

WOLFSPELL

*An role-playing game for 3-6 players by Epidiah Ravachol
Illustrated by Andrew DeFelice*

GATHER TO YOU . . .

. . . two six-sided dice that you can tell apart, some paper and writing implements. Choose now which of these dice is your Wolf Die and which is your Blood Die.

You will also need one player to take on the mantle of Winter. The rest of the players are the wolf players. Winter presents a world of horrors and prey for the wolves, and the wolf players act as stalwart adventurers who have been transmogrified into wolves in order to complete a geas or grim task set before them.

WOLF & BLOOD

You are wolves of human blood. When asked to roll, you will always roll both the Blood Die and the Wolf Die. Note which is higher. This will tell you

whether your wolf is guided by human knowledge and experience or by bestial instinct. The Blood Die represents the capabilities of human thought: from shaping the world around you as a farmer plows the field or a smithy forges a sword, to throwing yourself heedlessly into your task as an explorer sails past the sight of shore or a rover charges into the fray. The Wolf Die represents the advantages of lupine instincts, knowing where and how to hunt prey, and the safety of the pack.

To discern the extent to which either die dominates the situation, subtract the lower result from the higher one. So if  was your Wolf Die and  was your Blood Die, your result would be  Wolf. Whenever the result is zero, you must choose either a  Wolf result or a  Blood result.



If you have a Feral score, always add that to your Wolf Die before noting which die is higher and which is to be subtracted from the other. Feral scores may never fall below zero. Some may begin the game with a bonus that can be added to your Blood Die. This bonus is optional—roll first and then decide if you wish to add it.

THE PACK

Decide among the wolf players who is best described by each of the following:

- ♦ *Many have tested my sword-arm and now wait to mete vengeance upon me in the afterlife.* When performing tasks of gore or hatred you may add +3 to your Blood Die after you have rolled.
- ♦ *I am witness to stranger worlds than most. The arcane and preternatural are to me as wolves and weather are to the farmer.* When faced with the supernatural you may add +3 to your Blood Die after you have rolled.
- ♦ *I am at home when I sleep roofless and hunt my fare far from civilization.* You start the game with 2 Feral.
- ♦ *I am most alive in the houses, halls, and alleyways of humanity.* When you must know the minds of people, even your own human mind, you may add +3 to your Blood Die after you have rolled.
- ♦ *No one ever truly knows where I stand and who I keep at dagger point.* In matters of deception and trickery, you may add +3 to your Blood Die after you have rolled.



If you're like me, then reading all of this fantastic fiction has set your mind spinning. For me, the best part of Sword and Sorcery is the feeling of wonder and adventure that comes from a world that is vast and full of mysteries, and the casual hubris of those that try to make their way in the midst of it all.

I'm so captivated by this feeling that it led me to write a game. It's a card-based RPG that is centered around helping you and your friends create an emergent world that is as full of mysteries as the worlds in this magazine.

It's currently in an open beta, and I'm giving away free copies of the physical cards to people who are willing to give it a try. I hope you'll be one of them!

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Each wolf player should record their associated bonus or bonuses. Unless told otherwise, your Feral is zero. Record that as well.

Ask each other leading questions about who you were before falling under the spell. Everyone should answer at least three questions.

THE SPELL

Choose the spell that has befallen your adventurers and reshaped them.

- ♦ *From generations long past this curse has been upon you and your kin. This very night you shall lope out as children of Fenris and drive a rival clan from the vale.* Roll at morning's light and add +1 to your Blood Die for each enemy of your clan that you have personally slain this night.

- ♦ *The task before you is not one suited for the civilized, so you turn to dark magicks and shift your flesh into a form more suitable.* Roll once your task is complete or abandoned and you add +3 to your Blood Die if the task was complete.
- ♦ *The augurs dictate that only fang and claw will rend your destiny. You will be reborn as beast to fulfill the prophecy.* Roll once the prophecy is fulfilled and add +3 to your Blood Die.
- ♦ *Relics of an ancient cult plundered from an old queen's tomb carry with them a savage curse that can only be cleansed in distant holy fires.* Roll when your wolves have found the holy fires and plunged into their everburning flames. Add +2 to your Blood Die for every limb you lose to the fire.



When the spell is lifted, roll...

• Wolf—You remain a wolf who desires to be human, forever shunning the pack and shunned by civilization as a pest and predator.

•-• Wolf—You remain a wolf who will howl each moon to recall a time when you were not so.

•+ Wolf—You are of wolf mind and form, forevermore.

• Blood—You return to your true form and find it unfitting, forever shunning civilization and human companionship for the simple comforts of the wild.

•+ Blood—You return to your human form in waking life, but run with the pack in your dreams.

THE SHIFTING

Winter may ask any of the following questions of specific wolf players. For their part, the wolf players may, at any point during this phase, ask Winter any question about how the transformation feels, smells, tastes, sounds and appears.

- ◆ How does the shifting warp your consciousness?
- ◆ What is most painful about the shifting?
- ◆ What is most familiar about the shifting?
- ◆ What dread seeps into your soul during the shifting?

THE WOLVES

You are now wolves. Describe your coat, your size, your scent and your voice.

Communication

Though the wolves cannot engage in dialogue as you or I would, they are able to communicate with each other with similar clarity, particularly on topics leading to immediate action. Wolf players are encouraged to describe how their wolves communicate, but should also make sure that the other players know what their wolf is trying to say and that their wolves comprehend it.

Scent Marking

Like the written word, wolves can leave scents on the terrain for other wolves and similar animals to interpret. These markings establish the wolf's

territory, how long ago the wolf has been by, and the likelihood of good prey in the area. Any wolf beholding the world that listens to their nose will discern these things from nearby scent markings.

Howling

A wolf's howl may be an expression of affection, loss or simply excitement. One wolf howling is likely to cause any wolf who can hear it to howl as well. Thus, howling can also reveal the location and size of any nearby packs. Any wolf with a Feral score of one or more must roll a Blood result to resist joining in a howl. When you howl, you must tell your fellow players what you are saying.

Wrestling

Wolves also communicate through play. Wolves eager to play face the other wolves with their head down and haunches raised.

Each wolf playing must roll...

■ Wolf—Describe how you play too roughly. Winter chooses a wolf at play, which may be you. They suffer Winter's Wrath.

■-■ Wolf—Describe your play with the other wolves and gain 1 Feral.

■+ Wolf—Describe your play with the other wolves.

□ Blood—You are unable to negotiate the play and feel isolated. Choose two from the list below.

□+ Blood—You are unable to negotiate the play and feel isolated. Choose one from the list below.

- ◆ You are not separated from the group.
- ◆ You do not suffer Winter's Wrath.
- ◆ You do not lose 1 Feral, minimum zero.

Grooming

Grooming is an important part of pack health and communication. When wolves groom one another, they clean each other's fur, teeth, and any wounds they may have suffered. They also reestablish their relationships. Grooming can only happen during quiet moments when the pack is at rest.

When you casually groom with a wolf that has more Feral than you, you may choose to gain 1 Feral. In addition, being groomed by the entire pack will eliminate the effects of Winter's Wrath.



In the Thrall of the Chaos Lords

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INTO THE WILDS

As wolf players, you play the game by asking Winter what is going on around you and telling everyone what your wolf is doing. To get used to their new forms, your wolves will probably want to wrestle with each other. Try it. It may not go so well at first, but your wolves will soon get the hang of it.

But soon you must turn to your grim task. Behold the world and then tell everyone how you venture out into it.

Keep to the pack whenever you can. They can provide support and step in when you most need it. When in doubt, try:

- ♦ grooming,
- ♦ wrestling,
- ♦ hunting,
- ♦ or *beholding the world*.

Hunting

Wolves are coursing hunters, which means they run their prey down, often taking bites out of them where they can. Hungry wolves can find prey by *beholding the world* and run prey down by *sating a hunger*. If the prey is particularly dangerous or unnatural, the wolves should *face the perilous* instead.

ROLLING

You are wolves with wolfish instincts, but somewhere deep inside are your memories and experiences as a human. Here are the three primary ways such creatures interact with the world at large.

If you are taking a sniff around or trying to assess your situation, you should *behold the world*. If you are fleeing from danger or charging into it, you must *face the perilous*. If you are seizing what you desire or enacting a scheme, you can *sate a hunger* or *bend the world to your will*. If you don't know what to do, *behold the world* first. Then, if you are in for a hunt, *sate a hunger*; if you are in for a fight, *face the perilous*; and if you are enacting a plan of human engineering, *bend the world to your will*. The wisest of wolves do whatever they can to avoid *facing the perilous*.

To Behold the World

When the pack pauses to attend to the scents, sights, and sounds, Winter should describe the world about you in loving detail, taking care to impress upon you an appropriate sense of safety or danger. You may each then decide to roll individually.

When your wolf drinks in their senses, roll...

■ Wolf—Winter may tell you what scent, sound or sight confuses and scares you.

■-■ Wolf—Choose two questions from the list below and Winter must answer both.

■+ Wolf—Choose three questions from the list below that Winter must answer correctly and unambiguously.

- ♦ *What do my eyes tell me?* A wolf's eyes are keen and true, able to detect slight movements ahead of them, even by moonlight. If it moves, the wolf can see it.
- ♦ *What do my ears tell me?* A wolf's ears can hear much higher frequencies than we can and,

depending on conditions, can detect sounds as far as ten miles away. If it makes a noise, the wolf can hear it and know where it is.

- ♦ *What does my nose tell me?* Depending on the wind and weather, a wolf can detect and locate scents from over a mile away. If it has a scent, the wolf can identify it, and know where it is. For familiar scents, a wolf can also tell its emotional and physical state.
- ♦ *What do my instincts tell me?* The true instincts of a wolf will know what is a threat to be avoided, what is prey that is vulnerable, and who can be cajoled into playing. If your wolf acts on this knowledge, and you get a Wolf result of ■ or less, add 1 to your Feral.

□ Blood—Winter will tell you what you should have noticed, had the environment not conspired against your senses.

□-□ Blood—Choose one of the questions from the list below and Winter must answer it correctly.

□+ Blood—Choose three of the questions from the list below and Winter must answer them unambiguously and elaborate on those answers.

- ♦ What should I be afraid of?
- ♦ Who is vulnerable?
- ♦ What do they want from me?
- ♦ Where am I most advantaged?
- ♦ Who is in control here?
- ♦ What is most valuable here?

To Face the Perilous

When danger has befallen the pack, Winter should ask them which among them is most vulnerable. Those wolves and any wolf suffering from Winter's Wrath must roll unless another wolf is able and willing to roll in their stead.

When your wolf's life and limb are at risk, roll...

■ Wolf—Choose whichever is appropriate:

- ◆ You suffer harm as the peril persists.
- ◆ You sacrifice yourself for the good of the pack.

■-■ Wolf—Choose one:

- ◆ You suffer harm and retreat to safety.
- ◆ You are yet unharmed, but the peril has the better of you, perhaps making more of the pack vulnerable.

■+ Wolf—Choose one:

- ◆ You suffer harm, but you chase off or slay the source of peril (Winter's choice). If you are with the pack, you do not suffer harm unless the threat was supernatural.
- ◆ You retreat to safety, unharmed.

□ Blood—You may suffer harm and push on heedless of the danger.

□-□ Blood—Choose one from the list below.

□+ Blood—Choose three from the list below.

- ◆ The rest of the pack is not put in peril.
- ◆ You do not suffer harm.

- ◆ The peril is vanquished.
- ◆ No one is separated or given Winter's Wrath.

If your Feral is 2 or less, include this option:

- ◆ Winter does not have to teach you a harsh lesson and give you 1 Feral.

To Sate a Hunger or Bend the World to Your Will

When the pack wishes to sate a hunger, seize what they desire, or accomplish something unnatural for a wolf, have the wolf with the highest Feral roll. If more than one wolf ties for the highest Feral, the wolf players may choose which among the tied wolves must roll.

When you attempt to seize what you desire or set in motion a plan of human engineering, roll...

■ Wolf—Winter should describe how the path before you is fraught with peril and you describe how you retreat to safety.

■-■ Wolf—Choose two from the list below.

■+ Wolf—Choose three from the list below.

- ◆ You get what you want or sate your hunger.
- ◆ No one else must go without.
- ◆ None are put in peril.
- ◆ You may lose Winter's Wrath.

□ Blood—There is peril to be faced before you reach the end of this path.

□-□ Blood—Choose two from the list below or one from the above Wolf list.

□+ Blood—Choose three appropriate results from the list below. If you are acting on the Blood result of a behold the world roll, you may choose four.

- ◆ You may modify your environment to your advantage.
- ◆ No one is in peril.
- ◆ You do not earn Winter's Wrath.
- ◆ You seize upon your advantage turn it into success.
- ◆ You may lose 1 Feral, minimum zero.

How can you tell if you have an advantage to turn into a success? A Blood result will allow you to modify your environment to your advantage. You may even modify your environment and take advantage of that in the same roll. Did you behold the world and learn where to place yourself at advantage? Did you act on that knowledge? If you are still unsure, ask Winter if you have advantage.

Suffering Harm & Winter's Wrath

When you suffer harm, choose one of the following options.

- ◆ *Each scar is a lesson learned.* Describe how your wolf is permanently marred and then either gain 2 Feral or lose 1 Feral, minimum zero. Once you have suffered this harm, you may not suffer it again.
- ◆ *The toll of a careless life.* Describe how your wolf has lost either an eye or a limb. Once you have suffered this harm, you may not suffer it again.
- ◆ *Meat and bone.* Describe how your wolf has suffered a fatal blow and passes.

Whenever you suffer harm, you gain Winter's Wrath. A wolf suffering from this is isolated, sick, injured, or otherwise made vulnerable by their condition or behavior. When the pack *faces the perilous*, Winter should describe how the wolves suffering Winter's Wrath are put in harm's way, and then make them roll along with all the other vulnerable wolves. You can only lose Winter's Wrath by being groomed by the rest of the pack.

WINTERING

As Winter, your job is to present the world as the wolves smell, hear and see it. As they lope toward their goal, present them with threats and obstacles to overcome. Answer their questions if you can, and have them *behold the world* if you cannot think of an immediate answer.

Whenever the wolf players have to choose options from a list as the result of a roll, all other options left on the list are fair game. For if they do not choose that "no one else must go without" and you can think of a way for the other wolves to go without, then they must make do without.

Whenever you cannot think of something to do, you may:

- ♦ Separate a wolf so that the pack can no longer smell or hear them.
- ♦ Capture one of the wolves by human or supernatural means.
- ♦ Take the story forward to by hours, days or a season.
- ♦ Foreshadow a threat you have not thought up yet.

- ♦ Remind the wolves of their hunger.
- ♦ Howl.
- ♦ Hunt the wolves.
- ♦ Threaten an ally or ward.
- ♦ Twist something with sorcery when the wolves least expect it.

You may never threaten the wolves immediately following wrestling or grooming.

Natural Threats

The cold never puts wolves at risk. Their fur keeps them well insulated even in the darkest winters. A snowstorm may slow a pack down and blind their senses, but it will not put them in peril. There are, however, many natural predators to contend with. Bears will attack wolves if there is a fight over a carcass or if they perceive the wolves as a threat to themselves or their cubs. Mountain lions will prey on wolves they see as vulnerable or who are separated from the pack. Such animals will cause the wolves to *face the perilous* but will not fight to the death if they can help it.

Other natural threats can include environmental dangers such as forest fires, avalanches, floods, or treacherous terrain that must be crossed.

Lupine Threats

The wolves may encounter other wolves. They may be lone wolves, desperate and hungry. They may be seeking a suitable mate. They may be another pack. Packs of wolves can vary greatly in size. The more there are, the more of the player wolves that will be vulnerable should they be put in peril.

What happens between the players' pack and a strange pack will depend greatly upon the strange pack's disposition. If the player wolves are on the new pack's territory, there will be a dispute. The player wolves will be able to tell, through scent markings and warning howls, that this is the case. Or the new pack may be hurt, fresh from a horrible encounter, and willing to find a tense peace with the player wolves. However, injured wolves can also be volatile.

Other wolves do not roll for things, but if it comes up, assume they have a Feral score of 5.

Civilized Threats

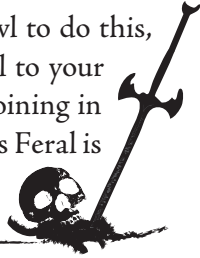
Humans and other civilizations are a growing threat to wolves. Civilized threats act irrationally. They will, on occasion, fight to the death. They almost always lead to larger, more prepared threats as people react to their own being preyed upon by a rogue wolf pack. Wolves able to roll well into their Blood when beholding the world or bending the world to their will can easily maintain the advantage when dealing with humans.

Supernatural Threats

Most sorceries are unknown to wolves and can only be observed, not understood, by Wolf results while *beholding the world*. In general, Blood results fair better than Wolf results when dealing with beings and spells of alien origins.

There is an older, wilder wizardry that is well-suited for the minds and voices of wolves. Should the wolf players discover this secret knowledge, they may learn to shape spells within their howls. When you use a mystical howl to *bend the world to your will*, you may add some of your Feral score to your Blood Die

instead of your Wolf Die. You must decide to do this before you roll. You must howl to do this, and you may not apply more Feral to your Blood Die than there are wolves joining in the howl, including yourself. Excess Feral is still added to your Wolf Die.



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