

A DOG BARKS

Stephen of Sarcombe is not a popular man. One of the original Mournwonwold rebels, he threw his lot in with the Jotun, back when the war started. Outraged at the actions of the Empire in the Mourn in 381YE, he's pursued a campaign of vengeance against the Empire ever since. A campaign that aims to see the Empire burn for what it did to the Mourn and his family. From Sermersuaq and Bregasland, through Kahraman, into Liathaven, and in a bold strike against the Spider's Dream between Madruga and Sarvos, this former Mournwolder has brought fire and destruction to the western territories for over five years.

It's no surprise that most Imperials want to see the back of this traitor, but of late it seems he's fallen from favour with the Jotun also. He's become increasingly volatile since the Empire killed his beloved partner Wallis, on the Rojota Road. Ever more black of heart since that day, he's desperate to have his revenge. As the old proverb goes, "Fair words won't bury grudges..."

At Meade, Stephen planned to hang the city's alders, til the Jotun stopped him. Now he's slipped the leash, and come to Wayford to try again and this time only the Empire can stop him. He may know that the Drakes are oathsworn to protect Mitwold and be thinking to shame them. To that end, he's captured a local beater, Jim Moor. His plan to commit murder will be a bitter blow to Mitwold, if he's not stopped.

OBJECTIVE: KILL STEPHEN OF SARCOMBE

- **Stephen of Sarcombe has appeared to lead the attack on Wayford**
- **Killing Stephen will see an end to his reign of terror**
- **Care must be taken lest he may choose to slink away from battle**

There is a chance to finish the threat Stephen of Sarcombe poses to the Empire once and for all. He's leading the forces in the area, so this is the best chance the Empire have had in a while to finally end the threat the traitor poses. Killing him will not be a simple matter however, for he is described as being as slippery as a Bregas eel supper and as flighty as a Tassattan card dealer. He has always been cautious and careful in where and when he strikes, disappearing for months on end only to reappear hundreds of miles away. An angry and driven man, but a shrewd fighter and cunning strategist, he is unlikely to misstep. If the battle turns too quickly against him, then Stephen will seek to flee.

The best way to lure Stephen out is by presenting important Imperial targets to attack and ensuring that the flags of his allies keep flying. That will make it easier to surround him and prevent him getting away. If he feels like he is losing, the chances of him making a run for it will jump. He is no Jarl Haakon after all; Stephen is a man with an Empire to burn, not an ageing orc seeking a good death to atone for past failures.

OBJECTIVE: SAVE JIM MOOR

- **Stephen of Sarcombe is set on a brutal murder in Wayford**
- **Rescue former Wayford Wanderer, Jim Moor, from Stephen's clutches**
- **Saving the beater will lend support to the Drakes in Mitwold; failure will hinder their efforts**

Stephen and his supporters plan to kill Jim Moor at the river fork. The popular bear is something of a local hero, whose courage saved the lives of four of his teammates at the Battle of the Bog. Stephen could have killed Jim days ago, but just going missing would have counted for nothing. Instead, the traitor plans to make an example of Jim. He is dragging him to the river fork outside Wayford, where he will be hung for all to see as the sun sets. That'll be a bitter blow. The drakes are oathsworn to protect Mitwold... people understand they're in Bregasland fighting to do exactly that. Still, the loss of one of Mitwold's favoured sons, killed in such a cruel manner, will cut people hard.

If Jim is saved, then it will prove that the Drakes, and all Marchers in Anvil, cleave to the old adage, "Pride in small things, Loyalty to great ones...". Support for the army will climb even higher than it already is, with more folk of Wayford picking up their bills, increasing the oathsworn benefits by a further five hundred effective fighting strength. Sadly, if the Empire doesn't stop this outrageous killing then it will have the opposite effect, reducing the numbers who would flock to the army's banner by five hundred. Nobody will drink sour milk over it, folks here know you don't bring the harvest in until the ears are ripe, but it'll still hurt their Pride if the worst happens to Jim Moor.

OBJECTIVE: KILL RED WALDER'S DESCENDENTS

- **Four bandits have thrown in their lot with Stephen**
- **Killing three or more will stop their reign of banditry before it begins**
- **If two or more survive, taxes from Mitwold will fall by five thrones until they are dealt with**

Stephen of Sarcombe is not the only one looking to settle old scores. Red Walder was a notorious bandit who preyed on merchants along the roads that pass through Wayford. The magistrates finally caught up with him 359YE - he was hung in the very place that Jim Moor is being taken - and most people thought that was the end of the matter. However, Red's offspring seem to have different ideas. While their father is dead and gone, it seems the apple has not fallen far from the tree. His daughter Jyll Longleys and her half-brother Bill of Beatsdown have decided that an honest living is for other folk. Along with Dusty Cob, their father's shriver who somehow got away with a heavy fine, and Bill's best friend, Jack Poullice, a local poacher, the four of them plan to take up where Red Walder left off. Stephen has provided the four would-be bandits with weapons and armour and all he is asking in return is that they steal every ring that sets foot on the roads of Mitwold. "Rich folk need big dogs" as the saying goes, and Mitwold is one of the richest territories in the Empire...

The four have already made a good start, robbing a pair of merchants travelling to Wayford from Hay. Magistrates have made it clear that as the bandits have thrown their lot with a traitor and engaged in banditry, they do not need to be returned to Anvil for trial and can be executed for their crimes on the battlefield. The four are:

- Jyll Longleys, Red Walders daughter, a flax farmer and one of the town's renowned gossips
- Bill of Beatsdown, Jyll's half-brother, the celler-hand at the Black Pig and sometime bouncer
- Jack Poullice, a local poacher and childhood friend of Bill of Beatsdown
- Dusty Cobb, an old soldier turned monk and Red's shriver, who pleaded clemency many years ago, now a bandit again

If the Empire can kill at least three of Stephen's new allies it will put an end to their plans before they can amount to much. If one of them flees then they will not be able to cause much trouble, at least not immediately. On the other hand, these outlaws are well-armed and plan to get rich at Mitwold's expense. If two or more of them get away, then they will present a threat to any Marcher with two rings to rub together. If that happens, it will inevitably hit Imperial taxes with income from the territory will fall by five thrones a season until a serious effort succeeds in hunting the bandits down and stopping them for good.

BATTLEFIELD OPPORTUNITY: THIEFTAKER'S BOUNTY

- **Icewatch Stilla, thieftaker of Gildenheim, was in Mitwold on the trail of three lost items of worth**
- **Stilla has offered bounties to any citizen who can locate these items of worth**
- **If handed over to the civil service, a reward will be issued over the coming season**

Icewatch Stilla, a thieftaker from Gildenheim, was on the trail of a notorious maggot, a blackguard from Hahnmark by the name of Steappa "Nine-Lives" Alpin. The orc believes that the maggot came down to Mitwold looking to sell items of worth, a set of three swords looted from a group of Imperial orcs who lost their lives years ago in the Jotun invasion of Skarsind. The thieftaker finally caught up with the thief near Meade, but not before Steappa had fenced the stolen swords to followers of Stephen of Sarcombe.

Desperate to retrieve the family heirlooms before they disappear for good, Icewatch Stilla has lodged Steappa's purse with the civil service as a reward for the return of the stolen weapons. She appreciates they will be hard to find, they're finely made weapons that look as if they could be enchanted, but they won't stand out beyond that. Still, careful examination of any magical items recovered on the field of battle should reveal if a recovered weapon is one of the three that Icewatch seeks.

The three swords were part of a set made by first orc egregore for a family of reavers in Britta's time. Named Virtue's Edge, Ussa's Sword and Calanine, Stilla offers a reward of two thrones per blade. This is far more than they would fetch from anyone who doesn't appreciate their worth. If an honest citizen returns one or more of the blades to Leonardo i Del'Toro i Riqueza, Secretary General of the civil service in the Hub, they will receive the reward, and Icewatch Stilla's gratitude.