

A Disturbing Scene (for 3ed D&D)

DM: After hour of travel time, read or paraphrase the following to the lead player.

PCs: The ride (or walk) so far has been fairly uneventful as you merely sit and look about at the rolling hills, and the multicolored leaves upon each treetop in the forests and sparse copse of maples, oaks, and elms here and there. Offsetting the colors of fall are countless firs, pines, and evergreens whom proudly display their green-hued needles for to all that see.

It is while in this moment of thought you take notice of a lone, shaggy brown-black horse grazing several yards away from the worn path many cartographers and travelers call the High Road. Usually such a scene is not peculiar, but atop its back is a saddle that is currently unoccupied and even the gear of a rider you presume. As you approach the horse remains calm and composed and unconcerned with your advance.

DM: Any PC who approaches the unmounted horse will find that it does not run away. Upon closer inspection, they will notice that the horse, at one time, had a rider, but do to some happenstance (either the rider or something else), the rider was dismounted. Searching the horse reveals a normal longsword, a quiver full of 18 arrows (12 with green and brown fletching; and 6 with red and yellow fletching), a duskwood necklace with the symbol of Mielikki carved and painted onto it, and a well-worn saddle bag containing a cloth bag with 15 dragons (gp) and 2 shards (sp) and an aged tin whistle. A successful Spot check reveals subtle claw marks, and abrasions both on the saddle and horse. This should be the PCs first sign that something is amiss.

Unbeknownst to the PCs is that the one-time rider was actually a human ranger from Triboar named Roark Dillihnon (CG hm Rgr5). As Roark camped for the night, he was beset by a pack of ghouls (12 of them to be exact) that had been released from a recent barrow by a group of adventurers several days before. The ghouls, anxious for the taste of flesh, readily made the ranger their meal. Roark was easily slain (as he was surprised and then paralyzed quickly), and devoured by so many foes, and stood not a chance.

As a meal was made out of Roark, his horse fled when the ghouls set upon eating it next. The horse easily out distanced the undead, and finally made a stop near the road and is has been grazing ever since (last night). A successful Search check (DC 10) will reveal the path all the way from the road to where the horse was attacked and its master slain. This lies nearly two miles (At which point the PC must possess the Track feat and Wilderness Lore skill to go any further; DC 14) to the east and takes PCs through rough terrain and deep forests. Upon reaching the site, a small campfire and the bloody remains are all that tell the fate of Roark Dillihnon. The ghouls have since moved on in pursuit of more prey (and flesh) and will be encountered later, with the advent of night (I will post this encounter in this series as well).

Due to the rancid stench and horrific scene, should any PCs search the surrounding area they are required to make a successful Fortitude save, or become both sick (vomiting) and ill (extreme nausea) for 2-5 (1d4+1) rounds thereafter, suffering a -2 to Strength and Dexterity. This will continue until either the PC leaves the area or the allotted time passes, which requires an additional three rounds to subside.

Any persons daring enough to search the area uncover a torn, bloody, ichor-stained private journal of Roark Dillihnon, stamped with the sign of Mielikki on its hard-leather front. It mostly contains personal entries and accounts of his life (93 pages worth), but has a few useful things to provide any ranger or other PC or those with the Wilderness Lord skill, should he/she read it. If one reads the text and practices what it teaches two weeks after reading it, he/she may roll an Intelligence check (DC 15, -1 every extra week spent in study) to determine if they retain the knowledge therein. After a successful check is made, the PC may add an additional +2 bonus to his Wilderness Lore skill. This may only be utilized once per ranger or PC, and no more. If the ranger PC meets with failure, another two weeks must pass before he/she can make another Intelligence check.

A broken long bow of once exquisite craftsmanship (made from duskwood as well and etched with nature symbols), a useless quill of plain make and spilled ink in a broken 1 oz. vial, and normal longsword are all that is left at the scene other than the torn, bloodied body of Roar and his private journal and gear. Nothing else of value can be found here.

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