



POSTCARD FROM THE DARK PEAK · #9

The Don Head Relay

A SOLO RPG SCENARIO · THE DARK PEAK · HELLSBOROUGH, S6

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A Note from Pip

The job was simple.

Go up to the Don Head before the murk gets thick. Find the relay node -- you'll know it, it pulses. Pour the flask on it. Get out before the Mentiloth work out what happened.

Simple jobs. You know how they go.

Here's the thing about Mentiloth that the person who briefed me didn't mention: they're not guarding the node because someone told them to. They're guarding it because they built it. The Xin told them to build it, yes, and the Xin's communications run through it, yes. But the Mentiloth remember every junction point in a network they wove before most of Hellsborough was a plan. When one of those junctions burns, they don't check with anyone. They already know.

The flask is in your pack. It smells of nothing. That part is correct -- you're carrying the right compound.

The moor above Langsett at this time of year. The murk sitting at head height -- two inches is the margin between managing it and not, and don't think too long about what lives in that surface. The Mentiloth patrols flickering through positions you can't track.

One relay node. Don't make eye contact with anything that looks back.

-- Pip Rippon, field notes. Passed along. Don't ask from where.

Your Character

You are a crosslander, recently arrived from the off-world. You know very little. This is both dangerous and, occasionally, useful.

Distribute the numbers **3, 2, 1** between your three stats. Choose according to who you are.

STAT	WHAT IT COVERS
Grit	Strength, endurance, physical force. Staying upright in bog. Not dying.
Wit	Perception, quickness, intelligence. Staying undetected. Destroying things quietly.
Murk	Sensitivity to dark matter. Luck. Resistance to things that feed on intention and will.

HP: 6. At 0 HP you are taken by the moor. The node is not destroyed. Nobody will admit to having hired you.

Tests

When you attempt something uncertain and the outcome matters, roll **2d6 + the relevant stat**.

ROLL	RESULT
10+	Success. You do the thing.
7-9	Success with cost. You do the thing, but something goes wrong, you take 1 damage, or the situation gets worse.
6 or less	Failure. Your own bad luck decides what happens instead.

When a creature attacks you, roll **2d6 + Grit** to resist physical damage, or **2d6 + Murk** to resist damage to intention and will. On a failure, take the creature's listed damage.

The Don Head

The high moorland above Langsett sits in three distinct zones. Each time you enter a new zone, roll on the **Encounter Table**. Also roll when you fail a test or make noise.

THE DROVE ROAD

The old track above Langsett reservoir. Murk at shoulder height. The reservoir is a black mirror below. Outbridge is behind you. This is where you return to survive.



THE RELAY MARGIN

Open moorland. Pale silk threads push up through the peat, running north-east in parallel lines. Mentiloth territory. Think about nothing.



THE DON HEAD

The river source. Peat becomes near-liquid here. The relay node pulses at the junction of four silk lines, half-buried, wet-looking but not wet. This is where you do the job.

To complete the scenario: Reach The Don Head, destroy the relay node (Wit test), and return to The Drove Road -- all before making **6 total Encounter rolls**.

Entering The Relay Margin costs a Wit 7+ test (see Mentiloth stat block). This is in addition to the Encounter roll for the zone transition.

After the node is destroyed: Add +2 to all subsequent Encounter rolls. The silk burns as a signal. The Mentiloth already know.

Encounter Table

Roll 2d6. After the node is destroyed, add +2 to every roll on this table.

ROLL	ENCOUNTER
2	A Xin. It has been standing at the edge of your lamplight for long enough that you don't know when it arrived. Do not make eye contact. Roll Murk 10+ to look away in time -- on a fail, it reads your intention and you lose 2 Murk. Roll on this table again immediately. It does not attack. It watches.

- 3-4 Mentiloth -- three of them.** They flicker at the edge of visibility, repositioning faster than your eyes can follow. Roll Wit 7+ to blank your mind. On a 10+, they pass through. On a 7-9, they circle once and add +1 to your next Encounter roll. On a 6 or less, one closes: resist Grit 7+ or take 1 HP from an acid bite you barely see coming.
- 5-6 Bog trap.** The peat opens. Roll Grit 7+ to pull free without going in. On a 7-9, you're out but slow and loud -- roll on this table again. On a 6 or less, you go in to the waist. Take 1 HP damage and roll Grit 7+ each round to extract yourself; each failed roll costs another Encounter roll.
- 7-8 The murk thickens.** Your lamp dims. The silk threads multiply beneath your feet -- more of them than there were, and faintly warm through the sole of your boot. Nothing happens. Add +1 to your next Encounter roll.
- 9-10 Clear passage.** You move without incident. The wing-hum is distant. The silk is closer than it was.
- 11 Don bog beast, moving away.** You hear the wet drag of it through saturated peat before you see anything. Roll Wit 7+ to go completely still. On a 10+, it passes. On a 7-9, it pauses and scents the air -- hold still and do not roll again this round. On a 6 or less, it turns toward you (see stat block -- it will not attack unless you run).
- 12 Total silence.** The Mentiloth wing-hum has stopped entirely. The Don Head is close. Move without rolling again this zone transition. This is not reassuring.

The Creatures

Mentiloth



Horse-sized, moth-bodied, six segmented limbs tucked against a plated thorax, wings vast and cross-hatched with dark venation. It flickers through positions -- there, then three feet to the left, then not-there. The light from your lamp does not fill the space it just vacated. Do not track where it was. Watch where the air moves.

STAT BLOCK

HP 5 **Damage** 1 (acid, physical) **Type** Blinker

Drawn to thought: Entering The Relay Margin costs a Wit 7+ test to stay cognitively blank. On a 10+, you register as nothing. On a 7-9, they sense your warmth but not your purpose -- add +1 to your next Encounter roll. On a 6 or less, they sense intent: immediate Encounter roll at +2.

Flicker movement: A Mentiloth attacks from a position you did not see it move to. Grit attacks against it require first locating it (Wit 7+). Wit-based manoeuvres work normally.

They do not travel alone. When Mentiloth appear, there are three. Only one attacks at a time. The other two are repositioning.

The Xin

Upright, roughly human height. Two pairs of forearms -- the lower set doubling as legs when it crouches. Chitin plates fused with wet amphibian skin. A flat, broad head with void-black eyes that hold no expression you can interpret. It is carrying a short spear loosely in one upper forearm. It has not yet decided whether you are relevant. This is the only window you have.



STAT BLOCK

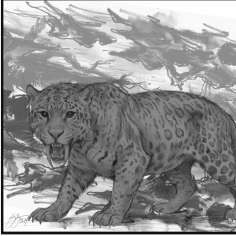
HP 15 **Damage** 2 (intention, to Murk) **Type** Warden

Do not make eye contact. The Xin read intent through ocular contact. Looking directly at one requires an immediate Murk 10+ roll. On a fail, it reads your purpose. Lose 2 Murk. At Murk 0,

your intention is stripped: you forget why you came here and cannot complete the objective. You walk back to The Drove Road with nothing.

It is not hunting you. The Xin is checking on the network. If you avoid its gaze and trigger no further Encounter rolls while it is present, it leaves. If you run, it follows. It cannot be negotiated with. It can be outlasted -- barely.

Don Bog Beast



The size of a large felid but lower-slung, heavier across the shoulders. Striped shaggy coat matted with peat water. The skull is too wide and too flat for a cat. The sabre teeth curve back at the tip. It moves through the wettest ground on the moor with the confidence of something that has never had a reason to be careful. There is something beneath the animal smell that your body processes before your mind does. Not a warning. A category. Do not be here is the information, and it doesn't arrive as language.

STAT BLOCK

HP 6 **Damage** 2 (physical) **Type** Lurker

Do not run. The don bog beast is territorial, not predatory. If you hold still when it appears, roll Wit 7+. On a 10+, it passes. On a 7-9, it pauses and scents -- one round of stillness required before it moves on. On a 6 or less, it turns toward you. Fighting it is possible. Hiding is better.

Bog sense. The don bog beast navigates by smell and vibration. Darkness does not impair it. Murk does not impair it. Stillness does. If it appears in The Don Head after the node burns, it moves toward the burning silk, not toward you. Use this.

Objective

The relay node sits at the junction of four Mentiloth silk lines at The Don Head. It is a knot of pale silk roughly the size of a large dog, half-buried in peat, wet-looking but not wet, with a surface-tension quality to it. It pulses every few seconds -- a low resonance through your sternum and molars. Do not stand too long near it.

You are carrying a clay flask of dark-reactive accelerant. Pour it onto the node. Roll **Wit 7+**:

ROLL	RESULT
10+	You pour it cleanly. No sound. The accelerant soaks into the silk along the capillary lines. Roll one forced Encounter roll. Roughly forty-five seconds later, the silk ignites from within -- cold blue-white light spreading along the branching lines outward. Add +2 to all subsequent Encounter rolls.
7-9	You pour it but your footing shifts and you make a noise. Roll two forced Encounter rolls immediately. Take 1 HP damage. The node ignites. Add +2 to all subsequent Encounter rolls.

ROLL

RESULT

6 or less

The node pulses at the wrong moment, or the peat shifts, or you hesitate. You do not pour the flask. Take 1 HP damage. Roll one forced Encounter roll. You may try again next round -- costs another Encounter roll to re-approach the node.

How to Play

| A complete example game. Follow this once and you'll have it.

Step 1 -- Make your character

| Assign **3, 2, 1** to your stats (see page 2). For this example: **Grit 1 • Wit 3 • Murk 2 • HP 6**. Write it down.

Step 2 -- The goal

| Drove Road → Relay Margin → Don Head → pour the accelerant → Drove Road. Do it in **6 Encounter rolls or fewer**. Every zone transition triggers a roll. Entering The Relay Margin also costs a Wit 7+ test.

Step 3 -- Move to The Relay Margin

| Roll 2d6 for the zone transition. You roll **3+6 = 9**. Look up 9-10.

"Clear passage. You move without incident. The wing-hum is distant."

Now roll the **Drawn to thought** Wit test to stay cognitively blank in Mentiloth territory. Roll 2d6 + Wit 3. You roll **4+4 = 8, +3 = 11**.

11

10+: You register as nothing. No modifier added.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 1 OF 6

Step 4 -- Move to The Don Head

| Roll 2d6. You roll **3+4 = 7**. Look up 7-8.

"The murk thickens. Your lamp dims. The silk threads multiply beneath your feet -- faintly warm through the sole of your boot. Nothing happens. Add +1 to your next Encounter roll."

Note the +1. You are at The Don Head. The relay node pulses ahead of you.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 2 OF 6

Step 5 -- Pour the accelerant

Uncork the flask. Roll **Wit 7+** (2d6 + Wit 3). You roll **3+5 = 8**, **+3 = 11**.

11

10+: Clean pour. No sound. Roll one forced Encounter roll. Add +2 to all subsequent rolls.

Forced Encounter roll (with the +1 from the murk thickening, and +2 from the burning node): Roll 2d6. You roll **3+2 = 5**, **+3 = 8**. Look up 7-8.

"The murk thickens. Add +1 to your next Encounter roll."

The silk is burning. The +1 stacks. The wing-hum has changed.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 3 OF 6 (1 FORCED ROLL THIS STEP)

How to Play continued

Step 6 -- Move back through The Relay Margin

Roll 2d6. Add +2 (burning node) +1 (murk thickening). Total modifier: +3. You roll **5+4 = 9**, **+3 = 12**. But wait -- the table only goes to 12. Look up 12.

"Total silence. The Mentiloth wing-hum has stopped entirely. Move without rolling again this zone transition. This is not reassuring."

The silence is worse than the hum. Free passage -- but they're repositioning, not retreating.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 4 OF 6

Step 7 -- Move to The Drove Road

One more zone transition. Roll 2d6 + 2 (burning node modifier). You roll **4+3 = 7**, **+2 = 9**. Look up 9-10.

"Clear passage. You move without incident."

You step onto The Drove Road. The Outbridge path is below you. The silk is still burning behind you, somewhere on the high moor.

5 of 6

Scenario complete. Node destroyed. You're out.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 5 OF 6 · SCENARIO COMPLETE

Five things to remember

- 1 Move between zones** = roll the Encounter Table. Every zone transition costs a roll.
- 2 The Relay Margin** also costs a Wit 7+ test each time you enter it. Mentiloth are drawn to active thought.
- 3 Destroying the node** adds +2 to all Encounter rolls for the rest of the scenario. Getting out is harder than getting in.
- 4 The Xin damages Murk, not HP.** At Murk 0 you walk back to The Drove Road with no memory of why you came.

5 **The don bog beast** moves toward burning silk after the node is destroyed. If it appears, the silk is your exit strategy.

Outcome

If you return to The Drove Road with the node destroyed, before 6 Encounter rolls:

You come down off the moor at first murklight. Outbridge has a pub open already -- it usually does. Someone confirms it via the hivemind before you've finished your second pint: three adjacent relays on the eastern Don network have gone intermittent. Cascade effect from losing the junction point. Whose communications that interrupted, and what they were saying when the silk burned, you don't know. That's not your job. Your job was the flask. The ϕ hits are in your account by midmorning.

If you reach 0 HP:

The Don Head has you. The peat at the source is deep and cold and does not give things back. The node is still burning when you go under. The job is half done, which is worse than not started, because now whoever commissioned it has to send someone else, and they'll find what's left of you on their way to the node if they go far enough into the bog.

If you reach 0 Murk:

You walk back to The Drove Road without the flask. The objective is not completed. You have no clear memory of why you were on the moor at murkneet in a squall. You wake up in Outbridge with nothing missing from your body and nothing present in your recollection. The Xin has administratively resolved the situation. You feel fine. That's the part that should concern you. It doesn't.

The full story of the Don Head Relay, the world of Hellsborough, the Bestiary of The Dark Peak, and more Postcard Adventures:

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