

Sword Saga

*A one player
storytelling game*



Sword Saga – a one player storytelling game

By Danny Dellinger / @dannyplaysrpgs / <http://dannymakesrpgs.itch.io>

Materials needed:

- * One 6 sided die
- * A means of recording your story (pen & paper, computer, audio recorder, etc)

In Sword Saga you will tell the story of a weapon, from its creation to when it stops being used. This weapon exists in a changing era, and will bear witness to momentous events, if not participate in them. It shall see much use, undergo change, and be judged by history for its part. The presumptive setting is some form of medieval era where things like swords and other weapons are commonplace. However, the prompts are vague enough that you should be able to incorporate genre elements from fantasy, science fiction, and others with little difficulty.

The game takes place over 6 scenes. These scenes are narratives from the viewpoint of somebody involved in that moment. It could be the weapon itself, the person wielding it, an eyewitness or historical account, anything you can come up with. The narrator should change from scene to scene. The amount of time that passes between scenes is up to you, though some later scenes state a minimum amount of time to have passed.

Each scene starts with 2 charts, and includes an optional 3rd. Roll your 6 sided die and incorporate the results into that scene. Feel free to pick instead of rolling, or ignore them entirely if you have a better idea. The scene ends when you've detailed the event to your satisfaction.

Scene 1 – It Starts With a Clang

This scene details the weapon’s creation and early ownership. From raw material to a completed item. From an idea to a thing you can hold in your hands. What threats is this weapon expected to face? What element of society makes its existence necessary?

Example viewpoints: a “recipe” for the weapon with all the materials and rituals needed to make it; the weapon itself making the journey from creator to owner; the owner receiving the weapon and learning to use it

The weapon is a...

1 – Large, heavy weapon	2 – Small, concealable weapon	3 – Medium sized, able to be used in one hand
4 – Ranged/throwing weapon	4 – Shield, gauntlet, or other protective item	5 – New or unusual kind of weapon

It was created for...

1 – A wealthy family, who had it custom-made	2 – A rank & file soldier, one of hundreds like it	3 – No one in particular, whoever decides to buy it
4 – A child, to train them for future danger	5 – A hero, who needed it for a specific purpose	6 – A poor laborer, to protect what little they have

Optional plot hook-y bits

1 – It is made of an unusual material	2 – There is a prophecy about this weapon	3 – It was made to imitate another, specific weapon
4 – This is the first/last weapon the maker ever made	5 – The person who made it was famous (not for weapon making)	6 – It is unintentionally magical (or if already magical, has an unintended effect)

Scene 2 – The First Cut is The Deepest

This scene details the first time the weapon was used to harm another. Maybe it was on the battlefield, maybe a training accident. Maybe it's a violent murder. This is when the danger that was always inherent became real.

Example viewpoints: the person being hurt; a medical/police report of the incident; an obvious embellishment told in the bar after the fact

The wielder felt...

1 – Angry	2 – Scared	3 – Betrayed
4 – Righteous	5 – Unstoppable	6 - Reluctant

The victim felt...

1 – Angry	2 – Scared	3 – Betrayed
4 – Righteous	5 – Unstoppable	6 - Reluctant

Optional plot hook-y bits

1 – The wielder and victim knew each other	2 – The victim never saw the wielder (or vice versa)	3 –The harm was not done on purpose
4 – The wielder immediately went on to harm several others	5 – The wielder and victim were alone	6 – There were hundreds of other people present

Scene 3 –The Mother of Invention

This scene details a time the weapon was used for something other than hurting something. A crowbar, a mirror, a crutch, a musical instrument. What life can a weapon have outside of its violent purpose? What situation makes it necessary in the first place?

Example viewpoints: the wielder feeling desperation/inspiration strike; a confused onlooker; a gossip column-esque description of this outrageous act

The wielder used it in this way because...

1 – They were in a hurry	2 – They were unprepared for an obstacle	3 – The help they expected was absent
4 – Nobody can get their hands on the real item	5 – Somebody else needed the real item more	6 – The item they were going to use broke/was lost

Using a weapon in this way...

1 – Worked poorly	2 – Worked better than expected	3 – Got the wielder in trouble
4 – Became unexpectedly popular	5 – Damaged the weapon in some way	6 – Led the wielder to discover something about themselves

Optional plot hook-y bits

1 – This reveals a previously unnoticed detail about the weapon	2 – This happens in the wielder's home	3 – This saves somebody's life
4 – This damages an object other than the weapon	5 – This happens while doing illegal activities	6 – This happens in the middle of a fight

Scene 4 – New Owner, Who Dis?

This scene details how the weapon changed from its first owner to its second. Willingly or not, we all part with our possessions eventually. And when something has such a storied history with one person, we must make changes to distance it from the past or make it our own.

Example viewpoints: A student inheriting their master's weapon, an item entry in an auction or estate sale, a long overdue make-over for wielder and weapon.

The new owner got it by...

1 – Receiving it as a gift from the old owner	2 – Recovering it when it was thought lost	3 – Purchasing it
4 – Finding it when they needed it most	5 – Stealing it	6 – Killing the previous owner and taking it from their corpse

What changes did the new owner make to it?

1 – Restored the neglected weapon to working order	2 – Added personal cosmetic touches	3 – Altered it to better face a new threat
4 – Removed something they see as excessive	5 – Used part of it to build a new weapon	6 – Damaged it through misuse

Optional plot hook-y bits

1 – The new owner coveted the weapon for a long time	2 – The old owner had to be persuaded to part with the weapon	3 – The new owner doesn't intend to use the weapon
4 – Everybody still associates the weapon with the old owner	5 – Other people tried to get the weapon before and failed	6 – Changing the weapon took unusual effort

Scene 5 - War... War ever changes.

This scene details how the situations weapons are used in have changed. It should take place at least a few years after the last scene. The conflicts of the past are different from those of today. This reflects not just a change in technology and tactics, but a change in society's values. Perhaps wars are ended by single combat, or an individual exploring ruins is now seen as a diplomatic incident. A contrast should be drawn between the things the weapon was used for in previous scenes.

Example viewpoints: reminiscing about the days of dungeons and monsters, the manifesto of a community defending themselves when law enforcement will not, play-by-play of an underground arena fight

Why did the situations in which this weapon is used change?

1 – The greatest threat to society was defeated	2 – A tragedy caused people to re-evaluate their use	3 – Non-violent competition replaced armed conflicts
4 – A new generation arose demanding change	5 – The land was occupied by a hostile power	6 – New laws were passed on weapon ownership and use

Who was this weapon last used to kill?

1 – An enemy	2 – A popular public figure	3 – A friend
4 – A tyrant	5 – A stranger	6 – The wrong person

Optional plot hook-y bits

1 – A new training method emphasized an effective, unorthodox style	2 – The wielder is on the run from the law	3 – A past event left the country with a much smaller population
4 – People are suspicious of anybody carrying a weapon	5 – Another culture's views have been adopted	6 – Weapons are more widely spread than ever

Scene 6 – Deeper Than Ever Did Plummet Sound

This scene details what happened to the weapon when it was no longer used as a weapon. It should be set decades or longer after the previous scene. Maybe it was displaced by new weapons, maybe the need for them has ended. Whatever the case, it is seen as a piece of the past rather than a functional object.

Example viewpoints: a parent giving a kid-friendly overview of the past, a local news story on significant historical objects, a weapons maker reflecting on the history of their trade as they announce a new project

Where did it end up?

1 – Buried with its last owner	2 – Used as a ceremonial prop/weapon of office	3 – Donated to a museum
4 – Kept as a decorative object	5 – Lost or destroyed	6 – Repurposed into something new

What do most people say about the weapon (specifically, or this type of weapon in general), and the age it represents?

1 – It is a tool of a more elegant and honorable age	2 – It is a symbol of violence and barbarism	3 – It was used to defend our values
4 – It was a tool of those who oppressed us	5 – We needed it then, but no longer	6 – It is serving better now than it ever did when it was in use

Optional plot hook-y bits

1 – New weapons are markedly different from old ones	2 – People's views are shaped by a great victory	3 – People's views are shaped by a great loss
4 – The weapon is unrecognizable from its original form	5 – The weapon has become more famous than those who wielded it	6 – Information presented with the weapon is wildly inaccurate

After this scene your saga is finished. Reflect upon the passage of time and the arc of history. Consider an unintended use for something nearby.

Sword Saga was created for the Legacy Jam, exploring ideas of succession, consequence, and time. The Legacy Jam is hosted by Mousehole Press. You can find more information on the game jam and see other submissions at <https://itch.io/jam/legacy-jam>

Sword Saga is partially inspired by the song "Those Hands" by the band Lindby for episode 25 of their Dungeons & Dragons actual play podcast Bombarded. They can be found at <https://bombardedcast.com/> and <https://bombarded.bandcamp.com/>

The cover image is by [Mr Bear Mac Mahon](#) from [Pixabay](#)