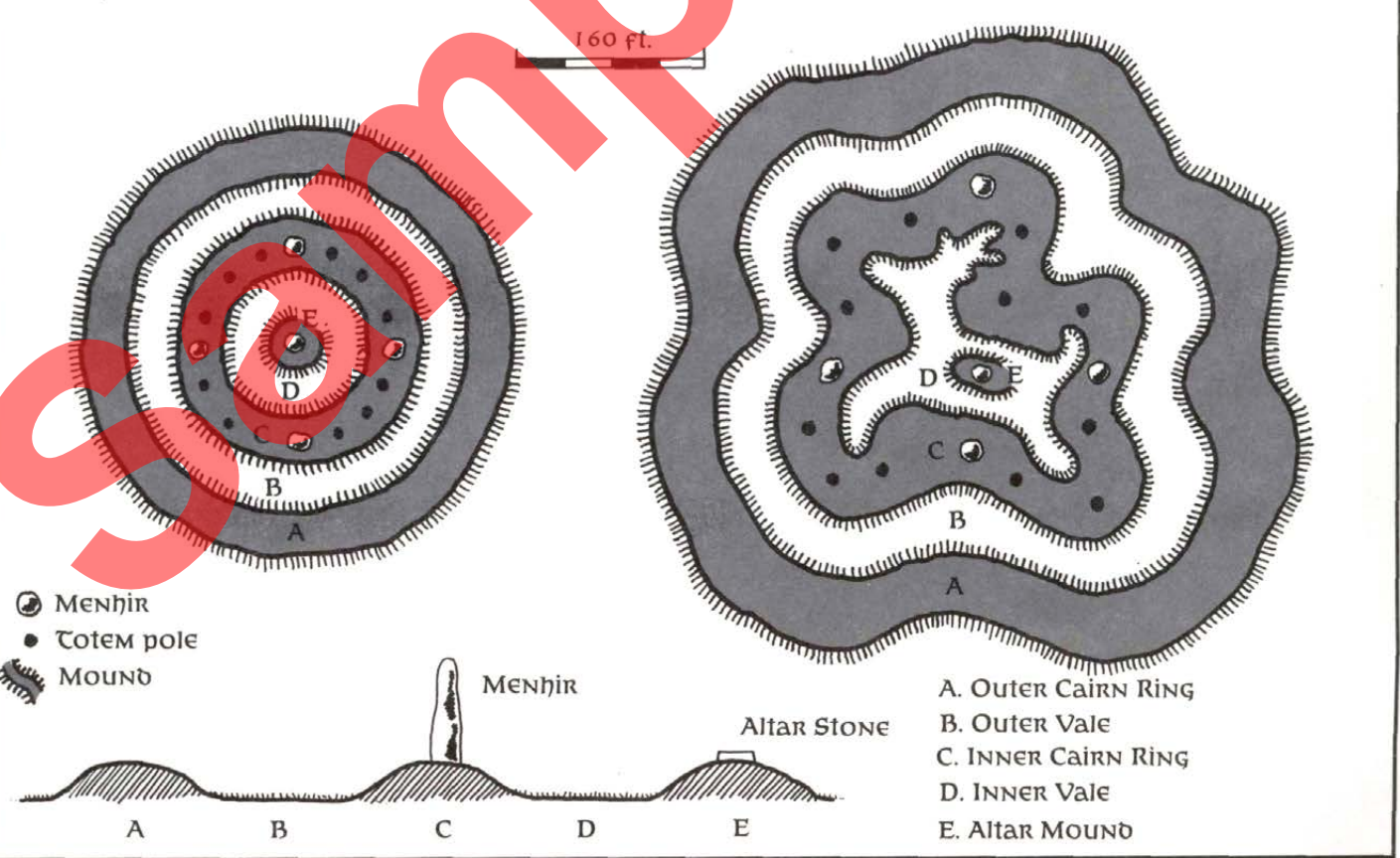


LUSKAN "City of Sails"



UTHGARDT ANCESTOR MOUNDS



Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®



The Savage Frontier

by Paul Jaquays

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ISBN 0-88038-593-6

\$7.95 US

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SAVAGE FRONTIER



"Civilization ends here."

Although no sign in the North actually says this, the folk of the North know this to be true (Well, to be honest, there was a sign over the door to my laboratory that said it, but I made EreK take it down. Who I am I, you ask. Let it be known, that I am Amelior Amanitas, alchemist extraordinaire and supreme sage of the North. At the request of Elminster, I am dictating the history and wealth of information regarding my savage homeland to my manservant EreK, who has promised to edit out digressions such as this when he recopies it. But as I said, I digress).

To walk past a city's walls is to rely only upon one's own skills and strength of arms. It is truly a Savage Frontier, where man has yet to tame the land or its denizens. You have been warned.

What is the Savage Frontier?

"The Savage Frontier" is a descriptive

name for what many also call "the North". In this book, the North refers to those lands north of the city of Waterdeep, between the Sword Coast and the Great Desert; the term also encompasses the islands of the Trackless Sea, including Tuern, Ruathym, and Gundarlun.

It is a rugged, heavily wooded wilderness marked by cool, mild summers and harsh, bitter winters. What little civilization can be found hugs the coastal regions and a few inland river valleys. The rest is the domain of orcs, trolls, barbarian tribes, and uncountable other monstrous denizens, who regularly hurl themselves in fury upon the palisades of the towns and villages in the wilderlands.

It is a land of riches. Mineral wealth unequalled elsewhere in the known realms is found here, along with seemingly endless stands of timber of a size not often found elsewhere. Here too is the wealth of history, the plunder of lost civilizations and vanished realms.

Using this Book

This book is intended to be read by *Dungeon Masters* only. Much of the information contained within would not be known to players and their characters under any circumstances.

Read this book in its entirety before running a campaign in the *Savage Frontier*: it describes the major features of the North, beginning with history and ending in adventure. In between, it looks at the geography, climate, creatures, peoples, religions, politics, cities, island realms, areas of mystery, and personalities. Though it hoards a wealth of detail, this book only scratches the surface of adventure opportunities of the North. The rest has been left to the most potent force present in the North... your imagination.

History of the North

Eons before men walked the earth, ages before the elves were civilized enough



to record history, in a time when the North was always warm and the seas of the world were deeper, the lands of Abeir-Toril were dominated by vast empires of inhuman peoples. In the elven oral tradition, these were known as the "Days of Thunder," when cruel lizard, amphibian, and avian peoples (known to the elves as the Iqua'Tel-'Quessir or creator races, but with no honor or respect intended) tamed the mighty dinosaurs, built towering cities of stone and glass on the shores of the warm seas and spanned the wilderness with shining roads, and fought constant wars of extermination, such was their hatred towards each other.

The stuff of magic was rawer in those days, less refined, more potent. These ancient peoples experimented endlessly with magics more powerful than can be even imagined today. Powerful mages hurled devastating bolts of seemingly god-like power, leveling armies and mountains; and like gods, they played at creating life, wryly choosing to release their monstrous mistakes rather than destroy them. To those who made them, the mistakes were unnatural horrors, unlike anything that walked the land. Most died in the cruel jungles, yet many lived and as thought awakened in them they hid themselves from their creators. When the end came at last, it was they, not the surviving creators who seized control of the suddenly colder realms. And so it was that the first of the elves, the dragons, the goblin races and an endless list of creatures of a new age took possession of their heritage. Their creators, the ancestors of the lizardmen, bullywugs and arakocra, declined into endless barbarism, never to rise again.

The unmeasured age that followed was known as the Time of Dragons, when those mighty creatures reigned supreme. Not until the elves themselves became powers in the world would the rule of dragons be challenged.

Elven sages still speculate on the events that brought about the "overnight" destruction of the creator races. There are wildly diverging theories,

but all agree that a rapid climate change occurred, creating a world unsuitable to most of the creator races and the dinosaurs. Many believe that the change resulted from a cataclysm the races brought upon themselves. Proponents of this theory point to the Star Mounts in the central High Forest, whose origins are most likely magical and otherworldly. The elves believe that around this time, the greater and lesser Powers began to manifest themselves in the world, particularly the beings known as Chauntea and Corellon Larethian, aiding the new races and confounding the survivors of the creator races.

There has been civilization in the North since before the Time of Dragons, yet little more than tantalizingly vague myths survive. For millennia, gold elves dwelt in Illefarn (where Waterdeep now stands) and Eaerlann (along the River Shining). From their ornate forest cities, they traded with primitive, emerging human nations like Netheril and Illusk and repulsed the constant attacks of the goblin races. Yet as men began to dominate the world, the elven lands declined and now little or no remnants remain of those lost and abandoned realms. When the elves chose to leave the North and travel to Evermeet, their works quickly disappeared, leaving only places like the Old Road and a ruined port in the High Forest to mark the passing of Eaerlann, while a mysterious ruin called the Crumbling Stair may be the last remnant of fabled Illefarn.

Meanwhile, in the far North, the dwarven burrow clans united as the dwarven nation of Delzoun, named for the dwarf who forged the union. The dwarven nation, which existed primarily underground, extended from the Ice Mountains in the Utter North to the Nether Mountains in the south. Silver Moon Pass was its western border and the Narrow Sea its eastern.

To the east, on sandy shores of the calm and shining Narrow Sea, human fishing villages grew into small towns, then joined together as the nation of

Netheril. Sages believe that the fishing towns were unified by a powerful human wizard who may have discovered a book of great magic power that had survived from the Days of Thunder—a book that legend calls the Nether Scrolls. Under this nameless wizard and those that followed, Netheril rose in power and glory, becoming both the first human land in the North and the most powerful. Some say that this discovery marked the birth of human wizardry, since before then, mankind had only shamans and witch doctors. For over 3,000 years Netheril dominated the North, but even its legendary wizards were unable to stop their final doom.

Doom came as desert, devouring the Narrow Sea and spreading to fill its banks with dry dust and blowing sand. Legend states that when the great wizards of Netheril realized their land was lost, they abandoned it and their countrymen en masse, fleeing to all corners of the world and taking the secrets of wizardry with them. More likely, this was a slow migration that began some 3,000 years ago and reached its conclusion some 1,500 years later.

Whatever the truth, the wizards no longer dwelt in Netheril and to the north, once-majestic dwarven Delzoun had fallen upon hard days. Then the orcs struck. Orcs had always been foes in the North, surging out of their holes every few tens of generations when their normal haunts could no longer support their burgeoning numbers. This time they charged out of their caverns in the Spine of the World, poured out of abandoned mines in the Graypeaks, screamed out of lost dwarfholds in the Ice Mountains, raged forth from crypt complexes in the Nether Mountains and stormed upward from the bowels of the High Moon Mountains. Never before or since had there been such an outpouring of orcish power.

Before this onslaught Delzoun crumbled and was driven in on itself. Netheril, without its wizards, was wiped from the face of history. The



elves of Eaelrann alone withstood the onslaught and, with the aid of the treants of Turlang and other unnamed allies, were able to stave off the final days of their land for yet a few centuries more.

In the far west, men also dwelled — wise, clever primitives called the Ice Hunters. They lived their simple lives on the Sword Coast since time beyond reckoning, countless generations before Netheril's first founders set foot on the Narrow Sea's western shore. Yet this peaceful folk fell prey to another invasion. From the south came crude long ships to disgorge a tall, fair-haired, warlike race which displaced the Ice Hunters from their ancestral lands.

This race, now known as the Northmen, spread their farms and villages along the Sword Coast from the banks the Winding Water to the gorges of the Mirar. Their fierce warriors drove the simple Ice Hunters further and further north, forced the goblinkind back into their mountain haunts and instigated the last Council of Illefarn. Within 500 years of the Northmen's arrival, Illefarn was no more—its residents had migrated to Evermeet.

From the Sword Coast, Northmen sailed westward, finding, claiming and establishing colonies on the major western islands of Ruathym and Gundarlun, eventually spreading to all islands in the northern sea. Others migrated northward, past the Spine of the World and became the truly savage barbarians of Icewind Dale.

Where Luskan now stands, the Northmen found the citadel of Illusk, built by a refugee wizard from Netheril. The Illusk wizards ruled for centuries until the folk of Illuskan (as the surrounding village was known) were "liberated" by raiders led by Uther Gardolfsson, a Ruathym Thane.

The angry Illuskani destroyed Gardolfsson's fleet and drove him inland where he and his warriors would die (theoretically) in the monster-infested wilderness. Instead, they forged the birth of a new people, the Uthgardt bar-

barians.

Meanwhile in the east, the elves of Eaelrann built the fortress of Ascalhorn and turned it over to refugees from Netheril, as the Netherese followers of Karsus built the town of Karse in the High Forest. Other Netherese founded Llorckh and Loudwater. Still more wandered the mountains, hills, and moors north and west of the High Forest. These became the ancestors of the Uthgardt barbarians and the founders of Silverymoon, Everlund and Sundabar.

In the centuries that followed, Ascalhorn became Hellgate Keep when it fell into the hands of demons, and Eaelrann collapsed under the attack of a new orc horde. The elves fled southeast, joining with Northmen, Netherese descendants, and dwarves to form what would later be known as the Fallen Kingdom. This realm was short-lived and collapsed under the next orkish invasion—though in dying, it dealt the goblin races a blow from which they have yet to recover.

Yet along the coast, in what was once elven Illefarn, humanity was once again rising in power. Merchants from the south, tribesmen from the North, and seafarers from western islands had created a village around a trading post on a deepwater harbor, first known as Nimoar's Hold after the Uthgardt chieftain whose tribe siezed and fortified the ramshackle village. Nimoar and his successors, known as War Lords, led the men of Waterdeep (as it had become known to the ship captains who called there) in a slowly losing battle against the trolls. In a final, climactic battle, the trolls breached the aging palisade and all seemed lost—until the magic of a Northern youth, Ahghairon of Silverymoon, turned luck against the trolls and the "everlasting ones" were destroyed or scattered.

Ahghairon, heir to the magical heritage and learning of Netheril, stayed in Waterdeep and in his 112th year he again saved the city... from itself. In so doing, he created the Lords of Waterdeep, the government that rules there

today. The city has since grown into the largest in North, possibly in all Faerun. With Waterdeep as a firm anchor, "civilization" again forged cautiously into the wilderness. Illuskan (now just Luskan) was retaken from the orcs. Loudwater, Llorckh, Longsaddle, Triboar, Secomber and other towns were resettled by pioneers from Waterdeep, sponsored by noble Waterdhavian merchant families.

Though it has been centuries since the last orc invasion, there is still constant strife. Barbarians harass merchants, travelers, and towns; the seas are filled with Northmen pirates; the demon forces of Hellgate Keep assault the east; and two wars have marred the land in recent years. Luskan, now a fierce merchant city known to harbor (and support) pirates, wages war with the island realm of Ruathym over an act of piracy against a Luskan merchant ship; and to the far north, in Icewind Dale beyond the Spine of the World, the Ten Towns are slowly rebuilding after being nearly destroyed by the monstrous forces of Akar Kessel.

It is a time of relative quiet in the North. Where once elves and dwarves reigned, men now rule, but their hold—as was true for all civilizations before — is tenuous at best.

Amelior Amanitas



Acknowledgements:

Like many fantasy worlds, this one owes its birth to a number of other folk. The culture of the seafaring Northmen comes from Douglas Niles, who described them in FR2, *Moonshae*. Icewind Dale, its heroes and tales are based on *The Crystal Shard* by Bob Salvatore. And last, but never least, gratitude is owed to Ed Greenwood, who gave us hints about The Savage Frontier in FR1, *Waterdeep and the North*, and whose copious notes and previously published material are the foundation of this book.

SAVAGE FRONTIER OVERVIEW

"You know, Erek, if Elminster hadn't been so kind to us when we were, um, avoiding the rather unfortunate consequences of that incident in Volkumburgh, I would never have agreed to this project. After all, how was I to know WHY the awtawmatawn had been shattered in the first place?"

"Oh well, I rather like the history chapter, didn't you? Showed some real pageantry there, I think."

"And Brother Lychor, he seemed like such a pleasant chap... Erek, you're writing this all down. Why you little weasel! That's it, no more letting you beat me at nine-draughts!"

Character Races in the North

With the exception of elves and halflings, most of the common character races of the AD&D® game are native to the Savage Frontier, though the demi-human population in the North is slowly declining. Players who wish to use characters of other races may of course do so, subject to DM approval (members of virtually any race, even drow, can be found in Waterdeep).

Humans: The Savage Frontier is populated by human peoples with a variety of cultural backgrounds. There is no unified human nation in the North, only individual towns, villages and city states loosely linked by trade agreements, and the barbarian tribes that roam the wilderness. A human character starting in the North might be from any one of these folk.

The most ancient are the primitive but peaceful Ice Hunters of the Ice Peaks. The war-like Northmen control the Outer Islands and much of the Sword Coast. Northmen scorn agriculture, preferring to raid and make war.

In the far North, beyond the Spine of the World, the fierce tundra barbarians have recently allied with the folk of the Ten Towns in Icewind Dale. The powerful Uthgardt barbarians roam the wilds of the North, bickering amongst themselves and warring on orcs and outposts of civilization.

In the northeast, the cultured folk of Silverymoon produce the finest bards in the land. They and the stalwart defenders of Sundabar and Everlud are descendants of an ancient, dark-haired race known as the Netherese.

Then there are the Waterdhavians, the folk of Waterdeep, the melting pot of nations—nearly all lands on Faerun (and other worlds) are represented here.

Elves and Half-Elves: Though at least two elven realms once existed in the North, the closest elven land is Evereska to the south. Elves in the Savage Frontier are usually wanderers and adventurers, though an Deepearth realm of drow is said to exist far beneath the North. Elves of most non-aquatic subraces dwell in Waterdeep. The Ardeepforest is known to house retired elven adventurers. Sundabar has a large half-elven population, and Loudwater a small one, due to half-elven descendants of Eaerlann who tend to marry other half-elves.

Some folk in the North (mostly Lawful humans and all dwarves) consider the elven withdrawal to Evermeet a kind of "desertion" from racial responsibility and will treat strange elves with suspicion and ill-disguised contempt. Except on rare occasions, drow and drow half-breeds are treated like filth... if allowed to live at all.

Dwarves: The dwarves of the north, whose population is steadily declining, live in scattered underground realms. These stocky folk are generally reclusive, but will ally with men to battle orcs. Two dwarven cities are still known to exist, Ironmaster in the west and Citadel Adbar in the east. Men trade freely within Adbar, but have few dealings with the isolated dwarves of Ironmaster, other than to purchase iron goods.

If encountered wandering in the wilderness, dwarves tend to be extremely suspicious of strangers. They think that others seek to find and loot the halls of their ancestors (which is often what the dwarves themselves seek to do).

Gnomes: This once-populous race of

wry little folk is nearly gone from the North. Their underground realms have been overrun by orcs until few remain. The survivors wisely avoid contact with all but dwarves. Still, merchants in Waterdeep are constantly on the lookout for their clever little toys and illusionary gew-gaws.

Halflings: There is something about four to five months of fierce winter that doesn't appeal to the average halfling. While Waterdeep has a fair halfling population (and a much milder winter), it is rare to find them elsewhere in the North.

Half-orcs: Given the vast orc population in the north and the amount of raiding, one might suspect a plague of these half-breeds, yet they are few. Northerners have a distinct and strong dislike for anything even vaguely orcish and only the most human-looking can pass safely among northern folk.

Character Classes in the North

Rangers: In the Savage Frontier, rangers are well-respected for their vigilance and diligence in the service of the Harpers and the Lords' Alliance. In the wilderness, the word of a name-level ranger is the law and the Lord's Alliance will enforce it as such.

Bards: While bards are not common in the North, they are respected. Northmen treat "skalds" like heroes, particularly if they sing of Northmen victories. Even the Uthgardt barbarians treat bards as near equals. More often than not, bards are members of the Harpers.

Clerics: Many of the major gods and faiths of Faerun are represented in the North, though few are "native" to the residents here. Over the centuries, missionary clerics have come north to establish their churches meeting with varied success. Predominant "civilized" gods in the North include Mystra, Lathander, Mielikki, Tempus, and Tymora. The barbarians have their own private gods. The gods section in