

The Fortress of Two Seasons



Dungeon Master's edition

The characters are approaching Greyspan along the western road when a toll bell begins ringing without rhythm. A red signal pennant hangs from the fortress gate: rescue assistance requested; treasury authority granted. Through the rain, the western towers appear warm and wet. Across the central bridge, snow streams sideways around a wall of blue-white ice.

OPENING READ-ALoud

Rain streams down the mountain road toward a fortress gate standing half open. Beyond it, a stone bridge disappears into blowing snow, though the nearer towers drip with summer rain. A bell strikes three quick notes, pauses, then strikes again. A soldier struggles out of the gate dragging a stretcher with one broken handle. Behind him, someone shouts that the gallery roof is moving.

Credits

Adventure credit: bandolek

Rules basis: Dungeons & Dragons fifth edition, 2014 rules, using the System Reference Document 5.1. Greyspan's transit procedure, survivor coordination rules, wardglass beads, and all named opposition statistics are original homebrew for this adventure.

This work includes material taken from the System Reference Document 5.1 ("SRD 5.1") by Wizards of the Coast LLC, available at <https://dnd.wizards.com/resources/systems-reference-document>. The SRD 5.1 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

The fortress, characters, factions, situations, and adventure prose are original.

Overview

A mountain fortress has split along its central bridge. Summer rain beats against its western windows; winter ice entombs its eastern gate. Between them, a failed planar crossing hangs open over a gorge. Twenty-four people remain inside. The next transit will either reunite the fortress, open a negotiated road through winter, or pull its foundations apart.

The characters have the power to cross the gap, move survivors, confront the intruders, and change the mechanism's fate. The challenge is deciding what to protect while keeping enough routes open to accomplish it.

AT A GLANCE	DETAILS
Characters	Four level 9 characters
Rules	D&D 5e, SRD 5.1, 2014 rules
Expected play	5-6 hours; target schedule 330 minutes
Structure	Six substantive encounters, with flexible order through the middle
Likely combat	One short optional fight and one defensive finale; fighting the frost delegation adds substantial danger
Main objectives	Rescue twenty-four stranded people; decide the fortress's future
Themes	Divided authority, obligations to strangers, disaster response, bargains with dangerous neighbors
Content notes	Exposure, entrapment, threatened civilian deaths, predatory hospitality
Maps	One fortress site plan and one bridge enlargement, each with separate DM and player views
Rest assumption	Characters arrive near full resources; one short rest is possible at a significant time cost
Rules notation	Procedures and creatures marked homebrew are original rules for this adventure

The fortress, its inhabitants, and its surrounding region are independent of any established campaign setting. Place it on a mountain trade route with a deep gorge and a nearby settlement capable of receiving evacuees.

DM Introduction

The fortress of Greyspan was built around a transit engine intended to carry a section of mountain road across otherwise impassable distances. Custodian Oren Vale attempted a short crossing to a winter-bound refuge after receiving a genuine distress signal. An old, twelve-inch primary alignment lens fractured during activation. Its ordered replacement had not arrived. The three palm-sized reserve lenses stored in W2 fit secondary survey instruments, not the transit engine; none can replace the cracked primary optic. The fortress's western half remained in summer, its eastern half caught in an adjacent winter realm, and the engine began accumulating energy for an automatic second transit. Oren's shelter wards are keeping twenty-four people alive in three rooms, but those wards depend on the same central bridge that houses the failing engine. Without intervention, the second transit tears both wings loose, destroys the bridge, and leaves anyone still inside exposed above the gorge.

Commander Maelin Rusk controls the summer wing. She wants everyone moved west and the bridge demolished before the second transit can occur. She has correctly identified the bridge as the danger's center, but she does not know that breaking it immediately ends the shelter wards. Oren knows the engine can still work if its summer and winter brakes are set and someone arms the bridge selector. He initially conceals that he authorized the failed crossing because he fears Maelin will reject the repair on principle. Neither person needs to be obeyed: their information, tools, and authority are useful, but the characters can operate the machinery themselves.

The opening disaster brings the characters to Greyspan while travelers remain trapped in a damaged gallery. Beyond it, the winter shelters contain wounded people and the maintenance record that explains the controls. An emissary called Lady Sere Vault has followed the breach with two rime hounds. Her frost court treats shelter as a debt and hopes to convert the stranded travelers into obligated guests. She will instead accept a bounded, voluntary payment for safe passage and assistance. Flight, climbing, teleportation, scouting magic, and a route around her audience chamber can all keep the characters from having to fight or bargain with her.

The characters can evacuate everyone and abandon the fortress, reunite it through controlled closure, or stabilize a temporary passage under an enforceable agreement with Sere. Setting the two brakes stores those changes; no one must remain at either control. Once the final transit begins, the party has six rounds to defend and arm the bridge selector while breach-born scavengers try to unlatch it. Successful closure saves the fortress and ends the danger. Successful passage preserves the fortress and opens a twelve-hour road before the mechanism closes safely. Demolition can also stop the crossing, but collapses the bridge and its wards immediately. Every ending retains the actual people rescued, bargains made, valuables recovered, and damage suffered.

Hook

The characters are approaching Greyspan along the western road when a toll bell begins ringing without rhythm. A red signal pennant hangs from the fortress gate: **rescue assistance requested; treasury authority granted**. Through the rain, the western towers appear warm and wet. Across the central bridge, snow streams sideways around a wall of blue-white ice.

A gate runner named Tal reaches the road with a broken stretcher. He reports trapped travelers, failing wards, and a commander preparing to destroy the bridge. He asks the characters to help carry people out before the next bell sequence.

Characters with an existing reason to travel can simply encounter the emergency. For a commissioned opening, the nearest town asked them to inspect Greyspan after caravans stopped arriving that morning. No patron needs advance knowledge of the planar failure.

What Tal knows: Eight people are waiting in the summer reception hall, four travelers are in the damaged gallery, and twelve people were last counted on the winter side. He has seen movement beyond the winter courtyard but cannot identify it.

What Tal does not know: The engine's controls, the frost court's demands, or the consequences of breaking the bridge.

First-Session Guide

Read the DM Introduction, the Transit Procedure, and the six encounter entries before play. The creature statistics and reference sheets are intended for use during the session, not advance memorization.

Prepare these materials:

- A transit dial marked 0-12, starting at 0.
- Three control markers: **Summer Brake: released**, **Winter Brake: released**, and **Selector: PASSAGE, unarmed**.
- A demolition marker starting at 0 of 3 pulls.
- Six survivor group cards, each naming four people.
- Five hostile identity cards for the court and gallery, plus three for the finale.
- Separate player copies of the two maps and four handouts.
- A place to record damage, spent magic, recovered lenses, and promises.

Use the following division of information at the start.

The characters already know: Greyspan is experiencing a magical disaster, help is welcome, people remain on both sides, and the central bridge is unstable.

Immediately visible inside: The shelter lamps still shine; the engine's bell and dial give a readable warning; both courtyards are open to the sky; the bridge is physically

traversable.

Discovered through play: The shelter wards depend on the bridge; two local brakes can stabilize the crossing; the selector can close or open a controlled passage; the frost delegation is willing to bargain; destroying the bridge is survivable only if people have already moved clear.

Do not begin with all six encounters in initiative. The transit dial measures fictional time during exploration. Real-world discussion does not advance it unless the characters are also spending that time in the fiction.

Ask each player for one rescue-relevant capability they are willing to put into play: mobility, protection, healing, information, force, or negotiation. This is an invitation to use their abilities, not a requirement to divide into predetermined jobs.

If the table wants threatened death without civilian fatalities, establish that before play. Use the optional **Lost in the Crossing** treatment under Civilian Movement and Injury. It changes what "lost" means while retaining rescue consequences.

Target Runtime

SEGMENT	TABLE TIME	LIKELY FICTIONAL TIME
Opening, orientation, and Encounter 1	35 minutes	10 minutes
Encounter 2: gallery rescue	45 minutes	10-20 minutes
Encounter 3: winter shelters	40 minutes	10 minutes
Encounter 4: court audience or bypass	45 minutes	10-20 minutes
Encounter 5: brake operation and commitments	45 minutes	10-20 minutes
Encounter 6: six-round defense	70 minutes	36 seconds
Resolution and character decisions	30 minutes	Variable
Deliberation and transition allowance	20 minutes	Included where spent
Total	330 minutes	Usually under two hours before the finale

The court audience need not become combat. If it does, expect another 25-40 minutes. Use one of the optional cuts rather than rushing the finale.

Fast or Uncontested Routes

The 5-6 hour budget allows extended faction negotiation and a contested evacuation; it is not a minimum duration. After a rapid rescue, run a compact 3-4 hour schedule: opening 15 minutes, gallery 25, winter rescue 30, court decision 25, brakes 15, finale 30-45, and aftermath 20, with the remaining time for player planning. If all survivors are already safe, say so and make the remaining decision about preserving the road, accepting a passage agreement, or leaving. Do not invent replacement captives or move the disaster earlier to restore pressure.

If both brakes are set and the party has contained or defeated every arriving reaver, ask for final control positions and any remaining civilian movement, then resolve uncontested rounds together. Count round 3's possible R3 arrival before advancing past it, and respect spell durations, concentration, pulse exposure, and actual latch state. A wall or spell that will expire before dial 12 needs its stated continuation plan; otherwise no extra rolls or attacks are required. If nothing can contest a valid final state, narrate the remaining bells in a few minutes and proceed to the earned ending. Scene 5 likewise takes only the time needed to reach and operate its controls once understood.

Optional Cuts

Resolve the gallery without combat. Show the grounding-chain solution immediately. The storm motes subside when grounded. The rescue still requires a decision about the trapped traveler and the damaged lens case.

Shorten the audience. If the characters arrive with the maintenance record and a clear offer, Sere states her acceptable terms at once. One exchange can conclude the bargain.

Skip the audience chamber. Oren can identify the outdoor route through W4. Characters who bypass Sere need no permission from her to set the winter brake or attempt closure.

Combine control work with exploration. A character examining a brake can operate it then. Encounter 5 becomes a five-minute review of stored states, evacuation destinations, and the selector choice.

Never recreate a rescued group, unseat a brake, or return a confiscated item to make an omitted encounter occur later.

Stakes

Greyspan is both a refuge and a public road. Saving its occupants matters immediately; preserving the crossing affects the surrounding communities for years.

STAKE	PRESENT CONDITION	WHAT CAN CHANGE IT
Twenty-four lives	Twelve people on each side; four initially injured or trapped	Rescue, healing, shelter, teleportation, final stabilization

STAKE	PRESENT CONDITION	WHAT CAN CHANGE IT
The fortress	Structurally intact except for the gallery roof	Controlled transit preserves it; demolition or an uncontrolled transit destroys the bridge
The mountain road	Closed by the split	Closure restores a usable crossing after repairs; negotiated passage restores it after twelve hours
The shelter wards	Active in S1, S2, and W2	Remain active while the bridge stands; fail immediately on demolition
Maelin and Oren's cooperation	Fragile but recoverable	Evidence and shared planning can reconcile them; coercion may leave lasting distrust
The frost court's access	A temporary breach, unsuitable for a caravan	A passage bargain grants one limited crossing; closure excludes the court
Public confidence	Travelers believe the fortress failed without warning	An honest explanation and survivor testimony can rebuild trust

Without intervention: Tal gets the eight people in S1 to the western refuge. He cannot free Kes or organize a crossing into winter. At dial 6, pulse rounds begin. At dial 12, the unbraked, unarmed engine tears the bridge away. People still in the fortress suffer the uncontrolled-transit outcome described under Resolution Paths. The court withdraws into winter rather than remain in a collapsing structure.

This is the baseline, not a scheduled ending. Tal follows better instructions when given them, and other people can move or act without the characters personally escorting every footstep.

Factions

Greyspan Garrison

Representative: Commander Maelin Rusk, practical, exhausted, visibly angry at decisions made without her knowledge.

Goal: Get the stranded people onto ordinary ground and prevent a second uncontrolled transit.

Leverage: Gate authority, the rescue treasury, organized labor, a demolition key, and knowledge of the western approaches.

Fear: Losing more people while experts argue over a repair they cannot guarantee.

Voice: Short statements followed by a concrete request. "Tell me which door stays open. I can work with a door."

What Maelin knows: The western refuge is beyond the affected foundations. The emergency fuse can destroy the bridge. Tal counted twelve people in winter before the courtyard filled with snow.

What she conceals: She has already tested the fuse key. She has not pulled the lever and has ordered nobody to do so without her.

What changes her position: The ward diagram, a successfully set brake, or a practical evacuation plan for both sides. She does not demand a Persuasion check to accept visible evidence.

What she offers: The 300 gp advance, people to carry litters, her key, and responsibility for the western evacuation.

If threatened: She orders the garrison to protect the survivors, not fight the party. She refuses to surrender public money without a reason but will step aside rather than turn a rescue into a battle.

Observable escalation: At dial 4, she asks for a direct report. At dial 5, she moves to S4 with the fuse key if no one has explained the shelter problem. She still has not begun demolition. Her movement is a warning and a new conversation opportunity.

If Maelin has accepted a repair or negotiated passage, those later behaviors do not occur.

Greyspan Custodians

Representative: Oren Vale, the keeper of the engine; Tova Reed, a maintenance worker who knows the practical controls.

Goal: Preserve the shelters and bring both halves onto the same plane.

Leverage: Maintenance records, winter access, warm brine, and an accurate understanding of the brake sequence.

Fear: Maelin destroying the bridge before the winter shelter can empty.

Oren's voice: Complete explanations that start too far back. Under pressure, he catches himself and says, "The part you need is this."

What Oren knows: All three controls, the six-pulse crisis window, the available selector modes, and the ward dependency.

What Oren conceals: He authorized the transit using an alignment lens already marked for replacement. The distress signal was real, but he chose urgency over inspection.

What Tova knows: How to set the winter brake, the safe courtyard route, and where the reserve lenses are stored.

What changes their position: A plan that protects the people in W2. They accept evacuation and deliberate demolition once the rooms are empty. Oren's attachment to Greyspan never overrules the occupants' lives.

What they offer: Records, tools, repair labor, the winter shelter's supplies, and ownership authorization for three reserve lenses.

If blamed or threatened: Oren admits his responsibility. A public denunciation damages his future standing but does not make him sabotage the controls or withhold their operation.

The Frost Court Delegation

Representative: Lady Sere Vault, an emissary carrying a narrow crown of clear ice, accompanied by exactly two rime hounds.

Goal: Secure recognized passage and a profitable obligation. Taking the survivors as dependent "guests" is her opening demand, not her only acceptable outcome.

Leverage: Knowledge of the winter side of the breach, the ability to exclude one scavenger from the finale, and a dangerous but limited personal escort.

Fear: Being trapped by a collapsed crossing or returning with nothing to justify her expedition.

Voice: Courteous, literal, and transactional. "A guest may leave. A debt must be named first."

What she knows: The coming scavengers are attracted to the engine, not her servants. She can keep one away if the characters honor a passage agreement.

What she conceals: She cannot command the engine, cannot compel a bargain with words alone, and has no reinforcements waiting to arrive during this adventure.

What she offers: A binding passage agreement, exclusion of the third seam reaver, and guidance for a caravan already waiting beyond the breach.

What changes her position: An enforceable, valuable alternative to claiming guests. The three reserve lenses or a carefully bounded toll agreement satisfy her.

If refused: She permits the characters to leave the audience chamber. If they are clearly closing the breach, she withdraws before the final pulse rather than launching a suicidal assault.

The court's menace comes from the terms it seeks and the consequences of voluntary promises. It has no undisclosed power to seize memories, souls, names, or player control.

Locations

Greyspan consists of two compact fortress wings joined by a broad bridge. The entire traversable fortress floor is at elevation 0 in the map coordinate system, 120 feet above the gorge floor.

Summer occupies the west wing. Winter occupies the east wing. A seam of alternating rain and snow hangs above the bridge but does not form a wall.

S0: Western Refuge

A grounded road terrace beyond the engine's affected foundations. Its boundary begins at $x = 0$ and extends west. A supply cart, a canvas awning, and an iron road marker provide a clear gathering point.

Use in play: Safe evacuation destination, triage station, place to leave recovered property.

Access: The western road passes through the apron and the gate into S1.

People: Tal can lead survivors here without further checks once given that task.

Safety: The transit cannot displace this terrace. Ordinary storm exposure remains, but the transit pulses do not affect it.

S1: Summer Reception Hall

A room of benches, wet cloaks, and three shelter lamps. The lamps burn with steady gold centers even when rainwater runs across the floor.

Use in play: Initial briefing, rescue payment, safe staging area, western shelter.

People: Groups A and B start here, eight people total.

Discoveries: The engine dial is visible through the east door. A brass sign beside a lamp states that shelter power is supplied through the bridge spine. Maelin's fuse key and the treasury chest are here initially.

Pressure: The room remains safe from pulse damage while the bridge stands. Its occupants lose ward protection if demolition occurs while they remain inside S1; reaching the stable western apron beyond $x = 40$ already places them outside the affected structure, with S0 farther west as the gathering point.

S2: Broken Gallery

Four travelers were sheltering beneath a glazed roof when an upper stone rib fell. Kes is pinned beneath a crosspiece; a lens case lies beside the debris.

Use in play: Rescue, first evidence of the engine's failure, optional storm-mote combat.

Access: A door connects it to S4. A ten-foot roof opening permits direct aerial entry.

Discoveries: A damaged lens and inspection tag establish mechanical failure. A grounding chain can discharge the two storm motes.

Pressure: One local aftershock threatens Kes after a clearly announced rescue window. It is a one-time event, not an endlessly repeating punishment.

S3: Summer Brake House

A copper exhaust pipe runs through a squat stone cylinder. Three colored viewing panes reveal the state of the trapped heat.

Use in play: Set the summer brake; demonstrate that the controls preserve their state.

Access: Its north door opens into S4.

Discoveries: The operating instructions are engraved on the cylinder. No NPC is required to explain them.

Pressure: Applying the brake before venting heat causes a visible, localized blowback.

S4: Summer Courtyard

Rain falls through the open roofline. Broad paving connects the reception hall, gallery, brake house, and bridge.

Use in play: Route selection, evacuation staging, west approach to the finale.

Access: All western interior destinations connect here.

Pressure: It is outside the shelter wards. During pulse rounds, civilians should cross promptly or receive protection.

B1: Central Bridge

A thirty-foot-wide stone span with waist-high rails. Its center holds the selector plinth; a shimmering plane near the winter end marks the breach.

Use in play: Final transit controls, demolition, defensive set piece, cross-fortress evacuation.

Discoveries: The selector displays both brake indicators and the current mode. A diagram explicitly shows which rooms lose protection if the bridge is severed.

Pressure: Pulse damage, seam reavers, and the possibility of intentional demolition. The deck remains intact until an actual destructive outcome occurs.

W4: Winter Courtyard

Snow accumulates in grooves between the paving stones. The shelter entrance, brake-house door, and audience chamber are visible from the bridge.

Use in play: Safe navigation around the court, winter evacuation staging, aerial landing.

Access: Connects B1, W1, W2, and W3.

Pressure: Outside the shelter wards. Snow is shallow and does not create difficult terrain.

W2: Winter Shelter

A former mess room warmed by shelter lamps and a small brine kettle. Tools, blankets, and maintenance slates line its walls.

Use in play: Reach the twelve winter survivors, learn the engine procedure, recover resources.

People: Groups D, E, and F begin here, twelve total.

Discoveries: Maintenance record, warm brine, reserve lenses, and an exterior clerestory that can provide an alternate exit.

Pressure: Safe while the bridge stands. Its occupants must be protected or moved if demolition is planned.

W3: Winter Brake House

Ice grips a toothed wheel beneath a hand-powered heater. A return pipe glows faintly inside the wall.

Use in play: Set the winter brake.

Access: North door into W4.

Discoveries: Engraved thawing instructions and the heater crank.

Pressure: Forcing the frozen wheel causes cold backlash. The heater and brine offer reliable alternatives.

W1: East Hall

A receiving chamber with a frozen east gate and an open western door. Sere has arranged three chairs beside a shallow silver bowl.

Use in play: Court negotiation or an optional hard fight.

People: Sere and her two hounds; no civilians begin here.

Discoveries: Exact terms of safe passage, the court's limited force, and the approaching scavengers.

Pressure: The delegation watches the west door but does not attack visitors automatically.

E0: Eastern Refuge

A stable ledge beyond the detached eastern apron. A sixty-foot gap separates the apron from its near edge.

Use in play: Alternate evacuation destination for flying, teleporting, or otherwise mobile rescuers.

Access: Across the gap from the eastern apron, or directly by magic.

Safety: Like S0, it lies beyond the transit's affected structure. Reaching it does not require continuing through the winter realm.

Map Specifications

These coordinates are authoritative. Both maps use the same origin, orientation, elevation, and obstacle positions.

Units: Feet. **North:** Increasing y. **Square size:** 5 feet. Coordinates for creatures identify the southwest corner of their occupied square. Room boundaries describe interior usable space; drawn walls sit along those boundaries. Doors are openings in those walls. Humanoids, hounds, and reavers are Medium. The storm motes are Small; they also occupy one 5-foot square. No listed creature needs a larger footprint.

Authoritative Geometry

KEY OR FEATURE	COORDINATES	ELEVATION AND CONSTRUCTION
S0 western refuge	x -80-0, y 60-100	Stable ground, z 0
Western apron	x 0-40, y 40-120	Stable ground, z 0
West fortress platform	x 40-120, y 40-120	Engine-bound structure, z 0
S1 reception hall	x 40-80, y 60-100	Roof at z 20
S2 gallery	x 80-120, y 95-120	Roof at z 20 except opening below
S3 summer brake house	x 80-120, y 40-65	Roof at z 20
S4 summer courtyard	x 80-120, y 65-95	Open sky
B1 bridge	x 120-200, y 65-95	Deck z 0; rails 3 feet high
East fortress platform	x 200-280, y 40-120	Engine-bound structure, z 0
W4 winter courtyard	x 200-240, y 65-95	Open sky
W2 winter shelter	x 200-240, y 95-120	Roof at z 20
W3 winter brake house	x 200-240, y 40-65	Roof at z 20
W1 east hall	x 240-280, y 60-100	Roof at z 20
Eastern apron	x 280-320, y 40-120	Engine-bound structure, z 0
Eastern gap	x 320-380	Open gorge; no connecting walkway
E0 eastern refuge	x 380-420, y 60-100	Stable ground, z 0
Gorge floor	Below unsupported areas	z -120
Gallery roof opening	x 100-110, y 105-115	Open from z 0 to sky
Gallery rubble	x 100-110, y 105-115	Difficult terrain, up to 3 feet high; Kes is pinned within it
Summer brake cylinder	x 100-105, y 50-55	Solid 5-foot-square obstacle, 6 feet high
Winter brake cylinder	x 220-225, y 50-55	Solid 5-foot-square obstacle, 6 feet high
Selector plinth	x 155-160, y 75-80	Solid 5-foot-square obstacle, 4 feet high
Fuse housing	x 160-165, y 75-80	Solid 5-foot-square obstacle, 4 feet high
West bridge pylon	x 140-145, y 65-70	Solid 5-foot-square obstacle, 8 feet high
East bridge pylon	x 175-180, y 90-95	Solid 5-foot-square obstacle, 8 feet high

KEY OR FEATURE	COORDINATES	ELEVATION AND CONSTRUCTION
Breach plane	x 190, y 70-90	Vertical light plane, z 0-20; does not block movement before resolution
East hall table	x 260-270, y 75-80	3 feet high; difficult terrain to climb across
Treasury chest	x 45-50, y 65-70	Low object; occupies its square, provides no meaningful cover

The unused margins of each fortress platform are exterior maintenance ledges. They are accessible by climbing or flight but have no additional doors or secret passages. Interior rooms have stone walls 20 feet high.

Doors, Windows, and Connections

CONNECTION	OPENING	CONDITION
Western apron → S1	x 40, y 75-85	Open double gate
S1 → S4	x 80, y 75-85	Open double door
S4 → S2	y 95, x 95-105	Open 10-foot doorway
S4 → S3	y 65, x 95-105	Unlocked 10-foot door
S4 → B1	x 120, y 65-95	Full-width open connection
B1 → W4	x 200, y 65-95	Full-width open connection
W4 → W2	y 95, x 215-225	Unlocked 10-foot door
W4 → W3	y 65, x 215-225	Unlocked 10-foot door
W4 → W1	x 240, y 75-85	Open double door
W1 → eastern apron	x 280, y 75-85	Ice-bound double gate
W2 north clerestory	y 120, x 215-220, z 10-15	Latched inside; 5-foot-square opening
S2 roof → gallery	Listed roof opening	No door; rubble below

The east gate requires two actions with tools to chip free, a successful DC 17 Strength check, or at least 10 fire damage directed at its ice. A failed Strength attempt costs the action and does not worsen the gate. Once opened, it stays open.

The W2 clerestory opens with an action from inside. From outside, its latch can be reached through a broken pane; the pane has AC 13 and 5 hit points. Breaking it does not disable the room's shelter ward.

Named Starting Positions

IDENTITY OR OBJECT	STARTING SQUARE OR AREA
Maelin, Tal, Eda, Joss: Group A	S1, four separate squares in x 50-60, y 75-85
Pell, Rud, Sive, Fen: Group B	S1, four separate squares in x 65-75, y 85-95
Lio	S2, (85, 110)
Brin	S2, (90, 115)
Amra	S2, (95, 115)
Kes	S2, (105, 110), pinned beneath the rubble crosspiece
Storm mote M1	S2, (90, 105), hovering 5 feet above the floor
Storm mote M2	S2, (110, 100), hovering 5 feet above the floor
Grounding-chain reel	S2, (95, 100)
Lens case and damaged lens	S2, (100, 105), in rubble
Oren, Tova, Linn, Harl: Group D	W2, four separate squares in x 205-215, y 100-110
Nera, Besh, Col, Iven: Group E	W2, four separate squares in x 225-235, y 100-110
Yara, Sol, Venn, Daro: Group F	W2, four separate squares in x 215-225, y 110-120
Sere	W1, (260, 85)
Rime hound H1	W1, (250, 70)
Rime hound H2	W1, (250, 90)
Reaver R1, when triggered	B1, (185, 70)
Reaver R2, when triggered	B1, (185, 80)
Reaver R3, if it arrives	B1, (185, 90)

The population areas contain enough distinct squares for their assigned people. They do not overlap doors, controls, or solid furnishings. R1-R3 have separate legal arrival squares, none occupied by a pylon. The two plinth squares leave the entire y 80-90 lane open across the bridge, permitting side-by-side Medium movement.

If an arrival square is occupied, a reaver appears in the nearest unoccupied bridge square east of x 180. If no such square exists, it waits beyond the breach until one opens; it does not displace or damage a creature merely by arriving.

Distance and Access Checks

- The bridge itself is 80 feet long.
- The direct courtyard-center route from (100, 80) to (220, 80) is 120 feet.
- The usable southern selector operating square is (155, 70). It is adjacent to the selector and west of the fuse housing.

- The fuse can be operated from (160, 70), (165, 75), or (160, 80).
- A creature at a brake operates it from an adjacent square. No reaching through walls is permitted.
- Each brake-house door opens onto the same courtyard that connects to its wing's shelter.
- The shortest ordinary westbound route from W2's door to S0's gathering-point boundary at x 0 is approximately 250 feet through W4, B1, S4, and S1.
- The western affected-structure boundary is x 40. A creature wholly west of that line, on the western apron, has already escaped transit pulses and structural failure. S0 begins at x 0, another 40 feet west; it is the organized gathering place, not the start of safety. Move rescued people onward when practical, but do not apply another pulse on the safe apron.
- The eastern apron ends at x 320. The gap to E0 is 60 feet; flying from the east gate to E0's near edge covers 100 feet.
- Reavers emerging beside the breach can reach the selector vicinity with their normal movement, but the western starting reaver must move around the plinth to reach a free adjacent square.
- Three-foot bridge rails provide half cover to a creature using them against suitable attacks from below or across the gorge. They do not provide cover against attacks along the bridge.

DM Schematic

The rendered map sheets below provide this route network; the coordinate tables remain the tactical reference.

Player-Safe Schematic

The rendered map sheets below provide this route network; the coordinate tables remain the tactical reference.

The player map includes visible architecture, doors, the roof opening, the clerestory, scale, and north arrow. It omits occupants, encounter numbers, controls' hidden functions, hazards, ward boundaries, treasure, and arrival markers. There are no secret rooms or secret passages to add.

The Two Map Assets

Map 1: Greyspan site plan. Show x –80-420 and y 40-120 with off-map vertical room for labels. Use the exact geometry above. Provide a color DM view and a player-safe view. An 11 × 8.5-inch landscape placement may span a two-page reference spread only if the gutter does not obscure the bridge.

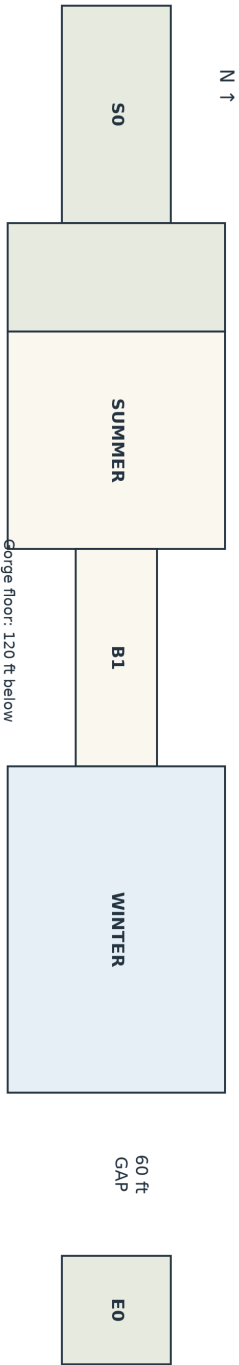
Map 2: Bridge tactical enlargement. Show x 110-210 and y 55-105 at a 5-foot grid. Include only the edge of each courtyard, bridge rails, pylons, selector plinth, fuse housing, and breach plane. The DM view adds arrival markers and control labels. The player view retains visible physical objects but removes mechanical labels and creature markers.

Both core maps are delivered below, with their player-safe counterparts in Player Map Sheets.

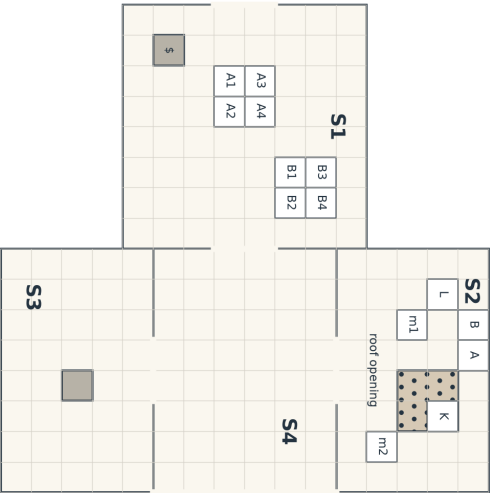
DM Map Sheets

THE FORTRESS OF TWO SEASONS

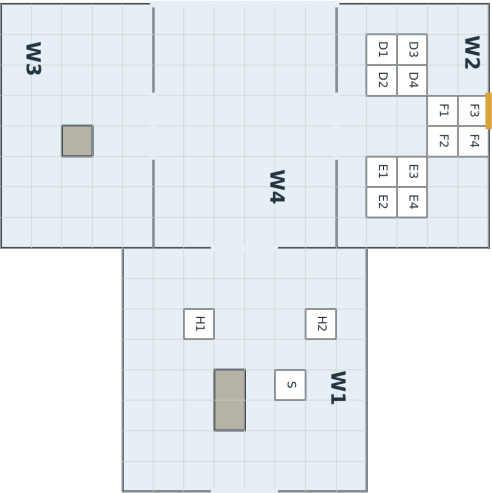
Greyspan site plan | DM ONLY



SUMMER WING - 5 ft grid



WINTER WING - 5 ft grid



Site overview has the same orientation and geometry as the enlarged wings. Bridge: 80 x 30 ft. Rooms: 20 ft walls.

Gallery roof opening: 10 x 10 ft. Winter clerestory: 5 ft wide, 10-15 ft above floor. The east gate opens onto the apron.

DM: groups A/B in S1; gallery survivors L/B/A/K; groups D/E/F in W2. S = Sere. Notes and nouns retain individual identities.

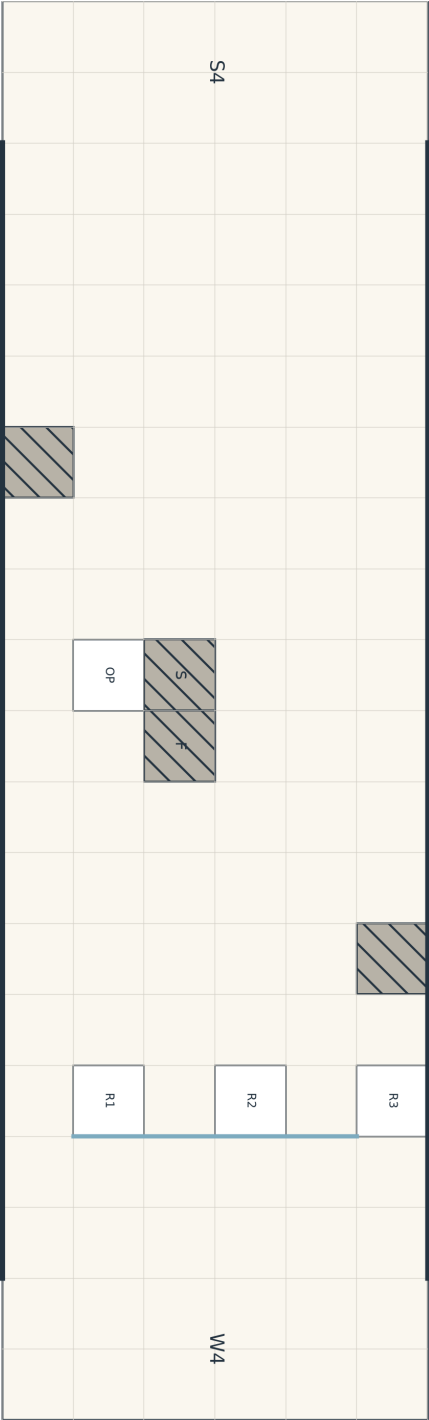
Map key: use the keyed location descriptions on the following pages.

The Fortress of Two Seasons

THE FORTRESS OF TWO SEASONS

Bridge tactical enlargement | DM ONLY

N ↑



B1 - 80 ft between courtyard edges

GRID: 5 FEET. Rails are 3 ft high. The gorge floor is 120 ft below the deck. Open courtyard connections at both ends.

Two central blocks: 4 ft high. Pylons: 8 ft high. Pale vertical plane: 20 ft high; it does not block movement.

S = selector; F = fuse. OP is a clear selector operating square. R1/R2 arrive at crisis start.
R3 arrives at round 3 unless Sere crosses before that deadline and maintains exclusion. No marker is an additional enemy.
Keep actual actor positions. Arrival fallback uses the nearest clear bridge square east of x 180.

Map key: use the keyed location descriptions on the following pages.

The Transit Procedure

Homebrew: This section completely defines Greyspan's engine. It uses one transit dial, two stored brake states, a selector state, and a demolition counter. The brake markers and demolition counter are control states, not additional time clocks.

Starting State

ELEMENT	INITIAL STATE
Transit dial	0
Summer brake	Released
Winter brake	Released and frozen
Selector	PASSAGE
Selector latch	Unarmed
Demolition lever	0 of 3 pulls
Shelter wards	Active in S1, S2, W2
Gallery aftershock	Not yet occurred
Court agreement	None
Reavers	None present

The failed transit has already occurred. The dial measures the buildup to the second one.

Exploration Time: Dial 0-5

Advance the dial by 1 for every **20 minutes of fictional time** spent after the opening. Keep accumulated minutes; do not round every short action up to a full increment.

A normal room examination, detailed conversation, or organized rescue operation takes about 10 minutes unless its encounter provides a faster action procedure. Walking through an already known route takes actual movement time. A one-minute spell takes one minute.

At each increase, the bell rings the new number once, and all engine dials display it. At dial 4, copper seams begin glowing. At dial 5, the breach produces a sustained organ-like note.

Neither ordinary failure nor combat automatically adds a dial step. Add only the time actually spent. A failed investigation might cost ten minutes because the characters dismantle a casing; a missed attack costs six seconds.

Beginning the Crisis

The crisis begins when either:

- The exploration dial reaches 6; or
- A creature adjacent to the selector deliberately pulls its **Begin Transit** handle.

Pulling **Begin Transit** takes an action and advances the dial directly to 6. It requires no brake state and is visibly labeled

with a warning: **SIX PULSES TO TRANSFER.**

Beginning early is useful when the brakes are ready and survivors are positioned. It is also a dangerous choice if the characters have not prepared.

Once at 6, roll initiative. There are exactly six rounds, advancing the dial to 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and finally 12.

Crisis Round Order

1. Characters and creatures take their turns.
2. At initiative count 0, coordinated civilians move as directed.
3. Advance the transit dial by 1.
4. If the new value is 7-11, apply the exposure pulse.
5. If the new value is 12, resolve the engine immediately instead of applying another exposure pulse.

Each exposure pulse deals **1d6 cold damage** to every creature on an engine-bound platform or bridge that is outside S1, S2, or W2 and outside an active protective effect. Roll once per pulse for all affected creatures.

A roof alone does not stop this pulse. The three shelter rooms do. S0, E0, and the stable western apron at x 0-40 are beyond its reach. A creature must have its whole footprint off the engine-bound platform at x 40 before it gains that protection. Resistance, immunity, temporary hit points, and other applicable abilities function normally.

Damage from pulses is minor for level 9 heroes and dangerous for injured people. It exists to make escort, healing, protection, and timing matter.

Setting the Summer Brake

The summer brake is in S3. An adjacent creature can read its engraved instructions without a check.

1. **Vent:** Use an action to turn the exhaust valve. The viewing pane changes from red to white. The vent remains open.
2. **Brake:** Use an action to pull the locking arm. If the pane is white, the brake becomes **set**.

Pulling the arm while the pane is red fails and releases hot spray. The operator makes a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 2d6 fire damage on a failure or half on a success. The pane remains red. The spray affects only the operator's square and does not accumulate damage or destroy the brake.

The vent cannot be made "too open." Once vented, repeated vent actions do nothing.

Setting the Winter Brake

The winter brake is in W3. An adjacent creature can read its instructions.

1. **Thaw:** Pour the warm brine over the clutch as an action; turn the heater crank with two actions; or apply an effect that would deal at least 5 fire damage to the clutch.

2. **Brake:** Once thawed, use an action to pull the locking arm. The winter brake becomes **set**.

The two crank actions need not be taken by the same creature or consecutively. Record one completed crank action if interrupted. The clutch remains thawed for the adventure once warmed; the engine's return pipe then maintains it.

Trying to pull the frozen clutch forces a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. The operator takes 2d6 cold damage on a failure or half on a success, and the clutch remains frozen. It cannot be permanently jammed by a failed attempt.

A fire effect used only to thaw the clutch does not damage the brake housing. A player explicitly trying to destroy machinery uses the object rules below instead.

Stored States and Remote Information

A set brake remains set until an adjacent creature deliberately releases it with an action. Transit pulses, room abandonment, Oren's absence, and a short rest do not reset it.

The selector shows a gold light for the summer brake and a blue light for the winter brake. Each becomes steady when its brake is set. Everyone who can see the plinth can read the two indicators.

The brakes do not require simultaneous operation or a person remaining in each room. There is no spoken password, particular ancestry, attunement requirement, or mandatory skill check.

Choosing and Arming the Selector

An adjacent creature can use an action to choose either mode:

- **CLOSE:** Reunite the fortress with the local world and close the planar breach.
- **PASSAGE:** Reunite the fortress while retaining a stable road into winter for twelve hours.

The selector starts in **PASSAGE**. Choosing its current mode costs no action if the creature is merely confirming it.

If both brakes are set, an adjacent creature can use an action to **arm the latch**. Arming and choosing a different mode are separate actions.

An armed latch remains armed unless deliberately unlatched. If a brake is released, the latch becomes unarmed immediately. A creature adjacent to the selector can unlatch it with an action.

Changing the mode automatically unarms the latch. The new mode can then be armed normally.

At dial 12: Both brakes must be set and the latch must be armed. If so, the selected mode succeeds. Otherwise the uncontrolled-transit outcome occurs.

Protecting the Selector

A creature adjacent to the plinth can use an action to **guard the latch** until the start of its next turn. While guarding, it prevents another creature from using the unlatch action unless the guard is incapacitated, moved more than 5 feet from the plinth, or willingly stops.

An attacker can still damage, grapple, shove, or otherwise interfere with the guard using its normal abilities. Guarding does not grant immunity to attacks and does not physically bar movement around the bridge.

A readied action can rearm a latch after an enemy opens it, provided the readied trigger and normal action requirements are met.

Projecting a Shelter

An adjacent creature can use an action at the selector to project a **20-foot-radius shelter sphere**, centered on the center of the selector plinth, until the end of the current round.

The sphere prevents that round's exposure-pulse damage to creatures within it. It does not stop attacks, block movement, grant resistance outside its area, or extend into later rounds without another action.

Projection works whether the latch is armed or unarmed, provided the bridge still stands. It does not change the dial, brakes, or selected mode.

The projection is useful for a civilian group caught on the bridge. Its radius does not reach either courtyard.

Emergency Demolition

The fuse housing beside the selector contains a keyed lever. Maelin's key opens it without an action beyond the normal object interaction. Thieves' tools and a successful DC 16 Dexterity check open it with an action; failure costs that action. Dealing 15 damage to the housing also exposes the lever. The housing has AC 17 and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Once exposed, the lever requires **three separate actions** to complete demolition. Different creatures may take those actions, including on the same round. Each pull displays one red bar. Progress persists.

Before the third pull, an adjacent creature can use an action to reset all accumulated pulls to 0. There is no check.

The third pull immediately:

- Destroys B1, including its controls and pylons.
- Ends every shelter ward and projected shelter.
- Closes the planar breach.
- Cancels the remaining transit procedure.
- Leaves the two fortress wings standing but unsafe for long-term occupation.

Every creature on B1 falls 120 feet unless it has a valid means to avoid or arrest the fall. Falling damage follows

SRD 5.1 rules, for **12d6 bludgeoning damage**. The bridge does not offer an undocumented last-second jump across eighty feet.

People in the wings do not fall merely because the bridge is demolished. They must leave by their remaining routes and endure ordinary weather. The immediate pulse hazard ends with the breach.

The third pull is an unmistakably destructive commitment. Describe the first two red bars and the engraved warning before anyone completes it.

Attacking the Structure

The bridge cannot be accidentally destroyed by a missed attack or a small area spell.

For deliberate structural destruction, each of its two support assemblies has **AC 17, 60 hit points, damage threshold 10**, and immunity to cold, poison, and psychic damage. A support assembly is accessible from beneath the bridge near either end. Destroying both has the same result as the third demolition pull.

Damage threshold means an instance of damage below 10 deals no damage to the assembly. Other object interactions follow the chosen spell's actual text; a spell that targets only creatures cannot damage a support.

The brakes and selector are reinforced devices, each with AC 17, 40 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. A destroyed required device cannot satisfy the success condition. A character can restore a destroyed device to functional, 1-hit-point condition with ten minutes of work, suitable tools, and parts from either brake house. No check is required, but ten minutes is usually unavailable during the crisis.

Magic and the Engine

The engine is an original magical device, not a spell.

- **Dispel magic:** A DC 16 spellcasting ability check suppresses one targeted shelter lamp, brake indicator, or projected shelter for one round. It does not erase stored physical brake positions or stop the transit. Explain the limited target before the spell is spent.

- **Antimagic:** Affected magical outputs cease inside the effect. Physical controls still move. Suppressing the selector at dial 12 prevents a successful controlled transit while suppression remains.

- **Teleportation:** Works normally. The court has placed no interdiction. Familiarity, destination knowledge, range, and creature limits remain those of the actual spell.

- **Divination:** Can reveal the failed lens, the ward dependency, the consequences of a selector choice, or Sere's intended bargain as appropriate to the spell.

- **Flight:** Works normally. Rain and snow obscure distant views but impose no special flight check.

- **Walls and force effects:** Can block reavers according to their normal rules. They do not automatically protect

civilians from the exposure pulse unless they provide relevant damage protection.

- **Cold protection:** Functions fully against exposure pulses. It does not prevent structural collapse or falling.

Do not invent an anti-magic field to force use of the bridge.

Civilian Movement and Injury

Homebrew: The following common profile and coordination procedure keep twenty-four survivors manageable. They replace combat-stat distinctions among these NPCs for this adventure.

Survivor Profile

Medium humanoid; AC 12; hp 9; speed 30 ft.

STR 10, DEX 10, CON 10, INT 10, WIS 10, CHA 10.

Saving throws and untrained ability checks +0; passive Perception 10.

Languages: Common, plus any language appropriate to a character's background.

Improvised defense: Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target; Hit: 2 bludgeoning damage.

Survivors prioritize escape, aid, and carrying injured people. Their profile is not intended to make them meaningful reinforcements against level-appropriate enemies.

Fen, Kes, Iven, and Daro start at **3 hit points**. Fen, Iven, and Daro also have a temporary movement injury reducing speed to **15 feet**. Kes is pinned until rescued; after release, Kes has the same speed reduction.

Any magical healing that restores at least 1 hit point ends that survivor's movement injury. Restoring hit points does not free Kes from the crosspiece.

Survivor Ledger

GROUP	PEOPLE	STARTING LOCATION	SPECIAL CONDITION
A	Maelin, Tal, Eda, Joss	S1	Able to move; Maelin initially coordinates
B	Pell, Rud, Sive, Fen	S1	Fen injured
C	Lio, Brin, Amra, Kes	S2	Kes pinned and injured
D	Oren, Tova, Linn, Harl	W2	Oren initially reluctant to leave the engine
E	Nera, Besh, Col, Iven	W2	Iven injured
F	Yara, Sol, Venn, Daro	W2	Daro injured

All twenty-four people are accounted for here. Tal is part of Group A, not an additional runner. Maelin and Oren are included in the total.

Coordinated Movement

Outside initiative, a group follows a clearly explained route without repeated checks. One uninjured survivor can lead it. Tal can guide western groups; Tova can guide winter groups; another named survivor can take over if either is absent.

During initiative, groups move at count 0:

- A group with no slowed or carried member moves **60 feet**, using movement and Dash.
- A group walking with a speed-15 member moves **30 feet**.
- Two uninjured survivors carrying one injured person on a litter allow the entire group to move **40 feet**. This is a complete homebrew carrying abstraction.
- A group can instead split. Track the separated people and their own movement.

A group does not move through a visibly occupied hostile square or abandon a member without explicit instruction. It stops at the nearest safe point and calls out the obstacle.

Giving a brief route order requires speech, not an action. Organizing a new litter, lifting an unconscious person onto it, or changing carriers takes one action by one participant.

Two intact litters are available in S1 and two in W2. Tal's broken litter can be repaired with one minute of work or suitable magic. The four intact litters already cover all four initially injured survivors.

Damage and Death

Track actual hit points. Survivors make death saving throws under the normal 2014 rules when reduced to 0 hit points. Stabilization, healing, carrying, and damage while unconscious work normally.

For efficiency, roll one pulse damage value and apply it to everyone exposed. Mark individual hit points only when healing, injury, or protection makes a person differ from their group.

Enemies in this adventure seek mechanisms, escape, or leverage. They do not execute unconscious survivors. Environmental damage can still harm an unconscious person, making protected routes important.

Optional Lost in the Crossing treatment: If the table agreed to avoid civilian death, a survivor who would die instead vanishes into a stable pocket of winter. That person is unavailable for the immediate rescue reward and requires a later, optional recovery expedition. State this treatment openly before it first matters. It does not change player-character death rules.

NPC Independence

Maelin can evacuate A and B once she has a destination and understands whether demolition is authorized. Tova can lead D, E, and F after the winter plan is clear. Oren will leave if another person accepts responsibility for the controls or if evacuation is the chosen plan.

The characters need not make Charisma checks to persuade people to use a visibly safe exit. Use checks for uncertain trust, disputed claims, or demands that require real sacrifice.

Essential Information and Discovery

ESSENTIAL CONCLUSION	DIRECT EVIDENCE	INDEPENDENT ROUTE	FAILURE CONSEQUENCE
Destroying the bridge ends the shelters	Diagram at selector	S1 lamp sign; Oren's explanation	Misreading with a rushed DC 12 Intelligence check costs a minute; another source remains
The summer brake must be vented first	Engraving on S3 cylinder	Tova's record; white/red viewing pane feedback	Wrong order causes local fire spray
The winter clutch must be thawed	Engraving in W3	Tova; brine kettle label in W2	Forcing it causes cold backlash
Both brakes keep their settings	Mechanical locking dogs visibly engage	Record; steady selector indicator	No check required
The crisis lasts six rounds	Begin Transit warning	Oren; dial's six remaining segments	No check required
The court cannot command the engine	Its delegation asks for access	DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) during audience; Oren's technical explanation	Sere notices suspicion and insists on precise terms
Closure does not require a court bargain	CLOSE position and instructions	Oren; direct magical investigation	No check required
The eastern refuge is stable	Visible gap and rock strata	Flight reconna issance; Tova's route sketch	A failed DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) assessment costs ten minutes of scouting

ESSENTIAL CONCLUSION	DIRECT EVIDENCE	INDEPENDENT ROUTE	FAILURE CONSEQUENCE
The original failure was mechanical	Cracked lens and tag in S2	Maintenance record; Oren's confession	Careless extraction breaks the damaged lens, but its tag and record remain

A successful ability check should resolve a real uncertainty, reveal useful context, or save time. Do not ask for an Arcana check merely to let a character read a legible instruction.

A character spending ten minutes examining the engine with proficiency in Arcana automatically understands the operational procedure. A rushed examination takes an action and a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Failure yields the visible indicators but no inferred explanation; it does not give false instructions.

Encounter Matrix

1. A Key Before the Axe KEY: S1/S4 MAIN SITUATION: Establish rescue authority and stop premature demolition OPPOSITION OR PRESSURE: Conflicting information; no initial hostiles USEFUL CHANGE: Evacuation organized; key and payment assigned
2. The Gallery Holds Its Breath KEY: S2 MAIN SITUATION: Free Kes and ground unstable storm motes OPPOSITION OR PRESSURE: Exactly two motes; one announced aftershock USEFUL CHANGE: Four travelers rescued; cause established
3. Twelve Under the Lamps KEY: W2 MAIN SITUATION: Reach winter survivors and decide their route OPPOSITION OR PRESSURE: Four-person group movement, injury, mistrust USEFUL CHANGE: Winter evacuation or shelter plan; record and brine
4. Guests of the White Crown KEY: W1 MAIN SITUATION: Negotiate, reject, bypass, or fight the court

OPPOSITION OR PRESSURE: Sere and exactly two hounds USEFUL CHANGE: Agreement, withdrawal, or defeated delegation
5. The Two Brakes KEY: S3/W3/B1 MAIN SITUATION: Set controls and commit to a final plan OPPOSITION OR PRESSURE: Local heat/cold backlash and remaining time USEFUL CHANGE: Stored brakes and chosen mode
6. Hold the Last Crossing KEY: B1 MAIN SITUATION: Defend the selector through six pulse rounds OPPOSITION OR PRESSURE: Two reavers initially; one possible arrival USEFUL CHANGE: Closure, passage, demolition, or uncontrolled transit

Scene Flow

SCENE	ENTRY LEADS	CHANGED STATE TO RECORD	AVAILABLE EXITS
1	Tal's request; red rescue pennant	Payment, Maelin's orders, fuse-key holder, A/B movement	S2, S3, B1, S0
2	Shouting from gallery; missing traveler count	Kes freed, mote states, aftershock spent, lens evidence	S4, roof, S0 by escort
3	Tal's count; sight of winter lamps; aerial scouting	D/E/F destinations, injuries, brine and lenses, Oren's disclosure	W3, W1, B1, clerestory
4	Sere's invitation; need for east gate; optional bargain	Exact treaty, court location, current hostile hp	W4, eastern apron, breach at finale
5	Control instructions from any source	Brake states, selector mode/latch, demolition progress	All remaining rescue routes; early crisis
6	Dial 6 or Begin Transit handle	Pulse-by-pulse movement, latch, reavers, final location of each group	S0, E0, shelters, controlled passage

Scenes 2-5 can occur in a different order or be divided among characters. Use their current-state arrival notes when the party returns.

Scenes

Scene 1: Rain at the Muster Table

Runtime: 30-35 minutes.

Objective: Establish what must be rescued and put the western evacuation under competent direction.

Stakes: Confusion could send Maelin toward demolition while people remain under the wards.

Arrival condition: Use the following text on the first visit while A and B remain in S1. If they have departed, use the return description below.

READ-ALoud

Water drips from a row of helmets onto the reception table. Beside three steady lamps, a woman in a rain-dark coat braces a map with her forearm. A brass key lies beside six wooden counters. Near the west door, two soldiers adjust a blanket beneath an injured companion's leg.

DM Prompt: Maelin looks up and asks who is taking charge of the gallery rescue.

Encounter 1: A Key Before the Axe

Location: S1, with possible movement into S4.

Trigger: The characters enter the hall or call to Maelin from the courtyard.

Opposition: No hostile creatures. Eight survivors are present: Groups A and B.

Pressure: Maelin intends to demolish the bridge after a western evacuation unless someone gives her a workable alternative.

What Is Evident

The six counters represent six groups of four people. Maelin has reliable names and counts, though she does not know their current condition beyond the summer rooms.

The treasury chest contains 1,800 gp in sealed rescue and repair funds. Maelin can legally release it under the red rescue pennant. She has the demolition key and is willing to give it to a character who accepts responsibility for the bridge.

The lamps protect this room. Their brass supply plate reads: **SHELTER CIRCUIT - CENTRAL SPINE - DO NOT SEVER UNDER OCCUPANCY**. Anyone examining a lamp finds the plate without a check.

Maelin's Opening Position

"Get the gallery people out. Get the winter people across if you can. Then we drop the bridge."

She is not concealing a plan to sacrifice the winter side. She believes that preserving the bridge longer risks everyone and assumes the lamps have independent power.

A character who points out the plate changes her understanding immediately. She asks how long the wards last after demolition; the correct answer, obtainable here by following the diagram, is that they end immediately.

Procedure

1. **Account for people.** Maelin supplies Handout: Muster Slip.

2. **Assign destinations.** S0 is established safe ground. Maelin can send A and B there now, leaving herself and Tal temporarily behind if desired.

3. **Assign the key.** Record who holds it. Maelin retains it only if no one accepts responsibility.

4. **Release the advance.** Maelin offers 300 gp now, credited toward the rescue contract.

5. **Choose the first problem.** The gallery calls for immediate help; the winter route and summer brake remain open alternatives.

This discussion takes about ten fictional minutes if played fully. A concise emergency briefing takes two.

Useful Checks and Leverage

A DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check identifies that Fen's leg can tolerate litter movement. Failure does not prevent evacuation; Fen reports the movement hurts and the group requests the litter already present.

A DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check can persuade Maelin to accept a claim supported only by the speaker's confidence. Failure means she wants physical evidence or a direct report from winter. It does not make her hostile.

A character with military, engineering, or rescue experience can obtain cooperation by giving specific assignments. No roll is needed for a sensible plan such as "Tal takes these eight to the road marker; you keep the fuse untouched while we count winter."

If the Characters Order Immediate Demolition

Maelin asks whether the twelve winter survivors and four gallery travelers have been accounted for. This question is an explicit warning, not a veto.

If the characters insist with full knowledge, Maelin relinquishes the key but refuses to perform the final pull while people remain in danger. The party can still choose demolition. Resolve the actual positions and consequences; do not invent a surviving bridge afterward.

If Violence Starts

The garrison uses the Survivor Profile. It retreats toward the west gate, carries Fen, and seeks cover rather than trading attacks with level 9 characters.

Maelin can surrender the key and chest to stop bloodshed. Injuring or robbing the garrison changes future testimony and payment, but neither action makes the machinery inaccessible.

Success, Fail-Forward, and Transition

Success: The party has the count, the ward warning, a western evacuation leader, and access to the key and advance.

Fail-forward: Even if Maelin refuses to trust the party, Tal points out the gallery door and offers to carry messages. The lamp plate and selector diagram remain available. Maelin's later movement toward S4 is observable and interruptible.

Transition: The names on the muster slip lead to Kes in S2 and Oren in W2. The supply plate points directly to the selector on B1. The cylinder visible through S3's door offers a third route.

Return description: If S1 is empty, describe wet boot tracks, unlit mundane lanterns, and the steady shelter lamps. If the chest or key has moved, omit it. If demolition occurred, the shelter lamps are dark and the east doorway opens toward a broken courtyard edge.

Scene 2: Glass Above the Travelers

Runtime: 40-45 minutes.

Objective: Rescue four travelers and secure evidence of the original failure.

Stakes: Kes is pinned beneath a crosspiece; an approaching aftershock threatens injury and a longer extraction.

Arrival condition: Use this text before the aftershock while Kes remains pinned. Variants follow the encounter.

READ-ALoud

Broken roof glass glitters across the gallery floor. Three travelers crouch beside a fallen stone rib, passing a folded cloak beneath it. A fourth person's boot protrudes from under the crosspiece. Two bright knots of rainwater drift above the rubble, snapping blue threads toward a loose copper chain.

DM Prompt: Kes is conscious and can describe exactly where the crosspiece is pressing.

Encounter 2: The Gallery Holds Its Breath

Location: S2.

Trigger: A creature enters the gallery, opens the roof approach, or disturbs the rubble.

Opposition: Exactly two storm motes, M1 and M2. Use the complete homebrew statistics below.

Terrain: Gallery rubble is difficult terrain. The roof opening allows flight and lines of sight from above. Stone walls provide total cover; the rubble does not provide more than half cover.

Starting positions: Use the authoritative table.

Visible Problem and Warning

Kes's left leg is pinned, but the body is not beneath the entire stone rib. The crosspiece can be lifted, cut, shifted, or bypassed magically.

On arrival, dust sifts from an overhead socket. Lio says, "It did that before the first piece fell." Tell the players that another shift looks imminent.

Start a **three-round local rescue window** if they engage in action-scale rescue or combat. This is the gallery's one-time aftershock timing, not an additional transit clock. If they spend several minutes discussing while physically remaining in the gallery, the aftershock occurs before they act.

Freeing Kes

Any one of these methods works:

- **Lift together:** Two creatures adjacent to the rubble each use an action in the same round. If their combined Strength scores total at least 28, the crosspiece lifts without a check.
- **Lever:** An adjacent creature uses an action with a crowbar, stout pole, or suitable tool and succeeds on a DC 15 Strength check. Another creature can Help normally.
- **Cut the binding strap:** Investigation reveals that an iron packing strap, not the main stone rib, holds the crosspiece down. Finding it takes an action and a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check, or one minute without a check. Cutting it requires an action with a suitable edged tool.
- **Teleport or transform:** An applicable spell removes Kes if its actual targeting and movement rules allow it. The stone does not have a special anchor.
- **Break the crosspiece:** AC 15, 20 hit points, immunity to poison and psychic damage. Deliberate attacks can target it without hitting Kes. Broad area damage still affects Kes if the spell's area includes them.

A failed lever check costs the action and produces visible movement, confirming that leverage is viable. It does not injure Kes or secretly add another collapse.

Once freed, Kes can be placed on a litter or healed. Record the change immediately.

The One-Time Aftershock

At the end of the third local round, the overhead socket slips.

Creatures in the rubble area make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage on a failure or half on a success. Kes automatically fails while still pinned.

If Kes remains trapped, the rescue remains possible, but the lift-together threshold becomes a combined Strength of 32 and the lever DC becomes 17. Cutting the strap, breaking the crosspiece, and applicable magic remain available.

The aftershock then exhausts. It does not recur on return visits, during the finale, or after another failed check.

The Storm Motes

The motes are fragments of discharged engine energy. They initially lash at the chain and rubble, not deliberately at people.

A mote becomes hostile if attacked or if a creature ends its turn within 5 feet of it. Once hostile, it attacks the nearest active creature that is not prone or unconscious. It does not pursue beyond S2.

Their purpose is to complicate hands-on rescue, not require a fight.

Grounding: The reel at (95, 100) has two free chain ends. An adjacent creature can use an action to press an end to a floor socket. Grounding both ends, with two actions total, discharges both motes. They vanish harmlessly regardless of remaining hit points.

The chain's arcs visibly travel toward the sockets. A DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the solution as an action; one minute of observation does so automatically. Touching an ungrounded chain deals 1 lightning damage, enough to communicate its function without punishing experimentation.

Moving the chain with mage hand or another applicable effect can ground it. The action requirements still apply unless the spell explicitly enables both manipulations together.

The Lens Evidence

The damaged lens is worthless as treasure. Its inspection tag states that replacement was advised before another transit. The case can be recovered with an action once a creature reaches it.

If the case is ignored, Oren's record supplies the same essential history. If an attack destroys the lens, the metal tag survives. This evidence establishes responsibility; it is not a key needed to operate the engine.

Success, Fail-Forward, and Transition

Success: Group C can evacuate. The motes are grounded or destroyed, the aftershock state is recorded, and the party has physical evidence of the failed lens.

Fail-forward: A wounded or unconscious Kes can still be extracted. If the group retreats, the surviving travelers attempt the strap solution over the next ten minutes; they free Kes if the aftershock has not killed them, then remain in S2 until given a route. Surviving motes stay here.

Transition: The inspection tag names Oren as custodian, leading to W2. The chain's power line runs toward S3 and B1. A rescued traveler can deliver evidence to Maelin while the characters continue.

Return narration: If Kes is free, describe the empty gap beneath the crosspiece and discarded packing cloth. If the aftershock occurred, describe the fallen socket. If motes

were grounded, no blue knots return. If Group C has departed, the gallery is empty of people.

Scene 3: The Room That Still Remembers Warmth

Runtime: 35-40 minutes.

Objective: Reach the twelve winter survivors, learn the complete engine procedure, and give them a viable destination.

Stakes: The shelter is safe for now, but its people cannot all outrun the pulse window without planning.

Arrival condition: Use the default text while D, E, and F remain in W2. If some have departed, describe only the remaining people and equipment.

READ-ALoud

Snow melts in a narrow line across the doorway. Inside, three lamps shine over blankets, tool rolls, and a kettle breathing steam. A man with ink on his cuffs holds a slate against his chest. Beside him, a woman in a leather apron tightens the straps of a litter while two seated travelers watch the lamps.

DM Prompt: Tova asks whether the bridge is still open and whether someone has told Maelin about the lamps.

Encounter 3: Twelve Under the Lamps

Location: W2.

Trigger: The characters reach the shelter by W4, its clerestory, or teleportation.

Opposition: No hostile creatures. Twelve survivors are present.

Pressure: Injury, incomplete trust, and the need to choose between moving now and sheltering through a controlled transit.

Immediate Facts

The room's gold-centered lamps are the same kind as S1's. They provide reliable protection while the bridge stands. The outside snow cannot cross the threshold as drifting powder, though creatures and carried objects pass normally.

Two intact litters are ready. Iven and Daro need them unless healed. Tova has organized the people into the three groups on the muster slip.

A covered kettle contains one useful dose of warm brine. A wall heater can warm another dose in ten minutes if this one is lost or used elsewhere. The winter brake's hand crank remains a separate, faster fallback.

Oren's Explanation

Oren first says that the engine can still be stabilized. If given space to speak, he explains the two brakes, selector, and six pulses plainly. Give the players the operational facts even if they dislike him.

If shown the damaged inspection tag, he admits his decision immediately. Without it, a character who asks why the lens was still installed receives an honest answer. A DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check notices that he is choosing his words around personal responsibility; it does not reveal a false technical procedure.

His full account is that the winter refuge signaled for help, the twelve-inch primary replacement lens had not arrived (W2's three palm-sized reserve lenses fit secondary survey instruments and cannot replace it), and he believed one short crossing was safer than leaving people to freeze. The signal's senders are not extra captives hidden in this adventure. The failed transit never reached them.

Oren wants the characters to set both brakes and choose CLOSE. He accepts PASSAGE if its terms protect the occupants. He accepts evacuation if no one trusts the machine.

Rescue Planning

Put the actual routes in front of the players.

West route: W2 → W4 → B1 → S4 → S1 → western apron → S0. It does not enter W1 or require Sere's permission.

East route: W2 → W4 → W1 → eastern apron → sixty-foot gap → E0. This requires dealing with or bypassing the delegation and providing transport over the gap.

Aerial route: Exit W2's door into W4 and fly directly to either refuge. Alternatively, use the clerestory for a smaller, more sheltered loading point. The opening admits a Medium creature without squeezing.

Shelter plan: Leave people in W2 through the crisis while the party performs a controlled transit. This is viable. They need not all be exposed on the bridge merely to make the finale dramatic.

Tova asks for a destination and a departure trigger, then follows the plan. "Go west now," "Stay until the blue indicator is steady," and "Wait for our return with transport" are all clear orders.

Supplies and Ownership

Tova supplies:

- The warm brine.
- Two litters.
- The maintenance record.
- Two wardglass beads.
- Three palm-sized secondary-instrument reserve alignment lenses, each worth 200 gp. Their size and mounting cannot fit the twelve-inch primary transit optic;

they are salvage or bargaining goods, not an emergency repair.

The lenses are packed in three padded brass sleeves, each weighing 2 pounds. They are not needed for this emergency stabilization; the engine can make one controlled cycle using its surviving fixed optics. Oren authorizes their transfer as salvage in return for rescue work.

The wardglass beads are emergency protective tools. Their rules appear under Items and Rewards. Tova explains their limits before handing them over.

Checks with Consequences

A DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine) check, taking one minute per injured person, allows a careful splint that removes the speed reduction for **one ten-minute evacuation**, without restoring hit points. Failure spends the minute and the patient remains slow; litters and magic remain available.

A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check made while comparing the record with a lamp takes one minute and reveals that the wards will persist through a successful transit. Failure means the character cannot independently verify Oren's claim, but the engraved selector diagram supplies the same fact.

No check is required to obtain the record, ask people to evacuate, or carry the brine.

If the Characters Reject Oren

Tova provides the practical instructions and takes charge. Oren does not flee with the tools. He can be escorted, left under guard, or told to remain with the shelter.

The characters may promise an inquiry after the rescue. That promise has a meaningful later consequence without consuming the emergency scene in a trial.

Success, Fail-Forward, and Transition

Success: The winter groups have a destination or shelter plan, the characters know the procedure, and resources have named holders.

Fail-forward: If negotiations break down, the maintenance record is on the public workbench and Tova will explain its use. If the party leaves without orders, she keeps the twelve people in W2 rather than marching them blindly into the pulses.

Transition: The record points to W3 and S3. Sere's invitation is audible from W1 if she remains there: "Those responsible for the crossing may enter." The open courtyard also permits an immediate return west.

Return narration: Empty bedrolls and a cooling kettle replace departed groups. Removed lenses and beads do not reappear. If the brine was used, its vessel is empty until someone spends the stated time reheating a new dose.

Scene 4: The Price of Being a Guest

Runtime: 35-45 minutes; add 25-40 minutes if a full fight occurs.

Objective: Decide whether to accept a bounded bargain, reject the court, or remove its delegation.

Stakes: The court offers useful assistance in exchange for access or valuables. An incautious promise could burden survivors.

Arrival condition: Use this text while Sere and both hounds are present and uninjured. Adjust visible injuries and absent creatures.

READ-ALoud

Three chairs stand beside a silver bowl on a bare table. A tall figure in a pale coat waits behind them, a narrow crown of clear ice resting above her brow. Two white hounds lie on opposite sides of the room. Frost feathers the closed eastern gate, but the path back to the courtyard remains clear.

DM Prompt: Sere offers seats and says that no one becomes her guest merely by entering.

Encounter 4: Guests of the White Crown

Location: W1.

Trigger: The characters accept the audience, attempt to pass through W1, or attack the delegation.

Opposition: Lady Sere Vault, H1, and H2-exactly three creatures.

Terrain: The table offers half cover when appropriate. The east gate is initially ice-bound. Both hounds have unobstructed paths to the west doorway.

Starting positions: As listed in Map Specifications.

What Sere Actually Wants

Sere opens with a proposal: the twenty-four stranded people enter winter as guests until Greyspan pays a shelter debt.

She knows this is an aggressive opening. If challenged, she asks what the characters offer instead. She does not claim that existing shelter lamps have already created a debt.

The silver bowl is a mundane ceremonial vessel. Drinking, sitting, giving a name, or accepting warmth does not bind anyone. State this if players investigate. The only binding agreement is an explicit spoken acceptance of written terms.

Acceptable Bargains

Sere accepts either of these without a check if the party can deliver the consideration.

The Lens Compact: Give her the three reserve lenses, total value 600 gp, after successful PASSAGE. In return:

- No unwilling person is taken into winter.
- No debt attaches to any survivor.
- Her caravan crosses once during the twelve-hour opening.

- The caravan carries no unwilling passengers or prisoners.
- She excludes R3 from the final encounter.
- Her delegation does not attack the party, civilians, or controls.
- The passage closes automatically after twelve hours.

The One-Winter Toll: Greyspan grants her court a publicly posted right to request one voluntary 10 gp toll from each willing merchant caravan using a future, separately authorized winter crossing during the next year. No crossing is promised, no minimum revenue is guaranteed, refusal incurs no punishment, and the right expires after one year. Maelin and Oren must both accept this arrangement because it concerns the fortress.

Sere accepts the toll's uncertainty because recognition matters to her court. She receives no right to enter Greyspan after the current passage closes.

A party may propose another specific consideration worth approximately 600 gp or an equally bounded public concession. A DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check can persuade Sere to accept something worth about 300 gp. Failure leaves the original offers available; it does not start combat.

Staging Sere's Intervention

After an agreement, Sere immediately walks from W1 through its western door and W4 to the breach at x 190, y 85. The route is approximately 70 feet; allow one minute in exploration, or use her actual movement and Dash actions in initiative. This departure is visible and does not move the hounds or other actors automatically. Tell the party when she is in position before they choose Begin Transit.

At crisis start she steps through the breach if already beside it. If the crisis starts while she is en route, she must reach and cross it before the start of round 3 to exclude R3. Crossing from an adjacent square costs five feet of movement. She must remain beyond the breach until the start of round 3; she cannot simultaneously fight on the bridge during that intervention. At that deadline, if she has crossed and remains able to perform the exclusion, R3 loses its only arrival window and is permanently excluded from this crisis. She may return afterward without restoring that missed arrival; later injury, departure, or breach of the compact cannot summon R3 retroactively. If movement is blocked, she is incapacitated, or the deadline is missed, R3 arrives on its normal schedule. An agreement alone does not teleport her or erase that arrival. She warns the party if they start the engine before she is ready. Record her location, crossing time, and whether the intervention occurred.

Making the Agreement Binding

Homebrew: The court's compact is a voluntary magical contract. It binds only Sere and the characters or officials who explicitly consent. It cannot bind absent survivors.

Write the terms on ordinary paper. Each consenting party speaks, "I accept these terms freely." The words glow blue, making later alteration obvious.

The contract does not compel behavior or inflict damage. If a signatory knowingly breaks a stated term, the paper records the breach in visible script, and the wronged party can present it as unquestionable evidence to the court. This is the full magical effect.

Sere's compliance comes from law, reputation, and her own interests. There is no hidden curse.

Alternatives to Bargaining

Reject and leave: Sere permits withdrawal. She does not own W4 or the brake house.

Pass through without agreement: She allows a visibly evacuating civilian group to use the east gate if it does not interfere with her delegation. She asks the characters for compensation but does not seize refugees when refused. Doing so would trap her in a fight before the transit.

Bypass: Fly over the hall, use the winter courtyard, climb exterior ledges, or teleport. No check forces discovery by the delegation when an ability normally avoids it.

Force withdrawal: A demonstration that both brakes are set and CLOSE is selected convinces Sere to retreat into the breach once the crisis begins. A DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation) check can achieve the same early withdrawal if backed by a credible threat. Failure makes her remain for further negotiation; it does not make her attack.

Combat Procedure

Sere fights if attacked, if a character attempts to restrain her, or if the party tries to take her crown or hounds by force.

Her objective is to force a pause and secure an exit, not kill everyone.

- H1 moves to block the west doorway.
- H2 protects Sere or threatens a character concentrating on a spell.
- Sere uses Rime Fan when it can affect at least two active opponents without hitting a hound.
- She otherwise attacks a threatening melee opponent and moves toward W4 when withdrawal becomes necessary.
- The hounds do not pursue into S0 or attack civilians who are not fighting.

At 35 hit points or fewer, Sere offers immediate mutual withdrawal. At 15 or fewer, she surrenders if escape is blocked. A surviving hound withdraws when Sere orders it or when she is incapacitated.

If the characters accept surrender, Sere yields her crown as a nonmagical pledge and leaves when a route is provided. Its resale value is negligible; its worth is political evidence.

Identity and Movement

Record Sere, H1, and H2 separately. Damage persists.

If they withdraw from W1, they move through W4 toward B1. Before the crisis, Sere waits at the breach edge; she cannot disappear through an inactive transit as an unexplained ability. When the crisis begins, she can step into the opening with surviving hounds and leave.

They never become extra reavers. Defeated hounds do not reappear at full health in the finale.

Success, Fail-Forward, and Transition

Success: A clear agreement and Sere's timely crossing earn R3's exclusion and a supported PASSAGE ending; rejection preserves the party's freedom to choose CLOSE.

Fail-forward: A failed bargain leaves the courtyard route open. Defeat or surrender gives the party control of W1 and the eastern gate. Retreat leaves Sere in her current state without halting brake work.

Transition: The compact points to the selector's PASSAGE setting. A rejection points to CLOSE or evacuation. The now-accessible east gate offers a concrete rescue route.

Return narration: Empty chairs and tracks leading west replace a departed delegation. Broken ice remains broken. If a compact lies on the table, its actual terms remain visible; no new terms appear.

Scene 5: The Teeth of the Machine

Runtime: 35-45 minutes, or 5-10 minutes if controls were already operated.

Objective: Establish the engine's final configuration and place people where the party intends them to survive.

Stakes: The procedure is reliable if completed, but a missing brake or unarmed latch matters at the final pulse.

Arrival condition: This scene may begin at either brake. Use the appropriate paragraph. These descriptions do not assume the controls are untouched.

Summer arrival:

READ-ALoud

Copper pipes descend into a stone cylinder beneath three colored panes. A broad locking arm projects from its side. Above it, an exhaust wheel sits within easy reach, and engraved arrows connect the wheel, the panes, and the arm.

Winter arrival:

READ-ALoud

A toothed wheel rests beneath a hand crank and a narrow heating pipe. Frost covers the surrounding bolts. An instruction plate hangs at eye level, its lettering cut deeply enough to remain legible beneath the ice.

DM state adjustment: Describe red or white light in summer only after checking the vent state. Describe ice gripping the winter clutch only while it remains frozen. A set brake has its locking arm down and its teeth visibly engaged.

Encounter 5: The Two Brakes

Locations: S3, W3, and B1.

Trigger: The characters decide to configure the engine, or the rising dial makes a final plan urgent.

Opposition: No automatic creatures. Remaining motes stay in S2; the court remains wherever its encounter left it.

Pressure: Stored mechanical states, travel between controls, and the approach of dial 6.

The Playable Decision

This encounter is more than pulling two handles. The characters must choose whether to preserve the fortress, whether to grant passage, whether to expose survivors during evacuation, and who will remain near the selector.

Put these questions into the fiction through Oren, Maelin, or the visible controls:

- Are the survivors leaving now or sheltering through the transit?
- Is the final setting CLOSE or PASSAGE?
- Who holds the demolition key?
- Who will operate or guard the selector?
- Where will a wounded character retreat?
- Is the group ready to begin early?

Do not require a particular answer. Evacuating everyone and abandoning the engine is a legitimate plan.

Operating the Brakes

Use the complete procedures under The Transit Procedure. Repeat only the needed numbers at the table:

Summer: Vent with one action, then brake with one action. Wrong order: DC 14 Dexterity save, 2d6 fire damage, half on success.

Winter: Brine with one action, heater with two actions, or at least 5 fire damage; then brake with one action. Forcing frozen clutch: DC 14 Constitution save, 2d6 cold damage, half on success.

The inscriptions provide the solutions. The uncertainty lies in time, divided attention, and the larger choice, not

guessing a phrase.

Split-Party Operation

Characters can divide between the wings. Each local control can be completed independently. A messenger, familiar, sending effect, or the selector indicators can communicate success.

Do not run simultaneous brake operation as a mandatory synchronization puzzle. If one character finishes first, that brake stays set while the other acts.

The route between brake houses passes through their respective courtyards and B1. Flight over the gorge can shorten a path according to actual movement. There are no roofs over the courtyards to obstruct direct aerial approaches.

Unconventional Solutions

Freeze the summer brake instead of venting: At least 5 cold damage applied to the cylinder lowers the heat enough to turn the pane white. This substitutes for the vent action. The brake must still be pulled.

Heat the entire winter room: An applicable sustained heat source thaws the clutch after one minute. It does not injure sheltered people in W2, which is a separate room.

Operate with summoned creatures: A creature able to understand the instruction and manipulate the control can do so. Intelligence and hands matter only as the creature's actual description requires.

Jam a set brake: An action with an iron spike or similar durable wedge prevents that brake from being released until an adjacent creature spends an action removing the wedge. This does not improve the final result beyond preserving the state.

Remove the selector: Dismantling it takes ten minutes and renders it nonfunctional. Carrying it does not carry the bridge's connection or create a portable portal.

Block the breach before starting: A wall or other effect may constrain reaver movement. The transit can still resolve if the selector is functional. A barrier does not create an extra arrival point elsewhere.

Handling Maelin's Concern

If she still expects demolition, a steady brake indicator and the shelter diagram are enough to bring her into the discussion. She asks for a final deadline: "If it is unarmed at the last bell, what do we do?"

The honest answer is that demolition closes the breach immediately but destroys the bridge. If everyone has been evacuated, it is a reasonable fallback. If people remain in shelters, demolition trades the transit threat for isolation and exposure.

Record whether Maelin is authorized to act. She never silently performs the third pull because the adventure wants a dramatic complication.

Ready Positions

Characters can choose any legal positions before beginning early. Useful positions include:

- One operator adjacent to the selector.
- One defender east of the plinth, with a clear path back.
- One mobile rescuer in W4 or S4.
- One character near a shelter group or in aerial overwatch.

These are suggestions, not required roles. The bridge supports alternative formations, including everyone defending from one end with a summoned creature at the latch.

Success, Fail-Forward, and Transition

Success: Both brakes are set, the chosen mode is visible, the latch is armed or assigned, and people have actual locations.

Fail-forward: A partially completed brake remains partially completed. During the crisis, a fast or teleporting character can still finish it. An unready party can evacuate instead, use demolition, or accept the consequences of an uncontrolled transit.

Transition: Pulling Begin Transit or reaching dial 6 triggers Scene 6. If the party evacuates and leaves, resolve the engine at its current states when the dial reaches 12; do not force a return to the bridge.

Return narration: The summer pane remains white after venting. The winter clutch stays thawed. Set arms remain down. Missing tools, spent brine, wedges, and damaged housings retain their states.

Scene 6: Six Bells Across the Gap

Runtime: 60-70 minutes if contested; 5-15 minutes once all arrivals are resolved and no active threat can change the controls. See Fast or Uncontested Routes.

Objective: Keep the final engine state valid through dial 12 while protecting anyone still crossing.

Stakes: The fortress's fate is decided by the actual controls and creature positions at the sixth crisis round.

Arrival condition: Read this when the crisis begins while the bridge stands. Omit references to people or enemies not yet visible.

READ-ALoud

The bridge's copper seams brighten from end to end. Rain hangs briefly above the western rail before falling upward in silver threads. At the winter end, the pale opening widens, and two narrow shapes press through it onto the stone. The selector rings once. Six dark segments remain beyond the new light.

DM Prompt: Announce the current brake indicators, selected mode, and latch state before initiative begins.

Encounter 6: Hold the Last Crossing

Location: B1 and connected courtyards, with survivors in their recorded locations.

Trigger: Transit dial reaches 6 or Begin Transit is pulled.

Opposition: R1 and R2 arrive at crisis start. R3 may arrive at the start of round 3.

Rules source: Complete homebrew seam reaver statistics below.

Objective: Reavers try to unlatch the selector, making the breach easier to feed upon. They do not understand or operate the brakes.

Arrival Count

• **No court agreement:** R1 and R2 at the start; R3 at the start of round 3.

• **Honored Lens Compact or One-Winter Toll, with Sere across the breach before round 3:** R1 and R2 at the start; Sere excludes R3, which never arrives. If she misses that deadline or the intervention ends before the start of round 3, R3 arrives at the start of round 3 normally. If exclusion is active at that instant, it is permanent for this crisis; later interruption cannot restore the missed arrival. Apply the staging procedure in Scene 4.

• **Sere defeated, absent, or merely refused:** The normal three-reaver schedule applies.

• **Bridge demolished before crisis:** No reavers arrive; the breach is already closed.

R3 is the only reinforcement. No additional court soldiers, hounds, motes, or scavengers appear.

Initiative and Environmental Order

Use normal initiative for characters. **Homebrew encounter timing:** Reavers act at initiative 12; resolve ties after player characters with the same initiative. All civilian movement and pulse resolution occur at initiative 0.

At the start of round 3, place R3 in its named square before anyone acts that round. It acts at 12. If Sere excludes it, describe a third shape turning away beyond the opening; do not place a token.

Advance the transit dial at the end of each round exactly as specified. Do not add exploration-time increments during these six rounds.

Reaver Tactics

Round 1: R1 moves toward the selector and uses its action to unlatch if it can reach an unguarded control. R2 attacks a creature blocking access or uses its movement to threaten a rescuer.

Later rounds: A reaver adjacent to an armed, unguarded latch prioritizes unlatching. Against a guard, it uses attacks or a shove to remove the guard. Other reavers attack defenders, concentrating on standing threats rather than unconscious victims.

R3: Moves toward whichever side of the plinth is least defended. It has no special access through walls or occupied squares.

A reaver using the unlatch action does not also use Multiattack. This tradeoff is central to the encounter's action economy.

They do not deliberately demolish the bridge, kill civilians for sport, release distant brakes, or perfectly identify every spell. They perceive the armed latch as a painful knot of ordered energy.

Escalation and Morale

At the end of round 3, frost forms around the breach plane. This is visual feedback, not an additional damage effect.

A reaver reduced to 15 hit points or fewer retreats toward the breach if it can do so without moving closer to a visible enemy. It uses Disengage when needed and leaves by entering the plane. It does not return.

At dial 11, any surviving reaver that cannot reach or unlatch the selector before the next resolution attempts to escape. One already beside an unguarded latch makes a final attempt instead.

Surrender is not meaningful to these predators, but retreat is. Characters need not kill them to win.

Protecting Moving Survivors

At initiative 0, move groups along their assigned route before applying the pulse. A group reaching S1, S2, or W2 is ward-protected while the bridge stands; a group wholly on the western apron, S0, or E0 is outside the affected structure independently of the wards.

A character can use the selector's shelter projection to cover people within 20 feet of the plinth for the current pulse. A wardglass bead can protect one individual who cannot reach the sphere.

If a reaver blocks a group's route, it stops rather than walking into the hostile square. A hero can clear a lane, direct it along the bridge's other ten-foot lane, carry an individual, or instruct it to retreat into a shelter.

Use the actual map: the plinth and fuse housing occupy only two adjacent squares. They do not block the entire span.

Meaningful High-Level Solutions

A wall of force or equivalent barrier can separate the reavers from the controls if placed within the spell's rules. That may make the defense much easier. The characters still decide the engine's mode and protect exposed survivors.

Banishment can remove a reaver if the spell succeeds. Its origin is the winter-adjacent planar breach; if the spell's duration and conditions permanently return it to its home plane, it does not reappear.

A flying character can attack from above, carry survivors, or guard an aerial approach. Reavers have no flight and no ranged attack. Their jump and climb speeds do not let them leap into hovering characters beyond reach.

Teleporting everyone to safe ground can turn the finale into a voluntary effort to preserve the fortress. Honor that success. The module does not require endangered civilians to remain on the map.

If a Character Falls

The bridge's rails are ordinary obstacles. A shove toward a rail first knocks a creature against or over it according to positioning. **Homebrew ledge safeguard:** A creature forcibly moved over a rail can use its reaction to make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, catching the edge on a success. It then hangs, occupying its former edge square for targeting, and can climb up using 15 feet of movement.

On failure, it falls 120 feet. Flight, feather fall, teleportation, and other actual abilities can intervene.

This safeguard does not apply when the entire bridge is destroyed; there is no intact edge to catch.

The Final Resolution

At the end of round 6, advance to dial 12 and read the actual states:

- **Both brakes set, latch armed, CLOSE:** Controlled closure.
- **Both brakes set, latch armed, PASSAGE:** Stable twelve-hour passage.
- **Any required state missing:** Uncontrolled transit.
- **Demolition already completed:** The transit ended at demolition; do not resolve it again.

There is no final hidden check. The party's earlier actions determine the outcome.

Success, Fail-Forward, and Transition

Success: Resolve CLOSE or PASSAGE and the corresponding survivor, payment, and faction states.

Fail-forward: Demolition may still prevent an uncontrolled crossing if completed before dial 12. Otherwise resolve structural failure, rescue opportunities, and losses. Survivors already at S0 or E0 remain safe.

Transition: The changed fortress leads directly into Resolution Paths. If a rescue is still possible from a stranded wing or the gorge, play it as an aftermath problem using the established geometry and remaining resources.

Opposition Statistics

All creatures below are **homebrew for D&D 5e, SRD 5.1, 2014 rules**. Challenge ratings are encounter-building estimates for these original creatures.

Storm Mote

Small elemental, unaligned

Armor Class 14**Hit Points** 27 (6d6 + 6)**Speed** 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

4 (−3)

DEX: 16 (+3)**CON:** 12 (+1)**INT:** 3 (−4)**WIS:** 10 (+0)**CHA:** 6 (−2)**Saving Throws** Dex +5**Damage Resistances** thunder**Damage Immunities** lightning, poison**Condition Immunities** grappled, poisoned, prone, restrained**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10**Languages** -**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)**Unstable Form.** The mote can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch without squeezing, but cannot pass through solid material.**Gallery Anchor.** The mote cannot willingly move outside S2. If forcibly moved outside, it becomes inert until returned to S2; after one minute outside, it dissipates.**Grounding Vulnerability.** Grounding both gallery-chain ends destroys both motes without damage to nearby creatures.**Arc Lash.** *Melee Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) lightning damage.**Discharge on Defeat.** When reduced to 0 hit points by damage, the mote flashes. Each creature within 5 feet makes a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) lightning damage on a failure or no damage on a success. Grounding does not trigger this trait.**Table use:** M1 and M2 make one attack each per round. They have no multiattack, ranged attack, or ability to follow an evacuee into the courtyard.**Rime Hound***Medium monstrosity, lawful neutral***Armor Class** 14**Hit Points** 38 (7d8 + 7)**Speed** 40 ft.

16 (+3)

DEX: 14 (+2)**CON:** 12 (+1)**INT:** 5 (−3)**WIS:** 14 (+2)**CHA:** 8 (−1)**Skills** Perception +4, Stealth +4**Damage Immunities** cold**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14**Languages** understands Common and Sylvan but cannot speak**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The hound has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.**Ice Walker.** The hound ignores difficult terrain caused by ice or snow.**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or fall prone.**Interpose.** When a creature within 5 feet of the hound attacks Sere, the hound can use its reaction to impose disadvantage on that attack roll. It must see the attacker.**Table use:** H1 and H2 have one bite each per turn. Interpose is a reaction, not an additional attack. A hound can protect Sere only while actually adjacent to her.**Lady Sere Vault***Medium fey, lawful neutral***Armor Class** 16**Hit Points** 105 (14d8 + 42)**Speed** 30 ft.

12 (+1)

DEX: 16 (+3)**CON:** 16 (+3)**INT:** 16 (+3)**WIS:** 14 (+2)**CHA:** 18 (+4)**Saving Throws** Dex +6, Wis +5, Cha +7**Skills** Insight +5, Persuasion +7**Damage Immunities** cold**Condition Immunities** charmed

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Courtly Composure. Sere has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Multiattack. Sere makes two Frost Scepter attacks.

Frost Scepter. *Melee Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) cold damage. The attack is magical and does not depend on a recoverable magic weapon.

Rime Fan (Recharge 5-6). Sere releases frost in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area makes a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) cold damage on a failure or half on a success. On a failed save, the creature's speed is reduced by 10 feet until the end of its next turn. Multiple uses do not stack this reduction.

Winter Step (2/Day). As a bonus action, Sere teleports up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space she can see. This is teleportation, not planar travel.

Measured Reprisal. When a creature within 5 feet hits Sere with a melee attack, she can use her reaction to deal 5 cold damage to that creature.

Exclusion of the Third. If honoring the compact, Sere can prevent R3 from entering during the finale. This requires her to cross the breach before the start of round 3 and remain on its far side until the start of round 3. Successful exclusion at that instant is permanent for this crisis; returning or losing the ability afterward does not cause a delayed arrival. If she is staged there, she crosses at crisis start; otherwise use actual movement and the Scene 4 deadline. She cannot exclude an R3 that has already entered. She cannot also join the party's combat. This feature affects only R3 and has no offensive use against other creatures.

Table use: Sere has no legendary actions, legendary resistances, spell slots, or unlisted spells. Her scepter and crown are ceremonial objects, not transferable sources of her abilities.

Seam Weaver
Medium aberration, unaligned

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 68 (8d8 + 32)

Speed 35 ft., climb 20 ft.

18 (+4)
DEX: 14 (+2)
CON: 18 (+4)
INT: 5 (−3)
WIS: 12 (+1)

CHA: 6 (−2)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +6

Skills Athletics +6, Perception +3

Damage Resistances cold

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages -

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Seam Sense. The reaver knows whether the selector is armed while within 120 feet of it. This sense provides no information about hidden creatures, spell effects, or the brakes' locations.

Clinging Limbs. The reaver can climb rough stone without an ability check. It must still use its climb speed and cannot occupy unsupported air.

Multiattack. The reaver makes two Hook attacks.

Hook. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage plus 2 (1d4) cold damage.

Unlatch. While within 5 feet of the selector, the reaver uses its action to unarm the latch, unless a creature is guarding it under the Transit Procedure. This replaces Multiattack.

Shove. The reaver can replace one Hook attack in Multiattack with a shove, using Athletics +6 against the target's Athletics or Acrobatics under the normal 2014 contest rules. This substitution is a homebrew feature. It can push 5 feet or knock prone, not both.

Breach Exit. A reaver that enters the breach plane can leave the encounter permanently. It cannot use this feature to reappear elsewhere.

Table use: Reavers have no ranged attacks, teleportation, flight, or immunity to control spells. R1, R2, and R3 are separate individuals with persistent hit points.

Difficulty, Resources, and Scaling

The default adventure assumes four level 9 characters beginning near full resources. The gallery is a small drain or a problem solved without combat. The court is a hard optional fight. The finale is a positional defense with moderate incoming damage and competing actions.

Using the 2014 encounter multipliers as a rough guide:

FIGHT	BASE XP	ADJUSTED XP	INTERPRETATION FOR FOUR LEVEL 9 CHARACTERS
Two storm motes	400	600	Minor combat pressure
Sere and two hounds	3,200	6,400	Approximately hard

FIGHT	BASE XP	ADJUSTED XP	INTERPRETATION FOR FOUR LEVEL 9 CHARACTERS
Three seam reavers	3,300	6,600	Approximately hard before objective tradeoffs
Two seam reavers after compact	2,200	3,300	Easier defense; the bargain has real value

The reavers' need to spend actions unlatching reduces their attack output. Conversely, survivor movement and pulse protection can consume party actions. These factors matter more than the XP labels alone.

A reaver that uses Multiattack can deal about 27 damage if both attacks hit. Three focusing reavers are dangerous, but their stated behavior does not make them all ignore the controls to eliminate one character. Follow their objective.

Rest Opportunities

S1 and W2 permit a short rest while their wards function. A one-hour rest advances the exploration dial by 3. A rest begun too late is interrupted by the crisis and grants no completed-rest benefit.

There is no safe opportunity for an eight-hour long rest before the second transit. Characters can leave the site and rest afterward; doing so does not pause the engine.

Concrete Scaling

PARTY	CHANGES
Three level 9 characters	Each reaver has 52 hp; R3 never arrives. Sere has 85 hp and only H1 is present. Motes unchanged.
Four level 8 characters	Each reaver has 58 hp and Hook cold damage is removed. Sere has 90 hp; Rime Fan deals 5d6. Other counts unchanged.
Four level 10 characters	Each reaver has 78 hp. No count increase. Sere and motes unchanged.
Five level 9 characters	Each reaver has 85 hp; Hook attacks are +7 to hit. No count increase. Sere has 125 hp; hounds unchanged.

Scaling changes do not alter control actions, pulse count, survivor count, map geometry, or rewards. The three-character version's absent H2 and R3 are genuinely absent; do not replace them later.

If the party spent heavily fighting Sere, use the default finale and allow their remaining control abilities to matter. Do not add reavers to punish a successful barrier or teleportation plan.

Items and Rewards

Item: Wardglass Bead

Wondrous item, common; homebrew; no attunement

A thumb-sized glass bead contains a stationary gold spark. Tova keeps exactly two in W2's maintenance box.

Activation: As an action, a creature crushes the bead and touches itself or one willing creature within 5 feet.

Effect: The target gains resistance to cold damage for 1 minute. In addition, it takes no damage from Greyspan's exposure pulses during that minute.

Limits: One target per bead. The bead is consumed on use, has no charges, and cannot recharge. Multiple beads on the same target do not stack or extend a current duration; a later activation starts a new one-minute duration.

Recovery: None.

Ownership: Emergency equipment released by Tova for rescue work. Unused beads may be kept by the party after any good-faith rescue effort.

Value: Their resale value is campaign-dependent and is not included in the coin total.

Item: Reserve Alignment Lens

Valuable component; nonmagical

Each lens is a palm-sized disk of carefully cut clear crystal, packed in a brass sleeve. There are exactly three, all in W2. Each is worth **200 gp**, weighs **2 pounds including its sleeve**, and can be sold to an instrument maker or arcane engineer.

They have no activation, charges, attunement, or independent magical effect. They fit secondary survey instruments only. The engine requires a twelve-inch primary optic with a different mounting; these palm-sized disks cannot replace it, singly or together. The emergency controls dissipate the stored transit charge without replacing that optic. They are not required for this emergency cycle. Giving them to Sere under the Lens Compact removes them from party treasure.

The damaged lens from S2 is separate and has no sale value.

Item: Demolition Key

Tool; nonmagical

Maelin's iron key opens the fuse housing. It has no charges or magical effect. It does not activate demolition by itself.

Whoever carries it should be recorded. Duplicating its shape does not require a magical item rule, but making a functional copy takes appropriate tools and at least an hour-usually a poor use of remaining time.

Reward Ledger

REWARD	OWNER AND LOCATION	ACCESS CONDITION	AMOUNT
Rescue advance	Greyspan treasury, S1	Accept rescue responsibility	300 gp for the party
Remaining rescue payment	Same treasury	Based on people brought to safety	Up to 1,500 gp more
Three reserve lenses	Custodians, W2	Oren or Tova authorizes salvage	600 gp total
Two wardglass beads	Custodians, W2	Issued for rescue	Two consumables
Damaged lens	Gallery, S2	Recover from rubble	0 gp
Court regalia and bowl	Sere, W1	Only if surrendered or taken	Ceremonial, no assumed treasure value

Payment Formula

The contract pays **75 gp for each of the twenty-four named survivors brought to lasting safety**, with the 300 gp advance credited against the total.

Total contract payment is:

The greater of 300 gp or 75 gp × survivors saved, to a maximum of 1,800 gp.

Thus:

- Saving all twenty-four yields 1,800 gp total, including the advance.
- Saving sixteen yields 1,200 gp total, so 900 gp remains after the advance.
- Saving four or fewer yields only the 300 gp advance.
- The advance is not reclaimed after a good-faith but unsuccessful rescue.

A person counts as saved if alive on the stable western apron, at S0, or at E0, or alive in the stabilized fortress after successful CLOSE or PASSAGE. A person delivered unwillingly into court custody does not count as saved until free and safe.

Maelin can pay because the funds are physically present and legally assigned to road emergencies. If she dies, Tal and Oren can jointly authorize the chest. If all officials are absent, survivor testimony supports a later claim through the nearest settlement; the money remains finite and is not paid twice.

Taking the whole chest gives possession of the same 1,800 gp, not additional treasure beyond the contract. Theft can create legal and relationship consequences without changing the arithmetic.

Maximum liquid reward: 1,800 gp payment + 600 gp lenses = 2,400 gp for the party.

With the Lens Compact: Maximum retained liquid reward is 1,800 gp, because the lenses are transferred to Sere.

Accomplishment Reward

Homebrew objective XP option: Award 12,000 XP to the party, divided equally among participating characters, for resolving the crisis and bringing the rescue to a meaningful conclusion. For four characters, this is 3,000 XP each.

This award replaces creature XP for the adventure; do not add the listed monster XP again. Negotiation, grounding, bypass, evacuation, retreat under pressure, and combat can all earn it. Reduce or withhold it only if the party abandons the situation without meaningful effort, not because they chose an ending that sacrifices the fortress.

A milestone campaign may instead treat this adventure as one substantial milestone toward the next level, according to its existing advancement pace.

Resolution Paths

Resolve the mechanism first, then count people, property, and obligations. These endings do not restore spent resources, resurrect casualties, or overwrite promises.

Controlled Closure

Requirements: Both brakes set; selector on CLOSE; latch armed at dial 12.

The winter wing returns fully to the local world. The breach contracts into a line and vanishes. Summer rain resumes across both courtyards.

People: Anyone alive in the fortress remains where they are. The pulse danger ends. Shelter lamps continue ordinary warmth for twenty-four hours, allowing treatment and organized departure.

Structure: Both wings and the bridge survive. The gallery roof remains broken. The transit engine becomes inert until a compatible twelve-inch primary alignment lens is delivered and fitted and a full inspection is performed. The three W2 survey lenses cannot perform that repair.

Court: Sere and surviving hounds beyond the breach remain in winter. If still on the bridge when closure resolves, they appear safely on the winter side of the closing threshold and cannot immediately return. This is the engine's visible outward sweep, not an attack or imprisonment.

Reavers: Any remaining on the fortress side are expelled through the same threshold. Defeated or retreated creatures do not return.

Possessions: The party retains authorized lenses and unused beads unless previously transferred or spent. Payment follows actual survivors.

Relationships: Maelin credits the characters with saving the road. Oren accepts an inquiry into his decision. If the

party concealed his negligence, that choice remains a future political issue rather than a new magical threat.

Return visit: Greyspan is a repair site with a working ordinary bridge. Travelers remember their rescuers. No inevitable second breach undoes the victory.

Optional follow-up: The genuine distress signal may justify a separately chosen expedition. It is an opportunity, not a revelation that this rescue secretly failed.

Negotiated Passage

Requirements: Both brakes set; selector on PASSAGE; latch armed at dial 12. A court agreement is recommended but not mechanically required.

The fortress returns to the local world while a stable, walkable opening remains beside the eastern bridge end. Its far side leads into a cold but sheltered caravan yard.

People: Survivors remain free under the listed compacts. They may evacuate normally or stay in the stabilized fortress.

Structure: The bridge and wings survive. The opening stays stable for exactly twelve hours, then closes automatically without another crisis or required defense.

Court: If an agreement exists, Sere fulfills its limits. Her caravan consists of six wagons and eighteen willing attendants. These are post-crisis travelers, not combat reinforcements, captives, or additional rescue targets. The caravan crosses once and departs by the ordinary road.

Reavers after PASSAGE: Successful stabilization expels any remaining R1-R3 through the breach immediately, regardless of whether the party bargained with Sere. The now-stable passage excludes these three scavengers for its entire twelve-hour duration; their feeding opportunity has ended. Their previous wounds, retreats, and destruction remain recorded. This is a defined effect of successful stabilization, not a new combat or another arrival.

Without agreement: Sere requests permission before crossing. The party and garrison can deny it, negotiate then, or allow only voluntary travelers. Selecting PASSAGE does not automatically transfer ownership or invite an army.

Possessions: Transfer the lenses only if the Lens Compact was the agreed price and PASSAGE succeeded. Under the toll agreement, retain the lenses and record the one-year bounded right.

Relationships: Maelin is uneasy but honors a bargain she accepted. Oren considers the controlled cycle proof that the machine can be repaired, while acknowledging that future use requires oversight.

Return visit: Before twelve hours pass, the site is a supervised crossing. Afterward, it is an ordinary fortress awaiting repairs. The compact's text determines any continuing obligation.

Optional follow-up: Trade, diplomatic scrutiny, or disagreement over future transit policy. The court cannot

invent retroactive guest debts.

Evacuation Without Preservation

The party may rescue everyone and leave the engine unresolved.

People: Those at S0 or E0 remain safe regardless of the later transit. This is a successful rescue.

Structure: If no one completes a valid final configuration, the uncontrolled-transit result occurs at dial 12. The road is lost.

Payment: Full rescue payment is available if all twenty-four survive. Preserving the fortress was never a hidden payment condition.

Relationships: Maelin publicly supports prioritizing lives. Oren grieves the loss but cannot reasonably deny what the characters achieved.

Return visit: The wings are isolated ruins. The central road requires rebuilding or a new crossing. The court has no ongoing access after the breach collapses.

Optional follow-up: Recovery of public records or construction of a replacement route, with no obligation to undertake it.

Deliberate Demolition

Requirement: Third fuse pull, or deliberate destruction of both supports.

Resolve falls immediately for anyone on B1. The bridge and controls are gone. The breach closes and pulses end.

People: S0 and E0 occupants remain safe. People in the wings remain on their floors but lose the shelter wards. The summer wing can empty west through S1. The winter wing requires aerial rescue, the east gap, teleportation, climbing to the gorge floor, or another credible method.

The winter wing does not instantly freeze everyone to death. For emergency play, it remains survivable for one hour with blankets and the kettle. After that, apply the campaign's normal cold-weather rules or describe worsening exposure while offering rescue opportunities.

Structure: The two wings remain standing, but engineers later condemn the unsupported bridge approaches. No ordinary foot route connects them.

Court: Sere retreats if given time. Anyone from the delegation on the bridge faces the same fall rules. Survivors in winter do not become her property.

Possessions: Items on the bridge fall with it. Recovering them later requires an actual expedition to the gorge; do not assume automatic recovery.

Relationships: Maelin supports demolition if it protected people or was the last viable option. If done knowingly with preventable casualties, survivors and officials judge that choice directly.

Return visit: Both wings can be approached independently. Shelter lamps remain dark. Brake and selector states are irrelevant because B1 no longer exists.

Uncontrolled Transit

Trigger: Dial 12 arrives without both brakes set and an armed latch.

The bridge tears free. The engine displaces each wing several feet and fractures its foundations, but the wings do not instantly vanish.

Immediate effects:

- Creatures on B1 fall 120 feet unless they prevent the fall.
- Creatures inside either fortress wing make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4d6 bludgeoning damage on a failure or half on a success.
- The shelter wards end.
- The planar breach closes.
- Both wing platforms begin settling toward collapse.

Last evacuation window: Each wing remains traversable for **ten minutes**. During that time, the west route through S1 works; the winter side still requires its established exits. At the end of ten minutes, the engine-bound platforms collapse into the gorge.

This window is explicit and announced through cracking floors, tilting walls, and Oren or Tova's assessment. It is not a hidden rescue roll.

People: Apply damage and track who can move. Survivors already on stable ground are unaffected. Characters may still save people during the ten-minute window.

Court and reavers: Those beyond the breach remain beyond it. Creatures left on collapsing stone face the same environmental consequences; they do not become an automatic sequel threat.

Possessions: Recoverable only if carried out or later retrieved from the gorge.

Relationships: The party's rescue efforts still matter. A failed control plan does not erase the lives it saved. Responsibility depends on actual decisions and evidence.

Return visit: Greyspan is a pair of broken foundations and debris below. The ordinary road ends at the gorge. There is no active portal.

A Partial Rescue

Use this overlay with any ending.

Name the people saved, missing, captured by explicit agreement, or dead. Keep groups from becoming anonymous numbers at the moment consequences matter.

Maelin remembers Fen. Tova remembers Iven. Lio speaks for Kes. Yara asks after Daro. Each gives the characters someone specific to answer, help, or mourn with.

If survivors remain stranded but alive, state where they are and what access remains. "Twelve people are still in W2; the east gap is open and the room is habitable for another hour" is a playable aftermath. "Some people are lost somewhere" is not.

No future hook should restore a destroyed bridge overnight, reopen a successfully closed breach without a new cause, or reveal that a freely completed rescue bargain contained undisclosed terms.

Return-Visit and Continuity Ledger

Use this sheet after each major scene and before describing a return.

STATE	RECORD
Transit dial and accumulated exploration minutes	—
Summer vent	Red / white
Summer brake	Released / set / wedged / damaged
Winter heater work	0 / 1 / 2 actions
Winter clutch	Frozen / thawed
Winter brake	Released / set / wedged / damaged
Selector mode	CLOSE / PASSAGE
Selector latch	Unarmed / armed
Fuse housing	Locked / open / broken
Demolition pulls	0 / 1 / 2 / completed
Gallery aftershock	Pending / spent
Kes	Pinned / freed; hp ____; location ____
M1 and M2	Current hp or grounded/destroyed
Sere, H1, H2	Current hp, location, agreement or surrender
R1, R2, R3	Not arrived / current hp / retreated / destroyed / excluded
Groups A-F	Current location, route, leader, injuries
Reserve lenses	Three individual holders or transfer status
Wardglass beads	Holder and unused/used
Brine	W2 / carried / used / reheating
Demolition key	Holder
Treasury	Amount paid, carried, or remaining
Handouts delivered	Muster / tag / record / compact
Final outcome	—

Continuity Rules

A departed group stays departed unless it has a reason and time to return. A survivor who is healed no longer has the initial movement injury. A damaged enemy retains damage after retreat or surrender.

An exhausted aftershock never resets. Grounded motes never reform. An opened gate remains open unless someone closes it. Broken glass stays broken. A shelter lamp goes dark after demolition and does not resume shining in a later read-aloud.

If the party begins at W2 by flight, Scene 1 has not secretly occurred. Maelin still holds the key, A and B remain under her direction, and the advance has not been paid. If the party operates a brake during its first visit, Encounter 5 begins from that completed state.

If a character carries the inspection tag to Maelin while others negotiate with Sere, record the resulting change in Maelin's orders even if the whole party was not present.

Player Handouts

Distribution instructions are outside the quoted player-facing text. Each handout stands alone and is acquired at its own point.

DM Distribution Guide

These instructions are private. Detach or share each player page separately only after its acquisition point.

Muster Slip - Acquisition: Maelin or Tal provides this in Scene 1. Do not include engine instructions on this slip.

Cracked Lens Inspection Tag - Acquisition: Recover the damaged lens case in S2. This contains evidence of the failure, not the winter control instructions.

Winter Maintenance Record - Acquisition: Tova provides this in W2, or the characters read it on the maintenance workbench. Do not attach the later compact.

Terms at the Silver Bowl - Acquisition: Give this only after the parties have agreed on terms in W1. Fill the consideration line before sharing; omit unused alternatives.

Handout: Muster Slip

GREYSPAN - PEOPLE STILL INSIDE

Reception hall

Maelin, Tal, Eda, Joss

Pell, Rud, Sive, Fen

Gallery

Lio, Brin, Amra, Kes

Winter mess room

Oren, Tova, Linn, Harl

Nera, Besh, Col, Iven

Yara, Sol, Venn, Daro

Six groups. Four people in each. Twenty-four total.

Western gathering point: the iron road marker beyond the apron.

Mark a destination beside every name. Do not count someone safe merely because they have left a room.

Handout: Cracked Lens Inspection Tag

PRIMARY TRANSIT ALIGNMENT LENS - INSPECTION

Twelve-inch optic. Secondary survey spares have incompatible diameter and mounting.

A hairline fracture crosses the inner ring.

Replace before the next transit. A short crossing places the same initial load on the lens as a long crossing.

Shelter lamps may remain in service while the engine is idle.

Custodian acknowledgment: O. Vale

A later note, written beneath the inspection:

Distress signal confirmed. Compatible primary replacement has not arrived. I accept responsibility for one emergency activation.

Handout: Winter Maintenance Record

ONE CONTROLLED RETURN

Summer brake

Open the exhaust until the viewing pane is white. Then lower the locking arm.

Winter brake

Thaw the clutch with warm brine or the hand heater. Then lower the locking arm.

Both arms remain locked after the operator leaves.

Bridge selector

Two steady lights mean both brakes are set.

CLOSE returns Greyspan and shuts the opening.

PASSAGE returns Greyspan and holds a road open for twelve hours. The road then closes by itself.

Choose the setting. Arm the latch.

Beginning the transit leaves six pulses. The final pulse uses the controls as they stand at that moment.

Shelters

Reception, gallery, and winter mess room draw protection through the bridge spine.

Severing the bridge ends their protection immediately.

The selector can project a brief shelter around itself while the bridge remains intact.

Handout: Terms at the Silver Bowl

AGREEMENT FOR ONE PASSAGE

The undersigned freely accept these terms.

Greyspan's opening shall be set to PASSAGE for one controlled cycle.

No unwilling person shall be taken through the opening. No survivor's name, service, memory, or future shall become a debt under this agreement.

Lady Sere Vault's caravan may cross once during the twelve-hour opening. It shall carry no unwilling passengers or prisoners.

Lady Sere Vault and her escort shall not attack the rescuers, occupants, or controls. She shall prevent the third seam scavenger from entering during the final transit.

The agreed consideration is:

If the controlled passage does not open, the consideration is not owed.

The opening closes after twelve hours. No continuing right exists except one expressly written above.

A knowing breach shall be recorded on this page. This agreement imposes no hidden penalty.

Accepted freely by:

Quick Reference Sheets

Engine at the Table

TASK	REQUIREMENT	COST	RESULT
Vent summer cylinder	Adjacent operator	1 action	Pane turns white
Set summer brake	White pane	1 action	Summer brake set
Thaw winter clutch	Brine, heater, or fire	1 action with brine; 2 crank actions; or ≥5 fire damage	Clutch stays thawed
Set winter brake	Thawed clutch	1 action	Winter brake set
Choose selector mode	Adjacent operator	1 action to change	CLOSE or PASSAGE; latch unarms
Arm latch	Both brakes set	1 action	Latch armed
Unlatch	Adjacent operator, no active guard	1 action	Latch unarmed
Guard latch	Adjacent creature	1 action	Blocks unlatching until its next turn, subject to stated limits
Project shelter	Adjacent operator	1 action	20-foot-radius pulse protection this round
Begin transit early	Adjacent operator	1 action	Dial becomes 6; crisis starts
Open fuse housing	Key, tools, or damage	Interaction with key; action/check; or 15 damage	Lever exposed
Pull demolition lever	Exposed lever	3 actions total	Third pull destroys bridge
Reset demolition pulls	Before third pull	1 action	Counter returns to 0

Crisis Round Sheet

ROUND	DIAL AFTER ROUND	NEW OPPOSITION	END-OF-ROUND EFFECT
1	7	R1 and R2 already present	Move civilians; 1d6 exposure pulse
2	8	None	Move civilians; 1d6 exposure pulse

ROUND	DIAL AFTER ROUND	NEW OPPOSITION	END-OF-ROUND EFFECT
3	9	R3 at round start unless excluded	Move civilians; 1d6 exposure pulse
4	10	None	Move civilians; 1d6 exposure pulse
5	11	None	Move civilians; 1d6 exposure pulse
6	12	None	Move civilians; resolve engine; no additional pulse

The pulse protects neither a creature merely because it is on a roof nor an entire group merely because one member is inside a shelter. Apply actual positions and individual protective effects.

Evacuation Dispatch Sheet

Before moving a group, record:

Group: ____

Leader: ____

Destination: S0 / E0 / stabilized shelter / other specified place

Route: ____

Departure trigger: ____

Movement: 60 feet / 40 feet with litter / 30 feet with slowed member

Protection: ____

Fallback if blocked: ____

A useful fallback is "return to W2 if the bridge lane is occupied" or "stop inside S1 until the next escort arrives." A vague instruction to "find somewhere safe" does not tell the DM how the group behaves.

NPC Bargain Reference

PERSON	WANTS NOW	ACCEPTS READILY	WILL NOT DO VOLUNTARILY
Maelin	Rescue and a clear bridge decision	Evidence, assigned responsibility, accountable evacuation	Perform demolition while knowingly stranding people without necessity
Oren	Keep shelters alive and repair his mistake	Another competent operator; oversight; evacuation if required	Lie about the control sequence

PERSON	WANTS NOW	ACCEPTS READILY	WILL NOT DO VOLUNTARILY
Tova	Move people with practical tools	Clear destination, litters, brine use, independent brake work	Wait for rank to settle every small decision
Sere	Valuable, recognized passage	Lenses or bounded toll compact	Accept an undefined obligation or remain for a certain collapse
Tal	Get the named people onto safe ground	Messenger and escort duties	Abandon a carried survivor because a fight looks exciting

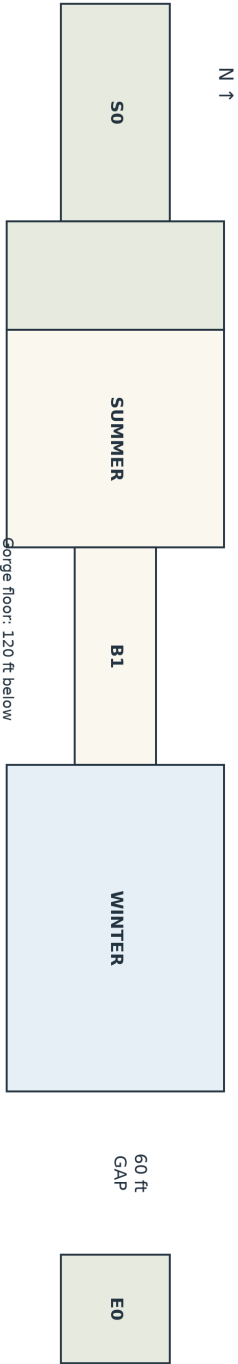
Player Map Sheets

Share the appropriate sheet only when the party knows its layout. Cover unexplored rooms when needed. These sheets omit DM positions and hidden mechanics.

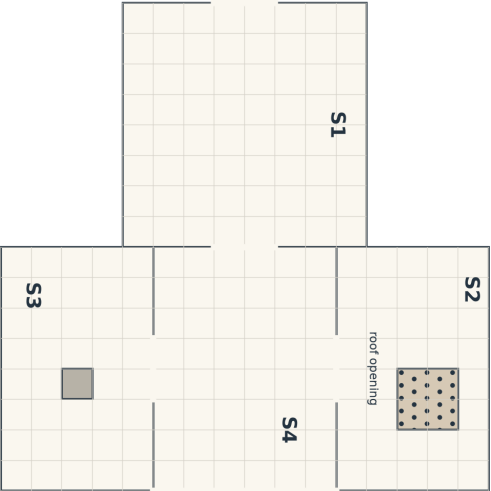
The Fortress of Two Seasons

THE FORTRESS OF TWO SEASONS

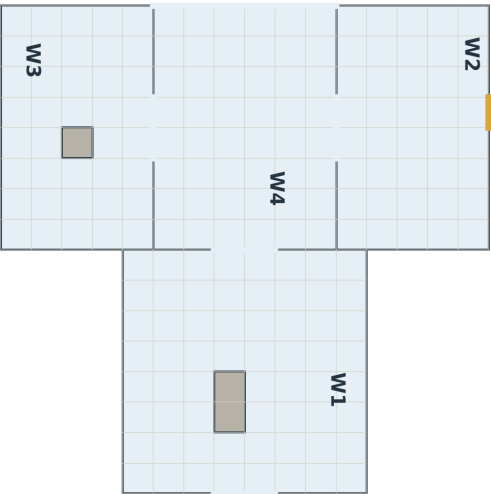
Greyspan site plan | PLAYER MAP - reveal interiors as explored



SUMMER WING - 5 ft grid



WINTER WING - 5 ft grid



Site overview has the same orientation and geometry as the enlarged wings. Bridge: 80 x 30 ft. Rooms: 20 ft walls.

Gallery roof opening: 10 x 10 ft. Winter clerestory: 5 ft wide, 10-15 ft above floor. The east gate opens onto the apron.

Room keys identify places only. The diagram grants no knowledge of unexplored rooms or their occupants.

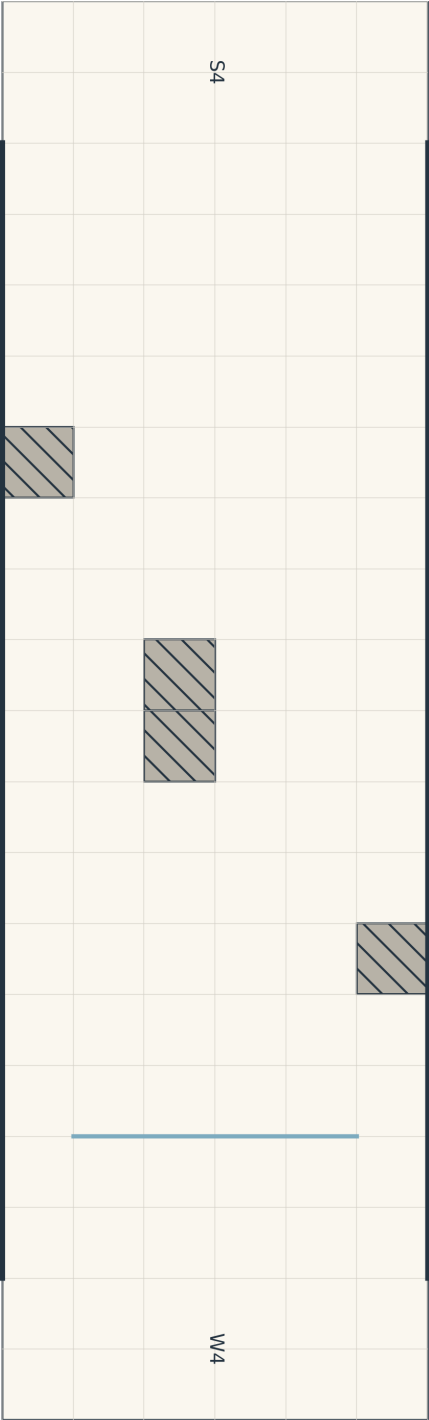
Map key: use the keyed location descriptions on the following pages.

The Fortress of Two Seasons

THE FORTRESS OF TWO SEASONS

Bridge tactical enlargement | PLAYER MAP

N ↑



B1 - 80 ft between courtyard edges

GRID: 5 FEET. Rails are 3 ft high. The gorge floor is 120 ft below the deck. Open courtyard connections at both ends.

Two central blocks: 4 ft high. Pylons: 8 ft high. Pale vertical plane: 20 ft high; it does not block movement.

Visible objects and clear lanes are shown. No control functions, encounter arrivals, or ward boundaries are disclosed.

Map key: use the keyed location descriptions on the following pages.