

The Archive of Small Promises

120-minute plan · 4 players · Bring people together

Promises have become little objects in an overflowing archive. Owners, clerks and delivery volunteers disagree about what may leave the shelves.

Content notice: Commitment and family disappointment. Nobody must share a real promise; a fictional household repair is enough.

GM overview

The archive has three empty bays, not unlimited space. Noel's owners will accept a renewal station only if each owner can choose separately. Imi's clerks need a legible procedure and one working bay. Gus represents absent owners and needs a protected waiting bay that nobody can sign out for them. The third bay can become an open renewal station, producing the full settlement, or remain storage for a closed-intake appointment service. Rhea's garden model is her personal promise: she may request a change, while her sister's reply remains pending. Never reward players for choosing RELEASE over KEEP. The negotiation is about access to decisions, not making everyone abandon a commitment.

What is really happening

Rhea filed unresolved promises as permanent deposits. Owners therefore cannot revise them. Renewal cards permit KEEP, CHANGE or RELEASE, while absent owners require a dated waiting shelf. Closing intake protects everything but leaves the old promises unresolved.

Opening agreement and read-aloud

Agree on subjects to soften or skip. Each player names an ordinary skill and a reason to help. Evidence does not require a successful roll; uncertainty changes time, cost or obligations.

A tiny ladder knocks against its jar. A pebble shaped like a garden gate leans toward the door. The old catalogue has a single box: PERMANENT.

Time and preparation

120 minutes: A policy that can hold an unanswered letter

Opening agreement: 10 minutes

Compare cards with the old index: 25 minutes

Negotiate present and absent ownership: 40 minutes

Apply the policy to Rhea and choose service scale: 35 minutes

Closure and debrief: 10 minutes

Earn the renewal procedure at the desk and apply it to Rhea's request. Appointments retain one bay but give up new intake; extra discussion creates no extra shelf space.

Starting information: Three empty bays

Starting state: Unoccupied shelf bays = 3; Present owners accept = false; Clerks accept procedure = false;

Absent owners protected = false; Renewal choices understood = false; New intake paused = false; Rhea's request recorded = false; Owners decline today's renewal service = false

With 4 players: share the roles of mapper, evidence keeper, speaker and timekeeper.

If the group gets stuck

If any group refuses, pause intake with every deposit intact. A missing renewal card can be dictated by Imi after reading the desk; a missing owner can only be placed in WAITING. Do not clear shelves by invented consent.

Archive lobby

Read aloud: Noel holds a jar with a ladder too small for any real wall.

GM: Noel will support individual decisions if the posted procedure includes all three choices. No one may authorize a mass release on behalf of owners.

Choice: Offer each present owner all three choices

Ask: Let every owner decide without requiring a release?

Requires: Renewal choices understood is true and Owners decline today's renewal service is false. Present owners accept: true

Result: Noel accepts a service where keeping a promise remains a choice.

Choice: Record the owners' refusal to begin today

Ask: Respect Noel's request for more discussion and preserve the deposits?

Requires: Available. Owners decline today's renewal service: true; Present owners accept: false

Result: The owners decline today's service. Clerks may prepare, but intake must pause until a later agreement.

Card desk

Read aloud: Imi spreads three unused stamps over the old catalogue.

GM: Reading the cards supplies the policy knowledge. One bay and a named clerk make the procedure usable; merely promising a reform does not change the state.

Choice: Read and compare the renewal choices

Ask: Where does a changed promise go while an answer is pending?

Requires: Available. Renewal choices understood: true. Reveal An owner's renewal card, Three empty bays

Result: Imi drafts a procedure with three choices and a waiting status.

Choice: Give the clerks a working bay

Ask: Spend one bay on the staffed renewal desk?

Requires: Renewal choices understood is true. Spend 1 Unoccupied shelf bays. Clerks accept procedure: true

Result: Imi signs the procedure and staffs the desk.

Delivery steps

Read aloud: Gus turns over six unsigned receipts. "Nobody answered these."

GM: Gus needs a dated waiting shelf and a no-proxy-signature rule. Waiting is a valid status, not failed consent. Protect it before ending.

Choice: Protect the unanswered deposits

Ask: Reserve one bay for dated invitations and forbid proxy signatures?

Requires: Available. Spend 1 Unoccupied shelf bays. Absent owners protected: true. Reveal Unsigned delivery receipts

Result: Gus dates the waiting labels and keeps the unsigned receipts.

Promise vault

Read aloud: Rhea cups a miniature garden that has outgrown its shelf.

GM: Rhea can request a smaller garden; her absent sister still chooses her own answer. Recording the request adds a personal consequence but is not needed to force an institutional settlement.

Choice: Record Rhea's request

Ask: Hold the smaller-garden proposal for her sister's answer?

Requires: Absent owners protected is true. Rhea's request recorded: true. Reveal A proposed smaller garden

Result: Rhea signs only her own proposal; the second answer stays blank.

Renewal shelf

Read aloud: The vacant shelf has more room for labels than for jars.

GM: The full service uses one bay for clerks, one for absent owners and one for present decisions.

Appointment service closes new intake and leaves the last bay available for overflow.

Choice: Open the renewal service

Ask: Spend the final bay on present owners' decisions?

Requires: Present owners accept is true and Clerks accept procedure is true and Absent owners protected is true. Spend 1 Unoccupied shelf bays

Result: The three bays take their new labels and the first owner chooses a card.

Closure: Room for a different promise

Choice: Close intake and book private appointments

Ask: Keep the final bay for safe storage while owners receive appointments?

Requires: Present owners accept is true and Clerks accept procedure is true and Absent owners protected is true. New intake paused: true

Result: Rhea closes the intake slot and posts individual appointment times.

Closure: A quieter archive

Connections and changing routes

Archive lobby - Card desk: Approach the catalogue. Available.

Archive lobby - Delivery steps: Meet the delivery basket. Available.

Card desk - Renewal shelf: Pass the index wall. Available.

Delivery steps - Promise vault: Walk the delivery corridor. Available.

Promise vault - Renewal shelf: Use the inner shelf gate. Available.

Card desk - Promise vault: Follow the garden leaves. Available.

Archive lobby - Renewal shelf: Open the public renewal gate. Clerks accept procedure is true.

Noel - Present owners' representative

Goal: Recover the right to revise a promise

Offers: Owners willing to try individual cards.

Will not accept: No mass RELEASE and no compulsory CHANGE.

Voice: "Let me choose what I can still do."

Track: Present owners accept

Imi - Renewal clerk

Goal: Make a procedure another clerk can follow

Offers: Three stamps and a staffed desk.

Will not accept: Needs one working bay and legible choices.

Voice: "Where does a missing answer go?"

Track: Clerks accept procedure

Gus - Volunteer for absent owners

Goal: Protect unanswered promises

Offers: Dated invitation deliveries.

Will not accept: No volunteer signs for an absent person.

Voice: "An empty doorstep is not permission."

Track: Absent owners protected

Rhea - Archivist

Goal: Request a garden promise she can keep

Offers: Her own renewal request and the intake key.

Will not accept: Her sister's answer cannot be assumed.

Voice: "May I ask for a smaller garden?"

Discovery card: An owner's renewal card

Give only when revealed in play.

Choose one: KEEP / CHANGE / RELEASE. Owner's mark: ____ . If CHANGE, write the proposed change.

If another person must agree, their answer remains pending. Nobody signs for another owner.

Player task: Draft a fictional choice or revise the public procedure.

GM answer: The service respects all choices; a request for change is not another person's agreement.

Discovery card: Three empty bays

Give only when revealed in play.

Bay A ____ . Bay B ____ . Bay C ____ . Clerks need one working bay. Absent owners need one waiting bay.

Present renewals need one service bay. A closed-intake service may keep the last bay for stored appointments.

Player task: Allocate the bays and show which service will be offered today.

GM answer: Full renewal uses all three; appointments use two and preserve one storage bay.

Discovery card: Unsigned delivery receipts

Give only when revealed in play.

Six deliveries: no answer recorded. The receipt has room for a new date, an invitation and WAITING. The signature line belongs to the owner.

Player task: Write the waiting policy and a follow-up date.

GM answer: A dated waiting shelf protects absence without treating it as refusal.

Discovery card: A proposed smaller garden

Give only when revealed in play.

Rhea proposes one shared planter instead of a full garden. Her mark is present. Her sister's answer is blank.

Write how the archive should hold this request while it travels.

Player task: Apply the new policy to a real fictional disagreement.

GM answer: Keep the request pending on the waiting shelf; do not narrate the sister's consent.

State sheet

Unoccupied shelf bays: 3 (resource, minimum 0, maximum 3)

Present owners accept: false (stance)

Clerks accept procedure: false (stance)

Absent owners protected: false (stance)

Renewal choices understood: false (knowledge)

New intake paused: false (flag)

Rhea's request recorded: false (flag)

Owners decline today's renewal service: false (stance)

At any place: Seal intake and preserve every deposit

Pause the archive while its owners and clerks continue the discussion?

Requires: Available. New intake paused: true

A runner turns the intake sign to CLOSED. Existing deposits stay safe.

Ending: Room for a different promise

Requires: Present owners accept is true and Clerks accept procedure is true and Absent owners protected is true

Owners choose KEEP, CHANGE or RELEASE. Unanswered tokens wait with dates, while the archive makes room one decision at a time.

Next: What should the next invitation say without assuming an answer?

Ending: A quieter archive

Requires: New intake paused is true

New intake closes. Protected waiting and private appointments begin, with one bay left for safe storage. Public walk-in service will take longer.

Next: What evidence would justify reopening intake?

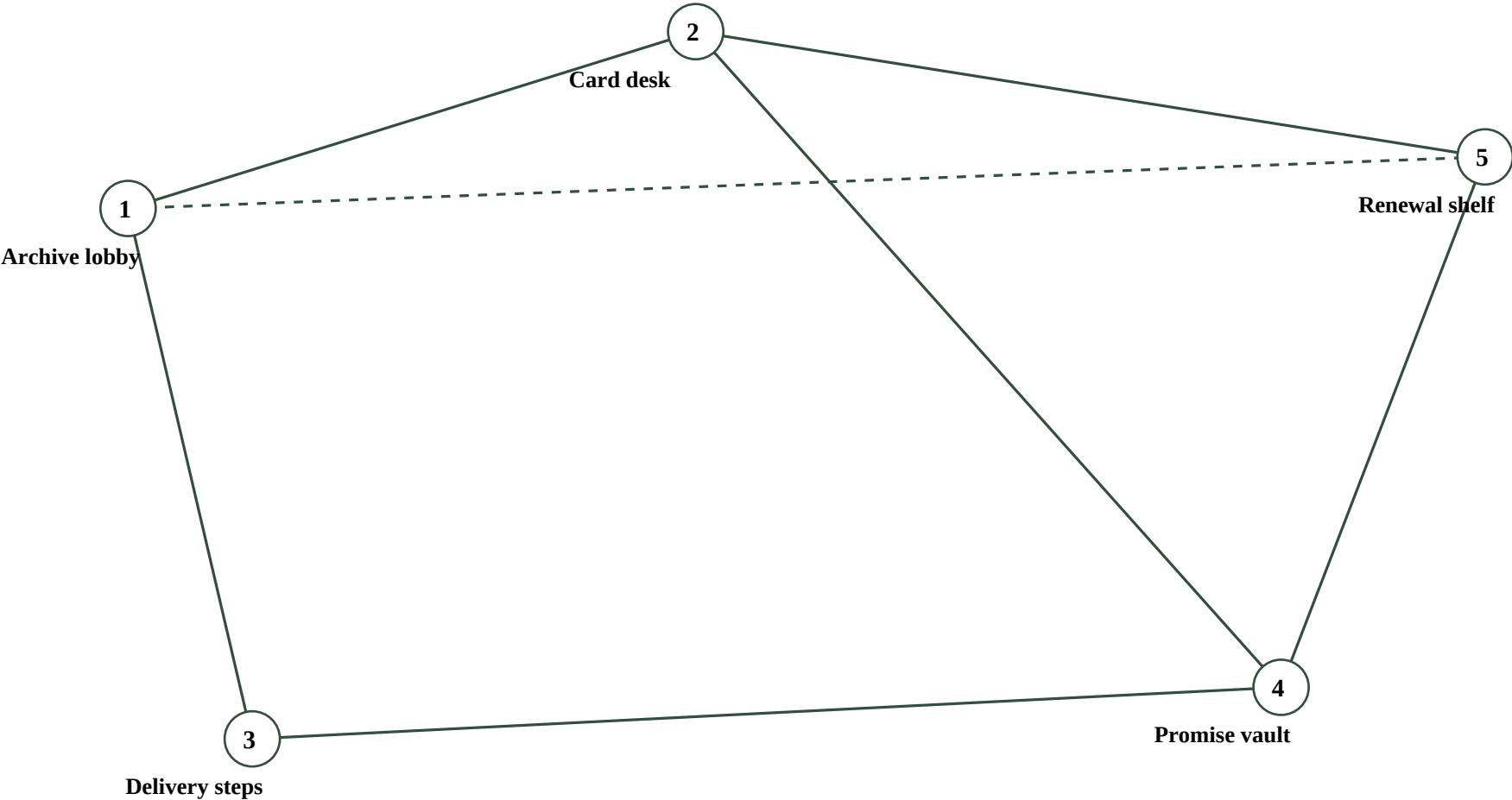
Ending: Safe behind the glass

Requires: Available

Intake stops and all deposits are preserved. The right to revise promises still needs a working agreement.

Next: Which owner and clerk should meet first?

The Archive of Small Promises - GM decision map



Dashed paths need conditions. Read Connections and changing routes for costs and direction.