# Find/Replace Version of the Background for the Players

*I have removed as many of the particulars from this account as I could. I have inserted words like <OLDEST> or <YOUNGEST> in place of character names, as well as <SIBLINGS> and <CHILDREN> instead of brothers or sisters or sons.* ***You should replace these to fit your characters****. Check for pronouns also, as my version was full of “she” and “her” and might not be correct with your group. Remember, the “Setting” section should also be given to the players.*

*By all means, add to it. Make it personal to the players you have. It is the setup to the story you will make together.* ***The most important takeaway from this section is: What happened to Arden, Orphea, and their children three years ago?***

## Family History

<OLDEST>, <MIDDLE>, and <YOUNGEST> are the<3-6><CHILDREN> of Arden and Orphea of Redwater.

Arden came to Redwater when he was in his early twenties, as part of the expedition from Westflood, led by Eldram, future Lord of the region. The purpose of the expedition was to reign in the Berian woodsman under the Lloar banner, more specifically under the rule of the Regent of the Lake. This endeavor would ultimately be successful, and would be credited to Eldram, but all knew, including Eldram himself, that the real breakthroughs were because of the efforts of Eldram’ s young lieutenant Arden.

The agreements made by Eldram (and Arden) with the Berian woodsmen would forever change Redwater. The construction of the palisade and creation of a secure town in which the woodsmen could live with their families in safety, would ultimately allow for stability in the region. This stability would allow for the re-establishment of the timber trade so essential to the communities down river.

Eldram was rewarded for this success with a newly sanctioned title of Lord of Redwater as well as the accompanying wealth resulting from the opening trade route. He would eventually bring his wife Thylera and young son to live in the keep overlooking the town.

Arden was credited with opening several new paths into the Berian Wood, finding several lost settlements, and helping to manage wise harvesting of the trees around Redwater. Arden would also ultimately become good friends with his mentor Lord Eldram. The two would often take expeditions in the woods alone together, much to the displeasure of Lady Thylera.

Arden would meet Orphea at a wedding during the time of construction of the palisade wall. A local woodsmen of some fortune had a daughter marrying one of the palisade builders close to Arden, and so he was invited to attend (along with most of the town). During the typically large feast, Arden became captivated by a woman singing traditional celebratory songs. She was very gifted and very beautiful. He would later learn she was also quite smart and very strong willed. Her name was Orphea.

Orphea’ s family had lived in the Berian Valley for many generations. Her father a woodsman, her mother a midwife. She was an only child to older parents. She too had noticed Arden, the strong, respected man at the right hand of the new Lord.

At one point in the celebration, after much encouragement, Orphea began to sing a familiar wedding feast song. “The Legend of Ilval and Annon” is an ancient verse telling of two forbidden lovers that eventually find happiness only to end in tragedy. All at the feast were surprised, but none more than Orphea, when Arden began to sing along, trading stanzas, as though rehearsed. The two were lauded as the highlight of the feast. Arden and Orphea would be forever tied to the song and local wedding traditions.

They were married that same summer. The following year, <OLDEST> was born.

Eventually, Orphea took on the role of midwife, thanks to the teachings of her mother, serving Redwater and the surrounding countryside. Arden continued to explore the Berian Valley, searching for new trails, ridding areas of beast and other fowl denizens. Both had the respect of the population of Redwater and of many of the woodsmen as well.

Orphea learned to love the winter in Redwater. It was a time when her husband was home.

The family grew to include <2-5> more <CHILDREN>. First <MIDDLE> followed then by <YOUNGEST>. <Orphea feared that Arden wanted a son, but he would never say so.> He loved his <CHILDREN> and raised them to be strong willed like their mother. He would teach them to hunt and track and survive in the wood. Always saying to Orphea, “I cannot always be here to look over them. They need to know to look after each other.”

The springs would come, and Arden’s duties would take him away from home. Once even taking him with Eldram on a journey to Westflood for some political meeting. They would be gone for 60 days. <OLDEST> has memory of <HIS/HER> mother crying often during this time.

In the coming summers, Arden agreed to stay closer to home. Eventually suggesting that Eldram take his son Henerick on his outings instead, but there would always be at least one or two he could not refuse.

Orphea was pleased. The young family had years of stability, contentment, and happiness.

## Lord Eldram’ s Dilemma

In these years, Henerick would come of age. A handsome, strong, and smart young man, Henerick was given every opportunity to learn from his father and his retainers. Fencing, fighting, hunting, riding, all were taught and learned.

The trait Eldram tried most to impart to Henerick, wisdom, was the piece he refused.

He became an entitled, cruel, angry young man. Bullying the locals, stealing, using his father’s title to get him out of any scrape.

Eldram would eventually press Henerick’s mother to send him to her brother in Westflood to get formal education at the Abbey. She agreed and used it as an excuse to leave Redwater for a time.

When Thylera and Henerick returned, he was no better. What he seemed to have learned was ambition. And not surprisingly, lust. He now had a male attendant/bodyguard named Fuhlgar. A large man of similar ambition and morality, always with him to muscle his way out of trouble.

Thylera almost immediately began to press Eldram about arranging for Henerick to succeed him as Lord. Eldram was, at first, excited by the idea and even went so far as to inquire with the Regent about such a possibility.

It would be Arden, and Orphea that would change his mind.

Orphea would eventually learn of Henerick’s treatment of the local population of young, unmarried ladies when attending several of them in pregnancy. Orphea became so affected by the accounts given by the young women, she immediately told Arden and demanded something be done. <adding that she had noticed Henerick speaking with <DAUGHTER> just days before.>

<Arden wasn’t really concerned about <DAUGHTER>, but> Eldram deserved to know what was happening with his son.

Eldram was less than happy to learn of it. He became enraged at Arden for overstepping their friendship. Arden was forced to make a quick apology and almost fled the keep.

It is unclear what happened over the next few days, but in the end, Lady Thylera left the keep and Eldram came to Redwater to visit with Arden and Orphea.

## The Trip

It had been a long time since Eldram had visited their home. It was large by Redwater standards, but nothing compared to the keep. Eldram looked around the family home with a hint of envy. He first apologized to Arden and then to Orphea, offering her his own purse filled with septems. He asked that she use them to see to the girls she was caring for. He then asked Arden if they could take one of their trips into the wood. He had been thinking of a possible solution to the issues with his son and wanted to discuss it at length. To their surprise, he invited the entire family. Arden eventually agreed and allowed the <SIBLINGS> to come along. Orphea elected to stay to check on a pregnancy that was nearing time.

Eldram refused to let any of his retainers accompany them on the hunt, only one cook, and one groom for the horses. They modestly outfitted themselves, hoping to live off the land as usual.

The first couple of days were spent travelling on trails all of them, even the <SIBLINGS> knew well. Arden and Eldram debated how to correct the misdeeds of Henerick. Once they reached the deeper wood, progress was slow. They were forced to slay an Ursi. Eldram was knocked from his horse. Once it was over, he laughed loudly. Thanking Arden for saving him once again.

They stumbled upon a waterfall in the stream, almost fifty feet high. It was a perfect place to stop. After making camp, Eldram asked the <SIBLINGS> for some time alone with their father. Not long after, they could be heard arguing. Eventually Eldram came storming into camp asking the <SIBLINGS> strange questions, almost yelling.

“Wouldn’t you like to live in the keep? To travel to Westflood and beyond? To learn from the best teachers?”

Finally, Arden had to physically restrain him. It would all end with the two of them laughing and the <SIBLINGS> confusedly joining in.

Once they gathered their breath, Eldram continued, “Is it so bad Arden, what I propose? Is it such a tragedy for you and your family?”

“No, I suppose not.” Arden responded.

“Then ask me or I shall not believe you!” Eldram pressed.

Arden then smiled, drew his sword, and yelled, “I demand Lord, that you name me successor!”

“Good. So it will be.”

The attack that followed caught them all by surprise. Many arrows from all directions. Both Eldram and Arden were struck. Eldram called to his friend to get his family to safety.

“This time I shall save you!” he cried.

Arden leapt from the falls screaming for the <SIBLINGS> to run. <OLDEST> fired arrows blindly into the trees, trying desperately to hit their assailants.

“Come on you cowards!” Eldram shouted to them.

Several more arrows pierced him as he fell at the top of the waterfall. It would become quickly apparent that the arrow that struck Arden was poisoned. He would need help to escape.

The <SIBLINGS> would spend the next five days, helping each other, dragging their seriously injured father home. When they finally arrived, they would learn that Orphea was killed in an attempt on Henerick’s life. The <CHILDREN> were all accused of conspiracy against a Lord of House Lloar. And, Arden was accused of the murder of Eldram, Lord of Redwater.

## The Inquiry

The <SIBLINGS> were imprisoned within the dungeon of the keep for several days. They received no word of their father and struggled to support each other through the ordeal.

They received a visit the Curate of Redwater, Linden, an Acolyte they all knew well. He was very serious and measured in his account of what was happening. Their father was alive and would stand accused before Klain Whiteshield, Regent of the Lake himself, as soon as he arrived.

Lord Eldram’ s body was brought in to Redwater the day before the <SIBLINGS> arrived in town with Arden.

Orphea was killed in their own house for attempting to kill Henerick. Henerick was badly injured. He may be blind in one eye.

Linden refused to hear any of the <SIBLINGS> accounts of events, stating he was to be involved in the inquiry.

The day before the trial the <SIBLINGS> were taken to a different part of the keep and briefly questioned by an Acolyte calling himself Lathan. He was a very serious, tall, thin, pale man. His questions were very specific, and he demanded the <SIBLINGS> each answer with yes or no only.

### Day One

The day began with introductions of the participants in the Inquiry:

The Regent, Lathan, Linden, Henerick, Lady Thylera, the <SIBLINGS>, Arden, a few other witnesses, finally ending with Lady Thylera’ s brother Toreas, Henerick’s uncle, who would be speaking for the Lord’s family. And, Rilen, one of Arden’s trusted guides, who would be speaking for Arden’s family.

Arden was placed in chains at the front of the room. The <SIBLINGS> caught his glance several times, but they were not allowed to speak with him at all.

Many boring accounts of Lord Eldram and Arden’s friendship and working relationship were given in the morning, followed by character witness including the Regent himself on behalf of Arden.

After a midday break, Lady Thylera gave an account of Arden visiting Eldram to speak of Henerick shortcomings and unworthiness to be Lord and the argument that followed. She also testified that both she and Eldram wished greatly that Henerick be Lord one day.

<OLDEST> was asked to give an account of the night they were visited by Eldram.

<MIDDLE> was asked details of their trip.

<ADD ADDITIONAL ENTRIES HERE AS NEEDED>

<YOUNGEST> was asked only two yes/no questions:

“Did your father and Eldram argue on the trip?” and,

“Did your father draw his sword and demand to be made successor?”

<HE/SHE> tried to answer both with “no”, but Curate Linden shook his head both times at the Regent, and the Regent asked <HIM/HER> to answer truthfully or face the consequences. <HE/SHE> eventually did.

Arden would give his account of the trip and the death of Eldram. Many details of which were fuzzy due to the poison still in his system. Many objections and questions were voiced from Toreas.

Another break was taken.

The room was cleared of all audience not directly involved in the inquiry. Lathan then began to pray in front of a small alter that had been hastily set up at the end of the room. Linden and one other Acolyte began praying soon after.

Lathan called a visage of Eldram into being in front of the room. The image of the dead Lord was terrible to behold. He looked like a statue of himself, looking around at the those in the room as if confused.

Both Toreas and Rilen were asked to pass a single written question to Linden. Linden then asked the visage of Eldram each question aloud:

“Did you wish your son to succeed you as Lord of Redwater?”

“Yes” he responded.

“Did Arden or his <CHILDREN> cause your death?”

“No” he responded.

Clearly shaken, Linden wiped his brow and nodded to the Regent.

The image of Lord Eldram then faded away.

The Regent then spoke,

“So then on the matter of murder, Arden, you are declared not guilty. In the matter of conspiracy and treason, perhaps tomorrow will show the truth. This inquiry is now excused for the night.”

Curate Linden would later inform the <SIBLINGS> that the second day would be largely concerning their mother and the conspiracy. He added that the will of the Triad will be also present at the inquiry as the day before.

### Day Two

A few minutes before the beginning of the second day, the <SIBLINGS> were briefly reunited with their father. Arden looked very sick but smiled as soon as he saw them. He was in chains. There were many tears but, in the end, he demanded they be strong and that they remember their mother as they knew her, not by what would be said there today.

Again, much of the first half of the day was made up of introductions and statements of the conspiracy case to deny Henerick succession to Lord of Redwater. Later were many accounts of the quality and character of Orphea.

Eventually, there would be an account of the evening in question from a local man, Artil, a respected merchant that knew the family. He told the story of how Orphea was at the Whetstone singing when Henerick and Fuhlgar arrived. Eventually, as was common on the rare occasion when Orphea was at the Whetstone, she was asked to sing the “Legend of Ilval and Annon”. She eventually agreed and was unexpectedly joined by Henerick. The crowd cheered loudly. Not long after, Orphea left. And soon after, Henerick would also leave. The story caused Arden to protest to the point of being further restrained and gagged.

Henerick would then tell a surprising tale of how he saw Orphea walking home and offered to escort her. She would accept and upon arrival at the house, ask him if he needed on more cup of wine before heading to the keep. Henerick accepted. She then threw herself upon him and they made love in Arden’s bed at her request. After sleeping for a few hours, he arose before dawn to make his usual escape before waking the woman of that particular night. He would find his father’s purse on the table. He woke Orphea, demanding an explanation. She told him of his father’s wishes to take care of the girls he had been with. Henerick denied his involvement and she became enraged and attacked him with a kitchen knife. He called for help and Fuhlgar kicked in the door and ran Orphea through. He immediately sent for help and then cut off Orphea’ s head that she would not rise to trouble them further.

At the end of the telling, Linden, with tears in his eyes turned to the regent and nodded.

A break was called.

Afterwards, when the <SIBLINGS> were again called to the inquiry, there was an argument happening between Henerick’s uncle, Toreas, and the tall Acolyte Lathan. Toreas was demanding that he be allowed to ask the questions. Eventually the Regent denied him.

What was to happen next would haunt the dreams of the <SIBLINGS> forever.

The room was again cleared of all audience not directly involved in the inquiry. Lathan then began to pray in front of the small alter as he had the day before. Linden and the other Acolyte began praying soon after.

Lathan called a visage of Orphea into being in front of the room. Colorless, silent, but undeniably Orphea. Her hair waved about her as though she was floating in water. She looked thin, almost ill. The injury at her neck was not bleeding, but obvious. Her eyes went immediately to Arden who was crying. She smiled.

Linden took the page he was given and asked the following question aloud,

“Did you act in defense of yourself when you attacked Henerick?”

“No” she replied, with a look of anger and pride.

Linden then asked the second question,

“Did you willingly invite Henerick into your own bed?”

The visage of Orphea immediately looked to Arden, she began to shake and eventually pulled at her hair and looked as though screaming, her mouth wide, eyes closed tight, silently screaming.

Toreas demanded, “Make her answer!”

And so, she did. With streams of tears running down her colorless face.

“Yes.” she said.

And she was gone. Arden had to be removed from the room, <OLDEST> too was restrained. Never have the <CHILDREN> been as confused or saddened.

The Regent then closed the inquiry for the day.

### Day Three

The morning of the third day began with a visit from Linden. His hair had turned white overnight. He was, like everyone, affected by the events of the previous day. He informed the <SIBLINGS> that their father had requested a direct audience with the Regent do discuss confessing to the accusations.

Soon, they were taken to see Arden in his cell. The Regent was leaving as they arrived.

“You have one hour.” he stated as he exited.

This would be the last time the <SIBLINGS> would see their father. They spent the time talking about how things would change and how to stay strong. There were many tears and embraces. Embraces that would have to last.

At the end of the hour, the Regent returned and gave Arden his word that the <SIBLINGS> would be safe. Arrangements had been made to take them to Westflood. They would not see Redwater or their father again.

## The time between

Three years. The Regent promised Arden he would keep his <CHILDREN> in Westflood under his protection for three years.

<ADD ENTRIES HERE CONCERNING THE CHARACTERS TIME IN WESTFLOOD AS NEEDED>

At the end of the three years promised to the Regent, the <SIBLINGS> ended their service. But it worked out that he was able to keep them a bit longer. The Regent refused to allow the <SIBLINGS> to leave until winter’s end. When Auctus finally came, and the snows ended, the <CHILDREN> would no longer stay.

On the 16th Day of the First Cycle of Auctus, in the 65th Year of the Triad, the <SIBLINGS> started their journey home.