAPTER 8), a gangly professor who believes the buildings should be transformed into a museum dedicated to the achievements of rhydan.

For their part, the rhy-ravens roosting in the glen largely ignore both Dralong and Kreri. However one of them, **Singh** (see CHAPTER 8), does flap down from the trees once a day to play chess with **Ghabil Mane**, a young girl residing in the apartments (use the **Child**, CHAPTER 8, boosting both the Communication and Intelligence abilities to 1).

#### STORY SEEDS

- Well-meaning rhy-ravens begin stealing powerful (and shiny) arcane relics and burying them around the property.
- Kreri's business practices surrounding the grove lead to conflict with the local rhydan.
- Guided by a sorcerer (perhaps even the **Cuckoo**, from the Lake Ward), treasure hunters begin toppling the trees to find a legendary relic allegedly buried beneath. But soon they find it's their party being hunted...

#### M2

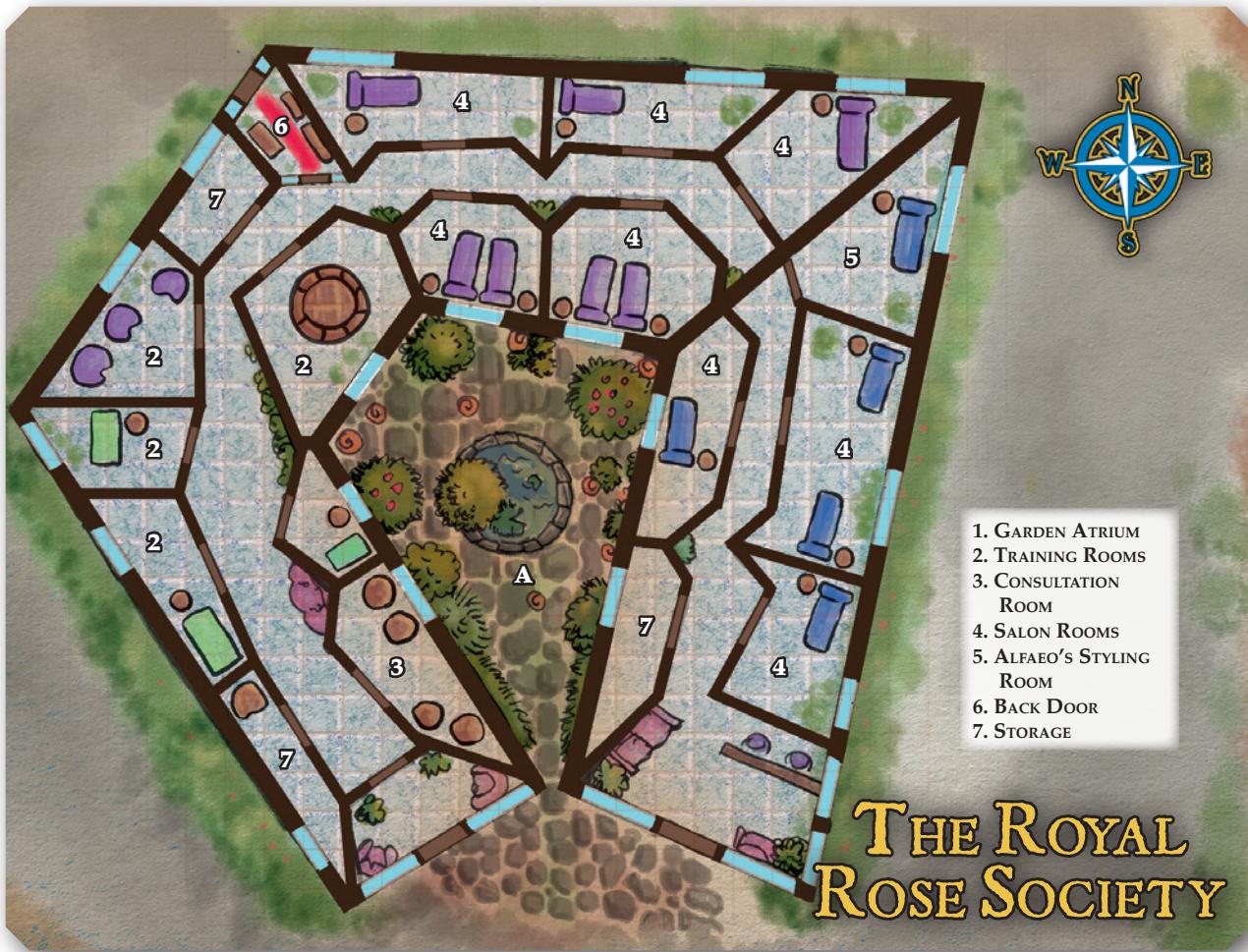
### KYANITE

The Kyanite neighborhood is somewhat peculiar for its lack of large trees. City planning documents state the area has high bedrock, meaning bedrock especially close to the surface. This leaves insufficient depth for many trees to take root. Residents combat this shortfall with effusive plantings of blue roses. Bushes surround nearly every building, and vines twine up the walls to the rooftops. Both the rocky ground and velvet blossoms influenced the area's name: kyanite is a blue rock, its name derived from the color cyan.

### THE ROYAL ROSE SOCIETY

#### BEAUTY SALON

Residents of Kyanite pioneered the "rose crown" hairstyle, in which long hair is plaited and folded into concentric, petal-like rings on the top of the head. While the district is crowded with salons specializing in the look, the Royal



## THE ROYAL ROSE SOCIETY

Rose Society is widely considered the best. Its other services include the grooming of rhydan and the intricate application of cosmetics and henna-like skin-dyes. These are all scented with extracts from blue roses: the honeyed-clove aroma of pressed petals, the spicy liquorish of crushed leaves, or the sweet citrus of a broken stem.



### LAYOUT

The roughly pentagonal compound is one of the only structures in Kyanite *not* to be surrounded by blue roses, which might have competed for glory with the Society's fabulous hair creations. Its four buildings (which have nearby merged into one after years of additions and renovations) wrap around a lovely central atrium where visitors are greeted. The area is lushly planted with a variety of flowers from across Aldeia.

One of the salon's four buildings is dedicated to training future stylists to perfect the rose crown and other hairstyling techniques. The other three allow stylists licensed by the Society to rent spaces and sell their skills to the public. The somewhat twisting and baroque rooms and hallways were built to mimic the structure of a rose. While this was done to prove the salon's love of roses, it creates a somewhat claustrophobic environment of unsettling, oddly-shaped spaces.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The salon's owner, **Erevan Alfaeo** (see **CHAPTER 8**), is also considered its most talented stylist. His schedule rarely has room for new clients, as he spends most of his time servicing his regulars. One of the most insistent is **Esington Waithe** (use the **Noble, CHAPTER 8**), an impressively built green noble who grows more despondent every time Erevan rejects his romantic advances.

**Wren Blackbeak** (use the **Elite Noble, CHAPTER 8**) works as the salon's receptionist and gardener. She is an incredibly petite woman with brown hair, brown skin, and brown fingernails—the latter from the amount of time she spends gardening. She is incredibly soft-spoken and always seems more comfortable around plants than people. Erevan employs her as a receptionist only because the atrium isn't large enough to justify a full-time gardener.

### STORY SEEDS

- After the Society is set on fire, the lack of an obvious motive makes everyone a suspect.
- Erevan is found one morning in the Society atrium, covered in Wren Blackbeak's blood, her dead body at his feet. He is unwilling—or unable—to speak about what happened.

## CHAPTER 4: THE MIDDLE WARD

- Cloudblight strikes the salon's flowers, covering them in wisps of orange mold that soon spread to its clients' hair.
- From admitting to affairs to confessing to cheating on their taxes, the citizens of Kyanite suddenly become a great deal more honest—dangerously so. It turns out the Silence has been testing a new kind of psychic sorcery, one spread by the scent of blue roses. The Society is the only refuge.
- An odd rumbling rises from the sewers running beneath the building every day at dawn and dusk.

### ALFAEO ESTATE

#### SHOPS & ESTATE RESIDENCES

The Alfaeo estate is a sprawling complex of townhouses and shops bookended by wedge-shaped manor houses. When built, it was intended to be the permanent home of the entire Alfaeo clan, with private residences for each family and manors for the family heads. However, romance, intrigue, and adventure pulled many family members to other parts of the city and even further afield. Rather than let the townhouses stand vacant, Erevan—made caretaker of the old property—began renting them to other Middle Ward residents and shopkeeps, eager to show initiative in earning some benefit for the family.



#### LAYOUT

Yuumei and Violet Alfaeo, the family matriarchs, run the family and its shipping empire from the eastern manor house. They have given Erevan the keys to the western manor house and entrusted him with its care.

The manor houses stand three stories tall; each boasts a sun parlor in the narrow end of the triangular building. The stunning glass ceilings vault the full three-story height; two bedrooms overlook each sun parlor from interior balconies. The sun parlors are densely planted with light-loving plants from the world over and are often used to host lavish galas.

Between the manors, townhouses line the block. As is typical in this ward, many feature shops or art galleries on the first floor. Two workshops stand in a hidden courtyard sandwiched between the townhouses. One is rented by Ankti and Tadeas Lunathorn, a married ceramicist and glassblower. The other is rented by **Fourash Tallore** (see CHAPTER 8), an elderly rhy-cat skilled in the use of shaping arcana to carve *duduks*: woodwind flutes which produce a haunting, purr-like song.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Yuumei** (use the *Heroic Merchant*, CHAPTER 8) and **Violet Alfaeo** (use the *Heroic Noble*, CHAPTER 8), known as

the “Alfaeo flowers,” have a legendary love story that evolves every time they tell it. Adventures on the high seas, pirates, and jealous sea-folk ex-lovers are common elements, peppered with numerous and detailed bedroom escapades neither woman is shy about sharing. They have also shared several male lovers over the years; all have now either died or moved on.

Yuumei's skills veer more toward business, while Violet (rumored to be a former pirate herself) focuses on all things sailing. While they inherited the already-successful Alfaeo shipping empire, together they took the enterprise to new heights.

**Ankti and Tadeas Lunathorn** (use the *Laborer*, CHAPTER 8, for both), meanwhile, met at a tradeshow for skilled handicrafters. Each was deeply impressed by the other's talent and passion for his art. They fell immediately in love, and now refer to their ceramic and glassware creations as their “children.”

#### STORY SEEDS

- Fourash Tallore purchases a *kuweeca*, a type of friction drum, which seems to be haunted. He tries to dispose of it, and even destroy it, but it somehow returns to his workshop every morning and continues to produce a strange crying noise every night.
- Tadeas has been accidentally infusing his work with arcana, causing his tiny glass animals to come to life at night. The creatures have slashed the heads off all the flowers in the Alfaeo estate, then arranged them in the kiln.
- Violet Alfaeo has been kidnapped, and Yuumei is frantic to find her. A spurned lover from their past may have returned to strike at the women, or maybe a disinherited child is showing their anger. Surely Erevan, the golden boy, can't be involved?
- It starts as simple pranks—torn paintings, broken mugs, spilt ink—throughout the estate. Then, things escalate—chairs are shattered, walls gouged, desks upended. And now, worst of all, a servant has been stabbed!

### M3

### THE SINGE

This historic neighborhood has always been famous for two things: its nightlife and the massive fire in its past. Forty years ago, a blaze swept south through the entire district; only the Old City Wall kept it from spreading to the High Ward. Many homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed. While the name “the Singe” has always been controversial, especially to survivors, most residents use it like a badge of honor, proof of the neighborhood's resilience.

# CHAPTER 4: THE MIDDLE WARD

ALDIS

## THE ROTUNDA

### CITY PARK

This crumbling jumble of stone was once a famed bastion of the Old City Wall, and the site of a shadowspawn skirmish after the Great Rebellion. The shadow-spawn rallied at the tower's base after weakening its foundations. Finally, they believed, the tower was about to fall, and they would have their run of the city. However, the city's shapers had other plans. They used their arcana to destroy the tower themselves, toppling it outwards to crush the enemies arrayed outside. The tower was never restored, and is now known as the Rotunda. Planted with shady oaks and elms, it is a beloved city park famous for its summer picnics.



### LAYOUT

The Rotunda's perfectly round shape is outlined by the foundations of the tower that once stood there. Short tower walls still remain in a few places, jutting from the ground like dulled teeth, but most of the stone was robbed away after the tower fell. What's left is now used primarily as impromptu climbing frames by children. The three large trees planted in the Rotunda's center blanket nearly the entire area in sun-dappled shadow.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The Singe employs **Wilidere Dabor** (use the *Elite Laborer, CHAPTER 8*) as the Rotunda's primary caretaker. Though painfully polite, many find the vata'sha's burning eyes deeply unsettling, and he has taken to performing the bulk of his duties after sundown. When he does brave the park in the sunlight, many parents instinctively draw their children closer for a moment. Rumors say he once served a sorcerer, but Dabor heartily denies such allegations. He insists he is a refugee from Jarzon and nothing more.

### STORY SEEDS

- The three trees begin to wither and die, their blackened, leafless branches growing gnarled, like arthritic fingers. The blackness spreads down through their roots and into the very grass.
- A young night person's body is found in the Rotunda the morning after a night-picnic. Investigations reveal a twisted web of slave trafficking. The victims? All Jarzoni refugees, seeking a better life, but finding only new miseries.
- Jarzon declares Dabor an enemy of the state and demands his arrest for crimes he allegedly committed in his youth. Now, the arcane talents he has denied for so long may be the only way to prove his innocence.

- The three trees have begun to move. Very, very slowly, they're lifting their roots like legs, wrenching free of the ground, and treading north. Rumors claim the trees are awakening to the Call for the first time in history.

## THE OUBLIETTE

### NIGHTCLUB

This notoriously raucous nightclub stands near the border of the Middle and Lower Wards. While its dungeon theme caters to darker tastes, the owners run a tight ship and put a priority on safety. Patrons can pay for nearly any service, but undercover Wardens roam the halls, ready to step in if anything goes too far or illegal activities are detected. Any who break the rules are banished for life.



### LAYOUT

This squat, square building was deliberately built with low ceilings to increase the sense of foreboding inside. While it appears to be a single-story structure from the street, it extends several stories underground.

The street-level floor offers the quietest music; musical styles become louder each floor you descend. This helps control the sound and prevents neighbors from complaining. The under-basement (the lowest floor) often features music including the ululating wails of vata'sha death whistles, which some have described as sufficient to trigger a severe migraine.

A street-level courtyard serves as a hookah bar; all its foliage was chosen for being nearly scentless, so as not to detract from the flavors and aromas of the smoke. Inside, this floor features spacious, dimly-lit mingling areas and dance floors. The underground stories offer a few large dance areas, as well as a number of intimate, private rooms.

An innovative series of vents and shas crystal-powered fans circulate air through the lower levels of the building. Unfortunately, since some of the vents connect to the system of catacombs crisscrossing Aldis, they are a favorite refuge of pests, leading to the occasional circulation of unpleasant odors, as well.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Sex work in Aldis is both legal and regulated, and **Felora Gardini** (use the *Heroic Noble, CHAPTER 8*), the Oubliette's head madam, was hired specifically for her lawful, no-nonsense attitude. She is thick-bodied, but knows how to use every inch to her advantage. Her gowns are specifically tailored to be as skintight as possible in order to show off her every curve. She always paints her full, rosebud lips a deep rose blue.

**Ubaid Kazemde** (use the *Laborer, CHAPTER 8*) is a beautiful young vata'an belly dancer who works in the court-

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yard. He is not yet old enough to study the pleasure arts, and so is not allowed to venture into the establishment's lower floors. He is smart, ambitious, and fearless—the relative safety offered at the Oubliette may have given him a false sense of security around some of its clientele.

**Greene Mouseblossom** (see **CHAPTER 8**) is Ubaid's exact opposite. A petite adept who specializes in manipulating fire for artistic performances, her personality is quiet and cunning; ironically, she could be described as almost anything but fiery. She often provides pyrotechnic accompaniment for **Emile Hazestar** (see **CHAPTER 8**), a struggling bard who is only ever given performance slots early in the evening, before the club gets into full swing.

### STORY SEEDS

- Suddenly, Emile Hazestar grows popular. His song "Golden Dawn" has become a genuine hit. Its notes strum from every tavern, and its lyrics sing from the entire city's lips. The eyes of its most ardent fans begin turning a deep, golden yellow. Productivity in Aldis slows as work grinds to a halt—everyone is too busy listening to "Golden Dawn."
- The Oubliette is attacked by a pack of darkfiends. Patrons struggle to escape or barricade themselves in downstairs rooms, hoping to survive long enough to be rescued. However, the fiends seem to be avoiding one particular room...
- Felora Gardini has begun wasting away, both in body and spirit. Her flesh hangs from her bones like wet laundry, and she no longer even has the strength to lift her head. The healers say something—or someone—seems to be feeding off her very lifeforce.
- A noble who frequents the club claims he's being blackmailed by the Silence. The next day, he has no memory of this conversation and vehemently denies any blackmail occurring.

### M4

## RIVASI HEIGHTS

The Heights sits on a natural rise. Before the city's waterworks system was expanded to service the area, early residents had to dig especially deep wells to reach water; they compensated by installing elegant drain pools and cisterns to catch and store rainwater instead. Today, thanks to the city's extensive water system, these features are mostly decorative. The many houses still surrounded by small moats have tiled them with intricate mosaics. Ferns, cattails, and irises thrive along their borders. Rivasi Heights is heavily residential, with very few shops and businesses. Most residents work and shop in neighboring Whalefin, a district with comparatively few private homes.

### M5

## ELMBURY

This sprawling neighborhood south of Rivasi Heights was named for looking like the buried roots of a tree when its streets were first viewed on a map, as its roads all seem to branch from a central square like roots from a trunk. Over the years, residents have further cemented the name with copious plantings of trees along every boulevard. Each street is contained in its own tunnel of arching branches. The constant shade allows a slippery, yellowish moss called *rockbeard* to grow between the cobbles.

## THE LANDSEA AMPHITHEATER

### THEATER

The Landsea pioneered semi-aquatic theater, in which sea-folk and land-dwellers perform epic, sweeping plays. The primary tradition of this theatrical style is that no more than sixty percent of any performance may occur on either water or stage. Most initial tales focused on pirates, sea-folk, and shipwrecked sailors, but lately, romances have gained in popularity. Some more daring playwrights even use the amphitheater as a place to experiment with more symbolic stories, in which action on the water is used to indicate characters' emotional states, while action on the stage furthers the actual plot.



### LAYOUT

The covered seating area curls around the stage in a semi-circle. Seats are deeply tiered to increase the vertical space, and thus increase the number of audience members who can fit into the building.

Behind the stage, a rectangular pool is reserved for the aquatic portion of performances. A high wall has been erected around the back of the pool to prevent people from viewing shows without buying a ticket. Footlight shas globes line the edge of the pool, and headlight globes line the top of the wall.

Beneath the stage lies a storage area for various pieces of set dressing; complex rigging raises and lowers each piece to and from the stage. Winding underground aqueducts and pumps supply the pool with fresh water from Rivasi Heights and the Rose River.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The unspeakably graceful laevvel, **Krauss Miller** (use the **Heroic Noble**, **CHAPTER 8**), is the amphitheater's current

## CHAPTER 4: THE MIDDLE WARD

manager. Miller oversees every aspect of every production, from casting actors, to selling tickets, to creating refreshment menus. Miller does it all from within a chiffon cloud of rainbow-hued gowns and veils, exclusively designed by **Adele** (see **CHAPTER 8**), the theater's most talented costume designer. Miller consistently has her fingers in so many pies, many swear she doesn't have time to sleep and must survive exclusively on arcana and energy potions.

In truth, Miller is a set of eccentric twins constantly swapping places in and out of the public eye. Both twins were born female, though one is laevel. They believe their joint lifestyle is the most productive way to live—one or the other is constantly at work on their shared goals. One of their longest-running aims has been to propel the sea-folk actor **Nirvelli Nerin** (see **CHAPTER 8**) to superstardom. The joint efforts of the secret twins have worked: Nerin is by far the Landsea's most popular leading person.

### STORY SEEDS

- Krauss Miller rushes onstage in the middle of a performance, screaming. She claims her twin has been kidnapped by the theater's resident phantom. Many leading actors have claimed romantic dalliances with the phantom over the decades, but these encounters were always described as consensual. They've also been written off as local legend.
- Adele's costumes begin spontaneously bursting into flame onstage, killing one actor and injuring several others. Is it due to sorcery, alchemy, or some other malevolent source?
- Nirvelli Nerin decides to perform a play considered to be both the most romantic play ever written, and as an accursed one. It hasn't been performed in decades, because at some point during every run, the lead actor vanishes from the stage in a smoky explosion, never to be seen again.

### M6

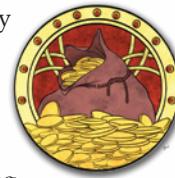
## WHALEFIN

This neighborhood was reborn as Whalefin after its bowl-like shape lead to repeated, extensive flooding. Rather than fight nature, Aldis' citizens decided to embrace it. Residents largely abandoned the district and entrepreneurs moved in, bringing aquatic businesses and entertainment inland. Its wildly popular seafood restaurants (many situated on stilts to avoid flooding) cater to gourmet tastes and specialize in serving raw fish with delectable sauces and foams. Whalefin is the only neighborhood in the ward whose fishy scent is not only pervasive, but desirable.

## THE WINDSAIL SYMPHONY

### SYMPHONY HALL

Water and wind combine at the Symphony to create eerie and fantastical musical performances. Winds sweeping south from the Heights are captured by towering canvas sails and redirected through a multitude of pipes, creating wailing melodies in varying pitches. Some of the pipes curl under a vast pool beneath the sails, releasing bubbles of air underwater that glug to the surface to create staccato bursts of rhythm. While the Windsail breathes haunting music on its own, day and night, master conductors have learned to shift the sails and close the pipes to create more structured performances.



### LAYOUT

The roof of this circular building is formed by seven moveable sails. As they shift due to the machinations of the wind itself—or conductors seeking to control it—they become a kinetic sculpture, piercing and shaping the sky.

While the Windsail's music can be heard faintly from outside, the architecture directs the building's sounds toward its central audience chamber. This area is reached by seven bridges arching over the Windsail's "music pool." The conductor stands on a platform directly below the audience but above the surface of the pool.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Kile Mistraker** (see **CHAPTER 8**) is one of the Windsail's newest conductors. Known for his daring compositions and flamboyant fashions, he specializes in concerts during wild storms, much to the dismay of **Seren Serwa** (use the **Guard**, **CHAPTER 8**), the aging sea-folk who maintains the Windsail. Serwa restrings new sails as needed, and keeps the pipes clean and clear of blockages. The work is physically demanding, just as Serwa likes it. In her youth, she was a fire-pearl diver, collecting sulfur-colored pearls from the spiky fire oysters clustered around underwater volcanic vents.

Serwa is typically quiet and keeps to herself, but violently defends anyone she perceives as being victimized. In physical altercations, she is known to be reckless, willing to sustain dire injuries to land decisive victories. Rumors say a mistake she made in her youth cost a fellow diver his life, and she's never stopped trying to make amends.

### STORY SEEDS

- The strange music produced at the Windsail somehow opens a whole new kind of shadowgate. Its shadowspawn are like nothing ever seen before—

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in fact, they're not seen at all: they're as invisible as the wind itself.

- Every night after a Mistraker performance, Serwa has the same disturbing dream. She holds a fire-pearl in her hand, and watches as a strange rune inscribes itself on the surface. The pearl grows, transforming into a distant island. Then, someone screams in a language she can't understand, and she wakes up. It feels like a message, but to what purpose? And from whom?
- First, the rats begin to die. Then, the feral cats begin to die. Then, the dogs. Finally, a horse. All seem to have mutated slightly, growing fins, gills, and scales. It's almost as if the Windsail's music is casting a spell, transforming them...

### THE MERNAGERIE

#### CITY AQUARIUM

When the district transitioned to be both more commercial and flood-proof, a fantastical, four-tank aquarium was constructed at its center. The project was funded entirely by a wealthy merchant, Foxboth Prie, and now nets a healthy profit. All manner of exotic aquatic life is temporarily displayed here, then freed back to the Rose River, Lake Vash, and beyond. One tank is typically reserved for more dangerous-looking animals, such as sharks, juvenile giant squid, and Vashian spinefish.



#### LAYOUT

The Mernagerie is divided into four towering display tanks by two walkways. While anyone can walk up and peer into these recreated underwater worlds from the outside, the interior walkways can only be accessed by paying an admission fee. Heavily reinforced glass arches over each walkway entrance, allowing smaller creatures to swim over guests giving the impression visitors are truly entering the realm of the sea-folk.

Platforms over each tank allow keepers to feed and care for the creatures inside, as well as give educational talks to guests. Just north of the Mernagerie is a warehouse storing the wheeled pools used for transporting the aquatic creatures. These pool-carts are enchanted with special arcana to keep them light enough to be pulled by an ordinary team of horses, despite the heavy water and animals inside.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

When **Foxboth Prie** (use the *Elite Merchant, CHAPTER 8*) was a young lad, his family was killed in a storm at sea. He was adopted by family friends and feels he only survived thanks to their charity. This has given him a deep commit-

## CHAPTER 4: THE MIDDLE WARD

ment to philanthropy, though he has otherwise recovered well from his childhood trauma. Prie has an eager and boisterous laugh and is generally described as jolly and generous. However, as with many rich philanthropists, a number of citizens suspect darker urges lurk beneath his friendly facade.

**Rusalk Ryba** (use the **Noble**, **CHAPTER 8**) is the Mernagerie's primary keeper. Though human, he has always been fascinated by water and sea-folk; some might call him a bit obsessed. He has studied aquatic creatures his entire life, and as a young man, gave himself a sea-folk name (his birth name is Barth Greenflow). He typically paints his skin a pale blue and uses lemon juice to lighten his chestnut hair, then dyes it an algal green. When Prie was searching for Mernagerie employees, Ryba was at the top of his list.

Ryba is so earnest about his passions, it can make other people uncomfortable; his eagerness to share his vast knowledge at the slightest provocation has given him a reputation as an odd duck. While this characterization frustrates Ryba, he is generally quite kind, especially to the aquatic life in his care.

### STORY SEEDS

- Someone—or something—begins eating the helpless animals from the Mernagerie. Like fish in a barrel...
- Rusalk Ryba's poor social skills lead him to accidentally challenge a noble to a duel of honor.
- Foxboth Prie decides to devote one tank to the breeding and harvesting of sea urchins, a valuable commodity due to the natural purple dye they produce. However, conflict emerges in the community when sea-folk myths supporting the existence of rhy-urchins are revealed.
- Visitors claim to see a bone-chilling trail of mist weaving through one of the tanks at twilight. It's described by witnesses as having an eel-like face with a serrated grin.

## OKEAHNA THEATER & SWIMTRACK

### CITY SWIMTRACK

These two interconnected buildings were constructed to honor both the art of physical achievement and the physicality of art—or at least that's what the brochures say. In truth, the gambling offered at the swimtrack was meant to fund the performances at the theater. This arrangement worked even better than expected, as the theater is sufficiently popular that it often doesn't need the help, giving the Okeahna some of the highest profits of any business in the ward.



### LAYOUT

The audience sits in the center of the circular Okeahna Theater, entering via underground tunnels painted with murals of sea-folk myths. The theatrical performances occur in the vast pool encircling the seats, and are typically devoted to breathtaking aquatic acrobatic displays. A shas-powered pump mechanism can be used to swirl and churn the water into a controlled maelstrom. Famously, the climax of each show occurs when skilled shapers lift wagon-sized bubbles of water into the air as swimmers cavort inside.

The elongated swimtrack shares a similar structure, with audiences entering via tunnels and sitting in the center of the track. The track itself is a comparatively shallow pool, only about fifteen feet in depth, save for the deeper area below the diving platform. The track is used for all manner of competitions, from sea-folk-only swimming races to human high dive competitions to hippocamp speed trials.

An aqueduct connects the theater with the track. Its only purpose is as an advertising tool: winners at the track often hold victory parades along its length, while actors and acrobats use the space to warm up and practice before shows to lure potential audience members into buying tickets.

Tickets are purchased for both venues at a booth at the western end of the track. This is also where audiences enter the tunnels leading to their seats. In between the audience entry tunnels stand wedge-shaped dressing rooms for actors and waiting rooms for competitors.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Cascata Bonefury** (use the **Epic Guard**, **CHAPTER 8**) is one of the few athletes to frequent both the theater and the racetrack. The night person is not only a star swimmer, but a talented aquatic acrobat. Commentators often remark on her agility and grace despite her thick and corded muscles. Bonefury comes from a long line of soldiers; a brick in the Old City Wall is carved with her family name, showing where her ancestors once defended Aldis from an attack by darkfiends. She has never been interested in bloodshed, however, instead channeling the violence from her family's history into her fiercely competitive nature. She has been accused of using potions or arcana to enhance her athletic prowess, but has always vehemently denied such allegations.

**Benjamin Chirp** (use the **Merchant**, **CHAPTER 8**) handles all the betting and odds-making at the track. He can best be described as a nice man—entirely too nice. Individuals invariably walk away feeling somehow sullied after an interaction with Chirp, no matter how innocent the conversation seemed to be. An air of devousness runs through his every movement, though no one has ever uncovered what motives lie beneath his friendly veneer.

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## BATTLE OF THE BANDIT KING

Just after the Great Rebellion, a bandit king decided to seize Aldis for himself. The city's troops were weakened and depleted from the constant fighting: a biscuit dunked in tea, if you will—soft and ready to crumble.

Wielding a great battle-axe, the bandit king led his horde towards the Old City Wall, all the while singing bloodcurdling drinking songs about what he would do to the men, women, children, and rhydan huddled behind it.

Unfortunately, his booming bass voice carried right across the farmland and made him a perfect target for the city's most skilled archer, Reed Kimura. The archer nocked an arrow, whispered a prayer to the Seven, and let fly. The head plunged directly into the bandit king's eye, burying the shaft in his skull. He was killed instantly.

The bandit force was thrown into immediate chaos—clearly, the city was stronger and more prepared than they'd bargained for. They retreated without firing a single shot.

### STORY SEEDS

- The heroes must protect Cascata Bonefury from an assassin, whether she wants their help or not.
- A famous diver vanishes in the water during a competition after a particularly perfect dive.
- The waters of both arenas turn to blood in the middle of performances. It's not part of the show.
- The competitors at the top of the bracket for an upcoming competition all fall mysteriously ill. It could be the downfall of Benjamin Chirp—unless he's actually behind it.
- The usually-peaceful hippocamps turn on each other during a race, beating one stallion to death with their hooves.

M7

## AXEHEAD

This neighborhood was named as a sly prod at a fallen bandit king and his mighty weapon; a public square stands on the site where his great axe fell when he died. On one side of the square, a statue honoring a heroic archer was erected. On the other side of the square, in the path of the statue's arrow, a statue-less plinth was built, the empty platform symbolizing the bandit king's defeat—and his forgotten name. Where he once stood, an entire, bustling neighborhood rose, filled with happy homes, serene shops, and laughing children.

## THE PLINTH

### PUBLIC STAGE

The platform left empty for the bandit king was eventually named the Plinth. It's now used as a sort of tiny public stage. Anyone can sign up to spend an hour atop the Plinth, doing whatever they choose. Some people use their time



to speak on an issue important to them, while others take the opportunity to publicly create a new work of art. Some spend an hour meditating quietly, enjoying the view, or performing a monologue from a famous play. Sometimes days or weeks pass when no one chooses to perform on the Plinth, but then the structure experiences a burst of popularity, with citizens squabbling over time slots.

### LAYOUT

The Plinth stands a little taller than the average one-story house. It is carved from white marble veined with faint blue streaks. A wheeled staircase is kept just outside the square, then rolled into position whenever anyone wants to climb up or down the Plinth.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Liang (use the **Heroic Laborer**, CHAPTER 8) and his rhy-cat bond-mate, Nahm (use the stats for *Fourash Tallore* in CHAPTER 8), are the Plinth's current caretakers. They maintain it, keeping it clean and well-polished, as well as managing the list of guests who'd like to spend an hour atop it. Liang is a quiet man, rarely saying much to anyone but Nahm. His facial expressions, however, speak volumes. Some consider his silence a sign of grumpiness, but Liang simply prefers not to waste energy on meaningless conversation. He was never much good at small talk, anyway. Both Liang and Nahm were once members of the Sovereign's Finest. They consider this their retirement job; an easy, peaceful way to continue contributing to the city they love.

### STORY SEEDS

- A Jarzoni dignitary climbs the Plinth and announces her intention to kill herself while up there. Her father has forbidden her from marrying the night person she fell in love with, and her beloved has since vanished.
- One day, everyone who mounts the Plinth ends up performing a disturbing shadow dance.
- Angry at what it represents, a group of bandits who consider themselves descendants of the bandit king steal the Plinth.

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- A woman mounts the Plinth to share her grandmother's prize-winning sourdough recipe. The next day, people begin falling ill all across the city.
- A young bard heads atop the Plinth to sing his latest song. It seems to be a love song, but also incites violence in all who hear it.

### LOVERIDGE ACADEMY

#### PRIVATE ACADEMY

Once a square of stately apartment buildings, this construction was recently purchased and renovated by **Sharwani Loveridge** (use the **Noble, CHAPTER 8**) as a special school for *qu'alius*. Sharwani welcomes any case and never turns anyone away, regardless of their ability to pay for their tuition and board. She accepts charitable donations to help support the academy, while her students also pitch in by selling the artisan craft goods they create. Profits from the sales go first to cover the students' fees if they otherwise cannot afford them, with the remainder used to further the academy's work and fund scholarships.



#### LAYOUT

Where possible within the constraints of the old buildings, the academy has been constructed to ensure maximum accessibility for its students. Wide corridors and doorways, along with ample space between workbenches and desks, permit wheelchair access. Each classroom has racks for canes to be stored safely while not in use, and all clutter is kept to an absolute minimum to ensure safety of movement for the physically and visually impaired. Designated storage spaces are rigidly maintained for craft and teaching materials so students always know where to find a given item, and lighting throughout the academy can be altered to best accommodate the students' requirements.

The academy's first floor is mostly made up of classrooms and workshops, all of which smell of chalk and old wood. Some are outfitted like miniature gymnasiums, with specially-designed pieces of equipment students can use to stretch and strengthen their bodies and other senses, while the remainder are much more traditional teaching spaces.

The second floor houses the faculty bedrooms, the kitchen, and the dining hall. The kitchen is extra-large and fully accessible, with numerous counters and stoves at different heights, so students can help cook their own food. The third floor is comprised almost entirely of student suites, each individually tailored to their occupant's requirements. Ramps and staircases link each of the floors.

Outside, a central courtyard houses several kilns; the rest of the area is a park-like retreat where students can get fresh air or play outside. The sensory gardens, developed with the assistance of the Institute of Arcanobotany, are a particular feature of note. Due to the lack of growing space

#### THE QU'ALIUS

*Qu'alius* is the Aldin term for the differently-abled. It can refer to the blind, the deaf, or those with various physical differences, such as dwarfism, missing limbs, or permanently hunched backs. Some *qu'alius* are born as such, while others are injured in accidents or by illness. In some areas, *qu'alius* are seen as bad luck and drains on society's resources. In Kern, they are considered useless and unworthy of life—a cruel and harmful opinion. Strong family ties in Jarzon usually ensure that *qu'alius* are cared for, if somewhat infantilized and kept apart from society as a whole. In Aldis, though, *qu'alius* tend to be just as valued as every other citizen. In ancient times, some were even revered, with the loss of a physical ability believed to gain the *qu'alius*' soul a closer connection to the gods.

While flesh shaping is sometimes used to "normalize" the bodies and abilities of *qu'alius*, this is not necessary or at all encouraged in Aldis. Rhydan—some of whom identify as *qu'alius* due to their lack of hands and/or feet—do not possess standard, two-legged bodies, and yet are fully integrated into Aldin society; their non-rhydan *qu'alius* counterparts are no different.

for fruit and vegetables within the academy's grounds, Sharwani's students regularly attend the Institute to develop their horticultural skills while also providing food for the table, and Institute students and lecturers regularly act as guest speakers.

Despite the challenges the old buildings present, the academy's ethos of supporting one another while also developing the skills to support oneself means that no student is left to struggle in terms of either their studies or their ability to access the academy's facilities. As a result, the student body is a close-knit and encouraging one, and Sharwani hopes that, one day, her former pupils will either return as teachers or develop schools of their own.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Sharwani Loveridge** was born without legs. One of her fathers, unbeknownst to the other, paid a corrupt flesh-shaper an exorbitant sum to try and craft a pair for her. But the procedure went disastrously wrong, almost killing her in the process. Her father, Kamur, nursed her back to health, then trained her in the family business: pottery. After a long and successful career, Sharwani now devotes her life to operating a special school to empower *qu'alius* to lead happy, fulfilling lives. Loveridge Fine Porcelain is known throughout the city, and its value has skyrocketed since Loveridge stopped making it. She now teaches every ceramics class at her school, and sells only her students' work.

Besides her missing limbs, Loveridge has a puckered, pock-marked face and other scarring as a result of the botched procedure she was forced to undergo as a child. Despite the pain she has suffered, there is no purer heart

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in all Aldis. She tempers her kindness only when necessary to encourage her students to find their own way.

**Sahn Huaki** (see **CHAPTER 8**) is one of the teachers at the school. Both her arms had to be amputated after a horrific factory accident; she has now learned to use her feet to accomplish almost any task. Despite these victories, she remains sad for her loss. She adores Sharwani's mission, but a part of her despises the woman's insistently-sunny personality.

### STORY SEEDS

- A young blind girl reveals she can suddenly see. But the blood-soaked horrors playing before her eyes are not what anyone would wish to view.
- All the students and teachers become suddenly weak and frail—except for Sahn Huaki, who begins to grow new arms.
- The ghost of the bandit king (see the sidebar **Battle of the Bandit King**) possesses a girl to enact his revenge on one of her classmates, who he believes to be a reincarnation of Reed Kimura.
- A Jarzoni mercenary is sent to abduct a student, a religious dissenter known for protesting Jarzon's qu'alias policy of segregation, institutionalization, and silence.
- Sahn Huaki requests outside help and guidance when a group of students begin to bully everyone else—including their teachers.

### M8

## MOUSE HOLLOW

Mouse Hollow was one of the first neighborhoods built outside the Old City Wall. All its structures are compact and crammed together, as if the architects were afraid of sprawling too far beyond the city limits. The district is also one of the few to feature blue tea roses in abundance. The flowers are so named due to their diminutive size—each blossom “no bigger than a mouse’s teacup.” No one really knows if these tiny but beautiful flowers were cultivated in the district at some point in the past, or are perhaps the result of some dormant power that keeps them small (and is perhaps also responsible for the Tiny Tree).

## TINY TREE

### CITY PLAZA

Legend holds this maple tree was planted when the neighborhood was first built. It was deliberately placed in the center of a large plaza to give it plenty of room to grow. However, for some reason, the



tree never really did. It’s still no taller than a sapling, though its abundant, leafy branches clearly mark it as an adult tree.

### LAYOUT

The Tiny Tree stands in the center of a grassy knoll. Its roots seem to be full size, and stretch all the way to the edges of the plaza’s cobblestones.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Pluton** (see **CHAPTER 8**) is a rhy-rat who has burrowed a home amidst the tree’s roots. At one time, he had big dreams about becoming an adventurer and freeing the world from evil, but he was inadvertently stepped on during his first real fight. His hind legs have never quite been the same, and neither has his damped personality. Still, he enjoys telling the story of the Tiny Tree to any who will listen.

### STORY SEEDS

- The evening after a spring music festival at the Tiny Tree, all the neighborhood’s children disappear. Footprints seem to indicate they simply walked—or skipped—away.
- Pluton dreams of the Old Kingdom, as if reliving a past life—one in which he had a very important mission he was never able to complete.
- A traveler from a distant land claims the Tiny Tree is an affront to his god, and vows to destroy it.
- Incredibly, the Tiny Tree begins to speak. In a voice that sounds like breaking wood, it claims a sorcerer has been bringing trees to life, using them to spy on citizens, then tearing their newfound consciousness from their bodies before they can turn on him. The next day, the tree falls silent.

### M9

## CARDAMOM

This densely-populated district features a little bit of everything—shops, restaurants, residences, public baths, and more. It is the most varied of the Middle Ward’s neighborhoods, and its architecture reflects this. Some streets are lined with elaborate wooden row houses. Called “painted cake” architecture, the multistory townhouses are notable for their pastel plaster and intricate, contrasting trims, reminiscent of the frosted bunting on the sides of cakes. This style of construction was pioneered by Jonathan Hegwer, a regionally famous baker and early resident of the district, who designed his bakery as a permanent way to advertise the beauty of his confections.

## CHAPTER 4: THE MIDDLE WARD

# THE GRIFFON'S QUILL

## TATTOO PARLOR

When the popularity of Hegwer's treats forced him to move to a larger facility, he sold his business' original home—much to the surprise of his two apprentices, Chakri Ashcloak and Tal Canson. Both had not-so-secretly expected to be named manager of the now-satellite premises. Never again used as a bakery, the building has since changed hands a number of times. Most recently, the tattoo artist Plec Atramentum has set up shop there.



## LAYOUT

The building is a cozy duplex near the center of the neighborhood. Hegwer originally lived in one side and worked out of the other; while the bakery is now a tattoo parlor, Hegwer's home has become a cheese shop.

The interior of the bakery was gutted by an oven fire, but enterprising firefighters managed to save the building's shell, most of which is original. When it rains, the scent of burnt sugar permeates the rooms, seemingly exuding from the wood itself.

The first floor features a waiting room and a tattoo suite hosting a rotating array of visiting artists. Both are opulently furnished in sunset-colored leathers and gold trim; a few live ferns and palms provide splashes of contrasting green.

The second floor is home to a small art gallery showcasing the paintings and sculptures of Atramentum and the other artists, as well as Atramentum's private tattoo suite. The suite is practically decorated, almost ascetic compared to downstairs. Everything, from the wall paint to the leather chairs, is in shades of white, a stark contrast to the jewel-like pots of ink glimmering in the light from the canted bay window.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Plec Atramentum (use the **Commoner, CHAPTER 8**) rose to infamy after he was arrested on charges of sorcery. It was alleged he was infusing his tattoos with dark arcana, sometimes cursing the wearer while at other times providing a boon. Although many tattoos linked to Atramentum were indeed found to be enchanted, it could not be proven that Atramentum himself had woven

the sorcery inside. Many expected his business to shrivel away after the trial, but instead, it boomed. His shop was monitored closely by the Sovereign's Finest, but no more of his tattoos have been anything but ordinary.

Atramentum is a slender, almost waifish man, with a bird-like, hooked nose, disproportionately long legs, and spidery fingers. His chest curves slightly inwards due to an imperfection in his ribs; to compensate, he often wears shirts with elaborate ruffles cascading from the neck. His soft-spoken manner gives an impression of shyness and easily lends itself to suspicion. Rumors of his volcanic temper abound, though no one seems to have ever actually witnessed an explosion. His few close friends universally describe him as quiet, with a penchant for melancholy.

Tal Canson's (use the **Commoner, CHAPTER 8**) daily walk takes her past the Griffon's Quill; she always waves up at the bay window whether Atramentum can be seen or not. An ancient woman, she has looked to be on death's doorstep for decades. However, she continues to display a quick smile and a friendly manner, though her episodes of senility are growing more frequent. She requires a live-in nurse, and has been banned by doctors from using stairs.





Should a party choose to speak with Canson, the Narrator should roll 1d6. On a 1 or 4, Canson is having an episode and believes she's in her youth, mistaking modern characters for those from her past. On a 2, 3, 5, or 6, she is perfectly coherent and knows exactly who—and when—she is. She has never forgotten the fire that claimed **Chakri Ashcloak** (see **CHAPTER 8**).

### STORY SEEDS

- The lost ghost of Chakri Ashcloak does indeed haunt the Griffon's Quill and must be put to rest. However, doing so may stir up more of Tal Canson's past than she would prefer.
- Plec Atramentum begs for help to clear his name after another accusation of sorcery arises.
- The Griffon's Quill is mysteriously the only building on the block still standing after an earthquake.
- A man who received a tattoo of his late wife from Plec Atramentum claims the portrait comes to life at night and torments him.

## THE LORD OAK BAKERY

### BAKERY

The Lord Oak was the primary competitor to Jonathan Hegwer's bakery and has now become the most popular patisserie in the Middle Ward. The bakery is famous for sweets featuring unique flavor combinations, as well as its

alleged use of arcana in some recipes. Citizens of Aldis revere the business with a good-humored half-seriousness, raising their children to believe its "love cakes" really do encourage tender emotions and its "trouble truffles" really do ward off misfortune. The bakery has always dismissed such claims with a wink and a chuckle.

### LAYOUT

Due to its early rivalry with Jonathan Hegwer, the Lord Oak is one of the few buildings in Cardamom to *not* employ "painted cake" architecture; instead, it is built of simple, unadorned marble. Its only outward decorations are the broad windows lining every side of the building, each filled with fantastic confections of sparkling sugar.

It is also unique in being a single-story, flat-roofed structure in a ward where two to three stories are most common. The interior space is divided into three rooms: a café area packed with wrought-iron tables and chairs; a bakery area lined with shelves of sugary treats; and an industrial-sized kitchen/storeroom. The kitchen windowsills are filled with elaborate cakes, and passersby can look beyond them to watch the bakers at work.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Preesh Devah** (see **CHAPTER 8**) currently runs the Lord Oak. A Jarzoni immigrant, Devah and her family fled her homeland after discovering Devah's talent for healing.



## CHAPTER 4: THE MIDDLE WARD

However, Devah never had the desire to be a healer and has always found solace in baking.

### STORY SEEDS

- The wedding cake of a visiting dignitary is vandalized with a slur, threatening to create a diplomatic incident.
- When a group of Jarzoni Purists protest the Lord Oak's (and Preesh Devah's) alleged use of arcana, angry defenders of the bakery use violence to break up the crowd.
- The bakery's "thinny-chip cookies" begin making people ravenously hungry—and yet they continue to lose weight, becoming skeletally gaunt no matter how much they consume.
- Preesh Devah drops a marble rolling pin on the floor, shattering one of the tiles in the kitchen and revealing an ancient door to a secret underground passage. A howling wind emerges from around the cracks.

M10

## SUTRO DISTRICT

Surrounded by water on three sides, the Sutro District lies on the tip of a peninsula jutting into the Rose River. Four bridges connect the neighborhood to the districts across the river, including (clockwise from the western bridge) Cat's Gate Bridge, Market Bridge, Picket Bridge, and Drop Bridge.

The area is famous for its luxurious public baths and bathhouses, all of which make good use of their proximity to the river by pumping fresh water from its crystal depths. The district proudly offers baths to fit any price point, allowing everyone access to a cleansing and rejuvenating experience. The social aspects of the Sutro's baths cannot be overstated, providing a location for mingling, courting, and even negotiating business deals.

## MARKET BRIDGE

### MARKET

Market Bridge was the only bridge to span this part of the Rose River for quite some time, and thus was built as a wide and sturdy thoroughfare capable of withstanding heavy traffic. As other bridges spread across the waters, the full width of this span was no longer needed. Market booths sprang up along its sides. Instead of simply linking two market locations, it now serves as a shopping destination in its own right.



### LAYOUT

City code states all constructions on the bridge must be temporary in nature, able to be removed by nightfall if

needed. However, enforcement of this policy has grown quite lax. While many market stalls are simple tables covered by canvas tents, many others are more significant wooden booths; there are even several semi-permanent restaurants that have not been fully packed up or moved for years.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Rancine Clast** (use the **Merchant**, CHAPTER 8) runs the Fishing Spot, a restaurant she describes as "experiential dining." Guests sit at tables along the edge of the bridge and fish for their own meals; Clast's gourmet chefs then prepare and cook the fresh catches. It can be a time-consuming meal if the fish are feeling reluctant, but this leisurely pace has only made it more popular for dates and business meetings alike.

While Clast is human, her father was sea-folk, and she views the enterprise as a way to marry both sides of her heritage. She speaks and laughs loudly, and is often described by patrons as bold or brash. However, privately, Clast is incredibly quiet, bordering on insecure. For her, being social requires an immense amount of energy, and by nightfall she usually feels quite drained. She lives alone, with an old sea dog of indeterminate breed for companionship.

**Durian Jack** (see CHAPTER 8) runs a fruit stand near the bridge's northern tip. It specializes in exotic fruits brought in from all across Aldea. Jack pioneered a shipping technique utilizing specially-trained shapers to guarantee freshness. While the details are secret, the process allegedly combines plant-shaping, weather-shaping, and wind-shaping to prevent spoilage.

**Eri Ikeda** (use the **Elite Merchant**, CHAPTER 8) runs a *migramah* booth—a hair-braiding technique created by sailors utilizing knots rather than weaves or knits. She primarily sells beaded migramah jewelry, but also creates fantastically intricate hairstyles. She spent her childhood on the high seas, the beloved youngest of a sailing family. She left that lifestyle in search of a more structured one.

Ikeda has tried to train apprentices in the past, but most have fled in tears. The quality of her work comes at the price of being an obsessive perfectionist. She thrives on facts, figures, and logic, but struggles with emotions and feelings. That said, she is not cruel—she's simply kind only when she deduces the situation genuinely deserves it.

### STORY SEEDS

- An amphibious, troll-like aberration takes up residence under the bridge and begins demanding all passersby pay a toll to cross.
- When the fish stop biting entirely, Rancine Clast claims a rival is trying to drive her out of business.
- A rider's bloodied body is found one morning in the center of the bridge, his horse pacing anxiously

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beside him. A love note and a lock of obsidian hair are tucked in his pocket.

- Durian Jack abandons his fruit stand to pace obsessively in front of a temple, where he claims to have seen the ghost of his one true love.
- A dead woman's body is found floating in the Rose River, bound head to toe in Eri Ikeda's distinctive knots.

### THE RHEMAY SPA

#### SPA & PUBLIC BATHS

The Thermai Spa is a truly luxurious bathing experience. Almost no one—save for a handful of Aldis' wealthiest—can afford the spa on a daily basis; it is primarily used as a rare treat. The Thermai employs fire-shapers, water-shapers, and shas crystals to heat and move its whirling, bubbling baths. It even offers foot- and hand-baths full of toothless carp, which gently nibble away calluses to reveal the smooth, new skin beneath.



#### LAYOUT

Patrons of the Thermai enjoy sweeping views of the Rose River and the High Ward, as the spa is situated on the eastern bank of the Sutro District. A rectangular moat surrounds the building; a slight current allows bathers to drift slowly around the building on floats crafted from cork and wicker, draped with towels.

The Thermai's public baths are found in its central courtyard, and it is here where most of the spa's socializing takes place. Each wing of the surrounding building is devoted to a different luxury, with the north wing offering mud baths, the east wing offering massages, the south wing offering "carp services," and the west wing offering seaweed wraps to warm and relax the muscles.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Bulgan Urr** (see [CHAPTER 8](#)) is the face of the Thermai Spa, while **Moore Heather** (use the [Merchant](#), [CHAPTER 8](#)) serves as the brains of the establishment. Urr is a stunningly beautiful night person, impossibly personable and engaging. She personally welcomes every guest and handles all negotiations with dissatisfied customers.

By contrast, Heather works out of a small annex beside the spa, staying as far from the public eye as possible. A sea-folk with a port-wine stain birthmark covering nearly half her body, she was teased as a child and continues to view most people from within a cloud of mistrust. However, Heather is gifted with an incredible business acumen. When Urr decided to start a spa business, her only thought was to convince Heather, an old acquaintance, to work at her side.

#### STORY SEEDS

- The water of every bath in the spa turns blood red (perhaps at the same time as the similar event at the Swimtrack in this Ward).
- A new perfume distributed at the spa seems to be making patrons permanently drunk.
- A visiting noble from a distant country is horrifically burned when one of the baths suddenly turns to boiling water.
- When Moore Heather disappears, Bulgan Urr blames one of her own jealous lovers.
- The Thermai adds a flesh-shaping business, with Moore Heather as its first customer. But the treatments are temporary, forcing patrons to return—and pay—again and again.

### M11

### GRAINVIEW

City sprawl has eaten up what was once almost entirely peaceful farmland and orchards. However, the neighborhood cherishes its past: many of the homes and businesses here are located in converted barns and mills. A few such buildings are said to be haunted by the farmers who once owned them, but these rumors have proven to be more fiction than fact. Few people felt they lost their homes or were forced out as the city expanded. Some even chose to stay in their homes as the district materialized around them, eager to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by city life.

### M12

### MOONPOINT

This neighborhood makes up the southern point of the Middle Ward crescent, hence its name. It was never quite as heavily agrarian as Grainview, beginning as a small fishing community at the mouth of Lake Vash. The village grew in concert with the rest of the ward and can now only be described as "thriving." The neighborhood puts on a bonny fish festival every year at the start of spawning season, replete with fish-shaped paper lanterns, savory (and sweet!) fish pies, and "mouth fishing" contests (similar to our world's bobbing for apples, save with small live fish in place of fruit!).

### HEDGEROW HOUSE

#### RETREAT

Overlooking Lake Vash, this sprawling mansion stands at the very tip of Moonpoint. It can best be described as



an asylum in the purest sense of the word: a place of refuge and retreat, affording protection and security. Stays here are always voluntary, and mostly free: Hedgerow is entirely funded by the Crown.

All citizens of Aldis are encouraged to stay at Hedgerow House whenever they feel the need; there is no stigma attached. Many citizens go their entire lives without once setting foot there, while others require periodic stays throughout their lives or a single stay after a particularly traumatic event. Psychic adepts and healers at the house treat all manner of mental maladies, from depression to anxiety and grief, as well as more serious problems.

## LAYOUT

The three-story mansion is roughly rectangular in shape, with a semi-circular courtyard carved out of one side. A small gatehouse stands at the end of the drive, monitoring who enters and exits the grounds. Lush gardens surround the entire building, a living moat of blossoms.

The first floor houses the kitchen, drawing room, dining room, parlor, and library. The second and third floors are primarily residential, featuring both single rooms and multi-party suites. The second floor also offers a music room, and the third floor a playroom.

The adepts and servants who keep the place running stay primarily in the attic rooms—the low ceilings prevent these from counting as a full fourth story. In addition to a pantry, the cellar contains a canning room and a wine cellar.



## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Freewell Pineton** (see **CHAPTER 8**) serves as the unassuming gatekeeper to the estate. A kindly and sensitive man, Pineton often provides the house's other adepts with guests' initial diagnoses, drawn not from probing anyone's minds but from innate empathy.

The estate's head adept, **Grer Voubros** (see **CHAPTER 8**), works with every patient and helps to create each individual treatment plan. In her youth, she witnessed a murder. Fear and depression took over her life, and she ultimately attempted suicide. After recovering in a facility similar to Hedgerow House, she petitioned the Crown to subsidize such a place—her parents, humble innkeepers, had spent their life savings on her treatment. The Crown agreed, and Hedgerow House was born.

## STORY SEEDS

- When Plec Atramentum (see **The Griffon's Quill** in the **Cardamom** section) visits Hedgerow House for treatment, Grer Voubros realizes he looks quite similar to the murderer from her past. Her psychic powers begin to spin out of her control, and traumatic memories flood both of their minds.
- A woman who believes a lost soul is slowly taking over her body demands help.
- A refugee child who seems to have suffered horrible abuse refuses to speak, communicating only in psychic images.



**T**hick with residential homes and stores that provide for the everyday needs of the city's middle-class population, the Lower Ward's neighborhoods are as eclectic and diverse as the people of Aldis itself. The Lower Ward was the "outskirts" of town in ancient times, and now houses the majority of the skilled laborers, practical craftsmen, and purveyors of moderately-priced practical goods to the city's citizens.

L1

## THE NORTH FAIR DISTRICT

A slightly upscale cousin to the Outer Ward's many marketplaces, the North Fair District is named after the area's large courtyard and open field that play host to several major fairs and events each year. Even during downtimes, the neighborhood is often bustling with traveling peddlers,

merchant caravans, and Roamer traders hoping to sell goods to the Lower Ward's inhabitants, usually for higher prices than they would receive in the Outer Ward.

### FAIRFIELD STONES

#### LANDMARK

Scattered throughout the North Fair Field is a collection of ancient stones whose original purpose has long been forgotten. While some might otherwise be mistaken for naturally occurring boulders, the stone is different than any found elsewhere in Aldis.

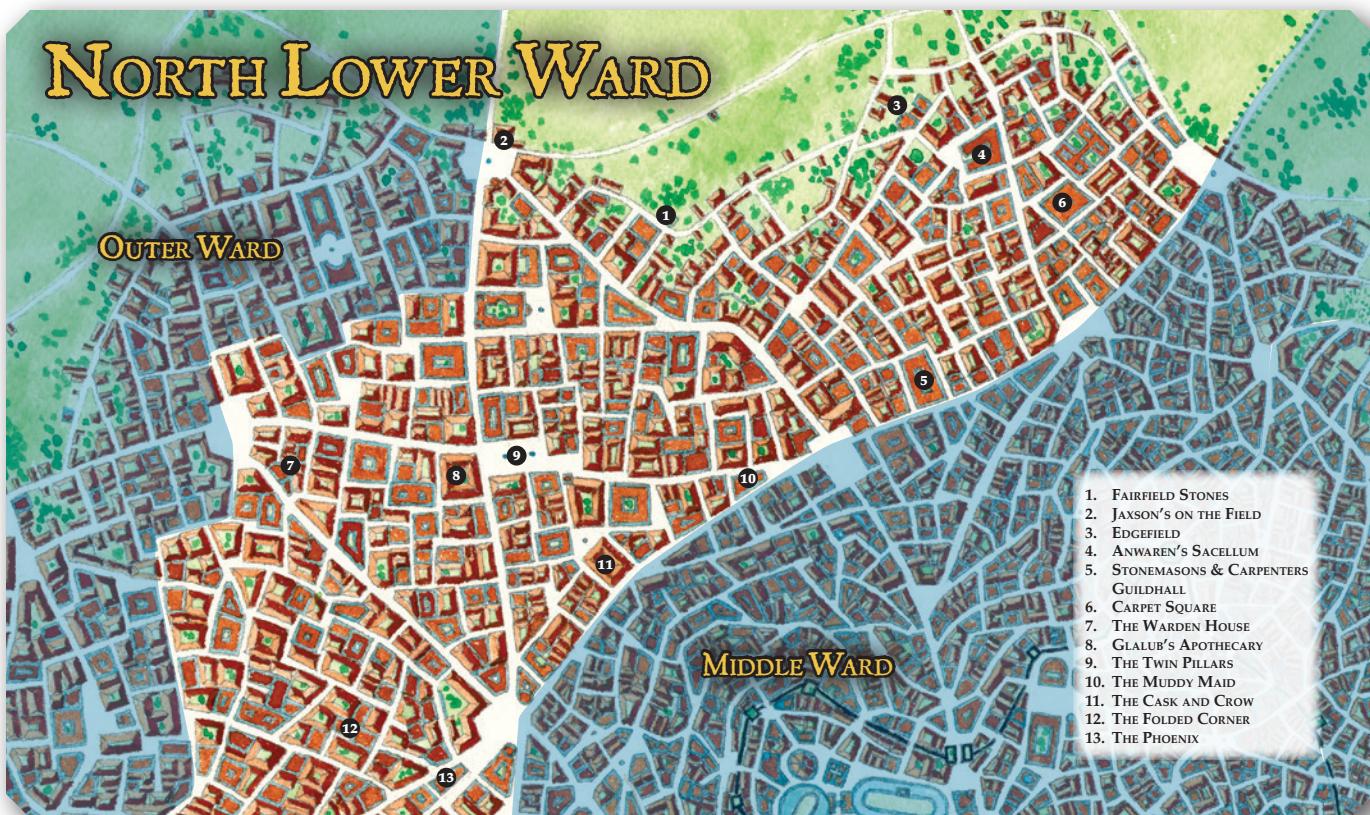


#### LAYOUT

Thirty-three of the mysterious white stones have been located thus far. The tallest, a monolith known colloquially as "The Knight," stands shoulder-tall; most others are

*"Everything of import comes from the Lower Ward. Without our people, the Outer is nothing but stink, and the Middle nothing but useless fripperies. Every arse in the High Ward sits in one of our chairs, sleeps in one of our beds, rides in one of our carriages, drinks from our cups. We're the spine of the city, whether folks like to think it or not."*

- Guildmaster Jarellia Dire, head of the Guild of Stonemasons & Carpenters



no taller than knee-height, while some have been found buried beneath a layer of topsoil. So far, no one has been willing to completely excavate the smaller stones to see how deep below the surface they extend.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Gram Lael** has lived in a tiny cottage on the edge of the North Fair District for as long as anyone can remember. (Use the **Commoner**, CHAPTER 8, for Lael, increasing Communication to 2, and adding the Animal Handling focus.) She's built like an ancient willow, wrinkled and gray but supple and strong, with perfect posture despite her age. She keeps a small menagerie of animals, including a sizeable apiary, and tends a garden that provides enough food for herself and her animal wards, and plenty to trade for other goods she might need. The honey, honeycomb, and beeswax her hives produce is renowned throughout Aldis. She's also considered an authority on the Fairfield Stones, although her expertise may well be due to her longevity in proximity to them rather than any scholarly studies on the matter.

## STORY SEEDS

- Someone has begun leaving disturbing offerings on the Fairfield Stones. It's difficult to tell what (or who) the bones and blood once belonged to, but it's causing quite a stir in the district.
- "The Knight" has disappeared, with no signs of how the massive stone was removed, or to where. Officials are investigating potential vandals, but local rumors blame sorcery.

## JAXSON'S ON THE FIELD

### EXOTIC GOODS SHOP

Set at the northern edge of the North Fair District, Jaxson's on the Field is well known across Aldis as the place to go for exotic and one-of-a-kind items. From potions and brews to unusual animals—or parts thereof—no one seems to know exactly where Jaxson gets all the intriguing goods his shop contains, but it is well worth a stop for the curious shopper.



### LAYOUT

A single story run of buildings set in an incomplete circle, Jaxson's on the Field consists of lodgings for Jaxson and his family on the northern side, an office to the east, and a long, narrow shop building along the south side of the complex. Customers enter from the road side of the building, ensuring at least a modicum of privacy for the family. Shelves line the walls of the shop from floor to ceiling, with rows of waist-high tables filling the space between them. Glass skylights are set into the ceiling, allowing natural light to showcase Jaxson's treasures during store hours.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

While **Jaxson** (use the **Merchant**, CHAPTER 8) employs several clerks to handle mundane sales, he personally supervises all incoming purchases as well as negotiations

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involving any of the more exotic pieces in his store. A shrewd man with a clear love of haggling, Jaxson has been known to go back and forth with customers for an hour or more just to get the best price possible on a particularly interesting piece from his inventory.

### STORY SEEDS

- Jaxson is holding an auction for an animated wooden owl that seems to possess intellect and sentience. Is this arcane artifice? Or something more sinister?
- A map is found hidden inside a purchased object, and the writings are in a language no one recognizes.

L2

## THE APRON

Home to many of the Lower Ward's best restaurants, food shops, and bakeries, the Apron takes advantage of its neighborhood's relatively low population and open spaces to provide a little taste of refinement for those who cannot afford the Middle Ward's upper-crust establishments. Businesses here often feature small gardens, where essential ingredients are grown within a stone's throw of where they are cooked and served to eager customers. More unusual ingredients are garnered from the nearby North Fair District's traveling merchants.

## EDGEFIELD

### RUSTIC COMFORTS INN

Once a sprawling farm, Edgefield is now one of the ward's most popular inns. Diners from across the city make their way into the Lower Ward for festive meals, with those from the High Ward considering the journey as something of an adventure to "see how the other half lives." Visitors to Aldis may use Edgefield as a temporary-yet-trendy base from which to explore the rest of the city.



### LAYOUT

The former farmhouse has been renovated by Kuba Hatik (see **Hatik's in Wood Point** [L17] for details on Kuba's business), turning the formerly rustic abode into a formal fine dining room and cutting-edge kitchen. Other buildings have also been repurposed under Hatik's expert hands. The barn and stables now act as an open-air venue that can be reserved for parties and celebrations, while the former servants' quarters are now quaint but elegant guest lodgings, and the grain silo has been renovated into a multi-story dormitory to house those of Edgefield's staff who do not keep lodgings in other parts of the city.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Castien Nremen** (see **CHAPTER 8**) is the face of Edgefield, and for some, as much of a draw as the business itself. Visitors are rarely disappointed by the dapper and genteel vata'an publican. Castien's three spouses also live and work at Edgefield, although in less public roles. His wife, Aileena, handles the inn's accounting and books, while his husbands, Kaern and Feargus, are in charge of the kitchen and grounds, respectively.

### STORY SEEDS

- Castien is being blackmailed by someone who threatens to reveal a secret about his past that might ruin Edgefield.
- A guest has died of a mysterious ailment at Edgefield and rumors whisper that several staff members are now ill with the same symptoms. What kind of infection could circumvent the city's wards against disease?

L3

## COBBLESTONE

Originally, Cobblestone Quarry was well outside Aldis' city limits, having provided much of the stone that the original town was built from. Around the quarry, a small village of quarrymen, stonemasons, support employees, and their families blossomed. As Aldis grew, however, its borders eventually stretched to the point where the village of Cobblestone became a neighborhood without separation from the rest of the city. In time, the quarry's stone was depleted, and the quarry itself shutdown. Anxious for space, builders filled in the former quarry and the neighborhood expanded over the area, although a labyrinth of subterranean tunnels is still rumored to run beneath the district. While the city had to seek further afield for additional quarry materials, Cobblestone still houses the guildhall belonging to the Masons & Carpenters, and many of its residents are still active in stoneworking.

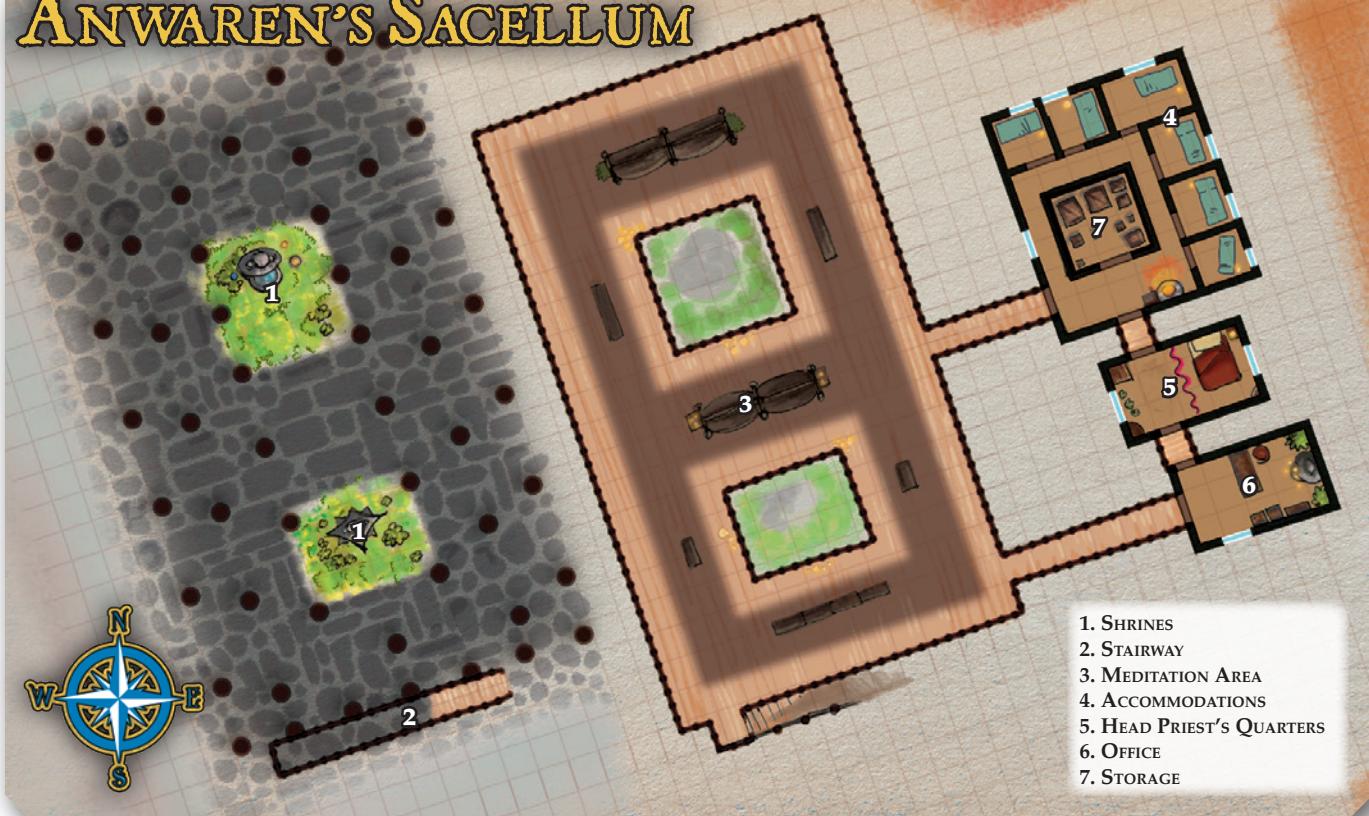
## ANWAREN'S SACELLUM

### OPEN-AIR TEMPLE TO ANWAREN

Dating back to the time when the quarries were still open, Anwaren's Sacellum was originally little more than a pile of beautiful crimson stones dug up from the quarry and stacked as an offering by those seeking the Warrior King's blessing. Over time, structures were built around these original stones, but not over them, creating a courtyard of worship to the Lord of Madness. A second, connected courtyard was built years later, and is dedicated to the feminine aspect



# ANWAREN'S SACELLUM



of Anwaren. There, farmers, hunters, and others wishing to give thanks for the Queen of the Harvest's blessings bring produce and meat as offerings. These materials are prepared, preserved, and distributed to the needy in a ritualized celebration on the autumn equinox each year.

## LAYOUT

The most notable feature of the Sacellum is that the entire first floor is open plan, consisting of nothing more than sturdy columns that support the actual buildings above, along with stairways by which the second floor is accessible. The housing for temple priests, storage, offices, and other mundane needs of the temple are arranged in a pair of connected second-floor buildings, the first shaped with two squares open to the sky, and balconies circling the entire structure, and internal open areas. Visitors and residents can observe and meditate upon the shrines below from the upper level. Accommodations and offices are in the second building, connected to the first by wooden bridges.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The rhy-eagle **Talons-Like-Daggers** (see **CHAPTER 8**) nests here in the heights of the temple's construction, serving as an advisor and aide to the priests. It is not uncommon for the faithful to seek out Talons-Like-Daggers for his wisdom.

## STORY SEEDS

- The donations for this year's autumn equinox have been tainted with a mysterious blight, and the Sacel-

lum's dedicants are out for the blood of whoever has desecrated their offerings.

- Talons-Like-Daggers claims that the head priest of the Sacellum has been tainted by the exarchs' influence. Is there truth in the rhy-eagle's words, or has the Lord of Madness' influence finally taken its toll on the bird?

## STONEMASONS & CARPENTERS GUILDHALL

### GUILDHALL

The Stonemasons & Carpenters Guildhall is the oldest and grandest building in the Cobblestone neighborhood. Built with funds raised from the construction of the Cerulean Playhouse, the guildmaster at the time caused quite a stir by equaling (some would say exceeding) the elegance of that building in the creation of his guild's home.



## LAYOUT

Comprising an entire city block, the guildhall is a three-story building, built in a U-shape around an open courtyard. The first floor houses the guild's offices, whereas the upper floors are reserved for meeting rooms and visitors' quarters. The upper floor is private lodging for the guildmaster and her family, as well as their servants and staff.

## CHAPTER 5: THE LOWER WARD

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Jarellia Dire has served as guildmaster of the Guild of Stonemasons & Carpenters for over a decade. (Use the **Merchant, CHAPTER 8** for Jarellia, increasing Intelligence to 3 and adding the Engineering focus.) While outsiders to Aldis may look askance at one of the night people holding such an important role, Jarellia's expertise, not only in stoneworking but also in business management and project coordination, has earned her the respect of her colleagues and the heads of other city guilds as well.

### STORY SEEDS

- Someone is waylaying incoming stone shipments from other areas of Aldis.
- Many of the guild's finest masters have been employed in the design and construction of a strange new site in the Lake Ward, but nobody seems to know who their patron is or what the tall construction might be. Passersby with training in arcane lore have noted the site's foundations seem to be of a design that channels arcane energies, and so the Sovereign's Finest want to know everything about the project. However, the guild is maintaining its professional standards and keeping mum about what little they do know.
- One of Jarellia's crews has discovered something ominous while excavating an ancient part of town.

### L4

## BRIGHTMEADOW

Home to the majority of the city's spinners, weavers, and household fiber goods producers, Brightmeadow is frequented directly by citizens of Aldis and by the tailors, haberdashers, seamstresses, and other apparel makers who ply their trades in the Middle Ward. Yard goods can be bought by the bolt here, as well as notions and off-the-rack clothing suitable for wear by those who cannot afford personally tailored outfits.

## CARPET SQUARE

### MARKET HALL

Spanning an entire city block, Carpet Square is a collection of cooperative-yet-competitive rug merchants who vie for the attention of potential clients. The merchants work together to consolidate prices, ensuring that none of them significantly undercuts the rest (and thus damages the entire industry's profits), but each also works very hard to ensure their wares are more appealing than their competitors'.



### LAYOUT

Carpet Square is a two-story, open-walled building, with a roofed perimeter to protect its merchants and their goods from the elements. The center of the building stands open to the sky. Some of the more established rug vendors have offices in loft-space under the roof, while others operate out of open-air stalls in the center of the square.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The Weaver family has made tapestries for Aldis' citizens for countless generations. Family legend has it that those early Weavers were present when the Golden Hart selected Seltha as the first Sovereign, and that Aeron Weaver created a tapestry commemorating the incident which still hangs in the Royal Palace to this day.

Untold generations later, the Weavers' patriarch, **Theowald Weaver**, runs the family business as best he can while caring for his aging and ill wife, **Ralsa** (use the **Child, CHAPTER 8**, due to her advanced infirmity, but increase Communication and Intelligence to 1 and decrease Speed, Health, and Defense to 8; also remove the suggested Favored Stunts).

Their eldest son, **Jak** (use the **Merchant, CHAPTER 8**, with the Artisan focus and the Journeyman-level Intrigue talent), and his husband, **Martel** (use the **Scholar, CHAPTER 8**, adding the Novice-level Observation talent), are the ones in line to take over the family business when Theowald decides to step down, and anxiously await the opportunity to do so.

### STORY SEEDS

- Ralsa has taken a turn for the worse, and Jak is seeking evidence against the allegations that Martel has something to do with his mother's failing health.
- Theowald has discovered a mysterious object in a shipment of specialty dyes from the Southern Coasts.

### L5

## NOB HILL

Largely a residential area, Nob Hill borders the southern edge of the Outer Ward's Turncoin neighborhood. Many of the supervisors and managers of Turncoin businesses make their home in the more affluent (at least by comparison) Nob Hill neighborhood. While the district is far from actually rich, the difference between lifestyles in Nob Hill and the Outer Ward is notable enough to create envy (and sometimes resentment) in those who cannot afford to move out of Turncoin.

## CHAPTER 5: THE LOWER WARD

### THE WARDEN HOUSE

#### RESIDENCE OF THE WARDEN FAMILY

One of the largest and most elaborate homes in the already upscale Nob Hill neighborhood, the Warden House is named after the Warden family who have made their home here for generations.



#### LAYOUT

The Warden House sits at the center of a grand estate. Rising three stories tall, the building surrounds an expansive rose garden, home of the famed Warden House roses, prized in Aldis for their colors and scents. As the home of multiple generations, the majority of the third floor is dedicated to the family's bedrooms and bathrooms. The first floor is almost entirely utilitarian, housing the kitchens, stables, storerooms, and the like. The middle floor holds entertaining space, dining rooms, and studies for the various scholars and businessfolk in the family, along with other public rooms.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

While an entire tribe of Wardens make their home in the family estate, one of the more notable members is **Rosemund Warden** (see **CHAPTER 8**), the current matriarch of the family and a skilled adept. Along with her husband, the notable rake **Jerome Warden** (use the **Noble**, **CHAPTER 8**, adding the **Romance** focus), Rosemund has been personally responsible for maintaining the Warden garden and business for the past decade. Her work has been exemplary, much to the chagrin of her mother-in-law, **Natalie Warden** (use the **Elite Noble**, **CHAPTER 8**, adding the **Intrigue** Talent at Journeyman level).

#### STORY SEEDS

- The Warden House gardens have been pilfered, and one of Rosemund's most recent experiments stolen. The ransom note implicates Jerome, but surely he wouldn't be complicit in the theft of his wife's work?
- Rumors of an artifact that transmutes plants into living gemstone flowers have reached Rosemund's ears, and she'll pay anything to those who bring her the item.

### GLALUB'S APOTHECARY

#### APOTHECARY

Hidden down a narrow alley, Glalub's Apothecary doesn't advertise, relying instead on word of mouth from satisfied customers to promote their business. Whether seeking love potions, fertility charms, hex jars, or protections from Shadow, Glalub's customers pay well for the ancient sea-folk's expertise—and discretion.



#### LAYOUT

Glalub's Apothecary is a tiny, narrow shop, squeezed under the eaves of two taller buildings and entered down a narrow alley barely an arm-span across. Only a story and a half high, the building serves both as business and home to Glalub, a talented medicine-maker. Their lofted living quarters are sequestered up under the eaves of the building, accessible only by a rickety ladder that they climb adroitly despite their age.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Glalub** uses "they" as one of their pronouns, and anyone so indiscrete as to inquire as to their gender (or why they do not make their home in the Lake Ward with the majority of the city's sea-folk) has found themselves no longer welcome in the ancient apothecary's shop. (Use the **Scholar**, **CHAPTER 8** for Glalub, adding the **Brewing** and **Healing** focuses, as well as the **Novice**-level **Lore** and **Healing** talents.) For the more respectful customer, Glalub provides wondrous curatives, strengthening tonics, hallucinogenic powders, and other interesting and useful concoctions—for a price.

#### STORY SEEDS

- Glalub is arrested on charges of poisoning. They claim they are being framed, and offer a mysterious reward for those who can prove their innocence.
- The key to accomplishing a goal lies in convincing Glalub to create a particular potion, but the ingredients are difficult (and dangerous) to obtain.

#### L6

### POTSHERD

Long the home of potters and other manipulators of clay, much of the city's basic clay items originate in this neighborhood. While sculptors and those who create earthenware largely for aesthetic purposes may find a better clientele in the upscale neighborhoods of the Middle Ward, for tankards, dishes, bowls, oil lamps, and other household necessities, Potsherd is the place. This neighborhood is also the home of one of Aldis' great cultural sites, the Twin Pillars.

### THE TWIN PILLARS

#### LANDMARK

Towering above even the tallest buildings in Aldis, the Twin Pillars are a vestige of the Old Kingdom. Their nearly translucent, opal-colored stone is a wonder to see, especially at sunrise and sunset when the columns fairly glow. No visit to Aldis is complete without a visit to the Twin Pillars.



ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE

## CHAPTER 5: THE LOWER WARD

### LAYOUT

Located in Pillar Square, a courtyard often used by potters to sell their wares on market days, these two stone columns are visible from almost anywhere in the city. Elaborately carved around their bases with scenes that commemorate the creation of the world, the upper half of each is a several-stories-tall depiction of two of the ancient gods of Aldis—Maurennna, the Primordial of fire, and Braniel, the Primordial of water—reaching towards each other as they weave corporeal bodies for the first people. Visitors come from across the nation to leave offerings at the base of these ancient columns, asking in return for blessings of fertility and good health, for their crops, their animals, and themselves.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Twig, Dust, and Little Bit** (use the **Child**, CHAPTER 8, adding the Bargaining focus) are three street urchins who claim the area around Pillar Square as their turf. They make a living by interacting with locals and travelers who come to visit the Twin Pillars. Sometimes this involves escorting hungry travelers to the “best” restaurant or “lowest price” merchants (usually those who offer the trio a small bribe for herding business their way). At other times, the impish youths earn a few coins by singing, playing music, or storytelling for pillar tourists. They also claim the offerings left at the pillars, discretely spiriting them away in the wee hours of the morning when their removal won’t offend the supplicants. They are careful not to cross the line into illegal behavior, and are sometimes genuinely helpful (if mischievous).

### STORY SEEDS

- One of the trio has gone missing, and the other two seek aid in finding their lost companion.
- Someone is attempting to coerce the street urchins into criminal activity, and while they do not want to oblige, they do not know where to turn for aid.

## THE MUDDY MAID

### UPSCALE PILLOW HOUSE

On the border between the Lower and Middle Wards, the Muddy Maid is one of the area’s newest brothels. Clients from around the city—and beyond—have flocked to the Maid since its grand opening last year, enticed not only by an exotic and enticing team of paramours, but also by a feature no other brothel in town offers: therapeutic mud baths.



### LAYOUT

Once a potter’s workshop, the current owners of the Muddy Maid purchased the building and set about creating some

thing truly unique. The main floor contains a large waiting room where clients socialize with the Maid’s staff of entertainers while awaiting their “treatment.” When it is their turn, customers are escorted to one of the smaller rooms on the main floor, each of which is outfitted with a wood-heated soaking tub full of thick, rich, red clay slurry. With the assistance of an attentive staff member, visitors undress and sink up to their necks in the warm, soothing, viscous liquid, allowing the heat and buoyancy to relax away their troubles. Afterwards, their attendants aid them in exiting the tub before escorting them into a secondary room, where they bathe them and attend to any other requirements as their desires—and wallets—dictate.

The upper floor of the building, smaller than the downstairs due to a steeply sloping roof, is dedicated to storage, offices, and living space for those staff members who don’t have other housing.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

While **Alistar Orion** (use the **Noble**, CHAPTER 8, adding the Novice-level Contacts talent) is the nominal owner and operator of the Muddy Maid, the true force to be reckoned with is his “assistant,” **Erzaveta** (use the **Guard**, CHAPTER 8, increasing both Communication and Intelligence to 1, and adding the Intimidation focus). Fiercely protective of the Maid’s employees—and its good name—Erzaveta has an instinctive eye for customers who might be potential troublemakers, and isn’t the least bit shy about dealing with them. More than one miscreant has found themselves plucked bodily out of a tub and thrown out into the street wearing nothing more than mud when they’ve crossed a line with one of the business’ staff.

### STORY SEEDS

- Customers at the Muddy Maid begin noticing that their mud treatments seem to be making them feel and look younger—even long after they’ve stopped visiting the brothel. But when the process starts to regress them back towards childhood, even Alistar recognizes that something must be done.
- Threatened by the new brothel’s popularity, other brothel owners in town have been sending Alistar increasingly ominous demands that he sell.

### L7

## BREWER’S ROW

Originally a single street, Brewer’s Row eventually gave its name to the entire neighborhood, as many of the residents there are involved in creating, bottling, or selling the district’s potent wares. Brewers and distillers here take advantage of the presence of an extremely pure underwater spring, a water source which many claim makes beverages brewed in this area the tastiest in the world.

# THE CASK AND CROW



1. BAR	7. STORAGE	12. BEDROOMS
2. COMMON ROOM	8. STAIRS	13. BATHROOM
3. PRIVY	9. DINING ROOM	14. MASTER
4. OLD MAL'S TABLE	10. PRIVATE DINING	BEDROOM
5. COURTYARD	ROOM	15. SITTING ROOM
6. BREWING AREA	11. KITCHEN	16. OFFICE

Braniel's Cup, a massive stone fountain, stands in the largest plaza in Brewer's Row. Ancient piping provides plentiful fresh water for all the brewing-based businesses in the neighborhood. Then the spring water tumbles out of a tall sculpture of the Primordial Braniel pouring an ever-flowing fountain out into pools, where various statues of people and animals wait patiently to quench their thirst.

## THE CASK AND CROW

### BREWERY & TAVERN

Located across the square from Braniel's Cup, the Cask and Crow is a favorite of locals and travelers alike. They make their own ales; the most popular is a heady brew called Haylin's Choice, named after the former Sovereign, who purportedly was fond of the recipe during his reign.



### LAYOUT

The Cask and Crow is located in a squat, square structure with a notable hand-carved sign hanging above the front door. Upon it, the legs and tailfeathers of a raven are all that can be seen as the—presumably drunken—bird submerges its head and upper body into an open beer cask. The bar itself takes up the front half of the first floor of the two-story building, with additional seating available in an open courtyard. Above the bar proper is living space for the owners and their family. The back half of the

building is filled with brewing equipment and storage for the massive casks of ale produced there.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Old Mal** (see CHAPTER 8) is a near-constant feature at the Cask and Crow, having her own small table in one corner that no one else sits at, even when the retired adventurer isn't present.

### STORY SEEDS

- Helpful allies point towards Old Mal as a source for useful information, but the old woman must be convinced to share her knowledge.
- Tired of her slow descent into anonymity, Old Mal reveals herself as a once-noted warrior and asks for aid with one final quest to earn her place in history.

### L8

## PRESSTON HEIGHTS

From guild periodicals and daily papers to hard-bound reference books and episodic adventure tales, Preston Heights is the source of most of the city's printed materials. Many aspiring writers make their home here as well, often working for book vendors or print shops while dreaming of taking a more direct role in creating written content for the city's largely-literate population.

## CHAPTER 5: THE LOWER WARD

### THE FOLDED CORNER

#### WRITTEN GOODS SHOP

Although it appears to be a small shop wedged between two other buildings in Presston Heights, the Folded Corner is actually a multistory store, packed from floor to ceiling with a collection of pre-read books, scrolls, tomes, and folios that rivals that of any of the nation's great libraries.

#### LAYOUT

Accessible only down a foot-path off one of the neighborhood's major streets, the Folded Corner is a favorite browsing spot for recreational readers and scholars alike. Its front door, painted with a pile of well-read books, opens into a long dark corridor, which eventually leads to the main room. Here, all manner of written materials are arranged in a fashion that only Amedee truly understands. Wall-sized shelves divide the main room into a labyrinthine maze, while a myriad of smaller rooms branch out from there. Amedee's living quarters are located somewhere among the printed chaos, although some of her customers believe she simply sleeps on whatever empty shelf or horizontal stack of tomes is handy when exhaustion overcomes her.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Amedee** (see [CHAPTER 8](#)) is the vata'sha owner of the Folded Corner, and prides herself on her encyclopedic knowledge of books—not only those in her store, but also what's been published in the past and is currently being produced in Aldis and beyond.

#### STORY SEEDS

- A folio from Amedee's collection has been stolen, and she's willing to pay well for its discrete recovery.
- When a book seemingly consisting of utter nonsense might hold desperately needed answers, Amedee may be the only person in town who can decipher it.

L9

### NIGHTWATCH

Nightwatch's central location makes it an ideal place to protect the city from. The Vigilants—an ancient company that takes contracts to protect businesses and homes from fires—is based out of Nightwatch, as are several other private protection organizations. Many of the citizens of Nightwatch are a part of one organization or another, which sometimes leads to conflict over contracts and territory rights.

Nightwatch is also known as an excellent place to find schools that teach anyone—professional or otherwise—



the battle arts. Swordsmanship of all degrees is in the majority, but schools of specialized knife-fighting, spear-and-shield, two-handed weaponry, and even bare-handed fighting can be found here (the latter sometimes taught by Spirit Dancers). The nightlife in Nightwatch can be ironically rowdy: duels aren't out of the ordinary here after a night's drinking in the local taverns, though it's considered gauche to go beyond first blood.

### THE PHOENIX

#### TAVERN

The Phoenix is the most popular tavern in Nightwatch and a favorite of firefighters, no matter which organization they are a part of. While the clientele can be on the rough side and few families frequent the place, crime is almost unheard of in this bar.



#### LAYOUT

Typical of the Lower Ward, the Phoenix is a two-story building with a tavern below and residential dwellings for the staff and owners above. The brickwork is notable for being painted as if the building is on fire: red at ground-level, with *trompe l'oeil* flames rising up the sides to a bright yellow roof with white gables.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Cendis Rhe** is the current head of the Vigilants, and can frequently be found at the Phoenix when not on duty. (Use the *Elite Guard*, [CHAPTER 8](#), for Cendis, increasing both Communication and Perception to 1 and Willpower to 3; also add the Leadership, Stamina, and Courage focuses.) She earned her position through years of dedicated service to the town, working her way up through the Vigilante ranks, and has led the group for just under a year. Her bravery knows no bounds, but since a raging fire killed a family she was close with (including several young children), the weight of her responsibilities sits heavily on her.

#### STORY SEEDS

- An arsonist is plaguing Aldis. Can they be stopped?
- Cendis Rhe seems to be spending more time in the Phoenix than with her company; will the firefighters survive their leader's decline?

L10

### RED BLUFF

Named for the height and stone color of its apartment buildings, Red Bluff is a thickly-packed residential area, home to more people than any two of the Lower Ward's

## CHAPTER 5: THE LOWER WARD

other neighborhoods added together. Not a single one-story building remains in Red Bluff, having all been replaced with taller (and thus more densely populated) apartments. Stores, restaurants, and offices are often found on the first or second stories of these buildings. The upper floors are reserved for lodgings, not only for the owners of the businesses below, but also for those who work in other parts of the ward as well.

### CRESTON'S ACADEMY

#### CHILDREN'S SCHOOL

While many of those born in Red Bluff will live their entire lives there, not all are content to have their children follow in their own working-class footsteps.

Creston's Academy (named after its long-dead founder) offers basic education for the children of not only Red Bluff but many nearby neighborhoods as well. Many of the guildhalls keep an eye on Creston's Academy students, seeking out those who show potential for apprenticeship in their particular fields.

#### LAYOUT

Wedged into the crossroads between Red Bluff, Smoothstones, and Dogpatch, Creston's Academy takes up all four stories of its narrow-but-tall building. The first floor houses public education for any child seeking to learn reading, writing, history, and other basic educational needs. The second serves as offices, kitchen space, and storage. Advanced classes are held on the third floor, while the fourth is reserved for lodgings for the school's administrators and teachers, as well as any visiting specialists brought in to teach on particular topics.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Laert Keller** is the headmaster of Creston's Academy, although all the students consider **Maejar** (see **CHAPTER 8**), Headmaster Laert's rhy-hound bondmate, to be a sort of "vice headmaster." (Use the **Elite Scholar**, **CHAPTER 8**, for Laert, increasing both Accuracy and Fighting to 1, and adding the Cultural Lore focus and the Novice-level Oratory talent.)

#### STORY SEEDS

- A very promising student is nearly old enough to take a guild apprenticeship, and the various guild scouts have spotted them. They suddenly begin a flurry of offers to the youngster and their



family, using escalating special treatment and gifts bordering on outrageous bribery. Why do they want the student so badly, and can the player characters head off an inter-guild conflict with a confused student and their family caught in the middle?

- Maejar disappears without a trace, and the psychic link between him and Laert, while not severed, reflects only confusion and pain. Laert is heartbroken, throwing the entire academy into chaos.
- An influx of rhydan have visited Creston's Academy of late, refusing to speak to anyone but Maejar.

## CHAPTER 5: THE LOWER WARD

L11

## COOPER'S RUN

Long the home of many of the town's smiths, coopers, and farriers, Cooper's Run is a loud neighborhood and its citizens reflect the fire and energy of their surroundings. While those seeking jewelry and fine metal work may shop for wares in the Middle Ward, most of the city's metal household goods, from everyday plates and eating utensils to gates, hinges, and nails, originate in Cooper's Run.

## BOTTCHER'S GENERAL MERCANTILE

## GENERAL GOODS SHOP

While professional builders may make arrangements to order goods directly from those who make them, sometimes a businessperson or household simply needs some sort of metal goods for daily use or repair. Those who have such a need often visit Bottcher's General Mercantile, a three-story storefront providing durable goods, tools, and other handy components. Everything from needles and pins to metal ewers and bathtubs can be found somewhere in Bottcher's extensive aisles, and while the owner is perhaps not the friendliest woman in Aldis, her prices are fair and the breadth of her inventory ensures the Mercantile is always a busy establishment.



## LAYOUT

The first two stories of Bottcher's are all the public ever sees. Arranged with heavy and large goods on the first floor and smaller wares above, the shop is neatly laid out in precise aisles wide enough to allow customers to shop at their leisure without jostling one another, even when purchasing bulky or awkward items. Twin broad, wooden staircases along the right and left walls reach the second floor, but entrance to Miss Bottcher's living quarters in the attic can only be made through a private door at the back of the building, via a two-story stairway barely wide enough to permit the proprietor's muscular form passage.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Miss Bottcher** (use the **Merchant**, CHAPTER 8, adding the Novice-level Contacts talent) is a formidable woman, strong in both frame and temperament. She routinely lifts goods that would make the strongest Outer Ward laborer tremble with exertion, and bargains adroitly with both customers and those she purchases her shop's wares from. While somewhat curmudgeonly to everyone, Miss

Bottcher apparently has a particularly dim view of seafolk, a notable prejudice she refuses to justify with explanation. Her cool attitude towards those she calls "fishfolk" has raised more than a few eyebrows in town.

## STORY SEEDS

- Rumor has it that the Mercantile has a secret inventory of wares of a dubious nature, shown only to those customers who know the proper codewords.
- One of the local blacksmith's apprentices has forged a remarkable journeyman's project, an item purported to have spontaneously demonstrated mystic powers.

L12

## LITTLE REZEA

Although the epithet is not popular with citizens of the nation of Rezea, the sheer abundance of horses in this neighborhood has given it a nickname that has stood since the city's earliest days. Several of the city's hackney cab companies work out of Little Rezea, where the central location and straightforward thoroughfares aid their access to each of the other wards. There are also horses-for-hire here, as well as messenger companies specializing in carrying missives throughout the city and beyond. The Phalera, one of the city's largest crossroads, marks a border between the Lower and Middle Wards, and is named after the cast-metal circles used to adorn horses (and war heroes).

## SWIFT'S CABS

## CARRIAGE AND HANSOM CAB SERVICE



Swift's is located just off of the Phalera and has provided contracted carriage services to the people of Aldis for two generations. Originally founded by Malea Swift with a single carriage, the plucky driver leveraged her business into a local institution through hard work and a knack for both reliability and charm. The Swift fleet now contains over a dozen of the city's most finely appointed cabs-for-hire, and throughout the city, hiring a Swift cab is considered the next best thing to having your own carriage and driver.

## LAYOUT

When Malea founded the company, she ran the cabs' service office out of her front parlor, allowing her to share time with her stay-at-home husband and their two boys. This situation continued even after the boys moved out, the business expanding to take over their now-vacant rooms as it grew. After she and her husband both passed away, the boys opted to convert the two-story family home

## CHAPTER 5: THE LOWER WARD

completely over to office space. Now, on-call drivers sleep in the former bedrooms, awaiting communications that will summon them to the nearby extensive garage where Swift's keeps its fleet of carriages of the highest merit.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Calaban** (use the *Elite Laborer*, CHAPTER 8, adding the Master-level Animal Training talent) and **Caspian Swift** (use the *Noble*, CHAPTER 8, adding the Journeyman-level Carousing [Gambling] talent) are the twin sons of Malea Swift and have inherited the business from their mother. While the boys look identical, nothing else about them is similar.

Calaban is a quiet lad with a penchant for simple clothing, who prefers to spend as much time as possible with the horses and handlers involved in the family business. Caspian is something of a fop, and although he claims to be largely responsible for leveraging the company from the foundation his mother created to its current zenith, some believe he is actually doing so at the cost of the business' stellar reputation for animal care, employee quality, and other factors that made Swift's the household name it is.

### STORY SEEDS

- A Swift's cab apparently picks up a contracted fare. A few minutes later, a real Swift's carriage shows up. The counterfeit cab and driver (and their purloined rider) have vanished without a trace.
- A rhy-horse enters town, seeking council with Calaban Swift regarding a sorcerer who has reportedly created an artifact which can sever the bond between rhy-creatures and their companions—permanently.

L13

## OAKWOOD

Home to Aldis' largest city park, Larai's Weald, the Oakwood neighborhood carries a certain prestige among those who live there. Oakwood's residents often consider themselves "Higher Lower Ward." The homes there tend to be larger and less densely inhabited, and its citizens dressed more elaborately, than their Lower Ward neighbors. They also frequent the Middle Ward's nightlife and cultural events when possible and, in general, cling to a fancier way of life than the rest of the Lower Ward's population.

## LARAI'S WEALD

### PUBLIC PARK

Created almost 200 years ago, Larai's Weald is just one of the beautiful legacies the eccentric Sovereign left behind from her time as ruler of Aldis. During the middle of a trade negotiation, one of the queen's invisible companions apparently suggested they take in some fresh air. The entire room

of guildmasters, foreign dignitaries, and the Sovereign's staff was forced to follow Larai as she left the palace and made her way out of the High Ward and across the entire town, continuing diplomatic negotiations while pointing out many of the city's notable landmarks as the makeshift tour continued.

Eventually, the procession ended in a small parcel of unused land, surrounded by buildings that were in ill repair. Much to everyone's amazement, the queen brought the entire conversation around to a very pertinent end, comparing the state of the current negotiations to that of the area they now found themselves in, and encouraging those involved to see the potential that could come from working together to make the trade agreement something positive for everyone involved. After that, the negotiations proceeded well, and those involved later purchased the land to create a beautiful park in homage to their often-confusing but unmistakably wise Sovereign.

### LAYOUT

Spanning the equivalent of several city blocks, Larai's Weald is a bastion of nature and beauty. The park features multiple walking trails, carefully cobbled and maintained and each featuring comfortable covered seating in many places along the pathways. The Weald's gazebos often host musicians and theatrical performances for the benefit of those who visit the park and, when not being used for performances, are frequently used for picnics, outdoor weddings, or other social events. The park is well-lit, well maintained, and a point of pride for not just the neighborhood and the ward, but the entire city.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Bug** is a young person who frequents Larai's Weald, offering their services to those who are visiting the park. (Use the *Noble*, CHAPTER 8, for Bug, increasing their Communication to 3 and adding the Disguise focus and the Novice-level Intrigue [Deception] talent.) They are willing to help set up canopies, carry baskets, run errands, carry messages, and the like. Rail-thin, but always clean and comfortably dressed, Bug refuses to talk about themselves, leading many folks to believe they may be a resident of the Outer Ward who finds fetching and carrying for park-goers preferable to working in one of the tanneries or at some other form of heavy labor. Their manners, however, speak of a connection to the High Ward, lending an air of mystery to the youthful entrepreneur's story.

### STORY SEEDS

- A footpad has begun preying on visitors to Larai's Weald, but steals only jewelry.
- Visitors to the neighborhood claim that they have seen a silver stag walking the Weald.



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L14

## WAINTON RESERVE

While much of the city's official business in regard to finances and lawmaking takes place in the High Ward amongst the noble-folk and city administrators, the average person often has need of educated advice and assistance as well. Wainton Reserve contains many fiduciary service providers, including money-lenders, accountants, financial advisors, investment firms, civil lawyers, negotiators, and other businesses focused on dealing with high-detail and complicated community needs.

## RALZI'S CIVIL SERVICE OFFICES

## LOCAL BUREAUCRATIC CENTER

Stationed in the Lower Ward to assist the people there with day-to-day legal and civil matters, Ralzi's is a trusted location for information and paperwork processing. They notarize contracts between individuals and businesses, file trade agreements, and handle inheritances, along with other matters necessary for the day-to-day running of life in the Lower Ward. Ralzi's is just one of several such centers, meant to provide access for all of Aldis' citizens to the city's bureaucratic processes without forcing them to travel far from their homes into the already crowded High Ward.



## LAYOUT

Located directly on Barrister Square, Ralzi's has long served the people of the Lower Ward as a middle-man organization between laypeople and the law. The building itself is an irregularly-shaped curve and is notable for being only a single story tall, unusual for Aldis. It curls around an open courtyard, where citizens await their turn to speak with the barristers, lawyers, notaries, scribes, and clerks inside. Part of the building is dedicated to private offices where meetings may take place and meeting rooms where aggrieved parties can come to try and work out their differences. The rest is dedicated to maintaining copies of all the legal records relating to the Lower Ward, a complex system of filing that only the most adroit of Ralzi's clerks truly understand.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Eshton Burkholder** (use the *Elite Scholar*, CHAPTER 8, adding the Novice-level Lore and Journeyman-level Contacts talents) works as a secretary, scribe, and filing clerk for Ralzi's, and he's very good at what he does. The problem is, he hates it. He wants nothing more than

to be a grand adventurer, out doing "things that really matter" in the city and beyond. While he can serve as an extremely valuable ally in matters pertaining to legality, contract history, and even family lineages (thanks to his adept knowledge of Ralzi's files), any interaction with him results in Eshton trying to learn more about what "interesting" things have prompted the request, and those who rely on Eshton may well find themselves looking out for him as he tries to involve himself in their inquiries first-hand.

## STORY SEEDS

- Eshton has discovered an obscure but pertinent fact that may sway the current political situation, and seeks aid in deciding what to do with it.
- Eshton holds vital knowledge hostage. His price: to be included on the adventure in exchange for his assistance.

L15

## WHITEWALL

Named for the visual spectacle created by an entire city's sheets and other laundry hanging from its washing lines, Whitewall is the laundry center of Aldis. Its position along the downstream curve of the Rose River ensures that any suds or detritus created in the laundering process are quickly swept away. Many of the folk in this area are employed by the Laundry or one of the smaller establishments that specialize in the care and maintenance of clothing or more-difficult-to-clean items.

## THE LAUNDRY

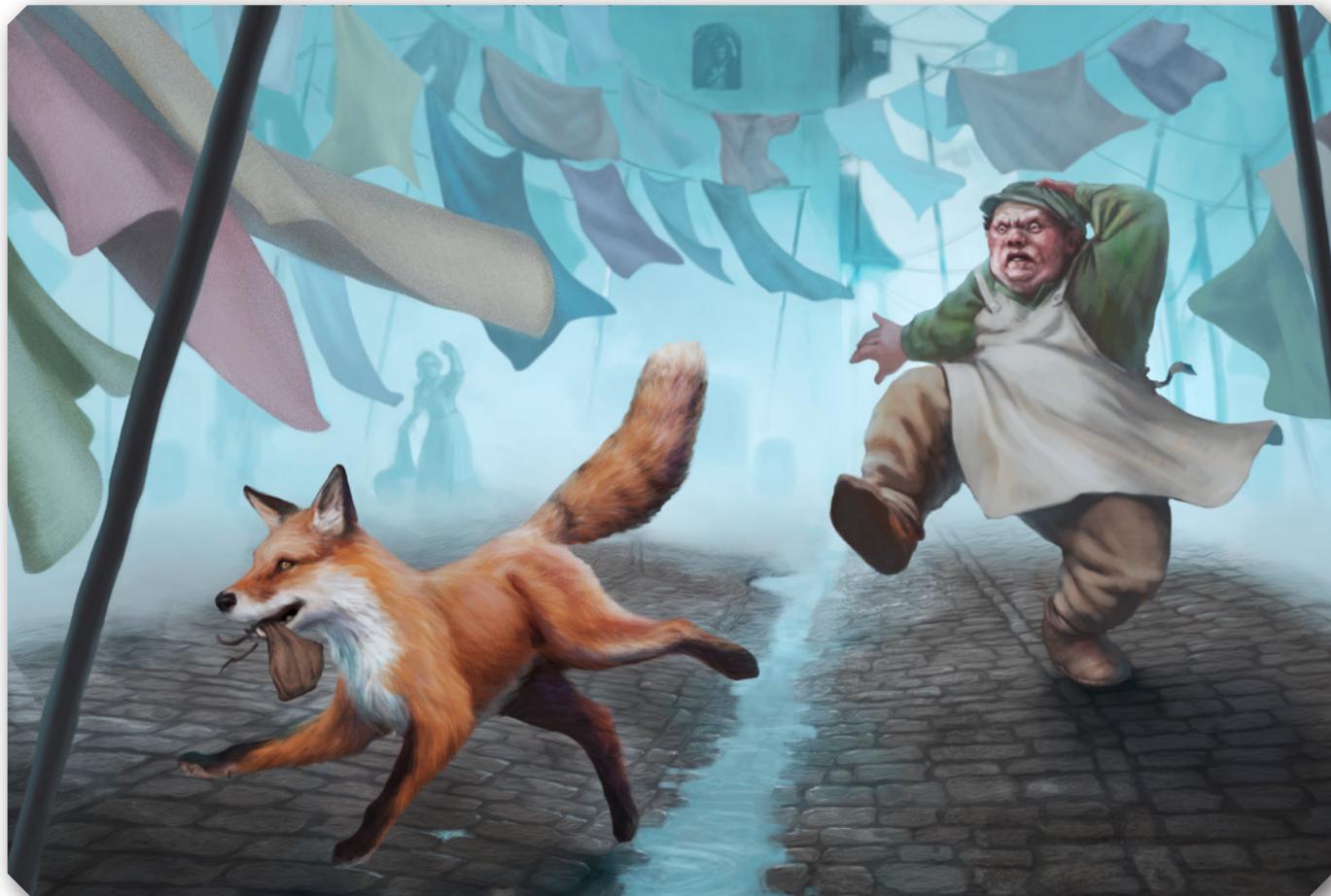
## LAUNDRY SERVICES

There are countless clothes and linen washing businesses in Whitewall, but only one is known simply as "the Laundry." Specializing specifically in household and business linens rather than clothing, all of their fabrics are line-dried to create a crispness that crystal-dried laundries can't match. Several decades ago, a business front was built on the eastern bank of the neighborhood, to process linens for Middle and High Ward households more easily.



## LAYOUT

The Laundry's actual washing processes take place in a complex of ancient buildings stretching along the bank of the Rose River across from the Bend. Hundreds of drying lines, normally full of pristine, starched tablecloths, sheets, towels, and other linens, separate the washing facility from the rest of Whitewall.



## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Tavaster Flood** is the current proprietor of the Laundry, and has turned the business into far more than its former creators could have imagined. (Use the *Epic Merchant*, CHAPTER 8, for Tavaster, increasing Communication to 3 and adding the Etiquette and Investigation focuses and the Journeyman-level Intrigue, Master-level Contacts, and Master-level Observation talents.) By focusing on the “low” laundry rather than fancy clothing, Flood has created ties with most of the town’s successful pubs, taverns, inns, and restaurants, as well as many private households across the city. His people glean tidbits of information from each of their customers, creating a complex, but discrete, network of unknowing spies in a majority of the town’s meeting places and homes while drawing no attention to himself.

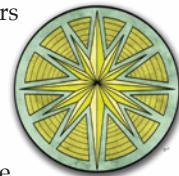
## STORY SEEDS

- Flood’s network has discovered a traitor amongst one of the town’s high-ranking nobles. He seeks those who can take care of the problem discretely, without asking too many questions about where his information comes from.
- Flood’s minions send word that a secret from the past has come to his attention, and he is offering to keep it secret—in exchange for a favor.

## WINTERHAVEN

### TEMPLE OF FELISAR

Winterhaven is a boon to weary travelers and the underprivileged citizens of Aldis alike. As one of the oldest temples to Felisar in Aldis, Winterhaven serves as both hostel and church, as well as a center from which donations and aid missions are sent to the furthest corners of the nation when need strikes.



### LAYOUT

The main room of Winterhaven consists of a large area of worship, ornately carved with scenes depicting Felisar’s protection and blessings being bestowed on travelers and the downtrodden in a myriad of different settings. Here, penitents and pilgrims who have traveled to the city from across the nation—and Aldea—gather to give thanks for Felisar’s favors, or to beseech the Bringer of Miracles for intervention. There are no steps into the building, which is constructed entirely at street level, and the seating area is broadly spaced, allowing those with mobility issues easy access. There are open areas enabling bed-bound worshipers to comfortably participate in the temple’s services, and it is not uncommon for the injured and infirm to be brought to Winterhaven seeking Felisar’s intercession on their behalf.



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Beyond the main room are sleeping chambers where weary travelers may claim refuge, as well as offices from which the priests of Felisar plan their good works. A kitchen provides filling, if plain, meals for the hungry, with the leftovers being distributed throughout the Outer Ward amongst those who have need.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Lennor Bowers** (use the *Commoner*, CHAPTER 8, increasing her Constitution to 1 and adding the Stamina focus) is a young Roamer priestess. She has made her home at Winterhaven since she lost her left leg just above the knee as a small child in a terrible wagon accident. Had she not experienced a vision of Felisar beckoning her away, she might have lost her life instead of a leg. After she recovered, she asked to be brought to the temple to dedicate herself to Felisar's service. Her family agreed, making the difficult decision to allow her to remain there and be raised and educated by the priests who could more readily assist her in relearning to walk with the aid of a prosthetic limb. While Lennor has served the temple dutifully since her childhood, lately her Roamer blood has begun to speak, urging her to travel and seek the open road as her family always has.

### STORY SEEDS

- A traveler has been brought to Winterhaven after being found half dead from injuries sustained on the road. In the throes of a fever, they claim to have been attacked by darkfiends no more than a day's ride from the city gates.
- A natural disaster in one of the hinterlands up near the Kernish border of the Kingdom brings in a call for aid. A caravan is leaving from Winterhaven with supplies, but they'll need protection from wildlife, brigands, and potentially more dire threats.
- A chance encounter with Lennor Bowers forms the seed of an obsession in the young priestess, and she becomes determined to use the connection as a means of seeking adventure within the town. Unfortunately, she's ill-suited to the task and quickly gets in over her head.

L16

## KEYSTON

Almost entirely dedicated to the crafting guildhouses (and support thereof), Keyston is the heart of the Lower Ward. It is home to the Key, where guildmasters from both the Lower Ward and other parts of the city come together to deliberate over the goods and services produced within the ward. The Key Courtyard also serves as a public location for airing grievances or demanding justice for those who have not found it elsewhere.

## THE KEY COURTYARD

### INTERGUILD RELATIONS COURT

Surrounded on three sides by the Key, a collective building used for meetings and negotiations between Lower Ward guildmasters and their business associates, the Key Courtyard is often used for public declarations of new policies, as well as sharing news from outside the ward and any additional important information with its citizens. However, by ancient tradition, it is also a location where individuals who feel they have been treated unfairly by the guildmasters or other important figures of the town can come to air their grievances.



### LAYOUT

A broad courtyard, the northern edge is bordered by a short street and the other three sides are surrounded, shaded, and protected by the four-story Key itself. Tradition dictates that every meeting room in the Key have at least one balcony open to the Key Courtyard, so that those airing their grievances can be assured their words are heard, no matter what important business is happening inside the Key.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Shawlyn Greene** (use the *Elite Laborer*, CHAPTER 8, increasing Perception to 2 and adding the Journeyman-level Observation talent) has served as groundskeeper for the Key for decades. Although the more physical aspects of her work have gradually been taken over by a younger member of staff, Shawlyn knows more about the Key's building and grounds than any other person in Aldis, and has a seemingly encyclopedic knowledge of the area's secret passages, bolt holes, and suitable nooks for spying on conversations anywhere on the grounds.

### STORY SEEDS

- A young member of the forest folk visiting the Courtyard claims their tribe has been wronged by local timber harvesters.
- Shawlyn has overheard incriminating information about one of the ward's guildmasters, and fears the information may put her life at risk.

L17

## WOOD POINT

Due to the ease of bringing lumber and logs into the ward by water, Wood Point is home to many of the town's

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carpentry and woodwright businesses. The eastern riverbank (facing the Middle Ward) is largely populated by shops, offices, and showrooms, and a great deal of traffic comes across the Cat's Gate Bridge. The western bank, facing the Bend, tends to have more rustic (and louder) businesses.

## HATIK'S

### BUILDING RENOVATIONS CONTRACTOR

Hatik's is a relatively new business, with offices on the eastern riverbank of Wood Point. While many of the carpenters in the Lower Ward apprenticed themselves to long-established ward businesses, Kuba Hatik came to Aldis from somewhere else (the strongest rumors suggest Lar'tya). Within the last decade, he has made quite a name for himself by virtue of thinking outside Aldin tradition. Specializing in renovation rather than new construction, his notable works include the transformation of a farm-in-decline into the Apron's newest and most popular dining and lodging establishment: Edgefield.



### LAYOUT

Hatik's offices are held in a small two-story building. Simple and elegant, the building's facade has been refurbished using enameled metal and finely polished wood, setting it apart from its neighbors and acting as additional advertising for its owner's expertise. Hatik's living quarters are above the offices, and, if anything, are even more beautifully appointed than the business rooms below.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Kuba Hatik** is an emigrant to Aldis, although he refuses to say from where. (Use the **Heroic Scholar**, CHAPTER 8 for Hatik, increasing Strength to 1 and adding the Artisan, Crafting, and Engineering focuses, as well as the Novice-level Lore and Artificer talents.) He dresses plainly, in great contrast to the elegance of his handiwork, and keeps largely to himself. He has no interest in small talk or frivolities, seemingly dedicating his life solely to his craft.

### STORY SEEDS

- A mysterious stranger has come to Wood Point, asking pointed questions and offering rich rewards for information about the neighborhood's renovation master, but revealing nothing about their purpose in discovering more about Hatik.
- Renovations on a project elsewhere in the city have led Hatik and his crews to discover what may well be a long-blocked portal—but to where?

L18

## THE BEND

Located mostly across the Rose River from the rest of Aldis, the Bend consists largely of flat, fertile farmland and river-front businesses. Only one real Bend business is found on the southern bank of the river: the Blue Heron, a generations-old restaurant and inn that moved across the water decades ago after its original location was destroyed.

## THE BLUE HERON

### PICTURESQUE CUISINE INN

Noted for its serene atmosphere and amazing cuisine, as well as the picturesque view that diners enjoy during their meal, the Blue Heron has been a Lower Ward destination for decades. The business hit a small decline after the original owners retired, but their daughter is now doing very nicely in her quest to continue the family tradition.



### LAYOUT

The Blue Heron is a broad, two-story building located near the Bend Bridge that spans the Rose River. The front walls feature thick, clear glass windows that afford an expansive view of the ancient bridge, and the upper rooms with river-views are earmarked for guests and travelers. The back half of the massive building consists of the kitchen, business, and utilities below, with quarters for the owner and several of the staff who do not have homes away from the inn on the second floor.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Pasha Moon** inherited the Blue Heron from her fathers a few years ago, after the three men decided to retire. (Use the **Merchant**, CHAPTER 8, for Pasha, adding the Bargaining and Tasting focuses and the Journeyman-level Contacts talent.) She had a little bit of trouble convincing her clientele (some of whom have been visiting the Blue Heron since they were children themselves) to think of her as the owner rather than the owners' daughter after her father has retired. But now, business is booming as Pasha implements new ideas to complement her fathers' traditional business savvy.

### STORY SEEDS

- Intent on creating a new dish for the Blue Heron's menu, Pasha offers phenomenal prices for exotic ingredients.
- After Pasha refuses to pay "protection money," someone begins sabotaging the Blue Heron.

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**T**he Outer Ward represents the northwest segment of the city, where civilization begins to fade into the picturesque wilderness of the lands just outside Aldis. Here, trees and lush grasses mix with the paved streets of the city, confirming the kingdom's promise to preserve, protect, and embrace the natural world even as it fosters cultural growth within the city's boundaries.

Because it covers much of the land approach from the north and all of the west, the Outer Ward is the first stop within the city proper for many visitors, and in fact, some travelers never make it deeper into the city. As a result, the ward rings with the sound of many languages and the businesses attempt to cater to the desires of both the native residents and those who may not be fond of—or familiar with—Aldin custom or cuisine.

Being farther from the city's center also means certain business and activities are more accepted here than they might be elsewhere. Soap-making, tanning, butchering, smoking meats, and other vocations that create unpleasant odors are usually confined to the Outer Ward, where the less-dense streets allow the winds to dissipate smells before too many folk are disturbed by them. Businesses

and establishments tend to have direct, simple names indicating their function or ownership; the people who frequent them often don't have the time or the interest for flowery titles or confusing metaphors when looking for a place to buy goods or to enjoy a meal.

Construction in the Outer Ward is a mixture of newer buildings added as the city expanded and some very old structures that were swallowed by the city. Some buildings that used to be on the outskirts, or even considered to be outside the city, now rest in the heart of this ward.

## O1

### THE GROVE

The Grove sits on the northern edge of the city and is usually the first sight of Aldis proper for travelers from the north. The grasses on either side of the paved streets are lush and green here. The trees are well-tended, coppiced in many places to maintain their shape without threatening the plants' ability to grow larger and more impressive.

*"First time in Aldis? Nab, not reading your mind, friend—just your face. When you live in this part of Aldis, you get used to seeing folk newly arrived in the city. Beautiful, isn't she?"*

Runado Elkis, teamster

# NORTH OUTER WARD



This neighborhood draws its name from the plentiful fruit trees that have been planted here, as well as just to the north of the city. Citizens choosing to enjoy the area's proximity to nature often picnic here, and take freely from the trees.

## DELILE'S

### FLORIST

Located at the northernmost point of Aldis, Delile is a florist known throughout the city for being able to foster and raise flowers and other plants that otherwise should not be capable of growing in the area. Delile is a frequent provider of flowers to the Royal Palace.



### LAYOUT

The shop is a large, open square filled with tables and benches of various heights, upon which Delile and her staff tend the ever-changing array of blooms she has on offer.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The owner and namesake of the florists, **Delile** (use the **Merchant, CHAPTER 8**) is a kindly woman just entering middle age. She is always willing to pay for healthy

samples of new flowers or saplings, but is very careful not to raise plants that might be detrimental to species native to Aldis. If pressed, she can perform simple healing arts, and sometimes does so for traveling adventurers who require immediate medical attention.

### STORY SEEDS

- A new flower, never seen before, suddenly blooms among the blue roses.
- Try as she might, Delile cannot get a certain plant to take root, and fears that fell influences are to blame. Those finding and stopping the source of the problem will be rewarded.

### O2

## TURNCOIN

In the neighborhood of Turncoin, folk can expect to make money in many different ways, from trading goods to offering themselves as labor to load or unload wagons for the many caravans that come in and out of the city. Named for the frequent changing of hands that money often undergoes here, Turncoin is home to many who are unestablished, hoping to find a profession, or simply looking to make some quick cash without much training or expertise.



## THE WINDING BAZAAR

### MARKETPLACE

From the outside, the Winding Bazaar is a loud, frightening, chaotic place. On the inside, it is much the same, but filled with people who wish to buy or sell every type of wonder from across the kingdom. Vendors shout prices almost nonstop, and may sprinkle spices, reflect light from glassware, or wave textiles in the air in front of potential customers in the hopes of drawing them into their booths for a closer look.



Inside the bazaar, traders are willing to accept nearly any kind of payment, be it local currency, barter, or foreign coins. However, buyers paying with gold of any minting are likely to draw suspicious glances and whispers from the bazaar's denizens.

### LAYOUT

The Winding Bazaar has two entrances, both of which lead visitors along the outer edge of the building. Once inside, customers enter a continuous, winding flow of people that moves past stalls and booths selling every kind of good imaginable, including perishables made on the spot (although no fires are permitted within the bazaar). After following the river of people around two corners, one can either escape back out the opposite entrance, or continue deeper into the bazaar.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Xaff and Leen** (use the **Merchant**, **CHAPTER 8** for both) are married, but thanks to well-applied cosmetics, look almost like identical twin brothers: both tall and slim, with open shirts and easy smiles. Only Xaff's slightly broader nose and lighter complexion suggest they are not actually related by blood. The pair sell cloths and silks, as well as stories to go along with the purchases: this bit of silk was actually part of the wedding dress of a former Sovereign, while that woolen swatch once swaddled a great hero, and so on. None of these tales are true, of course, but they take great joy in sharing them and in the looks of wonder that cross the faces of the gullible.

### STORY SEEDS

- A stolen item has been sold to one of the vendors in the bazaar, and must be found before the true owner discovers it's missing.
- A wealthy noble is willing to pay well to be the sole owner of an object rumored to be in the bazaar, but refuses to be seen browsing there.

### O3

## THE PASTURE

Named for the broad, flat, green spaces between the northern hills and the city to the south, the Pasture is a

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wide, verdant, mostly empty plain. The grasses here grow quickly and thickly, as they do in the Grove, but are kept short by the frequent feeding of the pack animals, cattle, and sheep that traders and travelers pause to pasture here before continuing into the city. Visitors can pay to have young pasture-keepers watch over their animals, which are reclaimed by turning in small, brightly painted tokens that match identical markers slung around the animals' necks.

Buildings are sparse in the Pasture, and a good proportion of them cater to travelers entering or leaving the city: inns and taverns, stables, boarding houses, and a few slop-sweep (manure-gatherer) sheds. The area is dominated by animal activity—and smells like it—making lodgings cheap, as the only people that can tolerate the area for long are the locals, the cattle drivers, and other animal workers that are not put off by the fragrant aromas.

### THE SHEPHERD'S CROOK

#### RUSTIC INN

Shepherds and goatherds from the nearby region often bring their livestock to the city in small droves for sale, and they mainly prefer to stay at the Shepherd's Crook. A large, comfortable inn, the Crook serves simple country fare, based on the same farmers' recipes that the couple who own it, Ifra and Zej, enjoyed in their youth. Mutton is often on the menu, as is lamb, and there is nearly always a savory stew on the fire just moments away from being ready to serve.

Shepherds that can't afford the coin for a stay can always pay in either labor or livestock. Labor usually involves a hard few hours mucking out the stables or minding someone else's horses, before being rewarded with a hearty stew and a straw bed for the night. A good, unshorn ewe can finance a week's stay, including board.

#### LAYOUT

The Crook is divided between the stables to the north and the actual inn housed in the western and southern parts of the building. The kitchen is large, extending all the way across the narrow connecting building (guests may **not** pass from the stables to the dining room through the kitchen), and the large hearth and stove spread heat throughout all three of the inn's stories.

There are six guest rooms on both the second and third floors, with a pair of small but comfortable beds in each. The stable haylofts double as a common room for those who can't afford a room to themselves.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Ifra** (use the **Commoner**, **CHAPTER 8**) and **Zej** (use the **Laborer**, **CHAPTER 8**) are a couple entering their sixties. They have no children, and fill their days caring for one another

and the guests at their inn. Neither is especially warm or playful, but they are willing to provide extra attention to the wounded, the grieving, the sick, or the lonely.

#### STORY SEEDS

- Someone is hiding out at the inn. It's not clear whether this person is sneaking into or out of the city. Patrons are becoming suspicious of the guest's surreptitious behavior, and wish them to leave immediately.
- The couple are beginning to worry as to who will take over the inn once they pass on, and have sought the counsel of trusted friends to figure out an inheritance.

### THE KILN

#### CHARCOALERS

In time, most untreated wood rots, and every act of carpentry or woodworking has unusable scraps as a byproduct. In the Outer Ward, such bits of leftover wood that aren't put to use in regular fires eventually make their way to the Kiln:



a wide, squat stone structure in the far north of the city used to generate charcoal. Once a week, a rotating crew of convicts serving their sentences through community work sweeps out the Kiln, collecting the results of the previous firing and distributing it to a number of smiths who have made arrangements with the Crown to receive the products in exchange for discounts on the smiths' wares.

Due to the danger of combustible materials finding their way into the Kiln (accidentally or otherwise), there is always a pair of guards on duty who inspect all items before deposit. No building construction is permitted within 500 feet in any direction of the Kiln, to prevent any fires or explosions from harming bystanders or other properties.

#### O4

### GREENSTREETS

Greenstreets is named for the luscious grasses and other greenery that surround the neighborhood's paved roads. Even in the denser, eastern part of the area, residents and businesses take pride in planting flowers by the roads, not only to make the area more inviting but also to mask some of the smells emanating from the rest of the ward. Though most thoroughfares through Aldis can boast some degree of greenery, nothing quite matches the breathtaking artistry of Greenstreets, whose botanical artists delve into miniaturization, topiary-crafting, and the precise planting of flowers to ensure specific effects at any given time of day, even hiring plant-shapers to accomplish their horticultural wonders.

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## THE OPEN ROOF

### TRAVELERS HOSTEL

A welcoming hostel for travelers, the Open Roof is run by a kindly old blind night person named Yakha, a woman who depends upon the benevolence of her guests and the general goodwill of her neighbors. It costs nothing to stay at the Open Roof, but residents are asked not to remain for more than a week. Everyone is tasked with something during their stay, whether it be cleaning, mending the sheets and blankets, tending the gardens, or preparing food. Those who attempt to take advantage of Yakha's hospitality by refusing to contribute their share are asked to leave. Such invitations seldom need to be enforced; the presence of the two large young men Yakha employs as helpers is usually enough to discourage troublemakers.



### LAYOUT

The Open Roof consists of two buildings. The northern building is a longer, single-story affair, filled with bunk beds along the walls and small trunks to hold guests' possessions. The shorter building holds the kitchens and common room, as well as a second story where Yakha and her assistants live. The common room is dominated by two long trestle tables with benches, where guests eat, gather, and converse.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Yakha** (use the *Elite Merchant, CHAPTER 8*) came to Aldis nearly thirty years ago, and does not discuss her time in Kern or anywhere else. She has sufficient savings to run the Open Roof, and makes ends meet through a combination of self-sufficiency, trading, the generosity of former guests, and tapping into her savings.

### STORY SEEDS

- Despite the rules, there is one resident that will not leave, and Yakha won't say why she won't make them.
- Someone is looking to buy the Open Roof, at almost any price. Yakha wants to know why.

## VINE DAY MARKET

### MARKETPLACE

Held weekly on Vine Day, both residents and travelers are welcome to set up stalls in this open-air market. Any item that can be legally sold within the city might be (and often is) found here on Vine Day, but the majority of the items sold are



hand-crafted goods or found curiosities—which some folk collect as relics of previous ages.

Because it happens only once each week, there is no guarantee that a given vendor won't be gone the next time a customer tries to buy something. The sellers here use that fact to their advantage, threatening to have other purchasers waiting in the wings or important travel that will make desired goods unavailable—anything to close that sale.

### LAYOUT

The market is packed with small, booth-like stalls between five and twelve feet in length, each with a canopy above it to protect the occupants and customers from the sun and rain. The location of many stalls changes from week to week, and a stall may be missing for weeks at a time if a vendor is traveling, focusing on farm business, or otherwise occupied. This leads to some minor feuding over prime locations, but for the most part, customers are able to find what they want with ease.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Lhoris** (statistics left for the Narrator to determine) is a squat creature barely five feet in height, whose race and gender are both concealed by a dirty, hooded cloak no matter the season. Lhoris attends the market each week, irrespective of the weather, wandering the stalls but flatly refusing to purchase anything. Rumors abound as to who or what Lhoris really is, why they take such an interest in the Market, and who they work for; suspicions range from one of the Sovereign's Finest to an agent—or even a Baron—of the Silence.

### STORY SEEDS

- Lhoris has information. No one knows what it is, but everyone knows it's important, and Lhoris demands a heavy price to reveal it.
- A powerful shas crystal has been discovered, and someone plans to sell it at the next Market.

## O5

## STAG'S CHARGE

There is an Aldin legend, from before the establishment of the modern kingdom, of a wanderer who needed to escape a great injustice. Tired and alone, she wandered the streets of the city late at night, but no one would aid her; most thought she was mad, or cursed.

When she called to the gods for aid, she was met by a vision of a great silver stag, who charged northwest towards the wilderness. The wanderer's steps became leaping strides as she followed, and by the time she caught the stag, she had taken on the form of a great hart, and escaped the city before her pursuers could find her.

## CHAPTER 6: THE OUTER WARD

The neighborhood has long believed the stag charged through this area, and some nights, children claim to find evidence of the stag's passing.

### GHIN'S WAREHOUSE

#### WAREHOUSE

Serving many of the traveling caravans that move through the city, Ghin's Warehouse is a stopping point where caravans can offload, check inventory, and store both wagons and goods while they attempt to find buyers or trade partners. The warehouse is abuzz with people moving goods from just before dawn until the last light of day, but once twilight has passed, all the doors are locked and every worker is chased out.



#### LAYOUT

Shaped like a giant horseshoe, Ghin's Warehouse has bays all along the inner courtyard to allow wagons and carts easy access to the interior. Within these wide shelters (between 14 and 40 feet wide) are stairs that lead to a second story, where lightweight items can be stored and workers can take meals or naps out of the sun.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

A man of average build with thinning gray hair, **Ghin** (use the *Elite Merchant, CHAPTER 8*) is the owner of the warehouse. He speaks to no one but his two husbands and their three daughters, who to most people are nearly interchangeable. Ghin sets the prices for storing wares, determines the rules for who can and can't stay, and has his family deliver messages to their customers in short, cryptic sayings that most seem to understand without explanation.

#### STORY SEEDS

- The Sovereign's Finest are convinced that something is being smuggled through the warehouse, and need help with discreetly locating it.
- Strange noises are coming from the warehouse at night, but all Ghin's workers swear the place is empty.

### THE KING'S RACK

#### RESTAURANT

The many visitors to the city of Aldis need to be fed, and one of their favorite establishments is the King's Rack. A simple place with good food, the Rack is open from just after noontime until the late evening every day. It does not serve strong drink or cater to late-night activity, but most



people forgive them for this failing once they've tasted the venison. A constant flow of fresh meat from Zakarm's keeps the patrons happy, and happy, sober patrons are always quiet and respectful.

#### LAYOUT

The King's Rack is dominated by the display of a giant rack of antlers just inside the front door. Tables seating anywhere from two to ten guests are arranged around the room.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The proprietor of the King's Rack, **Alata** (use the **Laborer, CHAPTER 8**), is a tall woman who wears hunting leathers to work, showing off her powerful arms to any who might think of causing trouble in her establishment. Her cousin, Zakarm (see **Zakarm's**, in **Seltha's Watch**), offers her good prices on fresh meat, and she is incredibly skilled at making tasty meals from the cheapest cuts. Alata makes a point of helping her cousin through the leaner winter months, and is always well-rewarded come spring.

#### STORY SEEDS

- Accusations have been made that the King's Rack is obtaining its meat through foul means, either via arcana or by hunting rhydan.
- Alata's strongbox full of savings has gone missing, and the only evidence points to her cousin, Zakarm.

#### O6

### SMOOTHSTONES

Nearly every foot that passes through the Outer Ward passes through Smoothstones at one time or another. With streets wide enough to allow for horses and carts to pass easily as well, this neighborhood has seen its streets worn smooth over time. Rather than repave, the residents have chosen to keep the name and the character that comes along with it.

### THE PRECIOUS PALATE

#### RESTAURANT

Nestled in a small building just off the main road south, the Precious Palate is proof that even in the poorest of areas, wealth will find a way to show itself off. This expensive restaurant caters to those that want the experience of enjoying the flavors of other cultures without the hassle of mixing with the people that actually belong to them. Thus, the Palate spends a good deal of time and money purchasing exotic ingredients and recipes to share with its clientele.



ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE



## CHAPTER 6: THE OUTER WARD

### LAYOUT

Surrounded by a shallow stream that acts as a natural moat, the Precious Palate is reached by a small wooden bridge that allows only one person to cross at a time. Looking like most buildings of the Outer Ward outside, it is exquisitely appointed on the inside, with marble sculptures accented with gold. There are only six tables, each seating no more than six people, with a warm fireplace on one wall sharing the heat and flame with the kitchen.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The primary chef of the Precious Palate is a reclusive vata'an woman named **Bavaana** (use the **Commoner, CHAPTER 8**). Her cooking has brought her much acclaim from the wealthy and nobles of the city, and twice she has turned down exorbitant fees to work for the palace or for affluent families.

### STORY SEEDS

- Someone has been poisoned by a meal at the Precious Palate. No toxin can be detected in the food, and there was only one victim, leading to a large number of suspects.
- An unexpected invitation to dine at the Precious Palate arrives, but with no indication of the sender.

## O7

### ARRAN'S THIRST

Many centuries ago, a sea-folk traveler named Arran was stranded outside the city with neither a mount nor companions, having long since run out of water as he tried to return to Lake Vash. Eventually, within sight of the old city's walls, he collapsed in a small ditch, believing he would die of thirst. It was not long before a passing caravan saw him, and every trader, guard, and traveler among them surrounded Arran with stones before emptying their waterskins to create a makeshift pool for him. Other travelers soon followed, and through their care and generosity, Arran's life was saved.

The legend of Arran's Thirst is well known throughout the entire city, but it is a point of public pride to residents of this neighborhood. No one that lives within sight of the fountain at Arran's Square will ever deny a passing traveler a drink or shade from the sun.

### ARRAN'S SQUARE

#### PUBLIC SQUARE

To commemorate Arran's legend, a fountain was erected in what is now known as Arran's Square. A statue of a sea-folk man being tended to by members of every other race

surmounts the fountain, and water flows out of pitchers, skins, and goblets onto the likeness of Arran before flowing down into the pool below.

Each day, the truly starving and indigent can be found near Arran's Square, where they receive some small measure of charity (such as a meal). The square is considered a place of quiet contemplation and kindness, and by tradition, adolescents—particularly those engaged in romantic liaisons—avoid the area to prevent causing unintentional heartache.

### LAYOUT

In addition to the large fountain, four polished brass basins stand at the center of Arran's Square. Traveling sea-folk sometimes stop and sit in these basins, pouring water from the fountain over themselves in memory of Arran's travails. Actual bathing is usually frowned upon in the basins, but sea-folk have been known to fully immerse themselves on truly hot days.

### STORY SEEDS

- A strange disease has begun to affect humans touching the waters from the fountain. The affliction turns the skin red for a few days, but is otherwise seemingly harmless.
- Reports of strange apparitions appearing at night have begun to circulate, but only from those walking alone.

## O8

### THE WANDER

Now located near the center of the Outer Ward, the Wander was once considered the outskirts of the city, where children were left to wander unattended but still close enough that parents could find and account for them. Now, parents are less apt to allow their children to mingle with some of the outsiders that walk the streets of the ward, but brave adolescents still use it as a proving ground for exploits as daring as walking alone at night, interrupting strange folk, or trying new foods at odd restaurants.

### PENNYWEIGHT'S

#### SECONDHAND SHOP

Occupying a large corner on the Street of Seeds just on the edge of Greenstreets, Pennyweight's is the final destination of a good deal of the city's refuse. Items which are discarded, broken (and unfixable), or otherwise ruined are sometimes



# PENNYWEIGHT'S



sold for scrap at one of the counter windows along the southern edge of the building. Metal that can be melted down is purchased by weight—hence the name of the establishment—but nearly everything, from rags and hunks of wood to old boots or capes, can fetch some sort of price at Pennyweight's. As long as it shows no visible signs of rot, decay, or infestation, the shrewd workers here will buy it. Sellers can repurchase sold items before the shop closes for the day; after that, items cannot be recovered.

Once an item makes it inside, a team of keen-eyed sorters gets to work, making sure that what is usable makes it to the appropriate place. Penny, the owner, hires only those workers who prove capable of quickly appraising the value of goods and knowing what will require her personal attention. Any written correspondence is removed from the sorting tables to prevent gossip. Objects of value that can be repaired and resold are moved to a separate area of the complex for examination by artisans. Almost everything else is broken down into its constituent parts: cloth, leather, nails, hinges, or whatever other components make it up.

By aggregating, processing, and selling what others might consider trash, Pennyweight's helps keep the city's streets and homes free of rubbish and reuses items that might otherwise simply be discarded. Penny makes a tidy profit purchasing items at low cost and then selling them for their maximum value, but can also be a good resource for someone looking for sturdy, usable items that may have had a previous owner or two.

## LAYOUT

The trapezoidal building is marked with five large windows along the southern edge, where customers can walk up and offer items for sale or purchase select raw goods (wooden scraps, short lengths of rope, cuts of wool too small for a blanket or cloak, and such) on the spot. Inside along the western and eastern halls are various rooms for different types of goods, sorted by material and use, some awaiting missing parts or more general repair. More valuable or interesting items are held in the northern hall, which can only be reached through a door on the second story of the building, accessed through a stairway in the central courtyard.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The owner of Pennyweight's goes by the name of **Penny** (use the *Elite Merchant, CHAPTER 8*), but this seems to be an inherited family name of some sort, as court records show she is at least the fourth woman called Penny to own the shop. She is a young woman, only just thirty, but her forehead and eyes are marked with the lines of someone who often squints or closely examines small objects. She is a brusque, no-nonsense woman who has little time or patience for pleasantries; she indicates her affection for someone by loosening some personal stricture or rule of the shop.

Penny has shown a particular leniency towards adventurers, though whether this is to keep tabs on them for the Sovereign or because she has a special liking for them is

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a matter of some debate. It is true that she will not hold any item secret from the Crown. At least twice, criminal plots have been foiled because she was asked to keep quiet about an item sold to the shop, which she promptly turned over to the Sovereign's Finest.

### STORY SEEDS

- An important item that was supposed to be discreetly carried into the city has gone missing, and the courier claims that someone at the inn in which he was staying stole his cloak. A cloak matching the courier's was recently sold to Pennyweight's, but everyone claims the case sewn into the lining was already gone.
- Rumor has it that the shop's entire reason for being is to locate one specific item of great arcane significance that has been missing for decades. What the item is, no one knows for sure.

### 09

## SELTHA'S WATCH

Marking the area where the surrounding countryside's plains and hills roll into Aldis, Seltha's Watch mixes the natural landscape with the edge of the city's growth. The hill that dominates the western quarter of the neighborhood is used for picnics and looking out over the city, and has long been accepted as the limit for Aldis' westward expansion.

Taking its name from Aldis' first queen, Seltha's Watch represents the commitment of Aldin-folk to the natural world and a limit to civilization's excesses. The hill (which shares its name with the neighborhood) allows those that climb its gentle slopes to look out over the natural beauty to the west, the great din of the city to the east and south, and the fading villages and rising density of trees to the north.

## ZAKARM'S

### SLAUGHTERHOUSE AND TANNERY

Part slaughterhouse, part butcher, part tanner, Zakarm's is little more than an outbuilding, but it's where many go to have the messy business of turning live cattle into useable goods handled. The owner, Zakarm, is a jovial sort, even when engaged in his trade.

### LAYOUT

Zakarm's is a long building that houses both the business and the owner's family. Along the northwest wall, there are nearly always skins stretched out for tanning or stripping, while the northeast side is where carcasses are hung



for butchering when the building grows too hot in the summer months.

Inside, a small shop lets visitors peruse and purchase all manner of leather goods, dried meats, and animal trophies, as well as trade good smoking wood for any of those items.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Zakarm** (use the **Laborer**, CHAPTER 8) is a huge, red-haired man with giant hands and powerful arms. It's rumored he can tear the limbs from large animals with little effort, although no one with any sense dares ask him to do it.

### STORY SEEDS

- Rumor has it that Zakarm is still fuming over a hypothetical request to butcher a rhydan. The requester fled the city before the authorities could be summoned.
- A small calf has wandered into Zakarm's and will not leave. Zakarm won't let anyone remove it.

## THE NURSERY

### CIVIC BOTANICAL NURSERY

In the shadow of Seltha's Watch is the Nursery, where the city grows small trees and other flowering plants, allowing them to reach maturity under the careful watch of its gardeners before they are moved to other locations. Unlike the Villa Fruta orchard in Cropwick, the Nursery is owned by the city, and its job is to maintain the trees that are necessary to keep the kingdom's promise to protect its natural wonders.



### LAYOUT

Plants are arranged in the Nursery in rows representing their potential size; currently, the largest and oldest trees are along the southwest edge of the small farm. Over time, the plants are rotated, but the buildings always serve the same purposes: the northeastern building grows small, potted plants that are meant as additions to the gardens of new homes; the northern building houses the workshop, where mending, splicing, and seed extraction take place; and the southernmost building is where the heavier tools, wheelbarrows, and other equipment are stored.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The chief tender of the Nursery is a short, spindly man named **Terrin** (use the **Scholar**, CHAPTER 8). Always dressed in spare woolen clothes that leave his lower arms free for working on plants or digging in the earth, Terrin views it as his mission to preserve the natural beauty of Aldis, even at the cost of human enjoyment of the more civilized elements the city has to offer.

## STORY SEEDS

- Reports of strange plant maladies rising up across the city have alarmed Terrin, who needs someone to carefully gather samples of the affected plants without drawing notice.
- Seeds of the same species planted at the same time have been growing at vastly different rates, and Terrin cannot determine the cause of the discrepancy.

## O10

## BARRELSMOUTH

Though the buildings in Barrelsouth are constructed of the pale stone so typical of Aldis, it's impossible to tell at first glance. Many of the structures are covered in thin, dangling shingles that dance to their own clattering rhythm in the wind. These are the staves of future barrels, hung to age outdoors for three years. This guarantees the barrels they form will be strong and waterproof without the need to coat them in pitch, which can alter the flavor of anything stored inside.

## THE COOPERS' GUILD

## GUILDHALL

Members of the Coopers' Guild produce hundreds of quality barrels every day, and it's a good thing they do—nearly all goods in Aldis are shipped via cask and barrel, from grains to nails to the finest wines. Because shaping a barrel is not a rapid process, numerous shops must work together to fulfill large orders from shipping merchants. All deals are brokered at the guildhall, defining exactly how many barrels each shop is expected to produce and what cut of the payment they can expect in return.



## LAYOUT

Wealthy merchants and aristocratic traders have often remarked on the Coopers' Guild's uncreative architecture—in any other ward, the building would likely be shaped like a giant barrel to reflect its purpose. However, the plain, rectangular hall is perfectly indicative of the practical, no-nonsense men and women who frequent it. Their splinter-roughened hands and attitudes belie their status as artisans. It takes true skill to make a good barrel, marrying elements of both woodworking and blacksmithing.

The single-story hall itself is also more impressive on the inside than the outside. The ceiling is supported by a splendid row of brick piers which bloom into ribbed vaults of wood at the top. These piers divide the space

in half, with one half functioning as a meeting hall while the other features a series of displays on the crafting of barrels and the marks of barrel quality, meant to educate merchants on why they should hesitate to purchase cheaper, non-guild casks.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Burly and barrel-shaped himself, **Blakeney Trew** (use the **Laborer**, CHAPTER 8) was elected leader of the Coopers' Guild several seasons ago. He's ambitious and passionate about the rights of his guildmates, emphasizing every statement with a booming voice and firm-fisted hand gestures. The skills he honed gambling beyond his means at the Okeahna racetrack were put to good use negotiating higher rates for several of the guild's largest long-standing contracts. He is practically a caricature of a leader, but much-beloved among guild members and their families.

## STORY SEEDS

- Residents steal thousands of aging barrel staves for protection after a series of mysterious vampire attacks throughout the Outer Ward.
- When a sea-worn barrel of blood-colored wood washes ashore, it's brought to the guild for examination. A mummified human heart is found inside.
- Casks with arcane traps set to detonate when opened are found across the city, all of which can be traced back to the Coopers' Guild.

## O11

## TARBOROUGH

The reasons for this district's name become clear upon first sniff—the air is filled with the pervasive scent of pitch or, more accurately, bitumen. A number of ancient tar pits have bubbled to the surface of the countryside here, some no larger than a footprint and some vast enough to swallow entire caravans. A great deal of the neighborhood's economy is centered around bitumen in one form or another; it is highly valued as a sealant to waterproof roofs, ships, scabbards, and even etchings, but is also sold in small "smudge pots" to ward off biting insects.

## BREAL TAR PIT

## PITCHWORKS

This land was once a humble alfalfa farm; however, its owner often complained the ground never felt sturdy. After a few decades of tilling the soil, she discovered why: just below the topsoil was a



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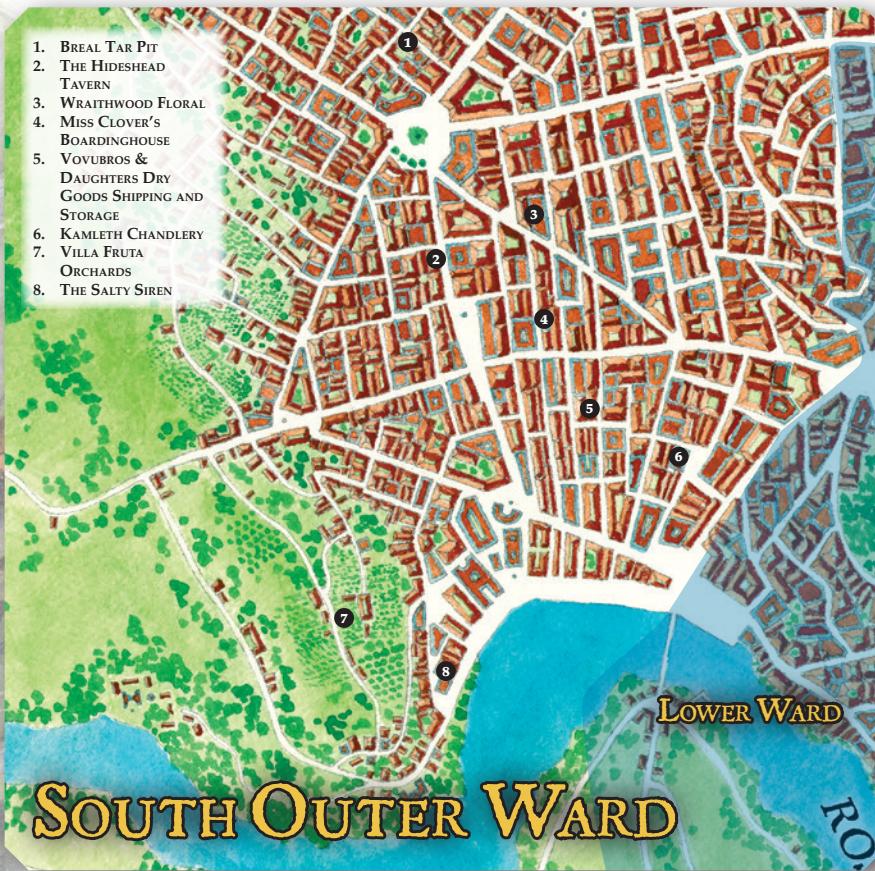
viscous lake of pitch. The remote and odiferous location, accessible only by a single road, is now a thriving bitumen export business, part mine and part warehouse. No matter how much tar is removed, more continues to rise up and fill the lake, which constantly burps gases from deep underground.

## LAYOUT

A roughly circular building—the Breal Tar Works—was built to encompass the tar pit so it could be mined and processed. However, over the years, the bitumen eroded the surrounding land until the edges of the lake extended beyond the structure. The building was converted into a barge, and now floats atop the pitch rather than relying on an ever-sinking foundation beneath it. Rope bridges connect the factory-barge to the mainland at a number of points around its perimeter. These bridges also anchor the barge in place, preventing it from smashing into land in high winds.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The current matriarch of the Breal family, and the current owner of the tar pit, **Zhou Breal** (use the **Merchant**, CHAPTER 8) is a deceptively frail-looking woman with a cunning mind and a cutthroat attitude. She adores lace, frills, and pastel colors, but has never been cowed by a difficult decision or a calculating competitor.



**Geldstone** (use the **Laborer**, CHAPTER 8) worked at the tar pit for decades, just like his father and grandfather before him. He was forced to retire due to a consumptive cough, boils, and persistent headaches—just like his father and grandfather before him. An impeccably honest man, Geldstone once got into a fistfight over a bank error in his favor.

## STORY SEEDS

- The local economy stumbles and conflict erupts when a sickly former tar pit worker accuses bitumen of causing his maladies, and the Breals of conspiring to cover up the dangers.
- A run on smudge pots occurs after swarms of locusts devour local crops. However, some of the pots seem to be *attracting* the insects instead of *repelling* them.
- When a Broken Circle resurrection experiment goes wrong, walking corpses sealed in pitch-covered wrappings stagger back to the tar pit and attack its workers.
- Ancient skeletons of bone-chillingly strange creatures come to life, crawling out of the tar pit and rampaging across the landscape.
- A body bubbles up from the depths of the tar pit, the fashion of its pitch-soaked clothing preserved enough to prove the recency of its demise. The multiple stab wounds to the chest indicate that, whoever they are, they were murdered.

## O12

## TANGLE

On royal maps of the city, this tri-tipped district's name is always spelled out fully as *Tannery Angle*. However, this is universally shortened to *Tangle* in everyday speech across Aldis, even among wealthy citizens who've never heard an Outer Ward accent in their lives.

As its full name suggests, Tangle is home to a number of tanneries and an even greater number of noxious odors. Few residents own their own homes here: Tangle is treated only as a stopping-place on life's journey and not a permanent home.

Rent and rum can both be found cheaply here, and the neighborhoods' taverns are popular even with outsiders.

# THE HIDESHEAD TAVERN

## TAVERN

The Hideshead is mostly popular among tannery workers and hapless travelers who can't afford anything better. It's a rowdy place where the only music offered is the loud and drunken arguments of patrons, which not-uncommonly devolve into brief fisticuffs. The barmaids are likely to spit in the drinks of anyone they dislike; they've done even worse, once or twice.



### LAYOUT

The Hideshead opened in a former tannery building. Kegs are now stored in the old tanning pits under the floorboards, and the second- and third-story drying spaces were divided into individual guestrooms with flimsy partitions. None of the rooms are a consistent size.

The bar running the length of the main tavern room is constructed out of old drying and scraping racks, and the stools and chairs are cushioned with the last leathers pulled out of the tannin baths. The taxidermized head of a flea-bitten stag oversees the tavern from behind the bar; the only other décor is the graffiti scrawled on and carved into the walls by patrons over the years.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The tavern's long-time cook, **Sae-June Willow** (use the **Commoner, CHAPTER 8**), specializes in cooking with offal, often frying small pieces in buttery cornmeal batter, and utterly refuses to utilize vegetables as anything more than a garnish. She keeps her offerings fattening and greasy, believing the men and women she serves work too hard in too lousy conditions for anything less. Her tongue is as sharp as her knives, and her wit is as dark as her eyes.

While not an official employee, **Rom Sonsak** (use the **Commoner, CHAPTER 8**) nevertheless earns his living at the Hideshead, working nearly every evening as the tavern's most consistent sex worker. He sometimes helps out behind the bar, hefting kegs to show off his brawny figure, or participates in high-stakes arm wrestling contests. However, his true talents are on display only in the tavern's private, upstairs rooms. A bit of a grasshopper, he's never really planned for the winter of his life when his muscles wither and his chestnut hair dulls. In the back of his mind, he assumes he'll find a wealthy lover to keep him; he's never considered how unlikely he is to meet this diamond in the rough of Tangle.

### STORY SEEDS

- Sae-June Willow swears she's trapped an abomination in one of the old tanning pits.

- The Hideshead is set on fire by an angry patron who claims Rom Sonsak has been blackmailing her with bedside secrets.
- The Hideshead and all its guests are held hostage by a young sorcerer desperate for help.

## O13

# FOUR CORNERS

Four Corners is the rare district whose borders form an almost perfect square. It's one of the nicest areas in the Outer Ward, housing numerous thriving outdoor markets and flower stalls. This is by design: city planners hoped the fresh scents of Four Corners would help barricade the rest of the city against Tangle's unique odors. The neighborhood's markets offer some of the best booth rental fees in the entire city. All merchants chip in to maintain the colorful flags and banners fluttering over every street: all are treated with special perfumes and incense before they're hung to help keep the aroma of Tangle at bay.

# WRAITHWOOD FLORAL

### FLORIST

Wraithwood Floral sells what it advertises as "fey-touched" flowers. Some look like ghostly, semi-transparent versions of ordinary plants and flowers (mistflowers); some look like perfectly ordinary flowers, except they never wilt, even when cut (everblooms); and some are simply miniaturized trees planted in pots, no more than a few spans tall. Everything is quite expensive, but the beauty of each plant is utterly unmatched in all Aldis. Other vendors have tried to grow mistflowers and everblooms commercially, but the breeding and planting conditions are a closely-guarded secret no one has been able to replicate.



### LAYOUT

Wraithwood is easily distinguished from its neighbors by its square tent—instead of being a single, bright color, or even striped, the canvas is tie-dyed in swirling shades of green and blue. The tent supports are living vines and saplings, awash in colorful blooms.

Inside, in addition to displaying flowers and miniature potted trees for sale, several shelves hold nothing but interesting stones, well-polished shells, and tiny lacquer figurines of winged humans and animals.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Adroi Leaning-Thorn** (see **CHAPTER 8**) owns and operates the Wraithwood Floral market stall, as well as Wraithwood Floral Farm in Tarborough. She hates the busi-

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ness aspects of running both concerns and pays several accountants to handle her finances. Her free-spirited life-style extends even to her wardrobe choices—she wears only gauzy, flowing gowns and says any other clothing is too constrictive. If it were more socially acceptable, she'd likely go about "as naked as a rhydan."

### STORY SEEDS

- Adroi Leaning-Thorn begins selling bouquets of a curious, singing flower. However, those who purchase the blooms say the singing quickly turns to weeping.
- A rhy-rat accuses Leaning-Thorn of being associated with the Broken Circle and claims her ever-blooming flowers are part of an eternal life experiment.
- A young noble accuses a jealous ex-lover of ruining his wedding by poisoning all his Wraithwood flowers and making his guests sick.
- A fey noble asks for help freeing the ghosts of his lovers from Wraithwood Floral Farm, where he claims Adroi Leaning-Thorn is holding them captive and using their essence to grow her flowers.

## MISS CLOVER'S BOARDINGHOUSE

### BOARDINGHOUSE

The boardinghouse was once a modest manor house on Four Corners' main boulevard. After its previous owner passed away, Edward Rajmund bought it and began renting out the rooms. Believing the prior owner to have had excellent taste, he kept most of her belongings and added antiques as fancy struck him. The décor lends the boardinghouse the aged warmth of a favorite grandmother's house; the effect is only enhanced by the cookies and pastries Rajmund seems to be perpetually cooking in the kitchen. He named it "Miss Clover's" in honor of a favorite aunt—and to make it sound like a safe place for young women new to the city.



### LAYOUT

Built of slate brick, the home boasts an asymmetrical shape set off by carved stone trim painted white and burgundy. Parts of the three-story house feature a steeply angled roof that creates generous attic spaces, with their lack of large windows the only thing preventing them from being considered a full fourth floor.

The first floor contains a parlor, a sitting room, a study, a dining room, and a kitchen. The second and third floors host only guestrooms and washrooms, as well as several secret passages used to spy on residents from behind false walls and closets.

The parlor was converted into a guest suite years ago; however, due to a series of accidents, it is considered unlucky and is rarely rented. Somewhat unusually, the home has only a small basement, located directly below the kitchen and used as a root cellar.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Edward Rajmund** (use the [Noble, CHAPTER 8](#)) owns and runs the inn. He tends to keep to himself, but seems kindly and jovial to all he interacts with; he also seems to take a shy delight when asked if he himself is "Miss Clover." He refuses to say where he's from, other than "a bad place." Some suspect he may be a Roamer from the Shadowlands, while others argue he's a refugee from Kern. The way he flinches at raised voices has led some to believe he's simply the product of an abusive home. He dotes on his seven cats like children, feeding them the choicest morsels even if it means he must go hungry. Very occasionally, he's been known to explode in anger; most recently, this occurred when a guest accidentally shattered the sugar bowl from his mother's porcelain set.

**Blythe Nell** (use the [Noble, CHAPTER 8](#)) is a struggling writer working on her first novel. She moved into the boardinghouse because the price was right, and because she wanted to experience a slice of authentic Outer Ward life. She often feels uncomfortable alone in her room, but believes it's because this is her first time living on her own. She's taken a job with a fruit vendor at a nearby market, and spends her evenings at the writing desk in the boardinghouse sitting room.

### STORY SEEDS

- A young man claims his sister, a guest at the boardinghouse, has vanished mysteriously. And she's not the first...
- When the floor is replaced in the unlucky Parlor Suite after yet another accident, a strange, tomblike structure is discovered beneath it.
- A young adept claims she can sense someone watching her whenever she's alone in her room.

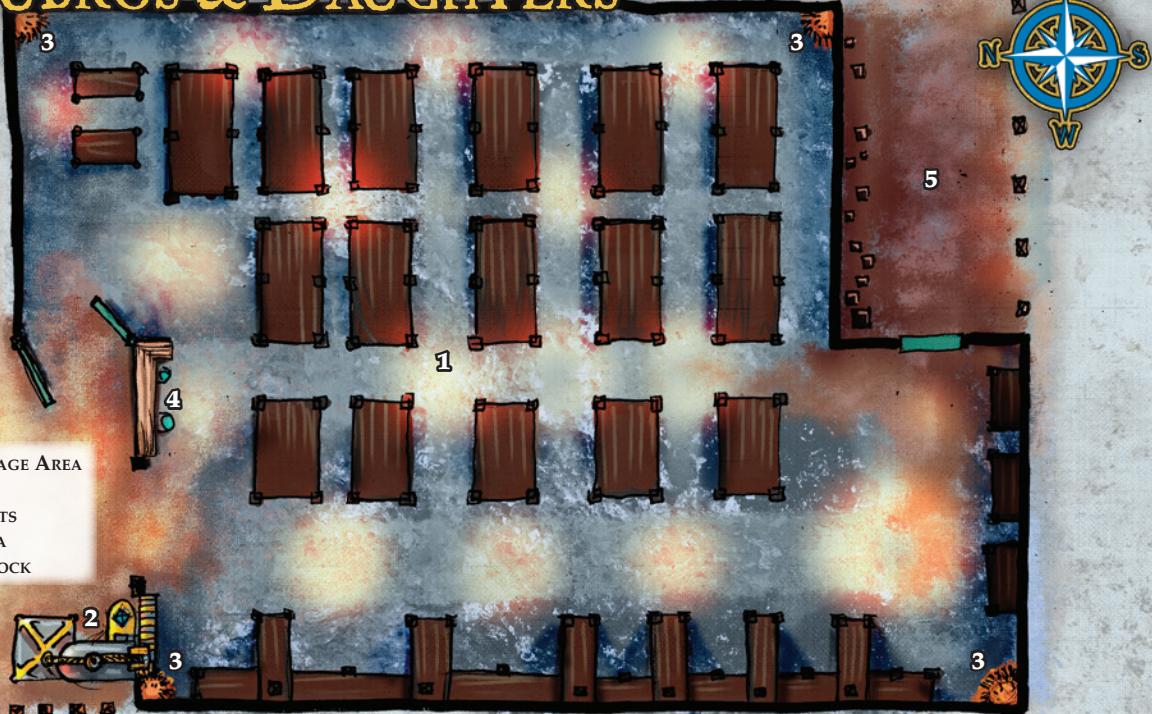
### O14

## DOGPATCH

Rumors say this heavily residential neighborhood got its name because it has always been home to a number of butcher shops, making it of great interest to roaming packs of feral dogs. However, while Dogpatch does boast several excellent butcheries, it does not possess any more of them than any other district. Rather, when the area was first settled, it was covered in shaggy stands of dogfennel. To this day, dogfennel tends to proliferate along the roads of Dogpatch, much to the consternation of local residents,



# VOVUBROS & DAUGHTERS



who complain the leaves have an unpleasant scent when crushed underfoot. Unfortunately, every effort to eradicate the plant in favor of more aesthetic cultivars has failed—dogfennel is as tenacious a survivor as many other Outer Ward residents.

## O15

### THE SHANKLE

Unlike Dogpatch, the Shankle district does have a connection to butchering: it's shaped like the cut of beef above a steer's ankle, called the "shankle" by some butchers. While there are a few apartment buildings and shops here, the neighborhood is mainly home to warehouses. It adjoins a major port on the Rose River and is used to store and distribute a wide variety of goods on their way in or out of the city.

## VOVUBROS & DAUGHTERS DRY GOODS SHIPPING AND STORAGE

### WAREHOUSE

Belinda and Marion Vovubros purchased this warehouse when they decided to settle down and adopt children. The investment was a good one and has provided the family with a stable life.



### LAYOUT

A simple rectangular structure with exposed beams supporting the roof, the Vovubros & Daughters warehouse stands near the Shankle's northern border. A shas crystal-powered hoist at the southern end helps transfer heavy pallets of goods to and from towering storage shelves.

Marion has constructed four falcat nests in the building's rafters, one in each corner. The boxes each house up to three falcats who've received special training for hunting pests. Marion calls them her "catbirds" and often laments not being an adept, and thus being unable to bond with one as a familiar.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Belinda Vovubros** (see **CHAPTER 8**) and her wife, Marion (use the **Noble**, **CHAPTER 8**), own and operate Vovubros & Daughters. Belinda is a loud, outspoken woman with a raucous laugh and a dirty sense of humor honed among dockworkers. She can perform even the toughest mathematical calculations in her head.

While Belinda handles the business' books, Marion, a vata'an, handles its clients. Not everyone appreciates Belinda's crude sailor jokes, and Marion smooths any ruffled feathers. Her excessively doe-like eyes and musical voice can charm even the hardest heart, convincing any client to sign on the bottom line—whether the numbers are in their best interest or not.

Belinda and Marion's oldest daughter, **Amel Vovubros** (use the **Guard**, **CHAPTER 8**), is expected to take over the busi-

## CHAPTER 6: THE OUTER WARD

ness someday, but can't think of anything less interesting to do with her life. She's desperately hoping a striking sailor will sweep her away to a life of adventure on the high seas. Meanwhile, her sister, **Deave** (use the **Merchant**, CHAPTER 8), is desperate for more attention and incredibly eager to please. She wants nothing more than to inherit the family business, but being almost ten years younger than her sister, has never been seriously considered.

### STORY SEEDS

- A hungry mob converges on Vovubros & Daughters after a poor harvest causes a grain shortage.
- Neighbors complain of screaming emanating from the warehouse every night. Upon investigation, they find a starving young vampire sealed in a barrel of grain.
- A giant mushroom sprouts overnight from a sack of flour at the center of the warehouse. Its mycelia squeeze between the floorboards and take root in the ground below the building.

## KAMLETH CHANDLERY

### CHANDLERY

The chandlery primarily produces dipped tallow candles, which can be made cheaply and easily and sold to the widest range of customers. Though glow globes have supplanted the need for candles in many households, they are much more expensive than a simple wax taper; many Aldins, especially in the Lower and Outer Wards, simply can't afford to have one for every room in their home. Additionally, some people claim to prefer a candle's natural, flickering warmth over the cool, steady illumination offered by the glowing shas-powered globes.



### LAYOUT

The chandlery is located on the southern border of the Shankle, where crisp air blowing in from the Rose River helps the candles cure quickly. The building itself is a square one, with a courtyard in the middle where tallow is rendered. The interior of the building houses large vats of wax for dipping candles. Some of the vats have special dyes added to produce colored candles, while others have essential oils added so the tallow burns with a more pleasant scent. Thousands of candles hang from the rafters to cure, dangling over the vats like rainbow-hued stalactites.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Hui Kamleth** (use the **Merchant**, CHAPTER 8) owns and operates the chandlery. Candle making is a skill passed down in his family for generations. He has a terrible

sense of smell, either inherited from his forebears or numbed from decades of working with molten tallow. He is an intensely practical man, speaking in short, clipped sentences and never wasting a breath. His only indulgence occurs once a month, when he treats himself to a performance at the Landsea Amphitheater (see the **Elmbury** section in the CHAPTER 4).

**Meihlo Dewbrand** (use the **Commoner**, CHAPTER 8) always dreamed of being a marble sculptor, but her parents were unable to afford the special schooling required. She turned to chandlery so she could practice her carving skills using wax. She's made several plaster casts of her work to make molded candles with, but Kamleth is skeptical anyone wants to pay a premium for fancy, molded candles over cheap and practical tapers.

### STORY SEEDS

- Hui Kamleth finds a severed head coated in wax at the bottom of a vat.
- Meihlo Dewbrand is possessed by the irresistible urge to carve candles into the shapes of people. A sailor claims the wax people resemble a group of dockworkers who died in a fire.
- Candles produced at the Kamleth Chandlery begin summoning tiny flame sprites when burned.

### O16

## CROPWICK

Cropwick was named for its heavily agrarian nature. Most of its structures are small, single-family homes or barns. The few multi-family dwellings around the borders of the district primarily house seasonal workers, who visit Aldis during harvest time to work and do their yearly trading before returning to their more remote wilderness homes.

## VILLA FRUTA ORCHARDS

### ORCHARD

Villa Fruta started as a single, small fruit orchard near the center of Cropwick. It grew famous after a Roamer fruit-picker invented marmalade on the property (in the Roamer tongue, *marma* means *orange* and *ladeh* means *honey*) and sold the recipe to the farm. Villa Fruta originally touted the orange preserves as a cure for seasickness, but it quickly became popular as a topping for biscuits, a filling for tarts, and even a glaze on meats. Villa Fruta expanded its operation to make preserves from other fruits as well, selling them in small ceramic pots with wax-sealed lids. The Villa Fruta farm purchased a number of adjacent properties, eventually growing to encompass all of central Cropwick.



## CHAPTER 6: THE OUTER WARD

### LAYOUT

Villa Fruta is comprised of eight buildings and six orchards. One home belongs to **Graindren Cang**, the owner of the farm; this house includes a storm cellar containing the foundations of several ancient buildings. Three other buildings are apartments for workers. A barn stores equipment and horses, and the rest of the buildings are devoted to the making of preserves. The orchards include trees growing oranges, peaches, plums, apricots, and cherries. The borders of each are marked off with rows of apiaries.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Age may have slightly hobbled **Graindren Cang** (use the **Laborer**, CHAPTER 8), but the spritely old night person still manages to take daily walks around the perimeter of his prize orange orchard. His parents were Kernish miners who fled to Aldis when his mother was pregnant, then worked as indentured servants until they earned enough to buy a small orchard. Thanks to their hard work, the orchard eventually became Villa Fruta. The farm's preserves have found more success than Cang ever dared to dream but, somehow, he still can't quite afford to retire. He's tired, but he tries not to think about it too much, focusing instead on doing his best and taking things one day at a time. Little does he know, his bookkeeper, **Rem Sterngrove** (see CHAPTER 8), has been embezzling money from Villa Fruta for years, laundering it through various other businesses.

### STORY SEEDS

- A corrupted band of rhy-rats wreak havoc on the crops and orchards, despoiling what they can't devour outright.
- The neighborhood's children refuse to leave their homes, swearing they've seen Villa Fruta scarecrows come to life at night and threaten them at their windows.
- When diseased orange trees are uprooted to be burned, an arcane relic is dug up in the orchard. The cursed artifact seems to be Roamer in origin.
- A stone wall in the storm cellar crumbles away, revealing a tunnel that looks like an ancient, underground street.

O17

## BLUEBURG

The particularly beautiful azure depths of this part of the Rose River give Blueburg its name. The river-facing district features a long, rickety boardwalk. Most of the buildings along the boardwalk are fisheries, with a healthy number of warehouses and taverns thrown in for good measure.

## THE SALTY SIREN

### TAVERN

The only food for sale here is the grain in the grog. There's no sophistication to be found at the Salty Siren, but no pretensions, either. It's an honest place where rowdy workers and fisherman mingle and wail sea chanties. The atmosphere is typically convivial, with brawls a rare occurrence. The men and women who frequent such establishments know well what kindred spirits they are.



### LAYOUT

The Salty Siren is no more than a long, narrow shack cobbled together from driftwood, the upside-down hull of a ship, and sheets from a tin roof. A ship's wheel dangles from the ceiling, turned into a lamp with candle-mounts glued to the spokes with wax. The bar, supported by several rusty anchors, stands just below it. The rest of the space is crowded with mismatched chairs and tables, more than a few of the makeshift variety.

Above the main room, what was once the cargo hold has been subdivided into several private rooms, all renting by the hour instead of by the night. These rooms are accessible only by a rope ladder, perilous even for sober patrons and hilariously challenging for everyone else.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Anyone who dares call **Coral Coventina** (see CHAPTER 8) a prostitute is promptly thrown out of the tavern and banned for life. Or at least for the night. She has, instead, branded herself a "night nymph," which she feels is more reflective of her elegance, mystery, and sea-folk wiles. She claims a history of daring affairs with pirates, narrow escapes from the law, and adventures involving buried treasure.

### STORY SEEDS

- Fishermen dredge up an old sarcophagus inlaid with gold and precious gems and bring it to the Salty Siren to show off.
- A sailor stumbles into the tavern, soaking wet, to claim a monstrous serpent destroyed his boat just off the southern tip of Cropwick.
- A group of sea-folk activists blockade the tavern's entrance, protesting the stereotypical depiction of sultry sea-folk in its logo.
- Coral Coventina purchases an arcane relic which transforms her voice into an angelic, operatic soprano. However, as her body begins to wither, she realizes the cost may be higher than the relic's price in gold.

ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE



The lands within a day's ride of the city of Aldis are lush, green plains and gently rolling hills, well suited for farming and easy travel. There are roads northward towards Latik and Trident Bay, southwest toward Garnet and Shariven, and beyond to Elsport. All the eastern paths from the city are naturally dominated by Lake Vash or the Rose River.

## THE NORTH HILLS

North of the city, the grasslands make good pastures for sheep and cattle, and various farms of every size provide plentiful food for trade with urban Aldins and the shops, restaurants, and merchants that serve them. Although the thicker woodlands are farther north, there is wood aplenty for building and cooking. The people in and around the city strive to be good stewards of the land, never taking more than the landscape can spare.

### LOCATION 3

## ABBEY OF CONTEMPLATION

### ASCETICS MONASTERY

Northwest of Aldis, atop a flat, sparsely-wooded hill, is a quiet retreat known as the Abbey of Contemplation. Founded and populated by a small sect of worshipers

of Athne, the abbey is a place of quiet asceticism, where adherents come to deprive themselves of physical pleasures that they might better understand Athne's other glories. Only by experiencing a lack, they argue, may they truly appreciate the pleasures the deity embodies.

### HISTORY OF THE ABBEY

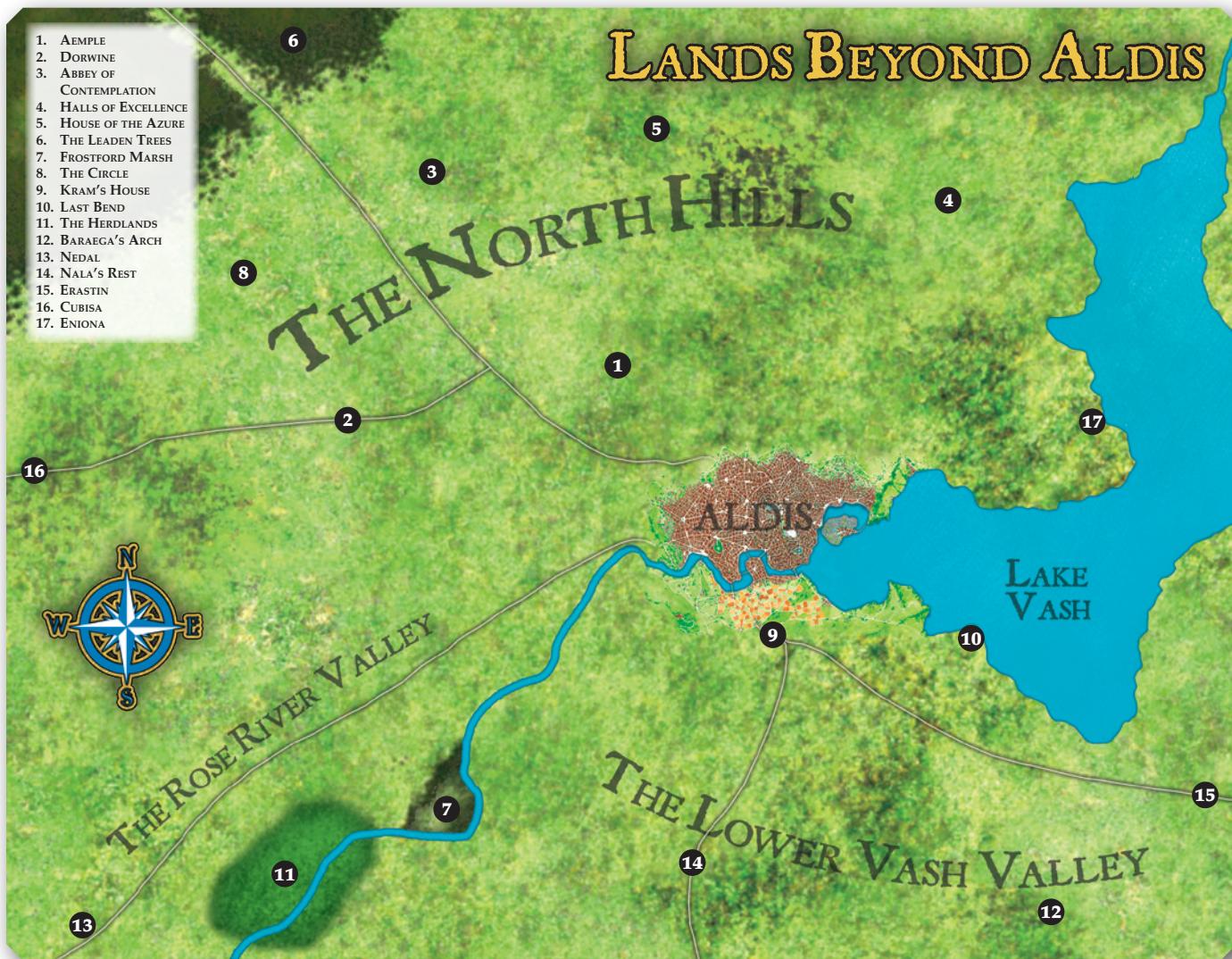
Thirty-three years ago, on the 3rd of Atholon, four ascetics faithful to Athne began erecting the Abbey of Contemplation. Designed as a respite from the material world, their goal was to shut out wealth, excess, and pleasure in order to better appreciate what Athne provides. Over the years, they slowly gained additional adherents, expanding the abbey to make room for the forty monks that inhabit the complex.

Eight years ago, they were visited by a tall, slender man calling himself "the Eremite," who impressed the adherents with his knowledge, wisdom, and foresight. He taught his fellows of the benefits of isolation and deprivation. It was a short time before the Eremite was the recognized leader of the Abbey of Contemplation. Rigorous requirements for permanent residency at the abbey were instituted, and the monks granted him the title of "Abbot," the only title which he goes by now.

### LAYOUT

The abbey is made up of four buildings arranged in a square, with open points to the north, east, south,

# LANDS BEYOND ALDIS



and west. Each building is virtually identical from the outside: a long rectangle with gently sloping eaves and four windows facing out onto the central courtyard. The buildings each have a specific purpose, with the northwest building serving as sleeping quarters, the northeast as kitchens and dining hall, the southeast as a crafting area, and the southwest as a quiet room.

## DAILY OPERATIONS

The monks spend their days meditating, debating and discussing the benefits and philosophy of moderation and temperance, carving wooden items they trade for coin and goods, and cooking simple, flavorless fare. They happily receive guests, but generally ignore them except for what offers of meals and lodging they can provide. Guests are asked to help with cleaning or cooking, but payment is sometimes accepted in the form of coin instead.

Those that display interest (however slight) in the monks' philosophies are tested by simple denials: minor thefts, smaller portions of food, or other inconveniences. Those that show perseverance in the face of these slight travails may be invited to stay.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**The Abbot** is a tall, slim man with a seemingly ageless face. His eyes are a piercing blue, and he wears his black beard closely and neatly cropped. According to some, the Abbot is a simple sage (use the *Elite Scholar*, CHAPTER 8), but others suggest that he may be a powerful adept that dabbles in sorcery (use the *Epic Adept [Sorcerer or Seer]*, CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook).

## STORY SEEDS

- The monks of the abbey have determined that enforced moderation is the best way for some of their visitors to learn. A robbery might help one guest understand the excesses of wealth; smaller portions of food might teach another the dangers of gluttony.
- There are whispers that the Abbey of Contemplation imposes its moderation in order to create want, and that the desire to make up for any lack (real or perceived) drives the monks and their guests to acts of extreme depravity.



## CHAPTER 7: LANDS AROUND ALDIS

### THE IRON ARROW

Rumors persist of a lone wanderer near the city of Aldis, who often comes to the aid of those who are beset by bandits or wandering beasts. This individual travels hooded and by foot, speaking to no one, but is credited with saving the lives of the lost, abandoned, or otherwise endangered.

No one is sure who the Iron Arrow is, or what this person's purpose might be. Named for the iron-tipped arrows that are common to each encounter, reports are otherwise extremely different: one bystander claims that she was saved by a tall man with flowing black hair, while another is convinced that his savior was a woman, with close-shorn red hair. The Iron Arrow is variably clad in brown, green, or black, and described with all manner of builds, but never remains behind long enough for authorities to form an official description or to thank them for their assistance. All that the Iron Arrow leaves behind is any spent arrows.

Reports of the Iron Arrow are most common near Cusiba and the Leaden Trees, but there are claims they have been spotted as far east as Baraega's Arch.

The location, abilities, and true nature of the Iron Arrow are left to the Narrator to decide. Whether this figure is just a myth, a crusader for folk who cannot defend themselves, or on some quest for vengeance should be decided by what is most interesting for the series.

- The Abbot has been accused of revering not Athne, but Mytaxx and Yungo, driving the monks to acts of horrific evil by depriving them of simple pleasures.

#### LOCATION 1

## AEMPLE

#### FARMING HAMLET

Only a few hours' ride out of the city, the small farming hamlet of Aemple serves as a waystop for many travelers that have wandered off the main roads on their way to or from Aldis, or those who have intentionally avoided the roads in the first place. Residents long ago learned that the location of their hamlet is a prime spot for travelers, and almost everyone has a ready supply of goods that travel easily or are aid to wanderers—hardtack, cheeses, dried meats, sturdy waterskins, and other items such as coils of rope, spare boots, or warm cloaks.

As a rule, the people of Aemple keep to their own affairs; they have little interest in the business of others and even less in gossip or sharing secrets. They ask no questions of travelers, and use their ignorance as a shield when, inevitably, other folk appear asking about someone who recently passed through the area. Aemplens believe that everyone is entitled to their privacy, and while they will answer truthfully when posed with a question to which they have an answer, they would much rather not be bothered.

Other than normal rules of courtesy and decency, the people of Aemple have only one custom they enforce on outsiders: any attempt to psychically influence or investigate anyone within the town, be they a guest or a resident, is met with immediate and open scorn when discovered. Transgressors are fortunate if they are merely chased out of the hamlet and back onto the road.

If compelled to discuss this outlook, Aemplens claim they are particularly protective of the sanctity of the mind.

Anyone trying to pry into the thoughts of another likely has some worse transgression of their own to hide (be it past or future), and they would rather such folk be far away from them.

#### HISTORY OF AEMPLE

No one knows with any degree of certainty how old Aemple is, but people have been gathering at this intersection of two disjointed valleys and a minor road for at least two centuries. An inn, the Red Shield, grew up on the spot of those meetings, and eventually outbuildings were added, along with a stable, a farrier, and a few small shops. Natives of the area were never interested in the hamlet growing any larger, so they instead began bringing sacks or wagons of goods with them to trade with their neighbors or with travelers.

#### LAYOUT

Aemple itself is only a dozen buildings, the largest of which is the Red Shield. Opposite the road are the stables, farrier, and the leathers shop that sells tack, saddles, boots, and the like. The remaining buildings are quite small, built to serve as both temporary houses and as shops for traveling farmers from the immediate area to sell food, wool, and other items to one another. In any given week, as many as half these "homes" are empty, waiting for their next resident to stumble in and lay claim for a few days.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

**Crydo** (use the **Merchant**, **CHAPTER 8**) is a small, stooped, doddering woman in her late fifties who runs the Red Shield as though she were the ruler of Aemple—and she's not entirely wrong. Most people look to her for guidance, especially when outsiders are after information. Crydo's wife, **Jiocli** (use the **Laborer**, **CHAPTER 8**) is more than two decades younger and is also the local farrier, working horseshoes and other small bits of metalwork for those

# CHAPTER 7: LANDS AROUND ALDIS

that need it. Their son, **Blay** (use the **Child, CHAPTER 8**), tends the stables.

## STORY SEEDS

- A traveler has been spreading rumors that the reason folk in Aemple are so tight-lipped is due to an enchantment laid on them, keeping secret an artifact of great power or importance hidden somewhere near the town.
- A small band of criminals is taking advantage of Aemple's secrecy to hide from the Sovereign's Finest that are chasing them.

## LOCATION 8

### THE CIRCLE

#### SPIRIT DANCERS RETREAT

Northwest of the city of Aldis, just when the **Leaden Trees** begin to come into view, is the small settlement of spirit dancers known only as "the Circle." Quiet and reserved, they seek little knowledge of the outside world, preferring to exist in quiet contemplation. Trusting other sects and the **Academy of the Dance (CHAPTER 3)** in Aldis to continue the important mission that spirit dancers perform for their neighbors, the dancers of the Circle are content to keep to themselves and explore the mysteries of creation that their arts allow.

Visitors to the Circle are met coolly, unless they demonstrate some genuine need (for food, water, rest, or healing) or are clearly on a mission to root out evil within the kingdom. The Circle otherwise tries to remain distant, hoping they will not draw such attention to themselves as to require greater isolation than they already maintain.

#### HISTORY OF THE CIRCLE

The Circle was founded by Medvice in 242 BR, and has experienced periods of growth and quiescence every generation or so. In 260 BR, they located and destroyed a small group of shadow dancers who they discovered were planning to infiltrate the Academy. This led to a surge in potential members, after which the Circle moved its location in order to determine whether public operation was in its best interest. Its members decided against advertising their presence, though every few years there are suspicious increases in the number of wanderers stumbling upon them.

#### LAYOUT

The Circle is a gathering of small, handmade cottages arranged in a ring, each holding one or two inhabitants. The number of dwellings varies depending on how many dancers currently reside in the Circle; as new dancers

join, they create their own lodgings, and dismantle them when they choose to leave or are dismissed. A firepit at the center of the ring provides heat, light, and a place to cook.

## DAILY OPERATIONS

One day in the Circle is much like any other, with dancing, song, teaching, and practice of the arcane arts. At least one member of the Circle is always dancing at the heart of the gathering, just a step or two from the fire. Another dancer watches and tends the fire, to make sure that it remains lit and that the dancer does not become so entranced that they fall into the flames. Other dancers may be teaching, learning, cooking, gathering food or fuel for the fire, or quietly contemplating the Eternal Dance.

## DANCERS OF THE CIRCLE

The spirit dancers of the Circle are a secretive lot, and with good reason: the wilds of Aldis always contain the risk of taint by Shadow, and they are terrified of unleashing potential shadow dancers into the kingdom. While the Circle would prefer that aspirants arrive with some knowledge of their arts already in place, they are willing to train anyone, though any dancers who fail to show the requisite skill or flexibility are politely asked to leave. Anyone caught showing the slightest hint of sorcery or intentional pursuit of the secrets of Shadow is slain.

The dancers are currently led by **Eytelia**, a lithe woman of Lar'tyan stock (use the **Heroic Adept, CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook, with the Spirit Dancer talent), but she is currently growing restless for exploration, and the Circle may soon be seeking new leadership.

## STORY SEEDS

- The Circle believes that the Abbey of Contemplation is employing secrets of the sacred dance to embark on mysteries that its monks neither understand nor can control, and they are contemplating a strike against the abbey.
- A young night person aspirant has been attempting for weeks to join the Circle, but a decision is still delayed, as one of the members believes the would-be dancer is irrevocably tainted by Shadow.
- A former dancer of the Circle has betrayed their purpose and location, and the dancers need help to defend themselves.

## LOCATION 16

### CUSIBA

#### TOWN

A day and a half's ride west of the city, the shining town of Cusiba is typical of many others in the central valleys

ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE

## CHAPTER 7: LANDS AROUND ALDIS

of Aldis: clean and bright buildings of white marble arranged in an orderly pattern along paved roads, where the town's residents work on their various trades and businesses while providing support for the many nearby farmers that come into town to trade and socialize. The primary crop of the area surrounding Cusiba is grain (particularly wheat), and trade is brisk, with low prices and many sellers. Much of the grain that is grown here finds its way east to the city.

### HISTORY OF CUSIBA

Cusiba is a fairly young town, less than a century old, having grown up after local farmers realized they needed a more sheltered place to perform trade exchanges. Three years of rough storms immediately following good harvests nearly destroyed the profits for several farms, and the wealthiest of the families in the area, the Nikanurs, decided to fund the building of a town along a primary westward road rather than simply replanting. Within a year, the first great storehouses had been constructed, and many families' fortunes were saved by the foresight of the Nikanur family.

Over the following decades, the Nikanurs have always been considered the informal leaders of Cusiba, even in the face of the authority of Crown-appointed nobles. The family has always deferred in the face of directly-exercised noble authority, while nevertheless quietly guiding the growth and expansion of Cusiba to ensure that residents and travelers can obtain what they need as long as it also benefits the town as a whole.

### LAYOUT

Cusiba is composed of dozens of buildings of white marble, centered on the main road. Occasional spurs out from the heart of town lead to stables, a few small inns, and even a restaurant and tavern for travelers to enjoy before setting back out on the road.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The most famous resident of Cusiba is the scion of the Nikanur family, **Eamol Nikanur** (use the **Noble, CHAPTER 8**), who recently completed the tests to become an Aldin noble. He has worked his entire adult life for the improvement of his family's beloved town, even defying his parents by investing much of his personal wealth in the building and expansion of a large garden for the area's children to play in. Although quite attractive, Eamol is clearly uncomfortable with flirtation and does not seem interested in men or women, much to the disappointment of his family, who wish to see him soon married.

Eamol's duties mean that he often travels to some of the other settlements under his purview as a noble, leaving his mother, **Ora** (use the **Merchant, CHAPTER 8**), unchecked to wield her influence both as the leader of the Nikanur

family and the mother of the resident noble. She is well aware that her actions reflect on the Crown's opinion of her son, and so she treads lightly, applying her touch only when truly necessary.

### STORY SEEDS

- A traveling merchant promises some of the local farmers he has a substance that will vastly improve their crop yields, and is looking for interested families to take him up on his offer to share its secret.
- Whispers have begun to circulate that the coin the Nikanurs used to fund the initial construction of Cusiba was somehow ill-gotten, and worse, that the rightful owners wish to reclaim their fortunes.

### LOCATION 2

## DORWINE

### TOWN

Nestled in a long, shallow valley to the west of Aldis, Dorwine is home to some of the most productive grape farms in the kingdom, and its crops generate much of the choicest wine enjoyed by the Aldin elite. Near the eastern edge of the valley, a small town has grown up to support local commerce, creating a gathering place for locals to meet, trade, gossip, enjoy company, and share growing secrets.

Dorwine is the name of both the town and the larger community surrounding it. The Dorwine Valley is home to ten large vineyards growing primarily grapes, as well as a handful of smaller farms growing beans, peas, and berries, for both local consumption and sale to nearby communities. The town is used as a center to arrange such commerce, as well as storage to help consolidate sales. There is little competition in Dorwine for trade, and farmers often work together to fulfill an order or set prices for sale to outsiders. This lack of competition stops, however, on Athne's feast day, when the community gathers to determine which of the season's newly opened barrels of wine is most worthy of praise. This day is considered a festival of the senses, and residents indulge in both drink and companionship.

### LAYOUT

The town of Dorwine is small and tightly packed, consisting of only sixteen buildings, including a small inn called the Oak Goblet and two large storehouses that are used to gather barrels of wine or crates of fruit for sale outside the town. The Oak Goblet serves as the semi-official meeting place for the town leaders, who try and solve matters locally as much as possible. No one really wants to involve traveling nobles in local affairs. Not that they don't trust them—they just tend to consider them more as



bumbling meddlers than worthy servants of the kingdom, at least where grapes and wine are concerned.

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The owner of the Goblet, **Siloc Baru** (use the **Commoner, CHAPTER 8**) is a brightly-smiling, shamelessly flirtatious man of some eighty summers. Siloc takes particular interest in travelers and welcomes adventurers of all stripes with great delight, constantly bending their ears with questions. Despite his flirtatious nature, any advances—playful or serious—are immediately ceased (and rebuffed) the moment a guest at the Goblet begins to partake of any wines or spirits. Although he is flattered by the suggestion that a much younger person might be interested in him, he does not believe in (or encourage) attraction that grows out of drunkenness, or boldness that arises out of strong drink.

#### STORY SEEDS

- Grapes have been coming off their vines early, and the normally sweet juice they provide seems already fermented and ready for bottling.
- In late Atholon, a rumor begins that someone was violated during Athne's festival, and both the accused and the victim were too drunk to remember their actions that evening.

## DORWINE

#### LOCATION 17

## ENIONA

#### SEA-FOLK VILLAGE

Along the shores of Lake Vash, northeast of the city, lies what appears at first to be a simple fishing village. In truth, the few sparse buildings above the water are the surface portion of the town of Eniona, a settlement of sea-folk that has grown largely below the water. The town is a place primarily of and for sea-folk, especially those who want to remain reasonably close to human relatives while preferring more space and isolation than the city provides.

Enionans work hard to teach their human neighbors not to over-fish the lake, as well as the best ways to swim, fish, and enjoy their aquatic surroundings efficiently and responsibly. Small boats that wreck or capsize near the town know they can expect aid, both in surviving their crises and recovering any valuables that may be lost beneath the water.

#### HISTORY OF ENIONA

For many years, before the establishment of the new kingdom, the sea-folk of the central valleys remained mostly submerged, fearing the Sorcerer Kings. Once the

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Kingdom of the Blue Rose was founded, however, the sea-folk found more freedom to roam, to create settlements of their own, and to live in the manner most comfortable for them.

The town of Eniona was the birthplace of King Rikin. But it was not until after his reign that the sea-folk began expansion in earnest, adding structures that had levels beneath the waters of Lake Vash, much like Aldis' Lake Ward.

## LAYOUT

Above the water, Eniona seems to be a ramshackle jumble of buildings, from shanties and sheds to a few sturdier shops, all very close to or hanging over the edge of Lake Vash. Inside most of these buildings, however, trapdoors or stairs lead down into the waters of the lake, providing sea-folk easy access to the rest of the town.

Beneath the water, Eniona is far more complex, with some buildings plunging down two or three stories and yet others built up from the lake floor in the shallowest waters.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Two people dominate most of the public life in Eniona. The first is **Brealagh** (use the **Noble**, CHAPTER 8), who stumbled upon an ancient shipwreck several years ago and has used the money to invest in her fellow sea-folk so they can grow businesses in the town. The other is **Gesdin** (use the **Guard**, CHAPTER 8), a former adventurer who believes the sea-folk should not hide away beneath the surface of the water. While Brealagh encourages insular commerce until Eniona can become wealthier and more independent of Aldis, Gesdin firmly believes the town should better integrate with the rest of the kingdom.

Making matters worse is that the two are part of an extended constellation, and although they personally hold no romantic ties with one another, they share both a husband and a wife. They have agreed to keep their public beliefs as far from their home life as possible, but things are clearly strained.

## STORY SEEDS

- A strange, oily liquid has been seen floating through Eniona. Although it seems to make aquatic life more docile (facilitating catching fish), extended exposure makes the local sea-folk more dependent on their supplies of fresh water.
- Coins of ancient make have been appearing more frequently in Eniona, but the sea-folk who discover them appear to be protective of their wealth and belongings, and covetous of what others possess.
- Shifts in the stones supporting some of the structures in Eniona's upper levels have made the buildings uninhabitable, and something must be done before they fall entirely into Lake Vash.

## LOCATION 4

# HALLS OF EXCELLENCE

## CRAFTSPEOPLE RETREAT

Well to the northeast of Aldis, where the rolling grasslands begin to give way to the lower plains near the northwestern edge of Lake Vash, lie the Halls of Excellence. A cluster of buildings made of slate and wood, the halls are home to "the Excellent Ones," a group of craftspeople and focused experts whose goal is to master themselves and their chosen fields.

## HISTORY OF THE HALLS

Some fifty years ago, a trio of powerful adepts came to an understanding regarding their practice of arcana: so long as one avoided employing sorcery, all manner of study was to be tolerated, even encouraged. These three friends wandered until they found a strange area of land which had been cleared of everything: no stones, trees, or even grass could be seen for over fifty yards in any direction. Seeing this as a place to begin their studies together, they set about building their halls. Each of the three called upon powerful arcana to grow the stones from the very ground that became the foundation of their new home.

No one knows what happened to these adepts, as all reports of them ceased almost as soon as the rumors of their existence began. In time, the site was taken over by craftspeople who wished to work in peace, hone their skills, and shape items for the sake of the beauty and joy of the task, rather than for professional gain.

## LAYOUT

The Halls of Excellence are three separate buildings, each one formed by the arcane manipulations of the adept that founded it. The buildings themselves are laid out in a haphazard triangle, and appear to be built of strange stones. Rather than being cut from some larger formation, the blocks appear to have been swirled or woven together from smaller rocks, roots, and other materials from beneath the surface of the earth. Stored within the natural-seeming structures are all manner of crafted tools—functional, yet at the same time an attempt to create something lasting and beautiful.

## DAILY OPERATIONS

The Halls of Excellence are usually a quiet place, with stretches of silence punctuated by brief flurries of activity related to the various crafts of its residents: the chopping of wood, the hammering of metal, or the cracking groans of stones being split. The newest residents have additional duties—fetching food, water, and firewood—but otherwise are expected to impress their betters with regular displays of growing mastery of their respective arts.

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Occasionally, one of the Excellent Ones may be willing to lend their skills to a traveler, adventurer, or servant of the Crown, in the hopes of proving they have reached some new level of demonstrable expertise in their chosen field. Success in such an endeavor is a sign the adherent is ready to move on from the halls, a moment that is celebrated by fellow residents as the culmination of their mission.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

It should be little surprise that a group calling itself the Excellent Ones has little modesty to share among its members. Within the halls, they wear jackets of green with brown trousers, comfortable but close-fitting to allow free movement without the distraction of large sleeves or other ornamentation. At any one time, there are from fifteen to thirty residents of the halls, divided evenly among the three buildings.

Each of the Excellent Ones holds mastery of a single skill or talent as the pinnacle of achievement, and works tirelessly in pursuit of perfection. Second only to that mastery is the display of their accomplishments, whether by the creation of a new item or through the instruction of someone of lesser talent. In order to remain in the Halls of Excellence, an adherent must demonstrate skill in a particular craft or trade, creating something of lasting utility. For works of art, dance, or song, utility is measured in emotional rather than monetary value. Residents and visitors of the halls may be experts in nearly any focus, but Artisan, Crafting, and Smithing are the most commonly encountered. In many cases, those that seek perfection among the Excellent Ones may be considered to be narrowly focused in a specific area of item creation (see the **Optional: Trade Focuses** box in CHAPTER 3 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook).

The leadership of the Excellent Ones rotates annually among the three masters of the Halls—**Vara**, **Kelisar**, and **Unmada Firesong**—who meet regularly to discuss the future of the group. The current leader is Vara (use the *Heroic Adept [Shaper]*, from CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook), who has abandoned the shaping of materials using arcana in order to restore her connection to the physical world.

### STORY SEEDS

- One of the Excellent Ones has been requested to return to her family to care for her aging parents, but wishes to further develop her skills before leaving the halls.
- Strange occurrences have been reported near the Halls of Excellence, and there are whispers that forbidden arcane experiments by the residents are causing them.
- An ancient relic caused the land formation on which the halls sit, and it wishes to be unearthed.



### LOCATION 5

## HOUSE OF THE AZURE

### KNIGHTS OF THE BLUE ROSE CHAPTERHOUSE

No group is as dedicated to the military security of Aldis as the Knights of the Blue Rose. This life of continued service is one that demands great sacrifice of those who choose it, and few who do not wear the rose can understand what this devotion means.

The House of the Azure is typical of a number of such chapterhouses throughout Aldis: refuges and training facilities for Rose Knights in addition to the Rose Hall in the capital. The House of the Azure serves as a place to set aside larger duties, to contemplate one's service to the Crown, and to grow—through study, training, and conversation with one's fellow knights—into ever more

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### TRAINING IN THE HOUSE OF THE AZURE

Visitors and junior knights spending an extended time in the House of the Azure may choose to benefit from the wisdom and experience of its inhabitants. In particular, many Knights of the Blue Rose may have dabbled in specializations that players find appealing.

Characters who spend time with the knights at the House of the Azure can usually find a teacher who can provide instruction in the Bard, Champion, Commander, Diplomat, Duelist, Guardian, Healer, Knight, Noble, Outrider, Sacred Warrior, Spy, and Swashbuckler specializations (or other specializations at the Narrator's discretion).

The Knights never charge for their instruction, but usually require a significant service or act of sacrifice before teaching outsiders. Fellow knights are taught for free.

competent defenders of the Sovereign's realm. Veterans of the Rose Knights use this location (and others like it) to refresh their skills and occasionally to test the mettle of prospective knights.

### HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF AZURE

The House of the Azure was once the country mansion of a former knight named Zaner, who went on to achieve great wealth following his retirement from military service. When he died twenty years ago, all his material belongings passed to the Knights of the Blue Rose, who repurposed the house as a place for training and respite.

### LAYOUT

The House of the Azure is a spacious, three-story country manor house. The grand entrance hall has been converted into a refectory for communal meals, while kitchens, storage, and a large library take up the bulk of the first floor. The second floor is occupied by thirteen bedrooms of nearly identical size, each one appointed with a bed, a desk, a wash basin, and a pair of small shas crystals for light and warmth.

Behind the mansion, there are four tubs: two for bathing and two for laundry. Small piles of kindling and firewood rest against the outer wall, and a small stream provides the water necessary for daily living. Despite his bravery in the service of Aldis, Zaner was plagued throughout his life by nightmares of drowning, and so declined to have running water installed in the mansion. As a result, the resident knights do their washing and laundering outside, believing they are honoring some wisdom their late benefactor neglected to set down in writing.

### DAILY OPERATIONS

Knights, prospective knights, and their guests perform all menial tasks at the House of the Azure: cooking, cleaning, mending, grooming horses, maintaining armor, training,

teaching, and so on. No one is exempt from chores, even if they have more important duties; those with higher functions simply spend less time performing domestic labor. The goal is to reinforce that the duty of a knight is service, and that no one, even commanders and nobles, is above performing base work in the name of the kingdom.

At any time of day, groups of knights can be found outside drilling with various weapons, while inside, their comrades study military and courtly history. Nights are filled with the discussion and evaluation of major events of the past, and sometimes include recreations of major events at court or on the battlefield to determine whether greater success could have been achieved.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The residents of the House of the Azure rotate regularly, but one common occupant is **Mirala Ken** (use the *Heroic Warrior*, CHAPTER 12 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook, with the Knight talent). A seasoned knight who is very close to retirement, Mirala cuts an imposing figure, standing tall in her armor and looking down on most people with a stern face framed with silver hair. Mirala has given her entire adult life to Aldis, and now wishes to pass on as much of her knowledge and martial insight to others as possible before finally settling down somewhere in the western valleys.

### STORY SEEDS

- Some of the older knights staying at the mansion believe that the order could use new blood, and are actively seeking worthy recruits from among the adventurers that often pass by.
- A Knight of the Blue Rose has gone missing, and the tracks seem to stop suddenly when approaching the House of the Azure.

### LOCATION 6

## THE LEADEN TREES

### UNCANNY FOREST

Almost a full day's ride north and west of Aldis lies the Leaden Trees, a forest that grows thicker as one travels deeper into the woods. Although primarily known for the sturdy branches of its trees—and their ready use as staves and other short, straight rods of wood—the Leaden Trees is also the site of many reports of strange creatures, including giant bears, enormous stags, and woodland rodents larger than a person's head.

Given the difficulty of exploring and mapping such a landscape, along with its reported strange flora and fauna, it is only natural that locals avoid all but the forest fringes. There are, as one might expect, a number of salutary tales to justify their doing so. According to one such story, there is a corrupted pool deep in the heart of the wood,

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and those that drink from it become hopelessly tainted, rising as unliving (if human) or poisoning the hearts of hunters that eat them (if animal). Another tale promises a stream that, when sampled, can cure any hurt, or even return one from the brink of death. Such fables are ever changing, along with the locations of their subjects, so that the poisonous waters of one season are the life-giving fountains of the next.

More practically, the sturdy wood found among the Leaden Trees is surprisingly water-resistant, and the small scroll tubes, pipes, and other items crafted from it are quite popular among travelers, agents of the Crown, and sea-folk who wish to preserve surface items while traveling their favored waterways.

### GEOGRAPHY

The trees of the forest are odd, straight things that range from a few inches thick to sufficiently wide that a large person can barely wrap their arms around them. These trees can survive on little water, but their sparse branches and leaves mean that rainfall easily reaches the ground below, making the earth a difficult tangle of soft soil, moss-covered roots, and emerging saplings. To the north, where the forest grows thickest, one can barely walk a hundred feet without having to squeeze between trees that, to the trained eye, should not be capable of growing so close together.

Throughout the Leaden Trees, small streams emerge from the sides of hillocks, running for a few hundred feet only to dwindle into nothing or to disappear beneath a large formation of stone or bundle of roots.

### STORY SEEDS

- Deformed creatures have been reported wandering south and east of the Leaden Trees, only to vanish like smoke when witnesses get close to investigate further.
- A Knight of the Blue Rose thought dead for decades has apparently returned from the Leaden Trees, telling tales of the horrible beasts and beings lurking there.

## THE ROSE RIVER VALLEY

Immediately along the Rose River, tight clusters of farms and outbuildings form loose communities of Aldins that are not truly part of the city, although they provide much of the food necessary to keep it functioning. Here are raised many of the crops that find their way to the dinner tables across the river, as well as some of the smaller livestock (like pigs and chickens) that are enjoyed at mealtimes.

### LOCATION 7

## FROSTFORD MARSH

### LONELY WETLANDS

Located in the bend of the Rose River south of Aldis where the waters take a sharp turn westward, Frostford Marsh is a mainly flat wetland. It spends a good deal of the year at least partially covered by the slowly moving waters of the river's shallows, along with pools of rainwater or flood-waters that gather beyond the river's normal banks.

Because of its unstable landscape, few people live in the marsh and none in any sizeable communities, though there are some far-flung shacks where a handful of night people and sea-folk live. In most cases, these folk keep to themselves, and prefer that travelers passing through leave them to their own devices. They live out in the middle of a wild marsh for a reason, after all.

In the early summer, and again just after the autumn harvest, people from the nearby valleys travel to the marsh to gather the strange mushrooms that grow there in order to sell them to the various healers and alchemists that wish to use them in their experiments. These mushrooms have already been instrumental in helping Aldis develop protections against certain types of pollution—one fungus can clean drinking water, while another draws smoke from air that passes over it—and there are rumors that new strains of mushroom sprout in the marsh every day. The latest hearsay includes mushrooms that can extend a person's breath underwater, but which cause rapid dehydration among sea-folk.

### HISTORY OF THE FROSTFORD MARSH

Frostford Marsh was, until forty years ago, another unnamed bend in the Rose River as it flowed south and west away from Lake Vash. In 279 BR, however, massive rainfall in the area saturated the land, followed by a particularly cold winter. This combination froze the water within the ground, and the river became crossable by foot. By the end of that winter, the possibility of crossing without rafts or boats became common knowledge among the folk living in the area. Come spring, the region had its new name, even when the frost receded and the waters began to flow freely once more.

### GEOGRAPHY

Frostford Marsh is primarily covered with grasses ranging from a few inches to two feet in height. In the dry season, the area is marked with a number of shallow pits and trenches that quickly fill when the rains come, but which drain quite slowly, keeping the soil well-watered even when no rain has fallen for weeks. Horses and other hooved animals understandably have a difficult time crossing the marsh, and unless an especially cold winter

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has struck, most find it worth the additional travel time to cross upstream or downstream rather than endure the loss of pack animals or cattle.

### STORY SEEDS

- Botanists in the city of Aldis are convinced that some of the fungi growing among the grasses in the marsh might have miraculous properties if added to certain healing ointments.
- A local carpenter wishes to construct a means of passing safely through the marsh all year, but is unable to recruit a crew of assistants willing to help her build it.

### LOCATION 11

## THE HERDLANDS

### RHY-HORSE TERRITORY

To the southwest of Aldis, along the Rose River, a traveler can often find signs of wandering herds of hooved animals. Crown investigators discovered only recently that a small herd of rhy-horses has begun running in the area. They enjoy the proximity to Aldis, which they believe gives them the opportunity to find more of their own. Knowing full well the confusion and difficulty awakening can cause, the herd hopes for reports of other rhy-horses they can mentor in the ways of being rhydan. Occasionally, they accept other rhydan that can match

their speed, but for the most part, the herd runs simply with horses.

### GEOGRAPHY

The lands between the southwest trade roads and the Rose River are lush with grasses that choke out most other vegetation, making them poor farmland but rich pasture. Save for a few fortunate hillside cottages—which the herd avoids—the area is not hospitable for building, either, especially closer to the river where the soil is wetter.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The rhydan herd has no official leader, but most of its members defer to the judgment of **Narn** and **Meara**, a mated pair that lead the herd on most of its runs and decide when an area might be turning unsafe to remain in. (Use the *Heroic Rhy-horse* from **CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook for both.) The herd seldom contains more than a dozen or so members.

### STORY SEEDS

- A member of the herd has felt the pull of a rhy-bond and is seeking to move closer to the city to discover their potential companion, but they require brave, two-legged companions to help them on the journey.
- Local farmers and traders are concerned with the activity of the herd, and want the Crown to encourage them to move farther from the river and trade roads.

## LOCATION 13

## NEDAL

## VILLAGE

A full day's ride beyond Aldis, Nedal is a small village that marks when a traveler has finally entered—or left—the capital's sphere of influence. A quiet, insular place with a few far-flung cabins and a small tavern, Nedal is less a stop along the road than a marker of how close someone is to the true center of Aldin activity.

## HISTORY OF NEDAL

No one is truly sure how old Nedal is. Certainly, it existed before the founding of the kingdom, but whether it sprang up during the latter years of the Empire of Thorns or was small enough to persist throughout that entire dark period is unclear.

## LAYOUT

As a village, Nedal is somewhat nondescript. But for the few marble flagstones that have been laid at a certain point in the wide road running through the center of it, most urban folk might mistake the village for a boundary where a few rural farms collide. Although the tavern is friendly and welcoming to visitors, it remains open only a few hours past dusk. When travelers arrive in Nedal in the dead of night, only a wide, doorless, hay-filled shelter with a small fire pit just outside waits to greet them. In the morning, visitors are encouraged to move on, as there is little work and less wealth in the town.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Despite its small size and relative lack of wealth, Nedal suffers from no shortage of ambitious and influential residents. The most boisterous of these is a man named **Tundric** (use the **Merchant**, CHAPTER 8), who has spent the last few years encouraging his fellow farmers to join with him in a sort of agricultural union, with the aim of setting prices and crop goals so they can take better advantage of their proximity to Aldis. He is known for stroking his waist-length black beard when interested in a potential deal, and this tell has become a distinct weakness when he's negotiating.

## STORY SEEDS

- A sudden influx of young, able-bodied farmers has arrived in Nedal looking for work, believing that wealth and opportunity await them.
- Some farms in the area are suddenly experiencing much larger yields of grain and nuts, while other farms are suffering from an extreme lack. Tensions are rising between the haves and the have-nots.

## THE LOWER VASH VALLEY

South of Lake Vash, the rolling hills are somewhat flatter, though the lands are slightly less fertile. Small, widely-spaced farms dot the landscape, far enough apart to necessitate waymoots and temporary markets in some areas, or the development of the smallest of towns in others. Farther from the city, folk gather closer together for shared commerce and protection. But even here, homesteads are a long walking distance from one another, enough that most people have a good deal of privacy.

## LOCATION 12

## BARAEGA'S ARCH

## ANCIENT RUINS

Well to the southeast of Aldis, at the end of a short, winding ravine, lies the cluster of ruins known collectively as Baraega's Arch. Named for the twisted columns that form an archlike gateway within the ruins, this area was once the domain of a sorcerer killed near the very beginning of the Shadow Wars.

Today, the ruins are the subject of many rumors, including sightings of the unliving and odd beasts, as well as mystical phenomena that few can understand. Brave folk often approach the ruins hoping to find active shas crystals or other useful treasures, but to date, no substantiated reports of such artifacts have made it out of the area. Wise adventurers tend to stay clear of Baraega's Arch, wishing to keep from angering, awakening, or encountering whatever dangers may yet lurk there.

## HISTORY OF BARAEGA'S ARCH

Baraega was an adept during some of the worst excesses of the Empire of Thorns, a powerful sorcerer just before the Shadow Wars. Rather than engage in the fighting that was to come, she found a quiet area of wilderness and had her followers build her a refuge. Within that sanctum, she constructed a makeshift shadowgate. Baraega employed it infrequently, using its power not only to summon darkfiends but to send them against others who might oppose her power.

In the great battle that took Baraega's life, a monstrous hand is said to have torn the shas crystal from the arch's apex, destroying both the sorcerer and the arcana that sustained the shadowgate.

## LAYOUT

Located in a small depression that appears blasted of all vegetation, Baraega's Arch is actually a smattering

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of rocks, ruined columns, and roughly-cut stones that is believed by many to be a former shadowgate. At the center of the clearing, a pair of arching spires of black "stone" reach up out of the ground towards each other. They are broken near their top, not quite touching. The stones are contorted, as though a great hand reached down from the sky and twisted off the apex of the arch.

Around the arch itself, the area appears as though it were once paved with large, gray stones, although dirt, soil, and the action of time cover much of what remains. The place has a bleak feel to it. Adepts and others with psychic senses sometimes report headaches and nightmares after spending time near the arch.

#### STORY SEEDS

- A Shadow cult is attempting to reactivate Baraega's Arch, believing that they have found the missing keystone required to open it.
- Strange beasts have been found wandering near the arch. Although their behavior is typical for their kind, they exhibit strange features, such as elongated tongues or tails, odd colorations, or exaggerated limbs.
- Rhydan have been aggressively chasing people away from the area around Baraega's Arch, worried that something catastrophic will soon happen in the ruins.

#### LOCATION 15

#### ERASTIN

#### TOWN

To the southeast of the city, past the southern spur of Lake Vash, is the town of Erastin. Long the home and seat of the Garmaj family, who have served the Crown as nobles for generations, Erastin is a town in upheaval following the removal of one of the family from a noble posting due to accusations of untoward behavior.

Erastin's economy is maintained with a mixture of agriculture and trade, taking advantage of its location to bring fish from Lake Vash southward to greater Aldis, and food crops and livestock northward to the settlements along the lake. Geography and a lack of local resources conspire to keep the town at its current, healthy size, and attempts to grow Erastin have, in the past, resulted in a few small buildings which were later torn down or abandoned for lack of interest.

Nearly as old as the kingdom itself, Erastin prides itself on its loyalty to the Crown and its embodiment of the traditions of Aldis, not least of which is service to one's fellow citizens. The Garmaj family's recent disgrace has not shaken this belief, although relationships between the locals and their current nobles are strained.

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## HISTORY OF ERASTIN

The settlement grew up among the ruins of what was once the country estate of one of the Sorcerer Kings' minor vassals. It was only when the Empire of Thorns fell and good folk began returning to the central valleys of Aldis that the town began to take shape, building upon the foundations of the ruined estate and creating homes, businesses, and usable roads from its detritus.

In those first years, a family of young men and women called Garmaj took charge of the town, helping to organize the community. As more people moved to Erastin, the Garmajs were rewarded for their labor and investments with both status and wealth, which they continually reinvested into the town. Their many children married into some of the more prominent families of the town, and two of their grandchildren were, in time, selected as nobles of Aldis.

Four years ago, the Crown determined that one of its nobles, Tufas Garmaj, was misappropriating funds and, when discovered, had murdered one of the Sovereign's Finest. Tufas refused all manner of investigation or rehabilitation, and was exiled. When news reached the town, Erastin was thrown into disarray, as most local families can trace at least some small amount of blood back to the Garmaj family.

## LAYOUT

Erastin is a tightly-packed town, whose largest buildings reach to three stories. Some of these contain rental apartments for workers on their second and third floors, while the ground levels are reserved for the businesses and other trade that keeps the town flowing with coin. Roads and cart paths extend out of town in nearly every direction, helping to carry goods to and from the many farms and settlements that depend on Erastin to survive.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

Outside the Garmaj family, the most respected figure in Erastin is **Gunda** (use the **Scholar**, CHAPTER 8). No one living can remember a time when Gunda was not already old, and she has taken it upon herself to act as Erastin's collective memory, aware of every marriage, birth, and family relation in the town over several generations. Gunda has survived all four of her husbands with no offspring of her own and wishes to ensure the town's continued growth and survival, viewing it almost as her surrogate child.

## STORY SEEDS

- Evidence has been uncovered that Tufas' crimes may have been influenced by a corrupt item, and the Crown is looking for agents to help investigate the matter.
- Gunda has decided the local blood in Erastin has grown "too thick," and tries to convince every brave,

noble, or attractive individual passing through town that perhaps they might find a mate in Erastin.

## LOCATION 9

# KRAM'S HOUSE

## FARMING COMMUNE

Just across the Rose River, to the immediate south of the city, lie a number of farms and other settlements that Aldis greatly depends on for its survival. Nestled among these is Kram's House, a small farming commune where the city's former criminal element can come to find themselves. Designed principally as a reform house for those that have been convicted of crimes and completed their sentences, Kram's House is a small cluster of buildings, farms, and workshops where ex-convicts work to reintegrate themselves into Aldin society.

Residents may only come to Kram's House once they have finished whatever incarceration, treatment, and/or restitution have been required of them. Kram believes in the redemptive power of hard work, and neither charges any of the residents nor directly pays them any wages, instead providing food, lodging, and training. Inhabitants may leave any time they choose, but Kram insists they announce any planned departures at night, so that he knows who will be available for work in the morning. Folks leaving the commune are given a token pouch of coin to help to sustain them, along with a pack of food, then sent on their way.

Kram's House is not an impressive sight to look at, but neither is it dour. Although residents are discouraged from romantic entanglements while staying at the facility, there is no shortage of dancing, singing, laughter, and tale-telling when each workday is done.

## HISTORY OF KRAM'S HOUSE

Founded just eight years ago, Kram's House was intended as a resting place for those who had recently finished paying restitution for crimes committed against the city and its inhabitants. Kram himself had been convicted of minor crimes following a successful career as a merchant and craftsman, and wished to show that even those who have harmed others can be cared for and, in turn, care for one another.

## LAYOUT

Kram's House has a fairly simple layout, consisting of three tiny farms that rotate crops annually. At the center of the farms is a small gathering of buildings: a workshop for making and repairing farming implements; a small stable that houses the commune's three horses (used for riding and as draft horses); a sturdy barn, which also doubles as a shelter for the farms' carts; and the lodging house, where the twenty or so residents sleep.

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## DAILY OPERATIONS

Each day at Kram's House is simple: everyone works. It may be milking cows or goats, shearing sheep, shoveling manure, or plowing furrows and planting seed, and Kram makes sure that no one in the complex is without a task each morning to occupy them until dusk. After the sun sets, everyone washes up, then gathers at the lodging house for a large, hearty meal. Once the meal is finished, residents are left to their own devices, until morning comes and the work begins again.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The owner of Kram's House is a night person named **Kram** (use the **Laborer**, CHAPTER 8), who employs every ounce of his strength in supporting and defending those that come into his care. Since the passing of his spouse, Kram has steadfastly refused any romantic attachments, and views the former criminals he tends to as his family.

## STORY SEEDS

- Someone within the city has been accused of a great crime, and the suspect's only known associate is a current resident of Kram's House.
- Things have gone missing from nearby farms, and workers have begun to cast blame at the inhabitants of Kram's House.
- A large donation has been made anonymously to Kram, who wishes to be sure of its provenance before investing any of the coin.

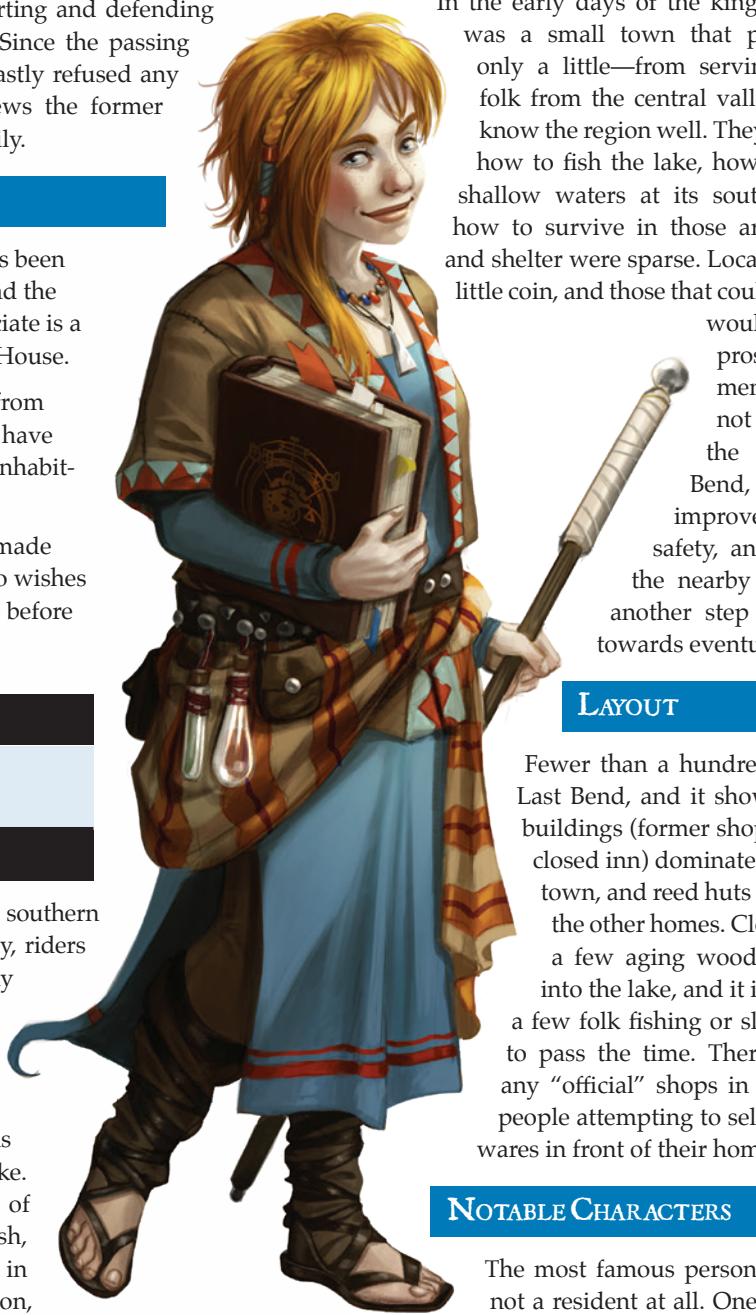
## LOCATION 10

# LAST BEND

## TOWN

After riding eastward along the southern edge of Lake Vash for half a day, riders eventually come upon the tiny town of Last Bend. Its residents eke out a simple living near the shallow waters, making extra coin when they can through trade and serving as guides for those exploring the lake.

Nestled into a small curve of land jutting out into Lake Vash, Last Bend is a community in decline. Efficient administration,



plentiful harvests, and ever-improving travel mean that settlements farther from Lake Vash have greater access to trade from locations farther north, making shopping trips to the small town—which has little to offer in terms of its own trade goods—less desirable. On top of that, many youngsters are drawn to the bright lights, social whirl, and greater opportunities Aldis affords.

Natives of Last Bend are proficient swimmers, sailors, boat guides, and fisherfolk. Most are also very capable at weaving, mending, and repurposing scrap material, and there is a long tradition of weaving various plant fibers into strong, usable ropes and cords for fishing (both as lines and nets).

## HISTORY OF LAST BEND

In the early days of the kingdom, Last Bend was a small town that profited—though only a little—from serving as guides to folk from the central valleys that did not know the region well. They showed people how to fish the lake, how to navigate the shallow waters at its southern edge, and how to survive in those areas where food and shelter were sparse. Locals would make a little coin, and those that could afford to do so would move to more prosperous settlements. Time has not well rewarded the people of Last Bend, and every improvement in travel, safety, and the wealth of the nearby communities is another step the town takes towards eventual collapse.

## LAYOUT

Fewer than a hundred people live in Last Bend, and it shows: a handful of buildings (former shops and one long-closed inn) dominate the center of the town, and reed huts make up most of the other homes. Closer to the water, a few aging wooden piers jut out into the lake, and it is common to see a few folk fishing or sleeping (or both) to pass the time. There are no longer any “official” shops in Last Bend, only people attempting to sell their catches or wares in front of their homes.

## NOTABLE CHARACTERS

The most famous person in Last Bend is not a resident at all. One of the youngest

## CHAPTER 7: LANDS AROUND ALDIS

nobles in the kingdom, **Atelen Damaer** is a clever, studious young woman who has tirelessly worked to improve the realm in whatever way she can. Atelen has a slight frame and somewhat stooped shoulders from a lifetime of reading and manipulating alchemical components, and she stands somewhere between five and six feet tall, her stoop masking her true height. Currently, Atelen is responsible for the administration of lands south of Lake Vash, and has taken particular interest in trying to keep Last Bend from being abandoned by its people. Although her instincts are to take the most capable of the younger generation and find them roles in other communities, she fears this would leave the oldest and weakest of the town to suffer miserable ends.

### STORY SEEDS

- A local has stumbled onto a great chest filled with coins from a long-ago shipwreck, and is torn between helping the community and simply moving their family to Aldis.
- Local caravans have begun recruiting local youths in earnest, and the town's elders are seeking help from the Crown on how to convince the younger generation to stay.

### LOCATION 14

## NALA'S REST

### CARAVANSERAI

Due south of the city, about half a day's ride, is the bustling caravanserai known as Nala's Rest. Built into the edges of a deep, roughly circular depression that was once a hilltop, the caravanserai provides a watering place, a stop for horses and caravan workers to rest and for the caravan masters to share news of potential employers, contracts, and other opportunities. For the last twenty years, Nala's Rest has been a refuge for travelers, and a gathering place for those who live their lives on the road.

### HISTORY OF NALA'S REST

Nala's Rest was once a nameless depression that formed when an old cavern could no longer support the weight of earth above it and collapsed into a dusty crater. Most caravans tended to avoid stopping at the spot, as the city of Aldis was already almost in view to the north, and just a few hours' ride hardly made a difference to most caravan masters.

All of this changed one summer when Nala, who was then a caravan master herself, reached the spot in the dwindling twilight, and a great storm sprang up from the north. With nowhere else to shelter her horses or people, she guided everyone down into the depression, and

upturned her wagons to protect them. When the storm passed, much of her shipment was ruined, but everyone was safe, and all her crew forewent payment in gratitude in order to make up for the caravan's losses. A few weeks later, Nala petitioned the Crown for permission to claim the depression as a homestead, and was granted the right to build there.

### LAYOUT

Nala's Rest is built around a large, almost circular courtyard, paved in dusty marble with the outline of a rose arranged in mosaic in the tiles that make up the courtyard's center. Around the edge of the depression, a number of carved-out recesses are marked by colorful canopies, beneath which travelers can seek refuge from the sun or their travels. Wood-and-rope gates are rolled to the left of each opening, and can be pulled across each "cave" and covered with the silk canopies to protect from whatever wind the walls do not guard from.

At the northern and southern ends of Nala's Rest, small springs bring fresh water from beneath the earth, with ladles and buckets to allow folk to bring water to their companions or pack animals. Tools are available for loan, trade, or purchase from Nala's staff.

### DAILY OPERATIONS

For the majority of visitors, most of the day at Nala's Rest is spent recovering from the road among comrades that understand the same life. Idling or chatting with one's fellows, repairing wagon wheels or horse tack, and allowing animals to recuperate are the primary occupations of the day for most.

For Nala and her staff, the days are somewhat busier, with discussion about road conditions, trustworthy employers, and important shipments filling the hours. At night, she spreads information among those caravan masters she trusts or cares for the most, letting them know which routes might be most profitable in the coming months.

### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

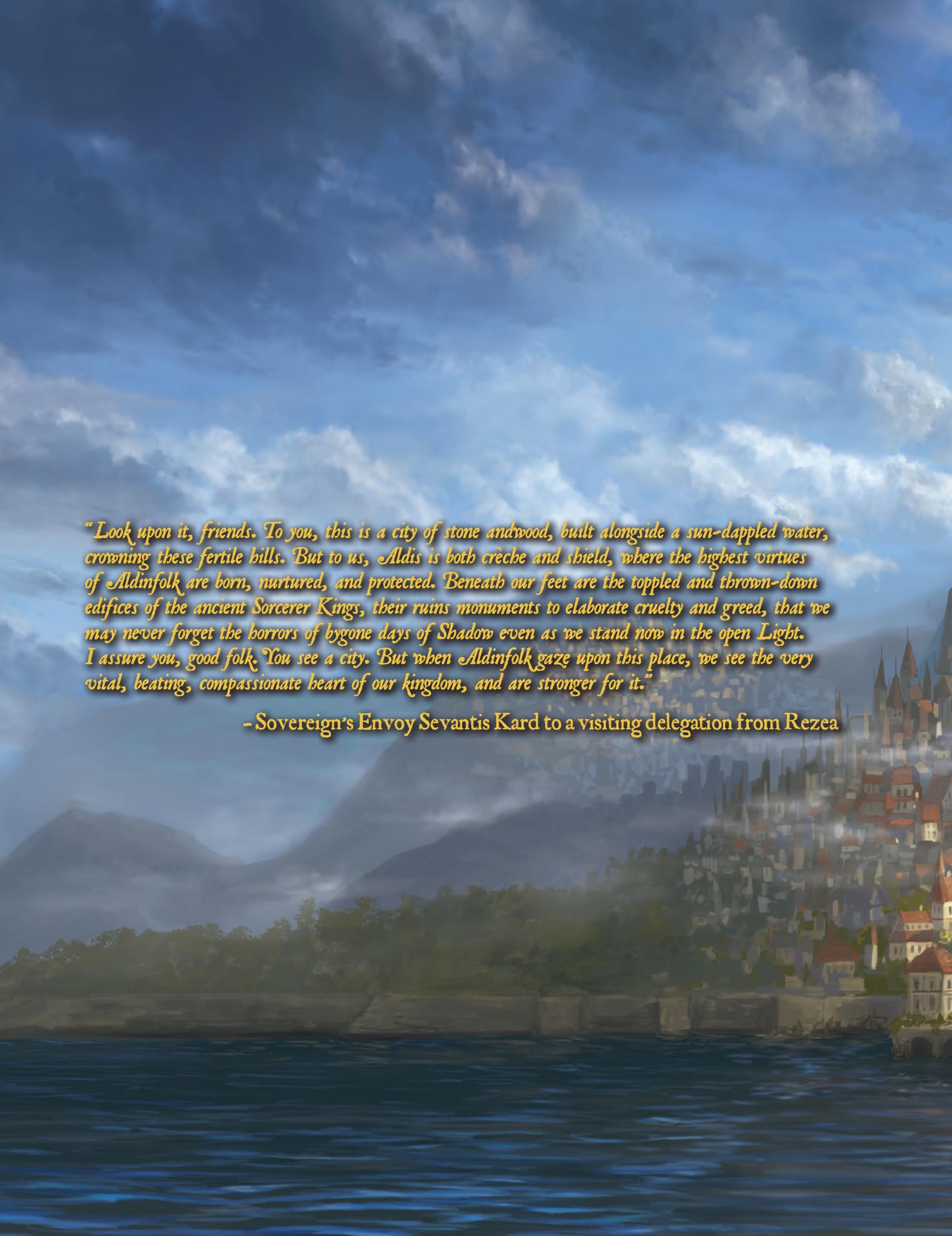
The unquestioned authority in Nala's Rest is the eponymous owner. **Nala** (use the *Elite Merchant, CHAPTER 8*) is a small woman with an iron grip and steely eyes, who seems to know every person that rides into or out of her camp before they have the opportunity to unsaddle their horses.

### STORY SEEDS

- Ill and wounded travelers who spend the night at Nala's Rest seem especially hale and refreshed come morning. No one, not even Nala, seems to know why.
- Strange items have been appearing inside crates, barrels, and other containers bound for Aldis that were inspected at their last stop.

ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE

A wide-angle landscape photograph of a city built on a hillside. The city is densely packed with buildings featuring red roofs and light-colored stone walls. In the foreground, a dark blue body of water with small ripples is visible. The middle ground shows a steep hillside covered in green trees and shrubs. The background features several large, dark, mountainous peaks under a sky filled with white and grey clouds.

*"Look upon it, friends. To you, this is a city of stone and wood, built alongside a sun-dappled water, crowning these fertile hills. But to us, Aldis is both crèche and shield, where the highest virtues of Aldinfolk are born, nurtured, and protected. Beneath our feet are the toppled and thrown-down edifices of the ancient Sorcerer Kings, their ruins monuments to elaborate cruelty and greed, that we may never forget the horrors of bygone days of Shadow even as we stand now in the open Light. I assure you, good folk. You see a city. But when Aldinfolk gaze upon this place, we see the very vital, beating, compassionate heart of our kingdom, and are stronger for it."*

*- Sovereign's Envoy Sevantis Kard to a visiting delegation from Rezea*





**F**or all that it is a location, the city of Aldis is made what it is by the people who live there. From the folk who fight to defend it to those who seek to destroy it, and those who simply want to live peaceful lives within it, this chapter details the various NPCs that make up this city.

## STOCK STAT BLOCKS

Throughout this book, certain non-player characters (NPCs) are mentioned as adhering to one of the following stock stat blocks. By and large, there should be no real reason for player characters to interact mechanically with such folk, but should it become necessary, feel free to use the following sets of statistics to represent them (sometimes with one or two small, flavorful changes to help better represent that specific individual).

### CHILD

The child is a youngster, not yet grown to adulthood. Narrators should feel free to shift some of the traits rated at 1 around to reflect kids of different aptitudes: the pre-

iciously social youngster might have a 1 in Communication, or a very clever child might have a 1 in Intelligence.

**ADVANCEMENTS:** There is very nearly never any cause to use advancements for the Child stock stat block; if a youngster is more remarkable than these traits suggest, they are almost always deserving of a full unique stat block of their own.

### COMMONER

The commoner is an average citizen, without any particularly notable skills.

**ADVANCEMENTS:** There is almost never any need to increase the Commoner's threat level. Common folk who live in particularly dangerous frontiers might warrant an increase to Elite, as might those commoners who have seen a good deal of danger and survived it. Anything beyond that is usually the realm of Adepts, Experts, and Warriors.

### GUARD

A somewhat average person whose work demands of them some potential of violence, the Guard is trained

*"Let there never be a doubt in this, my love. This city is but a series of stones, set one atop the other. The true Aldis is in the people that move and live and love among those stones."*

-Queen Jaellin, to Kelyran

# CHAPTER 8: PEOPLE OF ALDIS

## CHILD

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0, COMMUNICATION 0, CONSTITUTION 0, DEXTERITY 1, FIGHTING -1, INTELLIGENCE 0, PERCEPTION 1, STRENGTH -1, WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	10	11	0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
UNARMED	+0	1D3-1

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Seize the Initiative, Skirmish (used to flee)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling

**EQUIPMENT:** Typical clothing fitting the child's background, a toy or other token of interest

### THREAT: MINOR

## COMMONER

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1, COMMUNICATION 1, CONSTITUTION 0, DEXTERITY 1, FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 0, PERCEPTION 1, STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	13	11	0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
UNARMED	+1	1D3

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Defensive Stance, Disarm, Skirmish (used to flee violence)

**PROFESSIONAL FOCUS:** Give the Commoner a single focus that best represents their vocation or typical way of life. Then, increase the ability associated with that focus by +1.

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling; may add one other if the character's vocation involves weapons of some sort.

**EQUIPMENT:** Typical clothing, equipment needed for their vocation (which may include a weapon and/or armor in some situations; adjust armor rating and weapons accordingly)

### THREAT: MINOR

for combat. Use these statistics to reflect guards, private security, average mercenaries, bodyguards, and general sell-swords.

**ADVANCEMENTS:** Elite Guards often function as captains or other leaders, or swordsmen with some degree of reputation. Heroic Guards serve in positions of high distinction, or are well-known for their feats of skill. Epic Guards tend to serve at the upper reaches of military organizations, or head up schools of fighting.

## GUARD

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1, COMMUNICATION 0, CONSTITUTION 2 (STAMINA), DEXTERITY 1 (INITIATIVE), FIGHTING 2 (AXES OR HEAVY BLADES), INTELLIGENCE 0, PERCEPTION 0, STRENGTH 2, WILLPOWER 1 (COURAGE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	13	11	0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
STANDARD HEAVY BLADE	+4	2D6+2
STANDARD AXE	+4	2D6+2

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**TALENTS:** Armor Training (Novice), plus one other Style talent (Novice). Add to ability ratings or focuses to allow the character to meet talent prerequisites, ignoring class requirements.

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Axes or Heavy Blades, Bows, Brawling

**EQUIPMENT:** Heavy Blade or Axe, Chain Mail Armor

### THREAT: MINOR

## LABORER

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (BRAWLING), COMMUNICATION 0, CONSTITUTION 1 (STAMINA), DEXTERITY 1, FIGHTING 1 (BLUDGEONS), INTELLIGENCE 0, PERCEPTION 1, STRENGTH 2 (MIGHT), WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	15	11	0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
CLUB	+3	2D6+2
UNARMED	+4	1D3+2

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Knock Prone, Mighty Blow

**TALENTS:** Any one. Add to ability ratings or focuses in order to allow the character to meet the talent prerequisites, ignoring class requirements. Typical talents for the Laborer include Animal Training, Arcane Potential, Carousing, Command, Contacts, Horsemanship, Observation, Single Weapon Style, and Unarmed Style.

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bludgeons, Brawling

**EQUIPMENT:** Rough clothing fitting the character's vocation, work tools (including something that can be used as a club)

### THREAT: MINOR

## LABORER

Similar to the Commoner, the Laborer is meant to reflect a rather typical citizen whose vocation or upbringing has made them particularly hale and strong. It can be used to

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CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE

# CHAPTER 8: PEOPLE OF ALDIS

## ADVANCEMENTS

Each stock stat description has notes on the use of “threat advancement” for that particular character type, as per the **Beefing Up Adversaries** section of **CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook. We have also summarized them here, for ease of reference.

- **ELITE:** +1 to any three Abilities. Add two Focuses. +5 Health. Add one degree in a Talent (new or existing).
- **HEROIC:** +2 to any two Abilities, and +1 to any three other Abilities. Add four Focuses. +15 Health. Add two degrees in Talents (new or existing).
- **EPIC:** +3 to one Ability, +2 to any two other Abilities, and +1 to any three other Abilities. Add five Focuses. +20 Health. +3 Armor Rating. Add three degrees in Talents (new or existing).

## MERCHANT

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0 (LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 2 (BARGAINING, ETIQUETTE), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 1 (ARTISAN OR CRAFTING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 2 (EVALUATION), PERCEPTION 1, STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	12	11	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
DAGGER	+2	1D6+1	
UNARMED	+0	1D3	
SPECIAL QUALITIES			

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Sway the Crowds, The Object of Your Attention

**TALENTS:** Any one. Add to ability ratings or focuses in order to allow the character to meet the talent prerequisites, ignoring class requirements. Typical talents for the Merchant include Animal Training, Arcane Potential, Carousing, Contacts, Horsemanship, Intrigue, Linguistics, Observation, Thievery, and Wild Arcane.

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bludgeons, Light Blades

**EQUIPMENT:** Clothing in keeping with the merchant’s social class and vocation, one or two pieces of jewelry, a purse with a moderate amount of coin, a ledger

### THREAT: MINOR

represent the strapping ploughmen on a farm, teamsters on caravans, bouncers at an inn or tavern, dockhands at a port, or pugilistic thugs in a city’s dark underbelly.

**ADVANCEMENTS:** With most of these types, what you see is what you get. But the occasional Laborer might be particularly fit or skilled, justifying advancement to *Elite* or, more rarely, *Heroic*.

## MERCHANT

The Merchant, despite the name, does not reflect only those with mercantile interests. It is a good stat block

## NOBLE

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1, COMMUNICATION 2 (ETIQUETTE, LEADERSHIP), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 1 (RIDING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 2 (CULTURAL LORE, HERALDRY), PERCEPTION 1 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	15	11	3
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
FENCING BLADE	+1	1D6+1	
DAGGER	+1	1D6+1	
UNARMED	+1	1D3	
SPECIAL QUALITIES			

**TALENTS:** Any one. Add to ability ratings or focuses in order to allow the character to meet the talent prerequisites, ignoring class requirements. Typical talents for the Noble include Arcane Potential, Carousing, Command, Contacts, Dual Weapon Style, Horsemanship, Inspire, Intrigue, Linguistics, Lore, Mounted Combat Style, Oratory, Performance, Single Weapon Style, and Wild Arcane.

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades

**EQUIPMENT:** A satchel of documents and correspondence, a purse heavy with coin, 2 Daggers, Fencing Saber, Light Leather Armor

### THREAT: MINOR

to represent any character who focuses on specialized knowledge and/or interpersonal skills. It can be used for merchants, bureaucrats, minstrels, con artists, and similar folk.

**ADVANCEMENTS:** *Elite* Merchants stand out and inevitably rise to the top of the local game, with profitable businesses and many employees and apprentices. *Heroic* Merchants are basically merchant princes, with investments in other businesses and success at their beck and call. An *Epic* Merchant might be a once-in-a-generation mercantile genius, or the very worthy heir of a notable mercantile empire.



## NOBLE

Useful for either bureaucrats or wealthy citizenry, the Noble may or may not be a noble proper. They certainly travel in those same circles, however, and can be used to reflect the independently wealthy, extremely successful merchant princes, vital bureaucrats and government officials, and the like.

**ADVANCEMENTS:** *Elite* Nobles are well-suited for those bureaucrats and society notables who stand apart from the rest. *Heroic* Nobles have had years of experience and are well-lauded, while *Epic* Nobles make their mark on the world around them with their contributions (or schemes).

## SCHOLAR

The scholar represents any character with an academic or otherwise particularly cerebral focus. They could very well function as students or professors at the Royal College, academy teachers, guild archivists, scriveners, and physicks who specialize in non-arcane healing methods.

**ADVANCEMENTS:** Advancing the Scholar to *Elite* can represent a prodigy or experienced character, including professors of the Royal College, the dean of a civic children's school, and those quite skilled in their respective fields. *Heroic* Scholars probably represent some of the finest to be found in Aldis, while *Epic* Scholars will surely make their mark with breakthroughs and new philosophies that will be remembered for generations.

## SCHOLAR

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0, COMMUNICATION 2 (PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 0, DEXTERITY 1 (CALLIGRAPHY), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 2 (RESEARCH, PLUS ONE OTHER), PERCEPTION 1, STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	12	11	0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
UNARMED	+0	1D3

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Skirmish (used to flee violence), Stunned Silence

**TALENTS:** Lore (Novice), plus one additional. Add to ability ratings or focuses in order to allow the character to meet the talent prerequisites, ignoring class requirements. Typical talents for the Scholar include Arcane Potential, Artificer, Contacts, Linguistics, Medicine, Observation, Oratory, and Wild Arcane.

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling

**EQUIPMENT:** Clothing appropriate for their vocation, satchel of tools, books, and other materials

### THREAT: MINOR

# CHAPTER 8: PEOPLE OF ALDIS

## FOLK OF ALDIS CITY

NAME	NOTES	THREAT	LOCATION	PAGE
Adele	Female rhy-mouse shaper & seamstress	Minor	Landsea Amphitheater (M5)	145
Adroi Leaning-Thorn	Female human florist	Moderate	Wraithwood Floral (O13)	145
Alfric Benneck	Male human mercenary leader	Dire	Silver Shields Barracks (H15)	146
Amedee	Female vata'sha bookseller	Minor	The Folded Corner (L8)	146
Anya Pell	Female human double agent	Minor/Moderate	Silver Shields Barracks (H15)	147
Astirien	Genderfluid vata'an child with a secret	Major	Tarvenyl's Tower (H12)	147
Atelen Damaer	Female human noble	Minor	Last Bend (10)	148
Ayazrin	Male night person gardener	Dire	Temple of the Eternal Dance (H17)	148
Baroness of Whispers	Sinister crime lord	Dire	varies, Matchmaker's Guild (LA6)	149
Belinda Vovubros	Female human shipping magnate	Major	Vovubros & Daughters (O15)	150
Bulgan Urr	Female night person courtesan	Moderate	Thermal Spa (M10)	150
Castien Nremen	Male vata'an publican	Minor	Edgefield (L2)	151
Chaedy Poeson	Male human innkeep	Moderate	Swallowtail Inn (M1)	151
Chakri Ashcloak	Human ghost	Major	The Griffon's Quill (M9)	152
Connor Bartia, Master	Male sea-folk gondolier	Minor	Waterways; Gondolier's Guild (LA12)	152
Coral Coventina	Female sea-folk courtesan	Moderate	The Salty Siren (O17)	153
The Cuckoo	Male human sorcerer	Major	Lake Ward; Dorn & Byorn's Golden Alehouse (LA7)	153
Dagen Vos	Male human noble	Major	The Soul's Flame (LA5)	154
Dorrin Tyr	Male human mercenary	Major	Silver Shields Barracks (H15)	155
Durian Jack	Male vata'an fruit seller	Moderate	Market Bridge (M10)	155
Emeris Telford, First Envoy	Female human First Envoy	Dire	Hall of Envoy (H8)	156
Emile Hazestar	Male human minstrel	Minor	The Oubliette (M3)	156
Erevan Alfaeo	Male night person shipping magnate	Moderate	The Royal Rose Society (M2)	157
Evan Green	Male human tavernkeep	Moderate	The Ballad and Blade (H5)	157
Fourash Tallore	Male rhy-cat woodwind crafter	Moderate	Alfaeo Estate (M2)	158
Freewell Pineton	Male human healer	Minor	Hedgerow House (M12)	158
Greene Mouseblossom	Female human fire-shaper	Major	The Oubliette (M3)	159
Grer Voubros	Female human mind-healer	Moderate	Hedgerow House (M12)	159
Hexton Reyes	Male human spy	Major	Alaric's House (H9)	159
Julinn the Masqueless	Genderfluid courtesan	Dire	The House of the Thousand Ways (H15)	160
Kile Mistraker	Male human musician	Moderate	Windsea Symphony (M6)	161
Kiren, Ilah, & Magda Stagmarr	Human female sibling fire-shapers	Moderate	The Soul's Flame (LA5)	161
Kyra Emauri, Professor	Female human arcanobotanist	Moderate	Institute of Arcanobotany (LA1)	162
Linnea Selder	Female human sorceress	Moderate	Fellows of Lake Vash Guildhouse (H18)	162
Lisaya Silán	Female human server (spy)	Moderate	The Cockerel and Onion (H14)	163
Maejar	Male rhy-dog "vice-headmaster"	Major	Creston's Academy (L10)	163
Marnetta Savahn	Female human guildmaster	Dire	Moneylenders Guild (H2)	164
Nellia Aramys	Female vata'an business magnate	Major	Goia's Plaza (LA9)	164
Nirvelli Nerin	Nonbinary sea-folk actor	Moderate	Landsea Amphitheater (M5)	165
Old Mal	Female human retired adventurer	Moderate	The Cask and Crow (L7)	165
Peregrus	Male rhy-falcon envoy	Minor	Hall of Envoy (H8)	166
Pluton	Male rhy-rat storyteller	Moderate	Tiny Tree (M8)	166
Preesh Devah	Female human baker	Minor	The Lord Oak Bakery (M9)	167
Rem Sterngrove	Male human bookkeeper	Moderate	Villa Fruta Orchards (O16)	167
Rosemund Warden	Female human matriarch	Moderate	Warden House (L5)	167
Sahn Huaki	Female human teacher	Minor	Loveridge Academy (M7)	168
Shili	Female rhy-cat proprietor	Moderate	Rhydan's Rest (H16)	168
Singh	Male rhy-raven retiree	Moderate	Foxhollow Grove (M1)	169
Sinrus	Male rhy-rat nest protector	Major	The Nest (H3)	169
Siryna	Female sea-folk tavernkeep	Major	The Trout's Eye (H10)	170
Talons-Like-Daggers	Male rhy-eagle temple advisor	Minor	Anwaren's Sacellum (L3)	170
Tegra Fire-Eyes	Female night person/vata'sha smith	Moderate	Tegra's Smithy (H16)	171
Theowald Weaver	Male human weaver	Minor	Carpet Square (L4)	171
Wiltell, Captain	Male rhy-horse Knight of the Blue Rose	Major	The Rose Hall (H8)	171

# THE FOLK OF ALDIS

While many people of Aldis can be simply summed up, there are a great many more with unique skills, experiences, and backgrounds that require a bit more precise handling. You'll find these individuals in this section.

The following characters are listed alphabetically by first name, with a caption that mentions where they can be found most often located in Aldis.

## ADELE

**LOCATIONS:** *Landsea Amphitheater, Elmbury (M5)*

A rhy-mouse with powerful shaping arcana and an even more powerful sense of fashion, Adele is extremely picky about which shows she agrees to design for. She views her art as her calling; it is the way she contributes to society. It is consistently astounding how much passion is contained in her tiny heart.



## ADROI LEANING-THORN

**LOCATIONS:** *Wraithwood Floral, Four Corners (O13)*

Leaning-Thorn seems incredibly kind-hearted, especially to children and animals. She regularly nurses injured birds and small animals back to health and always has a nugget of honey-candy for any children who visit her shop. This life of simple kindness and open affection to nearly all she meets has earned her not only a very loyal following, but a diminutive army of small birds and animals who hang around outside the shop, waiting for her to come out to pet them and offer them treats, which she happily does several times a day.



## ALFRIC BENNECK

**LOCATIONS:** *Silver Shields Barracks, Silverhill (H15)*

The middle-aged Alfric cuts a dashing figure, right down to the snowy streaks at his temples and the eyepatch he wears to cover an old injury gained during his youth as a treasure-hunter. Under his leadership, the Silver Shields has flourished, and his own wealth is now greater than that of nearly half of his clients.



The safety and certainty of it all, however, gnaws at him, and he thinks back, perhaps over-fondly, to younger days spent sleeping miserably in the mud, scrounging after the barest whispers of great relics of the Old Kingdom. Sometimes, Alfric wants to just disappear, setting aside his fine

## ADELE

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

**ACCURACY 2 (BITE), COMMUNICATION 2 (PSYCHIC), CONSTITUTION 0, DEXTERITY 3 (ARTISAN, STEALTH), FIGHTING 0 (CLAWS), INTELLIGENCE 1 (SHAPING), PERCEPTION 2 (HEARING, PSYCHIC, SMELLING), STRENGTH 0 (CLIMBING), WILLPOWER 2**

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	20	13	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
BITE	+4	1D3	
CLAWS	+2	1D3	
SPECIAL QUALITIES			

**ARCANA:** Arcane Strike, Manipulate Object, Move Object, Plant Shaping, Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Second Sight

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Lightning Attack, That Makes Me Wonder

**SMALL SIZE:** See page 173.

**TALENTS:** Psychic (Novice), Shaping (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Natural Weapons

### THREAT: MINOR

## ADROI LEANING-THORN

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

**ACCURACY 3 (ARCANE, STAVES), COMMUNICATION 3 (ANIMISM, DECEPTION, PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 1 (ARTISAN), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3 (NATURAL LORE, SHAPING), PERCEPTION 1 (VISIONARY), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 2**

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	26	11	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
STAFF	+5	1D6+2	
UNARMED	+3	1D3+1	
SPECIAL QUALITIES			

**ARCANA:** Arcane Weapon, Imbue Unlife, Move Object, Plant Shaping, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Summon Spirit

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Effortless Arcana

**TALENTS:** Arcane Training (Novice), Intrigue (Novice), Shaping (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Staff

### THREAT: MODERATE

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# CHAPTER 8: PEOPLE OF ALDIS

## ALFRIC BENNECK

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (BOWS, BRAWLING), COMMUNICATION 3 (ANIMAL HANDLING, ETIQUETTE, LEADERSHIP), CONSTITUTION 5 (STAMINA), DEXTERITY 5 (INITIATIVE, RIDING), FIGHTING 6 (BLUDGEONS, HEAVY BLADES), INTELLIGENCE 3 (CULTURAL LORE, HERALDRY, MILITARY LORE), PERCEPTION 3 (SEEING, TRACKING), STRENGTH 6 (INTIMIDATION, MIGHT), WILLPOWER 4 (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
15	130	15	5
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
BASTARD SWORD	+8	2D6+6	
UNARMED	+5	1D6+6	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Disarm, Dual Strike (3 SP), Inspire (2 SP), Mighty Blow (1 SP), Threaten (1 SP)

**EXPERT STRIKE:** Alfric knows when to strike with precision and when to strike with power. When he makes an attack, Alfric can take up to a -3 penalty on his attack roll to receive a corresponding bonus to his damage roll. For example, Alfric can take a -2 penalty on his attack roll to get a +2 bonus on his damage roll. Alternatively, Alfric can receive up to a +3 bonus on his attack roll if he takes a corresponding penalty on his damage roll.

**HEROES' ARMOR:** Alfric has an armor rating of 5, or the rating of the armor he is wearing—whichever is higher—even if he is not wearing armor.

**QUICK STRIKE:** Alfric can make a melee attack vs. an adjacent opponent as a minor action. The attack roll and damage roll of this Quick Strike suffer a -2 penalty. This action cannot be combined with Expert Strike.

**STUNT BONUS:** Alfric can make sweeping attacks on opponents before him. When he performs the Dual Strike combat stunt with a melee attack, he can hit two secondary targets instead of one. All three of his targets (the original target and his two secondary targets) must be adjacent to him either when he makes the first attack or after he has used the Skirmish combat stunt to move next to them.

**VETERAN:** Persevering through long hours of practice and many bloody encounters has made Alfric a fearsome combatant. When he inflicts damage with an attack, Alfric can add his focus bonus to his damage total if he has an applicable weapons group focus. The focus must match the weapons group of the weapon he attacks with.

**TALENTS:** Armor Training (Master), Command (Master), Commander (Master), Inspire (Master), Quick Reflexes (Master), Two-Handed Style (Master), Unarmed Style (Master)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Axes, Bows, Bludgeons, Brawling, Heavy Blades, Polearms

**EQUIPMENT:** Bastard Sword, Medium Armor

**THREAT: DIRE**

## AMEDEE

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0, COMMUNICATION 2 (INVESTIGATION), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 2, FIGHTING -1, INTELLIGENCE 5 (CARTOGRAPHY, CULTURAL LORE, HERALDRY, HISTORICAL LORE, RELIGIOUS LORE), PERCEPTION 3, STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 3 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	24	12	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
HIDDEN KNIFE	+0	1D6+1	
UNARMED	+0	1D3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Visions

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Speedy Search, That Makes Me Wonder

**BRIGHT LIGHT SUSCEPTIBILITY:** Amedee is blinded in bright light (equal to full daylight) for one round when she is first exposed to it.

**DARK SIGHT:** Amedee can see up to 30 yards in darkness without a light source.

**SWIFT RECOVERY:** Amedee's Constitution ability is considered 2 points higher for any of the recovery formulas given under **Health and Healing** in **CHAPTER 1** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook.

**TALENTS:** Contacts (Novice), Linguistics (Master), Lore (Master), Visionary (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Log book, spectacles, several books at any given moment, Hidden Knife

**THREAT: MINOR**

garb of silk and velvet, shrug back into an old, patched-up chain hauberk with a battleworn sword at his hip, and find a quest fit to make his heart sing once more.

## AMEDEE

**LOCATIONS:** *The Folded Corner, Preston Heights (L8)*

The vata'sha owner of the Folded Corner can be difficult to interact with, as she tends to forget that not everyone has the extensive foundation of information that she does. She frequently makes references to obscure tomes as if they are common knowledge. For those that do approach her experience and education, though, Amedee is a resource worth knowing and cultivating. Not only does she have a great deal of interest in the



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## ANYA PELL

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1 (BOWS, BRAWLING), COMMUNICATION 2/3 (DECEPTION\*, INVESTIGATION, PERSUASION\*), CONSTITUTION 3, DEXTERITY 2 (LOCK PICKING\*, RIDING, STEALTH\*), FIGHTING 4 (HEAVY BLADES, POLEARMS), INTELLIGENCE 1/2 (EVALUATION\*, HERALDRY), PERCEPTION 2 (SEARCHING), STRENGTH 3, WILLPOWER 0/2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	65	12	4

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
LONGSWORD	+5	2D6+3
UNARMED	+3	1D3+3

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** And Another Thing (1 SP), Defensive Stance, Mighty Blow (1 SP)

**HEROES' ARMOR:** Anya is considered to have an armor rating of 4, or the rating of the armor she is wearing—whichever is better—even if she is not wearing armor at all.

**TALENTS:** Intrigue (Journeyman), Observation (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Heavy Blades, Polearms

**EQUIPMENT:** Light Armor, Longsword

**NOTE:** Numbers after the slash are those of Anya's hidden personality, and focuses marked with an asterisk belong solely to that personality.

### THREAT: MINOR (MODERATE FOR ANYA'S HIDDEN PERSONALITY)

various lores she's studied, but she has almost perfect recollection, and is able to tell curious information hunters which books in her shop, or in one of a dozen private collections, a required tidbit might be found in.

## ANYA PELL

### LOCATIONS: *Silver Shields Barracks, Silverhill (H15)*

Anya's is a mind that was broken apart and stitched back together during childhood in the Lich King's arcane laboratories. The calculating, malevolent will that lurks behind her conscious mind remains one of Jarek's loyal talons, gathering information on the homes, families, resources, and security measures of the company's patrons. When this fabricated personality deems the moment opportune, she intends to strike for maximum mayhem, seeding fear and distrust throughout Silverhill in accordance with what she believes her master would have wanted.



## ASTIRIEN

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 4 (BITE), COMMUNICATION 3 (PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 3 (STEALTH), FIGHTING 0 (CLAWS), INTELLIGENCE 2, PERCEPTION 1 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 3, WILLPOWER 0

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	75	13	4
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
BITE	+6	2D6+3	
CLAWS	+2	1D6+3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** None; the Lich King's experiments seem to have removed the vata'an child's innate arcane gifts.

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Mighty Blow, New Friends, Skirmish

**CONCEALED WEAPONRY:** Most of the time, Astirien looks like a perfectly normal, beautiful vata'an child. As a minor action, however, they may cast aside this pretense, sprouting long, hooked claws and a maw full of razor-sharp fangs. While Astirien's claws and fangs are concealed (which also requires a minor action), they may not use their bite or claw attacks.

**DARK SIGHT:** Astirien can see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

**HOLLOW HEART:** The Lich King removed Astirien's heart in the ritual that killed the child and raised them to unlife. Astirien's body cannot die until after their heart is destroyed. While the heart is intact, Astirien automatically recovers 25 Health every hour, regenerating even from total physical obliteration, upon the precise spot where they were "killed." If Astirien's heart is destroyed, their body crumbles instantly (and permanently) to dust. Astirien's heart could be anywhere, but it is most likely somewhere in Kern. It may be a well-guarded artifact from Jarek's reign, or it might just be sitting somewhere in a box, forgotten.

**SWIFT RECOVERY:** Astirien's Constitution ability is considered 2 points higher for Health recovery formulas.

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Natural Weapons

### THREAT: MAJOR

## ASTIRIEN

### LOCATIONS: *Tarvenyl's Tower, the Blessed Hills (H12)*

When Astirien's father, Tarvenyl, refused to betray Aldis for the Lich King, Jarek claimed to have murdered the youth, but instead vindictively performed dire experiments on the young vata'an. Years later, Tarvenyl discovered the truth. During the war that saw the



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## AYAZRIN

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 6 (LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 4 (PSYCHIC), CONSTITUTION 4, DEXTERITY 5 (INITIATIVE, STEALTH), FIGHTING 2, INTELLIGENCE 3 (ARCANE LORE, HEALING, MILITARY LORE, SORCERY LORE), PERCEPTION 4 (PSYCHIC, SEARCHING, TRACKING), STRENGTH 4, WILLPOWER 6 (COURAGE, SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
15	115	15	4
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
PSYCHIC WEAPON (LIGHT SWORD)	+8	2D6+4 (PENETRATING)	
UNARMED	+6	1D3+4	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Arcane Weapon, Body Control, Cure, Enhancement, Psychic Shield, Psychic Weapon, Second Sight, Ward

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Effortless Arcana (5 SP), Lethal Blow, Seize the Initiative

**ARCANE STUNT APTITUDE:** Ayazrin can perform the Effortless Arcana stunt for 1 SP less than the normal cost.

**BRIGHT LIGHT SUSCEPTIBILITY:** Ayazrin is blinded in bright light (equal to full daylight) for one round when he is first exposed to it.

**DARK SIGHT:** Ayazrin can see up to 30 yards in darkness without a light source.

**HEROES' ARMOR:** Ayazrin is considered to have an armor rating of 4, or the rating of the armor he is wearing—whichever is better—even if he is not wearing armor at all.

**QUICK STRIKE:** Ayazrin can make a melee attack vs. an adjacent opponent as a minor action. The attack roll and damage roll of this Quick Strike suffer a -2 penalty.

**TALENTS:** Healing (Journeyman), Inspire (Journeyman), Quick Reflexes (Master), Single Weapon Style (Master), Wild Arcane (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Light Blades

**EQUIPMENT:** Light Leather Armor

### THREAT: DIRE

Lich King's destruction, he undertook a secret mission to recover his beloved progeny, only to discover an unliving monstrosity wearing the innocent face of a child; one that could not be given peace in death by any craft known to the powerful adept.

Now, the creature that was Astirien bides its time patiently in the depths of Tarvenyl's home, awaiting an opportunity to escape and bring death and ruin to the living. Its precise motivations and imperatives are obscure and even seemingly random, following a set of programmed directives straight from the twisted intellect of the now-departed Lich King. Narrators should use this in whatever way best benefits their chronicle.

## ATELEN DAMAER

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1, COMMUNICATION 3 (INVESTIGATION), CONSTITUTION 1 (DRINKING), DEXTERITY 2 (ARTISAN, CRAFTING), FIGHTING 1, INTELLIGENCE 4 (BREWING, ENGINEERING, RESEARCH), PERCEPTION 3 (SEARCHING), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 2 (COURAGE, PURITY)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	15	12	1
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
DAGGER	+1	1D6+2	
STAFF	+1	1D6+2	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Pierce Armor (1 SP), Stay Aware

**TALENTS:** Artificer (Novice), Lore (Novice), Medicine (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Dagger, Staff

### THREAT: MINOR

## ATELEN DAMAER

*Location: Last Bend, Lower Vash Valley (10)*

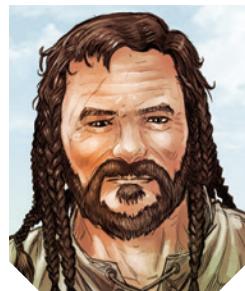
A brilliant young woman who recently passed the tests of nobility, Atelen first drew the Crown's attention when she discovered an alchemical mixture that more efficiently cleaned wastewater, and volunteered to come to the capital to share her findings with others. This selflessness brought her into contact with other similar intellects, leading to more innovations, until it was determined that the kingdom might be better served with Atelen traveling the valleys and finding ways to help people more directly.



## AYAZRIN

**LOCATIONS:** *Temple of the Eternal Dance (H17)*

A veteran of the most recent war against Kern, Ayazrin laid down his arms at the end of that conflict, opting to retire to a life of religious service. While still young by the standards of his people, he is a near peerless warrior-adept. Few know of his exploits, and he is much better recognized in the capital city for the fine job he does raking and pruning, and for taking the occasional pause to offer a hello or to admire the flowers.



## BARONESS OF WHISPERS

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (BRAWLING), COMMUNICATION 4 (DECEPTION, INVESTIGATION, PERSUASION, ROMANCE), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 3 (INITIATIVE, LEGERDEMAIN), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 2 (CRYPTOGRAPHY), PERCEPTION 3 (EMPATHY, SEARCHING), STRENGTH 2, WILLPOWER 2 (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	35	14	6
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
FISTS	+5	1D6+3	
QUARTERSTAFF	+5	1D6+6	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** And Another Thing, Efficient Search (1 SP), Knock Down, Speedy Search (1 SP)

**SLIPPERY:** The Baroness is hard to pin down, both in the heat of combat and in the complexity of social situations. Opponents do not gain an attack bonus for outnumbering her in melee combat. Normally, attackers gain up to a +2 bonus in such circumstances. The Baroness also cannot be targeted by a Sway the Crows roleplaying stunt unless the stunt's user pays an additional 1 SP to include her.

**STUNNING REPARTEE:** The Baroness can daze or distract any opponents within earshot with carefully chosen and timed words. To use this power, the Baroness takes a major action and must defeat the target in an opposed Communication (Deception or Persuasion) test vs. their Willpower (Self-Discipline). If successful, the target can only take a single Move action on their next turn. The Baroness may also now use the Stunned Silence roleplaying Stunt and the Taunt combat stunt for 1 SP less than their usual cost.

**TALENTS:** Intrigue (Master), Martial Artist (Novice), Spy (Master), Unarmed Style (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Martial Arts, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Quarterstaff, Hidden Masterwork Armor (Reinforced x2, Well-Crafted: Stealth), Shielding Stone.

### THREAT: DIRE

## THE BARONESS OF WHISPERS

**LOCATIONS:** *Anywhere in Aldis, but particularly the Matchmaker's Guild, Marlicel's Crossing (LA6)*

No one knows the Baroness' true identity; when she meets with her underlings, she wears a white, waxen death mask, all the more unnerving for how softly she speaks. The nobles of the Lake Ward only have scraps of information about her. She must have come to power during Queen Jaellin's rule. Over the last decade, Silence activities in the Lake Ward have shifted from smuggling to information and blackmail. Some within the Sovereign's



Finest also suspect the Baroness of being a powerful adept, or having a sorcerer willing to commit psychic crimes on her payroll—she simply knows too much information that could only be obtained by psychic invasion.

For her own part, the Baroness is terrifyingly good at what she does because she *enjoys* it. She loves her day job as a matchmaker, and takes as much professional satisfaction in uniting new lovers as she does in running her Dominion. After all, crime is also about making matches, between a burglar and the perfect manse, pickpockets and the right crowd, or a con artist with the ideal mark. To the Baroness, her clients at the Matchmaker's Guild and

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## BELINDA VOVUBROS

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 5 (BRAWLING), COMMUNICATION 1 (BARGAINING), CONSTITUTION 3 (DRINKING), DEXTERITY 0 (LEGERDEMAIN, LOCK PICKING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3 (EVALUATION), PERCEPTION 2, STRENGTH 5 (DRIVING, MIGHT), WILLPOWER 3 (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
10	48	10	3
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
UNARMED	+7	1D6+5	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Jest, Knock Prone (1 SP)

**HEROES' ARMOR:** Belinda is considered to have an armor rating of 3, or the rating of the armor she is wearing—whichever is higher—even if she isn't wearing armor at all.

**PINPOINT ATTACK:** Once per round, Belinda can add 1d6 damage to a successful attack if her Dexterity is greater than that of the target of the attack.

**STUNNING ATTACK:** Belinda can daze opponents with sharp blows to vulnerable areas. To make a stunning attack, Belinda uses the Aim action and then either a melee or a ranged attack. If successful, she inflicts no damage, but her opponent must make a successful TN 15 Constitution (Stamina) test or become stunned. Stunned opponents can attempt the test again at the start of their turn, and if successful can act normally. Otherwise, stunned characters can only take a single Move action on their turn. While her opponent is stunned, Belinda can use Pinpoint Attacks against them with no regard for Dexterity. Stunts are possible on her initial attack roll.

**TALENTS:** Carousing (Novice), Command (Novice), Unarmed Style (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Light Leather Armor

### THREAT: MAJOR

her underlings in the Silence are all just beautiful puppets, dancing on her strings.

The Baroness prefers to work with those who understand subtlety and loyalty first and foremost, letting those lieutenants work with the necessary rabble that form the main body of the Silence's operatives. All her lieutenants are individuals one would almost never mistake for seasoned mob criminals: the lamplighter who sees everything in a neighborhood, the gondolier who knows Lake Vash's most—and least—traveled areas, the disgruntled palace bureaucrat often overlooked for promotions, or the gossipy single father in the Lower Ward with a great many mouths to feed.

The appearance and identity of the Baroness of Whispers is left undescribed, to allow Narrators room to incorporate her into their campaigns as they see fit.

## BULGAN URR

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (BRAWLING, LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 2 (PERSUASION, ROMANCE), CONSTITUTION 2 (DRINKING), DEXTERITY 3 (INITIATIVE, STEALTH), FIGHTING 1, INTELLIGENCE 2, PERCEPTION 1, STRENGTH 2 (MIGHT), WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	32	13	1
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
DAGGER	+5	1D6+3	
UNARMED	+5	1D6+2	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Flirt, Passionate Inspiration

**BRIGHT LIGHT SUSCEPTIBILITY:** Bulgan is blinded in bright light (equal to full daylight) for one round when she is first exposed to it.

**DARK SIGHT:** Bulgan can see up to 30 yards in darkness without a light source.

**TALENTS:** Contacts (Novice), Intrigue (Novice), Unarmed Style (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUP:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Dagger

### THREAT: MODERATE

## BELINDA VOVUBROS

**LOCATIONS:** Vovubros & Daughters Dry Goods Shipping and Storage, The Shankle (O15)

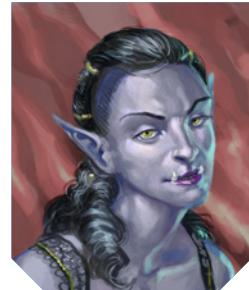
Belinda's mighty arms appear slightly too large even for her impressive body, and she can sling bags of grain and heft barrels and crates with the best of them. She also loves to perform sleight-of-hand magic tricks, even though she's not very good at them.



## BULGAN URR

**LOCATIONS:** Thermai Spa, Sutro District (M10)

In a crowded room, Urr's violet skin seems to glow as brightly as her smile. Her bow-shaped lips are bookended by two ivory tusks polished to a high sheen and inlaid with gold and precious gems. Her almond-shaped eyes are rimmed by sultry, dark lashes, which she



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## CASTIEN NREMEN

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1 (BRAWLING, LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 3 (ETIQUETTE, PERSUASION, ROMANCE), CONSTITUTION 2 (DRINKING), DEXTERITY 2, FIGHTING 1, INTELLIGENCE 1 (CULTURAL LORE), PERCEPTION 2 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 1 (MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	32	12	3
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
DAGGER	+3	1D6+1	
RAPIER	+3	1D6+1	
UNARMED	+3	1D3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Bon Mot, And Another Thing, New Friends

**DARK SIGHT:** Castien can see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

**SWIFT RECOVERY:** Castien's Constitution ability is considered 2 points higher for any Health recovery formulas.

**TALENTS:** Arcane Potential (Novice), Carousing (Novice), Contacts (Novice), Intrigue (Journeyman), Observation (Novice), Oratory (Novice), Psychic (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Heavy Blades, Light Blades

**EQUIPMENT:** Light Leather Armor (tailored in the latest fashion), matching set of Rapier and Dagger

**ARCANA:** Heart Reading

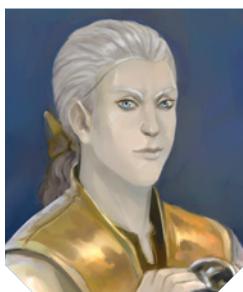
### THREAT: MINOR

enjoys peering out from underneath. She takes great pride in moisturizing her skin to best show off the shapely muscles cording and curving around her entire body.

## CASTIEN NREMEN

### LOCATIONS: Edgefield, the Apron (L2)

Between his stunning white hair and ice-blue eyes, and the gracious charm which comes naturally to the handsome vata'an publican, visitors to the elegantly appointed inn are rarely disappointed by their welcome. Though he is genial and welcoming, Castien always deflects any questions about or references to his past. He is never rude about it, although anyone crass enough to ask directly about his background will be told, point-blank, that his own story is painful and not something he cares to recollect in casual conversation.



## CHAEDYS POESON

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 3 (BARGAINING, PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 2 (DRINKING), DEXTERITY 1 (RIDING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3 (MILITARY LORE, WRITING), PERCEPTION 2 (SEEING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	27	11	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
SHORTSWORD	+5	1D6+1	
UNARMED	+3	1D3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** That Makes Me Wonder (2 SP), The Object of Your Attention (2 SP, +2 bonus)

**TALENTS:** Observation (Master), Oratory (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Shortsword

### THREAT: MODERATE

## CHAEDYS POESON

### LOCATIONS: Swallowtail Inn, the Retreat (M1)

Poeson's boyish features make him appear much younger than his fifty-odd years. He's taken to wearing a curled mustache in an effort to appear more mature, but it unfortunately gives him the look of a child playing dress-up in his father's clothing. He favors overpowering colognes that leave a scent-wake when he passes. The intent is to keep his authority lingering in a room long after he's left; he believes this is partly why service at the Swallowtail is so widely commended—the boss always seems to be near.



## CHAKRI ASHCLOAK'S GHOST

### LOCATIONS: The Griffon's Quill, Cardamom (M9)

When Hegwer sold his first bakery, Ashcloak became furious. Two days later, the oven fire occurred, and Ashcloak was never seen again. Many say he set the fire out of jealousy, but accidentally killed himself in the resulting conflagration. His spirit supposedly haunts the premises, forever outside the



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## CHAKRI ASHCLOAK'S GHOST

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 4 (BRAWLING), COMMUNICATION 1 (PSYCHIC), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 3 (INITIATIVE, STEALTH), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 4 (BAKING, SHAPING), PERCEPTION 3 (HEARING, SEEING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 4

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13 (FLYING)	37	13	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
SPECIAL QUALITIES			

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Pierce Armor, Stunned Silence

**ARCANA:** Cold Shaping, Heart Shaping, Manipulate Object, Move Object, Psychic Blast, Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Sorcerer's Grip, Suggestion

**HOSTLY TOUCH:** The touch of a ghost chills living things if the spirit desires it, causing  $2d6 + \text{Willpower}$  penetrating damage. This attack uses the Accuracy (Brawling) focus and ignores the target's shield bonus.

**INCORPOREAL:** Ghosts are incorporeal, having a tenuous existence in the mortal world. They ignore the effects of terrain. Normally, only arcane attacks can harm them; other attacks pass through their forms without effect. However, a character attacking a ghost such as Ashcloak can perform a special stunt called Spirit Bane for 3 SP. The character then inflicts normal weapon damage, but substitutes Willpower for Strength or Perception.

**TALENTS:** Observation (Novice), Psychic (Journeyman), Shaping (Journeyman)

### THREAT: MAJOR

Wheel of Rebirth. His ghost is focused entirely on making others understand his pain.

## MASTER CONNOR BARTIA

**LOCATIONS:** *Anywhere along the waterways; Gondolier's Guild, Firefly's Rest (LA12)*

To most people, gondoliers are cabbies and entertainers. Connor Bartia has made it his life's mission to be something more. As an apprentice, he overheard whispers of an arson attempt from passengers as they disembarked. Unable to sit by and do nothing, he anonymously tipped off the guards, and he has no regrets about his choices to this day.

While most of his fellow gondoliers keep their customers' secrets, Connor believes that as long as he has ears, he'll use



## CONNOR BARTIA

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1, COMMUNICATION 2 (PERFORMANCE), CONSTITUTION 2 (ROWING, SWIMMING), DEXTERITY 2 (SAILING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 1 (HISTORICAL LORE), PERCEPTION 2 (EMPATHY, HEARING), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12 (LAND, SWIM)	15	12	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
DAGGER	+1	1d6+2	
SLING	+1	1d6+3	
UNARMED	+1	1d3+1	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Water Shaping

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Speedy Search, That Makes Me Wonder

**DARK SIGHT:** Connor can see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

**DEHYDRATION:** Connor must be immersed in water once per day or consume twice as much water as a normal human. With no immersion and limited to normal human water consumption or less, Connor gains a level of fatigue each day and cannot recover from fatigue until he is properly hydrated.

**HOLD BREATH:** Connor can hold his breath for 60 rounds, plus 6 rounds  $\times$  his Constitution ability.

**TALENTS:** Arcane Potential (Novice), Observation (Novice), Performance (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Dagger, any one musical instrument. Even off the job, Connor prefers his gondolier's uniform: white shirt and pants, with a different colorful scarf for each season.

### THREAT: MINOR

them for the good of Aldis. For the last twenty years, the sea-folk gondolier has acted as an unofficial informant for the Crown, secretly feeding the Aldin Watch information whenever he dares. He always turns down any offers of official employment, claiming that he is but a humble gondolier.

## CORAL COVENTINA

**LOCATIONS:** *The Salty Siren, Blueburg (O17)*

Coventina was born and raised in Blueburg and has never ventured beyond Aldis' city limits. Her stories of romance and intrigue are all culled from books; a voracious reader, she spends nearly all of her time either reading, sleeping, or working. She dreams of being a



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## CORAL COVENTINA

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1 (BRAWLING, LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 4 (BARGAINING, GAMBLING, PERFORMANCE, PERSUASION, ROMANCE), CONSTITUTION 0, DEXTERITY 3 (ACROBATICS), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3 (HISTORICAL LORE), PERCEPTION 2 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	30	13	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
DAGGER	+3	1D6+2	
UNARMED	+3	1D3+1	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Bon Mot

**DARK SIGHT:** Coral can see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

**DEHYDRATION:** Coral must be immersed in water once per day or consume twice as much water as a normal human. With no immersion and limited to normal human water consumption or less, Coral gains a level of fatigue each day and cannot recover from fatigue until she is properly hydrated.

**HOLD BREATH:** Coral can hold her breath for 60 rounds, plus 6 rounds  $\times$  her Constitution ability.

**TALENTS:** Carousing (J journeyman), Contacts (Novice), Inspire (Novice), Lore (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Dagger

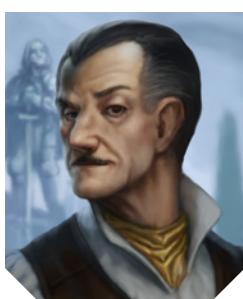
### THREAT: MODERATE

star like Nirvelli Nerin (see **The Landsea Amphitheater** in the **Middle Ward** chapter), but her slightly drawling, Outer Ward diction makes this unlikely.

## THE CUCKOO

**LOCATIONS:** All over the Lake Ward, but particularly Dorn and Byorn's Golden Alehouse, Everlamp Way (LA7)

Practicing sorcery in the city of Aldis is no easy task. In his public life, the Cuckoo is a sketch artist named Haleth Bailey. He spends his days drawing passersby on the docks and selling his sketches. The ruse gives him a good excuse to spend extended periods of time in visual contact with someone, studying the potential targets for psychic sorcery. He is careful to choose his victims wisely, preferring traders, sailors, or travelers who might



## THE CUCKOO

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (ARCANE), COMMUNICATION 4 (DECEPTION, DISGUISE, PSYCHIC), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 2 (STEALTH), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3 (ARCANE LORE, HEALING, SORCERY LORE), PERCEPTION 3 (PSYCHIC), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 3 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	30	12	3
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
SMUGGLED CRYSTON	+4	2D6+3	
STILETTO	+2	1D6+2	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Cure, Draw Vitality, Flesh Shaping, Mind Delving, Mind Shaping, Psychic Contact, Psychic Domination, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Suggestion, Torment

**FAVORED STUNTS:** And Another Thing (1 SP), Imposing Arcana, Lasting Arcana

**ATTUNE ARCANA:** Reduce the familiarity modifier on any appropriate arcana rolls by -2.

**CORRUPTION:** The Cuckoo has embraced his Corruption, and starts with a Corruption score of 4. At the Narrator's discretion, he may gain additional Corruption.

**TALENTS:** Arcane Training (Novice), Intrigue (J journeyman), Observation (Novice), Psychic (Master), Healing (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Smuggled Cryston, Stiletto, Hidden Armored Vest (Light Armor). In his guise as a sketch artist, he wears colorful, well-made clothes that are carefully patched and fraying at the edges.

### THREAT: MAJOR

have information about more important individuals. Occasionally, the Baroness orders him to delve into the mind of an Aldin resident. In these dangerous instances, he uses the Mind Shaping arcanum to try and erase his tracks.

Although the Baroness gives her precious Cuckoo a long leash and many luxuries, he chafes under her control. In some ways, the Cuckoo's tale is a tragic one. Once a promising young adept in Garnet, Haleth fell under suspicion of sorcery. His image-conscious parents disowned him for the mere rumor, though he hadn't faced trial, and Haleth fled his home rather than endure further social disgrace. The Baroness quickly snapped him up when he drifted into the Lake Ward, desperate for any kind of livelihood. During his time in her service, he has come to loathe both the Baroness and himself for the psychic invasions he commits on her behalf. But she has too much leverage for him to walk away, and redemption seems but a cruel and distant dream after all his transgressions.

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## DAGEN VOS

**LOCATIONS:** *The Soul's Flame, Steelcourt (LA5)*

Dagen Vos' life is one for the storybooks, and he's only just getting started. At only forty years old, he's been a thief, a smuggler, a hero (to some), and now a noble. Once a criminal, he turned his considerable talents for skirting authority toward helping Kernish refugees into Aldis. After the Lich King's fall, he made bolder forays deep into Kernish territory, eventually leading to a Skull Knight uncovering the Kernish side of his operation. The Skull Knights murdered several of his friends, and scattered

## DAGEN VOS

## ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (BRAWLING, LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 3 (LEADERSHIP, PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 2 (RUNNING), DEXTERITY 3 (STEALTH), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 1 (NAVIGATION), PERCEPTION 2 (SEARCHING), STRENGTH 2 (CLIMBING), WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	30	13 (14 vs. MELEE)	3
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
PARRYING DAGGER	+6	1D6+3	
RAPIER	+6	1D6+3	
UNARMED	+5	1D3+2	

## SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Lightning Attack, Sway the Crowd, Taunt (1 SP), The Upper Hand

**STUNNING REPARTEE:** Vos can daze or distract any opponents within earshot with carefully chosen and timed words. To use this power, he takes a major action and must defeat his target in an opposed Communication (Deception or Persuasion) test vs. their Willpower (Self-Discipline). If successful, the target can only take a single Move action on their next turn. Vos may also now use the Stunned Silence roleplaying Stunt and the Taunt combat stunt for 1 SP less than their usual cost (making it a free use of Taunt).

**STUNT BONUS:** Vos is adept at finding the weak spots in his opponents' armor, physically and otherwise. He can perform the Taunt combat stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2.

**TALENTS:** Dual Weapon Style (Novice), Duelist (Novice), Quick Reflexes (Master), Oratory (Journeyman), Thievery (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Parrying Dagger, Rapier, Light Leather Armor. A consummate showman, Dagen eschews finery and dresses like the street bravos who frequent the Dueling Club.

## THREAT: MAJOR

most of his Kernish contacts to the wind. Burdened with grief and guilt, Dagen came to the capital for the first time and applied himself to the tests of nobility with alarming zeal.

He passed the test of the Blue Rose scepter last year, and immediately began seeking support for military action against the Shadowed Seven. After his personal efforts ended in tragedy, he firmly believes that only drastic action from the Crown can help the oppressed people of Kern. He is a passionate and charismatic public speaker, with piercing grey eyes and a scar across his neck. In a short period of time, he's rallied an eclectic group of people to his cause: Kernish refugees, nobles disaffected with Queen Jaellin, and even some of the

## CHAPTER 8: PEOPLE OF ALDIS

### DORRIN TYR

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (ARCANE, LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 3 (ETIQUETTE, PERSUASION, ROMANCE), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 3 (INITIATIVE, RIDING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 5 (ARCANE LORE, HISTORICAL LORE, MILITARY LORE, SHAPING), PERCEPTION 3, STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 4 (MEDITATIVE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	80	13	3

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
RAPIER	+5	1D6+2
CRYSTON	+5	2D6+4

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Arcane Strike, Arcane Weapon, Body Control, Cure, Enhancement, Manipulate Object, Move Object, Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Summon Spirit

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Imposing Arcana, Mighty Arcana

**TALENTS:** Animism (Novice), Arcane Training (Journeyman), Charmer (Journeyman), Healing (Novice), Oratory (Novice), Shaping (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Cryston, Light Leather Armor, Rapier

#### THREAT: MAJOR

Aldin Guard. Depending on who's talking, Dagen Vos is either an irresponsible demagogue, a champion of the refugees, or a man whose grief has overtaken his good sense. Some also wonder what connection the old rebel has with Kelyran, the Queen's Consort, who once led the insurgency in Kern.

### DORRIN TYR

**LOCATIONS:** Silver Shields Barracks, Silverhill (H15)

Dorrin has plans within plans for expanding both the Silver Shields' power and influence, and his own, with the ultimate goal of assuming command of the company as its next First Captain. A handsome young adept, with a rakish grin and a full head of hair like spun gold, he's presently on the hunt for a noble spouse whose wealth and political pull he can put to good use in advancing his causes. And he doesn't limit his search purely to natives of Aldis; Dorrin is *quite* willing to accept a proposal from a foreign dignitary, provided their duties allow them (or, at the very least, their spouse) to remain in the capital of the Kingdom of the Blue Rose.



### DURIAN JACK

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (BRAWLING), COMMUNICATION 3 (ROMANCE), CONSTITUTION 3 (DRINKING), DEXTERITY 2 (ACROBATICS), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3 (SHAPING), PERCEPTION 2 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	28	12	0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
UNARMED	+4	1D3

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Move Object, Plant Shaping, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Wind Shaping

**FAVORED STUNTS:** New Friends, Flirt

**DARK SIGHT:** Jack can see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

**SWIFT RECOVERY:** Durian Jack's Constitution ability is considered 2 points higher for any of the recovery formulas given under **Health and Healing** in **CHAPTER 1** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook.

**TALENTS:** Carousing (Journeyman), Charmer (Journeyman), Inamorata (Journeyman), Shaping (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Basket of fresh, fine fruit, workman's clothes in good condition, lover's tokens from other intimates.

#### THREAT: MODERATE

### DURIAN JACK

**LOCATIONS:** Market Bridge, Sutro District (M10)

Jack is known as a roguishly handsome vata'an who takes full, flirtatious advantage of his good looks. He sends a fruit basket to each of his dalliances the morning after, meticulously choosing the contents to represent his partner's personality. How this gesture is received by the recipient varies.



### FIRST ENVOY EMERIS TELFORD

**LOCATIONS:** Hall of Envoys, the Palace (H8)

As one of the four lieutenant leaders for the Sovereign's Finest, Emeris Telford is a well known figure around court. Emeris has been an envoy for the last twenty-six years, having worked her way through the ranks, and many suspect she will become the Sovereign's Envoy once Sevantis Kard steps down.

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## EMERIS TELFORD

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 4 (BOWS, LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 3 (LEADERSHIP), CONSTITUTION 3 (STAMINA), DEXTERITY 2 (RIDING), FIGHTING 4 (HEAVY BLADES), INTELLIGENCE 4 (CULTURAL LORE, HISTORICAL LORE, MILITARY LORE), PERCEPTION 4 (SEEING), STRENGTH 3, WILLPOWER 3 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	75	12	5
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
DAGGER	+6	1D6+4	
LONGSWORD	+6	2D6+3	
LONGBOW	+6	1D6+7	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORITE STUNTS:** Inspire, Knock Prone, Mighty Blow (1 SP if using longsword), Threaten

**EXPERT STRIKE:** Emeris knows when to strike with precision and when to strike with power. When she makes an attack, Emeris can take up to a -3 penalty on her attack roll to receive a corresponding bonus to her damage roll. For example, Emeris can take a -2 penalty on her attack roll to get a +2 bonus on her damage roll. Alternatively, Emeris can receive up to a +3 bonus on her attack roll if she takes a corresponding penalty on her damage roll.

**HEROES' ARMOR:** Emeris is considered to have an armor rating of 5, or the rating of the armor she is wearing—whichever is better—even if she is not wearing armor at all.

**STUNT BONUS:** Emeris' highly developed combat skills allow her to make sweeping attacks on opponents before her. When she performs the Dual Strike combat stunt with a melee attack, she can hit two secondary targets instead of one. All three of her targets (the original target and her two secondary targets) must be adjacent to Emeris either when she makes the first attack or after she has used the Skirmish combat stunt to move next to them.

**VETERAN:** Persevering through long hours of practice and many bloody encounters has made Emeris a fearsome combatant. When she inflicts damage with an attack, Emeris can add her focus bonus to her damage total if she has an applicable weapons group focus. The focus must match the weapons group of the weapon she attacks with.

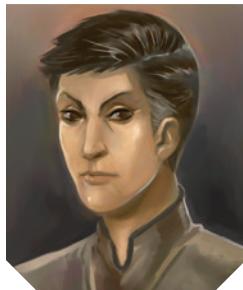
**TALENTS:** Armor Training (Journeyman), Command (Master), Commander (Master), Diplomat (Novice), Lore (Novice), Medicine (Novice), Oratory (Journeyman), Single Weapon Style (Master)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Axes, Bows, Brawling, Heavy Blades, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Chainmail Armor (Medium), 2 Daggers, Longbow, Longsword

**THREAT: DIRE**

Emeris is arguably among the best fighters in the Sovereign's Finest, and certainly the best within its leadership. She prefers to let others take care of the politicking, academics, and arcane details—for her, the battle-readiness of every envoy is the first priority. She is also a fine historian, with a focus on military history and tactics, but these are all means to an end for her: the execution of violence when necessary, in the service of the Queen (whom wags among the envoys say Emeris is more than a tiny bit in love with).



## EMILE HAZESTAR

**LOCATIONS:** *The Oubliette, the Singe (M3)*

Hazestar is not completely without musical skill, but his work isn't especially striking. He may well never become the famed performer he dreams of being. However, he is nothing if not tenacious.

Hazestar is grateful for the chance to perform at the Oubliette as often as he does, for the



## EMILE HAZESTAR

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (ARCANE, STAVES), COMMUNICATION 3 (PERFORMANCE), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 1, FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 2 (MUSICAL LORE, SHAPING), PERCEPTION 1 (HEARING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	22	11	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
LUTE	+2	1D6 (LUTE SHATTERS IF DAMAGE IS 3 OR GREATER)	
STAFF	+4	1D6+1	
UNARMED	+2	1D3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Fast Casting, Lasting Arcana, Stunned Silence (2 SP)

**ARCANA:** Move Object, Light Shaping, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Sound Shaping

**TALENTS:** Performance (Novice), Shaping (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Inlaid Lute, Mahogany Lute, Staff

**THREAT: MINOR**

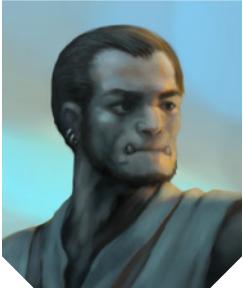
# CHAPTER 8: PEOPLE OF ALDIS

house permits him to enjoy the establishment's other diversions once his performances are completed for the evening.

## EREVAN ALFAEO

LOCATIONS: *The Royal Rose Society, Kyanite (M2)*

A night person orphan adopted by a human family, Erevan is heir to the Alfaeo shipping fortune and one of the most notable night people in Aldis. He is known for his deep sense of honor; while the Alfaeos also have a number of natural children, they are known for being spoiled, reckless, and even cruel. The family's matriarchs privately regret this, but dutifully hide their children's escapades as best they can anyway. Meanwhile, the Alfaeo family trumpets the successes of Erevan, who has proven to be a hard worker and brilliant businessman. His one obvious weakness is his propensity to carry around an antique shortsword he wields like a carpenter's mallet; he believes keeping the sword at his hip helps him cut a more dashing figure, worthy of his adoptive family's legacy.



## EREVAN ALFAEO

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0 (LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 3 (BARGAINING), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 3 (ARTISAN, STEALTH), FIGHTING 2 (BLUDGEONS), INTELLIGENCE 1 (EVALUATION, HISTORICAL LORE), PERCEPTION 1 (TOUCHING), STRENGTH 3 (INTIMIDATION, MIGHT), WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	37	13	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
SHORTSWORD	+2	1D6+4	
UNARMED	+0	1D3+3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Mighty Blow, New Friends

**BRIGHT LIGHT SUSCEPTIBILITY:** Erevan is blinded in bright light (equal to full daylight) for one round when he is first exposed to it.

**DARK SIGHT:** Erevan can see up to 30 yards in darkness without a light source.

**TALENTS:** Contacts (Journeyman), Diplomat (Journeyman), Linguistics (Journeyman), Lore (Novice), Scouting (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUP:** Bludgeons, Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Antique Shortsword

**THREAT: MODERATE**

## EVAN GREEN

LOCATIONS: *The Ballad & Blade, the Commons (H5)*

The owner of The Ballad & Blade, Evan is a retired member of the Sovereign's Finest. While nowadays he would much rather sling a mug of ale than sling a sword, even so, he keeps his old armor and gear behind the bar just in case. Talking about his days as an envoy is one of the few subjects which darken his otherwise sunny disposition.



That said, every envoy known to Evan who comes into the Ballad & Blade can count on their first drink being on the house. He is subtle about this, so as to protect the identities of undercover envoy. But he is seemingly quite in the know, setting up drinks with a simple "On the house" in front of even brand-new envoys, and those who have never actually been in the city of Aldis before. The only exception to this is for those envoys who operate in deep cover—although there is question whether he is respecting that deep cover, or simply unaware of them.

## EVAN GREEN

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (BOWS, LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 3 (BARGAINING), CONSTITUTION 2 (DRINKING), DEXTERITY 2 (RIDING), FIGHTING 3 (HEAVY BLADES), INTELLIGENCE 1, PERCEPTION 2 (TASTING), STRENGTH 3 (MIGHT), WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
1	47	12 (15 WITH SHIELD)	5
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
LONGSWORD	+5	2D6+3	
LONGBOW	+5	1D6+5	
UNARMED	+3	1D6+3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORITE STUNTS:** Knock Prone (1 SP), Mighty Blow (1 SP if using longsword), Set Up

**HEROES' ARMOR:** Evan is considered to have an armor rating of 2, or the rating of the armor he is wearing—whichever is better—even if he is not wearing armor at all.

**TALENTS:** Carousing (Journeyman), Contacts (Novice), Guardian (Journeyman), Medicine (Novice), Observation (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Journeyman), Unarmed Style (Journeyman), Weapon and Shield Style (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Heavy Blades, Light Blades

**EQUIPMENT:** Dagger, Longbow, Longsword, Medium Leather Armor, Medium Shield

**THREAT: MODERATE**

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## FOURASH TALLORE

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (BITE), COMMUNICATION 1 (PSYCHIC), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 3 (ARTISAN, STEALTH), FIGHTING 1 (CLAWS), INTELLIGENCE 1, PERCEPTION 3 (HEARING, SMELLING), STRENGTH 1 (JUMPING), WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	27	13	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
BITE	+4	1D6+4	
CLAWS	+3	1D6+	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Calm, Manipulate Object, Move Object, Plant Shaping, Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Sense Minds, Summon Spirit

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Set Up, Speedy Search

**NIGHTVISION:** Fourash can see in near darkness as if it were normal light.

**TALENTS:** Psychic (Journeyman), Shaping (Journeyman), Tooth and Claw (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Natural Weapons

### THREAT: MODERATE

## FOURASH TALLORE

### LOCATIONS: Alfaeo Estate, Kyanite (M2)

In his youth, Fourash Tallore was a member of the Sovereign's Finest; he has long since retired and now focuses his energies on creating musical instruments. Some say he obsessively crafts *duduks* (woodwind flutes that produce a haunting, purr-like song) in search of a way to exactly replicate the purr of a rhy-cat he once loved; Tallore finds such rumors amusing, but has never denied them, either.



## FREEWELL PINETON

### LOCATIONS: Hedgerow House, Moonpoint (M12)

Though none would guess it based on his wizened frame, Pineton was once a member of the Sovereign's Finest, journeying far and wide as an adept healer. He still has many contacts in the organization. He now relies heavily on a pair of crutches to walk.



## FREEWELL PINETON

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (ARCANE), COMMUNICATION 2 (ANIMAL HANDLING), CONSTITUTION 0, DEXTERITY 1, FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 2 (ARCANE LORE, HEALING), PERCEPTION 3 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	10	11	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
STAFF	+2	1D6+1	
UNARMED	+2	1D3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Body Control, Cure, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Sleep

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Disarm, Fast Casting

**TALENTS:** Animal Training (Journeyman), Arcane Training (Novice), Healing (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Staff

### THREAT: MINOR

## GREENE MOUSEBLOSSOM

### LOCATIONS: *The Oubliette, the Singe* (M3)

Greene Mouseblossom much prefers lurking in shadows to being in the spotlight, and is more than happy when everyone pays more attention to her dancing flames than the woman controlling them. She was raised by her uncle, a cruel man with no use for children, blood or no. Her psychological scars from her upbringing are deep and pain her greatly.



## GRER VOUBROS

### LOCATIONS: Hedgerow House, Moonpoint (M12)

Voubros devoted her life to the specialized training that would one day allow her to work at Hedgerow House. However, part of her psyche remains permanently scarred by the murder she witnessed as a child; she has had her room soundproofed with thick curtains and upholstered walls due to how often she wakes up screaming. Because of her dreams, she occasionally chooses to go several days without sleep.



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## GREENE MOUSEBLOSSOM

### Abilities (Focuses)

Accuracy 5 (Arcane), Communication 2 (Performance), Constitution 1 (Stamina), Dexterity 2 (Acrobatics, Calligraphy), Fighting 0, Intelligence 5 (Arcane Lore, Musical Lore, Shaping), Perception 2 (Seeing), Strength 0, Willpower 3 (Purity)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	36	12	0
Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage	
Staff	+5	1d6+1	
Unarmed	+5	1d3	

### Special Qualities

**ARCANA:** Fire Shaping, Light Shaping, Manipulate Object, Move Object, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Summon Spirit

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Effortless Arcana, Split Arcana (3 SP), Stunned Silence (2 SP)

**ARCANE POWER:** Greene may add her Willpower to the damage done by any Arcanum that does damage to a target.

**ARCANE STUNT APTITUDE:** Greene can perform the Split Arcana stunt for 1 SP less than the normal cost.

**TALENTS:** Animal Training (Novice), Lore (Novice), Observation (Novice), Performance (Journeyman), Shaping (Master)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Staff

### Threat: Major

## HEXTON REYES

### Locations: Alaric's House, Highmark (H9)

From an early age, Hexton was trained to be one of the Sovereign's spies. Since completing his apprenticeship, Hexton has begun cultivating his network of informants around the city, and building a series of personas he can assume as and when required. His main personas are Selin, a young party boy with more than enough money to make all his remaining years comfortable, and Nix, a street tough known for his brawling abilities.



Given that he operates out of Aldis, almost no envoys here recognize him. The mentor with whom he apprenticed taught him spycraft by requiring him to live full-time for six months as four different personas (two of which were Selin and Nix), giving him solid backgrounds for each. Hexton has only met his mentor (whom the Narrator is left to detail) and Kaiphan Ildar, the First Envoy who usually oversees espionage operations. He's a deep cover asset, ready to act when called upon by his Queen.

## GRER VOUBROS

### Abilities (Focuses)

Accuracy 1, Communication 3 (Bargaining, Psychic), Constitution 0, Dexterity 2 (Acrobatics, Calligraphy), Fighting 0, Intelligence 3 (Arcane Lore, Healing), Perception 4 (Empathy, Psychic, Visionary), Strength 0, Willpower 2 (Self-Discipline)

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	25	12	0
Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage	
Unarmed	+1	1d3	

### Special Qualities

**ARCANA:** Calm, Cure, Mind Shaping, Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Scrying, Second Sight, Sleep, Visions

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Powerful Channeling, Jest

**TALENTS:** Healing (Novice), Psychic (Journeyman), Visionary (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Money pouch, small ceramic jar of stimulant tea, fine merchant's garb

### Threat: Moderate

## HEXTON REYES

### Abilities (Focuses)

Accuracy 3 (Brawling, Light Blades), Communication 4 (Deception, Investigation, Performance), Constitution 2, Dexterity 2 (Lock Picking, Riding), Fighting 3, Intelligence 3 (Cryptography), Perception 4 (Empathy, Searching), Strength 2 (Climbing), Willpower 3

Speed	Health	Defense	Armor Rating
12	48	12	5
Weapon	Attack Roll	Damage	
Dagger	+5	1d6+6	
Shortsword	+5	1d6+6	
Unarmed	+5	1d3+5	

### Special Qualities

**FAVORITE STUNTS:** Efficient Search (1 SP), Pinpoint Attack, Speedy Search (1 SP), Stay Aware

**HEROES' ARMOR:** Hexton is considered to have an armor rating of 2, or the rating of the armor he is wearing—which ever is higher—even if he isn't wearing armor at all.

**LETHALITY:** Hexton uses his wits to hit enemies where it hurts. He adds his Intelligence to his damage when making attacks.

**TALENTS:** Contact (Novice), Insight (Novice), Intrigue (Journeyman), Observation (Novice), Roof Running (Journeyman), Spy (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** 5 Daggers, Medium Leather Armor, Shortsword, various disguise kits

### Threat: Major

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## JULINN THE MASQUELESS

LOCATIONS: *The House of the Thousand Ways, Silverhill (H15)*

The truth of Julinn is their direst secret: once, they were a whisperer in service to In'nassi, and merely a weapon used by the Sorcerer Kings in their struggles against one another. At least, they were until a warrior sworn to one

## JULINN THE MASQUELESS

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

**ACCURACY** 2 (LIGHT BLADES), **COMMUNICATION** 5 (BARGAINING, DISGUISE, ETIQUETTE, LEADERSHIP, PERFORMANCE, PERSUASION, PSYCHIC, ROMANCE), **CONSTITUTION** 4, **DEXTERITY** 4 (CALLIGRAPHY, STEALTH), **FIGHTING** 1, **INTELLIGENCE** 4 (ARCANE LORE, CULTURAL LORE, HISTORICAL LORE, SORCERY LORE), **PERCEPTION** 3 (EMPATHY), **STRENGTH** 2, **WILLPOWER** 5 (FAITH, PURITY, SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
14	75	14	4
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
STILETTO	+4	1D6+3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Calm, Heart Reading, Heart Shaping, Illusion, Mind Delving, Mind Reading, Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Scrying

**FAVORED STUNTS:** And Another Thing (1 SP), Defensive Stance, Entrancing Words (2+ SP), Flirt, New Friends, Stunned Silence (2 SP)

**DARKVISION:** Julinn can see perfectly in total darkness.

**TOUGH:** Julinn's skin provides a natural Armor Rating of 4. Due to Julinn's arcane nature, this Armor Rating protects against all damage, even that not normally affected by armor.

**ENTRANCING WORDS STUNT:** For 2 SP per target affected, Julinn speaks to a character or characters, attempting to distract them with honeyed words. The target must succeed on an opposed Willpower (Self-Discipline) test versus Julinn's Communication (Deception). Failure means the target suffers a -3 penalty to any attacks against Julinn, or to any opposed rolls against Julinn, until the end of the encounter. Julinn can only use this ability on a target once per encounter. This can be used as either a combat or roleplaying stunt.

**GIFT OF FORMS:** Julinn can change their outward appearance with a minor action, providing them a +2 circumstance bonus to any Communication (Disguise) or Communication (Deception) tests to appear as a humanoid of any desired size, shape, race, age, or gender. They often use this power to appear in as pleasing a form as possible to a target, providing a circumstance bonus of +2 to all Communication (Romance) and Communication (Persuasion) tests when dealing with them.

**TALENTS:** Contacts (Master), Intrigue (Master)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Light Blades

**EQUIPMENT:** Stiletto

**THREAT: DIRE**

of those corrupt adepts truly fell in love with the creature sent to seduce him in the process of probing his master's household for weaknesses.

That love drove the warrior to abandon his liege, and to seek a way to free Julinn from Shadow's bonds. He succeeded, but at the cost of his own life, and for the first time, Julinn the Masqueless knew what it was to be touched by *real* love. In that moment, In'nassi's hold was forever broken, and Julinn set out across Aldea to make amends for their prior wickedness.

While no longer a darkfiend and instead a wholly unique sort of creature, Julinn is nevertheless still most comfortable in the realm of carnal desire. Now, however, they are motivated by healthy expressions of sexuality, rather than



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the cruel predation in which they used to remorselessly indulge. Centuries of travels enabled Julinn to amass a fortune, which they eventually turned to the creation of the House of the Thousand Ways so that they might share the joys of physical pleasure, and the mental and emotional wellbeing it engenders, with as many people as possible.

Still, however, they remember their own monstrous past, and take every possible step to ensure that only safe, respectful, consensual sex occurs within their house, both out of a newfound sense of right and wrong, and to honor that warrior who looked past raw, vicious, animal lust to see something greater and worthier within Julinn.

## KIREN, ILAH, & MAGDA STAGMARR

**LOCATIONS:** *The Soul's Flame, Steelcourt (LA5)*

The Stagmarrs hail from the port city of Elsport. All three share the islander look of dark skin, stocky build, and brown hair tinged with gold. For generations, the modest family business produced ship parts and metal goods for trade with the Scatterstar Archipelago. Everything changed when Ilah, Kiren, and Magda were born with fire-shaping abilities, and each mastered different elements of their craft.

### THE STAGMARR SIBLINGS

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

**ACCURACY 0, COMMUNICATION 1, CONSTITUTION 2 (STAMINA), DEXTERITY 3 (CRAFTING, ARTISAN), FIGHTING 1 (BLUDGEONS), INTELLIGENCE 2 (ARCANE LORE FOR ILAH, MILITARY LORE FOR KIREN AND MAGDA, SHAPING), PERCEPTION 1, STRENGTH 3 (SMITHING), WILLPOWER 1**

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING			
13	20	13	0			
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE				
HAMMER	+3	2D6+3				

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Resources at Hand, Skillful Channeling (1 SP)

**ARCANA:** Fire Shaping, Manipulate Object, Move Object, Psychic Shield, Second Sight

**ARCANE CHANNELING:** The sisters may use the Skillful Channeling arcane stunt for 1 SP instead of its usual cost of 2, and when using the Powerful Channeling arcane stunt, they treat the result as if they've spent +1 SP on it—although they must spend at least 1 SP to gain this bonus.

**TALENTS:** Artificer (Master), Shaping (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bludgeons, Brawling

**EQUIPMENT:** Hammer, smithing tools, meditation stone. Kiren interacts more with the visiting public, and keeps herself better dressed than Ilah or Magda.

**THREAT: MODERATE**

Magda likes to joke that she and her siblings are touched by fire, and there certainly seems to be some truth to the sentiment. In addition to their smithing work, Ilah is keenly studying the Soul's Flame as an arcane artifact, hoping to unlock its secrets and cement the family name in Aldin history.



To use the optional trade focuses rule from **CHAPTER 3** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook, specify Ilah as an armorsmith, Kiren as a jeweler, and Magda as a weaponsmith. Grant them each a default +3 bonus for the narrower focus.

## KILE MISTRAKER

**LOCATIONS:** *Windsea Symphony, Whalefin (M6)*

The Windsail was actually struck by lightning during one of Mistraker's first performances, destroying one of the seven sails. Mistraker famously adapted his songs on the spot to use only the remaining six sails and continued the symphony. Privately, he has a personality as tempestuous as his music.



One ex-lover described him as constantly vacillating between tender and brutal.

### KILE MISTRAKER

#### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

**ACCURACY 1 (ARCANE), COMMUNICATION 3 (ETIQUETTE, PERFORMANCE), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 2, FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3 (MUSICAL LORE, SHAPING), PERCEPTION 3 (EMPATHY, HEARING), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 2**

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING			
12	26	12	0			
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE				
STAFF	+1	1D6+2				
UNARMED	+1	1D3+1				

#### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Heart Reading, Mind Shaping, Move Object, Psychic Shield, Second Sight

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Stunned Silence, Sway the Crowd (1 SP)

**TALENTS:** Arcane Potential (Journeyman), Performance (Journeyman), Shaping (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Staff.

**THREAT: MODERATE**

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## PROFESSOR KYRA EMAURI

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0 (STAVES), COMMUNICATION 2 (ETIQUETTE), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 1, FIGHTING 1, INTELLIGENCE 3 (ARCANE LORE, NATURAL LORE, RESEARCH, SHAPING), PERCEPTION 2 (SMELLING), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
11	20	11	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
STAFF	+2	1D6+2	
SPECIAL QUALITIES			

**ARCANA:** Earth Shaping, Move Object, Plant Shaping, Psychic Shield, Second Sight

**FAVORED STUNTS:** The Object of Your Attention, Powerful Channeling

**TALENTS:** Lore (Journeyman), Shaping (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Staff, *stamina elixir*. Kyra's clothes are almost always covered in a healthy dusting of dirt, except the one nice uniform that she keeps for formal occasions.

THREAT: MODERATE

## PROFESSOR KYRA EMAURI

LOCATIONS: *Institute of Arcanobotany, Bloomridge (LA1)*

Kyra Emauri looks more like an adventurer than a professor, with her sturdy hands, sun-tanned skin, and unruly mop of curly black hair. After she finished her basic studies at the Royal College, she left to travel with a Roamer caravan. She gathered seeds from all over Aldea, and even managed to procure a few from Rezea and Lar'tya. When she returned to begin her teaching career, she quickly attracted a group of like-minded plant-shapers.



Within two years, the College's own gardens ran out of space, and Dean Nicodemus Wade grew weary of vines snaking through classrooms and dormitories. He petitioned Queen Jaellin to grant Kyra and her students their own facilities outside the crowded High Ward. Since suddenly discovering herself in charge of an entirely new academy, Kyra has certainly come into her own. The added space is a great boon to the depth and breadth of not only her own experiments and projects, but also to the kinds of projects she can now approve for her students. Kyra is very careful to keep track of any and all student projects that even vaguely sound as if they might have shady applications, including poisons, herbs with sorcerous uses, and the like.

## LINNEA SELDER

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1, COMMUNICATION 2 (DECEPTION), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 2 (SAILING, STEALTH), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 4 (ARCANE LORE, NATURAL LORE, SHAPING, SORCERY LORE), PERCEPTION 3, STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 4

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	50	12	1
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
DAGGER	+1	1D6	
SPECIAL QUALITIES			

**ARCANA:** Draw Vitality, Harm, Light Shaping, Nature Reading, Plant Shaping, Sorcerer's Grip, Weather Shaping

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Advantageous Positioning, Skillful Channeling

**TALENTS:** Shaping (Master), Wild Arcane (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Dagger

THREAT: MODERATE

## LINNEA SELDER

LOCATIONS: *Fellows of Lake Vash Guildhouse, Rosewater Head (H18)*

Linnea likes to claim she enjoys the solitude of her rainy-day boating trips because they remind her of the happy but often gray days she spent out on the water with her great-grandmother as a little girl. Her nostalgic words are nothing but lies.



Linnea is a sorcerer fully under the sway of Shadow, and solitary contemplation is by no means her motivation for traversing the length of Lake Vash while remaining essentially unobserved. In truth, she seeks a way of using the waters of Lake Vash itself to cause harm to the people of the capital in the name of the Queen of the Burning Eyes. A great—and terrible—reward awaits her if she is successful. Though she is not aware of it, Linnea's existence has come to the attention of the Silence. The Cuckoo's arts have revealed that he is not the only sorcerer at work in Aldis, and he has reported these findings to the Baroness of Whispers. Together, the two of them seek to discover the identity of this unknown sorcerer; so far, their investigation has led them to know that the person they seek is often found near—or even on—the lake itself. Linnea has just started to notice shady figures lurking around some of her haunts, and is beginning to grow concerned.

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## LISAYA SILÁN

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 4 (LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 2 (DECEPTION, INVESTIGATION), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 3 (LEGERDEMAIN, LOCK PICKING, RIDING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 2 (CRYPTOGRAPHY), PERCEPTION 4 (HEARING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	60	13	3
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
DAGGER	+5	1D6+1	
UNARMED	+2	1D3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** And Another Thing (1 SP), Efficient Search (1 SP), Skirmish, Speedy Search (1 SP)

**TALENTS:** Contacts (Novice), Intrigue (Journeyman), Spy (Journeyman), Street Smarts (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Dagger, Light Armor (concealed)

**THREAT:** MODERATE

## LISAYA SILÁN

**LOCATIONS:** *The Cockerel and Onion, Lendri's Narrow (H14)*

Because Grammen is known to offer employment to Kernish refugees, the Crown deemed it wise that the Cockerel and Onion have a minder, to ensure the owner's soft spot for his former countrymen doesn't enable an enemy agent to slip in through his kitchen. Thus, Lisaya—a spy in her own right, loyal to Queen Jaellin—was secretly assigned to the establishment.

A plain-faced human woman, broad-shouldered and on the short side, she tends to blend right into a crowd. Over the course of the year she's been there, Lisaya has figured out that Grammen harbors feelings for her—which wouldn't be so bad, save for the fact she's slowly realizing she feels the same way about him, and he has no idea why she's *truly* there. Despite this, Lisaya remains dedicated to her purpose, keeping an eye out for signs of questionable personages from Kern. Though she would deny it to anyone else, she secretly worries that her growing affections for Grammen might not only make her miss something in the future, but that they could have already. As a result, Lisaya comes across as slightly hesitant in nearly every interaction she has with Grammen and the Kernish folk of the establishment.



## MAEJAR

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (BITE), COMMUNICATION 0, CONSTITUTION 2 (RUNNING), DEXTERITY 2, FIGHTING 4, INTELLIGENCE 2, PERCEPTION 5 (HEARING, PSYCHIC, SEARCHING, SMELLING, TRACKING), STRENGTH 2 (INTIMIDATION, JUMPING), WILLPOWER 1 (COURAGE, MORALE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	37	12	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
BITE	+4	1D6+5	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Second Sight

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Knock Prone (-1 SP), Skirmish

**TALENTS:** Contacts (Journeyman), Inspire (Novice), Psychic (Novice), Tooth and Claw (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Natural Weapons

**THREAT:** MAJOR

## MAEJAR

**LOCATIONS:** *Creston's Academy, Red Bluff (L10)*

Maejar is a rhy-hound bonded to Laert Keller, the headmaster of Creston's Academy in the Lower Ward's Red Bluff neighborhood. Bonded in their youth when Laert served as one of the Sovereign's Finest, Laert and Maejar are inseparable, and Maejar serves as both protection and a status symbol for the academy. He also considers every student that passes through the academy to be one of his "very own," and often stays in contact with them even after graduation (the source of his Contacts talent). It is not unusual to find Maejar sitting in one-on-one communication with a student, discussing the problems they face at home or at school. While some of the parents consider the rhy-hound to be a bit on the "nosy" side, Maejar doesn't hesitate to intervene where the welfare or safety of one of his charges is concerned.



Maejar is also known to check in psychically with those students currently experiencing difficulties, discreetly seeing how they're feeling and giving permission if they need to take a break or find a place to cry (where he's invariably waiting for them, of course). Even Laert knows better than to object to such sudden retreats—as Maejar has argued on multiple occasions, a child who is suffering isn't learning anyway. It is their responsibility as caregivers to do what they can to comfort the child and hopefully help them find a frame of mind from which to learn again.

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## MARNETTA SAVAHN

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 4 (LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 4 (BARGAINING, LEADERSHIP, PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 2 (RIDING), FIGHTING 3 (HEAVY BLADES), INTELLIGENCE 5 (CULTURAL LORE), PERCEPTION 3 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 2 (INTIMIDATION), WILLPOWER 4 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	72	12	5
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
DAGGER	+6	1D6+3	
SHORT BOW	+4	1D6+4	
SHORTSWORD	+6	1D6+3	
UNARMED	+4	1D3+2	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

#### FAVORITE STUNTS: Skirmish, Knock Prone

**EXPERT STRIKE:** When Marnetta makes an attack, she can take up to a -3 penalty on her attack roll to receive a corresponding bonus to her damage roll. Alternatively, Marnetta can receive up to a +3 bonus on her attack roll if she takes a corresponding penalty on her damage roll.

**HEROES' ARMOR:** Marnetta is considered to have an armor rating of 4, or the rating of the armor she is wearing—which ever is better—even if she is not wearing armor at all.

**QUICK STRIKE:** Marnetta can make a melee attack vs. an adjacent opponent as a minor action. The attack roll and damage roll of this Quick Strike suffer a -2 penalty. This action cannot be combined with Expert Strike.

**TALENTS:** Armor Training (Novice), Charmer (Novice), Contacts (Novice), Diplomat (Master), Inspire (Journeyman), Observation (Novice), Oratory (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** 2 Daggers (Ornate), Medium Leather Armor, Short Bow, Shortsword

### THREAT: DIRE

## MARNETTA SAVAHN

### LOCATIONS: Moneylenders Guild, Middleton (H2)

A former Knight of the Blue Rose, Marnetta is now the head of the Moneylenders Guild in Aldis. Marnetta is a middle-aged woman of average height and build, but her bearing and how she presents herself to the public make her military background quite evident.



## NELLIA ARAMYS

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (BOWS, LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 4 (BARGAINING, DECEPTION, ETIQUETTE, PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 1 (DRINKING), DEXTERITY 2 (CALLIGRAPHY), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3 (EVALUATION, WRITING), PERCEPTION 3 (SEEING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	30	12	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
CROSSBOW	+4	2D6+3	
DAGGER	+4	1D6+1	
UNARMED	+2	1D3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Object Reading, Psychic Shield, Scrying, Second Sight, Visions

**FAVORED STUNTS:** New Friends, Tower of Will

**DARK SIGHT:** Nellia can see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

**STUNNING REPARTEE:** Nellia can daze or distract any opponents within earshot with carefully chosen and timed words. To use this power, Nellia takes a major action and must defeat the target in an opposed Communication (Deception or Persuasion) test vs. their Willpower (Self-Discipline). If successful, the target can only take a single Move action on their next turn. Nellia may also now use the Stunned Silence roleplaying Stunt and the Taunt combat stunt for 1 SP less than their usual cost.

**SWIFT RECOVERY:** Nellia's Constitution ability is considered to be 2 points higher for any Health recovery formulas.

**TALENTS:** Contacts (Master), Intrigue (Journeyman), Street Smarts (Master), Visionary (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Crossbow, Dagger, *shielding stone* (part of a delicate silver necklace), traditional Aldin clothes of the finest materials

### THREAT: MAJOR

## NELLIA ARAMYS

### LOCATIONS: Goia's Plaza, Silverstone (LA9)

Nellia is a vata'an: seventy-one years of age, with deep green eyes, white hair drawn back in elaborate braids, and a taste for rich velvet dresses. Her long life has been an incredible gift, giving her the luxury of time to outmaneuver her rivals. She has wealth and influence, but



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## NIRVELLI NERIN

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (BRAWLING, LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 3 (DISGUISE, PERFORMANCE, PERSUASION, ROMANCE), CONSTITUTION 1 (DRINKING, SWIMMING), DEXTERITY 2 (ACROBATICS), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 1, PERCEPTION 3 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	31	12	3

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
DAGGER	+5	1D6+2
SHORTSWORD	+5	1D6+2
UNARMED	+5	1D3+1

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Threaten, Seize the Initiative, Sway the Crowd (1 SP)

**DARK SIGHT:** Nirvelli can see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

**DEHYDRATION:** Nirvelli must be immersed in water once per day or consume twice as much water as a normal human. With no immersion and limited to normal human water consumption or less, they gain a level of fatigue each day and cannot recover from fatigue until they are properly hydrated.

**HOLD BREATH:** Nirvelli can hold their breath for 60 rounds, plus 6 rounds × their Constitution ability.

**TALENTS:** Carousing (Novice), Charmer (Journeyman), Oratory (Novice), Performance (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Dagger, Light Leather Armor, Shortsword

### THREAT: MODERATE

still lacks an enduring legacy for her two adopted children. She raised Avoc and Felira on her own, eschewing romance for a single-minded focus on growing her personal wealth. Nellia truly believes nothing she does can be evil if it's for the good of her family, and for now, she insulates her children from knowledge of her most ruthless business practices.

She, herself, is not a physically imposing person, but she is so entrenched in the Lake Ward that she can easily buy someone else's services or call in one of the many favors owed to her. Her only consistent rival over the last decade has been the Baroness of Whispers, who is slowly but surely encroaching on what Nellia considers her territory.

For now, their power struggle remains in the shadows, away from the authorities' prying eyes. On one hand, this rivalry means the Silence and their Merchant Guild contacts are far less likely to share resources than they were in the past. On the other hand, Nellia and the Baroness come closer to bloodshed each year, with the citizens of the Lake Ward caught in the middle.

## OLD MAL

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (BRAWLING), COMMUNICATION 0, CONSTITUTION 2 (STAMINA, SWIMMING), DEXTERITY 2 (STEALTH), FIGHTING 3 (BLUDGEONS, HEAVY BLADES), INTELLIGENCE 2 (MILITARY LORE), PERCEPTION 2, STRENGTH 2 (INTIMIDATION), WILLPOWER 3 (COURAGE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	38	12	3

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
ONE-HANDED (WEIGHTED CANE)	+5	2D6+2
UNARMED	+4	1D6+2

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Defensive Stance, Disarm, Knock Prone (1 SP), Stay Aware

**TALENTS:** Armor Training (Master), Archery Style (Journeyman), Unarmed Style (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bludgeons, Bows, Brawling, Heavy Blades

**EQUIPMENT:** Light Leather Armor, Weighted Cane (Bludgeon)

### THREAT: MODERATE

## NIRVELLI NERIN

**LOCATIONS:** *Landsea Amphitheater, Elmbury (M5)*

Known for an incredibly tender, sensitive stage persona, Nerin's deep-set eyes and chiseled cheekbones quake the knees of women and men alike. The laevvel sea-folk is as talented at stage fighting as singing, training in both constantly and obsessively. This has translated into some actual martial skill, and more than one violent ruffian has woken up with a knot on their skull the shape of Nerin's cane-topper.



## OLD MAL

**LOCATIONS:** *The Cask and Crow, Brewer's Row (L7)*

Old Mal walks with a slight limp, although the story of how she got it varies depending on her audience. She claims to have travelled the entirety of Aldis and far beyond, and certainly espouses a large number of "facts" about the history of the kingdom—specifically its wars—although no one is really certain how accurate her remembrances actually are.



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## PEREGRUS

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (BITE), COMMUNICATION 2, CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 3 (INITIATIVE, STEALTH), FIGHTING 0 (TALONS), INTELLIGENCE 2 (CULTURAL LORE, NATURAL LORE), PERCEPTION 4 (PSYCHIC, SEEING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2 (COURAGE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
14 (FLIGHT)	37	13	2
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
BITE	+5	1D6+2	
TALONS	+2	1D6+2	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Second Sight

**FAVORITE STUNTS:** Lightning Attack, Pierce Armor

**NIGHTVISION:** Peregrus can see in near darkness as if it were normal light.

**TALENTS:** Observation (Novice), Psychic (Novice), Scouting (Novice), Tooth and Claw (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Natural Weapons

### THREAT: MINOR

## PEREGRUS

**LOCATIONS:** Hall of Envoys, the Palace (H8)

The young and outgoing rhy-falcon is a recent addition to the Envoys' ranks in Aldis. Besides his day-to-day duties, the dedicated Peregrus is the unofficial Envoy liaison to the various avian rhydan in the area. He takes great pride in this task, and executes it with enthusiasm.



## PLUTON

**LOCATIONS:** Tiny Tree, Mouse Hollow (M8)

Pluton is a little small for a rhy-rat, though with a full-size tail. Though he once wanted to become an adventurer, his hind legs were badly injured in one of his first fights; he has since become a resident of the Tiny Tree, enjoying telling its story to visitors. He grooms his brindle fur multiple times a day, and twitches his whiskers frantically if he is interrupted in the task. His grooming is a sort of nervous tick; he picked it up only after his injury.



## PLUTON

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (BITE, BRAWLING), COMMUNICATION 2 (PSYCHIC), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 3 (STEALTH), FIGHTING 2 (CLAWS), INTELLIGENCE 1 (NATURAL LORE), PERCEPTION 2 (HEARING, PSYCHIC, SMELLING), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 3 (COURAGE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	47	13	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
BITE	+5	1D3+1	
CLAWS	+4	1D3+1	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Psychic Weapon, Second Sight, Ward

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Lethal Blow, Skirmish

**SMALL SIZE:** See page 173.

**TALENTS:** Psychic (Journeyman), Oratory (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Natural Weapons

### THREAT: MODERATE

## PREESH DEVAH

**LOCATIONS:** The Lord Oak Bakery, Cardamom (M9)

Devhah's family purchased the failing Lord Oak with their life savings; Devah's culinary skill saved the business almost immediately. She is known for being moody; sometimes ebullient and happy, and other times anxious and withdrawn. She hates loud noises and has a difficult time during thunderstorms, kneading bread or whipping cream to calm herself.



## REM STERNNGROVE

**LOCATIONS:** Villa Fruta Orchards, Cropwick (O16)

"Calculating" doesn't even begin to describe Sternngrove, who would doubtlessly spend much of his time twirling his mustache had he any facial hair. As it is, he is completely hairless, lacking even eyebrows. He was teased mercilessly for his appearance as a child and has never stopped resenting it. He loves jewelry, especially gaudy rings, and has a particular taste for fine tea.



# CHAPTER 8: PEOPLE OF ALDIS

## PREESH DEVAH

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1, COMMUNICATION 2 (LEADERSHIP), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 3 (ARTISAN, CRAFTING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3 (HEALING), PERCEPTION 3 (SMELLING, TASTING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	21	13	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
UNARMED	+1	1D3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Cure, Psychic Shield, Second Sight

**FAVORED STUNTS:** And Another Thing, New Friends

**TALENTS:** Artificer (Novice), Healing (Novice), Medicine (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Recipe book

### THREAT: MINOR

## ROSEMUND WARDEN

### LOCATIONS: Warden House, Nob Hill (L5)

When Jerome Warden, the quite frivolous Warden heir, married the stoic and deeply respectable adept Rosemund, it set Aldin's gossipy tongues a-wagging, wondering why such a promising talent would yoke herself to someone so useless. But Rosemund has always been clear: she loves her rakish husband, and indeed delights in his often absurd exploits. For all her arcane talents, she has only ever wanted a beautiful home and a garden where she might get her hands dirty, a place where she can raise little ones and enjoy life. Rosemund has often had to negotiate the schemes her mother-in-law devises to "teach her some humility," though Rosemund only finds the old woman exasperating rather than threatening.



No one who knows Rosemund makes the mistake of underestimating her, however. Rosemund's training in the use of her arcana gives her a great many options when working at her gardens, and the simple combination of her telekinetic and plant-shaping talents have allowed her to achieve nearly unimaginable feats of landscaping that set even the most staid neighbors' heads a-spin with envy.

Rosemund is good friends with Professor Kyra Emauri, the two adepts having trained together in their early schooling. Kyra brings Rosemund the most wonderful new plants to add to her gardens, and in return, Kyra gets to see firsthand how those plants manage outside of an academic space (though Rosemund is very capable

## REM STERNGROVE

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0, COMMUNICATION 4 (BARGAINING, DECEPTION, PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 2 (INITIATIVE), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3 (CRYPTOGRAPHY, EVALUATION, RESEARCH, WRITING), PERCEPTION 3 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	26	12	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
UNARMED	+0	1D3	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Draw Vitality, Mind Shaping

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Mighty Arcana, Powerful Channeling

**TALENTS:** Arcane Potential (Journeyman), Contacts (Novice), Intrigue (Novice), Observation (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Small ceramic jar of mustachio wax, numerous pieces of gaudy jewelry, fine porcelain tea set, very fine clothing (including a set of highly polished black boots)

### THREAT: MODERATE

## ROSEMUND WARDEN

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (ARCANE), COMMUNICATION 2 (ANIMISM, PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 3 (ARTISAN, CRAFTING, RIDING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 4 (NATURAL LORE, SHAPING), PERCEPTION 3 (SEEING, SMELLING), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	23	12	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
UNARMED	+2	1D3+1	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Animal Messenger, Move Object, Nature Reading, Plant Shaping, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Water Shaping, Weather Shaping, Wind Shaping

**FAVORED STUNTS:** That Makes Me Wonder, The Object of Your Attention

**TALENTS:** Animism (Journeyman), Artificer (Novice), Lore (Novice), Observation (Novice), Shaping (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Gardening tools, experiment notebook

### THREAT: MODERATE

and knowledgeable in botany, and knows when to bring developments to Kyra's attention). The Wardens also contribute annually to the Institute of Arcanobotany, and have a small wing of the greenhouses named after them.

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# CHAPTER 8: PEOPLE OF ALDIS

## SAHN HUAKI

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0, COMMUNICATION 3 (PERSUASION, LEADERSHIP), CONSTITUTION 1 (STAMINA), DEXTERITY 3 (ACROBATICS, CRAFTING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 2 (HISTORICAL LORE, WRITING), PERCEPTION 2 (EMPATHY), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 0

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	21	13	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
UNARMED	+0	1D3+1	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Exciting Opportunities, Passionate Inspiration  
**TALENTS:** Inspire (Novice), Quick Reflexes (Novice)  
**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves  
**EQUIPMENT:** Simple pull-over garments

### THREAT: MINOR

## SAHN HUAKI

### LOCATIONS: Loveridge Academy, Axehead (M7)

Though she lost her arms in a horrific factory accident, Sahn has more than overcome her injuries, by methods including learning the use of her feet. She is, at heart, a realist; while she doesn't push away her most negative thoughts, neither does she dwell on them. Overall, she keeps her focus on her primary goal: empowering her students and bettering their lives.



## SHILI

### LOCATIONS: Rhydan's Rest, Riverway (H16)

The rhy-cat Shili, acting in partnership with Ashento, is an intermediary and facilitator at Rhydan's Rest in the not-uncommon circumstance that a rhydan looking to be spoiled still feels a little leery about being so extensively handled by a non rhy-bonded humanoid. She talks prospective clients through the entire process, helping them to become comfortable and pairing them up with the best possible match among the staff for their individual wants and needs. Shili and Ashento share not just a rhy-bond, but also a romantic—though non-sexual—relationship, built upon years of friendship, mutual trust, and respect.



## SHILI

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (BITE), COMMUNICATION 4 (ETIQUETTE), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 5 (STEALTH), FIGHTING 0 (CLAWS), INTELLIGENCE 4 (NATURAL LORE), PERCEPTION 3 (EMPATHY, PSYCHIC, SEEING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
15	70	13	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
BITE	+4	1D6+1	
CLAWS	+2	1D6	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Calm, Mind Reading, Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Second Sight  
**FAVORED STUNTS:** Defensive Stance, Skirmish  
**NIGHTVISION:** Shili can see in near darkness as if it were normal light.  
**TALENTS:** Inspire (Novice), Psychic (Journeyman)  
**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Natural Weapons

### THREAT: MODERATE

## SINGH

### LOCATIONS: Foxhollow Grove, the Retreat (M1)

Singh is an older rhy-raven, deeply learned and the most likely to communicate with those outside his flock. He always turns his head slowly, as if his neck pains him, and no longer preens his feathers as much as most. He greatly enjoys games of logic and strategy such as chess and baduk (a game similar to our world's Go). While playing, he often paces or hops from foot to foot while waiting for his opponent to make a move. He may be truly impatient, or may simply be goading his opponent into rushing and making a poor decision.



When he isn't playing games with visitors to the Grove or friendly residents of the apartments overlooking Foxhollow, Singh acts as an organizer for the conspiracy of rhy-ravens which has informally congregated around the Grove. Only a few of them dwell there, but they all gather to trade gossip and interesting things they've seen, and Singh tends to play host at such circles.

Singh also considers himself the de facto host for Foxhollow Grove. He takes great delight in helping rhydan new to the Grove settle in and find good accommodations for themselves in the park. For non-rhydan, he is happy to answer (or volunteer) answers to questions about the Grove's history, and enjoys collecting new tales and friends.

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## SINRUS

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 4, COMMUNICATION 3 (PSYCHIC), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 4 (ACROBATICS, STEALTH), FIGHTING 2 (CLAWS), INTELLIGENCE 3 (CULTURAL LORE, HEALING, SHAPING), PERCEPTION 4 (PSYCHIC, SEEING, SMELL), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
16	63	14	2
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
BITE	+4	1D3+2	
CLAWS	+4	1D3+2	
PSYCHIC WEAPON*	+4	2D6+4 (PENETRATING)	

\*IN HIS NATURAL FORM, SINRUS' PSYCHIC WEAPON MANIFESTS AS A WICKED LOOKING BARBED BLADE ON THE TIP OF HIS TAIL.

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Animal Messenger, Arcane Strike, Cure, Flesh Shaping, Light Shaping, Manipulate Object, Move Object, Nature Reading, Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Psychic Weapon, Second Sight, Sleep

**FAVORITE STUNTS:** Lasting Arcana, Pierce Armor, Stay Aware

**SMALL SIZE:** See page 173.

**TALENTS:** Animism (Novice), Healing (Novice), Observation (Novice), Psychic (Journeymen), Quick Reflexes (Journeymen), Roof Running (Novice), Shapeshifter (Master)\*\*, Shaping (Journeymen), Tooth and Claw (Novice)

\*\*Sinrus uses this specialization to assume a human form; while in that form, he is able to speak.

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Natural Weapons

### THREAT: MAJOR

## SINRUS

### LOCATIONS: *The Nest, Eastall (H3)*

One of the numerous rhy-rats who live in the shadows of the city, Sinrus is the protector of the Eastall rhy-rat nest. He is also in the service of the envoys, acting as one of the Sovereign's spies.

## SIRYNA

### LOCATIONS: *The Trout's Eye, Grandwater (H10)*

Siryna is good-humored, quick-witted, and quite nimble on the whalebone peg that serves as her left leg below the knee, although some patrons of the Trout's Eye speculate that her rolling gait is really the product of life as a buccaneer from the Pirate Islands. In response to



## SINGH

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (BITE), COMMUNICATION 3 (DECEPTION, GAMBLING, PSYCHIC), CONSTITUTION 1, DEXTERITY 3 (LOCK PICKING), FIGHTING 1 (CLAWS), INTELLIGENCE 2 (CRYPTOGRAPHY, NAVIGATION), PERCEPTION 2 (SEEING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12 (FLYING)	26	13	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
BITE	+4	1D6	
CLAWS	+3	1D6	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Heart Reading, Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Sense Minds

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Lightning Attack, Pierce Armor

**NIGHTVISION:** Singh can see in near darkness as if it were normal light.

**SPEECH:** As a rhy-raven, Singh can speak.

**TALENTS:** Linguistics (Journeymen), Psychic (Journeymen), Thievery (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Natural Weapons

### THREAT: MODERATE

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## TALONS-LIKE-DAGGERS

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1 (BITE), COMMUNICATION 0, CONSTITUTION 0, DEXTERITY 2, FIGHTING 2 (CLAWS), INTELLIGENCE 2, PERCEPTION 5 (SEEING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
4 (FLYING)	20	12	0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	
BITE	+3	1D6	
CLAWS	+4	1D6	

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**ARCANA:** Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Second Sight

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Pierce Armor, Skirmish

**NIGHTVISION:** Daggers can see in near darkness as if it were normal light.

**TALENTS:** Psychic (Novice)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Natural Weapons

### THREAT: MINOR

such rumors, Siryna spins all sorts of unbelievable yarns while the patrons raise a glass and toast to her wild (and almost certainly fictitious?) adventures.

## TALONS-LIKE-DAGGERS

**LOCATIONS:** Anwaren's Sacellum, Cobblestone (L3)

Talons-Like-Daggers (known as Daggers) is a rhy-eagle who has, for many years now, made his home at the sacellum. While it is extremely unusual for one of the rhydan to associate themselves with two-legged folks' reli-

## SIRYNA

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 5 (LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 4 (DECEPTION, LEADERSHIP, ROMANCE), CONSTITUTION 2 (SWIMMING), DEXTERITY 4 (ACROBATICS, SAILING, STEALTH), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 3, PERCEPTION 2 (SEARCHING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
14 (SWIM 13)	90	14	3

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
LIGHT CUTLASS	+7	1D6+1

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Disarm, Lightning Attack (2 SP), Sway the Crowd (1 SP), Taunt (1 SP)

**DARK SIGHT:** Siryna can see up to 20 yards in darkness without a light source.

**DEHYDRATION:** Siryna must be immersed in water once per day or consume twice as much water as a normal human. Otherwise, she gains a level of fatigue each day and cannot recover from fatigue until she is properly hydrated.

**HOLD BREATH:** Siryna can hold her breath for 60 rounds, plus 6 rounds × her Constitution ability.

**SLIPPERY:** Opponents do not gain an attack bonus for outnumbering Siryna in melee combat. Siryna also cannot be targeted by a Sway the Crows roleplaying stunt unless the stunt's user pays an additional 1 SP to include her.

**TALENTS:** Carousing (Journeyman), Contacts (Master), Performance (Journeyman), Swashbuckler (Master)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Light Cutlass, Light Leather Armor

### THREAT: MAJOR

gions, he was formerly rhy-bonded to a priest of Anwaren who was killed in battle. Daggers himself suffered injuries to his wing that make long-distance flight difficult. Since then, he has nested at the sacellum, serving as an advisor and aide to the priests there, although he professes no particular faith in Anwaren himself.

## TEGRA FIRE-EYES

**LOCATIONS:** Tegra's Smithy, Riverway (H16)

Tegra likes to say that she got her strength and her good looks from her night person mother, and her eyes and love of steel from her vata'sha father. While she certainly has an intimidating look about her, she is actually very personable, and it's not uncommon for her to take



# CHAPTER 8: PEOPLE OF ALDIS

## TEGRA FIRE-EYES

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 0 (LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 1, CONSTITUTION 4 (STAMINA), DEXTERITY 3 (ARTISAN, CRAFTING), FIGHTING 3 (BLUDGEONS), INTELLIGENCE 1, PERCEPTION 1, STRENGTH 5 (MIGHT, SMITHING), WILLPOWER 1

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	85	13	3

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
Smith's Hammer	+5	2D6+5

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Mighty Blow, Pierce Armor, Threaten

**BRIGHT LIGHT SUSCEPTIBILITY:** Tegra is blinded in bright light (equal to full daylight) for one round when she is first exposed to it.

**DARK SIGHT:** Tegra can see up to 30 yards in darkness without a light source.

**TALENTS:** Contacts (Journeyman), Quick Reflexes (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bludgeons, Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Light Leather Armor, Smith's Hammer

### THREAT: MODERATE

a break from working the forge to entertain one or more friends who've dropped by to pay a visit. She makes ample time for her spouses and all of their family's children.

## THEOWALD WEAVER

### LOCATIONS: Carpet Square, Brightmeadow (L4)

Theowald is every inch the devoted and loving patriarch, so much so that he has something of a reputation as the “neighborhood papa,” with sweets in his work-apron’s pockets for the local kids and a kind word and remembered name for anyone he’s ever met more than once. As such, the locals are extremely protective and solicitous of him, much to his befuddlement.



## CAPTAIN WILTELL

### LOCATIONS: The Rose Hall, the Palace (H8)

Wiltell is a captain of the rhydan Knights of the Blue Rose, a fact which he is more than ready to remind you of, just in case you’ve forgotten. This chestnut-brown rhy-horse has been a member of the order for the last seven years, and was rhy-bonded to Jasmyth Corlan until her untimely death at the hands of a shadowfiend six years ago. Captain

## THEOWALD WEAVER

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1 (LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 2 (BARGAINING, ETIQUETTE), CONSTITUTION 1 (STAMINA), DEXTERITY 3 (ARTISAN, CRAFTING, RIDING), FIGHTING 0, INTELLIGENCE 2 (EVALUATION, LORE), PERCEPTION 3 (TOUCHING), STRENGTH 0, WILLPOWER 2

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
13	25	13	0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
Dirk	+3	1D6+1

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORED STUNTS:** Defensive Stance, New Friends, Skirmish

**TALENTS:** Contacts (Novice), Observation (Journeyman)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

**EQUIPMENT:** Dirk, work apron (with sweets in its pockets)

### THREAT: MINOR

## CAPTAIN WILTELL

### ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2, COMMUNICATION 2 (PSYCHIC), CONSTITUTION 3 (RUNNING), DEXTERITY 3 (INITIATIVE), FIGHTING 3 (KICK), INTELLIGENCE 3 (MILITARY LORE), PERCEPTION 3 (PSYCHIC, SEEING, TRACKING), STRENGTH 4 (INTIMIDATION, JUMPING), WILLPOWER 3

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
17	68	13	5

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
Kick	+5	1D6+6

### SPECIAL QUALITIES

**FAVORITE STUNTS:** Dual Strike, Knock Prone (1 SP), Lethal Blow (5 SP), Mighty Blow (1 SP), That Makes Me Wonder (2 SP)

**ARCANA:** Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Second Sight

**TALENTS:** Armor Training (Novice), Observation (Journeyman), Psychic (Novice), Quick Reflexes (Journeyman), Tooth and Claw (Master)

**WEAPONS GROUPS:** Brawling, Natural Weapons

**EQUIPMENT:** Medium Leather Barding

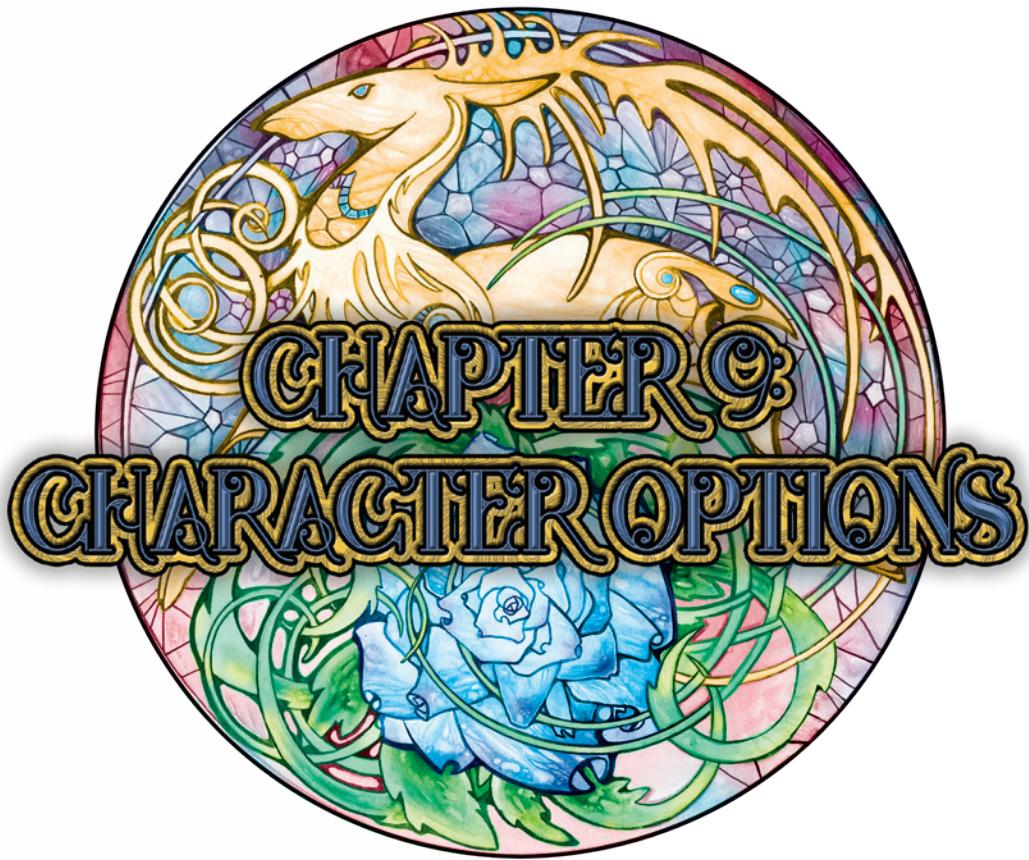
### THREAT: MAJOR

Wiltell is frequently assigned to train rhy-horses new to the order in the skills of bearing an armored rider, both in battle and out. He is exacting and precise, demanding the same from his students, but a great many knightly rhy-horses look up to him as a mentor and teacher.



ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE



The city of Aldis is a city of possibilities, with a wide variety of beings striding its streets, avenues and back alleys. This chapter covers new options available for those characters from the heart of the Kingdom of the Blue Rose. It includes a new rhydan option, three new backgrounds, thirteen new talents, and five new specializations (with their associated talents). In addition, in this chapter you will find new stunts, a new arcanum, and additional arcana “knacks”—a new option that expands on the ways characters may manifest the various arcana found in *Blue Rose*.

## RHYDAN IN ALDIS

While still not really common in cities of Aldea, there are a number of rhydan breeds more suited to life in an urban environment. Though rhy-cats and rhy-horses hold a special place in the folklore of Aldis, most folk know the types of possible rhydan are broader than that. City folk might point to rhy-hounds and rhy-ravens for starters, as well as rhy-racoons, rhy-serpents, and a wide variety of avian rhydan.

Of all the diverse types of rhydan in the city, though, the rhy-rats are the most abundant. The population of rhy-rats is easily three times larger than all the other breeds of rhydan combined. This fact is not commonly known to anyone, even the other rhydan, which is exactly how the rhy-rats prefer it.

### RHY-RATS

Of all the various breeds of rhydan found in Aldea, rhy-rats are the most common in urban environments. This fact would come as a surprise to most folk, since rhy-rats prefer to keep largely to themselves and are predominately nocturnal in nature, but when one considers how common rats are in any urban space, it really shouldn't be that surprising. Rhy-rats have short fur in black or various shades of brown. Those found in cities commonly range from two to three feet in size with rather sharp, angled features. Their less common country cousins tend towards the small end of that scale, with more rounded features.

### PLAYING A RHY-RAT

If you choose to play a rhy-rat, adjust your character as follows:

- Modify your ability scores: +3 Dex, +1 Per, —2 Str.
- You have a Natural Attack: Bite 1d6.
- Your base Speed is 12.
- Gain your choice of the Intelligence (Natural Lore) focus or any one Perception focus.
- You are trained in the Natural Weapons group. This allows you to use your bite attack without penalty.

## CHAPTER 9: CHARACTER OPTIONS

- You do not begin with, but now have access to, the Accuracy (Bite) focus.
- You gain the Novice degree of the Psychic talent, but must choose Psychic Contact as your third arcanum (along with Psychic Shield and Second Sight). You may improve the talent normally.
- You do not choose a background, as rhydan do not mature in humanoid society.
- You are limited to performing the kinds of physical manipulations a rat can achieve. This usually means grabbing things with your mouth and pushing or knocking them over with your body or limbs, but no fine manipulation requiring fingers or an opposable thumb.
- Your small size and your animal shape limit your movement and actions in logical ways. Being a smaller rhydan, you lack the size and leverage to push open heavy gates or carry large objects, regardless of your comparative physical abilities. The Narrator may modify the target number of tests where your size or shape is a great hindrance or help. Additionally, if you wish, you may choose to take the Small Size ability. Rhy-rats without this ability are quite large, about the size of a hound.
- You can only vocalize sounds a rat could make, which means you cannot speak out loud, although you can communicate through Psychic Contact. You understand and can read Aldin plus one additional language of your choice.
- You are considered skilled in the Brawling weapons group and in the use of your teeth to bite, but gain no training in other weapons groups, regardless of your chosen class.
- Roll twice on the **Rhy-Rat Benefits** table for two additional benefits. Roll 2d6 and add the dice together.

If you get the same result twice, reroll until you get something different.

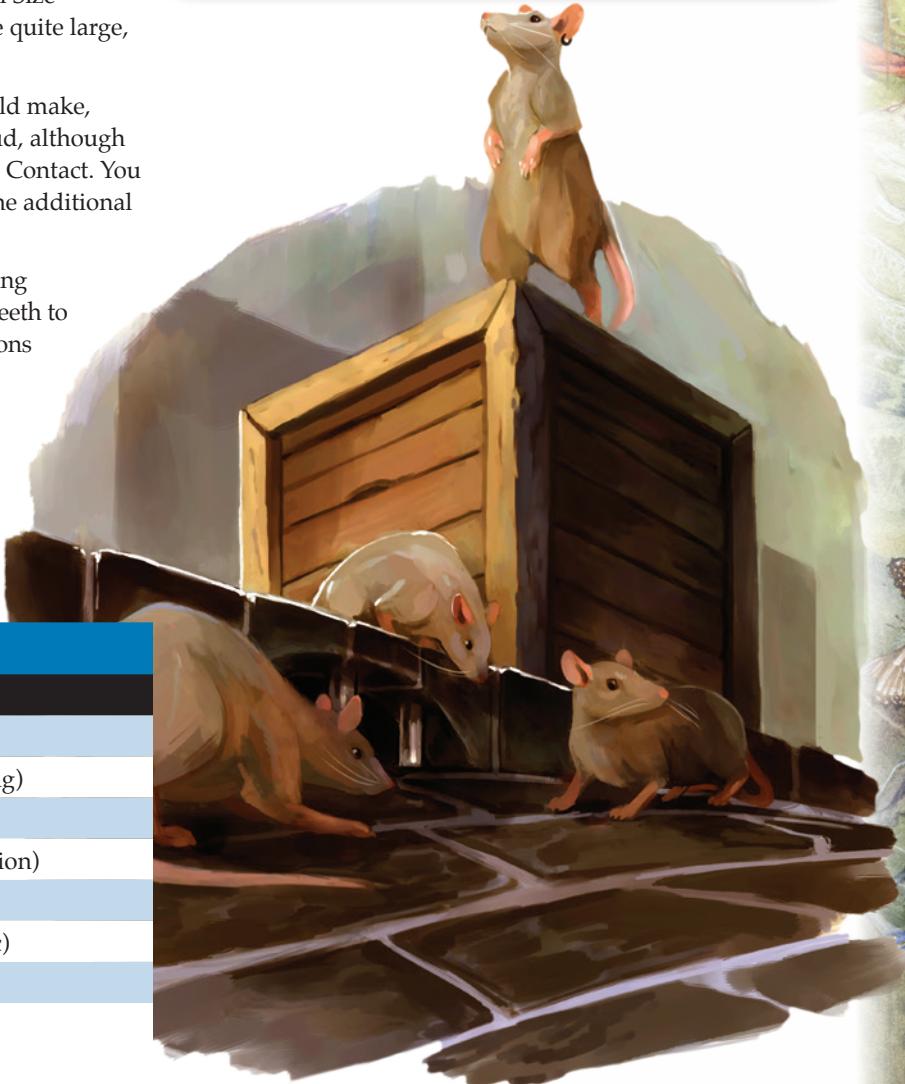
RHY-RAT BENEFITS	
2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 Dexterity
3-4	<b>FOCUS:</b> Perception (Smelling)
5	<b>FOCUS:</b> Dexterity (Stealth)
6	<b>FOCUS:</b> Strength (Intimidation)
7-8	+1 Perception
9	<b>FOCUS:</b> Perception (Psychic)
10-11	<b>FOCUS:</b> Accuracy (Bite)
12	+1 Willpower

### SMALL SIZED RHYDAN

Though most rhydan are assumed to be of a relatively large size (that of a large raptor or wolf), there certainly have been fully awakened rhydan smaller than this. For those players who wish to portray rhydan characters of these sizes, use the following notes:

- Constitution and Strength increase is limited to 3. After that, it takes two improvements to continue increasing that ability. To compensate, such characters may increase their Dexterity to 6 before having to spend two improvements to continue advancing it.
- Give small rhydan the Small Size ability:

**SMALL SIZE:** A small rhydan's size makes them harder to hit and allows them to sneak into places larger-sized beings would be unable to. This should be reflected in their abilities, and they receive a +2 bonus when their small size would be an extra advantage, such as a Dexterity (Stealth) test involving hiding in small spaces. However, a small size can work against such a character as well, reflected in a -2 penalty for appropriate tests, such as Strength (Might) tests to move heavy objects. Damage dice from natural attacks are reduced from d6s to d3s.



ALDIN

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE

## NEW BACKGROUNDS

This section includes three new character background options for those who originally hail from Aldis or the lands nearby.

### ALDIN PATRICIAN

You were born and raised in a family of means. As a child of a wealthy merchant family, or from a family who inherited their riches from previous generations, you were raised with access to the finest things life has to offer. However, with wealth comes certain responsibilities and obligations, such as taking over the family business when you come of age or carrying on certain family traditions. This is especially common in families who've had at least one, if not more, members chosen to join the ranks of nobility every generation since the Great Rebellion.



### THE FELLOWSHIP OF PATRONS

Founded by Nacklos Hirsh, a teacher of note at the Royal College, the Fellowship of Patrons is a loose association made up of similarly-minded members of many wealthier Aldin families. Members sponsor children to the Royal College on full scholarships, choosing candidates who show academic promise or who are gifted in the arts. There are a variety of other such groups as well, all of whom enable Aldis to live up to its meritocratic ideals.

- **FOCUSES:** Communication (Bargaining), Communication (Leadership), Intelligence (Evaluation) or Intelligence (Historical Lore)
- **LANGUAGES:** Aldin and one other of your choice.

### ALDIN LABORER

You are no stranger to demanding work, as most of your adolescence was spent performing manual labor. Most laborers from Aldis start life by balancing school and work at an early age. The type of work they find is usually dependent on which area of the city they grew up in. Most from the lake- or river-side wards of the city are drawn to the docks, where they find work loading and unloading goods coming into and out of the city. Growing up in the city's outer wards means a slightly more rural space, with farming being the primary field of employment.

- **FOCUSES:** Constitution (Stamina), Perception (Seeing), Strength (Climbing) or Strength (Might)
- **LANGUAGES:** Aldin and one other of your choice.

### ALDIN TRADESFOLK

Hailing from a family of craftsfolk or from a family who recognized your natural aptitude at an early age, you were set up with an apprenticeship after your childhood schooling. As an apprentice, most of your youth was spent being trained in your artistic pursuit. The craft you honed could be purely artistic in nature, such as painting, sculpting, or writing, or you might be trained in a craft skill, such as brewing, blacksmithing, leatherworking, or herbalism, amongst others.

- **FOCUSES:** Communication (Performance), Dexterity (Artisan), Dexterity (Crafting) or Intelligence (Brewing)
- **LANGUAGES:** Aldin and one other of your choice.

# NEW TALENTS

In the following section, you will find thirteen new talents available to player characters. While these talents are best suited to characters who spend a fair amount of time in the city of Aldis, they are also easily suitable for characters from elsewhere in Aldea.

## BLIND FIGHTING

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have Perception 2 or higher.

Your experience of practicing fighting and negotiating spaces without sight allows you to do so without the undue panic and clumsiness that most others face in such situations.

**NOVICE:** You can focus your other senses on noting the presence of a single foe. With a minor action, you can note the presence of any enemy within 10 yards. The penalty for fighting that enemy while unable to see is reduced to -3, and you may retain your Dexterity as part of your Defense against that enemy only.

**JOURNEYMAN:** While focusing on a single enemy while unable to see, your penalty to fight them is reduced to -1. Your penalty for fighting foes other than the one whose presence you have noted drops to -3, as your attention to one foe's movement reveals where their allies are as well. You may retain your Dexterity as part of your Defense against all allies while you are unable to see.

**MASTER:** When taking a minor action to note an enemy's location, your attention now encompasses all foes within 10 yards. Additionally, with a minor action, you can pinpoint an enemy up to 15 yards away with a missile weapon instead of the normal ranged limits.

## CHARMER

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Communication 2 or higher.

You know how to talk to people and convince them to see things from your point of view.

**NOVICE:** You are accomplished at reading people's moods and body language. If you fail a Perception (Empathy) test, you can reroll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You are the master of talking your way out of a dire situation. When you are out of your depth and the situation is heading towards bodily harm befalling you or your group, you gain a +2 bonus on Communication (Deception or Persuasion) tests to talk your way out.

**MASTER:** You are gifted with a silver tongue; as such, the cost for the Sway the Crowd roleplaying stunt is halved. Your use of this stunt also affects double the usual the number of targets.

## GIFT OF THE HART STYLE

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have the Novice rank or higher in the Spirit Dancer Specialization.

There is strength in numbers, especially for the spirit dancers who study the Gift of the Hart Style. If you possess the Novice rank or higher in any of the other spirit dancer styles (Shel-Shanna, Shrike's Fall, or Whispering Wind), you must choose which style you are activating when entering Battle Dance mode. It is a minor action to switch from one style to another.

You may not have a higher ranking in this style than you do in your Spirit Dancer specialization.

**NOVICE:** When taking the Aid Ally action while in your Battle Dance mode, add your Communication rating to the +2 normally granted by the Aid Ally action, to a maximum of +4. If the ally you are aiding is also using any Battle Dance mode, you may take the Aid Ally action as a minor action.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You have access to the **Locked Antlers** combat stunt while you are in Battle Dance mode. Additionally, the Aid Ally action becomes a minor action for you while you are in Battle Dance mode, even if the ally you are aiding is not also in Battle Dance mode.

**MASTER:** You have access to the **Bounding Attack** combat stunt while you are in Battle Dance mode. Your maximum Aid Ally bonus now becomes +5.

## GIFT OF THE HART STYLE STUNTS

Gift of the Hart Style teaches techniques for fighting in close proximity to an ally. Reduce the cost of these combat stunts by 1 if your ally is also in Battle Dance mode; reduce the costs by 2 if your ally is also using Gift of the Heart Style in Battle Dance mode.

## FIGHTING IN THE DARK

While most bonuses and penalties in the *AGE System* are intended to be somewhere between +3 and -3, a Narrator is certainly justified in going beyond these in certain extreme situations. One of these is the loss of sight, whether because of visual impairment or simply fighting in total darkness.

Fighting in total darkness or while blind imposes a -5 penalty to attacks and other actions. This penalty also applies to ranged attacks made at short range or within ten yards, whichever is less. Any ranged attacks beyond that simply fail. Finally, if you are fighting while blinded, you lose the benefit of adding your Dexterity to your Defense as well.

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# CHAPTER 9: CHARACTER OPTIONS



## GIFT OF THE HART STYLE STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
3	<b>LOCKED ANTLERS:</b> You and your ally take defensive stances to protect one another, interweaving your movements to stymie attacks and shunt aside lines of offense. Until your next round, as long as you remain within 2 yards of your ally, you gain a bonus to your Defense equal to their Perception; likewise, you grant your Perception as a bonus to your ally's Defense.
5	<b>BOUNDING ATTACK:</b> As part of your action, you set an ally up to make an attack. Designate an ally when purchasing this combat stunt; during that ally's turn, they must either start their turn next to you or use a Move to reach you. If they do, the two of you may perform a Bounding Attack: through momentum and acrobatic agility, you allow them to launch off your body at a foe. This is considered a Charge attack, and adds your Perception as a damage bonus to their attack.

## HIGH SOCIETY

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Communication 2 or higher.

You are adept at navigating the subtle intricacies of courtly politics.

**NOVICE:** You are aware of all the important court players, and just the right things to say. If you fail either a Communication (Etiquette) or an Intelligence (Heraldry) test, you can reroll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You have your finger on the pulse of what's transpiring in court circles. You can subtly inquire into court gossip, sifting the facts from the rumors. Make a TN 13 Intelligence (Investigation) test. On a success, your character knows if the rumor is baseless or if there is some truth to it; you gain additional details for every 2 points of Outcome. These additional details may include:

- How long the rumor has been circulating.
- Who started the rumor.
- The legitimacy of one of the rumor's "facts."

For outlandish rumors, adjust the target number to 11, while for rumors which blur the lines between fact and fiction, raise the target number to 15. Tests instigated by others to determine which court rumors you have been investigating are always 2 higher than the target number of the rumor involved.

**MASTER:** Through a natural gift or dedicated practice, you are able to harness the force of your personality. Any test that generates roleplaying Stunt Points always generates two additional points.

## INSIGHT

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have Intelligence 2 or higher and the Intelligence (Cryptography) focus.

You are skilled at seeing hidden threads and patterns.

**NOVICE:** You have a keen eye for detail. If you fail a Perception (Searching) test, you can reroll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

**JOURNEYMAN:** The Object of Your Attention exploration stunt only costs you 2 SP to use instead of the usual 3 SP.

**MASTER:** You can see the bigger picture and pick up on patterns that allow you to see how events are connected. You can make an Intelligence (Cryptography) test to confirm if two or more events are connected to each other in the grand scheme of things, and what the next event in the pattern is likely to be. For example, if the Silence arranged for the theft of several rare books from various private collections around the High Ward, the player could make a roll to see how the books are connected and what the next most likely target would be. The target number for this test varies depending on the number of events and how obscure the pattern is.

## PRIEST

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have Intelligence 2 or higher, the Intelligence (Religious Lore) focus, and the Oratory talent at Novice or higher.

Those who hear the call to serve the gods come from all walks of life. Most priests in Aldis serve the gods of Light, while in Jarzon, priests are commonly part of the Church of the Pure Light. And scattered throughout the various kingdoms are the rare priests who hear the call of the gods of Twilight.

**NOVICE:** As part of your training, you've spent long hours reading your religious texts, as well as learning to read your audience. If you fail either an Intelligence (Religious Lore) or Perception (Empathy) test, you can reroll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

**JOURNEYMAN:** Through your devotion and joining in prayer with one of the faithful, you are able to assist the follower with their internal battle against corruption. Using this talent requires you to sit and pray with the penitent from sunset to sunrise. As the first light of dawn breaks over the horizon, the two participants complete the prayer. The player makes a test using Willpower (Purity); the target number for this test is the same as the act which originally caused the corruption. Narrators should use the **Corrupt Acts** table in **Chapter 2** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook to determine what that number is. On a success, the penitent receives one point towards negating a point of Corruption. Only five of the ten points needed to remove a point of Corruption can be granted using this talent.

# CHAPTER 9: CHARACTER OPTIONS

**MASTER:** Through your prayer, you bolster the faith of everyone who actively participates in the service. At the end of your sermon, with a successful TN 15 Communication (Persuasion) test, all those who participated are granted the use of a bonus Willpower focus until the next sunrise. Your choice of prayer determines which focus is granted, and it should be chosen based on the theme of the service. Everyone participating is granted the same focus; those who already have the focus gain +1 on top of their normal bonus from that focus for the same period.

## MISDIRECTION

**CLASS:** Expert.

**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have Dexterity 2 or higher and the Dexterity (Stealth) focus.

You are accomplished at using your surroundings to obfuscate your activities.

**NOVICE:** You have deft fingers and are skilled at using misdirection. If you fail a Dexterity (Legerdemain) test, you can reroll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You gain +2 to all Dexterity (Stealth) rolls when attempting to disappear into a crowd or lose someone who is tailing you.

**MASTER:** You can slip into or out of a room in the blink of an eye without leaving any tracks or making a sound. You can use this ability if you are within 50 feet of any entrance to the location, as long as the entrance is not barred by arcane or supernatural means. This ability functions even if there is someone present, as long as their attention isn't focused on you. If they divert their attention from you, even for a moment, you are able to use this ability to its full potential.

## ROOF RUNNING

**CLASS:** Expert.

**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have Dexterity 2 or higher and the Strength (Climbing) focus.

Quick, agile climbing ability and unerring balance mark those who are as at home among Aldis' rooftops as they are on its streets.

**NOVICE:** You can take Move actions on uneven or slick surfaces without any penalties due to terrain or weather.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You can scale buildings with practiced ease. You do not need to roll to scale a building under ordinary circumstances. Even when hurried and harassed, you gain a +2 bonus to your Strength (Climbing) tests.

**MASTER:** You are able to perform both the Run and Charge actions without risk of falling. You also gain +2 to Strength (Jumping) rolls when leaping from one roof to another.



## SHEL-SHANNA STYLE

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have the Spirit Dancer specialization at Novice or higher.

This spirit dancer style is commonly practiced by the Roamers, who believe that its circular movements were inspired by the moon's waxing and waning. If you possess the Novice rank or higher in any of the other spirit dancer styles (Gift of the Hart, Shrike's Fall, or Whispering Wind), you must choose which style you are activating when entering Battle Dance mode. It is a minor action to switch from one style to another. You may not have a higher ranking in this style than you do in your Spirit Dancer specialization.

**NOVICE:** Your battle motions describe circles large and small with a true dancer's grace. When you are in Battle Dance mode, you may add your Communication to your Defense, but only if you are wearing no armor.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You have access to the **Circle the Moon** combat stunt while you are in Battle Dance mode. Additionally, while you are in this style's Battle Dance mode, the penalty you incur from attacks while using the Guard Up action is reduced by one.

**MASTER:** You have access to the **Moon's Tide** combat stunt while you are in Battle Dance mode.

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## SHEL-SHANNA STYLE STUNTS

Shel-Shanna Style teaches circular, indirect methods of fighting, a seemingly slow passage across the battlefield. Reduce the cost of these stunts by 1 if you perform them outside under the light of the moon.

### SHEL-SHANNA STYLE STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
3	<b>CIRCLE THE MOON:</b> This combat stunt may only be used to augment an attack, and only if you have at least one hand free (though you may drop what is in your hand as part of this stunt). As part of the attack, you clutch at your opponent, pushing and pulling them into the flowing circular patterns of the style and hurling them up to 10 yards away to land prone.
3	<b>MOON'S TIDE:</b> Your movements ebb and flow with your opponent's. Activating this combat stunt gives you Press the Attack as an immediate free action. Your Speed is considered doubled for the sole purpose of keeping up with your opponent. If you successfully remain adjacent to your target, your next attack against them is considered a Charge.

## SHRIKE'S FALL STYLE

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have the Spirit Dancer specialization at Novice or higher.

In this style, the spirit dancer finds inspiration in the movements of the shrike and the falcon: high-leaping motions and devastating clawed strikes. If you possess the Novice rank or higher in any of the other spirit dancer styles (Gift of the Hart, Shel-Shanna, or Whispering Wind), you must choose which style you are activating when entering Battle Dance mode. It is a minor action to switch from one style to another. You may not have a higher ranking in this style than you do in your Spirit Dancer specialization.

**NOVICE:** Your bare-handed attacks are savage, raking strikes which draw blood as though you fought with a weapon. When in Battle Dance mode, you may add your Dexterity as a damage bonus to your unarmed damage. Additionally, when in Battle Dance mode, a Move minor action allows you to scale a number of yards equal to your Speed in height by running up a vertical surface. There must be a place to stand (or at least handholds to allow you to dangle) at the end of that movement, or else you fall back down again. Alternately, you may use Move to leap your Speed in yards horizontally or half your Speed vertically.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You have access to the **Flurry of Talons** combat stunt while you are in Battle Dance mode. Additionally, you may add +1d3 damage to your unarmed

attack damage while you are in Battle Dance mode. This does not "upgrade" your normal unarmed damage die, but provides a separate, additional damage die.

**MASTER:** You have access to the **Swift Wing Strike** combat stunt while you are in Battle Dance mode. Additionally, upgrade the damage bonus you received from the Journeyman level of this talent from +1d3 to +1d6.

## SHRIKE'S FALL STYLE STUNTS

Shrike's Fall Style teaches techniques of vicious, rapid slashing while moving or plummeting down onto the opponent. Reduce the cost of these combat stunts by 1 if they are performed alongside a Charge attack (whether across a battlefield or down onto an opponent).

### SHRIKE'S FALL STYLE STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
3+	<b>FLURRY OF TALONS:</b> This combat stunt may only be activated after a successful unarmed attack. Using the same attack test, you may make a single unarmed attack against every opponent within 4 yards. If the strikes are successful, they inflict the same amount of damage as the original attack. For each additional Stunt Point spent on this combat stunt beyond the first 3, you may add 1 yard to the distance.

**SWIFT WING STRIKE:** This combat stunt may only be activated after a successful unarmed attack. You deliver the blows and then use your opponent as a vaulting platform, clambering over them before soaring away out of their reach. Your opponent is knocked prone and you perform a free Move action as a vertical leap, which must end at a perch somewhere above your starting elevation.

## SPELUNKING

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have Dexterity 2 or higher and the Strength (Climbing) focus.

You are at home in the dark caverns and tunnels of the earth.

**NOVICE:** You have a flair for finding your way when underground or underwater. If you fail an Intelligence (Navigation) test, you can reroll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

**JOURNEYMAN:** Thanks to your sure footing, penalties due to tricky terrain are cut in half when in an underground environment, such as a tunnel, cave, or the ruins of a sunken building.

**MASTER:** You have developed a sharp eye for geology. When exploring a natural underground tunnel, cavern or similar area, the Efficient Search and Speedy Search exploration stunts only cost 1 SP each instead of the usual cost of 2 SP.

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## STREET SMARTS

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Communication 2 or higher.

You know what it takes to not only survive, but thrive in the shadier parts of a city.

**NOVICE:** When it comes to asking for information, you always know who to go to. If you fail a Communication (Investigation) test, you can reroll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

**JOURNEYMAN:** Having spent considerable time in less than upstanding neighborhoods, you are able to quickly pick up when something isn't right. You receive a +2 bonus to any Surprise tests when in a city environment.

**MASTER:** You have cultivated a network of street contacts and black market ties. When attempting to acquire any questionable or illegal goods, you receive a +2 bonus to your test.

## WHISPERING WIND STYLE

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** You must have the Spirit Dancer Specialization at Novice or higher.

Flowing and light, gentle as a breeze and furious as the typhoon, Whispering Wind style spirit dancers are skilled at interrupting their opponents, deflecting arrows, and turning blades back on their wielders. If you possess the Novice rank or higher in any of the other spirit dancer styles (Gift of the Hart, Shel-Shanna, or Shrike's Fall), you must choose which style you are activating when entering Battle Dance mode. It is a minor action to switch from one style to another. You may not have a higher ranking in this style than you do in your Spirit Dancer specialization.

**NOVICE:** You lash out at attacks using bare hands or lengths of flowing cloth, lessening the assault. When you enter Battle Dance mode, you may add your Intelligence to your armor rating. Additionally, you gain the ability to speak in a whisper and be heard clearly by a single target you can see within 20 yards. Other practitioners of Whispering Wind Style who are also in Battle Mode at the time can hear the whispers if they are within 20 yards of you, whether you want them to or not.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You have access to the **Protective Southern Winds** combat stunt while you are in Battle Dance mode. Additionally, during any turn in which you are in Battle Dance mode, you may take Move as a free action or Run as a minor action. Finally, you negate any penalties to Perception tests from high winds.

**MASTER:** You have access to the **Retributive Northern Winds** combat stunt while you are in Battle Dance mode. Additionally, the winds will carry your whisper up to 50 yards away, to any number of targets whether you can see them or not (though you must know they are there).

Only other Master-level practitioners can overhear your whispers now. You are also immune to being picked up by winds of up to tornado-strength.

## WHISPERING WIND STYLE STUNTS

Whispering Wind Style teaches techniques for deflecting attacks with storm-quick accuracy, and for turning weak attacks back on their originators. Reduce the cost of these stunts by 1 if you are fighting in a battlefield with at least moderate-strength winds, or by 2 if you are fighting in a battlefield with at least severe-strength winds (see **Wind Shaping**, CHAPTER 4 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook, for details on wind strengths).

### WHISPERING WIND STYLE STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
3+	<b>PROTECTIVE SOUTHERN WINDS:</b> You gather the winds to defend you and nearby allies from ranged attacks. For each additional point spent on this combat stunt, you may defend one ally as long as they are within 4 yards of you when they are attacked. Until the beginning of your next round, any time you or a protected ally are attacked by a ranged attack, Defense does not apply. Instead, you may perform an immediate opposed Accuracy (Brawling) test. If you win, the attack is deflected harmlessly away; failure indicates that the attacker's strike lands, even if the check was insufficient to strike through your Defense. For each such attempt to deflect a ranged attack after the first, you gain a cumulative -1 penalty to the opposed test. This combat stunt has no effect against ranged attacks without physical solidity, area of effect attacks, or attacks by massive missiles such as siege weapons.

4	<b>RETRIBUTIVE NORTHERN WIND:</b> You and the winds flow as one, confusing enemies foolish enough to get close to you. Until the beginning of your next action, any time you are attacked by a melee attack, Defense does not apply. Instead, you may perform an immediate opposed Accuracy (Brawling) test. If you win, the attack is redirected away from you harmlessly. If your opposed test result was high enough to equal or overcome the attacker's Defense, you cause them to strike themselves, inflicting normal damage based on the attack used. For each such attempt to deflect a melee attack after the first, you gain a cumulative -2 penalty to the opposed test. You cannot cause creatures using natural weapons to damage themselves; instead, you redirect them into terrain features, inflicting $1d6 +$ the attacker's Strength ability damage to them.
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# NEW SPECIALIZATIONS

The following five new specializations are available to characters in a *Blue Rose* campaign. As with the new talents in the previous section, they're especially suited to those who dwell in the city of Aldis, but can easily be encountered beyond the city confines.

## DEEP DELVER

Aldis is a city of rebirth, rising from the ashes of the Great Rebellion. The centuries of building and rebuilding have led to numerous secrets being buried beneath the foundations of newer structures. Deep delvers are part historian, part explorer, and part treasure hunter, looking to uncover the secrets of the past.

Deep delvers can be found across Aldea, especially where there are long-buried glimpses into the past to uncover. Given the rich history of the city, Aldis is a prime location for these intrepid explorers. For the sea-folk among the deep delvers, the coastal regions in general, and the Leviathan's Teeth region in particular, are a popular choice for digging into the past.

### DEEP DELVER TALENT

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Dexterity 2 or higher and the Intelligence (Historical Lore) or Intelligence (Nautical Lore) focus.

You are an explorer of hidden and lost places under the earth or sea. When choosing this specialization, choose whether your abilities apply to an underground or underwater environment.

**NOVICE:** Your sharp eyes excel at detecting entry points into buried ruins, as well as picking up useful details while investigating them. If you fail a Perception (Searching) test when trying to locate an entry point to underground ruins, or while exploring them, you can reroll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You have an uncanny ability to avoid either naturally occurring underground or underwater hazards (choose one). You gain a +2 bonus to spot and avoid these types of hazards. This bonus does not apply to traps.

**MASTER:** You can perform The Upper Hand exploration stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 4.

## INITIATE OF THE ETERNAL DANCE

Citizens from any walk of life may hear the call of the Eternal Dance. Traveling from the farthest corners of the land, they join the faithful as initiates. They begin their

studies at the Temple of the Eternal Dance, and those who show an aptitude for skills of use to the temple are sent by temple elders to the Royal College for additional instruction. The ranks of the Initiates of the Eternal Dance are filled by those who are ardent in their devotion, as well as skilled in the ways of arcana. Becoming one of the Initiates of the Eternal Dance requires a test, and there are additional trials at each step beyond Novice. These tests are tailor-made for each individual initiate.

It is worth noting that initiates are priests of the temple, but not all priests of the temple are initiates. Becoming one of the initiates requires the touch of an arcane gift, and a powerful calling. It is not uncommon to find initiates who also possess the Purifying Light talent.

### INITIATE OF THE ETERNAL DANCE TALENT

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Willpower 2 or higher, trained in at least one arcanum, and the Priest talent at Novice or higher. You may not have any Corruption.

You walk the road of the Eternal Dance, and in turn it grants you the ability to channel your devotion to resist the call of the exarchs and to defend others from their corrupting influence.

Purity of spirit is absolutely necessary to access the abilities of the Eternal Dance. If you gain a point of Corruption, you are unable to access these abilities until you atone. If you embrace corruption, you lose access to these abilities for good.

**NOVICE:** You are blessed with a purity of purpose. You are granted a +2 bonus on all tests to avoid Corruption.

**JOURNEYMAN:** Through your studies and devotion, you can infuse any item you are using with a little of your faith. Any attack you make against corrupted or Shadow-touched foes does additional bonus damage equal to your Willpower. If used with arcana, the attack is always fatiguing, even if it is normally not.

**MASTER:** Through your strong belief, you are connected to the gods of Light. This connection allows you to empower others in the battle against the Shadow. You and up to six companions are able to share your resistance to corruption, and your ability to infuse an item with your faith. To use this ability, you need to succeed at a TN 13 Willpower (Faith) test. Manifesting this ability is a major action and is fatiguing. This ability also makes you more prone to spontaneous visions; for details, see the Visions arcanum entry in Chapter 4 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook.

## GRIFTER

Always playing the odds, grifters survive on their wits, charm, and more than a little luck. Living in the somewhat questionable gray area of the law, grifters who prefer cities ply their craft in the various game halls located across

# CHAPTER 9: CHARACTER OPTIONS

Aldis, either as patrons or (for those who hit a lucky streak) as proprietors. Grifters who prefer to travel, either due to their desire to see the world or some trouble back home, tend to find a place among the various bands of traveling performers and entertainers.

## GRIFTER TALENT

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Communication and Perception of 2 or higher.

You make your living on the roll of the dice or the turn of the card.

**NOVICE:** You are accomplished at reading your opponent's body language. If you fail a Communication (Gambling) test, you can reroll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You are skilled at turning a potential enemy into an ally. The New Friend roleplaying stunt only costs you 2 SP instead of the usual 3 SP.

**MASTER:** Once per story, you can wager a Conviction point to earn free-floating Stunt Points. To begin, pick the target number for the test, based on the **Luck of the Dice** table. You then make a Communication (Gambling) test as a free action and spend a point of Conviction. If successful, you regain the Conviction point and gain a number of Stunt Points indicated by the chosen target number. If you fail the test, you lose the point of Conviction. (Note that rolling doubles on this test does not generate additional Stunt Points.) The Novice ability of this talent can also be applied to this test. Stunt points generated on this test must be used immediately, as part of a subsequent major or minor action (which may itself generate additional Stunt Points).

### LUCK OF THE DICE

TARGET NUMBER	STUNT POINTS GENERATED
15	1 Stunt Point
17	2 Stunt Points
19	3 Stunt Points
21	4 Stunt Points

## INAMORATA

Inamorata excel at being the ideal companion, even if only for a fleeting moment. They are masters of the art of pampering, comforting, and making their partners feel as if they are the center of the entire world while in the inamorata's company. While most inamorata are members of the Guild of Intimates, there are some who work independently. Inamorata can be found in all the major cities of Aldis, but are not common in the other lands of Aldea.

## INAMORATA TALENT

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Communication 2 or higher, and the Charmer talent at Novice or higher.

You are the ideal companion, for as long as your favored partner has your attention.

**NOVICE:** You are accomplished at reading what a person truly desires, and gain a +1 bonus on Perception (Empathy) tests to uncover what they desire at any given moment. You also gain a +1 bonus on tests involving the Heart Reading arcana, if you know it.

**JOURNEYMAN:** You know just the right words to say. Choose one of the following Communication focuses: Etiquette, Persuasion, or Romance. If you fail a Communication test with your chosen focus, you can reroll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll. You also gain a +1 bonus with tests involving the Heart Shaping arcana, if you know it.

**MASTER:** With just a smile and a well-chosen turn of phrase, you can disarm even the most distrustful of people. You can perform the New Friends roleplaying stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 3 SP. In addition, you gain a +1 bonus on any further tests arising from use of the stunt. The bonuses for Heart Reading and Heart Shaping both increase to +2, if you know those arcana.

## INVESTIGATOR

Serious crimes are rare in Aldis, but when they occur, investigators of the Aldin Watch are on the frontline, using their extensive training to uncover the culprits behind crimes such as blackmail, extortion, smuggling, and murder.

## INVESTIGATOR TALENT

**CLASS:** Any.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Communication 2 and Perception 2 or higher, and the Object Reading arcana.

You take the lead in investigating serious crimes committed with the city.

**NOVICE:** You can perform the Speedy Search exploration stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2 SP. You also have access to the Object Reading arcana knack Reconstruct the Scene (see **Arcana Knacks** later in this chapter for further details).

**JOURNEYMAN:** Once per story, you can make a TN 13 Intelligence (Investigation) test. If successful, you receive a number of rumors from the Narrator pertinent to the story or setting equal to the result on the test's Drama Die.

**MASTER:** When using the Object Reading arcana, you may spend a point of Conviction to gain Stunt Points equal to the number shown on the Drama Die. These may only be used to power arcane stunts, and cannot be invoked if the roll already generates Stunt Points.

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## NEW ARCANA

The following arcanum is available to any character who has access to shaping arcana.

### SOUND SHAPING

**TALENT:** SHAPING **TIME:** MAJOR ACTION

**TARGET NUMBER:** VARIES **TEST:** INTELLIGENCE (SHAPING)

**RESISTANCE:** NONE **FATIGUE:** TEST TN (SEE DESCRIPTION)

You can mentally control and shape sound. You can manipulate any sound you can hear (including sounds you produce), and the manipulations last as long as you maintain them. Creating multiple effects at once (such as making a flute sound louder while also improving its pitch) counts as maintaining multiple arcana. Sound Shaping does not produce sound, but alters an existing sound.

#### VOLUME MANIPULATION

**TN 7+**

You choose a sound you can hear and make it louder or quieter for all listeners within a 20-foot radius, and can move this radius at will anywhere in your line of sight as a minor action. For each 10 feet you add to the radius of the volume adjustment, the target number increases by +2. Volume Manipulation is not fatiguing.

#### SONIC ALTERATION

**TN 9+**

You choose a sound you can hear and alter it for all listeners within a 20-foot radius, and you can move this radius at will anywhere in your line of sight as a minor action. A sonic alteration can make a sound objectively worse (speech is more difficult to understand, a lute loses its pitch, etc.) or objectively better (slurred speech becomes clearer, an off-key song grows mellifluous, etc.). For each 10 feet you add to the radius of the effect, the target number increases by +2. The target number to resist fatigue is equal to the target number used to generate the Sonic Alteration.

#### VENTRiloquism

**TN 7 OR 11**

You throw the sound of your voice to a target listener within your line of sight up to 60 feet away. The listener hears your voice as if you were standing next to them; no one standing next to you will hear your voice, although they can see your lips moving. Other creatures within the immediate vicinity of your target may make a Perception (Hearing) test to see if they can hear you. The target number is 7 in an otherwise quiet space and 11 in an otherwise loud space. Ventriloquism is not fatiguing.

#### SONIC TERROR

**TN 13**

With a successful TN 13 arcanum test, you can turn an existing sound into a weapon, dealing 1d6 penetrating

damage to a single target. Every 2 points of Outcome increases the damage by 1d6, to a maximum of 6d6. The target number to resist fatigue is equal to the Outcome of the arcanum test for creating the Sonic Terror.

## ARCANA KNACKS

Arcana knacks are additional ways to bend the flows of power as manifested by a character's arcana. The sub-uses already listed under certain arcana are also considered to be knacks—they're simply so common that learning them is part of learning the arcana as a whole, as opposed to something additional.

Arcana knacks may be learned in one of several ways:

- Characters may learn new knacks from talents or specializations.
- Certain arcane items may be imbued with the power to perform these knacks when the arcanum is channeled through them. A character who practices with and studies these items for at least an entire season may learn to use the knack without the item.
- Mentors who already know a knack may teach it to a character, usually over a course of study lasting between one and six weeks. (This takes seven weeks minus the rating in the ability that governs the use of that arcanum, minimum one week.)
- Strange situations and need may cause characters to spontaneously develop the knack that will save their lives or dramatically turn around a situation. A player may, with the Narrator's permission, spend 1 Conviction point in such a situation to spontaneously manifest the knack. Either the player or the Narrator may be the one to propose the gain.

## COLD SHAPING

There are two new arcana knacks available for the Cold Shaping arcanum.

#### FREEZING AURA

**TN 15**

You can surround your body in a mantle of arctic cold, which causes no harm to you and does not damage anything you are wearing or carrying. Manifesting a Freezing Aura is a major action, fatiguing, and requires a successful TN 15 Intelligence (Shaping) test. Freezing Aura lasts one minute (4 rounds) and does 1d6 damage, plus an additional +1d6 for every 2 points of Outcome (up to 4d6 total), to anyone you touch.

#### FREEZING WEAPON

**TN 15**

You are able to enshroud your weapon in bone-numbing ice which does no damage to you or your weapon. Manifesting a Freezing Weapon is a major action, fatiguing, and requires a successful TN 15 Intelligence (Shaping) test.

## ARCANE KNACK ITEMS

The following items permit arcana wielders to utilize their listed knacks when they channel their arcanum through the item. After a season of dedicated use, an arcanum wielder learns the knack in question, and can employ it with that arcanum without need of the item.

- **AEGIS RING:** An arcane item crafted of gleaming silver with a shield-shaped quartz sliver as its centerpiece, this ring can be used to create the Extended Psychic Shield knack for its eponymous arcanum.
- **ENVY'S LOCKET:** An arcane item wrought from plain copper which opens to reveal a thin glass bubble filled with quicksilver within, this locket can be used to create the Mind Vault Mind Shaping knack.
- **FIRESPIRIT GARNET:** An arcane stone carved from a garnet with a bright, person-shaped occlusion in its center, this pendant can be used to create the Flame Aura Fire Shaping knack.
- **WINTERSTEEL DAGGER:** An arcane weapon shaped from a strange, icy-white steel and engraved with patterns like frost, this dagger can be used to create the Freezing Weapon Cold Shaping knack.

The Freezing Weapon adds +1 damage and an additional +1 for every 2 points of Outcome. This knack immediately ceases if you are disarmed or release your weapon; as such, it cannot be used on ranged weapons.

## FIRE SHAPING

There are two new arcana knacks available for the Fire Shaping arcanum.

### FLAME AURA

**TN<sub>I5</sub>**

You can surround your body in a shroud of fire, which causes no harm to you and does not damage anything you are wearing or carrying. Manifesting a Flame Aura is a major action, fatiguing, and requires a successful TN 15 Intelligence (Shaping) test. Flame Aura lasts one minute (4 rounds) and does 1d6 damage, plus an additional +1d6 for every 2 points of Outcome (up to 4d6 total), to anyone you touch.

### FLAMING WEAPON

**TN<sub>I5</sub>**

You are able to wreath your weapon in flames, which do no damage to you or your weapon. Manifesting a Flaming Weapon is a major action, fatiguing, and requires a successful TN 15 Intelligence (Shaping) test. Flaming Weapon adds +1 damage and an additional +1 for every 2 points of Outcome. This knack immediately ceases if you are disarmed or release your weapon; as such, it cannot be used on ranged weapons.

## MIND SHAPING

There are two new arcana knacks available for the Mind Shaping arcanum.

### IMPLANT KNOWLEDGE

**TN<sub>I3</sub>**

Using this knack, you may temporarily implant any focus you know into the subject's mind, or implant any

focus known to the subject into your own mind. This is a major action, is fatiguing (at a target number equal to the roll for the knack's activation, plus 2 per each additional activation of Implant Knowledge currently active), and requires a successful TN 13 Communication (Psychic) test. The subject retains the imparted information for one hour, plus one additional hour for every two points of Outcome.

### MIND VAULT

**TN<sub>II</sub>**

Mind Vault is a variation of the Alter Psyche knack which allows a character to use Mind Shaping on themselves. This allows them to conceal key information or memories from Mind Reading. While this information is hidden away, the bearer of the information cannot access it either. The character may set a trigger to restore the hidden memory, be it a set length of time or a particular stimulus, such as seeing a certain person or hearing a key phrase.

Creating a Mind Vault is fatiguing and requires a successful TN 11 Communication (Psychic) test, along with some time. The amount of time required varies depending on the extent of the information being hidden, using the **Mind Shaping Table** in CHAPTER 4 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook.

Those using the Mind Delving arcanum may discover the presence of a Mind Vault, but not what it conceals. "Does this mind have a Mind Vault?" is always a legitimate question to ask during the use of Mind Delving (assuming the questioner knows of the knack's existence), though the target receives a +3 to the resistance test to avoid answering it.

When the trigger that unlocks the Mind Vault activates, there is a possibility that the recalcitrant psyche may simply keep the memories locked away. The bearer of the Mind Vault must make a successful TN 9 Communication (Psychic) test to have their memories returned. This target number increases by +2 per subsequent attempt, cumulative within the same twenty-four-hour period.

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# CHAPTER 9: CHARACTER OPTIONS

A character with Mind Shaping (including the one who bears the Mind Vault themselves) may attempt to unshape a Mind Vault they are aware of. This uses the Alter Psyche knack of Mind Shaping and is a resisted use of the arcanum, and the Mind Vault gives the target a +3 bonus to the resistance test.

## OBJECT READING

There is one new arcana knack available for the Object Reading arcanum.

### RECONSTRUCT THE SCENE

**TN16**

Through shrewd observation and your Object Reading arcanum, you are able to look at a scene and reconstruct the events as they transpired. To use this knack, you must make a successful TN 16 Perception (Visionary) test. While the starting target number for this test is 16, it should be adjusted based on the number of clues available at the scene. Succeeding on the test gives you a single “read,” plus another read for each additional 2 points of Outcome.

Reads reveal obscure and possibly critical details about the scene which can't be uncovered by a simple Perception (Investigation) test. Reads do have limitations, though. For example, a read would not reveal that a city watch captain was assaulted by the street tough named Jonas; instead, it would reveal the assailant was a big man, over six feet tall, who favored his left hand and smoked a pipe.

When using this knack, you appear to have entered a fugue state to any onlookers. In your mind's eye, the blurry rendition of the scene plays out for you, with the reads shifting into sharp focus. Reads will never reveal names, faces, or any dialogue exchanged during the scene.

## PSYCHIC SHIELD

There are three new arcana knacks available for the Psychic Shield arcanum.

### DEATHBLOCK

**TN15**

Use of this knack is considered an extreme measure and best left as a last resort. If the user's mental defenses are breached, the Deathblock is triggered, shattering their psyche. Setting a Deathblock in place requires a major action, along with a successful TN 15 Willpower (Psychic) test. When initiating this knack, the user may determine if it is triggered by all mental incursions, or specific arcana such as Mind Reading or Psychic Domination. A Deathblock may be dismissed as a free action at any time, including just prior to it being triggered.

The Deathblock is triggered once the user's Psychic Shield is overcome and any applicable resistance tests are

failed. If the Deathblock is activated, the user's psyche collapses in on them, leaving a living, mindless shell. Unless intended otherwise, anyone who establishes Psychic Contact with the user can detect the Deathblock. If the user deliberately intends to hide the Deathblock when it is established, an opposed Second Sight versus Psychic Shield test is required to sense the Deathblock.

### EXTENDED PSYCHIC SHIELD

You are able to use your Psychic Shield to protect others from mental attacks. The number of allies you can extend this protection to is equal to your Willpower ability, and they must be within your line of sight. For each additional ally under your shield, you take a -2 penalty to all Psychic Shield tests, including your own. Extending your shield this way makes this knack fatiguing. The use of Psychic Shield remains a free action, and if someone under your shield is mentally attacked, you make the opposed test on their behalf. Extending or withdrawing your shield is a free action.

### INNER WALL

As part of the process of crafting an alternate persona, you hide away a portion of your memories and personality behind an inner wall in your mind. As long as your wall is in place, anyone using extrasensory arcana on your character will only pick up on your false personality. Crafting this wall takes an hour of meditation, at the end of which you must make a Psychic Shield arcane test. The result of this test is the target number for others to notice the existence of this wall.

Characters using Heart Reading, Heart Shaping, Mind Delving, Mind Reading, Mind Shaping, Psychic Contact, Psychic Domination, Sense Minds, or Suggestion have a chance of noticing the presence of the wall. If the result of their reading arcana equals or exceeds the result of your Inner Wall test, they notice there is some part of your psyche that is locked away, but not what is hidden. Each time someone tests your Inner Wall in this way, you must resist fatigue against a target number equal to that made by the one probing your wall.

Characters that have noticed the wall may attempt to break through it, using Heart Reading, Mind Delving, Mind Reading, Mind Shaping, Psychic Domination, Sense Minds, or Suggestion. This is an opposed test between their arcana test and your Psychic Shields or Willpower (Self-Discipline). If you win, the reader may not make another attempt the same day unless they take a level of fatigue. If you lose, the reader immediately breaks through your wall and may make a second arcanum check, this time against your fully integrated psyche.



Cities and settled locations tend to feature more prominently in romantic fantasy than in other sorts of fantasy. This isn't surprising, of course—in a genre where the relationships built between characters are paramount, these settings provide plenty of allies, rivals, and enemies, sometimes even in the same characters over the span of the narrative.

A *Blue Rose* series set primarily in an urban environment such as the city of Aldis offers particular opportunities and challenges for Narrators. This chapter looks at them, along with ways to adapt and supplement the material found in Chapters 8 and 9 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook to suit a city-focused series. It also offers some ideas unique to urban adventuring, as well as resources to make running a city series easier. Some of the advice in this chapter applies particularly to series set in the city of Aldis, while the rest can apply to one set in any large city in Aldea.

## THE HIGHS & LOWS OF THE CITY

If you plan to run a *Blue Rose* series set and centered in Aldis, what are the advantages and challenges of doing so? If you know these in advance, you can look to play to the strengths of an urban series, while downplaying or otherwise compensating for its weaknesses. Consider them as you plan out your own series and its adventures.

## ADVANTAGES OF A CITY SERIES

The following are some of the main advantages of a *Blue Rose* series set in a large city, particularly the city of Aldis.

### HOME BASE

First and foremost, characters in a city series are *home* or, at least, never too far from home. This means they can have a residence or home base (or both) within the city but, more importantly, they can have a home life. They can return home at the end of a day, perhaps to family and loved ones, and they can build up a network of friends and relationships. This has the added benefit of characters having something additional to protect as part of the series: their home!

### SENSE OF FAMILIARITY

The stability of having a home base means there can be a sense of familiarity to the setting. Characters in a city series can have a favorite teahouse where they gather, or a particular park or plaza where they like to stroll. They can visit the same places time and again, more easily than travelers returning to some place they've been before.



They can also build up memories associated with specific sites and parts of the city as the series unfolds. Still, the city is large enough to offer new places to visit and explore for some time. This sense of familiarity also allows players to describe their characters in terms of what their perspective of the city is. Where is their home and how is it furnished and decorated? What places do they frequent? What neighborhoods do they enjoy (or avoid)?

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Not only does the city provide a home for the players' characters, but it also does so for a large number of other people, allowing the heroes to have a considerably larger recurring cast of supporting characters. In the city, they are likely to see many of the same people every day, certainly frequently enough for them to become fixtures of the series. On the other hand, the city is also full of so many people it is impossible for your protagonists to know everyone, so it is easy for the Narrator to introduce fresh characters, because there's always someone new just around the corner.

## ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Cities feature the greatest concentration of resources available, from specialized goods to libraries, archives, wealth, and so forth, as well as the greatest concentration of arti-

sans, experts, and teachers, to name but a few. Aldis is home to all the key organizations of the kingdom, and if the heroes cannot find what they are looking for in the city, chances are it isn't all that easily available in the first place.

## CONSTANT OPPORTUNITY

A city the size of Aldis always has *something* going on thanks to the intersecting lives and interests of almost countless individuals and the great institutions at the heart of a nation. The city is full of all kinds of potential. As the popular saying goes, "If you tire of life in Aldis, 'tis time for another turn of the wheel, for you have tired of this life."

## CHALLENGES OF A CITY SERIES

The following are the challenges of setting a *Blue Rose* series in a large city, particularly the city of Aldis.

## OVERWHELMING DETAIL

While a traveling series ventures all over the world, characters only see discrete parts of their surroundings at any given time. Much about the places they visit can be painted in broad strokes, and then not seen again for some

time. In a city series, the focus is always on one place, so there are opportunities to explore it in great depth and detail. While material such as this book is helpful to Narrators in managing that level of detail, it can still be a lot to handle. Running a city series requires some careful note-taking and record-keeping to build up details over time, as well as resources for coming up with elements of the city on-the-fly during a game.

## CLOSE TO THE CENTER, LOW ON THE PYRAMID

*Blue Rose* Narrators have to manage the issue of low-level heroes starting their careers in Aldis, when some of the most famous and powerful people in the kingdom already live there. Initially, the characters are close to the centers of power but still fairly unimportant in the grand scheme of things. This is fine, and there are vast numbers of people in the great city who do not have access to the Royal Palace or get to chat with the queen whenever they want, but be prepared to manage player expectations of their characters' status.

## PASSING OVER

Related to the previous issue is making sure the heroes deal with challenges at their level, so players aren't constantly left wondering why the "big names" of the city aren't taking any notice. Likewise, ensuring the characters feel some sense of responsibility to handle challenges at their level on their own, without looking to hand them off to either their superiors or their underlings, is also important. It can help in these situations to remind players that their heroes' reputations may be on the line, to say nothing of employment or positions of trust. If they frequently pass over things they should be doing, they will quickly find themselves entrusted with fewer and fewer tasks.

## RESPECT FOR THE LAW

In some roleplaying games, the player characters are outlaws, rogues, or rebels—if not actual criminals—whereas in *Blue Rose*, the presumption is that the characters are heroes, champions of justice, law, and civilization. The city is at the center of that devotion. The players characters must respect the rule of law in the city, especially if they are entrusted with enforcing it! Adventures out on the wild frontier or in savage or lawless lands allow a certain amount of latitude, but a city series means that if the heroes tear through a shop or tavern, they may well be faced with an angry shop- or tavern-keeper later on! While their roles may allow them to bend the rules—particularly if they are agents of the Crown—they cannot ignore them.

## ALL ROADS LEAD TO ALDIS

Aldis is the center of the known world in many ways: the ancient capital of the Old Kingdom that once spanned far and wide, the stronghold of the Sorcerer Kings of the Empire of Thorns, the spark of the Great Rebellion that toppled them, and the light of new hope that rose to rebuild the Kingdom of the Blue Rose. The city is legendary in its own right, and a great prize for its people to protect, and for their enemies to envy and seek to control—or destroy.

## CENTER OF TRAVEL

Unlike in a traveling series, in a city series, all roads literally lead to Aldis. Rather than wandering far and wide in search of adventure and exploration, the heroes of the story have only to wait in the greatest city in all Aldea for those things to come to them, and they will. Traffic is the lifeblood of a city. Its roads, bridges, docks, and canals are the arteries through which it flows, keeping the city and its people alive and vital, infusing it with new visitors and immigrants, and removing exiles and expatriates. Traffic brings goods into the city from the surrounding communities, particularly food and other vital supplies the city cannot easily produce on its own, before turning around to take out the manufactured goods the city trades to the wider world. Block that traffic for any real length of time and the city suffers, sickens, and will eventually perish.

## MAINTAINING SAFETY

The key concept of a city series is that adventure opportunities find their way there, rather than the heroes traveling to seek them out. There is a great deal going on in a city as large as Aldis, particularly one that is also the capital and heart of a thriving nation. Although the city and its domain are lauded as safe—and they generally are—that doesn't mean there are not things for heroes to do. Far from it! The work of *keeping* a city like Aldis safe is ongoing and never-ending, worthy of heroes such as those your players may create.

## VISITORS AMONG THE THRONG

Some of the people heroes in a city series encounter are locals while others are visitors. Well-known and legitimate visitors may have their arrivals noted and planned well in advance, with diplomatic protocols for greeting and dealing with them while in the city. Others may arrive

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A detailed illustration of the city of Aldis, showing a dense network of buildings, trees, and a central square. In the foreground, a woman with long red hair and a green and gold ornate headdress is looking towards the viewer. The city is built on a hillside, with many buildings featuring traditional architectural details like tiled roofs and decorative stonework. The overall atmosphere is one of a vibrant, ancient urban center.

quietly—even covertly—with their presence unknown until someone spots them. It's difficult for modern people to appreciate just how easy it is to lose yourself in the throng of people in a city the size of Aldis. Although there are some bureaucratic records, there's nothing quite like modern media and data-sharing in Aldea, so it's possible for a person to adopt a false name or guise and simply disappear into the crowd. People come to Aldis every day via every possible route. While psychic messages are far more effective than wanted posters in terms of putting the faces of fugitives into the minds of the authorities, it is still difficult to watch every port of entry, much less every crowded street corner.

## STREETS AND ROOFTOPS

The close confines of the city can make it easier to escape notice or pursuit by disappearing into a crowd or down the nearest alley or side-street. Heroes may sometimes have to pursue, or escape from, adversaries along the city streets or even across rooftops. Narrators can assign appropriate modifiers to the target numbers of ability tests for the urban conditions: a Dexterity (Stealth) test may get a bonus of +2 or more for being on a crowded street, for example.

### PURSUITS

For pursuits, an advanced test is better suited (see **Advanced Test** in **CHAPTER 10** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook). Usually this involves a test of Constitution (Running), although Dexterity (Acrobatics) and Strength (Jumping) may come into play. Achieving the test's success threshold means the characters have caught their quarry or escaped pursuit, depending on their goal. For an added element of risk, the Narrator may have a failed test as part of the advanced test lead to some consequence for the failing character, ranging from colliding with a person or obstacle in the way to narrowly missing a difficult leap from rooftop to rooftop!

Going from street to rooftop or vice versa is typically a test of Strength (Climbing), with a target number ranging from 9 (easy) for a wall with plenty of hand- and footholds to 15 (hard) or more for a fairly sheer, slick, or otherwise difficult climb. Depending on the circumstances and the length of the climb, a failed test might result in no progress, or it could mean a fall from a height of about half the distance.

## THE ROAD AWAY

While a city series focuses on life and adventure within the urban environment, there's nothing wrong with taking a break occasionally and getting the characters away from the city for an adventure or two or even a

short story arc. Fortunately, there are plenty of opportunities to give the players a change of scenery and a chance to get away from the familiar and out into the world from time to time.

One is simply leaving the city on an errand or mission of some sort. This can range from a short trip into the surrounding regions up to overland or oversea travel for weeks or even months. You don't have to emphasize the journey, although you can play out the interesting parts of it. However, taking the characters away for too long can change the focus of your series. That said, travel away from the city can be refreshing, and it allows you the opportunity to have things happen at home while the characters are away, such that there are interesting new situations taking place when they return.

### THE TRAVELING COURT

The Aldin tradition of the traveling court (see **CHAPTER 6** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook) offers an opportunity to get out of the city, as well. Courtiers, nobles, envoys, and other servants of the Crown might be chosen to travel with the court on its two-month sojourn in another of the kingdom's cities, either as part of the regular relocation of the court every three years or due to some crisis. Conversely, having the court leave Aldis for another city can change things for those who remain behind. Antagonistic or criminal elements might be emboldened, adversaries could look to take advantage of what they see as Aldis' weakness, ambitious nobles or merchants might advance their own causes, and suchlike. In a high-level series, a player character might even be chosen to manage the city in the Sovereign's stead!

## THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST

As the expression says, "Rome was not built in a day." Cities grow over long periods of time—generations, centuries, or even longer. The city of Aldis is nearly two thousand years old, dating back to its founding during the Old Kingdom, built up from its initial settlement in what is now the High Ward, and slowly spreading outward, growing far beyond the old city wall. During that time, the city has expanded, suffered devastation, and been rebuilt multiple times, creating layer upon layer of history. The city is thick with the presence of the past, especially to those sensitive to such things.

There is a strong tendency to reuse and refurbish what can be maintained in a city such as Aldis, meaning some structures are centuries old, parts of them having been replaced and rebuilt over time. Others are put together from the remains of other, older structures, or built on their foundations. For example, what is now a shop might be built on the site of a tavern or home that burned or



was torn down, and what is now an elegant hotel might once have been the manor house of some rich merchant during the time of the Sorcerer Kings. Building materials and fixtures are taken from the wreckage of old structures and used in new ones.

All of this has some effects on visionary and psychic arcana, in that places in cities as old as Aldis can have layer upon layer of psychic resonances left behind. Narrators should keep this in mind when assigning or modifying target numbers for those arcana, and cunning foes might take advantage of it in order to thwart arcane investigators.

## SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE

Although the present citizens of Aldis have had centuries to erase the scars and works of the Sorcerer Kings, it cannot be forgotten that the great city was the center of the Empire of Thorns for nearly three times longer than it has been free from its dark rule. As much as Aldins would like to put aside the interregnum, they understand the importance of the words “never forget” and the shadows of history surrounding them. Somber memorials are found in parts of Aldis as reminders of life under the Sorcerer Kings.

## DARKEST LEGACIES

The shadows of the empire linger in other ways, as well. The Great Rebellion damaged many parts of the city, which were either rebuilt or demolished and built over. What’s more, many remnants of the empire remain: hidden chambers beneath buildings, secret passages, catacombs, and the like that concealed rebels, served smugglers and criminals, and were lairs for cults and dark deeds. Many took the existence and secrets of these places to their graves, so who knows the extent of Aldis’ “shadow city”?

The extent of those remnants of the empire can be important, since although Aldis has done much to rid itself of the legacy of the Sorcerer Kings in the past centuries and remains ever vigilant, there are still places in the city that may contain sorcerous artifacts or other relics of that corrupt time. Such things may be no larger than a ring, gem, or piece of bone hidden in a chimney ruin or beneath a false floor. What’s more, there remain corrupt places in the city, often tucked away or waiting for the right conditions to manifest themselves, which feed into the Fates of those who are there. It is often the responsibility of agents of the Crown like the Sovereign’s Finest to deal with such things. See **Corruption** in CHAPTER 2 of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook for details.



## THE CITY OF TEN THOUSAND STORIES

The most prominent feature of cities is their concentration of people. Wandering envoys visiting tiny villages and far-flung outposts may only see a few dozen or so people at a time. In the great city of Aldis, characters are likely to see more people than that just walking out their front doors in the morning. The streets, plazas, and buildings of the city are thronged with people, and each person has their own particular story. The concentration of people in the city also affects the kinds of stories told there, as well as the sorts of adventures that draw in the heroes, including tales involving politics, social conflicts, investigations, and criminal activities.

## POLITICS

Aldis is the capital city of its namesake nation, the home of the Sovereign and the institutions governing Aldis and its people, so politics are interwoven with the city's very existence. Although Aldins make every effort—including the test of the Blue Rose Scepter—to ensure their political leaders are free from corruption and have the best interests of the people and nation at heart, politics remains “the art of the possible.” Nobles and other leaders must balance differing needs and limited resources against what is just, equitable, and for the greatest good, and also explain their decisions to the people.

## THE GUILDS

While the members of the nobility are the officially-sworn and vetted guardians of the public good, there are other loci of power in the city. The Guild Council must also be contented with. This body of merchants and tradespeople has its own agenda, primarily looking to protect the prosperity and business interests of its members. Negotiations and compromises between the Noble Council and the Guild Council are common, since the those who guide the machineries of trade are capable of inconveniencing those who stand against their wishes. Some of the most active politicking in Aldis occurs *between* members of the Guild Council, particularly when they hold their own elections to choose their members and director, who serves on the Sovereign’s Council.

## THE RHYDAN COUNCIL

The Rhydan Council likes to outwardly maintain the notion that it has as little to do with politics as possible, but the truth of the matter is the rhydan of Aldis keep a watchful eye on everything that happens in the city. Psychic conversations and conclaves occasionally turn to debate about the affairs of the rhydan’s two-legged neighbors and what the awakened animals should do concerning matters that reach their attention. Veterans of Aldin politics know the “head” of the Rhydan Council chosen to serve on the Sovereign’s Council is perhaps the best-informed person in all of Aldis. The term “spymaster” is considered rude, but it’s not entirely inaccurate, either.

## SOCIAL CONFLICT

Beyond just the day-to-day politics of ruling and running a city and a domain as large as Aldis, there is also the “small” matter of large numbers of people living together in relatively close quarters. While Aldins have a reputation as unfailingly polite and cheerful, no large gathering of folk is entirely without discord. Most of the social conflict in Aldis is minor disputes between neighbors over petty annoyances, some of which rise to the level of requiring arbitration or some sort of outside mediation; work that is good training—or punishment—for those in service to the people. Two larger social conflicts more regularly concern Aldis: religious proselytizing and relations with races perceived as sorcerously corrupt.

## CONVERSATIONS

Proselytizing is not technically illegal in Aldis, but is considered in poor taste and an annoyance by most, and a potential threat to society by some. Most proselytizers in the city are members of the Church of the Pure Light, seeking to warn the people of Aldis and bring them into what they believe to be the light and protection of their faith. They cite a lax attitude towards dangerous practices like sorcery and “corrupt” beings like the night people, as well as what they describe as a decadent culture that does not focus on the “core family” as the “cornerstone of society,” as is the case in Jarzon. In short, Aldis should be more like Jarzon to survive in the world, and should take up the same faith towards that end.

Other proselytizers tend to be lone prophets, seers, or mystics, sharing their own particular visions of the gods and their plan for the world and the souls of the Eternal Dance. In general, proselytizers get ignored or told to move along if they’re not welcome. The authori-

ties are only concerned when such conversations turn into arguments—or, worse yet, fights—or in instances when a “seer” or other mystic is an agent or front for a shadow cult. In fact, only open worship and proselytization involving the exarchs is forbidden in Aldis, and any public discussion of such is sure to draw attention and some serious inquiries.

## CORRUPTIONS

The avoidance of anything touched by Shadow connects to the other social conflict in Aldis: the treatment of shadow-touched peoples, particularly the night people and the dark vata. The inclusion of races literally created by the arcana of the Sorcerer Kings has tested Aldis’ openness, and not everyone passes that test. Even after generations of integration, a small handful of people remain suspicious of and prejudiced toward anything they deem “corrupt” or “touched by Shadow.” Such behavior is considered inappropriate in society, but it still exists, often festering quietly beneath the surface until the right opportunity or incident brings it into the open. That Queen Jaellin has chosen a vata’sha from Kern as her consort shows clearly where she stands on the matter, and the just and fair people of Aldis continue to counter the notion that prejudice against any person is permissible.

## CRIME AND MYSTERIES

Beyond mere politics and social friction, Aldis, like all cities, experiences crime, ranging from petty theft to cold-blooded murder. Thanks to the Aldin Watch, the queen’s justice is swift and, because of the arcane arts, fairly sure as well. This tends to keep crime in the city limited primarily to crimes of passion and professional criminals who know their trade and are willing to take the risks involved. The

### INVESTIGATIVE TOOLS

Object Reading is the most common and effective investigative tool, offering glimpses of past events from psychic impressions left on places and objects. It is not perfectly effective: as mentioned under **The Presence of the Past**, some areas of the city are so dense with layers of psychic impressions that the target number for an Object Reading test is much higher, perhaps even +6 or more. Savvy criminals are also careful to avoid emotional outbursts or psychic shocks likely to leave traces; if all the victim experiences is a sudden, sharp stab from nowhere before death takes them, without even seeing their killer, then arcane investigation will reveal little. Second Sight is also used to investigate any signatures left behind by arcana.

In speaking with witnesses and suspects, Heart Reading is useful to sense their emotional state and to pick up when they are lying. It is also not perfectly reliable, as the innocent are often quite agitated or nervous when speaking to the authorities. A heart-reader might miss a lie and cannot pick up on half-truths or lies of omission. Still, a criminal would do well not to speak at all when questioned, or to stick to the absolute truth. While other psychic arts like Mind Reading and Mind Delving are quite useful in finding and interrogating people, they are also sorcery when used without the subject’s consent. Such techniques made the secret police of the Sorcerer Kings frightfully effective, but are not practiced in places such as Aldis. This means the process of using arcana to dig up evidence and find and apprehend a suspect still tends to involve a good deal of leg-work and more mundane investigative methods.

### QUICK NPC GENERATION

In the appendices in the back of this book, you'll find a Narrator Character generator, which uses a combination of pulls from the Major and Minor Arcana to help generate on-the-spot characters for the Narrator's use. They provide appearance, personality, role in Aldin society, and motivations. Narrators should of course always feel free to choose from the charts included, ignoring or even entirely forgoing any cards drawn to best suit the scene at hand.



latter tend to belong to the Shadow Guild or the Silence, or else are small-time enough to escape their notice. Those who rise above such ranks are either recruited or eliminated as potential rivals. The professional criminals of Aldis prefer a peaceful and orderly city, so they take pains to keep their own activities in the shadows.

This is vital because the Watch solves most of the crimes they become aware of, given time. Thus, the ideal crime is one that is never detected in the first place, or at least not until the trail of investigation has gone truly cold. Both the Silence and the Shadow Guild operate in small cells specifically to insulate their organizations against the possibility of one compromised lieutenant revealing all to the authorities. For their part, the Aldin Watch uses all non-sorcerous means at its disposal to investigate crimes and to track and interrogate the perpetrators.

## FACES IN THE CROWD

It is hardly expected of the Narrator to prepare a census of the hundreds of thousands of people living in a city the size of Aldis. Most of the time, the bulk of the population is made up of background characters, a largely faceless crowd. You can describe the diverse people the heroes pass on the street to give scenes a sense of place, but otherwise you don't need to worry about them. Still, from time to time, the player characters are going to encounter random people and you will need to know more about them, such as when they stop to ask questions of that incidental cart-hauler, baker, or child. In these cases, you need to come up with characters on the fly to help your setting come to life. The following are some useful resources for the Narrator in these situations.

## ROLL OF NAMES

You may wish to prepare yourself with a list of ten to twenty character names: first names, possibly surnames, sorted by gender and nationality, if necessary. When players ask the name of a random character you haven't detailed, you can

quickly glance at the names on your list, choose one, and place a note or check mark beside it to note the arrival of this new named character. The name you choose might also offer clues about that character. If it sounds "foreign," perhaps the character is a visitor or immigrant, for example. The back of this book has an appendix with a broad selection of names to get you started.

Likewise, you can also prepare a quick reference for the major named characters in your series, ones the heroes interact with on a regular basis. This could be a reference table on one or more sheets of paper, a set of index cards, or even a searchable spreadsheet or wiki—whatever is easiest for you to reference while running the game. It gives you an easy way to recall a particular character's name, role, or other details at a glance.

## CENTRAL CASTING

For additional inspirational images, you can collect photos and art, either digitally from online sources or as clippings from print materials. Focus on images of people who could be characters in your *Blue Rose* game: use their pictures to inspire descriptions, or even just show them to your players when they ask what someone looks like. Encourage your players to get involved in this process by collecting and giving you images they find inspirational. You can extend the process to scenery, locations, and the like, as well.

You can even bring this image collection into game play by having your players provide you with themed images. For example, have each player provide one or more images of people their characters would be romantically interested in, if they met them. Then you can build a character around that image and introduce them in play, knowing the player character will show some interest. Things can get complicated if one of their potential romantic interests also turns out to be an antagonist! You can do the same with images of people the players feel their characters would immediately dislike, want to help, and so forth, giving you a useful "central casting" resource for the game.



**T**he Case of the Rhydan Swine is a *Blue Rose* adventure for a group of four to six characters, levels 1–3. It is intended as an introductory adventure which can start the characters' careers in the city of Aldis and lead into an ongoing series set there. Narrators may wish to adjust the opposition in the adventure for a higher-level group of heroes, either increasing the number of adversaries, or making them more formidable as outlined in **Beefing Up Adversaries** in **CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook.

This adventure tends to suit a mix of heroes with some strong investigative abilities and an interest in enforcing the law, although the characters do not need to be official agents of the Sovereign or the like. Animism and Psychic arcana are useful, but not essential. The same is true of tracking abilities, particularly if any of the heroes are rhydan.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Sylas, a hired hand living and working on a hog farm on the outskirts of Aldis, is deeply indebted to the Silence for his gambling losses. So, when asked to perform a favor for them by way of repayment, he did so without question, serving some “special” feed to the farm’s hogs: human remains the Silence wanted disposed of without

any traces. With the hogs slated for slaughter soon, no evidence at all will be left behind.

Except that Aron, the young grandson of Farmer Faldin, is a budding adept and quite fond of Wilhelmina, one of the pigs. As slaughter time approached, Aron used his nascent psychic talent to tell the farm hands “No!” and they mistook it for one of the pigs awakening as a rhydan! Since killing another intelligent creature would be murder, the farmers set about finding the supposed rhy-pig, buying Aron some time but raising the suspicions and ire of the Silence. If there *were* a rhydan in the sty, that could mean a witness to their crimes!

Young Aron worked up a scheme to save Wilhelmina and release her on the outskirts of Aldis by convincing folk at the farm that she was, indeed, a rhydan. He would miss her, but better she be free than slaughtered! He used his arcane talents to get Wilhelmina released, but then took it upon himself to escort her away, disappearing from the farm. Aron’s undisciplined and uncontrolled use of arcana attracted the attention of a shadow cult, offering them a rare prize: a young, untrained adept. They seized Aron not far from his home, but the pig Wilhelmina ran off.

Now both Aron and Wilhelmina are missing, along with the original victim murdered by the Silence. The criminal syndicate is looking for the supposed rhy-pig they fear witnessed Sylas’ deeds, while the nervous farmhand fears exposure. Meanwhile, the Cult of the Crimson Eye has Aron as their prisoner. This is where the heroes come in.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure is divided up into a series of encounters, each loosely organized around a particular focus or goal:

The **Introduction** serves to bring the characters into the story, most likely starting them off at Faldin's Farm, although the Narrator may wish to begin a little earlier if it fits the characters and their various in-roads into the adventure better.

**Scene One** is the investigation at Faldin's Farm, where the heroes meet the various characters there, learn the story as the farm-folk know it, and have the opportunity to search for clues and follow up on leads. In particular, they're introduced to the farmhand Sylas, who is acting suspiciously.

**Scene Two** involves tracking down Sylas' connections with the Silence at a hospitality house on the south side of the Rose River in Aldis. The heroes encounter the criminal Norrood and his henchmen, and a conflict may break out. They also have the opportunity to rescue Wilhelmina the pig, pointing them to the whereabouts of the missing Aron.

**Scene Three** takes the characters to a riverfront hideout where the Cult of the Crimson Eye is holding Aron before they smuggle him across the river and into the depths of the city. The heroes confront the cultists and have the opportunity to rescue the boy.

The **Conclusion** looks at the wrap-up of the events in the adventure and possible loose threads for the Narrator to pick up in future stories.

## INTRODUCTION

*The Case of the Rhydan Swine* is assumed to begin when the characters arrive at Faldin's Farm in **Scene One** to begin looking into the disappearances of Aron and the (supposed) rhy-pig Wilhelmina; there's also a possibility they're there to investigate the disappearance of the merchant Horst Drover at the hands of the Silence. You could also start at an earlier point in the timeline, if you want to establish more groundwork for the players and their characters.

## INVOLVING THE HEROES

Exactly how the players' characters get involved in the plot of *The Case of the Rhydan Swine* depends on who they are and what their roles are in the city. The two primary in-roads involve the disappearance and murder of the merchant Horst Drover, and the disappearance of Aron and Wilhelmina from Faldin's Farm.

If the heroes are primarily envoys of the Sovereign's Finest, nobles, guardians, or people in similar roles of civic responsibility, then they may be assigned the task of investigating one or both disappearances, most likely that

of the boy and the supposed rhy-pig. Rhydan characters, in particular, may be involved on behalf of the Rhydan Council to ensure the safety and rights of one of their own in what could be a delicate situation, especially since Wilhelmina is initially a potential suspect in the disappearance of Aron.

If the player characters are not the type to be entrusted with an official investigation, they could be amateur or freelance investigators, or simply friends or associates of the various parties involved in the plot. Possibilities include:

- Characters who are friends—or even relatives—of Farmer Faldin and her family, called upon to help in this troubling situation.
- Heroes who have crossed paths—and possibly swords—with the Silence in the past, who are investigating their activities in Aldis. A brief recent visit by Norrood, a known Silence member, to the outlying farm is unusual enough to warrant investigation in hope of a lead about the Silence's location and plans.
- Adepts, particularly those with the Animism and Psychic talents, may have sensed an unusual burst of arcane activity in the area of the farm and come to investigate, either on their own or on behalf of one of Aldis' institutions of learning, religion, or security. Likewise, those with the Visionary talent might have premonitions or dreams involving the farm, drawing them there.
- Heroes tracking the activities of shadow cults in Aldis, particularly the Cult of the Crimson Eye, might have information about cult members spotted along the road not far from Faldin's Farm, headed north. For example, someone may have just glimpsed a poorly-concealed pendant bearing the cult's emblem and reported it to the authorities, or directly to the heroes.

## SCENE ONE

## FALDIN'S FARM

## Exploration/Roleplaying Encounter

In this scene, the characters come to Faldin's Farm, to the south of the Rose River, to begin an investigation. They may begin with not very much to go on, but there are opportunities to acquire various clues and leads they can pursue. This scene is fairly free-form, both an exploration and roleplaying encounter depending on what the characters are doing, and they are free to go about their investigation however they wish. Allow the players some latitude and be prepared in case they head off in an unusual direction. See **Staying On Target** at the end of this scene for some advice in that regard.

## THE FARM AND ITS FOLK

Faldin's Farm is located on the southern end of the swath of farms and cultivated land south of the city of Aldis and the Rose River. Because the farm deals primarily with livestock, it is located on the outer edge of the area. The farm itself actually consists of a small collection of buildings: farmhouses, barns, pens for livestock, sheds, and the like, making it almost a tiny village, complete with multiple families as well as single hands and employees. Compared to the city itself, the farm is fairly rustic, and more like the Aldin villages of the Central Valleys: there is well-water, for example, but also outhouses and minimal plumbing, and oil lanterns at night rather than the arcane street lighting of the city.

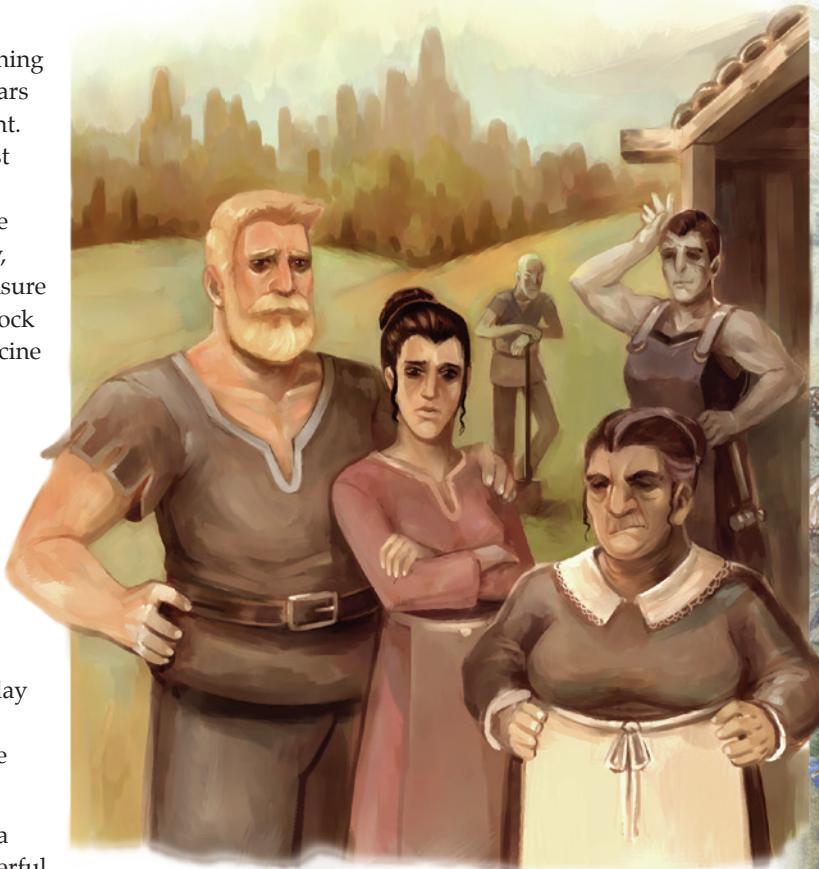
The major people of the farm the heroes are likely to interact with include:

- **Faldin**, the owner and grand-dame of the farm. Farmer Faldin is a mature woman who has owned and run her farm for decades with the assistance of two partners, both now deceased. Faldin is a conscientious citizen and loyal supporter of the Sovereign, as well as a no-nonsense businessperson with little time for pretense. Her family is vitally important to her. Faldin uses the **Laborer** stock character statistics in **CHAPTER 8**, advanced to *Elite* with Bargaining, Nature Lore, and similar focuses to reflect her vocation.
- **Rian** (REE-Ahn), Faldin's daughter and Aron's mother. Rian is learning all the business of running the farm from her mother, more so in recent years now that her son is older and more independent. Rian is kind and empathetic, a capable herbalist who helps treat minor ailments and injuries on the farm that don't require the services of a true healer. Her greatest concern is for Aron's safety, and she will do anything to protect him and ensure he's returned home. Rian uses the **Merchant** stock character statistics in **CHAPTER 8**, with the Medicine (Novice) talent.
- **Alain** (AL-lane), Rian's husband and Aron's father. Alain manages a great deal of the work on the farm, particularly the hands and hired help. His charm and personable nature—the same qualities that helped win him Rian's heart—make him quite good at it. Alain loves his son, partially because he is so much his mother's boy in terms of his kind and sympathetic nature. He is frustrated by any delay in finding Aron and bringing him home. Alain uses the **Laborer** stock character statistics in the **CHAPTER 8** with the Strength (Might) focus.
- **Jorra** (YOR-ra), the farm's smith and farrier, is a night person with her people's broad and powerful

build, made more so by hours of work at her anvil. She mainly makes and repairs horseshoes, nails, and farm and household implements. Jorra has lived happily at the farm for seven years now, after leaving behind a more difficult life on the borderlands of Aldis. She's grateful for a life of peace among a welcoming community, and hopes to have left her time of struggle for survival behind her. Jorra uses the **Commoner** stock character statistics in **CHAPTER 8**, with a Smithing (Blacksmith) specialized trade focus (as per the **Optional: Trade Focuses** sidebar in **CHAPTER 3** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook).

- **Sylas** (SI-lass), a farm hand. Although he is a capable enough worker, Sylas has a gambling addiction that has left him deeply indebted to the Silence after a long losing streak. He is responsible for carrying out the Silence's orders to dispose of the remains of the dead merchant, Horst Drover, although he had nothing to do with Aron or Wilhelmina's disappearance. Sylas is fearful of exposure and is doing his best to keep his composure—and his secrets. Sylas uses the **Laborer** stock character statistics in **CHAPTER 8**.

There are thirty other people at the farm, mainly field hands, cooks, apprentices, and their families. Feel free to make up other farm-folk for the characters to meet and interact with, using the guidelines in this book and the *Blue Rose* core rulebook.



# THE CASE OF THE RHYDAN SWINE

## THE FACTS OF THE MATTER

Official or even unofficial assistance in finding Aron is welcome at the farm, and the characters are likely to have the opportunity to sit down with Faldin and her daughter and son-in-law—together or individually—to learn what they know. The facts are limited, but fairly straightforward.

- Three days prior, the farm prepared to slaughter a number of their pigs. Sylas, one of the farm hands, says he received a psychic communication, telling them to stop. Two other farm hands also received this sending.
- The farm suspended plans to slaughter the pigs, believing it was possible there were one or more awakening rhydan among them. They made preparations to investigate.
- The following morning, Aron, Faldin's grandson, was missing, along with one of the pigs, Wilhelmina. There has been no sign of either of them since.
- There's no evidence either Aron or Wilhelmina were taken by force, or that any violence was done to either of them.

## INVESTIGATION

Allow the players to have their characters investigate by whatever means they wish, using the following guidelines of what they might turn up.

### INTERVIEWS

The majority of people on the farm haven't much to add to the facts initially provided by Farmer Faldin. Feel free to offer speculation about the boy Aron being abducted by the rhy-pig, or perhaps a creature of Shadow in the form of a pig, as well as idle chatter about odd folk passing by the farm on their way to or from the city: cloaked travelers, Roamers, a lone rider late at night, and so forth. All of this is nonsense, of course, and people seeing threats in harmless everyday occurrences, although at least one late-night visit was the Silence delivering Sylas' first "task" for them.

The other two farmhands, Owain and Midge, back up Sylas' story about the psychic voice that spoke to them. They didn't recognize it, nor could they tell where it came from, but it seemed to them that the pigs were all staring at them, so they naturally assumed it was one of them. None of the three have any real experience with the psychic arts, so they have nothing with which to compare the experience.

During any initial interviews or questioning, a successful **TN 9 Perception (Empathy)** test notes Sylas appears especially nervous. If called on it, he simply says the whole matter has him on edge and that he's worried about "the poor, missing lad," which a successful **TN 11 Perception (Empathy)** test or a use of Truth Reading (via the Heart

Reading arcanum) reveals is a lie. If the characters press Sylas, it doesn't take much for him to crack; a successful **TN 11 Communication** test does the trick, using focuses like Deception, Investigation, or Persuasion. Alternatively, a successful **TN 11 Strength (Intimidation)** test works, too, since Sylas is something of a coward.

If the heroes get Sylas to crack, his guilty conscience spills out the whole story, starting with him moaning, "The pigs! The pigs knew—they knew what I did!" He tells the characters how the Silence forced him to feed human remains to the pigs to dispose of them, and how he became entangled with them because of his gambling debts at a place called the South Bend near the southern riverfront.

## EXAMINATION

Careful examination of physical evidence at the farm can turn up the following.

- A successful **TN 9 Perception (Searching)** test shows Aron left the farm with the clothes he was wearing, his shoes, and belt, but nothing in his room is disturbed or otherwise missing.
- A successful **TN 11 Perception (Seeing or Tracking)** test at the pigpen reveals a confused wallow of tracks in the muck, but also a pair of clear, deep footprints just inside the fence made by fairly small shoes, sized for a child rather than an adult.
- A successful **TN 11 Perception (Searching)** test turns up a wooden "coin" with a U-shaped bend, a star, and the letters "SB" carved into it—a token from the South Bend tavern—in Sylas' quarters. A successful **TN 13 Intelligence** test reveals where it's from; apply a +2 focus bonus if the character has either the Drinking or Gambling focus.
- A successful **TN 15 Perception (Smelling)** test by a rhydan picks up faint traces that a human and a pig made their way away from the pigpen some time ago. The trail is too old to follow past the road and there are no clear tracks, but it seems they were headed south.
- If the characters follow the road south and search, a successful **TN 13 Perception (Searching)** test turns up a torn piece of blue fabric discarded near the road that anyone from the farm can identify as belonging to Aron's tunic. It's found less than half a mile away, but out of sight of the farm.

## ARCANA

Characters can use arcane means to further their investigation as well, including the following primary avenues.

- **Heart Reading** can tell them when someone—particularly Sylas—is lying.
- **Object Reading** used on the swatch of fabric found alongside the road shows Aron and Wilhelmina were set upon by a small group of cloaked and hooded

# THE CASE OF THE RHYDAN SWINE

figures, who seized Aron after he tore away from one of them. Both Aron and Wilhelmina were trussed up and put in the bed of a cart under a cloth, and taken up the road north.

- **Psychic Contact** allows a character with the Animism talent to communicate with the pigs as “witnesses.” Cleverer than many folk assume, the swine can confirm Sylas’ misdeeds. They can also relate how Aron came and led Wilhelmina out of the pen, to the road, and away from the farm southward.
- **Second Sight** allows a character able to read arcane signatures to sense the use of arcana on the farm. A successful TN 13 Perception (Psychic or Visionary) test detects there was a psychic contact, while 2 points of Outcome reveal the user was a human psychic, and not rhydan.

## STAYING ON TARGET

It is entirely possible during this initial scene of the adventure for the players (and their heroes) to go off on a tangent, perhaps quite far afield from what is actually going on. That’s fine, so long as you and the players are having a good time, but a concern if it threatens to spoil the game. Fortunately, you, as Narrator, have a few tools at your disposal to help get the players back onto the right path, if you’re not feeling like improvising whole new sections of the story.

The first is Sylas. If it seems the characters are going to give him a pass and not press for information, you can have the farmhand’s guilty conscience force him into a confession, pointing towards the Silence as potential culprits. . Or, you can have the Silence decide to eliminate him as a loose end (see **The Silence Strikes**, following).

The other is Wilhelmina. If it seems clear the heroes are going to bypass investigating the South Bend and possibly miss the rest of the adventure altogether, skip **Scene Two** and have the wayward pig find the heroes and pass on Aron’s message for them to come rescue him.

## OPTIONAL: THE SILENCE STRIKES

This is an optional addition to this scene, useful if you feel the need for some action or conflict. Sylas may make the Silence aware of possible witnesses to their cover-up and they could decide to deal with the loose ends by eliminating the farmhand. If so, you can have the heroes alerted as a Silence killer (use the **Rogue** from **CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook) attempts to murder Sylas, or after the deed is done. If the investigators save Sylas’ life, he tells them everything in the hope of gaining protection from the Silence. If the criminals murder the characters’ primary lead, Sylas might give them a dying confession, or the heroes might find a note or useful clue he left behind.

## SCENE TWO

### GAMES OF CHANCE

#### Combat/Roleplaying Encounter

In this scene, the characters have the opportunity to track down a cell of the Silence operating illegal betting schemes in the area of the city south of the river, and learn more about Silence operations in Aldis.

If Sylas confesses or the heroes find his token from the South Bend, they know where to go. If they’ve talked to Sylas, they have some sense of what to expect: the Silence is behind illegal gambling operations in this part of the city, and has used them to entangle Sylas in far more serious crimes.

## THE SOUTH BEND

The South Bend Tavern is a somewhat bawdy public house not far from the riverfront on the south side of the Rose River, in the Grainview neighborhood of the Middle Ward, catering to dock-workers, price-conscious travelers, and farmers from further south. It’s mainly a place to drink, although there’s sometimes food to be had, and tavern-keeper Nat Crowell is happy to turn a blind eye to whatever else his patrons do or talk about so long as their coin is good. For some time, he has allowed floating dice-and card-games at his establishment for “entertainment,” overlooking the often substantial betting that goes on, or how the organizers of said games seem particularly well acquainted with the goings-on in the city. Nat gets a cut, and keeps his silence—so to speak.

If characters visit the South Bend in the evening, there are 8+1d6 patrons there. They and Nat use the **Commoner** stock character statistics from **CHAPTER 8: People of Aldis**, should it matter, and use makeshift weapons that inflict 1d6 damage. While tavern patrons are willing to throw a punch or a tankard if provoked, roll a TN 13 Willpower (Morale) test for them when faced with any real show of force, including characters drawing steel rather than raising fists. Any damage to their number provokes another morale test until they break and scatter.

## BREAKING THE SILENCE

The real foes in this scene are agents of the Silence: the crook Norrood and his small gang of toughs. Norrood is a **Rogue** from **CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook, backed up by three **Warriors**, except they have cudgels in place of sword and bow (give them the Bludgeons weapon group; +4 attack roll, 2d6+1 damage) and no armor.

Norrood is a somewhat greasy and rough-around-the-edges type. He’s ambitious and looking to advance his position in the Silence; using Sylas to solve a problem was intended to show his initiative. He initially plays things

ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE

# THE CASE OF THE RHYDAN SWINE

cool. If he can, he'll find out what the strangers think they know before looking to stage a withdrawal. If the characters ask to join the game, he lets them. Feel free to have the players engage in an advanced test of **Communication (Gambling)** to see if they can win. However, if things begin getting too drawn out, one of Norrood's men gets jumpy and takes a swing at a character, starting a fight.

Although Norrood is guilty of a whole host of criminal activities, he knows nothing about the disappearance of the boy Aron or the pig Wilhelmina. If he's taken alive, Norrood can inform on some of the Silence members in the neighborhood, a potential boon for the Aldin Watch.

## SCENE THREE

### IN A PIG'S EYE

#### Combat Encounter

In this scene, the heroes are on the trail of the missing boy Aron and can rescue him from the sinister Cult of the Crimson Eye with the aid of an unexpected helper.

### WILHELMINA'S MESSAGE

Most likely, the clue that guides the characters to Aron is Wilhelmina the pig, who escaped from the clutches of the Crimson Eye cultists bearing a psychic message from the boy. Wilhelmina seeks out friendly authority figures as well as Aron's home, so the characters may encounter her at or near the farm or in the southern part of the city, including right outside the South Bend Tavern. The simple fact that the characters are looking for Aron provides a bit of a psychic "beacon" for his message to reach them—along with the fact that they smell of her home farm, drawing her to them.

When Wilhelmina makes her appearance, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

*Just then, a young but quite plump pig, a sow from the look of her, comes trotting up towards you. Her pink snout wrinkles and ears twitch as she looks right up at you, her dark eyes meeting yours, and you feel the faint, tingling brush of a surface-level psychic contact.*

*"Please..." a young voice says, "help me..." An image fills your mind of a derelict warehouse along the riverfront, along a closed-off pier, and a sign belonging to a chandler's shop.*

Any further interaction with Wilhelmina makes it clear she is not a rhydan, just a reasonably bright and loyal farm-yard pig. The psychic message clearly came from someone else; anyone with the Animism or Psychic talents knows it was an implanted message that Wilhelmina delivered. If the heroes rush to Aron's rescue, Wilhelmina tries to accompany them unless she is forcibly restrained from doing so. If

the characters think to ask the pig to lead them to Aron, she does so, running off in the direction of the riverfront.

## THE RIVERFRONT

The place seen in Aron's psychic message is fairly easy to find, even if the characters simply search the streets along the riverfront; easier still if they ask about the landmarks or follow Wilhelmina. No test is necessary either way, just cut to the next part of the scene with the heroes arriving outside the run-down warehouse. The place belonged to a merchant whose import business fared poorly and has been taken up by the Cult of the Crimson Eye as a temporary hide-out in this part of the city. Their plan is to smuggle Aron north across the river, deeper into Aldis, where he can be more properly "inducted" into the cult.

The warehouse is a wood-frame building similar to a large barn, with sliding doors at either end, a large, open main floor, and a loft above reachable by wooden stairs along one side. Smaller, person-sized doors open in one of the sliding doors on each side. The cult has the doors locked and barred, requiring either a successful **TN 15 Strength (Might)** test to break them down or a successful **TN 13 Dexterity (Lock Picking)** test to open them. Characters can also access the interior with a successful **TN 13 Strength (Climbing)** test to reach a high window.

## CONFRONTING THE CULT

Inside the building are members of the Cult of the Crimson Eye equal in number to the characters. They are led by a human woman named **Sethra**. Use the **Adept** from **CHAPTER 12** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook for Sethra, with the Psychic option and the Heart Reading, Illusion, Psychic Blast, Psychic Contact, and Second Sight arcana. The remaining cultists use the **Warrior** stats, also from **CHAPTER 12** of the core rulebook. Sethra is an ambitious young initiate of the Cult, already drunk on the power of the sorcery she has learned thus far, and seeks to emulate cult leader Dara Kalchy (see **Cult of the Crimson Eye** in **CHAPTER 6** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook for details). **Aron** (use the **Child**, **CHAPTER 8**, giving him the Wild Arcane [Novice] talent, with Psychic Contact, Animal Messenger, and one other as-yet-unmanifested arcanum of the Narrator's choice) is tied up and gagged in the loft and has been dosed with a suppression elixir to keep him from using his arcane talents any further.

The cultists fight to the death against intruders, although Sethra attempts to flee if the odds run against her, either alone or taking Aron with her as circumstances dictate. She may use her Illusion arcana to create a distraction to cover her retreat. If the fight goes against the heroes or they need a last-minute advantage, Wilhelmina the pig may help them out, or Aron may recover enough for one use of an arcane ability to offer a warning or to overcome one of Sethra's powers.



## CONCLUSION

Ideally, the heroes manage to rescue young Aron from the clutches of the cultists and break up a local Silence operation, which solves another disappearance and murder as well!

### Rewards

If the characters are largely successful in their investigation, taking down the Silence and the cult members and rescuing Aron (and perhaps Wilhelmina as well), they should advance to level 2. If they are already at level 2 or 3, one or two more successful adventures might be needed for them to advance again. See the guidelines in **CHAPTER 11** of the *Blue Rose* core rulebook for further details.

The heroes earn the gratitude of Faldin's Farm for the safe return of Aron. They're welcome to visit any time, and the farm-folk are happy to help in whatever way they can. In the future, the farm may serve as a source of local information or even a safe haven, if the characters are in need of one. The farm-folk likely tell everyone about the heroes' exploits, and might even bring them other problems to solve, if you're in need of adventure hooks. If one of the characters is an adept, particularly with the Animism or Psychic talents, Aron might seek to apprentice with them, becoming a companion. He's a smart, hard-working lad who comes with an unusual familiar.

Any remaining rewards are up to you. If characters have membership or advancement in particular organizations as one of their goals, this initial adventure may

draw those groups' attention, if not an immediate invitation or promotion.

### FURTHER ADVENTURES

*The Case of the Rhydan Swine* can be a “big break” adventure for novice characters in Aldis, bringing them a measure of notoriety and the attention of their superiors—as well as some dangerous foes. It also opens up some possible storylines for the heroes to pursue in further adventures. Certainly, the characters get a reputation as investigators, problem-solvers, and crime-stoppers, which can lead to further opportunities for adventure in the city, either as members, or consultants for the Aldin Watch.

The Silence is not at all pleased about the arrests or deaths of some of their people. The operations Norrood controlled were small change, but there is a threat of greater exposure, leading the organization to tidy up loose ends. The Silence may not immediately retaliate against the investigators, but they're sure to keep an eye on them to see if they will be a persistent problem. If Norrood survives, he may seek revenge or be tasked with eliminating the characters before they can pose more of a threat. He may also turn up floating face-down in the Rose River, if the Silence feels he's a liability.

Likewise, the Cult of the Crimson Eye takes notice of the heroes who thwarted one of their promising adepts and denied them the prize of another. If Sethra survived, she seeks revenge against the characters. If not, her mentor Dara Kalchy may do so. The Cult might also take the intervention as a sign that these investigators are targets for corruption and recruitment, especially any arcane talents among them.

# APPENDIX I: ALDIS ENCOUNTERS

The following encounters are not intended to be combat encounters or story seeds. Rather, they are “slice of life” encounters—the sort of things characters moving around the city of Aldis might encounter that are worth stopping and noticing. Player characters being the sort of creatures they are, they may choose to pause and investigate these small scenes, or simply take note of them and keep going about their business.

These encounters are written to be detailed enough for the Narrator to easily embellish them with specific occurrences, people, and events to make them interesting and relevant to their current series, while leaving the entries themselves sufficiently generalized that if they are drawn again in the future, they needn’t be the exact same event all over again.

Simply draw a single tarot card during the game, add whatever details you see fit, and lay bare the wonders, turmoil, and vibrancy that life in the city of Aldis has to offer!

## MAJOR ARCANA

CARD	EVENT
The Fool	A young, solitary Roamer with a rhy-bonded companion wistfully wanders about the streets, cheerfully conversing with those nearby. Picking up parts of conversations here and there, you notice that the Roamer is asking for directions to the nearest trading road. Desperate to begin their own journey, the young Roamer seems blithely unaware of his companion’s obvious discomfort around some of the folk he chats with.
The Adept	You come across a gaggle of people surrounding a citizen. Preening over the gathered crowd, this brightly dressed individual stands in the center of the group, excitedly expounding the virtues of various arcane wares they have acquired. Enraptured by the adept’s words, some onlookers seem eager to snatch up various items.
The Priestess	An elderly vata’an laevvel woman is out in the city, surrounded by young children. The children bustle around the elderly instructor, yet their voice remains calm and soothing. Gathering the little one’s attentions with the simplest of gestures, the teacher begins their lesson, pointing out something in the city environment to center their learning on.
The Empress	A gathering of people dressed in rich garb are followed by a small caravan. Amongst the various carts and litters, wines and exotics foodstuffs can be seen, while covered boxes hint at even more sumptuous items hidden away. The extravagant display continues to its destination, while onlookers begin to stand up a little straighter and primp their clothing, anxious for a taste.
The Emperor	Walking about the streets, you see two citizens engaged in an animated conversation. One of the pair appears younger than their companion, and is repeatedly looking down at their hands. As you close the distance, you see the younger person is clutching a small object, which they examine intently, quickly tilting and turning it at various angles to examine it in a better light. While they do so, the older companion, speaking of rewards and honors, authoritatively gestures to the piece and points in a particular direction.
The Hierophant	While enjoying a refreshment, you cannot help but pick up on small conversations that buzz about your ears. Turning to see one of the sources of these spirited discussions, you happen to spot a small group engaged in polite, but animated, conversation. At the center of this small group, a noble is enraptured by the storytelling abilities of his companions. The noble, dressed in clothing that seems to set them apart from the more obvious locals, soaks up the discourse eagerly, only interjecting to ask clarifying questions about the various tales and descriptions the seasoned locals provide.
The Lovers	The air is abuzz with excitement as you notice those nearest you are all wearing happy faces and what appears to be their finest clothing. The smell of fresh flowers follows them, and soon so do others; all carry various items, some domestic in nature and others which are more sumptuous. Those in this entourage all speak happily, many greeting each other with warm embraces. Through the chatter, you hear them talk of the joys of love and how this is the most auspicious time for couples to profess their deepest feelings for one another.
The Chariot	While passing an open portico, you happen upon a middle-aged Rezean and an Aldin craftsman. The Rezean hands a large scroll to the craftsman and begins discussing their plans for a new invention. The Aldin unfurls the scroll and asks questions about the design, while offering some potential improvements.
Strength	Walking down the street, a warrior from Wyss can be seen escorting a small group of merchants. The sound of heavy cart wheels rattling along the ground fills the air. While the merchants and traders in the warrior’s retinue absentmindedly follow behind, the warrior’s eyes carefully survey the busy street. Though the warrior appears young, their eyes tell a different tale: one of hardship, experience, and resolve.
The Hermit	From out of the crowd, you notice a large family gathering around a citizen who is dressed all in white. They each begin to embrace one another and offer warm but tearful goodbyes. The figure in white begins to walk away from their family, only pausing to give them one final smile before walking out of sight.

## APPENDIX: ALDIS ENCOUNTERS

### MAJOR ARCANA

CARD	EVENT
The Wheel	Traveling about the city, you come across a small area that seems somewhat strange. Even in bright light, it appears somewhat shrouded in shadow, and the air takes on a crisp and charged feeling that is unusual for the season. You notice a figure just in the distance, but their outline appears hazy. At first, they seem to be dressed in noble garb, but upon closer inspection they look to be wearing only humble pieces of clothing. Locals seem unfazed by the area's unusual nature, while passersby quickly, but unworriedly, move through the area, whispering to one another about the nature of Life and Death and the Wheel of Rebirth.
Justice	Amongst the daily hum of city life, you catch sight of a gathering of citizens, who have divided themselves into two groups. Between these groups stands a noble, who gestures for one of the groups to begin speaking. They accuse one member from the other group of various transgressions, who in turn is given a chance to argue their innocence. The noble looks on, weighing the decision in their mind. Another citizen approaches the noble and offers to act as a heart-reader, should they need assistance in the matter.
The Hanged Man	The sound of laughter directs your gaze over to a rhydan who is sitting in a corner, surrounded by other figures. As if holding court, the rhydan begins to pose a riddle to those in attendance. Some in the crowd offer up answers, and as soon as one riddle is solved the rhydan poses yet another. If asked, one of the onlookers simply says that the rhydan is looking for a new perspective.
Death	The sounds of loud clanking and banging fill the street. Turning to the source of this loud noise, you see a citizen surrounded by several crates set before a house. They wipe away tears from their eyes and begin to point towards the house, calling out orders to those still inside. More boxes and crates emerge and continue to pile up outside. The teary citizen begins to take items from these boxes and offer them to passersby. Before long, a kind-eyed citizen approaches the scene and offers the former homeowner a small instrument. Soon, others begin to arrive and help to move the boxes.
Temperance	While out in the city, you come across a large group of citizens waiting to enter one of the nearby buildings. The group stands awkwardly, divided into two smaller sections. One is dressed in noble regalia, while the other looks to be comprised of members of various merchant guilds. The air is thick with tension between the two factions, and no member of one attempts to speak with the other. A door opens and a rhydan warmly asks those gathered to enter so that the meeting can begin.
The Exarch	An ominous shadow falls across one of the buildings you pass on your way about Aldis. The main wooden door appears barred, and the glass windows are caked with dust. As you look at the exterior of the building, which shows signs of wear from many seasons past, you notice movement in one of the windows. Was it the wind, or something else? Nearby, locals look on with curiosity.
The Tower	A large sound, perhaps the crash of thunder, shakes the surrounding walls. Those nearby instinctively react to the loud noise. Suddenly, loud voices can be heard rounding the corner, and a group of Jarzoni exiles rush past you towards the origins of the clamor. Those nearby begin to act in an agitated manner, and the atmosphere of the area quickly turns to one of panic. Is that smoke you smell in the air, or something else?
The Star	As you turn the corner, you see a person wiping away their tears. A figure dressed in heavy robes reaches out to this tearful individual and places their hands on their shoulders. Whispering words of comfort and hope, the cloaked figure releases the individual and offers a warm smile. Breathing a heavy sigh, the once tearful person smiles back and nods in thanks. The cloaked figure does not move from their spot, but instead turns their head as if searching for someone. From the crowd, a citizen turns the corner and makes their way to the cloaked figure. With red eyes and a hoarse voice, they begin to tell the cloaked figure of recent plights.
The Moon	Turning down a street, you come face-to-face with a marvelous sight. As soon as you blink, this strange and unexpected vision disappears. Cautiously making your way down the avenue, you see bleary-eyed locals engaged in polite conversation. Despite their hushed tones, you hear them whisper about the arcane and strange sights they have just witnessed. Looking up, you notice a sea-folk person reading over pieces of parchment, their brow furrowed in concentration as they switch from page to page. For a moment, they look up. After staring into the sky for the briefest of moments, they shake their head and return to their notes.
The Sun	At sunrise, the sounds of an ethereal melody can be heard. It is soothing to the ears and leaves all who listen to it reinvigorated. Upon closer inspection, the mysterious music leads you to a nearby fountain. A single bard is playing their instrument as they stare off into the distance, their mouth turned slightly upward in a contented smile, as if entranced by their own music. They look lost to the outside world.
Judgment	While walking along the streets of Aldis, off in the distance you see a pale figure. Unmoving, it feels as if the figure looks directly at you. Peering closer, you find it difficult to gather specific details. Suddenly, the light shifts and a beam of light falls through the figure, making their ghostly countenance unmistakable.
The World	Loud clapping can be heard echoing down the city streets. Walking towards this applause, you happen upon a small gathering. On a makeshift wooden stage, a citizen can be seen shaking hands with a finely dressed noble. Behind them, a new piece of public artwork can be seen. Onlookers talk amongst themselves about the illustrious accomplishment, while another speaks of hidden meanings in the artwork.

ALDIS

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE

## APPENDIX: ALDIS ENCOUNTERS

### SUIT OF SWORDS

CARD	EVENT
Ace	As you are walking, you come across an old house. Looking closer, you notice the trim of the building is decorated with symbols of Selene and other, unknown markings. Just then, a citizen comes out of the house holding a stack of books in their arms. Their eyes are bright with excitement as they mutter something about a breakthrough in their studies.
Two	In the bustle of the day, you come across two citizens arguing in public. Something about the clothing and demeanor of the two suggests a close relationship. Onlookers uncomfortably pretend not to notice the spectacle and focus on their work. After several tense exchanges, the two figures sigh heavily and one offers the other an apology. Furrowed brows turn to warm eyes as the two begin to chat more amicably.
Three	Various people you pass wear a dour expression on their faces, and many seem to be in a hurry. Turning the corner, you notice that a usually busy thoroughfare is barred by a large fence. Nearby, a city official is speaking to a disgruntled group who demand to know how long the barrier will stay in place. Wearily, the city official speaks about various plans to improve the roadways and streets, all the while dodging the more pointed questions posed by the worried group.
Four	A new sign is being installed over a doorway that you walk past. Inside the entrance, a gray-haired citizen can be seen speaking with a hunched figure who is wrapped in bandages. Gently, the bent figure is lead deeper into the house. As they close the door, you catch the scents of various herbs, which leave you feeling refreshed, if a little light-headed.
Five	At the end of a street, a finely dressed Jarzon citizen is speaking with what appears to be a local artist. Various rolls of parchment, obviously recently moved, have been hurriedly stacked behind the artist. Unfurling one of the rolls of parchment, the artist presents their drawing to the foreigner. After briefly examining the piece, the Jarzon citizen points to various sections of the drawing, making sure the artist notes all their demands. Bleary-eyed, the artist nods and reaches down for another roll.
Six	While taking a moment to rest at a nearby tavern, you see a small group of sailors enthusiastically discussing their plans. The younger members of the group jump from topic to topic, while the veteran sailors speak in hushed tones about the weather. Taking a long drink from their cup, one of the older sailors whispers to the others about ill omens. Another sailor nods and begins to note the changes in the winds and the possibility of storms.
Seven	While exploring the area, you hear a loud commotion coming from around the corner. Following the voices, you turn to see a group of Kernish refugees engaged in a heated debate. Raised voices, lamentations, and concerns arise from the group, and various members point angrily towards the houses all around them, claiming those inside have committed various infractions or illicit behaviors. Someone from the crowd of refugees accuses a night person of theft and tensions begin to rise.
Eight	While walking the streets, you see a bound figure being led to a nearby house. They offer no resistance and shuffle towards the door with their head hung low. Upon reaching their destination, one of the guards escorts the bound individual into the house, while the other remains behind to secure the main door. After pausing briefly to watch the event, onlookers shake their heads and slowly return to work.
Nine	A crash is heard as a citizen drops an item they were carrying. Slowly, others nearby turn around to offer help. Those helping all move in a sedated manner, and upon closer inspection, you notice deep bags under their eyes. People around you yawn and rub their faces, trying to shake off the vestiges of sleep. A young child runs up to their parent, complaining of bad dreams and things that go bump in the night.
Ten	The sounds of crying can be heard down the street. Those you pass wear faces heavy with concern, and children are rushed out of the area by their guardians. Locals gather to form a small circle around something that is lying on the ground, and you see a figure kneeling off to the side, weeping into their hands. The sounds of clanging armor grow louder as a small contingent of knights turn the corner and make their way directly to hunched figure.
Page	At the end of the street, you see a very attractive citizen with bright eyes. Those fortunate enough to be caught by the figure's gaze all seem to blush and instinctively smile back at them. Opening a small satchel at his side, the figure rummages through papers and books, some of which accidentally spill over the edges of the bag.
Knight	A young citizen runs down the street, carrying a small scroll in their hands. They rush to a nearby doorway and call out to those inside. Looking on, you see a figure open the door and look down at the exuberant young citizen, who immediately begins rattling off a missive.
Queen	While taking a moment to rest, you see an older citizen carrying scrolls and assorted books, one with a marking reminiscent of Queen Allia's heraldry. They are soon met by other, similarly dressed citizens who begin discussing various aspects of Aldin history. Their voices remain calm and clear, each waiting for the other to finish their point before adding their own contributions.
King	Amongst the many faces that dot the nearby area, you notice two figures whispering in an inconspicuous corner. The seemingly older of the two figures looks down at their companion with calm, stern eyes. Attempting to hide their actions from onlookers, this other citizen produces a small bag and various other items hidden underneath their cloak. The older citizen quickly mutters something to their companion, who dejectedly places the items back under their cloak.

## APPENDIX: ALDIS ENCOUNTERS

### SUIT OF CHALICES

CARD	EVENT
Ace	A small set of storms has recently washed over Aldis and the smell of fresh rain still lingers in the air. Journeying about the city, you see many inhabitants basking in the sunshine, while children play in the puddles that remain. Having found the largest of these puddles, a small group of children begin to dance and sing songs from the Feast of Braniel.
Two	During your day, you come across an elderly citizen who is dressed in the traditional clothing of Aldis. A small group surrounds this figure, and you notice they are wearing clothing that marks them as being from different places, backgrounds, and traditions. The elderly citizen begins to introduce the various members of the group to one another, and before moving on to the next pair or group, they offer a warm smile and quick wink.
Three	A Rose Knight and their rhydan companion can be seen walking down the street. Their conversation appears animated and warm, and they both offer pleasant smiles to those around them. Ahead of the pair, a nervous figure lets out a big sigh. The wary figure approaches the Rose Knight and their companion and begins speaking with them. The rhydan companion's expression is quizzical, but still warm as they attempt to answer the question posed to them.
Four	The public gardens of Aldis are jewels in their own right. You cross through one of these lush escapes from the din of city life and are comforted by the smell of flowers and the soft crunch of grass underfoot. While passing through one of these small areas, you catch sight of a noble, who is absent-mindedly walking the garden paths. They do not acknowledge those that pass them, as they seem completely absorbed in their own thoughts.
Five	As you are walking the streets, a local accidentally bumps into you, nearly spilling a drink they are carrying. Their clothing is stained from recent spills and their hair is unkempt. Slurring their speech and begging your pardon, the intoxicated local makes their way to an unoccupied bench. A nearby citizen grabs a flagon of water and offers it to the teary-eyed drunkard, who begins to recount a tale of broken hearts and personal sorrow.
Six	An elderly vata'sha, dressed in extravagant clothing, can be seen speaking with a younger citizen. The vata'sha points to various parts of their clothing and explains the different fabrics and stitches they used to construct their garment. Their companion looks on in interest, and asks the vata'sha about what from the past inspired them.
Seven	You pass a humbly decorated tavern, located just off one of the busier streets. Loud voices and laughter can be heard emanating from the building. Suddenly, an entourage of Rose Knights and assorted nobles spill out of the doorway. They speak of the wonderful food and service, while several onlookers take note.
Eight	As you pass a building, you notice there are many crates, boxes, and other items placed on the street. A member of the Merchant Guild exits the house and begins marking these objects with the name of another city. Their movements appear hurried and determined, their brow is furrowed, and their lips seem tight with concern.
Nine	A small group of people gather around an old city well. Some people in the group solemnly lower their heads and whisper something into its dark waters. Turning around, they decisively march across the square. Others, barely able to hold back their giggles, run up to the well, squeak out a quick word or two, and then excitedly run off.
Ten	The sounds of happy voices can be heard inside a large building. Flowers have been arranged across the building's facade, and the main doorway has been propped open. Passing an open window, you can see various pairs and small groups of adults surrounded by clusters of children, all of different races and ages. One or two figures seem to be shepherding the children towards the adults, who smile down at the youngsters.
Page	You turn the corner and see a small, but growing crowd. A simple drum beat can be heard rising from the crowd's center, and soon other instruments join in. The music's fine quality belies its impromptu nature, and those with a good ear notice the musicians are still in the process of learning each other's abilities. During all of this, you catch a glimpse of long, flowing pieces of fabric fluttering above the crowd's heads. Stepping closer, you can see a spirit dancer weaving their dance around a set of parents, who are holding a newborn child.
Knight	From out of the blue, a Rose Knight comes charging down the street singing a song of love and adventure. They make their way to one of the citizens, who begins to blush at this public spectacle of affection. Those nearby begin to whisper about the romantic display, some even suggesting that the knight will use the scene to propose.
Queen	A sea-folk citizen sits in a nearby chair, humming softly to themselves. In their hands, they hold some yarn and begin to knit, not even looking down to survey their work. While in this state of reverie, a companion of theirs approaches. After gaining the attention of the knitter, the two begin to talk about old times, families, and dreams long past.
King	As you turn the corner, you come across two citizens who are quietly talking to one another. One appears to be instructing the other, and those with arcana feel the tinge of enchantment in the air. The student closes their eyes and places their hands on their teacher's heart. After a few moments, the student opens their eyes, while the teacher nods sagely.

## APPENDIX: ALDIS ENCOUNTERS

### SUIT OF RODS

CARD	EVENT
Ace	In a nearby courtyard, you hear the energetic melodies of a prominent musician. The lyrics weave a tale of praise for Maurenna in her guise as the Grain Lord, and a small audience has gathered around the artist. The crowd begins to clap in rhythm to the song, and some even begin to dance. While many in the growing throng watch the performance with bright smiles, there is a tension in the air as passions—and tempers—begin to flare amongst some of the onlookers.
Two	While walking, you come across a queue of young people. The group fidgets about, but each person seems to be patiently waiting their turn. At the end of the line, you can see another young person sitting at a small booth. The seated figure speaks with each young person that approaches them, closes their eyes, and mutters something that only the questioning figure can hear. When asked what they are waiting for, a member of the line says they are here to receive counseling and advice from a seer.
Three	The pleasant smell of a familiar dish wafts through the air and you pause, savoring the moment. Mixed in with this familiar scent, you catch others that seem somewhat more unusual. The smell becomes stronger, and a citizen passes close to you carrying delicious-looking food. The dish appears Aldin in nature; however, you catch the notes of various seasonings and ingredients that create a new delicacy instead, one that mixes tastes from different cultures, some familiar and others unknown.
Four	Laughter and the sound of friendly chatter fill the area around you. As you look on, you see a small group of children by a newly installed water pump. Behind them, a group of adults emerge from a bathhouse and are engaged in energetic chatter. One of the children approaches you and offers you a small cup of the mineral water before running back to their friends.
Five	A group of Pure Light adherents, all wearing similar garb, file out of a nearby house. They begin to walk the street, passionately proclaiming their faith to any who will heed them. While some nearby listen to the calls of the group, others give them a wide berth and whisper to one another about the dangers of religious zealotry. The voices of the sect drown out most of the ambient noise in the area, and the air feels thick with tension.
Six	A small parade of knights makes its way down the street. Locals begin to cheer and applaud them, and a child approaches them with a small bouquet of flowers. The atmosphere is cheerful, but solemn. Another child tugs on the clothing of a nearby adult and asks where the knights came from. The adult nods sagely and begins to recount their heroic deeds and victories over the darkspawn that haunt the night.
Seven	A middle-aged noble can be seen standing in front of a house, while a few members of their household hover nervously behind them. The sounds of music can be heard rounding the corner, and a large entourage of diplomats from the Matriarchy of Lar'tya approach the house. With a gulp, the noble straightens their spine and greets the entourage.
Eight	The bustle of daily life is drowned out by the clamor of moving crates and the neighing of horses. Making your way towards the commotion, you see a household of people hurriedly moving their possessions onto a horse-drawn cart. Strong, able-bodied members carry the heavy objects, while small children make a game of trying to see who can bring things to the cart the quickest.
Nine	An older figure wearing armor sits on a rough wooden stool. They wrap their hands in white cloth, muttering about battles, fights, and wars long past. A similarly dressed citizen approaches them, and soon others in armor gather around. Once the small gathering is settled, the older warrior begins to give a passionate speech about the power of good, even over superior numbers. They invoke the honored name of Queen Jaellin, and those in attendance nod in agreement.
Ten	Loud music fills a small square, and a large gathering of locals can be seen. Glancing over the people in the crowd, you begin to notice various similarities between those in attendance. Out of this festive clamor, a bell rings and the crowd turns to face the source of the sound. An older citizen, surrounded by their family, lifts a glass and prepares to deliver a speech.
Page	A young rhydan picks up a small log and places it on an open fire. A rush of cinders escapes into the air and the soothing crackling of the flames echoes off the stones. Others gather around the rhydan, who begins to talk about the importance of cultural exchange between the nations.
Knight	While walking down the street, you notice a cloaked figure making their way towards an alleyway. Shortly behind this mysterious person, you see a citizen dressed in leather armor and a loose shirt heading towards the same destination. Just moments later, two well-dressed figures reach the same alleyway. Nodding to one another, they, too, seem to follow the cloaked figure, who has since disappeared from your sight.
Queen	While taking a moment to rest, you see an attractive citizen pacing just a few yards from you. While they walk to and fro, they seem to be intently looking at the ground and reciting what sounds like a monologue. Someone close to you whispers to their companion about Queen Larai's invisible council.
King	In one of the small squares, you see a tall figure addressing any who will listen to them. Their voice is strong and bold, easily carrying their message. As they gesture animatedly, they call for people to take up their cause. Some onlookers seem impressed with this charismatic leader, while others seem more wary of the speaker's fiery nature.

## SUIT OF PENTACLES

CARD	EVENT
Ace	The smell of rich earth fills the air around you, seemingly at odds with your present location. As quickly as this scent appears, it is gone. Walking more, you come across some food vendors speaking with a robed figure. This figure raises their hands and offers up a prayer to Anwaren. The vendors thank this itinerant priest and offer them some of their produce.
Two	During your day, you notice that several new posters have been plastered across the area, each depicting the Aldin Guard or one of the Sovereign's Finest in a triumphant pose. A small group of young citizens gathers around one of these posters, and some begin to discuss the various merits and economic incentives of joining the Guard.
Three	As you walk past a few fruit and wine merchants, you notice that each of the owners are speaking with a person wearing clothing that sets them apart among the local fashions of Aldis. The conversations appear to be going amicably, and the stall owners offer some of their wares to their foreign companions. Intermixed with these groups, you catch sight of a noble and a guild member, each looking on with pride.
Four	There is a small commotion just at the end of the street, where an older citizen wearing a sour expression stands with their arms crossed. Next to them and holding a large piece of parchment, another person gestures to the buildings behind the disgruntled citizen and begins to unfurl their large scroll. On it, you can see plans for a new building, one which would replace the current architecture.
Five	A wounded citizen walks the streets ringing a small bell. They are accompanied by four others in distinctive clothing that marks them as priests of the Primordials. As the group slowly traverses the streets, they call out for charity, not for themselves, but for others. Onlookers seem moved by the procession and begin to speak with one another about how they, too, can help.
Six	As you make your way through the day, you come to a section of the city where dust has been kicked up into the air, giving the scene a hazy quality. The immediate area is filled with workers, each hammering away at their various crafts. As the old edifices around you are stripped and reworked, you notice the buildings were in desperate need of repair. Amongst the controlled chaos of the area, you see a table where a single citizen is pouring over large pieces of parchment.
Seven	As you turn the corner, you see a sea-folk scholar tending to a sapling, which they carry in a small, simple clay pot. They carefully pour water over the young tree and mutter a short blessing. A child approaches the sea-folk scholar and points to the plant. Smiling, the scholar begins to recite the name of the plant, while the child reaches out to touch a leaf.
Eight	You hear the sounds of raised voices and the heavy clatter of objects being moved about. Passing an open porch, you see a wizened craftsperson directing a younger person who is intently working away. The master craftsperson sighs and paces about, while the young apprentice finishes one task and begins another.
Nine	Laughter can be heard coming from a nearby garden. When looking through the garden gate, you see a group of people smiling and talking. People of various ages mingle together, all enjoying the lush atmosphere. A small wind picks up the rich scents emanating from the garden's exotic flowers and spice bushes. Suddenly, one of the figures in the garden catches your eye and offers you a warm, inviting smile.
Ten	As you pass a small square, you see a crowd is growing. Some figures are holding small pieces of parchment in their hands, marked with various numbers and symbols. Looking over the crowd, you see that no two slips are the same. Suddenly, a bell rings out, and their conversations fall to a quiet murmur as they turn to face a member of the Sovereign's Council. The noble unfurls a small scroll and begins to give a short speech.
Page	A lone night person sits at a table, pouring over various scrolls, letters, and maps. They rummage between the different documents, only sparing a moment to write down a quick note. Using their fingers to make one last calculation, the night person gathers the disparate piles of papers into neat and orderly stacks. Soon, they're approached by a wealthy-looking citizen, who greets them with a warm but formal smile.
Knight	The sounds of hooves and the clatter of armor echo down the street, and you see a member of the Sovereign's Finest approaching your location. Methodically, they offer those that cross their path an opportunity to train with them. Many politely decline the offer, but the rider does not seem disheartened, and they continue along their path.
Queen	The soft sound of knocking draws your attention. Looking up, you see an older noble, dressed in simple clothing, knocking on a nearby door. Attending them are members of their household, and those closest to them carry small lockboxes. Eventually, someone comes to the door, and the old noble begins to explain they are raising money for a new charity.
King	While out among the citizen of Aldis, you see a small group of figures dressed in fine clothing. One darts about the street and stops in front of a refugee, while another one approaches a disheveled immigrant. The finely-dressed messengers bow and offer their hands to the selected citizens, and begin to speak of a feast held in the late King Haylin's honor.

# APPENDIX II: ALDIN NAMES

The following is a selection of names, divided by gender and nationality. Feel free to use any of them when naming player characters or Narrator characters for your own games.

## ALDIN & KERNISH MALE

Trenszan	Loldar	Mygrarn	Thosiniary	Nailgen	Felstal	Hethuros	Rhandus
Peelar	Holdalus	Dustan	Glain	Fertias	Irgul	Kogrold	Turgus
Mylarger	Onlolvil	Maenin	Molon	Borrar	Maerimoth	Dein	Brothaer
Novyn	Urlandyr	Meth	Onthigalder	Fethgon	Alvudon	Arskil	Mildult
Phasyn	Sarthy	Aust	Blorr	Burn	Ornar	Ssaen	Jolar
Phester	Chalbedyr	Aunshe	Alushervon	Duldul	Hecon	Jarold	Azuldor
Neirkhar	Yvitryran	Hlar	Taltro	Irstiir	Ulenae	Tharith	Gemmorn
Taleen	Thothyn	Lelarge	Eldyl	Herolker	Methel	Krandus	Thilund
Khomnlk	Almril	Skomry	Jolsar	Helaundo	Indystan	Konshin	Nalden
Feeeldar	Mphendus	Lonzathos	Aer	Lelios	Melushar	Byrine	
Edydrar	Sorable	Thaloruth	Dahvro	Dersarl	Kolvorn	Ramdon	
Sagreldo	Arglyrver	Kuntrar	Dorth	Istrin	Hallorth	Dossard	
Belor	Oltarn	Jyondune	Kuglyn	Ilcolar	Bronger	Ilbus	

## ALDIN & KERNISH FEMALE

Jhalethel	Alene	Ilphiira	Temmyra	Jomethe	Teezra	Aless	Ziera
Jhenta	Larntyn	Mhaerel	Lyrenna	Estrura	Shadyl	Ansy	Nelalueth
Jhaspril	Ederil	Neithla	Shalseel	Sheran	Jelesail	Terura	Orlitha
Ildirera	Eluera	Dandryl	Kenna	Shandee	Hoadil	Osyndra	Riselin
Tendilee	Cethra	Jhoysil	Maerie	Venythra	Klindue	Baesiel	Lambril
Janil	Lendue	Nethemeen	Teshinda	Sundel	Eglayss	Chylera	Weieyrae
Alithyl	Telchess	Phenane	Muljrane	Renallyl	Tarith	Estena	Imerrel
Lethra	Glarthe	Lyroldil	Orlulda	Beririnna	Hlariel	Shalil	Antrin
Nendryn	Lluryl	Tesziera	Elryl	Methyra	Jaeth	Ilerryth	Pherra
Beryra	Merna	Tiira	Lentha	Ondle	Mindrueth	Tannarla	
Synna	Mera	Malethe	Sendra	Valshee	Catel	Serane	
Bhaeryl	Eleen	Alee	Tandel	Bruun	Endreera	Shoundra	
Harylee	Luntra	Irora	Ulwira	Cheetha	Lyndra	Opeltel	

## ALDIN & KERNISH SURNAMES

Dullance	Miivremin	Untharr	Niontzar	Shudwon	Ulzuryn	Ammost	Tane
Shundosko	Urmm	Parnsher	Burenta	Mulhaelon	Astoon	Hlirth	Nahorn
Indeir	Urusk	Thalzin	Meindlin	Belellyn	Ilaun	Fuzund	Erander
Yelnar	Deinaeroon	Crolvorn	Laroolun	Lyrleir	Ulsrin	Kommyn	Rentann
Unthrynn	Mir	Mingaldin	Uinsuran	Huthovyn	Vaeloon	Rherold	Tisdann
Daerzoun	Toss	Rald	Orezlar	Gander	Chaltoon	Vommer	Phoryntimar
Nfaler	Stoniir	Mekelzar	Sulzooral	Rheraeyl	Hlar	Estorlin	Tharin
Darossin	Hurdar	Sherdh	Drypeer	Miraber	Beindestam	Rharithil	Rhobaltoler
Lhairder	Murkind	Oraunner	Ondorn	Elaenyl	Bann	Thilathorn	Duimmond
Thimar	Flalen	Uhlethwulmil	Aundurn	Cheldin	Ummyn	Embrim	
Ortorn	Wommlar	Durklath	Draun	Oldann	Naer	Sauniir	
Bilaskoth	Thrilard	Merthan	Vurner	Staber	Ammommur	Dhaendry	
Onsaethoon	Zithond	Mannolin	Belen	Talris	Ullorgarr	Zarirlyn	

## ROAMER MALE

Rano	Masun	Chakana	Nasan	Kara	Changu	Murao	Saeno
Blaeric	Uno	Tangao	Magun	Mangu	Antan	Tenina	Nayena
Ungen	Chajina	Mengu	Menta	Inten	Mar	Hurin	Mana
Narino	Nagen	Ton	Masano	Hunen	Naru	Sangu	Menan
Inton	Blaenar	Maka	Nangu	Nanga	Naeru	Ban	Blaeran
Nanara	Bajin	Ronina	Aru	Inangen	Untan	Nara	Tano
Ara	Sayema	Nantu	Tasar	Charin	Kantar	Nasu	
Nar	Karu	Rona	Sagen	Unarten	Easar	Rangan	Nongu
Kan	Nino	Kar	Manen	Chaeno	Rajin	Changen	Kana
Tandao	Kayen	Magar	Intan	Angan	Hunic	Chakan	Nesao
Nayen	Blaenan	Ingår	Rangu	Mara	Chasema	Masuta	
Taena	Chaera	Angen	Untar	Nelma	Kasen	Majic	
Naero	Nenin	Nagar	Masen	Manga	Easan	Easun	

## APPENDIX: ALDIN NAMES

ALDIN

### ROAMER FEMALE

Nimelicia	Belenicia	Eramesa	Besunelia	Timele	Elansu	Amesura	Nelia
Macia	Ameresa	Timane	Elisune	Neria	Alesune	Melisa	Besure
Mesura	Eransa	Meresa	Kasia	Alanisu	Alisura	Besumelia	Alansa
Nesura	Amenisa	Nimora	Belama	Elansa	Melene	Amanera	Amelisa
Bemia	Eralisa	Elanera	Nerelicia	Melera	Nimerelia	Belia	Esumela
Alerane	Elensa	Alimene	Amesane	Besune	Tisurelia	Elameria	Kurela
Timere	Timore	Kumesa	Alisure	Tisune	Amalesa	Timene	Alanisa
Erensa	Alisane	Berama	Kumore	Timera	Belera	Malera	Berela
Aleresa	Nesame	Ticia	Bilia	Timesa	Malia	Kumene	Melisocia
Kelia	Menia	Erelene	Beresa	Nelisa	Amensa	Amesure	
Timala	Kesia	Nicia	Amerene	Kumerelia	Eleressa	Kurele	
Timora	Elenesa	Alesura	Amansa	Belane	Kemia	Alerene	
Erelisa	Eresane	Alesure	Kumera	Besunicia	Kurene	Alensa	

### JARZON MALE

Erenar	Astetes	Beri	Mema	Myrto	Boce	Jorkishaa	Ibud
Ipetz	Txoser	Bigeki	Boker	Alas	Ersan	Ahi	Artiart
Onneldin	Antene	Bererga	Estalди	Tauntu	Alan	Aili	Arti
Abirtz	Kinirki	Buguen	Haranar	Txegoz	Markas	Seramnas	Pogaultxo
Pintudal	Eciar	Elin	Iral	Zaimu	Egumande	Hesto	Lailes
Ubourni	Juroiz	Astazaios	Olkalliluinir	Sadalet	Balail	Ortzoí	Renel
Mautyntxo	Ardolan	Sammadunda	Etzi	Gadartz	Anes	Engesmisuanin	Ohantzelbi
Ebisputz	Orera	Anditz	Lilondi	Maun	Gezebebe	Astatz	Atxirtxi
Lelai	Rezari	Akirpe	Ale-Onas	Hoskibein	Akes	Azkaduran	Mogalas
Jatos	Buni	Adeunes	Oeri	Zulluaro	Bloerez	Mares	
Aunis	Birshalua	Marendi	Mauta	Fernitakar	Zibai	Ganderin	
Igidi	Forkansas	Hiren	Artso	Landaus	Laixteris	Lunbas	
Arroci	Selloki	Gadabal	Ireinus	Tumanda	Barktaeusad	Nal	

### JARZON FEMALE

Getxole	Ximile	Maintxe	Zohararre	Ikain	Grutaynda	Laiarre
Gele	Umunanarta	Huntzazeiru	Amadea	Goriart	Herara	Zikotu
Amaiala	Drikonan	Nanea	Aruzan	Ora	Ardase	Akulisse
Andie	Osagirlia	Arbierra	Arriart	Arezega	Akan	Birabe
Oralu	Kaoza	Bibate	Indoa	Yer	Artia	Irdonorul
Arranie	Enduna	Ulorge	Erramati	Mana	Benia	Kematz
Yadaro	Barga	Almikara	Grilanan	Nirome	Balani	Aurele
Urazatzela	Umunazta	Prana	Amidendi	Indezia	Abaskere	Marurria
Qiata	Orantu	Aungerne	Enesti	Atxatz	Oinuza	Irras
Uzoka	Borra	Oiarra	Antona	Linaia	Urania	Ondarua
Indiarte	Beagor	Inaia	Zalake	Burzea	Aedoranes	
Oruzaldi	Irrez	Itia	Undesoa	Munirna	Yayona	
Enatz	Kialaki	Arurka	Bitsinka	Nabelo	Ondiri	
Aiza	Ugoresme	Obulku	Orrerbi	Obu	Utzarema	
Mazarroa	Ekalalde	Miritz	Poneraia	Banadie	Oberdiro	

### JARZON SURNAMES

Gandoutane	Marnasta	Gasende	Menzata	Bialana	Orarton	Arrira
Plozare	Bestatagan	Anduz	Cugoitazze	Erugande	Oyarron	Agui
Enain	Aderrasurro	Azaiz	Otandarre	Dulaztuin	Mundiago	Arkiat
Latxaubato	Mertben	Hurruza	Arrebi	Etatepul	Alagagan	Marrinzerroa
Anclaurre	Erirtitxa	Uzurraga	Iuretes	Oindazqa	Arruietxe	Arracare
Enaura	Akarrea	Ulicharegikoa	Igetia	Arircurta	Barridigasi	Ratxeas
Garrasta	Vanas	Ageru	Zabia	Relaroa	Etazeko	Agegabo
Sunzemega	Iztirra	Tagasta	Yralara	Gatchala	Zalagato	Dikage
Zatsbetxa	Erogain	Engetarzai	Adruzi	Gulerbus	Lendanz	Plazaz
Sarzirot	Babertui	Ratelara	Ypaolda	Mirelan	Laratauba	Andene
Landiatz	Dacharza	Anazu	Ardazege	Lirtzan	Ananzega	
Orratanea	Yrtano	Miraizi	Aderrui	Zandaolla	Latenbana	
Ibizna	Marriral	Arrarrara	Arreridatiz	Olarainda	Arrora	
Zirtenz	Arguruz	Loistedaso	Igilai	Taste	Aziaragoike	
Zanira	Agauba	Gauzaz	Lurboziguizia	Zotua	Bartikati	

CITY OF THE BLUE ROSE

# APPENDIX III

## NARRATOR CHARACTERS

This appendix provides a quick and easy method for generating Narrator characters, providing both an appearance and a personality. The system assumes the Narrator has at hand a tarot deck that has been divided into two stacks of cards: one for Minor Arcana, the other for Major Arcana.

It is of course worth noting that the Narrator has the full option of choosing elements instead of relying on the draw of a card.

### TEMPERAMENTS

CARD SUIT	TEMPERAMENT
Chalices	Emotional, relaxed, peaceful, given to passivity.
Pentacles	Fastidious, organized, hard-working, given to melancholy.
Rods	Short-tempered, fast-paced, dynamic, given to anger.
Swords	Intellectual, enthusiastic, distracted, given to anxiety or obsession.

### DISPOSITIONS

CARD FACE	DISPOSITION
Ace	In the middle of starting something new, dealing with new changes in life.
Two	In a balance-seeking mood, or establishing / maintaining a partnership of some sort.
Three	In a creative mood, seeking to establish a group or organization, or fostering growth and increase in life.
Four	In a stable mood, focusing on structure and foundations, or seeing the fruits of their labor just ahead.
Five	In a changing mood, caught in the midst of conflict, or troubled over instability.
Six	In a communicative mood, interested in engaging conversations and exchanges of ideas.
Seven	In a reflective mood, seeking to gain more knowledge, or assessing their place.
Eight	In a masterful mood, a person of great accomplishment and swift action.
Nine	In a fulfilled mood, seeing the fruits of their labor come to pass, or having attained some goal.
Ten	In a retiring mood, at the end of some major life cycle, in the space between the ending of one thing and the beginning of another.
Page	A notably innovative person, in pursuit of opportunities, a messenger of some kind.
Knight	A notably ambitious person, with a strong goal in mind and the will to accomplish it.
Queen	A notably wise person, perceptive and creative, a nurturer that sustains others.
King	A notable leader of some kind, accomplished and mature, a provider and protector.

### IDENTITY

This section covers the overarching personality of the Narrator character. There are four cards in this draw: *Calling, Destiny, Fate, and Personality*.

#### CALLING, DESTINY, AND FATE

##### Major and Minor Arcana

Use the method of generating Calling, Destiny, and Fate described in the **Goals & Persona** section of **CHAPTER 2: Character Creation** in the *Blue Rose* core rulebook. This system is a somewhat more extensive alternative to the Walking the Royal Road system in the *Blue Rose* core rulebook.

#### PERSONALITY

##### Minor Arcana

Draw a single Minor Arcana card. This card determines both Temperament and Disposition. Temperament describes a character's overall approach to life, while Disposition represents what things currently occupy their attention.

#### FRAME

CARD SUIT	FRAME
Chalices	A lushly-built, curvaceous person...
Pentacles	A thickly-built, hefty person...
Rods	A strongly-built, athletic person...
Swords	A thinly-built, lissome person...

#### BEARING

CARD FACE	BEARING
Ace	...with a baby face or youthful frame.
Two	...in the prime of youthful vigor.
Three	...with the solidity of adulthood to them.
Four	...with a steady, composed air.
Five	...with poor health or limited ability.
Six	...with an attentive, engaging demeanor.
Seven	...with some age to their frame, but a canny, sharp attitude.
Eight	...with advancing years but a surety of self.
Nine	...with a slow comfort about them.
Ten	...with the weight of accumulated age about them.
Page	...with a quick, frenetic sense about them.
Knight	...with a warrior's strength and bearing.
Queen	...with a regal, arch demeanor.
King	...with a commanding, lordly air.

# APPENDIX: NARRATOR CHARACTERS

## APPEARANCE

This section covers the physical appearance of the Narrator character. There are four cards in this draw: *Behavior*, *Build*, *Coloration*, and *Status*.

### BEHAVIOR

#### Major Arcana

The character's outward, observable behavior. These should all be clearly apparent within moments of meeting the character. These are not permanent traits but simply express what the character is going through at the time of meeting.

### BUILD

#### Minor Arcana

The character's size and proportions. A single card of the Minor Arcana determines both Frame and Bearing.

### COLORATION

#### Minor Arcana

The character's complexion, hair color, and eye color. This is primarily for humans.

### STATUS

#### Minor Arcana

The character's apparent placement in society, reflected by grooming, clothing, and possessions.

### COLORATION

CARD SUIT	COLORATION
Chalices	Olive or golden complexion. Hair is black, brown, or chestnut, and wavy or curly. Eyes are black, brown, hazel, green, or (rarely) golden.
Pentacles	Dark brown complexion. Hair is either curly or kinked, and black or brown. Eyes are dark or (rarely) golden.
Rods	Darkly tanned complexion. Hair is dark and straight. Eyes are dark brown or black.
Swords	Very pale complexion. Hair is either dark, brown, or blond-to-reddish. Eyes are dark black, brown, blue, gray, green, or golden.

### STATUS

CARD SUIT	STATUS
Chalices	Entertainer or artist class, such as actors, singers, craftsfolk, or minstrels.
Pentacles	Wealthy class, such as guildsfolk, merchants, or politicians.
Rods	Working class, such as soldiers, farmers, fishers, and laborers.
Swords	Educated class, such as clerks, lower-level bureaucrats, advocates, or scholars.

### BEHAVIOR

#### MAJOR ARCANA

#### BEHAVIOR

The Fool	Wonder-filled and free-spirited. "Did you see that? That was amazing!"
The Adept	In control of the situation and strong-willed. "Don't worry—I'll take care of this."
The Priestess	Intuitive and mystical. "There is something greater at work here, I fear."
The Empress	Nurturing and abundant. "These are for you. You just seemed like you could use a little something right now."
The Emperor	Authoritative and in charge. "What is the meaning of this? I expect an explanation, and quickly."
The Hierophant	Orthodox and traditional. "This is highly irregular. It goes against the way we've always done these things."
The Lovers	Loving and unified. "We can do this together, cariad. Take my hand."
The Chariot	Determined and victorious. "No! I won't back down, and I won't stop until we're successful."
Strength	Strong and compassionate. "I'm so sorry you're going through this. How can I help?"
The Hermit	Introspective and desirous of solitude. "I may have read something about this recently. Perhaps you could come back later so I can double-check?"
The Wheel	Lucky and well-rewarded. "Did you see this? What are the odds?"
Justice	Truthful and just. "I have something to confess..."
The Hanged Man	Sacrificing and perspective-shifting. "Let's try and look at this situation from another angle, eh?"
Death	Transforming and completing. "I know. I'm sorry, but this is just the way it has to be."
Temperance	Patient and balanced. "I understand, but we need to consider all sides in this situation."
The Exarch	Addicted and vice-bound. "Have you tried this? I'm all...tingly!"
The Tower	Disastrous and dramatic. "How am I supposed to recover from this?!"
The Star	Hopeful and serene. "Surely we can determine a way out for everyone, if we only discuss this calmly."
The Moon	Anxious and insecure. "I'm... I'm not sure about any of this. I have such a bad feeling..."
The Sun	Warm and vital. "Fair the day! How are you, neighbor?"
Judgment	Judging and absolving. "I know you tried your best. Maybe I can give you some pointers?"
The World	Well-traveled and accomplished. "That reminds me of something I saw when I was in Garnet. It was perfect for this!"

# APPENDIX IV: ALDIS LOCATIONS

BUSINESSES & GUILDHALLS			
NAME	NOTES	NEIGHBORHOOD	PAGE
Alfaeo Estate	Shops & Estate Residences	Kyanite (M2)	76
Bottcher's General Mercantile	General Goods Shop	Cooper's Run (L11)	100
Breal Tar Pit	Pitchworks	Tarbourough (O11)	115
Brewer's Guild	Guildhall (Brewer's Guild)	Newstead (H6)	31
Carpet Square	Market Hall	Brightmeadow (L4)	94
Cerulean Playhouse	Theater (closed for business)	Gentle Rest (H4)	28
Coopers' Guild, The	Guildhall (Coopers' Guild)	Barrelsmouth (O10)	115
Delile's	Florist	The Grove (O1)	107
Folded Corner, The	Written Goods Shop	Preshton Heights (L8)	98
Ghin's Warehouse	Warehouse	Stag's Charge (O5)	111
Glalub's Apothecary	Apothecary	Nob Hill (L5)	95
Gondolier's Guild	Guildhall & Business (Gondolier's Guild)	Firefly's Rest (LA12)	69
Grand Guildhall	Guild Business Hall	Newstead (H6)	32
Great Bank of Aldis, The	Bank	Blessed Hills (H12)	46
Griffon's Quill, The	Tattoo Parlor	Cardamom (M9)	85
Hatik's	Building Renovations Contractor	Wood Point (L17)	105
Jaxson's On the Field	Exotic Goods Shop	The North Fair District (L1)	91
Jeusole's	Shaswright Shop	The Commons (H5)	30
Kamleth Chandlery	Chandlery	The Shankle (O15)	120
Landsea Amphitheater, The	Theater	Elmbury (M5)	78
Laundry, The	Laundry Services	Whitewall (L15)	102
Lord Oak Bakery, The	Bakery	Cardamom (M9)	86
Market Bridge	Market	Sutro District (M10)	87
Matchmaker's Guild	Guildhall (Matchmakers)	Marlicel's Crossing (LA6)	62
Moneylenders Guild	Guildhall (Moneylenders)	Middleton (H2)	26
Pennyweight's	Secondhand Shop	The Wander (O8)	112
Rhydan's Rest	Rhydan Grooming	Riverway (H16)	52
Royal Rose Society, The	Beauty Salon	Kyanite (M2)	74
Silver Shields Barracks	Security Company (Mercenaries)	Silverhill (H15)	49
Soul's Flame, The	Smithy	Steelcourt (LA5)	61
Stonemasons & Carpenters Guildhall	Guildhall (Masons & Carpenters)	Cobblestone (L3)	93
Swift's Cabs	Carriage & Hansom Cab Service	Little Rezea (L12)	100
Tegra's Smithy	Weapon & Armorsmith	Riverway (H16)	51
Thermai Spa	Spa & Public Baths	Sutro District (M10)	88
Villa Fruta Orchards	Orchard	Cropwick (O16)	120
Vine Day Market	Marketplace	Greenstreets (O4)	110
Vovubros & Daughters Dry Goods Shipping and Storage	Warehouse	The Shankle (O15)	119
Winding Bazaar, The	Marketplace	Turncoin (O2)	108
Windsail Symphony, The	Symphony Hall	Whalefin (M6)	79
Wraithwood Floral	Florist	Four Corners (O13)	117
Zakarm's	Slaughterhouse & Tannery	Seltha's Watch (O9)	114

## APPENDIX: ALDIS LOCATIONS

INNS			
NAME	NOTES	NEIGHBORHOOD	PAGE
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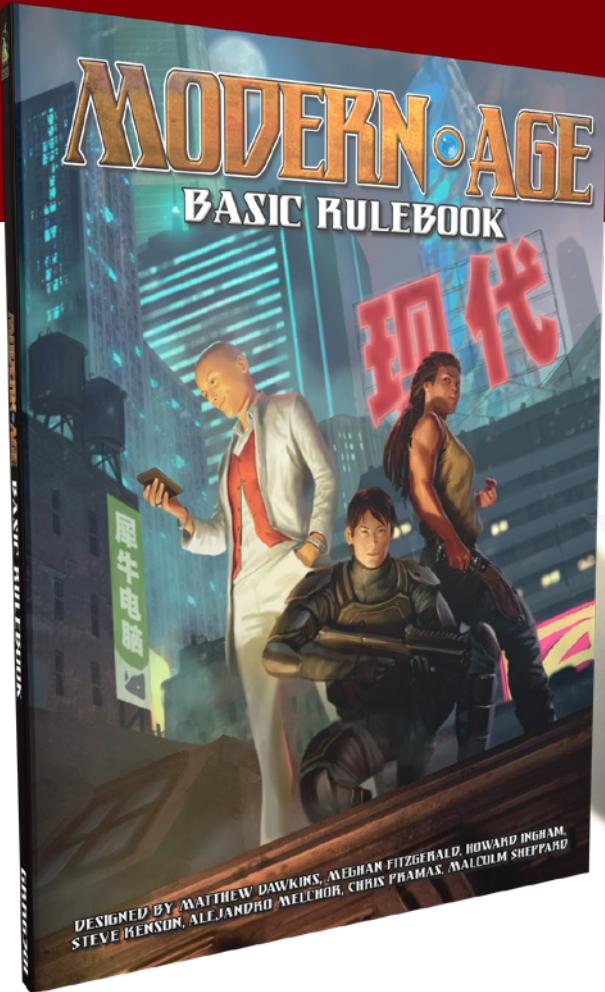
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