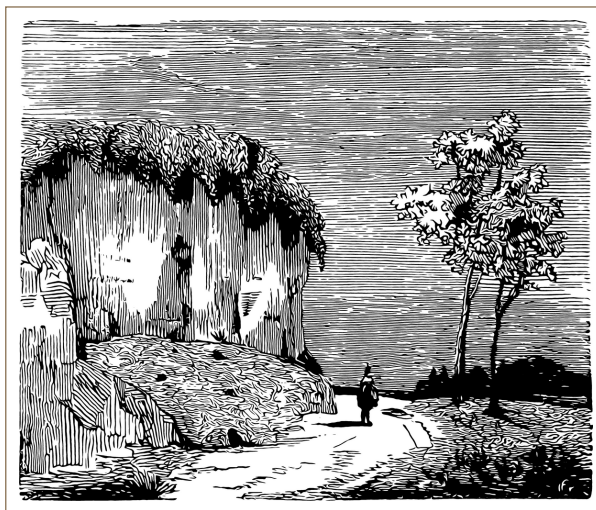


WIZARDS & LIZARDS

THE LEVEL-0 FUNNEL

A WIZARDS & LIZARDS SUPPLEMENT



B E T A

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CONTENTS

1. The villagers	2
2. Running the funnel	3
3. From villager to hero	3

Most campaigns begin with heroes. A **funnel** begins with a crowd of people who are about to become heroes, or to die trying. Each player runs a **handful of ordinary villagers**, fragile and untrained, through one deadly opening, a raid, a cave-in, a thing loose in the dark, and whoever crawls out the far side picks up a playbook and stands as a level-1 hero. It is a session-zero with stakes, and it hands the table a party already bound by what they survived together.

This is **advanced play**, an optional opening that sits outside the core loop. A funnel asks each player to juggle a fistful of characters, asks everyone to spend most of them, and asks the GM to pitch lethal encounters by feel; none of that is the gentlest way to meet the rules. A table new to the game is better served building level-1 heroes from playbooks and starting there. But for a group that knows the dice and wants a campaign with roots, the funnel is a fine first act of the campaign-frame module (the West Marches hub and its growing base): the founding disaster that sends the survivors out to the frontier in the first place.

THE VILLAGERS

A **level-0 character** is a villager swept into adventure, set below the level-1 grant budget. Every one of them starts the same fragile chassis:

- **Hit Points 6**, no toughness (half a level-1's base).
- **One attribute at +1**, a knack from the old trade; the other three at **+0**. No signature +2 yet.
- **One skill (+1)**, from that trade.
- **No Advanced Actions**, and so no stress-fueled tricks, though the stress track (**4 + Presence**) is there to **Push** a roll or **Resist** a blow.
- **Speed 2**, a simple or improvised weapon, at most light armor.

A felled villager does **not** get the hero's death save: a drop to **0 HP** is simply out, the GM's call on dead or dying. That is the point of the form.

Make them in a minute. Hand each player two to four villagers and roll each on the trade table; it grants the one skill, says which attribute is the **+1**, and arms them with whatever was in reach. Names and faces take longer than the numbers.

d6	You were	+1	Skill	In your hands
1	a farmhand or laborer	Might	Athletics	a hayfork or cudgel (improvised, 2)
2	a hunter or trapper	Agility	Tracking	a sling or long knife (light, 3)
3	a smith or woodcutter	Might	Mechanics	a hammer or hatchet (light, 3), an apron (armor 1)
4	a fisher or boatman	Agility	Seafaring	a gaff or net (improvised, 2)
5	a healer or midwife	Wits	Medicine	a sickle (light, 3)
6	a pedlar or hedge-scholar	Wits	Old Lore	a walking staff or knife (improvised, 2)

The stress track and Push are the only lever a villager has over the dice; teach them to spend it, because they will not survive on numbers alone.

RUNNING THE FUNNEL

The funnel's danger lives in the **opposition, not the villagers' frailty**. A band of a dozen weak bodies wins by swarming, so changing their Hit Points barely moves the survival rate; what decides who lives is **how many foes you set against them and how hard those foes hit**. Tune there:

Throw at the band	What happens	Use it for
A few vermin (rats, a stray cur)	A one-round rout.	Teaching the dice, a warm-up.
A weak pack near the band's own number (goblins, raiders, the restless dead)	About half the villagers fall ; the band still wins.	The funnel's main course.
A lone tough beast (an ogre, a cave-thing)	Slow but safe : the swarm grinds it down over several rounds, losing only the one or two it reaches.	A climactic monster that costs a name or two.
A large trained warband, more than the band can mob	A wipe .	Only if you mean to end the funnel here.

Keep the fights short and the bodies cheap. Two to four scenes is a whole funnel: the disaster, a flight or a search, the thing at the heart of it. Play the losses for stakes but name them lightly, the funnel earns its heroes by spending the rest.

Six players, three villagers each: eighteen souls in a burning waystation as something climbs out of the well. The first room is a handful of giant rats, a rout that teaches the table how a Strike works and costs no one. The yard is a pack of nine ghouls, the main course: the villagers swarm them down over three rounds, but eight of the eighteen go under, dragged off or torn open. Ten reach the well, where the well-thing waits, a lone horror with thick hide. It is slow work, four rounds of pitchforks, and it fells two more before a fisher's gaff finds its eye. Eight survivors climb out into the dark, no longer villagers.

FROM VILLAGER TO HERO

A survivor who reaches the end of the funnel **chooses a playbook and takes its full level-1 grant budget**, the trial just played becoming that character's lifepath: the playbook's origin and motivation questions are already answered in the fiction, so a player who wants to may skip the lifepath tables and keep what the funnel wrote. The villager's one trade-skill folds into the playbook's grant where it fits, or carries over as a sixth.

The bonds are the real prize. Whoever a survivor stood beside, dragged from the fire, or watched die, is the seed of the **party-binding** beat: point each new hero at another and ask what the funnel made between them. A party that met in a funnel never needs to explain why it travels together.