

## **RE:SOLVE**

a game by vesta

You are a dabbling crew of paranormal sleuths, stumbling from one ghostly rumour to another. You've heard about a ghost who stalks within mirrors, haunting reflections, and have decided to poke around. Your crew take a few photographs of reflective surfaces: mirror selfies, artistically composed shots, random snaps.

And one night, you all come together to investigate. Here's the catch: in the process, you've also invited the ghost to your table.

## **ABOUT**

*Re:Solve* is a photo-investigative, paranormal roleplaying game for a group of 2 to 6. It will take 90 minutes. One player is the ghost. The rest are investigators.

The game can be played online through any messaging application that supports a group chat, image sharing, and emojis/emoji reactions. Online play should be done through text, and voice chat is an unnecessary complement. If playing in person, you require printed out photos, a handful of stickers (post-it notes with drawings on them work too), a handful of small tokens (e.g. beans, seeds, rice grains, marbles, coins), and writing/drawing materials.

## **PREPARATIONS**

To prepare, each investigator should take at least one photograph, with a range of 4 to 10 total photographs across the group. The photographs should be mirror shots, where what the mirror reflects takes up a great amount of space. The simplest option is to take a mirror selfie in your room, bathroom, window, or the glass surface of a building, but you can be as creative with your photos as you want.

When you're ready to play, the investigators will meet up at 10.30pm, such that the game reaches its climax at midnight. If face-to-face, have the photographs printed. If online, be on your group chat or channel, and send the photographs up top, pinning them for easy access.

## **INVESTIGATORS**

As investigators, you've expected a night of spooky but lighthearted sleuthing, but ended up inviting the supernatural into a mystery that's up for you to untangle. At the beginning, some of you might take the investigation seriously and others not at all, but as midnight steadily approaches and **Omens** keep appearing, the ghost's influence becomes unmistakable.

Throughout the night, you may scrutinize details, weave conspiracies, frighten each other, or

just shoot the shit, among any number of interactions. But one priority is to **Solve the Mystery**. To do so, there is a list of five questions to anchor them and give their night some structure.

1. Why is the ghost amongst you tonight?
2. Why does the ghost reside in mirrors?
3. How would the ghost get out of the mirrors? What happens when they do?
4. What happens at midnight? Why is this time important to the ghost?
5. What does the ghost ultimately want?

Investigators may ignore these questions at their peril, but it is through answering them with **Resolve** that they get to define the narrative of the Ghost, and themselves influence how **Midnight** will play out when the clock strikes twelve.

In addition, it is the Investigators' job to interpret and react to the Ghost's **Omens**. The Ghost will attach images or symbols in the form of stickers to your photographs, or to some of your actions and messages. Investigators then translate them into the ephemeral influence of the ghost in your world. For example, a cheese sticker on a photograph might mean that there's a funky smell for a second, or that a sentimental (cheesy) object in the photograph goes missing. A 'no' symbol attached to a message might mean that you feel a sense of dread as the ghost believes your statement is completely wrong, or that the topic in the message brought up bad memories you do not wish to approach.

Finally, on top of definitively answering questions that **Solve the Mystery**, there are a handful of other moves that investigators can take when they are awarded with **Resolve**. These moves are covered in their own section later on.

## **GHOST**

As the Ghost, you are the specter invited by the investigators, and who now haunts them as they piece together the mystery of you. You are unable to communicate verbally or textually during play, but you can make your presence known, altering images of mirrors, and through those images, interact with the world. You do this through placing **Omens**.

You can have strong ideas for what you are and what your answers are to the questions the investigators are trying to figure out. You can indicate what elements of the investigators' discussion interests you through handing out **Resolve**. But these answers are ultimately a collaborative effort that the Investigators have the last say on, and you should be flexible in going with the flow of the game.

If you are playing in person, you can move about, loom over shoulders, adjust the position of materials of the table, even physically nudge investigators every now and then (do ensure you

have their permission for touching them). If you are playing online, you will make a much more liberal use of **Omens** to establish your presence.

In either case, the Ghost acts as a guide and facilitator of the game through **Omens** and **Resolve**.

## **OMENS AND RESOLVE**

**Omens** are established through stickers/emojis/emotes. These are images or symbols that the ghost attaches to the photographs that the investigators interpret as the ghost's fleeting influence on the world. It could be interpreted as a smudging of colour, a vase that wasn't originally there, a feeling of unease from wind brushing past one's ear. Omens can also be attached to actions, spaces, or when playing online, as reactions to text messages.

Through the first half of the game, the ghost places Omens on the photographs at set intervals as markers of time. Every 5 minutes is a good benchmark, but the ghost can choose the appropriate interval. Other Omens (attached to actions, spaces, messages) can be handed out freely as the ghost deems fit. In the second half of the game, the Ghost may permanently alter the photographs with Omens that are not transient, but lasting. This is done through drawing or editing the photos. This is also the only moment where the Ghost can write words, although they are advised to do so sparingly.

**Resolve** is a form of narrative currency established through the tokens. As the Ghost listens in to the investigators, they can award Resolve to specific investigators when they feel that the investigator has said something interesting or acted in an interesting way, or that their comments are closer to what they feel is the "truth" of the ghost.

When an investigator has Resolve, they can spend it to shape the narrative of the ghost in definitive ways. Everything else up to that point is hearsay, conjecture, ramblings. But with Resolve, investigators make their mark. Spending one Resolve allows investigators to make one of five moves:

1. Definitively answer a question to **Solve the Mystery**  
When approaching the questions to Solve the Mystery, investigators can have a whole hodgepodge of suspicions, inferences, and theories. However, they do not hold any weight until this move is used. The investigator's answer to the corresponding question then becomes the truth.
2. Define a backstory element of the ghost  
Throughout the night, the investigators can exchange ghost stories, conspiracy theories, or histories of a dubious nature regarding the mirrored entity they are investigating. None of these are set in stone, and can be outright contradictory. Using this move allows the investigator to declare that a backstory element of the ghost is true.

3. Crystallize the interpretation of an Omen

As the ghost nudges the world with their Omens, investigators are free to interpret and react however they deem fit, and other investigators can even disagree on what occurred. The ghost's influence is ephemeral, and there could be lingering doubts on what actually occurred, unless this move is used. Then, the type of interpretation of the Omen becomes unquestionable, and investigators have to acknowledge it as true.

4. Ask a yes/no question that the ghost has to answer honestly

It's difficult to communicate with the ghost directly, and it's not like they would ever listen to an investigator. But should one want access to the ghost's perspective, they may use this move to get an honest yes or no answer from the ghost.

5. Give weight to a partner's suspicion and pass on your Resolve

An investigator might have Resolve, but feel that another element brought up earlier by another investigator warrants more attention. They can then give weight to that earlier assertion by bringing it back up, and then handing off their Resolve token to the party in question. This move does not make that assertion true, but it gives the partner the power to make it so if they wish to.

Spent Resolve tokens are returned to the Ghost's token pile. If playing online, digital tokens (specific emotes or images) or simply a counter will suffice. The Ghost is responsible for keeping track of who they've awarded Resolve and who's spent theirs.

## MIDNIGHT

When Midnight arrives, the investigators have done all they can. It is now up to the Ghost to narrate the resolution of the game. The Ghost does not have to answer the questions that would **Solve the Mystery**. But they have to use what has been defined and established by the investigators through their **Resolve** moves to inform the resolution. All they have to do is state what happens when the clock strikes twelve.

Does the ghost simply fade away or escape from the photographs? Or maybe they are at the height of their powers and attack the investigators? The investigators may respond in kind, but the final say is in the hands of the Ghost.

After the final scene, the game is over.

## SPOOK DIAL

*Re:Solve* deals with the supernatural, with themes and genre conventions of horror as a significant part of the possibility space. Make sure you take care of each other and stay safe! Before, during, and after the game, communicate clearly the ideas and elements you'd like to

explore as a group, and those you'd like to stay away from. Always have measures in place to pause or leave the game, and you can always break character during play if there is a need for discussion. Feel free to bring in snacks, play ambient music, anything that helps you stay comfortable and have a fun night!

## INSPIRATIONS

This game owes a great deal of debt to *This Discord Has Ghosts in It* by Adam Vass and Will Jobst, a fantastic game about exploring a haunted house using the architecture of Discord. Resolve tokens and their moves were inspired by the *Belonging Outside Belonging* system, first developed in *Dream Askew* and *Dream Apart* by Avery Alder and Benjamin Rosenbaum respectively. And the concept of Omens as interpretive symbols took inspiration from a whole bevy of tarot-interpretation games such as *Anamnesis* by Samantha Leigh and *Spindlewheel* by Sasha Reneau.

These games can be found here:

<https://willjobst.itch.io/ghosts>

<https://store.buriedwithoutceremony.com/products/dream-askew-dream-apart>

<https://blinkingbirchgames.itch.io/anamnesis>

<https://22to22.itch.io/spindlewheel-legacy-deck>