

# News Hole

A Live Action Game by **Jason Morningstar**

HOW TO PLAY

## Things You Need

- 4-8 players and, optionally, 1-2 GMs
- A laptop, or paper displaying the pacing text.
- All the characters and circumstances, cut out.

## 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 Burnekos.

## 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. There are four actual events and four strong emotional connections. Players may incorporate their circumstance however they like, whenever it seems appropriate. None of them need to emerge in play, necessarily. Either distribute circumstances randomly (mix them all together first if you have less than eight players), or talk over who should get what. If you are playing with a GM, circumstances could be deliberately handed out to stir up maximum tension, or delivered bird-in-ear during the game, as you prefer.

## Scenes

When you are ready to begin, have each player introduce their character with a brief monologue. After that, allow players to call for scenes for themselves or others. Scenes should generally be short and focused. There's nothing wrong with one person scenes, or scenes that include everyone. A GM can also call for scenes.

## Pacing the Game

You can shorten the game by removing sentences initially if you prefer. If you don't, your game will be 17 scenes long - a pretty good length.

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. The game ends when the screen is blank.

# **Bill Burneko**

**Publisher of the Clarion-Advance**

**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 Burneko**

**Internet Entrepreneur**

**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 Burneko**

**Web Manager of the Clarion-Advance**

**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?**

# **Avery Kirkwood**

**Owner of Kirkwood Automotive Group**

**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?**

*Front of name tag*

*Fold*

*Rear of name tag*

# **Tweet Partlow**

**Kirkwood Tire Shop Employee**

**Old 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?**

# **Anna Wayne**

**Reporter for the Clarion-Advance**

**Old 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?**

# **Gene Kirkwood**

**Blogger and Businessman**

**Son of AVERY and younger 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 Kirkwood**

**Manager of Internet Sales for the Kirkwood Automotive Group**

**Son of AVERY and older 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?**

*Front of name tag*

*Fold*

*Rear of name tag*

## 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 smear Gene's online reputation and sink his little blog forever. It will probably also get him arrested. 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.

## "I love you"

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

## "I hate you"

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

- **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.**

# THANKS!

I hope you enjoyed News Hole. I certainly enjoyed bringing it to you and if you have comments—particularly if you play it—I would like to talk to you. I can be reached at [jason@bullypulpitgames.com](mailto:jason@bullypulpitgames.com) or @jmstar on Twitter.

None of this was done in a vacuum—there’s a whole community of talented, generous, creative people out there making and sharing their work. I borrowed from a few and stole from many, who in turn eagerly did the same.

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