Mystic Realms

Members Manual

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Mystic Realms, Ltd

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Part I. Theatric Roleplaying

"Think of all your favorite action-adventure heroes and remember their best stories. Have you ever wanted to be like them? Have you ever imagined yourself embarking on a grand adventure?"

Many of us enjoy playing our pixilated heroes, pointing, pressing and clicking our way through glorious adventures splayed out on video screens. Some of us have sat around tables and moved painted figures on tactical map boards, playing adventures where dice determined success or failure. And some of us have even had the pleasure of dressing in costumes and playing live-action roleplaying adventures. But have you truly experienced life as these characters?

Mystic Realms provides an immersive style of live-action roleplaying that encourages you to become your character through the use of a rule systems designed around actually performing your skills. Play occurs in highly detailed game worlds where dramatic stories are driven by player choice.

Mystic Realms events are theatric, cinematic, and totally in-character from start to finish, because the goal is to develop a deeper, more profound roleplaying experience. To this end we present live-action roleplaying as a multi-dimensional hobby that embraces immersive rules, a cooperative community, and a theatric approach to events.

An Immersive Style

When you dress up in a costume, talking and walking in a persona, you've entered the world of costume play. Add a game master to narrate the world and rules system that allows combat between players, you've made a live-action roleplaying game. Remove the game master, build the world, and design the rules system to resolve everything in character and you've created the Mystic Realms immersive style of play.

Ask any experienced roleplayer to relate their most amazing moments and the common thread will also be how the scene "seemed" to be so real. Much of this book is about how you can make the scene become "real" for you, which is the heart of an immersive style.

Suspending Disbelief

The Mystic Realms rules remove as much out-of-play activity as possible because anything that pulls a player out-of-character will ultimately make the scene less real. By playing totally in-character without a need for any out-of-play conversation or resolutions the player more easily able to suspend their disbelief and find the "realness" in the scene.

The concept of suspension of disbelief is what allows the magic of roleplaying to happen. The ability to suspend disbelief is a basic performing skill. Any actor playing a role needs to become the character for the audience to believe the scene. If you want to believe in your own scene, you'll need to suspend your disbelief.

At a basic level, this suspension is accomplished by trying to think and act as your character as much as your roleplaying skills will allow. Good roleplayers can get deep into their characters psyche. Of course, there will always be a small part of your awareness devoted to safety, interpersonal, and theatric concerns, but most of your mind will be given over to your character's thoughts.

Since the Mystic Realms rules are keyword driven with most skills requiring physical action that mirrors real-world activity this really helps immersion. Rules systems that require players to use out-of-game devices such as dice or rock-paper-character pull players out of the scene and prevent suspension of disbelief, as do out-of-character discussions over skills effects.

In an immersive system, players are encouraged to play out the activity as if the skill was a theatric performance and the other players around are the audience. This is especially true with material-based skills. Performing a cool ritual using chants and occult paraphrenia will aid in the suspension of disbelief, whereas a player just waits for time to expire is not adding to the theatric environment.

Dramatic Conflict

In live-action roleplaying, conflict is often associated with combat. The excitement of physical confrontation is intrinsically stimulating. When participants face off against each other with their skills, there is an emotional content to the scene that cannot be denied, and because of this, combat will always be a major part of live-action roleplaying.

Mystic Realms recognizes the importance of physical conflict but stresses other forms of dramatic conflict can add to the roleplaying environment. A more profound style of play recognizes that conflict can occur in many different forms. While physical combat is exciting and challenging, dramatic conflicts stimulate the mind and the heart in different ways. Dramatic conflict in storytelling simply refers to the opposition faced by characters. This conflict may be internal or external.

Internal conflicts are based on the characters own thoughts or feelings. They are conflicts with the self and most often occur when a character's values or belief systems are challenged. The Mystic Realms worlds provide much information on creating your past, personality, and purpose so that players invent internal conflicts that reflect the world and the characters place in it. Having this background helps connect new players to cast driven plots by allowing them to be conflicted over their in-character choices.

External conflicts are conflicts with forces outside of the characters. These kinds of conflicts are most visible between characters. One character wants one outcome while the other character wants an opposed outcome. This forces characters to resolve the conflict and the action of their resolution drives the scene. More experienced immersive roleplayers will choose to create minor conflicts with other player characters based on their past, personality, and purposes. The resolution of these conflicts will help drive player plot during an event.

The resolution of dramatic conflict does not generally involve physical combat. In fact, in this kind of immersive, theatric roleplaying, combat often becomes the least exciting alternative. Instead, players want to explore the conflicts to heighten the drama. Only after the story is "played-out" will the players resolve these conflicts, often through negotiation or compromise that leaves everyone a winner.

Character

The detailed Realm Book provided for each Mystic Realms setting allows players to create characters with character. That pasts, personalities, and purposes that are connected to the world of play. This means that every character will be linked to every other character by the relationships established in the source materials. To create dramatic conflict, players need only have their characters react to the world around them.

Because of the well-developed worlds, characters have logical in-play reasons for developing relationships. Characters thwart each other's goals, challenge each other's belief systems, undermine support networks, and corrupt allies, but they can also support each other's goals, advance each other's belief systems, bolster support networks and reward allies.

In immersive, theatric roleplaying, you portray your character in a manner that creates small confrontations that develop tension between characters that need to be addressed within a scene. The resolution of these conflicts brings players into the moment. For example, raising moral, intellectual, and emotional questions over issues allows players to express their opinions and the resultant conversation connects players to the issue. As the scene unfolds, players can become more invested in the action, which leads to greater immersion, which then leads to those magical moments that everyone seeks.

Dramatically motivated events occur when characters and story combines together to give emotional and/or intellectual meaning to the conflict. At these events, the conflict (both combat and non-combat) brings the roleplaying experience to a new level. At drama-driven events, players place their characters into struggles across a broad spectrum derived from contrasting backgrounds, motivations and personalities, and only resort to combat when all other exciting means of conflict are exhausted.

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Winning

Theater is performing and performing is giving. Winning is about gaining victory and gaining victory is about taking. At a roleplaying event there will always be those who give to the environment and those who take from the environment. In order to have an immersive event there must be many more "giver" than "takers."

Everyone performs at their best in a comfortable and supportive environment. Competitive environments stifle interaction. They make people wary and careful, which causes them to group up and be more isolated. By their nature, roleplaying games premised on competition will not develop diverse experiences.

Roleplaying cannot be about winning in the sense of besting another but winning through cooperating with each other so that all can be equally entertained. An event about everyone is an event where all players can experience awesome highs and tragic lows. In such events, members will find "victory" every time they play, because such events are always fun and exciting.

Fundamentals

Immersive, character-driven roleplays do not just occur whenever players dress in costume. These kinds of amazing events require a group of people who understand the goal and are willing to cooperate.

One or two people embracing an immersive style will not create a theatric roleplaying event. If people want to experience those elusive, magical, memorable moments that the immersive roleplaying can produce, most of the participants must embrace the following fundamentals.

Individual

These fundamentals focus on perspectives that will help prepare individuals to be more theatric roleplayers.

The Art Predominates

Members are encouraged to learn more about the theatrical arts of acting, costuming, stage prop-making, script writing and scene setting through use of decoration, lighting and sound. A member's artistic interests in writing, sketching, painting, illustration, photography, computer graphics, graphic design, and other creative pursuits are also incorporated into production events. All members should strive to improve their improvisational-acting abilities as well. By becoming better performers, they reap the rewards of better performances. Those who have the most fun in this hobby, continue to develop their skills over a lifetime. There is always something new to learn. Roleplayers who stop developing their skills will generally lose interest in the hobby or worse, become frustrated.

Seek True Immersion

Until a person truly plays immersively, they will likely think their non-immersive play style is immersive. In the common understanding of immersive play, all you need to do is wear a costume and "sort of" be the character. It's okay to make out-of-play comments and players don't really need to be in the headspace of their character. These types of players often embrace the adrenaline rush and mistake excitement for immersion.

The goal of true immersive play to become your character in a way that lets you experiences the imagined world as real. You end up thinking and acting as your character. You internalize the rules in such a way that you can use them subconsciously. You stifle your own internal monologue and replace those out-of-play thoughts with the thoughts of your character. In this way, you end up acting, speaking, and even thinking as your character.

When playing in the Mystic Realms style everything you say and do is to improve the shared story and get people involved in the action.

The imagined world becomes so real. When you hear effect statements, you can see the effects happening in your mind's eye. When you're "swimming" over a blue tarp, you can almost feel the cool water splashing on your skin. When you're jumping over stepping stones, you can feel them wobbling under your feet even knowing they are just painted pieces of plywood.

Of course, you're not totally lost in the character. Your subconscious is there to guide your roleplaying in a manner

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We are looking for a few members to help with the editing and will provide a non-pdf copy for easy editing and tracked changes.

that makes it fun for everyone. You may have to pop out of your immersed state to resolve a "clarify" or to give a "caution," but you'll develop the skill and theatric discipline to do this well. You'll be totally immersed and "living" the world, but still be able to handle out-of-play concerns.

Honor Code

Members need to value honesty. All members must play by an honor code that requires them to follow the rules without cheating. During theatric roleplaying, members are expected to honestly acknowledge skills used against them, accurately make all required counts with the proper cadence and to only use skills as written in the core rule book. Members must conduct themselves fairly and in accordance with the spirit of the rules, and most importantly always seek to give others the benefit of the doubt.

Violations of the honor code, both intentional and accidental, will inevitably occur. When this happens, the participant who witnesses the violation should politely point out the mistake and explain to the player who committed the infraction the correct way to resolve the situation. If the situation warrants, they should make a formal complaint to the arbitrator.

Entertaining Others

When you go to a play or movie, you watch the show and have no control over the entertainment value of the presentation. You are merely a member of the audience. Your task is simply to remain quiet and attentive. At a roleplaying event, by contrast, you are the performer. You have direct control over the entertainment value of the event. Your task is to be the best protagonist you can be. If you do not involve yourself in the story, you cannot fault anyone but yourself. You must become involved, create your story, and help others to create their story.

Members must accept they are responsible for entertaining themselves and others. A good member knows that if those around them are not holding up their part, the best course of action is to double their own efforts, and lead by example. One of the best ways to ensure that you are an entertaining performer is to attend every event with a series of goals for you and your character. The goals can be anything. Examples may include meeting every new person attending

the event, attempting to remain in character using your in-play accents for the entire event, or even to achieve some position or honor as your character.

Personal Enrichment

Clubs should challenge their members to become better persons. Participation in theatric live-action roleplaying is the perfect way to develop social skills. Exposure to improvisational acting techniques will quickly allow a person to develop their self-confidence. Running clubs provide leadership, organizational, and management skills. Theatric-touch combat develops athletic skills, hand eye coordination, and helps members to stay in-shape and be healthy. All of these skills will have a positive impact throughout a member's life.

Appreciation

Members must appreciate those who volunteer their time and effort to administrate clubs and to write plots. Members must realize that these persons are doing their best. Their jobs are necessary and require a commitment above that of a normal member. When administrators ask for help, members should show their appreciation by pitching in and making their jobs a little easier. Members should thank managers and writers after every event. The fun you had at the event would not be possible without their efforts.

Use Skills Theatrically

We understand theatric roleplaying is hard for some roleplayers to understand. There are many people who have never looked at live-action roleplaying as anything more than a competitive game, and until a person experiences theatric roleplaying, they may not understand what they are missing.

One difference between theatric play and gaming play is how and why the skills are used. A non-theatric roleplayer will use skills to best an opponent as quickly as possible almost every single time if they can, whereas a performer will first look at the context of the situation, and decide what skill to use based on the needs of those around them.

A performer will wait to use their feats until the moment of greatest dramatic impact. For example, the performer will allow the "evil" monologue from the villain and then "kill"

the villain. Performers respect each other's performances and try to work with each other so that everyone enjoys the scene. A non-theatric roleplayer might just kill the villain before he or she has a chance to even speak, because their competitive kill is more important than any other consideration in the scene.

A performer understands that a ritual and procedure gives them an audience for a short scene. The performance of a ritual or procedure should be personalized to the character. They should also use props and vocalizations to make an entertaining scene for the duration of the performance time. A non-theatric role player will often rush through the roleplaying, because the rewards are the goal, and the required time is merely what must be endured to reach that goal. This behavior misses the whole point of the roleplay.

Perhaps the greatest difference between using skills theatrically and using skills competitively is found in melee and ranged combat. Theatric-touch combat requires all participants to accept a non-competitive environment. In this environment, the better fighter will still be victorious, but since the goal is not winning, the combat scene will be a shared performance that is fun and fair for all.

Acceptance

No event is going to be perfect for everyone because people have different likes and dislikes. Some players like lots of fighting, while other players like lots of roleplaying, puzzles, or physical challenges. Differences in tastes mean that you're going to enjoy some events more than others. Members accept these differences and realize that one person will love an event that they thought was only average, and vice-versa.

Members must also accept that not everyone will have great skills. New players will be developing their skills and experienced players may reach a limit to the depth they are willing to achieve in their immersion. Respect each other for their abilities and accept the differences between members. As long as people are meeting the minimum standards, don't be overly critical of how they want to have fun.

In the end, it really does not matter what other people are

doing, members who accept responsibility for creating their own fun are less effected by what others are doing. Members who entertain themselves by playing characters to the best of their ability even when others are not, will almost never have a "bad" time. Most times all it takes is one player roleplaying hard to bring everyone else back into character.

Group

When a group of players embraces these fundamentals, they will have a greater chance of creating good theatric roleplaying.

Community of Friends

A roleplaying club should be a community of friends. As a community of friends, members are encouraged to be respectful of other members, to participate responsibly and safely at all events, and to support their club in a manner that allows all members to explore their creative interests. Compromise forms the basis of all collaborative endeavors. Theatric roleplaying requires sharing and teamwork. Every member will have their own ideas, opinions, and beliefs in regards to what constitutes their own perfect interaction, so members must accept the positions of another and try to meet in the middle when they disagree.

Shared Labor

Clubs are run entirely by volunteers who work together to create those memorable moments of live-action roleplaying. At events, there's always a lot of work that needs to be done, but when this labor is spread over the entire membership it's not much work at all. The best events set up decorations in the play area, check members into the event quickly, serve food to members, clean up the host site to leave it looking better than when the event started, and update all player characters expediently and accurately.

If everyone at an event helps out, that shared labor results in a better event for all. When a member does not contribute, this member puts an additional burden on those who are sharing the labor. It is a selfish person who does not contribute. Strong clubs encourage members to become better people who are able to work and cooperate with others for the common good of all.

Clubs using principles of shared labor should not be profit-

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making businesses for a select few persons. When players are working for the betterment of the community, the community as a whole should benefit. Monies raised should be used for the club for its improvement. Be wary of for-profit groups using the club model. Ask yourself if it's right for owners to personally benefit from your labor.

Accessibility

Members are encouraged to host their own events, start their own clubs and create their own amazing memories. This can easily happen in local parks, school campuses and even your very own backyard. Pre-written activities and mission-based events can be downloaded from the Mystic Realms website and played by groups of members. Each event states the status earned by players and cast for running the show.

A trained writer can write activity-based events and mission-based events. A trained director can host their own community-based events. Hosting an event is not hard and doing the preparation work for the event is part of the fun. Meeting people, coming up with ideas, writing events, making characters and building props are all part of the process that invigorates the creative spirit.

Philanthropy

Clubs are a part of the larger community and supporting local charities helps members realize this. Supporting food banks, homeless shelters, medical research foundations, or veteran support groups establishes positive relationships and spreads the awareness of live-action roleplaying in a positive direction. Clubs should work closely with host sites to volunteer their services in order to improve them through workdays or similar events. When members work together to better their community, the club builds friendships and a sense of connection between members. In turn, this fosters communication and provides better events.

Role Responsibility

Everyone who attends a theatric roleplaying event has an obligation to contribute scenes to the success of the club's event. In the traditional roleplaying game, players often rely totally on the cast to provide monsters to slay and plots to enjoy. In theatric roleplaying, those participants portraying player characters have a responsibility for creating their own player driven plots because it is their commitment to

the event that creates theatric roleplaying.

The writers and cast performers set up the background story for the event, which explains why the player characters are at the in-play location. They also offer a series of plot scenes that unfold during the event to create a loose story for the player characters. But, it is the player characters themselves that actually create those magical moments of live-action roleplaying.

The basic background information and unfolding plot scenes created by the cast are used by the players as the starting place for their own activities at the event. The player uses the information found in the plot scenes to create dramatic experiences with other members. It is the cumulative interactions between the players during an event that gives rise to the elusive feeling of truly becoming the character.

The cast performers, in movie parlance, are the extras, who support the protagonists. The cast reacts to the actions of the players. The player performer guides the roleplays in every scene, including the plot scenes. The cast member expects the player to make the decisions and take the actions that make a good story.

Player performers work together, sharing the spotlight to create their own scenes that develop player plot between other player characters. This player created interaction is what truly drives the theatric event. Player plot often occurs in conjunction with the background scenes created by the cast, but can also occur independently, as plots between players takes on a life of its own.

Thus, player performers have the responsibility to create well-defined characters with personalities, motivations and backgrounds developed from the source materials of the world setting. At events, players are expected to perform scenes for and with others that capture the essence of their character.

A player who complains that there's not enough happening in an event must realize that it is their responsibility to make something happen. Exciting, emotional theatric roleplaying only occurs when all players accept their responsibility to drive action, working together to create a story that includes

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and entertains everyone.

Consistent Rules

Consistency is the fundamental cornerstone of the Mystic Realms system. The Mystic Realms system requires that rules remain constant between groups of members and clubs. No house rules or special play considerations are allowed.

In many roleplaying games, the rules specifically state, 'keep the rules you want and throw away the rest.' This may work with ten friends sitting around a table or in a live system that stops the action and uses an out-of-play arbitrator to interpret every rule, but it does not work in a system that seeks to ingrate rules and action seamlessly throughout the scene. Out-of-play arbitrators, rules deliberations and so forth disrupt performance, and must be kept to a minimum.

If different groups played with different versions of the rules, it would be impossible for individual groups to get everyone to understand their version of the rules. Play would become a jumble of rules discussions, destroying the reality of the theatric moment. To avoid this, everyone plays by the official rules and any errata published.

Local groups should never modify or invent skills, special abilities, or other rules that are not in official publications. All participants have a right to know the rules and the kinds of characters and situations they will face during the show. By ensuring rules consistency through groups, everyone is assured that events will remain fair and fun to all.

Participation

Like any worthwhile endeavor in life, you get out of a live-action roleplaying event what you put into it. A roleplaying event is not like a gas station where you can pull up to the pump and pay an attendant to fill you up with gas. You can't come to a roleplaying event, pay some money and expect to have an attendant "fill you up with fun."

Roleplaying is a hobby that requires your active participation. In a movie or other theatric event, you are an observer watching the action unfold. When roleplaying, you are the action; and to get the most out of an event, you must become heavily involved in the story. The interactions you create for yourself and those around you will directly impact the fun you have at an event.

Don't be intimidated because it's not hard to roleplay a character. Even if you're a shy person, you'll soon find yourself thrust into the action forgetting that you're shy. In the supportive and encouraging environment that Mystic Realms strives to create, the shyness you once felt will disappear forever. We promise!

So don't stand on the sidelines and watch the show; jump right in and become the show. Introduce yourself as your character, meet members of the cast, learn about the event plot and start making an impact on the show. It's easy and more fun than you can imagine.

Later on in this book, much will be said about keeping your theatric experience fresh and new, but for now a person entering this exciting hobby need only to accept the simple premise that theatric events are best when everyone contributes their share.

Player Performer

The performer who portrays the central role of the story is called the player, because they "play" out the drama (and not because they are a player in a game). The player performer provides the action, intrigues and dramas that drive the story forward. Their decisions guide the direction of the show.

Player performers are responsible for creating player plot. A character is created with a background, a personality and clear motivations. All of these are drawn from the world setting using a source book as a guide. Their life stories may include rules based information such as a culture, a religious faith, and/or a military allegiance, and personal information like a missing brother, a dark secret, or a driving ambition.

Before attending an event, the player will set goals for their character derived from their background, personality and motivations. They will conceive scenes that they wish to have their character play out during the event. Theatric roleplaying requires players to share parts of their

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character's life story with those around them.

Player plot scenes include obvious things like ranking up, admissions to military and divine groups, and campaigning for luminary positions. But anything a character says or does can be thought of as a player plot scene. Simply sitting down and telling a story about an event in the character's life is a player plot scene that will have an impact on other players.

A confrontation with another player is a great type of plot scene. Just because players are cooperating out-of-play to have a good time, doesn't mean that everyone's character needs to get along in the show. In fact, it may be fun to create characters with your friends who don't get along, but remember this is a game of interactions and just killing someone because you disagree with them is not conducive to theatric roleplaying.

When participating in theatric roleplaying, do not rely on the combat-focused solution to a disagreement - beat down and/or death - instead come up with real roleplayed confrontations that develop verbal conflicts into dramatic moments. Violence should be the last option as violence often decides the issue with finality. You want to build up the action in every scene, pushing the limits further and further, and only resorting to violence when you have reached the climax of the confrontation.

But if your fellow player's roleplaying leaves you no choice other than violence, then a theatric-focused player will engage in the combat as a means to entertain everyone, and when it's over they will ensure that all parties enjoy the outcome, even the vanquished. Being a player in a theatric event makes you responsible for other's enjoyment, and every act you take should be to entertain others, as well as yourself.

Player performers are responsible for creating the interactions in the main play area, and this area should always be full of character activity. If you find yourself with nothing to do, don't be bored, it's your show! Add to the drama by thinking of a scene that conveys yourself to others and play it out. Spend your time talking, performing rituals and procedures, practicing combat, playing a musical

instrument, conspiring against someone, basically doing anything that your character would normally do. As time goes on, and your performance skills improve you'll learn how to create amazing player plots that sweep whole groups of less experienced players up into your performance.

By portraying your character as a real person you will begin a journey through their day-to-day lives and adventures. Combat-focused roleplaying can often reduce the roleplaying experience to a series of wins and losses, but as a theatric player you're not trying to win and you really shouldn't see any part of the show as losing. In theatric roleplaying, you're trying to experience the performances of everyone around you, while contributing to the best of your ability with your own performance skill.

Good things will happen to your character, such as recovering a magical item, surviving a dangerous mission, making new friends, uncovering a dangerous plot and defeating a dastardly villain. Bad things will happen to your character, such as losing your favorite sword, having your character's money stolen, being unable to solve a puzzle or pick a lock, and yes your character may even die.

But the beauty of roleplaying is whatever happens only happens as the life of the character. Benefits and harms to the character have no real effect on you or the real world. The highs and lows are just the dramatic elements of your performance, nothing more and with no lasting impact. The good and the bad should be enjoyed equally during the event, and relished afterwards as moments of theatric roleplaying where you felt many kinds of emotions.

The player performer has an obligation to those around them to stay in character and to play through all scenes as their character. The player should seek to divorce his own out-of-play thoughts from the scene and always react as his or her character would. It's when the player performer starts reacting to in-play events with out-of-play thoughts or expectations that needless frustrations may develop.

Experienced performers learn to stay completely in character, and because of this they have the ability to enjoy any theatric experience. Good performers accept scenes as they are, realizing the limitations of money, time, and writer

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or performer skill will impact the execution of all scenes - those that are well-played and those that may go awry.

By playing through the scene as their character, the player performer maintains the strict theatric environment for all no matter what happens, just like an actor on the stage, the show continues as if nothing is wrong. This does take discipline and the mark of a good theatric performer is his or her ability to stay in character even when the player may feel that something is not right or fair in the show.

The goal of the ultimate theatric player is to "be their character through thick and thin, heaven and hell" and because theatric roleplaying is not a competition everyone should be unfettered in this goal. There are no winners, no losers and everyone should be working together on the common goal of producing a compelling scene for all involved.

The member must always remember that anything that occurs to their player character (positive and negative) at an event can be talked about when the show is over by people who are supportive and caring of one another's art.

The elegant beauty of a true cooperative community in and out of the show is that members are able to speak with each other respectfully about all their concerns. Frustrating issues in competitive, combat-focused roleplaying such as cheating, bullying, power-gaming, and so forth are easily dealt with in community-focused theatric clubs.

Cast Performer

The cast performers play all the supporting roles in the writer-created background story. It's the job of the cast to bring the world to life for the player participants who are the main focus. The cast will end up playing all kinds of supporting characters ranging from allies to opponents.

As a cast member, you are an actor - a performer who will portray many characters. Your theater is not just a stage, but the entire environment of the play area. It's your task to create the magical moments that make memorable scenes into legendary events. You will do this by learning your assigned role, by setting up the location for the scene and by acting out the scene with the player participants in a manner

that develops the roleplaying environment that the writer is trying to create.

The heart of being a cast member is good performance skills. Before their scene, the cast member must read the script, learn their character's skills, and memorize the information that needs to be conveyed to the player characters. While performing the scene, cast members must do their best to roleplay their assigned character in a serious manner that promotes the goals of the scene.

Every cast character should be played as a real person, with background, personality and motivations that are consistent with the scene. Each role is important and the cast member should try his best to roleplay his or her assignment accurately. There are no throw-away, just fight and die characters. That type of focus by the cast lends to a "gaming-type" atmosphere, with is the opposite of what theatric roleplaying is trying to create.

Cast performers must never break character or make out-of-play statements during the scene's performance. After the scene, the cast members should move away from the play area so as not to interrupt the player characters with their out-of-play presence. Ultimately, the performance of the cast will determine how the scene is received by the players.

In combat, cast participants should always try to entertain the player characters. Instead fighting with the goal of killing their adversary, the cast member must fight with these goals; (1) maintaining combat safety by not engaging in unsafe areas, (2) entertaining the players through roleplaying of the stop, step and roleplay rule, and (3) staying true to the cast character's purpose. Notice that the cast character's goals are listed as less important than entertaining the players, which means cast members should never push combat to a level where it begins to frustrate player characters.

Writer

Writers should seek to create a world of intricate, well-developed storylines capable of evoking emotional responses from participants while maintaining an environment where player character action impacts story development.

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When done correctly, a writer will produce true interactive entertainment by combining roleplaying, combat, special effects and scripting techniques to produce a level of seamless realism that removes the stigma of reality and allows total immersion in the world setting.

A writer is both the person who puts ink on the page and also the person that transforms the ink into reality. A writer has to be able to describe scenes accurately and succinctly, but they must also supervise the cast members to execute the adventure for the player characters. A writer must develop the interpersonal skills to work with and lead others.

The writer wears many hats. He or she is the one who drafts the scripts, but also the acting coach who encourages his cast members to perform at their best. The writer is a prop procurer, enlisting the members of his team to build, borrow or buy the props that will add to their scenes. The writer is the creative director choosing the sounds for the scene, and deciding on other special effects.

Every writer knows that the key to a successful performance is rehearsal. A writer must have his cast characters rehearse pivotal roleplaying scenes before their execution. The writer coaches each cast performer on how he or she wants them to perform. The writer will also instruct cast on how to operate the sound systems, lighting and other special effects.

Publications

Mystic Realms is like a box of tools: hammer, nails, ruler, pliers, screws, saw, and so forth. Tools in a toolbox produce nothing, but in the hands of a creative, willing person they can be used to produce beautiful things. We at Mystic Realms want you to have as much fun in your hobby as we have had. We want to provide for you all the tools you need to play-out interactive theatric experiences in your own homes, parks, schools and local halls. To that end, we have assembled our materials into publications which you can use to guide your endeavors. We hope they are helpful to you and provide you with as much enjoyment as they have given us. We know that if you use the rules contained within these publications you will create powerful, entertaining,

intellectual, and emotional theatric roleplaying events.

Members Manual

The Members Manual is a core part of the comprehensive system designed for the creation of a new kind of live-action roleplaying event, which is made possible when roleplayers form cooperative clubs and work together to create memorable, magical moments of theatric drama. The manual brings together all the concepts found in other publications and explains how you and your friends can use these publications to become characters in a story that stimulates your intellect and excites your emotions.

Other Mystic Realms publications provide the rules, setting materials, and writer training necessary for members to become skilled crafters and create engaging interactive masterpieces. This book provides the spirit of the system as a program that will expand your experiences and contributions. By embracing the contents of this book, you create the dramatic presentations that are the essence of the next generation of roleplaying games, finding a new level of excitement in your hobby.

The Members Manual is arguably more important than the rule book because it provides a philosophy to achieve superior roleplaying experiences. Members are encouraged to develop real performance skills that will help them create more theatric roleplaying events. By giving clear guidance on how to achieve this theatric success, members will be able to experience the full scope of live-action roleplaying as a multi-dimensional hobby.

The book is also filled with the basic information that every member needs to become a compelling part of the show. Members learn how to create characters that promote player driven plots. There is a how-to section with basic information for making costuming, props and other accessories. There's also an in depth section on theatric-touch combat, as well as helpful information on make-up, accents and roleplaying in general.

The member manual also outlines the minimum standards for a contributory participation, and explains the basic organization of production clubs which are used to make larger events possible. The book concludes with procedures

to enforce rules and ensure compliance by all participants, and an afterword by the author.

Rule Book

Two decades of play testing has ensured the Mystic Realms live-action rules provide efficient playability, amazing diversity and a great depth of character. The system, when used properly, creates a seamless theatric experience by promoting a performance-oriented environment that keeps all participants focused on in-play action instead of out-of-play rules mechanics.

Character skills are divided into nine categories based on how the skills are used during play: abilities, ballads, castings, compounds, feats, glyphs, knowledge, methods, scripts, and traps. The rules for each category function on similar standardized principles making the system simple to learn and easy to use, but also allowing the rules to retain a great complexity permitting diverse characters in varied settings.

The overarching concept uses key words to define all major game effects. Participants only need to memorize the key words effect and they will be able to handle the countless, complex permeations of skill use and environmental calamities that occur during a show.

The system was created so that participants could interact with others on fair and equal footing and not require the services of an out-of-play participant to resolve rules issues during play.

If a skill is not in the rule book, its absence is not because Mystic Realms has not considered it, but rather the skill has some flaw impeding ease of roleplaying or creates some other problem that is too difficult to overcome in a theatric setting.

Realm Books

There is a realm book for each of the theatric settings that details the source materials needed for playing in that realm. Our realm books tell the players everything they need to know about the realm of play, including character creation information, the history of the realm, descriptions of prominent locations, and important information for characters living in the world.

The realm book is the primary tool for creating your character. Knowing the basic background of the world, and where your character fits into this background is the most important part of creating theatric roleplaying. If you've got a strong character with much to say about past, current and potential world events then you may be able to get through the entire event without ever using a single game skill. Your knowledgeable interactions will bring the world to life, creating much enjoyment for you and those around you.

The realm books are stuffed with world information so you can create a highly detailed character with poignant motivations. The source materials are carefully designed to place groups of players in diverse and often conflicting relationships that promote exciting interactions and dramatic confrontations.

Item Guide

The Item Guide contains a descriptions of all common items, including tools, weapons, and armor. Look in this book if you want to know how long a sword is or how much damage a rocket launcher can cause. You find complete rules for using armor and for enhancing items. There are also rules for artifacts, gadgets, and other realm specific items.

The system has a lot of stuff that characters can haul around. The reason for having rules for all this stuff is to enhance your roleplaying. The props you carry can make scenes interesting. Picking locks requires a lock picking kit, so that the player can spend the performance time of the skill actually getting out the tools and using them in the roleplay of picking the locks. The props are needed to enhance the scene. Otherwise players are just sitting there counting off time, the goal is to become the character and the handling items makes the scene so much more real.

For example, are hedge clippers and chainsaws really needed as a weapon entry? Not if you're playing a combat style roleplaying event, because then a sword would be your best choice because its better balance makes it a more effective weapon, but if you're playing in an immersive,

theatric system you might want to choose the hedge clipper or chainsaw for your hockey-mask wearing post-apocalyptic mutant freak. With the touch-combat, roleplayed style of Mystic Realms you won't be at a great disadvantage, you'll look unique holding the weapon, and the use will add so much to the character.

Menagerie

The realms-verse is populated with a huge variety of beasts and this volume contains information on over one-hundred of the commonly encountered creatures. Each entry describes the beast in detail so that readers not only know the game skills the beast possesses, but gain an understanding of how the creature acts in the wild. In addition, the menagerie provides roleplaying guidance for each beast.

Many live-action roleplaying styles allow writers to make up monsters willy-nilly. These styles believe that new monsters can make a scene interesting; in fact the additional of new monsters and "special" monster skills is often used as a way to keep these combat-focused styles fresh. We believe that constantly introducing new beasts reduces the realness of the world to a confusing jumble of unrecognizable costumes and unbalanced monsters skills. We know that to create immersive roleplaying environments writers must use consistent antagonists, with detailed plots and good backgrounds.

The live-action roleplaying game that relies on the introduction of new beasts each one weirder than the last really only entertains on a surface level by providing the apprehension of combating the new creature. Deep, thought-provoking, emotion creating plots are not achieved when writers rely on the introduction of a new beast for generating excitement in the players. After their defeat, the monster-of-the-month is gone, never to return, and in time one monster becomes much like any monster, and soon the only difference between the monsters are the costume and a few skills, and all that remains is the apprehension of combat.

Compendium

The compendium is a listing of the common intelligent beings in the multiverse of Mystic Realms. The book includes entries on all player character races giving descriptions of each and listing their abilities. In addition, the compendium contains extensive entries on the non-player character races, which are called Lesser Beings because they lack the full faculties of intelligence and mana use. The compendium also contains all the myriad of entities that a character can be transformed into from their own form. The remaining entries are those entities that form by action of the environment or as an unintentional consequence of character action.

Players will use this book to understand what motivates the various entities. Writers will use the information contained within each entry to bring alive their plots. The compendium is massive and full of interesting information intended for use during play because theatric roleplaying requires characters who act in logical, predictable ways. The wealth of information on each entry allows the writer to tailor scenes and the player to have an understanding of why those scenes are important.

The consistency of costumes, skills and behaviors will give realism to the setting, enabling the plots to better capture the player's imaginations. Consistency helps move the game into theatric roleplaying, because instead of focusing on figuring out what their adversary is portraying, the player's will focus on what the adversary is doing and saying.

Internet

The Mystic Realms web site is a central hub for rules and event related information. The site includes a wealth of free downloadable content. There is also a forum where you can post questions and receive official answers.

The best part of the Internet is your ability to use it to reach out and find new friends, or to unite with other Mystic Realms players. Join the social networking sites and use them to find players, or to advertise your events.

Part II. Joining the Fun

Joining a live-action roleplaying club means commitment to yourself, it's the first step in your theatric journey. First, you'll work towards developing a character with "character" and meeting the minimum standards of costuming. Afterward, you will begin to explore the multi-dimensional hobby of live-action roleplaying, and hopefully learn some new theatric, writing, organizational, leadership and social skills that will serve you well throughout life.

Roleplaying Focus

Everyone is different, and everyone enjoys a different kind of roleplaying game. One of the strengths of Mystic Realms is that we recognize that there are many ways to live-action roleplay and seek to build a community that embraces all types of roleplayers and aspects of roleplaying, so long as they are willing to be a part of the cooperative community.

If you can learn to recognize your own preferences, you'll be better able to understand why some events appeal to you more than others. You'll also be able to see why others like events a certain way, and with that understanding you will see how Mystic Realms roleplaying events try to please a broad range of people.

Mystic Realms is a diverse community working together to create events that offer something to everyone. If you learn your preferences and the preferences of others around you, then you'll be better able to entertain. The community that accepts the combatist, the gamist, the narrativist and the simulationist will have much more exciting events than the community that favors one or the other.

The Mystic Realm rules system, unlike most other systems, is written to embrace those who like combat, those who like playing games, those who like story and those who like living as someone else. The strength of our program is found by merging these divergent approaches to roleplaying into one community where each focus is

respected and embraced.

Combatist

The combatist likes live-action combat. They love to fight and will train with weapons, maybe even exploring martial applications of real technique. Mystic Realms is a great system for the combatist because it encourages real world martial techniques.

In the real world, people fear the pain and injury caused by an attack so when they fight they have a defensive awareness as well as an offensive awareness. Since foam weapons don't hurt, most live-action roleplayers enter combat with no defensive awareness. The lack of concern for wounds changes the dynamics of a fight, destroying a powerful element in the realism of combat.

Under the Mystic Realms theatric-touch combat system, you are required to roleplay wounds and injuries before making counterattacks. This creates a defensive awareness, restoring that lost element of realism to our fighting. Players must develop real martial skills. They must learn to use parries and avoiding strikes to prevent wounds, which then requires more complex attacks. Feints, glides, beats and so forth become important in the combat so members learn real martial techniques.

The theatric-touch combat is realistic and tactical, but also safe and fair. It simulates a realistic style, but removes the advantages of strength and so that everyone can participate with equal enjoyment. Combatists love the real-life skills that they develop. Everyone else loves the system because they can participate on an equal footing. Small people, large people, men, women, boys, and girls can all participate successfully in the theatric-touch combat system.

Gamist

The gamist likes the rules. They enjoy flipping through skill lists and trying to build characters that amplify aspects of the rules. They like tactical situations, and

enjoy using their skills to the greatest advantage. Mystic Realms offers the gamists a well-balanced, extremely diverse set of rules that are simple in their use and execution, but endlessly complex in their applications.

The rules are easy to learn and give great freedom to the player when designing their characters. Feats give the combat advantage, rituals and procedures create amazing roleplaying opportunities, and a fully functioning trap system makes thieving interesting. Players can use castings to perform a variety of different effects. Glyphs, runes and compounds round out the system offering diversity and specialization.

The unified movement system allows swimming, climbing, flying, tunneling, moving through mushy ground and even through hindering terrains like brush and briars. The rules create a true three-dimensional play space that allows writers to create challenging scenes using different terrains.

The gamist has a unique opportunity to really define the character by choosing skills appropriate to the concept. And more importantly to the player, every skill has a use, which means that no character type will ever feel useless. The rules system has been designed to give every character an opportunity to contribute to the scene.

Narrativist

The narrativist cares about the story. They are looking to play in a series of events that has complex plot and strong themes. They want their actions to be able to influence the story, and they want to feel like they are a part of the big picture. Mystic Realms divides narration into two areas of responsibility. The first rests on the player characters, whereas the second rests on the cast characters.

A player has the responsibility to create their own character story. Groups of players write plot for themselves by creating adventuring groups with interwoven back stories, and then playing out these back stories at events. Plot derived from a player character's past, personality, and purpose is called player plot. Every in-character conversation you have with another player character creates plot. Over time, skilled players can

develop these in-play relationships in strong story elements. These plots can even be more important than the background plots created by the writers, because they directly impact your character in very personal ways.

Many events are driven by over-arching cast driven plots. These plots may touch your character personally if you involve yourself in them, but they may also just provide the catalyst for further player developed plots. Teaching writers how to create complex cast-driven plots and long term stories is a major part of the hobby. Aspiring writers are taught to use story-telling techniques that introduce characters, create rising action and then bring the action to an awesome cinematic climax. Experienced writers can go beyond the basics; they can create complex plots that interact with each other, involve many player characters, exist over a long period of time, and then lead into derivative stories. Of course, the limitations of time, money and ability will always determine the end result of any individual story. Mystic Realms can provide the guidance in this and other publications, but it's up to each club to create compelling cast-driven narrative plot.

Simulationist

The simulationist wants to be a character in a world that feels real. They want to live in an imagined world setting that has all the complexities and nuances of reality. A simulationist is not happy roleplaying in an empty play space. They want terrain and environmental effects. They want to be able to fly, swim, climb, and swing on vines. They want to use their skills to do all the interesting things that you can do in real life. The setting is important to the simulationist. They want to visit spooky graveyards, caves filled with burning lava, and underwater caves.

Mystic Realms serves the simulationist everything they can want and more. We have detailed rules for terrain and environmental effects. Our unified movement system means that walking and flying and swimming all use the same basic movement rules allowing great diversity in scenes.

We know simulationists often have the hardest time enjoying traditional roleplaying, because most system do

not support complete immersion. In other styles of play, you have to stop and describe the action. Simulationists hate out-of-game moderators, unnecessary rules discussion, stopping of action, dropping character; all those details interrupt the seamless simulation.

We've designed a system for the simulationist, as well as everyone else. All players are encouraged to internalize the rules mechanics and out-of-character thought, but the simulationist truly relishes this separate identity. By encouraging everyone to stay in-character and by avoiding rules-created interruptions, play flows seamlessly which is exactly what the simulationist is seeking. They want the world to feel as real as possible.

"Every roleplayer knows it's all about the story, but stories are fragile concepts when born, they need to be tended and cared for by player characters with strong pasts, personalities and purposes, or the stories will never grow into the complex ever-evolving, almost-living entities that must be desperately wrangled and reasoned with during the course of its telling."

Developing "Character"

When people say Mystic Realms is "character driven," they mean that theatric play is driven by three-dimensional roleplaying derived from the interactions of fully developed personas. The creation of theatric roleplaying depends heavily on the interaction between player characters who have their own stories to tell.

The best roleplays have characters with "character." The character is a list of statistics including numbers, skills, past, personality and purpose, but the "character" is how those statistics come alive in the roleplay. Your "character" will guide your character's actions during every roleplayed interaction. Player participants make up their own past, personality and purpose, while writers provide past, personality and purpose to every character in their scenes.

Having a character is a list of skills; having "character" is so much more. "Character" is the speaking and the doing in the context of a character's past, personality and purpose. Having "character" is what helps you get involved in the action. "Character" makes your character stand out and get noticed. It's also the primary path to greater enjoyment of your roleplaying hobby. You will find that once you start down this path developing "character" for your character, you will have a very rewarding experience.

Roleplayers often talk about advancing their character, but they rarely talk about developing their "character" and so miss an amazing part of this hobby. Live-action roleplaying is so often reduced to going on adventures and bashing monsters; but it can be so much more rewarding if participants focus on developing and growing their "character" in the world setting. A participant who does not develop "character" may still have a great time, but may never realize the realistic, emotional and intellectual content that theatric events can create.

The purpose of "character" is to help a participant roleplay their persona. A participant without a well-defined "character" may feel out of place or even bored when there is not an enemy around to fight. "Character" fills the time between adventures by giving the participant a reason to interact with other characters in non-combat interactions which will build over time, deepening into relationships that allow the emotional and intellectual content of theatric roleplaying.

In order to create those awesome dramatic moments, the players must first develop their character's "character". This section discusses how to build your character in a way that will permit you to have "character." First, you should be aware that terms past, personality and purpose serve distinct functions and build on each other to provide useful guidance during play.

The character's past is the background of the character which is consistent with the source materials of the setting. The character's personality is shaped by the background. And the character's purpose is built by comparing the character's past and personality to the character's current situation to create present and future goals for the character.

The personality may change as the background grows. The motivations will certainly change as goals are accomplished and possibly in fluctuation with changes to the personality. Notice how the character becomes almost like a real person. That's the goal.

Past

The character's initial past is drafted during character creation, but continues to grow as the character participates in events. Every event becomes an entry in the chronicle of the character's past. In fact, players are encouraged to keep a journal for their character. In this way, players will watch as they character grows and changes over time.

Creation

Creating a past for the character is perhaps the most important step in character creation and, unfortunately, the most often overlooked. A good past describes a character's origin, family history and pre-character creation experiences that have molded the character.

Source Materials: The source book will explain the types of characters permitted and give the general feel for the world. When creating a character's past you will consult the source book for your realm of play, by building the character's past from the source materials and basing the character's experience on things likely to have been encountered. By connecting the character to the world, the player will be more able to interact with others. The character will have stories to tell and reasons to react.

You should attempt to include as much of the source materials into your character's past as possible. The more connected your character is to the history of the world, the more you connect with other characters. Much of the action in theatric roleplaying is driven by the ability of the players to have their characters embrace the world. The first step in finding those memorable moments you seek is connecting with others and the bridge to that connection is the world setting.

A character's past must not conflict with the setting. Historical facts found in the source materials should be treated as immutable. Dates, descriptions and underlying understandings should not be factually challenged. In theatric roleplaying, the players rely on the consistency of the world to give meaning to their characters. Writing character pasts inconsistent with the world devalues the realism of the world and will begin to break down the stability of the play environment. So you must be careful not write to write into your character past facts or events that are contrary to established historical truth as detailed in the source book.

In some live-action roleplaying games (often those without deep characters and detailed worlds) it's sometimes acceptable (often encouraged) to make-up something weird and "just go with it." Players of these games often enjoy the silliness of a character wearing rabbit ears as some genetic mutation or the elf that doesn't have pointed ears because of a childhood accident. While this seems like harmless fun or small breaches of realism, overall this breaking down of fact will undermine a theatric world. There's many ways to create unique and interesting characters without resorting to breaches of the world setting.

Contacts: One of the most important details in making a past is answering the pivotal question: "Does my character have any family, friends or foes?" In the traditional roleplaying game, the player usually makes up imaginary people. In the theatric roleplaying game you should consider building your character's past in conjunction with the pasts of other players.

Imaginary characters serve little purpose in a live-action roleplay. Whenever a participant makes a new player character it's always best to speak out-of-play with other players and build that new character's past related to other characters in some form. Are they allies or enemies? Are they family, friends, or foes? Define relationships and play as groups. By creating interconnected in-play relationships for your characters you create character depth that can be brought to life during play.

The source book will provide a choice of different cultures, life styles or vocations that are often in conflict and this allows for ready-made dramatic conflict between

characters that enhances the play environment by bringing the world to life. Notice we wrote "dramatic conflict" and not the kind of simple violence, theft or intimidation that leads to confrontations that can only result in combat. In theatric roleplays we seek more subtle confrontations that build up to larger dramatic conflicts.

Participants who are friends out-of-play will commonly create player characters who are in conflict. These characters may grow closer during play, or their animosity may increase. Either way the power of the performance and the enjoyment of the show will be enhanced for all as these characters play out their confrontations without resorting to killing each other which creates a finality to the story that both players want to avoid.

Wealth, Power and Influence: Most players want wealth, power and influence for their player characters, but in Mystic Realms most of the world settings have all characters starting off at the same relative level. This creates fairness of play that is enhanced by a rules system that does not create top-heavy, all powerful characters.

Pasts cannot be used to give one player character an advantage over another. Player characters are not allowed to claim in-play reputations, noble titles, military ranks, or other prestigious positions during character creation. No participant should write that his or her player character is the child of a nobleman, or even worse silliness, that his or her player character is the ruler of a nation.

But there are opportunities for starting characters to capture some elements of wealth, power and prestige. In most realms if you take the appropriate level of the wealth skill, it's okay to be the son or daughter of a minor noble, or even the leader of a small manor house and surrounding village that you create and place in the world, but don't expect your holdings to have additional resources or soldiers to send to you. Your own skills provide your resources.

Evolving Past: Many roleplaying games see the character's past as stopping at character creation, but at Mystic Realms we see that character's past as an evolving entity. We encourage a participant to write down a statement of the character's past at character creation, but we also encourage the participant to maintain a chronicle of the character's journey during play.

Most worlds require characters to have a book used to record skills and situations of importance. For example, in the Glory of Guildhall all Guildsmen are required to have a lore tome. This book is a record of their learning and life. For some it's a large, carefully drafted manuscript, for others it's just notes jotted down on paper. Players use this as a record of their character's experience in the world and reading it before an event helps get the player into the mind of their character. This is a very powerful tool for developing improvisational acting ability as it presents a snap-shot of the character.

Journals are not only important early on as a tool to get you into character as a new player, but they often become even more important after you have played the character for more than a few years. Long time players often find it ever more difficult to stay immersed in live-action roleplaying, than new players. They are continually brought out of character by their own internal monologues. The lore book is there to remind these experienced players of their amazing journeys and players who keep character journals are less likely to become disenchanted with their character's story, because they continue to focus on developing that story, and not so much on the distractions all around them.

Personality

A character needs personality. It is the essential link to "character," interacting between the character's past and the character's purpose. A personality is shaped by the character's past and in turn shapes the character's purpose.

What is personality? Well, personality is defined as the characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that make a person unique, but what does this truly mean? At its basic level personality is simply having a recognizable order and regularity to your character's actions. It's trying to act in similar ways in a variety of

situations because of your character's past.

Mystic Realms assumes that there are too many different kinds of people, personalities and situations to attempt to give archetypes and alignments for characters. Instead, player participants are encouraged to reach within themselves and create a character with depth and meaning different from themselves. In deciding on a personality, ask the following questions: Who is he? What makes her act a certain way? Does he have flaws or habits? Is she heroic or is he cowardly?

The best personalities are those that capture everyone's attention, so you should try to create a character with an open personality that interacts with as many people as possible. Generally, a character's depth of personality will depend on your roleplaying ability, which is why you should always strive to improve your theatric ability, thereby enriching your experience at Mystic Realms. The good news is that even if you're shy in real life, many people find playing a character lets them speak and act without inhibitions. In fact it's commonly accepted that if you're bored at a roleplay it's because you are portraying a boring character. So stand up, do something, be the center of attention and you'll have a great time and you will help others have a great time.

A personality is dynamic and constantly evolving, and theatric roleplaying encourages long-term character development. You will find that, as in real life, your player character will grow and change over time, just as a real person would grow and change. In fact, you should look for those pivotal moments where events could potentially impact the core of your character's beliefs.

You should stay away from playing rude characters. You must also accept that the character you play will be seen as a reflection of you. You should not rely on the mistaken convention that you are just playing a character, because caustic words and actions will hurt feelings in-play just as easily as they will out-of-play. Rudeness is often seen as the hallmark of poor roleplaying, because anyone can play an obnoxious character. It takes no performance skill to be offensive. Most people play to relax and have fun, not to be subjected to rude behavior or demeaned by another.

Rudeness is not the kind of roleplaying that will foster the growth of a cooperative community within a club and it's also against the Code of Conduct.

You should be careful when playing a character with an antagonistic personality. Many new players try to cover their insecurities by playing these character types. On the opposite end of the spectrum are those experienced but jaded roleplayers who become antagonistic to cover their frustrations. Antagonistic personalities are harmful to the play environment because they will inevitably offend other players out-of-character. It is very difficult to play an antagonistic character that is not offensive out-of-play. Instead of simply having an antagonistic personality, you should have a past and purpose that brings you into conflict with others.

An overly violent personality is another common pitfall as these players tend to think their character must rush into combat. Players in theatric roleplaying should always see combat as the last resort instead of the first resort. When combat becomes the quickest road to solving your problem, you run the risk of becoming combat-focused, and too much combat with too little communication will destroy the possibility of creating awesome emotional content and truly realistic roleplaying. Violent characters can be a lot of fun, players just need to realize that characters with violent personalities should spend more time roleplaying their violent personality than actually fighting.

Theatric live-action roleplaying requires cooperation and collaboration, though characters may disagree and in some events player-versus-player combat may even be encouraged, but the use of combat should always be a final option. The choice used at the moment of greatest climax. If the confrontation turns to immediate violence there is no rising action, no depth of characterization, no story to the disagreement. Roleplaying is conversation, good stories have good dialogue, if players resort to just killing someone without the discourse, there is no true show . . . no real performance.

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minimal

Purpose

Every person needs goals. In real life, you may want to graduate school, get a car, get a good job, and maybe get married. Now imagine that you did not have these goals or any goals at all. Imagine spending every day just sitting in your room waiting for something to happen, waiting for someone to walk in and provide action. You'd likely be sitting there forever, floundering directionless in life, bored out of your mind. A character without a purpose, suffers the same fate. Such a character depends totally on others for their enjoyment of the event.

Let's use the movie comparison. Would you want to watch a movie where the characters have no direction or goals? Imagine watching the characters listlessly move from scene to scene without a reason for their action. There would be no meaning to the character's existence and the movie would seem very superficial. Without the dramatic conflict that arises from characters with conflicted goals there would be no compelling emotional or intellectual connection to the characters. Similarly, a group of characters at a roleplaying event without individual purpose will not produce an exciting tale. These characters will only provide superficial entertainment for each other. It is only when characters act in accordance with their own purpose that interactions on a deeper level can develop.

When creating purpose, a player must ensure that the character's goals will conflict with other characters. Conflict is the heart of drama, and characters with motivations opposed to others will generate plenty of action, but be careful not to create an antagonistic character. Dramatic conflict is not antagonism, nor is it physical violence. Dramatic conflict is differences of opinions, ideals, beliefs and lifestyles that result in a deeper more believable portrayal of the character. These differences should not always rise to violence as violence is the simplest solution to conflict. Players are encourage to seek more intellectual and emotional resolutions to their differences.

Whenever one character acts it provides a chance for other characters to react. For the cast, a character's statement of purpose tells the cast member how to react to what players do. Writers use motivations to set the actions of a cast character. For example, if a cast character's goal is to take the prisoner to X, and the players want to free the prisoner, the cast's motivations provide clear guidance on any situation that may develop between cast and player. For a player, the character's statement of purpose is often much more complex, but just as useful. Everything that happens to a player character can be weighed against the character's purpose, with the character acting accordingly.

Criminal Purpose: Player participants must be careful when playing a character with criminal purpose. While portraying a criminal can be exciting and fun, it is not a license to prey on other player characters. Persons should not roleplay to fulfill their felonious fantasies at the expense of other player participants. There is no place in theater for the school yard bully or the former bullied person who desires to use his powerful character to push others around. Such real-life personality issues invariably clash with the cooperative nature necessary to create theatric roleplaying. These kinds of players will find combat-sport roleplaying games a more enjoyable experience. In theatric roleplaying the character with a pure criminal focus is overshadowed by the player whose criminal acts are caused by reasons of background and personality, and not a simple declaration of purpose.

Development: Participants new to Mystic Realms can get away with not having a clear purpose so long as the majority of the other characters are acting in accordance with their goals. Finding purpose is the hardest thing for a new player to grasp. New members will rely on the cast to provide a story and they follow the story in a reactionary manner. They will go on adventures, find out about the "antagonist" created by the cast, and then decide a course of action for their character.

However, once the "newness" of live-action roleplaying wears off, a player will need to stop reacting to stories by chasing the next adventure. They will have to develop their own character's purpose and create interactions of their own making that further these goals, because players who become dependent on the cast to provide their goals

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can find themselves not having as much fun as they once did. Experience has shown that these players will eventually frustrate themselves, as eventually the goals provided by the cast will be insufficient to motivate the player.

By developing their own motivations a player advances plots that are important to them. In creating their own motivations, players sweep other players up into their stories and become a central hub for roleplaying. And it is through this kind of activity that players bring to life the main play area.

Experienced live-action role players often end up in the tragic position of losing their character's purpose. Once you've mastered the game and roleplayed for many years cast driven plots won't interest you as much anymore. Victory against the cast is just too easy and the competition grows stale. In fact, one of the best ways for experienced roleplayers to continue to enjoy their roleplaying hobby is to focus on having clear goals for their character to achieve each event.

Character motivations that encourage performances are one of the keys to enjoying the hobby in the long term. In fact pursuing self-created personal character plots often leads players to a greater enjoyment of the game. Some grow to love the performance aspects of roleplaying more than gaming aspects. While both are important, learning to perform teaches skills that will benefit you throughout life, whereas the mastery of the game has little long term reward.

Experienced players who are able to move beyond a reliance on cast plots generally find player character motivations are the key to keeping their game fresh and new. By adopting clear purpose they seek out intrinsic goals for themselves which leads to a renewed enjoyment of roleplaying. By creating character motivations players gather others into their own player plots, this connects the experienced player to the newer players, rekindling for them the magic of the hobby.

Minimum Standards

The minimum standards must be embraced by both new and experienced players. A good club culture helps new players develop skills necessary to meet minimum standards, and helps experienced players remember that the enjoyment they get out of an event is directly proportional to the effort they put into the event.

Enforcement of minimum standards occurs at the level of the average member who enforces by collaboration, and not by confrontation. In other words, the members, not the managers, must enforce the minimal standards. If you notice a person falling short of the minimum standards you should help the person meet the achievement by having a non-confrontational conversation. By gently guiding everyone to adopt high standards of roleplaying excellence, the elusive experience of theatric roleplaying can be achieved for all.

Most new players come to the show with limited roleplaying skills, lack-luster costumes and no understanding of how to create plot with other players. Helping new players is easy. Most new players are eager to learn and respond favorably to being pulled aside and helped. If the new player is talking out-of-character just explain about the roleplaying environment. If the new player's costume is insufficient offer to let them borrow a tabard. Just be kind and be respectful and they will appreciate the help.

Experience players will sometimes stop giving full effort into their roleplaying. They will no longer take the time to read prologues and epilogues and will stop developing player plot and begin expecting others to entertain them. Some experienced players will go so far as to treat roleplaying events as merely a place to hang with their friends. It's difficult to help experienced players overcome themselves, but in a positive environment with all members maintaining the standards the experienced players don't generally become this jaded.

Club manager and charismatic members must set a good example of the minimum standards, but it's the members who determine if these standards are met. Members need

to enforce the minimal standards of roleplaying, costuming and decorations on themselves as a matter of pride in themselves and their club. Criticism and punishment creates resentment that drive players away, whereas helpful advice can make all the difference. Instead of telling someone, "Your costume sucks," offer to lend them a tabard to cover their "t-shirt" and perhaps teach them how to make a more serviceable costume.

If members do not enforce the minimum standards, their club will have difficulty keeping members. The simple truth is good performers look for other good performers, and good performers do not want to play with those who don't understand the meaning of theatric roleplaying. A good performer may play a one dimensional live-action game a few times for something different, but invariable they are going to seek the emotional and intellectual highs of a well-played show.

Events that don't meet the minimum standards are not examples of theatric roleplaying. They are just live-action roleplaying events using the Mystic Realms rules. It's your event, so please enforce these minimum standards for your own benefits and experience the full entertainment value of theatric roleplaying.

Roleplaying

Roleplaying is the most important element of a theatric-focused event because it allows the participant to become their character through the assumption of a persona. People come to an event with varying levels of performance skills, and the goal of every member should be to increase their acting skill, in order to increase their enjoyment of the performance.

Basic Roleplaying occurs when you wear a costume speaking and acting like your character. Most roleplayers can arrive at this level with a bit of practice. At this level you're reacting to scenes as your character would, often experiencing high and lows as your character. You've started to develop performance skills and can have profoundly enjoyable roleplaying experiences. The trouble with this level of play is that you still play through the event with a head full of out-of-character thoughts,

expectations, and rules decisions which prevent you from truly becoming the character.

When your roleplaying skill allows you to "become-the-character" that internal monologue will fade away. At this level you have immersed yourself in the role. Rules mechanics are internalized and are performed without thought, like riding a bike. Out-of-character thought exists below the level of consciousness, and the player thinks like the character, much like thinking in another language. At this point you are able to suspend your disbelief and experience scenes around you as your character's reality and it's awesome!

Becoming the character does not automatically happen. In fact many roleplayers never reach that level of immersion, but it's a goal you should strive for. The follows is a list of very basic concepts that will start you club on the road to becoming a great theatric-focused club.

Do portray a character with "character". You'll need a character with a background, personality and motivations to get the most out of your roleplaying experience. Don't play the strong silent type, especially if you're only justifying your out-of-character shyness. Instead, play a character that's trying to be an extravert. After a while, your shyness will leave and you'll have learned to be more social.

Do roleplay your character. Roleplaying is as simple as saying, "Hello. My name is <insert character name>." You can follow up with, "I'm from <some in-play place>. I just arrive here and I'm trying to learn more about <some plot you heard mentioned>." After this short roleplay you will make an acquaintance and know about some story information. You can then share this information with everyone else you meet during the event.

Do be open, friendly and communicative. All roleplaying events are social experiences. Improvisational acting requires cooperation and in theatric roleplaying the best moments are created when members support each other's scenes. Too much physical conflict will reduce the show's diverse interactions to one-dimensional combat interactions. Nothing kills theatric roleplaying quicker

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than playing with a group of anti-roleplaying, blood thirsty, belligerents who just want to steal your worldly possessions and leave your body for the carrion.

Do stay in-character. Good theatric roleplaying requires you to stay in character whenever you are in the public play area. Talking out-of-character about past epic events or your expectations for this event are taking you and everyone around you out-of-the-play and preventing you and your friends from having a good time playing your character. If there is no cast driven activity then players need to perform player plot scenes for each other. In fact, many players look forward to breaks in cast driven activities so that they can further they own player plots.

A poor roleplayer will spend a few minutes roleplaying as their character and the next few hours having conversations that are quasi-in-play discourses about game related subjects. This activity, acceptable at some games, falls below the acceptable level. We believe that everyone who attends has a duty to stay in character and contribute to the roleplaying environment in a cooperative, positive manner by playing out scenes that entertain others.

Don't say anachronistic, out-of-play comments. The goal of theatric roleplaying is total immersion in the moment so that you can feel like the show is real. Using modern euphemisms, making allusions to movies or just commenting in ways unlike your character detracts from the seamless play environment.

For example, comments like "epic fail," "nice hit, dude!" or "awesome roleplaying" destroy the environment by taking everyone out-of-play for a moment. Always keep your interactions in-play and appropriate for the time period and character you are playing.

Don't abuse clarify by asking questions that could be handled in-play. Use clarify to ask about skills quickly during combat, but when you're not in combat, just ask how a skill works and nine-times out of ten, you'll be able to discuss the skill completely in-play as your characters.

When confused, always try to ask all questions in-character For example, you don't need to say "Clarify- is

that a goblin?" Just ask as your character and you'll get an in-play response. For example, don't ask, "Clarify- What is that brown tarp," instead ask in-play, "What's that brown stuff over there." The answer to both questions is, "It's mud and it causes you to move slowly," but the latter question stays in-character, and so does the response.

Don't be negative. There's nothing worse than the member who verbally criticizes other members, scenes, adventures or even the whole event to others. Everyone around you is doing their best to help everyone have fun. If you're that person not having fun, you need to ask yourself why. If it's a matter of personal taste then respect that your likes are not the only likes that exist, someone else may be enjoying the situation you find distasteful. In most situations, instead of becoming negative, you should ask yourself what you are doing to help the environment. Complaining only makes the situation worse.

Remember the goal is to immerse yourself in the character so deeply that you do not have out-of-play thoughts or expectations for the scene. If you have truly achieved this level of skill as a performer then very little should be able to shake you from your persona.

Of course, if your suspension of disbelief is broken, and you're not having fun, and can't stay in character, then you must walk away from the scene without disturbing others. You may hate the scene, be mad at someone in the scene, or whatever, but others may be enjoying the scene, so you should be respectful and not interrupt. Publically expressing your frustration is only going to compound a problem, and ruin the experience for everyone who hears your negative comments.

Complaining never helps, and only spread the negativism around. When you encounter an issue, either try to help fix the problem (in a cooperative, non-confrontational manner) or accept the situation and play-through without complaint. If there is a real issue, then let the producer or the arbitrator know what's going on so they can help you address the issue. At the end of the event, if the issue is not resolved to your satisfaction, make an official complaint.

Don't disrupt another's scene. If a player or cast character is trying to create a roleplaying scene, don't spoil their scene by interrupting or upstaging them. A stage performer learns not to speak over another's lines and theatric roleplayer need to learn when not to interrupt.

For example, if a group of player characters are portraying a player plot scene where the leader of a military unit is inducting a new member, don't walk into the scene and start speaking to those involved. Also, don't start making a lot of noise or doing another activity close by that could disrupt the scene. If you're a cast character weigh your mission and the player's right to have this special moment. Be respect of your fellow player's right to roleplay.

Players are generally pretty good about not stepping on other players who are enacting out player character scenes. Most players will either watch the scenes unfold with respect if they're not involved or join right in to enhance the scene if appropriate.

Players are more likely to interrupt cast scenes. If a pair of cast members are having an argument in front of a bunch of players, it benefits the players to allow the cast characters to complete their roleplay. There always is a time for players to interrupt and finding the proper moment is important to the story. Act too soon and you ruin a carefully rehearsed scene by the cast; act to late and you may feel like your character is allowing something to happen that they would not. The solution is not to interfere until the cast characters have had an opportunity to make all of their points. An experienced roleplayer will see when the cast characters are finished and looking for someone to pick up the action, that is the moment for players to interrupt.

A good rule of thumb is if the cast character attempt to use skills or make an attack, then players are then free to intervene. Until that moment it is disrespectful for you to be stepping between the parties, pushing the parties apart or shouting them down. All members have a right to stage their scenes without interruptions.

Don't disparage the scene. Cast members work very hard to set up scenes for the players and you as a player must at least meet them halfway by accepting their efforts at decorating in order to suspend your disbelief for the scene. For example, if the cast is trying to set a spooky graveyard scene with tombstones, special effects, and undead you as a player must make your character react as if the scene was real.

Remember, you as a real person are never going to be scared walking through a staged cemetery with fake tomb stones, a couple of people in costume and a hissing smoke generator. Your character, on the other hand, is walking through a world where the chemical created fog is real, the styrofoam tombstones are cold solid granite, and the wounds caused by monster will really bleed.

No one is asking you to play a simpering coward, but even the bravest character should always be a little apprehensive walking through a malevolent cemetery. Instead of destroying the scene with false bravado and mocking words which are derived from your out-of-play knowledge, roleplay the scene as if it was real embracing the moment as dangerous or even deadly for your character.

Show in-character bravery in spite of fear, instead of out-of-character bravery without fear. For example, a poor roleplayer will yell out as he enters the graveyard, "I've seen better special effects in a B-rated movie!" While the aforementioned spoiler is a very obvious out-of-play comment that can smash the ambiance of a scene for everyone, a less obvious spoiler is the same poor roleplayer screaming out, "You call this scary? I've seen much bigger graveyards with much worse monster!" The second statement could be an in-character statement, but it's belittling of the moment.

A good roleplayer helps to build the scene. In the spooky cemetery you could say, "Be careful, friend. This is a malevolent place and we don't know what dangers are lurking here." Bam! You've just added to everyone's fear. You've cranked up the reality of the moment, embracing the unknown. With each roleplayer adding to the scene, the scene become stronger, more powerful and begins to reach that elusive level of roleplaying when magical

moments happen.

No single player has the right to destroy the mood and atmosphere for those who want to experience the scene as it was intended. Writers go through a lot of effort to create scenes and its frustrating when one selfish player ruins the scene for everyone. If you must play against the scene, you should do so quietly and in a manner that only involves your character and those who will appreciate your roleplay.

Don't disrupt the Dialogue. The most insidious spoiler of any scene is the interruption of dialogue. You must let people make their point. Theatric roleplay requires communication and good role players will share the spotlight because it makes a better show. Wait your turn, but of course don't let one person monopolize the scene.

For example, if an adversary is speaking a monologue don't override his voice by booing or hissing. Share the spotlight with others. Let characters speak through their point before speaking in reply. Be courteous and respect of others and this will create a stronger dialogue than shouting someone down or interrupting them.

Also avoid the temptation to kill the adversary character in the middle of a very important speech. Interactive drama requires speech. Words convey feeling, emotion and purpose. The best roleplayers will assassinate the enemy leader *after* he makes his speech; thus, sharing the spotlight with the speaking character and all those listening.

Roleplaying your character in a manner that opposes the scene can destroy the mood for everyone including yourself. If a group of players are gathering around for a serious ceremony, such as marriage between two characters or the promotion of a character to a higher rank, you have an opportunity to contribute to the scene. If you choose to contribute you should add to the tone of the scene, but if you choose not to contribute you should not disrupt the scene.

Don't be a Taker: People come to a roleplaying event with varying levels of performance skills. Some may even come from live-action games where roleplaying consists

of sitting around waiting for the cast to produce a momentous event and complaining when there is no cast-driven activity. Players who wait to be entertained are "taking" their entertainment from others.

Takers wait for things to happen to them and often complain (sometimes loudly) when not being entertained sufficiently to meet their expectations. Takers don't realize that they are the show. Givers use the time between cast driven scenes to play out their own plot scenes, whereas takers grumble that nothing is happening. Takers do not realize that they have an obligation to the community. Takers are like leeches, pulling energy from the drama around them.

Roleplayers who achieve the greatest enjoyment from their hobby are not takers. The most successful players are "giving" entertainment into the event. Givers get others involved by roleplaying with them. They create situations that are fun and entertaining simply by their words and actions. Givers are like whirlwinds of entertainment creating roleplaying out of thin air wherever they blow.

In essence, the difference between giving and taking is illustrated by the following. To be a giver you need to ask, "How am I going to entertain others?" instead of asking "How is everyone going to entertain me?" which is the hallmark of the taker.

Don't Power-Game: There are some roleplayers who enjoy competition so much that try to make everything into a fight. In their search for "victory" power-gamers will spend a large amount of time discussing rules, searching for loopholes, often cheating or manipulating the rules beyond their plain letter intentions.

Power-gamers tend to want combat and downplay other interactions. In fact much of the power-gamers' event revolves around using their skills in combat and bragging about how they used their skills in combat. Power-games seek every edge to win, some will even use out-of-play information to their character's advantage. Much of this, of course, comes from an extreme competitive perspective that will impede the development of a cooperative theatric experience.

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Enforcement: Every participant needs to enforce the roleplaying minimal standard in a friendly, positive way. When someone talks out-of-character in the play area, ignore their comment, or if possible without confrontation, politely remind them to stay in character while in the public view. Suggest they go to an out-of-play area or at least move out of earshot of others, if they wish to converse about pressing non-play related issues.

Costume

Costuming helps set the tone for a roleplaying event. Good events require all participants to wear appropriate costuming. The clothes really do make the character, and the simple act of wearing a costume makes becoming the character so much easier. A costume helps you get into character. A costume helps others around you get into character. Before someone even talks to you they look at your costuming and decide the level of your commitment to making the roleplay successful.

A costume does not have to be elaborate, but should be a sincere attempt to costume yourself appropriately. Everyone understands that a good costume takes time to create, but showing up to a fantasy roleplaying in jeans and t-shirt is just not acceptable. Wearing a pair of black sweat pants, black sneakers and a two dollar cloth tabard belted at the waist is acceptable for your first couple of events.

Do attempt costuming. No one requires new players to have expensive costumes and costume accessories. What is expected is that everyone makes a fair effort. Don't wear jeans and graphic t-shirt. The presence of a non-costumed person in the play area is damaging to immersion. A tabard over your t-shirt and modern pants is a very cost-effective start.

Do wear appropriate costuming. Mystic Reams events are varied, so one type of costuming may be appropriate for one genre and not for another. For example, don't wear a logo jacket to a fantasy show or a revealing costuming to a show where there's going to be minors present. Read the source materials for the realm and let common sense be your guide, and if you have any questions ask the Concierge of the Production Club where you want to play.

Do keep weather in mind when planning your costuming. Plan your costume for all seasons. In the summer, it's going to be hot and in the winter its cold. Buy your tunics a little large so it will hang loosely in the summer and so you can put clothing under it in the winter. Instead of wearing the heavy winter coat on the outside of your tunic wear long underwear under your tunic or buy some cheap fur to make a cape. Take pride in your costume in all seasons and don't take it off or cover it up because of weather.

Enforcement: Costuming is an issue that needs to be handled carefully. Members need to help others with costuming; perhaps even bring something to lend to a new player. They need to share their knowledge. With a little guidance, anyone can learn how to throw together a costume that meets the minimum standards. It doesn't take a lot of money to create appropriate costumes it just takes a little time and thought.

Not every new player wants to buy expensive costuming for a hobby they may not like. A $3 rectangle of fabric with a cut neck hole becomes an appropriate fantasy costume when belted at the waist. Add a neatly drawn symbol to the chest and the simple tabard becomes something that really contributes to the environment. For wild west, modern and even sci-fi roleplaying, thrift stores provide wonderful costuming at bargain prices.

Decorations

Imagine if a movie was filmed on a plain white sound stage with no scenery or computer created backdrops. The audience would be unable to relate to the story. The characters would seem out of place. In essence, the movie would not be entertaining. Similarly, the location of the roleplaying event must be appropriate to the genre. It is not necessary to build sets or painted backdrops, but some effort must be made to decorate the play areas.

Players must bring decorations to enhance locations where they gather. Bring a pavilion or appropriate looking tent and fill the location with stage props appropriate to

your character. The easiest way to decorate is for players to gather as a group and to share the responsibility. The rules encourage players to group into cultures or life styles. They also encourage the formation of military units or religious faiths. These groups will benefit from having a decorated base of operations.

The cast must bring decorations to enhance the scenes on their adventures. A bandit camp really becomes a camp when some clothes are hung on a line as a backdrop to the scene. A spooky graveyard is easily created by cutting out a few plywood tombstones and painting them grey. Flickering LED lights will contribute to any night scene. Not every scene needs heavy attention to detail, but the major locations must be decorated.

The best props are cloth tapestries that can be hung (without damaging walls) to add an appropriate feel to the event. A painted map of the realm (or huge star map) would help any tavern scene become real. A painted depiction of stone-work walls five feet wide by seven feet high can be used over and over again. The painted rock walls will add a rustic feel to any room when covering modern appliances or they can become ruins when used outside and supported by chairs. Painted rock walls can be clipped to the basement ceiling to make an underground maze or clipped to the side of a pavilion to make a bunker.

Florescent or incandescent lighting makes getting into character difficult for some people. Sometimes just turning down the lights and using some flickering LED candles can help create the appropriate atmosphere.

Enforcement: Players are encouraged to bring props to decorate their own areas. Once players see the benefit of having their own space, most players become proud of their personal areas and will leap at the opportunity to showcase their decorating ability. For the cast, writers need to be trained to enhance one or two key scenes through use of decoration. Often writers will get together with their cast members and create the decorations together.

Play Area

The play area is divided into the main play area and collateral play space. The main play area is where the player assigned structures and sleeping sites are located. Collateral play space is where the cast sets up adventures. The main play area is always in-character, while collateral play space is only in-character when players are brought there by the cast. Players control the main player areas, while the cast controls collateral play space.

The players are responsible for creating all the activity that occurs in the main play area. When in the main play area, players must interact with each other in manners that contribute to the roleplaying environment. For example, they should perform rituals on each other to enhance their characters and they should share and discuss information discovered on adventures. In-character conversation about in-play events past and present is the heart and soul of a good show.

The cast is responsible for bringing to life collateral play space by running adventures. Adventures convey information to players that players bring back to the main play area and share with others. Activities in collateral play space support player activity in the main play area.

The first thing a player must realize is that theatric roleplaying is not a game of waiting silently for an opportunity to enter collateral play space for a "quest". The adventures at an event are just the backdrop to the character's own story which they should be sharing with others from the moment "play-on" is called. The adventures are the back story in theatric roleplaying, because the real show is what the player characters say and do to each other in the main play area.

Most of play time is spent in the main play area, where the players are responsible for their own entertainment. Adventures may seem to be important, but they should only serve a supporting role to the player character's own story. The show is really about what you do and say as your character while in the main play area. Time on adventures is only a small part of an event, the rest of the time is your stage to perform unfettered by cast activity.

Said another way, if a live-action roleplaying was like a movie (and it is) the player characters would be the stars of the movie and the cast characters would be all the extras. Imagine a movie where the stars waited for the extras to do all the acting. What a silly, crappy movie this would be!

The players are the stars of the event, so players must never sit around lethargically in the main play area "waiting for the next quest!" The real quest *is* the main play area and all the roleplaying that occurs therein. Talk to people, use your non-combat skills, entertain others and yourself, and the event will be successful for all.

Improvisational Acting

Improvisational acting (also called improv) is a dramatic art where most or all of what is performed is unplanned or unscripted. The performers collaborate in real time spontaneously inventing the dialogue and action to develop the story in relation to the characters they portray. This sounds a lot like live-action roleplaying, doesn't it?

While most people associate improv acting with comedy, performers have begun using improv techniques in non-comedic theatrical performances as well. The film and television industries commonly use improve acting to develop characters and scripts. Improv acting has also found its way into non-theatric specialties as well. Techniques are used in classrooms as an educational tool and in businesses as a way to develop communication skills and as team-building exercises. Improv acting is also used in psychotherapy treatments to explore relationships.

The techniques of improv acting are readily applicable to roleplaying and form the core of Mystic Realms. The concepts are woven through the whole rules system in an effort to create an immersive theatric environment. Fundamentally every conversation spoken and every action taken by a character in a roleplay is either an offer or a refusal of an offer.

Offers can create conversation and action. They come in the form of verbal interactions that contain information about characters, situations, story, and so forth. Some verbal offers are merely informative, while others are intended to get another to do some activity or form an opinion. Offers can also come in the form of action-oriented physical interactions. When one player swings a weapon at another it's an offer for theatric combat. Writers who set up terrain features are offering players a chance to swim, climb, or fly.

Refusals have as many forms as offers, but unlike offers that create conversation and action, refusals stop conversation and action. Since roleplays are built on conversation and action, players must be careful not to completely deny an offer in a way that ends the interaction and leaves players searching for a way to continue the scene.

Mystic Realms has adapted the "yes, and . . ." and "no, but . . ." rules of improv acting to the hobby of live-action roleplaying. In Mystic Realms, both rules are used subconsciously by the performer as a means for regulating offers and refusals in a way that builds more story.

"Yes, and . . ."

Roleplaying, like improv theater, is about accepting the contributions of others and then adding some element to further the interaction. The "yes, and . . ." rule suggests that a participant should accept what another participant has stated ("yes") and then expand on that line of thinking ("and"). "Yes, and . . ." is a collaborative process where roleplayers cooperate to build the story around their characters.

The "yes" portion of the rule encourages the acceptance of the contributions added by others. It contains an intrinsic requirement that participants listen to what other participants are saying and give it value.

The "and" portion of the rule encourages the participant to add new information into the narrative. This is where players interject their past, personality, and/or purpose into the roleplay. The "and" personalizes the scene for each player.

Think of the "yes, and . . ." as saying "I'm willing to move

forward with your offered roleplay and I'm going to contribute this element."

"No, but . . ."

The "no, but" rule is not as favored in improv acting, because it denies the unconditioned acceptance of what another participant says. In fact, in comedy improv "no, but . . ." is rarely used, but in a live-action roleplaying it has a solid place.

Mystic Realms gives equal weight to the "no, but . . ." rule, because much of the story is driven by dramatic conflict and "yes, and . . ." artificially removes the opposition necessary to create conflict. Roleplayers need to be able to disagree with each other to generate dramatic tension, so the "no, but . . ." rule, allows participants to challenge the narrative in such a way that continues the story.

The "no" portion of the rule declines the offered story element. This may stall the interaction which is why most improv actors avoid the "no" and argue that actors should always accept the element and add to it. Of course, this works great for actors building scenes that are not related to a greater story, but not so well for roleplayers trying to immerse themselves in a believable world while playing an opinionated character.

The "but . . ." portion of the rule is extremely important to the interaction, because it allows the scene to move beyond the denial. A flat "no" would shut down the interaction; the "no, but . . ." makes a counter offer and allows the scene to continue smoothly.

The "no, but . . ." is like saying, "I'm not willing accept a scene moving in the offered direction, but I'm willing to accept a scene that moves in this direction."

Character Becoming

A live-action roleplayer assumes a character when he or she puts on the costume and enters the play area. By wearing clothes and adopting a name, they have taken on the outside identity of the persona they are portraying, but nothing more. Many roleplayers simply play as the costumed character, pretending to be the persona to those around them all the while their head is filled with their own thoughts.

Really becoming a character is more than wearing a costume and reacting to a name. Internalizing game mechanics and separating out-of-character thoughts from the immediate scene is required to really become the character. Too many roleplayers play with the baggage of their real person weighing down the scene and issuing a running commentary on all that occurs.

Actors learn to "become a character" as a basic element of their performance art and roleplayers can benefit much from this traditional performance-based technique. Two methods that will help you become the character are partitioning thought and internalizing rules. He's an example of what we're talking about.

The player who does not internalizes rules or partition thought participates in a scene thinking an out-of-character monologue similar to "That cast member bat is flying up with Bob's bleeding body. It won't go far because cast members can't leave the scene. The bat is saying 15 so I need to fly 15 feet in the air by counting my flying count. I can use my kill cut by hitting in the person's torso, but then I have to count backwards to fly down. I hate counting backwards. Joe and Pam are being attacked by blood bats below, but the blood bats are played by newbs who suck at fighting. No challenge there. I'll save Bob, counting such is a hassle. [Begins counting flying count in bored tone]."

The character who has internalized rules and partitioned thought is automatically counting and using his or her mind to think tactical in-character thoughts like, "If I don't catch the bat it's going to fly away with Sir Arwynn! I may never see him again. [player begins counting flying count without thinking about it] I need to kill the bat quickly, because the other bats are attacking Vex and Lady Allison. Those bats are blood bats with powerful magic. I should warn Vex to protect our healer. We'll have to be careful! Blood bats can be very deadly."

As you can see in the second example the internal

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commentary is much more fun. It's tactical, theatrical, and most importantly completely immersive. The flying count is spoken almost subconsciously and there is no conscious thought about the out-of-character ability of the cast. Instead, the player treats the bats as true in-character danger making the moment so much more exciting for the character and in-turn for the player.

This kind of in-character, immersive thinking really helps to focus the player on his or her roleplaying. The performance becomes so much more real for the player. In this style of play you can almost totally suspend your disbelief and see the imagined world as startlingly realistic. It's a tragedy that so many roleplayers embrace the out-of-character monologue when they play. They're not playing immersely and they're not finding those profound moments that come frequently to immersive players. Here are a few hints to help you develop these very important skills.

Partitioning Thought

Members are asked to portray their character's past, personality and purpose during the event. This is accomplished by partitioning your awareness so that the real person you are is reduced to a subconscious level and the character you become moves to the forefront of your thinking. When you're first learning to roleplay you may have to consciously think, "How would my character react" when faced with situations during play, but soon you'll just be thinking and reacting as your character. You "real" self will be just under the surface, thoroughly enjoying all the awesome things you are doing and saying as your character.

The process of partitioning thought between an adopted persona and the players own persona can be compared to learning a second language. When you start learning the language you need to translate the words in your head, but as you become more fluent in the new language you begin to think in the new language, and the need for translation declines.

At first you will struggle to get to know your character and real world concerns will creep into your seamless

reality. The process of knowing the character is also the process of creating that separate identity and developing the theatric discipline to control your thoughts so that the developed past, personality, and purpose can take the forefront of your imagination. This is easier for some and harder for others, but with a little practice you will be able to think and act as your character. Your real personality will be partitioned off from your adopted persona and only leap to the forefront in moments of caution or clarification.

Of course, no matter how separate the identities become, the real life person is responsible for everything that the roleplayed character does. Partitioning is a tool that performers use to entertain; partitioning is not an excuse to disclaim responsibility for your actions. Every member of the theatric community is obligated to ensure everyone has a good time and everything you say and do is done with subconscious awareness. You never lose yourself so much that you become unsafe or un-fun.

Your subconscious still guides your choices as a character. Just like an actor on stage subconsciously remembers to keep facing the audience to make their entrances and exits, you'll subconsciously remember all the rules necessary for play. By your third or forth event you'll be able to use all you skills without thinking and then its just a matter of learning how to perform your character. This will take a little time, but as long as you incorporate basic improvisational acting skills (such as "yes, and" or "no, but") you will be on your way to reaping the rewards of playing immersive.

The supportive environment of Mystic Realms embraces strong characterization because we know it produces a superior roleplaying environment when used by the majority of the players to entertain each other. Roleplayers who do mean or cruel things, often try to excuse their offensive behavior by claiming "It was not me, because it was my character." This is nonsense. The goal of partitioning thought is to allow players to be better performers, and not to excuse inappropriate, belittling, or abusive behaviors.

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Internalizing the Rules

All live-action roleplays require rules to define a character's interactions with others and their environment. When rules are internalized, body movements, verbal counts and announcements are viewed as physical or mental acts by the member portraying the character. Game systems favoring complex rules are always interrupting the action with out-of-character talk and thought. This inhibits the free flow of characterization and prevents the seamless feeling of reality embraced by Mystic Realms. An immersive style of play borrows techniques from real acting skills.

The Mystic Realms rules are designed to be internalized so as not to interrupt the flow of the action for the play. Skills are simple to use during play and once practiced, do not require out-of-character thought. They are designed to be used as part of the player's performance. For example, picking a lock simply requires the character to roleplay the action for a period of time represented by a count. Striking with a weapon requires a successful hit on a specific part of the body.

The announcement of skill effects allow for immediate reaction in the targets. Players do not have to discuss resolutions because all information is contained within the effect statement. Members who memorize a few principles and key words will be able to easily handle the complex permeations and interactions found in the rules system.

Internalizing rules allow the players to treat game situations as really happening. It really the first step in becoming the character. It's hard to "become" the character if you're trying to think about how to use skills. The key to internalizing rules is to practice them just as you would practice using a second language. In time their use will become a natural reaction. Soon you'll subconsciously make the calls and the counts, and with more practice you'll see the calls and counts as the physical actions they represent.

By internalizing the rules, players can see out-of-play game mechanics in their minds eye as what they represent in-play. For example, base card are used to track some game skills. In play the cards represent physical item, but in reality they are just pieces of paper. Players internalizing the rules see the cards as the items they present. They handle ritual powder with care keeping the cards in a box or cloth bag so that the grains are not lost. They treated raw materials used to make items as heavier than the paper card actually is.

Skills that use base cards require filling out the car as the start of the in-play process. Player able to internalize rules suspend their disbelief of this necessary out-of-play record keeping, seeing the out-of-play requirement as an in-play activity. In magical worlds the act of writing on the card is symbolic of drawing the mystical energy out of the materials. In non-magical worlds the writing on the card symbolizes breaking down, cleaning, or otherwise preparing the materials. Some players will decorate their pens to look like instruments used during the roleplay. Pens become wands, wrenches, or small hammers. This often helps players stay in character as they fill out the cards; the out-of-play manipulation of their decorated pen is the character "working" to use the materials.

Props are a great aid and really help players to start internalizing rules. In fact, most time-based skills require props. The rules call these props "kits" and their purpose is to make roleplays more entertaining. Sitting and staring at a locked box for three minutes is about as entertaining as watching the grass grow. A restoration ritual where the performer repeated rubs the corpses shoulders is an improvement over staring at the box, but still misses the point of theatric roleplaying. Both acts also fail to meet the minimum standards of roleplaying set in the rules.

Props are required because they make the scene more believable and also show everyone around that a skill is being used. Props fill the performance time with interesting activity. Even something as simple as picking a lock with tools can become an interesting roleplay. The performance time begins when the player announces, "I'm picking the lock" and takes out the tools. The roleplay of laying out the tools and then fiddling with the box helps to internalize the out-of-play count. In fact, the more intensely you roleplay the picking of the lock, the

more immersed you'll be in the moment.

The internalization of the rules allows players to enjoy greater immersion and heightened excitement without out-of-play interruption often associated with out-of-play calls and announcements.

Reacting to Rules

Perhaps the most important part of creating a theatric environment is how you react to the rules that interact with your character. In a theatric environment your reactions build the world for those around you and its important to react to rules as entertainingly as possible under the circumstances.

Every sword stroke that causes you to step back and grunt in pain, builds the realism world. The theatric touch combat system can really place people in the moment. When fought theatrically every fight between two players becomes a story of strikes dealt and received. Of course, there will always be players who want to swing as fast as legally possible within the rules and there will always be players who don't understand or don't want to fight theatrically. A club can deal with a few players like that and still create a theatric environment. Players wishing to fight theatrically will find each other on the battlefield and have those amazing theatric fights that become stories in their own right. The more players looking for theatric engagements, the more theatric the overall battle will become.

Treating injuries as real is one of the best ways to add immersion to play. A splinted limb will still function, but the pain the character experiences will be severe. Roleplaying that pain brings everyone into the moment. A gasp of pain when the splint is applied, provokes the healers to say, "I'm sorry I'm hurting you." The pretend feeling becomes real and both players experience life as their character in that moment. Cradling the splinted arm as you approach your opponent, brings to life the gallantry of continuing the fight with a painful splinted limb. Roleplaying the pain in your arm during the fight, brings your gallantry to life. Your efforts will bring everyone into the scene.

Reaction to effects is not the only way to build story. A good player reactions to all kinds of rules situations to build the story around them. For example, when a player sees a flying character counting vertical movement they can comment on the flying they bring everyone into the moment. "Look out, that bat is swooping down toward us!" "Archers. The enemy general is trying to escape on its raven. Bring it down! Archers, bring it down."

Adventure guides are particularly skilled at using in-play commenting on rules. Watch and listen to a good adventure guide. As players walk up to a scene, good guides will add in-play commentary as their character to explain the scene, especially if the scene has terrain features that will need to be negotiated. For example on the approach to a jungle scene with monkeys swinging on vines, climb trees, and walking along branches (high platforms) the guild explains, "Look at those monkeys swinging on vines. I bet they climbed up the rough bark on those trees to get up into the canopy. Look at the bones on the ground. Those monkeys are people eaters!" The guide "frames" the scene by commenting on it and this brings everyone into the moment.

When reacting to rules, always do so as your characters, and as you gain experience you will be able to bring your past, personality, and purpose into your reactions, which will add a whole new level to your roleplaying. Perhaps you faced monkeys before in a similar situation and your group was nearly wiped out. As you approach you add to the guide's roleplay by cautioning your fellow players about your previous experience. Players can play into your offer and build a scene for each other as they approach the monkeys. These are players creating a theatric environment in reaction to terrain features and some monkeys.

As much as good reaction builds the environment; poor reactions can lessen the environment, sometimes ruining the experience for everyone. A good example of players reacting poorly to a skill effect is found in the reactions to forced movement. It is very common for players to not take all of the required steps or even for players to display frustration after being forced to move two or three times in a combat. These players are not reacting the rules;

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they're displaying an out-of-character response to being forced out of the combat for a few moments. The better reaction is to roleplay the movement away from the persons using the movement skill excessively (in your opinion, not theirs), because then you won't be moved again by this person.

Forced movement is very common during scenes. Cast members use forced movement to prevent the more numerous player characters from overwhelming them in mob fashion. Without forced movement combats would always be three or four on one with fights being boring mob mumps. The cast could rely on power skills to kill or disable opponents mobbing them, but this solution would bog down action much more than movement effects which are meant to keep combats dynamic and flowing. The better fighter you are the more you can expect to be moved because newer cast members need protection from your fighting skill in order to entertain everyone.

Movement effects are supposed to be very cinematic. Powerful beasts tossing people around, spell casters manipulating mana to create buffeting winds and driving gales. There are monsters with horrible bodily odors, and experienced fighters who learn throws and body checks. These highly theatric moments are all represented by a few skills that cause the "Move" and "Flee" effects.

Player struck with movement effects should enjoy the moment and roleplay the cinematic motion to its full potential. Non-theatric players stomping out the movement effect detract from scenes, whereas a theatric player screaming for help as they bounce off trees really captures the essence of a cinematic scene!

One word of caution, negative reactions are almost always hurtful to the environment because players have a hard time recognizing if your frustration is in or at out play. For example, when if you are hit with an effect and throw your weapon on the ground or mutter angry words as you comply with the effect, players don't know if you're really angry or just "playing" frustration. Members who display frustration when they are struck with adverse effects often end up are destroying the theatric environment for themselves and others. You should

roleplay the pain of the effect and try not to show frustration unless its clearing in play, such as shouting in-play statements of anger while complying with effects. Pure body language displays of frustration are almost always interpreted as out-of-character feelings of frustration.

Of course, there are players who legitimately feel frustration when they are hit with effects, especially movement effects. Consider this you're not losing anything real by roleplaying an effect you have suffered. The effect is part of your story. It might not be how you want your story to go, but compromise if part of play. Everyone has a story to tell and that character who used the skill on you is telling their story.

Think of the roleplaying the adverse effect as winning because your roleplay adds to the environment which will end up making the whole scene better for everyone in the end. Whereas your muttered curse of frustration makes the user of the skill feel badly and has the potential to cause everyone witnessing to drop character focus on you and your inability to have fun with the scene.

Benefits

Roleplayers who adopt a theatric perspective will be able to enjoy the hobby for many years. However, roleplayers who do not embrace the separation of thought often become disenfranchised with the hobby. These roleplayers never learned to truly become their character, and are only able to see the world as a game.

Eventually every roleplayer reaches a point where they become so skilled at the game aspects of the roleplay that they are no longer challenged because their peers have not yet developed sufficient skill to compete. We have tried throughout this book to encourage roleplayers to adopt a non-game, theatric perspective and in this section we will discuss how becoming the character can help members avoid many of the frustrations that come with being an expert gamer.

Every roleplayer, even the best theatric role players will encounter moments that pull them out-of-character. New writers will screw up scenes, new players will interrupt

with out-of-character comment, but how you handle those interruptions speaks much to your performance ability. The benefit of perfecting the theatric art of becoming a character means that following an interruption you can immediately return your perspective back to your character.

Theatric roleplayers almost always have more fun at events, because they're playing through scenes as their character. They're not seeing person in a costume, instead they are seeing "real" beasts and monsters. Their interactions are "real" to the member as their character and this allows them to experience heightened sensations and emotions.

Roleplayers who just assume the identity of a character are often overly concerned about the out-of-game aspects of scenes. They worry about people's roleplaying ability, the quality of another's costume, the amount of treasure, the toughness of monsters in relation to their own skill level, the number of cast used on a scene, or the quality of writing in a certain plot line.

Theatric roleplayers who have become their characters see costumed performers are representing real entities. They can suspend their disbelief and embrace the world as represented by the costumes and decorations.

This habit of "playing the game" as yourself may eventually lead to the inability to suspend your disbelief. These roleplayers are not seeing a "real" world instead they're seeing people in costumes with statistics. They're not seeing a dangerous wolf, they're seeing a dude standing around in a felt wolf mask. Roleplayers playing without a partitioned persona view everything through the filter of their own out-of-character thoughts, which makes it more difficult to accept costumed characters as "real."

Avoiding Prejudicial Judgments: Non-theatric roleplayers who do not partition their thought will often end up making out-of-character judgments that prevent their enjoyment of the scene. For example, when these players see a new cast member in a wolf mask, they appraise the situation, knowing that there's no threat and no need to be afraid because the new cast member does

not have anything close to their out-of-game combat skill.

Instead of allowing their character to be happy they survived an encounter with a giant wolf, they are out-of-character disappointed that they were not challenged more. Conversely, if a really good fighter beats them down, this roleplayer would likely complain that they were unfairly challenged by a ninja wolf their point being that wolfs should never be that powerful!

The benefit of theatric roleplaying is you learn to let your character have emotions and thoughts different from your own. In the above example, you can roleplay being afraid of the new cast member in a felt mask because for your character a snarling, man-sized wolf is always scary, you won't notice the wolf is a new cast member on a conscious level. When you fight the wolf you'll roleplay the combat as if the wolf was a dangerous adversary, accepting the wolf's level of skill as just part of the in-play world, knowing that some wolves are weaker than others.

Seeing Characters not Players: Another benefit of becoming the character is that you see other members only as their character and not as their out-of-character persona. Members come with all that extra out-of-character baggage; characters are known just through the roleplayed interactions.

When you are immersed in your character you will not be making out-of-character judgment calls based on the faces you recognize from the out-of-play. Maybe you think Bob is a back stabbing jerk out-of-character, but his character Sir Gideon is the most honorable character in town.

A more common example of using out-of-character judgments occurs when a so-called expert roleplayer meets a character played by newer member with less developed roleplaying skills. The experienced non-theatric player will often see the new member as an annoyance to be avoided. These roleplayers cannot embrace the new player as a unique character. Instead they label the new player as a newb just because he or she is not as articulate as they have become with years of practice. This will result in the newer player be shut out

of the action by more experienced non-theatric players.

This kind of behavior does not occur in theatric roleplaying as the focus is on including everyone so newer members are brought into the action in a way that helps them develop skills. When the world is real, and full of beasts and monsters, every friend counts so it makes sense to meet people you don't know. In a theatric roleplay you'll talk to every player you meet, and if someone is not articulate or as skilled, maybe your character will take them under your wing as a protégé.

Those who Compare: The most important benefit of becoming the character is avoiding the out-of-character internal monologue. Some roleplayers use their internal commentary to compare every situation they encounter to their previous in-character experiences. Many of these roleplayers can't be excited or even be entertained, unless their out-of-character personality embraces the situation and they will only embrace situations that meet their standards. Sadly, everyone has different standards so no player, cast member or writer will be able to write a scene that entertains everyone. Every scene created is going to have one or more non-theatric roleplayers ready to criticize the scene based on their personal feelings, desires and/or expectations.

These roleplayers have completely lost their ability to suspend disbelief. They are unable to see the world of play as anything more than people in costumes trying (and often failing) to play characters. Their internal commentaries are full of statements like: "I could do this scene better." "Why are they wearing costumes that do not hide all their modern clothing?" "How can I roleplay when so many people are not meeting the minimum standards." "This is boring, because I've been on similar adventures so many times before."

Roleplayers who do not adopt a persona and immerse themselves in their character can rarely see the wonder of the setting. Since they cannot suspend their disbelief they will see everything as it is, people in costumes playing a game, and thus they are unable to capture the theatric magic found in events where players really become the character.

Having a running out-of-character monologue in your head completely removes you from the experience. The benefit of becoming your character is that the perspective frees you from having those disruptive out-of-character judgment calls. When you are able to suspend your disbelief you are less likely to find fault in out-of-character issues, because you'll be too busy reacting to world as your character.

No event is going to be perfect. Every event has people with varying levels of theatric skill. The difference between Mystic Realms and your traditional non-theatric event or combat-focused game is that at Mystic Realms events you have a community of players committed to helping each other achieve the theatric focus which increases the potential to have those magical, memorable moments of live-action roleplaying.

So if you've gotten to the point where you feel your skills are above those around you then it's time to help others learn the skills you possess. If costumes and roleplaying skills are not up to your personal standards then offer to help members sew or offer to help the club producer host a roleplaying seminar for your club. When adventuring feels stale it's time to talk to the producer about helping out with the writing so that you can show newer writers how to create more unique plots. Great events are built by cooperation and teamwork.

Player Plot

Player plot is action promoted by the players without cast involvement. It's the opposite of cast plot which is drafted by writers and brought to life during play through the use of cast characters.

In theatric live-action roleplaying members who are portraying player characters share the burden of creating plot at the event. Player characters strive to be the protagonists of every scene by their interactions with other player characters; the cast who are running adventures and playing key plot character are the extras whose purpose is to support player plot by creating a general theme for the event.

The creation of player plot is one of the most important aspects of theatric roleplaying and it sets theatric roleplaying apart from the traditional cast-driven, combat-focused game. Traditional game-based play relies on the cast to create plots that motivate characters; in these roleplays the player characters become reactionary performers.

Origins

Player plot is at its best when you have well developed characters capable of portraying solid backgrounds, personalities and motivations that conflict with others. What follows are some examples of how club members create player plot scenes for their characters.

Source materials: Players often develop their plots from the source materials. The detailed game worlds of Mystic Realms are full of dramatic conflicts which players can use to entertain each other.

For example, in the Glory of Guildhall setting (as in most settings) there are cultures that are in opposition to each other. Northern Confederation and Five Kingdoms is a widespread conflict involving many cultures, whereas the historical difficulties between the Asgarns and Followers of the Ancient Path is less widespread, but both bring players together and set them at odds.

In the setting there are radical red robed Karthydians who seek to bring about the Age of Karthis and destroy the world in fire and flame. The Elves have just fought a terrible civil war, and the Orcs have threatened war against all their neighbors. And in each of these cultures there are characters trying to bring peace to the world, and others who want the stereotypical conflict, so even among the groups players will experience drama as tensions are created and resolved during play.

The goal is for members to create a mix of player characters that represent factions and to roleplay the limitless permeations of beneficial and confrontational scenes. Members who create player characters in this manner are automatically connected to the world and can easily roleplay entertaining dramatic conflicts.

In the Glory of Guildhall, like most game worlds, members are encouraged roleplay out their conflicts using a broad spectrum of activities that entertain everyone including your in-character adversary. The Laws of Guildhall stop player characters from just killing each other, and since all players are Guildsmen disagreements rarely become violently confrontational. This allows for all kinds of social and political confrontations.

Players who embrace character beliefs and attitudes will have plenty of interactions as they work in- and out-of-character to create a realistic worlds for each other. The story of the Glory of Guildhall is about how peacefully or antagonistically these characters interact. In fact, the central theme of the world setting is the ability of Guildsmen with very different ideologies banding together to keep their world from falling into the final age where it will be consumed in fire and flame.

Player Designed Relationships: One of the best ways to create player plot is to work with other members to design characters with in-play relationships. Most of these relationships are positive, but some can be negative.

Good friends sometimes chose to play characters that antagonize each other. This is a safe way to really add to the tension. Players who are best friends can yell at each other, shake their fists and create some real emotion in their characters, knowing that as soon as the event is over they will laugh about the good times and amazing roleplaying. Trust us, a well roleplayed scene is a rush that you can become addicted to in a good way.

Relationships based on personality are a common way to create interactions among groups of members who know each other. For example, an adventuring group in any game setting will benefit by designing characters with personalities that have some clash. Well-developed personalities will often enable character to take on different roles in the group: the leader, the troublemaker, the follower, the flirt, the know-it-all, and so forth. Such a group will be able to enter any roleplaying situation and play off one another with witty comments and meaningful jibes.

Another common way for players who know each other to create character relationships is to create a family group. Blood relations give rise to all sorts of crazy roleplaying situations just think about your own family gatherings and all the drama that occurs.

Players capturing this kind of drama can really experience some emotional highs, and we're not just talking about negative emotions. Characters fall in love with each other all the time. Many players with out-of-character relationships choose to create characters who to fall in love, fall out of love, hate each other, or are just friends. Roleplaying allows a player to safely explore all kinds of different situations.

World Designed Relationships: Members who don't know anyone can come to the event knowing that all world settings establish relationships for them. They will walk into the event and immediately have allies just by the very nature of their chosen character, culture, life style and so forth.

Character types are designed to promote group cohesion, so members of different character types will end up conversing with each other. Most world setting have luminary positions where the players holding these positions are empowered to bring their groups together and make them feel like they are connected to the community.

Members who hold these luminary positions have an added burden of planning player plot for members of their group. They need to hold meetings, teach members and do everything they can to bring the world to life for those who rely on them. Player plot scenes should revolve around things that are important to the player group.

For example, in the Glory of Guildhall setting the rogues get together at secret meetings where they gather and exchange information. The cavaliers get together and teach leadership principles and military organizational skills to their newer members. The Warlocks often midnight sabbats in candle-lit meeting places; Rangers and Druids train their woodland skills. Every Guildmaster works to bring his guild to life for the members of the Guild. The Guildmaster connects the Guild members to Guildhall and in doing so brings the roleplaying to a powerful level.

When you talk to players you share information about you. In the nation of Coventry everyone is poor and resources are scarce, characters from Coventry are always talking about how things are bad back home and they base many of their decisions off this perspective. Ancient Path who emulate the natural world often act animal-like, embracing pack mentality and making decisions off social order. This kind of roleplaying really brings the world to life. LARPs without strong backgrounds have no way creating this consistent culturally roleplaying, which is why Mystic Realms always provides such detailed settings.

Event Based: Player plot is often devise from the background of the event. All members should carefully read the background information posted by writers regarding the event. Information provide by knowledge skills should be provided to players before the event so players can use the information to develop player plot scenes.

For example, a rumors knowledge card announces that a suspected trouble-maker will be in town at a certain time. This allows for the creation of numerous plot scenes. One member will plan a scene where he tries to explain that the troublemaker is misunderstood and is really a hero. Another member will plan a scene that explains why the cast member needs to be captured and brought to justice. Both members will use their scenes to gather players to their sides. As the announced time arrives, one group of players will seek to capture the trouble-maker while the other group will attempt to warn him, or hide him.

Reactionary players often say that cast driven plots are not interesting to them. Proactive players don't care whether they find plots are interesting or not. They see cast plots as tools they can use to place their character in the spotlight.

Depending on cast plots for your enjoyment is like going to Las Vegas and playing the slot machines. You're just

gambling that a writer will be able to write something that you will personally feel connected to when that writer is trying to write for all the other players with different opinions and different expectations. The safe bet is to attend an event with the understanding that the cast driven plot is just background material for your own story.

At an event you are the show and the cast are the extras - the set pieces who will fill up the background – as you interact with other player characters creating your story.

Planning

The best player plot is planned. That means that before an event the member plans a series of scenes to be performed by his or her player character. In the scene the player character engages in some activity that will draw everyone's attention to them.

It is very helpful to write down a short description of the planned scene. The brief description of the planned scene should include the information you wish to convey (or the action you want to take) and the intended people for your interactions. The scene could involve one or two people or it could involve many. You may perform the scene once, or it may be the kind of scene that lends itself to being performed over and over again throughout the event.

A member should plan enough scenes to fill the event. You may think of this list as your improvisational acting script, but if the word script is too intimidating, just think of the individual descriptions as a to-do list. These are the scenes that you want your character to accomplish during the event.

Planning and executing player plot scenes is the first steps to becoming a performer who is able to really become the character. If every player plans player plot scenes for an upcoming event, the interaction will reach the level of interactive theater and the world of play will begin to feel real for the participants.

Scenes

These are examples of basic plot scenes that members should have their player characters perform at every event. These are general scenes, but as members gain experience in roleplaying they will be able to plan scenes directed at specific individuals within the context of existing plots. Finally, they will devise scenes that bring their characters to the forefront of the event.

Introduction Scene: This pre-planned scene is nothing more than walking up to a person you don't know and telling them your character's name and asking them their name. You can follow-up the introduction by asking a question, and then commenting on the answer.

Improvisational acting would call this an opening, and roleplayers need to see this as an opportunity to interact. An important concept in improvisational acting is very important in roleplaying as well- Never shut another player down, and always treat the introduction scene as important.

Our community is a supportive environment and anyone using this basic scene is either a new person reaching out to participate or a person trying to bring you into their world. Respond and share the magic. Meet them halfway.

If you're in a rush, or involved in a plot, bring them along, or after the introductions pass them to another person who may have more time. Never walk just away, or shut someone down. It's impolite improvisational theater to ignore an opening.

Share Your Skills: Many of the skills in Mystic Realms provide some kind of benefit to a character. Members who have their characters learn these skills will automatically gain roleplaying opportunities when using the skills.

All skills that provide a benefit or allow a character to make something are intended to promote interactions between characters. These skills all have strong roleplaying elements which should not be overlooked. When you use these skills you should embrace the performances they require, if not you are squandering unique roleplaying interactions.

For example, much time at events can be spent roleplaying rituals and procedures. The performance time

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is meant to be an interaction between characters. If player just sit there staring at one another the required time becomes a frustration. However, if the performer roleplays a really cool ritual many players may feel disappointed when the performance time is completed.

People often say that the little things in life give meaning to existence. This saying is as true in roleplaying as it is in real life. Great roleplaying events start with basic interactions, and only by roleplaying character skills with enthusiasm and vigor will a group be able to produce a roleplaying environment capable of consistently producing those magical, memorable moments everyone seeks.

Share Your Background Scene: When you speak about your character's culture, lifestyle, trade, occupation, or even some event in your character's life you are sharing your background with other characters. This kind of scene forms the basis for great roleplaying.

Sometimes characters will use scenes based on their backgrounds to heighten tensions between groups of player character with known histories of conflict.

For example, in the Glory of Guildhall setting Andorians and Phythians share a border that is often in dispute. Two players who know each other in passing, and play an Andorian and Phythian characters, agree out-of-character to set up their tents next to each other at the next event and plan to argue that each is encroaching on the other's space. In doing so they share their culture with other players and compel the community to mediate their dispute. After the event both members talk about the highlights of their performances and plan to bring their disagreement to a new level next month. In time, when their bickering becomes boring they will resolve to end their differences during play perhaps by having their characters gain respect for each other, perhaps not. Two players who barely knew each other have created an amazing story-arc for themselves and others and most importantly they became friends in doing so.

Some background scenes explain why a character acts or behaves in a certain manner. Oftentimes the character will

react to some stimulus in a way that seems out of the ordinary for them and others players will try to find out the cause. For example, the character has a fear of snakes and when the character encounters the snakes they become terrified and irrational. During the scene the combat is complicated by this character's fears, after the scene there is the roleplayed explanation for the behavior.

Background scenes are often used by luminary characters to take stances on issues of plot. For example, in the Glory of Guildhall setting Guildmasters vote on community actions. At one such meeting a Guildmaster sides with an outside force who is moving against another outside force, because they are of the same culture. This turns an easy vote into a complex political situation, because the objecting character's friends are considering backing his play against the general good. In fact, many people begin to wonder what exactly is the general good. The player characters are divided politically, but neither side turns to right to violence because they want to build the action higher. The players must find a solution worthy of Guildhall, and in doing so there will be plenty of player plot scene being created.

Compare Notes Scene: Many events are built by using adventures to share information with player characters. Players are then encouraged to share this information with others in ways that showcase their character's personality. This creates communication between players on many levels.

To create this kind of scene a one player approaches another player and simply asks if they have heard something about a stated topic. The exchange that follows will always be unique and interesting, because members will answer through the filter of their character's personality. Some characters give information freely, other characters will require some urging. They key here is that communication occurs and that both players enjoy the exchange and receive a benefit from the interaction.

In the Realm of Guildhall setting Guildsmen generally work together and exchange information freely or for minor favors. However in the Realm of Tyrs setting, non-humans, revolutionaries and imperials will often be in

conflict, and the exchange of information between groups is often accompanied by the exchange of favors or funds.

Group Activity Scene: These scenes are used by player characters to get other player characters involved in some kind of activity. The kinds of activities are only limited by the imaginations of the characters. The best time for player promoted activities are during periods of downtime when the cast is setting up adventures. At events where there are no cast participants player promoted activities form the major means of entertainment.

Some activities are based on a character's cultural background. If your culture has a specific type of physical contest or ceremony you may want to hold one for your fellow players. For example, in the Realm of Guildhall highlanders throw large logs, orcs fight in a circle of challenge, while shorians have tea ceremonies. A player could easily announce and run these activities to enhance an event.

Other activities can be based on your character's trade, occupation or even certain skills. For example, rangers in the Glory of Guildhall will often organize woodland competitions, whereas clerics and druids will host religious events. It's very common for cavaliers and warriors to train military maneuver and host fighting competitions.

Some group activities are derived from the nature of the event. Meals are often made into lavish feasts where players come together and entertain each other in talent show after the evening meal. Following the talent show there is often a drum circles and/or dancing. It's important that these theatric activities have full participation by members. These artistic endeavors help make the world more than just a combat simulation, they bring the world to life.

The modern world entertains with television, video games and similar mediums, but human societies in ages other than the modern world enjoyed such things as feasting, dancing and informal entertainment. It's not hokey to participate and enjoy such things, its embracing a human culture different from the modern world's immediate gratification.

The best way to create a group activity scene is to make an announcement. Sometimes large town-encompassing activities should be run by the producer who can advise when the best time to do an activity would be. Smaller activities, designed for a players select group of friends can be done anytime that is appropriate for the group.

Player Relationship Scene: These are scenes that enhance the emotional aspect of theatric roleplaying. They capture the love, life and laughter and the pain, sorrow and tragedy of interpersonal relationships.

Members will often have their player characters pursue friendships, alliances and romantic relations with the characters of other members. This is the heart of theatric roleplaying. Most members are friends out-of-play and plan their relationships to counterpoint or reinforce real life feelings, but sometimes player characters become friends in-play which then leads to real life friendships.

Sometimes members decide to play characters that hate one another. The reasons are varied, perhaps they let a friend die, seduced their lover or caused some other great harm. Sometimes members create characters who hate each other based on misunderstandings that the members have their characters resolve over a series of events.

Caution must always to taken so as not to hurt another's feelings. Careful planning and communication before events is always recommended before embarking on intense in-play interactions. Some players create statements to alert their partner if the roleplaying is going too far. While breaking character at the height of an amazing roleplay is never a good thing, if you think that someone is real-life upset ask for a clarification on their comfort, before continuing.

A final word of caution is to never attempt to roleplay an emotional, personal scene with someone you do not know, or that you have not coordinated with out-of-character before the event. Getting in someone's face over personal or emotional issues without knowing them or having pre-arranged agreement is a recipe for disaster.

Communication is a key ingredient for successful player relationship scenes. They can allow actors to create amazing emotional scenes, but they can also hurt members in real ways. So be responsible performers and take care not to hurt anyone's feelings. The purpose of roleplaying is entertainment, crying as your character can be really cool, so long as you're also not crying for real!

Connecting to Cast-created Plot: Some theatric players become so skilled at creating personal plot that they see cast-driven plots as unnecessary. These talented players can create amazing stories involving many other players without any cast involvement, but for the average player some cast motivation is necessary.

There are going to be members who rely on cast plots for their enjoyment of the event. They want to make connections with plot characters, go on adventures and resolve cast created plots. And that's okay, because the Mystic Realms writing system fosters awesome cast-driven stories.

Our writers learn how to create amazing adventures and complex political plots. Writers want to develop charismatic plot characters, and they want to entertain everyone with cast driven action, but we know that intense theatric roleplaying comes primarily from player interactions. We understand that some players will not be able to achieve the kind of roleplaying ability that allows for independent creativity, but we hope that most players will.

To join a story the player character needs to make connections with the plot character involved with the story. The basic plot character is the adventure guide. He or she will bring you on an adventure where you will receive information and guidance on events outside of the play area. You should then bring this information back into town and use it to promote player plot in reaction to what you've learned.

Plot characters can be interacted with on many levels. Though they lead players on adventures, they also serve a major role in plot promotion and resolution. In good stories plot characters will present various solutions the story conflict and the player characters can select from these options (or to create their own) in their efforts to interact with the story.

The best stories create more complex interactions by using plot characters to provide players with opposing solutions to the story conflict. This awesome activity will place groups of player characters in direct conflict with each other. Directors of plot use these conflicts to provide player generated interactions which are often more intense than cast created situations.

In essence this is your story, what's important is the actions you make as your character. Do you agree with one of the solutions provided? Is your character arguing with another player character over the issue presented by the cast characters? Will that disagreement lead to more complex player promoted plot. We hope so!

Luminary Scenes: A member who has a luminary character is obligated prepare and perform his or her luminary duties. We like to think of these duties as theatric scenes. Luminaries fulfil an important duty that is critical to creating the roleplaying atmosphere in community based events. The required scenes are based on their position in the community.

As a luminary you've got to welcome new players and perform the duties of your position. All luminary positions are detailed in the source materials for the realm of play. If you're unsure of your task, seek help from the concierge or the producer, but don't let your club down.

For example, in the Glory of Guildhall setting a guildmaster is responsible for creating the scenes that make the member of their guilds feel like guild members. The first step is setting up a guild table. The next step is talking to your guild members as the guild leader. You'll need to introduce yourself to new members and welcome returning members to the event. You'll also need to promote guild members by performing their ceremonies of promotion which are important milestones in a character's development. By assuming the mantle of guildmaster you are responsible for the enjoyment of other players.

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The most important scene for your character in many game worlds is the community meeting. In this scene all the important people of the community come together and react to each other. At this point player plot can reach a climax as players struggle to get their points of view accepted by the majority of the players. The cast will often provide additional roleplaying support by having their charismatic plot characters attend to "stir the pot (of plot)."

These meetings are meant to be dynamic and confrontational. The plot committee of the club plans events from what the players choose in the meeting. These meetings directly change the world of the players. It's a powerful tool for players, and a great opportunity for heroics that does not require combat skill.

Telling a Story Scene: Everyone has stories to tell. The source materials are full of interesting stories that not everyone has read in full detail. As you play you will have amazing experiences. Simply telling these stories as your character in-play is a great way to pass the time and has the added benefit of informing and involving others. Everyone loves a good story-telling so please take advantage of free time and use it to develop your character, make connections with other characters and share the history of the world.

Reactionary Roleplaying

Reactionary players wait for cast driven scenes, and if there's not enough cast or if the scenes do not appeal to them these players will often be unable to entertain themselves or each other. Events can become social gatherings with much out-of-character comment, inter-spaced by moments of roleplaying when the cast is present.

Most roleplayers will start as reactionary performers, and if given the opportunity they will grow into proactive performers who can create interesting plots around them through their interactions with others. No one wants to be bored at a roleplaying event, and though the encouragement of proactive roleplaying and player plot scenes, no player should ever be bored unless it's by

personal choice.

A reactionary roleplay style is particularly well-suited to small, combat-focused games or to short events that focus on a single adventure or theme. Many activity and mission based events work well without player plot, however, the addition of player plot will add to any event.

Player plot is necessary for all community based events. Community based events are designed so players can perform their player plots. The space between cast driven scenes must be filled by player driven scenes if members want to create that elusive concept of theatric roleplaying.

Shyness

A lot of shyness is simply not knowing what to say; it's really the inability to make small talk that is hampering to most individuals. They are simply unable to think of anything to say, and their worry of being "shy" ties up their tongues.

One method used to teach people to overcome shyness is simply to plan out and prepare short conversations about topics that are of general interest to most people. For example, if you're going to meet people in a sports bar, you'll prepare background information on the teams participating in the game. In the real world people overcome shyness by practicing these conversations with people they meet. The continual practice builds confidence and allows the person to overcome their shyness.

The environment of a theatric roleplay is the perfect place to overcome your shyness and develop good social skills. The environment necessary for highly theatric roleplaying is receptive and supportive. In the real world you risk people not wanting to talk with you, however, in a theatric roleplay everyone supports each other's roleplaying so the things you say will be embraced.

Another good thing is that the source books and immediate game plots give you a wealth of information to use. The contents of your small talk is literally at your fingertips. All you need to do is read about the world and choose what portion you want to bring to life.

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Since player plot scenes are primarily conversations that you share with others, theatric roleplays can quickly help people overcome their shyness. Afterward, they will be able to work on leadership, organizational and other management skills that they can use in real world situations.

Keeping It Up

Don't let creating player plot become a chore. Newer players always seem to have goals. They want to go out on a certain adventure, raise their character's rank, become a luminary character, join a certain group of players, get involved with a particular cast driven plot, recover a coveted artifact, and so forth. These basic motivations are the first steps to creating real player plot.

Once they develop confidence in their abilities, newer players will begin to produce excellent interactions. They will be quick to embrace inter-character conflicts, and relish in the excitement of playing them out in ways that help everyone have fun.

During the first few years of live-action roleplaying players are excited and automatically have lots of things planned for every event. Sometimes excited players make plans without even realizing they are constructing plot scenes for their characters, but in time as these goals are accomplished, members sometimes stop making goals. Without goals and motivations, without a strong connection to plots, even the best roleplayer risks becoming disenfranchised with the hobby.

A simple way to avoid becoming disenfranchised is to understand the need for player created plot. The very act of creating player plot gives motivations for the characters, and when everyone is designing player plot the event becomes so full of interactions that there is no time to not be the character. Player characters will be swept up into the moment and even the most experienced member will always find events fresh and entertaining.

When creativity is encouraged by the rules and the philosophies of the roleplaying embrace cooperation the scenes created by the player characters will make truly amazing events possible. Theatric roleplaying is so different from the cast-driven, combat-focused competitive game that it's hard to compare the two. When all of the players at an event embrace the production of player plot they are giving energy into the event and with all that theatric energy building to a climax there is no comparison between theatric roleplaying and basic combat-sport games.

Cast Plot

Cast plot provides the framework of the event. They players are portraying the main characters whose actions drive the story. The Writers are creating antagonists and allies for the players to interact with. Simple stories require players to find out information about a monster and then must slay the monster. Other stories are have more depth using antagonists that are not black and white and are acting to further goals that clash with the player's goals. Some writers are capable of creating complex political affairs where player have to manipulate cast characters like pieces on a game board.

Many times the complexity of the story a writer can tell depends on the roleplaying skills of the players. Simple stories require only a few pieces of information, but the more in depth and complex a story become the more pieces of information that players need to collect, share, synthesis, and react to. When telling stories writers and players need to meet on the middle ground.

Building Story

One of the most important ways stories are developed is through the passing of information. Players receiving information from writers and sharing that information with other players drive a large part of the roleplaying at an event. In fact, it is the cooperation

One important skill of a good writer is the ability to divide complex stories into small kernels of information that can be passed to player through (1) epilogues and prologues, (2) knowledge cards, (3) handouts, and (4) cast roleplaying.

One important skill of a good player is the ability to collect information and use it to build their character's

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part of the story in the LARP. People say "knowledge is power", but in a LARP "Knowledge is the power to entertain." In a LARP players collect pieces of information and share that information with other players in ways that develop their own character.

Good writers and good players understand that the passing of information is a powerful method of expressing the "character" of your character and this roleplay forms the basis for much dramatic interaction. The writers supply basic information that players use to express aspects of their character's past, personality, and purpose. In essence, players repeat the information, but they share the information through the filter of their own character adding their own likes and dislikes and opinions which will hopefully conflict with other players as that's how drama is built.

EXAMPLE

A story about the Cult of Shivakas is created by sharing the following information: Shivakas is a winged demon-god. Cult members worship Shivakas. Cult members wear purple hoods in ceremonies. Cult members eat the hearts of their victims. The victims are local Guildsmen. The Cult Leader is a new arrival to the small village of Ironfell and he has recruited seven followers. A young woman forced into cult by boyfriend and wants to expose the Cult Leader. The Cult is having a big meeting that night. He boyfriend knows how to get there.

The story is introduced in a prologue describing the missing victims and corpse found without hearts. Players read the prologues to get a hint. They arrive at the event asking other players if they have heard about the murders. Good players build the excitement of the story. Grisly murders are something to talk about!

As the event develops, players may investigate the grisly scenes of murder, learning more information through knowledge cards. Other players may visit a scholar who gives them handout about ancient Cult that had similar practices. The players compare the information found in the prologues, to the investigations scene, to handout and in doing so they are building the story of the Cult.

It is important to realize that without players collecting this information and discussing the information among themselves the story is not very exciting. The writers and the cast provide the skeleton framework of the story, but it's a players commitment to learning and sharing the information provide that truly brings the story to life. It is important to note that players should share this information through the filter of their character's past, personality, and purpose. The information is important, but even more important is each player character's opinion on the information, because it's the sharing of their opinions that drives the theatric story of each player character.

At some point in the event, the players will encounter the young woman who will reveal the name of the Cult Leader and confirm the whole cult will be gathering that night which will give the players an opportunity to capture the cult. She does not know the location of the meeting, but her boyfriend does. This creates a very human moment for the story.

Perhaps the players can convince her to betray her boyfriend. Perhaps, the players will need to find the location of the Cult through other means. Regardless, plot is developed through these conversations that are built on the information provided in the prologue, knowledge cards, and handouts. This is the rising action of the story. The player may do some more investigations to find out if cult members have developed powers or gain allies.

Eventually the players will plan their confrontation with the Cult. This is always an important roleplaying scene that should not be rushed through. Sure, in a LARP you could just walk out to fight, but wouldn't it be cooler to appoint leaders of the front line, scouts, and healers. This is good practice because most stories and combat at Mystic Realms are not as simple as this one. In fact, stories can become very complex which is why developing information gathering skills is so important.

The story concludes in the climatic confrontation where the players attack the cult, interrupt a heinous ceremony, and kill or capture the cult leader and the cult followers. Or maybe the cult defeats the players and eats all their

hearts.

Potluck Comparison

A LARP is much like a potluck feast where everyone contributes something to the success of the event. Players bring the main dishes where the cast brings the plates and utensils.

Player characters are the major characters of the story. The dish the players bring to the meal is their characters' past, personality, and purpose which they roleplay throughout the event in every interaction they have. Players talking to each other as their characters forms the basis of every style of LARP, except the pure combat style. The excitement and emotion experienced during dramatic LARP events grows directly from the players' commitment to roleplaying their character's against the backdrop of the player plot and cast driven story.

By supplying the plates and utensils, the cast is providing the underlying framework for the players' roleplay. The event director creates the reason for the gathering and/or background story that is conveyed to the players through prologues, knowledge cards, and the roleplaying ability of cast members. The plates and utensils are necessary to eat the meal, but they are not the truly fulfilling part. The real "meat and potatoes" of the event is the player characters reacting to the framework. The player characters interactions with each other give the rich flavor to the meal.

The story provided by the cast is necessary to give an event flow, but it won't fill you up. Players need to develop their characters and roleplay the sharing of information with each other to build the dramatic conflicts of the event. If the cast supplies an adequate framework, it's the players who must build the immersive theatric experience. For example, if the people coming to a potluck dinner fail to bring main dishes, they can hardly blame the host for going hungry. Similarly, if the host fails to provide the plates and utensils and no one can eat. This is the same as the cast not supplying a framework and giving players any information to share.

In essence, players and cast need to meet each other halfway with both contributing their share to the success of the LARP. The best events occur when both writers and players are doing their best to enhance the shared story. The players bring full heaping dishes of past, personally, and purpose. The cast brings a framework with emotional content, intellectual challenge, and exciting combat.

Sharing the World

A cornerstone of TTRPGs is that the GM and Players are free to modify the rules and history of their game however they want. Change monster stats. Do movement differently. If you can't pronounce the name of a character in the source material, change the name. If you want another culture or species just retro them into the world. Tabletop roleplayers embrace this freedom, and many Game Masters demand this freedom. However, this might not be the best way to run large games.

Why Share?

When a GM and 5 friends are sitting around a private table every thing they do only affects them. They can remember any changes they make to their game rules and the history of their setting, and the geography of their world. Six people are easily able to personalize their private games to exactly what they enjoy, and there are absolutely no concerns. In fact that's the right and proper way to play a private game.

However, large public gaming groups are different. The freedom of the individual must be balanced against the freedoms of every member. When there are 20 GMs with 100 players all rotating through different GM's tables changes can cause lots of confusion. In a LARP setting with many different writers and hundreds of players these issues become even more concerning.

Rules Confusion

Changing rules causes confusion and sorting this confusion brings everyone out-of-play. In public games, GMs with special personal rules will have to constantly interrupt play to explain their changes. "At my table, we

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do that rule differently." This invariably leads to players discussing the changes, and oftentimes disagreeing with the change. As unofficial rules accumulate, players won't be able to rely on their skills. Instead of a consistent, dependable ruleset that a players can build their character around, the constant flux creates confusion and frustration.

In theatric LARPs, clarifications over rules stop the action destroying the immersive environment. Some LARP systems use action stopping mechanisms ("Hold!") into their games so players can continually pause play allowing them to sort out issues. That's not how Mystic Realms is intended to be played. The system prefers continually flowing action with everyone knowing the rules and playing through the scene as their character.

Historical Confusion

When GMs and players change or modify the history of the world becomes inconsistent. "Sorry, that whole Orc invasion never happened." "We thought having five human nations was too many, so we reduced to the humans to four nations."

Unofficial additions and changes to history erodes the story. Everyone ends up with a different understanding of the past. Characters are not connected by shared events and the world loses its realness for everyone. An alternate way to play is for everyone to learn the official history and use it to reinforce the world. Mystic Realms world building is top-notch. Every setting explores profound aspects of the human condition. Complex themes and diverse narrative elements have been built into every world to add roleplaying depth.

Geographic Confusion

Mountain ranges, rivers, lava fields, and other areas forming on or disappearing from the map. When GMs in private groups need a spooky woods they make up a name and put it on the map. If they need a village full of cultists, they'll just add another to the map. In a small game this is fine, because its only one small forest or village. It will stay in the player's mind and become part of their private world.

The problem happens when there is one map and twenty writers doing the same thing. The players are bombarded with newly spawning places that only have meaning when the writers are writing that particular plot. These "new" places appear and disappear without adding to the story, making the map (and the plot) seem meaningless to the players.

The better way to play, the way that gives meaning to the player's world is for everyone to learn the map and to consistently use its locations withing their roleplaying. That way when writers create plots that affect existing areas of the map everyone can have the feeling that the world is changing based on their actions.

Sharing Solution

In a short time, unofficial changes to the rule, history, and geography will make the game experience frustrating. When this happens in a LARP, the confusions erodes the immersive nature of play. Rules clarifications become commonplace, and they generally devolve into arguments. Players stop learning the history and don't bother discussing their surrounds. Many players might not even know maps exist, because they have become meaningless to club members.

To avoid the frustrating, game-breaking experience of ever-changing rules, history, and geography every member involved in Mystic Realms agrees to accurately use the rules and to bring the history and geography to life in a way that makes the world feel real. When players go to an event they should feel like they are walking into a rich world with a vibrant history and lots of stories happening around them.

Each official Mystic Realms club runs in a shared-story world that creates areas of responsibility and story control for each level of participant. This process allows hundreds of players and writers to tell stories that don't overwrite each other.

Coordinating Stories

All mystic realms clubs run with a shared-story concept that balances the individuals freedom to create and needs

of the group to have consistent history and geography.

The Realm Sourcebook Governs World

Mystic Realms, LTD publishes official sourcebook. This establishes the overall themes and aesthetic of the realm. The book provides the creation story, a detailed history, and a map that defines all the major areas. Players will find all the playable species, cultures, and skill classes available to them. The goal of a realm book is to create a world with a unique feel. Each setting is carefully constructed to connect players to each other. The framework of the world is diverse enough to provide a wide range of plots, but not so vast as to be like every other realm.

World Writers Guild Modifies World Map

The realm sourcebook evolves slowly. Generally, world plot reacts to local plot. For example, when Evermore Directors write culturally-driven plots the nations of the world take notice and react. For example, the phrase, "All things ripple from Evermore" is true in the sense that world events mirror those enacted by the players in Evermore. In addition, every two or three years Mystic Realms will work with club writers to supervise a big world plot that changes the overall world.

World changes always come from cool things that happen at LARP events. Allowing a player to change plots between events takes to focus off the LARP. Allowing specific players (read "special players") to affect the world create inequities between players and leads to accusations of favoritism, because no writer guild can handle dozens of "special" requests from different players between events. They have enough work preparing plot for the next LARP event. Managing private plots for individual players (or groups of players) is not fair to other players and is not permitted.

Local Map governs Local Area

When a club forms the organizers create a local document detailing the history and geography a small part of the world. Generally, the size of the local map is 500 to 1000 square miles and is often named for a prominent feature in the local area. This document should contain most of the elements of the main source materials so that writers and players will be able to connect to the overarching themes of the world in their local stories.

Local Writers Guild Modifies Local World Based on Player Action

After a club is created, the club Dramaturge supervises the Directors who use the local map to tell their stories. Plots are written to give players direct agency over their local maps. As players interact with local area, the map and supporting text are changed to reflect player activity. Enemies rise and fall and the local area changes around the players. This gives true player agency in their local area.

Players attending a club work to establish relationships with the plot character who run locations. They also "build" their character's homes and businesses in the local area, so they have a connection to the map. The Plot Directors create an intricate patchwork of stories that respond to player action while playing at LARP events.

Players Govern their Homes

The rulebook permits every player to have a home in the local area established by their club. The size of this home depends on the character's Wealth skill as detailed in the rulebook. These homes are recorded on the official map and become a part of the local world. Once they are added to the map become a part of the world can be referenced during play.

Players control their house. Between event roleplay in a person's house is allowed under the guidelines established in the members manual. No combat. No player versus player use of lore. Status is never earned for these roleplays, but they can be used to develop characters and deepen relationships. Most often between event roleplaying is used to set up player plot that gets resolved at the event to the entertainment of everyone witnessing the interactions.

Players are permitted to have people portray servants and other characters that would naturally be part of their estate. This also is based on wealth, but even the riches players cannot afford armies and other things that would

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unbalance the local area. Don't be that player that email the Dramaturge to argue, "I hired an army between events and I want to use it to destroy marching to the town

Plots in the local area can affect player homes only by agreement between dramaturge and players. Player should contact dramaturge and discuss. For example, when the Void Plague came through Evermore (1009A.Order) many players choose to have family members and servants die. There was plenty of tragic roleplaying. When the orcs attacked in (1001.A.Order) some players decided to have their homes destroyed while other player conducted a heroic defense. It's really up to the player.

Local Guidebooks

Mystic Reams is designed so that dozens of clubs can run in locations around the in-play world without creating conflicting stories. Players can event go from location to location playing in the same consistent world, visiting other clubs and experiencing a local story that expresses the themes and stories unique to that part of the in-play world.

Each club creates their own local area that is placed in the larger world provided by the source book. Club founders usually pick areas of interest to them that have unique cultural and geographic significance.

The Directors in this local area have creative freedom (within the confines of the rules and world setting) to produce something that is uniquely their own. This document provides players and cast the history and geography of the local area. The map and supporting text describing the points of interest and detailing important characters.

Some like to think of the information in the source books as the bold, black-ink lines defining the world, while the local guide provided the color that truly bring the world to life for the players.

The sourcebook shows the world map. The text explains major events, important places, and keys persons that make up the world. This information provides themes, mood, and genre specific guidance. But it doesn't create a world for individual players. Instead, it establish a consistent background. Players use this information to build their backstory and to define their relationships to the world.

The local guide book brings life to the world. It fills the black-ink outline created by the sourcebook with color. Each local area has a map, plot characters, common monsters, and other elements to give their unique expression of the world setting. The local guide will show and describe ruins, suspected bandit camps, farms, castles, swamps, mines . . . anything that could be useful for plot reasons.

The character's everyday life of adventure comes directly from the local guidebook. The player participants interact directly with events and characters. Strong local plots that player can affect through their actions reinforce the important of the local map. The players local area becomes important to them. It becomes their world, and when that happens everyone is one step closer to having to magical moments that every LARP seeks to have.

Part III. Multidimensional Hobby

Live-action roleplaying is a multidimensional hobby that encourages cooperation and empowers participants to explore all facets of the theatric arts. Developing real-life theatric skills will bring your interactions to a higher level. Basic improvisational acting, costume creation, prop making and script writing will elevate the game into a dramatic interactive theater experience. By suspending your disbelief of the game mechanics you can experience a truly immersive environment.

Interpreting Rules

The spirit of these rules intends that Mystic Realms be safe, fair, and fun. Each player should have an equal opportunity to be the hero. This goal can only be achieved if participants read and understand game mechanics, both in the letter and in the spirit.

The spirit of Mystic Realms requires that game rules and mechanics be narrowly construed to their stated meaning. Gamers will twist words to gain advantage or to win, but the spirit of Mystic Realms is of a shared performance with no "victory" or "defeat." The spirit requires performers to use rules as a means to entertain others and themselves.

To this end, participants must not manipulate the wording of the written text to extrapolate uses for skills beyond what is written. If the rule book does not explicitly state that a particular skill may be used in a certain manner, then that skill cannot be used for the proposed purpose.

If a member is unsure about a game skill use, they must get clarification from Mystic Realms before attempting the use during play, because if they use the skill inappropriately they will be subject to an accusation of cheating.

Creating Theater

Theatric roleplaying events are intense dramatic presentations that blend reality with show interactions to create a seamless play environment. Lighting, music and other special effects are combined with theatric-touch combat, improvisational acting and script writing to produce sweeping theatric scenes. With hearts pounding, thoughts racing and emotions whirling, players feel like they have become their characters!

Immersive roleplaying is an intense experience that evokes multidimensional excitement, a broad range of emotion and intelligent thought, and most-importantly allows the player to suspend their disbelief of the game mechanics in order to become their character in the world setting.

Roleplayers are encouraged to practice improve acting skills in order to more easily become their character. An immersive perspective can give a greater understanding of the hobby. Becoming the character requires theatric discipline, because the player must still follow game rules and mechanics, but must otherwise think and act as their character.

As you can imagine cooperative theatric live-action roleplaying is as different from competitive combat-focused live-action roleplaying, as day is to night. Many combat-focused roleplaying games only scratch the surface of character and story development, focusing instead on skill accumulation and combat interactions. Theatric roleplaying is more concerned with creating a truly immersive experience and developing a supportive community. The goal of theatric LARPing is to develop acting ability so that they can use their game skills in an way that entertains each other.

Creating an immersive roleplaying environment is the responsibility of every single participant in the event, and only when all participants cooperate fully, working together for the common goal, meshing and meeting perfectly like gears in a machine, will they begin to experience the magic of truly collaborative drama.

Costumes

Why is proper costuming required? After all, as someone once said, "If I can imagine a small packet is a fireball, why

can't I just imagine I'm dressed in a costume?" Perhaps there's some merit in the argument, but we chose to believe in the transformative power of clothing.

Think about uniforms: When a police officer puts on his uniform, he/she become the physical representation of society's laws. When a clergy member puts on vestments, he/she becomes the vessel for the divine.

Even in mundane life, clothing has transformative powers: we speak of "from rags to riches" to indicate that one's social status is reflected in their clothing. Important events in our lives, like marriages, funerals, and even the first day of school, are often accompanied by new clothing. Clothes symbolize who we are, who we were, and who we want to be.

It is no different with your character's costume. When you put on that costume, you are becoming that person. Along with physically putting on the clothing, you are also putting on your character's hopes, dreams, and history. The right clothing gives you an insight into the mind of your character that allows you to identify with them in a very intimate way.

The Perfect Costumes

Perfect costumes not only look good and fit well, but also capture the essence of the character. Thus, looking good and fitting well are terms used in context. A beggar character looks good in rags that don't fit, whereas a noble may have tailored clothing, whereas the beggar pretending to be a noble may wear fineries that don't fit well.

The perfect costume is of course one that is appropriate for the setting of play, but that's addressed in the section on minimum standard. This section talks about going beyond the minimum and creating for yourself those amazing immersive moments when you are your character.

So, how do we go about creating the "perfect" costume for your character? Well, first of all, don't think of it as a costume: a costume is something you put on for a certain amount of time, and then take off. But clothing is something you wear everyday- your personal style helps define you. So take a few minutes to think about what your character's clothing would look like. Draw a sketch, check out some

historical or fantasy clothing books and websites, watch your favorite movie. Use these for inspiration.

Consider the Following

What is my character's trade or occupation? What does my clothing need to be able to do? Does it have to fit well under armor? Does it need to hide me and my movements?

What is my character's history? Do I come from a warm place? A cold place? Is my family upper class? Are we poorer? Did we have servants, or did we need to work in the fields?

What image do I want to portray? Do I want people to think I'm someone important? Would I rather hide in the shadows? Is there some object that I wear that's special to me?

Making the Costume

Now that you've got some ideas, let's talk about the nuts and bolts of actually making your clothing. Sure, you can buy something from a costume shop or online store, but the real fun is making something that is unique and totally your own! The following resources should help you get started.

Fabric: Fabric can be found in many places. There are mainstream fabric stores, like JoAnn's and Walmart, but there are also some more places. Thrift stores are a good place to find old curtains, sheets, blankets and tablecloths that are often made of good quality fabric for very low prices. Thrift stores are also a good way to find some costume basics- fur vests, fun hats. Discount fabric warehouses are also a great place where you can find expensive fabrics for really cheap prices. These ware houses are usually found in larger cities so load up your car with friends, and take a road trip.

Sew Days: Once you've acquired your fabric treasures, plan a sewing day! Sewing, like most things connected with this hobby is more fun when you do it as a group. So get your friends together, and spend a few hours making your fabulous new clothing! This is a good way to teach people how to sew, and it's also cool because everyone can participate.

Sew days are good way to involve everyone. Those who

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can't yet operate a sewing machine can cut the fabric following patterns. This is an especially good idea if you're making a group of characters who wears similar clothing. For example, in creating the assembly line one person can cut the fabric into tabards or tunic pieces, someone else can pin, one person can do the actual sewing, someone else can put the design on the finished tabard.

Exchanging Help: Everyone is good at something and while everyone can learn to sew not everyone loves sewing. Some players may be willing to exchange services with you, for something you love to do and thus both members gain something. This cooperation is the cornerstone of a good roleplaying community.

For example, maybe you can't sew, but you can make weapons. Or maybe you can't sew, but you can cook! Ask around- you never know who will be willing to exchange a new tunic for some cupcakes.

Learning to Sew

Now you've got your fabric, what do you do with it? It's quickest to sew on a machine. Ask around- someone in your family may have a sewing machine, and be willing to teach you. Don't panic- the trickiest part of sewing is learning how the pattern pieces fit together. The rest is just patience. Here is some information to get your started.

Machine: The sewing machine does not need to be expensive, but remember you get what you pay for, and cheaper machines may not last as long. Many cheaper sewing machines have plastic pieces. If the choice is an all-metal sewing machine with "only" 12 stitches and a machine with more bells and whistles (and plastic parts) for the same price, invest in the all-metal machine. More expensive machines often have lots of different options that really aren't needed for the beginner who only needs to sew a straight stitch for ninety percent of their costume sewing.

Fabric: For basic sewing you'll want to start with a medium-weight, non-stretch fabric made from mostly from cotton. Fabric comes in several "weights." Lightweight fabrics feel thin and wispy to the touch, medium-weight fabrics feel more substantial, and heavyweight fabrics are thick and feel heavy in the hand.

Fabric can also be stretch or non-stretch meaning that when you pull stretch fabric the material pulls like a rubber band, returning to its natural size when pressure is released. You can tell non-stretch fabric because it will have little give on both the length and width.

The "fiber content" means what makes up the fabric. Natural fibers are cotton, silk, linen, bamboo, while man-made fabrics are polyester and nylon.

Patterns: Sewing success is all about the pattern. You can't build a house on a poor foundation and expect it to look good. Similarly, good looking costumes start with a good pattern. They are many commercial patterns available, but remember to buy a pattern that matches your experience level. New sewers should stick with basic pattern to avoid frustration. Many patterns describe the experience level necessary.

All beast, creations, and monster costumes are standardized to ensure they are easily recognizable during play. You must make menagerie costumes using official patterns. Simple patterns, for skeleton, elemental and automation masks are available for free and can be easily made by anyone who can sew a straight stitch. In fact most menagerie costumes were designed to be made using only a straight stitch to make them easily replicable by groups of players.

Suggested Yardage: Most professional patterns will include the recommended amount of cloth you will need to sew the pattern in a specific size. They will also show you how to lay the pattern pieces on the fabric to minimize waste. Pay attention to how the fabric is folded.

Material is generally sold by the yard and comes in standardized widths, generally 45 or 60 inches. Be careful that you check the width given on the pattern carefully and always buy a little extra, just in case. If you do have extra, you can make bags, pouches, hoods, sashes, and so forth.

Necessary Supplies: In addition to the pattern and materials you'll need a few more things. The first is thread. Get an all-purpose thread that matches the color of your material so the stitch won't be seen. Always have a few extra needles for your machine on hand as you'll likely break a few needles as you learn to sew. Pins will be needed to hold

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pieces of fabric together as you sew. A good pair of sewing scissors is worth their weight on gold. Treat these scissors well and don't use them to cut anything but material and thread. While not necessary an iron can be helpful in flattening sews and hems to make sewing easier.

Extras: Don't forget about trim, buttons, ribbons and lacing. These can make a simple tunic look very elaborate.

Resources: There's lots of good book son how-to sew in your local library. The Internet also has how-to sites that show the basics of sewing. The manual that came with your sewing machine will also be a big help. Mystic Realms has patterns for all monsters listed in the menagerie and members are always willing to help.

Enhancing Costuming

Mystic Realms believes so strongly in the transformative power of clothing that the rules allow players to empower certain articles of clothing and clothing accessories to give them in-play powers. This is intended to encourage players to wear unique and iconic items that reflect

So next time you're playing remember that divine vestment doesn't just give you magical armor - it also identifies you as part of a close-knit group united by similar beliefs. Your character's military award grants benefits but may also represent years of hard work to your military unit or a heroic act of sacrifice or daring.

Many times, characters with unique or iconic cultural costumes or accessories will be able to augment them. This encourages their wearing and/or use. For example, that hat may give your character armor protection, but it also represents a strong connection to your character's culture.

__Decorations__

Decorations capture the essence of the play setting. Creating an event is a team effort, and groups of members work together to provide decorations. Everyone should bring something to add to the atmosphere.

Main Play Area

Players always have an in-play place to congregate. Community meetings, tournaments, staged entertainment, rank raising ceremonies, competitive group games, and meals all occur in this location.

The main play area is where player characters gather to discuss plot information discovered on their adventures. They will formulate plans of action and negotiate with other groups to determine the course of action that best serves the community.

Think of the main play area as the stage where the player characters perform their personal plot scenes. Players use the main play area to act out scenes with other players that help develop their characters. While some of these scenes develop naturally through interactions at events, many of these scenes are pre-planned before the event. It's important to come to the event with something to share.

Anything that enhances the setting can (and should) be brought to an event.

Lighting: Lighting the play area appropriately is important for mood, as well as safety. In fantasy-based events, if everyone brought a few of LED candles to decorate your guild table or bunk, incandescent or florescent lighting would not be needed, thus making the night-time play area much more in-period. Going one step further, if a few player brought colors lights the incandescent bulbs could simply be replace with red lights to create more atmosphere.

Pavilions: Group gathering areas should be marked with a decorated pavilion. Pavilions should not have guide-lines as these will trip people. The ez-up pavilions with advertising tags removed and some painting will make an excellent contribution to almost any setting. Chairs and table will give characters a place to sit, but the furniture should fit the period, or the "character" of the pavilion. Making medieval chairs are fun and easy to make, whereas a rug and pillows placed under the pavilion make an excellent place to lounge.

Market: Almost every player archtype has a group of skills that they share, barter, or sell to other players. These skills buff other characters and are often desirable.

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Knowledge notes and prologues posted by writers will often tip off players as to what buffs will be helpful on the upcoming adventures which allow players to prepare. For example, if the prologue to the event shows Philosopher Po discovering food stuffs hidden in a remote lake, players can prepare by getting buffs that allow water breathing and increased swimming movement.

Since the rules require the performer to roleplay the creation of the buff, the interplay entertains the performer and the purchaser. The theatric nature of the performance can be enhanced by using props. If you have a few props this performance is much easier (and often much more entertaining for others which is the goal). For example, bringing a person back to life with rattles and tom toms is a lot more enjoyable than soft chanting under the breath.

Collateral Play Area

Collateral play area is the term used by Mystic Realms to denote areas where the cast set up scenes and/or adventures. Collateral means "running with" or "adjacent to" and these areas are used to represent locations are around the main play area that can be reached by traveling to them (often with a cast member, map, or verbal directions as a guide)

Collateral play areas are often prepared before the show begins. Special effects and large stage properties cannot be set-up during play and are left undisturbed until they are needed. These areas are only open to player characters when authorized by the cast through in-play action. Thus, players will "learn" their locations at the appropriate times, which is usually when something of in-play importance happens in the area.

Helping to decorate the collateral play area is the responsibility of every member in the group. Clubs will work together to build these decorations. Everything that a club builds should be created with the intention of using it again. Nothing should ever be thrown away. Stage properties can be stored in basements, garages, or sheds and used over and over again. If a club shuts down the properties are passed to other clubs and lent out when needed. This ensures that props are never lost or destroyed and will always be used by the community of friends.

Examples

Cast properties are used to set scenes. Here's just a small sampling of the properties that clubs use over and over again.

Stone Walls: Every club needs a good set of "stone walls." These are constructed out of grey cloth by painting stone onto the cloth. You can use bed sheets, but we recommended grey canvas as the heavy weight material does not blow easily in the wind and give a more substantial look to the wall. These decorations are used for everything. They can easily turn basements into underground dungeons and living rooms into stone walled taverns. Metal spring clamps (purchase in hardware stores) are used to hold them to the rafters of the building were the rooms or halls are needed. Wooden frameworks can support the walls when they need to free stand.

Small Cave: Every club needs a "cave" for those scenes out in the woods where there are no buildings. Eight cloth panels should be enough to define the small cave. Heavy canvas fabric, forty inches wide and six feet tall, works best as it will not easily blow in the breeze.

The painted cloth facade is hung between trees or clipped to the top of a black or grey ez-up pavilion to define the cave. At night the cave mouth will give the impression that the players are really entering a cave. Daytime use requires more suspension of disbelief, but it can be used effectively with good players.

Don't try and make long cave systems as these do not meet the what-you-see-is-what-you-get requirement.

Tomb Stones: Graveyards are such common scenes that sooner or later your group will need to make some. Use plywood and cut tombstones twelve inches wide by twenty four inches tall. You'll get sixteen tombstones out of a four by eight sheet of plywood. Cut one foot long bases for you tombstones out of 2x4 or 2x3 boards and screw the tombstone to the base. Paint all stone with a grey outdoor paint, and then use sponge dabbed in dark grey paint to give a stone-like appearance. You can drill a hole in the base and use a tent stake to hold them upright on uneven ground. An LED candle is placed in front of each stone gives enough

light to really show the graveyard scene.

__Theatric Makeup__

When we talk about theatric make-up we are talking about more than wearing elf ears or painting yourself green. We're talking about using makeup in a professional way to make you look different. Make-up can be used subtly to elongate a nose, to shadow the eyes, to make a character seem older or younger. Make-up is just one more way that you can differentiate yourself from your characters.

When creating a character much care should be given to the facial composition of that character. Just as clothes can make the character so can make-up on the face and hair. Good undead or other monster makeup can push a scene over-the top in areas of atmosphere and mood. Player performers who portray their races with excellent makeup detail bring everyone around them deeper into the environment just by their presence.

You don't need to be a professional theatrical makeup artist to create impressive results. The makeup artist uses the same skills that any artist does, and anyone can learn to use makeup. Cosmetics can be used to do everything from highlighting a cast member's natural features to making him or her look 40 years older to making them look like a totally different being.

One of the main goals of theatrical makeup is taking an individual and transforming them into something unrecognizable. A lot of times when a performer is playing a part, it is vital to mask what they are in real life with the help of cosmetics. You will want to make a young man look very old, a good girl look very bad, or an unassuming person into a vicious-looking orc.

Every group of players should encourage at least one of their members to begin an exploration into the art of theatric makeup. As this person gains proficiency, he or she can help teach others.

Makeup Types: It's not necessary to buy a ton of professional-quality makeup and tools, in fact we recommend starting with basic Halloween supplies. Water-based makeup is best for the quick removal but tends to bleed easier.

Oil-based makeup is difficult to wash off and will easily stain costumes and other property. It should not be used at events.

Powder-based makeup lasts long and is easy to remove, but can flake off the skin. At Mystic Realms the makeup has to last the entire scene without touch ups, and performers have to be very careful not to make a mess no matter what they use. Some clubs do not allow oil-based make-ups.

After you learn the basic skills you should buy the best quality makeup you can afford. Good makeup does make a lot of difference, but a lot can be done with cheap products as well.

Makeup Kits: Anyone desiring to specialize in makeup for their group will need to build up their make-up kit. The kit should contain basic cosmetic items such as foundation, eyeliner, lipstick, eye shadow, and nail polish.

Cake foundation is the most common type used in theater because it covers well and blends easily, but you can also use street liquid foundation. More expensive foundations and powders do cover and last better than cheap drugstore brands; on the other hand, you can probably get away with cheap eye shadows and lipsticks. Keep an assortment of brown eye shadows and different shades of blush on hand, as well as brown and black eyeliner pencils and mascara. If you're good at mixing colors, a theatrical quality "color wheel", which is a single disc with red, blue, yellow, black, and white creams, can save you a lot of money in the long run on eye shadow, eyeliner, and blush.

A few good tools can drastically improve your makeup application. Sponges are necessary for applying foundation and blending. You'll need several small brushes, especially if you're going to use creams for eye shadow or eyeliner. Q-tips can work in a pinch and are also indispensable for touching up smears and smudges. You'll also need several large brushes for powder and blush. If you're going to share the makeup kit, you'll want to purchase disposable brushes, sponges, mascara wands, and mixing palettes.

You will also need a cosmetic pencil sharpener, cotton balls, and your favorite type of makeup remover. Later you can add many kinds of facial prosthetics, latex adhesives and even wigs. Finally, a toolbox or tackle box will keep all of your makeup and tools organized.

Basics

Live-action roleplaying uses the same basic makeup techniques that are used for all types of theatrical productions, including high school, college, community, or regional professional theater. It is not necessary to use make-up for every character, in fact its not recommended as the application of make-up takes a lot of time, but certain important cast characters should look different than the person playing them and basic stage make-up is very useful to achieving that end.

The key to becoming a makeup artist is to experiment with makeup. It will take time to develop a feel for the hobby. The best way to begin learning is to start working with makeup. Practice is important. You'll get better every time you do a character. Always consider the style of scene, type of character, and size of play area when planning a makeup design.

Stage Technique
Before applying any makeup, wash the face thoroughly with a gentle soap or face cleanser. Be sure to remove all traces of street makeup. Next, apply an even coat of foundation over the entire face, and blend into the neck. If you are using dry cake makeup drag a slightly damp sponge across the cake and then apply to the skin. Cream and liquid foundations should be applied with dry sponges. If you want the foundation to create a skin tone different from the actor's skin tone, then you also need to cover any exposed skin on the neck, and possibly the hands, with makeup.

Once a base coat is on the actor's face, use lighter and darker foundations (or blend white and brown makeup into the base foundation) to emphasize or create highlights and shadows. Use subtle highlights and shadows to emphasize the natural contours of an actor's face. You can also change the shape of an actor's face with highlights and shadows. For example, a crooked nose will appear straight with a strong straight highlight down the bridge of the nose, or you can bring out deep-set eyes by highlighting under the brow bone. Be sure to blend highlights and shadows well unless you are going for a very stylized look.

Specific Character Techniques
The average makeup artist will find themselves using these specific character techniques described below much more often than the basic stage technique described above.

Aging: When a young actor has been cast to play an older person, often makeup is required to achieve the necessary look. First, figure out how old the character should look, and then find pictures of people in that age group. Take note of where the skin has wrinkled and sagged, then use highlighting and shading to create that effect on the actor's face. Have the actor smile, frown, raise his or her eyebrows, and scrunch his or her face together to see where the skin would naturally wrinkle, then use a brown eyeliner pencil (or mix colors from your color wheel) to draw in the wrinkles. Highlight the skin around the wrinkle, and then blend carefully.

Cultural or Time Period: Many genres and world settings will have certain looks. In some cultures or time periods, men and women alike powdered their faces white, painted their lips red, and drew on beauty marks. In many periods, "proper" men and women didn't wear any makeup at all, but lower class women did. The source books for each realm are a good starting point, and when playing shows set in different times of earth a little research can help you to figure out what would have been common for the given time period and subtle makeup can be used to enhance the character.

Masks: Most Mystic Realms beasts, monsters and lesser beings are represented by masks. These masks are all standardized to make the type of character readily recognizable to everyone. Participants portraying these characters, must wear masks with an official design. Latex masks of varied looks are useable only when the rules do not state a specific mask. Makeup should never be applied to masks that belong to the club or another member.

Being Types: When fulfilling the costume requirement of a

greater being you may use cream face paints to draw on the actor's face followed by powder to set the make-up. You can use highlights and shadows to make the face look even more different. Then you can add the final details as required for the race of being.

Injuries and Mutations: You can also use makeup to create injuries and mutations. Latex and spirit gum can make scars, wounds, and large crooked noses, but it can take a little practice to be able to achieve effects that look realistic. Household items you can use to create effects. You can use oatmeal and latex adhesive to create the face of a rotting corpse. Toilet paper and latex can be used to create peeling skin.

Further Information

If you are interested in learning more, many books, websites, and classes cover makeup effects in detail.

Character Accents

An accent is a manner of pronunciation peculiar to a particular individual, location, or nation. An accent may identify the locality in which its speakers reside (a geographical or regional accent), the socio-economic status of its speakers, their ethnicity, their caste or social class, and so forth. Accents are important in theatric roleplaying and are often used to enhance or denote a particular character lifestyle or culture.

Accents typically differ in quality of voice, pronunciation of vowels and consonants, stress, and prosody. The term dialect encompasses the broader set of linguistic differences including grammar, semantics, vocabulary, and other language characteristics. When a player adopts an accent, he or she will often adopt dialect choices as well, so we'll talk about both in this section.

The five major parts of creating a basic accent is vocal resonance, vowel sounds, consonant sounds, speech rhythm, and expression.

Resonance Location

A major feature of accents is the part of the mouth where "the energy of the voice is focused." Native speakers use different parts of their mouth and different facial muscles to get their characteristic sound. In general, the "energy focus" of American speech takes place in the middle of the mouth.

To create other accents one can shift the focus of the speech into different areas of the mouth and use this as a starting point for the Accent. For example, the German Accent takes place in the front of the mouth and often pinches the lips together, whereas the Cockney Accent occurs in the rear of the mouth. This focus on resonance location is very helpful for those without an ear for accents as many of the vowel and consonant changes grow naturally out of the accent.

Vowel Sounds

Different languages have different vowel sounds, and each vowel sound requires specific physiological positions.

Vowel Substitutions: It is very common for accents to replace one vowel sound with another. For example, when doing a french accent, when you say a short "i" sound, you turn it into something more like an "ee." "Fish" will sound more like "feesh."

Consonant Sounds

Consonant sounds vary from language to language and thus replicating consonant characteristics are important to creating accents.

Consonant Drops: Consonant drops occur when an accent leaves off a consonant when the word is spoke. The R drop in the American Southern accent and the H drop in the English Cockney accent are two very common examples of this. The R drop is reflected in Bird which is pronounced "buhd" without the R and the H drop can be seen in the name Oliver Higgins, where the last is simply pronounce "iggins."

Consonant Shifts: Consonant shifts occur when the sound of a consonant changes to another consonant when the word is spoken. For example, in some parts of the American South Accent, the R almost turns into a Y, such as thirsty to "thi-y-sty", hair to "heya," and your to "yua". Other shifts, see the T to D, T to N, as British to "bridish" and twenty to "twenny."

Speech Rhythm

Speech rhythm is the stress and intonation in words and sentences.

Lilts and Drawls: Lilts and drawls are two common features of accents. The drawl is a tendency to use long lazy vowels. The lilt is a feature of speech whereby the voice rises and falls on elongated vowels creating two or more sounds for the vowel. In a minor lilt extension one vowel turns into two, such as Bill to bee-hill, foot to foo-at and bed to be-od. Drawls are found in American Southern accents and lilts are found in Irish accents.

Syntax: Syntax reflects the manner of speaking. For instance, when speaking like a New Yorker the original syntax of a question is preserved in indirect questions, rather than being inverted, as with common usage. For instance, instead of saying "I want to know why you don't like it" a New Yorker would say "I want to know why don't you like it," Note the difference between "don't you" and "you don't."

Word Changes: Sometimes an accent changes words. For example in American Southern accent the plural of you is "Y'all" and the Australian word that serves the same purpose "You's" (pronounced use).

Expressions

Expressions are colorful and effective sayings common to the language. They are very useful in creating depth to the character, but care should be taken to ensure that they do not interrupt serious roleplaying by injecting humor into a non-humorous scene.

A few American Southern Expression are "Dad burn it!" which is a polite rendition of "God damn it". "He's all hat and no cattle referring to someone who's more talk than substance. "You think I was born on crazy creek?" for "You think I'm stupid?" And the phrase "He chews his own tobacco" describes a person who is independent.

The Cockney accent is full of expressions and rhyming slang which is simply replacing a common word with a rhyming phrase of two or three words and then, in almost all cases, omitting the secondary rhyming word, making the origin and meaning of the phrase elusive to listeners not in the know.

Additional Resources

The Internet is full of information on accents. Another good (and enjoyable) way to learn accents is to watch movies where the accents are used. Practicing you accent is key. Most commercial DVDs and CDs give vocal exercises to make learning easier.

<u>Weapon Combat</u>

In this section we'll try to look at combat from a number of different perspectives to see where a theatric-touch combat system fits into the world of simulated weapon combat.

Stage Combat: The goal of stage combat is to entertain an audience. Weapon strikes are delivered in a manner that gives the most effective presentation. There is a complete absence of competition and total cooperation between the combatants. The whole fight is planned out through careful choreography taking into consideration many aspects of the performance including personality of character, location of the audience and ability of the performers.

Everyone who has seen a fantasy or martial arts movie can admire the performance of a good fight. Stage combat can be very exhilarating to perform. As a weapon strikes and rebounds, combatants whirl and weave, avoid blows and striking their own. When a blow lands the defender grunts in pain and staggers back. The heroes continue to pound away, neither giving ground, both dreaming of victory, until finally at the height of the action, one hero falls.

Even though a stage combat fight is highly-theatric and look great to the audience, a predetermined, choreographed, combat does not work in a live-action roleplaying scenario. Combatants need the freedom to use their skills in an unrehearsed manner where players must be able to use their character's skills, physicality and martial ability to honestly best an opponent.

Combat Sports: The goal of a weapon-use combat sport is often fitness and martial application. Combat sports generally require protective gear and allow a participant to use some or all of their strength, power and speed. Combat

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sports are based on competition.

There are live-action roleplaying systems that build their combat around a combat-sports model. These systems generally have a simple approach to combat where a hit on a limb disables the limb and a hit to the torso or head will cause a casualty. Sometimes game skills will be added, but more often than not combat is simply weapon against weapon with no additional elements.

Martial ability is very important in combat sport roleplaying. Size, strength and speed of the participant are important aspects of the combat. The winner is usually the combatant who has the greater skill but physicality impacts greatly the confrontation and smaller or weaker combatants are usually disadvantaged in combat sport events.

Combat sports create a very realistic environment. Since weapons blows can disable a character's limb or even kill outright players are fearful of being struck. Thus, they will fight with a realistic wariness that captures the feel of a true battle. The fact that blows are landed with force and can cause real pain to the player also lend to the wariness.

Combat sports fall short in the roleplaying, because they are the most competitive of the styles discussed here. This heavy focus on competition takes much energy. You rarely see acting on a combat sport battlefield. Most participants have personas in which they roleplay a fighting style or time period, but during the engagement the player's entire focus is on surviving the conflict. There is no element of acting outside of the application of martial skills.

Game-Focused Combat: Live-action roleplaying systems can use a competitive model for combat. Systems generally use lightweight weapons and armor is not required because attacks to the head and other sensitive body areas are not allows. Game-focused systems often have high numbers for body and weapon damage so that characters can advance competitively. These game-based combat systems often encourage aggressiveness by having players scream out numbers representing their "power" or "damage" when they attack.

In these systems the distance in power-level between different player characters can become very wide with some characters seeming god-like when compared to others. The roleplay is built on competition and players are focused on winning or at least getting their character to the point where they are capable of winning. In a game-based environment a player often sees skills as a route to character survival.

To anyone observing these battles, it's plain to see that there is little martial skill and no performance art in the execution of these battles. Players often end up hug-fighting which is a popular style where players use two weapons to strike at opposite sides of their opponent while exposing their torso. Or they end up aggressively charging without care for defense, or swinging blindly as a result of a tunnel vision effect caused by their shouting of damage numbers.

Some systems will try to regulate speed, force, skill use and other aspects of their combat, but these rules are always in conflict with the competitive-nature of their system. Player are encouraged to win, but then discourage to act in a manner that will allow victory. Thus, competition-focused rules systems suffer an inherent flaw that is difficult to manage.

This type of combat may seem exciting on a one-dimensional plane, but it gives no time to roleplay tactics or even exchange verbal interactions. How can anyone do any serious performing when the focus is on number screaming and speed striking? And honestly, how can people keep track of wounds in such a system? Do most players fall down when they "feel" like they have taken enough hits?

These free-for-all battles with little roleplaying are the exact opposite of the high energy cooperative performance-oriented battles that theatric roleplaying seeks to create. Live-action roleplaying combat needs to contain a competitive element, but it cannot reduced to a competition where winning the conflict becomes the most important criteria.

Theatric-Touch Combat: Theatric-touch combat borrows the best elements of stage combat, sport-combat and competition-driven combat by combining the best aspects of these systems into a form of combat that creates an amazingly realistic, enjoyable combat where the better fighter can achieve "victory," but everyone gains the "win."

The crucial component of the unique theatric-touch combat developed by Mystic Realms is that it requires combatants to react to wounds received by roleplaying a response to the harm before they can attack again. This gives participants an awareness of in-play mortality, which causes combat to become even more realistic as players need to possess a competent defense in order to effectively attack.

This focus on light touches and realistic response to wounding has the added benefit of leveling the playing field for all participants and allows smaller participants (especially females) to enjoy combat against larger opponents. Because of the touch-combat pace of the battle, less skilled fighters are not immediately cut down by more skilled fighters, and this makes combat more interesting for everyone, giving more time for roleplaying, tactics and enjoyment.

Battles should allow for highs and lows, ebbs and flows, for morale and suspense, and of course, safety, honestly and a feeling of success for everyone, including those who are vanquished. The goal of theatric-touch combat is to create a dramatic roleplay where participants can perform as if in a "real" battle using strategy, tactics, communication and martial skill.

Theatric-touch combat battles do not need to be rushed, because a longer battle means more roleplaying opportunity. There is no reasons for participants to slay their fellow players as quickly as possible. The end of combat is not the goal, instead the combat itself is the goal. The tactically-paced attacks, the roleplaying of wounds, and the conversations that occur between combatants are the essence of the theatric-touch roleplaying.

Combat is not perceived as a competition, but as a shared performance where players cooperate to produce a fight, where the better more skilled opponent will win, but the less skilled opponent will not feel like a loser. Both want to make their fight a good performance for each other.

The pace of the theatric-touch combat occurs at a tactical speed where the all combatants are able to accurately assess the damage they take and respond to that damage by roleplaying the harm. This pace is achieved through the use

of the touch-based combat system that regulates the force and speed of blows, while encouraging roleplaying of harm.

Blows are not delivered with speed or force, but instead use precise striking and developed skill. Players seek to create a true martial exchange with skills developed from actual fighting techniques capturing the realistic tactical pace of a combat. The use of realistic fighting techniques applied in a tactical-speed, touch combat system gives a realistic theatric performance, while still allowing victory to be open-ended.

Melee Technique

Much has been written about the martial arts of melee combat, whole books have been devoted to the topic and they have not even begun to scratch the surface of all that can be known. So it is impossible for us here in this short space to provide competent instruction, so instead we will seek to provide a starting point for your own exploration of these wonderful historic martial arts.

The legs are responsible for mobility and body speed. The arm and hand commands the actions of the weapon. The mind plans, coordinates and executes the movements necessary for offense or defense. In melee combat the body is thus unified of purpose and effect.

Body Position: There is often described in modern fencing the guard position whereas the arm holding the weapon is pointed toward the opponent and the body is turned to the side. Historical fencing provides a whole host of positions from which to launch and receive attacks.

Lines of attack: In combat the body can be divided into four quadrants. The low lines which are below the abdomen and the high lines which are above. The inside line are those areas to the inside of the weapon (often meaning the stomach, chest) and the outside (often meaning more toward the flank or back). When an attack is directed at one of these areas that becomes the line of attack. When a defender blacks into one of these areas he is said to be closing the line of the attack.

Footwork: Correct footwork forms the foundation of successful melee combat. The "simple step advance" is a walking step where the lead leg is moved forward and the

rear leg follows coming to rest at the same distance from the from front leg as previously held. The "simple step retreat" is the inverse of the advance with the rear leg leading and the front leg following.

"Advancing on the pass" means bringing your rear leg forward past your front leg and placing it at the same distance as it was previously held but in the lead position. "Retreating on the pass" has the combatant moving his forward leg rearward past his rear leg to become the rearmost leg. Moving on the pass allows a greater distance to be covered more quickly that simple stepping.

The "lunge" is a long forward step while keeping the rear leg planted that extends the weapon to the target quickly, and allow immediate recovery either forward or backward.

Voiding: "Voiding" is simply moving out of the way to avoid the attack. You can do this simply by stepping the entire body back out of distance by using your footwork, but more complex "voiding" is accomplished by moving the torso or limb out of the line of attack while maintaining distance.

Basic Blocks: Blocking an incoming attack with your weapon is called a parry (not to be confused with the feat of the same name which represents a parry of amazing theatrics). Parries (called weapon blocks in our rules) use your weapon to create a moving defensive wall around your body. Weapon blocks that move from inside line to outside line are called in fencing parlance "lateral parries". "Vertical parries" move from a high line to low line or a low to high line on the same side of the body. "Diagonal parries" move diagonally across the body from a low or high line on one side to the high or low on the opposite side of the body. The goal of the parry is to intercept the attack before it strikes body.

Basic Attacks: Attacks are either cuts or thrusts. Cuts can occur vertically up or down, horizontally across from the left or right, or on both diagonals in either a descending or ascending direction. This pattern gives eight possible cuts. The thrust uses the tip of the weapon and it can be directed into any line of attack. The cuts and thrusts are combined with actions (such as presses, beats, glides, etc.) on your

opponent's weapon to afford you superior position in the attack.

Theatric Combat

While ranged combat and the casting of spells, prayers, and powers do have their place in the battle, it is the melee that sets the tone of the engagement.

When you are struck by a damage or adverse effect, the core rules require you to step back and react to the wound, injury or effect. If you do not make this reaction the rules allow your adversary to discount all your subsequent attack by simply stating, "step?" until you comply and make your reaction.

It is therefore important that you make a pronounced step and audible sound so that your opponent knows the hit against you was taken. So long as everyone follows the step and roleplay combat will become theatric.

The golden rule is "slow down!" Don't rush the combat. You need to give your opponent time to react to the one-step and grunt rule before you hit them another time. Let them grunt in pain, don't use their roleplaying as an opportunity to gain another hit on them.

Because of the rule discounting rapid strikes, your opponent must be able to comply with the one-step and grunt rule before you make a follow-up attack. Of course, the struck character must make his reaction immediately following your strike and conclude it within a reasonable amount of time. In additional, the struck character is not allowed to use exaggerated reactions to prevent subsequent attacks.

Respect your opponent's roleplaying, and wait for them to be ready. If you're a better fighter than they are, you'll hit them again, so there is no reason to rush, and every reason to take your time and roleplay!

When fighting, don't swing wildly, look for your openings, gauge your opponent, and give them time to gauge you. Savor the combat, and rely on your skill to vanquish your foe and not your strength, speed, or power.

Enjoy the combat for the experience and not the victory. This is where live-action roleplaying games go wrong. The

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participants are looking to win. They're like a video game players pressing the attack button as fast as they can. They're often trying to hit their opponent as fast as possible. There is no art in such play. And hitting your opponent faster than they can count their body is not creating an environment conducive to fair play or theatrics.

Practice

The key to perfecting theatric-touch combat is to always practice using the step and roleplay rule. In fact you should practice using exaggerated motions and train yourself to react to the wounds under the stress of actual touch-combat. This will also train your opponent to wait for you to finish your reaction before they follow-up with another attack.

Further Information

If you are interested in learning more, many books, websites, and classes cover historical martial techniques in detail.

Concepts

Embracing Creativity

While most roleplaying rules set are simply concerned with resolving combat, the Mystic Realms rules and source materials allow you (if you want) to transcend far beyond the traditional live-action roleplay which often becomes little more than a combat sport over laid with a thin veneer of character.

The Mystic Realms rules were designed to create a performance-based, expressive atmosphere where you can share your creativity with others in a safe and supportive club environment. The rules not only resolve conflicts between characters and determine the effects of terrain and other environmental conditions they foster creativity during play by encouraging you to personalize many aspects of skill use for your character.

For example, the simple act of casting a spell, prayer or power allows you an opportunity to display your own originality. You get to invent your own words of invocation. This personalization gives you greater freedom when expressing your character. Further, the rules require the verbal to be spoken slowly and loudly with a dramatic impact on the play environment.

The rules are also designed to provide opportunities for unique in-character performances that are key elements in the play environment. You are encouraged to develop short roleplays that your character will use over and over again to aid yourself and your fellow players. This simple addition brings to life the world enhancing many aspects of play.

For example, rituals and procedures allow characters to receive enhancing effects, but to gain these the character must act out a roleplay performance that entertains you and everyone around you. Rituals and procedures give you a captive audience for your show. Anyone who wants to receive the benefits of the ritual or procedure must participant in the roleplay.

The rules also promote creativity by encouraging you to make up your own social groups by providing augmentations to character of players who undertake such creative action. These player created groups are the cornerstone of dramatic play as each has its own personalized set of motivations and ideologies that allow your character to inject their own perspectives into the world.

For example, certain skills allow you to create your own religious faith or military unit with all the elements and aspects of those groups. As a player you're never stuck worshipping gods or serving as soldiers for causes designed by others. The rules encourage you to design your own symbols, standards, ideologies and tenants so that you can bring them to life for yourself and others during events.

The rules system has been designed to capture many different genres of play, but still ensure that every genre has a different feel. This is accomplished by providing the ultimate freedom in creativity. When you play Mystic Realms you get to envision how your character uses his or her skills. All of the skill names are generic so that players can flavor the skills to their characters and better capture the world setting.

For example, a generic spell name like "cripple" may not

seem as cool as "Malaki's Mighty Smiting," but in this approach to live-action roleplaying playability is worth more than long, catchy names.

Further, since you can describe unlimited ways to "incapacitate" an enemy, the rules afford you the creative freedom to imagine how your character uses his or her skills. In these rules every character does not need to invoke Malaki to smite, because the more generic skill titles give you the freedom to imagine a limitless methods of incapacitation ranging from crawling bugs to blazing heat to anything imaginable.

The rules even design creativity into the theatric-touch combat system that requires participants to acknowledge each wound through roleplaying a response to the harm. Defenders must roleplay the wound or injury before they can make a counter attack, and attackers must allow the defender time to finish their roleplay before landing another hit. This creates very honest fighting as hits can be more easily counted and tracked. It also creates very skilled and safe fighting, with lots of feints, glides, binds, envelopments and other realistic martial techniques. And best of all, the tactical pace of the theatric-touch combat allows for communication between participants, thus adding to the theatric environment.

The final key element in a strong theatric rules system is to devalue player character death. If you are worried about how a death is going to affect your character, you're not going to be free to roleplay. All player characters (and some cast characters) have the ability to come back over and over again. Death is just a short time-out, and destruction of a character's physical form while frustrating is certainly not character ending.

Without a fear of final death, there's a lot less cheating, there's a lot more creativity, and there's a great deal more communication. Since dying is only a brief inconvenience to the player, the character can take more risks and roleplay more freely. The atmosphere is meant to be one of invigoration and empowerment to act.

The rules used for a larp define the play experience. If you're looking to create in-depth character driven events

that evoke emotional and intellectually stimulating stories the rules system must promote creativity and embrace the originality of each player, while still affording the standardization that allows for easy combat resolution.

Staying In-Character

So many live-action roleplaying styles accept the out-of-character intrusions as part of play. Some styles even embrace the out-of-character by creating a quasi-live system that requires narration by players or other out-of-character administrators.

What-you-see-is-what-you-get roleplaying embraces the paradigm that any intrusion into the world by the out-of-character is a disruption in the seamless play environment. This is not a strange as you may think. Consider this:

When watching a movie or a stage show the audience would be aghast if the actors suddenly dropped character and talk as themselves. Similarly, the director of a play does not walk onto the stage to explain a point to the audience.

If no one tolerates breaches of action in movies and stage shows, why would anyone permit them in a live-action roleplaying experience? The breaches of play are simply not necessary when you have a good set of theatric rules and the benefits of character immersions and real-life action are totally worth moving into wysiwyg gaming styles.

Every event will have a location where you can drop your character. No one wants to force a player to remain in-character when they need a break. Thus, events should have out-of-play area where you can escape the roleplaying. Instead of dropping character in the main play area and being a spectacle of anti-immersion, just remove yourself to the out-of-play area so you can relax and recuperate without being disruptive.

Discipline

Theatric live-action roleplayers can improve their events by developing a stage performer's discipline. Actors don't drop out of character when they are on a stage, nor should you drop character during your roleplaying performance. Every time you speak an out-of-character word you are removing everyone around you from the scene. And on a deeper level,

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every time you have an out-of-character thought you are removing yourself from the scene.

The discipline to stay in character and to embrace the realness of the imaginary world is a learned skill. Many roleplayers never achieve this level of true immersion. Some are happy playing with a veneer of character, and that's fine so long as they are having fun and are not being disruptive, but most experienced roleplayers who do not practice immersion become dissatisfied with the roleplaying events they attend.

Having the discipline to immerse yourself in your character no matter what happens ensures that you will experience the world only through your character's thoughts and perceptions. This helps you avoid out-of-play frustrations during play.

Experience roleplayers who are not able to suspend their disbelief tend to make judgement calls on every scene, which begin to interfere with their enjoyment of the hobby. Whenever the roleplaying is not interesting to them or if the adversaries are too tough or too weak, they are quick to drop character and lose the moment. They did not have these judgement call when they were new players, because everything was fresh and new. However, as experienced players many scenes are just not good enough. Developing the discipline to stay in character and accept the world as real for their character is one of the best ways to address this difficulty suffered by so many experienced players.

This does not mean you ignore dangerous situations but it does mean you play through the scene, staying totally immersed in your character, living in the moment, and doing your best to raise the level of the scene to one that would satisfy your standards. After the event is over you might discuss the scene with the producer or dramaturge who can address the issue with the writer, but nothing will be gained by dropping character in the middle of a scene and rebelling against the scene.

Rules

Mystic Realms has carefully designed their rules to allow you to remain totally in your persona throughout the entire event. This allows for complete immersion in your character

and provides the opportunity for you to internalize the rules mechanics and to suspend your disbelief of the game. In this manner you can truly become your character, thinking and acting as your adopted persona, and never needing to step out-of-character.

What-you-see-is-what-you-get roleplaying will not have out-of-character persons walking through the play area to moderate rules effects, narrate environment conditions, or provide plot information. All of these are codified into the rules by using keyword effects that are paired with physical activity and/or theatric props. These theatric rules attempt to remove all distractions and keep the player totally in-character so that nothing interrupts their dramatic experience.

In non-theatric roleplaying, if you need background information on an item you'll need to break character, find an out-of-character moderator, tell the moderator how you learned the information, have an out-of-play discussion about the information you need, and then try to get back into character and catch up with the in-play action that you have missed while you were out-of-character. That's a lot of work, and totally disruptive to the flow of the action.

Mystic Realms handles the gathering of background information totally in-character by simply placing a note on the item that allows anyone with the appropriate skill to discern all useful information. You roleplay the examination of the item as you read the card. You begin to share the information on the card with the other players as you progress through your roleplay. When writers use cards to provide information there is no disruption in play and the information is always there when needed by players with the proper skills.

Another common way traditional live-action rules bring you out-of-play is to give characters skills which require out-of-play moderators to interpret or at least some stoppage of action with out-of-play discussion between players. This intrusion removes everyone from the moment and destroys the rising action of a scene. Stopping the action of a live-action roleplay is like pausing a movie right at the moment of greatest tension. Imagine watching the end of your favorite movie, pausing every few seconds. Will the

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excitement be the same?

Good what-you-see-is-what-you-get systems never require you to pause the action. The rules are laid out so that short spoken statements and/or body motions are all that is necessary to inform others of in-play skill use.

Cooperation vs. Competition

There is an inherent tension between cooperation and competition. In many ways these are diametrically opposed concepts. Cooperation requires teamwork, comradery, and a wiliness to compromise. Competition places people against each other as they struggle to gain the desired outcome which is the "win." Unfortunately, these two concepts collide in roleplaying games.

Roleplaying finds its grounds in theater. Acting is about expressing yourself emotionally, creating magical moments while sharing elements of your personality, and taking risks while expanding your social skill-set. The best theatric productions are produced in a cooperative, supportive environment where the actors all work together.

Games on the other hand are almost always played as competitions with winners and losers. While there are cooperative games these games compels are still premised in competition with all players either winning or losing together.

The traditional roleplaying game has been long interconnected with the concept of competition. In player-versus-player settings players compete directly against each other. In settings where players-versus-player conflict is not permitted players compete against non-player characters or the environment.

The level of competition affects the roleplay experience. In games where player's goals are to develop powerful characters and use their skills to destroy monsters, there's often less verbal interaction and more combat. In these setting players often rush to solve conflict with violence, which reduces the social aspects of roleplaying. While many people embrace these kinds of systems, not everyone can enjoy this style of play. Often, the constant stream of combats become meaningless without a context outside

their own excitement.

Non-competitive, theatric roleplaying introduces a whole new way of looking at "roleplaying." The competitive-focus that drives combat is replaced with a cooperative aspect of improvisational acting to create a more profound experience. In a more cooperative environment, players can explore non-combat solutions to plot problems that can create more depth of character. Stories will almost always develop across a wider spectrum since violence is one choice among many choices.

In cooperative roleplaying you will often experience a greater diversity of character as players are not forced into certain character builds to survive. The world of play becomes more real, because you get to meet everyone instead of being isolated into your group by fear of being murdered. You also avoid the in- and out-of-character friction that always forms when one group competes against another group.

Theatric roleplaying requires you to strikes a balance between cooperation and competition. When characters come in "conflict" you as a player are expected to act in ways that entertain everyone (including yourself). The idea of "winning" or "besting your opponent" is tempered by the more important goal of ensuring that everyone has fun. In theatric roleplaying the golden rule is "Do not ruin another's good time." The inverse of the rule is also true, "Always act in a manner that entertains others."

At Mystic Realms cooperation builds relationships both in- and out-of-character. Cooperation creates in character environments with lots of drama and depth of character because players are able to explore creative scenes without resorting first to a violent option. There's always a place and time for combat, but participants are willing to cooperate to find that moment. The win is a collective win for everyone involved in the scene.

More importantly, cooperation creates an out-of-character environment where members are eager to socialize with one another. They are willing to help one another, and to share their knowledge and skills. They are able to be openly creative and expressive of their ideas, and it is at this point

where a club will truly become a magical place.

Part IV. Attending Events

Successful events require (1) club administrators willing to organize and manage events and (2) club members willing to help perform all the work of running the event. A positive club culture is one where everyone pitches and contributes to the best of their ability.

Participating

At events the majority of members are player performers who portray the protagonists of the story, while a smaller number are cast performers who portray various supporting characters and adversaries in cast created scenes. In essence cast act as the backdrop for player character interactions.

Player Characters

The player characters are the protagonist of the story. The diversity of their interactions brings the event to life. It is actually the player character interactions (and not the cast-driven story) that determines the overall quality/success of a roleplaying event.

Player Performer

The majority of members attending an event will portray player characters. These members create characters who will become the protagonists of the event.

Putting on a successful live-action roleplaying event requires a lot of work. The club divides this work over everyone who attends. At events players volunteer to complete all the necessary tasks in the main play area, such as cooking and supply. Club managers are coordinators, but players provide the labor.

The player's theatric contribution to the event is to roleplay their character in a way that brings the play area alive. They are responsible for establishing the social interactions that drive roleplaying in the main play area.

A new member contributes to the roleplaying environment by staying in-character and wearing an appropriate costume. More experienced members help build the shared story by collecting and sharing cast plot information in a way that enhances the story. Long-time members will creating personal plot and share these stories with other players.

All members should portray their player characters in a manner that fosters interaction, develops relationships, and creates drama. They should play through scenes with vigor and enthusiasm. Events where all members embrace plot through their character's past, personality, and purpose become the most memorable for everyone.

Every experienced player must come to the event with a planned scene that involves other players in their story. This planned scene can be a story to share about the history of the setting or better yet a story about current events. The planned scene could be recruiting for (or a meeting of) the players religious, ideological, or military group.

When all experienced players are prepared to entertain themselves and other players without the involvement of cast, no player will ever be board at an event.

Luminary Player Characters

A luminary is a club member whose player character has chosen a leadership role during play. These special in-play positions require the member to perform essential duties for their club.

Luminary positions are generally positions in community government. Their specific titles and duties are described in the setting sourcebooks, but their overall purpose is to oversee a group of players. They also create town politics and welcome assimilate new players into the community. A club without strong luminaires will have trouble connecting newer players to plot which will result in poor retention of new players.

Strong luminary characters drive inter-group roleplaying. Between events, they work with other luminaries to create potential interactions between the groups they oversee. Before events, the luminary must read all prologues and knowledge notes available to them. At events, they facilitate roleplays by sharing information and creating the inter-

groups activities.

Luminary characters who are committed to their community will make all the difference in the success of an event. Members should only accept a Luminary position if they are willing to fulfill the essential duties of the position. Most are social, gregarious players willing to bring others into their stories.

The concierge is responsible for training Luminaries and Luminaries who do not perform their duties should be removed.

Cast

About one quarter to one third of members at an event will play the cast. These members volunteer their time to play the supporting roles that allow the players to become the heroes of the story.

A production club needs talented members to bring the event to life. Directors, writers, and performers are all equally responsible for the success of an event.

Cast characters give motivation to player characters by acting out loosely scripted story which the player characters control through their roleplayed action. A good way to imagine this relationship is to think of the event as a movie.

The cast performers are the extras, while the player performer's characters are the protagonists. By providing background details and portraying antagonists when needed the cast gives the players enough support so the players can create the shared story that sustains action in the main play area.

Cast Performer

Cast performers play the supporting characters who will bring the world outside of the player's community to life. The cast are the monsters in the woods, the flowing lava surge, the visiting merchants, the radiation storm, the invading army, the falling artillery shells, and everything else that creates the cast plot.

The roles cast performers play are contained in improvisational acting scripts that are drafted by writers

who act as team leaders. The performer should read the script memorizing the information that needs to be given to the player characters. The performer should also know their skills and how to use them correctly. Cast members incorrectly using skills detracts from play and is an easily remedied situation.

While performing the cast must listen attentively to the writer and scene leader. Combat should never be approached in a competitive manner. Instead, the cast performer must entertain the player character during the combat, ensuring that combats are fair and challenging. After the scene the cast member should move away from the scene so as not to interrupt the player characters with their out-of-character presence.

Adventure Writer

Adventure writers draft improvisation acting scripts and then supervise the cast members who perform the script. Writers assign character roles based on ability, set locations for scenes, instruct performers on where to place stage properties and time permitting perform rehearsals of key scenes. The writer generally plays the guide who leads the players on the adventure.

Just placing some monsters in the woods does not make for a theatric-style adventure. Theatric roleplaying requires more and the adventure writer learns to provide a balanced mix of engaging roleplaying, exciting combat, physical challenges, intellectual puzzles and emotional experiences.

Director

Directors create and run cast-driven plots. These are the background stories that bring the setting to life for the player characters. They supervise the adventure writers working with them. They will generally write the battle scripts that act as event climaxes.

The Directors supervise members who play plot characters. When their plots are active, many of these characters can be reached between events for real time communication using a setting appropriate means.

Dramaturge

In large clubs with monthly events and an established local

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map, the Dramaturge supervises the Directors who write story for the club.

Each play location has a local map that is maintained by the club's Directors (and Dramatists). This is a living breathing ever changing world that the actions of player characters have a direct impact on.

The Dramaturge drafts the event plan which outlines the master schedule for the whole event. These includes the scripts that drive forward the main action of the event.

Management

Events are managed by volunteers called managers. They are the out-of-play leaders who coordinate the efforts of members so clubs can host successful events.

Managers set the standard for roleplaying at their events by their costumes, roleplaying and enthusiasm. They are planners, organizes and builders who are able to motivate members to bring their dreams to life. They are problem-solvers figuring out sensible solutions in a way that brings people together.

Managers earn status for performing their leadership duties at these events in addition to the play or cast status that they earn. Hosting and running events is a great way to advance your player character by earning status and gaining roleplaying opportunities.

Mystic Realms breaks down event administration into areas of responsibility where each manager leads a team of players to perform critical tasks. At small events multiple management positions may held by a single person, while larger events will require one person to handle each duty to ensure that no one manager is overburdened.

Producer

The Producer leads the Production Club by managing the managers and is ultimately responsible for the successes and failures of the club. The Producers wear many hats. They are a motivator, a coach, a storyteller, and a visionary.

Coordinator

The coordinator supervises event the team responsible for event check-in, check-out, and character records. Mystic Realms maintains a data-base of all official characters. Coordinators gain access to this database for the purposes of printing character cards and adding event status. Before events, their team handles the registration process. At the conclusion of the event, their team supervises the host site clean-up. The coordinator's player character serves as the registrar.

Concierge

The concierge's team is responsible for welcoming and training new members. The concierge supervises the main play area by encouraging players to bring decorations appropriate to their player characters and by helping players to develop player plots which they will use to entertain each other during play. The Concierge also approves and trains the players who will hold certain luminary positions in the in-play community. The concierge's player character serves as the supervisor of the play area such as the innkeeper, tavern owner, or similar position.

Promoter

The Promoter's primary out-of-play responsibly is to showcase club events. At the event, the Promoter's team are responsible for getting photographs and videos that can be used to chronical the events. Their emails to club members summarize events and share plot information for upcoming events. They post videos and photos from events to social accounts media highlighting the moments and heroics of members. The Promoter works to develop relationships with local groups (gaming conventions, Renaissance fairs, comic stores, community theaters, historical reenactments) to establish a network of mutually supportive connections. The promoter's player character serves as the Historian.

Arbitrator

Arbitrators enforce the minimum standards of behavior, roleplaying, and costuming in the club. They ensure all participants follow safety, game, and social rules. When a participant allegedly violates the rules (both in-play and out-of-play), the arbitrator involved will hear both sides of the situation and act in a manner that resolves the situation as best as possible for all parties. The goal of arbitration is to be a non-confrontational process that enables aggrieved

persons to communicate with each other so that minor misunderstandings do not grow into a long-term animosity. When evidence reveals an offense the offender will normally lose status, but continual or egregious offenses will also result in suspension or expulsion. The arbitrator's player character serves as the magistrate and also appoints sheriffs.

Concessionaire

Food and drink are important to the success of all events. Hungry and thirsty members are distracted from the story. The concessionaire supervises the members who prepare the food. At a minimum drinks need to be available to participants at all events. Short events are enhanced by simple snacks, while longer events may serve a meal to participants. When clubs move to producing overnight events a full meal service should be provided so members can leaving the site to purchase meals as this breaks character. The concessionaire's player character serves as the cook who supervises the members who prepare the food.

Proprietor

Between events the Proprietor's team is busy making costumes, props, and decorations for the next event. At events, the Proprietor is coordinates the placement of club decorations in the play are. They work with players to help them decorate their pavilions. At the end of the event Properties will supervise the gathering, inspection, and inventorying of all club properties. They are called the Groundskeeper and they handle the maintenance of the grounds.

Event Types

Events can range from a simple adventure in the park near a participant's house to an entire weekend event attended by hundreds of participants. Some events are open to the public and any member who creates a player character can attend, but most times space is limited by the location and the number of cast that is available.

Non-public events will be limited to those invited. For example, most mission-based events are private events that are run by small groups of friends for each other using pre-

written missions. Events can also be semi-private. These events establish an invite list, and then open the show to the public if there's still room for additional player characters. These events will sometimes have waiting list.

Members should not feel disappointed in they hear about an event to which they did not receive an invite. Limitations of space and the availability of cast sometimes means that someone will be left out. We encourage anyone feeling left out to reach out and find others who want to play and then host your own events. We promise you that the events you run will be just as good the events you were unable to attend.

Mystic Realms provides pre-written introductory activity and mission-based events that can be easily played as one-time block event. They require three to four cast members and six to twelve player members. They use a variety of setting ranging from local parks to members houses. These pre-written activity and mission based events can be run by any group of members to earn status for their official characters.

Members who advance in the Writers Guild can write and run their own events based on their ability level. These events can be official status earning events if written within the guidelines and submitted to Mystic Realms for status. Players can host their own social events.

Mission Events

These are usually one or two time block events. The mission-based event brings a group of player characters from a base of operations to a location where they interact with cast through a series of scenes. For example, player characters go to investigate a "haunted house," pursue a kidnapper, recover a stolen item, spy on a rival or transport goods for a supplier. The possible missions are endless. A longer mission-based event usually moves through different locations. Here's an example of how an average length mission-based event would run.

Playing missions is a great way to start getting involved. They can usually be played in a few hours and at a basic level they do not require a lot of costuming or stage properties. Of course, missions can be as involved and complex as writers and cast members choose.

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Since mission adventures often have higher cast to player ratio, they rely more on the cast to drive the story. It is harder for a small group of players to develop player plot on missions where the scenes are often linear in nature and progress at a continuous pace. Thus, mission-based adventures usually run with cast allotments that are equal to one-half the number of player characters present. Thus, if there are six player characters, there are three cast members permitted.

Mystic Reams provides many stand-alone pre-written adventures that can be easily played in one's own neighborhood by 3-5 cast members and 6-10 players.

Example: "The Old Lady Next Door" is a mission-based event where ten payers hear about a neighborhood where children have gone missing. This event can be played in many different game worlds, and what follows is a brief summary of the event. The actual script would break down the event into a series of cast driven scenes that provide the complete framework for the story including motivations and game statistics for all cast characters. Players would not see this summary or the actual script. They would only receive a request from a family looking for help in finding their missing child.

"The Old Lady Next Door" can be played in any residential home with a small yard, and requires five cast members play all the roles. One cast member travels with the player characters, he is called the guide because he'll guide the players through the scenes in a non-obtrusive way that adds to the roleplaying. The other four cast members will prepare each scene and roleplay them in order according to the script.

Players arrive at the location of the first scene just before dark. The first scene takes place in front of the guide's house. This scene is used for players to get into character and to make sure everyone knows the purpose of the event.

In the second scene the player are admitted into the house to meet the guide and other parents who have lost children. Each cast member has a story to tell, and by the end of the scene, player characters will see that all the children had some interaction with the old lady who lives in the house

down the street with her big dogs and overgrown lawn.

The third scene is the walk to the house. Generally one house is used and the players walk down the street and/or around the block while the cast prepares the house for the next scene. The players enter the third scene as soon as they step on the property. It should be dark by now and knowledge cards explain that the house is on a blighted node. Flood lighting or light strings can be used to give the house a spooky look, and sound will enhances the scene as well. A pair of undercover detectives at the scene shed some more light on the disappearance. They leave by explaining, "we couldn't get to the house without going around back and we heard some barking. Since our shift is over we're going back to the station." Knowledge cards describe the yard as overgrown and the front door is declared impassable because of the growth.

The next scene takes place in the as the players move to the back of the house. The old lady has vicious dogs and they will attack. The cast playing the detectives have changed their costumes and will attack from the rear as two additional dogs.

The fifth scene occurs in the corner of the back yard where the stolen children who have been turned into zombies are playing. The children have been ordered to kill trespassers and bring their bodies to the old lady living in the basement (or garage or even waiting for them in some other location where combat is possible). The guide's child is not there.

The sixth scene is a combat against aged zombies who happen on the players as they move to where the hag is waiting. These are trespassers and other children killed through the years.

The seventh scene is a roleplay at the location where the hag is supposed to be. In this scene the players save the guide's teenage child and also rescue the person hunting the old lady. He explains that she is a hag and warns the players that she is protected by powerful undead. She'll be coming back here soon. The guide, the child and the hunter all leave so the player characters can prepare their defenses. This is a great time for players to roleplay making a plan, regain some expended feats, and set up domes and healing taps if

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they can.

In the final climactic scene all the cast members portray the hag and her undead, and the players having set up a defensive position attempt to destroy her.

Activity Events

Activity events gain their name from the fact that player characters come together for a specific type of stated activity and the players play out the activity on which the event is based. To provide structure to the event, the host will announce a schedule that lists the planned elements of the activity and the times when they will occur. The beauty of an activity event is that almost any kind of social function can provide the elements needed to create an event. For example, the player characters attend an activity such as a dinner party, an art auction, a sports competition or other activity that provides the framework the event. The cast plays all the roles that support the activity and the main plot of the event.

Activity events can range from one-time block evening events to two or three time block day events to the lengthy overnight events of four or more time blocks. Two day overnight events generally run Saturday to Sunday, while three day overnight events run from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. Longer events can occur over holiday weekends such as Memorial Day or Labor Day.

One time block events can be easily run at a person's home. Day-long events can be run at a player's house or rented hall, but will needs a few acres of property or ways to partition the play space. Overnight events are played in 20+ acre rented facilities such as campgrounds or state parks. All the major meals are served, and snacks are provided. Accommodations for members can range from tents to buildings.

Longer activity events require more players. Groups of twenty-five to well over one hundred players come together and create a "community" populated by the player characters. In these events the cast writes a background plot for the event, but real theatric action arises from player to player interactions. The event provides a real social setting where players can truly exist as their character for extended periods of time. This allows character relationships to develop and deepen in ways not possible during the cast-driven adventure and activity events.

At activity events players gather in the main play area which is a location that is appropriate to the genre of play. In fantasy settings the main play area will usually be an inn or tavern. In a wild west setting the players will usually gather around a saloon or trading post. An air ship works in a steampunk setting, while space stations serve as a base in sci-fi setting. A player's house can make a perfect base of operations in a modern earth setting. The key is that the play area needs to give the player characters a solid reason to congregate in that location.

The player characters stay in the main play area which they bring to life by creating interacting player plots. The cast runs supporting scenes in the main play area that adds to the action there, but the cast's main purpose is to run short supporting adventures in the collateral play space around the main play area. These adventures provide critical plot information pertinent to the overall plot of the community event.

Activity events can become political with lots of player character interactions. Story is built by information gathered on the supporting adventures. The whole community is called on to make decisions that affect the lands and people in and around the community.

Example: "Death Walking" is a short one-time block activity based event where eighteen players are invited to a dinner party which takes place at the manor house of a wealthy merchant. This macabre horror event can be played in many different game world, and what follows is a brief summary of the event. The actual script would break down the event to a series of cast driven scenes that provide the complete framework for the story including motivations and game statistics for all cast characters. Players would not see this summary or the actual script. They would only receive an in-character invitation to the dinner party.

 "Death Walking" can be played in residential home with a yard, but if the house is small the number of players should be cut down. A dining room, living room, kitchen and one

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bedroom should provide enough room to play through the roleplaying scenes. A good sized yard will be need for the climax which involves intense touch-combat fighting.

During the event the five cast members play all the supporting characters, which include the merchant who invited the player characters, his servants, guests who get sick, a police detective investigating the merchant, and the undead in the final scene. Players arrive at 6:00pm, and the cast run a series of introductory scenes which includes, the welcome by the host and the serving of hor'dourves and drinks. It's always good to feed everyone at an event.

At 8:00 the rising action begins after everyone has had a chance to meet each other and perform a few scenes of player plot. The servant notices that something is moving in the family graveyard and the supporting adventure occurs as the servant bring guests to investigate the graves. Through investigation (by reading knowledge cards placed on clues) and conversation the player characters learn that the merchant's brother was recently murdered. The rising action continues, a cast member playing a guest, and maybe a few player characters who touched the graves contract an infection that transforms them into undead with the orders of killing the guests in the house. (Note: the infection ends on death of the undead so the undead will transform back to a corpse and can be resuscitated returning the players and cast member to play.)

Around 9:00pm the action continues to rise during investigation scenes guided by the police detective who reveals the merchant murdered his brother. Shortly thereafter, the dead brother and other family members returned as specters to extract vengeance on the merchant and his guests (the player characters). The end begins at 10:00pm with the climatic confrontation between the specters and the player characters and lasts until all the players are dead, they beat the specters or they escape.

Informal Events

With permission and oversight by Club Producers, members are permitted to host informal events as their characters provided the event takes place in a world location that is controlled by their player character, such as their player character's in-play home, and does not impact club plot.

The event does not use cast support. Instead, player plans in-character activities to fill up most of the time at the event. Since these events do not have a cast driven plot, they are dynamic opportunities for characters to act free from cast and writer influence. These stories belong solely to the characters who attend them.

The hosting character (or characters) invites other player characters to the in-play world location, but hosts the event as his character. Everyone arrive as their characters and plays until the end of the event. The player does not need to step out-of-character at all during the event. He'll coordinate all activities as his character, just as if his character was a real person hosting any other social affair!

Location: The out-of-play location can be any place large enough to host those invited. The hosting characters should decorate the play area appropriately so that it captures the setting. The in-play location must be a place that the player's character controls in the game world. Thus the setting would need to be the character's house, his place of business or other location belonging or rented by the player character in show.

Food: Often these events are pot luck with everyone coming and contributing a drink, snack, desert or meal dish. Or every one contributes a small donation and the food is made by a member who is reimbursed for their efforts.

In-play Purpose: The purpose of the gathering can be anything from a public birthday party (in-play of course) for one of the player characters where anyone with a player character can attend to a small private ceremony where a new member is inducted into a military or divine group. The gathering could be a summertime swim party, an evening masquerade ball, or even a marriage and reception of two characters.

Activities: At these events player characters simply socialize with each other as they would in any kind of social gathering. These events require skilled performers, because without any cast support to drive the action, player performers must create the whole story through their own actions.

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Player-planned events are heavily dependent on the ability of the hosting characters to plan in-character activities during the show. The host does need to plan supporting activities to keep their guests entertained. These are not activities or missions that require cast, instead they are simply activities found in any well planned social event. In fact, cast use at a player planned event is not generally allowed as it gets in the way of the player plot.

Here is an example of a player-planned event with some supporting activities. As you can see these events are the simplest of events to produce. All that is required in a play space and player characters who are willing to roleplay for the duration of the event.

The in-character surprise birthday party begins at 5:00pm. The host welcomes everyone as they arrive; this is the first planned activity (called a player plot scene). At 6:00pm the guest of honor arrives (the second player plot scene). The character does not know about the event, but the player may or may not be in on it. One hour is offered for mingling with the guest of honor, and then at 7:00pm everyone eats a pot-luck dinner, sings happy birthday and eats the cake (This is the third player plot scene). At 8:00 there is the entertainment portion of the event where attendees honor the birthday character with an act of entertainment (The fourth player plot scene). Following the conclusion of entertainment there are two hours of open roleplaying, for players to further their own player plots. The event will end at 11:00pm, making a nice six hour event.

Invitations: Player-planned events are usually announced with an invitation. The invitation always includes the planned activities for the event so that players understand the flow of the performance. For example:

You are hereby invited to celebrate the birthday of Samuel at [address and time]. The surprise party begins with your arrival at 5:00pm. Samuel's arrival is planned at 6:00pm. Baked ziti, meatballs, soda and cake will be served at 7:00pm. Entertainment begins at 8:00pm. The party concludes at 11:00pm. All guests are asked to prepare an act of entertainment and to make a five dollar donation to cover the cost of food and cake.

Providing the schedule of events is important because players will want to plan their own player plot scenes around those scheduled by the host. Cooperation is key here, because you don't want to interrupt the hosts event. It's just bad form, and we all need to have an out-of-play respect the schedule.

Player Plot: Player planned events are great opportunities for players to promote their own player plots. In cast driven events players are often saddled with a mission and most activity revolves around the completion of that mission, but in player driven events the players have total freedom to plan their own activities without worrying about cast interruption.

The player plot of one character should cooperate with the player plots of other characters. When the host goes through the effort of creating an event, all players attending agree to participate in the activities to make the event successful. They will weave their own person plots in between scheduled activities.

Most player-planned events have time after the planned activities for players to conduct player plot activities. In fact one of the draws of player planned events is the opportunity to sort things out without violence, because they take place without cast support and thus after the player planned activities are over there is no overarching story with which to interfere.

For example, if you are an enlightened arcane your society may want to publically announce the induction of your newest member or if you're a vampyre you may want to introduce your newly kissed progeny. Perhaps two feuding groups have decided to make peace and they would use the space at the end of the event to publically make their peace.

Alternately, your character may be attending the surprise birthday party with the sole purpose of robbing, roughing up or even killing one of the other guests. In looking at the schedule you will see planned activities end after entertainment, thus you as a cooperative player will plan your disruptive behavior for after that point so as not to intrude on what is planned, and also to allow your intended victim time to fully enjoy the event as well. Or maybe you

may decide to forgo the murder completely in the spirit of respect for the player who just spent the evening entertaining you.

Event Fees

Running an event costs money. Even small events will need to cover the cost of stage properties and cast costumes. Clubs running large events will have to worry about covering the costs of site rentals and insurance. Monies collected are used to defray operating costs. It is important that all members understand that their contributions go to support and improve the club. Event fees are based on how many hours of play time is provided. Each time block will cost a stated amount. Clubs may offer approved discounts.

Time Blocks

All events are broken down into blocks of play time that are approximately four to six hours long. Status is earned by players and cast according to number of time blocks in an event.

Time blocks are used to divide up play time, meal times, and other in-play happenings. By dividing the event into time blocks the cast and players can more easily organize their scenes, and other activities.

When designing events cast supported scenes should fill a substantial portion of the time block so that all players will have sufficient opportunity to learn about the plot of the event. Cast performers should already know their responsibilities for the scene having reviewed the scripts before the event so that last minute set-up should only take a few minutes and not disrupt the flow of the event. A good rule of thumb is that for at least three-quarters of the time block the cast performer should be roleplaying a character, and the rest of the time can be used for set-up and clean-up.

Players run player created plot scenes in the main play area throughout the time blocks, but especially in the periods when the cast are taking meals or preparing plot scenes. The plans for many events have player controlled activities built into them to help drive player interaction at events. Community meetings, tournaments, staged entertainment, and plot specific activities should be embraced by the players as providing an opportunity to perform.

The shortest event is one time block, generally five to six hours long. Most groups of members start playing by hosting one-time block events. These events usually start around noon and end before dinner, or are played in the evening into the darkness. Meals are not usually served for afternoon one time-block events, but snacks and drinks are often provided. Evening one-time block events will often include dinner or even start with an in-play dinner to set the mood of the event.

When a local group of members gain experience and skill they can move onto hosting longer events that last the better part of a day. These events usually begin at noon and run until ten or eleven at night. Day events will usually include dinner and may include a snack as well.

Longer events can last overnight. These are awesome experiences where you can really live as your character. A four time block event is a sleep-over event.

Full weekend events are the longest event. They are generally divided into five time blocks of time as follows: Friday Night, Saturday Morning, Saturday Afternoon & Saturday Evening and Sunday Morning.

Player Fees

Production clubs will charge members a fee to portray player characters. Event fees for players will range from $5 to $10 per time block.

Duty Discounts

A member earns a "duty discount" when out-of-play responsibilities take them away from play in a time block. Managers will often end up performing these duties as many are tied into their areas of responsibility. However, this duty can be given to a trained member of their team.

The Cook prepares, cooks, serves, and cleans-up meals. Such work generally impacts greatly on their ability to play their character and so the cook is not charged for the time block for the meal. In exchange for this discount club members expect timely, tasty, hot, home-made meals of sufficient portions.

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The Registrar remains close to the check-in site and is readily available for the out-of-play duties of checking in players, accepting money, printing character cards, and handling all the mechanical duties of check-in.

The Trainer remains close to the check-in site and trains new players who arrive to the event. They give the full training to the new player.

Manager Discounts

The Producer automatically receives a discount as they are responsible for attending all cast briefing to ensure all points are covered and the proper tone for the event is set. He or she will be on hand to help the cast set up for complex scenes such as battles and theatric presentations, as well as handling any other concerns as they arise. The producer will not generally be charged for event time blocks.

All other managers will pay for their time blocks at the time of registration. However, if at any time a manager is pulled out of play for a major part of the time block, the manager may request a refund for that time block from the producer who will allow it.

The following are examples where managers should request refund: (1) The cast realizes the halogen light has burned out, the final battle cannot be properly lit, and the props manager runs out to buy and install a new light. (2) If more people attend the event than are initially purchased for, the concessionaire can run out to buy more food. (3) The arbitrator is called on to sort through some hefty out-of-play issue between players. (4) There is a large influx of new players and the concierge needs to personally aid the Trainer in welcoming and training the new players.

Incentive Discounts

A club will set various discounts used as incentive for members. For example, the early arrival discount encourages member to arrive earlier, usually within the first hour of check-in.

Cast Fees

Members do not pay for time blocks in which they serve as cast members, but they must still purchase meals if they desire food. Before the event a cast member must sign up with an event director and be assigned to an adventure team. There are a limited number of cast spots for each event. Cast spots are usually available on a first come first served basis so contact the Event Director early.

The cast members should plan on attending for the entire event. If the cast member is unavailable they should make it clear for which time blocks they can attend. If you suddenly find yourself unable to attend please inform the event director as quickly as possible as there is often a wait list for cast members.

Splitting time between player and a cast member is not conducive to creating a seamless play environment. Stepping out of play to become a cast member jars the in-character experienced and exposes the player to inside information known only to the cast.

Despite discouragement some players will inevitably decide to break up their play experience and expose themselves to cast information. Members do not pay for the time block in question and will earn cast status provided they serve for the full time block.

Sometimes it becomes necessary for a player to fill in as cast member by jumping onto an adventure or at the big battle. This must be authorized by the Producer and should only be permitted in cases of emergency cast shortages. In this case the member who has paid to be a player will receive pro-rated cast status for the amount of the time block served and also receive full status for playing. For example, serving for an entire battle or set of adventure runs is worth full status. Running one-half the number of adventures in the set or arriving late to a battle is worth one-half.

Meal Fees

Players and cast may purchase meals. Meal prices depend on the complexity of the meal and can range anywhere from one to five dollars.

Check-In Process

Check-in is a process has four stations. Missing check-in creates a burden on everyone especially the member who arrives late who will often have to wait to be checked in by

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the Registrar who handles late Check-in. This person is required to remain accessible in the main play area and will run the later comer through all of the check-in stations.

Station #1. New Member Training

The Concierge supervises the new member training station where new participants (player and cast) will be assigned a mentor who will offer one-on-one new member training. It is important that the mentor be an experienced player who has the ability to communicate. The mentor will accompany the new member through the remainder of the registration process explaining the process as they go.

The at event Fundamentals Training uses an ordered standardized format consisting to the following information: (1) structure and spirit of Mystic Realms clubs, (2) basics of theatric roleplaying with immersive play as the goal, (3) choosing a pre-generated character, (4) a general explanation of the rules focused on using their skills theatrically, (5) and a brief one-on-one combat training that is focused on safety and teaches basic melee and ranged weapon use and casting. The goal of fundamentals training is not to teach everything perfectly, but to provide the new member with an overview. As soon as play starts the Luminary Characters will be on hand to help new players roleplay and get involved with the story. The rules are best learned by doing and the adventures will provide that opportunity. If you try and teach new players to many rules it will overwhelm them.

After completing fundamentals training players the new member is brought to the front of registration line by their mentor. After proffering payment and receiving a character card the new member and their mentor will move to the next station. After registration is complete the mentor should bring the new member on a short out-of-play tour of the site making sure the new player knows the limits of the lay area and where the main gathering spot of players is located. If it's an overnight event the new member should be left at their sleeping area to prepare.

Staffing: This station requires one or two persons ready to help new players. A large club may of course require more staff members.

Station #2. Registration

The Coordinator supervises Registration. At registration the member pays to play and purchases meals. Signs up for service and sleeping, and receives character supplies and materials.

Stop A. Payment and Card

Participants will pay the event fee and purchase meals if they desire. After payment players will receive an official character card for the event. Players cannot adjust skills at this time. All skill adjustments are made between events. Players (including new players) who have not entered characters into the data base are given a standardized pre-made character of the type they wish to play and are responsible for entering this character into the database. Cast members and new players do not wait in line, but move immediately to the front making payment and moving on.

Staffing: At a small event one person is all that is needed, but when attendance begins to rise above twenty-five this position should be split into two people. The first staffer enters attendance data into the event registration part of the data-base, while the next staffer after being informed of the proper amount handles the fees accepting monies and making change.

Stop B. Service and Sleep

Every player attending an event must contribute to the success of the event by fulfilling a service to the club as their player character. The staff member at this station must explain the volunteer nature of the club, inform players of their required contribution, and get members to sign up for a specific contribution duty or shift.

If the event is an overnight event the staff member will help the player choose their sleeping accommodation. The staff member must know the site very well and be able to give accurate directions. A map of the site should be provided to all new players.

Staffing: At a small event this position may not need to be staffed, but at medium-sized and larger events one staffer is needed to explain the need for these duties.

Stop C. Character Supplies and Materials

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All participants pick up their base materials and money from this station. The materials that a player character receives will depend on the skills they have chosen.

Staffing: Only one staffer is usually needed at this station. The line will only start to back up if players do not know what they want and stand with the staffer discussing their choices. The staff should inform these members to return when they are ready as they are holding up the line.

Station #3. Inspections

The arbitrator supervises this station. All participants (player and cast performer) must have their costumes, weapons and armor inspected to ensure they meet minimum standards of aesthetics and safety. At events that do not involve sleeping over the players will generally arrive to Check-In wearing their costumes, weapons and armor. In this case the inspection station can be located near the other stations. At overnight event players usually check-in, set up their sleeping areas and then get into costume. In this case the inspection station will be placed in the main play area. To ensure all players go to this station the character card is marked when the costume, weapons, and armor are approved. The event director should be empowered by the arbitrator to inspect the costumes, personal weapons and armor of the cast.

The costume must meet the minimum standards for the realm of play. Some latitude should be given to newer members who should not be chastised, but instead they must be encouraged to improve their costuming. Large clubs will often have simple tabards so that new members can use to cover their modern looking t-shirts, jackets or other offensive clothing.

Each weapon must meet the uniform specifications required by the rules. For fairness, the staffer ensures the total length, head size, grip size, and striking surface size are correct for the desired weapon skill. For safety, the staffer ensures the foam sheathing of the weapon is firmly attached to the shaft and the tip of the weapon has sufficient cushion.

Armor must be examined and approved as either non-sturdy armor or sturdy. Non-sturdy armor must be an item that has the appearance of armor and be made of an approved material that can serve to lessen the impact of weapon strikes to a minimal degree. Sturdy armor is real armor constructed to the standard of real armor that is truly capable of absorbing the impact of real weapons strikes.

The requirements of sturdy armor are intended to be rigorously enforced and only those wearing items of actual armor should gain the benefits of sturdy armor. The first question asked of a person who claims their armor should be sturdy armor is "Would you rely on this armor in a real fight?" The bonuses for sturdy armor are given to those who want to roleplay the weight and restrictions of real armor.

Staffing: Only one staffer is usually needed at this station, but larger events may require multiple members.

Station #4. Pre-Play Briefing

Every event has a Pre-Play briefing (often called the "Play-On Speech") immediately before calling "play-on" that all members are expected to attend.

In this briefing the Producer welcomes members and introduces the event staff. Any important announcements are made by managers and/or members. The upcoming schedule is announced. The last part of the briefing is the Event Director briefly summarizing the major plot points leading up to the event. This helps focus players on the important aspects of the upcoming story. After the summary, the Event Director announces "Play-On!" to start the action.

Check-Out Process

The main concerns of check-out are the clean-up of the host site, character status totaling, and character card collection.

Step #1. Character Review

At the end of the event a player totals up their status and brings all materials to the check-out location. The Logistics staff will check the players' math and accept the return of all club supplies, materials and items used during play. After this review is complete the player's card will be returned to the player and the player will then complete their clean-up duties. This area is open from the end of the event, until thirty minutes after the event ends.

Step #2. Personal Area Clean-up

Immediately after the end of the event the player and cast must clean-up their personal areas. Within thirty minutes of the end of the event all personal effects must be placed in their vehicles and removed from the site. If the event is an overnight event the sleeping site section of the character card will be signed off by the supervisor of that sleeping site.

Step #3. Public Area Clean-up

After cleaning their personal area, players should report to the main play area where they will be assigned a public clean-up duty at a public location used by players. These areas are usually the kitchen, bathrooms, common room, battle field, frequently used trails and so forth. When each area is cleaned the supervisor of that area will sign off for those people who participated in the public clean-up. Cast members will work to clean up cast areas under the direction of the writers and event director.

Step #4. Post-Play Briefing

After the Producer and the Host certify the site as clean all the members will come together to a few final words (often called the "Farewell Speech"). Any manager with announcements will speak. Much appreciation is always offered to the Event Director and the Cast. The upcoming schedule is announced and any questions can be answered.

Step #5. Character Collection

After the Summation Briefing, the coordinator will collect all of the cards. As the cards are collected the Coordinator will check that each player has completed their clean-up assignments. Members generally need to leave rented sites immediately after the character card collection, but most time players arrange to meet at a diner or other place for some out-of-character social activity.

Early Checkout

Participants leaving early are responsible for totaling their own status and for the completion of their clean-up duties. Persons leaving early must ensure their sleeping area is cleaned. Public clean-up duties must be requested from the appointed person during the event well before the player is planning to leave, which is generally the Innkeeper or Host.

After completing clean-up duties the departing participant will deposit their character card into the designated early check-out card collection box or envelope. Used base cards are thrown away. Unused base cards, treasure items, realm monies and all other club supplies and items used during play should be placed separately into their marked location.

Site Clean-up

When members use a host site they must leave the site cleaner than when they arrived. Members must take seriously their commitment to preserving the host site. One way to develop a positive relationship with the host site is delivering the site back to the owners in a state of perfect cleanliness. Only in this way will you ensure that you'll be invited back. Thus, clean-up is one of the most important activities a member will perform during an event.

Every participant is required to contribute to the clean-up effort. Members who fail to comply with procedures will receive disciplinary sanctions, ranging from a warning on the first offense, to loss of status and/or suspension for persistent offenders. Everyone must work quickly and efficiently.

Responsibilities

Clean-up begins immediately after play ends. All players help clean the areas used by the players.

The Coordinator appoints Clean-Up Supervisors who will supervise the clean-up all the areas used by players. This is part of the event staffing. Each site will have a list of locations that need to be cleaned and tasks that must be performed in each location (see sample below).

The Event Director or (Dramaturge in large clubs) is responsible for supervising the clean-up of the main cast areas including the cast staging area or cabin. The writers are responsible for supervising the clean-up of their assigned cast areas.

The Proprietor is responsible for conducting an inventory of all Mystic Realms props present at the event and repacking the properties for storage. They will collect props from the play and the cast areas.

On an overnight event every member (player and cast) is responsible for packing up their own belongings and then cleaning their sleeping site. Please pack personal gear as quickly as possible.

Each player sleeping site will have a clean-up boss that is appointed by Coordinator. After the player is finished cleaning their sleeping site they will report to the main play area to help in public area clean-up. Cast members should pack their belongings and clean their personal areas and then help clean the communal cast areas.

Process

The member will arrive in the area to be cleaned. The supervisor will explain the tasks needed to be completed. The member will complete the tasks and the supervisor will mark the appropriate spot on the member's character card when the area clean-up is completed. The following is a listing of tasks which must be completed in each area. Not all events will have all areas.

Kitchens
  refrigerator empty
  freezer empty
  cabinets must be searched
  drawers must be searched
  sinks scrubbed
  sinks wiped out
  stove-top must be scrubbed spotless
  oven wiped out
  floor swept
  floor moldings wiped down
  window sills wiped down
  windows closed and locked
  curtains closed
  floor mopped

Bathrooms
  trash can emptied completely
  sinks scrubbed
  sinks wiped out
  toilets scrubbed
  toilets wiped down
  toilets free of paper and other debris

  toilet seats down
  floor swept
  floor moldings wiped down
  window sills wiped down
  windows closed and locked
  curtains closed
  floor mopped

Indoor Rooms
  trash can emptied completely
  cabinets must be searched
  drawers must be searched
  couches move to check under
  couch cushions move to check under
  tables folded and stacked
  chairs folded stacked
  floor swept
  rugs vacuumed
  floor moldings wiped down
  window sills wiped down
  windows closed and locked
  curtains closed
  floor mopped

Tent Areas
  platforms swept clean
  flaps closed, but not tied
  pavilion swept clean
  garbage cans emptied

Cabin Areas
  mattresses flipped
  sleeping platforms brushed off
  floors swept clean
  doors closed, but not locked
  pavilion swept clean
  garbage cans emptied

Outdoor Latrines
  sinks wiped out
  toilets wiped down
  toilets free of paper and other debris
  toilet seats up
  floor swept

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Please do not distribute beyond Club Members
This is a Proofreading Edition for Members Review. Send comments and concerns to tony.kukal@gmail.com.
We are looking for a few members to help with the editing and will provide a non-pdf copy for easy editing and tracked changes.

Grounds
   all fields searched
   all trails searched
   all adventure areas searched
   10 foot on both sides of the trail searched
   50 foot around all sleeping areas searched

Combat Accommodations

Mystic Realms seeks to provide safe entertainment for people with all levels of physicality. Our clubs are supportive groups and members are willing to help each other become the hero regardless of ability, age, disability, and/or infirmity. When conditions preclude a person from embracing live-action combat the rules provide alternatives.

The non-combat rules allow a participant to totally avoid combat, but still participate in roleplaying and most other interactions. For those individuals who are not totally precluded from combat, cast members can run cautious-combat adventures which help these individuals experience the excitement of live-action roleplaying combat without the physical exertion.

Being a non-combat or cautious-combat must be designated at check-in and cannot change during the event without approval of Producer and Coordinator. All cautious-combat players are considered non-combat players when not on a cautious-combat adventure.

Parents or legal guardians with children are non-combatants or cautious-combat when in the presence of their non-combatant or cautious children. A non-combatant or cautious-combat player will not be allowed to participate in any live-action combat.

Non-Combat

A non-combat player cannot engage theatric touch combat by choice, age, or medical condition. In order to keep these players safe, they must remain in the main play area and/or sleeping sites. They should use roads only to travel between these sites or the parking area. Non-combatants must always keep away from areas where combats can develop.

A non-combat character may not go out on adventures or out to battle activities. A non-combat character may go out on cautious-combat adventures, but my not participate in cautious-combat. Non-combatants must not approach into a scene where cautious-combat can occur. The Guide will provide guidance. If combat develops the non-combat character will moving out of the combat area, while announcing "non-combat."

If a non-combat player is in an area where combat develops the non-combat must immediately announce "non-combat" with every step taken and move quickly from the area to a place where the combat is unlikely to reach. This may occur when walking to sleeping areas or if the main play area is attacked.

If the non-combatant is in a building when combatants enter the non-combatant should withdraw into an out-of-play location within the building. The bathroom and kitchen are always non-combat areas. If there is no out-of-play refuge they should move into a corner and announce non-combatant. No characters involved in the combat should approach within five feet of a non-combatant taking refuge in a corner. If multiple non-combatants are present they must move to one corner so combat may take place in other locations of the structure.

Cautious-Combat

The theatric focus of our community, the adventure-based design of our events, and the caring community of our members affords us with the unique ability to run an adventure replacing actual combat with a non-competitive, simulated-combat interaction.

All cautious-combat players are non-combat players except when going on approved cautions-combat adventures. All players going on a cautious-combat adventure must acknowledge that every combat on the adventure will be performed using the cautious-combat method.

Method

Cautious-combat creates a safe, non-challenging combat

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environment allowing children and those with medical, or other, conditions to participate in combat under the following rules:

(1) Movement is limited to slow walk speed only.

(2) Casting invocations and ranged weapon counts are spoken at a slower pace than normal at approximately two seconds per count with attacks being lobbed at the target (adults should use underhand throws).

(3) Cast members are not fighting to provide a challenge. They are not permitted to block player attacks and will exaggerate their reactions to hits.

(4) All combatants (cast and players) make melee weapon attacks using low speed swings with touches of minimal contact.

Execution

Cautious-combat is declared at the start of the adventure and the entire adventure is performed cautiously for ALL characters on the adventure.

A group of players seeking a cautious combat adventure should agree to travel together before seeking an adventure. They may accompany short adventures if their numbers are 4-6. They may accompany long adventures if their numbers are 8-10. Players without need for cautious combat traveling with this group understand that their own combat-play will be limited to cautious combat for the duration of the adventure.

The group will approach the guide and alert the guide in character in this manner "The members of our group are looking for an adventure with cautious-combat." The phrase "cautious-combat" will be an in-play term meaning non-challenging combat. The Guide will ensure all agree to "cautious-combat" by asking, "Does everyone understand this will be a cautious-combat adventure?" If so, the guide will accommodate.

At the entry point of the adventure the guide will loudly shout "Clarify: Cautious-Combat!" All cast members must respond "Clarify: Cautious-Combat Understood." If a cast member does not respond the guide must have the players

wait while he or she walks forward in the adventure and clarifies how cautious-combat works.

During all combat scenes players and cast will use cautious combat rules. Anyone fighting beyond a cautious level will be reminded by use of the key words, "cautious-combat." The guide will remove anyone from combat who is warned more than once by stating "Clarify: Please leave the cautious-combat."

Guides will help players and cast maintain the safe combat environment, but it is the responsibility of individual members to act safely and within the "cautions combat" rules.

Under-Age Participation

Mystic Realms live-action roleplaying can be a fun, family focused activity, so long as every member recognizes the need to maintain the roleplaying environment. Many roleplayers attend events seeking an immersive world where everyone contributes to the environment. Children and minors can add to the environment, expanding roleplaying opportunities, bringing the dimension of family, and making the world seem more real by their inclusion, but when they misbehave or act inappropriately they can also detract from the environment. Thus, members will work together to strike a balance where children and minors are incorporated into play in a manner that ensures safety for everyone and also meets the minimum standards of theatric roleplaying.

Children

The Mystic Realms community encourages members with children to bring their children to events, but also acknowledges the responsibility attendance places on the parents or legal guardian of the child. Children must not disrupt the roleplaying environment. They must of course be in costume and be portrayed as children living in the setting.

Under 10 Years

Children 10 and under must be non-combatants. They are too small to be allowed around combat. It's too easy for a

running person to accidentally trample a small child in the heat of combat. Parents must not endanger their children, or place other people in situations where they could accidentally injure a child.

Children 10 and under who are able to understand and follow the rules may create characters with up to 2,500 spent status. They will be limited to 5 health and rank 1 skills. Older children may participate in cautions-combat after demonstrating a capacity to use their skills and react to hits.

Very young children (in most realms) can be given the ability healing touch I-III that will work without their understanding provided they are held by a wounded or injured character or sit near the dead character. The child loses this ability when they become able to understand play.

10-12 Years

Children 10-12 years of age may play characters after demonstrating a capacity to play by the rules, stay in character, count hits, properly use character skills and properly respond to skills used against them. They may play characters with up to 5,000 spent status. They will be limited to 5 health and rank 1 skills. They will be limited to cautious combat adventures unless their physical size allows them to participate safely in combat. In that case they may be allowed to participate on adventures, but not battles.

Handling Children

When children are not well-behaved, players and cast must address this issue with the supervising adult and not with the child. Players should only approach the child if there is an immediate danger or a safety concern. Difficulties with children can range from hard hitting to crying at the first sign of a monster. In all cases the children need to be quickly attended to and removed from the situation by the supervising adult. The witnessing player or cast member will announce to the supervising adult present "Clarify: [Describe activity or situation of concern]" and the supervising adult will immediately remedy the situation. The child does not need to be removed from the adventure unless issues persist and then the child will be disallowed participation.

Minors

Minor members are thirteen to seventeen years of age who have both (1) the requisite maturity to participate in live-action roleplaying events and (2) attend an event with a responsible adult who is either their parent or legal guardian or another adult appointed by the parent or legal guarding to be responsible for the minor at all times when they are at events. An adult is 18 years of age or older.

While the Mystic Realms program seeks to help minors develop their dramatic abilities, minors must attend with the desire to develop theatric skills and the commitment to remain in character at all times. In addition, the theatric events take place out of doors, often in rustic locations and at night. There is physical activity in running and theatric touch combat.

Mystic Realms does not supervise minors when at events as club efforts are placed into running the event for all participants. Thus, minors must attend with a member who acts as their responsible adult. Younger minors will often be accompanied by their parent or legal guardian. Minors who are older may attend with a responsible adult who is appointed by the minor's parent or legal guardian to be responsible for their minor.

The responsible adult should be an adult sibling, family relation, or other adult known well to the minor's parents or guardian. The minor must remain with the responsible adult at all times while at a Mystic Realms event. Minors who separate from their responsible adult may be asked to leave and event without refund.

Minors who attend an event accompanied by a responsible adult must present the Mystic Realms Parental Consent Form MR115 completed and signed by their parent or legal guardian nominating the responsible adult to that capacity. The parent must be reachable by phone at all times when minor is at event.

13-14 Years

Minors who are 13-14 years of age may be limited to cautious combat if unable to follow rules or lack the size to safely participate in live-action combat. In all cases the

producer of the club will make the final determination after testing a child's ability to participate safely under the rules. Minors who are 13-14 years old may play characters with up to 7,500 spent status.

15-17 Years

Minors who are 15-17 years old will generally have sufficient size to participate safety in combat. At 15-16 they may play characters with up to 12,500 spent status, while 17 year old minors may play characters with up to 15,00 spent status. Mystic Realms may waive these limits for a minor who demonstrates significant maturity, a dedication to theatrics and a commitment to following rules.

Chronicles

Chronicles are a series of events that are linked with a common thread. In small groups a writer assisted by a few cast members will often create a series of activity and mission-based events that will take place over a period of time. Ten to fifteen members will participate in cast and player roles.

Most chronicles last a few months to a few years, but some groups maintain play for longer. Most often a small group of players will get larger and decide to create a production club to run community-based events.

It is very common for Production Clubs to run monthly community-based events. The Evermore Club in New Jersey has been running a monthly Glory of Guildhall chronicle since 1997.

Living Map And Guidebook

All Chronicles have a local map that shows all the locations in that area. This map is updated after every few events to show changes that players have caused to their world.

Player agency is a core fundamental of Mystic Realms events. The local map allows players to directly affect their world. This provides a realness and purpose to play that is not found in games without a living local map.

Players a chronicle should place their homes on the local map so that events impact them directly. Players with characters involved in different chronical can have homes in each area if they desire.

Club writers will create plot characters to represent the various cast groups on the map. These plot characters come to town frequently and can be contacted by players when their plots are active. Their interactions with players establish the politics of the game.

The local map is often supported by a local guidebook that contains information about the locations on the map. Long running clubs will provide summaries of previous stories and bios of important characters.

Between Event Roleplaying

It is only natural that players want to talk about current events and developing plots between live-action events. Mystic Realms encourages players to talk as their characters between events. The communication builds player plot between players that can be resolved at the next event. In fact, experience has shown that players who spend a time conversing with each other as their characters between events generally have more enjoyable times at events because they are more invested in the story.

There are two kinds of between event roleplaying. (1) Real time communication roleplaying using either verbal or text-based methods where player talk as their characters to other characters. (2) Descriptive/narrative roleplaying is when a participant describes in detail what the character is doing and saying and expects a described response back from the other participants.

Real time communication roleplaying occurs when participants meet in person wearing at an in-play location. They wear their costumes and roleplay normally with the below describes restriction. If the meeting is not in person then the real time roleplaying is assumed to be using some form of in-play communication device to allow the character to speak. Players are free to use any system that

allows voice, video, or text based communication. Ome players use the phone, while others choose social media sites. If video is used, players are generally in costume. When using real time roleplaying there is no narration of activity and players just speak as their character. If something needs to be said that's out-of-character players use cease play or clarify depending on the situation.

Descriptive/narrative roleplaying occurs when participants describe what their characters do and say through narration to other participants. Generally, everyone takes turns describing what they do or how they react to what others do. While voice can be used, most descriptive/narrative roleplaying is text-based and uses social media sites. Descriptive/narrative roleplaying is generally not real time because the narration requires time to write, read, and respond. Usually participants decide when the events described occur in relation to the real time story of their club.

Player-With-Player

Players can engage in player-with-player real time communication roleplaying or descriptive/narrative based roleplaying between events as long as (1) the roleplay occurs in a location the player created and controls, (2) the roleplay does not affect the world outside of their location, and (3) the roleplay does not include combat or the offensive use of skills.

Explanation (1)

A location a player creates and controls is their in-play house, places of business, or other location provided by their background as permitted according to the source materials of setting. Most realms let players describe where they live. It's the small part of the their club's shared world that they get to personalize. The description is provided as narration at the start of on-line chats or in the invitation for player-hosted live-action gatherings.

Explanation (2)

A "shared world" will not seem real to players if the stories are filled with consistencies. Allowing players to roleplay outside of their sphere of control creates introduces minor

consistencies into the story. Groups of player may portray plot affecting actions differently and then arguments can develop over which player had the real in-play experience. For example, the X item was very important to a plot and two independent groups of players performed a private roleplay between live-action events where they stole the X and wanted to show up at the event with the X.

If players were allowed to affect plot outside of their location then a player could simply perform a ceremony in their character's basement that destroyed the world for everyone. While this example is extreme, every little inconsistency introduced into the world destroys a part of the seamless nature of the roleplaying Mystic Realms seeks to create. This blanket rule prevents all potential story conflicts arising from players trying to affect the world outside their sphere of influence.

Instead of focusing on affect the plot of writers, players are encouraged to focus their between event roleplays on developing their own player plot. Drama is the beating heart of a story and drama comes from having "character." Between event roleplaying is the perfect place to develop your character's past, personality, and purpose. Events are busy. There is not often time for a player to sit around with other players and build their personal dramas. That's where between event roleplaying finds its purpose.

Explanation (3)

Combat is not permitted at unofficial events. In live player-hosted gatherings there is no way to ensure that the player area is safe. Players are not using official character cards. They don't have access to base materials. There is no club supervision and no review by writers, and because club administrators have enough work getting ready for the next official event. They cannot be asked to supervise unofficial events. Combats in non-LARP settings are not permitted because it's impossible to decide who lives and who dies.

Writer-With-Player

Writers can engage in player-with-writer real time communication roleplaying, but cannot engage in descriptive/narrative roleplaying. This means that all roleplaying occurs directly between players portraying

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player characters and writers who are portraying plot characters. This communication as the character using voice or text and does not contain out-of-play description or narration. When engaging in real time communication roleplaying writers follow the same rules as players but have a few extra restrictions.

Writers are permitted to roleplay between events as long as (1) the roleplay occurs in a location the writer created and controls, (2) the roleplay does not affect the world outside of their location, (3) the roleplay does not include combat or the offensive use of skills, (4) the roleplay is part of an approved plot, (5) the roleplay does not decide a major issue of plot that should be decided during a LARP event, and (6) the roleplay must be conducted in real time so as to preserve continuality with other in-play happenings.

Explanation (4)

Creating story for a shared world requires writers to run plots that complement each other. For example, having three cult plots moving to a climax at one time will confuse players, whereas having three different plots in different stages of development creates stories that can be followed and reacted to by players. The requirement that writers get approval to run means that they've worked the details of their story arch out with other writers and the club will reap the benefits of their teamwork in having better stories.

Explanation (5)

Some players don't see the value in between event roleplaying that cannot change the world and they argue that if there is a writer present they should be able to change the world. These players argue their character should be able to use their skills to kill major plot characters, steal important items, or solve plot points between events. While there is no denying that it would be cool for that one player to be able to radically change the plot between events, there is also no denying that its just as uncool for all those players who did not get that special opportunity. Mystic Realms has chosen to place the focus on at-event LARPing and thus writers can't run between-event roleplaying to decide major plot issues.

Explanation (6)

Writers run between-event roleplays in real time, just like they post their prologue's and epilogues around the time that the event actually happens. This provides for a consist flow of information between events and gives a realistic feeling to the developing story of the LARP.

Players have latitude in pretending when their player-only roleplays occur because their roleplay only affects the people involved. Writers, on the other hand, bring the story alive for everyone. Their plots are built to affect the entire club. In fact, the primary reason why writers participate in between event roleplaying is to spread their story out to more players.

Part V. Membership Rules

All members agree to accept the following rules, guidelines and prohibitions in exchange for being allowed participation in Mystic Realms. Each member has a responsibility to be familiar with these rules.

These standards are not intended to oppose or supersede any law or statute that may be in effect in your area. If a rule in this document conflicts with a legal statute, the statute takes precedence. In addition, if a member has violated a legal statute, enforcement of the statute takes precedence.

Mystic Realms does not condone violations of law and will cooperate fully with any investigations made by legal authorities. These rules should not be used as a substitute for legal action or criminal prosecution, but it may be applied in addition to such action.

Honest Theater

It is important to address allegations vigorously within a club in the early stages or these problems will become unmanageable. One person cheating, fighting improperly or breaking rules will cause others around him or her to do the same. Within a short time, the isolated instances could become the norm for the club.

The best way to handle disciplinary problems is not to have them. A club with diligent honest members who don't tolerate antics of rule breakers is the best form of defense against dishonestly and disruption. Clubs will rarely have to discipline a member for serious violations when the club leadership supports diligent members with expedient and effect disciplinary action for offenders who fail to respond to corrections by their peers.

Member Enforcement

It is the responsibility of all members to act as caretakers of a clubs honestly culture. All members must be willing to enforce rules, guidelines, and prohibitions by politely informing an infringing member of their concerns.

Learning to help people stay honest without seeming to confront them is an important skill for every member to learn. We know that standing up for your right to have an honest and safe club is hard for some players. You may be afraid or feel that it's not your responsibility, but you must overcome these feeling because if everyone in the club felt this way the club would be full of cheating and unsafe combat.

Most members don't confront cheaters because they are afraid to get into an out-of-character conflict.

The key to avoiding the confrontation is to address the cheating before the cheating frustrates you. Saying "Clarify: Do you realize . . ." is a good non-confrontational way to address potential cheating. Most players will respond favorably to the help, especially if the help is not offered as a confrontation, but if they become confrontational please report their behavior to the arbitrator

Practice the questions a few times and soon you'll be able to communicate under pressure. Example: Say "Clarify!" and politely ask "Do you realize you have just taken over 30 damage?' or "Do you realize you've just used six parries?"

This clarification should not need to be an interruption in the flow of the scene, and remember performers may violate the rules out of mistake, inexperience or ignorance, so please be courteous when you question a call or skill use.

Clarifications for cheating can be as simple as "Clarify: You just called four parries." And the response will often be, "Oh yeah, I'm sorry you're right," and the accused player will take the effect mistakenly parried. Both players should continue with play and both parties should be glad the issue was resolved.

Another clarify resolves the mistake in favor of accused party. "Clarify: Did you see your shot hit me because that bean-bag lying over there clearly missed me." And the response from the accused player could be, "That's not the bean-bag I threw. The one I threw is at your feet. The bean-bag you saw miss you was his [points to guy next to him.]"

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Now the accuser should apologize, "Oh I'm sorry." and play should continue with both parties glad the issue was resolved.

Of course, if either is unsatisfied with the exchange, they can bring the issue to the Arbitrator.

Luminary Enforcement

Even though every member is empowered to stop cheaters, thieves, and other rules infringers, luminary characters are on the forefront of making sure minimum standard are met and that rules are enforced. Making rules mistakes and failing to meeting minimum standards interrupts the immersive environment. Players talking out of play, not wearing costumes, calling skills wrong, cheating, are all little breaks in the seamless reality. Good immersive players can tolerate a few breaks, but too many breaks will overwhelm even the most disciplined roleplayer. The arbitration team helps keep these anti-immersion incidents to a minimum by patrolling the play area.

The arbitrator appoints player characters to help enforce rules. The names of these character vary according to the setting, but they are generally called sheriffs or arbiters and they are empowered to help players meet the minimum standards. These players generally will generally inform the player or cast member of the issue and then bring it to the attention of the arbitrator who will follow up after the event.

Guide Enforcement

Adventure guides are often in the best position to help players realized they are not meeting the minimum standards. Adventure guides should become skilled in helping players improve their roleplaying.

Interpersonal Conflicts

While not everyone will get along with each other in every social situation, all members have an obligation to the group not to allow their interpersonal issues and conflicts to disrupt club events.

Members who have a personal issue with another member have a responsibility to either work things out or avoid each other in a manner that does not draw others into their personal disagreement. Events (or clubs) must never become social battlegrounds on which members attempt to sway people to their cause. This behavior is hurtful to everyone's enjoyment.

If necessary, the parties can approach the Arbitrator (see next section) to help in the resolution of the dispute. Oftentimes the whole issue is the result of a misunderstanding. Members who have an issue with a club manager acting in their official capacity likewise have a responsibility to handle it calmly by approaching the appropriate person in the club structure.

Nothing hurts a club more than interpersonal drama between members. Conflict can be as simple as a couple breaking up that sends shockwaves through the club and forces players to take sides. Don't do this to yourselves and your friends. Instead, be mature and professional.

Site Rules

Mystic Realms clubs use private sites to host their events. These sites range from personal residences to large multi-building camps. Each of these sites may have unique rules that will be announced to members. Everyone must make themselves aware of these rules so that relationships with event hosts are not damaged.

Gun Warning

Never bring a real firearm to an event, or anything that fires a projectile that could injure. This included air-soft, BB style guns, and dart guns firing non-foam projectiles.

While realistic looking gun props add to the roleplaying environment, players should never use realistic looking guns in public area. Persons observing theatric activities may be panicked by the seemingly real activities that occur at Mystic Realms theatric events.

If you're going to use air soft or BB guns because they look good, you must disable their firing mechanisms and plug the barrels to render them non-firing. Further, in certain jurisdictions air soft and BB guns are treated as real

firearms, making possession of these a serious offense. Please consult your local laws in this regard.

No matter what type of weapon prop you are using, when going to and from an event, these facsimile weapons should be locked in your trunk, and possibly in a locked case of their own. Never allow a facsimile weapon to be in the passenger compartment of your vehicle.

Arbitration

The purpose of the Arbitrator is two-fold. (1) Arbitration will help resolve conflicts between members when individuals cannot or will not address the issue between themselves. (2) Arbitration will investigate allegations where members are accused of prohibited acts and if credible evidence is found arbitration will deduct status and record the infraction.

An Arbitrator is not a professional mediator or trained legal professional. They cannot determine actual guilt or innocence. When allegations are made they will attempt to find the root cause of the problem and help accused members understand why they are being reported by other members.

After investigation and discussion, if credible evidence arises that a member has violated one of the prohibited acts, the Arbitrator is required remove status from the player's character. Usually, when a member is reported there is credible evidence, as reporting another member falsely is its own offense.

The commonest infractions are hard-hitting, miscounting health and stamina, and

If a player continues to be a problem, a club has the right to suspend a problem member from attending club events. If there are any further offenses, the club may petition Mystic Realms to expel the member from all official events. A club may petition Mystic Realms to expel a member from all official events for any criminal offense.

Prohibited Acts

Mystic Realms members are expected to act as mature and responsible persons who are respectful of others and the law. What follows is a list of prohibited acts that are divided into rules offenses, theatric offenses, social offenses, and actual criminal offense. The list is not meant to be exhaustive.

Violations of these prohibitions will result in disciplinary action by club arbitrators. Guilt and innocence is very hard to determine so most penalties are small status deductions meant to remind players to play fairly and be kindly. Records are kept and players who seemed to accumulate multiple offenses will be asked to leave.

Rules Offenses

Members choosing to use a skill have an obligation to know exactly how that skill is used. Members should not use a skill if they are not prepared to use it correctly. Of course, new players need to have some latitude during their first few events.

Experienced players should practice using skills so that they do not make mistakes. When they do make a mistake, they should expect the status loss. The alternative is a game where the seamless play environment is destroyed by constant rules confusion.

Cheating needs to be taken very seriously or its practice will spread through the club as every person is forced to cheat to remain competitive. The only way to rehabilitate a game that has become lax with their rules is for concerned members to note any instances of cheating and report to Arbitration. At the end of the event, Arbitration will contact accused persons. In time, the game will become honest, and arbitrators will not have much to do. Until that time, there will be some growing pains.

The following is a short list of common mistakes made by players:

> calling incorrect effect duration – 50 status
> calling damage modifier (impact, breach, etc.) after
>   damage amount – 50
> calling damage type (cold, heat, etc.) before damage
>   amount - 50
> calling ranged effects when not seen to hit - 100 status

Please do not distribute beyond Club Members
This is a Proofreading Edition for Members Review. Send comments and concerns to tony.kukal@gmail.com.
We are looking for a few members to help with the editing and will provide a non-pdf copy for easy editing and tracked changes.

calling skill by wrong name – 50 status

failing to announce effect after delivery of feat – 50 status

not filling out cards (compound catalyst, ritual powder, etc.) at moment of use – 50 status

not fulfilling full required time for skills – 100 status

not overtly performing methods so they appear as ritual, rote, or procedure – 100 status

not setting up traps using the correct materials and placement – 100 status

not singing ballads loud enough to be heard by all in area – 100 status

not using audible clear words of invocation when casting – 100 status

not using correct markers for skill effects – 100 status

not using tools, props, or paraphernalia when required by rules – 100 status

The following are common acts of cheating:

hurrying duration counts – 50 status

hurrying movement counts – 50 status

hurrying other skill counts – 100 status

miscounting health, stamina, and armor - 200 status

not taking melee hits when they land solidly - 100 status

out-of-play stealing of in-game commodities - 500 status

using feats that were expended - 200 status

using skills not permitted to character - 300 status

Theatric Offenses

Theatric offenses involve violations of the immersive play environment, antagonistic or anachronistic roleplaying that disturbs other participants, out-of-game disrupting the flow of the game, and interference with cast activities for out-of-game reasons.

These offenses are independent of any in-play legal rules that may exist in the realm of play. Some settings want to simulate a more stable play environment, while others want an edgier tone or feel and may encourage players to have more inter-character conflicts. However, inter-character conflicts are never permitted to become interpersonal conflicts. Players whose characters enter into conflict must do so with cooperative, plot-related goals.

In theatric roleplaying, players wantonly killing or stealing from each other with no dramatic purpose is harmful to the environment because they impede the cooperation necessary to build an interrelated story. When roleplaying theatrically, the conflicts that arise between characters must be understood and embraced by all players as driving the story forward.

Theatric offenses will arise, when player confrontational player activity occurs without plot reasons, simply for the sake of producing wanton harm, or in opposition to the cooperative story being told by the cast and players.

Antagonistic Roleplaying: A successful event requires cooperation between players, administrators and cast. Players who set themselves up as adversarial to the in-play community disrupt this delicate balance. While it's often cool to be the "bad guy or girl," the player participant must not unduly antagonize other player participants who have the right to enjoy themselves as they desire without being offended.

Anachronistic Roleplaying: Mystic Realms events are supposed to be immersive environments where one can experience life in another world. Blatantly anachronistic comments and character-types bring the real world into shows inappropriately and break the atmosphere. There are a few types of infringement. Anachronistic comments are statements that are not appropriate for the realm. Anachronistic characters are characters that are not appropriate for the realm.

Anachronistic items are sometimes difficult to pin down. For example, a modern-looking music player providing thematic instrumental music in a fantasy setting may appear out of place, but it's serving an in-play purpose. Perhaps the owner could decorate the box or cover it with a cloth, but since it's serving a non-anachronistic purpose its use may be tolerated. Contrast this with the player who sits at an important in-play community meeting making a show of eating a large pizza out of a box displaying the logo of the local pizza. Many players would argue the pizza box would

be a disruptive anachronistic item when used so openly.

Breaching Non-Cooperative PvP Prohibition: Non-Cooperative Player-Versus-Player is defined as direct and indirect skill use or antagonistic roleplaying by one player participant against another player participant that does not develop cooperative plot between player characters. All events prohibit non-cooperative player-versus-player activity because the goal of Mystic Realms is theatric LARPing. Players committing wanton violence against other players for no constructive purpose other than character gain, humor, bullying, or similar reasons are not adding to the overall story. Consensual roleplays based on in-character reasons that players enjoy only violate this prohibition if they are roleplayed in a public way that disturbs other players.

The out-of-play prohibition against non-cooperative PvP is separate from the in-play legal system found in each world that prosecute players for in-character offenses. A player can be found guilty of an in-play offense such as murdering a player or stealing in-play items from another character and not be guilt of any out-of-play offense. Similarly, a player can murder another and escape in-play prosecution because the victim doesn't want to press charges, but still be punished for non-cooperative PvP. While in-play laws preserve the play setting, out-of-play rules preserve the cooperative community.

Players cannot target other players for out-of-play reasons. For example, if you get into an out-of-play disagreement with another player you can't begin to badmouth that player's character in-play or otherwise disrupt their player experience for out-of-play reasons. If you've got an out-of-play problem with someone and you roleplay your character against them, you're breaking this prohibition so stay away from them during play until your issues are resolved out-of-play.

Discrimination: In-play prejudices and hatreds created by the worlds of play will only be tolerated so far as they are entertaining. Roleplaying dramatic conflict does not give one the right to offend another member or to make another member feel threatened or uncomfortable. In-play prejudices and hatreds are meant to enhance the enjoyment of a world and must never be roleplayed in a manner that offends the sensibility.

Disruption: Mystic Realms gives players every opportunity to have their actions influence show plot, some players delight in "messing up the plot." Some do it for supposedly in-play reasons, while others will freely admit they do it for out-of-play reasons. Regardless, the effect is the same; they have acted to intentionally interfere with the flow of the show. Their interference with cast activities will disrupt play for everyone.

Some examples include: killing guides for no reason or just because the character doesn't like what they have to say; spreading rumors or falsehoods with the intent to undermine plot; jumping ahead in a linear adventure, so as to prevent the cast from getting set for the next scene; knowingly blocking off the only point of entrance into or egress out of the play area; moving forward into the cast re-pop area or out-of-play staging area; and going into collateral play area without a guide.

Roleplaying: Members who do not meet the minimum standards of roleplaying and costume will need to be addressed. The concierge should handle these details through encouragement and assistance to improve, while offenders need to be sent to the arbitrator.

Staying in character is one of the most important rules. While you may be tempted to make out-of-play comments these should be avoided as they take everyone out of play.

The style of roleplay at Mystic Realms asks you to stifle that out-of-play internal monologue so you can really experience the event. If you need to take a break, go and chill in an out-of-play area or at least move away from those staying in play, but remember achieving profound roleplaying experiences does not happen without effort. It takes time to immerse yourself in the experience and time to build your excitement. If you're dropping character all the time, you're not going to find those highs.

Unsafe Combat: Charging, hard hitting, strikes to illegal targets, hard strikes to illegal targets, and other acts of unsafe combat cannot be tolerated. If a player receives multiple complaints in one event, the Arbitrator will impose

a status penalty. A participant who causes a darkened bruise, breaks the skin or causes other injury is not allowed to participate in combat for the rest of the event and an official complaint must be filed with the Arbitrator of the club who will impose the status penalty.

- Anachronistic Comments (making disruptive statements) - 100 status
- Anachronistic Character (playing disruptive characters) - 200 status
- Anachronistic Items (displaying items that break setting) – 100 status
- Discrimination (in-play discrimination that offends sensibilities) – 300 status
- Disruption (jumping ahead of guide in a linear adventure) - 200 status
- Disruption (jumping ahead of guide in a battle scene) - 500 status
- Disruption (blocking cast access to a main play area) - 500 status
- Disruption (entering into the cast staging area) - 300 status
- Disruption (going into collateral game space without a guide) - 500 status
- Disruption (killing guides without provocation) - 500 status
- Disruption (spreading falsehoods to undermine plot) - 300 status
- Non-Cooperative PvP (antagonism for out-of-play reasons) – 100 status
- Non-Cooperative PvP (compounds, traps, and other indirect harms) – 100 status
- Non-Cooperative PvP (attacking) - 200 status
- Non-Cooperative PvP (compounds, traps, and other indirect killing) – 300 status
- Non-Cooperative PvP (killing) - 400 status
- Non-Cooperative PvP (control of will or body) – 500 status
- Non-Cooperative PvP (spiriting) - 600 status
- Roleplaying (dropping character in a play area) – 50 status
- Roleplaying (poor roleplaying after counseling) - 100 status
- Roleplaying (poor costuming after counseling) - 100 status

status
- Unsafe Combat (charging) - 100 status
- Unsafe Combat (hard hitting) - 100 status
- Unsafe Combat (strikes to illegal target area) - 300 status
- Unsafe Combat (hard strike to illegal target area) - 300 status
- Unsafe Combat (causing bruise) - 500 status
- Unsafe Combat (causing significant injury) – 1000 status

Social Offenses

Social Offenses deal with the maintenance of a friendly community. Most of these offenses deal with interpersonal acts that include abusive behavior toward other participants, rudeness, extreme profanity, or improper comments. When one member acts poorly the whole play environment can be tainted. Events have been ruined for many people by a single person's untimely outburst. All of these are behaviors that if allowed disrupt the safe, friendly and fostering environment a club is trying to create and maintain.

New clubs and new players don't have to worry too much about social problems. The first six events of any long-term LARP club are always good because members don't know each other. The excitement of meeting people and exploring a new place carries the new LARP club through its honeymoon period. Everyone tells their story. It's a fresh and new, with everyone putting on the best face for each other. This is one reason why members coming to going to a new LARP club experience so much excitement.

As a club ages, the newness wears off. The honeymoon period ends. Members get to know each other and invariably out-of-play social rifts will develop. It is impossible for everyone to will get along in any social organization. In a Mystic Realms club, all members are required to respect each other and treat each other professionally. The community offenses punish people who don't want to be kind to others. Players must be careful of what they say and how they say it in a closed community. If allowed to grow social rifts can destroy a club. In fact, most Mystic Realms clubs will be destroyed by social conflict between members or between members and managers. It's a simple fact of the

hobby.

Abusiveness: Participants are discouraged from publicly disparaging other participants in any in- or out-of-play forum connected to the show of Mystic Realms. Abusive intimidation, belittling, insults and similar behaviors are hurtful to the individual and in violation of the cooperative spirit of Mystic Realms.

Bullying: Mystic Realms is committed to providing its members with a social environment free from any bullying or harassment that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive atmosphere of interaction. Engaging in any kind of harassment is prohibited.

Discrimination: Real life discrimination will not be tolerated. Members are not allowed to express derogatory or offensive comments or make any offensive conduct of any kind, involving race, religion, age, national origin, sexual orientation, color, disability status, or political party.

Disparaging Members: Publicly disparaging members, their ideas or their accomplishments is wrong. Complaining that someone is a cheater, power-gamer, unsafe-fighter and so forth without filing an official complaint with the arbitrator is unfair because it damages a person's reputation without giving them a chance to defend their actions. Undermining a member's reputation not only hurts the member, but the organization as well. Constant complaining will ultimately harm the club by creating a negative culture that drives good roleplayers away. A club cannot tolerate members berating members. The most successful clubs are cooperative and collaborate social organizations that do not permit a climate of antagonistic social drama.

Disparaging Managers: Making negative or disparaging statement about those who run your club is just silly, because you're only going to hurt their feelings which will cause them to step down and not run events. It's obvious that everyone loses when disgruntled players decide to criticize managers, writers, and cast.

Being a manager, writer, and cast is a lot of work, and these people do their best to produce enjoyable events. If a member's not happy with the club, they should step up and help. Please don't make the manager's job more difficult by disparage them and their best efforts.

Members should not participate in public griping sessions that serve no purpose other than to hurt. In fact, members should shut them down, especially when they are at events. Members who have a problem with how a volunteer is performing must discuss their opinions with the Producer, and should offer to help out.

Disparaging Writers, Cast, and Plot: Making negative or disparaging statement about those who write for your club is just silly as criticizing your managers. The writers and cast are trying their best, and if you criticize them you won't have any cast driven support for your roleplaying.

Writing events is not easy and requires significant practice to learn all the skills necessary to produce amazing events. Experienced members are sometimes quick to disparage new writers or Production Clubs that are just starting. Its easy to find the mistakes when you've had years of strong Mystic Realms training, but as a member you have an obligation to play through the scene without criticism.

Even the best planned events by the best writers can go awry, because there are so many considerations from weather to number of cast at the event, to the mood of the players, that events should not be publically disparaged. You don't want your Mystic Realms club to have a culture of criticism; it's much better to have a supportive culture.

Griping: Club's run best when members work together to create a cooperative community. There is no way that everyone is always going to get along, but members can act professionally toward each other. Griping and trash talking hurts the cooperative community. It creates cliques, hurts feelings, and saps the creative energy of members. Managers and writers are volunteers who should not have to suffer a climate of criticism for their efforts. Players are encourage to respectably talk to managers and writers about issues, but players who publicly gripe about managers and writers are actively undermining the cooperative community.

Lewdness: Distasteful behavior, such as lewdness, pornography, roleplaying of rape or other sex crimes is strictly prohibited.

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Ideological Platforming: A Mystic Realms club is an inclusive community where all members should feel welcome, safe, and accepted. No member is permitted to push political or religious agendas onto other members of the community. Please keep the real world arguments out of the hobby.

Rumor-mongering: Members should avoid spreading information that is hurtful to other members, particularly information that is secondhand or potentially incorrect. Club administrators are allowed to pursue necessary lines of information gathering and dissemination that might otherwise fall under the aforementioned definition if this is done in the course of performing their duties.

Rudeness: There is a fine line between roleplaying a rude character and being rude. Rude characters may make some people laugh, but they might also spoil the fun of those around them who are the targets of their rudeness. Mystic Realms clubs should be friendly places that attract new people. Rude or trouble-making participants discourage membership in the long run and should not be tolerated.

Also, it's easy to roleplay a rude jerk, and Mystic Realms members should always be striving to improve their roleplaying ability. The real world is full of rude, annoying people with no performance skills. Since it takes no real acting skill to be rude, Mystic Realms asks members to leave rudeness in the real world.

- Abusiveness (private disparagement in personal communication) - 300 status
- Abusiveness (public disparagement in open forum) - 500 status
- Bullying (harassment or intimidation of any kind) – 500 status
- Discrimination (real life offensive comments) - 500 status
- Disparagement of Managers, Writers and Cast - 500 status
- Disparagement of Events, Adventures and Plot - 500 status
- Griping Publicly (about player) – 100 status
- Griping publicly (manager or writer) – 200 status
- Ideological Platforming – 100 status

Lewdness - 500 status
Littering - 100 status
Rumor-mongering - 300 status
Rudeness - 200 status

Club Offenses

The are rules established to protect clubs and their members.

Alcohol: The use of alcoholic beverages is prohibited on many sites where Mystic Realms is played. Playing while intoxicated is prohibited, even if alcohol is permitted on site.

Filing a False Complaint: It's hard to imagine that a member would try to use this rules system to hurt another member by filing a false complaint, but if someone if found trying to get the Arbitrator to falsely punish someone they will be penalized.

Littering: Participants must dispose of waste in proper receptacles. They must not leave behind base cards, yarn, bean bags, garland, candle wax and any other refuse.

Marijuana: The use of marijuana is prohibited at all events. Playing while under the influence of marijuana is prohibited.

Player Poaching: There's nothing more frustrating for Mystic Realms members and managers than to be at an event and listen to someone bragging about his or her great "roleplaying" experience at another club. If you come to an event respect those who are running the event and do not try to steal players away by putting down the event or by building up your events to be greater than they are.

Profanity: Shouting or extreme use of profanity and other off-color comments are prohibited in any in- or out-of-play forum connected to Mystic Realms.

Real Weapons: The possession of real weapons at any event or meeting is strictly prohibited. Real weapons have sharp edges so please leave combat knives, swords, axes, spears, and so forth at home. Do not bring working firearms or bows to events or meetings. Stage combat weapons may only brought to events or meeting when they are required

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for approved club activities.

Refusing Arbitration: A Mystic Realms club requires open communication between members. Arbitration is the chosen method to avoid longstanding animosity. So long as members treat each other with respect and deal openly and fairly conflicts can be resolved through mediation. Therefore, a status penalty shall be levied against a member who refused to respond to an arbitrator. This offense is continual and may be repeated every five days in which the member refuses to comply with arbitration.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment includes all unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, including but not limited sexually suggestive comments, off-color language or jokes of a sexual nature, slurs and other verbal, written, pictorial, or physical conduct relating to an individual's sex or sexual conduct.

Smoking: Smoking is never permitted while in an in-play area. Aside from the dangers of second hand smoke, it's too easy for a cigarette to be forgotten in a combat and end up behind a couch or in a pile of leaves. Unless otherwise posted smokers must smoke inside their cars as many events are in the woods where fire hazard are common. When alternate areas exist the location will be designated as an out-of-play area, where no roleplaying or combat can occur.

- Alcohol (use at event when prohibited) - 1000 status and mandatory removal from event
- Alcohol (playing while intoxicated) - 500 status and mandatory removal from event
- Filing False Complaint - 500 status
- Marijuana (use at event) - 1000 status and mandatory removal from event
- Marijuana (playing while influenced) - 500 status and mandatory removal from event
- Player Poaching - 500 status and possible removal from event
- Profanity (extreme and disruptive general use thereof by character) - 100 status
- Profanity (expressed or directed against another participant) - 300 status
- Real Weapon Possession (non-illegal) - 500 status
- Refusing arbitration – 100 status (continuing offense)

Sexual Harassment – 1000 status
Smoking (in unpermitted location) - 500 status

Criminal Offenses

Criminal offenses are serious matters beyond the scope of arbitration. Club managers should consider involving local authorities.

The club can be irrevocably harmed, even forced to disband by a member's criminal acts. The finding of alcohol or drugs or vandalism to the host site are two egregious acts that will cause the host site to deny their facilities to a club. Sexual assaults, physical alterations, the presence of real weapons are very serious offenses. Participants who observe breeches of criminal violation must report them to the nearest club managers immediately. On credible evidence the Arbitrator must remove the infringing member from the event and then may consider suspending the member from club activities for a period of time.

Alcohol: Use of alcohol on a scout site or other site where its use is illegal is grounds for immediate removal from event and suspension of up to three months. Under aged drinking should be treated as Illegal Substances.

Illegal Substance: Use of illegal substances at events is strictly prohibited. Persons using illegal substances or in possession of illegal substances must be immediately removed from host site and be suspended for up six months.

Physical Conflict: Physical conflicts between individuals are a serious matter. If a participant assaults another participant, those involved should be encouraged to contact the proper authorities. On many occasions, these altercations arise out of unique circumstances, often independent of the event and cannot be resolved by club administrator intervention. Parties should be encouraged to work out their differences, with the explanation that these types of outbursts cannot be tolerated at a Mystic Realms. Suspension for up to three months is required. If a person is found guilty by a government entity permanent removal from club activities should be considered.

Possession of Real Illegal Weapons: The possession firearms and other illegal weapons at events is strictly

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prohibited.

Sexual Assault: Sexual assault includes all unwelcome contact of a sexual nature. Permanent removal from all club activity until a government entity makes a legal determination of charges is required.

Theft: All members must respect the ownership of property. Never move or take anything that does not belong to you. Return of the item and suspension for up to three months is required.

Vandalism: Vandalism of the host site is very serious, because it jeopardizes the entire club. Repair of damage and suspensions for up to three months are required.

- Alcohol (use at state or private camp facility) - 2000 status
- Alcohol (underage drinking) – 3000 status
- Illegal Substance - 3000 status
- Physical Altercation Between Members (mutual escalation) - 1000 status
- Physical Alternation Between Members (unprovoked) – 2000 status
- Real Weapon Possession (illegal) - 2000 status
- Sexual Assault – 2000 status
- Theft - 1000 status
- Vandalism - 2000 status

Cast and Writing Offenses

The overall quality of play is often dependent on the ability of the director, writers, and cast members to produce safe, entertaining, and fair events. While most events run efficiently and safely without problems or major confusions, some events are better than others.

In order to help directors, writers, and cast member identify the behaviors and actions that undermine successful events they are included here in list form so that arbitration can help resolve these issues if not resolved by the event director or the producer. Each of these are violations of minimum writing standards that disrupt play or cause dangerous situation.

General

Producing an event is not easy and directors, writers, and cast members are urged to communicate with each in a manner that fosters a team environment where everyone keeps to the schedule for overall good of the event. When scenes start late or don't run the appropriate number of times, when cast stay up late socializing instead of preparing for the next day's efforts the players are the ones who suffer.

- Not contributing to the team environment – 100 status
- Late to cast briefing without justification – 100 status
- Staying awake after lights out – 100 status
- Making noise after lights out – 100 status
- Failing to attend duty without notification to event staff - 300 status

Director/Writer

Directors and writers need to be responsible, empathetic leaders. They are responsible for the safety of cast members and players. They must always ensure that combat areas are well lighted and safe from tripping hazards or eye-level branches. Directors and writers must understand the rules for skills, terrain features, and environmental effects used on their adventures and ensure their cast members follow those rules correctly. When setting up scenes the cast must use proper markers and sufficient signage so as not to confuse the players. Sometimes things get missed and that's expected in the rush and pressures of producing an event, but directors and writers must be held to meet these minimum standards in the execution of their stories.

- Failure to adequately identify impassible terrain – 100 status
- Failure to use proper terrain markers – 100 status
- Failure to adequately light combat scene – 100 status
- Failure to locate a combat scene in safe area – 100 status
- Failure to move branches or other tripping hazards from scene location – 100 status
- Failing to start adventure on time without good justification – 100 status
- Failing to run adventure required number of times without good justification – 100 status
- Deviations from approved scripts when not justified by circumstance – 100 status

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Improper use of skills, terrain, environmental effects on the adventure – 100 status

Guide

Guides need to bring the world to life for the player characters. When walking up to a blue cloth representing water it helps brings everyone into play when the guide says enthusiastically, "Up head there is a stream with rapids. The bridge is out but we can cross on stepping stones." Similarly, when a Guide walks in the middle he or she can be heard by everyone in the group which includes everyone in the commentary provided by the guide as they walk from scene to scene. Guides who say little, beyond name and mission are not bringing the world to life.

- Does not give in-play description of terrain on approach – 50 status
- Does not identify adversaries or beasts on approach – 50 status
- Does not provide commentary and/or facilitate roleplaying – 50 status
- Denies player agency by walking out in front when leading players on an adventure instead of staying in the middle of the group and letting players lead – 100 status
- Participates in combat in a manner that devalues players

contribution – 100 status

Cast Member

Bring a cast member is an opportunity to play many different roles developing your improvisational acting ability. Your goal is to bring the world to life for the players, knowing that when you're playing other cast members will be doing their best to entertain you. To build the theatric environment that everyone appreciates, cast members need to be supportive team members. They need to help each other fulfill their roles to the best of their ability and to follow the schedule as best as possible.

- Leaving location of adventure without permission of immediate supervisor – 100 status
- Failure to listen to the instructions of event management – 200 status
- Abusive use of Move or Flee effects on player characters – 100 status
- Use of spirit causing effects without express personal permission by Director – 500 status
- Making up plot information – 100 status
- Making up plot information that causes confusion in the players - 300 status
- Damaging costume or weapon through misuse – 200 status
- Losing costumes or weapon – 100 status

Part VI. Member Covenants

Members of all social organizations are expected to act in a socially-responsible manner in return for the benefits of belonging to that organization. This is true of the nations in which we live, the companies for which we work, and the schools that we attend. This is also true in a Mystic Realms club.

The Covenants of Membership are intended to outline the social standards that you are expected to uphold in order to retain the privilege of membership. Failure to abide by these social guidelines may result in suspension or revocation of your membership in Mystic Realms, restrictions to positions you may hold within the club, or loss of status.

In an ideal world, Mystic Realms members would strive to act with respect for themselves, each other and their communities at all times. They would resolve problems without fanfare, rather than creating social discord. While we recognize that no member is able to maintain such lofty goals at all times, it should be every member's intent to strive for this level of excellence.

Membership Covenants

As a member of Mystic Realms I agree to the following:

I acknowledge that I have an obligation to contribute to the success of an event. As a player, I promise to remain in character and wear a costume for the entire duration of my attendance at an event. As part of the cast, I promise to follow directions of the event leaders and to entertain the players through roleplaying excellence and fair combat encounters.

I acknowledge that I must know the basic rules of the game. I promise not to use a skill during play unless I have personally read the rule in the rule book and am confident that I understand how to use the skill correctly and with theatric intent. I will not ask others how to use skills, because I understand that they may provide erroneous information. If I suspect a rule to be unclear as written, I will bring this to the attention of club arbitration and wait for an official clarification.

I acknowledge the importance of having a well-defined, realistic world setting with consistent history and interconnected plots. I promise to read the source materials and to use the material as a player and writer to help create a meaningful interactive experience that brings the world to life for all participants.

I acknowledge that theatric touch combat system requires cooperative roleplayed combat rather than competitive combat. I promise to participate within acceptable standards of speed and force so all participants can enjoy safe, fair combat.

I acknowledge I am part of a collaborative effort and must share the burden of production by actively helping when I am a player and by taking my turn as a cast member or a club manager. I understand my enjoyment of Mystic Realms directly depends on my own contributions.

I acknowledge the value of entertaining others when roleplaying. I promise to play my characters, player and cast, with a vigor and enthusiasm that entertains myself and all those around me.

I acknowledge that all forms of bullying is strictly prohibited. I understand bullying has no place in a cooperative, theatric endeavor because our success depends so heavily on the mutual respect that we have for one another. I promise not to bully in- or out-of-character.

I promise not to publicly criticize other players, cast members, writers, or managers for deficiencies I perceive. Instead, I will acknowledge their effort as their best attempts and will try to help them improve in a way that does not offend.

I acknowledge that negative social behaviors, such as belligerence, criticisms, rabble-rousing, rumor-mongering, and so forth, are hurtful to the cooperative social climate necessary for the continued operation of a Mystic Realms club and promise not to engage in these behaviors.

I acknowledge that members are obligated to resolve issues

with other club members in a respectful and mature fashion so that they do not disrupt the community. If members cannot or choose not to resolve issues affecting the community, club arbitrators will make the most equitable determination possible.

If I become disenchanted with the hobby of live-action roleplaying, I recognize that my unhappiness will ruin the experience for everyone around me, and I promise to resign my membership in Mystic Realms until such time as I realize others are not to blame for my unhappiness and that I alone have the power to control my own happiness.

A Final Word

I like combat-based, competitive LARPs where I can compete against others and not have to hold back. I like stop-action LARPing where a good out-of-play narrator can mesmerize me with their description. Actually, I like all kinds of LARPing, but I love real time, what-you-see-is-what-you-get LARPing where players can suspend their disbelief and really become their characters.

I believe that immersive, theatric roleplaying offers opportunities for exciting real-time interactions that other types of live-action roleplaying simply cannot provide. I'm not saying that any one style is better than any other style, but I am saying that systems offer different things and if you're looking for deep characters, powerful stories, and a theatric environment then you may find a life-long hobby in the worlds of Mystic Realms. Here are a few words of advice:

Please do not become so involved in your persona or an out-of-character position that you cannot enjoy the hobby. If you find yourself arguing over rules or getting frustrated when things don't go your way, please take a step back and re-evaluate your goals. LARPing is a life long hobby. Don't burn yourself out trying to make things different.

Please keep the social drama between members to a minimum. Nothing hurts a club more than interpersonal conflict. Don't listen to rumors and don't voice hurtful thoughts. The best clubs are a community of friends who treat each other with mutual respect. Social conflicts must be quickly resolved in a mature fashion, or they can grow to destroy your club.

Please, don't reduce your experience to winning and losing. A combat-focused game or competitive sport experience cannot create theatric roleplaying as described in these pages. If you want to play like this there are other styles of live-action roleplaying. In Mystic Realms we're all winners when an event is filled with dramatic, magical, memorable moments, but we're all losers when the event makes people frustrated for out-of-play reasons.

Please advance your player character with the intent to expand your roleplaying options and not with the goal of gaining power. If you play for power, you'll look back across the years spent in this hobby and find only disappointment. You'll eventually realize the full futility of pursuing power in an imaginary world and wish you had spent your time differently. You'll likely quit the hobby without ever understanding its true value.

Please roleplay to entertain yourself and others. Enjoy every experience for what the experience has to offer. There will be events you love and events that you wish were different, but resist the urge to be negative and to criticize. If you become unhappy please don't spoil the magic for those around you. Take a break from the hobby you love before you end up hating it.

If you roleplay in the style proposed in this book, you will make many friends, be well-liked, and well-respected for the real person that you are. You'll probably pick up some really good social skills, and maybe some organizational and leadership skills, as well. The years will pass without interpersonal conflict, and after all is said and done, you will have many fond memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.

Anton Kukal