



## FREELANDS CAMPAIGN SETTING PRIMER

This primer is meant to be used as an instant mini-campaign setting. It holds just enough details about the setting but attempts to leave a lot of room for additions and improvisations. This mini-setting is the foundation for all of the Adventures and other content created by The DM Tool Chest in order to give a flowing and coherent background that can be used by any group to take the worry out of building a world from scratch so you can jump right into the Adventures. This setting can be completely disregarded, however, and is easily replaced by your own custom content or existing campaign.

### ABOUT THE FREELANDS

The Freelands are many things to many different people, but just as its name suggests, it is a place of unbound freedom, nestled between rival Empires. It is a place where wild magic lives in the lush forests that carpet the countryside and adventure awaits around every corner. It is here that ancient ruins are buried deep in the northern mountains and hungry creatures prowl the forests at night.

Situated in the southern-central section of the continent of Astaria, this small portion of land sits directly below a massive range of mountains that split the entire continent in two. It's sprawling plains and hills comprise a handful of cities, towns, and villages. The capital of Haven hosts the elected council that presides over the Freelands and help keep the peace as best they can in an otherwise unruly and wild place.

The Freelands are right between two expansive rival Empires, the Z'hing-Tao Empire and the Holy Ignis Empire; more commonly referred to as the Phoenix and Dragon Empires, respectively, due to their nation's official crests.

*"It's a lawless land, full of banditry, Necromancy, and Heresy. One day we will purge that land in Holy Fire!"* ~ High Priest Arkamon of the Order of the Phoenix

*"Th' Freelands? Ah, t'is the last bastion! Where all peoples can be free of the yokes of the Empires."* ~ Kyl Blackwater, Renowned Explorer

These Empires have been locked in a Great War for over 500 years, vying for complete dominance over the continent. It was a bloody and bitter engagement that scarred the entire world and no one saw an end but twenty years ago a reluctant truce was declared, shocking the world. This truce solidified the borders of the Freelands as a sort of buffer state between the two Empires.

### CITIZENS OF THE FREELANDS

At the beginning of time, the Gods created the First Races of Dwarves, Elves, and Orcs. As they began to populate the world, they soon began to wage war against each other. Eventually, these struggles decimated the populations of every race to almost extinction levels. The Gods then made the Second Races of Human, Goblin, Kobald, Gnome, and Halfling.



## HUMAN EMPIRE

Humans began to populate more quickly than imagined and have become the dominant species on both Astaria and the lost continent of Jerik. A catalysmic event caused Jerik to sink into the ocean, the survivors taking to the sea and eventually founding the Holy Ignis Empire on Astaria.

## DWARF CLANS

The once proud, Dwarven nations, whose massive underground cities were a marvel to behold, were driven from their mountain strongholds by the Orcish clans. They initially took refuge on the high seas, hoping to settle elsewhere. Their descendants now dominate the oceans and have a strong aversion to being on dry land, almost never seen off of a ship's deck.

## ORC HORDES

The Orcs eventually dominated the goblin and kobold races and took complete control of the Motionless Mountains, splitting the continent in half. One hundred years ago, they swarmed from their strongholds thinking the Phoenix and Dragon Empires weak from their centuries-old struggle, but they cracked their teeth on the might of the Humans and retreated back to their underground citadels. Half-Orcs and Orcs are extremely rare outside of these mountains and heavily mistrusted pretty much everywhere.

## THE NOMADIC TRIBES

The Sargoth nomadic tribes roam and hunt the plains in the southwest corner of the Freelands. They are the last remnants of the first tribes of humans and they still keep to the shamanic old ways. They generally leave the established roadways alone but aggressively defend against any who dare to trespass on their lands. There is little contact with these people and most people tend to leave them be.

As the centuries have passed, many new races and people have been bred into existence and it is not uncommon to find them co-mingling contentedly for the most part. In a land of magic and ever-present Gods who touch the world at their whim, nothing is too out of the ordinary to be seen as an everyday common occurrence.

## LIFE IN THE FEELANDS

The Freelands are a wild and fairly untamed place outside of the cities and ports. The countryside is full of ruins from past civilizations and people wiped from history because of the centuries of wars. The settlements tend to stick near the coastline and rivers with only those strong in the martial and magical ways able to venture out into the hills and forests.

Each of the cities and towns has its own unique flavor depending on its people and governing body. Some places like Haven and Hopewell Harbor are known for their lawful abiding and good-natured populace while other towns like Greywatch and Port Mercy visitors keep their hands close to their weapons. There are plenty of opportunities to find whatever you seek and make a name for yourself, or just as easily wind up another pile of bones in an ancient crypt.

## THE GODS OF ASTARIA

Astaria is still fairly young and the Gods are still actively engaged with its denizens. They meddle in affairs, support champions, and curse those who work against them. The two Greater Goddesses of this universe are representations of the Light and Darkness that came together to create all that we know, including the Lesser Deities. They are few in number but they and other God-Touched (quasi-deities) interact on a daily basis with the mortal realm, often appearing to their favorite worshippers.

## GREATER DEITIES

**Sylvanis** (LN) is the Goddess of Life. She is stunningly beautiful, with bronze skin, luxurious long blonde hair, and eyes the color of shimmering sapphires. She usually appears depicted in her shining golden armor and shows favor to champions of law and order. She's worshipped heavily by the Holy Ignis Empire who rabidly seeks to spread her faith across the entire continent. Her symbol is a blazing Sun with Eight Rays extending from it.

**Lunara** (CG) is the Goddess of Death and has deep ebony skin, long, wavy white hair, and the golden eyes of a wild wolf. She is often worshipped by those who practice magic and she shows a particular favor towards those of the darker arts. Her many followers can be primarily distinguished by their distinctive facial tattoos. Her symbol is a crescent moon over a five-pointed star.

## LESSER DEITIES

Deity	Alignment	Domain	Symbol
Trasklyn is the God of Summer and Fire.	CE	War	A Burning Rose
Nestor is the God of Spring and Water	CN	Tempest	Three wavy lines forming a broken triangle
Amber is the Goddess of Fall and Earth	N	Nature	An Oak Tree in full bloom
Prucla is the Goddess of Winter and Air	N	Knowledge	A wolf's head in profile, facing left
Cerlion is the God of Order and Justice	LG	Order	A set of balanced scales
Jak is the God of Shadows and Thievery	CG	Trickery	A dagger with a drop of blood on the tip
Kylon is the Goddess of Luck and Wealth	LE	Light	A gold coin with a Jesters Hat emblazoned upon it





## MAGIC & TECHNOLOGY

The people of Astaria and especially in the Freelands have a strong knack for magical talents and abilities. There is a Great College of Magic that is well respected in Haven and its students are often seen assisting in city-wide projects to help the populace. While magic in the land is strong, those who wield it are extremely diverse. Necromancy is the only true discipline that is reviled and outlawed across the land. Other dark arts tend to be frowned upon in the urban areas but most magic users tend to prefer remote towers and lairs in the countryside for secrecy anyway.

At the same time that magic is abundant, technology is not quite as advanced. Outside of basic architectural engineering such as sewer systems, there are not many advances in the sciences. Most that have any aptitude in scholastic achievements tend to pursue Magic or Alchemy as a more profitable career choice. There are not many civil engineers working outside of the capital.

## LOCATION SUMMARIES

These are a brief summary of some of the major and minor locations found in the Freelands.

### LUNA LAKE

At the northern border of the freelands, this lake provides access to the Northern Sea.

### PORT RYKER

Frequented by pirates and dwarven merchants alike, Port Ryker is known for its mischief and mayhem.

### THE VERDANT HILLS

Lush green hills sprawl across this area that is home to many magical creatures and hidden ruins.

### LAKESIDE

A small fishing village on Shield Lake.



## THE MOTIONLESS MOUNTAINS

Home to the Orcish clans, these mountains are dotted with old dwarven ruins and mines. Its passes are too dangerous for most to travel and it provides a wall between the Phoenix and Dragon Empires.

## BRACKENSWORTH

A small, lawless town that is full of thieves, murderers, and gangs. It's not a place you go alone or stay out past sundown. The Black Skull brotherhood, a notorious guild of assassins, pirates, and slavers is rumored to have control over this town.

## THE BLACK HILLS

Black not only in name but in history, these hills have seen more bloodshed during the Great War than any other place in the Freelands. So much so, it's said that vampires now infest the area.

## MOHUR DESERT

Home to the Holy Ignis Empire, this a vast desert spanning most of the eastern side of the continent. Many lost civilizations are said to be buried in its sands, torn down by war after war.

## THE SHIMMERING FOREST

Home to the Phoenix Empire, these trees grow a slightly translucent leaf that makes the treetops appear to sparkle in the sunlight.

## ASHENVALE

The easternmost Freeland town, Ashenvale is the only official avenue of trade with the Phoenix Empire. Wartorn but rebuilding and flourishing with the influx of trade goods, it's growing quickly.

## FOUR LORDS

A small hamlet that is named for its four Inns that sit on the crossroads of the trade roads.

## SUMMERFALL

A small village known for its Temples to all the deities. Many pilgrims come here to be cleansed in the lake and seek their patron God's gaze.

## GRAYWATCH

A military town that is watched over by Castle Graywatch. Although it's been a hundred years since the Orcs descended from their mountains, Graywatch stands always prepared to repel them again.

## MERRYWEATHER

A logging camp that has slowly turned into a village of note due to multiple trade routes running through it. The people here are a rough and hardy bunch and they are persistent in wanting to build something new from the ashes of the War.

## JACKSTOWN

Originally founded by a single man named Jack, this town has grown into a prime source of quarried stone from the nearby mountain. It produces a unique black granite that is heavily used in the construction of Freeland forts and battlements.

## BLACKSTONE CROSSING

Named for its impressive black granite bridge spanning the White River, this trading town is starting to grow massively since the Truce was signed. As the only official trade route with the Dragon Empire, it has flourished economically.

## PORT MERCY

Home to Pirates and Privateers of all sorts, no reputable merchants deal in this port officially. There seems to always be room on a ship set for some sort of adventure, however.

## SARGOTH PLAINS

Home to the Sargoth Nomadic tribes, these plains are avoided by all. The warrior tribes find a love of life in the joy of battle, often warring with each other one day, allying against another tribe the next. They stick to the plains and anyone who enters does so at their own risk.

## KEENE

A small, sleepy hamlet that sits along the trade routes.

## HAVEN

Capital of the Freelands and home to the Council of Seven and the Great College of Magic. Haven is the seat of authority and is renowned for its Fortress that has never fallen in battle. Sitting in the shade of Mt. Honris, it overlooks and protects the Breakwater Coast. Adventures of every sort are born in this city every day.

## ISLE OF JAKOBI

A deserted island that is supposedly cursed by a man who was once marooned there and left for dead. No ship will sail anywhere near it for fear of the curse.

## THE BREAKWATER COAST

The southern coast of the continent of Astaria covering the entire southern border of the Freelands

## PROUDMORE WOODLAND

Home to creatures of all shapes and sizes, this woodland has been infested with bandits of all sorts as of late, attempting to take advantage of the trade routes between Hopewell and Blackstone.

## HOPEWELL HARBOR

This harbor is known for its cleanliness and well-disciplined town guard. A small Alchemical College as well as persistent trade between Haven and Blackstone have helped grow this into a good-sized town from just a small fishing hamlet within a few years.

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# THE DM TOOL CHEST

## CREDITS

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