GM reference • People, tools and time

Set the scene

The party arrives on the low west bank of the River Alder. The return road is flooded. The east raised road and west quarry shoulder are both safe from the default flood; the stair does not cross the river. Pella can repair the sound ferry, but Sorn initially withholds the tool-shed key unless his three iron-goods crates go first.

Count everybody before planning

Eighteen adult travelers: eight returning residents (Dema, Harl); six independent traders (Brin); four company people (Sorn and porters Tavi, Renn, Udel). Add three to five player characters. Pella is additional, in her separate operator station. Give the complete inventory to players when planning begins.

Item	Default rule
Ferry	Six spaces shared by people and cargo; Pella is outside the six.
Person + ordinary kit	One space. Dema’s seed sack and traders’ personal packs are included.
Iron shipment	Three intact crates, two spaces each. Wagon stays behind; no draught animal.
Salvage sack	Five minutes to pack selected goods from the crates; one extra space.
Stair gear	Two planks, short sound ladder and hand rope outside the ferry-house; no shed key needed.
Office cash	Three packets of two days’ porter wages, plus half a day’s wage in toll change. Separate chest key; whole chest uses one space.

Use a fictional tally, not a player stopwatch

Tools accessible: five minutes to repair and board a prepared first load. Each west-to-east crossing takes five minutes through unloading; return and next boarding take five more. Earliest west departures: 5 / 15 / 25 / 35 / 45. East unloadings finish: 10 / 20 / 30 / 40 / 50. A departure exactly at 45 is inside the default safe window.

Minute	Visible change and warning
0	Lowest step awash; scattered timber. Work and negotiation can start.
15	Water enters the yard. A ready boat still has four departures available.
30	Shallow moving water covers the path; warn before fresh errands.
45	Last routine west departure; stair users must have cleared the low approach.

Give Pella approximate forecasts in trips, or consistent minute estimates when asked. Warn before a plan loses its margin. Questions about the description cost no time. Warn before charging about five minutes for a sustained standoff. Parallel tasks need different people with the necessary tools; do not count the same worker twice.

Source v0.9: pp. 2–12, 19–20

© 2026 Scott Mills

GM reference • Plans, choices and closure

Plan for 3–5 characters	Timing and trade-off
Everyone by ferry	21–23 passengers; four crossings. Depart 5, 15, 25, 35; arrive by 40. Ten minutes of extra delay still fits.
Everyone + salvage sack	22–24 spaces; four crossings. Parallel packing/repair: first depart 5. Sequential: first 10, last 40; five minutes' remaining margin.
Everyone + all three crates	27–29 spaces; five crossings. Depart 5, 15, 25, 35, 45; final arrival 50. No extra-delay margin.
Everyone up the stair	5-minute walk + 10-minute preparation + 20-minute movement = 35 minutes. Includes Pella and Harl's support. Start by 10. Boat and intact crates remain below.
Divide the work	Four traders including Brin + one PC use the stair. The other 16–18 passengers and all crates fit four ferry crossings. Stair start by 10; ferry has ten minutes' delay margin.

A crewed early-cargo manifest

Pella operates every trip. First: two porters + two crates (six spaces); the porters stay east to receive cargo. Second: four people + one crate (six). Third and fourth: six people each. Fifth: three to five people. Keep enough loading help west until cargo leaves. A full boat of crates requires an east receiving crew already in place.

The stair is an early alternative, not a late teleport

Remove the loose slab, seat planks or ladder on firm support, secure hand rope to the sound upper post, and station helpers at both ends. Routine prepared work needs no mandatory roll. To use it as backup, have gear prepared and users already at the stair, beginning to climb by 25; deciding to walk there at 25 is too late. Agree a daylight signal before separating. Both high refuges remain safe; no other local crossing joins them.

If the characters do not lead

At 10, Brin and four other traders take the stair gear; ready by 25, clear by 45. At 20, Sorn releases the key for a credible witnessed account. Pella and helpers are ready at 25. Departures at 25, 35, 45 carry the remaining thirteen travelers plus three to five PCs (16–18 people). Crates and wagon stay west. This assumes routes, gear and workers remain available.

Keep choices honest

Competent NPC repair, operation and prepared stair work are reliable. Ordinary facts are not roll-gated. Bonus-only speed checks leave the normal duration on ordinary failure; use the chosen rules for botches and real hazards. Warn before forcing entry, unusual hauling, swimming or late departures. Accept genuine transport abilities and feasible player plans; do not add a fight or new disaster to prolong success.

Close on what actually happened

Read names and destinations; resolve late hazards before cutting away. Account for people, seed, personal kit, salvage, crates, cash and boat separately. Record wages paid or still owed, borrowed tools and named custodians. A witnessed record is evidence, not guaranteed compensation or a new debt. The last ferry is safe east by default; an unattended west-bank boat has no guaranteed fate. Continue the campaign when the immediate choices are settled.

Source v0.9: pp. 11–19; manifests pp. 14–15

Produced by Terrible Gamers with writing, editing, and design done by Scott Mills and Mira Vale.

Copyright © 2026 Scott Mills in his original contributions and any protectable selection and arrangement, to the extent copyright applies and the rights are held by him.

GM ONLY — NOT PLAYER HANDOUTS

NPC cards — cut on the thin borders

Pella Rusk

Ferrywoman • Additional to the eighteen travelers

Portray: Late forties–fifties; broad-shouldered, weathered, patched oilskin hood; cracked hands pulling a cuff thread.

Wants: People safe, her boat intact, a livelihood she can keep. Owns and operates the ferry; speaks in concrete instructions.

Responds: A witnessed manifest makes her businesslike. Accepts cargo if everyone has a feasible exit; will not knowingly overload. If threatened, explains the controls rather than sabotaging rescue. Default operation is test-free.

“Tell me who is staying here while that goes over.”

v0.9 p. 4

Sorn Vale

Company cargo agent • One of four company people

Portray: Late thirties–forties; narrow face, carefully combed hair, neat clothes wet to the knees; wipes his document-case clasp.

Wants: Shipment delivered and losses accounted for. Personally guaranteed its credit; office cash can pay wages, not erase shipment debt.

Responds: Initially holds the shed key for cargo priority. Can release equipment without prior permission. A credible witness and honest saved/abandoned inventory give him evidence, not compensation. Feasible plans, real payment or salvage can move him; unsafe orders may lose the porters.

“I am trying to leave with something I can explain.”

v0.9 p. 4

Dema Orrel

Resident and seed keeper • One of eight residents

Portray: Fifties–early sixties; lined broad face, tied headscarf; holds a patched seed sack and rubs a grain between fingers.

Wants: Several households’ planting seed home and dry. Her home and their remaining stores are east, above the flood.

Responds: Offers to keep the boarding list if someone answers where the seed goes. Sack and wrapping fit her one personal space. Seeks a covering; a tarp from abandoned crates can help. Distrusts cargo priority but can support livelihoods on both sides.

“If we lose the planting seed, we start borrowing before we have even sown. Some households are hungry already.”

v0.9 p. 5

Harl Nenn

Resident and former mason • One of eight residents

Portray: Late sixties–seventies; spare-haired, short-bearded, direct gaze; rises slowly, pressing a stiff knee.

Wants: A steady hand, time to move deliberately and to be addressed as a person. Dry, practical voice.

Responds: Ask before carrying him. Prefers the ferry but accepts a supported stair with helpers. One ferry space; no hidden knee penalty. Twenty-minute stair movement already includes his support. Can advise on bearings and shifting supports; Brin can still prepare the route without him.

“Tell me where you want my foot. Then let me put it there.”

v0.9 p. 5

Portrayal tendencies, not compulsory responses. Adapt to trust, danger and workable proposals.

Produced by Terrible Gamers with writing, editing, and design done by Scott Mills and Mira Vale.

Copyright © 2026 Scott Mills in his original contributions and any protectable selection and arrangement, to the extent copyright applies and the rights are held by him.

GM ONLY — NOT PLAYER HANDOUTS

NPC cards — cut on the thin borders

Tavi Pell

Porter • One of four company people

Portray: Late twenties–thirties; lean and wiry, dark hair tied back; cloth at one wrist, chalk in her fingers. Watches the other porters' responses.

Wants: Porters safe together; earned wages paid, or honestly acknowledged if the money is gone.

Responds: Knows packing and contents. Can ready cargo during repair, or spend five minutes making a one-space salvage sack. Company wage payment or a truthful unpaid-wages record earns cooperation; no impossible personal guarantee required. Rejects unsafe orders. Work clubs do not make trained guards.

“Iron doesn't drown. Renn does.”

v0.9 p. 5

Brin Vetch

Trader; former quarry worker • One of six traders

Portray: Forties–fifties; broad face, battered soft cap, close beard, clay in his cuffs. Tests a support, then wipes mud on his coat.

Wants: A route that does not depend on winning an endless argument. His wrapped pots fit his ordinary personal pack.

Responds: Knows the upper stair and can lead routine preparation using the accessible gear. Does not pretend the broken lower section is already safe. Helps Harl without hurrying him. Cooperates with a clear ferry plan. Agree a signal; once safe he reports the group's names.

“That step is bad. The whole hill isn't.”

v0.9 p. 6

Renn

Porter • One of four company people

Portray: Late teens–early twenties; long-necked, lightly built, untidy fringe. Grips his work club during shouting; relaxes with a useful job.

Wants: Cross with Tavi and Udel; be paid for work already done.

Responds: A calm loading instruction works better than a speech about courage. Can load crates, ready passengers or stay on either bank as agreed crew. Ask about the next practical step. He is not a nameless extension of the cargo agent's authority; porters decide independently whether to obey.

“Which crate first? And who is taking the other end?”

v0.9 p. 6; group portrayal p. 3

Udel

Porter • One of four company people

Portray: Late thirties–forties; broad face, close-shaved crown, short chin beard; vest patched at the shoulder. Looks for someone shivering or left out.

Wants: All three porters safe and wages accounted for.

Responds: Can carry, load or receive cargo. May suggest giving the dry blanket to someone colder. Will protect company property but asks what an order entails before risking a fight. Give clear roles; do not make him an automatic attacker.

“Give the blanket to her. I am still moving.”

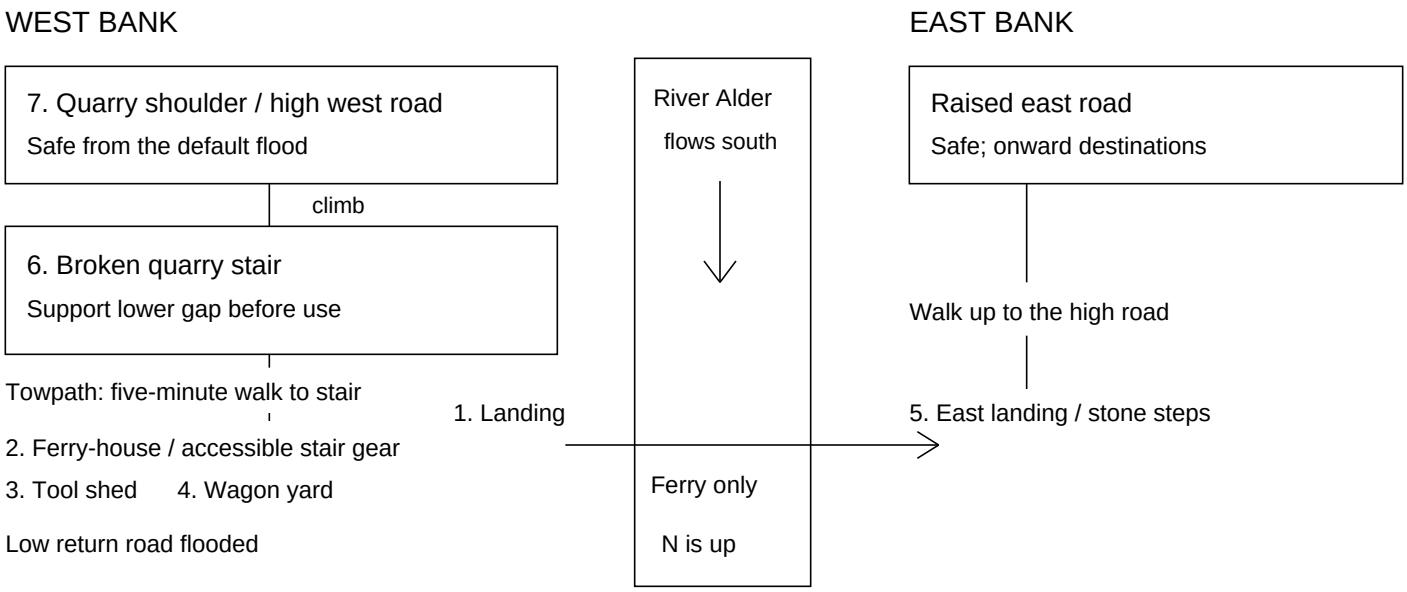
v0.9 p. 6

Portrayal tendencies, not compulsory responses. Adapt to trust, danger and workable proposals.

Produced by Terrible Gamers with writing, editing, and design done by Scott Mills and Mira Vale.

Copyright © 2026 Scott Mills in his original contributions and any protectable selection and arrangement, to the extent copyright applies and the rights are held by him.

Reedcross • Find your bearings



Where you are

You are on the low west bank. The road behind you is flooded. Across the River Alder, stone steps reach the dry east raised road. The quarry stair climbs to safe high ground on this same west bank; it does not reach the east road. The river flows south. Not a measured map; no other local crossing joins the high roads.

People waiting

Eighteen adult travelers: eight returning residents, six independent traders and four company people (cargo agent Sorn and porters Tavi, Renn and Udel). Add your party. Pella owns and operates the ferry and is additional to those eighteen. Dema has planting seed; Harl is a former mason. Brin knows the quarry route. Ask people for their knowledge and proposals.

What is available

The ferry’s hull and guide rope are sound; its hauling-lever pin is broken. Pella knows the repair. Sorn has the tool-shed key. Two maintenance planks, a short sound ladder and hand rope lie outside the ferry-house, accessible without that key. The broken lower stair needs support before use. Three iron-goods crates are in the wagon yard; the wagon cannot use the ferry or prepared stair.

Ask for the usable time and the requirements of your plan. Before dividing, agree how to signal that everyone reached high ground. Neither a map line nor a capacity square is a promise that an improvised method is safe.

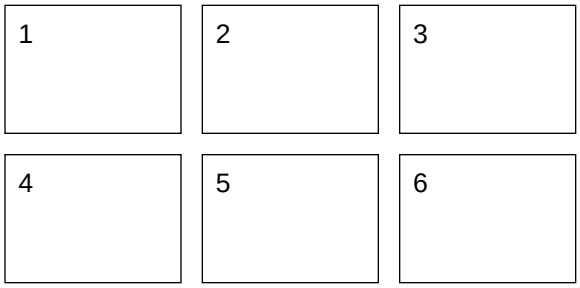
Source v0.9: pp. 2–3, 7–11. Schematic redrawn from the published locality.

© 2026 Scott Mills

The six-space ferry • Plan a crossing

One person with ordinary kit uses one of six shared spaces. One intact iron-goods crate uses two adjacent spaces. Pella’s operator station is outside those six; it is not a seventh passenger place. Dema’s seed and the traders’ ordinary personal packs fit their owners’ spaces. Bulky extra property needs agreement before loading.

Six shared spaces — sketch each crossing here



Pella: separate operator station

Not one of the six numbered spaces.

Capacity schematic; no distance scale.

Examples of capacity only: six people; two crates and two people; or three crates with no passengers. Cargo still needs loading and receiving helpers. A selected salvage sack takes five minutes to pack from the crates and uses one extra space; it does not compress all the goods into personal luggage.

Your manifest — name people, roles and cargo

Agree the operator, west loading crew and east receiving crew. Count only people actually aboard. Pella’s empty returns are not passenger crossings; ask how turnaround and preparation affect the schedule.

Trip	People / names	Crates / other goods	Spaces	Departure
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Other route, shared work and signal

People using the prepared stair stay west. Do not also count them aboard the ferry. Keep the same helper out of two jobs that must happen together. Recheck the inventory if your party adds mounts, dependents or unusually bulky equipment.

Source v0.9: pp. 8–10, 13–16. Planning sheet is blank; ask Pella for current timing.

© 2026 Scott Mills

Witnessed record • Write what happened

Use this sheet only if the group wants a written account. A slate or a spoken agreement witnessed by others can also serve. Record observations, saved property and still-unresolved claims separately. Signing as a witness does not promise payment or guarantee compensation.

Place, time and people present

Facts witnessed — equipment released, actions and reasons

Saved / abandoned / damaged property	Custodian / action / observation
Wages paid / still owed	
Borrowed equipment / return agreed	
Other observed loss or damage	

Claims not verified / disputes left open

Witness names and what each actually observed

Keep wages paid separate from wages still owed. Name who holds any saved goods or borrowed tools. Leave uncertain facts uncertain; this record is evidence, not an automatic settlement of debt or liability.

Source v0.9: pp. 4, 6, 8, 17. Blank table aid, not an official company form.

Produced by Terrible Gamers with writing, editing, and design done by Scott Mills and Mira Vale.

Copyright © 2026 Scott Mills in his original contributions and any protectable selection and arrangement, to the extent copyright applies and the rights are held by him.