

Hvalgrunn (Kallavesa)

Scouts bring word that the Jotun have been encountered moving at speed into West March from Greenwall, spreading out across the expanse of West Marsh. From the reports, this is not an invasion of scale, and no armies are committed to this attack. Instead, units of elite kirkja, backed by yegarra from Kalsea, along with representatives from Eisa Winterborn and Yanya Uranduln great warbands, are crossing the hinterlands of Hvalgrunn, several days south of Rest.

The marshes of the Kallavesi are more than just the spiritual heart of Wintermark. The rolling hills and bogs of Hvalgrunn have been the site of numerous clashes between the Mark and the western barbarians for centuries. Alongside the great heroes of the Mark interred here are the remains of countless Jotun champions. The Jotun may not be fond of marshland, but they have long nursed an ambition to take back these lands from the Mark hoping to reclaim some of the lost treasures of their people.

They have not committed to an attack in recent years, perhaps believing that such a sacred site would be as well protected as their own Mount Majastind. Raids and testing attacks have been thwarted in the earliest stages, or deterred altogether by the Empire's strong magical defences. Now things might be changing in the minds of the barbarians, it seems a new generation of Jotun have decided the rewards are worth the risks. They have sent an advance force of raiders into the marshes looking to blaze a trail for those who might follow.

At the vanguard of this raid is the army standard of the Bear Who Swims, carried by their champion Idunn Ironjaw. Idunn Ironjaw and his warband are a mix of kirkja units backed by war parties of yegarra out of Kalsea. Alongside them are a group of heralds of the eternal Janon, the Shadowed Flame. These creatures of the Night realm dance and slip among the orcs, beating drums and spurring the Jotun to acts of heroic passion and marvellous feats.

Objective: Claim the Banner of the Bear Who Swims

- **Idunn Ironjaw, champion of Yanya Uranduin, carries the standard of the Bear Who Swims**
- **If the Jotun return from their raid with the banner then their army's current quality will be improved**
- **If the Empire take the banner from the battlefield, the Bear Who Swims will gain no benefits when claiming a beachhead for a year**

Yanya Uranduin, champion of half a dozen victories against the Empire and child of Veerkarsa, has been given command of the Jotun army, the Bear Who Swims. In doing so she has passed on leadership of her former warband, the Howling Bears. The army is famed for its ability to attack deep into enemy territory, the warriors abilities allow them to attack regions that are not adjacent to land controlled by the Jotun without penalty. While useful, it is dangerous for any army to attempt such an invasion alone.

Yanya intends to put that right. To demonstrate her army's strength, she has sent the war standard ahead with the scouts, to show other Jotun the strength, cunning and determination of the Bears. If the raiders return still carrying the banner, it will bolster the courage of the army and all who fight with them. This will improve the quality of Yanya's army. If that happens, the Bear Who Swims, and any army that fights alongside them will be able to attack regions that are not adjacent to land the Jotun control without penalty.

Such a strategy is not without risk however, Yanya can only prove her army's prowess by putting the banner at the front where it will be in danger. If the banner is captured and taken from the battlefield, if Yanya's champions do not return to the Jotun lands with it when this raid is over, then the Bear Who Swims will lose confidence in their new leader. If that happens the army will not be able to benefit from their ability to launch an attack in this way for the next year.

Objective: Recover the Sibling Swords

- **Prevent the Jotun recovering the three swords, Skofnung, Angrvurdr and Hofnd**
- **The Jotun will use each of the storied blades as inspirational gifts to improve one of their armies**
- **The war scouts will be able to provide further information on location they can be found**

During a period of relative peace with the Jotun during the second century of the Empire, the Suaq runesmith Appo Mäkitalo crafted three fine swords for Jarl Taala of Kierheim. They were forged following peace negotiations and given as a lavish gift for the orc's children. What became of the Thanewords (commonly named Bravo's Blades), is unknown and they were presumed lost with the death of Jarl Taala after the peace broke down.

It seems that these three items of worth may even now reside in Hvalgrunn - scouts report that the Jotun are carefully searching for them. Their progress is delayed because they are taking great care to try to avoid disturbing the rest of any of the spirits of the dead heroes interred in the marsh, but they seem confident that they will find what they are looking for soon. Yanya plans to present the storied blades as gifts to the generals of the Shield of the Mountain, the Southern Bear and the Howling Night.

According to the skops, Skofnung was wielded by Eino, Taala's first child and was said to be sharp enough to cut through stone. Yanya plans to present the blade to the Shield of the Mountain to inspire them to destroy the Empire's fortifications. Angrvurdr was borne into battle by Lynea, the Jarl's daughter. It is said that once drawn the blade could not be returned to the scabbard until the bearer had claimed victory or lost their life. Yanya hopes to present the blade to the Southern Bear to make their heroism match that of the Green Shields. Hofnd, the final blade, was carried by Taalason, the Jarl's son. According to the verse, whoever fought with Hofnd would never know fear. If Yanya can deliver the blade to the general of the Howling Night it will inspire enough warriors to join the army to enlarge it.

There is no possibility of any kind that these blades still possess any magic, but they are relics of great worth - at least to the Jotun. Each blade that the Empire can claim in battle with the Jotun will prevent Yanya from empowering one of her fellow generals from improving the quality of their army in the coming season.

Objective: Speak to Mikko 'Stoutheart'

- **Speak with the ghost of Mikko 'Stoutheart'**
- **Find a way to allow the spirit to pass onto the Labyrinth**

A Kallavesi mystic, Sygbald of Wythe, has spoken with the ghost of a Suaq warrior, called Mikko 'Stoutheart'. This restless spirit is haunting the woods of Hvalgrunn near where the Jotun are searching for the lost blades. The mystic believes it is their presence, the Jotun raiders, that has triggered the ghost's appearance.

If it is the presence of the Jotun that has impelled this restless spirit to manifest, then it will likely fade once they depart the area. Sygbald asks the heroes of Wintermark to try to reach the ghost and talk with it before that happens. Exorcism would be a last resort, especially here in the marshes. Better by far to talk with the ghost and see if some way can be found to ease Mikko's passage to the next life.

The name of Mikko 'Stoutheart' is not listed in any official records, but the scops may know more of the man's tale.