

The Cartographer's Last Door

120-minute plan | 4 players | No combat

A new door appears on a finished map. Its cartographer went through yesterday; today the map begins erasing the roads behind him.

Content notice: Displacement and forgotten journeys; use a lost trading route if preferred.

What is really happening

Cartographer Olin mapped every public road but omitted the old refugee path he once used. The unfinished path manifests as a door and erases nearby routes to demand recognition. Naming it as a shared road stabilizes the map; folding it shut saves existing roads but keeps the omitted path hidden.

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: Call Olin along the constant line and let him return under his own power. Mark the immediate goal safe only once the people or resource are secured. Then, if no final method was used: Bring everyone back, fold the existing seam and fix it closed. Mark the fallback method and read the cost ending. Give each character an epilogue; do not bypass the safety step.

4 PLAYERS

Bring Olin off the unfinished line before another road vanishes.

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

Choose whether to include the omitted road.

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

Arrival - 10 minutes

Place: Map room

Read aloud

Dena holds a map down with four stones. Between two drawn houses, a tiny door stands open in the paper.

Run this scene

The omission is local and can be addressed. Close the manifestation without erasing the existing roads. 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 Ink shop
2. Follow the trail to Old milestone

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Paper threshold. A missing method can be found again at Unfinished road; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Dena: Save the town's only reliable road map Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Timeline record: Roads vanish around one unlabelled blank, not across the whole map. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The omission is local and can be addressed.

Fallback instruction: Fold the threshold along its existing seam and secure it with fixative. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Close the manifestation without erasing the existing roads.

Records and tools - 15 minutes

Place: Ink shop

Read aloud

Kit watches ink lift from a pen and move toward the map room. A bottle labelled FIXATIVE is still full.

Run this scene

Acknowledging the omitted road stabilizes the map. The threshold is his location. 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 Paper threshold
2. Compare evidence at Old milestone

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Paper threshold. A missing method can be found again at Unfinished road; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Kit: Keep the disappearing ink from reaching the index 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: The old milestone records the path's shared public name: Shelter Road. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Acknowledging the omitted road stabilizes the map.

Destination note: Olin's note: I am at the paper threshold; follow the unfinished line. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The threshold is his location.

An independent trail - 15 minutes

Place: Old milestone

Read aloud

Uma cleans moss from a milestone whose arrow points into a blank field. Someone has scratched "we came this way" into it.

Run this scene

A physical trail reaches him. A witness provides an independent lead. 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 Paper threshold
2. Compare evidence at Ink shop

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Paper threshold. A missing method can be found again at Unfinished road; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Uma: Make the old path visible for travellers Guides the party if they share a plan. If refused, points to the visible trail. Voice: Cautious, distinguish observation from assumption.

Physical trail: Footprints in lifted ink lead from the milestone to the paper 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 trail reaches him.

Witness statement: Uma saw Olin enter the blank door carrying a signpost. Give it: Ask any direct question, or read the witness's signed statement if conversation is refused. GM inference: A witness provides an independent lead.

The immediate problem - 20 minutes

Place: Paper threshold

Read aloud

The paper door opens onto a road with no edge. Olin's footprints remain bright while the other marks fade.

Run this scene

Cartographer Olin mapped every public road but omitted the old refugee path he once used. The unfinished path manifests as a door and erases nearby routes to demand recognition. Naming it as a shared road stabilizes the map; folding it shut saves existing roads but keeps the omitted path hidden. 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. Anchor the map edge while another player follows the milestone line.
2. Call Olin along the constant line and let him return under his own power.

If the group gets stuck

Call Olin along the constant line and let him return under his own power. Explain a five-minute delay before they accept it; mark the immediate goal safe when the people or resource are secured.

People and evidence

Olin: Acknowledge the journey he left out 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: A traveller may cross only while another holds the map edge; the milestone line is constant. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Use the anchored line or bring Olin back before folding.

Encounter and party adaptation

Bring Olin off the unfinished line before another road vanishes.

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

Anchor the map edge while another player follows the milestone line.

Call Olin along the constant line and let him return under his own power.

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: Unfinished road

Read aloud

Olin waits beside an empty signpost. Behind him, half a village appears and disappears like a breath on glass.

Run this scene

Acknowledging the omitted road stabilizes the map. Use the anchored line or bring Olin back before folding. 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. Write Shelter Road on the signpost and the public map.
2. Bring everyone back, fold the existing seam and fix it closed.

If the group gets stuck

Bring everyone back, fold the existing seam and fix it closed. Mark the fallback method, keep the immediate goal safe and read the cost ending. Do not repeat a failed test.

People and evidence

Kit: Keep the disappearing ink from reaching the index Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Olin: Acknowledge the journey he left out 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: The old milestone records the path's shared public name: Shelter Road. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Acknowledging the omitted road stabilizes the map.

Fallback instruction: Fold the threshold along its existing seam and secure it with fixative. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Close the manifestation without erasing the existing roads.

Encounter and party adaptation

Choose whether to include the omitted road.

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

Write Shelter Road on the signpost and the public map.

Bring everyone back, fold the existing seam and fix it closed.

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: Map room

Read aloud

Dena puts a fifth stone beside the map. The new sign, or the folded seam, becomes part of what the town remembers.

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

Dena: Save the town's only reliable road map Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Olin: Acknowledge the journey he left out 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

Shelter Road joins the other routes without displacing them. Olin leaves enough blank space for another traveller's correction.

First secure the immediate goal at Paper threshold. Use final method A at Unfinished road before choosing this ending.

Resolution with a cost

The seam closes and the old roads return. Uma keeps the milestone clean, waiting for a future map willing to include the missing path.

First secure the immediate goal at Paper threshold. Use final method B at Unfinished road before choosing this ending.

Write Shelter Road on the signpost and the public map remains for a later visit.

Handout answers

h-order: The omission is local and can be addressed.

h-fallback: Close the manifestation without erasing the existing roads.

h-method: Acknowledging the omitted road stabilizes the map.

h-note: The threshold is his location.

h-trail: A physical trail reaches him.

h-witness: A witness provides an independent lead.

h-safe: Use the anchored line or bring Olin back before folding.

Clue reasoning

The omission is local and can be addressed.: c-order

Proceed to Paper threshold: c-note OR c-trail OR c-witness

Use the anchored line or bring Olin back before folding.: c-safe / marked safety fallback

Choose whether to include the omitted road.: c-method OR c-fallback

Map descriptions

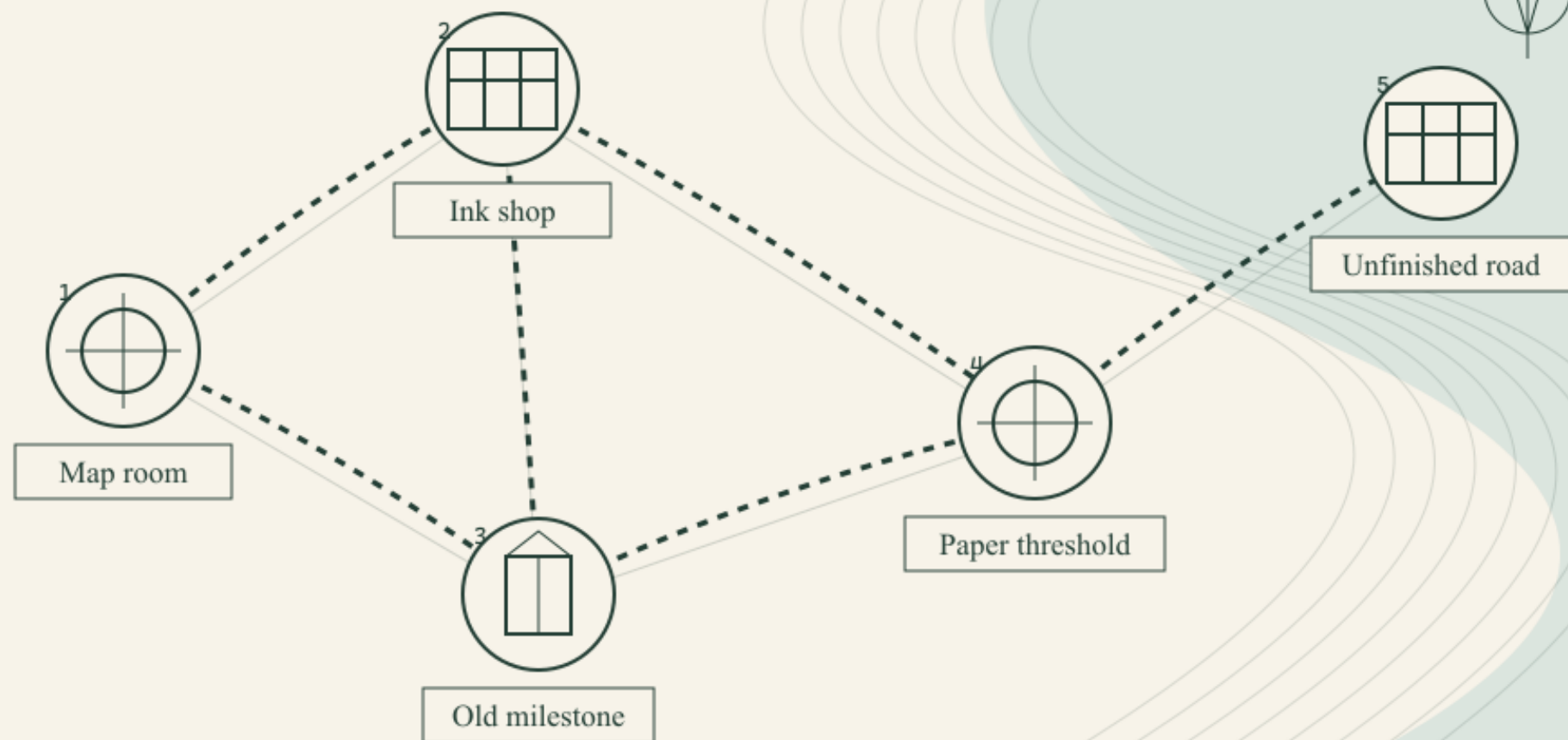
GM route atlas: Start at Map room. Ink shop and Old milestone are independent investigation routes; both connect to Paper threshold, which leads to Unfinished road. All marked connections are bidirectional. Return uses the known route to Map room.

Paper threshold - approach plan: At Paper threshold, the marked entrance reaches the immediate problem. Approach A: Anchor the map edge while another player follows the milestone line. Approach B: Call Olin along the constant line and let him return under his own power. Both reach the onward route.

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

Player route map: Public route map: Map room connects to Ink shop and Old milestone; either reaches Paper threshold, then Unfinished road. Routes work in both directions. Retrace the route to return. No hidden information is marked.

GM route atlas

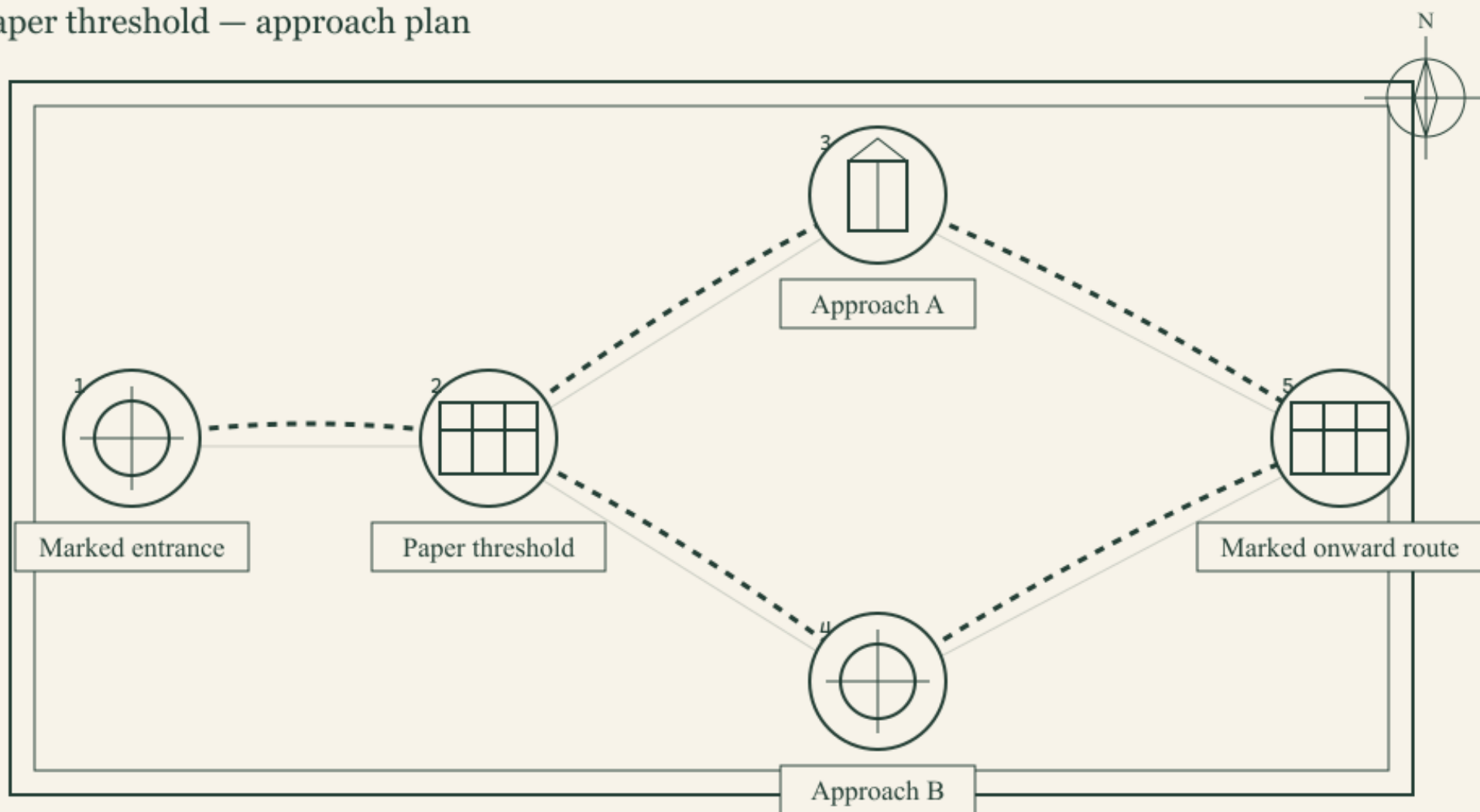


C-SAFE / immediate problem

C-METHOD or C-FALLBACK

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Paper threshold — approach plan



Anchor the map edge while another player follows the milestone line.
Call Olin along the constant line and let him return under his own power.

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