

The Bakery at the Edge of Winter

120-minute plan | 4 players | No combat

The town's only warm oven is fading before the winter fair. A delivery of fuel has been diverted, but the baker will not blame the miller.

Content notice: Cold weather and resource shortage; this fictional oven procedure is not appliance guidance.

What is really happening

Baker Sani sent dry fuel to the mill shelter after a roof failure. Damp sacks replaced it by mistake. Separating dry offcuts and sharing oven time saves the fair and shelter; moving all baking to the small mill stove provides fewer loaves but keeps everyone warm.

Prepare and play

Use your own rules or play without dice. State the goal, choose an approach, explain a reasonable cost and let the players decide. Plausible careful actions succeed; uncertain actions can succeed with delay, spent supplies or a favour owed. Evidence is always available through its described action. Each player creates an ordinary person with a useful skill, a reason to help, and an item. No character sheet, monster statistics or proprietary rulebook is needed.

Take 10 minutes to introduce characters, read the premise and discuss the content notice. Anyone may say "pause", pass on a description, or ask to move an uncomfortable moment offstage. Agree on no combat and on treating consequences as delay or repair, not permanent harm. Give one player the route map and another the time sheet.

Time plan

120-MINUTE PLAN

0-10: Opening agreement

10-20: Arrival

20-35: Records and tools

35-50: An independent trail

50-55: Break

55-75: The immediate problem

75-95: The final choice

95-110: Home and aftermath

110-120: Closing and epilogues

Follow both investigations; take the break before the immediate problem.

At 75 minutes, settle the immediate problem using a safe approach without another roll. At 95 minutes, finish the final method and begin the return.

With 10 minutes left, first secure the immediate goal: Bring the prepared dough to the mill's stove and share its small batches. Mark the immediate goal safe only once the people or resource are secured. Then, if no final method was used: Bake smaller batches at the shelter kitchen and serve a shared supper. Mark the fallback method and read the cost ending. Give each character an epilogue; do not bypass the safety step.

4 PLAYERS

Agree on fuel allocation without taking heat from the shelter.

Two pairs take observation and action tasks. Resolve them in two short alternating turns.

Choose the fair's meal.

Work in two pairs, one following the method and the other preparing a fallback or record.

Arrival - 10 minutes

Place: Bakery lane

Read aloud

Ed's tray of unbaked loaves rests on a cold sill. The fair ribbons have frost on their edges.

Run this scene

Fuel was diverted for shelter rather than stolen. A smaller shared meal is the fallback. Begin with the concrete request in the premise. Ask each character why they care and give them one ordinary useful item. Read both public observations without requiring a roll. Explain that the marked routes are safe to investigate, and offer a choice of the records or the visible trail. Let the group appoint a map reader; do not use hidden travel rolls to block the first lead.

Choices

1. Visit Fuel shed
2. Follow the trail to Mill yard

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Shelter kitchen. A missing method can be found again at Great oven; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Ed: Bake enough bread for the fair Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome.

Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Timeline record: The damp sacks arrived after the shelter's roof failed. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Fuel was diverted for shelter rather than stolen.

Fallback instruction: The mill's small stove can bake short batches while heating the shelter. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A smaller shared meal is the fallback.

Records and tools - 15 minutes

Place: Fuel shed

Read aloud

Nia breaks open a sack: the wood inside is wet and heavy. Untreated offcuts sit on a higher shelf.

Run this scene

The fair and shelter can share scarce dry fuel. The baker is at the shelter. Put the method card and destination note on the table. Ask what the two objects suggest, then answer direct practical questions from their wording. The maker can trade tools for help carrying or recording them, but refusal never removes these public documents. The trail remains another route. A check, if your rules use one, changes the time or tidiness of the work rather than whether this evidence exists.

Choices

1. Proceed to Shelter kitchen
2. Compare evidence at Mill yard

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Shelter kitchen. A missing method can be found again at Great oven; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Nia: Find dry fuel without using unsafe painted wood Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Method diagram: Dry untreated offcuts are tagged on the high shelf; two short oven turns conserve them. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The fair and shelter can share scarce dry fuel.

Destination note: Sani's delivery note says SHELTER KITCHEN, hot soup watch. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The baker is at the shelter.

An independent trail - 15 minutes

Place: Mill yard

Read aloud

Tor stacks blankets beside a roof panel. The fuel delivery stamp points toward the shelter kitchen.

Run this scene

A physical route finds her. A witness confirms the destination. Describe the physical trail before asking for a decision. The witness tells what they actually observed and admits what they did not see. If the group refuses conversation, the physical route supplies the destination. Let a character compare the timeline and another trace the map. For a divided group, take one short turn per side, then reunite at the meeting; do not add another travel encounter.

Choices

1. Proceed to Shelter kitchen
2. Compare evidence at Fuel shed

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Shelter kitchen. A missing method can be found again at Great oven; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Tor: Keep the temporary shelter warm Guides the party if they share a plan. If refused, points to the visible trail. Voice: Cautious, distinguish observation from assumption.

Physical trail: Floury handprints follow the fuel cart toward the shelter door. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A physical route finds her.

Witness statement: Tor saw Sani carry the dry fuel into the shelter kitchen. Give it: Ask any direct question, or read the witness's signed statement if conversation is refused. GM inference: A witness confirms the destination.

The immediate problem - 20 minutes

Place: Shelter kitchen

Read aloud

Sani ladles soup from a small stove. "They needed heat first," she says, "but I thought the replacement sacks were dry."

Run this scene

Baker Sani sent dry fuel to the mill shelter after a roof failure. Damp sacks replaced it by mistake. Separating dry offcuts and sharing oven time saves the fair and shelter; moving all baking to the small mill stove provides fewer loaves but keeps everyone warm. State the immediate stakes and offer both listed approaches. Before resolving action, ask who observes, who acts and who helps. Make any cost visible before a player accepts it. Avoid demanding a special ability or spell. When a plan fails, use the slower listed route and mark its time cost; people remain recoverable. Once the goal is safe, mark the immediate goal safe and continue. A refusal by the keeper cannot hide the marked safety instructions.

Choices

1. Reserve the shelter pile and carry only tagged spare offcuts back to the bakery.
2. Bring the prepared dough to the mill's stove and share its small batches.

If the group gets stuck

Bring the prepared dough to the mill's stove and share its small batches. Explain a five-minute delay before they accept it; mark the immediate goal safe when the people or resource are secured.

People and evidence

Sani: Honor both the fair and the shelter's needs Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Safety marks: Use only tagged dry untreated fuel. Keep the shelter's allocated pile separate. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Protect the shared resource before lighting another baking turn.

Encounter and party adaptation

Agree on fuel allocation without taking heat from the shelter.

A delay leaves less time for the final repair or decision. Explain costs before resolving an action.

Reserve the shelter pile and carry only tagged spare offcuts back to the bakery.

Bring the prepared dough to the mill's stove and share its small batches.

Two pairs take observation and action tasks. Resolve them in two short alternating turns.

Mark the immediate goal safe after either safe approach; a setback costs time, not access to the next scene.

The final choice - 20 minutes

Place: Great oven

Read aloud

The great oven holds a small red glow. Beside it, a board has space for two short baking turns.

Run this scene

The fair and shelter can share scarce dry fuel. Protect the shared resource before lighting another baking turn. Reveal the method and fallback together. Ask the group which tradeoff it accepts and give every character a small contribution. Mark the complete method for the first choice or the fallback method for the second. A risky improvisation should inherit one of these outcomes after its cost is explained, rather than create a third unprepared lock. Keep the immediate goal safe. Return by the known marked route; no new location needs to be invented.

Choices

1. Run two short great-oven turns with the agreed fuel reserve.
2. Bake smaller batches at the shelter kitchen and serve a shared supper.

If the group gets stuck

Bake smaller batches at the shelter kitchen and serve a shared supper. Mark the fallback method, keep the immediate goal safe and read the cost ending. Do not repeat a failed test.

People and evidence

Nia: Find dry fuel without using unsafe painted wood Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Sani: Honor both the fair and the shelter's needs Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Method diagram: Dry untreated offcuts are tagged on the high shelf; two short oven turns conserve them. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The fair and shelter can share scarce dry fuel.

Fallback instruction: The mill's small stove can bake short batches while heating the shelter. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A smaller shared meal is the fallback.

Encounter and party adaptation

Choose the fair's meal.

The complete method preserves the planned service; the fallback preserves the immediate goal at a visible cost.

Run two short great-oven turns with the agreed fuel reserve.

Bake smaller batches at the shelter kitchen and serve a shared supper.

Work in two pairs, one following the method and the other preparing a fallback or record.

Mark the complete method for the first approach or the fallback method for the second. Both allow return and an ending.

Home and aftermath - 15 minutes

Place: Bakery lane

Read aloud

Steam rises above a row of cups. The fair begins around bread that is plentiful, or deliberately shared in smaller pieces.

Run this scene

Choose a complete resolution or a resolution with a cost, then ask the group what happens next. Read the ending matching the selected outcome. Invite each character to add one ordinary detail to the aftermath, then ask the keeper for a concrete next action. Record who accepted the cost and which clues went unused. Spend the last few minutes on one enjoyable moment and one thing to change next time. Characters need not solve every optional inference to earn a resolved ending.

Choices

1. Describe who follows up tomorrow
2. Ask who helped whom and what it cost

If the group gets stuck

If no method was chosen, first confirm the immediate goal is safe, use the final fallback method and then read the cost ending. Record the unresolved work and give every character an epilogue.

People and evidence

Ed: Bake enough bread for the fair Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome.

Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Sani: Honor both the fair and the shelter's needs Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Endings

Complete resolution

Two warm batches reach the fair while soup stays hot at the shelter. Sani posts tomorrow's fuel allocation where both kitchens can see it.

First secure the immediate goal at Shelter kitchen. Use final method A at Great oven before choosing this ending.

Resolution with a cost

The fair becomes a smaller supper around the mill stove. Nobody loses their warm meal, but several planned stalls wait for another day.

First secure the immediate goal at Shelter kitchen. Use final method B at Great oven before choosing this ending.

Run two short great-oven turns with the agreed fuel reserve remains for a later visit.

Handout answers

h-order: Fuel was diverted for shelter rather than stolen.

h-fallback: A smaller shared meal is the fallback.

h-method: The fair and shelter can share scarce dry fuel.

h-note: The baker is at the shelter.

h-trail: A physical route finds her.

h-witness: A witness confirms the destination.

h-safe: Protect the shared resource before lighting another baking turn.

Clue reasoning

Fuel was diverted for shelter rather than stolen.: c-order

Proceed to Shelter kitchen: c-note OR c-trail OR c-witness

Protect the shared resource before lighting another baking turn.: c-safe / marked safety fallback

Choose the fair's meal.: c-method OR c-fallback

Map descriptions

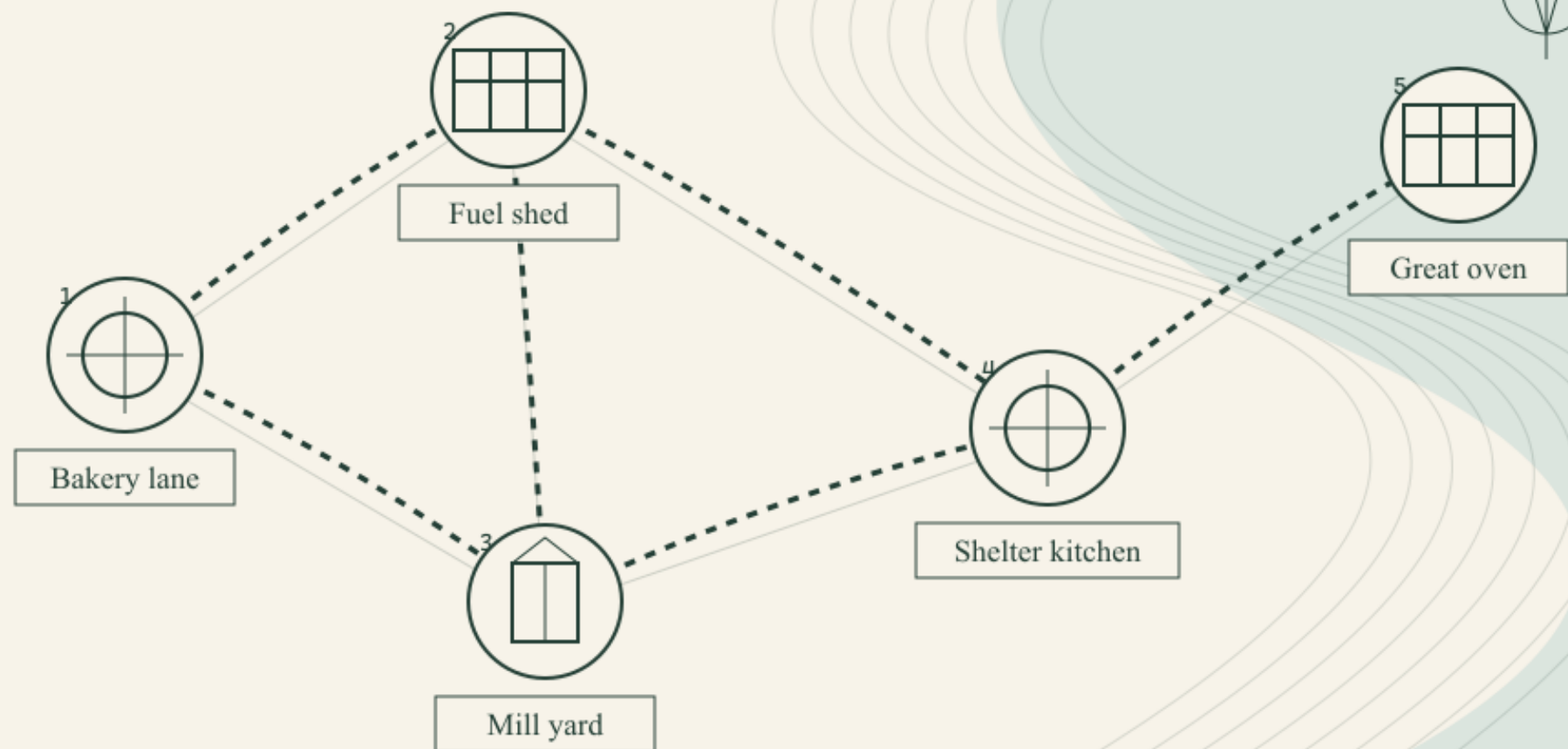
GM route atlas: Start at Bakery lane. Fuel shed and Mill yard are independent investigation routes; both connect to Shelter kitchen, which leads to Great oven. All marked connections are bidirectional. Return uses the known route to Bakery lane.

Shelter kitchen - approach plan: At Shelter kitchen, the marked entrance reaches the immediate problem. Approach A: Reserve the shelter pile and carry only tagged spare offcuts back to the bakery. Approach B: Bring the prepared dough to the mill's stove and share its small batches. Both reach the onward route.

Layout is schematic, with no combat grid or movement scale.

Player route map: Public route map: Bakery lane connects to Fuel shed and Mill yard; either reaches Shelter kitchen, then Great oven. Routes work in both directions. Retrace the route to return. No hidden information is marked.

GM route atlas

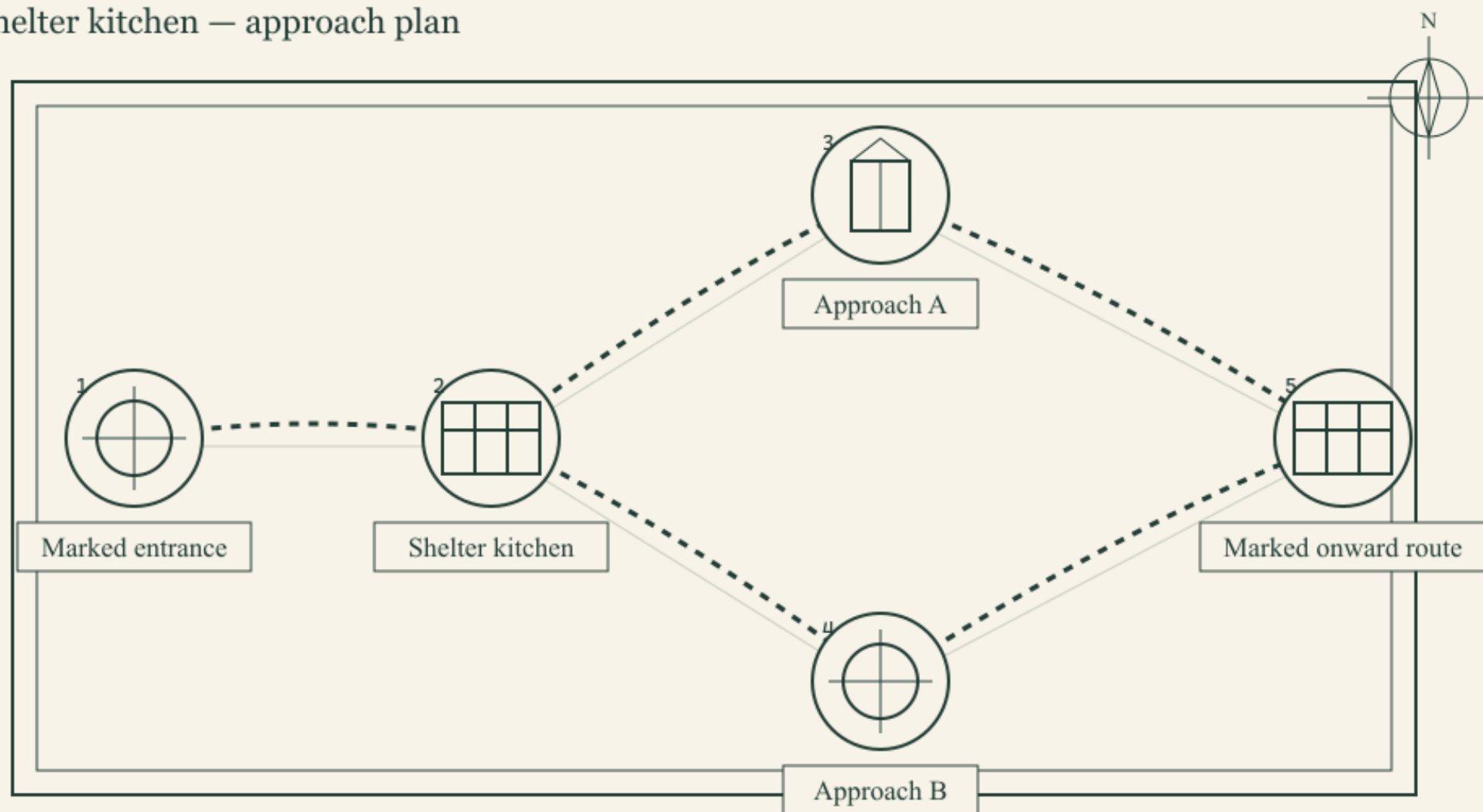


C-SAFE / immediate problem

C-METHOD or C-FALLBACK

GM ATLAS · CONNECTIONS ARE BIDIRECTIONAL · NOT TO SCALE · 1.0.0

Shelter kitchen — approach plan



Reserve the shelter pile and carry only tagged spare offcuts back to the bakery.
Bring the prepared dough to the mill's stove and share its small batches.

GM ATLAS · CONNECTIONS ARE BIDIRECTIONAL · NOT TO SCALE · 1.0.0