

# Introduction - Land Made of Wonder

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## INTRODUCTION

Land of Wonder is a domino-driven roleplaying game about children, known as Lost Ones, winding up eerily into a surreal dreamscape world, liberally inspired by a mixture of sources *Alice in Wonderland*, *Spirited Away*, and *Coraline*.

The Lost Ones will spend a single long night together, drifting in and out of a troubled sleep, alternating surreal shared lucid **Dreamscapes** and the scary **Darkness** when they happen to be briefly half-awake.

Will they see the bright light of the morning sun again, or will they choose to stay behind in the Land of Wonder?

### You may like the game if...

- ... You want to play a kid character alongside their friends and see them grow as they deal with real-life problems.
- ... You like stories like The Chronicles of Narnia, Peter Pan, A Series of Unfortunate Events, Over the Garden Wall, and many others!
- ... You love when your character's backstory gets woven into the narrative of the game.
- ... You're intrigued by the idea of playing a Surreal Fantasy game with oniric rules of reality.
- ... You are curious how this game uses bag-building mechanics and domino pieces instead of dice!

## GAME SETUP

To play a game of Land of Wonder, by using this quickstart, you'll need:

... **Between three and six people.** One will be the host of the game, known as GM or gamemaster (it'll be likely you!), and the others will be players. Only three people could go, but you'll be required to advance on tiptoe.

... **Desire to have fun and let others have fun,** one per each, players and GM included.

... **A character sheet,** one per player. The more pencils and rulers, the merrier.

... **A cloth bag and a full double-six domino set,** one per player, with 28 unique tiles apiece. If you don't own enough of those, you can find the **Printable Kit** in the Appendix, with custom printable dominoes and origami-like heart bags, but get some glue!

## QUICKSTART GUIDE

This Quickstart is meant to teach the Land made of Wonder game basics to the GM. By reading the quickstart front to back and with a bit of creativity to back it, they will have the foundations to run impromptu demo sessions with this system. Demo sessions are designed to be tied to the specific characters created by the players at the table and each time different. While player familiarity does help, it's not required to run it as intended.

# SETTING OVERVIEW

Below, you'll find all the things you need to know about the setting. And I said "all the things" precisely, because that's exactly what I meant! Make your world based on the lax premises below and build it around the characters your players will make as required.

## The Lost Ones

The Lost Ones are a group of kids, friends to each other, destined to fall into a surreal dreamscape and to embark on a wondrous journey. Pay Attention! In this system, we use Lost One as a synonym of what would be called a character in most other systems; please remember that! Each Lost One is a character controlled by a different player at the table. Lost Ones have...

- **Hearts**, represented as bags with domino tiles in them, measure their spiritual strength.
- **Memories**, written down on their sheet, are the lost ones' experiences, each with either a Light or Dark tone.
- **Pockets**, written down on their sheet, full of wondrous and magical objects that could be liberally used by them!

You'll find more detailed pieces of information about them in the coming sections of the quickstart; that's all you need to know for now.

## The Land made of Wonder

The Land made of Wonder is the surreal **place** created by the **sleeping Lost Ones' shared imagination**. All dreamlike places

literally exist within the Land made of Wonder, whole fictional worlds included. There, surreal events become mundane. Each time different Lost Ones access it, they'll end up somewhere else within the Land made of Wonder, in a place that only them would be able to perceive and appreciate.

Furthermore, the Land made of Wonder is a surreal dreamscape place, where things, physical laws, and the nature of what you hear, see, and touch may change abruptly, mutate and become something else suddenly. Be open to the surreal.

## The Dark Room

The Dark Room is the **real** and **grounded** place where the character's bodies sleep in the night the game is set on, but the Lost Ones would only be able to access a perfect replica of it, right on the edges of the Land of Wonder, but still within it, where they'll be only half asleep. The real Dark Room should be physically enclosed, potentially locked, and requiredly dark. *A lot of kids are afraid of the dark.*

Time passes erratically in the Land of Wonder, only paced by loud cuckoo clock **Chimes**. Tolls will be spaced out inconsistently. Sometimes spotty, sometimes busily. The only thing certain is that, sooner or later, the twelfth chime will move their consciences there, ready or not. As they'll wake up within the Dark Place, their bodies immediately fall asleep within the Land of Wonder. Still drowsy, within the confines of the Dark Place, the Lost Ones will fall into something that looks like the safety net of reality to recover and reminisce with each other about some of the things they thought went forgotten.

## Metaphors

The memories and the fears of the kids fill their Land of Wonder with significant people and places. All inhabitants of the Land of Wonder endowed with *significance* are known as **Personae** (singular Persona). In contrast, all objects or places within the Land of Wonder endowed with *significance* are **Loci** (singular Locus). Collectively, Personae and Loci are called **Metaphors** but notice that not all people and places within the Land of Wonder will be metaphors. Each Metaphor is tied to one of the Lost Ones' memories and shares their tone, either Light or Dark, and is inspired by it. Design them to be a symbolic, warped, exaggerated version of real memory.

[due esempi qui. Due memorie e due metafore associate]

The following are three truths associated with metaphors:

1. If the tone of a Memory changes, the related Metaphor's Tone changes accordingly.
2. If a Lost One meets one Metaphor within the Land of Wonder materialized by one of their memory, they innately recognize them and learn what they are. They just know it.
3. If a Persona dies or a Locus is destroyed definitely, the Lost One memory associated with it disappears immediately. The Lost One will forget everything associated with it, but, in turn, their shape in the Land of Wonder will become slightly more *wondrous*. Just be careful not to lose all your memories; otherwise, you won't be able to wake up anymore, and you'll forget your name as well, forever lost in the Land of Wonder.

## RULES OVERVIEW



Here's a shorthand breakdown of the rules of Land of Wonder. The core mechanic of the system is the Basic Draw.

### The Lost One's Heart

The Heart is an essential object in this game, possibly the most important and unique one! It is...

- ... **concretely** a bag (a cloth bag, a paper bag, or whatever bag you'll be able to play with) that contains all the 28 domino pieces you own at that specific point of the game.
- ... **mechanically** a way to blindly pull out a certain amount of domino pieces while playing while letting the player mitigate their luck in advance by balancing the bag's content.
- ... **thematically** a representation of your lost one's inner strength and personal growth, since domino pieces are also tied to personality traits.

Your Lost One will advance during the game both by adding elements on their sheet and building your heart as you see fit. This is known as **Bag Building** and is one of the key ingredients of this game.

For example, knowing that  is tied down to bravery, the larger the number of domino pieces with an  on it you get to have on your bag, the braver your lost one will end up being, and the greater the odds of succeeding on Brave challenges.

### Basic Draws

How would you determine if all the Lost Ones' combined effort would be able to move a big seashell away? How would you say if your Lost One would be able to come to peace with the Mirror Queen? How would you know if you were able to find the right path through the deep Bramble Patch?

Whenever a Lost One attempts a risky task and the odds aren't intuitively apparent, they resort to their hearts and make a basic draw. They draw a specific number of pieces from their hearts, look at the values written on them, and then put those pieces away. According to the drawn values, things will go their way, or they won't. The full ruling is in Section XXX, but this is a shorthand version to let you be on track.

## CHIMES

As the players make basic draws, the GM will count the number of drawn □ faces, also known as blank faces. For each of those, everyone will hear a ringing chime across all the Land made of Wonders, beating out the passage of time erratically.

The GM must show the players the sketch of a clock, filling segments as chimes rings. Generally, the deeper the sleep, the longer the adventuring day within the Land made of Wonder and the more the clock segments.

### Adventuring Day

The number of clock segments sets the pace of the upcoming adventure. On average, players will draw one □ for each basic draw. A GM should balance out the pacing and the game session's content by looking at their clock. Earlier during the adventuring day, be more whimsical and relaxed, almost reactive, set up the scene and see where things are going; later during the adventuring day, be more active, don't pull punches, and draw the story to its natural conclusion.

## Wonder Draws

The Land made of Wonder should be a place full of surprises for the players and the GM. We all play to see what happens; being surprised is half the fun.

Once in between each chime, if there's been a shift in the scene and the GM is about to narrate what happened, the GM may ask a player of their choice to make a Wonder Draw. Usually, the one beholding said change.

If they *don't* draw a piece with a □ face, the scene goes on as you would expect. But, if at least one □ is drawn, that's when things get surreal pretty quick!