



Howl at the Moon

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In every mortal, the unreasoning and monstrous nature of a beast strains against morality, virtue, and civilization. Most control the darkness by clinging to religion, philosophy, or a moral code. Under certain circumstances, such as when under great strain or terrible pressure, the anger breaks free and only violence can sate the beast.

Civilization provides a harbor for those seeking to escape the world of hunger and want. Behind steep walls, on streets watched by constables, and when tucked in warm beds, mortals tell themselves the darkness is out there, somewhere, held at bay by enlightenment's advance. Yet evil casts a long shadow. It never remains content with the gains it makes, and it seeks to creep across the landscape, spreading ruin, death, despair, and suffering to anything it touches. Evil goads the beast. It weakens the chains. It defeats reason. And when it takes hold, the monster breaks free and tragedy follows.

The tension between the rustic world and the urban one is alive and well, and dangers aplenty abound in both. From the mythical dragons soaring through fire-scorched clouds to the glistening horrors bubbling up from the Underdark's depths, most evils reveal themselves in their horrific or terrifying visages. Yet some evils reflect the darkness within mortals. These evils might even hide behind human masks, moving unseen through those havens where mortals think themselves safe. These dreadful threats are, perhaps, the most insidious of all because they can be anyone, anywhere, at any time. They are the hidden threat and the menace stalking the streets. They are the lycanthropes, the skinchangers, and

werebeasts. They have become lost to the monster and are now its slaves.

Most lycanthropes possess unremarkable appearances and can pass for any man or woman, though most lycanthropes also show some roughness around the edges. They might hold jobs and raise families, just as any other contributor to their communities. But they all carry a terrible secret that would see them exiled at best and destroyed at worst if the secret is exposed. The human forms they wear are masks that conceal a bestial nature they struggle to control.

Or so the stories go. This article goes beyond the *Monster Manual*[®] and *Monster Vault*[™] books and explores lycanthropy from the player's perspective by going into detail about the myths and legends concerning skinchangers. Additionally, three new character themes allow you to play a werebear, wererat, or werewolf.

CHILDREN OF THREE WORLDS

Lycanthropes stand in three worlds, yet they belong to none. In their humanoid forms, they can, though rarely do, live as other humans. They might form communities or adopt human ones, gather in tribes, tend herds, and do all the things one might expect. In their beast forms, though they are little different from the animals they resemble. Their unnatural hunger drives them to hunt under the full moon's light, prowling for the blood their unnatural appetite demands. They exist in both forms, yet are not fully

comfortable in either. The true form—the form all lycanthropes prefer—is the form between: the perfect melding of human and beast.

The following entries are legends about the origin of werebeasts.

Melora's Children

One legend claims Melora created the werebeasts. They were her children and, as such, she showered them with her affection. To them she put a great charge: protect the world from all threats and preserve it for future generations. She then divided them into clans to watch over her other creations and to rule them as they saw fit.

Harmony existed for a time, yet war in the heavens drew Melora's eye from the world. She needed to safeguard her dominion and her children from the elemental host seeking to undo what had been done. The werebeasts made good on their ancient vows and fought against the invader as they had been taught. Yet the longer the war raged, the further Melora drifted, and many werebeasts began to believe she had abandoned them altogether.

In this dark time, the werewolf champion Fenris convinced his clan they should make a gift to Melora to appease what they thought was the cause for her absence: her anger at them. Perhaps a true prize, one worthy of her divinity, would bring her back among them once more. And so Fenris and his fellows climbed the highest mountain, and from the peak they leaped from cloud to cloud until they could reach the largest jewel in the heavens: the silvery moon that had so long entranced them. Fenris plucked the moon from the night sky and returned to the moot where the other werebeasts awaited. All was dark, the moon gone, and many feared they had angered the other gods. Yet when Fenris revealed his prize, they were pleased, knowing Melora would be with them soon.

SHIFTERS

Though lycanthropes can pass for human while in their humanoid forms, humans they are not. Even those werebeasts who temper their appetites for human flesh and live among humans peacefully reveal their true heritage in their offspring. Where two lycanthropes produce lycanthropic children, shifters result when one parent is human.

Mingling between the two peoples produced shifters enough that they have become a true race, much as half-elves and half-orcs might gather in small communities. They form into tribes such as the razorclaws and longtooths. Shifter tribes typically include lycanthropes and humans, and tend to favor places steeped in primal magic. For more information on shifters, see *Player's Handbook*® 2.

For three days, the moon vanished, and the Maiden who set it there grew angry. Sehanine descended to the earth to find her missing treasure, searching mountain and forest, hill and field, and yet found nothing. As the sun set on the fourth day, she turned to the children of the forests and asked who had taken the moon. None would speak except for one man—a simple farmer—and he revealed the theft.

Sehanine swept into the werebeasts' camp like a storm. She slew Fenris, and his blood stained the silver crimson. Before she withdrew to replace the sphere in its proper place, she laid a curse against them. "That which you sought, you will never have. That which you will never have will ever be your master. When the moonlight shines, may your true natures be revealed." Sehanine's curse had several consequences. First, werebeasts have been tied to the

lunar cycles and feel their bestial natures become stronger and harder to control when the moon is full in the sky. Second, lycanthropes cannot abide silver's touch since the pure metal has powerful symbolic and supernatural connections to the moon. Third, and finally, the werebeasts loathe humanity because a human man revealed their theft. This loathing has evolved into a terrible hunger for human flesh and blood.

Touched by the Spirit World

Although many lycanthropes hold Melora as their creator, a few shamans point to another figure: the Primal Beast. Of all the primal spirits, the Primal Beast is the most savage. It embodies the predator, representing nature in all its most dangerous forms. According to the shamans, the first lycanthropes were savage humans who honored the violent spirit in different aspects—wolf, fox, raven, bear, and others. Their devotion to the Primal Beast gave their mystics strange powers: the ability to change shape and adopt the totems they venerated. The more they surrendered themselves to the Primal Beast, the greater the spirit's hold over them became until the invaders showed up.

Stories disagree about who these invaders were. They might have been settlers from an ancient empire, rampaging orcs, an undead army led by Vecna, or something else. What is known is that the initial forays by these invaders were disastrous to the savage people. As the dead mounted, the shamans beseeched the Primal Beast for aid. The people's plight moved the spirit: the Primal Beast stirred from the spirit world and touched all who served him, awakening in them a beast. Although they remained more or less human, they could shed their human forms to become beasts to escape their foes or rend them with tooth and claw. With the Primal Beast's aid, the clans threw back the invaders and secured their lands.

What they came to realize was that the Primal Beast's gift changed them forever, and they had become children of the spirit world—a people forever after bound to the beast. Differences between the clans drove them apart, and they spread across the world, each contending with their new natures in their own ways. The wolf clan became ferocious and warlike, while the rat clan infested civilization. Of them all, only the werebears reconciled their divided natures and used their power to preserve the wilderness and safeguard from the enemies without, yet they were too few and too scattered to unify the clans once more. And thus the skinchangers were born and they have troubled the world ever since.

Nerull's Plagues

The tragedy in the divine and primal origin stories suggests some explanation for why lycanthropes are as violent as they are and, to some extent, creates sympathy for these peoples. These tales might be nothing more than fabrications—wild, fanciful myths designed to place these people in the world and explain their actions. The stories do little to expose why lycanthropes are almost universally a wicked and monstrous people, who are carriers of plague and despoilers of the good.

Enemies of the lycanthropes deny the old tales and point to the sickness each werebeast carries as evidence of corruption in lycanthropes. Werebeasts carry filth fever, moon frenzy, and worse. Each time they attack, they spread their plagues so that even the ones lucky to survive these terrifying encounters likely die anyway. A few stories talk about how those sickened by a lycanthrope's bite become werebeasts themselves.

Some theologians blame Nerull for the lycanthropic plague. The old tales recall a time when the Lord of the Dead loosed plagues against the world to claim mortal lives and imprison them in his shadowy realm. Sickness reigned supreme, and entire

civilizations died. These scholars believe the first lycanthropes appeared during this age and were people Nerull chose to spread the sickness. These men and women were transformed into merciless killers, slaughtering and infecting wherever they went. Although the Raven Queen ended Nerull's threat, the lycanthropes remain a legacy of the old dark god.

Since most lycanthropes infect their victims with sickness, the explanation above makes a great deal of sense. Opponents to this theory counter it by saying the disease is a byproduct of the environments these shapechangers inhabit and the fodder they eat. For example, wererats might carry filth fever, but so too do dire rats and ottyughs. The same could be true for moon frenzy or any of the other diseases transmitted by a lycanthrope's bite. It might be that disease could have been one story for skinchangers in the world, but it is certainly not the only one.

Lycanthropes in the World

Lycanthropes encompass a wide range of creatures. For each animal in the world, a good chance exists that a lycanthrope can adopt its form. How lycanthropes fit into the world and beyond depends on their animalistic natures.

Nearly all lycanthropes crave human flesh and are thus drawn to places where humans congregate. Wererats, for example, infiltrate human cities and claim the sewers and abandoned buildings. They use such places to mount raids into the city, stealing riches and lives in equal numbers until the militia or an adventuring band roots them out. Others lurk on civilization's fringes, where they can trouble the lonely roads and the isolated farmsteads with impunity. Only when food becomes scarce do these werebeasts dare attack larger and better protected targets. Such attacks last only until they have eaten their fill or are driven back to the wilderness once more.

Many werebeasts gather in clans led by the strongest in the group. Werewolves in particular collect in large packs led by a lord who holds the position until a younger, stronger lycanthrope can take it. These clans do not mingle with other lycanthropes. They might share a common heritage, yet they regard other breeds as competition for resources already scarce.

Not all lycanthropes seek out their kind. A few, such as the werebear, prefer isolation. Werebears, for example, lack the evil bent so common to lycanthropes and see themselves as nature's protectors.

Brokenstone Vale

The appetite for human flesh earns lycanthropes intolerance, fear, and hatred. Most settlements in the natural world guard against these creatures by hanging wolfsbane over their doors or placing silver coins in their windows to keep the monsters at bay. If whispers reach a town about a skinchanger at large, the people organize into mobs to bring down the beast before it can spread its sickness or claim any more lives. Thus, for most shapechangers, there is hostility on all sides, and even those who master the beast within them and seek to live normal lives must deal with the threat of discovery at all times.

Yet all is not without hope for the lycanthropes. A place known to the werebeasts allows them to live without fear of persecution and in the company of their own kind. Brokenstone Vale has, for many, become something of a promised land for the destitute and disaffected. Some werebeasts spend their lives searching for the safety the vale promises.

In truth, little peace exists in the savage realm of Brokenstone Vale. The lycanthropes living there war against each other most of the time, and order and unity are almost alien concepts. Furthermore, this fabled land lies far beyond the natural world, which is hidden deep in the Feywild behind hostile eladrin who remember well the War of the Pelt that pitted fey against shapechanger for an entire generation.

Brokenstone Vale became a refuge for lycanthropes ages ago, when the werebeasts first explored the Feywild while searching for a new home free from the persecution in the natural world. Rather than temper their violent impulses, the lycanthropes felt that the Feywild's abundance gave them an excuse to hunt and raid with little restraint. The eladrin, who bore the brunt of these attacks, responded in force, and thus began the War of the Pelt. For years, the two sides fought. Eladrin magic destroyed many among the werebeasts and drove them back, deeper and deeper into the mountains. Each victory came at a terrible price, and the eladrin could not replenish their warriors and wizards fast enough to compensate for their own casualties. The war ground down to a stalemate.

Rather than perpetuate the violence, the eladrin agreed to let the werebeasts live in peace provided they never left the mountain vale they held. With no other recourse other than extinction, the

lycanthropes agreed and made do in their new home. The vale, however, could not sustain their numbers. The werebeasts were not farmers; they were hunters. In a few short years, they wiped out the wildlife and turned against each other. A few tried to flee, but the eladrin were ready to destroy any skinchanger that crossed the boundary.

The werebeasts might have died out, yet a leader emerged—one strong enough to unite the tribes and bring order of a sort to the vale. The werewolf lord, Viktor Mazan, modeled himself on the ancient king who first gathered the skinchanger tribes long ago, and he founded a settlement on the vale's lower slopes where all lycanthropes could live together. Mazan taught them to farm the land, to mine the mountains, and to use the land's resources wisely. They even began to trade with the eladrin. Old grudges and violent tendencies trouble the community still, yet Mazan rules with a firm hand and has thus far enjoyed great success in keeping his people alive. Not everyone wants Mazan's new civilization, and rumors have begun to circulate that factions in the upper mountains plot to destroy the werewolf lord and resume the war against the fey once more.

CHARACTER THEMES

Your character's theme is a career, calling, or identity that describes who he or she is in the world. Just as race and class create basic definitions about who your character is, theme adds a third character component to help refine your story and identity. For example, the werewolf theme works well for a druid character who wants to actively fight against those who would despoil nature.

For information on using themes as part of character creation and rules for how to gain and use theme powers and features, see "Heroes of Nature and Lore," *Dragon* 399.

Lycanthrope Themes

According to the *Monster Manual* and *Monster Vault* books, lycanthropes are a race unto themselves. That they can assume human forms does not, in fact, suggest they are human. Instead, the human form is merely one form they can wear. The world of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, however, is big enough to accommodate other kinds of lycanthropes: people who are cursed, afflicted by a disease, or born with the ability to change shape. To represent these characters, this article presents three new themes available to just about any sort of character you would want to play.

Before you choose one of these themes, talk with your Dungeon Master about the role lycanthropes

play in your setting. If a person can become a lycanthrope from a werewolf's bite, for example, you can pair up the theme with just about any race. If the DM prefers to keep lycanthropes as they are presented in the monster books, then human, or maybe some variation of human such as half-elf or half-orc, might be your only options.

VARIANT LYCANTHROPY

In older editions of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, lycanthropy was a supernatural disease and a curse. A character could become afflicted with lycanthropy after being bitten by a werebeast and thereafter transform into a wererat, werewolf, or something else, depending on the enemy that transmitted the disease or curse. Although the *Monster Manual* and *Monster Vault* books posit lycanthropes as being a true race, not all lycanthropes have to be. Characters could become lycanthropes after contracting a disease.

When a character reaches stage 3 of any disease gained from a lycanthrope's attack, the character becomes cursed. During the next full moon, the character gains the appropriate lycanthrope theme. Thus, a character bitten by a wererat and who reaches filth fever's third stage would become a wererat during the next full moon.

If the character already has a theme, the character loses the original theme and any features or powers gained from it. The character then gains the new theme and gains all the features granted by level. The player can then choose to replace lost utility powers with those from his or her class, skills, or the new theme.

WEREBEAR

"I do not consider my nature to be a curse. It is a duty. I safeguard the wilds from those who would despoil them."

The wilderness holds dangers aplenty for the unwary and unprepared. Savage humanoid gather in fell places to launch raids against caravans and homestead alike. Twisted monsters lurk in the shadows and deep caves. Old ruins harbor the spirits of old kings and warriors turned to evil. As dangerous as these realms can be, certain folk take it upon themselves to protect the world and innocents from these threats. From the fearless ranger who prowls the old paths to the druid who secures founts of primal magic from exploitation and ruin, such guardians fight on the front lines against the spreading darkness. Yet they do not fight alone. The legendary werebears emerge from their isolation to fight at their sides and uphold the ancient charge placed upon them by nature's divine protector.

Werebears stand apart from most skinchangers. They lack the evil natures that compel their cousins to commit violence against mankind. Rather than grapple with the bloodlust and savagery so pervasive among the werebeasts, they retain their morality, in part from Melora's favor and also from the great task they accept as theirs. As Sehanine's curse spread through the werebeast clans, Melora reached out from her heavenly realm and sheltered the bear clan. They had ever been among her most devout servants and took no part in the misguided effort to steal the moon from the sky. In exchange, she commanded them and all their descendants to protect the world against their fellows' wickedness, to secure the wilderness against the despoiler and destroyer, and, above all, to keep alive the old ways of the world's magic.

Although many werebears descend from the bear clan, others come by their lycanthropic natures in different ways. Rangers, wardens, and others might receive the gift of lycanthropy after performing a

great service for the druids or for a nature spirit. Melora sometimes rewards favored priests with the ability to transform into bears after a demonstration of uncommon devotion.

Regardless of the transformation's cause, werebears do not remain in civilized areas. They live alone in unspoiled forests and mountains. They construct crude shelters or settle in caves. And the lands and all the creatures living there for miles around fall under their protection. Werebears tend their lands and watch over their charges to ensure the natural processes are left undisturbed. Should anything or anyone threaten the lands they guard, the werebears respond with deadly force and lead the people and the beasts to destroy their intruder, fighting until no threat remains.

Even though many werebears remain in their chosen lands, some do not settle in one place for long. They come to see the entire world as their responsibility. These werebears are the ones most likely to become adventurers, and they crusade against evil in all its forms. They take up with like-minded adventurers, preferring the company of individuals also connected to the spirit world.

Creating a Werebear

Werebears dwell in the wilderness where they can fulfill the sacred duty that Melora or the primal spirits gave them. They are protectors and champions who roam the world, working to preserve nature as it was intended and to safeguard it from those villains who would exploit or despoil it. To better meet their obligations, werebears choose classes that help them not only navigate the wilderness but also draw from its magic. For these reasons many werebears become wardens, finding in that class the powers and capabilities needed to make good on their ancient promise. Less-rooted werebears might instead become rangers, since the class favors those who take the fight to evil rather than guard against it.

Although werebears consider the world's safety a chief concern, it is not the only one. Many realize much damage has already been done to the world, either from dark magic, alien invasion, or even civilization's steady expansion. Rather than just holding what they can, these werebears seek to repair the damage done and secure it for the future. Those with primal inclinations favor the druid and shaman classes, while werebears with strong divine connections lean toward the cleric class and usually worship Melora.

Viktor Mazan, Werewolf Lord of Brokenstone Vale



Bear Shape**Werebear Utility**

Surrendering to the beast within causes you to shed your humanoid form and become a savage bear.

Encounter ♦ Polymorph

Minor Action **Personal**

Effect: You change from your humanoid form to a bear form—a bear—that lasts until the end of the encounter. Alternatively, you can end the form as a minor action and shift 1 square. While you are in bear form, you can't use weapon or implement attack powers that lack the bear form keyword, although you can sustain such powers.

While in this form, you have low-light vision. The form is your size, and it doesn't otherwise change your game statistics or movement modes. Your equipment becomes part of the form, but you drop anything you are holding, except implements you can use. You continue to gain the benefits of the equipment you wear, except a shield.

You can use the properties and the powers of implements as well as magic items you wear, but not the properties or the powers of weapons or the powers of wondrous items. While equipment is part of the form, it cannot be removed, and anything in a container that is part of your form is inaccessible.

Until the form ends, you can use the secondary power at will.

Secondary Power (Bear Form)

Standard Action **Melee touch**

Target: One creature

Attack: Highest ability modifier + 3 vs. AC

Level 11: Highest ability modifier + 6

Level 21: Highest ability modifier + 9

Hit: 1d8 + highest ability modifier damage, and you mark the target until the start of your next turn.

Level 21: 2d8 + highest ability modifier damage.

Special: You can use this power in place of a melee basic attack.

Starting Feature

As a lycanthrope, a werebear can transform from humanoid form to that of a bear and back again. When you assume a bear's form, you become a powerful beast armed with long claws and sharp teeth to

better rend your foes. Even when not in bear form, you retain the animal's hardiness, making you better able to resist the challenges faced by living in the wilderness, though silver still causes you to back off.

Benefits: You gain a +2 bonus to saving throws against disease.

You have the shapechanger subtype. As such, you are subject to effects that affect shapechangers. In addition, any enemy has combat advantage against you when attacking you with a silvered weapon or implement.

In addition, you gain the *bear shape* power.

Additional Features

Level 5 Feature

You have an affinity for dealing with bears due to insights you've gained when you've adopted a bear's form, plus you become hardier while in your bear form.

Benefit: When interacting with bears or similar creatures, you gain a +2 bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks.

Additionally, while *bear shape* is active, you gain a +1 power bonus to AC and Fortitude.

Level 10 Feature

Experience teaches you to control your lycanthropic nature so that when you embrace the beast within you, you need not fully transform into a bear. Instead, you can retain your humanoid shape while adopting the bear's appearance and power.

Benefit: When you use the *bear shape* power, you can assume the form of a humanoid-bear hybrid, instead of a bear. While in hybrid form, your equipment does not become part of your new form, and you are not forced to drop any items you are holding. You are also not limited to using implement and weapon attack powers that have the bear form keyword.

Optional Powers

A close connection to the spirit world protects many werebears from the terrible curse afflicting their skinchanger kin. Freedom from bloodlust grants werebears the ability to explore their dual nature and reconcile the conflict between them until they can learn to achieve true harmony.

Level 2 Utility Power

As you become more comfortable in your bear form, you learn to use its great strength to grab hold of your opponent and grasp it tightly. Additionally, the wounds you suffer in combat heal in moments.

Bear Up**Werebear Utility 2**

Your massive arms itch to wrap your enemy in a crushing embrace from which there is little hope of escape, and your wounds begin to close.

Encounter ♦ Beast Form, Healing

Minor Action **Personal**

Requirement: You must have started this turn bloodied.

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, when you hit with *bear shape*'s secondary power, you can grab the target until the end of your next turn. In addition, while you are bloodied and in bear form, you have regeneration 2.

Level 11: Regeneration 4.

Level 21: Regeneration 6.

Level 6 Utility Power

The bear spirit sharing your body is a constant presence in your heart and mind. Should the danger grow too great, the bear might break free from your self-imposed restraints and emerge with a mighty, terrifying roar.

Enraged Bear

Werebear Utility 6

Sudden pain shatters your control and you transform into a bear before your enemies' eyes.

Daily ♦ **Beast Form, Fear**

Immediate Reaction **Personal**

Trigger: An attack hits you while you are not in your beast form.

Effect: You use *bear shape* even if the power is already expended. Each enemy within 3 squares of you that can see you takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).

Level 10 Utility Power

The primal spirits reward those werebears who protect and nurture the natural world by granting them an evocation that can remove afflictions and ease suffering. When you use this power, a soft light limns your body and flows toward the ally you would help.

Blessing of the Great Bear

Werebear Utility 10

You call out to the Great Bear and feel nature's magic flow through to aid an ally in need.

Encounter ♦ **Beast Form, Primal**

Standard Action **Melee touch**

Target: You or one ally

Effect: You end one effect that a saving throw can end on the target.

WERERAT

"People scorn rats, yet are they not among the world's best survivors?"

They carry plague. They live in squalor and filth. They eat whatever they can, fouling foodstuffs and other supplies with their leavings. And they breed at an alarming rate. For these reasons, most folk consider rats vermin and it's no surprise that rat catchers patrol almost every city, venturing into the sewers and exploring the docks with dog and club to control the rat population. Whispers circulate among those who do this thankless job about the big rats that can break a rat's neck with a single bite. And then some tell stories that no one dares believe: tales of rats who walk upright as humans.

Wererats find no more welcome among other skinchangers than they do in civilization. Deemed the lowest form of werebeast, they have few opportunities to interact with other clans. Instead, they keep to their own kind and live with the rats whose warrens they share. More than any other lycanthrope, wererats live among human populations, hiding in plain sight and learning the secret ways in and out of the city to move about unseen when hunting. They claim the sewers, the abandoned buildings, and the slums, where witnesses are rare and reports about their activities go unheard. They are scavengers, picking through civilization's leavings and spreading their disease wherever they can.

Despite the hostility toward wererats coming from all fronts, they not only survive, but also thrive. Wererats might be hated, yet they exist in the largest numbers. They might be rejected, yet they operate in extensive communities so that they do not need assistance or aid from other werebeasts. And although they might lack the ferocity or durability enjoyed by rivals, their swarms can overwhelm even the toughest werewolf.

Since wererats live among humans, they have the best opportunities to pursue adventuring classes. Rarely, a wererat might change his or her views regarding humans and make efforts at restitution for past crimes, if not directly to improve the community, then indirectly to fight for other communities. A few wererats owe their natures to a chance encounter with another wererat or plague-bearing dire rat. Once the disease runs its course, the individual is uprooted and searching for a new future as a shapechanger.

Creating a Wererat

Wererats require large host populations to sustain their warrens. For this reason, wererats populate cities, living within or below them where they can steal what they need to survive and carry out various mischievous plans. Most wererat adventurers take much from the experience inherent in living secretly amid others and apply what they've learned toward their adventuring careers. As one might expect, wererat thieves and scoundrels are quite common, and a few might go further and become assassins. Some wererats could instead focus on survival skills and become rangers or possibly tempest fighters to better defend themselves against attack. Also, since most wererats survive by stealing, they sometimes come upon magical lore, and the most cunning among them can learn to decipher the strange writing to become powerful wizards, warlocks, and sorcerers.

Starting Feature

You can change your shape to become a dire rat, a monstrous and larger version of an ordinary rat. While in this form, the disease you carry—filth fever—becomes infectious, and anyone you bite is at risk of contracting it. Your time as a wererat teaches you how to move unseen and to avoid attracting attention.

Additionally, silver is particularly harmful to you, and enemies that attack you with silvered weapons have a deadly advantage against you.

Benefits: You gain a +2 power bonus to Stealth checks.

You have the shapechanger subtype. As such, you are subject to effects that affect shapechangers. In addition, any enemy has combat advantage against you when attacking you with a silvered weapon or implement. Also, you are immune to filth fever.

Finally, you gain the *dire rat shape* power.

Werewolf Devotee of the Primal Beast



Dire Rat Shape

Wererat Utility

By embracing your bestial nature, you undergo a disturbing transformation into a vicious dire rat.

Encounter ♦ Polymorph

Minor Action Personal

Effect: You change from your humanoid form to a beast form—a dire rat—that lasts until the end of the encounter. Alternatively, you can end the form as a minor action and shift 1 square. While you are in beast form, you can't use weapon or implement attack powers that lack the beast form keyword, although you can sustain such powers.

While in this form, you have low-light vision. The form is Small, and it doesn't otherwise change your game statistics or movement modes. Your equipment becomes part of the form, but you drop anything you are holding, except implements you can use. You continue to gain the benefits of the equipment you wear, except a shield.

You can use the properties and the powers of implements as well as magic items you wear, but not the properties or the powers of weapons or the powers of wondrous items. While equipment is part of the form, it cannot be removed, and anything in a container that is part of your form is inaccessible.

Until the form ends, you can use the secondary power at will.

Secondary Power (Beast Form)

Standard Action Melee touch

Target: One creature

Attack: Highest ability modifier + 3 vs. AC

Level 11: Highest ability modifier + 6

Level 21: Highest ability modifier + 9

Hit: 1d4 + highest ability modifier damage. If the target is granting you combat advantage, it also takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

Level 21: 2d4 + highest ability modifier damage.

Special: You can use this power in place of a melee basic attack.

Additional Features

Level 5 Feature

Your experiences as a dire rat have revealed much to you about rats, their minds, and their behaviors. You can draw on your expertise to help handle and deal with these creatures. You also respond more quickly to threats while in your dire rat form.

Benefit: When interacting with rats or similar creatures, you gain a +2 bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks.

In addition, while *dire rat shape* is active, you gain a +2 power bonus to Reflex.

Level 10 Feature

You realize your full potential as a wererat when you master your transformation. Rather than adopt a humanoid or beast form, you can fuse the forms together to become a hybrid. In this form, you benefit from the dire rat's speed and quickness, while retaining the ability to cast spells and use the items you carry. There are still times when transforming into a dire rat can be advantageous, and you have become so comfortable in that form that you can use its natural agility to evade enemy attacks.

Benefit: When you use the *dire rat shape* power, you can assume the form of a humanoid-rat hybrid, instead of a dire rat. While in hybrid form, your equipment does not become part of your new form, and you are not forced to drop any items you are holding. You are also not limited to using implement and weapon attack powers that have the beast form keyword.

Optional Powers

Wererats survive due to superior cunning and a willingness to hide in places others fear to explore. As you come to terms with your lycanthropic nature, you have opportunities to deepen your understanding

about your beast form and learn new ways to use your dire rat form to your advantage.

Level 2 Utility Power

As with other lycanthropes, you can recover from your injuries in combat more quickly, as if the quality that allows you to change form also repairs injuries you sustain in battle. Also, while in your rat form, your claws help you scurry up walls and reach escape routes beyond your enemies' reach.

Rat-Blooded

Wererat Utility 2

Your claws help you scramble up a vertical surface with ease, and your madly beating heart increases your vitality.

Encounter ♦ Beast Form, Healing
Minor Action **Personal**

Requirement: You must have started this turn bloodied.

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you gain a climb speed equal to half your speed while you are in beast form. In addition, while you are bloodied and in beast form, you have regeneration 2.

Level 11: Regeneration 4.

Level 21: Regeneration 6.

Level 6 Utility Power

Speed and quickness make dire rats challenging foes to face. While in your beast form, you can race past your enemies, slipping through their ranks so that you can attack where they are most vulnerable.

Rat Scurry

Wererat Utility 6

You scurry between your enemies' feet, slipping past their reach to get into position.

At-Will ♦ Beast Form

Move Action **Personal**

Effect: You shift up to 2 squares.

Level 10 Utility Power

Although many tales and rumors talk about wererats, no one expects to face them. You play up your transformation to give your foes a momentary fright.

Wererat Feint

Wererat Utility 10

You catch your enemies by surprise when you shed your humanoid form to become a dire rat.

Encounter ♦ Beast Form

Free Action **Close burst 2**

Trigger: You use the *dire rat shape* power.

Target: Each enemy that can see you in the burst

Effect: The target grants combat advantage to you until the end of your next turn.

WEREWOLF

"The beast within me strains to escape my control, and when it does, you must run. Run as fast as you can, but I'll warn you that even that might not be enough."

When people think of lycanthropy, they think of werewolves. No other lycanthrope evokes the same fear, even if other lycanthropes might be stronger and more dangerous. Life on the frontiers puts settlers in contact with wolves and, having watched livestock vanish and having fended off attacks against ravenous wolves, the fears seem justified, even though most wolves avoid mankind when they can.

Although ordinary wolves are content to go their own way, ranging across the countryside in packs, werewolves hunt humans. They and the wolves they enslave are aggressive, vicious, and unrelenting in their attacks. Werewolf packs are dangerous, since they can scout out the landscape by day in human form and launch attacks by night. They might be fearless in battle, but they avoid the cities where they face discovery and death. Instead, they keep to the wilderness, where their attacks might go unnoticed and where retribution comes slowly—if at all.

As with all lycanthropes, being a werewolf is no guarantee of evil. The hunger remains, but a strong will can control it. It is always a struggle, though. A werewolf must always fight to keep the beast in check, and sometimes even the best efforts are not

enough. Werewolves seeking redemption for or escape from their natures favor the adventurer's life since it carries them away from innocents and lets them vent their fury on more deserving foes.

Nearly all werewolves inherited their natures from their parents, passing on what many would consider to be a curse. Such werewolves are human or have human blood, such as half-elves or half-orcs. Just about any other natural or fey race could become a werewolf by succumbing to moon frenzy or fall prey to a curse due to their bloodlust.

Creating a Werewolf

Werewolves have intense cravings for human blood, and this hunger urges them toward rash and violent action. For this reason werewolves pursue classes that put them on the battle's front lines where they can rip and tear through their opponents. Most werewolves become barbarians and slayers. Werewolves attuned to nature also find success as scouts and beastmaster rangers. Unlike other lycanthropes, werewolves have little interest in primal spirits and thus do not often become druids, sentinels, or shamans.

Starting Feature

Within your body hides the wolf's spirit, and if you choose to release it, you undergo a startling transformation. Fur sprouts all over your body, your teeth lengthen, and joints pop to accommodate your bestial form. The wolf's spirit lends you power, and its form lets you deliver a terrible wound.

You have an instinctive fear of silver, and when it's used against you, you cannot help but recoil.

Benefits: You gain a +2 power bonus to Intimidate checks.

You have the shapechanger subtype. As such, you are subject to effects that affect shapechangers. In addition, any enemy has combat advantage against

you when attacking you with a silvered weapon or implement. Also, you are immune to moon frenzy.

Finally, you gain the *wolf shape* power.

Wolf Shape

Werewolf Utility

Loosing the beast within triggers a sudden, painful transformation into a menacing wolf.

Encounter ♦ Polymorph

Minor Action

Personal

Effect: You change from your humanoid form to a beast form—a wolf—that lasts until the end of the encounter. Alternatively, you can end the form as a minor action and shift 1 square. While you are in beast form, you can't use weapon or implement attack powers that lack the beast form keyword, although you can sustain such powers.

While in this form, you have low-light vision. The form is your size, and it doesn't otherwise change your game statistics or movement modes. Your equipment becomes part of the form, but you drop anything you are holding, except implements you can use. You continue to gain the benefits of the equipment you wear, except a shield.

You can use the properties and the powers of implements as well as magic items you wear, but not the properties or the powers of weapons or the powers of wondrous items. While equipment is part of the form, it cannot be removed, and anything in a container that is part of your form is inaccessible.

Until the form ends, you can use the secondary power at will.

Secondary Power (Beast Form)

Standard Action

Melee touch

Target: One creature

Attack: Highest ability modifier + 3 vs. AC

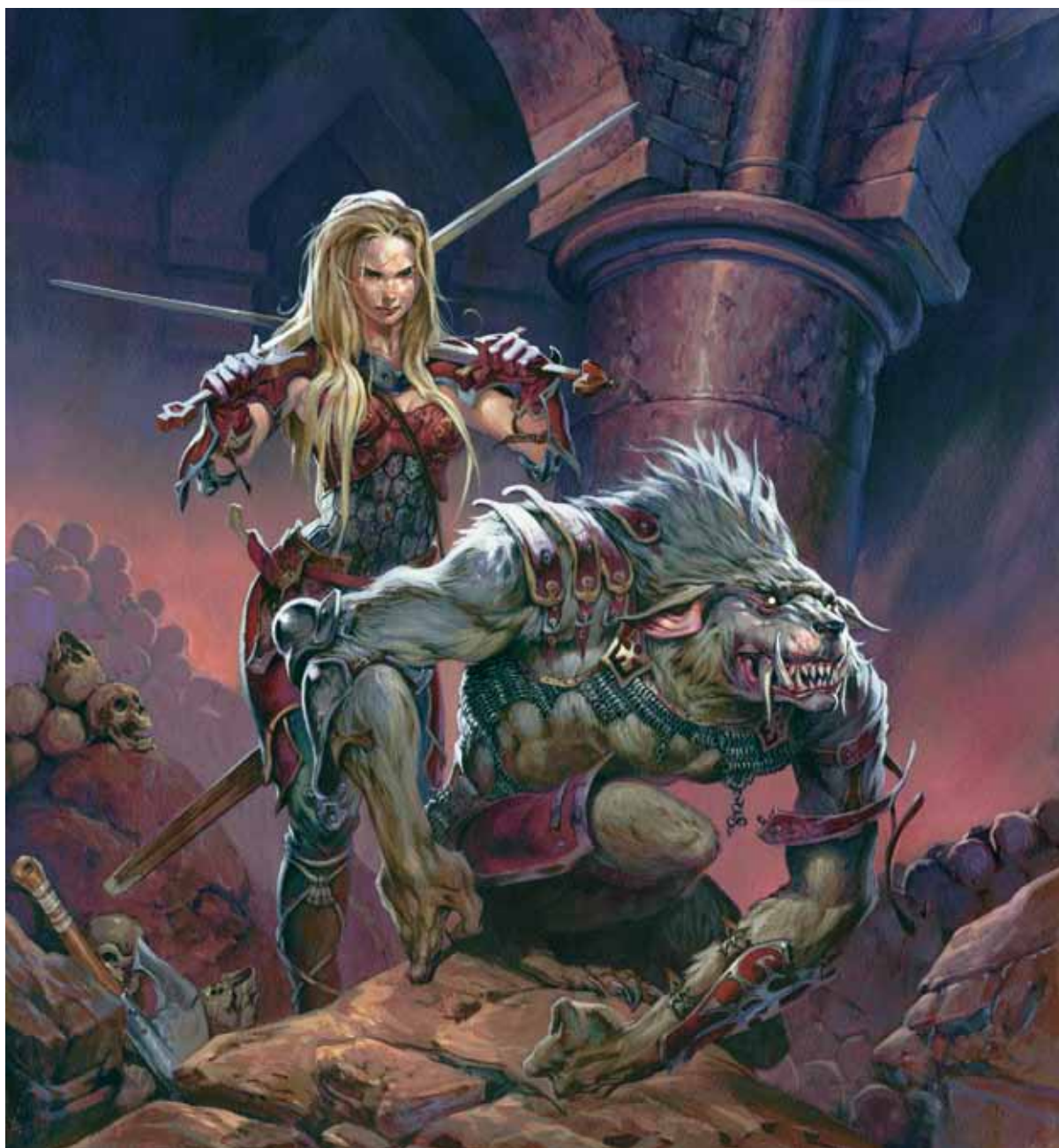
Level 11: Highest ability modifier + 6

Level 21: Highest ability modifier + 9

Hit: 1d10 + highest ability modifier damage.

Level 21: 2d10 + highest ability modifier damage.

Special: You can use this power in place of a melee basic attack.



Additional Features

Level 5 Feature

Your bestial nature gives you a powerful connection to other wolves. You can sense their feelings, almost as if you could read their thoughts. You also have an unnatural fleetness that comes from your dual nature.

Benefit: When interacting with wolves and similar creatures, you gain a +2 bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks.

In addition, while *wolf shape* is active, you gain a +2 power bonus to speed.

Level 10 Feature

The more accustomed you become to your divided nature, the easier it is to live with your duality. Rather than be one or the other, you have learned to embrace both at once and can now assume a hybrid form that gives you access to the best of both forms.

Benefit: When you use the *wolf shape* power, you can assume the form of a humanoid-wolf hybrid, instead of a wolf. While in hybrid form, your equipment does not become part of your new form, and you are not forced to drop any items you are holding. You are also not limited to using implement and weapon attack powers that have the beast form keyword.

Optional Powers

The only way to end the conflict roiling in your soul is to embrace the beast within. In time you learn to control the violent impulses and can channel them in constructive ways. The wolf is hard to tame, however, and sometimes it takes control.

Level 2 Utility Power

The first asset you gain from your beast form is increased speed. Giving into the wolf's nature helps you spring across the battlefield to lead the charge against your enemies, plus you might gain a boost to your ability to heal yourself.

Wolf's Vitality

Werewolf Utility 2

Anger courses through your veins and lends a fierce strength to your legs.

Encounter ♦ Beast Form, Healing
Minor Action **Personal**

Requirement: You must have started this turn bloodied.

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, your speed increases by 1 while you are in beast form. In addition, while you are bloodied and in beast form, you have regeneration 2.

Level 11: Regeneration 4.

Level 21: Regeneration 6.

Level 6 Utility Power

You can use your bulk and speed to send an enemy sprawling while it's distracted by one of your allies.

Pack Attack

Werewolf Utility 6

Wolves fight better in packs, which you prove when you work with your allies.

Encounter ♦ Beast Form
Free Action **Special**

Trigger: You hit an enemy with *wolf shape*'s secondary power, and the enemy is adjacent to at least one of your allies.

Effect: You also knock the enemy prone.

Level 10 Utility Power

Every time you experience pain, you risk losing control. When you lose control, the wolf takes over. This power gives you great strength but risks making enemies of your allies.

Werewolf Frenzy

Werewolf Utility 10

Your pain drives you to madness, causing you to lash out at anything in your reach.

Encounter ♦ Beast Form, Stance
Immediate Reaction **Personal**

Trigger: While your *wolf shape* is active, an attack bloodies you, or you are hit while bloodied.

Effect: You assume the werewolf frenzy stance until you are no longer bloodied. While in this stance, you gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls, and your beast form attack powers deal 1d6 extra damage. Until your *wolf shape* ends, your allies provoke opportunity attacks from you, and you must make every opportunity attack that you can.

About the Author

In the ten years or so **Robert J. Schwalb** has spent working on games, he's designed and developed scads of books and articles for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay, A Song of Ice and Fire RPG, Star Wars RPG, and the D20 SYSTEM. Some of his more recent work can be found in *Player's Option: Heroes of the Elemental Chaos*, *The Book of Vile Darkness*, the *Spiral of Tharizdun* set of D&D Fortune Cards, and his first novel *Death Mark*. Rob is currently working as a designer on the next iteration of D&D.

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