

Arcane Adversaries

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The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

Arcane Adversaries is a collection of Mystic Villains for use with Champions. It contains five organizations and twelve solo villains.

Chapter One - Mystic Factions And Organizations. Five adversarial organizations are provided, from low powered to near world dominating.

The Circle Of The Scarlet Moon is a conspiracy type organization. As far as raw power goes they don't have a lot, you won't see members blasting holes in walls. As far as social power goes the Scarlet Moon is everywhere. Politics, law, religion, business, pretty much everywhere. They make a great mystery type adversary, taking down one member will not dismantle the entire organization.

The Devil's Advocates are much closer to a classic Supervillain team, with Magic as their driving special effect. Their goal is to eliminate modern society, technology and culture, believing the pre-industrial revolutionary world was the ideal world to live in. While an interesting collection of characters, both individually and as a group, their use is limited to mostly classic superheroic style encounters.

The Kings Of Edom is Hero Games version of Lovecraftian Nightmares. And they're a good take on the concept of things that are just Strange And Evil. The cult around them is DEMON which has a sourcebook of its own. The Kings themselves, and a few powerful servants not related to DEMON, are detailed here. The Kings Of Edom would be good as the big things that go bump behind a Pulp campaign, or even a Cthulhu Hero style game.

The Sylvestri Clan is an extended family of mystics and occult practitioners. They can be used in a variety of ways. First as low powered adversaries with a wide reach, or as a higher powered group of mystics. The Sylvestries are really a collection of families, The Patriarch at their head. They are worshippers of The Dragon, which puts them at odds with just about every other occult group out there.

The Vandaleurs is another family group of mystics. Unlike the Sylvestries they don't have a central focus. In fact, some portions of the family aren't evil at all, but the Vandaleurs are more widespread through the world than the Sylvestries. The Vandaleurs trick is that their patriarch can suppress or augment any one of his descendants relatives, and lives in secrecy and behind a number of false identities. This trick keeps the family in line, and prevents in fighting that might otherwise fracture it.

Since the family is less tightly knit than the Sylvestries it wouldn't be out of place to find a member as part of another organization (like the Scarlet Moon or DEMON) as hook to get them into a game.

Both families would make an excellent group of NPCs for an Urban Fantasy game as well as a Mystic Oriented Champions game. In fact, considering both families are low to mid powered mystically and have a similar structure you could use them as two factions in a fully Mystical world. They work well together in the same setting, either as enemies (most likely) or occasional allies.

Chapter Two - Mystic Solo Villains. Twelve villains who aren't connected to an organization are presented. Many of the villains aren't actually evil, but forced into circumstances they cause them to commit evil acts. Like many displays of mysticism the magic is more often a curse than a blessing.

Blackfang is a classic cursed Werewolf. Bromion is an aspect of Absolute Order who wishes to create Perfect Order by homogenizing reality. Doctor Teneber is a man who can bring the dead back to life, but at a cost. Evil Eye is a young girl caught in the grips of an artifact beyond her control. Frag is a young woman with demon's blood running through her veins, but not entirely sympathetic. Harpy is a villainess who uses a potion to change into a classic mythical Harpy. Hell Rider is a man who made a bargain with the devil for revenge. Lamplighter is one of the few absolutely evil villains presented. Mother Gothel is a faery tale nightmare come to life. Tezcatlipoca is bent on bringing back the worship of the ancient Aztec Gods, a Cultist write-up is provided as well. Witchfinder is a man who hunts down and kills mystic characters vigilante style, it's only a matter of time before he goes after a Mystic PC.

The solo adversaries are a good range of people to put into a game. From freeing them of a curse to full opponents in a game you have pretty much everything you need.

They range in power as well, some of them would work perfectly in a Mystic Heroic game as well as a Champions game. The book would also do very well to add even more background to the Vibora Bay setting.

The Downside:

Unlike other NPC books for Hero there is no Master Villain chapter, the book could have fleshed itself out a little more by providing one or two more truly powerful Mystic Villains for use as the main enemy in a game.

It's just short, there aren't too many characters presented here.

The Otherside:

While the book is written for Champions it's use extended way beyond the Superhero genre. The Circle Of The Scarlet Moon is almost perfect as is for a Pulp game with a mystic bent. Modern Occult or Urban Fantasy games can also use a number of characters and organizations in this book. The myriad of uses it has for different genres makes up completely for its brevity.

For any game needing some villains or NPCs of a mystic bent this is a highly recommended book. What the book lacks in quantity it more than makes up for in quality and variety.

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