

The Town That Moved Overnight

120-minute plan | 4 players | No combat

Buildings have traded places overnight. The clinic stands where the bakery was, and a surveyor's chalk grid glows beneath the market.

Content notice: Disorientation and moving buildings; keep all residents safely outside during changes.

What is really happening

Surveyor Tessa used a civic rearrangement grid to shorten access routes for a festival. She transposed two anchor labels, rotating whole blocks instead. Correcting the labels restores locations; fixing paths to the new arrangement stabilizes it but obliges the town to choose permanent new addresses.

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 Tessa to freeze one block at a time while neighbours escort visitors. Mark the immediate goal safe only once the people or resource are secured. Then, if no final method was used: Keep HOLD engaged and approve a public map of the new arrangement. Mark the fallback method and read the cost ending. Give each character an epilogue; do not bypass the safety step.

4 PLAYERS

Create a stable route to the clinic while stopping the moving blocks.

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

Choose the town's next map.

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

Arrival - 10 minutes

Place: Displaced square

Read aloud

Ada's bakery door opens onto the clinic's waiting room. Outside, the market fountain stands on dry paving.

Run this scene

The grid caused a bounded transposition. Stabilize first and choose permanent new addresses later. 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 Survey shed
2. Follow the trail to Old signpost

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Grid centre. A missing method can be found again at Anchor stones; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Ada: Make the clinic reachable before its first appointment Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Timeline record: Only blocks inside the chalk boundary move; the old signpost stands outside it. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The grid caused a bounded transposition.

Fallback instruction: HOLD fixes the current layout; new signs can make it usable. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Stabilize first and choose permanent new addresses later.

Records and tools - 15 minutes

Place: Survey shed

Read aloud

Niko compares two anchor labels. The north arrow on one points through its own letter.

Run this scene

Correct anchors restore the original layout. The surveyor is at the grid centre. 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 Grid centre
2. Compare evidence at Old signpost

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Grid centre. A missing method can be found again at Anchor stones; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Niko: Find which anchor label was reversed 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: North label goes to the northern socket, east to the eastern; scratched arrows match. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Correct anchors restore the original layout.

Destination note: Tessa's survey slip says GRID CENTRE, alignment watch. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The surveyor is at the grid centre.

An independent trail - 15 minutes

Place: Old signpost

Read aloud

Brin carries an old signpost that still points to the clinic's former location. The ground beneath it feels steady.

Run this scene

A physical trail locates 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 Grid centre
2. Compare evidence at Survey shed

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Grid centre. A missing method can be found again at Anchor stones; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Brin: Help neighbours navigate without blaming them Guides the party if they share a plan. If refused, points to the visible trail. Voice: Cautious, distinguish observation from assumption.

Physical trail: Fresh chalk tracks run from the shed to the grid centre. 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 locates her.

Witness statement: Brin saw Tessa step inside the central chalk square before dawn. 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: Grid centre

Read aloud

Tessa stands at a glowing chalk grid. Two blocks slide one paving stone, then stop while everyone looks.

Run this scene

Surveyor Tessa used a civic rearrangement grid to shorten access routes for a festival. She transposed two anchor labels, rotating whole blocks instead. Correcting the labels restores locations; fixing paths to the new arrangement stabilizes it but obliges the town to choose permanent new addresses. 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. Pull HOLD and mark a path from the old signpost to the current clinic door.
2. Ask Tessa to freeze one block at a time while neighbours escort visitors.

If the group gets stuck

Ask Tessa to freeze one block at a time while neighbours escort visitors. Explain a five-minute delay before they accept it; mark the immediate goal safe when the people or resource are secured.

People and evidence

Tessa: Stop block movement and accept public oversight of the grid 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: Pull HOLD before touching an anchor. Keep the clinic route marked while the blocks settle. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Stop movement before changing the plan.

Encounter and party adaptation

Create a stable route to the clinic while stopping the moving blocks.

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

Pull HOLD and mark a path from the old signpost to the current clinic door.

Ask Tessa to freeze one block at a time while neighbours escort visitors.

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: Anchor stones

Read aloud

Anchor stones read NORTH and EAST, but their scratched arrows face the opposite sockets. A latch is marked HOLD.

Run this scene

Correct anchors restore the original layout. Stop movement before changing the plan. 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 anchor labels under HOLD, then restore the old layout.
2. Keep HOLD engaged and approve a public map of the new arrangement.

If the group gets stuck

Keep HOLD engaged and approve a public map of the new arrangement. Mark the fallback method, keep the immediate goal safe and read the cost ending. Do not repeat a failed test.

People and evidence

Niko: Find which anchor label was reversed Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Tessa: Stop block movement and accept public oversight of the grid 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: North label goes to the northern socket, east to the eastern; scratched arrows match. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Correct anchors restore the original layout.

Fallback instruction: HOLD fixes the current layout; new signs can make it usable. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Stabilize first and choose permanent new addresses later.

Encounter and party adaptation

Choose the town's next map.

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

Correct the anchor labels under HOLD, then restore the old layout.

Keep HOLD engaged and approve a public map of the new arrangement.

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: Displaced square

Read aloud

The square holds still. Neighbours post either restored addresses or agreed new ones before opening their doors.

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

Ada: Make the clinic reachable before its first appointment Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Tessa: Stop block movement and accept public oversight of the grid 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 blocks settle into their old places. Tessa hands the grid key to a public committee, and the clinic opens on time.

First secure the immediate goal at Grid centre. Use final method A at Anchor stones before choosing this ending.

Resolution with a cost

The new layout stays. Neighbours paint temporary addresses together, knowing some familiar routes have changed and will need patient adjustment.

First secure the immediate goal at Grid centre. Use final method B at Anchor stones before choosing this ending.

Correct the anchor labels under HOLD, then restore the old layout remains for a later visit.

Handout answers

h-order: The grid caused a bounded transposition.

h-fallback: Stabilize first and choose permanent new addresses later.

h-method: Correct anchors restore the original layout.

h-note: The surveyor is at the grid centre.

h-trail: A physical trail locates her.

h-witness: A witness confirms the destination.

h-safe: Stop movement before changing the plan.

Clue reasoning

The grid caused a bounded transposition.: c-order

Proceed to Grid centre: c-note OR c-trail OR c-witness

Stop movement before changing the plan.: c-safe / marked safety fallback

Choose the town's next map.: c-method OR c-fallback

Map descriptions

GM route atlas: Start at Displaced square. Survey shed and Old signpost are independent investigation routes; both connect to Grid centre, which leads to Anchor stones. All marked connections are bidirectional. Return uses the known route to Displaced square.

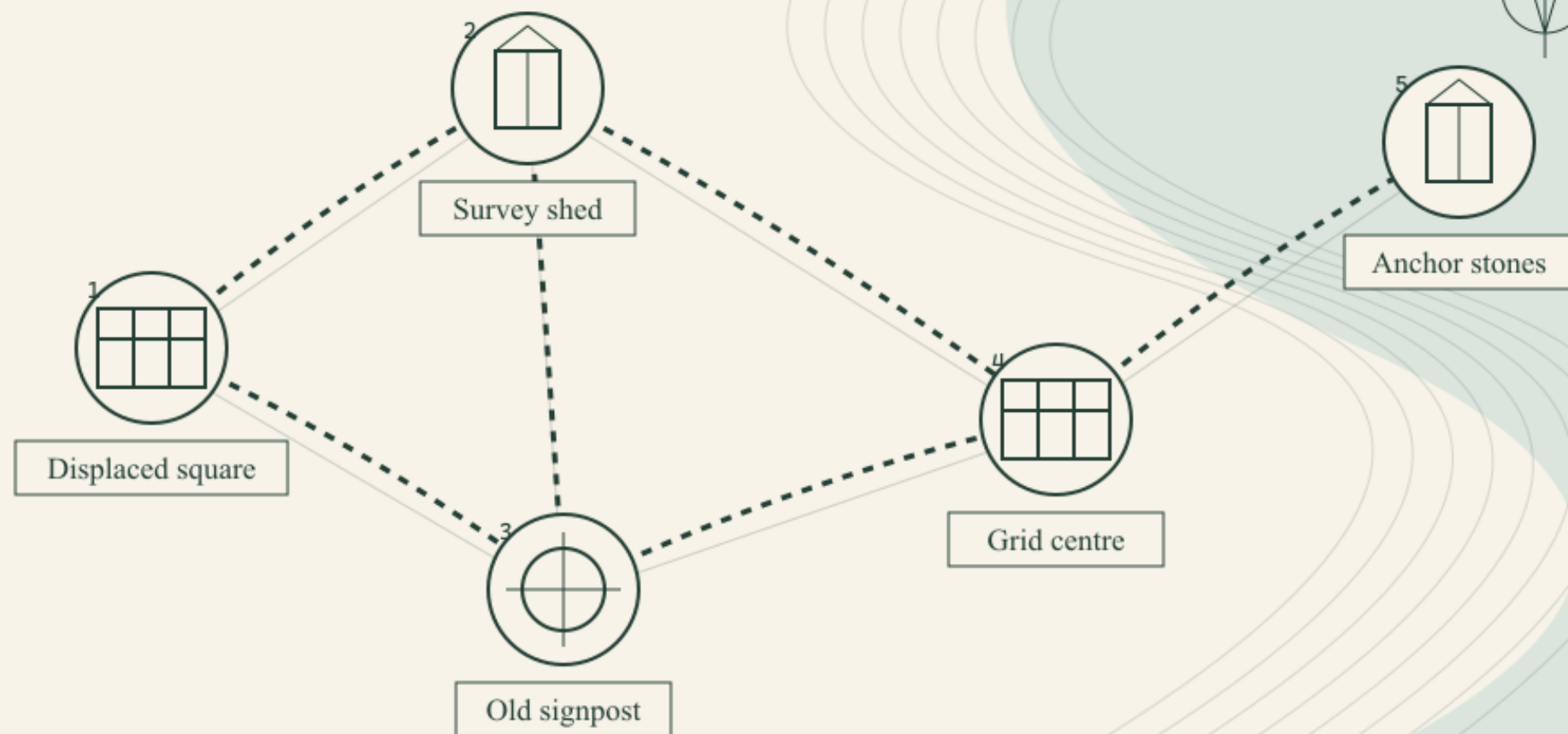
Grid centre - approach plan: At Grid centre, the marked entrance reaches the immediate problem.

Approach A: Pull HOLD and mark a path from the old signpost to the current clinic door. Approach B: Ask Tessa to freeze one block at a time while neighbours escort visitors. Both reach the onward route.

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

Player route map: Public route map: Displaced square connects to Survey shed and Old signpost; either reaches Grid centre, then Anchor stones. Routes work in both directions. Retrace the route to return. No hidden information is marked.

GM route atlas

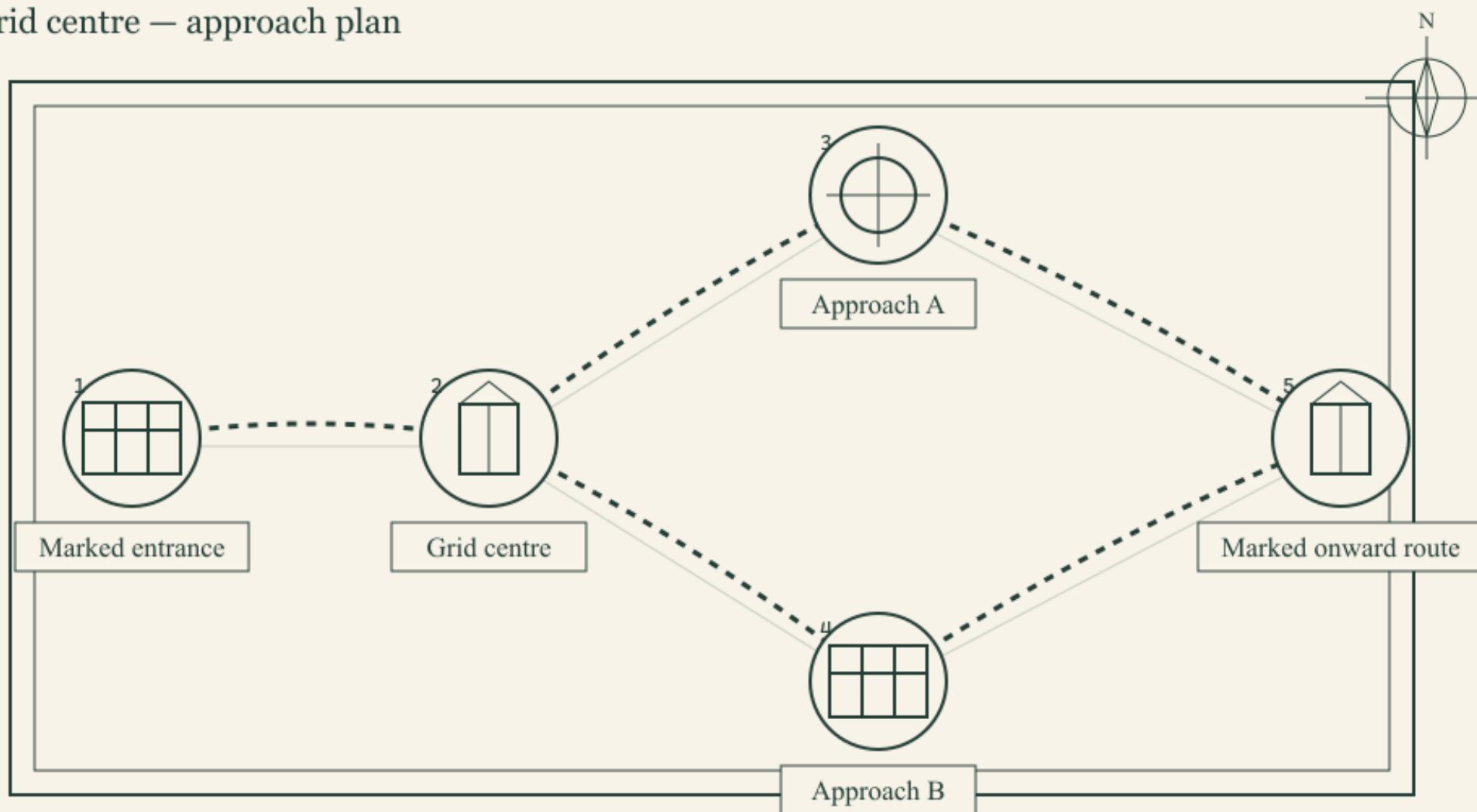


C-SAFE / immediate problem

C-METHOD or C-FALLBACK

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Grid centre — approach plan



Pull HOLD and mark a path from the old signpost to the current clinic door.

Ask Tessa to freeze one block at a time while neighbours escort visitors.

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