

# BLACK MIRACLES

The children of Mother Varushka, the grim-faced schlacta of the Iron Helms, are gone; brutally slain by the barbs and venoms of the Black Wind. The orcs from the Barrens, consumed by hatred, have taken their revenge for past assaults, running down every Varushkan they could catch and slaughtering them without mercy.

Thousands of Iron Helms are dead, but the peace of death eludes them. The force marched under a cruel winter enchantment that respects neither the sanctity of life nor the dignity of death. The army is no more, but the stony grasp of magic is not yet ready to release them from service. Their bodies are forced to rise from the forest to begin a macabre battle against any foe that comes within range of blade or claw.

For now, they are a problem for the Druj, but should the Empire's enemies leave the territory, then these revenants will immediately turn on whatever threat they can find. They could become a terrible peril to Therunin and the lands around unless some way can be found to bring the magic back under control.

## OBJECTIVE: BIND THE DEAD IN EASTRING

- **Seize a chance to bind the restless dead of the Iron Helms**
- **Conduct a Varushkan hearth magic rite at the Stained Rock**
- **If successful, the undead horrors in Easting can be commanded to attack the Sarangrave**

There is a chance for Varushka to exert a level of control over the hordes of shambling corpses terrorising the marshes of Easting. It is perhaps not the most palatable avenue to tread, but the people of the dark vales are used to making hard choices.

In life the Iron Helms swore oaths to serve their nation, to defend its interests and slaughter its enemies. Such oaths have power, even in death, especially if those they swore to serve refuse to release them from their geas. If the people of Varushka return to the site of the massacre then they could perform a dark rite, drawing on the power of the oaths, binding the spirits with wards and compelling them to serve the nation even in death.

This is not a ritual for the magicians nor a ceremony for priests to conduct, though the rites might well resemble either or both these things. Hearth magic must be used to invoke the oaths sworn by the Helms, to force them to submit to the iron will of the rulers of Varushka. Few know how to create wards as powerful as the Varushkans, they know how to use hospitality to force even the most evil creatures to submit to their iron will. The soldiers of the Iron Helms may be slain, but even the dead may long for home.

The ritual rite must be performed at the Stained Rock, an ancient stone cut from the Granites of Veltsorgsk decades ago and gifted to strengthen the Navarri forests. The original gift has long since faded in purpose and power, but the grey stone still retains a symbolic link to the Varushkan home lands. The ritual could be led by anyone skilled at invoking Varushkan hearth magic, but the rite will be most powerful if the general of the Iron Helms and those who supported the army during their last stand are included. The army may be broken, but many things in Varushka continue to serve long after they are dead. Alderei the Fair had dominion over the soldiers of the Helms in life, and may yet be able to command them in death.

If the Varushkans can wrest back control of the undead horrors plaguing Easting, they could command them to attack the Druj in Sarangrave. That would ensure people across the territory are safe from attack by these ravenous winter spirits. The problems would be for the Druj and their people living in Sarangrave, making natural resupply there impossible until the horrors are dealt with or the magic of the ritual finally ends.

## **OBJECTIVE: RECOVER THE STANDARD OF ISAELLA'S DANCE**

- **The army's banner was lost during their final stand**
- **Recover the symbolic item and return it to the nation**

The loss of Isaella's Dance to the Navarr is beyond compare. One further twist of the dagger is the army standard - Knife of Thorns - fell in battle and now languishes in barbarian hands. It represents those who gave their lives to fight the Druj and ultimately to defeat the vallorn. Even lost it serves as a reminder of them, a symbol of sacrifice, and Pride for the nation. If it can be recovered then the pale green gonfalon emblazoned with Isaella's blades would offer a glimmer of hope.

The guides and priests of the Navarr Assembly are best placed to decide what should happen with the banner, where it should be displayed and how. However, the nation will resist any attempt to raise a new army that carries the banner or bears the name Isaella's Dance. One option would be to have the standard become an inspirational symbol of the nation's Pride. The Assembly are not the only ones who might be keen to recover Knife of Thorns.

Some eternalists are known to place great value in such objects and are prepared to offer boons to those who give them up. The Queen of Silence, as Kaela is known to the Navarr, is obsessed with the ending of all things and she will surely be interested in this symbol of Isaella's final dance. If the Navarr cannot recover the banner, or it falls into the wrong hands, it may still end up traded to Kaela or one of the other great powers of the Wasteland.

## **BATTLEFIELD OPPORTUNITY: STOP THE KROLLTHORNED**

- **The Druj are accompanied by a coven of human ritualists**
- **In battle the coven will support the orcs with their enchantments**
- **Killing the coven early in the battle will deny the Druj of magical support in the fight**

A coven of human winter ritualists from the eastern reaches of Sarangrave has been spotted aiding the Druj. Little is known about them - besides their coven name - but it is likely they serve a ghulai allied to the Palace of the Sleepers in northern Kroll. Targeting them will open up a chance to learn more about who they are, why they serve the Druj, and if they pose a wider threat to the eastern Empire.

Whilst they have the numbers to cast powerful rituals, individuals are focused on performing rituals to enhance the prowess of individual orcs in battle. The coven will be continually supplied with mana and resources for their rituals, so eliminating them quickly will deny the Druj important battlefield support.