

WEREWOLVES & GRAVEDIGGERS

BY RYAN LANEY

A werewolf attacks a young woman in broad daylight in the middle of the market square. Perhaps this wolf has something to do with the recent disappearance of the resident spice merchant Tomir.

As a DM, this scenario features fairly open-ended investigation. Feel free to pepper in your own clues that fit how you envision everything playing out. It's quite likely that you won't do all three portions between parts II-IV. You may also want to add in a few simple rewards (healing potions, a weapon upgrade, etc.) if the party happens to investigate many areas thoroughly.

This scenario features:

Investigation Tracking Combat

And is particularly well-suited for:

Rangers Druids Wizards

BACKGROUND

This scenario is designed to start *in media res*, so there isn't much background info needed. You may choose to have the party begin in a nearby tavern or some other building near the market square in the town of Parrencourt. Either way, they will be called to action by the screams of a young woman.

I. WEREWOLF IN THE SQUARE

Have the party describe what they're doing either in the tavern or other nearby area, then begin with:

"Suddenly the sounds of hawking vendors and wooden carts are pierced by the scream of a young woman. You drop everything and clutch your weapons as you run to the source of the cry. A large circle of people has already formed around the center of the town square where you see a large hairy creature standing on two legs grasping a woman in his right arm. His vicious snarl is aimed at her briefly, then towards the crowd of onlookers."

This otherwise simple combat is complicated by the fact that an innocent woman is in the fray. Encourage your players to make sure she's safe before attempting anything too dangerous.

1 Werewolf (MM, p.211)

For a more difficult combat, add a second **Werewolf**.

Following the fight, the players meet Lerra, the young woman attacked by the werewolf. People around the scene start murmuring about where this creature came from, and offering their own theories for why it attacked her. At this point, lead your players to notice any of the following things that could help them into parts 2-4:

- Lerra was holding a burlap sack with the distinct logo from **Tomir's**

Kitchen (two ducks in a pond). She often uses spices from his store in her own goods.

- Tomir himself has been noticeably absent for about a week. Normally he returns from his visits to Taffer's Port within 4 days. No one has checked out his home yet.
- An old woman named Jorah in the crowd recognizes the pants the werewolf was wearing as belonging to her husband who passed away 9 years ago. *The werewolf is NOT her dead husband!*
- Robin, a town guard, has noticed some odd shadows moving in the night on the nearly every edge of town.

You as the DM will understand more about why the werewolf attacked Lerra later in this scenario.

Parts II-IV can be handled in any manner you wish, some parts even being avoided completely.

II. INVESTIGATE TOMIR'S HOUSE

"Tomir's house sits on a corner spot just a few blocks away. It's obvious that no one has been here for a few days based on the pile of mail on his doorstep. Tomir's house is two stories tall, is attached to other units on its west and north walls, and has a closed second-story window with a small hanging flower bed."

While the house is locked, the party may find a way inside at your discretion. Among a variety of common household items and things related to Tomir's profession as a spice

merchant, the players can find a small notebook of his that contains his daily musings about interesting uses for spices, notes about business opportunities, and a few records kept on his money. If they look to the last page they will find the following:

"Salt needed for preservation. Perhaps sage to help with excess moisture? Boss wants something to help maintain flexibility; moon's tear, lupine paw, aedelian?"

III. INVESTIGATE LERRA'S STAND

"After helping Lerra regain her composure, you check out her market stand and see why the werewolf attacked her."

There's nothing particularly unusual about her stand, though the werewolf was clearly targeting the burlap sacks with **Tomir's Kitchen** labeled on them. If the players question Lerra further, they learn that she was just about to open a bag of paxi (a simple citrus spice) when the werewolf ambushed her.

IV. INVESTIGATE THE EDGE OF TOWN

"Parrencourt has a perimeter roughly 6 miles long. On the edges of town are an entrance to Noyan Forest, the town graveyard, Povisa Stream, and a road out of town."

Using a standard **Survival** check, the players can find tracks from the outside of town leading from various places to the graveyard.

As the DM, find a way for your party to naturally make their way towards the

graveyard based on what they did in parts II, III, or IV.

V. THE GRAVEYARD

"You approach the graveyard, a place you haven't visited in years. The 3ft-tall brick wall surrounding the area is just as ragged as you remember, though the bright green trees and shrubs throughout the graveyard more than make up for it. The elderly gravekeeper Julien can be seen in the distance dragging what looks like a large bag of grass seed. Several graves are open and empty while one looks to be recently unearthed."

Julien is a grumpy old man who's also nearly deaf. He has been stuck as the town gravekeeper for decades, occasionally with help from his wife Myrma. If the party talks to him, it's obvious he's upset about someone constantly running through the graveyard at night, almost to the point where he's considered hiring a night watch for a few nights to catch whatever's going on.

A grave was recently dug up belonging to Jorah's husband (*mentioned in part I*), but nothing of great value was stolen. Only some clothes were missing from the dead body.

The entrance to the underground lair can be hidden among any of these locations at DM discretion:

- Under a portion of the brick wall surrounding the graveyard.
- In the backside of a tall mausoleum with an angel statue on top.
- Under a false gravestone with a name of someone who never lived in Parrencourt.

- A hidden door behind a boulder just a short walk outside the graveyard.

A simple **Survival** check can help the players find the location. Regardless of where it starts, the underground lair begins by a direct downward descent on a metal ladder.

VI. ENTRANCE OF THE UNDERGROUND LAIR

"You peer down into the dark chamber seeing a metal ladder descending straight down about 20ft, with the ladder attached to the wall by small metal bars propping it about 3 inches off the wall. From the ground above, it's nearly impossible to see anything inside except for the dirt ground directly below the ladder."

Once the party actually enters the lair with a source of light:

"You stand in a room roughly 15ft square. On the far end of the room you see a shoddy wooden door, and on the walls you see tree roots and small bugs. The smell of recently-churned dirt is strong."

As the party investigates the area, they may be able to discover the following:

- A high enough **Perception** or **Survival** check reveals two wheel tracks in the dirt. It also reveals a clear sign of struggle/clawing in the dirt wall near the door.
- A high enough **Perception** check or similar way to detect traps reveals an **arrow trap** triggered by stepping on any of various plots of dirt hidden in the ground.

- Any kind of check for **Arcana** on the door reveals that it's not a real door.

If anyone tries to open the door on the far side of the wall, their hand immediately becomes “absorbed” into the door, trapping them in the wall. A small **hidden latch** on the back side of the entrance ladder will disable the false door, making it vanish completely and reveal a hallway leading farther into the lair.

VII. EMBALMING ROOM

”You enter a room with several well-cleaned wooden tables, each one large enough to easily hold a person’s body laying down. Compared to the hallways, this room is surprisingly clean. Medical tools are hung on the walls, and metal dishes are stacked on several shelves. There’s a thin layer of some kind of oil on the ground, and the ceiling is completely boarded up to prevent dirt from falling into this room.

Despite the cleanliness of the room, it holds a distinct scent of dried blood and salt.

There are several small cabinets around the room. There’s a door on the far side, and another door with a large locking handle near one of the cabinets.”

This room is clearly designed for embalming dead bodies. You may embellish this room as seen fit, adding items from the **Utensils and Personal Items** and **Container Contents** tables in the Dungeon Master’s Guide (p.300-301, DMG). A very simple encounter with some kind of undead creature can be added here quite easily.

Optionally, you may let players potentially find items from **Magic Item Table A** (p.144, DMG) among the tables and shelves.

The door with the large locking handle near the cabinets leads to **VIII. Storehouses & Salt**, while the door on the far side of the room leads to **IX. Tomir’s Study**.

VIII. STOREHOUSES & SALT

”You lift the heavy wooden beam blocking the door near a cabinet on the wall. A mixture of thick hay and mud keep a nice air-tight seal on this doorway. As the heavy door opens, the distinct smell of salt fills your nostrils.

You enter a small 20ft x 20ft room with thin shelves lining the walls. Small bottles and boxes on the shelves are meticulously organized and labeled, containing a variety of minerals, spices, oils, extracts, and herbs. A work table is set against one of the walls in lieu of more shelves, and a tall filing cabinet leans against the corner of the room. A small journal on the table is filled with handwritten notes and scientific formulas, many of which have been scratched out and edited over time. Hung along the corners of the ceiling are many unlabeled 5lb bags clearly holding something.”

The journals and notes strongly reference ways to reanimate dead animals and/or preserve recently-deceased creatures so that their body parts may be used later.

Notably, there are many bags of salt hung near the ceiling.

IX. TOMIR'S STUDY

"You enter a messy room with standing chalkboards and handwritten notes covering the walls. There are some chains and wrist shackles hanging off of a mount. A standing desk is askew in the middle of the room with a clear trail of books strewn in a semicircle on the floor nearby. Based on the moved furniture and pieces of paper crumpled against the wall, it looks like there was recently a struggle of some kind in here.

There are several cages in a corner of the room big enough to easily hold a large human. There is a slightly-open wooden door on the wall to your right leading into a dark room."

If the party investigates certain areas of the room they can also find many **small grains of sand** in various spots on the floor, a **shattered magnifying glass** near the cages, and some notes about shipping schedules and routes related to the goods offered at **Tomir's Kitchen**.

As the party nears the ajar door on the right wall, they hear a slight scuffling sound. As explained in the next section, a **Wererat** is hastily eating from a container filled with salted meat jerky.

X. THE WERERAT MONSTROSITY

"A strange rustling sound is coming from behind several stacks of wooden crates. It sounds like someone pushing into them from behind. A lit torch is mounted on the wall."

If the party approaches or makes any sounds, they immediately draw the attention of a very angry (*and very hungry*) **Wererat**.

1 Wererat, using the stat block for **Werebear** (MM, p.208).

EPILOGUE

"You inspect the various crates of preserved meat and vials of various herbs and chemicals. The shipping labels on most of them have been torn off and replaced with a new label that reads:

*Direct Transport to Port Riddee
Post Office Back Vantage
To Be Held 2 Weeks Upon Receipt (___ / ___)
c/o Cardinal Bassikor*

It appears Tomir is not here, but notes and accounts of his experiments on humans and beasts are spread across the various studies of this underground lair. Port Riddee is a short boat ride across Vermillion Lake, though the name Cardinal Bassikor doesn't sound familiar."

If you'd like to continue this adventure, consider allowing the party to determine how they want to handle the lair they've uncovered. This adventure can easily be continued by seeking out Cardinal Bassikor, somehow connected to Port Riddee. The primary motives of whoever has been working with Tomir are still unknown.

Werewolves & Gravediggers [map]

*A werewolf appears in the town for the first time in over 30 years.
Strangely enough, people have noticed activity in the graveyard recently too.*

Drawing This Map

Sections 1-4 of this map only require an actual map for the purpose of fighting the werewolf in the square. The other parts can be done purely through talk and role-play. This diagram is primarily to help show the potential flow of the story until you reach **V. The Graveyard**.

The actual underground lair is somewhat shoddy in most areas, though the **Embalming Room** is noticeably more pristine, well-kept, and clean. Other rooms and passages underground are only roughly squared off, being held up by simple wooden slats.



X. The Wererat Monstrosity

