

# ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ORB



Orb is the fantasy world which serves as the setting for the *Way of the Tiger* fantasy gamebook series.<sup>1</sup>

*'Men share this world with weird and fell monsters, giants, dragons, demons and talking beasts. There are warlocks and sorcerers here too, great wielders of magic in the cities.' A world of '...pinnacled castles, knights on horseback, their men at arms bearing banners that stream in the wind, strange high-walled cities with towers and spires, concealing the dives of assassins and thieves amid the splendour' (TD/0).<sup>2</sup>*

In this document I have divided the entries into six categories based on geographical entities described in the books – the **Manmarch**, the **Northlands**, **Beyond the Rift**, the **Southern Lands**, the **Endless Sea** and the **Little-Known Lands**.<sup>3</sup> Also, there a couple of entries that fall outside of these categories, detailed below. Seven appendices will describe further areas of interest.

## Calendar

The calendar of Orb seems to run in *cycles* of months (II/21), perhaps equivalent to a year? Months include *Harvest's Bounty* (IV/11), *Grimweird*, which seems to have at least 47 days (II/21) and *Pantheos*, which has at least five (VI/1). The month of *Grimweird* may also be known as *Weir*. The month of *Weir* marks the beginning of spring (DM2/0, DM3/1). The rains come in the month of *Demandim* (VI/275). Once every five hundred years, during the month of *All-Mother Splendour*, for three nights the moon turns red during the great conjunction of the planets (I/191). During this month '...the fruit is ripe on the branches and the birds are in full song' (DM3/0), implying that it is during late summer.<sup>4</sup> This is confirmed by a reference at I/307, where we learn that this month is '...harvest time'. DM3/1 states that it marks the start of the campaigning season in the land of the Ten Kingdoms. DM3/0 and DM3/1 together imply that the months of *Demandim*, *Weir* and *All-Mother's Splendour* run consecutively.

## Prehistory

In the various books we learn a little of the early history of the planet. For example, in a past age (many thousands of years before the events of the *Way of the Tiger* series) the gods of Orb descended to the surface of the world to do battle (VI/52). Another ancient epoch of which we hear was the *Age of Snows*, when the whole of the Manmarch was covered by ice and frost (I/1). We are also told (DM3/0) that Orb is a '...drier place than it once was', suggesting that the temperature of the planet has risen at some time in the past.<sup>5</sup> A final point – I think that the inhabitants consider their world to be round in shape.<sup>6</sup> This is based on two pieces of evidence. First of all it's called *Orb*, and secondly we can see a model of a globe on the shelf of the sage Apothecus of Greyguilds, illustrated opposite TD/143.<sup>7</sup>

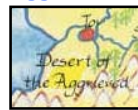
## THE MANMARCH



Part of the Greater Continent (I/0) this is a large plain (TD/196) defined as the country west of the Rift and east of the sea – the lands of men. The Manmarch is the one part of Orb that is dominated by men – only at its edges does the Wilderness encroach (DM4/0). The Sea of the Star and the Mountains of Vision probably mark the northern edge of the Manmarch.<sup>8</sup> The southern boundary of the Manmarch is

indicated by the Mountains of Horn (V/265).<sup>9</sup> In these lands it is customary for city rulers to raise money through temple taxes. In this way, some of the contributions of the people are channelled to the treasury (IV/7). The scholars of the Manmarch know little of the country that lies beyond their home – none of their maps seem to agree (V/61).

### Aggrieved, Desert of the



A desert land located to the south-west of Tor (III/map) at the far southern end of the Manmarch. It is perhaps connected to the Desolation of Ilexmanman the Aggrieved in the Rainbow Land (*q.v.*; see also the entry for Mayhem).

### Arkadan, Forest of



A blue-green (III/111) forest located between the city of Tor and the Walls of Shadow (III/map), filled with beautiful trees and dappled in sunshine. Ferns and majestic elms canopy the brown-leaved ground (III/73). Under the deep, green gloom of straight pine trees (III/44), the forest floor becomes moist and mossy and the leaf carpet gives way to marsh marigolds and spider grass (III/73). The woods eventually reach a series of forested gullies (III/35). Creatures encountered here during the course of *Usurper!* included a leopard (III/73) and the forest sprites (III/44).<sup>10</sup> When Avenger ventured here, Glaivas said that, like many forests, the Arkadan brought its dangers, but with his guidance most of them could be avoided. The forest has at its heart the *Crypts of Arkadan*, which Glaivas said should be steered clear of at all costs (III/111). One of the endings of *Usurper!* has Avenger struck by paralysis in the vicinity of the Crypts, and subsequently slain by the Fiend from the Pit (III/201).

### Aveneg



This city, located north of Doomover (I/map, III/map), is notable for its worshippers of Béatan the Free (V/227) and its own (lesser) Legion of Vasch-Ro (V/32).<sup>11</sup>

### Barrow Swales



A range of wild and windswept hills between Doomover and Irmuncast, shrouded in a perpetual mist (I/341). According to I/map they are located between Mortavalon and Greyguilds, becoming wooded between the latter city and the Rift. The country on the edge of the Swales is a gentle landscape of rolling meadows with small hamlets nestling in the valleys (III/13). The ancient tribes of the Barrow Swales constructed shrines to the All-Mother in the form of stone cairns, which cover the landscape (III/348). To the south, beyond the lower hills, is the valley of the River Greenblood. To the north is a wilderness of trees and meadows (III/360). Avenger encountered a two-headed ettin<sup>12</sup> when travelling in the Swales. Here also is the Ring of Vasch-Ro (III/5). Some of the hills can be seen in the background of the illustration opposite that reference.

The wooded hills to the west of the Rift are probably those detailed in the early part of *Talisman of Death* (TD/185). The countryside here is shown in the background opposite TD/39. In these woods is an idyllically-peaceful sacred grove (TD/52), tended by the Guardian Druid, Wodeman (TD/52,

<sup>1</sup> According to the various biographies in the gamebooks, Mark Smith began to create the fantasy world of Orb in 1976 for a *Dungeons & Dragons* campaign. The information in this document is based primarily on the *Way of the Tiger* (I–VI) books and *Talisman of Death* (TD), by Mark Smith and Jamie Thomson, and to a lesser extent the *Duelmaster* (DM1–4) series of two-player gamebooks, the *Falcon* book *Lost in Time* (F4) and the *Virtual Reality* books *Green Blood* (VR1) and *Coils of Hate* (VR3), by the same authors.

<sup>2</sup> A reference at F4/196 describes the reaction of Falcon (a technologically-advanced time-traveller) to Orb: 'A place where incredible monsters and magic are everyday realities. A highly civilised world as far as learning goes, but one which uses the most incredible magical powers instead of technology (which could) just possibly be Earth in the Dark Ages or the days of a lost civilisation.'

<sup>3</sup> The Greater Continent (I/0, I/26) is a term that we must assume applies to the Manmarch, the Northlands and the Southern Lands as a whole.

<sup>4</sup> At DM3/1 the first day of *Weir* (*i.e.*, the first day of spring) and the first day of *All-Mother's Splendour* are mentioned as being 100 days apart.

<sup>5</sup> I like to speculate that this may have been caused by the titanic magic/weird science of the Firedrakes in a drastic attempt to achieve victory in their long war against the water-dwelling Ancients.

<sup>6</sup> Rather than flat, or balanced on the back of a giant turtle, for example.

<sup>7</sup> An interesting aside: at V/75 the adjective *orbwards* is used in place of *earthwards*.

<sup>8</sup> Ionalbion and Ulrik's Haven (*qq.v.*) are certainly Northland territories.

<sup>9</sup> We know that the birds fly south of this range in winter, in search of warmer climes (III/13).

<sup>10</sup> Capricious fay who take delight in tormenting and stealing from travellers. The sprites sometimes help those who find themselves in danger, but will not aid people who have harmed the forest or its inhabitants (III/132, III/114).

<sup>11</sup> Amusingly, the name of the city seems to be *Geneva* (the capital city of Switzerland) spelled backwards!

<sup>12</sup> Illustrated opposite I/341 – also note that some of the terrain in the Swales can be seen in the background of this picture

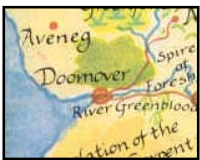
TD/199).<sup>13</sup> Creatures encountered in the forest by the hero of *Talisman of Death* include a huge white wolf (TD/256, companion to Wodeman (TD/52)) and the basilisk (TD/159), as well as the grendel-hag (TD/230, TD/270) and the tree-like willow weird (TD/319).<sup>14</sup> Further to the west the hero of that book found a steep sided and verdant valley, deep in ferns (TD/111, TD/227). On the valley floor was a bubbling spring (TD/203).

#### Boreas, Bay of



The area of sea immediately west of the Manmarch, protected by a long peninsula extending from the countryside around Wargrave Abbas. The main port in the bay is the city of Doomover (II/map).

#### Doomover



One of the largest cities in the Manmarch, with perhaps over 400 000 souls. It is ruled by the *Legion of the Sword of Doom* (see below) under the iron grip of Honoric, Marshal of the Legion. There are shrines to other gods, but the temple to Vasch-Ro overshadows them all. The Cathedral to the Wargod (I/26) is a grand edifice of basalt blocks with a great square tower, stark and unadorned, rising 200 feet above the surrounding buildings. Honoric's manse, more a fortress than a palace, is behind it (I/408).<sup>15</sup>

#### The Barbican

The city is bounded by forbidding, towered walls. The harbour walls of Doomover are also fortified, and protected by the *Barbican League*<sup>16</sup> with their long black-wood ships. It is part of the duty of a naval commander to assess the business of ships arriving in the port. The Barbican itself is a huge gate-house, like a fort that spans the harbour walls in an arc (I/26). The barracks of the Legion of the Sword of Doom are not far from the harbour (I/6). Doomover can be seen in the background of the illustration opposite I/26. The fortified harbour wall and the Barbican can be seen. The city skyline features a number of domes, and a cloistered area, possibly the *Sanctuary* (see below).

The main street heads under the *Obsidian Gate*, a huge arch of dark glass. The city itself has tall, solid buildings and roofs of sloping slates. There are shops everywhere, selling fish, wine and grain as well as a slave market (I/6) – slaves pull the oars of the Barbican League (I/408). There is a town crier<sup>17</sup> who speaks announcements and news to the citizens (I/6).

#### The Black Sword

Outside the *Black Sword* tavern hangs a sign showing soldiers with spoked wheels on their shields covering before a black sword, which hangs in the air.<sup>18</sup> The tavern stands inside a fork in the street – past it lays the monastery of Vile (I/408). The *Sword* is a long drinking hall, which maintains a blazing fire, even in late summer. The drinkers are mostly soldiers, and all men. None of the patrons is a sailor.<sup>19</sup> Inside, we find only raucous noise, sweltering heat and a reek of stale sweat (I/273, I/307). The obese barman 'ambles up and down the long bar slamming down mugs of mead...and pocketing silver' (I/307). When Avenger came here, a night in the tavern cost two gold pieces (I/225). The interior of the tavern is illustrated opposite I/176. The roaring fire can be seen in the background and over it hangs a great horn. The tavern floor appears to be either tiled or flagstoned.

#### The Sanctuary

There is a temple district entered *via* the *Portal of the Gods* – this legend is written in gold leaf on a portico held up by white marble pillars (I/26). When Avenger passed below the Portal, a voice spoke from the stones: 'Welcome to the Sanctuary, draw no swords here' (I/208). The Sanctuary is a plaza of temples, illustrated opposite I/208, showing the cloisters in the background. The steps to the temple of Béatan the Free can be seen, attended by his yellow-robed priests. Inside, Béatan's temple has wooden pews, placed seemingly at random. The roof is pierced with rose windows – the temple is bright and cheerful. Crystals reflect the sun's rays against a painting showing a demolished castle with soldiers and peasants dancing in the meadows before it (I/196, I/208).

Also in the Sanctuary is a small wooden chapel to Fate, run by an old seer and his young female acolyte. The chapel is small and dark, but clean and well-kept and could seat around 20 people. Scrolls are stacked neatly in

racks along the walls (I/27, I/36, I/208).<sup>20</sup> The interior of the temple is shown opposite I/36. A stone altar is visible in the background. The chapel floor seems to be covered with some sort of circular design.

#### The Monastery of Vile

There is a temple of the Order of the Scarlet Mantis in the city (I/26). They are an evil order of monks, worshippers of Vile, twisted brother to Kwon (I/0). Monks of this order wear a mantis tattoo on their forehead, a scarlet jacket tied with a black cotton belt and loose trousers which end just below the knee. They go shaven-headed (I/101, TD/261). Their head is Yaemon, Grandmaster of Flame (I/0).<sup>21</sup>

The monastery itself is made from dark stone with bright red shutters at its windows. It is situated close to the *Black Sword* (I/408). Beautiful towers and arches adorn the building and its walls are barbed with spikes (I/273). Its cloisters are well guarded by dead-end passageways inside the walls '...designed to lead an intruder into an inescapable hole...' (I/303). The *Hall of Webs* (I/323) is an arched corridor, like a hump-backed bridge, that connects the upper floor of the sleeping quarters to the refectory. The Hall is itself overlooked by a balcony (I/368). In *Avenger!* we learn that the sole defence for the Hall is a network of many threads, as thin as spider-weave, crossing the floor that trigger alarm bells or traps (I/303, I/323).<sup>22</sup>

#### The Legion of the Sword of Doom

This evil order, one of the best armies on Orb, is based in Doomover. They are described as spreading '...fear about them in battle, like a pall' (V/0). The Marshal of the Legion of the Sword of Doom is Honoric, never defeated in combat, who once slew a storm giant single-handed.<sup>23</sup> Honoric's great black sword *Sorcerak* '...smokes evilly...' (III/397), dispels magic when unsheathed (I/112) and emanates fear (I/154).<sup>24</sup> When on campaign, Honoric's tent is a massive red pavilion adorned with the sword symbol of Vasch-Ro (V/142).

The Legion worship the Wargod, Vasch-Ro, He who Sows for the Reaper (I/26) to whom the first day of Grimweird is sacred (V/121). The symbol of the Legion is a silver sword hanging from a silver thread on a black field (I/50). During the events of *Avenger!* the Legion was paying well for recruits in Doomover and conducting manoeuvres (I/6). Enlisted recruits were drilled for a few hours and sent to their barracks. Some were chosen to demonstrate their swordplay. The Legion was preparing to attack the Spires of Foreshadowing for loot and pillage (I/16).

There are different regiments within the Legion – the *Rain of Doom* are heavy crossbowmen (V/394) whereas the *Bringers of Doom* are cataphracts – both they and their mounts are clad from head to toe in glowing mail armour (V/158, V/290). Soldiers of the Legion of the Sword of Doom are illustrated opposite I/176. Although they appear to be relaxing, they wear mail and metal breastplates. They are all shaven-headed, but most have moustaches, some a single lock of hair.<sup>25</sup> A horseman of the legion is shown opposite I/208, probably one of the Bringers of Doom. The symbol of the Legion is clearly visible on his shield and his horse is wearing a black hood. A captain of the Legion illustrated opposite I/399 wears full armour and his head is shaven, his helmet at his feet. Some members of the Legion are shown opposite V/250 by the feet of Honoric's black colossus. The swords of Legion officers glow with a black light and seem to inspire fear when brandished (I/176, II/106, V/134, V/138, V/158).

<sup>20</sup> During the events of *Avenger!* the seer divines the title character's destiny. The subject must lie on a marble slab, their blood is let into a silver chalice and is mixed with a green liquid. The seer begins to chant and visions of the future appear projected through a crystal prism into a mirror (I/36, I/50).

<sup>21</sup> Yaemon is illustrated opposite I/306 standing on the battlements of Quench-Heart Keep. He wears his red monk's costume and his mantis tattoo is visible on his forehead. This leads us to the great Metal Anklets Controversy. In the illustration, Yaemon is wearing metal anklets. The monks shown opposite V/266, skirmishing with the shieldmaidens of Serakub, don't seem to be wearing anklets, but the figures aren't very detailed. There is an excellent picture of a monk opposite TD/261 standing next to an overturned cart in the streets of Greygulds. He wears the same metal anklets as Yaemon, although I don't think the monk encountered by the hero of *Talisman of Death* is actually meant to be Yaemon.

<sup>22</sup> The result of a spell cast by the priestesses of Nullaq (I/323).

<sup>23</sup> Honoric is a great, roaring bull of a man with a three-horned helmet and studded armour. (III/416). He slew three *Tools of Fate* at the battle of the Hollow Tower (I/297). He also possesses a great horn that summons a 25-foot-tall colossus, a black titan wielding a mirror image of *Sorcerak* (V/250). Honoric is shown opposite that reference, second from the left blowing the horn and summoning the colossus. Honoric is also illustrated opposite I/112. He wears his studded leather armour and a three-horned helmet. In this picture, Manse the Deathmage has turned his sword (a practice blade, not *Sorcerak*) into a large tulip. Another illustration, opposite I/265 shows him asleep, with *Sorcerak* at his side. Opposite III/405, Honoric can be seen wearing full battle dress and carrying his sword. His horse is visible in the background. The last picture of Honoric, wearing very heavy armour and offering battle, is shown opposite V/404.

<sup>24</sup> The blade can make him levitate (III/316) and he can command it to fly through the air to impale an enemy before returning to his hand (V/390). It seems to have the ability to deflect missiles cast at its bearer (III/397). *Sorcerak* never leaves his side – Honoric even sleeps clasping his sword (I/265). I like to speculate that the sword is the true power behind the Legion, Honoric being merely the puppet of this evil artefact – after the events of *Warbringer!* Honoric's body is recovered but the sword is nowhere to be found (V/400).

<sup>25</sup> Although the illustration of Honoric opposite I/265 shows that his head is *not* shaven, so I don't know if this is a uniform practice throughout the Legion.

<sup>13</sup> He is illustrated opposite TD/52, standing next to the she-wolf, Snowmane, carrying an oak staff and a silver sickle. On his head he wears a crown of mistletoe. This encounter with a druid suggests that the eastern, forested part of the Swales is connected to the Forests of Passing (q.v.) south of here.

<sup>14</sup> The sap of the willow weird has certain healing properties (TD/161).

<sup>15</sup> We learn in *Avenger!* that there are some dungeons under the Cathedral (I/21).

<sup>16</sup> The name of Doomover's navy (I/26, I/408).

<sup>17</sup> The crier carries a bell as a mark of office and is dressed in an unusual uniform of orange-and-green (I/6).

<sup>18</sup> The spoked wheel is the symbol of the god Fate, and the sign most likely represents the men of the Spires, the ancestral enemies of Doomover (V/301).

<sup>19</sup> Unusual for a tavern so close to the docks (I/307).

### The Plain of Feet

Outside of the walls of Doomover, corn and barley ripen in the breeze. After the fields is a low plain, known as the *Plain of Feet* (I/65).<sup>26</sup> The smooth plain eventually gives way to a wilderness of trees and vines (I/254).

### Fiendil



The city of Fiendil<sup>27</sup> lies in a cool and verdant valley. Avenger's journey from Mortavalon to here takes four days along the banks of the River Fortune. An old track joins the river to the *City of Learning*, Greyguilds on the Moor, far to the south (I/260). The people of Fiendil '...smile at visitors to their city. They seem to float past with the uncaring calmness of those who accept their destiny has already been decided' (I/114).

The city walls are ill-kept, crumbling and, in places, breached. There are no guards (I/213, I/260). Whimsical, Theocrat of Fate (I/234), rules the city. He often knows much of what is to happen and during the events of *Avenger!* it appears that the eponymous hero's arrival has been foreseen (I/200).<sup>28</sup> The cathedral to Fate is topped by a large dome (I/76, I/100). The army of Fiendil is commanded by a General Hickling and consists of mostly infantry with some medium cavalry (V/369).

The main street of Fiendil is called Dreamer's Saunter, which turns right into Wheel Way (I/185). A tavern on the Saunter, called the *Volunteer*, has the sign of a young warrior on bended knee receiving a sword from a man in golden robes wearing a smiling golden mask (I/234).<sup>29</sup> The *Volunteer* is a wheel shaped building, airy and light, with a circular bar at its centre. There are ten tables with chairs screwed into the ground (I/200). There is a monastery of the reverencers of Vile here (I/221).

### Fortune Pass



A mountain pass three days out of Mortavalon. The youthful River Fortune pours down a narrow valley which winds like a snake between the escarpments of the Mountains of Vision. The highest peak here is jagged Mount Gwalodrun, where the air is crisp with the scent of mountain heather (I/70, I/210).

The snow-capped mountains are inhabited by arocs – bird men (I/70). Dwelling in the mountain caves are the sightless rock hulks (I/83). The monk and mystic Togawa makes his home here, on the slopes of the Gwalodrun (I/83). Togawa was once *Grandmaster of the Dawn* on the Island of Tranquil Dreams. He is old but remains fit and strong and '...sets his mind free to roam the planes of existence' (I/221). Only a skilled climber could reach Togawa's home (I/210). Togawa is illustrated opposite I/83 executing a *Kwon's Flail* kick on a rock hulk.<sup>30</sup>

### Fortune River



A river that rises high in the Mountains of Vision and flows through narrow Fortune Pass past Fiendil and down into the Manmarch before joining the Greenblood in the south (I/map, II/map, III/map). Downstream, the river winds between the spurs of the hills. Its dark, green waters are wide, deep and fast-flowing (III/270).

### Great Plateau



A large plateau south east of Greyguilds, topped by the great *Mount Star-Reach*, the tallest of all mountains. At its summit there is thought by scholars of the Manmarch to be a portal between the worlds (TD/6, TD/248). Steep cliffs surround the plateau, but the hero of *Talisman of Death* finds that at least one point on the western side has steps cut into the reddish rock face (TD/20). The further our hero climbs up the stair, the temperature and humidity increases (TD/328). Partway up the steps is a cool, fine spray rising from a waterfall which cascades down the side of the plateau, casting small rainbows in the sun. The thunderous roar is almost deafening (TD/20).<sup>31</sup>

At the top, the plateau floor is covered in a thick, prehistoric rain forest – giant ferns abound with pools of waist deep water amid their fronds as well as antediluvian beasts like the pteranodon, triceratops and tyrannosaurus (TD/4, TD/25, TD/86); one such is illustrated opposite TD/4. In the forest, the hero of *Talisman of Death* encounters its oppressive heat and sees huge flies circling the tall, straight conifers:<sup>32</sup> violet creepers trail from overhanging branches, great ferns cover the ground. The air is alive with the strange noises of the jungle animals, which include the scarlet macaw and huge dragonflies, vibrantly coloured, hovering from flower to flower (TD/4, TD/192, TD/263).

There is a tribe of hairy, blue-grey hogmen in the jungle, with heads like tusked boars (TD/192). They don't speak the common tongue (TD/151). The hogs' village is composed of several elegant buildings made from wattle and daubed with clay. A deep, dry moat and spiked palisade surrounds it. They eat mangoes, nuts and guavas. The Headhog's dwelling is a two-storey building, part of which is made of crumbling green stone. There is a huge mud wallow nearby. The Headhog sits on a carved stone throne, his muscles rippling under his blue-black skin. He wears a red robe fastened at his thick neck with a necklace of amber. He is<sup>33</sup> hoglord of the plateau (TD/72, TD/365) and is illustrated opposite the latter reference. The hogs fear the ancient ruins and cities on the plateau, especially the temple of Nil to the north (TD/90).<sup>34</sup>

At the foot of Mount Star-Reach, stunted bushes grow on the slopes. The air becomes thinner and climbers shorter of breath before they reach a wide cave mouth, reeking of sulphur (TD/14, TD/110), where an ancient red dragon has made its lair within the mountain.<sup>35</sup> The last time the dragon awoke, it despoiled the villages of the hogs. On the summit of the mountain, the air is rarefied and pure. The panorama is incredible. The whole plateau lies below like a table – a collage of mountains, huge glittering lakes and emerald forests which shimmer and glisten in the haze of the sun. There is a rectangle of shimmering silver, dancing in the air, unsupported: the legendary portal (visible in the background of the illustration opposite TD/69). The dragon is bound by the gods to guard the portal – it will live until the day somebody passes through (TD/369, TD/400).

### Greenfens



A marshland north of Doomover. Skirting the swamp, a track leads north-west from Mortavalon to Sundial, climbing the wild and windswept Barrow Swales (I/341).

### Greenblood, River



A river in the Manmarch that flows from the Barrow Downs through the Spires and joins with the River Fortune to reach the sea at Doomover (I/map, II/map, III/map).

### Greybones, River



A beautiful, green river (V/255), which winds from the Forests of Passing down to the city of Greydawn, then through the Valley of the Lich Kings to the sea at Tor (I/map, III/map).

bearing the spear *Dragonsbane* (TD/395) which, as its name suggests, is enchanted to sorely injure dragons (TD/51). The mummy is illustrated opposite TD/352. It carries the spear, a helmet and an Egyptian-style sword. The caves are probably an abandoned temple to Nil, Mouth of the Void (TD/90).

<sup>32</sup> When the black flies of the forest lay their eggs on our hero, their larvae hatch and start feeding off his/her flesh. They are removed by hasty immersion in one of the many algae-filled pools in the forest (TD/14).

<sup>33</sup> Or, at least, he claims to be.

<sup>34</sup> The ruins are probably the remains of an old empire, possibly connected to Greydawn (q.v.) that may have fallen under the pressure of beast-man incursions, or perhaps they indulged in the degenerate worship of Nil (TD/90). They seem to have fashioned their buildings from a green stone (TD/72, TD/365).

<sup>35</sup> The dragon is immense, sixty feet long, and covered in thick scales. Its tail is curled round a vast hoard of treasure – gems, gold, goblets and vases lie higgledy-piggledy beneath its bulk. The sleeping dragon is illustrated opposite TD/378 resting on its treasure hoard. Small puffs of sulphurous smoke billow from its nostrils as it sleeps (TD/48, TD/378). The only way to withstand its fiery breath is to fashion a shield made of the dragon's own scales to shelter behind (TD/110). When the dragon speaks, its voice is as soft as honey (TD/170), rich and mellifluous (TD/356), and in conversation it can charm its victims before pouncing (TD/317). It is the *Lord of the Skies* and can summon gales of wind to buffet its adversaries (TD/275), as well possessing as the power of shape-shifting (TD/12, TD/29, TD/77). The dragon is also illustrated opposite TD/69. One should '...never trust a dragon' (TD/77).

<sup>26</sup> So called for this is where the Legion drill and practise for war (I/65).

<sup>27</sup> Sometimes spelled *Fiendal* (V/369), although this may be a typographical error.

<sup>28</sup> During the events of *Warbringer!* we learn that Whimsical is 'in debt' to Dom the Prescient, ruler of the Spires of Foreshadowing and, what is more, he '...hates to be outdone' (V/139!).

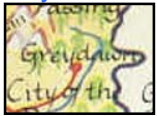
<sup>29</sup> The wizard encountered by the hero of *Talisman of Death* in the Rift is similarly-attired – he is likely to be a worshipper of Fate.

<sup>30</sup> Perhaps Togawa is the 'solitary mystic' who raised Arcos the Monk, a competitor in the Arena of Death in Mortavalon (DM4/0).

<sup>31</sup> Under the waterfall, the hero of *Talisman of Death* encounters a cave entrance (TD/33) with a network of trap-laden tunnels behind a door of black wood inlaid with alabaster. The musty air reeks of decay (TD/42, *et seq.*). In the caves is a hideous idol with the coiled tail of a huge serpent – its muscular torso sprouts four clawed arms, two gruesome heads and bat-like wings – this is the dormant form of Damolh, Son of Nil, Mouth of the Void (TD/339 – Damolh is illustrated opposite that reference). Also in the cavern, is the tomb of an ancient, mummified warrior



## Greydawn



The city of Greydawn lies south of the Rift and west of the Great Plateau on the River Greybones (V/381). Its inhabitants follow Moraine, God of the Empire (V/251). Little is known about Greydawn in the rest of the world.<sup>36</sup> The only other cities in the same valley are the City of the Runes of Doom and the Walls of Shadow (V/381). Many of the inhabitants are not men but great hog-headed beast-men (V/251).<sup>37</sup> The people here speak the common tongue of a millennium past (V/295).

In ancient times this was once a civilised city from which a large empire ruled, but those times have long passed.<sup>38</sup> It is thought that the followers of Moraine desire once more to regain their empire, but the only way they can expand is northwards into the Manmarch (V/381).

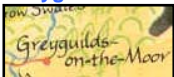
The proud, gaunt city walls are built in the style of the ancient *Emperors of the Blue Seal* (V/265).<sup>39</sup> The gates are bound with iron (V/275). A neat patchwork of fields is laid out around Greydawn – these fields are tilled both by slaves tied together in rows and serfs toiling on the lands of their masters. Many are driven on to labour by the beast-men (V/265).

Each of the streets and squares of Greydawn boasts an equestrian statue of Moraine, majestic and arrogant.<sup>40</sup> The temple to Moraine is magnificent. Great columns rise up in row after row towards mosaic roofs of lapis lazuli and gold leaf, somehow insured to the weather. Another shining gold statue to the God of Empire stands astride the enormous stairway that leads to the temple gates. Although the temple to Moraine dominates the city, when the inhabitants pass the black temple that is built in the shape of the whirlpool of Nemesis, they make obeisance by describing the shape of a spiral on their forehead (V/335).

There are two rulers of this strange city (V/335), the soldier-lord Hennis Alchmeonid and the mysterious Peisistratus.<sup>41</sup> Both dress in the gold-and-azure finery of Moraine (V/395). The army also dresses in the resplendent gold-and-blue with an élite corps of wolven, the *Wolf Warriors*. Wolven are proud (V/415), fierce and tall (III/343, V/275) beast-men. In melee, the wolven intone a ritual chant, the *Prayer of the Forgotten Hero*, which appears to send them into a frenzied state (V/325).<sup>42</sup> There are also legions of both men and of the powerful beastlings (V/415). For example, the mighty *Cavalry of the Resplendent Empire* is captained by a wolven (V/295).<sup>43</sup>

Just before the events of *Arena of Death*, the followers of Moraine led two Crusades into the lands south of the Manmarch. They were really nothing more than organised looting parties. They were making for Nowall, but in the end they were smashed by the *Man-Haters* of Gynouebbe<sup>44</sup> before they even came within sight of the former city. Only a few loyal troops made it back to Greydawn (DM4/0[2]).<sup>45</sup> Ghatt the Iconoclast (mentioned in DM4/0[2]) was the '...last High Priest of Moraine', and probably a native of this city.

## Greyguilds on the Moor



A university city (III/357) at the southern end of the Manmarch (II/260, TD/196), also known as the *City of Learning* (II/260).

<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the city is often literally cloaked in mists at sunup (V/265). According to Glaivas one should '...not risk (one's) life by entering this city' (III/299).

<sup>37</sup> Also known as *beastlings*, each of these creatures is as strong as two men (V/251). They are described at V/265: '...naked to the waist, with hugely powerful torsos – their blue-black skin rippling on taut sinews.'

<sup>38</sup> It seems likely that the ancient mannish empire of Greydawn fell under pressure of beastling or wolven incursions and exists today with a ruling class of beast-men. The empire may be connected to the ruins atop the Great Plateau and/or the golden age of the Inner Sea.

<sup>39</sup> These *Emperors* are not mentioned anywhere else, but are probably an ancient ruling dynasty of Greydawn.

<sup>40</sup> Some are more than three thousand years old (V/335).

<sup>41</sup> Alchmeonid, is '...a great ox of a man,' with a ruddy complexion and the tan and calloused hands of one used to sword practice in the open air. Peisistratus has '...the olive-green pallor of one who shuns the sun. He is tall and almost unnaturally thin, as though he suffered from a wasting disease. Strangest of all, seven spherical gems of different colours hover above his head and (follow) his movements, as if attached by invisible wires' (V/395).

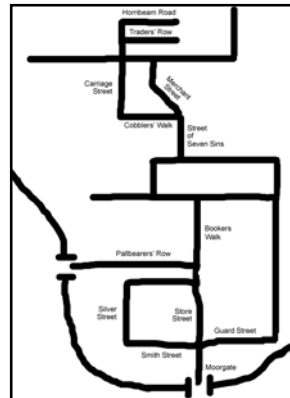
<sup>42</sup> We don't know if this rite is unique to the wolven of Greydawn, or if it is more widespread.

<sup>43</sup> Lord Ogg Redhand rides a magnificently caparisoned black charger. His hair is braided with cloth of gold and he wears solid gold vambraces studded with diamonds. His retinue of servants and lackeys are all human (V/275). He is illustrated opposite that reference standing before some of the buildings of Greydawn.

<sup>44</sup> Probably followers of Fell-Kyrinla.

<sup>45</sup> Their tale is immortalised in Fidelio's *The Longest March* (DM4/0[2]).

## City streets



I shall endeavour to describe the layout of the city as best I can, based on the wanderings of the hero of *Talisman of Death*.<sup>46</sup> The gate nearest the Rift enters the city along a street called Moorgate (TD/318). Along Moorgate are various food and pottery shops, as well as some fairly grand buildings built of light grey stone. Moorgate joins bustling Store Street. Guard Street turns right off here to a squat grey building – the *Watch House* (TD/296, TD/351). Store Street is a continuation of Moorgate (TD/258). Smith Street heads left from here (TD/296). Further down Smith Street is Silver Street (TD/175). Store Street joins a tree-lined avenue called Booker's Walk (TD/254) as does Silver Street (TD/304). The Street of Seven Sins adjoins Guard Street (TD/78). From the Street of Seven Sins, a side street called Cobbler's Walk heads west and Merchants' Street heads north-west (TD/289). Carriage Street joins Cobbler's Walk and Merchants' Street. Traders' Row and Hornbeam Road also connect to Carriage Street at some point (TD/28, TD/61). The streets of the city are illustrated in the background of the illustrations opposite TD/104 & 130. A panoramic view of the city rooftops is available opposite TD/248.

## City Watch

Greyguilds is not the tranquil city it once was. The armed forces protecting the city come from two groups: the warrior-women who worship the evil goddess Fell-Kyrinla, and the followers of the All-Mother (TD/35, TD/279). The city gates are guarded by the followers of the All-Mother on the evenings of market days and the three days following (TD/117).<sup>47</sup> The guards of the All-Mother are men and women in green livery (TD/249). There are mounted guard patrols in the city (TD/237).

## Library and Guilds of Learning

In Booker's Walk there are two very grand buildings, built of blocks of grey stone. One is the largest library in the Manmarch and is frequented by young students in blue togas, escorted by the older scholars. A flag, showing books and scrolls flies from the top of the building. The entrance hall of the library is filled with desks at which scribes work, copying books and scrolls – the quiet stillness is broken only by the scratching of pens. Visitors can recline on plush window-seats (TD/304, TD/346). The other building is a university of some sort (TD/279), probably one of the *Guilds of Learning* (see below). Apothecus is a sage and historian of Greyguilds (TD/98) – he lives in a small stone bungalow (TD/143).<sup>48</sup>

The Guilds of Learning are built around a cloister which circles a square of tall grass speckled with scarlet poppies. There is a huge greenhouse made of tarred wood and glass. Sages and professors from the Guilds wear light blue togas and we also encounter groups of students – young men and women carrying books and scrolls. Two (disreputable) scholars of the guild are Moreau and Polonius (TD/216, TD/318), who spend their time engaged in *vivisection*.<sup>49</sup>

## Taverns and shops

The *Red Dragon* inn is on the Street of Seven Sins (TD/92). The ale-cellar here is a dangerous place (TD/19); it is nothing more than a den of thieves (TD/92, TD/281). Steps lead downwards into the smoke-filled gloom below, and the sound of raucous laughter floats up into the street. The only part of this dive which is illuminated is the bar, behind which stands the bulky proprietor (TD/24, TD/156). The patrons are a disreputable bunch of villainous-looking cut-throats.<sup>50</sup> A mug of ale costs the hero of *Talisman of*

<sup>46</sup> As well as the *Talisman of Death* solution map, available from the Outspaced Shrine (<http://outspaced.wsnw.net/>).

<sup>47</sup> There seems to be a rotation between these and the followers of Fell-Kyrinla for the other three weekdays and the morning of market day. I think this may be a source of the rivalry between the two temples – the swordswomen appear to think the followers of the All-Mother too lenient (TD/35).

<sup>48</sup> Apothecus is illustrated opposite TD/143 seated in his home. He has many books, jars and other items on his shelves. A skull, an exotic shell and a small globe are visible. He has a friend called Diodorus who is an expert on travel between the planes of existence (TD/6).

<sup>49</sup> Described in *Talisman of Death* as the use of surgery and magic to create new forms of life (TD/182). In the middle of the greenhouse is a large sunken pit, ringed at the top with downward-pointing spikes in which they keep their creations. They offer money to bravos who agree to test their beasts in combat (TD/182). One of their *vivisections* is illustrated opposite that reference.

<sup>50</sup> For example, Heimdol the Mighty was one of the most unpleasant men ever to swill ale at the *Red Dragon*. One day, a stranger, Tyutchev, accepted his challenge to a bout of arm-wrestling. Heimdol lost for the first time in his life. He was furious and threatened awful reprisals if Tyutchev ever returned. A few nights later, Tyutchev *did* return and began to insult Heimdol and two of his friends. In the inevitable fight which followed, Tyutchev killed them all and carved his initial into Heimdol's forehead (TD/181).

*Death* a single piece of gold (TD/3).<sup>51</sup> The bar is illustrated opposite TD/156, where the barkeeper is pouring a drink for a shifty looking patron, and from a different angle opposite TD/169.

On Merchants' Street are several markets where grain traders deal. Here also is the drab shop of Alembic the Alchemist.<sup>52</sup> Alembic wears a white, sleeveless robe with a phoenix rising from flames embroidered on it (TD/394), possibly the traditional dress of an alchemists' or healers' guild, or maybe a cult with which Alembic is associated.<sup>53</sup>

Along Smith Street there is an armourer's and a tinker's shop next door to each other (TD/303).<sup>54</sup> On the bend of Smith Street and Silver Street there is a jeweller's shop (TD/85). The jeweller, Oliol (TD/299), is a small man with a monocle (TD/278).<sup>55</sup> Down Carriage Street is the *Silver Trinket* inn, next to a large stable and a work-house. It is much more pleasant than the *Red Dragon* (TD/28), if a little short-staffed.<sup>56</sup> On Cobbler's Walk lives a sorcerer, a man dressed in black robes covered with odd symbols (TD/195), a practiser of summoning rituals. The cemetery is on Pallbearer's Row (TD/261). The city walls run adjacent to the edge of it (TD/392) and a postern gate leading out of the city was found here by the hero of *Talisman of Death* (TD/6, TD/99).

#### Thieves' Guild

According to *Greyguilds Revisited*,<sup>57</sup> the religious orders of the city hold all the power. Vagar, the god of thieves, liars and cut-throats has the most worshippers in the city (TD/196). Indeed, Greyguilds has a large and organised thieves' guild. There are at least two entrances to the guild headquarters. One is through an open storm drain that leads to the sewers near Trader's Row (TD/236), and the other is a disguised coal-hole in Hornbeam Road (TD/223). Under the storm drain in Trader's Row (TD/183) is a huge sewer, where there is a small round door set into the wall.<sup>58</sup> Inside is a magnificently-furnished room – thieves lounge on the sofas here, at the entrance to their guild (TD/238). The coal cellar at the back of a dilapidated warehouse in Hornbeam Road has a small crawl-way hidden on the far side of a pile of coal. A chute leads to a small passageway which winds under the city for some distance. Eventually it comes to the thieves' guild chambers mentioned above (TD/149). The guildmaster of thieves is called Vagrant, a handsome middle-aged man who wears an ermine jacket. He has a large moustache which he twirls proudly (TD/209). Other thieves include Scarface, Jemmy the Rat, Bloodheart and young Lord Min (TD/276). Bloodheart<sup>59</sup> is a hulking, silent fellow and Jemmy is a wiry man with fingers like spiders' legs (TD/241). Lord Min<sup>60</sup> is a small, agile young man (TD/194). Vagrant is illustrated opposite TD/209. The thief to his right with the crossbow can only be Scarface.

#### Temples

The magnificently-tiered temple to the All-Mother, Fountain of Life is on the far side of a small, grassy square. It is covered by a wonderful hanging garden and surrounded by flocks of small, multi-coloured birds. A pair of guards stands at the wide, green doors. Inside, the altar is loaded with grain and fruit. We meet a priestess of temple, Lillantha (TD/117, TD/166), illustrated opposite the former reference. She is holding a suit of chainmail and standing before the altar.

The *Swordswomen of Fell-Kyrinla* are a band of warrior-women that worship the goddess Fell-Kyrinla, known as the Man-Hater. They patrol out of the city to the edge of the moorlands (TD/35, TD/279, TD/331). Their insignia is of a pair of crossed swords above the female symbol (♀). Mounted swordswomen are illustrated opposite TD/65. The symbol of the goddess is clearly visible on one of their shields. The temple to Fell-Kyrinla is made of white stone with dark, grey columns. Steps lead up to the entrance between two pillars with a guard at the top (TD/221).<sup>61</sup> Inside the inner sanctum of the temple is an altar, behind which is a large marble

statue of the goddess wearing chainmail, her expression arrogant and cruelly-beautiful (TD/239). The High Priestess of the temple and Marshal of the Watch is Hawkana, a tall and striking raven-haired woman. She carries a longsword with a polished hilt (TD/78) and wears a magical ring that allows her to regenerate injury, even to the point of death (TD/44, TD/54).<sup>62</sup> Hawkana is illustrated opposite TD/78 gloating in her finely decorated temple, holding the *Talisman of Death*. Opposite TD/222 she is shown before the altar to Fell-Kyrinla. Here she is wearing an unadorned gown. The statue of the goddess can be seen in the background as well as a pair of twisted, snake-headed candlesticks.

Elsewhere in the city<sup>63</sup> there is a large, gothic building with tall pinnacles surrounded by bat-like gargoyles in a tree-lined avenue. This is a grand temple to Death, where hundreds of black-cowled worshippers can kneel at prayer. Black candles shed an evil light and an organ sounds doleful music. The high priest is called Somnus (TD/97). The followers of Death in Greyguilds wear black robes, perhaps clasped at the neck by shrunken human skulls (TD/97, TD/186).<sup>64</sup> A golden chalice is passed around the rows of worshippers. It contains human blood, cursed in Death's name.<sup>65</sup> At least one of the worshippers of Death is an undead vampire (TD/157). The temple is protected by the *Angel of Death* – a huge, dark figure with shadowy wings and a tall, white crest sweeping back from the black helmet which hides its features (TD/188).<sup>66</sup> Nearby is a house with walls seemingly made of pale bamboo (TD/144). Mortphilio, who lives here, is a necromancer (TD/396) or a 'death magician' who performs human sacrifices and other unspeakable abominations in the pursuit of power (TD/279).<sup>67</sup>

#### The Moors

The moorlands between Greyguilds and Serakub are known for brigands (TD/191). An old track joins Greyguilds to the city of Fiendil in the north (I/map).

#### Horn, Mountains of



A range of rugged, purple mountains to the south of Greyguilds and the Spires of Foreshadowing (I/map, TD/326). They mark the southern boundary of the Manmarch (V/265).

#### Horngroth



A city on the northern slopes of the Mountains of Horn (I/map), notable for its followers of Fell-Kyrinla, who have a temple here (V/122).

#### Irmuncast-nigh-Edge



A great city of the Manmarch, home to 20 000 souls (IV/215). It is plagued by '...religious schisms, racial tensions, unscrupulous greed and warring factions with proud leaders' (III/420).

The city lies amongst rich farmlands and meadows in which grow the various plants used to make colourful dyes. Irmuncast is famous throughout the Manmarch for its weaving and dyeing, and for carpets, pavilions and tapestry-making. It is a '...fair-seeming city', its walls made of a dull red stone with towers at fifty foot intervals along the battlements. There are no paved highways that lead to Irmuncast, but a beaten earth road runs to the River Fortune. The citizens are of many types (III/236).<sup>68</sup>

Whenever the hosts of evil spew forth from the Bowels of Orb – the great Rift that scores the world like a black pit in a rotten fruit, Irmuncast is the city they fall on in their search for new slaves (VI/0). Irmuncast-nigh-Edge holds back the black tide from the Rift which threatens to swamp the lands of men (IV/0).

#### The Usurper

The previous ruler of Irmuncast was the Loremaster Szeged, Overlord of the city – his full title was *Overlord of the City-State of Irmuncast, Protector*

<sup>51</sup> This is expensive – the price is more likely a piece of silver, like the bar in Doomover.

<sup>52</sup> In the window is a small plate with five hazelnuts on it, and a stuffed lynx (TD/394). The significance of these, if any, items is unclear.

<sup>53</sup> He sells a variety of potions and trinkets when visited by the hero of *Talisman of Death*: the *Elixir of Life* for 12 gp which improves vitality *Barkskin Ointment* for 7 gp (TD/372) which, if fresh, toughens one's skin for a week; the *Fortunate Luckstone* for 10 gp, which does actually work; and the *Vapours of Speed* for 10 gp which are supposed to speed up one's actions. Later in the book, the *Vapours* are found to be ineffective (TD/76, TD/233, TD/266, TD/306, TD/360, TD/372).

<sup>54</sup> The price of a sword in the armourer's is 7 gp (TD/139).

<sup>55</sup> He has a large safe behind the counter (TD/278) where he also hides a shortsword (TD/299, TD/309). The safe is fire trapped to release a blinding sheet of flame when tampered with (TD/341) – a magical *glyph of warding* (TD/354).

<sup>56</sup> A room costs 5 gp for the night. A particular delicacy is the hippogriff in cream sauce (TD/15).

<sup>57</sup> A book from the Library, written by a certain Nyleve, which tells the story of a dissolute young nobleman who failed to take advantage of the education offered by the Guilds of Learning. The title of the book is a joke derived from *Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh (Nyleve is Evelyn spelled backwards).

<sup>58</sup> When the hero of *Talisman of Death* visits, it is trapped with a harpoon-throwing mechanism (TD/205).

<sup>59</sup> It is unlikely that this Bloodheart is connected with Kritos Bloodheart, his namesake slave trader from Upanishad and a captain in the Valley of Gad.

<sup>60</sup> Another in-joke here. I understand that Min was/is the nick-name of one Mark Smith, a noted gamebook author.

<sup>61</sup> The guard has a hidden bell to raise the alarm (TD/234).

<sup>62</sup> It is probably a cult item and sacred to the goddess, since it constricts to sever the finger of a non-believer who wears it (TD/137). What is more, outside of the inner sanctum of the temple the ring does not appear to hold any magic (TD/16).

<sup>63</sup> Probably a wealthier district.

<sup>64</sup> During *Talisman of Death*, we learn that he priests of Death appear to use enchanted helmets interwoven with silver bands to magically transport themselves out into the street; supposedly so they can come and go from the temple without being seen. We also learn the helmets also have the odd additional effect of improving one's quickness of thought (TD/97, TD/165).

<sup>65</sup> It curdles in the stomach of non-believers inducing a violent palsy (TD/157).

<sup>66</sup> In *Talisman of Death*, the mere sight of the Angel causes the heart of the hero to stop instantly (TD/188).

<sup>67</sup> The walls of Mortphilio's home are not made of bamboo, but of the bones of his victims. He commands a flying winged skull and sits in a bath-chair swathed in cloth (TD/144). The walls can be made to animate as skeletal warriors. A stone archway draped with a black blanket (TD/396) leads into the temple of Death next door (TD/97).

<sup>68</sup> Some are flaxen-haired (perhaps Northlanders), others have flashing black eyes and raven hair (perhaps Manmarchers). Many peasants have a coarse-limbed, orcish look about them – some have the noseless faces of halvorcs (III/236).

of the *Manmarch against the Rift* (III/1, III/420 – the city was the last stronghold of men before the Bowels of Orb). Szeged was one of the Loremasters of Serakub, ‘a wise synod’. Also known as the *Missionary King* he brought the word of Kwon to the Manmarch. He became high priest of the temple to Kwon in Irmuncast and, in time, through his wisdom and fair-mindedness, he became King. He ruled benignly and well, and was beloved of all save the reverencers of Nemesis and the riff-raff of cut-throats and thieves that gather in any great city. When the monks of the Scarlet Mantis wished to build a temple to Vile beside the temple of Avatar the One he opposed them. He was a great martial artist, but he met his match and died at the hands of Yaemon, Grandmaster of Flame (III/1). He was ‘...not a man who sought greatness, but one who suffered greatness to be thrust upon him for the common good. He was a wise and popular ruler, enlightened, but no despot.’ During the events of *Usurper!* many in Irmuncast ‘...still grieve(d for) his passing’ (III/381). When Yaemon slew him, he was replaced by the Usurper. Szeged’s seal was the mark of a hippogriff on a chequered background (III/181). This seal was carved onto the back of his throne and is visible on the cover of *Usurper!*

When Avenger first came here, the city was quite busy, and at night large torches burned on the street corners. Each house was obliged to hang a lantern outside its door to light the way. Despite this, there was a general mood of spineless dejection under the rule of the Usurper. Orcs wearing chain-mail marched the streets carrying shields emblazoned with the symbol of a red deer with a barbed tail and spiralling horns (III/254) – the personal device of the Usurper (III/71). The city was kept under the heel of his loyal troops (III/96), who numbered 5000 men and orcs (III/208).

The Usurper<sup>69</sup> terrorised the people, killing all who opposed him and grinding the spirit of the peasants underfoot. The farmers had their land taken away from them – they became bond-slaves, tied to the earth, forced to give half of everything they grew to feed the Usurper’s army of orcs and halvocs. To be married, couples had to gain a permit from the Usurper’s Lord Steward.<sup>70</sup> Crippling taxes were imposed on all save those who worshipped Nemesis (III/181). However, the Loremaster was survived by his only child, hidden on the Island of Tranquil Dreams (III/1). Eventually, Avenger overcame the Usurper and restored the family line (III/420, IV/0).

The Lord High Steward was a follower of Nemesis who administered the city at the whim of the dark Overlord (IV/41).<sup>71</sup> He ran the city after the death of Szeged and told Avenger that ‘...it suffered no attacks in that time’ (IV/31). He remained the high priest of Nemesis when Avenger regained the throne (IV/41), but was slain when the forces from the Rift overran Irmuncast just before the events of *Warbringer!* (V/21).

#### City gates

The Great South Gate is a triumphal arch, topped by squat towers with a raised portcullis at front and back. The inscription on the arch reads: *In memory of the great victories won by the people of Irmuncast against the Dark Forces from the Edge*. The gate-guards are watchful, and when Avenger first entered the city the guards numbered ten halvocs under the command of a priest of Nemesis (III/236). As well as the spawn of the Rift, the cities of the western Manmarch are also enemies of Irmuncast (IV/211, IV/221). A plan of the city is illustrated as part of III/161, showing the city gate & walls, the major temples, the Barracks and the Palace. The view of the city rooftops from the palace walls is shown opposite IV/420. Views from the streets are shown opposite V/73, V/87 & V/252, where orcs and others are looting and burning.

#### City streets

The city gates are shown in the background of the illustration opposite V/369. The street from the gate runs fifty yards before entering a large green, rutted with the trail of wheels (III/244).<sup>72</sup>

Two large streets run on from the Green – one north (Palace Road) towards some imposing and grandiose buildings and one (the Edgeway) east towards a park (III/161). The Edgeway leads past the houses of well-to-do people towards a park surrounded by railings and two huge iron gates. Here, traitors to the Usurper were whipped and broken on a wheel – left to hang in full view of the citizenry, food for the crows. A monk of Kwon and a shieldmaiden who have suffered this fate are shown opposite III/269. In the

park at night the glow of many torches lights up a cloistered monastery adjoining the great church to Kwon the Redeemer (III/269).

The east side of the city, the poorest, is named the *Edgeside*. The city wall there is taller than at any other point because it faces the Rift – from which nameless evil issues forth to pollute the world (IV/0, IV/55). Palace Walk, a wide avenue of lime trees,<sup>73</sup> leads past the houses of the wealthy to a grand crossroads with Cross Street, lined with three temples (III/109, IV/0, IV/420), with the Palace Crier’s podium at the centre (IV/55, IV/283, IV/343). A windmill tower overlooks the city on Seven Post Road (V/73). The *Halls of Justice*, where legal proceedings are held, is on Shieldbearer’s Row (IV/371). There is a street called Pudding Lane (IV/213).<sup>74</sup>

#### Temples

The brooding black pinnacles of the temple to Nemesis, the Supreme Principle of Evil, seem to claw rapaciously at the sky. It is a great church, too tall for its width, with great archways rising to a cloister 40 feet above the street, and four towers shaped like flames (III/109). During the rule of the Usurper, the temple was gilded with gold leaf (IV/395). A cartoonish illustration of the temple can be seen on the city map (III/161). Three in ten of all the inhabitants of Irmuncast worship Nemesis (IV/31)

Also on Cross Street (and equally imposing) is a very large church of grey stone with a central pyramid looking as much like a square-towered fort as a place of worship – the great fortress-temple to Dama (III/109), Shieldmaiden of the Gods, known as the *Pyramid Temple* (IV/25). This temple is also simply illustrated on the map (III/161). Under Loremaster Szeged, the 2000 (IV/225) warrior-women who guard it were the city watch and gate-sentries – they kept law and order. They were valiant fighters but were outnumbered by the Usurper’s army (III/172). Their temple flies a flag showing a warrior-woman holding a sword aloft with a lozenge shape shield resting on the ground before her (III/109). The symbol of Dama is a diamond, often used as a shield blazon. The majority of the followers of Dama are women, but they include a sizeable number of men. Their head is Force-Lady Gwyneth, High Priestess of the temple (IV/41).<sup>75</sup>

Smaller than the other temples, and opposite the black pinnacles, is a small white-stone chapel in the shape of a cross with a steeple and spire topped by the cross of Avatar, Supreme Principle of Good (III/109). When Avenger overthrew the Usurper, a great white torch flared atop the spire’s cross to honour the occasion (IV/0). The high priest of the temple to Avatar is called Greystaff (IV/23).<sup>76</sup>

To the south is a park where lies the temple to Kwon the Redeemer. The cloistered temple with its gabled towers is shown on the plan of Irmuncast (III/161). The grandmaster of the temple is called Parsifal (IV/19).<sup>77</sup> Further inside the temple is the *Inner Sanctum*, a bare room with rush matting and the *Song of Kwon* inlaid in silver on the walls. Here Parsifal hears confession (IV/139). Avenger noted that martial arts tradition of this temple fell far short of the monks on the Island of Tranquil Dreams (IV/75).

A wide, tree-lined (III/161) road called the Avenue of Seasons leads towards the temple to Time, which consists of a single silver dome rising like a flower bulb into a tall spire which acts as a sundial on the wide square to the south of the temple (III/394) known as either the *Square of Seasons* or the *Plaza of the Infinite Instant* (V/187).<sup>78</sup> A representation of the temple is shown on the city map (III/161), but a more detailed drawing can be seen opposite III/394.<sup>79</sup> The square in front is visible and the sundial markings can be made out. The Square of Seasons is joined to the Avenue of Seasons, which connects to Palace Row (V/33) and the corner of Belfry Street (V/25). Solstice, the high priest of the temple has the power to control the flow of time (IV/411, V/153).<sup>80</sup> His priests wear grey robes and white

<sup>73</sup> The closing paragraph of *Overlord!* has these trees hacked down by the forces of the Rift (IV/420).

<sup>74</sup> During the course of *Overlord!* a fire breaks out here, a reference to the traditional origin of Great Fire of London.

<sup>75</sup> Lady Gwyneth is a tall, graceful woman with a determined look in her eyes – her hands calloused from regular swordplay, and short, spiky, iron-grey hair – she has a powerful presence (IV/71). Force-Lady Gwyneth is illustrated opposite III/100 on horseback in front of her shieldmaidens, and opposite IV/211 standing in the throne room of Irmuncast. She is also shown opposite VI/71 standing before Cassandra, a reverencer of Anarchil.

<sup>76</sup> He has a kindly, though solemn, face and is thin and a little pallid for want of the sun. There is an aura of saintliness about him. He wears a white skull-cap and voluminous white robes, which is likely to be the usual attire of a priest of Avatar (IV/23).

<sup>77</sup> He stoops slightly with age – his watery eyes may still burn with the light of wisdom but he has lost the strength of his body (III/181). When Avenger visits, Parsifal leads the worship of the congregation at evensong with a chant or song called the *Catechism of the Redeemer* (IV/139). During the events of *Overlord!* Parsifal was slain by Mandrake, Guildmaster of Assassins, and later replaced by Hengist, a younger man and a dangerous martial artist (V/21).

<sup>78</sup> The symbols of a budding shoot, an open flower, a yellow leaf and a pile of dust dominate the temple front. Above the gate are the words: *Time, the Snowfather – Eldest Father – Youngest Son – From Whose Touch None Are Immune – Without Whom We Would Neither Be Nor Die*. Inside is a sunny conservatory. A grey statue of an aged but wise man with his hands on the shoulders of a very young but precocious-looking boy occupies the bright room (III/394).

<sup>79</sup> Strangely, a range of mountains can be seen behind the temple – this is probably the artist’s mistake.

<sup>80</sup> He is a tall and gaunt man in a grey and white robe with a broad white belt. His noble face is lined with age, but the wisdom that wells within his misty eyes is the wisdom of centuries

<sup>69</sup> Also known as the *Tyrant* (III/238).

<sup>70</sup> Worshippers of Avatar and Kwon were often refused and could not bear legitimate children, preventing their inheritance (III/181).

<sup>71</sup> His face is pale and drawn with a long, thin nose and a little grey goatee that emphasises the length and point of his chin. He moves like a great black-hawk, his silver and sable cloak topped by curving wings of black velvet at the shoulders (IV/31). As a priest of Nemesis, he knows of a unique spell, the *Cleansing Fire* which casts a wave of silver flame (IV/121). The Lord High Steward is illustrated opposite that reference, wearing his sable cloak with the velvet wings and a close-fitting black cap. He is casting the spell of the *Cleansing Fire*.

<sup>72</sup> Known as the *Green* (III/161). Traders’ caravans ply their wares on market days from ox-drawn wagons and one corner of the Green is occupied with the gaudily coloured pavilions of the city merchants and their agents. One or two smaller tents bore the names of clairvoyants and soothsayers who will provide a reading of the future if one ‘...crosses their palm with gold’ (III/244, III/286).

belts (III/394).<sup>81</sup> Of all the temples, that to Time is not subject to a temple tax and its priests and their followers enjoy special privileges.<sup>82</sup> The Usurper did not see the priests as a threat, even though they were not allied to him (III/172). The priests don't really care who rules the city as long as they're left alone to '...pursue their strange devotions'. When the Loremaster was killed, they did nothing to help, despite their power (III/263).

#### The Palace

The street north from the Green is called Palace Row (V/3) and leads past shops and stalls. At its end was the Usurper's palace – a small building set in a high-walled garden with regimented flowerbeds. The pointed towers at either end flew two flags – one was his personal device, the other was the black whirlpool of Nemesis. It was guarded by men, orcs and wardogs (III/254). The Donjon is a windowless tower at the north eastern corner of the palace where dissenters are imprisoned (VI/175). The palace roof is protected by a set of battlements (IV/420). In the easternmost tower of the palace, a winding stair ends at the tower roof. The Usurper's flag flew above the battlements – the stag with spiralling horns and a barbed tail (III/189). The palace treasury contains an enchanted ebony rod topped with a cone of alabaster, the *Torch of Lumen*. When touched, it gives off a constant light (VI/105, VI/393). An illusion disguises it as an ordinary light source, such as a brazier or a lantern (VI/359). In *Warbringer!* we learn that the Palace Library contains a book called the *Tome of Maledictions* (V/375).<sup>83</sup>

The magnificent royal bedroom is decorated with paintings of souls in torment. The bed is decked with sable furs and satin sheets (IV/1). The Usurper had palace handmaidens, chosen for their beauty, who tended the bedchamber (IV/11).<sup>84</sup> There is also a large banquet hall in the Palace (IV/65).

A hidden passage leads below the Palace to the Throne Room of the Palace from the ornately-carved tomb of Lord Kalmon in the cemetery (III/7, III/9, V/267). We learn in *Usurper!* that a host of awful horrors lurk in these dungeons.<sup>85</sup>

The Throne Room was decorated with the insignia of the Usurper, but beyond it could still be seen the hippogriff and chequerboard coat of arms of the Loremaster and a statue of Dama (III/363) – the throne with the coat of arms is visible on the cover of *Usurper!* At the base of the throne can be seen mounds of skulls, human and otherwise. Here the Usurper sat in judgement on wrongly-accused innocents (III/9).<sup>86</sup> The throne room can also be seen in the background of the illustration opposite V/81. The Usurper was not a man, but Astaroth, seventh Duke of Hell (III/329).<sup>87</sup>

#### The Overlord

The Loremaster ruled with the assistance of four appointed advisors, who sat in the *Privy Council* of the *Star Chamber* (IV/11). The Star Chamber is a large, oval room, the ceiling of which is decorated with five-pointed stars in gold leaf. A large marble table separates a small throne on one side from four tall, straight-backed chairs where the chosen Privy Councillors sat (IV/203). The (fairly nondescript) doors to the Star Chamber are shown

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(IV/103). His back is bowed, his face furrowed with lines, but his voice is soft and sweet, that of a young boy (IV/255). Solstice is illustrated opposite IV/411 in the throne room of the Royal Palace. Some courtiers are visible in the background.

<sup>81</sup> When Avenger visits, they are gathered in a group of three, each resembling the old man of the statue in the conservatory (III/394). They were old, '...even by the reckoning of the very old (and) steeped in the thaumaturgical arts.' They could stop time and made it seem to Avenger as if '...hours have passed in the space of an instant'. They referred to non-priests as 'young ones' (III/386).

<sup>82</sup> There are more temples to the Snowfather than any other. Good and evil mean nothing to Time. In *Usurper!* we learn that '...it would take a year to explain the worship of Time' (III/172).

<sup>83</sup> It seems to be a codex listing or describing evil-doers.

<sup>84</sup> The handmaidens and the ornaments were retained for at least the early part of Avenger's reign as Overlord (IV/1, IV/11).

<sup>85</sup> When Avenger shifted down the wrought iron torch bracket that lit the epitaph of the long-dead lord, a doorway opened in the tomb (III/9). This revealed an ornately-carved portal leading below ground into a crypt. There was a single sarcophagus in the ancient chamber. A well-oiled, dust-free mechanism caused a wall to slide open. Beyond the secret door, a flight of rough steps led down to a cold, flag-stoned corridor. Murals on the walls showed scenes of battle between men and other creatures – orcs, dark elves, ogres and other hideous monsters. Some of the figures bore the coat of arms of the Loremaster (III/7). Guards down here included grossly-misshapen cave trolls with greyish-green skin, warty and mottled, huge beards matted with filth, wide, splayed nostrils and rotting teeth. They wore blackened and stained leathers emblazoned with the livery of the Usurper (III/28). An illustration of the trolls can be seen opposite III/28, showing some of the architecture of the crypts. The tomb of Lord Telmain III, a previous Overlord of Irmuncast, was also in the crypts and was protected by ethereal flames (III/315, III/417) but contained the enchanted golden circlet he wore (III/247). The final chamber before the Throne Room was the study or lair of an evil old one (III/207), illustrated opposite that reference, showing rows of books, an open journal with a quill pen in a pot of ink and a large parchment inscribed with mysterious sigils.

<sup>86</sup> He had the cold eyes and cruel-yet-handsome face of a tyrant and, when Avenger came here, was sat on a carved throne and dressed in cloth-of-gold which shimmered as he moved. He bore the golden rose-crown of the Overlords of Irmuncast on his brow and had no guards (III/363).

<sup>87</sup> His true form had red and bloated flesh with purplish-black blood, spikes growing out of his back, huge bat-like wings and terrible clawed fangs (III/329). His flesh burned red and his leathery wings exuded a nauseating stench (III/320). He is illustrated battling Avenger in the throne room of Irmuncast on the cover of *Usurper!* He is also shown opposite III/320 sitting on the throne of Irmuncast. These two pictures are dissimilar on a number of points, but I am inclined to think that the latter illustration is more reliable.

opposite IV/179. Although dismissed during the rule of the Usurper, the Council was restored under the rule of Avenger (IV/11). A clerk stood near the throne, clad in a green robe (IV/203). Councillors who wished to speak on a given issue placed their clenched fists on the table before them (IV/373, IV/233). When the Overlord attended the chamber, he or she wore a cloth-of-gold robe (IV/363).<sup>88</sup>

The rulers of Irmuncast had wielded two powerful artefacts, '...since the glorious days of Telmain I...' – the *Sceptre* and the *Orb*.<sup>89</sup> They were reft from the Loremaster Szeged and carried away to the Mountains of Undying Solitude (IV/119), before they were recovered from an island in the Elemental Sea by Avenger (IV/378). The rose crown of Irmuncast is another symbol of rulership (III/420).

#### Inns and taverns

The city's three largest inns are the *Cleansing Flame*, the *Hostel from the Edge* and the *River of Beasts* (III/161).

The *Cleansing Flame* is in a narrow thoroughfare called Iskra Street,<sup>90</sup> and the sign outside depicts a single violet flame. Up a set of wide stairs is a large club-room with a spinet<sup>91</sup> at one end. It could be used for dancing, but when Avenger comes here we find many soldiers, priests and priestesses lounging on divans, and *chaises longues*, drinking wine. The serving wenches are polite and wear dresses of black velvet and silver satin. As Avenger, a stranger, entered there was absolute silence and all heads turned to stare. Most patrons wear black, and without exception the priests and priestesses sport the whirlpool symbol (III/105).<sup>92</sup> There is a low chess table (III/19) at which customers can pit their wits. The inn is frequented solely by followers of Nemesis (III/238).

The *Hostel from the Edge* is located down dark side streets. The people of Irmuncast refer to the Rift as *The Edge* hence the name of the inn. Inside is a low, huge vault, capable of holding 200 souls. About half the customers are human. The others are orcs, halvorcs and the occasional wolven (dangerous man-beasts over seven feet tall). Peasant girls carry tankards to the customers, seated at low tables and benches (III/78, III/343, III/401). Most strangers to the city finish up here, so the tyrant's informers are always present (III/238). We discover that the clientele of the *Hostel* held private grudges against the Usurper, but did not voice them (III/33).

The *River of Beasts* inn is on a crooked line of flagstones called Izvestia Street.<sup>93</sup> The sign outside shows a sea serpent and grotesque snake-like horses and dogs frolicking in a frothing blue river. When Avenger visited, we found two armed guards and a number of small rooms each served by bars in which around 200 people are drinking and talking. The air was heavy with smoke and here the common people of Irmuncast seemed to enjoy themselves. They have a leader, the Demagogue. He's a fine mob-orator, but no one would fight for him. Despite this, just before Avenger arrived in the city there were riots in which the orcs had '...to kill many (citizens) to quell their revolutionary ardour' (III/62).<sup>94</sup> There is a great meeting hall behind the inn where the Demagogue speaks to the malcontents of the city (III/68). When Avenger and the Demagogue speak at one of these meetings, it is broken up by the Usurper's soldiers. There is a secret back entrance, along which the imperilled orators escape (III/41).

#### The army

The army barracks is a large building near the temple to Nemesis. The army numbers 4–5000 soldiers – at least 2000 men, 1000 orcs and 1000 nonetheless, crossbreed halvorcs. The different troops drill in separate parties until evening. The halvorcs show commendable discipline. The great bulk of the army is loyal to Nemesis, but is also loyal to their city. They helped in the past to protect the city against raids from the Rift (III/96, III/208, IV/205). The army of the Usurper was commanded by the *Strategos*, General Barkant, until his death during the events of *Overlord!* (IV/211). The orcs of the city came as slaves three centuries before our period, from the Purple

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<sup>88</sup> The official dress of the Overlord when he or she attends the Star Chamber (IV/363).

<sup>89</sup> The *sceptre* is made of gold, inlaid with many gems, with a finely-carved hippogriff embossed on the head. It has the power to inspire loyalty. The *orb* is a glowing green gem '...perhaps the size of an eye' (V/158, IV/378). At DM1/471, we read of *Ouroboros*, the cosmic dragon, whose eye is the *Orb of All-Seeing Wonder* – perhaps related in some way to the *Orb* of Irmuncast.

<sup>90</sup> *Iskra*, meaning *Spark*, was a newspaper published by émigré Russian socialists in the early years of the twentieth century – also see the note to the *River of Beasts*, below.

<sup>91</sup> A spinet is a kind of small harpsichord.

<sup>92</sup> Patrons encountered by Avenger included Radziwil and Elektra. Radziwil wore a doublet and hose – Elektra had plucked eyebrows and eye Kohl. She carried a black lace fan (III/19) and was a magic-user (III/84).

<sup>93</sup> *Izvestia*, meaning *News*, is the second street in Irmuncast to be named after a Russian newspaper, this time a popular daily that is still printed today.

<sup>94</sup> The Demagogue is a '...tall but emaciated man – his yellow robe flaps around legs no thicker than a sparrow's. His face is all nose – his lips narrow and twisted, but his eyes burn with a manic intensity' (III/68). The Demagogue is pictured opposite III/59 delivering a speech to the mob of Irmuncast. He wears a pendant chain around his neck. He is shown opposite IV/331 in the throes of another oratory. Yellow, the colour of the Demagogue's robe, is also the colour of the priests of Béatan – perhaps he is affiliated with that cult (they do seem to share some common goals).



Mountains:<sup>95</sup> they and their families were given citizenship a century later (IV/21, IV/255).

#### The merchants

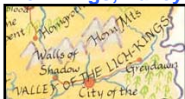
The spokesman of the merchants' guild is Golspiel of the Silver Tongue. Golspiel's spice emporium is a purple pavilion on Low End Road near the Green, furnished with exotica from far-away lands.<sup>96</sup> He is one of the richest men alive – baubles in his mansion house include a stuffed manticore, the *jewels of Pandar* and the *Tulemite vases*.<sup>97</sup> The merchants know a great deal about the underworld and the power struggles in the city. They have large numbers of well-paid mercenaries at their beck and call and could afford to pay the Usurper's taxes. All who wish to do business in the city must buy a license from the Guildmaster of Merchants (III/172, III/184, IV/155, IV/405). Antocidas the One-eyed commands the mercenary regiment – their symbol is a golden sword and a bulging money-bag (V/37) and they wear purple livery (III/184).<sup>98</sup>

#### Order of the Yellow Lotus

These were the secret informers of the Usurper, one of his instruments of subjugation. When Avenger came here, many believed the Order to be nothing more than a '...pestilential crew of guttersnipes, given dangerous powers under the rule of the Usurper' (IV/237). However, when Avenger regained the throne the Order was not disbanded and the Yellow Lotus remained a power within the city (IV/73, IV/247, IV/263) until the forces of the Rift attacked before the start of *Warbringer!* when the order was scattered.

Members of the Order wore a yellow mark near their elbow. They gathered at two large inns – the *Cleansing Flame*, exclusively frequented by followers of Nemesis, and the *Hostel from the Edge*, where newcomers to the city often end up (III/238). The head of the Order is the shrewd and captivating Foxglove (V/21), a beautiful courtesan and enchantress (VI/1, VI/15) as well as a priestess of Nemesis (IV/41).<sup>99</sup> Another member that we encounter was named Radziwil (V/25).

#### Lich Kings, Valley of the



Two immortal beings rule over the Valley. Each keeps his own court – the Fleshless King in the City of the Runes of Doom and Ganarre in the Walls of Shadow (III/368).

#### City of the Runes of Doom



This city lies on the River Greybones and its tyrannical ruler for more than a millennium has been the Fleshless King, a necromancer who discovered the secret of half-life after death, kept alive only by the power of his arcane magics and horrific sacrifices to his god, Death. The people of the city are fed by slaves, forced to till the fields by cruel orcish overseers and the walls of the great cathedral to Death are dyed the purple of putrefying flesh (III/154, III/368). On the altar table to Death in the cathedral are conducted the awful rites that maintain the Fleshless King's half-life (III/185). The *Sylph* is imprisoned in the great keystone above the west gate to the city.<sup>100</sup> Her doleful cry is a signal that that the eldritch brother of the Fleshless King, Ganarre, leads the Spectral Company forth through the night (III/115, III/106).<sup>101</sup>

#### City of the Walls of Shadow



This city is at the end of a small river and is surrounded by an anvil shaped pall of black cloud.<sup>102</sup> It is ruled by Ganarre, brother of the Fleshless King.

<sup>95</sup> This range of mountains is obscure. They may be those north of the Rift or possibly an alternate name of the Mountains of Horn (see their description at TD/326).

<sup>96</sup> He is illustrated inside his pavilion opposite III/184. He rests on a huge cushion and there is a pair of vases behind him (perhaps these are the noted *Tulemite vases*?). His eyes are '...like small, shining currants in a face that shudders in time with his footfalls. His fat jowls hang down like dewlaps and his hands are like bunches of pork sausages' (IV/251). There is a full length view of him opposite IV/193.

<sup>97</sup> We don't have any more information about the jewels or the vases. Perhaps Tulem and/or Pandar are place-names that are not marked on the available maps?

<sup>98</sup> Antocidas himself is a capable and veteran general. He is six-and-a-half feet tall, and seems almost as broad. His dark craggy face is disfigured by a purple scar running from his receding hairline to his ear. He sports a gold eye-patch and wears scratched and supple *cuirbouilly* armour, the mark of his trade. He carries a bastard sword (III/130, III/138, IV/105, IV/358). He is pictured opposite IV/358 kneeling in the banqueting hall of the Palace.

<sup>99</sup> She is a striking and impressive figure, unusually beautiful. She is rarely seen without rouge, eye-paints and other make-up, but her look betokens a swift intelligence (IV/73). Foxglove has no peer when it comes to finding out what is going on amongst the dregs of society (IV/227). She is illustrated opposite IV/75 dressed in her court finery and opposite IV/247 simply-attired in a straw hat and a woollen cloak. A dishevelled and tearful Foxglove is shown opposite VI/245, and there is yet another picture opposite VI/305.

<sup>100</sup> Nowhere is the nature of the Sylph described. I assume she is some kind of good-aligned spirit, held captive by the Fleshless King.

<sup>101</sup> It is hard to believe, but it is claimed there are priests of Avatar in the city, with sufficient power to defy (in a small way) the will of the Fleshless King (DM2/469). This claim is indirectly substantiated by a comment made by Glaivas at III/414.

<sup>102</sup> The city walls always shed an unnatural darkness beneath them, no matter how bright the sun. At DM3/91 they are used as an example of a wall of proverbial height.

It is one of the few cities where the last chapel of Good has been driven forth. Only those who are steeped in evil live here. There is a high palisade of poisonous thorns surrounding the city (III/404, III/414). It is twenty miles in circumference with guard-huts around the perimeter. Within and around the circle of thorns are seas of rippling corn, tilled by slaves chained together and driven on by cruel orcish and halvorcish overseers.<sup>103</sup> Inside the thorns huge (II/342) blackhawks<sup>104</sup> are used to spy on intruders (III/264). In one part of the palisade Avenger finds a concealed gateway (III/69).

#### The Slave Fields

The lands between the Walls of Shadow and the City of the Runes of Doom are dotted with forbidding castles around a flat plain known as the *Slave Fields*. The slaves are kept staked out under canvas awnings near the fields they harvest. Each group has orcish guards – this race was chosen for they have never shown any compassion towards humans. Vampire bats flit past at night (III/69). There is a bowl of hills in the Fields with a well at the centre. A shrine was built below it millennia ago. The Spectral Company seem to draw magical power from the shrine by standing atop the hills that surround it (III/110, III/125).

#### Spectral Company

A band of ten (III/215, III/299) spectral knights in the service of the Fleshless King. Each of them was 'once a baron of Greydawn. In the centuries past they led an invasion into the Valley of the Lich Kings, then known as the *Valley of Grain*. In those days the Fleshless King was newly returned from the dead and more active. He rode at the head of his troops. His magic cast down the generals and he took them as servants, bringing their tormented bodies back to life as spectres that can drain a man's life from him with a single touch' (III/83, III/91). Four of the Spectral Company are illustrated opposite III/284, riding over grasslands.<sup>105</sup> One member of the Company is shown opposite TD/287.<sup>106</sup> Ganarre leads the ten Spectral Knights. His body '...retained its cloak of flesh, but part of his brain festered many years ago' (III/83). There is a set of white boundary stones near Greydawn topped with black pitch which Avenger finds that the Spectral Company are unable to pass (III/299).<sup>107</sup>

#### Talisman of Death

'Long ago, the minions of the god Death in the City of the Runes of Doom fashioned a Talisman that would allow them, if the time was right, to summon their god to the surface of Orb. If Death was summoned, his presence would spread like a grey shadow across the world of Orb and all life would cease – only his followers would exist in an awful half-life.' The Fleshless King sent the Talisman to the depths of the Rift for safekeeping (TD/100). The Talisman is virtually indestructible by normal means (TD/388) and can be used to command the undead servants of Death (TD/46, TD/336). A glowing inscription appears on the Talisman as '...the nearness of the minions of Death lend it power', which reads '*I am Death's Talisman. I am protected by the Faceless Ones who serve my wielder.*' The Faceless Ones (also known as the *Instruments of Death*, TD/138) are a coven of ten (III/268, III/299) mounted wraiths – for more details, see above. The Talisman is illustrated immediately after TD/100 and also opposite TD/78 in the hands of Hawkana, High Priestess of Fell-Kyrinla in Greyguilds.<sup>108</sup> Examples of the wraiths are shown opposite TD/287 and on the cover of *Talisman of Death*.<sup>109</sup> In that book, the hero took the Talisman away from Orb into another plane of existence.<sup>110</sup>

#### Mayhem



A town in the Desolation of the Serpent, between Tor and Doomover, in the southern Manmarch (I/map). At DM1/413 we read of Lord Javhah, Duke of Mayhem.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>103</sup> There is wall of thorns illustrated opposite III/82, almost certainly that of the Walls of Shadow. Standing amid the corn is a number of overseers, who don't look like orcs or halvorcs. They are wearing helmets, with a spiral pattern on the front.

<sup>104</sup> Colossal birds with a 14-foot wingspan (III/342).

<sup>105</sup> Their '...countenances are cruel and they...look upon (living things) with contempt. (T)heir clothes (were) once gaudy martial finery (but) are now no more than a ghostly shimmering (around their transparent forms)' (III/284). Their chill touch is death: victims become shadows in the service of the spirit knights (III/83, III/110, III/224). The obvious inspiration here is Tolkien's *Nazgûl*.

<sup>106</sup> We should note that the picture of the rider shown on both covers of *Talisman of Death* does not agree with those referenced here.

<sup>107</sup> Most likely a protective warding surrounding Greydawn. In *Talisman of Death*, the Company are able to travel as far north as Greyguilds, so the wards probably do not encompass the whole Valley. (Although they may form a continuous barrier – it could be that the wraiths' power to force across them had waxed in the presence of the *Talisman*.)

<sup>108</sup> The Loremasters of Serakub sent Crusaders into the Rift, charged to seize the *Talisman of Death*. They gained the *Talisman* but were overwhelmed by the spawn of the Rift, leaving the hero of the eponymous book to continue the quest (TD/100).

<sup>109</sup> Both the original Puffin and new Wizard versions of the cover.

<sup>110</sup> Which TD/6 and TD/400 make clear is our own Earth.

<sup>111</sup> The evil druid, Ilexmanan, waged war against him. Although Ilexmanan appears to have lived and died in the Rainbow Land (in the Desolation of Ilexmanan the Aggrieved) perhaps we there is a connection with the Desert of the Aggrieved, south-west of Tor. This leads me to speculate that some areas of the Rainbow Land may have a partial existence on Orb as well.



## Mortavalon



The *Death City* (I/6) in the centre of the Manmarch, a place where many trade routes converge (DM4/0). Mortavalon nestles in a bowl of green pastures and cornfields (I/283).<sup>112</sup>

The entrance to the city is through a large triumphal arch in the grey walls dedicated to a victory won by the Empire Hunters, who follow the god Moraine, against the soldiers of Fate. At some time in the last 2000 years, however, the followers of Fate smashed the power of the men of Moraine (DM4/0).

The priesthood of Death here are strong (DM4/0) – the largest temple in Mortavalon is dedicated to Death (I/283), indeed the army of Mortavalon is known as the *Forces of Death* (V/121). A cavalry regiment in the army of Mortavalon is called the *Wings of Death*.<sup>113</sup> Elsewhere, Mortavalon is described as '...one of the cities of Death' (DM4/0).<sup>114</sup> The priests do not interfere in daily life as long as the odd disappearance is ignored – they practise child-sacrifice (I/283). The high priest of Death is named Kashu, the most powerful man in Mortavalon (DM4/0, DM4/150).<sup>115</sup>

The streets of Mortavalon are quiet ('...the dead city'), but there is a rose garden and trees where a small monastery is dedicated to Kwon (I/169, III/348). The local grandmaster is named Bartok (I/221).

Merchant caravans often tarry outside the walls for here the greatest spectacle on Orb takes place – the battle for survival in the Arena (DM4/0). The Arena is a grand white building, cool and marble-floored, run by warriors dressed in blue-and-gold togas (I/290).<sup>116</sup> There are arena games on holidays, with the chance of a fabulous fortune to the victor (I/283). Criminals are often sentenced to the Arena (I/372). Winners are showered with rose-blooms (I/272).<sup>117</sup>

The original Arena was built by the followers of Moraine 2000 years before the events of DM4. When they were defeated by the followers of Fate, the temple to Death took over the running of the Arena. It suited their purposes, for beside ritual sacrifice, Death enjoyed the rites of trial by combat and violent ends of all kinds. The temple grew in popularity as people flocked to the Arena, which boasted some of the most horrible denizens of Orb tearing men limb from limb on the sand or lurking in the murky pits beneath. Keepers of the Arena scoured the Wilderness at the edge of the Manmarch for powerful and malevolent beasts to which they throw innocent<sup>118</sup> victims for the pleasure of the crowd. As time went by, tier upon tier of seats were added, and ever-more bloody combats enacted to sate the bloodlust of the people.<sup>119</sup> The Arena itself seats 100 000 people<sup>120</sup> in its marble tiers and is divided into four quarters by fifteen foot stone walls. At its centre is a

<sup>112</sup> Some miscellaneous facts about Mortavalon: there is an upper class of independent nobility in the city – we learn in *Arena of Death* that one Calcor is a '...dissolute nobleman' of Mortavalon (DM4/0) and at I/272 an aristocrat's butler offers Avenger a job as a bodyguard. The dwarf, Arakad the smith, makes his business forging weapons for the soldiers of Mortavalon, but also has a licence to sell to Arena contestants (DM4/9). An adventurer found a secret way into the city via a cave in the hills that encircle it (I/6). The cave has steps leading into the darkness. A snare has since been set to capture any intruders including a water trap and a falling iron portcullis. Captives are sent into the arena (I/275). There is a zoo in the city (I/227). The hills around Mortavalon are low and covered with cypress trees (I/235). Avenger's journey here by road from Doomover took until dusk on the second day (I/212).

<sup>113</sup> It may be composed entirely of worshippers of Death (V/210). A captain of this regiment is illustrated opposite that reference. He wears a long cloak and his horse has a head-mask. He has a skull symbol on his helmet and breastplate.

<sup>114</sup> This implies the existence of other 'cities of Death', but we do not learn what they are. I suspect the list would include the City of the Runes of Doom, the Walls of Shadow, perhaps Greygilds and probably Sacerdote in the Ten Kingdoms.

<sup>115</sup> Kashu is the most powerful man in Mortavalon. He is gaunt and sits on a throne of bones wearing sickly yellow robes. He paints his face to resemble a skull (DM4/150). He is illustrated on the cover of DM2[2] sitting in the royal box of the Arena of Death, dressed in his yellow robes.

<sup>116</sup> These are the colours of the worshippers of Moraine – perhaps they still have a role to play in the administration of the Arena.

<sup>117</sup> The covers of both volumes of *Arena of Death* join together to form a large colour illustration of the Arena. We can see the sandy floor and the marble tiers, crowded with spectators. The outer walls of the Arena fly yellow flags at regular intervals. On the arena floor there is a large, free-standing arch topped by grotesque statuary. Kashu sits in the royal box opposite under a yellow canopy, attended by a guard in red and white wearing a bronze helmet.

<sup>118</sup> ...and not so innocent...

<sup>119</sup> At the start of DM4 the Arena of Death at Mortavalon had no peer. The high priest of Death continued the tradition of the games in his honorary role as Master of the Games. The underworld below the Arena had recently been extended at his request, and on the last day of each month two seasoned gladiators battled to the death, stalking each other in the crypts, '...watched by the crowd every step by sweat-soaked step'. The winner was rewarded richly, with wealth that only a lackwit could squander in a year. If the gladiator was a slave, the reward is richer still – freedom (DM4/0). When Avenger competed in the arena, one of the more unusual holiday games was played. The field was divided into four quarters: marsh, sand dunes, grasslands and ice. In the centre was a mock castle, housing the reigning champion, surrounded by a moat occupied by voracious *floating mouth* fish (possibly a species of piranha). Each quarter housed monsters: a bog octopus, a cobra man, a pair of lions and a snow-beast, respectively. Four combatants started out on platforms between each quarter (I/261). Part of the arena is illustrated opposite I/172, here a dark elf battles the octopus in the marsh quarter. A plan of the arena is shown as part of I/261. The best illustration of the arena is opposite I/372. In the foreground is a magician – in the middle distance is the castle with a hobgoblin atop. In the distance can be seen the crowds. The snow-beast is shown opposite I/252.

<sup>120</sup> This seems to be a very high number: 100 000 is a quarter of the population of Doomover and five times the population of Irmuncast. It is comparable with only the very largest sports stadiums in the real world.

castellated tower and at the north side of the Arena is the Imperial Box, draped in black velvet, from where the Master of the Games watches and dispenses the justice of the crowd. A defeated gladiator must cast themselves on the mercy of the crowds and beg for their life. The people of Mortavalon are fickle at heart, and if a fighter has not provided good sport they will not show mercy – the spoiling of his or her body will be public and painful. If the fighter triumphs, the adulation will ring in their ears and they will join the great Champions of the Arena of Death (DM4/0).<sup>121</sup>

## Passing, Forests of



The tall trees of this wood are so close together that they block out almost all of the sun's rays. When Avenger travelled here it was difficult to tell the difference between day and night. It is said that those who enter here '...pass from this world into the twilight world of dreams and are never seen again.' In

the wood Avenger encountered apparitions of grey robed figures accompanied by strange owls.<sup>122</sup> Eventually the trees thin out at a beautiful, green river, the Greybones, which winds from the forests down to the fabled city of Greydawn (V/255).

These country to the east of the Forests, and south of the Mountains of Horn is known as the *Lands of Beasts*. They are separated from the Manmarch by the *Barren Lands* and the River of Beasts (IV/177, V/265, V/395, VI/51).<sup>123</sup> In *Warbringer!* we learn that, although men live here, their rule is disputed by the *Beastlings*, a race of animal men (V/265).

## Rift, The



This is the most dangerous region in all the Manmarch, where much of the evil that affects the world boils forth from lightless pits near the centre of the world (III/97). The chasm itself is like an immense gorge surrounded by a honeycomb of natural tunnels and carved halls which stretch to the very centre of Orb (VI/125).

The Rift has been a cauldron of evil since time immemorial. All manner of wicked and unnatural creatures spawn there, giving rise to an endless stream of evil pouring from the dark chasm across the land of men. Dark elves, sisters of Nullaq, orcs, old ones, sons of Nil, plague trolls – these are but a few of the denizens lurking in the unending darkness. In *Inferno!* we are told that a man could walk here for a lifetime and still not trace every catacomb and vault (VI/125, VI/145). *The Abyss* (III/155) is probably an alternate name for the Rift. The inhabitants of the Rift refer to men and others as *Sunlanders* (VI/250, VI/410).

## The Chasm

At the edge of the great chasm is a fissured bleakness of baked mud and dark rock (III/350).<sup>124</sup> The earth is blackened and cracked, full of pits and fissures where noisome fumes rise from the depths of the chasm – stale, hot air, rank with the smell of sulphur and ammonia, seeps out of the great fissures that split the barren landscape. There are no wild animals here at the edge of the Bowels of Orb, only dust. The eastern wall towers a full kilometre above the western wall (TD/185, III/352, VI/95). In the chasm itself, great winged monsters wheel lazily through the twilight air like dark shadows (VI/79).<sup>125</sup> The view from the lip of the chasm is illustrated opposite VI/95, showing one of the twisting stairs that lead over the edge.

## First Tier

There are many twisting stairways and tracks leading down the side of the canyon wall and there is even a road, wide enough for carts and siege machines, winding snake-like into the depths of the earth. The road passes through many guard-posts (VI/95). The stair taken by Avenger is mostly crumbling and unrepaired – the steps are half-eroded in places. After half-an-hour it reached a gallery of caves served by many tunnels and paths cut into the side of the canyon wall. This is the first tier, '...a twilight world of darkness' (VI/415). Avenger followed the winding road gradually downhill, criss-crossing the canyon face in kilometre-wide zigzags. Every now and then it burrowed into the rock, cutting through a spur that made a natural archway of stone above the road. At the first arch there were the signs of a deserted sentry-post (VI/7). Beneath the next archway, Avenger

<sup>121</sup> The Champions of the Arena to Death include such men and women as Castaryos the Torean, who retired unbeaten after nine combats only to be kicked to death while breaking in a wild stallion; Adjanaa the Amazon, killer of Kashu's champion and victor five times, until forced to fight her lover (who slew her); and Ringold Redmane, who now owns a stable of slave gladiators trained in his own particular style (DM4/0). Locris was another legendary hero and five times champion in the Arena. His shortsword was sheathed in a scabbard encrusted with jewels. The hilt was adorned with a large ruby and it radiated an aura of red light (DM4/28).

<sup>122</sup> These were most probably druids.

<sup>123</sup> The River of Beasts is probably the one marked on I/map between Irmuncast and the Rift – it is described (IV/109) as visible from the turrets of that city.

<sup>124</sup> The chasm has no bottom – or if it does it is lost in darkness, kilometres below (VI/95).

<sup>125</sup> These are demiveults (VI/279) that prey on road passengers, attacking without warning (VI/79). Demiveults are one of the forms taken by the semi-legendary Firedrakes – the dark elves stole and hatched their eggs. They hunt in the abysmal darkness by scent alone (VI/279).

encountered dwarf-trolls guarding the road, tethered by their necks, like dogs chained to their guard posts (VI/287, VI/367).<sup>126</sup> Further down the road a great fortress of stone blocked the way, perched on a buttress of rock. This is the gatecastle of the first tier and the road runs through the middle of it (VI/237 – it is also illustrated opposite that reference).<sup>127</sup> Also encountered by Avenger on the road were motley groups of creatures, engaged in the task of repairing the surface (VI/237). Just before the gatecastle, a tunnel in the rock twists and turns down to the chamber with the fresco just before the second tier (see below; VI/217, VI/417).

The gallery of caves on the first tier is enormous – there are storerooms (mostly plundered) and a forge and armoury, both deserted, but further down Avenger found signs of life – a certain amount of growling and wailing and much low chatter in guttural, complaining voices. This area is a slum, where the refuse, the helpless or foolishly scrupulous inhabitants of the Rift are forced to eke out their days.<sup>128</sup> Tunnels descend from here to the next tier, away from the chasm edge (VI/27). Avenger found that the tunnels converge on a cavern with a chilling black fresco of a great web with a black widow spider, identifiable by the scarlet hourglass shape on her back, testing all the lines from the web with her legs (VI/417).<sup>129</sup>

#### Second Tier

The tunnels wind down steadily into the depths of Orb. Soon they reach the more populous second tier. Here, complete villages and towns exist, trading with one another, mining and raiding for slaves and booty (VI/9). Countless tunnels diverge in all directions at this level (VI/39). The tunnels and caverns of the second tier are '...as lively as the streets of a market town, but the darkness discourages conversation.' The people of the second tier, low in the hierarchy of power, are too busy conserving enough energy to keep alive to indulge in frivolity. Also on this level live the *shamblers* in holes in the rock (VI/419).<sup>130</sup> Additionally, we learn that there are prison caves on the second tier (VI/290). From the second tier, Avenger found two routes – a small tunnel, branching away into the rock away from the cavern and a wider tunnel with rusty rail tracks at one side of it leading gently downwards and ahead (VI/289, VI/319, VI/402).

The small tunnel ended abruptly in a steep stone stairway shelving deeply down. After a long climb it reached the edge of an immense chamber – the *Sacred Vault* of Nullaq (VI/232, VI/312, VI/409). The Vault is huge – echoes return from the faraway walls way out of torchlight-range.<sup>131</sup> The chamber is like a huge underground temple with mock pillars that no longer quite reach the ceiling and that cast shadows at irregular intervals. There is a gallery leading to some stairs.<sup>132</sup> To the right is another tunnel (VI/172).<sup>133</sup>

The wider tunnel with the rails curved gently for about half a kilometre – these tunnels were fairly deserted (VI/210), but there was a maze of side passages (VI/250). Avenger encountered orcs rolling wagons down the rails – one such was the personal conveyance<sup>134</sup> of Lord Sile of the second tier (VI/62), an orclish chieftain.<sup>135</sup> Eventually, the tunnels twisted circuitously down to the third tier (VI/372).

#### Third Tier

Past the tunnels was a seemingly never-ending stair with a number of stone landings (VI/52). The third tier is filled with the smoke of burning braziers that catches in the lungs until one can become accustomed to it. There is a constant hum in the background – the everyday noise of the denizens of the third tier going about a multiplicity of mundane tasks. The sounds of their voices and the scuffing of their shoes blend with many thousands of other

noises into a monotonous low drone (VI/208). On the third tier Avenger reached a dark cavern with fluted arches meeting at points in the ceiling. Hanging from each of the points was a skeleton (VI/368).<sup>136</sup> This chamber is illustrated opposite VI/268.

The railroad from the second tier leads to a balcony above a great open underground plaza with rows of *guruka* trees.<sup>137</sup> In contrast to the rest of the Rift, this area is brightly lit by furnaces and blazing fires. The plaza is busy – this is the main route from the third to the fourth tier – along the *Fire Giants' Stair*. There are no guards to be seen on the 35-foot wide stair, just a steady bustle of people coming and going. It glows redly, like a stairway to Hell, in the light of banks of fires on either side. Halfway down, are what looks like perfect waxwork models of fire giants, their dark, hirsute bodies glowing in the rufescent firelight, their unseeing eyes, like dark stones, gazing into empty space. They stand as still as statues and passers-by pay them little attention.

When it comes to passing the giants, the people of the Rift either hurry by or linger behind. The giants are blind, but they need no eyes to see for they have the *inner eye*. When their sixth sense warns them to anyone who should not be on the stair, they hurl huge flaming boulders before smashing intruders under their iron clubs.<sup>138</sup> In this way, subjects who have no business leaving the lower tiers are kept down, just as interlopers are kept out (VI/96, VI/196, VI/336, VI/376). They are illustrated opposite VI/196, standing halfway down the stairs.<sup>139</sup>

Elsewhere on the third tier Avenger came across a chamber with an etching on the floor, extending over most of the room. It had been plated with metal on to which a huge bloated spider-shape had been etched with acid. The spider had only four legs, one at each corner of its huge body, each of which pointed towards a tunnel exit (VI/350). The chamber is illustrated opposite that reference.<sup>140</sup>

Avenger found an alternative route to the fourth tier by watching the thieves of the twilight world.<sup>141</sup> There was a secret doorway in a rock face. The mechanism swung the rock aside to reveal the descent to the fourth tier (VI/176). It is a long way between the third and fourth tiers. There are few connecting tunnels and stairways – in the event of an assault on the Rift this area is easily defensible (VI/410).

#### Fourth Tier

The twisting thieves' tunnel soon branches into myriad other tunnels and caves (VI/296). The tunnels end at a great dimly lit hallway of dressed stone. A magnificent and sinister sight greeted Avenger – a huge archway away to the left, and beyond it a succession of carved thrones with statues of the former rulers of this part of the Bowels of Orb – the *Way of Thrones*. A second, right hand tunnel (next to the *Way*) was tall, but narrow, admitting only one abreast (VI/416).<sup>142</sup>

Avenger found the *Way of Thrones* trapped so as to be blocked off by great slabs of stone, rumbling down into position at either end, imprisoning victims forever (VI/256).<sup>143</sup> The *Way of Thrones* is probably that illustrated opposite VI/220, showing a row of dark elf statues and the narrow tunnel on the right hand side. Another view is available opposite VI/416.

The 'narrow way' continues in a straight line for many hundred of metres, without widening or offering any other openings. Towards its end it climbs slightly, and when Avenger reached halfway up the incline, the floor was set to tilt and pitch forward into a small well-lit room hung with lush tapestries (VI/224). The tapestry on one side of the hallway hid the true dimensions of the room – it was far larger.<sup>144</sup> In the hall was a large secret door (VI/34). The end of the hall slid back to reveal a bowl-shaped cavern running with fire – in the middle of the bowl was what looked like a gigantic statue of a snake's head, its mouth open, showing great curving fangs – the lair of the

<sup>126</sup> Fat, but powerful cross-breeds, with pug-like faces. They howled an alarm at the sight of Avenger, then hurled tomahawks and boulders (VI/287, VI/367). Dwarf-trolls are surprisingly skilled axe-fighters (VI/247) and are shown in the illustration opposite VI/187, chains on their legs and collars around their necks.

<sup>127</sup> There were guards in each of its towers, as well as on the battlements, wielding bows. The elves in the gatehouse rode forth to battle with Avenger on flightless, fire-breathing dragon-lizards (VI/259, VI/389).

<sup>128</sup> Here they are closer to the danger of Crusaders, who come to the Bowels of Orb to attempt to slay evil beings indiscriminately, or to the many renegade orclish tribes who do not obey the Black Widow (III/43, VI/27).

<sup>129</sup> At each extremity is a smaller version of her, crawling over some poor unfortunate – orc, dark elf or man – even an old one is shown trying in vain to free itself from a silken web. Another fresco shows a paladin in full armour, but without a helm. He is being assailed by small spiders which seem to be creeping into his ears, nose, and as he screams, his mouth (VI/417).

<sup>130</sup> These are shifty-looking but intelligent man-like beings with short arms and bandy legs, shaped like an orc, but fairer of face (VI/419). Their narrow tunnels in the walls are covered in dried ordure. They wear grime-ridden furs (VI/49).

<sup>131</sup> It appears to be magically trapped – when about halfway across, a ring of flames bursts up to surround Avenger (VI/172).

<sup>132</sup> When Avenger came here, this was heavily guarded by a score of orcs with crossbows (VI/172).

<sup>133</sup> Also guarded, this time by ogres wearing leather armour and wielding 15-ft pikes (VI/172), illustrated opposite that reference.

<sup>134</sup> This was a wooden chariot with rusty iron wheels, pulled by a team of orcs. Sile's driver was clad in an outlandish suit of spiked armour with a polished brass horn, which seemed to grow out of his forehead (VI/62).

<sup>135</sup> Of all the orcs in the Rift, he is the most brutishly strong and ugly looking. His torso is scored with ugly scars, the trophies of many battles (VI/152). Lord Sile is illustrated opposite VI/62, wearing a cloak and an ornate helmet. He is being pulled in his cart by two orcs. His driver is shown wearing the spiked armour and a horned helmet. Opposite VI/142 he is shown bare-chested, in preparation to wrestle with Avenger.

<sup>136</sup> A '...grim reminder of the fate that befalls many here in the eternal darkness.' (VI/368).

<sup>137</sup> A species of tree-like mushroom which flourishes in large spaces underground, nourished by the bacteria and guano of bats and other creatures, '...like great still beasts, contorted into grotesque shapes, entwining as if they had been writhing together when the sun suddenly went out and they were robbed of movement' (VII/116).

<sup>138</sup> Fire giants aren't the largest giant race, but are among the strongest. '(P)erfectly synchronised and on target, their weapons (strike) great chunks of rock from the stair' (VI/336).

<sup>139</sup> Even outsiders on the stair do not arouse suspicion from the inhabitants of the Rift, unless they should try to turn back before reaching the giants (VI/196, VI/376).

<sup>140</sup> The tunnels are trapped with suddenly-flaring walls of fire (VI/240). To the left of the illustration can be seen the silhouette of a sister of Nullaq.

<sup>141</sup> These are mainly orcs and elves. They have their own thieves' cant, unlike any other on Orb (VI/176).

<sup>142</sup> Referred to in the text as the *Narrow Way*, the title of a three-part song on Pink Floyd's 1969 album *Ummagumma*. Perhaps the authors were fans?

<sup>143</sup> In the early part of *Talisman of Death*, we encounter a huge vaulted chamber, deep underground, which may be part of the *Way of the Thrones*, as it has a similar trap mechanism. The room is '...lit by the ruddy glow of flaming torches fixed to pillars, soaring beyond sight. The walls are running with damp, the air musty and heavy with age. There are two archways at the back of the cavern (TD/1). The arches are trapped with smooth slabs of stone that crash down to block them off (TD/17, TD/21, TD/41).

<sup>144</sup> These contrivances were likely to have been a trap set for Avenger by Tyutchev, Cassandra and Thaum (VI/224).

Worldworm (VI/411).<sup>145</sup>

In *Inferno!* we learn of a legend stating that there is a colony of 'evil humans' based on the fourth tier (VI/232), but no further information on this is forthcoming.

#### Deeper levels

We don't have any information about the fifth through seventh tiers, but when Avenger plunges from the shattered innards of the worldworm, we learn a little of what lies beyond the seventh. The *Forbidden Sanctuary* – the Black Widow's web, reaches out from the hub there (VI/183). It is a cocoon of gossamer thread, smooth as silk, lit by a pale and sickly glow. The great heaving body of the *Black Widow* scuttles across her web on eight black, hairy legs (VI/424).

#### Orcs

The orcs of the Rift dress in greasy, blackened leather and (at least) one tribe carries saw-toothed scimitars and shields emblazoned with a purple claw (TD/134).<sup>146</sup> They have yellowed tusks like those of a boar (TD/68). Orcs have a keen sense of smell and use this to sniff out prey, but they are greedy for gold and are easily distracted or bribed with a handful of coins (TD/148). Another orcish tribe is the man-eating *Severed Head* (V/73, VI/11). Their emblem is that of a woman's head, cut off at the neck, dripping blood (V/73).

#### Elves

The dark elves are tall and lithe, wearing ornately spiked armour and carrying longswords of a dull black metal (TD/134). They worship Nullaq, the Supreme Queen of Malice, who rules in malicious envy (V/343).<sup>147</sup> Elves are shown opposite TD/39 tracking in the countryside near the Rift. They are known to use magic (TD/214) and to employ carrion crows to spy on their enemies (V/53). When abroad in the Manmarch, they sometimes ride on these crows (V/115, V/343). The elves practice slavery and use 'coffe chains' to transport human slaves (VI/29).<sup>148</sup>

The dark elves of the Rift seem to make their homes in caverns with a rock façade built across the front, a little like a house (VI/29).<sup>149</sup> They wear coloured robes that indicate their status and profession – sorcerers wear blue robes, soldiers are clad in green and red (VI/249). The personal bodyguard of the Black Widow wears red robes (VI/34). Only female dark elves can attain proficiency in the magical arts (VI/249). The followers of Nullaq wear purple head-dresses with bloated green spiders perched on top (V/343).<sup>150</sup>

At the time of *Warbringer!* the dark elf sorceress Shadazar was commander-in-chief of the forces of the Rift (V/375, VI/1). She is illustrated opposite V/313 & V/375 atop the palace towers in Irmuncast. *Sisters of Nullaq* are dreaded magicians, whose mothers have mated with one of the three *Mother-Spiders* in the deeper vaults of the Rift.<sup>151</sup> Some cobwebbed and hidden spaces in the Rift are home to the *daughters of Nullaq* (VI/68, VI/397).<sup>152</sup> The *krathak* is a monster '...as large as a city', too big for its dimensions to be guessed at (VI/34).<sup>153</sup>

<sup>145</sup> A fantastical serpent, which '...fables tell has its head here in the Rift, a body that stretches all the way around Orb, through the roots of the mountains and a tail that stretches to the very centre of Orb.' The Worm's head is shown on the cover of *Inferno!* The Worldworm seems to emerge into life when someone enters its mouth – the stone turning to grey-green scaly flesh with a crackling noise. When Avenger observed this, the worm began to close its jaw (VI/411). Leading from the Worldworm's maw is a dark tunnel of ridged stone, running towards its belly. Later, Avenger discovered that the Worldworm no longer had what passed for stomach and tail (possibly through the treachery of Tyutchev & co.). It opened out of a jagged hole into a pitch-black void. The wind whistled past as Avenger fell to the seventh tier to be caught in the web of the Black Widow (VI/424).

<sup>146</sup> We may decide to call this tribe the *Purple Claw*.

<sup>147</sup> Although some follow Zarahraya the Temptress – they are held in scorn by the majority (VI/190).

<sup>148</sup> The cruelty of the dark elves of the Rift surpasses understanding (VI/123): the *death of a thousand torments* is a torture so horrific, only the immortal elves have the patience to carry it out (VI/71).

<sup>149</sup> Avenger enters one such cavern-house, entered through a stone door. Inside it is richly furnished with ornaments and even paintings (probably brought back by raiding parties). Water is provided by a stream cutting across the centre of the room (VI/29).

<sup>150</sup> They are able to command the small, purple *executioner spiders*. The spiders are no bigger than a man's thumbnail, but their bite is fatal to even a horse within seconds. The worshippers of Nullaq can instruct these spiders to seek out and assassinate specific individuals (V/343).

<sup>151</sup> They appear as dark elves in robes of purple-and-green, but the usually-beautiful jet-black face is horribly contorted. Eight splayed legs and a bloated spider's carcass project from below the chin, as if half a huge spider had been grafted onto the face. A sister is illustrated opposite VI/297. They are magic users – one spell created a shimmering haze (VI/297) which forced a raging thirst on its target, causing choking and gasping as if without water in a desert. Avenger's desire to slash a wrist and drink the blood was overwhelming. They can turn into black crows to escape pursuit (VI/337), and summon a weird cloud of acidic, green dust (VI/59, VI/297, VI/377).

<sup>152</sup> These tiny spiders entered Avenger's head through the nose, mouth or ears, and headed for the brain, where they can subjugate their victim's will to the control of Nullaq herself (VI/104, VI/108).

<sup>153</sup> Based on the descriptions in *Inferno!* it is a kind of giant chameleon with huge pincers and claws around its mouth (VI/34). The krathak has stinking breath and its footfalls shake the earth (VI/411). It has howdah behind its head – from where the beast is driven by dark elves of the Black Widow's bodyguard, armed with bows and bolas (VI/34). The krathak is illustrated opposite VI/34.

#### Old ones

The old ones are fell monsters from before the time of man, a race of creatures that inhabit the depths of the Rift.<sup>154</sup> They are utterly evil, and thought to be the ultimate leaders (other than the dark gods) of much that is evil on Orb (III/207). Deep within the Rift lays their home, the dreaded *City of Bone* (V/241). They have eyes that are completely white save for their pupils, two pinpoints of blackness. Their faces are hideous: totally bald, the skin a pale blotchy colour. Under the flat nostrils of their boneless faces, five tentacles each a foot in length writhe horribly. Just below these, the mouth is small and circular with sharp pointed teeth. Their hands end with three long thin tentacles in place of fingers. They speak in a sibilant whispering voice and can assault lesser beings with waves of psychic attack (III/207), capable of shredding the mind like paper, leaving them as mindless vegetables (III/335). Their tentacles secrete an acidic substance that corrodes flesh as they gnaw with their teeth. One such, encountered by Avenger in the crypts below Irmuncast, wore purple robes edged with gold. They appear to be able to summon mind-bending illusions to confound an enemy – the creature in Irmuncast summoned an exact replica of an Avenger to fight (III/369: this was merely an illusion perpetuated only by the target's belief in its reality). They have other powers – the same creature escapes from Avenger by creating a magical gate from reddish energy (III/400). It is illustrated opposite III/207 in its study under the Royal Palace in Irmuncast. The illustration opposite V/168 probably shows the same creature, at the battle of Bridgebeam.<sup>155</sup>

#### Serpent, Desolation of the



A desert land, located between Doomover and Tor. A river runs from the centre of the Desolation to join the Greybones – near its source is the town of Mayhem (I/map).

#### Spires of Foreshadowing



The domes and spires of this, the largest city on the Manmarch, lie within a sea of rippling corn on the banks of the Greenblood (III/13). The city lies between Irmuncast and Doomover, two tendays from the former (V/401).

The temple spires that give the city its name are awesome to the newcomer – they stretch to dizzying heights, each built to outdo the others and proclaim the importance of the god or goddess to whom they are dedicated. The city is bustling – full of life and different types of seemingly well-to-do and powerful people (V/163, V/401). It is a city of great architecture and at its centre is one great, towered dome, larger than any other building – the great hub-shaped Cathedral to Fate which dominates the city. At night the wide avenues are lined with magical lamps in which orange flames flicker, casting a dull brown glow over the dark of the sky (III/40, V/401).

The people of the Spires of Foreshadowing are the ancient foes of Doomover – they have clashed three times in the century preceding the events of the *Way of the Tiger* books (V/121, V/301). Even though there is a temple to Vasch-Ro in the city, the followers of Fate see the wargod as their greatest enemy (V/401).

The ruler of the Spires is Dom the Prescient (V/401): '*He who sees all things that are to come to pass*' (V/407). He rules in conjunction with other (unnamed) followers of Fate (V/401). There is a magnificently-spired palace beyond a set of huge stables<sup>156</sup> with jewelled gates and huge rooms lined with velvet, halls with crystal chandeliers and wide marble staircases (III/40, V/397). The royal chambers are blocked by doors of solid gold (III/40).<sup>157</sup> Fate vouchsafes him glimpses of the future so that he may rule the city more wisely and to the greater glory of the goddess (V/59, V/69). His personal bodyguard is a seven foot tall Golem of Flesh (III/40)<sup>158</sup> and has stood on a pedestal in his hall of state for three centuries (V/407).

<sup>154</sup> They are probably the descendants of the Ancients, a race of elder beings that inhabited the oceans of Orb aeons ago. They were deadly foes of the Firedrakes as they struggled for supremacy before the rise of man. Their traces remain today as scattered artefacts of vast power, lost in underwater locations (e.g. the *mace of the ancients* in the Valley of Gad). They appear to have been humanoid in form, but with squid-like faces and webbed feet. Their lower faces were composed of masses of tentacles. Parts of their bodies were shielded by bony armour, like a lobster (DM2/807, DM2/817).

<sup>155</sup> The old one illustrated on the cover of *Warbringer!* appears to be much larger than those described anywhere else – this is probably an error.

<sup>156</sup> Perhaps the barracks of the *Cavalry of the Wheel?*

<sup>157</sup> He is short and powerfully built, in early middle age but no fighting man. When he grants an audience to Avenger he wears a magnificent robe of many colours. His eyes twinkle merrily beneath a forehead lined with cares. He doesn't stand on ceremony and has the air of one who knows everything there is to know about the matter at hand. Dom's throne is carved from rocks in as many colours as his robe, somehow welded together. The effect is of a colourful waterfall of glass (V/29).

<sup>158</sup> It speaks rarely, with a cracked voice, long unused, and has the sweet scent of honeysuckle (III/55). When Avenger battles with it, it continually returns from defeat with the words *My name is Everyman, and I am Legion* (III/120). It can cover ground at a surprising rate (III/240). It appears that it must be killed a hundred times before it finally dies, or else be pushed into the Rift to break the enchantment (III/409). The misshapen golem is illustrated opposite III/55 emerging from the mists of the Barrow Swales.



The *Scholars' Guild* of the Spires wear pale blue robes (V/397).<sup>159</sup> There is a military academy in the city, to which soldiers come from far-and-wide to study (DM3/0[1]). The élite regiment of the army of the Spires is the *Cavalry of the Wheel* who number 500 heavy horses and are one of the best in the Manmarch (VI/139).<sup>160</sup> They are commanded by the *Tools of Fate*, an élite band of heroes who are '...destined to enact great deeds in her service' (I/200, I/297).<sup>161</sup>

### Sundial



A city in the northern Manmarch on a western branch of the Fortune river (I/map, II/map, III/map). Forests supposedly located north of here are the home to wood elves (V/159).<sup>162</sup> However, according to III/map the only forests near Sundial are to the west.

### Tor

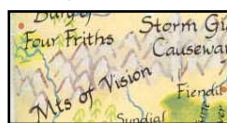


A city on the river Greybones, Tor is a huge city of half a million souls. At the river mouth is the harbour of Ilvontor – Tor itself is further up the estuary, where different ships' cargoes are unloaded at different wharves, e.g. the Grain Wharf for agricultural produce (III/21). Tor has no temple to Kwon, but does have one to the All-Mother (I/26). The temples to Vasch-Ro, Moraine and Avatar the One are all located on Temple Street (III/21). The other cities on the river are evil [I/26 – these include the Walls of Shadow, the City of the Runes of Doom and Greydown IIII/map]]. Glaivas the ranger lives here in a house at the end of Temple Street, beyond the temple to Avatar (III/21), within a beautiful but wayward garden with a wrought iron gate (III/393, III/407). The busy city streets can be seen in the background of III/381, outside of Glaivas' house. Glaivas' house, (and probably most of the other houses in the city) is warmed by a peat fire (III/381). We can see the wrought-iron entrance gate, which leads into his garden. The city is the origin of *Torean fire*, exploding balls of flame used at sea (II/84).<sup>163</sup> A pottery factory hides the Assassins' Guild of Tor. Through the cracked quartz windows Avenger spies a small statuette of Torremalku in a dark alcove (III/407).

### Vasch-Ro, Ring of

An arena in the Barrow Swales (III/70), maintained by the Legion of The Sword of Doom, used to fight ritual duels of honour (III/5). The goddess Fate curses those who refuse a challenge in the Ring (III/25).<sup>164</sup> The laws of the Ring state that victors are free to go unmolested by the legionnaires who garrison it (III/309). Each combatant enters at a pair of opposite gates (III/70). A detailed plan of the ring is found as part of that reference, showing the *Victor's Gate* and the *Victim's Gate* linked by the *Path of Fools*, which runs through the *Duelwood*. North of the path is *Hunter's Quarry* and south of it is the *Pillar of Death*<sup>165</sup> atop the *Barrow Mound*. The Victim's Gate is composed of weather-worn stone blocks (III/70). The attendant legionaries dwell in a low stone-roofed building in a cultivated field.<sup>166</sup> Beyond the Victor's Gate is a small hut, also used by the attendant legionaries (III/321). Here Avenger battled Aiguchi the Weaponmaster, a monk of the Order of the Scarlet Mantis – see the entry for Doomover (III/5 – he is also illustrated opposite that reference).<sup>167</sup>

### Vision, Mountains of



A range of mountains in the northern Manmarch that run from the northern edge of the Rift in the east almost to the shores of the Endless Sea in the West. Here are the Storm Giants' Causeway, Fortune Pass and Mount Gwalodrun (I/map, II/map).

<sup>159</sup> But one such met by Avenger was a disguised assassin of Torremalku in the service of the city (V/397).

<sup>160</sup> They wear parti-coloured surcoats of blue, green, red and yellow, symbolising the cloaks of many colours worn by the priests of Fate (V/369). The Cavalry and assorted footsoldiers are illustrated opposite that reference passing through the gates of Irmuncast.

<sup>161</sup> The best include Happening the Mage, Kelmic the Warrior, Tolber (his twin) and Hoitekh the Priest (V/139, V/369). Honoric, commander of the Legion of the Sword of Doom (see the entry for Doomover), slew three Tools of Fate at the battle of the Hollow Tower (I/297).

<sup>162</sup> When we encounter some of these elves during the events of *Warbringer!* Avenger feels as though '...plunged into a tale of olden times', implying the mysterious regard in which elves are held by the folk of the Manmarch. Gwyneth seems to have more experience of them and states that, with their stout yew bows '...each one is a better marksman than anyone in the Manmarch' (V/159).

<sup>163</sup> Analogous to *Greek fire* used by the historical Byzantine Empire.

<sup>164</sup> In ages past a covenant was made between Vasch-Ro and Fate. Fate will turn her back on anyone who will not take up the challenge of the Ring, or crosses the encircling Fatestones before the contest is over (III/70).

<sup>165</sup> The *Pillar of Death* inside the Ring is an ancient menhir carved with runes from top to bottom (III/82) in '...an archaic tongue...' (III/300). It '...pulses with ethereal energy...' (III/312).

<sup>166</sup> One such legionary encountered by Avenger is known as Maak: a sharp, quick man with brown eyes and curly hair (III/70).

<sup>167</sup> He does not wear the mantis tattoo on his forehead, but the symbol appears on his weapons: a short bow, a quiver of arrows and several daggers. Opposite III/177 he is shown wielding *nunchaku*.

## THE NORTHLANDS



This seems to be a general term for a region between the Mountains of Vision and the Great Valley Reaches, but I have also included the frozen north as well. Avenger considered that the men of the north speak a 'guttural' and 'uncouth dialect' of the Manmarchers' tongue (I/262, I/294). We read that, in the Crow valley, each peasant pays a part of his crop to his lord for the right to a small area of land, sometimes only five yards across (II/21). This suggests that the Northland territories have a feudal

economy, as opposed the theocracies, semi-democracies and city-states of the Manmarch.

### Alalom



A settlement located to the north of Harith on the Crow River (II/map).

### Alone



A town located where a river (name unknown) flows into the south-west corner of the Sea of Snows (I/map). Its name suggests a distant or lonely outpost.

### Baysease, River



A watercourse that runs from the Bury of Four Friths through the Marshes of Mist and the Greylap Hills to the sea at Slate Bay (II/map).

### Borderlands, The



The countryside to the west of Quench-Heart Keep and the Sea of the Star. It is dotted with barrows from which the revenants of ancient barbarian warlords now stalk the land (II/415, *et seq.*) – one such is illustrated opposite II/397. The lands to the south of here are populated by suspicious and hostile hill dwarfs,<sup>168</sup> south-west is a wild land where Vespers, Tafiwr and co. tell Avenger that '...brigands often ambush travellers'.<sup>169</sup> The west is open country (II/9), bare but for the occasional giant pine (II/32).

### Brigand Keep



A castle or fort on the Crow between Alalom and Harith (II/map). Whether it is used by brigands or to fight against them we don't know.

### Bury of Four Friths



A town on the western edge of the Marshes of Mist, south-west of Harith (I/map, II/map, III/map).<sup>170</sup>

### Change, Pillars of



Twin edifices in '...the snow wastes of the north...' either side of a northern inlet of the Sea of Snows (I/map).<sup>171</sup>

The *Scrolls of Ketsuin* are a set of parchments which hold the secret to the *Word of Power*. If the *Word* is spoken at the Pillars when the moon turns red during the great conjunction of the planets, it will bind the god Kwon and at least one other, including a goddess<sup>172</sup> (I/191, I/214, II/0). In the Inferno for eternity. The land will be covered by a great darkness (I/100), an endless night lit by the red moon (I/313).

Yaemon stole the scrolls from the monks of Kwon many years before the events of *Avenger!* but was unable to decipher the *Word* (I/191). He teamed with Honoric, Master of the Legion of the Sword of Doom, and Manse the Deathmage, a reverencer of Nemesis, to decipher the *Word* and speak it at the Pillars (I/214, I/337, I/409), but was defeated by Avenger, as related in the eponymous book (I/420).

<sup>168</sup> This may be a reference to Dwarrowhame – but refer to the entry for the River Flatwater.

<sup>169</sup> Although those shown opposite II/106 are soldiers of the Legion in disguise (II/297).

<sup>170</sup> A frith (according to the *OED*) is 'a poetic name for a lightly wooded area'. See also Upper Frith, a range of mountains.

<sup>171</sup> The two Pillars do not seem to be identical. The westernmost one has a conical top and the easternmost one is topped by a sphere (I/map).

<sup>172</sup> II/408 reveals this to be Dama.

### Crow River



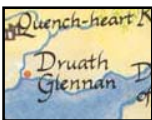
Abbas<sup>173</sup> is a town in the lowlands of the Crow valley on the way from Harith to Ulrik's Haven (II/135).

### Curses, Tower of



An evil-sounding structure east of the Bury of Four Friths, on the northern edge of the Marshes of Mist (II/map).

### Druath Glennan



A city of narrow, cobbled streets with tall, thin houses of dark brick, enlivened only by their brightly-painted, wooden balconies which almost touch above, making the streets dark and gloomy. The city guards are in the pay of the monks of Vile (II/219, II/409). The *Square of the Gods* has a red-shuttered monastery to

Vile faced by a temple to the All-Mother. There is a poor house, the *All-Mother's Hostel* in a dingy side street, as well as an inn called the *Hydra's Heads* (II/48, II/124, II/190, II/219). Bung Hole Road climbs away from the *Hydra's Heads* towards the quarters of the well-to-do, a part of the city where the streets are wider and many of the houses have gardens full of yellow All-Mother-splendour and moon lilies (II/364, II/409). The ground between Druath Glennan and Quench-heart Keep is called the *Wold* (II/300). Druath trades for dyes with the kingdom of Monsalyar to the east (DM3/0(1)).

### Dwarrowhame



Dwarrowhame is described in *Assassin!* (II/297) as a place '...in the lands of the dwarves'. It is probably the settlement of suspicious and hostile hill dwarfs mentioned by Tafliwr, Thybault & co. (II/9) or the range of wooded mountains inhabited by stocky mountain dwarfs that

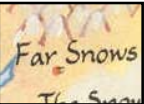
Avenger spies in the distance when travelling near here (II/417). According to II/map, Dwarrowhame is a town of some sort, west of the Sea of the Star and south-east of the Great Valley Reaches.<sup>174</sup>

### Eldinarde, Castle



A fortress in the Northlands, upriver of Wargrave in the Crow valley (II/map), probably part of that city's defences.

### Far Snows



A settlement in the Snow Wastes (I/map). The city has white domes and ice houses (I/313). The Order of the Scarlet Mantis sends acolytes to the frozen training grounds here – the most thorough regime found anywhere on Orb (I/26, DM4/0).

### Flatwater, River



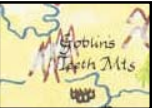
This river flows into the north-west corner of the Sea of the Star. West of here, a range of wooded mountains are inhabited by stocky mountain dwarfs (II/417).<sup>175</sup> The name of the river suggests to me a lazy, slow-moving watercourse.

### Glastondale Abbey



A monastery or church of some sort, situated in the hills south of Ionalbion, as shown on I/map, II/map, III/map and IV/map.<sup>176</sup>

### Goblin's Teeth Mountains



A range of high mountains in the Northlands. There are tunnels below the mountains, which Avenger entered via a stone trapdoor (II/318). They were mined carefully by hammer and pickaxe (II/303),<sup>177</sup> but are now inhabited by crude goblins, most of which live in a single large cavern (II/286).

A second chamber has a square rock carved into a representation of an amoeboid mass of jelly and tentacles (II/188). This is a sacred shrine (II/164) where goblin sacrifice occurs (II/188). There are also grain stores and rat farms (II/113). The caves are teeming with plague (II/9).

The king's chambers are lit by crude ornamental lanterns. When Avenger comes here, we find the king to be a big and powerful goblin with a huge sword, rusty ringmail armour and a dented copper crown (II/72). His sword is an enormous enchanted *dancing blade*<sup>178</sup> which fights on its own (II/368). The king is illustrated opposite II/313 wearing his crown and wielding his sword.

Elsewhere in the complex, Avenger encountered traps (a falling portcullis, II/46) and guard patrols – goblins riding on giant rats whilst wielding stone tipped lances (II/146 – illustrated opposite that reference). The goblins wear spiked armour and ring-mail shirts.

Deeper underground is a 20-foot-wide pool of black lava. Sacrifices are hooded and tied, then hung over the bubbling pool, which is in reality an amorphous primordial terror, worshipped by the goblins (II/174). One such sacrifice is illustrated opposite that reference, a half-eaten goblin with a purple hood over its head.<sup>179</sup> The 'lava' is in fact a kind of black slime-creature. Contact with it has an effect like flesh-stripping acid, but it can be driven back with fire (II/88, II/99, II/117).

Eventually, the maze of tunnels beyond this cavern leads to a stair exiting the caves on the opposite side of the mountains to Quench-Heart Keep where there is a commanding view of the forests and wild lands stretching west to the Crow valley (II/3).

### Goth



A town on the south east coast of the Sea of the Star (shown on I/map), which may be notable for its religious diversity – it is referred to proverbially in Irmuncast (and elsewhere) as *Goth of Ten Temples* (VI/351). In the appendices of DM1, we read of '...the slums of Goth of

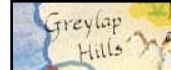
Ten Temples...'<sup>180</sup>

### Great Valley Reaches



A coastal region of cold fjords (II/406) in the far north, carved out by the ice floes of the Age of Snows (I/1). The settlements here include Strand in the west, Seareach and Ulrik's Haven in the centre, and Oakenhulls to the east (I/map, II/map, III/map). The barbarians of the Reaches engage in coastal raids using their swift galleys (II/406). They may use the symbol of the raven as an emblem (II/297).

### Greylap Hills



A range of hills in the Northlands north-east of Slate Bay and south-west of the Bury of Four Friths, partially encircled by the Baysease (II/map).

### Harith-si-the-Crow



A large and flourishing city (II/6) on the Crow River (III/map). In *Assassin!* (II/9), we are told that '...all paths lead to the city of Harith' (or at least all those in the north-country). The city guards wear black armour with no token of any deity – as shown in the middle distance opposite II/21, standing before the city gates. The guard wears an odd style of quilted

armour and carries a long spear. The city gates appear to be made of wood with an unusual slanting design.<sup>181</sup>

There is a temple to Illustra in the city.<sup>182</sup> The temple guards and priestesses wear green and white (II/21, II/60). There is also a temple to Anarchil (II/60).

In the town, Avenger encountered an old woman selling unusual objects from an upside down cart, including the internal organs of exotic beasts such as chimeras and hippogriffs.<sup>183</sup> A surprising number of urchins run

<sup>173</sup> The authors seem to have derived this name from William Morris' epic fantasy *The Well at the World's End*. Interestingly, another place mentioned in this book is the Burg of the Four Friths (compare with the Bury of Four Friths). I haven't yet read the whole of Morris' book so I can't say if any other place names on Orb have their inspiration here.

<sup>174</sup> Dwarrowhame may include the regions of Hilvenmoot and Larandillion, which, although are marked on II/map, don't appear to be mentioned anywhere else.

<sup>175</sup> This may be a reference to Dwarrowhame (q.v.)

<sup>176</sup> I'm guessing that it's dedicated to Avatar.

<sup>177</sup> The tunnels probably were the original work of mountain dwarfs.

<sup>178</sup> The sword is probably too large for him to fight with in a normal fashion anyway. It seems unlikely that it is of goblin origin, but no further information is forthcoming.

<sup>179</sup> The purple hood, in goblin folklore, denotes a sacrifice to one of their gods (II/174). It may be significant that purple is the colour of the god Death (III/154).

<sup>180</sup> Although in context the passage seems to be referring to a part of the Rainbow Land – see the entry for Mayhem to read further discussion of this matter.

<sup>181</sup> Look at the illustration to see what I mean.

<sup>182</sup> Aurora (II/60), the high priestess of the Immaculate Illustan priesthood was slain by Tyutchev, Cassandra, Thaum and Olvar the Chaos Bringer (murderers and reverencers of Anarchil) on '...the 47th day of Grimweird in the last cycle' (II/21). They were banished from Wargrave Abbas for similar atrocities. Through Thaum's trickery the chaos-worshippers escaped to the Manmarch (II/60).

<sup>183</sup> The woman was a witch and also sold flash powder (II/6).



about the streets in gangs but they are adept at keeping out of the way (II/6).

The Church of Nil (II/404) is found amongst a maze of backstreets – a great stone edifice. The Church has tall circular towers, around the outside of which spiral staircases twine like great serpents. Snake-headed gargoyles with gaping mouths threaten the streets below (II/43). There are 'unfathomable frescoes' of strange monsters made of beaten copper, 'greened by the rains of centuries' (II/395). Steps under a trapdoor in a stable next door lead to a large ill-lit cellar below the church (II/43) – the cellar is illustrated on the cover of *Assassin!* In a dark crypt here Avenger battled Mardolh, Spawn of the Void, Greater Son of Nil (II/210, II/413) – also illustrated on the cover. The representation opposite V/181 is an illusion created by a vulcan imp.<sup>184</sup>

#### Hilvenmoot



An area marked on II/map, but not mentioned anywhere else, perhaps connected to Dwarrowhame.

#### Ionalbion



Seaweed cracks underfoot as one approaches Ionalbion, perched on white cliffs over the Sea of the Star. Sheep occupy the rolling downlands outside of the land gate. The guards bear the token of a dancing sword with a scroll wrapped around the blade.<sup>185</sup> There is also a sea gate and harbour area. Most ships in the harbour are long-sided biremes.<sup>186</sup> Around a square with a fountain in the shape of a dolphin are many scroll shops and sellers of coloured marzipan flowers. The people here speak a guttural version of the common tongue (II/294).

#### Larandillion



An area marked on II/map, but not mentioned anywhere else, perhaps connected to Dwarrowhame.

#### Lightgrieve Muster



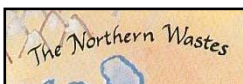
A town resting on a northern tributary of the Crow (II/map). Its name suggests that it is a gathering place for the armies of Wargrave.

#### Mist, Marshes of



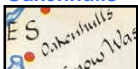
Wetlands north-west of the Mountains of Vision, drained by the River Baysease. At their northern edge is the Bury of Four Friths and the Tower of Curses (II/map).

#### Northern Wastes



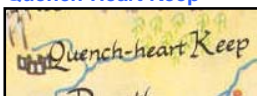
A frozen desolation in the far north, far from the lands of men – a land of cold mountains beyond the Great Valley Reaches (II/map, II/map).

#### Oakenhulls



A coastal town in the eastern Great Valley Reaches at the western edge of the Snow Wastes (I/map, II/map, III/map). Its name suggests a ship-building port.

#### Quench-Heart Keep



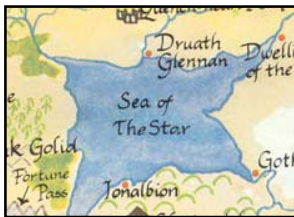
Before the jagged Goblin's Teeth range stands Quench-Heart Keep, made of the same black stone as the mountains. The gatehouse is flanked by two stout posts with iron maidens swinging in the wind, in

which prisoners are caged. The Great Keep rises high above the walls, surrounded by three towers. When Avenger came here, they were flying the respective banners of their three occupants: the Scarlet Mantis flag (north tower), the silver sword hanging by a needle thread (west tower) and the black whirlpool symbol of Nemesis (I/179).<sup>187</sup> A gate from the courtyard leads to the inner bailey and there is a ruined tower at the back of the castle (I/112). There is a food/water-hole in the wall to the inner bailey. The (unnamed) Captain of the castle lives here with his lady (I/99). The main hall

of the keep has a large spiral staircase leading to the roof and the three turrets.<sup>188</sup> There is a plan of the keep opposite I/418, based on Avenger's observations.

A grille in the ground beside the moat is used to throw prisoners at '...feeding time' (I/179). It leads into a wide rock-hewn tunnel, foot deep in slime – squealing sewer rats brush past in the darkness (I/402).<sup>189</sup> An inky-black underground river feeds the castle moat (I/309), infested by bullfrogs (I/392) that seem to provide an unusual method of detecting intruders.<sup>190</sup> Additionally, Avenger encountered the blubbery 'moat horror' (II/211, II/332). A submerged tunnel leads to the ducking stool of the torture chamber (I/309) illustrated opposite that reference, where the torturer and the tools of his trade (a rack, chains and a branding iron) can be seen. He is also shown opposite II/271, where he is stretching a victim on his rack.

#### Sea of the Star



A salt sea, in the north of the Manmarch with 'chill, invigorating waters', apparently named for its slightly four-pointed shape (I/219, I/map). Avenger found an unnaturally calm part of the sea, which was near a whirlpool leading down into the green depths (II/23). The river that flows into its north-eastern corner is named the Eger (DM3/222).<sup>191</sup>

Below the surface live the blue-skinned mermen.<sup>192</sup> There are also sea elves – their coral meadows (II/23)<sup>193</sup> include the poisonous *dead men's fingers* (II/41) a fan-shaped coral. No one speaks under the sea (II/23), but Avenger heard the voices of the mermen telepathically. The narwhals encountered during *Assassin!* (II/97, illustrated opposite that reference) are a species of horned whale.

#### Seareach

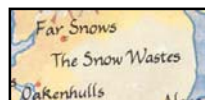


A settlement in the central Great Valley Reaches (II/map), probably a fishing or whaling port, battered by the storm-wrack of the northern seas..

#### Slate Bay



A port town at the mouth of the River Baysease on the shores of the Endless Sea (II/map). There are probably a number of slate quarries in the area.



#### Snow Wastes

A northern region, also called the *Ice Wastes* (I/191) – which includes the towns of Far Snows and Alone (I/map). In *Assassin!* (II/19), mention is made of a '...white dragon's egg...found in an

ice-cave in the snow wastes', implying that such beasts make their homes here.



#### Storm Giant's Causeway

A pass leads through cool mountains where snow falls. There are no tracks except those of mountain goats. At the highest point of this pass, clouds cover the path. Avenger saw what appeared to be a titanic statue on the peak of the highest mountain but was caught in an avalanche caused by a mysterious bolt of lightning (I/81).<sup>194</sup>

<sup>184</sup> When Avenger defeats Mardolh in combat, the entity is banished, leaving behind a pulsating gateway to the Void. Curiously, it also leaves a strange black statue and a goblet of the *blood of Nil*, the most virulent poison known to man (II/210).

<sup>185</sup> Probably one of the symbols of Gauss, Enchanter of Arms (VI/86).

<sup>186</sup> When Avenger crosses, on board the *Porpoise*, the fare to Druath Glennan is 2 gold pieces (I/294). The decks and rigging of the *Porpoise* are illustrated opposite I/337.

<sup>187</sup> It appears that when the three are visiting, the Sword of Doom flag marks Honoric's chambers, the Mantis flag indicates those of Yaemon and the Whirlpool flag flies over the tower of Manse the Deathmage (I/130, I/265, I/320, I/348). Manse is illustrated opposite I/112 standing in the middle distance. He wears long robes and a diadem. He is also shown at I/130 where he stands at the top of a staircase in his chambers, casting the *Finger of Death* spell. At I/141 he is shown cowering from the blade *Sorcererak*, which nullifies his magical powers. In his chamber can be seen a tall candlestick holder, an upholstered chair and some drapes.

<sup>188</sup> The stairs from the banqueting hall to the roof are trapped (probably only at night) by a loose flagstone, which launches a pair of crossbow bolts (II/277).

<sup>189</sup> When Avenger came a roaring beast lived in the cave (I/402), lit by a single smoking torch. A great horn protruded from its head, and it is 15 feet high. Its outline was jagged, and smelled of putrefaction – its hide sloughed off in great dead patches (I/383). It was chained at the ankles (I/373). The beast is apparently illustrated opposite I/373. I don't think much of this picture – it certainly doesn't match the text and isn't particularly fearsome. The creature may be related to the Primordial Terror of the Goblin's Teeth Mountains.

<sup>190</sup> Their nocturnal croaking is halted should they be disturbed (I/392), thus alerting the wall sentries!

<sup>191</sup> Also the name of a real-world river that flows through Germany and the Czech Republic.

<sup>192</sup> One such is illustrated opposite II/97 apparently being attacked by a narwhal. A merman encountered during *Assassin!* imparts water breathing abilities, by forming a globe of air in his cupped hands that surrounds Avenger's head (II/23). The bubble burst on contact with the surface (II/160).

<sup>193</sup> The prince of the sea elves was imprisoned in a giant clam (II/264) by the sea-jacks (II/111 – illustrated opposite that reference and in the background of the illustration opposite II/164) which resemble a weird cross between sharks and manta rays, intelligent and evil. The sea elves possess 'water crystals' which summon a huge watery figure when smashed – a water elemental, resembling a huge wave (II/8).

<sup>194</sup> The 'statue' was probably a storm giant, protecting its home from an intruder.



## Strand



A town (DM2/0) in the Great Valley Reaches (I/map, II/map, III/map). Near here live tribes of strong and ferocious barbarians, many of which are highly valued as military commanders in the Manmarch (DM2/0).

## Trollfens



A dank land of mists, an enormous expanse of fog-bound marshlands (I/59) surrounding a river that flows into the south-west corner of the Sea of the Star (I/map). When Avenger comes here, we encounter a troll with the power to regenerate even the most severe of injuries (I/30) and the bloated shaggoth, a '...tentacular green mass' (I/385).<sup>195</sup>

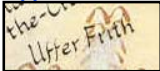
## Ulrik's Haven



Five days north-west of Harith (II/135), this is a port where the fjords (II/406) of the Great Valley Reaches pour their cold waters into the sea.<sup>196</sup> It is peopled by buccaneers and barbarian coastal raiders (II/395). They speak an uncouth barbarian dialect (II/135). Unlike the sailors of the Manmarch, the barbarians do not use slaves as rowers, but row themselves from the open deck, shaded from the sun by their shields (II/406). Trading ships foolish enough to land here are seized, and their crew put to death. The city is well-defended from the sea but has no guards on the land-gate (II/135).

When Avenger comes here the Barbarian Overlord (or *Liege-chief*) of this haven of men is a grizzled old warrior with a cunning gleam in his eyes called Ulrik Skarsang. He held court in a long wooden building, where he sat on a wooden throne surrounded by his advisors (II/135). Skarsang wais an arrogant leader, and demanded that Avenger kneel before him. His chief advisor was described as 'hatchet faced' (II/312, II/329) and was a reverencer of Nemesis who possesses a magical *chalice of visions* (II/234). Ulrik's court is illustrated opposite II/135. He sits in his hall, wearing a horned helmet. Behind him can be seen his advisor. His personal vessel is the *Sack of the South* (II/283), which has sailed as far south as the city of Upanishad. It is a large three-masted sailing ship (II/193).

## Upper Frith



The mountainous lands east of Harith. The text on the map is difficult to interpret reading either *Uffer* or *Utter Frith* (II/map) – but I prefer *Upper Frith*.

## Wargrave Abbas



A wealthy trading-port of the north with a strong military tradition – there are many training schools for mercenary soldiers, taught by the worshippers of Dama (II/395, II/408, V/43). The city exports both grain and wool to the south (II/408).<sup>197</sup>

Wargrave stands on an island in the delta of the Crow. Just north of the gate is a beautiful public garden where the children of the city come to play (II/408). By a stand of rhododendron bushes is a monastery to Kwon – when Avenger came here, the grandmaster was called Hardred (II/131).

The assassins who revere Torremalku the Slayer have long had a guild in the city, where anyone may go to put a price on an innocent man (II/408). The local people hold the guild in great fear (II/380).<sup>198</sup>

## Zarik Golid



A region, marked only on I/map, that otherwise remains obscure.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>195</sup> This beast is similar in name and description to the *shoggoth* of H. P. Lovecraft's fiction. Come to think of it, quite a few of the monsters in the books are fairly Lovecraftian – such as the primordial terror of the Goblin's Teeth Mountains and the beast that lives below Quench-Heart Keep.

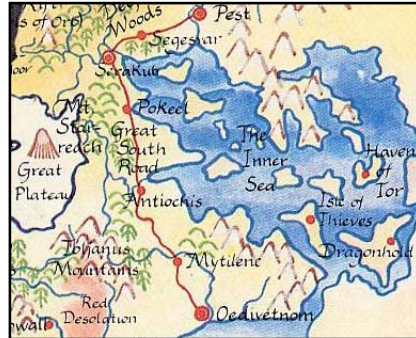
<sup>196</sup> The correct position of Ulrik's Haven is only shown on III/map. The position shown on I/map is a 'scribing error' as Glaivas explains (III/381). The depiction on II/map lacks a red mark indicating the port's location.

<sup>197</sup> Avenger's journey to the city (from Harith) is long and hard – three nights spent in the towns of Chaddy, Steepfell, and Cheaping Knowe. After this, the road runs along the banks of the Crow River (II/131). The journey from Irsuncast, by way of contrast takes almost a month (V/43).

<sup>198</sup> Avenger was led to the guild by a secret message delivered by a young man (II/380). A trip through the twisting city streets led to what looked like the back of an old grain warehouse under a low wooden doorway (II/365). Inside was near darkness. What had looked like a broken-down building from the outside was in fact the temple to the god of assassins. There was gold and silver everywhere, the coinage of murder melted into fair-seeming candelabra and altar ornaments. In the centre of the hall was a great effigy of the god himself. The Grandmaster of Assassins is named Mandrake (II/309) and is illustrated opposite that reference. The temple altar and the statue of the god can be seen in the background as well.

<sup>199</sup> It may be an (ancient?) name given to the region of land directly west of the Sea of the Star. Perhaps it is connected with Dwarrowhame, although I have no other reason for this supposition other than it sounds a bit dwarfish and they're both relatively close together.

# BEYOND THE RIFT



Marked on I/map, this is likely to be a term used in the Manmarch for the country to the east of the Rift.

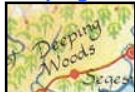
I have extended this term to encompass the cities of the Great South Road and the coastline and islands of the Inner Sea.

## Antiochis



One of the cities along the Great South Road on the western shores of the Inner Sea (III/map), also known as the *City of Pillars*. Antiochis is a fair city with white marble columns, temples and a magnificent harbour with a fleet of 'shark-nosed' triremes (DM4/02). During the *Golden Age* of the Inner Sea, the men of this land used long pikes in warfare (VI/172).<sup>200</sup> Falcon encountered some people of Antiochis in the city of Mytilene during the *Feast of Fools*. They wore togas and had dark, oiled hair (F4/113, F4/128).<sup>201</sup> It is possible that there are bath-houses here (F4/200). A group (possibly of mercenaries), the *procthenoi*, may be based in the city, but apart from that we learn next-to-nothing about them (F4/66).

## Deeping Woods



The lands beyond the Rift are wild, but fertile. A great forest of elms, the Deeping Woods stretch on, seemingly forever (IV/409). The Great South Road passes through the wood, between the cities of Pest, Segesvar and Serakub (III/map).

## Dragonhold



An island in the Inner Sea (III/map), supposedly home to the largest community of dragons on Orb (DM3/0). It seems likely that the island is the source of the dragon attacks on the Haven of Tor, but Doré le Jeune claims that there is an order of paladin-knights based here, or at least named after the island.<sup>202</sup> The knights ride out on suicidal missions to combat evil on Orb (III/43, III/237).

## Great South Road



A grand highway leading along the coast of the Inner Sea, from the city of Pest in the north to the city of Oedivetnom on the Heartsea coast in the south. *En route* between the latter two cities, the Road passes through, in order, the cities of Segesvar, Serakub and Antiochis and the towns of Pokeel and Mytilene (III/map).<sup>203</sup> When the Road passes through Mytilene, Falcon considers it 'rough-paved'. It crosses a winding, blue river by a large, arcing packhorse bridge to the city gates (F4/2, F4/12, F4/55, F4/74, F4/132).

## Haven of Tor



An island of the Inner Sea (III/map).<sup>204</sup> It has a port around a rocky headland. It is a beautiful city – several tiers of white stone buildings climb skyward. Many galleys – triremes and biremes – are moored here. Some sails bear the symbol of a dancing sword, a tasselled scroll and an open hand beneath them.<sup>205</sup> Others bear the pointed red

<sup>200</sup> This use of Macedonian-style pikes suggests that a kind of Hellenistic empire once existed in this region of Orb, maybe connected to the ancient empire of Greydawn. Other evidence that this was the authors' intent includes the city of Mytilene (this was the name of an ancient Greek city) and the shape of the northern coastline of the Inner Sea, which strongly resembles the Chalcidice in the Aegean. IV/194 suggests that this style of armament is still in use, at least on the Haven of Tor.

<sup>201</sup> The commander and charioteers of the *Cavalry of the Wheel*, also encountered by Falcon on the road to Mytilene may be Antiochians as well, but this is by no means certain (F4/66, F4/74 *et seq.* – compare also the namesake regiment of the Spires of Foreshadowing (V/139), followers of Fate rather than Threnoday).

<sup>202</sup> Perhaps Doré is getting confused with the Haven?

<sup>203</sup> Refer to the individual city entries for more details.

<sup>204</sup> The Haven is probably not connected to the city of Tor in the western Manmarch, despite the shared name. On the other hand, it is not impossible that it was once a colony or overseas possession of that city.

<sup>205</sup> The tokens of Gauss, the Sage God turned Warrior God (IV/194).

cross on a white background.<sup>206</sup>

Warriors patrol the harbour and man the city walls, overlooking the bustling quayside, dressed in armoured breastplates with greaves, round shields and crested helmets and bearing sixteen-foot pikes. Every tier of the city walls is crested with many towers. Each turret contains several guardsmen, surveying the skies – not the outlying grounds or ocean. They man enormous ballistae – great crossbow-like devices pointed at the sky. Stretching between the towers are massive rope-nets, so that the whole city is encased in webbing. These defences are used because the Haven suffers a terrible threat from the skies – the attack of flights of dragons (IV/9, IV/194), probably from the isle of Dragonhold.<sup>207</sup>

An archway in the lowest tier leads to a wide staircase, clear and bright in the sun, stretching up to the topmost galleries, where can be made out a number of temples gleaming in the sun. After a tiring walk up the steps, another archway leads to several temples – buildings of breathtaking architectural beauty. They border a wide-open courtyard of flat marble. There are temples to Time, the All-Mother, Gauss and Illustar, but the largest and most awesome is the fortress-like temple to Rocheval.<sup>208</sup> When Avenger came here, the white-robed priests were accompanied by warriors dressed in shining armour, great red crosses embroidered on their surcoats. Each and every one seemed to radiate an aura of purity (IV/33). At their head was Paladin, Keeper of the Holy Order of Errants Templar.<sup>209</sup>

### Inner Sea, The



An inland sea in the east, filled with many small islands (III/map). The islands of the Inner Sea '...lie like emerald jewels in a flat plain of aquamarine'. They are well populated – the people fish and trade olive oil, strong red wine and murex shells (the source of a purple dye). The salt sea is so clear that Avenger notes '...shoals of silver and red fishes trailing in the wake (of a boat), until they are chased away

by the porpoises which leap clear of the water for the sheer joy of living.' On the shores of the sea, sleepy fishing villages of simple huts bask peacefully on sandy beaches in the sun. The peasants here are poor, their clothes tattered and greasy. They are forced to pay tribute to the Isle of Thieves (IV/2, IV/79). The lands of the Inner Sea provide mercenaries to fight in foreign wars (DM3/0). They are described as 'dark-haired people with sallow skin'. The mercenaries wear green *cuirboilly* armour<sup>210</sup> and are armed with crossbows (DM3/21). At VI/172 we read of the *Golden Age* of the Inner Sea, seemingly a past epoch when this civilisation was at its height.

### Mytilene



A city on the northern end of the Great South Road (III/map), sometimes spelled *Mitilene* (F4/196).

Outside the city are rolling fields with goats grazing on hills covered in green grass. A rough-paved road leads to the town walls. There are olive trees<sup>211</sup> with nesting crows (F4/55). A winding blue river runs in a gentle curve around the city wall and the paved road to the city itself. The city is entered by crossing a large, arcing, packhorse bridge (F4/2, F4/12, F4/74, F4/132). In the battlemented wall of the city is a huge brass gate, open to all. There is a

<sup>206</sup> The symbol of Rocheval, Lord of Paladins and Knights Errant (IV/194).

<sup>207</sup> The dragons attacked when Avenger came here: '...a great horn blast fill(ed) the air, echoing around the courtyard. A cry (went) up: *Dragon attack, dragon attack!* There were '...scores of red- and black-scaled dragons in the sky. The sound of a hundred leathery wings beating the air wash(ed) over the city.' The ballistae launched volleys of enormous spear-like arrows and the priests of Rocheval hurled bolts of white fire from the towers and the temple roofs. The dragons unleashed a terrible assault on the city. Great spurts of flame burst from the mouths of the red dragons and rivers of acid erupted from the mouths of the black dragons. They ignored the towers and ballistae and concentrated on the nets. Even though the nets were coated in fire-resistant material, the massed flames and acid burned them away in huge sections. One dragon was truly enormous. With iridescent blue scales, it launched a crackling bolt of lightning from its jaws. It seems to be a mortal enemy of Paladin (IV/9). The dragon attack is illustrated opposite that reference. We can see the nets and ballistae used in defence, as well as two priests atop a tower, hurling bolts of energy.

<sup>208</sup> Perhaps one of these temples is the *Citadel of White Flame*, referenced at DM4/0/1. Home to the Knights of that order, it was sacked by a pirate fleet from the Isle of Thieves a few months before the events of Arena of Death DM4/0/1.

<sup>209</sup> Paladin is tall and strong, and bears an unsheathed greatsword across his back that pulses with white light. His sheer presence was such that Avenger had to resist the temptation to kneel before him and '...swear lifelong fealty to this god-like warrior'. His eyes are a striking steel grey and he seems to radiate peace and goodwill. At his side is his son, of no more than fourteen summers (IV/288). Paladin and his son are illustrated opposite that reference with crowds of islanders in the background, watching the procession. Unusually, Paladin carries his sword on his back with the point uppermost.

<sup>210</sup> At IV/358 the boiled leather armour is described as the '...mark of (a mercenary's) trade.'

<sup>211</sup> These trees are apparently common in this area of Orb: one such was considered a suitable disguise for *Falcon's Wing* (F4/2, F4/12, F4/132).

gatehouse within, but when Falcon<sup>212</sup> came here, there were no guards (F4/74). We should note, however, that this was during the *Feast of Fools* (a festival day – see below).

All ways in the city lead (F4/312) to the great cathedral (F4/132) – an '...awesome and weird building...' which dominates the city waterfront (F4/2). It is immense, with ten halls shaped like buttresses, clustered like the points of a star around a great, domed hub with a golden roof. The halls are joined to one another by enclosed bridges which arc between them at seemingly-random heights and angles. Under every bridge that Falcon could see there was a painted sign of some strange mythical beast or animal (F4/74 – an illustration opposite that reference shows the cathedral and the insignia of a ram). The bridges and halls stretched for a hundred yards to each side (F4/91).<sup>213</sup>

During the Feast (F4/196), the city streets were thronged with people wearing cloaks, tunics and leather kilts (F4/74).<sup>214</sup> The city street is paved with flagstones (F4/196). There seemed to be no laws – everyone could do exactly as he or she pleased (F4/416), however, this general lawlessness was probably restricted to the time of the Feast. Falcon described the speech of the people here as 'staccato' (F4/66) and their writing as 'ornate' (F4/66).<sup>215</sup> The people of the city worship a god called Threnoday (F4/416).<sup>216</sup>

At least two of the bridges have painted signs of ornate writing – one is the sign of a coloured, ten-spoked wheel and the other shows a city with many-pillared buildings like the ancient Greek temples of Earth. When Falcon came here, many people were coming and going from doorways beneath each of them (F4/66, F4/78). The doorway under the sign of the wheel is a large, low-ceilinged room, '...obviously a place where people meet to talk' (F4/175).<sup>217</sup>

Under the sign of the many-pillared city, Falcon visited a drinking- or banquet-hall where a jester and a troupe of tumblers performed on a stage (F4/68). It was dimly-lit, long and low. The hall had a stone ceiling (F4/258).<sup>218</sup> The jester welcomed Falcon to '...the *Feast of Fools!*' (F4/128).<sup>219</sup> The entertainment lasted into the evening. Falcon found it '...decadent, even disgusting' (F4/416).<sup>220</sup>

<sup>212</sup> We should note that the information regarding Mytilene derived from F4 necessarily derives from Falcon's frame of reference, that of a technologically-advanced visitor with no knowledge of Orb and its customs, making it difficult (but not impossible) to integrate with the other sources.

<sup>213</sup> Outside the city walls Falcon encountered a charioteer with two magnificent black horses and a driver, both wearing a bronze helmet with a green crest and leather tunic on which a ten-spoked wheel is sewn (each spoke was a different colour) and a similarly-dressed, aristocratic-looking horseman (F4/66, F4/74). When Falcon was dressed in obviously religious attire, the horseman asked which god he/she worshipped (F4/110). He went on to declare that: 'I will have that splendid robe to wear to the bath-house!' (F4/200) – this suggests the presence of a bath-house in either Mytilene or Antiochis. However, when Falcon was wearing a toga he asked: 'Are the *procthenoi* safely returned to the *City of Pillars*' (F4/66) – here it seems that he mistook Falcon for a native Antiochan. The aristocratic horseman was an important figure in the cathedral to the god of chaos, Threnoday (F4/196). He declares that '...we will accept anyone here in Mitlene, as long as they show some courtesy to the Cavalry of the Wheel' (F4/217). It may be that the horseman and the charioteers were Antiochan mercenaries hired by the city of Mytilene (based on their style of clothing) but this conflicts with his declaration that he was an important figure in the cathedral to Threnoday. His reference to the *procthenoi* is likewise obscure – perhaps the *City of Pillars* to which he refers is not Antiochis itself, rather the name of the drinking hall in which Falcon encounters some citizens of that city (for that is the sign that hangs over its doorway – Falcon is unable to read the hall's actual name).

<sup>214</sup> The busy city streets can be seen in the background of the illustration opposite F4/74. Perhaps notably, one seems to be a woman wearing a veil. Another view of the streets is available in the background of the illustration opposite (F4/303). Some people encountered in the city by Falcon were wearing chainmail hauberts (both men and women) and were carrying swords (F4/78). Others wore colourful robes (F4/218). Also in the streets, Falcon noticed a '...toothless, old beggar-woman' (F4/237).

<sup>215</sup> The people of the city do not wear togas, but do not, apparently, see them as unusual (F4/2, F4/66). Perhaps this suggests to us that the people of Antiochis are often visitors to Mytilene. When the people of the city saw Falcon wearing an environment suit, they began to flee in panic, thinking him/her a monster. They disappeared down alleys and doorways (F4/91). A group of cavalry commanded by a man in a swirling robe of many colours came to deal with the threat (F4/12, F4/146). The man in the robe (perhaps a priest of Threnoday) used a kind of *command spell* to incapacitate Falcon (F4/23).

<sup>216</sup> Threnoday is not attested in any of the other source texts – although this deity seems to have some symbols in common with Fate – the ten-spoked wheel, rainbow-coloured robes for priests (F4/12, F4/74, F4/146, F4/218) – he or she seems to have more beliefs in common with Anarchil (F4/88, F4/416). Perhaps Threnoday is a chaotic aspect of Fate, a blending of the two cults or simply another name for Anarchil. However, at F4/217 we learn that the people of Mytilene will '...accept anyone, as long as they show some courtesy to the *Cavalry of the Wheel* – a military order dedicated to Fate.

<sup>217</sup> When Falcon came here, some were buying drinks from two pretty young women behind a long counter. The dark room was lit with hundreds of candles and was packed with city folk clustered around tables. At the far end of the cellar, a tall man with white hair and a ludicrously-long, pointed beard was reciting a poem about the slaying of a black dragon, his beard 'twitching like an eel' as he talked (F4/175). One of the barmaids was named Zalusithra. The other seemed to be a magic-user and cast a spell of lightning with words of magic that Falcon's translator-device could not decipher (F4/175, F4/180).

<sup>218</sup> When Falcon came here, long trestle tables were packed with revellers gorging themselves and 'sweating lightly' in the warmth of a huge log fire, above which a boar turned on a spit (F4/128).

<sup>219</sup> The *Feast* is illustrated opposite that reference, showing the jester and a few others. The feast includes a large roast turkey or chicken and a number of ornate wine goblets.

<sup>220</sup> The revellers were drinking a heady wine and occasionally fighting amongst themselves (F4/416). The jester attempted to trick Falcon into handling a deadly cockatrice, causing petrification (F4/88). The ultimate fate of Falcon's stone form was to have been '...a magnificent statue in the pleasure-gardens behind the cathedral to their god' (F4/88). The jester addressed Falcon as follows: 'Step this way, come, caress the rainbow bird of paradise!' A great, golden-



The city is famous for its master painters (DM3/0[2]). The 'wine-gardens'<sup>221</sup> beyond a street called Undertaker's Walk are also the place of business for the city healers (F4/217). There may be a bath-house in the city (F4/200)<sup>222</sup> and a pleasure-garden, behind the cathedral to Threnoday (F4/88). There may be some enmity in the city towards those perceived as 'sorcerers' (F4/12, F4/157).<sup>223</sup> There are thieves in the city: a pick-pocket encountered by Falcon flees to a run-down quarter of the city (F4/389), ending up at burned-out building, perhaps a hideout.<sup>224</sup>

### Oedivetnom



A city on the northern shores of the Heartsea at one end of the Great South Road (III/map).<sup>225</sup>

### Pest



A city east of the Deeping Woods on a river that drains into the Inner Sea. Pest lies on the northernmost end of the Great South Road (III/map).

### Pokeel



A city on the Great South Road (III/map). There is a temple to Avatar here (DM2/0).

### Segesvar



Segesvar<sup>226</sup> is a city in the Deeping Woods on the Great South Road (III/map). We know very little about it except that in times past, a certain prayer was much used in this city to find the favour of Avatar (DM2/0[2]) and that the nobles of this city employ slaves to till their fields (DM4/0[2]).

### Serakub



One of the cities along the Great South Road on the west coast of the Inner Sea (III/map), Serakub is also called the *City of Gardens*.<sup>227</sup> It lays a tenday's travel east of the Bowels of Orb (V/391) on the banks of the beautiful blue waters of the Ebune amid richly fertile fields. Everywhere flowers blossom and there are clouds of many-hued butterflies in the meadows (V/27). Serakub is larger even than the Spires, with as many souls within its walls. It is hard for westerners to understand their version of the common tongue (V/391). Many of the buildings of the city have been built out of many different types of stone of varying colours. Most are covered in a drapery of flowing creepers: clematis, Ra's glory, red ivy, and widowfoil (V/27).

The largest temples are to Dama, Béatan the Free and Ilexkuneion,<sup>228</sup> a strange nature god whose priests call themselves Druids (V/391). The temple to Dama is run by Swordmistress Hivatala of the Serakub guard (V/227).<sup>229</sup> The followers of Dama patrol the lands between here and the Rift. Indeed they hate the spawn of the Rift more than all else (V/391). Her shieldmaidens wear grey, white and green (V/409).<sup>230</sup>

There is no one ruler of Serakub, it is a republic. A hundred *Prodrumese*, each chosen by the vote of the populace, sit in a council called the *Boule*.<sup>231</sup> where decisions of state are made. When Avenger came here, the followers of Béatan held a few votes more than either Dama or the followers of the nature god, Ilexkuneion (V/17).

In the city chambers is the *Hall of Governance* where the Boule meets. It is an oval hall with tiered pews. Avenger noted that the 100 Prodrumese '...could not look more different from one another.' Many proclaim the deity

barred birdcage, containing a colourful cockerel with enormous pink-and-mauve fanned tail feathers was brought forward. 'You will experience a miraculous change, stranger, if you touch this phantasmagorical creature of the skies' (F4/98). When Falcon entered the drinking hall dressed in a toga, four people dressed the same way, but with dark, oiled hair beckoned him/her over (F4/113, F4/128): 'We couldn't allow a fellow Antiochan to be made fun of at the Feast of Fools!' (F4/113). This suggests that the toga is an item of dress distinct to the people of Antiochis.

<sup>221</sup> These are probably vineyards.

<sup>222</sup> Although this could be equally be in Antiochis.

<sup>223</sup> Perhaps the practice of magic in this city is illegal or shunned. There does not seem to be a similar stigma attached to the magic of the priesthood (F4/23).

<sup>224</sup> She wears a gold bracelet on her wrist with a blue gem shaped like a teardrop hanging from it by a chain (F4/268). One of her cut-throat allies is stocky, young Lord Min (F4/389), last seen in Greygulds during the events of *Talisman of Death*. The pick-pocket's tear-drop gem turned out to be a magical protection against mind-control effects (F4/9, F4/418).

<sup>225</sup> Here we have another backwards city name, this time *Montevideo* (the capital city of Uruguay)! I suggest a pronunciation with a silent *d* and a silent *t* resembling something like 'Qvinom'.

<sup>226</sup> Sometimes referred to as Segeshvar (DM4/0[a]), although this may be a typographical error. The real-world Segesvár is a town in Hungary, site of a famous battle in 1849.

<sup>227</sup> A third (possible) backwards city name. *Bukares* (Bucharest) is the capital city of Romania.

<sup>228</sup> *Ilex* is the genus of plants that includes the various types of holly.

<sup>229</sup> She is illustrated opposite V/227 on the right and opposite V/410 standing next to what may be an Elf. When Avenger meets with her she wears a plain kirtle of a blue shawl, her coppery hair done up in silk twists. She is a striking woman with warm and soft blue eyes (V/227).

<sup>230</sup> They are illustrated opposite V/266 skirmishing with the monks of the Scarlet Mantis.

<sup>231</sup> In ancient Greece, the *boulai* were gatherings of citizens, each appointed to run the affairs of a city.

they serve through their dress.<sup>232</sup> Head of the Boule is Obuda Varhegyen, a learned man and a follower of Béatan (V/237, V/307).<sup>233</sup> Also based in the city are the Loremasters of Serakub, a 'wise synod'. Szeged, the previous ruler of Irmuncast was a member of this order (III/1).<sup>234</sup> The people of Serakub are described as the 'forefathers' of the people of Irmuncast (V/361).<sup>235</sup>

### Toljanus Mountains



A range of peaks south-east of the Great Plateau and west of Mytilene. It is bounded by rain forests to the east and west and by the Red Desolation to the south (III/map). Perhaps these mountains are connected in some way to the god Toljan (DM3/0[2]).

### Thieves, Isle of



An island of the Inner Sea (III/map). When Avenger comes here, scores of galleys, both triremes and biremes,<sup>236</sup> lined the lengthy, wooden wharves in the harbour. Bustle and activity were everywhere. Groups of ships, armed for piracy, arrowed outward through the waves. Ships heavy with booty and scarred by battle limped inwards. The wharves were lined with a milling crowd of sailors, cut-throats, villains and townsfolk. Avenger noted that '...(i)t is evident that the island's main trade is piracy' (IV/72, IV/86). At night, the streets were still alive with activity, '...the sounds of a lawless city wafted on the night breeze, laden with the stink of the dregs of humanity' (IV/156). Some of the oriental-style buildings on the Isle are illustrated in the background opposite IV/96.

There is a church to Nullaq, the Supreme Queen of Malice – many of her followers have gained fortune and power on the island (IV/72). It is a large temple of ebon stone – its spider-like turrets and spires reach heavenward in a seemingly-random pattern. The enormous doors, made of lacquered red enamel, are adorned with the symbol of a stylised spider, and priestesses dressed in red and black pass through them. Some of the buttresses are joined to the main building by arching spans of web, giving the impression that the whole place is the abode of some great spider (IV/96). The entrance to the temple is also illustrated opposite that reference.

Through the yawning doors of the temple, one enters a huge vaulted chamber. At the far end of the huge hall is a huge dais topped with a massive bronze idol in the shape of an enormous bloated spider. Eight huge rubies serve as its multifaceted eyes, '...gleam(ing) with malevolent intelligence in the temple gloom' (IV/278).<sup>237</sup> High-ranking priestesses have a bodyguard of eunuchs.<sup>238</sup> A priestess observed by Avenger wore a complicated array of red and black robes and a strange head-dress of boiled leather, fashioned to look like the bloated body of a spider – a '...rather revolting sight'. She also wore a pendant of onyx on a gold chain, gilded with diamonds and shaped like a squid – an *amulet of Nullaq* (IV/96). The priestess is illustrated opposite IV/96 wearing the head-dress and attended by her bodyguard. Her *amulet* is also visible.<sup>239</sup>

<sup>232</sup> When Avenger came here the followers of Béatan spread themselves evenly throughout the hall and wore the five-spoked wheel of myriad possibilities. Seated opposite them were a body of men and women who wore the sword and lozenge shaped shield of Dama. On their right were the followers of Ilexkuneion, the god of animals and plants, clad in greens and browns, each wearing a sprig of oak in their hair. Beyond them were the seats of 15 or so black whirlpool badges (Nemesis) and a like number of purple and green spiders (Nullaq). Fate and Torremalku the Slayer were also represented. Six young priestesses wore the symbol of a crescent moon (V/67) signifying followers of 'Batayan' (V/237). The nature of this deity is a mystery, Batayan is not mentioned anywhere else. I am speculating, but he or she may be somehow connected to the Loremasters of Serakub, or perhaps it is the human name of the elf-goddess Tanajla. The Hall of Governance is illustrated opposite V/67. The shaven-headed women in the front row may actually be the priestesses of Batayan.

<sup>233</sup> When he meets with Avenger he wears a long yellow robe with the five-armed half wheel that signifies the many ways to do good deeds (V/227), shown on the left of the illustration opposite that reference.

<sup>234</sup> The Loremasters sent the ill-fated group of crusaders into the Rift to steal the Talisman of Death (TD/100). The last of the Crusaders are illustrated opposite TD/13, shortly before meeting their doom in the depths of the Rift.

<sup>235</sup> It seems likely that some citizens of Serakub migrated west and founded Irmuncast as a colony.

<sup>236</sup> Men dressed in bronze breastplates with greaves and crested helmets with cheek-guards stood on their decks, their round shields painted in many colours (IV/72).

<sup>237</sup> Before the dais the floor drops away into a large circular pit. A massive iron grille lies across it, with a trapdoor in the middle of the grille. Here, the priestesses conduct ceremonies of prayers accompanied by a keening chant. The congregation joins in, filling the temple with sound. A cage, drawn from above, is used to lower sacrificial victims into the trapdoor. The cage returns empty, the victim vanished – to where is unknown (IV/278). A picture of this sacrifice is shown opposite that reference – the spidery legs of the effigy are partially visible to one side, as well as number of priestesses. Inside the temple at night, Avenger found the turrets trapped with a web of alarms – gossamer thin strands woven across the walls and floors (IV/156). The internal doors were trapped with a thin needle that jabbed out from the door jamb, tipped with a deadly poison (IV/170, IV/182, IV/218, IV/206). Across the doorframe, a tripwire opens a panel in the opposite door where a small crossbow bolt was launched at chest height (IV/218), also poisoned (IV/191). There was a robing-room where the garments and *amulets* of the priestesses were kept (IV/230).

<sup>238</sup> Those encountered by Avenger went naked to the waist, tall and heavily muscled, the muscle also covered with much fat. They wielded enormous scimitars (IV/96).

<sup>239</sup> In a little-frequented side street at the rear of the temple Avenger found a servants' entrance, for food, tradesmen and so on (IV/134). Inside there was a woman, sat on a chair down a thin corridor with one hand on a lever. Upon failure to give the 'secret signal' Avenger was hurled



Elsewhere on the island Avenger found a small clothing store (IV/96) and an old stable (IV/78). There was a blacksmith's shop that backed onto the temple (IV/110). Under a marble archway is a walled enclave, quiet and peaceful, away from the hubbub of the city. There is a spacious courtyard where '...flowers and trees flourish in a riotous display of natural greenery'. A simple white building is at its centre. Restful music fills the air of this, a temple to Tanajla, free spirit of creation and guardian of elfdom. The worshippers of Nullaq '...would have this place razed to the ground, but they cannot, and content themselves with one or two elvan sacrifices when they can.' The worshippers of Tanajla protest in the council, but '...their voices are but a leaf in the wind on the Isle of Thieves' (IV/342).

## SOUTHERN LANDS



The name given to the southernmost parts of Orb, beyond the Manmarch (III/381). Avenger does not visit this region during the *Way of the Tiger* series, except for an ill-fated attempt to reach Upanishad during *Warbringer!* so all of our information is

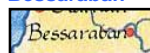
second-hand and, therefore, should be taken with a pinch of salt. Only one book is set here (DM2) and even then this not for certain.

### Asanti Homelands



An area of wilderness that stretches from Napol in the west to the shores of the Heartsea in the east (III/map), seemingly named after its (original?) inhabitants, the *Asanti*, who aren't mentioned anywhere else.<sup>240</sup>

### Bessaraban



A city north-west of Upanishad and north-east of Tabot (III/map) on a branch of what is probably the Great River (V/351).

### Braggart's Hold



A fortress in the Scorpion Hills east of the Jungles of Kheshe and north of the Port O'Reavers (III/map).<sup>241</sup>

### Dhervan Desert



A desert located to the north of Upanishad (III/map). Who or what the Dhervan are we don't find out.

### Forsaken, Desert of the



Another desert north of the Sea of Szeged, between the Port O'Reavers and Napol (III/map).

### Gad, Valley of

The exact location of this valley is unclear – whilst it may be part of the mountain range that surrounds the *City of the Firedrakes*, east of the Sea of the Star, it is more likely to be located in the Scorpion Hills in southern Orb (III/map, IV/map).<sup>242</sup> It is ruled by a Firedrake (see the entry for the Land of the Firedrakes), one of the archvults (referred to as *the Archvult*), who has lived in Castle Remorse in the valley for three hundred years prior to the events of *Blood Valley*. He slew the old king and renamed his castle, beginning a reign of terror. It took him forty years to subdue the whole valley. He is feared and hated by all his people.<sup>243</sup> There is a city in the Valley called Askelon. The Valley is ringed by mountains, but there is a way out at the settlement of Gap (DM2/0).

### Gynouebbe



A city on the road that leads east from Upanishad to the Port o' Reavers (III/map). It is inhabited by the *Man-Haters* (also known as the *Misanthropists*), who are probably worshippers of Fell-Kyrinla (DM4/0/2).

<sup>240</sup> The real-world *Ashanti* Empire was a pre-colonial state of West Africa, in what is now Ghana, that flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries.

<sup>241</sup> This is probably the same place as the *Braggart's Hold* of Razzim the Mad (DM2/205, DM2/293) in the Valley of Gad (q.v.).

<sup>242</sup> I am fairly convinced that the Valley is located in the Scorpion Hills. The so-called *City of the Firedrakes*, tentatively marked on IV/map, probably does not exist – it is conspicuously absent from the map of the Ten Kingdoms in *The Shattered Realm* (and see V/61). Evidence that points to the Valley being located in the south is as follows: (i) The Archvult appears to have arrived in an existing human kingdom and taken it over (DM2/0) but the Land of the Firedrakes is exclusively populated by those creatures (DM3/0). (ii) There are two settlements or buildings on III/map and IV/map in the Scorpion Hills, only one of which is identified (the Braggart's Hold). The other may be Castle Remorse, Askelon or Gap, etc. (iii) Much of the background information in *Blood Valley* mentions the city of Upanishad ('...the road from Upanishad...', '...the slave-pens of Upanishad...'), which is a lot nearer to the Scorpion Hills than the Land of the Firedrakes. (iv) Although there are a lot of different terrain types mentioned in *Blood Valley* (marshes, mountains, forests, moors and jungles), they are not marked on IV/map. We can assume that the version of the Valley described in DM2 was composed 'dramatically', in order to produce a varied and interesting landscape for the pursuit of the slave (see the following footnote). The version of the Valley included in this work ignores this range of terrain types.

<sup>243</sup> In *Blood Valley*, we learn that every year, one of the Archvult's slaves is set free from a stone circle near the castle and pursued by his *hounds of hell*, a gift from a demon lord. Slaves that escape the valley are allowed to go free. The stone circle is on a conical hill top, and is hung with the decaying heads of the Archvult's previous victims (DM2/0, DM2/1).

### Heartguard



A city on the western shore of the same inlet of the Heartsea as Varbol (III/map). Heartguard trades with Monsalyar in the north for dye products (DM3/0[11]). Its name suggests a naval fortress that protects the

surrounding waters.

### Heartsea



A large lake or inland sea of the south, which feeds into the Inner Sea to the north. The Great South Road reaches its northern shore at the city of Oedivetnom. At its southern end are the towns of Varbol and Heartguard (III/map).

### Hunting Plain



A region of arid wasteland, dotted with oases, south of the Red Desolation and north of the Hungry Plain (III/map).

### Hungry Plain



A region of desert west of Lembroil and south of the Hunting Plain (III/map).<sup>244</sup>

### Khesh, Jungle of



A region of tropical forest, sometimes spelled *Kesh* (DM2/0[2]). The River Khesh flows from here to the sea at Upanishad (III/map). The barbarous inhabitants live in small villages (DM4/0[2]).

### Lembroil



A city to the south of the Toljanus Mountains, on the banks of a river flowing east from the Hungry Plain into the Heartsea (III/map).

### Napol



A city on a river at the north-eastern corner of the Sea of Szeged, east of the Desert of the Forsaken (III/map).

### Nowall



A city south-west of the Toljanus range (III/map), also known as the *City without a Wall* (DM4/0[2]).

### Oracle, Desert of the



A desert, south and east of the Jungles of Khesh (III/map), probably home to *Terengedion*, the so-called *Oracle of Oracles* (III/362).<sup>245</sup> There are three great Oracles on Orb. The sources reveal the identity of only one more: the *Sybil*, or the *Oracle of Axis at World's End* (DM3/0 – see the entry for the Sea of Passing).

### Port o' Reavers



A port of the far south, on the Sea of Szeged, between the Desert of the Forsaken and the Desert of the Oracle (III/map). It is notable for its pirate fleet (known as *Reavers*) – fast green-and-red ships flying red pennants, crewed by slave oarsmen. There must be a waterway of some sort connecting the Endless Sea and the Sea of Szeged, as a ship of Reavers attacked Glaivas and Avenger when they were sailing in the waters around the Isle of the Magical Goddess (I/232). Pirates of the Port o' Reavers are illustrated opposite that reference, boarding Glaivas' ship, the *Aquamarin*.

### Red Desolation



A wasteland south of the Toljanus Mountains and east of Nowall (III/map), most likely named for the colour of its soil.

### Scorpion Hills



A range of hills in the Southern Lands east of the Jungle of Khesh (III/map), probably the location of the Valley of Gad (q.v.).

### Starkan



A town on the shores of the southern Endless Sea, west of Bessaraban (III/map).

### Szeged, Sea of



A sea in the far south, where is found the city of Napol and the Port o' Reavers (III/map). The Sea is probably unconnected to the Loremaster Szeged of Irmuncast but may be connected to the Endless Sea by a waterway of some kind (see the entry for the Port o' Reavers).

### Tabor



A settlement in the Southern Lands on the coast of the Sea of Szeged, west of Upanishad (III/map).

### Tribal Plains



A great savannah or grassland dotted with woodlands and located between the Dhervan and the Toljanus range (III/map).

### Upanishad



This great city lies far to the south of the Manmarch, south of the desert of the Dhervan and between the deltas of the Great and Khesh Rivers, north of the Jungles of Khesh (II/193, III/map, V/271, V/351).<sup>246</sup>

It is the largest city on Orb. A city of a million souls, it '...caters for as many creeds as Goth of Ten Temples,'<sup>247</sup> and twice as many species.' The main temple here is dedicated to Kwon – Upanishad is known as the *City of the Redeemer*.<sup>248</sup> The Grandmaster of the Stars is reputed to be the most powerful man in the city. People call him the *Right Hand of the Redeemer*. He seldom leaves the *Duomo* monastery (V/351). The next largest temples are dedicated to Dama and Moraine (V/271). Slaves from the pits of Upanishad are gathered from and transported to the length and breadth of Orb. The thieves' guild of Upanishad is divided into 'chapters' (DM2/0[2]).

### Varbol



A town on the eastern shores of a wide southern branch of the Heartsea, the most southerly settlement marked on the maps of Orb available to us (III/map).

<sup>244</sup> Maybe this was the original homeland of the Bone people (see the entry for the Ten Kingdoms)?

<sup>245</sup> In *Usurper!* the Oracle's home is described as a place '...near the Jungle of Khesh' (III/362).

<sup>246</sup> One branch of the Great River probably flows south to the sea at Upanishad from the mountains north of the Dhervan. The River Khesh probably flows north from within the jungle of the same name (III/map).

<sup>247</sup> This may be a reference to the city of Goth on the shores of the Sea of the Star, but see the entry for the Rainbow Land.

<sup>248</sup> The temple is (supposedly) larger than all of Kwon's other temples piled on top of one another (V/351). The real *Upanishads* are Hindu scriptural texts.

## ENDLESS SEA



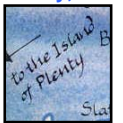
The great expanse of water west of the lands of men (III/map). There is a number of island groups in the Endless Sea, very few of which are marked on the maps. I have collected them all in this section.

### Goddess, Island of the



An island in the Sea Elves' Sound (III/map), situated north-east of the Land of Plenty (I/232). The main settlement on the island is called Hon (III/map). Also known as the *Island of the Magical Goddess*, here is the school of Dithyrhambo, a college for minstrels (V/81).<sup>249</sup> Fidelio, a harlequin of that tradition, is shown opposite that reference wearing the distinctive pink-and-green garb of the school, a lute strapped across his back. The scented passion-flower grows here (VI/265). The island is also appears to be inhabited by a race of amazons, warrior-women skilled with both bow and spear (DM4/0<sub>[1]</sub>). The island apparently trades with the kingdom of Monsalyar (on the other side of Orb) for dyes (DM3/0<sub>[1]</sub>).

### Plenty, Isle of



An island of rich and bountiful fields (III/15) somewhere in the Endless Sea,<sup>250</sup> where the god Eo is worshipped. Lemné is the main port on the Isle (II/289), built on seven hills (II/11). In the bustling harbour are many junks and fishing boats (II/84). There is a port on the southern tip of the Island, Iga,<sup>251</sup> from where the Island of Tranquil Dreams can be reached (III/15). Avenger made the journey from here on board a spice ship, suggesting some trade and contact between the two islands (III/80). Lemné is a few days' travel from Iga (III/15), suggesting that the island is fairly large. There is an important strongpoint in a mountain pass – the fortress of Kanokura (II/91).

Local aristocrats are called *Daimyo* (II/77), and are served by *samurai* warriors, some of which are illustrated opposite II/91. They carry long spear-like weapons and some are mounted whilst others are on foot or ride in carts. On the highest of the seven hills of Lemné is the house of Singing Wind, widow of the Daimyo, who serves the *Great Daimyo*, or Lord, Kiyamo (II/11). The chief advisor of Kiyamo is called Onikaba (II/36).<sup>252</sup> The samurai are peerlessly loyal and superb warriors, incorruptible and tirelessly alert (IV/195). Kiyamo's palace is in the mountains near Lemné. His audience hall is a long chamber of polished wood (III/15).<sup>253</sup>

The islanders conduct the tea-ceremony (II/11).<sup>254</sup> They live in paper houses – one such house is shown in the background of the illustration opposite II/22. Oddly, the evil ninja of the Way of the Scorpion appear to maintain a *Ryu* (school) on the Island (IV/124) – one attempts to slay Avenger on the Island (II/22). When Avenger came here, the island was terrorised by a pair of dreadful monsters – the Hannya and her servant, the O-Bakemono (II/91, *et seq.*). Illustrations of this pair are shown opposite II/29, II/287 & II/402.

### Plenty, Land of

A couple of references (I/0 and I/232) mention this place name. The former describes Avenger as '...honing (his/her) skills helping the downtrodden in the Land of Plenty' and the latter mentions Glaivas' ship sailing past it *en route* from the Island of Tranquil Dreams to Doomover. This is probably another name for the Isle of Plenty, but Avenger does not seem familiar with the Isle during the events of *Assassin!* This may simply be an oversight by the authors, or it could be a term used to refer to the island groups of the Endless Sea.

### Sea Elves' Sound



An island archipelago in the far south-west, where we find the Island of the Goddess (III/map). We could assume that there are sea elves dwelling here, perhaps southern relatives of those that live in the Sea of the Star.

### Tranquil Dreams, Island of

*On the magical world of Orb, alone in the sea that the people of the Manmarch call Endless, lies the mystical Island of Tranquil Dreams (I/0).*

A mysterious island in the Endless Sea with golden shores and emerald rice meadows. The Island is two weeks' sailing (or four hundred leagues) west of the Island of Plenty (I/232). Spice traders often ply this stretch of ocean (II/15) but it is 'distant leagues' from the mainland (I/0).<sup>255</sup>

Most of the people on the island are honest and open folk, with nothing to hide (III/26). Monks dedicated to the worship of Kwon have shared the island with the villagers for centuries. Their centre of worship is the *Temple of the Rock*, a huge pillared hall built into the side of an enormous boulder of red granite that was brought to rest on the island by the ice floes of the Age of Snows. The temple is set amid hot, red sands. The tiger heads in the great golden doors stare balefully – their eyes priceless fire opals that glower redly. Inside the doors is a cool half-light (III/1). The interior of the Temple is shown in the background of the illustration opposite I/1. There is a large opening in the ceiling that reveals the sky. A number of monks are also illustrated. They are shaven-headed and wear one-piece robes. The gates to the Temple of the Rock are illustrated on the cover of *Avenger!*

The monks of Kwon live only to help others resist the evil that infests the world. Some of their order follow the *Way of the Tiger* – these ninja are known as the 'men with no shadow' in the Land of Plenty and the Manmarch, and the mere mention them strikes terror into people's hearts. The ninja's covenant, the *Ninja No Chigiri* is as follows:

*I will vanish into the night; change my body to wood or stone;  
sink into the earth and walk through walls and locked doors. I  
will be killed many times, yet will not die; change my face and  
become invisible, able to walk among men without being seen.*

There are five Grandmasters who rule the order. They include the Grandmasters of the Dawn, Five Winds and Stars.<sup>256</sup> The secret litany of the ninja Grandmaster is as follows:

*I am ninja/My parents are the heaven and earth/My home is my  
body/My power is loyalty/My magic is my training/My life and  
death is breathing/My body is control/My eyes are the sun and  
the moon/My ears are sensitivity/My laws are self protection/My  
strength is adaptability/My ambition is taking every opportunity  
with fullness/My friend is my mind/My enemy is  
carelessness/My protection is right action/My weapons are  
everything that exists/Mt strategy is one foot in front of the  
other/My trust is in Kwon/My way is the Way of the Tiger.*

The dress of a ninja of the *Way of the Tiger* is shown on all the covers of the *Way of the Tiger* books except for *Inferno!*<sup>257</sup> At the start of *Avenger!* the Grandmaster of the Dawn is a man of fifty. Ranked below the Grandmasters are the initiates of the Inner Circle. New grandmasters are appointed when the elder one dies. Initiates duel with one another but must also pass a spiritual test (I/0, I/1, I/177).

### Western Isles

The location of these islands is uncertain, but they're probably somewhere in the northern Endless Sea. They appear to be home a breed of elk with antlers almost 20 feet across (I/83).<sup>258</sup>

<sup>249</sup> And, as some say, charlatans (V/81).

<sup>250</sup> The Isle is not marked on any of the maps, except for a south-west pointing arrow on II/map.

<sup>251</sup> The real-world Iga was a province in southern Japan, apparently famous for its *ninja* clan.

<sup>252</sup> When Avenger encounters him, he wears white robes adorned with stylised flowers of ultramarine. He has two swords, one long and one short, tucked into a sash at his waist (II/36).

<sup>253</sup> The soldiers of Kiyamo wear red lacquered armour (III/15), laced together with white ribbons. Their flags are strapped to the backs of banners – the symbol (or *Mons*) of Kiyamo is a four pointed star with a quatrefoil, red on white (II/91) – the design is also shown opposite that reference on the banner of one of the samurai.

<sup>254</sup> In real-world Japanese culture, this is a ritualised form of making tea.

<sup>255</sup> A league, defined as the distance a person can walk in one hour, is usually taken to be around 3 miles.

<sup>256</sup> What titles of the other two are, we don't know. Najishi was the Grandmaster of the Dawn, the most ancient and powerful of the monks on the island. He was killed by Yaemon, Grandmaster of Flame. Using borrowed sorcery, Yaemon tricked the monks into believing he was a worshipper of Kwon from the Greater Continent. He was in fact a worshipper of Kwon's twisted brother, Vile. He slew Najishi and stole the *Scrolls of Keitsuin* from the Temple of the Rock (I/0, I/1, I/177).

<sup>257</sup> The cover of *Avenger!* shows a ninja (probably intended to be Avenger) standing before the gates to the Temple of the Rock. However, the ninja is wielding a weapon, contrary to the teaching of the Way of the Tiger. This is probably the artist's mistake.

<sup>258</sup> Larger even than the prehistoric Irish Elk (*Megaloceros giganteus*), which had antlers of 12 feet from tip-to-tip.



## LITTLE-KNOWN LANDS



The name I am using for this region is derived from IV/map, but I also include the lands north and east of the Inner Sea.

### Clonmel



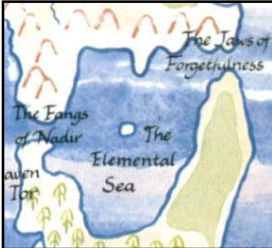
A town on the Ioun Straits (IV/map) between the Land of Bone and the Land of the Firedrakes (DM3/map), possibly a western outpost of Dorganath.<sup>259</sup> It stands on a river that flows into the straits (DM3/map), perhaps the Erebur (DM3/0 – see the entry for the Ten Kingdoms).

### Dwellings of the Fey



According to I/map and III/map this is a city on the river Eger (DM3/222) which flows into the north-east corner of the Sea of the Star.

### Elemental Sea



An inland sea in the far east separated from the Inner Sea by the rocks of the *Fangs of Nadir* (IV/map). The Fangs are '...incredible to behold' (they are illustrated on the cover of *Overlord!* and opposite IV/252). A thin strait passes between two rocky headlands that almost meet. 'They clash together continually, driven by some enchantment, or perhaps the very rocks themselves are alive? The force of their meeting sends a great booming roar into the skies and the water around the rocks heaves and surges in turmoil.' Avenger notes that an ordinary sailing boat stands no chance in these waters (IV/252).

On the other side, the sea itself appears '...calm enough, save where sudden geysers and spouts of water erupt randomly and whirl along at enormous speed for a little way, back and forth, raging like a wall of water, before subsiding into the sea once more.' These are the water elementals that give the sea its name (IV/14, IV/306). During *Overlord!* we find that the elementals can easily drown swimmers in a watery embrace with their huge liquid arms (IV/74), but they also seem to play quite joyfully (IV/54).

The kraken also lives in the sea, a daughter of Nullaq (IV/29). When Avenger came here the kraken attacked: '...a sudden boiling of the water...(h)uge tentacles clear the wave-tops and begin wildly threshing the sea...a great, bloated squid-like body heaves itself up, water cascading off it in torrential rivulets. Two milky eyes stare...balefully, the eyes of the kraken. A great beaked maw clashes...and its tentacles reach out (amid) the tumult of its rising' (I/54). She is illustrated on the cover of *Overlord!* rising from the waters before the Fangs of Nadir. A better illustration shows the kraken bursting from the waves opposite IV/54. The huge monstrosity uses her tentacles, as thick as a man's waist, to crush and drown prey before swallowing it whole with her beak (IV/204, IV/282).<sup>260</sup>

A small island lies near the centre of the Elemental Sea, at least according to IV/map and the Grandmaster of Shadows (IV/42), but when Avenger attempts to swim to the island (IV/14), the text suggests that the island is only half a mile out. The island is a rough circle of earth only a few hundred yards across. It is bare of vegetation and the air is cold and clammy, even though the sun beats down brightly from above. At the middle lies a cloud of mist, static and unmoving. Here, Avenger battled the devil-beast<sup>261</sup> and recovered the *Orb* and *Sceptre* (IV/246, IV/378; see also the entry for Irmuncast).

### Fables, Forest of



A vast forest on the coast south of the Fangs of Nadir, a few days sail from the Haven of Tor. A thick wall of trees stretches away to either side where the sandy beach ends (IV/158). The forest is murky and dark, '...musty with the smell of ages'. In the forest Avenger encountered the fabulous unicorn, a beast of great beauty and presence

(IV/26).<sup>262</sup> The woodland is filled with myriad flowers and monkeys of many colours (IV/252).

The other inhabitants of the forest avoid any intruders. The woods are populated by elves – their lord is known as Galanviel.<sup>263</sup> He has chestnut brown hair and amber eyes. The elves dress in oak-leaf green and carry ash bows (IV/36, IV/158). Deeper in the forest is an area where the trees are less dense but much taller – each tree is the home of an elvan<sup>264</sup> family, living on tiered tree-houses. Several elvan boats are moored at a rushing river – this is the Greenfen. They are made of white wood, with beautifully-carved swan-prows. These enchanted boats respond to spoken commands (IV/174).<sup>265</sup> The elves of the Forest care nothing for gold and gems (IV/216). They were born when the world was young, and have seen mankind grow up out of the mire of creation (IV/234). They know nothing of the lands to the north, nor do they travel there, save very occasional visits to their kin. They are not concerned with the doings of men (IV/306). Those who do a great service to elvankind are named *Elf-Friend* – when Avenger receives this blessing, we discover that these words carry an enchantment of '...uplifting wholesomeness...' (IV/312, IV/342).

The lands beyond the forest are unknown to men.<sup>266</sup>

### Firedrakes, Land of the



The firedrakes are fierce reptilians that rule the lands to the north of the Mountains of Undying Solitude and to the south-east of the Sea of the Star (III/map, IV/map). Their country is part of the Ten Kingdoms (DM3/0).

The cruel firedrakes are one of the 'elder races' of Orb. Since time immemorial, tales of the firedrakes have been used to terrify human, elven and orkish children alike into good behaviour. They are reptiles, with scales of a deep, iridescent blue. They keep human slaves and are notorious for their wanton cruelty. They remain contemptuous of man's weakness, though their numbers have declined gradually over the centuries. Their land forms an unassailable buffer between the men of the cities north of the Inner Sea and the lands of the Ten Kingdoms (DM2/0, DM3/0).<sup>267</sup>

### Greenfen, River



This river (not be confused with the Greenfens north of Doomover) rushes through the lush greenery of the Forest of Fables to the before it empties into the Inner Sea (IV/252). (IV/map, IV/174, IV/252). If IV/map is anything to go by, this is the longest river in Orb by a very wide margin.

### Ioun Straits



A series of waterways east of the Sea of the Star (IV/map) that run to the Sea of Passing through the marshy Everglades (DM3/map).<sup>268</sup>

### Monsalyar



A kingdom east of the Ioun Straits, indicated by an arrow on IV/map and on DM3/map.

<sup>262</sup> 'Its silvery flanks seem to gleam like armour and its golden horn spirals delicately upward. Great are the powers of the unicorn's horn, and most fortunate is he who can make the unicorn his steed' (IV/26).

<sup>263</sup> This name is very similar in style to Tolkien's elvish languages. GMs may like to use the *Sindarin* language for elves on Orb. Another elf Avenger encounters on the Isle of Thieves is called Lithuel (IV/342).

<sup>264</sup> The authors' preferred adjective.

<sup>265</sup> The boat illustrated on the cover of *Overlord!* appears to be made of gold, but the swan-prow and a line of (most probably) elvan script along the bulwark are visible.

<sup>266</sup> That is, they are labelled as such on IV/map.

<sup>267</sup> The lowest form of firedrake is a *lacker*, a puny slave-thing. *Soldiers* resemble blue-scaled, man-like lizards. *Demiveults* are huge flying reptiles that some say are archveults or other firedrakes in larval form, others that they are the productions of magical experimentation. They are dull-witted and unable to reproduce (VI/279, DM3/19). *Archveults* are the ruling caste, larger and more powerful than all others (save the demiveults). They are eight feet tall, and have a fierce head topped by a bony, spiked carapace like that of a reptile. Their eyes are smouldering pits of fire which, when they are angered, ignite, burning with a deep red flame that also bursts out over the blue scales of their body. They have large blue wings that, when spread, cast an awesome shadow (DM2/0). It is possible that the different forms of Firedrake may be part of their life cycle, given their resemblance to the dragonets of the *RuneQuest* RPG.

<sup>268</sup> *Ioun stones* are magical items from the *D&D* game but they have their origin in Jack Vance's *Dying Earth* stories where they are made by a race called the *archveults*. On Orb, the archveults are the rulers of the Land of the Firedrakes. Note also the magical stones of Peisistratus in the city of Greydawn (V/395) which resemble *D&D* *ioun stones*. Perhaps this waterway is the source of such stones on Orb, gathered or fashioned by the Firedrakes?

<sup>259</sup> The real-world Clonmel is a town in County Tipperary, Eire.

<sup>260</sup> 'Unless they bear an *amulet of Nullaq* – the Kraken's tentacles '...cease to writhe and (it) sinks down, quiescent ...disappear(ing) back into the watery depths' (IV/29, IV/138).

<sup>261</sup> 'A devil-beast is a warped and twisted creature, '...a foul spawn of the dark elves' (IV/234), created by the priests of Death from the remains of an elf, and thus an abomination to that race (IV/42). The beast encountered by Avenger is illustrated opposite IV/138.



### Passing, Sea of

A large ocean located to the east of the Elemental Sea – the two are separated by the Jaws of Forgetfulness (IV/map). The Jaws are held in superstitious awe by the simple folk of the Inner Sea (IV/60). On the shores of the Sea, above the *Farewell Lighthouse* lies the cave that harbours one of the three great Oracles of Orb, the *Oracle of the Axis at World's End* (DM3/0).

On the shores of the Sea of Passing above the *Farewell Lighthouse*, lies the cave that harbours the *Oracle of Axis at World's End*. The people of the Ten Kingdoms consult the Oracle over everything from the planting of crops to the waging of war. She shrouds her predictions in riddles and phrases that may be interpreted in more than one way. At the start of *The Shattered Realm*, she delivered a prophecy the meaning of which could not be mistaken. She predicted that the Land of the Ten Kingdoms would become the Land of the Nine Kingdoms '...through bloody war' (DM3/0).<sup>269</sup>

### Tolkaday

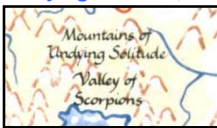


A town on the Ioun Straits (IV/map), possibly a western outpost of Monsalyar, located between the Land of the Firedrakes and Eyrie (DM3/map).

### Ten Kingdoms

'On the magical world of Orb, beyond the Mountains of Undying Solitude, lie the lands known as the Ten Kingdoms.' The people of the Ten Kingdoms are '...not as the people of the Manmarch – four of the kingdoms are not (populated) by men...but other, older races.' The old gods<sup>270</sup> are strong here and the people very superstitious. The lands of men are Monsalyar, Dorganath, Alleyn, Oligarchane, Sacerdage and the Dwellings of the Fey. The kingdoms of beasts are the Land of the Firedrakes, the Land of Bone, Margue and Eyrie (DM3/0).

### Undying Solitude, Mountains of



A range of mountains north of the Inner Sea (IV/map). The mountains are dark and forbidding, '...like gnarled fingers clawing blindly at the dirty grey sky. When Avenger came here, a cold and biting wind chills the bones – black clouds, heavy and ponderous, empty themselves of the lifeless earth with great sheets of freezing rain and sleet. The land is all but barren, a hostile place tortured by the elements, where few plants or animals, let alone men, can survive. There is some sparse vegetation – shrubs and bushes, blowing violently in the keening wind as if they struggled desperately against something that sought to tear them by the roots from the life-giving earth. Mountain goats huddle under small bushes.' The lands to the west of the mountains are a barren wilderness that runs down to the sea.

Avenger came across a great chasm opening the earth '...as though some godlike titan has slashed it with his sword.' Beyond it, rising up into the sky, were the *Craggs of Abandoned Hope*, three crooked jumbles of stone, towering upward above the mountain like a crown. A thin stone bridge of natural origin, about 2 feet wide, spanned the chasm. Above the mountain leant over and joined the massive expanse of forbidding stone on the other side (IV/10).<sup>271</sup>

The path towards the Craggs ran through the barren hills and soon became little more than a series of footholds, which appeared to be little used. Directly below the three gnarled Craggs was a small flattish clearing where Avenger found a carved rock with the whirlpool symbol of the god Nemesis. This was the fabled *Valley of Scorpions*, where the black-hearted ninjas of the *Way of the Scorpion* live and train under their Grandmaster of Shadows

<sup>269</sup> This, of course, came to pass following the war between Monsalyar and Dorganath chronicled in *The Shattered Realm*. The great battle between Dorganath and Monsalyar takes place on a plain between the 'River Erebor' and 'Mount Skelos' (DM3/0), but its location is not explicitly identified on DM3/map. The most likely place that matches this topography is the land between Clonmel and Tolkaday (DM3/map). This leads me to believe that these two cities are western colonies of Dorganath and Monsalyar, respectively.

<sup>270</sup> We aren't told who these 'old gods' are. Gods worshipped in the Ten Kingdoms are Toljan (DM3/0a), Anarchil, Nemesis and Death (DM3/0), all but one of whom are widely worshipped in the Manmarch. Perhaps Toljan is an 'old god'.

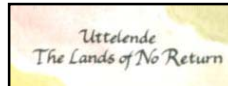
<sup>271</sup> Avenger encountered a horned cyclops living in a cave near the bridge – a massive (10 foot tall) humanoid figure. Its knotted limbs were heavy with muscle and hair and a single eye stared out from a misshapen head, topped by a wicked horn. It had a keen sense of smell and was dressed in goat hides. Its voice was more like the growl of a wolf than the common tongue (IV/34, IV/382). There was a net strung underneath the stone bridge, so as to catch anything that fell into it (IV/130). The cyclops hurled rocks in an attempt to knock Avenger into the net (IV/22). The cyclops' dwelling cave reeked with a foul stench of rotting flesh and excrement that '...hit the nostrils like a solid wall of odour'. There was filth and rubbish everywhere. In one corner was a heap of old clothes, weapons, splintered bones, etc. – the remains of previous victims (IV/95). The cyclops is illustrated opposite IV/22 atop its crag, where we can see part of its net.

– one of the most feared centres of evil on all Orb (IV/286).<sup>272</sup> The Grandmaster of Shadows is a master of the *Way of the Scorpion*, the supreme form of Ninjitsu, and the (self-proclaimed) most-accomplished ninja on Orb (IV/140).<sup>273</sup>

The symbol of the Scorpion ninja (probably carried by them all) is a small iron ring with a tiny black scorpion set in amber as its stone (IV/274). The Valley itself is unlike the mountain peaks which surround it. It is green and lush and the outlying fields are extensively farmed. They surround a small cluster of buildings in the middle of the valley. A winding goat track leads to the village, which is enclosed by a man-high stone wall (IV/148).<sup>274</sup>

The rough-looking farmers and mountain villagers that live here are actually adepts of the Way of the Scorpion in disguise. None of the buildings are very large, certainly not big enough to be training halls – there is nothing here to suggest that this is the only *Ryu*, or school, for the ninja on Orb [outside of the Island of Plenty (IV/124)].<sup>275</sup>

### Uttelende



*The Lands of No Return*. A 'new continent' of the extreme south east (III/381, IV/map). In the appendices of DM1 we read of a native of this country (here spelled *Uttelände*). He has features that '...betray a mix of racial types...' and we learn that he settled in the *Heath of Magicians*, perhaps located in Uttelende. 'Some,' the text states 'have suggested that he is not a man at all.' Perhaps these small pieces of information can give us a clue to the seemingly-bizarre nature of this land and people?

<sup>272</sup> One such ninja is illustrated opposite II/22 standing before a paper house on the Island of Plenty, carrying a sword and wearing sandals (compare this with ninja of the *Way of the Tiger*, who go barefoot). Another is shown opposite IV/292 wielding a *kusari-gama* and wearing a fully covering ninja costume.

<sup>273</sup> When Avenger came the Grandmaster wore the costume of a ninja, but red, without a hood and a black cloth belt around his waist. His forearms were exposed – there was a scorpion tattooed on each wrist. His face was nondescript, instantly forgettable, save for the eyes, black as night and full of power and malice, his voice black and accent-less (IV/140). He used a form of ninja magic – *innin* – the 'skill of silent stealth' or the 'secret shadow' to create a pitch black darkness (IV/272) as well as hurl clouds of burning pepper dust and acidic chemicals in an attempt to blind Avenger (IV/284, IV/296, IV/320). There is an illustration of the Grandmaster opposite IV/140, his *kyoketsu-shoze* on the floor in front of him. He wears a two-piece costume and is barefoot. When the *Sceptre* and *Orb* were stolen from the city of Irmuncast (IV/119, IV/148) they were taken to the Valley, although they were later removed to an island in the Elemental Sea, from where they were recovered by Avenger (IV/378). Only the Grandmaster knew their true location, which he revealed to Avenger upon the point of death (IV/42).

<sup>274</sup> Ninja sentries protect the village, armed with *ninjato* swords and dart-like 'throwing spikes' (IV/28, IV/40). Some lurked in turfed-over pits in the ground (IV/196). Weapons used by the Way of the Scorpion include a chain weighted at one end and with a short stick with a sickle-like blade at the other; a *kusari-gama* (IV/220); the paired *sai*, an iron spike with two sharpened quillons (IV/8); the *kyoketsu-shoze*, a length of braided animal hair connecting a heavy metal ring to a dagger-like blade (IV/140); a simple wooden stick (IV/380) that has a hidden sickle-like blade (IV/404); and a thin sliver of steel concealed in the sleeve that darts out on a flick of the wrist (IV/42).

<sup>275</sup> Avenger observed many of the 'villagers' climbing down the well in the centre of a cobbled square as evening fell, rather than going to any of the houses. At night, all was quiet '...except for the muted scratchings of crickets and the occasional hoot of an owl' (IV/208). Some huts in the village kept lanterns outside them. The well was as black as coal save for a side tunnel set in the wall, some 10 feet above the water. The tunnel, more like an alcove, ended in a wooden door with a lantern outside of it (IV/316). The door was painted with a large red scorpion rising out of a whirlpool. Over the door an inscription read *Make the night your friend and darkness your cloak of invisibility*. There was a small indentation where the handle should be – a circular lock (IV/316). The door opened when a ninja's scorpion ring is placed in the hole (IV/376). The corridor beyond was dimly lit, the floor and ceiling made of polished wood – clean and simple. The walls are of sculpted stone – gargoyles and demonic forms surged out, as if to bite and snap at those who walked along the corridor. After a time the corridor bent to the right. There was a ninja guard beside a door [IV/388 – in reality a trick clay dummy with a wax head (IV/8, IV/412)]. The real sentry lurked behind a trapdoor in the ceiling (IV/8). The door itself was studded with many bolts, shaped like scorpions. An enormous whirlpool symbol was painted on it. The door led to another corridor (IV/44) where there was a mirror, placed to confront an interloper with an unexpected reflection (IV/56, IV/68). Behind the mirror was a gaunt pale man in black robes adorned with whirlpool symbols – a priest of Nemesis (IV/56), illustrated opposite IV/68. He carried a ball and chain-style weapon. Past this, the corridor opened out into a circular well, a spiral staircase going down. Over the edge, a bright light glowed at its base, a hundred yards below (IV/140). The whole effect is that of a whirlpool – the staircase was built in honour of Nemesis – the god whose symbol is the vortex. The stairs came out at a well-lit, spacious chamber. The floor was made of polished wood and the walls polished ebony, lined with glowing lanterns. It was bare of furniture, save an altar at the other end with a black velvet drape, covered in striking white whirlpool and scorpion shapes. An effigy of the god Nemesis towered behind it, radiating an aura of evil. This was the chamber of the Grandmaster of Shadows (IV/140).