

Pygmalion's Rhapsody

A LARP about transformation, perfection, and the bond between Artist and Creation

by Jacqui Albin

*"I just want to be more than the mud in your eyes,
I want to be the clay in your hands."*

-Mineral, Gloria



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To create is an act of godliness; to be created is to be part of the divine. The bond between Art and Artist is sacred, and Creation often takes on a life beyond what the Artist could imagine.

Players will play as pairs of Artist and Creation. One will entomb the other in clay, plaster, and spackle, then mold and sculpt them to their desired vision. The LARP is a multi-part ritual, aimed at guiding the Artist and Creation through a spiritual journey of mutual connection and transformation.

The ritual occurs in three acts: The Forming, The Perfecting, The Releasing. It is intended that both the Artist and Creation players read this full document, including the safety appendix. There is no facilitator or gamerunner. It is intended for adult players only.

Content includes: Objectification in the absolute most literal sense, intimate touch, partial-to-full nudity, elements of physical control and possessiveness, and is likely to include intense praise and complimenting the Creation player's physical body.

Part 0: Calibration and setup

Please discuss with each other what body parts are off limits for touching and covering in clay, and what the Creation player is comfortable having done to them while they are a statue. This should also include types of compliments that the Creation player is comfortable receiving and what kinds of clay body modifications they consent to. As the Creation will not be able to move much, a key phrase like "off-game" should be agreed upon prior to gameplay to signal out-of-game player needs. Discuss if they're comfortable with plaster being used. If plaster is used, please consult the safety appendix, as plaster carries risk of heating up/burning if applied too thick, and there should always be a safe way to get the player of the Creation out of the plaster quickly in case of emergencies. Plaster should *not* be applied to the joints of the body.

The Artist player may offer to help "prepare the canvas" by offering to shave their skin where plaster or stickier clays may be used. Wearing underwear and possibly pasties is suggested, with the suggested level of nudity being swimsuit-level, per players' comfort levels. The player of the Creation should sit, ideally on a stool, but a plain chair also works, since standing for that long would be incredibly difficult. A comfortable pose they can hold for over an hour should be agreed upon.

Ritual implements should be collected and laid out beforehand:

Air-dry craft clay	Clay sculpting tools
Kaolin face mask clay	Vaseline, optional, if plaster is being used
Water-based spackle	Dremel, optional, if plaster is being used
Plaster of Paris	Masquerade mask
Spatula and/or putty scraper	Drop-cloths
Tuning fork/gong/bell	Aluminum foil

The Artist player creates their own character. What do they find beauty in? Why do they create? What do they get out of the Creation process, or hope to get out of this ritual? Are they fearful and seeking a creation that can protect them? Are they consumed by ennui, and tired of seeking thrills, choose to chase down new forms of beauty for beauty's sake? Do they seek the perfect partner after the loss of one they loved or after being let down by the problems with a human lover?

The Creation serves as a mirror to this, and has character happen *to* them, serving as a blank canvas for the Artist's work. This process should be as collaborative as the players deem appropriate.

Part 1: The Forming

The ritual begins with a change in lighting. The Artist poses the Creation into the agreed-upon pose.

The Artist asks:

"Are you ready to be transformed?"

"Are you ready to be made according to my vision?"

The Artist then puts the masquerade mask onto the Creation. They should chant, sing, hit a tuning fork or gong, etc, as part of this, but some sort of auditory, musical element is strongly encouraged.

"Prepare to be created anew."

The Artist then covers the Creation in clay, spackle, and/or plaster. During this process, they should discuss what they're forming, what they're creating, narrating out loud to the Creation what they are making out of them. Are they creating their arms for holding or for fighting? What sort of torso are they creating? One of presence and boldness? Legs that are strong, legs that are there to be moved and posed? Do they create a mouth for them to speak loudly to protect, or softly to compliment? They can use aluminum foil as a base for larger protrusions. Will they be given extra arms, or have their anatomy otherwise altered? What do they find beautiful in their Creation, in this new canvas? This stage should be sculpted only with the hands and putty knives/spatulas, not the smaller tools. This stage is for overall form, not decorations and perfecting.

If they do so wish, they can incorporate things into the clay and plaster, such as their own hair, stones/gems, or even bits of their own blood* to reinforce that their Creation is part of them. This should all reflect on their Artist character and what they seek from their Creation.

Part 2: The Perfecting

The ritual undergoes a further lighting change, if possible. RGB lighting is encouraged for this purpose.

The Artist says:

"You will now be perfected, according to my vision."

The Artist then should take out their sculpting tools and shape decorations for their Creation and should continue to narrate out what they are doing. Are they molding clay ornaments to decorate their Creation? Are they etching their signature into their arms? Carving sigils down their back with a dremel? Do they agonize for an extended amount of time about needing things to be perfect, or do they accept "happy accidents" as they happen? The Artist should talk to their Creation about how much they admire their work, how well the decorations and additions work so well for the canvas. Based on the Creation player's pre-agreed-upon comfort level, the Artist can caress their work as part of this admiration.

The Artist should then document this moment of Creation, with photographs, sketches, paintings, etc, of their perfected work.

Part 3: The Releasing

The ritual undergoes another lighting change, if possible.

The Artist tells the Creation:

“You now fully embody my vision.”

The Creation now must plead for their release. Maybe the Artist will agree to release them. If the Artist does not agree, The Creation can begin to crack the plaster, remove the clay, etc. to reveal the fleshy canvas underneath on their own, breaking out of this entombment.

Regardless, the Creation has taken on a life of its own. It has transcended the Artist.

The Artist can choose to tell the Creation that they will forever be their Creation, and that their purpose and changes will stay with them. Or they could unmake their creation and destroy the plaster and clay. Or they can tell them that they are free to go into the world on their own accord, and are free to be as transformed as the Creation wishes to be, where they can work together to remove the clay and plaster and free the canvas underneath.

Will the Artist guide the Creation into a rebirth of the Canvas, or will the Creation defy the will of its Creator in every way? Will they tear their stony flesh off angrily, or gently seek to crack through this new facade? Regardless, after the ritual, the Creation would eventually go out into the world and in some way be irrevocably changed from the Artist’s vision, possibly even destroyed as time goes on.

The Ritual closes with the bell/gong/chime ringing and the lighting reverting closer to the room’s “normal” lights.

Part 4: After the Ritual

It’s encouraged that the Artist and Creation players debrief by examining the pieces of plaster and clay that were removed from the Creation player’s body. The Artist player can explain to the Creation player how they achieved each of the effects, and the Creation player can talk about the physical sensations of each element. They can also build an epilogue together, talking about how the Creation acts after their release and how the Artist will respond to their art being out in the world.

Safety Appendix

- **It is encouraged to do a patch test of all products used before the LARP**, both to learn how the Creation player's skin reacts and for the Artist player to become familiar with application in a low-intensity environment.
- Plaster should be applied fairly thin and should not exceed ¼ inch or 5mm thick, since **plaster can heat up as it hardens** and heats up more if applied thickly.
 - Wrapping body parts in gauze or cotton padding can help insulate the flesh from risk of burns and make plaster easier to remove.
 - Using plaster gauze as a base can help mitigate risk of burning as well, and aid in application.
 - The Artist player should check the temperature with their hand and be ready to remove any plaster if it begins to heat up uncomfortably.
- **Plaster should NOT be applied 360° around limbs, extremities, or the torso.**
 - For example, you can apply it to the front and back of somebody's legs, but leave at least a centimeter/half an inch between plaster-covered spots running down the sides of their legs. **This is important, and lets you remove the plaster safely.**
 - There should always be areas of uncovered skin, or skin covered only in kaolin clay, adjoining areas of skin covered in plaster in order to have points where plaster pieces can be pulled off.
- Plaster should NOT be applied to the face or groin area.
 - Kaolin clay should be used on more delicate areas, such as the face.
- **Plaster may hurt to remove** if vaseline is not applied under it. Use this information as you wish.
 - It may not stick well if applied *only* to areas that are covered in vaseline, or may need to be "anchored" to plain skin or bits of spackle or air-dry clay.
- Strong scissors such as poultry shears should always be on hand for breaking through plaster pieces, though [plaster-specific shears](#) are recommended.
- **Plaster should not be applied to joints** such as the wrist or elbow; air dry clay or spackle work well for these areas. They give a feeling of restriction without dangerously restricting movement.
- When using a dremel, make sure that the plaster is fully cured and is only used in thicker areas.
 - The dremel should not be used at full speed/power. This is a slow process. The etching will be subtle.
 - Metal woodworking bits work best for carving plaster, versus sandpaper drums.
- Avoid washing plaster and clay down the drain. **Please remove as much of the plaster and clay before showering** to avoid ruining your pipes.

*Please only utilize blood or other fluids if this is pre-agreed-upon and adequate safety measures are taken for both players. **If you are unsure if your safety measures are adequate, assume they are not and do not do this.** You should both be confident that you are taking as many precautions as you can, to protect both of you during high-risk scenarios. Keep in mind that lighting will be low and emotions will be high, which may serve as a complicating factor. Do this at your own risk.