



# LOOP GAROU

A role-playing game  
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# What is Loop Garou?

**Loup** - French 'wolf'.

**Garou** - Middle French 'werewolf'.

**Loup-Garou** - French 'werewolf', literally 'wolf-werewolf'.

**Loop** - A repeated sequence of actions.

**Loop Garou** - A role-playing game about time loops and werewolves.

In *Loop Garou* you play people in a nineteenth century rural French town, on a night when the village is attacked by werewolves. They will almost certainly die. Due to some cosmic accident, or perhaps Providence, they are given the opportunity to live that night over and over again, retaining their memories of what happened in the previous iteration. In this way, they can try to change the course of events to a happier outcome.

What constitutes this 'happier outcome' is for you to decide. Naturally, surviving until dawn is an important objective. But protecting your loved ones from the werewolves is also important. And if you're doing that, why not try to protect the rest of the town? Ah, but some of the werewolves might be people from the town - perhaps you should investigate so they can be brought to justice before the next full moon. Alternatively, you could take the battle to the enemy, and try to kill some of them armed with courage and foresight. Given



enough repetitions, you could make the night of the full moon an orgy of terror for the werewolves rather than their intended victims.

There is not a readily identifiable end to this game. It can continue as long as you want it to, to fit whatever time-scale you wish or until you feel you have explored all the possibilities of the characters and town you have created.

## Getting Started

The most natural way to play the game is to have one player designated as the 'Game Master', or GM, to act as a kind of master of ceremonies and assume control of the bulk of characters in the town - not to mention the werewolves themselves. The other players each take on the role of a single, specific townspeople. The format of the game requires the GM to be somewhat adversarial, but not in a particularly destructive way. Unlike most role-playing games, in *Loop Garou* the Player Characters, or PCs, will die frequently. The time loop means that such a death is not the end of the character. The GM can also offer advice and recommendations based on his knowledge of the rules to players not familiar with them. This style of play is well-suited to a single player introducing others to the game.

Alternatively, every player can have a townspeople to control, with the group as a whole acting as Game Master. This style of play requires more active participation from all players, and preferably for all of them to have a working knowledge of the rules. It's also essential that no player becomes too precious about any single aspect of the shared GM duty, or becomes unreceptive to elements he introduced being taken in directions different to those he was planning.



## **Creating Details**

This game is designed around the premise that you don't have to rigorously define the town and all its inhabitants ahead of time. People and places are created on the fly, as the story needs them, by any of the players according to some loose rules given later. If at all possible, every detail should attach to the story directly in some way. If introducing people, put them in danger or have them pose some threat to the plans or safety of the players' characters. If introducing a place, make it a refuge for someone fleeing in desperation or the location of an important tool.

In order to keep track of this information, it can be helpful to use index cards. A single card cut in half is a convenient size for one family, individual or place. As events unfold more details can be added to the card. In the absence of index cards, use paper cut into usefully-sized pieces.

There are two types of information. The first is 'fixed' which describes who someone is, their history and anything else that doesn't change no matter how differently the events of the night unfold. The second is 'possibility', which is a list of things that have happened to the character or at the location in at least one iteration, but could be changed or averted in others. How much detail is thus recorded is up to you, based on how good you think your memory is and how much small errors with bother you.



## **Extra Materials**

Apart from a supply of index cards and writing implements, you will need three dice. At least one with four sides (d4), one with six sides (d6) and one with eight sides (d8). Additional dice of those sizes will be convenient.

## **Principles of Repetition**

Repeating the night over and over again has some rules and limitations, designed to try to keep the tangled possible histories coherent and prevent the repetition itself from becoming boring.

**Principle 1 - If events unfold a certain way, then they will always unfold that way unless significant action is taken to change them.**

This means that if the werewolf with the scarred snout is in the stables at eight o'clock, then it will always be there at that time unless a deliberate action is taken that leads it to be somewhere else. Sometimes the deliberate action can be indirect - if another werewolf is attacked before then its cry might alert Scarred-Snout or otherwise make it change its plans. The 'butterfly effect', on the other hand, does not exist in this world.

Similarly, this means that it's not possible to simply re-run events and hope for better luck with the dice. If your character is killed by a werewolf in the pantry, then no amount of foreknowledge about how the fight has gone before





will save you. Knowing that the ambush is coming and arriving armed, however, can make a difference.

This principle forces you to come up with plans when it comes to changing the course of events, instead of relying on chance.

### **Principle 2 - The universe has a powerful sense of irony.**

This is a lesser version of the first principle. It means that if your character is killed by Scarred-Snout in one iteration, the chances of it being Scarred-Snout that does for him in future iterations is greatly increased. Even if in one iteration he is fatally wounded by a scared farmer with a blunderbuss, somehow it'll be ol' Scarface that chances upon him in the fields just before he dies of blood loss.

This principle lets you be playful with events, encouraging you to reincorporate things that have happened in previous iterations in dryly amusing ways.

### **Principle 3 - Time is of the essence.**

Taking advantage of the first principle, do not waste time going over events that have happened before if they are going to be the same this time. Each time you start a fresh iteration, skip forward to the first different action. If some players' characters are unaffected by this action, then their actions can be similarly elided until the first interesting difference.

This principle avoids boring repetition.



It can be broken sometimes, as a device for conveying how blasé the characters are becoming about actions they have done lots of time before, and how they are changing as people through their experiences. What was initially a terrible struggle to the death with a werewolf over a gun becomes a contemptuous one-shot kill as soon as it appears in the doorway.

#### **Principle 4 - Memory is fallible.**

It is quite probable that at some point a detail will be misremembered. The wrong werewolf will be described in a scene, or a character might appear who should have already been killed according to past iterations. When this happens, assume the inconsistency is the result of your character's imperfect memory, even if the detail was written on an index card and is thus 'official'. Let the current situation be correct and adjust any details accordingly. If this does not seem possible, allow a one-time 'unintended consequence' of some other key action to have changed matters for this iteration.

This principle ensures that the game does not become stymied by contradictions, and means that you don't have to slow the game down by carefully checking all the details in play before proceeding.



# Creating a Character

Creating a character to play is as simple as choosing a name, a job, a family situation and a hobby.

## Traits

A player character is defined by a name and three 'traits'. Each of these traits reveals something about the character's life, personality or skills. They do not have to be the exact three things in the above paragraph, but those are suggestions you can fall back on if you are short of other ideas. It is best to choose traits for which you can see an easy way to make them relevant to the story. Traits that introduce things you want to protect - particularly people - fill that requirement nicely.

You have opportunity to 'force' traits to be relevant through your character's actions. For example, the trait 'master boatman' might like it would only be useful in unusual circumstances, but a character with that trait is likely to seek out opportunities to go boating, or hole up in his boathouse for a home turf advantage. Traits that require too much effort to become relevant, however, can torture the believability of the story and often become dull after the first few times they are invoked.

Traits confer a significant advantage to your dice rolls if you can make a compelling case that they should help in the current task. However, each trait can only be used this way once per iteration, limiting their usefulness and encouraging you to employ all three traits instead of relying on a single one.



## **Details and Possibilities**

You can add further details to your character, to elaborate on the traits you have chosen or provide more context and background. As the game progresses, you can also add 'possibilities' based on previous iterations. The most significant possibility to record is how your character dies in the first iteration, because this forms the basis of future universal irony.

As with other elements of the game's world, characters are written onto index cards. You can keep the card for your character in front of you, or put it in the middle of the table where everyone can see it. The details written on it are not secret.

As PCs are the hub of the game and likely to have more happen to them than any other character or place, it's entirely possible you will have to use a second, third or even fourth index card to keep track of everything. A paperclip or rubber band is useful in keeping the stack together.



# Facing Problems

At dramatic moments in the game, where the outcome is uncertain and your character faces significant consequences if luck is against him, you roll a dice. What dice you roll depends on how well prepared your character is to face the problem.

**d4 - Unprepared**

**d6 - Prepared**

**d8 - Well-prepared**

Some tasks are impossible without at least some preparation; in those cases an unprepared character has to think of something else to try instead.

## Preparation

Often, the way to be prepared for trouble involves using knowledge of previous iterations. The knowledge alone is not sufficient - it must be backed up by time and effort spent in preparation. It is possible to become 'Prepared' with the chance discovery of a weapon or tool, or with a few minutes spare to prepare a barricade, trap or argument. Becoming 'well-prepared' requires significantly more effort and time and possibly help from another PC or Non-Player character. It is not always possible to reach the top stage of preparedness with the time and resources available. Some examples of what preparation might be required for the better dice are given in this table.



<b>Task</b>	<b>Prepared</b>	<b>Well-Prepared</b>
Attacked by a werewolf	Ready for the attack and armed	Barricaded in a house with plenty of weapons on hand and a trap or two
Distracting a werewolf while someone else gets away	Expecting the attack and talking about the plan beforehand	As prepared, but with something specific to draw the werewolf's attention and a concealed exit available
Collapsing a tunnel on a werewolf	Time to plant sufficient explosives	Plenty of explosives and time and something to slow the werewolf down
Fight with another villager	Armed, not caught by surprise	Armed, and with knowledge of an injury he's carrying
Persuading a scared man with a gun	Knowing what specific thing has freaked him out	Having his family with you to help calm them down
Climbing a stone wall in a pinch	Rope	Rope and a helping hand at the top
Defending your daughter	A safe room she can be in where you control the entrance	A safe room for her, a weapon for you
Arguing with a stubborn neighbour	A compelling reason for him to see things your way	A secret you can use as leverage against him



## Dice Roll Results

When you roll the dice, you read off the result of your character's action. The result is one of four broad categories, the precise interpretation of which depends on the task being undertaken. Some suggestions for particular tasks are given in the table that the GM can use as a basis for these decisions. Ultimately, the GM decides what the roll means for your character, but you can make suggestions or plead for leniency.

Task	1	2 – 3	4 – 5	6
General	Terrible outcome	Bad outcome	Acceptable outcome	Good outcome
Attacked by a werewolf	Torn apart	Mortally wounded, to die soon	Escape with your life	Kill the werewolf
Distracting a werewolf while someone else gets away	You are both killed	You are killed, the other person is injured but gets away	You are killed, the other person gets away unharmed	You both get away, but you are injured
Collapsing a tunnel on a werewolf	There werewolf is injured, but you are killed	You are killed, the werewolf is buried alive	The werewolf is buried alive, you are badly injured	The werewolf is buried alive



<b>Task</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2 – 3</b>	<b>4 – 5</b>	<b>6</b>
Fight with another villager	You are killed or knocked unconscious	Injury	Escape, or fight to a draw	Kill or overpower your enemy
Persuading a scared man with a gun	Death to you, him or someone else	Injury to you, him or someone else	Talk him down enough that he won't shoot in anger or fear	Talk him down enough that he will drop the gun
Climbing a stone wall in a pinch	Fall and break a leg	Fail to get over the wall	Climb the wall with some difficulty	Climb the wall quickly
Defending your daughter	She is killed	She is taken away from you or badly injured	You are injured protecting her	You protect her without getting hurt
Arguing with a stubborn neighbour	The neighbour thinks you are crazy or up to no good	The neighbour ignores you or doubles down on his argument	The neighbour grudgingly yields some ground	You convince the neighbour completely





The dice you roll limits how successful you can be. Without any preparation, the best you can expect is an 'acceptable outcome'. With extensive preparation, you have a better than even chance of at least some success. In particular, being unprepared for an attack by a werewolf is almost certainly fatal.

The idea of an 'injury' is left open for the GM to adjudicate. An injury might impede a character's ability to prepare for task in some way. If a character already has a number of injuries, then the GM might change the Terrible and Bad outcomes for a problem to graver alternatives. The obvious example is to change an injury result to a death result, as it makes sense for any further injury to be fatal.

## **Repetition**

As per the principles of repetition, once a task has been rolled for in one iteration it will always have the same outcome in future iterations. You can roll dice again, however, if your character is at a higher level of preparation than the previous attempt. You are not guaranteed a better result, but you do have better odds. You cannot try the dice roll again by downgrading your preparation. It makes little sense that being in a worse position at the outset should yield better results. After all, if a gun won't save you from being eaten alive, a knife won't either.

Once you have rolled dice at the highest level of preparation there can be no further change in outcome. There is always, on the other hand, opportunity to simply avoid the problem by being somewhere else, so failing badly at the highest level



of preparation is not the end of usefulness for your character. On the other hand, it can seriously limit the viable approaches to a particular problem.

If a situation is very similar to an established roll, but technically different, the GM might rule that the previous result stands. An example is the same character fighting the same werewolf in the same place with the same weapon, just earlier or later in the night.

The chances of getting a good outcome when well-prepared are 37.5%. The chances of getting a good outcome if you are prepared, then upgrade to well-prepared on the next iteration are 47.9%. It is therefore advisable to 'play the long game' and go up a step at a time. If a trait could be used on the roll (as described in the next section), the two chances are 60.9% and 72.9%.

## Using Traits

If you can justify how one of your character's traits could give him an advantage, you can re-roll the dice. You have to abide by the new roll, unless you invoke another trait. Each trait can only be used once per iteration, so use them wisely.

Once an outcome is 'locked in' by the principles of repetition, no dice roll is made. So even if you had to invoke a trait to get that outcome the first time, you do not need to 'use up' the trait in future iterations. This is another way that the rules promote gradual improvement.

Having a trait available for use where it was not before is not enough to allow a new dice roll. Only improving preparation can do that.



## **Assistance and Co-Operation**

Assistance from other characters can often help make your character better prepared. In the wall-climbing example earlier, having someone at the top to help was one component of being well-prepared. The helper can be a PC or an NPC, it makes no difference as long as they are there.

If more than one PC is facing a problem, then the GM should determine which of them is specifically facing it, with the other offering help. It is that character's player who rolls the dice and suffers the brunt of any consequences for any failure. The other PCs might help upgrade the level of preparedness. Assisting PCs can also offer up use of their traits for re-rolls.

Once an outcome is established for the roll, in future iterations the players can change who suffers the penalty of failure by having him be the 'facing' character. Sometimes this can offer a small advantage later on in the night, but usually it's an opportunity for a little dramatic self-sacrifice in one iteration before the whole sorry situation is corrected in the next one.



# Werewolf Mythos

The idea of a ‘werewolf’ has changed considerably through history, shaped by the legends and traditions of different regions and, latterly, books, films and games. Some of the earliest werewolf legends describe something that resembles a ghoul more than it does a modern idea of a werewolf. Some commonly accepted aspects of werewolf lore are products of specific authors pulling the older legends in directions they want.

It’s true to say, therefore, that there is no definitive characterisation of werewolves and their abilities.

This leaves matters open for the GM to decide exactly what the werewolves in the game can do, and how they behave. There are several approaches the GM could take.

## Play It Straight

Let the werewolves’ abilities be defined by what ‘everybody knows’ about them. Ignore the more obscure things that tend to get left out in films. Where not all popular depictions agree (for example, whether werewolves can only be harmed by silver), pick whichever option you like, and let the player characters find out which version you chose the hard way. All the players know more-or-less what to expect, and can play their characters savvy or naive as they choose.



## **Confound Expectations**

Mix things up by making radical changes to how the werewolves work. The players and their characters will have to think on their feet. They can't rely on what they might know, and might have to experiment to find out key details. If you follow this approach, make that fact very, very clear to the players before you start. It's a good idea to manufacture opportunities for any really unexpected abilities or vulnerabilities to be demonstrated, because otherwise they might not get any screen time at all. If there is a werewolf power that might be mistaken for 'cheating', foreshadow it like crazy so you can point to the foreshadowing later on if a player feels the ability is unfair.

## **The Standard Model**

Somewhere between the two is the 'recommended' set of abilities. It's recommended only in the sense that the details are deliberately chosen to try to keep the game interesting, at least for first-time players.

- I) Werewolves, when transformed, are seven foot tall bipedal wolf-beasts. They transform on the night of the full moon from sunset until sunrise. The rest of the month, they are human at all times.
- II) Werewolves are incredibly strong when transformed, but not particularly skilled fighters.



- III) Despite their size and strength, they can't run faster than a human fleeing for his life.
- IV) Werewolves can be killed by any weapon, but silver is slightly more effective. This provides the option of acquiring silver when preparing for a fight, but stops the game degenerating into a farcical search for more silver items to make into weapons.
- V) Werewolves recover from injury more quickly than humans, but not quickly enough for it to be a concern during a fight. It is their ability to take a beating and keep on fighting that is more of a problem. A seriously injured werewolf will be inconvenienced for a few hours, and still limping a little for the rest of the night.
- VI) Werewolves generally hunt singly, but there is a pack hierarchy. The alpha werewolf is probably the original infector of all the others. If at all possible save the alpha until later in the game, to build up tension.



- VII) If a bite from a werewolf becomes infected, the victim will become a werewolf at the next full moon. That will be outside the time-frame of the game, but the possibility can lead to some difficult decisions when an NPC or PC is bitten but survives.
- VIII) The werewolves are aggressive and bloodthirsty, but not suicidally so. They have enough self-control to be suspicious of obvious traps, but can still run afoul of overconfidence in their strength.
- IX) They will not prey on their own families or very close friends unless they cannot find any other human meat.
- X) To a lesser degree they will avoid the families and friends of their pack-mates; although werewolves high up the pecking order might not extend that courtesy to those below them. It is possible to get a werewolf to fight a werewolf if the family of one is attacked by the other.
- XI) The werewolves have a lair nearby. It is deserted most of the month, but during the full moon they sometimes drag victims' corpses there to eat in peace, or flee there if they are hurt.



- XII) Other animals, including wolves, cower in fear in a werewolf's presence, and are uncomfortable around werewolves in human form.

## **Other Detail**

Apart from the abilities and behaviour of the werewolves, the GM must also decide on the recent history of the area. Are there legends of werewolves, or rumours of recent animals attacks here or in the nearby countryside? If anything unusual happened at the last full moon it might be cast in a new light by the revelation that werewolves are abroad. Are the werewolves locals, travellers passing through or a mix of both?

In all these cases the details might be determined during play by the player group, but it is useful for the GM to decide what alternative he will begin working with from the outset. It is entirely possible that his original idea will be supplanted by player-driven suggestions as the game goes, and in fact positively encouraged.





## **Research**

It's possible that the PCs will seek out information on werewolves from libraries, wise elders of the town or local archaeological findings on display in the museum. Acquiring information is a particularly efficient use of the player characters' time because it's something they will only have to do once in order to reap the benefit in all subsequent iterations. It's up to the GM how much information can be gleaned from such sources. It's a good idea for him to only require one research session, rather than stretching it out over multiple iterations, in the interests of keeping the game moving.

## **Werewolf Cards**

Once a werewolf is introduced to the story, usually when it attacks someone, make up a card for it to be put in the middle of the table for reference. Each werewolf should have a distinguishing characteristic that serves as a name for it. As with everything else, details of possibilities can be added. As with PCs, the circumstances of the werewolf's first death should be given special prominence. Repeating those circumstances exactly will result in its death in any iteration, but creating similar yet different circumstances might qualify as a form of preparation for the dice roll.



# **The Town, Its People**

Rather than requiring either the GM or the group as a whole to create the town before play, the details are improvised during the game. Once something significant has been established, it can be added to an existing information card or written on a new card.

The GM should seed the game with a few prominent landmarks and people. How many he adds depends on how imaginative he expects the rest of the players to be. Picking strong elements to seed the game with starts the game with a bang.

During the game more details are added by the players, and the important facts are recorded on cards, in the same way as for PCs and werewolves. If there is room available, it can be useful to arrange the cards geographically. This makes it easy to visualise where places are in relation to one another, and where characters can be found.

Whenever the identity of a werewolf is established, keep the werewolf and NPC card together, maybe even with a paper-clip or a staple.



## Seed Elements

Here are some suggestions for seed elements  
in a game of *Loop Garou*.

### Places

- I) A ruined abbey surrounded by farms.
- II) A working quarry set in a hillside.
- III) A struggling mine in the mountains.
- IV) The town hall's famous clock-tower.
- V) The nearby dense forest and its mysterious old huts.
- VI) Rows of houses leading up the steep-sided valley the town occupies.
- VII) The extensive vineyards around the town.
- VIII) The ancient, ruined castle in the centre of town.
- IX) A tourist-attracting Roman spa.
- X) The area's largest insane asylum.



### **People**

- I) The large Allard family and their violent patriarch, Gustave.
- II) The batty widow Marcoux.
- III) Mayor Rondeau, a well-meaning buffoon.
- IV) Lieutenant (retired) Grandchamp, full of bluster but still courageous.
- V) Father Hugo, obsessed with eschatology, who thinks the werewolves are the beginning of the end times.
- VI) Maurice, beggar and drunk, whose mumbled ravings hint that he knows important secrets.
- VII) Anise Bordeau, wealthy and well-educated, studying an archaeological find in the area.
- VIII) A troupe of gypsies who rolled into town a little over a month ago, shunned by the locals.
- IX) Denise Villers, spiritualist and busybody.
- X) Doctor Malenfant, who has been very secretive about his scientific research in his recently-purchased mansion.



## **Player Contributions**

The town is fleshed out with facts and characters by the players as and when they need or want more details. When new a detail is created, add it to an existing card or use a new card, as seems most appropriate.

- Any player - Can add an element if it relates to one of his character's traits, even if only very tangentially.
- Any player - Can add an element if it directly relates to another player's character trait.
- The GM - Can veto either of the above if it doesn't fit the game very well or undermines already established details.
- The GM - Can add details of his own when none are forthcoming from the other players.
- The GM - Must provide any detail needed in response to a player question.
- Everyone - Should avoid creating a new place or person if an existing one can be used for the current situation. Reincorporating an established element is better, where possible.

Not all of the information players create needs to be to their benefit. It can help liven up the game if they introduce elements solely in order to put something important at risk for themselves or others. The more problems and



complications that are introduced, the longer the game is likely to last. Bear this in mind when considering whether to introduce a new detail. Because of the emphasis on reincorporation there will be a welter of detail introduced at first, which will tend to tail off. When a new part of the town or its surrounding area is visited for the first time, the pace will pick up a little. Be aware that in any length of game there is a saturation point beyond which any new detail will either not be fully exploited or will 'bump' an earlier detail out of use.



# Running the Game

As with any tabletop role-playing game, the GM should endeavour to make sure that:

- I) Everyone gets to have fun.
- II) Everyone gets a reasonable amount of 'screen time'.
- III) Everyone gets to feel like they've contributed ideas to the shared world.
- IV) Everyone gets to have their character do something cool and interesting.
- V) No-one has their ideas closed down needlessly.
- VI) No-one is left feeling uncomfortable by what goes on in the game.

The repetitive structure and likely repeated character deaths of *Loop Garou* mean that the GM should also pay close to attention to:

- VII) Avoiding going over the same ground over and over again.
- VIII) Avoiding killing a character in a particular iteration before he has had a chance to do anything interesting and new.



## **Starting the Game**

The game should start around nightfall. Longer, possibly multi-session, games can start an hour or so before sunset to give the players chance to establish their characters before the carnage begins. Every future iteration, however, should start at nightfall. Anything a character does before nightfall in the first iteration is set in stone and cannot be changed. Under no circumstances should the werewolf attacks begin right away after sunset - there needs to be ample time for each character to either prepare for the fight or avoid the encounter completely.

In the first iteration, The GM should ask each player where his character would normally be at that time of day. For any answer along the lines of 'at home in front of the fire' or 'tucked up in bed', he can follow it up with the question 'What is different about tonight, and where are you instead?'. This guarantees that every character is at a potentially interesting place, and is probably not surrounded by his family. The latter fact is important when it comes to later iterations where the character can be terrified for the safety of his family and drive him to find them and make sure they are okay. There is no reason why characters might be together in ones and twos, maybe even all in one group, at the start of the game.

Early on in the first iteration, the GM should give each character an 'unmistakable event' - some noticeable but not really important thing; a glass falling off a table, a wolf's howl nearby, a clock chime or something like that. The purpose of this event is to provide an unambiguous indicator that time has looped back on itself. The GM can start each new iteration





with that event, until the players and their characters are used to time loop shenanigans.

The first iteration will probably end quickly, and in death. A werewolf bursts through the door, attacks the unprepared character, and the best result he can hope for is probably a mortal injury. He might crawl an impressive distance before a werewolf, maybe not even the same one, follows his trail of blood and finishes him off. For variety, one character might bleed to death in the wilderness. Apart from kicking off the game and letting the characters know what they are facing, it demonstrates to the player just how essential it is to plan, and be prepared.

In some games, the characters might have difficulty coming to terms with the temporal strangeness, perhaps spending the second iteration in a state of wide-eyed confusion. In particular, each character might believe he is the only one experiencing it, and be reluctant to admit to his foreknowledge, even to other player characters. It's an interesting situation to role-play, but for shorter games it cuts into the time available for the 'incremental improvement' play. All the players should agree at the start of the game how much time should be spent on the confusion step. There is nothing wrong with the characters being savvy enough to come to grips with problem immediately, and to use cunningly loaded questions to identify others in the same boat.



## **Iteration to Iteration**

Each time the characters begin a new iteration, there will be at least one thing they are determined to change. Ideally, there will be a number of things to change, each requiring some deviation from their actions in the previous iteration.

Often, this problem will be the death of one or more of the characters. When a character dies in an iteration, the GM should seek to manipulate events such that the other characters are killed as well, because a player having to sit out of the action for more than a little while is best avoided. An unanticipated werewolf attack is very handy to kill a character off quickly.

In general, throwing random werewolf attacks at characters with no warning is a little unsporting, so if at all possible the GM should find a way of using an attack or the threat of an attack to complicate the situation rather than just kill someone off. Once one character has died, then the brakes can come off in the interest of letting that player back into the game as soon as possible.

In order to keep the game interesting, the GM's duties include creating problems for the characters to overcome. The problems should not bury the characters, but rather arrive in a steady stream that keeps the characters thinking on their feet and revising their actions iteration to iteration. There are several different types of problems the GM can think about using:



- I) **New immediate problem:** A howl indicates an incoming werewolf with little time to prepare, someone in the town has become paranoid and is obstructing what the characters want to do. In this case, the problem can be solved in the same iteration it first appears.
- II) **New after-the-fact problem:** A character arrives at a friend's house find him already dead, the orphanage director has already fled with his charges, unknowingly straight towards the werewolves. In this case, the problem can only be solved in a subsequent iteration by acting earlier.
- III) **Problem of ambiguity:** A character assumes the dismembered dead body in the house was the owner, but when he arrives earlier he discovers the owner is a werewolf and killed a visitor. In this case, the character discovers he has misinterpreted a previous problem and prepared wrongly. It might be possible to solve the problem in this iteration.



- IV) **Logistics problem:** A character does not have enough to do everything he needs to before what might be quite literal deadlines. He will have to make some hard choices as to what is most important, enlist the help of another character (who might also be struggling to find enough time for everything) or come up with an ingenious scheme that lets him do everything he wants to in a more efficient manner. Whatever he tries, there is a chance that event won't run the course he wants them to as he can't rely on all the 'locked in' problem rolls he was using any more.
- V) **Unintended consequences:** A character doesn't meet an NPC he expected to, because that NPC went looking for the gun that character has taken earlier to fight a werewolf. A character discovers that a change they made in the previous iteration has made things worse in some way or broken the chain of events the PCs were expecting. It might be possible to solve the problem this iteration by improvising, or he might have to come up with a different way of solving a problem that doesn't disturb the equilibrium.



- VI) **Trust problem:** The driven way a character is behaving makes his friend suspicious of him, so he won't do as asked, the character is drenched in blood from killing a werewolf and townsfolk assume he is a crazy murderer. These sorts of problems might not even be solvable, as such, just a price that has to be paid for the victories earned so far.

A new problem can create a chain of problems to solve, each linked to the last. This organic, incremental approach is the heart of the game. New problems should only be discovered when a character visits a new location, or an existing chain of problems has its potential exhausted.

It can be taxing for the GM to generate all these problems. Other players are free to pitch in suggestions.



## **Example Problem Chain**

- Iteration n - Character A arrives at the family home, to discover that his family has already been killed.
- Iteration n+1 - Character A arrives earlier, and successfully fights off Werewolf 1. However, to do so he no longer has time to give his gun to Character B, leaving Character B in the lurch.
- Iteration n+2 - Character A gives Character B the gun as before, and Character B defends the house instead; however he can't save all of the family in the ensuing fight.
- Iteration n+3 - Character B flees the house instead of trying to defend it, getting all of the family out. However, he discovers that Character A's eldest son has crept out and wasn't there to be rescued.
- Iteration n+4 - Character B takes most of the family to relative safety, as before, while Character A searches for his son. On a hunch, he goes to house of the girl his son has a crush on, and sees Werewolf 2 killing her father.



Iteration n+5 - Character A has time to spare, as he has ruled out many places his son might be. He decides to save the girl's father, grabbing a new weapon and waiting to ambush Werewolf 2. After killing it, he discovers on inspecting the corpse that Werewolf 2 was his son.

Iteration n+6 - Character B saves Character A's family, as usual. Character A gets the gun and gives it to his son's girlfriend to defend herself and her father, because he is unable to bring himself to do what he realises has to be done.

## **The Reset and The End**

If all the PCs are dead, the time resets and they begin the night anew. If they survive until dawn, they are also dragged back to the start of the night. Whatever they do, however successful they are, there are always new problems to solve in each iteration. It can help if the players make a list of what they want to fix at the start of each iteration, and decide what each character will take care of.

However long you intend the game to be, once you start getting close to the end the GM cuts down on the number of new problems that appear. This gives the PCs a chance of resolving nearly everything once they hit their final iteration.



Once this final iteration is finished, the reward for the characters is seeing the sun rise, a pleasure they might not have known for months of subjective time. There will undoubtedly be problems following the night of the loup-garou, not least of which are clean-up and explaining the bloodbath to the authorities. But after dozens of iterations the event of the night are far better than they would otherwise have been. It's fitting to end the game right there.





## **Broadening Horizons**

The game mechanics can fit any potential setting, not just the default nineteenth-century French one. A modern day setting might be an easier game to play, due to familiarity. Equally, the rules could be used in a fantasy milieu. The monsters the PCs fight need not even be werewolves, but whatever horror you choose. However, there are several aspects the setting should keep:

- I) The location must be isolated. The PCs can't call in help from outside, or even contact the outside.
- II) The location must be ill-equipped to deal with the problem. The PCs can't just let the local army garrison or SWAT team handle the problem.
- III) The lethality of the monsters is scaled to match the power of the weapons available. Unprepared characters stand little chance of surviving.
- IV) There must be a significant number of NPCs, so that there are people the PCs can try to save and uncertainty as to the human identity of the werewolves. It also gives the players plenty of material to work with when introducing new elements to the town.