

Silicon Valley Mystery (SVM)

An abstract mystery game for 2-4 players by Chris Ward and Daniel Ballabás

Playtime: 5-15 minutes/scenario

Components

- Player sheets (1/player)
- Scenario guide (print 1/play or session)
- D6 dice (1/player)
- Writing tools for each player

Goal

You are detectives tasked with solving a mystery quicker than any other player. Whoever scores the most points is declared the winner. You gain more points for gaining clues when they are newer (called “freshness”), as opposed to gaining as many clues as possible.

Setup

Choose a scenario from the list at the end of the rules or from any community-contributed scenario. Each scenario consists of:

- A map (scenarios can share the same map)
- A number of clues. Each clue has a description, a region number that matches an area on the scenario map, and a type that matches a clue type defined by the scenario
 - A scenario suggests the levels of freshness each clue should have, but you can also adjust the level yourself to change game length, for example:
 - 3 or less - Short game
 - 5 to 7 - Medium game
 - 7+ - Long game
- The number of clues a player needs to find for the game to end

Each player takes a combined map and detective notebook sheet each. Players use this sheet to move around collecting clues and keep a record of the clues and their freshness that they collect.

All players roll a dice to determine which region they begin in, they can pick which square in that region. Determine the first player randomly, or pick whoever starts in the highest value region.

Finding and Gaining Clues

SVM is an abstract mystery solving game. Players are welcome to theorise the solution to the mystery (and scenarios typically follow a loose story), but score points from gaining clues, nothing else.

Scenarios define where players can find clues on a map through a combination of regions and types.

I.e. There is a clue in region 5 that matches an office type as defined by a scenario.

When players know enough information to “gain a clue” (the region and type), they mark it on their sheet at the highest level of freshness for the scenario, this is now an “active clue”. Use vertical lines to indicate the current level of the clue, i.e. “|” for level 1, “||” for level 2 etc.

A player then needs to travel to and end their turn in two matching type locations in the matching region that match the active clue (though it's scenario dependent, there are typically 3 locations of each type in a region), then they gain that clue at its current level of "freshness".

This means that all other players now know that there is a clue available of the same matching region and type, and may mark it as available. However, it enters play on their sheets at one freshness level lower than the level it was when the current player claimed it. If another player had already marked the clue as available, then instead they change its freshness value to match the new value. Note the level of freshness in the box for clue types you collect in the clue table attached to each region.

Rounds and Turns

In each round players take in turns to roll 1 six sided dice and decide what to do with the value it shows from the following options.

Movement

Draw from your current location up to a number of spaces equal to the value. If you end movement on a location that matches a combination of region and type to contain a clue, mark the clue in your notebook at its current level of freshness.

Speak to an Informant

Consult the scenario to see if there's one or more clues present in the region number that matches the value. If there are, make a note in your notebook of the number of clues in the region. Scenarios show clues in a table, so try to cover the clue type column of the clues when you check the region.

Hit the Streets

Consult the scenario to see if there are clues available that match the type that matches the dice value. If there are, make a note in your notebook of which regions contain the clue type. Scenarios show clues in a table, so try to cover the region column of the clues when you check the type.

Sabotage

Use the dice value to sabotage the investigation of another player. You do this by choosing a player, and asking them to reduce the freshness of an active clue by one.

End of a round

After each player has taken one turn, the round ends and at the end of each round, all players reduce the freshness of all **active** clues by one level.

Game end

When a player gains the amount of clues required by the scenario, finish the round, and the game then ends.

Scoring

Players score the number of clues multiplied by the tier. So for example 3 level 3 clues are worth 9 points, 5 level 2 clues are worth ten points.

Each player should also explain what they think happened in the scenario, this is purely for fun, but you might want to consider rewarding bonus points for whoever is most accurate or has the best interpretation of clues.

Creating maps and scenarios

SVM is something of a framework for games, and we encourage others to create new maps and/or scenarios for the game. This is a rough guide on how to do that.

Creating a map for scenarios

The Silicon Valley version is based on a six sided dice, and hence there are six regions on the Silicon Valley map. If you want to make a larger map, the region count needs to match an appropriate dice, i.e., D8 for 8 regions, D10 for 10 regions etc.

Adding locations to regions

The Silicon valley version has 3 location types defined, and 9 locations per region. So 3 instances of each location type. The version requires players to visit two locations of a matching type in a region to gain a clue in that region. To vary the difficulty or length of a map, you can experiment with adding a different amount of location types, or instances of each type.

Feel free to use the same style for locations and paths as on the Silicon Valley map ([you can find files here](#)), or invent your own (If you do, share them with us!).

Adding player aids to a map

The Silicon Valley map features boxes attached to each region where players can keep track of the clues they have found. Feel free to use the same style for your maps ([you can find files here](#)), or again, create your own, and share those creations with us!

Creating Scenarios

SVM is not explicitly a mystery solving game, more of a game about finding the best clues to solve a mystery quicker than any other player. Thus, if you create your own scenarios (for the Silicon Valley map, or maps of your own), you do not need to write complex mysteries for players to solve, but instead a rough story. Here's what scenarios need.

A title

Pretty self-explanatory, something cool and attention grabbing is good.

A length and difficulty

This is a ratio of the number of clues there are for players to find, and how many they need to find to finish the game. We generally find that anything up to 5 clues total is a short game, 7-9 is a medium length game, and any more is a long game. Similarly, if players need to find half the total clues, that's a short game, $\frac{3}{4}$ is a medium game, and all of them is a long game.

Clues

Each clue consists of the following.

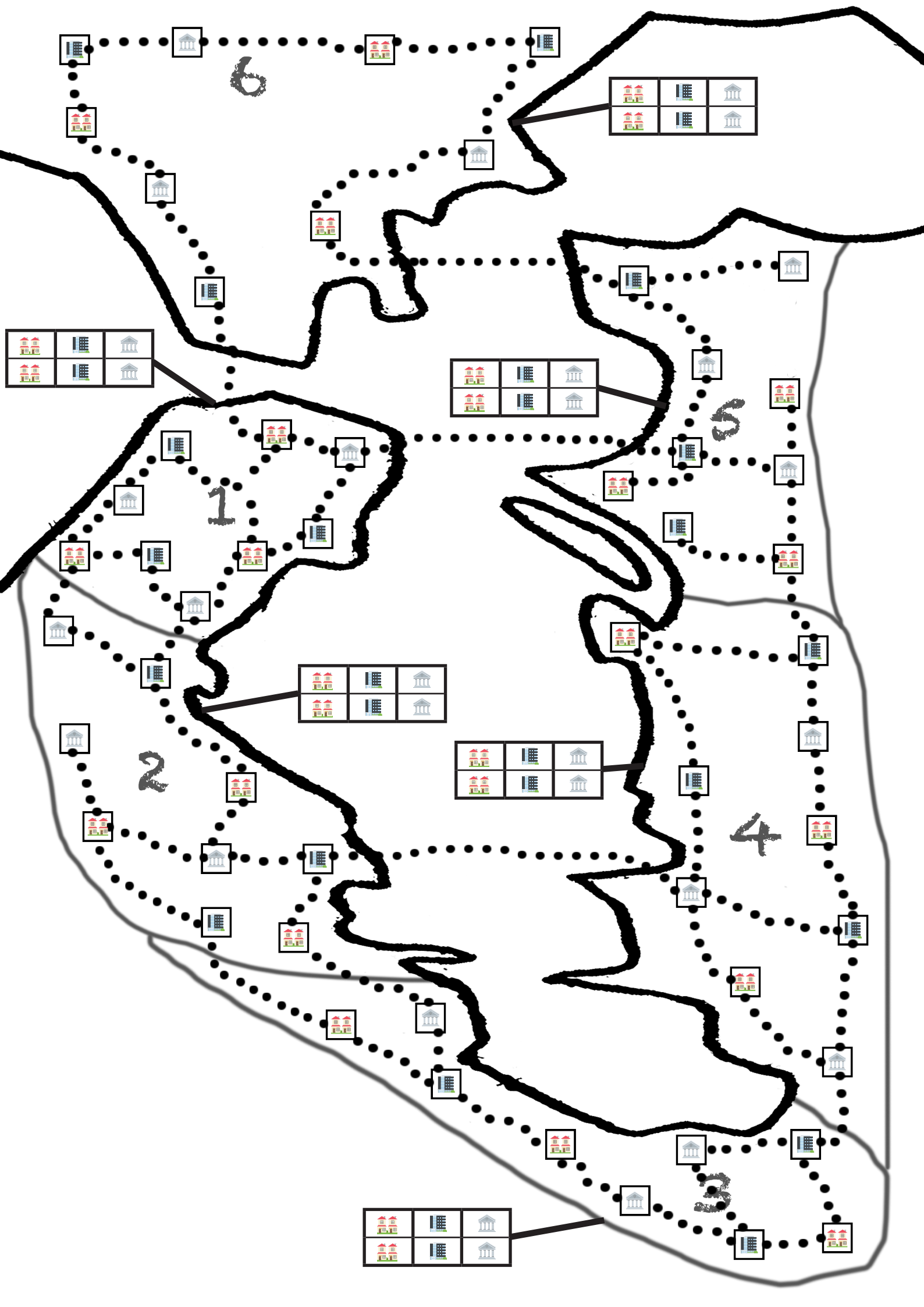
- A region number
- A location type and matching dice value
- A name of the location

- A description of what players find at the location. This is purely descriptive and you can give away as much or as little detail as you want.

A solution

The solution provides nothing mechanical to the game, but it's fun for players to see if their theories match yours at all.












Print one scenario page for each playsession

Scenario: Doom Pit

Length - Medium, 5 clues to complete

Locations and clues

<p>Region 3</p>	<p>The murder scene André Lenhart, partner at San José venture capital firm MoarDollar attended a launch party hosted by a local game studio his company had invested in. At around 1am he was discovered face down in a ball pit on the rooftop terrace. Initially other party goers thought he was just passed out as he had been hitting the free punch quite hard. When he hadn't moved an hour later, they called security, who found he was dead, with ball pit balls filling his throat. Was it an accident, or intentional?</p>	<p>Social () D6 Value 1-2</p>
<p>Region 1</p>	<p>GameStep studios Some of the party goers remember a strangely dressed figure arriving late, walking right past the free food and drinks, and right up to the terrace. André had had a few drinks, but he was still quite sharp, other party goers remember him doing well in a game of "DanceStar" at 11pm.</p>	<p>Office () D6 Value 3-4</p>
<p>Region 5</p>	<p>MoarDollar offices You speak with Andrés assistant. He always had a packed schedule from morning to night, and little time for much else in his life.</p>	<p>Office () D6 Value 3-4</p>
<p>Region 2</p>	<p>Andrés home You find the home of a typical busy Valley executive, sparse, but expensively decorated, and little sign of someone spending much time here. On the hallway table are a pile of unopened letters addressed to "my darling".</p>	<p>Residential () D6 Value 5-6</p>
<p>Region 3</p>	<p>Andrés boyfriends home Brendon looks surprised to meet you, and you notice a hastily dumped pile of clothing in the corner of his lounge room. He says he has not seen André in over a week, which was common as he was often so busy.</p>	<p>Residential () D6 Value 5-6</p>
<p>Region 6</p>	<p>Andrés mother's home Andrés mother is tearful as she greets you at the doorway. She explains that André had always prioritised work above life and relationships, and she knows that André and Brendone were having increasing heated arguments.</p>	<p>Residential () D6 Value 5-6</p>
<p>Region 4</p>	<p>The Braized Avocado The night before the party, staff remember André and Brendon eating at the restaurant, and at a certain point Brendon screamed extremely loudly, "I can't take this anymore, you might as well be dead, the amount i see you!", and stormed out of the restaurant.</p>	<p>Social () D6 Value 1-2</p>

Solution






This is a time-honoured tale of jaded lovers. Andrés boyfriend, Brendon Moncrieff had become resentful and jealous at the number of parties that André attended for work and networking. Tonight he had begrudgingly let him attend this launch party, but gatecrashed in disguise, and drowned him in the ball pit at midnight in a fit of jealous rage.

Print one scenario page for each playsession

Scenario: Robo Justice

Length - Short, 3 clues to complete

Locations and clues

Region 3	Zachary's apartment Zachary Pontolli, the founder of a buzzing pet grooming robotics startup, Frr , was found dead in his downtown apartment. He was strangled to death by a prototype dog walking robot he was testing. Or was he? It's your job to find out...	Residential  D6 Value 5-6
Region 4	The Frr offices The first thing that catches your eye as you enter the offices are a series of robots that look like rapidly improving prototypes and posters proclaiming an "end to needing to hire dog walkers".	Office  D6 Value 3-4
Region 5	A popular dog walking park You notice a handful of dogs wandering the park walked by a machine emblazoned with a giant "Wz", they seem to occasionally malfunction.	Civic () D6 Value 1-2
Region 4	The Walkeez offices This large warehouse office combo is full of robots of different sizes and models, all fitted with retractable leashes, and in the reception of this warehouse office you notice a poster proclaiming "for when you don't have time for your precious".	Office  D6 Value 3-4
Region 6	A luxury holiday rental You find a woman attempting to hide in the bathroom, in the lounge room are three dogs barking loudly and running around the room with two "Wz" emblazoned robots whirring around after them	Residential  D6 Value 5-6

Solution

Zachary was murdered by a rival CEO of **Walkeez**, Tasha Limoine. She was angry about **Frr** making a rival to their long established product and visited Zachary's apartment in a hope to convince him to work on a collaboration, instead of rivals. Zachary was rude, accusing Jared of making an inferior product to their prototype, and was so arrogant it angered Jared. She used the lead typically attached to the prototype, and strangled Zachary, then hastily reprogrammed the robot to make it look like it had malfunctioned. In a panic she then hot footed to a holiday rental to hide until the heat died down.

Print one scenario page for each playsession

Scenario: Tech Punch

Length - Medium

Asha Dahwan, cofounder of AirP&P, the AirBnB of cooling was found bludgeoned to death by a large blunt object in her office early this morning. In her calendar the day before was an appointment with the mysterious "X". Who was X, did they kill her, and what was the murder weapon?

Solution

Asha was hit in the head by an award she recently won for her company from the Valley observer for being the "coolest" startup. She was beaten by one of the runner ups for the award, Gerald Sejate, CCO of Frigid, a dairy-sugar free ice cream startup. Gerald ran, and stole the award, he now has it proudly displayed over the fireplace in his apartment, the faintest spots of blood still underneath.