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Every time their gazes tug down,
They think us monsters, then men,
Predators, then persons again,
Beasts, then beings,
Horrors & then humans.

—AMANDA GORMAN, "LUCENT"



Introduction

Scent of Decay is the first chronicle supplement for *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, 5th edition. It's a series of stories set in the small Midwestern American town of Milton, that link together into a chronicle that will take a pack from its formation, through claiming territory, through their first steps into the Umbra, and finally into the difficult and tense relations of the Garou Nation. The pack will face a Pentex Group front, a manipulative trickster spirit, and another pack of werewolves with a grudge. They'll earn Renown and maybe even a spirit ally and earn their place amongst the local Garou.

Milton's a deliberately easy place to adapt to your own preferred setting: there are small towns just like it—struggling to survive, exploited by corporate interests and selfish politicians—just about anywhere. We have no doubt you'll be able to adapt *Scent of Decay* to wherever you set your games without losing a thing. The stories that make up this chronicle are designed to work as consecutive chapters in a pack's tale, or to be separated by other stories of the Storyteller's own design.

Inside this book, you'll find:

Assembling the Pack: Advice on creating a set of characters who'll work well together, identifying

and respecting one another's strengths without ignoring tension. This chapter also contains some background information on Milton, which will be useful when creating characters for *Scent of Decay*.

The Break Room: The first story in the trilogy puts the pack up against a Pentex front turning human workers into wasp-like drones. Productivity is everything.

Shadows on the Prison Walls: The second story takes the pack into the Umbra to address some of the less obvious problems afflicting Milton, teaching them a lot about the power, and the agendas, of spirits in the process.

A Pound of Flesh: In the final story, the meddling of the pack's mentor gets them into trouble and places them in a challenge set by the Horned Serpent to make amends: find a local Kin before her First Change, and make sure her Rage doesn't undo all the pack's work.

The Weaver's World: An additional set of plug-and-play scenes addressing the challenges that Garou face when they interact with humans and their world. Run these scenes as part of a story, or feel free to draw inspiration from them for your own narratives. ■

SESSION ZERO

During session zero (see *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, pp. 203–205) you have two goals: character creation and making sure everybody is on the same page concerning the game you're about to play. You can find more information in the Appendix: Advice for Considerate Play in *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, p. 320.

You can start working on the pack's in-game dynamics during session zero by helping the players form a tighter ensemble. After all, if the players feel good about each other, it's easier for that feeling to translate into the relationships between the characters as well.

A simple technique you can use to build the ensemble with your troupe is to do rounds where everyone answers a question. The answers are not meant as the start of a debate and you, the Storyteller, can even skip your turn if you wish. The goal is to listen to what your fellow players are saying so you get a better feeling for where they're coming from.

A good first question is simply:

- * Do you have any questions about *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*?

Depending on how the troupe answers, you can tailor the rest of the discussion to their interests.

Here are a few more questions:

- * What do you hope to experience from the pack dynamic? (As the Storyteller, you can elaborate on the question to help your troupe: Should the pack have a leader? If yes, what kind of responsibilities do they have? Should everyone have a unique role, or would you prefer a more fluid dynamic?)
- * What kind of positive themes do you wish to see between pack members? Are you interested in stories of camaraderie, trust, or the thrill of the fight that playing a werewolf pack makes possible?
- * What kind of tensions do you think would be fun to explore within the pack? Do pack members have differing moral opinions on how to fight for Gaia, when killing is or isn't justified, or should each pack member contribute equally? Or is tension built around something more personal, like each member's individual need for glory?

- * Is there anything you're afraid of happening that would diminish your experience of the game?
- * What makes you excited to play *Werewolf*?
- * Are there any movies, comics, books or the like that you've been thinking of as references regarding this game?
- * Is there something specific that you think would be cool if it happened, or that you'd enjoy experiencing in the game? For example, a struggle for who's in charge of the pack, delving into the spiritual mysteries of the Umbra or intrigue, drama, and betrayal among the Garou.

The last two questions are especially useful for the Storyteller, making it easier to tailor the content of the game to what the players are interested in experiencing.

Once you have characters and they've been introduced to the troupe, you can do a few more rounds specifically about them:

- * What kind of things do you wish to explore with this character?
- * Are there things you want to avoid playing with your character?
- * What's something that holds you together as a pack?

That last question may spark a discussion, and that's fine—desirable, in fact. Each pack has its own problems, but there are reasons they're sticking to each other, and it helps play to know what they are.

CONFLICT IN THE PACK

Playing conflict inside the pack can be great fun. The ahroun is just about to rip apart the employee of an oil company when the philodox intervenes, arguing that killing defenseless people is not what the Garou are supposed to do.

When such conflicts stay between characters, they can create powerful moments in the game. However, there's a danger that they sometimes bleed over into the relationship between the players. Intellectually we understand that play is just play but when someone is shouting in your face, it's easy to get angry for real.

Building trust inside the troupe in advance helps with this. It's also useful for the Storyteller to keep an eye out for the escalation of conflict beyond in-game events. If that happens, the Storyteller can seek to pre-emptively make the situation less emotional.

Here are a few ways you can do this:

- * **Involve game mechanics.** If the players have been discussing things as their characters, you can turn the situation into a roll. Ask both to roll for whatever they're arguing for.
- * **Ask the players how they see the scene progressing.** Ideally, they should suggest different possible outcomes. If they don't, you can offer some additional alternatives. This tends to take the player out of the emotional space of the characters and subtly gets the players to work together to sketch out the outcome of the scene. While the characters are in conflict, the players cooperate.
- * **Cut to another scene.** You can take a break from the scene to see what's happening with the rest of the pack and then cut back to the conflict. On the level of the characters this changes nothing but for the players, watching other troupe members play for a few minutes allows them to relax for a bit and come down from the conflict. It can also help them think about how their scene fits into the

wider story, instead of just how it's making them feel in the moment.

- * Finally, if the conflict escalates so that it causes actual, real anger, the Storyteller can **stop the game for a moment**. The participants should discuss what happened, facilitated by the Storyteller, and seek to de-escalate the conflict so that it doesn't harm the relationship they share as players. Mutual apologies are often a good start, even if it doesn't really feel anyone did anything wrong.

Note that sometimes the Storyteller is part of a difficult situation like this. In such a case, they should still stop play and try to emotionally de-escalate and smooth things over. It's difficult, but part of their job as facilitator is to be able to step back and do this. If it's not going well, consider asking another player to facilitate the discussion.





BUILDING UP YOUR PACKMATES

When you're playing an ahroun, it's fun to feel like an unstoppable engine of brutal violence. When your character is a ragabash, you want to feel like a clever troublemaker who's always one step ahead.

How do you make this happen?

When you play a game of *Werewolf* with your friends, you can build their characters up. When everyone does this to each other, the result is a pack of Garou who are all exactly as cool as you want them to be.

If you want to make this happen as a player, the first thing to do is simply to listen. Here are three examples of things your fellow players might say about their own characters:

- * "My character is a theurge. She's been forced to grow up too fast and although she has acquired hard-won wisdom, there's a sadness behind her eyes."
- * "I'm a Silver Fang, but I'm pretty young and I didn't have a lot growing up. Being called by the Falcon into this tribe has been a confusing experience and I'm worried I won't live up to the expectations everyone is placing on me."
- * "My wolf-born character is a bit of a dork, especially among humans and human-born, but in a fight he's unstoppable."

The key is to not only note details like tribe and auspice but also pay attention to the overall concept your fellow player has for their character. Then, during play, there are several things to do to build them up:

Give Spotlight: When the situation calls for someone to represent the pack at the moot, you turn to look at the Silver Fang expectantly. This way, their player can portray their uncertainty without that uncertainty causing them to lose the spotlight during play. There's no need to be subtle about this. Especially if you're playing online, where it's hard to read pauses and body language, you can just say out of character: "Hey, you're a great tracker, right? Do you want to handle this?"

Hype: Sometimes the simplest methods are the best. You can simply hype up another character in a social scene: "Black Spiral Dancers? Oh, my ahroun friend will make short work of those. Wait until you see him in action!"

React to Reinforce: You can make sure to react when something happens in the game to reinforce the character of your packmate. For example, your theurge friend is talking with a raccoon spirit and rolls exceptionally well. You can say: "I knew the spirits would recognize your wisdom!" This also applies when handling failure. The dice might go against your theurge friend, but it's important to rationalize what happened in character: "These spirits were especially challenging to deal with!" rather than: "You're a bad theurge and I'm going to handle the next negotiation."

The basic mechanism that makes this work is the idea that a lot of character identity is built together, as a group, and not just by the individual playing that character. A character whose concept, Attributes, Skills, and Merits all suggest charisma becomes the social animal they are if all the other characters and players treat them as such.

One auspice excels above all others when it comes to building up their packmates. That one is obviously galliard. When your job is to tell the stories of your pack at the moot, you have a wonderful opportunity to build up your friends in ways that support their character concepts. It doesn't have to be all that complicated: Simply make their successes sound as grand as possible, ideally in line with their character concepts. Out of character communication can really help here: Ask other players what they intended or were trying to achieve with a great deed, so you can give them their due in the retelling.

UNUSUAL PACKS

Typically, a pack consist of Garou from different auspices. This way, each player has their own area of expertise in which they can shine. However, you can also experiment with other compositions. In the World of Darkness, a pack rarely comprises exactly 5 Garou with one representing each auspice: it's an ideal that just doesn't occur that often. If the players are interested in trying out new things, or just don't want to be forced into one particular choice, the troupe can create all sorts of combinations.

Here are a few possible concepts:

Two Ahrouns: There are two true warriors in the pack and there's always competition between them. Who gets the most kills, who manages to save more people, whose deeds are talked about at the moot?

The Ragabash Pack: Most if not all members of the pack are ragabash. They're known troublemakers, getting kicked out of moots and making practical jokes on the esteemed heroes of the Garou. Some want to kill them, others desire to point them in the direction of the enemy.

The Spirit Guardians: There are several theurges in the pack, and they have a sacred mission to work with a specific spirit and keep it friendly with the Garou. However, each theurge has their own ideas on how to do this best.

Rebuilding the Nation: The Garou Nation is in tatters, destroyed by the internal divisions among werewolves. Yet the dream of being united against the Wurm still lives and is the purpose of this traveling pack consisting of a few philodoxes and their packmates. They move from sept to sept, trying to heal old wounds and get intransigent elder werewolves to talk to each other.

The Band: A couple of galliards is all it takes to put together a band and the traveling lifestyle of being on tour suits the hunt for the despoilers of Gaia. If you want to play to type, the characters can be a hardcore punk band. If you want contrast, they can be an austere electropop ensemble or a mellow hippie band.

When you have more than one character from the same auspice, make sure there's something that distinguishes them from each other. Each should have their own strengths so that it's still clear when they can have their moment to shine. Ideally, have players discuss this openly during session zero.



THE Weaver's World

APPENDIX

From the heart of the city to the edges of civilization, every Garou was born entangled in some part of the Weaver's web. These scenes draw on strands of the web — human connections and problems — to challenge the pack. If the Garou can navigate them, they'll reap rewards. Fail, and they'll ruin lives.

This appendix is a collection of standalone scenes flexible enough to fit into the stories in this book or ones of your own making. These are best used between major story beats to further define how the pack fits into the

world of humans and how they stand apart. They're ready to use as-is, but you can tailor them to your stories by adjusting details as you see fit.

At the Storyteller's discretion, these scenes might allow the purchase of a single point of Glory, Honor, or Wisdom, depending on how the characters handle them.



A HARD BARGAIN

Cast: A boss with direct authority over the characters (3/2).

What Happened: At a character's day job, or at an organization the pack is infiltrating like a Pentex front, their boss praises them work they've done so far and offers them a new opportunity. It's under the table work; the boss wants them to spend some shifts loading and transporting unmarked bags and boxes to locations around the city. While the proposed work doesn't sound like anything that furthers the Wurm's goals, it's highly suspicious. If they're infiltrating a Pentex front, it's almost certainly a cover for something terrible.

What Could Happen:

- * If the character or pack declines the work, it's not the end of the matter. The boss offers more incentives, questions why the character wouldn't take the work and escalates to subtle threats. They might have to engage in a Social Conflict to escape the boss's badgering.

- * Instead of leaning on the character or pack, the boss might pass on the job to a co-worker they know if they refuse it. The co-worker's enthusiastic about such a simple task for more pay, but it becomes clear that whatever is going on, it's not just physically taxing on them, it's morally taxing. Unless the characters find a way to get the co-worker out of this jam, their colleague is about to undergo a nervous breakdown or a Bane Spirit possession.
- * If the character or pack takes the work, they have a chance to investigate what they're transporting and why the company's involved with it. It's something distasteful, if not outright illegal or immoral. They might learn the company's involved in some kind of trafficking, whether that's bootleg merchandise, drugs, or even people. If the company's a Pentex front, it could be an illegal waste-dumping scheme, or even gathering offerings to a secret temple to Fly somewhere in town. Whatever it is, the characters have a chance to stop it from the inside.

Attribute Focus: Social



BARFIGHT

Cast: An Ally or a Contact, at least one human troublemaker (4/2 for a single antagonist, 3/2 for each member of a group), several human bystanders.

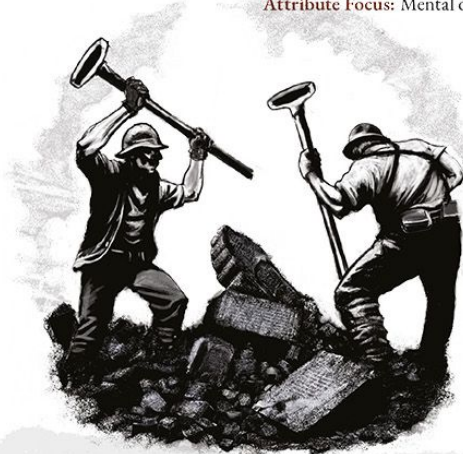
What Happened: The pack meets a Contact or Ally at a bar or other public place to discuss important business. The troublemaker approaches them, and they aren't interested in pleasant conversation. They have a bone to pick with the connection.

If the werewolves let loose, they can absolutely destroy the troublemaker, but they have to face the consequences: attention, Delirium, bodies to dispose of, or a reputation for letting things get out of hand.

What Could Happen:

- * If the pack isn't interested in talking things out, they can get right to business. The troublemaker and the pack enter a Physical conflict.
- * The troublemaker is an agent of a greater force that wants to intimidate the pack's connection. That force could be the story's antagonist or someone unrelated like a loan shark. The pack must prove they're the greater threat.
- * The troublemaker's mistaken the connection for someone else. After it's cleared up, they're still itching for some kind of conflict. The pack could redirect their aggression into less violent competition.

Attribute Focus: Physical or Social



CAMPFIRE SONGS

Cast: One or more Contacts, Allies, or Touchstones involved in an artistic community such as a local music scene.

What Happened: The pack recently experienced a devastating loss or failure. A member of the pack's extended circle, an aspiring musician, catches on that the pack's bummed out and invites them to an upcoming performance at an open mic night held at a gazebo in the park. There's a good crowd, and everyone else is in high spirits.

If the pack doesn't know anyone musically inclined, this scene could take the form of any public arts display relevant to the pack's social circle, ideally one the pack themselves can take part in.

What Could Happen:

- * The pack is invited to take the stage. Even if they're not musicians, this could be a way to mourn their failure in a cathartic way. Their performance could be an ode to a peer they lost, a raucous song that almost sounds like furious howls, or even a secret call to action.
- * A boastful musician (who could even be their friend!), challenges their peers to a "friendly" musical duel. A musically talented member could show them up and gain some Contacts, Allies, or even a dot of Fame.
- * Their musician friend is hit with stage fright before their set. The pack must give them the encouragement they need to perform. It's a tiny victory, but it might be what the pack needs.

Attribute Focus: Mental or Social