

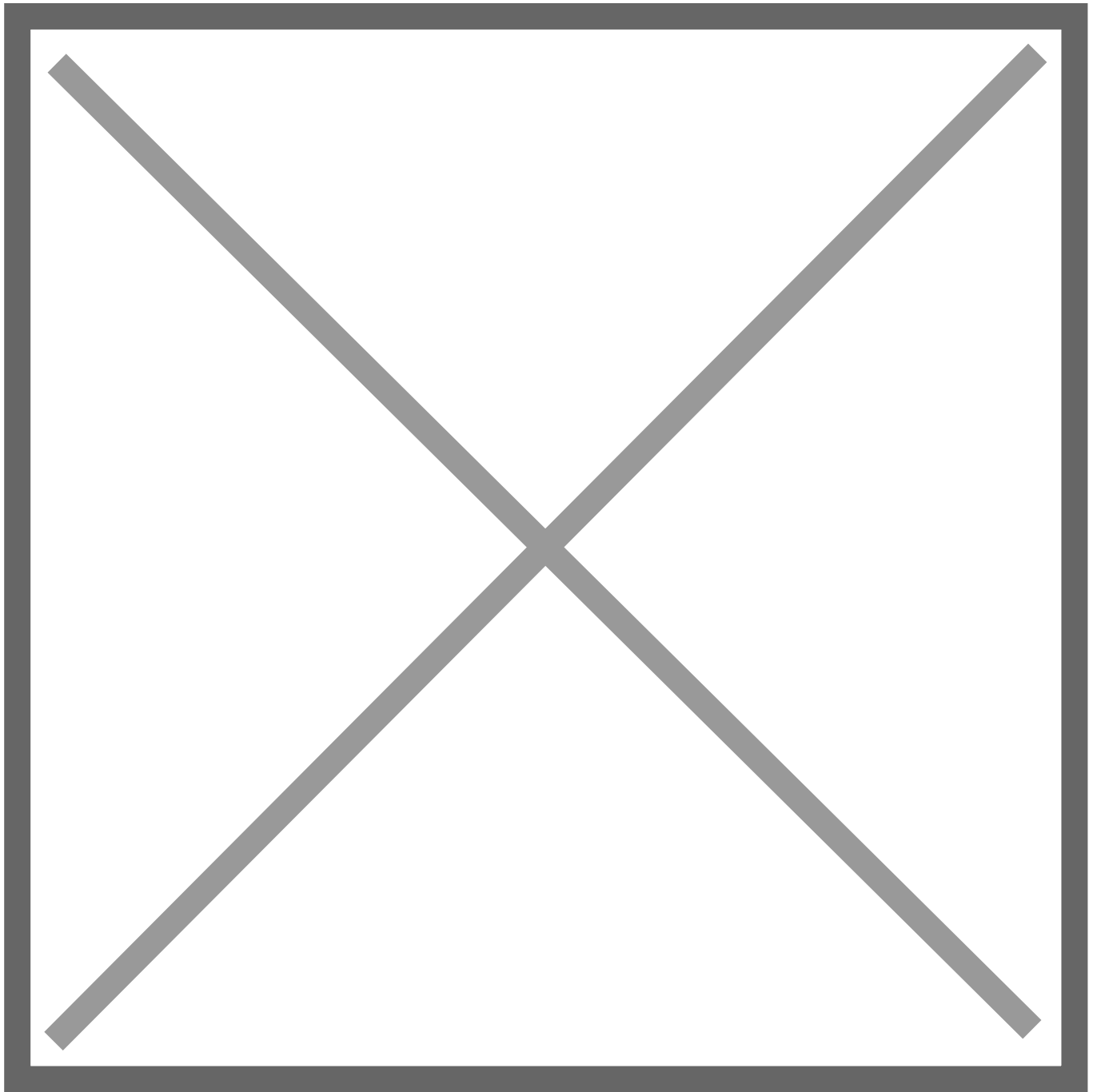
Session 13

We have a new friend? And some more enemies still need to be dealt with.

As the afternoon goes on, with Stella basking in the sun to recharge her invocation, the others are in the clearing discussing the ambush plans. Soren gets the direction that Horsh will be coming from Grumman. Esme asks the hunters to setup a blind to get the jump on him, and Rua pulls out his crossbow. Soren asks him to go with the hunters and add his crossbow to the volley. "Sure, and maybe they can tell me how this thing works!" Soren shakes his head in exasperation in response. Stella is closest to the build of the dead bandit, but Esme says Stella is already shook enough, Kiva should wear his cloak and hat to be a distraction/stand-in for the dead bandit. When Horsh approaches and does the "pickles" "cheese" call and response they will spring the trap, with the hunters+Rua letting loose a volley and Soren rushing him. With the plan sorted they spend some time chatting idly, with Esme shaking out the hat and turning it inside out to shake out any bugs or things.

As dusk starts to fall everyone gets into position. Grumman and Kiva are at the clearing, the hunters and Rua are hidden behind a blind, Soren is hiding behind a tree to the side of the hunters and Esme and Stella move a ways away. They wait in position, a tense silence settling over the bluff. Minutes tick by, but eventually the sound of whistling starts to grow louder, and then steps on the rocky hillside. Horsh's head comes into view first, and as he crests the top of the bluff he calls out "Pickles!". A couple moments of silence go by, then Kiva answers "Cheese". Horsh takes one step forward, then pauses confused at a woman's voice responding to him. "Now!" Soren shouts and Rua lets loose with the crossbow. The bolt flies true, sinking into the dead center of the bandit's chest, and the three arrows from the hunters also hit home. Horsh staggers under the assault, then tips backwards and falls down the slope, crashing into seemingly every rock on the slope going down causing a small landslide of crashing and bouncing down the slope. The sound continues for several seconds and then silence falls once again on the dim forest.

"Well shit, I guess there is such a things as a TOO successful ambush" Soren muses. Worrying about the noise drawing the attention of the rest of the bandits, he asks Fio and the hunters to go down the hill and keep a lookout for anyone coming to investigate the noise, and Esme comes back into the clearing talking about recovering Horsh's body and hiding it. As people are about to start moving Grumman speaks up and says that he and Fuda will be expected back in camp, if they don't show that will tip them off. That gets everyone's attention and it is agreed that they should go directly to the camp and move the plan forward, with Kiva and Grumman leading in case they run into anyone. They do not encounter anyone and soon see firelight through the trees and they creep up to the treeline and see the camp down below the slope to the south.



They see a sheep pen with 4 sheep in it, a low building that looks like stables, some scattered tents and huts, another low building with a smoking chimney and a campfire in the middle of camp with benches around it. Three people sit around the fire playing dice while two others are at the south edge chopping and stacking wood. Grumman points out a woman sitting on a bench by the fire and the cook inside the building with the chimney as being decent folks that he would prefer don't die. With 5 of 8 bandits visible the group makes their plan. They don't want to charge the fortified camp head-on, Grumman and Stella will go to the edge of the light on the west and he will call out for help, saying he twisted his ankle in the dark. Hopefully Greta?, the woman Grumman knows, goes to help and he can convince her to stay out of the fight, then he will enter the camp and go to the cook, closing the door and keeping him out of the fight as well. If its someone else who goes then the hunters and Soren(with Treasa's crossbow) can ambush them and thin the numbers. Esme will approach from the east and block the narrow exit there while Treasa, Willem, Rua and

Kiva will circle around then charge down the south hill after the trap is sprung at the front. They agree if Grumman's plan works, they will count to 10 before charging.

Everyone gets into position, Kiva giving words of encouragement to Stella who is a little unsure of herself and her part in the plan. Once they are in position Grumman calls to the camp "Greta, come help us get back to camp, Horsh twisted his ankle!". Thankfully it is Greta who responds, coming alone out of the west entrance going towards his voice. As she approaches she realizes that it's not Horsh and hisses at Grumman "What's going on here?". Stella tells her not worry, Helior is watching and will protect her. Grumman explains that the camp is about to be ambushed and she should get away while she can. Greta is unsure, but with reassurances from Stella that she will not be hurt she goes further down the path. Grumman takes a deep breath, and after a quick exchange with Stella telling her that she did well after she expresses the felt she didn't do a good job in her role he goes into the camp. He strolls in nervously, exchanges some greetings with the bandits around the fire with a strained chuckle and enters the cook's building and closes the door. While he is moving through the camp all the others sneak closer. Kiva stumbles on the south hill, tripper over her own feet and falling onto some branches and breaking them but Esme sent Eysa, Queen of Crows, to go and make a bit of noise to cover for the blunder.

Once everyone sees Grumman enter the cook's building they count to 10 then burst into action. Treasa runs headlong down the south hill and engages the woodcutters, one of whom Grumman identified as Bogden's second in command and the greatest threat. With Rua backing her up she enters into an exchange of blows with him, axe to axe. Soren and the hunters have snuck up to the west entrance and he takes a prepared shot against a bandit leaning against the stable while directing the hunters to shoot at two bandits remaining at the campfire. Soren's bolt flies true, pinning the bandit's head to the wall and killing him instantly. The hunters are less successful, by pure chance the bandit had reached down to pick up the dice as they loosed their arrows, causing 2 of them to fly harmlessly overhead and only one sticks in his arm. The bandit clutches his wounded arm and looks around wildly, utterly surprised by the ambush. Esme appears in the east entrance and bangs her mattock on her shield twice, causing the shield to resonate like a gong and yells a challenge "Lay down your arms before the might of Stonetop or die!". She can tell the bandits in front of her by the fire care only about their own lives, and leaves room for them to flee if they wish. Up on the south hill Kiva spots a stump of a tree that had fallen then been harvested for wood for the camp leaving the stump with root network attached that had been pulled up by the initial tree fall. Using her staff as a lever she starts trying to push the stump down the hill. Willem sees what she is planning and moves to help her, and between the two of them they are able to tip the balance and send the stump flying down the hill! It crashes into the second bandit that was chopping wood, missing Rua by inches, knocking the bandit back next to the campfire and landing on him with a crunch. The bandit does not get up. Stella has approached the west entrance, initially hanging back but has lit her lantern and attempts to bring the warmth of Helior to the battlefield to bolster her allies but the shock of the battle and the sight of the two dead bandits has broken her focus and the light grows bright for just a moment before sputtering and going back to its mundane level of illumination.

At this point a bandit appears from one of the huts brandishing an iron sword, trying to rally the remaining bandits together. This just paints a giant target on his back as Soren and the hunters switch targets to him, nailing him with multiple arrows and a crossbow bolt causing him to drop just

moments after emerging from the hut. Seeing him go down the two bandits at the fire run away from the archers, heading towards Esme at the east entrance. She stands there and demands they put down their weapons before fleeing, putting her mattock down behind her as well in a gesture of good faith. After a moments pause the first bandit says "Fuck it", drops his spear and darts past Esme, fleeing for the woods. The second bandit starts, dropping his weapon and chases after him calling for him to wait up. At the south edge of the camp Treasa and Rua are still fighting the 2nd in command, going blow for blow with the bandit voicing his surprise and yelling, somewhat rhetorically, "Who are you people?!". Rua overextends himself on a spear thrust, missing and losing his balance and the bandit scores a glancing blow on his back, slicing into him. Seeing this Kiva runs down the hill and steps in front of Rua in a protective stance. Seeing a woman with just a staff and Rua kneeling down bleeding the bandit focuses his attention on Treasa, the real threat. As he looks away Rua pushes through the pain, his anger burning brightly seeing Treasa being wounded and he suddenly acts, thrusting his spear with unerring accuracy into the side of the bandit. The blow is the final one in the battle, the bandit letting out a pained gurgle before sliding off the spear onto his knees, then onto his face.

With the noise of battle finally over, Grumman opens the door to the cook's house and steps out with the cook. He is an unsightly man, shot and squat with his knows having been cut off in some past fight. He looks around, observing the bodies and says "well that was over quickly." He then introduces himself as ... and Soren approaches introducing himself as well. ... is the quartermaster of sorts for this group, and indicates all the supplies are in the building he came out of, as well as a stew he has been cooking that will be ready in about 30 minutes. Soren goes inside to investigate what is in there. Stella is still standing at the west entrance, seeming frozen in place. Esme goes to her and offers some encouraging words, directing her to Rua and Treasa who are wounded from their clash with the 2nd in command. Stella heals them both, consuming the oil in her lamp and having to refill from her pack. Healing both of them strains her and seeing the carnage around her leaves her miserable.

End of Session!

Stuff in the camp:

1 Surplus worth of food and trade goods — heavy load for everyone if it were to be taken right away

Five usable bows, several bundles of arrows, six spears, four iron swords, one bronze sword, a handful of knives, two woodcutters' axes

Spare tack for one horse

Four sheep (will add a couple extra days to the journey back if you take them)

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