



The Dark Kingdom

A workshop for serious artists and fools.

As storytellers, we strive to be closer to our story and to the listener. There are many techniques for developing relationships with both. This workshop is not about those techniques. The Dark Kingdom is a three hour inward passage to the dark kingdom of obstacles which keep us **from** our story, the listeners and ourselves.

In this land we may encounter Dragons of fear, Trollish habits, Enchanted but useless Beliefs, our own Wise Critics, Handsome but Ignorant Strengths, right down to our Precious Achilles heels. Any of the creatures living there can keep us from being open and expressing ourselves honestly. But they needn't. Welcome all beasties! We go to this land with the greatest of respect for all the creatures there!

Why would we want to go there? Why, to come back, of course! And to bring some of those poor beasts into the light.

No matter how accomplished we are as storytellers, there are things that keep us from growing even further. The more we learn, the less we know. It is the natural path.

In fact, in The Dark Kingdom, we learn that our strengths are usually one of the chief characters holding us back from growth. When we develop some reliable strengths, they can become a shield around us, and protect our more vulnerable parts.

We become lopsided and partially hidden. But when we dare to put that shield down, and wander in the land of our monsters alone, real magic can occur. We find ourselves full of the exhilaration of danger and not knowing, of allowing, and of discovering. And we find that we are not alone. We find that those monsters are the best of company that we can have.



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Bring Light

So what are we going to do? As a group, we will support each individual as they navigate their personal Dark Kingdom. We will bear their swords and light their paths. We will be the crystal ponds into which they may peer, to know their internal kingdom better. We will be there to rescue them if they ask - *if* they ask.

The guarantee is this: Each storyteller in the workshop will find at least one activity that puts them in enough discomfort YES – DISCOMFORT that they will be able to hear the unhelpful echoes of their fears and critics, and the trumpets of their strengths trying to shield them. From this point, it is up to each participant where they want to go, how much they want to risk, and how vulnerable they care to be.

Now this may all sound dark and dreary. But in fact, it is a whole lot of fun. The exercises are designed to challenge us, and the facilitation is directed at keeping it light and safe.

In short we will participate in exercises designed to teach us:

How to let go of our defences and invite our intuition to play

How to identify our *critical inner fables* (Yes! You can be part of this new pop psych catchphrase!)

How to absorb discoveries about yourself gently, without prejudice

How to begin to practice fearless vulnerability

How to let go of our strengths, and truly nurture our weaknesses



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In the spring of 2007 I was able to attend a ½ day seminar presented by Kevin MacKenzie entitled the Dark Kingdom. It was a seminar designed to stretch your abilities as a storyteller – no matter the level or degree of your experience. To enable one to discover the ‘uncomfortable’ zone that inhibits performance.

***Why** do we self judge ourselves over one person or one event when
hundreds or thousands have vindicated our abilities?
What are the monsters that lurk in our own kingdoms that inhibit us when
performing?
How do we overcome our fears and perform at our best all the time?
When is it appropriate that we face and challenge/or accept our fears?*

*I was looking forward to participating in this seminar because **I know of Kevin MacKenzie’s skill, knowledge and experience in Storytelling.** I was without doubt that the seminar would prove engaging and entertaining. I was however doubtful of finding a ‘dark kingdom’ in a room full of storytellers. I was **amazed** at the exercises that Kevin took us through in finding an area of discomfort in **all** that participated. He competently took us ‘out’ and skillfully brought us ‘back’. I was able to recognize ‘demons’ in my own mind that have time and time again taken me from my full capabilities as a storyteller and performer. Kevin was able to assist us in finding these areas and then dealing with them by recognition, acceptance, caging or releasing them entirely. I felt exhausted and exhilarated by the end of the seminar as we had covered and discovered so much together. I wish there could have been more time allotted for this seminar – a full day or a weekend as there was so much to it. The knowledge and experience we were gaining was tremendous! Would I recommend this workshop? **I absolutely recommend this workshop!** It is not only **engaging and entertaining it is enlightening too!** Anyone that performs or speaks publicly, whether a student in grade school having to give a report in front of the class, a business person speaking in a meeting, a library programmer or an entertainer on any level – **this is a workshop that you NEED to take!***

Kevin MacKenzie is a master in the Art of Storytelling, recognized nation-wide through provincial organizations as well as Storytellers of Canada/Conteur du Canada. He is a talented Storyteller in his own right with extreme and varied experience in conducting seminars, workshops and mentoring.

Pearl-Ann Gooding