CHAPTER

16



LarP

and Layered Reality

LarP is an important part of life for a lot of people. Understanding and navigating the games, worlds and systems can bring you exclusive access to places, people, and generally very cool shit.

16.01 Live Play in 2126

LarP may have its roots in the Live Action Role Playing of a hundred years ago, but its meaning has metamorphosed into something far more colourful. Live Augmented Reality Play is the acronymic soup of the day. Blame the backronym craze of 2088, when a lot of old initials suddenly found themselves unemployed.

So many good acronyms lost that year. It was very confusing for a lot of people.

The change was not for the sake of it. LARP itself had transformed from a niche (but ultra cool) form of roleplaying to something far more societal in scope, because:

LarP is much more than playing a roleplaying game: *LarP is the gamification of life*.

16.01 / CONTINUED

Live Play in 2126

Once AR became small enough to be cool, and seamless enough to feel real, things really took off. What transformed it into LarP was the simple fact that *most stuff is more interesting as a game.*

Got a job serving food? Gamify that.

Learning new things? Gamify it!

Want to get fit? It's all the same, more game.

At least that's what you'd hear blasted everywhere in the 2090s. But even back then, games weren't really games in the old sense. Gaming is just what you call adding an engaging and rewarding interactive layer to what you're doing. A layer on reality designed to make learning, practising, working, socialising and of course being entertained more enjoyable, while also making the activity itself far more effective.

Multiple generations have built on this, and the result is a huge variety of sophisticated games with complex communities, all linked in a vast network of LarP systems.

This idea is now as ubiquitous worldwide as the long-dead social networks of yesteryear. The whole 'going out and doing stuff' part of AR also turned out to be pretty good for your health and social life. No running on treadmills with goggles in sweaty rooms, it's running with your friends from the pirates you double-crossed (again).

'Real' games are still played, of course, just turned up to 11. Many enjoy living in their favourite worlds for a while, sometimes for years. Dress the part every day and live somewhere like Svanheim (a popular but highly unrealistic Viking world), drink mead with friends and walk among Norse gods.

Some take it to epic levels. *Grenzliebe*, the love of the boundary, was built around the idea that an experience only becomes fully real when something real is at stake. Its devotees, known as Grenzers, deliberately seek out games where injury, and even death, are genuine possibilities.

They like to think of themselves as the border guards of human experience, keeping the rest of us from losing our edge. The rise of dead games (games that can hurt you) and dead dead games (games that can kill you) is ample evidence of how seriously some of them take that idea.

Of course, not everyone is doing anything so dangerous. It's important to understand LarP is far more than the gaming of a century ago. Among other things, LarP has replaced what used to be job markets. Long gone are the days when you went to HR, apart from a few companies that like to do things the old-fashioned way. These days, you play a game you enjoy, and if you play it well enough, it leads you somewhere, and that somewhere is the actual job. But you never stop playing. The job/game/experience adapts to your level of skill, and you get better until you want to stop.

So it's common for a person who likes to play a spy game or MilSim to find themselves working in those very services, with the games acting as training and proving grounds.

That same system works for a chef or a sculptor or a musician.

Gastro de Gastro is *the* game for hospitality work in Aten7. Known around Strange as GasGas, it gives players access to work, facilities, contacts and areas that are off-limits to others. There are rankings, and as usual the games woven into the work are sophisticated and designed to enhance the job. Most people love playing them.

LIVE AUGMENTED REALITY PLAY

The thing about GasGas, and why it's a favourite of those in certain professions, is that you gain access to *a lot* of places.

All of this is mediated by your Operator (see Chapter 16.07), which is the formal name for the intelligent system that helps you organise your life.

While many people predicted all kinds of dystopian horror, drowning in ads or people doing shady stuff with nudes, that thankfully stayed firmly in fiction. Privacy in particular is well enforced (at least in most places) and has been that way for a few generations. Of course there are outliers and such, but people are generally very happy with the system, mostly because it works rather well.

LarP is used everywhere: gangs and militia use it for testing people, and the local sewing group uses it for their nefarious purposes.

So inside these worlds are communities, some of which are tight-knit, and some of which are a proxy for something else entirely... very often with secrets and treasures to share.

What does this mean for players? It means you gain exposure to people, places and tech that are only available to players who have a certain level, or are trusted enough in that world. But in order to do this you often have to play a game, a game inside your game.

What it means for play at the table is that you can sometimes play a mini game, or rather something between a mini game and a module, a mini module, if you will.

These are a chance to gain access to new places, people and abilities, while playing fun alternate realities at the table, often with interesting new mechanics. There is a long list of canon LarPs to play with, along with tools to create your own in the GM Guide. You will find a number of introductory ones listed later in this chapter.

At the table, these games are played as though you are there in those worlds, with the reality underneath referenced only where relevant to play. Some are deeply involved, with people who live in them, and entire sessions of play can take place inside them.

It's a kind of LarPception of A7.

STORY EXCERPT

Dozer reached for the burnished Art Deco handle with trepidation. He'd reached rank 6, so according to the rules he could come here.

But if he got this wrong, it was going to hurt like a mother.

The door turned from decidedly ominous matt black to a soft gold, and opened smoothly.

Thankful to still be conscious and upright, Dozer entered the establishment. Esther, sprawled on a dilapidated couch, greeted him with a goofy smile.

"Ha! Well, I knew you'd get here eventually. Guess you'll want to see Honzo?"

"Straight up yup, need some of his lovely sonics, those new ones out of Kerala."

"Oh, I thought you liked his eyes. He does great eyes," she said, looking through his best pair of last year.

"Nah, prefer echo-loc and keeping my baby blues," he winked back, before bouncing up the stairs.