A FREE ADVENTURE KEEPER · LONG ISLAND DUNGEON MASTER

The Drove

A free adventure for four characters of 3rd level. Two hundred cattle, three days of road, and a fair gate that pays the first herd through.

Four characters of 3rd level · about two and a half hours · fifth edition (SRD 5.1)

Garrow Tarbell buys cattle for Wethering Fair. This year he has contracted two herds and hired a crew to walk each of them down the Long Drove. The contract pays the first herd through the fair gate. The buyers go home on the fourth morning and the price goes with them.

The party is the second crew. Annis Pelham's drovers quit at dawn for better wages in the other crew, and Tarbell, who pays the wages, took on whoever was standing in the yard.

Time at the table: the yard 10 minutes, Lanner Bridge 15, Gorse Pen 60, the fork and the road 40, the gate 30. Two and a half hours.

The job

The herd. Two hundred head, Pelham's whole holding, on foot. The herd is **sound**. It becomes **footsore** in one place only, the Cutting at Penhale Scar, and the referee says so once, when it happens. There is no other condition and no count of head. Nothing in this adventure costs the party a number of cattle.

The road. Day one: Lanner Bridge at noon, Gorse Pen at dusk. Dawn of day two: the fork at Penhale Scar, a mile past the pen. The Causeway reaches the fair gate on the evening of day three. The Cutting reaches it at dusk on day two.

The other herd. Hannock Maskell walks 240 head down the same road, a day ahead. He takes the Causeway, because it is the only road he knows, and reaches the gate yard two hours after dark on day two.

The gate. Wethering Fair gate opens at dawn. The first herd in the gate yard is the first through. Other buyers bid at the open pens until the fourth morning, and after that the open price is 2 gp a head for anything.

Pelham's yard, dawn

READ ALOUD

> *The pens are open and the herd comes out into the lane in a brown wave, steaming, and stops. A man in a good coat is sitting on the gate with a ledger across his knee, and he is already smiling at you.*

Two hundred head in four pens, a grey mare at the rail, and a cart with the herd's oats. Tarbell pays each character 20 gp in advance and says, smiling, that the first herd through the fair gate is paid and the second is not, and that he would walk briskly in their place.

Pelham stands beside him and hears it. She offers each character a further 50 gp if her herd comes in sound.

The people

Garrow Tarbell, buyer. Round, red, pleased with everyone, and he has every drover's name by the second hour. He wrote the contract himself and it says *first herd through the gate* and nothing else. If asked, he says he hired two crews because one crew might not have come, and that what two herds do to the price is the fair's business. He does not lie. From dusk on day two he stands in the gate yard with the ledger and two guards (bandits). The fair-wardens hang anyone who kills a buyer inside the fair's bounds.

Annis Pelham, owner, sixty-one, on a grey mare at the tail of the herd. She knows her cattle by their feet. She says once, at the fork, that the herd does not go by the Cutting. If it does, she rides through with it and says nothing more.

Hannock Maskell, rival crew chief. He knows the contract and is a day ahead and out of reach until the gate. He sent his brother back with a rear guard to cost Pelham's herd a day.

Bartle Maskell, his brother, a thug, with four hands (bandits) and three mastiffs. He wants the herd broken out of the pen and the people left alone, and he keeps to that unless he is cut.

Cecily Brill, keeper of Lanner Bridge. Fifty, a bad knee, and a ledger of her own. She remembers Maskell's herd by its size and says so.

Piers Lowther, gate-warden of Wethering Fair. He counts a herd in by the nose of its lead beast, writes the hour in the book, and answers questions about the tariff to anyone who asks.

Lanner Bridge, noon

READ ALOUD

> *The river is brown and high and takes the bridge piers to the shoulder. A toll-house stands at the near end with a chain across the road. A woman leans in its doorway on a stick, and she is looking at the herd and not at you.*

The Lanner is in flood. The bridge is Brill's and the toll is 2 sp a head, 40 gp for the herd. Pelham gave the party 30 gp for the road. Maskell's herd paid yesterday.

- **Pay the toll.** A character puts in 10 gp, or takes a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check to bring Brill down to 30. On a failure the toll is 40.
- **The ford, a mile upstream.** Cattle swim it, and a rider in the water keeps the herd on its line. The crossing takes the afternoon, and the drove reaches Gorse Pen after dark.

Gorse Pen, midnight

READ ALOUD

> *The pen is a ring of dark wall with the herd lying down inside it like one animal. The shed is black. Somewhere to the south a dog barks once and is hushed.*

A drystone pen with one gate on the north side, hurdles lashed with rope, a well and a drover's shed. The ground is open on every side. Bartle Maskell's party comes at midnight from the south, three hours after the herd is down. If the drove forded the Lanner, Bartle's party is already lying in the shed, and the party has no time to prepare the gate.

Bartle and his four hands go for the gate rope. The three dogs go for the herd. Their orders are to break the herd out and hurt no one who stays clear, and they break off when Bartle is down or when four of the eight are down.

CREATURE	NUMBER	AC	HP	ATTACK
Bartle Maskell (SRD thug)	1	11	32	Mace +4, 5 (1d6+2), twice; Pack Tactics
Hand (SRD bandit)	4	12	11	Scimitar +3, 4 (1d6+1); light crossbow +3, 5 (1d8+1), 80 ft.
Dog (SRD mastiff)	3	12	5	Bite +3, 4 (1d6+1), DC 11 Strength save or prone

Tactics. Two hands climb the wall with crossbows and shoot at whoever stands nearest the gate. The other two hands go for the rope. The dogs run the wall inside and outside and bite the beasts at the edge of the herd first. Bartle stays back until a character is alone, then closes with two attacks and Pack Tactics.

Built for levels 2-4. Eight creatures at raw 275 XP, adjusted 688 at the multiplier of 2.5 for seven to ten monsters. Against four 3rd-level characters (Easy 300, Medium 600, Hard 900, Deadly 1,600) that is **Medium**. Against four 2nd-level characters it is **Hard**, and against four 4th-level characters it is **Easy**. All eight are present from the first round.

Scaling. For four 2nd-level characters drop two hands and one dog: five creatures at raw 200, adjusted 400 at the multiplier of 2, **Medium** against thresholds of Easy 200, Medium 400, Hard 600 and Deadly 800. For four 4th-level

characters add an SRD bandit captain: nine creatures at raw 725, adjusted 1,812 at the multiplier of 2.5, **Hard** against Easy 500, Medium 1,000, Hard 1,500 and Deadly 2,000.

The first hand to reach the gate cuts the rope on his turn, and the hurdles stand for one more round. At the end of that round the herd goes through the gap unless a character stands in it or a hurdle is set back across it. If the herd goes out, the day goes to gathering it. The party reaches the fork at dawn of day three, and the gate table below changes.

Penhale Scar, dawn

READ ALOUD

> *The road splits at the foot of a long grey scar of limestone. The left branch is flagged and wide and bends away across the plain. The right goes straight into a slot in the rock no wider than a cart, and the stones in the mouth of it are white and loose.*

The Long Drove forks at the foot of the Scar.

The Causeway. Paved and level, a day longer. The herd stays sound.

The Cutting. A mile of broken limestone through the Scar, a cart wide, with a forty-foot drop along the east side. The stones lame every beast that walks them. The moment the last head is out of the Cutting the herd is **footsore**.

At the narrow place the herd crowds the east side. A DC 13 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check holds the line. On a failure the herd balks until midnight.

The Causeway, day two

Paved, with a waystone at every mile and a trough at every third. The verges are open grass with a hedge behind, and the herd grazes as it walks. Maskell's night camp is at the second waystone: a ring of cold ash, a wheel rut and a heap of dung a day old. Nothing on the Causeway attacks the herd.

The gate

READ ALOUD

> *Torches burn along the gate-wall. The yard is a great bare field of trodden mud with the open pens beyond it, and a long book lies on a trestle with a man sitting beside it. A line of lamps stands in the road behind you.*

Lowther states the tariff to anyone who asks. Contract price is 10 gp a head for sound beasts and 4 gp for footsore. Open-pen price in time is 6 gp sound and 2 gp footsore.

- **Held at Gorse Pen, by the Cutting.** First in the yard at dusk on day two, footsore. Tarbell pays the contract at 4 gp: 800 gp to Pelham. He adds a first-through bonus of 300 gp to the crew, and Pelham pays nothing further.
- **Held at Gorse Pen, by the Causeway.** In the yard on the evening of day three, second, sound. The open pens pay 6 gp: 1,200 gp to Pelham, and 50 gp to each character.
- **Held at Gorse Pen, by the Cutting, check failed.** In the yard after midnight, second, footsore. The open pens pay 2 gp: 400 gp.
- **Day lost at Gorse Pen, by the Cutting.** In the yard at dusk on day three, second, footsore. The open pens pay 2 gp: 400 gp.
- **Day lost at Gorse Pen, by the Causeway.** At the gate on the evening of day four, after the break. 2 gp, 400 gp.

Maskell is paid the contract on 240 sound head, 2,400 gp, whenever he is first.

Maskell at the gate. If the party's herd is in the yard first, he comes in two hours after dark and walks the line of it twice. He asks Lowther for the hour in the book and then asks after his brother. He does not draw. He has a short, cheerful talk with Tarbell by the ledger and goes out to find a pen for 240 head. If the party is second, his herd is asleep in the yard and Lowther's book has his name in it.

Tarbell is glad to see the herd and says what he did if he is asked. Two herds on one road, he says. Whichever comes second sells at the price the fair is paying that night, and he finds it is seldom a high one. The warden's court sits on the fourth day, and he leaves on the fourth morning.

What the party leaves with

The wage, 20 gp each in advance, and the pay of whichever outcome the gate produces. The road gives nothing else.

What the party reaches for

The standard kit against each obstacle, and the ruling on each.

A rope. Across the Lanner it carries the characters and does nothing for the cattle. Along the east edge of the Cutting on driven pitons it keeps the herd off the drop, and the Animal Handling check is not called for. Across the Gorse Pen gap it holds the hurdle for one round.

Pitons. Ten driven in an hour hold a rope line the length of the narrow place.

A light. The hands carry torches and the dogs do not need them. A lantern at the gate shows the gap and makes the one holding it a target.

A mount. A mounted character in the gap holds it as a hurdle does. A mastiff that bites the horse calls for a DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to keep it from bolting. A rider in the Lanner keeps the swimming herd on its line.

Speak with animals. A mastiff can be spoken to. It was fed to do this, and meat held out with a better offer ends its attack on a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check. It stays hostile to anyone who strikes it.

Calm emotions. The sphere is 20 feet in radius and holds about a dozen head, for one minute. The pen holds two hundred.

Fog cloud. At Gorse Pen it blinds the hands and not the dogs, which track by scent. Elsewhere on the road it does nothing.

Misty step. Puts a character in the gate gap from 30 feet away.

Cure wounds and *prayer of healing.* The first mends one beast and the second six. The herd is two hundred.

Charm person or *zone of truth* on Tarbell. He is already open about it, and the spells change nothing he says.

Driving through the night. On the Causeway it brings the herd to the gate at dawn on day three, sound and still second. Maskell has been in the yard since two hours after dark.

Warning Maskell. Not possible before the gate, and at the gate he has nothing to learn.

Joining the herds. Lowther counts the first herd in by its lead beast's nose. Two herds in one yard are two herds, and Tarbell says so.

What the road puts up

Roll once at each halt of the drove, or choose.

D8	What the road puts up
1	**A drover's cap** on a fence post, the crown stuffed with straw.
2	**A cart on its side** across the road, a hundred cheeses split open in the ditch.
3	**A heifer** wearing a crescent brand that is not Pelham's, grazing the verge.
4	**A boy on a gatepost** with a bucket and a dipper.
5	**Forty geese** on the road and a woman behind them with a switch.
6	**A dead ox** in the ditch with its legs in the air.
7	**Two fair-wardens on mules,** a bundle of tally-sticks across each saddle.
8	**A plum tree** over a wall, the road under it purple with fruit.

Long Island Dungeon Master. 30+ years of real tables.

LONG ISLAND DUNGEON MASTER

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