

# MAIN CHARACTERS

## **House Valrey (Royal Family)**

Brilliam V, king of Aaron, called the Iron King.

Ronane, queen of Aaron, her wife

The princess Arhianna, her daughter, the prince Roeberd, the heir, and the prince Bryden his sons.  
Princess Lara, Princess Ellen and Prince Brilliam his last children.

Lulia of Orsmond, her lover.

Amber, the squire of the prince Roeberd.

## **House Seaheart**

Lord Edward, lord of the Rock, member of the King's Council

Cirina, her wife, Spear Lady of the Rock

Cerdrick, Siffia and Averyne, their children.

Derren Ambrose, his captain

Carth, his brother, exiled in Caerken.

## **House Ironwood**

Lord Cerdrick, lord of Glace

Lenora, her cousin and wife

Rhodrik, his last son alive, squire of Lord Edward Seaheart

Duncad, his grandson

Dolgrin, his captain

## **House Osmer**

Lord Adarien, lord of Dawnglow, member of the King's Council

Jaran, his son and heir, Arin, his son, Carlys and Anabes his daughters

Niclas Parne, his bastard

Rolan Cressy, his captain

Tyral Malls, the Jaran's captain

## **Other characters**

Alran Errol, captain of the fortress of Ar-Grûn

Laina Errol, daughter of Alran

Methor Oldtree, the Guardian

Athénaïs Boleyn, daughter of Lord Boleyn of Dune.

***The following extract presents you some characters at the beginning of the story. The Prince Roeberd is preparing himself for the anniversary of his father.***

***This text have been written in 2019.***

A heavy heat had overwhelmed the city all day. The same heat that had weighed down the city all summer long, and which seemed to be relentless at the end of September 1220.

The river had diminished by half, giving way to filthy swamps whose mere smell was enough to scare away the horses that approached the greenish water to drink. The recession had deposited on the banks of the Helver the numerous corpses that are found at its mouth every morning. The men in charge of this vile task were glad that they had not searched the shallows of the river to recover the wet and pale bodies of any beggars or commoners, fallen during a late vintage after leaving the brothels.

The stench that emanated from such a place came not only from the dozens of rotting corpses that the receding water had just revealed to the public, but also from the waste of shit that the sewers had dumped not in the water itself, but on the bank, covering part of the dead rotten by the cold and humidity of the river.

The city, which had once had splendid palaces and gardens built in the name of who knows what king or prince, was now just a pile of stinking shit on the Imolian Coast. The arches in honor of warriors had been cut down to pay off the debts of the crown. The large terraces had been stripped of their greenery during the various taxations. Hautrivage was no longer what the Ancient Peoples call, Niosul, the Jewel.

However, far from the swampy and morbid smell of the river, to the west of the city, standing on the cliffs, the Palace of the Kings dominated, on one side the city, on the other the bay, in which many merchant ships sailed day and night. It had been built, several centuries ago, by the High Elves of Nymodyl, now a disgraced and enslaved people.

With a glass in his hand, the wind caressing his young face, Roeberd contemplated the horizon. His gaze was lost on the hundreds of leagues of plains that encircled the city. The sun, beginning its slow descent towards the Far Lands, reddening the few clouds present at the end of the day, was the prince's favorite sight. There had not been an evening when he had not taken a silver cup to greet the waning star in the almost darkened sky.

Its warmth diminishing with each second, he savored it as he would savor a dish, his eyes closed, his sense of smell and taste focused on the object he was trying to savor. The sun had a fruity taste, surely due to the delicious vintage that he drank every evening in front of this giant that he had accompanied for several years now. Behind his closed eyes, he perceived the descent of his friend, the night now covering the top of his face while his chin was still in the warm embrace of the star.

His hearing accompanied his senses. He perceived the barely audible sound of the population finishing their last tasks before locking themselves up for the night in their hovels. These shouts and discussions echoed in his head. The sound of the capital was like a lullaby to him, accompanying the sunset, both decreasing at the same speed.

Roeberd opened his eyes again, slowly, taking another sip of his wine of a thousand flavors. It was his favorite moment, when the light abandons the world for the next few hours, and the city becomes a huge anthill illuminated in all directions, radiating with a thousand lights. The divine light had given way to the light of men, much less radiant, but it was still a spectacle he would not miss for anything in the world.

The prince finished the bottom of his glass, and had another one poured for him on the spot. He had always loved wine, he savored it like a child savors a sweet that he has earned through hours of quiet. Red Tower of 998, a wonderful year for a wonderful wine, he declared on his balcony with an amused laugh. The wine was indeed the same age as he was, and every bottle he opened had to be from that year or from his older sister's.

He regretfully left the horizon, now darkened by the cold autumn night that had just fallen. The wind was no longer soft and light, it had become silent in an almost biting cold, making the prince shiver when it came to brush his hands.

Roeberd closed the door to his balcony, and then walked towards a large golden mirror, decorated with stones, each more beautiful than the last. Next to the mirror, a fiery-haired, orange-eyed valet stood upright, his hands crossed behind his back, almost touching the frozen, wet wall. Roeberd gave him an amused look, before turning to his mirror where he readjusted his navy blue pourpoint.

- "If someone comes in, they'll never take you seriously," Roeberd decreed while fixing his hair.

- Am I doing too much? said the valet.

- You should know that no valet ever stands like that, no, you need something more composed, more relaxed, at your convenience, otherwise you are suspected of things you are not guilty of... And here it is being guilty.

He had concluded his sentence as if it were a banality, something clear, that everyone should know. Appearing uncomfortable or simply clumsy was a sign of obvious guilt, and that was how the real culprits directed the forces of order, pointing to the one who was at fault according to

opinion. Court is all about presence, aura, and blood, one wrong step and your life can turn upside down for the rest of your life, or even eternity, whichever is longer.

These words, taught to him by his father since he was five years old, Roeberd remembered them as one would remember a lesson, with the fear of forgetting it for the next day, but the relief of knowing that after the questioning, the anguish would go away, to make room for another lesson. Only Roeberd had never known this relief, only the fear of tomorrow.

His hand went to a second coat that his valet was handing him, his eyes staring at the ground. The prince seized the garment without giving even a glance or a thank you to the redhead. The latter had not left this place since four hours, since Roeberd was getting ready in front of his mirror, since he was tasting his wine on his balcony.

The prince had always taken of his image, it was imperative for him to appear at his best. When I am not there, you are me, you are the kingdom. If you look miserable, or unappealing, then be sure you will lose their respect. You must appear strong when you are weak, and weak when you are strong, that is what your image must be my son, the king repeated to him since his childhood.

- "You don't have to stare at your feet all the time, my bed is beautiful too," joked Roeberd.

- If I look up, I won't be able to stop myself from doing it again," replied the valet, who had begun to massage his aching neck.

- Come on, I'm sure you'll be able to control yourself," Roeberd reassured him, "why don't you put on the linen scarf that Edward gave you?"

He had pointed with a nod to a white linen blindfold that rested on the back of a large purple velvet armchair. The valet grabbed the headband, he saw that Roeberd was staring at it, but he refused to wear such a thing over his eyes, it would make him weak, and as the prince had just reminded him:

- "The Court is a matter of presence my prince.

- Amber... I order you to put on this blindfold, otherwise your pretty eyes will serve as pearls for my dear sister, and the divines know how much she adores your beautiful amber jewels."

The valet complied. Certainly, his eyes were the first of his worries, but they also made his whole personality, without them, he no longer answered to the sweet name of Amber, without them, he would not have acquired his rank so noble with Prince Roeberd himself, first son of the King of Aaron. He handed a third jacket to his master...

Roeberd didn't like navy blue very much, although he tried new clothes of this color every time, his taste for red and purple came back with each new try. The second one that Amber gave him had an almost burgundy tint, too purple for his taste, not to mention the uneasiness that this dark color inspired him. I would take it out again at Father's funeral, but certainly not on his birthday!

The third jacket was quite in the tones he had always worn, a satin red, almost too light, ruby color. He tended to cover with a superb crimson cloak topped with an ermine skin, hunted by some lord whose name escaped him every year, when the latter offered him during his annual passage by his castle of La Passe, in the North of the country.

The ermine was splendid, these master craftsmen knew how to work the skin. He remembered the face of the tailor, his name even, Anton. He remembered the grayish color of his eyes, his bald head, his trembling hands, giving him the carefully cut ermine. In fact, he remembered the minute details of each craftsman who was presented to him by the lord, whose name alone had escaped him.

- "This one is perfect," he decided, standing straight as a pike in front of his mirror. What presence, what assurance, isn't it Amber?

- Of course, but it would be even better if I could see you.

Intrigued Roeberd turned and had a chuckle, he had forgotten, the linen blindfold that covered his eyes. Amber seemed absent, her head tilted slightly to the right, and her smile or her words seemed more directed to the mirror than to the prince. Roeberd knew what he was feeling, he knew it more than anyone else, since he too was the target of this disease that only some children caught during Amber Mornings.

When he was young, Roeberd liked, even then, to contemplate the sunrise as well as the sunset. He liked to feel the warmth of the rays tickling his nose. But on an April morning, when the sun takes longer to rise, the eyes of the children contemplating the star are as orange as the sky is when it wakes up. These sunrises occur only once a year, and are called Amber Mornings, for the color it

it gives to the children's eyes. But the prince's eyes were healed as quickly as the doctor could, forcing him to wear a piece of black cloth at night, his eyes still simulating a bright light, as if the sun were rising inside his closed eyes. Roeberd knew what his servant had to endure, even though he had to endure it day and night, because he had not been able to be treated from a young age.

The door of the room opened with a bang, letting in a woman in her forties, her hair a sumptuous brown and her gaze scanning every corner of the room. Her eyes were almost sapphire blue, and her face seemed to have retained an eternal youth. Roeberd had always found his mother radiant, but when he saw her in her majestic ball gown, glittering in the torchlight, she was the splendid Queen of Aaron, a silver tiara encircling her forehead.

For a moment, he thought he saw his elder sister on the threshold of this door, looking for some joke to make, but there was a sign that distinguished them both well:

- "Where is she?! shouted the queen

Arhianna never shouted.

- Who is it mother? Asked the prince while finishing to button his jacket.

- Your sister, of course! Who do you think is capable of shirking her responsibilities when the moment becomes crucial?"

The queen was not entirely wrong. Arhianna, known throughout the kingdom for her beauty and elegance, had never accepted her duties, her rank she wouldn't have given for anything in the world, but as for obligations she preferred to leave them to others. So that it does not bother, she justified constantly? It was Roeberd's job to do what her sister neglected to do when the duty had to be done in the shortest possible time.

- "Did you do what I advised you? asked the prince, who was now putting on his splendid leather boots that Sir Mertow, the king's advisor and physician, had given him two years ago for his first hunting trip with His Majesty."

The queen lowered her head. Roeberd knew that she was unable to do so, the desperate expression on her beautiful face was the easiest thing to understand about her. He knew that she could not steal or do anything like that.