

GHOST LETTERS

Crime investigation game with secret roles

GAME RULES

PROLOGUE

- Who's here?!

The sheriff nervously moved the flashlight beam from side to side, trying to locate the source of the sound. A dark silhouette separated from the fence and slowly walked towards him.

- Hey, I won't ask twice! .. - the sheriff's slightly trembling hand was already unbuttoning his belt holster.

A muffled female laugh came from the darkness.

"Hopkins, stop shining in my eyes. Better explain what you are doing alone near the house of the victim of this high-profile murder after midnight?"

The county police chief exhaled with barely concealed relief and lowered his flashlight. His most frequent thoughts in recent days were "Will I have enough nerves to live until the vacation?" and "Damn these journalists."

- Susan, I answered all the questions regarding this case at yesterday's press conference, and now, please, do not ... - the sheriff already wanted to send the journalist home, but she did not let him continue the phrase.





- The only thing that we learned yesterday - is that the police never came a step closer to solving the crime. And the fact that you are now heading back to the house, which has already been searched many times along and across by your policemen, only confirms this.

- We are conducting active investigative actions, and I am not obliged to report to you. Anyway, Susan, I should rather ask you what you are doing here. It can be unsafe for a girl to walk around at night, don't you think?

- Of course not. What can happen to me when such professionals are in charge?

Hopkins tried to ignore the ill-concealed sarcasm so as not to get turned on. He was pretty sure that in her purse she had a dictaphone turned on. Reporting a sheriff lashing out on an innocent journalist would clearly not benefit the reputation of the local police.

- Okay, Hopkins, let's say you won't tell me about the details of the investigation. But what do you say about this? - She took out and handed the sheriff several photographs.

- What is it? - anger began to appear in Hopkins' intonations.
- Evidence, isn't it? Don't tell me you didn't bring it to the point.

Fatigue and irritation more and more confidently prevailed over Hopkins' self-control; there was simply no strength left to adhere to the official tone.

- So, you track me down in the middle of the night on the street, and then present some incomprehensible photographs that, most likely, have nothing to do with this case at all, - Hopkins could no longer stop, the desire to take out anger on someone for his own impotence was too great.
- Although no, wait, you are a great detective, where can I compete with you in the investigation of crimes? Well, Susan, let's check your version. Why don't we ask the victim about the murder, eh? Here is his mailbox, let's send him these photos, and then he will write to us, what's what. How do you like that thought?

With these words, he dropped the pictures into the slot of the mailbox and defiantly walked towards the door of the house, which was blocked off with a signal tape.



The mailbox suddenly rattled its lid and shook with indistinct howls. The next moment it was over, as if nothing had happened. Frozen with surprise, the sheriff and the journalist silently looked at the box, then at each other. Finally, moving away from his stupor, Hopkins slowly approached it and carefully peered under the cover.

- Susan, there is only one picture left ...

There was a tense silence for a while.

- You understand that no one will believe us?

*- there was a slight tremor
in the journalist's voice.*

*- Agree. Although I think I know
someone from our town...*



GAME REVIEW

You act as detectives and try to solve a confusing crime. Sidewood police have found **clues** that may point to a **reason, place** and **means** of the murder, but only 3 of them are **true clues**.

One of you plays as **the Ghost** and helps the detectives solve the crime. The only way of communication between the Ghost and the rest of the players is via the mystical letter box, where the players send their clue cards to. The Ghost secretly looks at these clues and reveals as **hints** only those which are associated with the true clues. The rest of the cards go to a vanished pile face down.

While discussing and analyzing the clues revealed by the Ghost and the vanished cards, you need to figure out 3 true clues in the course of several rounds. But be careful, because there might be the **Murderer** and his **Accomplices** among you. They will do their best to confuse the rest of the players in order to mislead the investigation.

GAME MODES

You can play in a **competitive** (4+ players) or **cooperative mode** (2+ players). In the competitive mode, the Ghost and the team of Detectives play against an undercover Murderer and his Accomplices. In the cooperative mode only the Ghost and the Detectives participate: all players work together to solve the crime.

At the end of the rules, you will also find a description of additional game options that will allow you to diversify your games. For example, add into the game **characters** with unique abilities.

You do not have to read the full rules beforehand. Choose a player who will read aloud the next part of the rules, and immediately follow these steps.

COMPONENTS

150 Clue Cards



Letter Box Token



14 Secret Role Cards



12 Double Sided Character Cards



3 Category Tokens



Radio Token



ROLES DESCRIPTION

Ghost - Knows the true clues and the roles of all players. The Ghost helps the Detectives guess the true clues and wins with them.

Detective - try to guess the true clues and the identity of the Murderer. The detectives win if they can solve the crime: guess all 3 true clues, or guess any 2 true clues and arrest the Murderer. However, if the Murderer guesses the identity of the Witness or the Expert, the Detectives lose, even if they solve the crime.

When playing in co-op mode:
The detectives have one way to solve the crime - guess all 3 true clues.

Murderer - knows the true clues and the Accomplices (if they are in the game). At the beginning of the game, he secretly chooses (and shows the Ghost and the Accomplices) the true clues, and then during the game tries to prevent the Detectives from guessing them. The Murderer wins if the Detectives do not solve the crime, or if he himself guesses the identity of the Witness or Expert.



Accomplice - knows other Accomplices, the Murderer and the true clues. During the game, he tries to prevent the Detectives from solving the crime and not be identified. The Accomplices win if the Detectives fail to solve the case and he himself is not arrested.

Witness - knows the Murderer. Helps the Detectives solve the crime, but must not be identified by the Murderer. Wins together with the Detectives.

Expert - knows the true clues. Helps the Detectives solve the crime, but must not be identified by the Murderer. Wins together with the Detectives.

Blackmailer - knows the Murderer and the Accomplices. He tries to guess the true clues and prevent the Detectives from solving the crime. Wins if the Detectives could not solve the crime, and he himself guessed the true clues and was not identified by the Murderer. The option of playing with the Blackmailer is described in the section "Game Options" (p.18).



SET-UP AND START OF THE GAME

1. Assignment of roles

When playing in co-op mode (2+ players): You do not need role cards. Select one player as the Ghost. Everyone else is playing as the Detectives. There will be no Murderer among you, and your common task is to figure out all 3 true clues..

Competitive (4+ players): Prepare the Role cards by the number of players according to the table. Shuffle them and give each player 1 role card face down. The player who received the role of the Ghost immediately reveals his card. The rest of the players keep their roles secret for the rest of the game.



Number of players	Roles
4	Ghost, Murderer, Detective x 2
5	Ghost, Murderer, Detective x 3
6	Ghost, Murderer, Detective x 4
7	Ghost, Murderer, Accomplice, Witness, Detective x 3
8	Ghost, Murderer, Accomplice, Witness, Detective x 4
9	Ghost, Murderer, Accomplice, Witness, Detective x 5
10	Ghost, Murderer, Accomplice x 2, Witness, Expert, Detective x 4
11	Ghost, Murderer, Accomplice x 2, Witness, Expert, Detective x 5
12	Ghost, Murderer, Accomplice x 2, Witness, Expert, Detective x 5

For your first games replace the Witness and Expert roles by Detectives.

2. Collecting Clues

Shuffle the Clue deck. Put on the table one below the other 3 category tokens: Reason, Place and Means. Starting with the Ghost, the players take turns to reveal 1 card from the clue deck and place it in a row to the right of any of the category tokens - until each category has 4 clues in it. At the same time, the players offer a hypothesis on how this clue can be related to the chosen category. Hypotheses do not have to make one big story. On the contrary, they can be completely contradictory. These hypotheses might help to make broader associations later in the game.

Example: A player draws an "Acorn" card. He says that the acorn can indicate that the murder took place in the forest, and puts this card in the "Place" category. The next player reveals the "Wet Footprints" card and adds it to the Reason category, explaining that the victim stomped loudly at night.



As a result, there should be 4 clue cards in each category. When playing with the character cards (page 17), place 5 cards per category.



All clues are collected

3. Choosing the True Clues

When playing in co-op: There is no Murderer in the game, so the Ghost himself secretly chooses 1 true clue in each category and remembers them for the entire game.

In competitive mode: Pass the rules to the Ghost. The Ghost reads aloud the following text, and everyone performs the indicated actions depending on their role.

Everyone falls asleep. The Murderer and the Accomplices (if any) wake up and get to know each other. The Murderer chooses 1 true clue in each category. The Ghost points the Murderer to each category token, and the Murderer shows on his fingers its order number from the category token: Reason ... Means ... Place ...

The Murderer and the Accomplices fall asleep.

The Ghost, Murderer and Accomplices must remember the true clues for the entire game!

When playing with the Witness: The Witness wakes up. The Ghost points to the Murderer. The Witness falls asleep.

When playing with an Expert: The Expert wakes up. The Ghost points to the true clues. The Expert falls asleep.

When playing with the Blackmailer: The Blackmailer wakes up. The Ghost points to the Murderer and the Accomplices. The Blackmailer falls asleep. Everyone wakes up.



The Murderer has chosen the true clues

4. The First Clue

Give each player (including the Ghost) **5 cards** from the Clue deck. Players should not show their clue cards to each other or discuss them.

The Ghost can (if wants) choose one of his cards, which is associated with one or more true clues, and place it on the table face up as the **first hint**. Then the Ghost draws 1 card from the deck so that he again has 5 cards on his hand. The rest of the players can discuss the revealed hint before the start of the first round of the game.

Until the very end of the game, the Ghost cannot communicate with the players with the help of words, gestures or in any other way. He guides the Detectives only with the help of hint cards. Even if the Detectives are completely confused and went in the wrong way, the Ghost must remain calm and in no way show his emotions.



The Ghost played a "Thermos" as a hint, alluding to both "Acorn" (coloring the thermos) and "Donut" (thermos is usually used for tea or coffee)

Now you are ready to start the game!

The game lasts from 2 to 5 rounds. The number of rounds depends on the number of players

Players	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Rounds	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	2

GAME ROUND

1. Sending Cards to the Ghost

All players (and the Ghost) choose 1 clue card from their hand and put it face down on the Letter Box token. Till the Discussion phase, the players cannot talk about the clues they sent or want to check.

In a two-player game: The Detective and the Ghost put 2 cards in the Letter Box at once.

Example: A player sends the "Mosquito Repellent" card to the Ghost to check the clue "Acorn" in the "Place" category - both of these cards are related to the forest

The first player (except the Ghost) who puts his card on the Letter Box, takes the Radio token. In the Discussion Phase, he will be the first to speak.



2. Ghost Hints

The Ghost takes the cards from the Letter Box token, shuffles them face down, and then looks at them. Out of these cards the Ghost chooses those that can be associated with the true clues, and reveals them as hints. The rest of the cards are discarded face down into a Vanished pile.

Tip: Place the Vanished pile next to the Ghost Role card so that it won't be confused with the general discard pile.

The Ghost can choose any number of clue cards - even zero. The Ghost reveals all the selected cards at the same time and does not give any sign of the order or belonging to a category.

3. Renewal cards in hand

Each player (including the Ghost) can discard one **face down** card from his hand to the **discard pile**, and then draw cards from the clue deck so that he again has 5 cards.

4. Discussion

A player with the Radio token starts the discussion. It makes sense to say which card you have sent to the Ghost (especially if it vanished), what you think about the revealed hints and vanished cards, and also what clues you consider to be true. After that, the Radio token is passed to the next player clockwise - and this is how all players in a circle speak. The Ghost does not say anything, but simply passes the token on. While one player speaks, others are welcome to comment, but the word priority belongs to the owner of the Radio token. Do not worry, each player will have their own time!

***Advice:** It is beneficial for the Murderer if his card vanishes. Then the Detectives will not get additional information, and the Murderer may bluff about the clue card which he sent and thus divert suspicions from the true clues. If none of the Murderer's card was revealed by the Ghost as a hint, he can always safely name the card he left in his hand or discarded. The Accomplices and the Blackmailer can also bluff about the cards they send.*

***Example:** The true clue in the Place category is Acorn. The Murderer sends the Ghost a "Knife" that is not associated with any true clues, and the Ghost puts the "Knife" in the Vanished pile. During the discussion, the Murderer says that he allegedly sent "Mosquito repellent" (although in fact this card remained in his hand). And since "Mosquito repellent" is not among the open hints, then "Acorn" is beyond suspicion. Thus, the Murderer tries to divert suspicion from the true clue.*

After the Radio token has made a full circle, start a new round. While the Ghost is choosing clues from the cards sent to him in the new round, you can additionally discuss all the information received.

FINAL VOTING

At the end of the last round, you vote which clues you believe are true and who you will arrest as the Murderer. All players participate in the vote, except for the Ghost.

Voting takes place in **4 stages**: for the Reason, Place, Means and Personality of the Murderer. In the first 3 stages, you simultaneously at the command of the Ghost, show on your fingers the order number of the card, which you consider to be the true clue in the named category. The clue that the majority voted for is considered chosen: slightly rotate the card. **The Ghost does not tell if the clue is guessed!** At the 4th stage, at the command of the Ghost, simultaneously point to the player whom you consider the Murderer and want to arrest.

If there is no clear majority at any stage, repeat the vote. In case of the second "draw" - the players failed to make the right decision.

When playing with the Accomplice: If an Accomplice is arrested, he reveals his role card and the players make an additional arrest. The arrested person does not vote.

After all the voting stages, the Ghost reports whether the Detectives have managed to **solve the crime**, but **does not name the true clues**. The Murderer reveals his role card. *Let us remind you that the crime is solved if all 3 true clues are correctly solved, or 2 clues and the identity of the Murderer.*

When playing with the Witness or Expert, if the crime is solved: The Murderer tries to identify the Witness or Expert by pointing to one of the players and naming his role. If he identifies the Witness or Expert exactly, the Murderer wins and the Detectives lose.

When playing with the Blackmailer, if the crime is not solved: The Murderer tries to identify the Blackmailer by pointing to one of the players. If the Murderer has not guessed, the Blackmailer names the true clues. If everything is named correctly, the Blackmailer wins and everyone else loses.

Finally, all players reveal their Role Cards, and the Ghost reveals the true clues. You can also have a look at the Vanished pile cards and discuss what the investigation looked like for the Detectives, Murderer, and Ghost.

ADDITIONAL GAME OPTIONS

Playing with Character Cards

Many Sidewood residents have decided to take part in the investigation. But do all of them really want to help solve the crime, or is someone just covering their tracks?

After the roles have been assigned, give each player, except the Ghost, a random Character card. Character cards are double-sided: the player chooses which of the two characters he wants to play as and places his character card in front of him with the chosen side up. Each character has a unique ability that can help the players achieve their goals. All character abilities are single use only. After using your ability, turn the character card sideways.



Some characters' ability descriptions state: "Other players fall asleep." When someone uses this ability, all players except him and the Ghost close their eyes. Only the player using the ability gains additional information, so the Murderer and his Accomplice can bluff about what they have learned through their characters' abilities.

Many abilities give the Ghost the ability to point the player to certain elements on the table. If the Ghost thinks that by pointing to any of the options, he will only confuse the Detectives, he may not show anything.

When playing with character cards, at the stage of collecting clues, put 5 clue cards in each category (Reason, Place and means), not 4.

Adding the Blackmailer Role

When playing in a competitive mode with a company of 8 players or more, you can replace 1 Detective card by the Blackmailer.

The Blackmailer initially knows the Murderer and the Accomplices. He needs to prevent the Detectives from solving the crime, but at the same time figure out the true clues by himself. Then he will be able to blackmail the Murderer, threatening to reveal the whole truth about the crime. The Murderer at the end of the game can detect him, so the Blackmailer should not give himself away.



Clues Pointing to the Murderer

When playing with the characters, the Ghost, with the help of the revealed hints, can point not only to the true clues, but also to the Murderer. By sending a card to the Ghost, you can tell that you are going to check the character. But the Ghost, when revealing the hints, does not in any way indicate whether they refer to a character or to the clues.

Example: By placing the “Handcuffs” card as a clue, the Ghost may hint that the Murderer is the Sheriff.



Discarding a Random Role Card

When playing in a competitive mode with up to 6 players, you may discard a random Role card before assigning roles. Now, in the course of the game, you will need to try to figure out if there is a Murderer among the players.

When preparing the Role cards, put aside the Ghost card and add an additional Detective card instead. Shuffle the resulting stack and discard a random card. After that, add the Ghost card to the pile, shuffle again and give each player 1 face-down role card. The player who receives the Ghost card secretly looks at the discarded role card to find out who will not be in the game.

If the Murderer card is discarded, the Ghost will need to choose the true evidence himself, but at the same time not make it clear to other players that the Murderer is not in the game. The Ghost reads the same text and depicts that the Murderer woke up and chose the true clues.



If you think that the Murderer is not in the game, when voting for the identity of the Murderer, point to the Ghost. If most of the players pointed to the Ghost and the Murderer is really not in the game, then it is believed that the Detectives managed to figure out the Murderer.



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