

APPENDIX EIGHT

A SHORT PRIMER ON CHARACTERIZATION

How to be "In Game" at Mystwood

LARP is an unusual hobby, different from pretty much anything else. It can be hard to come to your first Event, and once there get right into the world and always be role playing, but it can be done given effort and a bit of planning.

Before your First Event

* Don't be afraid to ask questions- about the game sites, about the game rules, about the world setting, about LARP in general. You have several options, from your friends who may already have played, to the Facebook page (where several members of Staff can respond), to the Mystwood e-mail address, which is mystwood@mystwood.org.

* Generally speaking, Mystwood is set up for player cooperation against outside forces and the elements of the setting. Consider not making a character who is treacherous, steals from other townsfolk, or is secretly a Chaos worshipper. These character types may encounter resistance from other players and the society of the in-game world, and may be less fun for you.

* Write a detailed back story and history. Other players will ask you about who you are, and you should have answers for them. What is your full name? Is that your real name or a nickname? What are the names of your parents? Where are you from? What did you do before you came to this town? What's your plan, now that you're here? The more you know about how your character was shaped by their history, the more informed you will be when called upon to react in game.

* Be prepared to have your history gently altered if it does not quite match Mystwood's world setting. Remember, you can't be a noble, and your first character must be from the area of the Mystwood. (This means coming from Eastmarch, Dragonshire, Fenwyck, Pelancia, or Burgundar.) The campaign setting is basically Medieval Europe, so pirates, samurai, ninja, and the like won't make sense. The setting is somewhat low magic, so you will probably not be the child of a wizard or the like. Perhaps your parents were able to use magic but they likely had a "normal job" as well. Finally, your character must be human, though there are many creatures you might have ancestors from- not everyone is full-blooded human!

* Understand how your Gifts, Occupation, and Skills work. The more you know about them, the better prepared you will be to use them in game, and the more fun you will potentially have.

While at an Event

* Good role play requires active listening. If you are listening to what is going on around you, you will be better able to think about how your character will respond.

* Many experienced players are able to answer any rules or world questions you might have. Remember that 'Clarify' is your friend if you do not understand what an Effect does.

* Talking "out of game" in public areas is NEVER ACCEPTABLE. It's unlikely that all the other players around you want to know what the football score was last night, or what TV show you're basing your character on. The better you stay in character, the better everyone around you will, and the game will be more fun for everyone.

* When trying to get "in character", think of how your character's personality traits are similar and different to your own. Many players choose to make a character who is like them, and that is absolutely fine. For others, as a challenge, making a character much different from themselves can be fun. If you are naturally introverted, you might choose to play a loud, boisterous town crier. If you are not normally athletic, perhaps a courier might be a fun role.

* When making a decision in game, think of how it will affect the game world, your continued character, and more importantly the player characters around you. A thing might seem fun in the short term, but would your character do it? A law-abiding magistrate, for example, would probably never blatantly use Chaos magic, even though the player might think it's awesome. Consider how your decision will affect other players and their characters. It might make sense for your character to choose to do something that will hurt the entire town, but that decision will probably make the game less fun for everyone. Carefully weigh this before making a decision.

* When referring to an in-game skill or power, try to merely allude to it rather than calling it by name. If someone asks if you can heal, for example, tell them that "My grandmother said I was pretty empathic", or "I've got the healing hands", not "I have Level 7 Empathy". If they ask you if you can use a two handed sword, tell them you are a squire who has spent long hours training by the side of the other would-be knights, not that you have Use of Arms. Some skills make sense to call by name- if someone is looking for a Butcher, and you have that skill, you can affirm easily enough. Remember that there may be in-game punishments for out of game sayings, and act accordingly.

* If you are struck in combat, make sure to role play the pain and surprise of injury. While simply saying "you hit me!" or "got it" is technically acceptable, playing up the danger and pain makes the fight seem more real.

* If you are wounded, don't say "I've got 2 Hit Points left". Tell the healer "I think I can take another hit or two". If you're out of uses of your skills, say "I need a drink, that last fight really took it out of me!", not "I need to renew".

* Further, remember that our game world is meant to "almost" be medieval Europe. Try to avoid modern anachronisms. "Soda" might be ale or beer. "Going to your car" might be "headed to the wagons" or "returning to camp". Modern plastic wrappers shouldn't be left out in sight. Unwrap your food before bringing it into the playing area. If you must bring a water bottle into the game area, take the label off- but even better, use a mug.

* Suspend your disbelief and remember what your character would and would not know about the world. There's no New World, and not much is known about the areas that are Africa and Asia in our world. There's no germ theory of disease (and indeed, Afflictions don't work like real world diseases), and no telescopes to tell us about the stars. There are no firearms, no industries churning out hundreds of books, items, and foodstuffs, and no fast or cheap ways to transport goods or communicate. Assume you know nothing, do some research about the Middle Ages on Wikipedia, and have fun immersing yourself in a world far simpler than our own.

* Write Post Event Letters. Doing so helps you advance, helps keep your mind on what happened during the Event, and helps you get more plot and fun stuff at the next game.

After Your First Few Events

* Work to improve your costume. Investing in a costume that is yours is the best way to feel more "in character". Start with accessories- should your character have some special necklace, rings, or a cloak? Would a hat really make them look unique? Should your character have certain tools or other implements that would make them look more realistic? Do you have your own weapons, armor, and other necessary things? If your character likes to gamble, maybe buying an antique-looking deck of cards would be a good accessory, or if they are a butcher, getting a "blood-stained" apron or making fake meat to hang where your character makes their camp would be a great way to make this obvious.

* Much of the fun in the game is player driven. Decide on what your character wants and start working toward it. The Pathfinding and Research skills can be great ways to facilitate this. Enlist your friends to help you, and help them achieve their own goals, if it makes sense for your character.

* If you are unhappy with your Occupation, Advantages, or Disadvantages, remember there are ways in game to change them. You don't necessarily need to make a new character if something isn't fun, or not working for you. The Staff is always willing to work with players to ensure that they are having fun.

* Remember what the game was like for you when you first started, and what was difficult, confusing, or not fun. Try to help newer players as much as you can.

Interpersonal Relationships

* Whenever you are going to have in game siblings, a romance, rivalry that might lead to fighting, or the like, make sure the Game Masters are aware. This can help them plan for your role play and helps establish boundaries. For example, Mystwood is generally not a player-vs-player game, because oftentimes player conflict results in hurt feelings. The Game Masters knowing that players have a rivalry they have designed allows this role play to occur with fewer conflicts. The same holds true for romantic relationships. Advising the Game Masters that you will be portraying this kind of relationship can help smooth over issues with fellow players that might not be aware of the dynamic you have designed.