

Terras is a nation of musicians, artisans, and wealthy merchants. It is a place where caravans begin and end and ships leave for exotic ports and return laden with gold and strange items. Terras maintains a large population of Hobblings, Mystic Wood Elves and Selunari, as well as many other different races and has profited greatly from its beliefs on tolerance, culture and trade.

The people of Terras are obsessed with art, wine and wealth. Unlike their northern neighbors of Helios, who pursue wealth for its power, those of Terras look for the comforts that wealth has to offer, using the money they acquire to create more happiness for themselves and for those they care about. Terras's economy is supported by strong guilds, controlled by powerful merchant families who have a great deal of wealth and political clout. Every aspect of trade or craft is covered by a guild.

The nation of Terras sits on the southwestern coast of the continent, nestled between the Empire of Helios to the north and the Golden Plains of TajiQ to the east. The settled portions of the kingdom wrap around the coast line and the country's borders with its neighbors. To the eastern borders of Terras are the Northern and Southern Rhun Mountains. In the center of these two massive mountain ranges is the Ivory Gate, a large mountain pass that leads into the rest of the country.

The Long Forest lies on the southern Coastal Stretch where some of the major settlements are. Though ostensibly part of the kingdom, the forest is mostly untamed wilderness; and few people dare venture into it. The north side of the Long Forest is bounded by the Frogsquat Hills with which the Fork River and the Trident River cut through, creating the northern Azure Valley and the southern Hunter Valley.

At the mouth of the Fork and Trident rivers and to the west of the Frogsquat Hills is the great Restless Mire, a lowland region that is so close to sea level that the ground cannot properly drain. To the North of the Frogsquat Hills is the open fields of the Golden Valley, and the central sea line coasts named The Golden Cliffs. Most of Terras's countryside is filled with gentle, rolling hills blanketed with rich soil that supports a wide range of crops and vineyards. Small copses of very large, very old trees dot this pastoral landscape.

Recent History

The cultures of the world have inhabited Terras for thousands of years, but only with the rise of the Empire of Helios did the region become a unified nation, reaching its current borders a mere 700 years ago. During the rise of Helios, most of the Hobblings and Selunari made efforts to stay neutral in all acts of hostility engulfing the continent, a fact that all citizens of Terras like to remind aggressive cultures. With independence, Terras became a center of trade, and its people became wealthy and prosperous.

Terras has always been a hot, damp, verdant land, suitable for growing olives and dates and grazing by huge herds of livestock. Its forests are filled with fragrant carving-woods, and its sandbars and coastal shoals bristle with oysters, crabs, edible fish, and rocks harboring both gems and metals.

The country is ruled by a monarch, currently Queen Roselyn Dawnthistle and her Alabaster Council. Through her and her predecessors, the country has flourished over the past 700 years. The country emphasizes culture and art, and has extremely wealthy schools that teach the populace various crafts and skills. Terras is known for its fine arts, and in the eyes of its people, anything can be turned into an art form. From cooking and fishing, to combat and swordplay.

A few hundred years ago, the Empire of Helios attempted to invade Terras through sheer force, but was

pushed back by the many mercenaries employed by the crown. Now mercenary companies can be seen in all of Terras's cities and will work for the highest bidder. Despite that, the country is a relatively peaceful land. At least that is what they would like you to think.

Laws

The people of Terras have few laws and many customs. Strictly limiting the actions of a people who are whimsical and mischievous by nature would be a nigh-impossible task. Nonetheless, the Hobblings and Selunari manage to regulate themselves enough to prevent most serious offenses against society. When a Terrasian commits a minor offense, the miscreant usually just receives a good "talking-to" and an admonition to straighten up and fly right from an older, wiser member of the community. When an outsider stirs up trouble, the community often find creative ways to turn the crime back on the criminal. For example, a con artist might find himself duped into losing his own coin as well as what he gained through his cheating ways, or a thief might wake up to discover that he's been moved in the middle of the night - minus his belongings - to the middle of nowhere.

The natives of Terras recognize that there are a few truly bad apples in every barrel, and that if left unchecked, an exceptionally villainous individual can cause quite a mess. When such a situation occurs, the community will call on a local Knight of Sepira to administer justice. Though people from Terras are generally jovial and prone to forgiving slights, they can deal with serious threats quite firmly. When the law catches up to a murderer, he shouldn't expect much more than a quick execution.

In any rural community in Terras, two rather informal councils of village elders handle most of the governing. The menfolk assemble on the front stoop of the largest communal building (usually a taproom or general store), and the womenfolk gather around the baking table inside. These two groups discuss the situations facing the community and decide on the proper way to handle any problems. Usually, the most respected and/or prominent citizen in the community presides over the dual meeting as mayor or wise woman, though occasionally a Knight of Sepira assumes the role of leader. This individual listens to all arguments and counterarguments and, if the gathering cannot come to a consensus, hands down a decision for dealing with the situation at hand.

In Terras's urban centers, the governing body is more formal, with a Knight of Sepira or the Queen presiding over any punishments for crimes committed.

Locations of Interest

Ivorycrest

The city of Ivorycrest is a beautiful place of ancient trees and soaring towers, with curving lines in its stonework and garden plantings adorning every nook and balcony. Magic and learning is revered, music and laughter are heard often in the streets, and the city contains fascinating shops brim-full of maps, books, wondrous items, and beautiful things.

Ivorycrest is the capital of Terras and is built on the spirit of cooperation between all people. All races maintain dwellings in the same areas of the city instead of dividing into separate wards. A human home might be built around the base of a tree, with elves using the tree above as part of the walkway to their central tree home, and Hobling burrows and warrens just beneath the surface. It is said that Ivorycrest is considered the foremost center of learning and culture in the continent. It is noted for its music, its artists, its artisans, and its crafters - as well as the mages, who are gathered here in greater numbers than in any other city of the continent except Solus.

Ivorycrest boasts a conservatory of music, a great library, parks, the castle-like estates of many noble folk, and many great colleges dedicated to the fine arts. Perhaps the most famous structure is the Ivorycrest University; a school dedicated to the teaching of all manner of subjects and composed of several formerly separate colleges.

The Knights of Sepira maintain a fortress within the city walls, and act as the city's primary defense. Well

paid mercenary organizations assist them in patrolling the countryside, and when they must turn back orc and goblin hordes from the Rhun mountains, the citizens line the streets to celebrate their success upon their return. Ivorycrest is also protected by a number of wards that detect the presence of evil beings, such as outsiders and undead.

The city's peace and goodwill is due to the influence of the country's monarch, Rosalyn Dawnthistle and her Alabaster Council. Ivorycrest's folk feel safe and that's due to the vigilance of their Queen.

Sepira

Located southwest of Ivorycrest and situated on the verdant lands between the Fork and Trident Rivers, Sepira is the second largest city in Terras and one of the three most active mercantile communities in the region. A thick stone wall rings the city, pierced in five places by the city's gates. Like the spokes of a wheel, broad, straight streets lead from each gate to Silver Market at the city center. The layout of these streets and the location of certain city features, such as the market, many inns, and warehouses, are designed for the accommodation of caravans and their merchants. Mercenaries and trainees of the Knights of Sepira make a show of patrolling the walls in strength, both to provide reassurance to citizens and visitors, and to discourage attackers.

Like many of the communities in Terras, Sepira traces its origins to a time right after the great war. Since its humble beginnings as a fortified trading outpost, the city's population and importance have increased to the point where it is one of the most important trading cities in Terras, and the continent as well. The fact that nearly every single trade caravan that journeys deeper into Terras, as well as Taji and Helios calls at Sepira en route to other destinations brings to the city a position of considerable economic and social importance. The city's voice carries considerable weight among its peers, for nearly all are dependent to some degree on Sepira's role as the main caravan station in this region.

The city's leaders have never failed to keep its first line of defense in good repair, nor to add to the fortifications whenever possible. As such, Sepira owes its survival to the thickness of its walls, some strategic mercenary alliances, and its proximity to the Knights of Sepira's Headquarters.

Cerise Savoureux

A walled city of all races, Cerise Savoureux is cultured without being arrogant, bustling without being greedy, and charming without being quaint. The city is best known for its master crafts: lamps of multicolored glass, precision water clocks, and exquisite jewelry. It is also famous for its year round gardens, heated by the beautiful natural hot springs. The gardens fill the markets with fruit in the summer and enliven winter with its flowers.

Queen Victoria Dawnthistle founded this city 200 years ago as a sort of vacation home for her family. Under her careful ministrations, and her dedicated descendants, Cerise Savoureux has grown into a beautiful city, visually fortified with vineyards, gardens, and masterful sculptures that cover more than seven square miles, making it by far the continent's largest piece of artwork.

The parties and celebrations in this city are legendary, and many travel from across the continent to attend the midsummer and midwinter festivals. In the beginning of the spring, the people of each community will form teams and work together to plow each other's fields for free, going on until every farmer in the area had at least one field ready to sow. Each day they work hard, and each night they celebrate. Due to the massive amounts of alcohol, this event can last up to four days.

Unlike the other great wineries or vintners of the world, that seek only profit, Cerise Savoureux is an ongoing act of devotion to masterful art, beauty and celebration. Many of the world's finest restaurants and important political figures have at least one Cerise Savoureux bottle in their wine cellars, and oenophiles and sommeliers dream of a taste of wine from this region.

Starlite Cove

Starlite Cove is one of the most bustling places in Terras. All night long, in all but the worst weather, lanterns blaze in the arches of its open gates and glimmer above the docks, so work can continue. Wagons creak and rumble along the streets day and night, and the air is filled with the crack of whips,

the shouts of drovers, the bellows of oxen, and the jingling of harnesses. The stink of fish and saltwater hangs strong over the city and clings - thanks to the river-damp - to all clothes hung to dry unless they are draped in the scent-mist wardrobe chambers of the wealthy or of the most expensive launderers. When the winds blow from the west (a thankfully rare occurrence), the reek from The Restless Mire is chokingly thick. The rest of the time, a thin layer of mud dust hangs over the city, and the smells of laboring draft-beasts are strong and ever present.

In the west of the city, wealthy noble estates sprawl along the Inner Sea coast. Beautiful houses and manors of all shapes and sizes stare out into the peaceful ocean scenery. The eastern portion of the city is littered with hundreds of tanneries, shops, shanties, warehouses, stables and inns to keep the teamsters content.

Visitors often find sleep comes hard for their first week or so. Entertainment and debauchery keeps the streets busy at night, but such "moon work" is made possible because citizens of Starlite Cove and visitors alike feel safe: the Knights of Sepira are ever vigilant and mounts numerous patrols against gangs, thuggery in the shadows, and brawls. Everyone knows that "No thief thrives in Starlite Cove."

Argentridge

Argentridge is the home of many "silver barons" and wealthy nobles, who inhabit several of the estates and manors in the area. Visitors are warned to respect anyone dressed in finery or displaying arrogance, since the families are powerful and not afraid of proving it. The surrounding countryside is sparsely inhabited but rich in mineral wealth, which draws foreigners looking to strike it rich quickly. The nobles quickly adapted to this and have made a considerable profit by offering land leases and ore taxes on all minerals mined on their lands.

Argentridge maintains friendly relations with its neighbors and has a thriving silver and gem trade. Despite the trials of their recent house feuds, in which nobles fought openly on the streets over specific land rights, the citizens of Argentridge are proud of their city. Argentridge's citizens are grateful to the Alabaster Council for stopping the feud dead in its tracks. Their mines produce enough metals and gems to pay for most anything, and as such the city's beauty is only rivaled by Cerise Savoureux and Ivorycrest.

Vaisselle

Beyond the Golden Valley of Veris and straddling the verdant Azure Hills, lies the city of Vaisselle. This large town services a large number of farmers, artisans, mercenaries and nobles. But what puts Vaisselle on the map is the Terre Forme, a prestigious school dedicated to the art of creating masterful sculptures and brilliant ceramics. Hundreds of warehouses dot this expanse. Each one containing vast amounts of various clay crafted items.

Merchants from all over the continent come here in hopes of find prized vases or other ceramics to adorn their homes, while students arrive with dreams of learning under the great masters. The city is dominated by a quiet pace of life and carefree folk that enjoy seeing beauty in the most simple of things.

Landmarks

The Rhun Mountains

This forested mountain range has protected Terras's north eastern border for centuries, although its resident goblin tribes organize large raids every few years. The Knights of Sepira have military outposts in the mountains, using their bases for their activities, most of which involve the betterment of the common folk of Terras, particularly the freeing of slaves from Helios.

The Frogsquat Hills

The Frogsquat Hills form Terras's central interior, dividing the western coastline from the farmland to the east. This range, sometimes referred to as the Little Mountains by people in Starlite Cove, is old and worn, and its gentle slopes are dotted with trees. If it weren't for the silver that lies in the depths of these mountains, few would pay them any attention at all.

The Restless Mire

The Restless mire is a lowland region in western Terras that effectively separates itself from the rest of the country. The region is so close to sea level that the ground cannot drain properly, and the excess water has formed a swamp.

The Restless Mire is a nasty bog filled with countless pests. In addition to the giant leeches always disturb the water, giving this place its name, The Restless Mire is also home to giant varieties of frogs, snakes, water spiders, and deadly wasps; as well as biting swarms of more mundane insects.

Perhaps the most dangerous and cunning inhabitants of the swamp, however, are the Vespis. These wasp like creatures occasionally raid the surrounding farms and caravans, carrying off livestock and food stores to feed their Hives. A powerful shaman or chieftain known as the Hive Queen presides over these creatures. With these creatures at her command, the Hive Queen can make the road through the swamp a dangerous route.

The Golden Cliffs

The area known as the Golden Cliffs are not as calm and safe as the Bay of Dolphins to the west. Its depths are noticeably darker and murkier than either of those two bodies of water, and those from Terras, who are not much for sailing, spend little time on its surface. Still, the amount of trade passing in and out of Terras means that merchant ships crisscross the Golden Cliffs on a regular basis. A regularly scheduled route from Starlite Cove to Tokkenhiem crosses the bay in one direction every couple of days to ferry merchants and other folk between those two cities, thereby saving them several weeks' travel overland.

Major Factions

The Alabaster Council

Created 200 years ago, this group was formed to oppose the Empire of Helios from invading their lands and to show their invaders that Terras is not a country that will go silently into the night. The council represents the interests of rulers of cities in all of Terras. The lords of Starlite Cove, Sepira, Ivorycrest, Argentridge, Cerise Savoureux and Vaisselle, make up this Alliance.

The various Lords differ on issues of trade, magic, relations with foreign nations such as Helios and Solus, and even the treatment of humanoids such as orcs and goblins. The members of the Alliance are all equal in discussing Alliance matters, regardless of station outside the group. Given the increase in hostile negotiations with the Empire of Helios in the North, the Lords have been trying to encourage other countries to join their cause, but so far such efforts have been met with little success. The Midnight Syndicate are the antithesis of the Alabaster Council, and the mere mention of their name can set the whole council into arguments.

The Knights of Sepira and the Alabaster Council have a mutual respect for each other, as each organization does its best to help the citizens of Terras. Backed by the wealthy and the privileged, the Knights carry quality equipment (often disguised to appear common), and spellcasters tend to have a large number of scrolls and potions with which they use to help those in need.

The council also has a history of hiring mercenaries, both to raid hidden Syndicate dens and to scout out any slavery operations close to its borders. Local mercenaries with an interest in combating evil have quickly gained status and valuable contacts by their association with the Alabaster Council, and just as quickly made enemies of the Midnight Syndicate because of it. The Council pays these groups in information, travel arrangements, and masterful items, as well as in cold, hard gold.

The Knights of Sepira

The Knights of Sepira are more than two hundred years old and have more than two thousand members, and countless well paid mercenaries. It is very prestigious and popular, having saved untold lives from corrupt barons, slavers, feral monsters, bandits and more. The order consists of all manner of skilled professionals as well as various races. They have all vowed to do their best to heal the sick, help the weak, and avenge those harmed by injustice. Sometimes called “the Purple Cloaks” among the local populace, these champions seek to bring about justice and order in the lives of good folk everywhere.

The knights are defenders of the oppressed and downtrodden in all of Terras, and often further from its borders, even moving into Helios waylaying slaving caravans and freeing their illicit cargoes, not to mention stopping anyone from being robbed on the road. Its leader, Edwin Sepira, the eighth of his name, is a kind and passionate man whose sole purpose is the protection of the people he has come to love and respect.

The Midnight Syndicate

Founded over a century ago in Ivorycrest, the Midnight Syndicate were eventually unmasked and nearly destroyed by the Alabaster Council. After the guild was banished from Ivorycrest, the survivors regrouped in Helios. The guild has since grown to be the largest and most prosperous thieves guild in all of the continent, controlling the lion's share of all criminal operations in the region, and elsewhere in Fortannis.

The Syndicate have schemed to reestablish themselves in Ivorycrest. Constant vigilance by the Alabaster Council and the Knights of Sepira have kept the guild at bay until recently, but the dark relations with Helios over the past two decades have given the Syndicate an opening they have been quick to exploit. For more than five years, the guild has been funneling manpower and resources into Ivorycrest - and results are beginning to show. The guild has slowly come to dominate criminal activity in city and plan to move to other locations in Terras.

The Mercenaries' Guild of Terras

In a land full of mercenaries, the Mercenaries' Guild thrives by recruiting primarily from the proud merchant families. Locally famous as a group of ne'er-do-wells and wastrels, the Guild is also known for its brave and skillful recruits. Though the company has a core of veteran recruits, new members are added with every job.

The Guild operates exclusively in Terras. It began by rooting out pirates along the coast of the Inner Sea. After which they fought orcish bandits in the Rhun Mountains and later, they were instrumental in dealing with Helios during their invasion of Terras.

The guild leader and founder, Ravine the Crow, is an Elven scholar who began the operation as a way to cajole bored and disaffected members of a rival merchant family out of the city so they could make a name for themselves. Detractors claim she used magic to recruit her troops so quickly, but, in fact, the Guild's lieutenants and their skillful propaganda deserve the credit (or blame) for filling the ranks.

The Guild prefers to lead infantry attacks, marching to the fore where danger and glory abound. Their charges are generally carried by their enthusiasm and prowess. Given enough time to train their recruits, the Guild tends to produce competent warriors and skilled magic casters.

