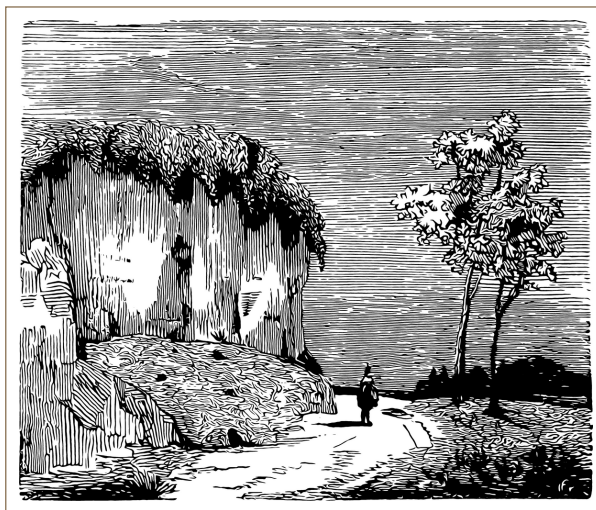


WIZARDS & LIZARDS

BLEAKMIRE MARCHES

A WIZARDS & LIZARDS STARTER



B E T A

Version 0.12 · not yet playtested

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A grim delving game. Players tell the referee what they do. The referee tells them what it costs.

The marches are what is left where the old kingdom used to keep its cellars. Wet country, low light, and everywhere you put a spade you hit somebody's roof. Nothing down there was built for you and nothing down there wants you, and the villages on the rim will still buy whatever you drag back up, no questions asked about the smell.

You are not a hero. You are a person with a lantern, a debt, and an opinion about where the money is. You go down because the thing you need costs more than an honest year pays, and the only ending you get to choose is the one where you climb out for the last time with enough to buy it.

This is a starter page. It runs on the Wizards & Lizards engine, and it carries everything a table needs for a first session. The full rules are in the SRD; the reminders below are enough to play tonight.

THE DICE, IN BRIEF

When something is genuinely uncertain and failure would cost you, the referee names where you stand and you roll a pool of d6. You never add anything.

Where you stand	Pool
Desperate	1d6
Poor	2d6
Fair	3d6
Good	4d6
Commanding	5d6

Take the **two best** dice (a lone die pairs with a 1). A **5 or 6 is gold**. Two gold, you get it clean; a 1-2 and no gold, it goes wrong; anything else, you get it at a cost the referee names. Every die you talk your way into is one more chance at gold, so arguing the pool up, out loud before you roll, is the strongest play in the game.

Your **stress** is five boxes. Mark one to cast, to push your body, or to buy a reroll. At five marked, further strain wounds you instead. A safe night clears it.

Your **condition** only ever worsens: Healthy, Wounded (roll a die fewer on everything), Incapacitated (two dice fewer, out of the fight), Dying (a four-segment clock, one segment an exchange), Dead. Every wound is one step, whatever dealt it. **Worn armor turns the first wound of a fight aside**; after that it lands. There is no soaking blows by breaking your kit, so a good position is what keeps you whole.

MAKING A DELVER

Stats. Spread -1, 0, +1, +1 across Might (force, hauling, carry), Agility (finesse, stealth, shooting), Wits (noticing, knowing, field medicine), and Will (nerve, magic). A stat is a die you add or drop, not a number you add to the roll.

Background. One line: what you were before you came down here. Roll the d66 below or pick. Your background is your permission: if a thing follows plainly from it, you may attempt it without asking. The *done when* is what you came for. Hand it to the referee to put a price on, usually a great deal of coin, sometimes a specific dangerous deed. Meet it and you climb out for good, and become someone the next crew can call on once an adventure. Then roll up a new Novice.

Kit. Take one, or describe your own and let the referee price it. Kits are gear, not classes; the witch's book works for anyone who picks it up.

- **The Vanguard.** A greatsword, a mail shirt, an iron helm, two torches, 10 coin.
- **The Grave-Witch.** A bone knife, a censer of skull-ash, the spellbook *Blight-Bolt*, a twist of grave-dust snuff, 15 coin.
- **The Scoundrel.** A crossbow, picks and shims, a padded jack, a bottle of laudanum, 20 coin.
- **The Houndmaster.** A boar spear, a war-hound, a leather coat, an iron helm, 10 coin.

Your gear does what it obviously does. A greatsword needs two hands and room. A spear keeps things at arm's length. Mail turns aside the first wound of a fight; after that it is only weight. Say what you use and how, and if it plainly helps, the referee counts it.

Vice. Name what you take to stop the shaking. Grave-dust snuff (10 coin) clears 2 stress, and you roll a die fewer on your next physical thing. Laudanum (15 coin) clears 3 stress, and you roll a die fewer on your next roll. Black-blood elixir (25 coin) clears everything; roll Fair, and on a Failure something about you does not change back.

Rank. Everyone starts a Novice. You get **Expert** the first time you pay real weight toward your *done when* (the money finally moves, the name is finally found). Expert lets you mark 1 stress to reroll one die after seeing it. You get **Master** when the way out is in sight with only the last stretch left; Master also lets you spend 1 stress to reroll a die of another delver's roll, with their say-so. Most people die a Novice.

WHO YOU WERE (ROLL D66)

Roll two d6, first as tens. Answer the *describe* in your own words; that is your background. Hand the *done when* to the referee.

d66	Who, and done when
11	Poacher. Whose land, and the night they caught you. Done when you stand on ground of your own.
12	Grave-digger. The burial you did badly, and who paid. Done when you have put right the grave you dug wrong.
13	Ship's Surgeon. The voyage that finished you, and the one you couldn't save. Done when you have a room on the rim and a shingle over the door.
14	Deserter. The order you refused in the Ash War. Done when the last person who can name you is dead, paid, or across the water.
15	Hedge-Witch. The village that ran you out. Done when they send for you.

d66	Who, and done when
16	Sin-Eater. The chest you ate off that you should have left. Done when you find the one who will eat yours.
21	Plague-Carter. The door you painted before you were certain. Done when every name on your list has a stone spelled right.
22	Toll-Keeper. The winter you started turning people back. Done when you own the bridge and can leave it open.
23	Mudlark. What you pulled from the shallows as a child. Done when you go back for the rest.
24	Rat-Catcher. The house where the rats were the least of it. Done when you can afford never to go under a floor again.
25	Bone-Setter. The limb you set crooked on purpose. Done when you have taught someone better than you.
26	Inheritor. The debt that came with the furniture. Done when the ledger is clean and the paper is in your fire.
31	Fen-Guide. The party you led in and came out of alone. Done when you have gone back for what you left.
32	Reliquary Thief. The saint's finger you sold. Done when you have bought it back at any price.
33	Charcoal-Burner. The wood that stopped growing back. Done when you have bought green country somewhere the trees don't know you.
34	Wrecker. The false light you hung, and the ship that trusted it. Done when every family on that list is paid.
35	Drover. The herd you lost at the crossing. Done when you have repaid the man who fronted the animals, to his face.
36	Bailiff's Man. The eviction you still dream about. Done when you have bought the holding back and put the family in it.
41	Lamplighter. The one night you were late. Done when you can pay for the lamps and light them for nothing.
42	Smuggler. The fortnight you carried what you swore you never would. Done when you never have to ask what is in the crate.
43	Widowed. Who you buried, and what they left owing. Done when it is paid and the stone is cut properly.
44	Foundling. The mark stitched into the blanket. Done when you learn whose mark it was, whatever the answer.
45	Tithe-Taker. The parish you bled white. Done when you have put back more than you took, and someone there knows it.
46	Mercenary. The contract you are technically still under. Done when you have bought your way out in coin.
51	Cartographer. The map you drew wrong, and who followed it. Done when you have walked and corrected every league.
52	Ostler. The horse you were ordered to destroy and hid instead. Done when you have land to keep it in the open.
53	Fisher. What came up in your nets the season the catch failed. Done when you have a boat and never go past the shelf.

d66	Who, and done when
54	Miner. The seam your crew broke into, and what breathed on the other side. Done when you have the money to seal it right.
55	Apothecary. What you were really selling as medicine. Done when you can make the real thing and give it away.
56	Bell-Founder. The bell you cast with something wrong in the metal. Done when you have recast it true.
61	Gaoler. The prisoner you let walk. Done when you have caught up with them, one way or the other.
62	Scrivener. The will you forged. Done when you have quietly made the family whole.
63	Pilgrim. The shrine you were walking to when the road ran out. Done when you can afford to finish the walk.
64	Kennel-Keeper. How you came to have only the one dog. Done when you have the ground and coin to breed the line back.
65	Tanner. The hides that plainly weren't cattle. Done when you have burned the yard and paid off everyone who worked it.
66	The Only One Back. The delve that killed everyone but you, and the choice you made. Done when you have carried their share up to their families, by hand.

THREATS

No stat blocks. A creature is a **tier** and **one true sentence**. A blow is a Success or a Partial against it; a Partial fells it too, but you pay for it.

Tier	Blows to finish	Facing it
Lesser	1	Fair
Common	3 (and 1 stress)	Fair
Greater	6	Poor
Dire	8 (a clock fills)	Poor

A blow lands often, so a party swamps a lone foe fast; that is why the counts run high. **Outnumbered** is how weak things kill: face more foes at once than the party can meet and you drop a die, badly outnumbered you drop two, until you thin them or block the way.

This setting runs lethal. A worn suit is a real edge and few of the rim's people own one, so a fight you cannot avoid is one you may not walk away from. Rank comes only as a delver nears their way out, so the newly arrived are at their most fragile. Referee: let Partials draw blood freely down here.

Four ready to run:

- **Grave-goblins.** Lesser. There are too many of them, and their bites go bad.
- **The Blight Knight.** Common. Armoured, and it does not know it has lost.
- **Gore-fiend.** Greater. It knits itself back together, and what it leaves in the wound spreads.
- **The Ash Drake.** Dire. Armoured, above them, and every round it survives fills a clock you name before the fight, because it is burning something down while they decide what to do.

Fights are won before they start, with a collapsed floor, a jammed door, a fire, or a corridor narrow enough that one thing reaches you at a time.

GETTING INTO TROUBLE

Roll a d6 for why they go down, or when a rumour is bought in a taproom.

d6	The rumour
1	A tax collector went down with an escort and never came up. Someone wants the ledger back, not the man.
2	The water in the low fields has gone bad, and it comes from underneath.
3	A relic was buried down there on purpose, by people who were right to.
4	Someone's daughter walked in willingly, and has been seen since, further down.
5	There is a working still running that nobody remembers building.
6	A rival crew went in eight days ago, well equipped, and one came back wrong.

THE BACK PAGE

Rooms and sites. Roll four d6 and read across.

d6	What it was	What ruined it	What is here now	What crossing it costs
1	A shrine to something with no name left	Flood that never fully left	Standing black water, waist deep	The light. Something puts it out.
2	A miners' gallery	Fire hot enough to melt the fittings	Ash drifts, and prints through them	Noise. Everything nearby hears.
3	Somebody's great hall	The roof came down in one night	A collapse, half-passable, groaning	A choice of two, no time for both.
4	A gaol, or something calling itself one	Plague, and then panic	Bones arranged by someone with a system	A wound, unless they go slow.
5	Storerooms and cold cellars	Abandoned in an orderly hurry	Fungus, breathing, faintly warm	A ration, a torch, or a rope.
6	A working dug for one purpose	Whatever they dug into	A door barred from this side	Time. A clock fills a segment.

What they find. Roll 2d6 for a relic.

2d6	Relic
2	A blade that was somebody's life work. It never needs the whetstone. Worth a house.
3	A tower shield scarred to the boss. Worn as armor, it turns aside the first two wounds of every fight, not just one.
4	A pocket hourglass still running. Turn it once to stop a clock from filling, then it is glass and sand.
5	A tooth on a cord. Ask a dead body one question; it answers. Mark a stress.
6	A censer of grave-dust. Three throws: blinded eyes, and everything against that thing is two dice better.
7	A scroll, one casting. One spell of your choosing, then ash.
8	A crossbow with a hunter's mark. Punches through armour that stops everything else.
9	A wolf-skin cloak. Warm, and hard to see against cold ground.
10	A flask of alchemical acid. Eats a lock, a hinge, or a suit of armour. One use.
11	An idol nobody wants to hold. Thirty coin to the right cultist; sleep with it and wake with a stress.
12	A spellbook. One spell, half the pages gone, and it works every time you dare open it.

A village on the rim. Roll four d6. Start it Civil, unless picked over (Wary) or well spoken of (Obliging). What it lives on, it has; what it lacks, no regard can buy.

d6	Lives on	Hasn't got	You deal with	What would move them
1	Peat, every hand black to the wrist	Salt, and they know what that means by spring	The reeve, who forgets nothing	Bring their dead home; names will do
2	Eels and withy baskets	Iron; every blade reground twice	The widow who owns the drying-shed	Buy local, and be seen doing it
3	Sheep on the high ground	Anyone under thirty	The smith, twenty and frightened	Do something about the water
4	The ferry, the only crossing for a day	A priest; no one buried properly in two years	A delver who got out and knows what you are	Say plainly what happened to the last crew
5	Salvage; they resent the help	Clean water; the well went bad	Two brothers who disagree about you, loudly	Leave the shrine alone; they will know

d6	Lives on	Hasn't got	You deal with	What would move them
6	A shrine nobody visits	Rope and tallow; the last crew took the lot	The publican, because no one else will look at you	Nothing quick; earned over a season