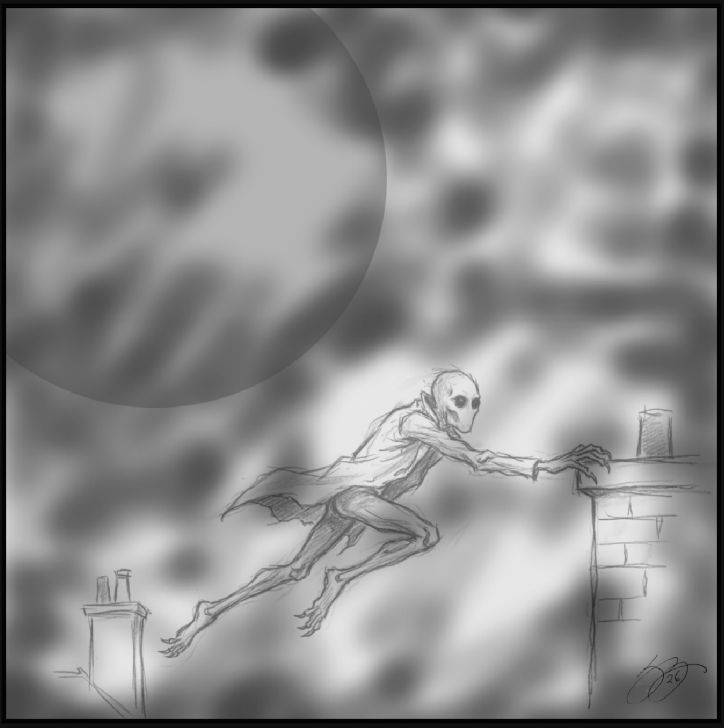


POSTCARD FROM THE DARK PEAK · #13

SAY NUMBER 13

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

DEMONSPAWN BOOKS AND GAMES

HELLSBOROUGH.COM

A NOTE FROM PIP

You already have the thing. That is the difference with this one.

Every other job in this series, you go out empty, and the danger sits between you and whatever you have been sent to fetch. This time the danger is in your own coat, ringing, and it has been since before the scenario started. You are not walking toward the trouble. You are carrying it.

It is a cup of murk-salt. Fresh, still warm, wrapped in oilcloth. What an ullagnaw leaves on the brick when something drives it off its den. It rings, on and off, faint, and every time it rings it is telling the whole underside of the city where you are. There is iron in your other pocket to dampen that. It helps. It does not fix it.

A woman at number thirteen wants it at her door before murkrise, while there is still a ring left in it. Her man went into the Rivelin culverts and came out with nothing in him, and this cup is the nearest thing to his voice that anyone is ever going to hand her. Get it there cold and you have still done it. You will just have done it too late to matter, and she will know, and so will you.

One thing, murker, and then go. The man who gave you the cup will have told you already. He is right, and I am going to tell you again, because people forget it exactly when it counts. On her road there are gratings every few yards and there is an ullagnaw under them. Do not say the number out loud. Not to check. Not to a child on a step. Count the doors.

> *-- Pip Rippon, field notes, The Rawson Spring, Langsett Road*

YOUR CHARACTER

You are a crosslander, over the Causeway years back, making a living carrying things across Hellsborough for people who would rather not be seen carrying them. Tonight the hivemind has decided there are netherlanders in the city, so every exacid in the district is out checking coats, and you are a netherlander with a regulated substance in yours. You knew that when you took the ȼhits. You took them anyway.

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

STAT	WHAT IT COVERS
GRIT	Strength, endurance, keeping hold of a thing when you are hit. Taking a railing and not going over it.

STAT	WHAT IT COVERS
WIT	Perception, quickness, reading a rhythm. Keeping a count straight while something drinks it out of you.
MURK	Sensitivity to dark matter. The soul-weight an ullagnaw feeds on. What you have left of yourself.

HP: 6. At 0 HP you go down somewhere between the outflow and the door, and the cup is found near you or in the water. **If your Murk reaches 0**, you stop, you sit down, and it stops mattering which door was hers.

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. You don't do the thing. Your own bad luck decides what happens instead.

When a creature reaches you, roll **2d6 + Grit** to resist physical damage, or **2d6 + Murk** to resist what arrives through your teeth and the back of your eyes. On a failure, take the damage.

THE ROUTE

Three zones. You start in **The Outflow**, holding the cup. Reaching **number thirteen** and completing the handoff is the whole of it. You move forward only. Roll on the **Encounter Table** each time you enter a new zone and each time the rules tell you to.

THE OUTFLOW

The tiled outflow under the bottom Rivelin dam. The man who drove the thing off its den hands you the cup and the nails and will not come past the tiling. Where the overflow meets the culvert the water goes a colour that isn't quite water. Murk 3. Every sound rings.

↓

THE CROSSING

Holme Lane down toward Owlerton. A checkpoint across the road by the old tram stop, coats coming open. Then the terraces, the gasholder, and the railing over the Don. An exacid on the road. A gambrel on the roofs.

↓

THE COUNTED ROAD

Her street, along the top of a culverted beck. Old tiled paving, a grating every few yards, a cold coming up off them that isn't weather. Thirteen doors. An ullagnaw under all of it. Number thirteen is at the far end, and you will not say so out loud.

THE CARGO

You are carrying the **cup** (murk-salt, oilcloth-wrapped, ringing) and a **fist of cut iron nails**.

The Ring. Keep a d6. Before each Encounter roll you make, roll the Ring:

- **1-2:** the salt rings. **Subtract 1** from that roll. If you are on The Crossing or The Counted Road, also lose **1 Murk** as the ring goes down a grating to the thing under the street.
- **3-6:** quiet. Nothing.
- While you hold the iron nails, the salt rings only on a **1**. Lose the nails and it rings on **1-3**.

Protecting the cup. Any time you take HP damage, roll **Grit 7+** at once. On a failure, the cup is knocked, cracked, or half-spilled: mark the salt **Compromised**. A Compromised cup still delivers (see Outcome). If you take HP damage while already Compromised, or roll a **2** on this test, the salt is **lost**, and the scenario ends in Failure.

The nails are worth Murk, not ¢hits. They dampen the Ring and they halve the ullagnaw's drain. Anywhere you are told to drop something, lose them last.

THE CLOCK

6 Encounter rolls to reach number thirteen and put the cup in her hands.

- Entering **The Crossing** is your first Encounter roll, and you spend it at the checkpoint: roll the Ring, then resolve your checkpoint choice. Do not also roll on the Encounter Table for it unless a branch tells you to.
- Entering **The Counted Road** is another Encounter roll, rolled on the Encounter Table as normal.
- Going round, each Wit roll working down The Counted Road, going door to door again after the child loses your meaning, and every branch marked "costs an Encounter roll": all spend a roll off your six.
- If the cup is not in her hands by the end of your **6th** roll, the ring is gone whatever else is true. The delivery is **Partial** at best.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

Roll 2d6 when you enter a new zone and when the rules tell you to. Roll the **Ring** first and take its penalty, then apply any other modifiers. **Low results are the dangerous ones.**

ROLL	ENCOUNTER
2	**A hand on your collar.** An exacid has come up behind you while you listened to your own coat. No roll to notice it. It has you. Go to **The Exacid**, and you begin that encounter **Marked**.
3-4	**Sweep.** Two exacids working the street in step, coats coming open ahead of you. Roll **Wit 7+** to be into a ginnel or an entry before they reach you. On a failure: 1 damage as you are shoved to a wall and searched rough, and roll to protect the cup.
5-6	**The ring carries.** The salt rings whatever your d6 said, long and clear, and something under the road answers it. Lose **1 Murk** (none if you hold the iron, but the sound still lands). **Subtract 1** from your next roll.
7-8	**The murk thickens.** Nothing arrives. The street empties around you, and you are more alone with what is under it than you were a minute ago. Note it.
9-10	**Clear stretch.** You move without incident. Note it down. It will not hold.
11	**A dropped coat on a railing.** Someone left in a hurry. In the pockets: a **snough torch** (see The Ullagnaw) and **4 ¢hits**. Take what you want. The torch is a decision, not a gift.

ROLL	ENCOUNTER
12	**A gap in it.** For one stretch the gratings are paved over, the murk sits still, and the cup goes quiet in your coat. No drain, no Ring roll, and **this roll is not spent**. The clock does not advance for it.

THE CROSSING

THE CHECKPOINT

Entering The Crossing spends your first Encounter roll here, at the checkpoint by the old tram stop. It is across the whole road, you are a netherlander, and the sweep is looking for netherlanders. Roll the Ring, then choose:

- **Read the rhythm and slip the pause.** An exacid searches in threes -- step in, claw up, look you over -- and when a search turns nothing up it stops for one beat, waiting for an instruction that has not come. Roll **Wit 7+** to move on that beat. **10+:** through clean. **7–9:** through, but it clocks your back. Subtract 1 from your next Encounter roll, and you did not pass clean. **6 or less:** it turns as you move. Roll on the Encounter Table at **–2**, and go to The Exacid.
- **Queue and bluff it.** Roll **Wit 7+**. **10+:** waved through, clean. **7–9:** searched. The oilcloth is opened, you talk, and it costs you **2 ¢hits or a possession** and one Encounter roll of delay. **6 or less:** the salt is found and named. Go to The Exacid.
- **Go round through the yards.** Costs **1 Encounter roll**, and it puts you under the eaves. You meet The Gambrel, and its Wit test is at **–2**.

OWLERTON

Past the checkpoint the road runs into the terraces, the gasholder, and the railing above the Don. There has been a gambrel working these streets three weeks.

- If you came through the checkpoint **clean** (a 10+ on Read the rhythm, or waved through on Queue and bluff) and are **not Marked**, walk the middle of the road, chin up. The gambrel pads you along the ridgeline for a street and peels off. No roll.
- Otherwise -- a 7-9 at the checkpoint, **Marked**, or **went round** -- you are under the eaves. Go to The Gambrel.

The far side of Owlerton is the railing over the Don, and then her road. Entering **The Counted Road** is an Encounter roll.

THE COUNTED ROAD

Her street runs thirteen doors, tiled and gratinged, and the ullagnaw is under all of it. You will not say the number. You get to number thirteen by reaching the child on the step partway down, who will fetch her mother.

The drain. At the end of every **down-the-road Wit roll** on The Counted Road, lose **1 Murk**. The iron nails halve this: lose 1 Murk every **other** down-the-road roll instead. The

zone-entry Encounter roll and the child roll do not drain you. Every ring of the salt here costs **1 more Murk** on top.

Down the road. Entering The Counted Road costs an Encounter roll like any zone. After that, each roll you spend working down it is a **Wit** roll, not an Encounter Table roll: roll the Ring for it, take the drain, and spend it off your six, but do not roll on the Encounter Table unless a result below sends you there.

- **10+:** good ground, count intact.
- **7–9:** you press on, but you have lost your place. Subtract 1 from your next roll.
- **6 or less:** you stop in the open, unsure which door you are on. 1 damage from the cold that isn't weather, roll on the Encounter Table, and make no ground this roll.

After **two Wit rolls of 7+** on this road, you are level with the child.

THE CHILD

A child is sitting up on a step. She stands and asks you, clear as anything, what number you are looking for. Choose:

- **Point. Don't speak.** Roll **Wit 7+**. **10+:** she fetches her mother -- you have arrived, go to Objective. **7–9:** she fetches her mother, but you stood in the open too long. Roll the Encounter Table, then Objective. **6 or less:** she doesn't follow your meaning and wanders back inside. Spend another roll working down the road, then try again.
- **Tell her the number.** You are at the right door at once -- go straight to Objective. But you said it out loud over a grating. The ullagnaw **fixes on you**: from now the drain is **2 Murk** per roll and the salt rings on **1–4**, and the Objective roll is at **-2**.

OBJECTIVE

You are at number thirteen. The woman comes to the door. Roll **Wit 7+** to get the cup into her hands while there is still a ring in it.

ROLL	RESULT
10+	Clean. The cup is still ringing when she takes it. **Success.**
7-9	You get it to her, but your hands are shaking and the doorstep is tiled and slick and you fumble the oilcloth. The ring is nearly out of it. Mark **Compromised** if it is not already. **Partial.**
6 or less	You cannot make your hands work. The cup goes down on the step and rings once against the tile and stops. Delivered dead. Counts as **Compromised**; if it was already Compromised, **Failure**.

If your 6th Encounter roll is already spent when you reach this point, the best result available is **Partial**.

THE CREATURES

EXACID

> *Biologically engineered enforcer crab, up on its back legs, armour the colour of wet slate, one lateral claw doing all the work. The nascenti's hand on the street. Not bright, and it has never once been asked to be.*

You cannot beat an exacid. You can only end the one in front of you and live with what that costs.

STAT BLOCK

HP 7 **Damage** 2 (crushing claw, physical) **Type** Warden

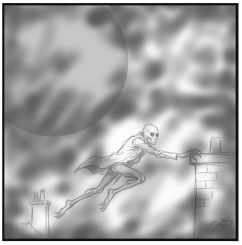
Three then a pause: in a fight it runs the same attack three rounds straight, then must skip a round waiting for the next instruction. On that skipped round your attack lands automatically, or you break away clean with no roll.

Thick shell: Grit attacks deal 1 less (minimum 1). Wit manoeuvres that duck it, put a railing between you, or take you where it cannot pivot deal full damage and avoid the claw.

The problem is what sent it: drop it to 0 and you are clear of this exacid, not of the nascenti that stood behind it without showing itself. Mark yourself **Marked**: subtract 1 from every remaining Encounter roll, and the gambrel has your angle in Owlerton.

THE GAMBREL

> *Reads as a long dark coat folded on a ridge until it moves, and then it reads as too many joints. Two points of banked-coal orange, held dead level while the rest of it does not. On slate it sounds like someone laying out cutlery.*



It works a district a season. Owlerton is three weeks in and it is hungry, and a hunched figure hurrying under the eaves with both hands on something is the exact shape it comes down for.

STAT BLOCK

HP 4 **Damage** 2 (impact -- it rides you into a wall or a railing) **Type** Blinker

It wants the drop: when you meet it, roll **Wit 7+**. **10+:** you get a hand to the railing first -- no damage, but you have stopped in the open: roll the Encounter Table. **7-9:** you take the rail but keep your feet -- 1 damage, and roll to protect the cup. **6 or less:** it has you -- **2 damage** as it rides you into the railing over the Don, roll to protect the cup, and only your grip on the top bar is between you and the water.

Deny it the angle: chin up, middle of the road, and it will not commit. The only way you meet the gambrel in this scenario is to give it the eaves -- by being Marked, going round, or a 7-9 at the checkpoint.

Blinker: it is a coat until it is not. Any attack against it in the first round of a fight misses unless you rolled **Wit 8+** to keep it in view.

THE ULLAGNAW

> *There is no body. There is a thickening under the road that answers sound, and until you make a sound it is only dark. It keeps to the resonant places: culverts, tiled outflows, the long drains where a dropped chit rings for a full second before it dies.*

It does not take your body. It takes the soul-weight the nascenti read and the hivemind files -- the part that makes you a person the murk bothers to recognise -- and it takes it slowly, and what goes does not come back.

STAT BLOCK

HP 7 **Damage** none to HP -- it takes Murk **Type** Listener

You do not fight the ullagnaw. It is under The Counted Road, not on it. There is nothing on the surface to attack, and hitting the tiles only tells it where you are standing.

The drain: on The Counted Road, lose **1 Murk** at the end of every down-the-road Wit roll (halved by the iron nails; the zone-entry and child rolls do not drain). Every ring of the salt is 1 more.

Say the number and it fixes: speak "thirteen" aloud on that road and the drain doubles to **2 Murk** per roll and the salt rings on 1-4 for the rest of the scenario.

Snough torch: if you light one, the drain is warded for your next roll on The Counted Road. By the one after, the murk has saturated the flame and the flame is just light. **Iron dampens it too:** the nails are the only reason you have any Murk left by door thirteen.

HOW TO PLAY

> *A complete example run. Follow it once and you'll have it.*

STEP 1 -- MAKE YOUR CHARACTER

Assign **3, 2, 1** to your stats. For this example: **Grit 1 · Wit 3 · Murk 2 · HP 6**. A crosslander courier -- quick, reads a street well, no use at all in a fight. You are holding the cup and the fist of iron nails.

STEP 2 -- THE GOAL

Outflow → Crossing → Counted Road → number thirteen, cup in her hands, in **6 Encounter rolls**. Before every roll, roll the **Ring** d6: while you hold the iron it rings only on a **1**. A ring subtracts 1 from the roll, and on the Crossing or the Counted Road it also costs 1 Murk.

STEP 3 -- THE CHECKPOINT (ENCOUNTER ROLL 1)

Enter The Crossing. Roll the Ring: d6 = **5**, quiet. Choose **Read the rhythm and slip the pause**. Roll Wit 7+ (2d6 + Wit 3): **4+2 = 6, +3 = 9**.

9	7-9: through, but it clocks your back. Subtract 1 from your next Encounter roll -- and you did not pass clean.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 1 OF 6

STEP 4 -- OWLERTON, THE GAMBREL

Not a clean pass, so you are under the eaves and the gambrel comes down off the gasholder. Roll the Ring: d6 = **3**, quiet. "It wants the drop." Roll Wit 7+: **3+3 = 6, +3 = 9**.

9	7-9: you take the rail but keep your feet. 1 damage (HP 6 → 5), and roll to protect the cup.

Protect the cup -- Grit 7+ (2d6 + Grit 1): **6+4 = 10, +1 = 11**.

11	10+: your grip holds. The salt is not Compromised.

The gambrel goes back up the brick. That cost a wound and nearly the cup -- but not a roll off the clock.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 1 OF 6

STEP 5 -- ENTER THE COUNTED ROAD (ENCOUNTER ROLL 2)

Carry the -1 from the checkpoint. Roll the Ring: d6 = **2** -- with the iron, a 2 is quiet. Encounter roll: 2d6 = **6+6 = 12, −1 = 11**.

> *"A dropped coat on a railing. In the pockets: a snough torch and 4 ¢hits."*

Take the torch and the coins. No drain on the zone-entry roll.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 2 OF 6

HOW TO PLAY CONTINUED

STEP 6 -- DOWN THE ROAD (ENCOUNTER ROLL 3)

Roll the Ring: d6 = **4**, quiet. Roll Wit to hold your count (2d6 + Wit 3): **5+3 = 8, +3 = 11**.

11	10+: good ground, count intact. That is one 7+ toward the child.

Drain: first down-the-road roll, so lose 1 Murk. **Murk 2 → 1**.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 3 OF 6

STEP 7 -- DOWN THE ROAD AGAIN (ENCOUNTER ROLL 4)

Roll the Ring: d6 = **6**, quiet. Roll Wit: **2+3 = 5, +3 = 8**.

8	7-9: you press on, but you have lost your place. Subtract 1 from your next roll.

That is your second 7+ on this road -- you are level with the child. Drain: second down-the-road roll, and the iron halves it, so this one is free. **Murk stays 1**. The torch is still in your pocket, unlit -- you did not need it.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 4 OF 6

STEP 8 -- THE CHILD, AND THE DOOR (ENCOUNTER ROLL 5)

The child stands up and asks what number you are after. You have "thirteen" in your mouth. You do not say it. Choose **Point. Don't speak.** Roll Wit 7+, carrying the -1 from the last roll: **6+3 = 9, +3, -1 = 11**.

11	10+: she fetches her mother. You have arrived. The child roll does not drain you.

Objective. The woman comes to the door. Roll Wit 7+ to get the cup into her hands while there is still a ring in it: **4+4 = 8, +3 = 11**.

11	10+: clean. The cup is still ringing when she takes it. Success.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 5 OF 6 · DELIVERED

RESULT

> *She takes it to her ear on the step and stands like that a long time. You look away. A roll to spare, one wound, Murk down to 1 and not coming back up -- and the cup still ringing when it left your hand. That is as clean as this job comes.*

FIVE THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. **The Ring is the problem.** Roll the d6 before every roll. The iron keeps it to a 1 -- lose the nails and it rings on 1-3. Every ring on the Crossing or the Counted Road costs Murk.
2. **You cannot beat an exacid.** Slip the checkpoint on Wit. A 7-9 gets you through but hands the gambrel its angle in Owlerton.
3. **Middle of the road, chin up.** The gambrel only drops on you under the eaves -- Marked, gone round, or a 7-9 at the checkpoint.
4. **The Counted Road drains Murk** on every down-the-road roll; the iron halves it. Two rolls of 7+ gets you to the child.
5. **Never say the number.** "Tell her the number" doubles the drain and puts the handoff at -2. Point instead.

OUTCOME

Success -- the cup delivered, still ringing, not Compromised, within 6 rolls:

She takes it to her ear on the step and stands like that a long time, and you look away, because whatever she is hearing is not yours to watch her hear. She pays you in full. You walk back to the tram in the murklight lighter than you went out, and it is not only the pocket. An ullagnaw's drain does not fill back in. If you are running this character on, your Murk maximum drops by 1.

Partial -- delivered Compromised, or after the 6th roll:

The ring is gone, or nearly. She holds a cup of cooling salt to her ear and there is not much left in it, and she knows before you do, and she pays you half and does not meet your eye. You made the delivery. You did not make it in time, and in time was the entire job.

Failure -- the salt lost en route:

You knock on number thirteen with nothing in your hands, or with a cracked cup of dead grey salt you spilled on a tram-stop floor an hour ago. She looks at what you have brought her and does not ask you in. Nobody will admit to having hired you, and you would not bring it up either.

If you reach 0 HP: you go down between the outflow and the door -- a claw, or a railing, or the drop to the Don. The cup is found near you, or not at all. Whatever was in it is in the murk now, which is where it was always headed. Just not like this, and not with her still waiting up.

If you reach 0 Murk: you sit down on the tiles with the cup in your lap and you stop counting, and it stops mattering which door was hers. At murkrise somebody on their way to work finds you there. You are intact in every way they can measure. The cup has gone cold in your hands, and the ullagnaw has what it came up the drain for.

The ullagnaw, the gambrel and the exacid, the world of Hellsborough, the Bestiary of The Dark Peak, and every Postcard Adventure:

hellsborough.com

Postcard from The Dark Peak 13: Say Number 13. Published by Demonspawn Books and Games, Sheffield S6, South Yorkshire.
Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0). You are free to share and adapt this material for any purpose, provided you give appropriate credit.
Written by Bull Stuart. hellsborough.com

THAT WAS ONE JOB

A Postcard Adventure is one job, three stats, two dice, done in an evening. **Foked** is what that grows into.

Same Grit, Wit and Murk. Same 2d6. But in Foked your stats are your flesh: every hit comes off the number you roll with, and the character who walks out of one job carries every scar into the next one.

- Six species and four character types, netherlander to xaexs
- The Murk Clock, the one thing none of you can outrun
- A solo oracle, so nobody has to sit opposite you
- Skills you earn by surviving the wrong place, not by spending points

THE CORE RULES ARE FREE

The rules and the first scenario, *Three Murkneets Dark*, cost nothing. The full boxed set adds the Oracle's Toolkit, a Bestiary of 35, three more scenarios and the complete Coker campaign, for five dollars the lot.

hellsborough.com/foked

Foked — Demonspawn Books and Games, Sheffield S6. Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International.
hellsborough.com