

The Hidden Story of A Village

A game about solving the mystery and reviewing the truth together

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Abstract

In this 2-4 players game, you are detectives aiming to find out what happened in this mysterious village by checking the remaining mails in an abandoned post office. However, workers will clean everything up and move all mails to another functioning post office 8 hours later, so you may lose your last chance to collect evidence if you don't work fast. Work with each other, gather around a large board to arrange evidence, take notes and look closely at these mails, the truth may be hidden just in them.

Materials

- 72 mail cards, letter side is the front
- 7 ending cards, the side with the ending words is the front, one with the portrait is the back.
- 4 markers
- 1 whiteboard and 1 marker holder
- 100 magnets

RULES

Setup

1. Pin the ending cards face down to the top of the whiteboard with magnets. Names on the back of the ending cards help you keep in mind that how many characters are involved in this mystery and who are they.
2. Each of you starts with 3 random mail cards in hand.
3. Divide the whiteboard into a note area and 6 empty clue slots.
4. Put the deck of rest mail cards into the marker holder, attached to the whiteboard.
5. Players stand in line in front of the whiteboard.
6. Start with any player, then play in turn from left to right in each round.

Gameplay

One round is to go through the turns of all players once.

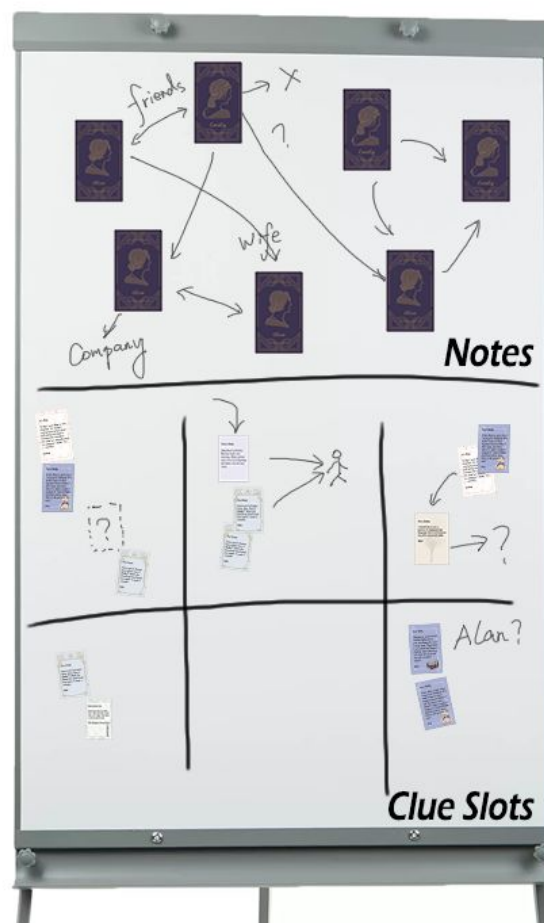
In each player's turn:

1. **Pin Clues:** In your turn, you pin your mail cards in hand into the clue slots on the whiteboard with magnets. The mail cards that you think related to each other can be put in a queue into one slot. You and your detective team can only be able to handle 6 clue slots at the same time. You can pin as many mail cards as possible in one turn, as long as they are related to any clue in slots.

2. **Draw:** At the end of your turn, draw two new mail cards from the mail card deck into your hand. You can hold at most **Five** mail cards in hand at the same time; If the number will exceed the limit after you draw, you must discard the exceeding mail cards before drawing, and put the discarded cards to the bottom of the mail card deck.

After each round (all players finished their turns):

1. **Combine:** You and your group have a chance to look into the clue slots again. If two slots of clues start being associated with each other, you can combine them into one clue slot, and leave the empty clue slot for another new clue in the next round. You can combine clues as many as you can.
2. **Take Notes**(optional, but recommended): Discuss with each other, take notes with markers on the spare space of the whiteboard, write down important names and nouns, draw the relationship network, and do anything else that can help with the investigation.

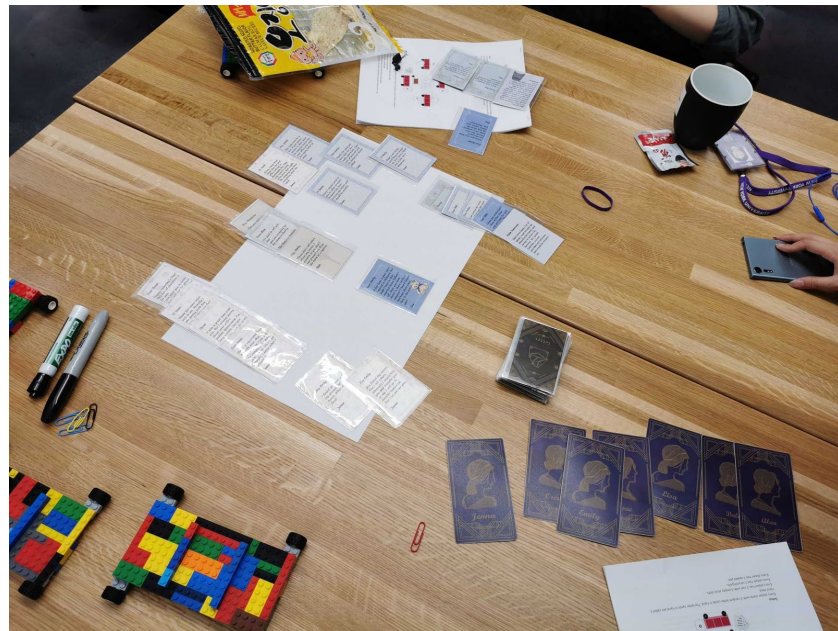


Ending

The game ends when the 8th round passes.

Turn over the ending cards, read what actually happened, and compare it with the story in your minds.

PHOTOS





PLAYTEST LOGS AND FEEDBACK

10.29.2019

in-group playtest

Feedback:

- 1) It's hard to find 5 letters that can be put together as a 'story' in a linear storyline.

10.31.2019

in-group playtest

Changes:

- mix the storyline with each other
- take away some less crucial letters (letters that do not affect the story)

Feedback:

- 1) The new story feels good, however, that may be because playtesters are the designers. Playtesters outside the group are needed.

11.04.2019

short playtest (Jingyi Julia Rosaita Lu), did not reach the end

Changes:

- add bonus mission cards for players in story deck
- add more anonymous letters that can connect to any story

Feedback:

- 1) The bonus mission cards seem not necessary. Reasons as follows:
 - a) They belong to letters but do not fit in the story, thus making players jump out of the game.
 - b) The mission itself is hard to achieve.
- 2) About the in-game storyline:

- a) People like letters with names better and want to find out the complete story.
 - b) Anonymous letters make trading harder.
 - c) Letters and characters that connect with each other should be kept within a certain range. Anonymous letters with neither enough content nor enough connection with the main story should better be removed.
 - d) For anonymous letters that lost their names, part of the name (for example the initial letter of the word) should be kept to give the player enough clue.
- 3) About the event card between days:
- a) Weaken or remove the "Caught a Flu" event. The time to finish one round is relatively long, being unable to participate because of an event card will make players feel they are completely kicked outside of the game.
- 4) About how we describe the rule:
- a) Jingyi recommends telling the backstory (tell players they are workers cleaning up a postoffice) before starting the game so that players can get immersive.
 - b) Julia hopes the backstory of the post office will not affect the playthrough too much. It feels good currently though. The preface should not be too long, or players might get distracted.

11.05.2019

critique (Eric)

Changes:

- remove bonus mission cards
- remove more anonymous letters

Feedback:

- 4 players might be too many
- there's a gap between a large amount of mechanics and the open ending
- new players may not be able to keep track of the stories
- players may not care about others' stories
- possible solutions:
 - secret cards that prove a secret
 - satisfying endings about the story content
 - players set endings for each other
 - envelopes with endings
 - end after end

in-class playtest (Stephen, Varun, Harry, Steven)

Feedback:

- rules need to be explained more clearly
- need a longer goal: for example, to reveal the characters' relationship
- let players use other players' published stories?

playtest (Christine, Charles, Mengqi,)

Changes:

- remove the first-player token
- add ending cards

Feedback:

- event cards do not seem necessary
- playtesters enjoy discussing with each other about the story
- functions best as a cooperative game, but the event cards changed it into a competitive game
- players need a goal to be in the post office. maybe add role-playing
- need a better balance between letting people trade and preventing people from trading (think about the players' relationship with each other)
- may add a time limit