



FAMILIAR / A BEGINNER ADVENTURE

The Troll at Blackwater Mill

Start Here

A hungry troll has occupied the mill. Tomas is trapped upstairs. Can the heroes bring him home and make the mill safe?

For: four level-4 characters, with full resources; beginning DMs and players, ages 10-12+. **Time:** 90-120 minutes. This is an independent adventure from Monsters of the Lantern Vale.

Bring: character sheets, pencils, dice, tokens, six counters for fire flasks and two for acid. Use the 2014 fifth-edition rules. Players need their characters' normal abilities; the booklet supplies the adventure's monster and special procedures.

Prepare in ten minutes: read pages 3 and 11-12, mark the troll's starting position, and put the controls handout aside. Page 15 is a friendly NPC sheet, not an additional player character. Keep DM pages private.

Explain before play: a dangerous fight is possible, but rescuing Tomas, bargaining and trapping the troll are real choices. Nobody must kill it to earn the full reward. Ask what kinds of suspense the table enjoys; pause or soften descriptions when requested. Avoid graphic injuries.

Your job: describe what the characters notice, ask what they do, explain a risky action's consequence, then resolve it and describe what changes. A safe plan often needs no roll. Failed checks never withhold essential clues. Start by asking who takes each loan and how they will approach.

DM Introduction

Three nights ago, a troll followed the stream to the mill. Water put out the hunters' burning arrows. Hobb fled; Tomas barricaded himself behind the maintenance hatch. Mara, his sister, offers 100 gp from the mill's repair purse: 40 for his rescue and 60 for a usable, safe mill.

What the players must learn: fire or acid stops the troll's regeneration briefly. They can hear this from Hobb, find it in the patrol note, or see a burn stay open during a fight. Give the information freely when its source is reached.

Opening: Mara meets the heroes at her workshop. She lends a crowbar, 50 feet of rope, tinderbox, two fueled hooded lanterns, three spare oil fills and six fire flasks. Assign carriers. She knows the mill controls and hatch; Hobb knows the stream approach.

Suggested pacing: opening and workshop, 15 minutes; stream supplies, 15; mill approach and rescue, 25; threat, 30-45; ending, 5-10. A good bypass may finish sooner. Do not add enemies to stretch a clever solution.

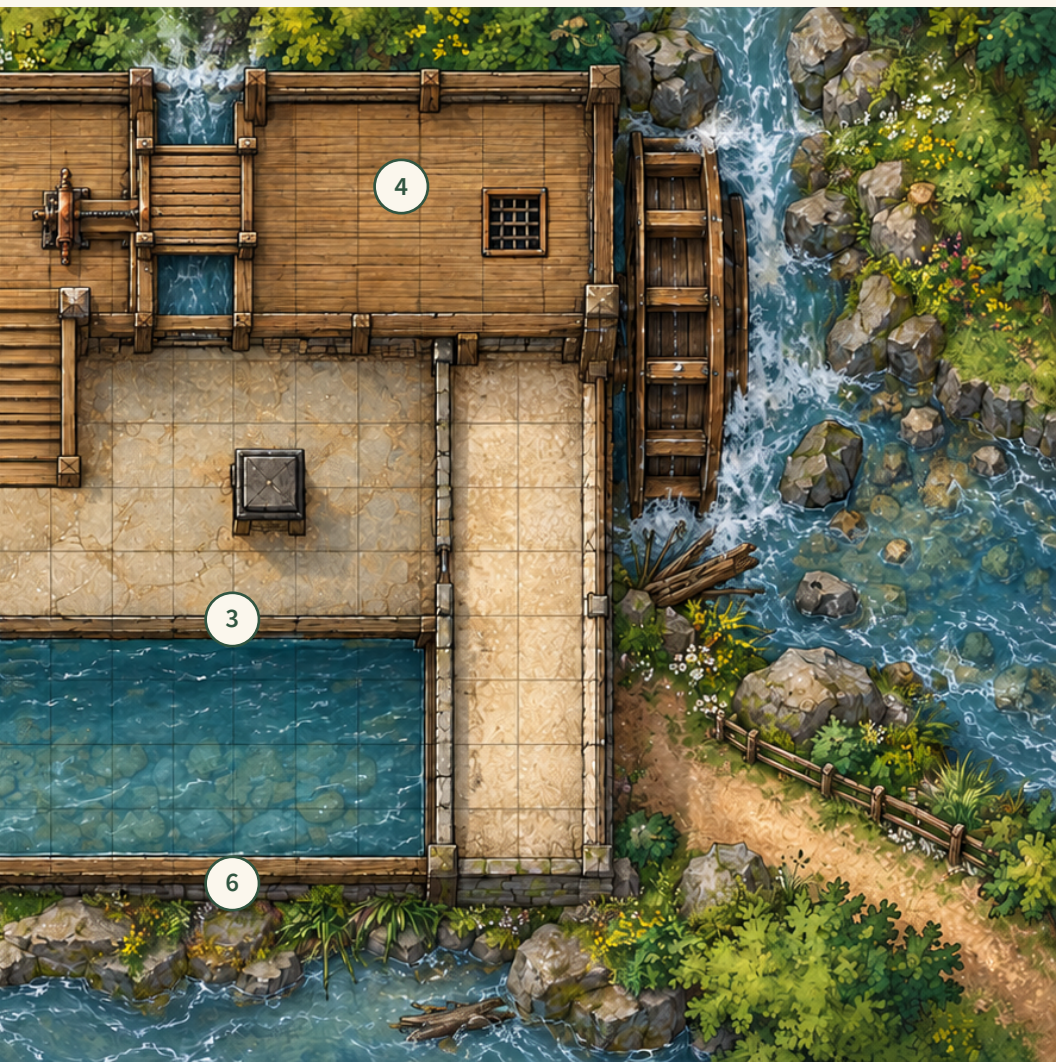
Initial state: arrive at noon; collection is at dawn, eighteen hours later. The troll waits in B3's southern water. Tomas is behind B4's hatch. Brake and sluice are open; B5's gate is raised. Tomas has no hidden death countdown. Machinery progress survives interruptions. Rescue and threat resolution can occur in either order.

If the party leaves: Tomas remains trapped until helped. The mill stays closed while the troll can return. Retreat preserves rescued people, expended supplies and damage already dealt; do not reset the scene.



Adventure Map

- 1: B1 Yard. West entrance, ramp, gate lever.
- 2: B2 Platform. Brake, sluice, stair down.
- 3: B3 Undercroft. Pillars; southern water costs twice movement.
- 4: B4 Gallery. Bridge, Tomas's hatch, north rope exit.



Map Key

5: B5 Channel. Walled trap; gate east, barred outlet south.

6: Stream exit. Unbarred B3 exit over low edging.

North up. Upper floors are ten feet above B3. Painted grid is illustrative; measured geography is on page 13. Place enemy tokens privately; timber edging is not a wall.

Scene 1: The Millwright's Request

One purse

40 gp for Tomas; 60 gp for a safe, usable mill. Partial payments and gear damage are on page 10. This is party money, not a payment to each hero.

Hobb's help

He can operate the brake safely if escorted. He stays out of combat and cannot solve the troll encounter for the players.



The troll beneath the mill; Tomas waits above

Read-Aloud

A carpenter's square trembles in Mara's hand. "My brother is still inside. Bring him back. Save the mill if you can."

DM Guidance: Give the offer and loans on page 3. Hobb admits that water doused his arrows, but their burns stayed open.

Choices: Ask about the controls; recruit Hobb to work the brake; collect supplies beside the stream. Mara authorizes a boar carcass for bargaining.

If Things Go Wrong: Hobb's shame delays his story, not assistance. Mara explains the controls anyway.

Next: Follow the stream to the broken wagon, or approach B1 directly.

Scene 2: Supplies in the Stream

Read-Aloud

A wagon leans toward the bank. A folded note protrudes from a chest pinned beneath its wheel. Water curls around the spokes.

DM Guidance: The wagon is ten feet from the bank in knee-deep water. The chest's lid is pinned partly open. Inside are two acid vials, a steel mirror and twenty feet of chain; the patrol note protrudes through the gap. No enemy waits here; give the note when reached.

Choices: Brace the wagon with rope or a beam; with two helpers and the crowbar, lifting succeeds without a roll. An unsupported lift needs DC 12 Strength (Athletics). Mage Hand can fetch the exposed paper, but cannot lift the wheel.

If Things Go Wrong: An unsupported failed lift deals 1d6 bludgeoning damage to the lifter and soaks the chest. Its contents remain accessible. Supporting a second attempt succeeds; do not demand another roll.

Next: Ask who carries each consumable. The path reaches B1. Let the players inspect the visible gate lever before attracting the troll.

Acid vial

Action: throw within 20 feet. Roll d20 + Dexterity against AC; add proficiency only with improvised-weapon proficiency. Hit: 2d6 acid; miss: none. Either consumes the vial.

Fire flask

Six homebrew wick-capped pots. Free hand plus burning lantern or tinderbox: one action to light and throw within 20 feet. Roll d20 + Dexterity + proficiency against AC. Hit: 1d4 fire; miss: none. Each throw consumes one pot; no ongoing fire.

Scene 3: Above the Troll

Controls

Homebrew: brake takes two actions; sluice takes two. Each needs a free hand, no roll; partial work persists. Reversing either completed control takes one action.

Close the brake BEFORE the sluice. Otherwise gears crack, reducing the mill payment by 50 gp once.

Closing the sluice drains B3's southern water at the end of the following round. B5 stays wet. Full trap procedure: page 11.

Read-Aloud

The waterwheel thumps. Above the wet floor, a narrow gallery ends at a barred hatch. Someone taps from the other side.

DM Guidance: B2 connects to B4 by a level bridge. Crossing quietly needs one DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check, using the lowest result in the group. The gate lever in B1 can be inspected unseen.

Choices: Free Tomas; operate the controls; study the holding channel. Opening the hatch takes one action with the crowbar, or a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. A failed check loosens it: the next action opens it automatically, but the noise alerts the troll.

If Things Go Wrong: Failed stealth alerts the troll. Roll initiative from everyone's actual positions; do not move it upstairs for free. Its five-foot reach cannot attack someone ten feet above. Stairs cost twenty feet of movement.

Next: Tomas follows safe directions, Dodging while he waits. Lead him west through B1 or down a rope from B4's north side. Resolve the threat only if the players choose to remain.

Finale

Before reading, use the troll's actual position and condition. Skip the opener if it has already been dealt with.

Read-Aloud

The troll gives a deep snort. Its breathing rumbles across the mill, loud enough to swallow the wheel's creaking. What do you do?

DM Guidance: Describe its current cover, confinement and distance separately. Keep its current HP; the opener grants no movement. Complete statistics are on page 12.

Choices: Fight using fire or acid; lure it through B5's raised gate; bargain in Giant using the boar carcass. Hobb needs twenty minutes to fetch the carcass. A troll not under attack accepts that meal and lets Tomas leave, but feeding it alone does not make the mill safe.

If Things Go Wrong: The heroes can retreat west through B1 or use B4's north rope. With daylight outside and food inside, the troll stops at the yard. Otherwise it pursues for two rounds, then returns. It never attacks a fallen character.

Next: Record rescue and mill safety separately. Trapping, reliable relocation and defeating the troll earn equal mill payments. An escaped troll may return, so it has not secured the mill.

On its turn

Move up to 30 feet. Attack: one bite and two claws, each +7 to hit, reach 5 feet. Bite 1d6+4; claw 2d6+4.

Track regeneration

AC 15; HP 84. Regain 10 HP at turn start unless it took fire or acid damage since its previous turn. Water does not remove that suppression. At 0 HP it dies only when starting its turn unable to regenerate.

Endings and Rewards

Tomas rescued; mill safe and usable: pay 100 gp total. This includes peaceful, trapped and relocated outcomes. Do not require a kill.

Rescue only: pay 40 gp. The mill remains closed until the threat can no longer return. Bargaining for a temporary meal normally gives this result.

Mill safety only: pay its 60 gp component now; add Tomas's 40 gp if he is rescued later. Never pay a component twice.

Damaged machinery: cracking the gears reduces the mill component by 50 gp, to 10 gp. A rescued Tomas plus safe but cracked machinery earns 50 gp total. A destroyed mill earns no mill component, but rescued Tomas still earns 40 gp. Do not charge both reductions.

Trapped troll: it counts as secured only with reliable custody. Keep a visible burning lantern on guard until the cage arrives at dawn; page 11 explains the homebrew morale rule. Without that guard it can break out before morning. An escape does not cancel a rescue already earned.

Experience: each hero receives a flat 450 XP when the threat is resolved, or 200 XP for rescue alone. If rescue precedes threat resolution, add only 250 XP later. Do not add monster XP. For milestone play, record one completed adventure; follow your campaign's agreed advancement.

Return unused loans, including acid. Consumables cost no fee. Mirror and chain remain loans. Explain the mill's actual state, then close:

Read-Aloud

Mara sets out bowls by the workshop door. "Tell me what happened," she says. What do you tell her about the mill?

Running the Adventure

The holding-channel plan

B5 has fifteen-foot walls with an inward overhang and a barred southern outlet. Its fifteen-foot-wide eastern gate opens into B3. The exterior lever is in B1. Small or Medium heroes can squeeze through the outlet, spending ten feet of movement; the Large troll cannot.

Lure it with meat or a retreating hero. If another conscious enemy remains visible, the lure needs DC 12 Charisma (Deception); failure leaves the troll at the mouth. If all other enemies break sight, the lure works automatically. Place its entire ten-foot footprint inside before an action at the lever closes the gate.

An action at the lever raises or lowers the gate. A premature closure can be reversed from B1; it never resets the troll's position.

The gate has AC 19, 60 HP, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. The borrowed chain takes two actions to attach from outside, increasing maximum HP to 120 without erasing damage. The trapped troll attacks the gate. A guard displaying a lit lantern makes it cower until collection at dawn; this is a homebrew morale rule, not fire immunity or automatic damage. Each lantern has six hours of fuel; Mara supplies three spare six-hour oil fills at no cost. Keep one lantern lit; refilling a cold lantern takes an action, then lighting takes another. A watched troll will not attack the gate. If it becomes unwatched, track initiative: it bites and claws the gate normally each round, regeneration unchanged, until the gate reaches 0 HP. It then escapes to the stream; keep actual gate HP on return.

Keep the decisions visible

Explain the controls separately: stopping water does not cage a troll. Only actual pillars or gates provide cover.

Allow other reliable containment or relocation using normal spells and equipment. Explain required custody before accepting a plan.

Short session: Hobb works the brake; Mara supplies the note before departure. Keep the players' choices.

Creature Reference

Troll - 2014 SRD

Large giant; chaotic evil. AC 15; HP 84; speed 30 feet. STR 18 (+4), DEX 13 (+1), CON 20 (+5), INT 7 (–2), WIS 9 (–1), CHA 7 (–2). Perception +2; passive Perception 12; darkvision 60 feet; speaks Giant. CR 5 (1,800 XP), replaced here by the flat adventure award. No additional saves, resistances or immunities.

Keen Smell: advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks relying on smell.

Regeneration: regains 10 HP at the start of its turn. Fire or acid damage prevents this on its next turn. It dies only if it starts its turn at 0 HP and cannot regenerate. Wetting a burn does not restore regeneration early. Mark a counter when fire or acid hits; remove it after the skipped regeneration.

Multiattack (action): one bite and two claws. Each is a melee weapon attack, +7 to hit, reach 5 feet, one target. Bite: 1d6+4 piercing. Claw: 2d6+4 slashing. Roll each attack separately.

Behavior: attack the nearest reachable conscious enemy; break ties against someone without visible fire. Use the stair to reach elevated heroes. After a burn it seeks water, despite the burn's continuing effect. At 20 HP or less it flees south through B3. It does not finish off fallen characters.

Party-size adjustments (homebrew): three level-4 heroes: 65 HP and only one bite plus one claw. Five: 100 HP and the normal three attacks. All other rules stay unchanged. Do not add another troll.

People and Places

Mara Venn: the millwright wants her brother home and a working mill. Direct, practical, holding her carpenter's square. Her support sheet is opposite the player handout, on page 15.

Hobb Reed: lanky hunter in a muddy cloak. Ashamed of fleeing; wants a second chance. He knows burns stayed open and volunteers to work the brake. He escorts no one into a fight alone.

Tomas Venn: wiry mill worker. Simplified homebrew support statistics: AC 10, HP 4, speed 30 feet; all abilities 10 (+0), saves +0, no proficiencies or attacks. He follows safe instructions and uses Dodge while waiting. No offscreen timer kills him.

Read the mill map

North is up. The yard B1 is 30 by 20 feet. A ten-foot-wide ramp, twenty feet long, climbs ten feet east to B2. B2 and B4 are each 30 by 20 feet and share a level bridge. B4's north rope descent is ten feet.

B3 is 50 by 40 feet with a fifteen-foot ceiling. Its southern half starts in two feet of water: difficult terrain costs twice movement. Two five-foot-square pillars break sight. The B2 stair costs twenty feet of movement. B3's open southern edge has a ten-foot-wide, unbarred stream exit; beyond it is the bank. A troll at the south edge moves ten feet through water, costing twenty feet of movement, to clear the opening; movement on the bank is normal. B5 is 30 by 40 feet, two feet deep; its separate barred outlet is on page 11.

On the map the troll begins in southern B3, Tomas at B4's eastern hatch. Tokens are not printed into the color plan: place them privately, then reveal them when the heroes actually see them.

Player Handout

Give each message when its source is reached. This page contains no hidden enemy position. Read it aloud or let the players examine it separately.

Patrol note - found in the wagon

The creature's cuts closed while we watched. Burned patches stayed open. Water put out our arrows, but did not heal the burns immediately. Fire and acid may buy us time. Keep a clear way back to the bank.

Mill control plate - on the wheel platform

BRAKE FIRST. THEN SLUICE.

The brake stops the wheel. The sluice shuts off the water.

Closing the sluice while the wheel is running damages the gears.

The spill-channel gate uses the separate lever in the yard.

Your rescue checklist

Who carries the crowbar and rope?

Who carries each fire flask or acid vial?

How will Tomas reach safety?

If you contain the creature, who will watch it until help arrives?

Talking, climbing, trapping and retreating are choices. Tell the DM what you want to accomplish before choosing a die to roll. You may ask what your character can see and what a control appears to do.

Character Sheet

Profile

Mara Venn. Human millwright; friendly NPC. New homebrew support statistics: AC 10, HP 8, speed 30 feet. She waits in the workshop or safe yard, not beside the troll.

Abilities

Ability	Score	Bonus
STR	12	+1
DEX	10	+0
CON	12	+1
INT	12	+1
WIS	12	+1
CHA	10	+0

No additional skill or save proficiencies.
Initiative +0.

Actions

One action each turn: Help with a reachable repair or control, operate a mechanism, or Dodge. She does not make combat attacks in this adventure. Help grants advantage on one suitable ability check when she can actually assist; it does not reduce a mechanism's action cost.

Equipment

Carpenter's square, work apron and the 100 gp reward purse. The loans are listed on page 3; transfer them to the heroes' inventories before play.

Roleplaying

"Bring him back. We can mend a wheel." Wants Tomas safe; knows controls and routes, not the troll's thoughts. Hasty plans earn practical questions. A successful unconventional rescue earns the promised reward.



Quick Reference

Help and saves

Help: action; grant advantage on one check you can assist. Control costs stay fixed.

Saving throw: d20 + the named save bonus against the DC.

Rules credit

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Flasks, machinery, custody and support statistics are homebrew. Adapted from Monsters of the Lantern Vale.

Dodge: until your next turn, attacks by enemies you see have disadvantage; your Dexterity saves have advantage. Incapacitation or speed 0 ends it.

Checks: roll d20 plus the relevant ability or skill bonus. Meet or beat the difficulty class (DC). Advantage: roll two d20s and keep the higher; disadvantage: keep the lower. Safe, supported solutions need no roll where stated.

Combat: roll initiative, d20 plus Dexterity modifier. On a turn, move and take one action; bonus actions and reactions require a feature granting them. An attack meets or beats Armor Class (AC); roll damage only on a hit. Track remaining Hit Points (HP). Fire-flask throws use page 7.

At 0 HP: heroes normally fall unconscious. At each turn start, roll a death save: 10+ succeeds; three successes stabilize, three failures kill. Natural 1: two failures; natural 20: regain 1 HP. Damage at 0 causes one failure, two on a critical hit; massive damage can kill outright. Healing restores consciousness. This troll avoids fallen heroes.

Find it: supplies, 7; controls/rescue, 8; threat, 9; payments, 10; trap, 11; troll, 12; geography, 13; player messages, 14; Mara, 15.