

# A Magic Kingdom After Bedtime

A 24-hour RPG by Selene Tan

## Concept

*A Magic Kingdom After Bedtime* is a game inspired by those books where a group of children find their way to a magical land that they must save. As in the best of those books, the events in the magical land allow them to learn things about themselves and grow more confident than they could have in the mundane world. The magical land is created as a group effort before play starts. This makes preparation a little more intensive, but sets a stage that everybody is happy with.

## Characters

Characters in *A Magic Kingdom* are children between the ages of 6 and 14 who live together. They may all be siblings; they may be cousins who are vacationing together; they may be friends at a boarding school. It is up to the group to decide the initial situation. Characters should be created at the beginning of play, with input and feedback from everyone at the table. It's okay if the characters don't like each other to begin with. The initial situation should force them to tolerate each other, and in the magical land they will learn to rely on each other.

Every character has an Issue that they must face. The Issue should be fairly broad, but not all-encompassing. "Lack of confidence in schoolwork" is better than just "Lack of confidence." Each Issue also expresses itself as a real-world Problem. For "Lack of confidence in schoolwork," the Problem might be "Receives failing grades in English despite liking to write on her own." In the magical land, the Issue expresses itself as a Threat to the land. This threat is metaphorical; whatever form it takes, it can only be defeated by resolving the Issue. There is more information on creating the Threat in the section Setting.

Each character also starts with two Allies, one in the real world and one in the magical land. These may not be other player's characters. These Allies are people who believe in the character, lending support when things are going badly.

Now for some numbers. Every character has ratings for Sensibleness and Imagination. These two numbers must add up to 10. Sensibleness could also be called "grown-up-ness", while Imagination could be called "childishness." The starting value for Sensibleness is  $age - 5$ . This means that a 6-year old starts with a Sensibleness of 1 (and correspondingly, an Imagination of 9), and a 14-year old starts with a Sensibleness of 9 (and an Imagination of 1). Children with a 10 in Sensibleness are not "completely grown-up;" if they were, they would be unable to visit the magical land. Likewise, children with a 10 in Imagination are not completely oblivious to the needs and responsibilities of the real world; if they were, they could not function there.

The character's Sensibleness is used as the starting number for their Dedication

to the Real World. The character's Imagination is used as the starting number for their Dedication to the Magical Land. Dedication is used to determine how easily a character can move to the relevant setting.

Characters also start with a Confidence rating of 5. A player may choose to use up to 4 points of Confidence to change their character's starting Sensibleness and Imagination values. A character's Confidence determines the magnitude of their Problem and Threat – for someone with very little Confidence, even a seemingly small problem can present a big hurdle. The Magnitude of the real-world Problem is equal to the character's Confidence plus Imagination. The Magnitude of the magical land's Threat is equal to the character's Confidence plus Sensibleness.

The Allies have a Supportiveness value, which is how much support they can lend to the character. The real world Ally has Supportiveness equal to Imagination, while the magical land Ally has Supportiveness equal to Sensibleness.

## Setting

The real-world setting involves figuring out the relationships between the children, their reasons for being together, and where they are.

For the magical setting, each player states one place, one life-form or culture, and one technology or artifact they want to exist in the magical land. It's up to the players to resolve conflicts and make things work harmoniously. (Which is to say I'm currently too lazy to write up a better method, and also short on time.)

## System

The main dice mechanic is heavily borrowed from Vincent Baker's *Otherkind*. Resolution uses 10-sided dice. For each player, numbers 1 to Sensibleness on the die count as Sensible, and numbers 10 to 10 – Imagination count as Imaginative .

First, determine the stakes of the conflict. Name one thing that you want to have happen, and one thing that your opponent wants to have happen. These should be mutually exclusive. Next, you and your opponent each name one thing you don't want to have happen. These should not be mutually exclusive with the things you want you have happen.

Roll 4 dice. Distribute them among the categories Narration, Achievement, Cost, and Dedication. In the real world, dice showing Sensible values are successes and dice showing Imaginative values are failures. In the magical land, dice showing Imaginative values are successes and dice showing Sensible values are failures.

A success in Narration means you get to narrate the outcome; a failure means your opponent does. A success in Achievement means that you get what you wanted; a failure means your opponent got what she wanted. A success in Cost means that what your opponent didn't want to happen, happened. A failure in Cost means the opposite. A success in Dedication means that you add a point of Dedication to whichever setting you're in, real or magical, and deduct a point of Dedication from the other setting. A

failure in Dedication means you do the opposite.

You can also choose to spend Confidence to add dice to the roll. Every Confidence die you include in the roll you get back; the others are lost. Every Confidence die in the roll that comes up as a success gives you an extra point of Confidence. In other words, to gain Confidence you must risk it, and you must learn from your mistakes rather than ignoring them.

You can aid another player by giving them one of your Confidence dice. As with spending your own Confidence, you get it back if the die is used in the roll and lose it otherwise. Additionally, if the die is used in the roll and comes up a success, *both* of you gain a point of Confidence.

If your Dedication to one of the settings drops to zero, then you lose your ability to travel to, believe in, and enjoy that setting. You will remember events from the other setting as nothing more than a dream. You may still be dragged unwillingly to it by the other players. However, you also lose your ability to make rolls in the setting whose Dedication is zero. Regardless of setting, you can continue to lend Confidence dice to other players. You may still deal with your Problem or Threat – whichever is appropriate to the setting whose Dedication is non-zero.

Changing settings is done using a conflict roll.

## **Play**

Play starts with each player going through one scene where they face their Problem. They may not use Confidence dice in this scene, as it exists to set the stage. The players then each choose one sign by which they get the first hint that magic exists. The players with the highest Imagination are the first to actually encounter the land and break through. This, and the sequence where the others are brought to the magical land, should be roleplayed. (i.e., again in a time-crunch) Feel free to set up actual conflicts and roll for them during this section.

The game rotates between players, giving each of them a scene. Players may choose to combine their scenes, into one. The scenes may be of the following types:

- Face a Problem or Threat
- Confront a Problem or Threat
- Seek help from an Ally
- Attempt to change settings

When facing a threat, the Game Master has a number of dice that can be used against a character in the real world equal to the magnitude of that character's Problem, and a number of dice that can be used in the magical land equal to the magnitude of that character's Threat. The GM must use at least one Magnitude die in each roll for the Problem or Threat. When the Magnitude dice for a Problem or Threat have been reduced to zero, that player's next scene will be a Confrontation.

In a Confrontation, a player directly faces her Problem or Threat. She can use

her own Confidence dice in the roll, but nobody else can lend her Confidence dice – the Confrontation is something that must be done alone. If the player wins the Confrontation, the Problem or Threat is vanquished and the player gains an extra point of Confidence. If the Confrontation is lost, then the Problem or Threat was too much for the character. The GM gains Magnitude dice equal to the character's Confidence, and the character loses a point of Confidence.

A character can also seek help from an Ally. This involves a roll as usual, but the character cannot use her Confidence dice to augment the roll. Instead, she may use the Ally's Supportiveness to add dice to the roll. Supportiveness dice which are not used in the roll are lost, while those used in the roll are kept. Additionally, Supportiveness dice which count as successes each add one point of Confidence to the character.

When attempting to change settings, the player may not use Confidence. Instead, she may use Dedication to the target setting to augment the roll exactly as if it were Confidence.

The game ends when all characters have successfully Confronted their Problems and Threats. There is a celebration in the magical land where each player gets to narrate how their characters are recognized for their achievements. Then the characters take their leave of the magical land, and the players each narrate an epilogue that describes how their characters' lives have changed for the better.