

Untitled - August 15, 2025

Speaker Welcome to pick up and Deliver the podcast, where I pick up my audio recorder as I step out for a walk and deliver an episode to you while I stroll around. I'm Brendan Riley. Well, good afternoon listeners. It's a lovely day here in suburban Chicago. It's very warm, the sun is out and I'd say it's in the mid eighties, so it's a toasty kind of day, but a delightful one nonetheless. So today I am taking a walk up to the library and I'm going to hit the hardware store. My wife and daughter just redid some of the upstairs bathroom. They painted a cut cabinet and replaced some stuff, and we discovered that the cabinet handles weren't on very well because the screw inside them was not long enough. I don't know if at some point they switched or whatever. So I'm going to get some different screws to go with the current cabinet hardware, and I'm going to drop a couple of things off at the library. so I thought this would be a good opportunity to talk to you about stuff I've been playing. That's right. It's time for a board game. Espresso. Triple shot. Order up. So the board game espresso triple shot is a segment in which I talk to you about games I've been playing recently. Generally, what I do is I talk about three games I've tried recently for the first time, and then one game I've dusted off. So let's jump into it. First, I want to talk about unconscious mind. This is a game from last year, published in twenty twenty for designer Laskas, Johnny Pack, Yoma, and Antonio Zacks. I know that I believe Johnny Pack and Yoma are both founding members of the Phantasia Games Company. Phantasia games is the producer there, and Andrew Bosley and Vincent Dutrait are the artists for the game. Unconscious mind is a really pretty game about being a psychiatrist in the burgeoning era of talk therapy. You represent members of Freud's inner circle, People who are hanging out with Sigmund Freud in Vienna in the turn of the century, like nineteen ten nineteen fifteen. Somewhere in there, uh, in the game you are analyzing patients. You are discussing things with your colleagues at coffee shops, you are publishing research, and you're doing all of that to manipulate a system of tokens and bonuses to get points. At its heart, this is a complicated Euro with point scoring engine. The theme comes through really well, but I'm not sure. Like it doesn't really feel like being a therapist necessarily. But I don't know how you would have an interesting board game that feels like being a therapist. Uh, but I really like the design of it. It's really pretty. The components are beautiful, the art is amazing. The some of the elements reflect the theme really well, even if they don't feel very thematic. Like you have this office and at the beginning you can only have one patient at a time. But once you've cured that patient of their Malady, then you're allowed to have two patients, and after that you can have two patients at a time. And you kind of go between gathering information through the research part and then curing patients, which doesn't progress you on those other tracks, but does help you get lots of points. The game has a variety of different ways that you manipulate things, and I'll talk about one mechanism here, but it's hard to explain. In the abstract. You have this grid of bonus tiles, which reminds me a little bit of the grid in Trismegistus. It's not quite the same, but it reminds me of that. And you have this marker that moves when you do actions, and the place the marker lands triggers a row of powers. And then every now and again it passes this one mark. And then you trigger one of the columns. So you go back and forth using rows and columns, and so building up a nice little engine and then taking actions to try to fire that engine as much as you can as part of how you gather the resources you need to do the other work of the game. There's also a really

interesting element where anytime anybody does some of the big moves, the little Freud marker moves forward on the progress track and your marker moves as well. And the game ends when the Freud marker reaches the end. And since every player making progress moves the Freud marker, it can catapult really quickly like the first. It reminds me a little bit of cerebra in that way, that you have a whole bunch of things that are happening to set up big plays, and then the big plays all happen kind of in succession in the game can end pretty fast. Now there's a long game. I think we crested two and a half hours at least playing four players on our first play. I haven't gotten it back to the table yet, which is a shame because it was pretty complicated. Which means waiting very long means I have to relearn the whole thing, which is a bummer. But it is a beautiful game. Really interesting. Very intricate. I probably won't be bringing this one to toggle to play because it's. I can't guarantee we'd finish on time, even though, like I said, I think it took us two and a half hours. But getting set up and like things always take a little longer there. So really pretty. I really enjoyed it. I got it with birthday money and I got the The Unconscious or the nightmares expansion as well. I haven't cracked open that yet, but um, it seems obvious that we would. There's an interesting element where your patients have like two stages of health. They are troubled, and then they are they have a breakthrough and the troubled sequence, they have a see through card on them, like from gloom or from canvas. And when you have the breakthrough, then you remove the see through card, which I think is a really nice little maneuver. All in all, Unconscious Mind is a really interesting game. If you like heavy, crunchy games, definitely worth checking out and I think you should. That's unconscious mind from a bunch of designers. Published by Phantasia Games. Next up we have a game, Skyway Robbery. This was published in twenty fifteen from designer Philip Dewberry, somebody whose name I see up pop pop up rather regularly. The first design that I was thinking of that I know he did is spirits of the Rice Paddy. So interesting Designer art from Jackie Davis, Dan May, Kelly McClellan, Louis Philippe, Pireddu Noguez or Noguchi and published by Game Salute. Skyway robbery is a sort of hand management kind of deck building game. You. It is a alternate present where there are lots of airships around, flying in various places, giving clever thieves the opportunity to swipe things of value in the game. The game takes place over several rounds. Each round a different location shows up where this. I think this airship full of thieves has gone. And so people, you lead teams of thieves who are trying to steal important valuables from these different locations. There are a variety of different challenges that the thieves have to overcome. And you play cards from your hand that can overcome different kinds of challenges. You also can get equipment you can get People like you can blackmail crew members to help you, but they'll only help you once, that sort of thing. The art is fun. It's kind of silly. It reminds me of the art from, say, Team Fortress. It's kind of line art with big bodies and tiny legs, that kind of thing. I don't remember for sure if that's what it looks like, but that's what I'm recalling right now. The game's fairly complicated and the rulebook is not ideal. We were able to figure the game out pretty well, I think. I don't think we had any major rules blunders, but there were times where we had to really puzzle through the logic or the systems. Nonetheless, the game is well produced. It looks nice on the table. The art, the art on the board is thoroughly entertaining, if a little busy, but generally it was a fun time. This is a game that I haven't heard much about since. I know it's from Game Salute and that company had its share of problems. I'm not sure where Skyway Robbery landed in the development and publishing cycle for Game Salute. Like this is one of the games

that got out there. Well, or if it, you know, was supposed to get out there and didn't. I just don't know. But we had fun playing it and let's see what else. Oh, so there you're accumulating these groups of thieves. I think one of the things that's interesting is that you get to pick up your hand every, every round. So you can't use a thief or a card more than once in a location. But once the group has stolen enough stuff, then the game moves on to the next location. And so you're constantly like racing to get to the good prizes or the good artifacts before other people get there and take them ahead of you. I mean, this does present one of the challenges of the game is that sometimes you're all set up to get something and someone else snatches it away, and that often ends up being the thing. The part that I found a little puzzling is the game has a sort of built in timer where if you take too long, then we move on to the next location, even if no one got the good thing. And generally, when a game has a timer, I sort of assume that at least part of what's going on with the timer is that you are figuring out how to is that you're kind of racing that clock that that clock is pushing you, or you can use the timer as a way to understand how long the game should go. In this case, most of the time the timer would give us say, let's say six turns in a location and by three turns everyone, all of the good stuff would have been stolen. And we're moving on to the next location. I don't think we ever got close to the timer, which really makes me wonder did we play too fast? Did we miss a rule? Is the timer just there in case you're having a lot of trouble? Because there are. I think there is a little bit of random luck. If I recall, but not much. It's a pretty deterministic thieving process in terms of playing the cards. You can see what challenges are coming overall. Like I said, Skyway robbery. It was an interesting time. I don't know that I would seek it out to buy it, but certainly if someone were setting it up on the table and said, hey, I want to play this, I would play it again. I probably I don't know if I found a copy at goodwill, would I purchase it? My main reason for saying no is that it's a friend of mine who has it? In which case, why would I? I don't need to buy another copy for our game group. I guess would be the one thing. Although it's a it's a nice, nice looking game, so I probably would buy it to like give away or to do a raffle or a drawing or something. That is Skyway Robbery from designer Philip Dewberry and publisher Game Salute in twenty fifteen. I had a chance recently to dust off Return to Dark Tower. This was one of the most prominent projects from Restoration Games. Restoration games sort of came on the scene ten years ago, probably now, and started buying up old games that had some awesome stuff in them and sort of polishing them up to modern game standards and publishing them. So the first couple that came out were things like Stop Thief and Downforce. These are games that the design that designers Rob Davio and Justin, somebody really thought had a lot of potential in the market. And that by going to those games and finding them, finding them and bringing them back, that they would have a lot of success. And it turns out they have. They've done this with a number of things. Probably their most well-known line is unmatched, which is a restoration of a game that Rob Daviau designed at Avalon Hill called Duel of Legends or something like that. And it was a Star Wars game where you could, like, have Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader fight, as I recall, but so return to Dark Tower. They went back to the original idea of this tower in the middle that interferes with the game, and they built a very elaborate device that interacts with your tablet or your phone and allows and does stuff like make noise. It rotates, it opens doors, it lights up, it drops things out. It's pretty cool. It is pretty cool. This this thing looks great on the table. The graphic design is very sharp. And then the gameplay is really interesting. It is a sort of manage the panic style co-op game, so there's

a heavy element of kind of Accumulating danger, although that is not nearly as present in, say, something like a pandemic. You have to manage the skulls that are landing all over the place, but you don't have to spend every waking moment trying to get them, which is good, because there's a whole bunch of challenges that are popping up throughout the game. And if you aren't accomplishing those challenges, you really are screwed. The core game mechanism is that when you go to do a challenge, the app shows you a bunch of digital cards and you pick a certain number of cards to face, and those cards have a cost. If you can pay the cost, then you get a bonus. And the better your cost, the better you pay the cost, the more you do. So it'll say like lose five soldiers and then you also lose a point. Or you could lose three soldiers and then you maybe gain something or uh. Um, so there's a, there's a thing where the more resources you put into beating the challenge, the better the reward is. And you get you get those rewards by finding the right equipment or doing that. So actually the soldiers end up at the penalty losing the soldiers. But instead, if you have like these symbols, you can spend and you only get to spend them like a certain amount per adventure. So that part really is, uh, a fun element. And as you're trying to do these challenges, you each player has a different character with a different kind of expertise or skill level that you can use as you play. So there's a lot of variety to be had in exploring the game, and it works out really well. Uh, as you use the equipment and face the challenges, there's a nice balance and there's a whole bunch of different enemies and different monsters, which give you a different feel for the game. All in all, Return to Dark Tower is really fun. Uh, there is an element of kind of cooperative dice chucker to it, even though there's no dice, but it does have that random element. It is very thematic, but also a little whimsical in terms of your ability to strategize and the role that luck plays in the game. Luck plays a fairly high role in the game. If you have the wrong set of mechanisms available to you or the wrong set of symbols, and you go to a particular place. You could just get rolled and end up losing a lot of stuff. And there are relatively, relatively easy to end up on the wrong side of the difficulty curve, where things just keep getting harder and harder and it's difficult to recover. We have played the game a number of times, and I think we have about a sixty percent win rate, but I think we tend to play uneasy or normal. I don't think we've ever played on hard, so if I recall, I don't I don't remember for sure that there is a difficulty rating like that, but I think there is and I think that's what we've been playing. So that is Return to Dark Tower. Definitely worth trying if you get a chance. Pretty expensive. So unless it really sounds like something that's up your alley, I don't know that I would go buy it unplayed, but it's really neat. And if you get a chance to play it, you should. That's return to Dark Tower. Finally, I got a chance to play a children's game called piggy. Piggy. This is from twenty twenty four and was designed by Ken Gruel and Jeremy Posner, published by Hasbro. Games. Now. Piggy. Piggy. Like I said, it's a children's game. You have a hand of cards. On your turn, you're going to add all the cards. There are like four different colors. It comes with a bunch of different pigs. There's like four different colored pigs too. Maybe five. On your turn, you are going to play all of the cards of one color into your tableau, and you're making stacks of cards, kind of lines of cards where you can see how many you have of each card. So on, on your turn, you're going to add to one of the lines of cards that you have. If the line that you have is longer than anyone else's line of that color, you take the pig of that color into your possession. You can have more than one pig, of course, and then you draw back up to your full hand size. And if you have any cards that match the color of one of the pigs that you have, I think it's just if the cards you drew

match any of the color of the pigs you have, you get points based on which ones match. It's a very simple game. There's a little bit of choice there, but it's really easy to play. I played with my young niece, who is, I think five, four or five, and she can play it just fine. In fact, she won, so I hate this game. No I'm kidding, it's cute. It's an excellent game to play with little kids. It comes in a very nice form factor. It's like a a little cartoonish pig and definitely worth checking out. So if you get a chance, that's piggy. Piggy from Hasbro. Well, that's about it for me today. Thanks for joining me on my walk today. I hope that your next walk is as pleasant as mine was. Bye bye. Well, I'm a punk rocker, yes I am. Punk rocker, yes I am. Brought to you by Rattlebox Games.