

TOTAL WAR™
WARHAMMER



SON OF KISLEV
- BY ANDY HALL -

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UNDERNEATH THE INN, A FELL RITUAL
WAS TAKING PLACE. SIX ELVISH FIGURES
DANCED AND WOVE ABOUT THE
PATRONS. THE CELLAR WAS CROWDED
WITH REVELLERS WHO ROARED IN
UNSHACKLED ECSTASY, NONE MORE SO
THAN THE TALABECLAND MERCHANT
WHO HAD SMUGGLED HIS PASSENGERS
ACROSS KISLEV AND INTO ITS CAPITAL.

"Six are we, a darkling coterie. Revel with gaiety, to summon our master, the great N'kari," the dancers sang in unison. Not that the audience heard the lyrics for they were too engrossed in their merriment. Two of them bashed into each other, knocking their pewter tankards of kvas out of both their hands. Anger was fleeting as they instantly recognised each other.

"Jakub! What are you doing down here?" said the older one with a large kossar-style beard.

"I just came to quench my first, as usual, then followed the singing. What's going on, Anton?"

"I don't know, this Empire-man brought these elves into the inn, and next thing we're in the cellar, moving barrels so there's room to sing and dance! I have to go shortly; my wife is expecting me home by the late evening bell."

Before the two friends could continue, the volume rose as a clearing was made in the middle of the floor. A group of six Kossars began dancing - a mix of high and low kicks, as was the tradition in southern Kislev. The elves swooped in, weaving in and around the dancers to a mesmerising effect. The crowd cheered, louder and louder, all while clapping to the beat of the stamping Kossars.

"I SEE HERESY!" the voice, louder even than the crowd, reverberated across the cellar, every syllable laden with judgement. The dancing stopped. Suddenly there was silence. All looked up to the top of the cellar steps. There stood Kostalyn, the Supreme Patriarch of Ursun's Cult and leader of the Great Orthodoxy, "All here are sinners. All here shall burn."

The elves hissed, their eyes now pools of black. They sprang up the steps at twice the speed of

their previous whirling dance moves. The first one to reach Kostalyn no longer had a hand but an elongated, claw-like blade that extended from the elbow. Kostalyn looked on unfazed, he swung a heavy mace that blocked the elf's swing. As the two weapons connected, the brazier on the mace's head burst into flame. The elf seemed blinded by this and so did not see the patriarch's headbutt that crushed into its face. He spat at the creature as it tumbled off the stairs and into the former revellers below. The five other elves were also dazed by the holy brazier's combustion but were quickly recovering. The Supreme Patriarch, however, merely turned around and left, a heavy oak door closed firmly behind him. All light in the cellar went out.

"Jakub... what, what is happening?" came a frightened whisper. In the dark, the elves hissed once more.

Kostalyn strode from the cellar with purpose, through the inn's taproom, toward the exit. Patrons and the innkeeper looked on uneasily as armed Patriarchs remained at the doors that led onto Kislev's streets.

"What do you bid, High Patriarch?" said one that carried the rank of Orthodoxy Superior. Kostalyn's face gave nothing as he spoke, he walked outside, expecting his subordinate to keep up.

"Ursun has forsaken this gospoda. Burn it to the ground. The flocks must be protected. No one leaves."

The Patriarch Superior gave a nod to the gathered brother Patriarchs who swarmed toward the inn with torches lit.



"And the Tzarina?" said the subordinate.

"What of her?"

"She will not take kindly to an immolation in the shadow of the Bokha Palace. The Ice Court claims the capital—"

"NOT TAKE KINDLY!" spat the Supreme Patriarch. He had stopped in the middle of the street, oblivious to any traffic and turned his ire upon the underling; no longer impassive, the fires of his fury were now truly lit.

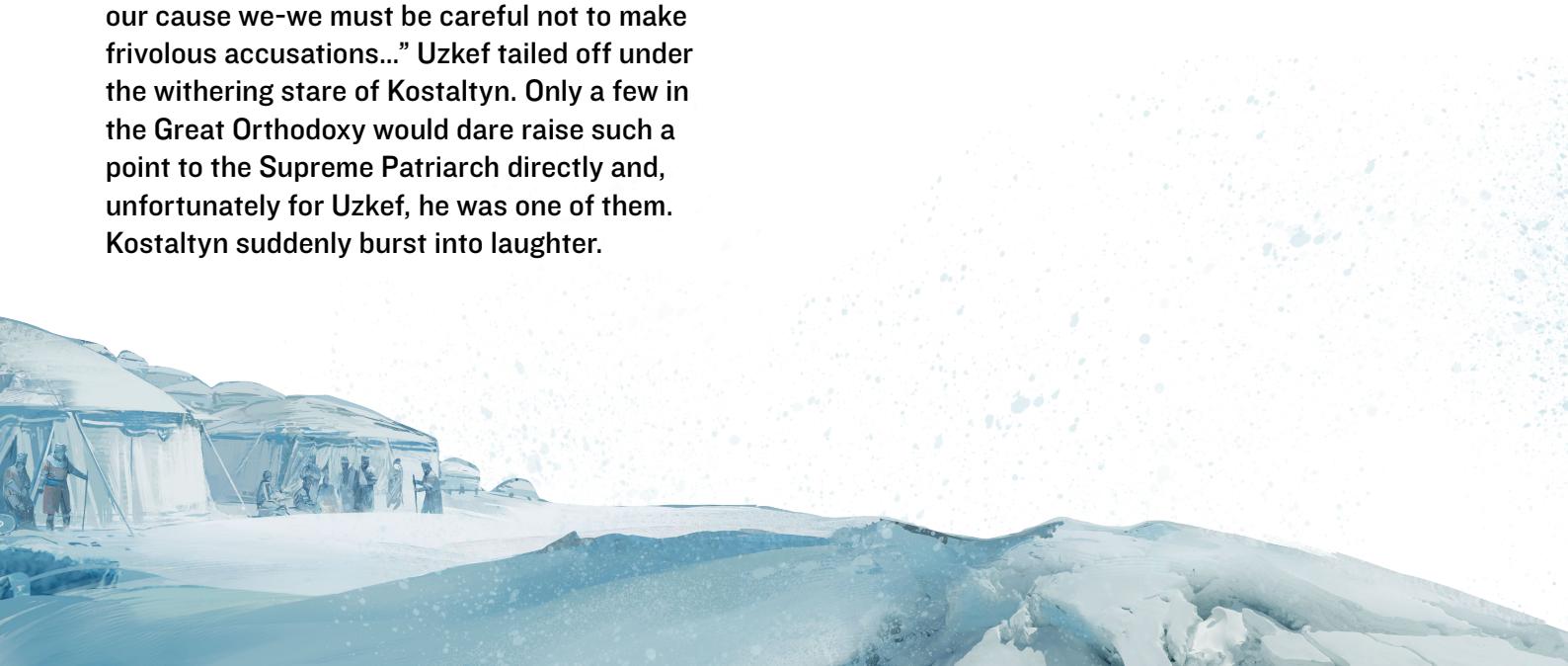
"This child, a witch no less, sits upon the throne. All too eager to rest her frozen buttocks upon the seat still warm from her father's touch - Ursun bless his revered spirit! Yet the Ruinous Powers send their agents to cavort in spitting distance of where she eats and fornicates. No, it is I that does NOT TAKE KINDLY to all this! She'd already be screaming on a pyre if she did not share the Red Tzar's blood." Behind him, licks of flame came through the windows of the inn. Faint screams could be heard. "Magic is evil, even if you cloak it in ice. That is why the Great Bear is silent; he despises this witch who claims sovereignty upon the Motherland!" The subordinate carefully removed the phlegm from his face, avoiding eye contact with his master, he shuffled uncomfortably. "Brother Uzkef, something bothers you. Speak!"

"Fornication... if we are to bring the Druzhina to our cause we-we must be careful not to make frivolous accusations..." Uzkef tailed off under the withering stare of Kostalyn. Only a few in the Great Orthodoxy would dare raise such a point to the Supreme Patriarch directly and, unfortunately for Uzkef, he was one of them. Kostalyn suddenly burst into laughter.

Brother Uzkef, if I did not know better, I think you'd be calling me a liar. I make no false pronunciations!" He took a parchment from his belt and plunged into Uzkef's chest, who staggered at the force. Uzkef shakily unfolded the parchment and read the words on it. "From my spy in the palace," added Kostalyn. Brother Uzkef looked at his master.

"Who is Prince Yuri Barkov?" he asked.

"Exactly!" said the Supreme Patriarch, who was on the move once more. 'Come, Brother, back to the Grand Citadel. We have work to do." Behind them, the building was fully aflame; Kislevites rushed toward it with buckets of ice and snow, only to be stopped by a ring of Great Orthodoxy soldiers and Patriarchs. The inn would burn all night, until there was nothing but blackened timber and ash.





THE ROAD TO THE CITY OF KISLEV WAS CROWDED WITH THE POOR AND FROZEN. PROGRESS TO THE CAPITAL WAS SLOW.

"Out of the way! Move!" Gerik rode at the head of the twenty-strong mounted column of hardened Kossars, trying to force the refugees to the side of the road. He turned and rode back to his brother who was ambling along in the centre of his retinue.

"It's no good, the roads are choked with peasants, we're going to be late." said an exasperated Gerik.

"Then we'll be late. There is no point adding to the misery of these common-folk by pushing them aside. They already suffer," said Yuri.

"I know, brother, six years of constant winter... but we cannot keep the Tzarina waiting. It'll be considered bad form to miss an appointment with the Ice Queen. And you know what they're like down here. Any excuse to mock Ungol bloodlines."

"Ice Queen?"

"Yes, that's what they're calling her in all the gospodas and taverns. It has a poetic weight, does it not?"

"Hmph," smiled Yuri. "She was always just Kat to me."

"A lot has happened since then. She's now a queen, you're now a prince."

"Stop reminding me, Gerik! You know I don't like that term... just some Empire anachronism from when Magnus was awarding our ancestors titles

in the aftermath of Praag's re-taking. It means very little these days, especially down here."

"Nonsense!", countered Gerik. "You are a Druzhina, foremost of the Kovalenko and Barkov families, and so a prince over many of the Ungol tribes. You know how these Gospodars like to lord their titles over us, but yours actually comes with rank in Mother Kislev's courts."

From up ahead, a horn sound accompanied by the unmistakable rhythm of galloping hooves.

"Ah, the Gryphon Legion," said Gerik. "Sent by the Tzarina to get us into the city on time no doubt. See, your title matters."

"So much for keeping this little visit quiet," murmured Yuri. He turned to his brother with a thoughtful look. "You know what bothers me about this endless winter?"

"That our farmers can't grow crops? That we're importing all our food from the Empire and prices keep rising?"

"No. If Father Bear won't roar in the spring, why can't we give Dazh a nudge to warm up the Motherland instead? After all, he is the god of the sun."

"That's a question better asked of the Patriarchs."

"Hmm, I don't think I will," laughed Yuri who eased his own steed into a run toward the approaching legion. Gerik followed and broke into song, the Ungols riders joined in...



**“DEATH IS LIKE
THE WINTER CHILL;
NO DOOR CAN KEEP
IT FROM US; AND
SUMMER YET MAY
BLOOM AGAIN;
THOUGH ICE BE
ALL UPON US.”**

THE SUN. IT FREEZES, THEN SHATTERS.
A YOUNG MAN WITH GOLDEN LOCKS
AND BURNING EYES, HE CLOSES THEM,
SHAKING HIS HEAD. HE WALKS INTO
THE DARK.

“You are no prince. Unworthy. Kovalenko blood
in your veins. Do not seek what is lost.”
Another emerges. An older man. Large and
muscled. He wears only a loincloth. Grey in his
beard. Chains shoot from the darkness. Black
chains. They fetter the man, bringing him to his
knees. The dark roils around him like fog.

“Find me, son of Kislev.”

Yuri woke up with a start. His chamber door
rattled as Gerik banged upon it from the
other side.

“Get dressed, Brother. We are late for court.”

The Bokha Palace lies at the centre of the
capital, a great edifice of towers and citadels,
projecting the power of the Tzardom. And at its
heart was the Ice Court. The name was not a
frivolous one for it was made of ice. Stone walls

and pillars could be seen deep within the ice, but
it was elevated and built upon by the twisting
fractals of frost created by the Tzarina’s magic.
No wonder they call her the Ice Queen, thought
Yuri, as he stared down from the galleries at
the central dais where, upon the throne, sat the
sovereign of Kislev. She looked beautiful and
stern in her raiment of office, mused Yuri. A far
cry from the smiles and jests he used to share
with her. He had tried to catch her gaze, but she
had studiously ignored him.

Throughout the day, the business of court took
place. Most of it was unengaging and dealing
with Kislev’s plight. This was a nation used
to harsh and long winters all while defending
against the threats from the north. Yet even
the hardest of Kislevites on the oblasts were
struggling with a deep frost that would not end.
The roar of spring, usually taking the form of a
great, loud storm, would signal the end of the
snowfall and the beginning of the rains, followed
by the sun. And for a few short months, spring,
then a tepid summer, when crops would grow,
and animals fattened. But that was six years
past, coming on for the seventh.

Yuri’s reverie was broken as a serf approached,
summoning him down from the gallery, to
be formally introduced to the Tzarina. He
approached the throne flanked by Gerik and
another of his loyal Ungols. She sat regal on the
throne surrounded by her own royal retinue. Ice
Guard, with glowing frost-bladed glaives stood
closest, on either side of the throne, while the
richly attired and armed Tzar Guard prowled the
outer edges of the court.

For the first time in years, Katarina looked
directly at him, but Yuri saw no warmth in those
eyes, just the icy cold. They bowed deeply, as
the royal seneschal announced their approach.





Muttering could be heard around the court. It seemed the rumour-smiths had already heard about their past.

"And why does the Ungol-Prince journey to the capital?" said the Tzarina in a voice as cold as her gaze. Confusion swept across Yuri's face before he hid it under the typical dour aspect of a Kislevite warrior. She had summoned him! He knew challenging her on the point would not serve either of them as the audience strained to hear, and so responded in a neutral fashion about concern for his tribesmen as the winter, especially this winter, was even harsher in the north. The Tzarina nodded and Yuri felt an ice-cold pang on the back of his hand, crawling up his wrist and forearm. He wondered if he was having some kind of stroke or spasm but refused to show weakness in front of so many Gospodars in the court. Before he could linger, the seneschal skilfully herded Yuri's retinue away from the throne and back toward the grand door they had entered by.

That very door flung open. The Supreme Patriarch of Ursun's Cult strode through, Patriarchs Superior of each of the Kislevite faiths following in his wake. The Great Orthodoxy in full panoply. The two groups moved past each other, Kostaltyn momentarily glared at Yuri. Before they reached the door, Yuri stopped and turned, despite court etiquette dictating they return to the galleries above.

"Come, we're better off far from this," whispered Gerik.

"No, I need to hear it," said Yuri in a low tone. "Besides, no one is looking at us anymore." He was right, the attention of the court was firmly on Kostaltyn.

His holy retinue arrived before the throne. The Patriarchs Superior bowed to the Tzarina. Kostaltyn remained ramrod straight.

"High Patriarch," said the Ice Queen. Yuri thought she had been cold to him, but her voice had been positively welcoming compared to the contempt barely concealed in those two words.

"You dare summon me, child."

"The correct form of address is, your highness!" stated the seneschal, who, to his credit, remained firm under Kostaltyn's withering glare.

"You burnt down an inn full of my subjects just half-a-mile from here, I want to know why," said the Tzarina.

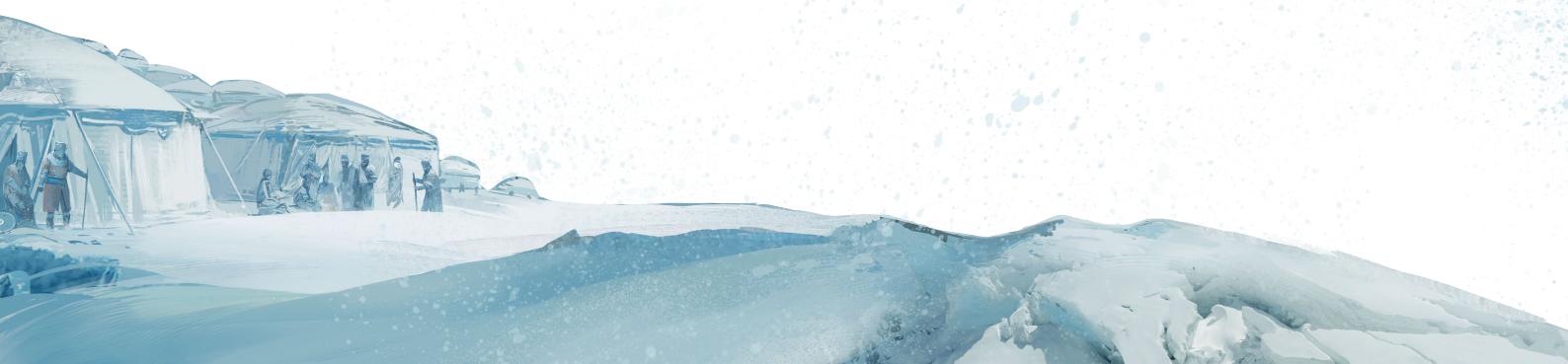
"I answer only to the gods. I certainly don't need to justify my actions to a witch!" The Ice Guard went from attentive to an aggressive pose in a swift motion, they would brook no insult to their liege. The Tzarina bade them return to their previous stance.

"But you do have to answer to the sovereign. The founder of your Orthodoxy."

"Boris Ursus is dead!"

"Yes, he is!" shouted the Ice Queen. Unbeknownst to anyone, she touched a forefinger to her thumb and small tines of ice grew across the frozen structures of the Ice Court. "But I am his daughter, he was Tzar, so I am the Tzarina," as her voice rose the tines vibrated, making it louder, sharper, "you answer to me, Patriarch, as does every Kislevite!"

Those in the galleries muttered, as if collectively recovering from an onslaught. Kostaltyn



remained resolute, but the Patriarchs behind him gathered and conversed. One approached their leader, and they spoke briefly. Kostalyn turned back to the throne, annoyance upon his brow.

"I observe the sacraments, for this moment... The gospoda you enquire about was a haven for daemons, and so was purged along with all the lost souls within," he said. Then his anger returned. "The Ruinous Powers cavit on your doorstep. They are attracted to magic like moths to a flame. You may rule, for now, but the last great Bokha was your father. If the monarchy is in the clutches of magic-users and witches, then perhaps it is time for change? The people's only salvation from Chaos is the church!"

Kostalyn didn't wait to be dismissed but spun about and walked away from the throne, his Patriarchs in tow.

"Say the word, my Tzarina," whispered the Ice Guard next to her, "he'll be dead before he leaves the chamber."

"No!" hissed Katarina. "It would start a war that could only serve the Dark Powers. The moth wouldn't just be drawn to the flame, it'd burn and spread its fire everywhere."

Just outside, in the icy vestibule, Yuri was about to study his sore forearm when Kostalyn burst forth from the throne room. He homed in on Yuri. Gerik tried to intercept but the Supreme Patriarch pushed him aside.

"Tell me, Prince Yuri... Prince... does that foreign title not disgust you?" Yuri did not respond but held his gaze even as Kostalyn's face got closer to his. "Tell me, you claim lands in Duklys Forest. My brethren sweep those trees looking for the hags practising their heathen rites, but they

remain elusive. One thing they do tell me is that Mother Ostankya and her shadow-creatures are no mere myth."

"The common-folk will always swear what is legend is real," said Yuri.

"I don't think so, not this time. Too many witness testimonies given under a certain amount of duress claim she exists, and so presents a threat to this nation."

"The stories say she is a protector of the Motherland. Only those that wish the land harm need fear her."

"She is a witch, and a powerful one at that. If we find any of your Ungols are withholding the crone's location, then I will declare the whole tribe apostate." Yuri wiped the phlegm from his face but Kostalyn had already moved off without looking back.

"You're making lots of friends down here," said Gerik. "Let's get back to our chambers, I need to check my arm."

Back in his room at the far end of the palace, a wing not coated in permafrost, Yuri pulled up his right sleeve to reveal a thin layer of ice running from his wrist up the forearm, to the elbow. The ice gleamed and he shrugged off the fact it hadn't melted yet.

"This better not be permanent," he muttered to himself. On closer inspection he saw words etched into it. A location and time. Suddenly, the ice began to melt away. He clenched and unclenched his hand, while calling for Stefan, a loyal Kossar stationed outside his door.

"Yes, Boyarin?"

"Get my brother, we have to go out."





THE WINTER GARDENS WERE PART OF THE PALACE COMPOUND, AND YET - OTHER THAN THE TOWERS OF ICE AND ONION DOMES THAT DOMINATED THE SKYLINE - YOU COULD BE FORGIVEN FOR THINKING YOU WERE IN A FAR MORE REMOTE PLACE, RATHER THAN THE CAPITAL.

The garden was well-tended with trimmed hedges, high flower beds containing species both local and exotic; the paths were lined with great pines and samples of tall grasses from across the Motherland.

Most important of all, a great cave stood atop a mound in its centre. The cave walls were inscribed with images and prayers to Father Bear and a large altar, itself carved into the shape of a large bear wearing a gold crown, was erected before the cave mouth. A shrine to Ursun, second only to the Great Bear's temple as a holy site in the city. Everywhere was capped or covered in snow, as it had been for the past few years.

Midnight had gone, and it was dark, even the moon was hidden behind the clouds. Other than Yuri's Kossars, the garden seemed deserted. The brothers walked anxiously along the length of the altar. Trying to keep themselves and their retinue inconspicuous.

"Why would she want to meet here? Now?" asked Gerik. "Why not in her private chambers. It's her palace."

"Because there are spies everywhere," said the Ice Queen. She appeared from within the cave mouth and stepped forward to greet Yuri holding out her hands, a smile on her face. No longer a

stern regent, this was the girl... the woman now, Yuri remembered.

"Kat, I have missed you."

"And I have you, my prince." They embraced.

"Why these clandestine methods? You are the Tzarina," said Yuri as he stepped back to look into her eyes.

"My rule is not as stable as my father's. The Orthodoxy, the Ruinous Powers, all work to unseat me. But that is a minor concern. My subjects struggle, the endless winter weakens us and so the forces of Chaos prey upon them. When day breaks, I take the armies of the Ice Court north for the Blood God's host invades through Black Blood Pass."

"Then we shall go with you!"

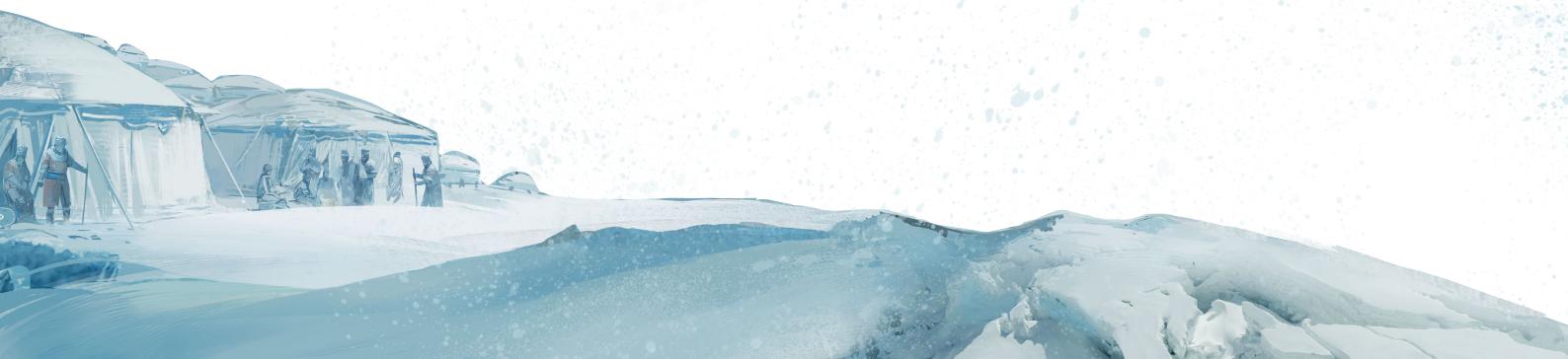
"No! I have a greater task. It may be too much, even for you."

"Name it, Kat... your highness."

"The lost god must be found. Only Ursun can melt the snows of this cursed winter."

"I agree, but I am only a mortal man, how... how can I search for a god?"

"Fort Dervingard. Our furthest northern outpost, established by my father decades-past as a beacon in the Northern Wastes. A haven amongst the madness. Its commander, Boyar Slavin Kurnz - a loyal Boyarin - has sent me messages claiming he has heard Ursun's roar. That the Great Bear prowls those far lands."



"Then I shall go there. I can leave on the morrow with you. Accompany your army, fight with you against the daemons and then continue north." Katarina shook her head.

"No, brave Yuri. I need you to return home. Gather supplies, prepare your warriors and await my missive," she held his gaze. "We must coordinate for I will not let them use our bond as a weapon against us. They already know of our past, if we are seen together, they will wield your heritage to claim that I shall weaken the Bokha bloodline."

"Who!" said Yuri, furious. "Who would do such a thing?"

"I would!"

Standing on top of the cave stood the Supreme Patriarch surrounded by Grand Citadel guards.

"Fornicators! You dare desecrate this shrine with your lust!"

"I see your spies have done their job," spat Katarina.

"I have no need for spies when your Ungol paramour told me all I needed to know." For a moment the Tzarina looked back on Yuri with a flash of betrayal in her eyes.

"Liar!" shouted Yuri.

"I never lie! As I have said, she is a child, passing notes to you like a love-sick student in a classroom. Getting close to you was easy, Prince Yuri, as we... exchanged views on the hags infesting your lands, I read your message as it sat in ice upon your arm, not with my eyes, but the most holy of senses. Touch." He held out

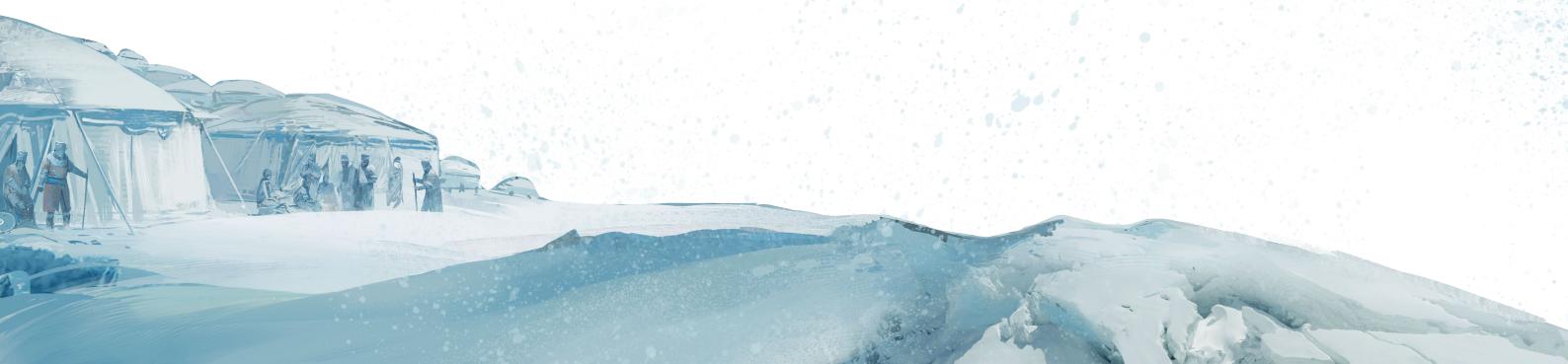
his hand. "You were unaware, of course. The one good thing about ice; it numbs the skin. That was my confession, now it is time for yours. Time to admit that Kislev needs to be led by the faithful. Give me stewardship and then I may let you live. You are the Red Tzar's daughter, after all!"

"You will never hold the throne." shouted the Ice Queen.

"I don't want to hold the throne; I want to destroy it!" The citadel guards charged down the slopes of the cave, while he leaped to ground, his mace burning. "Kislev will be saved, not by birth right but with faith!" He struck out at the closest body, an Ungol Kossar who barely managed to parry. Yuri and Gerik drew their swords, and engaged the Orthodoxy forces, while the Tzarina rose above them all on a pillar of ice.

"Attend us" she shouted. And from the undergrowth a full rota of Ice Guard emerged and loosed their frost shard arrows into the air that rained down upon the citadel guards. "You have gone too far, priest! This is treason."

"It is you who betray this nation!" shouted Kostalyn as he struck down one of the Ungols before engaging another. He swiped with his burning mace and connected with the head of Stefan. The Kossar fell dead upon Ursun's altar, blood seeping from his wound. There was a low rumble. The ground heaved and suddenly the altar cracked apart revealing a rent in the material realm. Growls could be heard, and then hellish canines sprang from the opening, attacking any mortal that was close. Yuri and Gerik stopped fighting with their opponents and both they and the citadel guards immediately turned to face the Flesh Hounds of Khorne as the pack raced toward them, with jaws gnashing!



"Daemons here!" gasped Gerik as he stabbed his sword into the eye of a Flesh Hound, that simply shrugged off what would be a fatal wound on any mortal creature. Suddenly, his sword began to glow, a light frost gleamed across the blade, on Yuri's too... and all the Kislevites present.

"Your blades are blessed, now vanquish these interlopers," commanded the Ice Queen. Yuri and his brother Ungols fought with renewed fury, this spurred on the citadel guards and the ice warriors of the Tzarina. By the altar, Kostaltyn faltered, he looked upon the body of Stefan.

"What have I done?"

"You gave the enemy what it needed. You gave the Blood God a bloody sacrifice upon the Bear's altar. The ingress required to stop me from facing his host in the days to come," said the queen from upon high. She stood on the ice pillar and sent shards of frost raining down on the Flesh Hound pack.

"No... Noo! Nooo! I am no puppet! I am no tool of the Dark Gods!" Kostaltyn's mace had been a spluttering flame, but it suddenly turned into a ball of bright hot fire as the realisation hit. He strode into the daemon hounds casting one down with each swing. It was the impetus the Kislevites needed; they surrounded the daemon pack and fought with wrathful vigour, for in their blood was generations of fighting against the forces of Chaos. They were the bulwark against the darkness.

Yuri's sword arm spun, and he slayed another Flesh Hound. It burned from existence. He noticed that there were but a few hounds left; the creatures smouldered and turned to ash before they could be struck. The rent in the

world withered, leaving only the bodies of the mortal slain, six of Yuri's men and a few of the Ice Guard. The citadel guards had fared the worst, but a few still survived. They gathered around the broken altar and took stock. "I should have you clapped in chains and hung for treason." said the Tzarina to the Supreme Patriarch.

"Then why don't you?" defiance returned to Kostaltyn's voice.

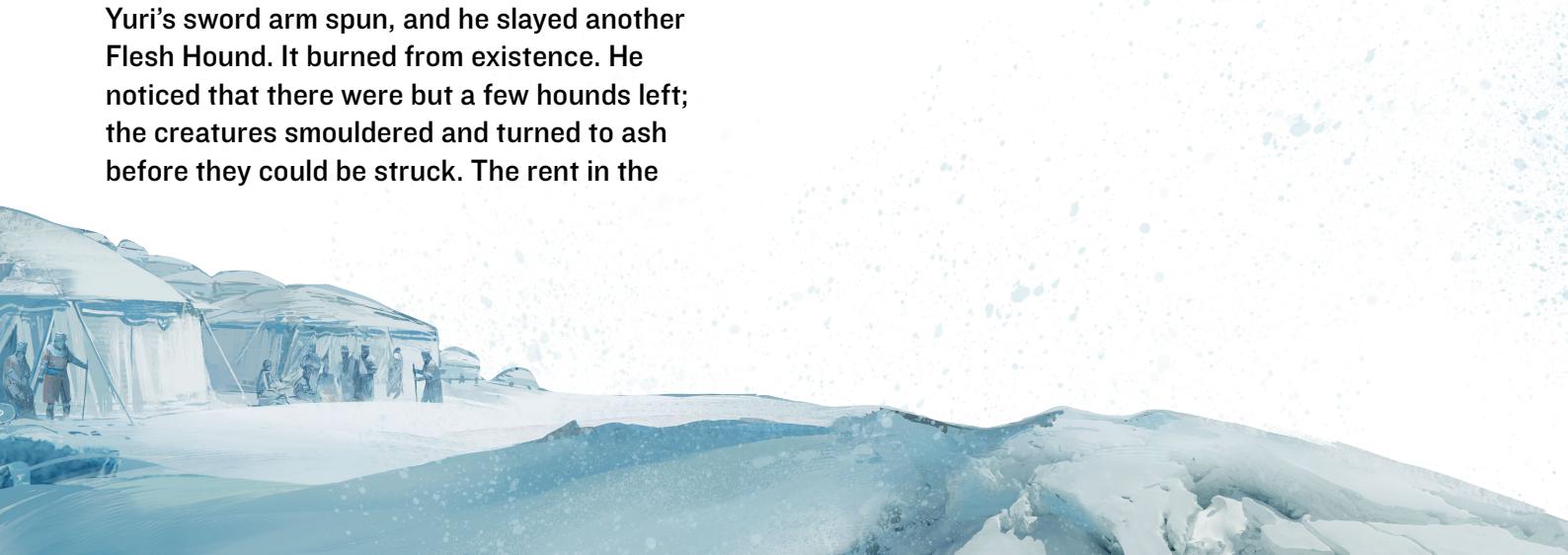
"You know why. Your followers would be at the palace gates - a martyr in mere moments and the schism would fester. We would be doing the Dark Gods' work once more."

"There may be some truth in what you say. As I never lie, I cannot deny your foul magicks may have aided us to vanquish these abominations. I must ruminate on these events. I take my penance away from this palace of iniquity. This city of heathens."

"Yes, go. You are exiled from here," said the Ice Queen. Kostaltyn stood defiant, and then saw the Ice Guard and Ungols outnumbered what was left of his followers.

"Fine, witch! I'll take my leave, but salt the soil of this garden, it is desecrated. I will go to the true shrine of Ursun, on the coast." The Patriarch left, along with his remaining followers.

"Escort them," ordered the Tzarina to her Ice Guard. She looked at Yuri and Gerik.



"Come, brother-Ungols," said Gerik, "we must celebrate our victory with kvas and vodka!" Cheers erupted from the Ungols. "Let them talk in peace. Then we will return to claim our dead." They left, and so Yuri was alone, at last, with Katarina.

"I can accompany you now. Kostalyn will not cause any more trouble after this," he gestured to the broken altar.

"Oh, brave Yuri. No... he is a wounded animal, more dangerous than ever. You must follow my plan. Return to your homeland, prepare, and await my order." Yuri nodded, and they came in close, their foreheads touching.

"What if I am not strong enough; not worthy enough to find the Great Bear? Why not send the Golden Knight, so I may fight at your side?"

"Naryska petitions our cause in the Empire. No, you are my prince. A worthy one at that. If I am Kislev's daughter, then you are Kislev's son. One thing you can learn from that fanatic - let faith power you, let it be your armour and your strength. Then our god will find you... Let us return to the palace, we both must be ready to leave in the morning."

**THE UNGOL PRINCE
AND THE ICE QUEEN
LEFT THE GARDEN
AND WENT THEIR
SEPARATE WAYS. THEY
WOULD NEVER SEE
EACH OTHER AGAIN.**

THE END.





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