

TERRA

WELCOME TO TERRA.

The city of Terra is expansive, beautiful, and entirely walled in, with towering stone walls that seem to resist all attempts to be climbed. Should you have wings to carry you up, you will see little more than a mysterious haze that seems to hang over the rest of the country—before a member of the guard apprehends you, of course, and brings you back down to ground level.

And with the ominous part out of the way—we can reassure you that you will not find yourself bored during your time in the city. The city is split into the Northern and Southern sectors, divided by a line marked on the ground in cheerful red brick, and each sector has its own fair share of curiosities to occupy any newcomers.

TEMPLE OF THE DIVINE

At the heart of the city stands the temple to the Goddess Tania; the kind of place that, for all its painted ceilings and gilded stone, feels somehow welcoming to anyone who steps through its doors. The main room has twelve indents in the wall, carved in the shape of the twelve elemental gems, and a legend helpfully inscribed on a nearby dais claims that if one collects all twelve elemental gems, they will have the power of the Goddess herself bestowed upon them. In the inner sanctum, stone gives way to soft grass and carefully-tended flowerbeds, and in the greenery stands a statue of Tania, carved from white marble and reaching out as if to embrace those who enter her temple. Whether or not this statue bears an accurate resemblance to the Goddess is unknown; no one has encountered her in centuries. Every so often, a flower crown might mysteriously appear on her brow.

BRIARY CASTLE

Lying on the northern side of the dividing line, directly across the street from the Temple of the Divine, reigns the Briary Castle. As imposing as it might be, the doors stand open to visitors nonetheless—though gaining entry to anything other than the entrance halls and the Royal Library may prove to be something of a challenge. It is home primarily to Princess Lilliana and her father King Nimbus, though other important guests stay in the castle's guest chambers during their visits.

ROYAL GUARDHOUSE

Tucked away out of sight in the shadow of the castle, this low, unassuming building is home to the headquarters of the Royal Guard. More of a peacekeeping force than police, these guards nevertheless stand ready to protect Terra and her interests from any ne'er-do-wells. If you want to report a crime, this is where you go; if you want to report a crime you're about to commit and give them a headstart, they have a form for that. Criminals get put in a cell in clear view of the waiting room and given a stern talking to in front of everyone.

NORTHERN SECTOR

SHRINE OF THE AGES

Terra's Northern half is governed by Andromeda, the Sage of Time; it is only fair, then, that her shrine would stand proud to the north of the Goddess's temple. The entrance is marked by a white marble archway, with a symbol carved into the stone: two eight-pointed stars on either side of an hourglass. Tapestries line the walls inside, depicting the Sages Andromeda and Luna together in brilliant color. The temple grounds are well-kept and dotted with pools of purified waters, by which her followers often pray or leave offerings to their Patron Sage. Rumor has it that if one were to gaze into one of these pools, they would catch a glimpse of their future—provided they have the right kind of magical talent, of course.

MAGIC QUARTER

Should one need any assistance in the noble field of magic, this is the place to go. The large building at the heart of the quarter is the headquarters for the curiously-named Order of Mushroom Wizards; they keep an extensive library of magic books and have generously opened it to the general public, but those not studied in wizardry may not get much use out of it. Eleven smaller houses are dotted around it, each of which serves as home base for one of the witch clans. Ten are branch offices, one is for the witches of time, and the witches of space... have very inconveniently taken up residence in the southern sector to be closer to their Sage. The Magic Quarter is also home to most of the city's magical supply stores.

FANTASY COSTCO-DENNY'S

It does what it says on the tin. There seems to be an all-hours diner attached, so if you ever want mediocre breakfast foods at three in the morning, you know where to go.

KESTER PARK

For people who enjoy the outdoors, there is a vast park that expands a far distance. The meadow remains a clean evergreen, mowed just short enough for proper upkeep. Among various locations, and the edges of the park, are flower beds that showcase a delightful variety of colors. Even flowers that shouldn't be in bloom are growing healthily with little regard to the season; among them is a wooden sign that tells travelers they are allowed to take some flowers, but to portion themselves carefully and to leave budding ones alone.

Through the park lies a stone pathway, a smooth and steady course that will take them throughout the various displays within. On occasion, there are park benches, enough to seat three adults, to allow any weary travelers a break if needed. However, most individuals prefer to find sanctuary under one of the many oak trees that decorate the meadows. Always luscious, full of leaves that rustle as the wind blows through them, they provide a good amount of shade from the gentle warmth of the sun. You'll often find individuals napping underneath or families having a picnic.

In its own section, a separated portion from the rest of the park lies a unique display of topiary: some are trimmed in what you can only assume to be vague shapes of the sages, but others are impossible to guess in its fantastical nature. Tall figures, round figures, shrubs of all shapes and sizes encompass this location - it feels like its gardener trims the shrubbery in a seemingly chaotic manner. However, no one has seen such a gardener, nor anyone else taking care of the meticulously hedged plants. But every day, the pattern of its design seems to change, and no one can guess what theme it seems to be following. Only time will tell what the next showcasing of plants will be.

THE CHANTERELLE CLUB

With such a pretentious name and equally pretentious black-plastered gothic architecture, not to mention the golden resin that seems to drip from the awnings and lacquers the stupid little architectural embellishments, one might expect the Chanterelle Club to require some kind of membership to enter, or at least be prohibitively expensive when you're through the doors. Well, that had been the initial goal, but the Club's owners had soon realised that there was a lot more profit to be made in being the only bar in the Northern sector actually worth visiting. Today, however, the taproom (seriously, they insist on calling it that) is a fine and friendly place to spend an evening drinking cocktails with flowery names and playing pool with your companions.

(Rumor has it there's a nightclub in the basement, too, and since you can go out after dark now...)

VOLITION ACADEMY

It's hard to miss the sprawling, three-story building that takes up a decent chunk of land in the Northern sector. Built the same way all schools are built—most of it at once, and then

the rest sort of awkwardly tacked on when they realized they'd run out of room—Volition Academy is something of a maze, with corridors doubling back on themselves and closets turned belatedly into lecture halls. It's charming in its own way, however, and clearly well-loved. Students can assemble their own curriculum from a wide range of subjects; there's a class for everything from traditional academia, to magical studies, to trade courses. Like Fantasy Home Economics. Visitors to Vraelgard are welcome to attend, and there may even be positions available if anyone wishes to share the knowledge of another world.

SOUTHERN SECTOR

SHRINE OF THE EXPANSE

As Andromeda's temple stands in the north, so does Luna's in the south, an equal distance from the city center. Curiously enough, the temple is constructed almost exactly the same as Andromeda's, save for the symbol carved into the archway—two eight-pointed stars either side of a swirling galaxy. Even the tapestries of the two women inside are all but identical. The temple grounds are marked by their magnificent gardens, bursting with life; statues that seem to depict the Sage can be found as the centerpiece of the grander flowerbeds. They show a woman with hair that falls in curls to her waist, pointed ears, and the same starscape mark on her forehead.

WORLD-RENOWNED INTER-PLANAR BAZAAR

The name is impressive, but so is the range of goods on offer, so the local commerce board has let this bold claim slide. For those with a craving for something they can only get back in their home world, this is the place to go; chances are there will be something that fits the description with alarming accuracy in some no-name shop tucked away on a side street. If you can find it in the *other world*, you can find it here. How far are you willing to go for a new iPhone? (We promise all dealings in the Bazaar are strictly legal. Unless they aren't.)

FANTASY IKEA

Like Fantasy Costco, but a little more... foreign. Instead of the not-Denny's, there's an in-store cafe that only serves meatballs. If the sun sets while you wander the aisles of Fantasy IKEA, the doors will lock. Wait patiently for the intercom to call **FIRST BLOOD**.

PEARL PARK

Similar to Kester Park, the park extends a large length that allows large communities to visit and enjoy any outdoor activities. Here, the meadow is not so meticulously trimmed,

but the uneven stalks of grass give it a more ethereal imagery to it. The willow trees are accompanied by yoshino cherry trees that give little shade, but are compensated for a dazzling display of colors beyond green. In the middle of the land stands a large fountain, with benches surrounding it in a circular pattern. Rumor has it that those who wish upon it may be granted something special, but the tradition has long been lost. Now, it operates merely as a wishing well that only children believe in.

There is a large cobblestone that directs wanderers through the park. The stones, however, often showcase unique colors: bolder reds and blues, greys with sprinklings of light through them. One could almost guess that these are not rocks of the land but from elsewhere; though where could a sage of space retrieve such a thing? Along these paths are small sections of shrubbery: wildflowers of bold purple, pink, and oranges sprouting between the gravel that encompasses the area. The flowers here are less luxurious than found in Kester Park, but they complement the gravel which shows a cascading rainbow. Rocks of all colors and patterns are found beneath these flowerbeds, and one may often see young children gathering some for their collections.

Deeper in the park lies one of the few places of consistent shade: a large willow tree that hunches over a small koi pond. Very few travelers dare to enter so deep in the park, though those who do so are rewarded with peace and quiet. Rumors can sometimes speak of strange figures reflected in the pond, or faces gnarled into the tree itself - but rarely has anything come from investigating them. For most people, it is simply a cool area to relax if one needs to escape the bustling noise of civilization in Terra.

LINDEN CAFE

Close enough to the Temple of the Expanse to capitalize on the lingering fragrance of the Sage's gardens, but just far enough away that the worshipers do not confuse the quaint wrought-iron outdoor seating for another branch of the shrine, a few entrepreneurial locals have set up a charming little cafe. Customers can enjoy a wide range of hot and cold beverages, as well as an entirely vegetarian and somehow immaculately flower-themed brunch menu. The main barista is a shameless gossip, and will gladly juicy tidbits to anyone who asks—though she's more likely to discuss other visitors to the city than Terra's own history. That's *old* news, sweetpea!

PAT'S POSTHOUSE

The cheery bright-red brick building stands out amongst the more sedate architecture in the Southern sector, with a stark white envelope painted on one wall to advertise it as Terra's one and only post office. Sure, the city is small enough that you could just walk over to whoever you're sending mail to, but where's the fun in that? Where's the sentiment? Where are the cute novelty stamps? Pat, a giant of a man, is more than happy to personally deliver any mail that comes his way. He doesn't get a lot of business.

BLACKGROVE

WELCOME TO APHELION.

The city of Aphelion is elegant, gothic, and blends in entirely too well with the surrounding forest. The white-trunked trees cluster in an imposing thicket, and the black leaves overhead dim the sunlight to an enchanting gloom; if you're not looking too closely, you might pass by the city limits without even noticing, thanks to the way the monochromatic architecture matches up with the woods. Thankfully, if you're coming from Terra, there's a well-kept road that will lead you straight to the city center.

The road is, of course, lit with gas lamps, because keeping the Blackgrove aesthetic intact is the most important thing in the world.

As for the forest itself: the closer you are to the edges, the more likely you'll be able to see genuine daylight as the canopy thins overhead--but should your path take you too far north, south or east, you'll find that the trees grow sparse, and that strange heavy fog blankets the empty space between them. If you walk too far into it, you'll just find yourself back where you started, and you'll probably get a cold from all the damp. Peculiar.

BLACKGROVE MANOR

The ancestral home of House Blackgrove, which currently consists only of Count Ivory and Lady Ebony, along with some staff who *basically* count as family at this point. It's just as ridiculously gaudy and gothic as you would expect from a family of vampire nobles; in other provinces, it's illegal to have *this* many embellishments on the face of a building, but House Blackgrove are nothing if not rebellious trendsetters. The black and ivory architecture is decorated all over with silver filigree; it's both beautiful and a functional defence against werewolves. Lady Ebony is likely to invite you over for tea... which might possibly be a setup for a date with her brother, or for an extended gossip session. Pack an overnight bag, because when we say extended, we *mean* it.

SHRINE OF THE SHADE

Have you heard of those restaurants where you dine in pitch darkness so you can really experience the taste of the food, or something? The temple to the Sage of Darkness is like that, but for faith. As soon as you pass through the entrance, a darkness deeper than the void itself falls over you; the only light that can penetrate it is one granted to those with Lumen as their patron. The walls and floors are carved in sharp relief, giving wandering

feet and curious hands guidance towards the inner sanctum, where the ceiling glitters with softly-glowing runes that make up the shape of a starry night sky.

GRIM REAPER VRAELGARD REGIONAL BRANCH ('REAPER REVIVAL DISPATCH')

A mysterious location only accessible if you've died during your stay here (sorry about that). This building was probably a quaint little cottage once upon a time, but as populations have grown and dangers have multiplied it's had a few additions slapped on the back and now takes up far more of the side street it calls home than any quaint little cottage should. Trying to navigate the rooms is apparently a metaphor for Limbo. Here is where you can converse with the Grim Reapers who bring you back to life--usually, though, you'll just end up talking to the receptionist, Whitney, before she can redirect you where to go. An antique wine cellar has been renovated into a hall of records, in case you're curious about the people who have died here in Vraelgard. Grim Reapers at the Dispatch include Kino, William, Acid, Elvira, and Saturday Grimm, among others.

MOONLIGHT APARTMENTS

There's something glamorous about this apartment building and its twin across the street; the building rises towards the canopy like an obsidian monolith, with black-tinted windows and a facade of dark, glittering stone. There are two apartments per floor, and each can comfortably house three. Residents can enjoy modern, minimalist furnishings that make every apartment feel like a penthouse and will make any visiting friends so *jealous*.

ORPHEUS APARTMENTS

In almost every respect, these apartments are identical to their counterparts, with one notable exception. If you're walking down the hallway in the middle of the night and glance behind you, you might see the shade of a woman fade into the darkness just outside the dim glow of the wall lights, and you will know you have lost her forever. Do *not* turn around.

CIEMNICA COMMUNE

The Witches of Darkness have made their home in the run-down shell of an abandoned castle, weathered by time and elements, though close inspection will reveal this wear and tear to be more of a carefully-cultivated shabby-chic sort of thing. Inside, it's surprisingly cozy, with all sorts of rugs and cushions and occult home decor. The once-grand stone building is hidden away within a dense copse of white-barked trees and not easily found by outsiders... unless you have an invite, of course, in which case the trees themselves will bend to grant you easy passage. Magic's cool, huh?

'FANTASY' 7/11

It's like the other fantasy stores, except significantly less fantastical. The tired-looking cashier *will* say the name with air quotes if you ask him about it. This dingy 7/11 looks like it's either haunted or the scene of a murder--possibly both, though they did a good job of cleaning up the blood. All the fluorescent lights in the ceiling flicker but at different intervals, so it's like a very boring rave, and an absolute nightmare for anyone with light sensitivity. It's said if you drink enough energy drinks in one terrible, self destructive stretch, you can fight an eldritch abomination behind it at 3 am, but who knows.

Blackgrove officials will *not* confirm whether or not the cashier and the fabled eldritch abomination are one and the same.

LITTLE SHOP OF TERRORS™

A perfectly normal plant shop in the middle of a row of other perfectly normal shops. Sure, it's the only one on the street with its storefront painted deep purple, or with candles flickering in its windows, or with the kind of clientele that duck their heads when they're entering the building in case anyone has a surveillance camera trained on the door, but that doesn't mean it's not just as perfectly normal as the rest of them. It's also definitely not owned by the Ciemnica Witches, even though the woman at the counter is probably the single witchiest person you've ever seen. It's a great place to visit if you want a new houseplant or some seeds for the garden--or if you want to see exactly how far magic can take the whole 'carnivorous plant' thing. You know you want to. Come buy a man-sized pitcher plant and see what happens.

Pay no mind to the sign by the register that says plants with teeth are not pets. What do they know, anyway?