

# THE BITTER REACH



The Alter Mountains

Deadwoods

Grimmerpass

Barren Hills

The Midden

Morma Glacier

The Mirror Lake

Glitterhome

The Serf's Pass

Serfhaven

The Southern Range

The Stillmist

The Winding Ways

Wolvenhome

Trottersmark

Trotter Isles

The Silver Coast

Fallowmoor

Dragon's Grave

Keld

Ashenmark

Kasor's Edge

Vistra's Edge

Ised

Garme's Edge

Sea of Ice

Grifter's Cove

The White Peaks

Icemoor

Fist of Nantar

World's End

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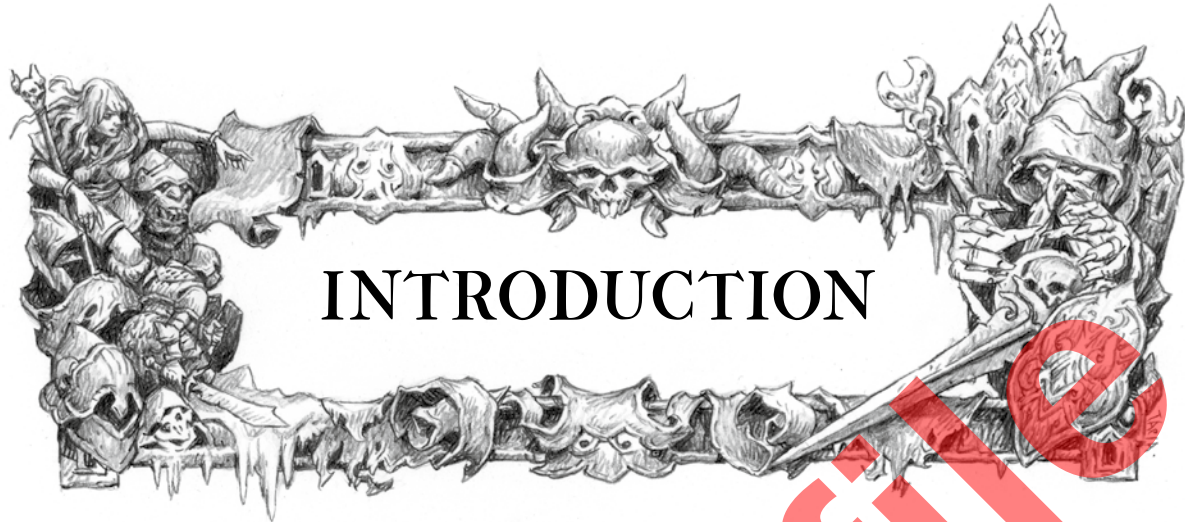


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# INTRODUCTION

*"What can you offer me? I am the only one to return, my kinsmen lie dead beneath the ice." The bitter words came in a whisper from Korlis' tormented throat. "So what will you give me for my troubles? What are the lives of four adventurers worth?"*

*The merchant prince stared disdainfully at the haggard figure in front of him. "A silver warrior figurine... I have dozens of them. I'll give you six silver pieces!"*

*Korlis spat her scorn at Ingmarg Plump. "Your greed will be the death of you, peddler! But who else will pay me for what I free from the ice? Give me the coins, so that I may toast my lost friends!"*

*With a sneer, Ingmarg handed the silver coins over to the unfortunate treasure hunter.*

Elders in Alderland speak of the cold storms from the north. Cursed voices borne on the icy winds whisper of secrets from ages past that would plunge realms and kin into ruin if only someone would understand these ancient words. They are the desperate confessions of the lost. They are the legends of the Bitter Reach.

The haunted winds and the fierce cold haven't discouraged the poor and downtrodden of Alderland from heading northward. When the southern lands are too cramped and the yoke of the oppressor too heavy, some seek a better life in the open vistas of the north, in the shadow of the eternal Morma Glacier.

Traders, adventurers and treasure hunters steer their ships toward the frozen coast in the



hope of finding glory and riches. Full of hope they journey to the cold north and venture out into the untamed icy lands to find the golden artifacts that, according to myths and legends, lie hidden under the ice, waiting to be found. Few return.

For the ancient treasures aren't guarded by the ice alone. Deep beneath the frozen surface, creatures told of only in the oldest of legends dwell. They guard treasures that can give their owner power beyond their wildest dreams, treasures that could destroy the Bitter Reach if they were found.

And the treasures will be found, sooner or later, so why shouldn't they be yours to claim?

whether it is your own or someone else's, paid for with clinking coins.

You have most likely journeyed to the Bitter Reach for the same reasons as so many others—you want to find treasure and fame. The ruins of a mysterious lost civilization that ruled here millennia ago lie ready to be explored, and every find reveals more about this kingdom and the creatures that inhabited it. You must brave the harsh climate to explore ruins, cairns, enormous grottoes and halls of ice, subterranean lakes, and even abandoned city ruins hidden in glittering ice caves.

But be wary, you are not alone in your endeavors. Other treasure hunters and fortune seekers push further and further west into the icy realm, and they are discovering that the land isn't as desolate as was first believed.

At the same time, settlers struggle to create a new and bearable life for themselves along the coast, and merchants gather heaps of silver by selling food and equipment to hopeful treasure hunters.

There is no shortage of failed adventurers now making a living by oppressing the locals. They often work for local peddlers, but there are also groups of outlaws that aimlessly drift along the coast in search of someone to rob or use for their own benefit.

## OVERVIEW

The Bitter Reach is a campaign book for *Forbidden Lands*, the roleplaying game that lets you step into a world full of danger, where you and your friends together create stories full of mystery and adventure.

This book contains both a description of the Bitter Reach, the icy realm north of Ravenland, and the *Wake of the Winter King* campaign, which describes a number of key people and locations that all play an important part in the events that your characters will be part of in your adventures here.

Both the players and the GM can read Chapters 1 to 5, but Chapter 6 and beyond are for the GM's eyes only.

### THE BITTER REACH IN BRIEF

The Bitter Reach is a lawless land where the rule of the strong trumps all. A strong sword arm is your greatest asset, regardless of

## JOURNEY TO THE BITTER REACH

There are several ways to get to the Bitter Reach. Ships set sail from ports in northern Alderland and carry both traders and those



willing to brave the dangers offered by the Bitter Reach to gain glory, fame and riches.

They sail due east and then north to evade the magical forces that separate Alderland from Ravenland (also called the *Forbidden Lands*). Only a handful of captains know the route that takes them through the storms that ravage the seas east of the cursed dominion of the Demon-King Zygofer.

The king of Alderland doesn't view the people leaving his lands kindly, however. He keeps a watchful eye on the ships that leave his ports, forcing many to enlist the services of shady seafarers for their journey.

From Ravenland, ships set sail for the Bitter Reach from Far Vivend and northern Margelda. Very few make this dangerous journey however, as Ravenland itself still offers unexplored ruins and unfound treasure. Those who travel north are often fleeing from local warlords or even the feared Rust Brothers.

In all, it is a motley collection of people that journey north. What they have in common is the hope of making a better life for themselves, either seeking refuge from a miserable existence in the south or believing that they can find fame and fortune where others have fallen along the way. People like you, adventurers with brave hearts and strong sword arms!

### THE MAGICAL WEATHERSTONES

Most who come to the Bitter Reach have sailed from Alderland. This route opened a few centuries ago with the discovery of the magical weatherstones. These are magical artifacts that can calm even the fiercest of storms raging in the sea off the coast of Ravenland.

Using the weatherstones, a few brave captains in Ravenland and Alderland successfully made their way north and eventually landed on the coast of the Bitter Reach, opening a route for others to follow.

This knowledge is rare and well-guarded, however. Only a handful of ships traffic the route between the Bitter Reach and Alderland. On the coast of Ravenland, there are maybe one or two captains that both know the way and possess a weatherstone.

### OVERLAND TRAVEL

Legends, known to few, speak of two different paths from Ravenland to the Bitter Reach without crossing the sea: the Stillmist and the Winding Ways.

THE STILLMIST: Few are those not of elven kin who have entered the Stillmist and fewer still are those who have left it. It is possible to journey from Ravenland to the Bitter Reach on the dreamlike pathways of the Stillmist, but since the elves don't let strangers wander freely in this domain it is nigh impossible for other kin to use this passage to travel to the cold north.

THE WINDING WAYS: The Winding Ways is the dwarven name for a system of subterranean passages that wind their way under the northern mountain range of Ravenland. Not even dwarves know where all these tunnels lead, but there are rumors of maps to be found in the cavernous libraries of the clan lords, showing which passages lead north and which lead to dead ends and lethal traps.



Very few adventurers have made their way through the Winding Ways. Without a dwarven guide and access to the secret maps, they quickly become lost in the passages under the mountains.



## LIVING IN THE BITTER REACH

Due to the cold, the ice and the snow, the Bitter Reach differs significantly from

Ravenland. The Bitter Reach is more inhospitable than the cursed lands of the south, and it is important that both the players and the GM always keep this in mind. In the Bitter Reach it is the climate that has hindered the exploration of the wastes instead of the Blood Mist, which never spread north of Ravenland.

A constant adversary in the Bitter Reach is the weather, which is predictable and erratic at the same time. The cold and the snow are ever-present dangers, but on top of that a blizzard can sweep in without warning, the temperature can plummet for a week, or the sun

### HOW DID YOU GET HERE?

This book describes the Bitter Reach and the adventures that can take place there. It makes no difference to the *Wake of the Winter King* campaign how you have reached this part of the world. You don't need to play out the actual journey here, unless you want to.

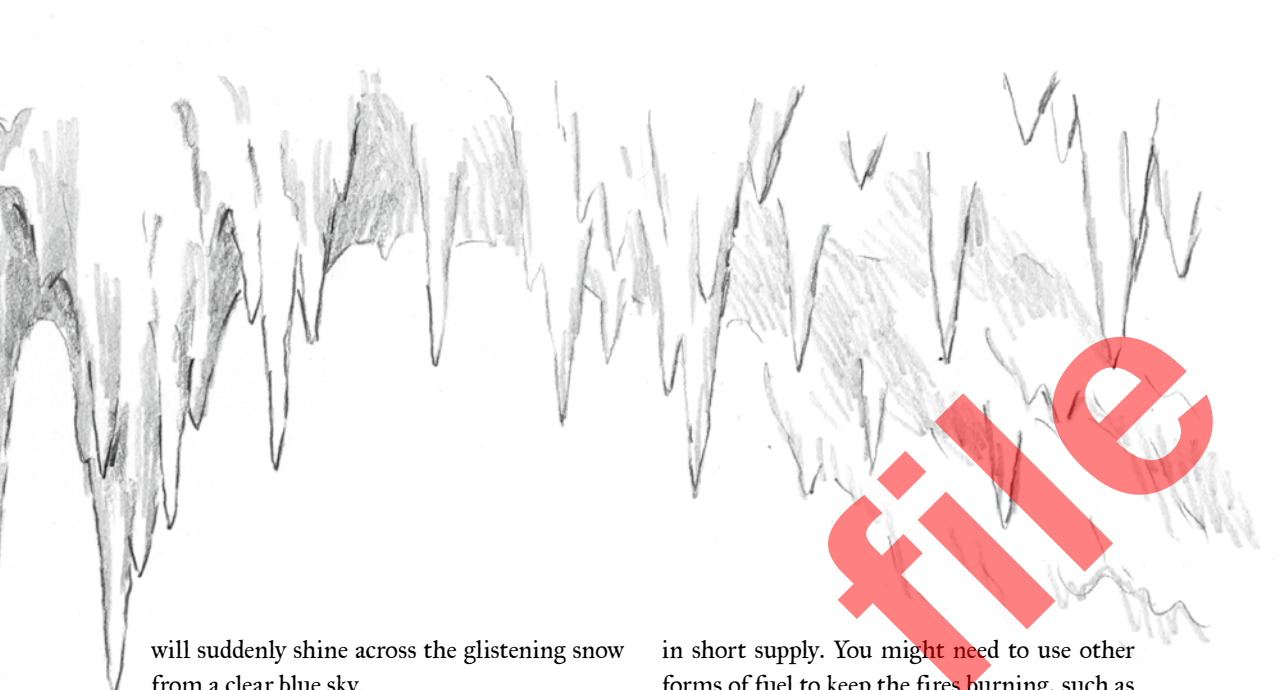
If you are adventurers from Ravenland, you have likely sailed here on a ship, probably from the coast of Margelda. You've just stepped ashore in the largest settlement on the Bitter Reach, Northfall (see page 166), and your adventures in the land of ice and snow start there. The GM may also decide that you've come here through

the Stillmist or the Winding Ways, with the help of an elven or a dwarven guide. In this case, your journeys in the Bitter Reach should start in the Southern Heights mountain range.

You may also decide that your adventurers were born in the Bitter Reach. You can then begin your game anywhere, but most likely in a village where you can make sure your PCs get hold of basic equipment to survive in the realm of ice.

Wherever your adventures begin, you should place the large map of the Bitter Reach (available separately) and start exploring. The riches under the ice await!





will suddenly shine across the glistening snow from a clear blue sky.

When you are out adventuring in the wastes, the world is vast, cold and windy. You are alone on boundless white plains where warmth and comfort are far off. You move through snow-capped ruins filled with statues casting uncanny shadows. During the day, the sun shines cold and clear, and at night, the stars glimmer brightly in the cold sky.

When you reach shelter, it's typically cramped and warm. Settlements are often small, just a few huts or caves where the inhabitants huddle around a bonfire to keep warm. There is little room for privacy in the Bitter Reach, unless you head out into the wilds where you can freeze to death without anyone ever finding you again. Everyone is in some way depending on someone else to survive.

## FIRE

In the Bitter Reach, there is no life without fire. It gives warmth, melts snow to water and lets people cook their food. Firewood is always

in short supply. You might need to use other forms of fuel to keep the fires burning, such as dried animal droppings and whale oil.

## FOOD AND DRINK

During your adventures, you subsist on a meagre diet, typically of dried meat or fish. You will only be able to cook warm food in rare cases. You melt snow to get drinking water.

When you reach a settlement, there will hopefully be someone there offering steaming hot food: cooked meat or fish, soups or stews. Mulled wine or beer is drunk with gusto.

## CLOTHING

How you dress is very important for your survival in the Bitter Reach. Clothing functions both as protection against the cold and against attacks by enemies. The clothes are often produced locally and created from skins and pelts.

Newly arrived people tend to keep the clothing they traveled in, gradually realizing how to protect themselves against the cold and supplement their clothing with caps, pants and coats.



### COLD, COLD, COLD!

It is cold in the Bitter Reach. Bone cold. The air is dry because all water in the air is frozen. The snow crunches beneath your feet with every step and it hurts to breathe.

When you travel in the Bitter Reach you never know when you'll be able to get warm again. The only protection you can count on is that which you create yourself. There are no conveniently placed inns with crackling fires that serve steaming stew.

The cold isn't physical strain alone, it has also broken the mind of many a wanderer. The struggle to stay warm never ends, you can never rest, you can never escape. If you fall asleep, you die, but if you keep pushing through the frozen wastes, your energy will soon run out.

Those who have lived in the Bitter Reach for a long time wear heavy clothes, often impregnated with whale oil as protection against moisture. The clothes have none of the decorative details found in Alderland. They are usually brown or black with some elements of white fur.

### HOUSING

There are several types of housing in the Bitter Reach, both permanent and temporary. Houses made of stone and wood are seen as the most grand and comfortable.

All wood used for housing must be taken from the ships that come to the Bitter Reach as there are no local sources of timber. It's more common to use animal hides and bones from whales or monsters to build huts and houses.

Snow and ice are also used to create permanent dwellings, in the form of igloos. For temporary shelter, tents insulated with snow are common. Further inland, people often live in caves. This is particularly true of the orcs of the Bitter Reach, who live in ice caves and rock caverns.





# THE LAY OF THE LAND

*Obald the Frozen stared at the newcomers. "How do we find our prey? How do we know where the herd gathers?" The seal hunter pointed to the black night sky. "The glittering stars are our guides. The icy winds are our companions. The Ice Sea is their realm and together they show us where the prey hides."*

Newcomers to the Bitter Reach usually disembark on the eastern coast. The first impression is that of an inhospitable land, harsh and cold. The coast and the glacial seas are constantly harrowed by strong winds. Icy cold waves beat against the rocky shores.

To reach the black beaches where it is possible to make landfall, ships must navigate between icebergs easily capable of piercing their hulls. Some ships get permanently caught in the ice and turn into housing for settlers.

From the coast, the lands of the Bitter Reach rise higher further inland. West of the coast lies Fallowmoor, an icy tundra that gives way to the Morma Glacier, an enormous wall of ice. On the glacier, treasure hunters search crevices that lead down icy dungeons full of death and fortune.

The Morma Glacier is pierced by the Barren Mountains, peaks where ruins from the fallen realm of the winter elves lure many adventurers seeking riches and glory. The rivers Ised and Keld originate from within the glacier and gush forth from the enormous wall, running down from the Barren Mountains and through Fallowmoor before finally reaching the coast.

After the Barren Mountains the glacier continues across Icemoor before it finally gives way to the White Peaks, lofty mountaintops that no being now living has managed to climb.

## SETTLEMENTS

The largest settlement the Bitter Reach is called Northfall and is described in detail on page 166



and onwards. There are other settlements strewn across the land as well, most of them in Fallowmoor and Trottersmark. The settlements are small, typically no more than twenty people live in each, and family ties are strong. Strangers are met with suspicion, but the harsh environment in the the Bitter Reach has yet fostered a tradition of hospitality to visitors.

You'll find an example of a small settlement, called Last Hope's Rest, on page 220.



## KIN

Many kin and creatures that live in Ravenland can also be found in the Bitter Reach.

### HUMANS

A variety of humans inhabit this frozen realm. The main difference between them is whether they were born here or have come as visitors from the south. Most humans here are Ailanders hailing from Ravenland, but there are also Alderlanders who seek their fortune in the cold north. Aslenes are rare, as there are few horses in the Bitter Reach.

### ELVES

Only a handful of elves from the southern lands have made their home in the Bitter Reach. Some Unruly (see page 54 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*) live among the humans, and even a few Redrunners have been seen in the wastes. They avoid contact with the other kin and are generally hostile to the orcs clans in the Barren Mountains.

### HALF-ELVES

The few half-elves to be found in the Bitter Reach are typically Frailers from Alderland, often steering the ships from the south. Their long lives have made them knowledgeable when it comes to navigating through the storms that prevent travel on the high seas off the coast of Ravenland. Such half-elves typically live on the ships anchored along the coast, always ready to set sail.

### DWARVES

Both Crombes and Canides (see page 59 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*) have made their way through the mountains to the Bitter Reach. Most live in the coastal regions of the Southern Heights or in Northfall. The Crombes guard the Winding Ways and the Canides patrol the Southern Heights to stop the humans from traveling to the Ravenland from the north.

### ORCS

There are three main orc clans in the Bitter Reach: the Bearskull Clan, the Wolfhowl Clan, and the Frostwind Clan. Most live in the Barren Mountains, where they guard the wastes from intruders. The orcs are hostile towards treasure hunters and they have been known to attack adventurers who have defied their warnings and entered the ancient ruins. A few orcs trade with the other kin in the Bitter Reach, and that is often the only contact they have outside the clans.

### HALFLINGS

As a rule, this jovial kin is rare in the Bitter Reach, since most halflings simply don't feel