

The Market of Borrowed Names

120-minute plan · 4 players · Bring people together

A baker answers to the mayor's borrowed name. With the return ledger erased, three groups must agree which loans to end before dawn.

Content notice: Names and consent; use invented market aliases. Nobody must disclose a real name.

GM overview

Suri speaks for three workers who need their names for morning work; Hale represents the council and needs one valid signature; Venn represents the masked visitors and will not surrender anyone's voice token without permission. Give each group a concrete request, then ask players which of the three staffed return hooks they will allocate. One hook serves a named group. Suri accepts priority returns, Hale accepts a witnessed signature, and Venn accepts an opt-in queue plus an audit. The same three hooks cannot also staff a private all-market audit, which needs two. Agreement depends on recorded offers, never on a persuasion roll. Keto freely explains the matching notches when asked and takes responsibility without becoming the price of settlement.

What is really happening

Venn lent names as voluntary festival costumes. Keto spilled erasing sand over the ledger. Notched receipts and clay voice tokens still match. Borrowers may return their own names individually; a public dawn bell ends all loans and the masquerade.

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 ribbon above the arch calls "Mayor!" and the flour-covered baker turns. A clay mouth on a stall answers with somebody else's laugh. Beyond the roofs, the first stripe of dawn appears.

Time and preparation

120 minutes: Public appointments or private audit

Opening agreement: 10 minutes

Investigate matching without exposing names: 25 minutes

Hear and revise the three offers: 45 minutes

Staff and conduct the agreed return service: 30 minutes

Closure and debrief: 10 minutes

Start without the matching method. Compare the tokens and allow one counterproposal per group; the two-hook audit replaces two public desks rather than adding free capacity.

Starting information: Three return appointments

Starting state: Staffed return hooks = 3; Workers accept = false; Council accepts = false; Borrowers accept = false; Matching method understood = false; Private audit reserved = false; Borrowers decline a public return record = false

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

If the group gets stuck

If a party refuses or a hook has been promised twice, keep the promises already made and announce the dawn bell. No borrower loses a name permanently; the cost is the cancelled masquerade. A blocked booth can be bypassed via the tea steps to the dais.

Market arch

Read aloud: The board offers return appointments in three empty boxes.

GM: Suri waits here. She needs one return hook for workers; a promise of tomorrow is insufficient. Let players amend the queue card aloud.

Choice: Reserve workers' first returns

Ask: Spend one hook on the morning workers?

Requires: Available. Spend 1 Staffed return hooks. Workers accept: true. Reveal Three return appointments

Result: Suri writes the first return appointments.

Token stall

Read aloud: Two clay mouths have the same laugh, but different notches.

GM: Keto demonstrates why guessing by voice fails. Matching notches identifies a loan, while the borrower's own RETURN supplies consent. Observing gives the pairing card without an accusation.

Choice: Compare receipts and tokens

Ask: Which marks distinguish the loans?

Requires: Available. Matching method understood: true. Reveal Notches at the token stall, Three return appointments

Result: Keto lays out two reliable pairs and explains the spilled sand.

Tea courtyard

Read aloud: Hale calls every visitor "friend" until the names settle.

GM: Hale wants one witnessed valid signature, not an end to costumes. A dedicated hook meets this; a private audit also secures the signature but uses two hooks.

Choice: Offer a witnessed signature

Ask: Dedicate one hook to the council's valid signature?

Requires: Available. Spend 1 Staffed return hooks. Council accepts: true

Result: Hale accepts the witness and removes the demand to close every loan.

Broker booth

Read aloud: Venn has written "Ask the borrower" on a blank page.

GM: The erased entries cannot be guessed. Venn accepts a public opt-in hook, or a two-hook private audit. He refuses coerced returns and offers the common dawn bell if agreement fails.

Choice: Offer an opt-in return desk

Ask: Dedicate the final hook to borrowers who choose to return?

Requires: Matching method understood is true and Borrowers decline a public return record is false. Spend 1 Staffed return hooks. Borrowers accept: true. Reveal Borrowers' return terms

Result: Venn invites the remaining borrowers without naming anyone publicly.

Choice: Reserve a private audit

Ask: Spend two hooks to check council and borrower returns privately?

Requires: Matching method understood is true. Spend 2 Staffed return hooks. Council accepts: true; Borrowers accept: true; Private audit reserved: true. Reveal Borrowers' return terms

Result: Venn and Hale accept a slower private register. Open walk-in returns must wait.

Choice: Record the borrowers' refusal of a public record

Ask: Accept Venn's refusal and consider a private audit or the common expiry?

Requires: Available. Borrowers decline a public return record: true; Borrowers accept: false

Result: Venn declines the public desk. The private audit and agreed dawn expiry remain on the table.

Dawn dais

Read aloud: The hooks can hold a ribbon and a token together.

GM: Resolve one agreed policy here. Individual returns require all three groups; the audit can instead cover council and borrowers while workers keep one hook. The blanket bell needs no secret phrase.

Choice: Open the agreed public queue

Ask: Invite each borrower to make their own return?

Requires: Workers accept is true and Council accepts is true and Borrowers accept is true and Private audit reserved is false.

Result: Three staffed hooks open, each with a consent invitation.

Closure: A name returned by its speaker

Choice: Begin the private settlement

Ask: Keep workers first and audit the remaining loans behind screens?

Requires: Workers accept is true and Private audit reserved is true.

Result: Workers return promptly; council and borrowers accept a private wait.

Closure: Behind the quiet screen

Connections and changing routes

Market arch - Token stall: Browse the stalls. Available.

Market arch - Tea courtyard: Cross the tea lane. Available.

Token stall - Broker booth: Follow the sand. Available.

Tea courtyard - Broker booth: Enter the back counter. Available.

Broker booth - Dawn dais: Carry the return board. Available.

Tea courtyard - Dawn dais: Take the public steps. Available.

Suri - Workers' speaker

Goal: Return names before bakery opening

Offers: One worker can staff a hook if one appointment is guaranteed.

Will not accept: Workers must not lose their morning names to preserve a party.

Voice: "Put our turn on the board."

Track: Workers accept

Hale - Council delegate

Goal: Make a valid morning signature

Offers: A witness and a quiet desk.

Will not accept: No signature under another person's name.

Voice: "I need one honest line, not everyone's story."

Track: Council accepts

Venn - Broker for consenting borrowers

Goal: Keep the masquerade reversible

Offers: Remaining tokens and the public reset bell.

Will not accept: No return spoken by a substitute.

Voice: "The borrower decides."

Track: Borrowers accept

Keto - Broker's apprentice

Goal: Repair the return records after spilling erasing sand

Offers: The surviving notches and an honest demonstration.

Will not accept: Will not guess an owner from a laugh or be offered as the price of agreement.

Voice: "The sand took the writing, not the notches."

Discovery card: Notches at the token stall

Give only when revealed in play.

Receipt A: two square notches. Receipt B: one round notch. Token X: one round notch. Token Y: two square notches. Both tokens laugh alike. Draw the pairs; leave the speaker blank.

Player task: Match receipts to tokens and ask who can speak for each loan.

GM answer: A/Y and B/X. Matching identifies the loan; it does not transfer consent.

Discovery card: Three return appointments

Give only when revealed in play.

Three staffed hooks. Workers request one. Council requests one. Open opt-in returns request one. A private audit takes two. Write a proposed allocation totaling no more than three.

Player task: Allocate the finite hooks before making offers.

GM answer: 1/1/1 supports the public queue; workers1 plus audit2 supports the private settlement.

Discovery card: Borrowers' return terms

Give only when revealed in play.

Each borrower may say RETURN over their matched receipt and token. Nobody may say it for another. At dawn, the marked bell ends every remaining loan. Choose who receives an invitation.

Player task: Draft invitations or choose the common expiry procedure.

GM answer: Both endings respect the original agreed expiry; individual returns keep future borrowing available.

State sheet

Staffed return hooks: 3 (resource, minimum 0, maximum 3)

Workers accept: false (stance)

Council accepts: false (stance)

Borrowers accept: false (stance)

Matching method understood: false (knowledge)

Private audit reserved: false (flag)

Borrowers decline a public return record: false (stance)

At any place: Use the agreed dawn expiry

End all loans at dawn and close this year's masquerade?

Requires: Available.

A messenger carries the public bell instruction to the dais.

Ending: A name returned by its speaker

Requires: Workers accept is true and Council accepts is true and Borrowers accept is true

Workers, council and visitors each keep an agreed turn. The masquerade survives with a return system people can understand.

Next: Who checks tomorrow's consent register?

Ending: Behind the quiet screen

Requires: Private audit reserved is true

The workers open on time. The council and borrowers accept a private audit; the final dances wait until names are settled.

Next: Which public service should receive the next spare hook?

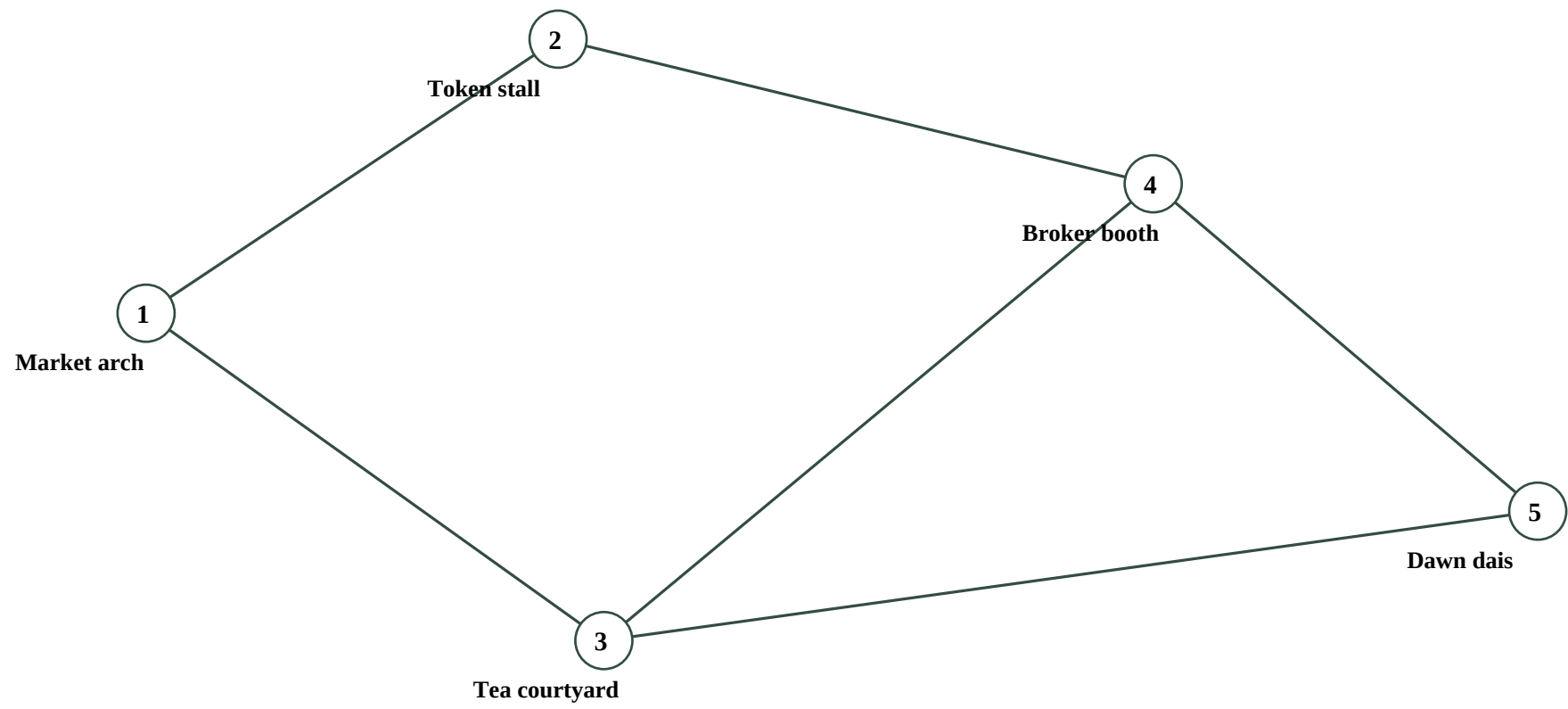
Ending: Ordinary introductions

Requires: Available

All borrowed names expire safely. This masquerade ends early, and the market must discuss a better return service before another.

Next: Who should be invited to that discussion?

The Market of Borrowed Names - GM decision map



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