

A Ghoulish Suprise

DM: If the heroes have not made any stops, evening is approaching when they come across the ambush.

PCs: The dirt-road winds before you, zigzagging in between the well-nigh leafless trees. The night is fast approaching as the weak autumn sun drifts behind the distant horizon. Ablaze throughout the near-night sky are the magnificent colors one can only see outside the city of Waterdeep. Streaks of silver, purple, pink, olive and blue intersect with one another, forming more strikingly, beautiful colors that make up dusk sky.

Up ahead, you make out the hunched forms of several dark figures. If it were daylight, you could determine their appearance, however, the approaching night only displays their shadowy silhouettes. As you draw closer, you take notice there are six of them, all surrounding something and flailing about wildly. The once sweet scent of fall is now replaced by the horrid stench of brimstone and freshly disturbed soil. No noise escapes the trees save the wailing wind and rustling leaves.

Within seconds, the six dark figures stop flailing, and turn to your direction. With a jerky gait, they make their way towards your party. It is then you hear the unearthly, inhuman sounds of blood-filled gurgling from the shadow-covered group. Stepping from the shadows of the trees it soon becomes apparent that these figures may have been at one time human, but have now been horribly changed.

Clad in dirty, half-rotten drabs of clothing, they slightly resemble peasants in dress, but that is where the similarity ends. Patches of hair cover the scalps of each deranged-looking creature. Their pace quickens at the sight of your group, their long, spear-like tongues covered with fresh blood flit about like snakes. Several have on their bodies, a series of slashes and cuts, though no blood flows from their wounds only insects and dirt. Their dirty claws reach out to rend your flesh as they open a mouth full of sharp, rotten teeth and let out another horrid, gurgling sound that expels spittle's of crimson.

DM: This pack of ghouls is all that is left of a once larger group, that attacked Roark Dillihnon, the ranger in the previous encounter. At the time of Roark's attack, the ghouls numbered 12, but have since been reduced to half that when they attacked a group of adventurers. The remains of the adventurers lie just beyond the trees, where they are all but completely devoured. Unless each of the two bodies that have not been devoured are blessed by a priest, they rise up in 1d4+3 rounds and attack the characters*.

Ghouls (6): CR 1; Medium-Size Undead; HD 2d12; hp 12, 11, 10, 7, 6x2; Init +2 (+2 Dexterity); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+4 Natural); Atk +3/+0/+0 melee (1d6+1, bite; 1d3, 2 claws); SA Paralysis, create spawn; SQ Undead, +2 turn resistance; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 15, Con --, Int 13, Chr 16.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Escape Artist +7, Hide +7, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +6, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Spot +8; Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite).

Special Attacks: Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by a bite or claw must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or be paralyzed for 1d6+2 rounds; elves are immune.

Special Attacks: Create Spawn (Ex): Unless a victim slain by a ghoul is not enspelled with protection from evil on his/her body, they will themselves turn into ghouls.

Special Qualities: Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralyzation, stunning, and disease; not subject to critical hits, ability damage, subdual damage, ability drain, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

***DM's Note:** Only add this to the encounter if you wish to make it harder on the PCs. The following should be done, if the PCs do not cast protection from evil the corpses of the adventurers, use the ghoul statistics in the above text.

DM: Anyone searching the remains of the former adventurers discovers the following treasure in the area where the adventurers were attacked by the ghouls: six small road-worn leather belt pouches containing 2d12 dantars (gp) each, 2d8 tarans (sp) each, and a total of two gems (table cut frost agate, worth 12 gp; an inch-thick ring fashioned out of angelar's skin, accented by a thin-platinum wire, spiraling around its band; 100 gp value), a triangular +1 large steel shield (emblazoned with two crossed silver swords with gold hilts and ruby encrusted pommels; the herald of an unknown and long-forgotten mercenary company in Amn), a thick, leather bound tome, clasped with a bronze buckle (spellbook containing all 0-level spells, 14 1st-level spells, 5 2nd-level spells of the DMs discretion), a +2 dagger of returning and a platinum-chained, ivory-encrusted cameo necklace of a regal lord wearing an exquisitely-detailed, plumed helm (actually an amulet of inescapable location). The PCs also find standard, mundane equipment typically carried by adventurers (rations, normal weapons, rope, torches, etc.etc...). Most of their equipment is torn, shredded and unusable.

Due to the rancid stench and horrific scene, should any PCs search the surrounding area they are required to make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15), 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, or unless the PCs leave the affected area (30-ft. radius from the bodies).

The six bodies were part of a company of low-level adventurers, the Men of the One True Hand. All were either sympathizers or dedicated worshippers of Torm Truehand, God of Duty. They hailed from far-off Amn, and were lead by a paladin of Torm, Ermforth Trueheart (LG hm Pal2). The group also consisted of Woalter of Cape Velen (NG hm Ftr2), Gellyessth (N hem Wzd2), Firsn of Torm (LG hm Clr2), Qolin Hurriedfoot (NG halfm Rog3), and Haeltor Dalloveg (CG hm Ftr2). The company formed in the Year of the Banner (1368 DR, 336 NR) in Athkatla. They have since adventured up along the Sword Coast, where they will, "the spread the will of the Torm, and put to practice his Penance of Duty to help all those suffering from the Arrival."

Anyone burying the fallen adventurers will be awarded a bonus of no more than 250 XP, and anyone blessing the bodies shall receive an additional 100 XP for their goodly act.

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