

On Were-Creatures - Were-goblins and were-plants

Were-goblins:

Overview:

To say that were-goblins are unusual would be an understatement. They diverge so thoroughly from the norms established by other were-creatures as to defy most classifications. They are largely unaffected by the lunar cycle, are simultaneously the most and least impacted by their lycanthropy, display no discrete shifted or lunar forms, and transmit their infection through a wholly unique method. Given those differences, it is worth providing all the details I can.

The starting point for any discussion on were-goblins would have to be their method of transmission, which is, bizarrely, engaging in conversation. Fortunately, it's not that a were-goblin can merely talk to another person and immediately create another lycanthrope. If that was the case, we would already be overrun by them. Actual conversation is required, with participation from both parties. Moreover, this dialogue is only infectious if the were-goblin is in their non-human state, although existing were-goblins can be 'nudged' into a further shift even if the conversing lycanthrope is themselves not yet fully shifted.

Goblin conversation is typically described as high-pitched, fast-paced, and frequently sexually suggestive. That then describes the mindset that were-goblins find themselves slipping into as they lean further into their infection. Uniquely among were-creatures, were-goblins essentially have the option of adopting an alternative lifestyle, albeit one that can at times be difficult to resist.

Personality and tendencies:

In their non-shifted forms, there are no common traits among were-goblins, except for a tendency towards curiosity. However, fully shifted were-goblins share a number of traits, and indulging in these can prompt their mindset to shift, encouraging them to change forms.

Fully shifted were-goblins tend to be a rowdy, rambunctious lot, and given that they frequently congregate together their most impulsive ideas get amplified by the rest of the group. They also tend to be highly sexual, freely requesting or offering intimate acts to even casual associates. Were-goblin societies are then frequently chaotic affairs; marked by petty pranks, showboating, wild parties, and an impressively large amount of orgies.¹

Physical Characteristics:

There is no common thread in the non-shifted physiology among were-goblins. They can be tall or short, lean or large, and so on. More so than other were-creatures, were-goblins live their lives on a sliding scale. At one end is their normal, human selves, and at the other is their full goblin body. In this latter form they do demonstrate common traits, being around three feet tall,

¹ It has been argued that the orgies are a deliberate recruiting tactic, but if so, it's one that seems to come naturally to any group of were-goblins. If they have an ulterior motive to these events they don't seem disappointed when others participate and manage to avoid becoming infected themselves

with a surprisingly curvy physique for their height. Their skin is almost forest green, while their ears taper notably backwards. They are generally described as "quite attractive, so long as you can ignore them constantly aggressively propositioning you".

In between these extremes, were-goblins can find themselves shifting back and forth depending on their response to stimulus. A were-goblin that indulges their curiosity may find their ears poking out through the back of their hair, while participating in petty mischief will see them grow progressively shorter and greener. Like many were-creatures, becoming aroused is also a fast route to transitioning into their shifted form, but in their case the more they lean into promiscuous goblin tendencies, the more they will have to struggle against their manner of speech shifting accordingly, which then rapidly becomes a degenerative loop.

Transmission:

Any non-lycanthrope who engages with the questions or comments posed by 'goblin speech' will find the tendency to respond in kind creeping into their thoughts. It is hard to say how much interaction is necessary for infection to take hold, because the standard advice is to avoid conversation with a full goblin at all costs. The best I can say is that a single question and answer is probably fine, but any engagement longer than that puts the subject at increasing risk.

All of this puts were-goblins in a unique position. A fully infected were-goblin could live their entire life without anyone being aware of their condition, simply by keeping control of their actions and refraining from sinking into the goblin mindset.² Conversely, were-goblins are perfectly capable of living in their goblin form at all times, especially when clustered together. Indeed, the surest way to detect a were-goblin is through the intervention of another, as few infected can resist responding once they start a conversation. That said, even a fully shifted were-goblin can revert back to their human self, so long as they separate themselves from other goblins and refrain from indulging in those instincts. It may take some time (examples vary from days to weeks, depending on how long they've been in full goblin form), but it is demonstrably possible.

The fact that non-lycanthropes largely avoid known were-goblins has led to many of them banding together, despite how that then reinforces their goblin state. A few small enclaves have sprung up, and by far the most successful is the one outside the village of the Goo People. As they are physically unable to speak they appear completely immune to the were-goblin's influence, and seem to regard them as intriguing sources of distraction. For their part, the were-goblins have established themselves as toll-collectors for the endless series of visitors the Goo People encourage. So long as they don't frighten off too many prospective partners this seems to be tolerated, while the were-goblins gain customers who cannot argue against their

² I've had correspondence with a few 'stealth' were-goblins, and they report that while it takes willpower - and a thorough dedication to avoiding any of the clusters of other were-goblins - they're able to live more-or-less as normal. If they can find a sympathetic partner they're even able to have healthy sex lives, although that requires having a comfortable gag on hand. Fortunately, applying this to either partner avoids the possibility of further infection, allowing them to choose their level of indulgence accordingly

prices. Any visitor either hands over what the goblins want or silently leaves, lest they find themselves becoming inclined to stay longer than they planned.

Were-plants:

Overview:

While not as singular as were-goblins, were-plants still rank as one of the more unusual lycanthrope subspecies. To begin with, 'were-plant' is something of a misnomer; it would be more accurate to call them were-trees.³ Beyond that though, while were-plants share some similar traits and tendencies, there's substantially more variability within the subspecies based on which particular tree the individual relates to. For example, those with a lunar form like a willow may be more inclined to flexibility, while one with thorny bark might be more prickly than their typically placid kin.

Personality and tendencies:

Overall, were-plants tend to be thorough and slow-going people. More likely to be defensive than aggressive, they can sometimes struggle with change and be somewhat stuck in their ways. They also tend towards being introverted and deeply uncomfortable in crowds, tending perhaps unsurprisingly towards being happier in natural environments.

Accordingly, were-plants are often solitary people. Their infection allows them to live quite comfortably out in the wilderness, and many find that preferable to being cooped up in oppressive-feeling cities. In turn, the presence of a were-plant is often quite beneficial for their surrounding area. They have the time and patience to tend to their plants well, together with the ability to instinctively understand their needs. Even the accompanying animal life benefits from the increased productivity of the region, meaning that the presence of a were-plant can create an oasis of bounty in even the leanest forest.

Physical Characteristics:

In their non-shifted form, were-plants look mostly human. They often have green hair, and may struggle with constantly finding leaves tangled up in it, but on the whole they can normally pass for uninfected. Most notable however are their eyes, which are uniformly the colour of freshly-drawn sap. However, in practice were-plants would struggle to pass as human, purely because how little of their time they spend entirely non-shifted.

As with all lycanthropes, were-plants can transition from their non-shifted to shifted forms due to their emotional state. However, like with were-goblins, were-plants have another potential trigger, albeit one that's less publicly hazardous. If any were-plant stands still for any length of time they find their toes instinctively starting to dig into the ground, spreading gradually out into a minor root system. They can break this off without injury, so fortunately they're not having to constantly fight against being immobilised, but it is enough of a nuisance that it encourages

³ It's possible there is a 'were-creeping vine' or 'were-rose' somewhere out there, but to date nothing other than trees have been identified

them to be deliberate with their movements, either keeping constantly off their feet or walking only when necessary.

Likewise, the more they take root, the more they transition to their shifted form. In this state they slowly grow, typically topping out at six to seven feet tall. Their skin becomes darker and more bark-like, lending them an increasing resistance to injury. Eventually leaves and even flowers flourish freely in their hair, and any facial or body hair takes on the appearance of thick moss.

The lunar form of a were-plant is even more exceptional, as they almost cease to be animate entirely. The transition happens with the full moon, as with all lycanthropes, but for some reason were-plants receive an instinctive awareness of when this will occur. As early as the sun starting to set they will know that tonight will be 'the time', and seek to make preparations.⁴ Generally they will find a quiet, open space, one where they can be comfortable that they won't be disturbed, and then allow themselves to take root. Soon they will transition into their shifted form, but as the moon rises the transformation goes still further. Over time they find themselves losing mobility entirely, with their limbs, then their body, and finally their head freezing in place. They do not lose the definition of their human shape entirely, but to a casual glance they will pass for a simple tree, especially if they've taken care to pose themselves accordingly.

The process is described as quite peaceful, similar to falling into a deep and relaxing sleep. While they are largely unaware of their surroundings, subjects report a dim perception seeping through, similar to dreams being influenced by someone else talking in the room.

Uniquely among known lycanthropes, this lunar form can last longer than a single night. The time it takes varies, and the only criteria I can determine is the amount of relaxation the were-plant is able to achieve. If they have merely found what space they can in the yard of a crowded townhouse, they'll likely revert to normal the next morning. However, someone safe in their peaceful grove can slumber away for as long as several weeks. In either case they will awaken refreshed, reporting the same satisfaction as having had a rejuvenating bath and a truly filling meal.

Transmission:

The exact mechanics of were-plant transmission are unknown, but we do at least know that there are some specific circumstances required. First, the were-plant must be sleeping in its lunar state, and the new subject must then similarly sleep nearby. The current theory is that some sort of pollination takes place while both individuals slumber, but any direct evidence of this so far evades us. However, as any wall or full enclosure that blocks line of sight between the two does seem to prevent infection, were-plants tend to be on the safer side for lycanthropic transmission, as even those that still live in cities can simply sequester themselves in walled gardens or, at worst, a dirt-floored room to prevent any incidents. Most incidences of transmission occur when travellers find havens of tranquillity out in the wild, and for one reason or another cannot resist the urge to sleep beneath the comforting boughs of the central tree.

⁴ There have been reports of particularly canny were-spiders or were-sharks casually befriending a were-plant, so as to receive advance warning of their own dramatic transformations

My advice in such circumstances then is rather simple - if you ever find a magical, well-tended glade deep in the woods, feel free to enjoy its beauty, but perhaps push on just a little further before making camp. Unless of course, you wish to get really into gardening yourself.

- Isobelle Carroway