

HANGOVER CITY

A City Sourcebook for Dresden Files RPG

by Sue Wilson

Chapter Seven- The Wirral Wolves

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The Ferry Across

The water laps at the side of the ferry as it pulls away from the dock. Angela looks back at the Pier head, taking a photo of the famous view of the waterfront buildings known as the Three Graces. As the shutter snaps Cale looks up, concerned she may be photographing him. It's the first positive response he has made since they left China town and An Bao helped him onto the boat.

"Are you alright?" She asks.

He manages a nod. Then he leans back. "Just trying to take it all in." He confesses. "I guess..." He stops and blinks up at her in the sunlight.

She sits down next to him and pats his leg. "I am glad you came with me." She assures him. "I don't know if I could have got through that on my own. They are very intense."

"Ditto." He manages. He looks back towards the city as the Ferry swings round and starts to chug across the current. "I'd guessed dad was important, but no one ever said how." He shudders for a second. "I guess outside china town they might not even know." He looks down at his knees. "I just wish I'd had chance to know him." She sits in silence not sure what to say. To her surprise he continues. "It's not all that uncommon in the Breed. Nature of the job. There are a lot of us who grew up orphans or missing a parent. Like me and Rick. But there is always some one to take you in. Ream is very careful about that. May be if it hadn't been so common I would have realised sooner. Asked some one about him." He looks over his shoulder at the receding city. "Gone there sooner."

"Will you go back?" She asks.

"Yeah, probably." Then he adds with a sigh. "If I'm allowed."

"Shen said he would see you later." She reminds him. Given the way they reacted, she is sure China town would be all to keen to welcome him 'home'.

He looks at her, and she can see a sadness in his eyes. "Might not be his choice." He says.

"Breed are meant to be independent so..." He turns his eyes to the other side of the river and she can feel him turning his back on China town mentally as well as physically. "That might not go down too well."

She looks at him and the expression on his face as he buries his anticipated pain. It doesn't seem fair. She turns to look at the low grey buildings across the shining ribbon of silver. "So." She prompts, hoping to distract him for his dark thoughts. "Where next?"

"Your lot." He says.

"My lot?" She responds confused.

"Wolf-kin." He replies. He looks at her surprised face. "Sorry, am I not meant to know?"

She shrugs.

"Breed." He excuses. "Sorry but... well even under the perfume and soap... you smell of dog."

She glares at him. "What?"

"Well not smell as such." He responds as he tries to dig himself out of the hole, "It's more like a taste, but through the skin." He struggles to explain a sense he knows she does not have.

"I'm not racist." He says quickly. "I mean you can't help being born... that way... It's not your fault."

Her glare turns harder. "I wasn't born this way. I chose to be what I am." She says firmly.

He frowns at her, clearly confused. "What?"

"I leant to be..." She looks round the boat lowering her voice. "What I am."

He stares at her whilst she tries to give him the cold shoulder to make it clear how angry he has made her. Eventually he whispers "Weird. Why would yo do that?"

She looks at him, her eyes flashing. "Because I wanted to make a difference. It was something I believed in." She hisses.

"What? Running around sniffing each others arses and peeing on lampposts?" He taunts.

She slaps him hard on the shoulder, her hand glancing off the patch on his leathers. It stings the back of her hand and she withdraws it sharply.

"Ow!" he protests. Rubbing his own arm.

She glares at him as she unconsciously licks the back of her hand to reduce the smarting feeling. "No protecting the planet." She growls. "You wouldn't understand."

He looks at her incredulously. "I wouldn't understand. Listen miss I put my life on the line every day for this city. When was the last time you took down a Ghoul!"

"Two years ago." She responds truthfully.

He stops looking at her. His expression changes, a look of begrudging respect. "Really?"

"Really." She says. "My pack and I, back where I live. It was attacking a friend of ours. We distracted it so he could kill it with his magic."

"Oh." He says.

The ferry turns lining up with the Birkenhead dock. It gives them another view across the river and towards the city. The sky line of buildings a silhouette against the white sky. The river is a dirty brown and no longer shining. She looks at him as he studies the sky line then he looks at her. "Chose it?" He echoes almost as if he is trying to grasp the concept.

She nods.

He sighs. "The only people who get a choice in this city are the changelings, and then its an all or nothing so most of them avoid making it. You are born wolf. Born Breed. Born Vampire. If you have some magical talent then Callum or one of the others will find you and teach you. Often whether you like it or not given how dangerous those skills can be without a focus." He looks towards the city, nodding to the two distinctive shapes that make up the Cathedrals; one an inverted funnel the other a finger to the sky, "Or God chooses you." He muses. "No one really gets a say in anything, you just do it."

He stands up as the boat bumps against the shore. He offers her his hand. She looks at it for a moment before taking it and standing. He leads her towards the off ramp.

"I'm sorry I took the piss." He says softly as they step onto dry land.

"It's ok. I guess I didn't understand how big the cultural difference is." She says.

He laughs, the tone almost bitter. "Yeah well, you guys are the land of the free not us." She nods.

There is a rumbling voice beside them. "Mr Tien. If you have quite finished with your propaganda."

Angela turns. The speaker is massive; approaching seven foot. He is a mass of muscle which quite literally blocks out the sun coming through the transparent curved roof. His face is all but obscured by a thick blond beard and nest of blond curls.

"Master Gunnar." Cale says, bowing his head slightly. His tone is remarkably respectful given his earlier reference to sniffing and lamp posts.

The man turns his gaze on Angela for a second, his expression flinching into the slightest of smiles. "Well met sister." He greets her.

"Hello." She replies nervously.

"I would have thought a Pym would have been a more fitting escort." Gunnar complains looking at Cale. "Sending a Stanley is almost a declaration of war."

"Jakes busy." Cale responds pointedly.

The grunt from the man is only just short of a growl. "I do not acknowledge him." He steps forward towards Cale. His movement threatening but Cale stands his ground.

"Cale came with me to China Town." Angela defends quickly. "Tu Di Gong asked him to keep me safe during the rest of my stay."

Gunner looks at her. "Really." He inhales sharply. "Well they say the old man is almost as mad as the king."

Cale's eyes narrow at the insult. His hand drifts closer to the pouch on his hip.

"But we all know how much wisdom there is in the madness." Gunnar follows up quickly. He looks down at Cale. "Well then Stanley. Keep the peace and laws of hospitality and you can have safe passage whilst you guard my sister. But don't come this side of the river again without a deed of action from the council."

"Sir." Cale almost spits out the word.

"This way sister. Let us show you the wolves of the old country, so you may have pride in the person you are." He leads them up the ramp to a waiting van.

Wolves

There's a ferry across the Mersey, but beware. There are wolves on the other side.

On 902AD the long boats of Ingimund warriors arrived on the Wirral peninsula. They established a community and set up a thing (Viking Parliament) at Cross Hill. This gentle bowl in a flat English field the saw the first democratic debates in the U.K. and operated until the area was over run during the Norman conquest. Despite the William's forces destroying their political power, the viking community were well established and the people remained and thrived. A recent genetic studies it was revealed that 42% of the current population of the wirral are of Viking descent.

Many years later, the football ground of Tranmere Rovers was built on the site of the thing and they remain the only football league team with a Norwegian Viking name. The wolves have never been sure what to make of the Rovers part, on one hand it speaks of the ancient wanderings of their people as they searched for a new home land, which is an important part of their history, but on the other it is, well, a bit 'doggy' and embarrassing. However it does given them a nice warm place to 'do their thing.'

Amongst Ingimund forces, and Olaf's who followed after him, there were a number of highly regarded warriors that acted as his shock troupes. Essentially these were the equivalent of modern day special forces units, and they were treated with great respect; given the best cuts of meat and the first choice of the women. They were also Lyncanthropes, which may go a long way to explain why everyone else was so nice to them. (That 42% is beginning to look a bit more significant now isn't it?)

However as the community settled into a more peaceful farming based way of life on the rich soil of the peninsula, having rage powered killing machines was less of an advantage than it had been. There was pressure on the berserker descendants to exhibit a little more self control. Years of researching magics, praying to the gods and divining the burning leaves for insight have allowed the wolves to take the next step and actually transform into the beasts they admire and gifting them true were-forms.

Although it is still the most common, not all of these forms are 'wolf'. The Wolves also have a fair number of werebear and wereravens (two animals

highly regarded in the Viking saga) There was a small community of Werehares but they moved across the Dee and into Wales after one was caught and burnt as a witch in Chester in 1656. Even amongst those who are 'wolf' in their form, 1000 years of civilisation has had an impact and most of the shapes are more 'canine' and 'lupine'. Still packs of feral dogs running through town centres are far easier to explain away than a full wolf pack, so Ream believes this to be no bad thing. It is not like the claws and teeth are any less deadly.

Lycanthropes still arise in the community, but they are now treated in much the same way the Victorians treated people with Down's syndrome or similar learning difficulties. Lycanthropes are kept away from the sane for their own good, and are taught methods to control their rage. It seems as shameful amongst the wolves to have a lycanthrope child; they are a throw back that has not truly mastered the gift they have.

For the most part the Wolves remain on their side of the river, but they are still signed up to the Covenant, and their leader Gunnar has a place on the High Council. They have on a number of occasions turned out to help protect the city at times of crisis. A large number of Wolves helped fight the fires during the Blitz that almost destroyed the city, including a group of Lycanthropes who pulled many mortals out of the collapsed rubble before they burnt to death. By way of thanks the High Council gifted the group a small mansion in the grounds of Croxteth Hall where they can lead peaceful lives free of the discrimination they suffer under the Wolves. Living with them is a small family of Loup Garou who have made a home in the city with the Lycanthropes, brought together by what they see as the mutual hatred of every one else.

Face: Gunnar

Gunnar is a massive as both wolf and human. His human form is pushing seven foot and has a body born of a life spent in the Camel-lairds shipyard moving plates of steel by brute force. Since the yard moved onto smaller craft and there is less danger of sparks from the wielding he has allowed his blond hair and beard to grow long. His eyes are the clear blue of his nordic ancestors and he has made a small name for himself as a reliable extra in historical dramas where they need a hulking great viking to run screaming towards the hero and be shot down in a hail of arrows.

As a wolf he is too large to pass for anything natural and his fur is almost white. Callum once suggested he would have more success 'wearing a saddle and disguising himself as a pit pony'. Not surprisingly this was a suggestion the proud werewolf was all too quick to shoot down.

He is the leader of the Tranmere wolf pack, which being easily the biggest in the city, makes him the leader of all the wolves in Liverpool and gives him a seat on the High council. He is very traditional and holds power by physical strength. That said he knows his pack have a better chance of survival if he takes council from 'lesser beings' and formulates his decrees from their suggestions than just going with his own gut instinct. This is probably a very good thing as Gunnar is very much an 'attack first- interrogate the dead' person himself. Meeting of the council often take a break whilst Gunnar 'goes for a walk for a calm down' before decisions are made to ensure he is voting with his head not his anger.

Gunnar is fiercely loyal and protective of the wolves, including the 'brothers in another shape' as he calls the other weres. He knows the vampires, Fae and wizards are all well versed in social manipulation and court politics that his people have less experience with, so he is consciously on guard against his faction being out manipulated or abused by 'the politicians over the water'. As a result he sometimes sees offence where none was intended and reacts badly to minor slurs. The other factions pussy foot around him, always conscious that his anger is only just beneath the surface. If he did call a war the variety of weres under his command would make them a difficult faction to take down.

The Wolf-kin at Croxteth Park

The lycanthropes live in what used to be the Dower house of Croxteth Hall. The main hall is owned by the local council and open to the public but the Dower house is still in the 'private' hands of the Molyneux Charitable Trust (One of Emma Clayton's projects and funded by Graham Rathbone). The building is surrounded by 35 hectares thick woodland and a high stone wall with a very solid metal gate. Local people believe the community living there are adults with dangerous personality disorders, which helps visitors to a minimum.

In fact there are 15 Lycanthropes, 11 of these originally from the wirral and exiled here by the wolves when it became clear they could not control their anger and 'make the change'. The other 4 are children born in the community since it was founded and who have grown up at the hall. In addition there are 3 Loup Garou who act as 'carers' to the lycanthropes for most of the time, and are locked in wards during the full moon. Despite the violent reputations of the creatures the community has the air of a hippy commune about it. They have their own farm which makes them mostly self sufficient in meat and veg, though they still have to buy in staples like rice and flour.

In the last few years there has even been attempts to make the community 'pay its way' by running anger management and relaxation courses, but so far this has not met with much success. The advice of "Oh just go with the flow and rip his throat out" was greeted by stunned silence by the last set of attendees. The concept probably needs more thought.