

A Bell Beneath the Bridge

120-minute plan · 4 players · Bring people together

Each wagon crossing the bridge makes a bell ring underwater. The ferryman wants the bridge closed; a stranded bell diver asks for help.

Content notice: Heights, water and a damaged bridge. Keep characters on the bank if preferred; this is fictional infrastructure, not repair advice.

GM overview

Three parties control different things: the produce guild has loads and two loaders, the bridge crew has a spare beam and warning authority, and the ferry cooperative has three reserved trips. First retrieve Noma and her tools without cutting the bell line. Then bargain for either limited light-cart crossings or a ferry manifest. The full repair branch consumes the spare beam and two work turns; the ferry branch consumes all three departures and forfeits the market's first stall slot. The warning remains until either a limited-use sign or a bridge-closed sign replaces it. Sef's offer is at the posted cooperative rate; this is not a profiteering twist. Players allocate crates, nominate loaders and specify exactly what the public sign allows. Do not introduce a hidden stronger brace or an unlimited boat.

What is really happening

Noma rigged the underwater bell to warn of a cracked brace. She is safe on the maintenance ledge; her tool line shares the warning knot. Eli can install a fictional temporary brace for light carts. Sef can ferry all produce in three trips, but the market guild must surrender its delivery priority and provide loaders.

Opening agreement and read-aloud

Agree on subjects to soften or skip. Each player names an ordinary skill and a reason to help. Evidence does not require a successful roll; uncertainty changes time, cost or obligations.

One wagon wheel touches the bridge and a low bell sounds under the water. Vale stops the driver. Across the river the market opens its awnings; Sef ties the ferry firmly to shore and waits for a public decision.

Time and preparation

120 minutes: Compare a temporary crossing with the ferry

Opening agreement: 10 minutes

Hear the three parties and compare manifests: 25 minutes

Retrieve Noma and preserve the warning: 25 minutes

Negotiate the permit and install the brace: 30 minutes

Watch the first crossing: 20 minutes

Closure and debrief: 10 minutes

Use approach - shed - ledge - shed - brace - approach. Five turns leave two spare after retrieval and bracing, so the table can inspect the ferry alternative without inventing extra departures.

Starting information: Discover cards in play

Starting state: Crew work turns = 5; Spare beam = 1; Ferry departures = 3; Noma and tools ashore = false;

Guild commitment = none; Bridge crew commitment = false; Ferry cooperative commitment = false; Limited brace installed = false; Produce delivered by ferry = false; Warning retained or replaced = true

With 4 players: share the roles of mapper, evidence keeper, speaker and timekeeper.

If the group gets stuck

Refusal of heavy traffic is a real boundary, not a persuasion obstacle. If the beam is missing, use the ferry manifest. If no departures remain, hold-traffic keeps Noma safe and records the undelivered goods. Neither fallback pretends the bridge was repaired.

Bridge approach

Read aloud: Vale folds a market ribbon and puts it in his pocket. "What may we promise the drivers?"

GM: The guild can accept lighter loads with a weight limit, or supply loaders and lose its first market slot. No contract permits heavy wagons.

Choice: Put the three loads on the table

Ask: Which load goes first under each plan?

Requires: Available. Reveal Guild load tokens

Result: The guild's delivery needs and the lost-priority cost are public.

Choice: Accept lighter loads and a watcher

Ask: Name the watcher and tell the drivers why heavy carts still wait.

Requires: Available. Guild commitment: light

Result: Vale orders light repacking and accepts the written limit.

Choice: Open the watched light-cart lane

Ask: Read the limit aloud to the first driver.

Requires: Limited brace installed is true.

Result: One light cart crosses while the watcher holds the next.

Closure: A limit the town can read

Choice: Supply loaders and surrender first market priority

Ask: Which two guild workers load, and who tells the market you will arrive later?

Requires: Available. Guild commitment: ferry

Result: Vale accepts a later stall and sends two loaders to Sef.

Carpenter shed

Read aloud: Eli taps the beam. "This buys limited use while we plan the real repair."

GM: Eli's boundary is an explicit light-cart rule with a named watcher. The beam cannot be spent twice.

Choice: Sign the limited-use permit

Ask: What date goes in the permanent-repair blank?

Requires: Guild commitment is light. Bridge crew commitment: true. Reveal Temporary crossing permit

Result: Eli commits the beam and crew under the stated light-cart restriction.

Riverbank

Read aloud: Sef points to three chalk squares. "One for the diver and her tools can also bring a load. Three departures, no fourth hidden behind a favour."

GM: Ferry rescue is included in the three departures only if the subsequent manifest reserves all three; the rescue action itself uses work, not a trip, representing an alongside transfer.

Choice: Fill and agree the three-departure manifest

Ask: Place one load beside each departure.

Requires: Guild commitment is ferry. Ferry cooperative commitment: true. Reveal Three-departure ferry sheet

Result: Sef reserves the three departures; other passengers keep their agreed service.

Choice: Run the agreed three trips

Ask: What message travels with the last load about the closed bridge?

Requires: Noma and tools ashore is true and Ferry cooperative commitment is true and Guild commitment is ferry. Spend 3 Ferry departures; Spend 1 Crew work turns. Produce delivered by ferry: true

Result: All produce crosses late. The bridge remains clearly closed and the spare beam remains available for proper repair.

Closure: Three trips and a later stall

Maintenance ledge

Read aloud: Noma holds two ropes apart. "The tools pull here; the warning bell pulls there. Please support one before loosening the other."

GM: A bank transfer or supported two-stage haul both cost one work turn. Give the rope card before choosing. Noma then accompanies the group.

Choice: Identify the tools and warning lines

Ask: Which rope must be supported before the shared knot moves?

Requires: Available. Reveal Two lines, one knot

Result: Noma confirms both routes can retrieve her without cutting the warning.

Choice: Support and haul in two stages

Ask: Who supports the tools while Noma climbs the protected stair?

Requires: Available. Spend 1 Crew work turns. Noma and tools ashore: true

Result: Noma and tools reach the bank; the bell continues to guard the span.

Choice: Use the alongside ferry transfer

Ask: Who receives the tools while Noma steps into Sef's moored ferry?

Requires: Available. Spend 1 Crew work turns. Noma and tools ashore: true

Result: Sef lands Noma and her tools before reserving any goods departure.

Upper brace sockets

Read aloud: The crack is visible from the protected work platform. A blank sign has room for a limit and a watcher's name.

GM: Install only after Noma is ashore and both bridge and guild agree. The resulting crossing is limited, never a permanent all-traffic repair.

Choice: Fit the temporary beam under the permit

Ask: Who keeps the public approach closed during the work?

Requires: Noma and tools ashore is true and Bridge crew commitment is true and Guild commitment is light.

Spend 2 Crew work turns; Spend 1 Spare beam. Limited brace installed: true

Result: The temporary beam seats; the permit, not silence from the bell, defines allowed traffic.

Connections and changing routes

Bridge approach - Carpenter shed: Carpenter lane. Available.

Bridge approach - Riverbank: Closed-span diversion. Available.

Riverbank - Maintenance ledge: Ferry alongside the shelf. Available.

Carpenter shed - Maintenance ledge: Protected maintenance stair. Available.

Carpenter shed - Upper brace sockets: Work platform. Available.

Upper brace sockets - Bridge approach: Upper inspection path. Available.

Vale - Produce guild

Goal: Deliver three loads before the afternoon market.

Offers: Two loaders, lighter repacking and loss of the first stall slot if necessary.

Will not accept: Needs a written delivery plan; refuses an undefined wait or a promise of heavy bridge traffic.

Voice: Ask how many loads, in which order.

Track: Guild commitment

Eli and Noma - Bridge maintenance crew

Goal: Keep the warning meaningful and people off the damaged span.

Offers: One spare beam, a work platform and a trained watcher.

Will not accept: Only one light cart at a time after the temporary brace; otherwise the bridge stays closed.

Voice: Noma names what she observed; Eli writes the limit.

Track: Bridge crew commitment

Sef - Ferry cooperative

Goal: Keep an ordinary, fair service during the closure.

Offers: Exactly three reserved departures at the posted rate and an alongside rescue transfer.

Will not accept: Needs two loaders and a manifest; will not overfill a boat or cancel other passengers without agreement.

Voice: Point to the chalk squares and leave space for an answer.

Track: Ferry cooperative commitment

Discovery card: Guild load tokens

Give only when revealed in play.

Three loads: early greens, flour sacks, empty return crates. For the bridge, split each into light carts and name one watcher. For the ferry, put one load in each departure and assign two guild loaders. Taking the ferry loses the first market stall slot.

Player task: Allocate three counters and write the accepted cost.

GM answer: Both programmes deliver goods; light bridge use consumes the beam, while ferry use consumes all departures and the priority slot.

Discovery card: Two lines, one knot

Give only when revealed in play.

Noma's tool bag pulls the striped line. The plain line rings the warning. Support the striped line first. The dry ledge can be reached from the protected stair or by Sef's alongside transfer.

Player task: Trace each line and choose a rescue approach before untying anything.

GM answer: Either careful approach retrieves tools and diver without silencing the alarm.

Discovery card: Temporary crossing permit

Give only when revealed in play.

One spare beam. Two crew turns. Required before opening: diver ashore; light carts only; one cart on span; named watcher; permanent repair date blank. Sign does not certify heavy traffic.

Player task: Fill the watcher and repair date, then compare the cost with the ferry manifest.

GM answer: The crew agrees only to the limited crossing branch after guild acceptance.

Discovery card: Three-departure ferry sheet

Give only when revealed in play.

Departure 1: ____ . Departure 2: ____ . Departure 3: ____ . Loader A: ____ . Loader B: ____ . The rescue transfer takes place alongside before loading. All three goods departures remain necessary.

Player task: Assign the three loads and two loaders; cross off each departure when used.

GM answer: Ferry rescue does not provide a free fourth goods trip; carrying all produce consumes exactly three.

State sheet

Crew work turns: 5 (resource, minimum 0, maximum 5)

Spare beam: 1 (resource, minimum 0, maximum 1)

Ferry departures: 3 (resource, minimum 0, maximum 3)

Noma and tools ashore: false (flag)

Guild commitment: none (stance)

Bridge crew commitment: false (stance)

Ferry cooperative commitment: false (stance)

Limited brace installed: false (flag)

Produce delivered by ferry: false (flag)

Warning retained or replaced: true (flag)

Event: First market slot closes

Trigger: Guild commitment is ferry

Vale removes the first-stall ribbon. The ferry agreement has an actual cost even if every load arrives safely.

At any place: Keep traffic stopped and bring in the relief crew

What unfinished job must the relief crew hear first?

Requires: Available. Noma and tools ashore: true

Noma uses the protected stair with the relief crew. Goods stay ashore and the warning sign remains.

Ending: A limit the town can read

Requires: Limited brace installed is true

Noma hangs the warning bell beside a posted light-cart limit. Produce crosses one cart at a time; heavy traffic waits for a permanent repair.

Next: Eli records the watcher's report and the public repair date.

Ending: Three trips and a later stall

Requires: Produce delivered by ferry is true

The ferry delivers every load. Vale loses the early stall, Sef keeps the cooperative schedule honest, and the bridge stays closed.

Next: Use the unspent beam in the planned repair, after a proper inspection.

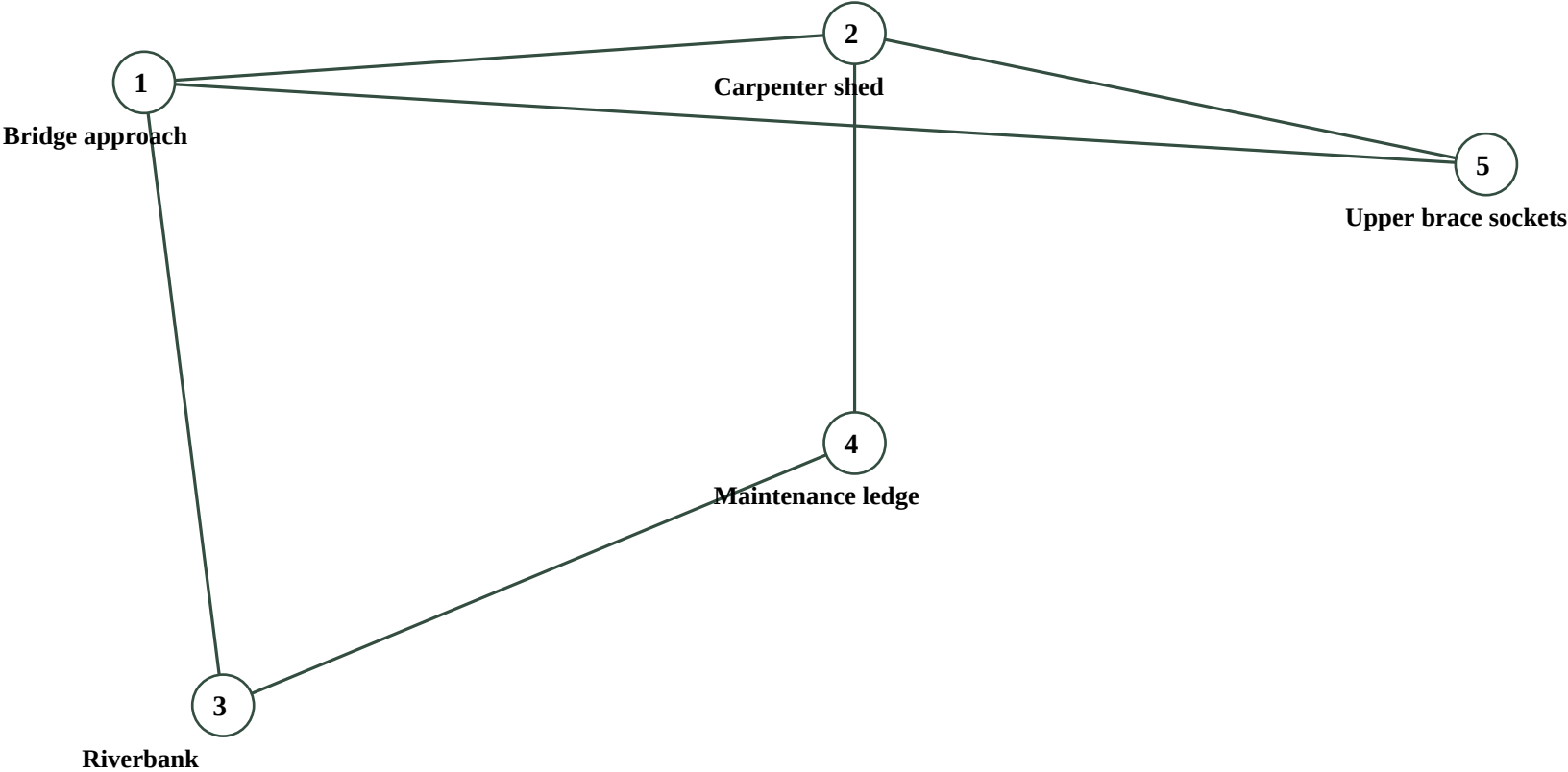
Ending: The warning does its job

Requires: Available

Noma is safe and the damaged span remains closed. The produce has not been delivered; the market receives an honest delay notice.

Next: Let the guild choose the next morning's ferry manifest with Sef.

A Bell Beneath the Bridge - GM decision map



Dashed paths need conditions. Read Connections and changing routes for costs and direction.