

The Battle of IGVEDDON



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FOREWORD

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In the Grand Histories of both the Empire and the Hastfradic peoples, two themes stand out above any other: valor and honor. Whether it be Bhudev III's heroic fight against his insane father Akbar X, or the valiant last stand of Sherwin II at Karthied against our own legions, these two traits pervade the very cultures of both peoples.

In the early years of Imperial rule of the Vestrugat during the colonial period, before the Empire reached its greatest heights in the mid-1700s, during the early days of the Imperial advance, the Esplandians in particular performed a true feat of honor and valor, exhibiting both traits spectacularly. I'm sure my ancestors were more than surprised after hearing of their deeds at the Battle of Igveddon.

At first glance the odds of the Esplandians winning the battle was something one would consider impossible for them to win. An army of 11,000 Aernish warriors and 500 Esplandian reinforcements would fight against a superior force of 37,500 well-trained and battle-hardened Imperial soldiers. Yet despite these unfavorable odds and despite an initial slaughter on the plains before the castle, five survivors held the entire castle against an army. Through cunning and subterfuge they were able to convince the Imperial troops that there was still a massive force inside, ready to defend the castle.

The vastly stronger army would retreat and go back the way they came, halting the Empire's advance into the interior of the Vestrugat. A Syrixian is nothing if not honorable in loss, and I have oft been fascinated by this tale of heroism, unthinkable odds, and unfathomably good luck. I am positive that you, reader, will be as well.

CHAPTER 1

The Prelude to Battle

Heinrik Edwinsen auf Halkon, Crown Prince of Esplandia and Count of the Hakonkregs, during the late 1600s, began a campaign of persecution against all those who believed other than the tenets of Aelostianism. He believed all must embrace Aela, the Aelostian deity, or be destroyed. While King Edwin I, the King of Esplandia at the time, condemned his son's actions, Heinrik continued his persecutions and tortures unopposed.

His brother, Edwin, Count of Walkonsaet, followed his brother's lead and began a campaign of fear against the Skalts, a minority ethnic group, as well as the Jenovak people. This caused a massive uproar in Esplandia, as the Skalts and their customs in particular were protected by the Crown. King Edwin ordered the arrest of Heinrik and the younger Edwin, and Heinrik responded by declaring a rebellion, and declaring his father unfaithful to Aela. The traitorous prince intended to seize the throne for himself.

Heinrik marched west and united with his brother near the town of Lestenberg. The King sent the royal army under the command of his Warden General, Raemond Montagmar, as well as Sherwin, his loyal third son, to meet the rebel princes in battle. Sherwin would later be proclaimed as the heir of King Edwin. The two armies met at the town. The battle lasted for six hours. The rebel army numbered at seventeen thousand, while the royal army numbered at twenty two thousand.



Heinrik, Crown Prince of Esplandia and Count of the Hakonkregs.

Historians believe about ten thousand Esplandians died that day, but ultimately the royal army came out on top. The younger Edwin in particular was captured as the rebel army fled around him. However, the ultimate prize evaded King Edwin, Raemon, and Sherwin as Heinrik escaped. Sherwin followed after his oldest brother, but lost him in a pass. The royal army marched into the mountains, occupying the Hakonkregs and capturing Heinrik's wife and youngest daughter, so that he could not return and rebuild his army. A reward of ten thousand florents was offered for the capture of the prince, an astronomical sum at the time. Sherwin returned to Karthied, the capital of Esplandia, with the younger Edwin in tow.

Heinrik fled to the Esplandian coast, disguising himself as a priest, and boarded a ship bound eastward, taking with him his eldest daughter, Bethanae. For the next two decades he travelled the world, looking for a foreign power to help him take back the throne he claimed was his by right. Then at last, in T.A. 1695, he came to Pataliputra and the court of His Majesty, Emperor Rajesh I, who would later become known as the *Kingslayer*. Rajesh was intrigued with



His Majesty, Rajesh I, Emperor of the Syrixian Empire.

Heinrik's tales of Esplandia and the Vestrugat, this far-away land of plenty, and here he was, with a *casus belli* to invade it. How could a growing colonial empire resist that? And so for three years Rajesh kept Heinrik in the Empire with his vague promises while he met with his Parishad as they discussed a possible invasion of Esplandia. It would take many ships and many soldiers to conquer the Kingdom so far away. Rajesh believed it would be worth the expenditure in capturing the rich iron and copper trade.

Heinrik offered his eldest daughter in marriage to the Emperor, which would give the invasion

legitimacy. The Empire was going to take Esplandia, and maybe even more. The Emperor had grand designs on the Vestrugat. It was to be one of the prides of his Empire, besides maybe New Vayaram, Iraelia, and the Home Island itself. He would even put Heinrich on the throne of the Esplandians, but only as a puppet king. In T.A. 1698 he called Heinrich before his throne and swore a vow to raise an army and take Esplandia in Heinrich's name.

He phrased the vow in such a way that the determined prince would not suspect the Emperor's ulterior motives. Shortly after, Rajesh married Bethanae de Halkon, who promptly became the woman historians know today as Her Magnificence, Empress Aanya, as a way of solidifying this illusory alliance. A great army, the 117th Legion, was raised, numbering at 250,000. 700 ships, all fitted with the finest in Imperial naval armor and equipped with weapons utilizing the Empire's own *Bokaro Fire*, were needed to carry the army, supplies, and siege equipment it would need for the campaign. In the spring of T.A. 1699 the great Imperial fleet set sail for the Peregrine Territories, and then, from Alanic, set sail for Esplandia.

The Imperial fleet landed in Jenova, one of the Free Jenovak Cities, on May 5th, T.A. 1699, sacking and looting the city. Thousands of troops poured into the Genovan port over the next seven days. Word reached King Sherwin on the 7th of May, and he promptly called his banners and raised the royal army. Meanwhile, the Imperial army marched along the Klarvatter River to Karthied. Soon after, despite Sherwin's best efforts, the city was taken and King Sherwin was killed.

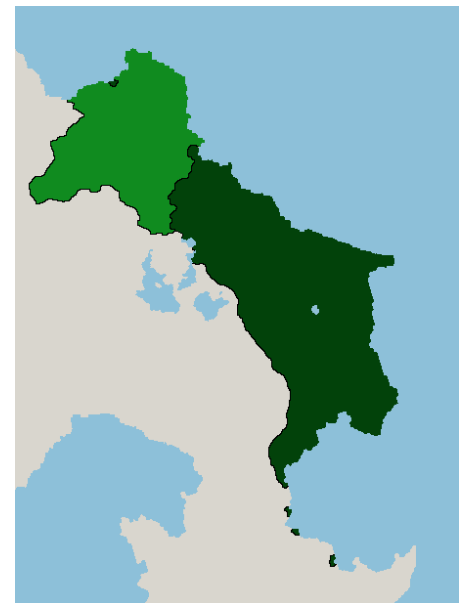
With the King dead the lords of Esplandia converged with their armies on the city of Jorvik, where an emergency council was held. Bickering and infighting threatened to set off violence, even as the Syrixians consolidated their hold on the heartland. It was apparent that the Esplandians needed a leader or else any

chance of resistance would disappear in the fires of civil war. The most likely candidate was Alistair Montagmar, son of Raemond Montagmar.

In fact, Alistair was riding north, having slipped past the Empire, and found Edwin, the illegitimate (but only surviving) son of Sherwin II. Then the two rode to Eborum and met with Duke Vilhelm auf Stroka, an Esplandian lord, who was overseeing the preparations to march south. Alistair convinced Duke auf Stroka to instead prepare to defend the north, reasoning that the forces of Esplandia were no match for the superior numbers and weaponry of the invaders. The advice was heeded and defenses were prepared. Alistair and Edwin then sailed from Eborum south to the city of Taeberus, then rode from there to Jorvik. They arrived on the nineteenth day after the sack of Karthied.

The Esplandian lords were near to fighting each other at this point, despite the fact that the Empire's armies were marching towards them. Alistair was immediately declared the tenth Warden-General, and two years later Edwin was crowned as King Edwin II. From T.A. 1701 to T.A. 1705, more battles were fought between the Empire and the Esplandians, such as the Battle of Mirror Lake and the Battle of Veklenberg.

The Empire quickly established its dominance in the east of Esplandia. Thousands of merchants and settlers came to the land, settling in once bustling Esplandian towns. At first Prince Heinrik was set up as a puppet governor, but at some point he disappeared. The most likely explanation is that he was secretly executed, though there is also a long standing legend that the Emperor had Heinrik sent into the hands of the Esplandians who summarily executed the traitorous prince and threw his



A map of the Imperial Vestrugat. Dark green indicates direct Imperial control, while the light green is the vassal state of Hastenfrakta.

body down a ravine. The truth will likely never be known.

The Emperor then appointed his own governor, and moved the capital of the colony to Eborum. The Empire also began advancing into other nearby states, and soon it had control of half of the Vestrugat. Even though the advance of Imperial troops was slowing due to the need to cross the Hakonkregs, the Esplandians were still nowhere near strong enough to face the might of the Imperial legions. In T.A. 1704, the Emperor returned to Syrixia content with how things were progressing with the colony. One year later, the Battle of Igveddon began.

CHAPTER 2

The Battle

The Empire was not done conquering in the Vestrugat. Its main military policy in the area became the subjugation of what remained of the defiant Kingdom of Esplandia, which endured west of the high mountain range known as the Hakonkregs. Imperial commanders, however, due to defeats west of the mountains, decided to choose a different option- invasion from the north.

Warden-General Montagmar was tasked with the defense of Gothelif from the Syrixian invasion, but he also realized that the empire would attempt to push past the mountains elsewhere. He sent a small force of Esplandians as a detachment of his own main force, led by Edmin auf Stultaug, Count of Esgar, to warn the Aernish of the Empire's invasion. Edmin's small force was joined by a larger force of Aernish warriors he enlisted in Idjo. Reports that the Empire had overrun Boisland had reached him and he feared that the Syrixians would attempt to cross Ulveraernholm and come at Esplandia from the north.

He headed out with his force, northwards through Aernish lands. His forces eventually met on February 18, T.A. 1705 with a vastly superior Syrixian army near the Aernish fortified settlement of Igveddon, across the Naerrumaer from the city of Pogwe. The Syrixians encamped just to the north of Igveddon, on the coast of Naerrumaer. Edmin took command of the defense of Igveddon and sent all the women and children, as well as the old and infirm, south to Idjo. He then bolstered his forces with the remaining defenders. The next day, after both forces had made sufficient preparations, they marched out and met on the farmlands north of the settlement, between the Syrixian camp and Igveddon. The Syrixians began the assault, sending the infantry forward, advancing in columns whilst firing their rifles.



A diagram of the Battle of Igveddon. Each square represents 500 soldiers. To the south is the keep of Igveddon, on an Esplandian-Aernish-controlled hill, and to the north is the Imperial camp, on an Imperial-controlled hill. Xs represent infantry, circles archers, slashes cavalry, and yellow Xs infantry units containing army commanders.

In the meantime, the Syrixian cavalry was sent around to the flanks, arriving in position at the same time as the infantry charge began. As the infantry entered the melee, the cavalry smashed into the defenders lines from both sides, causing mass confusion and negating the defenders' ability to retreat back to Igveddon and safety behind the walls. The Esplandians and Aernish were promptly routed by the Syrixian forces, superior in technology and numbers, with the Syrixian cavalry positioned to cut them off.

The most disciplined of the Esplandians, Edmin and his knights, fought their way bravely towards the gate, despite heavy losses. The most experienced Aernish soldiers stuck with them, holding off the infantry so that the Esplandians could break through. The heavy armored soldiers led the retreat, driving the Syrixian cavalry back, many falling in the bitter close quarters fighting, while the lighter armored soldiers brought up the rear falling in droves to Syrixian rifle and bayonet. By the time the defenders broke through, there was only a handful left.

They fled back to the gates, more falling to the pursuing cavalry, with only seven making it back to Igveddon. As they moved to close the gate another, an Aernish warrior, was shot through the eye and killed. Another, an Esplandian knight, died of wounds received from a Syrixian saber shortly after. There now remained only five people in the entire castle- Edmin himself, two Aernish brothers named Traes and Gerwyn, and two Esplandian knights named Sandalf and Emrik. The small group of defenders proceeded to employ various tricks in order to deceive the Syrixians and make them think a larger force was inside Igveddon.

Whilst Sandalf and Emrik lit bonfires all throughout the castle and put up straw dummies to simulate the large army's presence, Traes and Gerwyn used the supplies inside Igveddon to make lots of noise during the day to make it

seem like there was much activity amongst the soldiers of this false army. At night, Sandalf and Emrik sung loudly so as to keep the Syrixians on their toes, pretending that the army was singing war songs. Meanwhile, Traes and Gerwyn would sneak out of Igveddon and into the secondary Syrixian camp made after the rout of the Esplandians, assassinating Syrixian soldiers as they slept.

The Syrixians knew they didn't have much time to settle in for a siege, as Edmin had also sent for Aernish reinforcements after he had initially arrived Igveddon. The Syrixian scouts reported a large Aernish force gathering south of Pogwe. The Syrixians would need to defeat the defending force inside and then prepare to fight the Aernish reinforcements, or be caught between the fortress and another force. With what appeared to be a large army inside the castle, a large battle having just occurred, and limited time on their hands before hostile reinforcements arrived, the Syrixians decided that their advance southwards had been stopped, so they packed up their camps and headed back north to Syrixian-controlled territories.

Edmin, Sandalf, Emrik, Traes, and Gerwyn were soon relieved by the Aernish reinforcements, and a pact was written to aid each other against the foreign invaders. Two shrines were constructed on the site of the battlefield: an Aelostian shrine to Aela and a Courantist altar to the Messianist God, for the three Esplandians and the Aernish respectively. The Esplandians and Aernish won the battle with only 5 men left. For centuries to come, the Battle of Igveddon would be used as a model for how to turn around what would seem like a certain loss into a victory with shrewd resourcefulness and psychological manipulation of the enemy.