

DREAM ASKEW



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A game of *belonging outside belonging*
Sigil by Ezra Rose
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Dream Askew was written on the unceded, ancestral territory of the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh nations.

THE OVERVIEW

Dream Askew gives us ruined buildings and wet tarps, nervous faces in the campfire glow, strange new psychic powers, fierce queer love, and turbulent skies above a fledgling community, asking “*What do you do next?*”

Imagine that the collapse of civilization didn’t happen everywhere at the same time. Instead, it’s happening in waves. Every day, more people fall out of the society intact. We queers were always living in the margins of that society, finding solidarity, love, and meaning in the strangest of places. Apocalypse didn’t come for us first, but it did come for us.

Gangs roam the apocalyptic wasteland, and scarcity is becoming the norm. The world is getting scarier, and just beyond our everyday perception, howling and hungry, there exists a psychic maelstrom.

We banded together to form a queer enclave — a place to live, sleep, and hopefully heal. More than ever before, each of us is responsible for the survival and fate of our community. What lies in the rubble? For this close-knit group of queers, could it be utopia?

Queer strife amid the collapse.

Collaboratively generate an apocalyptic setting.

Content warnings: violence, gangs, oppression, bigotry, queer sexuality.

For 3-6 players across 3-4 hours.

WELCOME TO THE ENCLAVE

CIRCLE 3-5 VISUALS

an abandoned complex, individual homes, shanties + tents, a bustling market, overgrowth, glass + concrete, swamp, reclaimed green space, community gardens, tunnels, moldy tarps, rust, quietude, wreckage, wilds, blockades, squalor, outdoor kitchens, shrines, splendor, high-rises, heavy industry, a train station, trailers, bonfires, remnants of war, the ocean, wastelands, scrub, flooding, mutant plants blooming, farmland, raging parties, piles of trash, eerie warning signs, running water, repurposed plastics, coarse fibres

CIRCLE 3 THINGS THAT ARE IN CONFLICT IN THE ENCLAVE

psychic privacy, gender abolition, goddess cults, religious customs, revolutionary fervor, racial identity, indigenous land rights, mutants, scarcity thinking, politics of the void, hedonism, need for purity, party culture, barriers to access, food justice, womens' spaces, the use of violence, trauma, the limitless possibilities of queer sex, known abusers, desiring a return to society

**SCRAWL NOTES AS YOU NEED.
DRAW A MAP TO THE RIGHT.**

INTRODUCING THE IRIS

The psychic maelstrom touches us all, but the Iris has been indelibly marked and changed. Their gifts are unprecedented and unexplainable, but may hold the secret to our healing. What is everyone so afraid of?

The Iris is an unnerving individual. Their power is mysterious, ephemeral, and unprecedented.

PLAY TO FIND OUT

Are you calculating, rash, or opportunistic?

Do your psychic gifts help or hurt your community?

Is your heart pure?

CHOOSE A NAME

Shadow, Lively, Smith, Pallor, Azure, Damson, Raksha, Kite, Monsoon, Micaela, Burroughs, Tion, Pity, Brace

CHOOSE A LOOK

slim frame, angular frame, disfigured frame, soft frame, steely frame, willowy frame

calculating eyes, dead eyes, wet eyes, arresting eyes, caring eyes, pale eyes, luminous eyes, ruined eyes

CHOOSE A GENDER

androgynous, emerging, ice femme, void, gargoyle

CHOOSE 2 WARDROBE STYLES

formal attire, leather, casual wear, ceremonial garb, medical wear, bondage gear, hoods and robes, never washed, a slender weapon carefully concealed

CHOOSE 2 PSYCHIC GIFTS

Shared Dreams, Memory Harvesting, Lucky Guesses, Ghost Echoes, Unearthing, Astral Travel, Absolution, Brain Whispers, Fortune Telling, Storm Sheltering

DECIDE WHAT THE WORLD'S PSYCHIC MAELSTROM TOLD YOU

- That it needed me for a higher purpose.
- That it would shelter me from any repercussions.
- That I could swallow their pain away.
- How and when I would die.
- That love is the only salvation.
- That power is the only salvation.

CHOOSE 2 KEY RELATIONSHIPS

the slowly-dying drag mama whose pain I ease, our recently-exiled elder, the weird-eater I created, a wasteland mercenary who makes use of my talents, the weepy trans girl whose past I'm erasing, an impure soul I monitor carefully, my submissive

CHOOSE ONE TO ASK LEFT

- What secret did I learn about you yesterday?
- How have I unsettled you in recent days?

TIPS

- Find people in their moments of weakness or need, and offer them your strange gifts.
- Explore deviance, difference, and vulnerability.
- Make your character fallible and relatable.

LURE

Whenever someone invites you to use your psychic gifts on them, they gain a token.

STRONG MOVES

SPEND A TOKEN

- Get out of harm's way.
- Move unseen.
- Use your psychic gifts with artful precision.
- Restrain someone, physically or psychically.
- Abruptly call forth the world's psychic maelstrom.

- Ask "What do you wish I would do next?"
- Ask "What do you secretly desire right now?"

REGULAR MOVES

- Take action, leaving yourself vulnerable.
- Stare into someone's eyes without blinking.
- Quietly gather clues or information.
- Open your brain to the world's psychic maelstrom.
- Use your psychic gifts with unexpected side effects.

- Ask "What should I be on the lookout for?"
- Ask "Are you telling the truth?"

WEAK MOVES

GAIN A TOKEN

- Draw unwanted attention to your movements.
- Experience psychic flashbacks.
- Lend someone your signature weapon.
- Temporarily lose control of your psychic abilities.
- Cave to someone else's desires.

- Ask "What makes me vulnerable in this situation?"

INTRODUCING THE HAWKER

The market failed. The shops and restaurants and factories closed their doors. And into that void stepped the Hawker, hustling and working odd jobs, pulling a livelihood out of the rubble of apocalypse.

The Hawker is an industrious individual. Their power is material, social, and contingent.

PLAY TO FIND OUT

*How do you stay in business amidst all this chaos?
Who do you prioritize when resources get scarce?
Are you a provider or a gatekeeper?*

CHOOSE A NAME

Angler, Cookie, Devraj, Chief, Jackbird, Sugar, Esme, Proper, Proust, Lafferty, Waters, Fancy, Zachariah, Zola

CHOOSE A LOOK

pinched face, warm face, tired face, honest face, scarred-up face, friendly face, flawless face

quick hands, precise hands, tattooed hands, calloused hands, slight hands, fresh manicure

CHOOSE A GENDER

high femme, genderfluid, dagger daddy, stud, raven

CHOOSE 2 WARDROBE STYLES

immaculate whites, a stained apron, vintage formal, leather, gold chains, street wear, scrounge-ups, a signature colour, flawless makeup, stilettos

CHOOSE 3 THINGS YOU PROVIDE

a venue, easy food, luxury food, liquor, coffee, fantasy, nostalgia, surveillance, companionship, enforcement, deliveries, body-guarding, expertise, guns and ammo, art, a thriving social scene, lodgings, tobacco, smut, hard drugs, whatever people are chasing at the time

CHOOSE 2 DESIRED CURRENCIES

cash up front, lingering debts, whispered secrets, protection, dependency, barter, work-trade, fawning adoration, something weirder

CHOOSE 2 KEY RELATIONSHIPS

the old queen I drove out of business, my kids, the wasteland salvager who brings in what I need, my ingénue assistant, the pissy killjoy next door, the society types who come here to slum it, the loan-shark who finally tracked me down

CHOOSE ONE TO ASK LEFT

- What do I regularly hook you up with?
- Why have I been sizing you up recently?
- How are you integral to my supply line?

TIPS

- Look for opportunities to provide for others, but also to hustle your wares.
- Foolishly overextend yourself from time to time.
- Make your character fallible and relatable.

LURE

Whenever someone offers you a new gig, or gets hooked on your supply, they gain a token.

STRONG MOVES

SPEND A TOKEN

- Get out of harm's way.
- Bring out supplies that no one knew you had.
- Draw a weapon before anyone can react.
- Lace something with undetectable poison.
- Call in a timely favour from a powerful friend.

- Ask *"How could I put you at ease?"*
- Ask *"What do you have that I might want?"*

REGULAR MOVES

- Take action, leaving yourself vulnerable.
- Deal with a routine and uneventful job.
- Cave to someone's demands.
- Lie fairly convincingly.
- Bolt for the nearest exit.

- Ask *"What do you need right now?"*

WEAK MOVES

GAIN A TOKEN

- Get caught lying, cheating, or sneaking.
- Lose track of something very important.
- Walk into a situation unarmed and unprepared.
- Accidentally open your brain to the world's psychic maelstrom.
- Beg for mercy.
- Ask *"How have I earned your ire?"*

INTRODUCING THE STITCHER

*Things break. Supplies run out. Bodies get wounded.
The Stitcher is there - fixing, mending, making,
re-purposing. They have a workshop and an
uncanny intuition.*

*The Stitcher is a resourceful individual.
Their power is technical, material, and reactive.*

PLAY TO FIND OUT

*Where does your meticulous focus come from?
Do you ever try to fix things that aren't broken?
Does your life have balance?*

CHOOSE A NAME

Nils, Tai, Spector, Lemieux, Dremmer, Sander, Spook, Grip, Corey, Robyn, Depot, Jane, Garon, Aiden, Knots

CHOOSE A LOOK

knowing eyes, appraising eyes, skittish eyes, covered eyes, modified eyes, red eyes

scarred hands, clean hands, greasy hands, gloved hands, worn hands, busy hands

CHOOSE A GENDER

bigender, agender, cyber dyke, transgressing, raven

CHOOSE 2 WARDROBE STYLES

scrounge-ups, duck canvas, fucked-up hair, oil stains, countless pockets, a repurposed uniform, visible tech, scrubs, overalls, minimalist chic, symbiotes

CHOOSE 2 WORKSHOP FUNCTIONS

vehicle repair, bicycle repair, art space, infirmary, firearms, tech assembly, hydroponics, broadcasting, brewing + preserving, body upkeep, metalworking, hacking, recycling, psionics, chemistry, woodworking

DECIDE WHERE YOU GET THE BULK OF YOUR SUPPLIES

- I scavenge ruined buildings in abandoned districts.
- I barter with those still living in the society intact.
- People bring me the weirdest shit.
- I take apart the old to furnish the new.
- I have access to a partially-excavated landfill.
- I steal what I need.

CHOOSE 2 KEY RELATIONSHIPS

twin apprentices, a ghost who haunts my workspace, the beautiful boy who makes me trip up my words, the black marketeer to whom I owe a small fortune, the void kid who needs my maintenance to stay alive, my terminally-ill lover, my sobriety circle

CHOOSE ONE TO ASK LEFT

- What broken thing do you have that I could fix?
- What did I lend to you recently?

TIPS

- Establish meaningful, personal relationships with your tools, supplies, and workshop ephemera.
- Involve fellow players in brainstorming interesting risks or complications when you tinker with things.
- Make your character fallible and relatable.

LURE

Whenever someone comes to you with something precious that needs fixing, they gain a token.

STRONG MOVES

SPEND A TOKEN

- Get out of harm's way.
- Ease somebody's pain.
- Have everything required to fix or make a thing right away with no compromises or sacrifices.
- Jury-rig a temporary solution while under duress.
- Decipher the hidden logic of a troubling situation.

- Ask *"What supplies do you have that I need?"*

REGULAR MOVES

- Take action, leaving yourself vulnerable.
- Fix or make something, partially or shoddily.
- Open your brain to the world's psychic maelstrom.
- Head out to scavenge or barter for supplies.
- Appeal to justice and reason.

- Ask *"What do you have that needs fixing?"*
- While your character holds an object, ask *"What powerful emotion has this recently absorbed?"*

WEAK MOVES

GAIN A TOKEN

- Take apart something crucial to repurpose its parts.
- Tinker with an object, leaving it volatile or broken.
- Isolate yourself to work on a secret personal project.
- Treat someone like a project instead of a person.

- Ask *"What have you lost forever?"*

INTRODUCING THE TIGER

The police fled the neighbourhood. Things were scary for a while. Now, the Tiger and their gang own the streets around here. Is that ownership still contested?

*The Tiger is a wicked fierce individual.
Their power is social, violent, and hard-won.*

PLAY TO FIND OUT

*Where does your militancy stem from?
Are you a guardian or a troublemaker?
Do you know how to yield and make compromises?*

CHOOSE A NAME

Domino, Tyrus, Blues, Keegan, Smith, Duke, Tawny, Cheshire, Vigo, Boston, Impala, Diesel, Mia, Aadita

CHOOSE A LOOK

scarred face, baby face, pretty face, weathered face, tattooed face, masked face, tough face, narrow face

slender arms, burned arms, jacked arms, solid arms, tattooed arms, shot-up arms, a busted arm

CHOOSE A GENDER

hard femme, butch queen, two-spirit, masc, gargoyle

CHOOSE 2 WARDROBE STYLES

leather, velour, scrounge-ups, militant wear, armour, tailored suits, breathable athletics, flashy acquisitions, a gang logo back patch, neon hair, black bloc attire

CHOOSE 2 GANG TRAPPINGS

motorcycles, bicycles, guns, riot gear, a safehouse, medical supplies, clean drugs, chains + rusty pipes, slingshots + baseball bats, megaphones + banners

DECIDE YOUR GANG'S BIG FLAW

- We owe a lot of debts that we can't pay.
- Since that unsettling murder, I've lost some trust.
- The enclave isn't entirely on board with our vision.
- The gang is addicted to something dangerous.
- Our actions bleed psychic instability into the area.
- The gang is agitating to become an autonomous collective, but it's not clear how to make that work.

CHOOSE 2 KEY RELATIONSHIPS

my son, my pastor, my hungry-for-blood sibling, the wasteland biker pack I have an uneasy truce with, the second-in-command who covets my title, my leather daddy, my poz support crew, the aging dyke who cooks me dinner sometimes

CHOOSE ONE TO ASK LEFT

- What have you recently contributed to the cause?
- How did I capture your attention yesterday?
- Why don't you trust me?

TIPS

- Explore both your kindness and your cruelty.
- Sometimes ask the other players about whether your gang willingly follows your commands.
- Make your character fallible and relatable.

LURE

Whenever someone relies on you to solve one of their biggest problems, they gain a token.

STRONG MOVES

SPEND A TOKEN

- Get yourself or your gang out of harm's way.
- Lead your gang into battle or confrontation.
- Say just the right thing to extinguish someone's fear and bolster their confidence.
- Kill someone.

- Ask "How can I get you to do what I want?"
- Ask "What resources are you making do without right now?"

REGULAR MOVES

- Take action, leaving yourself vulnerable.
- Attempt to recruit someone into your service.
- Tenderly care for someone.
- Make an example of someone.
- Give something away.

- Ask "Who's really in control here?"
- Ask "How are you vulnerable to me right now?"

WEAK MOVES

GAIN A TOKEN

- Reveal your secret vulnerability to someone.
- Promise something you can't possibly deliver.
- Get high at the worst possible moment.
- Experience a flashback of past trauma.

- Ask "What makes me vulnerable in this situation?"
- Ask "Whose motives should I second-guess right now?"

INTRODUCING THE TORCH

All routines and mundane knowledges crumble under the weight of apocalypse. But the Torch has answers. Are they ancient teachings, ecstatic fantasy, or a new faith dawning? Followers draw near to their warm glow.

The Torch is a compelling individual.
Their power is spiritual, social, and mystical.

PLAY TO FIND OUT

Do your teachings offer the enclave a path forward?
Do you know when to lead and when to listen?
How do you get along with non-followers?

CHOOSE A NAME

Hope, Noni, Lucia, Dian, Chester, Always, Wynn, Cass, Vase, Eita, Rabbit, Rhyme, Sibyl, Sissy, Mischa, Spoke

CHOOSE A LOOK

calm eyes, faraway eyes, forgiving eyes, mournful eyes, blotted eyes, flickering eyes, dilated eyes, fiery eyes

open face, covered face, sober face, wrinkled face, gentle face, ashen face, unwashed face, marked face

CHOOSE A GENDER

predestined, transgressing, femme, goddess, warrior

CHOOSE 2 WARDROBE STYLES

tattered vestments, scrounge-ups, fetish wear, robes, beautiful fabrics, coarse fibers, striking colours, traditional garb, drawn sigils, rave wear, witch chic

CHOOSE 2 RITUALS YOU LEAD

Boiling the Bones, Letting the Blood, Street Wards, Close Reading of the Holy Texts, Glitter Bombing, Rites of Passage, Tea Ceremony, Augury, Bacchanal, Tripping the Circuit, Dirty Flutter, Handfasting, Truth

DECIDE WHAT LOOMING THREAT YOU ALONE TRULY UNDERSTAND

- Our souls have begun to rot inside our bodies.
- The psychic maelstrom sends wolves to devour us.
- We're replicating the oppressions of our old society.
- Hope and mischief are fires that we must keep ever-burning, or we will face eternal darkness.
- When we abandon our historical rites and bonds, evil things grow in the empty spaces left behind.

CHOOSE 2 KEY RELATIONSHIPS

the lovers I must please, the students I must teach, my chosen sisters, the faeries who've taken me in, a bitter ex, the herbalist who distills my tinctures, the coven I was asked to leave, my feral muse

CHOOSE ONE TO ASK LEFT

- Are you among my followers and devotees?
- Why did we break up?

TIPS

- Use your rituals to bring people closer together.
- Make yourself valued and needed.
- Make your character fallible and relatable.

LURE

Whenever someone participates in one of your rituals for the first time, they gain a token.

STRONG MOVES

SPEND A TOKEN

- Get out of harm's way.
- Psychically summon your followers.
- Soothe someone's pain or duress.
- Incite your followers into violent action.
- Enact a cunning diversion.

- Ask "What is your greatest fear?"
- Ask "Who or what do you secretly love?"

REGULAR MOVES

- Take action, leaving yourself vulnerable.
- Commence a ritual.
- Gather supplies.
- Share food or advice with someone.
- Open your brain to the world's psychic maelstrom.

- Ask "How could I deepen your sense of belonging and purpose in this place?"

WEAK MOVES

GAIN A TOKEN

- Ostracize one of your followers.
- Admit you don't have the answer to someone's question or problem.
- Botch a ritual, exposing yourself to risk or ridicule.
- Threaten someone or something far too powerful.
- Appeal to prophecy or cosmic forces.

- Ask "What do you really think of me?"

INTRODUCING THE ARRIVAL

When society shoves you out, you don't really have time to process. You need food, shelter, friends. The Arrival found their way to the enclave. Can they barter a measure of amnesty into a permanent home?

*The Arrival is an individual in flux.
Their power is contingent, technical, and suspect.*

PLAY TO FIND OUT

*How well do you cope with stress and change?
Will you ever return to the society intact?
What new possibilities does the enclave offer you?*

CHOOSE A NAME

Burton, Audi, Yeong, Bishop, Deshaun, Lark, Rutger, Kayla, Jordan, Tahani, Javier, Fai, Maria, Dremmer

CHOOSE A LOOK

tired frame, starved frame, sturdy frame, plump frame, muscular frame, hunched frame, bandaged frame

calloused hands, polished hands, gloved hands, scabby hands, capable hands, trembling hands

CHOOSE A GENDER

ambiguous, transitioning, man, woman, tomboy

CHOOSE 2 WARDROBE STYLES

standard issue, scrounge-ups, rumpled suits, scrubs, hiking gear, long sleeves, shoplifted club clothes, my old uniform, prison jumpsuit, bloodstains

DECIDE HOW YOU KNEW THAT THE ENCLAVE EXISTED

- I used to drive an armoured grocery truck through the area every week.
- I used to be a cop, policing the borders of society.
- I was a scavenger, living alone before injury forced me to seek out a bigger community.
- I used to come out here for the epic parties.
- My daughter has been living here for a few years.

CHOOSE 2 THINGS YOU BROUGHT WITH YOU WHEN YOU FLED

old pistol, water purifier, my inhaler, concealed knife, truck, photo albums, a phone that's still got service, holy book, stockpiles of food, my dog, stolen money

CHOOSE 2 KEY RELATIONSHIPS

the people I fled from, the spouse I left behind, the gentle soul who invited me to share their bed, the twinkie trans guy who has me questioning things, the first person to offer me a stiff drink, my guide

CHOOSE ONE TO ASK LEFT

- Why do you wish I had never arrived?
- What was the first thing you noticed about me?

TIPS

- Tell the other players the secrets of your character's past, so they can help incorporate it into the story.
- Discover the enclave's rules through trial and error.
- Make your character fallible and relatable.

LURE

Whenever someone gives you an opportunity to prove yourself to the community, they gain a token.

STRONG MOVES

SPEND A TOKEN

- Get out of harm's way.
- Reveal a previously unmentioned skill.
- Work hard and get the job done.
- Eavesdrop undetected on a conversation.
- Leap forward to shield someone else from harm.

- Ask "What do you wish I would do next?"
- Ask "What should I be on the lookout for?"

REGULAR MOVES

- Take action, leaving yourself vulnerable.
- Step in to negotiate with outsiders.
- Offer someone a cigarette.
- Attempt to lend a helping hand.
- Let someone see you at your most vulnerable.

- Ask "What do you need help with currently?"

WEAK MOVES

GAIN A TOKEN

- Confess something and seek forgiveness.
- Threaten or coerce someone.
- Accidentally open your brain to the world's psychic maelstrom.
- Run out of something that the queer enclave doesn't have steady access to.
- Demand an explanation from someone.

- Ask "Do you feel okay with me being here right now?"

YOU ALSO PLAY THE VARIED SCARCITIES

There's no postal service. No municipal waste treatment. No reservoir operations manager to treat your water. No ecological impact survey team. No police. No road maintenance crew, and that means no refrigerated trucks hauling groceries into the area. No signal in the cell towers most days. The people who used to think about this stuff so you didn't have to? They're gone now.

CIRCLE 2 DESIRES

competition, paranoia, collaboration, uncomfortable bargains, scrappy diy, suffering without, a feral age

TIPS

- Introduce scavengers, hustlers, growers, and bandits. Make them all somewhat sympathetic.
- Explore what happens when every-day infrastructure no longer exists.
- Ask compelling questions and build on the answers that others give.

PICK UP WHEN

Someone wanders the wasteland, seeks a buyer, or visits a marketplace.

TRADE AWAY WHEN

You need something material and don't immediately know where to get it.

MOVES

- Show someone acting foolishly out of need and desperation.
- Introduce a betrayal.
- Spread disease.

After every move, ask "What do you do?"

SOURCES

An incomplete list: No more diving into pools of chlorinated water lit green from below. No more ball games played out under floodlights. No more porch lights with moths fluttering on summer nights. No more trains running under the surface of cities on the dazzling power of the electric third rail. No more cities. No more films, except rarely, except with a generator drowning out half the dialogue, and only then for the first little while until the fuel for the generators ran out, because automobile gas goes stale after two or three years. Aviation gas lasts longer, but it was difficult to come by. ... No more pharmaceuticals. No more certainty of surviving a scratch on one's hand, a cut on a finger while chopping vegetables for dinner, a dog bite.

-Emily St. John Mandel, "Station Eleven"

This was not an ordinary pandemic: it wouldn't be contained with biotools and bleach. This was the Waterless Flood the Gardeners so often had warned about. It had all the signs: it travelled through the air as if on wings, it burned through cities like fire, spreading germ-ridden mobs, terror, and butchery. The lights were going out everywhere, the news was sporadic: systems were failing as their keepers died. It looked like total breakdown, which was why she'd needed the rifle.

-Margaret Atwood, "The Year of the Flood"

"Look, brother," Shevek said at last. "It's not our society that frustrates individual creativity. It's the poverty of Anarres. This planet wasn't meant to support civilization. If we let one another down, if we don't give up our personal desires to the common good, nothing, nothing on this barren world can save us. Human solidarity is our only resource."

-Ursula K. LeGuin, "The Dispossessed"

You Stopped Giving Driver's Licenses? Since When?

"January this year." The lady was bored.

How Was I Supposed To Know That? Michelle felt outraged. Driving was a right, right? So she put it off for about a decade, so what? It was still her right, wasn't it?

"It was in the news." The woman spoke to Michelle as if she was a dummy. "It went into effect in San Francisco on January first, and in the state of California last month. No new driver's licenses. Not enough gas, you know?"

The woman looked tired. She was Latina, her hair was in a claw at the nape of her neck, she wore gold hoop earrings and a little cross on her clavicle. "I'm lucky to still be here, they laid off half the office." It was creepily quiet.

-Michelle Tea, "Black Wave"

YOU ALSO PLAY THE PSYCHIC MAELSTROM

*Close your eyes, open your brain: something is wrong with the world.
That something is the psychic maelstrom. It's just beyond our
everyday perception, ever-present and howling.*

*It can offer guidance, protection, even flashes of brilliant inspiration.
But it's hungry, and nobody knows what will satisfy its appetite.*

CIRCLE 2 DESIRES

human dependence, cosmic revelation,
revenge, entropy, fervent intimacy,
to be ushered into the world forever

TIPS

- Explore the subtle impact that the psychic maelstrom has on everyday people and places.
- When people open their brains to the psychic maelstrom, describe or ask about their sensory experiences.
- Ask compelling questions and build on the answers that others give.

PICK UP WHEN

Someone uses a psychic gift, seeks out the strange, or invokes the maelstrom.

TRADE AWAY WHEN

You're involved in any of the above or leave yourself psychically vulnerable.

MOVES

- Foreshadow a threat.
- Enter into someone's sensory experience at the right moment.
- Bleed psychic instability into the immediate area.

After every move, ask "What do you do?"

SOURCES

Now the world is not what it was. Look around you: evidently, certainly, not what it was. But also close your eyes, open your brain: something is wrong. At the limits of perception, something howling, everpresent, full of hate and terror. From this, the world's psychic maelstrom, we none of us have shelter."

-Vincent & Meguey Baker, "Apocalypse World"

The entire planet was dreaming of the lovers they would have had if only they had lived. In the dreams everyone was their highest self, everyone was present and their hearts were wide-open. It was a gift and a plea, from the planet perhaps, or from the universe, from the essence of life - no one knew enough about such things to be certain.

The planet is showing us how beautiful our lives will be if we stay here and work together to heal it, pleaded mystical people and ecologists on television. Psychologists deemed it an episode of mass hysteria on a scale previously unknown and commentators blamed the Internet and globalization for allowing it to spread so rapidly. Christians blamed the devil and deemed sleeping a sin, other religious people insisted it was God and that what was happening was a miracle.

-Michelle Tea, "Black Wave"

Miig explained it one night at the fire.

"Dreams get caught in the webs woven in your bones. That's where they live, in that marrow there." He poked at the crackling wood with a pointy stick till the shadows were frenetic against his tan face...

I imagined spiderwebs in my bones and turned my palm towards the moon, watching the ballet of bones between my elbow and wrist twist to make it so. I saw webs clotted with dreams like fat flies.

-Cherie Dimaline, "The Marrow Thieves"

She'd already arranged for her crossing and how to find her brother, now she had to make sure there would be someone to help her back; she didn't want to stay there, nor have to endure what had happened to a friend who stayed away too long, maybe a day too long or an hour too long, at any rate long enough too long that when he came back it turned out that everything was still the same, but now somehow all different, or everything was similar but not the same: his mother was no longer his mother, his brothers and sisters were no longer his brothers and sisters, they were people with difficult names and improbable mannerisms, as if they'd been copied off an original that no longer existed.

-Yuri Herrera, "Signs Preceding the End of the World"

YOU ALSO PLAY THE SOCIETY INTACT

For some reason we thought the collapse was going to hit everybody at the same time. But nothing happens like that: neatly, evenly. Civilization crumbles in waves, eroding the peripheries of good society.

Apocalypse is only a distant nightmare for the privileged, a cautionary tale about what might happen to them if they should fall from the master's arms. You'd be surprised what one of those people would do to keep their society intact.

CIRCLE 2 DESIRES

orthodoxy, ignorance of outsiders, profit eternal, self-preservation, a technological solution, hope renewed

TIPS

- Describe environments and people that feel at once familiar and alien.
- Make decisions about what you can still buy in conventional markets.
- Ask compelling questions and build on the answers that others give.

PICK UP WHEN

Someone wanders into the society intact, or you have an idea for why they might pay the enclave a visit.

TRADE AWAY WHEN

You need to deal with the society intact or they remember that you exist.

MOVES

- Introduce an authority figure.
- Announce future threats.
- Offer an opportunity, with or without a cost.

After every move, ask "What do you do?"

SOURCES

L.A. is like... nowhere. Everybody who lives here is lost.
-Gregg Araki, "Nowhere"

He was putting on his old clothes, and as he pulled the shirt over his head he saw the doctor stuff the blue and yellow "sleeping clothes" into the "trash" bin. Shevek paused, the collar still over his nose. He emerged fully, knelt, and opened the bin. It was empty. "The clothes are burned?" "Oh, those are cheap pajamas, service issue — wear `em and throw `em away, it costs less than cleaning." "It costs less," Shevek repeated meditatively. He said the words the way a paleontologist looks at a fossil, the fossil that dates a whole stratum.
-Ursula K. LeGuin, "The Dispossessed"

Michelle thought if Stitch hadn't been a fuckup she could've maybe been the next Einstein. She liked to imagine who her friends could have become if they hadn't been saddled with a low-grade PTSD from being queer, if they hadn't been forced into the underground, away from the world and its opportunities. Stitch would have been Einstein, Copernicus. She was obsessed with the astronomer Tycho Brahe, who had lost his nose in a duel and tied a golden prosthesis around his head with a ribbon. Stitch tagged GOLD NOSE in barroom bathrooms and bus-shelter walls with Sharpies. She would have been Jane Goodall, Jacques Cousteau. She would have been a marvelous surgeon, her urge to slice herself, her friends, and her lovers with sharp objects redirected toward healing.
-Michelle Tea, "Black Wave"

"Now, suppose you're an outfit called HelthWyzer. Suppose you make your money out of drugs and procedures that cure sick people, or else-- better-- that make it impossible for them to get sick in the first place."
"Yeah?" said Jimmy. Nothing hypothetical here: that was what HelthWyzer actually did. "So, what are you going to need, sooner or later?" "More cures?" "After that." "What do you mean, after that?" ... "You'd need more sick people. Or else — and it might be the same thing — more diseases. New and different ones. Right?" "Stands to reason," said Jimmy after a moment. It did, too. "But don't they keep discovering new diseases?" "Not discovering," said Crake. "They're creating them."
-Margaret Atwood, "Oryx and Crake"

YOU ALSO PLAY THE DIGITAL REALM

Everything we'd ever known or said was embedded somewhere inside it. Even though the digital realm was young, it was hard to remember back to the way life was without it. It seemed as permanent as it was pervasive.

Apocalypse pulled the digital realm to pieces. Networks fell into disconnect. Satellites blinked out. Computers were ripped apart and stripped of their precious metal content. But humans are wily and resourceful. They know how to salvage, re-purpose, and rebuild. Maybe the digital realm still has a future.

CIRCLE 2 DESIRES

expanded networks, shared knowledge, escapism, trafficked secrets, fresh code, to reinvent the world in its image

TIPS

- Describe sketchy, patchwork ways that people gain access to the digital realm after infrastructure collapses.
- Give some people a reason to hate, fear, or mythologize the digital realm.
- Ask compelling questions and build on the answers that others give.

PICK UP WHEN

Someone interacts with a digital device, or you have an idea about how digitization shaped this environment.

TRADE AWAY WHEN

You interact with a digital device or recall memories of the digital realm.

MOVES

- Reveal something to be broken.
- Let the technology speak in turn.
- Introduce a glitch.

After every move, ask "What do you do?"

SOURCES

In Traverse City, the town they'd recently left, an inventor had rigged an electrical system in an attic. It was modest in scope, a stationary bicycle that when pedalled vigorously could power a laptop, but the inventor had grander aspirations: the point wasn't actually the electrical system, the point was that he was looking for the Internet. A few of the younger Symphony members had felt a little thrill when he'd said this, remembered the stories they'd been told about WiFi and the impossible-to-imagine Cloud, wondered if the Internet might still be out there somehow, invisible pinpricks of light suspended in the air around them. ...

In Traverse City Kirsten had stared at the This webpage is not available message on the screen. She didn't seriously believe that the inventor would be able to find the Internet, but she was fascinated by electricity. She harboured visions of a lamp with a pink shade on a dining table, a nightlight shaped like a puffy half-moon, a chandelier in a dining room, a brilliant stage. The inventor had pedalled frantically to keep the screen from flickering out, explaining something about satellites.

-Emily St. John Mandel, "Station Eleven"

"When The Matrix was first built, there was a man born inside who had the ability to change whatever he wanted, to remake The Matrix as he saw fit. It was he who freed the first of us, taught us the truth: as long as The Matrix exists, the human race will never be free."

-The Wachowski Sisters, "The Matrix"

His mother was supposed to be able to speak her last words to him via the mike system, said Crake, but there was a digital failure; so though he could see her lips moving, he couldn't hear what she was saying.

-Margaret Atwood, "Oryx & Crake"

YOU ALSO PLAY THE OUTLYING GANGS

People had wildly differing ideas about what the collapse of law and order meant for their future. Some shuffled the mortal coil at the first sign of real danger. Others took to the hills, equipped with water purifiers and dried goji berries.

But some people stayed right where they were, armed and alert. Ready to carve out an empire by whatever means necessary. Stop whatever you're doing. Crane your neck just a tiny bit. You can probably hear their roaring in the distance.

CIRCLE 2 DESIRES

territory, unspoken fealty, splendor, the smell of fear, home-cooked meals, mutant blood, somewhere safe to sleep

TIPS

- Describe the varied aesthetics and ethics of the outlying gangs.
- Use the outlying gangs to explore and magnify tensions within the queer enclave.
- Ask compelling questions and build on the answers that others give.

PICK UP WHEN

Someone wanders the wasteland, takes a major road, or trespasses.

TRADE AWAY WHEN

You do any of the above or you have a gang debt that you run out of time on.

MOVES

- Put a gun in someone's hand.
- Bring gossip in from the wasteland.
- Use abrupt violence to make an example or seize valuable goods.

After every move, ask "What do you do?"

SOURCES

"I don't want to put the Gardeners in danger," was how Toby put it.

"My dear," said Adam One, "you are safe with us. Or moderately safe." Blanco was Sewage Lagoon pleebmob, he explained, and the Gardeners were next door, in the Sinkhole. "Different pleeb, different mobs," he said.

-Margaret Atwood, "The Year of the Flood"

The strong women told the faggots that there are two important things to remember about the coming revolutions. The first is that we will get our asses kicked. The second is that we will win.

The faggots knew the first. Faggot ass-kicking is a time-honored sport of the men. But the faggots did not know about the second. They had never thought about winning before. They did not even know what winning meant. So they asked the strong women and the strong women said winning was like surviving, only better. As the strong women explained winning, the faggots were surprised and then excited. The faggots knew about surviving for they always had and this was going to be just plain better. That made ass-kicking different. Getting your ass kicked and then winning elevated the entire enterprise of making revolution.

-Larry Mitchell & Ned Asta, "The Faggots & Their Friends Between Revolutions"

Now, look what we have here before us. We got the Saracens sitting next to the Jones Street Boys. We've got the Moonrunners right by the Van Cortlandt Rangers. Nobody is wasting nobody. That... is a miracle. And miracles is the way things ought to be. ... You're standing right now with nine delegates from 100 gangs. And there's over a hundred more. That's 20,000 hardcore members. Forty-thousand, counting affiliates, and twenty-thousand more, not organized, but ready to fight: 60,000 soldiers! Now, there ain't but 20,000 police in the whole town. Can you dig it?

-The Warriors

The shock of realizing this was probably actually the ending, after a lifetime of near misses, after all this time. She walked forward through the radiant world, the sunlight and shadow and green. Thinking of trying to do something heroic, sending a knife spinning through the air as she fell. Thinking, please don't let them find August and Sayid. Thinking of Dieter, although thoughts of Dieter carried a pain that was almost physical, like probing at an open wound. She stepped up onto the hard surface of the road and stood before the prophet, her hands in the air...

"Titania," the prophet said. He raised the point of his rifle to the spot between her eyes. In his gaze she saw only curiosity.

-Emily St. John Mandel, "Station Eleven"

YOU ALSO PLAY THE EARTH ITSELF

We built a new world upon its back, glass and steel stacked toward the heavens. We learned how to pull electricity out of every natural element, to mechanize, to automate. Some of us went whole days forgetting that anything existed outside our edifice.

We wounded the earth. We alienated ourselves from its touch and its harmonies. We broke holes in the sky. When it tried to warn us, we didn't listen. What now? Will apocalypse cement that alienation for all eternity, or finally bring us home?

CIRCLE 2 DESIRES

healing, reciprocity, strange new forms, the fall of man, eden renewed, carrion, trembling awe, to be reborn in fire

TIPS

- Describe the smells, colours, and scurrying movements of the world.
- Show how the earth responds to human activity, adapting or withering.
- Ask compelling questions and build on the answers that others give.

PICK UP WHEN

You want to describe weather, mutation, beasts, or the natural world.

TRADE AWAY WHEN

You brave the elements, investigate something organic, or walk in nature.

MOVES

- Abruptly storm.
- Reveal an abundance or serenity.
- Leave something wounded.

After every move, ask "What do you do?"

SOURCES

Stitch was a Taurus. She felt the damage of the natural world in some deep place inside her. She was not separate from the stinging South American ants burrowing through the backyard dirt, sculpting conical hives. Not separate from the abandoned canines living in trash caves in the Bayview. Not separate from the roaches scurrying through her kitchen each night. Their home was supporting life! That seemed crucial to Stitch, radical even, and she believed it was only a matter of time before ecopeople woke up and began championing the species they were currently scapegoating. Better invading Asian citrus beetles than no beetles at all.

-Michelle Tea, "Black Wave"

"Then the wars for the water came. America reached up and started sipping on our lakes with a great metal straw. And where were the freshest lakes and the cleanest rivers? On our lands, of course. Anishnaabe were always the canary in the mine for the rest of them. ...

"The Great Lakes were polluted to muck. It took some doing, but right around the time California was swallowed back by the ocean, they were fenced off, too poisonous for use."

-Cherie Dimaline, "The Marrow Thieves"

Fermentation is everywhere, always. It is an everyday miracle, the path of least resistance. Microscopic bacteria and fungi are in every breath we take and every bite we eat. Try as we may - and many do - to eradicate them with antibacterial soaps, antifungal creams, and antibiotic drugs, there is no escaping them. They are ubiquitous agents of transformation, feasting upon decaying matter, constantly shifting dynamic life forces from one miraculous and horrible creation to the next.

-Sandor Katz, "Wild Fermentation"

Earthy disasters await - chasms yawn in quakes, the sleeping dragon turns below the ground and vomits magma from its throat. But that's off in the distance. Right here, right now, on this little plot of land, the ash will make for rich, rich soil to grow a future in... Cant help keep casting nervous glances at that lava, though. In her dreams it pours over her like Pompeii.

-Egypt Urnash, "The Tarot of the Silicon Dawn: Worry"

Strength is a farmer of wild plants in wild environments harmed by global warming... Undeterred by fancy gadgets, gender norms, and the material world; Strength focuses on the rebirth of soil, the regeneration of endangered medicinal plants, the longevity of sacred succulents, and the avid kindness that is required to fight the beasts of industrialization.

-Cristy C. Road, "Next World Tarot: Strength"

HOW THINGS BREAK

Electricity requires upkeep. Without human intervention, a coal plant would likely go down in less than a day, and a hydroelectric dam in less than a fortnight. Failures anywhere can affect the overall grid, potentially pulling the whole thing down. Private, off-grid power systems require knowledge and upkeep too, and parts will degrade over time.

Gasoline goes stale quick. Depending on oxygen exposure, temperature stability, container material, and whether there is an added fuel stabilizer, that time can vary from one month to a few years. You can't siphon usable gas out of a car that's been abandoned on the side of the road since last year.

Paved roads will last a few decades before breaking down to the point of being treacherous or impassable for cars. The exact timeline depends on weather, use, and the earth itself.

The amount of time it takes for **industrially-canned foods** to degrade depends upon the integrity of the container. While best before dates expire within a few years, the food inside can remain edible across many decades, though colour, texture, and flavour will degrade. Once the can becomes compromised or dented, however, oxygen and bacteria quickly invade and make the contents unsafe.

Dried foods can last a lifetime if kept in a cool, dry environment safe from oxygen and life, though their nutrients will slowly degrade over decades.

When things break down, how does your community react to their varied scarcities? Do they go without, broker uncomfortable deals with profiteers from the society intact, make their own from scratch, scavenge, or something else entirely? How do they prove themselves to be resourceful?

GENDERS OF THE APOCALYPSE

Creating a character in Dream Askew involves contending with gender, but it's a gender exploded, extracted from the society intact and made mutant. What do some of these words even mean?

Some carry storied legacies from the real world, already infused with meaning - femme, androgyne, bigender, genderfluid, and others. A few are tied to racial community, positioning a character intersectionally, like two-spirit and stud.

Others are genders of the apocalypse. Ice femme and dagger daddy take existing queer identities and recast them in ways the real world has yet to experience. Gargoyle and raven emerge entirely new.

When you encounter a gender word, imagine. Ask your fellow players. Flirt with a search engine. If nothing comes up, invent. No matter how you come to your initial understanding, it's yours to continue to define through play.