

WOLF HOLLOW SHIFTERS'

GUIDE TO SURVIVING
THE APOCALYPSE

A HOW-TO FOR HUMANS

NIKKI JEFFORD



Wolf Hollow Shifters' Guide to Surviving the Apocalypse (A How-To for Humans)

Life as you know it has ended. Don't panic. The Wolf Hollow shifters are here to help guide you through. Look on the bright side: No more housecleaning and maintenance; no more commuting; no more bills to pay; no more social media status updates and hashtags. Feeling a reaction to something? Forget the emojis. From here on, your actual face will do all the expressing.

Welcome to life in the wild.

Sasha

I don't understand why anyone would want to live in a box to begin with. Humanity, as I understand it, started out nomadic. The real question is, what led you astray? Well, never mind that, it serves no purpose to dwell on the past. I see no reason to panic. There are so few things you need to get by. It comes down to water, food, shelter, and warmth. See? Doesn't that immediately ease your troubled mind?

What I want to talk to you about is your tribe. For me, my pack is everything. We survive because we work together. It's important to have a variety of skill sets and strengths. You might not like everyone in your community. When that's the case, I choose to focus on their contribution rather than their personality.

Don't take things personally. The side effects of speech sometimes lead to offenses. Believe me, I've heard a lot of bluster from the males on my council. Sometimes I need to put them back in their places, but I always try to stay calm and collected. This is no time to lose your mind or add drama where none is needed.

Which reminds me—keep drama in check. I'd say avoid it altogether but where you have people, shapeshifters included, personalities will clash. Strife disturbs the peace. Don't allow it to escalate. Things can't be perfect, but try to keep your tribe as harmonious as you can. You need one another.

I believe these are better times than before. Mother Earth is healing and reclaiming her territory. I hope you will come to see it that way as well and make the wise choice the next time around to keep life simple.

Tabor

Not everyone is a powerful wizard shifter like me, but my mother taught me a thing or two about healing herbs and tonics.

Following is my *list of 14 wild medicinal plants and their uses.

1. Blackberry leaves

Uses: Helping with diarrhea. Can be made into mouth-wash. (Don't be kissing your honey with squirrel breath.)

2. Lemon Balm

Uses: Cold sores and as a calming tea to combat insomnia.

3. Lavender

Uses: Insect repellent, relieving itches, rashes, burns, and bug bites (including beestings). Note: Do not use it internally for pregnant and nursing women or small children.

4. Comfrey

Uses: Topical treatment (do not eat) cooked, mashed roots for arthritis, bruises, burns, and sprains.

*Reference: Survival Skills: 14 Wild Medicinal Plants by Tim MacWelch. OutdoorLife.com. May 27, 2014.

5. Yarrow
Uses: Crushed leaves and flowers placed on cuts and scratches can stop bleeding and reduce infection.
6. Burdock
Uses: Roots and leaves make an excellent liver tonic to purify the body and blood.
7. Plantain
Uses: Leaves can be crushed into a paste and applied to venomous stings and bites. (Works to neutralize the venom of bees, wasps, scorpions, and other pain-inducing creatures, though not snakes.)
8. Dandelion
Uses: (Apparently humans of old considered this an unwelcome weed.) To stimulate digestion, and as a general liver and gallbladder tonic, mix one spoonful of the dried root into one mug of hot water.
9. Willow
Uses: Treating inflammation and pain. (Boil a handful of green leaves in one cup of water for 10 minutes to create an astringent.) Anti-diarrhea drink. (Soak bark scrapings in one cup of hot water for 10 minutes.)
10. Echinacea
Uses: Make a tea from the dried root and/or leaf at the first sign of cold symptoms to reduce the effects and duration of a common cold.
11. Elderberry
Uses: Treating wounds. (Apply directly to skin.) Help relieves nasal congestion and contains anti-inflammatory and anticancer properties. (Cook berries before consuming, as raw berries are mildly toxic.)
12. Black Walnut

Uses: Add one spoonful of the dried green husk material to one cup of hot water for a parasite-expelling tea. (Warning: tastes nasty.)

13. Jewelweed

Uses: Treat rashes from poison ivy, oak, or sumac. (Crush the juicy, purplish stalk into a slimy paste and scrub over the affected skin. After 2 minutes, wash off with clean water.)

14. Birch

Uses: Treating pain. (Scrape bark from sweet birch swigs and steep into a tea. Warning: Stop taking if it causes upset stomach, nausea, or ringing in the ears.)

Having a healer on hand is a valuable addition to any tribe. Ensure the knowledge of healing arts gets passed on.

Kallie

Don't give up hope.

After my injury, I thought I was doomed to live out my days as a useless invalid in the den. Don't get me wrong, I still make myself useful in the communal garden and help with the children in the den. I just thought I would never have a mate or family of my own.

Turns out I was wrong.

Take care of yourself. Stay strong. Make new friends. Speak your mind. Follow your heart. Don't let anyone convince you that you deserve less than what's best for you. So long as you have breath in your lungs, keep on fighting.

Emerson

Okay, listen up. No doubt you can find busywork between eat-

ing and sleeping: washing cups and clothes in the river, gathering kindling, patching shelters, and all that other boring stuff.

There is a lot of downtime, and it's important to enjoy some of that for yourself. Laugh with your friends. Stir up some drama . . . I don't care if Sasha's frowning at me in disapproval. People need a little entertainment to amuse themselves.

If you're single, flirt with other singles.

If you're not single, then for Sky's sake, flirt with your sweetie or mate! Flirting is healthy. It improves your mental well-being, makes others feel good about themselves, and boosts your relationships.

Health is important.

You want to be healthy, right?

Jager

The liquor stores have been raided and emptied out. It's time to man up and make your own moonshine. Your pack is counting on you.

Following are three of my basic booze recipes. All you need are some containers scrounged up from an abandoned home or superstore.

Tipsy Berry

Gather lots of wild berries (nonpoisonous, mind you). Squeeze, strain, and let it bubble up in a protected spot. In about two weeks, you'll have crude wine.

Root Stew

Just about any tuber root will release starches. (Send a den mate to dig some up from the communal garden.) Boil them long enough and the starch breaks down into complex sugars.

Allow to cool in an open area for wild yeasts. Set aside in a protected area. (I keep a batch fermenting in my hut at all times.) In two to three weeks, you'll have booze.

Bee-fuddled

Boil honey in water, let cool, and leave in an open area for wild yeasts. In two to three weeks, you'll have crude mead.

Once you get the basics down, there is a wide range of edible flowers, herbs, fruits, berries, and other flavor-enhancing ingredients that will add their own unique yeasts to your brew's flavor.

Share with your packmates.

Remember to raise your glass to the moon.

Elsie

Never underestimate yourself.

I know I'm new here, but I wanted to say that if you're petite (and female), others tend to underestimate you. They can think what they want so long as you remember who you are. A survivor. A fighter. A force to be reckoned with. Don't forget it.

Aden

If you are just getting started, or are on the move, your quickest shelter is a shallow cave.

In the woods, you can construct a leaning shelter by breaking off branches to build your structure. Angle your gradual incline toward the wind, and build your walls from the bottom up using vegetation on hand. For bedding, gather pine needles, dry moss, leaves, and ferns.

Lacy will tell you how to start a fire . . . just don't keep it inside your shelter.

One final piece of advice: Protect your pack.

Lacy

Hey, there. Are you hungry? I know my packmates are throwing a lot of advice at you.

I've done my fair share of communal meal duties in the hollow. There is an abundance of bowls, pots, and utensils in the abandoned subdivisions. Our elders hauled back a large cauldron found on an old patio in a deserted neighborhood. There was charred wood in it like it was being used as a fire pit. We use it to cook up big batches of stew and porridge.

Whether you're cooking for a large group, or simply for yourself and your family, you'll need to warm up your meals.

If you have no cookware starting out, don't fret. You can roast meat over an open campfire with a stick. You can also steam food by digging a hole in the ground, adding hot rocks to the bottom, and covering it with wet vegetation. Add your food on top, slowly add water, and the hot rocks will create steam.

Now let's get your fire started. One of the more primitive techniques is the fire plow method.

1. Gather up materials for your tinder nest.
2. Here are some suggestions: shredded birch bark, dry grass, dry moss, sage, juniper bark, or the inner bark of aspen and cottonwood. Fuzz up the tinder so that it will ignite easily. When you fuzz it up, fine bits will fall from your hands. Save this dust by working over a piece of cloth, such as a bandanna.
3. Work your tinder materials into a nest. Keep stuffing until it is dense enough to hold the coal and not burn out be-

fore a flame begins.

4. To make the plow, start with bone-dry wood. Whittle one end into a wedge. The plow is used to make a groove in the base log or stick (make sure it's at least two inches wide). Push back and forth to create a six-inch-long groove in the base log. Once you have this groove made, you are ready to get to work.
5. Lower the butt end of the plow so that the contact area between it and the base is greater. (This dries out the wood and builds up heat without gouging too deeply into the base.) Work the plow back and forth. Really get into the rhythm. You can do it!
6. Once you get coal with your fire plow, transfer it to your tinder nest and blow it to a flame. Be careful to keep the coal intact. Fold the nest around the coal to prevent it from falling out. Continue to blow into the bundle. Once the smoke increases, blow with more force. Keep on blowing until the nest flames.
7. Once you have flames going, set them in a pit surrounded by rocks. Lay the ends of sticks in the fire and push them into the flames slowly as they're consumed. This is an efficient way to keep your fire going longer.

Isn't it magical that with enough energy and focus, you can create a brightly burning fire?

Stay warm and well-fed!

Palmer

Protect your territory. Respect borders and maintain friendly relations with your nearest neighbors.

Breed. The continued survival of your pack depends on you impregnating your mates. Strength in numbers.

Camilla & Rosalie

This is the apocalypse; get used to nudity.
Don't be a prude.
And stay away from our males!

Hudson

Don't take life too seriously. Laugh with your friends.

Chase

In this new world, as with the old, you will lose loved ones. When you do, honor them in ceremony and take comfort knowing that their spirit is forever free and that one day you will be reunited.

Garrick

Your tribe needs a leader. Pick the strongest of the bunch. If that's you, stick to your guns. Keep the riffraff in line and womenfolk—

Sasha

Sorry about that, folks. Garrick seems to have forgotten he no longer has a say in pack matters. I won't have him passing along bad advice to anyone else, either.

Raider

Your pack is your family.

Zackary

Never ever betray a packmate. If you do fuck up, take responsibility. Accept your punishment. Keep your head down, and

work your ass off to regain your pack's trust and forgiveness. Do that, and maybe, just maybe, even a mongrel like yourself will get a second chance.

Vallen

Grrrrrrr. Rerrrrrr. Woof. Woof. Oooooowwwwww!

Translation: Don't get bitten by a rabid wolf.

Alec, Heath, & Mauree (aka: The Drum Circle)

Celebrate life.

Ceremony and music are more important than ever.

Heidi

We do our best to keep the insects out of Eric's and Amy's meals because they're young and picky, but you actually want to go out of your way to eat bugs. They're full of proteins, vitamins, and minerals. Here are some suggestions to get you snacking: crickets, ants, grasshoppers, worms, potato bugs, termites, and beetle larvae.

Wolfrik

Be the hunter, not the prey.

Listen up, human, I'm going to talk to you about hunting, but only because I was told you're worth my time. Let me make myself clear: If you so much as wound a wolf, I will go Cujo on your sorry hide. Back to hunting.

Rabbit is one of the easiest animals to catch—even for a human. Yep. Poor dumb bunnies. You can easily hide and sneak up on them. Downside, they're lean. You're gonna need some fatty

meat to survive.

Two words: Spear hunting.

Even if you get your hands on a rifle, you're going to run out of bullets. Besides, weapons are for wussies.

Make yourself a spear. One end pointy. Done.

If you have access to fish, start there. It is the least challenging and least dangerous form of spear hunting.

Catching game means tracking. Familiarize yourself with animal droppings so you know which animals to pursue and which to avoid. (Stay clear of vulhena. Even if you manage to take one down, they taste like shit.)

Once you've chosen your animal, get to know its habits: when it eats, sleeps, and drinks.

Stay as silent as possible while stalking your prey. Get as close as you can before attacking.

When the time comes to take your prey down, aim to kill!

Wounding an animal is cruel and wasteful. It could escape and even attract predators.

You should practice throwing until you get it down. Don't wait until you're facing a deer to use your spear for the first time.

If you're still having trouble catching fresh game, (jeez, am I wasting my time here), do like a squirrel and eat acorns.

And if you can't follow Lacy's easy instructions on fire building either, get ready to chase after lightning.

Got what it takes to survive?

Well, do you?



The Wolf Hollow pack wishes you a Happy End of the World.

Save this guide in the event of an apocalypse. You won't be laughing when the internet crashes.

May you run forever free.

Interview with the Author

Note: These questions originally came from Bite Me Box for their February 2020 dystopian romance box which included a special edition of Wolf Hollow. Not all of the questions fit into their author pamphlet, but you can find them all below. To learn more about this awesome book subscription box, visit www.BiteMeBox.com.)

Tell us about where the idea for this book came from.

All my books start out with a set of characters. (In this case, a hotheaded male and a strong, willful female who start out despising one another only to fall in love.) From there, I brainstorm locations and situations.

Starting from childhood, countless daydreams have taken place in remote outdoor settings. I'm the most content in nature with no one, besides close family or friends, around. I like to look out and see no sign of civilization and no hordes of people.

I wanted to write a series with shapeshifters living in forest communities. I asked myself why they weren't in an urban environment. This led to the answer that humans destroyed the world with overpopulation and environmental destruction, leading to disease and the collapse of civilization. For the humans who survived, it's turned into a *Mad Max*, dog-eat-dog nightmare, while shifters and wizards have forged communities in the wild away from the violence (though not from all danger).

Is there any special backstory to the story or characters?

Moon cycles play an important role in the hollow because female wolf shifters can only get pregnant during a full moon.

This connection to the moon was inspired by the three months my husband and I lived off-grid in a 200-square-foot shed on

the edge of a mountain cliff in northern California. I was learning to grow food (because I thought the world was going to end soon and my biggest fear is going hungry).

What I miss most from that time was the connection I felt to nature. I remember being so in tune to the weather, plant life, animals, insects, and moon phases. I always had to have our Westie, Cosmo, on a leash so he wouldn't take off after deer and get lost in the woods. At night I'd have his leash in one hand and a battery-operated lantern in the other. During the clear nights surrounding a full moon, I didn't require any kind of man-made illumination. Those were magical times of wandering the woods, listening to nature's evening calm, having the stars seemingly all to myself. It was a time of complete peace. This is part of what I strive to capture in *Wolf Hollow*.

Is this book part of a series? If so, how many books and how long do you see it going? Does it flow into another series or world you write in? Oh please do tell!

As of March 2020, there are four books in the *Wolf Hollow Shifters* series with three more planned. Each novel centers around a new couple's trials, tribulations, and courtship. They can be read as standalones. If you want to experience all the hollow happenings in chronological order, it's best to read the series in order.

About You: Where do you do most of your writing? What is special about this place?

I was writing from home in front of a window at a desk with two big monitors (one with my WIP; the other with notes or online research). I'm in love with my ergonomic keyboard. My workspace was right next to the sliding door, so I could let Cosmo in and out a hundred times a day. We had a wonderful home, with south-facing windows looking out over a field where it was

typical to see deer, rabbits, raccoons, eagles, and coyotes.

Update: We are now moving into a truck camper and will see where the wind takes us. (Any room in Wolf Hollow?)

On a side note, the first draft of Wolf Hollow is very unique in that it was written entirely outdoors on a laptop from our previous residence. Our landlady had just whacked a bunch of trees down and suddenly the backyard had sunlight. When you've grown up in dark places like Alaska then end up in the rainy Pacific Northwest, there is a magnetic force when the sun comes out.

I wrote the first draft during spring and summer on a patio table with my laptop inside an overturned box to keep it from overheating in the sun.

Do you have a fav snack you eat when writing? If so, what is it and maybe we can feature it in the box!

Don't get me started on snack attacks. One of my nicknames is "Piggy Nikki." I'm not good at chewing so much as inhaling.

I never snack at my desk. Tea is the only food item allowed near my computer. However, I get up A LOT. Favorite yummys include cookies, dark chocolate, pretzels, chips, nuts, crackers, bananas, cereal, bread, and ants on a log. (Yep, good old peanut butter on celery with raisins.)

Do you listen to a playlist when you write? What's on it? Why do you like it so much?

Not at all!

I need silence to hear my characters talking. Sometimes I'll run their lines or scenes out loud. I also like to talk to myself as I write, stuff like, "Oh, wow. I didn't see that coming." "Hmm.

That might be better sooner." "What?!" "Phew! Is it getting hot in here?"

If you could tell your readers ONE thing about you that would blow their minds, make them curious, or be totally excited about... what would it be?

At age 19, I spent a month in Kenya where I lived in a mud hut in a remote village. My host father had three wives and somewhere around fifteen children (one of whom wanted to marry me). I'd signed up for a biointensive volunteer vacation only to have it fall through after I flew all the way from Alaska to Africa. Luckily, a wonderful young married couple from Colorado arranged for the three of us to help out through Habitat for Humanity.

We were placed with families a thirty-minute walk away from one another. It was hard at first, because the couple had become like stand-in parents I latched on to. But it didn't take long for me to become a part of my African family. I tried to help out, but they insisted on treating me like a celebrity guest.

From what I saw, everyone only had two sets of clothing: one for everyday wear; and one nice outfit for church on Sunday. The kids at the school had a "ball" made from plastic bags tied into a round shape with rope, which I kicked around with them. Even with so little, I never saw so many smiles in one place. My African family and I laughed together nonstop. They thought it was hilarious every time I jumped at the sight of a cockroach. I get hyper and outlandish when I'm telling stories out loud, and they were the absolute best audience.

On my last night, the boys played "drums" on buckets while the women sang and danced. It was hypnotic. Pure magic.

The most eye-opening lessons I learned in Kenya are: 1) We don't

require many material goods to get by; 2) Community is everything; and 3) It is absolutely amazing how quickly we can adapt to our surroundings. That last part was especially empowering.



Stay wild moon child! I hope you find your way back to the hollow.

Wolf hugs,
Nikki