

# INTRODUCTION: THE BLOODSTONE LANDS

## Using this Book

This sourcebook is divided into nine sections. These offer the Dungeon Master a solid overview of the region, plus details of some specific places and personalities.

Section 1: *Overview of the Bloodstone Lands* introduces a Dungeon Master to the region, particularly to Vaasa and Damara. This section covers the history of the region, with a close-up on the last two years—the Year of the Prince and the Year of the Shadows (FR1357 and 1358). Present day is 1359, the Year of the Serpent. Recent events, created by playing the H-series through to a logical conclusion, have reduced Vaasa to its former status as an unclaimed wilderness (rich adventuring territory!). The various provinces of Damara weave a web of political intrigue that should provide plenty for PCs to disentangle.

Section 2: *What the Neighbors Think* introduces Narfell and Impiltur, neighboring kingdoms with a vested interest in Vaasa and Damara. Narfell and Impiltur could themselves support a fine campaign. For this book, however, and in the context of the Bloodstone Lands, they are treated as icing on the cake that is Vaasa and Damara.

Section 3: *Societies of the Bloodstone Lands* presents the culture and flavor of the land. This section details religion, currency, races, and classes, all of which transform a campaign from a dice-rolling exercise into a role-playing event worthy of daydreams.

Section 4: *Cities, Towns, and Villages*, and Section 5: *The Geography of the Region* look at the physical geography and locales that PCs will encounter. Included are descriptions of various communities, their usual attitude toward strangers, and a general feel of the more distinctive locations.

Section 6: *Strongholds, Ruins, and Dungeons* goes a step further, providing specific adventuring sites and “home base” locations for the players. In the Bloodstone Lands, knowing where to find trouble, and where to go to escape it, can mean the difference between a successful adventure and disaster.

The next two sections, Section 7: *Movers and Shakers* and Section 8: *Traveling Bands and Organizations*, give a Dungeon Master many of the NPCs that his players will encounter in the region (or PCs they may choose to run). These are the characters who might help the PCs out of a jam—or put them into one!

Finally, Section 9: *The Bloodstone Lands Campaign* gives some suggestions for potential adventures. It must be noted that one of these involves having your players run through the H-series of modules, rewriting the last two years of history. This could pose a problem to Dungeon Masters using this sourcebook, as the outcome of the game may alter the situations described herein.

Therefore, this section also offers tips to less-experienced Dungeon Masters. The Dungeon Master may have to deal with his players deciding on different life-courses for the major PCs, particularly for Gareth Dragonsbane who is regarded here as the central power figure of the entire region. Crafty Dungeon Masters will slip around this by focusing on other NPCs. For example, Baron Tranth or Lady Christine can fill in any gaps in the political structures left by an uncooperative Gareth.

Enough said. Let us now explore this dangerous and exciting region called the Bloodstone Lands. All the ingredients are here for a long and enjoyable campaign, or for a welcome diversion from the mainstream events of a campaign set in some other region of the vast Forgotten Realms. Go to it!

## Overview of the Bloodstone Lands

The phrase “Bloodstone Lands” refers to the region between the Great Glacier and Impiltur, particularly the two states of Vaasa and Damara. The whole area encompasses roughly 150,000 square miles in a roughly triangular shape, using the southern line of the Great Glacier as its northernmost boundary.

To the west, beyond the Earthspur Mountains, is the wicked land of Thar, the Moonsea, and the independent city-state of Mulmaster. To the south is Impiltur and beyond that, the Sea of Fallen Stars. To the east looms Narfell and the Great Dale.

One might assume that the nickname of this rugged region comes from the quantity of blood spilled in the area, especially in and around the Galena Mountains. There have been numerous battles with goblin and giantkind. The sturdy inhabitants have also faced the relentless forces of the climate, and even fought among themselves over the years. In truth, this would make “bloodstone” an apt label.

However, the phrase refers to the uncountable mineral wealth found in the area, a deep-green chaledony flecked with red jasper. Bloodstones were once mined throughout the Galenas and the Earthspurs, luring men here in droves. Bloodstones established Damara as a major power in the Forgotten Realms.

## Geography and Ecology

The Bloodstone Lands are a cold region. Freezing winds roll down from the Great Glacier and swirl through the mountain peaks, making the long winters of Vaasa and Damara longer still. Yet though their temperature ranges are similar, the geography of these two states is vastly different.

### Vaasa

The northernmost of the two states, Vaasa is also the smaller. The kingdom lies in a triangular region bounded by the Earthspur Mountains, the Great Glacier, and the forbidding Galena Mountains. For centuries untold, Vaasa remained an unclaimed wasteland of frozen moors and broken clumps of tundra, a captured pocket of deep winter.

Summer does come here, if only for a few short weeks. Even then, Vaasa feels the edge of its climate's wickedness. When the moorwaters melt and the top layers of tundra soften, the entire re-



gion becomes one vast bog of sludge and mud where "the tallest horse would wet its belly," as the saying goes in Damara.

Even more insidious, many bottomless bogs open up, particularly in the central region, above the Beaumaris River. These deadly moors would do much more than "wet a horse's belly!"

Where small farms have been scratched in Vaasa's rocky soil, harvests show a somewhat fertile land. However, nowhere in all the kingdom has a large enough stretch of arable land been found capable of supporting a large-scale community.

Few people live in Vaasa. Even they probably wonder why.

### **Damara**

More hospitable is the land of Damara. The hardy people of Damara get along fairly well overall, but even so, deadly winter takes its toll among the folk who live here. Summer brings a short but fruitful farming season. Game is plentiful and the rivers tame enough to be useful. Generally speaking, the lands south and east of the Galenas provide a tolerable life, if not a comfortable one.

Damara's northern border runs along the Great Glacier, while the Earthspurs demark most of Damara's western and southern border. Impiltur is an important neighbor around the southern tip of this mighty mountain range.

Natural boundaries separate Damara from Narfell to the east. Huge Rawlinswood, the Giantspire Mountains, and Icelace Lake have kept the two nations further apart than their literal proximity would seem to indicate.

### **History of the Bloodstone Lands**

For centuries, the story of the Bloodstone Lands was simply the story of Damara. The cold wastes of Vaasa attracted little attention from scholars (or anyone else!) outside the mountainous harricades of the region. The people of Vaasa gathered in scattered communities of hunters, trappers, and

farmers, all pitifully poor and eking out a squalid, uninteresting existence.

Damara, though, had a different tale to tell. This kingdom traces its noble lines back almost three centuries, to the time when Heliogababus was founded by Feldrin Bloodfeathers, the first king of Damara. Thereafter, his long, unbroken line of kindly heirs ruled Damara well, only ending with King Virdin's death. Until the most recent generation, the kingdom was a force on par with Impiltur.

Damara maintained strong trade relations with the city-states along the Moonsea and along all the reaches of the Sea of Fallen Stars. The narrow gap between Rawlinswood and the southern expanse of the Earthspurs is still known as Merchants Run, though few merchants use it today.

At the height of Damara's glory, long caravans of merchants transported chalcedony down this pass to the fortress of Ilmwatch along the Easting Reach. They were welcomed and even protected by the legions of Impiltur. Fortified by brigades of Impilturian soldiers, the Damaran merchants then crossed through the Traders Bay region and into the great port of Sarshel. Ships from Thesk and all the nations floating vessels on the the Sea of Fallen Stars met the merchants with open arms and open purses.

A second trade route, shorter but more difficult, carried the precious stone through Bloodstone Pass, the only sensible trail through the mighty Galenas. From there, the stone went to points north and west. Because it crossed through the wilds of Vaasa and through the Earthspur Mountains along Garumn's Climb, this route was not preferred. But Garumn's Climb has proven invaluable to Sembia and the city-states on the Moonsea, especially in times of heavy pirate activity, or on such occasions as when the Moonsea was cut off from the main waterway by a particularly nasty dragon turtle, as happened a few decades ago.

The bloodstone was traded in bars, each measured at 25 gold pieces in

value. The crest of a Damaran noble house marked every bar, and on the opposite side was the year in Damaran reckoning. Nearly 1,000,000 gold pieces worth of the stone was taken annually from the mines in the Galenas alone. Particularly rich was the small region surrounding Bloodstone Pass, aptly named the Barony of Bloodstone. This annual yield of raw wealth more than kept the interest of merchants and speculators, and therefore the craftsman, farmers, and ordinary folk of Damara lived quite well.

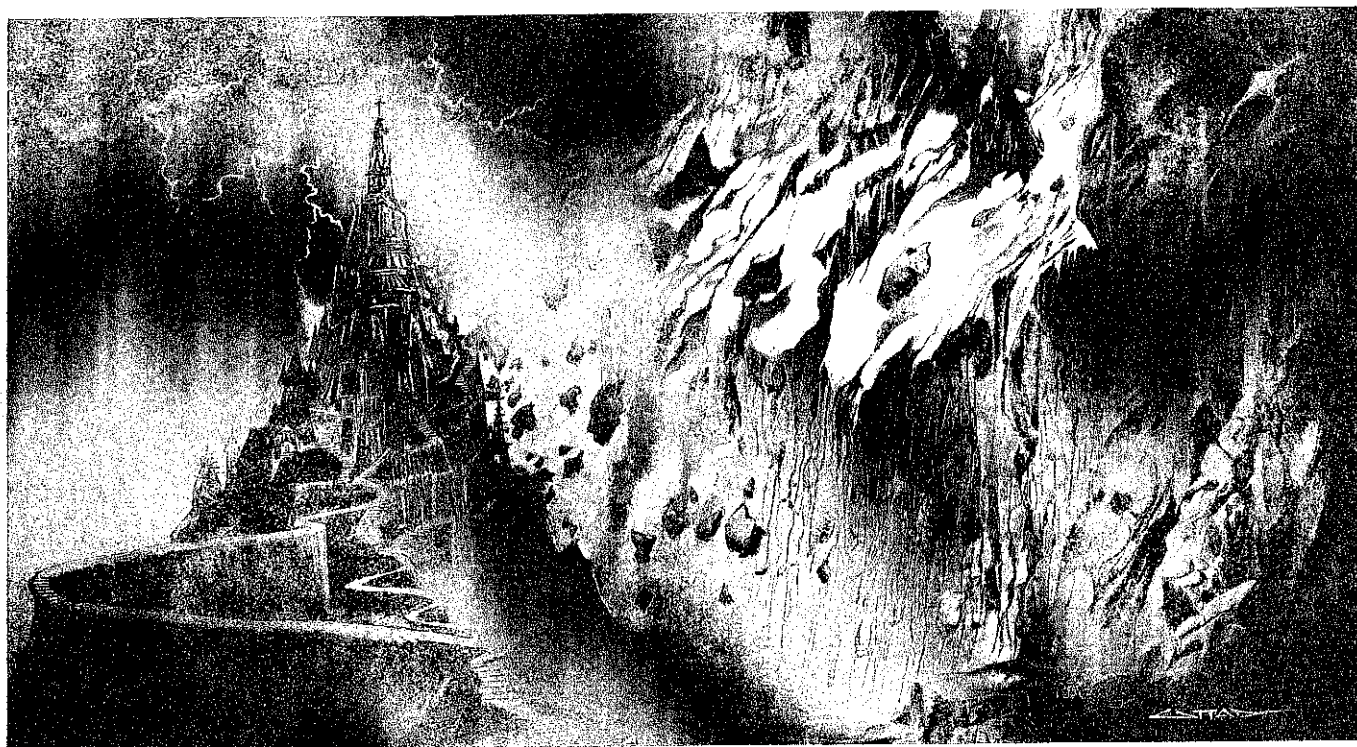
Furthermore, Damara had little to fear from its neighbors. Protected by imposing natural boundaries, with the noble houses united under the rule of a single well-accepted king, there was little cause for unrest. The king maintained an army only to protect the caravans, and to defend the outlying rural communities from bands of raiding goblins or other wretched creatures. Certainly, the scattered tribes of Vaasa could never unite or pose more than a marginal threat. Peace was the norm, and the expectation of future prosperity, obvious.

Or so the Damarans thought. The merchants could never have guessed that the bloodstone bars would in time be called "cursed money," shunned by all outside the region for fear that it would bring to the user the same disastrous fate that befell Damara!

### **The Rise of the Witch-King**

Barely twelve years ago, in FR1137, a calamitous event in the wastes of Vaasa rocked the stability of the entire region. In a single night, the evil fortress Castle Perilous arose on a lonely crag only 60 miles north of the Galenas and the Damaran border.

Out from this bastion of wickedness stepped, Zhengyi the Witch-King, a lich of unspeakable powers. The Witch-King claimed the sovereign powers of the kingdom of Vaasa. Winning the cold hearts of the countless goblins, orcs, and giants living in the mountains, the Witch-King pulled them all into his fold. Zhengyi enlisted the aid of powerful



denizens of the lower planes and surrounded himself with the foul priests of Orcus, who could raise and command legions of undead. With this vast army swiftly assembled, and further aided by the infamous Grandfather of Assassins and his foul guild, the Witch-King prepared for war.

Damara's eyes were blind to the sudden rise of Zhengyi. At the time of the Witch-King's rise, the kingdom was suffering a series of catastrophies—events which, in hindsight, seem suspiciously connected with the Witch-King.

First, a nameless evil awakened in the Mines of Bloodstone, a force that drove the men and dwarves from the place in terror. These mines had been the primary source of wealth for the northern barony. Indeed, up to that time, the wealth rolling out of them—more than 400,000 gold pieces annually—represented nearly half of all the bloodstone flowing out of Damara. Hundreds of brave men tried to reclaim the mines in the next few months, but none returned.

Wolf Winter fell that same year. Early frosts destroyed the harvest and the winter that ensued was therefore doubly terrible. Starvation was common among man and beast alike. Packs of dire wolves swept into northern Damara from the Galenas, leaving little but bloodied snow in their wake. Even worse, many of the wolves were infected with lycanthropy.

The Witch-King's armies roared down to the Galenas the very next year, cutting off Bloodstone Pass and effectively shutting down all the mines on the Vaasan side of the mountains. The horrid army pushed on, driving hard into Damara and committing one massacre after another.

But the people of Damara were a tough people. After they recovered from the initial shock of Zhengyi's lightning attacks, they fought back bravely. For ten brutal years, Vaasa and Damara fought. Neighboring nations, notably Impiltur and Narfell, looked on with more than passing interest, fearing the shape of their own future if Zhengyi

proved victorious. Yet though they sided with Damara in principle and for practical reasons, the nearby kingdoms of the region had problems of their own. In turn, they had too many opportunistic neighbors just waiting to gain their own advantage. Neither Impiltur nor Narfell offered Damara any substantial assistance. Their paralysis almost cost them dearly.

In the summer of FR1147, Zhengyi's forces faced off against King Virdin at the Ford of Goliad. Neither side could gain any advantage through the month of June and many thought that the war would hold in stalemate until the next winter, when the river would freeze.

Then came the day that Damarans will ever despise. No one can say for certain what occurred that foul day, but it seems obvious that treachery led the way for Zhengyi. Most scholars agree that the scoundrel was Felix, King Virdin's chief lieutenant. Long afterward Felix was discovered to be a member of the Assassins Guild of the



Galenas, Zhengyi's cohorts. Nothing was suspected at the time.

Felix—if it was him—tricked young King Viridin into believing that a magical wand he had acquired would allow the Damaran army secret passage across the river. Actually the "wand" was a cheap stick stacked with twelve *Nystul's magic aura* spells. Viridin desperately grasped at the chance to end the long and costly conflict. Already aware of the deception, Zhengyi held his forces in check for several tense minutes, coaxing in the Damarans. Then the lich-king struck hard, trapping the bulk of the Damaran army in the river and shattering Viridin's forces. On a hillock a short distance away, the young king watched his kingdom fall. His grief ended when a dagger (wielded by Felix?) found its way into his back.

Zhengyi had spent ten years preparing for this day, and he didn't hesitate. Calling on the forces of the Grandfather of Assassins, the Witch-King instituted the second phase of the destruction of Damara. It took only one bloody night for the most loyal and powerful nobles of Damara to be slain.

The "peace" that ensued was not favorable to the conquered. The Witch-King granted a veneer of independence to the feeble remnants of the Damaran houses, dividing the southern reaches of the old kingdom into six poor baronies—poorer still after paying tribute to their conqueror, the Witch-King.

Zhengyi gave control of the Galenas to the Grandfather of Assassins, then tightened his own evil clutch on the north. A stream of refugees trekked south as best they could.

With Damara spiralling into economic ruin and Zhengyi's power growing every day, the neighboring states could only sit tight and hope that the Witch-King would be content with his new domain.

That was only two years ago. How swiftly things can change!

## RECENT EVENTS IN THE REGION

### Two Tamaltuous Years

*"Pray tell, fellow bard, where will thy horse fly?" asked the first. "To Damara to busy my pen. 'Tis said that more has happened in the last two years than in the last two centuries!" The second bard twirled his lute in excitement at the mere thought of entering the Bloodstone Lands.*

*"Then surely you have missed your time, good fellow," said the first, "for the Witch-King is dead and his armies scattered."*

*"Not so, not so," argued the second. "The issue is far from settled. And although the new heroes have lived more adventures in two years than most will see in a lifetime, they have many more before them." He spurred his horse and galloped away. The call, "Many more!" echoed back as he went.*

This may be a typical scene among the bards of the Forgotten Realms these days, for indeed the bloodstone region has undergone tremendous changes since the victory of the Witch-King. Still more lie ahead before the situation stabilizes.

After the Witch-King secured his hold on northern Damara, he disappeared for a time, presumably to reevaluate the remaining strength of his forces and to plan out his next moves. Deliberately, he left a nation in disarray.

Zhengyi's decision to divide southern Damara into separate, independent baronies was shrewd indeed. In spite of the hardships descending on the conquered land, the puppet rulers of these baronies squabbled, conspiring against each other. Each one would gladly fight another over whatever might add to his own power and meager wealth.

Combined with the terrible tribute to the Witch-King, this disarray crushed the pride of the people of Damara. Under such ineffective rule, the entire southern region was quickly thrown into chaos, both political and economic.

As he had planned, Zhengyi was left in peace to concentrate on his next moves.

In the security of his arrogance, Zhengyi took no notice of the actions of his cohorts, the bandit army of the Galena Mountains. Led by the Grandfather of Assassins, a High Priest of Orcus, and an Arch-mage who had once been Zhengyi's own personal advisor, a tribute of gold and even slaves was demanded from the poor people of the Barony of Bloodstone.

This proved to be the proverbial last straw. The bandit army's depredations bred an angry resolve in Baron Tranth and in all the people of Bloodstone. Perhaps because arrogance and evil so often go hand-in-hand, Zhengyi did not imagine mighty heroes might arise, but proud people can only be pushed so far. When a group of heroes emerged to lead them, the people of Bloodstone rose up and fought for their homes.

The heroic leaders were Gareth Dragonsbane and his company of six: Emelyn the Gray, Friar Dugald, Celedon Kearney, Riordan Parnell, Olwen Forest-friend, and Kane, monk of the Monastery of the Yellow Rose. Men, women, and even children of Bloodstone Village followed them, and boldly faced the bandits, even standing proud against the horrible undead brigades of the evil priest, Banak. The sheer courage of the villagers rallied support, and groups of dwarves, halflings, and centaurs rolled up from the woodland clusters just south of Bloodstone Village. The Grandfather of Assassins was slain by the monk, Kane, and the bandit army was soundly defeated.

The most important result of the battle was that the races of the region had come together and mighty new leaders had been found. Quiet whispers spoke of hope when rumors circulated that Gareth Dragonsbane had fallen in love with the Lady Christine, Baron Tranth's daughter.

But just when Gareth and his friends seemed to have the region turned back toward the right course, bad luck and an unspeakable evil once again came crashing down.



First, torrential rains swept through Bloodstone for a full week in September, and after the storm came a sudden freeze. Unharvested wheat and hay rotted and died in the fields and the town feared another Wolf's Winter of hardship and starvation.

Second, a scream in the night came from the Abbey of St. Sollars, rousing the village. What looked like a simple work attack was soon found to be something much more insidious when the symbol of Orcus, a horned goat's head, was discovered painted in blood on one of the Abbey's walls.

Everything pointed to the long-closed bloodstone mines as the source of the horror, prompting talks of a heroic adventure. Furthermore, all the people of the barony could see the possibilities of wealth if the mines could somehow be reopened. Although the monk Kane had been called back to the Monastery of the Yellow Rose, Gareth and his five remaining friends went boldly into the mines. With the help of a community of *svirfneblin* gnomes, they routed the minions of Orcus, a tribe of *duergar* dwarves.

The mines were promptly reopened and King Ruggedo, head of the *svirfneblin*, swore eternal friendship to the barony. Baron Tranth, confident of Bloodstone's bright future, gave to Gareth the hand of his daughter in marriage. As a dowry, he turned over rulership of the barony itself.

The people of Bloodstone dug in and fought through the savage winter. Under the leadership of the new baron, they were confident that the spring would bring new growth and hopeful about the wealth to be dug anew from the mines. The very next spring, the dwarves of Clan Orothiar and the *svirfneblin* brought out a million gold pieces worth of the fabled bloodstones.

With new wealth came new trouble. The promise of riches attracted thousands of new citizens to the barony. Perceptively, Gareth understood what was to come next. He promptly put the newcomers to work building new towns and new fortifications. Then the baron commissioned his friends as gen-

erals and bid them to build a great army. He recognized that Bloodstone was surrounded by the jealous lords of the other baronies and, of course, there was still the Witch-King.

William the Lazy, eighth Duke of Arcata, was first to strike. In league with the Grandfather of Assassins, his move began the Bloodstone Wars.

But William and the other leaders had no concept of the resolve of the barony, nor of the strength of its new-found leaders. Arcata fell, then Carmathan, and finally, the minor baronies of Ostel, Morov, and Polten. In a few short weeks, the southern provinces of the old Kingdom of Damara were united once again.

With so much in flux, the Witch-King finally turned his eyes back to Damara. Assessing the problem, Zhengyi sent his vast army south. He pulled the bandit army back into his fold, and attacked across the Galenas. But the swelling army of Bloodstone fought fiercely and drove back the Witch-King's soldiers. The forces reached a stalemate at the Ford of Coliad—ironically, the very site of the Witch-King's first victory over Damara. With each army in firm control of one bank of the river, there seemed no end in sight.

The stalemate was shattered by Gareth, Emelyn the Gray, Dugald, Celdon Kierney, Riordan Parnell, and Olwen Forest-friend. The six brave friends struck out at the heart of the Witch-King's power: at Orcus himself, ruler of the lower planes. The friends traveled to the Abyss and stole the demon-lord's wand, taking the vile instrument to the Seven Heavens where it was ultimately destroyed.

The adventure did not end there. Bahamut, the Platinum Dragon, gave Gareth the Tree-Gem, and sent the victorious heroes back to Bloodstone. Once planted, the gem grew into a beautiful white tree, a symbol of hope with the power to forever banish Orcus and the other monsters of the Abyss from the Bloodstone Lands.

With the defeat of the demon-lord, the Witch-King lost the source of his

dark power. Castle Perilous crumbled into ruins, the priests of the goat's head religion lost their strength, and the undead of the Vaasan army fell to dust. Gareth drove the confused remnants of the wretched forces of Vaasa back through Bloodstone Pass and into their dark holes in the north kingdom. Peace seemed, at last, to be at hand.

## WHERE THE REGION STANDS NOW

Peace in Damara is far from secure, although the prospects for it seem much more promising. Still, difficult problems face the people of the land.

First of all, although it united under Gareth for the strike against the forces of Vaasa, Damara remains divided, in spirit at least. The petty barons and dukes who tasted power in their pseudo-autonomy under the Witch-King are reluctant to relinquish control of their lands to a single king leading a reunited Damara. Several of them have a claim to the throne left empty when King Virdin was slain, particularly Tranth of Bloodstone and Dimian Ree of Morov. None are of direct descent, however, and the ascension of any claimant would be fraught with uprisings and covert coups.

Perhaps the most popular plan has been outlined by Tranth, the former Baron of Bloodstone. Rather than returning to the old kingdom, Tranth would like to see a new state formed that encompasses both Vaasa and Damara. The new kingdom would be called Bloodstone, and its first king, Gareth Dragonsbane.

At this time, this plan is only a topic of discussion. While retaining full control of the army, Gareth will not even hear of any permanent plans for the region until the business at hand is finished. Still, it seems obvious that the heroes are taken with Tranth's plan. At the very least, they are determined to prevent one of the petty barons from grabbing control.

The northern provinces remain in the clutches of the Vaasan scum. Al-



though twice defeated, the bandit army has yet to be destroyed. Furthermore, Vaasa itself remains unconquered by any, and that forsaken land holds many holes filled with goblins, giants and other reminders of the Witch-King's reign.

Furthermore, two strange events have Gareth and all of his friends worried about the future. First, three flights of dragons—reds, blues, and blacks—have flown high through Damara and over the Galena Mountains, heading generally in the direction of the ruins of Castle Perilous. It is rumored that a flight of green dragons will soon follow, and thereafter they will all be joined from a huge group of whites from the Great Glacier.

The second disquieting situation is that a strange cloud has engulfed the top of Suncatcher Mountain, a tall peak found where the Galenas join the Earthspur range. This cloud seems to defy the winds, for it does not move. Witnesses have said that if the mountain is viewed at the proper angle when the sun is low, the shining spires of an immense castle are clearly visible.

Undeniably, the people of Damara still have much to do before the area settles back down. Gareth and his friends are working to enact a four-part plan designed to stabilize the region.

#### 1. At home:

Gareth and Friar Dugald remain in Bloodstone Village, securing their home base. Gareth is determined to provide the people of Damara with strong centralized power. To do this, he strengthens the ties to his closest allies. Baroness Christine, a druid, has links with the centaurs and halflings of the woodland south of the village. Gareth visits the dwarves and gnomes of the mines every week. On Kane's advice, Gareth has spent some effort soliciting the goodwill of the Monastery of the Yellow Rose. He has invited Cantoule, the new Grandmaster of Flowers, to visit Bloodstone Village. If the Monastery throws its support behind the new baron, as expected, Gareth's power will be greatly increased.

Perhaps the most notable event in Bloodstone is the construction of "the Gates." These two massive fortresses will secure the entrances to Bloodstone Pass and protect the mines. Whatever the future of Damara holds, when the Gates are complete, the valley around Bloodstone Pass will be secured as the mightiest region of the Bloodstone Lands, with a guaranteed source of wealth.

#### 2. The northern provinces:

A large contingent of the Bloodstone army under the command of Olwen Forest-friend has been working to secure the northern provinces of Damara. Never free of the Witch-King, the people of this region have no self-proclaimed leaders and should readily swear allegiance to their rescuers. Gareth is determined to get there before one of the other dukes or barons takes it upon himself to invade. In particular, he seeks to head off the designs of Dimian Ree of Morov.

Olwen's mission is described as the "five S's": *squash* the remaining Vaasan scums; *supply* the poor people of the region; *secure* the region and give it over to the people; *seed* them with hints of what is to come and with news of Bloodstone; and *scout* out the happenings over the borders in Vaasa and Narfell.

The first reports from the region indicate Olwen is having great success. He is rallying support for the instigation of the Kingdom of Bloodstone. Cries of "King Gareth!" resound through the streets of every rescued hamlet.

#### 3. Preparations for Vaasa:

Certainly Gareth intends to strike hard into Vaasa after the situation in Damara settles down. ("But not until the region has been reunited—in the old kingdom or the new," Gareth has been heard to say with a sly wink.) The baron and the people he rules do not desire a return to the skirmish-filled days of the past. Formerly, Bloodstone Village and indeed all of northern Damara had to constantly seek out and destroy individual tribes of goblins or giants that had descended upon one of the farm com-

munities, thinking them fair game. The Damarans want Vaasa put down, once and for all, and they envision a line of fortress-cities along the northern edge of the Galenas, each pulling its share of gemstones from new mines and patrolling the border.

For the present, Gareth keeps a wary eye on the scattered forces of his northern neighbor. He wants to make sure that no army can organize against Damara. Moreover, he recognizes the importance of having a full understanding of what he will be up against when he commits his troops to a campaign in the hostile land. He seeks news of the gathering dragons, the bandit army, and that mysterious cloud over Suncatcher Mountain.

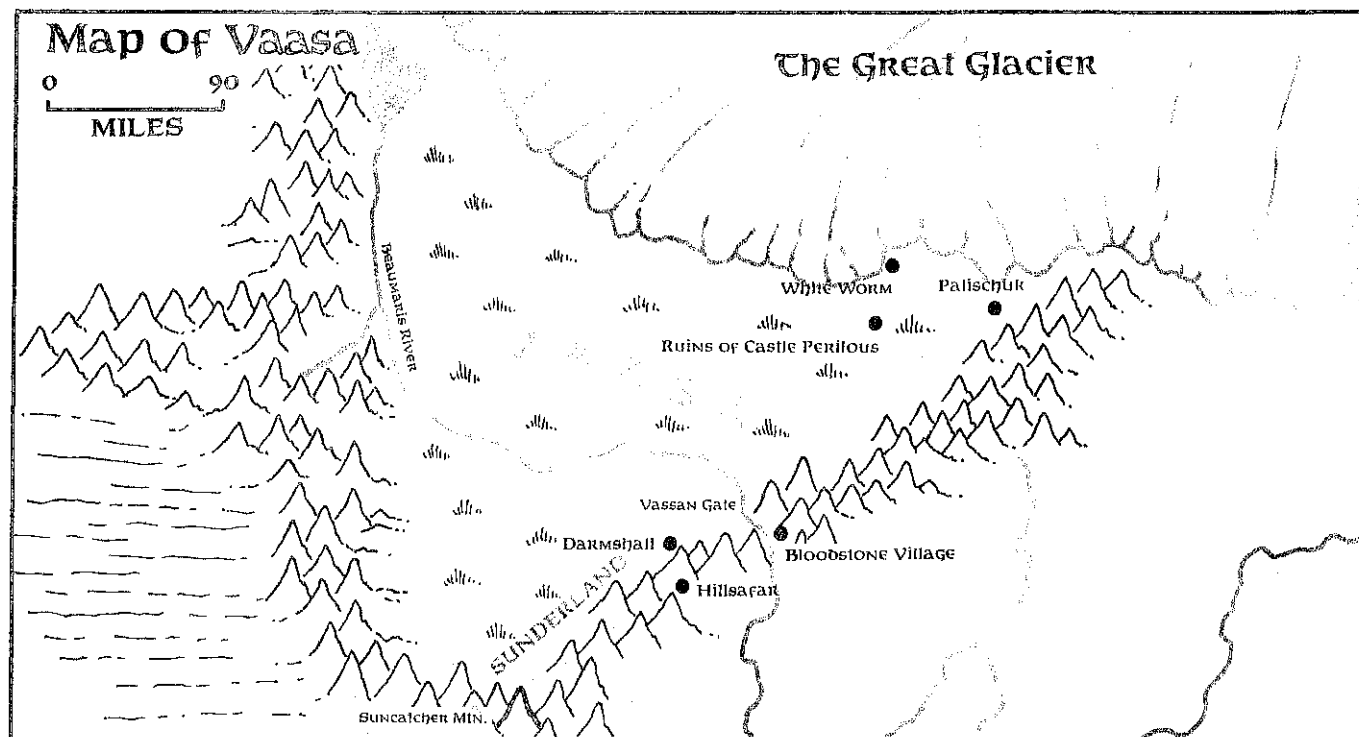
To these ends, Gareth has commissioned Spysong, a network of scouts led by Kane, Celedon Kearney, and Riordan Parnell. Spysong has infiltrated the Galenas and traveled far into Vaasa itself. The network relays information back to Gareth and his allies in the form of coded, bard-spun ditties understandable only by the right ears.

#### 4. The baronies:

Arguably, the biggest threat to Damara is the splintered spirit of Damara itself. The people of southern Damara generally aren't so supportive of the goings-on in the Barony of Bloodstone. This is particularly true in Heliogabalus and the other cities of Morov. They see Gareth Dragonsbane mainly as a conqueror, although so far a kindly one. The southern nobles have been capitalizing on their wounded pride to keep them from falling into the "King Gareth frenzy."

Here is where the "Twilight Riders" come in. Led by Emelyn the Gray and his fellow mage, Myrddin Viligot, this mighty group races through the southern provinces after the sun has set. Astride magically-conjured steeds of light, they aid those in need and spread the truth about the happenings in the north. They take no payment from those they help, and ask for no oaths of allegiance. But their message is clear to





the people. Cries of "King Gareth!" do not echo through the village streets in southern Damara, but those words are whispered door to door after the Twilight Riders have passed.

Whatever their official words might say, Gareth and his friends are determined to make Damara, hopefully Bloodstone, their home. Most agree that Gareth desires the kingship of a united nation. But even above that wish, scholars agree that the kindly Baron desires what is best for the people of Damara. He wants no further bloodshed, certainly no repeat of the Bloodstone Wars, and seeks an ascent to the throne on a wave of popular outcry so overwhelming that the other nobles won't dare oppose him. The power-hungry dukes and barons can see what is happening, and they aren't happy with the way the wind is blowing. In truth, though, there is little they can do to turn the tide.

It must be firmly stated that those who know Gareth Dragonsbane best are fully

confident that it is not overweening ambition motivating the paladin. If the tide of opinion flowed another way; if the people opposed the formation of a Kingdom of Bloodstone; if they desired the return of the old Kingdom of Damara with one of the blooded heirs sitting on the royal throne, then Gareth would step down. The Baron of Bloodstone and his mighty friends will put their personal desires aside and willingly, faithfully serve the new king in the establishment of his realm.

Ironically, the people's faith only adds to his support. Few are those who think that Gareth and his companions act from self-serving ambition.

## Politics of the Bloodstone Lands

### The BARONIES

To understand the Bloodstone Lands, a Dungeon Master must have a grasp of where Damara stands among its neighbors, and the dynamics at work within

the kingdom itself. Present-day politics in Damara have their roots in the past.

Although the Bloodstone Wars brought the armies of the land together, the people remain divided. Each barony fared a little differently during the recent wars, and therefore everyone has their own opinion about goings-on in the north, and of the rise of the new heroes. The selfish and deceitful rulers Zhengyi put in place have only served to aggravate the already-volatile situation.

Before the Witch-King, and from the days of its earliest origins, Damara was a single harmonious nation. An acknowledged, accepted king ruled all from Heliogabalus. The provinces existed as counties, all solidly behind the trusted decisions that issued from the throne. Each county was ruled by a noble house of long standing.

The counties were of two types: the city provinces and the supply provinces. The city provinces of Morov, Ostel, and Polten serve primarily as trade markets and launching sites for merchant caravans, and here dwell Da-



maras finest craftsmen. Farming is only on a small scale, and there is no raw mineral wealth here. These provinces are wholly dependent on the other regions to keep them from being more than simple trading communities suffering stoically in a cold frontier.

The supply provinces of Arcata, Bloodstone, Brandiar, Carmathan, and Soravia are less densely populated than the city provinces. These provinces support Damara's large-scale farmers and miners, the backbone supporting the cities' economies.

Zhengyi could not change economics, but he shattered the ruling class that kept everything working. After the bloody night when the flower of Damaran nobility was slaughtered, Zhengyi began replacing the nobles, hand-picking his puppets, and he got some doozies indeed!

### **The Duchy of Arcata**

**Ruling House:** Horgath

**Present Duke:** William, 8th Duke of Arcata

**Family Crest:** Diving Dagger and Mountains Three

**Province Population:** 15,000

**Capital:** Valls (1,300)

Most of the people of Arcata are either farmers or miners. The farms are predominantly in the south, around Valls. Bloodstone is not common along the Arcatan stretch of the Galenas and the Earthspurs, but several silver and iron mines have been opened.

True to St. Sollars and the ethics of endurance and perseverance, the proud Arcatans work on in the face of any hardship. Tomrav, a mining and farming community deep within the Earthspurs, is a testament to this determination. This tight-knit city is entirely self-sufficient, often cut off from the rest of the land by deep snows for eight full months.

Arcata's House of Horgath had been in decline even before the rise of the Witch-King. The common Arcatans recognized this fact, but they were con-

cerned mainly with day-to-day survival. Little attention was paid to the failings of House Horgath, which seemed harmless enough. William sent House Horgath to the very nadir of disrespect and indecency.

The opening salvo of the Bloodstone Wars was the conflict between Arcata and Bloodstone. In league with the Grandfather of Assassins, Duke William tried to take the wealth of the bloodstone mines by force. More than 1,600 strong, William's army forged straight in toward Bloodstone Village, marching through the foothills between Sleepy Wood and the Galenas. On their first night encamped on the outlying hills, Gareth sent a simple note to the Arcatan generals: "We are of common heritage, common suffering, and common goals. Why, then, do we fight?"

The Arcatan generals did not know of the massive fortifications that had been built in Bloodstone, and they could not appreciate Gareth's magnanimity. They thought the note was a desperate plea for mercy. The next day taught them a bitter lesson.

When the sun rose on the forces of Bloodstone, they were 1,200 strong, fully arrayed, and entrenched in cunning fortifications. There was worse news yet for the Arcatans. Centaurs, halflings, and dwarves had crept out of the tunnels of the Warren to encircle the Arcatan army from behind. Still loyal to the wishes of their duke, the Arcatans attacked the walls of Bloodstone anyway and battle was joined—but only briefly.

In a matter of minutes, 300 Arcatans lay dead or wounded, and the remainder of the army was pinned down in the little vale against the outer wall of Bloodstone Village. Now Gareth and the people of the new Bloodstone showed their true strength of character. The paladin and his friends raised a white flag and rode through the Arcatan lines, unarmed and unescorted, and sued for peace.

The terms were simple. The Arcatan army would collect its casualties and return home, swearing not to renew the attack. Duke William could remain on

his throne, and no penalties would be imposed, no reparations demanded. Gareth only asked that the Arcatans allow him to move his forces along the border of Arcata and Brandiar to meet Carmathan, a new threat growing in the south.

The peace was quickly accepted. The new land of Bloodstone based its own hopes on the precept of self-determination. The Baron of Bloodstone gambled that Arcata would realize that its best hopes lay on the same path. The terms of the peace, which have come to be known as "Gareth's Gamble," apparently worked their magic. Nearly half of the Arcatan army fell in behind the marching army of Bloodstone. Three hundred more troops joined in along the trek to meet Carmathan.

William's power has decreased in proportion to the increasing popularity of Gareth Dragonsbane and the proposed Kingdom of Bloodstone. The majority of Arcatans fully support the idea of a new kingdom with Gareth as king of a united, self-directing people. Not too stupid to understand the tide of opinion around him, William does not oppose the populace, covertly or overtly.

It is believed that the Ducal Guard in Valls regularly runs a secret emissary to Bloodstone Village. Although the Guard traditionally bears a fierce loyalty to the Horgaths, they express the Arcatans' desire to preclude even the smallest possibility of renewed conflict.

### **The Barony of Bloodstone**

**Ruling House:** Tranth

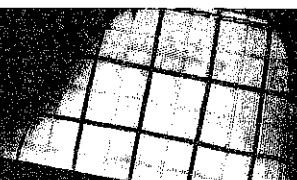
**Present Baron:** Gareth Dragonsbane, 6th Baron of Bloodstone

**Family Crest:** Crossed Pick and Sword

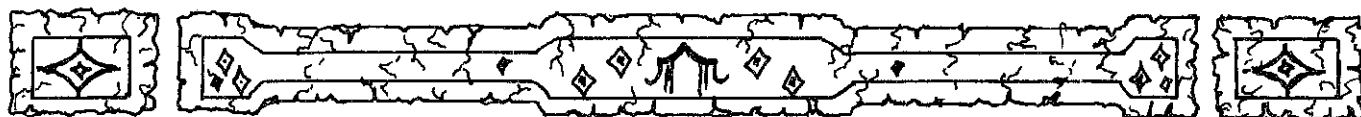
**Province Population:** 12,000

**Capital:** Bloodstone Village (7,500)

For many centuries, this area in the Galenas was considered merely an extension of the Sunderland of southern Vaasa, unwanted by all but a handful of brave frontiersmen and miners. But the miners had a secret: knowledge of a







## WHAT THE NEIGHBORS THINK

The events in Vaasa and Damara have not gone unnoticed outside the two countries. Of the other nations in the area, only Impiltur and Narfell seem likely to directly affect Vaasa and Damara.

Northern Impiltur and western Narfell are also considered "Bloodstone Lands," though their mines produce nowhere near the quantities taken from either Vaasa or Damara. But Impiltur in particular plays a major role in Damara's economy. Both Gareth Dragonsbane and Dimian Ree understand the roles that Impiltur and Narfell might play in their struggles. So far, Gareth has made a better impression.

The territories west of the Bloodstone Lands will be detailed in a separate sourcebook. For a Bloodstone Lands campaign, simply consider Thar and the city-states of Mulmaster and Procampur to be secondary to Vaasa and Damara.

### Impiltur

Across the rushing waters of the Side-winder Rivers sits Damara's most important neighbor, Impiltur. Not a large nation, Impiltur is bordered by the Earthspurs and Damara on the north, the Sea of Fallen Stars to the south; it stretches from the Earthfasts on the west, east to the Easting Reach.

Some two-and-a-half centuries ago, the city-states were invaded by hordes of hobgoblins rolling out of the Giant-spire Mountains. The largest of the four cities took the boldest action. Imphras, War-Captain of Lyrabar, called up an army from all the states. When the dust cleared, the hobgoblins were smashed and Imphras was a hero. Seeing firsthand the value of working together, the four city-states united, forming Impiltur with its seat of power in Lyrabar. Today the crest of Impiltur—crossed sword and wand on a dun field trimmed in flaming scarlet—is a standard to be reckoned with.

Impiltur is a land of 100,000 citizens, more than 90% human. Only scattered groups of halflings and dwarves thrive in the nation.

Impiltur maintains a strong militia, and each of its four primary cities is a veritable fortress. A fifth city, Ilm-watch, houses only a few common folk, but more than 500 battle-ready troops.

The kingdom is ruled by Queen Sambryl, a 17th level magic-user who gained her position by marrying the great, great-grandson of Imphras, Imphras IV. Queen Sambryl has no taste for the duties of rule. She is a lover of knowledge and finds the tedium of day-to-day politics and formal engagements an absolute bore.

Nevertheless, Impiltur is well-ruled. Sambryl willingly acts as a figurehead, relinquishing her power to the council, the Lords of Imphras II, twelve indirect descendants of Impiltur's noble founder. War-Captains all, each one is known to be of good alignment and all are high level paladins (not less than 11th level). Their leader is Kyriraun, a 20th level paladin, who advises the Queen on every matter.

The Lords of Imphras II disperse to oversee events throughout the nation. With Kyriraun are three other War-Captains: Rilimbraun, Limbrar, and Haelimbrar. Haelimbrar normally spends his time in the town of Laviguer, between the Earthspurs and the Earthfasts. His responsibility is to secure the western and northern borders of Impiltur. Presently, however, he is on a secret mission in Damara.

The city of Sarshel is home base to Silaunbrar and Rilaunyr. The cities of Hlammach and Dilpur are home to three paladins each: Imbra, Silmgar, and Lashilaun guard Hlammach. Imbraun, Soargilm, and Sambrar watch over Dilpur.

Impiltur's wealth lies in trade, for all its major cities are seaports. Before the days of unity, the four cities had close ties with Procampur, Sembia, and with their fellow city-states along the Sea of Fallen Stars. Now the ships all sail under the Impilturian banner, and the traders manipulate the market quite to their own advantage.

Furthermore, Impiltur has become the gateway between east and south.

The nation acts as liaison between the Bloodstone Lands and the powers of the Sea of Fallen Stars. Ashanath, Narfell, and Rashemen beyond the Great Dale also conduct much business through Impiltur. The strange goods that flow into Impiltur from these lands can bring high prices.

### Recent events in Impiltur

Over the last few years, the Lords of Imphras II have faced a few challenges within their own borders. In Rawlinswood, strange events have raised a few eyebrows. A bandit-lord called Lothchas has been operating in the area with a small, high-level band of marauders. Rumors also whisper of the Nentyarch, a mighty wizard living at the heart of the wood in a tree-lined fortress called Dun-Tharos.

However, Impiltur's greatest concerns have undoubtedly been over the recent upheavals in Vaasa and Damara. Impiltur's War-Captains watched the rise of the Witch-King uneasily, and as Zhengyi smashed through Damara, they kept one hand on their sword-hilts. Throughout the ten-year war, the debate raged over whether Impiltur should come to King Virdin's aid.

All hoped that Damara would defeat Zhengyi, but officially the nation was neutral. A local rumor implied that some "Carmathan" troops who marched to aid the Bloodstone army were in fact a division sent secretly by Impiltur, but no truth to the rumor was ever found. Privately, the rulers feared that their entry into the war would instigate action by their more opportunistic neighbors.

When Damara surrendered at the Ford of Goliad, many of Impiltur's Lords regretted their political paralysis. They talked of annexing Carmathan and Polten to be a buffer zone, and this was almost carried out. Impiltur finally opted for patience and discretion, fearing the consequences of angering the mighty Witch-King.

The two subsequent years of Zhengyi's reign were an anxious period for



the people of Impiltur. Those in power understood the limitations on Zhengyi's strength and few feared an immediate invasion. Zhengyi would not risk another campaign against a major power too soon. The knowledgeable in Impiltur expected the Witch-King to strike to the east, where his long arms had already found Icelace Lake and the border with Narfell.

Although it did not fear invasion, Impiltur was still badly hurt, for the conquest disrupted all trade with Damara. Even the value of the now-"cursed" money dropped, and mine production fell off. In the past, nearly all of Damara's bloodstone passed through Sarshel. The Damaran merchants paid a percentage to Impiltur, as protection money, to pay for trading rights-of-way, and for the use of Impilturian port facilities. A substantial proportion of her fleet once sailed exclusively for bloodstone. Impiltur's ready wealth disappeared.

### Where Impiltur now stands

Impiltur's official stance toward Damara continues to be "wait-and-see," at least officially. The War-Captains say little of their feelings about Gareth Dragonsbane in Bloodstone, or about his potential conflict with Dimian Ree in Hellogabalus.

After the fall of Zhengyi, Dimian Ree secretly pleaded for Impiltur to furnish

him the men he would need to put things aright in Damara. But on unanimous advice from her War-Captains, Sambryl politely refused. Her statement wished Dimian Ree the best, but firmly reminded him that Damara's business was Damara's alone.

Outraged, Dimian Ree saw the refusal as another nail driven into his coffin, even though his closest advisors had told him to expect no help from Impiltur.

But Dimian Ree won't give up easily. Using his elaborate underground network, the Baron of Morov spreads promises of wealth and trading benefits to the merchants of Lyrabar and Sarshel, but only if he is on Damara's throne. Ree hopes that this will encourage them to appeal on his behalf to the leaders of their cities.

In fact, Impiltur's neutrality is still more official than real. One of Impiltur's War-Captains, Haelimbrar, is secretly riding with the Twilight Riders, hoping to learn more of the methods and ambitions of Bloodstone's new baron. Kinelyn the Gray denies it—with a wink.

Just like Dimian Ree, Gareth actively hopes to sway Impiltur's opinion into his own camp. To embellish his reputation in the southern kingdom, he has laid the foundations of his own communications network. Furthermore, the Baron of Bloodstone is taking advantage of his relationship with the Monas-

tery of the Yellow Rose. Long respected by the Lords of Imphras II, the Monastery supplied emissaries to speak on Gareth's behalf.

It seems logical that Gareth would be the Lords' first choice. Though from a different order, he too is a paladin and above reproach. Paladins understand and trust fellow paladins, and it is doubtful that cries of anguish would be heard on the streets of Impiltur's cities if Gareth were named the first Bloodstone king.

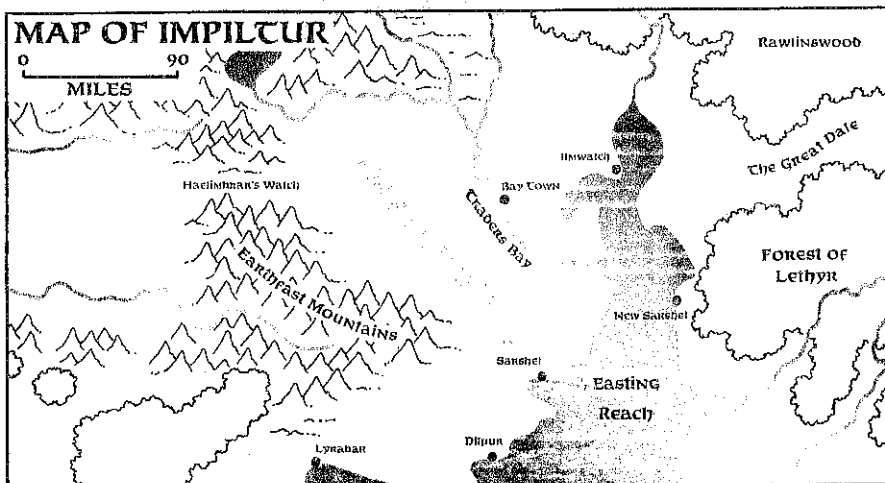
The people's feelings about Gareth are certainly colored by the parallels with their own hero. But more importantly, the powers of Impiltur want what is best for their neighbor. The recovery of the northern kingdom will restore the traffic of profitable merchant caravans.

### Narfell

Beyond the eastern border of Soravia, beyond Icelace Lake and the Giantspire Mountains, lies the kingdom of Narfell. Larger than Damara, Narfell stretches from the Giantspire Mountains north to the far reaches of Icelace Lake, east to the borders of distant Rashemen, and down to the northern shore of the Ashane, the Lake of Tears. Rawlinswood forms Narfell's southernmost boundary, although the Nars consider the waymeet of Bezentil and the Great Dale to be in their territory. The Great Glacier bounds Narfell in the north.

Overall, Narfell is a dry, flat grassland. There are a few central lakes called the Teardrops, with some connecting rivers. Other than the Giantspires, the kingdom has only a few lonely mountains, that do little to deflect the biting winds coming off the Great Glacier. These stony lumps are almost always crawling with fearsome monsters, with tundra yeti and hobgoblins poised behind every rock.

The soil in Narfell is not fertile; scraggly grass is about all it will support. The people here live as nomadic hunters, preying on the vast herds of reindeer and wild ox.





Though more tamed than Vaasa, Narfell can best be described as "savagely civilized." Certainly its culture is far different from that of Damara and Impiltur. The tanned horsemen who ride the tundra, the Nars, live in large tribal communities. Temporary tent villages called waymeets appear along the worn paths the Nars call roads, most often springing up wherever a tribe might be when the sun finds the western horizon and the vicious night wind begins to blow.

Tales speak of at least 20 Nar tribes (see the extended descriptions below). Each tribe is called by the family name of their current chieftain. The largest tribe is Abordabe, numbering 4,000, but most tribes have only a few hundred members.

When unity is required, the Nars will abide by joint decisions made for the common good. Thus, in dealing with representatives of foreign merchants or threats of war beyond the borders, the Nars rely on decisions made by a tribal council led by Chieftain Abordabe.

There are no permanent cities in Narfell, but once a year, the tribes briefly gather in a single location—a huge marketplace they call Bildoobaris, but more commonly referred to as the Trade Fair. This gathering is occasioned by the merchants' arrival from Impiltur and other lands, an effort which these traders make only once a year. The Trade Fair is a vast tent city that houses nearly all 30,000 men, women, and children of Narfell.

Narfell's primary wealth is, without doubt, its horses. The Nars are among the finest horsemen in the Forgotten Realms, and they demand much of their steeds. Over time, the tribes have bred exceptional quality into their horses. Tall, sinewy, and tough, these steeds possess an endurance and raw strength unequalled in the region.

The Nars love to deal, and the Trade Fair is one of the great pleasures of every tribesman and woman. They have a weakness for sparkling jewelry and colorful clothes (especially the men), and every year they eagerly trade

horses for trinkets. A caveat to those who would make a quick coin: their taste has improved since Impiltur joined the trade circuit.

But in essence life in Narfell remains as it has always been: a day-to-day war against the elements and the monsters. These are a tough people—Nar women can outfight most men of the civilized realms. As it always has been, Narfell is a land where only the strong survive.

### **Recent events in Narfell**

Even the rise of the Witch-King could not bring dramatic changes to this kingdom which has remained much the same since its earliest days. But the Nars did notice Zhengyi, and watched him closely.

The Nars had never involved themselves with Damara, and certainly they had never considered the possibility of war with their western neighbor. Only a few tribes had any contact with the east, and that only with frontiersmen in eastern Soravia. So the people of Narfell were not pleased by Zhengyi's evident taste for conquest. The Witch-King's army camped on the banks of Icelace Lake, and there was talk that, with its large numbers of unrecruited humanoids, Narfell would be the focus of Zhengyi's next campaign.

A group of Nar horsemen were sent on a scouting probe by the tribal council. They crossed over the Frozen Ford into northern Soravia and skirmished with a contingent of the Vaasan army. The fierce Nars thundered through Zhengyi's goblins, even cutting down several hill giants.

But a cleric of the Order of the Goat's Head saw the horsemen as barbarians (and it can be argued that the Nars are indeed barbarians). Some say the evil cleric was high priest Banak himself. This priest brought forth a legion of undead against the Nars. Like most barbarians, the Nars have a definite aversion to things they do not understand, and the proud warriors swiftly lost their taste for battle. Although Nars rarely retreat, the few survivors fled

back across the frozen expanse of Icelace Lake carrying tales of impending doom to their people.

The tribes gathered in the shadows of the Giantspires preparing for war, and watched the rise of Gareth Dragonsbane with sincere relief. Zhengyi never crossed into Narfell, for the army of Bloodstone arose and threw him down. However, if the second battle at the Ford of Goliad had shifted in Zhengyi's favor, the Nar army would have charged across the fields of Soravia to oppose the Witch-King.

### **Where Narfell now stands**

Little is known of the Nars' present feelings toward Damara. It seems likely that these proud and fierce people would lean in favor of Gareth Dragonsbane over Dimian Ree because there is a mentality of survival-of-the-fittest among the Nars. "Deed, not blood," is the rule, and all Nars are judged by their actions. Even the tribal chieftains constantly face honorable challenges from rivals. The winner of these hand-to-hand battles becomes the newly-accepted chieftain, while the loser (if he lives) willingly takes a lesser standing and pays all honor to the victor. By bravely opposing Zhengyi, Gareth has probably won the approval of those Nar leaders who have noted the events in Damara.

Conversely, Dimian Ree has done nothing to make the Nars think well of him, and he hints that he will claim the throne of Damara by right of blood—not deed. Moreover, Narfell's closest neighbors, the people of Soravia, owe their freedom and their allegiance to Gareth. Therefore, when they have occasion to speak with the Nars, the Soravians laud Gareth, not Ree.

The Nars know that Dimian Ree did not fight nor even offer support at the second battle at the Goliad ford. Even their own people were more battle-ready than the man who would succeed to the Damaran throne by bloodright. Therefore, Dimian Ree's only hope would be to dishonor Gareth in the eyes of the Nars: not easy! Gareth has shown



himself a man of honor and courage, virtues highly valued by the Nars.

Gareth himself values the Nars' respect, and he has some preliminary plans for a balanced relationship with his eastern neighbor: If he should come to power as the first King of Bloodstone, Gareth sees Narfell as an ally mustering a powerful cavalry. In return, he believes that he can offer much to the tribesmen in the form of mining expertise.

The Giantspire Mountains are known to be rich in certain minerals, bloodstone included. The Nar hunters have never learned to pull ore from the ground profitably, and it seems unlikely that all the tribes would change their nomadic ways to learn. However, for a tithe of gems and jewels, the tribes might allow Damaran companies to mine in the Giantspires. Damara has the people to set up lucrative mines in Narfell, and to teach the Nars who so desire how to do their own mining. Gareth believes the arrangement has the makings of a solid partnership.

### The known tribes

For the purpose of this description, each tribe has been categorized as being one of four dispositions: *Savage*, *Hostile*, *Ambivalent*, and *Tolerant*. A Dungeon Master should keep in mind that these ratings are generalizations.

A tribe rated *Savage* is likely to attack foreigners on sight, asking no questions. One regarded as *Hostile* would be more interested in capturing, or at least surrounding, foreigners before attacking. PCs caught in this unenviable position had better do some fast talking if they ever hope to leave. An *Ambivalent* tribe judges foreigners solely on their immediate actions. This tribe won't take any action, favorable or hostile, toward strangers until provoked—one way or the other. Finally, a *Tolerant* tribe will accept foreigners unless they do something to anger the tribal chieftain.

Most Nars fit somewhere between *Hostile* and *Ambivalent*. Even the most savage tribes come to the Trade Fair each year with open arms and wide

smiles, while even the most tolerant would not hesitate to put a pushy foreigner to a slow and painful death.

Tribes are usually difficult for outsiders to identify. They wear no distinctive colors or clothing, and the name of a tribe changes whenever a new chieftain takes command. While tribes are often found at waymeets within their territories, these locations are open to all the tribes and are freely shared. A traveler wandering to Peltarch, south of Icelace Lake, could not be sure whether the Nars camped there belonged to Abordabe or Creel—a dangerous confusion indeed!

#### Abordabe

Population: 4,000

Locale: Central Narfell between Hark's Finger and the western banks of the Teardrops.

Disposition: Tolerant

The largest of the Nar tribes, Abordabe oversees the Trade Fair each summer. The tribe views foreigners more as a source of added wealth than as enemies.

#### Aingst

Population: 1,700

Locale: Western Narfell, in the shadows of the Giantspire Mountains.

Disposition: Ambivalent

Aingst has had quite a bit of contact with farmers in eastern Damara. Still, this tribe is friendlier with strangers if they remain outside Narfell's borders.

#### Creel

Population: 750

Locale: Northwestern Narfell, on the banks of Icelace Lake.

Disposition: Savage

In the past, Creel might have been regarded as merely *Hostile*, but recent events changed that. The contingent of warriors routed by the Witch-King's undead came from this small tribe. Since their humiliation, Creel sees every foreigner as an enemy and will usually attack on sight. Even the other

Nar tribes make an effort to stay out of Creel's way these days.

#### Dag Nost

Population: 3,200

Locale: Southwestern Narfell along the borders of Rawlinswood, and as far as the northern fringes of the Forest of Lethyr.

Disposition: Tolerant

Dag Nost is considered by travelers to be the most civilized of the Nar tribes. Members of this tribe have occasionally traveled to the Impilturian village of Uthmerg to gain an edge in trading before the official Trade Fair gets underway.

#### Far Quey

Population: 2,300

Locale: Northern Narfell along the Great Glacier and on the northern banks of Icelace Lake.

Disposition: Hostile

Far Quey is a powerful tribe of exceptionally tough warriors. While this tribe can be more brutal than others, they are regarded as *Hostile*, not *Savage*. They have little contact with outsiders, and it may be that they are simply curious when a foreigner shows up in their inhospitable region. This hypothetical curiosity may be the PCs' only hope, should they wander into the clutches of Far Quey.

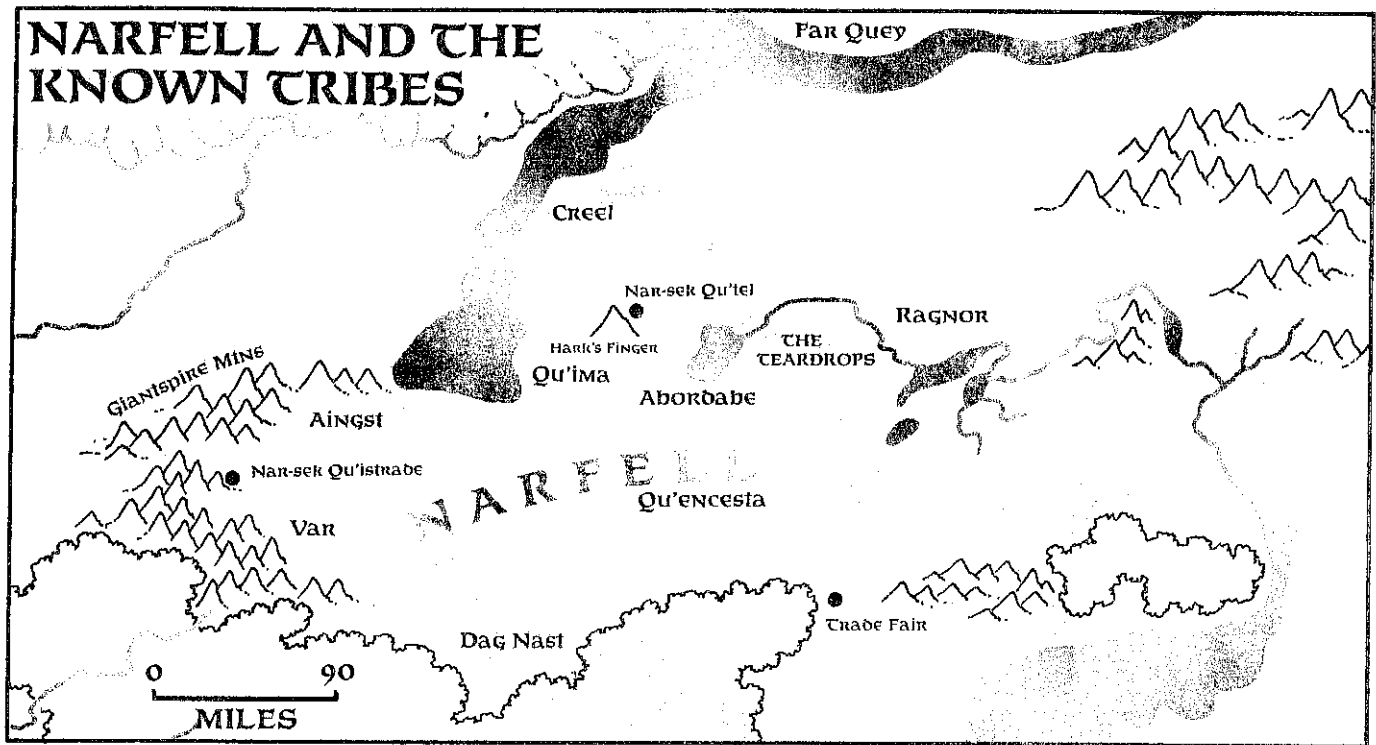
#### Qu'ima

Population: 1,900

Locale: West-central Narfell between Hark's Finger and the Giantspires.

Disposition: Ambivalent

Qu'ima is a middle-of-the-road tribe in all of their actions, with a tendency to blend into the background of events. Conservative by nature, they carefully weigh situations before acting, and this pause gives PCs a fair chance to walk away from Qu'ima without incident. If the PCs hoped to receive aid from this tribe, the task might prove to be more difficult.



A good example of Qu'ima's actions can be seen in their disassociation with Horse (see *Movers and Shakers*, p. 50). Horse is a particularly violent and anti-social renegade. Were he in the Abordabe tribe, Horse might have been executed; in a savage tribe like Qu'encesta, he would probably have become the chieftain! In a typically non-committal act, Qu'ima simply cast him out.

#### Qu'encesta

Population: 2,700

Locale: Central Narfell, from Icelace Lake to the northern borders of Rawlinswood.

Disposition: Savage

Qu'encesta takes the same hard line toward foreigners as does Creel, although they are on better terms with their fellow Nars. Qu'encesta firmly believes in the sovereignty and purity of

Narfell, and accepts no outsiders beyond the formal gathering of the Trade Fair. PCs coming in sight of Qu'encesta will be attacked by tribesmen outnumbering them five to one. If the PCs fight bravely and survive, they might be allowed to flee over Narfell's border. (The PCs should hope the skirmish takes place near a border!) In the worst case, they would be attacked again, this time outnumbered ten to one.

#### Ragnor

Population: 1,900

Locale: Eastern Narfell along the Teardrops.

Disposition: Hostile

Most of Ragnor's outside contact is with the warlike people of Ashanath and Rashemen, and there has never been any love lost between the Nars and these groups. However, if the tribe encounters PCs from elsewhere—

Damara, for example—they might talk before attacking. Brave and proud PCs could win them over, but any cowardice or hostility will be dealt with in the severest of terms.

#### Var

Population: 2,400

Locale: Western Narfell, in the shadows of the Giantspire Mountains.

Disposition: Tolerant

PCs would do best if their first Narfelian encounter was with Var. The large tribe is the one most often seen in Damara, even as far west as Steppenhall. Var may prove to be Gareth Dragonsbane's link to this savage land, for Chief Var appears to be quite interested in the mining gemstones out of the Giantspire Mountains. In this light, the chief eagerly questions anyone he can meet from Damara, which he views as a rich kingdom that Narfell would do well to imitate.







hard play. They live an existence well apart from the tumult of the squabbling politics of the humans.

The Waukeshire lies far to the north, in Bloodstone Valley. It is home to several hundred of the little folk who work in close association with the dwarves of Clan Orothiar and the centaurs of Warrenwood. This community makes a fine profit from the mines and the three races have built a defense pact, the Alliance of Beltwatchers, centered in the miles of formidably trapped tunnels of the Warren.

### Half-orcs

Half-orcs fare better and are more plentiful in the Bloodstone Lands than in most areas of the Forgotten Realms. Though not especially favored by the people of the region—certainly the men and dwarves here have no love for orcs!—half-orcs are generally tolerated as a fact of life in every province and every city.

In mountain settlements such as Tomrav and Sudrav, half-orcs live among the humans and act as go-betweens. Their efforts smoothe humans' relations with the goblinoids of the surrounding mountains. Without the efforts of these half-breeds, these settlements might not have survived.

The breed has evolved one step further, with half-orc marrying half-orc. Thus, they are developing a culture independent of conventional orcish heritage. In the blasted ruins of the Vaasan city of Palishchuk, half-orcs are carving out their own independent community, and they live in harmony with their neighbors in Damara. Amazingly, these civilized half-orcs carry on good relations with the dwarves across the Galenas in Ironspurs.

### Humans

The dominant culture in the Bloodstone Lands is mankind's, with humans comprising more than 90% of all the goodly folk in the region. Damara's wealth attracted fortuneseekers and rogues from every corner of the Forgotten Realms, and the nation has

long been a melting pot. Over the years, people from different backgrounds have brought to Damara a piece of their own culture, even as they were assimilated into the general milieu.

The largest group of humans resemble the Dalemen across the Dragon's Reach in both appearance and attitudes. Included in this type are most of the people of Impiltur and Damara, not excluding the noble lines of Damara. Indeed, the line of Bloodfeathers, and that of Damara's founder Feldrin, can trace bloodlines directly back to Sembia.

The tribes of Narfell represent a different group altogether. Short and stocky, their tanned skins are much darker than the average Damaran's. A Nar's hair is almost always raven-black and straight to the shoulders.

The last group of men in the Bloodstone Lands were probably the first humans in the region: the barbarians of the Great Glacier. Their hair is light, usually blond, and they have a tall, strong build.

The barbarians themselves know nothing of their history before coming into the region, and no direct evidence shows them to be related to any of the other barbarian tribes in the Forgotten Realms. However, their customs and physical appearance are too much like those of other known tribes for the similarity to be dismissed. Scholars believe that this tribe is more closely related to the tribes of Icewind Dale, whom they resemble physically, than to the more common Uthgardt tribes of the north.

Like other barbarian tribes, the people of the Great Glacier have an almost mystical symbiosis with Nature. Their totem beast, the white worm, honors a monster that presents a real and ever-present danger to their existence.

This bond with Nature, exhibited by all the barbarians of the north, may be the evidence for a common ancestry. However, all these people live a harsh, savage existence. They may simply have developed similar ideas based on a reverence for and an understanding of the awesome power of Nature such as no "civilized" man could ever experience.

### Gnomes

Surface gnomes are an uncommon sight north of the Sea of Fallen Stars. No community of these little people can be found anywhere in Vaasa, Damara, Impiltur, or Narfell. Like elves, those gnomes who come to the Bloodstone Lands are wandering bands or solitary fortune-hunters.

The svirfneblin, the deep gnomes, are a different matter. In a huge cavern under the Bloodstone Mines sits Deep-earth, a city of more than 800 svirfneblin. Ruled by good King Rugardo, these svirfneblin are intricately united with the societies of surface dwellers in the area, and the relationship is one of mutual benefit.

Other groups of deep gnomes are reported to live in peaceful solitude under the Earthspurs.

## Monsters

### Goblinkin and Giantkind

Goblins and orcs are more numerous than all the other races in the Bloodstone Lands combined. Yet they have failed to dominate the region because, like their kin everywhere, they are too petty and self-centered to organize themselves into a united force. The tribes are countless; every mountain seems to support its own clan. Induction into the Witch-King's vast army hardly made a dent in the numbers of potential recruits living in the dark holes of the mountains.

The Giantspire Mountains, on the Damara-Narfell border, are a veritable breeding ground for hobgoblins, bugbears and ogres. Travelers to the mountains in the region had better be prepared to face these formidable enemies. This is their territory, and they tend to travel in groups of a dozen or more.

Giants are also prevalent in the mountains. Most common are the stone giants, and there are a few scattered bands of hill giants. Generally, these monsters don't bother the villages, hav-



ing enough sport harrassing the goblins and orcs crawling all about them. On the rare occasions that they do come into human territory, the giants create serious problems, because even a small band can do an incredible amount of damage in a very short time. One particularly nasty group of stone giants, called the Thunkers, has been making trouble more frequently in the area.

### Tundra yeti

If the uncivilized mountains belong to the goblins and giants, then the empty grasslands and tundra of the north are the domain of the fearsome tundra yeti. Not a gregarious creature, the tundra yeti usually roam alone or in small bands. Their shaggy coats camouflage them, and they hide unseen until it is too late for the victim.

The tundra yeti are a serious, seemingly unstoppable problem. On Narfell's grasslands, they kill more than 200 people and twice that number of horses annually. The Nars have launched numerous efforts, coordinated among the tribes, to clear specified areas. Long lines of horsemen sweep across miles of grassland and dozens of the savage beasts die. In no time, this "newly-tamed land" reverts to being dangerous wilderness, and the yeti seem no less numerous.

### Remorhaz

Among the broken blocks at the fringes of the Great Glacier live the remorhaz, the polar worms. They are even more prevalent among the high frozen peaks of the Earthspurs. Rarely seen outside of these isolated areas, the remorhaz remain a popular symbol of the far cold reaches of the Bloodstone Lands. Within the boundaries of their predictable domains, the polar worms are supreme and unconquerable. The people who live nearby survive by understanding and respecting them.

The barbarians of the Great Glacier worship the remorhaz as a patron deity, and the glacier in the Earthspurs is

aptly named the Glacier of the White Worm. The monks of the Monastery of the Yellow Rose use the remorhaz to test their discipline. The monks share the worms' environment, living not in conflict with the creatures, but in harmony. They have even perfected a technique for riding the beasts!

### Dragons

Until very recently, dragons were not a familiar sight in the Bloodstone Lands. An occasional white would come down from the Great Glacier, or some other terror would drift in from the desolate wastelands north of Thar. But these solitary monsters never found much plunder, and they usually flew off before they became much of a problem.

Things have changed. In the ruins of Castle Perilous, evil dragons of all colors are congregating. One estimate puts their number at 50, and a huge group of whites is reportedly preparing to come down from the frozen wastes of the Great Glacier. Such a flight would double that number. The evil dragons are enraged by the defeat of Tiamat, their Queen, and are gathering to seek revenge on Tiamat's conquerors, Gareth Dragonsbane and his friends. Clearly, dragons are about to become a major influence in the area.

### Other Nasty Things

The Bloodstone Lands are filled with danger. Goblinkin and giantkind, tundra yeti, remorhaz, and dragons comprise the majority of foes for the daring adventurers to deal with, but these are not the only monsters roaming the region. White-furred snakes, polar bears, white puddings, moon dogs, winter wolves, and nearly every other animal and monster found in a cold wilderness area can be encountered here. Any one of them would enjoy making a meal of an unlucky fool. And, like every other place in the Forgotten Realms that men have not brought the land fully under control, the stench of troll is not an uncommon odor.

## Language

Modern common tongue is the predominant language of Damara, Impiltur, and Narfell. A bastardized form of the language, mixing common and dwarvish, is the argot of Vaasa. PCs speaking only common will be understood when visiting in Darmshall and other communities of Vaasa, but they may have a hard time understanding this odd dialect when it is spoken to them.

In remote mountain settlements such as Tomrav, orcish has become the second tongue, taught to every child. This is a simple matter of survival. More than one person from Tomrav has had to talk his way out of an orcan stewing pot! Language eases communication between the races, and has led to a quieter, if not completely peaceful, coexistence between man and orc in this region.

## Currency

"If it's good anywhere else, it's good in Damara!" This popular saying spread among Damaran vendors since the currency of bloodstone bars collapsed. Damaran merchants are true traders, and they will deal in almost any country's currency. They will usually accept even the old chalcedony bars, for many Damaran merchants foresee the return of the bloodstone bar currency with the restoration of the kingdom. A few are even hoarding the stuff!

Vaasan attitudes towards currency are similar to those found farther south. However, bartered supplies are more welcome than coins—gold pieces make terrible windbreaks against a winter wind! Similarly, the people of Narfell prefer barter to coins. Recall, however, that the Nars have a definite weakness for gems and jewels, and a crafty jeweller may get twice the worth of his goods in trade for Narfellian stallions.

Impiltur mints its own money in the city of Hlammach. The coins bear the crossed sword and wand on one side, and "Imphras" etched along the bor-



der. Like everyone else, the merchants of Impiltur will deal in any currency, but the government levies a 3% Kingdom Tax on all purchases made with outside coinage.

## Religion

Religion plays an important role for the people of the Bloodstone Lands. Rare is the individual who, over a span of years, has not seen death close at hand in this harsh territory. But though the people follow their chosen gods with dedication, they generally tolerate the ways of other religions. In this land, deadly monsters and deadlier weather are never far away, and there is no room for religious persecution, or religious separatism.

Baron Gareth Dragonsbane and Baroness Christine of Bloodstone are choice examples of this tolerance. Gareth is a lawful good paladin serving Ilmater; his wife Christine is a practicing druid of Silvanus! Simply put, the people of the Bloodstone Lands never let religion get in the way of living.

Ilmater, god of endurance and suffering, is a favorite of Damarans. The yellow rose, symbol of St. Sollars the Twice-Martyred, is a common sight in the land. Even those who live by other faiths feel a closeness to this long-dead patriarch. Anyone who has lived in this land of hardships knows the virtue of endurance in the face of suffering.

St. Dionysus is also honored here. Recently, construction of a huge cathedral has begun in Goliad. The construction was financed by a gift of gems and gold plundered from the lair of Tiamat by Friar Dugald, who is an associate of Baron Gareth. Some say the church is Gareth's political move to win over the people of Brandiar. However, those who know Friar Dugald do not question his dedication to St. Dionysus, though they might wink at the secondary motives behind the location of the church.

Impiltur sustains numerous sects and factions. The Lords of Imphras II call themselves "Holy Warriors of Suffering," a clear reference to the god Ilma-

ter. However, their choice does not constrain others, and Impiltur is truly a land of choice. Every city has many different places of worship, all tolerated by both the people and the leaders of the kingdom.

Among the fierce Nars it is Tempus, the Lord of Battles, who rules supreme. Speculation proposes that the barbarians of White Worm also pay homage to the Lord of Battles. This would link them yet more tightly with their suspected kin, the barbarians of Icewind Dale, but this preference has not yet been proven.

Evil beings have their own gods and their own interests in the region. Although Orcus and his foul kind have been forever banished from the Bloodstone Lands, priests of the goat's head continue to flourish among the goblinoids and evil humans. Their power structure was simply too entrenched to be thrown down, even with the defeat of their wretched god-figure.

In the wilds of the Galenas and the Earthspurs, another favorite is Skoraesus Stonebones, King of the Rock and god of the stone giants. Travelers in the mountains will often come across huge stone cairns built in honor of Skoraesus. His followers view the numerous stone giants as the true rulers of the mountain passes, and include many goblinoids as well as giants. Those goblinoids whose tribes worship Skoraesus have a longer life expectancy than others in stone giant country, so one wonders how much of their piety to Skoraesus is sincere, and how much is simple pragmatism!

## Character Classes

Nearly every character class has made some mark in the Bloodstone Lands, but fighters are particularly noted. After all, everyday life in these lands is an adventure in itself! Almost everyone not practising some other adventuring profession is at least a 1st level fighter.

PCs of any character class can advance themselves in this yet-untamed region. Vaasa particularly needs adven-

turers, and experience is not a hard thing to achieve—though survival might be a different story!

## Clerics

Every community in Impiltur and in Damara supports at least one chapel, and often several. As noted in the previous section, religion plays an important role in the lives of these people, and clerics are well-respected even by those not of the same faiths.

Like anywhere else, individual clerics in the Bloodstone Lands differ widely in their views on the proper lifestyle for a man of the cloth. Given their honored status, high-level clerics can pretty much decide for themselves the magnitude of their personal wealth and possessions. Many remain ascetic paupers, going among their flock as friends and advisors. But some, mostly in the larger cities, number among the wealthiest and most flamboyant people in all Damara.

Other pious individuals strike out into the mountain regions as missionaries for their chosen faith. Often they try to convert even the goblinoids to their viewpoint, and sometimes they meet with success. Often, though, missionaries simply disappear.

But whatever their faith or their practices, clerics thrive in the more civilized areas. The people here are eager to establish a good position in the afterlife, and most will go out of their way not to anger anyone in contact with the higher planes.

Among the Nars, shamans are honored even above the tribal chief. Tempus is the sole god of these people, and the Nars do not exhibit the religious tolerance common elsewhere. Clerics of other faiths would be wise to keep their beliefs very private when venturing into Narfell.

Evil clerics, like those of the goat's head religion, now find themselves severely limited in spell selection, especially in the higher level spells. With Orcus banished, there's no one left for them to commune with! Nevertheless,



## CITIES, TOWNS, AND VILLAGES

With scanty farmland and wide-spread mines, the Bloodstone Lands support numerous small-scale settlements. Farming and mining communities dot the Damaran countryside. Many are unnamed clusters of houses, but others are formally established, and continue to endure as long-standing communities.

Impiltur's population is concentrated in the cities. Once independent city-states, those four large cities house approximately three-quarters of the kingdom's entire population. The Nars of Narfell are nomadic, with no permanent settlements to call home. Untamed Vaasa is mostly uninhabited bogland.

### Bay Town

**Population:** 1,750

Bay Town is the community that the twelve Lords of Imphras II would most like to forget. Dominating Traders Bay in central Impiltur, Bay Town shelters thieves and pirates, smugglers and other unseemly types of every profession. The leaders of Impiltur acknowledge that thieves and rogues will carve a niche for themselves somewhere, so they simply turn their eyes away from the goings-on. In truth, they prefer to keep the scum confined to one area, preferably one of minimal importance, and Bay Town fits that bill. PCs wandering into the town are likely to be "invited" to serve as slaves on one of the many pirate ships—an offer they may find difficult to refuse!

### Bloodstone Village

**Population:** 7,500

The seat of the House of Branth, Bloodstone Village is more notably the capital of the Barony of Bloodstone. The city is as rich in heroes as in chalcedony, and undoubtedly the fastest growing power center in the region. Bloodstone Village would certainly become the capital of the Kingdom of Bloodstone if Vaasa and Damara are so united.

A high wall surrounds Bloodstone Village, but its gates are always open. In the past, the people of Bloodstone Village were either miners or tradesmen, but today the city has a more balanced fla-

vor because of the recent influx of merchants and adventurers.

All the goodly races are welcome here. More than 6,000 of the citizens are human, but halflings and dwarves abound. Even the half-orcs from Palishchuk appear with increasing frequency.

Bloodstone Village keeps no formal militia at this time, except for the Baron's palace guard. However, the most formidable and loyal army in all Damara is only a few hours away, at the Vaasan and Damaran Gates.

### Brotha

**Population:** 400

Brotha is an agricultural community five miles west of Portith in the Barony of Ostel. The farms here are quite productive, making this mid-sized town an important factor in Ostel's independence.

The people of Brotha truly despise Ostel's ruling Baroness Sylvia. These proud and honest farmers view the sorceress as a trickster and a liar, with no allegiance to anything but filling her treasurehouse. Rumor has it that Mayor Tom Haystacks has sent a secret note to the Twilight Riders, asking them to aid Brotha in its struggle to dethrone Sylvia. At the very least, Brotha is developing closer relations with Brandiar, whose people are lining up against Dimian Ree, the ruler who is Baroness Sylvia's closest ally.

### Daleport

**Population:** 125

Daleport came into being when a group of ambitious bargemen saw the opportunity to offer merchants and travelers crossing the Morov-Polten line a better option than to take the King's Road or Dalen's Ford (both of which pass through a stretch of bogland). The road is so bad that the extra ten miles up the Icelace River to the Ford can take a laden caravan as much as two hard days of travel, so until recently the bargemen have done well.

Ever since Polten began slipping away from its alliance with Morov and Ostel, business for the Daleport barges has been slowing down. The people of Daleport fear they may soon be pressed into a

more ominous service—transporting troops—if the baronies go to war.

On a lighter side, Daleport is also known for the Barge House, a tavern of wild reputation. Formerly a warehouse, the Barge House is a huge establishment, seating 500 comfortably. The majority of the Daleport population can be found here each night making quiet deals with those passing through. Barge owners are known to engage in some smuggling with certain less-than-reputable patrons. In fact, during a visit to the Barge House, a person can get, or can find out where to get, anything he or she desires.

### Darmshall

**Population:** 600

As much a fortress as a city, Darmshall is a bastion of security in the hostile land of Vaasa. Its usual population is only 600, but Darmshall has sheltered nearly ten times that number for extended periods in times of peril. A towering wall surrounds Darmshall, lined with weapons of war and grim-faced guards. Huge storerooms of food and supplies fill a secret tunnel complex beneath the city, stockpiled against times of need.

The construction of Darmshall was funded by an adventuring band called Tenblades, a group active during the early explorations of Vaasa. After two members of Tenblades were murdered, the group's stubborn leader Romas Thunderclap wanted to get back at the vile inhabitants of the district. He built Darmshall, a mighty fortress, to be a perpetual thorn in the side of those evil beings claiming dominion of the land.

Romas must have been smiling in his grave for the last decade. Although the Witch-King claimed all of Vaasa, he never conquered Darmshall, though 1,000 goblin corpses rotted on the fields surrounding the city.

### Dilpur

**Population:** 15,000

For a very long time, Dilpur was the smallest and least important of the Impilturian city-states. When trade from Damara declined, and Sarshel fell, many of the refu-



gees from Sarshel settled in Dilpur, the next closest city. The population nearly doubled. Dilpur quickly expanded its docks, and a new wall is under construction to encompass the sprawling additions built onto the city over the last few years.

The three lords who rule Dilpur are concerned for the future of their city. The Lords Imbraun, Soargilm, and Sambrar recognize the potential for renewed trade with Damara. While Impiltur as a whole would benefit greatly, a renewed flow of bloodstone from the north might prove disastrous for Dilpur. The lords must wonder how many citizens might return to Sarshel if trade resumes. Therefore, when planning new additions to the city, the lords are proceeding cautiously. Their efforts focus on improving areas like the docks, areas that will prove useful even if the new arrivals do not remain.

### **Dunfee**

**Population:** 1,100

Dunfee is Impiltur's most important mining town. Located in the southeastern corner of the Earhspurs, Dunfee is barely a stone's throw from the Damaran border. The people of Dunfee have close ties with their neighbors: their fellow miners in Sudrav, the Carmathan nobles in Ravensburg, and the farmers in Zarach. In fact, they are becoming Zarach's principal market for foodstuffs.

Dunfee's proximity to Damara brings watchful eyes and ears into the town. One or more of the Lords of Imphras II are almost always present. If not one of them, then their Heralds are here. They watch the continuing political struggle in the north and patiently gather information.

### **Goliad**

**Population:** 900

A closely-walled city amid sprawling fields and scattered farmhouses, Goliad is both the seat of power for the Duchy of Brandiar, and a war-time refuge for the nearby farmers. Only 250 people regularly reside within the walls, but its stated population includes the many farmers who rely on it to be home base and a shelter.

Twice battered, Goliad serves as a testament to the teachings of Ilmater, the god of endurance and suffering, simply be-

cause it continues to exist. When the Witch-King proved victorious at the first battle at the ford, Goliad was literally flattened and its people sent fleeing across the land. But they returned and rebuilt—only to have it flattened again when the armies returned for a rematch.

This time, though, the good guys won. The people of Goliad received considerable assistance pulling their city back together for the second time. The Church of Dionysus will soon be completed, and it is sure to be one of the most impressive structures in the region, a symbol of the unyielding will of the brave people of Goliad and all Brandiar.

### **Heliogabalus**

**Population:** 25,000

Second-largest city in the Bloodstone Lands, Heliogabalus has long been Damara's center of power and trade. Like large cities elsewhere in the Forgotten Realms, Heliogabalus is a place of many textures. The guilds are here: the Damaran thieves' guild, the merchants' guild, and the various trade guilds. Here also may be found the lures of the underworld, easy to contact in the many darkened taverns.

Until the reign of Zhengyi, Heliogabalus enjoyed the singular status of being a separate province of Damara. When the provinces were proclaimed independent, Dimian Ree moved his seat of power from Morovar to Heliogabalus, and annexed the city into Morov's realm.

The people of Heliogabalus raised no objections to Ree's actions. Independent, and loyal to no one outside their respective guilds, the people here rarely object to anything unless it interferes with day-to-day business.

Heliogabalus has its finger on the pulse of Damara's economy. Astride every trade route of road and waterway, Heliogabalus will always have a dominant role in the region's politics, even if the official seat of power moves to Bloodstone Village. The merchants' power, bolstered by their ties to foreign lands, cannot be threatened by proclamation of a new capital city. If the new baron expects his Kingdom of Bloodstone to succeed, he will have to coax the powerful guildmasters of Heliogabalus into his fold.

### **Helmsdale**

**Population:** 80

Helmsdale suffered greatly throughout the reign of the Witch-King, serving as Zhengyi's base of operations in Damara from his first invasion until his defeat almost 12 years later. Now the town is often referred to as "the cursed village."

Originally a quiet farming community, Helmsdale once harbored a population of 500, mostly farmers whose produce largely went to support the dwarves of Ironspur. The Last Outpost was a favorite tavern for anyone traveling the King's Road north of Goliad.

Helmsdale's population exploded to 4,000 when the Witch-King's army rolled in. None of the original inhabitants of Helmsdale managed to get out before the army overran the city. Of the 500 who surrendered to Zhengyi during the first year of the Vaasan War, only 78 survived to see the Witch-King defeated. Most of those have since remained in Helmsdale, and a few newcomers have trickled in.

Like every other community in Damara, Helmsdale is stubbornly determined to survive. With help from Ironspur and from the Bloodstone army, the final reminders of Zhengyi's vile reign have been swept from the village. On unanimous decision of the people of Helmsdale, the first structure rebuilt was the Last Outpost.

### **Hlammach**

**Population:** 21,000

Like all the important Impilturian cities, Hlammach is a major seaport. Walled and compact, the city is home to merchants, tradesmen, and sailors. Her docks are extensive and always filled with laden ships, for Hlammach is the final stopover before the village of Uthmerg and the trade road going east.

Before the unification of Impiltur, Hlammach was second only to Lyrabar in importance, because the city controlled the entire northwestern corner of the Sea of Fallen Stars. Hlammach's principal rival was Sarshel, and relations between the two cities were never friendly. Even today, under the united banner of Impiltur, relations between the people of Hlammach and Sarshel remain cool. (This



partly explains why those who deserted Sarshel when trade fell off settled in small, unimportant Dilpur.)

Hlammach retains great importance today as the center of Impilturian economic planning, being the location of the kingdom's mint. War-Captains Imbra, Silmgar, and Lashilaun work to maintain a level of currency proportionate to the true wealth of the kingdom.

### **Ilmwatch**

**Population:** 560

More a fortress than a city, Ilmwatch stands on the north bank of the infamous Buzzard Beak Harbor. It protects merchants traveling to and from Damara, and those who cross the Easting Reach to Uthmerg. Patrols from Ilmwatch regularly visit Uthmerg and the string of small villages that dot the road north. Mulltown, Guidodale, Maracrath, and Cairmpur are overnight stops along the Merchant's Run, part of the Herald's Road. Contingents from the garrison often accompany merchants journeying south.

### **Kinbrace**

**Population:** 4,500

Kinbrace covers more than 25 square miles of land. Nestled in the verdant valley of the Galena River, the city is surrounded by productive farms scattered across the broad grasslands of Soravia. Farmers often informally joined forces in Kinbrace before continuing south with their goods. This gave Kinbrace a solid lock on shipping coming down from the northern reaches of Damara.

Unlike most the towns in this hostile land, Kinbrace has no wall. Instead, its perimeter is anchored by six impressive castles. Each of these is ruled by an independent landowner. Generally, the owners work together, understanding the advantages of unity. But feuds have occurred in the past, and the ruling families have been as interested in their own profits as in the common good.

This shortsightedness contributed to the ease with which Zhengyi took Kinbrace. He named it as the capital of Soravia, but his puppet-Duke was quickly thrown down. With the Witch-King's fall,

Kinbrace has returned to its informal existence, as has Soravia in general.

### **Lyrabar**

**Population:** 32,000

The great port of Lyrabar is the largest city in the Bloodstone Lands. Impiltur's capital, the city is ruled by the twelve Lords of Imphras II. The castle of Kyrtraun stands within its walls, as does Tower Pureheart. The rising spire of the Tower can be seen for many miles. The most beautiful and dominant structure in the city is the golden-domed palace of Queen Sambryl.

Lyrabar is long and narrow, a strip city arrayed along the waterfront. Her docks are extensive and her fleet is the envy of all the region, floating numerous warships and merchant vessels.

Westernmost of the major cities of Impiltur, Lyrabar maintains good relations with the independent city-state of Procampur. Good relations also exist with the nations bordering the Dragon Reach, and those on the western banks of the Sea of Fallen Stars.

### **Morovar**

**Population:** 4,000

Once the thriving capital of the Barony of Morov, Morovar is on the decline. Forsaken by Baron Dimian Ree when he moved the seat of power to Heliogabalus, the city seems to have lost its spirit. Most of Morov's nobles have abandoned Morovar to follow the baron, and no ruling body remains. In times of trouble, the remaining militia are hard to organize and workers are slow to respond.

Not surprisingly, many citizens resent Dimian Ree's move south. They feel deserted and cheated, and malcontents are quite common in this once-proud city. Some even say Morovar should transfer its loyalties to the province of Brandiar, though most know that would be a daring and dangerous move.

Regardless of its present difficulties, the high-walled city retains its importance as a port on the Goliad River. Morovar also serves as a collection market for the produce farmed in the fertile lands of the barony.

### **Mulltown**

**Population:** 250

Typical of the Impilturian villages is Mulltown, the first stopover for caravans moving south down Merchant's Run from Damara. Many of the smaller cities in Impiltur support the trading routes to and from the four major city-states. Defensible Mulltown offers well-managed inns and skilled smithies, and is a perfect example of a community whose role is service to visitors.

### **New Sarshel**

**Population:** 1,500

The recently-completed structures of New Sarshel stand across the water from the city of Sarshel. Built out of defiance for the old city, New Sarshel does its utmost to steal merchants and sailors away from its namesake.

The construction of New Sarshel was financed by a committee of fifteen merchants, disgruntled by the city's apparent indifference to its decline in the wake of the Damaran disaster. The founders of New Sarshel have an aggressive hunger for trade from the east. But convincing trade to come to the new city is not an easy task. Certainly the great port of Hlammach will offer no assistance! Bettors get even odds that the new city will not survive the next winter.

### **Ostrav**

**Population:** 200

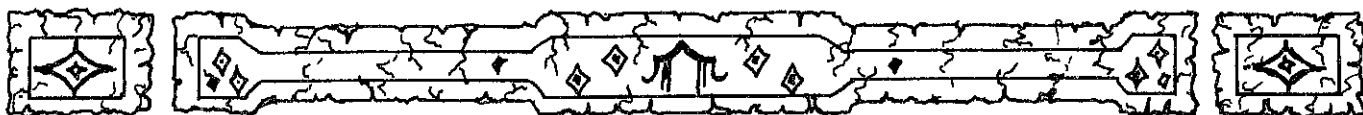
Isolated in the grasslands of Arcata, the small farming community of Ostrav has weathered the winters and the Witch-King without breaking a sweat. Politically neutral, Ostrav has some of the friendliest inns in all the land. The townspeople of Ostrav plod trustingly from day to day, cordial to strangers who wish to stop over and wipe the dust of the road from their boots.

### **Palishchak**

**Population:** 750

One of the most unusual settlements in all the Realms, Palishchuk is inhabited by half-orcs. After the fall of the Witch-King,





the half-orcs of the region claimed the ruined city of Palishchuk and rebuilt.

What makes this settlement doubly unusual is the half-orcs' determination to integrate themselves with the goodly societies of the land. The rulers of Palishchuk have made peaceful overtures to all their neighbors. They have extended their hands to their Vaasan kin in Darmshall, to the rising powers in Bloodstone, and even to the dwarves across the Galenas in Ironspur. Remarkably, the people of Darmshall and Bloodstone fully accept Palishchuk as a neighbor and ally.

Even most of the Ironspur dwarves have learned to place a little trust in the half-orc community. Only Clan Hillsafar refuses to put aside the long-standing antipathy between dwarves and half-orcs, but even that may be changing. Surly Grumble, head of the Hillsafar dwarves, seems to be mellowing in his attitude, and his fellows are likely to follow his lead. With everything initially against it, Palishchuk may yet become one of the region's greatest successes.

### **Portith**

**Population:** 1,200

Portith is a medium-sized town on the west bank of Lake Mogador in the Damaran province of Ostel. A convenient stopover between two prominent Damaran cities, Praka and Heliogabalus, Portith is known for fine inns and craftsmen.

Portith may be the only Damaran city that could flourish without help from any other community. In addition to the fine trading and crafting facilities, fishing and farm yields are productive enough support Portith's population in the worst of years.

### **Praka**

**Population:** 11,000

Smaller only than Heliogabalus, Praka had long been Damara's second-loudest voice in government. A city of tall walls and sky-reaching towers, Praka is a beautiful settlement, aesthetically pleasing and readily defensible. Here live many of Damara's true artists, and their work touches everything. Even the regalia of the Prakan militia is richly decorated.

In olden times, the head of House Praka was well-beloved by his or her subjects. Usually the ruling Baron of Ostel would be appointed steward to Damara's throne in the absence of the king. Those days are gone.

Today Praka finds itself more and more isolated, even from the cities in its own province. The Baroness Sylvia was put in place by the Witch-King's agents, and she is generally despised. Her arrogant and selfish policies have embarrassed the loyal people of this proud province. She has been particularly criticized for her unsympathetic attitudes toward the brave soldiers who helped defeat the Vaasan army and free Damara from the Witch-King's foul clutches. Huddled and desperate behind Praka's walls, Sylvia and her cohorts find only one hand held out to them: the equally desperate grasp of Dimian Ree.

### **Ravensburg**

**Population:** 3,500

Ravensburg, capital of Carmathan, faces a dilemma similar to Praka's: the Duke of Carmathan, Theodorus, is not loved. Now formally named Helmont the 15th, Theodorus has used misinformation to deflect any outward signs of that hatred, but the people are unhappy nevertheless.

In fact, the Carmathans are unhappy with the whole lot of would-be rulers. Gulled by the web of their Duke's constant lies, they distrust Gareth Dragonsbane and his proposed Kingdom of Bloodstone. Yet, for all that the people dislike Theodorus, they hate Dimian Ree even more.

So today Ravensburg is a city of intrigue and whispers. Agents of Dimian Ree and Gareth Dragonsbane stalk the alleys, spreading their tales to anyone who will listen. The monks of the Monastery of the Yellow Rose are closely investigating Theodorus' claim to the duchy. Like Ostel, Carmathan is a proud and noble province with a long history of loyalty to the old Damaran kingdom. The people are determined to do the right thing—if they can find out what it is!

Beyond the intrigue, day-to-day Ravensburg devotes much of its energy to warehousing the produce from surrounding

farms. Like Kinbrace in Soravia, which has a similar economic slant, Ravensburg's long, low warehouses sprawl over many square miles. The city proper bustles with tradesmen, mostly leatherworkers and metalworkers crafting farming equipment.

Ravensburg hosts a well-known spring-time horse market. A huge equine breed known as the Carmathan Red, or the Carmathan Horse-Ox, is dealt almost exclusively during this fair. The reputation of the Carmathan Red is that of an exceptionally strong and durable plowhorse, and the beasts have been favored by farmers throughout the Bloodstone Lands for a long time. The horses were starting to draw interest from traders and farmers all along the Sea of Fallen Stars until Zhengyi's wars isolated Damara. As conditions have stabilized, that interest has been rekindling.

### **Sarshel**

**Population:** 6,000

Sarshel is a walled city with extensive dock facilities. Seaside Palace is the city's main structure and governing house; the palace houses Lords Rilaunyr and Silaunbrar. The 200-room complex includes a covered wharf complex, which harbors Rilaunyr's Warship, the flagship of the extensive Sarshel fleet.

Sarshel is the largest Impilturian city close to Damara and points east, and for many years it served as the primary port for Damaran merchants. Since the Witch-King's rise halted Damaran trade, the city has suffered. Once a flourishing city of 18,000, Sarshel has shrivelled to only a third its former size.

Lately Sarshel has been eclipsed by Hlammach, a city better equipped to handle the east-west trade routes. Still, the people remaining in Sarshel are proud and stubborn. They sail onto the Sea of Fallen Stars often enough to bring them an ample piece of the trading pie.

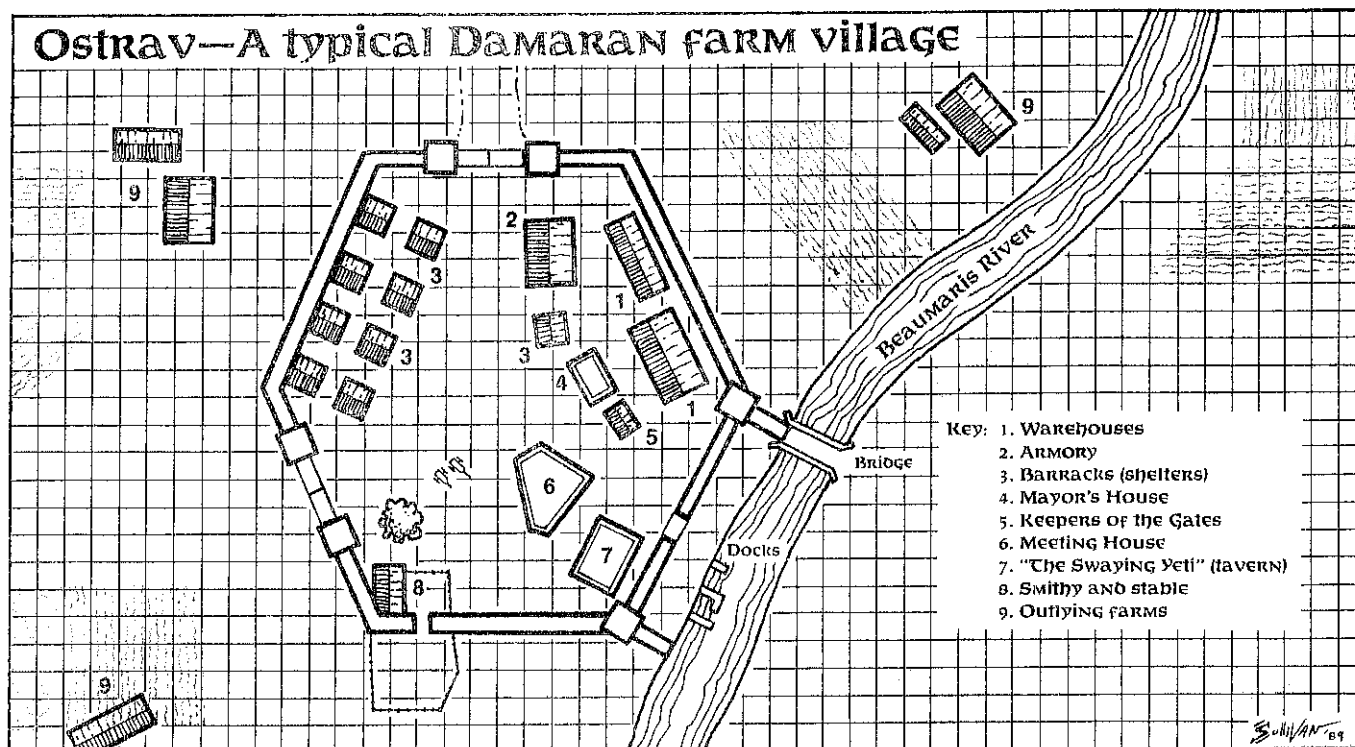
### **Steppenball**

**Population:** 70

Steppenball is often called "Little Narfell" because of its relatively close ties to the Nar tribesmen across the border. The



## Ostrav—A typical Damaran farm village



tribesmen of Narfell have actually visited the town on occasion, seeking news of the happenings in Damara. As such, Steppenhall has an important role to play in the future of modern Damara.

The town is an informal gathering-place, a watering hole for Damara's remote northeastern farmers. Many nearby "towns" are just farmhouses loosely clustered together—places like Kinnery, Merkurn, Newbelle, and Hinterford—and Steppenhall is where the inhabitants come together. Steppenhall also routes supplies to nearly half the Damaran region, even though this vast wilderness is settled by less than 7,000 people.

### Sudrav

Population: 600

Sudrav is the southernmost Damaran city. Formally located in the Duchy of Arcata, the city has stronger ties to Impiltur than to Damara.

The hardy iron miners of Sudrav are generally disgusted with the events of Damara. Effigies of Duke William are openly burned in the city streets, and the miners distrust the petty nobles as well.

Unrest is such that the council of Sudrav sent a formal (and secret) request to the Impilturian rulers, asking them to annex the city into that kingdom. In the interest of good relations with Damara, the Lords of Imphtas II refused that request. However, they did promise aid if the lesser nobles of Arcata or Carmathan oppressed the people.

### Tellerth

Population: 2,300

Tellerth is the easternmost Damaran city, situated in the Barony of Polten on the fringes of Rawlinswood. Another city of independently-minded folks, the angry people of Tellerth closed down their city when the Morov-Ostel-Polten alliance refused to send aid to the army of Bloodstone. Later, when Donlevy the Young made his way to Trailsend, the people of Tellerth reestablished their ties with the rest of the barony. But even today, the folk of Tellerth are not quick to welcome strangers. They are, however, excited that the Twilight Riders are coming.

### Tomrav

Population: 450

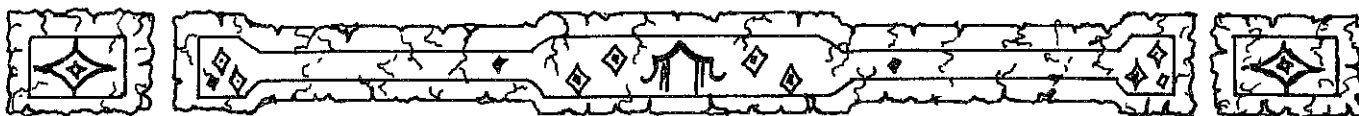
Tomrav is a lonely mining settlement high up in the Earthspur Mountains of southwestern Arcata. The secret of this town's success is its ability to coexist with its various neighbors. Tomrav finds it natural to host the monks of the Monastery of the Yellow Rose, but the city also maintains good relationships with neighboring goblinoid tribes!

Tomrav's population is a mixture of humans, dwarves, and half-orcs. The half-orcs act as liaisons between the townsfolk and the nearby goblin tribes. This relationship has been good for all, with only minor skirmishes between the miners and the goblins. In one such battle, one goblin tribe actually came to the aid of the town in its struggle against a second goblin tribe!

### Trade Fair

Population: 20,000-30,000

For a few brief weeks each summer, the tribes of Narfell congregate. The massive Trade Fair would hardly be called a "city"



by any ordinary standard, but Bildoobaris is as close as the Nars get. Skin tents cover miles of grassland as the entire population of Nars welcome western merchants—the only time of the year that foreigners are welcome in Narfell.

### **Trailsend**

**Population:** 8,000

One of the mightiest fortresses in the Bloodstone Lands, Trailsend is Polten's capital. The huge castle in the city's center was one of the earliest buildings in Damara, constructed by the associates of Feldrin Bloodfeathers. Donlevy the Young sits in the ruler's seat today.

For many years, Praka and Trailsend were sister cities. Facing each other across the mouth of the Great Imphras River at the southern shore of Lake Mogador, Trailsend provided the muscle protecting Praka's artisans. Today, the two cities go their separate ways. The Barony of Polten has pulled out of its alliance with Ostel and Morov, and Donlevy the Young has no love for Baroness Sylvia ruling across the water in Praka.

### **Valls**

**Population:** 1,300

A profound hush has fallen over the city of Valls, the capital of Arcata. Once the bustling trailhead to the King's Road and all western Damaran trade, Valls now waits in quiet anticipation. The people watch with great curiosity the ebb and flow of the powers struggling for dominion over the kingdom.

In local politics, Duke William is a mere figurehead, pinned by the constant scrutiny of his own Ducal Guard. If rumors are true, the Guard is now loyal to Baron Gareth Dragonsbane. Strangers are still welcome in Valls, but whispers will follow them down every street. Suspicious townspeople will make every effort to figure out what role a stranger may have in the shadowplay of intrigue.

### **Viridin**

**Population:** 1,500

Viridin is named after the last King of Damara, and acts as the natural link be-

tween Bloodstone Village and the Bloodstone Mines. The town has one large inn, the Snoring Giant. The inn's best customers are those visitors to the mines who feel more comfortable sleeping above ground than under. A half-dozen supply stores compete for business, offering gear for both mining and adventuring. Marko Orothiar, a master weapons crafter, has put up his forge in Viridin. Although Marko spends most of his time outfitting his clansmen in the mines, the right amount of gold could persuade him to create an exceptional weapon for a stranger.

### **Wassen**

**Population:** 250

The little farming and river town of Wassen is situated in northern Morov on the Goliad River. Wassen offers river travelers a comfortable alternative to a stop in the larger city of Morovar. This town is firmly neutral, stating no preference among the contenders. Wassen's townsfolk consider themselves independent, a community doing its duty to the concept of kingdom but not as anyone's unthinking serfs. People here are wary but friendly, and always listening for a good story.

### **The Waymeets**

**Population:** variable

Throughout the Narfellian grasslands are camping grounds known as the waymeets—really, just wide spots along the worn paths the Nars call roads. More than a dozen of these informal campgrounds exist, but the ones most frequented are called Jiyd, Peltarch, and Nobis, just south of Icelace Lake. Bezentil lies along the trade route of the Great Dale.

### **Windless**

**Population:** 2,500

The newest town in Damara, Windless actually considers itself a sort of suburb of Bloodstone Village. Bloodstone Village bustles with new growth and vitality, but many of the former inhabitants of the Village preferred the quieter times before Zhengyi. The rise of Gareth Dragonsbane has also created quite a clamor. The people of Windless bear no ill will toward the

Baron or the changes he has wrought in Bloodstone Village and in the barony as a whole; they simply choose to live a quieter existence.

Windless has a council, but no formal government. This new town retains tight ties to its mother city, and many of its people loyally serve in the Bloodstone army. Windless citizens are particularly well-represented at the Damaran Gate.

### **Withermeet**

**Population:** 100

The village of Withermeet is highly conservative, resisting change of any kind since its inception more than two centuries ago. The town continues along its chosen path, oblivious to the dramatic forces at work in the kingdom.

Withermeet welcomes visitors, thriving in its role as a stopover between Trailsend and points north. The village proper is no more than three dozen structures: mostly inns and workshops, including several good smithies. Nevertheless, the people of Withermeet own many square miles of land.

Land speculators see Withermeet as another Portlith, and some have offered serious gold for Withermeet's land. The townspeople are interested mostly in preserving their peaceful lifestyle, and they have firmly rejected all advances.

### **Zarach**

**Population:** 600

A flourishing farm community in Ostel, Zarach's biggest problem is deciding which markets to concentrate on. The people here are capitalists in the extreme. Unless Baroness Sylvia forces it, they will show no favoritism to Ostel so long as some other market offers a higher price.

Trade opportunities are good along the King's Road one way to Praka; Ravensburg offers good trade the other way. The impituriat town of Dunfee sends a constant stream of wagons to the vast warehouses of Zarach. And the community is the first stopover for goods being shipped from Halfling Downs in Carmathan! The people of Zarach have no shortage of work.





## GEOGRAPHY OF THE REGION

Nowhere in the Forgotten Realms is the awesome power of nature more prominently displayed than in the Bloodstone Lands. The geography of this area plays a major role in shaping the lives and attitudes of the hardy souls who reside here. All respect the forces exemplified by imposing features such as the Great Glacier and the towering peaks of the Galena Mountains.

### Buzzard Beak Harbor

Buzzard Beak Harbor is a sheltered arm of water jutting into Impiltur from the Easting Reach. Weedy and full of treacherous reefs, the place has long offered a treacherous sanctuary to the smugglers and pirates of the region. These evil sailors know Buzzard Beak Harbor like their own back yard, and are always quick to flee there when pressed by a superior vessel such as Rilaunyr's Warship. The pirates and smugglers have come to know the dangerous harbor out of necessity. No sane captain would take the risks to follow them unless he absolutely had to.

### Beaumaris River

The Beaumaris River is the longest waterway in the Bloodstone Lands. It cuts across the breadth of Vaasa, through Bloodstone Pass. Thereafter it swings south, then east, finally joining the Goliad River on its way to Lake Mogador. Barely a trickle in the fall and frozen solid through most of the winter, the Beaumaris sparkles with snowmelt in the warmer seasons. Its smooth-flowing waters glisten dreamily under sun and moon, and its taste revitalizes weary adventurers with a bone-chilling tingle.

The river does not run deep. It is suitable only for small rowboats or canoes, and there are many shallow fords around which boats have to be carried. Since the river is frequented by goblinoids and other monsters, only the very hardy or the very foolish follow it when traveling north of the Galenas.

### Bloodstone Pass

As the only real pass through the forbidding Galenas, Bloodstone Pass is of vital strategic importance to the kingdoms of

Vaasa and Damara. Controlling the pass means controlling trade between the kingdoms. No invading armies may cross in either direction except through the pass.

The pass is in the heart of the Barony of Bloodstone, housing Bloodstone Village and the towns of Windless and Virdin. Also located here are the fabulous Bloodstone Mines and the deep waters of Lake Midai.

Bloodstone Pass was cut by the raging Beaumaris River during the hasty retreat of the Great Glacier nearly 300 years ago. (In fact, the glacier's retreat was so abrupt, only magical interference offers a sensible explanation.) If the river swelled to those proportions again, all would be washed away. Those living in the valley of the pass would be wise to take note should the glacier exhibit any strange behavior in the future!

### The Easting Reach

The Easting Reach is a broad, sheltered harbor located on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Fallen Stars. The waters are deep and usually calm, with few reefs and predictable currents. The harbor is the best tradeport for goods coming into and out of the Bloodstone Lands. The city of Sarshel guards the harbor's mouth, and provides extensive docks; many merchant vessels fly Sarshel's banner. The fortress-city of Umwatch keeps an alert navy afloat from further up the reach.

### Earthfast Mountains

This small range of mountains marks the western border of the Kingdom of Impiltur. Not as high as the Earthspurs, the Earthfast Mountains are equally difficult to traverse, with steep slopes and sudden gorges. Mines in the Earthfasts have yielded moderate amounts of iron and silver in the past. However, none of the mines were productive enough to balance the hardships miners endured. Today, only a few dozen stubborn, solitary prospectors roam the rocky peaks.

### Earthspur Mountains

More important are the Earthspur Mountains, the imposing western barrier of Vaasa and Damara. With few trails, numerous monsters, and peaks reaching up

nearly four miles, the Earthspurs are dangerous indeed. When the founders of the Monastery of the Yellow Rose sought the most imposing location for their order, it is no accident that they chose the highest peaks of the dangerous Earthspurs.

Mining is lucrative in the Earthspurs, and miners withstand great hardship to delve into lodes of iron and silver that seem endless. The fortunate occasionally tap a vein of bloodstone. The Arcatan towns of Tomrav and Sudrav, and the Impilturian community of Dunfee exist largely because of their mines and miners. Unfortunately, survival is difficult, and many do not live long enough to enjoy the wealth they've pulled from the ground.

### Earthwood

Sheltered in a pocket of the Earthspur Mountains is Earthwood, a small, thick forest of evergreens and birch. The soil of Earthwood is stony and rocky, broken and hilly, yet the trees grow thickly. There seems no end to the fertility of the soil, for land cleared by woodsmen just a few years ago is already springing with new life, promising groves of trees even thicker than their predecessors.

Legends say that the land under Earthwood was enchanted by a great druid centuries ago, in defiance of the Great Glacier which then covered the land. The trees prospered in spite of the onslaught of ice. Legend predicts that the forest will thrive in the face of any hardship.

Few people live here, though some woodcutters have made a fine profit. More folk have moved in since Rawlinswood became so unfriendly to outsiders. The place is surprisingly safe: for some unexplained reason, the goblins and other monsters of the Earthspurs avoid the wood.

### Forests of the Great Dale

Collectively known as the Forests of the Great Dale, Rawlinswood and the Forest of Lethyr comprise one of the largest tracts of woodland in the Forgotten Realms. The forests encompass nearly 70,000 square miles. Rawlinswood is the larger, but the Forest of Lethyr is "small" only by direct comparison!



These forests once provided lumber for buildings in Impiltur and Damara, but few woodsmen travel here today. Thickly packed with firs and huge, ancient oaks, these woods are darkened by a thick canopy and a pervading aura of doom. Fireside tales speak of the woods as remnants of a past age, and legends tell of sentient trees that stubbornly hold onto the Forests of the Great Dale as their last stand in a world of shrinking woodlands.

Outsiders consider these tales to be fanciful superstitions, but the people living near the woods take the stories seriously, and rarely venture under the thick boughs. Druids reside here in large numbers, and the priests of this ancient order do not welcome strangers—particularly strangers bearing axes.

In the heart of Rawlinswood lies Dun-Tharos, the imposing home of the mighty Nentyarch. It is not known if he is a wizard or druid, or even if he is a man or something dire. Few doubt his disdain for trespassers, however. Hardy souls have ventured into the gloom of Rawlinswood, but only a handful ever came out. These few have expressed no desire to return!

### Galena Mountains

If a violent, powerful force brought two land masses smashing together, the result would surely resemble the jagged, broken peaks of the Galena Mountains. Two hundred and fifty miles long, this narrow range averages only twenty-five miles in width and Bloodstone Pass offers the only sensible way through. Adventurers walking in the range find themselves plodding 10 miles up, down, and around for every mile they move in their desired direction.

The Galenas define the border between Vaasa and Damara as sharply as any border in the Realms. The mountains are laced about with ice and snow, with a year-round wind howling down from the Great Glacier. The Galenas are home to hundreds of thousands of goblinoids and giants, and countless other monsters.

But people come to the Galenas by the thousands. They cannot ignore the lure of wealth promised by some of the richest mines in the world. Miners bring out millions of gold pieces worth of bloodstone, and tons of iron and silver.

Dwarves love the Galenas, and have three major settlements well established: Ironspur, the Bloodstone Mines, and Hillsfar Hall. The stone here is hard and pure, and dwarven hammers chime silvery notes worthy for the ears of Moradin.

Only the strongest survive, be they dwarf or human. Mines are often closed down by monsters and other calamities, but many new ones open up. Miners run the constant risk of breaking into the lairs of the dark denizens of the underworld: the duergar and derro, and the drow. But the lure remains, and the hammers ring.

### The Galena Snake

The Galena Snake is no reptile, but a twisty river rushing down from the Galena Mountains to link with Icelace River before spilling into Lake Mogador. The river is seasonal, with the melt-off bringing it to life each spring. The dance of bright water twisting across the grassland resembles a glistening snake wriggling through a meadow. Any observer can see where the river got its name.

The Galena Snake is rarely navigable. A canoe can pass during the first couple of weeks of the melt, but nothing larger. Nevertheless, the river is an important route for its brief life. The tiny farming communities of northern Damara rely on it for transportation to Kinbrace, and adventurers use it for a fast trip south from the eastern reaches of the Galenas.

### Giantspire Mountains

On the border between Damara and Narfell, the Giantspire Mountains are the least populated range in the region—unless you count the hobgoblin population! The Giantspires would seem to be an appealing hunting ground for prospectors. There are fewer natural barriers and more usable trails than the other nearby ranges, and the Giantspires are reputedly rich in precious minerals and gemstones. But the mountain range is a veritable breeding ground for hobgoblins. The hooting and hollering of savage tribes echoes off every mountain wall and resounds through every pass.

In more prosperous days, the King of Damara tried working with the Lords of Impiltur to sweep the Giantspires clean of

vermin. Politics interfered when the wild Nars wanted no part of the invasion. The tribes even warned their more civilized neighbors not to violate Narfell's border. The most optimistic of generals yielded to the litany of difficulties, shuddering at the likelihood of disaster.

In the end, the Giantspires remained unconquered, and may remain so for some time. Even though he hopes to forge an alliance with the Nars, Gareth Dragonsbane shies away from questions about the Giantspires. He would like to be able to exploit the riches of the mountains, but it seems unlikely that he alone could commit the vast army needed to pacify the massive hobgoblin population.

More likely, any reasonable assault on the Giantspires would have to be a joint effort, uniting forces from Damara, Impiltur, and Narfell. Even if that were managed, it's likely the hobgoblins would remain numerous. If the nations want the wealth of the Giantspires, then miners will have to seek out inconspicuous and defensible positions in spite of the dangers. At present, there are only two working mines in the range, struggling on in the northwest corner of Soravia.

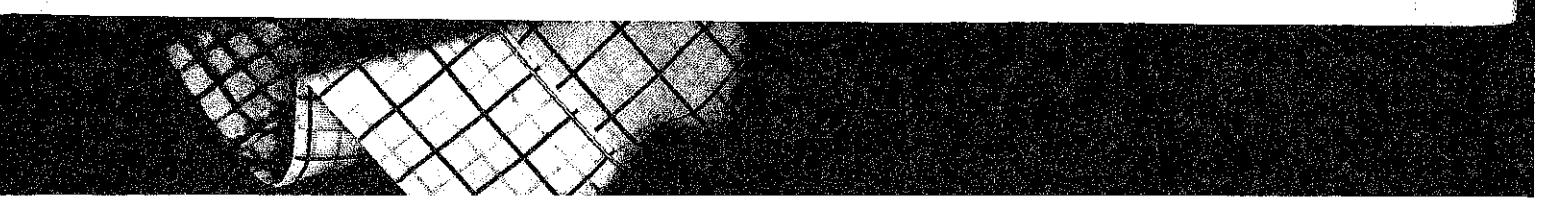
### Glacier of the White Worm

Draped across the highest peaks of the Earthspur Mountains is the Glacier of the White Worm, perhaps a remnant of the Great Glacier that once covered the land. The altitude of this icesheet does not justify its presence some 400 miles south of the larger ice mass. Some dweomercraft may be involved to maintain its existence.

The glacier gets its name from the pale breed of remorhaz roaming across the vast fields of ice. The remorhaz territory covers the glacier's expanse, some 1,200 square miles, and the beasts occasionally travel in herds of a dozen or more. A variety of other polar creatures make their home on the glacier as well. Of goodly folk, only the monks of the Monastery of the Yellow Rose reside here.

### Goliad River

The Goliad River is more important to shipping than the Galena Snake. Except when its waters are frozen solid, the Goliad runs wide and deep, eminently suit-





able for the network of barges that control transport on the river.

The river cuts through the heart of Damara. Barges run the length of the Goliad, bringing farm goods and minerals south to Morovar and Heliogabalus. From there, the goods move through Lake Mogador, into the Great Imphras River on their journey south to Impiltur.

On the northern half of the river shipping is sporadic. South of where the Beaumaris joins the Goliad, the barges run daily. The city of Goliad dominates this junction, and its opinion influences the people of the south. As Goliad warms to the idea of a new Kingdom of Bloodstone, the city's power hangs like an imminent disaster over the head of Dimian Ree.

### Great Imphras River

The Great Imphras River network is comprised of three major rivers. The Great Imphras River itself flows out of Lake Mogador, and the two Sidewinders stream along the Damara-Impiltur border. The rivers are rough, with many dangerous stretches of white water, especially along the southeastern fringes of the Galena Mountains. The rivers end at Traders Bay, a series of connecting lakes that lead into the Easting Reach halfway between Sarshel and Ilnwatch.

The river is frequented by Damaran merchants anxious to beat those who use the more conventional land route down the Merchants Run. The southern stretch of the rivers, and Traders Bay particularly, are much used by smugglers and thieves. The waterway enables these miscreants a route to the Sea of Fallen Stars, and a chance to escape the fleets of Impiltur.

### The Great Glacier

The Great Glacier remains one of the major mysteries of the Forgotten Realms, on par with the desert of Anauroch. Whereas Anauroch has expanded, though, the Great Glacier has receded. Just three centuries ago the glacier covered all of what is now Vaasa and Damara, as well as most of the grasslands of Narfell. Today the lands are free of constant ice.

Even though the ice has recently receded, the Great Glacier remains an awesome natural spectacle. It measures more

than 1,200 miles across in some places and is fully 700 miles wide.

This vast icesheet plays an important role in the lifecycles of the Bloodstone Lands. Spring meltoff from the glacier waters the grasslands, and makes river transport possible. In winter, the cold winds blowing down from the north keep the nights long and bitter.

### Halfing Downs

Halfing Downs is a fertile stretch of rolling farmland in the southeastern corner of Carmathan. Just across the border is the Ostel town of Zarach, and immediately to the south of the Downs is the border of Impiltur.

This farmland is inhabited almost exclusively by tallfellow halfings, with only a few men scattered among them. Per capita, Halfing Downs is the most productive farming community in all of the Bloodstone Lands, and the halfings here pride themselves on their hard work.

Halfing Downs is a relatively closed community. Until very recently, visitors were tolerated but not welcomed. The halfings became more hospitable after the Twilight Riders came through. Those heroes put down a rampaging bulette that had been terrorizing the community, and local folk remember those strangers warmly.

### Hark's Finger

Hark's Finger is known as Mount Jiksudur to the Nars. The singular spire serves as a landmark for anyone traveling through the flat, empty grasslands of central Narfell. The mountain is sacred to the Nars, who see its guiding influence as a gift from the gods.

### The High Walk

The Galena Mountains are difficult to pass through anywhere except Bloodstone Pass—difficult, but not impossible. The High Walk is the only other trail with a name, and it is a treacherous up-and-down trek. The High Walk is used primarily by the half-orcs of Palishchuk on their way to deal with the dwarves of Ironspur.

This is not a journey for the weak. A barely-marked trail spiders up sheer cliff

faces and through boulder-strewn canyons dominated by evil monsters. For every ten hardy souls who begin the journey, whether leaving from Vaasa or Damara, one will not arrive at the other end. No wagons can get through, and riders prefer mules to horses. To add to the troubles, rumors suggest that the new Citadel of Assassins is not far from this trail.

### Icelace Lake

Glistening along the northern Narfellian border is the crystalline beauty of Icelace Lake. The waters are sparkling pure, teeming with trout and salmon. Ultimately, the waters can be deadly. Anyone who falls into Icelace Lake will be chilled to death in minutes, even during the warmest months of the year.

In spite of the danger, the Nars come here in summer, venturing out on the lake in deerskin canoes. The nomadic Nars feast on the delicious fish, but many dangerous creatures are equally drawn to the feast. Even the finest boatmen must beware, for the great northern bears consider a man in a feeble boat to be a welcome change, and his catch, a particularly easy meal.

### Icelace River

A shimmering run of frigid water, Icelace River floods eastern Damara each spring with melt from the Great Glacier. The river does not run to Icelace Lake; rather, it culminates in the more southerly waters of Lake Mogador.

Icelace River is as dangerously cold as Icelace Lake, but swift with many twists and turns. The Damaran farmers in the wilderness of the province of Soravia have learned to ride its rapids at the end of each summer. Traveling on Icelace River enables the farmers to market their harvest before the frigid winter sets in.

### Lake Midai

Situated in the center of Bloodstone Valley, Lake Midai provides fresh water and fish to the folk of Bloodstone Village. The lake is only a few miles long and barely one across. However, it is very deep, beyond the measurements of those who





have dropped as much as a mile of line before giving up seeking the bottom!

Midai is mostly seen as a peaceful, pleasant rest area for the miners of Bloodstone. Recently, the lake has taken on a vital strategic role. Bloodstone's farms cannot feed its burgeoning population, nor keep pace with the many newcomers. But the deep waters of Midai, fed by the unharvested waters of the Beaumaris River, promise an endless supply of fish. With Midai close by, Bloodstone is self-supporting in times of trouble. Although a steady diet of fish might prove boring, the people's self-sufficiency is a distinct advantage in these hostile lands.

### Lake Mogador

The most important body of water in Damara is Mogador, the large lake surrounded by the city provinces of Morov, Ostel, and Polten. All shipping that comes down Damara's four rivers culminates here, and the lake is a beehive of activity. Merchant vessels zip in and out of the port cities. Any goods leaving Damara by water pass through Mogador, and thence down the Great Imphras River to Impiltur.

With the tense situation in today's Damara, Lake Mogador may become a hotly-contested battleground. Heliogabalus, Trailsend, and Praka all sail fleets on the lake. With Polten slipping out of its alliance with the other provinces, these fleets have become more heavily armed. Ships from Trailsend and Praka have already skirmished on the lake. More violence seems inevitable.

### Sidewinder River

The Sidewinder is actually two rivers: the River Lench flowing west from Rawlinswood; and the original Sidewinder, rushing east from the Earthspurs. Both feed into the Great Imphras River network, and are considered part of that network.

Little shipping is done along the Sidewinder. Nothing comes out of Rawlinswood, and the river from the Galenas is too wild and treacherous.

The Sidewinder's primary importance is to mark an indisputable, easily defensible border between Impiltur and Da-

mara. The border has gone unchallenged throughout history. When Zhengyi had conquered Damara, Impiltur massed its forces not knowing which way the Witch-King would turn. They could only be sure Zhengyi could not cross the Sidewinder. Had he chosen to invade Impiltur, the Witch-King would have had to march west and pass through the difficult Earthspurs, or go far to the east, braving the dangers of Rawlinswood and Dun-Tharos. Clearly, the Sidewinder provided a measure of security to the people of Impiltur in that dark time.

### The Teardrops

The Teardrops are a series of lakes lying across the eastern half of Narfell and the northern reaches of the eastern land of Rashemen. Fish and game are plentiful here, and many tribes of Nars spend most of the year in the vicinity. Few monsters lair here except for the ever-present tundra yeti.

### Traders Bay

Traders Bay is more commonly known as Traitor's Bay. The boats riding out over the Bay usually carry fugitives or pirates seeking an easy escape out into the Easting Reach beyond the attention of Sarshel and Ilmwatch.

Traders Bay is the only interior waterway in the Kingdom of Impiltur. It encompasses the southern stretches of the Great Imphras River system and two large lakes, Bluefang Water and the Old Water.

The only settlement on Traders Bay, Bay Town, has never gained prominence. The town cannot compete with the major cities located on the seacoast. The harbor of Easting Reach meets the legitimate needs of caravans coming from Damara and through the Great Dale. Bay Town survives by serving best those who do frequent the area: the scum.

### The Vaasan Bogs

In central Vaasa, north of the Beaumaris River, one must beware of the many wide stretches of bottomless bogs. More than one party adventuring in this area has simply vanished from the face of the world. But adventurers continue to ex-

plore this dangerous wetland, for there are reportedly several magical hot springs in the area. Their waters are said to enhance abilities, restore frail bodies, or even grant an occasional wish!

### Warrenwood

A small but incredibly overgrown wood in Bloodstone Valley, Warrenwood is home to the centaurs of the region. The forest takes its name from the nearby Warren, an intricate underground fortress which extends under its boughs.

Warrenwood drew notoriety during the Bloodstone Wars, when an invading contingent of the Morov-Ostel-Polten alliance camped in the wood to ambush the Bloodstone army. The forces of the Warren put a swift end to that threat, aided by the centaurs. The invaders were utterly defeated in a single night.

Warrenwood will have a new celebrity-resident once the situation in Damara settles down. Long ago, Emelyn the Gray had his famed centaur school in this forest, but the original school was destroyed at the coming of the Witch-King. Emelyn has vowed to rebuild the school to be tenfold more than it was, assisted by his apprentice Gabrielle. If it is half that, the school will be the most prominent center of learning and wizardry in all the Bloodstone Lands.

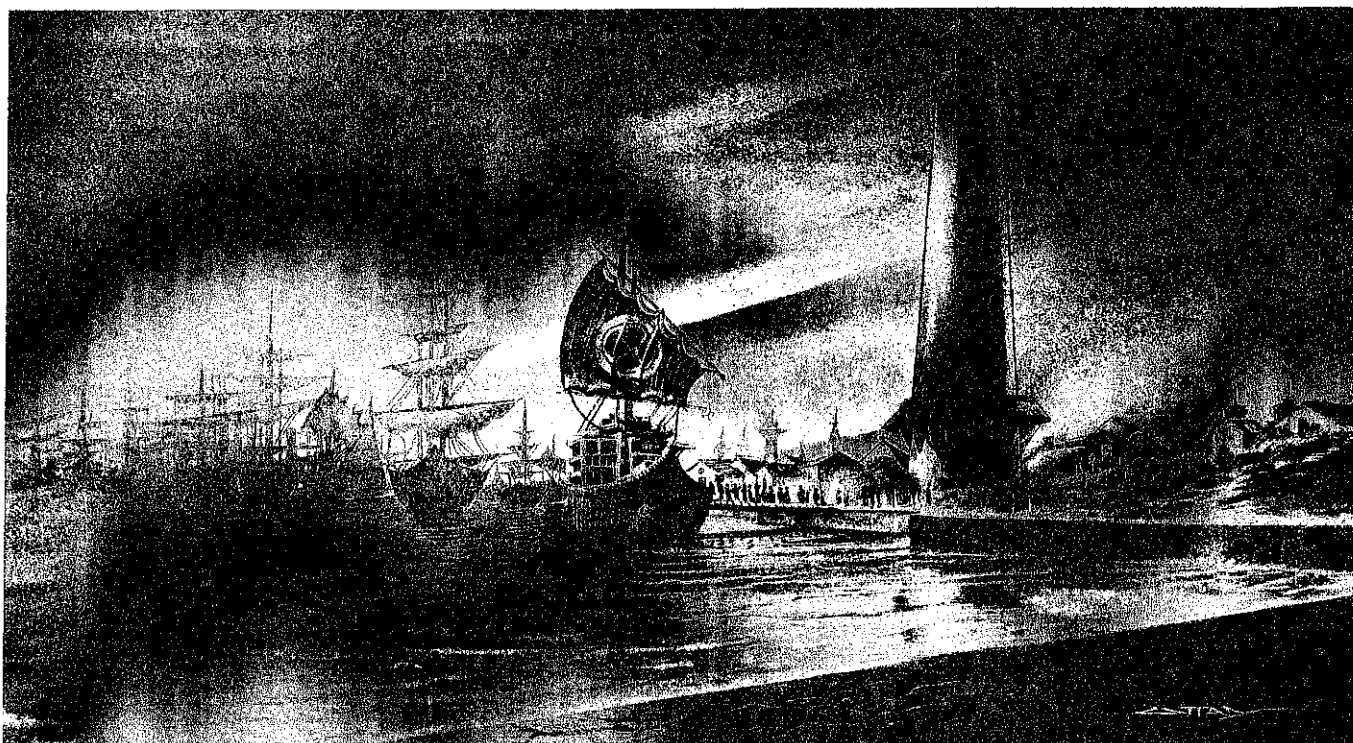
### The Waukeshire

Sister-forest to Warrenwood is the Waukeshire, home of the halflings of Bloodstone Valley. The major tunnel-complexes of the Warren lie beneath the Waukeshire, and tunnels cross under the Beaumaris River to connect Waukeshire to Warrenwood.

Unlike Warrenwood, the Waukeshire is a tidy forest of straight-limbed trees and manicured underbrush. Visitors are welcome, and many adventurers traveling to the Barony of Bloodstone stop here for a sorely-needed rest. But visitors must be careful not to litter the grounds or destroy the foliage. The halflings pride themselves on keeping their land neat and orderly, and they do not take kindly to strangers messing things up!



## STRONGHOLDS, RUINS, AND DUNGEONS



In a land so filled with monsters, one does not usually have to look far to find some dangerous, enticing dungeon for the adventurous to try their luck in. This section details some of the strongholds, ruins, and dungeons to be discovered in the Bloodstone Lands.

### **The Black Holes of Sunderland**

Along the slopes of the Galenas in the Sunderland of southern Vaasa loom the monster-filled caves known as the Black Holes. Some are shallow caves, others deeper and darker. Still others are long tunnels that lead into vast underground networks of interlocking chambers of horrors.

But whatever the depth and dimensions of these caves, they invariably have one thing in common—unfriendly inhabitants. Monsters in this harsh region need shelter as much as humans do, and many of the vile denizens of Vaasa have made their homes in the Black Holes. Monsters

here range from goblins and giants to leucrotta and owl bears.

Many of the Witch-King's troops fled to the Black Holes after their defeat at the Ford of Goliad. Some who fled from that defeat carried treasures they had looted during Zhengyi's better days.

The Black Holes of Sunderland offer hardy adventurers the opportunity to gain experience and treasure. If the adventurers are not as hardy as they believe, the Black Holes offer a cozy place to retire—permanently!

### **The Bloodstone Mines**

The ever-expanding tunnels of the Bloodstone Mines frequently link up with the natural tunnels and holes found under the Galenas. The dwarves of Clan Orothiar and the svirfneblin gnomes of Deepearth understand the danger of delving, but the mines are simply too rich in chalcedony to be forsaken.

Opportunities for mercenary adventurers are as rich as the ore to be found here. The dwarves and gnomes are too

busy hauling out the precious gemstone to explore every new tunnel they break into. They leave that work to those better accustomed to it.

In the Bloodstone Mines, adventurers may find the monsters of the darkest underworld. The depths harbor those denizens of the Forgotten Realms who never come out to see the sun. Duergar are often encountered, remnants of the grey dwarf community that was smashed in the battle for the mines more than a year ago. Their derro kin have also been spotted, as have ropers and several of the deadly puddings. Svirfneblin legends speak of even more ominous creatures, such as the kuo-toa and the drow, being found in the lowest chambers.

### **Castle Perilous**

When the Witch-King fell, so did his stronghold, the Castle Perilous. What was once an iron extension of Zhengyi's power crumbled swiftly into ruin. Today, Castle Perilous is just a blasted



mound of rubble on a lonely crag in the Vaasan wasteland. But those who believe that the perils of the evil fortress fell away with its iron walls would be rudely awakened were they to venture there!

Evil dragons lair amidst the broken stone and shattered iron. The flights that have been seen soaring northward over Damara chose the ruined castle to be their base from which to hatch their wicked plans. Huge reds occupy the top of the crag, lairing in the rubble-strewn foundations of the castle. The blues, greens, and blacks each have taken a slope of the crag for their own. The northern face of the crag remains unoccupied thus far. Cautious observers speculate that the space is reserved for the enormous flight of whites that is believed to be coming down from the Great Glacier.

Castle Perilous should be avoided by all but the most powerful of adventurers; even these might find themselves overwhelmed. Yet if some group fought their way through the gathered dragons, they would find their work just beginning. Under the rubble of the castle lies a vast underground dungeon. Here Zhengyi housed his darkest champions, creatures of unspeakable evil and power. Many were tied to the lower planes, and so banished by the Tree-gem that Bahamut gave to the heroes of Bloodstone. But many hideous things remain, monsters of this plane little known among surface dwellers.

Anyone powerful, brave and stupid enough to challenge the foul inhabitants of Castle Perilous will find threats aplenty. Before his demise, Zhengyi laid glyphs and wards and wicked traps throughout his dungeons. One of the Witch-King's favorites is reputedly an oil-slick tilting floor which ends in a pitfall. A high-level adventurer would not find a twenty-foot drop too discomforting, but when such a pit is blocked, halfway down, by a hungry gelatinous cube...

### **The Cave of the Whispering Wind**

In the heart of the Galenas, entered through a hidden ravine in a secret valley is the Cave of the Whispering Wind. For goodly folk who stumble upon it, this cave represents a haven; for monsters who chance upon it, it offers only disaster.

It is a natural cavern, found by the cousins Riordan Parnell and Celedon Kierney on one of their early treks into the Galenas. They recognized its potential and made it the home base of Spysong, a secret organization.

With the help of their friends, the two master scouts fortified the place. Emelyn the Gray and Friar Dugald laced the area with defensive glyphs and runes. The druid Baroness Christine of Bloodstone altered the nearby terrain to make the pathways, already difficult to find, even harder to discover.

At least two fighters no less than third level are continually on guard at the cave entrance, strategically placed to spot the approach of any friend or foe long before they reach the enchanted areas. If these guards spot unknown travelers of the accepted races, the guards will warn them of the dangers ahead and ask them their business. If the response bears any hostility or rudeness, the travelers will be turned away. Further attempts to approach can only be taken at great risk.

After asking unruly travelers to leave, the guards take up positions at the mouth of the cave, ready to operate a deadly ballista. But the glyphs and wards of Emelyn and Dugald are formidable indeed. Although many evil-hearted beings have approached the Cave of the Whispering Wind, the ballista has yet to be fired. Thus far, the guards have only been constrained to dispose of some blasted and charred bodies.

However, if any traveler is wounded or seems to be in need, or if the response is satisfactorily benign, the guards invite the person in for rest and recuperation. The Cave of the Whispering Wind is fully stocked with fine food and drink,

medical supplies, and adventuring gear of every type. Good souls will get a good rest, and find their packs restocked for the road ahead. The guards will not discuss the mission of this unusual mountain refuge, nor even hint that any such a hidden motive exists.

The cave is home base for Spysong, which operates and thrives in secrecy. However, the organization is open to new recruits. If the guards host an individual or an adventuring company that shows the proper demeanor and abilities, Riordan Parnell will be told about them. The bard may visit personally, or send one of his agents to further question the potential recruits. A willing and able character could find thrilling adventures by signing on with this daring organization. And forever after, he or she could be sure of having powerful, loyal allies in the Bloodstone Lands.

### **The Church of Dionysus**

Using the money he looted from the lair of Tiamat in the Abyss, Friar Dugald of Bloodstone has begun construction of a massive cathedral. Dugald does not intend to pastor the church, however, and it is not even being built in his home province. The church is located in Goliad, in the province of Brandiar. Some see this as a political move by Dugald and his close friend Baron Gareth to buy Brandiar's allegiance. But whatever the reason, the city of Goliad is grateful.

As much a fortified castle as a chapel, the Church of Dionysus will provide the people of this region with a shelter from the elements and from rampaging monsters. Dugald has poured more than a million gold pieces into the construction. He has bought assurances from the builders that the cathedral will be able to house the local populace for an extended period in comfort. This represents a considerable effort: there are some 900 people in Goliad, and another 250 or so would come in from the outlying farms. It will take another full year to complete the superstructure of the church, and several more to finish the fine details.



Already the church has attracted a score of clerics to the order, and dozens of applicants for the church guard. Brandiar suffered for so many years under the thumb of the Witch-King, that the province has responded to Dugald's gift with overwhelming support. Even those of different religious persuasions view the Church of Dionysus as both the symbol of and the means to enforce their resolve never to be kicked around again.

### The Citadel of Assassins

Hidden in the most difficult terrain of the unconquerable Galenas is the dreaded Citadel of Assassins. Somewhere between Bloodstone Valley and Ironspur, the bandit army has made its home base.

Like the proverbial bad habit, this bastion of wickedness and its foul adherents seem unconquerable. Twice the bandit army has been routed; twice its troops have been cut down, and the survivors sent scampering into the mountains. Ever the Citadel itself was blasted. But the bandits, and their home base, have returned.

A new Citadel was built somewhere in the same general vicinity as the old. Rumors say that parts of the old building were magically transported to the site of the new. The Grandfather of Assassins is no fool, either. By observing how his fortress was thrown down by Gareth and his friends, he learned from earlier mistakes. This new Citadel is even nastier than its predecessor, making it a powerful fortress indeed! Every corridor houses at least one trap, and every room is designed to destroy an unwelcome guest as painfully as possible.

The Citadel is no place for a novice burglar to learn his trade. Even a master thief would find himself testing wit and skill against the most devious and dangerous minds in all the Bloodstone Lands.

The bard Riordan Parnell composed a song now popular in northern Damara. Although he has not seen the new Citadel, he describes it fittingly:

*"A series of rooms,  
Built in the gloom  
With wedges and cracks  
To hide all the traps."*

Spysong is presently engaged in a massive effort to locate the new Citadel. Unfortunately, few of the hardy souls who have ventured into the area have returned.

### Dun-Tharos

Buried in the ever-evening of the depths of Rawlinswood is a tree-lined fortress known as Dun-Tharos. Knowledge of the place remains more rumor than substantiated fact, but one thing is known: the Nentyarch dwells there. Little more than that is known about this powerful wizard, for he does not take kindly to intrusion. Even the centaurs of the fringes of Rawlinswood take great pains to avoid him.

Dun-Tharos itself is said to be a hundred square miles of permeating evil. Local druids are quick to point out that darkness and evil may go together symbolically, yet they are not one and the same. Still, even the druids agree that the Nentyarch should be viewed with suspicion. Whispers through the trees speak of grim beasts, perverted creations, and horrid slaves of the mighty wizard.

Neighboring nations view the place with suspicion. Impiltur keeps a wary eye on the region, and the Nars will not go anywhere near the forest. With all that has happened in Damara recently, Dun-Tharos remains unexplored by any of that nation's heroes. The twelve Lords of Imphras II would eagerly hire any adventurer willing to delve into the forest and enlighten them on Dun-Tharos and its suspicious and powerful ruler.

### Ephran's Skinny Tower

It starts when a thirty-foot high pole appears mysteriously on the outskirts of a city somewhere in Impiltur. A yellow banner flies over it, emblazoned with a picture of a stick man. A few years ago, the people would have scratched their

heads and wondered what this was. Now, almost everyone in Impiltur recognizes the home of Ephran, an incredibly thin, cheerful, and eccentric magic-user.

The tower is actually a dimensional trick. What appears to be a pole just inches in diameter is actually a comfortable home on the inside of a cylindrical tower. Fifty guests could congregate without humping elbows!

Ephran's story is an odd one. While still a simple apprentice, Ephran was ensorcelled by the Red Wizards of Thay, forced to make a harrowing journey through the planes of existence. Sometime during this ten-year trip, Ephran stumbled into a world between the planes, a place where everything and everyone was distorted into nothing more than a series of connecting lines.

In this home of "stick-men," Ephran found a means to escape the wrath of the Red Wizards. He returned home bringing his pole-tower, a gift from the friends he made in the stick-world. Apparently, however, Ephran was personally affected by his stay there! His waist measures a scant ten inches around, his shoulders no more than twelve, and his neck only four! Those who know him say these measurements decrease month by month.

But Ephran retains his jollity, the same gift of mirth that got him into the soup with the grim Red Wizards in the first place. He takes his tower around the land of Impiltur in a cycle of unending parties and merry-making. People smile and nod whenever they wake to the sight of the yellow banner.

### The Bloodstone Gates

With barely half of the construction completed, the Bloodstone Gates are already being regarded as one of the wonders of the Forgotten Realms. Even skeptics grumbling over outrageous costs agree that these two incredible fortresses may forever change the complexion of the region. At the very least, the Gates guarantee that the Barony of Bloodstone will remain a major factor in



events occurring in the territory. The only sensible route through the Galenas, Bloodstone Pass is soon to be secured.

Baron Gareth Dragonsbane and his friends funded the project with quantities of the treasure they found on their adventures in the Abyss. Thousands of men and dwarves toil long hours every day (and they are well-paid) to speed construction. All the inhabitants of Bloodstone understand that when the Gates are completed, their own existence in this hostile land will be secured.

### The Damaran Gate

The most ambitiously-designed of the Gates is the Damaran Gate, which will seal off the southern entrance to Bloodstone Pass. The completed wall will stretch for more than three miles, stand thirty-five feet high and twenty feet thick, and be sectioned by flat-topped guard towers every 300 yards. The entire length of the wall is hollow and will be patrolled. Each guard tower supports a contingent of 50 soldiers. All told, only three entrances are planned for the Damaran Gate. Massive iron doors are well-defended, standing in the shadows of imposing fortresses at the eastern and western ends of the Gate. One much smaller entrance passes between the central guard towers of the wall. This last is designed for small parties, single riders only.

The western end of this construction is anchored by a castle. Three towers and a courtyard are built in the shadow of a tall mountain, and two hundred chambers are cut into the mountain. This castle houses the Order of the Golden Cup, Gareth Dragonsbane's order of hold warriors dedicated to Ilmater. These well-equipped and well-trained paladins represent the cornerstone of the Baron of Bloodstone's militia. The final number of soldiers in the militia is intended to be between 500 and 700. How many will be paladins, and how many ordinary fighters, has yet to be determined.

Expectations are less ambitious for the fortress at the east end of the Da-

maran Gate, although it is strategically vital. The eastern Gate has entrances leading into the tunnels of both the Warren and the Bloodstone Mines. The east headquarters will be the primary supply route for the entire Gate in times of siege and severe winter weather. No more than 300 soldiers, militiamen, will be quartered at this location at any given time. These soldiers will rotate among the guard towers along the wall.

The duties of the Bloodstone militia and the Order of the Golden Cup extend beyond the maintenance and security of the Damaran Gate. Patrols ride a 30-to-40 mile circuit to keep a constant watch on the lesser-known tracks leading into Bloodstone Valley from the Galenas. Every day, patrols depart from each end of the Damaran Gate at the same time. They travel opposite sides of the Bloodstone Pass north to the Vaasan Gate, arriving there at nightfall. The two groups meet and exchange news. At dawn, they cross to the opposite side of the Pass, and head south again.

The Damaran Gate is hardly more than a skeleton now, but is expected to be completed by the end of next summer. Already the fifteen guard towers are operational: each bears ballistae and pivoting catapults.

### The Vaasan Gate

Counterpart to the Damaran Gate, the Vaasan Gate bars Bloodstone Pass from invasion from the north. It is a smaller structure, but no less sturdy. The wall of the Vaasan Gate is barely a half-mile long, but is fully sixty feet high and thirty feet thick. The top of the wall, from mountain to mountain, is a jumble of heavy weaponry—mostly ballistae and catapults of various sizes. Only one entrance passes through the gate, on the western end.

Like its southern counterpart, the Vaasan Gate is anchored on both ends by fortresses built into the sides of the mountains. Both the wall and the eastern fortress of the Vaasan Gate are complete, except for the little details.

Construction on the western fortress will continue through the coming winter and should be finished by early spring.

The total Bloodstone militia stationed here numbers only 500, but they are superbly equipped. Furthermore, they have few responsibilities but the Gate itself. Only a minimal amount of patrolling is done around the immediate area of the anchoring fortresses.

The Vaasan Gate's primary mission is to block invasions from the untamed kingdom to the north. Its role is more than that of defense, however. The Gate also provides a forum for trade and diplomacy, and serves as a home base to adventurers.

Many interior chambers of the Vaasan Gate house traders, merchants, and craftsmen. The Gate itself has become an important marketplace. Miners and farmers from Vaasa can get fair market value for their goods, which frees up time for more production of those goods. The dwarves of Clan Hillsfar are being encouraged to trade through the Gate. Plans have been drawn for a tunnel fifteen miles long, which would connect the Vaasan Gate to the easternmost digs of Clan Hillsfar. The dwarves could then bring their minerals direct to market without risking surface transportation—a distinct benefit over crossing the wilds of Vaasa!

The Vaasan Gate fulfills another purpose by providing a haven to the hardy people who brave the dangers of the northern kingdom. Food and supplies are stockpiled here, and temporary shelter is always available. All this is offered at no charge. Even weapons can be purchased at below-normal costs.

The baron's generosity is founded in good politics. Gareth believes that through such tempting offerings, Damaran can move closer to taming Vaasa. He is determined to win over the hearts of the people of the Sunderland. Finally, if Vaasa's meager farmland can be made more prosperous, Bloodstone will benefit. Although the Barony can support itself on the fish from Lake Midai if it must, a broader support system is desirable.



The Vaasan Gate serves a related purpose, one that is, perhaps, the most important mission of all. While its counterpart, the Damaran Gate, is manned solely by Bloodstone soldiers, an open invitation has been extended to adventurers and mercenary companies to come to the Vaasan Gate. These folk may use the Gate as a home base for their expeditions into Vaasa. To further encourage these people, bounties have been placed on the ears of certain creatures, as follows:

Goblin: 2 gp  
Orc: 3 gp  
Gnoll: 4 gp  
Hobgoblin: 4 gp  
Bugbear: 7 gp  
Ogre: 10 gp  
Giant: 50 - 100 gp (by type)

Rates for other monsters are negotiable, but usually quite generous. Officials will also pay well for valuable information, such as the whereabouts of a certain bandit army...

The Vaasan Gate truly provides a Dungeon Master with the opportunity to continue a campaign with PCs of any level. The northern slopes of the Galenas are teeming with monsters of every strength and number (see *The Black Holes of Sunderland*, p. 36). The Vaasan Gate gives PCs a sanctuary at which to resupply and heal up. The Gate even allows for the possibility of mentors and instructors to aid PCs advancing through the levels.

### Hermit's Hill

Stories about Hermit's Hill are favorite fireside tales told throughout the small farm villages of eastern Soravia. Though surely exaggerated, these stories of a crazy old man with the strength to throw huge boulders actually have a basis in fact.

On the high slopes of Candle Mountain on the western fringes of the Giantspires lives an old recluse. His only friend is an equally aged stone giant. Their home is a cave atop a steep spur of the mountain. The place has been

chosen, then modified, for the inhabitants' solitude, so trespassers had better be wary!

The climb up to the cave itself is a barrier: at times, the way seems almost vertical. Other defenses of Hermit's Hill have been made quite formidable. Three rings of boulders circle the spur below the cave. These may be dropped, section by section, activated by levers inside the cave or by automatic trap mechanisms rigged along the mountainside. Tree stumps and rocks which might have offered cover from such a landslide have been torn away by the stone giant. Trespassers are defenseless in the face of the onslaught.

Quite simply, the two recluses just want to be left alone. No one, man or giant, is welcome. Why would anyone bother these two? It is believed that the hermit knows more about the inhabitants of the western Giantspires than anyone alive. He even knows secret tunnels to some hobgoblin lairs that the creatures themselves don't know about. But a party of PCs would have to do some very fancy talking and creative bribery to reach the top of Hermit's Hill!

### Hillsafar Hall

The most impressive fortress in all of Vaasa is not the city of Darmshall nor even Castle Perilous. Hillsafar Hall wins that honor. Hillsafar Hall is the name for the entrance caverns to the mine complexes of the dwarven Clan Hillsafar. These outer chambers were built for just one purpose: defense. A long tunnel leads into the first chamber. The tunnel walls are lined at varying heights on both sides by arrow slits, and murder holes loom above. The tunnel floor holds no less than ten cunning stonework traps. Every section of every floor in the entry is in the sights of some wickedly effective war machine.

Though they are primarily concerned with their lucrative mining operations, this clan of dwarves has lived in Vaasa too long to be caught with their guard down. At least fifty dwarves are always on active guard duty, and usu-

ally there are twice that number. Since the clan works the mines around the clock in shifts, several hundred other dwarves are usually in the immediate area. As one might expect of dwarves, their armor and weapons are always close at hand. Even the youngest fighters of Clan Hillsafar have attained at least the 3rd level.

### The House of Hurl

An increasingly frequent, always welcome sight in the Galena Mountains is the glowing red chalice beacon atop the House of Hurl. This unusual place is home base of the equally unusual "Thunkers of the Thunkers." This portable tower is a variation of Doern's Instant Fortress, and it has all of the defensive and structural strongpoints of the more common version. However, Hurl takes things one step further.

Hurl uses his place to forget about the hardships of the road as only a dwarf can. To get through the iron door, the password is "Party!" and it must be spoken with gusto. Inside, guests find a lavish lounge and restaurant, complete with magical bartenders and barmaids, and a ten-piece band. Casks of fine wine and strong ale are magically restocked every time the tower is closed down, as are the stores of meat and other good foods.

Hurl sets the place up each night—even if he's in a dungeon complex! He and his companions welcome any who come in the name of fun. Guests will find themselves well-treated (even elves!) but they will be taunted mercilessly if they refuse to compete in the nightly arm-pulling contests. These competitions almost always result in an all-out barroom brawl. Things usually begin with a fight between Hurl and his twin brother Burl. Both dwarves possess *girdles of stone giant strength* and they therefore wind up in an unresolved draw—which inevitably leads to fisticuffs!

The House of Hurl did not originate in the Forgotten Realms. It was brought here by the dwarf from his original home in some distant world. The Red





Wizards of Thay have offered a reward of 50,000 gold pieces to anyone who can obtain it for them.

### The Ice Run

Any adventurer wandering to the Vaasan stretch of the Great Glacier would be wise to avoid the maze of ice-walled pathways known as the Ice Run. The twisty Ice Run snakes its way all along the face of the Great Glacier, and encompasses several hundred miles of trails. Most of the paths are open to the sky, but this only makes things worse for a person trapped in the maze, for the light of the sun glitters dizzily off the crystalline walls. The danger does not stop there, however. Anyone trapped in the Ice Run had better be handy with a weapon, for the area is the haunt of northern bears and remorhazes.

The only people who know how to navigate this maze are the barbarians of White Worm. They use the place as a defensive retreat, hiding in the twisty corridors. The White Worm tribe considers the Ice Run holy ground. They would not be kind to uninvited intruders.

### The Monastery of the Yellow Rose

Also known as the Citadel of the White Worm, the Monastery of the Yellow Rose was founded before either Vaasa or Damara. The monks who established the monastery more than a thousand years ago crossed over land that would become Damara when that unborn nation was still overlain by the Great Glacier.

Their order is devoted to Ilmater, the god of suffering and endurance. These fanatical devotees sought the most inhospitable and difficult region they could find as the place to locate their temple. Not surprisingly, they eventually came to the highest peaks of the Earthspur Mountains.

The building itself is enormous. Each generation of monks adds new structures and digs out deeper chambers. Built on the stony side of a jagged mountain peak, the monastery overlooks the Glacier of the White Worm. About half

of the rooms look out into the daylight; the other half are underground chambers dug right into the mountain.

The monks of the Yellow Rose are ascetic and simple, but they are determined to create beauty in hardship. Their toils are matched by their stamina, and both seem boundless. No monk works less than 16 hours each and every day. The lower initiates are responsible for the bare necessities of survival. They labor in the meager gardens, haul ice to be melted for water, or forage on the bleak mountainsides. Their efforts enable their more skilled superiors time to concentrate on creating sculpture and tapestries.

Few visit this place casually, for the trails are not easily found or followed. Those who do manage it, find the journey worthwhile. The monastery is a spectacular museum, with every room exhibiting artwork and architecture reflecting the supreme discipline of the order. It is a monument to the ages, an ever-growing tribute to the painstaking stubbornness that has allowed mankind to rise to dominance in the Forgotten Realms.

Extensive catacombs twist through the mountain under the monastery, threefold in purpose. Some sections serve as burial vaults for deceased monks. In another wing, a vast cellar holds vats of wine that the monks make from blueberries they collect. Finally, the catacombs house the most complete archives of the Bloodstone Lands to be found anywhere.

Each year, mid-level monks lead expeditions down the mountain to gather data in the cities of Damara, Impiltur, and in even Vaasa and Narfell. They concern themselves with news of local births and deaths, travelers passing through and newcomers settling in the region. It is no wonder that Gareth Dragonsbane asked the Monastery of the Yellow Rose to verify the lineage of the Duke of Carmathan! And it is no more a wonder that the man is just a little worried.

### Riding the Remorhaz

The monks of the Yellow Rose have a spectacular and dangerous initiation-adventure. PCs will want their rightful shot at this exhilarating enterprise!

Before any monk can challenge to become a Master of Dragons (8th level), he or she must pass one of the most astonishing initiations ever devised. Armed with magical iron-and-leather spurs and a simple lasso, the monk must attempt to ride on the back of a remorhaz. This is done by lassoeing the monster as it rambles past an appointed outcrop of rocks. The monk leaps to the white worm's back, plants the spurs firmly, and rides along (still standing, of course!) for a distance of at least one hundred yards.

In game terms the procedure is straightforward. The monk must make a "to hit" roll with the lasso against Armor Class 10. Failure does not mean the attempt to ride has been botched, simply that the monk must wait for another remorhaz to come by. However, if the monk misses three times, he or she loses experience. The monk is reduced to the middle of the 7th level, and cannot challenge for the 8th level until the lost experience has been re-earned. The monk may, however, attempt to ride the white worm again after one week has elapsed.

Once the monk has lassoeed the beast, he or she leaps on, stamping the spurs into the white worm's back. This means two separate attacks. A remorhaz is normally Armor Class 0 in this area, but due to the special design and magic of the spurs, the monk need only hit Armor Class 8 to plant a foot.

At least one spur must be planted for the monk to have any chance of success. If one or both are planted (doing damage equivalent to the monk's open hand damage: 3-9 for 7th level), the chance for success is



determined by the extent of damage. Ten points of damage offers a base 40% + 5% per point of dexterity over 15. For every point of damage over 10, add 5%. (This gives a 7th level monk with an 18 Dexterity a maximum 95% chance of success, doing total damage of 18.)

Conversely, for every point of damage under 10 inflicted by the spurring attacks, subtract 5%. (Thus, a 7th level monk hitting with both spurs but doing minimum damage of 3 points each, for a total of 6, would have only a 20% + Dexterity bonus chance of success.)

If only one spur is successfully planted, or if the monk attempting the manoeuvre is lower level, the chance might be less still. The proposition gets even more grave, for any monk missing with both spurs, or failing the ride, takes the full consequences of touching the back of a white worm: 10-100 hit points of damage with *no saving throw*! Generous Dungeon Masters may allow PC monks of the Yellow Rose to score double damage on an attack roll of 20 when spurring.

It should come as no surprise that the burial catacombs under the Monastery of the Yellow Rose house the remains of many would-be Masters of Dragons.

Riding the remorhaz is one of the toughest tests of skill and courage in the Forgotten Realms. Yet no monk at the monastery who had earned enough experience has ever refused to attempt the challenge. Most monks will try their skill at least once, even if they are of a much lower level. Many of the younger masters ride the remorhaz on a regular basis, sometimes as often as once a week! For the monks, this is more than a test. To them, the white worm symbolizes the courage and determination that marks their order. Conquering the beast, riding inches away from death or serious injury, is a statement of their devotion to St. Sollars the Twice Martyred. This inner strength is greatly respected by everyone in the Bloodstone Lands.

### Nar-sek Qu'istrade

Nar-sek Qu'istrade is one of the few neutral meeting grounds among the tribes of Narfell. Also called Horseshoe Canyon, it is located on the northeast spur of the Giantspire Mountains, a circular bay of waving grass, sheltered by high, sheer cliff walls. Five square miles in area, the single entrance to the place is a crack only wide enough for two riders to go abreast.

Shallow caves line the rear walls of the canyon. The hardy Nars frequently sleep out under the open sky and put up their horses in the caves. Superbly defensible and protected from the harshest storms, Nar-sek Qu'istrade is often visited by the various Nar tribes. In the coldest days of winter, several tribes may congregate together, despite being fierce rivals out on the open grassland. An unbroken truce exists in Horseshoe Canyon and peaceful friendship is the norm.

On the occasions when a tribe comes under attack by a foreign invader, the people try to make their way to Nar-sek Qu'istrade where they light special arrangements of fires. These beacons signal an SOS to other tribes in the area, and help is sure to come quickly. When the Witch-King began massing his armies along the banks of Icelace Lake, the Nars gathered their own forces, using Nar-sek Qu'istrade as their home base.

### Nar-sek Qu'tel

Similar to Nar-sek Qu'istrade, Nar-sek Qu'tel is a smaller canyon, only a few hundred square yards of area. It is located on the western slopes of Hark's Finger, the solitary mountain jutting up from the flatlands of central Narfell. Nar-sek Qu'tel is used by tribes caught unexpectedly in exceptionally bad storms on the open grassland. There are no caves here, and the entrance is wide, allowing both the wind and enemies easy access. Although the canyon is so small, the same principles of neutrality hold here and no tribe is ever denied access, no matter how crowded the canyon becomes.

### The Pit

Strange indeed is the nasty phenomenon known as the wandering pit of Vaasa, or simply, the Pit. The Pit is believed to be a creation of the Witch-King's, let loose when Castle Perilous crumbled. No one has determined the Pit's true nature. It may be a portable, inanimate trap, or several separate but similar traps, or some weird living being. Whatever its nature, the thing cannot be ignored. Even the dwarves of Clan Hillsafar, ever doubting and suspicious, recognize the thing's existence, and they have put up a bounty of 500 gold pieces for information leading to its destruction.

Apparently, the Pit can blend into any landscape. It has caught people walking, and even riding. It has appeared in the bogs of Vaasa, in the grassland of Sunderland, and in the rocky foothills of the Galenas. The Pit shows up as a 20' square hole that opens abruptly underfoot, as if spring-loaded. Victims drop ten feet to a floor of spikes dripping with poison, and then the trap's ceiling springs shut.

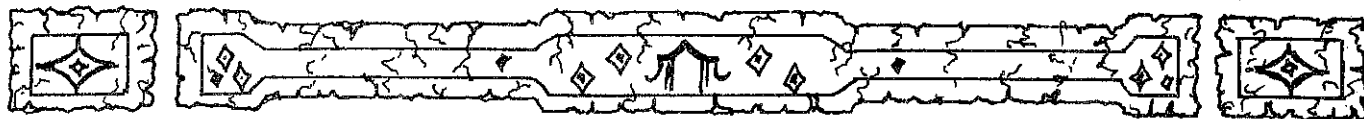
One adventuring party saw their point man fall in and land on the spikes. But before they could get to his aid, the trap closed. Desperately they dug for their friend, cutting a trench fully eight feet deep. But they never found the Pit, or their doomed friend, again.

### Rilaunyr's Warship

Now in dry dock at Sarshel, Rilaunyr's Warship was once known as the scourge of the Easting Reach. Swift and strong, it patrolled the length of the Reach and out into the Sea of Fallen Stars.

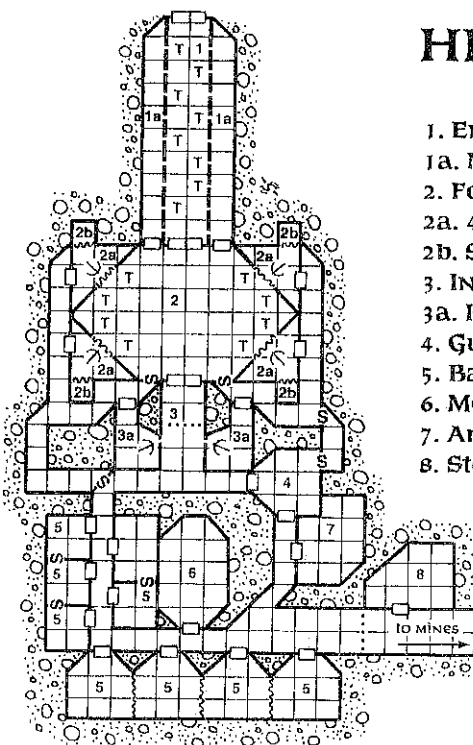
In the heyday of the Impilturian port city, the ship protected merchant vessels putting into or out of Sarshel. Then the shipments of bloodstone bars stopped flowing down from Damara, and Sarshel's importance waned. The Lord Rilaunyr could see how the winds were blowing, and brought his pride into dry-dock for refurbishing.

Rilaunyr longs to get back to sea. He hopes that the flow of bloodstone will



## HILLSAFAR HALL

Scale: 1 square = 10 feet



1. Entry Hall: traps are depressed blocks releasing spring blades
- 1a. Murder corridors: arrow slits to entry hall
2. Formal Hall: traps are pits, also dropping grates to block entry to 2a.
- 2a. 45-degree angle ballistae.
- 2b. Storage: ballistae bolts.
3. Inner Hall: portcullis crank in 4.
- 3a. Ballistae.
4. Guardpost liaison to barracks.
5. Barracks.
6. Meeting hall.
7. Armory.
8. Store-room (mining equipment and gems for market).

soon resume, and restore his city to its former prominence. When trade is restored, Impiltur's crossed wand and sword banner will once again fly proudly above the deck of this formidable vessel, to the dismay of pirates hungry for merchant prey.

The ship herself is a three-masted ninety-footer. She carries a sailing crew of thirty, and a hundred fighting marines. Mini-ballistae line her ironbound sides; a catapult shoots from the flying deck in the rear, and two massive ballistae are directed over the prow.

The real power of Rilaunyr's Warship lies in magic. When fully manned, she carries six magic-users, levels 7-13, and a complement of twelve clerics of Poseidon, one of whom is a 15th level high priest.

Three of the magic-users possess *rings of air elemental control*; they keep the sails filled with enchanted wind. The other three handle the offensive and defensive chores, surrounding vulnerable areas in *globes of invulnerability* and laying low pirate ships with fireballs and

lightning bolts. The clerics provide supplies and heal the crew when they are ill or wounded. Daily, they commune with their deity to keep Lord Rilaunyr informed of the fickle attitude of the god of waters, and of his domain.

### The Ruins of Monte Veldelio

One of the first mining towns run by humans in Damara was Monte Veldelio. The rugged community was located in the mountains of Arcata near the junction of the Galena and Earthspur ranges. For ten years, Monte Veldelio prospered, with miners trading large hauls of silver and iron each spring and fall.

But then something happened. Like all mountain mining communities, Monte Veldelio spent each winter in isolation, cut off by snow-blocked passes. But one spring, the miners did not return to market.

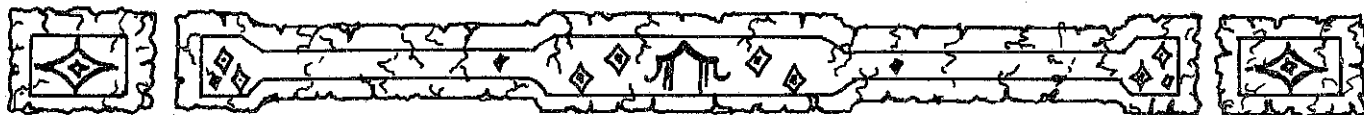
An expedition was sent out from Valls, but when the few survivors of that party returned, they had literally

aged with terror. The winter, the wolves, or something more evil had apparently killed every person in Monte Veldelio. The group found no survivors of the devastated community, and no bodies. Nevertheless, they said that the people of Monte Veldelio returned to dwell in the empty buildings of their town every night—as ghosts.

The empty town stands in the mountains still. Some of the buildings are falling down, but most are still in fair condition. The town offers a false welcome to weary travelers passing through the mountains. PCs might find Monte Veldelio a pleasant and convenient campground...until the sun goes down.

### The Warren

The Warren is one of the most ingenious and defensible complexes in all the Forgotten Realms. Located in Bloodstone Valley, the Warren encompasses more than three hundred miles of interconnecting tunnels.



The Warren was dug during the reign of the Witch-King by the Alliance of Belt Watchers, a partnership of the dwarves of Clan Orothiar and the halflings of the Waukeshire. The industrious little folk worked day and night, completing the initial network of tunnels in less than a month.

The dwarves of Clan Orothiar have moved on to reopen the Bloodstone Mines, but the Warren's defenses are no less formidable for their absence, and more tunnels are always being added. One now being worked on will connect the Warren to the eastern fortress of the Damaran Gate.

The main nest of tunnels lies under the woods of the Waukeshire. A secondary labyrinth leads through three connecting tunnels to Warrenwood. These tunnels delve under the Beaumaris River and include several flood pits to destroy invaders. Fredegar and his halfling militia now run the place, and their primary goal is the perfection of the interior traps and defenses.

Though an extensive project, construction of the Warren was kept secret for more than a year. Only the dwarves and halflings, and the centaurs of Warrenwood and the Waukeshire knew of it. The diggings only came to light during the Bloodstone Wars.

The Polten-Morov-Ostel alliance sent a force to Bloodstone Valley, to ambush the returning army of Bloodstone. The invaders camped beyond the banks of the Beaumaris, in Warrenwood. Centaur sentries alerted the forces of the Warren, and a plan, drawn up months before, was immediately put into motion. Sneaking up to ground level through trapdoors disguised as tree trunks or boulders, the halflings cut the invading army into isolated groups. The invaders' threat ended in a single night when 100 southerners died, and 900 were captured and held in underground caves. Not a single invader escaped.

The Warren is well-defended still. Any would-be invader would be smart to raise an army of kobolds or pixies. The tunnels of the place are designed for little folk, and most are cramped even for halflings. Orcs or men would have to crawl—an unpleasant position from which to face a halfling warrior specifically trained to fight in tight places.

Catching the halfling community unawares would prove equally difficult. This is a wary bunch, who learned bitter lessons in the past. At the first sound of trouble, be it a centaur horn or a halfling shout, the folk of the Waukeshire disappear into tunnels within their own homes—tunnels which all connect by a single passage to the Warren. This long entry has more than 20 doors leading out of it, 19 of which are cunningly trapped. Only the halflings and their allies know which is the right entrance.

The centaurs have formally allied with the halflings, and centaur sentries constantly patrol the two woodlands. In return, the defensive needs of the centaur community have been attended to. Two secret chambers have been recently constructed, one in Warrenwood and one in the Waukeshire. With their entrances hidden under brush, these chambers provide the centaurs with a shelter for their weak and young, or for all of them in times of desperation. Iron doors seal off the chambers from any menace outside. Once these are bolted, only the halflings within the Warren can approach, making their way through back tunnels to their centaur allies.

### **Watcher's Mounds**

The Watcher's Mounds are a series of encampments built by the monks of the Monastery of the Yellow Rose through the southern stretches of the Earthspur Mountains. Construction of new campsites continues along the trails down

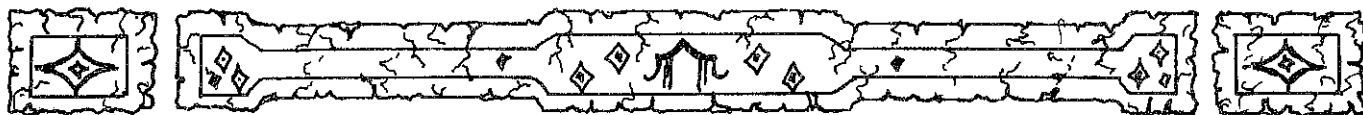
from the monks' mountain home. The exact number of these places is not known, but is estimated to be well over a hundred.

The Watcher's "Mounds" are not necessarily mounds at all. They might be a lean-to, or a hidden firepit in a tiny cave overhung by a cluster of boulders. In whatever form, Watcher's Mounds remain an open invitation to travelers in the Earthspurs. To goblins and orcs, these are simply pre-built, defensible campsites, which they often use.

The goodly folk of the surrounding kingdoms know that a Watcher's Mound might provide much more than just a place to stay for the night. Somewhere on every site lies a secret cache of dried foods, water, even adventuring supplies such as a tinderbox or a knife. These goods might be hidden under a stone or perhaps in a tree hollow. Even PCs unfamiliar with the Bloodstone Lands are likely to have heard of this, at least as a rumor.

Aside from the monks, rangers are the most common visitors to a Watcher's Mound. Rarely short of supplies, rangers are more apt to leave goods behind than to deplete the stores. Thus, any mound visited by PCs is likely to be well-stocked (90% chance that this is so).

Dungeon Masters should note that supplies in the mounds are intended for necessity, not convenience. PCs of Good or even Neutral alignments should not simply loot a mound. In fact, if they have extra supplies, they would be wise to leave something behind. The rangers and monks take note of looters, and often form opinions about parties being considered friend or enemy based on their behavior at one of the mounds. Although the rangers and monks have better work than to seek retribution on a party of casual looters, they would be quick to come to the aid of a party in danger who previously had behaved better.



## TRAVELING BANDS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Just as there are many strongholds in the hostile Bloodstone Lands, so there are many alliances and defensive pacts. Friendships may be built long and lasting among allies facing a common foe, and certainly the people of the Bloodstone Lands have enough foes in common to go around.

Those with ill intent also band together for strength. After the demise of the Witch-King and the ensuing chaos, adventure and booty have been easier to locate, if no easier to take! Damara and Vaasa have attracted many traveling bands, adventurers both good and evil.

### Alliance of Belt Watchers

The communities of halflings and dwarves lived in Bloodstone Valley long before any organized settlement of humans arose. It is only natural that the centuries of co-existence would forge a strong bond between the two peoples. This bond was made official with the formation of the Alliance of Belt Watchers, an organization for mutual defense set up during the first year of Zhengyi's reign. Mayor William of the halflings of the Waukeshire worked with Tribal Chief Tokan of Clan Orothiar to draft an official document spelling out each side's responsibilities and expectations. All the halflings and dwarves accepted the terms; all hoped the alliance would help secure their prosperity against an otherwise dismal-looking future.

The Witch-King eventually fell, but the Alliance of Belt Watchers has not been weakened. Both groups have signed separate treaties with Bloodstone Village, both groups also consider their mutual relationship as the cornerstone of their security. Clan Orothiar had an extensive agenda when they returned to the Bloodstone Mines, but the dwarves' first move was to construct a connecting tunnel to the halfling burrows of the Warren.

The halflings have brought into the alliance a third powerful group, the centaurs. This move met grudging agreement from Clan Orothiar, but

even the dwarves are looking to expand on the alliance's strength. King Ruggardo and the svirfneblin of Deepearth are on fine terms with Clan Orothiar, and the gnomes may soon come into the fold as well.

The Alliance of Belt Watchers is a significant force, one to be reckoned with. Gareth Dragonsbane pays particular attention to keeping the favor of Tokan, William, Ruggardo, and Kiros of the centaurs. With nearly 500 toughened dwarven fighters, 200 halfling archers and trained tunnel fighters, 150 mobile and deadly centaurs, and possibly 500 svirfneblin warriors, the army of the alliance is superior to forces mounted by most of the Damaran provinces!

In spite of their apparent power, the pact is strictly intended for defense. No group has designs beyond their own borders; the halflings and centaurs did not even travel south with the Bloodstone army during the wars. They simply do not want intrusion into their homelands. Their defensive strategies are intricate, cunning, and well-rehearsed.

Moreover, their defenses strengthen every day. The groups' leaders are brilliant tacticians. Gailan commands the Dwarven Guard, Fredegast is Sheriff of the Halfling Militia, and Valon is the centaurs' War Chief. The centaur leader is particularly able. These three have the responsibility and the reserves to improve security in Warrenwood, the Waukeshire, and the Bloodstone Mines. These communities have seen too much hardship and devastation to let down their guard again.

### The Bandit Army

The bandit army provides perhaps the greatest impetus for keeping the Alliance of Belt Watchers together. This resilient force continues to exist, even to thrive, in their secret valleys of the Galena Mountains, even though they have been twice defeated, with their fortress reduced to rubble. The leaders of the bandits continue to elude pursuit from the Bloodstone army, and they have

even managed to reclaim many of their losses.

Nevertheless, they are significantly weaker than they were during the reign of the Witch-King. Two factors in particular the bandits' leaders cannot wholly undo.

First, some of their most powerful troops deserted when the stone giants left, taking along many ogres to form an independent force called the Thunkers. Second, when Gareth and company crushed Orcus, the bandits' High Priest Banak literally lost his god. The evil cleric lost his higher level spells, and the Amulet of Orcus crumbled into dust when the foul god was banished. This powerful magic item had allowed Banak to raise hosts of skeletons, zombies, ghouls, and wights, and to summon more powerful allies from the lower planes. Its loss eliminated the Undead Brigade, one of the primary fighting brigades of the bandit army.

Like the army itself, Banak is weakened but he still remains a powerful figure among the bandits. He has used simple *animate dead* spells to rebuild the skeleton and zombie contingent of his once-mighty brigade.

Today's bandit army consists of approximately 100 goblins, 50 orcs, 12 bugbears, 15 ogres, and 6 hill giants, along with the 50 fighters and thieves who make up the assassins' guild. The bandit leader Timoshenko, a veteran fighter, understands that only disaster awaits if the bandit army tried to operate as openly as they had when the Witch-King stood behind them. Gareth and the unified forces of Bloodstone are simply too powerful for the bandits to face. By going underground, the bandit army has managed thus far to keep a profile low enough to elude Bloodstone's determined search.

Banak cannot see this. He dreams of reorganizing the scattered forces of Vaasan scum and subduing the region. Many around him think Banak has slipped a bit from reality since Orcus was banished.

Therefore Timoshenko has followed the advice of Arch-mage Knellic, much



to the dismay of Banak. Always an opportunist, Knellict showed the Grandfather of Assassins a better way to restore the bandits' prominence. Calling in some old debts, the bandit army has strengthened its ties to Tightpurse, the powerful thieves' guild of Heliogabalus. Rumors say that Tightpurse actually fronted the money for the new Citadel of Assassins.

Linking up with Tightpurse has given Timoshenko and Knellict new hope for the future. Tightpurse stands solidly, if secretly, behind Dimian Ree. Should the Baron of Morov actually become the new King of Damara, the bandit army and their allies in Heliogabalus stand to benefit greatly. Thus, Timoshenko is determined to clear the way for the would-be king. Many of his plans are directed to the elimination of the Baron in Bloodstone.

Gareth and his friends suspect the dark truth about Dimian Ree, and they have figured out the probable intentions of the Grandfather of Assassins. Therefore, Gareth's friends have made Spysong's primary mission to locate the bandits' new base, so the Bloodstone forces can deal with these evildoers once and for all. But even the optimistic Gareth doubts that the bandit army will ever truly be eradicated. A force like that will forever remain a thorn in the side of the goodly people living in and around the Galenas.

### The Circus of Dr. Trundles

Traveling a circuit through the four major Impilturian cities, the Circus of Dr. LL. McV. Trundles provides the hard working people of the land with a welcome diversion. The highlight of this sideshow is an extraordinary collection of monsters, each held in a specially-designed cage of imprisonment which resembles a circus wagon.

Trundles has nine wagons of monstrous wonders: an ancient huge blue dragon, capable of speaking and spell using; a chimera; a foxwoman; a gibbering moulder; a lamia; a pair of leucrotta; a mantichore; an umber hulk; and a xorn.

The special cages prevent any magical or breath weapon attacks and abilities from inconveniencing onlookers. Thus, the blue dragon cannot blow away the spectators with its breath, nor can the xorn transmute through the cage floor.

Unfortunately, the cages are not infallible. Two years ago, Dr. Trundles traveled in Damara, earning a good living visiting many of the scattered towns each spring and summer. But disaster struck in the Arcatan town of Valls when a bulette tore through the magical bonds of its cage. In its rage, it then ripped open the cages of the other monsters. All were recaptured except for the bulette, which subsequently terrorized Halfling Downs in Carmathan for nearly two years. Valls suffered only minor losses, but Trundles' reputation went sour. Hoping to regain his dignity and his way of life, Trundles moved south to Impiltur.

The Lords of Imphras II accepted Trundles and his traveling show on the condition that he strengthen his security. The circus now employs 27 medium to high level (6-13) fighters. Three are assigned to each cage, and all are specifically instructed in efficient ways to battle the monsters currently on display.

After the Valls incident, Dr. Trundles stepped aside as ringmaster to take a more passive role in the operation. He is a 7th level illusionist and possesses a *wand of wonder*, so he performs feats of illusion and wonder. The leader of the circus now is Trundles' faithful assistant, Tamaroo Quinson, a gnome fighter/illusionist (levels 5/5) with sparkling blue eyes and a knack for exciting crowd.

### Garuk One Ears

Dozens of goblin tribes haunt the slopes of the Galenas and the Earthspurs, but one merits special attention. Growing rapidly in membership, the Garuk One Ears have quite a scam. Every goblinoid who joins, even an ogre or bugbear, is paid cash upon initiation. Goblins and

orcs receive a gold piece, bugbears and ogres as much as five.

The payment scheme was the brain-storm of Garuk, a huge and cunning goblin (treat as a 5HD monster), and also exceptionally opportunistic for his race. The initiation upon joining the tribe is glossed over as a show of loyalty and savagery. Each new member cuts off his left ear and presents it to Garuk. The ears are then supposedly brewed into a foul stew shared by all.

Insiders know better. The stew is a concoction of rodents and roots, while the ears provide the wealth of the tribe. Garuk has half-orc connections from Palishchuk who regularly visit the Vaasan Gate. It is no coincidence that the money paid to new members is approximately one-half the bounty offered at the Gate for goblinoid ears.

### Heralds of Imphras II

The leaders of Impiltur consider communication a key ingredient in successful rulership. Their policymakers, the twelve Lords of Imphras II, are dispersed among the four major cities in the kingdom. These officials keep in contact through the aid of magic-users. But the Lords of Impiltur also consider it vital to keep their common people apprised of important situations in the kingdom.

This is the main reason the Heralds of Imphras II ride the countryside. These bands of couriers serve as representatives of the Lords. They regularly bear news to the outlying villages from the major cities, but the Heralds are much more than simple messengers. They are always led by a fighter of not less than 7th level, and they are empowered to enforce the laws of the land, even if it means doing battle.

On their routes, the Heralds patrol Impiltur's main roads all the way to Haelimbrar's Watch located in the pass between the Earthspur and Earthfast Mountains. Travelers are likely to meet up with these men and women, and when a patrol of Heralds hears of newcomers, they seek them out. Generally,





the Heralds are courteous and helpful, but if they find the foreigners undesirable, their warnings will be both stern and unyielding. More than one rowdy adventuring party has been put out of Impiltur by the Heralds of Imphras II.

### The Kneebreakers

One of the more interesting traveling bands in the Bloodstone Lands is the Kneebreakers. Comprised entirely of halflings from Halfling Downs in southern Damara, the dozen rowdies who make up the Kneebreakers charge across the countryside on saddled war-pigs.

The group was started by youngsters bored by the unchanging routine of a sedate halfling existence. These halflings are thrillseekers and brave warriors, at least by their own estimation.

In fact, the Kneebreakers are far more often boast than deed. They stand up to anyone—until anyone stands up to them! But they manage to hold onto their pride, rationalizing cowardice as "good tactics," and vowing severe retaliation "someday" against those who chase them off.

Backed into a corner, the Kneebreakers could actually be quite formidable. They are led by Hobart Bracegirdle, a 5th level fighter who wields a *+4 defender short sword* and wears *gauntlets of ogre power*. Where this 16-year-old halfling got these powerful items has not been determined, and Hobart isn't talking (for a change). One theory supposes that the eccentric wandering wizard Ephran gave them to Hobart. Ephran is the sort to enjoy the irony of such a little fellow endowed with such strength.

The rest of the Kneebreakers include two 3rd level fighters, six 1st level fighters, and one 2nd and two 1st level clerics. They are the progeny—the sons and one daughter—of some of the more prosperous farmers of Halfling Downs, and therefore all are well-outfitted. All wear chain mail and are competent archers. Besides the telltale war-pigs, they are easily identified by their large,

purple hats, stylishly plumed, and their rich purple capes.

### The Rocktappers of the Earthfasts

Roaming the mountain wilderness of western Impiltur are the Rocktappers of the Earthfasts. This is a very loose-knit association of solitary prospectors and trappers. The Rocktappers travel alone, but leave signs or supplies for their fellow Rocktappers to find. This is not altruism, but something more like a long shot at insurance.

The number of Rocktappers varies, depending upon how many new mountain men have recently climbed into the Earthfasts, how many oldsters have given up and left, and how many have been killed.

Each fall, the Rocktappers gather at a certain outcropping on the southwest corner of the Earthfast range. From this vantage point, they are within view of Tower Purchase and the city of Lyrabar. After a week of high rowdiness, the band stumbles down to the port to sell their season's take, be it valuable ore or furs.

The Rocktappers generally take on colorful names like Bearface Giltch or Goldsniffin' Hoots. These people are typically outcasts or hermits, living in the unpopulated Earthfasts to get away from a society that shuns them, or one that they would themselves prefer to shun.

### Soravian Talebringers

Similar to the Heralds of Imphras II are the Soravian Talebringers. This group, though, is self-appointed and has no official backing. An informal band of horsemen riding the eastern farmlands of Damara, the Talebringers are accepted by most Soravians, and are well treated wherever they go.

The Talebringers are led by Marco Wildfeet, an 8th level ranger, and his closest friend, Pastor Michael, a high priest of Ilmater. The band numbers 23, all battle-hardened fighters and clerics. They seek no trouble, but are quick to

aid Soravian citizens. They are quicker still to attack any Vaasan scum they find, for their hatred is high against those who devastated their homeland.

These last few weeks the Talebringers have been riding hard to spread the news of freedom. Because many of the group fought beside the army of Bloodstone as it liberated village after village, the Talebringers are great supporters of Gareth Dragonsbane. Moreover, many of them have come to know Olwen Forest-friend and consider him their friend and ally.

Because Soravia has no Duke nor any other formal leader at this time, the people of the scattered villages of Soravia look to the Talebringers for their direction. They are particularly heedful of the opinions of Marco Wildfeet. With his customary attention to diplomacy, Baron Gareth has formally invited Marco Wildfeet and Pastor Michael to an audience in Bloodstone Village. That Gareth has Marco and company on his side will not hurt support for a new Kingdom of Bloodstone.

### Spysong

The Barony of Bloodstone's scouting network has quickly become the envy of all the power groups in the Bloodstone Lands. Because of this organization, Gareth Dragonsbane is undoubtedly the best-informed leader in Damara, with a considerable edge over his rivals.

The cornerstone of Spysong's strength is the association of three powerful adventurers, each with abilities that perfectly complement the others'. With his *carpet of flying* and his *spirit walking* abilities, the monk Kane handles most of the long-range missions, especially those into Vaasa. Witty and resourceful, the magic-user/thief Cleodon Kierney keeps an eye on situations closer to home, particularly the doings of the Grandfather of Assassins and his evil clan. Bringing it all together is Rior-dan Parnell, the master bard. Parnell meets with his partners to exchange information, usually in the Cave of the



Whispering Wind. He transforms their reports into coded songs that will be sung throughout the land. Thus, the news is conveyed to Gareth and Dugald in Bloodstone, and even to the Twilight Riders in the distant south.

The Grandfather of Assassins is particularly worried about Spysong, and has placed a 1,000 gold piece bounty for the head of either Celedon Kierney and Riordan Parnell. In Heliogabalus, Dimian Ree fears Spysong will sabotage his own spy network if they can infiltrate it.

These two would be even more concerned if they understood that, like the Barony it supports, Spysong is growing more elaborate daily. Fifteen bards are working alongside Riordan to convey the coded songs throughout the land. Celedon Kierney is only one of 50 thieves and fighters searching the Galenas and the Earthspurs. As protection, a number of rangers keep as close an eye as possible on the whereabouts of Kierney and the others.

If a ranger reports that one of his people is in trouble, Riordan Parnell has the means to rush to the rescue. A mobile strike force of 100 fighters has been commissioned in Bloodstone Village under the bard's exclusive command. The force includes a cavalry of 20 centaurs. This strike force has no set home base and is being trained in wilderness survival. This will enable them to remain in the vicinity of the expected hot spots.

Spysong's primary mission remains discovery of the location and the defenses of the new Citadel of Assassins. However, two of its chief scouts are engaged in adventures which may prove equally important. Celedon Kierney has camped on the slopes of Suncatcher Mountain in hopes of learning more about the mysterious cloud that has engulfed the peak. Meanwhile, Kane is somewhere up along the Great Glacier, acting as an emissary from Bloodstone to the barbarians of White Worm. The monk hopes to recruit the tribe as Bloodstone's allies, but the tribe is difficult to deal with. At the very least, Kane wants White Worm to agree not to interfere

with adventurers from the Vaasan Gate on their excursions into Vaasa.

### **The Thinkers**

The Thinkers are, literally, one of the continuing headaches plaguing the people living in or near the Galenas. The dwarves of Ironspur are particularly beset by this gang.

This rogue band is led by stone giants who broke away from the bandit army after its first defeat in Bloodstone Village. The three stone giants who founded the Thinkers were once loyal servants of the Grandfather of Assassins. The Grandfather had promised Rocktooth, Boulderhead, and Bearcrusher they would win great wealth and have fine sport in the winning. However, the bandits' defeat at the hands of the Bloodstone army wasn't fun, and it wasn't very profitable!

The disgruntled stone giants deserted, taking a dozen ogres and a hill giant with them. They slipped back into the mountains, and little was heard from them for some time. Eventually, they became discontented with a peaceful existence foraging in the wilds, and the Thinkers were formed. They have traveled the length of the Galenas, raining rocks on towns from high peaks and burying adventuring parties in unnamed mountain passes.

The strength of the band has grown in proportion to its reputation. Many young stone giants have flocked to join the fun, and ogres and goblins who go along for the ride are living quite well. Recent reports speak of two dozen stone giants, two score ogres, and fifty or more goblins now calling themselves Thinkers.

Of course, notoriety has its flipside, too. The Thinkers pulled off a successful bombing of Bloodstone Village when the army was away in the south battling with Carmathan. This prompted Friar Dugald to place a high bounty on the heads of any Thinker. The gang was already marked by a considerable bounty offered by the dwarves of Ironspur, who are actually the Thinkers' favorite target.

Neither Ironspur or Bloodstone has the resources to deal with this pesty group right now, but both want the Thinkers put down soon. Bounties have attracted a few adventurers, notably the party described below.

### **The Thinkers of the Thinkers**

The Thinkers of the Thinkers are an odd band of five hardy adventurers who came into the Bloodstone Lands recently. This group did not originate in the Forgotten Realms; rather they came from some alternate world in the multiverse. They seem normal enough, if a bit eccentric. For the last six years, the group has wandered across the land, all the way from the Sword Coast, seeking adventure and fun and leaving hundreds of dead monsters, particularly giants, in their wake.

With their unusual view of giants as objects of fun, the group naturally found its way into the Bloodstone Lands, an unrivalled playground for giants. In the wilds of the Galenas and the northern stretches of the Earthspurs, the Thinkers of the Thinkers have found almost daily enjoyment for the last few months.

The twin brothers Hurl and Burl are both 8th level dwarven fighters. They have befriended fellow dwarves, exchanging tales from their own lost world and comparing the histories of the parallel races. In the bloodstone region, they have become allies of Clan Hillsafar, and close friends with Grumble, leader of the clan.

But Hurl and Burl have no intentions of settling down. They continue to lead a nomadic existence through the Galenas, and the red beacon of the House of Hurl is now a common sight east of Bloodstone in the vicinity of Ironspur. (See p. 40 for the description of the House of Hurl.)

The group's original name is "Hurl and Burl and Rangers Three." They have taken on the mantle "Thinkers of the Thinkers" in accord with their latest exploits. They make no secret of



their intention to hunt down and destroy the Thunkers, and they hope that spreading their reputation under their new taunting name will bring their intended victims out into the open.

If this seems a bit cocky and arrogant, it is true to the nature of this fearless bunch. They'll fight anything, any time, without the slightest hesitation. The three rangers—Andovar, Healthrow, and Heditrue, are the calming influence that maintains at least a bit of control over the wild dwarves. But the rangers, too, enjoy mixing it up with a goblin tribe or a giant clan.

Master tacticians, the band perfectly adapts its fighting style to its terrain, and to the type of monster they battle. In the mountains, especially when facing stone giants, Hurl and Burl engage the giants in rockthrowing volleys (both dwarves have *girdles of stone giant strength*. Andovar, Healthrow, and Heditrue then sneak in for a melee assault. All three rangers are high level (16th, 17th, and 18th respectively), are exceptionally strong (18+), and possess *giant-slayer swords* (Andovar's is a bastard sword). Once the real battle begins, Hurl and Burl rush to get in before the deadly rangers finish the job.

The group has yet to be truly challenged in the Bloodstone Lands. The largest band of stone giants they have yet encountered numbered six, and the rangers took them out before Hurl and

Burl ever got close—which didn't sit well with the eager dwarves! The group heard about the powerful Thunkers while in Hillsafar Hall, and set out straightaway, with wide smiles stamped on their faces.

### Tightpurse

Tightpurse is the most powerful thieves' guild in the Bloodstone Lands. The guild has been around longer than the Kingdom of Damara, a natural human reaction to the wealth represented by the merchants who flocked into the area to deal for bloodstone bars. Housed in Heliogabalus, this underground society numbers several hundred, with branch organizations operating in every major Damaran city except Bloodstone Village. There is even an associated group in Sarshel in the Kingdom of Impiltur. The rumors imply that every Damaran town and village houses at least one scout who owes allegiance to the guild.

Only recently has Tightpurse become a political entity. The Master of the Guild is Tarkos Ree, first cousin of the Baron of Morov, Dimian Ree. If Dimian Ree wins the kingship of Damara, the implications for Tightpurse are grand indeed. "Truly," say Dimian Ree's opponents, "the thieves shall have free run of all the cities, without the normal restraints respectable thieves' guilds usually impose on themselves!"

It is no secret that Tightpurse backs Dimian Ree. Tightpurse spies for Ree, like Spysong works for Gareth Dragonsbane, and it even tries counterintelligence.

But Tightpurse may be overreaching its abilities. Severely limited outside Damara's borders, it is only truly effective in the major cities of the southern provinces even within the kingdom. Tightpurse lacks the wide-ranging network that serves Spysong. The thieves have no contact with the Monastery of the Yellow Rose, nor with Impiltur beyond the city of Sarshel. They know nothing of the Nars in Narfell, and they haven't a single agent in all of Vaasa. Their only move has been to open communications with the Grandfather of Assassins and his dark band. That gamble could cost them dearly, and could bring Dimian Ree crashing down if the truth is ever exposed.

### The Twilight Riders

Every night at sunset, the wizard Myrddin Viligoth dances through the somatics of an enchantment; he catches the last light of day and transforms it into seven magical steeds. Myrddin and his six companions mount up and thunder off, searching for wrongs to right.

These seven are the Twilight Riders, emissaries of Gareth Dragonsbane in southern Damara. Their mission is to ride across the southland, helping wherever they may, and spreading the word about the rise of Bloodstone and the proposed kingdom. Even beyond that, they proclaim the return of pride and prosperity to the battered kingdom.

Now and again, their rescues are dramatic and heroic. Overall, though, the Twilight Riders concern themselves as much with little deeds as with great ones. A good night's work might be finding a lost puppy for a tradesman's son, or showing a farmer a more productive method of tilling his fields.

The Twilight Riders do not trade good deeds for allegiance. They help wherever help is needed. Only afterward do they speak up, and spread the word to those who wish to hear.



Alongside Myrddin rides the Archmage Emelyn the Gray, who is closely followed by his apprentice Gabrielle, a 5th level magic-user. The other members of the company include dwarven prince Tamal (6th level fighter/5th level cleric), the son of tribal chief Tokan of Clan Orothiar; Justin M'Dael, an 11th level paladin and long-time friend of Gareth; Tamarin Moonwisher, Justin's soon-to-be bride and a 14th level ranger in her own right; and Agarelth, a nomadic paladin who is really Haelimbrar, one of the twelve Lords of Imphras II and a 16th level paladin.

Haelimbrar sought out and signed on with the Twilight Riders deliberately, to study Baron Gareth's emissaries secretly. By getting to know some of the people closest to Gareth, Haelimbrar hoped to learn more about the man who would rule if the proposed Kingdom of Bloodstone comes to pass. Haelimbrar has not been disappointed by the group's activities thus far.

The Twilight Riders set out from Bloodstone just ten weeks ago. Since then, they have come to the aid of many and never asked for political allegiance. Everywhere they've passed, they have set the fires of hope burning brightly all across the south. First, they charged through Arcata, crushing a rogue band of rampaging hill giants. Then the Riders came through Carmathan, where they destroyed the bulette that had been terrorizing Halfling Downs for months. And finally they rode into Polten. There, with no more pressure than their presence, the Twilight Riders convinced two bands of highwaymen to see the light and turn their hands to a more respectable calling.

Haelimbrar's reports to his fellow Lords in Impiltur speak highly of the heroes of Damara, who he considers potential leaders all. The paladin has enjoyed his stint with this band of dogooders, a fall back to his own adventuring youth.

Emelyn and Myrddin, of course, suspect the true identity of this mysterious paladin. They are more than willing to have him along for as long as he wishes

to remain. In addition to his fine tales and worthy blade, Haelimbrar provides a kind of insurance policy for the group. Dimian Ree knows of the Twilight Riders and would pay very well to have them eliminated, but with rumors that a Lord of Impiltur rides among the band, no one would dare to strike at them, not even Ree himself.

Emelyn the Gray is the true leader of the Twilight Riders, and certainly the most powerful member. But the group works harmoniously, and each member strives to pick up where another leaves off. Even Tamal, a young and wacky dwarf, has become an integral and valued member of the group. Tamal's father, Tokan, cautioned Emelyn about including his inexperienced son, though he felt certain that joining the band would do Tamal some good. Emelyn brushed away all doubts, confident of the youth's potential. If anyone back in Bloodstone could see Tamal now, they would be amazed by his progress.

Presently, the Twilight Riders are heading for the town of Tellerth in the eastern part of the Barony of Polten. Emelyn the Gray wants to learn more about the druids and centaurs inhabiting the fringes of Rawlinswood. He hopes to forge better relations between them and the people of Tellerth.

Word about the Twilight Riders' destination has spread faster than the speeding strides of Myrddin Viligoth's magical mounts. The people of Tellerth look to the west each night, each one hoping to be the first to catch a glimpse of the telltale glow of the enchanted horses of the Twilight Riders.

### The Watchers

Anyone who spends more than a few days trekking through the southern peaks and valleys of the Earthspurs is or has been under the quiet eyes of the Watchers. These monks from the Monastery of the Yellow Rose roam the mountains day and night. They know how best to survive here by learning the ways of this forbidding land. They pay particular attention to strangers,

especially adventuring bands they see in the region, though they rarely come into face-to-face contact with any of these folk.

The Watchers' ranks are the Brothers, Disciples, and Immaculates (3rd, 4th, and 5th level) of the monastery. These monks endure long stays in the wilds as their penance, and their ticket to earning experience enough to become a Master. They are always alone and never in the same place two nights in a row. A Watcher will travel 20 to 50 miles every day, regardless of the weather. The season, too, is of no consequence. Watchers are as likely to be encountered among the deep snows of winter as they are in the few weeks of high summer.

Typically, Watchers leave the monastery for three to six months at a stretch. Often, their only contact during this extended sabbatical is with the animals of the wilds. Many Watchers surround themselves with animal friends, using their *speak with animals* ability to broaden their vision and knowledge. Watchers have been known to spend nights in bear's dens (with the bear!) or running among wolf packs. At this stage of their development, their mission as monks is to build a symbiotic relationship with the wild world around them. It is a testament to the discipline and training of the monks of Monastery of the Yellow Rose that 99 out of every 100 Watchers return to the monastery unharmed.

### White Worm

The land bordering the length of the Great Glacier is the territory of White Worm, covering the northernmost reaches of Vaasa. This tribe of savage barbarians is unlikely to welcome strangers, except at the end of a spear.

Three hundred strong, the White Worm people are nomadic within the boundaries of their realm. They rarely stray more than fifty miles from the Great Glacier, and most often travel among the winding turns of the glacier tunnel maze known as the Ice Run.



The tribe is led by Hea-Rem, a huge, tough veteran of fifty winters. Surrounding the chieftain is an elite guard of five warriors called Kura-winter, the Worm-Victors. Pierce and strong, each of these warriors has defeated a remorhaz single-handedly at least once in his lifetime.

The Ulk, or tribal shaman, actually wields more power than the chieftain, a situation often seen in barbarian tribes. The shaman has all the powers and spells listed in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, and in addition, can call upon the spirit of the remorhaz to bring on an extraordinary trance. In his trance state, the shaman exudes the heat of a polar worm's back, and has been known to execute prisoners with a single hug. (Like touching the back of a remorhaz, damage from such a hug is 10-100.) In a typical tribal spiritual, the shaman evokes this heat power and kneels in the center of a warrior ring. The warriors then spend the night in prayer, heated against the vicious glacier winds only by the warmth of their priest.

White Worm sets no regular patrols, but hunting bands are often roaming the region. If they happened upon a stranger in trouble they would be unlikely to offer any aid. Injured or not, strangers are considered a threat. The barbarians treat injured strangers like they treat healthy ones: at best, they are to be captured, but more often killed on the spot.

The monk Kane is presently trying to change this hostile attitude while acting as an emissary from Bloodstone. He is working to change White Worm's ways, turning them into a helping hand for adventurers wandering into their lands. Though Kane seems to be having some success, the traditions of the barbarians have not yet been forsaken, and visitors are still not welcome. For now, the wilds of northern Vaasa remain a dangerous place to go.

White Worm's first line of defense is their present spirit-hunter, their wandering champion (see the description of

Hedweck, p. 47). Chosen for his physical prowess, this spirit-hunter roams the Vaasan wilderness just south of the Great Glacier, hoping to intercept and destroy any threats to his tribe. He is magically strengthened, magically outfitted, and intent only upon faithfully executing the duties of his position. His determination is fanatical to the point of willingly attacking a superior foe without regard for his own death.

### **Weird Wingham's Wacky Weapon Wielders**

A wandering troupe based out of Palishchuk, Weird Wingham's Wacky Weapon Wielders travel throughout southern Vaasa and northern Damara. Their collection of unique and unusual weapons gives the band its name. The members trade for weapons and tales, and put on shows.

The troupe is all half-orcs, and all aligned to "good." Like most of the half-orcs from Palishchuk, they strongly opposed the Witch-King. In all, the troupe numbers perhaps a dozen young half-orcs, all acclimating themselves to Damaran ways, and working to better their lives.

Wingham is the half-orcs' leader and exceptionally intelligent for his breed. He has a penchant for rare weapons and, being quite wealthy, he has the means to pursue his collecting hobby. (His riches are said to have come from the abandoned loot of the Witch-King's crushed army.) Wingham's greatest treasure is a *staff-mace*, which he acquired on one of the many adventures of his difficult youth. Wingham says that this strange and magical weapon is what initially fostered his love of the unusual, and the surprising abilities of the *staff-mace* certainly have gotten him out of more than a few jams!

Wingham's tact cannot be underestimated. He has established a fine relationship with the dwarves across the Galenas at Ironspur. That the dwarves

of Ironspur talk to a half-orc at all is amazing, but Wingham goes even beyond a superficial trading relationship. He is openly welcomed by the bearded folk, and has spent many months living among them. Their relationship is mutually satisfactory, for the dwarven craftsmen love the challenge of creating unique weapons to Wingham's strange designs, and the half-orc pays them well.

The Wacky Weapon Wielders love to barter with adventurers. They have literally hundreds of uniquely-crafted weapons, and the half-orcs usually offer adventurers a fair deal. There is a mace headed by the sculpture of some unknown animal, a spear tipped with a real dragon's claw, and a sword with an invisible blade, to name only three. There is an 80% chance that the troupe will have in their possession any weapon listed in the expanded lists of the *Unearthed Arcana* (99% for the more common weapons such as swords, spears, and maces). Ten percent of the time they will have some magical weapon for sale.

Wingham's troupe has another aspect as well. They are minstrels and performers, re-creating battle scenes in dramatic fashion. Audiences pay well and have yet to be disappointed. The troupe has performed from Ironspur to Darmshall, and even in Hillsafar Hall. In pursuit of this line of work, the troupe has occasionally sold a weapon for a pitance plus a good tale of battle. They have turned many such deals with the Thinkers of the Thinkers. The Wacky Weapon Wielders can often be found performing at the House of Hurl.

The troupe no longer wanders throughout the year. Recently they traded a *holy avenger* to the Commander of the Guard of the Vaasan Gate. In return, the troupe was granted the rights and the chamber space to open a trade shop at the Gate during the winter months.