THE LAST RIDERS SERIES

The Sanctuary Field Guide & Da's Bakery Recipes

An Exclusive Companion Guide to the World of Veyrith

BY ALFRED WAYSON

A Note from the Kitchen at the Third Stair

If you are reading this, someone gave you a safe-conduct, or you found the drainage gate beneath the eastern wall when the city lanterns went dark. Either way: wipe the flour off your fingers, close the door behind you, and listen.

In Veyrith, the Hall of Reason spends gold swearing dragons never existed. But if your wrist has begun to prickle with heat—or if you have heard the unhurried hum vibrating beneath the flagstones—you already know the kingdom is lying.

At the Sanctuary, we do things differently. There are no binding ledgers and no irons. Before anything is done to a dragon, you ask. You wait for an answer. And if the dragon turns its shoulder or meets your gaze in flat silence, you honor the 'no.' Da always said that dough will not rise if you rush the fire, and a creature will not trust you if you treat an oath like an order.

— *Wren*

Part I: The Sanctuary Dragons

Zane (Bonded to Wren)

Appearance: Violet-black scales with silver edges; silver flame-scar over the left shoulder.
Temperament: Absolute silence. Zane does not speak with words or human thoughts; his bond is felt as steady warmth radiating into the wrist.
The Core Rule: Zane never makes promises. His bond is not an obligation—it is renewed every morning at first light. If he steps away, you let him walk.
Sanctuary Notes: Refuses sweetened oats. Prefers cold mountain stream water and scorched cedar bark.

Sprocket (Bonded to Rook, Sanctuary Mechanic)

Appearance: Copper-scaled, heavy-jawed, with mismatched brass harness fittings crafted by Rook.
Temperament: Incurably curious. Watches mechanical escapements, waterwheels, and latches with unblinking focus.
Sanctuary Notes: Keep loose iron hinges out of reach; Sprocket sits on them until they are warm enough to bend.

Part I: The Sanctuary Dragons (Continued)

Vex (Bonded to Kestrel, Ex-Ironhold Scout)

Appearance: Slate-grey, lean, bearing flank scars from an old Ironhold riding harness.
Temperament: Vigilant and guarded. Remembers what Ironhold was. Sudden movements or chains provoke an immediate defensive flare.
Sanctuary Notes: Approach only with empty hands held at waist height.

Willow (Bonded to Sable, The Reader)

Appearance: Lichen-green and slender, with delicate wing membranes that rustle like dry autumn leaves.
Temperament: Perceptive. Does not fear strength, but withdraws instantly from deceit or hidden intent. Say only what you mean.

Part II: Reading the Wrist Mark

The Steady Hum A low, rhythmic pulse indicating an unthreatened dragon within three leagues. Feels like resting your hand on a sleeping cat.	**The Silver Spike** A sudden sharp warmth with a silver outline on the skin. Indicates immediate dragon attention or an unspoken question.
The Cold Spot The mark turns dull grey and skin temperature drops. Signals an Order suppression ledger, a binding stone, or the Hollow's edge.	**The Refusal** A gentle, firm receding of the pulse. When felt, you must lower your gaze, step back two paces, and honor the answer.

Part III: Da's Bakery Recipes

1. Da's Hearthstone Morning Sourdough Rolls

YIELD: 12 CRUSTY ROLLS • RISE: 8–12 HOURS • BAKE: 25 MINS

"The secret is not the flour. It is leaving the dough alone long enough to forget what you wanted it to do." — Da

Ingredients:

- 500g (4 cups) bread flour
- 360ml (1 1/2 cups) lukewarm water
- 100g active sourdough starter (or 1 tsp yeast)
- 10g (1 1/2 tsp) sea salt
- 1 tbsp dark honey or barley malt
- Coarse cornmeal for baking stone

Instructions:

1. **The Mix:** Whisk water, honey, and starter. Stir in flour and salt to form a shaggy wet dough. Rest covered 30 mins.
2. **Four Folds:** Wet hands. Stretch dough edge up and fold over center. Do 4 fold sets every 30 mins over 2 hours.
3. **Overnight Sleep:** Let ferment 8–12 hours at room temp until doubled and fragrant.
4. **Shape:** Cut into 12 squares on floured board. Tuck corners under into rounded rolls.
5. **Hearth Bake:** Preheat oven & stone to 450°F (230°C) with metal pan on bottom rack. Dust stone with cornmeal, load rolls, and pour 1/2 cup hot water into metal pan for steam. Bake 22–25 mins until deep golden and hollow-sounding.

2. Sanctuary Cinnamon Oat Cakes

YIELD: 8 HEARTH CAKES • PREP: 15 MINS • BAKE: 18 MINS

"Finch eats three before they touch the cooling rack. Keep a towel over them if Rook is anywhere near." — Wren

Ingredients:

- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup dark brown sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp ground Ceylon cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp baking soda & 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 1/3 cup warm milk (or buttermilk)
- 1/4 cup maple syrup or molasses
- Turbinado sugar for topping

Instructions:

1. Whisk oats, flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, baking soda, and salt.
2. Stir in melted butter, warm milk, and maple syrup until a thick, sticky dough forms. Rest 10 mins for oats to absorb liquid.
3. Scoop 1/3 cup mounds onto parchment-lined baking sheet, 2 inches apart.
4. Press into 1/2-inch thick rounds. Score three marks across the top and sprinkle generously with turbinado sugar.
5. Bake at 375°F (190°C) for 16–18 mins until fragrant and golden bronze. Cool 10 minutes to set into a chewy hearth cake.

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