



POSTCARD FROM THE DARK PEAK · #3

THE THIRD STACK

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

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A NOTE FROM PIP

I want to be clear that taking a job to the gruzeyard is not something I recommend. Especially when the person sending you won't tell you why it needs to be you rather than them.

The job: take a package to a contact at the Third Stack — three old industrial chimneys at the edge of a former steelworks, dead centre of crosslander territory. Make the handoff. Come back with the çhits. Simple enough on a map. Less simple when you're standing in the gruzeyard at murkneet with the murk sitting at your knees and a ripperwing that has been circling for longer than you noticed.

The crosslands is not Hellsborough. The organic network is thin out here. Which means certain things that navigate by it just wander without direction until they find a purpose. The organic network logs this as normal activity. It has been doing so for longer than anyone has been keeping records.

Disassociated symbiots are one of those things.

If you hear clicking with no visible source, do not stop moving. Movement is not a guarantee. It is better odds.

— Pip Rippon, *field notes, The Mason's Arms, Walkley Lane*

YOUR CHARACTER

You are a courier running jobs in Hellsborough and the crosslands. You take work from people who don't explain themselves. This is the career you have.

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. Not being prey. |
| WIT | Perception, intelligence, quickness. Reading a situation. Getting out of someone's territory before they notice you. |
| MURK | Sensitivity to dark matter. Luck. Resistance to things that don't attack your body. |

HP: 6. If you reach 0, you went down somewhere in the gruzeyard. Your contact doesn't know what happened to you. Your client doesn't ask.

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- | Failure. The GM — which is to say, 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 mental damage. On a failure, take the creature's listed damage.

THE GRUIZEYARD

The route runs through three distinct zones. You can move between them freely, but each time you enter a new zone, roll on the **Encounter Table**. Also roll when you make noise or fail a test.

THE MIDDLEWOOD EDGE

Where the road ends and the crosslands begin. The murk thins here. You can see further. That is not entirely good news. You start here.



THE GRUIZEYARD

Dead gruizers stacked in rows. Something is circling overhead. The organic network runs in patches out here. Disassociated things wander between the chassis.



THE THIRD STACK

Three industrial chimneys. The third one still stands. Crosslander territory. Your contact is near the fire. The handoff point.

To complete the scenario: Move to The Third Stack and make the handoff (Wit test), without the crosslanders deciding you're hostile and without the symbiot bonding you — all before making **6 total Encounter rolls**. On roll 6, if you are not at The Third Stack, the gruizeyard has had long enough to find you.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

Roll 2d6 when you enter a new zone, when you make noise, or when you fail a test.

| ROLL | ENCOUNTER |
|------|---|
| 2 | The symbiot has you. It is already clicking. The inside of your head is already busier than it was. Skip directly to The Symbiot Encounter. |
| 3-4 | Crosslander. Steps out of cover. Fungun. Not pointing at the ground. Roll Wit 7+ to hold up your empty hands and name your contact. On a failure, they mark you — the old way, with intent. Take 2 Murk damage and roll on this table again, adding 1 to the result. |
| 5-6 | The ripperwing drops lower. This is the second pass. Roll Grit 7+ to keep still and make yourself uninteresting. On a failure, it commits — take 2 |

| ROLL | ENCOUNTER |
|-------------|--|
| | damage and move immediately to the next zone. The ripperwing does not follow across zone boundaries. |
| 7-8 | Network flicker. Something tracking you via a node briefly knows where you are. It is not a hostile awareness – the kind of attention given to something logged rather than watched. The distinction matters less than you might hope. Add 1 to your next Encounter roll. |
| 9-10 | Clear passage. The ripperwing is high and turning away. The clicking, if there was clicking, has stopped. Note that you can't tell why. |
| 11 | Clicking. Then silence. A disassociated symbiot is near but has not located you yet. Treat the next Encounter roll result as 9-10, whatever you roll. |
| 12 | Crosslander in the path ahead. They have seen you. Treat as 3-4, but you see them first – roll Wit 7+ to approach with hands visible and purpose clear, rather than freezing. |

THE CREATURES

CROSSLANDERS



Human clan of the Nether lands. DIY weapons. Clan markings. Watch the hands.

The crosslander clans don't use psycmasks and don't connect to the hivemind, which means the organic network doesn't track them and they don't trust anyone it does track. They are not automatically hostile to outsiders — they trade, they negotiate, they have a functional code — but they are on their territory and you are not. The difference between a stranger with business and a stranger without it is entirely about the first thirty seconds of contact.

STAT BLOCK

HP 5 **Damage 2** (physical — fungun shot, resist with Grit) **Type** Warden

Territory challenge: When you first enter The Third Stack zone, roll Wit 7+ or a crosslander challenges your right to be there. On a failure, roll on the Encounter Table immediately.

Hold the line: The crosslanders do not pursue outside their territory. If you retreat to The Gruizeyard zone, they stop following.

RIPPERWING

Aerial hunter. Two-metre wingspan. Has been watching you since before you noticed it.

The ripperwing identifies a target area and orbits it. Not quickly. Not urgently. It has all the time it needs, and it knows it. By the time the circle is tight enough for you to read as a threat, it has already made its assessment. The first pass is confirmation. The second is commitment. The talons are long enough to grip a wrist. The beak does not wait for things to stop moving before it starts working.



STAT BLOCK

HP 6 **Damage 3** (physical — talons and beak, resist with Grit) **Type** Hunter

Circles twice: If the ripperwing appears in the Encounter Table a second time, it attacks immediately — no roll to avoid. Take 3 damage.

Field range: The ripperwing only operates above The Middlewood Edge and The Gruizeyard. It does not descend into The Third Stack zone. Getting there is a partial shelter.

SYMBIOT



Small. Companion class. Looking for someone. Very much looking.

In its bonded state, the symbiot is a companion — organic or made, perched on a shoulder, communicating via clicks and gesture, a mutual relationship built slowly over time. A disassociated symbiot is something else. When it loses its host, it doesn't stop needing. It finds the first available warm entity and bonds without asking, skipping every stage of the process that makes bonding survivable. The molon-tor doesn't edit. What it delivers is unfiltered: whatever its last host was carrying in their final hours, arriving all at once in a form you may not have the vocabulary to read.

STAT BLOCK

HP 2 **Damage 2** (mental — forced bond, resist with Murk) **Type Hungry**

Clicking: The symbiot announces itself with clicks before contact. If you hear the clicking and keep moving, roll Murk 7+. On a success, it loses you. On a failure, it has found you — skip to The Symbiot Encounter.

The bond: If the symbiot reaches 0 Murk damage on you, the bond is forced. You deliver the package. You take your chits . On the walk home, three days of a dead crosslander's memories arrive in sequence. This is not immediately dangerous. It is not nothing, either.

THE SYMBIOT ENCOUNTER

The symbiot has found you. It is small — the size of a fist, clinging to the air near your shoulder — and it is not going to stop. Each round you remain in contact, it attempts the forced bond. Roll **2d6 + Murk** to resist.

- **10+:** You push it back. It retreats a short distance. It does not leave. Roll again next round.
- **7-9:** Partial resistance. You feel the edges of something — not words, not images, just presence. Take 1 Murk damage. Roll again next round.
- **6-:** The bond deepens. Take 2 Murk damage. At 0 Murk, it is complete.

Drive it off: The symbiot has HP 2. A single Grit attack deals damage normally. At 0 HP it detaches and does not return this scenario. It is not dead. It has found you inadequate, which is the better outcome.

Outrun it: Move immediately to the next zone and roll Murk 7+. On a success, you've broken contact. On 7-9, you've broken contact but it has tagged you via the network — add

+1 to all Encounter rolls for the rest of the scenario. On a failure, it follows you into the next zone.

OBJECTIVE

Your contact is at The Third Stack, near the fire by the broken chimney base. Give them the package. Take the çhits. Leave. Roll **Wit 7+**.

| ROLL | RESULT |
|------------|---|
| 10+ | Clean exchange. Your contact takes the package without looking at you and walks back to the fire. The ripperwing is gone. Something in the rubble shifts once and then doesn't. |
| 7-9 | Your contact takes it but holds your eye for a moment longer than necessary, looking past your shoulder into the gruzeyard. They take it anyway. Roll on the Encounter Table immediately. |
| 6- | Your contact isn't at the Stack yet. You wait in the shadow of the third chimney. Roll on the Encounter Table, adding accumulated +1s. Try again next round. |

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**. You're quick-thinking but not built for a fight. Write it down.

STEP 2 – THE GOAL

| Middlewood Edge (start) → Gruizeyard → Third Stack. Make the handoff. Do it in **6 Encounter rolls or fewer**. Each zone move triggers a roll. You have the package. You just need to get it there.

STEP 3 – MOVE TO THE GRUIZEYARD

| Roll 2d6. You roll **4+4 = 8**. Look up 7-8 on the Encounter Table.

"Network flicker. Something tracking you via a node briefly knows where you are. Add 1 to your next Encounter roll."

| Nothing hostile yet. But note the +1.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 1 OF 6

STEP 4 – MOVE TO THE THIRD STACK

| Roll 2d6, add the +1 from before. You roll **2+3 = 5, plus 1 = 6**. Look up 5-6.

"The ripperwing drops lower. This is the second pass. Roll Grit 7+."

| Roll 2d6 + Grit (1). You roll **4+4 = 8, +1 = 9**.

9

7-9: You go still. The ripperwing passes. But the nearness of it costs **HP: 5**.
you. Take 1 damage.

| The ripperwing banks and rises. You are in The Third Stack zone. The ripperwing does not follow.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 2 OF 6

STEP 5 – TERRITORY CHALLENGE

You've entered crosslander territory. Before anything else, roll Wit 7+ (2d6 + Wit 3).

You roll $3+3 = 6$, $+3 = 9$.

9

7-9: A crosslander steps out of cover. You name your contact before the fungun comes up. They stand down – but you've made noise. Roll the Encounter Table immediately.

Roll 2d6. You roll $1+1 = 2$.

2

"The symbiot has you." Skip directly to The Symbiot Encounter.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 3 OF 6

HOW TO PLAY CONTINUED

STEP 6 – THE SYMBIOT

It's the size of a fist. It's been wandering the gruzeyard without a host. You are the nearest available warm thing.

Round 1: Roll 2d6 + Murk (2) to resist. You roll $5+5 = 10$, $+2 = 12$.

12

10+: You push it back. It retreats a short distance. It does not leave. Roll again next round.

Round 2: Attack with Grit instead of resisting. Roll 2d6 + Grit (1). You roll $4+3 = 7$, $+1 = 8$.

8

7–9: You connect. The **HP 2** It detaches. It is not dead. It has found you symbiot takes damage. → **0**. inadequate, which is the better outcome.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 3 OF 6 · NO ENCOUNTER ROLL DURING THE ENCOUNTER ITSELF

STEP 7 – MAKE THE HANDOFF

Your contact is at the broken chimney base. Roll **Wit 7+** (2d6 + Wit 3). You roll $5+5 = 10$, $+3 = 13$.

13

10+: Clean exchange. Your contact takes the package without looking at you and walks back to the fire. The ripperwing is gone. Something in the rubble shifts once and then doesn't.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 3 OF 6 · HANDOFF MADE

RESULT

Your contact counts out your chits without speaking. You take the Middlewood road back at speed. You don't look back at the chimneys. The third one especially.

FIVE THINGS TO REMEMBER

1 **Move between zones** = roll the Encounter Table.

2 **The ripperwing won't follow you into The Third Stack zone.** Moving forward is sometimes the right escape.

3 **Territory challenge** is a Wit test when you enter The Third Stack — separate from, and in addition to, the encounter roll.

4 **If the symbiot finds you,** choose: resist it (Murk), fight it (Grit), or outrun it (move zone + Murk test). All three are valid.

5 **Crosslanders and the ripperwing damage HP. The symbiot damages Murk.** Track both. Reaching 0 in either ends the run.

OUTCOME

If you complete the handoff before 6 Encounter rolls:

Your contact pockets the package and counts out your çhits without speaking. You take the Middlewood road back at speed. The murk closes in behind you. The gruzeyard is quiet, which is what it should be and what it wasn't forty minutes ago. You don't look back at the chimneys. The third one especially.

If you reach 0 HP:

You went down somewhere between the edge and the Stack. When the murk lifts at murkise, there is nothing in the gruzeyard but the scattered çhits you were carrying. The ripperwing is back in its pattern overhead. The crosslanders will find you before anything else does. Whether that is better or worse depends on factors not covered in this scenario.

If you reach 0 Murk:

A disassociated symbiot found you somewhere in the gruzeyard. You don't know it happened. You deliver the package, you take your çhits, you walk home. The memories begin arriving that evening. Three days of someone else's life, in sequence, without context. They fade eventually.

The Third Stack myth, the world of Hellsborough, the Bestiary of The Dark Peak, and more Postcard Adventures:

hellsborough.com

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