

The world your characters know is dominated by a vast plain, thousands of miles across, bordered by mountains to the west, ocean to the east, frozen wasteland to the north and barren, rocky desert and forbidding terrain to the south. Rivers flow from the mountains across the plains to the ocean. These rivers are slow-moving and largely navigable by canal-boat-like craft being poled or pulled up and down them. The plains are covered with a several-feet-thick layer of productive topsoil; copses of trees and occasional small forests are scattered across a mostly grassy landscape.

Beyond the mountains to the west lies a grassy plain, then a vast veldt, home to large animals and large predators, through which no person is known to have passed. Beyond the ocean? There are a few islands, and there is rumored to be another, larger landmass (far?) beyond them. Open ocean travel is seldom practiced. Piracy and dangerous monsters make safe ocean travel of any kind difficult.

Surface-dwellers

The plains are peopled mostly by humans. They live in cities of 15,000-30,000 inhabitants distributed on the massive plain, and in Carsomonia, the largest city here, with 150,000 inhabitants. There are also towns, villages, remote farms and ranches, and the occasional isolated keep or mansion. The people are fed by farmers growing crops on the plains and by ranching operations producing milk and meat, and by a large hunting and gathering industry working in the vast areas of the realm.

Elves are uncommon here. Most elves live in secret cities hidden in the mountains. The elves are largely forbidden to come and go from these enclaves, so elves encountered outside of them will tend to be loners and outsiders that boldly left home knowing that return is unlikely, and the occasional offspring of such elves. Because of their long lifespan, elves are among the most learned scholars.

Half-elves are uncommon.

Halflings are nearly unheard-of. There are distant, largely unknown populations of them, and only very rarely will one strike out to enter the larger world.

Dwarves are a small minority (3-5%) among the human populations, and a dwarf-town is a common feature in human cities and towns. There are larger populations of dwarves in the southern mountains and a few other places.

Underground dwellers

Beneath the mountains is said to lie a vast and far-flung network of tunnels and caverns that comprise a realm inhabited by nearly every sort of humanoid and monster. Intelligent creatures there largely fear or despise the sunlight and openness of the above-ground realm, and only emerge from it occasionally to raid folk within a few hours travel from the mountains. Less intelligent creatures sometimes wander away and find new homes in a forest or ruin.

Because of they dwell largely in the mountains, the elves and dwarves often live near these populations, and trade and war with them as the situation merits.

Cities

Carsomonian:

The current capitol city of the civilized world, Carsomonian lies on the coast of the great ocean to the east. Carsomonian began in its current location when residents, after a long period of peace, increasingly abandoned fortified Old Carsomonian, or Khartam Nya in the old, forgotten tongue, for the less well protected, but more convenient, mainland location.

Now a city of about one hundred and fifty thousand permanent inhabitants, it boasts a fine, busy harbor and cultural influences from across the known world. It consists of a Harbor Quarter (the most international district), a Government Quarter (administering the surrounding area), a Market Quarter (trading the grain and livestock of the surrounding plains), a Temple Quarter, and a myriad of other neighborhoods.

Across the wide water lies Old Carsomonian, a far older city, now abandoned and perhaps inhabited by exiles (from the practice of dooming criminals to the island) and horrific monsters that escaped from their ancient enclosures and reproduced or merely held on. There are also rumors of a cult or two that have temples there.

Cartasela:

The oldest known continuously occupied city, Cartasela is a small (15,000 inhabitants) city in the mountains of an island off the east coast. The people of Cartasela are boat builders, researchers, educators and linguists. Some of the finest libraries, colleges, professional organizations and laboratories are here.

Tel Corela:

Rising from the rich plain on a plateau about 150' high is Tel Corela. The Tel cities were founded after the waters rose to make Old Carsomonian an island and thousands of years before its abandonment.

A medium sized city of twenty thousand inhabitants, it serves as the capitol for the northernmost plains. Tel Corela boasts a fleet of river patrol boats and a militia, for it shoulders the lion's share of responsibility for keeping the populations of demihumans that inhabit the mountains under control.

Urd:

The city of Urd (population 19,000), close to the mountains and farther away from the cosmopolitan center of Carsomonian, has some of the closest contact with the mountains and their denizens. Mountain men and prospectors, as well as archeologists and treasure hunters, all consider Urd to be a home of sorts, with large markets of the goods

associated with those types and a strong keep that dates from the distant past that serves as a court-house and seat of government. A large suburb has formed outside the town's walls that houses many seasonal visitors and workers. Because the mountains and the plains near them are forested here, there is a druid coven nearby and a ranger stronghold as well. The rangers coordinate the activities of a community of lumberjacks that supply much of the realm's lumber.

Moff Tet:

Moff Tet is a city west of the mountains. It lies at the northern edge, near the sea, of the vast plain stretching away from the foothills on the western side of the mountains.

Moff Tet itself is a tel rising from the soil of the plain composed of stones transported down the river from the mountains, lumber from the nearby jungles, and earth: clay bricks and soil architectural features.

Character classes:

Barbarians:

Barbarians of various kinds live in the regions to the far north, the far south, and in the grassy lands populated by megafauna to the west beyond the mountains. One who had made their way here would be a stranger in a strange land.

Bards:

Bards are common throughout the known world, traveling around and entertaining the people in taverns and common areas. The best of the bards are known to travel around the frontier areas, braving the risks of life there for the adventure.

Clerics:

Organized religion is big here, and there are temples of every size. Every grouping of people from village to city will have one or more temples conducting worship and rendering every sort of service one might imagine clerics rendering.

Druids:

Although they have a considerable impact on the commerce of natural products, the druids here are more removed from the town and city folk than the rangers and others that share those stewardships; they operate from remote places usually, in one of the forests bordering parts of the mountain or hidden in a marsh or among the dunes by the sea. From here, they study, manage and safeguard ecosystems of plants and animals they regard as being in jeopardy.

Fighters:

Less common a profession in largely peaceful times such as these, there are still fighters of every race. Dwarves, particularly, have a tradition of pursuing the fighter class. City and town militias are the largest employers of fighters in the realm.

Monks:

Monasteries in remote and dangerous places produce a very limited quantity of monks.

Paladins:

There are several orders of paladins in the realm but the largest is the Order of the Rose. The Order directs the organized military and defenses of the realm, and also operates the Pioneer Corps, the organization to which young people often belong and learn to become useful members of the realm's society. Paladins are often multi-classed, and operate, whether openly or secretly, in many places throughout the realm and beyond.

Rangers:

Considering the importance of lumber, agriculture, hunting, gathering and fishing to the economy here, it should come as no surprise that rangers are a large and influential group that exist almost everywhere. Rangers manage and conduct some aspects of nearly all these enterprises. They also have a substantial role, along with the paladins, in safeguarding the enormous frontiers along the mountains from the occasional trouble with underground dwellers.

Rogues:

Across the stable realm, guilds of thieves have existed for as long as any can remember. They regulate the trade of thieves, smugglers and other crooked merchants and suppliers, and they take a cut. Opposition to the guilds by various law enforcement entities is expansive and well organized, but meets with varying levels of success. Because they may be able to gain levels outside of an adventuring context, thieves have the potential to be of a higher level than other adventuring classes.

Mages and Sorcerers:

Because of the stability of the realm, there are many schools teaching and training mages and sorcerers. There is much to do in a world like this for a spell-caster, and it pays well.

The Nadir of Terra:

Among the wiser folk of Terra, this era of the world is known as the Nadir of Terra.

There exists in your time a storied past of legends and fables involving beings of might and wisdom. They allied and strove with one another, wielding mighty weapons and spells, to control the world in ways that are only describable by the use of allegories un-

decipherable to all but perhaps the most learned scholars. Evidence of literally thousands of such tales, variously consistent and conflicting with one another, exists in countless places around the realm. The earth split open, tidal waves crashed, winters lasted a hundred years and a myriad of other tales explaining geographical features, physical traits of people and animals, weather patterns and old feuds between various groups and sometimes explaining nothing at all.

Right now, however, is a pretty sleepy time in the realm. There are occasional (every few decades) minor conflicts with raiders from underground that somehow contrive to range beyond the frontier, a bit of fighting with the various other threats to the realm, but right now is a pretty poor time for an adventurer to go up levels.

As a result, in cities like Carsomnia, where there was almost no conflict at all, a fifth or sixth level practitioner is considered to be a seasoned expert. The top people in their fields are eighth or ninth level.

Those who achieved the higher levels usually did so by spending some time living closer to the mountains, where conflict was more common, though still rare. In communities near the mountains, third or fourth level people were common, but higher levels (above eighth) were still rare.

The Pioneer Corps:

The Pioneer Corps is an organization similar to the cub-boy-eagle scout organization, except more martial and often exposing the children (both genders) to greater hazards. Starting as young as seven years old, the Pioneer Corps teaches the children a variety of outdoor, martial and other skills with camps across the realm in nearly every kind of terrain and environment.

The Pioneer Corps is administered by the paladins of the Order of the Rose. The paladins use their powers to effectively vet any adults who will be interacting with the Pioneers, and no evil adults (and few who are not good) are permitted to. The children are largely exempted from purposeful alignment detection.

Order of the Rose knights and other functionaries reaching retirement age often become mentors in the Pioneers.

The Pioneers go on long journeys throughout the realm, and work on a number of charitable works aiding those in need.

Because of the potential intensity of the pioneer's activity, they often acquire levels in their fields of study in their teens. Those that do especially well are assured the references needed to get good jobs in fields needing their skills. The best often become knights in the Order of the Rose.

Archeology in the realm:

Archeology is a popular interest among some citizens of the realm. It can be a (sometimes difficult and dangerous) means of making a living, finding old artifacts and providing information about their origins and uses. It can also be a hobby, sometimes pursued by the wealthy in an elaborate, well funded manner, sometimes by those of no particular means, researching potential sites and planning camping-trip-like expeditions to explore some of the more safely located ones. The technical rigor with which it is practiced varies widely.

Magic items:

Magic items of a modest level (+2 and below) are fairly common in the realm. Often the forms of the items are archaic, sometimes very much so. Higher level items exist but are rarer. Many of the archeological efforts have obtaining magic items as a goal, and sometimes very old powerful items are found.