

## EMERGENCE by John F Marshall

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Influenced by the work of authors such as Paolo Bacigalupi and N K Jemisin, Emergence is an epic fantasy about love and war, when an undersea city supporting the remnants of an industrialised, authoritarian and callous society surfaces in an Eden where magic is real, and peoples have adapted to a post-apocalyptic world. Emergence holds a mirror to our own existence, and who we want to be.

### SUMMARY

Many thousands of years after a failed inter-planetary invasion, the planet Eco has recovered from catastrophic damage and life has returned. The Northern Lands are now split by the Great Rift, a Garden of Eden amidst barren wastelands. Human life has also returned and has learned to live with nature, refusing to return to the old ways. All of this changes when rebellious Caia Esvane, daughter of traditionalist shaman Robin Esvane, detects a point of light travelling across the sky. She breaks one of the greatest taboos by mind-joining, and discovers an escape pod containing a dying man.

The man is in stasis, a survivor of the great war that followed the invasion. Caia relives his memories and sees an industrialised world already destroying itself. The escape pod descends into the sea, until through the mind-join, she sees a colossal glowing star deep in the ocean.

This is City 5, one of seven undersea cities created to survive the invasion. Shaped like a starfish and feeding off natural resources (see Figure 1), it has grown and is now home to over thirty thousand people. City 5 is sentient, with its own agenda and ambitions, whilst the polarised society within is repressed, organised into sects governed by strict laws. At the top, Dynasties struggle for power and the most privileged consider themselves to be eternal gods, rejuvenated many times. There are sects in C5 based on differing beliefs about the surface, but all agree on one thing – that it is not habitable, and they are the only survivors from the war.

In the darkness of the lowest levels live the Feelers, blind and possessed of unusual gifts. Feelers live off waste and are part of the ecosystem within the ventilation systems. Order is maintained by Lawkeepers, work is done by Drones. Apart from the Royals, all other sects are allocated a specific life-span. The discovery of the survival pod acts as a catalyst. The Royals discover the Rift with its forests and mineral deposits, and its primitive peoples. They see resources to be exploited and slaves to do their bidding. They are resolved to return the planet to how it used to be, with giant cities and endless wealth, ruled over by the strongest dynasty. Knowledge of the impending changes – Emergence - disrupts the city, unleashing beliefs and the desire for freedom amongst its peoples. The Dynasties fight for control of the new world as the city itself reveals a secret agenda.

The surface is not all that it seems. The great war did more than destroy the old world. It changed nature and left behind an alien technology beyond understanding. The clans that live there and the ruined machines are linked to the planet in ways that the City dwellers cannot comprehend, including dragonkind and the Magda Stones, a relic from the invasion. Strangest of all is the Great Tree, a mystical one-eyed giant rumoured to sleep below the Rift.

The peoples of the Rift and the Outlands will have to unite to face the new threat, and Caia Esvane is chosen to lead the fight as her powers grow stronger. To make matters more difficult, she has encountered Lucas Venn - an inhabitant of the city sent to the surface to collect data - and she knows they are destined to be together. To realise her full powers and

become Dragonwitch, Caia must first be tested and forced to question her beliefs. Ultimately, to save her own world she must bring back the dragons and summon Eco to help destroy the city.

Emergence is much more than a clash of cultures. It follows the lives and fates of families caught up in an unjust war, and concerns the battle of beliefs - magic versus technology, progress versus sustainability, love versus hate. The sects from the city and the Surface clans must fight and die for what they believe in, as the full power of Eco is finally revealed.

### SYNOPSIS

Caia Esvane breaks one of the greatest taboos by mind-joining a mysterious object in the sky, and discovers an escape pod containing a dying man in stasis following an interplanetary war. Caia learns that her people were not the first, and that the world was on the edge of destruction. The escape pod descends into the sea, until she sees a colossal glowing star deep in the ocean – this is City 5. Subsequently, Caia argues with her father, Shaman Robin Esvane, about what she's done. He hints that her powers are growing too great, and banishes her to the Outlands to safeguard her secret.

Ex-gladiator Lucas Venn is an Investigator, exploiting his reputation to help suppress the thousands of slave workers within the City, and trusted by Hedra Darke, the tyrant queen. Lucas has incurred her displeasure and as a punishment, he is sent on maintenance duties with Tech Drone Laura Zobe, and discover the escape pod. The final message from the dying occupant is that the surface is now habitable and rich with resources.

Hedra discusses what she has learned with her Seer, a man who has rejected rejuvenation and challenges her conventions. He warns her of impending doom, but she chooses to ignore him. She calls a council meeting and informs those present, including ruling members of the Gore dynasty that the city is going to emerge. At this point the Seer immolates, as a final protest but his gesture is wasted.

Caia's journey to the Outlands is dangerous and she must outrun a lethal ice-storm and its attendant skysails. She is saved by an Outlander riding a reptyl and is taken to one of the ruined machines, relics of the alien invasion dotted across the landscape. She learns that Darius Esvane is her brother, abandoned as a child because of what he witnessed – the death of their mother. After the storm passes, the Outlanders decide to re-enter the Rift to take control back from the Shamans.

Within the city, Lucas visits the coliseum where he survived 100 contests. He discovers that the people already know of Emergence – leaked by Rath Gore to undermine Hedra. He also discovers the growth of the surface sects – the believers in the All-Seeing Eye, and those that believe the surface is hell. He himself has dreamed of the Eye, but has kept it to himself. He witnesses a family suicide, and reports to Hedra what he has learned.

Lucas and Laura are sent to the surface to collect data. They disobey orders and land, exploring the beach and the forest. They see the sun for the first time, and birds and the early morning sky and they are overwhelmed, and the magic of Eco affects them deeply. They don't want to return to their spartan existence. Neither has more than a year left to live if they do.

As the colossal storm approaches the villages, the Shaman orders everyone to take refuge in Glass Mountain (Figure 2), but the storm is so terrible that they must climb higher, following the Fool's Path – a winding, treacherous stairway. Many of the elderly and frail are lost as are entire children and families. Tovey Fegan, Robin's brother in law, lets his wife fall to her death rather than risk his own life and Robin knows he is to blame. When the haven is finally attained, Robin discovers an ancient painting of the Emergence, and has a vision of what will come.

Caia and the Outlanders are making their way around the coast towards the Rift via the Birdsong Estuary (figure 2) when they see the Explorers landing, and curious, track them. When they arrive, the Explorers are empty and the Outlanders conceal them within the trees, and then hide themselves. The Outlanders want to spear the newcomers but Caia senses the energy weapons and knows they are dangerous. Then she makes eye contact with Lucas Venn and there is an instant connection. Caia has a glimpse of the future and knows her life is changed. When Caia and the others reach Glass Mountain where Robin led the villagers for shelter, she learns what happened. Robin is devastated, but is overwhelmed to be united with his son. Darius does not share his feelings.

On his return, Lucas is punished for his disobedience by being sold into slavery. He becomes a Feeler and is blinded, but discovers their secret- in the lowest levels of the city there is a special chamber where alien DNA exists. Once consumed, Feelers become invisible to the city. He is also shown the all-seeing eye and experiences enlightenment, joining their movement. Laura is already a believer. She has been sentenced to death by maceration, and is left to await her doom.

Robin and Caia use the Magda Stones to call a clan-moot to share what they know. The clans begin to assemble. Robin wants to welcome the city and to share what they have. Caia's sister Aina wants war, but they have no idea what they face. It's decided that the King Stone must be hidden in a safe place, and Aina (Caia's twin) agrees to take it, travelling north with Darius and the other outlanders. They will hide it in the Delves.

Caia is taken on by Aris Dol, and is educated into the ways of the Dragonwitch. She is shown the Giant Tree, and begins to understand the power within. She is told that her full powers will not be realised until she is fully tested.

As the city begins to move landward there is structural damage and Laura escapes, taking an Explorer. She discovers ruins of other cities that have been attacked and recovers flight recorder, taking it with her.

Rath Gore attempts to seize control from the Darkes but keeps Electra Darke, believing her to be an ally. The board argues about the right strategy on emergence – build a wall to keep out the natives, or capture them and use them as slaves. C5 then reveals its true nature, and tells them that it will make the decisions.

Laura Zobe crashes on land. Caia sees her approach and finds the crash site. She rescues Laura and they take the black box to Caia's village where Caia intends to use Laura as evidence of the city's intentions - Laura is reluctant but agrees. Later, three Explorers appear and order the village to demonstrate their allegiance to the city. A boy fires arrows at the

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Explorers and they are going to kill him, when Caia creates the illusion of the Great Tree, possessor of the all-seeing eye. An Explorer is brought down, the others flee to the city. An ugly scene follows as the pilot threatens the villagers with his energy weapon, and Laura kills him with a spear, unable to control her rage. The villagers then attack the body to share the blame.

Caia is challenged by elders from the clans who resent her influence. Ultimately they will try to kill her, and all but her uncle Tovey Fegan are killed. Afterwards, Caia is angry and threatens to kill him unless he obeys her.

Caia meets Aris Dol, the wisest and most powerful witch. After an initial trial of strength, Aris realises that Caia is Dragonwitch. She takes her on a journey of discovery, showing her many things, even the Great Tree that slumbers below ground, and the location of the ancient weapons that halted the original invasion, thousands of years earlier. She teaches Caia about her powers and her responsibility. Finally Caia meets her dragon Firestorm, together with the most senior of their race. The dragons are unable to defy the Dragonseal for long, and must return to the outer darkness. Garth Dol is Firestorm's rider, until his death. In the meantime, he takes Caia with him as Firestorm flies out over the sea, and they see signs of the city's approach as the beacons are lit.

Electra Darke is watching through one of the snake-like eyes of the city and finds Caia Esvane running from the beacon. The eye pursues Caia until she turns and sees Electra. Then she destroys the eye, and Electra learns what Caia is capable of and knows she will be a dangerous foe. Electra and Rath Gore watch the surface approach as emergence commences. Electra is being tested by Rath Gore and is told to poison her lover, Lawkeeper Vera Closs. Electra does this happily, interested to see what will happen. Electra learns from C5 that she is a psychopath and this worries her.

Aina and Darius have reached the Delves when Emergence happens and they see the lights of the city illuminate the sky, and then they hear the cry of the city, the sound of triumph. They have time to use the King Stone one last time to communicate with the clans, and there is a furious argument about what to do. Caia decides to stay with her father to welcome the city, but Aina wants war. Finally, Caia absorbs the energy from the Stone they are using, and says that she will now be the Magda Stone, the only one able to join the clans together. They lead the Outlanders into the Delves as the Kingstone takes control. It leads them to an invisible chamber and they realise they are in a buried mother ship from the invasion, where there are 11 other stones, each one set into a dead navigator. These are People of White, interred by molten rock. When they leave, the entrance to the chamber is sealed, preventing them from using the Kingstone. Now their only defence is Caia.

Caia meanwhile disobeys her father and destroys the Dragonseal, finally releasing them from banishment. In doing so, she demonstrates that she is now the leader. Meanwhile, Robin sets out to welcome the people of the city, accompanied by his brother Dory and his brother in law Tovey, and three of the Rowan clan. They carry gifts of honey, nuts and other precious things.

Hedra Darke has been confined to her quarters by Electra, who has also formed an alliance with the Lawkeepers, led by Hol Xan.

Firestorm returns and with Garth Dol, flies to investigate the city. Their visit coincides with a

mass escape of Drone workers, led by Lucas Venn. Lucas frees Hedra and takes her with him, as they fight their way out in search of freedom. Electra and Rath lead the pursuit, as Electra kills many with her energy weapons. When she returns to the city, Robin and Tovey arrive with the others and are treated with contempt. Tovey is killed and one of the Rowan is also fatally injured. Robin's brother and the survivors are held as hostage, and he is sent back with the message that the peoples of the Rift are to become Drones.

Subsequently, Electra orders martial law and has Rath Gore and her family confined to quarters. Not long after, Rath's domestic drone, Ellie enters the quarters. She has been physically abused by the bisexual Rath, but this time she brings a knife. She stabs Rath before killing her family. The reign of the Gores is ended.

Hedra Darke has escaped. She and the others encounter Aris Dol, who leads them to the safety of a cave in the western cliffs. There she forces Hedra to see the truth, and tells her to take her own journey. Aris Dol cannot see the outcome of this fate. Hedra makes her way west with Lucas and the others, heading for Dragon Mountain where they will meet with Darius, Aina and the Outlanders.

Muin Longmane and the remainder of the outcast dragon riders are making their way back accompanied by Northerners, summoned through the moot. They have old scores to settle, but above all they sense the return of their dragons. Muin Longmane is in fact the estranged father of Caia Esvane and the source of her Dragonwitch powers. Muin, his brother and the other riders are skilled fighters and a terrible foe. Their longships are attacked by skysails, huge triangular creatures with breath of flame. Several are lost before the dragons come, and the skysails flee. Muin and his followers land, and also make their way to the Dragon Mountains.

Laura Zobe brings the Explorer and the black box. They discover that City 5 destroyed the other cities for their resources, even the people. It confirms their belief that war is the only option. Electra has control of the city, and commences her project of enslavement. She discovers the extent of the sect of the All-Seeing Eye, and knows It's a threat, but she is unable to find what it means, despite the brutal questioning by her Lawkeepers.

She decides that she needs to control Caia Esvane. Caia is with her father and the other clans people who stayed behind, undertaking the city's work. Some city dwellers who have come in contact with the outsiders have caught infections and many have died, and so Electra orders that none may enter the city until the threat has passed. The shaman and his daughter tend the sick using their healing skills and the alien dna within the dying becomes visible, and the truth is known. A Lawkeeper attempts to rape Caia, and she kills him.

Electra orders that the villagers are destroyed, and sends out all of the city's Explorers to burn the forests. The squadrons are led by Hol Xan, but as they fly over the forests, they are attacked by thousands of giant mantis, and a handful of Explorers return. The city has lost its air cover. Electra travels through the city, confronted by evidence of the All-Seeing Eye and realises that the Drones remaining on board have succumbed to the force of the planet. She turns her rage on Caia, and orders that she and her father are brought into the city. She will use Caia to control the others, and she will break her.

The escaped drones, dragon riders, outlanders and many rift clans have assembled at the Hallows, within the Dragon Mountains. The Hallows are an ancient meeting place of riders

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and also the site where a giant Magda Stone is buried. Simply being there is enough to intensify the senses.

Electra tortures Caia and then losing her temper, beats her father to death. Caia realises that the iron hull of the city has cut off from Eco and the source of her power and she is helpless. The war has started, and dragons have joined forces with skysails, burning the city and cutting through the hull. Outlanders ride through the forests on reptyl (large two legged reptiles), hunting down the squads of Lawkeepers. The many predators of the forests turn on the Lawkeepers and they are decimated, whilst the dragons hunt down those that escape.

Aina and Aris Dol approach the city on Firestorm. Electra has tied Caia against one of the windows of the old bridge at the very top of the city, holding a knife to her throat when the two witches use fire and rain to shatter the glass, but they are both killed in the process. As soon as she is exposed to the air of Eco, Caia regains her senses and her powers. Electra is lying on the floor when she sees the Giant Tree arise and it smites the city with a spear of light. The city dies but Electra has escaped.

Much later, the survivors converge on the city and celebrate. Lucas Venn is reunited with Caia and they kiss and embrace, before entering the city with Muin Longmane, Drones, Outlanders and villagers. They walk through the silent corridors, travelling to the heart of the city. Lucas wants to show her the Coliseum and to share what his life was once like. Electra Darke has followed them, and makes a final attempt to kill Caia but her anger is revisited upon herself, and she dies by her own hand.

The novel ends with the funeral of Robin Esvane. Muin tells Caia that he is her father, and she replies that she already knew. Caia is changed, and now leads the clans, Outlanders and the people of the city. The dragon riders are hers to command, and the city appears to be dead, but a savage winter is coming and Hedra Darke is still alive.

### SEQUEL 1 RESURGENCE

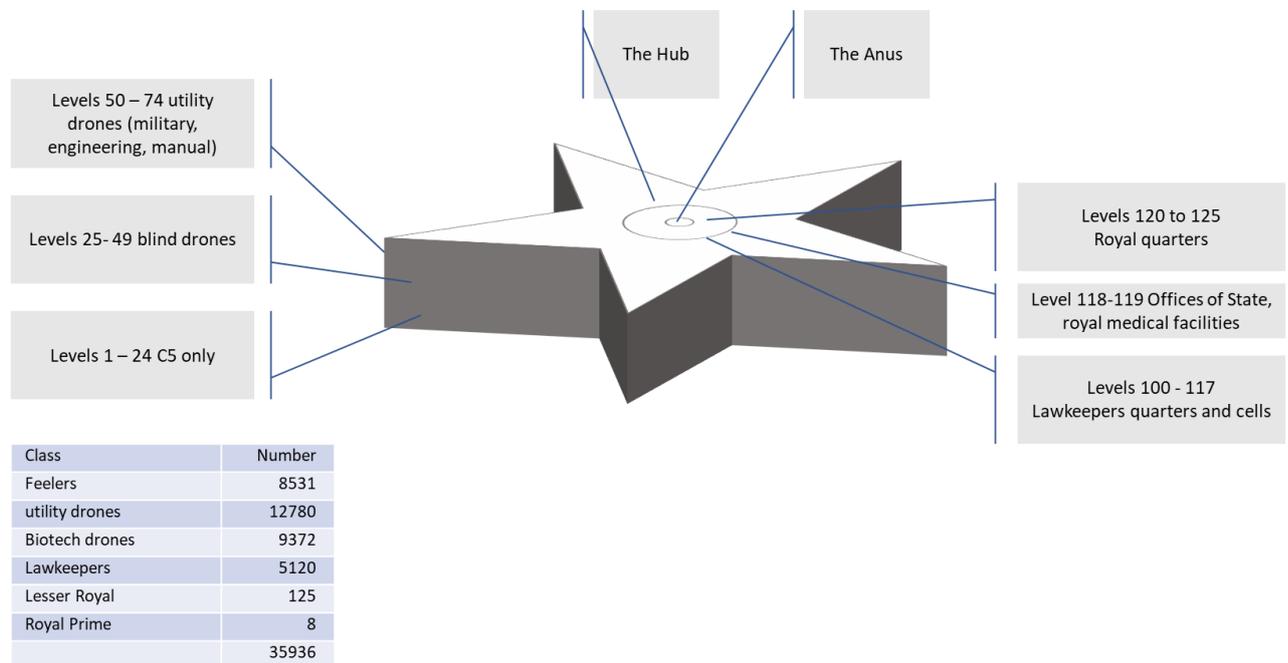
- Hedra Darke has been chosen by the People of White to be their leader. Originally navigators for the invaders, they need access to technology to survive, but City 5 is occupied by the blind Feelers who are using it for their own purposes, and the civilisation of the Rift is learning fast.
- Caia and Lucas Venn have been helping unite the survivors of Emergence. They are expecting their first child and long for a time when peace can return, but now the climate is changing, and food is growing scarce.
- Hedra is finally ageing, deprived of the rejuvenation process. She makes a deal with the mysterious People of White – she will help take back the City, as long as she can regain her youth and this time, invasion is not the answer. Hedra will use the power of ice.

### SEQUEL 2 SIGNAL

Hedra Darke rules a broken city, controlled for her by the People of White and the Feelers have been driven out. Some of the original survivors have returned to serve her and the old civilisation is rebuilding. Lucas Venn is dead, and Caia has grown in power and influence. Hedra believes she can control the People of White, but she is wrong. Their secret agenda is to send a signal into Deep Space, and someone is listening.

**ANNEX: BACKGROUND AND PEOPLE**

*City 5*



*Figure 1 Map of City 5*

- Food is manufactured from filtered plankton and algal farming. Water is also filtered from the sea and the city uses geothermal energy. Oil and uranium are extracted from below the sea floor and processed to provide all materials consumed by the society and waste is ejected into the sea, building up mountains of rubbish around the city. The city also decides when it is time to die. Everything is based on a digital model of the city, all time lines worked out.
- The city has a secret. It was built using alien biotechnology discovered during the invasion, with the intention of signalling when the Surface has become habitable - the same biotech is used by Feelers to enhance their senses. It is subsequently discovered that, programmed to survive, the psychopathic City 5 destroyed three of the other cities to take their resources.
- C5 is the personification of the city, a hologram that manifests in different ways, acting as counsel to the rulers. C5 often cites SSG1005, the Words of the Creator. SSG1005<sup>1</sup> is the bible of City 5, its teachings sacrosanct. The seven books comprise: Atmospheric systems, Bio systems, Recycling, Mental health, Social systems, Disaster recovery and Security.
- Ruling families the Darkes and Gores battle for supremacy. Hedra Darke is the current matriarch and, compared to her rival Rath Gore, is a modern leader, although she preserves traditions such as the Coliseum<sup>2</sup> and euthanasia by ejection for those reaching

<sup>1</sup> Far back in time, SSG1005 was a submarine maintenance manual

<sup>2</sup> Hedra Darke is influenced by a book about Roman Civilisation. Most books have been destroyed

their allotted span. Royals have been plagued by in-breeding, especially the Gores who have preserved this tradition, and have taken bio-engineering to the extreme. Rath's skin is covered with diamonds, and she possesses male and female sexual organs.

- Hedra Darke is a wise ruler who maintains power by creating lesser conflicts. She understands the impact Emergence could have on her society, but decides there is no choice. Hedra will survive Emergence and experience enlightenment, before heading into the wasteland where she will meet the enigmatic People of White.
- Psychotic Electra Darke, daughter of Hedra will usurp her mother and become Caia's adversary, ultimately slaughtering Caia's father in front of her and demanding Caia's surrender. Electra is psychopathic, not uncommon amongst Royals - where in-breeding has led to other problems.
- Most of the work of the city is undertaken by various Drone Castes, who inhabit different levels – tech drones, utility drones, sex drones, med drones all have limited lives and strict codes of conduct. Underground sects also exist, strange religions based on beliefs about the surface – heaven or hell.
- Laura Zobe is a former sex drone, now a technologist. Awaiting a slow death for accompanying Lucas Venn to the surface and breaking the rules, Laura escapes in a submersible and discovers the dead cities. She is found by Caia and plays a key role in proving the intentions of the city to Caia's people, and helping them prepare.
- Lucas Venn is a revered Investigator, accepted by many Drones and allowed into their society. Lucas survived 100 fights in the Coliseum and was offered freedom of the city, instead choosing to become a Lawkeeper. Lucas is one of the few trusted by Hedra Darke. He and Laura Zobe are sent to the Surface, a rare honour. But he breaks orders by walking on the beach and entering the forests, where he encounters Caia Esvane. His punishment is to be blinded and sent to the lowest levels of the city. Lucas will later lead rebellion, allowing many to escape from the city and to join with the Rift Clans.

## The Surface

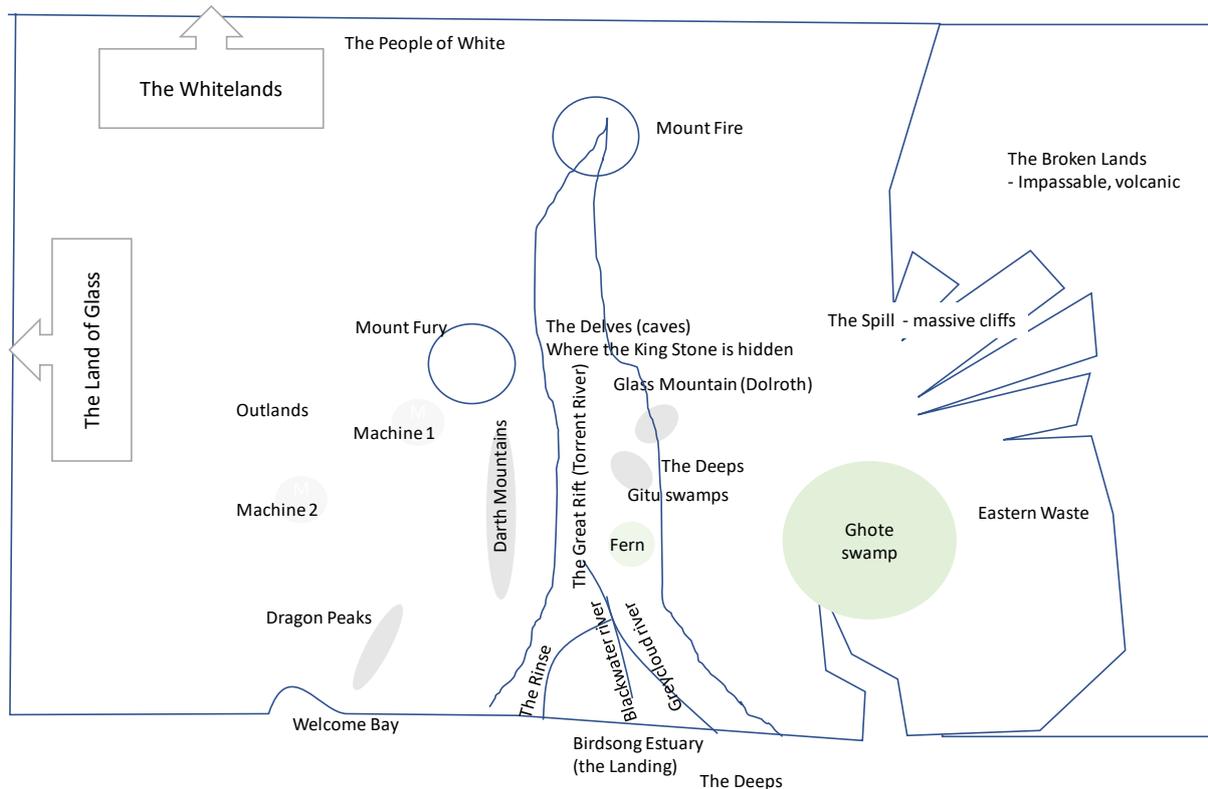


Figure 2 Map of the Rift and Surroundings

- The peoples of the Rift are nature-loving and believe in a Dream-Time when the Great Tree rode upon the dragon Dolor, creating life from rocks. Each of the many large rocky spires in the Rift are named after the life that came from them. Magic exists, harvested by the Shamans and used for positive matters. Those that break the greatest taboos are banished to the Outlands beyond the Rift, where they must survive in a hostile environment. As a result, the Outlanders are a hard people and eaters of meat. Caia is banished in this way for her crime.
- The Great Tree is the manifestation of Eco, just as C5 is the manifestation of the city. The Great Tree is a shaggy monstrous one-eyed man with willow-wands for hair, who sleeps deep below the Rift. Such is its power, even people in the submerged city dream of the eye and express it in graffiti.
- The Outlands are littered with the crashed machines of the invaders, brought down by a single magnetic pulse, though too late to prevent catastrophic damage. Outlanders use the machines to shelter from the murderous ice storms, but they also fear the machines, believing them to be still alive.
- The Rift peoples build houses in the trees and their lives revolve around the ecology of the forests. Robin Esvane, head shaman, has powerful magic but he has abused his power, banishing dragons to the Outer Darkness for an ancient wrong. The Riders have also been banished, travelling to distant lands.

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- Caia is rebellious. She travels to the Outlands and discovers she has a brother, Darius, abandoned there as a child because of what he knew. Caia's sister Aina is a Water Witch and desperately jealous of her sister.
- Aris Dol is an ancient witch with great powers, but not great enough to fight the City. Aris adopts Caia and teaches her what she needs to know, helping her realise her true nature as Dragonwitch. Aris Dol shows Caia that the Great Tree is real – the manifestation of the biosphere, powerful enough to destroy the city.
- Aris Dol also knows about the old ways, and shows Caia where the weapons that were used to stop the original invasion are hidden. Caia will not use them – not yet.

### *Contrasts*

The language of the Rift peoples is slow and rustic in nature, with much reference to folklore and the seasons. There is much song and poetry, and time devoted to story-telling. There are no seasons in the city and language is abrupt and factual. There is no song, no poetry or books – officially. But Drones like to drum and sing, and risk dire punishment to express themselves. The Rift peoples fear what might dwell in the ocean, the city people fear what lies above the surface. In the Rift, anything mechanical is viewed as evil. In contrast, life in the city is wholly dependent on technology. In the Rift, any authority tends to be mocked and gently challenged, but in the city, hierarchy is everything.