Guide to Playing Alone

Kenny the Solo Roleplaying Sage

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

'Not tonight, sorry.'
'Sorry, I'm busy.'

'I've got a big project at work.'

'Can't this weekend. It's my little one's birthday.'

How often have we heard, or said, something similar to the above?

However, even that is better than moving to a new area and not having anyone to play with. Which happened to me.

I thought my roleplaying days were finished.

I was wrong; I found a new way to roleplay.

I discovered *solo* roleplaying.

Solo roleplaying is a way to roleplay when you are unable to roleplay with mates. It can't take the place of time around the table, but solo roleplaying gives you a deep roleplaying experience, one that requires only yourself. The only excuses you'll hear are the ones you bring.

There are three key elements to exploring solo roleplaying:

1. Know Roleplaying

2. Know Thy Self

3. Know Thy Toolbox

In this guide I'll help you explore all three and give you guidelines on how to start roleplaying alone.

Kenny

Know Roleplaying

Many games and people have spent much ink (and pixels) talking about what roleplaying is. It's a topic most advanced roleplayers tend to ignore. But if you take a short time to think about roleplaying it can help you come to an understanding. This understanding will help you uncover solo roleplaying and how it's not only possible but enjoyable.

A Definition of Roleplaying

In social roleplaying there are 2 types of players. PCs and GMs.

PC   GM

The two types of players work together to create a story.

PC   GM
→Story←

This leads to the definition of roleplaying:

In roleplaying two 'powers' 'work together' to create a 'story' using 'guidelines'.

The 4 bold terms above are described below.

Powers

'Powers' is used for the lack of a better term.

This term refers to the Games Master (GM, narrator, DM, etc.) and Player (PC, hero, character, avatar, etc.).

If you're playing alone you have to control both powers. That is you're both GM and PC.

Doing this alone is possible but, to make things more interesting, it's best to use a solo engine to outsource *some* of the power of the GM. Solo Engines are talked about in more detail in *Know Thy Toolbox*.

Work Together

Collaborative, co-operative, interactive - Three words that can replace 'work together'. They all mean similar things.

There should be give and take, on how the story develops, between the two powers. Look again at the picture above. Notice how both arrows joining together at story are the same size.

Neither GM nor PC is more important in creating the story.

Story

This is differentiates RPGs from other games. Other games may have characters and need 2 types of players. It's the 2 types of players coming together to tell a story that's important.

Even if you don't think of it, there's a story, no matter how flimsy, to guide a character's actions.

For solo roleplaying, the story is more important than other elements. It's in the story that you'll gain the most pleasure.

In its most simple form a story is:

A narration of a series of events a character takes in order to overcome a situation.

This means everything within your game should be focused upon solving a single situation. This definition can be used with Sandbox, Railroading, or any other kind of roleplaying you do.

Guidelines

To be a game, rather than free-form storytelling, there has to be rules.

It does not matter how heavy, light, simulationist, or narrative your chosen ruleset is.

Rules help drive the action, what your character is able to do, and provides a framework to aid in telling the story.

The Two Types of Roleplaying

This is a typical social roleplaying where PCs and a GM work together to create a story.

When you're playing solo roleplaying you're both PC and GM. This makes it harder for you to add those events into your game to surprise you and make things more interesting.

To get two separated powers a Solo Engine, and Random Content Generators (see *Know Thy Toolbox,*), is used.

Putting everything together creates a framework sentence for solo roleplaying:

'You' and 'Solo Engine' will 'work together' to create a 'story about X' using 'guidelines'.

Putting it Together

The framework sentence for solo roleplaying is:

'You' and 'Solo Engine' will 'work together' to create a 'story about X' using 'guidelines'.

Rewrite and personalise the framework sentence to create your own framework for your game. If you haven't got a solo engine yet write 'Solo Engine' into your sentence.

For example:

- † Mythic (this is a ruleset and Solo Engine in one) and I will work together to create an epic story of how an exiled prince becomes a king.
- † I will be consorting with a Solo Engine to play a fun Savage Worlds game in a space opera setting where a group of people on a spaceship live hand to mouth trying to find that one big score.
- † Mythic GME and I will co-operate in creating a story about a homesick barbarian searching for a way to rescue his tribe using HeroQuest.
- † Fate Solo and I will create a story about a haunted superhero trying to overcome his demons using Fate.

Don't just make a single sentence; make a few.

They can be to do with a single game or different games. Tweak your favourite sentence then write it down.

Know Thy Self

It's important to know what you want out of roleplaying as this will help keep you interested and motivated while you learn. It will also help you craft stories and adventures that draw you back time and again. Even if it's just a few moments here and there.

So who are you: Heart, Club, Diamond, or Spade?

Bartle Types

Applying Bartle Types to solo roleplaying might not be a perfect fit. Dr. Bartle identified them for use with MUDs (Multi User Dungeons—the forerunners to MMORPGs). However, as social roleplaying games and MMORPGs are similar Bartle Types can be mapped across.

If you want to go into detail then Dr. Bartle said that MMORPGs use these elements: self-contained physics, real-time, not reality, control of an avatar, shared, can descend into. Check them all for social roleplaying. All but shared for solo roleplaying.

There are four reasons why people play [MMO]RPGs for *fun*:

† Achievement within the game.

† Exploration of, and within, the game.

† Socialising.

† Imposition upon others.

In the words of Dr. Bartle: achievers are Diamonds (they're always seeking treasure); explorers are Spades (they dig around for information); socialisers are Hearts (they empathise with other players); killers are Clubs (they hit people with them).[1]

One thing to think about is that over the course of a game the chances are that you'll change from one player type to another. Player drift is a common, and trackable, phenomenon.

It's time to look at player types so you can discover who you are right now.

Diamonds

Diamonds are achievers.

A Diamond is always ticking things off lists. They wanting to go onwards and upwards chasing targets and goals. Diamonds either want to achieve

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[1] http://mud.co.uk/richard/hcds.htm

either 'soft' (in-game achievements) or 'hard' (gaining levels, playing new games) targets. Maybe even both.

If you're a Diamond trying solo roleplaying you need to have, or find, distinct goals to achieve whilst playing the game.

Spades

Spades are explorers.

A Spade is always looking for new things to discover.

If you're a Spade solo roleplayer you can explore either 'soft' things (the world, people's attitudes, or the world's history) or 'hard' things (the mechanics of the rule system or the width and breadth of solo roleplaying).

Hearts

Hearts are socialisers.

A Heart seeks out social interaction.

If you're a Heart there is a possibility that solo roleplaying isn't for you. Unless they want a way to talk to the voices in your head and not seem strange...

Failing that, you can run a game with lots of NPC interaction. Some Hearts say NPC interactions are important to them.

There is also another side. Soloists, like other roleplayers, like to form groups. On the internet there are places where soloists congregate. Two places are the RPG Geek Guild: Solo Roleplayers and the other is the G+ Lone Wolf group.

Clubs

Clubs are killers.

A Club needs to find a way to impose themselves upon others.

If you're a Club you've got to find a game in which you can dominate those around you. You can be: a warrior lording it over others, an assassin striking your enemies down in the dark of night, a thief taking what you want without care for others, a politician climbing up the ranks of power stepping on all in your way, or even a warlord taking all the lands you want and forming those lands into a formidable empire.

In fact, there are eight Bartle Types. The eight are the four basic types with an Implicit or Explict tag. If you act automatically you're an implicit. If you make plans then you're explicit.

Putting it Together

Pick an option from above as to what Bartle Type you are.

The next step to take is to list your favourite stories. For each story write a list of elements that you enjoy about the story, the more focused the list the better.

Instead of writing 'I Like the Hero' expand it. What do you like about the hero? Is it that he always gets the girl? Or that he is tall and muscular? Or that he isn't afraid to share his emotions?

Once you have the lists of elements put them together into a single list. The more often an element appears the more important that element is to you.

Between knowing your Bartle Type and the elements you enjoy in stories, you should have a solid understanding about what types of games you want to play when you roleplay.

The good thing about solo roleplaying is the ability to play games that are fun for you!

Know Thy Toolbox

If you're been roleplaying for a while over the years the chances are you've amassed a large collection of books (both electronic and physical), dice, models, and other assorted roleplaying aids.

Core Elements

To solo roleplay you need some core elements. These make solo roleplaying possible.

There are five core elements:

1. Game Systems
2. Solo Engines
   a. Drivers
3. Random Content Generators
   a. Idea Generators

Three of these core elements need explaining: Solo Engines, Drivers and Idea Generators.

Solo Engines

Solo Engines, which were introduced above, help you by removing *some of the duties of the GM.*

They randomise what is going on in the story and provide results (either expected or unexpected) in your game. *Mythic GM Emulator* is the best Solo Engine available.

There are other Solo Engines out there, including my engine, Fate Solo, but these are more limited and might not give you the full experience *Mythic GME* provides.

You can find a list of Solo Engines here:
soloroleplayer.com/resources-and-tools/

Drivers

Drivers are optional frameworks that help frame an adventure for your PC.

Some solo roleplayers love using drivers, others don't. Try using a Driver and choose for yourself.

You can find a list of Drivers here: *soloroleplayer.com/resources-and-tools/*

Random Content Generators

Random Content Generators don't have to be books dedicated to randomly generating things. They can also be chapters within books or tables for products, such as Inspiration Pad Pro.

An important subsect of random content generators are Idea Generators.

Idea Generators are anything that can help spark your mind into thinking in new and different directions during an adventure.

They make your mind work that bit harder; making roleplaying more random and fun. *Rory's Story Cubes* and *Story Forge* are good examples.

Mythic GME has an Idea Generator built in.

It's possible to create your own: write a list of keywords, or draw some pictograms, and pick two (or more) at random when you need an idea.

Other Tools

Alongside the core tools there are other tools that can be useful. These can be broken down into five groups.

The four groups are:

1. Setting
2. Genre Toolkits
3. Lists
4. Source Books

These tools can be:

† specific (linked to a specific world),
† contemporary (linked to the played genre),
† generic (can be used for any genre), or
† different (linked to a genre that is not being played).

Settings, genre toolkits, and source books can also be linked to a games system.

Putting it Together

Now you're going to catalogue your toolbox and see what would be most useful for your solo gaming.

On the following page is the List of Lists that you should work on creating. Use OneNote, index cards, or sheets of paper (a single sheet, or card, per list) to create the list.

Go through your roleplaying materials and take note of any useful tools putting them on your List of Lists. Some items may belong on two or more lists; that's fine, add them to any lists they belong to.

After you have created the lists, go through and make another (much shorter) list with the standard tools you want to use in your adventures. Once you have done this you're almost ready to start playing.

The important things to note are you should be comfortable with the tools you use, your tools enhance your experience not detract from it, and you want to use the tools.

Though you can stick to your regular tools, it's good to experiment with new tools from time to time. If you do this you'll have a varied tool box you can use to play great games.

You should feel free to construct different toolboxes for different purposes, moods, rulesets, and genres.

First Steps

Even after getting your toolbox together, crafting a framework sentence, and having a list of elements you want in a game, you may still feel stuck.

That's okay.

Some of the confusion is because solo roleplaying is different from its social sibling. They may be alike and use most of the same tools. How they operate is different.

So, how do you go about solo roleplaying?

It's easy. You need to know 4 things:

1. Character

2. Story

3. Techniques

4. Logging

Character

Your Character, or PC, is the core of your solo roleplaying experience.

It's best if you stick to a single character. Your character is your vessel as you depart on your adventures. If you try to play multiple characters things get confused and messy. It's hard enough to start solo roleplaying without this confusion so it's best if you start with a single character.

You started the process of creating a deep character with the framework sentence. Now it's time to go further.
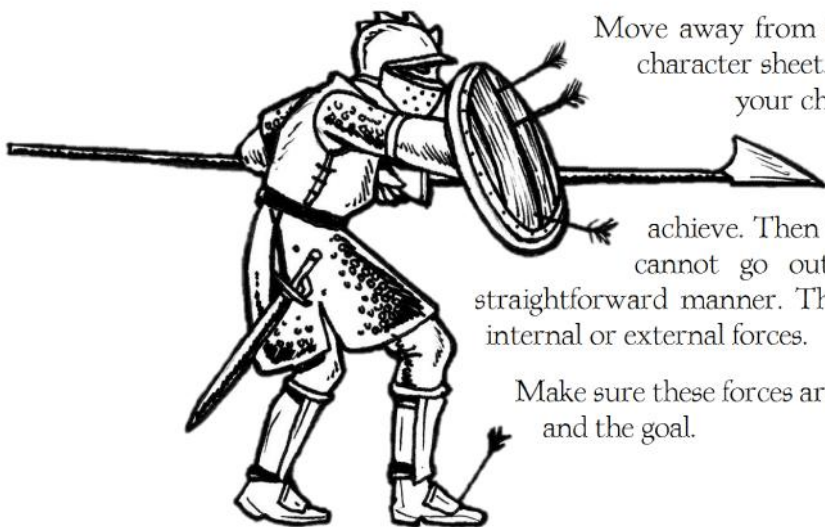
Move away from the mechanics, the nuts and bolts, of the character sheet. Look behind the stats and find the core of your character.

To create a deeper character create a goal: something your character wants to achieve. Then create a list of reasons why the character cannot go out and reach the goal in an easy and straightforward manner. These reasons, or opposition, can either be internal or external forces.

Make sure these forces are relevant to the gameworld, the character, and the goal.

Story

The other core element of solo roleplaying is interlinked with characters, and that's story. In fact you can't talk about Story without Character.

Adding story to your solo roleplaying game is important. Story is what makes solo roleplaying stand out from

Remember the definition of a story:

A narration of a series of events a character takes in order to overcome a situation.

You should've created a goal for you character. Now you need to figure out why that goal's important to your character. This is your story situation.

The opposition can help you in figuring out the why of your character's goal.

Your list of oppositions are also useful when you're playing your adventure. When you're stuck as to what happens next look at the list of oppositions and pick the one that fits within the adventure best.

Techniques

There are lots of Techniques you can use within solo roleplaying to make your games run faster, better, and smoother. Some of these techniques you'll discover by yourself. Other techniques you'll learn from other people.

Frustration to Freedom is a series of short PDFs to give some advanced techniques. Other techniques can be found in the newsletter archive at *soloroleplayer.com.*

Logging

A confusing issue for beginning solo roleplayers is how to play your games. You've got the basic tools and knowledge from this guide to play a game. Still there can be confusion.

Some solo roleplayers just start writing their sessions down as if they were writing a novel. This isn't the only way to play your game.

There are 5 basic Methods to recording your roleplaying:

1. writing it down as if it were a novel,

2. writing it down as if it were a journal,

3. drawing it as if it were a comic (or graphic novel),

4. making brief notes as you need them during your roleplaying session, or

5. playing it in your head.

To see more about getting your roleplaying session out of your head and starting to solo roleplay read: 4 steps to start solo roleplaying.

Those 4 things map into the 3 key areas:

1. Know Roleplaying (Characters and Story)

2. Know Thy Self (Characters, Story, and Getting it Out)

3. Know Thy Toolbox (Techniques)

The Best Way to Start

Even after all you've learnt in this guide you could still be stuck as to how to start a campaign or even play an adventure to try out solo roleplaying.

The strength of solo roleplaying is also its biggest problem. This is because you've got all these options as to what you can do and where you can go it's hard to find a good, simple place from where to start.

With this in mind I thought about one thing all computer RPGs have in common.

Rats in the Basement

Instead of going big to start, start small.

You don't even need to give your PC a large goal. In fact, Rats in the Basement is great for dipping your toe into the world of solo roleplaying and experimenting.

The framework following acts like a Driver as it guides the direction of the adventure in a certain manner.

Step 1. Getting the adventure: your PC is called, or stumbles upon, a situation where they're asked to help out.

Step 2. Tooling up: this is an optional step which is included to get more NPC interaction in your game. This step is where your PC gets the tools (physical or knowledge) to complete the adventure.

Step 3. Completing the mission: the longest part of the adventure. This is where your PC does what is needed to complete the adventure.

Step 4. Getting the reward: your PC now gets the reward for completing the adventure. From treasure to respect this can indeed be anything.

Once you know what setting you're playing your adventure in you need to know the following 6 bits of information:

1. The Basement: a confined location which houses the central part of the adventure.
2. The Rats: simple enemies with which you have to interact to complete the
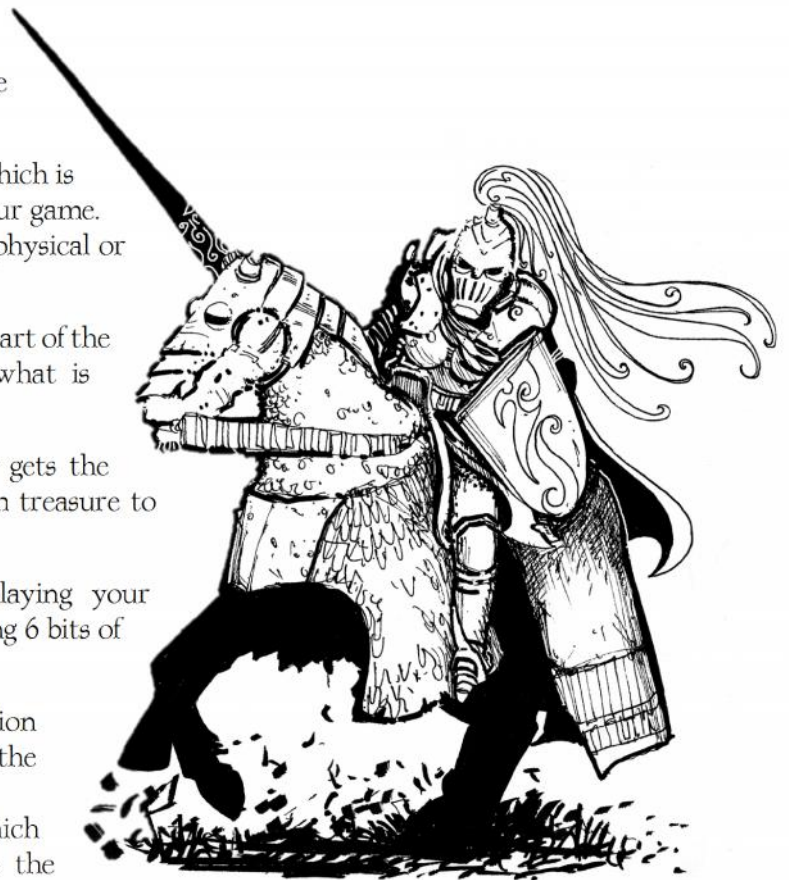
adventure. They can be good, bad, or inanimate objects.

3. The Shopkeeper: the person who sets you off on the adventure.
4. The Tools: what you need to complete the adventure.
5. The Deadline: when the adventure has to be completed by.
6. The Reward: what you get for completing the adventure.

Once you've discovered everything fill out the following sentence:

'Rats', are in 'basement' and 'shopkeeper' needs them 'method of removal' before 'deadline' you need 'tool' to complete the adventure and gain your 'reward'.

This sentence will help you keep on track and guide you through the adventure.

If after you've completed your first Rats in the Basement and you're still stuck as to where you want to go next do another Rats in the Basement. You can use the same character or a different one. You can even play in a new setting.

Now you have everything needed:
Get your Solo Engine, your Dice, your Rule Set, and get Playing Alone.

Kenny

Kenny the Solo Roleplaying Sage

SoloRoleplayer.com Roleplaying for Renegades.

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Document Promise:

Any, and all, future updates to this ebook will be provided free of charge to all existing owners.

I welcome any suggestions you may wish to make; this means that if you see any problems, typos, or want to make any comments about this ebook please contact me (via SoloRoleplayer.com).

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FRUSTRATION TO FREEDOM

30 Days to Legendary Solo Roleplaying Adventures

Do you feel your life is spiralling down into the realm of chaos? With the life of your friends equally full of chaos our roleplaying gets relegated. From once, or twice, a week to fortnightly, then to monthly--or, even worse, whenever... We spend our quality time reading roleplaying forums or buying roleplaying materials.

Imagine how you feel when you'll be able to carry on roleplaying?

It is possible! You don't need to have a group of mates (no matter how great it is as a group) to roleplay. You alone (along with your roleplaying tools and dice) are all you need. Yes, solo roleplaying is not just possible; it's also great fun.

This 30 day email training course is a guided journey from frustration in not being able to roleplay to having freedom in being able to roleplay any time you like. Not just lame, cookie cutter adventures or choose your own adventure style adventures but personalised and legendary adventures which keep drawing you in.

Because your time is important this course focuses upon the essentials: no fluff included.

Frustration to Freedom covers this and much more:

† Solid and useful guidelines for solo roleplaying to help you overcome the confusion of *'what the h*** am I meant to doing'*.
† The 4 type of characters so you can get the best out of them.
† How to pick the best tools for you to create and run adventures and campaigns so you can shortcut your journey to legendary adventures.
† A simple and effective method to create adventures allowing you to have an abundance of adventure ideas in the future.
† How to record your solo roleplaying sessions removing confusion of what you're meant to be doing during your adventures.

Stop putting off your journey into solo roleplaying take action and buy Frustration to Freedom now from RPG Now or Drive Thru

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