The Hands at Hext's Elbow

The moor road near Postbridge, Dartmoor — a foggy October night in 1926, with a charabanc due over the hill at midnight.

POSTBRIDGE, DARTMOOR, DEVON, ENGLAND · 3-5 PLAYERS · ABOUT 4 HOURS · 1920S (OCTOBER 1926)

BUILT ON THE LEGEND OF: THE HAIRY HANDS OF THE POSTBRIDGE ROAD (REPORTS FROM THE 1910S AND 1920S)

Spoiler-safe: everything in this pack may be read by players.

System-neutral. Difficulty is given in plain words (easy / hard / very hard) for you to map to the rules you play. The legend is real and cited; the adventure built on it is original fiction.

Why you are here

It's October 1926, and you are motoring across Dartmoor at dusk. You might be a touring party, a vet and his assistants, surveyors from Exeter, or friends on the way to a harvest supper in Princetown. The fog came down fast. On a walled double bend below the tor, your car stopped answering the wheel and ran into the verge. Nobody is hurt, and the car can be pushed out by morning. One of you is certain that something else had hold of the wheel. The nearest light is an inn a quarter of a mile down the road.

What everyone in town knows

On Dartmoor there is a lonely stretch of road between Postbridge and Two Bridges, the road now numbered the B3212. From around 1910, drivers and cyclists on it began to report accidents that made no sense. The motor jolted or the handlebars twisted, and the machine went off the road as if something had taken hold of the wheel.

Some of them said exactly that. A pair of large, hairy hands appeared from nowhere, gripped the steering wheel or the handlebars and forced them off the road. Others said the hands could not be seen at all, only felt. Most of those people ran into the verge and walked away.

In the summer of 1921 there was a fatal accident on the road, then a coach accident that threw its passengers from their seats, and then an army captain who said invisible hands had forced his motorcycle into the verge. After that the London newspapers took the story up and the whole country heard of the Hairy Hands.

Not every story involves a vehicle. In 1924 a woman camping on the moor with her husband said she saw a hairy hand creeping up the window of their caravan in the night, and that it drew back and was gone.

Sceptics blamed strangers driving too fast on narrow roads between high walls. When the road was investigated, the steep camber of its surface was judged the likely cause of the accidents and was altered. Local tellings rarely say whose hands they are. A few say they belonged to a man who died on that road.

Where the legend comes from

Hairy Hands — the road near Postbridge, the reports from about 1910, the summer of 1921 and the press coverage, the 1924 caravan, and the camber explanation
`https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hairy_Hands`

Postbridge — the village on the East Dart and its clapper bridge
`https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postbridge`

Dartmoor — the moor itself: tors, granite, blanket bog and fog
`https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dartmoor`

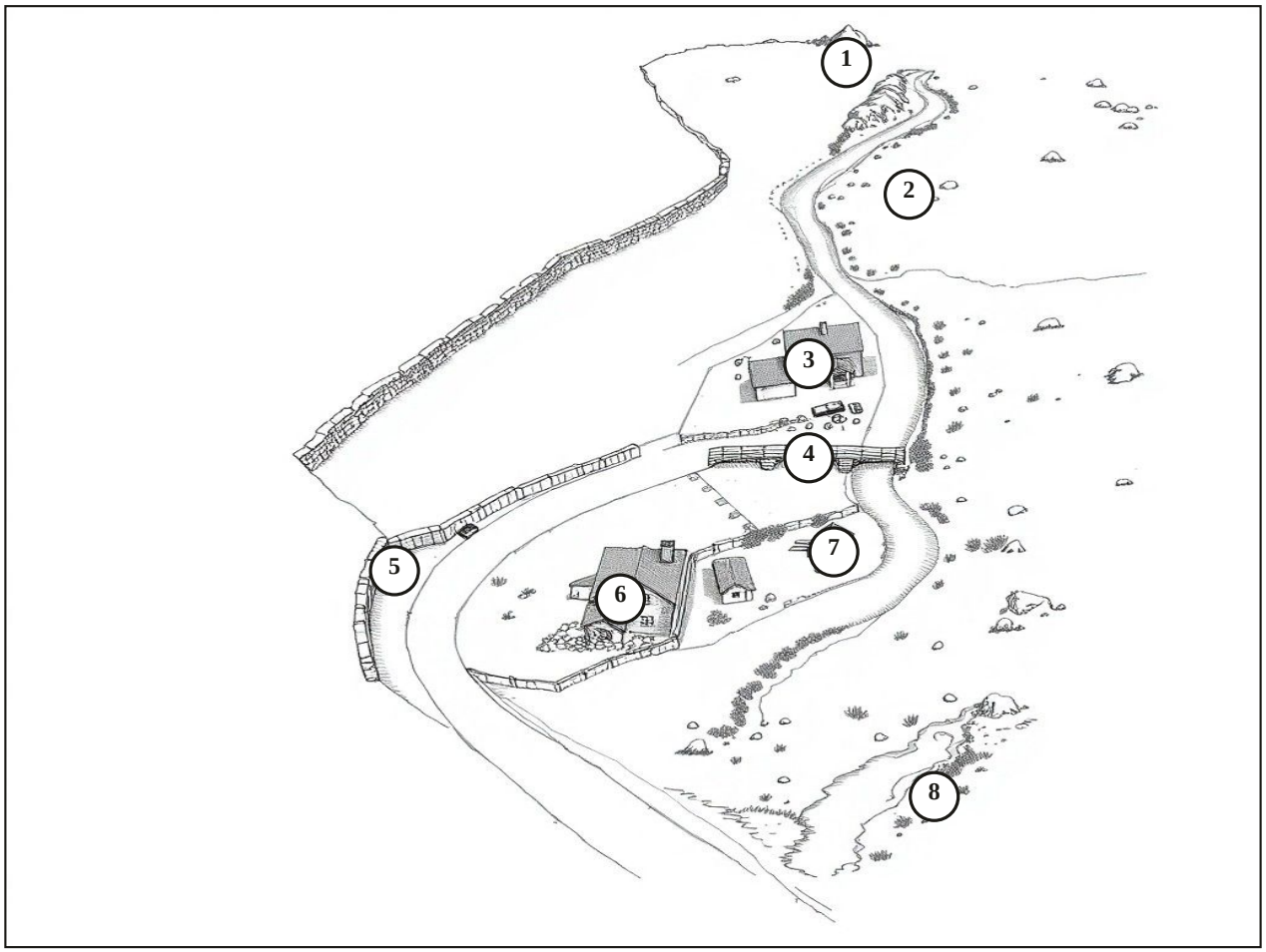
Content notes

- Motor accidents and near-misses (no one dies during play)
- Unseen hands grabbing at people in the dark
- A road at night in fog, with a vehicle full of people in danger
- No harm to children at any point

MAP — PLAYER VERSION

Hext's Elbow below Wennaford Tor

The walled double bend, the Drift Inn, the bridge, Pengelly's yard, the roadmen's hut and the stream, drawn for play.



SCHEMATIC — NOT TO SCALE, NOT A SURVEY

1. Wennaford Tor A granite tor above the road, black against the fog.

2. The road to Postbridge The moor road running north over the hill.

3. Pengelly's yard A haulier's house and yard with a cart outside.

4. Wennaford bridge A low stone bridge over the stream.

5. Hext's Elbow A walled double bend where the road tilts toward the wall.

6. The Drift Inn A moorland inn with a walled yard and a lamp in the window.

7. The roadmen's hut A small hut with a stovepipe, by the road.

8. The stream and Violet's caravan A stream winding down through heather and boulders.

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THE MARK AT THE ELBOW

Up Wennaford way where the walls lean in,
the road turns twice and the fog comes thin;
keep the Mark on your right-hand side
and the moor keeps its hands to itself, and wide.

But take the Mark and break the line,
and the moor will reach for what was mine;
it will have the wheel and it will have the rein,
till the hand stands up on the road again.

Printed for the hawkers of the parish, and sold for a penny.

CONSTABLE LETHBRIDGE'S POCKETBOOK

No.	Entry	Hand
1	*Hext's Elbow, below Wennaford Tor. Incidents since road mended (April):*	
2	*9 May. Post-van (Miss K. Mudge) into near verge. Driver unhurt. States 'the wheel was took'.*	
3	*23 June. Motor-bicycle, visitor from Plymouth, into verge. Unhurt. Would not give statement.*	
4	*14 Aug. Pony and trap, Mr W. Coaker's man. Pony bolted on bend. 'Something at the bridle.'*	
5	*2 Sept. Post-van (Miss K. Mudge) again. Unhurt. Same statement.*	
6	*19 Sept. Touring car, gentleman from London. 'Hands.' Lodged at Drift Inn.*	
7	*Camber at outer edge: 1 in 6. Before mending: near level.*	
8	*Note: the old stone at the bend not replaced after works. Ask the county.*	
9	*Note: fresh stone in outer edge is not quarry stone.*	