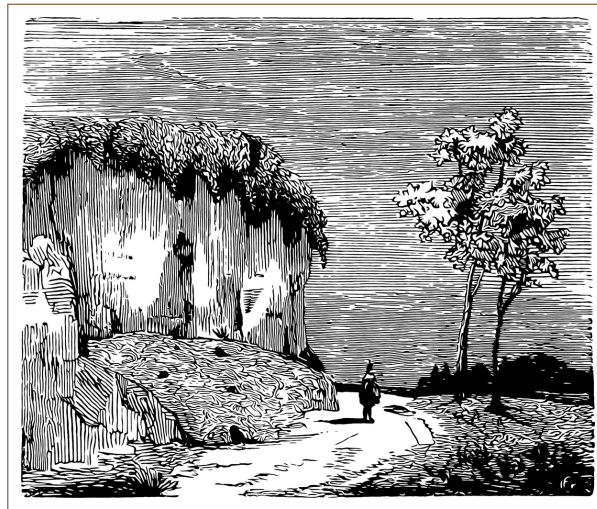


WIZARDS & LIZARDS

THE RUINS ABOVE PIGTON

GAMEMASTER'S GUIDE

A WIZARDS & LIZARDS PLAYSET



B E T A

Version 0.12 · not yet playtested

Jon Mayo. PUBLIC DOMAIN (CC0-1.0)

CONTENTS

1. The Gamemaster's Half of the Rules	3
2. Three Hours, Roughly	4
3. Pigton	4
Sir Ordric Vane	4
What the village knows	5
The three who are missing	5
4. The Truth	5
5. The Company	6
Turning Sergeant Vesk	7
6. The Ruins Above	7
7. The Workings Below	7
8. The Two Fights	8
9. Complications	8
10. How It Ends	9
11. Seven Players	9
Scale the fights like this	9
Give the Company more men	10
Split the party, but only make one half a fight	10
Keep the exchanges moving	10
Give the village more surfaces	10
Characters	10
12. Two Hours Instead of Three	11
13. Dropping It Into Theogonia	11
14. What This Format Is For	11

STATUS: BETA TEST

*The gamemaster's half of the playset **The Ruins Above Pigton**.*

A complete evening of Wizards & Lizards for a table that has never played it: a village, a ruin, and the thing under it. It is built for four players and scaled, with numbers, for as many as eight. Run it as a one-shot, or install it in a campaign as a two-session detour.

Do not hand this book to your players. It is the half with the answers in it. The other half of the playset is theirs:

Print for	What it is
Quick Rules	The whole engine in its short form, one player handout. Everything they may read.
Pre-Made Characters	Eight finished characters, ready to hand out. Four make the spine of the party; the rest are for larger tables.

Print for	What it is
Gear Cards	The kit those eight carry, one card per item, cut and dealt. Optional.
This book	Yours.

You do not need any other book to run this. If you want the long form of any rule, the SRD has it.

This is also a format experiment. The Quick Rules handout is the prototype for a **Quick Edition** of the game: the same engine, pared to what a table needs on night one, with everything that pays off over a campaign left out. If it survives contact with a table, it becomes the shape every playset ships in.

THE GAMEMASTER'S HALF OF THE RULES

The players' handout carries the whole engine: the pool and the bands, stress, harm and worn armor, and the fight. Read it, then read this.

The adventure's monster puzzle is the **road-dead** below: steel slides off them, and a crushing blow or magical harm is what fells them, wrapped around a better puzzle, **Bound** (drop the man raising them and they all fall). Both are on the stat lines, and both are telegraphed, not sprung.

A foe is a **tier** and one true thing about it (see the SRD, Harm and Danger). The tier sets how many **blows** fell it, Lesser 1, Common 3, Greater 6, Dire 8, and the pool it leaves a trained hero, Lesser and Common at **Fair**, Greater and Dire at **Poor**. A **blow** is any Success or Partial your players roll against it. Foes never roll; their threat arrives entirely through the players' dice.

Morale. Foes are not suicidal. When a side has lost about a **third** of its number, then **half**, then more, judge whether it breaks, or roll **d6** and let it hold on **2+**, then **3+**, then **4+**. Add **+1** for the drilled or cornered, **-1** for the underpaid; the mindless and the dead never check. A broken side runs, scatters, or surrenders, which is often how a fight should end.

A stranger's reaction, when it is genuinely in doubt, is settled by how the party approaches: a **Will roll** on the usual bands, a Success wins them over, a Partial a grudging yes with strings, a Failure hardens them.

When a player rolls a Partial, give them what they reached for and charge one price they will feel. Roll **d6** if nothing suggests itself:

d6	The price
1	A step of harm, or a stress.
2	A tool breaks, drops, or is spent.
3	They draw notice. Something comes.
4	It takes longer than it should.
5	It only half works. They give ground.
6	A hard choice: this or that, not both.

Those are **shapes of cost, not a list of combat outcomes**, and most of the partials at your table will land outside a fight. Out of combat, read entry 1 as a scrape, a turned ankle, or **1 stress**; entry 3 as somebody hearing you rather than a foe closing in. A partial on a climb, a search, or a parley costs the same kind of thing it would cost mid-fight, paid in whatever currency the scene

is already spending. A spell reads its own three bands (see the SRD, Magic): the Partial works and takes a bite, a stress, or a mark on the caster or the room.

THREE HOURS, ROUGHLY

Not a schedule to enforce, a shape to steer by.

Time	What is happening
0:00-0:20	Hand out the Quick Rules and the pre-made characters. Read the pitch. Teach the ladder and stress, and nothing else yet.
0:20-0:45	Pigton. The elders, the lord's man, the families of the missing. Rumors.
0:45-1:15	The walk up the Old Kings Road, and the yard. The first fight, or a way around it.
1:15-1:55	The ruins above. Wen. The crack in the flagstones, and what is under it.
1:55-2:30	The workings. Tam. The burying pit, and what the hammering has been.
2:30-3:00	The Doctor. Then the walk home, and what the village is told.

Teach the rest of the rules as they come up. Nobody needs conditions explained before somebody gets shoved.

PIGTON

Forty households on a fold of ground where two roads cross. Pigton raises hogs and walks them to the cities down the **Drove Road**, three to five days depending on the weather and the herd. That walk is the village's whole economy and most of its news.

The other road is the **Old Kings Road**, straight and stone-laid and going nowhere anybody living has been. The empire that laid it is gone. Nobody in Pigton has taken it further than the ruins, and nobody has needed to.

The ruins stand about a mile up it: a broken waystation of dressed stone, roofless, its yard grown over, its monuments cracked and leaning. The elders forbid them, on no grounds anyone can name past their own grandparents' forbidding. Every child in Pigton has played there anyway, which the elders know and pretend not to.

For about a month, the ruins have made noise at night. Hammering, steady and patient, the way a smith works. And under it, twice or three times, screaming.

The elders have been writing to the local lord about it, each letter more urgent than the last.

Two days ago, three young people did not come home. The village has been searching since, along the hog runs, the stream, the verges of both roads, and out into the fields. They are searching hard and they are searching everywhere except the one place, because no one will step through a broken doorway or put a lantern down a crack in the ground.

That is what the party is for.

SIR ORDRIC VANE

A retired knight who holds Pigton and four other hamlets, and who is not a rich man. He is neither cruel nor stupid. He simply cannot spend what he does not have on what he privately

believes is rural superstition. He can offer: **a hot meal, a bed, twenty silver between the lot of you, and whatever you carry out.**

He will not send men, because he has six and they are the only reason the hamlets are not robbed. If the party comes back with proof of something real, he will act, and he will be ashamed of how long it took him.

WHAT THE VILLAGE KNOWS

Ask around and roll or pick. All six are true.

d6	What you are told
1	The hammering keeps a clock. Same hour every night, stopping near dawn.
2	Old Yannick's dog will not go up the Old Kings Road anymore. It sits down in the road and will not be dragged.
3	A woman gathering fuel saw firelight in the yard three weeks ago and men standing around it. She was told she saw foxes.
4	The screaming is not an animal. Everybody says it is an animal.
5	Nesa Tarrow told her grandmother there was a new door in the ruins, one that was not there in the spring. She was told to stay out of the ruins.
6	Someone has been buying grain, salt pork, and lamp oil in the next village over, in quantity, and paying in old coin.

THE THREE WHO ARE MISSING

- **Wen**, twelve, the youngest. Alive. Has been hiding in the fallen shrine in the ruins for two days, too frightened to run the open mile home in daylight and too frightened to move at night. Has seen almost everything and will tell it all in a rush to the first kind adult who finds them.
- **Tam Ockley**, fifteen. Alive, below, roped at the ankle and hauling spoil up the shored stair. Exhausted, filthy, and much angrier than frightened.
- **Nesa Tarrow**, fourteen. Elder Maud Tarrow's granddaughter. Dead, on the second night, of a broken neck taken running in the dark. The Doctor has since made her walk again, and she is the first honest look the party gets at what he is.

THE TRUTH

Read this part and no other aloud to nobody.

Nine men are camped in the ruins. They are what is left of a company of forty from a war that ended somewhere far enough away that Pigton never heard it had started. They deserted together, in one piece, with their sergeant, which is rarer than deserting alone and says something about them.

They are kept by a man they call **the Doctor**.

Halvern Sisk was their company surgeon, and he is the reason most of them still have both legs. That debt is real and it is most of his hold on them. The rest is what he has promised: **fame, fortune, and life without end.** He is not lying about the third one. They have simply not understood the offer.

Sisk chose this ruin off a record, not by chance. The Old Kings Road was laid by conscripted crews, and the crews that died laying it were buried at the waystations in **burying pits**, quick-

limed and forgotten under the flagstones. He has been sinking a shaft to reach one, shoring it as he goes.

That is the hammering. Timbers, wedges, and chisels, worked at night because sound carries and because his men are more use rested by day.

The screaming is his other work. He is learning to raise them, a few at a time, and learning is not clean.

He does not want Pigton. Pigton is a nuisance nine miles from anywhere useful. He wants a hundred pairs of hands that do not eat, tire, or ask, and the road under this village happens to be where they are buried. In a fortnight he will have them and be gone, and this hamlet will never learn what walked away down the Old Kings Road in the dark.

The children were an accident, and the accident is what has begun to break his company apart from the inside.

THE COMPANY

Nine men, minus whoever the party takes off the board. They are soldiers, they have kept their discipline, and they are not monsters. They are also two days into knowing that a fourteen-year-old girl is dead and that their Doctor did not seem to mind, and that is the crack the party can put a bar into.

Deserter (each of nine): **Common.** *Underpaid soldiers a long way from home; press them and they break early (–1 on morale). In a knot they outnumber the party, which is their only real threat.*

Sergeant Vesk: Greater. *Rally: while Vesk stands and fights, his side does not break, ignore its morale checks. He is also the one still doing the arithmetic, and the one who can be turned.*

Halvern Sisk, the Doctor: Greater, but no fighter. *He has never been hit by anybody, because he stands behind the dead. His threat is not his arm: **Bid Them Up** (1 stress): a road-dead climbs from the pit, never more than four standing at once. **The Cold Word** (1 stress): a target Endures (a Will roll) or is Frightened. Drop him and the whole working ends (see Bound).*

The Foreman (large tables only, see *Seven Players*): **Dire.** *Whoever drove the road crews, buried with them, a head taller and still holding the maul. Tireless, and a solid hit (a Success against it) knocks you flat, off-balance, so the next hero to face it rolls a die worse. Fearless. **Bound** to Sisk.*

Road-dead (as many as Sisk has raised): **Common.** *The harm puzzle: **steel slides off them, only a crushing blow (a maul, a mace, falling stone) or magical harm fells them.** Fearless, so they never break and cannot be Frightened. **Bound:** when Sisk goes Down, every road-dead drops where it stands.*

Both of the road-dead's lines are the puzzle, and both should be **telegraphed, not sprung.** Have a sword clang off one and a mace crumple it, early, so the table sees that crushing and magic are the answer (Bram's, Cael's, Alde's maces, Surt's maul, Tariq's staff, Mirel's Starfall; Sera's dagger and Hesta's sword barely bite). And when Sisk raises the first, describe it turning its head to look at *him* first; when he takes a hit, have them all stagger. A table that works out it should cut the puppeteer's strings earns the short fight; one that grinds the dead down a hammer-blow at a time still gets there.

TURNING SERGEANT VESK

The best thing that can happen in this adventure is that the party talks. Vesk can be turned, and the fight is meaningfully easier without him. Any of these will do it, and two of them together will do it well:

- **Show him Nesa.** He has not been down since the second night, and he does not know. He believes she ran off home.
- **Show him the coin.** The Doctor has been paying the company in grave-goods out of the pit while crating the good pieces separately, and Vesk can count.
- **Ask him what the Doctor is going to need soldiers for,** once he has a hundred laborers who do not eat and cannot be killed twice.
- **Offer him the road.** Sir Ordric will take deserters who bring him a necromancer. That is a real offer and the party can make it honestly.

A turned Vesk does not fight for the party. He calls his men off, which is worth more, and he takes them down the road while the party goes below.

THE RUINS ABOVE

Five named places. That is the whole map, and it is enough.

The Milestone. Where the road bends and the party arrives. A leaning imperial milestone, the letters worn to shadows. The village searchers' last markers are tied here, ribbons on a thorn bush, and they stop at this line. Nobody crossed it.

The Broken Yard. Roofless, flagged, grown through with grass. A fire ring, well made and recently used. Four of the Company are here at any hour, bored and watchful. This is the first fight if the party walks up the road in daylight, and it is entirely avoidable: the wall is down in three places and the grass is high.

The Fallen Shrine. A collapsed corner where two walls lean into each other. **Wen is in here**, wedged into the gap, and has been for two days. A Wits check to notice the small movement, or nothing at all if anyone calls out kindly and waits. Wen knows the yard, the crack, the winch, that Tam is alive, that Nesa is not, and that the men are frightened of the Doctor. Wen does not know what is at the bottom.

The Stable Row. Where the Company sleeps: nine bedrolls, a stand of spears, crates. The crates are the evidence. Grave-goods sorted by quality, the good pieces packed separately from the rest, and a ledger in a careful hand that is counting something other than money.

The Crack. A split in the flagstones at the yard's low corner, widened with tools, with a windlass and a good rope over it and fresh timber going down. This is the way below, and it is the only way. Going down is a Skill roll if the party is being quiet or quick, and no roll at all if they are neither.

THE WORKINGS BELOW

The Shored Stair. New timber against old stone, and every surface chiseled. Cold. The hammering, when it starts, is directly overhead and then directly below, and it is impossible to tell which.

The Sorting Floor. Spoil heaps, a plank table, and **Tam**, roped at the ankle, hauling. One deserter watching him, who is sitting down and is not enjoying this. Tam will not go quietly and will not leave without Wen, who he thinks is still up top somewhere, and he is right.

The Burying Pit. The reveal, and the whole adventure in one room. Quicklime and a hundred years, and the road crews laid in courses, still with their tools, buried where they dropped by an empire that did not send them home. Six are missing from the near end, and the ground where they were is disturbed.

Give the table a moment here. The horror is not that Sisk is raising the dead. It is that somebody buried a hundred laborers under a road and wrote down where.

The Cistern. Dry, stone-lined, and the only warm room down here. A table, a lamp, instruments laid out in order, and the ledger's twin. **Nesa** is standing in the corner, and she has been standing there since last night.

Sisk will talk. He would much rather talk. He is courteous, tired, and entirely certain he is doing an ordinary thing that squeamish people have simply refused to look at, and he will explain the arithmetic of it, that a hundred men are already dead and their deaths were wasted, and that he is the only person in a century to propose putting them to any use at all.

He will offer the party a share. He means it.

THE TWO FIGHTS

Both are built for **four heroes**, and both were run through the current simulator (tools/sim), reckoning a playbook party as fighting a rung up in its specialty.

The yard. Four deserters (**Common**), in the open, around a fire. **Cleared ~100%, about 3.6 of 4 still standing.** The teaching fight, meant to be won. Run it to show the pool, one move each, and above all **morale**: four underpaid deserters will almost certainly break and run before the last of them falls. A table that watches a fight end because the enemy quit has learned the most important thing about how this game handles violence.

The cistern. Sisk, Vesk (**Greater**), a road-dead or two, and a deserter. The shape you want from a finale: they will almost certainly win, and someone will be on the floor when they do. Sisk keeps raising road-dead (up to four standing), and the road-dead are the harm puzzle, crushing and magic fell them, steel does not. The real lever is **Bound**: cut Sisk down and the dead all drop.

Two dials, decided before you sit down:

- **Vesk turned by parley:** the deserters lose their spine, and the fight is meaningfully easier and shorter. Talking is worth the whole fight; let the players feel it.
- **Harder:** a second road-dead standing at the start, or one more before they reach Sisk. Now it can genuinely go wrong.

Which weapons matter is the difference between the easy fight and the hard one, so it is worth knowing before you hand the sheets out: **crushing** (Bram's, Cael's, and Alde's maces, Surt's maul, Tariq's staff) and **magic** (Mirel's Starfall) fell the road-dead, while Sera's dagger and Hesta's sword barely bite. A table that never works this out is playing the harder version.

The simulator cannot model **Bound** (it grinds every road-dead to the last body), so the real fight is shorter than any number suggests: treat these as floors, not forecasts.

COMPLICATIONS

If the middle sags, or the party is being too careful to be interesting, roll d6.

d6	What happens
1	The hammering stops. Everything is listening.
2	Tam gets loose on his own and does something brave and badly timed.
3	Two deserters come down the stair carrying an empty crate, talking.
4	A shoring timber gives. The stair is passable at Hard , or in two trips.
5	Wen, who did not stay put, is at the top of the crack calling down.
6	Sisk finishes what he is doing, and one more of the pit's near end sits up.

HOW IT ENDS

If Sisk falls, the road-dead drop in the same instant, all of them, and the quiet afterward is the loudest thing in the adventure.

If Sisk talks his way clear, he is a problem the campaign now has, and he remembers faces.

If the Company is turned or broken, nine soldiers walk to Sir Ordric's gate with a necromancer's ledger, and the old knight has to decide something difficult in front of his own household.

Then the part that matters. Somebody has to walk back down the Old Kings Road and tell Maud Tarrow. The party can bring Nesa's body home, which is hard and right, or leave her in the pit with the crews, which is easier and will be found out. There is no roll for this. Let it be the last scene.

What Pigton does next is worth thirty seconds of epilogue. The elders were right about the ruins and wrong about why, for four generations, and now everyone knows it. The pit is still down there with ninety-odd laborers in it, and now the village knows their road was built by people nobody sent home. Someone is going to want to bury them properly. That is the next adventure, and you did not have to write it.

SEVEN PLAYERS

Seven heroes rolling every exchange overwhelm a lone foe, and a swarm of ordinary bodies barely registers, they die faster than they can crowd in. The instinct is to add bodies. Resist it. This is the engine's own lesson: a lone foe is weak, and what threatens a party is **numbers** (the outnumbered rule, when foes finally exceed the heroes) or **weight** (higher tiers). **Fewer, harder foes buy the same fight for half the bookkeeping.**

SCALE THE FIGHTS LIKE THIS

- **The yard: eight deserters.** Still the teaching fight, still meant to be won, ~100% cleared; eight of them break on schedule as they lose men, and eight against seven finally start to outnumber, which is where the bite comes from.
- **The cistern: Sisk, Vesk, and two Foremen (Dire), with three road-dead.** The two Foremen are what make it a fight for seven; the road-dead are the clock and the puzzle. In the sim (two Dire and three Common against seven), a real fight with casualties, ~98% cleared and about 5-6 of 7 standing, and Bound (unmodeled) shortens it at the table.
- **If Vesk is turned**, drop him and add a road-dead; talking is worth more than a whole character again.

As before, the simulator grinds every road-dead to the last body because it cannot model **Bound**. At seven players somebody is far likelier to reach Sisk early, so the true odds are better than the numbers, and possibly much better.

GIVE THE COMPANY MORE MEN

Nine deserters no longer fills a ruin. Make the Company **fifteen**: same war, same sergeant, same debt to the Doctor, more of them left. Nothing else in the fiction changes, and Vesk turning now takes a dozen men off the board instead of six, which makes the parley feel as big as it plays.

SPLIT THE PARTY, BUT ONLY MAKE ONE HALF A FIGHT

The real cost at seven is **waiting**: a full table plus a room of foes is a long trip around the group.

Do not answer this by running two combats at once. That split does not balance: a strike team against the Foremen while the rest hold the deserters leaves one half of your table with a walkover and the other half wiped.

Instead, make the **second front a job, not a battle**. While the fighters go for Sisk, two or three others have something urgent that is not combat:

- Get **Tam** untied and the other prisoners up the shaft, which is a Skill roll a round with people shooting.
- Cut the winch rope so nothing follows them up.
- Reach **Nesa** and get her out of the room before the fight goes through her, which no rule requires and every player will want.
- Hold the stair door shut against deserters arriving from above. That is Might against a count, not a fight, and it can be lost without anybody dying.

Everybody is busy, you track one initiative, and the players who did not build a fighter get the scene they came for.

KEEP THE EXCHANGES MOVING

- **One roll each, then narrate.** A round is a single exchange: everyone who acts rolls once, and there is no initiative to track. Call for the players' rolls together and resolve them in whatever order makes sense.
- **One roll, thirty seconds.** Say so out loud at the start.
- **Let the road-dead be simple on purpose.** They shamble, they swing, they never check morale and never retreat. Most of your bodies need no decisions.

GIVE THE VILLAGE MORE SURFACES

Seven players in one conversation is six players watching. Run Pigton as **four places at once** and let the party split: Elder Maud Tarrow at her door, Sir Ordric's man at the lord's house, the Ockleys out with the search parties, and the alehouse where the rumor table lives. Hand a different rumor to each group and let them assemble it themselves on the road up.

CHARACTERS

The playset ships **eight** pre-made characters. Hand out seven and leave one in the box, or hand out all eight and run the adventure at eight, which the numbers above will carry with one more road-dead (100% cleared, 5.3 of 8 standing). The four marked as the spine still make the party: someone to hold the line, someone to heal, someone who knows the ruins, someone who hits hard. The other four can be anything.

TWO HOURS INSTEAD OF THREE

Cut the yard fight, which the party can walk around anyway, and open **at the crack** with Wen already found and talking. Skip the Stable Row. Run Pigton as a single scene with Elder Tarrow rather than a round of the village. You lose the teaching fight, so demonstrate morale in the cistern instead by having the three deserters break early and leave Sisk with only the dead.

DROPPING IT INTO THEOGONIA

Pigton is deliberately plain, and it will sit in any setting with a road and a fallen empire. For the default setting, put it in the hinterland three days down the Drove Road from **Branigrad**, whose Walled Mother has never claimed a hamlet this small. The Old Kings Road becomes titan-work, older and better than anything raised since, and the burying pit is a titan-era labor levy, which sharpens everything: the Age of Titans did not only leave relics, it left the people who carried the stones. Sisk read about it in a locked drawer at a college in **Halkis**. The healer in the party serves whichever city goddess is nearest, and their sheet needs no other change. Each pre-made character names the Theogonia playbook it was cut from, so a table that wants to keep these people can pick up the full playbook and carry on.

WHAT THIS FORMAT IS FOR

If this worked, the shape is worth keeping: **timetable, village, truth, cast, map, two fights with sim numbers, endings**, with the engine and the cuts handed to the players as a separate sheet. That skeleton takes a setting and an idea and produces a runnable evening, and the players' half of it is the same every time.

That players' half is the draft of the **Quick Edition**: Wizards & Lizards with the campaign machinery lifted out, for tables that want one night rather than one year. Same engine, shorter on-ramp.

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