



THE  
RAVEN  
SCHOLAR

"Fiendishly charming and clever."

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"A labyrinth of a book with a deeply human heart. I'm obsessed." —ALIX E. HARROW



ANTONIA  
HODGSON







THE  
RAVEN  
SCHOLAR

BOOK ONE OF THE  
ETERNAL PATH TRILOGY

∞

ANTONIA  
HODGSON



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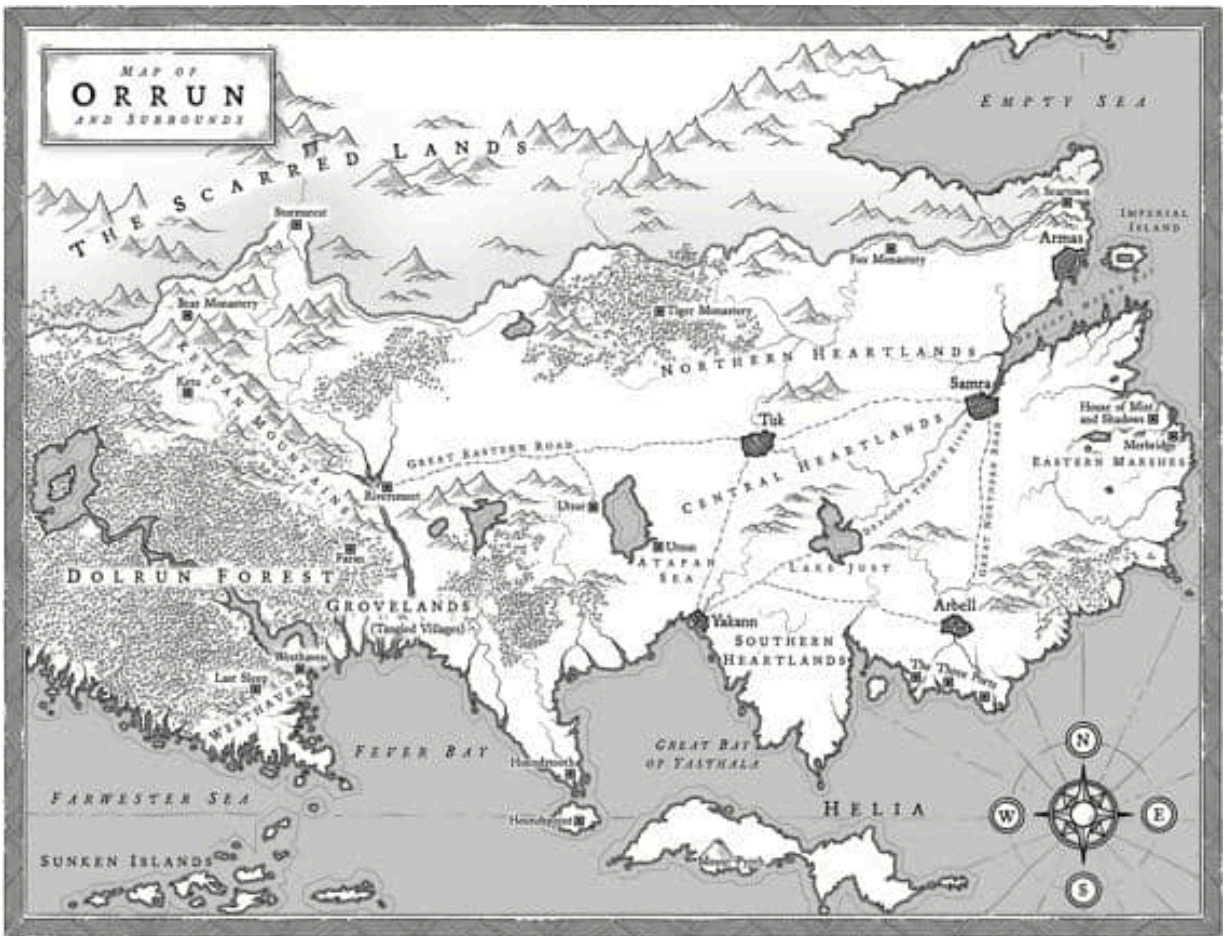
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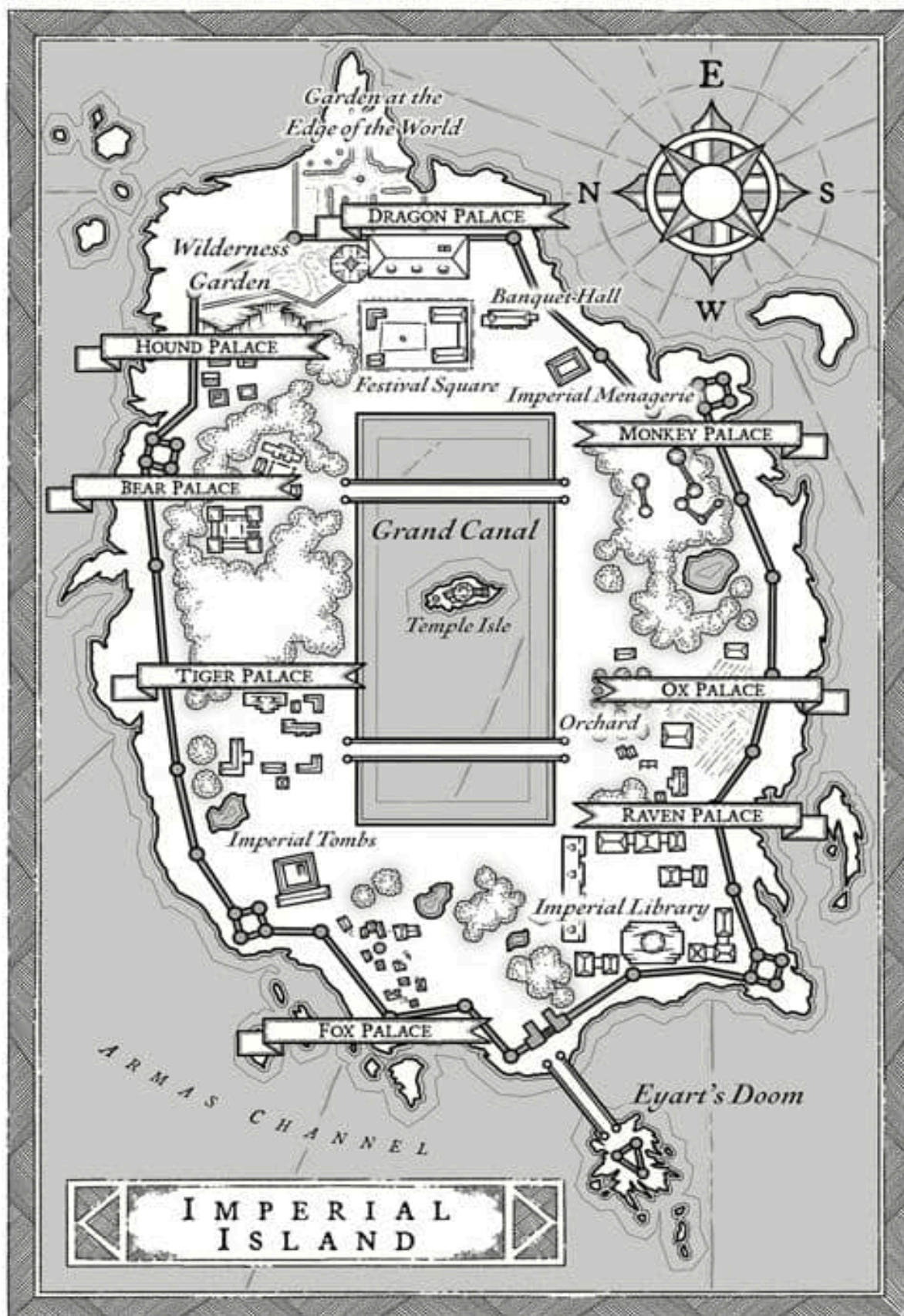
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Brother, Sister—listen to me,  
The Eight will Return in blood and fire.  
You will taste them in the water,  
You will hear them in the wind,  
You will glimpse them in the lightning storm.  
They will come to you in dreams.  
They will call to you.  
Do not let them in, do not let them in.  
They are coming.

“The Bear Warrior’s Lament,” anon

... and the skies wept poison on to the ruined earth...

Dolrun tomb inscription, trans. Neema Kraa

# **PART ONE**

## **An Invitation**

∞

# CHAPTER

## One

ONCE THEY MADE sacrifices here, to appease the Eight. This was many thousands of years ago, but the rock remembers. There was a modest temple on the hill, with views across the island, and worn stone steps leading up to a plain stone slab. Now there is a palace with golden halls and floors of white marble. Lustrous silk tapestries hang from the walls, telling intricate stories of love and war, and the death of tyrants. The air is lacquered with incense, rich and heady.

*This is where my father died.*

Yana Valit walked beside her twin brother Ruko, willing herself to stay calm. The emperor had no reason to hurt her; she had done nothing wrong.

Nothing he could know about.

Yasila followed close behind them, her footsteps muffled by the fine antique rugs that lined the way. Without turning, Yana could picture her mother's expression precisely—composed, dignified. Yasila wore her fabled beauty like a mask, her light brown skin unmarked by years of loss and misfortune. A flick of kohl, a dab of perfume. Three paces away, and as distant as the moon.

Had she known the emperor would summon them here, this morning? No point in asking. Yasila had grown up a hostage on the Dragon island of Helia, where secrets were hoarded like precious jewels. She had learned