

HOOF, MUD, CLAW, AND BLADE

Will the characters save the centaur couple from the wolves?

Hook

Through the torrential downpour, the sounds of beasts howling and a woman shouting carry through the woods.

BACKSTORY

Pronaris, the centaur, has carried new life within her womb for nearly twelve months, but several days ago, she felt a change and knew, as all mothers do, that it was time. Following tradition, she and her mate, Priaeon, left the herd and made for Halefoal, a bald hill upon which all centaur offspring of their herd have been birthed.

The journey was difficult as rain has fallen uninterrupted for several days upon the region, turning earth to mud, and tiny streams into log choked rivers. The centaurs picked their way slowly through the woods, at times pressing through saturated mire up to their knees. Eventually, the exhausted mother and her love arrived at the base of Halefoal only to be attacked by a pack of wolves which had been following them for several days.

Priaeon aimed his bow with the practice of a veteran warrior and dropped the closest wolf with an arrow through the throat. As Pronaris desperately made for the top of the hill, Priaeon fought with the rage and fury that only a father could in order to keep the pack at bay. Though he slew many, he was eventually forced to retreat and join his mate at the top of the hill where he continues to watch over Pronaris as she struggles to deliver their child. All the while, the pack of hungry and cunning wolves is slowly making its way in for the kill.

ENCOUNTER

The encounter begins when the characters overhear the battle between the two centaurs and the wolf pack:

The rain continues to fall, the relentless deluge finding its way in through even the smallest gap in your cloak and tunic, and the mud clings to your feet, making every step a struggle to complete. You are just pulling one foot free when you hear, from somewhere off to the right, the sound of beasts howling then a loud yelp of pain followed quickly by another.

If the characters investigate, read the following:

A flash of lightning illuminates the entire forest as you near the base of a low, bald hill. In that brief instant, you see a centaur standing at the summit brandishing a cruel spear. Beside him lies a second centaur coated in blood and mud with a swollen belly. Closing in on the two centaurs is a pack of eight wolves which are slowly making their way up the slick hillside. Several wolves lie dead at the base of the hill with huge arrows protruding from the blood-soaked fur around their necks.

The Hill. The rain has turned the entire hill into difficult terrain. Shrubs and underbrush dot the slopes giving any medium size or smaller creature half cover. It is 45 feet from the base of the hill to where Pronaris and her mate have made their stand.

Wolf Pack. Due to Priaeon's marksmanship, the pack has been whittled down to just 8 wolves which have made it 10 feet up the hill and are moving cautiously to encircle their prey. The pack is so focused on the centaurs that any attempt to surprise them will be at advantage. If the party intervenes, the pack will break up with 5 wolves turning on the characters while the remaining wolves close in on the centaurs.

The Centaurs. Priaeon (centaur) has only 3 arrows left and 10 hit points remaining. Pronaris (centaur) is lying prone at the top of the hill and is suffering from 3 levels of exhaustion. If the party manages to save her life and tend to her health, she will soon give birth to a healthy baby centaur. As a sign of their appreciation, the centaur couple will name their child after a character who went to extraordinary lengths to protect them or after a character who fell in battle. Priaeon will also offer his spear to the party, a sacrifice of great significance within his herd.

TREASURE

Priaeon's spear is inscribed with the lineage of his family going back to his earliest ancestors. It acts as a +1 spear and is worth 450 gp.

SCALING GUIDE

For a more challenging encounter, add 2 wolves. For a truly deadly encounter, replace the 2 wolves with 1 dire wolf.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- The characters encounter a centaur search party who are suspicious as to how they acquired the spear?
- A pair of ankheg, driven close to the surface by the rain, have caught the scent of the battle and are closing in?
- As the party and centaurs are recovering, the hillside gives way revealing the entrance to a long-buried crypt?

QUEST MASTER TIPS

Combat Tip. Wolves are far from mindless beasts that throw themselves at the first thing that moves. They are smart and tactical hunters that are able to take down much larger creatures than themselves due to their ability to work as a pack. Consider having 3 of the 5 wolves that break off from the pack focus down the largest character while the other 2 try to take down much weaker looking targets.

Exploration Tip. The hill is considered difficult terrain, but you can certainly make it more challenging than that to climb. Consider having the party need to overcome skill checks as they try and keep their footing in the mud, maintain their grip on slippery rocks, and leap out of the way of falling rocks or logs caught up in the runoff.

Roleplaying Tip. Both Priaeon and Pronaris will owe not only their lives but the life of their new child to the party if they manage to rescue them. This is now small debt to repay, and if you feel that the spear is not enough, consider having the centaurs offer to bring the party with them back to their herd. There they can bestow upon them additional gifts and possibly put them through ceremonies that will

CENTAUR

Large monstrosity, neutral good

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 45 (6d10 + 12)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

Skills Athletics +6, Perception +3, Survival +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Charge. If the centaur moves at least 30 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a pike attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) piercing damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The centaur makes two attacks: one with its pike and one with its hooves or two with its longbow.

Pike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

provide mechanical benefits such as increased Wisdom or Charisma ability scores.

NPC PROFILES

PRIAEON

Personality Traits. I am calm and collected in the face of danger. I also tend to think people are joking when they actually aren't.

Ideal. Protector: I will lay my life down before I see an innocent once taken. (Good)

Bond. Pronaris has been my mate for many years and I am honored to be starting a family with her.

Flaw. I take unnecessary risks.

PRONARIS

Personality Traits. I speak kindly and offer quick loyalty to those who show me respect. I also have a short temper for those that would do my family harm.

Ideal. Courage: When evil lurks nearby, the greatest defense is a fearless spirit and unwavering faith in the gods. (Good)

Bond. I will do anything it takes to ensure my child is safe and raised to be a mighty leader within my herd.

Flaw. I fear that I am not strong or wise enough to be a good mother.

WOLF

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+1)	15 (+2)	15 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages -

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pack Tactics. The wolf has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the wolf's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

