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Dog's Guide to Adventure

Rex Pyrenees wiped blood from his muzzle and adjusted his grip on his sword. He looked around for his attacker, but all he could see was the forest around him; he was surrounded by the ominous black bark of the trees. The only sign of the demon was its laugh, a sinister chuckle that whispered around him with the wind.

"Sister, I need your nose!" Rex bellowed, swinging again at where he thought the laugh was coming from.

Sister Picassa Collie pushed back the hood of her robe — the confining hood always matted her rich fur, and made it hard to focus on her fervent prayers to Man. She whispered for a moment, and the pungent smell of the demon filled the shepherd's muzzle. The colors in her mind coalesced at a location off to her right. "There!" she yelled, pointing at the scent-form.

Rex swung at the space where she pointed, and the blade sliced open unseen flesh. The demon's chuckle twisted into a horrible scream, and more dark blood splashed across Rex's shining armor. He barked triumphantly. "I will send you back to hell, foul creature!"

Pan Dachshund slipped out from between two of the imposing trees. The hunter was silent as a whisper, and his arrow was nocked and ready, waiting for the right moment. He growled a challenge to the demon and released the tension on his bow, aiming for the blood that seemed to drip from the air. The invisible demon screamed again, and then fell silent.

Yosha Pug removed her paws from her eyes. "Is it gone?" she asked, her wrinkles quivering.

Rex towered over her, pushing a hidden button on his sword's hilt. The demon's blood sizzled on his blade, turning into dark, pungent smoke. "You can open your eyes now, my lady," he said, looking at her to make sure she was unhurt.

Pan snorted as he slid the bow across his back before sitting on his haunches. "Yeah, some help she was."

Rex turned and looked sternly at Pan. "Be careful what you say, Dachshund. She warned us to the presence of the demon, did she not?"

"By barking her Man-damned head off, you mean! She drew it here, leaving us to clean up the mess! I told you we should have left her in Pugmire."

Rex started to growl, but Yosha put a paw on his arm before sitting awkwardly next to him. "He's right. I put you all in danger."

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"No, my lady," Rex rumbled. "I fear we are all on edge. It's this forest, lousy with demons to plague us. It's no surprise the necromancer built his tower in the middle of such evil."

"Oh, that's not entirely true," Yosha said, standing up. She spun excitedly in a circle until she found her rucksack, discarded in her eagerness to flee the demon. Opening it, she pulled out a thin book covered in old leather. "According to legend, the necromancer's tower was here long before this area was even called the Fearful Forest." She quickly flipped through pages before stabbing at one with her finger. "Ah, here it is! 'And the necromancers claimed the tower, preserving the secrets of the dead for themselves.'" She closed the book with a solid thump. "Some people say the demons were summoned by necromancer cats, but my uncle Murra heard the demons came of their own accord, long after Man banished them."

Sister Picassa touched her nose in the ancient sign of warding off evil and illness. "I am sure your uncle meant no harm by such blasphemy," she said carefully. "However, the teachings of the Church are clear: Man knew nothing about the demons, even after our ancestors warned Man night and day of their presence. That is why the Code of Man tells us we should protect all from the Unseen."

Pan stood up on all fours and started pacing around the group. "Look, it doesn't matter what the Old Ones knew, or who made the tower, or even why it's here in the forest now. All that matters is what's inside, what we need to get from it…."

"The Vessel of Rejuvenation," Yosha muttered. "One of the lost artifacts of Man, and the only thing that can cure King Puckington."

Introduction

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Let me tell you about *Pugmire*.

Imagine our world, but far in the future. Countless centuries have gone by, and everything looks very different than it does now. Most building have crumbled to dust, and broken roads are buried deep beneath dense forests and layers of rocks. Here and there, the occasional ancient ruin or incomprehensible object surfaces, giving tantalizing glimpses of a world that once was. The work of mankind has been reclaimed by nature, but we're all gone. Humanity is no more. And those that remain — our best friends — start to reclaim our legacy.

That's *Pugmire*. It's a fantasy game with evolved dogs as the main characters. They live in the ruins of our world, using tools, language, and ingenuity to build a new civilization in their image. And the kingdom of Pugmire is a center of that civilization. Many of these dogs strive to learn about Man (also known as "the Old Ones"). They deify humanity as examples all should strive to emulate. Other nations, such as the cats in the Monarchies of Mau, have different perspectives on what came before, but all species recognize there was a world before this one, even though it's now populated with mysteries and dangers.

As the dogs explore the world, they create and invent many new things, but also use what they can salvage. Some have even learned how to use the strange artifacts left behind by the Old Ones. They see these as literal gifts from their gods — rare and unusual magic relics, spells, and enchantments. We might dimly recognize them as the results of some far-flung futuristic invention, but any sufficiently-advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

These heroic dogs, eager for mystery and danger, are the characters you portray. As you

explore this world — a world that is and yet isn't the one we know — one question will follow your every decision: Are you a good dog?

What is Pugmire about?

Before I dive into showing you how to play the game you're reading about right now, I should explain the game's *theme* (the game's central idea), *mood* (the overall feeling of the game), and *action* (what the characters do in it).

Theme: Companionship as Salvation

Pugmire is a game set in a world of dog people, but the fact they are dogs only gives context to the fact they are *people*. They struggle to be moral and true while adrift in the dangerous world they inherited. Many dogs use a code of morality (the Code of Man) to guide them, and the first tenet of the Code is "be a good dog."

However, this isn't a world of regimented good vs. evil, but one of a more fluid "good vs. bad." Any bad dog can eventually be a good dog, and any good dog can make a mistake and end up as a bad dog. But what makes a good dog is subjective, and a lot of conflict comes from the balance between morality and culture.

In the end, a good dog is only measured by the opinions of others, so dogs work together. Working as a team, as partners, and as friends is how they have built a kingdom and made progress in reclaiming the world for themselves. It is through these relationships that dogs find their salvation. They believe if you follow the Code (or at least the Code's ideals) and are a good dog, everything will work out.

Mood: Mystery

At some point in humanity's future, something of immense magnitude happened, and now humanity is gone. Did we die? Did we depart for distant stars, leaving the Earth behind? Did we change into something incomprehensible? The reason is unclear — all the dogs know of Man is what was left behind. This central concern with what happened is compelling to many dogs, and leads to more questions. Some of those mysteries will never be answered, and some answers will only create another mystery to solve. However, in the end, the Old Ones can't be understood by objective facts. Instead, they're a mythological construct, something between a pantheon of lost gods and ancient progenitors, and there's a lot about them on which the various peoples of the world don't agree.

That isn't to say the dogs haven't learned anything about the world that existed in the Ages of Man. What they know, however, is fragmented and incomplete, and they use that lore in whatever way makes the most sense to them. A miscellany of genetic memory, half-understood books, and ancient legends is combined in a way that seems humorous to us as the players of *Pugmire*. The characters, however, take these scraps of knowledge seriously; Man and all things associated with them are treated by some with scholarly skepticism, and by others with religious reverence.

So the questions continue, and the dogs of Pugmire never fully escape the air of mystery that permeates their lives.

Action: Exploration

Pugmire is full of adventures. There are villages to protect from monsters, relics to rescue from ancient towers, terrible injustices by ill-tempered nobles to overcome, food to steal for a poor but well-meaning family, and even political maneuvers from the cats to thwart. Dogs *do* things, and it is through doing things that they learn more about themselves.

But more than anything, dogs *explore*. They are pioneers, journeying to new horizons so they can learn more about their world and the people around them. They dig deep into the histories of places to find out what happened there. They learn about other nations, and perhaps make peace or go to war with them. They escape from areas full of twisted, insane monsters bent on destruction. Such exploration is dangerous, but they keep on doing it, hoping to reclaim as much of the world as they can. Relics, justice, and knowledge are all good things to search for, but it is the search itself, the discovery of the unknown, that is the most important.

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Inspirations for Pugmire

During the creation of *Pugmire*, I was inspired by many books, comics, games, movies, and television shows — not only products I directly enjoyed, but also those that other people recommended to me. Here's a small sample of them, in case you find them to be inspirational as well.

- *Mouse Guard* by David Petersen
- *Redwall* by Brian Jacques
- *The Rats of Nimh* by Robert C. O'Brien and Jane Leslie Conly
- *Ginga: Nagareboshi Gin* by Yoshihiro Takahashi
- *Watership Down* by Richard Adams
- *Dungeons & Dragons* originally by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson (particularly early material, like *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks* by Gary Gygax)
- *Gamma World* originally by James M. Ward and Gary Jaquet (again, the early material)
- The Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser stories by Fritz Leiber
- *Thundarr the Barbarian* by Steve Gerber, Joe Ruby, and Ken Spears
- *Rover Red Charlie* by Garth Ennis
- The *Geneforge* series by Jeff Vogel

What Kind of Game is This?

You're holding a book in your hands, or reading a digital file. There's no board, no pieces, no software to install — nothing that looks like what you might expect from a game. So what kind of game is this?

Pugmire is a *roleplaying game* (or *RPG* for short). At its core, a roleplaying game allows you and several other players to work together in imagining fictional worlds and adventures. Nearly every player has their own character in this world — a *player character* — that takes part in these adventures, and players use a set of rules to determine the results of their characters' actions.

This isn't a competitive game, however. There isn't a score or a winning condition, or at least not one resembling what you'd find in other games. Instead, this is a game about creating stories. Think of the player characters like the characters in a movie or a novel — in general, the audience wants to root for them and see them succeed. It's those characters' actions that drive the story forward, whether they make good decisions or terrible mistakes.

The same is true in *Pugmire*. In general, the players work together to tell a story about their characters. While it's okay if the player characters sometimes don't get along (in fact, I think that makes games more interesting), the *players* are generally working together in their collective adventures.

Maybe you noticed I said "*nearly* every player has their own character" earlier. That's because there's one special player in every *Pugmire* game. She's called the *Guide*, and she doesn't have a player character. I call her the Guide because she guides the other players through the story everyone is collectively imagining and creating. She controls every other character in *Pugmire* (called *non-player characters* or *enemies*). She describes the settings the player characters are in, and establishes the initial situations they encounter. She doesn't decide the outcome of everything that happens, though — the players decide how their characters act and react, and the rules determine if they succeed or fail — but she does help to arbitrate and make sure the rules are being applied fairly and consistently.

What Do I Need to Play?

Before you start a game of *Pugmire*, you need a few things besides this book.

Dice

Dice are very important. When a character tries to accomplish something, often a roll of the dice will determine if he succeeds or not. Some actions don't require the use of dice — you don't need to roll to see if your dog can walk across the cobbled streets of Pugmire, for example. Dice are only used when the outcome of the action is uncertain, and the results of that uncertainty are interesting. So a player probably doesn't need to roll to have his character walk across the street, but he might roll if his dog needed to cross a street

Sample file

covered in slippery lamp oil while being chased by zombie cats. If the dog succeeded in getting across such a street, he would escape the cats, but if he failed he would be captured. Both results are interesting (at least, the *players* would find them interesting — the dog might not be keen on being captured!), so you roll dice to see what happens.

Pugmire uses special dice with different numbers of sides (often called "polyhedral dice"). They can be found at stores and websites that specialize in roleplaying games, or emulated through a variety of smartphone and tablet apps. Specifically, this game primarily uses twenty-sided dice (commonly abbreviated as *d20*), but there's also a need for four-sided dice (abbreviated as *d4*), traditional six-sided dice (*d6*), eight-sided dice (*d8*), ten-sided dice (*d10*), and twelve-sided dice (*d12*). It's best if you have a couple of each, but you'll need at least two d20s on hand.

If there's a number before the "d" (such as "2d8"), that's how many of those dice you should use: roll them all at the same time, and add the results together. If there's a math symbol after the "d" (such as "d6+1"), that's what you add or subtract from the result of the roll. You may see both at the same time (such as "2d4-1"), which means you roll multiple dice, add them together, and then add or subtract a number from the final value. Occasionally you'll have to divide numbers; if so, *always round down or drop fractions*.

Paper and Pencils

Players and the Guide will need to keep track of information during the game. Players will need to record a variety of numbers and other details about their characters. I provide a handy *character sheet* in the back of the book that players can use (you can photocopy it if you have this as a physical book, print those pages if you have a digital version, or download a digital copy from my friends at Onyx Path Publishing). I recommend using pencils over pens, as sometimes you'll have to erase and rewrite some things.

Nice Things to Have

All you *need* to play *Pugmire* are this book, dice, paper, and pencils. However, there are a few more things that might help you as you play — they're all optional, but some groups like having as many extras as possible.

- A bowl and some kind of counter (like plastic coins, poker chips, or glass beads) to use for the fortune bowl, which I talk about on **p. 87**.
- Playing cards to help track who has taken an action in combat, which is covered on **p. 93**. You can get special *Pugmire* cards from Onyx Path, too.
- A calculator if adding and subtracting isn't your strong suit. I tried to keep the math as easy as possible, but nobody will judge you if you need some help.
- A screen for the Guide, so she can hide her notes and other information and keep players from accidentally being spoiled about the upcoming adventure. Onyx Path has a special *Pugmire* screen full of useful charts and information, but the Guide can use a book or a three-ring binder to hide her secrets just as well.
- A map and figures. Sometimes it's helpful to know where the characters and enemies are in relation to each other. This can be as simple as a few Xs and Os drawn on a piece of paper, or as elaborate as a dry-erase mat with special figurines to represent each character and enemy.
- Food and drink. A game of *Pugmire* often goes for several hours, and every good dog likes snacks.

How Do I Play Pugmire?

This might look like a large book, but the core rules of the game are simple. Most of the game takes the form of a conversation between the Guide and the players. The Guide describes the setting or the situation the characters are in, and the players respond with what their characters say or do in response. The Guide then gives new information, and the conversation continues, all the while creating a new *Pugmire* story.

As I mentioned above, the dice and the rules only come out when a character takes an action where the outcome is uncertain and interesting. When that happens, the player or the Guide takes the following steps in order.

Sample file

Step 1: Pick up a d20.

Step 2: Determine if the character has an *advantage* or a *disadvantage*. If so, pick up another d20.

Step 3: Roll the die or dice. If the character has an advantage, use the higher result. If the character has a disadvantage, use the lower roll. A higher number is generally better.

Step 4: Add (or subtract) any relevant modifiers to the roll: usually an *ability modifier*, sometimes a *proficiency bonus*, and occasionally a bonus from a *trick*.

Step 5: Compare the total to the *difficulty* of the task. If it equals or exceeds the difficulty number, the action is a successful!

Let me show you how this works. Remember the example I gave of a dog running across a road covered in oil to avoid some nefarious cats? If I were the player of that dog, here's how I'd go through the steps:

Step 1: I pick up a d20.

Step 2: Running across a slippery road is certainly a disadvantage for my dog. I pick up another d20.

Step 3: I roll both dice. The results are a 17 and a 3. Since my dog had a disadvantage, I must use the 3. Ouch!

Step 4: I check my character sheet for appropriate modifiers, and find I can add 2 to my roll. So my total is 5.

Step 5: The Guide tells me the difficulty to cross a road while being chased by cats is a 10, but I only got a total of 5. My dog failed! The Guide describes how the dog slips and falls.

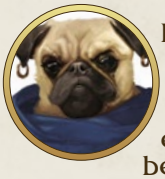
That's it! Most of the rules in this game are some variation on this system. Once you get used to this system of "match the difficulty," the rest of the *Pugmire* system should fall into place.

How Do I Read This Book?

As you may have noticed by now, this isn't an ordinary book. It's got a lot of interesting boxes and diagrams, but these are designed to help you out. If this is your first time playing *Pugmire* and you don't have a lot of experience playing role-playing games, I suggest you start by reading the material in this first half of the book, which I've called the "Dog's Guide to Adventure." That's all the information you need as a player. If you're planning to be the Guide, you'll probably want to read the second half as well, called the "Guide's Tome of Mystery."

Either way, read the parts that look interesting, and skip anything you don't understand — this is meant to be a reference book as well as something fun to read. I don't expect anyone to memorize everything in here, and a lot of my players read up on rules during a game as they become important (even I need to look things up sometimes, and I wrote the game). Just try to get a feel for the world, the rules, and how it all fits together, and you can figure out the rest as you play.

To help you out, there are a few different kinds of text boxes (or *sidebars*, as we call them) to point you in the right direction or call attention to something important.



Hi! I'm Princess Yosha Pug, and I try to be a good, helpful dog whenever I can. I'm here to help explain anything that could be hard to understand.

And I'm Pan Dachshund. I've been an adventurous dog for a long time now, so I've learned a thing or two. I'm here to point out some more advanced options in the game.

This is a section of text you read out loud to everyone at the table. Only the Guide sees these, to help her describe or explain something to her players.

Sample file