

Willards Fork

Frederik Jensen, 2025

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Willards Fork is a town for the roleplaying game Dogs in the Vineyard by Vincent Baker. The presence of the supernatural is low. The amount of sin enacted so far is limited. Players will find a town of helpful and kind people that somehow still need their help to steer clear of trouble brewing in the horizon.

Theme

Change happens over time whether we accept it or not. Kids grow up and move out. People grow old, become shadows of themselves and want different things from life. If we deny our children their future, they turn on us. If we don't guide them on their way, they get lost and fail.

The watermill is the central feature of Willards Fork. It is a promise of progress and prosperity but also a symbol of movement without change.

The Steward and the Miller both resist change. While the old generation falter and fail and the young generation grow impatient with what the town offers.

The arrival of a young woman is the crack in the dam that starts a trickle. Willards Fork is about to change.

At a glance

Willards Fork is a town of some twenty families of faithfuls. Founded a generation or two ago where a river flows from a natural reservoir in the high mountains into lowland plains.

Through a narrow gorge and a series of falls it supplies the town with a steady year round supply of ice cold water.

Exactly where a large rock splits the flow of water in two, the first settlers built a watermill.

Next to the mill and along the river, farmsteads fence in the open land. Next to each of them, a Tree of Life marks them as residences of the faithful. On unpaved streets, scores of children play. Pastures and fields stretch from the river and up into the foothills, dotted with sheep and cattle.

Some houses are clearly abandoned with caved in roofs and boarded up windows. Overgrown graves next to a Tree of Life.

Close to the mill, a newly built wooden house stands out. This is the new school.

Up to now

A decade ago smallpox took out half the population. The steward buried his predecessor under a tree and accepted the responsibility to shepherd the survivors.

Since then the town has slowly recovered. Families have moved in and taken over farmsteads. New scores of kids run between the houses.

Now the town is prosperous again.

The old school teacher, a kind old lady, is unable to keep up with the run of the new kids that the King has blessed the faithful with.

Kids not learning to read, not learning math.

One thing is to not be able to read the Book of Life: the rules of the faith can be memorised. But not being able to add up a column of number, then you get cheated by tax collectors and snake oil salesmen.

So the good miller invites his niece from back east to come teach. The young woman has attended a good school. Perhaps she was also getting into a bit of trouble, the young lady's mother was not too specific on the details. Just as the miller was not too generous with informing the town or his niece on what to expect.

A clash between the new and the old teacher was avoided as the old teacher knocked over a lantern one night and burned down the school. This was last autumn.

So it happened that the town got themselves a new school teacher with fine teaching skills and good eyesight. But she needed help to adjust to life out here.

Her behaviour is stirring up the town.

She wears dresses unlike any other women in town. She doesn't sew. Technically she is a faithful and a member of her uncle's household. But after a short while she moved out and now lives alone in the new school house that the town built.

A long line of suitors have presented themselves in a town short on unmarried women.

On a sunny spring day, a group of riders arrive. Dressed in finely sewn coats, guns on the side, with news of the outside and packages and letters to deliver.

Something's wrong

A pox epidemic wiped out half the town. Survivors pulled through, new kids born, new settlers arrived. The town is slowly changing. But the steward **Isaac Bluntswood** is a nay sayer that lives day to day and rejects most ideas for change.

The entrepreneurial miller **Malcom Garriot** and the stout farmer **Cyrus Reed** both dream of something bigger, seeing the great potential Willards Fork offers.

Cyrus Reed settled in the town after the epidemic. His three sons never learned to read and he worries how to find good wives for them so they will not leave town.

Rosemary Poof is getting too old to teach the many kids how to read and write. She knocked over a lamp and burned down the school. The Hendersons took her in.

Thomas Bruitswain keeps the watermill running, reliable when Malcom Garriot is not. But he is slow, dull witted. He should really take a wife but needs help.

Old hermit **Nicodemus Poof** (older brother of Ms Poos) lives alone up at the reservoir, one of the first settlers in the area. While technically a faithful, he rarely comes for service.

The steward **Isaac Bluntswood** and his wife **Magdalene Bluntswood** can't have babies.

Abigail Henderson creates beautiful coats and dresses using designs inherited from her grandmothers. However, lately at the sewing circle, young **Lilac Reed** got much praise for a new pattern she created using a hard-to-produce purple colour.

Pride

This town should do better!

Malcom Garriot needs Thomas Bruitswain right now but he wants someone else to take over the mill. He blames Rosemary Poof for Tom's poor intellect. After a visit to nearby Saint Martin last year, he wants kids to learn to read and write and to do proper math.

Cyrus Reed wants wives for his sons so they can start families of their own and will not move away. Except of course, they should not marry pox scarred Mina Bluntswood.

Isaac Bluntswood thinks his pox scarred step daughter deserves someone better than Thomas Bruitswain.

Magdalene Bluntswood correctly sees that Thomas and Mina could be a happy couple and has arranged for the two to see more of each other, sending Mina on frequent errands to the mill even if she knows that Isaac does not approve.

Jennifer Young thinks that she has better answers to what the town needs and that she does not need to learn from the townspeople. She can teach better than Rosemary (true but not always). Families should

get their kids vaccinated to not die from smallpox. The traditional dresses worn by women in the town is not for her.

Things should stay the same!

Isaac Bluntswood does not want his step daughter to marry Thomas. If she should marry, it should be Solomon Reed. ("She deserves better!")

Malcom Garriot does not want Thomas to move out and start family of his own.

Abigail Henderson does not like the new colours and patterns introduced by Lilac Reed she thinks her patterns and colours are better and that she is being overlooked.

Rosemary Poof thinks she is a great teacher. The Hendersons agree.

Injustice

Mina Bluntswood and **Thomas Bruitswain** are slowly getting to know each other, but Mina knows that her stepfather will never let her marry Thomas.

Abigail Henderson is overlooked at the sewing circle as Lilac Reed and her new designs and colours get all the attention.

Solomon Reed is denied courtship with Jennifer Young by Isaac Bluntswood because he wants Solomon to marry Mina.

Ephraim Reed is denied courtship with Jennifer Young by Cyrus Reed who wants the older brother Solomon to marry her.

The Reed and Gayle kids never learned to read and write and subtract them numbers.

Sin

Malcom Garriot invites his niece to come to Miller's Landing to live with him and teach the kids in school. He is not honest with neither Jennifer Young, Isaac Bluntswood, nor Rosemary Poof. He sets the wheels in motion, hoping for things to solve themselves in time.

Jennifer Young arrives and the town faces an awkward situation with two teachers and no school. After living with Malcom and Thomas for a short while she decides to move out and start her own school. At first she teaches the kids outdoor, then come winter she moves into an abandoned barn, then finally Isaac Bluntswood agrees to build a new school.

Abigail Henderson refused to teach **Lilac Reed** the family patterns and Lilac Reed refused to tell Abigail Henderson how she created the purple yarn.

Solomon Reed forces his courtship on Jennifer Young. She accepts to see him in private to have some protection from other suitors and to hold him off.

Cyrus Reed offers Malcom Garriot that Solomon Reed marries Jennifer Young without the approval of Isaac. Malcom accepts on the hope to one day marry Lilac Reed.

Demonic attacks

Rosemary Poof kicks over a lantern and burns down the school (six months ago).

Nicodemus Poof falls in the mountains (a few days ago).

A case of **smallpox** breaks out at the Gayle household (after the dogs arrive).

Solomon Reed beats up Thomas Bruitswain as a favour to Jennifer Young (after the dogs arrive).

False doctrine

These beliefs are at the verge of taking root in Willards Fork:

A woman can live alone just as a man can live alone.

A marriage can proceed without the approval of the steward.

Corrupt worship

Things could evolve into...

Jennifer Young could teach the children things that contradict the faith. The kids could act out these new “superstitions”. Like catching a sneeze in the sleeve instead of saying “One for the King!” when someone sneezes.

Solomon Reed could teach Jennifer Young how to be a woman of the faith.

False priesthood

A false priesthood could grow around Jennifer Young. Either the kids could worship her, or she could worship Solomon Reed.

Concerned mothers could attempt to reestablish Rosemary Poof as teacher and deny them to go to the new school. Instead of learning dogma from reading the Book of Life, they could learn from religious images sewn on tapestries and a cult could form around Abigail Henderson.

What do people want from the dogs?

Isaac Bluntswood wants the dogs to consecrate the new school (so it won’t burn down. Also we built it where the Clyde family used to live, poor souls, but they have been dead a long time now).

Ephraim Reed wants help to write a letter to Jennifer Young to convince her to meet with me at the reservoir, with a dog as company of course.

Abigail Henderson wants indigo from Bridal Falls (which one of the dogs brings her, perhaps as a present). Then she wants the dogs or the steward to put her in charge of decorating the new school with a tapestry depicting important moments from the King of Life.

Lilac Henderson wants to get indigo from Bridal Falls so that she can make the same patterns as Abigail (who refuses to teach her). She wants to travel to Bridal Falls to experience the greatest city of them all for herself. She needs someone to travel with her (and to get permission to travel from her father).

Malcom Garriot: I think I should marry again! Maybe a female dog? Or can they help him find a wife?

What do the demons want?

The demons want to divide the community, the mill to stop, and the town to die.

People stop accepting the leadership of Isaac Bluntswood (as Malcom Garriot and Cyrus Reed are on the way to do).

Mothers will split over whether their kids should learn the doctrine of the faith through embroidered images by the more and more destitute Rosemary Poof — or be taught to read and write and do them numbers by the unconventional woman from the East.

What do the demons want the dogs to do?

The demons want the dogs to pick different sides (Jennifer/Rosemary, Malcom/Isaac) and fail to come up with way forward that the entire town will accept.

What would happen if the dogs did not come?

Jennifer Young teaches the kids behaviour that contradicts tradition and the King of Life.

Concerned mothers will not let their kids attend school.

Pox epidemic breaks out, killing many of the young Gayles. Henderson will be confirmed that it was right to keep her children home from school.

Solomon Reed will force himself on Jennifer. Ephraim and Solomon will fight. Ephraim will run away to live at the reservoir. His anger will turn into violence and revenge.

Isaac Bluntswood will attempt to close the school but realise that he has no longer authority over the town.

Abigail Henderson will burn down the new school to stop Jennifer from preaching false doctrine to the kids.

Thomas and Mina will grow ever more frustrated until something triggers them to do something horrible. Like burn down the mill with themselves inside after taking poison.

Ephraim Reed confronts Solomon in a fight over Jennifer. Jennifer returns back East, alone.

The dam above the town breaks and the town wash away.

Who does the dogs know?

Abigail Henderson sewed your coat. With a very special blue colour. You have a package with indigo for her.

Cyrus Reed is your uncle. You know he moved here not long after you were born.

Constance Reed is your aunt. You know she moved here not long after you were born. You have a letter for her from her sister to deliver in person. You hope it is good news (someone died back east, there is a heritage to deal with).

Malcom Garriot visited your family in Saint Martin last year and stayed at your house.

The people of Willards Fork

The mill

Malcom Garriot, Miller

Entrepreneurial Miller, faithful, widower.

Bursts of great energy and creativity. Followed by periods of despair.

Wants the community to prosper. The children really need to learn maths and to read and write. Invited his niece Jennifer Young to be the new school teacher. Her arrival has made him think that he should marry again. Asks if the dogs can help him with that.

He took in Tom and trained him working the mill some years ago. Now he is very happy that he can leave all the heavy work to Tom.

He does not want Tom to move out. He also doesn't think that Tom should take over the mill one day.

Jennifer Young, the new teacher

Great at teaching and inspiring kids. Brings new ideas from the East. Inoculated (Vaccinated). She does not wear the kind of dress typically worn by women of the faith. Was there some scandal back East? Is she fully one of the faithful?

Wants to live alone (especially not under the same roof as Tom). Tom freaks her out but she does not want the dogs to help with that. She has already asked Solomon to help keep Tom away.

Appreciates any help with making the new school a success. School furniture, books.

Will mention that she has been inoculated (vaccinated) and suggest that the children in town should also be vaccinated to prevent another epidemic.

Thomas Bruitwain, "Tom"

Miller's Journeyman. Arms as tree trunks. Simpleton, reliable. Keeps the mill running.

Got off to a bad start with Jennifer Young. He is not comfortable around women. Appreciates when Mina Bluntswood comes to the mill though.

Went into the burning school and carried Rosemary Poof out on his shoulders.

Wants stability, a quiet life surrounded by people who appreciate him.

The Bluntswoods

Isaac Bluntswood, Steward

Carpenter, Undertaker.

Says no.

“Work hard, pray for your souls, sin is everywhere.”

Buried half the villagers after a pox epidemic seven years ago, including the previous steward. Fears that another epidemic will sweep the town.

He took a new wife, a widow with a shy daughter and a young boy who ran away within a year. No other kids have come from this marriage. The girl is shy and pox scarred but now growing to an age where she should marry.

Wants the dogs to consecrate the new school that he built. Hopes the school can also be used for services so he doesn't have to have people come to his house. It gets really crowded.

The steward is a good family man, he believes in hard work and prayers. He is also the undertaker and a good carpenter. He got to be the steward after he buried the old steward. Seeing half the village succumb to the pox, he drew his own conclusions. There are many temptations and many sins, all lead to suffering and death. Better to live a simple life and take care of your immediate family. When in doubt, say no.

As a steward he believes that his sets a good example for his flock. Truth is though that he is out of touch with what most of his flock is doing. As a new generation of faithful grow up, they see a lack of opportunities.

He had been up in the mountains when he came home late one night to learn that the old teacher had fallen and nearly set fire to the school. Half the village was putting out the fire. While some naughty boys was blowing for full lungs and hoping for it to burn down of course.

To be honest, he only agreed to the proposal of getting a new teacher because he misunderstood and thought it would be someone from Bridal Falls.

Magdalene Bluntswood, Steward's wife

Staring eyes.

Wants her daughter Mina to marry and thinks (correctly) that Tom could be a good man for her. Sends Mina on frequent errands to the mill.

Mina Bluntswood, Steward's daughter

Pox scarred and shy young woman, daughter of Magdalene. Isaac is her step father.

Wants a quiet and stable life.

The Hendersons

Allen Henderson, farmer

Honest farmer. Herds of sheep in the hills.

Gave shelter to Old school teacher Rosemary Poof after she set fire to the school.

Wants the town and the faithful to be united.

Abigail Henderson, Mrs Henderson, Aby

Renowned for her delicate patterns. Wants to create and be appreciated for her skill.

Women spin the wool into yarn. Oxblood, oak leaves, the yellow flowers abundant in the field, charcoal. Imports indigo for blue colours, rare, expensive.

Dislikes Jennifer Young, she wears the wrong dress for teaching. She gave her a headscarf but Jennifer does not wear it.

The Henderson kids

Judith, Rosanna, Little Perry.

Rosemary Poof, old teacher, “Miss Poof”

Set in her ways. Fragile, falls, poor eyesight. Good memory though. Sewing circle.

Knocked over a lantern and burned down the school. Now lives with the Hendersons.

Plays the piano which is appreciated by the older generation but not by the young. Perhaps because it hasn't been tuned in a decade.

At first happy to be relieved by Jennifer, especially when she was told she could still teach every Sunday, playing the piano and sing them psalms. And she got herself a nice little room at the back of the Henderson's farm. But then concerned mothers come to her and convince her to give extra private classes for their kids as they don't like the new teacher.

At the reservoir

Nicodemus Poof, Hermit, “Old Nick”

Lives alone in a cabin up at the reservoir. He now fears the demons that come to him in the winter.

He had a bad fall out in the wilderness and crawled back to his cabin. Almost died from exposure. Wants a hot meal and a soft bed and someone to check in on him.

The Reeds (farmers)

The Reed family moved to Willards Fork five years ago and have now settled.

Cyrus Reed, farmer, “Mr Reed, Cyrus”

Honest farmer. Wheat.

Wants wives for his sons so they will not move away.

Wants to irrigate the lowland to expand his land under plough. Wants to attract new settlers to help work the land.

Supported Malcom in getting a new teacher because his wife convinced her

Constance Reed, Mrs Reed, Midwife

Farmer wife. Member of the sewing circle. The town's Midwife.

“This town should have a doctor!”

“Rosemary is a disgrace as a teacher! My kids did not learn to read even one simple word!”

Solomon Reed, oldest brother

Hard worker. Can't read/write well but is good with his hands.

Believes he should marry Jennifer Young and is courting her. Her moving into the new school has made things easier.

Will beat up Tom for Jennifer.

Ephraim Reed, middle brother

Romantic. Can't read/write. Convinced he is deeply in love with Jennifer Young.

Wants help writing a love letter to her.

Asks if you can become a dog if you cannot read.

Benjamin Reed, youngest brother

Everybody likes him, between child and man. Prankster.

Lilac Reed

Daughter of Cyrus and Constance.

Sewing circle. Can't read/write but good with her hands.

The Gayles

Enoch Gayle, Baker

Has a large oven. His wife bakes bread three days a week and offers for sale. Leftovers handed out to kids from poor families at the end of the day.

Clementine Gayle, Baker

First wife of Enoch.

Wants the dogs to bring a basket of bread to Old Nic at the reservoir.

The Gayle Kids

Ephraim, Perihelia.

Hannah Gayle, second wife

Recently gave birth to a boy. Patient zero for a new outbreak of pox in the town.

(Enoch: Hannah is my cousin's oldest, I took her in when he died)

Other people

- Gershon Wise
- Prudence Reed
- Oliver Sunderland
- Jeremiah Greensleeves
- Adelaide Tall
- Abraham Charleston

NPC stats

Stat	Abigail	Thomas	Malcom
Acuity	5	4	5
Body	3	6	4
Heart	5	5	4
Will	4	5	3
Trait	1d4	2d6	2d8
Relationshi	2d10	2d4	1d6
Free dice	2d6	4d6	2d4
Free dice	2d6	2d8	2d8
Free dice	1d10	1d10	1d10

Stat	Isaac	Cyrus	Jenifer
Acuity	5	5	4
Body	3	6	4
Heart	4	5	5
Will	5	4	6
Trait	1d4	2d6	2d8
Relationshi	2d10	2d4	1d6
Free dice	2d6	4d6	2d4
Free dice	2d6	2d8	2d8
Free dice	1d10	1d10	1d10

Traits

I'm a good shot

My family look up to me

My uncle taught me how to use a hammer

Women find me attractive

I read every book I can get my hands on

My twin brother died from the pox

I don't like to be alone

My grandfather taught me how to handle a gun

I don't like to get dirty

In my heart there is a seed of doubt

I cook a great stew

The wind talks to me

I avoid sick people

I'm a slow reader

I'm attracted to weird people

My dad told me to never give up

I enjoy being around kids

I'm a good teacher

People listen when I RAISE MY VOICE

I throw a hard punch

I'm a good listener

The dead speaks to me

I'm good with animals

I ride like the wind

I know how to tie a knot and throw a lasso