

LANTERN QUAY

The First Lantern

A first adventure for D&D 5e

The Lantern Quay festival is about to begin, but the ember that lights the harbour lanterns is missing. Follow a soot trail and find out who needs the warmth more.

DUNGEON MASTER GUIDE / 3-4 LEVEL 1 CHARACTERS

60-90 MINUTES / 2024 RULES

Begin at the festival

Allow about 15 minutes for the opening

Get the table ready

Allow 60-90 minutes. Use this guide, the four character sheets, pencils and dice. One person is the Dungeon Master (DM). The other 3-4 people each play a level 1 character. Let everyone choose a sheet and read its first action. A party with any three of the sheets can finish. Use the 2024 D&D 5e rules.

What really happened

Nim, a young canal drake, carried the festival ember to a nest of cold eggs in the old pump house. He plans to return it when the eggs warm up. Keeper Elsi Marr can lend the party a tin snuffer for the ember. A kettle and stove in the pump house give the group a way to warm the nest.

How to run the session

Describe what the characters can see. Ask what they do. Resolve it and describe what changes. Give each new player space to suggest one thing. When an action is easy and the outcome is clear, say what happens. For a risky action, choose a skill and call for a d20 roll plus that skill's bonus. A total equal to or higher than the Difficulty Class (DC) succeeds.

Read aloud at the festival

The last light turns the water copper. Paper lanterns hang above the square, ready to be lit. Keeper Elsi opens the brass lantern on the steps. Its seat is empty. A trail of soot leads away from the steps towards the canal.

Ask each player one thing

Why have you come to the festival? Take brief answers in any order. Elsi asks the party to bring back the ember and offers the tin snuffer. The snuffer is a small metal pot with a lid. Someone can carry it in one hand.

The first check

Ask who looks closely at the steps. DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) spots little claw-prints over the soot. DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) notices that the copper-blue soot falls from a carried flame. On a failure, the character finds the trail after looking under the steps, but the party arrives just as Nim notices them. Both approaches lead to the towpath.

THE ROUTE

Festival square → towpath → pump house → festival square. Use the keyed map on page 5 at the pump house.

SCENES 2 AND 3

Follow the soot

Allow about 25-35 minutes for crossing and negotiation

2. Cross the towpath

A board has slipped off the old crossing. Show the party the wet ledge and a dry lane farther round. They can brace the board with a rope or timber and cross safely. If someone hurries over the slick ledge, call for DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics). On a failure, a foot goes in the water and the character drops a small item onto the near bank. They can retrieve it and take the dry lane. Both paths reach the pump-house door.

Let someone help

If a player wants to assist a check with a relevant skill or tool they know how to use, describe that help and give the person rolling Advantage. Have them roll two d20s and use the higher result. Bracing the board securely can solve the crossing outright.

3. Meet Nim

The door at A is ajar. The room smells of warm metal. A little drake is curled round three eggs at C. The ember burns beside the eggs in a copper dish. If the group approaches calmly, Nim says, “I was going to bring it back. They had gone cold.” He speaks Common.

Give the players a real choice

Ask what else could warm the eggs. The stove at B is lit and there is a kettle beside it. A wrapped kettle, warm stones, or the keeper's offer to house the nest by the festival lantern all work. If Nim is wary, DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) gets him to listen. On a failure, he waits by his nest until the party shows him a warm object or sends for Elsi. If attacked, Nim slips into the canal pipe and watches from there. The practical offer earns his trust.

An optional saving throw at the wheel

Show a loose metal pulley above the sluice wheel at D. Turning the wheel lowers the damp in the room and gives the party dry ground for the kettle. A wedge or a piece of rope can secure the pulley first. If someone turns the wheel while it is loose, they make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the pulley clips them for 1d4 bludgeoning damage. Once it falls the wheel is safe.

Make the ember safe

An adjacent character can use their action to cover the copper dish with the snuffer, without a check. Once covered, it is safe to carry and can be slid into the pot. Nim will accept a real way to keep the eggs warm. If someone rushes in and grabs the open dish or strikes it, go to the soot motes scene.

Sparks and lanterns

Allow about 20-30 minutes for the fight and return

Choose whether to teach combat

A rough grab at the open dish stirs the motes. If the table wants to practise combat, reveal a mote above the ember. Use one for 3 players or two for 4. Place them beside the dish.

Roll and take turns

Everyone rolls d20 plus Initiative. Highest goes first. On a turn, move up to your Speed and take an action. Offer striking, helping or covering the ember. The lid disperses the motes.

If someone drops to 0 HP

The character falls Unconscious. If still at 0 HP and unstable when a turn starts, roll d20. 10+ is a success. Three successes stabilise them and three failures mean death. A natural 1 counts as two failures. A natural 20 restores 1 HP. Healing or stabilisation clears the tally.

Teach an attack

Roll d20 plus the attack bonus. Meet or beat the target's Armour Class (AC) to hit. Rill rolls 9 + 5 against AC 12 and hits for 1d8 + 3 damage. On a critical hit, roll damage dice twice and add the flat modifier once.

Keep the fight short

A mote strikes standing creatures within reach or moves towards the dish. At 0 HP it disperses. If the group retreats, the sparks settle. Elsi can bring a Potion of Healing to the door. It restores 2d4 + 2 HP.

SOOT MOTE Tiny Elemental, unaligned

AC 12 | HP 5 | Speed 20 ft. Initiative +1 | Darkvision 30 ft. | Passive Perception 10

STR 5 (-3) DEX 12 (+1) CON 10 (+0) INT 3 (-4) WIS 10 (+0) CHA 6 (-2)

Spark flick +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit 2 (1d4) fire damage.

Fire immunity The mote takes 0 fire damage. It has no languages.

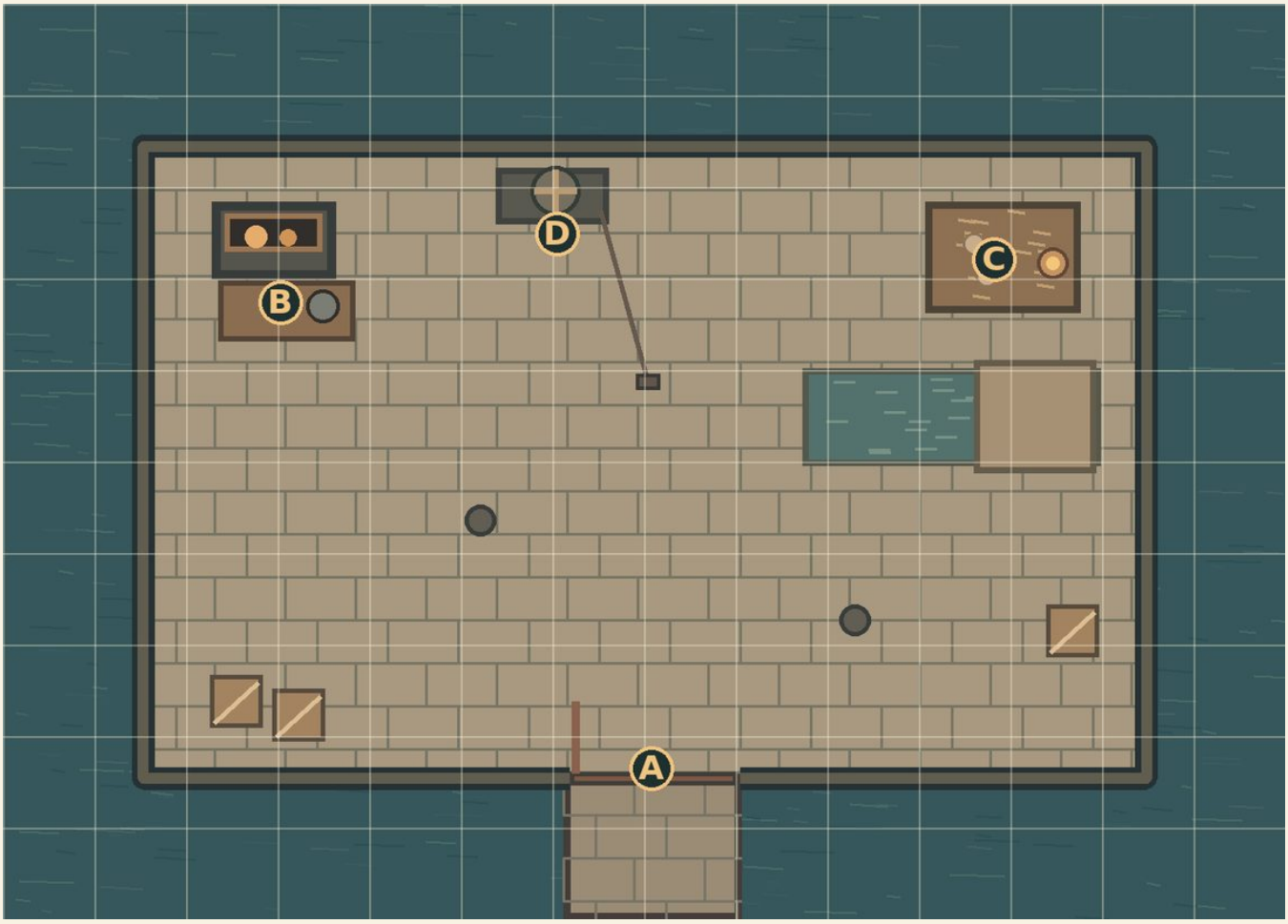
Back at the square

Bring the ember back to Elsi and ask how each character helps light the lanterns. The keeper pays the party 10 gp. If they tell her about the eggs, she sets aside a warm place for the nest. Nim will remember who helped him. Invite each player to name one choice they enjoyed.

DUNGEON MASTER MAP

The old pump house

14 × 10 squares / 1 square = 5 ft.



A. Canal door

The starting entrance for the party. It opens onto the towpath.

B. Stove and kettle

Characters can warm water or stones here to replace the ember's heat.

C. Nest and copper dish

Nim and the eggs. Place any soot motes in open squares beside the dish.

D. Sluice wheel

The loose pulley hangs here. Securing it lets anyone turn the wheel safely.

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