

A woman is shown in profile, facing right, wearing a highly detailed steampunk costume. The costume features a dark green, short-sleeved bodice with white lace cuffs and a white corset-like structure with black horizontal bands. A large, ruffled orange and red collar is positioned at the neck. The most prominent feature is a massive, multi-tiered skirt made of ruffled, translucent orange and red fabric, cinched with several black belts. She also wears black gloves and a dark headpiece with a long, thin, curved feather. The background is a solid, bright blue.

***The Drink Tank - Aurora for DUFF!***

*So, here, in her own words, is why you should vote Aurora Celeste. All these articles come from either her excellent Costuming blog (dramaticthreads.com) or her YA Review blog Young Adult Sci-Fi and Fantasy blog. (yasff.blogspot.com/) or this first piece which is custom-made for this little zine! I also figured if you've got one of the best creators of Cosplay and Costume pieces fandom has to offer, you better darn well show 'em! You can find the DUFF ballot at <http://taff.org.uk/ballots/duff2014.pdf> among other places. So, here's Aurora Celeste in her own words!*

*The Back cover's by Chelise Hyatt*

## TEN REASONS I'D LOVE TO BE DUFF'S DELEGATE TO AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND:

10. The Wine. I am a huge fan of Syrah, and I've seen some really cool and innovative affordable Syrahs come out of Australia recently, I'd love the opportunity to try some that I can't get in the US.

9. Museums. I'm a history buff, and I love finding out about new places through their choices of what to highlight in their museums. I'd love to visit some local historical sites with some local fans and get some unique perspectives on the places I visit.

8. Food. Although I've been a part of fandoms in New Orleans, Kansas City, Syracuse NY (though not much of a fandom, I found homes while there in both Toronto and Boston) and Philadelphia, but the one constant that brought fans together was the love of great conversation over good food and drink. I'm an adventurous eater, and I'd love to experience some great restaurants with new friends!

7. Nature. Sitting through the Polar Vortex here in the US right now I know not to expect sweltering temperatures and balmy beaches in June. I am willing to brave the temperatures, though, to see some of Australia and New Zealand's famous scenery.

6. New Ideas. There's a lot of stuff that's available in the United States, and I know we sometimes take that for granted, but we don't have everything. One of the biggest thing I admire about my Australian and New Zealand costumer friends is their innovation in figuring out how to costume without some of the stuff I take for granted, or with new stuff that's coming out of East Asia that the US hasn't heard of. I love learning new things and discovering new costuming toys!

5. Teaching. This goes hand-in-hand with #6. My experiences in fandom are full of idea exchanges. I love teaching, bringing people new ideas and leading them to places they never thought they'd go. Information is best when it's a two-way road, and I expect to try to contribute as much as I take away.

4. Con Styles. In addition to the Australian NatCon there are a few pop cons happening around the same time in both Australia and New Zealand. Having attended these kinds of shows in the US and Canada I'd love to attend one and see how the varieties of fandom in Australia and New Zealand compare.

3. Fabric Shopping. Like I said in #6 I'm sure there are a lot of things we have in the US that you can't get in Australia and New Zealand, but I'm also sure it works the other way around. I'm looking forward to being able to fondle lush New Zealand wools and silks imported from SE Asia, hopefully at a better price than I can get them here!

2. Volunteering. I am a work-a-holic at a con, and I have to pitch in and help or I feel I've got nothing to do! Helping out is one of the best ways of meeting new people as well as getting new conrunning ideas. I'd love to do both.

1. The Fans! It's great to meet new friends, and some of my best fandom memories come from chance encounters and conversations that drifted to places I'd never predicted. I love the surprise, and I'd hate to limit any of that by trying to pigeonhole people or experiences. I'm ready to embrace the experience, wherever it takes me!

## HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF A COSTUME CONTEST

This article isn't "How to Win", it's "How to have fun". Yes, winning can be really fun, but it's also a very ephemeral, uncontrollable thing. It requires you to judge yourself, your costume, and your skit/presentation very objectively and figure out how to best present them in the contest you're working with. I'll teach you how to do that here. However, winning also requires a bit of the unknown. In order to craft your entry to WIN you'd have to critique not only your own entry, but everyone else's entry. This is risky, because you never know who will enter against you, and how well-framed their entries will be. So we're going to talk about you, and what you can do and control, to get the most out of your costume contest experience. And hey, if having a good time brings prizes along, who are we to complain?

In order to get the most out of a costume contest you need to do some research. How much you do depends on you, how well you want to do, and what kind of a reaction you want.

The first research should be into you and your costumes. What kind of costumes do you like to wear? What kind of contests do you like to enter? What is your reason for entering the contest in the first place? Think about these objectively. If you are a handsewing nut and want to show off your neat craftsmanship, you're creating a totally different contest approach than someone who mostly buys or thrift-stores costumes but loves to get the crowd roaring. Think deeply about what you do, why you do it, and why you want to enter the contest (remember, "I wanna win" isn't an option).

Then do some research into your contest venue. At the minimum ask someone on the forums, in email, or in person what the contest is like. There are tons of different contest formats, and none of them are welcoming to all kinds of costumes. You've got to figure out what kind of contest you are entering, and figure out if it works well with your contest approach. For example, Costume Con Masquerades concentrate a lot on costume craft and skill. There's even an additional workmanship component for those people who REALLY like to show off their costuming skills. However, because of their concentration on craft, people who thrift-store or commission costumes for really great skits aren't going to be as welcome. Conversely, DragonCon's main



masquerade is all about the skits. If you aren't entertaining they don't care how well made your costume was. These two contests are really extreme cases, most contests will fall in the middle, but it will help you to figure out how close to your purpose the contest's purpose is. Other than talking to someone who saw the contest, another way to figure out clues as to the contest's bent is to look at pictures of last year's winners. Even better if you can find videos of the contest, either for sale or on You tube. This will show you how the contest winners looked, and whether their presentations were mostly skit or mostly show of a costume. Here are some common contest formats, and their strengths and weaknesses:

- Skits: concentrates on funny or entertaining performances. Costumes are usually secondary, and audience reaction can play a large part.
- Workmanship: concentrates on costume craft. Having a costume made by yourself is important. Acting and performance can play a part, but it is much smaller than Skits.
- Runway Walk: usually close to workmanship. Concentrates less on acting and performance than workmanship, in general, although being in character can still play a part. Audience reaction can play a larger part than workmanship.
- Crowd Pleasers: usually characterized by having no judges, and relying on audience applause to decide the winners. These are really a chancy endeavor, because they rely on having loud friends in the audience, and usually in having the least amount of clothes on a pretty girl. Common in bars around Halloween time.

Right along with what kind of format the contest will have is finding out about the judges. There are a vast number of people who could be judging your contest, and as judges they have a major impact on the results of the contest. So try to find out who is judging the contest you're entering.

- Celebrities: are usually guests of the con. They'll usually concentrate on impressive. Most often celebrities are impressed by people that do what they do. If the guests are actors, they'll like neat skits. If the guests are authors, not so dazzled. However, most celebrities can be dazzled by having an impressive-sounding introduction ((this costume was made by

hand over 50 hours of work)) because most of them don't really know what that MEANS, but it sounds good. Watch out, though, there are a few rare celebrities who have been trained as costumers, hairdressers, or are related/married to them, so they won't fall for that stuff.

- Costumers: usually judge costumes on costume merit. May have a tendency to put less stock in performances if they themselves are not performers. Some feel costumes are more of an even split, so they'll look at both. Some can tend to judge like fans/celebrities as well as look at costume merit, but there will be more of an emphasis on the clothes no matter what.

- Fans: judge a lot like celebrities. They'll score based on how impressed they are, if they laughed, or if the crowd gave a good time, but you have the advantage that they'll be more likely than celebrities to get inside jokes and be impressed with clever plots.

- Audience: usually judge by applause. That means the louder your friends, the better reaction you get. Also, when the audience is given the judging power they often feel they have the right to judge the contestants negatively, and will often be rowdy and boo people onstage. They also cheer for what they know and like, so if you have an obscure costume, or a common costume from an obscure show/genre, you may get a totally different reaction from what you expected.

As an aside to finding out about the judges, see if you can find out their names. Some contests don't like to give them out, but some don't care. I'm not suggesting you attempt to bribe the judges, because that will get you thrown out of most contests faster than you know, but knowing the judges means you can tailor your costume presentation to them and their skills/desires. For example, if you get the name of a specific guest actor, google them. Find out what they've acted in, what kind of costumes they've worn, and if they've ever worked as a costumer/lighting tech/designer. See if that anime artist is married to a professional wigmaker. If the person is a costumer or fan, try to find their website. Look at the stuff they've done. See if they do things in the same genre as you, or if they know a lot about a specific topic. For example, I have a lot of corsetry information on my website. If you know I'll be judging a contest and see that you might want to prepare a little extra

information on how you made the corset of your costume, because I guarantee I'll be asking about it. Don't let it discourage you, though, if you don't think your corset is very good. Judges know that everyone had to start somewhere, and remember their first projects, so usually they won't discount you for not being as good as them.

Duplicating a judge's costume, however, is a tricky thing. If a judge has also made the costume you are entering it is slippery. On one hand they will be very enthusiastic, because they are obviously fans of the costume as well. On the other hand, though, they will have researched the costume themselves, and will know more if there are details that are 'off' than they would with a costume from a genre they don't know. But, they will also know what you did right, and showing off how you duplicated small details will get you kudos from someone who knows exactly how hard they are because they've done them. So, I'm not telling you not to enter a costume a judge has done, just think about it a little bit first. Also, be ready just in case you walk into judging and see the judge wearing the same outfit as you. Daunting, but don't worry, they are a judge so you're not competing against them.

Next, as you're doing your judge and contest research, be sure to read the contest rules. I've seen great costumes get pushed from award status because they didn't comply with a strange contest rule about "always enter from the left". It's important to read, and know, the rules of every contest you plan to enter. Some things to note:

- *Costumes: What kinds of costumes are allowed? Also, what kind of costumes are preferred?*

For example, it's understood that a Star Wars costume contest is Star Wars costumes only. Even if there's no rule against Star Trek costumes, fans and judges will probably be confused by your costume entry and score you lower, either because they're insulted by your entry or because they just don't know enough about it compared to the costumes that fit the genre. I see this very often at DragonCon, where there are about 20 different costume contests over the 4 days. Quite often you will see the same person, in the same costume, entering a lot of them. As a judge, I can tell you that entering your costume in lots of contests doesn't increase your chances of winning. Your comic book character doesn't belong in the Klingon contest, even if they don't specifically ban it in the rules.

- *Effects: Will there be sound allowed? How about lights? Can you use a microphone?*

This is important if you're planning a skit. For example, if no light effects are mentioned you should ask before planning on having a blackout. Light-up costumes won't be visible under full stage lights, but would be better if the lights can be dimmed for part of the skit, and will be barely noticeable on a stage with regular hotel lighting. If you plan on having speaking in your skit, either use a microphone or pre-record your speaking over your music. Speaking from stage NEVER works, and will leave the people at the back of the room bored with your skit because they can't hear it. Bored people can, at best, not clap at your skit, giving a good skit a ho-hum reaction, and at worst they can boo, make denegrating comments, and be a nuisance. So do yourself a favor; pre-record all your audio. While you're recording your audio, try to find out what the masque will be using to play it. It's a bad day for you if you show up with a cassette tape and all they can play is CDs. Even if they are using CDs, find out if they should be MP3 format, or audio formatted. Some MP3 disks won't play on audio players. In general, if the cheapest \$10 CD player will play your CD, anything will, so it might be worth it to invest in a cheapo.

- *Stage: What size is the stage? Where are the entrances and exits? Will there be a runway? What is the stage made out of? Where will the judges sit?*

All of these are important to plan out a skit. Your skit can't use a runway if there won't be one. You can try to cram 30 people into a 10x4' stage, but it won't be pretty. Having the only entry and exit through the audience makes it hard to plan for a surprise character entrance. Finding out what the stage is made of helps to plan what you can do on it. For example, a stage made of risers in a hotel isn't going to be very good for 20 people doing Stomp because you might fall through. A real stage, though, has its own problems. It can be very deep and large, and seem to swallow a single person entry. Find out where the judges will sit, if possible, so that you can make sure they see your costume. Also, pay attention to what level the judges will be on, and pay attention to the parts of your costume that are on that level. If the judges are in the balcony the top of your head should be styled and neat. If they're sitting on the same level as you pay attention to your makeup and upper

torso. If they're sitting at knee level make sure your shoes match your costume. And if they're sitting below foot level (common for judges sitting in the audience of a stage) find out what your costume looks like from below and make sure you're not flashing your undergarments (or lack thereof).

Now that your research is done, go back to your original work. Why do you want to enter this contest? Is it because you want to make the audience laugh, show off your painstaking workmanship, or do a tribute to your favorite character? Now you have to tailor your presentation to your purpose. First, sit down with a piece of paper and write down your purpose in **BIG LETTERS** on the top. Then list off everything your presentation has to complete that purpose. Here are some general thoughts for each category:

**Audience appreciation:** Funny or clever punchlines, neat plots, coreography, and cultural references always get a good reaction.

**Costume workmanship:** Write this like you would write a making-of-the-costume website. Put down what patterns you used, what kinds of fabrics and supplies, and how you went about things. Note if you had any help from anyone, and what parts they helped with.

**Character tribute:** Put down why you like the character, what's so great about them, and how you plan to look, and act like them.

Now you can use your purpose sheet to tailor your presentation so that the judges see what you want them to see. Here are my general recommendations for how to do that with each category:

**Audience appreciation:** Practice. Practice a lot. Practice with an audience. If your purpose is to please the general audience and not just the Naruto fans present, try to practice with an audience that doesn't know what Naruto is. See if you can find someone who's not a close friend and practice in front of them. If possible, do it in a place with approximately the same lighting, and tape out the stage size on the floor to make sure you're positioned right, and sit them where the judges would

sit. Then give them a big sign, foam hand, or bell, something noticeable. Practice your skit and tell them to ring the bell, wave the hand, or whatever, when they're bored. That's your signal, you should do something new 2 seconds before they put up the sign. You'll be surprised how little time you have before someone is bored or confused. Onstage, bored or confused judges will stop paying attention to you and start picking on your costume in their heads. Audience members will start talking to their neighbors, which distracts more people and makes the clapping polite, not happy. In general, something new should happen every 20 seconds, MINIMUM. More often is even better. Someone should enter, someone should turn around to show the back of their costume, there should be a punchline, an interaction, or an exciting new body movement going on almost constantly. You'll probably find out you really shouldn't lipsync that whole song, just the first verse, or even just the chorus. Leaving the audience wanting more is fifty times better than leaving them slightly bored. You can always do an encore in the halls for adoring fans :D

**Costume workmanship:** The key to this one is figuring out what is new and exciting about your costume. This doesn't have to be new and exciting to everyone, just you. For example, if you are most proud of your hoopskirt because it is the first time you've made one/best one you've ever done/used a new acid-based inflatable balloon polymer then be sure that's on your list. Pay special attention to the things that YOU are the most excited about, not what you think will impress the judges the most. Judges are much more impressed by your enthusiasm than they are about what you think they will like. While you're at it, list off all the flaws you know the costume has. Come on, you know we all catalog these while making costumes. Now, once they're listed, make yourself a pact to NOT mention these in front of the judges. If they ask about it, fine, but don't tell them about your flaws before they see them. I've had plenty of instances where I didn't know the character being presented to me, yet the costumer started off their presentation by listing everything that was wrong with their costume and why it was that way. **IF THEY DON'T ASK don't tell them!!!** The judges may not remember that sash was light yellow and not light green, and if they do they will probably ask about why you changed it, and you can tell them then. Also

think about how you can prove your claims to the judges. Some things, like a good fit and new techniques, are self-evident, but proving that you look exactly like the character is hard if the judge doesn't know the series or source material. Think about what angles are the best and worst on your costume, and try to find pictures of the character with those angles. Reproduce these pictures in triplicate to bring to the judges.

Character tribute: Put down why you like the character, what's so great about them, and how you plan to look, and act like them. Include how the character walks, talks, stands, sits, express happiness, sadness, grief, boredom, and other emotions. You are, in effect, an actor researching your character. See about checking out books from the library on how actors prepare a role. Do some searches on the net for questions writers or roleplayers answer on their character. Then (the hard part ;) ) watch lots of the show/movie or read the books and fill them out. Practice in front of a mirror. Practice in front of friends. Practice is the key :D



# REVIEW - AND ALL THE STARS BY ANDREA K HOST

*Come for the apocalypse. Stay for cupcakes. Die for love.*

*Madeleine Cost is working to become the youngest person ever to win the Archibald Prize for portraiture. Her elusive cousin Tyler is the perfect subject: androgynous, beautiful, and famous. All she needs to do is pin him down for the sittings.*

*None of her plans factored in the Spires: featureless, impossible, spearing into the hearts of cities across the world – and spraying clouds of sparkling dust into the wind.*

*Is it an alien invasion? Germ warfare? They are questions everyone on Earth would like answered, but Madeleine has a more immediate problem. At Ground Zero of the Sydney Spire, beneath the collapsed ruin of St James Station, she must make it to the surface before she can hope to find out if the world is ending.*

I'm not sure why, but I just didn't "get" this book. All the pieces were there, but they just didn't fit together somehow. It wasn't the characterization, though. I did enjoy Madeleine and getting to know her and watch her overcome some pretty steep odds. There were other characters I liked, too, especially Noi. However, at times I did have problems telling some of them apart, especially the gang of boys. I also had problems with the nickname usage, there were times when the author would switch to using a nickname without telling you who was being addressed. It took me a while to recognize Emily and Millie as the same person.

I think my major problem was with the plot. I don't want to spoil too much, but I found the plot very disjointed and random. It starts with the obelisks that land in cities and spew dust everywhere that makes people sick and turns the survivors either green or blue. Later on things happen to the spires, and other events, and it really doesn't connect much to the beginning. There's little foreshadowing of events to come as well, so every plot twist seems very "deus ex machina" with no other purpose than to challenge the cast of characters yet again. The pacing works well, the author has the timing down as to when major events need to happen, I just didn't feel like the events were plausible based on the knowledge given. Too bad, I really wanted to like this book and did love its portrayal of a transsexual and a homosexual relationship.



# HOW TO TELL A COSTUME SCAM ON EBAY

This Tumblr post - <http://dramaticthreads.tumblr.com/post/70462046922/dear-cosplayers> - going around today reminded me of this old tutorial that might still be of use.

Ebay can be incredibly cool. You can find amazing costumes and accessories at super low prices, and one of a kind pieces that you'd never get anywhere else. But it can also be incredibly risky, especially when you're talking about custom costumes. What you see is not always what you get, and sometimes you can get nothing at all. Here are some tips for buyers to prevent being taken for a ride when buying costumes on Ebay.

The first step is to look at the costume and read its description. Make sure you're 100% clear on what it is you are buying. Is it a one of a kind costume, or is it a commercial factory make? Are you bidding on a completed costume, or will one be made for you? What size/sizes are being offered? Are they just numbers, or are measurements included?

There are also some specific things that costumes should include when they are legit. The first is pictures. Pictures of the actual costume. Not pictures of the movie/tv/comic actor/actress/character in the costume. If the only pictures are from the media then you have no idea what you'll actually get. One person's idea of a perfect replica can be totally different from someone else's, and I've seen places where people say something is an 'exact copy' when in reality it's barely the same \*color\*. If the seller is legit you should be able to email/question them for pictures of the costume that they've made, or at least pictures of another costume they've made, and the closer to the costume you're bidding on the better. I would stay far away from anyone who can't show you pictures of at least \*something\* they've made themselves. They may not be scammers, just overenthusiastic newbies, but there is no way for you to judge their skill level, replication ability, or their ability to complete a project and mail it off on any kind of deadline.

Pictures can have another tip off. You should do a little research and make sure the picture displayed is actually of a costume made by

the seller. There are many instances of people on ebay taking pictures of costumes from museum displays or from other sellers and trying to pass them off as their own. A few tip offs are white manequins (most museums use high-quality manequins with heads, sellers will usually have a headless dress dummy), blurry areas on pictures that may have been watermarks that have been removed, or few angles and details. There are a couple of ways to research this. First, find a costuming group, either on yahoo, a message board, forum, or other way to communicate, then ask them about the auction. These communities can be smaller than you think, and a lot of the people can recognize the real thing or one-another's work, especially if it's the same picture. Another way is to email the seller and ask them for more angles or a detail shot of something on the costume. If the seller really owns the costume, they should be able to get you shots of the back, embroidery detail, or inside lining.

While we're talking about contacting people, there are some other tip-offs you can use to signal warning. You should email the auctioneer and ask a question before bidding. Pay close attention to their response, because this is the seller at their best. If they are brusque, rude, or sparse in their contact it will only get worse when they've already got your money. Especially beware of a "How dare you question me!" attitude. Another thing to watch is a seller who waits until the last day of the auction to give you a reply. They're probably stalling time, waiting until you can't ask any more questions to answer you in order to force you into a bid.

Drama in the description can also be a 'bid-now' tactic. Stories about how someone got cancer, had their house burn down, must go visit someone before they die, etc. are usually just emotion tuggers, encouraging you to buy without causing the seller too much stress or pain. If the seller is a scammer they will continue sending you the heart-rending emails as they take you for a ride, using the excuse as a reason the costume won't be delivered on time, and playing on your emotions so you won't ask for a refund until it's too late. Look critically at what's described. If there are more words on the seller's pain than there are on the costume, then they're selling you a sob story, not a product.

Also, be just as cautious with sellers who have one costume, but will, off ebay, make you a copy in your size. Off ebay sales aren't covered by the buyer protection, and they may have not made the costume in

the auction themselves. I would suggest you agree on a price, then have them set up an ebay auction with a buy-it-now option at that price for you to buy, just for your protection. Also, credit cards have more buyer protection than checks and money orders, and tons more than paypal's instant fund transfer from your bank account.

When you are talking about a custom-made costume you should also be super-aware of the time frame for delivery. No one can complete a screen-accurate replica in 24 hours, but a too long time frame is just as bad. Worse, actually, because they are probably delaying until it is too late for you to get a refund for non-delivery. Look up ebay's refund policy, paypal's refund policy, your credit card company's refund policy, and whatever else applies, and be sure things are in that time frame. As of writing this article paypal only gives a buyer 45 days to file a nonpayment report. That means that if a costume is to be delivered in two months by the time you know it's not there you won't be able to file a nonpayment.

Also, look up the buyer's other items, and feedback from just completed auctions. Have they put up 8 other auctions for costumes in the past week, all to be delivered in a month or two? Probably a scammer who has no intention of delivering anything, or, again, an optimistic maker with no reasonable idea of his/her own limitations. Another tipoff is a seller with little or no feedback. Someone with months or years of buying history may just be new to selling, but someone who created an account in the last few days is a big warning. If they have 10 or 20 sales check out their feedback. Note who bought from them, and who else they bought from. Scammers often create three or four selling accounts in different fandoms, this one selling Star Wars costumes, that one selling Harry Potter, a third selling Pirates of the Carribean, etc. Then they create three or four buyers and a few auctions, using the buyers to buy the items for a buy-it-now price. Fake buyers always leave great feedback asap. My favorite was a buyer who got a custom costume in her size made and delivered from the east coast to her home in the west coast in 28 hours. Think logically about what you're seeing on the feedbacks, and read them, don't just note whether they're positive or negative. Also, if the person is an established ebay buyer but this is one of their first sales, check their buying feedback. If sellers say they're a little slow with payment or sparse on email contact and information they'll prob-

ably have problems shipping your costume out on time or keeping you informed in emails.

Other unreasonable expectations to look out for: tons of detail and expensive fabrics the seller could probably not afford for your price (i.e.-10 yards of silk in a dress for \$50, or thousands of hand-sewed beads for that price). If you're confused as to what's reasonable, again, ask around. Go to a few costuming and sewing communities and ask what the going rate would be for the product. Go to a few fabric stores online and see how much the fabric being used costs in raw form. Asking around can get another benefit as well - some sellers use 'buzzwords' or technical language to throw you off, but they don't really understand what it means. An experienced sewer/costumer can tell you when the auction seems off because the seller is confusing in their terms. Again, just think about what you're seeing. If it seems like a good deal, take it, but if it seems way too good to be true it probably is.

I also have a personal policy to always get package tracking on anything I buy that seems like an investment. Any seller worth their salt should be more than happy to give you package tracking if you pay for it (and some for free). Package tracking does more than reassure the seller that you got your package. It also provides the seller, and you, with proof that the package was mailed, and a way to get your money back if it disappears in route. Without package tracking a scammer can claim they sent the item weeks ago and you can't prove different. Remember, Ebay and Paypal make their money on auctions completed and sellers pay the auction fees, so Ebay and Paypal will often err on the side of a scamming buyer in order to keep the seller around and paying their auction fees, so have proof of everything you say.

And finally, look out for my pet peeve. Any seller who says they make things out of "silk and/or satin" really doesn't know sewing, fabrics, or their craft well enough to produce a costume for sale. The phrase "silk and/or satin" is used only by novices who don't know fabrics well enough to know that what they're saying is like calling a pie "apple and/or baked". One describes what it's made of and the other describes how it's made. So let's not use that term anymore, ok?



# THE COSTUMING GOLDEN RULE OF THREE!

Sewing and costuming have a lot of rules that are bendable, breakable, or moldable under different circumstances. But in all of costuming there is one golden rule that can never be broken: You can have something cheap, you can have it quick, or you can have it quality, but never all three. This rule works for both making costumes yourself or buying costumes from someone else.

So what do we mean by these? First is cheap. Cheap means for a small amount of money. If you have lots of time you can wait for sales and coupons, scour thrift stores and garage sales, and get rock-bottom prices. If you need it cheap and fast, you can always find passable knock-offs of expensive stuff. Next is time. You can either have something now, or you can have it later. If you need something now for cheap you will be making out of available, cheap, low-quality items. Think pre-made Halloween costumes and how they are only passable resemblances of movie costumes made out of tissue-thin materials. Finally is quality. Quality refers to both the quality of the materials chosen as well as their suitability to the project. For historical costumes quality also refers to the authenticity or “periodness” of the materials used. For reproduction movie, tv, and anime costumes quality can also refer to the accuracy of the materials and how closely they resemble the original costume/outfit. A quick but accurate costume is going to cost A LOT of money because there is no time to search for good bargains; top dollar must be paid for the correct materials. An accurate and cheap costume needs time to research the correct materials and then time to wait for them to go on sale, find low-price substitutes, and collect coupons.

In very extreme cases you may have to pick only one corollary and forget the other two. For instance, if you want your costume NOW it will probably be both expensive and inaccurate. The cheapest costume

is going to take lots of time and will also make some accuracy sacrifices. Finally, the most accurate costumes were neither quick nor cheap; lots of time was spent researching the correct materials and much money was spent to get them, even on sale correct materials can cost quite a bit of money.

Even when you are looking to buy a costume this rule holds. The seamstress you are buying your costume from must follow the rule, and you're paying for his/her time and work. So be sure to make it clear to them what you want and what is most important.



## REVIEW - THE HALLOWED ONES BY LAURA BICKLE

This was one of the big surprises for me out of the Cybils. I'm not big into Amish stories and I hate horror, so the combination sounded really distasteful. And, I have to say, on some level it was. My horror hate did come through a bit. However, it really stuck with me as a good read, and I was still having nightmares a week later through all the other books I was reading so my subconscious really latched onto it as a chilling thing!

The concept of this book is great: what happens to Amish society during the apocalypse? And what happens to a smart Amish girl who is questioning her faith and her elders? Katie is a great narrator and a very well-built character, showing us her humanity and her faith at the same time. Katie is very conflicted between preserving her way of life by not going against the elders and preserving her way of life by learning what's out there and how to keep it away from their community. This conflict is great, and serves as a driving plot that really kicks up the drama, especially for such a short read. The pacing is good, and although the romance seems very fast and a little forced, I went with it because Alex is such a well-rounded character. The mechanics of the apocalypse are really well done (and I really want to say more about how awesome they are, but I can't without spoiling you!). I was so enchanted and scared out of my pants that I read this book all in one sitting and then couldn't sleep. I think any horror fan will find it as wonderful as I did.

# REVIEW - SHADOWFELL BY JULIET MARILLIER

*Sixteen-year-old Neryn is alone in the land of Alban, where the oppressive king has ordered anyone with magical strengths captured and brought before him. Eager to hide her own canny skill—a uniquely powerful ability to communicate with the fairy-like Good Folk—Neryn sets out for the legendary Shadowfell, a home and training ground for a secret rebel group determined to overthrow the evil King Keldec.*

*During her dangerous journey, she receives aid from the Good Folk, who tell her she must pass a series of tests in order to recognize her full potential. She also finds help from a handsome young man, Flint, who rescues her from certain death—but whose motives in doing so remain unclear. Neryn struggles to trust her only allies. They both hint that she alone may be the key to Alban's release from Keldec's rule.*

*Homeless, unsure of who to trust, and trapped in an empire determined to crush her, Neryn must make it to Shadowfell not only to save herself, but to save Alban.*

It's odd, because I usually adore Juliet Marillier's books, and yet this one wasn't a slam dunk for me. It was certainly better than most, but it just didn't have that absorbing quality I've come to expect. Perhaps that's from the romance. It hung on such tenuous assumptions I often wanted to shake Neryn and say "Just talk to each other darnit!" I mean, I know Neryn is young, but you'd think after a few times she'd get the point. She just kept making the same dumb mistake, though, while skating through all the other challenges presented to her (another slight problem, she seemed a little overpowered in the virtue department, her 'tests' didn't give her much problem). This was really the only character issue I could see. The other characters we meet are well developed for their time on stage. The pacing was slow in spots, but not too bad. I could probably have overlooked the pacing issues if it weren't for the repetitiveness of the plot. Neryn's relationship I trust him / I don't trust him / I trust him flip-flops probably accounted for a lot of that feeling. It got a little better towards the end when there were new characters other than Flint to interact with, but the issues were still there. I think the biggest problem, though, is that Marillier is too used to writing for adults. The book felt like a good START to a great novel, but it didn't really have time to develop into something really juicy, and it didn't tighten up like a YA usually does. I think fans of epic fantasy will like this one, especially if they can read the whole series at once. As for me, I'll pick up the next book in the series to see if the spark of promise pays off.

