



Promise Hollows

A Story-Game of Technicolor Noir



*Suburban Secrets, in full-color shades of gray...
Stories of betrayal, bluffing, and strategy...*

*Can the Investigator brave the dazzling bright smiles that hide dark and guilt-ridden mystery, or will he
fall victim of the web of secrets?*

Chapter 1:

Introductions All Around

Overview:

Welcome to Promise Hollows-- a wonderful example of a modern-day planned community, with rolling green hills and winding cul-de-sacs composing a graceful and prismatic suburban landscape.

The players take the roles of model **Suburbanites** of Promise Hollows. Each of them bring cheer to their neighbors, help to the needy, and a little something special to the town. And of *course* everyone is happy to serve in the number of **Systems** that help keep the town blissfully chugging along-- grateful employers, a vibrant PTA, the City Improvement Committee, and more.

But behind this technicolor façade is a stark world of black and white and shadow. Each character is hiding a very fragile private persona, full of hurts, needs, wants, and some terrible guilt.

A few suburbanites have specific roles:

A **Criminal**, whose guilt is a crime he/she committed in Promise Hollows;

The **Investigator**, a newcomer to Promise Hollows, who will be asked to find the Criminal;

And the **President**, leader of a local community system, who also has a private agenda against his/her rival.

Goals:

The object of the game is to create a intriguing story with flawed characters, plot twists, and reversals of loyalty.

Each player hopes to keep their character's secrets from the other players as much as possible. Get too

many secrets revealed, and your character's removed from play!

Winning the Game:

The Investigator wins the game if he uncovers the secret Criminal in the midst.

The President wins if the secret Criminal is uncovered AND her private enemy has been removed from the game.

The Suburbanites win if the President is removed from the game.

The Criminal wins if the Investigator chooses his/her enemy as the Criminal instead (or if the Investigator is removed from the game.)

Order of Play:

Town-Building: Create characters, systems, and relationships, and, of course, the Crime!

Story-Building: Create scenes for the characters to interact, and for characters to challenge one another into revealing secrets!

Face-Off: If you think enough revelations have mounted to connect a character to the Crime, vote against the suspect.

Materials:

- One index card per player (for character details)
- Another index card per player (for labelling the Systems)
- Extra cards/paper & pencils
- One package of poker chips (or similar amount of small tokens)
- One 6-sided die per player
- Three "noir" cards per player (one Black, one White, one Gray)

Chapter 2:

Making A Colorful Town

"Shiny Happy People"
"Little Pink Houses"
"Smiling Faces (Sometimes Lie)"

Promise Hollows welcomes you! We hope you notice that our neighborhood is just the same as any in colorful, small-town, suburban America. We all have our quirks, to be sure, but we love to praise and help others out, because isn't that what communities are for, really? If only it weren't for a few, unsavory elements... ah, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

Step 1: Prismatic Systems

Even a small town like Promise Hollows needs a few Systems to help keep "life" running smoothly. Think of them as "communities" within our community. They can be organizations (public, private, volunteer), employers (major employers for the area or an influential private practice), or other groups (civic, community clubs). Examples of various Systems include:

The City Council, the Home Owner's Association, PTA, the local Episcopalian Church, the Salvation Army (or any Charity), Young Republicans, the Golf Club, local Little League, Mr. White's Milky Milk Dairy Emporium, and so on.

Note: As befitting our pleasant town, the types of Systems promote peace, charity, and happiness, so feel free to give names that reflect such happy attitudes.

The players should collaborate to name an equal number of Systems as there are players. (There will most certainly be more Systems at work in a town, so only choose Systems that you want to be important to the characters you want to see and the stories you wish to create.) Write each System on a

separate index card and keep the cards visible, lined up on one end of the table.

Naming Names

Next, each player takes a turn in "naming names." Now, now. Don't panic. It's not as sinister as it sounds.

First, a player rolls one six-sided die, and this is the number of names he must write down on the System cards. The names can be written in any combination-- one per card or multiple names per card-- but each System must have at least one name at the end of this step.

And, oh, such names! Choose any name, the more colorful and brilliant the better. Examples include Mrs. Orange, Mme. Chartreuse, and, of course, Perry Winkle.

Try the "And Did You Know" Option: In place of naming a name, a player can add a distinguishable detail about any one of the names written down (even one of his/her own.) This detail can be anything noteworthy, praiseworthy, or (dare I suggest it?) gossip-worthy. Perhaps you might know someone was an Eagle scout, cooks fabulous Chinese fusion cuisine, or was divorced twice before. Not every name needs a Did-You-Know detail.

Example: The player for Miss Ruby Redd has rolled a 4. There are more than 4 System cards (since there are more than 4 players), but she comes up with three names in total:

Joe Blue (on the "Milky Milk Dairy Emporium" card) and Sienna Blaze and Miss Orangey (both on the "Town Welcoming Committee.") For her fourth

"name," she chooses the "And Did You Know" option, announcing to everyone that Joe Blue is the most handsome-est man in Promise Hollows.

Step 2: Colorful Characters

Promise Hollows is a "people place." You know, a place for people. So each player chooses one of the names to make into a more detailed character. This will be the role each will be taking during the Story-Building, becoming the Suburbanites.

Special cases:

- One player must be Mr. Gray, the Investigator. He is new to the town and doesn't belong or attach to any System.
- One Suburbanite must also be named as President (or CEO, or Mayor, or whatever) of the System the character is attached to.

Each player gets a separate index card for his/her character and creates a character independently. Write down the character's name and role at the top.

The front side will be for the character's **public** persona:

- Name, Role, Occupation
- Cheer, Helps, Specialness, Pride/Accomplishment
- Friend, System

The reverse side will be for the character's **private** self:

- Hurt, Need, Want
- Guilt/Crime
- Enemy

Public Persona: Occupation

Each player chooses an occupation within the Town, including the Investigator. Examples include: a breadwinner (business owner, insurance claims adjuster, whatever), housewife, or student. Notice the Investigator need not (and maybe shouldn't be) a police officer or typical licensed private investigator.

Public Persona: Cheer, Helps, Specialness & Pride/Accomplishment:

Write down a simple statement that your character would answer to the following prompts. It might involve his/her personality, an activity/action, an event, possession, or relationship. (If someone had added a detail to the name in the "And Did You Know" option, you should try to incorporate that into one of your aspects.)

CHEER: Why people say I'm cheerful/bring joy.

HELPS: Why people say I'm helpful.

SPECIALNESS: Why people say I'm special.

PRIDE/ACCOMPLISHMENT: What is my greatest achievement/talent/thing to be proud of

Example: The lovely Miss Ruby Redd has the following Public attributes:

Cheer: I always get cast in the lead role in local community theater productions.

Helps: I am a gifted piano teacher.

Specialness: I have naturally curly bright red hair.

Pride: I was a runner-up for Miss Beauty Queen Pageant last year.

Public Persona: Friend & System:

Write the name of another player's character as your Friend. Write the name of the System you are affiliated with. And yes, you might share the same Friend and/or System with other players.

Private Self: Hurts, Needs, and Wants:

Without revealing your card to the other players, write down a simple statement that your character would answer to the following prompts. Each statement must include an object and/ or another character (either player's character or non-player character.)

HURT: What thing pains me to think about, or what thing causes **mental distress**?

Examples: rejection, broken heart, grief,

stress, jealousy

NEED: What emotional or physical thing are you **lacking** that drives your behavior?

Examples: friendship, love/intimacy, confidence, respect

WANT: What emotional or physical thing are you **actively seeking** that drives your behavior?

Examples: wealth, power, fame, possessions

Example: Not all is perfect with Miss Ruby Redd.

Hurt: "My high school sweetheart, Joe Blue, dumped me for my best friend, Jujube Brown."

Need: "I constantly need validation from Miss Orangey, the President of the Town Welcoming Committee."

Want: "I want my boss, Sienna Blaze, to give me a promotion."

Notice how each item includes the emotion/private thing (being dumped/ needing validation/wanting promotion) and the object (by Joe Blue/ from the President/ from Sienna Blaze.) Also notice: Miss Orangey is also the President, a character created and run by her fellow player!

HINT: Your private persona will serve as the **motive** for the next step-- determining Guilt/Crime. So make it juicy!

Private Self: Guilt/Crime

This is a simple sentence that admits to some dark secret or secret shame. Your Guilt must contain an **action** involving another character (player or non-player.) These secrets could reveal an event, a failure, a mistake, a hidden side to yourself, a scandal, or anything disruptive to "normal" suburban life!

In some cases, this Guilt is from a criminal act and is thus labeled "Crime." Crimes are determined randomly. There might be no actual crime committed, or there maybe more than one character hiding some secret crime!

- First, privately roll two six-sided dice. If the result totals 7, their "Guilt" is actually a "Crime." (Note: The Investigator will have Guilt but never have a Crime, and the President like any other Suburbanite, might be a criminal!)
- As described with Guilt, any Crime must contain an object/another character (player or non-player,) AND must have been **motivated** by one of your private attributes. For obvious reasons, Crimes of murder cannot have another player as the object.
 - Examples include: Abuse, Murder, Blackmail, Assault, Theft

Miss Ruby Redd:

Rolling a 9, Miss Redd will have Guilt, not a Crime. She feels guilty for spreading a rumor that Jujube Brown is cheating on Joe Blue, her former boyfriend.

If she rolled a 7, she would have had to write a Crime instead, and it must be motivated by one of her other private attributes. She would have chosen her Want as the motive for her crime, which is Blackmail against Sienna Blaze.

Private Self: Enemy

Finally, choose another player's character as your Enemy. Yes, you can choose the same name that you wrote as your Friend!

Step 3: Putting Everything In Place

How exciting it was to put the last-minute touches on the high school's homecoming decorations, until the principal was caught... well, that's not terribly important right *now*, is it? What we need right *now* is some Color, a Private Die, and Black/White/Gray cards. Oh, and a confession time. It's good for the soul, I hear.

Color

Roll three six-sided dice; this is the amount of tokens (called "Color") you will start the game with. Color is an important commodity, used to create the

scenes during the rounds of Story-Building as well as to force out revelations of other players' secrets.

Private Die

Keep one six-sided die (the Private Die) in front of your index card. This serves as a counter that will protect your secrets from being revealed. It starts at 6, but may be lowered during Challenges in the story or to purchase more Color if you run low.

Cards

Keep one Black card, one White card, and one Gray card. You'll need them to participate in Challenges and when voting for/against fellow townspeople.

Confessing Crimes

All players write down their Crime on a separate card. It needn't be the same sentence that you wrote on the back of your character's card; you can be purposefully abstract or use the passive voice. You must include the victim's name and the type of crime. After all, the crime is going to be the beginning of our story!

If you don't have a Crime per se, you must still write down your Guilt. Again, it could be purposefully abstract or use the passive voice.

*Example: Miss Ruby Redd doesn't have a Crime, but she still has to write down her Guilt-- something about spreading a rumor that Jujube Brown is cheating on Joe Blue. She chooses to be a bit abstract, and she writes down "Someone is spreading rumors about Jujube Brown." Let's say she *did* have a Crime-- something about blackmailing Sienna Blaze to get herself a better house. She may have written "Someone is blackmailing Sienna Blaze" instead.*

The President privately reads each card, choosing one to be the Crime the Investigator will have to uncover. This is the scene in many a noir movie when "SHE" walks into the Investigator's life. The President can describe a personal meeting between herself and the Investigator, encouraging the

Investigator to "look into" the situation... (Alternatively, the President can wait until the first scene of the Story-Building phase, weaving the announcement into the story of the first scene.)

The President cannot show any of the cards to any other player. The Suburbanite who has become the target of the Investigator is now the Criminal, even if he doesn't realize it until the President announces the Crime.

More than one Crime on the cards? That's okay. Only the one chosen by the President is important to the goals and objectives of the Story-Building. No Crime at all? That's okay. The President can "frame" another character by making that guilt important to the goals and objectives. Notice, too, that all other Crime/Guilt become rich sources of complications, red herrings, and private vendetta-subplots!

Chapter 3:

Stories of Shadowy Secrets

"There are eight million stories in the Naked City..."
"Ladies and gentlemen, the story you are about to see is true..."
"These are their stories."

Why, there are so many things to see and to do in Promise Hollows! Everyone gathers around their families and loved ones to listen to events of the day, laugh at each others jokes, and to talk about our upcoming seasonal festivals. Why don't you join us? And tell us! Tell us what's the most interesting thing that's happened to you today, hm?

Round Robin

The Story-Building phase takes the form of many scenes being strung together. Anyone can contribute to the scene, even if their player is not present, but any addition to the story must be matched by playing a piece of Color into a community pot in the center of the table. After all, the more Color to the story, the more interesting it is! You can chat pleasantly about the weather, ask another character to dance, or bring a nice plate of cookies to your neighbor.

Obviously, each player is limited in what they can control over another player's character, but feel free to use the setting, "extras," and plotting/event details instead. The opening scene is always the Investigator's, and after that scene is complete, the narrative passes to the player on the Investigator's left and so on, clockwise.

All scenes have the following elements: Entrance, Elaboration, Encounter, and Exit. A special element, the Monologue, can occur during the entrance or elaboration, according to the player narrating. Another special element, the Revelation, can occur after the encounter or exit, depending on who "wins" the rights to close the scene.

Entrance

The scene opens with a player putting his character in it. The first "round" is like anteing in to the pot. As the scene-opener opens the scene, he antes a Color token into the pot. Other players may narrate their character into the scene, matching the ante with their own Color to the pot. If a player doesn't want his character in the scene, he may still ante in with some details about the setting or the event, or otherwise he can pass or check the narration to the next player.

Example: Player Joe antes in with one Color, describing the scene-- the opening of his new art gallery! Player Bee and Player Cece ante in as well, describing their characters' entrances to the gallery. Player Jane doesn't want her character in the scene, but she antes in by describing some setting details about the wine and cheese hors d'oeuvres.

Elaboration

When control of the story returns to the scene-opener, he can elaborate on the action in the scene, with another addition to the pot.

- Interact: Promise Hollows is such a nice place, and everyone's willing to chat for a while. So ask a question, prompt a response. (For ease of storytelling, if you ask a question, the player can respond out of turn to interact with you. But in general or when in doubt, the elaboration continues in a clockwise pattern.)
- Interfere: Well, not so much interfere as, you know, mind someone else's business. Just because you aren't involved in the Save the

Puppies bachelor auction doesn't mean you can't help us interview potential auctioneers. And if you suspect a couple is having problems, don't you think you should invite both of them over for coffee?

- Intimidate: Ah, that's such an ugly word. And we really don't *intimidate* others in Promise Hollows, now, do we? No "shakedowns," here. Instead, why not try buttering someone up? Use flattery, throw a party in her honor, help her with some household chore. Now, isn't that a much better way to show how superior you are to her?
- Investigate: Sometimes, you may want your character to go out of his way to check out a person or a place. Perhaps it's the scene of the crime or some ancient stack of courtroom records. Either way, you'll probably learn something to share at next week's bingo night!
- Note: If she hasn't done so already, the President should integrate an announcement about the Crime he/she has chosen during the first scene of the story.

The scene-opener elaborates some action or interaction, opening with one piece of Color to the pot. Players respond/add their own elaborations by "calling" into the pot with the same number of pieces.

The key to better elaboration is to use your public persona to the fullest. Anytime you narrate something that relates to any part of your public persona, you can any number of Color to the pot. So the scene-opener can use his public persona and open with, say, three Color to the pot, forcing everyone to call with three Color as well. Or, as another example, the second player round-robin can "raise" the stakes on his turn by using his public persona at that time. (When responding to someone else's raise, you don't have to use your public persona aspects-- the minimum Color you can contribute is the raised amount. You must "call" the raise to participate in the story or otherwise you must "pass.")

A player who never anted in can't contribute to the Color in the pot. So, although he can make suggestions (via "table talk"), he has no narrative control in that scene.

When play returns to the scene-opener, he simply perpetuates the storytelling by:

- Calling, if the stakes have been raised, or
- Raising (minimum of 1 Color), starting another round of storytelling.

Example: Joe opens the elaboration by using his public persona, "Opening a New Art Gallery," for 3 Color, describing how excited he is to bring an original Thomas Kinkadee to Promise Hollows. Player Bee and Cece call, matching with 3 Color, but they don't have to tap into public persona if they're simply calling. Player Jane uses Miss Ruby Redd's Cheer attribute to remark how one painting reminded her of her role as Tzeitel in Fiddler on the Roof this spring. She sings a few bars of "Matchmaker" as she adds 5 (3 + 2 raised) into the pot. Back to Joe, and he sees the raise and raises 1 more, as he doesn't want to use an attribute but doesn't want the scene to end. Player Bee, our President, adds 3 to call, and casually mentions how one of the paintings reminds her of a horrible secret-- someone in town is murderer, from an unsolved murder one year ago today! The round continues to Cece...

The Monologue

As befitting any great *noir* story, any player has the option to "monologue" during their Elaboration phase. This is usually the time when a character's internal voice makes a comment about the scene, situation, or other character, and it often includes an interesting metaphor or simile.

A player giving a line or two of monologue can force another player to match his bid. The target player must be the object of his monologue or otherwise directly involved in it.

Example: Roy G. Biv makes the following comment about Miss Ruby Redd when she enters an art gallery: "She entered the gallery, and it was as if all the eyes of all the portraits followed her wherever she went. I know mine did." He throws a piece of Color into the pot, and the monologue forces Redd to throw a piece in as well.

If Roy used his public attribute of "I know Japanese," he could add any number of Color to the pot. How about a metaphor this time, such as: "She entered the gallery as bright as cherry blossoms and as fresh as sushi." Then, he could have thrown 2 (or more) Color in the pot, forcing Redd to match 'em.

Encounter

At some point, someone's going to want to jump in and claim all that Color in the pot. To do so, you'll have to confront another character in some kind of encounter! Encounters don't have to be physical (like breaking into a fight) or verbal (like breaking into an argument), but they can be. Encounters are also over anything that needs to be overcome in order that information can be revealed:

- Asking a more pointed question to a character.
- Asking a character for a date.
- Finding the right file on a computer.
- Trying to find a secret passage.
- Re-enacting a situation.
- Giving an ultimatum.

The Two-Player Challenge			
If both extremes are chosen, players split.			
B = ½	W = ½	W = ½	B = ½
W = ½	B = ½	B = ½	W = ½
But if the same extreme is chosen, both lose.			
B = 0	W = 0	W = 0	B = 0
B = 0	W = 0	W = 0	B = 0

Encounters don't have to be directly related between the player you want to challenge. The encounter can be within the mind of the player's character. Maybe he's just overheard something that reminds him of a word that described the criminal. Maybe that character is his private enemy and something just rubbed him the wrong way.

To call for an encounter, simply challenge another player for control of the pot *instead* of adding to the pot/giving narration. (Unless you are an Investigator-- then you can challenge another player to a confrontation at any point in the story, as long as your character is in the scene.)

Encounter: the Card Challenge

The two players involved in a challenge choose one of their cards-- labeled black, white, or gray-- and place it face down in front of them. At the same time, they turn the cards to reveal either black or white (split), or gray (steal). Take or split the pot accordingly. If anything is lost, the Color tokens are discarded. If any splits are uneven, the remainder is discarded.

Color can be very important to revealing secrets. Do you attempt to share the pot and keep some Color, or do you risk all the Color being discarded and go for all? What do you think your opponent will choose?

If one person chooses Gray, he steals all.			
B = 0	W = 0	W = 0	B = 0
G = All	G = All	G = All	G = All
But if both choose to steal, both lose.			
G = 0	G = 0	G = 0	G = 0
G = 0	G = 0	G = 0	G = 0

Encounter: the Third Man Challenge

A Third Man can join in any challenge, but must announce that he intends to do so before the players choose their cards. The Third Man will wait for the first players to put their cards on the table, and the players tell the Third Man what their face-down cards are before the Third Man plays his card.

The Third Man can try to ally with one player over the other, perhaps ensuring that the pot gets split accordingly. Or maybe he's out for himself. After all, the players could be lying about the cards they played, or may have played a different strategy once the Third Man announced he wanted in on the challenge. So, do you trust the Third Man to help you, or will you lie, perhaps even sacrifice your own stake so he won't get anything?

The Three-Player Challenge

Whoever is odd man out with Black or White, wins half (remainder discarded.)

B	= 0	W	= 0
B	= 0	W	= 0
W	= 1/2	B	= 1/2

Whoever is odd man out with a Gray, wins all.

B	= 0	W	= 0
B	= 0	W	= 0
G	= All	G	= All

The Third Man loses, if one other player steals with Gray.

(* designates Third Man's card)

B	= 0	W	= 0
G	= All	G	= All
B*	= 0	W*	= 0

B	= 0	W	= 0
G	= All	G	= All
W*	= 0	B*	= 0

The Third Man always loses with a Gray, if players split.

B	= 1/2	W	= 1/2
W	= 1/2	B	= 1/2
G*	= 0	G*	= 0

But the Third Man always splits with a player who chose to steal.

B	= 0	W	= 0
G	= 1/2	G	= 1/2
G*	= 1/2	G*	= 1/2

If three of a kind, everyone loses.

B	= 0	W	= 0	G	= 0
B	= 0	W	= 0	G	= 0
B*	= 0	W*	= 0	G*	= 0

Encounter: Example

Roy G. Biv declares a challenge, against the President! How dare she get Mr. Gray involved! This will bring nothing but trouble!

Player Joe, the Investigator, announces he wants to be a Third Man in this challenge, since he's been named in it, after all. Roy G. Biv has Mr. Gray listed as an ally, too, so perhaps they could work together.

Player Cece (Roy G. Biv) and Player Bee (the President) each put a card face down in front of them. They tell Joe it's a black (Bee's) and a gray (Jane's). Hm. If they are both telling the truth and he plays a black or white, Joe would lose everything to Jane. So he chooses to play a gray. Turns out, Jane was lying! She had a black as well, making Joe odd man out with gray, making him the winner and giving him all the Color from the pot!

Exit

The winner of the Encounter/Challenge closes the scene after the challenge is resolved. (If there is no winner or if there the winners had to split, the Investigator resolves the scene, even if his/her character isn't in the scene.)

Usually, this means resolving what happened in the winner's favor. Was there an argument? Perhaps the other guy turned away. Was there a fight? Perhaps the loser is lying on the floor unconscious. Otherwise, the computer files were found, the secret recipe was uncovered, the girl said yes to the date. (Or, depending on the winner, the guy got shot down, hard!)

The scene can also be closed down, allowing characters to exit. The party's over, the

conversation shifted, the kids finally fell asleep, and so on.

Example: Player Joe gets to close the scene, and he describes that the tension of the characters gave way to many people leaving early, effectively shutting down the opening party a bit early.

Revelation!

As part of the exit, the winner of the encounter (the scene-closer) can choose a player to reveal a secret. The player had to have been involved in the encounter, even if the scene-closer wasn't. (In this case, the Investigator may not have been involved in the challenge, and he could still target either of the challengers or the Third Man.)

The revealer must be able to "purchase" this secret by spending an amount of Color equal to the current value of target's Private Die. The target lowers his die value by one (turning the die from a 6 to a 5, for example), and must reveal part of his/her private self (Hurt/Need/or Want). There are two parts to any private self: 1) the aspect of Hurt/Need/or Want and 2) the object. The target can't lie, but he doesn't have to reveal to which category it belongs.

The Investigator should take note of the secrets as they get revealed, and arrange them the best they can. One of these aspects + one of these objects will be the motivation of the Crime!

Example: Player Joe also "buys" a revelation from Roy G. Biv, lowering the player's Private Die to 5. The player admits that Mr. Biv has a problem with anger, leaving Joe to wonder. Could Roy G. Biv had been angry enough ... to murder?

Chapter 4:

Technicolor Face-Offs

"A Saucerful of Secrets"
"Secrets are Sinister"
"What's Victoria's Secret"

Well, you just had to do it, didn't you? You seemed so nice. And then you had to bring all of this up. Sigh. You realize that if anyone gets hurt, it's all your fault, right?

Face It

Players can become vulnerable if their Private Die gets too low. By the time their die is reduced to 1, many of their private selves have been revealed, even if there's no guarantee that all the pieces fit together. That's where the Face-Off comes in.

When any player's die is lowered to 1, that player can be called out immediately for a special kind of encounter. The Investigator has dibs on calling the Face-Off first, but if he decides not to, the declaration of a Face-Off is up for grabs by any other player.

The Investigator may describe a scene, as any scene-opening entrance, although the target of his Face-Off gets to add details as well. In other words, there is no need to ante. Either the Investigator or his target (or both) should include some element of danger involved, either explicit (in a dark alley, one of the character has a gun!) or implicit (the character's lights won't go on in the house, but can hear the others' voice.) After all, the Face-Off is the showdown between the Investigator and a potential Criminal!

(The same procedure can be followed against the Investigator if his die is reduced to 1. In that case, the first Suburbanite who claims it can declare a Face-Off. Often, the Criminal might be tempted to do so, since his goal is to get rid or chase of the Investigator, but then again, that might tip his hand.)

Face Facts

Using the revelations that have been uncovered so far, the Investigator attempts to solve the Crime (or uncover a Guilt) by guessing how his target's secrets fit together. Since every Crime comes from some Hurt, Need, or Want, the Investigator should look for things that happened (like relationships that were shown to be connected) during the Story-Building.

In the Face-Off, the Investigator lays out why the target is the Criminal/why he is so guilty. This is the time in the movie when one of the character begins a bit monologue while the potential suspects sit and listen and seethe. In *Promise Hollows*, however, the Investigator has to pretty convincin in his arguments-- the other players will vote on if they think the Investigator is right!

Yes, we are nothing if not democratic in *Promise Hollows*; it's not *just* that you're guilty or not, it's the votes that count to keep your character in the game or not.

To vote, the Investigator and the other players accusing the suspect lay a card face down in front of them. They reveal the cards at the same time, the majority vote wins. Depending on the outcome, the suspect must reveal his Crime/Guilt and get away (white), reveal his Crime/Guilt and get killed off (black), or not reveal his Crime/Guilt and remain in the game (gray.) Ties always err on the side of the player's life/innocence.

Regardless of the outcome, the suspect gets the privilege of narrating the closing of the Face-Off

scene. Resolving the scene, the player has two choices. If remaining in the game, the player tells how the situation resolved and may return his Private Die to 6. If revealing his secret, he can do so by narrating his own demise (or escape.)

Example: Player Jane was forced to reveal Venus Dee Yellow is "just trying to protect someone." The revelation also lowers her Private Die to 1, and Player Joe cries "aha!", declaring an immediate Face-Off. Joe doesn't change the scene, keeping it at the Save the Puppies fund raising dinner. Mr. Gray publicly challenges Venus Dee Yellow! But Jane mentions that Dee Yellow has quietly grabs a knife from the table without anyone noticing.

Joe notes that Dee Yellow was "trying to protect someone," and he connects that to her son. In protecting her son, she was forced into murdering the Little League coach! Joe asks his fellow players to vote if they agree. The cards come up a tie white / black. In this case, Player Jane has to confess, but will be allowed to escape.

Jane lets Venus Dee Yellow come clean. Yes, she NEEDS to protect her son, but from his real father, who has ran off! In her hysteria, she tries to use the knife to stab herself, but the people around her

wrest the knife free, and Dee Yellow is remanded to a hospital. The characters watch Venus Dee Yellow leave, their sadness tempered by the realization that ... the true killer is still at large!

And They're Off

If the Criminal is successfully revealed, the Investigator wins! But if it is the Criminal's enemy, the Criminal wins! If it's the Investigator, then the Criminal wins! If it's the President's enemy, the President is one step closer to winning. Whew! If it is someone without a specific role, then the Story-Building continues again, until the next player has their Private Die lowered to 1.

Option: Systems Play

If a character is removed from play (received a White or Black in the Face-Off vote), the player can remain involved by taking over a System. Exchange the character's index card for the System card. The player can keep any Color he had when the character was removed, (or, if he had no Color, the only way he can get more is by earning some as a Third Man in a three-way challenge.) This means he can ante in and elaborate details like any character. The difference is that the player only has the ability to introduce and play story elements such as setting and extras, and therefore cannot raise or otherwise use public persona attributes.

Chapter 5:

Outline for Reference

TOWN-BUILDING (See Chapter 2 for more details.)	<i>Example of Play</i>
1) Players come up with a variety of Systems (organizations/employers/groups) that are at work in Promise Hollows.	<i>Player Joe is one of our group of players, and Joe contributes a few ideas for Systems. The group adds Joe's idea, the "Save the Puppies Fund Raising Committee," among the other Systems.</i>
2) Each player defines a character.	<i>Joe wants to be the Investigator, Mr. Gray, and the others are okay with that. Under Joe's control, Mr. Gray has various attributes, including "Opening a New Art Gallery" (Public), "Needs to be a rebel against his father" (Private), and "Not on speaking terms with his father" (Guilt). His ally is the character Roy G. Biv, a neighbor.</i>
3) Complete the table set-up.	<i>Joe rolls 10 (on three six-sided dice) for his amount of Color. He sets his Private Die to 6, and takes the Black, White, and Gray cards.</i>
4) The Suburbanites privately submit their Crimes/Guilt to the President, who chooses one to be the crime the Investigator must uncover.	<i>The President chooses the one labeled "murdered the Little League coach."</i>
STORY-BUILDING (See Chapter 3 for more details.)	<i>Example of Play</i>
1) Starting with the Investigator, players take turns creating a scene for the story. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrance: The opening player narrates the scene, and antes a Color token into the pot. Other players may narrate their character into the scene, adding their own ante/Color to the pot. 	<i>Player Joe starts narrating the scene, anteing one Color token. He sets it at his new Art Gallery opening. A few other players want to be at the opening, and they ante in, describing their entrances.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaboration: The players continue, telling the story round-robin style and adding more Color to the pot. 	<i>Joe narrates his character interacting with the President of the Save the Puppies fund, and all the characters are having a grand</i>

	<p><i>time at the gallery. How can you tell? They bring so much Cheer, Helpfulness, and Specialness!</i></p> <p><i>However, one of the paintings reminds the President of a horrible secret-- someone in town is murderer, from an unsolved murder one year ago today! The pot by this time has grown to 12 tokens.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encounter: Instead of adding narration, a player may choose to challenge another player for control of the pot during his turn, instead. 	<p><i>Roy G. Biv declares a challenge, against the President! How dare she get Mr. Gray involved! This will bring nothing but trouble! Joe the Investigator will be a Third Man in this challenge. When all is said and done, Player Joe is the winner, getting all the Color from the pot!</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit: The winner of the Encounter/Challenge closes the scene after the challenge is resolved. 	<p><i>Player Joe narrates the gallery party winding down.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revelation! The scene-closer also chooses another player to reveal a secret, by spending an amount of Color equal to the target's six-sided die. The target lowers his die value by one (lowering a 6 to a 5, for example), and must reveal one aspect of his/her private self (either the description or the object.) 	<p><i>Joe also "buys" a revelation from Roy G. Biv, lowering the player's Private Die to 5. The player admits that Mr. Biv has a problem with anger, leaving Joe to wonder. Could Roy G. Biv had been angry enough ... to murder?</i></p>

FACE-OFF (See Chapter 4 for more details.)	Example of Play
1) When one of the player's die is lowered to 1, that player can be called out immediately by the Investigator for a special kind of encounter.	<i>Player Jane was forced to reveal Venus Dee Yellow is "just trying to protect someone." The revelation also lowers her Private Die to 1, and Player Joe cries "aha!", declaring an immediate Face-Off.</i>
2) The Investigator may describe a scene, as usual, and may include some element of danger, as the Face-Off may end in tragedy! If he doesn't include any danger, his opponent might.	<i>Joe doesn't change the scene, keeping it at the Save the Puppies fund raising dinner. Mr. Gray publicly challenges Venus Dee Yellow! But Jane mentions that Dee Yellow has quietly grabs a knife from the table without anyone noticing.</i>
3) The Investigator attempts to solve the Crime AND/OR uncover his opponent's Guilt.	<i>Joe notes that Dee Yellow was "trying to protect someone," and he connects that to her son. In protecting her son, she was</i>

	<i>forced into murdering the Little League coach!</i>
4) The Investigator and the other players vote against the Investigator's opponent.	<i>Joe asks his fellow players to vote if they agree. The cards come up a tie white / black. In this case, Player Jane has to confess, but will be allowed to escape.</i>
5) If remaining in the game, the player may return his Private Die to 6. If revealing his secret, he can do so by narrating his own demise (or escape.)	<i>Jane lets Venus Dee Yellow come clean. Yes, she NEEDS to protect her son, but from his real father, who has ran off! In her hysteria, she tries to use the knife to stab herself, but the people around her wrest the knife free, and Dee Yellow is remanded to a hospital.</i>
6) Return to Story-Building, using your happy public persona to uncover those horrible private secrets, until the criminal can be revealed!	<i>The characters watch Venus Dee Yellow leave, their sadness tempered by the realization that ... the true killer is still at large!</i>

BLACK

WHITE

GRAY

BLACK

WHITE

GRAY

BLACK

WHITE

GRAY

BLACK

WHITE

GRAY



Promise Hollows

A Story-Game of Technicolor Noir



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A Story-Game of Technicolor Noir



Encounter Challenge Reference Card

Two-Player Challenge

Choose both extremes to split, (remainder discarded).

B = 1/2	W = 1/2
W = 1/2	B = 1/2

But if you choose the same extreme, you lose.

B = 0	W = 0
B = 0	W = 0

Choose Gray to steal all.

B = 0	W = 0
G = All	G = All

But if both choose to steal, both lose.

G = 0	G = 0
G = 0	G = 0

Three-Player Challenge

* designates Third Man's card

Whoever is odd man out with Black or White wins half (remainder discarded).

B = 0	W = 0
B = 0	W = 0
W = 1/2	B = 1/2

Whoever is odd man out with a Gray, steals all.

B = 0	W = 0
B = 0	W = 0
G = All	G = All

The Third Man loses, if one other player steals with Gray.

B = 0	W = 0
G = All	G = All
B* = 0	W* = 0

B = 0	W = 0
G = All	G = All
B = 0	W = 0
G = All	G = All
B* = 0	W* = 0
W* = 0	B* = 0

The Third Man always loses with a Gray, if players split (remainder discarded).

B = 1/2	W = 1/2
W = 1/2	B = 1/2
G* = 0	G* = 0

But the Third Man always splits with a player who chose to steal.

B = 0	W = 0
G = 1/2	G = 1/2
G* = 1/2	G* = 1/2

If three of a kind, everyone loses.

B = 0	W = 0
B = 0	W = 0
B* = 0	W* = 0

Encounter Challenge Reference Card

Two-Player Challenge

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