

## **Of Werewolves and Weretigers**

By Antaeus

In the time before man forgot about magick, there were born to the High King, Omnisire, twin sons. Their mother, Shanice, died to give them life. The first-born had golden hair like his mother, and the second-born had dark hair like his father.

The high king named the golden-haired one Dorado, which in the language of the time meant "Golden Sun." He named the dark-haired one Pascale, which translated to "Peaceful Night."

The high king's realm was vast. His kingdom encompassed most of the known world, and his subjects were happy. Omnisire's people enjoyed the gifts given them freely by the Earth Mother.

As the two boys grew, they were schooled in the arts and in the skills of warfare. The years passed swiftly, and the kingdom prospered. The young boys grew into strong, handsome men and became mighty warriors.

In time, Omnisire's sons became old enough and wise enough to be kings in their own right. It was in their twentieth year that their father called them to his throne room. He told them that he would be leaving on an extended pilgrimage to the sacred city of Lhasa. Since he would be gone for many years, he wanted to name a provisional ruler.

Tradition dictated that the elder son, Dorado, would inherit the kingdom, but their father loved them both equally. Ignoring tradition, the high king divided his realm equally between his two sons.

Neither brother was jealous of the other. For many years, all was well with the brothers as both kingdoms continued to grow and prosper. In time, Pascale married a woman named Elvira. This evil demon was really a succubus sent to him by the dark lords of the underworld. Every night while he slept, Elvira would feast on all that was good in Pascale.

It took many years, but soon there was no goodness left in Pascale. Once her transformation of the king was completed, Elvira left him and returned to her underworld palace.

With no light left in him, the evil ones found it easy to take control of Pascale's mind using dark magick. Pascale had become a pawn in the dark lords' plan to dominate the Earth.

When Omnisire returned from his pilgrimage to Lhasa, the dark forces prompted Pascale to kill his father. While the High King slept, his son crept into his chambers and slit his throat. Pascal offered his father's severed head in sacrifice to his dark lords.... and the bloody war between the two brothers began.

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King Pascale worshiped the evil gods of darkness. The "Dark King," as Pascale's subjects called him behind his back, rejoiced in the torture and mutilation of his enemies. King Pascale took great pleasure in performing many of these atrocities himself. Legend has it that he bathed in the blood of virgins so that he could live forever. His people suffered a great deal under his rule.

King Dorado was the opposite of his brother. He worshiped the gods of light and love. A kind man with a good heart, he was beloved by his people, who called him the "Sun King." This ruler took no pleasure in killing, even forgiving the assassins sent by his brother to kill him.

The Sun King was so forgiving that, after he won a battle, he always gave the Dark King's men a choice: They could live in his kingdom peacefully or could go back to his brother's country. They always chose to stay and were the loudest of Dorado's subjects in their praise of him.

The gods of light blessed the Sun King's land, making it fertile and green. Its rivers were clear and abundant with life. His subjects prospered under this good king's rule.

The two armies fought hundreds of battles over the years. Being equal in number, one could never completely overcome the other.

Soon the Dark King grew frustrated over his inability to defeat his brother. If he couldn't beat him by mortal means, he would use magick to defeat him.

Prompted by the dark gods, the Dark King ordered his wizard, Cloven, to summon up a shapeshifter from the underworld. A powerful being who could change at will into a ferocious animal to destroy his brother.

The obedient wizard made a pact with the forces of darkness. They would grant Cloven eternal life and help him create powerful allies for the Dark King in return for his soul. Fearing the wrath of the Dark King if the pact were not sealed, Cloven agreed to the bargain.

Using powerful spells and dark magick, the mage summoned up a score of half-man half-beasts.

Ferocious in battle, these cursed creatures had a lifespan many times that of mortal man and an appetite for human flesh. Their wounds would heal almost immediately unless inflicted by silver. The beasts could not be killed save by the removal of their heads, or if a vital organ was pierced by silver. The wizard named his creations werewolves. "Were," which meant "man" in their language, and "wolf" for the animal that they became.

When the dark magick was done, the gods of darkness kept their promise. They bore Cloven alive into the abyss, where he would live eternally in suffering and pain.

The fiercest of the horrors conjured up by Cloven was Magma. He was the first of the werewolves to emerge from the cauldron of darkness, and he was the most bloodthirsty of all.

It was Magma who taught his minions to tear out and eat the hearts of humankind, and it was Magma that forced them to fight to the death in battle.

Legend has it that he had an appropriate punishment for any werewolf who didn't fight hard enough in battle. Magma would chain them to a wall and devour their hearts. As it grew back, each lycan would take a turn ripping out the new heart and eating it.

Under Magmas' leadership, these "demons of the dark" devastated the countryside. They killed both man and beast without conscience.

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The Sun King's army was no match for these almost invulnerable creatures. Worse yet, those of his men wounded by these abominations became werewolves themselves. Thus, the number of monsters grew. Soon it became apparent to the Sun King that only the magick of light could defeat the magic of darkness.

The Sun King sought the counsel of his mage, Balain. Could he find a way to defeat these creatures born of darkness?

Balain fasted and meditated for fourteen days and nights before the gods of light gave him their aid. On the last day of his meditation, the exhausted and drained Balain was provided the answers.

The trustworthy mage immediately told King Dorado the information the gods of light had given him.

The werewolves were not invincible. Beheading would kill them quickly. The piercing of a vital organ with silver would kill each beast slowly. If a wound were inflicted by silver, the lycan would revert to human form, and it would only heal when the silver was removed. If a limb were removed by an object made of silver, it would never regenerate.

So, it was silver, the metal named after the moon, that was the one thing that could hurt or stop a werewolf.

However, silver alone would not be enough to entirely defeat the lycans, Balain told the king. For that, the gods had commanded him to create an army—an army of creatures who were stronger than the inhuman monsters. An army that would be able to hunt down and defeat the lycans, wherever they went.

King Dorado gave his mage permission to do whatever the gods asked of him. The next day Balain set to work, creating the beings the gods of light had instructed him to produce.

With his magick strengthened by the gods of light, the mage worked tirelessly, shaping and forming the beings the deities had designed.

Soon his spells and incantations became so powerful that they made the very earth tremble. From his blood, his sweat, and his very life energy, weretigers, the bane of the werewolves, were born. He named the powerful beings of good and light weretigers, after the animal that they could become.

The first to emerge from the cauldron of life was named Dunkeld, which meant "wolf killer." Being the first-born, Dunkeld was the strongest and wisest of his brethren. As a man, Dunkeld was light skinned and stood well over seven feet tall. He was handsome and muscular in his human form. As a weretiger, he was pure white with mesmerizing blue eyes and unstoppable strength and speed, a powerful and dangerous killing machine.

Balain used his magick to pull two hundred weretigers from the cauldron of life before he collapsed. The king had the finest healers in the kingdom attend to the mage in an attempt to save him. In the end, however, all magick, good or ill, has its price. The good king's mage had used the last of his own breath to give life to his creations.

So it was that Balain's spirit passed through the Gates of Ilium into the afterworld. When it arrived, the gods of light welcomed him into their number.

The Sun King, although saddened by the loss of his friend and mage, was grateful for Balain's sacrifice. As a reminder to always remember the sacrifice of their father, the king gave each weretiger a symbol of the House of Balain to wear. It was a pendant made of solid silver.

The pendant bore an oval eyelet that sat atop a crossbeam with pointed ends. This intersected a six-inch-long oval center post that tapered to a point at the bottom, like a knife.

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On the day after the funeral of Balain, the Sun King awoke to find hundreds upon hundreds of men standing in the castle courtyard.

They were all former soldiers of the Dark King. The spokesman for the group was a tall and muscular man called Oman.

When the Sun King asked him what it was that they wanted, Oman told him that they were all volunteers. He said that if weretigers were anything like werewolves, a drop of their saliva in a non-fatal wound would turn a man into a weretiger as well. To a man, they wanted to fight for the Sun King as weretigers and defeat the Dark King's army of werewolves.

After meditating on it, the Sun King agreed. The next morning the weretigers disbursed themselves amongst the throng of men. Following Dunkeld's lead, the weretigers made a deep scratch on the right forearm of each man, and then licked the wound.

At first, the Sun King feared that once the weretigers tasted the blood of man, they would turn on the volunteers. He had nothing to fear. These were creatures of the light, and the taste of human blood was repugnant to them.

The volunteers fell ill for four days with high fever and delirium. The king's healers feared that they would all die. On the fifth day, the men began to improve. By the sixth day, they were on their feet. On the eighth day, they could transform.

While the new weretigers trained, the king prepared his mortal troops for battle. Needing more silver, he ordered his armorers to gather all the silver in his kingdom. When that had been done, he ordered them to melt it down and make weapons.

His smithies worked tirelessly, fashioning swords with a core of iron and an outer casing of silver. Their apprentices took the still glowing

swords from the forge and distributed them. Over half of King Dorado's soldiers now carried weapons that were lethal to werewolves.

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On the day of the battle that would decide whether darkness or light would rule the Earth, the armies of the two kings met on a great

battlefield. The army of the Dark King numbered in the many thousands. Most of them were werewolves.

The Sun King's army was much smaller and consisted almost entirely of men. Their contingent of weretigers numbered less than a thousand.

Only five hundred yards separated the armies when Magmas' men, their bloodlust up, shape-shifted into their wolf forms and charged. The Dark King's mortal soldiers hung back, not wanting to risk their lives when the werewolves were expendable.

The weretigers waited until the werewolves were almost upon them before they shape-shifted. Having never seen the likes of the weretigers before, the beasts stopped their charge.

Roaring and slashing, the weretigers decimated the front ranks of the beasts. The Sun King's men, screaming his name, followed the weretigers into battle.

Sunlight gleaming from their silver swords, they stabbed and hacked at the fiendish creatures. The Sun King had instructed them to decapitate the werewolves whenever possible. Failing that, they were to try to pierce a vital organ or remove a limb. This they did with abandon, and it was a bloodbath on both sides.

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Although the werewolves outnumbered the weretigers by almost a hundred to one, they were losing. The weretigers were bigger, faster, and stronger than the werewolves. They were decimating the ranks of the Dark King's accursed army.

Magmas fought like the demon from hell that he was. By chance, he learned that the way to kill a weretiger was to remove its still beating

heart. It was not an easy thing to accomplish. It took twenty werewolves attacking one weretiger to do it.

Led by Magmas, the werewolves quit fighting the humans and focused on attacking the weretigers instead. The weretigers fought valiantly, and although they killed fifty lycans for each weretiger lost, the fatalities began to take their toll.

The Sun King's men had pulled back to let the weretigers do the bulk of the fighting for the king. Once they realized what was happening to their allies, the men rallied to the weretigers' defense, and the tide of battle began to turn.

With their wounds made by the silver swords unable to heal, and their comrades falling headless around them, the werewolves soon lost the will to fight. Magmas tried to rally them, but it was to no avail. Even monsters are afraid of dying.

The savagery of the weretigers and the decimation of the werewolves demoralized the human portion of the Dark King's army. They abandoned the battlefield and fled for the safety of the castle.

Magmas, now down to a fighting force of only one hundred werewolves soon followed.

When they arrived at the castle walls, the werewolves found their entry barred and archers shooting silver-tipped arrows into their midst. Enraged, Magmas and his remaining men scaled the castle walls and killed every living thing inside. No one's life was spared—not the women, the children, or even that of the Dark King, himself.

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Unaware of what had transpired before they arrived, the Sun King's army surrounded the Dark King's castle and awaited the arrival of their king.

It took four days for the Sun King to make the journey to his brother's castle. During that time, Dunkeld and a few of his men climbed one of the castle walls. They observed Magmas, his mate, Ursula, and the rest of the werewolves consuming the humans they had killed.

When Dunkeld told the Sun King what had taken place, the king was appalled. Saddened by the loss of his brother, the Sun King ordered his army back to his lands. Before he left, the king ordered Dunkeld to rid the world of the werewolves.

That night Dunkeld and his remaining 25 weretigers scaled the castle walls and attacked the lycans. In the ensuing confusion Magmas, his mate Ursula, and about a dozen other lycans escaped.



The descendants of Magmas and Dunkeld still battle today.

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