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Stuff to Go Elsewhere

The Tomb of Sir Thaenor [CHANGED]

Hex 11.16

Connects to: 37.01 and the **Hills of Gore**.

The tomb of Sir Thaenor is an unofficial border marker between **Thring** and **Gore**. It is a popular place for knights to fight duels, stage meetings or to simply wander about spoiling for a fight. Of Sir Thaenor himself there is little to say, he died a pathetic death at the hands of a Lord Sanguine who set his cat on the poor Thringish knight. The creature climbed about Sir Thaenor's face so that he could not even see the sword that killed him.

The name of that Lord Sanguine has been forgotten but the cat is another matter entirely. Perudien is said to be the ancestor of the entire breed of Gorean Greys (**The Hills of Gore > Gorean Grey**).

Connection

- The druid of Mirror Lake (37.01) owns a Gorean Grey.

Hooks

- Any other stories about Perudien?
- Who has fought a duel near Sir Thaenor's tomb?

Stories of Shuttered [ADDED]

Flying Fish in Shuttered

When word of these extraordinary creatures reached the ears of the nobles of the **Shuttered City**, an expedition was immediately sent out to capture them. Twelve flying fish were taken from the lake and flown through **Thring** and across the Keening Sea. Only three of them remained at the end of this journey. It was intended that the flying fish should pull leisure balloons for the nobles (29.14.02), but alas! During their first parade through the city, the fish were driven mad by the claustrophobic closeness of the tower walls. One fish had to be put out of its misery after killing several bystanders, and the remaining two are now stabled in the Gardens of the Sea (29.15). Their owner will pay good money to anyone who can cure the fish of their madness.

Hooks

- What happened to the rest of the fish? Did they all die, or did some escape?
- Who owns the remaining two fish? Will he/she be competing with the Doge for the highest spot in the city?

10. The Hills of Gore

Includes hexes: 02.22, 03.13, 03.19, 03.26, 04.17, 05.14, 05.18, 05.20, 5.24, 06.14, 07.17, 07.18, 07.21, 8.16, 9.19, 9.22, 10.12, 10.14, 11.20 and 12.22.

Connects to: 11.16.

After the Tarrasque broke free of the city that had been built around it and laid waste to the land of Bergolast it came here to what was once the heartland of the old Kingdom of **Gore**, where the kings of old sat upon the falcon throne, supped upon the blood of the Tarrasque and ruled with wisdom. But the Lords Sanguine butchered the last High King and rule in his stead, laying waste to farms and villages in their incessant wars with each other and the knights of neighboring **Thring**.

Now year by year the wilderness encroaches on what has become a land of lurking monsters, dread warriors that hold court in mist-shrouded halls and ruins of better days. The closest thing to justice that can be found in these lands is in the hands of Lady Natala and her snickersnees, though more than one man dreams of reclaimed the ancient rusted crown of **Gore**.

Hex summary

- The Castle of the Collector (02.22): his collection of seventy-nine Tarrasque skulls is especially impressive.
- The Temple of the Dead God (03.13): dead Tiamat lies dead but that is not always an insurmountable obstacle for a goddess.
- Castle Ravenscraig (03.19): the ruins of what was once **Gore's** principal seaport.
- Unwerth the Immense (03.26): this large and gregarious wizard is actually a desert toad masked by gnomish illusion.
- The Paionian Glade (04.17): the some of a raucus and astrologically-inclined tribe of centaurs.
- The Dryad Grove (05.14): the survivors of an exodus through the land of dream.
- Fools' Court (05.18): the site where the High Kings of **Gore** were once crowned with a helm of opposite alignment.
- The Bastion of Rhegard (05.20): the ruins of what was one the capital of the Kingdom of Gore.
- Ninbolm (05.24): a gnomish city carved into the stump of a great fossilized tree.
- The Arch of Sod (06.14): a place where men became blood brothers.
- Castle Maratan (07.17): the holding of Lady Natala, one of the most cunning of the Lords Sanguine.
- The Glade of Womanhood (07.18): here the brave and ruthless snickersnees enter Lady Natala's service.
- The Conclave of Mules (07.21): the mules of these lands are uncommonly clever and fertile.
- The Eyrie (8.16): a nests of the Scarecrows, a brotherhood that gives help to the poor and mischief to those in power.
- The Castle of the Sack Man (9.19): the sobbing of the children who are kept captive by the Sack Man, an emaciated figure in a red cloak trimmed with white, can be heard on the wind.
- The Lake of the Flying Fish (9.22): where fish can swim as easily through air as through water.
- Celadon the Shrewd (10.12): a cunning dragon who hides his treasure in a series of secret stashes.
- The Hunting Huts (10.14): in these lands even the huts will try to eat you.
- The Hill of the Swordsage (11.20): the home of a master of the sword who sees things not as

they are but as they might be.

- Swine Ravine (12.22): the swine harpies that live in this ravine are a constant plague to any trapped within its walls.

People of Gore

The Daughter of Ser Gareth Lemarr

It is the fourteenth birthday of the daughter of Ser Gareth Lemarr, her coming of age. She has not seen him since she was four. He was a brave snickersnee of Lady Natala (07.17), and she has used his razor-like sword to cut her hair short in the Glade of Womanhood (07.18)

Gareth's shield was entirely red (see **Snickersnees**), but it was lost alongside him.

The circumstances of Ser Gareth's death are unclear, but include a brutish **Thringish** knight called Sir Mimslet. He is known by his harlequin chequer and kite shield. The daughter of Gareth plans to become the man's squire and discover more about the death of her father.

Hooks:

- What happened to Ser Gareth and what did Sir Mimslet have to do with it?

Regional stories

The Lady-in-Waiting of Castle Maratan

Connects to: 05.20, 07.18 and 31.15

A Sanguine Lady would not be worthy of the title if she was not intimately concerned with the workings of blood. It should come as no surprise that Lady Natala keeps a gilded cage of stirges (31.15), and has her plump and otherwise content servants press their veins to the bars after dinner each night.

It is these stirges that may explain a curious discrepancy. All agree that after one particularly frustrating hunt for the tarrasque, the Duke fell to beating his princely jester. But the Duke did not escape unharmed—a wound of unknown origin across the back of his hand festered, and he collapsed alongside his jester not so far from Castle Maratan. Some say that it is the prince who Lady Natala nursed to health, for she learned what only he surely knows: a sporting ground of the tarrasque. But others say that it was the Duke, for she claims to have birthed his child.

The sobbed accusations of a former lady-in-waiting, now confined to her quarters for 'treatment,' may explain the mystery. According to the lady-in-waiting, she was assigned the task of nursing the prince to health, and with him she formed a deep, romantic bond. In thanks for her kindness, he whispered to her a place where the tarrasque sported freely and often, and where she could sit and watch that curious beast.

Word of this passed to Lady Natala, who became obsessed with harvesting the tarrasque's heartsblood. She demanded that the lady-in-waiting give up the location. Lips sealed by love, the woman kept her confidence.

Natala had a stirge brought to her quarters. It drew blood from the lady-in-waiting and delivered it into the Sanguine Lady's eager vein. Certainly, knowledge of the sporting ground of the tarrasque passed to the Lady, for a week later she battled that beast.

But when the son that Lady Natala bore grew his first head of copper hair—so unlike the hair of both the Lady Sanguine and the Duke—the lady-in-waiting drew a horrible conclusion. The stirge had

drawn not just a memory from her mind, but also a baby from her belly. The son of Natala is not heir of **Thring**; he is heir of all **Gore** (05.20).

Or so the mad lady-in-waiting believes.

Connection

- A daughter of Lady Natala by one of her faithful snickersnees has recently come of age (07.18).

Hooks

- What effect has frequent blood-letting and blood-mingling had on the servants?
- Is the son really of the jester prince? What would the prince think if he heard of it?
- Copper hair again. Is there a connection between all these copperheads?

Regional features

Snickersnees

The knights of Lady Natala and Castle Maratan.

For all their common blood and low station, the snickersnees are brave and ruthless knights. Upon entering Lady Natala's service, they paint their shields black and tear all heraldry from their clothes. Each kill that they may in the Lady's name allows them to add a band of red to their shields.

Hooks

- One of these snickersees is Elwen, a leader of the Browncloaks (08.01). Gareth Lemarr (**The Daughter of Gareth Lemarr** was another)
- What other famous snickersnees are there?

The Indigo Academy

The Indigo Academy, a subversive illusionist school based in Ninbolm, has managed to flout the Heirophant's authority with great aplomb and typical gnomish cheek. While the rest of Ninbolm abides the Heirophant's humorless thumb, the Academy devotes its time and energy towards clever and creative pranks. The frustrated Heirophant believes the academy must exist in a pocket plane because he cannot find it. The truth is that the school does not exist physically. It is a collective of wizards who pose as ordinary citizens. Their meetings are informal, and conducted entirely through disguises, codes and innuendo.

The Academy is beloved by Ninbolm's common folk for brightening their lives. But there is more to the Academy than good-natured rebellion. Working around the city's rigid, all-seeing theocracy is a means of honing their skills. Outsiders who can contact them often attempt to employ them in various schemes. The Indigo Academy knows they the best at what they do, and charge accordingly.

Connection

- One of the Academy's greatest pranks is the creation of Unwerth the Immense (3.26).

Hooks

- Does the Indigo Academy have a ringleader? Who are its prominent members?
- What have been some of the Indigo Academy's most epic pranks?
- Who in the Shrouded Lands is employing members of the Indigo Academy?

High Kings of Gore

Crowning

The mysterious humans who settled this land before **Gore** considered **Fool's Court** (05.18) a very sacred site. Although **Gore** is culturally quite different than their predecessors, the kings considered themselves heirs of the ancient race. Ardumar, the first king of **Gore**, discovered the rusted High King's Crown (14.27.01) in the center of the Fools' Court after a vision in a dream. Every king elected after him wore it to honor the old gods. The kings were chosen for their vices rather than their virtues due to the personality-changing nature of the crown. Ambitious lords acted uncharacteristically rakish and immoral in hope of being chosen.

For an age, peasant children crowned every High King of **Gore** in Fool's Court.

Hooks

- Why did peasant children crown the kings?
- Why did the old kings revere an ancient, little-known civilization and their gods so much?

Fall of the Falcon Throne

While the High Kings of Gore ruled they alone drank the blood of the Tarrasque of Bergolast (38.28) and ruled the land with wisdom. But last of their line was Turien the King of Fools and now the castle is home only to mice and ravens.

Before it fell, every year without fail the kings who sat on the falcon throne would hold a festival where people traded roles for a week: freemen paraded around in their wives' dresses, kings wore fool's motley and – in the last year of the kingdom – twelve butchers acted as the king's council of ministers. These were snidely called the Lords Sanguine, for they wore their robes of state beneath their bloody aprons.

When the week had passed, the Lords Sanguine realized that they preferred the work of ministers to that of butchers and guzzled down the blood of the Tarrasque. They cast the king and his family from the south and Turien, still in tattered motley, begged the vassal kings of Thring for help in winning back his throne. But they were far too busy fighting the Lords Sanguine and each other and neither they nor the Verlimes (18.07) opened their gates of him. In the chaos Ulthar the Loved, the first Duke of **Thring**, was able to conquer the banks of the River of Crystal Waters and proclaim the **Duchy of Thring**.

The Sanguine Lords keep the festival to this day, though they are careful to trade roles only with their wives. As for Turien, the King of Fools, he lived out his days Castle Tarengael as court jester (16.16.01) as did he son and his grandson after him.

Today the Jester Prince can often be found at the side of the Duke of **Thring**. In memory of the lost kingdom of **Gore**, the Jester Prince has the sigil of the Tarrasque rampant emblazoned on his shield and often accompanies the Duke on his hunts for the great beast.

As for the Lords Sanguine, they soon fell to fighting among themselves and the land of Gore was became as stained with blood as the aprons of the first bloody lords. They rule still in the lands southwest of **Thring**, but the blood of the Tarrasque has given them more madness than wisdom.

Connections

- It is possible that the true heir of Gore may be the young lad that Lady Natala believes to be the son of the Duke of Thring (07.17.01).
- The old crown of the High Kinds (actually a helm of opposite alignment) is now located beneath the Temple of the Hunt (14.27.01).
- The old High Kings were chosen according to their vices and crowned nearby (05.18).
- The High Kings had a pact with the pirate kings that spared them the ravages of those fierce giants (03.19).

Hooks

- Why was it called the falcon throne?
- Why did King Turien agree to be Duke Ulthar's jester?

The Gorean Gray

The Gorean Grey is a fierce breed of war cat popular in Gore. They are ferocious and agile and skilled at clinging to the faces of their victims. According to lore, they all descend from the cat Perudien (11.16).

Hooks

- What are the other breeds of war cats?
- Who owns a Gorean Grey?

The Tender Hunt

Connects to: 29.07.02.

Once each year the husbands and wives of the Lords Sanguine gather at the Collector's keep (02.22) for the Tender Hunt. Dressed in full court regalia they ride forth on sheep, cows and the timidest of sows to catch as many animals as they can, without harming any of them. Their hounds are puppies and their hawks traded for parakeets.

The Tender Hunt has its origins in the Collector's cunning attempts to capture the Unicorn (29.07.02) for his collection. He thought if he gathered innocent lords and ladies he might be able to lure it from hiding. Now, the event is an excuse for the nobility to meet and the hunt for the Tarrasque to pause for a few weeks. No one takes the hunt itself very seriously, with some nobles arranging joke captures like their husband in chains or a topiary shrub sculpted like a dragon.

Hooks

- What happened on the original Hunt?
- What sort of political machinations occur during the Hunt?
- Can an innocent soul really capture the Unicorn?

The Sanguine Lords, the Lords of Gore

The Lords Sanguine cannot bear to look upon running water.

The Lords Sanguine have mastered the art of teasing out useful information from the visions imparted by drinking the blood of **The Tarrasque**.

Lord Kardash, the Swordsage

Few Lords Sanguine are as good at teasing out useful information from Tarrasque blood visions as Lord Kardash, the Swordsage. When he was young, he took a knife red from the forge, marked his face thrice and thrice and had his ears, mouth and nostrils sewn up. Sight is sufficient for him and he knows where a blow will land before it is swung. In his prime he slew an aboleth of the Sunless Sea and sent Lord Ward (19.04) staggering to his knees with a single blow.

Now however, Lord Kardash never ventures from **The Hill of the Swordsage** (11.20), where he teaches his apprentices in silence and spends long hours staring at the movements of the stars that circle above his hill. Many come to his hill to seek out his teachings but few are chosen as apprentices.

Hooks

- If his mouth and nostrils are sewn up, how does Lord Kardash eat, drink and breathe?
- Tell me more about the Sunless Sea!

- Why does Lord Kardash gaze so intently at the stars? What does he see there?

Lady Natala

Rules: Castle Maratan

Related to: The Lady-in-Waiting of Castle Maratan.

Lady Natala seized the mithril coronet of the old ruler of Maratan from the air as he fell dead from snakebite. She is a frequent hunter in the wild lands around the castle and her hunts do much to supplement the meager tithes that she collects from the mud hunts of the cowering peasants of her domains.

She claims that on one of her hunts she came across Duke of **Thring** himself (16.16.01), lying stricken after an encounter with the Tarrasque of Bergolast. Strangely enough, the Tarrasque was not the source of his wound but rather it appeared mysteriously across the back of his hand while he beat his princely jester after he mocked the Duke in meter for failing to bring down the Tarrasque. The wound soon became septic and the Duke fell to the ground in a fever.

Although the Duke is not a kind man, Natala she fell in love in an instant and nursed him back to health and when infection took hold on a wound that rang across the back of his hand, she drew blood from the beast so that the Duke could tell her which fingers could be saved and which to cut away.

But their love could not last, for the Duke could not abandon his wife and Dukedom for her, but Lady Natala claims that the young lad who run whooping through the halls of Castle Maratan is the Duke's son and she means to see him sit on the high seat in Castle Tarengael (16.16) and rule all of the lands of **Thring**.

Hooks

- How does being mixed with hobgoblin shroom wine affect the effects of Tarrasque blood?
- How did a snake come to bite the old lord of Castle Maratan?
- How does Lady Natala plan to win the Dukedom of **Thring** from her son? Surely she knows that inheritance in **Thring** runs solely in the female line?
- Is the boy truly the Duke's son?

Connections

- The Lady in Waiting of Castle Maratan (07.17.01): Lady Natala ended up pregnant with her lady in waiting's child in a stirge-related accident.

Lady Belal of the Nets

Rules: Castle Ravenscraig.

Lady Belal of the Nets is slowly rebuilding her ancestral castle in the midst of the city's ruins. She spends most of her days with her ladies-in-waiting, weaving fishing nets from the silk of the giant spiders that dwell in the crumbling undercity. She hopes to build nets mighty enough to snare the great whales that frolic offshore. She finds her ambitions constantly sabotaged by other Lords Sanguine who fear that the Pirate Kings will return if she begins to accumulate wealth.

Hooks

- Who sabotages Lady Belal most persistently?

The Collector

Among the Lords Sanguine, perhaps the most insane is the Collector. Formerly he was known by his true name, but a few hundred years ago he developed an obsession with collecting knowledge of his name. First he collected every book, tablet and scroll which mentioned him. Then, to make sure his collection would always be supreme, he killed anyone who knew his name (or, more realistically,

anyone who publicly admitted such).

As one might already have surmised, the Collector likes to collect things. His obsession changes each decade or so: past fancies have included masterwork weapons, sand grains from different beaches, halfling slaves and books containing discredited theories of agriculture. All these collections remain in his sprawling keep, though he has turned his attention to other things.

The Collector has acquired several tarrasque skulls (his original and only constant collection) from Thringish knights. Those who traffic with the Collector are frowned upon in **Thring**, and the other Lords Sanguine frown on him for trafficking with **Thring**; but the Collector's coffers are seemingly bottomless even after all these years, and money always finds a way.

Rules **The Castle of the Collector**.

Connections

- The Collector knows of the great Bone Heap (50.03).
- The Collector has sent people to gather an artifact known as the Shield of Alberon (16.17).

Hooks

- What is the Collector's true name? Does anyone remember it in secret?
- What is the Collector's current obsession?
- Why can't the Collector get his hands on the Tarrasque Skull at 45.24? Not to mention the other nineteen of them...
- Who is it in **Thring** who sells Tarrasque skulls to the Collector?
- Where does the Collector's wealth come from?

Hex descriptions

The Castle of the Collector

Hex 02.22

Connects to: 16.17, 38.28, 45.24 and 50.03.

The Collector (**The Lords of Gore**) keeps his collections here, including his one constant collection, the first collection, which is the Hall of Skulls. In this hall, thrice expanded by masons since its original construction, there are a total of seventy-nine Tarrasque (38.28) skulls. Some are small enough to lift in one hand, while others are enormous enough that whole banquets can be held inside them. Many of these have come from **Thring**, whose knights have several times managed to behead the immortal beast.

Connections:

- One of the largest skulls yet to be collected is sunk in the River Hyad (45.24).
- **The Tender Hunt** occurs here.

Hooks:

- What other collections are housed in the castle?
- A benefactor is offering a handsome reward to anyone willing to break into the Collector's castle and steal a certain tome from the discredited agricultural theories section. Now, why on earth would such a book be valuable?

The Temple of the Dead God

Hex 03.13

Connects to: 14.02, 26.16.02, 29.14.28, 29.14.29 and 40.06.

Far to the west of **Thring**, in a cold and haunted forest, there lies an evil temple which is the last great bastion of the Cult of Dead Tiamat (40.06). It is presided over by the witch-priestess Kolfrosta. The other inhabitants include a vulture with poisonous talons, a male slave who serves Kolfrosta, and a demonic bull shackled behind the temple's altar. When a pure-white heifer from the Lands of the Night Cattle is mounted by the demon bull, the heifer's flesh becomes corrupted. Thereafter, any who eat it will become corrupted and transform into ogreish monstrosities. Kolfrosta and all her predecessors began their service to the temple by eating this evil flesh.

Recently, Kolfrosta has seen in her scrying of the future that her life will not last another month. In order to continue the succession of the witch-priestesses, she flew out on a storm-cloud and kidnapped the maiden Hleid, sister of the lord who rules the Castle of Dances. It is her plan to feed the corrupting beef to poor Hleid, who will then become the new witch-priestess of the temple. However, it will take the slave a long time to bring the night heifer all the way from the Kingswood to the temple in the west.

The treasures of the Tiamat cult are stored in this temple, some ancient artifacts, some merely stolen by Kolfrosta from the surrounding regions. One of the most famous is a vulture's egg covered in gold script, which is rumoured to be kept in the nest of the poison vulture.

One of the greatest treasures of the Temple of the Dead God is a pile of bone shards (**Tiamat > Bone Shards**).

Hooks

- Where is the Castle of Dances? Is it in **Thring**, or somewhere else?
- Why is Hleid the chosen victim? Why not kidnap a local peasant girl instead?
- Who was Kolfrosta before she ate the evil flesh? Did she eat willingly or not?
- Where is Kolfrosta's slave right now?
- What is written on the vulture's egg? What will it hatch into?

Unwerth the Immense

Hex 03.26

Connects to: 5.24.

The goat herders who traverse the rugged lands between **Gore** and the **Cornfields** revere a strange patrician known as Unwerth the Immense. He is a wizard bachelor who keeps a cozy home inside a cliffside cave. His rotundness, fine dress and booming, jolly voice would put visitors at ease in almost any situation. But those who go straight from the scrub lands into Unwerth's richly-furnished abode and treated as though they were expected for tea-time feel disoriented and unnerved.

Unwerth takes it upon himself to diffuse conflicts between the feuding bands of goat herders before they can turn to murder or worse. The goat herders always come to him and never see him outside his comfortable quarters. Unwerth is a first-class mediator: his warm humor, hospitality and unimpeachable taste soothe even the hottest-headed petitioners. By the end of negotiations, which may consist of a weekend of halfling brandy, eclectic pipeweed blends, nut cakes and boar sausage, all parties tend to be more or less satisfied.

Unwerth the Immense is in fact an elaborate prank perpetrated by the Indigo Academy (5.24). The gregarious wizard patrician is really a huge, docile desert toad beneath countless layers of illusion. The trick serves to pacify local human tribes, who envy Ninbolm's prosperity.

Hooks

- Tell me more about these goat herding tribes.
- Who, among the tribes, suspects something is seriously awry with this lovable bachelor?
- What do the tribes fight over?

- Has Ninbolm ever gone to war with local humans or anyone else?
- What other defensive measures does Ninbolm use against outsiders?

Castle Ravenscraig

Hex 03.19

Connects to: 04.17, 5.20 and 14.27.01.

Ravenscraig was **Gore's** principal seaport when the old kings ruled (05.20). Bards sing of a harbor thick with the sails of a hundred nations, and of every merchant residing in a gilded palace. When the Lords Sanguine seized power, however, the Pirate Kings (00.02) flew south, annihilated **Gore's** fleet, and plundered the city. The Pirate Kings considered Turien's fall to be the end of the ancient pact that spared Ravenscraig from destruction. They reveled in stripping every bit of wealth from the great city, a feat that took an entire month. The Lords Sanguine reeled in horror, and some attempted to restore the monarchy. They formed a fellowship and struck out on a quest for the iron crown (14.27.01). They rode into **Singing Waste** and vanished.

Lady Belal of the Nets rules here.

Connection

- A nearby centaur tribe employs nets of giant spider silk (04.17).

Hooks

- Could the return of the iron crown mean a return of the truce between **Gore** and the Pirate Kings?
- What became of the fellowship?
- Does Castle Ravenscraig produce anything else from spider silk?
- Giant spiders aside, what lurks in the ruined undercity? Did the Pirate Kings overlook any wealth stored there?

Paionian Glade

Hex 04.17

Connects to: 03.19 and 05.18

This rugged pine forest belongs to the centaurs of the Paion tribe. In the fractured land of **Gore**, they thrive as bandits. They waylay travelers with thundering hooves, steel tridents and nets of spider silk (3.19). Their favorite loot includes wine, smoked meat and astrology tomes. The tribal shaman, Knoss, uses the latter to conduct moonlit ceremonies at the Fools' Court (5.18). The ceremonies change from solemn to raucous as soon as the first flagon wine is poured. Their hoots and stomps echo through the hills until well after daybreak.

Despite their ferocity, the centaurs seldom prey on the Sanguine Lords' downtrodden serfs because their cruel masters leave them with little to steal. Many peasants admire the centaurs, and try to assist them whenever possible. Sometimes this includes providing human sacrifices for the centaurs' equinox festivals. The serfs usually choose suspected criminals or other unpopular figures from their village, but sometimes they must resort to trials of skill or luck. These trials vary from village to village, and could involve anything from ritual combat to pie eating contests.

Hooks

- How did the centaurs get their hands on spider silk nets?
- What powers do the centaurs derive from their monthly rites?
- What villages or towns still exist in **Gore**?
- What treasures have the centaurs looted from travelers?

The Dryad Grove

Hex 05.14

Connects to: *01.05*, *29.14.12*, and *32.05*.

This forest dell is home to the largest grove of dryads on this side of the Keening Sea. Rather than growing here naturally, all of the trees of the dryads were transplanted here fifteen years ago when Naros fell to the curse of the arch-lich Supendar (*29.14.12*). For more details of their journey, see **Naros > The Dryads and Supendar**.

As for the men of Naros, they were never heard from again and never got their chance to fell the dryad trees. Some say that on the nights of the full moon their cries can be heard here, but perhaps it is just the wind blowing through the trees of the dryads.

Fools' Court

Hex 05.18

Connects to: *04.17*, *5.20*, *14.27.01* and *19.31.03*.

This outdoor temple is ancient, and consists of two rings of standing stones that chart the movements of the sun, moon and stars. Some inner stones bear weathered reliefs of the androgynous deities known in **Gore** and Jahur as the Fools (*19.31.03*). The site was sacred to the first settlers of Gore and the High Kings of Gore held it sacred too.

The **High Kings of Gore** were once crowned here. Today, local centaurs (*04.17*) use the Fool's Court for their savage rites.

Hooks

- What other ruins are scattered across **Gore**?

The Bastion of Rhegard

Hex 05.20

Connects to: *03.19*, *05.18*, *16.16.01*, *14.27.01*, *18.07*, *38.28* and the **Duchy of Thring**.

The old **High Kings of Gore** once looked from the windows of the high mountain towers of the Bastion of Rhegard out upon the lakes and hills of their kingdom.

Hooks

- Is there anything worth exploring in the Bastion of Rhegard?

Ninbolm

Hex 05.24

Connects to: *3.26*, *11.01* and *29.07*.

This gnome city is carved into the petrified stump of a colossal tree. Most visitors only have the privilege of seeing the tunnels and windows that dot the small upper city. Most of Ninbolm's secrets, including the Heirophant's Heart and the Indigo Academy, lie within the enormous maze that is its root system.

Ninbolm's citizens proudly assert that they have inhabited the great tree forever. However, many human scholars believe that before it was turned to stone, the tree was the fabled goblin (*11.01*) tree of Nilbog. According to the legend of Nilbog, the tree was the source of all goblins, and like a good mother, it provided everything they needed. The Bloodied King (*29.07*), however, envied them and turned the mighty tree to stone. The surviving goblins scattered across the Shrouded Lands, nursing their bitterness and outrage until they became the scorned race that they are today.

For as long as any gnome can remember, the city has been ruled by the Heirophant, a druid who long ago merged with the tree's petrified heartwood. He can know anything that happens within the city. His omniscience is limited by the fact that he can only experience a few things at any given time. Druids, who serve all official functions within the city, commune with him through giant snail familiars that cling to the heartwood.

The Indigo Academy is based in Ninbolm.

Hooks

- How much of the legend of Nilbog is true?
- Where is the rest of the petrified tree?
- What are some of the Heirophant's decrees?
- In addition to the giant snails, what other strange creatures dwell in the city?
- Most important - where can a traveler get a drink in this crazy place?

The Arch of Sod

Hex 06.14

Connects to: to be added.

Here, at the edge of the wood where the dryads (05.14) now live is a great arch of sod held up over the ground by poles. Although the poles lean drunkenly and most of the grass has now died, brown stains of dried blood can be found by careful investigation under the arch. Obviously, this is the side where the ritual by which blood brothers are made was performed.

Hooks:

- Who made themselves blood brothers here?
- Why does an arch of sod have to do with being blood brothers?

Castle Maratan

Hex 07.17

Connects to: 11.15, 16.04, 16.16.01, 38.28 and the **Duchy of Thring**.

In an island in a lake rises the squat wooden bulk of Castle Maratan. It can only be approached by a narrow bridge that crosses the lake waters, which makes it difficult to besiege. The waters of the lake are stagnant, otherwise the castle would've been abandoned long ago as the Lords Sanguine cannot bear to look upon running water.

The knights of Castle Maratan have none of the Swordsages' (11.15) art and they mangle the blood of the Tarrasque (38.28) with hobgoblin (16.04) shroom wine to dull its powers. These warriors favor long straight swords with a single cutting edge, something like shaving razors of extreme length. After drinking their bloodied wine, they wave their swords in a frenzy the strokes coming seemingly at random but finding their mark often enough to make the knights of the castle bitter foes of **Thring**.

The current ruler of Castle Maratan is Lady Natala.

The Glade of Womanhood

Hex 07.18

Connects to: 07.17, 08.01, 29.14.47.

The people of **Gore** hold their coming of age rituals in this lush glade. Here, boys become men, girls become women and girls become men. In this glade, **The Daughter of Ser Gareth Lemarr** cut her hair short with her father's razor-like sword. Such is the way of the people of **Gore**: that girls will be girls

and boys will be boys, but a woman may be a man whenever she needs.

Connection

- Elharen the Silent (29.14.47) has come here to seek aid in her personal war against the gnolls of the **Burning Lands**.

Hooks

- Can men be women whenever they need?
- What does it mean for a maid of **Gore** to be a man? Is it just a change in behaviour and dress?

The Conclave of Mules

Hex 07.21

Connects to: 16.09, 16.16.04, 16.16.05, 18.26, 23.10, 29.07, 29.07.02 and 51.29.

Every year, the mules meet on this sparse field to discuss what they have observed in the Shrouded Lands (see **The Horses of the Shrouded Lands**).

The Eyrie

Hex 08.16

Connects to: 02.11.02, 10.12, 38.06 and the **Kingswood**.

The Eyrie is the only nest of **The Scarecrows** that is publicly known. It is a watchtower, abandoned after the collapse of the Kingdom of **Gore**. At any time, some two dozen or more Scarecrows and twice as many guests, diplomats, lovers, children and other civilians are present.

The Castle of the Sack Man

Hex 09.19

Connects to: 17.14.

This area is rugged with sharp ridges and narrow gullies. Few plants grow here save for the valuable Mushroom of Inversions. However, the willow people who live nearby will not go there to pick them. They say they fear the ghosts of the dead children whose sobbing can be heard floating on the wind of moonless nights.

They are correct that the sobbing of children can be heard, but the children are not ghosts. They are prisoners in the Castle of the Sack Man. One brave enough to wander the ridges long enough may glimpse the castle from afar, but no matter how they try they will never be able to get there by walking. The only ways to enter the castle are through the secret arts of the bugbears (17.14) and through the strange roads that lead beyond mortal barriers.

The castle itself is a ramshackle old place. The children wander the halls freely, kept captive on the castle grounds by the same magics that hide it from outside eyes. Somewhere in the castle broods the Sack Man himself: an emaciated figure in a red cloak trimmed with white. He carries always his sack full of toys and candies to present to the children, but no matter what fancies he produces he cannot win their love. It is said that long ago the Sack Man went by a different name, and was considered a benevolent spirit.

Hooks

- What is the Mushroom of Inversions? Does it grow anywhere else?
- Who are the willow people? Are they literally willows or do they just take their name from that tree?
- How do the bugbears travel to and from the castle?

- What happened to the Sack Man to make him the way he is? Why does he kidnap children?

The Lake of the Flying Fish

Hex 09.22

Connects to: 29.14.02, 27.18, 29.15 and the **City of Shuttered Windows**.

Southwest of the borders of **Thring** there lies a broad lake where cormorants nest in the shallows. Further out into the water, there are schools of enormous fish with the ability to swim through the air as easily as the water. Though they possess this remarkable power, they seem uninterested in using it, and will only fly up out of the lake if they are threatened by an attack from below. Because of this, the flying fish were known as the 'fat fish' until six months ago when their secret was discovered by the huntsman Lorenzo DiMarr.

An expedition from the Shuttered City captured twelve flying fish and brought them to the Shuttered City (see **Flying Fish in the City**)

Hooks

- Who is the huntsman Lorenzo DiMarr, and how did he discover the fishes' ability?
- What will happen to the flying fish when the flying snakes (27.18) arrive this year?

Celadon the Shrewd

Hex 10.12

Connects to: 08.16 and 45.09.

A green dragon named Celadon dwells in this wood. Using his sinuous body and stubby legs, he can slither up tree trunks like a boa constrictor to watch for his favorite prey: questing knights of **Thring**. He is not particularly old, mighty or cruel, but Celadon is unusual among dragons for not having a single massive hoard. Instead, he buries his loot in many places across the forest.

The kobolds that spring from Celadon's dreams (45.09) gravitate towards these stashes. Those who evade wolves, feral ostriches and knights cobble together dens around the hidden treasure. These dens are filled with traps that guarantee adventurers won't dig anything up without a mangling. And treasure hunters who do retrieve loot must also contend with Celadon himself.

Connection

- Anyissa, a Scarecrow of the Eyrie (08.16), made a name for herself when she retrieved a great golden egg from one of Celadon's stashes. She planned to give it to her home village, but the appearance of a long crack along the egg's surface has caused some alarm.

Hooks

- What else lurks in the forest between **Gore** and the **Westmarches**?
- What kind of traps do kobolds make?
- Who has been mangled in a kobold trap?
- Shrewdness aside, what special abilities does Celadon possess?

The Hunting Huts

Hex 10.14

A host of bizarre creatures dwell in the hilly frontier between **Gore** and **Thring**. Knights who must quest through these lands pray for the sight of a farmstead or cottage over the next hill. Some of these weary knights become prey to the hunting huts.

The hunting huts are three very large mimics that have moved above ground to find bigger prey.

They lurk in the center of an abandoned farmstead and adopt the appearance of a stone barn, a cottage and an outhouse, all meticulously rustic and weather-beaten. When travelers approach any of them, they spring to life. The doors and windows erupt with slobbering mouths and tendrils. The hunting huts are hungry but far from mindless. If they are being bested by their prey, they will offer some treasure from their gullets or information about the region in exchange for their lives.

The mimic that poses as the cottage is the chattiest and most erudite of the trio. It prefers highly intelligent victims because it enjoys debating and bantering with them as they are slowly digested in its inner gullet. It finds its more vulgar companions tedious, creating a tension that may someday drive them apart.

Hooks

- Who are the huts digesting right now?
- What kind of treasure have they accumulated over their career?
- What happened to the real farmstead?
- Where did these mimics come from?
- What insight can the huts give about the frontier?

The Hill of the Swordsage

Hex 11.20

Connects to: 19.04 and 38.28.

On this hill **Lord Kardash** teaches his apprentices in silence and spends long hours staring at the movements of the stars that circle above his hill. Many come to his hill to seek out his teachings but few are chosen as apprentices.

Hooks

- Who has studied with Lord Kardash?

Swine Ravine

Hex 12.22

Southwest of the borders of **Thring**, there lies a ravine five miles long and thick with trees. It is extremely steep on all sides, making it a grueling one-day trek just to get from the bottom of the ravine to the top. This is the haunt of the swine-harpies, vile creatures with the wings of birds, the bodies of virgins and the heads of sows. The swine-harpies are not directly hostile, but they are greedy, malicious and possess supernatural powers of perception. Whenever anyone prepares to eat while within the bounds of the canyon, the swine-harpies will swoop down and devour or defile the food. No mortal weapon can harm the harpies and no threat seems to scare them off. As a result, those who become trapped in the canyon may well starve to death.

Recently, a young nobleman of **Thring**, bearing the name Martin of Wenstoke, arrived in the canyon. Having killed a man, he was bound to pay the price of blood, and rather than give up his own life he swore to slay the swine-harpies. Although he considered these isolated and non-aggressive monsters an easy target, his foolproof plan to slay them fell through and the rest of his party has since died of starvation. Martin has discovered a rather unsavory way of surviving, although it is doubtful now that he will ever be allowed to return to **Thringish** society. On the other hand, it is possible that he has learned something about the ravine, which is rumored to contain a treasure which the swine-harpies were assigned to guard.

Hooks

- Where is Wenstoke?
- Who did Martin kill and why?

- What was Martin's foolproof plan to slay the swine-harpies?
- How has Martin survived without food for the past few months?
- What is the treasure of the ravine?

Appendix C: Creatures

The Tarrasque

The Tarrasque of Bergolast (38.28) is the greatest of all beasts. Those corpses that are struck by the lightning at its birthplace are returned to life, those who eat of its flesh have their bodies like those of the gods that can heal most every injury and those who drink of its blood see the world as the gods see it. After drinking the blood of the Tarrasque, one can perceive any object not only as it is but as it was and as it might be. Sadly, to most this appears as nothing but a mad smear of images and sounds and it takes long years of practice and training to tease out useful information from the visions imparted by Tarrasque blood.

The Lords Sanguine have mastered the art of seeing visions.

Hooks

- Where was the Tarrasque born?
- So, if trolls (the descendants of the people of Bergolast) regenerate because the meat of the Tarrasque has made them godlike, does that mean that you can kill gods with acid and fire? Why are trolls so ugly then?

Appendix N: Nations

Naros

Supendar and the Dryads

What most do not know is that Supendar was not a true lich but a mighty dryad who had been planted before the fall of Bergolast (38.28). Such a creature does not give into death easily and when the great tree of the dryad began to die, Supendar worked an ancient magic that stopped time itself within the borders of Naros. Death too was stopped and the full moon hung still in the sky and its moonbeams fell upon the trees of the Drymea, where the dryads frolicked with their lovers.

Elsewhere in Naros all those who had been asleep when Supendar's magic spread across the land remained so and did not wake. The waking men and women of Naros declared war on Supendar and sought to break the enchantment that the dryad had wrought. Finally a band of adventurers infiltrated deep into the Drymea and fell upon the tree of Supendar with great axes.

Feeling death coming upon it at last, Supendar worked a second great magic. The wall between this world and that of fairy are stronger in some places than others and in few places is the wall weaker than in the depths of the Drymea. Taking advantage of this, Supendar's magic conveyed all of the dryads of the forest into the land of fairy, along with the men of Naros and the life of the land, so that only undeath and the nightmares of those who had lain dreaming lay behind.

When the men of Naros found themselves in the land of fairy they despaired. The dryads, at first greatly confused by what had happened, began to see the purpose of Supendar's last act. The humans of Naros had hoped to take axes to all the dryads of the forest, so great was their anger at Supendar, but they now found that the only ones that could hope to guide them back to the mortal world were the very dryads that they hated so. Taking advantage of this, the dryads had the Narosi haul their trees across the land of fairy so that they could be transplanted far away from any who had been angered by the magic of Supendar.

Although some of the dryads ended up scattered across the Shrouded Lands (32.05), the bulk of them were indeed transplanted to **The Dryad Grove** (05.14). One, known as Laughing Sam (01.05) was driven mad by his journey through fairy and refuses to remember what has become of Naros.

It is unknown what happened to the men of Naros, though some claim that their voices can be heard in **The Dryad Grove**.

Hooks

- How did the time stop magic work exactly? The moon stopped, people were unable to wake up, but they were able to walk around and do things and even fight a war. How?
- Where did any of the other dryads who got separated from the main lot during the march through fairy end up?
- What happened during the journey of the men and dryads of Naros across the land of fairy?
- What happened to the people of Naros? Supendar's magic sent them into the land of fairy and the dryads came out again and were successfully transplanted. In order to do this it seems that the humans must have hauled the trees of the dryads, what became of them?
- So now Naros is full of undeath and nightmares, has any of this corruption leaked through into the land of fairy?
- What sort of metaphysics does the land of fairy have?

Appendix D: Deities

Dead Tiamat

Worshipped in The Temple of the Dead God (03.13)

Connections

- The Cult is not the only group to revere dead Tiamat (26.16.02).
- A band of cultists have established themselves in some caves in the Grey Mountains (14.02).
- The Tiamatan Revival is another group that reveres Tiamat (29.14.28). Splitters!
- John Luciferus, a mad lictor of the Tiamat Cult wrote the Book of Not Being Boiled in Fire before being burned at the stake (29.14.29).

Bone Shards

These appear to be ancient but seemingly-normal bone shards. Only close inspection will reveal that they have been cut so cleanly that they could only have been chomped on by the jaws of Tiamat herself. Pieces of bone that were crushed in the jaws of the mother of dragons are considered relics by all who revere Tiamat and they are often used as ritual currency.

Among the special properties of these bone shards is that if they are ground to dust and sprinkled just so on adhesive paper they serve as a most excellent alternative to magical inks for the recording of magical formulas. In fact, some spells can only be recorded in this fashion. However, Tiamat cultists put these bone shards to more exalted purposes and necromancers to darker ones.

Hooks

- Anyone out there selling fake Tiamat-chewed bone shards?
- What is a ritual currency anyway? Can't the Tiamat cultists just use gold like everyone else?
- Who uses dust from these bones to write out their spells?
- What sort of things do Tiamat cultists and necromancers use these bone shards for?
- What kind of creatures do these bone shards come from anyway? What do draconic goddesses snack on?

Appendix O: Organisations

The Scarecrows

‘Do-gooders and ne’er-do-wells’, said the bishop of the Scarecrows. These men and women, dressed raggedly in greatcoats and capotains, wander across the Shrouded Lands causing mischief for the authorities and helping the poor and downtrodden. Famously skeptical of faith and sorcery alike, they rely on wit and wisdom to carry them through the wilderness. Each carries a crude iron knife that they use for almost any purpose—skinning prey, fighting off bandits and as a sundial.

Although the arrival of a Scarecrow is a welcome event in beleaguered villages, the parents of impressionable young men and women have cause for concern. Many’s the lass that’s listened starry-eyed to a grizzled Scarecrow, followed him into the woods, and returned nine months later with an iron knife, wearing a wolf pelt and swearing to defend humankind against the forces of chaos.

Throughout the Lands, the Scarecrows have built nests: hidden rooms with emergency supplies, maps and notes, beds and weapons. These nests take all forms, from tree houses to abandoned bears’ dens and huts. The paths to each are marked with the travellers’ marks known to the Scarecrows and several other groups.

There are Scarecrows’ nests even in the **Kingswood**. Each has a single entrance marked with a rod of hawthorn (38.06), past which the elves will not pass. However, if the elves realise that the nest is inhabited they will do what they can to cause strife to those inside—perhaps leaving a beehive poised above the threshold or leading a bear to the cave.

Connections

- The Scarecrows are concerned about the Skinscratch Murders (02.11.02).
- A Scarecrow named Anyissa has taken a golden egg from one of the treasure stashes of a dragon named Celadon (10.12).

Hooks

- What other groups recognise travellers’ marks?
- What are travellers’ marks like?
- Why does the hawthorn rod repulse the elves?
- Who are some famous Scarecrows?

Appendix S: Stories

The Horses of the Shrouded Lands

It may have struck you as curious, dear reader, to have heard few mentions of horses in this land of ours. It is certain that we had them, for their hides mock travellers to the Black Ziggurat (18.26), some still ride with Sir Aland on his futile hunt (23.10) and the knights of **Thring** raise up the bones of their dead horses (16.16.04).

Where did they go?

I've heard it said that when the elves fought and the Courts split (29.07), the exiled elves called all the horses to join them as they departed for the Golden Realm (51.29). Along with the great herds, the elves boarded those mysterious white barges and left our lands, swearing never to return.

The story has it that the stallion of the king of **Gore** had demeaned himself by rutting with a donkey. Not even the fact that this was the donkey of a middle-ranked aristocrat checked the amusement of the horses and disgust of the donkeys, who shared the news with their riders and companions.

When the elves went out of this land, the stallion stayed beside his mule son. The elves sent a courtier to fetch him. The courtier turned up his nose at the stink of the stables. The stallion turned up his muzzle at the perfume of the elf, and that was that.

The stallion is long dead, but the mules of **Gore** are curiously fertile and breed with donkeys, zebras and fellow mules.

Many mules—disguising their ability to talk—arrange to be purchased by bands of adventurers to ensure that the mules know of any momentous events. They try not to interfere, but are sometimes moved by pity or expedience.

Connections

- Mules meet at **The Conclave of Mules**.
- Since the departure of the horses, the knights of Thring mostly ride donkeys, ostriches (16.09) or stranger beasts.
- In the (near) absence of horses, the knights of **Thring** have taken to riding a wide variety of beasts (16.16.05).

Hooks

- Does this mean that the residents of the Golden Realm are unseelie elves?
- Isn't a unicorn (29.07.02) a type of horse? Why did it stay?
- Are there still horses in the Golden Realm?