

STORM KNIGHTS

CREATING

IMMERSION

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These are original rules, intended for use with *TORG: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars*. The most recent version of these rules (and other TORG resources) can be found on the STORM KNIGHTS website:

<http://web.me.com/stormknights/>

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INTRODUCTION

Roleplaying, much like radio or books, involves described settings and events rather than depicted settings and events, like in movies. The more vivid and interesting the descriptions the GM can provide, the more the players will be drawn into the game. Conversely, players can also describe their actions more vividly, increasing their own

immersion and the immersion of everyone else at the table. Doing so makes the game more involving and more fun.

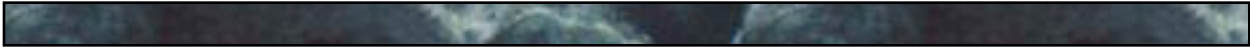
The following is a list of ideas and rules to encourage players (and gamemasters) to create vivid descriptions of their character's activities.

CREATING IMMERSION

Even within the current rules, certain types of game mechanical effects require some description of the character's actions: trading cards, playing a Supporter card, and Player's Call results for Non-Combat Interaction skills. This article extrapolates those situations to a more general rule, and adds additional bonuses.

The Rule

Before rolling dice or spending cards, a player declares their action, what the character is going to do in game mechanical terms, then describes it. Some actions require a basic description, while more colorful or evocative descriptions can grant



bonuses to nearly any significant action.

Declaring the action: I attack. I defend. I trick. I test. This is the statement, in game mechanical terms, of what the character is doing. It allows skill use, but not “Player’s Call” results or interactive card use. In addition to any description the player may chose to include, he has to clearly state what the action is so the gamemaster can adjudicate the situation (this declaration can happen before or after the description.)

For most skill checks, a simple action declaration will suffice. For a few, a little more is required. In addition to declaring the action, players can choose to describe what their character is going to do, and how they are going to do it.

Not all descriptions are equally interesting, and not all situations require the player to put special effort into describing the action. Many common game mechanical effects require nothing more than a basic description.

Basic description: I strike for his heart. I kick him in the head. I shout “You killed my father, prepare to die!” This is a short, and not necessarily involved statement. It is the minimum description necessary to allow Player’s Call results, Critical Moments, interactive card play (Leadership, Supporter, Rally, trading cards, etc.), and Trick Shots.

Optionally, GM’s can also require a basic description for the Vital Blow (or Called Shot) and Single-fire as Multi combat options (this makes those options into more than just number crunching).

If the player chooses to go beyond this basic description, when taking a significant action to advance the scene, the gamemaster can choose to grant the player a

ADVICE FOR PLAYERS

Roleplay the character. Colorful descriptions should enhance the characterization of a PC. By striving to make the described actions match your character’s style, these can add even more color. Uncharacteristic actions are still possible, but are noticeable because they are uncharacteristic.

Roleplay the character’s reality. Swashbuckling moves (like swinging on chandeliers) are inappropriate for Orroshan characters, unless they are in another reality. (See the next tip.)

Roleplay the local reality. When disconnected or in a Pure Zone, try to describe actions that are appropriate for the feel of the reality your character is in. In Aysle, bold swashbuckling moves are great; in Orrosh they’ll get you killed. In Nippon, think stealth and try to arrange an unexpected attack, or an attack from an unexpected direction. By working with the local reality you can enhance the flavor of that genre.

Don’t overdo it. Simple declarations are fine for many things (like a group *find* check). Save the colorful action descriptions for when it matters, when the character has center stage, or when the action is of critical importance. Remember, a jaded gamemaster is less likely to hand out color awards.

Don’t hog the limelight. Give other players a chance to shine. And don’t interrupt when they’re describing their actions.

bonus to the action, based on how evocative and interesting the description is.

Evocative description: An evocative description is something more involving than the basic description, essentially a basic description done with flair and color. It isn’t required for any game mechanics, but is entirely optional, granting a bonus if done well. Depending on how well done the description is, the GM should feel free to hand out a Bonus Modifier of +1 to +3 (boring descriptions gain no such bonus).

In order to gain a bonus, the action itself must advance the scene or be meaningful or significant. Routine skill checks, no matter how well described, don’t qual-

ADVICE FOR GAMEMASTERS

Make your descriptions engaging. The point of these rules is to encourage the players to become more involved in imagining and visualizing their character's actions. This applies to the gamemaster as well. Make each setting subtly different. "A maze of twisty passages, all alike" may be traditional, but it's hardly evocative.

Work to describe scenes better yourself. If you want to increase the immersion factor of the scenes, describe them more fully. Give the players plenty of environmental hooks to act off of: tapestries, tables, umbrella racks, paintings, chandeliers, banks of computers. Whatever scenery or props would be appropriate for the setting, provide. Stuff to throw, break, burn, blast, or hide behind is always appreciated.

If all else fails, let players make stuff up. If there's a prop or piece of scenery which could be there, but which you've failed to describe, let them "create" it. Feel free to override scenery or props which aren't appropriate to the locale or reality, or which are extremely potent or powerful, but otherwise let it go.

For example: *A Storm Knight is fighting in an Ayslish castle, and the villain has just disarmed him: "I back away, looking around desperately. Spying a sword upon the mantle, I race to grab it."*

If such a blade was never described, but it could have been there, let the player create it.

When describing the scene, don't forget innocent bystanders. Ords are great motivators. Decent Storm Knights will go out of their way to save endangered Ords. Think of new and interesting ways for them to be threatened by the bad guys. This ups the ante of the scene, and draws players in.

Roleplay the reality. When describing the scenery and the actions of the villains, get into the character of the reality. In the Nile, strike bold poses and declare every line.

Reward the players. If a character's action is apt, because it's in character, appropriate for the local reality, or appropriate for their reality, be generous with the bonus.

Milk the rules yourself. By describing the actions of villains (or heroic NPC's) you can inspire player's descriptions as well as gain some small bonuses for your villains. In general, do so only for significant villains, and avoid showing up the players.

ify.

It should go without saying that well-done descriptions can happen out-of-combat as often (or more often) than in combat. Any significant diced action is a good time to add color to the game.

Remember though that it is the description that determines the bonus, not the action. Other games use similar rules, in which the action itself determines the bonus. This is not the case here. A subtle and quiet test of wills can be described just as vividly as a wildly over the top attack, and both can receive equal bonuses.


Descriptions should be short, no more than a couple of sentences, and should describe the action visually, so that other players and the gamemaster can see (in their "mind's eye") what the character is doing or how he looks doing it, what he is doing it to, where he is doing it, and so forth. If it also hints at the character's emotions or mood, so much the better. The description should draw the other players and the gamemaster into the action.

Example: "I spin around, the moonlight glinting off my katana, and strike at the guard, my blade whispering in the night."

Example: "My character steels his nerve, his jaw clenched tightly. A single bead of sweat trails down his face as he takes aim."

Example: "With a grin and a yell my character plows into the goons, fists flailing wildly."

Whenever possible, a description should involve specific details- what the character is doing, how they are doing it, with what, or to what. Referring to other characters, scenery, props, facial expressions, gestures, and so forth can be ex-



tremely effective.

The description must enhance the mood and immersion of the game. If the description is too long, or if the game has come to a crashing halt while a player composes a description, the gamemaster can decline the bonus. Similarly, breaking character, metagaming, and other such problems negate any bonuses an evocative description might provide.

Descriptions of any kind ought not be boring and should never be repetitive. Repeating the same action- "I shoot"- is perfectly acceptable, repeating the same description isn't. In order to gain a bonus, every time the character repeats the same action, the player should describe it differently.

Example: "I shoot" can be described in many ways. Here are just a few.

"I look down at my fallen comrade, step over him, and raise my gun. My eyes are cold and dead."

"I spin around, my coat flaring out behind me. Their eyes widen in surprise as I bring up my pistols."

"I throw myself into the room, firing all the way. I land, roll, and dive for cover behind the couch."

"I eject my spent clips and, before they can hit the ground, have reloaded."

Even if the character is shooting his guns, like he has done many times before, when, where, how, at who, and other details of the situation have changed, so the description can vary (and must vary, to be worth any bonus).

Evocative descriptions can include more than one action, if the player can describe all of them concisely enough. If the player includes several actions within the description, all actions gain the bonus.

Example: "I clench my hands tight, and

swing across the burning ravine. The smoke billows about me as I land, sword out. The two guards gasp in fear as I strike." This description involves an *acrobatics* check and two *unarmed combat* checks, all of which would gain the appropriate Bonus Modifier (probably +2).

When adjudicating multi-actions, the gamemaster should ignore extraneous actions. No matter how many "actions", if the character is only attacking once, ignore them. "I insult his heritage, spit in his face, and strike for the heart." This is one action, not three. Similarly, "I wipe the blood from my chin and launch a fusillade of blows." If this is just one attack, treat it as such.

Players should be rewarded for working with the gamemaster to enhance the action and description of a scene. Don't punish players for attempting in-character moves that are colorful.

For example, if a character describes the following as a *taunt* action: "With a casual air and a slight yawn, I slap him across the face with my glove," don't make the player roll for an attack to slap the villain.

Similarly, if a player describes an intricate forward flip and roundhouse kick, don't increase the difficulty of the attack or make him roll an *acrobatics* check in addition to the attack. Neo jumped up a wall to kick Agent Smith in the face. The flip-and-kick is just an *unarmed combat* attack, so don't penalize the player for describing actions in an involving and interesting way.

The more powerful the opponent, the more lenient the gamemaster should be. Facing off against big bad guys in dramatic scenes are the payoff in TORG modules. If the module's been at all interesting, the players and their characters alike are angry and spoiling for a good rumble. Let them



get away with wilder and more outrageous actions than otherwise.

This isn't an injunction to allow them to metagame or break the scene, but rather to

let them shine. Give them a tough, wily bad guy and let them duke it out, mano a mano. The more they get into the scene, the better the game will be.

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