

Werewolf

What exactly is Werewolf? It's a game. It's another one of those University of Oxford experiences. As far as I can tell, Werewolf is the most purposefully complicated psychological thriller role-playing game ever invented. You may have played variations of it, or similar games like Mafia elsewhere, but I assure you the Oxford version is different. The roles and rules have been developing over at least the past fifty years. There are rumours that this version hatched from a cosmic egg laid by Helliconia author Brian Aldiss. I can neither confirm nor deny that. Anyway, it is complicated, but worth it for the feeling of smug self-satisfaction you get when you do well at a difficult game developed by generations of Oxonian geniuses. Yeah.

Please note that, for the purpose of clarity, I have used the gender neutral singular pronoun set 'ze' and 'zir' to denote an individual player of any gender, because using 'they' as a gender neutral pronoun doesn't allow me to differentiate between a single player and a group of multiple players clearly.

Premise

In Werewolf, you all play together as residents of a remote, isolated village suffering from a slight werewolf infestation. By the time we set our scene, approximately one third of local residents have already become werewolves. The werewolves have this pesky tendency (really becoming a bit of a habit now) of mauling villagers during the night. If you are a villager, you have to hunt down and execute all the werewolves before they maul and eat you all. If you are a werewolf, you have to maul and eat all the villagers before they hunt you down and execute you. Simple premise, really.

Objective

The object of the game is to survive to the end of the game and earn bragging rights by doing so. Of course, you may have secondary objectives (you may want as many of your fellow villagers or werewolves to survive with you; that would be nice and all) but your primary objective must always be your own personal survival.

Day Phases & Night Phases

During the day phases, all players still alive are allowed to discuss the dire werewolf situation and solutions to the issue. The werewolves are able to coordinate with each other on their next target during the day phases, so be alert to suspicious looking eye contact, toe tapping, or hand signals.

During the night phases, all players still alive bow their heads and close their eyes. Fate will call on each of the players with active night roles, one by one, to open zir eyes and select a target player as appropriate to zir role.

If you are already deceased, you can keep your eyes open at all times, but you cannot contribute any reactions to what you observe, and may say nothing except for, "Brains." You are dead and so you can no longer contribute any information to the players who are still alive.

The duration of any day phase may be limited at the discretion of Fate.

Signaling:

If you have an active night role, Fate will prompt you during each night phase to select a target. You can signal your target simply by pointing at zir, or by signaling zir player number. Fate is zero, and all other players are numbered one, two, three, and so on around the circle clockwise from Fate. If a player dies during the game, zir number is *not* removed from the number scheme.

The Local Justice System:

If you suspect a player of being a werewolf, or just want zir dead for any other reason, you can put an execution call on zir. The execution call must be seconded by another player. The accused gets a defense speech. All players still alive then close their eyes and put their closed fists in the air. Fate will then ask you to open your fist if you want the accused to be executed, or keep your fist closed if you want the accused to be acquitted. You always require a majority vote to perform an execution. A tie goes to the runner, and the runner in this context, is the accused.

Roles

Fate: Fate is the authority figure, like the referee, of the game, and also the deity of your village. Fate distributes your roles to you via decks of cards, controls the rising and the setting of the sun, determines the consequences of actions taken during the night phases, tallies the votes from execution calls during the day phases, narrates your struggle, and can choose to smite you if you do not follow the rules.

The Role Deck:

The first stack of playing cards to be passed around the circle is the Role Deck. Take any card that appeals to you. The card you draw from the Role Deck determines your role in the game. You are allowed to lie about your role. In fact, you are encouraged to lie as much as you like if it suits your purposes, but you cannot reference the actual card you drew from the Role Deck. Fate can choose to smite you if you mention your card. Fate *will* tell you which roles, and how many of each role, are living in your village at the beginning of the game.

Werewolf: If you draw any of the Jacks, you are a werewolf.

During the first night phase, while all the other local residents are asleep with their eyes closed, Fate will invite all the werewolves to open their eyes and identify themselves to each other. Fate will then assign all the werewolves names.

During all subsequent night phases, Fate will call your assigned name. When you hear your name called, you and only you may open your eyes and choose a player to maul. You can attack any player, including yourself or your fellow werewolves. If a player is mauled by one werewolf, ze will sustain a telltale injury, revealed in the morning. If a player is attacked by two or more werewolves in the same night phase, ze will succumb to zir injuries and die. If only one werewolf remains alive, the sole surviving lone wolf automatically becomes a super werewolf and gets one hit kills.

Werewolf Vigilante: If you draw the Jack of Spades, you may be a werewolf vigilante.

On occasion, Fate may choose to give one of the werewolves, usually the Jack of Spades werewolf, a crossbow, just to make an extra dangerous werewolf. The crossbow is only loaded with one arrow; it is a single use item, so use your shot wisely. The crossbow can only be fired during the day phase. All you need to do to fire your crossbow is point at your target player and loudly proclaim, “Twang!” Wait for Fate to confirm that your target has indeed died of zir injury.

Wolfsbane: If you draw one of the black Kings, you are a wolfsbane.

During each night phase, Fate will call on you to open your eyes and select a player to protect. The player you choose to protect cannot be attacked by any werewolf during that same night phase, but can still sustain a trap injury. You can select any other player, but you cannot protect yourself. If you are able to identify the other wolfsbane, the two of you can make a pact to protect each other, but it may be dangerous to reveal yourself as a wolfsbane, because this makes you a target for the werewolves, and be aware that the other wolfsbane could be lying. In a game with only one wolfsbane, the lone wolfsbane will be allowed to protect zirself on alternating night phases.

Trapper: If you draw one of the black Queens, you are a trapper.

During each night phase, Fate will call on you to open your eyes and select a local resident to trap. You can select any player, including yourself. At dusk, you sneak out of your own house and set a bear trap just outside the door of your selected house. If a werewolf attacks the player you have trapped, that player will still be harmed by the attack (unless ze has also been wolfsbanned) but the werewolf will also sustain a telltale injury from stepping in the bear trap and setting it off. A player who has been protected by a wolfsbane *cannot* be attacked by a werewolf during the same night phase, but *can* still suffer a trap injury.

Villager Vigilante: If you draw the Ace of Spades, you are the villager vigilante.

You have a crossbow, but it is loaded with only one arrow; it is a single use item, so use your one shot wisely. The crossbow can only be fired during the day phase. All you need to do to fire your crossbow is to point at your target player and loudly proclaim, “Twang!” Wait for Fate to confirm that your target has indeed died of zir injury.

Mayor: If you draw the Ten of Spades, you are the mayor of this troubled village.

As a corrupt politician, you give yourself two votes (your vote counts double) during execution calls.

Cultists: If you draw any of the Threes, you are a cultist.

During the first night phase, Fate will invite all the cultists to open your eyes and identify yourselves to each other. The Cult meets in the middle of the night in, so far, failed attempts to summon Cthulhu. You are not

exactly *innocent* villagers, but at least you know you and your fellow cultists cannot possibly be werewolves. You have an alibi, but unfortunately, you can never mention your alibi, because you can never let the other villagers know what you have been doing, or they would execute you too. You and your fellow cultists can form a voting block, but you must never mention the Cult. Fate can choose to smite you if you mention (or even hint at) the Cult.

Innocent Villager: If you draw any of the Twos, you are an innocent villager.

You are an actual innocent villager. You do not have any active role. Just sleep tight and try not to let the werewolves bite.

Dark Villager:

On rarer occasions, Fate may assign a dark villager. As the dark villager, you are not a werewolf yourself, but you are in league with the werewolves. You know who they are, and they know who you are. If you help them to take control of this village, they have promised to make you one of them. You do not have an active role during the night phases, but you must do whatever you can during the day phases to protect the werewolves. If the werewolves are all exterminated, the villagers will execute you too at the end of the game. Fate may or may not give you a crossbow.

The Lover Deck:

The plot thickens! The second stack of playing cards to be passed around is the Lover Deck. Take any card that appeals to you. The card you draw determines if you are in a lover or rival pair.

Lovers: If you draw the King or Queen of Hearts, or the Six or Nine of Hearts, you are in a lover pair. Fate often mixes these cards up to avoid being too heteronormative.

If you are in a lover pair, you and your lover have made a suicide pact. If your lover dies (is mauled to death and eaten by werewolves, double trapped, executed by the village, struck down by Fate, or killed in any other way) you will kill yourself too. As such, you must protect your lover to ensure your own personal survival.

Star-Crossed Lovers:

In the case of star-crossed lovers (a lover pair on opposite sides of the conflict), the win conditions change. No one else will ever understand your love. And so, you will have to kill them all. The only way you two can be together, and live happily ever after, is if everyone else is dead. Get to it. This is a bit of an unlucky draw, but the heart wants what it wants, and this can be done. You can still win.

Rivals:

If you are assigned a rival (much rarer), you cannot stand to live in the same village as your rival. Literally. You must do whatever you can to kill your rival or get your rival killed by other players during the course of the game. If, at the end of the game, you are both still alive, you will meet in the village square at dawn and duel to the death, as decided by Fate.

Winning & Losing

Fate cannot tell you if you have exterminated all of the werewolves and werewolf supporters, or killed all of the villagers, and will not tell you if you have already won. So the game does not automatically end as soon as one side has been eliminated. If you are a werewolf, and you think your team has won (in the checkmate sense that there is nothing any remaining villagers could possibly do to stop your conquest of their village), the werewolves can rise up by howling together. Fate will confirm if you have won. If you are a villager, and you think you have exterminated all of the werewolves and you feel it is safe to sleep, all the surviving villagers will enjoy a peaceful night of sleep, and Fate will wake you in the morning to confirm that you have won. Be prepared to be mistaken about winning on occasion.

Best of luck to you all!