

# DON'T WALK IN WINTERWOOD



*A game of folkloric fear*  
*by Clint Krause*

# *Don't Walk in Winter Wood*

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Dedicated to my mom and the memory of my dad.



# *Introduction*

*Don't Walk in Winter Wood* is a game about getting together with friends and creating spooky campfire stories. These kinds of stories have a way of turning back the clock, putting us into a childlike mindset of wonder and vulnerability. They remind us of the mysteries of our world, the holes in our day-to-day paradigm. They appeal to the primal hunger for myth that we all carry in our subconscious.

Think back to the times you've sat around spinning creepy yarns with your friends. Remember how after you finished, maybe in the wee hours of the morning, you found yourself on edge, easily startled by movements in the dark, speaking to each other in curt whispers? This game is intended to produce a similar result.

Winter Wood is a vague setting. This is intentional. It represents that place we all knew when we were growing up: the strange old house up the street, dead man's curve, the haunted cemetery, and all of the otherwise mundane locations given ominous importance by urban legends and folklore. Winter Wood as a setting is intended to capture the essence of these places.

The mechanics serve to add structure and tension to the proceedings. It's probably inaccurate to call the mechanics a "game" as there's little in the way of strategy or rules manipulation that can be applied during play. Really, the mechanics serve as a pacing tool and a means to make the outcome of the emerging story unpredictable.

This book is divided into three parts. The first, "Legends of Winter Wood," describes the setting and is intended to serve as inspiration for your games. The second, "Rules of Play," explains the basic play procedures and how to apply them. The third section, "Into the Woods," describes the role of the Watcher (gamemaster) and contains several ready-to-play scenarios.

Now then, let's go for a walk in the woods.



# *Chapter One*



# *Legends of Winter Wood*

*Don't Walk in Winter Wood* is set in a vague period between the 17th and 18th centuries in a vague region of the colonial United States in a vague village near some vague woods. The ambiguous nature of the setting is intended to increase the mystery of the game. Remember, campfire stories aren't about hard facts. They're about something that happened *somewhere* a long time ago.

## Society

Most colonial Americans still consider themselves English subjects. Colonial villages breed small, tightly-knit communities of families. Surviving the threats of the surrounding wilderness demands great cooperation. Those who do not fit into the community are quickly shunned or worse. Everyone knows everyone else's business and probably sticks a nose into it from time to time.

## Belief

It is a superstitious time. Christianity is the only socially acceptable religion (though others are practiced in secret). Most colonials believe that supernatural forces directly influence their everyday lives. Practitioners of pagan religions are feared and sometimes hunted. Despite this, many pagan beliefs have worked their way into common practice through a sort of spiritual pragmatism. People wear good luck charms and other talismans. They utter prayers, wards, and blessings to protect themselves from evil.

## Technology

Transportation is mostly equestrian. Printed books are available, but expensive. Newspapers are relatively common, but often out of date by the time they reach remote settlements. Long-range communication is accomplished through letters and messengers. Black-powder pistols and muskets are the most common armaments. Swords, hatchets, and polearms still see limited use. The night is a candlelight world of flame and shadows, with only lanterns, torches, and moonlight to hold back the darkness. Poor medical standards lead to a high mortality rate, especially among young children.

## Fashion

For most colonists, clothing is homespun and pragmatic. Everyone's in tricorne hats and longcoats. Women wear dresses. White powdered wigs are popular among the wealthy.

## The Village

The village was founded shortly before the American Revolution. It is a small, isolated town, several days travel from the nearest city. The village is completely self-sufficient and the villagers rarely have reason to leave. They have farms, a general store, a schoolhouse, a town hall, a midwife, and pretty much anything else that a small town of this sort would need to survive. The population is small. Everyone knows everyone else and outsiders are easily recognized. The place is pleasant enough, but the villagers have a hard, work-filled life and are very practical people.

## Winter Wood

Winter Wood borders the east side of the village. This overbearing forest got its name from the strange, unseasonal cold that always seems prevalent under the trees. By night, the woods are steeped in a seemingly perpetual fog, and by day, the dense foliage blocks out most of the available light. In the autumn, the woods become a sea of fallen leaves as the trees bare their pale skeletons.

Winter Wood is quite large and has never been fully explored by those who live in the village. Most of the villagers have no desire to enter the woods at all. Winter Wood has a long history of strange happenings and untimely deaths. This history can be traced all the way back to the Indian tribes who have dwelt in the region for centuries.

Seemingly every tale of ghosts, goblins, faeries, and demons in the region has its roots in these woods.

## FOLKLORE

“Don’t walk in Winter Wood.” Children growing up in the village hear this warning from the time they are very young. Indeed, it seems that the wood is a dangerous place. Over the years many people have gone missing there, never to be seen again. Of course, because of its dreadful reputation, Winter Wood is the subject of many legends. Some of these tales have been told in the Winter Wood region for centuries.

Listen carefully. You may be the next to find yourself lost in the woods.

## The Indian Legends

Long ago the village’s first settlers came upon natives who had dwelt in the nearby hills for centuries. The natives were not hostile, but when they saw that the settlers had built a village on the edge of the wood, they sent medicine men to persuade the villagers to move.

The Indians shared many legends about the woods. They believed that their great ancestors were buried there and that powerful spirits protected them. Of course, the villagers thought the Indians simply wanted their land back, and they were not going to fall for some foolish trick. They ignored the stories of ancient spirits in the woods and continued to build.

As the medicine men conversed with the settlers, they sang a strange song of the forest which was later recorded in *The Algonquin Legends of New England* by Charles Leland (1884):

There was a woman long, long ago:

She came out of a hole.

In it dead people were buried.

She made her house in a tree;

She was dressed in leaves,

All long ago.

When she walked among the dry leaves

Her feet were so covered

The feet were invisible.

She walked through the woods,

Singing all the time,

‘I want company; I’m lonesome!’

A wild man heard her.

She saw him; she was afraid;

From afar over the lakes and mountains  
He came to her.  
She saw him; she was afraid;  
She tried to flee away,  
For he was covered with the rainbow;  
Color and light were his garments.  
She ran, and he pursued rapidly;  
He chased her to the foot of a mountain.  
He spoke in a strange language;  
She could not understand him at first.  
He would make her tell where she dwelt.  
They married; they had two children.  
One of them was a boy;  
He was blind from birth,  
But he frightened his mother by his sight.  
He could tell her what was coming,  
What was coming from afar.  
What was near he could not see.  
He could see the bear and the moose  
Far away beyond the mountains;  
He could see through everything.

This song seems to be related to another Indian legend in which a horribly scarred girl was the only person able to see an invisible being who lived deep in the forest. As the legend goes, a woman who could see He Who Hides was destined to become the being's bride and dwell with it in the spirit world forever. Horribly abused by her sister and parents, this young girl sought out He Who Hides and eventually saw it with her own eyes. The girl's face was healed and made beautiful as soon as she laid eyes on it, and she vanished into the woods to dwell in the spirit world.

The Indians also believe that one of their ancestors, a terrible and savage war chief, is buried in a mound in the woods. The story goes that this war chief was so murderous and brutal to his enemies that he would chop up their bodies and eat them in his stew.

The war chief was betrayed by his warriors one night while sleeping. They bound him with rope and dragged him into the forest. There was a great struggle as he tried to escape, and he claimed the heads of three warriors before he was finally impaled on one of their spears. The chief was hastily buried in a low mound, and the people of his tribe swore to forget his name and never speak of his brutality again.

Some say that the war chief still haunts the woods, waiting to seek his vengeance on those who betrayed him. Now and then his name is found carved into the bark of a tree in Winter Wood. It is customary among the local tribes to deface such a carving when it is found.

## The Tale of the First Winter

The village was founded in late summer, and by autumn it was well-established with farms, houses, and barns. They had plenty of food to eat, and not a soul among them felt any fear.

Then the winter came.

The worst winter the region had ever seen set upon the villagers, trapping them in their newly constructed houses.

Frigid temperatures and thick layers of snow made travel impossible. Soon, the villagers began to run out of food. It was not clear how or why the food had vanished so quickly. Many villagers suspected that someone had selfishly stolen it. It was obvious they would need more provisions to survive. For a while, no one was willing to step forward. Finally, a brave man named Anson Miller volunteered to go into the cold forest and hunt for food.

Anson Miller was a woodsman in the village and his wife, Kate, was a talented seamstress and the town's music teacher. One frigid December day Anson set off into Winter Wood carrying only what he needed for the day's hunt. Eventually night fell, and he had still not returned from the forest. The villagers grew worried both for the hunter's life and for the food they so desperately needed. Two days passed without any sign of Anson, and the villagers began to give up hope. Anson's wife was distraught and blamed the other villagers for her husband's disappearance. "Cowards!" she shouted at them. "All of you cowards! Now you die here!"

The villagers assumed that Anson Miller had fallen victim to the relentless winter, and they holed up in their wooden homes, each family to itself. One by one, families began to die, first of starvation, and then of influenza. Beside themselves with fear and hopelessness, the townspeople began to speculate that Kate Miller had put them under a curse for sending Anson into the woods alone. Kate quickly became the village outcast. She was assailed with insults, pelted with stones, and generally made to feel miserable.

By the time the weather broke, nearly half of the villagers were dead. When spring thawed the ground, the village cemetery swelled with the caskets and shrouds of a hundred funerals. Those who could afford to leave did so. The remaining settlement was quite small, but it soon regrew as new settlers moved into the area.

Kate Miller rarely left her cottage after Anson's disappearance. Many villagers claimed to hear the poor woman talking to herself in the dead of night when all else was quiet. The village children would dare each other to knock on the Widow Miller's door and run away. They followed their parents' earlier examples. They dug up her plants and threw rocks at her cottage. They treated her terribly, and the widow's spite for the community grew.

Almost a year after that terrible winter, a young boy walking home from the village schoolhouse saw a man who looked like Anson Miller staring at him from the edge of the woods. He said that the man beckoned for him to come closer to the forest. As the boy got closer, he noticed that the man had no legs. The man's upper torso was floating in midair. The boy screamed and ran home.

When he told his parents what had happened they told the town constable. He searched the area where the boy had seen the strange, floating man but found nothing of interest, and the incident was attributed to the boy's imagination.

However, the event planted seeds of fear in the minds of the villagers, and rumors began to circulate that the woods were haunted. There were no further incidents involving Winter Wood for several months. Then, one winter night, the Widow Miller suddenly ran into the woods screaming. No one confessed to knowing what had happened. Some said she went mad because of the town children's mischief. Others said that she saw the ghost of her husband. The villagers said good riddance to the widow and conducted no search. Kate Miller was never seen again. Before long, her name was all but forgotten.

- Many years after Kate's disappearance, a female friend of the Miller family came upon Kate's journal while sorting through her property for an auction. In it, she found a strange entry written the night before Kate disappeared:

"There is a man under the floor. I have heard him pacing. Three nights ago I heard him groan. I fear that he will drive me mad with his noises. I only hope that Anson will return and drive

away the man under the floor. Perhaps I will join Anson soon. This village has lost its soul. Even as I write, I hear him pacing, groaning. I will listen."

Legend has it that on cold winter nights, if you listen closely, you can still hear Kate Miller's screams echoing through Winter Wood.

## The Sad Tale of Nelly Anderson

After the disappearance of Kate Miller, superstitions about Winter Wood spread throughout the village. Most of the villagers accepted that the woods were haunted and warned their children not to play there. Of course, children do not often do as they are told.

One story goes that three young children—Nelly Anderson, Noah Wilson, and David Hutchinson—went into the woods one day, playing and daring each other to delve further and further. They ran and played for several hours. When darkness began to fall, the children headed for home but soon realized they were lost. Nelly started to cry, and Noah and David grew worried. The boys later claimed that they saw a woman come out of an old oak tree and float toward Nelly. They said the woman's skin was made of clouds and her eyes changed color rapidly. Tremendously frightened, the boys ran as fast as they could back to the village, leaving Nelly with the ghostly woman.

Soon it was fully dark, and Nelly hadn't returned from the woods. Nelly's parents were panicked. The villagers frantically searched the woods for several weeks but found no trace of the little girl. It was as if she had vanished into thin air. Worse yet, one of the men who was searching for Nelly was tragically killed when he tripped and fell into a shallow ravine.

The village was devastated by the girl's disappearance. Her parents left soon after and never set foot in the village again. Some believe that the disappearance was a continuation of the curse placed on the village by the Widow Miller. Many believe that the curse hangs over the village even to this day.

## The Legend of the Roe Witches

One autumn, a widow by the name of Agatha Roe came to live in the village with her three teenage daughters: Rose, Catherine, and Elizabeth. Agatha was a peculiar and eccentric woman, and she did not fit in with the more practically-minded villagers. Agatha and her daughters lived quiet, reclusive lives and rarely interacted with the other townsfolk.

Then one night the village clergyman saw Agatha near the cemetery talking to herself. He began to suspect that she might be practicing witchcraft. Rumor quickly spread throughout the village that Agatha and her daughters were sneaking off into Winter Wood at night to consort with the dark spirits there. The women denied the accusations. With no proof, the villagers could do little to the women except shun them. The Roe women continued to live at odds with the other villagers for nearly a year. Then one night Arthur Fuller, the town constable, came across the four women gutting a goat in what he believed to be a satanic ritual. Fuller later wrote of the event:

"I come up around the creek and it was real late. I thought I heard some unruly noise up on Miller's Hill so I loaded my musket and headed up there with my hound Gerald.

When I got there I could smell something strange, a real fleshy scent. I got up to the very top of the hill and I could hear these women out there on the knob.

"I snuck up there real quiet and watched them from some bushes. It was the Widow Roe and her kin. They was mad says I. They were, all four, sitting there naked as babies rubbing that goat's guts all on themselves. When I saw that I knew that they was witches and I ran back to the village to get some of the other boys. When we went back up there they were gone. The next day we found them and put them under arrest one by one."

The Roe women had a swift trial and were sentenced to hang. Although the women furiously denied having done any evil, the townsfolk were in no mood to argue the point. One cold and dreary October day, the villagers led the four women out into Winter Wood and hung them from an oak tree that stood on the bank of East Creek.

The widow and her three daughters were not given a proper burial. Instead, they were left dangling by their necks from the tree at East Creek. Weeks later, the town constable and several volunteers returned to the woods to check on the witches' bodies. When they arrived, they found the bodies missing and strange, wooden effigies hanging in their places.

Many villagers believe that the Roe witches remain in Winter Wood to this day. Some claim that an apparition of the four women dangling from the tree will appear if you walk around the hanging tree three times at midnight. Others claim that they have been the victims of ghostly activity for merely uttering the name "Roe."

## The Devil's Herd

The villagers' food supply relies heavily on game from the woods, and hunters have returned with many strange stories. Perhaps the strangest of these stories is of a peculiar herd of deer who roam the deeper areas of the forest. Deer from this herd supposedly possess sharp, wolf-like teeth and have been seen eating carrion, chasing hunters, and, in one case, biting a young man's hand clean off his arm. Those who hunt the woods warn of the cleverness of this devilish herd. They are known to employ predatory tricks and feints to isolate victims for an attack.

## The Soothsayer

Many winters ago the village was visited by a great plague. Dozens died of illness, but one man was killed by the devil's deer. His name was Caleb Foss—and some might say he had it coming.

Caleb could track, trap, and shoot anything with at least two legs and one tail. Every fall he would bring home enough deer, pheasant, hare, duck, fox, and quail to last the winter ten times over. He mounted the best prize from each season on the walls of his study.

One year Caleb brought home a buck whose mouth bristled with row upon row of needle-like teeth. The townsfolk begged him to burn it, or at least return it to the woods, but he would have none of that. He butchered the beast himself, cured the meat himself, and mounted its head squarely above his mantel.

On All Saints Eve, the stag spoke. "Caleb," it said, "the Widow Hartman has fallen down her stairs. Go to her aid or she shall surely die." Caleb crossed himself, poured some brandy, and tried to put it out of his head, but they found the widow's corpse in her coal cellar the next morning. She had tried to climb out of the cellar on a broken leg.

The next night, as Caleb was doubting his sanity, the stag spoke once more.

"Rats have gotten into Shuster's grain," it told him. "Light a fire on the east side of the silo or many shall starve before winter's end." This time Caleb took the trophy's warning to heart, and, as soon as the fire was lit, rats stampeded from the silo. Caleb was a hero.

All through November, the stag predicted, and Caleb prevented, deaths and disasters. However, when Christmas came and brought the plague, it was without warning. Caleb berated the stag, and demanded that it justify its silence. "You have cheated Death of many trophies," it explained, "but Death may only be delayed, never denied." Caleb begged the stag for guidance. "Take me back to Winter Wood, give yourself to Death in trade, and the rest of the village shall be spared."

It took several more days, and several more deaths, for Caleb to make up his mind. He wrote a letter to his family, took the stag's head down from the wall, and walked into Winter Wood. The plague, however, stayed with the village until spring, for it had nothing at all to do with Caleb.

Some say he was mad, but they cannot explain the condition in which Caleb's body was found: torn to shreds by row upon row of tiny, needle-like teeth.

## The Hell Hole

Somewhere deep in Winter Wood there is a mysterious hole in the ground. This hole, the villagers say, goes down all the way to hell itself. No one has ever been brave (or foolish) enough to delve into the hole. Most frightening are the sounds. Several villagers claim to have heard awful noises coming from the hole as they passed. Sounds of suffering, torment, and demoniac ecstasy. The noises are subtle, they say, but clearly audible to the cautious ear. It's a commonly held village belief that if you drop a letter into the hell hole, you will receive a reply from one of the damned.

## The Grave Digger

Jonas Barker was a covetous boy but not so covetous as the dead. When he was just 12 years old, Jonas had an uncle who had a pocket watch. It was shiny and intricate and Jonas wanted it more than anything else in the world. When his uncle died, Jonas knew, just knew, that his uncle would leave the pocket watch to him.

At the funeral, they let Jonas place the silver coin on his uncle's tongue, to pay the ferryman. His mother had to remind him to weep. They read the will, but heard not a word about Jonas or the pocket watch. It wasn't in the dead man's bedroom, nor under his floorboards. Jonas asked everyone in the village where it could be, but there was only one person who knew, and he was deep in the cold, cold ground.

So Jonas, being clever on occasion, wrote his dead uncle a note and took that note deep into Winter Wood. He took it to the hole that glowed crimson on moonless nights, and he dropped his note inside. Three days later, the note came back. Jonas found it in the fireplace, under layers of soot, but the return message was easy to read. It had been slashed into the paper.

"It's in here with me, boy."

That night, Jonas took a shovel to his uncle's grave and, as quietly as he could, exhumed his uncle's coffin. It had only been a week, but the stench made him retch.



Jonas searched the corpse and searched the coffin, but the pocket watch was not within. Jonas beat his dead uncle's breast, wept from frustration and exhaustion, then pried the dead man's mouth open and reclaimed the silver coin. If he was to be a gravedigger, he should at least get paid.

That very night, someone set fire to Jonas' house. The flames claimed his parents' lives and everything he owned. Jonas himself was dragged out through his bedroom window, rescued by a man covered in dirt and stinking of rot. The stranger forced him to watch as the fire consumed his home and family. Then, before melting into the darkness, he whispered into Jonas' ear.

"You can keep the silver coin, boy."

## The Legend of Scarfang

The only person ever to see Scarfang and live was John Rogerson. He and his family lived in their homestead near the tree line. When his crops were insufficient—which was often the case in these cold winters—he and his sons would go into the woods and hunt for food. When they were lucky, they would find hare or raccoon. They would dry the meat for jerky and trade the pelts to the Clancy Sisters for butter and soap.

When John Rogerson returned from his last hunting trip, he refused to return to his home. With his shoes broken and his hands bleeding, he staggered into the middle of town and shut himself up in the church. When Mrs. Hundle arrived for morning services, she had to nudge him awake with her cane so that he would remove himself from her spot on the pew.

It was some time before John Rogerson told the townspeople what happened in the woods. He told them how the game he had been hunting ran thin and he had decided to venture deeper into the forest. And he told them of his encounter with Scarfang.

"The beast might look like any other black bear," John Rogerson said, "if you approached him from his left. But if he turned to reveal his other side, you would see three massive scars along his shoulder and flank where hair won't grow, and I do believe the skin there is so thin you can see the muscle moving under it. And there is a fourth scar on the side of his head, likely from some sort of fire, that has peeled back his fur and skin from his face so that you can plainly see some of his skull and jawbone. It is as if he is always in some terrible scowl, and I can tell you his growl and demeanor when he takes to rampage is something hideous to behold."

It was at this description that Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Winchester began to remove their children from the church, but John Rogerson stopped them.

"No," he said. "They need to hear this too."

Everyone listened attentively to John Rogerson's next words.

"If you find yourself face to face with this creature, do not try to run from him. He can run down any one of you here with no effort, and in the process you will only have proved to him that you are his prey.

You might think to climb a tree, for there are many about in his domain, but in so doing you will only have trapped yourself. This beast can climb swiftly and surely and you will then have nowhere left to go.

"And I cannot recommend taking to the water. The river that crosses those woods might seem to offer succor in your flight. However, the animal is a natural swimmer and will have his claws into you within two strokes from shore."

The townsfolk all soon agreed that they did not want to meet this Scarfang—as the children took to calling him based on John Rogerson's description—and most determined that there was no reason to venture into the woods at all. The pastor allowed him to remain in the church, as John Rogerson had no will to return to his home. The Clancy Sisters brought him food in the evenings, but most of the people in the town left him alone.

It was young Matilda who finally approached John Rogerson and asked him this question: "If there is no use in running, climbing, or swimming away from this bear, how is it that you're still alive? How did you escape him?"

John Rogerson looked down at his hands, now bandaged in clean cloths by Louise Clancy. There were some moments before the man could put voice to his words.

"I did run. And I swam across the river, and I clambered up the hills like the devil. But I did not need to do so faster than the beast."

John Rogerson, the only man to see Scarfang and live, raised his head and looked young Matilda in the eyes.

"I was faster than my sons."

## The Tale of Hart van Laer

A story? Of the war? You're too keen on war and guns and pretty uniforms. I'll tell you a story, but you won't like it.

This happened a long time ago, back when we fought the French and the Algonquin. Yes, war, glorious war. The French wore blue and we wore red. The swords were very shiny and the guns, oh how they roared.

The village was not so easy to get to in those days. The road was not fit for a wagon as it is today, and we were on the very frontier. It was a dangerous time and we were watchful—the forests around the village were wilder then, filled with bears and devility and nothing nice. We had a mighty village militia consisting of four men to keep everyone safe. We stayed out of Winter Wood, then as now.

One day in icy, early spring, a captain showed up, with a sergeant and a handful of dubious-looking ragged soldiers in red coats. "There is a war on," he said, "and your little militia must join my regiment to fight the French. And you must make us welcome and give us a good meal, for we are soldiers of His Majesty."

And they did make them welcome, and, just like you, every young man and boy in the village was desperate to sign up to serve King and country.

All save one.

His name was Hart van Laer, a Dutchman among the English, and a queer one at that. He was some severe flavor of Anabaptist: hard-working, honest, and proud. He was young and apparently quite handsome in a continental way.

This van Laer worked for Sylvanus Shaw—patriarch of the very same Shaws you find around here today—and he was courting old Sylvanus' daughter, Mary.

In any case, Hart van Laer made it clear that he would have none of war; his faith forbid him to lay a hand in anger upon any man, and he would obey God in this matter. The captain laughed and said that van Laer was either mistaken or a traitor and that his sergeant would lock him in the Shaws' woodshed until the Dutchman decided which it was to be. If he was mistaken, well, he could put on a new red coat like his fellows and serve his King with honor. If he was a traitor, they would shoot him at dawn.

So into the woodshed went Hart van Laer, and the sergeant guarded the door. The other three militia members came and visited him in their nice new soldier's coats, and they mocked him. They called him a coward.

"A coward," van Laer said to them, "I am not. Truth be told I'm the bravest man among us." And at this they laughed and begged the sergeant to let them teach him a lesson, but the sergeant had his orders.

Next came old Shaw, who urged him to reconsider. He knew the captain had made no idle threat, and he liked van Laer. The boy assured him all would be well but would not budge.

Finally, Mary came to the door of the woodshed prison. The old sergeant could not refuse her when she asked to say goodbye to her beloved. Mary Shaw—you would know her as Mary Rawson, for she married into that family, which spoils my tale's ending I suppose—well, Mary Shaw understood why her beloved Hart held fast to his convictions, and she loved him for it. She urged him to take a middle path: he could not fight, but did he need to be a martyr? Was there not a middle path?

And van Laer had no desire to die, truth be told. And so they conspired. Early in the morning, with the sergeant fast asleep wrapped in his greatcoat, Hart van Laer ran away.

The captain, who was no fool, had expected as much from the prisoner. He gave chase. Hart made for the ice-covered Chaughnawaga river and crossed it, the captain in close pursuit. Now the Dutchman knew the river and its moods, but the captain did not, and his foot found a weak spot and he plunged through.

Now, you can be sure that van Laer could have easily escaped and left the captain to die in the river, but he did not. He turned back and pulled the captain from the Chaughnawaga and saved his life. Van Laer returned him to the village, and the captain's new recruits threw him back in the woodshed. Once the captain had warmed up, they walked van Laer to the village square and killed him.

The captain then turned to his three recruits and told them to prepare for the march. They would leave the next morning, and their objective was to occupy and secure Winter Wood.

Ah, Winter Wood! Suddenly you aren't so keen on war, I see. Did you think it was all flags and parades?

You can be sure they tried to make the captain understand, but what captain listens to new recruits? There is a chain of command! The sergeant, already humiliated by his failure to secure the prisoner, surely clubbed them down and told them to keep quiet. Winter Wood was where they would go, and they would like it. Orders were orders.

So what do you think they did? Those brave soldiers? Those patriots who mocked Hart van Laer and took his life?

One ran away in the night and was never seen again.

One shot himself in the head.

And the last one was dragged, pleading and crying, into Winter Wood.

And you know the rest, don't you? There's your war story. Sometimes you can still hear the rattle of the drum and the sound of the fife out there in Winter Wood. Don't answer the call, lad.

Don't answer the call.

## The Chittering Tree

Little Esther Shilling had many imaginary friends. There was a cyclops named Keefer, a talking bunny named Mildred, and a flying pony who answered to "Toot Toot." Hence, the day Esther said she met a tiny man made of twigs, the news merited little more than a distracted nod from her parents.

Then Esther went missing.

A hunting party tracked her into Winter Wood, through the darkest and coldest of its valleys, into the beating heart of the forest. Only one man made it back, but he held Esther in his arms. The girl was deathly ill, whiter than a ghost, and slick with her own sweat. They took her home, called for a doctor, and tended to the hunter's wounds.

He claimed the rest of his party had been murdered by "a chittering tree" that walked on its roots and pulled men up into its branches. He said he saw its face, a hideous collection of twitching fangs and mandibles that never stopped moving. If it hadn't been busy devouring the other men, he could never have escaped with the girl.

Esther Shilling held on for two days, but there was nothing the doctor could have done. A swarm of tiny creatures consumed her from the inside and tore their way out, then stretched their gossamer wings and flew off into the trees. They looked, for all the world, like tiny men made of twigs.

## The Provisions

It's said that if you walk in Winter Wood, you will meet the children—who have not aged a day since their feast began.

The people of the village churned their butter and they boiled their soap and they skinned their game, but they never walked into Winter Wood. Anton the mason, a hard-faced man of 40, scowled at any child who meandered from the fields towards the wood, and the boys and girls scurried from his glare.

Other village men, with smaller chests and shorter beards, warned the children during night-stories and told them of the ferocious woodland savages. But tales of the Chippewa and Algonquin only made the children more curious. The bespectacled village men then told the tales of these tribes, hoping to frighten the children. They whispered of the Pau'Guk, a fleshless demon of bloodied bone with eyes like red coals, that skinned alive any villager who strayed into the snow-blanketed forest.

They muttered legends of the Wendigo, a long-fingered horror that hungered for the bowels and lungs of women and children.

Wide-eyed sons and daughters clapped their hands and squealed with delight at these myths, knowing that it was all good fun.

Still, they never entered Winter Wood. Sister Elizabeth, a huge-bosomed schoolmarm with three identical dresses of brown burlap, summoned the children to lessons each morning. As they scrawled numbers on their slates, Anton glared at the boys and girls through gaps in the school's stonework. Slowly, his eyes were obscured by handfuls of wood chips and pebbles, which he cemented in place with a mixture of earth, sand, and water. The children giggled at him, and his brows drew closer together in a black rage.

On Sundays, Marten Goswen, the grey-browed parson, spoke to the people of the village of their impending doom. The prostitutes and foreigners of the big city were all damned: this was a certainty. But the villagers were little better, as they could barely control their own bestial urges. The young men and women of the village cast longing glances at one another, eager to rend their garments and rut in the woods like animals. His lip curled as he reminded them of Anna Bellwether and Timothy Hooper, who entered the woods hand-in-hand 20 years ago and were never seen again. Pastor Goswen assured the villagers that their end had been most gruesome and that their carnal lust had ensured an eternity of anguish at the hands of stiff-membered devils with longings of their own. The women, pale-faced and trembling, closed their eyes and genuflected. The men shifted uncomfortably in their pews.

Pastor Goswen smelled of cabbage and sweat, and his threats of infinite torment so amused the children that they buried their faces in their mothers' dresses as their stone-faced fathers stared straight ahead, pretending not to notice.

The autumn harvest was followed by a winter of murder.

Mary Tanner, eldest daughter of Eunice and Jerome, was nearing her 16th birthday. Her patched skirt barely hid her long, slim legs, and her fiery red hair was all the more incendiary when glimpsed beneath a grey cotton bonnet. When she stretched to pluck shiny apples in the orchard or bent low to haul carrots out of the dirt, Anton stared. At first, Mary thought it his usual grimace of disapproval for recalcitrant children, but as the days shortened and the nights grew longer, his wide-eyed look made her more and more nervous.

When the first snow fell, Mary was splitting wood behind her home. Despite the chill, her face and throat dripped with sweat; without her bonnet, her burning tresses hung about her creamy white shoulders. Anton was fast; the axe was wrested from her grip and thrown away before she could blink.

Terrified, Mary hitched up her skirt and fled into Winter Wood. Anton followed, his face contorted in a rictus of hatred.

One by one, the children followed. They followed paths into the woods that they had trod many times before, in secret. They had stalked the Winter Wood in the heat of summer night, in the bloom of greenest spring, in the dead-leaf gold of autumn, and now once more in the frosted dark of winter evening. While their parents slept, the children had gathered pine cones and birch bark, arranging their finds in elaborate patterns, as instructed.

Dawn burned pink over the snow as the children filtered back into the village. Each carried a dripping sack. They dropped these sacks near the smoke-house, then gathered all of their tools: trowels, draw-knives, augurs, mallets, bow-saws, corn shellers, and awls. Quietly crunching through hard-packed snow, they crept back into their homes, where their parents were just rising from their beds to see that their children were absent.

The killing was over quickly.

They ground some of the lean meat for sausage, and the rest they rubbed with salt and sugar so that it could cure before the corn-cob smoking. Smiling, the children soaked the heads in vinegar, then slow-cooked them until the meat was off the bone. They cut the kidney fat and rendered it into lard, then ground the hearts and boiled them with apples and carrots. They chattered as they worked, and the frozen village was warmed by their joy.

The provisions lasted them all winter.

## Mr. Buglesuede

Don't go near the cursed place of Ol' Grandfather Hughes!

It was one of those irredeemable autumn twilights when young Mr. Sydney Tedlock decided to take a privy stroll into Winter Wood. Ol' Grandfather Hughes had warned him, bellowing through purple, toothless gums: "Don' be lally-gag'n 'round yonder wood back there now! 'Tis wild country ou' there! Liable t' git yerself inn a heap o' trouble!" Young Sydney was lackadaisical, innocently oblivious to caution. Grabbing his favorite stick by the old shed, he took flight down the hill and into the wood.

Young Sydney swiped a path through the thick brush with his trustworthy oak rod, forging his own way through the suffocating growth of nature. The moon was rising slyly through spaces between the trees. He sang an old victory song, a battle-chant from many wars ago: "I pounce the stately wicked...to break the evil thicket...of conquering marauders...that spit on God the Father...I know I'll be in heaven...when I kill seventy-seven..." He continued to roar his triumph until he was interrupted by a subtle sound deep in the woods. He paused to inquire, and the sound rose gradually in volume, like deep tubas wailing underwater. Soon, the entire area was filled with such hoarse baritones that Sydney felt goosebumps rise on his neck.

Then it stopped. Before young Sydney had a chance to excuse the occurrence as his imagination gone awry, he heard his name called.

"Mr. Tedlock, what brings such a fine selection of gaiety to my neck of the woods?" The man was barely half of Sydney's size. His resplendent grin was outlined by an intricately curled mustache and charcoal lips. His top hat and coat were made of maroon suede, with gold trim. Like a stately aristocrat, he was propped against a walking stick resembling a candy cane. Young Sydney licked his lips at the overwhelming scent of peppermint. He would have carried on the conversation had he not noticed small flashes of movement in the corner of his eye. He whipped around to find only empty brush; it seemed as if there were unseen things scurrying all around him.

"I asked you a question, Mr. Tedlock," said the little man, growing impatient with the boy's inability to focus.

"I do expect an answer! Am I being just, or just plain rude! I will give you my name...Mr. Buglesuede, it is!"

"I'm sorry, sir," said young Sydney. "I...I haven't been out here before. I didn't know anyone lived out here. I thought Grandfather Hughes owned all the land."

"So one thinks," said Buglesuede, throwing his hands in the air. "Always forget I'm hiding in the weeds to spoil the crop, do they? But this is our business! There is a tax to pay, Mr. Tedlock, for crossing paths on my territory!"

"But...but I have no money to pay a tax, Mr. Buglesuede!"

"I am no dictator, for Saturn's sake," Mr. Buglesuede hissed. "I just want what's mine, like anyone else! And you, boy, take note: Young Tedlock, age of 10 years, 10 months, 5 days, and a few hours, is cited for Involuntary Trespassing; tree bark fudge and pollen cakes!"

He tapped his cane twice on a slab of rock. In a magically swift motion, followed by a trail of nauseous pollen, Mr. Buglesuede drew a roll of parchment from his maroon sleeve and unraveled it before the daunted young Sydney.

Young Sydney began to read it:

"This covenant (i.e., treaty, i.e., transaction) is in the interests and associations of one young Mr. Sydney H. Tedlock, age 10 years, 10 months . . . under the allegations and accusations . . . Trespassing (tree bark fudge and pollen cakes) . . . by elongated ward and predecessor of Elysium Sniffleborks and Chopsticks, Mr. Buglesuede (meritorious and merited of the Ménage) . . . the defendant shall hereby acknowledge said accusations and carry out the given sentence . . . shall embark upon himself the privilege and rite of giving upon the Ménage one soul within the confines of one speculum jar . . ."

Young Sydney's jaw dropped.

"Wait . . . I've already signed this?"

"My, my," said Mr. Buglesuede as he peered curiously over young Sydneys shoulder. "It appears you have! How eager of you!"

"Oh dear!" poor young Sydney wailed. "What am I to tell Grandfather? He'll rightly be furious with me this time! I'm sure to be getting another beating . . . for giving up my soul of all things!"

With a snap of his fingers, the parchment rolled itself up and slid into Mr. Buglesuede's coat sleeve. "Now, young Mr. Tedlock, the contract merely states a soul. Yours specifically does not need to adhere to the said regulations. You could . . . steal somebody else's, if need be."

Young Sydney speculated about the many ins and outs of such a conundrum: if Grandfather Hughes were to know that young Sydney had fallen into this quagmire, surely he would be beaten once again. If, however, he were to give up another soul in place of his, he could do as his mum used to say before she died: plow two fields with one horse!

"You have until tomorrow evening, my young sprout," Mr. Buglesuede bowed a deep and gentlemanly bow. He lifted his head and with a wink vanished as soon as a blink. Just like that, he was gone.

It was the next day when young Sydney Tedlock came into the village to report the passing of Ol' Grandfather Hughes to the proper authorities. The coroner had determined the cause of young Sydney Tedlock's elder's passing was (he coined nervously) "unnatural." Young Sydney was too young to live alone on the farm and was sent away to a distant aunt. It is said he grew dismal and wretched in the coming years and eventually became retarded in his intelligence. "Possessed of devils," the reverends say. To this day nobody dares go to Ol' Grandfather Hughes' farm, which sits desolate and dilapidated. Its fields are parched and wrought with famine. Its only neighbor . . . the dark and somber trees of Winter Wood.

## The Grey Wolves

Everybody's heard about the time the wolves came. Folks don't always agree on a few specifics, such as the weather, the year, or the season—some say the frost followed them while others insist the encounter preceded the longest day of the year—but the major details remain unchanged.

Early in its settlement, the village had its share of run-ins with the savages. With the natives unwilling to aid the newcomers, the people of the village had no choice but to take from the tribes' plentiful harvests in order to survive. Unaccustomed to the hospitality of the homeland, the savages retaliated. Aside from the mortal toll the brutal altercations took, the constant clashing soured the townsfolk on outsiders, no matter their skin, to the point where even the arrival of a lone old woman raised the hackles of the citizens.

Mrs. Styer came creeping up to the border guard in the middle night, shaking from the cold (in some versions) and the exhaustion of travel. She was old, they say, with hair white as spider's thread, and she was painfully thin. She was distraught, on the verge of tears. When she spoke, her words were simple and they came in bursts. Still, the villagers were able to understand that the woman had lost someone or was looking for someone. Maybe both.

When the villagers asked for details, she couldn't remember. But she said God was guiding her.

The villagers believed then, as they do now, that God watched over the village. That He protected it from those who would do them harm. Though the trouble with the natives had soured them, a woman who spoke with the Lord's words was always welcome. So the villagers let Mrs. Styer in. They offered her a meal and a bed, and they treated her as one of their own.

By morning, two children were dead.

First, they were missing. The sun rose and a young mother, no older than 16, awoke with empty arms. Her husband and his parents set out to find them. Every house was searched, every resident questioned.

Everyone was accounted for, except Mrs. Styer.

A posse was formed to search the outlying area. They found the first set of remains in the hollow of a tree. When the priest examined the bones, he counted only one arm, one leg. Sharp teeth had carved deep scrawls into the skull.

The second body was half-buried in the dirt. Its wounds were packed with scat and fur. The boy had been buried, in an animal way, and marked with scents to ward off roaming predators.

The young mother was horrified, as you might imagine. Her husband too. He drew his woman close, she on the verge of hysterics, and tried to comfort her. But there is no salve for a mother's broken heart.

Then the group made their strangest discovery: Mrs. Styer, naked as a newborn, asleep on the edge of Winter Wood. Dripping blood and covered head to toe with deep scratches—some fresh but many that were much older—she seemed on the brink of death. Yet miraculously, she was fine. Cold, yes, and tired—but alive.

The villagers knew then that they had a devil-woman in their midst.

That evening there was a trial.

Godly women knew to cover their forms, especially in the presence of the Lord. The blood on the old woman's body, viscous and red, matched the blood of the babies when held up to the light. The sanctity of human life is a law inviolate, no man shall take or prevent its formation as decreed by the Lord Thy God. Any who oppose such law, who act so directly against human privilege, are but wild beasts.

And wild beasts must not be suffered to live.

It was the young mother who cast the first stone. Her husband the second.

They drew her up then, on the cross outside town, as a warning to devils everywhere. To the heathen savages as well.

They buried the poor children in sacred ground. A prayer was said. The young mother, as in the tradition, lay prostrate upon the soil, signifying her loss and sealing her babies' ascension in tears.

That night, darkness swallowed the village and the cold eye of God looked down upon them as the townsfolk went to rest, a young mother's cry their lullaby.

The sobs gave way to silence. And then silence disappeared.

A sound called the villagers out, called them up from their beds. A howl.

Outside the gates, the guards lay dead. A grey wolf, as tall as a man, glared at the village, human skin between its teeth. Mrs. Styer's remains were spread across the ground, torn apart by the invaders.

The grey wolf laughed.

Not a bark, not a bay, but a laugh. A human laugh.

Its pack appeared behind it and joined in. They had come from Winter Wood.

The villagers did not defeat the wolves that night. The animals killed and they ate. They defiled remains and dragged men and women, still screaming, between the trees.

They tore the young mother's belly open. Gobbled her entrails. Her husband, dying just a few feet away, could do nothing but watch.

By morning, the wolves had claimed a dozen souls.

Two days later, an old man approached the village from the west. His caravan had broken down days earlier. They were missionaries. Their priestess led them, guided them to protect the people of the frontier. They were headed to the village when their caravan broke down.

The man said he sent the priestess, his wife, ahead. She was infirm, so he sent their son along with her. He said the priestess is a righteous woman, and powerful, whom the Lord had gifted with a special sight. He wondered if she had made it to the village. If she and their son had found them in time.

See, the Lord had told her of an impending danger. Of an evil reborn, come to claim the wicked from the village. Grey wolves, he said. That was the vision the Lord had given her. The presence of the priestess, the man claimed, would ward them off. As she had done so many times before.

But her gift had a cost, the man said. She had lost the ability to speak. Her face had frozen up like stone on the left side. But their son understood her. He knew their son could translate the message.

The man identified himself as William. His son was Job. And his wife was named Annabel.

Annabel Styer.

## The Meadow

There is a place, deep in Winter Wood, known only as “the meadow.” Village lore says that Indians often gathered there. Strange totems still hang from the trees on the meadow’s edge. More recent accounts claim that strangers from faraway lands gather in the meadow during the harvest season and conduct bizarre, pagan rites. Village children maintain that the best way to find the meadow is to walk into Winter Wood blindfolded. When the blindfold is removed, the stories say, the traveler will have arrived at the meadow’s edge.

## The Indian Hill Ghost Light

Since the early days of the village, many of its inhabitants have reported seeing a strange orb of light bobbing in the air up on Indian Hill. Witnesses describe a “small flicker of pale light,” which seems to hover slowly up and down the sides of the hill. It seems to appear mostly during stormy weather.

Legend has it that this light is the spirit of an Indian man who died on the hill long ago. Though the story varies depending on the teller, the most common version says that this man was exiled from his tribe. He lived alone on the hilltop for many years. One night, during a terrible thunderstorm, he began to make his way down the hill to find shelter when lightning struck nearby. The ensuing crash of thunder proved too much for the old hermit’s heart, and he collapsed on the spot and died of fright.

Those who believe in the legend say that the ghost light is the poor man’s lonely soul, still roaming the hill looking for friends and shelter from the storm.

## Village Wisdom

Over time the villagers have developed an array of charms, wards, and superstitions for protection from evil. Common superstitions include:

### Red Thread

The women of the village commonly tie thin pieces of red thread around their necks. The origin of this practice is unknown, but it is said that evil spirits cannot see a woman whose neck is adorned with red thread. As a result of this superstition, nearly every woman in the village includes a necklace of red thread in her daily wardrobe.

## Hungry Grass

During the first winter whole families of villagers starved to death. Often the hungry villagers were so weak that they would simply collapse and die as they were walking to and from their homes. Strange patches of long white grass arose in the places where their bodies fell, and the surviving villagers began calling it "hungry grass." Village wisdom says that anyone who steps on hungry grass will be stricken with a sudden deathly hunger and die within minutes unless given food. Most villagers now carry a small piece of bread with them at all times in case of an encounter with the hungry grass.

## Door Wards

The villagers believe that a bent iron nail or crucifix hung above the threshold of a house will protect against all manner of supernatural creatures. This practice is thought to be particularly effective against the fair folk.

## The Secret Sign

Some villagers believe that the dark entities that dwell in Winter Wood can be held at bay by certain protective symbols. The secret sign is one such symbol. Though most of the villagers refuse to make the secret sign in public because of its pagan origins, most everyone knows how the sigil is made and many practice it in the privacy of their homes. The secret sign is often drawn onto a floor with chalk, although some believe that tracing the pattern in the air with one hand is also effective. Those who practice the secret sign claim that it serves as an effective ward against all manner of supernatural entities.

## Burial Traditions

The villagers believe that some special precautions must be taken to protect the dead from the spirits of Winter Wood. Upon the death of a villager, the body is immediately taken to the chapel, where a clergyman blesses the body. After the blessing, a silver coin is placed on the tongue of the deceased. Finally, when the body is put into the ground, those attending the funeral depart from the cemetery taking separate paths in order to confuse spirits who might otherwise follow the mourners to their homes.

## Children's Games

The village children are taught to fear Winter Wood. It is quite common, however, for the children to entertain themselves with scary legends of the wood, and over time a variety of mischievous games have developed.

One such game, popular on autumn nights, is called "Miller's Moan." In this game the children dare each other to stand at the edge of the woods after dark and say the name "Anson Miller" three times in the hope of hearing a dreadful, moaning reply from the woods. In practice, however, it is much more common for the child being dared to lose his or her nerve and run away.

The women of Roe were talking to me,  
The women of Roe, so lovely to see,  
The women of Roe came walking with me,  
The women of Roe got hung in a tree.  
- Children's Rhyme

# *Chapter Two*



# Rules of Play

The following section describes the rules and procedures for playing a session of *Don't Walk in Winter Wood* with your friends. This section assumes you already have some previous experience with role-playing games. If this is your first time playing one, find some savvy friends and ask them to explain the basics to you.

## Players

*Don't Walk in Winter Wood* requires two types of players: the Walkers and the Watcher. Walkers are players who create and control individual characters. During the game, the Walkers are responsible for describing their characters' actions and rolling dice on their behalf. One player takes on the role of the Watcher. The Watcher doesn't create a character, but instead controls the actions of all non-Walker characters. The Watcher also invents the scenario, describes the scenes and environments, and controls the pace of the emerging story.

## Getting Started

This game is best played someplace dark and a little bit cold. Playing around a campfire is ideal. If you don't have access to a campfire, a table in a dimly lit room will do nicely. The game works best with a small group of players (three to four), but can accommodate any number that the Watcher is comfortable with. Each player needs one six-sided die as well as a method of keeping track of cold tokens (more on these later). Glass counters or other atmospheric trinkets are ideal for this. If you don't have anything handy, you can keep track on your fingers.

## Creating a Character

Each Walker will take on the role of a character in the story. Your character will need a Name, a Concept, and a Motive. You can invent your own or choose from the lists below.

### Name

What is your character's name?

For some ideas, see the "Watcher's Reference Sheet" at the end of the book.

### Concept

What is the easiest way to describe your character?

Examples include: Child, Clergyman, Constable, Crazy Old Coot, Doctor, Highwayman, Algonquin Brave, Skeptical Outsider, Teacher, Village Outcast, Witch, Witch Hunter, Wizened Oracle, Woodsman

### Motive

Why is your character willing to enter Winter Wood?

Examples include: Seeking Approval of Others, Curiosity, Divine Inspiration, Happenstance, Love, Occult Power, Revenge, Sense of Duty, Survival, Wanderlust

The Watcher should work with you to choose a motive that will fit the planned scenario.

You can develop your character in more depth if you'd like, but resist the urge to add too much detail. Think back to the stories you've told around the campfire. Characters in these tales are often little more than a name or "this guy I knew."

## Narrative Style

In most role-playing games the players describe their characters' actions in the present tense and the first person. In *Don't Walk in Winter Wood* all actions and narrations are described by the Walkers and the Watcher in the *past* tense and the *third* person.

For example, rather than saying "I walk into the fog and listen closely," you would say "Aldous walked into the fog and listened closely." This method of narration is what gives the game the ambiance of a campfire story.

## Resolution

Whenever your character comes across something frightening or harmful, the Watcher gives you one cold token. Your character automatically receives one cold token upon entering Winter Wood. A cold token can represent anything from a frightful shock to a physical wound.

Whenever the Watcher wants your character's fate to be left to chance, a yes or no question will be asked. For instance, if you say "Aldous walked into the fog and listened closely," the Watcher might say: "Did he hear anything?" At this point you would roll a six-sided die. If your roll is higher than the number of cold tokens you have accumulated, you answer "yes" to the Watcher's question. If your roll is equal to or lower than the number of cold tokens you've accumulated, the answer to the Watcher's question must be "no."

This mechanic lets the game proceed without having to actually mention rules. It is important, however, that the Watcher is careful to phrase questions so that a "yes" answer is always beneficial to the character and a "no" answer is detrimental.

## Example

Walker: "Aldous walked into the fog and listened closely."

Watcher: "Did he hear anything?"

The Walker rolls a die and gets a 3, which is higher than the two cold tokens he has.

Walker: "Yes."

Watcher: "He heard the sound of footsteps in the dry leaves ahead of him."

Or alternately, Walker: "Aldous walked into the fog and listened closely."

Watcher: "Did he hear anything?"

The Walker rolls a die and gets a 1, which is lower than the two cold tokens he currently has.

Walker: "No."

Watcher: "Aldous didn't hear anything. The woods seemed completely silent."

## The Cold

When you have accumulated six or more cold tokens, your character is taken out of the scenario in some way. If you received your sixth cold token from a physical wound, your character probably dies. If you received the sixth cold token from a frightening event, your character probably faints or goes insane. The effects of a sixth cold token are left to the discretion of the Watcher, but should make sense given the context of events in the game.

# Examples of Play

## Example One

Walker: "Aldous walked into the abandoned cabin."

Watcher: "As he entered he saw that the place was in utter disarray but showed some evidence of recent habitation. Bread crumbs were scattered on the floor, and a child's doll sat in a small chair in the center of the room. He also noticed a mirror on the back wall that seemed to be obscured by fog."

Walker: "Aldous approached the mirror and carefully wiped the fog away."

Watcher: "As Aldous looked into the mirror he saw his reflection transform into the that of a long-dead woman."

The Watcher hands Aldous' Walker a cold token.

Walker: "Aldous screamed and ran out of the cabin as fast as he could."

## Example Two

Watcher: "The murderous spirit rose directly out of the grave Aldous stood on. Was he able to escape the creature's grasp?"

Aldous has already accumulated five cold tokens. Aldous' Walker rolls a die and gets a four!

Walker: "No!"

Watcher: "As the rest of the group watched in horror (the Watcher hands each Walker a cold token), the ghostly hands pulled Aldous directly into the unopened grave as if his body was simply swallowed by the earth."

# Into the Woods

This section discusses the role of the Watcher. What follows is intended to help Watchers achieve the proper mood for the game and design their own adventures in Winter Wood.

## Building Scenarios

Adventure scenarios in *Don't Walk in Winter Wood* are quite formulaic. The typical session goes something like this:

1. The characters enter the woods in pursuit of their goal.
2. Frightening and dangerous events occur while the characters strive to accomplish their goal.
3. The characters either accomplish their goal or fail. Some characters die or go mad.

Follow these steps to construct a scenario for the game:

## Step One: The Premise

Your first task is to determine why the characters needed to go into Winter Wood. What will their goal for the scenario be? The scenario's premise should be simple and evocative:

- A child had disappeared in the woods.
- A coven of witches had kidnapped people and taken them into the woods.
- Livestock in the village were found mutilated during the night. A hunt was organized to find the creature responsible.
- The characters had strange visions that told them to go into the woods.
- The characters were travelers who found themselves lost or stranded in the woods.
- The crops were failing. The characters were sent to make an offering to the spirit of the woods.
- A villager had contracted a deadly illness. The only cure was a rare herb that grew in the woods.
- The village was running out of food. The characters were sent to hunt in the woods.
- An angry spirit could be heard wailing in the woods at night. The characters went into the woods to put it to rest.



## Step Two: The Woods

The meat of a *Don't Walk in Winter Wood* scenario takes place in the forest itself. In game terms, the exploration of Winter Wood serves to slowly build tension and increase the number of cold tokens the characters have.

When designing your scenario, first decide which phenomena the characters will encounter and build the scenario around them. Use the “Legends of Winter Wood” section for ideas on entities and events that the characters might experience. Make a list of four to six possible scenes. Each scene should contain a physical or mental threat that has the potential to lead to additional cold tokens for the Walkers.

Your list should be as modular and flexible as possible, because you may want to omit or rearrange some scenes in reaction to the Walkers’ actions during the game. Scenes should never have a preplanned outcome. The outcome of a given scene is determined by the characters’ actions and the results of the Walkers’ rolls.

## Step Three: Climax and Resolution

Each scene should build toward a climax in which the characters confront some final horror and have an opportunity to accomplish their goal. The more cold tokens the characters have going into the climax, the more dramatic and tense it will be. During the climactic scene, everything should be on the line. Some of the characters will probably die or go mad. Success should never be a given. Failure must be a real possibility.

## Setting the Mood

Creating an atmosphere of fear and dread can be very difficult, but when it works it is extremely satisfying. A Watcher can greatly improve the mood and ambiance of the game session by making a few minor considerations. The goal here is not to scare the players per se (doing so is an oft attempted, but mostly unrealistic goal), but rather to create a spooky, memorable atmosphere.

## Where to Play

One thing that will help to make your game a more unique experience is to get your group outside its normal, comfortable environment. This game was designed to be easily played around a campfire. Obviously, you can’t build a fire every time you play. If it’s a nice night, try playing outside, perhaps at a picnic table in the park. If you’d rather stay inside, but still feel like creating the “campfire” mood, try having everyone sit in a circle on the floor with a candle or oil lamp in the center. If you’re playing at a convention, seek out a secluded lounge or hallway away from the crowds.

## Dramatic Delivery

Before you run a session, take a moment and think back to the times you've been sitting around with friends and family telling ghost stories. Remember the tension in the storyteller's voice. Remember the hushed tones used to relate the aftermath of the tale. As a Watcher, you should use these techniques when you are running a game. Be a good storyteller. Describe a small detail in a whisper. Startle the Walkers by shouting or clapping your hands suddenly. Strive to give your Walkers a memorable experience.

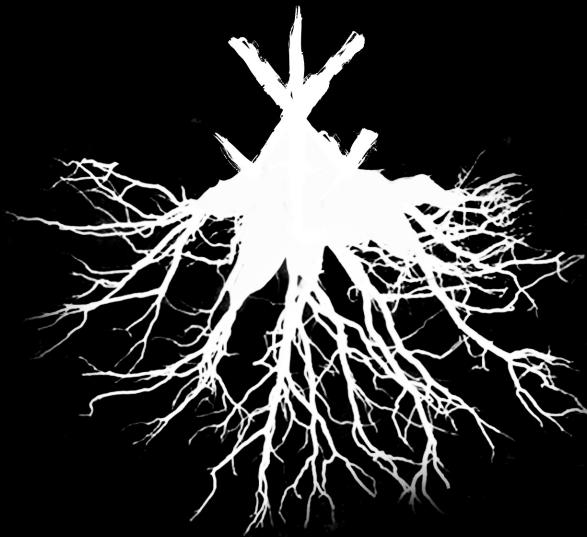
## Folkloric Fear

Subtlety is key to producing folklore-style horror. A hundred flesh-eating zombies attacking characters may be fun, but they won't evoke any kind of dread in the Walkers. In the early stages of the scenario, the characters should encounter nothing more than subtle hints that something sinister is going on. You'd be surprised how long you can keep your Walkers in paranoid suspense just by having their characters hear some leaves rustle nearby or find a single bloody handprint on a tree.

A closed door with strange sounds coming from behind it is far more frightening than a dozen ghosts and demons in full view. When setting up your spooky encounters, try to engineer them in such a way that the horror is only implied. This gives the Walkers a hint that something scary is going on but doesn't give them enough details to figure it out completely. The horrors spawned by a Walker's imagination are often much more terrifying than anything that the Watcher could create. A good example of this is the film *The Blair Witch Project*. You never actually see the titular entity in the film, only vague evidence of its presence. It's very effective stuff.

H.P. Lovecraft famously wrote, "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown." As soon as a situation becomes easily explainable, it is no longer frightening. Take advantage of this and fill your scenarios with mysteries and enigmatic events that have no logical explanation. The supernatural should defy the laws of reality in such a way that the Walkers cannot rely on their everyday assumptions.

# *Chapter Three*



# *Scenarios*

## The Curse

Wherein desperate villagers strive to save a girl hexed by a long-dead witch.

### Background

Late one October night Laura Ellis was getting water at East Creek near the edge of the village. As she bent over to fill her pitcher, she suddenly had the feeling that she was being watched. Laura looked up to see a strange woman standing on the opposite bank of the creek. The woman asked for a drink of water, but Laura, who was quite startled, screamed and ran home as fast as she could. The next day Laura fell deathly ill. When she told her mother about the woman she had seen, suspicions arose that Laura had been cursed by a witch from Winter Wood. Laura's condition continued to worsen, and as news of her affliction spread, a group of villagers were picked to go into Winter Wood to find the witch and put an end to the curse.

### Characters

Almost anyone from the village would make a suitable character for this story. Characters related to Laura (suitor, brother, sister, etc.) would be particularly fitting. Characters who are zealous witch-hunter types (village natives or not) also work well. Of course, a character who is a secret practitioner of witchcraft could add some interesting conflict to the scenario.

### Scenes

#### The Ellis House

The family was very upset. Laura's mother was protective, and Laura was confined to her bed. Mrs. Ellis was reluctant to allow the characters to speak with Laura due to her condition. If she was pressed, she allowed the characters to briefly speak to Laura but asked them not to upset her. Although Laura was obviously in a great deal of pain, she was willing to tell her story. She told of the old woman by the creek and of the wounds that she had suffered since. There was a visible, bleeding wound on Laura's chest.

#### East Creek

Laura's pitcher was lying on its side on the bank of the creek. There were some obvious footprints where Laura was kneeling but no sign of anyone having been on the other side of the creek.

#### Into the Woods

As soon as the characters left the village, they began to feel the cold of the woods (remember to give each player a cold token).

#### The Dream

After they'd spent the day traveling deep into the forest, night began to fall and the group made camp. One of the characters dreamt of meeting a strange woman in the forest. The woman led the dreamer to a tree where she provided a knife, a nail, and a hammer.

She then commanded the dreamer to carve the image of one of the other characters on the tree with the knife and hammer the nail into the figure's heart. (The Watcher should ask if the dreaming character was able to wake up in time. If not, the dreaming character hammered the nail into the tree, and the character depicted was suddenly stricken with great, stabbing pain and gained a cold token.)

## The Bridge

Ahead there was a small "wooden" bridge that spanned a deep creek bed. The bridge was painted red and it was obviously quite old. Upon closer inspection, it was obvious that various pieces of the bridge seemed to have almost finger-like protrusions. Further examination showed that the bridge was not made out of wood at all. It was made from the petrified body parts of young children (noticing this earns the Walker a cold token). If the characters tried to cut the bridge or tear it down, they found that the "wood" bled slightly when damaged.

## The Witch's Cottage

Eventually the group came upon what appeared to be a very old, abandoned cottage. The trees surrounding the cottage were filled with large, black birds that stared at them intently. Inside the cottage was a most disturbing sight: a menagerie of small, petrified limbs dangled from the ceiling (any characters who noticed this receive a cold token). The cottage also contained a large wooden trunk with two dead, petrified children inside. Evidence of witchcraft was easy to find in this unhallowed place. The floor of the cottage was littered with melted candles and strange herbs. There was a dirt path from the back door of the witch's cottage to a cave near the banks of East Creek.

## The Cave and the Murder Tree

The characters came across a small cave set in a bluff near the creek. Outside the cave was an old and withered oak tree. The tree had a carving in it that appeared to be a vague outline of a female figure. A nail had been driven into the center of this strange carving. If the nail was removed, Laura Ellis would be suddenly healed. As long as the nail remained in the tree, Laura Ellis remained sick and wounded and would eventually die. Any other sort of damage inflicted on the tree was reflected on Laura Ellis' body (if the tree was burned, for instance, Laura Ellis' body was burned as well).

After a short time a strange, humanoid shadow emerged from the cave. The shadow then shifted into the form of a ghostly woman holding a bloody hatchet. In a hushed tone, the apparition asked for a drink of water. If the characters quenched her thirst by offering a drink, the apparition faded away and stopped haunting the village. If the characters refused her request, she flew into a rage and set upon them with her hatchet.

INDIAN  
HILL

WINTER  
WOOD

MILLER'S  
HILL

THE VILLAGE

# A Light in the Woods

Wherein a luminous stone from the sky attracts all manner of onlookers.

## Background

One snowy night in the heart of winter, a handful of villagers witnessed an arc of blue light streaking across the sky and down into Winter Wood. Within a few minutes, a strange, bluish glow emerged from the forest. The light from the woods easily outshone the moon, and was enough to stir most of the villagers from their night's rest. Soon a group of reluctant volunteers formed to go into the woods and investigate the mysterious light.

## Characters

This scenario works for pretty much any kind of character. The volunteers will most likely be motivated by sheer curiosity or peer pressure.

## Scenes

### Into the Woods

Winter Wood is always cold, but on this snowbound night it was particularly frigid. (Remember to give each Walker a cold token as the characters enter the woods.)

### Fleeing Animals

The characters heard a sound from deep in Winter Wood, a flurry of movement on the forest floor. Suddenly, a pack of wild animals emerged, running like mad away from the source of the light. The group included deer, squirrels, foxes, and birds. Anyone who was unable to get out of the animals' way sustained minor injuries (a cold token). In truth, the animals were fleeing not from the light, but from the hairy creatures who'd come to investigate it.

### The Indians

As the characters grew closer to the source of the light, they ran into a small group of local Indians who'd also come to investigate the mysterious light. This encounter was complicated by the language barrier between the village folk and the natives. The Indians believed that the light was a fulfillment of prophecy, representing the arrival of a powerful spirit. They intended to investigate the light more closely and were willing to travel with the characters if they were not hostile.

### The Luminous Crater

Eventually the characters happened upon the source of the strange light. They saw a large crater, shrouded in smoke. At the bottom was what appeared to be a small stone, glowing with an intense whitish-blue light. The longer the stone was observed, the more the light seemed to fade. In truth, the stone was simply a meteorite with peculiar luminous properties. It held no supernatural power, and its light faded away entirely within a few hours.

### The Stick People

During their investigation of the crater, the characters suddenly realized that they were not alone. On the edge of the crater's light, they could see several sets of cat-like eyes staring down at them.

These belonged to black, hair-covered creatures that stood over seven feet tall, creatures known in the legends of the local Indians as “stick people” or “stick-shower men.” They were considered very dangerous, known for their appetite for human flesh. For a long time, the local tribes had been placing baskets of food at the edges of the forest to appease the stick people and keep them at bay.

The stick-showers retreated into the darkness of the woods when spotted, but began to follow the characters, attempting to bewilder and separate them by shaking trees and throwing sticks. Despite their size, the stick people were excellent and quiet hunters. Their movements were concealed by a seemingly supernatural silence. The only evidence of their passing were the large footprints they left in the snow. When an opportunity arose, they assailed the characters one by one, dragging them off to be eaten among the ancient trees.

## The Witchery Way

Wherein the village is haunted by rumors of a skin-changing beast from the sky.

### Background

One autumn there was a series of bizarre sightings that put the entire village on edge. No less than a dozen villagers claimed to have seen a massive black bird in the sky over their farms and houses. Some described the bird as a giant crow, while others claimed it possessed more human characteristics. Several farmers blamed the creature for the disappearance of pets and livestock. The sightings were eerie enough, but they weren’t taken seriously until a local man and his daughter were attacked.

Tobias Cross and his daughter Sarah were out in their field tending to livestock when, according to Sarah, a massive bird-like creature passed overhead and perched in a nearby tree. The two stood perplexed, silently staring at the creature for several minutes. Suddenly, the creature let out a terrible call and leapt toward the pair. Tobias shouted for his daughter to run, and she did, as her father struggled with the creature behind her. Sarah came running into the village square, crying hysterically. The constable and a number of volunteers hurried back to the farm, but when they arrived neither Tobias nor the creature were anywhere to be seen.

### Characters

Players should create characters who are members of the hunting party sent into Winter Wood to find Tobias Cross and capture or kill the creature. The town constable, local woodsmen, trappers, and perhaps Cross family members (including Sarah herself) make good character concepts.

## Scenes

### Into the Woods

The hunting party had barely set foot in Winter Wood when they heard an awful screeching sound deep in the woods. The sound echoed through the trees, but was not repeated. It combined with the chill of the woods to set the party’s hair on end. (Pass out a cold token to each Walker.)

## The Nests

The hunting party traveled deep into Winter Wood. Night had nearly fallen before they made their first discovery. In the fading light, they could see several indistinct masses high amongst the branches of the trees ahead. Looking closer, they could see what appeared to be a series of large nests woven from tree limbs and animal sinews. A partially eviscerated cow hung over the side of one of the nests, its innards gnawed by what appeared to be human teeth. (This revelation is worth a cold token).

## The Victim

The characters saw a figure sitting motionless against a tree. It was Tobias Cross. The poor man's eyes appeared to have been plucked out. He seemed dead at first, but sprung to his feet, flailing wildly, when startled. He was mad with trauma and severely disoriented. If calmed enough for questioning (a difficult task), he explained that the bird thing had taken his eyes, carried him through the air, and flung him to the forest floor. He had been sitting there, fading in and out of consciousness, since the attack took place.

## The Skinwalker

The crow creature was actually a human woman from one of the local Indian tribes. She was exiled from her village years ago, accused of practicing witchcraft in an attempt to fertilize her sterile womb. She swore vengeance and consulted with evil spirits in the woods. Soon, by some foul magic, she became a skinwalker; capable of taking the shape of a great crow. She had begun to hunt near the village when she encountered the Cross family. She plucked out Tobias' eyes and wore them on a thong around her neck. Through her witchery, they allowed her to see great distances.

While in crow form, the skinwalker retained her human head topped with a tangle of long black hair. (A clear view of her in this form is surely worth a cold token.) In human form, she used her magic to appear beautiful and young, however her feet retained the appearance of a crow's claws.

She hunted the characters either by making direct swooping attacks from the sky or by disguising herself as a woman in need, possibly even seducing the men in the party, and then carrying them off to drop from a great height into one of her nests.

## The Strangers

Wherein a youthful dare leads a group of village children to confront a darkness beyond their innocent understanding.

## Background

The characters are adolescent members of a secret group called The Whisper Club. Once or twice a week, members sneak out of their parents' cottages after dark to gather on Miller's Hill, tell ghost stories, and fool around. Thomas Pickett, the founder and de facto leader of the club, had decided that too many village children were coming to the group's supposedly secret gatherings, so he implemented a test for initiation. In order to become a member of the club, you had to complete a dare devised by Thomas. One fateful night, Thomas proposed the following dare: anyone who could go into Winter Wood and return with one of the strange totems from the meadow would earn membership in the club.

## Characters

One player could take the role of Thomas Pickett. Pickett plans to accompany the hopeful members on this dare in an effort to prove how brave and tough he is. The rest of the characters are village children between the ages of twelve and fifteen who desperately want to be a part of the club and are willing to take their chances with Thomas' dare.

## Scenes

### It's the Only Way

According to common wisdom, the best way to find the meadow, and perhaps the only way to find it before sunrise, was to walk into the woods blindfolded. Having planned his dare in advance, Thomas produced a number of suitable blindfolds from his satchel.

### Into the Woods

Despite their blindfolds, the characters could sense their entry into the woods by the cold air and the goosebumps raised on their exposed flesh. (Remember to give the Walkers each a cold token as they enter the woods).

### Just a Peek

Any characters who removed their blindfolds before or during their entrance to the woods saw the others (those with their blindfolds down) vanish right before their eyes. (Give each witness a cold token for this). In addition, they found themselves deep in the woods despite having entered only moments before. Any further attempts to find the meadow using the blindfold were futile. Any such Walkers likely spent the majority of the scenario isolated from the others, facing numerous dangers on their own, and perhaps even having a separate encounter with another group of the strangers.

### The Meadow's Edge

Any characters who kept their blindfolds on soon noticed the crunching of dead leaves beneath their feet giving way to the swishing of tall grass. Surely this was the edge of the meadow. When they removed their blindfolds, they realized that they were not alone. Sitting on the opposite side of the meadow was a strange covered wagon. It looked nothing like the wagons of the village, but rather like one belonging to some strange and foreign culture. A black mare was tethered nearby. In front of the wagon was a campfire with four dark figures huddled around it. At first, the figures seemed oblivious to the children's arrival.

### It's Not Working

If the children put their blindfolds back on and tried the meadow-finding trick in reverse, nothing happened. Whatever trickery brought them to the meadow seemed now to have abandoned them.

### The Strangers

The strangers in the meadow had come from a distant land beyond the woods. As soon as they saw the young villagers approach, they devised a plan to abduct them and carry them off for their supper.

The strangers wore long, hooded cloaks hanging with herbs and strange bundles. They walked with an unusual gait, their faces concealed in shadow. Their manner was strange and eerily feral.

They spoke the Queen's English to the children, but conversed with each other in a vaguely sinister, foreign tongue.

There were four of them, three adult males and a wizened crone who sat by the fire.

They began by offering the children help, food, and shelter from the cold. If the children refused or tried to run away, the strangers produced long, curved knives and attempted to take them by force. The crone by the fire was capable of using strange magics to trick or enthrall them.

## The Wagon

The strangers' wagon was painted in bright colors. If the characters approached it, they heard a muffled sound coming from the rear. It sounded like a whisper. From a distance, it appeared that an animal carcass of some sort was hanging from the side of the wagon near the source of the sound. On closer inspection, the "carcass" was actually a young boy, terribly disemboweled yet clinging to life as he dangled from the side of the wagon. He repeatedly whispered, "Help me..." in a weak voice and soon faded from consciousness. (Give a cold token for this discovery).

Inside the wagon was an even grizzlier scene: a collection of severed limbs hung from the ceiling, swaying and dripping with any jarring of the wagon. This grim collection was very precious to the strangers as it represented their store of food for the coming winter. (Seeing this is definitely worth a cold token).

## The Totems

Just behind the wagon, the characters could see a series of wooden totems dangling from the trees. Snatching one down required a fairly high jump or a brief climb up a tree.

# Designer's Notes

*Don't Walk in Winter Wood* has quite a storied history for an obscure, small-press, role-playing game. I first published the game in PDF form in December 2004. It was the second game I had self-published, and I didn't know what I was doing (nothing's really changed there). The original PDF was little more than a Word document with a very basic cover page. The game never sold well, but the reviews and feedback I received were encouraging. I was fairly happy with it and moved on to my next project.

In March 2005, I received a surprise email from an Arkansas filmmaker who was interested in using the game as the basis for an independent feature film he was producing. I was floored that someone had noticed the game and immediately wrote back expressing my excitement about the project. Over the course of the next several months, we traded emails and reviewed several different versions of the script. Eventually, I trekked into the Arkansas hills for the beginning of the shoot.

In 2006, I released a revised version of the game. I decided to upgrade the production values a bit so there would be a nicer version to accompany the eventual release of the film. The highlight of the revised version was a beautiful cover by Travis Smith, who has designed some of my favorite death metal album covers. For a short time, this revised edition was also available as a saddle-stitched, print-on-demand booklet. The film was eventually finished but, as I understand it, the producers were unable to get it into distribution, so it was never released. To this day, I've never seen the final cut.

Fast forward to 2011. I had kept the PDF version of DWiWW available in the intervening years. After starting my new imprint, I decided it was time to clean the slate and take my older games out of commission. Almost immediately after I had declared the game "out of print," I was contacted by George Cotronis. He asked if I'd be interested in re-releasing the game if he volunteered to do all new artwork and layout for it. Of course, his offer was far too good to pass up, so here we are: the second edition of *Don't Walk in Winter Wood*.

The process of revising, expanding, and re-playtesting the game for this new edition was also a process of rediscovering my excitement for it. I had pretty much convinced myself that my taste in games had changed so drastically in the intervening years that I wouldn't be able to stomach the one-step-above-freeform nature of the mechanics (in those years, I'd been designing a bunch of very structured games with hit points and detailed weapon stats and stuff like that). As it turns out, I love it. It works great for a spooky after-dinner yarn on an autumn night, and I think it's a really strong game for convention play.

Thanks for taking the time to check out my storied little game. I hope that one of these nights you find yourself lost in the woods.

Clint Krause  
October 2011  
Kansas City, Missouri

# Recommended Media

The following material had some influence on the style and tone of *Don't Walk in Winter Wood*. You may also find it inspirational for running your own games.

## Movies

*The Blair Witch Project*  
*The Village*  
*Brotherhood of the Wolf*  
*Sleepy Hollow*  
*The Brothers Grimm*

## Fiction

*The Dionaea House* by Eric Heisserer  
*House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski  
*The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson  
*Man-Size in Marble* by Edith Nesbit  
*The Horla* by Guy de Maupassant  
*Young Goodman Brown* by Nathaniel Hawthorne  
*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by Washington Irving  
*Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* by Alvin Schwartz (all three volumes are excellent)

## Music

Opeth, *Blackwater Park*, *Damnation*, *Ghost Reveries*, and *Heritage*  
Ghost, *Opus Eponymous*  
The Mars Volta, *The Bedlam in Goliath*  
Emily Jane White, *Dark Undercoat* (thanks George!)

## Audio

*Coast to Coast AM*  
*Anything Ghost Show*

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My eternal thanks to everyone who supported this project on Kickstarter:

## Villagers

Aaron & Gwyneth: always leave a trail of crumbs, Ralf “RdGka” Achenbach, Kevin Allen Jr., Vince Arebalo, May Barbieri, Devon Campbell, Massimo Dorianj Campolucci, Stephen Cantini, Michael Champion, Jonathan “Buddha” Davis, Maiken Josephine Engebak, Evil Hat Productions, Dave Garber, Mike Gerdes, Ollie Gross, Nash High, Matthijs Holter,

Paul Jones, Julia Pia Klein, Mad Knight, Nikolay L., Chad “Chadmeister” Lynch, David M., Manu Marron, Shane Mclean, Christian Møhlenberg, David Morrison, Alex Nuzzi, Ludovic “Heuhh” Papaïs, Reverance Pavane, Dev Purkayastha, R Rees, James Ramey, Robin Lynn Rodriguez, Noam Rosen, Chris Schreiber, Beth Amedeo Stigleman, Bettina Tan, Felicity Turcott, Matteo Turini, Alex Williams, Alexander Williams, Ryan Wheeldon, Donald Wheeler, Wraith808, Wordman, Koty Yell, Kristina Zill, Todd Zircher

## Walkers

Scott Acker, Ryan Anderson, Anonymous, Phillip Bailey, David Best, Brian Bethel, Jason Blair, Eric Boyd, Josh “Ninjacat” Brining, Ken Brown, Bryan Carter, Rafael Francisco Chandler, Raymond W. Chramega Jr., Tanya Cohan-Diaz, Bradford Cone, Ashley “nerdtastic” Cook, James Yasha Cunningham, Neal Dalton, Anthony Deming, Rob Donoghue, Scott Dorward, Nathan Downs and Family, Joshua Dunham, Julia B. Ellingboe, JD Figura, Ken Finlayson, James Gabrielsen, Matthew Gagan, Brandon Goede (@throwthegnome), Jack Gulick, Chris Gunning, Aaron Hamric, Brendan Howard, Gregor Hutton, J., Aaron Jones, Dan Justice, Brian Q. Kelley, Irven “Myrkwell” Keppen, Cyrus Kirby from FatherGeek.com, Michael D. Klein, Jeremy Kostiew, Jerome “Brand” Larre, Brian Lavelle, Gilberto Leon, Michael Litzenberger, T.S. Luikart, Brent M, Ryan Macklin, Marc Majcher, Robert G. Male, Jonathan McAnulty, Matt M McElroy, Louis Meyer, Flavio Mortarino, Murph, Christian A. Nord, Nathan D. Paoletta, Jacob Parks, Dan Petrik, Jason Pitre, Lisa Platts, Julio Angel Escajedo Pastor, Dane Ralston-Bryce, Dan Randleman, Mick Reddick, Mik Reed, Josh Rensch, Konstantinos “Yo! Master” Rentas, Nick Reynolds, Michael Richards, Carl Rigney, Rafael Rocha, The Rushlass Family, Céline .S. Sauvé, Zakharov “Zaksquatch” Sawyer, Jay V. Schindler, Robert H. Schneider, Keith Senkowski, Simon from Simon’s Say Presents, Anders Smith, Jason D. Smith, James Straight, Jim Sweeney, Randy and Gayla Tapley and Family, Eddie and Amanda Taylor, The Lurking Terror, Christian Turkiewicz, Jesse Tyler, Magnus Ultracock, Jen Vaughn, Vortex Games LLC, Rachel E. S. Walton, Christopher Weeks, Chris Wiegand, Lianna Wilson, Kirby Young, K. Reed Zesiger

## Watchers

Adam Wheelock Boisvert, Phil Cahiwat, Aaron Conaway, Jorge Jara Didier, Janice A. Dunn, Daniel Ley, Daniel and Rae Anna Moler, Andy Morton, Emily Poole, Rune Belsvik Reinås, Georg Rösel, Junius Stone, Steven Vest

## Dreadful Legends

Adam “Walker in the Whispering Aspen” Drew, Game Vault Virgina, Isaac MacGuffin Gehrke, Robin and Kelly Krause, Terrence “Terentius” P.J. Micheau

## Sources of Evil

Candice Bailey, Wayne “The Cap’n” Coburn, Herman Duyker, Amy M. Garcia, Ashley Griffiths, John Morrow, Geoff Seutter

# Watcher's Reference

## Female Names

Abigail

Alice

Anna

Catherine

Cecily

Chastity

Elizabeth

France

Joy

Judith

Margaret

Mary

Melinda

Mercy

Molly

Patience

Rebecca

Ruth

Sarah

Silence

## Family Names

Bailey

Becker

Bowman

Cooper

Cross

Gilmore

Glassick

Graybill

Hartman

Hellman

Jones

Lawson

Ludwig

Miller

Newcomer

Peters

Pritchett

Sherman

Smith

Taylor

## Male Names

Alexander

Amos

Arthur

Augustus

Benjamin

Charles

David

Edward

George

James

Jethro

John

Nathaniel

Peter

Philip

Richard

Robert

Roger

Thaddeus

William

## Past Tense Senses

Felt

Heard

Saw

Smelled

Tasted

## Dangers of the Woods

Bears

Bobcats

Coyotes

Cryptids

Exposure

Hostile Indians

Insects

Outlaws

Poisonous Plants

Supernatural Entities

Thorns/Brambles

Venomous Snakes

Wolves

# Are you ready for a walk in the woods?

*Don't Walk in Winter Wood* is a storytelling game of folkloric fear. Players take on the roles of hapless villagers who must enter a legend-haunted forest and uncover its sinister secrets. The game uses simple rules and a unique narrative style to help you create spooky stories with your friends. It includes:

**LEGENDS OF WINTER WOOD:** The dark folklore surrounding Winter Wood and its neighboring village. Featuring contributions by Jason Morningstar (*Fiasco*, *Grey Ranks*), Daniel Bayn (*Wushu*, *Secrets and Lies*), Jason L Blair (*Little Fears*, *Streets of Bedlam*), Jeremy Keller (*Technoir*, *Chronica Feudalis*), Rafael Chandler (*Dread*, *Spite*), and Daniel Moler (*Red Mass*).

**GAME RULES:** Easy-to-learn rules designed to be playable around a campfire. Recommended for 2–6 players in search of the willies. Playing time averages about 2 hours.

**ADVICE:** Tips on running games of folkloric horror, building your own scenarios, and creating a memorable, spooky atmosphere.

**SCENARIOS:** Four ready-to-run scenarios set in Winter Wood. Desperate villagers strive to save a girl hexed by a long-dead witch in *The Curse*. Rumors of a skinchanging beast haunt the village in *The Witchery Way*. A mischievous children's dare leads to an encounter with *The Strangers*. A strange celestial event leads to a terrifying encounter in *A Light in the Woods*.

This is the revised and expanded second edition of the game featuring all new layout and artwork by George Cotronis, new legends, new rules clarifications, and new adventures. It is the definitive edition to add to your game library.

## DON'T WALK IN WINTER WOOD

RMMS 2000

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\$15.00

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