

# D A R K H A Z E

A SURVIVAL GAME

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## SYNOPSIS

Dark Haze transports contestants to an Earth contaminated with toxins and rife with class inequality. The rich live in the luxurious Sky City floating above the ground, while those left on Earth must search and compete for even the most basic resources. Dark Haze is best classified as an Action/Adventure game with an open world playscape. Show contestants live in the harsh ground environment and are all vying for the ultimate prize, a chance at survival in the Sky City above.

## THE STORY

By 2071, a layer of smog has blanketed the globe, blocking the sun and making natural light a rare commodity. Years of chemical warfare and pollution have left Earth barren and toxic. Rising sea levels have flooded coastal cities, crops have turned to dust, and filtration systems are needed for cleaning the toxic air. Most people have not survived. Those left have split into three competing factions, scrambling to gather what is left of the now scarce resources in order to survive. These factions are the Marshland, Dustbowl, and Underground.

The only light which is able to reach these communities comes through a mechanized oculus which can be opened and closed in the smog layer. This opening is controlled by Sky City, a fortress floating above the smog which is occupied only by the very rich. The oculus remains open only if the factions on Earth provide a portion of their resources to the Sky Citizens. These Sky Citizens believe each individual on the ground owes them a life debt for the light and electricity they provide. They keep track of what each person provides, with the promise that the first team to repay the debt in full will be evacuated from Earth and allowed into the sanctity of Sky City.



### THE SHOW STRUCTURE

Dark Haze is a twelve-episode season comprised of one-hour episodes. The show is a narrative-driven, competitive live game show intended for airing late at night. The game world is populated by players, known as contestants, and audience members, known as civilians. The show will focus on three teams of six contestants as they play through the game, competing against each other for a real cash prize.

Civilians watching the show can participate in the game world through an app specific to the show. App users will have the opportunity to declare allegiance with their favorite team; interact with contestants and the game world; access virtual rewards when their team succeeds; and decide real time events in the show. For example, at certain moments while an episode is airing, app users may receive a pop-up notification to vote on an event that may occur in the game world. These votes will be counted and used in real time to decide events in the game.

### WHY IT WORKS

Dark Haze utilizes popular gaming styles, specifically multi-contestant arenas and first-person gameplay. Contestants on the show will act from a first-person perspective while civilians watch the show from a third-person camera narrative. The audience is also able to watch from the contestants' first-person perspectives in the app. This creates a much more immersive experience.

Additionally, Dark Haze incorporates other methods found to be effective in attracting large audiences. Over-archingly, the game capitalizes on an engaging narrative and complex world to draw in a diverse viewership. It also falls into the fantasy genre, one that is popular

among a wide range of audiences. The game incorporates a variety of weapons and a stylized aesthetic, both found to appeal to wider audiences. Additionally, by providing varied gameplay including puzzles, battles, and more, the game will cater to differing preferred play styles. Contestants and civilians will be given extensive options to personalize their avatars, and by asking audience members to choose to belong to one of the three teams, the stakes are much higher and more personal.

The world of Dark Haze is comprised of Sky City as well as three territories on the ground. Of the surviving population on Earth, one group has built shelters in the trees above the flooded coastline. Others have taken refuge from vicious dust storms in the remains of farming towns. The last faction has moved Underground, seeking safe drinking water from the bedrock below.

### THE DUSTBOWL

The Dustbowl territory is located in the remnants of an old farming town. The only shelters are old farming warehouses and greenhouses. Dustbowl contestants face challenges such as destructive sandstorms, limited water, and intense heat and cold. Contestants can venture outside of air filtered structures but only when wearing the proper protective equipment, such as air tanks and adequate eye protection from the blinding wind and sand. Visibility and exposure to extreme temperatures is a challenge for these contestants.

Despite these disadvantages, this community resides in the only territory with a controllable food source. Their many greenhouses are the only structures on Earth which make crop production possible. Additionally, the territory is home to several wells which provide a small amount of potable water. It is possible, however, for this water to be depleted by the Underground territory which also has access to this water source. Lastly, the community is able to harness some electricity through fields of lightning rods. However, once this electricity source is depleted, air filters stop working and the community is exposed to toxins.

### THE UNDERGROUND

The Underground consists of a series of tunnels and caves that weave underneath the Marshland and the

Dustbowl. The tunnels consist of recently carved openings, old mine shafts, and out-of-use sewer systems. Not all tunnels are explored, and it is possible to create new ones. Due to the age and instability of these tunnels, this territory's biggest concerns are structural collapse, flooding, and air contamination. Because the Underground has been sealed off from the surface level, the air is now breathable without filtration. However, if an earthquake or other catalyst event were to occur, a collapse could compromise the entire airspace.

Besides breathable air, this community has access to some sea life for food which is gathered from a secret coastal cave which has pools that can support life. However, this ecosystem is very fragile and vulnerable to contamination. Additionally, there is some visibility in the Underground through light given off by bioluminescent algae which lines many of the tunnels. The most significant advantage inherent to the Underground group is the easy access to pure, non-toxic bedrock water.

### THE MARSHLAND

The Marshland is an above ground treehouse type community that hovers over toxic water which ebbs and flows according to the tide of the adjacent sea. The main transportation in this high altitude community is a series of ziplines, pulleys, and ropes that connect the different platforms and huts throughout the trees. These are necessary for mobility while the tide is in as the water is toxic to bare skin. Members of this community are able to move around on the ground while the tide is out but need to be careful of getting trapped as the water moves in. Another concern of this territory is erosion of the earth below them. Similar to the Underground, instability of the ground makes structures vulnerable to collapse through felled trees or mudslides.

An advantage of these tides is protection from invasion, because the community is only susceptible to attack when the tide is out. The most significant advantage of the Marshland is access to wood and other valuable materials because this landscape supports the most life. The community survives by hunting small populations of wildlife remaining in the trees. Additionally, spiles can be used to slowly collect water from the trees which act as a natural purification systems.

### SKY CITY

Little is known about Sky City, the floating refuge from the toxic and crumbling earth below. It is made up of old historical pieces of architecture as well as new glass structures. The citizens of this territory are comprised of the rich who were able to afford a place in the man-made floating city. This community has completely clean air and access to unimpeded sunlight. The city runs on electricity harnessed from heat lightning, some of which is channeled to the communities on Earth. Additionally, they can condense clean water from the clouds. However, they still rely on resources that can only be harvested or found on the ground. They are run by the malevolent governess, “Minister Mary,” who has set the contestants on their competition for resources.

## THE DEBT

Throughout the season, each team races to be the first to pay off their life debt to the Sky Citizens in order to be taken to Sky City and avoid certain death on the crumbling Earth, thus winning the game. Individuals start with negative one thousand (1,000) points of debt. The first team to pay off their debt by reaching a neutral balance of zero (0) points will be saved by Sky City and win the game. Points are awarded by collecting resources, achieving objectives during mini games, and winning arena battles. The teams that do not achieve a neutral balance of zero (0) points will remain on Earth and be left to die. The civilian players allied with the winning team will receive exciting in-game prizes. Contestants can buy certain supplies from the Sky Citizens, which adds to their overall debt.

## PLAYING THE GAME

Contestants are faced with individual challenges and team challenges that they must overcome in order to accomplish their ultimate goal: getting to Sky City. Contestants are divided into teams and placed into one of the three territories on the ground. A typical episode consists of three challenges: *Environmental Objectives*, *Catalyst Events*, and *Dark Hazes*.

## ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES

Environmental objectives are missions specific for individual territories, based on resource needs or environmental dangers that each team must address. Teams are alerted to the dangers via “Danger Alerts” given by a PA system linked to Sky City. Resources must be collected for team needs and to be sent to Sky City. Resources can be obtained through collection (i.e. harvesting food from greenhouses), barter (i.e. trading with other teams

or buying things from the dark market), civilian gifts (i.e. civilians sending items a specific team), or stealing (i.e. sneaking into other territories and taking their supplies).

### *The Underground*

The Underground has the best supply of water, but the worst supply of food. However, they still have to harvest water for their supplies. Additionally, they have to barter with or steal from other teams for most of their food. The Underground team lives in a tunnel system which is constantly in danger of being flooded, having portions collapse, or being contaminated if toxic water is able to leak down from the Marshland. Alerts occur when the water level is too high, tunnels are at risk of collapsing, or there is a risk of a leak.

### *The Dustbowl*

The Dustbowl area has greenhouses full of crops and lightning rods for collecting electricity which need to be tended to. Also, they only have one or two wells for water supplies, and must also steal from or barter with other teams to replenish their water supply. The biggest risk to the dust bowl team is sandstorms. They receive an alert whenever one is coming, and must protect the greenhouses and their home base from being blown away or covered in sand.

### *The Marshland*

Movement for contestants in the Marshland environment is controlled by the height of the tide. They must collect food and hunt animals to maintain their food supply. The Marshland is also plagued by toxic water and collapsing structures due to the unstable nature of their environment. They receive a danger alert when buildings are collapsing, or when the tide changes and enemies are able to come into their environment and attack.

### CATALYST EVENTS

Regular environmental objectives are interrupted by catalyst events. Major catalyst events are environmental disasters, such as earthquakes or mudslides, that force one member from each team into an isolated area to compete while the rest of their team deals with the environmental effects to their territory. Major catalyst events are scheduled to happen during the 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 11th episodes of the season. Two options are presented to civilians who can vote on which event occurs.

Minor catalyst events occur when Sky City selects a contestant from each team and brings them up to their territory to compete against each other in a mini game for the Sky Citizens' amusement. The winner of this mini game receives a bonus for their team in the form of tools, weapons, or resources. Minor catalyst events occur during every episode in which no major catalyst event is scheduled.

### DARK HAZES

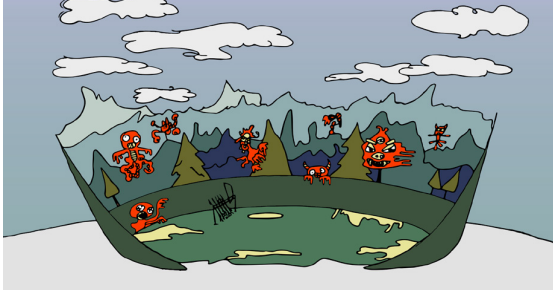
The most dangerous challenge for contestants happens when a "Dark Haze" occurs. Minister Mary turns off power to the world and closes the oculus, plunging the Earth into darkness and forcing all the teams to compete for resources to send up to Sky City. Without power, air filters stop working and teams have a limited amount of time to answer the Sky Citizens' request before suffering health damage.

Unfortunately, the low visibility means contestants must rely on the map section on their screen and may not notice oncoming danger. A Dark Haze happens at the end of every episode as a threat/punishment from Sky City. Teams collect resources during the episode and/or during a minigame. The civilians will also have

a chance to play a mini game to help their team with resource collection. These Dark Hazes can last a maximum of five minutes.

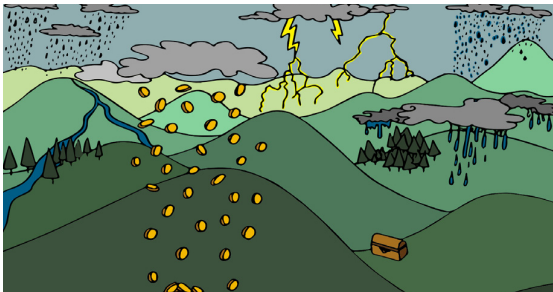
Once a team has provided enough, Sky City will restore power to just this territory. The first team to do so will also gain the advantage of "magic glasses" for the next episode. These are a one-time-use item that gives contestants enhanced vision during Dark Hazes. In special cases, a Dark Haze may occur when the linked app has a certain percentage of civilians are accessing the app at the same time during the live episode.

This causes a "blown fuse" in-game and creates a rare, totally random Dark Haze. If a civilian is on the app at the time of this Dark Haze, they are able to see exclusive content such as contestant confessionals. Only one of these civilian-generated Dark Hazes can occur each episode, if they occur at all. All teams must compete in this challenge to fix the blown fuses. If they don't fix the fuses quickly enough, Sky City will notice and fix the fuses themselves, adding the cost of repair to the total debt of the contestants. Once all teams have power restored, the oculus will be reopened.



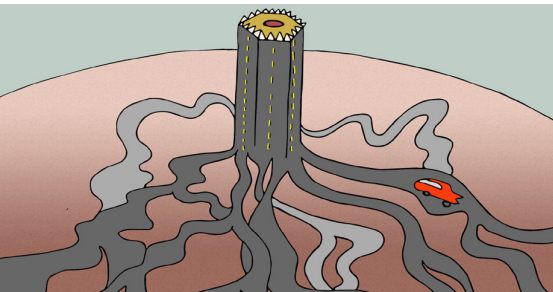
### TARGET PRACTICE

The Target Practice mini game places all the contestants into an arena where they compete to shoot the most targets in the quickest amount of time. They are ranked on how many targets they hit and how accurate their shot is.



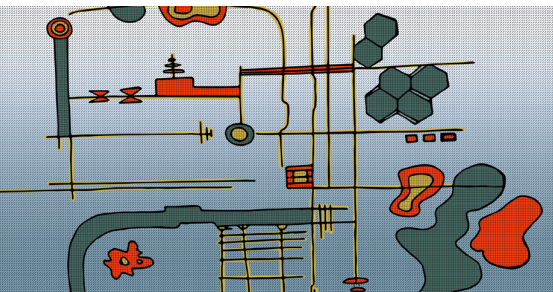
### RESOURCE COLLECTION

In the Resource Collection mini game, contestants are placed into the arena and must run around to catch as many resources as possible as they fall from the sky. They are marked off in points if they catch undesired resources, such as dirt or trash, and gain points by catching as many desired resources as possible. The winning contestant gets to keep their collected resources.



### RACING

The racing mini game places contestants in vehicles of the Sky Citizens' design and forces them to race. The contestant who finishes first wins the game.



### COMPUTER HACKING

The computer hacking mini game places the contestants into a digital world where they must navigate a maze and circumvent enemies to "hack" the computer and turn the electricity back on in their corresponding territory. All contestants competing are placed in their own maze, and the contestant who reaches the goal first wins.

### COMBAT

Contestants can engage in combat with each other when crossing into other territories, or during catalyst events. Combat is done almost exclusively with weapons (rather than hand-to-hand). If a contestant loses all of their health during combat (or for any other reason), they will be taken up to Sky City by a drone to be healed and have to sit out the next episode. Any contestant saved by the Sky Citizens will incur a debt increase and lose all resources they had on them. To prevent this, team members will receive an alert and have 30 seconds to try and reach their teammate before the drone does.

### ITEMS AND INVENTORY

#### *Items*

Items include gas masks, air tanks, weapons, magic glasses, health pack, food, water, miscellaneous. Each team starts with a few weapons and miscellaneous items scattered around their territory.

#### *Inventory*

Each contestant's inventory is limited to a basic pack size of three weapons, five pieces of food, a water pack, and ten miscellaneous items. Contestants can be awarded two upgrades. The first upgrade doubles space, and the second triples it. For items that cannot be carried in the pack or exceed pack capacity, there is a storage facility in each group's home base. If a contestant must be transported to Sky City for an episode, they return with full health but no items.

#### *Weapons*

There are no guns in Dark Haze, but there are a multitude of other combat items contestants can choose from.

### THE DARK MARKET

Many items can be obtained through the "dark market" run primarily by a character named Mike. He shows up in a different environment every episode to bother the contestants. Rather than selling things for money, he operates on a barter system, trading items for resources. He will also sometimes accept miscellaneous items contestants find while scavenging as payment.

## **SPECIFIC ITEMS**

*Bow and Arrow:* The basic bow is a short bow, with a quick reload time but a weak shot. This can be upgraded to a long bow, which has further range and deals more damage, but is more difficult to aim and takes longer to reload. Each bow comes with a quiver of regular arrows that can be upgraded to two types of specialized arrows; Fire arrows which set the target on fire, and exploding arrows which detonate on impact.

*Slingshot:* The basic slingshot is a wooden slingshot that can be upgraded to a metal slingshot to deal more damage and shoot further. The slingshot comes with ten rocks as ammo, but ammo can be upgraded to actual pellets that deal more damage and can be shot with more precise aim.

*Crossbow:* The basic crossbow is a handheld crossbow, which has a quick reload time but a weak shot. It can be upgraded to a larger crossbow with heavier ammo that deals more damage. Its bolts have the same upgrades as the arrows; fire bolts and exploding bolts.

*Knives:* The basic knife is a dagger, a small and easily concealed weapon that does not do much damage. Its upgrade is a fighting knife, which is slightly larger and deals more damage, or a throwing knife, which has a short range but does slightly more damage than a regular arrow or bolt.

*Axes:* The basic axe is just a regular axe and deals the most damage of any of the basic weapons in hand-to-hand combat. The upgrade is a battle axe, which deals significantly more damage but is heavier and takes longer to hit its target.

*Bats:* The basic bat is a baseball bat, and has a quick hit

time in hand-to-hand combat. It can be upgraded to a giant club to deal more damage.

*Gas Masks / Air Tanks:* The world in Dark Haze is filled with toxic air, so anytime a contestant ventures outside of air purified areas, they will need a gas mask and air tank. Both the gas mask and air tank are a part of their basic character build, and allow for ten minutes outside before the contestant starts taking damage. However, they can be upgraded to give the contestant fifteen minutes or twenty minutes of air before needing to return inside.

*Magic Glasses:* The magic glasses are one-time use items granted to a team when they win a Dark Haze challenge. They last for the duration of the next Dark Haze and heighten visibility by outlining everything in neon lights and revealing secret passages.

*Health Pack:* Each contestant is equipped with a basic medicine kit that can be used to regain health. Contestants can buy more health packs from Sky City, which adds to their overall debt. Each upgrade to a health pack gives the contestant a higher health increase when the pack is used, and the pack can be upgraded three times.

*Food:* Each team must collect food from their environment or others to keep their health up and use as a resource to be sent to Sky City. Contestants can get food by collecting it from their environment, stealing it from other environments, bartering with other teams, or receiving it as a gift from the civilians.

*Water:* Every contestant will have a “water meter” on their suit showing how hydrated they are. If their water meter runs out, they start losing health until they get more water. Water can be obtained in the same way as food.

## SEASON OUTLINE

### *Episode 1: Trials and Tests*

- Contestants meet each other and are introduced to the game world.
- Contestants take an attribute test and placed into teams hypothetically based on results, but actually based on previous decisions and witnessed interactions.

### *Episode 2: Resource Collection*

- One contestant from each team is sent to the arena to fight in a mini game to collect resources to appease Sky City.

### *Episode 3: Catalyst Event #1*

- Civilian Choice between Mudslide and Earthquake
- Mudslide: A giant storm will cause a wall of mud to cover all three earthbound territories. Contestants will be trapped and food resources will be in danger.
- Earthquake: An earthquake will occur that will rock the earth and cause the destruction of large sections of infrastructure.

### *Episode 4: Target Practice*

- One contestant from each team is sent to the arena to fight in a target practice mini game.

### *Episode 5: Racing*

- One contestant from each team is sent to the arena to fight in a racing mini game.

### *Episode 6: Catalyst Event #2*

- Civilian Choice between Famine and Contaminated Water
- Famine: A large solar flare will hit the earth. This dries but much of the surface water and withers

plant and animal life.

- Contaminated Water: A tsunami will flood the three earth territories, bringing with it destruction and contamination as the water contaminates supplies.

### *Episode 7: Alternative Catalyst Event #1*

- One contestant from each team is sent to the arena to fight in a mini game based off of the alternate choice from Catalyst Event #1.

### *Episode 8: Computer Hack*

- One contestant from each team is sent to the arena to fight in a computer hack mini game.

### *Episode 9: Catalyst Event #3*

- Civilian choice between Lightning Storm and Sinkholes
- Lightning Storm: A huge lightning storm will strike and set a portion of the Marshland on fire, as well as some of the farming buildings.
- Sinkholes: Sinkholes will abruptly appear and trap a member of each team. The remaining members will have to work together to retrieve them without causing a larger collapse.

### *Episode 10: Alternative Catalyst Event #2*

- One contestant from each team is sent to the arena to fight in a minigame based off of the alternate choice from Catalyst Event #2.

### *Episode 11: Catalyst Event #4*

- Civilian Choice between Disease and Contaminated Air
- Disease: There will be a sudden outbreak which will cause hallucinations and weakness.
- Contaminated Air: The air filters start to malfunction and poisonous air begins to affect the contestants.

## **EPISODE 12: THE FINAL BATTLE**

In the final episode, each team is taken up into the arena and placed within a locked room, similar to the actual escape room simulation games of today. The first team to break out is guaranteed a spot in the final showdown, while the other two teams fate are left to a vote, as the civilians will be given the chance to choose who the second team in the final showdown will be. Once chosen the two teams go head to head in individual challenges that will cover a wide variety of activities. The challenges include speed competitions, puzzle games, and obstacle courses. Each team must choose which member of their team will compete in each challenge. The team with the most wins by individual players is the champion and will get to stay in Sky City.

## USING THE APP

On the app, civilians can create their own avatars and follow the contestants on the show as the season progresses. To incentivize civilian interaction through the app, users can “level up” to unlock avatar customization and behind the scenes content. Level increases happen if a civilian either pays or completes five different tasks throughout an episode.

Additionally, civilians can choose one team from the show to support on the app. Their avatar will be affiliated with that team for as long as they choose. A civilian can switch teams at any point. However, they are rewarded with more coins for staying with one team for a longer amount of time. Coins earned can be used to buy and send supplies to the civilian’s selected team.

Supplies can be purchased and sent through the Dark Market feature on the app. It is an in-app store. In addition to buying supplies, civilians can also buy different clothing options for their avatars.

Dark Hazes give multiple opportunities for civilian interaction through the app. There are two different ways these opportunities can occur:

### *“Planned” Dark Haze*

Civilians can play a timed mini game in the app to unlock a hint to send to their selected team. Hints help the team with what ever task the Sky Citizens’ have set.

### *Civilian-Generated Dark Haze*

Civilians on the app at the start of the Dark Haze have access to exclusive content, including contestant confessionals. Contestant confessionals will be from the perspective of the contestants themselves and not the characters in the game. Civilians who are not on the app

when the Dark Haze starts do not have access to this exclusive content, thus incentivizing civilians to be on the app at all times.

Civilians can chat with other civilians through a chat function. In the general chat room, civilians may friend other fans, converse, and trade items. Additionally, each team has a private chat room which can only be viewed by civilians affiliated with that team. These can be used for collaboration during the in-app mini games. In the chat room, civilians may friend other fans, trade items, or plan fights with friends.

Additionally, civilians may battle each other. These battles take place during the off-season or times that the show is not airing. Fights occur in Sky City Arena. Civilians may watch other fights occurring live on the app or they can choose to fight with their avatar. Access to Sky City Arena for fights is off limits while the show airs.

While the show is airing live, certain episodes will have major catalyst events in which civilians will be invited to vote for which event option they want for the episode. A pop-up will show on the app screen with buttons for each of the catalyst event options.

Civilians can access a Statistics Page on the app to view contestant statistics, team statistics, and their own statistics. There is also an option to view a civilian leaderboard for civilian statistics overall.

### PROFILE

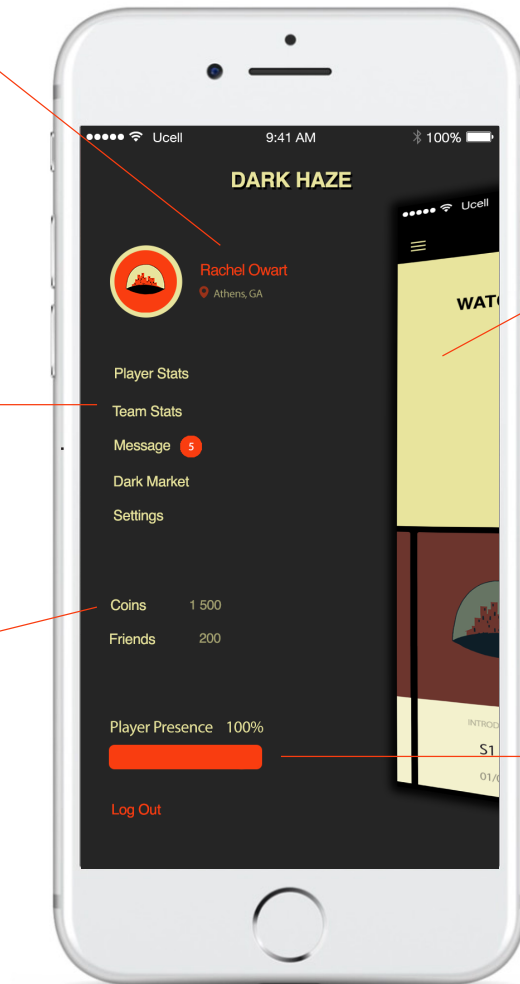
Civilians can create a personalized avatar and profile. By clicking on their name at the top of the app, they can view their stats, organize their items, and edit their profile.

### STATS

Civilians can view stats of individual contestants and of the contestant teams overall. They can also chat with other users.

### COINS

Here civilians can see how many coins they have collected. These can be used in the Dark Market to purchase supplies which can be sent to their preferred team. Coins are collected through mini games.



### HIGHLIGHTS

By clicking on this section of the app, users will be able to view highlights from previous episodes.

### PRESENCE

This section of the app is consistent for all app users. This bar indicates the number of people on the app at any given time. If the bar reaches is able to reach one hundred percent during an episode, a civilian generated Dark Haze will occur for the contestants. The cause of these Dark Hazes will not be explicitly explained to viewers.

## THE WORLD

The artistic style within the game itself contrasts with the dark, sharp, and extremely realistic graphics of games like *Call of Duty*. It is also a departure from the muted color palettes of many first person shooters, utilizing a more stylized, non-natural color scheme. For example, the colors used in the Dustbowl environment are all warm reds, oranges, and browns whereas the Marshland color palette is made up of cool blue and mauve tones. The obvious shift in color between the environments helps to orient contestants and civilians as they move around the game world. The animation style is detailed and realistic, similar to games like *Life Is Strange*.



*Sky City*



*The Dustbowl*



*The Marshland*



*The Underground*

## APP DESIGN

Promotional materials and the game app have a more limited color scheme (primarily red, yellow, and black) and minimalist design. This is a reference to Russian, twentieth century propaganda posters. The app design is intuitive and simple. App users can view contestant health meters, food supplies, and other statistics within the app at any time. This frees up screen space in the broadcasted show.

## AVATARS

Dark Haze also allows for extensive avatar customization. When contestants are placed in their respective environments, they can choose from a variety of clothing options, all within a color scheme which is similar to their environment. Contestants and civilians can distinguish team members based on the color of their outfits. When an civilian chooses a team to support, they can also choose from many clothing options for their avatar, all within the color palette of their chosen team.

