

STORM OVER WOLF'S HILL

Most often you hide from a storm but sometimes you welcome the breeze on your face.

• SALENN GREENLEAF ROCKFALL •

While traveling through the wilderness of Barsaive, the player characters are surprised by bad weather. A storm arises. Luckily there is a small settlement, which they reach just before the rain starts.

Wolf's Hill is a village that is mostly surrounded by forests. Most of the inhabitants are lumberjacks or working in the lumber mill. Though they have arranged themselves with the wolves that gave their village its name, fear is in their eyes when the group arrives.

In the last days two people were attacked by a pack of wolves that are taller than usual. The first victim was a young woman, who was killed in that attack. The second victim was a lumberjack, who escaped. The wolves also threatened other lumberjacks.

The spokesman of Wolf's Hill asks the group for help against those creatures. Investigating the incidents the player characters quickly find out that the dead woman's husband had lost his voice a few days ago due to some mysterious sickness. In fact, he is Horror-marked by a despair-thought, who forced his wife to perform the marking ritual on him. Two days later storm wolves that sensed the touch of the Horror on her killed the woman. They also sensed the Horror's victim in the village and investigated those, who left the settlement. They didn't attack anyone else. The second victim attacked the wolves by himself, trying to avenge the death of the woman.

While they talk to the inhabitants, the player characters may perceive a boy observing them. What first seems to be just a curious child will tell them later about a frightening silhouette in a cave, which has talked to the woman a few days ago. The boy can bring them to the cave where the player characters encounter the despairthought.

SETUP

As the player characters are traveling through the wilderness of Barsaive, suddenly dark weather clouds arise. Luckily, they spot a village on top of a hill at the outskirts of a large forest, which they can reach just before the rain starts to pour.

That village is Wolf's Hill, a small settlement of lumberjacks, which has its name from a high population of wolves in the surrounding forests. The inhabitants have arranged themselves with those creatures a long time ago and the wolves always kept distance to the people.

The village is protected by a wooden palisade to keep the wolves—and other threats—out.

When the group arrives at the closed gate, they are allowed to enter after performing the usual greeting rituals. The guard opens the gate while his eyes fearfully dart from tree to tree in the surrounding forest. Upon entering, they hear a wolf howling from deep within the forest, immediately answered by a howl from a wolf much closer by the village. The guard is shaken by fear and closes the gate as soon as the group has entered. If he is asked what is wrong, he simply says that the wolves have gone mad.

All buildings in the village, except for the forge, are made of wood. The player characters are guided to the only tavern in Wolf's Hill, where most of the inhabitants are gathered. They obviously discuss something but turn silent for a moment when the group enters.

After introductions, their arrival is seen as a good opportunity to solve the problem, so the group is asked for help. Three days ago, a young woman named Velma Rootcutter was killed by a mysterious new pack of wolves while searching for some herbs for her husband, who suffers from a strange disease that stole his voice. They assaulted and killed her only a few hundred yards from the village. One of the lumberjacks witnessed the incident, but wasn't able to rescue her.

Two days ago, the pack slowly came closer to a group of lumberjacks and threatened them. Most of the workers escaped to the village without being harmed. Only one of them, Jart Keeneye, was attacked and seriously injured, though he finally managed to escape.

Yesterday, only a few lumberjacks left the village to go to work. As soon as they had left the village, the whole pack appeared on the outskirts of the forest and the workers decided to turn back to Wolf's Hill.

Since then, nobody dared to leave the village.

The aggressive pack is different from the wolves that live in the forest. They are much stronger and taller than regular wolves. Nobody can explain their strange behavior. Some think that a Horror drove them mad, others believe that they were sent by Jaspre to punish the villagers for cutting his beloved trees.

The spokesman asks the player characters for help against the threat and to find out what happened.

EVENT ONE: ROOTCUTTER'S HOUSE

Nobody expects the characters to go into the forest while it's still raining, but they may talk to the people in the tavern. The fear of those strange wolves isn't the only fear in their mind. They are also worried about that mysterious disease Garuth Rootcutter, the husband of the dead woman, suffers from. He got sick from one day to another, without warning. One day he could talk, the next day he couldn't make any sound. Since his wife has been killed, he hasn't left his house.

When the characters go to his house, he does not open the door or give any other response. If the player characters force their entry, they find a frightened young man who silently begs them to leave.

If that doesn't keep the characters away, he will try to speak to them—but instead of a human voice, only horrible sounds and grunts issue forth instead of words.

Watchful characters may discover a boy who followed them to Rootcutter's house. If they try to question him, however, he makes his escape.

EVENT TWO: KEENEYE'S HOUSE

The player characters find the second victim, Jart Keeneye, in his house with his arms and legs bandaged. He curses the wolves for killing his good friend Garuth's wife. He admits that he attacked the wolves first on the next day to prevent anyone else from being killed, when the wolves tried to surround them. He wanted to defend himself and his colleagues, but he also wanted to take revenge for Velma.

Soon after his attack, five or six wolves assaulted him. With his last strength he was able to climb a tree to save himself, but was lucky that the wolves left shortly after, so he could drag himself to the village, where his wounds could be treated.

Talking to other lumberjacks will not bring any further information.

EVENT THREE: IN THE FOREST

In the forest it is easy to find the tracks of the wolves. However, the wolves likely find them first. Silently they surround them and come closer. Knowledgeable player characters may recognize them as storm wolves (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 202) and have heard about their ability to detect the foul presence of a Horror, a Horror construct, or a Horror-marked Namegiver.

The wolves observe the characters intensively, but they do not attack if the characters do not attack them, either. After a few moments they vanish back into the forest, leaving the player characters alone.

If the characters attack the wolves, they will fight until wounded before they escape. If the characters choose to fight, they won't get any help from the wolves at the end of this adventure.

EVENT FOUR: ABOUT A BOY

The characters return to Wolf's Hill and will again be shadowed as soon as they pass the gate. This time, the boy finally has the courage to talk to them in the shadow of the houses. Finn is twelve years old and afraid that his mother watches him talking to those "strangers." A few days ago he played with some friends in the forest near a rocky hill, when he heard the frightened voice of Velma Rootcutter. She was standing in a cave, saying that she couldn't do "it." There also was another, almost inaudible voice, but he couldn't understand the words.

Curious, Finn sneaked closer to see to whom Velma was talking. The boy gets nervous remembering that situation. Velma talked to a strange, white silhouette with scary dark eyes. Finn ran away and told his parents what he had observed, though they didn't believe him. He thinks that this "evil ghost" may be the reason why the wolves have gone mad, maybe even the reason why Mr. Rootcutter has lost his voice.

He can show them the cave where he saw the entity.

CLIMAX

It is not easy to convince the guardians on the gate to let Finn pass, even with the player characters in tow. Alternatively he may give them the description how to go to the cave, but this isn't very accurate.

When Finn leaves with the group, they have no problems finding the cave. As they enter the forest, the storm wolves surround them again to investigate Finn. Sensing no evil in the boy, the storm wolves disperse and follow the group. Once the group reaches the cave, the storm wolves follow the group into the cave if the group did not attack them earlier.

The cave is larger than expected. It leads into a stone tunnel that goes deep underground. An investigation of the walls reveals that Namegivers carved them. The tunnel leads into an abandoned kaer, the former kaer of Wolf's Hill. In one of the chambers they find the lair of the despairthought (*Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 288). The player characters must not only defeat the Horror, they may also have to protect Finn, who

wants to stay with the group, too scared to be left alone.

If the player characters need help to fight the Horror, the gamemaster may let the storm wolves help them.

If they defeat the Horror and return to Wolf's Hill, they find Garuth Rootcutter regained his voice, and a surprised, but thankful crowd, who celebrate their victory and spread their legend.

Though some of the villagers remain suspicious of Garuth, most of them will accept the fact that he was the Horror's victim, not his servant.

SEQUELS

With the Horror slain, the storm wolves leave the area. An experienced group may wish to follow them, in hopes of being brought to another Horror, who shall fall to their blades.

CREDITS

Writing: Benjamin Hoppe

Editing: Steven J. Black, Eike-Christian Bertram, Carsten Damm, Benjamin Plaga

Artwork: Kathy Schad

Earthdawn Line Developer: Carsten Damm

Earthdawn® is a Registered Trademark of FASA Corporation. Barsaive™ is a Trademark of FASA Corporation. Copyright © 1993–2011 FASA Corporation. Earthdawn® and all associated Trademarks used under license from FASA Corporation. Artwork used under license from Kathy Schad. Published by RedBrick LLC.