

MYDWANDR

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OLDE HOUSE RULES

Electronic Edition

Printed in the United States of America

www.oldehouserules.com

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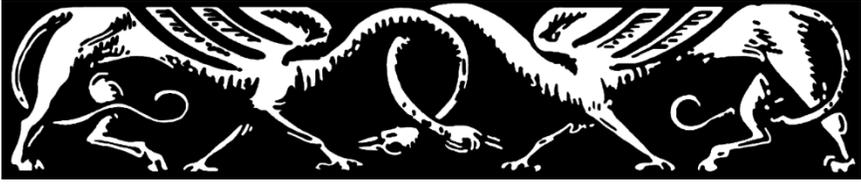
First, to Robyn, my indispensable wife and partner. Her keen insights into what happens in a game and what players expect from them remains our not-so-secret ingredient. The elves couldn't ask for a better ambassador...

And from both of us, many thanks to Ben Baldwin and Robert Maynard, whose encouragement was instrumental

Finally, to everyone who supported our efforts, but also to legions of roleplayers who found that the heartbeat of the hobby lies not in written rules, but in generations of players giving them life with their imaginations.

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INTRODUCTION

This is a fantasy roleplaying game, a thing which needs little introduction now that the hobby's gone mainstream. Everyone, even non-enthusiasts, seems to understand the scene and its conventions, which has doubtless served to bring even more to the gaming table. But half a century of the imaginary has only served to complicate things. No offense intended. There's really no wrong way to play; and everyone picks their own poison, something essential to gaming's enduring charm...

But there's something special about simple games. Those less reliant on tricky mechanical builds and more upon the basics of storytelling and human interaction. Early gaming, with its inconsistent mechanics and fiddly subsystems, wasn't always the best ambassador; but being a newer pastime nonetheless had advantages. There was less content (a void the hobby was eager to fill), but also fewer restrictions on the players and a greater reliance on negotiation and social contracts.

It's a tough balance to strike. Fewer rules often meant incomplete ones, which left everyone scratching their heads for want of more. But at their best, these games incorporated the everyday logic of cause and effect. Of course gulping hemlock is lethal. It's hemlock. How many charts and tables are needed to establish that? It's just what happens in a story where things make sense, and the referee can defend the outcome. But the players can defend their own activities on a similar basis...

This book attempts to thread that needle; first, with a single core mechanic that applies to everything not so simple that rolling isn't necessary or so impossible that dice are a pointless exercise, subject to the referee. This is a player-centric thing, with decisions driving outcomes as befits a story. Finally, there's abundant content, including an optional world setting for the referee to use or mine for inspiration. But nothing's set in stone, and the referee can modify things as they see fit.

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THE MECHANIC

Anyone who knows how to make decisions in real life should know how to do so in a fantasy game. It all comes down to what a character knows, and what shouldn't require anything more than the idea and the opportunity. All else, meaning those feats where success is uncertain, calls for 8 or more on two regular six-sided dice. Combat (and basically anything dangerous and/or difficult) requires these so-called doubles, noting that certain conditions can make the otherwise easy impossible.

Of course, certain characters (and their many challengers) may be talented in some particular area, performing at an advantage. Here the player rolls three dice and picks the highest two, greatly improving their prospects. This is called rolling triples, and it's the backbone of triumphant heroes and winning challengers alike. And while these are normally reserved for specific skills, the referee can award them in those situations where the characters have gained some leverage.

All of this encourages (and rewards) well-thought action, because the first games were basically wargames and remain so to some extent. Combat is central; but courage alone is little



proof against powerful and/or well-prepared foes, and careless choices are often the last. Death is an ever-present threat, by grievous battlefield injury or ill-conceived words in a tavern far from obvious danger. And again, so much of this results from routine cause and effect in a realistic campaign setting.

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ROLEPLAY

Despite the popularity of fantasy gaming, some explanation for the uninitiated is called for. First, one player, called the game master or referee, develops an adventure; usually, some dungeon or wilderness location to explore. The remaining players each create a unique character, armed and equipped for what dangers doubtless await. These games aren't competitive, meaning the players must work together to survive, winning treasure, some of it magical, while steadily growing in renown.

During a game, the referee describes what the characters experience, whether strange ruins or the terrible monsters within, while the players decide how best to respond. Of course, this often involves acting out encounters with enemies and unique non-player characters run by the referee. Unfortunate characters may die (they're easy to replace), but those who survive go on to greater things because each new session picks up where the last left off as part of a serial campaign.

This is a labor of love for the referee, who must prepare the adventure setting (including any adjacent settlements) and its various occupants well in advance. Needless to say, the moniker of referee is one earned through hard work and occasionally, exhaustive research. Fortunately, it appeals to those attracted to fantasy world building, and these abbreviated mechanics are

engineered to make it easier. A sample setting, its eponymous land, comes included as a demonstration.

More than anything, fantasy roleplay is the imaginary play of childhood, albeit more structured; and this rulebook offers content, monsters and magic, with simple-yet-complete rules to run a fantasy campaign. But a defining feature of such games, including the more complicated ones, is the ability to add and/or change anything. New races (kindreds herein), skills, monsters, and powerful magic to win and wield are yours to create, for this is more than any ruleset. It's a creative medium...

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CHARACTERS

Campaigns matter; but they need characters to occupy their spaces. These are the heroes of the story, and adventures, however enthralling, are just a thought experiment without the brave souls who undertake them. But character creation is likewise important to a campaign's referee, who may be tasked with crafting their cast of non-player characters; for enemy humans remain the deadliest of all, even in a world of dragons, giants, and dark demons from the pits of Hell.

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KINDREDS

Many races inhabit Mydwandr, human (much like ourselves) and otherwise, each having a selection of abilities. Hardy dwarves, nimble elves, and adventurous mortals share the setting's spaces, and players can choose the role they wish to assume:

- Dwarves, hardy and stubborn, are industrious mountain dwellers fond of mining the earth and famously covetous of gold