

NEWS HOLE

By Jason Morningstar

THINGS YOU WILL NEED

- 4-8 players
- 1-2 GMs
- A laptop computer, preferably on a centrally located desk.
- Some name tags and slips of paper with circumstances on them.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

There are eight characters. Bill Burneko and Avery Kirkwood are old friends and business associates. All the other characters are twenty years younger, in their late twenties and early thirties, established professionals, and former high school buddies. They may or may not be friends now.

The game is intentionally focused on the Burneko family.

BURNEKO FAMILY

Bill

You are the father of Tom and Lily.

You are the publisher of the Clarion-Advance, a dying local newspaper dependent on Kirkwood Automotive advertising to stay afloat

Why are you such a fierce defender of your son?

Tom

You are the son of Bill and brother of Lily.

You are the Internet-famous creator of News Hole, a news aggregator and all-around killer app.

What drove you to build a tool that will destroy your father's livelihood?

Lily

You are the daughter of Bill and sister of Tom.

You manage the Web version of the Clarion-Advance for your father.

How far will you go to save the family paper?

KIRKWOOD FAMILY

Avery

You are the father of Gene and Paul.

You are the owner of the Kirkwood Automotive empire, which is being killed by Internet sales.

Why are you so terrified of change, and what will you do to prevent it?

Gene

You are the younger son of Avery and brother of Paul.

You are a well-known blogger and gadfly, and manage a medical billing office.

Who are you trying to impress with your "bringing down old media" rants?

Paul

You are the elder son of Avery and brother of Gene.

You are the favorite son and a Junior executive with Kirkwood Automotive in charge of Internet sales.

Who turned you into a coked-up bully, and what are you going to do about it?

FRIENDS

Anna Wayne-O'Neill

You are a friend from high school.

You are a reporter for the Clarion-Advance whose husband was killed last year in Iraq.

How are you going to knock Internet "journalism" down a few pegs?

Tweet Partlow

You are a friend from high school.

You are a Kirkwood Tire shop employee and part-time drug dealer.

Why is your future a huge fucking black cloud?

EDITING THE CAST

Four players: Drop Tweet, Lily, Paul, and Gene.

Five players: Drop Tweet, Lily, and Paul.

Six players: Drop Tweet and Lily.

Seven players: Drop Tweet.

Eight players: Play with all characters.

You could also have a player double up and play Tweet/Lily, or two players play Tweet/Gene and Lily/Paul.

CIRCUMSTANCES

Before play, give every player a slip of paper with a circumstance on it. They may incorporate this however they like, whenever it seems appropriate. None of them need to emerge in play, necessarily. There are four actual events and four strong emotional connections.

You could just hand these out to stir up maximum tension, or distribute them randomly (mix them all together first if you have less than eight players), or talk over who should get what, or have the GM hold onto them and deliver them bird-in-ear during the game, as you prefer.

Bankruptcy

Kirkwood Automotive must file for Chapter 11 protection. You don't need to share this until you choose to introduce it into the game.

Money Hole

A silicon Valley consortium offers to fund a massive expansion of News Hole that will monetize Web news content and might effectively kill mainstream print media. You don't need to share this until you choose to introduce it into the game.

Kill File

You've been quietly informed of a legal irregularity that will tarnish Gene's online reputation and sink his little blog forever. You don't need to share this until you choose to introduce it into the game.

JOA

A national media syndicate offers to form a Joint Operating Agreement with the Clarion-Advance and a rival paper, ending editorial control and turning it into a semi-profitable zombie of ads and wire service stories. You don't need to share this until you choose to introduce it into the game.

I LOVE YOU

Choose another character you love. Let everyone know. Maybe they love you too; maybe not. You'll find out in play.

YOU LOVE ME

Choose another character who loves you. Let everyone know. Maybe you love them too; maybe not. You'll find out in play.

I HATE YOU

Choose another character you hate. Let everyone know. Maybe they hate you too; maybe not. You'll find out in play.

YOU HATE ME

Choose another character who hates you. Let everyone know. Maybe you hate them too; maybe not. You'll find out in play.

PACING THE GAME

Call up the following text in an on-screen editor on the laptop. During or at the conclusion of each scene, one of the players needs to delete one sentence. It doesn't matter who does the deleting, and the sentence deleted does not necessarily need to reflect what happened in the scene.

You can shorten the game by removing sentences initially if you prefer. The game ends when the screen is blank.

- Americans are a bold, inquisitive, literate, civil people.
- This community will fight to keep their newspaper alive.
- The Internet is a tool of freedom and prosperity.
- Our family can weather this storm.
- I'm a good person.
- I'm making the right decision.
- No one needs to be afraid of the future.
- If a person works hard they will be rewarded.
- The role of the newspaper in civil society is irreplaceable
- You can always trust your friends.
- We must forgive one another for our mistakes.
- Truth is not a subjective quality.
- Change is good.
- I'm happy.
- Fighting for what you believe in is the American way.
- If we work together everything will be all right.
- I can protect the people I care about.