

BLUE ROSE

A GUIDE TO SHADOWTIDE



BY JOSEPH D. CARRIKER JR



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A SUPPLEMENT FOR THE *BLUE ROSE AGE*
ROLEPLAYING GAME OF ROMANTIC FANTASY



GREEN RONIN PUBLISHING, LLC
3815 S. OTHELLO ST. SUITE 100, #304 SEATTLE, WA 98118

LEAD DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT: Joseph D. Carriker, Jr.

EDITING: Lynne Hardy **PROOFREADING:** Samantha Chapman

GRAPHIC DESIGN & ART DIRECTION: Hal Mangold

INTERIOR ART: Magdalena Pagowska, Damon Westenhofer

CARTOGRAPHY: Liz Courts, Will Hindmarch

PUBLISHER: Chris Pramas

GREEN RONIN STAFF: Joseph Carriker, Crystal Frasier,
Jaym Gates, Kara Hamilton, Steve Kenson,
Nicole Lindroos, Hal Mangold, Jack Norris,
Chris Pramas, Evan Sass, Marc Schmalz,
Malcolm Sheppard, Mat Smith, Will Sobel,
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Email: custserv@greenronin.com
Web Site: www.greenronin.com



Shadowtide, the first *Blue Rose* novel from Nisaba Press, follows the investigations of three members of the Sovereign's Finest into the disappearance of two of their own in the Veran Marsh's most notorious smugglers' lair: Serpent's Haven.

We've dipped into that novel to bring you some of its people and places for your own *Blue Rose* campaigns. The material here presents Serpent's Haven and its denizens as they are at the beginning of *Shadowtide*. Enjoy!

SERPENT'S HAVEN

Because the Veran Marsh is a true no man's land, it has become a refuge for criminals from both Aldis and Jarzon. The farmsteads and small towns near the marsh are sometimes the targets of raids by both people and shadowspawn.

The criminals of the Veran Marsh are as much at risk of monstrous attack as any caravan; all humans taste the same to shadowspawn, and most bandit gangs dwell on the outskirts of the marsh. They dart out to harry caravans or homesteads, then retreat as deep into the swamp as they dare to avoid Jarzoni and Aldin troops.

Towards the southern end of the marsh, the smugglers of Basketh Bay have a few semi-permanent settlements. They've either driven off or allied with the rhydan there. Pirates and smugglers use these settlements to buy and sell, to duel, and to make deals. The shifting, secret paths

leading to the settlements were chosen for the quicksand and ghostweed around them, perfect for trapping the unwary. The collections of moldy wooden shacks, moss-slimed plank walkways, and dim greenish lanterns would look abandoned, except for the slinking shadows and hard-eyed sailors living there.

The oldest such smuggler's refuge within the Veran Marsh is Serpent's Haven. Located between the southern track through the marsh and Basketh Bay, the shabby collection of driftwood shacks and muddy trails has been home to more murderers, bandits, and smugglers than your average prison. The Haven is a prime location for any dirty dealings with pirates and smugglers. Blue trumpet-flower paste from Rezea is traded for stolen pearls from Lar'tya, and heretics from Jarzon book risky passages to freedom from unscrupulous sailors.

The vata'sha gangster Shan Serpenttongue rules Serpent's Haven with an iron fist, and her gang takes a cut of every coin that crosses palms here. Shan's understanding of the marsh keeps the Haven afloat in the shifting sands—both figuratively and literally. She has outwitted shadowspawn and hunted down aberrations. She can provide guides and guards for travelers along the southern trail and has spies in both Lysana's Crossing and Fiery Defense to keep her informed of nearby patrols.

The Serpent's Coil is the circular main street and the only cobbled pathway in Serpent's Haven. Historically, the cobbling is maintained by whichever gang is

BACKGROUND: MARSHFOLK

Many of the rough and violent sorts that make Serpent's Haven and the Veran Marsh their home are certainly those of the Outcast background. But some folk who live here have simply grown up in the Haven or the surrounding marshes: They've known no other lives. These folk are accustomed to tough situations and violent criminals. To be marshfolk is to be able to survive anything, and to know how to deal with unsavory sorts.

FOCUSES: Communication (Bargaining), Constitution (Stamina), Dexterity (Sailing), Strength (Intimidation)

LANGUAGES: Aldin and one other of your choice

in charge at the time. Indeed, failing to perform decent upkeep on the Coil is a good way for any gang, no matter how powerful, to fall out of favor with those merchants and other business-folk who depend on the Coil for their trade, as carts and horses cannot navigate most of the other muddy passages through the city.

The Coil runs in a complete circle and most directions proffered in the Haven use it as a landmark—a necessity, given the ever-shifting nature of what passes for the other roads in the outlaw town. Once off the Coil, the only streets are muddy, filth-spattered footpaths and walkways made of wooden planks, more often than not slimy and green with algae thanks to the incessant dampness of the place. Not surprising, to be fair, given the fact the whole town is basically a collection of glorified shanties. Few of the buildings are higher than one story tall, as it takes skill to construct sturdy buildings that rise high in a swamp—skill that is expensive to hire. Though the Haven does stand on ground higher than the surrounding marsh, it isn't quite elevated enough to pull it up out of the wetlands completely.

The southern edge of the Coil abuts one of the deeper river-shards that flows out of the marsh, forming the salt-water estuary in which the Haven is concealed. It is deep enough to allow all but the largest of sailing vessels to dock, although the way through the estuary proper is very difficult for most vessels, even if they do have someone familiar with the route onboard. If they do not, the Haven is all but inaccessible to anything but small rowboats and the like. Several of the local gangs—including the ruling Serpenttongues—provide visiting vessels with highly paid navigators capable of bringing ships in. They also frequently raid ships mud-scuttled in too-shallow waters, carrying away their cargos.

The following locations use the location style established in the *Aldis: City of the Blue Rose* sourcebook, available now.

I. THE CITADEL

GANG HEADQUARTERS

At the center of Serpent's Haven stands the Citadel. A ramshackle tower that rises out of the swamp like some kind of teetering, misshapen fungus, the Citadel is built upon one of the few spots of relatively high ground in the Haven.



This fact is the only reason it soars as high as it does, standing some eight stories above the streets. Anywhere else, a building of this size would be doomed to sink into the mud and muck of the wetlands, assuming it could be built to begin with.

Despite its name, the Citadel is not a skillfully wrought fortification. In fact, it is a jigsaw puzzle of construction, built over the years from several smaller buildings combined into a single structure and then elevated higher and higher with each successive gang that has controlled Serpent's Haven.

As a result, the structure is a largely incomprehensible warren of small rooms, passageways, and stairs that wind both within and without its outer walls (and some of these outer staircases are entirely without railings of any sort), with ladders built into walls to grant access to chambers above and below. The ability to find your way through the place is classed as a mark of distinction by whichever gang is in control, though almost no one ever truly learns the entirety of the three-dimensional maze's layout.

The Citadel serves as a headquarters and seat of power for the gang in charge of the Haven, with a dizzying variety of gathering halls, audience chambers, balconies, bedchambers, kitchens, mess halls, small suite apartments, and even gaol cells in the upper stories that leave those imprisoned exposed to the miasmas high above the swamp.

THE SERPENTTONGUES

For the past several decades, the gang known as the Serpenttongues has been in control of Serpent's Haven. Indeed, its rule is one of the longest in living memory (as there's no one really recording an official history in Serpent's Haven), a fact directly attributable to their cunning, their viciousness, their organization, and, above all, their leader.

Shan Serpenttongue is a vata'sha mob boss and a figure of terror to the locals of Serpent's Haven. Indeed, she inspires fear even in her own subordinates, partially from her own vicious assassination skills—honed in many a back-alley gang war during her adolescence some 40 years ago—and partially from her rhy-bond.

Shan's bond-mate is a rhy-viper named **Chasya**. The pair are rightfully feared, even within the Citadel, for a good reason: Chasya is fond of slithering through the crevices and cracks of the ramshackle tower and eavesdropping on conversations held within. Received gang wisdom suggests

that one should simply always assume that Chasya is listening no matter where one is within the Citadel.

Shan has three primary lieutenants, whom she sets at odds against one another to keep their ambitions in check and to keep them from targeting her. They also cycle in and out of Shan's bed, based on their favor relative to one another. **Elidinna** is a *laevvel* human woman who used to run numbers and pop-up gambling dens before she was finally captured and brought to the Citadel to pay the gang their portion of her earnings. Instead, her quick wit impressed Shan, who not only put her in charge of the Serpenttongues' gambling efforts, but also made her the gang's accountant.

Gariban is a night person who might be charitably referred to as "slight," even by human standards (most night people use other terms like "runty" to describe him). A lifetime of underestimation and cruelty has made Gariban a vicious creature, given to elaborate schemes and underhanded murder. He is in charge of the Citadel's (and thus the gang's) security.

Finally, the newest of the lieutenants is **Lachisa**, a *vata'sha* woman who the other lieutenants suspect might be a childhood friend of Shan's. Lachisa only recently returned to Serpent's Haven, and her mocking hints suggest she may have spent the last few years studying arcane lore with "swamp witches" in the depths of the Marsh. Wherever she learned it, Lachisa is a skilled adept, and though she isn't immune to the Veran Marsh's violent responses to shaping arcana, she seems to know some lore that allows her to quell the worst of its feedback.

2. THE LAUGH AND WINK

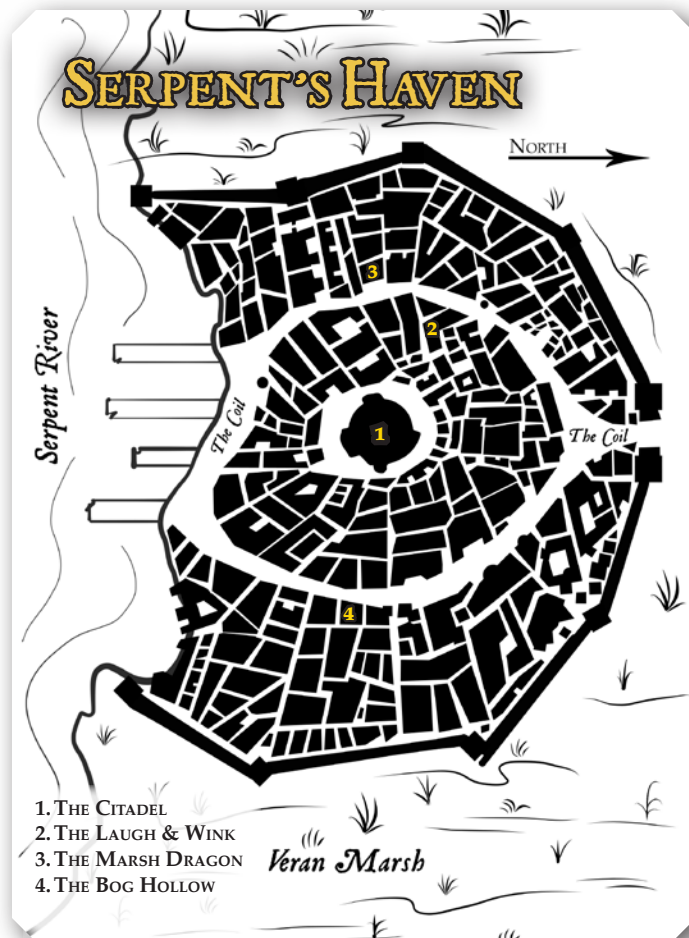
PILLOW HOUSE & INN

One of the largest and most successful pillow houses and inns in the Haven, the Laugh and Wink stands three stories in height: an impressive building that towers over its shorter neighbors. The Laugh and Wink has a reputation as a grand time, for those with the coin to afford its luxuries. This means the various gangs all do their best to find ways to take their cut, but its proprietress, Amandine, manages all of that quite handily. She prides herself on her establishment's reputation as a place to escape the squalor and drudgery that is daily life in Serpent's Haven.



FIRST FLOOR

The Laugh and Wink's front door is guarded but welcoming. A set of steps leads up to an entryway where visitors can clean off their boots (or pay one of the younglings on hand to do so), as Amandine is very particular about muck tracked onto her rugs. The night person doorman, Vodin, greets everyone who wanders in courteously, but firmly warns against any foolishness or hurting anyone within, be they patron or worker.



From the entryway, a short flight of stairs leads to the main lounge, where visitors may relax, drink, and mingle with the coin-lads and coin-lasses who work here, circulating among the guests and occasionally dancing (by themselves, with a client, or with one of the other workers). The bar at the far end of the hall has alcohol both plentiful and strong, and its side walls are set with small curtained alcoves where clients may sit and drink, with or without the company of the inn's workers.

A grand staircase leads up one wall, taking clients looking for a few hours of intimate company to the lavish rooms upstairs. Beside the stairs are the doors to the private salons, often rented out for meetings or gatherings of a sort that clients wish to remain private but for which they don't necessarily need (or want) bedchambers proper.

The back of the house features an impressively large kitchen complete with brewery and pantry, a large dining room for the household, and four bedchambers for household servants (including the cook). An ample storage room connects to the mud room and a back entrance.

SECOND STORY

The inn's second story features a prominent inner promenade across the rear section of the lounge, which leads through a set of doors to the outer promenade around

THE LAUGH AND WINK

FIRST FLOOR

1. FRONT STEPS
2. GUARD ROOM
3. CLOAK ROOM
4. ENTRYWAY
5. MAIN LOUNGE
6. BAR
7. PRIVATE SALONS
8. PRIVIES
9. STAFF DINING
10. KITCHEN
11. BREWERY
12. PANTRY
13. STORES
14. STAFF QUARTERS
15. MUD ROOM
16. SECRET PASSAGE



SECOND FLOOR

1. OUTER PROMENADE
2. MINSTRELS' LOFT
3. STORES
4. GUEST ROOMS
5. INNER PROMENADE
6. BATH
7. STAFF PASSAGE
8. LADDER UP



THIRD FLOOR

1. AMANDINE'S OFFICE/SALON
2. AMANDINE'S BOUDOIR
3. AMANDINE'S BATH
4. AMANDINE'S VAULT
5. STAFF QUARTERS
6. STORES



ATTIC

1. ATTIC STORAGE
2. GARRETS



the front of the building. Opposite this inner promenade is a minstrels' loft, where musicians frequently provide an evening's music. The windows here are often thrown open to allow the festive music and laughter to filter out into the streets to tempt others in. At least once an hour, one or more of the workers process from the inner to the outer promenade and back again, dancing and flirting, to draw onlookers into the establishment and to entice those within to hire them for a few hours. The second story features overly lavish rooms that belong to no one: They are for entertaining clients, although those with the coin can sometimes rent one of the out-of-the-way rooms to simply stay in.

THIRD STORY

The only access to the third story is via a locked door, though every employee has a key kept on their person. Up the concealed stair-tower are the workers' personal quarters. By and large, each worker has their own private room, although a few have children who live with them. This floor also has Amandine's suite, consisting of a large combination salon-office and her personal boudoir and bath, as well as a secret vault. Hidden in her salon-office's cloaks closet is a secret entrance to a small ladder-passage down to the first floor, which opens into the space under the main staircase.

ATTICS

The stair-tower continues up into the attics, which include a large storage space and a set of garrets (though these haven't been used as sleeping quarters for anyone on staff in many years).

STAFF & RESIDENTS

The vata'sha madame of the Laugh and Wink is **Amandine**, a beautiful and intelligent woman who has made as safe and prosperous a place for herself and her household as anyone who is not a gang member can in Serpent's Haven. She is very protective of her people and maintains an intricate web of contacts and favors to help her keep them safe. Her daughter, **Wynna**, is a young human woman on the verge of adulthood, with hair so blonde it seems silvery. Wynna has her own room on the third floor.

Among Amandine's workers are **Lilliana** and **Red Myra**, blonde and auburn respectively, who are young human women and the best of friends. **Gisolde** is a more experienced human coin-lass, and well regarded for her long, graceful neck and her artfully pinned-up muss of black hair; she has several little ones, and quite a thing for the household's marsh apple marmalade. **Robar** is a flirtatious human coin-lad who looks more like a dockworker than a pillowjack, with broad shoulders, a square jaw, and dull brown hair he constantly runs his hand through.

Windsall is the household cook and oversees the other

servants. A short, stout man, bald as a weather-worn stone, with mighty mustachios waxed, pointed, and curled, he is altogether put out at the existence of thin people and seems to have made it his personal mission to fatten them all up. **Spry Robin** is one of the household lads, working as an all-hand and messenger, while **Vodin** is a gruff male night person who helps keep the peace, most often guarding the front door.

3. THE MARSH DRAGON

TAVERN

A favorite evening dining place of many locals, the Marsh Dragon—easily found by the garish green dragon painted on its front sign—is a small establishment, as such places go. It is built higher than the surrounding land on wood pylons sunk into the mud. The wood of the flooring is lacquered to protect it from water and scattered with woven rag rugs. The building stands two stories tall, though the tavern is only on the first floor, with a set of rooms above that the proprietress rents out.

The owner and tavernkeep of the Marsh Dragon is a human woman named **Audmila**, a cheerful, matronly sort with generous curves and a round face. She makes an incredible marsh apple cider, beloved for its ever-so-slightly tart sweetness.



4. THE BOG HOLLOW

TAVERN

A filthy dive of a tavern, the Bog Hollow sits in a large, single-story building, though the taproom takes up maybe one third of the structure at most. Its windows are holes inexpertly bored into the walls, with inward-facing wooden shutters and lengths of thin, cheap parchment that cover against the weather and nosy passersby. Light comes from the low-hanging chandelier of driftwood, whose tallow candles drip hot grease down on those foolish enough to sit in the center of the taproom.

A large, squalid kitchen provides what little greasy, sooty food the tavern offers, and is frequently manned by **Kavin**, a boy of about 13 years. The place has a warren of back rooms and storage spaces, some of which are not openly accessible or visible. The proprietress, **Elevia**, sometimes rents these spaces to smugglers and other locals who need to hide something.

Unbeknownst to others, Elevia takes one additional source of coin: the golden harts of the Sovereign's Finest, who pay her to use her rooms as covert meeting places. She also provides them with information regarding those who come to see her, but she does not maintain regular reports.



THE VERAN MARSH

Though many folk think of the Veran Marsh as simply a harsh, barren wasteland, the fact is that those desperate and skilled enough do manage to eke out a living from its expanses. Its dangers are a daily concern for these folk, many of whom live within a day or so of Serpent's Haven and who tend to come in one of two varieties: marshfolk, who either farm small plots of rice and stands of cranberries and marsh apples or fish for a living, and the members of the smuggler gangs.

But tucked away in the depths of the marsh is one other community, unusual but vitally important for the work it does: Tranquil Waters.

TRANQUIL WATERS

RHYDAN ENCLAVE

No one truly knows how long the rhydan community of Tranquil Waters has existed, though Aldin records of it go back some 70 years. Those records claim that Tranquil Waters is a rare and needful resource: a community of rhydan dedicated to identifying the lingering sources of Shadow-taint in the Veran Marsh and purifying them.

The work done at Tranquil Waters isn't a mission or even a war—it is a way of life. This is perhaps due to the approach of the great rhy-turtle who leads the community, the Ancient Dumnall. The goals of Tranquil Waters' rhydan are simple: to identify places where Shadow pools and coalesces, to discover why, and then to break up the corruption, allowing it to bleed away.

The sorcerous genesis of the Veran Marsh has left its mark: a shattered arcane geography that not only attracts but collects and gathers the essence of Shadow, like a pit into which tar slowly seeps and consolidates. Tranquil Waters' rhydan seek out these places, work to discover what causes Shadow to concentrate there, and then fix them. Sometimes this means altering the geography's inauspicious, broken alignments to form a cleaner, more harmonious landscape. Sometimes it means discovering ancient, buried ruins that still house some Shadow artifact or continue to echo with the sorcerous atrocities committed there.

The work of Tranquil Waters is hard. The Ancient Dumnall has no illusions of that, and permits no illusions

to those who reside here, either. Half the rhydans' work involves self-inventory for the smallest shards of corruption, along with keeping an eye out for the same in those they work so closely with. Together, the rhydan have developed a corpus of spiritual discipline that can be used to speed recovery from corrupting influences, and none begrudge the time this takes.

The work of Tranquil Waters is slow but steady, and the Ancient Dumnall wouldn't have it any other way.

RHYDAN OF TRANQUIL WATERS

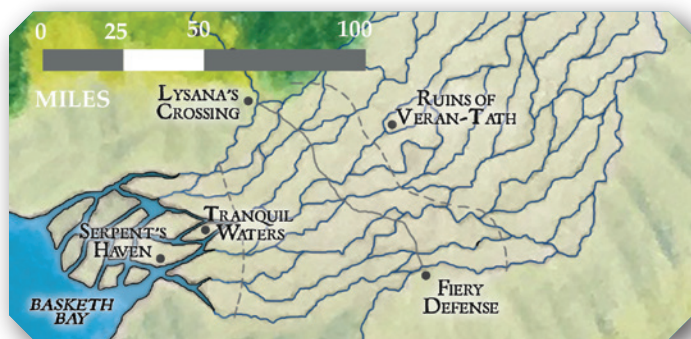
At any given time, there are perhaps a dozen rhydan who live in Tranquil Waters. Not all of them are involved in the battle against Shadow. Some (like young Feyarn) have been brought here after their rhydan awakening and are simply learning the specifics of their new lives and abilities. Many of them come to revere the work of Tranquil Waters, however, and choose to remain.

The **Ancient Dumnall** is a rhy-turtle adept the size of a large shield, who works to fight the taint of Shadow in the Veran Marsh. Dumnall is well over 120 years old, and though age has made him ponderous and contemplative—sometimes lapsing into silent meditation for days on end—he is also unwavering in his dedication to purging the Veran Marsh of its taint. For now, he is content to work slowly and surely, cleansing small pockets of corruption, helping the rhydan who follow him fight their own Shadow-taint, and teaching others his ways. Dumnall knows his years are waning, and he will not live to see the completion of his life's work. He takes pride, however, in the legacy he will leave behind.

Seradia is a rhy-heron with water shaping and healing talents, and she works as Dumnall's right hand. She is extremely learned in the ways of Shadow and the ebb and flow of the natural world, and though she is willing to do what is needful, she dreads the day when she must take up the Ancient Dumnall's mantle.

Lorus is a rhy-fox of advancing years, with streaks of grey fur at his muzzle, breast, and paws. Though Lorus is not an adept or a scholar, he is a faithful helper and rather good at getting around the Marsh quickly and quietly. He frequently acts as a scout, getting to places Dumnall suspects are Shadow-tainted and sniffing around. His long experience has taught him what signs to look for. Lorus has taken the young rhy-fox Feyarn as his apprentice in rhydan ways and is protective of the young kit.

Feyarn is a young rhy-fox who is learning rhydan ways from his Master, Lorus. He is excitable and curious, particularly when it comes to settlements and non-rhydan folk, though Lorus scolds him that those things are going to get him into trouble one day. Still, he loves when new people come to Tranquil Waters and frequently accompanies Lorus on his scouting missions, learning the stealth and observation skills the elder rhy-fox has to teach.



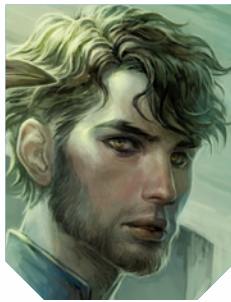
OUR HEROES

Many of the Sovereign's Finest work alone; spies, scouts, teachers, and guardians all sometimes find their missions require solitude and focus. But one of the genuine strengths of the company of envoys is their willingness and ability to drop all that and work together to achieve the mission at hand, no matter what.

Below are three such members of the Sovereign's Finest, the protagonists of the novel *Shadowtide*, now available from Nisaba Press.

MORJIN "BRIGHTSTAR" AVALAT

Morjin is a human Roamer who stands just a little over five-and-a-half feet in height, with a slim, acrobat's build. Sometimes criticized as being too handsome to be an effective spy, Morjin is delighted to own that particular bit of approbation. His dark hair is slightly long and always artfully mussed to frame his piercing eyes of green-gold. His personal style varies dramatically based on the situation, but he always looks very much at home in whatever he wears, from rugged road-traveling garb to high court fashions.



PERSONALITY

CALLING: *The Fool.* Morjin craves action and excitement more than anything else. He loves nothing better than adrenaline-inducing encounters and coming out on top of absurd situations.

DESTINY: *Three of Chalice.* Morjin is an incredible liar and actor, though both are simply facets of his natural gregariousness which he has put to useful ends.

FATE: *Ten of Rods.* Morjin tends to fixate on anything that catches his interest or curiosity, frequently neglecting responsibilities and other aspects of his life while he does so.

RELATIONSHIPS: Morjin has the following Relationship Bonds:

- **MY FAMILY (2):** *You are the world to me, and I'll do what it takes to prove my love.* Though by and large this applies to Morjin's spouses, Davica and Naevid, it also achingly applies to his home caravan, who cast him out.
- **THE SOVEREIGN'S FINEST (2):** *You give purpose to my chaos, and a home to my wandering heart.* Morjin is loyal to the Sovereign's Finest, and no wonder:

MORJIN AVALAT

EXPERT • 6TH LEVEL

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 3 (LIGHT BLADES), COMMUNICATION 4 (DECEPTION, DISGUISE), CONSTITUTION 2 (DRINKING), DEXTERITY 2 (RIDING), FIGHTING 1, INTELLIGENCE 1, PERCEPTION 4 (EMPATHY, VISIONARY), STRENGTH 1, WILLPOWER 3 (COURAGE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	58	12	3 (LIGHT ARMOR)

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
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FIGHTING KNIVES	+5	1D6+2
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THROWN KNIFE	+5	1D6+4, RANGED 6 YDS / 12 YDS, RELOAD MINOR
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SLING	+3	1D6+5 RANGED 16 YDS / 32 YDS, RELOAD MINOR
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SPECIAL QUALITIES

ARCANA: Visions

FAVORED STUNTS: Pierce Armor (1 SP), Taunt (1 SP), That Makes Me Wonder (2 SP)

EXPERT ABILITIES: Pinpoint Attack, Expert's Armor, Heroes' Armor 1, Take Aim

TALENTS: Arcane Potential (Novice), Intrigue (Journeyman), Spy (Journeyman)

WEAPONS GROUPS: Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Staves

EQUIPMENT: two slender fighting knives, secreted about his person; sling, worn wrapped around one wrist like a bracer; light armor; disguise kit; set of Royal Road cards; various outfits

THREAT: MODERATE

They gave him a place to belong after he became an outcast, and he is absurdly grateful for that.

HISTORY

DATE OF BIRTH: Anwanar 18th, 283 Aldin Calendar (age 37)

PLACE OF BIRTH: Somewhere on the roads between Verdaunen and Ennevan, Aldis

KNOWN FAMILY: *Imoran* and *Elajinna* (parents, 63 and 61 years), *Abiya* (sister, 41 years), *Tijaho* (brother, 35 years), various nieces and nephews, all part of the Caravan Ouriasai; *Davica* (wife, 29 years, an actress and singer in the theaters of Aldis' Middle Ward), *Naevid* (husband, 33 years, a former Jarzoni bureaucrat and refugee given residence for his aid)

- **283 AC:** Morjin is born into Caravan Ouriasai on the roads of Aldis.
- **303 AC:** At the age of 20, he helps what he assumes are some fellow Roamers evade their pursuers—they actually turn out to be Sel-Shanna hunting members of the Broken Wheel. His father, the

headsman of the Ouriasai, is deeply humiliated, as is his sister Abiya (also a Sel-Shanna). When he is cast out of the caravan by his father as a result, Morjin's grief-stricken mother gives him her cards and blesses his brow.

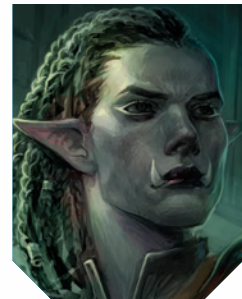
- **304 AC:** Morjin spends quite a few years as a petty thief, gambler, and drunkard.
- **312 AC:** He assists a healer named Raevis in tracking down Broken Wheel Roamers acting as agents for a poisoner cult dedicated to Ulasta, the exarch of envy.
- **313 AC:** Raevis once again calls on Morjin's aid, this time to infiltrate illegal groups in Serpent's Haven that are capturing and forcing rhydan to fight to the death. Morjin's winning nature allows the Finest to handily identify and round up the ringleaders and rescue the rhydan. He is inducted as one of the Finest that year, with Raevis as his sponsor.
- **316 AC:** Morjin and Davica meet during a night of

carousing, and after a weekend spent together at a luxurious Lake Ward retreat, the two marry.

- **318 AC:** On an extended mission to Jarzon, Morjin "turns" Naevid, a Jarzoni bureaucrat, through seduction, but finds himself with feelings for the man. He ends up complicating what should have been an easy escape by extracting Naevid. Naevid comes to stay with Davica and Morjin, and the trio eventually expand their relationship into a star marriage.
- **320 AC:** Events of *Shadowtide*

YDAH

Standing at six feet in height, Ydah is a night person with light, flint-grey skin and thick black hair braided into multiple strands, bound into a clustered rope at the back of her head. She tends to wear forester's garb, all buckskins and furs, with excellently made leather boots. She usually bears a hard, appraising look, with a sword at her side, a shield at her back, and an arrowhead worn as a pendant around her neck.



PERSONALITY

CALLING: *Judgment.* Despite being often alone by choice, Ydah fears she will be so for the rest of her life. In some ways, she seeks to atone for the death of Cinder, her rhy-wolf bond-mate, who was killed in the line of duty protecting her. She completely blames herself for his loss, and the solitude of her grief is almost smothering her.

DESTINY: *Page of Rods.* When Ydah sets her mind to something, grits her jaw, and pushes through, she can move mountains. She is exceptionally hardworking and stubborn—sometimes to a fault, though she usually uses that trait to get the job done and help others.

FATE: *Nine of Swords.* Ydah is prone to dark moods, deep melancholies, and brooding, exacerbated by her grief and the fact that she chooses solitude a great deal of the time.

RELATIONSHIPS: Ydah has the following Relationship Bonds:

- **CINDER (3):** *I don't know what to do with this grief, but I will atone for letting you die.* Guilt and grief are sprinkled liberally across the joy of Ydah's memories of Cinder, and she's not quite sure how to make the bad go away while keeping the good. Still, she is determined to prove herself in Cinder's memory and to make him proud. Even her connection to the Sovereign's Finest is filtered through this Bond, as it was Cinder who wanted them to become envoys, and she is determined to prove herself worthy.

YDAH

WARRIOR • 5TH LEVEL

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 2 (BOWS, BRAWLING), COMMUNICATION 0, CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 2 (ACROBATICS), FIGHTING 5 (HEAVY BLADES), INTELLIGENCE 0, PERCEPTION 2 (TRACKING), STRENGTH 4 (CLIMBING, INTIMIDATION, MIGHT), WILLPOWER 3 (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
12	63	12 (14*)	3 (LIGHT ARMOR)

* WITH SHIELD

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE
LONGSWORD	+7	2D6+4

SHORT BOW	+4	1D6+3 RANGED 16 YDS / 32 YDS, RELOAD MINOR
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SPECIAL QUALITIES

ARCANA: Body Control

FAVORED STUNTS: Dual Strike (3 SP)

WARRIOR ABILITIES: Heroes' Armor 1

NIGHT PERSON: Dark Sight (30 yds), blinded by bright light (one round)

TALENTS: Arcane Potential (Novice), Archery Style (Novice), Armor Training (Novice), Slayer (Novice; Bandits), Weapon and Shield Style (Journeyman)

WEAPONS GROUPS: Bludgeons, Bows, Brawling, Light Blades, Heavy Blades

EQUIPMENT: Arrowhead pendant, boiled leathers (light armor), forester's garb, longsword, medium shield (+2 Defense), short bow, tent roll and survival gear

THREAT: MODERATE

(It should be noted this is the remnant of Ydah's rhy-bond with Cinder.)

- **MYSELF (1):** *I am most comfortable with just myself, and need to protect myself while I'm vulnerable.* Even when she was rhy-bound with Cinder, Ydah preferred her own company and the solitude of the deep forests.

HISTORY

DATE OF BIRTH: Gravihain 29th, 294 Aldin Calendar (age 26)

PLACE OF BIRTH: Thelistar's Watch, a small community along the Rose River in the Pavin Weald watched over by the unicorn Thelistar

KNOWN FAMILY: *Ardra* and *Vogis* (parents, died during a bandit attack when Ydah was 12); *Rumah* (aunt, 49, who raised her after her parents died)

- **294 AC:** Ydah is born to Ardra and Vogis, two night people of Thelistar's Watch. Ardra was one of the village's defenders, and Vogis was a forester, gathering the goods outside the village granted to them by Thelistar.
- **300 AC:** Ydah meets Thelistar (the unicorn guardian of the village) for the first time, and he senses something special in her.
- **306 AC:** Vogis stumbles back into the village, nearly dead, warning of a bandit attack. He dies in Ardra's arms just moments before the large bandit group attacks. In the chaos, Ydah is nearly killed, but she flees the village with her aunt and a small group of others trying to get the children out. The bandits pursue; the Rose River Pack, a large pack of wolves led by a family of rhy-wolves, comes out of the wilderness to attack the bandits. One of the young rhy-wolves, Cinder, defends the young Ydah, and the two form a rhy-bond. Ydah is taken in by her aunt.
- **307 AC:** Most of Ydah's childhood is spent running away from home with Cinder—both are told by their elders they should remain in their respective homes, but the two are fiercely independent and love one another deeply.
- **308 AC:** Ydah meets the old vata'an ranger Eliael, a former member of the Finest, now retired to her woodland home in her twilight years. Eliael begins teaching Ydah fighting skills.
- **309 AC:** At the tender age of 15, Ydah begins a campaign of hunting down bandits. She starts by finding their encampments and picking them off one by one, but her tactics evolve as her skills do. Bandits of the Weald begin speaking of the "Grey Shadow," fierce as the wolf she fights alongside, and attribute supernatural power to the terrifying figure.
- **312 AC:** At 18, Ydah leaves her aunt's home for good, choosing to travel further afield to see the rest of the world and fight bandits where she encounters them. Cinder, likewise, leaves his home pack.
- **314 AC:** Ydah encounters the enforcers of a Baron of the Silence and begins working against them. She then meets Soot, a rhy-crow who is also investigating them, and together they defeat the Baron. Soot offers her a place in the Finest, but she demurs.
- **316 AC:** Soot finds Ydah and Cinder once more when he and some other Finest are mobilizing against a large bandit gang. Her contributions stand out, and when the group returns to Aldis with the gang in chains, the Sovereign asks Ydah to become one of her Finest. Ydah agrees, after Cinder insists they accept.
- **319 AC:** Near Iskander's Retreat in the Ice-Binder Mountains, Ydah and Cinder are attacked by Kernish raiders. Ydah is badly wounded, and Cinder is slain. Ydah escapes, though she is pursued for days. She is rescued by the arrival of Cinder's pack, who felt his death, and they wreak terrible vengeance on the raiders and their warlord. Ydah goes into deep mourning, staying with the pack for a few months but then disappearing one morning.
- **320 AC:** Events of *Shadowtide*

SOOT

Master Soot is more than just a senior envoy of the Sovereign's Finest: He is one of the foremost trainers of healers in its ranks. As a professor at the Royal College, he also works to expand the field of rhydan medical knowledge, as well as training the next generation of healers, envoy and otherwise. Unlike many rhydan, Soot is not particularly remarkable-looking, being about the size of a regular crow and with no special markings or eye color to suggest his awakened nature.



PERSONALITY

CALLING: *The Moon.* Soot is endlessly fascinated by all manner of lore and secrets and will do what it takes to unearth them. However, this also gives him the tendency to be almost reflexively secretive.

DESTINY: *King of Pentacles.* Soot has an impressively large network of contacts throughout Aldis and into the lands beyond, who range from close friends to useful information sources. This, combined with his skill at finding unorthodox resolutions to problems, makes him wildly resourceful.

FATE: *Seven of Rods.* Soot does not hesitate to dive into difficult situations, usually driven by his inquisitiveness. Intellectually, he knows his rampant curiosity and recklessness may be his undoing someday, but that awareness is almost always after the fact.

RELATIONSHIPS: Soot has the following Relationship Bonds:

- **MY APPRENTICES (2):** *I will always watch over and help you.* Soot is very protective of those he takes under his wing. Though he has taught many, very few qualify as his actual apprentices; he remains in contact with those who do, however, and will move heaven and earth to assist them where he can.
- **THE SOVEREIGN'S FINEST (3):** *I have seen firsthand the good the Finest do, and know that upholding them is the best use of my life.* Since becoming an envoy, Soot has seen the incredible good the Finest do in the world. Moreover, he is convinced they are the means by which he himself can bring the most benefit, and he is a dedicated and loyal member of the organization and servant of the Sovereign because of it.

SOOT		ADEPT • 9TH LEVEL	
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)			
ACCURACY 1 (NATURAL WEAPON: BEAK), COMMUNICATION 5 (ANIMISM, PERSUASION), CONSTITUTION 2, DEXTERITY 5 (INITIATIVE, STEALTH), FIGHTING -1, INTELLIGENCE 5 (ARCANES LORE, HEALING), PERCEPTION 4 (PSYCHIC), STRENGTH -2, WILLPOWER 3 (MEDITATIVE)			
SPEED	HEALTH	DEFENSE	ARMOR RATING
2 (17 FLYING)	72	15	2
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE
BEAK	+3		1d6-2
BEAK (ARCANES POWER)	+3		1d6+3
CLAW	+3		1d6-2
SPECIAL QUALITIES			
ARCANES: Animal Messenger, Animal Summoning, Arcane Strike, Body Control, Cure, Draw Vitality, Harm, Heart Reading, Imbue Unlife, Mind Delving, Psychic Contact, Psychic Shield, Second Sight, Sleep, Ward FAVORED STUNTS: Arcane Shield (2 SP), Powerful Channeling (+1 SP), Skillful Channeling (1 SP) ADEPT ABILITIES: Arcane Power, Heroes' Armor 2 CROW RHYDAN: Psychic arcana, Flying, Natural attacks (Beak 1d6, Claw 1d6), Nightvision, can speak TALENTS: Animism (Journeyman), Contacts (Novice), Healer (Master), Lore (Novice), Meditative (Novice), Psychic (Novice) WEAPONS GROUPS: Brawling, Natural Weapons EQUIPMENT: None			
THREAT: MODERATE			

HISTORY

DATE OF BIRTH: Braneth 7th, 264 Aldin Calendar (age 56)

PLACE OF BIRTH: The forests to the northeast of Elspart, in southwest Aldis

KNOWN FAMILY: None

- **264 AC:** Soot is hatched and fledged as part of a flock of crows in the forests of southwest Aldis. Even before his awakening to his rhydan nature, he is canny and curious, fascinated with the humans of the nearby villages.
- **268 AC:** Soot awakens to his rhydan nature. As he does so, his flock begins an unusual migration, traveling dozens of miles into the interior of the forest to the territory of Simithis, a canny old rhy-fox who teaches the young rhy-crow what he needs to know and understand. In the meantime, his flock returns to their normal lands, and this is the last Soot sees of them.
- **269 AC:** Simithis can tell the young crow has the potential to learn arcanes far beyond those which are natural to the rhydan as a whole, and so the two depart to seek out an adept of Simithis' acquaintance. They board a ship and sail to Garnet. Here Soot meets his first mentor, Edisanda, a Rezean priestess of Selene who helps him develop his animistic and healing arcanes talents.
- **271 AC:** A messenger comes to Edisanda's hermitage, bringing news of trouble with her kin. Edisanda immediately departs, telling Soot to remain behind. He refuses, stealthily following the Rezeans across the border into the Khanate and intervening when rivals of Edisanda's clan stage an ambush. Though put out at his disobedience, Edisanda is grateful for the intervention, and he stays with them while she deals with the troubles at home.
- **273 AC:** Soot returns to Aldis without Edisanda, who remains behind in her homeland. He wanders for a while in western Aldis, assisting folk with his arcanes. He develops quite a contact network during this time.
- **274 AC:** Soot expands his wandering, meeting a variety of folk before eventually coming to Aldis. He spends the next decade seeking out interesting people and following them around on their journeys, including several Finest and knights. His curious personality and willingness to use his powerful healing arcanes make him a welcome companion, as does his ability to win over folk wherever he goes.
- **283 AC:** When his traveling companion, Parival Denimal, is killed by Jarzon-backed pirates in Basketh Bay, Soot quickly gets word of the plot they discovered back to Aldis in time for the Finest to successfully answer his alarm. He is made one of the

A GUIDE TO SHADOWTIDE

Finest in response, an offer he accepts on behalf of Parival. Soot spends the next 12 years in service to the Finest.

- **295 AC:** Soot's efforts on behalf of the Finest are acknowledged and he is given a high position within the organization. Part of this involves overseeing the apprenticeships of various young and promising agents. Soot trains several skilled healers during this four-year period, during which he dwells in Aldis.
- **299 AC:** After one of his apprentices falls to Shadow through the use of sorcery, Soot releases all of his apprentices and seeks out this forbidden lore. He eventually finds a temporary placement at the Midnight Seleneum, the hidden vault-library where the Sovereign locks away tomes of Shadow lore and other dangerous written works. During this time, he himself masters some sorcery in an attempt to understand its power.
- **300 AC:** When his experiments unsettle him, Soot leaves the Midnight Seleneum, returning to Aldis

and undertaking his old duties once more.

- **302 AC:** With the ascension of Queen Jaellin, Soot requests a deployment back into the field, and the senior Finest reluctantly agree.
- **309 AC:** Citing a need for more skilled adept mentors, Queen Jaellin asks Soot to return to Aldis and take up teaching new adepts—not just Finest, but those with untrained skills that could benefit the nation. He does so, and a generation of young adepts take to calling themselves “the Crowkin,” complete with small, stylized crow tattoos at the bases of their necks. Soot doesn't comment on the practice, though he secretly takes a great deal of pleasure from it.
- **316 AC:** Soot once again returns to the field after many of his apprentices begin teaching in Aldis themselves. He spends a few years rejuvenating his contact networks and acting as one of the Finest's most subtle agents.
- **320 AC:** Events of *Shadowtide*.



SOMETHING DARK STIRS IN THE VERAN MARSH...

Shadowtide is the first novel set in the world of the Blue Rose RPG! When two envoys from the Sovereign's Finest disappear on a critical mission, an unlikely band of allies led by Soot, a rhy-crow with dark and secret power, are brought together to combat a hidden threat. As portents bloom across the smuggler's den known as Serpent's Haven, these strange agents quickly find themselves tested by the machinations of a cult dedicated to darkest Shadow.

Grieving, afraid, and unsure who to trust or where to turn, they must rely on one another and their erstwhile allies in hopes of rescuing the envoys and foiling a terrible plot. Success will bring no great reward, but failure is unimaginable. Can they overcome their suspicion and fear to fulfill their mission, or will they, too, fall to Shadow?

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