

The Garden Under the Reservoir

120-minute plan | 4 players | No combat

A lowering reservoir reveals a garden beneath its surface. A caretaker goes down to recover a memorial, while the water board prepares to refill.

Content notice: Flooding and memorial grief; nobody needs to enter deep water.

What is really happening

Caretaker Omri kept a submerged community garden mapped so its memorial could be recovered during maintenance. The refill notice arrived early because two schedules were confused. Holding the correct maintenance valve preserves a dry access window; lifting only the memorial before refilling saves memory but leaves the garden underwater.

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: Leave the beds behind and escort Omri up the marked stair immediately. Mark the immediate goal safe only once the people or resource are secured. Then, if no final method was used: Raise the tablet, clear the stair, and permit scheduled refill. Mark the fallback method and read the cost ending. Give each character an epilogue; do not bypass the safety step.

4 PLAYERS

Bring Omri and the tablet to the firm stair before refill.

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

Choose what the dry window can preserve.

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

Arrival - 10 minutes

Place: Reservoir rim

Read aloud

A row of stone beds appears beneath the retreating water. Rae has tied a rope across the soft shore.

Run this scene

The refill order is premature. Recover the memorial even if the dry window closes. 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 Schedule office
2. Follow the trail to Dry stair

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Sunken garden. A missing method can be found again at Refill valve; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Rae: Keep visitors off unstable mud Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome.

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

Timeline record: The cleaning and refill notices share a copied date but different sequence numbers. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The refill order is premature.

Fallback instruction: The memorial tablet fits the stair trolley and can be raised before refilling. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Recover the memorial even if the dry window closes.

Records and tools - 15 minutes

Place: Schedule office

Read aloud

Fin compares two schedules: one for cleaning, one for refilling. Both carry the same copied date.

Run this scene

A correct schedule preserves a dry access window. The caretaker is in the garden. 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 Sunken garden
2. Compare evidence at Dry stair

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Sunken garden. A missing method can be found again at Refill valve; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Fin: Find the real maintenance window 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: Maintenance sequence 12 precedes refill 13; hold valve on 12 until the dry stair clears. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A correct schedule preserves a dry access window.

Destination note: Omri's work note says SUNKEN GARDEN, memorial bed. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The caretaker is in the garden.

An independent trail - 15 minutes

Place: Dry stair

Read aloud

Ames brushes mud from a dry stair rail. A garden plan is carved into its first step.

Run this scene

A physical route reaches him. 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 Sunken garden
2. Compare evidence at Schedule office

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Sunken garden. A missing method can be found again at Refill valve; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Ames: Protect the dry stair until the caretaker returns Guides the party if they share a plan. If refused, points to the visible trail. Voice: Cautious, distinguish observation from assumption.

Physical trail: Cleaned rail marks continue down the dry stair toward the memorial bed. 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 reaches him.

Witness statement: Ames saw Omri roll a trolley down the dry stair. 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: Sunken garden

Read aloud

Omri kneels beside a memorial tablet. Flowers carved into the stone match the beds around him.

Run this scene

Caretaker Omri kept a submerged community garden mapped so its memorial could be recovered during maintenance. The refill notice arrived early because two schedules were confused. Holding the correct maintenance valve preserves a dry access window; lifting only the memorial before refilling saves memory but leaves the garden underwater. 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. Hold maintenance sequence 12 while a trolley team raises the tablet.
2. Leave the beds behind and escort Omri up the marked stair immediately.

If the group gets stuck

Leave the beds behind and escort Omri up the marked stair immediately. Explain a five-minute delay before they accept it; mark the immediate goal safe when the people or resource are secured.

People and evidence

Omri: Recover the memorial without risking anyone 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: The rope line marks firm stair access; mud beyond it is optional and unsafe. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Use the marked stair, not the exposed shoreline.

Encounter and party adaptation

Bring Omri and the tablet to the firm stair before refill.

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

Hold maintenance sequence 12 while a trolley team raises the tablet.

Leave the beds behind and escort Omri up the marked stair immediately.

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: Refill valve

Read aloud

The refill valve is tagged with two dates, one overwritten. The water is still below the dry stair.

Run this scene

A correct schedule preserves a dry access window. Use the marked stair, not the exposed shoreline. 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. Correct the notice and hold a supervised dry afternoon for the garden.
2. Raise the tablet, clear the stair, and permit scheduled refill.

If the group gets stuck

Raise the tablet, clear the stair, and permit scheduled refill. Mark the fallback method, keep the immediate goal safe and read the cost ending. Do not repeat a failed test.

People and evidence

Fin: Find the real maintenance window Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Omri: Recover the memorial without risking anyone 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: Maintenance sequence 12 precedes refill 13; hold valve on 12 until the dry stair clears. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A correct schedule preserves a dry access window.

Fallback instruction: The memorial tablet fits the stair trolley and can be raised before refilling. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Recover the memorial even if the dry window closes.

Encounter and party adaptation

Choose what the dry window can preserve.

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

Correct the notice and hold a supervised dry afternoon for the garden.

Raise the tablet, clear the stair, and permit scheduled refill.

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: Reservoir rim

Read aloud

A tablet stands on the rim, or the garden opens for one careful dry afternoon. People bring names to read, rather than flowers to pick.

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

Rae: Keep visitors off unstable mud Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome.

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

Omri: Recover the memorial without risking anyone 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

The corrected notice buys an afternoon. Omri walks the stone paths with neighbours, mapping what can be remembered without taking it away.

First secure the immediate goal at Sunken garden. Use final method A at Refill valve before choosing this ending.

Resolution with a cost

The tablet reaches the rim before the water rises. The garden disappears again, but its plan and names remain where visitors can see them.

First secure the immediate goal at Sunken garden. Use final method B at Refill valve before choosing this ending.

Correct the notice and hold a supervised dry afternoon for the garden remains for a later visit.

Handout answers

h-order: The refill order is premature.

h-fallback: Recover the memorial even if the dry window closes.

h-method: A correct schedule preserves a dry access window.

h-note: The caretaker is in the garden.

h-trail: A physical route reaches him.

h-witness: A witness confirms the destination.

h-safe: Use the marked stair, not the exposed shoreline.

Clue reasoning

The refill order is premature.: c-order

Proceed to Sunken garden: c-note OR c-trail OR c-witness

Use the marked stair, not the exposed shoreline.: c-safe / marked safety fallback

Choose what the dry window can preserve.: c-method OR c-fallback

Map descriptions

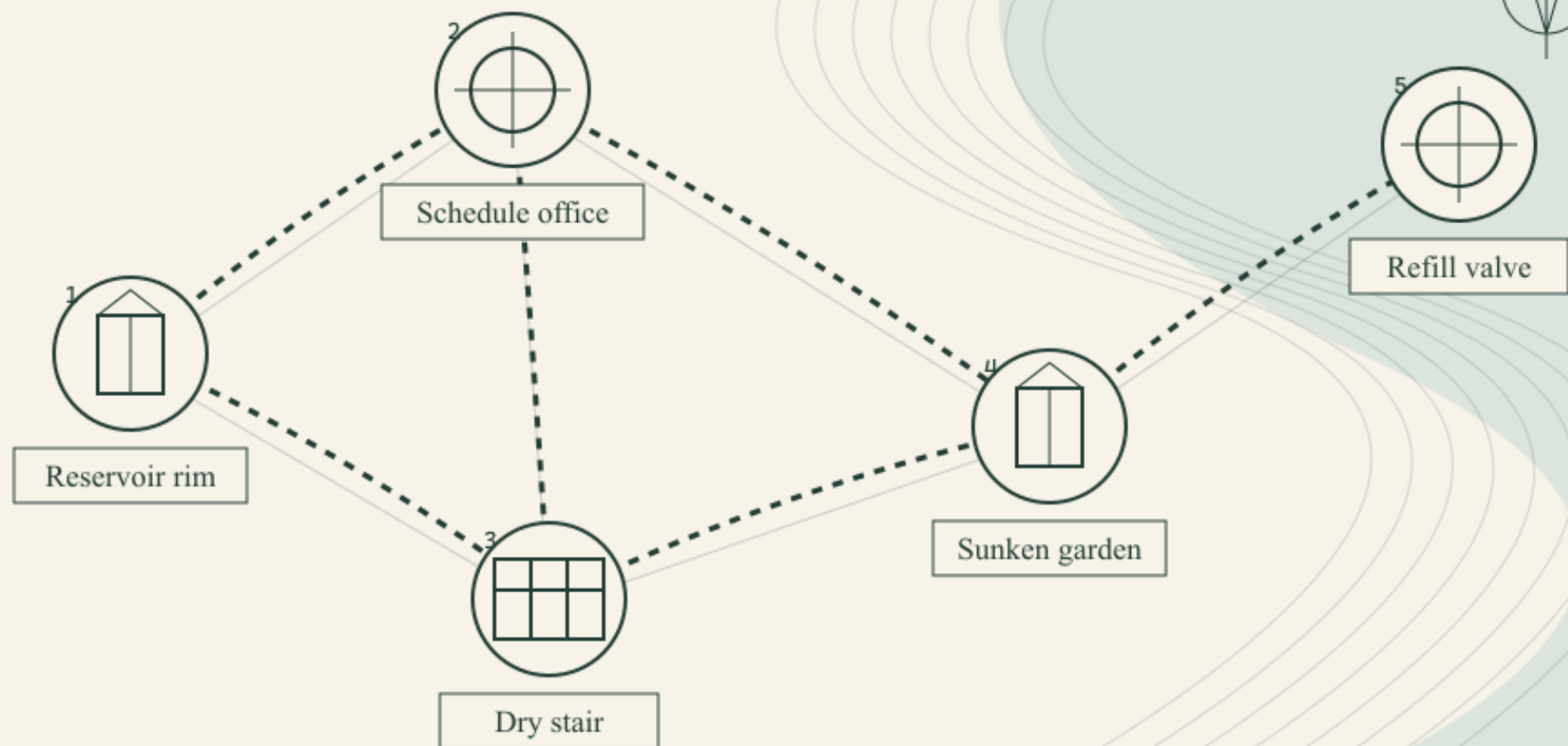
GM route atlas: Start at Reservoir rim. Schedule office and Dry stair are independent investigation routes; both connect to Sunken garden, which leads to Refill valve. All marked connections are bidirectional. Return uses the known route to Reservoir rim.

Sunken garden - approach plan: At Sunken garden, the marked entrance reaches the immediate problem. Approach A: Hold maintenance sequence 12 while a trolley team raises the tablet. Approach B: Leave the beds behind and escort Omri up the marked stair immediately. Both reach the onward route. Layout is

schematic, with no combat grid or movement scale.

Player route map: Public route map: Reservoir rim connects to Schedule office and Dry stair; either reaches Sunken garden, then Refill valve. Routes work in both directions. Retrace the route to return. No hidden information is marked.

GM route atlas

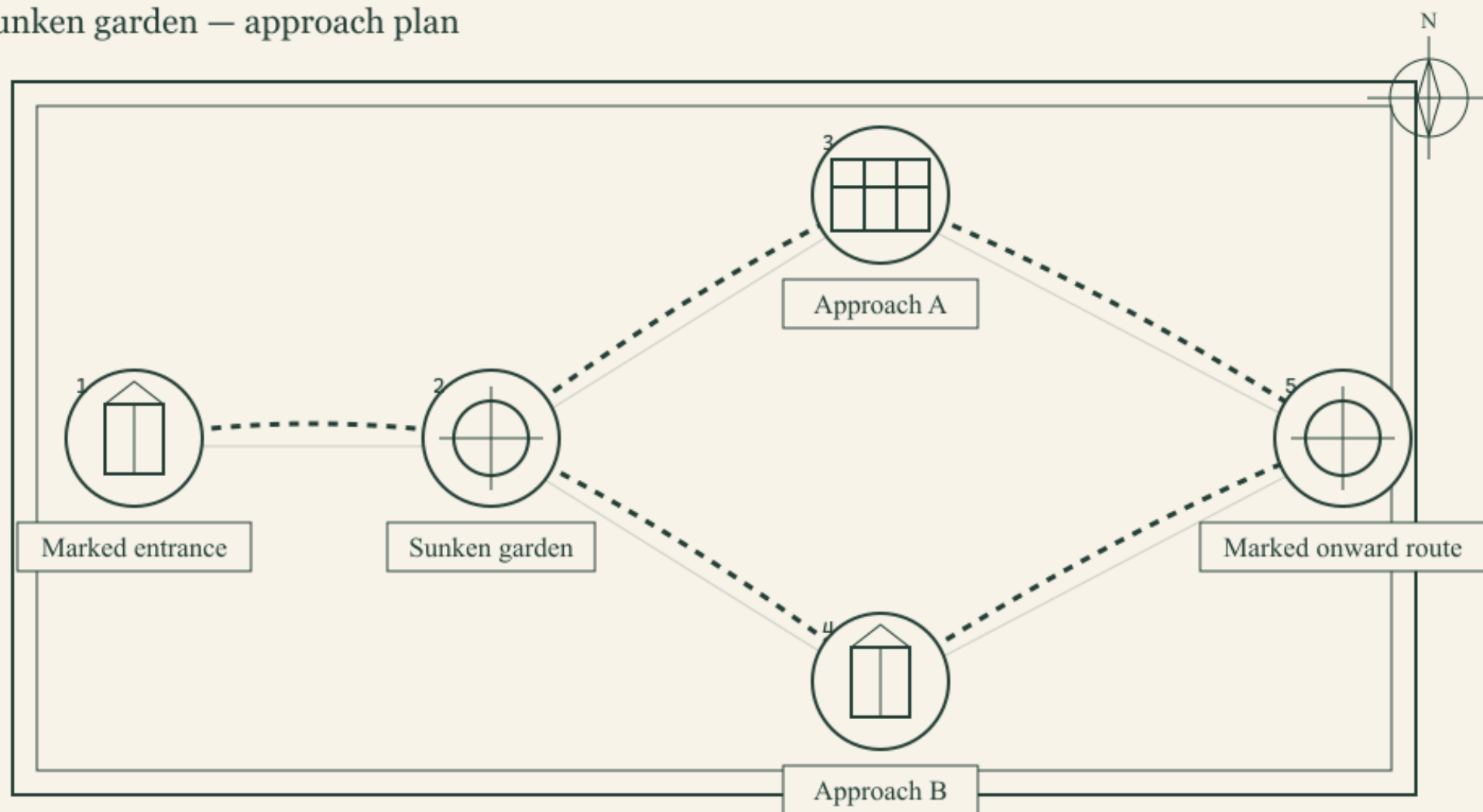


C-SAFE / immediate problem

C-METHOD or C-FALLBACK

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Sunken garden — approach plan



Hold maintenance sequence 12 while a trolley team raises the tablet.
Leave the beds behind and escort Omri up the marked stair immediately.

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