

The Mill That Grinds at Midnight



Dungeon Master's edition

The characters arrive at Alderhook as frightened villagers gather around the communal oven. Healer Toma Brindle asks them to stop the dreams before more children eat the bread. Miller Nessa Venn insists someone has sabotaged her flour. She offers 50 gp total for explaining Jory's binding as the cause of the haunting and leaving the mill able to resume safe work; explain both conditions before the party accepts.

OPENING READ-ALoud

At the alder ridge, rainwater runs through the wagon ruts toward Alderhook. Harrow Mill's wheel groans beyond the trees. A courier from the village meets you with an unopened flour sack: "The healer needs help before tonight's grinding." Will you follow him to the square or inspect the mill first?

Credits

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One-shot for four 3rd-level characters • 3-4 hours • D&D 5e SRD 5.1-compatible

Overview

Flour from Harrow Mill gives every eater the same dream: a soaked man bound beneath a turning millstone, pleading, *"Don't wake it."* At midnight, the mill must run to complete its last bread order. The characters can trace the tainted flour, negotiate with squatters sheltering in an old tollhouse, uncover a buried injustice, and survive a flood-driven mill disaster.

This is a rural mystery with a **non-combat resolution**. Combat may occur, but cannot settle the central wrong by itself.

DM Introduction

Twenty-two years ago, millwright **Jory Bale** discovered that mill owner Orr Venn had concealed a cracked axle after a flood. Jory tried to stop the wheel before it failed. Orr bound him in the lower sluice chamber, reported that he fled, and allowed him to drown.

Recent repairs disturbed the old floodway. Water now reaches Jory's remains and brass tally punch. His echo enters flour passing through the wheel. He wants the wheel stopped safely, his name restored, and his remains brought into daylight.

Run it as a mystery, then a rescue. Give clues when their sources are investigated. Rolls determine speed, cooperation or exposure to danger. There are two distinct objectives: make the mill physically safe, and settle Jory's grievance. Damaging his manifestation can stop tonight's disaster, but only acknowledgement, correction of the record and daylight for his remains end the haunting.

Endings: Public restoration clears Jory's name and offers Bren's group paid repair work. Quiet restitution ends the haunting through burial and a private correction. Saving workers while losing the wheel leaves a broken mill and imported winter flour. Dispersing Jory without restitution saves tonight's machinery but brings the dreams back next milling season. These branches are detailed under Resolution Paths.

Before play: Read the clue table, keyed map and Surge procedure. Put aside the three handouts until found. Prepare four Surge counters and note whether workers were evacuated, the hoist was rigged, and the tally punch changed hands. Tell players that this adventure includes a wrongful drowning, frightened families and flood danger; agree how much detail suits the group. Describe the discovery without graphic remains.

Equipment: Nessa's workbench lends a crowbar, 50 feet of rope, two timber wedges, a lantern and ordinary carpenter's tools. Eda shows it freely. Assign carriers. These are loans; no tool purchase or special character class is required. An improvised sturdy beam can substitute for a wedge. A tool check uses the ability specified in the

procedure and proficiency only if the character is proficient with that tool.

Pacing: Allow 15 minutes for the hook, 35 for the oven, 40 for the Rookhouse, 45 for mill investigation/preparation, 35-45 for the rescue and 10-20 for restitution: roughly 3-3½ hours, with roleplaying and a second visit extending to four. The normal fictional arrival is two hours before midnight; route travel takes ten minutes per leg and a focused search or repair takes ten minutes. Announce the second evening bell at the end of the first hour. At midnight, start Scene 4 if the wheel still runs. Do not charge real table discussion as fictional delay. Clever early shutdown is an earned shorter route; do not restart the wheel to force the finale.

If they stop it early: The mill can be shut down safely before the Surge with the same brake procedure, outside initiative. Jory can then be addressed at the lower grate and his remains recovered; run the moral decision without flood damage. If the party leaves without stopping or settling it, the workers evacuate when the wheel cracks, the mill breaks at midnight, and the dreams persist. There is no hidden offscreen worker death.

Hook

The characters arrive at Alderhook as frightened villagers gather around the communal oven. Healer Toma Brindle asks them to stop the dreams before more children eat the bread. Miller Nessa Venn insists someone has sabotaged her flour. She offers 50 gp total for explaining Jory's binding as the cause of the haunting and leaving the mill able to resume safe work; explain both conditions before the party accepts.

Stakes

- **Immediate:** Dreamers lose sleep and panic; workers may be injured when the mill surges at midnight.
- **Local:** If Harrow Mill breaks, Alderhook loses its winter milling capacity.
- **Human:** Jory Bale's death was hidden to protect a respected family. Exposing it costs Nessa dearly, but silence leaves Jory unrested.
- **Moral choice:** The party can clear Jory's name publicly, settle matters privately, or save the mill while leaving the truth unresolved.

Factions

- Nessa Venn: Harrow Mill's exhausted owner; she wants the mill running, then the truth contained.
- Toma Brindle: Alderhook's healer; he wants all tainted flour withdrawn and the villagers protected.
- Bren Cleft: leader of the Rookhouse squatters; he wants shelter and food for six displaced people.
- Jory Bale: the wronged millwright's echo; he wants acknowledgement and release, not revenge.

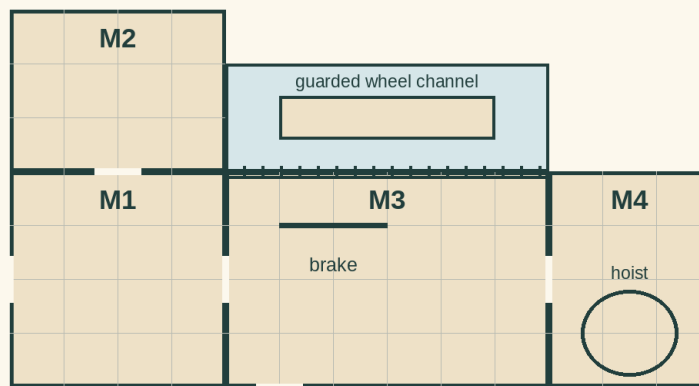
Locations

- Village Oven: a communal bread oven and gathering point in Alderhook's square.
- Rookhouse: an abandoned tollhouse above the reopened flood culvert.
- Harrow Mill: Nessa's working mill, office, wheel floor, and grain hoist.
- Lower Sluice: the flooded chamber beneath Harrow Mill where Jory died.

Keyed Site Map - Harrow Mill

HARROW MILL

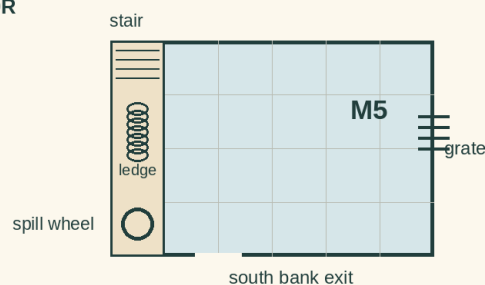
Player-safe plan • 5-foot grid • upper floor is 10 feet above the sluice



N ↑

- M1 Entry / loans
- M2 Office
- M3 Wheel floor
- M4 Grain hoist
- M5 Lower Sluice

LOWER FLOOR



M3 stair → M5

20 feet of movement

Shallow lower channel
and dry west ledge.

Brake chain: west ledge

The Rookhouse is a separate site ten minutes north along the ditch.

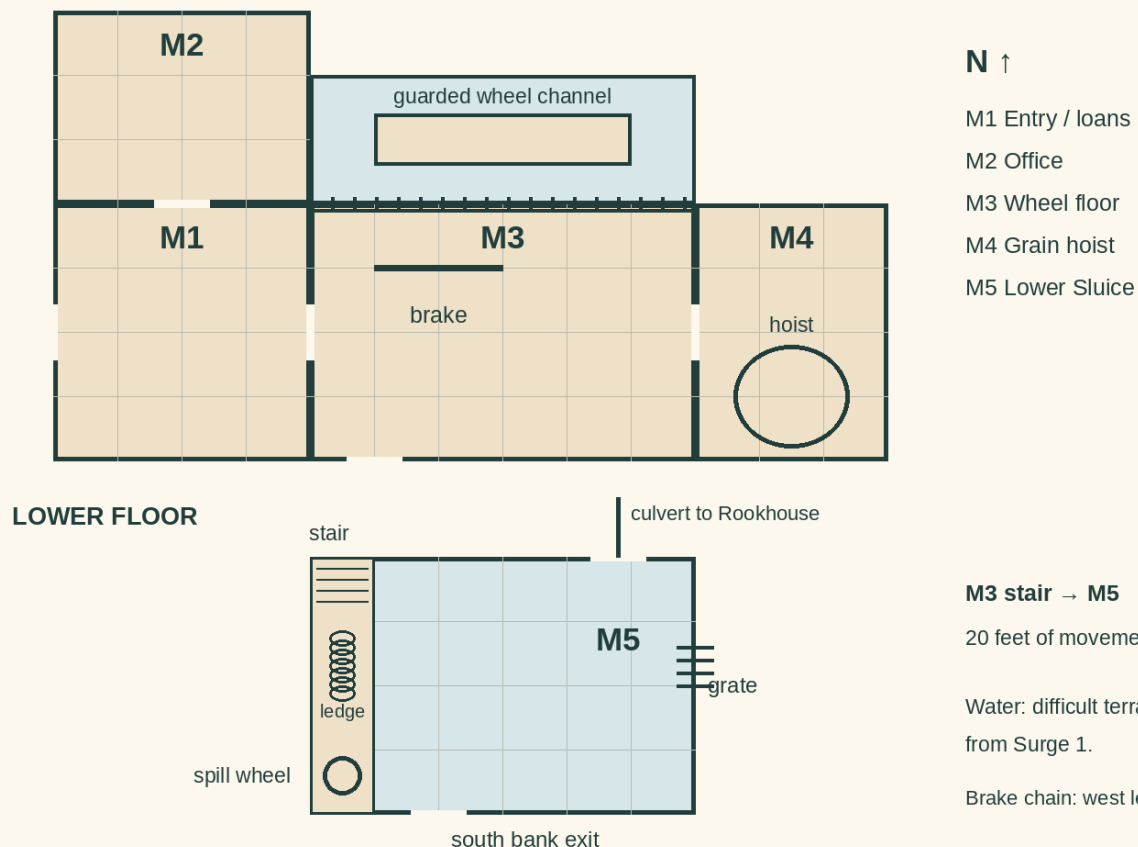
Safe exits: M1 west door and M5 south bank. Map labels show no hidden evidence.

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

Harrow Mill - DM Plan

HARROW MILL

PRIVATE DM PLAN • culvert and future Surge state • never share this sheet



DM ONLY: north culvert runs 60 feet to the Rookhouse; impassable during the Surge.

Safe exits: M1 west door and M5 south bank. Map labels show no hidden evidence.

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

North is upstream. The mill's upper floor stands ten feet above the Lower Sluice. Each square is five feet; ceilings are ten feet high. The player map shows visible machinery and ordinary exits. The following private DM plan also marks the culvert and its closure; share that route only once discovered. Neither map marks hidden evidence or the ghost's position. The village oven is ten minutes west; the Rookhouse is ten minutes north along the ditch. Walking between the mill and Rookhouse does not require entering the culvert.

KEY	SPACE	ACCESS AND USE
M1	Entry/workbench, 20 × 20 ft.	West door to dry yard; east open doorway to M3; north door to M2. Loans are here.
M2	Office, 20 × 15 ft.	Door to M1; locked only if Nessa was accused without evidence. Spare key with Eda; crowbar opens in one action, or DC 12 thieves' tools. Failed tools check costs ten minutes, then Eda offers her key.
M3	Wheel floor, 30 × 20 ft.	Joins M1 and M4; brake chain fixed at the north axle, within reach from the floor. Wheel is in the guarded channel north of the room, not a route. South stair to M5 costs twenty feet of movement.
M4	Grain hoist, 15 × 20 ft.	Open doorway from M3; platform at the same elevation, twenty feet from the brake. Its lowering chain runs to M5. Use Eda's current position.
M5	Lower Sluice, 30 × 20 ft.	Ten feet below M3; stair lands on a five-foot-wide west ledge. South exit opens to the bank. The spill-gate control wheel is mounted at the south end of the west ledge, beside its dry operating square; the inspection drawer is also reachable from that ledge. The gate itself is in the north wall, connected to the control wheel by rods. Lower grate is at the east wall.

The west ledge and bank exit remain usable at every Surge level. At Surge 1, only M5's central floor becomes difficult terrain; it is shallow water, not automatic drowning. M3's north rails block an accidental fall into the turning wheel. Leave the wheel guarded: entering its channel knowingly requires the DM to explain lethal crushing danger before the player commits.

The Rookhouse is a separate 20 × 30-foot tollhouse. Its front and rear doors both open to dry ground; a ten-foot stair

reaches the upper refuge. The cellar's four-foot-deep water is difficult terrain. A five-foot-high culvert leads from its south wall to M5's north wall, sixty feet away. Crawling it costs twice movement; during the Surge it is impassable. Children leave by the rear door, not the culvert.

Encounter Matrix

ENCOUNTER NAME	LOCATION	FACTION PRESSURE	OBJECTIVE	NON-COMBAT PATH
Encounter 1: The Shared Dream	Village Oven	Toma Brindle and Nessa Venn disagree	Identify the flour's source	Mediate, inspect, and gather testimony
Encounter 2: The Rookhouse Claim	Rookhouse	Bren Cleft fears eviction	Obtain Jory's evidence	Bargain for food, shelter, or repairs
Encounter 3: Harrow Mill Before Dark	Harrow Mill	Nessa Venn resists closure	Prepare for the midnight surge	Show evidence and secure the mill
Encounter 4: The Wheel's Wake	Lower Sluice	Jory Bale and trapped workers	Stop the wheel and release Jory	Rescue, parley, repair, and restitution

Running the Investigation

Give a listed clue whenever characters investigate its source. Checks add speed, detail, or leverage; they never gate progress.

CLUE	SOURCE	WHAT IT REVEALS
Dreamers hear two chain-strikes before the man speaks.	Village Oven; Toma	The source is below the mill wheel.
Grey river silt stains the flour sacks.	Wagon; Harrow Mill	Water reached the flour through an old channel.
J. BALE-AXLE UNSAFE is stamped on a collar.	Rookhouse tool roll; wheel floor	Jory identified a dangerous axle.
Orr's ledger says Jory "absconded following flood."	Harrow Mill office	The official story is suspect.
A brass tally punch fits the inspection drawer.	Rookhouse tool roll; mill drawer	Jory left an original final work sheet below the stair.

Use normal ability checks and genuine assistance where appropriate. Rule: Working Together

Scene 1: The Shared Dream

READ-ALoud

Toma bars the communal oven with his walking staff. Across it, Nessa holds a damp flour sack. "Every dreamer ate your bread," he says. "And every family needs tomorrow's," she answers. Who do you address first?

Encounter 1: The Shared Dream

Location: Village Oven. **Factions:** Toma Brindle and Nessa Venn.

Objective: Establish that Harrow flour causes the shared dream and point the party to the Rookhouse or Harrow Mill.

Setup: Toma demands that all flour be seized. Nessa insists the village cannot waste a day's bread and claims someone tampered with her delivery.

Information and leverage

- Toma confirms that every dreamer ate Harrow bread; he has heard "*Don't wake it*" from four patients.
- Nessa shows a damp sack. Its grey silt smells of iron and riverweed.
- A dreamer recalls two metallic knocks before the bound man speaks.
- The wagon's mud lies only on its wheels; the flour sack is wet from below.

5e-Compatible Mechanics: A DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine, Insight, or Perception) check confirms that the dreamers are exhausted, not poisoned. A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check identifies the silt as culvert wash. Failure still gives the relevant clue, but adds pressure: Toma follows the party, or Nessa refuses to shut down the mill yet.

Non-combat resolution: The party can mediate, promise a quick inspection, or follow the physical evidence. No roll is needed for a credible plan. If they accept an inspection and have not accused Nessa without evidence, she hands over her office key; otherwise she withholds it. Toma freely gives his dream testimony in either case.

Escalation: If the party openly blames Nessa without evidence, she locks the office at Harrow Mill. Eda Pike, her mill hand, later directs them to the Rookhouse.

Success and transition: The party leaves with Nessa's key, Toma's testimony, or both. The wagon ruts and wet silt trail lead east to the Rookhouse.

Fail-forward: Another villager wakes from a doze and cries, "The tollhouse is knocking again." The Rookhouse becomes the obvious next lead.

Scene 2: The Rookhouse Claim

READ-ALoud

The tollhouse sags over a reed-choked ditch. Onion smoke escapes an upstairs window. A split flour sack lies by the door, streaked with dark silt; behind a hanging blanket, a blade scrapes a whetstone. How do you approach?

Encounter 2: The Rookhouse Claim

Location: Rookhouse. **Faction:** Bren Cleft.

Objective: Learn what reopened the floodway and recover or identify Jory Bale's evidence.

Setup: Bren Cleft assumes the party has come to evict six hungry squatters. Two adults guard the entrance; children and the group's food are upstairs.

What Bren knows

- Floodwater rose through the cellar's buried culvert.
- The squatters removed an iron packing wedge to drain the cellar.
- The culvert yielded an old tool roll containing a brass tally punch and a waterlogged work sheet.
- The roll contains a wet copy of Jory's final work sheet: "*Axle unsafe. Stop before second toll.*" The original remains in the mill's inspection drawer; these are two documents, not two tally punches.

Non-combat resolution: Bren gives up the tools if the party offers food, a repair to the cellar door, or a promise to advocate for temporary shelter. A credible offer succeeds without a check.

5e-Compatible Mechanics: Without leverage, a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion, Deception, or Intimidation) check changes Bren's posture. On a failure, Bren reveals the culvert but keeps the tally punch. Record its holder. The original worksheet at the mill remains accessible without it; a refused bargain never teleports the tool to another site. The flooded cellar is difficult terrain; slippery climbs and rough water can require Strength (Athletics). Rule: Difficult Terrain

Escalation / chaos encounter: If violence begins, Bren and the two adults protect the upper stair while the other three refugees leave by the rear door. Use the appendix profiles and normal initiative. At the end of round 1, a surge through the culvert knocks cellar occupants prone unless they pass DC 12 Strength saves; no damage. At the end of round 2, the cellar fills and the culvert becomes impassable. Any creature still there can climb the cellar stair to the rear exit with twenty feet of movement; an adjacent ally can spend an action to help it up automatically. The adults then Disengage and withdraw. The tollhouse's ground floor and upper room remain dry. Announce the rising water before resolving it.

Success and transition: Bren shares the tally punch and tells the party that Eda Pike said, "The lower wall sweats

after sunset."

Fail-forward: The squatters flee through the rear lane, leaving the tool roll or a clear culvert route to Harrow Mill. The party reaches the mill before dark.

Scene 3: Harrow Mill Before Dark

READ-ALoud

Each turn of the wheel knocks through Harrow Mill's floorboards. Eda Pike watches cold water bead along a cracked wall beside the flour chute. Where do you begin your search?

Encounter 3: Harrow Mill Before Dark

Location: Harrow Mill. **Factions:** Nessa Venn, Eda Pike, and Jory Bale.

Objective: Connect Jory to the old axle failure and prepare the mill for midnight.

Setup: Nessa wants workers to finish the last order. Eda wants the mill cleared before the wheel breaks. Jory's echo makes the machinery behave strangely, but does not yet attack.

Discoveries

- **Office:** Orr Venn's ledger marks Jory Bale as "absconded following flood, second toll." A false-bottom drawer contains Orr's unsent confession to Jory's sister: he tied Jory below the wheel, then reported him fled. Give Handout 2 when found.
- **Wheel floor:** The axle collar bears Jory's inspection mark. The brake chain has fresh movement where it disappears into the lower wall.
- **Lower stair:** Water leaks from the stone seam. The punch opens M5's inspection drawer. Its swollen wooden catch also opens with a crowbar in one action, or by hand with DC 12 Strength; a failed check breaks the catch and opens it anyway. Inside is Jory's original work sheet. Give Handout 1; the punch remains with its actual holder.
- **Grain hoist:** The pulley can hold the brake chain during the surge if rigged before midnight.

5e-Compatible Mechanics: Searching the relevant place reveals its listed discovery automatically. A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds the office drawer quickly. Rigging the hoist takes ten minutes and uses twenty-five feet of the fifty-foot loan rope, leaving a twenty-five-foot free end coiled at M3's hoist doorway for the rescue; do not count a second rope. Then attempt DC 13 Strength (Athletics) or carpenter's tools. On success it remains sound. On failure it grants the same first brake-attempt advantage, then its extra rigging breaks immediately after that attempt, without injuring anyone; the platform remains subject to Surge 2. Record the result openly. Strength checks can cover pushing, pulling, or forcing machinery. Rule: Strength

Problem monster: Jory's Echo is not an evil creature to be defeated normally. It is bound to the brake chain by fear,

evidence, and the unattended remains beneath the sluice.

Non-combat resolution: Showing Nessa either the confession or the ledger together with a work sheet convinces her to evacuate automatically. Eda and the other workers leave through M1; record Eda safe. A request without evidence needs DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion); failure leaves Eda on M4, but no clue or loan is withheld. Even if she refuses, Eda helps the party rig the hoist and identifies Jory from the initials.

Escalation: At the second evening bell, flour rises briefly from the chute and settles on the ceiling beams. The wheel pauses, then resumes with a violent crack.

Success and transition: The party reaches midnight with Jory's name, evidence, a prepared hoist, or all three.

Fail-forward: At Surge 1, the inspection drawer breaks open, revealing the original work sheet on the west ledge. This never moves the tally punch. Anyone inspecting the axle learns Jory's name from its stamped collar, without a roll.

Scene 4: The Wheel's Wake

Read this only if the wheel is still running. If Eda has not been evacuated, add her call from the hoist; otherwise describe the empty platform. Preserve all completed preparations.

READ-ALoud

The wheel hurls spray into the lower chamber. A pale hand closes around the brake chain beneath the turning stones. Water gathers below the stair. What do you do?

Encounter 4: The Wheel's Wake

Location: Lower Sluice. **Factions:** Jory Bale, Nessa Venn, and Eda Pike.

Objective: Save anyone trapped in the mill, stop or divert the wheel, and release Jory.

Living environment: The wheel, water, chain, and collapsing mill frame are the encounter's active opposition. The place changes every round.

Timed escalation (homebrew): Roll initiative when the midnight surge begins. Jory's manifestation has no turn; each character has normal movement and actions. Start **Surge** at 0. After everyone's turn, increase it by one and resolve the new row once. Brake and spill-gate successes persist between turns. When the wheel stops, Jory releases it, or his manifestation is dispersed, end the Surge immediately. Once 4 resolves, the wheel is broken; stop advancing and resolve rescue and restitution. If the spill gate was opened, cap Surge at 3: its once-only axle jolt occurs, but never repeats. The water then stays shallow and the party may finish the brake or parley safely.

SURGE	CONSEQUENCE
1	Water covers the lower floor; it becomes difficult terrain.

SURGE	CONSEQUENCE
2	M4's platform tears partly loose and hangs ten feet above M5 on its main chain. Eda is stranded only if still present and unsecured. Evacuated workers remain safe.
3	The axle bucks; creatures on the wheel floor make a DC 12 Dexterity save or take 1d6 bludgeoning damage and fall prone.
4	The wheel breaks. Creatures in the lower chamber make a DC 13 Dexterity save, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage on a failure or half on a success. The mill is badly damaged.

Environmental dangers, falling, and breath-holding follow the normal rules. Rule: The Environment

Actions and approaches

• **Rescue Eda:** From M3's doorway, spend an action to brace M4 with a wedge before Surge 2; she walks to M3 automatically on her turn. After Surge 2, an adjacent character at the doorway can spend an action and pass DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) to secure the free twenty-five-foot end of the loan rope and pull her onto M3; failure spends the action, and she remains on the hanging platform. From M5, an action releasing the main hoist chain lowers her safely onto its west ledge without a check. Suitable flight or lifting magic works within its normal limits. Eda then moves toward M1 or the south bank; she has no hidden death timer.

• **Set the brake:** At M3's axle or M5's west-ledge chain, a character with a free hand spends an action and attempts DC 13 Strength (Athletics) or carpenter's tools. Two accumulated successes stop the wheel; failures spend actions but erase no progress. The prepared hoist grants advantage on the first attempt only. A character may Help instead, granting ordinary advantage, never an extra success. Multiple characters can contribute during the same round.

• **Open the spill gate:** At the south end of M5's west ledge, one free hand and an action permit DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or carpenter's tools. Two accumulated successes divert the flood and cap Surge at 3. Failures consume the action, not previous successes. This prevents the wheel breaking, but does not stop it or release Jory.

• **Name Jory and restore the truth:** From M3 or M5, spend an action to address him by name and promise to recover his remains and correct the false "absconded" entry. Showing the tally punch, either work sheet, the collar, or Orr's confession supports the promise and succeeds automatically. With only his name, attempt DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion or Performance); failure spends the action, but he points to the stamped collar as evidence for the next attempt. Success stops the wheel and Surge. The haunting ends when the promise is fulfilled; a knowingly broken promise brings the dreams back with the next flour.

• **Fight the echo:** Use the stationary manifestation profile below. Reducing it to 0 HP loosens its spectral hold, stops the wheel and ends the immediate Surge. It does not smash

the physical brake chain. Combat cannot correct the ledger or settle the grievance.

Non-combat resolution: Jory points to the lower grate. With the wheel stopped or flood diverted, opening it takes an action with the crowbar; otherwise DC 12 Strength, with failure costing the action and opening it on the next attempt. Two people can carry the covered remains to daylight without a check, by M5's bank exit or stair. At night, bring them onto the bank and wait until dawn; no danger repeats while the wheel stays stopped. Recover the final work sheet from its drawer if still missed. Correcting the ledger requires a willing reader to strike out "absconded" and record that Jory was killed after reporting the unsafe axle. Nessa may do this publicly or privately; the party or Toma can correct it if she refuses.

Safe restart: If Surge 4 never broke the wheel, Eda or Nessa can replace the unsafe collar with the spare kept at M1. This takes one fictional hour with the loan tools and one helper, after the wheel has stopped and the flood is diverted or subsided. No check or party payment is needed. Inspect the axle and make a supervised test load; it then resumes safe work. Nessa pays the 50 gp only if the party also explains Jory's binding as the cause of the haunting; her confession letter, Jory's own account or the matched collar and ledger establish that explanation without another check. If the wheel broke at Surge 4, this small repair cannot restore it; winter imports are needed and the commission is not earned. Treat the repair as an epilogue, not another hour of table play.

Moral choice: Nessa can read Orr's wrongdoing before Alderhook, restore Jory's name only in the ledger, or remain silent after the mill is saved. The party can support or challenge her choice.

Success: The wheel stops or is safely diverted and workers survive. Jory rests only after credible acknowledgement, correction of the false ledger entry and bringing his remains into daylight. A stopped wheel or burial alone does not settle the wrong.

Fail-forward: If the wheel breaks, the village loses the mill for the season, but Jory can still be released. If Jory is dispersed without restitution, the dreams return with the first new flour ground at Harrow.

Resolution Paths

Public Restoration

Nessa reads Jory's work sheet and Orr's confession before the village, clears his name, and corrects the ledger. The party or villagers bring his remains into daylight and bury them. With all three restitution conditions fulfilled, the haunting ends. Nessa pays Bren's group for repair work; a destroyed wheel still requires a season's rebuilding. Alderhook gains a hard-won new arrangement.

Quiet Restitution

Jory receives acknowledgement, his remains are brought into daylight and buried, and Nessa or the party corrects the ledger privately. All three conditions are fulfilled and the haunting ends, but Bren and Toma know that the village has not heard the truth.

The Broken Mill

The party saves lives but not the machinery. Alderhook must import flour through winter; Nessa's family name is damaged, and the squatters' labor becomes essential.

Unfinished Business

If Jory's echo is destroyed without acknowledgment, the immediate danger ends. The next milling season begins with the same dream, now heard by anyone who sleeps near Harrow Mill.

Rewards

- **Village gratitude:** Toma delivers 25 gp total for the whole party at the village oven when they return after ending tonight's mill danger or producing the evidence that clears Jory. He collects it from Alderhook's relief purse. The party chooses coin or equivalent provisions/trade goods; free lodging is additional. The Broken Mill and Unfinished Business endings still earn this payment if the immediate disaster was ended. Refusing the job or leaving without either result earns none. Pay once, not per hero.
- **Nessa's commission:** 50 gp total only if the party explains Jory's binding as the cause of the haunting and Harrow Mill survives and resumes safe work. See Safe Restart for evidence and repair; merely repairing the machinery earns no commission.
- **Jory's tally punch:** nonmagical brass tool, not bonus-bearing equipment. His surviving sister **Sella Bale** lives in the cottage beside Alderhook's oven; Toma can introduce her. Returning it gains a grateful village contact, meals and a place to sleep, without extra coin. If Bren still holds it, showing either worksheet and explaining its family ownership makes him return it automatically after the danger ends. He meets Toma at the oven after evacuation; he also still accepts the earlier food, repair or shelter bargain. If his group fled combat, Toma can arrange the same exchange without requiring another confrontation. Record an actual transfer before gifting the tool.

Table Reference

Jory's Manifestation - Stationary Haunting



Jory's Echo - Reference Art

This homebrew supernatural hazard fills a five-foot space beside M5's brake chain. It is not a creature: it has no ability scores, initiative, movement, attacks, reactions or opportunity attacks. **AC 13; HP 30; immunity to poison and psychic damage.** No other resistances or immunities. Attacks target it normally; a spell must be able to affect an object or supernatural manifestation under its own text or the DM's ordinary ruling. The physical chain does not lose HP when the echo is struck. At 0 HP, disperse it and stop the wheel. Its danger comes from the Surge, not unlisted ghost attacks. A character can speak to it while standing on either floor; during initiative a consequential parley attempt takes the action specified above.

Rookhouse Adults - Homebrew Support Profiles

Bren and the two door guards each use: Medium human; **AC 12 (leather), HP 11, speed 30 ft.; STR 12 (+1), DEX 12 (+1), CON 12 (+1), INT 10 (+0), WIS 10 (+0), CHA 10 (+0).** Initiative +1; passive Perception 10; Common; no save or skill proficiencies, resistances or immunities. **Club (action):** +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target; 1d4+1 bludgeoning. One action per turn; no multiattack or special reactions. They may Help, Dodge or Disengage normally. They knock a creature stable and unconscious if their melee attack reduces it to 0 HP. At 5 HP or less, or once children are clear, they withdraw. They never pursue a retreating party. No CR-based reward is used.

Eda, Nessa, Toma and the three other refugees are noncombatants: Medium humans, **AC 10, HP 4, speed 30 ft., all abilities 10 (+0), saves +0, no proficiencies, attacks or special traits; passive Perception 10; Common.** They use Dodge, Help when genuinely able, or move toward safety. Do not use refugees as combat reinforcements.

Faces at the Table

PERSON	PORTRAYAL	KNOWS / PROVIDES
Nessa Venn	Ink-stained hands; "A village cannot eat an accusation."	Mill routes, reward, ledger; accepts evidence, fears her family's disgrace.
Toma Brindle	Counts uneaten loaves; "First, stop feeding them this."	Dream testimony and practical shelter; helps correct the record.

PERSON	PORTRAYAL	KNOWS / PROVIDES
Bren Cleft	Keeps a worn door key on string; "We need one dry room."	Culvert repair, tool roll, food and shelter bargain.
Eda Pike	Flour in her hair; "That wall should not sweat."	Workbench loans, spare office key, hoist and collar; prioritizes evacuation.
Jory Bale	Pauses after his own name; "I stopped it before. He called me a thief."	Final worksheet and remains; wants acknowledgement, not revenge.

Procedure at a Glance

TASK	REQUIREMENT	COST / RESULT
Brake	Reach M3 axle or M5 chain; free hand	Action, DC 13; two successes stop wheel.
Spill gate	Reach M5 west ledge, south end; free hand	Action, DC 12; two successes cap Surge at 3.
Parley	Name Jory, offer restitution	Action; evidence automatic, name alone DC 12.
Hoist rescue	M3 doorway or M5 chain	M3: action, DC 12 after collapse; M5: action, automatic lowering.
Remains	Open east grate, make site safe	Crowbar action, then two carriers; take to bank/daylight.

Retreat: M1's west door and M5's south bank exit stay open. Use actual distances on the map and difficult terrain only where marked. No enemy chases a departing party. A broken mill ends the timed hazard; do not keep rolling Surge damage during later rescue or restitution.

Player Handouts

Each card below is player-safe only after its acquisition. Give cards separately; the confession must not appear on a sheet shared at the oven. The mill map may be shared on arrival and has no clue locations.

Handout 1: Jory's Work Sheet

Give: Bren's wet copy in Scene 2, or the original inspection drawer in Scene 3/4.

PLAYER TEXT

J. BALE - AXLE UNSAFE

Stop before second toll. Replace the collar. Do not grind another load on this axle.

Handout 2: Orr's Unsent Letter

Give: The false-bottom office drawer, after it is searched.

PLAYER TEXT

Your brother was right about the axle. I would not lose the order.
When he took hold of the brake, I tied him beneath the wheel. I told
the village he had fled. I cannot ask you to forgive me.

Orr Venn

Handout 3: The Old Ledger Entry

Give: When the office ledger is read.

PLAYER TEXT

Jory Bale - absconded following flood, second toll.

Accounts carried forward under Orr Venn.

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