



THE LAST HARVEST OF WILLOWBROOK

A ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE FOR D&D 5TH EDITION

For 3-5 Characters of Levels 1-3

Designed by Ryan Ly

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The small village of Willowbrook has two days before the brutal Crimson Blades bandit gang arrives to take their harvest and burn the village.

The player characters can help the villagers prepare. What they choose to do (or not do) during those two days will directly affect how difficult the final battle becomes.

This version focuses on reactive choices during preparation and builds to one big, memorable boss fight inside the village mill.

KEY NPCs

Elder Thorne - Practical leader who wants to avoid bloodshed. He has guided the village through many hard seasons and fears this may be the end.

Mira Stonehand - Runs the mill. Fierce and proud. The mill is everything to her - her family's legacy and the heart of the village.

Old Garrick - Retired fighter. Can train the villagers if convinced, but he has seen too much war to send farmers to their deaths lightly.

Sister Elara - Kind priest who keeps hope alive. She tends to the fearful and offers what little divine comfort she can.

Tomas - Reckless teenage boy who wants to prove himself. Eager and impulsive, he sees the adventurers as heroes to emulate.

ACT 1: THE VILLAGE NEEDS HELP

The party arrives in Willowbrook as the sun begins to set on the first day. They may have been traveling the old trade road, escorting a merchant who turned back at rumors of trouble, or simply seeking a place to rest. As they near the village, the sound of shouting carries on the wind.

The village square is crowded with nearly forty frightened people - farmers in dirt-stained clothes, mill workers with calloused hands, mothers clutching children, and elders leaning on walking sticks. Torches cast flickering shadows across worried faces. Fear hangs thick in the air, mixed with the smell of woodsmoke and fresh bread from abandoned ovens.

At the center of the argument stands **Elder Thorne**, a tall, gray-bearded man with a weathered face and steady eyes. He speaks in a calm but strained voice, trying to keep order.

To one side, **Mira Stonehand** stands with arms crossed, her apron still dusted with flour from the mill. Her voice cuts through the noise: "I will not abandon the mill like a coward! It is my home, my family's blood and sweat. If we run, the Crimson Blades take everything without lifting a blade!"

Nearby, **Old Garrick** leans on a gnarled staff, his scarred face grim. "I can teach these lads to hold a spear, but only if they have the guts. Most of them have never swung anything heavier than a scythe."

Tomas, a lanky boy of sixteen with wild hair and bright eyes, bounces on his toes. "We should fight! With real adventurers here, we can win! Let me help - I can scout or carry messages or anything!"

Sister Elara moves quietly among the crowd, offering quiet words of comfort and small blessings. "The harvest goddess watches over us. But we must also watch over each other."

The moment the villagers notice capable-looking strangers in their midst, the arguments turn toward the party.

"You there! You look like you've seen battle. Tell us - what should we do? Stay and fight? Flee into the hills? Try to bargain with these monsters?"

This is a pivotal social moment. The party must help the village decide its fate. The choice sets the tone for everything that follows.

MAIN CHOICE

Convince the village to stay and fight (most common and rewarding path)

A DC 14 Persuasion or Intimidation check (or strong roleplay showing empathy and competence) rallies the villagers. Elder Thorne bows his head in grim

acceptance. Mira gives a fierce nod. Garrick straightens, a spark of old fire in his eyes. Morale starts high. The party is seen as leaders from the start.

Help them flee (shorter, lower-stakes adventure)

The party spends much of the first day helping pack carts, calm panicked families, and herd livestock. They can escort the villagers partway into the hills. The adventure becomes a shorter journey with possible bandit scouts or a tense night ambush. The village survives with most of its people and some harvest, but there is little glory and the party receives only humble thanks. Good for a lighter session or if the party is badly wounded already.

Try to negotiate (risky, usually fails, lowers morale)

The party can attempt to send a message or meet a bandit scout under a flag of truce. The Crimson Blades are not interested in bargains - they laugh at the offer and send back threats of worse violence. Word spreads through the village that the strangers could not protect them. Morale drops sharply. Some families sneak away that night, weakening the defense. In the final fight, villagers are more likely to break or panic.

Once the party commits to defending the village (the path that leads to the memorable climax), the villagers look to them with a mix of hope and desperate trust. Elder Thorne speaks for the group: "Two days. That is all we have before they arrive at dawn. Tell us what to do."

The party now has two days to prepare. Time is short, and every choice matters.

ACT 2: TWO DAYS TO PREPARE (CHOICES MATTER)

The party has limited time before the Crimson Blades arrive at dawn on the third day. Their choices during these two days will make the final fight inside the mill easier or much harder - and will determine how many of the villagers survive to see the sunrise.

The party can pursue several preparations. Each major effort takes several hours. They have time for roughly four to five significant activities across the two days, though some can be combined (for example, training the militia while also boosting morale through inspiring words). The DM should track the passage of time narratively and remind players of the approaching threat, perhaps with a rumor at dusk on the first day: "A rider from the north says the bandits burned another hamlet two days' ride away. They are moving faster than we thought."

Below are the key preparation options and how they play out at the table.

1. TRAIN THE MILITIA (OLD GARRICK)

Old Garrick can usually be found behind his cottage or watching the square with tired eyes. He is reluctant at first.

“These are good folk, not soldiers. Teaching them to swing a spear feels like sending them to die.”

To convince him: DC 13 Persuasion or Intimidation check, or a compelling roleplay moment about protecting the village’s children and future. If the party helps him retrieve a hidden cache of old spears and shields from his barn (DC 12 Athletics or Survival to move the heavy trunk), he warms up quickly.

Running the scene: The next morning, Garrick sets up a crude training ground on the village green. The party can demonstrate basic spear thrusts, shield walls, or how to stand firm against a charge. Tomas volunteers for every risky drill and nearly brains himself with a practice spear, providing comic relief and a chance for the party to show patience or leadership.

A successful DC 14 Athletics or Persuasion check during training means the drills stick. The villagers move with more confidence by the end of the day.

Effect on the final fight: 2-4 villagers (including Tomas if he was guided well) can help hold the mill doors or provide the Help action to party members once per round. They fight with simple spears and have 8 HP each. They are brave but not skilled; they can absorb a hit or two before falling back.

If the party fails to convince Garrick or trains poorly: Only 1-2 villagers join the fight, and they are more likely to break if the tide turns against the party.

2. FORTIFY THE MILL (IMPORTANT!)

The mill is the symbolic and practical heart of the village. Mira Stonehand knows every beam and grain chute. She is initially wary of outsiders “meddling in my mill” but quickly respects anyone who shows genuine care for the building and the people who depend on it.

Running the scene: The party works alongside Mira and a few strong villagers. They can barricade the big double doors with heavy beams and carts, board up the high windows, stack grain sacks into defensive positions and firing steps, or rig simple hazards like trip lines or a grain chute that can be triggered to bury intruders.

Useful checks include:

- DC 12 Strength (Athletics) to move and stack heavy sacks and beams.
- DC 14 Survival or Intelligence (with carpenter’s tools) to build effective barricades and cover.

- DC 13 Sleight of Hand or Investigation to set a basic trap (such as a falling sack of grain that can restrain one Medium creature on a failed Dex save).

Effect on the final fight:

- Good fortifications = The party has half cover from grain sacks in key positions, the entrance counts as difficult terrain for enemies, and the mill feels like a defensive position rather than a deathtrap. Varga’s men cannot easily swarm in.
- Poor or no fortifications = Varga and his best men can rush the doors and windows freely. The fight becomes much more dangerous as the party is quickly surrounded.

Mira fights alongside the party if the mill is fortified (she refuses to let it fall without her). If the party ignores the mill or does a poor job, she still fights but starts the battle already disheartened and takes the first serious wound.

3. SCOUT THE BANDITS

The party can sneak out at night to spy on the Crimson Blades’ camp. This is a classic stealth and information-gathering scene.

Running the scene: The bandit camp is two hours away on foot. A group Stealth check (DC 15) lets them get close enough to overhear conversations around the cookfires. On a failure, they are nearly spotted and must retreat without full information (or risk a short, dangerous fight with scouts).

On success, they overhear several bandits complaining around a fire:

“Captain still wakes up yelling about that fire raid last year. Says he’ll gut any man who brings flames near the camp again. Smoke and fire; never again.”

The bandits are terrified of fire after a previous disastrous encounter.

Effect on the final fight: The party can prepare torches, oil flasks, or even rig a desperate grain-dust explosion inside the mill (a risky but powerful tool). If they use fire creatively against Varga (especially after scouting), it can dramatically turn the tide; his men hesitate, some flee the flames, and Varga himself fights at disadvantage for a round or two while coughing and raging. However, starting a fire in a wooden mill full of grain dust is dangerous; a poor roll or bad luck can cause an explosion that also damages the party or the building.

If they never scout, they miss this weakness entirely and fight Varga and his men at full strength.

4. HELP SPECIFIC VILLAGERS

These are shorter, personal scenes that build emotional investment and provide small but meaningful advantages in the final battle.

Help Mira: Spend time at the mill reinforcing weak points or simply listening as she talks about her late husband who built it with her. She opens up and shares a hidden vantage point in the loft and a sturdy mallet she can wield as a weapon. In the fight, she stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the party and can make one powerful attack or provide cover for a downed ally.

If ignored: She still fights but is cornered early and must be rescued, or she holds back to protect the mill's structure instead of helping fully.

Help Old Garrick: Beyond training, the party can help him retrieve his old armor from the barn or treat his bad knee so he can move better. He fights alongside the party as a capable ally (use veteran stats if needed) and can shout commands that rally nearby villagers.

Look after Tomas: The boy desperately wants to prove himself and follows the party everywhere. If the party gives him a real task (messenger, lookout, or even a small role in training) and shows they value him (DC 12 Insight or Persuasion), he feels seen. In the final fight he does something small but brave; perhaps tackling a bandit to save a villager or spotting a flank the party missed.

If ignored or dismissed: He tries to prove himself anyway by charging into danger. He either dies heroically (a tragic, memorable moment) or causes a complication that makes the fight harder.

Support Sister Elara: Join her in leading a small prayer vigil or helping distribute what little food and medicine remains. She keeps the other villagers calm and, during the fight, can provide one minor healing word or inspiration to a party member or key villager (equivalent to a 1st-level healing word or bardic inspiration once).

5. BOOST OVERALL MORALE

The villagers are farmers and millers, not warriors. Their courage depends heavily on whether they believe they can win; and whether they believe the party truly cares about them.

Running the scene: Morale can be boosted through many small actions throughout the two days: helping with the last of the harvest, sharing a meal and telling (true or embellished) stories of past victories, giving a rousing speech in the square at dusk (DC 13 Performance or Persuasion), or simply being kind and present instead of treating the villagers as obstacles.

At the end of the first day, a bonfire or communal meal offers a natural moment for the party to address everyone.

Effect on the final fight: High morale means the villagers are far less likely to break and run when things look grim. In mechanical terms, when a villager ally

would fail a morale-related save or check, they succeed instead (once or twice during the fight). The whole defense feels more heroic and cinematic. Low morale makes the battle feel desperate and tragic even if the party wins.

ACT 3: THE ATTACK & THE FINAL STAND IN THE MILL

(The rest of the module remains focused on the climactic battle inside the mill as originally written. The party's preparations from Act 2 now pay off in tangible ways; cover, allies, environmental weapons, and the emotional weight of the villagers they have come to care about.)

THE BATTLE REACHES THE VILLAGE

Describe the Crimson Blades attacking at dawn. Use the party's preparation to narrate how the initial fighting goes:

- Good fortifications elsewhere and trained militia with high morale: The bandits are slowed by barricades and surprised by organized resistance. Villagers put up a real fight at the edges of the village.
- Fire weakness discovered: The party can use it to create chaos early, perhaps setting a field alight or using torches to break a bandit charge.
- Poor preparation: The bandits overrun the outer defenses quickly and push straight toward the mill.

Eventually, the bandits break through and drive toward the mill; the heart of the village and the last strong point.

Captain Varga decides to personally lead the assault on the mill. He wants to crush the last resistance in the most symbolic place and make an example of the defiant villagers.

THE CLIMACTIC FIGHT: INSIDE THE MILL

This is the big, memorable finale.

Set the Scene: The mill is a large wooden building with heavy grinding stones, thick wooden support beams, grain sacks stacked for cover, a loft area above, and big doors that open toward the river. It smells of grain, dust, and old wood. Windows are high and small. It can feel like a fortress... or a deathtrap, depending on how well the party prepared.

THE BIG FIGHT

Captain Varga enters with a small group of his best men. The exact difficulty depends on how well the party prepared.

How Preparation Affects This Fight:

Preparation Done	Effect on the Final Fight	Difficulty
Fortified the mill well	Cover from grain sacks, barricaded doors, difficult terrain for enemies	Much Easier
Trained militia + high morale	2-4 villagers help hold the entrance or assist in the fight	Easier
Learned the fire weakness	Party can create fire hazards or explosions (risky but strong)	Easier
Helped Mira	Mira fights alongside the party	Easier
Helped Old Garrick	Garrick fights with the party	Easier
Did very little preparation	Varga has extra bodyguards. No cover. Villagers panic	Much Harder

Running the Fight (Simple & Dramatic)

- Start with Varga and 1-2 bodyguards entering.
- If the party prepared poorly, add 1-2 more bandits.
- If the party prepared well, the fight stays focused on Varga + 1 bodyguard.
- Use the environment: grain sacks for cover, beams to climb, grain dust that can explode if fire is used (risky, Dex save for half damage to everyone in the area).
- Varga is arrogant. He taunts the party and focuses on the strongest-looking character.
- If the party uses fire creatively (especially if they scouted), it can turn the tide dramatically his men hesitate or flee the flames.

Goal of the Fight: Defeat Varga. When he falls, the remaining bandits lose heart and flee (especially if the party used fire or the villagers are still holding strong).

You do not need a long, complicated battle. One solid, tense fight inside the mill is enough.

Possible Dramatic Moments

- A barricade breaks and more bandits try to rush in.
- Tomas does something brave (or reckless).
- Mira or Garrick takes a wound protecting someone.
- The party uses the mill's environment in a clever way (grain chute, loft, fire).

AFTERMATH

If the party wins the fight inside the mill (especially with good preparation):

- The village is saved.
- Most named NPCs survive.
- The party is celebrated as heroes.
- They receive thanks, a modest reward (perhaps 150 gp from the village emergency fund plus any bandit loot they claim), and the lasting gratitude of Willowbrook.

If the fight was very hard or they barely won:

- The village survives but is damaged.
- One or two named NPCs may die.
- The overall tone is bittersweet but hopeful.

If they lose the fight in the mill:

- The mill burns. Many villagers die or are captured.
- The party can still escape with some survivors.
- Possibly opens the door to a future story (the party could return later to rescue captives or hunt Varga's remnants).

VARIOUS POINTERS

- Make the players feel the pressure during the two days of preparation. Describe small moments with the villagers so the players care about them; a child offering a lucky charm, Mira sharing a quiet moment of doubt, Garrick teaching Tomas a proper grip on a spear.
- The final fight inside the mill should feel climactic and important. The preparation choices not only adjust difficulty, but also tone and emotional payoff.
- The mill battle does not have to be long, but it does need to be dramatic and memorable.
- Reward creative thinking. If the party comes up with a clever use of the environment or an unexpected alliance, lean into it.

STAT BLOCK

CAPTAIN VARGA IRONHAND

Medium humanoid, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +5, Dex +4, Wis +2

Skills Athletics +5, Deception +4, Intimidation +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Leadership: Varga can shout commands to his allies. Until the start of his next turn, each ally within 30 feet of him that can hear him has advantage on attack rolls. ;

ACTIONS

Multiattack: Varga makes three attacks: two with his scimitar and one with his dagger.

Scimitar: *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Dagger: *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

REACTION

Parry: Varga adds 2 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. He must be wielding a melee weapon and see the attacker.

VARGA'S BODYGUARD

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +4, Intimidation +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

ACTIONS

Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage.

The image on the cover is **A Creek in St. Thomas (Virgin Islands)** by Camille Pissarro