

# Dark Age Chronicles

## Roleplaying 201

By Steve "Larian LeQuella" Lundquist

As we all know, *DAoC* is an "MMORPG." One thing that may get a little lost in a persistent world is the RPG portion of that mouthful of letters. Now, there are a lot of "Roleplaying 101" type of resources out there, giving you advice on how to play your character, about devising a personality, and even creating a background. Most new players enthusiastically come up with something when they first start playing, but after a while it seems to fall by the wayside. This is not for a lack of dedication, but rather that the mechanics of the game just don't encourage roleplaying. Now you see "LOE" instead of "My blade weighs heavy in my hand, and I feel the need to rest, my friends. Please do not antagonize the enemy for a while." LOE is part of the lexicon of MOGs, everyone understands it, and it's easy to type. Sure, you could make a hotkey, but then you would run out of hotkey spaces for things you may actually need (like spells and styles).

So, what can you do to improve the roleplay flavor of your server? Sure, sticking in character as much as possible will help, but that is only a part of the big picture. (Granted, an important part!) The biggest thing to help your server/realm get that roleplaying flair is to really encourage others to do so, and give them the avenue to do so. There are a lot of reasons why many people don't want to roleplay. They may think it's too much effort. Well, I agree that there is effort involved, but



that shouldn't be a deterrent — you get out of it what you put into it. Many people may just be afraid to roleplay because they feel that they are not good enough, or they may get ridiculed. Any effort made to roleplay should be appreciated, and encouraged, by all around the player making the attempt. Make sure that if you witness someone trying to roleplay, encourage him! To most, fear of being made fun of is what discourages roleplay, followed closely by unfriendly game

mechanics. Therefore, I would like to take the opportunity to share a few ideas, tips, and mad ramblings with you on how I think roleplaying can be improved.

First of all, many of us come from other games, and are used to certain storylines and even "events" run by the company that puts out the game. I myself played *UO* (a few events) and *EQ* (actually quite a few events). Currently Mythic doesn't offer any company-run events, and it seems the storyline of the realms is highly dependent on us, the players. Therefore, it falls on us the players to host events! While this may seem like a lot of work, it's also a great deal of fun! There are several different types of "events" we the player base can run. Each requires a different level of commitment and work, and I just want to list a few of them.

**Barhopping.** The first type of event is more of a spontaneous occurrence. Basically you can gather a few friends at a spot in a village or town (say, a pub in Tir na Nog) and start to tell stories and jokes, and dance to your hearts' content. The fun thing about these little events is they take on a life of their own! Having just a few friends or guild mates in the same place making a bunch of noise, making naked runs through the city, and playing games usually gathers a few folks together in addition to the ones you started with. One danger in running these is people getting carried away in Broadcast; try to make a Chat group of the people there, so you don't spoil the event by having it annoy the other residents of the city. Also,



*Standing alone in front of the bind stone, Prior Tuck decides to sing a little ditty and dance to the tune.*

don't try to keep it running longer than it can support itself. If someone wants to leave, let him. Roleplaying isn't the same for everyone, and some can only take it in moderate amounts. Also, something that tends to spread a lot of good will and cheer is to empty out your vault of items you or your guild don't need. As a matter of fact, you will find that a common theme of any event I suggest. I'll get into the details on why I like to do this later.

These are the events I recommend the most, since they take the least amount of planning and effort. Remember, we are playing a game here — this isn't supposed to be work (well, at least not too much work). Having a particular persona that instigates these type of events helps, and the more you create these events, the better you will be known for it. Just logging on with your character may inspire others to follow your lead and instigate roleplaying events along the same vein.



Another thing you can do with these just-for-fun events is to promote them on web pages (like Stratics, IGN Vault, etc.) and chat boards. If you want attendance to be good at these events, it helps to entice people. This is where giving away items comes in. The biggest reason I like to give away items is because it makes folks happy! I try to roleplay even the simple act of giving away the item as well, if I have the opportunity; just something simple like a level-appropriate kill task, or whatnot. Not only does this make the recipient happy, but also in the end it helps the whole realm you are in by allowing them to be better equipped for their battles, to rise in levels, and eventually to kill the enemy players in RvR. Furthermore, these events are a great opportunity to get yourself known on the server, if you are attempting to join a guild, or to get your guild known if you are looking for more members. At these events, it's usually a good idea to have "minigames" to promote the perception of fairness in the giving away of items. These minigames can be as simple as the kill tasks I mentioned, or more opportunities for roleplaying, such as whoever answers a riddle first, tells the best story, or does something particularly "in character" that entertains the crowd.



Horse fight.

**Festivals.** Moving up in the hierarchy of events, you can organize them around major holidays. Make events that are appropriate to the holiday, and add in roleplay elements. For instance, you can have a festival in Hibernia called *The Love Festival of the Goddess* on or around St. Valentine's Day. You can even taunt the other realms with something like this and have it lead to a major excursion into the frontier. For instance, when I ran the Love Festival, I taunted the Albions (on various EBBs and such) with the fact that they celebrate love in the name of some celibate saint, while we truly understand the nature of love in Hibernia (okay, the taunts weren't totally accurate in a historical perspective, but it was fun to get them riled). After we had our fill of mead and dancing, we set upon the Albions with a ferocity that only a good taunting can inspire. The key to these events is to do a bit of research on the holidays, customs, and traditions of the realm you are in. The mythologies of Hibernia and Midgard are rich with festivals and holidays that can really inspire good roleplaying events. Albion also has great traditions from Arthurian legend, but I reserve them for the butt of my jokes.

Again, when planning these events, throw in mini-events. Fun possibilities include things



like scavenger hunts, beauty pageants, a game of "Simon Says," a footrace, or whatever strikes your fancy. Be a good master of ceremonies. Remember that an event that lasts over two hours will lose the interest of those in attendance. Try not to fill it up with too many events, and try to have a grand finale in mind. Also, be flexible! One thing about folks with a roleplaying personality is they will take your event to places you may not expect it. Try to guide them as best you can, but also encourage creativity and spontaneity. Also recognize when people's attention spans start to suffer and move straight to the finale. Roleplaying of this sort can actually be a bit of work, but it's rewarding work!

**Quests.** Along the lines of events that Verant and Origin have hosted in *EQ* and *UO*, you can try to take over the activity of your realm and server! Write a story that you want people on your server to act out. This will be much like writing your own module for *Dungeons & Dragons* or any other roleplaying game you've played. Make a compelling story, with steps that people have to complete. Give them clues on what to do next, and have a finale of some sort that results in someone getting bragging rights and possibly even some significant items you've saved away in your vault. Since Mythic doesn't actually support these events (though we can hope), making the finale mean something to the participants falls on the people of the server. One thing you can do to give it more meaning is to use EBBs to post the quest and the results for all to see. Announce if the folks who completed the quest are deserving of titles and if they got any really special items. Letting someone have a title can also encourage him or her to roleplay their character more, thus spreading the roleplaying bug!

**Beyond the Fields We Know.**

Now, just because you play a "massive multiplayer *online* roleplaying game," it doesn't mean that you should only roleplay while you can see all the wondrous colors and action on your screen. I have already mentioned computer bulletin boards a few times. Many are set up to bring people on the same server together (albeit from different realms). These are great places to establish relationships with folks you may not normally play with, and even communicate with folks of the enemy realms. You can issue challenges to the enemy, send an ambassador, or just start a humorous roleplaying story with other members of the board contributing their bit to the story. Also, posting on these boards will give you an opportunity to advertise any other events you or your guild may host, develop the massive quests and stories you are writing for the server, or even give your character more of a story or background. Do beware the trolls, though. I think we all know what I mean.

**Roleplaying Starts With You**

Finally I want to talk about what I see as the biggest aid to roleplaying. You, the player. I have already said that getting other folks to roleplay can mean leading by example. On the Genivere server in the Hibernian realm, there is a 3rd level Magician who is the recognized Mayor of Mag Mell. This started out as a small roleplaying joke for him, but suddenly it grew into something much bigger. As such, he naturally draws people to him, and spreads roleplaying to others. As I said, he's only a 3rd level character, but in many ways, he is the most powerful person on the server! He employs all the techniques that I mentioned above to great effect, and motivates our realm to heights greater than I



*A group effort proves successful against one of the monsters in Darkness Falls, DAoC's Epic Dungeon.*

think any other have reached in terms of community, fun, and shenanigans.

Developing a persona doesn't mean you have to come up with outrageous mannerisms, some sort of incredible story of your life, or take over a town somewhere as yours. A trap many people fall into is trying to make their character too memorable! Sure this can be fun, but it can end up being a lot of work (remember, this is a game), and can also tire those around you. What I have found that works best is to make your character someone that is easy for you to play, but still immersive enough for you to get enjoyment out of playing. Also, make the effort! If you want to say "Thank you" or

"Please," spend the extra seconds to type it out instead of "thx" or "plz." Just a small amount of effort can net large results. Another bit of advice — don't try to be the roleplaying police. If someone isn't roleplaying, or is detracting from your playing experience, don't berate them or correct them harshly. If you want to give them a hint, try emoting confusion over their strange language and actions. If they truly don't want to roleplay, then accept it or just move on.

Now, do I expect everyone to make the sort of commitment that the "Mayor of Mag Mell" has? No, he is indeed a special case (in ways you can't even imagine). However, just taking it upon yourself to do a few things listed in this article will immeasurably help increase the roleplaying on your server. The more people see it, the more people will want to get involved, and even run their own events. That is the secret to getting a true roleplay feel to your server and realm!

*(As the writer of this article, I am always more than willing to share my experiences and ideas. Feel free to email me at [brightblades@msn.com](mailto:brightblades@msn.com) if you want to discuss roleplaying, or anything. Be aware that I get a lot of emails, and quite often I am deployed to remote parts of the world, so I may not get back to you immediately, but I will eventually! Good hunting and roleplaying to you!)*



**MOGspeak**

"NOOBIT"

*Playful term used to mock fellow players, referring to them as a n00b, while showing they mean no ill will.*