

Fantasy Hero Battlegrounds

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The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner The Upside:

Fantasy Hero Battlegrounds is a book of adventures and locations connected to adventures. The book is divided into four chapters. The first three are fully detailed adventures, the fourth chapter is a collection of eight locations that adventurers are likely encounter along their travels, standard fantasy locations.

The adventures themselves are not connected to any particular Setting, but there are numerous suggestions throughout the text to place them into either the Turakian Age (Hero Games' High Fantasy Setting) or your own game. There is also a connecting thread running through the book tying everything together loosely, the return of a long forgotten evil god. The nice touch here is that the Evil God theme can be interconnected, stand alone or (with a little extra work) completely ignored. One suggestion that occurred to me, if you're using the Hero Games Metaverse this "Evil God" is a perfect place to drop references to either the Elder Worm or the Kings Of Edom in your campaign. And don't worry if you can't think of an appropriate Evil God for the three main adventures (which hinge on this item, see below for chapter details) one is provided for you in the introduction.

Chapter 1 - A Night Out Of The Rain. This short scenario involves a mystery and an inn surrounded by undead. The mystery surrounds the Evil God mentioned in the introduction and a lone member attempting to retrieve a piece of the prophecy that heralds its return to the world of men. The Adventure itself is well organized and thought out, providing both intrigue, tension and mystery, and if done right near non-stop action. This adventure would work incredibly well as a Convention game.

Chapter 2 - From Out Of The Depths. Straightforward dungeon crawl. The Characters are sent to investigate a proposed silver mine for a king, when they get there they find everything in chaos. Going into the mines starts the dungeon crawl. What they find is something wholly alien. The original worshippers of the Evil God resided here centuries ago, and their temple's magic is still active. Another good adventure for a Convention game.

Chapter 3 - Eisburk-Beyond-The-Shoals. Here we get a multiple scenario adventure revolving around the siege of a castle. It can be run in one session, but the text advises it could take several. The scenario can also make use of the Mass Combat Rules found in the Fantasy Hero Genre Book (but does provide notes on how to handle the battle if you don't own that book). Why the siege? Well it just so happens the castle is built on the ruins of a temple to the Evil God, and someone wants an ancient artifact buried there.

The three above adventures can be run stand alone, or connected as part of a long term plot. In fact the Evil God Resurrection plot as presented makes an excellent subplot to a full campaign, or with a

little work a complete campaign theme unto itself. If you decide to run with an Evil God subplot in your game some of the rest of the book's locations have Evil God Prophecy notes associated with them to expand on the theme.

Chapter 4 - Fantasy Locations. This chapter is not an adventure, it's a collection of eight locations that have appeared in just about every fantasy campaign since gamers have picked up dice. In detail: The Abbey Of Eternal Vigilance - a monks abbey with a secret, with notes on turning it into an abbey of evil monks if you need one of those. Sir Agnar's Manor - not every knight lives in a castle or keep. Here we have a typical knights manor house, with notes connecting it to Chapter 3 for further adventuring fun. Darmondrat's Palace - long ago an Ifrit was trapped in a bottle, where he made his own world in an effort to escape. Will the hero's now trapped with the Ifrit help him, and themselves, escape? The Hand Of Doom Taproom - what's a fantasy game without a bar brawl? The description in this chapter makes fun of just about every tavern to appear in every fantasy supplement ever. It's worth the price of entry of the book alone. Mordie's Shop Of Puissant Potables - a potion shop with a twist, and proprietor can't make potions but the demonling he has as a partner can. With notes on making it into a less fantastic shop or at least more mundane. Nostann's Prison - A simple large town or city prison where you can toss your unruly adventurers should the need arise. With notes connecting it to the Evil God from the first three chapters for extra fun. The Radwell Farmhouse - A simple family farmhouse out towards the edge of the wilderness, the kind of placed adventurers make on their final stop out into the unknown, or first stop back from it. Also with notes connecting it to the Evil from the first three chapters should the need arise. The Spire Of The Eastern Dawn - what's a high fantasy world without a wizards tower! And here was have one inhabited by a goodly wizard sage, with notes on making it an evil wizard's tower should you need it.

All eight locations come with the standard Hero Games Plot Seeds, three for each as well as the extra notes on placing it in your game world, or changing the locations to suit your needs a little better.

And of course we have Maps! Every location comes with maps to match the description, seven of the eleven are reprinted in the back of the book for easy photocopying. Of the three that aren't reprinted one occupies its own page in the middle of the book already (Darmondrat's Palace), two are unlikely to be needed for actual fighting or mapped combat (Mordie's Shop and the Radwell Farmhouse) and the last (Nostann's Prison) is reprinted on the title page at the beginning of the book where it can be easily photocopied and cut out from there.

The artwork in the book is good and more importantly matches the adventures they are attached to in the text making them more than just window dressing for the pages.

The Downside:

Two things pop out as possible downsides to this sourcebook. First - the only write-ups in the book are NPCs specific to the locations. All other monsters, beasts and common NPCs are referenced to either The Hero System Bestiary or Monsters, Minions, And Marauders. If you write-up your own creatures this is a non-issue. Otherwise having both of the above books is extremely useful. Writing up creatures in Hero isn't too hard and does allow you custom tailor the strengths of the enemy to the party. Second - This being an adventure book it would have been nice to see more than the standard three plot hooks for each location in Chapter 4. Going above and beyond in this regard to at least six plot hooks per location would have made it really stand out as an Adventure Sourcebook.

The Otherside:

Very little Hero Crunch is in here, centered on the NPCs provided. This book would be a great source

of adventures and locations for any fantasy game. Especially since each description comes with notes on how to place it within your game. And of course there's the Evil God subplot, and what game can't use more evil gods running around?

Overall, this is a good sourcebook for a fantasy game. Between the three adventures, the running subplot, and the eight locations it can be used to flesh out your game and campaign world quite a bit.

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