

Nobles, Knights, And Necromancers

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The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

Nobles, Knights And Necromancers is a collection of 72 adversaries for a fantasy campaign. The characters described are set in Hero Games' Turakian Age Setting. This is mostly a formality to give the book cohesion and expand on the setting. The book is divided into three chapters. Master Villains, Organizations and Solo Villains.

Starting with Chapter 1, Master Villains. The book gives us four high powered and over arching villains that can be the center focus of a campaign's adversary. They include a master spy and his network, good for campaigns focused on political intrigue. A Vampire lord, for those monster hunting campaigns. A crafty Orc Chieftain and an ambitious King, either, or both if you like to trap characters between two evils, good for campaigns focused on combat. The villains described in this chapter are good for campaigns focused on continuous story arcs.

Chapter 2, Organizations. Six organizations are described in light detail. A witches coven, though only three of thirteen characters in the group are written in detail. The lieutenants of Kal-Turak, who is the Big Evil in a Turakian Campaign, all four are powerful enough in themselves to be the focus of a long story arc or even campaign. A group of bandits, for those times you need to waylay a caravan the PCs are guarding. A slavers guild spanning the continent, which can be the entire focus of a campaign as the PCs try to rid the land of this group. A political body ruling a kingdom in place of the missing royalty, each member with their own agendas, perfect for a political campaign. A thieves guild, easily dropped into any major city setting, to help or plague the PCs. A trio of assassins to unleash on your campaign. And my personal favorite a group of adventurers, a lot like the PCs themselves (who met one night in a tavern . . .).

Chapter 3, Solo Adversaries. This is the largest chapter of the book, and describes a number of different adversaries your PCs can encounter. And not all of them are Evil Villains in the classic sense. From misguided, but otherwise good and noble, rulers to purely evil necromancers and knights. Thirty eight detailed write ups are included in this chapter. Some of the more interesting highlights include a pair of feuding dragon twins, an intelligent but thoroughly evil sword, a robinhood-esque outlaw, and a senile dragon.

All in all, if you need an adversary for your PCs, evil, political or just some competition, then this book will probably have it or an idea for it. It also includes what has quickly become a favorite feature of mine in Hero Books: Plot Hooks! Each write up comes with three plot hooks as suggestions to fit the particular adversary into your game. Another nice touch is that some of the villains described here in

have history with each other, easily letting you place several them into a game to flesh out your campaign world, even if they're just described as motivations for the main villains' plots and plans. Each write up also comes with suggestions on how to make the villain more powerful or less powerful depending on the kind of challenge you want them to pose to your PCs.

The artwork, like any book, ranges from good to excellent. Since artwork can be subjective I won't say there is any bad art here. None of it made me cringe however, which is a good sign. My personal favorite is the dwarf pictured on the cover (his write up is on page 51). Every character in the book has an image to accompany it as well, which is always a plus for a character book.

The Downside:

If the book has one shortcoming it's Chapter 2, Organizations. It's a relatively short chapter given the fact it describes six different groups. It doesn't go into too much detail on the groups as a whole. It would have been nice, especially for the thieves guild and slavers organization, to have more details on the inner workings of the group, details to their methods and more members described, even if they didn't have full write ups. I'm sure space constraints prevented this, a book could easily be dedicated to this chapter alone.

The other aspect that a few may find a turn off is that the spells for the many wizards and priests in the book refer to The Fantasy Hero Grimoire, 1 and 2, and the Turakian Age book. This isn't much of a down side though, since it's common practice to refer to spells written up in other sources to save space. Without those books, mainly Fantasy Hero Grimoire 1, the spells fall to the GM to write up.

The Otherside:

While the default setting is the Turakian Age Campaign Setting Hero Games has done an excellent job of making the villains interesting and generic enough that they can easily be transplanted. Simply changing some names of locations and characters to fit your own game is enough. Many of the character write ups even offer suggestions on how to relocate the villains to other places if needed. Even if you're using a system other than Hero and don't want to convert the stats the personalities described are still useful to anyone running a fantasy game.

Overall this is a good book of characters to set your players against. Not everyone in the book needs to be an outright enemy. Some make excellent competition, contacts or simply one more NPC for the players to interact with in the game.

The layout is standard for a Hero Enemy book, it's simply all the write ups and full character descriptions without any pretense of the setting they are in beyond how their backgrounds interact with it. There's no fluff in this book, just the characters, the kind of crunch we've come to expect from this type of book. Which is not a bad thing at all, since that's what the book it for. If you need some more NPCs for your fantasy game this is the book for you.

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