

*Once
Upon
a Time
and Long
Ago*

*a role-playing game by Jeffrey S. Schechter,
Created in only 24 Hours*

Table of Contents

Title Page	p. 1
Table of Contents	p. 2
Introduction	p. 3

CREATING CHARACTERS: THE BIRTH OF A ROYALTY DESTINED TO BE CURSED WITH INTERESTING LIVES

Age, Innocence, and Prior Development	p. 4
The Six Qualities	p. 5
Various Abilities	p. 6
Friends and Allies	p. 8
Possessions	p. 8
Hearts, Stars, and Tears	p. 9

RULES OF PLAY: THE INTREPID EXPLOITS OF OUR FEARLESS BAND OF HEROES

Task Resolution and Modifiers	p. 10
Interacting with Other Characters	p. 11
Being Frustrated	p. 12
Fights	p. 13
Magic	p. 14
Growing Up	p. 18

BEING THE GUIDE: WITH GREAT POWER COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

Finding Common Threads	p. 19
Archetypes of the Fantasy World	p. 20
Example of Play	p. 21

Character Record Sheet	p. 24
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Introduction

Once Upon a Time and Long Ago is a role-playing game inspired by the dark fairy tales collected by Jacob and Willhelm Grim, the enchanting, carefree children's epic Peter Pan, and a wonderful novel by Neal Stephenson known as The Diamond Age, or, A Young Lady's Illustrated Primer. It is not just a role-playing game, though: it is a lens with which the participants in the game look back at their childhoods, and transmogrifier that turns the day to day routine and tumultuous events alike of early childhood up through puberty into a fantastical adventure.

As in most role-playing games, you will need yourself, a few friends (two to five is best), dice (here normal six sided ones, preferably at least five or six per person), paper, and pencils in order to play. One person will be chosen as the Guide, and the others will be Princes and Princesses. Each Prince or Princess must create their character: a younger version of themselves, anywhere from four to eleven years old, that is the prince or princess of an imaginary fantasy kingdom. They might have been ousted out of their kingdom during the takeover of an Evil Witch, they might have been given away when they were babies to be raised by wolves and have only just found out about their heritage, or they might still be in charge--it is up to the player, but their character's current situation should be an allegory for their childhood. During the game, the players will have control over their Prince or Princess, and get to decide how they react to the puzzles, dangers, friends, and enemies that they will meet in their adventures.

The Guide will not need to create a prince or princess, for they will be portraying the rest of the world--describing the setting and situation, and playing the evil witches, tricky fairies, helpful talking animals, easily befuddled giants, and other antagonists and bit players. The guide also interprets rules and mediates disputes. For this reason, they should have a copy of the rule book, and it can be helpful if one or two other copies are available for perusal by the Princes and Princesses.

As they are creating their Prince or Princess, the players should have a piece of paper on hand, upon which they will write a brief timeline of major childhood events and lessons. The timeline doesn't need to be accurate in its dates at all, but should have a semblance of chronological order. The things that go on the timeline are left up to the player writing it, but they should be important things--major life lessons, events that shaped the player's personality, examples of recurring

childhood themes, and the like. They should then give this timeline to the Guide, who will use the collective timelines of all the players as a sort of map for the game. The people, places, and events on the timelines will almost all show up in the game via metaphorical counterparts.

The Birth of a Royalty Destined to be Cursed with Interesting Lives

The first thing that must be done in order to play is the formation of the Princes and Princesses and the creation of accompanying timelines. Each player (aside from the Guide) should use the following rules to create their character. This may be done individually, but it is preferable that everyone create their characters together, around the same table, with the ideas of each and every player contributing to each and every Prince or Princess.

Age, Innocence, and Prior Development

Before anything else may be considered about a players fantastical, royal, younger version of themselves, they must decide at what age their Prince or Princess will begin their adventures. This may be any age that falls within the span of four to eleven years of age. The younger a prince or princess, the more they have to learn and develop, and thus the more they will gain from their upcoming exploits. However, an older child may already have a handful of useful skills, allowing them to start play with more competence.

In order to represent this, each character has a pool of Innocence points that may be used during the game (equal to fifteen minus their age), and a pool of Prior Development points which may be used to buy useful abilities before the game has started (equal to their age). For instance, Pat decides that his character will start out at seven years old. Thus, Prince Patrick will start the game with eight points of Innocence and seven points' worth of extra Qualities, Abilities, Friends, and Possessions.

The Six Qualities

Princes and Princesses are defined by six Qualities, at their most basic level. The Qualities measure how much of something a character is, being Charming, Clever, Inquisitive, Magical, Quick, and Strong. There are five levels to a quality...

- Level One: Not Very
- Level Two: Moderately
- Level Three: Quite
- Level Four: Exceptionally
- Level Five: Mythically

The numerical level of a Quality tells how many dice are rolled when that Quality comes into play, and the descriptive level is useful when comparing the capabilities of one Prince or Princess to those of another or the difficulty of a task. Each Prince or Princess may spread thirteen levels out among their Qualities, putting at least one and no more than four levels into each. If they wish, they may buy extra levels at a price of two Prior Development points each.

As an example, Pat is picking Prince Patrick's Qualities. He was somewhat dense as a child, but larger and longer in the legs than most kids in the neighborhood, and was always asking "why." So, he decides that Prince Patrick will be Moderately Charming (2), Not Very Clever (1), Quite Inquisitive (3), Not Very Magical (1), Quite Quick (3), and Exceptionally Strong (4). This is fourteen levels total, so Prince Patrick's Qualities cost two of his seven Prior Development points, leaving him with five more to go.

The Qualities are described in a bit more depth below.

Charming describes how much people like a character. It determines how many close friends and allies a character starts off with, and how easy it is to make more. Charming can be used to impress the others at court, persuade a unicorn or baby dragon to be friendly and not bite, make others feel comfortable, and do similar things.

Clever indicates how much a character knows and how well they are able to think on their feet. Very clever characters have probably learned to read and even read a few chapter books, and are good at tricking people and making complicated plans. Clever can be used to fool and angry troll into thinking that his companion trolls are insulting him, navigate a maze set up by a wicked sorcerer, and find food and water in the desert.

Inquisitive reflects a character's propensity to ask questions and go exploring, and often how eager they are to pick up new skills. An inquisitive character will often figure things out by trial and error, and succeed where others have failed simply because they test out everything that they can think of. Inquisitive may be used to find out what people know about the old castle on the top of the hill, to happen upon the cave that you have been looking for, and to stumble across useful things in unlikely places.

Magical quantifies a character's mystical aura. Gryphons, pegasi, and other magical creatures are more likely to befriend a very magical character. A very magical Prince or Princess will have an easier time learning to cast spells, and will likewise be better able to resist the spells of their enemies.

Quick represents how fast a character can run, how easily they can dodge blows, and how little time it will take for them to notice and react to danger. Quickness may be used to win a race with a centaur, to avoid the flailing club of an angry troll or hill giant, to follow a leprechaun without being spotted and to get in the first swing in a scuffle.

Strong measures the raw physical power, stamina, health, and fitness of a character. A particularly strong prince may be able to lift heavy objects like boulders and get back on their feet after being dropped a handful of yards by an angry roc. Strong may be used to shrug off poisons placed in a character's food, hit hard in a fight, and tackle such barriers as solid wooden doors and large rocks in front of caves.

Various Abilities

Whereas all Princes and Princesses possess the six Qualities to one degree or another, Abilities are a rather different story. For the most part, one either has them, or one does not. Each Prince or Princess has at least three points' worth of Abilities. If they wish, they may spend some of their Prior Development points for extra Ability points on a one for one basis. The different sorts of Abilities are described below. Some Abilities might require a character to have one or more Qualities at at least a certain minimum level.

For example, Pat is picking Abilities for Prince Patrick. He decides that Patrick should be Famous in his home kingdom (1/2 a point), and at least have been schooled enough to be Literate (1/2 a point). Prince Patrick, being the athletic sort, also has the Talents of Running (1 point) and Brawling (1 point). Also, although nobody in his family knows, Prince

Patrick has the secret ability to turn into a Leopard during the night! (2 points). This is a total of 5 points, so costs 2 Prior Development points, leaving 3 more to go.

Deep Power means that a character has extra reserves of magical energy within them, and costs 1 point. It grants a character two extra Stars (see below).

Famous characters are easily recognized and usually liked. For half a point, a character may be famous only in one area, usually their home country. For one point, they may be known far and wide. For two points, they may be recognizable by literally everyone and everything, from people to fairies to forest animals.

Learned Spells are magic spells that a character knows by heart. Spells come in three powers: Novice, for small little spells that have a relatively finite effect, which cost one half of a point each; Adept, for sizable spells which may have a great effect, and cost 1 point each; and Sorcerer, for great spells that may harm dozens at a time, and cost 3 points each. Unlike when casting a spell from a book, a character does not need to spend time studying or test their Clever before casting a learned spell. More on spells can be found in the Magic section.

Literate means that a character knows how to read and write, and costs one half of a point.

Magical Prowess lets a character cast spells, and costs one half of a point. A character must be at least Moderately Clever and Moderately Magical to have Magical Prowess.

Patient means that a character is not easily frustrated, and costs one point. It grants a character two extra Tears (see below).

Shape Changing allows a character to become an animal. When some time comes--usually either dawn or midnight--the Prince or Princess turns back into a human. For two points, a character has one specific normal animal that they can turn into. For three points, they may either become any normal animal, or one type of magical animal. For four points, they may turn into any animal at all, normal or magical. A character must be at least Quite Magical to pick the Shape Changing ability.

Talents are things that a character is especially good at, like sailing or sword fighting or tending to animals. You may make up your own Talents for your Prince or Princess, but they should be relatively finite like the three examples above. Each

Talent that a character has costs them one point. Whenever a character is making a roll, and they have a relevant Talent, they may add one extra die to the roll.

Tough means that a character is hard to beat up and knock around, and costs one point. It grants a character two extra Hearts.

Friends and Allies

Everyone has at least a few friends, but some have powerful, loyal friends that are willing to follow them almost anywhere. If a character's level in the Charming Quality is high enough, they will gain a few Friends points for free. (They gain a number of Friends Points equal to their level of Charming, minus two.) Additional Friends points may be purchased for one Prior Development point each.

Other characters are not described in the same way as Princes and Princesses. Instead of having Qualities, Abilities, Friends, and Possessions, they simply have a number of Traits, that are rated from 1 to 10. A rating of 1 is poor, 3 is average, 5 is good, 7 is excellent, and 9 is spectacular. Traits are usually broad, like "Magical Powers" or "Fox Abilities."

When you create friends for your Prince or Princess, you will get to choose those friends' Traits. Each friend has a number of Traits equal to the number of Friends points that you decide to spend on them. The lowest rated Trait has a rating of 5. Each other Trait has a rating one higher than the last.

For example, Prince Patrick's best friend is an albino leopard with whom he runs during the night. Since the Prince is only Moderately Charming, he receives no free Friends points. Thus, he spends two of his remaining three Prior Development points on White Leopard. He picks for him the Traits of Leopard Skills at 5 and Has Traveled Widely at 6.

Possessions

Last of all, a character may have a few special, magical, or exceedingly useful possessions. A character does not need to buy any items that they own with points unless they are very expensive, well made, or imbued with sorcery. This sort of possession may be bought with leftover Prior Development points. The various types of possessions are described below.

Magical Trinkets are charms and baubles that with some

minor enchantment put on them. Minor trinkets cost one point, and major trinkets cost two points. A minor trinket might be a compass that always points to safety or a rock that will let you talk to your friends, even if you are very far away. A major trinket could be a mirror that lets you see any place or person that you wish in its glass, or a snow globe that grows and becomes a real house when you speak the magic words.

Mighty Tools are either exceedingly finely crafted and easy to use, or simply enchanted by some powerful magical being. A mighty tool either adds a bonus die to any roll made to wield it in any fashion, or two bonus dice when used in a particular fashion (such as only when slaying giants, for a sword). A mighty tool costs one point.

Personal Items are things that are very important to a character, and that they would never willingly part with. A character gains a bonus die on all rolls made to use one of their own Personal Items. Likewise, they gain a bonus die on all rolls made to recover a lost or stolen Personal Item. Each Personal Item costs one point.

Spell Books are books, scrolls, and stone tablets that have magical spells written on them. They have names like “The Primer of Practical Necromancy” and “1001 Uses for Eldritch Lightning.” Small spell books cost one point, medium books cost two points, and large books cost three points.

Wealth can either be a single expensive item or a large store of riches. A small amount of wealth costs one point, a great amount costs two points, and vast amounts cost three points.

For example, Pat has one more Prior Development point to spend for Prince Patrick. He decides to spend it upon a cloak made out of wove albino hairs that White Leopard gave to him when he was very young, and has always kept him warm during cold nights and been loose and cool on hot days.

Hearts, Stars, and Tears

After you have figured out your Prince’s or Princess’ Qualities, Abilities, Friends, and Possessions, you must calculate their Hearts, Stars, and Tears. Hearts represent how much physical punishment your character can take before they are forced to give up. A character has a number of Hearts equal to their level in Strong, plus two if they selected the Tough ability. Stars represent how much magical power a character can use before they have to rest. A character has no Stars unless they chose the Magical Prowess ability. If they did, they have Stars

equal to their level in Magical, plus two if they selected the Deep Power ability. Tears represent how much frustration a character can stand before breaking down. A character has a number of Tears equal to half their age, rounding down, plus two if they selected the Patient ability.

The friends of the Princes and Princesses and other characters also have a number of Hearts. This is usually one or two, but it may be the value of an appropriate Trait minus two, where relevant. For example, since leopards are fierce warriors, and White Leopard has the Trait Leopard Skills at 5, he will have three hearts. Characters with appropriate Traits may also have Stars, numbering the value of the relevant Trait minus 2.

The Intrepid Exploits of our Fearless Band of Heroes

The child protagonists of Once Upon a Time and Long Ago are expected to band together and have adventures in a world with a slightly dark fairy tale motif. Why might they band together? They could be in the same royal school, or traveling to the same destination, or simply be long time friends. What are these adventures about? Quite simply, the lives of the players. The opening scenario should tie in with the earliest events on the timelines given over to the Guide. During this time, other characters will be introduced that are parallel to important characters that come up later on the timeline. In further game sessions, the events in the game will proceed to metaphorically recapture events that occur later in the timelines. Many events and characters on the timelines of different characters will likely be merged, while others will not, thus exploring the similarities and differences between the childhoods of the players.

Task Resolution and Modifiers

But enough of the speculative exploration business--there's plenty of time for that later. What we're at right now is how to determine whether or not a young Prince or Princess gets something done. When one of the protagonists is attempting something difficult, or trying to do something better than another character, or trying to do something while being actively resisted by another character, dice are rolled to determine the outcome of events.

When the player states what their Prince or Princess is attempting to do, two things must be determined: firstly, how difficult the stated task is; and secondly, what Quality is most relevant. When the Guide has decided how difficult the task at hand is, they will assign a Target Number, or TN, based upon this decision. The TN of a task is 3 for something relatively simple, 5 if it is slightly difficult, 7 if it is very difficult, and 9 if it is as good as impossible. The player of the protagonist on trial will then roll a number of six sided dice equal to the relevant Quality. If the highest single die equals or exceeds the TN, then the character completed their task successfully. If multiple dice roll a '6,' then the value of the highest die is treated as if it were one higher for every extra 6 rolled. Sometimes you will need to determine a characters Success Level or Failure Level for a roll. This is equal to the difference between the TN and the value of the highest rolling die.

For example, Patrick is trying to push a medium sized boulder over a cliff and onto the head of a mean old ogre, as per a trap set by him and his friends. The Guide sets the TN of this task at 5. Prince Patrick, being Exceptionally Strong, rolls 4 dice, the results being 3, 4, 6, and 6. Since Patrick rolled one extra 6, the result of his highest die is treated as if it were 7. Therefore, Prince Patrick succeeds with a Success Level of 2 (7 minus 5).

Often times, there will be cause to modify the number of dice rolled. Sometimes this modifier will come from the Prince or Princess' repertoire of Abilities and Possessions, such as when using Skills, Mighty Tools, and Personal Items. Other times, however, it will come from external sources or the player behind the Princess or Prince.

- Being boring, predictable, and stupid: -2 dice
- Rushing or doing two things at once: -1 die
- Giving a bare minimum of description: -1 die
- Giving a good description: +1 die
- Taking extra time and working carefully: +1 die
- Being exceptionally proactive and cool: +2 dice

In addition to the above fixed modifiers, any roll may also gain a positive or negative modifier equal to the Success Level or Failure Level of a previous, related roll, as appropriate.

Interacting with Other Characters

Occasionally, the young Princes and Princesses featured by this game may get into a contest with one another. In these instances, each protagonist has an appropriate roll made for

them, with the result of that roll acting as the TN for their opponent. In the event of a tie, the contest may either be rerolled or taken as such.

More often, our heroes will want to test their mettle against the other denizens of the world. Remember how a character's friends have Traits? Well, so do the other denizens of the world, rated in the same way. You may notice that Traits are situated on approximately the same scale as Target Numbers. This is not a coincidence: when a Prince or Princess is going up against another character, the rating of that other character's most relevant Trait becomes the TN. If they have no relevant Trait, the TN is 3. This may be adjusted up or down by up to 2 points for favorable and unfavorable circumstances.

For instance, before Prince Patrick had started rolling his boulder away to wage war against the ogre, he had noticed that a large rock lizard was living in the shade underneath. Recognizing him as a friend of the Lizard King, Patrick thought it best to clear the moving of the rock with the lizard beforehand. The lizard, being a friend of the King, thought rather highly of himself, have the trait Pompous at 5. Because there were few other rocks in the area (after all, if there were, Prince Patrick wouldn't have bothered the lizard in the first place), the TN of convincing him to move will increase by 1, up to 6. Patrick takes the novel approach of informing the lizard in all solemnity that he had heard that ogres were quite fond of lizard eggs, and it would be in both of their best interests to dispatch the great brute. This earns him two bonus dice for being clever, which he adds to his two for being Moderately Charming. Patrick rolls a 1, 2, 2, 6--a Success Level of 0. The lizard claims that he had not before heard this interesting fact on ogre lifestyle, but he would allow his rock to be used in the ogre-slaying endeavor, as his favorite fourth cousin had been accidentally trodden upon by a member of the species in question and the family was still rather peeved.

Being Frustrated

Children, especially royal children, are used to getting what they want. When things don't go their way, even sometimes with trivial things--perhaps especially with trivial things--they can get very upset. As a consequence, further attempts to make things right just go worse and worse and worse. When out having adventures in the wild, with no adults to step in and make everything all better, coping with this can be a major issue.

When a character tries something and fails, they may try

again. If they fail a second time, they must mark a slash through one of their Tears with a pencil. They must also do this when they fail for a possible third, fourth, and so on, time. For small, quick tasks, the tears are marked immediately. For more lengthy, involved tasks, they may be marked a short while after each attempt. When a character has only one tear left, they become frustrated, and the TN of any task that they attempt is increased by 1 point. When all tears have been marked they go through a tantrum or collapse crying.

If, after they have gained a tear or two, a character steps back for a bit and takes a few deep breaths and in general takes some time to calm down, they may erase the mark through one of their tears. Note that a character may only do this after they have gained one or more tears, and they may only do it once per episode of frustration. The only way to get rid of the frustration entirely, and erase the marks through all of a character's tears, is the catharsis that comes when the last tear is marked and the Prince or Princess has a rather undignified minor breakdown. For each character that comes to comfort them, they may take a mark away from one tear, or two if they are comforted sincerely by a close friend. After such a cathartic episode, the young protagonist gains a new tear.

Fights

Fights are nasty and vicious, especially to a child who has taken on a cave troll or dragon. When a fight breaks out, everyone should have roughly the same opportunity to take action (at least after an initial surprise volley, if there is one).

When a character is injured in a fight, they will have slashes penciled in on their hearts. The number of slashes is equal to the defense's Failure Level (for princes and princesses) or the attack's Success Level (for other characters). If using man-made or powerful natural weapons, an extra slash is marked. If the defendant is wearing strong armor, one less slash is marked. When all of a character's hearts have been slashed, start doubling up by turning slashes into Xs.

After a character has no more hearts without a slash, they have been grievously wounded. Princes and Princesses have all of their TNs increased by 1, and other characters have their Traits reduced by one. Once a character has started to take Xs, they are unconscious. If all of a character's hearts have been Xed, then they pass away. At the end of the day, a character may test their Strength. The TN for this test is 5 if the character got complete rest, 6 if they got some rest, or 7 if they were active. If the character rolls a Success Level, then

that many Xs become slashes or slashes disappear. If they roll a Failure Level of at least 2, then the wound has been infected, and festers, causing the character to take one more slash.

Magic

There are two ways in which a character may cast a spell: by heart, or from a book. When casting a spell that they know by heart, a Prince or Princess need only pencil in a slash over some of their stars (1 star for Novice or Adept spells and 2 stars for Sorcerer spells) and mutter an incantation. As with hearts, you may start Xing stars after you have slashed all of them. If a character has one or more Xed stars, the TN of any roll made using their Magical Quality increases by 1.. If they have Xed all of their stars, they lose their ability to do magic for ever, and lose all of their stars. For every ten minutes during which a character doesn't use magic, one X becomes a slash or one slash is erased completely.

Casting a spell from a book first requires that the spell be *in* a book. Finding an appropriate spell requires a magic book on the topic at hand and a test of Clever. The TN of this test is 6 for a small book, 5 for a medium book, and 4 for a large book. Increase the TN by 1 for especially rare or dangerous spells. Increase it by 1 again for Adept spells or 2 for Sorcerer spells. This research usually takes about an hour. Actually casting the spell then requires that the Prince or Princess mark 1 star for a Novice spell, 2 for an Adept, and 3 for a Sorcerer one. In addition, the spell takes a full minute at least to cast, instead of a few seconds.

Other characters that have stars may also cast spells. Many spells require a Prince or Princess to make a roll against some TN. Other characters do not roll, but simply use the value of a relevant Trait. If the TN would be some Trait of the target, and the target is a Prince or Princess, they may make a roll to resist the spell using their Magical Quality. In this sort of situation, reverse the Success Level or Failure Level generated when interpreting the spell's effects. For example, if an evil witch used the *Zap* spell against Patrick, and Patrick rolled a 5 against the witch's Black Magic Trait of 6 (Failure level of 1), Patrick would slash two hearts, just as a monster would slash two hearts if one of Patrick's friends had rolled a Success Level of 1 when casting the same spell at them.

A number of example spells are presented below, although these are by no means the limits of magic. They should simply be used as guidelines against which new creations may be compared. The first and weakest type of spell is the Novice

level spell. Novice level spells tend to be simple, effect a small area, and not last for a terribly long time.

Armor lets a magician quickly raise an effective defense when surprised. For up to an hour, the caster is surrounded by a field of magical energy that acts like armor, even against magic spells such as *Zap* that normally bypass material protection.

Cover Trail is a spell often used by wizards fleeing from more powerful foes. It lasts for up to twelve hours, as long as the caster performs no other magic. As long as it remains active, the caster and those with them leave no trail that can be tracked with sight or scent.

Disguise creates an intangible illusion that moves with the caster, making them look like someone else entirely. If they wish, they may mimic the appearance of a specific individual that they have seen before. The disguise lasts for up to twelve hours, as long as the caster performs no other magic.

Find is a useful spell often used by exploring magicians. The caster concentrates upon a target, and senses the general direction in which they must travel to reach it, as long as it is no more than a few miles away. Find may last for up to twelve hours, as long as the caster performs no other magic.

Hide is a spell used to make small objects invisible for a short amount of time. The caster touches one inanimate object or willing subject no larger than themselves after casting the spell. For as long as the caster continues to touch it, the target cannot be seen. Inanimate objects may remain invisible for up to an hour thereafter.

Ignite starts a small fire on any flammable object that the caster can see. you may not use Ignite to start a fire on something being worn or carried by another character unless you physically touch the material to be immolated.

Light is one of the simplest spells ever devised. It simply creates a glowing bauble of light that the caster may command to hover over themselves or follow another or simply hold in their palm, and illuminates as well as a bright torch (if not better). The light lasts for as long as the caster concentrates upon in and then up to an hour more.

Low Countermagic is used to prevent other casters from finishing their spells, and thus takings only half a second to cast, instead of the normal two or three. Test your Magical against the target's most relevant Trait. If you succeed, and they were casting a Novice level spell, then their spell fizzles

and fails.

Prescience can be extremely useful, but is rather unreliable. The caster concentrates upon some action that they could take, and makes a roll of their Magical Quality against TN 6. If they succeed, they get a reliable feeling as to whether or not taking that course of action would be a good idea.

Zap is a simple spell for self protection that works on the principal of “the best defense is a strong offense.” It allows a character to roll the attack with their Magical Quality, and causes the victim to slash hearts as if they had been attacked with a weapon and were not wearing armor, even if they actually are. The Zap may take the form of a small ball of fire, a fork of lightning, and high pitched scream, or something else, depending upon the version used, and may strike a target up to a stone’s throw away.

The second group of spells, slightly more powerful, are the Adept spells. Adept spells are capable of producing moderately strong effects throughout a sizable target at a long distance, and can last for days or more.

Banish can force a ghost or spirit to stop haunting a place if the caster succeeds at a roll of their Magical Quality against the target malingering presence’s relevant Trait.

Blast is like an evolved version of *Zap*. It may target everyone within a sphere with a radius of about three yards, but otherwise behaves as a *Zap*. Roll to attack each target separately. Blast may also be put to more industrial use, carving out up to three cubic meters of wood or earth or two cubic meters of metal or stone at a time.

Charm is a nasty spell that can bend the mind of even a bitter enemy to make one seen as a close friend. Test your Magical against the target’s most relevant Trait. If you succeed, then they come to see you in a benevolent light at least, possibly as a close acquaintance with a greater Success Level. This spell lasts for anywhere between two days and a week, and ends immediately if the caster acts obvious hostile towards a *Charmed* target.

Flood of Light lets loose a torrent of brightness which powerfully illuminates any area up to a few hundred feet in radius and only dissipates when dismissed or after half a week.

Fog summons a thick, damp cloud that muffles sound and hinders sight beyond a few yards. The cloud may be up to a couple hundred feet in radius. For as long as the caster

concentrates, they may direct the movement and shape of the cloud. The cloud will not disperse while the caster is still concentrating upon it, and burns off in the sun like natural fog after their attention has turned elsewhere.

High Countermagic is used to prevent other casters from finishing their spells, and thus takings only half a second to cast, instead of the normal two or three. Test your Magical against the target's most relevant Trait. If you succeed, then their spell fizzles and fails.

Invisibility turns the caster invisible for as long as they concentrate. If they practice more magic or take any other strenuous action, the spell ends and the caster may once again be seen by human eyes.

Scry lets a caster look into a pond or mirror and see the person or location that they concentrate upon. They may spy in this way for hours on end, as long as they work no other magic in this interval.

Summon Storm is a powerful but uncontrollable spell. The caster shouts out the incantation to the sky, and over the next few minutes dark clouds roll in and torrential rain, snow, or hail pours down, accompanied by frequent lightning. The caster does not control the direction of the storm in the slightest. The storm dissipates after a number of hours equal to the summed roll of two dice.

Lastly is the most powerful level of spell, Sorcerer level spells. These potent magical tools may have very powerful, far reaching, and lingering effects.

Earthquake causes powerful forces to rock an area of land a few miles in radius, although tremors can be felt for hundreds of miles. At the center of effect, the earthquake may collapse sturdy buildings, level old hills and raise new, and greatly change the course of a river. The caster has control over exactly what the force that they unleash will do.

Fire Rain must be cast while a storm is gathering. When it begins to rain, it does not rain water, but instead droplets of hissing fire. The storm disperses after a number of hours equal to the summed roll of two dice.

Imprison is a spell used to lock an enemy away out of sight and mind without really killing them. The caster must have made a small doll carved in the likeness of the target, and wrap the doll in cloth when they cast the spell. Test your Magical against the target's most relevant Trait. If you succeed, they

are whisked away to a magical prison outside of time and space. They may only be freed if the doll is found and the cloth removed from around it. While imprisoned, a character does not experience time in a linear fashion, and does not sleep or age.

Night Hunt must be cast just as the bottom of the sun touches the horizon. In the time that it takes for the sun to fade completely, night beasts of all sorts, like wolves and bats and great cats, will gather around the caster, who may issue them one order. The beasts will obey that order until it is completed or the sun rises, whichever comes first, and then return to business as usual.

Shadow Sickness is a wicked spell that infects one creature or plant with a magical disease. Every day, they will grow a bit paler and whispier. After ten days, they start to be very blurry and indistinct. After twenty, they are only a moving shadow. The sickness is transmitted to every creature and plant that the character touches during the first ten days of their fading. Shadow Sickness can be cured by drinking liquid sunlight.

Slay will instantly kill any mortal with a touch, if the caster succeeds at a roll of their Magical Quality against the target's most relevant Trait. Use of this spell is considered evil and malign, and those who put it to their foul ends are spurned by the fairies and animals and even, it can seem, Nature herself.

Growing Up

The mature (but not age) according to the timeline provided to the Guide at the start of the game. After each session in which a character experiences a major events parallel to one on their timeline, such as the death of a companion or overcoming of some greater challenge, they may loose a point of Innocence. This may be traded in for both one extra level of a Quality and one more point's worth of Abilities. If a character wishes, they may save up these points to buy more costly Abilities down the line.

Some characters may not wish to be disillusioned. They may keep their Innocence even after experiencing pain, death, betrayal, and other harsh realities of life. When such a character would lose Innocence, they may choose to postpone the loss. Keep a tally of a character's points of delayed lost Innocence. When that character has slashed all of their tears, their breakdown is proceeded by a period of reflection and brooding, during which their lift catches up to their living. At this time they lose Innocence equal to the tallied number of

points multiplied by 1.5, rounding up. However, they only gain the extra Quality levels and Ability points from the tallies.

As a character loses Innocence, they grow up. Elements from their past become less important and fade. For every two points of Innocence lost the character loses something more. This may be one of their Friends, a Personal Item or other possession, or something more ephemeral. When a young Prince or Princess has reached zero Innocence, they are no longer truly a child. They will have one last quest, during which the themes and lessons of their life so far will be compounded, and then they enter the grown up world.

You may have noted that there are many things in the world that may slay a character before their time. Angry trolls, powerful wizards, and annoyed dragons can all be very dangerous. When a Princess or Prince would be slain, they may lose a point of Innocence without gaining any benefit in order to live on.

With Great Power comes Great Responsibility

The duty of the Guide is to turn the childhoods of the players into fantastical adventures for the young Princes and Princesses. More to the point, fun, interesting, thought-provoking fantastical adventures. This section is a collection of tips that will (hopefully) make this a bit easier.

Finding Common Threads

In order to make the story powerful to everyone involved without having to go off on a lengthy tangent for each separate Prince or Princess, you may want to locate and isolate common themes and parallel characters on the timelines of the players. These commonalities may often be combined in the game. For instance, one of the Prince's or Princess' Friends may act as a universal parental figure.

This is not to say that every theme *must* be combined with a few others. It may be a good idea to leave a few elements of each player's timeline unblended, giving each player's Prince or Princess some assured spotlight time. When deciding which elements would be best combined and which would serve well

individually, consider making events that are especially important to the player individual and more universal themes blended.

Archetypes of the Fantasy World

Because of our exposure to culture, our minds can't help but associate certain imagery with certain themes. Below is a list of common elements of the Fantasy world and how they might relate to a player's timeline.

Fairies, at their most simple, are simply an embodiment of nature and life. Like nature, they are prone to both periods of peaceful equilibrium and violent swings of malice and generosity. If appropriate, their mood may change with the season. Fairies are also often possessed of powers of enchantment and illusion, giving them a common trickster slant.

Magic has the potential to be many things. For some characters, it may represent their special talent that they had when they were young, or a desire to do things that they couldn't or weren't supposed to do. In the hands of others, magic can become frustrating powers that children do not fully understand, like magic or the moors of society.

Monsters tend to come in two types: stupid and clever. Stupid monsters like trolls and giants and greedy gnomes are there to give the young Princes and Princesses a chance to practice their skills, accomplish something, and feel good. Scheming, clever monsters, like evil dragons and goblin kings, are much more of a threat. When using monsters to represent abusive or cruel people from a player's timeline, the Guide should tread carefully, as it is quite possible that strong emotions will be evoked.

Scenery may have a very profound effect upon the game, as different land forms are associated with vastly different things. For instance, mountains are constant and imperturbably, reminders of the ever present things in life. Green, grassy fields are full of life and pleasantness. Dark forests and caves evoke foreboding and hear. Blasted, dry deserts bring to mind loneliness, desolation, and a sense of being lost. The Guide may use the scenery and changes in scenery to focus and magnify the themes brought up in play.

Talking Animals are pretty much ubiquitous in fairy tales. While playing Once Upon a Time and Long Ago it is safe to assume that almost any animal knows how to talk. Large,

powerful animals are apt to be parental or authority figures in the game. Smaller animals, like mice and cats and birds, can represent friendship like warm fuzziness. Some animals have more specific imagery attached to them, such as the cunning fox, the trickster coyote, the loyal hound, the lazy sloth, and the dishonest rat.

Time can be played down insofar as to be ignored, but it can also be played up when necessary. The season of the year may be brought into focus where appropriate, with spring being explosive and happy, summer hot and lazy, fall a flurry of preparation for tomorrow, and winter desolate and lonely. If the game goes on long enough, passage of time will also become an issue, with the characters possibly aging many years.

Wondrous Creatures represent everything good and nice in the world. Unicorns, gryphons, and friendly dragons can be powerful friends and allies to the adventuring Princes and Princesses, and can be used to represent equivalent persons from the Timelines.

Example of Play

What follows is an example of play that should give you a good idea about how Once Upon a Time and Long Ago is meant to be played. The players are Jeff, who is the Guide; Pat with Prince Patrick; Alyssa with Princess Ally; and Peter with Prince Peter. The scene is about escaping from a dungeon.

Jeff: Quick recap: we ended last game with the new Queen of the Fairies throwing you in the dungeon. That's where you are now. They haven't bothered to provide you with a torch, but you can tell that you're all in the same cell. What do you do?

Alyssa: Princess Ally casts her Light spell.

Jeff: You can see that your prison is round and wooden--it might be the inside of a great tree. There are no doors or windows, but there is a sort of trap door in the ceiling, which looks about seven or eight feet high.

Peter: Prince Peter lets Prince Patrick stand on his shoulders so that he can reach the trap door.

Jeff: He finds that the door opens a crack, but is tied down with heavy chains. Through the crack Patrick can see his and Prince Peter's swords and armor and Princess Alyssa's spell books against the far wall, out of reach.

Pat: Does he see any guards?

Jeff: No, but after a second he hears a door creak and someone walk into the room that the trap door leads to.

Pat: He gets back down and tells Peter and Ally what he's seen. "We need a plan, guys."

Peter: Can you reach Ally's spell books and pull them through the crack?

Pat: No, but we might be able to trick someone into giving them to us.

Jeff: You guys can hear footsteps in the room above you. Then, someone removes the chain and opens the trap door. It's a fairy with dragonfly's wings. He hands down four bowls of gruel.

Alyssa: Princess Ally's going to try to talk to him. "Hey, fairy! Can you give us my story books? We're ever so bored, and how can a few books hurt?"

Peter: "Please, Mr. Fairy, sir. She gets nightmares when she can't read her bed time stories."

Jeff: Peter, roll your *Clever* against TN 5. Alyssa, roll your *Charm* plus Peter's *Success Level* against TN 6.

Peter: I got a six. *Success Level* 1.

Alyssa: Drat. Just a 5.

Jeff: The fairy laughs. "Clever child! But did you really think that a fairy wouldn't recognize a magic book when they saw one? Those are going right to Her Majesty's library, they are!"

Alyssa: I'm trying again. "Aw, come on, sir. Only one of them's got spells in it. The other's just a picture book!"

Jeff: He's skeptical now, so *Charm* against 7.

Alyssa: Darn it! A 6.

Jeff: *Slash a Tear*. The fairy says, "If those aren't magic pictures, I'll eat my own wings!" He slams shut the trap door and puts back the chains, and you can hear him walking away, opening and closing another door behind him.

Pat: We still need a plan, guys. Let's search the room to see if there are any hidden passages or anything.

Jeff: Everyone, test your *Inquisitive*.

Pat: I got a 3.

Alyssa: Aah! a 1.

Peter: 5.

Jeff: Peter, you find some runes carved into the wall near the

floor.

Peter: I tell Ally. She can read, right?

Alyssa: Yeah, and Prince Patrick too. I read out the runes.

Jeff: They say, "THE MASK OF WINTERS MELTS IN SPRING."

Pat: What does *that* mean? That the Fiary Queen will melt? Or maybe she'll just let us out if we wait until Spring?

Alyssa: I don't know, but I think I've got a plan. Next time the fairy comes to give us food, we'll lure him down by asking him to read us the runes. When he's reading, Peter nicks his Fairy Stone, and Patrick can use it to call White Leopard to set us free.

Peter: What'll we do about the fairy?

Alyssa: I'll use a spell to put him to sleep.

Jeff: That set?

Pat: Yeah, sounds good.

Jeff: Okay. After a few hours, the fairy comes back to fill your bowls back up with your evening gruel. Alyssa, make your roll with Charming to lure him down, gaining two dice for being clever. TN of 5.

Alyssa: Just made it.

Jeff: The fairy looks puzzled. "Runes? What runes?" He pokes his head down through the trap door to get a closer look.

Peter: I snag his Fairy Stone from his shirt pocket!

Jeff: Quick, TN 5.

Peter: Got it with a 6.

Jeff: You're able to snag the stone without him noticing. He reads you the inscription, and fills your bowls. Were you going to put him to sleep?

Alyssa: I don't think I have to, since he didn't notice that we took his stone.

Patrick: As soon as he's gone, I use the stone to call White Leopard!

Jeff: Some hours later, you hear the sounds of swords being drawn, and a series of great roars. A few minutes after that, White Leopard appears, rips the chain from the wood, and opens the trap door. You can see that he's bleeding from a cut on his shoulder. What do you do?

ONCE UPON A TIME AND LONG AGO

Description:

_____ Charming Lv. ____
 _____ Clever Lv. ____
 _____ Inquisitive Lv. ____
 _____ Magical Lv. ____
 _____ Quick Lv. ____
 _____ Strong Lv. ____

Abilities:

AGE: _____ **YEARS**
INNOCENCE: _____

Friends:

♥♥♥♥♥♥

♥♥♥♥♥♥





























Possessions:
