



FREELANDS SETTING: NORTHREACH

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.

NORTHREACH

The warrior hefted his axe and shifted the furs around his shoulders before stepping towards the blue-skinned giant. Light from the fires of the burning wreckage of what was once his village glistened off the falling snow around him. He knew he must hold the line against the Jotun so his family could escape.

The sound of the war horn bleating from across the water chilled her bones more than the winter air ever would. Calmly removing her apron, the blacksmith looked towards her apprentices as they followed her to the racks of weapons and shields along the wall. *Spring has come early this year* she mused to herself with a grim smile.

The shadow darted between the trees quickly but not the arrow loosed by the hunter was faster. The light in the wolf's eyes was gone well before it hit the soft earth below. Pausing to offer thanks to the goddess of the wood, the hunter looked around the lush mountain forest around him and felt the warmth of the goddess accepting his prayer.

These are the people of Northreach, the snow-clad island dominated by rival clans fighting amongst themselves, the Jotun giants of the mountains, and the crucible of the ice and snow. It is a land of constant battle and a hard life.

It is also a land of music and light, filled with laughter and a greater appreciation for life because of how quickly it can be taken away.

ABOUT THE LAND

Far off the northern coast of Astaria is the northern island of Northreach; a land covered most of the year in ice and snow. There is a very short harvest period which forces the people to rely on fishing and hunting as their main sources of food. During the brief summer period, the island forests become a lush and colorful place and even more dangerous as the monsters that call it home stir from their winter slumber. The struggle for resources to survive is an ongoing battle for everyone who calls this land home.

TRAVEL & CLIMATE

There are few roads in Northreach worthy of the name and even then they are typically difficult to travel upon. Most travel is done via ship from port to port if done at all. Because of this and the snowy climate, overland travel is always considered to be *difficult terrain*. This will cause any long-distance travel overland to take twice as long as normal.

Other than during the summer months, the climate is consistently below freezing for the vast majority of the year. This results in *extreme cold* environments and requires the use of cold-weather gear to avoid exhaustion. It is very common to see wolf, bear, and fox furs used as not only local fashion but a necessity.

The lowlands have a slightly longer summertime and harvesting period, making the southern clans a target for those northern clans who had poor harvests.

Trade has been established in a very limited way with some of the cities in Astaria. Due to the constant threat of viking raids, its typically only dwarven traders that are welcome.

FORAGING

While the climate can be cruel and unforgiving, the land is rich in resources for those who know where to look and brave enough to take for their own. The forests are full of wildlife that will provide furs for protection and meat for sustenance. The local flora provides herbs for healing and will keep a person alive in a pinch. That being said, it is a constant competition to get to these resources before the more monstrous denizens of the forests and mountains get to them first.

Characters can gather foraged water and food as the party travels at either a normal or slow pace. A foraging character will need to make a successful DC Wisdom (Survival) check with a DC 10 in summer and a DC 15 during the rest of the year. A successful check will result in foraging enough to provide sustenance for one day for 3 (1d4) people.

While traveling, if a character does not have enough food and water for the day (1 lb. and 1 gal. respectively), they must make a successful DC 12+(days not properly fed) Constitution check or gain one level of exhaustion.

THE PEOPLE OF NORTHREACH

Humans are the dominant race in Northreach or Nordreich as it is called by the local populace. Some of the fractured dwarven race has made something of a home here among the northern clans but they still prefer to be aboard their ships more than among the people. The few elven peoples that live on the island prefer the slightly warmer climes of the lowlands and are a large part of the southern clans.

While the peoples who live in Northreach are generally considered to be hard and toughened by the harshness of the land, they are also people who love to appreciate life and live it to its fullest. There are nightly gatherings of clansmen to share a drink and tell tales, sing songs, and fight to feel alive. They join in both battle and love with an unrivaled fierceness because they know that any day might be their last and so they live it to the fullest in every way.

THE CREATURES OF NORTHREACH

While the climate and conditions across the island create a harsh environment for any one to survive, it has toughened not only the people but the creatures as well. The forests are filled with larger, tougher animals than are seen elsewhere. Dire wolves and bears dominate the forests while yetis and frost giants roam the mountains at will.

The Jotun, the shape-changing ancestors of the modern-day frost giants, still have a presence in the mountain ranges. Having invaded the material plane from their home plane of Jotunheim centuries ago, the remaining Jotun are still looking to establish a foothold in this realm to start their invasion.

The dark elves from Elfheim have also made their presence known in Northreach. Taking over the dark underworld beneath the mountains, their arachnid forces are slowly building to a point where they can attack the surface dwellers and take the realm for themselves.

Combat is a constant way of life among both the people and the creatures that call Northreach home, there are still many who wish to live in peace. The druids of the lowlands especially strive for peace between the people and creatures.

LANGUAGE

Common is the most prolific language in Northreach but remnants of a more ancient language once spoken amongst the clans seep into the language to this day. Here are a few examples of commonly used terminology:

Word	Meaning
Skald	A bard
Vikingr	Raider
Jomsvikingr	Mercenary
Drengr	An accomplished/respected hero
Seidr	Magic
Volva	A witch, shaman, or seeress
Laoch	A lowland warrior
Druadh	A druid
Drakkar	A vikingr longship
Gothi	Spiritual Leader
Gothar	Clergy

THE NORTHERN GODS

While worship of the main gods of the world can be found throughout Northreach, the clans call them by different names and have their mythos for them. The gods, when they chose to, also appear to them in these ways, reinforcing their beliefs. The following are the different names by which the gods are known in Northreach:

Astarian Name	Northern Name
Sylvanis	Frey
Lunara	Freja
Trasklyn	Odhin
Nestor	Balder
Amber	Idunn
Prucla	Frygg
Cerlion	Thor
Jak	Loki
Kylon	Heimdall



KINGDOMS & CLANS

Northreach is roughly divided in half between the highlands and lowlands, respectively. Each of the populated areas are controlled by a dominant clan who are in charge of that area's economic and military decisions. Many clans have formed alliances but more often than not, rivalries have formed between clans as they fight over the limited resources.

CLAN HIERARCHY

Most of the clans follow a very simple three-tier structure with some adding the fourth tier of a King or Queen as warlord of multiple clans. The **Jarl** (or Earl) is the head of the clan and leader of the people in all legal decisions. The **Karls** (or Citizens) are the warriors, tradesmen, farmers, and everyday people of the clan who enjoy all the rights and privileges of the law.

KINGDOM OF SVELLVEGR

The Svellish are among the most powerful of the highland clans. Bound together through centuries of intermarriage and treaties, the Kingdom of Svellvegr controls most of the western and northern coastline. United under King Halfgar One-Eye, the allied clans are the wealthiest and most populous in Northreach.

RAVEN CLAN

Leader. King Halfgar One-Eye

Clan Base. Karlsbrekka

Standard. Stylized black raven in profile sitting on a blood-red field

Predominantly a trading clan, the Ravens consistently raid the southern clans as well as protect the trade along the northern coast. They have established small trading posts with some of the Astarian towns but constantly compete against the Fox clan for contracts. They are fiercely loyal to their allies and promise swift retribution against any who stand against them.

HAWK CLAN

Leader. Jarl Brand Einarsson

Clan Base. Beruvik

Standard. A black hawk in flight on a diagonal split field of yellow and white

A clan of fishermen and fierce warriors, the Hawks are known for their endurance and bravery. They tend to keep to themselves and stay out of any political involvements if possible but will answer the call to battle when needed.

WOLF CLAN

Leader. Jarl Osvald Boesson

Clan Base. Rangerfell

Standard. A snarling white wolf head in profile on a field of bright blue

Sitting on the southern border of the Svellvegr territories, the Wolf Clan clashes with the southern clans regularly. They provide the bulwark of the heavy infantry to the Svellish forces when called upon and are known for their berserkers.

BEAR CLAN

Leader. Jarl Hallgrim Ljotsson

Clan Base. Reistara

Standard. A blood-red bear paw outlined on a field of white

Living at the far northeastern tip of Northreach, the bear clan does not see much raiding from the southern clans. However, they have been fighting against the Holy Ignis Empire from Astaria for decades. Known for their shamans and strong ties to the gods, this clan are fierce protectors of tradition and the old ways.

KINGDOM OF GLAREWYN

The Glarnese clans dominate the southeastern half of Northreach, banding together as they protect themselves from the northern clans while raiding the coast of Astaria across The Quiet Sea. Largely made up of half-elven and human peoples, these clans have strong ties to the elven Z'hing-Tao Empire on Astaria and have fought with them against the Holy Ignis Empire during the Great War. The Z'hing Tao Royal Guards even have members coming from these clans.

FOX CLAN

Leader. Queen Deirdre MacGaradh

Clan Base. Kerseyr

Standard. A snow-white fox courrant on a field of green

Guardians of the most southern tip of Northreach, the Fox clan is led by the legendary battle queen Deirdre MacGradh. As fierce as she is beautiful, Queen Deidre has brought her clan of warriors to dominate the southern seas in the past decade. Building strong trading ties to the Z'hing-Tao Empire and raiding the Holy Ignis Empire has made them an extremely wealthy clan.

BOAR CLAN

Leader. Jarl Beistean MacCreamhain

Clan Base. Skorraholt

Standard. A black boar's head affronte on a diagonal split field of red and white

Nestled between the base of the Ironspine Mountains and the Bay of Mourning, the Boar clan sees the brunt of the raids from the northern clans. A resilient people, these warriors are not only excellent sailors but have made a name for themselves as cavalymen. The spear techniques of their warriors are respected throughout all of Northreach.

SERPENT CLAN

Leader. Jarl Gilleasbaig O'Cain

Clan Base. Manarfell

Standard. A red serpent's head affronte with fangs bared on a checkered field of black and white

While the people of Northreach are all known for their hardiness, the serpent clan takes their namesake to heart. They say that the politics of the island were born from the serpent clan and are molded by their assassins. Kings and Queens have risen and fell by the poisons of their blades.



Karlsbrekka

Ikorel Sound

Beruvik

Myrkvid Forest

Reistara

Plains of Sorrow

Bilðsfell

Heimol Mts.

Osar

Ironspine Mountains

Koranes

Northreach

Rangarfell

Karlshur Forest



Skorraholt

Manarfell

Bay of Mourning

Coilhullan Foothills

N



Kerseyrr

The Quiet Sea



LOCATIONS

The following are descriptions of the locations that are keyed on the map of Northreach. There are many locations on the island that are not listed here or keyed on the provided map.

BERUVIK

Home of the Hawk clan and sitting on the northern coastline, Beruvik is primarily a fishing town but is known for its fierce warriors. Sitting so close to the tip of the Heimdl Mountains and on the edge of the Myrkvld Forest brings a constant danger from the monsters that live among them.

BILDSFELL

Nestled at the base of the Ikorel Sound, this town is constantly raided by the Jotun living in the mountains just to the south. A rough people, the townsfolk are survivors and known to be tough and merciless in battle. Many of the bandits and jomsviking that roam the northern coast hail from this town.

KARLSBREKKA

Home of the Raven clan, the dominant force in the Svellvegr kingdom, Karlsbrekka sits atop the Cliffs of Miraklaur and just north of the plains of sorrow, so named for the number of warriors killed in battle trying to take this citadel. Built from the granite and iron from the Ironspine Mountains, this fortress city is bustling with trade and intrigue. Several strong warrior and ranger guilds make their home here.

RANGERFELL

The lands of the Wolf clan, this city is both prosperous and dangerous due to its proximity to the trade routes to the south and the southern clans. The warriors here excel at combat with heavier plate armor and are known for their two-handed sword fighting style.

SKORRAHOLT

The Boar clan has built this port from a small fishing village to a city bursting with potential. Because of constant competition with the northern Wolf clan for the trade routes, the Bay of Mourning is so named for the lives lost at sea. The warriors here are known for a unique spear style of fighting and testing their mettle in a series of competitions in the Ironspine Mountains just to the north.

KERSEYRR

Queen Deidre and the Fox clan have controlled this city for generations. Perched above the Quiet Sea they have dominated the waves and watch over the southern shores from potential invasions. The city is home to a bardic college that skalds from all over the island come to study.

MANARFELL

A dark city and one that most honorable people shun, Manarfell is home to the Serpent clan. The warriors here are little more than pirates and bandits who have little honor outside of their code. The black market thrives here and slavers regularly ply their trade in the open.

KORANES

A small fishing village with a long history of fighting the goblinoid tribes that live in the nearby foothills and forest. While loyal to the kingdom of Glarewyn, their proximity to the border has them keep an uneasy but needed peace with the northern clans.

OSAR

One of the smaller cities in the northern kingdom, this city is known for its trade due to the number of dwarves that use its port. While they do not necessarily call it their home, many of the dwarven clans have representatives who stay here due to its non-political nature and staying out of the raids that each kingdom conducts on each other. As a neutral city, Osar is ruled by a committee and not a single clan.

REISTARA

A mystical and highly religious city, Reistara is dominated by the devout Bear clan. As first in the line of defense against generations of assault from the Holy Ignis Empire, this city has been attacked and burned almost to the ground many times. Coming back stronger than before each time, its stone walls are a testament to the faith of its people and the determination of their spirit.



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