

The Lighthouse in the Forest

120-minute plan | 4 players | No combat

A lighthouse shines among the trees. Migrating birds circle it instead of finding their river, while its keeper insists the light saved a lost child.

Content notice: Heights and migrating animals; no animal harm is required.

What is really happening

Keeper Hessa lit a forest beacon for a search. Its rotating mirror now imitates the birds' river glint. Angling the mirror toward the real river releases the flock; extinguishing it works too, but removes the night guide used by local travellers.

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: Ask Hessa to lower the mirror using its service cord from the stair. Mark the immediate goal safe only once the people or resource are secured. Then, if no final method was used: Extinguish the lamp and place fixed lanterns on the ranger trail. Mark the fallback method and read the cost ending. Give each character an epilogue; do not bypass the safety step.

4 PLAYERS

Reach the hinge without startling the resting birds.

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

Choose a night guide that lets the birds leave.

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

Arrival - 10 minutes

Place: Forest camp

Read aloud

Pax counts birds circling a beam between the trees. Their wings flash silver, then return to the same branch.

Run this scene

The mirror creates the misleading river glint. Turning the beacon off has a workable cost. 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 Ranger hut
2. Follow the trail to Bird clearing

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Beacon stair. A missing method can be found again at Mirror platform; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Pax: Get the flock to the river before its rest period Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Timeline record: The flock circles when the mirror faces trees and turns outward when it flashes east. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The mirror creates the misleading river glint.

Fallback instruction: The ranger's marked night trail can replace the beacon with small fixed lanterns. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Turning the beacon off has a workable cost.

Records and tools - 15 minutes

Place: Ranger hut

Read aloud

Demi spreads a ranger chart weighted with pinecones. A dotted night trail crosses the river at a ford.

Run this scene

Reorienting the glint releases the flock while preserving a guide. The keeper is on the stair. 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 Beacon stair
2. Compare evidence at Bird clearing

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Beacon stair. A missing method can be found again at Mirror platform; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Demi: Keep a safe trail for night travellers 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 real river is east; lock the mirror hinge on the EAST mark. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Reorienting the glint releases the flock while preserving a guide.

Destination note: Hessa's ranger entry says BEACON STAIR, final search watch. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The keeper is on the stair.

An independent trail - 15 minutes

Place: Bird clearing

Read aloud

Rin points past the circling flock toward a strip of real water. The birds look at the beam instead.

Run this scene

Visible search markers locate her. A witness independently confirms the route. 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 Beacon stair
2. Compare evidence at Ranger hut

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Beacon stair. A missing method can be found again at Mirror platform; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Rin: Show where the real river lies Guides the party if they share a plan. If refused, points to the visible trail. Voice: Cautious, distinguish observation from assumption.

Physical trail: Scarf-coloured trail ribbons lead to the beacon stair. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Visible search markers locate her.

Witness statement: Rin saw Hessa climb the stair after the child returned. Give it: Ask any direct question, or read the witness's signed statement if conversation is refused. GM inference: A witness independently confirms the route.

The immediate problem - 20 minutes

Place: Beacon stair

Read aloud

Hessa waits on the beacon stair with a child's lost scarf, now returned. The search is over; the light keeps turning.

Run this scene

Keeper Hessa lit a forest beacon for a search. Its rotating mirror now imitates the birds' river glint. Angling the mirror toward the real river releases the flock; extinguishing it works too, but removes the night guide used by local travellers. 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. Wait for the resting turn, climb together, and steady the hinge from inside the rail.
2. Ask Hessa to lower the mirror using its service cord from the stair.

If the group gets stuck

Ask Hessa to lower the mirror using its service cord from the stair. Explain a five-minute delay before they accept it; mark the immediate goal safe when the people or resource are secured.

People and evidence

Hessa: Keep the search beacon useful without trapping birds 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: Keep hands below the marked mirror edge; lock the hinge before approaching the platform rail. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A careful two-person operation avoids a fall.

Encounter and party adaptation

Reach the hinge without startling the resting birds.

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

Wait for the resting turn, climb together, and steady the hinge from inside the rail.

Ask Hessa to lower the mirror using its service cord from the stair.

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: Mirror platform

Read aloud

A mirror catches the lamp and throws a river-shaped stripe over the leaves. Its hinge bears an arrow marked EAST.

Run this scene

Reorienting the glint releases the flock while preserving a guide. A careful two-person operation avoids a fall. 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. Lock the mirror on EAST so its glint joins the real river.
2. Extinguish the lamp and place fixed lanterns on the ranger trail.

If the group gets stuck

Extinguish the lamp and place fixed lanterns on the ranger trail. Mark the fallback method, keep the immediate goal safe and read the cost ending. Do not repeat a failed test.

People and evidence

Demi: Keep a safe trail for night travellers Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Hessa: Keep the search beacon useful without trapping birds 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 real river is east; lock the mirror hinge on the EAST mark. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Reorienting the glint releases the flock while preserving a guide.

Fallback instruction: The ranger's marked night trail can replace the beacon with small fixed lanterns. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Turning the beacon off has a workable cost.

Encounter and party adaptation

Choose a night guide that lets the birds leave.

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

Lock the mirror on EAST so its glint joins the real river.

Extinguish the lamp and place fixed lanterns on the ranger trail.

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: Forest camp

Read aloud

The flock draws a long line above the real river. Travellers at the camp choose what kind of guide to keep for tomorrow.

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

Pax: Get the flock to the river before its rest period Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Hessa: Keep the search beacon useful without trapping birds 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 birds follow the joined silver line. Hessa keeps a gentle fixed beacon for travellers and writes down when to close its search mirror.

First secure the immediate goal at Beacon stair. Use final method A at Mirror platform before choosing this ending.

Resolution with a cost

The great beam goes dark. Birds find the river, while travellers follow a slower chain of small trail lanterns.

First secure the immediate goal at Beacon stair. Use final method B at Mirror platform before choosing this ending.

Lock the mirror on EAST so its glint joins the real river remains for a later visit.

Handout answers

h-order: The mirror creates the misleading river glint.

h-fallback: Turning the beacon off has a workable cost.

h-method: Reorienting the glint releases the flock while preserving a guide.

h-note: The keeper is on the stair.

h-trail: Visible search markers locate her.

h-witness: A witness independently confirms the route.

h-safe: A careful two-person operation avoids a fall.

Clue reasoning

The mirror creates the misleading river glint.: c-order

Proceed to Beacon stair: c-note OR c-trail OR c-witness

A careful two-person operation avoids a fall.: c-safe / marked safety fallback

Choose a night guide that lets the birds leave.: c-method OR c-fallback

Map descriptions

GM route atlas: Start at Forest camp. Ranger hut and Bird clearing are independent investigation routes; both connect to Beacon stair, which leads to Mirror platform. All marked connections are bidirectional. Return uses the known route to Forest camp.

Beacon stair - approach plan: At Beacon stair, the marked entrance reaches the immediate problem.

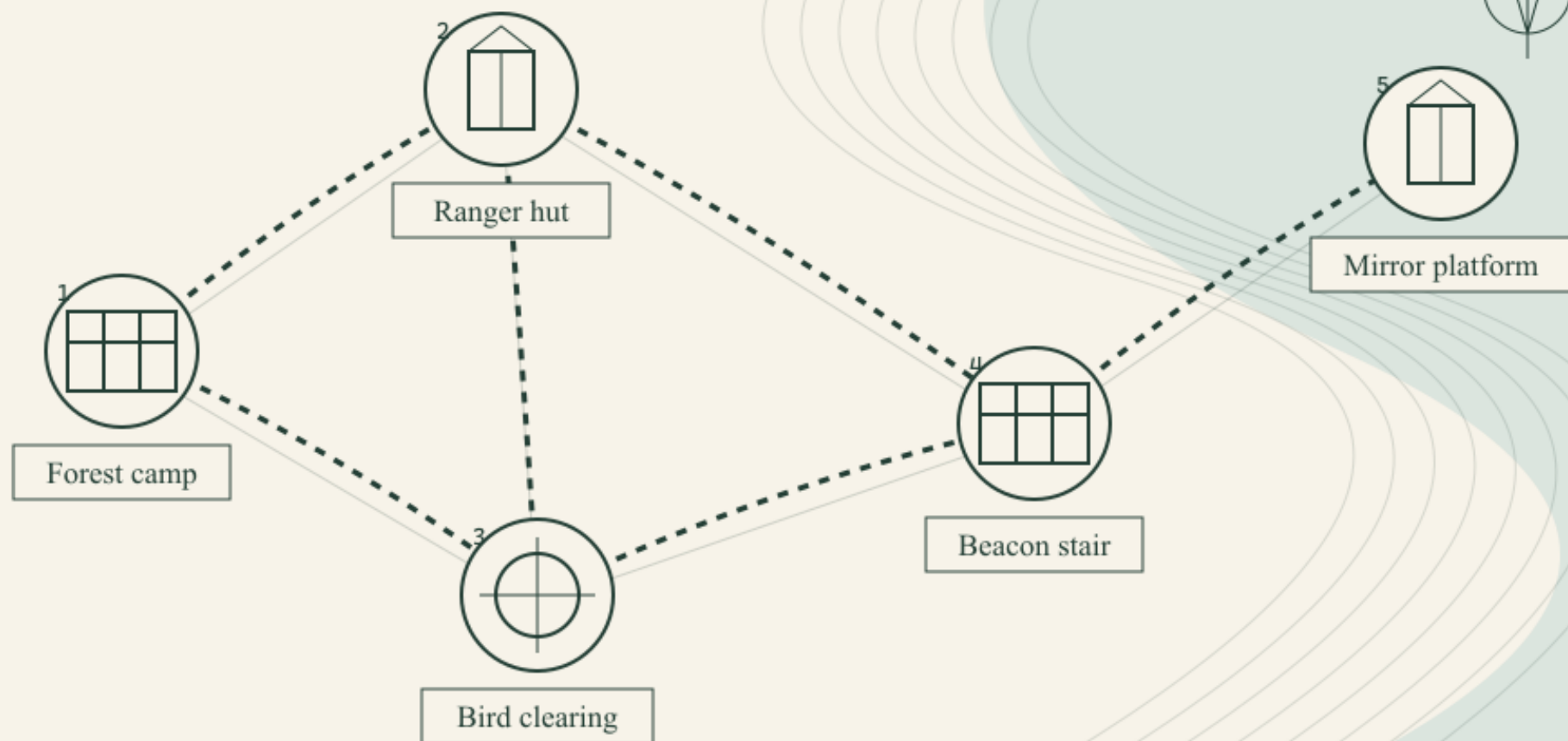
Approach A: Wait for the resting turn, climb together, and steady the hinge from inside the rail. Approach

B: Ask Hessa to lower the mirror using its service cord from the stair. Both reach the onward route.

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

Player route map: Public route map: Forest camp connects to Ranger hut and Bird clearing; either reaches Beacon stair, then Mirror platform. Routes work in both directions. Retrace the route to return. No hidden information is marked.

GM route atlas

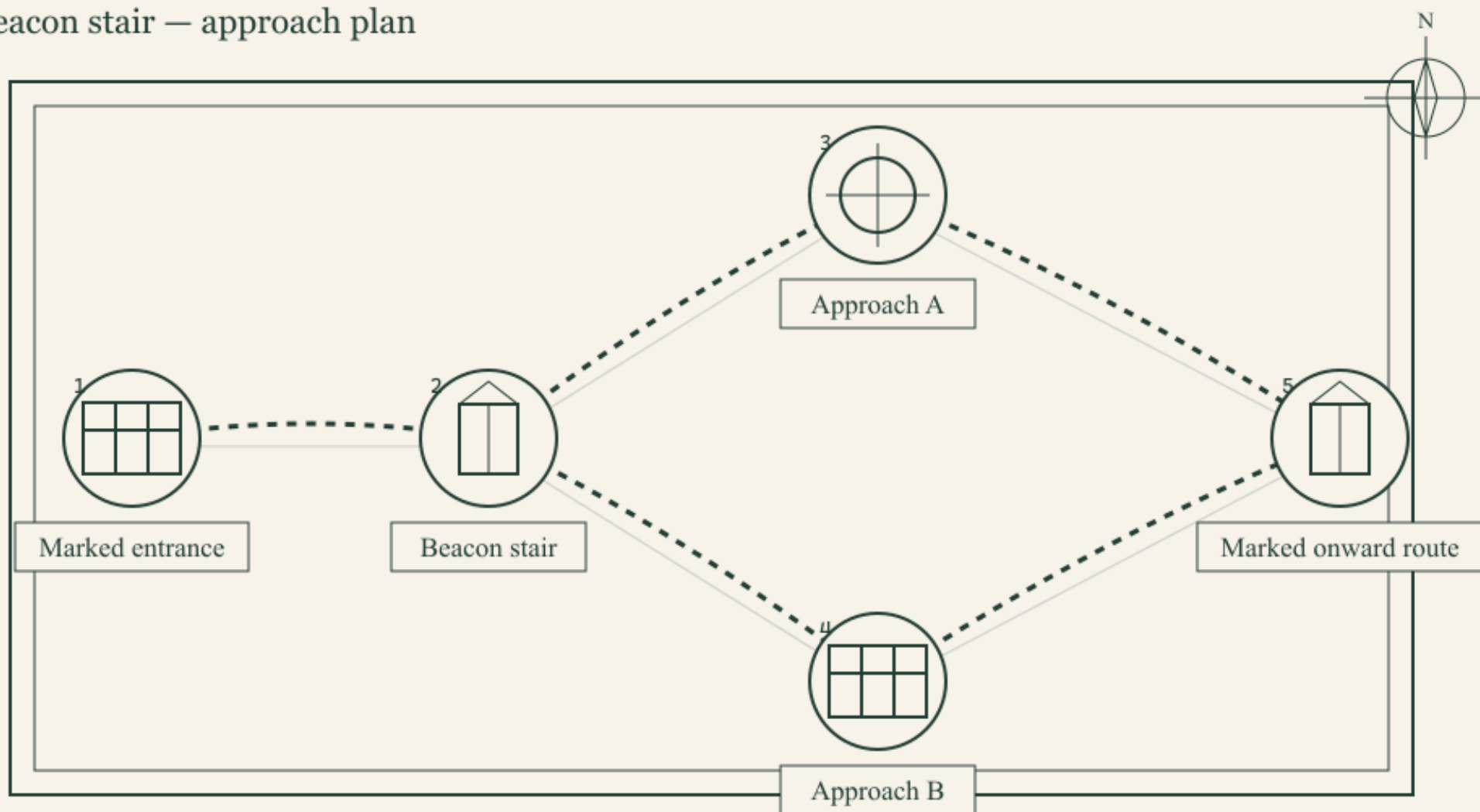


C-SAFE / immediate problem

C-METHOD or C-FALLBACK

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Beacon stair — approach plan



Wait for the resting turn, climb together, and steady the hinge from inside the rail.

Ask Hessa to lower the mirror using its service cord from the stair.

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