

The Market of Borrowed Names

120-minute plan | 4 players | No combat

At a night market, a baker answers to the mayor's name and the mayor cannot sign a decree. The name broker's ledger has gone blank.

Content notice: Identity confusion and consent; players may use temporary titles instead of personal names.

What is really happening

Broker Venn lent names as festival costumes. His apprentice spilled erasing sand on the return ledger, leaving the borrowers unable to match their receipts. Voice tokens remember consent; matching token and receipt restores names. Ending every loan at dawn also works but ends the market's cherished masquerade.

Prepare and play

Use your own rules or play without dice. State the goal, choose an approach, explain a reasonable cost and let the players decide. Plausible careful actions succeed; uncertain actions can succeed with delay, spent supplies or a favour owed. Evidence is always available through its described action. Each player creates an ordinary person with a useful skill, a reason to help, and an item. No character sheet, monster statistics or proprietary rulebook is needed.

Take 10 minutes to introduce characters, read the premise and discuss the content notice. Anyone may say "pause", pass on a description, or ask to move an uncomfortable moment offstage. Agree on no combat and on treating consequences as delay or repair, not permanent harm. Give one player the route map and another the time sheet.

Time plan

120-MINUTE PLAN

0-10: Opening agreement

10-20: Arrival

20-35: Records and tools

35-50: An independent trail

50-55: Break

55-75: The immediate problem

75-95: The final choice

95-110: Home and aftermath

110-120: Closing and epilogues

Follow both investigations; take the break before the immediate problem.

At 75 minutes, settle the immediate problem using a safe approach without another roll. At 95 minutes, finish the final method and begin the return.

With 10 minutes left, first secure the immediate goal: Let each borrower opt into the public dawn reset instead. Mark the immediate goal safe only once the people or resource are secured. Then, if no final method was used: Ring END ALL LOANS with the gathered borrowers' permission. Mark the fallback method and read the cost ending. Give each character an epilogue; do not bypass the safety step.

4 PLAYERS

Reconstruct the return pairs without deciding somebody else's identity.

Two pairs take observation and action tasks. Resolve them in two short alternating turns.

End the loans safely before dawn.

Work in two pairs, one following the method and the other preparing a fallback or record.

Arrival - 10 minutes

Place: Market arch

Read aloud

A baker turns when somebody calls "Mayor." Above the arch, ribbons carry names in handwriting that keeps changing.

Run this scene

Names were lent with consent, not stolen. A public blanket reset is a reliable fallback. Begin with the concrete request in the premise. Ask each character why they care and give them one ordinary useful item. Read both public observations without requiring a roll. Explain that the marked routes are safe to investigate, and offer a choice of the records or the visible trail. Let the group appoint a map reader; do not use hidden travel rolls to block the first lead.

Choices

1. Visit Token stall
2. Follow the trail to Tea courtyard

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Broker booth. A missing method can be found again at Dawn dais; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Suri: Get her own name back before opening the bakery Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Timeline record: Every receipt has a voluntary loan mark and an expiry at dawn. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Names were lent with consent, not stolen.

Fallback instruction: Ringing END ALL LOANS at dawn returns every name and closes the masquerade. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A public blanket reset is a reliable fallback.

Records and tools - 15 minutes

Place: Token stall

Read aloud

Keto has covered the counter in tiny clay mouths. One repeats a laugh without saying a word.

Run this scene

Matching evidence restores individual names. The broker booth is the next lead. Put the method card and destination note on the table. Ask what the two objects suggest, then answer direct practical questions from their wording. The maker can trade tools for help carrying or recording them, but refusal never removes these public documents. The trail remains another route. A check, if your rules use one, changes the time or tidiness of the work rather than whether this evidence exists.

Choices

1. Proceed to Broker booth
2. Compare evidence at Tea courtyard

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Broker booth. A missing method can be found again at Dawn dais; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Keto: Fix an honest mistake without being expelled Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Method diagram: A receipt's notch matches its clay voice token; pair them on a hook and speak the return word. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Matching evidence restores individual names.

Destination note: The return ledger is kept at Venn's booth beside the dusk bell. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The broker booth is the next lead.

An independent trail - 15 minutes

Place: Tea courtyard

Read aloud

Hale's official seal refuses to mark a page. The tea seller wisely calls everyone "friend."

Run this scene

A physical trail independently identifies the booth. A witness supplies an independent route. Describe the physical trail before asking for a decision. The witness tells what they actually observed and admits what they did not see. If the group refuses conversation, the physical route supplies the destination. Let a character compare the timeline and another trace the map. For a divided group, take one short turn per side, then reunite at the meeting; do not add another travel encounter.

Choices

1. Proceed to Broker booth
2. Compare evidence at Token stall

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Broker booth. A missing method can be found again at Dawn dais; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Hale: Sign a decree under the correct name Guides the party if they share a plan. If refused, points to the visible trail. Voice: Cautious, distinguish observation from assumption.

Physical trail: Erasing sand runs from the token stall to a booth with a dusk bell. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A physical trail independently identifies the booth.

Witness statement: Hale saw Venn bring the blank ledger into the broker booth. Give it: Ask any direct question, or read the witness's signed statement if conversation is refused. GM inference: A witness supplies an independent route.

The immediate problem - 20 minutes

Place: Broker booth

Read aloud

Venn brushes sand from a ledger. Blank spaces remain where the return list should have been.

Run this scene

Broker Venn lent names as festival costumes. His apprentice spilled erasing sand on the return ledger, leaving the borrowers unable to match their receipts. Voice tokens remember consent; matching token and receipt restores names. Ending every loan at dawn also works but ends the market's cherished masquerade. State the immediate stakes and offer both listed approaches. Before resolving action, ask who observes, who acts and who helps. Make any cost visible before a player accepts it. Avoid demanding a special ability or spell. When a plan fails, use the slower listed route and mark its time cost; people remain recoverable. Once the goal is safe, mark the immediate goal safe and continue. A refusal by the keeper cannot hide the marked safety instructions.

Choices

1. Invite each borrower to recognize their token's voice and match the receipt notch.
2. Let each borrower opt into the public dawn reset instead.

If the group gets stuck

Let each borrower opt into the public dawn reset instead. Explain a five-minute delay before they accept it; mark the immediate goal safe when the people or resource are secured.

People and evidence

Venn: Keep name borrowing voluntary and reversible Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Safety marks: Only the borrower may say RETURN. A friend may hold the paired ribbon, but cannot consent for them. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Restore consent without treating names as property.

Encounter and party adaptation

Reconstruct the return pairs without deciding somebody else's identity.

A delay leaves less time for the final repair or decision. Explain costs before resolving an action.

Invite each borrower to recognize their token's voice and match the receipt notch.

Let each borrower opt into the public dawn reset instead.

Two pairs take observation and action tasks. Resolve them in two short alternating turns.

Mark the immediate goal safe after either safe approach; a setback costs time, not access to the next scene.

The final choice - 20 minutes

Place: Dawn dais

Read aloud

A pale line appears beyond the rooftops. The dais has hooks for paired ribbons and a bell labelled END ALL LOANS.

Run this scene

Matching evidence restores individual names. Restore consent without treating names as property. Reveal the method and fallback together. Ask the group which tradeoff it accepts and give every character a small contribution. Mark the complete method for the first choice or the fallback method for the second. A risky improvisation should inherit one of these outcomes after its cost is explained, rather than create a third unprepared lock. Keep the immediate goal safe. Return by the known marked route; no new location needs to be invented.

Choices

1. Hang the consenting pairs and let the borrowers say RETURN together.
2. Ring END ALL LOANS with the gathered borrowers' permission.

If the group gets stuck

Ring END ALL LOANS with the gathered borrowers' permission. Mark the fallback method, keep the immediate goal safe and read the cost ending. Do not repeat a failed test.

People and evidence

Keto: Fix an honest mistake without being expelled Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Venn: Keep name borrowing voluntary and reversible Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Method diagram: A receipt's notch matches its clay voice token; pair them on a hook and speak the return word. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Matching evidence restores individual names.

Fallback instruction: Ringing END ALL LOANS at dawn returns every name and closes the masquerade. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A public blanket reset is a reliable fallback.

Encounter and party adaptation

End the loans safely before dawn.

The complete method preserves the planned service; the fallback preserves the immediate goal at a visible cost.

Hang the consenting pairs and let the borrowers say RETURN together.

Ring END ALL LOANS with the gathered borrowers' permission.

Work in two pairs, one following the method and the other preparing a fallback or record.

Mark the complete method for the first approach or the fallback method for the second. Both allow return and an ending.

Home and aftermath - 15 minutes

Place: Market arch

Read aloud

Suri says her name once and smiles. The market waits to learn whether tomorrow will have costumes or only ordinary introductions.

Run this scene

Choose a complete resolution or a resolution with a cost, then ask the group what happens next. Read the ending matching the selected outcome. Invite each character to add one ordinary detail to the aftermath, then ask the keeper for a concrete next action. Record who accepted the cost and which clues went unused. Spend the last few minutes on one enjoyable moment and one thing to change next time. Characters need not solve every optional inference to earn a resolved ending.

Choices

1. Describe who follows up tomorrow
2. Ask who helped whom and what it cost

If the group gets stuck

If no method was chosen, first confirm the immediate goal is safe, use the final fallback method and then read the cost ending. Record the unresolved work and give every character an epilogue.

People and evidence

Suri: Get her own name back before opening the bakery Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Venn: Keep name borrowing voluntary and reversible Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Endings

Complete resolution

Names find their owners in a chorus of familiar voices. Venn rewrites the loan rules in large letters, with a return token for every borrower.

First secure the immediate goal at Broker booth. Use final method A at Dawn dais before choosing this ending.

Resolution with a cost

The dawn bell ends every loan. Everyone is themselves, but the masquerade closes until its records can be made reliable.

First secure the immediate goal at Broker booth. Use final method B at Dawn dais before choosing this ending.

Hang the consenting pairs and let the borrowers say RETURN together remains for a later visit.

Handout answers

h-order: Names were lent with consent, not stolen.

h-fallback: A public blanket reset is a reliable fallback.

h-method: Matching evidence restores individual names.

h-note: The broker booth is the next lead.

h-trail: A physical trail independently identifies the booth.

h-witness: A witness supplies an independent route.

h-safe: Restore consent without treating names as property.

Clue reasoning

Names were lent with consent, not stolen.: c-order

Proceed to Broker booth: c-note OR c-trail OR c-witness

Restore consent without treating names as property.: c-safe / marked safety fallback

End the loans safely before dawn.: c-method OR c-fallback

Map descriptions

GM route atlas: Start at Market arch. Token stall and Tea courtyard are independent investigation routes; both connect to Broker booth, which leads to Dawn dais. All marked connections are bidirectional. Return uses the known route to Market arch.

Broker booth - approach plan: At Broker booth, the marked entrance reaches the immediate problem.

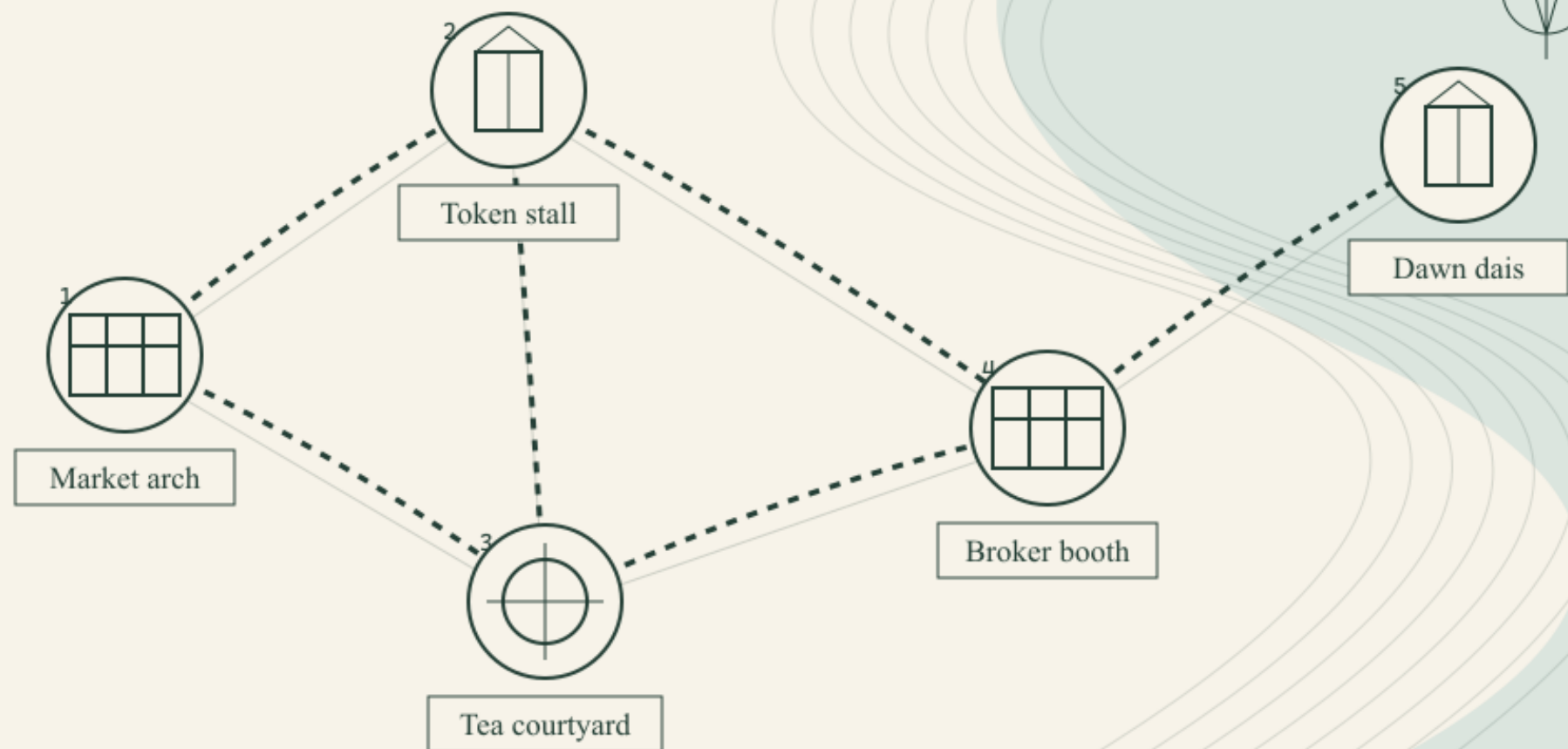
Approach A: Invite each borrower to recognize their token's voice and match the receipt notch. Approach

B: Let each borrower opt into the public dawn reset instead. Both reach the onward route. Layout is

schematic, with no combat grid or movement scale.

Player route map: Public route map: Market arch connects to Token stall and Tea courtyard; either reaches Broker booth, then Dawn dais. Routes work in both directions. Retrace the route to return. No hidden information is marked.

GM route atlas

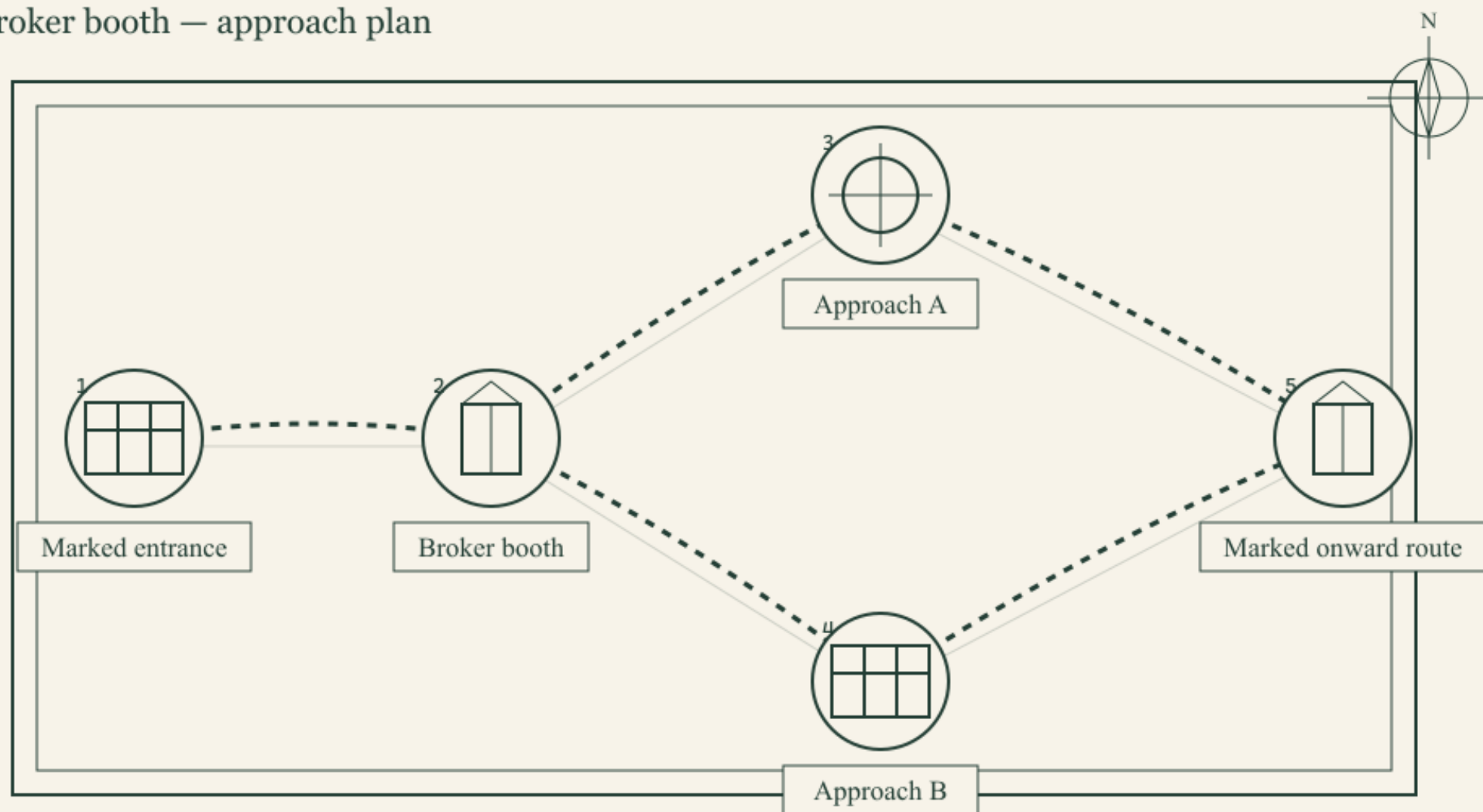


C-SAFE / immediate problem

C-METHOD or C-FALLBACK

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Broker booth — approach plan



Invite each borrower to recognize their token's voice and match the receipt notch.

Let each borrower opt into the public dawn reset instead.

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