



Fantasy Fight Scenes

By Golden Aerie
Oct. 21, 2016

Labyrinth opens itself up to fight scenes, big and small. If we look at the film, there are quite a few fights: the fight to free Ludo, Sarah's escape from the Fire Gang, Sir Didymus protecting the bridge, the fight against Humongous the gate keeper robot, and the battle in the Goblin City. Strangely enough, the majority of *Labyrinth* fanfiction does not have true fight scenes. They tend to have arguments, more than anything.

To write a killer fight scene (pun!) you should prepare yourself by having some kind of anatomical reference available. A picture of the human skeleton, the muscles, and the organs. In general most fantasy beings are thought to be formed in the same manner as humans. You will also need to have some weapon reference. This is easily googled, even various fantasy weapons.

There are a few different types of weapons, common in fantasy, that you should be aware of: long blades, short blades, ranged weapons, blunts, and poles. Long blades include various types of swords, except short swords. Long blades can be single-handed or double-handed. These include broadswords, claymores, rapiers, foils, epees, sabers, and scimitars. Short blades are short bladed weapons such as short swords (used by pirates and for close quarter combat), daggers, knives, and stiletto blades. Ranged weapons are currently en vogue and include bow/arrow, crossbow, slings, throwing knives/stars, darts, javelins, etc. Blunt weapons are typically handheld items that require swinging to be effective, this includes: axes, clubs, maces, flails, and hammers. Pole weapons are longer weapons that require the actions of swinging, striking, and jabbing; this includes: polearm, staffs, javelin, and lances. Usually powder weapons aren't used in fantasy, but there are exceptions. Powder weapons (gunpowder weapons) are typically considered to be blunderbusses, flintlock pistols/rifles, cannons, grenades, and other light explosives.

You can't just rely on weapons during a fight. Look into defensive items like shields and types of armor (plate metal, chainmail, leather, silk, etc). Not everyone who enters a fight has some kind of defense, but some do. If there is a knight of the realm, they might have a shield

that bears the crest or coat of arms for the lord or king they work for.

Fighting Words

When you begin your fight scene have a battle plan in mind, no matter how big or small. Your goal is to build up the fight until an outcome is reached: someone will win and the other will die or there will be a standoff or there will be a standoff while most others die. It's important to have an idea of how you want to move the characters.

In general, fight scenes start with some kind of banter. You don't have to stick to this. I'm just saying that it's typical. It lays the groundwork, giving a solid reason for the fight to take place. You might also find a way to provide some characterization. In *Lord of The Rings*, there was some friendly banter between character to provide humor alongside the gore. In the film *Army of Darkness*, it goes so far to use slapstick humor in opposition to the over-the-top gore. Humor isn't always necessary and is completely up to the author.

When the fighting starts, be sure to use your descriptive words and be sure to use the 5 senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. Extend the fight scenes by describing them. Can the characters hear the sound of arrows rushing past them? Perhaps they get hit in the face and can taste the metallic taste of blood in their mouth. Perhaps they attribute the sound of screams to the sound of seagulls.

Go Through The Motions

It's important to give us a play-by-play of the action alongside your descriptors. Here is a core word list for anyone wishing to write a fight scene.

Scraped	Kick	Storm
Struck	Stabbed	Attack
Thrust	Slice	Raid
Pelt	Plunged	Charge
Crush	Swung	Leap
Speared	Ducked	Howl
Jab	Deflected	Shriek
Punctured	Flee	Moan
Chop	Splatter	Petrify
Cleave	Impale	Disembowel
Choke	Pummel	Behead
Tear	Boom	Blast
Fired	Crunch	Pierced
Blocked	Splat	
Punch	Grinding	

These are just a few words of action. What you might also want to take into consideration are words of consequence. Here are my top 10 suggested words of consequence: Bled, vomited, oozed, pooled, aching, splintering of bone, blinded by blood, bile, distorted, and guts.

The best way to write a fight scene is to just do it. Write the scene and go over it a few times. Does it bring up the imagery that you desire? Does it end how you want it to end? If you

have any doubts, have a friend look over it and give you feedback.

Pacing

When you write your fight scene, you will want to make sure that your pacing fits the scene. You can write a fight scene that lasts four pages, but if it just seems to go on and on, then it's not good. If you write an "epic battle" in one single page, it's probably not that epic.

Story pacing is vital to how your readers react to your story. It's like music. Sometimes it has a fast tempo and sometimes it has a slow tempo. One way to assist in your pacing is to have the characters reach their goals for the scene. You can spend a little time with each character, delving into their thoughts and reactions, their actions, and their choices - good and bad.

Examples of Fight Scenes

I have here three very different types of fight scenes from three novels: *The Princess Bride*, *Animal Farm*, and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Look at the differences and get a feel for how the authors handled the scenes.

From *The Princess Bride* by William Goldman.

*The cliffs were very close behind him now.
Inigo continued to retreat; the man in black continued advancing.
Then Inigo countered with the Thibault.
And the man in black blocked it.*

Goldman separates the action line by line. This helps with pacing of the sword fight atop the Cliffs of Insanity.

From *Animal Farm* by George Orwell

At last they could stand it no longer. One of the cows broke in the door of the store-shed with her horn and all the animals began to help themselves from the bins. It was just then that Mr. Jones woke up. The next moment he and his four men were in the store-shed with whips in their hands, lashing out in all directions. This was more than the hungry animals could bear. With one accord, though nothing of the kind had been planned beforehand, they flung themselves upon their tormentors. Jones and his men suddenly found themselves being butted and kicked from all sides. The situation was quite out of their control. They had never seen animals behave like this before, and this sudden uprising of creatures whom they were used to thrashing and maltreating just as they chose, frightened them almost out of their wits. After only a moment or two they gave up trying to defend themselves and took to their heels. A minute later all five of them were in full flight down the cart-track that led to the main road, with the animals pursuing them in triumph.

Orwell's characters, some human and some farm animals, begin the revolution with this paragraph. When the animals start to revolt, they move in animal-like ways. They kick, they butt, and they thrash. Make sure your characters move and act only in their sphere of

existence otherwise it won't be believable.

From *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson

He would be aware of the great field of lamps of a nocturnal city; then of the figure of a man walking swiftly; then of a child running from the doctor's; and then these met, and that human Juggernaut trod the child down and passed on regardless of her screams. Or else he would see a room in a rich house, where his friend lay asleep, dreaming and smiling at his dreams; and then the door of that room would be opened, the curtains of the bed plucked apart, the sleeper recalled, and lo! there would stand by his side a figure to whom power was given, and even at that dead hour, he must rise and do its bidding. The figure in these two phases haunted the lawyer all night; and if at any time he dozed over, it was but to see it glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly and still the more swiftly, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamplighted city, and at every street corner crush a child and leave her screaming. And still the figure had no face by which he might know it; even in his dreams, it had no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes; and thus it was that there sprang up and grew apace in the lawyer's mind a singularly strong, almost an inordinate, curiosity to behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde. If he could but once set eyes on him, he thought the mystery would lighten and perhaps roll altogether away, as was the habit of mysterious things when well examined. He might see a reason for his friend's strange preference or bondage (call it which you please) and even for the startling clause of the will. At least it would be a face worth seeing: the face of a man who was without bowels of mercy: a face which had but to show itself to raise up, in the mind of the unimpressionable Enfield, a spirit of enduring hatred.

Stevenson's piece is haunting. Mr. Hyde is after a terrified girl and attacks her. It's a bit more grim and visceral than the other two pieces. The author uses a few key words that really help to inspire fear in the reader such as Juggernaut, dizziness, lamplighted, bondage, and the phrase "a spirit of enduring hatred".