

A FREE SOLO ADVENTURE · LONG ISLAND DUNGEON MASTER

THE PROCESSION

A free solo adventure for one walker and no Dungeon Master. Six stations of a fixed route, a city with every hearth drowned, and a live coal in a clay pot under your coat.

One character of 1st to 5th level · no Dungeon Master · a d20 and a d8 · SRD 5.1

Every fire in Thaxted is out tonight, and you are carrying one.

The Procession is a free solo adventure for one character, on one street, on one night, in something under an hour. Nobody runs it for you. The route is the structure: six named stations in a fixed order, each one a set of eyes, and the walk goes one way. There is no fight in it, and nothing is written down.

You need a character sheet, a d20 and a d8.

THE NIGHT

Thaxted burned from the wharf to the north wall three generations ago, and the Quenching is what the city did about it. On the eve of the Kindling the wardens go round from noon with the water-carts and drown every hearth, forge, oven, kiln and lamp inside the walls. At dusk the city forms up in the Quench Yard behind a lamp with nothing in it and walks the old route to the Well of the Year in the dark. At the Well the Warden of the Well strikes the new fire off flint and steel in front of everybody, and the city lights its lamps from that and carries the year home.

A man taken with fire on him between the Yard and the Well loses his fire-right: no hearth, no forge, no oven, in Thaxted, while he lives. The crowd does not always wait for the wardens.

Serle Alne keeps the forge at the sign of the Ram, first door past the Well. His fire has not been out since his grandfather banked it, the wardens search him first every year, and he is old enough that a forge started again would be somebody else's. This morning you raked a coal out of the back of it and shut the coal in a clay fire-pot the size of a fist, with a ring of holes pierced round the lid. It is still alive.

Serle Alne walks at the head with the smiths, where he is put every year so that everyone can watch him walk with nothing. You walk with your own street, somewhere in the middle.

HOW TO PLAY

Your walker. Any fifth edition character of 1st to 5th level. To start now, use the dyer's man: Strength 11 (+0), Dexterity 14 (+2), Constitution 12 (+1), Intelligence 10 (+0), Wisdom 13 (+1), Charisma 12 (+1), proficiency bonus +2, proficient in Deception (+3), Sleight of Hand (+4) and Insight (+3).

No fight, no hit points. Nothing here comes to blows, and nobody in the walk is armed but the wardens.

Nothing is written down. No track, no score, no word to remember. Where you are on the route is the whole of it.

Checks. Where the book asks for a check it names the ability, the skill, the number, and what both results do.

The d8. The book says where to roll on *Who is at your shoulder*, and what to do with the result. Roll it fresh every time; the same result twice is a different person of the same sort.

Entries. Start at 001. Every entry that is not an ending sends you to another number. There are five endings, and no score is kept.

WHAT WILL NOT SERVE

The procession is not a crowd. Every street in Thaxted has its own place in the walk, and a walker walks between the same two neighbours from the Yard to the Well. The wardens are not hunting a face they do not know. They walk the flanks looking for a place in the line with nobody standing in it, and for two neighbours who cannot say what is between them. A borrowed face is worse than your own, because your own has a street that will own it, and a walker nobody can see is a gap.

There is nothing above the street. Every sill, stair, gallery and roof-ridge on the route was taken before dark by the people who could not get a place in the walk, and they have been up there since the bells with nothing to look at but an unlit street. Nothing walks in Thaxted tonight but the walk. Anything of yours going along the route by itself, or

over it, is a thing moving in a city where nothing moves, on the one night when everybody is staring at the dark and waiting for a light.

A fire shut away is a fire that goes out. The coal wants air, and what takes air lets out smoke. Seal it in anything and you will carry a cold lump of charcoal to the Well, and a cold lump of charcoal is charcoal. Nor can it be put out now and struck again at the far end: a fire struck new is the new fire, and the new fire is what the Well is for.

Any light is the light. The crowd does not stop to ask what a light is made of, or whether it is warm. On the night of the Quenching there is to be nothing shining below the stars, and a glow at a man's collar is answered where it is seen.

The street-mouths are barred. Every lane off the route has wardens standing across it, and a walker who steps out of the walk is taken up as a matter of course. You may not leave the procession.

Nobody will take it from you. To put the pot into another man's hands is to put his fire-right into them, and there is not a walker in Thaxted who does not know it. Serle Alne walks at the head and will not come back down the line: nobody in the walk changes places.

WHO IS AT YOUR SHOULDER

Roll where the book calls for it and do what that entry says with the result. Where it asks for a check, the number at the end of the result is added to it.

D8 WHAT IT DOES TO THE CHECK

- 1 **The blind man.** He walks by his daughter's hand with his nose up, and he has been telling her for a hundred yards that somebody near him has been at a fire. **Subtract 4.**
- 2 **A warden on the flank.** He has matched his pace to yours for no reason you can see. **Subtract 3.**
- 3 **A boy who wants something to happen.** Eleven years old, six walks behind him, and not one was ever worth it. **Subtract 2.**
- 4 **The neighbour who knows your coat.** She has stood beside you in this place for years, and she knows how you carry yourself when nothing is the matter. **Subtract 1.**
- 5 **A woman with a sleeping child.** Her arms are full and her eyes are on the back of the child's head. **Add 1.**
- 6 **A man who has been crying since the Yard.** Somebody he had last year is not in the walk, and nobody near him is looking anywhere but at their own boots. **Add 2.**
- 7 **The press.** The line has closed up until nobody can free an arm or turn a head. **Add 3.**
- 8 **Two men arguing about money.** It started at the Yard, it is getting louder, and every ear near you is on it. **Add 4.**

THE WALK

Start at 001.

001

The Quench Yard is wet black cobbles with the smell of drowned ash over it. The lamp of the procession is up on its pole at the head, glass out, nothing inside, and Serle Alne's white head is among the smiths forming round it. He does not look for you.

Your own street forms on the east side. The pot is under your left arm, and when the ring of holes comes round against your shirt you can feel where each one is.

The Yard bell goes once.

- To take your place in the line, go to **020**.
- To go home before anyone has looked at you, go to **091**.

020

The Coopers' Bridge. The river crossing has houses built out over both parapets, so it is a tunnel with a slot of sky down the middle. The head of the walk stops on the far side for the blessing of the water, which stands the middle of the procession still inside the bridge for as long as it takes to say four paragraphs nobody can hear. The line closes up until no air moves in it, and the pot has nothing to lose its heat to but you.

Roll on *Who is at your shoulder* and add the number to the check below.

Make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw to stand still and keep your face.

On a success you stand it out, and the bridge lets you go. Go to **030**.

On a failure, you shift, the lid turns, and what comes out of your coat is the smell of a live fire. Go to **021**.

021

The smell of it. The boy on your right says it out loud the way an eleven-year-old says things: *somebody's got a fire*. He says it to nobody, and three heads have already turned, because there is nothing else on this bridge to turn a head at.

- To tell them it is the ash off the carts, still in everybody's clothes, make a DC 13 Charisma (Deception) check. On a success they go back to their boots and the blessing ends. Go to **030**. On a failure the man behind the boy says loudly that ash does not smell like that and that he would know. Go to **093**.
- To put your arm over the lid and hold it shut until the smell stops, go to **094**.
- To stand on the boy's foot, hard, and keep walking when the line moves, go to the note.

The note: he yelps, the carter behind him laughs, and before the bridge empties he has been told twice to be quiet and once that he imagines things. Nothing he says tonight will be believed. Go to **030**.

030

The Almsgate. Past the bridge the route turns into the Almsgate yard, where the procession kneels. Everybody goes down on the wet stones in their ranks with their hands palm-up on their knees, and the almoner comes down the rows taking each pair of hands in his own while the litany is said.

Make a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to get the pot from under your arm into the fold of your coat behind your knee, in the dark, kneeling, without the lid turning.

On a success it sits behind your knee, and he takes your hands, says the name of your street, and moves on. Go to **040**.

On a failure it is still under your arm when he reaches the rank in front of yours. Go to **031**.

031

The open hand. He is two men away, the litany has four lines left in it, and your hands are the only thing in this yard he is going to look at.

- To give him your hands and grip the pot between your knees, make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a success you hold it there through the whole of his blessing, and the burn on both knees is something you find out about later. Go to **040**. On a failure your knees come apart and the pot rolls out onto the stones. Go to **092**.
- To stand up and go forward as though you meant to give alms, make a DC 13 Charisma (Deception) check. On a success he takes what you put in his hand and sends you back to a place he has been down already. Go to **040**. On a failure a warden has your arm before you are upright, because nobody stands up at the Kneeling. Go to **092**.
- To keep your hands in your lap and let him pass you by, go to **092**.

040

Rushlight Street. The longest stretch of the route is a lane two carts wide with four storeys of house on both sides, and every sill, stair-head and gallery in it is full of people who could not get a place in the walk. They are directly above you, looking down into a street with no light in it. The lid has a ring of holes, and in a lane this dark that is a freckle of red inside your coat.

- To walk the inside, hard against the wall under the jetty of the first floor, make a DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. Nothing on a sill sees down through a jettied storey, and the rank that walks this inside every year will have you off the wall by the elbows. On a success you come out sworn at and unlooked at. Go to **050**. On a failure the lid turns while somebody has your sleeve. Go to **041**.
- To walk the middle with the rest of your rank and trust the dark, go to **041**.
- To turn the pot flat against your stomach and take the heat on bare skin the length of the lane, make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a success the light is against you and shows nothing, and you come out with a hand-sized burn. Go to **050**. On a failure your hand comes off it and for a step and a half the light is in the open. Go to **041**.

041

The sill. A woman on a first-floor sill has her legs hanging over the street and a blanket round her, and she has been watching the tops of heads for an hour. She sees it, and you know she sees it, because she stops moving.

- To look up and hold her eye, make a DC 13 Charisma (Deception) check. On a success she looks at you a long moment, decides something, and turns her head away down the lane. Go to **050**. On a failure she puts her hand out flat, points down at you, and calls across to the sill opposite. Go to **093**.
- To keep your face down and let the walk carry you out from under her, roll on *Who is at your shoulder*. On a result of 4 or less, somebody below follows her arm, and she has the whole sill leaning out and pointing before the lane ends. Go to **093**. On a result of 5 or more, there are eighty yards and four hundred heads between you before she and the man beside her agree on what she saw. Go to **050**.

050

The Spindle. Rushlight Street ends in the one piece of the route that doubles back on itself, a hairpin round the corn hall, and for fifty yards you walk face to face with the whole of the procession behind you, with nothing between the two lines but a rope on iron pins.

Roll on *Who is at your shoulder* and add the number to the check below.

Make a DC 13 Charisma (Deception) check to walk the Spindle with your face and your hands looking like everybody else's.

On a success you are round it and the street opens out. Go to **060**.

On a failure, a man coming the other way, four feet off, stops walking and looks at you. Go to **051**.

051

The face that knows you. He is a farrier who has had iron off Serle Alne's forge for twenty years, and he has just worked out where he has seen your coat. Both lines are moving, so you have about four seconds.

- To speak first, name him, and ask after his wife, make a DC 13 Charisma (Deception) check. On a success he answers out of habit and the lines carry you apart while he is still deciding. Go to **060**. On a failure he says your name back to you, and then the smith's, and not quietly. Go to **093**.
- To lift the rope off its pin, step across, take his arm and walk him back the way he came, go to the note.
- To stop walking and let the line pile up on you, go to **092**.

The note: the wardens stand at the ends of the Spindle and not along the rope, and for thirty yards you have him going the wrong way down his own rank. Then they reach him, because his place has been empty since the corn hall and his neighbours have been saying so, and you are back over the rope and in your own place. He will lose his fire-right in the morning and never be told what for. Go to **060**.

060

The Well of the Year. The route ends in the square, and the square is the whole city standing still in the dark around the Well with the empty lamp up on the Well-head. Everybody has a lamp or a lantern or a cup of oil and nobody has a light. The Warden goes up the steps with the flint and the steel, and he takes a long time about it, on purpose.

Serle Alne comes out of the smiths with his hand lamp open and unlit and goes along the front of the crowd. He will pass within a yard of you once.

- To put the pot into his hands as he passes, make a DC 10 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check in the crush. On a success it is under his coat and he keeps going. Go to **090**. On a failure it goes down between the feet of a crowd packed six deep. Go to **094**.
- To wait for the strike, and light his lamp off your own coal at the moment every face turns to the Well-head, make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. You have carried it since noon. On a success his lamp takes your fire in front of four thousand people looking the other way. Go to **090**. On a failure your hand opens before the strike. Go to **094**.
- To open the pot and tip it into the Well, and go home with the rest of the city, go to **094**.

090

The Kindling. The new fire goes up off the Well-head and the square fills with it lamp by lamp until the whole of Thaxted is standing in its own light again. Nobody looks at an old man going home with a lit lamp tonight; there are four thousand of them.

The forge at the sign of the Ram is open by the time you get past the Well, and Serle Alne is on his knees at the hearth building your coal up into the ash he banked this morning. When he says anything, it is that the wardens will be round in the morning to see a fire lit off the Well like everybody else's, and that he will show them one.

His grandfather's fire will go out one day. It did not go out this year.

THIS IS AN ENDING

091

The Quench Yard, and no further. You go back across the wet cobbles while the line is still dressing, and nobody stops you, because nobody has started looking yet.

The walk goes without you, and your street's place in it has a hole where you should be, between two neighbours who are asked at the Almsgate what has become of you, and who answer honestly, because they do not know.

The wardens come to the house before noon. They find no fire, and they do not need one: a man who was not in the walk has to say where he was, and everything you own with an ash in it is turned over. Serle Alne lights his forge off the Well with the rest of the city, and he is civil to you afterwards, and he is not warm.

THIS IS AN ENDING

092

Taken up. Two of them do it, the way men do a thing they have done every year: one on each arm, no talking, out of the rank and into the nearest lane before the people behind you have finished deciding what they saw. The pot goes into a bucket at the lane end and makes a noise like a word being bitten off.

In the morning the Warden reads out what you lose. No hearth, no forge, no oven, in Thaxted, while you live. Nobody asks whose coal it was and you do not offer. Serle Alne pays your rent for eleven months without once saying he is doing it, and then he dies in the spring, and the forge is cold when the carts come round the next year.

THIS IS AN ENDING

093

The crowd. Somewhere on the route one person says it out loud where other people can hear, and the difference between that and the wardens is that the wardens are a procedure.

The line does not break. It closes. The rank in front of you stops and the rank behind does not, and you are held up off the stones among four hundred neighbours all facing the same way, and hands come in and find the pot. Somebody empties it into the gutter and puts a boot on it.

They take you off the crowd, which is the only reason there is anything left to take. You lose your fire-right in the morning, and you go on living in a street that stood still and watched itself do that.

THIS IS AN ENDING

094

A cold pot. However it went out, it is out, and a dead coal is a lump of charcoal. The Warden strikes the new fire, the square lights up around you, and you stand in it with nothing alive on you.

You find Serle Alne at the foot of the steps. He looks at your face and works it out, and then he holds his lamp up to the Well-man's taper with everybody else and carries the city's fire home to a hearth that has had his own in it since before his father was born. He says fire is fire and the iron will not know.

He is wrong about the iron, or thinks he is, which comes to the same thing at his age. You walk back with him as far as the Ram and neither of you says anything else.

THIS IS AN ENDING



The adventures are mine. 30+ years of real tables.

LONG ISLAND DUNGEON MASTER

Compatible with fifth edition. Portions derived from the System Reference Document 5.1, © Wizards of the Coast LLC, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY-4.0). The Procession, Thaxted, the Quenching, the Kindling, the Well of the Year, Rushlight Street, the Spindle and Serle Alne are original content © Long Island Dungeon Master, free to play at your table and to use in your own work under CC BY 4.0.

THE WALKER'S SHEET

The Quench Yard to the Well of the Year

WALKER _____

STREET _____

NOTHING IS WRITTEN DOWN

There is no track, no score and no word to remember. Where you are on the route is the whole of it. This sheet is here for the walker's name and for the order of the stations.

#	STATION	ENTRY
1	The Quench Yard	001
2	The Coopers' Bridge	020
3	The Almsgate	030
4	Rushlight Street	040
5	The Spindle	050
6	The Well of the Year	060

THE d8

Roll on *Who is at your shoulder* where the book calls for it and do what that entry says with the result. Where it asks for a check, the number at the end of the result is added to it.