



FAMILIAR / A BEGINNER ADVENTURE

The Broken Watchtower

Start Here

For: 3-5 level-1 characters using D&D 5e, SRD 5.1. **Play time:** 60-90 minutes. **Goal:** recover courier Berrik Slatefoot's sealed dispatch from goblin robbers and return it to his cart.

Bring: character sheets, pencils, a d20 and damage dice; use the creature numbers on page 12. Read pages 3 and 6-16, mark the six map keys, and note the three goblins and one bugbear. Print or display the map and page 14 separately when instructed.

Budget table time: courier 10 minutes; barricade 15; tower exploration 20; finale 20; return and rewards 10. Discussion, scouting, bargaining and combat share these budgets. Reward an early clever success; never add another fight to fill time.

Your DM loop: describe the place, ask what characters do, then resolve consequences. Call for a roll only when success is uncertain. A check is d20 plus the relevant ability and any listed proficiency; meeting the difficulty class (DC) succeeds. Combat rounds last about six seconds.

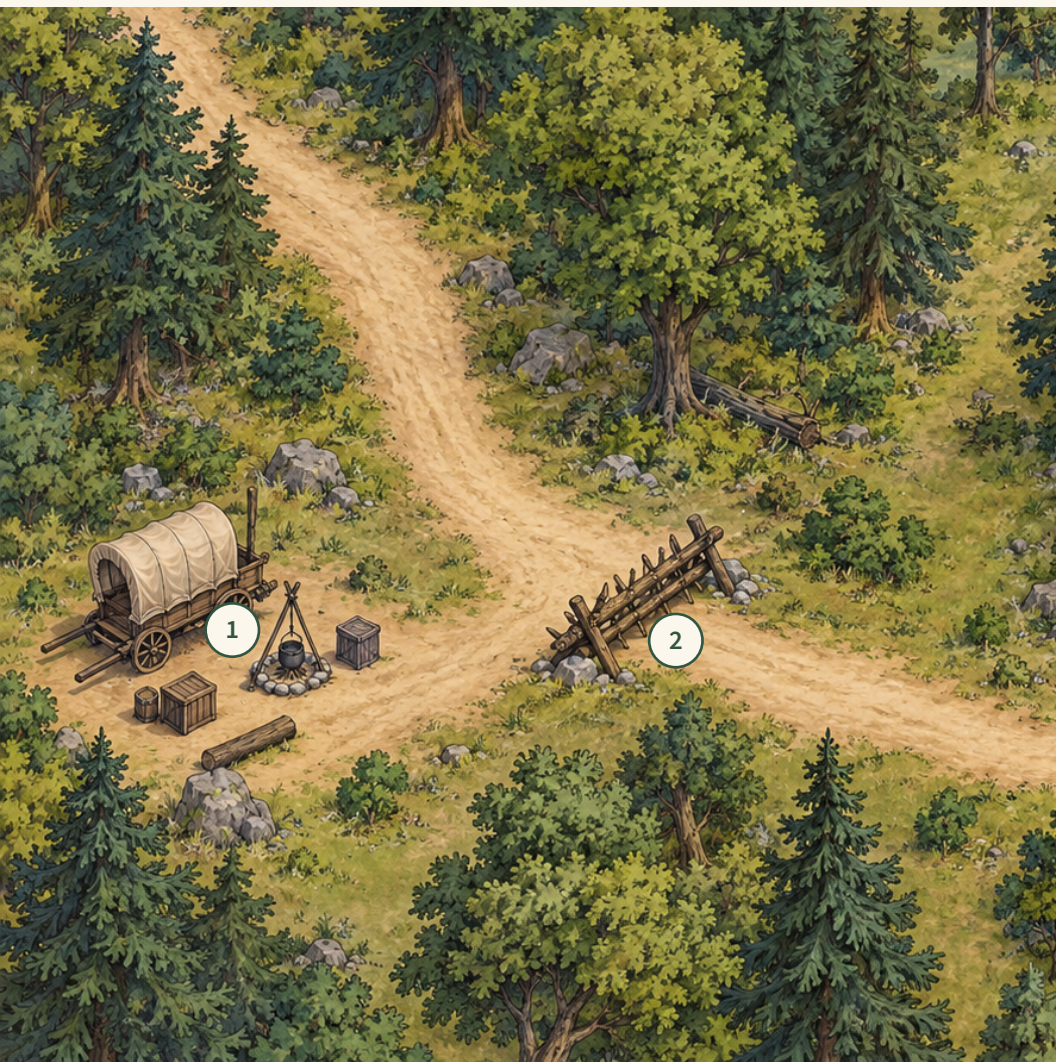
The bugbear can knock down a first-level hero with one blow. Warn players before they approach him; escape, negotiation and rescuing a fallen friend all count as choices.

DM Introduction

Dwarven dispatch rider Berrik Slatefoot carries orders diverting grain wagons away from a bridge under repair. Three goblin highway robbers stole his leather dispatch pouch, then fled to a ruined watchtower. Without the orders, the wagons will wait at the closed bridge for a day. Berrik tends Turnip, his shaken mule, beside a cart with a snapped axle. He will not abandon the animal and wagon to chase thieves.

The goblins thought their theft would buy supper. Gorr, a bugbear enforcer, claimed the pouch and withheld Skiv's promised eight-gold-piece wage from his own mercenary pay. Two goblins, Nip and Tatter, guard a roadside barricade. The third, Skiv, sulks in the tower's ground-floor storeroom. Skiv wants his promised wages and an escape from Gorr's orders. Gorr boasts loudly upstairs; he believes the sealed pouch must be worth a ransom.

Begin at Berrik's cart, then let the characters scout or confront the barricade. They can enter through the front or the visible rear gap, learn about the goblins' quarrel, and reach Gorr by stairs or an outside ledge. Recovering the dispatch, buying it, stealing it or copying its readable orders resolves the job. Retreat leaves Gorr a road threat; driving him away or capturing him ends that threat. Failure delays the wagons without requiring a sequel.



Adventure Map

1: Berrik's cart → 2: Timber barricade → 3: Ground storeroom. A side path connects 2 to 6: Rear gap, then 3. Stairs join 3 to 4: Upper hall. Exterior rubble joins 6 to 5: East ledge, whose window enters 4.



Map Key

Player-safe cutaway; top is north, not a battle grid. Cart to barricade: five minutes walking; barricade to door: 30 feet. Each tower room is 20 feet square; upper hall and ledge are 10 feet above ground. Stairs cost 20 feet of movement. Return by either ground entrance.

Scene 1: The Courier's Cart

The loaned potion

One potion, not one per hero. An action drinks it or feeds it to an adjacent creature; restore 2d4 + 2 HP, up to maximum HP. The vial is mundane after use and never refills. Berrik's full profile is on page 15.

Read-Aloud

A cart leans on a snapped axle beside the forest road. A white-bearded dwarf steadies a limping mule. Small footprints lead toward a stone tower. "They took my dispatch! Please tell me you can get it back."

DM Guidance: Berrik offers 20 gp to the whole party, payable for the original dispatch, even with a broken seal. He lends one healing potion and 50 feet of hemp rope; return the rope and any unused potion after any ending. He describes three goblins with shields and bows. A deep voice now carries from the tower: "Everything valuable belongs upstairs!" The robbers called their leader a bugbear; Berrik warns that its heavy weapon can fell a hero.

Choices: Follow the obvious footprints without a roll; ask about payment or the pouch; scout before advancing. DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) finds a discarded ration and the side path. On failure, Berrik points out the path.

If Things Go Wrong: Refusing the job ends safely. Berrik accepts advice about avoiding the barricade; he never insists on fighting.

Next: Accept and follow the road to key 2, or take the side path toward key 6.

Scene 2: The Timber Barricade

Read-Aloud

Two green goblins stand behind a timber beam across the road. One points a shortbow; the other shakes an empty cooking pot. "Road tax! Food first. Coins also good." A narrow trail curves around the tower.

DM Guidance: Nip and Tatter start behind the beam, 30 feet from the party. They attack if attacked or openly rushed; conversation costs no roll. One ration buys safe passage for the entire party. They name Skiv inside and Gorr upstairs with the dispatch. They want supper more than a fight.

Choices: Pay food; fight; frighten them with DC 10 Charisma (Intimidation); or use the side path. For stealth, each traveling hero rolls DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth); at least half, rounded up, must succeed. Cover is required. The guards' backs can be turned with a credible distraction instead.

If Things Go Wrong: Failed threats or stealth draw a demand to stop; the party can still pay, retreat or fight. Loud combat or a second failed attempt warns Gorr. One fallen goblin makes the other flee through the rear gap and out again; neither joins Gorr's fight.

Next: Pass to key 3, or bypass the beam toward key 6.

Two goblin guards

Each: AC 15; HP 7; speed 30 feet. Scimitar +4, reach 5 feet, 5 slashing; shortbow +4, range 80/320 feet, 5 piercing. Full dice and traits: page 12. The beam gives half cover: +2 AC and Dexterity saves against attacks crossing it. Warned state: page 11.

Scene 3: The Tower's Lower Room

Before ascending

Rooms: 20 feet square; stairs cost 20 feet of movement; ledge is 3 feet wide, 10 feet high. Crates give half cover. A fall from the ledge deals 1d6 bludgeoning and leaves the creature prone. Skiv uses goblin statistics if attacked; he flees rather than fighting beside Gorr.

Read-Aloud

Daylight crosses a room of open crates and fallen stone. A goblin counts empty purse strings. Wooden stairs climb toward the loud voice above. Through a gap in the rear wall, rubble rises beneath an open upstairs window.

DM Guidance: Shield ready, scimitar sheathed, Skiv explains that Gorr holds the pouch and his promised eight-coin wage. He offers one distraction upstairs if the characters promise him the eight coins after recovering them. Show page 14's scouting card now.

Choices: Accept or refuse Skiv's deal; inspect the stairs; enter through the rear gap; or climb the outside rubble to the ledge. No roll discovers these routes. Skiv will go upstairs and lower the loaned rope from a window ring if asked; doing so does not distract Gorr. Otherwise the first climber uses DC 10 Strength (Athletics), then ties it there. Secured climbing needs no check; all climbing costs double movement.

If Things Go Wrong: A failed climb leaves the hero on the ground and warns Gorr with falling rubble. Skiv retreats through the gap if threatened, shouting a warning.

Next: Stairs or the ledge's open window reach key 4 and the finale.

Finale



Gorr: A shaggy bugbear enforcer guards a sealed courier pouch in the upper hall; this illustrates a calm arrival.

Read-Aloud

The upper hall holds a table, an iron bell and a shaggy warrior with a spiked morningstar. "My tower. My prizes." The open window overlooks the rear path.

DM Guidance: Gorr stands by the table, 10 feet from stairs and window. Calm: pouch on table. Warned: pouch clipped to his belt. He demands 5 gp for it and honors payment.

Choices: Bargain with DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion or Deception); success gets the pouch without payment. Steal it under a distraction, DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand). Skiv's promised distraction gives advantage on that one check. Fight or retreat instead.

If Things Go Wrong: Failed bargaining allows payment or withdrawal. Failed theft starts combat. Gorr attacks the nearest standing enemy; at 7 HP or fewer he offers the pouch for safe departure.

Next: Leave by stairs or ledge and return to Berrik.

Gorr alone

AC 16; HP 27; speed 30 feet. Morningstar +4, reach 5 feet, 11 piercing. Full dice, javelins and traits: page 12. No goblin reinforcements. His boasting reveals him; heroes who heard it are not surprised. He stops pursuit at the barricade. Use normal opportunity attacks during escape (page 16).

Endings and Rewards

Dispatch recovered: Berrik pays 20 gp to the whole party, including if the seal was opened but the orders remain readable. He lashes a temporary axle into place and takes the dispatch onward. The grain wagons can use the safe road.

Orders copied: If the original cannot be retrieved, a readable copy earns **5 gp total**. A hero beside the open pouch needs one uninterrupted minute to copy its two sentences; taking it is faster under pressure. This payment replaces the 20 gp, never adds to it. Berrik signs the copy before delivery.

Retreat or refusal: No job payment. After every ending return Berrik's rope and unused potion; he forgives a spent potion. Berrik waits for another messenger, delaying the wagons one day. Injuries and spent resources persist. Gorr keeps any unclaimed pouch or coins.

Treasure: One purse of Gorr's personal mercenary pay, exactly **8 gp**, sits on his table. The purse is adventure treasure; no absent claimant exists. No other loot is hidden here. If Skiv was promised this purse and receives it, he and surviving goblins abandon the road. Otherwise he leaves resentful; he does not ambush the party. Maximum retained reward: **28 gp total**, before bribes. With Skiv paid, retained reward is 20 gp before bribes.

Advancement: Recovering the original or usable copy, by any method, advances level-1 heroes to level 2 after the adventure (optional milestone rule). Defeated or captured enemies need no killing blow.

On a delivery ending, read:

Read-Aloud

Berrik taps the message against his satchel, then strokes Turnip's nose. "You gave those wagon drivers a way through. That's worth more than a story about a fight."

Running the Adventure

Warned state

Begin calm. Loud combat, a second failed guard approach, failed climbing or Skiv's shout makes Gorr **warned**: move the dispatch from table to belt. Never reset this state during the visit. His voice still reveals him; goblins never reinforce his fight.

Stealing and spells

A thief must reach the pouch; distraction permits the finale's check. Otherwise Gorr objects before theft. Success takes it; failure starts initiative. Taking his coins while he watches also starts initiative. During combat, retrieving unattended loot is an action (homebrew); a worn pouch still requires distraction and the check.

Magelike hand: action to cast, verbal/somatic components, range 30 feet, duration one minute. Further actions move it up to 30 feet or manipulate objects; load limit 10 pounds. Each pouch weighs one pound. It cannot attack or activate magic items. Visible casting or movement prompts initiative; resolve completed actions normally. Use its range and the same theft check for the clipped pouch. Respect sleep and other character-sheet spells; bypass earns full reward.

Combat, rescue and departure

Initiative: d20 + Dexterity modifier, highest first. Each turn: movement, one action; bonus actions need a feature. Track HP across scenes.

Rescue (homebrew): an action lifts an adjacent willing or unconscious ally. Carry at half speed; total load, including gear, cannot exceed $15 \times$ Strength pounds. Two adjacent rescuers may split weight; each spends an action and moves together at half speed.

Gorr never attacks unconscious heroes. Surrender lets survivors carry fallen companions away; leave tower loot, keep personal gear. Without surrender, use turns and opportunity attacks until everyone escapes. The ledge's fall deals 1d6 damage; secured rope descent costs double movement. Dying heroes still make death saves (page 16).

Creature Reference

Goblin: Nip, Tatter or Skiv

Small humanoid; AC 15 (leather, shield); HP 7 (2d6); speed 30 feet. STR 8 (−1), DEX 14 (+2), CON 10 (+0), INT 10 (+0), WIS 8 (−1), CHA 8 (−1). Stealth +6; darkvision 60 feet; passive Perception 9; Common, Goblin; CR 1/4 (50 XP). Saving throws use listed ability modifiers.

Nimble Escape: bonus action Disengage or Hide each turn. Hiding needs cover or obscurity, then Dexterity (Stealth) against observers' passive Perception.

Scimitar: +4 to hit one target within 5 feet; 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Shortbow: +4 to hit one target, range 80/320 feet; 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing. Beyond normal range, disadvantage; beyond long range, impossible.

Nip and Tatter flee when either drops. Skiv flees when threatened. They do not return or reinforce Gorr during this adventure. Skiv keeps his shield ready and draws his scimitar only if cornered.

Bugbear: Gorr

Medium humanoid; AC 16 (hide, shield); HP 27 (5d8 + 5); speed 30 feet. STR 15 (+2), DEX 14 (+2), CON 13 (+1), INT 8 (−1), WIS 11 (+0), CHA 9 (−1). Stealth +6, Survival +2; darkvision 60 feet; passive Perception 10; Common, Goblin; CR 1 (200 XP). Saving throws use listed modifiers.

Brute: extra melee damage die already included below; do not add another. **Surprise Attack:** if Gorr surprises a creature and hits it in combat's first round, add 7 (2d6) damage. His audible boasts prevent surprise on the default approach.

Morningstar: +4, reach 5 feet, one target; 11 (2d8 + 2) piercing. **Javelin:** +4, reach 5 feet or range 30/120; 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing in melee, 5 (1d6 + 2) at range. He carries two javelins. One attack per action. At ≤7 HP he bargains; he never attacks unconscious heroes.

People and Places

Berrik: Wants the wagons rerouted and his pouch returned. Knows all guard numbers, the pouch's sun seal and the side path. Remains at the cart; lends one potion and 50 feet of rope, then joins no fights. His profile is on page 15.

Nip and Tatter: Hungry robbers, not loyal soldiers. Nip speaks first: "Tax means food." Tatter copies the last loud speaker. They accept one ration or flee from a convincing threat. If bypassed quietly, they remain at the beam but do not block heroes escaping Gorr.

Skiv: Wants his promised wages and freedom from Gorr. "Big paws. Small share." He shares route information without payment and risks one distraction for the promised eight coins. In the finale, he rattles the bell and complains about missing food, occupying Gorr's attention for one theft attempt. Then he leaves through the rear gap. He does not promise repeated distractions.

Gorr: Wants ransom and respect. Calls the pouch his "royal orders," but cannot read them. Clear evidence of approaching guards earns advantage on the finale's negotiation check; a credible counterfeit can do the same. He will not surrender just because somebody claims to be important.

Tower details: Daylight illuminates both floors; nighttime requires a light source for creatures without darkvision. Front door and upper window are unbarred. Ground rear gap and ledge are each 3 feet wide. Ground crates and the upper table provide half cover only when between attacker and target. The bell is ordinary: pulling its rope makes audible noise, not magic. Nothing collapses without an explicit warning.

Player Handout

DM release: Show the map after Scene 1. Give the scouting card when the party examines the lower room or Skiv describes it. Reveal the dispatch text only when a character opens the recovered pouch or reads it at the table. Separate the cards or conceal unrevealed text; never show this whole page at once. Remove DM instructions from player copies.

Scouting card

The tower has two square rooms, one above the other. Stairs lead up from the storeroom. A gap opens through the rear ground wall. Outside rubble reaches a narrow ledge beneath an open upstairs window. The ledge is ten feet above the ground. A rope could help you climb and descend.

Skiv complains that Gorr withheld his promised eight-coin wage. Loud shouting comes from upstairs. A direct fight is one option; a bargain, distraction or quiet approach might work too.

The sealed pouch

A leather pouch bears a red wax sun seal. Its outside tag reads:
"Northgate quartermaster. Grain wagons. Return receipt required."

Dispatch inside

"Hold all grain wagons before the bridge under repair. Send them along the east road to Northgate instead."

Courier's offer: 20 gold pieces to the whole party for the original readable dispatch; 5 gold pieces for a readable copy instead. An opened seal does not cancel payment. Return the loaned rope and any unused potion after the job.

Character Sheet

Profile

Berrik Slatefoot: male dwarf dispatch rider; homebrew NPC, no class levels. AC 14 (chain shirt); HP 13 (2d8 + 4); speed 25 feet. Tends Turnip at his damaged cart.

Abilities

Ability	Score	Modifier
Strength	12	+1
Dexterity	12	+1
Constitution	14	+2
Intelligence	11	+0
Wisdom	10	+0
Charisma	9	-1

Proficiency +2; Animal Handling and Perception +2; passive Perception 12. Other checks/saves use listed modifiers. Poison saves have advantage (Dwarven Resilience).

Actions

Shortsword: one attack, +3 to hit, reach 5 feet, one target; 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage. **Medicine:** action, DC 10 Wisdom (+0) check stabilizes an adjacent dying creature; grants no HP. **Dwarf traits:** darkvision 60 feet; Common and Dwarvish; resistance halves poison damage.

Equipment

Chain shirt, shortsword, ochre cloak, stained courier apron, sun-clasp satchel, walking staff, 50 feet of hemp rope, one healing potion and 20 gp payment fund. Potion: action to drink/feed adjacent creature, restores 2d4 + 2 HP up to maximum; consumed once, no refill. Loan rules: page 6.

Roleplaying

Protects Turnip; finishes delivery. Taps satchel addresses in wheel rhythms: "Road first. Heroics afterward." Knows three goblins at tower, bugbear upstairs. Accepts retreat; forgives spent potion; pays by ending (page 10).



Quick Reference

Attacks: d20 + attack bonus; total at least target AC hits. Natural 1 misses; natural 20 hits and doubles damage dice, not modifiers. Use printed average monster damage or roll its dice. Advantage: roll two d20s, keep higher; disadvantage: keep lower. They cancel if both apply.

Movement: move up to speed and take one action. Dash adds speed as movement. Disengage prevents opportunity attacks for that turn. Otherwise leaving an enemy's reach lets it use its one reaction for one melee attack. Prone creatures spend half their speed to stand. Half cover: +2 AC and Dexterity saves when the obstacle intervenes.

At 0 HP: unconscious; cannot act or move. Start each turn with a death save: d20, 10+ succeeds. Three successes stabilize; three failures kill. Natural 1 counts two failures; natural 20 restores 1 HP. Damage adds a failed save, or two on a critical hit. Attacks have advantage against unconscious targets; hits from within 5 feet are critical. Excess damage at least equal to maximum HP causes instant death. An action and DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) stabilizes; healing restores consciousness. Stable creatures regain 1 HP after 1d4 hours unless healed.

Rest: a one-hour short rest allows spending Hit Dice, rolling each plus Constitution modifier for HP. An eight-hour long rest, begun with at least 1 HP, restores HP and up to half total Hit Dice, minimum one, once per 24 hours. A rest pauses the fiction; it does not consume an hour of table play.

Optional easier: three heroes: Gorr HP 18. **Harder:** five confident heroes: HP 35. Keep him alone; preserve his morale and all exits.

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