

Werewolf: The Mourning After

By Tara Leederman

You are the small, remote rural community of Pineridge, a village on the edge of wilderness, having little contact with the outside world. Until the last fortnight, you were tightly knit, much interrelated, and highly dependent on one another. Years of petty gripes and grudges had amassed between you, of course—favours unreciprocated, overreliance by some older residents on the younger, land borders transgressed by animals and encroaching fences. It was never anything that couldn't be solved with conversation and kindness... until the scourge of lycanthropy visited your village. First you heard wolves in the woods, then villagers began to find livestock slain in their paddocks in the morning mist.

Then the murders began, terrible and bloody.

Pineridge embarked on a series of investigations and trials. Who amongst you had been converted to darkness, killing fellow villagers, consuming family and friends? Who schemed and killed in your midst?

In the end, fifteen died. Some met their deaths during the night, torn asunder by the werewolves. Some found execution at the hands of the village... and you slowly begin to realize that not all of them could have been werewolves.

Every adult in the village has blood on their hands, and recriminations fly to a fro. Winter is on the way, and the harvest must come in. You cannot survive if you lose another soul; you're stuck with each other. You've barely survived the scourge of lycanthropy... but can you survive the mourning after?

Werewolf: The Mourning After is a story of community rebuilding and the hunt for justice and restoration. It is a reaction to, and in conversation with, the well-known social deduction “party game” known as Werewolf (also Mafia and its ilk). Fundamentally, it is about the effects of paranoia and purgation brought on by witch-trial phenomena, and about the ways a community may choose to recover in the aftermath. If you have ever played Werewolf and felt as though you and your friends turned into ravaging sociopaths for an hour, and you wanted to think about how being in that village might make a person feel... this game is for you.

Workshopping and Safety Mechanics: “The Mourning After” is a game where emotions may run hot, and therefore emotional safety workshopping is a must. People Are More Important Than the Game—always, always. Immersion is not important; safety is. Go over check-ins, out-of-game negotiations, break, cut, and volume mechanics. Use of volume signalling (“volume up” with the hands when a scene is working well and can be amped up, and “volume down” when it would be best to cool the tone) can really help with a game of this nature. Lines and Veils can be useful, but a clear and direct Content Warning up front might help players more.

Structure: Like Werewolf, “The Mourning After” takes place in phases and involves a voting mechanic. Unlike “Werewolf,” all voting is public, and there is no elimination mechanic. The village is on the brink of population collapse; it needs all of its remaining people in order to survive the coming winter. In each phase, each player will receive a Discovery Card from the GM. This game includes Discovery Cards, as well as a means by which the GM can design and write new ones. You may also take inspiration from any Werewolf variant and add those characters to the game, as desired; add them in pairs, connect them, and remember each character needs 3 Discovery Cards during gameplay. Characters are provided for six players, and scale in pairs, so the game supports 4 or 6. Remove the appropriate Discovery Cards for 4.

Prologue: Look through the game and pick out the events which the characters should know about (nothing in the Discovery Cards), and offer a narrative to set the scene and the situation.

In Phase 1, all characters will come together at the tiny Pineridge Tavern for a town meeting. They should introduce their characters at the meeting first thing. They will address what has happened,

discuss, then have fifteen minutes of mingling and discussion time. Then they will come together and elect a new leader, as their former mayor himself was revealed to be a werewolf at the end of the trials. The new leader will invite them to address their known grievances with each other at this time.

In Phase 2, the GM will first announce that it is the next day and pass out one Discovery Card to each player. The leader will bring everyone together and begin the meeting, having received the Leadership Card, and they will ask for updates and any new grievances. Their job in this phase is to go over the grievances and present some options, as outlined on the Leadership Card: shall the village begin again tabula rasa, embark on a restorative model where all those who have transgressed attempt to amend their wrongs without being punished, or shall the village engage in retribution, punishing and taking from those who have done wrong in accordance with their evils? The Leader will lead a vote, and the day ends.

In Phase 3, the GM will first announce that it is the next day and pass out another Discovery Card to each player. The Leader will bring everyone together and begin the meeting, and they will ask for updates. Their job in this phase is to enact the results of the vote from the previous day, and plan an event, celebration, series of trials, festival, or ritual which will “restore” the community in accordance with that vote. Shall the community throw a Harvest Festival like every other year, to pretend nothing ever happened? Shall everyone in the community engage in a great ritual of Thanksgiving, pooling their resources to make sure everyone is restored and taken care of? Or shall the village descend into another orgy of recriminations and bloodshed?

Epilogue and Debrief: After the players have discussed, voted on, and planned their event, ritual, or course of action, ask them if they would like to act it out or narrativize it. If they choose to act it out, give them time to do so in the Epilogue phase. If they ask for narrative, give an overview of what happens and invite each person to contribute in turn. Then guide them into debrief. Ask each PC to lay down one object (pretend or real) that symbolizes their character, which they don’t wish to take with them. Ask them to “take,” or hold close, one object that they wish to keep, to inform who they are or their actions.

Characters

Dr. C. Westhaven: You are the town doctor. The werewolves, mysteriously at first, refused to harm you; when you were at the home of one of the villagers overnight, the werewolves would not harm anyone within. In the end, you learned that the mayor—your brother—was their leader. Despite the lycanthropic bloodlust that consumed him, he would not harm you. You did not vote for his execution, and you are deeply affected by his death. You believe that there could be a cure or exorcism for lycanthropy, and you would have preferred to lock up the werewolves and send someone to Ralston, a large city, for help. To you, the trials and executions were a terrible mistake, used to eliminate and divide you as a village.

Workshopping Instruction: Name your brother, the dead mayor, and define your relationship. Find one friend and one lover among the villagers. Discuss rival relationship with M. Rosebury.

A. Glenhollow: You are a seer, though no one but your immediate family knew this. Since you were a child, you have always seen the unseen, the terrible spirtuous entities that surround the village of Pineridge and the adjoining forest of Felfalough. Before the werewolves, you sensed a great cataclysm coming to your town. It is difficult to divine a werewolf just looking at them; you must see them beneath the moonlight and focus your powers on them. During the scourge, you divined two werewolves and brought them to trial... and you saved the lives of several villagers. Once you had people’s trust, you also deceitfully stated that a former lover of yours, X. Dartmoor, was a werewolf. They were not executed.

Workshopping Instruction: Meet up with X. Dartmoor and discuss your relationship and why you had a falling out. Why did you get together? How did you feel about the witch, Lady Dartmoor?

X. Dartmoor: You are a witch, though no one but your immediate family knew this. You have access to great powers of cauldron craft, but making such potions is time-consuming and dangerous, so you were only able to use your potions to help the village so far. During the trials, you believed fervently that your mother, Old Lady Dartmoor, was the alpha werewolf and, moreover, that she had originated the curse with dark magic she had wrought. You poisoned her with your potions; you have no confirmation yet if you were right. Your former lover, A. Glenhollow, a seer, claimed you were a werewolf during the trials, but the fact that you poisoned your mother (a feared hag and much despised) saved you. You may want revenge on them for that. With your revival potion, you saved the life of H. Hartshorn, renowned hunter, who took down a werewolf one night during the terror.

Workshopping Instructions: Decide on your relationship with your mother. Meet up with A.

Glenhollow. Discuss your relationship and why you had a falling out. Why did you get together?

H. Hartshorn: You are a hunter, of beasts and monsters both. Only you truly know the dark woods of Felfalough that surround the village, where you have long gathered herbs for the Dartmoor witches and their potions. For many years, you were lover to Old Lady Dartmoor; her child ministered to you with a revival draught when you fell in battle with a werewolf during the terror. Sadly, you learned that the old witch was poisoned by her own child, who believed her to be a werewolf, and you're torn between belief and disbelief, gratitude and vengeance. You have seen much in those woods, and you know there are worse spirits and curses waiting to descend upon the village in its darkest moment. Unity is vital.

Workshopping Instructions: Decide on the nature of your lover relationship with Old Lady

Dartmoor; give her a first name. Why did you fall out? Talk to X. Dartmoor and workshop.

M. Rosebury: Your family owns the most farmland in the village, as well as its most bountiful orchard. Your young daughter Lavender stole out of the house during the terror, and she happened to see a conference of the remaining werewolves, plotting to kill you. Sure enough, the next day, the werewolves attempted to turn envious feelings in the village against your family by accusing you of lycanthropy, but you were forewarned and forearmed. You started with the werewolf your daughter had identified: Madame Solent, the vicar's wife, who had painted herself as a virtuous woman campaigning against werewolves... who had been seen conspiring in the moonlight by your daughter. The town split in two, some loyal to the Roseburys, some loyal to the vicar in his wife... but by dint of some manipulation and clever rhetoric, you won the day by persuading the vicar to throw holy water on his wife.

Workshopping Instructions: Think about your role during the trials as a campaigner and leader, and approach other players about how this affected them. Approach C. Westhaven about rivalry.

V. Solent: (Note: This role has a gendered partner, but needn't be played by a man.) You are the town vicar. Your wife was proven to be a werewolf—not through confession or hanging, but when you were persuaded by M. Rosebury, the richest person in town, to throw holy water on her in full view of the village. Your wife was a strident campaigner against werewolves, and you thought she had been doing the Lord's work. You were so confident in her that you threw holy water on her to prove her innocence. Horribly, her flesh melted off her bones... leaving behind a wolf's skeleton. After this, you joined M. Rosebury to take down the mayor, after their daughter discovered him to be the last werewolf. You are a morose figure now, a haunted shade tortured by your wife's actions and those she killed, by day and night.

Workshopping Instructions: Give Madame Solent a first name, and decide some things about your relationship. Approach M. Rosebury about your current relationship and roleplay from here.

Discovery Cards: Place each of these on a small piece of paper or index card, then print.

- 1.) In the hovel belonging to Old Lady Dartmoor, mother to X. Dartmoor and feared witch, village wardens discovered a wolf pelt and salves, believed to induce transformation into a wolf.

- 2.) [Not to be given to those involved.] A. Glenhollow and X. Dartmoor were once lovers, espied while coupled in a forest glen, muttering dark magics together.
- 3.) Several bodies of those executed during the terror have gone missing from their graves, and limited remains have been found in the woods. It is believed werewolves exhumed them to eat.
- 4.) The old mayor's body has been examined closely; in death, long wolfish canines grew into his mouth, and fur covered the backs of his hands. The remains of corpses could be found in his stomach. He was most assuredly a werewolf, consuming the bodies of the living and the dead.
- 5.) The body of Old Lady Dartmoor shows no posthumous signs of common lycanthropy, but she is marred by several distinctive marks of cursing and a third nipple, for nursing her familiar imps.
- 6.) The mayor's journals reveal a mind slowly descending into madness over several months before the terror. He speaks of a cave said to contain a healing flower or mushroom, of following Old Lady Dartmoor, and a spirit who spoke his name with a howl in the deep forest.
- 7.) The mayor was seeing his sibling, Dr. C. Westhaven, for strange headaches and immense pressure for a year before the terror, asking if some miracle or magical cure existed. The doctor encouraged him to go to Ralston instead to seek treatment, but the mayor wouldn't go.
- 8.) Madame Solent spoke extensively of going mushroom foraging. She was known to ignore land boundaries and warnings, and several times went onto the Rosebury lands and orchards to pick mushrooms without asking permission or warning them. She claimed to have been shot at twice.
- 9.) [Do not give to H. Hartshorn.] The hunter, H. Hartshorn, delved deeply into the forest in search of game—deeper and deeper each year. While they knew the forest well, A. Glenhollow's father—known to be “fae-touched” and perhaps a changeling—warned that Hartshorn drove the forest before them, and silence followed; the forest would have its revenge.
- 10.) The Westhaven and the Rosebury lands have long abutted one another. A land dispute a generation ago apparently drove old Sir Rosebury, father to M. Rosebury, to ask Old Lady Dartmoor for a curse to be laid upon the Westhaven family.
- 11.) There was a land dispute between the Rosebury and the Westhaven family a generation ago; though the Westhavens won, misfortune has followed them ever since.
- 12.) H. Hartshorn was lovers with Old Lady Dartmoor, the notorious witch, in her younger days. It is believed she stole some of Hartshorn's essence to craft X. Dartmoor, and thereby have a child.
- 13.) The daughter of M. Rosebury discovered the identities of the werewolves because she had been sneaking out of the house to meet with a lover. Since an alliance with their family would be the most profane and forbidden, it is believed she had a tryst with one of the Westhaven siblings.
- 14.) A. Glenhollow's father was discovered in a hollow in the rock in the forest, a place where changeling children have long been left to return to the fairies, with a piece of fairy cake beside him—a gift of the good folk. He spoke of a cave at “Wood's End” where his mother once lived.
- 15.) Beneath the Westhaven home, village wardens have discovered an old cloth doll stuffed with hair and hellebore, its head wrapped tightly with tattered ribbon and a mandrake in its belly.
- 16.) Vicar Solent is an old friend of old Mr. Westhaven, father to the doctor and former mayor; he recruited Solent as vicar during the land dispute with the Roseburys a generation ago. Solent has long worried the evil eye of Old Lady Dartmoor fell upon them for coming to this cursed place.
- 17.) Around the Rosebury property, particularly the fences, there are hanging charms: a horned man in a cage of sticks. It could be superstition... but each one reeks of animal blood.
- 18.) The mayor's body, after his hanging on the final day of the terror and burial by Dr. Westhaven, has gone missing. A ghostly wolf has been sighted by H. Hartshorn deep inside the forest.

Leadership Card

You have been elected Leader during a vote at a village meeting. Your job is:

- **Phase One:** Once you are elected, invite the village to address their grievances with each other.
- **Phase Two:** Ask for updates and any new grievances. Go over the grievances and present some options: Shall the village begin again tabula rasa, embark on a restorative model where all those who have transgressed attempt to amend their wrongs without being punished, or shall the village engage in retribution, punishing and taking from those who have done wrong in accordance with their evils? Lead a vote, then end the day.
- **Phase Three:** Bring everyone together and begin the meeting; ask for updates. Here your job is to attempt to enact the results of the vote from the previous day, and plan an event, celebration, series of trials, festival, or ritual which will “restore” the community in accordance with that vote. Shall the community throw a Harvest Festival like every other year, to pretend nothing ever happened? Shall everyone in the community engage in a great ritual of Thanksgiving, pooling their resources to make sure everyone is restored and taken care of? Or shall the village descend into another orgy of recriminations and bloodshed? These are among the options that may be tried.