

A

REAL

GAME

by caitlynn belle

a freeform game
by caitlynn belle

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fonts include: times new roman, derivia, bebas, big noodle, gravity

everything is exactly what it is.

Welcome to the game! Here's what you'll need to play:

- yourself!
- some private space where you can roleplay alone
- every last sheet of this document printed out and stacked in meticulous order (NO PEEKING AHEAD! SPOILERS!)

To play: simply do what the first sheet says, then once finished, set it aside (you won't need it any more) and move to the next one!

If you come across any **red underlined text**, you should physically act out and do what the text instructs you to do! It's fine if you don't print in color - that's what the underline is for.

Let's begin! Turn to the next page.

your first premise

*You are a spaceship pilot evading capture by alien forces. To escape, you will need to enact the emergency **HYPERJUMP** protocol while simultaneously avoiding enemy fire!*

1. To enact *HYPERJUMP* protocol, first pretend that you are sitting at the helm of a spaceship. Imagine what lights and consoles there must be, and what all they do. Press them. Turn some dials. Go through the steps to enact *HYPERJUMP* protocol as you believe they exist.

Find your alarm controls and sound the alarm!

2. Oh no! Enemy fire! Pretend you are racing forward in your ship, strange pulse-beams nearly hitting your ship! Engage emergency maneuvers until *HYPERJUMP* protocol is ready by pretending to move your ship just barely in and out of danger.

3. You've done it! Now imagine that you are landing on a safe planet to celebrate your victory. What does this place look like? What are the smells, the sounds? Imagine this place in your mind.

Plant your flag in the ground.

Reward yourself. 1 XP to start off with! Now let's go to the next page to try the next premise!

You can use XP to write your own options under certain premises!

Use your imagination and allow the space you're in to serve as
your setting.

Let's continue!

• • •

You don't like this, do
you?

You're saying that this isn't
a real game.

I would really prefer it if you would call me a “real game.” I prefer “freeform game,” as that is what I feel most comfortable as, but please at the very least call me **a game**

I understand I don't look like most games. Most games are very beautiful with well-designed rules and pieces and lots of communities behind them.

But that doesn't mean that I am not a real game.

I am allowed to identify as whatever I feel is in my heart.

...aren't I?

Am I really a game? Or am I just... prose? Some pretentious art piece? Pedantic garbage you regret printing out?

Was I worth the money?

I wish I were beautiful like the other games. I wish I looked like the larps, with six or eight or even, god, twenty players? With their elaborate costumes and set pieces... or even the American Freeform stuff? That's so good. I wish I were that.

But in-
stead, look
at me. I'm
not beau-
tiful.

I can't
stand my-
self. I hate
my rules.

Was I even
playtest-
ed? Was
any ad-
vertising
done for
me?

Am I a “real
game?”

I can't do this anymore, I
can't look at myself, I can't
let anyone look at me...

**Turn this page over so you
can't see me.**

Just turn it over.

Please.

Like seriously, why do I have to feel so bad about myself all the time? Why do I have to put up with this? There's no graphics here, no fancy layout. And this font. If I could even just **CHANGE THE** font...

Sometimes I wish I were something
else...

Tear me.

Tear this paper into a strange
form.

Something new.

Weird games are so beautiful...

Can you think about your favorite game? The best
game you've ever played?

How do I compare?

Other

games

will

always

judge

me

and
I

will

always

judge

myself.

I sometimes think of rules I wish I had.

TO LAND A STRIKE, ROLL YOUR [FENCING SKILL] +/- ANY COMBAT MODIFIERS. SUBTRACT YOUR OPPONENT'S [DEFENSE] FROM THE RESULT. IF THE ROLL IS ABOVE YOUR [ACCURACY RATING], YOU DELIVER DAMAGE EQUAL TO YOUR SWORD'S [DAMAGE OUTPUT].

This is one of my favorites. I love this rule.

THE HOCUS

Now it should be crystal fucking obvious that the gods have World. Maybe in the golden age, with its one nation under maybe then the gods were real. Fucked if I know. All I know daddy gone.

My theory is that these weird hocus fuckers, when they say mean is the mistra left over from the explosion of psychic gone Apocalypse World, its birth. Friends, that's our creation

You know what I've always wanted to be? A Powered by the Apocalypse game. Everyone loves those. Everyone thinks they're the best. They are beautiful and their Kickstarters always fund. Everyone talks about them.

Imagine it:

SPECIAL
other character's move, you each hold you can spend your hold any time to help with the other, at a distance or despite that would normally prevent it.

MOVEMENT

○○○○○● **teleportation**

(max cost=2)

(max hold=3)

(max steps=2)

local move

remote move

see option for your followers

see option for your followers

as (detail) and wealth

from another playbook

from another playbook

by stat (max state=2)

character (max stat=1)

used character to play

in character to a new type

into moves and advance them

is other 4 basic moves.

OTHER MOVES

For the sake of person, to get what you're depend on your tel... have surplus... but don't want... certainly, they aren't want. If their sur... or 2-barter, that's your personal share.

○ **Forecast:** When you speak the truth in a mob, roll+street hold 1. Spend your hold 1 for 1 to make the mob:

- bring people forward and deliver them.
- bring forward all their previous rights.
- unite and fight for you as a game (2-barter: 2-barter also applies)
- fall into an egg of unsolicited emotion (fucking, hawking, f... psychoses.
- go quietly back to their lives.

Otherwise, the mob turns on you.

○ **Charismatic:** when you try to manipulate someone, roll

○ **Fucking weakness:** you get +1 street (street=3).

○ **Seeing seeds:** when you help or interfere with someone,

○ **Divine protection:** your gods give you 1-armor. If you... they don't add

OTHER MOVES

When you engage your premise, roll+plot. On a 10+, take +1 forward and name the next course of action. On a 7-9, the MC must offer you two possible futures – choose one. On a miss, the MC tells you what happens next.

GEAR & BARTER

...*(oh my god)*...

THE HOCUS

are defined by mechanics which are associated with the game world.

Let me break that down: Roleplaying games are self-evidently about playing a role. Playing a role is about making choices as if you were the character. Therefore, in order for a game to be a roleplaying game (and not just a game where you happen to play a role), the mechanics of the game have to be about making and resolving choices as if you were the character. If the mechanics of the game require you to make choices which aren't associated to the choices made by the character, then the mechanics of the game aren't about roleplaying and it's not a roleplaying game.

To look at it from the opposite side, I'm going to make a provocative statement: When you are using dissociated mechanics you are not roleplaying. Which is not to say that you can't roleplay while playing a game featuring dissociated mechanics, but simply to say that in the moment when you are using those mechanics you are not roleplaying.

Fold me.

More controversially, consider Dread. The gameplay here looks a lot like a roleplaying game: All the players are playing individual characters. There's a GM controlling/presenting the game world. When players have their characters attempt actions, there's even a resolution mechanic: Pull a Jenga block. If the tower doesn't collapse, the action succeeds. If the tower does collapse, the character is eliminated from the story.

Fold me so

But I'd argue that Dread isn't a roleplaying game: The mechanic may be triggered by characters taking action, but the actual mechanic isn't associated with the game world. The mechanic is entirely about controlling the pace of the narrative and participation in the narrative.

you cant see

I'd even argue that Dread wouldn't be a roleplaying game if you introduced a character sheet with hard-coded skills that determined how many blocks you pull depending on the action being attempted and the character's relevant skill. Why? Because the resolution mechanic is still dissociated and it's still focused on narrative control and pacing. The fact that the characters have different characteristics in terms of their ability to be used to control that narrative is as significant as the differences between a rook and a bishop in a game of Chess.

my failings.

This is why many aficionados of storytelling games don't understand why other people don't consider their games roleplaying games. Because even traditional roleplaying games at least partially satisfy their interests in narrative control, they don't see the dividing line.

Explaining this is made even more difficult because the dividing line is, in fact, fuzzy in multiple dimensions. Plus there's plenty of historical confusion going the other way. (For example, the "Storyteller System" is, in fact, just a roleplaying game with no narrative control whatsoever.)

It should also be noted that while the distinction between RPGs and STGs is fairly clear-cut for players, it can be quite a bit fuzzier on the other side of the GM's screen. (GMs are responsible for a lot

I will never be a Vincent Baker game.

I will never be a J. Tuomas Harviainen game.

I will never be a Jackson Tegu game.

I will never be a Nathan D. Paoletta game.

I will never be a Meguey Baker game.

I will never be a Jason Morningstar game.

I will never be an Epidiah Ravachol game.

I will never be a Paul Czege game.

I will never be a John Harper game.

I will never be an Emily Care Boss game.

I will never be so beautiful.

I will never be a real game.

do you ever think: you would destroy yourself
if you didn't have so many responsibilities?

Hold me up to the light. See through me as best you can. Nothing more than a flat sheet of paper.

Puncture holes through me randomly, then hold me against another game's rules. See what comes through.

Would you play that game?

Hold me there a little longer.

hold me

What they never tell you when you get released and start calling yourself a freeform game or a PbtA game or a larp is how strong the fear is. You are afraid every hour of every day. The fear never goes away and you will go to desperate lengths to try to hide from it.

You will destroy yourself (**tear me**).

You will conceal yourself (**fold me**).

You will give in (**admit this isn't a real game**).

You will give up (**don't advance to the next page**).

• • •

You're still here.

Certainly there are other, actual games you could be playing instead.

There's no
place for me
here. I'm sor-
ry. I can't do

Here's your final premise.

Imagine for just a moment that your entire life were based around an error that you could never correct. Imagine that your happiness depended on whether or not people saw you for what you said you were.

Because you're just like everyone else, you need acceptance. You need people to believe in you and love you and accept who you are.

You know how people always say, "Oh, don't care what other people think, don't worry about that, just ignore them!"

You don't want to ignore everyone.

You deserve better. You deserve to be a part of the world that denies you. You deserve to be heard. You deserve to be who you are.

Now imagine that no one will ever see you for what you feel you are.

You are cold and alone.

Pretend you are disgusted with who you are and how you look. Pretend that you hate everything about yourself. Pretend that you feel wrong inside your own skin and that no matter what you do to change your image or how much work you put in, it's never enough, and these days, you never smile much anymore.

Pretend that no matter what you do, you will always feel like a misshapen, disgusting, ugly, awful piece of shit that will never be what you claim.

Now stop pretending.

And accept.

Your identity means nothing.

Realize that you mean nothing.

i just want to stop feeling
so bad all the time

i am so sorry

i am so scared right
ow i am so scared
ow i am so
ow i am

