

Diceless Dungeons

Rules for Old-School Excursions Into the Dark

by

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Qide
House
Rules

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For the lovely Robyn,
who left a convention asking the
question: "why do we need
dice?" and started a conversation
that ended here...

Cover art by the incredible
Martin Schongauer
and all others in the public domain,
but no less great for the fact

Dedicated to gamers
everywhere, because they know
our hobby really began
with a passion for the childhood play
none of us could give up...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
ONE: AGAINST THE DARK.....	3
TWO: ACTS AND ACTORS.....	13
THREE: RISKS AND REWARDS.....	23
FOUR: BUILDING THE DARK.....	33

Sample file

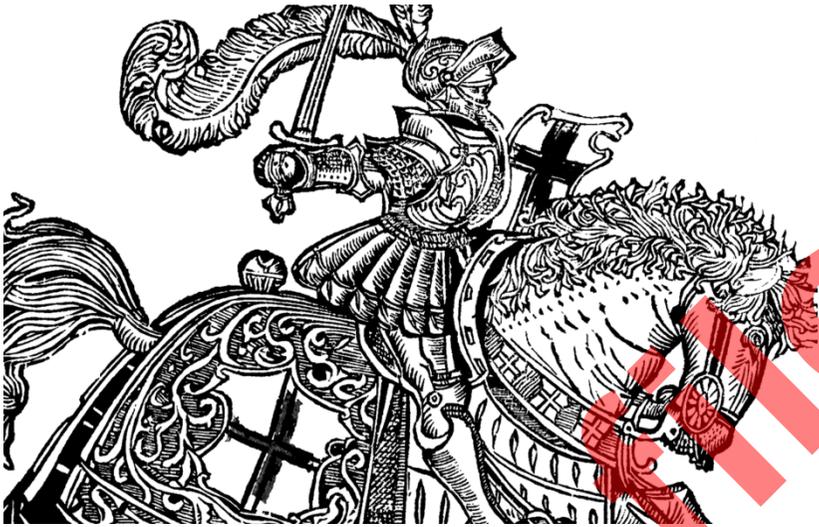
INTRODUCTION

This is a role-playing game. A system of imaginative play in a world of magic, monsters, and hoarded treasure awaiting heroes brave enough to seek it. But unlike other games of its kind, this one does not use dice, but only the creativity of its players, bringing it closer to the imaginary stuff of childhood.

One player is the REFEREE. They create an adventure, usually, a dungeon or similar area to be explored by the PLAYERS, who become heroic figures in an imaginary world of fighting men and sorcerer's apprentices seeking riches and glory in battle. These work together as a party, fighting as a team to survive...

During a game, the referee describes what is happening, including important events and/or enemy monsters, and the players decide what their characters do in response, whether fleeing or fighting, etc. Of course, some of these will perish, for the dungeons are cruel. Fortunately, it is easy enough to make a new character and return to the underworld ready for more!





However, this is also an old-school system, emphasizing the decisions of the players over complex rules that end up doing everyone's thinking (and imagining) for them, much to the detriment of play. And old-school is a good match for diceless gaming, because both are open to whatever creative ideas the players and the referee think up and want to try out.

Build a ballista to storm a dragon's lair and even the odds? Dress as goblins to deceive their king and steal their gold? Nothing should be off the table here if the players can reasonably defend their actions, and a central feature of old-school is the ability to add and/or change anything at all. To this end, the referee should treat these rules as just a guide.

Finally, a single dungeon may take several sessions to complete and, even then, the action need not end there. Rather, players can take part in an ongoing campaign SETTING, growing in power and prestige as they explore their world and triumph over it. The dungeons, with their deadly monsters and killing traps, are waiting for heroes brave enough to enter them...

ONE: AGAINST THE DARK

While the referee gets to work preparing an adventure, everyone else must each create their own characters. These are ordinary men and women who did not want to be the blacksmith's apprentice and heard rumors of riches to be won in dark dungeons and faraway lands.

This underscores the difference between the sunlit mortal realm and the subterranean world of soulless evil and highlights the very real terror monsters represent. Fantasy is a fabulous genre for sure, but when magic is commonplace and monsters an everyday occurrence, something is lost to the detriment of both.

ADVENTURERS

Characters are best described as traditional adventurers, and this usually means some sort of fighting man or woman, because without magic, the only way to survive the dungeons is to take up arms or employ stealth. But the deadliest weapon is undeniably the decision-making and problem solving of the participants themselves!

