

The Kim Sides; or, Everyone Is Em; or, Eminem the Roleplaying Game.
Alpha draft - Thanks for the interest, Elizabeth and Brendan.
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The Kim Sides is a game about a now sweet and now fucked-up relationship; specifically the relationship between the famous rapper Eminem and his sometime girlfriend/wife/ex Kim. It is a game where the three Personas of Eminem (as typified in his music) battle for control of his body to achieve their Aims related to Kim. After that, the players play Kim, on the other side of that relationship, as she tries to answer her questions about it.

This game is inspired largely by Eminem's entire oeuvre of music, as well as the biography/analysis of Eminem **Whatever You Say I Am** by Anthony Bozza, and countless Rolling Stone articles and reviews of Eminem's music. It is also based on the roleplaying game [Everyone is John](#) by Michael Sullivan. I've taken the basics of Everyone is John and hacked it up pretty good, but it's still in there.

You don't have to be a fan of Eminem or an Eminem hater or really know anything about him to play this game; the rules will take care of that. You should at least have some interest or curiosity, though! That's why you play: because this is an intriguing topic, and you might have something to say or find out about it.

Prep

One person will read this text and decide to be the Emcee, bringing this game to play with their friends. Before playing, the Emcee will have to:

- Copy/Print the Persona card and Kim card information onto index cards, one for each player except yourself (three total). The lyrics included under each persona can be copied or printed onto other cards, or the back of the Persona cards, to give everyone a sense of the Persona as it is drawn from Eminem's music.
- Bring 1 microphone. It doesn't have to be a real one, but it's more funner if it is.
- Bring 3 dice, one for each Persona player.
- Bring 40 tokens, representing Drive points.
- Write down the Em Scenes and the Kim Scenes onto cards, one scene per card. Shuffle each set of scenes into its own deck.
- Bring the game to three of your friends. This is a strict 4-player game.

The MC passes out the three persona cards. Each player, other than the MC, chooses one:

Persona Cards

Marshall Mathers

- "You see I'm just Marshall Mathers / I'm just a regular guy / I don't know why all the fuss about me" (Marshall Mathers)

Abilities:

- Protect
- Show Weakness
- Reason

-Defer

Aim - Make love to Kim

Drive: 10

Eminem

- “You better lose yourself in the music, the moment
You own it, you better never let it go
You only get one shot, do not miss your chance to blow
This opportunity comes once in a lifetime” (lose yourself)
- “Music is like magic, there's a certain feeling you get when you're real and you spit an
people are feelin' ya shit” (“till i collapse)
- “Sometimes I just feel like, quittin I still might
Why do I put up this fight, why do I still write
Sometimes it's hard enough just dealin with real life
Sometimes I wanna jump on stage and just kill mics” (8 mile)

Abilities:

-Flaunt Fame

-Rap

-Beef with Someone

-Do Business

Aim - Impress Kim

Drive: 10

Slim Shady

- “Well since age twelve, I've felt like I'm someone else
Cause I hung my original self from the top bunk with a belt” (my name is)
- “Here, you wanna help da-da tie a rope around this rock?
We'll tie it to her footsie then we'll roll her off the dock
Ready now, here we go, on the count of free..
One.. two.. free.. WHEEEEEEE!
There goes mama, spwashin in the wa-ta
No more fightin wit dad, no more restraining order
No more step-da-da, no more new brother
Blow her kisses bye-bye, tell mama you love her” (97 bonnie & clyde)

Abilities:

- Rebel
- Be Violent
- Use Drugs
- Act Goofy

Aim - Make Kim Cry

Drive: 10

Abilities

After players choose their Persona, they look at their 4 Abilities. Pick one and cross it out; it's not a part of your Persona for this game.

Abilities are a loose description of who the Persona is. If a player acts in accordance with their Abilities, it will be easier for them to do things in the game and to retain control of Em. Whenever an Ability is applicable to a roll (determined by you and the MC, see Control), you get +3 to that roll.

Drive

Each Persona gets 10 points of Drive, a representation of their inner determination. Players spend Drive before rolls to make it easier to succeed. Every point of Drive spent in this way gives +1 to your roll.

Drive is also used in Battles, detailed below. You can wager 1-3 Drive in a Battle. Whichever Persona has wagered the most wins the Battle, and takes control of Em.

Use coins or tokens as Drive points.

Aim

Each Persona chooses an Aim (in the alpha, each Persona comes with an Aim--there isn't yet a choice). Whenever a Persona completes this Aim, the Persona adds a tally mark to the Aim card. Completing an Aim happens whenever it happens in the fiction of the game. You don't have to be the one to complete your own Aim, you don't have to win a certain amount of rolls, or even win any rolls--you just have to steer Em in such a way that he--with either you or another Persona speaking and acting as him--completes your Aim.

Whenever a Persona wins a Rap Battle, they keep a running tally on the Aim card next to where it says "Rap Battle".

Keep your Aim a secret (In this alpha, with predetermined Aims, that will be difficult, I recognize)!

Curtains Up -

Side A: Em

Em and the Personas

On Side A, only one Persona will ever be speaking at one time. Each Persona is a distinct personality inside Em's head, but only one can win Control of Em at any given time. If you have Control of Em, you can speak as his voice and act as his body. If you don't, you can't--anything you happen to say is just commentary, or ideas: tabletalk. However, there's some recourse to this. Read on.

The game begins with a Battle.

Battles

Each Persona who wants to control Em puts 1-3 Drive in their hand. Everyone reveals at the same time. The Persona who wagered the most spends the Drive they wagered, and now has control of Em. The other Personas put the Drive they wagered back into their pool of Drive. If there is a tie for how much Drive is wagered in a Battle, each person in the tie rolls a die, with the highest winning control. Tied on the dice? Keep rolling.

MCing and Scenes

The MC has a deck of scene cards. At the beginning of the game, draw one of these, then have a Battle. Describe the scene (who, when, where) as it is written on the card, embellishing as you wish. Be sure to say Em's age, so the players have a sense of where they are in Em's life. Act as your characters, and react to the Personas, telling them to roll under two broad conditions:

- **Whenever a Persona describes a physical action.** Most physical action will be assumed on the part of the Persona: they are walking down the street, or riding in a car, and have no need to describe it. When they *do* have need to describe it, make them roll.
- **Whenever a Persona tries to do more than simply communicate in a social situation.** When they are talking to someone or using body language to try to coerce, or intimidate, or show love, or convince, or anything beyond just conveying information. It is your call as MC when this is happening--"It seems like you're trying to convince this guy to come with you. Roll."

During scenes, it's not your job to give them their Aim, it's their job to go after it and get it. Scenes last up to about 7 minutes. They end when Em *puts his pen to his pad*, which is one of the things the MC can choose to happen when Em fucks up on a roll.

Control

When your Persona has control of Em, you say what he says and describe what he does, and play to complete your Aim. When the MC decides that something you do or say might trigger a Battle between Em's Personas for control of him (see *MCing and Scenes*), she will call for a roll.

This is where you can spend Drive to add +1 per Drive spent on the roll. If any of your Personality traits apply to the roll, you add +3 to the roll as well. A Personality trait applies to a roll if you can look at it and see that Em has been acting or speaking such that that aspect of your Persona shines through. You and the MC both have to agree that the trait applies based on what's been established in the fiction of the game so far--no arguing. If either of you disagrees, it's out.

You did it or You fucked up

Roll your die when the MC tells you to. Add any +'s to the roll from Drive or Personality traits.

If you roll a 6 or better, you did it! Whatever it was you were trying to do. Describe how you do it, and then keep playing as your Persona until the MC tells you to roll again.

If you roll less than a 6, you fucked up! There is now a Battle for Control of Em, and the MC describes and follows through on your failure *after* the Battle has been decided.

The MC also has a few things to consider during rolls:

If a Persona rolls and does it (6 or more), step back and let them describe the follow through on their action, including what any non-Em characters do or say.

If a Persona fucks up, you have a choice to make about what happens next:

- **Em puts pen to pad.** Em has become distracted or overwhelmed by what's going on, or he has an idea for a lyric, and he starts writing...this leads directly into a Rap Battle and then into another scene. *The current scene is over when Em goes to pen & pad.* Choose this when you're no longer interested in where the scene is going, if all of the interesting situations have been played through, or, occasionally, because you just want to have something different happen.
- **Fail in and Subvert their intent.** Subvert the intent of what they were trying to do. Were they trying to comfort Hailie, for example? She gets scared instead. She runs away. She says, "I'm fine daddy, I don't need you to hold me." And so on. Was Em trying to punch a heckler? Em misses, and falls on his ass in front of him.
- **Give them their intent!** When a Persona fucks up, the MC says what happens next, but only after they Battle for control. Giving the rolling Persona its intent after fucking up is great when another Persona gains control of Em. The reason it's great is that the Personas have different Aims. They want different things out of every situation. The situation they've found themselves in when another Persona gets what it wanted is not likely a situation they'll like--which means they have interesting choices to make. Ex: You've backed Kim into a corner. You were just shouting at her and she's crying. What do you do?

Remember, In the case that a fucked up roll results in the MC narrating that Em puts pen to pad, there's a Rap Battle instead of a regular Battle, and the scene changes.

Rap Battle

A Rap Battle takes place between scenes, when Em puts pen to pad. Instead of doing a Battle for control of Em, each player has the chance to pick up the mic and spit out a rhymed line or two (or more, if they wish), commenting as themselves (not as their Persona) on the events of the previous scene.

The first player to rhyme their lines wagers nothing. The second and third players wager 1 Drive each if they want in on the battle. Order is determined by who grabs the mic and starts rapping first, and then who does it next. Think on your feet! If you grab the mic to rap but aren't ready yet and don't have anything to say, and someone else begins rapping before you, hand them the mic. They beat you to it.

No one *has* to engage in a Rap Battle. If all Personas refuse to, a Battle happens instead.

If only one player raps, that player wins the Rap Battle, and gets control of Em at the beginning of the next scene. If two or more players rap, the MC decides who won, based on the best *rhyme scheme*, *delivery*, and *content*. MC: go with your gut. Watch the reactions of the other players, too. Rap Battles are really won through group consensus, but it's consensus arbitrated by your subjective feelings.

If you win a Rap Battle, mark one tally on the "Rap Battle" section of your Aim card, and spend your wager of 1 Drive if you were not the first to go in the Rap Battle.

Things to consider when judging who wins the Rap Battle:

- **Rhyme Scheme**- Does it rhyme? Does the rhyme surprise you? Is it more complex than a couplet?
- **Delivery**- Is there a rhythm to the delivery? Does the performer flow smoothly from one word and line to the next? Do they have a distinct voice?
- **Content**- Are they commenting on the events of the scene? Are they saying anything interesting? Anything insightful?

Putting Pen to Pad and Changing Scenes

When you, MC, have Em put pen to pad as the result of a fuck up, the scene changes. We go back or forth through time, putting Em in a different situation with different people. Take these steps, in order:

1. Describe how the current fictional situation leads to Em retreating to his pen & pad, writing rhymes and ideas for songs.
2. Draw a new scene card, and read it to yourself.
3. Give each Persona 1 Drive.
4. The players then engage in a Rap Battle, as described above.

5. After determining who has control, describe the scene and play as detailed above in "MCing and Scenes".

The Mic

By now you can see that the only way to gain Control of Em is to hope that another Persona will fail on their roll, and then get lucky enough (or bid stupid enough) to win Control. However! There is another way. During all of play that has previously been described, there will be a Mic on the table. The Mic should be the same distance from all three Personas, and they all should be able to reach it.

No one can hold the Mic--hands off. However, if a Persona who is not currently in Control of Em manages to grab the Mic out from under the nose of the current Persona in Control, then the Persona who stole the Mic is now instantaneously in Control of Em--no Battle, no rolling, no risking Drive. Put the Mic back in the center and keep playing.

The Persona who is currently in Control can grab the Mic if he thinks someone else is about to go for it--he simply can't *hold* it, foregoing any possible loss whatsoever. It has to be out there, a risk, but one that can be protected.

Wrapping Up

The Side A phase of the game ends when one Persona spends their last point of Drive. If they spent it on a roll, finish that roll and the actions that follow from it, as described above in "You did it or You fucked up". Then end the scene. If they spent their last point of Drive in a Battle for control, or a Rap Battle, let whomever has control start the scene and play until they have to make a roll. Finish this roll and the actions that follow from it, then end the scene.

Side A Procedure recap

1. Non-Emcee players each pick a Persona card
2. The first Battle takes place
3. The Emcee draws the first scene card
4. Play out the scene, Battling if Em loses a roll
5. When Em puts pen to pad (decided by MC on a failed roll), a Rap Battle takes place
6. Each Persona gets 1 point of Drive back (max 10)
6. A new scene card is drawn and the scene played as above
7. Side A ends when one Persona has spent their last point of Drive

Intermission -

Scoring

Multiply how many times you completed your Aim by 2, as shown on your Aim card.

Add up how many Rap Battles you won.

Add these two numbers together. This is your score. The player who has the highest gets the last word on Side A, and can improvise a short rhyme, commenting as themselves (not their Persona) on the events of the scenes that have been played up to this point.

If there is a tie, a Rap Battle occurs between the tied players with no wagering. It does not matter who goes first. The winner is determined by consensus between the MC and the player (if any) that is not participating. If you don't rap, you can't win.

Side B: Kim

The Kim phase of the game is played differently than the Em phase. Each player picks a Kim Persona to play. Each Kim Persona has 2 Abilities written on its card. No abilities are crossed out or added. Kim's Abilities work exactly as Em's do.

Instead of an Aim, each Kim Persona has a Question.

Kim (1)

Abilities:

- Be Aggressive
- Protect

Question: _____

Drive: 10

Kim (2)

Abilities:

- Lie
- Be Loving

Question: _____

Drive: 10

Kim (3)

Abilities:

- Manipulate
- Be Real

Question: _____

Drive: 10

Writing Questions

Each player picks one of the Personas of Em that they did *not* play. Think about what this Persona has said and done in *Side A*, especially as it relates to Kim. What questions about Kim and Em's relationship, from Kim's perspective, does this Persona bring up? Write down the one you're most interested in finding out the answer to on your card. Use "he/him/his" in place of any of the Persona names. For example:

- Why doesn't he love me?
- Who does he want me to be?
- Is Hailie safe with him?
- etc.

Each Kim shares her Question with each other Kim.

Starting

The MC draws a card from the Kim scene deck, and play happens as on Side A, with the following changes:

There are no Battles or Rap Battles. There is no struggle for Control, and your personal commentary is in your Question, and in finding the answer.

There is no Mic.

Challenges

Kim does not Battle for control. The non-MC players all play Kim at the same time. When a situation comes up that would have required a roll in the Em phase (see *MCing and Scenes*), a Challenge happens instead of a roll. The MC puts forward 1-3 tokens, representing how many Drive Kim will have to spend to succeed. The number is based on the MC's intuition of how important this is to the Kim player currently speaking. Roughly:

- 1 = trivial
- 2: = if the MC is uncertain
- 3 = important to Kim.

If the current speaking Kim chooses to spend that many Drive, she did what she was trying to do. If she did it, she cannot immediately follow on that action--it is someone else's turn to speak, at least for the moment. If she chooses not to spend any Drive, she fucks up, but can still immediately follow up on that fuck-up.

The MC's choices for what to do when Kim fucks up are:

- **Fail in and Subvert Their Intent**

- **Give Them Their Intent!**

As above, under *You did it or You fucked up*.

If an Ability applies to the challenge, the player can choose to succeed for free, or fail.

Scenes on Side B

At any time, any of the Kim players can call for the next scene, in which case the MC stops the current scene, flips a new card, and describes the situation.

Confidential to Kims: Remember, we are not playing by the rules of drama. You are not ending a scene because it's appropriate dramatically, and you want to move to the next conflict. You are ending a scene because it is not helping you answer your Question, and you need to find out.

All Personas gain 1 Drive when a new scene is flipped over.

Answering Questions

At any time that a Kim player feels their question has been answered through play, whether by themselves or another, they write it down. They are now out of the game.

Curtains Close

The End

The game ends when *either*:

- Two Kims have answered their question and left play, or
- One Kim has answered her question and at least one player has spent all of their Drive

No one has to reveal her answer.

Em scenes:

1. Walking home from school at age 15. You like Kim. She appreciates your talent. NPCs: Kim.

2. You just got re-married to Kim. You're in your mid-20's, getting her name tattooed on your arm. Again. NPCs: Dr. Dre, MC Proof.

3. Age 15. Kim moves in with me and mom in our trailer in Detroit, after being kicked out of her house. Mom's yelling at me about it. NPCs: Mom, Kim, younger brother Nathan

4. In 2000, in your early 20's, in L.A. Kim calls from the police station to say she's booked with a DUI. For the second time. You're hanging out with the guys. Hailey's asleep in the other room. You're a couple not yet married. NPCs: Kim, Dre, MC Proof, others, Hailey.

5. Kim's kissing a bouncer outside a club in Detroit. You're in the car. There's a gun in your hand. You're married, in your late 20's. NPCs: MC Proof, Kim, Bouncer

6. Court battle over custody for Hailey. Early 30's. NPCs: Mom, Kim, Lawyer

7. Kim showed up at the house to take Hailey for the weekend. Mid-30's. NPCs: Kim, Hailey, niece Lainie.

8. High school. 17. Kim & I broke up a few weeks ago. Another girl at school who's hot named Kim sees me rap battling with someone on the steps to the cafeteria. She's looking at me. NPCs: Proof, Other Kim.

Kim scenes:

1. Sitting at home with your daughter Hailie and friend Jada, Watching Em on MTV news in 1999, age 23 -- he's being interviewed about being signed by Dr. Dre to his major label debut. You are a couple, not yet married. NPCs: Hailie and Jada.

2. Fourteen years old. You live with Em and his mother, Debbie, in their trailer in urban Detroit. You are arguing with Debbie while Em is at work. You are a couple. NPCs: Debbie, Em's brother Nathan.

3. You are a divorced adult. It's 2010, you're in your early 30's. Your preteen daughter Hailie is asking questions about lots of stuff, but also about you and Em, while on a drive. NPCs: Hailie.

4. At the premiere of his movie, *8 Mile*, your husband Em is across the room from you, being fawned over by beautiful women. You're married. NPCs: Em, record producer Steve Berman, fans.

5. Getting a call from him while out at a bar with your friends, accusing you of being with another man. He says he's in L.A., but actually he's at your place. You're married. NPCs: friend Jada, sister Kelly, others, Em.

6. After moving out of Debbie's house, you're back in with your folks as nineteen year old. Your parents hate Em, think he's a loser, etc. You're a couple. NPCs: Mom & Dad (Kathleen and Lester), sister Kelly.

7. You show up at Em's house to take your preteen daughter Hailey for the weekend. Early 30's. NPCs: Em, Hailey, niece Lainie.

8. Court battle over custody for Hailey. Late 20's. NPCs: Em, Mom & Dad (Kathleen and Lester), Debbie (Em's mom), Lawyer.

If you want to make more scenes, here's how:

It's pretty simple. In most of Em's scenes, he has direct access to Kim--she's there. In Kim's scenes, she doesn't have much direct access to Em--he's on the TV, or with fans, etc.

Play with biography. Think about your own fucked-up relationships. What was going on when you were together? That's an Em scene. What was going on when you were talking to them over the phone, or *about* them with someone else? That's a Kim scene. Then multiply it by celebrity.

That's it. Written by Hans.