



Scion Hero (Scion)

John Chambers

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Find your Destiny

The savage Titans have escaped their eternal prison to wage war with the Gods once more.

Their battles in the Overworld have spilled over to ours.

Armed with abilities and weapons granted by their divine parents, the Scions stand as humanity's only defense.

This book includes:

- Six ready-to-play Scions—the offspring of the Gods
- Rules to create your own Scion from one of more than 50 gods from six different pantheons
- The adventure, "The Long Road to Heaven," using the Storytelling Adventure System

Scion: Hero is the first book in a new Storytelling game series from White Wolf Publishing. 336 page hardcover.

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From Reader Review Scion Hero (Scion) for online ebook

Mark Stone says

In short, Scion: Hero is a great idea poorly executed.

In Scion: Hero, you get to play a modern Hercules, wandering the earth, kicking butt and taking names while Zeus (or Ra, or Thor, or Baron Samedi, or Ameterasu, or some freaky Aztec diety, or some god from a pantheon you and your friends ported into the setting) is off fighting a war against the Titans, cthonic elder powers who predate the world and would like to see it destroyed. Your power cap is determined by your fame, but that same power can warp the destinies of the mere mortals around you, forcing them to become your fans, your boon companions... or your deadly enemies. Best of all, the next two books in the series, Scion: Demigod and Scion: God promise to detail rules for advancing characters through the ranks of goodhood until they can rival their parents. Crunch-wise, it is the beautiful bastard love child of Exalted and Abberant. Fluff-wise, it reads like Nobilis crossed with the old World of Darkness and the old Hercules TV show, the one with Kevin Sorbo. What's not to love?

What's not to love is the execution. In the end, the book doesn't actually tell you enough about the setting to run the game. For example, the gods only have brief one-paragraph descriptions each. That wouldn't be a problem if the game only included one pantheon; if I want to know what Thor thinks of Loki and how they have interacted in the past, I can always do a little research. However, in this game I want to know what Athena thinks of Erzulie, and that is exactly what the game fails to provide. The book also tells us nothing about the history of the war with the titans. There is a bestiary full of beasts, but very little in the way of hooks to help us use them. There is a sample adventure, complete with pregens, but, being a sample adventure, it's basically worthless. Besides, who wants to play pregens?

But why, you ask, why did you give it three stars? For two reasons. Firstly, there is something so unbelievably awesome about the concept that it shines through, even in a poorly executed game. Secondly, there are two more books on the way, and I hope against hope that they will answer the unanswered questions.

Or, alternately, as my girlfriend suggests, they'll kill off the gods, and the game will be about your characters replacing them. Which is pretty awesome, too.

Marcello Tarot says

Originariamente 1 di 3 (poi di 5)

Il primo di tre libri di gioco di ruolo originariamente pensati per una linea a parte della White Wolf. Il concetto è che i protagonisti sono persone (più o meno) normali del giorno d'oggi che scoprono di essere figli di dèi di qualche antico pantheon; inizialmente dispongono di facoltà limitate, e devono usarle attraverso qualcosa prima di poterle sviluppare autonomamente a livelli più avanzati.

Buona parte del libro è dedicata alla spiegazione delle regole per questo sistema, la lettura scorre piacevolmente e ti fa continuamente chiedere che cosa ci sarà nei manuali successivi quando i PG – inizialmente definiti “eroi” – diverranno semidei e infine dèi a tutti gli effetti.

Le informazioni non sono disseminate al meglio, ma con un'attenta ri-lettura la comprensione è infine

assicurata.

La nota dolente è l'avventura inclusa, decisamente forzata in diversi punti, anche se contiene qualche spunto interessante.

Brian says

A month or so ago, I heard that a friend was going to run a Scion LARP. So, I said to myself, maybe I should read the book to get some background on the game and the setting? I had heard that the rules were legendarily terrible, but ticks and Rabbit Reflexes (see below) and so on aren't going to be a problem in a LARP, so how bad can it be? Surely there's plenty of useful background and setting information I can use even if the specific rules aren't going to be important, right?

Well. Funny that.

Setting

Forty. Pages. Of. Intro. Fiction.

It's not just that it's too long, although it is. It's that it's filled with every single cliché you could think of. The main character is named Eric Donner, a.k.a. Donar, a.k.a. the Germanic tribes' name for Thor. He's a child of Thor who drives a GTO he calls his goat. He's visited by ravens, goes on a quest to find Skirnir's Diner in the town of Nastrond, meets some dwarves working in a mine being lorded over by a giant because they're trying to dig up Jörmungandr, gets a huge pistol with a piece of Mjöllnir as the firing pin, meets a son of Loki named *Sylvester "Sly" Guiler*...come on.

A little bit of this is fine--I don't know anyone who complains about "Wednesday" and "Low Key Lyesmith" in *American Gods*, for example--but this much is just hammering the same nail in until there's a gaping hole in the wall. And it's not just the intro fiction, either. Another sample character is "Horace Farrow," son of Horus, who was born in Cairo, Illinois, and has an uncle named Seth who killed Horace's father Cyrus and blech. The scion of Amaterasu has the kusanagi and a magatama, and I'm really surprised she doesn't have a mirror too.

The major problem with the setting information is that this is about the only information we get about how the world of *Scion: Hero* works. There are six pantheons depicted--the Norse, Egyptian, Greco-Roman (really Greek, but I digress), Vodoun, Japanese, and Aztec--and each god gets a couple paragraphs of description. But there are no descriptions of inter-pantheon relations, even though they're ostensibly allied against the Titans, who were imprisoned by the gods long ago. If I want to know what Zeus thinks of Aphrodite, I have plenty of myths to consult, but if I want to know what Zeus thinks of Tlaloc, or what Amun-Re thinks of Amaterasu, or what Baron Samedi thinks of Hel, I'm out of luck. Since all the sample groups of Scions include Scions from different pantheons, this seems like a really important aspect of the background that's just missing.

The Titans are pretty much missing too. They're only ever referred to as a group except for talking about Mikaboshi, who I'm pretty sure is a Titan here because he was evil in *Kindred of the East*. I can easily think of who the Titans are from a Greek perspective, or a Norse perspective, but a Japanese one? A Vodoun one? An Aztec one? Some names would be helpful so that when the Scions bust into the evil cult's sanctum, you can at least describe what the hideous statue there looks like.

Furthermore, the premise is that the world of *Scion: Hero* is like our world, but the myths were real and so are the gods and Titans. Except apparently the world looks exactly the same. I mean, if the Aztec gods had actual divinely-empowered children, what were they doing when Cortés showed up? Centaurs are real, and so are dwarves, giants, shikome, zombies, alfar, ahuiatzotl, and so on, but it has no effect on human history whatsoever and there isn't even an attempt to explain why this is the case. Sure, *Vampire: the Masquerade* falls apart if you look at it with a critical eye, but at least they explain why people don't know about vampires. The central power stat in *Scion* is called "Legend," there are constant references to becoming more powerful as your legend spreads, and yet no one knows that they should be carving out hearts for Xipe Totec rather than going to church on Sundays.

Which brings me to my last complaint. So, the ancient gods and myths are real. Okay, what about...say, *Abrahamic* myths? You know, the belief structure of over half of humanity? Are their gods and myths real? At one point, the book even says:

As the stories of Herakles, Gilgamesh, and Jesus Christ demonstrate, the journey toward godhood is fraught with tragedy and hardship.

which at least implicitly suggests that Jesus was a Scion. What about the Buddhist pantheon? And yes, you can say that Buddhism doesn't have a pantheon, but if you asked a Hellene about the "dodekatheon" their response would be "*Which* twelve?" so I think they could have come up with something, even in an oblique mention, the way they show that the Chinese traditional deities exist by including a Scion of Sun Wukong. Especially since I know there's a "Yankee" pantheon in the *Scion* Companion.

But *Scion: Hero* doesn't deal with any of that. The only setting here is implied, without any specifics other than those I've mentioned in this review. Everything else is smoke and frantic handwaving.

System

Scion uses the rules from *Exalted* except with even more breakpoints and trap builds.

The basic Attribute/Ability structure of *White Wolf* games is here, and it uses *Exalted* timing-based combat system instead of the more common round-based structure. And if no one in the game had superpowers, it would probably work pretty well. But since you're playing the children of gods, there are a lot of problems that show up. The first and most blatant is probably in Epic Attributes.

Okay, I'm lying there. The first and most blatant is that you're rolling dice pools against a Difficulty that determines how many successes you need, but nowhere are there any guidelines for determining Difficulty other than that 1 is the base and it gets higher as the task gets harder. There are *specific* Difficulties for certain powers, but not for, say, fast-talking your way into a club, driving a car, rebuilding a motorcycle, or climbing a cliff. What if it's a particularly rocky cliff? What if you're doing it in the rain? What if the motorcycle was thrown into a building by a giant? How much should you change the Difficulty, and what should it start at? I hope you're good at improvising, because the game does not tell you.

Anyway, Epic Attributes stack on top of regular Attributes and add automatic successes to all rolls involving that attribute, and are meant to represent the way that Aphrodite is superhumanly beautiful (Epic Appearance) or how Thoth is so wise (Epic Intelligence) and so on. They also all have various Knacks that provide interesting bonuses, like Perfect Pitch for Epic Perception, which lets the Scion find any flaws in music to the point of identifying phone numbers from the key tones; or Charmer for Epic Charisma, which makes the Scion supernaturally likable even in the face of open hostility; or Untouchable Opponent for Epic Dexterity, which breaks the combat system over its knee.

See, Untouchable Opponent doubles the Scion's defenses for a scene as long as the Scion is dodging, and since Epic Dexterity itself also adds to dodge defense, it's pretty easy for a Scion to become, well, untouchable for an entire combat for a trivial expenditure of resources. Obviously, this warps the whole game around it for anyone who knows about it, and either you take Untouchable Opponent and join the ranks of the unstoppable ninjas, or you don't and die as the GM frantically ramps up the opposition to challenge the Scions who are doing triple backflips or gun katas to dodge bullets.

Furthermore, most scaling is geometric. Epic Attributes give one success at one dot, two at two, and four at three. Dilettantes may not apply, because your choice in Scion is to specialize in one or two things and be bad at everything else or specialize in nothing and fail at everything. A puzzle that can challenge the Scion of Thoth is completely incomprehensible to the Scion of Thor, and the player of the Scion of Thoth might as well pull out their phone and play Candy Crush in any combat where the Scion of Thor actually has to work hard. Even Legend, the main power statistic, scales the same way, with Legend Points (the main fuel for Scion powers) being determined by the *square* of the base Legend. Going from 2 to 3 more than doubles a Scion's ability to use their powers, and therefore any Scion who doesn't start with Legend 3, or even 4, is a stupid baby playing games for babies. Or at least that will be their opinion of Scion when the players who are better at analysis make more optimized characters and prove better at them in every way.

There are a few other weird system points, like how Rabbit Reflexes encourages everyone to go around blindfolded all the time so they can always be surprised and thus get the bonus against ~~surprise~~ attacks, but really it's the basic mechanic that screws everything up, not the specific implementation. Epic Attributes only go up to 3 here, but I can already see that if they keep the current scaling, at higher power levels even a one-point difference means that the Scion with the lower Attribute will never win against the Scion with the higher one. The difference between 7 and 6 should probably not be "7 always wins, don't even bother to roll, I bid you good day." Even the difference between 1 and 3 is going to skew in favor of the Scion with an Epic Attribute of 3 probably 90% of the time.

I haven't mentioned Boons before, which are the powers related to the aspects of the Scion's patron god that grant them blatant supernatural powers. Some of them are good, and some of them are not. ~~Plants~~Fertility is good for...growing things a bit better. Sky is for flying. Health is for healing people other than you. The problem is that while some of them are good, and some of them are bad, and there's no real sense of balance, all of that pales in comparison to the way that Epic Attributes give you automatic successes on all rolls you make with that Attribute and Boons let you do extremely specific and limited things. And you buy Epic Attributes and Boons from the same pool of points. It's true that Boons in the right circumstances can be excellent, but Epic Attributes are excellent in *all* circumstances,

Some mechanics from Exalted hang on for no obvious reason, too. Does Scion really need rules for bleeding damage, wound infection, or catching diseases? Unlike Exalted, where the Exalted can ignore all that but you can theoretically play mortals who have to worry about dying of sepsis, Scion is all about playing Scions with no support for playing anyone else, and no GM is going to roll to see if Cultist Mook #16 dies of sepsis a few days after the Scions cut off her arm. This is a waste of space that could have been used for explaining what Amun-Re thinks of Amaterasu.

There are a couple bits of the system that I like. I like how Boons aren't inherently part of the Scion, they're invested in items that are given to them by their divine patrons, like the aforementioned kusanagi, the Golden Fleece, or similar items of mythic power. Of course, the side effect of this is that items can be stolen to deny the Scion their power, whereas Epic Attributes are an inherent part of the Scion that can't be taken away, further making most Boons a sucker's bet and making Scion a game where you can win in character creation even easier than D&D 3.x.

I like the idea of *Scion: Hero*. I like the concept of playing the children of ancient gods in the modern world. But this is not the book you should use to do it. The system is barely held together with chewing gum and prayers and the setting is a few scribbles in crayon with "Dunno, make it up" scrawled on the top. There's a good idea buried somewhere in there, but that idea is literally "Myths are real, and you play the children of ancient gods in the modern world fighting against the Titans." Run with Your Favorite System. Whatever you come up with will probably be better than *Scion: Hero*'s take on it, and it will definitely be at least as good. I can't imagine how it could be worse.

Burt says

It's hard to review this kind of book as it's not really a novel. For those who play RPGs however, this book is a refreshing look on Mythology. Joseph Campbell would be proud.

In the beginning the Titans strode creation as its masters until the young upstart gods wrenched the power from them and sealed them in the underworld. However, it was not just the Greek gods who did this, the Egyptian, Norse, Japanese and Aztec spirits also hold tales of great, primordial darkness being sealed away from creation. For millennia, this has held, and the Gods have spent the long ages tending to the sustaining of the World, often with the assistance of their own children, those who they proclaim as Scions.

Now, the World faces great danger. The War has begun, and the chains holding back the titans of old are broken. Titans and their spawn are loose in the world, the modern world - *our world*. While the gods rage in the heavens and underworlds of the universe, the role of the World's protection now falls to their chosen agents on Earth, the Scions.

You get to create one of these godlings and take the fight back to the Titans.

It's a fun game, requiring about four to six people ideally.

Max says

This actually seems like a pretty fun game, and I kinda want to run it for some of my friends soon. *Scion* is, in essence, a lot like *American Gods* or *Percy Jackson* in RPG form. Various pantheons of gods are real, and they've all been given the Titans as ancient enemies to make it easier to have them work together against a common enemy. Of course, the Titans have escaped from their prisons, and it's thus up to the Scions, the children of the gods, to stop them. One thing that's interesting with the premise is that Scions, as the book's title says, start as heroes rather than the more traditional demigods of myth and other stories. Of course, they're still part mortal, part god - it's just that practically nobody has heard of them before, and so their Legend is still low enough that they're not far off from mortals. In terms of *White Wolf*'s system, Legend is the power stat - providing a cap on supernatural abilities while simultaneously being the basis for a pool of points that characters use to power some of their abilities. Only the first three dots of a lot of stuff is available, meaning that starting characters can do some cool supernatural things, but aren't anywhere near as powerful as their parents just yet. There are some bits of the mechanics that seem clunky or wonky, and I've heard that Epic Dexterity is basically a god stat compared to everything else. Still, the setting is fun enough that I'm intrigued anyway. There's a nice variety of pantheons here, with obvious ones like the Greeks, Norse, and Japanese (cause somebody is going to demand to have a katana, so why not make it easier for

them?) and others: the Egyptian, Aztec, and Voodoo Loa. The fact that this was a limited gameline and written relatively recently means that there's none of the metaplot and other silliness that can plague many World of Darkness products. I also appreciate that the book includes six pregen Scions and a pretty fun adventure, so you just need some friends and some dice to get going. All in all, while there are definitely some flaws here, Scion Hero is the start to a pretty cool game, and I'm looking forward to reading the other four books in this line.

Nikki says

Combat system seems overly complicated. Will have to play-test before I commit to running a game.

Nicklaus says

it was a good precursor to what Exalted would become, but it's just that, an alpha version of something better.

Oliver Eike says

Great idea. But terrible execution.

The game at the Hero level is why its getting 2 stars.

Beyond that it doesnt quite deserve one, because once you get to Demi-God or God level, the game is broken. And i am quite used to broken games, i have played Exalted since the start of it, and had E6+ chars running around. But while they can break settings, they dont break games.

Demi-Gods in this game just breaks it all and makes things un-fun. Things quickly become a headache. But the pantheons and the setting? That alone, is worth the read. I would love to play this game more if it didnt so quickly become a mechanical headache.

Rob says

One of my favorite roleplaying games. I am a big fan of mythology and playing on an epic scale. This book delivers both with a side of great writing.

Conor Warren says

Isn't the most amazing RPG in the world, but the setting is interesting and you can have a lot of fun making interesting characters. The game is what you make of it and a lot of the rules, stats, and mechanics are more suggestions than rules you need to follow. If you are really creative you can combine some of this stuff with

5E D&D but you really have to sit down and put a lot of work into it.
