

Elysor

Location · Capital City (the Elysor Reaches)

Population: Scholarly estimates range from 30,000 to 120,000

Government: Sun Court (the Sun King governs with the counsel of the seven House Council seats; the inner workings of this governance are not disclosed to outsiders)

Elysor cannot be described the way other cities are described, because it was not built the way other cities are built. There are no quarried stones. No poured foundations. No walls raised course by course from the earth. Elysor grew -- or more precisely, it was guided -- over centuries by High Elven magic that coaxes living wood into forms that would be structurally impossible if they were not also alive. Towers rise from the crowns of ancient trees, their wood smoothed to a finish finer than any worked stone, curving outward and then back in graceful arcs that seem to have no seams, no joints, no place where craft ended and nature began. Bridges between the canopy flow like frozen rivers. The largest of them are wide enough for three elves to walk abreast and are themselves trees, horizontal trunks trained over generations into spans of living wood. The whole city exists above the forest floor. The lower world -- where the roots go deep and the light filters down in thin gold columns -- is not inhabited. It is tended. The undergrowth of Elysor is as deliberately shaped as the towers above it: soft moss, specific flowering plants in precise arrangements, no deadfall left to rot where it lies. High Elves speak of the city and the forest as the same thing, because they are. What appears to be wilderness to any outsider who stumbles through the lower reaches is in fact the foundation of the city overhead. Those outsiders rarely look up at the right moment. The forest has a way of turning them around before they do.