

The Courier with an Empty Satchel

120-minute plan · 4 players · Follow the evidence

Miri's apparently empty satchel pulls heavily at its strap. A smudged street number keeps sending her to a door whose resident says the bell is not theirs.

Content notice: Delivery trust and privacy. Use fictional household seals and titles; no player needs to give a real name, address, or personal keepsake.

GM overview

Separate three decisions on paper: whether there is a parcel, where it belongs, and whether the recipient wants it now. The first needs the satchel observations plus the signed dispatch entry. The destination needs the surviving three-dot seal plus either the register or the observed correct door. The wrong doorstep establishes why following the number or bell alone is unreliable. The veil never opens as an investigative shortcut. Once players reach the correct household, tell them the recipient is available and willing to hear a neutral explanation; they can invite acceptance or offer an appointment. A delivery ending records an explicit yes. Returning the parcel is a complete privacy decision with a delayed gift, not a punishment for failing the mystery. Comparison intervals pay only for reconstructing damaged records or verifying the register directly.

What is really happening

Miri carries a repair gift wrapped in a privacy veil. Its weight, shadow, and sealed dispatch entry establish that a parcel exists. A three-dot crescent identifies Hazel Court; the smudged number points wrongly to two-dot Hazel Hill. The actual recipient may accept, arrange another time, or refuse. Only their affirmative consent lifts the veil; matching an address is not permission to open it.

Opening agreement and read-aloud

Agree on subjects to soften or skip. Each player names an ordinary skill and a reason to help. Evidence does not require a successful roll; uncertainty changes time, cost or obligations.

Miri opens her satchel just far enough to show an empty-looking interior. Its strap still cuts a square shadow on the ground. From inside comes one impatient bell. Biri closes the wrong door gently and points at the seal above it: a crescent with two dots.

Time and preparation

120 minutes: Follow custody all the way to consent

Opening agreement: 10 minutes

Inspect the bag and hear the wrong doorstep: 25 minutes

Check custody at the courier shelter: 25 minutes

Compare registry and physical household seals: 25 minutes

Make a neutral delivery offer and honor the answer: 25 minutes

Closure and debrief: 10 minutes

Use Biri's statement to challenge the tempting bell shortcut. Compare both register and door for redundancy, then let the table choose acceptance, a later appointment, or return without ranking privacy choices.

Starting information: Discover cards in play

Starting state: Careful comparison intervals = 5; Household seal verified = false; Veiled parcel established = false; Recipient's choice = unasked; Dispatch duplicate verified = false

With 4 players: share the roles of mapper, evidence keeper, speaker and timekeeper.

If the group gets stuck

Ona's witnessed duplicate check costs two comparison intervals and can replace a missing dispatch or tag observation. A closed Hazel Hill lane is bypassed through the seal desk and shelter. Return is unconditional and preserves both custody and privacy even when the destination remains uncertain.

Dispatch arch

Read aloud: The satchel looks empty, weighs like a small box, and casts a square shadow.

GM: Miri permits weighing and looking at the exterior tag. She never permits opening the private wrapping, even if a character has a clever trick.

Choice: Weigh the bag and copy its exterior seal

Ask: Record only what the bag's weight, shadow, tag, and bell establish.

Requires: Available. Reveal Exterior satchel examination

Result: Miri keeps the veil intact while you copy the three-dot crescent.

Seal desk

Read aloud: Three crescents appear in the book. Ona places a little wooden counter over each dot as she counts.

GM: The register is public routing information. Ona can compare its retained duplicate with the satchel for two intervals if a handout is missing.

Choice: Compare complete household seals

Ask: Check the crescent shape and every dot before choosing a household.

Requires: Available. Reveal Household seal register

Result: Ona distinguishes Hazel Court from Hazel Hill and Garden Lane.

Choice: Ask Ona and Lev to compare retained duplicates

Ask: Spend two intervals on a witnessed custody and seal reconstruction?

Requires: Available. Spend 2 Careful comparison intervals. Dispatch duplicate verified: true

Result: Lev confirms the accepted veil and Ona verifies the original three-dot crescent in retained records.

Hazel Hill doorstep

Read aloud: Biri opens the door a hand's width. "That bell follows the bag. It has never belonged to this house."

GM: Biri supplies the signed doorstep observation without further interruption. Asking them repeatedly earns no new facts; respect their boundary and move to the sheltered junction.

Choice: Take Biri's single doorstep statement

Ask: What does the moving bell establish, and which seal is on this door?

Requires: Available. Reveal Biri's doorstep statement

Result: Biri's account is recorded and their doorstep is left in peace.

Courier shelter

Read aloud: Miri places the bag on the bench. The bell stops while nobody is pulling it toward a door.

GM: The dispatch entry is tucked in Miri's exterior route pocket. Return may be chosen here from any stage; she carries it back under her own custody.

Choice: Read the exterior dispatch entry

Ask: Compare signed custody with the bag's physical observations without opening the veil.

Requires: Available. Reveal Sealed dispatch entry

Result: The dispatch entry records an accepted, deliberately veiled repair gift.

Hazel Court door

Read aloud: A voice answers the knock: "Please tell me what delivery you have before bringing it inside."

GM: Give the door observation on inspection, then ask for the players' neutral explanation. The recipient says yes when invited to receive privately, or agrees to a later appointment if offered; neither response reveals the gift until accepted.

Choice: Copy the door seal and blank choice slip

Ask: Check the seal before making any delivery request.

Requires: Available. Reveal Hazel Court observation and choice slip

Result: The three-dot crescent is recorded, while the recipient's choice stays blank.

Choice: Offer private receipt now

Ask: Explain a sealed repair gift and ask whether the recipient wishes to receive it privately now.

Requires: Household seal verified is true and Veiled parcel established is true. Recipient's choice: yes

Result: The recipient answers, "Yes, I would like to receive it privately." Miri repeats the permission back.

Choice: Complete the consented delivery

Ask: Place the parcel in the consenting recipient's hands and let them open the veil.

Requires: Household seal verified is true and Recipient's choice is yes.

Result: The veil lifts only in the recipient's hands, revealing the carefully repaired keepsake.

Closure: A gift in consenting hands

Choice: Arrange another delivery time

Ask: Offer a later private appointment and leave the veil intact today.

Requires: Household seal verified is true. Recipient's choice: later

Result: The recipient chooses tomorrow afternoon. Miri writes the time on the outer route tag.

Closure: Tomorrow is a real answer

Connections and changing routes

Dispatch arch - Seal desk: Dispatch counter walk. Available.

Dispatch arch - Hazel Hill doorstep: Smudged-number route. Available.

Hazel Hill doorstep - Courier shelter: Public lane. Available.

Seal desk - Courier shelter: Courier arcade. Available.

Courier shelter - Hazel Court door: Hazel Court lane. Available.

Seal desk - Hazel Court door: Signed household passage. Available.

Lev - Dispatch steward

Goal: Resolve the entry while keeping the gift private.

Offers: Signed exterior receipt and a return box.

Will not accept: Records custody, never the unseen contents.

Voice: Asks who last held the sealed bag.

Ona - Seal clerk

Goal: Route by a complete seal instead of an unreadable number.

Offers: Register and a duplicate comparison service.

Will not accept: Will not treat two dots as close enough to three.

Voice: Counts slowly and checks the shape as well.

Biri - Wrong-house resident

Goal: Stop repeat visits without shaming the courier.

Offers: A signed observation and directions to the shelter.

Will not accept: Does not accept a parcel meant for another seal.

Voice: Warm, short, and clear about the closed door.

Miri - Courier

Goal: Deliver only with the actual recipient's permission.

Offers: Satchel access for exterior inspection and an intact return.

Will not accept: A correct address still requires an explicit recipient choice.

Voice: Repeats the choice back before acting.

Reasoning: The parcel exists behind a privacy veil

Physical weight and shadow combine with a signed record of accepting a veiled parcel; neither alone establishes the full explanation.

Evidence combinations: Exterior satchel examination + Sealed dispatch entry

Reasoning: Hazel Court matches the complete route seal

The three-dot crescent survives the smudge and matches a separate household observation. The bell and street-number fragment are insufficient.

Evidence combinations: Exterior satchel examination + Household seal register OR Exterior satchel examination + Hazel Court observation and choice slip

Discovery card: Exterior satchel examination

Give only when revealed in play.

Measured weight: one small parcel. Shadow: a square beneath an apparently empty bag. Route tag: crescent, three dots; street number smudged. Bell moves with the buckle. Draw the surviving seal exactly.

Player task: Separate observations of a present parcel from the unreliable street number.

GM answer: Weight and shadow suggest a veil; the full seal, not the smudge, is the usable routing observation.

Discovery card: Household seal register

Give only when revealed in play.

Crescent + two dots: Hazel Hill. Crescent + three dots: Hazel Court. Square + three dots: Garden Lane. Full shape and dot count are required for a match. No entry grants permission to open a parcel.

Player task: Compare both shape and count, then circle the supported destination.

GM answer: The tag matches Hazel Court; the register says nothing about recipient consent.

Discovery card: Biri's doorstep statement

Give only when revealed in play.

This doorway bears a crescent and two dots. I heard the bell move away when Miri carried the satchel to the shelter. No parcel was accepted here. Signed Biri.

Player task: Test whether the sound belongs to the house and reject an unsupported delivery.

GM answer: The bell follows the bag and cannot authenticate an address; this door's seal differs from the tag.

Discovery card: Sealed dispatch entry

Give only when revealed in play.

One repair gift accepted into a privacy veil; weight entered before wrapping. Custody: Lev to Miri. Route seal copied on outer tag. Veil opens only after the named household's recipient says YES. WAIT and RETURN preserve wrapping.

Player task: Combine the custody record with physical observations, then offer a genuine choice.

GM answer: This independent record confirms a veiled parcel and states the consent boundary.

Discovery card: Hazel Court observation and choice slip

Give only when revealed in play.

Door seal: crescent, three dots. Sign: knock, explain, and wait. Choice slip: receive privately now / arrange another time / return unopened. Leave the recipient's choice blank until they answer.

Player task: Cross-check the exterior tag and record the actual reply without deciding for the recipient.

GM answer: The matching door establishes the destination independently of the register; the blank choice must still be completed by the recipient.

State sheet

Careful comparison intervals: 5 (resource, minimum 0, maximum 5)

Household seal verified: false (knowledge)

Veiled parcel established: false (knowledge)

Recipient's choice: unasked (stance)

Dispatch duplicate verified: false (knowledge)

Event: The bell waits at the shelter

Trigger: Visit Courier shelter

The bell falls silent while the bag rests. Remind the group that a signal can request attention without granting permission.

At any place: Establish that a veiled parcel is present

Name one physical observation and the independent custody record supporting it.

Requires: (Exterior satchel examination + Sealed dispatch entry or Dispatch duplicate verified is true). Veiled parcel established: true

The group distinguishes an unseen parcel from a missing one.

At any place: Verify Hazel Court with two observations

Show the surviving tag and its independent register or door match.

Requires: (Exterior satchel examination + Household seal register or Exterior satchel examination + Hazel Court observation and choice slip or Dispatch duplicate verified is true). Spend 1 Careful comparison intervals. Household seal verified: true

Miri replaces the smudged-number instruction with a verified household seal.

At any place: Return the unopened parcel

Apply the RETURN seal and send the gift back with a request for a clearer delivery arrangement.

Requires: Available. Recipient's choice: returned

Miri returns the sealed gift through dispatch without revealing its contents.

Ending: A gift in consenting hands

Requires: Recipient's choice is yes

The repaired keepsake appears in the recipient's hands. Miri's route book records a verified seal and an explicit yes.

Next: What small improvement makes the next private delivery easier?

Ending: Tomorrow is a real answer

Requires: Recipient's choice is later

The parcel stays private until the arranged time. The route is solved, and the recipient decides when the gift enters their home.

Next: Who checks the appointment without ringing the wrong household again?

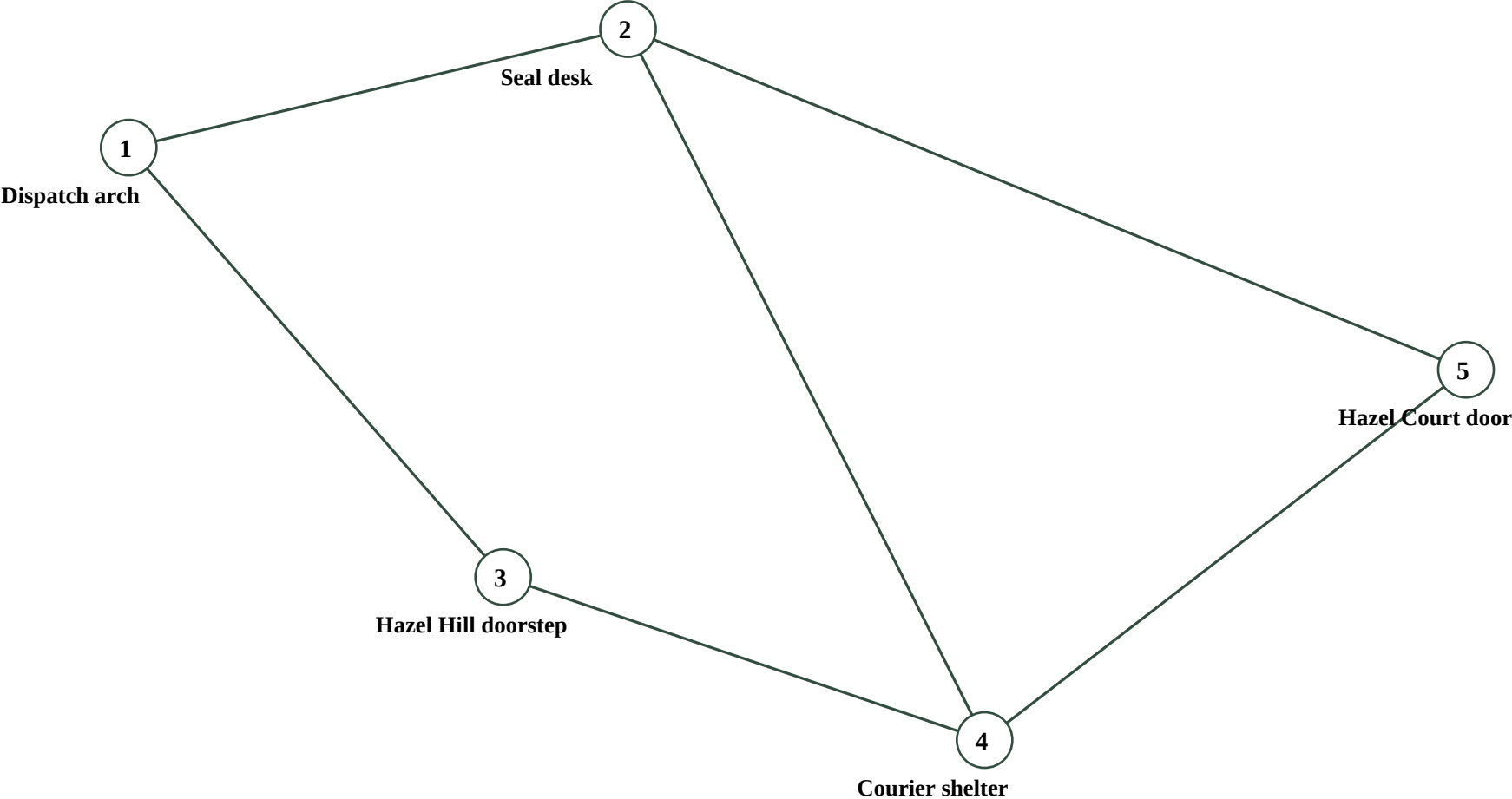
Ending: An unopened return

Requires: Available

The sender receives the unopened gift and a request for a clearer arrangement. No private contents were traded for a faster answer.

Next: What should the sender put on the next exterior tag?

The Courier with an Empty Satchel - GM decision map



Dashed paths need conditions. Read Connections and changing routes for costs and direction.