

Blood of Pangea

Narrative Role-Playing in the Pulp Tradition

by

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As always to Robyn, who was dissapointed with the genre's lack of elves, but still had great ideas about how it should work!

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With many thanks to the great writers of the pulp tradition, including both Howard and Lovecraft, who imagined entire worlds no less human for all the magic and monsters that dwelt within...

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INTRODUCTION

Sword and sorcery remains a popular genre and has been since its inception in the 1930s. But this has undergone many changes in almost a century despite being one of the oldest of the "modern" fantasy styles, again, in testament to its enduring charm...

Blood of Pangea is sword and sorcery role-playing with some modern innovations. For instance, the rules are extremely simple and depend largely on narrative elements for character creation and general gameplay, including the ways of magic and sorcery, although none of this is new or even particularly modern.

Conceived in another time, sword and sorcery was a rugged literary genre, one born in the yellowed pages of cheap (and tawdry by the standard of the day) pulp magazines. Here the violent, and even sensual, thrills were devoured by what might be called the first generation of modern fantasy fans, and the attraction continues!

So, just what is this sword and sorcery anyway?

To begin with, the genre imagined a world - our world - but in its ancient and myth-shadowed past, where sorcery lived and monsters were ever-presently real. This was usually some lost continent with many prehistoric holdouts from Earth's distant past alongside doomed and exotic civilizations in the style of Atlantis or sunken Lemuria.

It was only just the 1930s, after all, and 19th century sensibilities persisted, including its lingering ideas about lost worlds at a time when geology was revealing wonders...

Furthermore, sword and sorcery was a gritty, realistic genre despite being populated with magic and monsters. Gone were the elves and fairies of high fantasy, replaced with ruggedly human characters having all of the same weaknesses. These were passionate, lusty barbarians, frequently amoral, although still heroic in their way.

And despite some confusion on this point, the genre was not exactly medieval, imagining something closer to antiquity, with fabulous temples to the many elder gods. A time when lurking tribals hid in steaming jungles housing priceless gems and danger!

Magic (sorcery) figured prominently in these stories, although often approached with suspicion by the protagonists; warriors who preferred to trust in cold steel over spells. Sorcery was vaguely evil, even when practiced by good characters, underscoring the solidly humanistic element of the genre. Sword and sorcery was, ultimately, about people.

Once again, Blood of Pangea is a fantasy role-playing game in the rousing spirit of its pulp origins; a game of barbarians and wandering heroes exploring an untamed continent.

HOW TO PLAY

One person is the JUDGE. They prepare an adventure, usually some location to explore and survive, complete with enemies to fight, puzzles to solve, and various supporting (non-player) characters for them to interact with. This is done well in advance to ensure a more immersive gameplay experience without any interruptions.

Everyone else is a PLAYER (1-5 are best), each one creating their own fantasy character and working together as an adventuring party, combining their skills to survive. Play is not competitive, and there is no winner or loser. This applies to the judge as well, who must remain fair and impartial when moderating events.

During play, the judge describes what is happening, and the players react, working together to overcome challenging situations, like hungry monsters or deadly traps, etc. The rules are then consulted and dice rolled to determine the outcome in critical situations, whether killing the monster or performing an extraordinary feat.

Each new game picks up where the last one left off as part of a continuing CAMPAIGN. If the characters survive, they will gain valuable experience and get better at what they do, improving and/or adding abilities; perhaps a new language or knowledge of some ancient culture in whatever world the judge imagines.

Of course, sometimes characters will die. In these situations, the player simply creates a new one and rejoins their companions.

DICE AND MINIATURES

Play requires six-sided dice (called a d6), and when the rules say to roll two dice, this is written as 2d6...

Lead miniatures (25/28 mm) can be used to represent characters and monsters in the game. For scale, 1 inch equals 10' on the table, whether using a ruler and/or by sight if everyone agrees, noting here that figures can be painted to the player's liking, although their use remains completely optional, if highly encouraged.

Finally, the most important rule in role-playing is that the judge is completely free to add or change anything to suit the needs of their own fantasy campaign - these rules are just a guide to get started!

I. BARBARIANS

Player characters are unquestionably central to the game, and this section explains how to make them. Readers familiar with classic sword and sorcery know it as a literary genre and, accordingly, this game takes a narrative approach to character creation specifically (and play in general) as per the following rules...

FIGHTING MEN

Characters are fighting men and women, sword and sorcery being a ruggedly human genre, who can fight and attempt any actions open to an able-bodied adult. This makes the choice of armor and/or weaponry essential to their general success and emphasizes decision-making over complex rules and special abilities.

THE NARRATIVE

Of course, characters will have other, more specialized skills, and this must be included in their written NARRATIVE.

Using 30 words or less, the player describes their character's name, gender, and anything else, like being an acrobat or experienced hunter and tracker, etc. Except where noted, these are limited to realistic skills and should include some personal history:

ABILITY	NOTES
Exceptional trait	speed or physical strength, etc.
Craft/skill	either self-taught or trained
Specialized knowledge	history, science, and/or the occult

Note here that while anyone can attempt feats of speed or strength, exceptional types will find doing so easier, noting that characters are limited to a maximum of two such traits.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Obviously, magic is well-represented in sword and sorcery, and characters can become SORCERERS by making some mention of it in their written narrative. This is subject to additional rules and imposes restrictions on the use of armor and weaponry.

As a general rule, statements like "Gundigar can do anything" are strictly prohibited. Each skill and ability must be separately provided by the player as part of a coherent narrative. Indeed, the judge must take care to enforce this rule, lest tricky players exploit the narrative aspect of the game to make inferior, one-dimensional characters!