

MAXIMUM RISUS FUN

Guy Hoyle © 2011

[The MGF Rules System](#) © 1997 Michael O' Brien

Risus: The Anything RPG © 1993-2011

In Risus, players get an extra D6 for providing a Tale or backstory for their character. Often, however, games seem to start out by writing up characters as we are beginning the adventure; many of the players thus don't have a clear idea about their characters' background when we begin gaming, so they don't get that extra die when the scenario begins. After all, asking somebody to write up a few paragraphs of prose at a moment's notice is really a lot like schoolwork, and nobody likes a pop essay. What to do?

I could pass out a boring questionnaire about the character's background, with spaces for the character's family tree, what are his likes and dislikes, his relationship with his parents, etc., etc., ad nauseam, but that's pretty boring. Many years ago, a few regulars on the Glorantha Digest came up with the principle of [Maximum Game Fun](#): "in a nutshell, when writing, thinking, and gaming about Glorantha, you ask yourself, 'now, in this situation what will be the most fun?'... and then you go with it!" This eventually evolved into the even-lighter-than-Risus MGF Rules System, which is not actually what my post is about. I think that many of the principles of MGF can be applied to Risus as an aid in creating great background stories.

The part that interests me about the MGF system is the character generation system, where you basically just describe your character according to the following criteria. Often the hardest part of character design is actually figuring out what character you want to play. This process can help your player decide what he wants to play, and it's fun all by itself. If you haven't already come up with some of this character's cliches, this process should knock a few possibilities loose,

Included as an example is a familiar Viking youth:

Who Are You?

Grolfnar Vainsson, high-famed sea-reaver, skald, and ravager of women!

Where Are You From?

Njordling Fjord, where the beer is the best, and the women are better than the beer!

Why are you here?

Looking for more beer and more women, aye! And to make the songs they'll sing of me to the sons of the sons of my sons!

List three things your character does better than the average Viking

- Drink!
- Wench!
- Sing !

List three things your character does worse than the average Viking

- Gets seasick
- Loses sword with alarming frequency
- Looking for a meaningless relationship

List three things everyone knows about you

- Spends most of his time composing bad poetry
- The wenches laugh at him
- Can't hold his mead

List three things no one knows about you

- Secretly the King of Njordling Fjord's daughter, avenging her father's death
- Disguised as a boy to learn Viking skills necessary to avenge her father
- Pretends she's incompetent to allay suspicion about her true identity

List three things you believe are true

- This fake beard looks good on me
- I am fated to win back my father's throne
- Freyja herself is my patron

List three things you want but don't have

- Vengeance for my father's death
- Private toilet facilities
- That hot Captain Valgrim!

List three things you have but don't want

- A bad case of fake beard-itch
- Dad keeps dropping by to ask how the vengeance-thing is going
- Too many wenches trying to seduce me

Don't feel discouraged if you can't think of three examples for each category; this is supposed to be fun, and maybe something else will turn up later. Likewise, if you can think of more than three, the more the merrier! After you have finished working on your character's background, you should then have some good ideas about what his clichés should be.

On the next page is a blank form for copying, filling out, and using how you will. I have made it generic, so it can be used for individuals; that is, you would find three things you do better or worse than others like you (e.g. other thieves, other magicians, other gladiators); but you can use it for parties which share an occupation (all Vikings, all bureaucrats, all Clerics of Thoth, etc.) Customize it in any way that works for your campaign.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, I hang out on the Risustalk yahoo group. Let me know how this works for you!

Guy Hoyle

Maximum RISUS Fun

Who are you?

Where are you from?

Why are you here?

List three things your character does better than an average _____

List three things your character does worse than an average _____

List three things that everyone knows about you

List three things that nobody knows about you

List three things you believe are true

List three things you want but don't have

List three things you have but don't want