Guide for The Bloodwoods Queen against The Corpse of Viros

By Archivist

While all 6 of the Phoenixborn in the Master Set are interesting, Jessa Na Ni catches a lot of players' attention. And for good reason; you don't often see her theme in fantasy games, and very rarely do you get to play the blood-wielding villain.

But if you've tried playing her deck, either in PvP or against the Corpse of Viros (or any other Chimera), you're probably wondering how it is she's supposed to win.

Well, while I can't give you a lot of guidance for playing her deck in PvP, this guide should give you some help in fighting the Corpse of Viros. I'm going to go through this under the assumption you have the bare minimum to play: the Master Set and the Corpse of Viros PvE expansion, and have at least read the rules, even if you don't understand the finer details. This guide is going to focus on her Master Set deck (The Bloodwoods Queen), not the one in the Corpse of Viros expansion. Lastly, since the rules in the Red Rains campaign expect you to modify your deck for any game other than Standard level 1, I will mostly address navigating Standard Level 1.

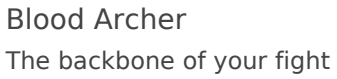
Jessa Corpse of Viros

Staring contest in 3...2...1...

Starting off

All the official Chimeras place a heavy emphasis on the battlefield, since none of them have any action or reaction spells at this time. The Corpse of Viros, being our first Chimera, also doesn't have alterations or conjured aspects, making its gameplay somewhat straightforward. This means that the main part of our strategy needs to be maintaining a solid position on the battlefield. Unfortunately, the Bloodwoods Queen deck is weak at this.

Jessa herself is strong in PvP because her ability skips over the field and hits the opposing Phoenixborn (if you're new to card games, that type of effect is often called "burn"). That's extremely valuable when the opposing Phoenixborn has 15-20 life, but much less valuable against a 30 or higher life Chimera. Additionally, her 4 battlefield is the smallest battlefield any Phoenixborn can have, and her spellboard, also at 4, doesn't even get filled by her deck. In her favor is her high life, at 19 - just shy of the Phoenixborn maximum by 1.



Her deck has four units: Blood Archer, Blood Shaman, Living Doll, and the summonable Blood Puppet. Taking a quick look, you'll see that the only one with any attack value is the Archer; he forms the core of Jessa's strategy, both with his ability and combat values. Blood Shaman is usually going to be a target of one of your own sacrificial spells (like Fear), but he's also useful as a one time blocker. Living Doll is one of the ways Jessa can throw damage straight to the Chimera, but the Doll's ability will be lower priority in most cases. The Blood Puppets are where things get strange. The summon book says you can place it on "target player's battlefield," and in PvP, you will often place them on your opponent's field. Here, though, you're more likely to place it on yours, to eat an attack from the Chimera. Once you get the timing right, the Puppets will always be destroyed before their ability damages Jessa.

Next are the spells. Fear is your secondary removal behind the Archers, mainly because you only get 3 of them, and the Archers can be brought back using the ceremonial dice power. Ideally, you will use Fear with the Shamans, to regain 2 life (1 from the Shaman's recover value, and 1 from his ability), but the Dolls and the Puppets can also be used in a pinch. Archers should only be used if there is nothing else and you absolutely need to use one.

Final Cry is just a burn spell. At 1 die, it's efficient, and they will help you win, but if you have to choose between it and playing a unit, go for the unit. Redirect is a way Jessa survives longer - but note that using Redirect does not change the source of the damage, so hitting a Shaman with the redirect does not count as using "a spell, ability, or dice power you control," and you don't get the benefits of Blood Ritual 1.

She comes with 1 alteration spell: Undying Heart. This should be played on a Blood Archer, if able, to get them into hand faster after they are destroyed. Granting them 1 additional life also lets them use Blood Shot 1 more time before dying, which is a nice perk.

This leaves her spellboard, of which we've already gone over 1 card (Summon Blood Puppet). Blood Transfer is difficult to use in Red Rains due to being a side action, but if you can use it to preserve an Archer by sacrificing something less important, then you should.

Then there's Cut the Strings. The rules say we can replace 3 cards with up to 3 copies of Channel Magic. So replace all 3 Cut the Strings with Channel Magic. Cut the Strings is mostly for opposing alterations, and the Corpse has none, making it a card you'll never want to see. Channel Magic, even if you don't like it, will always do something, so is better.

The rules also say you can mix and match Phoenixborn unique spells, but I'm excluding Playtime because I regard it as part of the Corpse of Viros deck, not the Bloodwoods Queen deck. I also personally feel that Fear is the superior unique for fighting the Chimera, since it is not removed when the Ultimates trigger.

You are also allowed to change any of your 10 dice for any other dice, but I find that the mix of 5 ceremonial and 5 charm works well enough for Jessa's base deck. Maybe going to 6 ceremonial and

4 charm works fine, too, but anything beyond that and I think you'll struggle to pay costs.

The First Five

The first five cards recommended in the rulebook for the Master Set are Blood Shaman, Blood Transfer, Fear, Living Doll, and Summon Blood Puppet. I feel this is about as bad a set up as you can get against the Chimera, because it only removes 1 aspect, and ensures an Ultimate at the end of round 1. You also only use 7 dice in that hand, leaving the remaining 3 for either Screams or dice powers.

As such, my recommendation for the first five is Summon Blood Puppet, Blood Shaman, Fear, Blood Archer, and Undying Heart. While this also uses only 7 dice, the intent is to get the Blood Archer killed and returned to your hand via Heart, then replay him. Ideally, this will result in all 4 aspects being cleared in round 1. More likely, you'll get 3, with a Blood Archer in play for the start of next round. To play this opener, you need 2 ceremonial power sides (don't forget that Blood Shaman can raise a die 1 level if you kill him with Fear), 2 ceremonial class sides, and 3 charm class sides. This leaves your last 3 dice as 1 ceremonial and 2 charm to pay for basic costs.

Summon Blood Puppet Blood Shaman Fear Blood Archer Undying Heart

My recommended first five

The Corpse of Viros

If you're playing by pre-constructed aspects, the Corpse of Viros has 2: Fury and Shadow. Each one has certain aspects that are trouble, and I tend to break them down into the following categories.

Grunts: these aspects are ones that you can hit last. None of the aspects will make you happy to see them, but these are the least troublesome if left alone for a while. For Fury, this is Rampage and Whiplash. I'd put Constrict and Regenerate in here for Shadow. Whiplash falls into here due to its ability only triggering once; while that once can be devastating, it doesn't quite push it into the other categories for me.

High priority: these aspects are ones you should focus resources into removing, or they will quickly kill whichever Phoenixborn you're using, and Jessa is no exception. In my opinion, the high priority targets for Fury are Frozen Fear, Hunting Instincts, and Firebelly. For Shadow, it's Dark Descent and Stormcall.

Annoying: this is kinda where everything else goes. They're more obnoxious than the grunts, but not demanding of attention like the high priority aspects. Fury has only one here, Iron Scales, while Shadow has two: Lurk and Glare.

Lurk

"Just" annoying

If you're wondering why Lurk is in the "annoying" group, it's because I view it primarily as a rules check: do you understand the interaction between exhaustion and abilities? If you do, then Lurk's threat diminishes the more used to losing units you get. If you don't, then here's the interaction: exhausted units' abilities are treated as having no effect, unless they're in a yellow or green box (ie, Iron Scales and Stormcall). This means that after Lurk is exhausted, it can be

targeted by abilities like Blood Shot, Throw, or the natural dice power. Or, attacked, like any other aspect. Even before Lurk is exhausted, it can be hit by cards that affect units without specifically targeting them (Mist Typhoon and One Hundred Blades do this - this kind of card is often called an "area of effect," or "aoe" spell). So while a Root Armored Hammer Knight or Blood Archer will still survive a Lurk attack and be able to counter, it isn't the only way to kill the aspect. Sequencing your turns in preparation for a Lurk is also generally a good strategy; you usually want to see as many of the Chimera's cards as you can before you run out of your damage sources, so holding onto a single damage effect until late in the round becomes pretty natural.

Moving on to apply Jessa's strategies to handling the Corpse's aspects, we see that the high priority aspects are comprised of 3 aspects with 3 life, and 2 with 2. Of them, I'd say that Frozen Fear and Dark Descent are the highest priority, with Firebelly and Stormcall being next, then lastly Hunting Instincts. The reason for this ordering is that both Frozen Fear and Dark Descent will take massive chunks out of Jessa, and both can be difficult to block and kill effectively - Blood Archer is it for Frozen Fear, and you need at least 2 units to block the Descent. Firebelly will simply eat your units, and also cut down on the number of Blood Shots you get in a round. Since that's a large chunk of your damage to aspects, you want to avoid that as much as possible. Stormcall will eat through Jessa's life surprisingly quickly; one might not seem like a lot, but once there's two out, you start feeling the burn really quick. Hunting Instincts is a threat due to its 4 damage and Red Rain token generation - both of these can hurt Jessa's small board immensely if not handled promptly.

Ideally, you'll be attacking exhausted versions of the 2 bloods with your Archers. However, putting the Archers in front of them (when able) to counter is more reliable, even with losing your Archer as a result. You can often see when this is going to happen, so try to Blood Shot the Archer down to 1 life remaining to get the maximum benefit of the 3 dice you spent for him. Speaking of, those 1 bloods make great Blood Shot targets....

Blurriness in priority happens when you get to Lurk and Whiplash. Blood Shot can take them out with a mere 1 activation, and reduce the number of tokens the Chimera will get at the end of the round, so it might not be a bad idea to do that when you can't get a kill on a 2 life aspect, either due to a lack of main actions, or not having enough Blood Shots left in the round.

The grunts are somewhat of a "when you get to them" set. Your Archers will eventually get around to them, but it will take some time, or a bit of luck in revealing nothing else of higher priority.

When to scream and (Final) Cry

Before the round gets underway, count the dice you'll need to get a defense set up. If you have 1 or 2 dice left over, you have room to use Screams of the Departed or Final Cry. In my experience, you'll really only use Screams two or three times the entire game, and usually in the last round, when you're trying to push enough damage through to win. Final Cry is a little stronger, since it does 2 damage for 1 die, but you'll still probably find yourself holding onto it until near the end of a round, as that's when you'll have a better idea of how much defense you need.

Plan ahead

Due to Blood Shots, Pain Links, and meditations, The Bloodwoods Queen is very side action heavy. You need to try to predict what dice you'll need early so you can get your meditation out of the way early in the round, and not feel like you need to meditate mid-round instead of doing something that affects the field more directly, like using Pain Link so your Living Doll will survive the next attack.

Rules Clarifications

The Bloodwoods Queen has a few rules quirks that can be easily missed by newer players. There's the aforementioned Redirect interaction (or lack thereof) with Blood Shaman, which is even in the official FAQ.

Then there's Jessa's ability and Final Cry. Her ability is a "triggered" ability, not a "reaction ability," which, for Ashes, are two separate things. This does mean that you can use both Screams of the Departed and Final Cry (or Redirect) in the same turn. However, it must be in the Player Turns phase of the game - if the Chimera triggers the Ultimate during the Recovery Phase, you can neither activate Jessa's Screams nor play Final Cry, regardless of your dice, as the Recovery phase is not the Players Turns phase. Similarly, Redirect can't be used during the Recovery phase.

The Blood Puppets also provide some interesting interactions. Since you can play them to any battlefield, you can very easily end up with one on the Chimera's field. Fortunately, the rules for handling it are very simple: it's just a conjuration on the Chimera's field. Since it doesn't have defender, it doesn't block for the Chimera or guard for other aspects. If it is attacked, the player attacking it can determine whether or not it counters, as players make all decisions for the Chimera. A Puppet attacks the opposing Phoenixborn if it is the leftmost aspect and the Chimera takes an attack action (usually, this is Jessa, but if you're playing multiplayer, it could wind up on a field opposing a different Phoenixborn). As a conjuration, it is not an aspect, so does not count for adding Red Rains tokens during the Recovery phase, but that also means it doesn't count against the Chimera's Threat. It is theoretically possible to have the Chimera have all 5 Blood Puppets on its field, as well as the full threat of aspects. Lastly, the timing for the Blood Puppet's damage is after the Chimera has added Red Rains tokens - which means that the Ultimate would trigger before the Puppet would deal damage for a round.

Moving past Standard 1

Okay, that's a lot! But Jessa's deck is not a simple deck to pilot, so a lot needs to be said. Below here is a sample round 1 I've played using the base deck, with the changes I've listed above (Channel Magic and first five), but before that, what about games 2 and 3 of the campaign?

Corpse of Viros

Fortunately, the base set gives a lot of good cards to pull from, and most of the cards in the Corpse of Viros player deck will also bolster Jessa's game. It really depends on which direction you want to take her in. For more allies, you'll want to look at Coal and the Corpse's deck. For better summons, Aradel has two that can be brought in, but Noah's False Demons are a good choice, too. Until you get expansions, Aradel's deck is the only one with an importable "area of effect" card (Mist Typhoon) which Jessa can make use of. There's a surprising amount of usefulness in the cards, despite having so few by name.

Just as a note, Root Armor does not stop a Blood Archer from placing the wound on himself due to Blood Shot. This is due to what step the damage prevention of Armor 1 affects: deal damage (Root Armor triggers here) -> place wounds (Blood Shot starts here for the Archer). This can be found on page 16 of the Master Set's rulebook. Root Armor will, however, stop Firebelly from dealing any damage to him.

After that, it's entirely up to you what to do. Done with the game? Okay, hope you had fun! Want more? There's lots more, including more Chimeras (that also come with another player deck)! Either way, best wishes.

Example game (vs Fury)

First five: Blood Archer, Blood Shaman, Fear, Summon Blood Puppet, Undying Heart

Starting roll: 4 charm class, 1 charm basic, 1 ceremonial power, 3 ceremonial class, 1 ceremonial basic.

I opt to go first, but it doesn't much matter. Usually, I have the Chimera go first so I am more likely to have main actions near the end of the round. This matters more when the Chimera has more aspects.

With my roll, I don't need to meditate at all, so no side actions there. I lead with playing the Puppet book to my spellboard.

The Corpse rolls 11 (raise 1 die) and reveals a Whiplash. That's good for me.

I summon the Blood Puppet to my field; I want it to soak an attack, early if needed.

The Corpse rolls another 11 and reveals a Hunting Instincts. That's 2 power sides from his behavior alone, so I'm a little lucky none of the actual rage dice rolls have been power sides.

Back to me, I play the Blood Shaman. It's at risk from Whiplash, but Hunting Instincts and Iron Scales would hit the Puppet, and Frozen Fear would be unblockable. If I need to, I'll guard with Jessa to make sure I get the Fear to hit what I want.

Chimera rolls a 1, and reveals Frozen Fear.

So, I have 2 high priority targets. I think I'm going to Fear the Instincts, and use the Archer to block the Frozen Fear. This gives me the least number of red rains tokens, and since I'm not using Screams this round, I don't mind Jessa getting exhausted.

On my turn, I play the Archer and put a Heart on him. Yes, he's going to die because he'll Blood Shot the Whiplash and block the Frozen Fear, but putting the Heart on him makes sure that a

"reveal and attack" with a second Frozen Fear doesn't kill him. It also puts less strain on my main actions, because the Heart will send him directly to hand, whereas returning him with a ceremonial power will also require a meditation and another side action to actually use the dice power.

The Chimera rolls a 9, causing me to lower 2 dice. Since Blood Shaman is going to raise only 1 die up 1 level, I opt for the ceremonial class and a charm class. I need to meditate anyways thanks to this roll. It then reveals an Iron Scales.

This doesn't change what I'm doing much; I'll get to the Scales later, when it's exhausted. So, I Blood Shot the Whiplash, preventing it from attacking my Archer. Then, even though Jessa isn't wounded, I use Fear, sacrificing Shaman to hit the Instincts. That's 3 total damage to the Chimera so far. I raise a charm die to class to reduce the number of cards I need to meditate later.

The Corpse makes its first attack: Frozen Fear. I block with the Archer (remember, he's supposed to die in round 1 so I can replay him).

I could choose to not block, and just take the damage. But then I have to rely on the Archer not being guarded when he attacks the exhausted Fear. I also then need to make sure I have enough mains to hit the Iron Scales with Blood Shots. Both are valid routes, but that one will likely end with Jessa wounded and 1 aspect left untouched. This should end with, at worst, 1 aspect left with 1 wound. The best case scenario for both is a Blood Archer that recovers all wounds at the end of the round. In one case, he'll have an Undying Heart on him, and I'll have dice left for using Screams once or twice.

Resolving the battle puts the Archer back into hand. I need to meditate to get the power needed to replay him (and lose a Fear - that's unfortunate), so that's my side action for the turn. I replay him.

The Scales takes out the Puppet.

On my turn, I use Blood Shot on the Scales, then attack it. The Chimera rolls a 4 for the guard, so the Iron Scales is out.

And that ends the round - the Corpse of Viros has taken 7 damage and has no aspects left, Jessa has taken none, and has a Blood Archer who recovers the 1 wound and is fresh for the next round.

Hopefully, that sample gives you a good idea of what to expect from the first five and how to adjust. Thanks for reading!

Final Cry

Revision #5
Created 2024-09-04 17:22:00 UTC by DubiousArchivist
Updated 2025-08-06 15:08:34 UTC by DubiousArchivist