CIRCLE OF WOLVES
An adventure by Michael Prescott

THE SITUATION
Morton village has a werewolf problem, and neither prayer nor pitchfork has solved it.

Tracks (booted, barefoot and paw) are easily followed, leading through the forest up the river Mor to an ancient mound, an old holy place nestled in the shadow of a rocky escarpment.

The mound has a long history, which will soon claw its way into the present.

THE OLD MOUND
A cross-shaped mound, 30 high in the center, built from the rock of the escarpment, now covered in hardy grasses.

On the mound, sounds fall dead, with only the loudest noises carrying further than 60'.

THE STONE CIRCLE
The stones stand 15' tall, and are hewn from the native rock. Many are etched with thoughtless graffiti.

For spellcasters who have been purified by the pool, peaceful magic has double its normal effect.

QUARRY POOL
Knee-deep and crystal clear, the quarry pool effervesces with tiny bubbles. Acid vapors play across the surface, and the bottom is pale, bare rock. There are no fish.

Metal objects immersed in the water will emerge bright and shining. It has a sour taste; those who drink it are doubly affected by magic cast from within the stone circle that day.

THE BLAZING FISSURE
A great crack splits the mound, pulsing with foul vapors and a ruddy glow. The fissure is 30' deep and 4' wide, and the bottom runs with molten lava.

Water from the quarry pool slushes in over a blackened lip, spitting up angry gouts of steam.

The first part of the fissure is open to the air, but it runs a further 50' into the mound, ending in a small, lava-floored chamber.

Careful exploration will reveal sufficient hand- and foot-holds to climb inside, along the fissure wall. It ends 50' inside the mound in a narrow lava-floored chamber, 20' x 7'.

On a ledge is a Vinteralf warrior, dead and long reduced to a statue of ash that collapses at the slightest touch. She wears scale mail, a silver buckle and a mithril-silver bastard sword.

Floating on the lava are the six Embrenu Sætung. Five gleam brightly in the red light.

ENCONTERS IN THE WOODS
Roll d10 every d4+2 hours spent in the area:
1. A wolf-marked villager, lost, confused, and full of venison
2. The spirit of the wolf
3. The werewolf (at night only)
4. The hermit Wyrtung
5. A Morton search party (2d6)
6. Members of the Circle (d4+3)
7. Black bear
8. The ghost of Troy Ulfssen
9. A stripped animal carcass
10. Deer (d4)

POOL OF GEFEOHT
A ceremonial pool predating the stone circle. Cracked, it will not hold water long, but any who fill it (even slightly) and bathe are blessed, and cannot be transformed by the Leádstæf until the next time they eat a meal.

The hermit bathes here regularly, and his off-pressed bucket sits in long grass nearby, as does his cyldwort-filled pipe. Perhaps he bathes now.

WATERFALL
This is the source of the Mor, which gives Morton its name. It flows underground above the escarpment and emerges here.

The mound-builders threw their sacrifices into it, and bone and skull fragments remain within the swirling pool at its base.

Half buried in pebbles: a tiny silver gauntlet containing a gnome-sized skeletal hand, and two golden rings.

DRY CAVE
A crack in the escarpment, a packed earthen floor shows frequent use. It runs 25' into the escarpment; within it hang hundreds of sprigs of dried cyldwort, one fresh. If consumed, effects vary by person and last d4 hours. Roll d6 + doses taken and apply all effects up to the result:
1. ringing in the ears
2. shivers, chattering teeth
3. painful cramps
4. incapacitating dizziness
5. life-threatening hypothermia
6. cold insight from the stars (d2 times only)

LAIR OF THE HERMIT
Inside: a cook fire, latrine pit and a filthy bedroll, all unwisely close. Wrapped in the roll is a Vinteralf dagger of mithril silver.

A subtle magic draws small forest creatures here; their bones litter the forest outside.

ANCIENT ROAD
Scattered cobbles run four leagues due east until finally being swallowed by the forest. Thrice blessed, one cannot meet enemies while walking upon it.

GARDEN IN THE RUINS
Remnants of a cottage create a sheltered space. Erected by a wizard now long dead, who came centuries before the Vinteralf to study the mound, circle and pool.

The hermit grew cyldwort here until the Circle of Morton began using it as a regular campsite. The hermit fumes, but dares not confront them alone.
CIRCLE OF WOLVES

THE WEREWOLF

A restless spirit wanders the lands around the mound; it is the soul of anguish and hunger unfilled.

It roams at night, looking for a victim: it can possess anyone that bears its mark, transforming them instantly into a snow-white wolf of fantastic size and ferocity. It will attack savagely, gorging itself on meat if it has the chance, fleeing into the woods if outmatched - ideally with a stolen limb to gnaw.

Unless treated by powerful magic, bites heal to a purplish scar: a wolfmark.

Members of the circle, like everyone in Morton, bear the mark of Hyngan.

The Circle believes that the coming of the wolf is a test of their faith. They return to the mound regularly.

They are serious but good-natured, and seek converts.

TROY ULFSSEN, WITNESS HERALD

Unaware that he is a ghost, Troy wanders the Morton wood preaching devotion to the old ones. Hyngan has added his mind with visions, and Troy unwittingly seeks to lure others into disturbing the Embrenu.

The werewolf is no common lycanthrope, bearing a mark (a bite on his left forearm).

The kin of Hyngan are as follows, from least to greatest:

- Brégnes, the spirit of terror
- Angnes, the spirit of fear
- Cwealm, the spirit of pain and torment
- Egesa, the spirit of dread and horror
- Invitsorh, the spirit of sorrow brought on by malice

Like Hyngan, the Leádstæf are intangible and invisible, detectable only by the most sensitive. Unable to withstand the heat of the narrow cave, they leave immediately.

Each is the herald of the next: if the Leádstæf choose, they can leave a mark usable by the next.

Those possessed by Brégnes and Angnes take on wolf form, while the victims of Hyngan. Cwealm manifests as an arctic fox, the flesh flayed from its skull.

Egesa appears as a white-furred bat of fearsome visage and 12' wingspan.

Inwitsorh manifests as a polar bear, white-furred and three-headed.

THE EMBRENU SÆTUNG

In the narrow chamber beneath the mound, floating on the surface of the lava, are five platinum bowls, engraved with mazes. Each contains an ingot of shimmering, molten silver, into which one of the great spirits of the Leádstæf has been bound.

A sixth bowl - which once held Hyngan - floats off to one side. Road by Troy, contact with the cavern wall has let it cool and its contents have solidified.

If the silver in the other bowls is spilled or solidifies, the spirit trapped inside is freed.

The bowls are incredibly hot and will burn the unprotected: this counts as a mark for the purposes of transformation.

Finally, drinking the molten silver will cause the spirit to be permanently bound to the drinker's body. This will surely kill the drinker, destroying the spirit along with them. If the imberih somehow survives, they are permanently possessed by the spirit.

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The Will of Devils

The Leádstæf wish to depart for the north as soon as possible, but will not leave their kin behind if any remain imprisoned.

Until all six are released, they will harass anyone in the area, attempting to draw attention to the fissure.

The Hermit

Wyr tung the mad has lived on the mound since he was a young boy. He is the latest inheritor of a secret tradition, for he is the guardian of the Embrenu Sætung.

Chosen by the mound itself, he knows all its ways. He knows of Hyngan's hunger and the folly of the Circle of Morton.

He rags are filthy and his hair plastered with animal fat, but his skin and hands are scrubbed clean from his daily baths in the pool.

The old powers of mound speak to him, and he serves them faithfully. Though he has no idea why, he dutifully maintains the cache of silver in the other bowls.

The Frost Women

The starpriests know the day would come when the Leádstæf would escape, and prophesied its exact hour. A year ago, a party of their bravest warriors set forth on a quest.

Their task: to prevent the spirits returning north by any means.

On their way south, they have been beset by every imaginable calamity. Several are injured, and they grieve the loss of their leader, their starpriest, their doctor, their two archers, and their finest swordmaster.

Used to arctic extremes, they are sick with the unbearable heat, which robs them of their vitality and causes frightening hallucinations.

The Survivors

Bregnan bears a two-handed vorpal blade and wears starstudded plate chain.

Zau wields dual maces of paralysis and is clad in white, hydra-skin armor.

Syareen, the translator, fights with a scarab of extortion - a mithril, animate wasp.

Pioban, the scout and pathfinder, wears a cloak of invisibility and wields a sling staff.

Nurmin, their confessor-acoalyte, is starblind but sees three heartbeats into the future. She fights unarmed, and alarmingly well.

They know all the ways to kill the Leádstæf. When they arrive, they will immediately seek out Wyr tung, the hermit, to obtain cylwort, the only thing that will allow them to operate unhindered.

Thereafer, they will do everything in their power to:

- magically trap the fissure entrance
- slay any escaped Leádstæf
- kill anyone marked by the Leádstæf, even Wyr tung

They have made unthinkable sacrifices on their journey, and are all five bound together by the memory of it. They expect to die here, and are determined to make their lives count.