

Dear Friends...

You may want to skip this letter. Does WOLF! need an introduction? After all- you have probably already played this game, as MAFIA, WEREWOLF, ASSASSIN, WITCH HUNT, LUPUS... etc. Perhaps if you are a true nerd, you might have played at a some kind conference or writers workshop, as the THING. Maybe you are a Latvian celebrity, and you were asked to participate on live television in some kind *The Price is Rite* meets *The Bachelor* reality show.

There is nothing terribly original about my version WOLF! all versions of the game stretch back to the same academy in Russia, with an experiment in social psychology during the 80s. If this was an action film we would say that experiment "escaped and went viral." Meaning of course viral-pre-internet. Pre-viral.

So this of course is the first thing with WOLF!, a deep level of mutability. However I am not writing here to remind you of open source culture, any more than I am to speak of hurricanes, or world without electricity, streaming internet movies, and Facebook. These are interesting topics to be addressed of course, but for another day.

All the WOLF! variants despite their diverse narratives and different rules, reflect a certain underlying structure of relationships. Within each player there is a battle between the unconscious and conscious intelligences, ignorance and intuition, retribution and strategy- that is then mirrored externally in the group dynamic itself. What is important is only a balance of forces in encounter. This is more important than the rules and why in this game they are often changed, added to, and re-constructed.

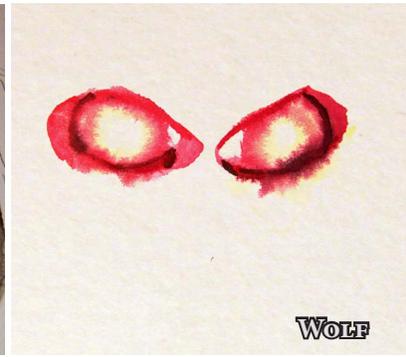
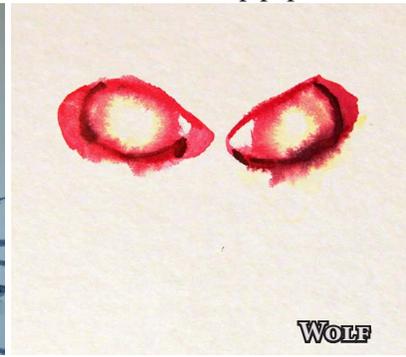
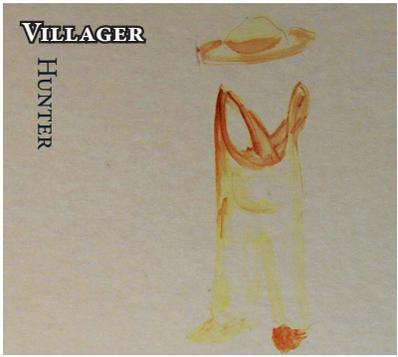
In the case of WOLF! as I said, I have only tuned it- tweaked it in the interest of highlighting certain relationships- certain silent confrontations, scenarios and networks- which are not analogous spaces, or representational devices. They are in fact real confrontations, outside representation, outside language, dramatized through selective focus. Lying has consequences, as does sacrifice. That it is *only* within the frame of a game is irrelevant.

In this thought I am in debt less to Dimma Davidoff who invented the original game we call MAFIA, than the writing of Ursula LeGuin- who reminds us that great fantasy is never about escape, rather it is about decision making in a world we cannot control.

Stories are about the choices we make in defining what it means to be human- with all the terribleness and greatness that that implies. If our identity must first be displaced by a fictitious encounter to see more clearly who we are, so be it.  
Good Luck.

Yours,  
mudboy. R. Lyon  
Night Phase, Dec. 31 2011

CUT THESE OUT



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Additional Wolf! cards can be constructed out of scrap paper.

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# WOLF!

## INSTRUCTIONS

*The moon is full.  
Wolves, choose a victim.*

### — OVERVIEW —

**THIS IS A GAME OF TREACHERY, AND OF BLOOD**<sup>1</sup>

WOLF! takes place in a small town of Villagers, and WOLVES. During the day, WOLVES look and act like regular Villagers, but **each night the WOLVES brutally attack and consume a Villager while they sleep. During the day the Villagers guess who is a WOLF and in retaliation, lynch them.** They are often wrong. **Rounds move between Day phases and Night Phases**, as the town is slowly consumed or killed. The game ends when all the WOLVES are killed or they equal the number of Villagers.

- At least 8 persons are required to play.<sup>2</sup>
- There is about one wolf to every 3 villagers.
- Rounds should last 20-40 minutes.
- Multiple rounds are recommended

### — ROLES —

#### STORYTELLER

One person playing will be THE STORYTELLER,- Their job is to run the game. The STORYTELLER decides which characters are in play for each new game and hands out ID cards. THE STORYTELLER cannot win or lose, takes no sides, and is responsible illuminating the vivid details of death and betrayal. No experience is necessary but a good STORYTELLER will be a person who enjoys embellishing details, and keeps the game moving. THE STORYTELLER is not assigned randomly, but chosen for their creativity and wit. THE STORYTELLER interprets the rules, keeps the game moving and strives for fairness above all things.

#### -WOLF

During the day Wolves appear as normal villagers and partake in the discussions of who is to be lynched. At night they gather and kill. They win when they slaughter enough of the town to outnumber its population.

#### -VILLAGER

Everyone else will participate as a Villager.<sup>4</sup> Some of the villagers will have special roles at night or powers during the day but they are all united in pursuit of WOLVES. The Villagers win when all the wolves have been destroyed.

#### -DEAD

All DEAD are equal and mute. Once killed, a character (WOLF or Villager) is marked and may not speak or influence play. Their only revenge is through haunting at night.

### — GAME PLAY —

**To BEGIN** 8+ Players sit around a table, facing each other. THE STORYTELLER passes out identification cards, randomly or with deliberation. **These cards remain secret and must not be shown!** True identities are know only to THE STORYTELLER (who must make keep track of who is who) and the player themselves. Most players are allowed to reveal their identity, but none may ever show their card. At the same time anyone may lie and pretend to be any other character. **All speech acts are permitted.** Lies, deception, and innuendo are part of the game.

Because each game may involve different villager characters, **in the first round, THE STORYTELLER describes the makeup of the town** - identifying the characters who live there, and in doing so their roles.

*There was once a small town in the hills...  
A woman lives there that can  
see through time and space (The Good Owl)...  
and a girl who can not sleep at night (Insomniac)..*

**The closer this, and other "revealed" information by THE STORYTELLER remains within a narrative mode the better.** Though much of the character identification will be repeated in the evening when some of the characters are called out to act, it is still a good idea to describe the general situation in the first round. **It is important that everyone know the makeup of the town, the number of WOLVES and which characters are in play.**

THE STORYTELLER **begins the game by describing the sleepy village and the terrible atrocities taking place there. Play starts with a lynching.**

*An innovent girl was found last night without a head, or arms.  
It is rumored that some of you  
turn into vicious wolves at night to hunt and eat.  
Villagers, you must have your revenge!*

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1. Initially this game was developed in 1986 by Dmitry Davidoff in Russia with only two roles as a strict sociology study in a Russian University. The game pitted an informed minority (Mafia) against and uniformed minority (Townspople.) There were no special characters and rules were simplified. The game, however quickly outgrew the boundaries of academia, spread quickly across the world within a folk tradition and dozens of variant village characters. In one version of this game The Good Owl is played by a revolutionary hero of the people, such as Assata Shakur, Emma Goldman, or Ernesto Che' Guevara. Likewise Wolves can be replaced by the FBI where winning the game involves eliminating all the FBI agents. Folks that play these version of the game generally call the game "Emma" or "Assata"...

2. An 8-11 person game would include 2 wolves. If you have more than 11 players include an additional wolf. The group can be expanded indefinitely at the ration of one wolf to every 3-4 additional villagers, but keep in mind the ratio is critical to balanced play. **Additional Wolf! cards can be hastily constructed out of scrap papers.**

3. Early rounds will be governed mostly by luck, but as time moves on, and as the game is repeated, prejudice, past rivalry and cunning will rise to the fore.

4. Some villagers can have special powers to use. All or none may be invoked by THE STORYTELLER. If the quality is NOT invoked the villager is simply a commoner with no nightly virtues, and the qualifier on the villager card (Owl, Hunter etc) is ignored

6. This dynamic between the rational and "irrational" group decision making is one element that makes this game so interesting and revealing.

7. There is always a first "innocent" victim who will die before influencing any event.

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## DAY

*The clock bell strikes, The sun has risen. It is Day.  
Everyone, awaken- Open your eyes!*

Knowing the true fate of the night, the STORYTELLER describes in lurid detail the course of the previous evening. This includes the identities of strewn and battered corpse or corpses, and often their profession.

### 1. THE VILLAGERS ARE INCENSED, AND CHOOSE A VICTIM.

Without knowing the identity of the killers, the Villagers now choose whom to lynch through a combination of logic, threats, questioning, deception and general mob mentality. **During the Day there are no restrictions on speech.** Any living player can say anything they want. **Players can never show their ID card.**

Lynching however is a messy business, <sup>7</sup> especially in the first round. **If no agreement can be reached then the SCAPEGOAT character is killed.** If that character is not in play-then no one is killed but keep in mind that it generally is in the best interest of the village to lynch someone.

Mob violence can vary. A “democratic” system involves a victim being nominated, seconded, and then voted on. Everyone can also simply point and yell. However before any final vote is cast, **the STORYTELLER should allow the accused to protest their innocence** with any convincing story or explanation they can muster. If a player wants to reveal some information, they have to do it before this final vote is cast. **Once the group picks a victim, the decision is final and the villager is lynched.**

**The lynched member is now one of the DEAD, and cannot speak or affect game play** for the rest of the game. **The DEAD should be marked** – either by wearing some item such as a hat or sunglasses, and/or be forced to sit in particular area with other ghosts.

### 2. IF THE CORONER CHARACTER IS ALIVE, THE TRUE IDENTITY OF THE DEAD IS NOW REVEALED BY THE MODERATOR.

*Though dismembered, the body twitches-  
Suddenly the face becomes horrible, hairy...*

or

*A pair of bloody pliers was found amongst his things, there is  
no doubt this man was the mad dentist...”*

**Notes on Temporality: It is critical that the STORYTELLER manage the speed of the round.** Pressure to quickly choose a suspect to hang, dismember, or drown before the sun goes down is part of the game. Rounds, especially early ones, which are pure speculation, should move quickly.

*The noon bell has rung, the day is half over..  
The clock is striking 7pm, the sun will go down in 2 minutes...*

Eclipses, sleeping sickness in which the town wakes up late in the day or other such temporal distortions may be engaged by the STORYTELLER for dramatic effect. But **at the moment of nightfall, the villagers rush to their homes in terror and cannot communicate.**

*The Sun sets... Darkness grows upon the town...*

It is now **Night**

## NIGHT

*The night bell strikes. The moon is full.  
You are in your home, alone...*

With nightfall, the STORYTELLER describes the growing darkness, the chilling wind, cold moon and fear. It is time for the village to sleep.

*EVERYONE, close your eyes.*

**Excepting the STORYTELLER, every player including the DEAD shuts their eyes. Players cannot cover their eyes with their hands or other objects.**

If this is the first round, ALL of the characters with special attributes are told (one at this time) to awaken and let themselves be known to THE STORYTELLER. **Some characters, like the MASONS and LOVERS- will only open their eyes this one first round, to simply identify each other,** others with special night roles will open their eyes every evening on command.

THE STORYTELLER **should make note of who is who.** In addition, the first night rounds are a good moment to speak through the more obscure roles to remind everyone of the villagers powers.

*LOVERS, Open your eyes and see each other...*

*You are doomed. If one dies, so does the other..*

*LOVERS, Close your eyes..(Etc)*

### 1. WOLVES STRIKE

*WOLVES, Open your eyes.... and select your meal.*

**The WOLVES now open their eyes, acknowledge each other, and silently select a victim.** THE STORYTELLER should take note of who they are, and who their victim is. Like all who act at night they must be absolutely quiet or they will be suspected the following day. When they have communicated to the STORYTELLER their choice, and it is acknowledged- they return to sleep.

*Werewolves, Close your eyes.*

### 2. VILLAGERS DEFEND

At this moment, other villagers whose special traits have been invoked by the STORYTELLER for this game, (such as the HUNTER or OWL) are instructed to awaken and perform their allotted tasks.

*HUNTER, Open your eyes... Choose your target...*

*HUNTER, You are acknowledged,*

*They will die if you do tomorrow, Return to sleep,*

*Close your eyes.*

### 3. THE DEAD RETALIATE

Freed from their bodies, the DEAD sit together, marked, WOLVES and VILLAGERS alike. The DEAD cannot influence the game at all during the day, and must, like other players keep their eyes closed when everyone is sleeping. After all the special villagers have been activated, and the wolves have attacked, shortly before dawn the DEAD are awoken by the STORYTELLER.

*DEAD, It is the Witching Hour!*

**The DEAD open their eyes, and together chose a living VILLAGER or WOLF to haunt.** Once they have picked a victim, one of the DEAD gets up from their seat, and silently as possible, sneaks over to the chosen person... and spooks them!

This may be as light as a tickle, or as rowdy as a slap.

The sounds of shock awaken the village...

*TOWNSPEOPLE AWAKE! It is Morning!*

It is now **Day.**

# VILLAGER VARIATIONS

You may use, all, some, or none of these variations.

Suggestion: If you are playing for the first time include THE GOOD OWL, CORONER and SCAPEGOAT.

## THE CORONER



The CORONER doesn't actually have any actual powers, but as long as the CORONER remains alive, the STORYTELLER will explain the true identity of lynched, shot and otherwise killed characters after they die. If the CORONER is killed, or not in play, villagers must deduce the true identity of dead characters on their own. When THE CORONER is killed, he or she is not identified.

## THE SCAPEGOAT



If by nightfall there is no consensus on whom to lynch, the scapegoat is automatically put to death.

NOTE: This card may be used as punishment for difficult players who continue to speak after they die, or it may be used

to balance a game with a particularly strong player. Typically it is given out randomly.

## THE GOOD OWL



With her powers of magical observation, at night this villager can fly through the air, watching silently to discover a true identity, or cast a spell of protection. However the GOOD OWL cannot do both in one night, and must choose each evening. The spell protects an individual from WOLF attacks for only one night. The GOOD OWL may use this spell on themselves

### NIGHT PLAY - Identity OWL discovers an identity

*OWL open your eyes and choose a villager..*

(OWL with one hand, points at an individual)

If the person is a WOLF, THE STORYTELLER gives a thumbs down.

If the person is a villager, THE STORYTELLER gives a thumbs up.

*OWL open shut eyes, return to your bed.*

### NIGHT PLAY -Spell OWL casts a spell of protection

*OWL open your eyes and choose a villager..*

(OWL joins its hands)

THE STORYTELLER acknowledges OWL is going to cast a spell.

(OWL with hands clasped points at a target person)

*OWL, close your eyes*

NOTE: The "saved" person miraculously survives any attacks by WOLVES, but this spell will not save them from a lynching. OWL may admit her identity but if she does she risks quickly become the target of the WOLVES next meal.

## THE INSOMNIAC



While WOLVES hunt, If she wishes, the INSOMNIAC may sneak a peek by opening her eyes slightly. If the WOLVES catch her spying, she is immediately slaughtered, and becomes the WOLVES sole victim for that night. The INSOMNIAC can only open her eyes after the STORYTELLER says: "WOLVES open your eyes!" and she MUST close them when the WOLVES are told to return to sleep.

## MASONS



There are always two MASONS, if there are any. In the first round THE STORYTELLER will ask the MASONS to open their eyes and acknowledge each other. They perform no night-ly actions but because they are part of a secret society they can be sure of each others identity as Villager.

Under pain of death they must keep this knowldge secret until their partner has been killed.

## HUNTER



At Night the Hunter selects a target. If killed by WOLVES during the night, or if lynched by Villagers during the day, he gets off one last shot from his hunting gun while dying, and shoots whoever he suspected the previous night. Hopefully it will be a WOLF.

## DENTIST



At night, a deranged DENTIST extracts a the tooth from one villager rendering them silent for the following Day.

*Dentist open your eyes, Choose a villager..  
The dentist points  
Dentist, close your eyes.*

In the morning of the following day, after revealing the WOLF's meal, the STORYTELLER announces the DENTIST's victim. The extractee while mute, can however make gestures and vote. He or she will recover in the following morning, unless of course the DENTIST continues to victimize the same villager.

## DOOMED LOVERS



THE LOVERS have no special powers. But if one LOVER dies, the other dies immediately of grief. The LOVERS may be two Villagers, or a Villager and a WOLF. There can only be two lovers at a time. In the case of a mixed WOLF/VILLAGER pair- the only hope is to kill off everyone else in the town and survive alone.

Note: A VILLAGE LOVER will never be sure if their partner is a WOLF.