

Making Acquaintances

It's the Christmas holiday. Not actually Christmas day, but just a few days after. A gathering like this could never take place on Christmas day itself. Too many expectations from relatives and the like. You had all been invited to the tavern by friends. This is the first time the holiday has given you a chance to really relax and have some fun.

A band plays a selection of Christmas classics from a small corner of the room. They have been squirrelled away underneath the staircase so as to take up as little room as possible, allowing more room to really pack in the 20 or so guests into the tiny little space.

A fire gently crackles away to itself in the fire place filling the room with its warmth and delightful aroma.

Tankards regularly spill in the hands of people making merry.

Let the group get to know each other. Spend some time here actually having a bit of fun. Maybe a tankard or 2.

There is a loud smash of a window breaking as something comes crashing through it and smashes onto a table next to the window. Frozen bones break apart, flying in different directions across the tavern.

Let the group study the scene for a while.

A freezing gust of wind whistles in through the window.

As if lifted by the freezing cold air the many bones start to shake. Slowly moving towards each other as if attracted by their own gravity.

Bones click and crack into place.

To your shock you recognise this humanoid figure standing up tall on the table in front of you. The terrifying blue glow from its eyes gives away the Arctic Skeletons identity.

It lets out an absolutely abominable roar, not dissimilar to the sound of the band earlier, as if signalling that the taverns defences had been penetrated.

Roll for initiative!

On DM initiative each turn add more monsters

D6: 1-2: 1 x Arctic Skeleton

D6: 3-4: 1 x Arctic Zombie

D6: 5-6: A deeper roar than before is heard, followed by a loud thud. Louder than the sound of a lightning bolt hitting the house next door. The group is rendered unconscious. (move on in the story)

Party Guests

The group awakens in a daze to find themselves in a circular room. The walls and floor around them are barely lit by 10 candles placed around the room.

There are 4 circular doors (not the best design really as it puts all of the load on a single hinge), one at each point of the compass. North, South, East and West.

Aligned with these doors are 4 large urns.

A book on a pedestal stands proud in the middle of the room.

Wait for the group to take a look at the book before reading the first quote out and wait for the group to move through a door before moving on to the next.

This is a game of guess the correct door... or there are dire consequences.

Each door they pass through leads to an identical room. If they pass through the correct door they progress. If they choose incorrectly then send them back to the beginning or previous room at DM's discretion.

Blow out a candle for each correct move. Relight them all when guessed wrong and return to the beginning.

Each new room, sit silent and wait for the group to explore. Read the hint when the book is looked at.

Continue like this until the group successfully navigate the puzzle or die.

DC18 Perception tests may be made to unlock hints. Adjust if the players are stuck. DM use your discretion as to what hints to give and how to proceed. Make this harder or easier as time allows.

Stick a monster in each time they get it wrong. D6. 1-3 skeleton, 4-6 zombie

1. As the feast draws to a close the friends retire to the drawing room to relax in the warming glow of a burning fire... (**FIRE**)

2. There are no logs to keep them warm, so they head outside and to search. **The night is cold and clear** and the ground is cold with snow. (**STARS**)

3. **Moving straight ahead** the group come across the outside wood store. (**FRONT MOST DOOR**)

4. Raising an **axe** above his head he splits the logs into manageable pieces. (**IRON**)

5. They return to the mansion house. Stepping through the front door, **leaving footprints on the marble floor** as they hit the warmth of the entrance hall. (**WATER**)

6. The **fire** is lit, they take their seats. (**FIRE**)
7. A discussion drifts along until finding itself considering the **lord of this manor**. (**GOLD**)
8. The night draws in signalling to the guests that they may retire for the **night**. (**STARS**)
9. The friends retire, **each in different directions. All but one**. "I shall finish this fine dram before I take to my bed". (**PARTY LEAVE ROOM THROUGH SEPARATE DOORS. ONE MUST REMAIN. ALL PARTY MEMBERS EXCEPT THE REMAINING ONE MUST LEAVE THROUGH A DIFFERENT DOOR UNLESS PARTY IS LARGER THAN 5 AND THEN DOORS MAY BE REPEATED BUT ALL DOORS MUST BE USED AT LEAST ONCE) ALL PARTY MEMBERS EXCEPT THE ONE WHO REMAINS WILL STAY OUT OF THE NEXT PUZZLE AND NOT GIVE INPUT.**
10. "They talk about me behind my back" Murderous thoughts cross ones mind. (**JUST THE REMAINING PARTY MEMBER MAY CHOOSE. DISCUSSION IS NOT ALLOWED. GOOD: DIRT, WATER, WOOD, STARS. BAD: FIRE, BLUE FIRE, GOLD, IRON – PARTY MEMBER MUST REVEAL THEIR REASONING TO THE DM TO DECIDE THEIR FATE) THE IDEA HERE BEING THAT GREED, WAR, FIRE ARE BAD BUT NATURE AND BEAUTY ARE GOOD.**

From here a split is made. Move to the GOOD CHOICES chapter if a GOOD choice was made or the BAD CHOICES chapter if the character made a BAD choice.

Good Choices

The entire party awaken in the tavern to complete the battle against the frozen undead. Their time unconscious has led to the room filling with several more dead enemies.

Allow it to continue for 4 to 5 battle rounds. Each round adding more enemies as per the table in **Making Acquaintances**.

At round 4 or 5 (or whenever you see fit)

Suddenly the tavern roof is ripped away and thrown over 1000ft into the forest nearby. The walls around you collapse and fall outward. The freezing night air surrounds you and snuffs out every one of the taverns oil filled lamps. The flames of the open fire retreat back inside the logs and embers from which they previously danced. Even the warm smoke appears to be swiftly sucked by into the fire pit as if a fire was never lit.

Expecting complete darkness, you stand in shock and complete terror as a thousand or more blue flames surround you. Their small fires staring at you from the dead eye sockets of the frozen hoard.

"Ahhh, the chosen few!" a huge, frosty figure booms.

"Stand aside my cold army. I have dreamt about how I would end the chosen few."

"For centuries the lands have been too warm for our return."

"Christmas cheer held back the cold in the dead of winter."

"Tales have spoken of a group of unexpected companions who are key to us claiming this land."

"There spirit of Christmas is the last true spirit remaining. Their perfect example of virtue in our other world test have proven them to be the chosen few."

"With these puny creatures gone our icy plague will roll across the realm, unstoppable. The undead will replace the living as our victims join our ranks."

Roll for initiative!

And so begins the final showdown.

Battle against a Frost Bitten Skeleton. The leader of this undead hoard.

Don't hold back much with the Frost Bitten Skeleton as this is now a group on one battle. See how the adventurers are holding up. If the battle is too easy then suggest that the boss ushers in a selection of undead to join him in the fight.

Allow for a Christmas spirit type victory.

If the group try to reason with the Frost Bitten Skeleton then allow it on a DC18 or so charisma check or similar depending on the suggestion.

Bad Choices

The entire party awaken in the tavern to complete the battle against the frozen undead. Their time unconscious has led to the room filling with several more dead enemies.

Each member who was murdered in the dream take D8 x 2 hits. To work this out roll one D8 for each character. Double the number rolled and assign that as the reduction to their hitpoints.

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"Tales have spoken of a group of unexpected companions who are key to us claiming this land."

"There spirit of Christmas was the last true spirit remaining."

"Murder, was it?"

"It would seem that we have extinguished the last of the good will in the mortal race."

"I'll re-animate you lot as generals in my frozen army of death!"

"Our icy plague will roll across the realm, unstoppable. The undead will replace the living as our victims join our ranks."

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The boss battle must be fought to the death.

The Wind Down

The last glow of the blue flames which had burnt in the eyes of the Frost Bitten Skeleton lord die out. As if animated only by the intense magical pull of their leader, the remaining undead hoard start collapsing one by one. Their frozen bones collapsing in heaps on the frozen ground.

The blue light filling the night fades with each monster as their eye sockets empty of light until only total darkness remains.

Wait for group to light a fire or a torch before ending their journey and gifting their XP.

The group take refuge around the warming fire to see them through until the sun rises in the morning. Safe from the undead this winter but with the knowledge that only they can hold back the deathly cold for years to come. Unless maybe they can help to spread the spirit of Christmas.

Gift 200 + (D20 x 100) XP to each party member.