Authenticity: truth to character

In The Teller System, **authenticity** is the golden thread that runs through every moment of play. It is the core principle against which all character actions, decisions, and developments are judged - not by success or cleverness, but by **truth to character**.

What Is Authenticity?

Authenticity, in the context of The Teller System, does not mean realism. It means internal consistency. A character is authentic when their actions emerge naturally from who they are - from their flaws, beliefs, fears, and desires - even when doing so complicates or imperils the unfolding story.

An authentic character might act impulsively, irrationally, selfishly, nobly, destructively. What matters is that the action rings true within the established environment, tone, and story logic.

Why Authenticity Matters

In the absence of rules, dice, and mechanical resolution, authenticity becomes the primary mechanism by which events move forward. Every meaningful development in the story is born of genuine character interaction - not random chance, not tactical advantage.

- A character who betrays their allies because of long-held resentment? **Authentic**.

- A coward who freezes in the face of danger? **Authentic**.

- A noble idealist who gives up their life to protect a stranger? **Authentic**.

It is not the outcome that matters, but the character truthfully revealed in the moment.

What It Looks Like in Play

- A reckless character doesn't stop to plan, even when logic dictates they should.

- A grieving sibling lashes out at the group, jeopardising unity.

- A leader sacrifices a tactical advantage to protect a vulnerable NPC.

These actions may lead to setbacks, but they deepen the story and anchor it in believable character motivation.

Player vs. Character Knowledge

One of the challenges of role-play is resisting the temptation to act on information your character wouldn't have. Authentic play requires:

- Ignoring meta-knowledge (what the Player knows but the character doesn't)

- Making decisions based on the character's beliefs, not Player strategy

- Embracing mistakes, contradictions, and personal biases

To be authentic, Players must become their characters in the moment of play.

Collective Authenticity

While authenticity is deeply personal, it is also communal. Each character must feel grounded within the world and the

tone set by the event frame. What feels authentic in a grimdark horror may feel jarring in a slapstick sci-fi.

It is the shared responsibility of the Teller, Fate, and Players to maintain cohesion by responding authentically within the established emotional and thematic register.

Examples:

- A character screaming in hysteria may heighten a horror scene's tension.

- That same behaviour could break tone in a serene or comedic frame.

- Authenticity does not mean acting however one pleases. <u>It means acting truthfully within context</u>.

The fundamental principle

The Teller System is a rules-free framework. But one principle rises above all:

To be true to your character is, fundamentally, the story.

Every scene, every interaction, every shift in flow depends on this single commitment. Authenticity and a commitment to it, is the aim and objective of play.