

The Secret Lives of Junk(kin) Drawers, Or, Why Marie Kondo Does(n't) Spork Joy

a freeform larp for 4 to 6 people about the half-forgotten stuff of life by edmond y. chang

“Svenssons, Svenssons,” a Junkkin crooned. “So funs to say!”

“Stops that!” their companion snapped, puffing up. This Junkkin began arranging the items she pulled from their family’s home: a dead D battery, a broken dinosaur eraser, a bright blue ballpoint pen that read “부산에 방문하세요,” a purple flashlight, a box of matches with only one match in it, an old house key, a Barbie’s head, a barely crinkled twist tie, the green plastic-toothed ring from the top of a gallon of milk, and a human child’s tooth. Junkkins, as they preferred to be called, were part of the family of household mischief makers, brownies, gobbies, fairies, elves, and spiritfolk. While some specialized in shoes, lost socks, souring milk, LEGOS left in the dark, and cat zoomies, Junkkin lived in, cared for, and communicated with the quotidian yet ubiquitous junk drawer. “Gets your things readies!”

A third Junkkin grumbles, “I don’t want to play Svenssons. Always depressings.” This Junkkin brought only a collection of nearly depleted spools of sewing thread. Every time they touched one of the spools, they could feel the traces of memory left by the human who handled them. The wisps of scarlet red thread left tingled the most; they hoped it would fetch a good trade.

“Yes, yes, too lamentings,” a fourth Junkkin jumps in, dumping their trove into a loose pile in front of them.

The second Junkkin relents, “Fines, fines. Sorts your things and then we plays—”

The first Junkkin erupts, “Kondos! Kondos!” The third and fourth companions join the chorus.

“Kondos! Kondos! So funs to say!”

The second Junkkin deflates.

Premise: You are a small group of Junkkin having a junk moot to swap items from your respective drawers. Junk moots are called when Junkkin want to socialize, share stories about their human homes and families, and to exchange items charged with feelings, memories, and histories, often causing confusion and consternation when their humans cannot find something they swear they put in the drawer.

Space: A player’s home, around a kitchen table, a dark house with only a light shining down on the table (or on zoom, each player in their darkened kitchen).

Props: Each player brings (or shows on camera) their actual junk drawer from their home, unsorted and untampered with, but a box of random stuff, at least 20-30 items, can be substituted (though not as fun); players can remove any items they do not want to be in play (though, again, not as fun). All dangerous items should be removed (e.g. firearms).

Mood: Players should discuss the overall tone of the game (how serious, how queer, how silly, how competitive); players should sketch and share the general personality of their Junkkin character and the home or household they are a part of (it would be great to have diverse players from different kinds of homes, families, even cultures); players should determine what topics or feelings, if any, that should be off the table during play.

Play: Pick a player to go first (perhaps the host). Go clockwise around the table. Each player must go at least once, which is a full round.

On their turn, the “trading” Junkkin selects an item from their drawer to tempt their fellow kin. They may pick something they want to get rid of or that they think will win them something good in the trade. The Junkkin holds the item and “reads” the psychic, emotional, memory residue on the item and briefly explains what the item is, the use of the item, to whom it belonged, and how it got into the drawer. Here player can rely on their own memory of the item, musing on the item’s importance (or lack thereof), or bluff the item’s history; the bleed between player and Junkkin is purposeful to spark reflection on the things we save, hold on to, forget about, even suddenly remember. After they tell their story, the trading Junkkin must proclaim what the item *sparks* (e.g. it sparks *surprise, dread, confusion, boredom*, but never “joy”) and asks for a trade. However, if overwhelmed by the recounting of the item’s narrative, the trading Junkkin may change their mind once per game, put the now beloved item back, and offer something else.

With an item up for trade, the other Junkkin, desirous of new things for their drawer and new psychic experiences for themselves, may propose an item to exchange; they, too, must select an item from their home drawer, share its psychometry, and offer it up. The trading Junkkin may accept only one of the offered trades, and items are swapped and deposited into respective drawers. The trading Junkkin may reject the trades or if no one wants to trade, the turn ends. Items traded are locked and cannot be traded again. The round continues with the next player (to the left of the most recent trading Junkkin).

After every player has gone at least once, play continues until a Junkkin offers up one of the following from their drawers—a spork, a copy of *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* (or similarly branded item), a sock (in solidarity with Dobby), a defunct charger cord, or a tooth. This signals the moot is over. Once offered and the turn completed, the Junkkin all thank each other (often in a collective cacophony), and the game ends (regardless if the round is finished). The players keep all traded items in their junk drawers, which are to be returned to their own homes (if played online, the players send one another the traded items to add to their junk drawers).

Alternate Thieving Elves Play:

On their turn, the “stealing” Junkkin looks at the drawer of the Junkkin to their left and selects 1 item (e.g. that purple marker, that doohickey next to the nail polish) to take; once, on their turn, they may ask the drawer’s owner to move something or do a gentle one-handed “mix” of an area of the drawer (e.g. turn over that white paper, pull out that wrench, shuffle the top right corner). Once the item is the picked, the “burgled” Junkkin picks up the item, holds it and “reads” the item’s use, user, importance, memories. Again, the player can rely on their own memory of the item, musing on the item’s importance (or lack thereof), or bluff the item’s history; the bleed between player and Junkkin is purposeful to spark reflection on the things we save, hold on to, forget about, even suddenly remember. After they tell their story, the burgled Junkkin must proclaim what the item *sparks* (e.g. it sparks *surprise, dread, confusion, boredom*, but never “joy”) and hand over the item. A stolen item cannot be stolen again. The turn ends, and the next Junkkin, the one that was just stolen from, goes next. Each player gets a steal to complete the round.

After every player has gone at least once, play continues until a Junkkin steals one of the following from someone’s drawers—a spork, a copy of *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* (or similarly branded item), a condiment packet, or a loose screw. This signals the game is concluding. Once that round is completed, the first Junkkin may steal one more time, then the Junkkin all thank each other (often in a collective cacophony), and the game ends. The players keep all traded items in their junk drawers, which are to be returned to their own homes (if played online, the players send one another the traded items to add to their junk drawers).

Debrief:

Bring the lights up. Set the junk drawers aside. Then, to close out the experience, each player should share one thing they discovered, felt, experienced when during play, particularly as they went through their own junk drawer.

Optional Debrief Declutter:

Once everyone has spoken, share a drink or snack whilst sorting through and organizing your own junk drawer, discarding what is not necessary anymore, giving someone something they need, donating anything that is donatable.