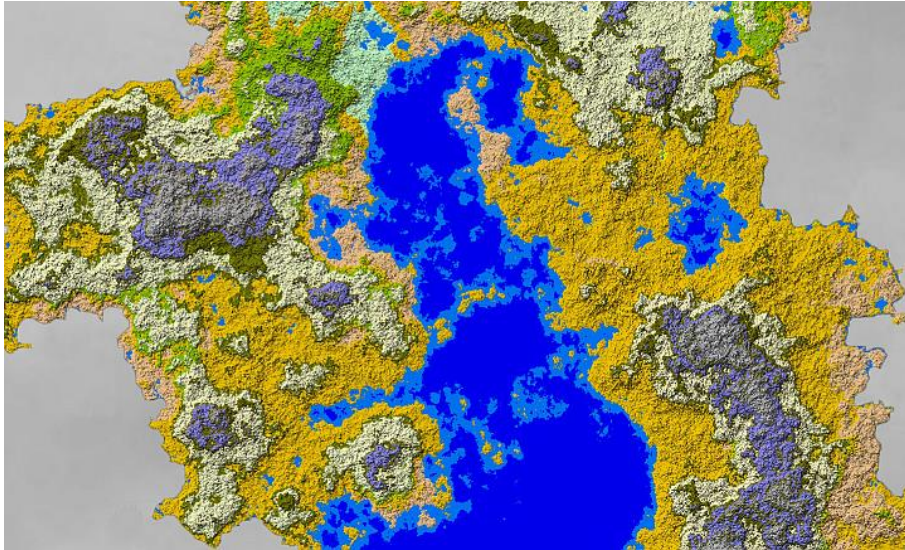


# BOOKLET: LANDS OF LEGEND

This is a preliminary draft of what will become *Book 4 – The World*. But a brief description of the core nations is needed for *Book 1 – character design*.

This does not describe the whole world – far from it. It describes the homelands mentioned in character design, most of which are clustered around the seahorse neck in the map below.

From top to bottom, the map covers more than 5,000 miles. The grey areas are the Mists of Madness that surround the world. (The map needs prettying up.)



## THE ETERNAL EMPIRE

*The Eternal Empire of 1,000 Loyal City States* (*The Eternal Empire* for short) is the world's greatest nation, as every child born there knows. At almost a century old, it may also be the world's oldest empire.

Ruled today by Empress Sofiria, *Queen of A Million Daemons*, as it has been since the beginning, the empire brings peace and civilisation to all it touches.

The empire might be more properly termed a republic. Those nations which ally themselves are allowed to keep their identity and continue as they did before. The only stipulation is that they accept the Tithe into *The Church of Daemonic Celebration*.

(Note: In the Empire, names are often aspirational. It is *The Eternal Empire of 1,000 Loyal City States* because that's what Sofiria wants and maybe if enough believe it, it will become true...)

## THE TITHE

Daemons are considered a force for *good* in the empire, and people volunteer (or criminals and prisoners are 'volunteered') to become Celebrants of the church.

The big problem with daemons is that to have any impact in the world they need to be bound. Individual sorcerers gain great power but are limited in how many daemons they can bind before their mind shatters. Empress Sofiria discovered a ritual to bind countless daemons to the church (and by extension, herself).

Individual Celebrants take on the care of daemons, and each agrees to be possessed for at least one year. This changes a person, who isn't always the same afterwards.

Some consider the tithe to be evil, little more than a form of slavery. But those who have served as Celebrants (and thus possessed by daemons) are loyal and have a favoured position in the empire – so how could it be bad?

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## **FESTIVUS**

This island queendom, just off the north of the mainland, is the first nation of the empire, the empress's birthplace.

Festivus is the utopia at the heart of the empire. That it appears like a skull in certain maps can be safely ignored.

This can be a strange place. Everyone accepted as a citizen has full access to the daemonic spigots on every street corner and can wish for any physical goods once a day. The first wish is usually a grandiose house built by daemons, which leads to the occupied realms having a unique appearance.

Society is *different* here where every physical need is satisfied for free, and where every position of importance is occupied by someone who has served multiple terms as a Celebrant (and whose mind is a little strange)...

This is a land of wild artistic expression, where society is all about making an impression on those around you.

After art comes politics. It is a land of cut-throat rivalry. The scions of the aging Sofiria (her daughters, grand-daughters, and more) wonder which will replace her (and the boldest wonder aloud if she can even die).

*This is not be a good place for continued adventure since it is a utopia, though the occasional adventure here can explore what form that utopia takes. What are the troubles of a people where every citizen can have whatever they want?*

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## **SANGUINE**

The first nation accepted into the Empire, and one of the few by conquest.

One of the few nations ruled by men, like Mettle – such an offence against nature naturally leads to madness.

A city devoted to sorcery in all its forms, light and dark. To be a full citizen you must prove your sorcerous skills to the ruling Covenant; no sorcery is forbidden.

Everyone important here is a sorcerer. Others are second class citizens – which is not a good thing in a city where human life has little value and coinage is minted in blood – literally.

Their coven-like leaders planned to conquer nations around them, and sleepy Festivus with its “let others be” philosophy would be an easy conquest.

The absolute devastation of their military and sorcerous forces was a humbling moment, and they bound their fate to the Empress in a blood pact.

Now, a century later, none of the original cabal survive. Those who now rule wonder if it is time for a change...

*Sanguine is a great place for darker themed adventures, where the currency is human lives and blood. This is the place to be for grimdark adventures.*

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## **CRUCIBLE, LAND OF THE DEAD**

A land of vast tombs, where the wealthy and heroic dead are celebrated, their bodies cared for and guarded against possession. No one knows more about daemons and keeping them at bay than the sorcerers of Crucible.

You'll later read of the creation of the world 500 years ago, where humanity and daemons were both enslaved and teamed up in rebellion. Crucible has different ideas.

By their telling, humans were unthinking machines of flesh and bone created by a Primordial for its own purposes. In its experiments, it bound humans and the bodiless daemons together.

And so, humanity gained its mind and soul. Now, the daemons that are the soul of humanity are caught in a cycle of rebirth and will, by means as yet unknown, one day leave this mortal coil and ascend back to true daemon-kind.

Daemons help humanity because they see us as broken sisters who they want to help reach ascension.

Crucible culture is based around the idea of being caretakers for the soul. They often consider sorcery and the binding of daemons to be perversion, and the rogue daemons that are created by summonings gone wrong are figures of pity they are eager to help leave their mortal prisons.

Children are born without souls, and most acquire one in their first year. The ambitious and powerful bring new-borns to the Halls of Repose in Crucible, hoping their child inherits the soul of a bygone hero. Offering this service makes the nation very powerful and most of its neighbours want to protect it.

*This land can be modelled after any land of ancient antiquity, especially Egypt.*

## FENDISH

A swamp queendom and the source of much of the empire's military might.

This is a land the early Fendish had to conquer to live here, and is the only nation known to have faced the collective might of The Buccaneers of the Shining Sea and won (technically it was a draw, a stand-off, but that has never happened before so it is regarded as a win).

Living in a swamp has its challenges. The Fendish constructed elaborate floating towns and cities, navigated by canals and waterways.

The people are warm, friendly, uptight, and eager to fight – over their honour or just for fun. Each community considers itself a single family, with the entire nation regarded as more distant kinfolk.

When the Eternal Empire invited their membership, they saw this as a perfect opportunity to band together and fight a superior force.

As their forces were gathering, the nation of Sanctuary was invaded by Outland tribes. This pimple could have easily been abandoned by the Eternal Empire (which was what the tribes gathered against Sanctuary were relying on), but while still a young empire and facing threats on multiple sides, Sofiria came to their defence. She could easily have lost everything.

This sort of dangerous loyalty to minions was exactly the way to the Fendish heart, and their gathered forces joined with the Eternal Empire to drive off the gathered Outland forces. A formal alliance came soon after.

Ever since, Fendish legions have formed the heart of the Eternal Empire's armies.

*Think of Germany as it is often portrayed in steampunk settings, or perhaps ancient Sparta or mythic Greece generally. This is a land of nobility and duels and is perfect for a campaign with lots of fighting and tests of honour.*

**A note on Fendish Duels:** There are two types. One-on-one duels are sometimes allowed but those part are scorned since they can't find someone willing to stand by their side.

Two-on-two duels are the norm. Duellists usually have a second, and that second fights alongside them.

## LABYRINTH, CITY OF SECRETS

All roads pass through the Labyrinth, it is said. Any map of the world shows the city in several places, each a junction of important roads and rivers. There is one Labyrinth and all routes pass through it.

This is a city-state of scheming and intrigues, a rich hub of travel and trade, and the Covenant of Merchant Warlocks who rule enshrined as law the concept that everything has a price. People come here to make deals, knowing they can always get what they want – at a cost.

Once a deal is made here, the full power of the Law of the Vow comes into play and punishes any who try to back out.

A less-discussed side effect of this is that misunderstandings around intentions and agreements (to hide the nature of the vow) are common and can lead to comedic or tragic consequences.

This law makes Labyrinth influential and powerful and so Empress Sofiria sought to add the realm to her empire.

She entered into a private negotiation with the Council of Labyrinth, and emerged with a treaty of alliance. The details of that treaty have not been shared but it has sparked wonderings and rumours of what she might have given up to get that treaty.

The people of Labyrinth are guarded and cagey, careful to avoid their secrets being used against them, and believing words have power they are reluctant to enter into deals without good reason.

*If you want an adventure focussed on intrigue, lies and secrets, investigations and mysteries, this is the place. Fiction offers many sources of inspiration, such as the works of Shakespeare.*

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## **SANCTUARY, LAND OF THIEVES**

A refuge for the downtrodden and oppressed, a sanctuary for those in need. The Covenant of well-meaning Warlocks who founded the city had a vested interest in establishing the idea that no-one is beyond redemption, and so the city is overrun by thieves and gangsters.

Here, the Law of Redemption says if you have enough people who love and respect you, the laws of nature change to protect you. People exploit this by taking advantage of others, and then doing little good deeds to make up for it. Criminal gangs thrive when they do real good for their communities.

No one is ever truly outcast from the land of thieves, no matter how powerful their enemies are. Some are frustrated that the city doesn't live up to its ideals.

Almost the oldest of the Eternal Empire's protectorates, and first willing member. The land acquired enemies quickly since it provided a haven for those who had powerful enemies, and the Covenant was quick to accept the empire's offer of protection.

A mighty force of tribal Outlanders under the legendary Khan Kharif plundered Sanctuary. When help was demanded from the new treaty, there was little hope considering the forces arrayed against them. But their Empress responded, and brought the forces of Fendish with her.

This was the day that legendary Khan met her end, and the Outlanders loyal to her have never forgotten those involved.

But neither has Sanctuary which has remained steadfastly loyal.

*Sanctuary is a good place to start your adventures – it is the most familiar of the lands to typical RPG adventures.*

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## **THE INFINITE LIBRARY**

The Librarians are a monastic order of philosophers and truth-seekers, founded by the first Witch Queen, the inventor of writing. In spreading this art, she made it possible for others to become better sorcerers.

It's said that anything written down, anywhere, appears in a secret archive of the Library. The Librarians enjoy a degree of protection since it is assumed that they know every ritual ever created, along with many secrets people would prefer they didn't know.

The Library is technically not a member of the Eternal Empire. No treaty has been agreed, but it is on an island close to Festivus so it is assumed to be allied.

Librarians maintain their neutrality by offering service to other nations as arbitrators and inquisitors. Those who accept their service know the findings will be upheld by powerful daemonic pacts, ensuring fair and honest outcomes. (They are more popular as investigators than arbitrators – since diplomats generally want outcomes that benefit them, and those aren't fair outcomes.)

*Think of the Brotherhood of the Rose. Agents of the Library can act as a typical adventuring party, travelling from nation to nation and sticking their noses in other people's problems.*

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## **DERESPINE**

The Derespine are nomads who know no fixed home. They began as refugees of lands which were conquered or became Hexlands, and sought a new home.

Over time, they built a common culture based on camaraderie, independence, resistance to oppression, and their nomadic lifestyle.

Their unwillingness to accept the laws of others means they are rarely welcomed, and are subject to mistreatment. They are forced to the fringes of whatever society they are passing through.

The lands of the Eternal Empire are very attractive to them, because they are largely protected from the vicissitudes of spontaneous magic but can be found almost anywhere.

Any individual traveller within their ranks may be hiding past secrets, but as long as they pull their weight within the clan they are welcomed and protected.

*They are based more on the Travellers of the UK than the Roma or Jews but they don't come from a single culture and can accommodate many concepts. It's hard to suggest fiction to draw upon that isn't infested with racism, so it's best make up your own approach to the Derespine.*

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## **OTHER NATIONS**

The Eternal Empire contains many more nations, but these are the most powerful and recognisable. These are city states that ally and conflict with neighbours.

# INLAND NATIONS

The inlands of the East lie between the coastal nations on the edge of the Living Sea and the Outland nations at the edge of the world. Every nation here is defined by their relationship with The Conquest of Mettle. The Eternal Empire is spreading through this region, and The Conquest of Mettle stands in opposition.

## **LAMPOON**

Possibly the strangest of all the Inland Realms, Lampoon has been invaded by both the Eternal Empire and Mettle, but neither knows how to conquer the realm.

This land is under a curse of Wish Fulfilment. What people say tends to come true, and it doesn't matter if people previously believed it. This is a chaotic land of larger-than-life bards and heroic entertainers, in the mould of Baron Munchausen. Being a storyteller or artist of some sort, able to spread wild tales, is powerful.

But wishes can be double-edged – the wisher can't control how their wishes play out, so it's easy to inadvertently set in motion a series of events that lead to your own doom or exile. This is a land prone to instability and extreme events.

Who rules, and the nature of culture and government, can all change rapidly. The greatest adventurers here are people who leave to use their skills elsewhere.

*This is a land of chaos and wild magic, avoided by outsiders because nothing is predictable here.*

## **THE METTLE CONQUEST**

The sun never sets on Mettle. That eldritch orb is always overhead, burning the land, turning forests to glass, and creating a fierce warrior people.

The current ruler, Kaiju Khan, follows the Forgotten God who made the world and will one day unmake it, and believes daemons are evil. His sunglass-armoured, golem-riding Cataphracts raid other lands to liberate them from daemon corruption and bring them to the cleansing purity of the Sun.

The most celebrated and honourable slave-knights rise to the status of Paladins, gaining land and noble status.

Daemons have no power here. The armies of Mettle carry this magic with them. Every land they conquer is forced to swear allegiance to the Forbidden God, and then becomes a desert with the Eldritch Sun permanently overhead.

*This is a great land if you want to play honourable paladins who take their oaths a little too seriously, or warriors who can become land-holders through conquest and knightly quests. Numerous kingdoms believe (accurately) they are beset on all sides by the scourge of daemonkind.*

## **MIRTHRENDOR, LAND OF HEROES**

This is a land of gladiators. The crowd rewards entertainment, so those who have a flashy style do well.

Everyone is born a slave and if they earn their freedom, it is either through the arena or winning the approval of a superior, which requires swashbuckling force of arms.

The magic of this land rewards those who stand on their own feet and do it in a flashy style. This is a land of insufferable show-offs.

*Take the stories of Alexandre Dumas and add Spartacus, and you have Mirthrendor. This is a land of swashbuckling duels, hot tempers, honour and dishonour.*

## **SPIRAL, THE FIRST CITY**

Spiral is a vast city in the heart of a hexed wasteland. The city itself has many regions that are off-limits.

This land fell before the Eternal Empire was founded by the city still stands, hiding its own secrets.

People live here because people make a home everywhere, and conquest from outside is likely impossible. The city is split into many separate communities.

The Rust is a mysterious plague that afflicts many who use magic, consuming them and their daemons. It affects even the golems ridden by knights of Mettle. No magic or magic-user is safe.

Those who dwell here have learned to appear 'normal' and avoid overt magical actions. There may be secrets and ancient magics, but they aren't described here – they have yet to be discovered.

It is said that those who reach the heart of the city, the centre of the spiral, get their true wishes granted, so it does attract doomed visitors.

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## **TOURMALINE, CITY OF GLASS**

The second city of Mettle is home to artificers struggling to figure out how the world works – an art not needed elsewhere since daemons solve any task.

Glassmancers harvest sunglass and harness its power to forge living weapons of war, including the Golem Warmounts ridden by Slave-Knights and Paladins.

The Glassmancers of Spiral can't match the physics-defying creations of daemon artificers, but their works burn daemons and break bindings, giving the Khans of Mettle a weapon against other lands.

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## **VIAND**

A land of rolling hills, bountiful farms, and comfortable temperatures.

Those living here want a simple life, and that's what they get. Adventurers leave to seek excitement elsewhere. The covenant has sought alliance with the Eternal Empire and with the Conquest of Mettle, and with other nations besides, but have so far been overlooked. They just don't offer anything worth having.

*Think of idyllic medieval England. Or the land of the hobbits. A land where conflicts are often over small things. The magic of this realm ensures that nothing really important ever happens here. Avoided by adventurers – there is little Glory here.*

## **THE LIVING SEA**

There are many cities and nations on the isles and coasts of the Living Sea. Some pay tithes to the Pirates, others haven't yet entered into a 'protection' agreement but all fear the queens of the sea.

The further south you sail, the more risky and unexplored the coasts...

*If the campaign is based on maritime exploration, there is much to discover.*

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## **FOUNTAIN**

A roaming island travelling the Shining Sea; its people are cosmopolitan traders and scholars, known for camaraderie and curiosity.

Most people encountered from this land are outcast for trying to find answers to these questions, or were accidentally left behind when the island moved on.

There are secrets hidden in the island. How does it roam? What protects its people from wild magic and roaming daemons? What are the strange ruins and the peoples sometimes glimpsed inland?

*This is a legendary land full of mysteries. A place for sandbox and hexcrawls.*

## **THE PIRATES OF THE LIVING SEA**

The Shining Sea, maybe more often called the Living Sea, is home to clans of sea people – swashbuckling Vikings accepting no law but their own. Going on a raid is a rite of passage.

Several clans are large enough to rule cities or islands, and have an annual meeting of Pirate Queens to hash out differences, agree territories and tithes, and brawl a lot. The known clans have flags styled after birds:

**Doves:** Known for compassion and mercy, thanks to true stories of towing sinking victims back to safety. Their goal is to establish a pirate empire, with them as leaders naturally. They want to show non-pirate neighbours they can be trusted to maintain treaties.

**Penguins:** The peacocks of the sea, known for their flamboyant fashion sense and the love of extravagant violence. They have no desire for peace with other nations, believing that pirates are natural predators. This creates conflict with the Doves. They created the lightning cannon many pirate vessels carry.

**Ravens:** Renowned for diplomacy and cunning. Their word is their bond, but it is said they always come out on top in any negotiation. When pirates unite, it's usually a Raven in charge of the battle.

**Sparrows:** One of the more scattered clans, crewing smaller ships. Renowned for their camaraderie and heroism, and tales of abandoning treasure to help clan mates in trouble (while complaining about it at length).

**Crows:** Most feared of the clans, exiled from the Compact for brutality and treachery. There are more sorcerers in this clan than most, those willing to sacrifice captives to power blood sorcery. When a merchant sees a pirate ship, they pray for any flag but this one.

*There are many fictional sources for pirates and mariners.*

# THE OUTLANDS

The Inlands are the regions closer to the Living Sea, where life is abundant.

The Outlands are those lands between the Inlands and the Mists of Madness that mark the edge of the world.

These are realms plagued by wild magic and roaming mists, and can be savage.

## OUTLAND TRIBES

Most cultures in the Outlands are tribal and nomadic. If they stay in one place they will be destroyed by wild magic or pillaged by those who want what they managed to build.

Some Tribes seek harmony with the world and each other, venerating life and respecting nature. Many more seek domination through violence and terror.

Their Gods are shaped by the tribe's beliefs, though the more 'civilised' inland nations often claim their shamans are commanding daemons with realising it, their gods and elementals are simply misunderstandings of daemons.

Tribes-folk are hardy and honourable peoples who regard city-folk as soft and decadent. Some worship the Forbidden God, who teaches that daemons are evil and corrupt and are using adventurers.

Almost a century ago, a single tribal leader arose to unite the tribes. Different tribes remember her goals differently, but the basic idea is that Khan Kharif was on her way to unifying the tribes and needed a major victory to prove herself and gather the tribes to her banner.

When she fell at Sanctuary, that dream was destroyed and the local tribes fell back into infighting.

Travel further south and few have heard of this event and the tribes simply have to deal with the day-to-day struggle of survive in these hostile lands. They have their own legends.

*The Outland nations make for a great Conan The Barbarian-style setting, but any setting which privileges the nobility of a savage people being civilised works too.*

The Outlands are a mysterious realm with many wild tales of legendary realms here. There are even stories of non-humans, or creatures that have lost their humanity... Everything said about the nations in the next column might be true – or might be tall tales.

## OGROMYTH

In every generation there are born some humans that are unnaturally large and strong. Whether exploited and enslaved for their strength or treated with love, they are different. They don't belong.

Legend says out in the Outlands there is a land of mighty giants, Orgomyth, from which these kin are descended...

## SATYMPHALIA

Humans can think and feel. There are many creatures in the world – how different are they, really? Do they have their own land in the Outlands?

Sorcerers are known to experiment with daemons and wild-life. Some of these creations escape to make their own life. Some are said to escape to a sanctuary in the Outlands, a magical land where thinking beast and human live in harmony.

## VESTIA

The world is of the body of the Forbidden God, but it was shaped by Daemons. These are diametric opposites. What does that make the Dryads? Are they one or the other – or something different?

The Dryads of Vestia live in symbiosis and harmony with plant life, especially the Great Forest. Trees have reshaped to form houses and cities, and the people tend the forest and punish those who harm it. There are rumours the people have lost their humanity and worship a mysterious One Tree or are each controlled by sentient fungus. Why else would you go to such effort to protect and preserve your fields and forests?

## VOLKAN

A remote, volcanic land, home to the sorcerer Volkan and her dragon-riders. Little is known by outsiders, though tales of the Dragon Warlock's inhumanity and cruelty are common.

The loyalty of her people is intense and suggests the tales of her cruelty might be exaggerated – or perhaps the people are equally harsh.

Sometimes people with volcanic blood are encountered who claim Volkan as their home. If so, why were they outcast?

# MYSTERIOUS AND HOSTILE HOMELANDS

## HEXLANDS

A hexland is a particular kind of ruin, a place where wild magic dominates.

In the past, when the sorcerer or warlock ruling a land died, her bound daemons were unleashed, causing chaos, and turning their domain into ruin.

Or wishes (see Spontaneous Magic) cause chaos and doom to an unprotected realm.

Or a powerful sorcerous experiment runs wild and destroy a community.

There are such ruins everywhere, either of individual buildings, villages, cities, or entire tribal lands, or entire queendoms.

These are places avoided by sensible folk, but adventurers are not sensible. There are often prizes to be won here, and sometimes the hex can be reversed.

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## MISTS OF MADNESS

The world is flat, surrounded by the Mists of Madness. Those entering the Mists are corrupted and become rampaging monsters intent on destruction.

The Mists sometimes bubble up from the earth or seep in from the edge of the world, transforming all they touch.

There is no Glory to be won here, only an ignominious death.

(An adventurer's Glory is not accessible inside the Mist.)

It is possible to roll Abomination as a Legend. That means you have been swallowed by the Mists, and now feel the chaos burning and boiling within you and fear the day you lose control and turn into a crazed monster wreaking havoc. People like you are feared and distrusted, so you hide this side of yourself.

This is a roleplaying element – the game system will never force such a fate on you, so when other PCs find out about it (usually pretty quickly), the players need not panic (their characters might!).

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## BEYOND THE MIST

There are rumours of lands beyond the Mists and people that visit them or come from there.

Whether true, or another manifestation of the Mist's corruption, is unknown. To be safe, when discovered, such people are usually killed...

## THE HIGHLANDS

There are islands floating the sky, carried by aetheric winds, strange weather thought to have a daemonic origin. The people on these islands are invariable piratical wanderers, whose ships have the power of flight only close to the islands.

They raid realms for supplies before winds carry their islands away.

## OTHER LOCATIONS

There are many strange and wondrous realms that defy understanding. Maybe some will be encountered by adventurers.