

NOIRLANDIA

by evan rowland



Game Design by Evan Rowland
Art and Diagrams by Evan Rowland
Layout by Hannah Shaffer & Evan Rowland
Editing by Joshua Yearsley
Proofreading by Kate Unrau

Game content ©2016 Make Big Things Games. Illustrations ©2016 Evan Rowland. All rights reserved.

First Printing: October 2016 (Print & PDF). The fonts used are Maitree, Special Elite, Prestige Elite Std, Hammerkeys, Bodoni 72, and Courier New. The dice font is Art's Polyhedral Dice D6 Font with Pips, courtesy Arthur Braune/Skullduggery Press.

Made possible by the Noirlandia Kickstarter backers. All the thanks!

NOIRLANDIA

A STRANGE CITY.

A VICIOUS CRIME.

ONE CHANCE TO FIND THE ANSWERS.

CONTENTS

WELCOME TO NOIRLANDIA	7
Overview	10
Supplies	11
Consensus and ownership	12
THE CITY	15
Step 1: Corruption	17
Step 2: The big questions	18
Step 3: The districts	21
Step 4: Your city's language and name	26
THE CHARACTERS	29
Step 1: Create and claim the characters	31
Step 2: Create the victim	34
Step 3: Flesh out your characters	36
Step 4: Make introductions and relationships	37
Step 5: Learn about the murder	42
THE INVESTIGATION	45
Starting the scene	48
Supporting the action	50
Challenge rolls	52
Offering a bargain	55
Investigation rolls	57
Changing the outcomes	63

Narrating the outcomes. 67

When things fall apart 71

Putting the pieces together. 72

Answer dos and don'ts 73

The epilogue 74

EXTRAS AND RESOURCES 77

QUICKSTART SETTINGS 79

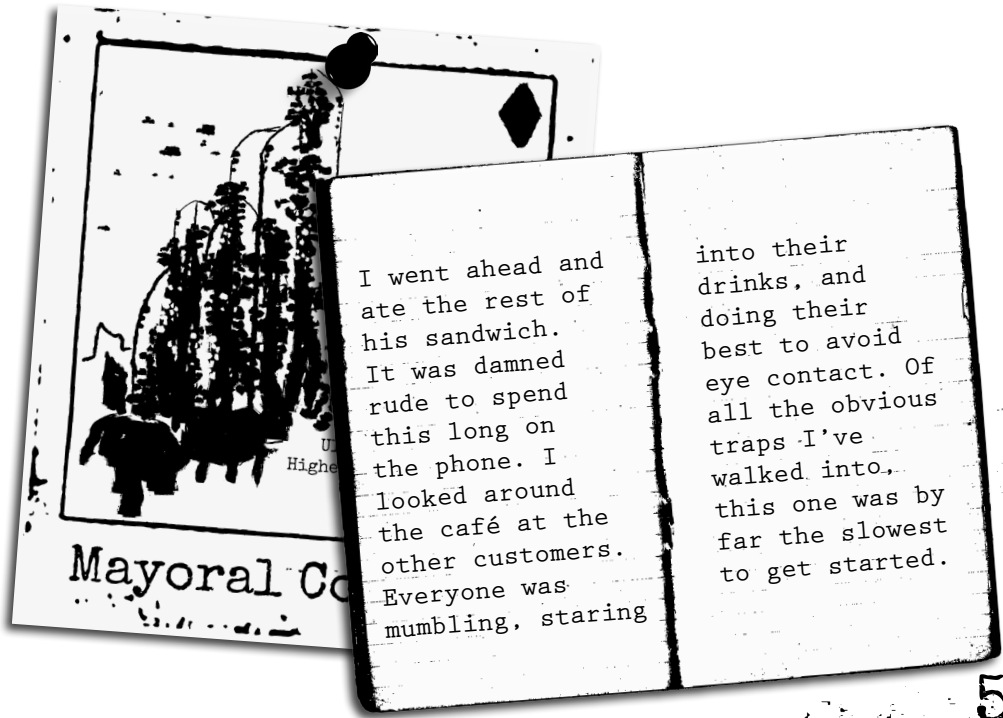
 Quickstart play 79

REFERENCES 81

 Glossary. 81

 Sequence of play 86

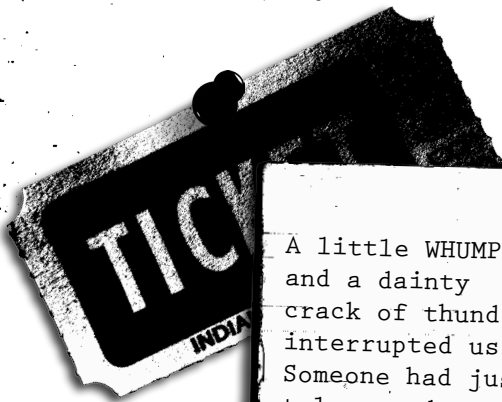
 Tables. 88





Welcome to Noirlandia

*overview, supplies,
consensus & ownership*

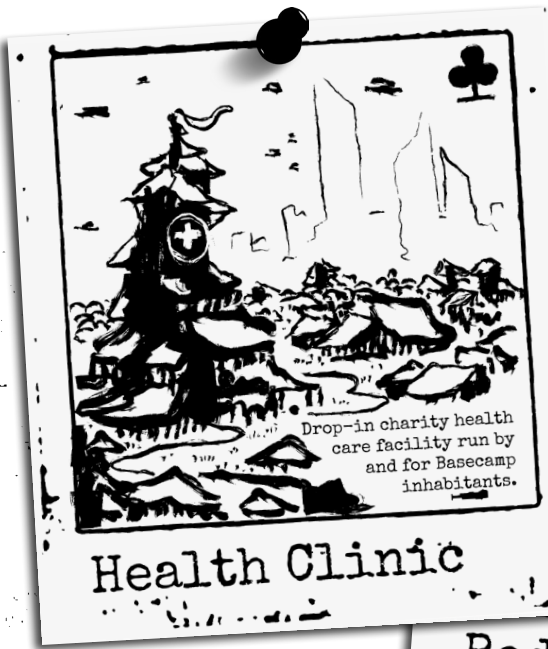


A little WHUMP, and a dainty crack of thunder, interrupted us. Someone had just teleported out of the room. They had heard everything.

"Goddamnit," she said, and grabbed my arm. "Let's go, before the path goes cold."

Following the teleporter would throw us into whatever ambush they were inclined to prepare.

But we hopped into the ether and didn't bother with hope.



Drop-in charity health care facility run by and for Basecamp inhabitants.

Health Clinic



Industrial SI machine that killed its operator. Scheduled for rescripting.

Red 579Q / Hénon

Welcome to Noirlandia



Noirlandia is a desperate hunt for truth in an unforgiving society. In each game, you'll create a unique city with its own distinct flavor of corruption. Your characters will fight for answers and question their principles. After roughly four hours, you'll have either found the truth, or lost your mind trying.

In Noirlandia, two to four players will work together to solve a murder mystery, playing the roles of people connected to the victim. But there is no game master. Instead, everyone will help to bring life to the city and its disreputable citizens.

Finding the answers doesn't mean you win. Dying doesn't mean you lose. The gears of the city will turn, apathetic to your efforts. It's not about justice—it's about what you're willing to give up to get it.

WELCOME TO NOIRLANDIA

OVERVIEW

First, you'll **create the city**. You'll find out why it's corrupt, what makes it different from other cities, and how the buildings and districts look.

Next, you'll **create the characters**. Despite their different backgrounds and motives, they'll all be investigating the same crime.

After that, you'll **create the victim** and learn about the murder scene.

Then, you'll **search for answers**. Your characters will take turns in the spotlight, combing the city for clues and gradually putting the pieces together. In an average game, you'll have your answers after three to four hours.

Finally, you'll **tell an epilogue**. Was justice done? Did you make a difference? What became of you and your city? The answers won't come cheap.



SUPPLIES

- » Printouts of the **character** and **reference sheets**
- » **Pencils** for everyone
- » One **marker**
- » A deck of **standard playing cards**, jokers removed
- » **Six-sided dice**, at least 12, half black and half white (or any two distinct colors)
- » A **corkboard**. 20" by 20" is good—if yours is much bigger, just pin your leads to a smaller section of the board*
- » **Tacks**—15 of them is plenty
- » **String** or yarn
- » **Scrap paper**. A variety of paper styles is ideal—old receipts, photos, train tickets, map fragments, anything you're willing to mark up with a marker and pin to the board
- » **Scissors** for cutting your string and paper

*Don't have a corkboard? You can improvise a replacement: tape things to a table, draw everything on a big whiteboard, or create a digital corkboard.

WELCOME TO NOIRLANDIA

CONSENSUS AND OWNERSHIP

Before you start city-building, take a moment to talk about **consensus**. In the questions that follow, and most often in play, you'll make decisions collaboratively. You all have the right to **veto** aspects of the story or setting you aren't comfortable with. You don't need to explain yourself if you don't want to—it's everybody else's job to be flexible and try another way. During gameplay, a veto could look like saying, "*Can we try doing this another way?*"

Noirlandia divides up worldbuilding among players using a system of **ownership**. As you establish your setting, each player will take ownership over certain elements, written on index cards. One person might own *The Twelve-Year War* or *city transportation*, while another might own *Upper Crust architecture*.

When a question comes up about an owned element of the setting, the person who owns it gives the **first and final** answer. The owner is welcome to solicit ideas and help from the other players, but always let the owner have the first say, and at the end of any discussion, what they say goes.



When a question is asked about a part of the setting that isn't owned, give ownership of that element to a player, who'll answer the original question. New ownership always goes to the player who owns the fewest elements. When multiple people are eligible, it goes to whoever is most excited about the new element.

CONSENSUS AND OWNERSHIP

When a question comes up that falls under multiple players' ownership, the owners will answer it together.

In all discussions, remember: It's okay if there's some silence at the table as people think. Because there's no game master to advocate for quieter players, it's everyone's responsibility to manage their own contributions and make space for other voices. **Take this responsibility seriously.**

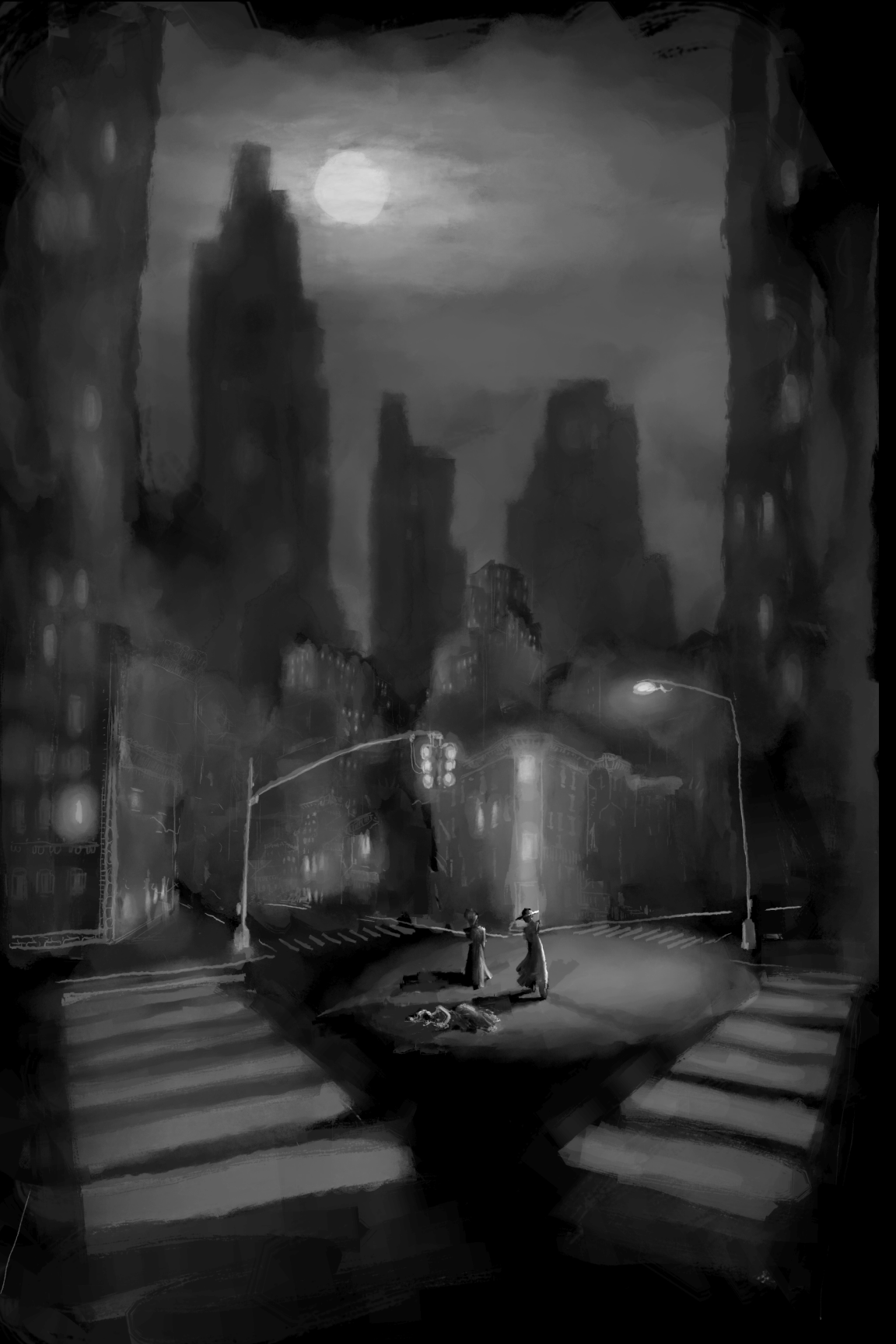
When everyone is on the same page about consensus and ownership, it's time to create your city!

The fog was thick enough, I supposed, to hide my little fit. It was getting tougher to keep the act together. A street-cleaning bot scuttled along the sidewalk, and its beady eyecams spent a microsecond too long giving me the lookover. I gave it a quick "boop beep" and headed the other way. I hate these kind of jobs.



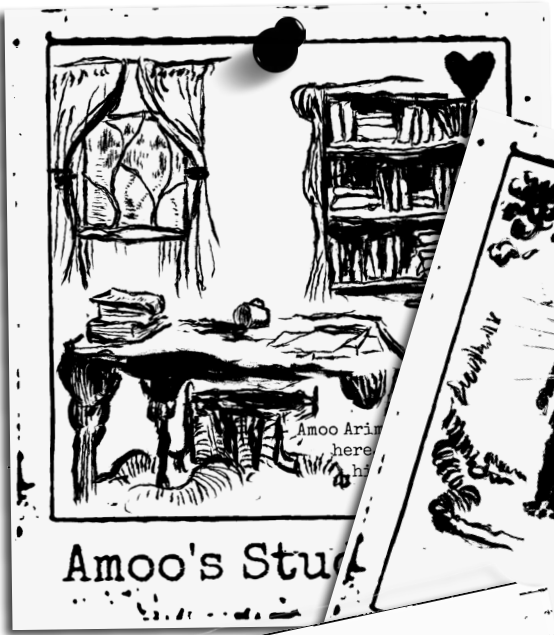
Courtrooms where petition
for digital citizens
rights has been filed.

Hall of Justice



The City

*corruption, big questions,
districts, language & name*



When the city's main import is trash, you'd think the folks would get pretty good at picking out treasure. But the garbage went untouched.

City Hall gave everyone a little house, a little food, and a little cash. Wading through the trash canals required a spark of desperation, which was carefully snuffed out by the city's policies.

So we enjoyed a modicum of privacy as we picked through the filth.

Press

The City

You'll play each game of Noirlandia in a different city. Some will be quite familiar, some will be unrecognizable. As your group answers questions about the city, your setting will take shape.

STEP 1: CORRUPTION

Maybe your city started with the best intentions. Maybe it was rotten from the beginning. In any case, it's clear that corruption has taken hold.

Roll a die. On everyone's character sheet, record that your city is corrupted by:

•	TECHNOLOGY
••	EXTRAVAGANCE
•••	DECEPTION
••••	ISOLATION
•••••	PRIDE
••••••	APATHY

Think about the implications of this corruption as you answer the questions to come.

STEP 2: THE BIG QUESTIONS

Noirlandia's cities are sometimes contemporary, sometimes from the distant past or future. The people are sometimes alien, sometimes just like us. Answer these four questions to flesh out your city:

- » **How are the city's people unlike us?**
- » **What do the buildings look like?**
- » **How did the corruption take hold?**
- » **What laws do the people live by?**

Let a different person start each answer. Whoever answers a question takes ownership over that aspect of the city, writing it on an index card. After each question, everyone can take a moment to discuss details and ramifications. Don't let these conversations go for more than a few minutes—you'll have the chance to expand upon the answers as you play. In a three-player game, one player will end up answering two questions and owning two cards.

HANNAH: We rolled a 3. It looks like our city's corrupted by.. deception! So, let's see. Does anyone have thoughts about how the people here are unlike us?

ALANNA: Well, if we're corrupted by deception, maybe all the people here wear masks. It's

THE BIG QUESTIONS

looked down upon to show any emotion. Maybe it's even illegal.

EVAN: That sounds neat! How does that sound to you, Hannah?

HANNAH: I'm game! Alanna, do you want to take ownership over "The Masks"?

ALANNA: Yup!

Alanna writes "The Masks" down on an index card. She'll keep this card with her for the rest of the game. When questions come up about the city's masks, Alanna will have first and last say.

EVAN: That's one question down. So, what do our buildings look like? What if our architecture is one of the only things that really communicates an emotional experience? Like, your job is supposed to make you feel happy, so... the buildings are twisted into these giant, carnivalesque smile shapes?

ALANNA: Haha. Carnival stuff really creeps me out. I'm going to veto that one!

EVAN: No problem! Actually, I think I like this idea even better: Maybe our architecture reflects our society's stance on hiding your emotions at all costs. Maybe our buildings only have really imperceptible differences, and they're very utilitarian. Residential buildings are perfect squares, offices are rectangles, certain buildings

THE CITY

are shaped liked spheres. It's all very geometric and uninspired.

ALANNA: Love it! That works for me.

HANNAH: Me too!

Evan takes the index card "Uninspired Architecture", showing he owns this part of the setting.

EVAN: Great! Hannah, how do you think the corruption took hold?

HANNAH: What if, not so long ago, our society was actually incredibly empathic? It only took reading someone's facial expression to identify with their experience and to feel emotionally connected with them. Maybe there was some sort of outside coup or takeover, and the new leader—or leaders—needed to maintain divisions between people to keep control. The masks are part of this new rule to try to tamp down our empathy. Maybe the people are actually the ones deceiving the upper crust, always trying to peek through our masks and reconnect?

ALANNA: That sounds awesome. I can totally work with that!

EVAN: Hannah, do you want to take ownership over the old regime or the new one?

HANNAH: I'll take the old regime. I have a lot of

questions about the new regime, but maybe we can answer them as we go!

Hannah writes "Empathic Old Regime" on an index card and keeps the card close by.

STEP 3: THE DISTRICTS

Your city is divided into four districts: **Downtown** (♥), **Skid Row** (♣), the **Outskirts** (♠), and the **Upper Crust** (♦).

Go through each in turn and answer the question: **"What structures define this district?"**

As before, let a different player start each answer, then take a little time as a group to describe some details. Write down a summary of each answer and the district's suit on an index card. For example, you might have *Kodachrome HQ* (♥) for Downtown, *Painters' Alley* (♣) for Skid Row, *The Docks* (♠) for the Outskirts, and *Hanging Gardens* (♦) for the Upper Crust. If you come up with some details, write those down on the cards as well.



Pin these index cards up on the corkboard, arranging them like the corners of a square around the outer edge. If your corkboard is really big, just arrange them in a smaller square anywhere on it.

THE CITY

It should look something like this:



As you play, you'll pin up more paper on the corkboard, and often you'll be told to pin something up **in the district**. This just means you'll pin it near the index card for that district.

.....

HANNAH: I have an idea for Downtown. What if the new leaders came in after our city had an economic collapse? I don't know what caused the collapse, but they came in with this crowd-control mask idea, which was also a brilliant business scheme because they've got us all working in the Downtown mask factories!

Hannah writes "Downtown-bustling mask factories, industrial hub" on a card and pins it to a corner of the board.

ALANNA: Haha, that's ridiculous. But I also kind of love it. What if our economic collapse wasn't actually a collapse, but just this brief period of instability as we were working toward this weird, empathic utopian government? Whoever came in and took over had been waiting to do this for a loooong time, and they struck when the iron was hot.

EVAN: That sounds great. And that gives me an idea for the Upper Crust! I think these new leaders know how loathed they are, so they've gone to great lengths to wall themselves off from the rest of the city. Any thoughts on what that could look like?

HANNAH: Maybe they live in these big water-tower-style buildings that loom over everyone? That gives them a lot of security, and they can do sneaky surveillance from above.

ALANNA: Yeah! Oh! And what if the towers are so high up that the people on the ground can't see that they're actually incredibly lavish. Most people aren't allowed any house decorations, but these towers are totally decked out.

Evan writes "Upper Crust—fancy surveillance pods towering above Downtown" on a card and pins it to another corner of the board.

EVAN: Alanna, any ideas for Skid Row?

THE CITY

ALANNA: Hmm. Maybe Skid Row is home to everyone who can't work in the mask factories? Lots of elderly folks, people with poor vision or another disability.

HANNAH: Sounds neat! Does the upper crust give them a bad time, or do they generally leave them alone?

ALANNA: I think they're seen as a bit of a pox, but they actually get left alone. They don't have to wear masks, because the people in command don't see them as a threat. Let them have their empathy—it won't feed 'em.

Alanna writes "Skid Row—near Downtown, no masks, ignored" on a card and pins it to the board.

EVAN: That's perfect. So the final district is the Outskirts. If the people in Skid Row don't wear masks because they can't participate in mainstream society, what if the people on the Outskirts don't wear masks because they refuse to? I can imagine there's actually a lot of activism and discontent coming from Skid Row, and they're often secretly consulting with radical, empathetic, non-mask-wearers in the Outskirts.

HANNAH: Can they call themselves *The Unmasked*?

EVAN: Totally.

ALANNA: Can they also be nudists as a radical act of self-expression?

HANNAH: Yes. Absolutely yes.

Evan writes "The Outskirts—unmasked radical nudists, conspiring with Skid Row" on a card and pins it to the board's final corner.

.....

That completes the four districts! If there are still big questions about how the world functions, you might take a moment to answer them here, but don't get hung up on it. It's great to reveal these answers and learn more about the world during play.

In the previous examples, the three players worked together to answer questions about the city. Everyone made sure to bounce questions and ideas off each other, leaving room for each person to contribute new ideas before anyone took ownership over parts of the story.

STEP 4: YOUR CITY'S LANGUAGE AND NAME

Take a moment to think about how the people of your city talk. Feel free to use any method or methods below.

If your city is **mostly realistic**, decide what region and time defines how its people speak—for example, modern Ireland, Victorian England, or precolonial Mexico. Choose a dialect that everyone is comfortable using. Feel free to make a mash up of several regions.

If your city is **fairly strange**, come up with some slang that shows how its people are unlike us. An asteroid-mining colony might have slang based on their work and home: *bouncers* might describe the solitary, space-suited scouts who bound across the low-gravity surface, and *floatwork* might be the deep-core mining that gets close enough to the asteroid's center that there's almost no gravity.

If your city is **alien or unrecognizable**, build your language from a syllable list. Go around the table, suggesting word fragments like *bizh*, *lu*, *grum*, or *bodah* until you have about a dozen. Use these as the building blocks for names and special words in your city.

Using the established language as a guide, come up with a name for your city.

LANGUAGE AND NAME

Alanna, Evan, and Hannah take a few minutes to talk about some of the defining features of their city. They decide that their city's language is **mostly realistic**, but with the new emphasis on hiding emotions, they invent a few slang words unique to this society:

Actors—the word the Upper Crust well-to-do use to refer to the citizens

Noface—a derogatory term used by folks in the Outskirts to refer to anyone following the status quo without question

Clovers—a tongue-in-cheek term folks in Skid Row use to self-describe; refers to anyone who "lucked out" by being born poor and disabled

The players decide to name their city **Diligencia**—a name given by the new leaders after the takeover. They agree that it's frowned upon to ask things like "How are you doing?" or "How was your day?" even as a formality. In Diligencia, common greetings look more like "A productive workday to you," and "The weather has changed, but all is proper."

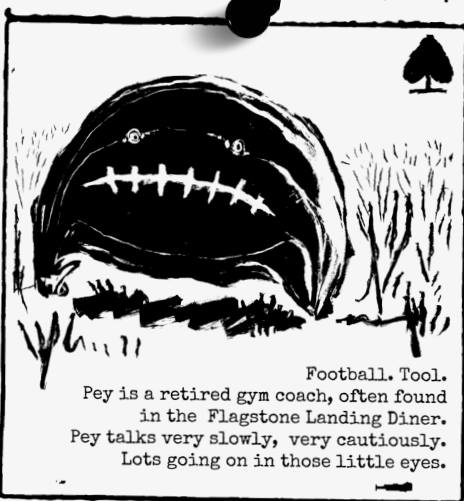


The Characters

*characters & the victim,
introductions & relationships,
the murder*

I was a little sleepy. I had been up late, attaching the recorder to the inside of my jacket. I'm terrible at sewing. As Roderick droned out the details of his plan, I wondered what he'd say about the ragged stitchwork hidden under my vest.

He seemed like the kind of person who could do good work with a needle. When he wasn't busy with his crimes.



Football. Tool.
Pey is a retired gym coach, often found
in the Flagstone Landing Diner.
Pey talks very slowly, very cautiously.
Lots going on in those little eyes.

Iron

The Characters

Characters in Noirlandia come from all walks of life, and all districts of the city. They are principled, fragile, and united by their search for the truth.

STEP 1: CREATE AND CLAIM THE CHARACTERS

Put some playing cards on the table, one more than the number of players. So, in a three-player game, put down 4 cards. For each card, roll a die and place it on top.

Each set of card and die represents one character. Have someone read out loud what the cards and dice represent using the three lists below while someone else records the characters' descriptions on pieces of scrap paper.



THE CHARACTERS

The card's value represents **the character's identity**:







2	URCHIN/VAGABOND
3	ACTOR/PERFORMER
4	WRITER/JOURNALIST
5	SALESPERSON/INDUSTRIALIST
6	MOBSTER/LOCAL BIGWIG
7	OUT-OF-TOWNER
8	COP/DEPUTY
9	ASSASSIN/HIRED GUN
10	GOVERNMENT AGENT/INTELLIGENCE
J	PRIVATE EYE
Q	ARISTOCRAT/HEIR/HEIRESS
K	FORMER DETECTIVE/OFFICER
A	MASTERMIND/SCHEMER

The card's suit represents **where they operate**:

♥	DOWNTOWN
♣	SKID ROW
♠	THE OUTSKIRTS
♦	THE UPPER CRUST

CREATE AND CLAIM CHARACTERS

The die represents **what principle guides them:**

	NEVER HARM ANOTHER
	LIVE ALWAYS WITH DIGNITY
	TELL NO LIE
	NEVER REVEAL MY TRUE SELF
	JUSTICE MUST BE DONE
	NEVER BETRAY MY OWN

Lay out the descriptions where everyone can see them. Each player chooses a character they'd like to be, and takes that description. If multiple people want the same character, politely talk it out. Once everyone has taken a character, there will be one extra card and die on the table that nobody chose. Leave it there for now.

.....

Evan draws 4 cards—one for each player, plus one extra—and lays them on the table where everyone can see them. Alanna then rolls 4 dice and randomly puts one on each card.

3♠ & 1

Actor or performer / Outskirts / "Never harm another"

6♠ & 6

Mobster or local bigwig / Outskirts / "Never betray my own"

THE CHARACTERS

3♣ & 5♦

Actor or performer / Skid Row / "Justice must be done"

Q♥ & 1♦

Aristocrat / Downtown / "Never harm another"

Hannah chooses the performer from the Outskirts, Evan chooses the performer on Skid Row, and Alanna chooses the bigwig on the Outskirts. With that, the aristocrat from Downtown—the one who would "never harm another"—becomes the victim.

STEP 2: CREATE THE VICTIM

One character was left unchosen. That character is the **victim**, whose murder you'll attempt to solve together. Give the victim a name. If you need ideas, refer back to your city's language.

Write the victim's name, and draw their picture if you'd like, onto a piece of scrap paper. Then, draw a big X over their name or picture. Pin them to the center of your corkboard amid all four districts.

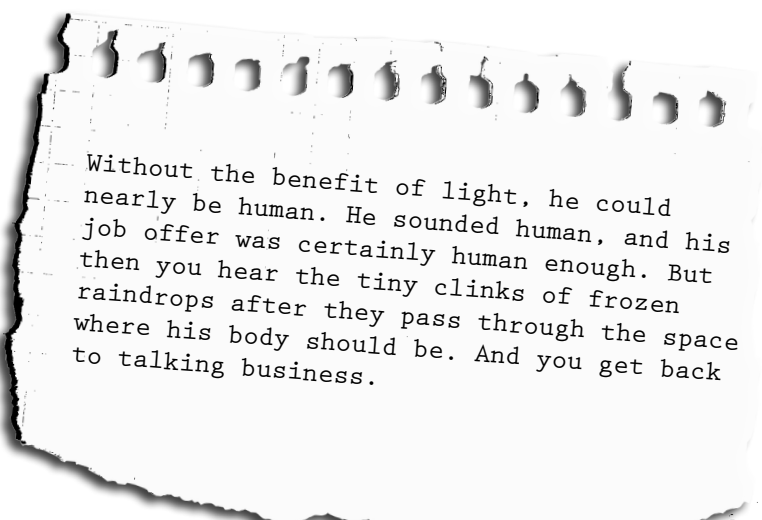
At this point, you're done using the cards and dice for now. Shuffle the cards back together, and set the dice aside.



The players name the victim **Alyssa Vector**. They decide that Alyssa was a respected leader in the old regime (before the nofaces stepped in). Most of the old leaders were exiled (or worse), but Alyssa was allowed to remain in Diligencia to placate the people. If she'd been exiled, the new regime may well have needed to face down a violent revolution.

After the takeover, Alyssa began working as a mediator in the Downtown factory district. Despite the new regime's distaste of anything emotional, they admitted that emotional tension at the workplace was sometimes unavoidable, and someone had to act as peacemaker.

Alyssa had been a beacon of light—a symbol that perhaps the old regime could rise again. Though she'd been working under the new regime, and now refused to show emotion around others, everyone knew that the trusted, compassionate Alyssa was still there behind the mask.



Without the benefit of light, he could nearly be human. He sounded human, and his job offer was certainly human enough. But then you hear the tiny clinks of frozen raindrops after they pass through the space where his body should be. And you get back to talking business.

THE CHARACTERS

STEP 3: FLESH OUT YOUR CHARACTERS

On your character sheet, transcribe the details given by your card and die—your **identity**, your **district**, and your **principle**.

Then, take some time to think about your character. Decide **what others call you**. It doesn't have to be your character's real name. Write down your **appearance**. This is what people remember about how your character looks, whatever makes you distinctive.

On your sheet, you'll see four conditions: **Body**, **Mind**, **Heart**, and **Rep**. Set one of them to , and set another to . Set the remaining two to .

BODY:	MIND:	HEART:	REP:
<input type="checkbox"/> Vigorous	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharp	<input type="checkbox"/> Content	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trusted
<input type="checkbox"/> Able	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Calm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quiet	<input type="checkbox"/> Overlooked
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hurt	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflicted	<input type="checkbox"/> Guilty	<input type="checkbox"/> Suspected
<input type="checkbox"/> Broken	<input type="checkbox"/> Unhinged	<input type="checkbox"/> Haunted	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeted
<input type="checkbox"/> Wrecked	<input type="checkbox"/> Shattered	<input type="checkbox"/> Consumed	<input type="checkbox"/> Damned

Evan marks hurt() in Body, calm() in Mind, quiet() in Heart, and trusted() in Rep. His character, Venn, will begin the game injured but well regarded.

Finally, write down your **relationship with the victim**. You could be old lovers or involved in a recent affair, partners in business or in crime, close family or distant admirers. This relationship can take any form, even adversarial, but make it strong enough to drive your character into the investigation.

STEP 4: MAKE INTRODUCTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

When you've all finished fleshing out your characters, introduce yourselves in a circle. You can speak in either first person or third person in these introductions and throughout the game.

I tiptoe past the door... and *Venn tiptoes past the door...* are both great ways of talking about your character. Use whichever point of view feels natural to you, and feel free to switch between them.

As you introduce your characters, some of your relationships with the victim might seem incompatible. How, for instance, could two of you be the victim's husband? The victim is a mysterious figure and may have been living a double or triple life. Still, feel free to change your relationships if a better idea strikes you.

After each introduction, the other players should ask a question or two about that character. *Where did you spend the last night? How long have you lived in the city? Why do you refuse to tell lies?*



THE CHARACTERS

As you go, talk about how your characters might relate. *How do we know each other? Maybe we're family? Maybe we were both sleeping with the victim?*

You don't need to have a relationship with every other character, but do make a connection with at least one. Write the names of the other player characters and your relationships with them on your character sheet.

.....

EVAN: My character's named **Venn**. I don't think anyone knows his last name. He's pretty old, and he's walked with forearm crutches since birth, but he's really struggling to get around now that age is taking its toll. I'm going to use a loose interpretation of "performer" here and say that Venn is performing for the upper crust. I like that they already think of their citizens as actors, but he's been acting especially obedient recently.

I think he has some crazy plan to go out in a blaze of glory, though I don't know what it is yet. That's where my "justice must be done" principle comes into play. But right now, from the outside, I look like another down-on-my-luck clover. I'm taking hurt(●) for my Body, giving me a black die, and trusted(□) for my Rep, giving me a white die. My Heart and Mind conditions give me no dice.

I'm going to say that I look downright ghoulish. If I'm sitting and thinking quietly, people come up to me and check my pulse to make sure I'm still

INTROS AND RELATIONSHIPS

alive. As for my relationship with the victim, I'm not sure. Any ideas?

HANNAH: What if you're her father?

EVAN: Whoa. I hadn't even considered that. I like it! I wonder why I'm here in the slums when my daughter was basically aristocracy—at least in the old world. How about we leave that question unanswered for now? Alanna, want to intro your character?

ALANNA: They call my character **Diva Dopamine**. Diva's always had the drugs that make people feel good, but business has been weird under the new regime. Everyone's afraid to buy drugs because the law's always watching, and Diva is convinced that some of her recent clients are government officials. She's even been getting requests for new drugs. Stuff she'd never give to her own people. I think that's where her "never betray my own" comes in.

Diva's tall, muscular, and curvy. She's got the physique of an opera singer with the grizzled look of an underworld drug dealer. In fact, she does sing opera. Her performances were legendary, before things went to hell. I think that she'd recently started selling drugs to Alyssa—some of these weird new drugs—and the whole thing just didn't sit right with her.

Oh, Evan, I think our characters might have a connection! What if, when Alyssa started buying drugs, Diva came to Venn and snitched. She was

THE CHARACTERS

worried about what Alyssa had gotten herself into, and wanted Venn to keep an eye on his daughter from afar. Now that Alyssa's dead, I think we both feel like we're in this together. Like we knew what was coming, and we have to get to the bottom of this. Is that cool with you?

EVAN: That's perfect! What are Diva's stats?

ALANNA: She's vigorous(□) in Body, conflicted(■) in Mind, quiet(○) in Heart, and overlooked(○) in Rep—for now.

HANNAH: These are awesome, and this all fits nicely with my character! I'm **Carrot Lightning**.

ALANNA: ... Carrot Lightning?

HANNAH: Too silly? Did I silly up the tone too much?

ALANNA: Nope. I can roll with it. Just making sure I heard right.

HANNAH: Where Diva deals in good feelings, Carrot deals in information. Even under the old regime I was somewhat of an outsider. I've always had trouble expressing my feelings, but I never wanted my right to express those feelings taken away. I'm small, with dark skin and light hair, and my gender isn't immediately apparent. I run a punk newspaper called the **Workers' Free Press** that reports on the goings-on in the factories. A lot of workers actually think I should stay out of their business, given that I don't actually work in a factory.

INTROS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Before Alyssa died, I'd been trying to shake her down for insider information about the factories, but I could see she wasn't the bad guy. The whole thing felt really insincere, and it was starting to challenge my "never harm another" principle. I gave up on trying to get information from her directly, but by then I had a crush on her, so I kept coming back around.

ALANNA: Haha. And what makes you a performer?

HANNAH: Oh! Right! Carrot does these flash mob demonstrations all around the city. I sneak around in a mask and I'm able to slip in with the rest of the "actors", and then I rip off the mask and start to slander the tyrants in their towers. I always manage to slip away in the chaos though. I'm like the Banksy of spontaneous speeches.

Evan, I'm not sure how we're connected yet. But I'm sure Alyssa's mentioned her father to me before. I'm vigorous(□) in Body, calm(○) in Mind, quiet(○) in Heart, suspected(■) in Rep.

The players go around asking each other a few questions. Hannah asks Evan if Venn has ever been in trouble with the law. Evan asks Alanna if Diva samples her own wares. Hannah asks Alanna if Diva has ever been in love. Alanna asks Hannah if Carrot was born in the Outskirts, or if they moved there in protest.

THE CHARACTERS

STEP 5: LEARN ABOUT THE MURDER

Now that you know who's on the case and how they're connected to the victim, it's time to learn a little more about the murder.

Draw two cards from the deck. These are your first **leads**. Leads are people, places, and things that will help you solve the mystery. The first card drawn is a location: the scene of the crime. The second is a thing: a suspicious object found at the crime scene. You already have a lead who's a person: the victim.

Figure out what the two new leads are, and where they were found, by using the tables on page 91. Describe the location in a few evocative words, give it a name, and write it on a piece of scrap paper. Then, pin it to the corkboard **in the district that shares its suit**. Do the same for the object.



Finally, decide what state the victim is in. Is it clear how they died? Even if the cause of death seems apparent, the truth

LEARN ABOUT THE MURDER

might be very different—you'll find out during gameplay. This is a good place to talk about how graphic or veiled you want the game's violence to be; if you feel uncomfortable, you're free to **veto**.

Hannah drew two starting leads: a 4 of clubs and a queen of diamonds, which mapped to a park in Skid Row and a potent chemical from the Upper Crust towers.

Everyone contributes their thoughts and theories. They decide that the body of Alyssa Vector was discovered in a patch of greenery just outside of Skid Row. It's an area that unites the Downtown and the Outskirts with the Skid Row tent villages—a place where children might be seen playing in the summer, if such a thing were allowed anymore. The body was discovered by an inhabitant of the tent village, and was quickly covered up before Venn could see it in passing. In Alyssa's hand was a small vial inscribed with the word **Solopserin**: Highly concentrated. This clearly isn't Diva's stuff. It looks too high-end.

Was Alyssa killed on the common green, or was her body placed there to send a message? The cause of her death is unclear. Will an autopsy test positive for this unfamiliar substance, or was she just a carrier, in over her head?

The players decide that they're okay with unsettling violence, so long as it doesn't feel gratuitous.



The
Investigation

*scenes, rolls, bargains,
outcomes, the epilogue*

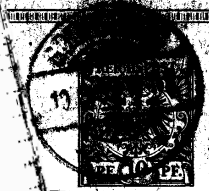


Kulha is the source of
the Incense of Life,
a drug popular with
the powerful.

Kulha

The monitors all across downtown flickered and dropped their scheduled programming, replacing the adverts for food-paste and fun-drink with Alice's mugshot. My sister's face stared blankly from ten thousand screens as an echoing, urgent voice told the crowds that a criminal was loose in the city.

"I'll call you back," I said, and handed the phone to the smirking officer. In an unexpectedly soft-hearted gesture, he removed his boot from my neck and extended a hand to help me up. For a moment, I reconsidered: Take his hand? Or trigger the phone's detonator?



*Franklin
Richard
meads
meads
Versiers*

The Investigation

By now, you've created your city, introduced your characters, and learned a little about the victim. The scene is set. A strange city, a foul crime, and a handful of would-be detectives on a doubtful hunt for answers. It's time to start roleplaying.

Your goal is to find the truth. Specifically, you need **answers** to three questions:

- » **Why was the victim killed?**
- » **How was it pulled off?**
- » **Who did it?**

To get your answers, you'll play out a number of **scenes**.

In every scene, one player character will be the **protagonist**. The scene will center on the protagonist's action and struggles, and the protagonist will dictate the setup and direction of the action.

After some freeform roleplay, the protagonist will attempt something difficult or dangerous, making a **challenge roll**. At the end of the scene—after roleplaying the consequences of the challenge roll, and possibly some more freeform roleplay—the protagonist will make an **investigation roll**, which will, hopefully, bring you closer to answering the case.

THE INVESTIGATION

Investigation rolls generate **leads** and **connections**. Leads are the people, places, and objects that hint at the murder's cause. Each time you get a lead, you'll pin it to the corkboard in its district. Connections are the strings that tie the leads together. **To get an answer, you must have a chain of three connected leads.** These rolls can also generate answers and **escalations**. Escalations are major disruptions to the city's power and population. This will be explained in detail later.

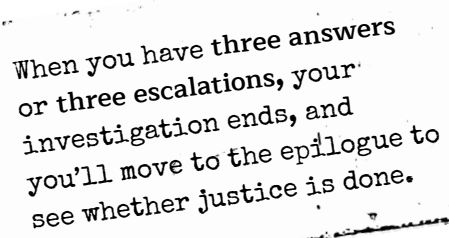
Start by deciding who will be the protagonist for the first scene. You can take turns being protagonist in any order, but nobody can take a second scene before everyone has taken their first.

STARTING THE SCENE

As the protagonist, you'll set the scene by answering three questions: **Where are you? What are you doing? Who are you with?**

If you need inspiration, think about which leads on the corkboard you might be investigating. The first scenes of the game often begin with hearing the bad news about the victim. Where were you when you found out? What are you doing about it?

Choosing the right condition will help you find answers. If your Body gives you a white die, try framing the scene so you'll



When you have three answers or three escalations, your investigation ends, and you'll move to the epilogue to see whether justice is done.

STARTING THE SCENE

be physically chasing down answers. If your Rep is your best condition, then try cooperating with (or coercing) your city's law enforcers.

Remember, you're **on the case**. Don't make a scene about having breakfast. You need to get answers, and you need to work fast.



Evan decides to take the first scene. The other players, helping to facilitate the scene's action, ask "Where are you? What are you doing? Who are you with?"

EVAN: Venn is on his way back from picking up supplies at a neighboring tent settlement. He's walking alone, like he always does, though everyone greets him as he passes. He's an old-timer here, and generally well-liked even though he's cranky. As he passes by the park, he notices a lot of commotion, but he can't make out what's going on.

THE INVESTIGATION

SUPPORTING THE ACTION

Once the protagonist describes what they're hoping to do, everyone else at the table will help bring the scene to life as supporters. Supporters have a duty to **describe the world**, **introduce conflict**, and **jump in as characters**. These characters could be their own, or other characters in your city.

Supporters, ask each other questions like *What should Painter's Row look like?* or *Who wants to roleplay as the palace guard?* You'll be taking on the role of traditional game masters, so be ready to support each other and brainstorm on the fly.

You're welcome to enter the scene as your own character. But remember, during this scene you're playing a supporting role. Keep the spotlight on the protagonist whether you're helping or opposing them.

Add conflict if the scene feels like it could use it. You don't have to oppose everything the protagonist attempts. Use your cinematic intuition. If you're not sure how to shake things up, draw a card and consult the Dramatic Hits table on page 92.

If the protagonist attempts something difficult, dangerous, or both, it's time for a **challenge roll**.



SUPPORTING THE ACTION

ALANNA: As Venn tries to get closer to the scene, a panic ensues. Some people start trying to lead him away. No official law enforcement has arrived yet, but Skid Row has its own people who handle bad situations, and they're all here. A park watchwoman, Roberta, takes you by the arm and says, "Venn. You don't come any closer now, Venn. We've got a bad situation here. Let's find you a bench. You're gonna want to sit down."

EVAN: Venn isn't thinking that whatever this is might be connected to him, but he's old and he's put in his time and he doesn't like being told what not to do. He grumbles and pushes her aside with one of his crutches.

HANNAH: I think that might call for a challenge roll. Venn isn't really in a position to pick fights here, and folks really don't want him to see this.

EVAN: I think you're right!

THE INVESTIGATION

CHALLENGE ROLLS

Once per turn, when you attempt something **difficult or dangerous** as the protagonist, you'll determine the outcome with a **challenge roll**. You might be convincing police of your good intentions, duking it out with the street gang's bruisers, seducing the mayor, or outwitting the high school's chess team captain.

First, decide which of the four conditions best fits this challenge: Body, Heart, Mind, or Rep. Everyone can weigh in, but the **supporters have the final say**.

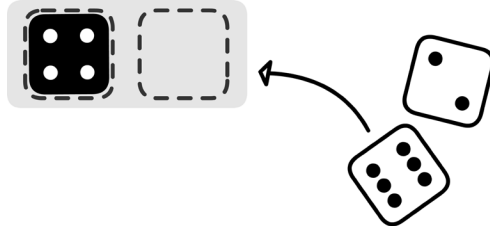
EVAN: Venn's heart is about to be broken into a million pieces, but he doesn't know that yet. I think this is a Body challenge.

ALANNA: Agreed!

HANNAH: Yeah, this absolutely seems like a physical roll. You're trying to push Roberta aside.

Next, the protagonist rolls a **white die**, and any supporter rolls a **black die**. Take a look at the protagonist's condition governing this challenge: if it gives any white or black dice, roll those as well. If you roll multiple black or white dice, **put only the highest die forward**.

CHALLENGE ROLLS



For example, if you're rolling a Body challenge, and your Body condition is vigorous(□), you'll roll 1 extra white die (a total of 2 white dice). If it's broken(■), you'd roll 2 extra black dice (a total of 3 black dice).

Protagonist, you'll compare the results of the white die and black die:

- » If the **white die** is higher by 2 or more, you **succeed** unconditionally. Narrate what your success has brought about. **Keep the white die.**
- » If the **black die** is higher by 2 or more, you **fail**. Narrate how the investigation just got more difficult. **Keep the black die.**
- » If **neither die** is higher by 2 or more, it's a **stalemate**. One supporter will offer you a **bargain**. If you accept the bargain's conditions, treat your roll as a success and keep the white die. If you refuse, treat your roll as a failure and keep the black die.

At the end of the scene, you'll add your kept white or black die to your investigation roll.

ALANNA: Alright, here's your white die. I'm rolling 2 black dice because your Body is hurt.

THE INVESTIGATION

EVAN: I rolled a 3.

ALANNA: I rolled a 2 on the first die, and... Oh no, it's a 5!

EVAN: Nooo! So close!

HANNAH: So if you'd rolled a 3 and Alanna rolled a 4, we could have put a bargain on the table?

EVAN: That's right. But Alanna's die was two higher than mine, so this is a loss for me. I'll hang on to this black die now.

HANNAH: Alanna, do you want to narrate what happened?

ALANNA: Oh gosh, okay. Roberta the watchwoman leads you by the arm to a nearby bench. You sit down next to each other and she takes your hand.

EVAN: Venn isn't one for hand-holding. I think his heart immediately drops into his stomach.

ALANNA: "I'm so, so sorry, Venn. Alyssa is dead."

EVAN: Venn has seen a lot of pain in his time. He puts his head in his hands, and he's silent for what seems like an eternity. When he looks up he says, "I have to see. I have to know."

ALANNA: "I'm sorry, Venn, it's not a good idea. You're an old man and you don't need that. We'll tell you what you need to know."

OFFERING A BARGAIN

When the protagonist makes a challenge roll and gets a stalemate, a supporter can offer a bargain. By accepting the bargain, the protagonist succeeds on the challenge roll, but in return must **damage** one of their conditions, decreasing it by one step.

Supporters, you can choose to damage whichever condition you believe would best serve the story. So, when the protagonist tries to plead their innocence to the police and rolls a stalemate, here are some bargains a supporter might offer:

- » “If you accept this bargain, they’ll leave you alone for now, but will grow suspicious. You’d damage your Rep.”
- » “You can convince them if you sell out your friend Nikolas. They’ll hunt him instead, and you’ll damage your Heart.”
- » “They’ll only believe you if you agree to keeping a secret microphone in your pocket. Having the police listening to everything you say will bring your Mind down to conflicted.”

Protagonist, if you accept the bargain, you’ll take the damage described, then narrate your success and **keep the white die**. If you refuse, you’ll describe how your failure made the investigation harder and **keep the black die**.

THE INVESTIGATION

What if, in the scene between Venn and Roberta the watchwoman, Evan had rolled a white 3 and Alanna's highest black die was a 4?

In Noirlandia's rules, a roll of 3 against 4 would lead to a bargain.

EVAN: So we're at a stalemate?

ALANNA: We are! If you really want to push past Roberta, she's not going to physically try to stop you. But seeing your daughter like this won't be easy. You won't be able to get the image out of your head, and you'll wish you never saw it. If you want to succeed on this roll, you'll have to change your Mind condition to conflicted. Are you willing to do that?

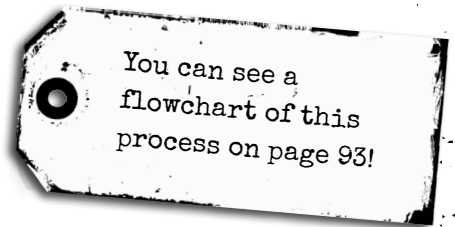
EVAN: Absolutely! So I whip my cane to the side and Roberta stumbles, and before she can recover I'm standing over the body. The crowd parts for me. It's Alyssa, but it's not Alyssa. Everything is wrong. I see the vial in her hand. My vision goes blurry, but I keep that image in my mind.

INVESTIGATION ROLLS

At the end of every scene, the protagonist makes an investigation roll. This roll can affect the progress on the case, the protagonist's conditions, and the city at large.

The protagonist can call for the investigation roll at any point after their challenge roll. Sometimes the investigation roll will be a part of an active challenge, like interrogating a witness or searching the basement for clues. Other times the roll will happen after the scene's action has resolved, and will tell you about the surprising consequences.

To begin, give the protagonist **2 white dice**.



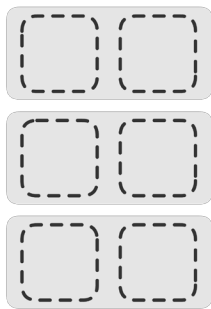
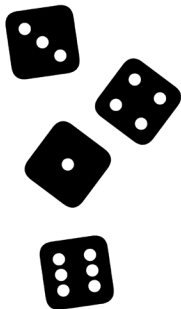
Give any supporter **3 black dice**. If the protagonist failed on the challenge roll, add a fourth black die. Then, add another black die for each **escalated district**. (You'll learn more about escalations on page 71.)

Then, the supporters decide which condition best fits the investigation in this scene: Body, Heart, Mind, or Rep. Award any white or black dice indicated by the governing condition.

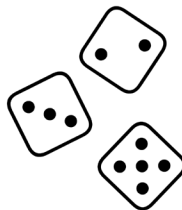
If the protagonist succeeded on their challenge roll, and for each answer your group has found, give a white die to a **supporter**—preferably someone who hasn't had a big role in this scene. If there are multiple white dice to give out, divide them as evenly as possible among the supporters. These dice are called **bargain dice**, and don't matter quite yet—see the "Changing the outcomes" section below.

THE INVESTIGATION

Opposition dice



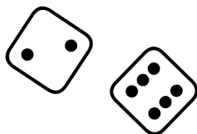
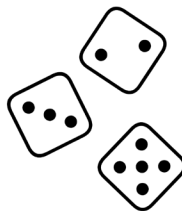
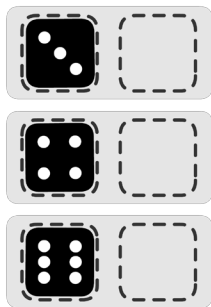
Protagonist dice



Bargain dice

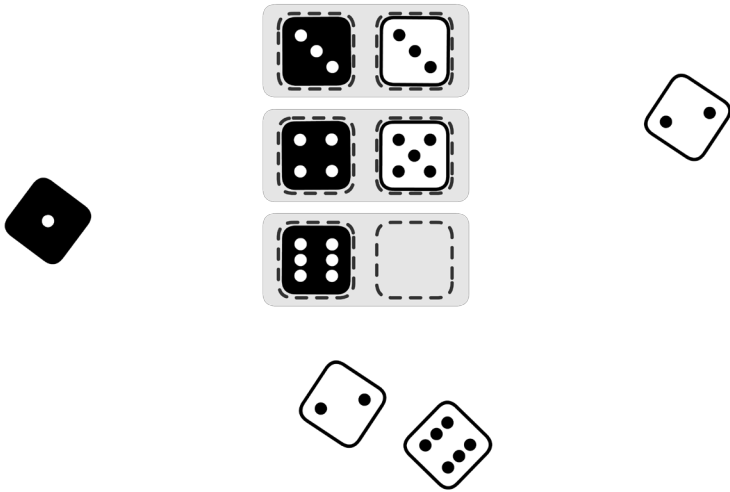


Everybody rolls their dice. Black dice on the left. The protagonist's white dice on the right. Bargain dice below.

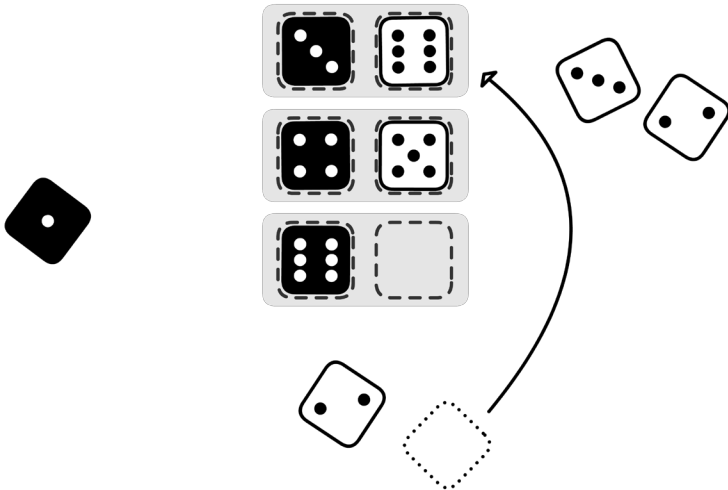


The opposition always puts forward their three highest dice. In this case: 3, 4, and 6.

INVESTIGATION ROLLS



Then, the protagonist puts forward any 2 white dice, pairing each white die with one black die.



If one of the bargain dice looks appealing, the protagonist can make a bargain with a supporter to get it!

THE INVESTIGATION

As the protagonist, you might feel like the best strategy is to put forward your two highest dice to pair the two highest black dice. However, different dice produce different **outcomes**. Review the possible outcomes listed on page 68 before choosing your pairings. If the dice look bad, there are a few ways to change the situation for the better, as you'll learn in the next section.

HANNAH: You know that Alyssa is dead, and you don't for a minute believe that the cause was natural. What do you do next?

EVAN: I'm going to go have a talk with Diva. I thought I could trust her, but as far as I know, it was one of her drugs that did this. If there are drugs, Diva's got to be involved.

HANNAH: Diva, where are you?

ALANNA: I'm lying low, but I'm where you'd expect to find me. I'm in my "secret" lounge on the fringe of town. Secret to the nofaces, at least. Everyone else knows about it. Let's say it's called The Fringe.

EVAN: I make my way there faster than you'd expect and burst through the door.

ALANNA: Normally my security would stop you, but word of the crime has already made it to me, and I knew you'd be headed my way.

INVESTIGATION ROLLS

EVAN: "Diva!"

ALANNA: "Venn. I know why you're here. And I'm gonna tell you right now, I had nothing to do with it."

EVAN: "She was a good kid, Diva. She was one of the good ones." It's hard to keep my composure. I'm not sure if I want to fall into her arms or fight her.

ALANNA: "I wouldn't keep this from you, Venn. You knew Alyssa was mixed up in something. I told you she was mixed up in something. But your girl wasn't one of my junkies. I swear up and down she wasn't touching the stuff I gave her."

EVAN: "What were you giving her, Diva? What killed her?"

ALANNA: "Venn, the stuff she was buying from me was light stuff. Fluff for the richie rich. She couldn't have gotten hooked on it if she'd tried, but I swear to you she wasn't a sampler—she was some kind of courier. The stuff in her hand, Venn, I don't know what it is. I've never seen it before."

EVAN: "You mean it wasn't from you?"

ALANNA: "It wasn't from me, Venn. And we don't even know if that's what did her in. Someone may have been out to get your daughter."



EVAN: At this point I'm trusting Diva again. I think I knew from the start that she wasn't the one

THE INVESTIGATION


who did this, but I needed to channel my anger somewhere. I ask her if she's willing to help me get to the bottom of this, and I ask her to tell me everything she knows. Time for an investigation roll!

Evan takes 2 white dice. Hannah takes 3 black dice, then adds the black die from Evan's failed challenge roll into the pool. Everyone decides that Venn's Heart condition best fits the investigation in this scene. Venn's Heart is quiet, adding no black or white dice. There are no answers on the board yet, so there won't be any bargain dice awarded to supporters in this scene. The city isn't falling to pieces yet, either: there are no escalated districts, so that won't add any more black dice.

Hannah rolls the 4 black dice, and Evan rolls the 2 white dice. The results are:

Black:	
White:	

The opposition always puts forward the three highest black dice, so Hannah pushes the 5, 5, and 4 forward.

Black:	
White:	

*As the scene's protagonist, Evan can put forward **any two of his white dice**. He's only got two here,*

CHANGING THE OUTCOMES

a 6 and 4, so he can choose how to pair them. Evan pairs his white 6 against the black 5 and pairs his white 4 against the black 4—a tie!

Black:	6 5 4
White:	6 4

Here, Evan hit on a 6 and tied on a 4. If he'd like another hit for his character, Venn, he'll have to break his principle to get it.

CHANGING THE OUTCOMES

As the protagonist, you have a couple ways to change the outcomes of your investigation roll: **using bargain dice** or **breaking your principle**.

As the protagonist, you'll only roll 2 or 3 white dice. However, if your group has found any answers, or if you succeeded on the challenge roll, the supporters will also roll white dice. These are the **bargain dice**.

On an investigation roll, **any** supporters who rolled a bargain die can propose a bargain. These bargains work like the bargains on challenge rolls: the supporter can propose how



THE INVESTIGATION

you'll get lucky in the investigation at the cost of harming one of your conditions.

However, unlike in challenge rolls, bargainers in investigation rolls can propose a purely narrative cost. Accepting a narrative bargain doesn't harm a condition, but you'll have to fulfill their end of the bargain to the best of your abilities. Narrative bargains might look like:

- » You have to lose your lucky hat to the abyss!
- » You have to adopt every single one of the abducted Dalmatians.
- » You'll need to vow to put every single member of the corrupt monarchy behind bars—even your father!

Sometimes there will be a few good bargain dice available, and you can hear the proposals for each one of them, and take whichever bargain you prefer, if any. However, you can accept just **1 bargain die**. And even after taking it, you can still only put forward **2 white dice**.

ALANNA: Yikes. The best dice I have to put forward are a 3 and a 4.

HANNAH: Well, I have something that might be of interest to you. What do you think of this lovely 6?

ALANNA: That all depends. What do I have to do to get it?

CHANGING THE OUTCOMES

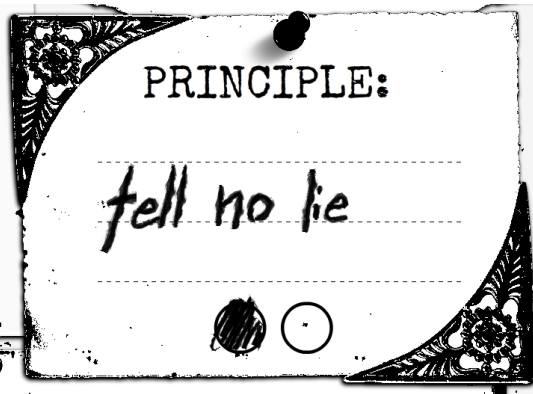
HANNAH: Diva will have to cancel her performance this weekend at the underground opera house.

ALANNA: What! But she's waited so long for this moment!

HANNAH: She shouldn't be seen in crowds right now. It's too dangerous. She's got to lay low. So are you gonna take the bargain?

.....

If any of your paired dice are tied, you can **break your principle** to count all of your ties as hits. If you do this, put a **black mark** in one of the circles next to your principle, and narrate how you broke with your principle in the scene. This will impact your epilogue, so it's not a decision to be made lightly. If you have two black marks already, you cannot break your principle again.



.....

HANNAH: Now you're tied on a 4, Alanna. Is Diva going to break her principle here?

THE INVESTIGATION

ALANNA: Hmm. I really don't want to, but a hit on a 4 will get me a new lead or connection. So yeah, she's going to break her principle.

HANNAH: What does that look like?

ALANNA: Well, my principle is "never betray my own". I think... oh! I realize that if we're going to get any answers, we're going to have to pander to the upper class. They've been buying my drugs, so before I can go in there swinging, I've got to play nice with them. Everyone is going to think I'm a filthy traitor.

EVAN: You're gonna suck up to the nofaces?

ALANNA: It's the truth. *Alanna marks one of the circles next to her principle on her character sheet.* So Venn and I talk out our plans. Are you okay being pissed at the idea of sweet-talking them to get what we want?

EVAN: Hell yeah I'm pissed.

ALANNA: Great! Let's narrate the outcome then!

NARRATING THE OUTCOMES

You should now have 2 white dice paired with 2 black dice, along with 1 unpaired black die. This will produce three **outcomes**—two from the two pairs, and one from the unpaired die. For each white die that’s greater than its paired black die, the protagonist gets to narrate a **hit**.



Next, for each black die that’s greater than its paired white die—and for the unpaired black die—any supporter gets to narrate a **miss**.

Tied dice are counted as a **miss**—the black die wins. However, you could change that result—see the “Changing the outcomes” section above.

These outcomes will change the corkboard and your character. In the following sections, “When things fall apart” and “Putting the pieces together”, you’ll learn how destroying leads, escalating districts, and finding answers work in detail.

The narrative results are determined by the following tables:

THE INVESTIGATION

HIT ON...

- 1: **De-escalate.** The city's situation improves—remove one escalation.
- 2: **Heal a condition.** Heal one of your conditions, increasing it by one step.
- 3–5: **Add a random lead or connection.** Add a new lead to the corkboard by drawing a card, or string a connection between any 2 leads.
- 6: **Find an answer, or add and connect a new lead.** Create a lead from scratch and connect it to any other lead. Or, if there is a chain of 3 undestroyed leads connected on the board, you can create an answer.

MISS ON...

- 1: **Death.** Damage your Body, Mind, and Heart conditions. Your character is killed, and all of your future scenes are flashbacks.
- 2: **Pin self and damage Rep.** Pin a new lead to the board: your character, in the district they operate in. Damage your Rep condition, decreasing it by one step. If your lead is destroyed, your character dies, as if you missed on a 1.
- 3–5: **Damage a condition.** Damage your condition governing this investigation roll.
- 6: **Escalate, or destroy a lead.** Draw a card. Look at the district that shares its suit. If it has any undestroyed leads, destroy any one of those. If it has no undestroyed leads, escalate the district.

NARRATING THE OUTCOMES

Once you've learned the outcomes of the scene, take a moment to describe or roleplay them. The protagonist will describe the hits first, and then the supporters will describe the misses. Save any misses on a 6 for last. Once the outcomes have been narrated and the results recorded, **it's time for the next scene!**

When you've found 3 answers or once 3 districts are escalated, the investigation ends, and you enter the epilogue.



EVAN: I hit on a 6 and—since I broke my principle—on a 4 as well. But I missed on a 5. I get to narrate victories first, so I'll start by using that 6 to create a new lead and connection. I think that in our discussion, I learn about a competitor of Diva's—let's call him Spice Tom—who's more willing to deal in dangerous chemicals. He's one of the Outskirts' nudists.

HANNAH: Oh good, we need to get them involved. Does someone want to take ownership of the nudists?

ALANNA: Be my guest!

EVAN: He's connected, of course, to the vial. He's the main supplier. And, with the victory on a 4... I think I'd like to add a random lead. One more character. Would you draw a card for me?

THE INVESTIGATION

ALANNA: You got it. It's a... 10 of hearts. A government agent, working Downtown.

EVAN: I think as we're chatting, I notice somebody staring at us through a window. I lean over—"Diva, you know that noface?"

ALANNA: "Who?" Diva whirls around to see. "Hey!"

HANNAH: And the figure turns around, cool as can be, and walks out of sight.

ALANNA: "I'm telling ya, someone's been trailing me for days. It happens sometimes, given my line of work, but this one's been getting a little too close for comfort."

EVAN: I'm adding "shady G-person" to the corkboard, in the Downtown district.

HANNAH: And finally, you lose on a 5. I think you regret rushing to accuse Diva of having a hand in your daughter's death. Your Heart is going to drop from quiet to guilty.

EVAN: Makes sense!

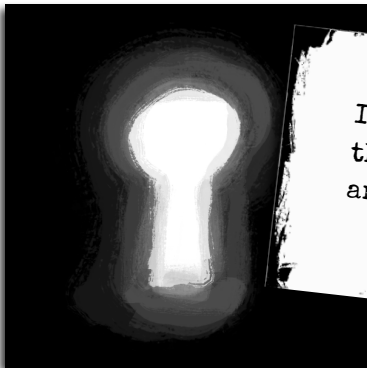
WHEN THINGS FALL APART

As you work to solve the case, the city around you will teeter on the brink of collapse. Your investigation may push it over the edge.

Missing on a 6 may **destroy** a lead. A destroyed lead can no longer contribute to the case. You cannot tie new connections to it, and it cannot be used to create answers—with one exception: If a character operates in the **same district** as a destroyed lead, they can use it as an undestroyed lead.

One of your leads is already destroyed: the **victim**. However, the victim belongs to every district, so anyone can use the victim to find an answer.

Escalations represent a part of the city becoming unstable. It could be a riot, a military lockdown, a man-made disaster, a mass exodus, or whatever is appropriate for your city. Escalations make things harder for everybody—each one adds a black die to every investigation roll.



If 3 districts are escalated,
the investigation is over,
and the epilogue begins.

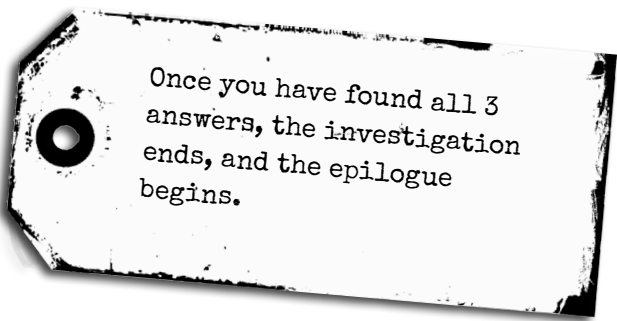
THE INVESTIGATION

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Answers are how you solve the case: Finding out **who** did it, **why**, and **how**. To find an answer, you first must have 3 leads: they must all be connected; they must not be destroyed; and they cannot have already been used to find an answer. It's okay if the connections run through used-up or destroyed leads, as long as 3 of the leads are usable.

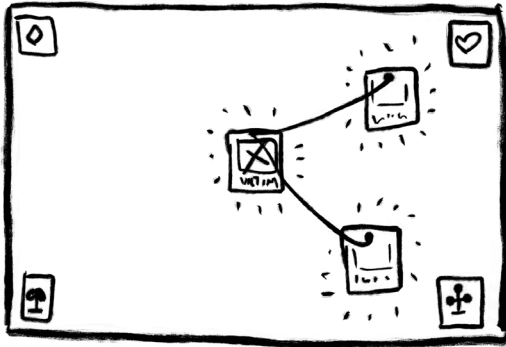
As the protagonist, if you then hit on a 6, you can answer any one of the three big questions. You have first and final say over the answer, but you're welcome to ask the supporters for input. Write the answer on a piece of scrap paper and pin it in the center of the board. Then, mark the 3 leads you used with a small circle. They cannot be used to find future answers.

The answer is a lead that belongs to every district and cannot be destroyed.

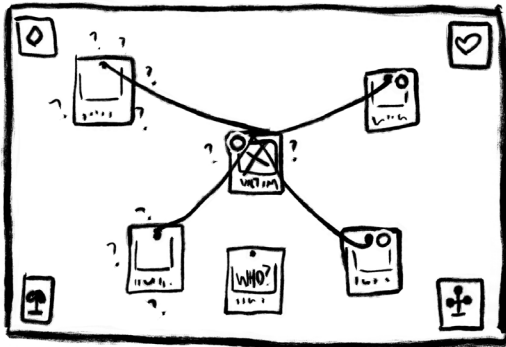


Once you have found all 3 answers, the investigation ends, and the epilogue begins.

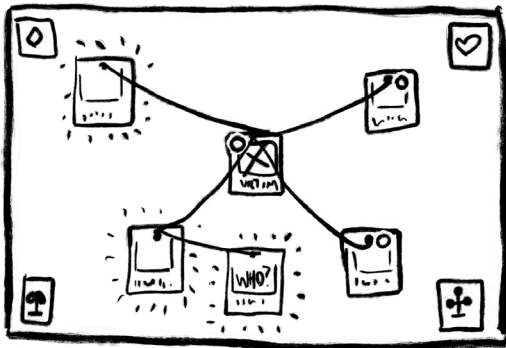
ANSWER DOS AND DON'TS



Three connected leads can form an answer. Destroyed leads work if protagonist operates in same district.



Once leads have been used for an answer, draw a circle on them. They can't form answers again.



It's okay if the three leads are connected through an unusable lead. Remember, answers count as leads too!

THE INVESTIGATION

THE EPILOGUE

When your group has 3 answers, or once 3 districts are escalated, the case ends and you'll begin the epilogue. You'll go around the table, learning a bit about the future of each character and the city at large. You can tell epilogues in any order.

For your epilogue, begin by taking 1 white die for **each unmarked box** by your principle, then take another one if **all 3 questions were answered**.

Then, take 1 black die for **each black mark** next to your principle, and another one if **3 districts are escalated**.

Arrange the dice in front of you in an alternating pattern, starting with a white die if possible. Now, you and the other players will **tell a fortunately/unfortunately story** about your character. For each white die, you'll narrate a positive element of your character's future. For each black die, the other players will narrate one negative aspect.

When you get to your last die, use it to **describe the city at large**. Did your efforts bring any improvement to the city? Or are things even worse?

Once everyone has taken a turn giving their epilogue, the game is finished.

Alanna tallies her epilogue dice. She takes a white die because the players found all 3 answers, another white die for an unmarked box by her principle, and a black die for one black mark next to her principle. She arranges the dice white, then black, then white.



ALANNA: Fortunately, after the drug bust, Diva is pardoned for the valuable information she's provided on the case.

EVAN: Unfortunately, she could never resume her business—her recognition meant the underworld no longer trusted her.

ALANNA: One last fortunately. This one's for the city itself. Fortunately, Diva was able to seamlessly transition back into opera. She was just one part of a cultural reawakening in Diligencia. With the toppling of the new regime, people took off their masks and started creating again. The factories became libraries, art galleries, and museums. What about Carrot? Things weren't looking good last time.


HANNAH: Well, fortunately..

And so on, and so forth.



Extras & Resources

*quickstarts, glossary,
sequence of play, tables*



Creatures, small and large, erupted from the soil around us. The pounding hum of the machine shook the landscape and blurred our vision.

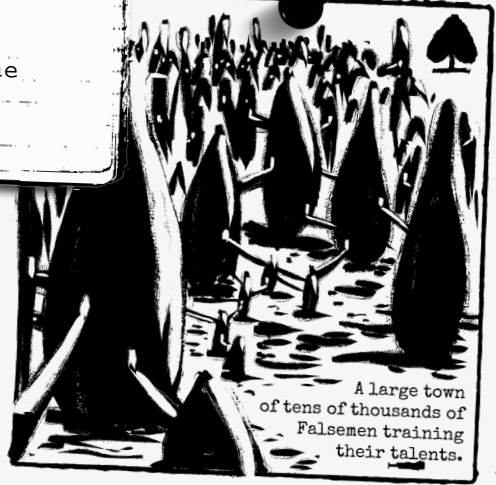
I reached out to Catherine and took her hand in mine. Fleeing animals, panicked and wailing, parted around us as we approached the towering device.

Inside it, we'd find the truth.



Its altar is covered with tokens left by the brokenhearted.

Chapel of Amelha



A large town of tens of thousands of Falsemen training their talents.

Anilo Township

Quickstart Settings

Quickstart settings are pre-made cities that let you skip some of the setup and jump into play. These are available to download at makebigthings.com/noirlandia.

Each quickstart comes with a description of the city, the crime, the districts, and the player characters. It also comes with a set of leads to be discovered during play. Some settings give details about the city's language or culture. Although quickstarts include a lot of information, you'll still expand on the setting during play. Quickstart crimes don't come with answers—you'll find your own answers to your investigation.

QUICKSTART PLAY

First, assemble your envelope of 10 leads—4 people, 3 places, and 3 objects. Each setting comes with a description of the crime, the city, and the four districts. Read the city and district sections aloud to the players at the table. As in a normal game, have each player take ownership over at least one of the locations or concepts introduced, and pin the districts to the four corners of your corkboard.

When it's time to choose characters, choose from the provided characters. Transcribe the information from your chosen character onto your character sheet.

To learn about the victim, the scene of the crime, and the clue found there, read aloud from the crime sheet. Pin these 3 leads—the victim, the starting scene, and the starting clue—to the board.

Put any extra information, like syllable charts or additional setting descriptions, in the center of the table where everyone can see.

At this point, you're ready to start the investigation! The rules are all unchanged: Take turns playing out scenes, give players ownership over new setting elements, and find answers before the city escalates out of control. These quickstarts are meant to get you started. During play, feel free to expand on the city, characters, and story in any way you like.

Whenever you discover a random lead on the case, draw a new lead from the envelope. Whenever you hit on a 6, you can choose to create your own or draw a pre-made lead from the envelope. If you ever run out of pre-made leads, use the book's lead tables instead (page 91), interpreting the results to match your setting.

References

GLOSSARY

ANSWER (PAGE 72)

A special kind of lead, the kind that solves cases and gets people in trouble. You can create one if you hit on a 6 when there's a chain of 3 connected, unused leads on the corkboard. It's the answer to one of three questions: Why was the victim killed? How was it pulled off? Who did it?

Answers are leads, so they can be used to create connections and find more answers. They don't belong to any district, and so cannot be destroyed.

CHALLENGE ROLL (PAGE 52)

Once per scene, the protagonist will make a challenge roll to attempt something difficult or dangerous. If the protagonist succeeds, add a white die to the scene's investigation roll. If the protagonist fails, add a black die.

CONDITION (PAGE 36)

Your character's well-being in one of four categories: Body, Mind, Heart, and Rep. At best, a condition grants an extra white die to investigation and challenge rolls governed by that condition. Unhealthy conditions can add 1-3 black dice.

CONNECTION (PAGE 48)

The literal string that ties leads together. A chain of 3 connected, unused leads is necessary to find an answer. When you make a new connection, you can describe what it means: Maybe Mr. Green was the adopted son of Lady Gray. The ivory hound was unearthed from the forgotten cemetery. The vehicle junkyard was the place where Brave L.T.'s body was found.

REFERENCES

CORRUPTION (PAGE 17)

The moral rot of your city. The appalling foundation upon which your setting is built.

DAMAGE (A CONDITION) (PAGE 55)

Lowering your condition to the next-worst descriptor. For example, you could damage your Heart condition from guilty to haunted.

DEATH (PAGE 68)

A small price to pay for the truth. You die if you miss on a 1 during an investigation roll. If you die, damage your Body, Heart, and Mind conditions. All your future scenes will be flashbacks, which can contribute to the case just like any other scene.

DESTROY A LEAD (PAGE 71)

During an investigation roll, a miss on a 6 might destroy a lead. Destroyed places are burnt, collapsed, or otherwise ruined. Destroyed objects are lost or broken. Destroyed people are killed or otherwise rendered inert.

Destroyed leads keep their connections, but aren't counted toward the chain of 3 connected, unused leads necessary to find an answer. A destroyed lead can still be a part of a chain used to find an answer, but the chain would have to include three other undestroyed, unused leads.

If your character operates in the same district as a destroyed lead, you treat the lead as undestroyed. Your character knows how to make use of the fragments that remain.

DISTRICT (PAGE 21)

One of the four areas that make up your city, represented by a quadrant of your corkboard. Every character and lead belongs to a certain district, except for the victim and the answers.

ESCALATION (PAGE 71)

During an investigation roll, missing on a 6 might escalate a district, making the area more dangerous and unpredictable. Every escalation adds a black die to all future investigation rolls. A single district can be escalated multiple times, and each escalation adds another black die to investigation rolls. If three of the four districts are escalated, the investigation ends and the game moves to the epilogue.

IDENTITY (PAGE 32)

The role of your character in society. Can be interpreted very loosely to reflect how life works in your setting.

INVESTIGATION ROLL (PAGE 57)

Every scene ends with an investigation roll—a chance to find answers on the case or to see the truth further obfuscated. Every investigation roll produces three outcomes, which can include producing and destroying leads, connecting leads, escalating districts, and finding answers.

LEAD (PAGE 42)

A person, place, or thing that might shed light on the case. Every lead belongs to one district, except for the victim and any answers you've learned. Leads can be destroyed by escalations, and can be connected to one another by hits on investigation rolls. A chain of 3 connected, unused, undestroyed leads allows the group to find an answer if someone hits on a 6 during an investigation roll.

OWNERSHIP (PAGE 12)

Each player owns specific elements of the setting. When there is a question about an element, its owner gets first and final say on the answer. When there's a question about an unowned element, give ownership to whoever owns the fewest elements.

REFERENCES

PINNING YOURSELF (PAGE 68)

When you miss on a 2 during an investigation roll, you become a suspect in the case. Damage your Rep condition, and pin yourself up on the corkboard as a new lead in the district you operate in. If your lead is destroyed by an escalation of your district, your character dies (just like if you missed on a 1).

PRINCIPLE (PAGE 33, 65)

The source of your character's troubles, and the guide of their actions. By breaking your principle, you turn all ties on your investigation roll into hits. You can only break your principle twice, and each time will have a negative impact on your epilogue.

PROTAGONIST (PAGE 47)

When it's your turn, you set the scene, and your character becomes the protagonist. The action will focus on your character's choices and feelings. As the protagonist, you can direct the flow of plot. During your scene, you must make a challenge roll, and then at the end of the scene you must make an investigation roll.

SCENE (PAGE 48)

The duration of a player's turn. It begins with the current protagonist describing where they are, what they're doing, and who they're with. After some freeform roleplay, the protagonist makes a challenge roll to attempt something difficult or dangerous. A scene always ends with an investigation roll to (hopefully) make progress on the case.

SUPPORTER (PAGE 50)

Every player at the table other than the current protagonist. Supporters introduce challenge and conflict, flesh out the world and setting, and roleplay as their own characters or others in the city. They roll the black dice in challenge and investigation rolls and decide what conditions govern those rolls. They also offer the protagonist bargains when a challenge roll is stalemated or after rolling bargain dice during an investigation.

VETO (PAGE 12)

The power of any player at the table to refuse any element of the game's setting or a character's behavior. No explanation is required; everyone else is responsible for proposing an alternative. Use the veto to avoid topics and behaviors that you find upsetting or that make you feel disconnected from the story's themes.

VICTIM (PAGE 34)

The unfortunate, unchosen character, whose mysterious death can only be explained by the player characters' efforts. The victim is a destroyed lead that is pinned to the center of the corkboard. It belongs to every district, so it can be used to find an answer.

WHERE I OPERATE (PAGE 32)

The district your character is most familiar with. You treat destroyed leads in the district where you operate as though the leads weren't destroyed. As such, you can use these destroyed leads to find answers. If you're pinned to the board, you end up in the district where you operate.



SEQUENCE OF PLAY

THE CITY

- Roll for your city's corruption.
- Answer four questions about city.
 - » Distribute ownership of the answers.
- Describe architecture of the four districts.
- Create city's language and name.

THE CHARACTERS

- Draw cards (# players +1), and roll a die for each.
 - » Note their identity, principle, and district.
- Choose a character.
 - » Decide name, appearance, and relationship to victim.
 - » Start one condition at , one at , and the rest at .
 - » Introduce your character and establish relationships.
- Learn initial leads: victim, crime scene, and an object found nearby.

THE SCENES

- Protagonist sets the scene: where, what, who with?
- During scene, protagonist must attempt something risky or difficult, using a **challenge roll**.

CHALLENGE ROLLS

- Supporters choose governing condition.
- Protagonist rolls a white die, supporter rolls a black die, adding any extra white or black dice from governing condition. If either player rolls multiple dice, count highest result.
 - » If **white die** is higher by 2 or more, protagonist succeeds: keep white die and narrate what comes next!
 - » If **black die** is higher by 2 or more, protagonist fails: keep black die and narrate how investigation has been complicated.
 - » If **neither die** is higher by 2 or more, it's a stalemate. Supporter will offer a bargain: success in return for damaging a condition.
 - » If protagonist accepts bargain, they roleplay the results and succeed, taking white die. Otherwise, protagonist fails, taking black die.
- Scene concludes with investigation roll.

INVESTIGATION ROLLS

- Protagonist rolls **2 white dice**.
 - » +1 die if governing condition is positive.
- One supporter rolls **3 black dice**.
 - » +1 die if challenge was failed.
 - » +1 die for every escalation.
 - » +1-3 dice from a negative governing condition.
- Supporters may also roll some white **bargain dice**.
 - » +1 die if protagonist succeeded in challenge roll.
 - » +1 die for every answer the group has found.
- Roll all dice, then put forward **3 highest black dice**.
- Protagonist then pairs **2 white dice** with any 2 black dice.
- Protagonist can accept bargain to take a single bargain die.
- Protagonist may break their principle to count ties as hits.
 - » They narrate how they break their principle and take a black mark.
- Players narrate and record investigation's **outcomes**.
 - » One black die will **always** be unopposed.
 - » In each dice pair, only the higher die produces an outcome.
 - » Tied dice are losses unless protagonist breaks their principle.
- Players continue playing out scenes until they have 3 answers or 3 escalated districts. Then the **epilogue** begins.

THE EPILOGUE

- Players take turns giving their character's epilogue.
 - » Take a white die for **each unmarked principle box**.
 - » Take a white die if your group **found all 3 answers**.
 - » Take a black die for **each marked principle box**.
 - » Take a black die if **3 districts are escalated**.
- Arrange dice in an alternating pattern, starting with white.
- Tell a fortunately/unfortunately story die by die.
 - » White dice are positive results of the case, narrated by you.
 - » Black dice are negative results, narrated by the other players.
 - » The last die, white or black, describes the city as a whole.
- Once everyone has taken a turn, the game is over.

TABLES

CORRUPTION

•	TECHNOLOGY
••	EXTRAVAGANCE
•••	DECEPTION
••••	ISOLATION
•••••	PRIDE
••••••	APATHY

IDENTITY

2	URCHIN/VAGABOND
3	ACTOR/PERFORMER
4	WRITER/JOURNALIST
5	SALESPERSON/INDUSTRIALIST
6	MOBSTER/LOCAL BIGWIG
7	OUT-OF-TOWNER
8	COP/DEPUTY
9	ASSASSIN/HIRED GUN
10	GOVERNMENT AGENT/INTELLIGENCE
J	PRIVATE EYE
Q	ARISTOCRAT/HEIR/HEIRESS
K	FORMER DETECTIVE/OFFICER
A	MASTERMIND/SCHEMER

DISTRICT

♥	DOWNTOWN
♣	SKID ROW
♠	THE OUTSKIRTS
♦	THE UPPER CRUST

PRINCIPLE

●	NEVER HARM ANOTHER
◻	LIVE ALWAYS WITH DIGNITY
◼	TELL NO LIE
◽	NEVER REVEAL MY TRUE SELF
◾	JUSTICE MUST BE DONE
◿	NEVER BETRAY MY OWN

Every customer was served their drink by a different tentacle, which was a neat trick. I gave one a tickle as it slid by, and got a lapful of honeywine and broken glass for my trouble. Lucky I packed an extra pair of pants.

He was pretty, in a squirrely way—chattering about winter with a mouth full of walnuts.

Incumbent mayor, seeking to quash growing unrest.

Martinek

OUTCOMES

HIT ON...



1: **De-escalate.** The city's situation improves—remove one escalation.



2: **Heal a condition.** Heal one of your conditions, increasing it by one step.



3–5: **Add a random lead or connection.** Add a new lead to the corkboard by drawing a card, or string a connection between any 2 leads.



6: **Find an answer, or add and connect a new lead.** Create a lead from scratch and connect it to any other lead. Or, if there is a chain of 3 undestroyed leads connected on the board, you can create an answer.

MISS ON...



1: **Death.** Damage your Body, Mind, and Heart conditions. Your character is killed, and all of your future scenes are flashbacks.



2: **Pin self and damage Rep.** Pin a new lead to the board: your character, in the district they operate in. Damage your Rep condition, decreasing it by one step. If your lead is destroyed, your character dies, as if you missed on a 1.



3–5: **Damage a condition.** Damage your condition governing this investigation roll.



6: **Escalate, or destroy a lead.** Draw a card. Look at the district that shares its suit. If it has any undestroyed leads, destroy any one of those. If it has no undestroyed leads, escalate the district.

● Break your principle to count all your ties as hits.



LEADS - PLACES:

2	ON THE ROAD
3	OFFICE
4	PARK
5	APARTMENT
6	LIBRARY
7	RESTAURANT
8	SHOP
9	HEADQUARTERS
10	ABANDONED INDUSTRY
J	HIDEAWAY
Q	ENTERTAINMENT
K	LION'S DEN
A	CRIME SCENE

LEADS - THINGS:

2	AN OFFICIAL DOCUMENT
3	A FAMILY HEIRLOOM
4	A MAP
5	A KEY
6	A WEAPON
7	A DISGUISE
8	A VEHICLE
9	A STRANGE TECHNOLOGY
10	A BADGE OR MEDAL
J	A TRAINED ANIMAL
Q	A POTENT CHEMICAL
K	A PRICELESS OBJECT
A	A HANDWRITTEN MESSAGE

LEADS - PEOPLE:



2	URCHIN/VAGABOND
3	ACTOR/PERFORMER
4	WRITER/JOURNALIST
5	SALESPERSON/INDUSTRIALIST
6	MOBSTER/LOCAL BIGWIG
7	OUT-OF-TOWNER
8	COP/DEPUTY
9	ASSASSIN/HIRED GUN
10	GOVERNMENT AGENT/INTELLIGENCE
J	PRIVATE EYE
Q	ARISTOCRAT/HEIR/HEIRESS
K	FORMER DETECTIVE/OFFICER
A	MASTERMIND/SCHEMER

DRAMATIC HITS:

2	A GUNSHOT RINGS OUT
3	PEOPLE AROUND BEGIN TO PANIC
4	SOMETHING HAS BEEN STOLEN
5	A WITNESS MAKES A RUN FOR IT
6	A BETRAYAL
7	A "NATURAL" DISASTER
8	THE TECH GOES HAYWIRE
9	THERE WAS SOMETHING IN THE DRINK
10	A CONCEALED WEAPON IS REVEALED
J	SEDUCED
Q	TARGETED BY A DANGEROUS PROFESSIONAL
K	SUMMONED BY A POWERFUL PLAYER
A	ANOTHER CRIME IS COMMITTED



INVESTIGATION ROLL FLOWCHART

You will always start with:

<p>Protagonist: 2 dice</p> 	<p>Opposition: 3 dice</p> 
--	---




You might also add dice for:

<p>Protagonist: +positive condition</p> 	<p>Opposition: +negative condition +each escalation +a failed challenge</p> 
--	--

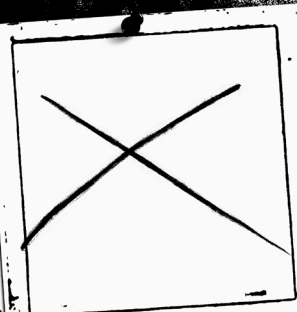


In addition, a supporter might roll bargain dice for:

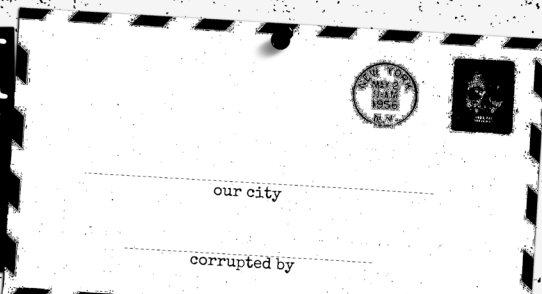
<p>+a successful challenge</p>	<p>+each answer your group has found</p> 
--------------------------------	--

CHARACTER SHEET

NOIRLANDIA



the victim:



our city

corrupted by

appearance/identity:



district
(▲▼♦)

relationship to victim:

other relationships:

Why?

How?

Who?

what they call me:

PRINCIPLE:



BODY:

- Vigorous
- Able
- Hurt
- Broken
- Wrecked

MIND:

- Sharp
- Calm
- Conflicted
- Unhinged
- Shattered

HEART:

- Content
- Quiet
- Guilty
- Haunted
- Consumed

REP:

- Trusted
- Overlooked
- Suspected
- Targeted
- Damned

CHALLENGE ROLLS:
Relevant trait dice +
1 white die
1 black die

Compare the highest white
and black die.

If you...

Win by 2 or more:
Narrate success.
Keep white die for the
investigation roll.

Lose by 2 or more:
Narrate failure.
Keep black die for the
investigation roll.

Otherwise:

You will be offered a
bargain.
Accept the bargain and
succeed, or refuse
and fail.

INVESTIGATION ROLLS:
Relevant trait dice +
2 white dice
+ bargains from challenge
victory and answers
3 black dice
+ escalations
+ challenge loss

Hit on a...

- 1: De-escalate
- 2: Heal condition
- 3-5: Connection, or
a random lead
- 6: Answer or connected lead

Miss on a...

- 1: Death
- 2: Pin self
- 3-5: Damage condition
- 6: Escalation, or
destroy lead

Break principle
to win ties.

CASE NOTES

SPECIAL THANKS

Thanks to the awesome playtesters at Big Bad Con 2015, Metatopia 2015, and Dreamation 2016. Thanks to alpha playtesters Joshua Yearsley, Rebecca Slitt, Epidiah Ravachol, Emily Care Boss, and Sam Anderson. Thanks to beta playtesters Rob Bohl, Kit La Touche, Luigi Briganti, Daniel Lewis, and the Gauntlet community.

And a **HUGE** thank you to all the Kickstarter backers who made this possible!



ABOUT THE DESIGNER

Evan Rowland is the lead designer of *Noirlandia*, as well as the artist. Evan is an avid player and creator of both tabletop and computer games.

Evan hopes to train a generation of gamers capable of solving his own murder, should the occasion arise.

ABOUT MAKE BIG THINGS

Make Big Things is a three-person game design cooperative based out of western Massachusetts and Chicago, Illinois. We care about accessible games that ask challenging questions about the world. We began publishing in 2013 as a design duo, with Hannah Shaffer and Evan Rowland. In 2015, Brian Van Slyke joined the team, and we've been producing games collaboratively ever since.

Our games include *Questlandia*, *14 Days*, *Noirlandia*, and the upcoming *Damn the Man, Save the Music!* and *Good Dog, Bad Zombie*.

Visit makebigthings.com for *Noirlandia* printouts, quickstart settings, additional lead generators, and to follow our upcoming games!

