

Lycanthropy as Metaphor

Werewolves have always been my favorite mythological creature. To me, they're not about rage or hunger, they're about freedom. The Wolf is that savage part of us which rebels against society, the primitive part that has no patience for laws and no need for civilization. It is Defiance, pure and primal.

The Wolf has great power, the only power that really matters: the capacity for violence. It is this power that allows a werewolf to rebel, but it is inherently dangerous, easily abused. There is drama inherent in having to decide when to use such fearsome, bloody powers... and when to restrain them. Who deserves violent reprisal for their misdeeds? Does anyone? Is lycanthropy a power to be used for the benefit of others or oneself? Or is it a curse that must be cured?

To drive these questions home, the power of the Wolf must be under conscious control. None of that full moon crap! Once summoned, the Wolf may slip its leash, but the initial decision to invoke it must be up to the player. Anything less would undermine the moral dilemma.

The rest of this document shows you how to run a savage werewolf game, from the basic rules of lycanthropy (what it does, how it spreads) to a rogue's gallery of predators and prey. Along the way, we'll explore the workings of werewolf society, from street-prowling packs to penitent lone wolves. Though this is a generic sourcebook, I've also included an add-on game mechanic for modeling a werewolf's struggle for self-control: The Librium. Now for something you can sink your teeth into...

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Though werewolves work very hard to make humans think they don't exist, no cover-up is perfect. However, those who do find out (and survive!) tend to be more interested in exploitation than expose. The worst of them turn the predators into prey. Unlike most human antagonists, they come to the fight with the specialized weapons and tactics needed to take down creatures as powerful as lycanthropes. Sometimes, that means magic. Other times, it means ambushes and high-tech weapons. They are the bogeymen who haunt the nightmares of nightmares.

The Haruspex

This black market maven has more in common with Asian herbalists and Haitian witch doctors than the animal-eviscerating diviners of ancient Rome. She just thinks "Haruspex" sounds cool. Her potions, poisons, amulets, and aphrodisiacs demand high prices for one reason: unlike her historic predecessors, her shit actually works! The secret is to use real, supernatural creatures as the main ingredients.

To the Haruspex, every lycanthrope is a multi-million dollar payday. Their pelts can be used for shapeshifting, their hearts cooked into vitalizing elixirs, their bones ground into healing salves, and their intestines spilled for divination. Their eyes and ears can be worked into talismans that enhance the senses. Their claws and fangs can be fashioned into magical weapons. A human equipped with this kind of mojo is more than a match for any lycanthrope!