

THE QUEEN WAITS

Skallahn is at war. The Empire has forced the gates of Kierheim open and has only been driven back at great cost.

Now the drums of war beat to the tune of the defenders. Messengers race to call back armies. Thralls carry the message to the fyrds to raise their banners. Ghodi pass the long halls waiting to entreat the Kings and Queens of Summer to keep the faith.

In the midst of all this, the seat of Kierheim lies vacant. Jarl Ustigar lies in state. Hurlled across the Abyss to meet his ancestors by the hand of Iron Osric, leaving his beloved city a rudderless ship.

Jarl-of-jarls, Queen Yrsa Jansdóttir, is caught in a vice. She is loathe to leave her army engaged in Bregasland without her, but she cannot leave Keirheim to fend for itself. She must affirm the succession of the capital and install a jarl that can command the loyalty and respect of thousands of Jotun.

Torn, she has called for the ghodi Uksahkka, favoured of Ulven, to help her choose Ustigar's successor. Only once a new Jarl of Keirheim is named, will the Jarl-of-Jarls be able to lead her army back to war.

OBJECTIVE: KILL THE GHODI

- **A wise ghodi travels to Keirheim at the behest of Yrsa Jansdóttir, Jarl-of-Jarls**
- **Uksahkka is widely respected, when she speaks the ancestors listen**
- **Killing the ghodi will delay the decision to appoint a new jarl for another season**
- **The delay will force the Northern Jotun armies onto the defensive for the season**

Ghodi Uksahkka is heading southwards from her refuge in the snowy reaches of Mount Tromsdalen, travelling a short distance behind the main force moving from Tromsa. Robed in the furs of a great bear, she is bound in boons of the faðir. She is escorted by four great warriors of the Ulvenwar, heroes touched by summer magics and crowned as champions by the realm. These companions will project the ghodi to their dying breaths and will be formidable foes in battle.

Uksahkka will arrive with her companions and alongside a large warband of warriors, some 30-45 minutes after the battle is joined. Depending on how the fighting is going, Uksahkka may attempt to bolster the Jotun lines to turn the flow of battle, or take a more cautious approach to avoid being drawn into a battle that would see her waylaid. The Empire will need to be on alert for Uksahkka's arrival, ready to counter how she responds to the flow of battle, and prepared to quickly and decisively descend upon the ghodi as hounds fall on their quarry.

Killing Uksahkka will mean another seasons delay before a new jarl can be appointed. That will force Queen Yrsa to remain in Keirheim, sew chaos in the ranks of the Northern Jotun and force their armies onto the defensive.

OPTION: RANSOM UKSAHKKA

- **Rather than kill the respected ghodi, the Empire could try to capture them**
- **The ghodi must be persuaded to surrender and convinced to return to Anvil as a captive**
- **The Queen will pay a ransom for Uksahkka's safe return**

Killing Uksahkka is not the only way to delay the appointment of the new jarl. Taking the ghodi hostage would be just as effective. Such tactics were common during the reign of Emperor Guntherm. Rather than kill his enemies, Guntherm took important jarls captive and then ransomed them back. Guntherm made a point to treat those he captured as honoured guests, they were never plied for information or secrets or treated as a prisoner. This approach helped steer several key moments in the war, buying Guntherm's forces time or forcing the Jotun's hands.

The difficulty in this approach concerns the Jotun sense of honour. Many Jotun would seek to die in battle than to become a 'prisoner' of the Empire. There is no guarantee that Uksahkka will allow the Empire to carry her back to Anvil. It won't be easy to defeat Uksahkka and her bodyguards, but it will take a very skilled mediator to convince the ghodi to accept the Empire's hospitality.

If she can be convinced to surrender, then the Empire can use The Cuckoo's Egg to bring her back through the Sentinel Gate. It would undo years of diplomatic efforts if Uksahkka was murdered, so once in Anvil Uksahkka, the civil service would arrange secure quarters for her. The Military Council could wait to see what the Jarl-of-jarls will offer in ransom, or they could issue their own demands. The Jotun are not going to stop the war just to save one ghodi, even a favoured one; but with the right demand or offer, it could crucially change the direction of future events.

OBJECTIVE: TURN BACK THE TROMSDALEN FYRD

- **Jarl Ebbe the Snowboar of Bladdeskog marches south to honour oaths to his old friend Jarl Ustigar**
- **If the respected warrior falls in battle, his force of will return to their lands in Tromsa**

Jarl Ebbe was once a contemporary of Jarl Ustigar. When they were young, they travelled together to distant Fjorknae to battle fell monsters and win glory together. In time their paths took different directions, Ustigar the clever and shrewd politician, Ebbe the doughty and dependable warrior. With Ustigar dead, and his city threatened, Ebbe has gathered his oathsworn veterans and raised the Tromsdalen fyrd. He marches south, under a banner of a frostrimmed boar, towards the capital to honour oaths he swore long ago to a now dead friend.

This fyrd comes here only at Ebbe's command- it is not honour bound to answer Queen Yrsa's call. Doubtless, many jarls will bring their troops south, but it is not expected that fyrds do the same, especially those from another territory. Their bonds are to the land from which they hail, and even Queen Yrsa herself could not demand they come and fight for her in Skallahn. Ebbe's fyrd has an effective fighting strength of a little under a thousand coming to bolster the defences of Keirheim. If the Jarl falls in battle then they will return north - no longer sworn to the Snowboar's oaths, they would return to their own lands in Tromsdalen.