

POSTCARD FROM THE DARK PEAK · #15

# THE SENTINEL STONE

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

DEMONSPAWN BOOKS AND GAMES

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## A NOTE FROM PIP

I've told Lomas Revill you'll go, because I can't.

The clearing on Wadsley Common let me in twice. The second time I brought somebody out of it, and since then it hasn't let me in at all. I've walked past it four times. I've felt it go by like a draught. So it's you, murker, and I'm sorry, and Lomas is paying.

Here's the job. Lomas keeps the Commons, Wadsley and Loxley both, and lives in the old gamekeeper's cottage built over the mouth of a cave. Somebody born a Ley, from out past Walkley, has gone up to the Sentinel stone, the way the Moor and Ley clans do in Fecunder, and hasn't come back. That was two murkneets ago. Lomas can't find the clearing. It has never once let him in. You go up, you find it, you bring them down.

Three things. The Common turns. Steer by the white obelisk on Loxley Edge going up, and by Wilkin Hill coming back, because Wilkin Hill is the only thing in sight the Common doesn't own. Keep well off the standing stones. And whoever you find at that stone won't want to come with you. I knew exactly why, when I found mine. That was the worst part.

Count the redfronts on the way down.

> *-- Pip Rippon, field notes, The Star Inn, Fox Lane*

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## YOUR CHARACTER

You are a crosslander, over the Causeway years back, known in the Star for going places other people won't. Lomas Revill has paid you to bring somebody down off Wadsley Common alive.

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

| STAT | WHAT IT COVERS |
|---|---|
| **GRIT** | Strength, endurance. Getting a grown adult onto their feet who has decided not to stand. Tearing yourself out of a briar. |
| **WIT** | Perception, bearings, footing. Knowing where the obelisk was a minute ago. Not walking into a quarry hole. |
| **MURK** | Sensitivity to dark matter. Feeling the clearing go past. Not sitting down beside the stone yourself. |

**HP: 6.** At 0 HP you go down in the bracken. **If your Murk reaches 0**, the stone has you as well. See **Outcome**.

## 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. You don't do the thing. The Common decides what happens instead. |

When a creature reaches you, roll **2d6 + Grit** to resist physical damage, or **2d6 + Murk** to resist what gets in through your head. On a failure, take the damage.

## WHO YOU'RE BRINGING DOWN

**Mary Revill**, Lomas's wife. Born a Ley, married a Hellsborough keeper, which went down with her family about as well as you'd expect. Every Fecunder she goes up to the Sentinel stone once, on her own, and is back by murkrise. Not this year.

**Mary: HP 3.** Track it separately from yours. She is sitting with her back against the stone, legs out, and she has been there two murkneets and a day. She isn't hurt. She isn't coming, either. *"I've never been this close before. Tha dun't know what it's like."*

Once she's on her feet she travels with you, and **she adds +1 to every Encounter roll on the way back.** She walks like her feet belong to someone else. She stops and turns back toward the stone. And she sings, a low Ley hymn, the same few notes over and over, and everything on the Common can hear exactly where you are.

**Gyp.** Lomas lends you his barker: old, grey, long in the leg, and he knows Mary's scent. **Gyp: HP 2.** Gyp can do each of these **once**:

- **Stop and stare at a patch of nothing.** Reroll a failed **Bearing** roll. Gyp is right.
- **Take Mary's sleeve. +1** to one **Getting Her Up** roll.
- **Go for the Bracken Man's legs.** You break free of a grapple automatically. Gyp takes **1 damage**.

If Gyp reaches 0 HP, he's gone, and you'll be the one telling Lomas.

# WADSLEY COMMON

Three zones. You start at **the Keeper's Cottage** at murkfall. You go up, you find the clearing, you come back down the same way, if the Common lets you. Roll on the **Encounter Table** each time you enter a new zone and each time the rules tell you to.

**1 THE KEEPER'S COTTAGE**

Top of Loxley Common. The back half of the house is a cave: the kitchen table and mantelpiece are cut from the rock. The cave breathes out cold even in Fecunder and smells of murkreck. Forktails nest in rows under the overhang. A redfront sits on the wall by the gate. You start here, and you finish here.

↓

**2 THE BRACKEN DUNES**

Wadsley Common after murkfall. Bracken to the waist, gorse, gannister sliding underfoot, old quarry holes full of water the colour of tea. Buzzers off the bracken in clouds. Somewhere in the middle, the standing stones, and the thing that stands in the middle of them.

↓

**3 THE HIDDEN CLEARING**

Short grass and quiet. The buzzers don't come in and the murk sits round the edge and doesn't either. In the middle, the Sentinel stone, taller than you, leaning, with rockcrust on its north side the colour of old copper. Mary is against it.

## THE CLOCK

> **6 Encounter rolls on the way up.** Find the clearing and get Mary on her feet before they're spent. At murkrise the clearing turns away, and Mary goes with it.

- **Leaving the cottage** at murkfall: the forktails come off the overhang. Resolve **The Wall of Wings** (see **Forktail**) before your first roll. It isn't an Encounter roll.
- Entering **The Bracken Dunes** is an Encounter roll.
- Each **Bearing** roll to find the clearing costs **1 Encounter roll**, whether it succeeds or not.
- Entering **The Hidden Clearing** is an Encounter roll.
- Each failed **Getting Her Up** roll costs **1 Encounter roll**.
- If the **6th** roll is spent and Mary is not yet on her feet, it is murkrise. See **Outcome: Failure**.

**On the way back, the clock stops.** You have all the time in the world, and Mary is with you, which is the problem. The way back costs one Encounter roll **leaving the**

**clearing**, one **crossing the dunes** (then a Bearing roll on Wilkin Hill, see **The Common Turns**), and one **reaching the cottage**. **Every Encounter roll on the way back is at +1** while Mary is with you.

## ENCOUNTER TABLE

Roll 2d6. **High results are the dangerous ones**, so everything that adds to the roll is bad news.

| ROLL | ENCOUNTER |
|---|---|
| 2 | **A gap in it.** The murk lifts off the dunes, and for a moment you can see the obelisk and Wilkin Hill both. **This roll is not spent.** On the way up it doesn't count against the clock. Your next **Bearing** roll is at **+1**. |
| 3–4 | **Clear going.** Bracken and the smell of it, green and wet and a bit rotten underneath. Nothing happens. Note it down. It will not hold. |
| 5 | **A redfront.** On a rock, very still, watching you without turning its head. Mark **1 redfront**. See **Redfront**. |
| 6 | **Buzzers.** They come off the bracken in a cloud and get in your mouth and eyes. Roll **Wit 7+**. On a failure you lose your line. On the way up your next **Bearing** roll is at **−1**. On the way back, Mary stops and turns toward the stone: make **one extra Encounter roll**. |
| 7 | **The ground's different.** Bracken you were walking through a moment ago has become bracken you've never seen. Roll **Murk 7+** to feel which way it turned. On a failure, **one extra Encounter roll**. |
| 8 | **Forktails, feeding low.** A few hundred of them over the dunes at head height. Go to **Forktail: Feeding Low**. |
| 9 | **The gannister goes.** A slope of loose stone slides out from under you, toward a quarry hole full of black water. Roll **Wit 7+**. On a failure, take **1 damage**. If Mary is with you, she takes **1 damage** too. |
| 10 | **The cresentwings go quiet.** The screaming party overhead stops, all at once, and climbs, hard, straight up into the murk, and is gone. Go to **Cresentwing**. |
| 11 | **The circle, in view.** Closer than it should be. Something is standing in the middle, rough-edged like a gorse bush, two orange points where the top is. It doesn't move. Roll **Murk 7+** or lose **1 Murk**. |
| 12+ | **It comes out of the ring.** Slow, and then not slow at all. Go to **The Bracken Man**. |

## FINDING THE CLEARING

The clearing is in the dunes somewhere, and the Common turns about the white obelisk on Loxley Edge like a card on a pin. You can walk past it twice without knowing.

**Bearing.** Once you are in The Bracken Dunes, roll **Wit 8+** to bring the obelisk round onto the right shoulder and walk into it. Each Bearing roll costs **1 Encounter roll** off your six.

| ROLL | RESULT |
|---|---|
| **10+** | You step into it. One step the bracken's at your waist and the next you're on short grass. Entering **The Hidden Clearing** is an Encounter roll. |
| **8–9** | You're in, but you've come in the long way. **Mark 1 redfront.** Something saw where you went. |
| **7–** | You come over a rise where it should be and it's more bracken. The obelisk has moved on your shoulder. Roll again. |

**Murk helps.** If you'd rather feel for it than look, you may roll **Murk 8+** instead of Wit. On a failure, you feel it go past you like a draught, and lose **1 Murk**.

## THE COMMON TURNS

On the way back the Common has turned. Steer by the obelisk and it'll bring you round in a curve to the standing stones. After your Encounter roll for crossing the dunes, choose your bearing:

- **Wilkin Hill.** Roll **Wit 7+**. **10+:** you come off the Common by Boggard Lane, clean. **7–9:** you come off, but Mary stops on the edge and turns, and you have to turn her. Mark **1 redfront**. **6 or less:** the Common brings you to the circle anyway. Go straight to **The Bracken Man**.
- **The obelisk.** Don't. If you do, you don't roll. The Common brings you to the circle. Go straight to **The Bracken Man**.

# THE CREATURES

## THE BRACKEN MAN OF WADSLEY COMMON



> *Bowed legs of ash, four arms of yew and perishing juniper, a body of bramble, thorn and briar, a head that is a gorse bush. Eyes the orange of burning coals.*

Taller than the stones it stands among. It smells of crushed bracken and sap and, underneath, something like a wound. Its breath is leaf mould. It wardens the Common the way a boundary stone wardens a field, except a boundary stone doesn't know you're there before you know it.

STAT BLOCK

**HP** 7 **Damage** 1, rising (briar grapple, physical) **Type** Boss

### IT COMES OUT OF THE RING

You can't outrun it. You can try to hide: roll **Wit 9+** to go flat in the bracken before it reaches you. **On a success** it stops, rustles, and goes back to the circle. If Mary is with you she is still singing, so the hide roll is at **-2**.

### THE GRAPPLE

If it reaches you, a briar arm comes round your chest and lifts. You're held, not struck. Struck comes after.

- At the end of every round you're held, take **1 damage**, then **2**, then **3**. It squeezes harder each time.
- Each round, roll **Grit 8+** to tear free. On a success you're out, and you land in the bracken on your back. It goes back to the ring.
- **Gyp** can go for its legs once: you're free, and Gyp takes **1 damage**.

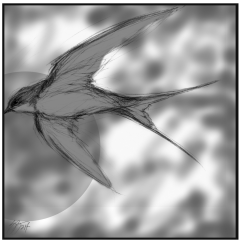
### FIGHTING IT

You can strike instead of tearing free: **Grit 8+** deals 1 damage. You're held, so you don't get far. At **3 HP or less** it lets go and goes back into the ring. It doesn't die. The poem's been going three hundred years and so has it.

**It doesn't go for Mary.** It looks at her, the coals turn and settle, and it leaves her be. Nobody knows why. Pip has an idea, and won't say.

*Field note: the gannister near the circle sheds root fragments worth having for a warding charm. Not tonight.*

## FORKTAIL



> *A swallow, blue-black back, pale throat, the tail forked like a fishtail. The same flight as an off-world swallow, faster, and it doesn't stop at murkfall the way an off-world swallow does.*

They nest in rows under the overhang above the keeper's cottage, hundreds of mud cups, and the flit itself is no danger at all. The flock is.

STAT BLOCK

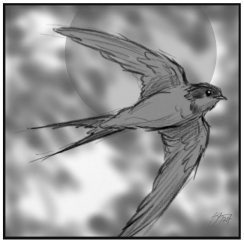
**HP** 2 **Damage** 1 (wall of wings, physical) **Type** Blinker

**The Wall of Wings:** At murkfall the whole colony leaves the rock at once, low, at head height, close enough that the air tears past your ears. You are stood in the yard underneath it. Roll **Grit 7+**. On a failure you go flat on your back in the muck and take **1 damage**. *"Should've said,"* Lomas says. *"They do that."*

**Feeding Low:** Out on the dunes, a party of them working the buzzers at head height. Roll **Grit 7+** or go down: **1 damage**. If Mary is with you and you fail, she goes down too and takes **1 damage**.

**Don't swing at them.** You'll hit nothing. If you try, the next Encounter roll is at **+1**.

## CRESENTWING



> *A swift, scythe-winged, near-footless, built never really to land. They fly in screaming parties at height and bank half a second before anything you can see would explain it.*

They read the hivemind's chatter the way the rest of a flock reads the flit next to it. A party that suddenly goes silent and climbs has heard something in the traffic worth leaving the sky over, and it arrives at ground level within the minute.

> STAT BLOCK
>
> **HP** 2 **Damage** none **Type** Listener

**The warning:** When the cresentwings go quiet, **your next Encounter roll is The Bracken Man** (12+), whatever you roll, unless you act now:

- **Take cover.** Roll **Wit 7+** to get off the line and down into a hollow before it arrives. On a success, the warning passes and your next Encounter roll is rolled as normal. On a failure, it comes for you.
- **Push on.** Spend nothing, roll nothing. It comes for you.

If Mary is with you, the Take Cover roll is at **-1**. She won't stop singing.

## REDFRONT

> *A small flit on a drystone wall, red-fronted, sitting too still. The pupil doesn't move the way a flit's should. It holds you the way a lens holds a subject.*



It doesn't feed, preen or sing. It logs you, your pace and your direction and the fact that you exist on that stretch of Common at that hour, and it passes it along.

> STAT BLOCK
>
> **HP** 1 **Damage** none **Type** Blinker

**Count them.** There is always **one** on the wall by Lomas's gate. You start with **1 redfront** marked. Every redfront result adds one.

- **One** on a wall is the toll for using the road.

- **Two** means somebody already knows. From your second redfront on, **every Encounter roll is at +1**, on top of Mary's.
- **Three or more** at the end: see **Outcome**. Something followed you home.

**Don't knock one off its perch.** Striking a redfront is logged the same as anything else it logs. Mark **another redfront**.

# OBJECTIVE

## GETTING HER UP

Talk to her if you like. It won't work. In the end you get your arms under hers and lift, and she doesn't fight you, which would be easier. She goes heavy, all of her at once.

**First, the stone.** Before you lift her, roll **Murk 7+**. You've walked into the place where the Moor and Ley clans feel closest to Dunlockslyn, and some part of you wants to sit down next to her and not get up. On a failure, lose **1 Murk**, and your Getting Her Up roll is at **−1**.

Then roll **Grit 7+** to get her on her feet. Gyp's sleeve, once, gives **+1**.

| ROLL | RESULT |
|---|---|
| 10+ | She stands, swaying, your arm round her, her face turned back to the stone. She'll walk. |
| 7–9 | She stands, but she fights you every twenty paces. **One extra Encounter roll on the way back.** |
| 6– | You can't get her past your knees. **1 Encounter roll** gone. Try again. |

# 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. For this example: **Grit 1 · Wit 3 · Murk 2 · HP 6**. Ness Hague, a tracker who can find anything on the Commons and can't lift much of it. Mary is **HP 3**, Gyp is **HP 2**, and you start with **1 redfront** marked for the one on the gate.

## STEP 2 -- THE GOAL

Cottage → Bracken Dunes → find the clearing → get Mary up → back through the dunes → Cottage. You have **6 Encounter rolls** to get her on her feet. After that the clock stops, but every roll on the way back is at **+1**. High rolls are bad.

## STEP 3 -- LEAVE THE COTTAGE

Murkfall. The Wall of Wings first: **Grit 7+**. You roll **2+3 = 5, +1 = 6**.

| | |
|---|---|
| **6** | Failure. Flat on your back in the yard, feathers stuck to you. 1 damage. HP 5. |

Now enter The Bracken Dunes. Encounter roll: **4+1 = 5**.

> *"A redfront. On a rock, very still, watching you without turning its head. Mark 1 redfront."*

That's your **second**. Somebody already knows. Every Encounter roll from now on is at **+1**.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 1 OF 6 · REDFRONTS: 2 · HP 5

## STEP 4 -- FIND THE CLEARING

Bearing, **Wit 8+**. It costs a roll whatever happens. You roll **2+2 = 4, +3 = 7**.

| | |
|---|---|
| **7** | 7 or less: more bracken. The obelisk has moved on your shoulder. |

Gyp stops and stares at a patch of nothing. Use him: reroll the Bearing. **5+2 = 7, +3 = 10**.

| 10 | 10+: you step onto short grass. You're in. |
|---|---|

Entering The Hidden Clearing is an Encounter roll: **3+3 = 6, +1 = 7**.

> *"The ground's different. Roll Murk 7+ to feel which way it turned."*

**4+2 = 6, +2 = 8.** You feel it. No extra roll.

ENCOUNTER ROLLS USED: 3 OF 6 · REDFRONTS: 2 · GYP'S REROLL USED

# HOW TO PLAY CONTINUED

## STEP 5 -- GET HER UP

The stone first, **Murk 7+**: **1+4 = 5, +2 = 7**. You stay standing. Now **Grit 7+**, with Gyp's sleeve for **+1**: **3+3 = 6, +1 Grit, +1 Gyp = 8**.

| | |
|---|---|
| **8** | 7–9: she stands, but fights you every twenty paces. One extra Encounter roll on the way back. |

She's up. The clock stops at 3 of 6. From here, every Encounter roll is at **+2**: +1 for Mary, +1 for the redfronts.

CLOCK STOPPED: 3 OF 6 · WAY BACK: 4 ROLLS (3 + 1 EXTRA)

## STEP 6 -- LEAVE THE CLEARING

Encounter roll: **4+4 = 8, +2 = 10**.

> *"The cresentwings go quiet."*

Take cover, **Wit 7+**, at -1 for Mary's singing: **3+2 = 5, +3, -1 = 7**. Down in a hollow. The warning passes.

## STEP 7 -- CROSS THE DUNES

Crossing roll: **2+3 = 5, +2 = 7**. The ground's different. Murk 7+: **4+2 = 6, +2 = 8**. Fine. Then Mary's extra roll: **1+3 = 4, +2 = 6**. Buzzers. Wit 7+: **2+1 = 3, +3 = 6**. She turns back toward the stone, which means one more roll: **5+6 = 11, +2 = 13**.

| | |
|---|---|
| **13** | 12+: it comes out of the ring. Hide, Wit 9+ at -2: 4+3 = 7, +3, -2 = 8. It reaches you. |

Held. Tear free, **Grit 8+**: **3+2 = 5, +1 = 6**. Fail. End of round: **1 damage**, HP 4. Next round, Gyp goes for its legs. You're out. Gyp takes 1 damage: Gyp HP 1. It doesn't touch Mary.

Bearing on **Wilkin Hill**, Wit 7+: **6+2 = 8, +3 = 11**. Off the Common by Boggard Lane, clean.

## STEP 8 -- REACH THE COTTAGE

Last roll: **1+2 = 3, +2 = 5**. A redfront, on the gatepost next to the first. That's **three**.

WAY BACK: 5 ROLLS · REDFRONTS: 3 · HP 4 · MARY HP 3 · GYP HP 1

## RESULT

> *Partial. Mary's home and unhurt, but three redfronts logged you coming down, and something followed. She stands in the cave mouth in her white nightdress every murkneet now. The clearing won't let Ness in again.*

## FIVE THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. **High rolls are bad here.** Mary and the redfronts both add to the Encounter roll.
2. **The clock only runs on the way up.** Every Bearing roll costs one, even the ones that work.
3. **Count redfronts from 1.** Two means +1 on everything. Three by the end means Partial.
4. **When the cresentwings go quiet, take cover**, or the Bracken Man is your next roll.
5. **Gyp's three tricks are once each.** Save the leg-grab for the grapple, because the damage rises every round you're held.

## OUTCOME

**Success. Mary home alive, nothing following (Mary at HP 2 or 3, fewer than three redfronts):**

Lomas comes out of the cottage at a run and picks her up like she weighs nothing, which you could have done with an hour ago. He doesn't say anything to you. He carries her in and sits her at the stone table and puts a blanket round her. She lets him. Then she turns in the chair so she's facing the back wall of the cave, the direction of the Common, and sits like that. Lomas pays you twice what he said, and doesn't stay to watch you drink it.

**Partial. Extracted, but at a cost (Mary at HP 1, or three or more redfronts):**

You get her home and she's alive, and that's what you'll tell people. A month on, Lomas comes into the Star and says she eats and sleeps in the murklight. In the murkneet she stands in the cave mouth in her white nightdress, looking up at the Common, and he sits up with her until murkrise in case she goes. He's put a bar across the door, on the inside. People who walk the Common late have started talking about a white lady up by the cottage. They make it sound older than it is. And the clearing won't let you in again.

**Failure. Mary lost (Mary at 0 HP, or murkrise before she's on her feet):**

If the clock ran out, the murk goes grey at the edge of the clearing and the stone isn't where it was, and Mary isn't either. If she reached 0 HP, she's on the Common somewhere, in a quarry hole or under the stones, and you can't bring her down. You go back to the cottage with Gyp and nobody else, and you tell Lomas. He'll walk the Common every day of Fecunder after this. It still won't let him in.

**If you reach 0 HP:**

You go down in the bracken with your side opened by briar, or at the bottom of a gannister slope with black water round your knees. Gyp stays with you. Lomas finds you after murkrise, which is more than the engineer got. Mary is still at the stone.

**If you reach 0 Murk:**

You sit down. You hadn't meant to. Your back is against the Sentinel stone next to Mary's, and you understand at last what she meant, and you don't want to get up, and you don't. Gyp lies down at your feet. Lomas waits at the gate. There are three of you at the stone now, and he can't find any of you.

The Bracken Man, the forktail, the cresentwing and the redfront, the world of Hellsborough, the Bestiary of The Dark Peak, and every Postcard Adventure:

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# 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

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