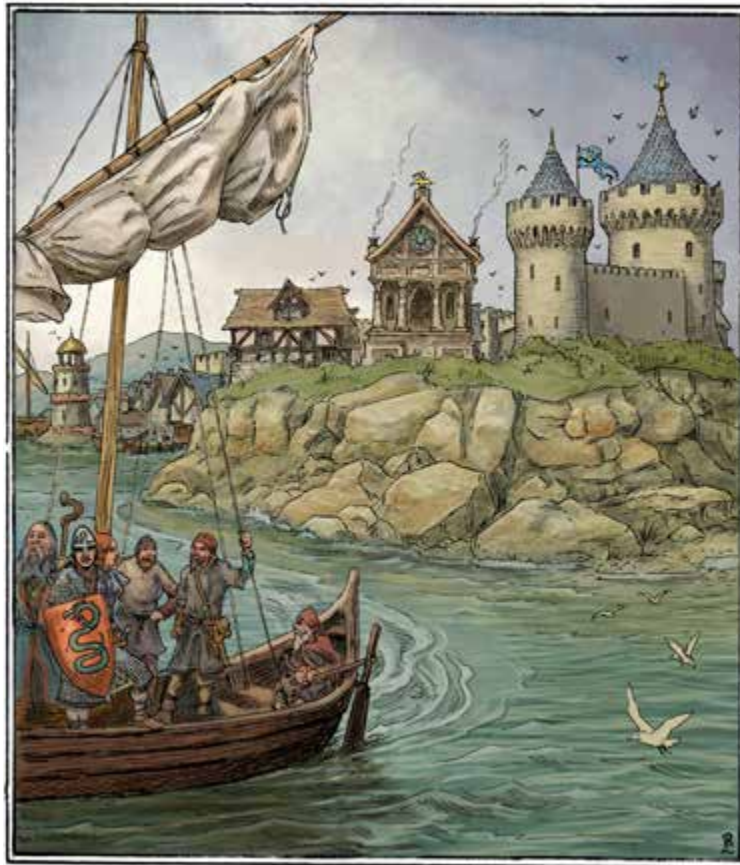


A SETTING SUPPLEMENT
COMPATIBLE WITH
Swords & Wizardry
ALONG WITH
The Majestic Fantasy RPG
AND ALL OTHER EDITIONS BASED ON
THE ORIGINAL 1974 ROLEPLAYING GAME

Into the Majestic Fantasy Realms

The Northern Marches



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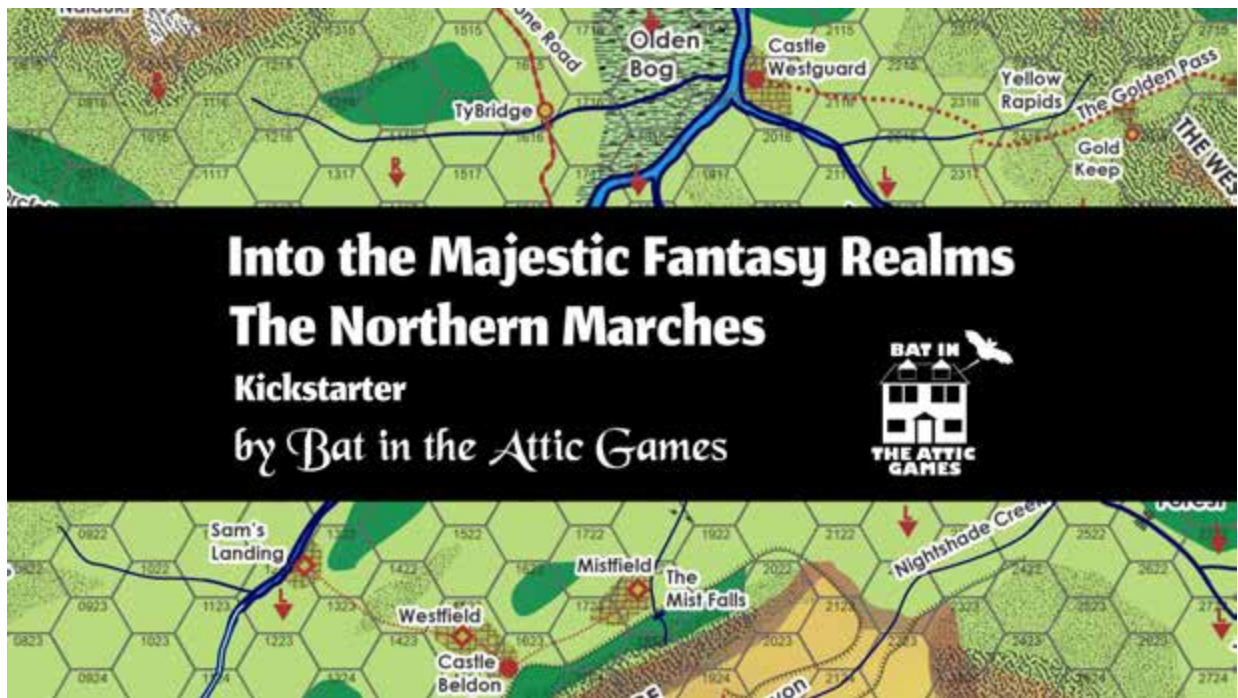
A Special Thanks to Matthew J. Finch of Mythmere Games for putting together the Swords & Wizardry Rules

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Explore. Discover. Change the world, and Open the Portal to the Majestic Fantasy Realms

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Following pages are samples and excerpts from the guidebook so you get a feeling about The Northern Marches, what kind of information is provided, and how is it organised

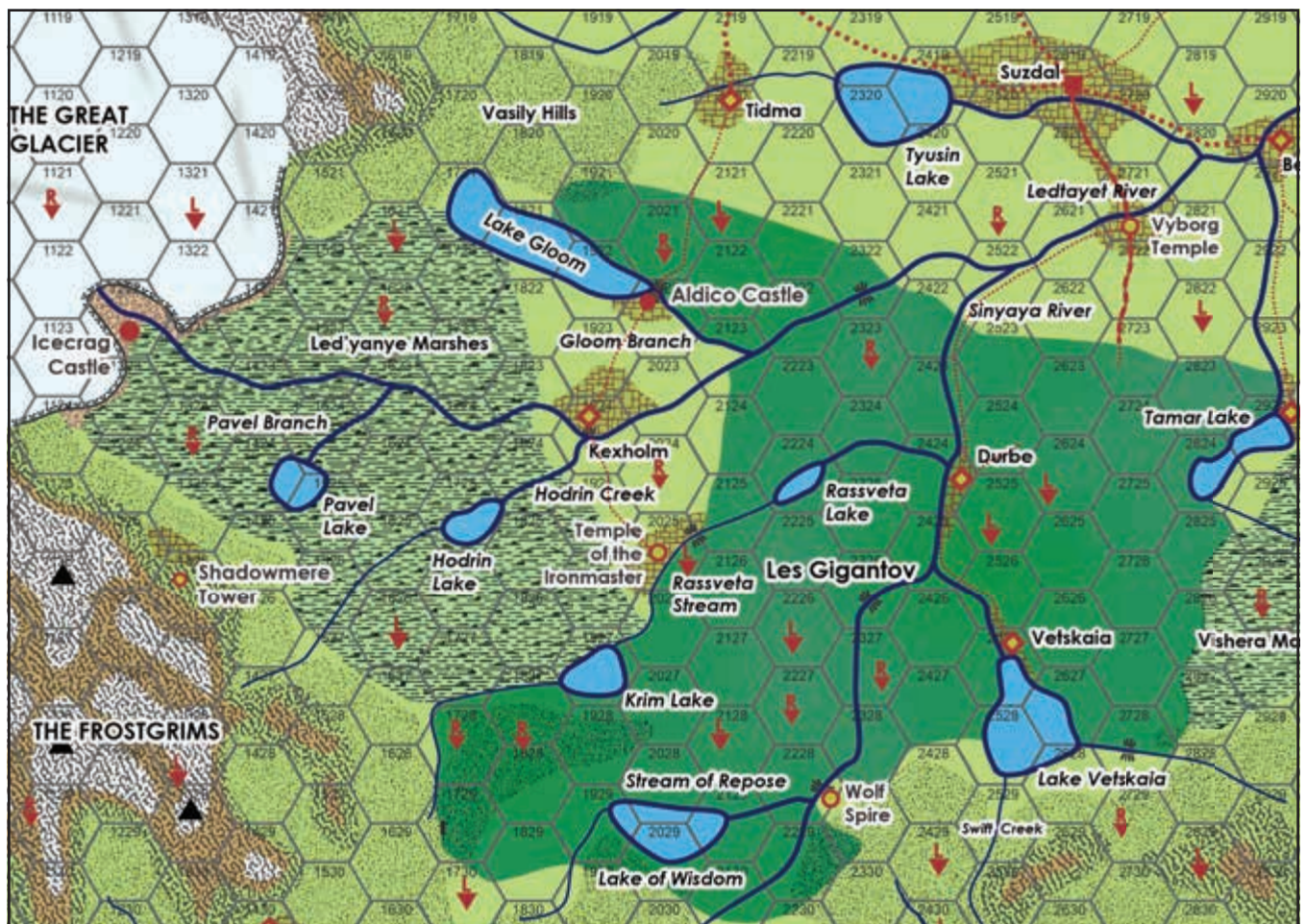
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Introduction

Many excellent fantasy settings evoke a grand, epic feel: lands torn by the clash between light and darkness, cut through by mighty mountain ranges and shrouded by ancient forests. But lost in those lofty views are the little details that truly bring a world to life. Details that give rise to dangers just as deadly as facing a dark lord. Though they may not shake continents, they are equally lethal to people struggling to live their daily lives.

I have lived my entire life in a small town in northwest Pennsylvania. I've walked among the crowds in places like New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles, but spending decades in the same hometown has made me aware of the countless stories nestled among the green hills around me: their triumphs, tragedies, hopes, and fears. I have seen the majesty of the Grand Canyon and heard the thunder of water pouring over Niagara Falls. Yet, within a few hundred yards of my home are secluded pockets of beauty where streams tumble across shale ledges in moss-draped ravines.

This book's goal is to bring to life a 320-by-400-mile fantasy setting filled with possibilities for adventure and peril. It builds on my previous works, Blackmarsh, Southland, and the Wild North, while adding depth and expanding into previously unpublished regions.

What sets the Majestic Fantasy Realms apart?

It's the abundance of local-level detail. While running sandbox campaigns that allowed players to "trash" my setting, I learned how to write and use the hexcrawl format. This approach, which uses a map with numbered hexes, efficiently organizes a large number of locales for quick reference. This was crucial since I could never predict where the players would go next to "trash" my setting.

The Majestic Fantasy Realms is a medieval fantasy setting. Unless stated otherwise, assume that things work as they did in our history between the 10th and 15th centuries. I rely heavily on traditional medieval tropes so that players would feel comfortable enough to try to trash things.

Similarly, the fantasy elements rely on familiar tropes. Trolls, orcs, and giants roam the wilderness, and dragons guard glittering hordes of gold. Magic abounds: wizards dedicate long years to mastering arcane spells, while priests are granted divine magic through their faith. For variety, I drew on numerous historical and mythological variants. This ensures that alongside the familiar, there will be something unexpected.

Another aspect of the Majestic Fantasy Realms is that nothing exists in isolation. Characters, creatures, and events shape their surroundings. There are no clear boundaries between the known and the unknown. Instead, these elements blend and intertwine as one adventure further into a region.

While this book provides an overview of the region and the continent it occupies, the focus is on the various locales, specifically, the various terrain, islands, lairs, ruins, and settlements found on each map. Each locale stands alone but can also connect to others near and far. Reading through them will gradually form a picture of life in that area and its possibilities for adventure. Numerous cross-references and summaries have been added to assist you.

Finally, while each map includes a comprehensive listing of locales, it does not define everything that could exist within these regions. Most locales are spaced 10 to 15 miles apart, leaving plenty of room for your own original ideas. In addition, many locales only have a terse description, a framework you can flesh out to make the final adventure truly your own.



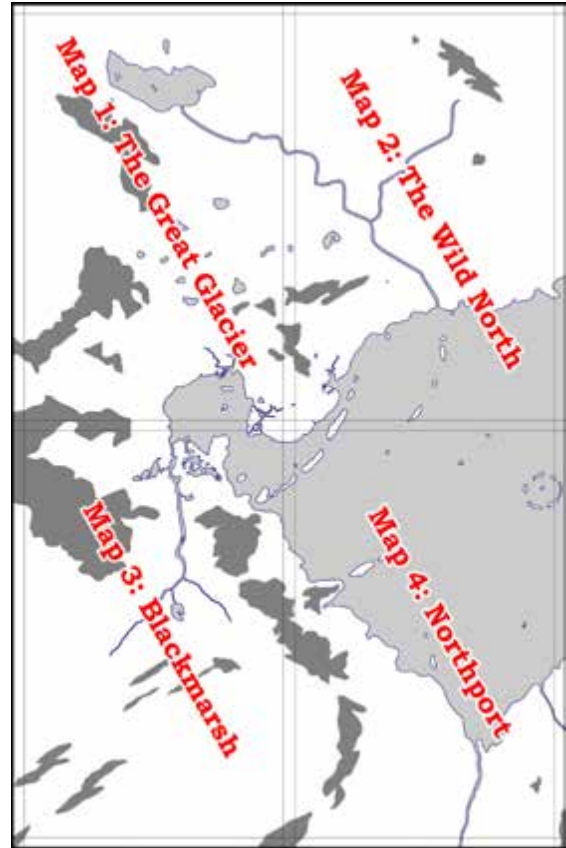
Organization

This book is divided into two main parts. The first part focuses on the four maps of the Northern Marches and briefly introduces the Majestic Fantasy Realms, highlighting details relevant to the region. The second part is a more comprehensive gazetteer covering the main campaign area of the Majestic Fantasy Realms, offering information on its various regions and its history, religion, cosmology, and culture.

Maps

The Northern Marches are divided into four 12" by 18" maps. Superimposed on each is a grid of hexes, with each hex equal to 5 miles. This equates to 2 hours of walking across level ground. There are 31 hex columns across each map, west to east, and 41 hex rows going from north to south. Each map covers 137 miles from west to east and 205 miles from north to south. For each map, this is slightly less than the area encompassed by Scotland or Ireland in Europe or the state of Indiana in the United States.

- **Map 1** to the northwest is the Great Glacier, named after its most prominent geographical feature.
- **Map 2** to the northeast is the Wild North, the name of the northern half of the Northern Marches.
- **Map 3** to the southwest is named Blackmarsh after its most famous locations, Castle Blackmarsh and the Black Marshes.
- **Map 4** to the southeast is named Northport after its largest city. This map also encompasses the Duchy of Northport, the westernmost dukedom of the Grand Kingdom.



Hex Map

A grid of hexes arranged in columns makes up each map. The hex numbers are given in a four-digit format (1213, 0114, etc.). For example, 0211 means it is in the "02" column (the 2nd column of the map) and is 11 hexes down. Sometimes, the hex number will not be clear because of the terrain in the hex. In this case, you will need to count the hexes. Each map hex is 5 miles.

This hex number system allows a referee to find the locales on the map quickly and what is near a location. This helps keep the map uncluttered and easy to read. Geographical features are composed of multiple hexes. They are labeled directly on the map and listed alphabetically in that map's chapter.

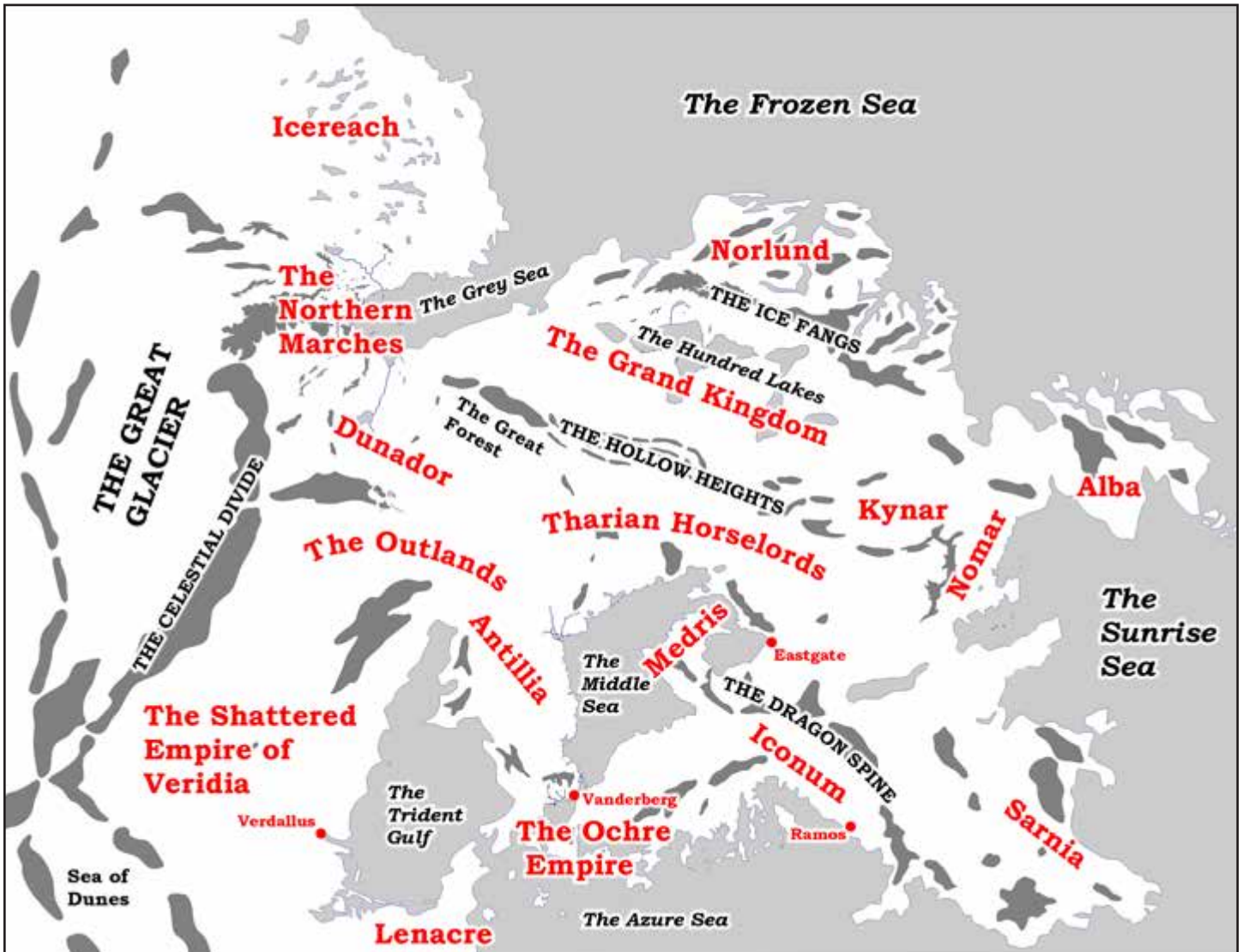


*Duchy of Northport
(Grand Kingdom)*

Majestic Fantasy Realms

The main campaign area of the Majestic Fantasy Realms is roughly 3,500 miles from west to east and 2,600 miles north to south. It ranges from 20-degree latitude along the map's southern edge to 60-degree latitude along the northern edge. It encompasses an area slightly larger than the European Continent with a similar range of climates.

The continent's geography is dominated by a convoluted coastline, which forms numerous peninsulas, seas, and bays. This and various major mountain ranges divide the Majestic Fantasy Realms into distinct regions.



The Bright Empire and the Ochre Empire

Centered on the city of Ramos near the shore of the Azure Sea, the Bright Empire was a continent-spanning empire that lasted for nearly 500 years. Central to the empire's stability was the United Church, a union of the Church of Veritas, the God of Truth and Creation; Thoth, the God of Knowledge and Magic; Sarrath, the God of War and Order; and Delaquain, the Goddess of Honor and Justice.

Two hundred years into the Bright Empire's existence, theological and doctrinal disputes ignited civil wars between the followers of Sarrath and Delaquain. This weakened the empire, which eventually had to split into an Eastern Empire still centered on Ramos, the empire's original capital, and a Western Empire centered on the new city of Vanderberg. This change wasn't enough, and at the battle known as the Shattering, the imperial forces were defeated by migrating barbarian tribes, and the Eastern half of the empire collapsed. A shrunken Western Empire continued to exist and eventually reformed itself as the Ochre Empire dominated by the Church of Sarrath.

The Grand Kingdom

After the Shattering, new cultures and realms rose outside the Bright Empire's old borders. In the Hundred Lakes region known as the Hundmera, five kingdoms were united to form the Grand Kingdom. For the past four centuries, the Grand Kingdom has grown to become the largest human realm within the Majestic Fantasy Realms. Its only rival in size is the Ochre Empire. The Grand Kingdom is generally viewed as a force for good, and the worship of Veritas, the God of Truth and Creation, culturally dominates the realm.

Preview Excerpts

The following are excerpts from the first draft of the Northern Marches to give you a better idea of what to expect from the final product. The examples that are used are taken from the map shown on page three after the table of contents.

Assumptions

I designed the Majestic Fantasy Realms to incorporate many classic fantasy tropes found in books, movies, and the original 1974 role-playing game. This helped new players avoid feeling overwhelmed when introducing them to my campaign. It also made players comfortable enough to jump in and take a proactive role as their characters.

However, the Majestic Fantasy Realms also has its own unique assumptions and interpretations of classic fantasy tropes. This section explains the most important ones and outlines my reasoning behind them. Later sections will also discuss how they can be adapted to other RPGs that may have different assumptions.

I have listed two examples of what is found in this chapter.

Money

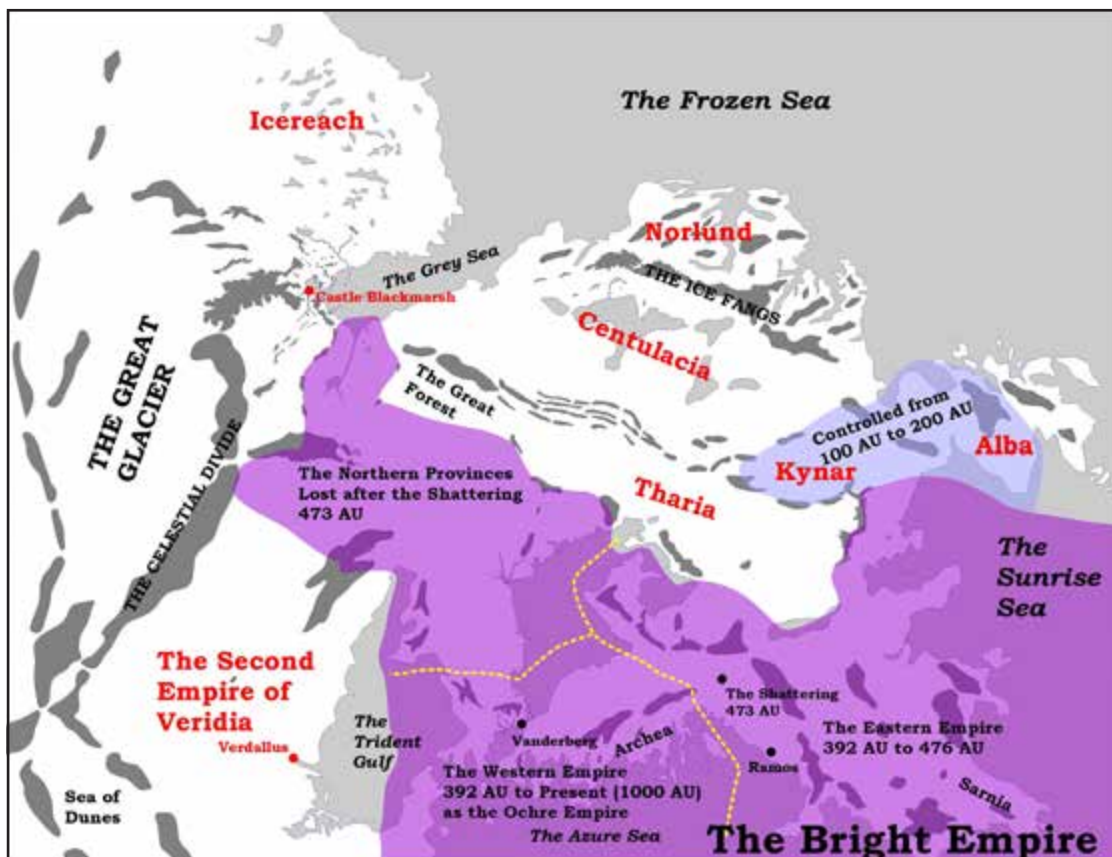
The “d” symbol is used throughout this text to denote coin values. Historically, “d” stands for denarius, a common silver coin in the Roman Empire, which later came to represent the silver penny in the Middle Ages. For example, 1d equals one silver piece, 10d equals ten silver pieces, and so on.

The Majestic Fantasy Realms adopts a silver-based currency standard. However, in many older-edition campaigns, the gold piece is more common. In that case, you can treat 20d as equivalent to one gold piece. Additionally, 250d weighs one pound in the Majestic Fantasy Realms.

Another commonly mentioned coin is the gold crown, a one-ounce coin worth 320d. Sixteen gold crowns weigh one pound, so each is roughly an ounce. The crown’s value in denarii is often noted in parentheses.

There is also the farthing, represented by “f.” Four copper farthings equal one silver penny in the Majestic Fantasy Realms. If your campaign uses a gold-based economy, you can treat these as copper pieces instead.

Before their age of exploration and raiding, the Vikings of Norlund had little gold. Their primary high-value coin was the Mark, a one-pound silver bar worth 240d.



NPC Classes

The Majestic Fantasy RPG has a few more classes than Swords & Wizardry. Below are the descriptions of the different classes and how to use them if you don't want to use the Majestic Fantasy RPG.

Class	Description
Artificer	A practitioner of an older form of magic that focuses on creating and using magic items. Treat as a magic user in Swords & Wizardry with much of their wealth invested in potions and scrolls.
Berserker	Fighters who are champions of Mantriv, the god of storms and thunder. Treat them as fighters who can berserk per the berserker description in various classic editions.
Burglar	A character who is good at burglar-related skills. Treat as a thief in Swords & Wizardry.
Claw of Kalis	A character who is good at deception, stealth, and assassination. A member of a secretive cult devoted to the blood goddess Kalis. Treat as an assassin in Swords & Wizardry.
Cleric	This class operates similarly to their counterparts in Swords & Wizardry. All clerics have the religion they are part noted as part their class description.
Druids	Similar to their Swords & Wizardry counterparts. In the Majestic Fantasy Realms they are associated with a druidic organization known as the Trehean (Tree-hey-an) and clerics of Silvanus the Forest Lord and Veritas the High Lord.
Fighter	Operate the same as their counterparts in Swords & Wizardry.
Knight	Fighters who have additional abilities related to mounted combat. Treat as fighters in Swords & Wizardry who ride horse, use lances, and often engage in mounted combat.
Mage	A Magic-User who is a member of the Order of Thoth, a magical order with conclaves throughout the Majestic Fantasy Realms. Treat as a magic user in Swords & Wizardry who is a member of a magical order.
Magic-User	This class operates similarly to their counterparts in Swords & Wizardry. Represents the lone practitioner of magic outside of the established magical orders.
Merchant Adventurer	A character who is good at haggling and other merchant skills. This class can fight as well as a cleric. Treat as a fighter in Swords & Wizardry who focuses on merchant activities. Or treat as a 0-lvl merchant, depending on the character's description.
Mountebank	A character who is good at various street skills and who can also cast a limited number of arcane spells. Treat as a magic-user in Swords & Wizardry who also knows 1d3 thief abilities.
Myrmidon	Fighters who are champions of Sarrath, the dragon god of Order and War and have various holy abilities. Treat as Lawful Evil paladins in Swords & Wizardry and adjust their abilities accordingly.
Paladin	Fighters who are champions of Delaquain, the goddess of honor and justice, and have various holy abilities. Treat as paladins in Swords & Wizardry.
Rangers	Similar to their counterparts in Swords & Wizardry. In the Majestic Fantasy Realms, they are part of a druidic organization known as the Trehean.
Runecaster	A practitioner of an older form of magic that focuses on the creation and use of carved runes. Treat as a magic user in Swords & Wizardry with much of their wealth invested in scrolls carved into staves or rods. One scroll can be carved into the wood for every one to three inches of length. Divide the spell level by three and round up to determine how many inches will be needed to carve the spell.
Soldiers	Fighters who have additional abilities to represent their military training. Treat as fighters when using Swords & Wizardry who operate primarily in organized formations.
Theurgist	A practitioner of an older form of magic that focuses on casting spells cooperatively for greater effect. Most Theurgists are members of the Order of Sarrath, which is a part of the Sarrath-dominated Ochre Empire. Treat as a magic user in Swords & Wizardry who can combine their class level with other theurgists casting the same spell. For example, Fireball or Lightning Bolt.
Thug	A character who can fight as well as a cleric and knows various street skills like intimidation. Also, they know how to damage their opponent effectively. In Swords & Wizardry, this class is treated as a fighter but fights with the same to-hit chance as a cleric. In addition, they get a +1 bonus to damage in addition to their normal strength bonus even if it is +0.
Wizard	A practitioner of Elven magic that focuses on spontaneous spell casting. Treat as a magic-user in Swords & Wizardry who can swap one memorized spell with another in their spell book once per level, once a day. Also, halve the number of spells they can memorize and round up.



Terrain

These are examples of what multi-hex terrain entries look for each of the four maps covering the Northern Marches.

Led'yanye Marshes (Hex 1622)

The marshes were formed by meltwater from the Great Glaciers, which flooded the depression left behind as the ice retreated. The water is infused with necromantic energies, remnants of ancient experiments conducted by the Thule Wizards. As a result, the marshes are inhabited by an unusually large number of weak undead, including wights, ghouls, and zombies.

Despite the dangers, prospectors make their home here, braving the undead to extract bits of amber from the blue earth deposits scattered throughout the region.

Les Gigantov (Hex 2326) "Forest of Giants"

Les Gigantov, the Forest of Giants, is the largest and oldest woodland in the Wild North, emerging shortly after the retreat of the great ice. Hill Giants migrated north from the foothills of the Northguard Mountains, settling among the ancient oaks and towering spruces. More than two dozen families built steadings and hunted wild game. When the Sorobes arrived, the local tribes left the giants alone.

This peace ended when the Sons of Vladimir and the Sons of Vadim began their long war. The Sons of Vadim attempted to recruit the hill giants as allies but were rebuffed, sometimes even attacked. The giants wanted nothing to do with the affairs of humans and sought only to be left in peace.

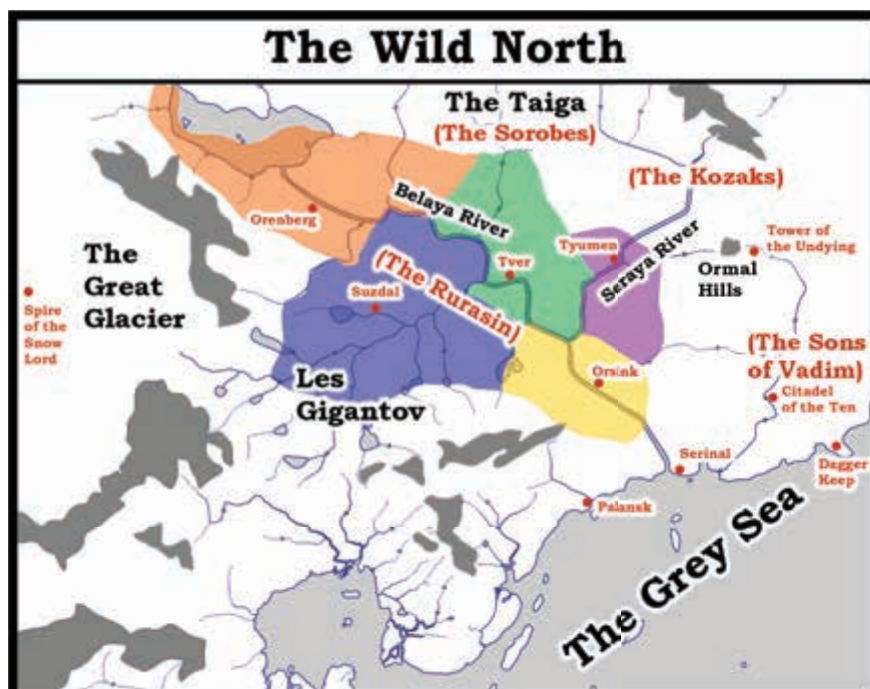
Among the Sons of Vadim was Zakhar, a lycanthrope and pack leader. He and his werewolves moved into Les Gigantov and began to claim territory, slipping through the dense spruce groves and preying on the giants. Over the centuries, Zakhar's descendant, Dreko (*Locales, 2228, Wolf Spire*), has become the dominant power in the forest. Now, only a half dozen hill giant families survive in isolated steadings, their ancient realm slowly consumed by Dreko's shadow.

The Great Glacier (Hex 1120)

Once covering nearly all of the Wild North (see *Locale, 0118, the Snow King*), the Great Glacier is slowly retreating to the northwest. Its southeast face is riddled with crevasses and subglacial caves where icy cold streams emerge. Calving ice sheets are also dangerous, as the glacier's edge forms a cliff 10 to 20 feet high in some areas. Travel on the glacier's surface is also hazardous due to the numerous crevasses and moulins. A moulin is a sinkhole up to 10 feet in diameter that, in a few cases, reaches down to the bottom of the glacier.

Aside from the dangers of the terrain, the glacier surface is relatively free of animal life or monsters. A few small Remorhaz (HD 6 to 8) lair in the southern third of the glacier's top surface. The white dragon, Rekokardek, is known to lair in the glaciers somewhere in the northern third of the glacier (*Locales, 1115*). However, the glacier's flat surface makes surprising her almost impossible.

More common are the ruins of the Thules and the occasional Frost Giant castles (*Locales, 1321*) found amid the nunataks jutting above the glacier surface. The ancient Thules used their towers on the glacier as a bastion from which to rule their fallen empire. They experimented with magic involving water and ice, some of which still remain undiscovered beneath the gravel and snow.



Locales

These are examples of what various locales look for in each of the four maps covering the Northern Marches. They include examples of Lairs, Ruins, and Settlements. Note that the population figure for each settlement is the total number of inhabitants.

1121 Long Dead Wizard

At the bottom of this crevasse is the mummified remains of a Thule wizard. The body is guarded by **three Ice Golems** (treat as stone golems). The only usable possession is a Wand of Lightning Bolt with 8 charges remaining.

1222 Icecrag Castle

Pop: 448, Human (Rurasin);
Ruler: Jareko, FTR 8, Human(Rurasin, M);
Resource: Market; **Market Size:** V;
Military: Light Foot 50; Med. Foot 19; Shortbow 20; Med. Cavalry 10;

This castle is built around a rocky outcrop about a mile from the front of the Glacier. It is the home of Jareko and his companion Lady Natava (MU6, Human(Rurasin, F)). Jareko is a Son of Vladimir. They are in the midst of studying artifacts uncovered by the retreating glacier.



1324 Ruins of the Construct

Half buried in the bog is the broken remains of one of Koschei the Undying (*The Wild North, Settlements, 2415*) huge mechanical constructs. There are **8 wights** (3 HD) inhabiting the remains. They are all that left of the original operating crew.

1326 Shadowmere Tower

Pop: 592, Human (Rurasin);
Ruler: Vomilav FTR 8 Human(Rurasin, M);
Resource: Market; **Market Size:** V;
Military: Light Foot 43; Med. Foot 15; Shortbow 14; Lgt. Cavalry 21; Horse Archers 43; Hvy. Cavalry w/Bows 6;

Vomilav is a son of Vadim, who uses Shadowmere Tower as a base to terrorize the villages around the Led'yanye Marshes. Vomilav leads his Shadow Guard (Ftr5) and his men on a raiding expedition every new moon. Several years ago, Koschei the Undying (*Wild North, Settlements, 2415*) kidnapped one of his women. Vomilav was able to rescue her and destroy the giant mechanical construct (*Locales, 1324*) that was sent to destroy his tower. The two evil lords are now bitter enemies.

1626 Ghouls in the Marsh

Packs of **ghouls, over 120**, roam the southern half of Led'yanye Marsh. During the day, they sleep in a copse that is tangled with vines and fallen branches. Treasure can be found among the remains of their victims.

2619 Suzdal

Pop: 3,782, Human(Rurasin);
Ruler: Lord Councilor Remilov,
Merchant Adv. 5, Human(Rurasin, M);
Resource: Market; **Market Size:** II;
Military: Light Foot 338; Med. Foot 135; Shortbow 135; Med. Cavalry 67;

Suzdal is one of the largest towns in the region and one of the few not controlled by the Sons of Vladimir. It considers itself strictly neutral in the conflict between the Sons of Vladimir and the Son of Vadim. As long as the interest of the Merchant Adventurers remains unthreatened, they will not pick sides. Temples from all the Wild North deities are present, including a handful of shrines dedicated to foreign gods.

Suzdal dominates much of the land southwest of The Belaya River. It has attempted several times to build a paved road south to Muncaester (*Locales, 2435*) through the woods of Les Gigantov, but the elves of the forest (*Locales, 2226*) have foiled all attempts. A Council of Merchant Adventurers rules Suzdal, the exact number of which depends on the fortunes of the leading families. A Lord Councilor is appointed yearly to handle the town's day-to-day business.



Cultures

Rurasin

Running out of land, people began to form bands called Vikings to seek out homes and wealth outside of Norlund. One Viking band, led by Rurasin the Bold, sailed north across the Grey Sea and explored the Belaya River. Finding amber and fur, the Vikings conquered the native Sorobes tribes and built forts along the Belaya River and its tributaries.

Over the next century, the forts turned into towns, and the Vikings intermarried with the Sorobes, calling themselves the Rurasin. From the Sorobes, they learned how to survive the winters of the Wild North and took pride in their ability to live in even the harshest conditions. The Rurasin retained many of the warrior traditions of their Viking forebearers, which resulted in constant in-fighting among rival princes and families, particularly among the descendants of Vladmir, Rurasin the Bold's eldest son. The growing trade in amber and furs led numerous younger sons and wealthy peasants to become prosperous merchants. In Suzdal, along one of the Belaya River's tributaries, it is the merchants who rule rather than a prince descended from Vladmir.

Life is hard among the Rurasin peasants. Descended from the conquered Sorobes, they are ruled with an iron hand by the nobles (boyars). The vast wilderness surrounding their domains is the only thing that keeps their lords' power in check. Those who rule too harshly often find their villages deserted, as the inhabitants flee into the wilderness to live free from tyranny.

The Rurasin adopted the worship of the gods of the Sorobes. Their chief deities were Perun, the sky father, and Mokosh, the mother of life (Mantriv and Dannu). Those who hunted and trapped honored Zimtra, the huntress (Delaquain). They also feared the attention of the dragon god Veles, the Ironmaster, and the patrons of the Sons of Vadim. Another group, descended from Rurasin the Bold's second son, became enemies of the Rurasin Princes.

Organizations

The Order of Thoth

In addition to his priesthood and temples, Thoth is honored by the Order of Thoth, an alliance of magic-users who founded their order in his name. When the Bright Empire was at its height, the study of the arcane arts was controlled by the United Church, under the supervision of priests of Thoth. The imperial civil wars and the Bright Empire also destroyed the United Church, and many people once supported by the church were now left to fend for themselves, including magic users who learned how to cast arcane spells.

The first two centuries after the Shattering were a dark era for magic users. Unscrupulous spellcasters would raid rivals for their spellbooks and magic items. Worse, the victors would use spells like Charm Person to enslave those they vanquished.

Magic-users started to organize themselves into conclaves for mutual support and protection and these conclaves united to form the Order of Thoth. Today, in 1,000 AU, the heart of the order lives in Ramos. Once the imperial capital of the Bright Empire, the city is now the seat of the Grand Conclave. Order of Thoth is now the largest and most powerful magical order within the Majestic Fantasy Realms.

In the Northern Marches, there are several conclaves of the Order of Thoth. The House of Prismatic Mysteries in the city of Northport is the oldest and largest Thothian conclave in the region. Near the Aldean Forest is Mistwells, where the mages prepare expeditions to explore the Strange Wold, a pocket dimension that lies in the depths of the forest. Near the Westwall is the Golden House, renowned for its research into new arcane spells and the high quality of the magic items it produces.

Off the coast of Vasa is the Salt Silver Conclave on the island of Rennesøy. The island is covered by dozens of rune-covered wind traps designed to capture the sea spray rich in viz blowing in from the Grey Sea. In the Westwall, north of the Golden Pass, lies the Icespire Conclave, devoted to the study of the magic of ice and cold. It is rumored that at the base of the Icespire is a portal leading directly to the icy regions of the Elemental Plane of Water.

Finally, the ancient keep known as the Ring Tower is controlled by the Order of Thoth. The mages, led by Grandmaster Selindra, use the tower as a base to explore the strange magics of the Ring Islands.



Religion

The Thulian Faith

After the murder of his beloved wife by the ancestors of the Norlund Vikings, Snær the Snow Lord desired vengeance. He resolved to cover all the lands north of the Ice Fangs in everlasting ice. To achieve this, he sought out human tribes living in the mountains surrounding the Great Glacier. These tribes, calling themselves the Thules, learned the secrets of magic from the Snow Lord and, with his aid, built an empire of snow and ice atop an expanding glacier.

From Snær, they learned about the Aesir led by Thor (Mantriv), the god of thunder, whom they named Perun. They called his wife Dannu "Molkosh," the Mother of Life, and referred to Hildegun as "Zimtra," the Mistress of the Hunt. However, Snær the Snow Lord's desire for vengeance conflicted with Thor's protection of the human tribes of Norlund. As a result, the Aesir became enemies of the Thule, and the Thule swore allegiance to Hela (Kalis) and Hárþjorn (Sarrath), their enemies, whom they named Morana, the Night Mother, and Veles, the Ironmaster.

The impact of the Mountain That Fell in 1,627 BU proved a turning point in the Snow Lord's war. The Thule were defeated, and the chaotic weather conditions caused the Great Glacier to melt. In the wake of the glacier's retreat emerged the Sorobe, the elk hunters. From the surviving Thule, they learned of Perun (Mantriv), his court, and his enemies. Unlike the Thule, however, they chose to follow Perun, revering Zimtra (Delaquain) the Huntress above all and adopting her demanding code of honor as their own.

Two centuries ago, in 812 AU, Rurasin the Bold led Vasan Vikings upriver along the mighty Belaya River and conquered the Sorobes. Rurasin died while battling the Sorobes, and his sons Vladimir and Vadim completed the conquest. However, Vadim turned to evil and began to worship Veles the Ironmaster (Sarrath). Vladimir banished him, prompting Vadim to curse his brother: "Never a son shall be born to you."

Vladimir consolidated his rule, but his wives bore him only daughters. A decade later, Vadim returned with nomads from the eastern steppes to wage war on his brother's kingdom. Although Vladimir's forces were victorious, the two brothers ended up killing each other in a duel.

Following Vladimir's death, the surviving Viking lords quarreled among themselves, and Vladimir's daughters were married to their sons. Civil war soon erupted, fracturing the kingdom into rival principalities. Within a generation, the Vikings intermarried with the native Sorobes, giving rise to a new people, the Rurasin.

The Rurasin adopted Perun, as their patron and erected temples to him and his wife, Molkosh, in their newly founded cities. The descendants of Vadim continued to worship Veles as they established themselves on the plains and steppes east of the Wild North.

The Church of Thoth

Thoth is the god of knowledge. Veritas charges him with keeping the Covenant between the Gods and recording everything that transpires in the Majestic Fantasy Realms. His religion is organized into monasteries that collect lore. Often, these monasteries serve as bases for expeditions to recover lost artifacts or explore unknown regions of the Realms. Thoth was worshipped by the Ramosian of the Bright Empire whose priests were consulted for auguries before major events. Later the Church of Thoth became part of the United Church.

When the Bright Empire founded Castle Blackmarsh in 43 AU, it was not intended as a base for launching the empire's next conquest but as an outpost to explore the region's strange magic, artifacts, and creatures. For nearly a millennium, the Temple of Thoth fostered a community of scholars, sages, and mages that dominated the cultural life of the Ramosian settlers. Since the overthrow of Atacyl Oathbinder a century ago, the Temple of Thoth has struggled to regain its former prominence and now faces competition for the hearts and minds of Castle Blackmarsh's citizens from the Temple of Thor.



History

The Thules and the Great Glacier

During the Dawn Wars, the Thunder Lord Thor, also known as Mantriv, led the surviving Aesir into the mountains north of the Ice Fangs. Atop a remote peak, he used his powers to create a wold and build a new home for the Aesir, called Vingolf. The entrance to this wold can be reached only by a rainbow bridge, the Nyfrost, which appears solely by the command of Thor or his son, Magni. After Heimdell's death during the Dawn Wars, Magni was appointed as the Nyfrost's guardian.

For the next several centuries, Thor and the other Aesir traveled in and out of Vingolf via the Nyfrost. Many hunted, explored, and gathered resources from the uninhabited mountains, valleys, and icy fjords north of the Ice Fangs.

A thousand years later, Vetunna, a storm giantess and beloved wife of Snær the Snow Lord, ventured out to gather rare herbs for her kitchen and poultices. She encountered a hunting party of humans, ancestors of the Norlund Vikings, who had crossed the Ice Fangs. The meeting went poorly, and the humans attacked and killed her.

When Snær discovered her body, he was enraged. He tracked down and slaughtered the hunting party, then turned on their tribe, killing every man, woman, and child. For decades, he roamed the Ice Fangs, killing anyone who attempted to cross them. However, human numbers continued to grow, and more settlers arrived to populate Norlund.

Seeking allies, Snær eventually found the Thule people living in the mountains surrounding the Great Glacier. The Snow Lord taught them his secrets of magic, and together, they expanded the Great Glacier until it threatened to engulf the entire Northern Marches. The Thules established a vast empire of snow and ice, assisting Snær in hunting down the ancestors of the Norlund Vikings.

After The Mountain That Fell, Thor intervened. With the aid of Ægir and Rán, Snær's mother and father, along with their daughters, Snær and the Thules were defeated. The Great Glacier began to retreat, and the people of Norlund were saved from the Snow Lord. Now Snær sits on his ice throne within the Great Glacier, pondering his next move to exact vengeance.

The Sons of Vladimir and Vadim

After the Mountain That Fell, the ice began retreating from the Wild North. Nomadic tribes followed elk herds and settled throughout the land, becoming known as the Sorobes (so-robos), or "people of the elk." Two centuries ago, in 812 AU, Rurasin the Bold led Vasan Vikings upriver along the mighty Belaya River and conquered the Sorobes. Rurasin died during the conquest, his sons Vladimir and Vadim completed the conquest. However, Vadim turned to evil and worshipped Veles the Ironmaster (Sarrath). Vladimir banished him, prompting Vadim to curse his brother: "Never a son shall be born to you."

Vladimir consolidated his rule, but his wives bore him only daughters. A decade later, Vadim returned with nomads from the eastern steppes to wage war on his brother's kingdom. The two armies met in battle in the Sinyaya Hills. The forces of Vladimir were victorious but the two brothers wound up killing each other in a duel.

Following Vladimir's death, the surviving Viking lords quarreled among themselves, and Vladimir's daughters were married off to their sons. Civil war soon erupted, fracturing the kingdom into half a dozen rival principalities. Within a generation, the Vikings intermarried with the native Sorobes, giving rise to a new people: the Rurasin.

