



# Potential Problems in L A R P S

by  
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## POTENTIAL PROBLEMS IN LARPS

LARPS are vastly more fun, more realistic, more engrossing, more emotionally exhausting than any TTRP (TABLE-TOP ROLEPLAYING). Period.

The only valid excuses for preferring TTRPs to LARPS are:

- 1) You have not yet LARPed, and are arguing from your armchair.
- 2) You are a hermit, or socially backwards, and dislike interacting with other humans.
- 3) You have confused LARPS with live-action RPG stuff (you know, rubber swords, water balloons as fireballs, rent-a-castle, etc). While a selected few of the trappings of live action RPGs have proven occasionally useful in LARPS, the two types of gaming are similar only in the sense that miniatures games and TTRP are similar. Hey, they both have metal figures don't they? And combat rules?
- 4) You have LARPED once or twice, but had bad experiences. Sadly, this is a real possibility -- not everyone has fun in a LARP, even a good one.



In LARPs, the players can be divided up into three broad categories.

- A) those who have an inordinate amount of fun.
- B) those who have a lot of fun, but once or twice during the game experience slow periods when not much is happening to/around them.
- C) those who mostly sit on their butts being bored, though usually even they have fun a couple of times.

In a really well-run LARP, maybe a third of the players fall into category A, and only one or two players get stuck as Cs. In a badly-run LARP, as few as 10% of the players get to be As, and I've seen as much as a fourth be Cs. Three reasons are to blame for the existence of Cs.

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### PROBLEM ONE: Bad Organizers

If the directors suck wind, and/or your character stinks, you can be handicapped to the point that you don't have fun. I remember three games in particular. In one, I got stuck with a character who was a lone sniper. *\*sigh\** not much interaction there. In a second, I was the Italian Observer with no clout, no minions, no allies, and no cool abilities. I didn't even have a neat diabolic enemy. In a third game, I was the Russian Ambassador. What's wrong with that, you ask? It was a Superhero game. I had no superpowers, and with master criminals, alien invasions, and secret coalitions, I was pretty damn superfluous.

**SOLUTION:** if your character or goals stink, ignore them! Emulate a new personality you like better, and decide to go for goals that seem more interesting or better fit your guy.

If the directors stink, ignore them, too! Most LARPS I've played in I never or at worst very rarely had to talk to a director. They're not the same as a TTRP GM and can be ignored with a fair amount of impunity.

Take my three games mentioned above as examples: in the Lone Sniper game, I immediately discarded my character concept and signed up with a bunch of like-minded losers to cause real harm for The System. Tragically, bad GM intervention killed off my character shortly after we got our gang moving along (even the guy who killed me was surprised that the GMs left me dead, and said later on he wouldn't have done it if he'd known), and they didn't even have provision for replacement characters. So I was hosed, but it was an unusually bad game. In the



Italian Observer game I got together all the national observers/rulers/ambassadors and managed to keep the others talking and "diplomating" enough so that no one ever realized that I didn't really have any power except what they gave me. My ploy was so successful that I soon had bitter murderous enemies chasing me around and had heaps of fun. I even succeeded in making three other players with stinky characters have fun. Two were helpless Observers like me, who were drawn into the politicking, and one was this poor woman whom I mistook for a vampire (there was no supernatural element in the game), and persecuted for much of the game. She loved it, of course. In the Russian Ambassador game, I decided to totally overstep my boundaries, recruited KGB agents, browbeat everyone I didn't like, and informed all and sundry that I had full authority to order an immediate nuclear attack on Los Angeles and environs (where the game was supposedly taking place). Soon I had enemies, fawning toadies, false friends, true friends, sniveling bleeding hearts trying to talk me out of my villainy, etc.

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## PROBLEM TWO: Other Players

If other players are doing bad things to hurt your character, or not cooperating, or whatever, it can be hard to have fun. Good example: the first time we ran *Cafe Casablanca*, one woman was prevented from going on a rescue mission to free her father from a concentration camp by her lover and his allies because it would be "too dangerous". Hence, she sat on her butt waiting for them to return. Deathly dull. In one game, there was going to be a huge clash between the forces of Good and Evil on Sunday morning. As one of the forces of Evil, I ran around frantically that morning looking for my allies, who'd all sworn to assist me that day. I found one (1) of them. The others were sleeping in, out to breakfast, or had decided that some trivial plot they were engaged in was more important than the fate of the planet. \*ARGH\* Naturally enough, the forces of Evil lost big-time (there were over a dozen Forces of Good opposing me and my lone ally). Now, I don't mind losing - - in fact, I fully expected to do so from the start. But I think that the Final Clash would have been far more interesting if there'd been more guys on my side -- for one thing, the Forces of Good would have been more worried and frantic about the outcome. As it was, a number of them didn't get to contribute anything to the clash, but were mere spectators.

**SOLUTION:** don't stand for it. If they're well-meaning ("Don't come with us, it will be dangerous.") stand on your rights -- "I'm not staying here sitting on my thumbs. Take me NOW!". If they're unreliable ("Where's Fred? It's time for the



human sacrifice!" "He's at dinner. Said he'd be back in about three hours.") do without them -- replace them with someone else ASAP. "Sorry Fred, I got Mr. Hyde to do the job instead, so now *he's* Nyarlathotep's avatar. You're still on the team, though." Also, you can help ensure lack of bad players by asking the game organizers to pit you against, or to make you an ally of, people you know. **IMPORTANT** -- it's as fun to be a sworn enemy of your best pal as it is to be working together with him. Preventative medicine is good, too -- early on try to recruit as many allies and potential friends as you possibly can. Then when someone goes off on a tangent and loses interest in your plots, you can readily replace. **ALSO** -- keep your eye open for players who are in category C (i.e., not having fun). These folks are easily recruited into most any plot and can prove valuable aides! In addition, if you need help, go to the Directors and ask them who in the game could use an extra plot. Good directors are usually aware of who's having a slow time, and they can point you towards potential helpers.

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### PROBLEM THREE: Yourself

You may have personality quirks that make it hard for you to have fun in certain LARPs. If it's hard for you to walk up to a complete stranger and start talking to them, or if you are generally rather passive in your gaming, waiting for the GM to give you missions to do, then a LARP can be tough.

**SOLUTION:** steel yourself. Walk up to the first affable stranger you meet and start talking. Either she will be (a) useful to you, (b) dangerous to you, or (c) completely unconnected with you and your goals. In case of (c), move on. In case of (b), respond appropriately (bluster, threaten, be obsequious, etc.) and in case of (a), link forces. In any case, she won't be a stranger any more. If you don't care for taking charge of your own destiny in the game (maybe just because you had an all-nighter the evening before and are very tired), find out who your allies are supposed to be and offer your services. They'll give you stuff to do. If they don't, go to their enemies, and offer to help them. Either way, you'll soon have lots to do.

