

Wither'd Murder

A Dragon Warriors Scenario
for Conquest 2013

Melbourne High School

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The party, consisting of Lord Turquin of Springdale and his retinue are travelling from Vantery in the County of Braeburg to Meore on the coast of Chaubrette. They had been commissioned by the King of Albion to deliver certain exceptionally important (but secret) documents to the Count of Braeburg – His Majesty needed a group of people who could pass as adventurers but who were led by somebody with the rank to be taken seriously as an emissary of the King, and Turquin and his companions fitted the bill perfectly. It is autumn as they travel up the road that runs alongside a river through a combination of woodlands and farmlands. Fiefdoms in the north of Chaubrette tends to be bigger than those they are used to in Albion, and heavy fortifications are rarer, so the sight of an imposing castle set atop a cliff face overlooking a large village, though not surprising, is unusual. A Knight of noble birth, such as Turquin would normally be able to expect hospitality for the night for himself and his retinue at such a castle, but when the castle is approached, it will be found that an outlying gatehouse and drawbridge is closed with the bridge raised, and any communication with the guards inside (who only speak Beaulangue – or who will, at least, claim to only do so) will be met with the information that Lord Achel has ordered that no visitors will be admitted to his castle. If the party wants shelter – and rain is threatening, they will have to seek it in the village of Dinat.

Dinat is a fairly sizeable settlement, falling into that grey area between a large village and a small town. It straddles the river with a stone bridge allowing passage between the two halves of the village. The party should just have time to see this, before they become aware of shouts for help – again, in Beaulangue, though the urgency is obvious.

If they investigate – and what type of noble heroes would not! – they will come across a man in chain armour wearing livery that matches the banners on the castle gate house (a silver turtle on a green field) under attack by a pack of wolves. Despite the sword that hangs at his side, he is fighting with a dagger. One wolf per member of the party would be about right:

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------|--------------|-----------|
| ATTACK | 15 | Fangs (d4,5) | |
| DEFENCE | 3 | AF | 0 |
| MAGICAL DEFENCE | 1 | Movement | 12m (25m) |
| EVASION | 3 | STEALTH | 16 |
| <i>Health Points</i> | 10 each | PERCEPTION | 11 |
| <i>Reflexes</i> | All 13 | | |

Once two wolves have been killed, a larger wolf will be heard, and then seen, howling from atop a mound about fifty metres away. At his howling, the other wolves will break off their attack and flee.

The large wolf is, in fact, a werewolf named Heffrey il Carind, who will reappear later. He is the ‘villain’ of this adventure. By profession, he is an Assassin, but was turned to a lycanthrope over a decade ago.

The man who was under attack is a young knight – Benedict Crux – in the service of Lord Achel of Dinat. Provided the party came to his aid swiftly, he will not be seriously injured, although his horse lies dead nearby, and a perceptive person may note that when he gets a

chance, he carefully examines his wounds (to ensure they are scratches, and claw marks, and not a feared bite – he believes that only the bite of a werewolf can bestow lycanthropy on a person). He will rapidly sheath his dagger at the first opportunity – not even taking the time to clean it, a serious omission for a knight – but he does not want anybody to see that the dagger is made of silver, if he can avoid it.

He will be grateful to the party for their assistance, but is reluctant to answer questions. He has been acting as a messenger for his Lord and he takes his Lord's confidentiality seriously. He knows that Lord Achel refuses to admit what everybody else has already accepted – that there are werewolves on the loose, but even in pressed about the obvious facts that he has a silver dagger, which he was using to fight wolves, despite having a perfectly adequate sword at his waist, he will not go against what his Lord insists on – that there are lycanthropes about.

He is returning from an attempt to deliver a message to the Jinny King – a local dignitary. A wedding had been arranged between the daughter of Lord Achel and the son of 'King' Bertus, in an attempt to resolve an historical disagreement about the ownership and rulership of the lands hereabouts, but it was called off suddenly about three weeks ago. Benedict does not know why – he can say that Lady Ella (the sixteen year old daughter of Lord Achel) has been confined to her rooms in strict isolation since the wedding was called off and he suspects she may have refused to go along with the wedding – but he does not know for sure (Benedict is only a year or so older than Ella, and when he says her name, it may be obvious that he has feelings for her – feelings he would, in honour, never act on, but they are there). Bertus refused to see him – he was run off the Jinny camp – so he is now returning to his Lord to explain his failure. If the party asks him, he will take them to see Lord Achel – he outranks the guards on the gate.

The Roots of the Dispute

The area around Dinat was, like all of Chaubrette (and a great many other nations) conquered by the Selentines and absorbed into their Empire about 1000 years ago. As the Empire receded, new Kingdoms came into being under new rulers, and in many places, there have been several changes of rulers over the century.

Dinat is such an area. In the period after the Selentines left, a semi-nomadic peoples – known as the Jini or Jinnies, moved into this region and established control over it for nearly 200 years. More recently, however – about two hundred years ago – organised bands of warriors from further east came into the region and established a feudal rule under the crown of the new Kingdom of Chaubrette. Lord Achel, ruling from his castle, is the accepted legal ruler of this land under Chaubrettan law, and is descended from these 'new' invaders. But the Jini in this area were never destroyed and instead merely took to their semi-nomadic lifestyle again, wandering the forests of central Chaubrette. Bertus – who styles himself the King of the Jini – is a direct descendant of the Jini who controlled this area, and he moved his people back into the area about twenty years ago, and asserts that he is the true ruler of this land.

Lord Achel, on the orders of the King of Chaubrette, has not moved against him, because the King fears a widespread Jini uprising (there are groups of Jini all over the Kingdom) if things are ever pushed too far, and with so many soldiers and knights away at the crusades, this would be exceptionally dangerous. Relationships between local Jini and the local Chaubrettans were tense, at first, but over time have become less so, and Achel and Bertus began to meet with each other. Both came to respect each other and about a year ago, Achel proposed a marriage between his only daughter, Ella, and Bertus' only son, Titus, both aged sixteen – any child of Titus and Ella would become heir to the lands and title of the fiefdom surrounding Dinat, a Chaubrettan Lord with Jini blood as well. Achel is even willing to designate Titus as his own direct heir – he has no male issue, brothers, or male cousins, and Chaubrettan law would therefore allow the title to pass to a son-in-law. Bertus agreed to the match – but a problem developed as to who could perform the ceremony – Achel and his family are true adherents to the True Faith, but the Jini, though nominally of the True Faith, have their own traditional semi-pagan beliefs as well, and the local Bishop refused to allow the marriage the two unless Titus and Bertus renounced these teachings – something they were not prepared to do. Matters were at an impasse until a couple of months ago, when an itinerant Priest named Heffery il Carind arrived in Dinat. He is not under the control of the Bishop and said he would be happy to perform the marriage.

Final preparations were being made – and then suddenly the marriage was called off. Nobody seems to know why. Some say that Lord Achel called off the marriage, some say that Bertus called off the marriage. Tensions have grown. The Jini have retreated to their camp in the forest, Lord Achel has sealed off his castle.

The fact is the marriage was called off, almost simultaneously when both their children suddenly disappeared, but neither is prepared to say this publically. Bertus is aware that his son has been turned into a werewolf and suspects that Ella has probably suffered the same fate – but fears that if Achel discovers this he will blame the Jini for it – they are used to being treated as scapegoats for misfortune – or worse, that Lord Achel or the Church might order a hunting down of all the lycanthropes, leading to the deaths of Titus and Ella. Bertus might even agree with such a drastic step as the only option – he'd rather see his son dead, than a monster – but the Wise Woman of his camp has told him there is another way, if the wolves can be captured.

Visiting Lord Achel

Benedict is willing to take the party to see Lord Achel. On his orders the drawbridge will be lowered and the gate opened so the party can pass beyond it, and take the winding roadway up to the Castle of Felswand. This brooding structure sits perched on a cliff face overlooking the village below – and while it is a perfectly normal castle, it may seem very ominous and threatening. The gatehouse of the castle itself is also locked with both gate and portcullis but again these will be opened at Benedict's request provided he does not seem to be under any sort of duress.

The meeting with Lord Achel will be brief and to the point. He will be disappointed, but unsurprised at the fact that Bertus was unwilling to accept Benedict's message, and will seize on the sudden appearance of a 'diplomat' from Albion in the presence of Lord Turquin. He will ask if Turquin is willing to meet with Bertus and find out why Bertus called off the wedding. Achel will admit, but will not discuss, that he also called things off at about the same time. His manner is quite abrasive and offensive – the clear implication is that the Jini are beneath his family, so it was quite acceptable for him to call off the wedding, but the fact that the Jini did so is an insult. Nonetheless, as he presented this marriage to the King as a way of resolving the tensions between the crown and nobles of Chaubrette, and the Jini, it is important to him to discover why Bertus did this, so he can explain things to the King as not being his fault. He will strongly suggest that they enlist the support of Heffery il Carind, when they go and see Bertus – he made the mistake of trying to order Heffery to act on his behalf and discovered that, Heffery sees himself as not just outside the authority of local Bishops, but also of local Lords and while his first reaction to his refusal was to have the man thrown into the dungeon, he decided that he really did not need any more disputes right now. Heffery is staying at the inn in Dinate – the Guttred Sheep – at Achel's expense, while attempts are being made to salvage the situation. Achel suggests they see him there. It is getting towards evening at this point and why Achel will give hospitality if asked, he will suggest the characters might be better off going straight to the inn and trying to see Heffery.

If the characters ask to see Ella, they will be told this is impossible. She is confined to her room – actually a room at the top of one of the castles towers – and no contact is allowed with her. On this, Achel is unshakeable – because she is not actually there. He does not know where she is, and he is both terribly worried and extremely angry about this fact.

If they ask about his wife (the Lady Freda) he will likewise refuse to answer any questions. His wife actually died nearly three weeks ago, just after the wedding was called off, when she and Bertus' wife, Bethilda, met in the woods to try and work out what was going on, and were killed by their respective children newly turned into wolves at the instigation of their werewolf masters. Achel knows this – but he and his wife never loved each other (their marriage as with so many noble marriages was arranged for political purpose) and while he regrets her death he is not terribly affected by it, in comparison to his other concerns.

Under no circumstances will he admit there may be a werewolf about – even though everybody else had admitted it – because his greatest terror of all is that Ella has fallen victim to such a creature, in which case, as Lord, he would need to order her destruction. He refuses to admit this is possible – even to himself, it seems.

In Dinate

Once the characters enter Dinate, probably just before sunset, they will notice that the village is battened down for trouble. All windows are heavily shuttered. All doors are firmly closed. It is not hard to find the inn – the sign depicts a wolf, but the inn is known as the Guttred Sheep, for reasons nobody can explain (they are lost to history). Perceptive characters may notice a purple flower has been placed above the lintel of almost every door and window

frame they can see – anybody with basic knowledge of woodslore or woodcraft will be able to identify it as wolfsbane.

In the inn, they will find a populace in an obvious state of fear. People are drinking their final drinks for the evening, intent on getting home before midnight. Unusually for an inn in Chaubrette, the main fare is a strong cider – rather than wine. Red wine is unobtainable – “too much like blood” according to the innkeeper. The cider is very strong – even two mugs is enough to put a strong man to sleep quite quickly.

If they ask about Heffery, they will be told by the innkeeper that he has retired for the night and left instructions he was not to be disturbed until morning. The characters are welcome to take rooms for the night (2 florins each) or sleep on the floor of the common room for 5 pennies. If the party attempts to search the inn and find Heffery, unless they are very stealthy, they will be detected by one of the innkeeper's family and loudly told to desist. If they persist, the innkeeper will rouse his other guests – mostly lumber men from the forest who prefer the safety of the inn at present – to evict them.

People will confirm – reluctantly – if asked that there are werewolves about – perhaps, surprisingly, they do not want the assistance of the armed warriors to deal with the problem. This is because they know that the Jini have ‘ways’ of dealing with such things if needed, and they trust that the Jini will do so – and they do not want the problem made worse by armoured knights and witch types blundering around.

In the morning, the party will meet Heffery. He wears the black robes of a Monk, but carries a shortsword at his side. He speaks Elleslandic and Beaulangue with an Algandarve accent, and speaks Algandarve fluently – as he is from Algandy, this is unsurprising. He does not speak Bacchile – almost unheard of in a Monk – although the characters will only discover this if it happens to come up somehow.

He will readily agree to take the party to see the Jini – but will insist on waiting until after he has been able to perform his morning prayers. He will take the opportunity to use his *Ring of Obedient Parts* to send a message to his cohort in the forest telling them to be ready to ambush the party. He sees them as a threat.

The ambush will take place on the edge of the forest. Heffery had hired this party to cause mayhem and havoc around the countryside but had not yet unleashed them. By coincidence, the Wise Woman of the Jini – Cassiopa – is nearby when the ambush occurs – she will see it being set up and will move to warn the party that is approaching. During the confusion of the battle, Heffery will throw throwing spikes at her in an attempt to kill her, if he thinks he can do it unobserved. He fears (with reason) that she knows enough about lycanthropy – and how to deal with it – to be a threat to his plans. She is unlikely to be killed by his attempts – she is a powerful Adept Mystic and immune to the poison on his spikes.

CASIOPA (8th Rank Adept Mystic)

| | | | |
|--|----|----------------|-----------|
| ATTACK | 16 | Dagger d4+1, 4 | |
| DEFENCE | 11 | AF | 0 |
| MAGICAL ATTACK | 23 | | |
| MAGICAL DEFENCE | 14 | Movement | 10m (20m) |
| EVASION | 5 | STEALTH | 17 |
| <i>Health Points</i> | 16 | PERCEPTION | 14 |
| <i>Str 11, Ref 18, Int 13, PT 18, Lks 12</i> | | | |

Assessment

Ambush Party

Maurice (5th rank knight)

| | | | |
|---|----|----------------|----------------------|
| ATTACK | 17 | Sword (d8+1,5) | |
| DEFENCE | 11 | AF | 5 (Plate) and shield |
| MAGICAL DEFENCE | 6 | Movement | 10m (20m) |
| EVASION | 5 | STEALTH | 14 |
| <i>Health Points</i> | 15 | PERCEPTION | 7 |
| <i>Str 12, Ref 10, Int 13, PT 7, Lks 11</i> | | | |
| Carries <i>Potion of Strength</i> | | | |

Halbet (5th rank Knight)

| | | | |
|---|----|----------------------------|-------------|
| ATTACK | 19 | Two Handed Sword (d10+1,5) | |
| DEFENCE | 12 | AF | 6 (Plate+1) |
| MAGICAL DEFENCE | 7 | Movement | 10m (20m) |
| EVASION | 5 | STEALTH | 14 |
| <i>Health Points</i> | 16 | PERCEPTION | 7 |
| <i>Str 17, Ref 11, Int 11, PT 9, Lks 11</i> | | | |

Note the enchanted nature of his plate armour.

Karloff (5th rank Barbarian)

| | | | |
|---|----|------------------|------------------|
| ATTACK | 19 | Battleaxe (d8,6) | |
| DEFENCE | 10 | AF | 3 (Mail Hauberk) |
| MAGICAL DEFENCE | 7 | Movement | 10m (20m) |
| EVASION | 6 | STEALTH | 15 |
| <i>Health Points</i> | 16 | PERCEPTION | 7 |
| <i>Str 14, Ref 11, Int 11, PT 9, Lks 11</i> | | | |

Carries a *Ring of Red Ruin* (with 2 remaining charges to be used in extremis)

Natasha (5th rank barbarian)

| | | | |
|----------------------|----|-----------------|------------------|
| ATTACK | 18 | Halberd (d10,5) | |
| DEFENCE | 11 | AF | 3 (Mail Hauberk) |
| MAGICAL DEFENCE | 7 | Movement | 10m (20m) |
| EVASION | 6 | STEALTH | 15 |
| <i>Health Points</i> | 16 | PERCEPTION | 7 |

Str 12, Ref 14, Int 11, PT 9, Lks 11

Carries a *Potion of Healing*

Helena (5th rank Assassin)

| | | | |
|----------------------|----|---|-------------|
| ATTACK | 17 | Shortsword (d8+1,3) and Spikes (d2+1,2) | |
| DEFENCE | 9 | AF | 2 (Leather) |
| MAGICAL DEFENCE | 7 | Movement | 10m (20m) |
| EVASION | 6 | STEALTH | 22 |
| <i>Health Points</i> | 14 | PERCEPTION | 12 |

Str 12, Ref 15, Int 11, PT 10, Lks 11

Carries *Assassin's Lotion (4 doses), 3 Flash Pellets, and a vial of strong poison*

At the conclusion of the battle, the party will be taken into the Jini camp.

In the Camp of the Jini

The camp consists of a circle of wagons, some with tents attached, surrounding a large pavilion style tent in its centre, all within a clearing in the forest. It is clear that this has become at least a semi-permanent settlement – nothing has moved in years. Most of the wagons would require repair before they could move again.

Bertus, the Jini King, can be found within the large tent – this is his home and court – it is important to understand that Bertus truly believes he is the rightful ruler of this land and expects the courtesy due that position. He is a realist who accepts a compromise must be found with the Chaubrettan nobles and the King of Chaubrette and was – and would remain – willing to embrace the marriage of his son, Titus, to Lady Ella as a way of resolving the dispute – but nobody should make the mistake of thinking he intends to give anything up or does not care. Provided the characters treat him with respect, he will be polite and cordial with them – especially because he wants their help.

He knows what has happened to Titus – and suspects it has also happened to Ella as well. They have been turned by a werewolf – three weeks ago when they met in the forest, in secret, to decide for themselves what they thought of the person their father would have them marry.

Tomorrow is the night of the true full moon, and Titus and Ella can be saved if a certain ritual can be carried out before midnight on that night, when the moon reaches its true fullness. Casiopa can explain what is needed.

She describes the ritual.

Capture the werewolf in question in a net intertwined with silver. Take a tooth or claw, grind them with wolfsbane and ingest. The tooth and claw must be cut off with a silver weapon at moonrise. As long as the wolf is alive when ingested it will cure the one who takes it. If the wolf is dead, it can still provide a temporary control – but it is far better if the wolf is alive. If necessary, the ritual can be performed with any werewolf's tooth and claw (except its own), but it is better if it can be done with the master wolf's parts.

Casiopa has already fashioned the necessary net – a fishing net with silver wire binding each of its crossing threads. She will provide it to the party if they are willing to take on this task. She will tell them that moonrise for the next two day is close enough to sunset that if they aim to perform the cutting part of the ritual around that time it will work. They will need to acquire a silver weapon from somewhere.

The party may be aware that the knight, Benedict, has a silver dagger. He will willingly loan this weapon to them if they return to the castle and ask him. It is a d4,3 weapon. The smith in town could also fashion a crude silver dagger (d3,2) or a crude silver sword (d6,3) if provided with 20 or 50 silver florins as raw materials for a fee of 20 silver florins, but would need four hours to do so – he rarely makes weapons, and he is being asked for a rush job with unusual materials, so this is the best he can manage.

As the party leaves the Jini camp, Heffery will tell them that he believes Casiopa's method of dealing with the wolf is slightly wrong – he will claim to have read books on the subject at his monastery in Algandy. The master wolf must be killed with a silver blade for the cure to work – leaving him alive will not work. And Titus and Ella are probably in human form right now and hiding somewhere in the forest – perhaps it would be best to try and find them, or the master wolf – quickly, before nightfall.

Shortly after saying this, the party will be attacked by a pack of wolves. They will see Heffery grabbed by a large wolf and dragged off into the forest while the other wolves keep the party at bay. Heffery has arranged this with his mastery over other wolves as a way of getting free of the party so he can set up an ambush and his final plans. Tracking will be impossible because of the presence of so many wolf tracks in the area (for reasons, nobody can explain, the *Pursuit* spell does not work in this area – it is actually due to interdiction cast in the past by elves in these forests, who do not wish to be easily seen or tracked).

If the characters approach Lord Achel, at this point, they can explain to him what has probably happened to his daughter – while it represents his worst fears, the fact that there is a possible solution means he will accept the facts.

Searches during the day will prove fruitless – but just before sunset a large wolf will cause a panic by running through the town. This is Heffery in wolf form, seeking to draw the party out to fight his entire pack in a narrow gully near the base of the cliff.

Endgame

Unbeknownst to Heffery, he has also been followed by Ella and Titus in wolf form. They are angered at what he has done to them, and want to kill him, and just wait for their chance. They will take it when he springs his ambush on the party.

The battle involves Heffery and seven normal wolves, lying in wait for the characters. Titus and Ella will become involved, and will be seen – if they have the chance of constantly launching attacks at Heffery. They are smaller than the other wolves – being late adolescents rather than full adults, and Heffery is considerably larger. This is the only way to tell the wolves easily apart. They will not attack the party unless attacked themselves with a silver weapon – at that point, the pain of being struck will drive them into a frenzy where they cannot control themselves.

Normal Wolves

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------|--------------|-----------|
| ATTACK | 15 | Fangs (d4,5) | |
| DEFENCE | 3 | AF | 0 |
| MAGICAL DEFENCE | 1 | Movement | 12m (25m) |
| EVASION | 3 | STEALTH | 16 |
| <i>Health Points</i> | 10 each | PERCEPTION | 11 |
| <i>Reflexes</i> | All 13 | | |

Ella and Titus

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------|----------------|-----------|
| ATTACK | 17 | Fangs (d4+2,5) | |
| DEFENCE | 6 | AF | 0 |
| MAGICAL DEFENCE | 3 | Movement | 12m (25m) |
| EVASION | 3 | STEALTH | 16 |
| <i>Health Points</i> | 16 each | PERCEPTION | 11 |
| <i>Reflexes</i> | Both 14 | | |

Heffery's statistics can be found on his separate sheet.

If the net can be thrown over any of the three werewolves, he or she will instantly become paralysed. If it thrown over Heffery, he will also lose control of his wolves, allowing either Titus or Ella to take control of the pack and tell it to flee into the forest. They will have to be convinced not to kill Heffery, or they will continue to try. An explanation that keeping him alive will allow them to be cured will persuade them.

If the potion described by Casiopa is made from Heffery's living body, both Ella and Titus can be cured. If it is made from their own living bodies (or rather from the bodies of each other – a cure will not be effected by the use of ones own body), they will be cured, but the person whose body was used will suffer negative impacts on their health for the rest of their lives. If the potion is made from Heffery's dead body, a partial cure is obtained – they will only turn into werewolves if exposed to direct light from the full moon, something it is possible – though awkward – to avoid for the rest of their lives.

If cured, in any form, and if both survive, the marriage can be arranged. Unfortunately the celebrant is probably dead – or at least awaiting execution – and his qualifications must be viewed as suspect in any event. Lord Achel, grateful for Casiopa's lore and knowledge in saving his daughter will consent to her being married in a ceremony from Jini tradition, and Bertus, delighted by this gesture to respect his beliefs, will then offer the Bishop a compromise in which the True Faith is allowed to provide a Priest and Parish for the Jini settlement – something the Bishop has been seeking for a while – in exchange for a True Faith sealing of the wedding.