

The Barrowmaze

Session 61 03-04-25 The Wild Dogs of The Redwood – part 3

Next Session 08-04-25 19.00

Sunday the 22nd day of Setherius, 21:00, The Redwood camp.

Following careful preparation The Hammers settle in to defend their forest camp from the packs of marauding Wild Dogs. Gerald and Lyntern prepare their ranged weapons, propping bow and crossbow within easy reach in case they need to fire over the traps and fires. Sir Leo thinks of placing Shadwell into the Bag of Holding to keep him safe which although not a good idea right now since the poor fellow is gravely wounded and therefore cannot be moved, could be very helpful tomorrow for transporting him safely back to Thurmaster. It is an excellent idea and everyone is suitably impressed. Now there is just the small matter of surviving the night.

In the forest darkness with their now blazing campfires providing light, they hear the sounds of the animals of the forest with a clarity and focus not perceived in the daylight. Surrounding them, out in the darkness, in a seemingly constant orbit, are the ever-present yips and barks of the Wild Dog packs.

Before Fenella beds down in an attempt to get enough sleep to regain spells (6 hours), she lends her Continual Light pendant to Gerald. They prepare for two-hour shifts throughout the night and Gerald and Arnd take the first watch. Things remain much the same for the next two hours as they tend the fires and keep a sharp lookout. At midnight they hand over to Leo and Lyntern.

During this watch the sounds die down and the forest becomes quiet... too quiet, until with a baying call from the northwest a group of Dogs enter the clearing, moving about; circling, snarling and displaying their sharp teeth from the edge of the campfire light. After a few tense minutes of this they exit the clearing to the south disappearing from view.

The Wild Dogs Attack

All remains still and the watch changes back to Gerald and Arnd. Keeping the same careful lookout they are not surprised when a pack of Dogs race from the darkness to attack the west side of the camp. Gerald and Arnd raise the alarm as they move to meet the assault bracing themselves behind their blazing fire and forming a defensive line. The Wild Dogs keep well clear of the fire but in doing so fall foul of the cunningly placed spikes, howling and whelping as the sharp metal pitons pierce them. Lyntern sleepily targets his crossbow against the Alpha Dog missing his first shot as Leo strides to the line, looming impressively next to Lyntern and filling out the defence.

As more of the Dogs run in, also suffering damage from the spikes and the blazing fire, Gerald strikes, the Black Iron Shortsword biting deep and despatching the Dog before him to the sound of Lyntern's excited "huzzah!" The remaining Dogs rush the line, also suffering confusion and wounds from the buried spikes. Amazingly Fenella is able to remain asleep while all of this occurs.

The Alpha Dog hangs back growling and spitting at them. Arnd defends the camp as another Dog attacks Leo but the snapping animal is fended off by Leo's splendid armour and evasive acumen as Gerald also avoids an attack. Noticing that Leo is engaged with a Dog to the south, Lyntern, with sound tactical judgement, switches his attack to the same Dog, killing it instantly with an elegant fencing strike with his longsword. Snarling viciously the Alpha Dog runs in to attack Leo, luckily avoiding the spikes, tearing into the Knight and wounding him.

With a look of grim determination, Gerald stabs powerfully with the Black iron Shortsword, burying it into his enemy and killing it in a single magnificent stroke. "This is more like it! Praise St Ygg!" he exults, grinning almost as broadly as Lyntern. Leo attacks the Alpha Dog, wounding it and taking revenge for the beast muddying his armour.

In the clamour of battle, Fenella wakes and leaps cursing to her feet, knowing she hasn't had enough time to recover spells. She quickly reviews the fight before her deciding on her best course of action, hurling her spear into the nearest Dog, killing it instantly... "that'll teach you to interrupt my sleep you bastard!" she hisses.

Lyntern and Gerald step up brandishing swords heroically but in the chaos of battle don't manage to hit. Leo flourishes the Sword of Sir Chyde and plunges it deep into the Alpha Dog killing it instantly.

With the benefit of their excellent surprise defences and fighting skills, the Hammers rout this first attack.

The Great Hound

Gerald tries to reset the spikes but can't locate them in the undergrowth. Leo and Fenella assist and they re-assemble the chains of spikes on the western side of the camp as best they can in the flickering campfire light.

Gerald and Arnd maintain their watch and Fenella grumpily tries to sleep again. Leo and Lyntern nod off, their swords placed next to them as they doze. It seems they have barely closed their eyes, before howling and yipping from the south another group of Dogs assemble into the clearing this time to the east, hovering around the edge of the firelight. They parade up and down yapping and snarling before leaving to the north.

At 04:00 in the deepest, coldest part of the night the watch changes as Lyntern and Leo take over. Again, an unnerving quiet comes over the forest, this time however, more complete and somehow more menacing than before. Straining their eyes and senses the two keep a careful watch, eventually hearing a deep, ominous growling to the northeast, clearly emanating from a much larger beast than the Wild Dogs they have been fighting. Step by step the rumbling, growling menace approaches until they can make out a pair of bright red eyes glowing unnaturally in the darkness, a flicker of the campfire light suddenly revealing a huge black Hound regarding them with hatred and menace... surely this must be the fabled Hound of Howling Moor come down to ravage the lands of the good folk of Haranshire. Watching it carefully, poised for battle Sir Leo notes there is something other-worldly about this demonic creature regarding them balefully from the edge of the light as Gerald and Arnd silently join him, swords at the ready.

They signal to each other as Fenella rises and Arnd steps back, disappearing from sight while Lyntern takes his place, a look of wonder and amazement on his young face as he gazes at the monstrosity.

Suddenly the Hound leaps forward, screeching hideously, flying straight through the large campfire's flames, over their heads, completely unafraid and unharmed by the fire, landing in the middle of the camp in a shower of sparks right behind Lyntern. It snaps at Lyntern but the agile Fighter spins to avoid the attack.

Fenella, staggers back a little as Gerald steps in but misses. Leo attacks striking a mighty blow into the demonic Hound causing it to ululate in pain and rage. In answer to the summoning screeches the Wild Dogs surge forward from the east. They hug the treeline tightly to keep away from the fire but still fall victim to the concealed daggers, screaming and wailing as the razor-sharp blades slice into vulnerable paws and legs.

Fenella considers her skull pendant of paralysation but since it attacks indiscriminately she decides it's not a good idea to paralyse her comrades as well.

Arnd tries to hit the huge Hound from stealth but misses as Leo spins around and using his momentum slices into the hellish beast with his magical sword, wounding it yet again. "Good doggie, come and get a bone," he mutters grimly beneath his breath. One of the Wild Dogs totters from the dagger trap to attack Gerald but misses as Lyntern fends it off.

The Paladin prevails

Locking eyes with the Great Hound, Gerald attacks, raising the Black Iron Sword high and plunging it deep into the creature's heart. As the holy warrior forces the sword deep into his foe, the dying hell-touched creature glares malignly at its slayer as the light fades from its demonic eyes. Gerald bears the beast to the ground, ensuring it is truly dead before wrenching his magical sword free and raising it high in victory!

Fenella notices that the west side of the camp is unattended leaving Shadwell exposed so she moves to defend their fallen comrade. She is soon joined by Arnd who re-appears from camouflage thinking that the sight of both of them will be more intimidating to any potential attackers.

Another group of Wild Dogs blindly rush the daggers as they cower away from the fire, taking wounds but still attacking, scattering most of daggers now uselessly to the sides. In the furious melee Leo is again hit and wounded quite badly, with his armour covered in blood he lays about him refusing to cede his ground. Lyntern is also struck for a significant wound yet his sword gives as good as he gets. Gerald dispatches another Dog in a single stroke as Leo cleaves his attacker cleanly in two with the might of his weapon and the sheer force of his blow!

Gerald supposes these creatures are clearly insane and will fight to the death as the grim melee continues. The Hammers kill many of the Dogs although they are gradually being worn down by the relentless attacks. Leo sees Lyntern take a nasty gash to the throat and orders him back so the young fighter makes a disciplined withdrawal to join Fenella guarding Shadwell as Arnd rushes forward into the fray to replace him. Gerald quickly steps in and stabs Lyntern's attacker killing it in a single thrust. At last, just one crazed Wild Dog remains, boxed in by Leo, Gerald and Arnd. In a flurry of glinting steel and Leo's brutal final stroke, it goes down in a shower of blood.

In the freezing cold of the pre-dawn suddenly they see movement at the edge of the firelight but it is the retreat of the pack they are witnessing. Groups of Wild Dogs on both sides of the camp slink by the clearings, cowering and fleeing from the adventurers and their deadly fire and steel. With tails between their legs, they depart the forest to the north. The Hammers have won the battle of the Redwood and as the sun comes up on a bright beautiful winter's day, the Dogs are routed, less than half of the pack remaining as they flee the forest.

Gerald Lays Hands on the rather battered Sir Leo restoring him to a much better state as he wipes off the worst of the blood from his fine armour.

Rummaging through their backpacks they find a few Potions of Healing and Fenella also has a Cure Serious Wounds memorised so Fenella gives Lyntern the Healing potion which the young warrior gulps down gratefully to fully restore him to health. Lyntern then assists Gerald, recovering the spikes and daggers.

Gerald slices off the head of the giant Hound as proof that they have disposed of the Great Hound of Howler's Moor. If they can find a taxidermist, he thinks it would make a fine mounted trophy at the Parlfray Manor House.

They secure Shadwell cosily in the Bag of Holding and lifting it carefully they can safely transport the fallen hireling. Lyntern is given the honour of bearing their fallen comrade as Leo lectures him not to just drop it in case of trouble.

At 07:00 they leave the camp heading south to Thurmaster arriving at 12:00, amazing and impressing the villagers yet again as Gerald proudly brandishes the severed head of The Great Hound!

Monday the 23rd day of Setherius, 12:00, Thurmaster.