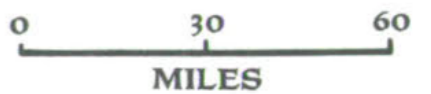


Damaran Province Map

	COUNTRY BORDER
	PROVINCE BORDER





OFFICIAL GAME ACCESSORY

THE BLOODSTONE LANDS

by Bob Salvatore

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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 goblinkin 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 chalcedony 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 barricades 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 Heliogabalus 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 chalcidony 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 Theek 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 catastrophes—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 Viridin 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 Viridin'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 Virdin 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. Virdin 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 Virdin'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.