

Masque of the Red Death

A side-trek based on the story by Edgar Allen Poe, for levels 4-6

This adventure is a short side-trek for characters level 4-6 and can be placed in nearly any campaign world. A terrible plague has ravaged the nearby countryside. The characters track the source of the plague to a secluded abbey on a barren hilltop. Inside they discover the scene of a cursed and haunted masquerade gone horribly wrong. They must defeat the guardians of the Red Death and the Red Death itself. Once vanquished, the plague begins to disappear from the surrounding land.

Overview

Background

The Red Death plague is a truly horrendous condition that has afflicted this area of the land for several months. It starts with sharp pains and dizziness, and then the victim begins to bleed from all pores, particularly from the head. The entire process, from contraction to death takes only half an hour.

It is rumored that the source of the plague is a secluded abbey to Avandra on a bare hilltop, last owned by Prince Prospero. The adventurers may come across bodies being burned in heaps outside of villages. They may encounter victims along the roadside, either dead or dying. If infected blood enters a PCs bloodstream, they contract the disease. (See appendix)

The real cause of the Red Death is a plague wraith that has taken up residence in Prince Prospero's vacation

abbey. Once an abbey to Avandra, goddess of luck and travel, the local Prince has repurposed the strangely twisted building as a vacation palace to entertain guests and ride out the plague.

It was during a grand masquerade at the abbey that several of the courtiers noticed a guest making his way through the suite of rooms dressed as a victim of the Red Death plague. The prince became enraged at the sight and pursued the tactless fool from the east end of the abbey to the west. He reached the mysterious man in the western-most chamber and raised a dagger to strike down the party crasher, but just as he was in range with his blade, the guest turned to face the Prince. Prospero let out a startled cry, and dropped stone dead a moment after. The plague rapidly spread throughout the abbey, killing all inside.

Synopsis

Upon seeing the death and destruction wrought by the brutal plague, the adventures track down the source of the outbreak to the old abbey of Avandra. Once the adventurers enter the abbey, the doors seal magically preventing escape. They move from room to room tackling the various challenges in the colored rooms until the final showdown with the Red Death in the black and red clock room at the western end.

Adventure Hooks

Dead hunter - Live hound: The party comes across a hunter either in the wilderness or just off a road that has succumbed to the plague. The characters hear the whimpering of a hunting dog that is tied with a long lead to the hunter's belt. It is sniffing the pools of blood surrounding its former master. If the

PCs free the hound it bounds off in the direction of the abbey, then stops and looks back for the PCs to follow. If they follow the hound, he sniffs the trail and leads them to the abbey, at which he points, and then lays down with his paws covering his eyes. He cannot be persuaded to go near the abbey, but won't leave the site until the adventurers purge the abbey of the plague.

Root of the plague: The party is approached in town by Eilonna Loyalar, a half-elven priestess of Avandra. Her robes are worn and dirty, and from the look in her eyes she has gotten very little sleep. She begs the adventurers to find the cause of this terrible affliction. She is in charge of last rites and disposing of the bodies for the local village. She fears at this rate there will be no one left in the village, and it could spread to other regions. Eilonna surmises that it may have come about from the arrogance of Prince Prospero commandeering the old abbey of Avandra as his personal getaway. She provides some basic directions to lead you to the once holy place. While she can offer no monetary reward, she advises that Prince Prospero was no pauper, and that Avandra would look kindly on the cleansing of her abbey. She would certainly overlook the heroes taking anything they felt held value, as long as it had no holy significance to Avandra.

Getting Started

The Abbey is a singular structure on top of a small bald hill. If not given directions, or led by the hunting hound, it would be a fairly unremarkable structure. The sky is overcast and a slight drizzle begins to fall as the PCs approach the hill. Dusk is approaching. As they near the structure an almost palpable dread

creeps in sending shivers down the spines of even the hardest of adventurers. It seems unnaturally dark and torchlight or even magical light does little to pierce the pervasive gloom.

If the party examines the outside of the structure they find it to be long hall, about 250' from east to west, 80' from north to south, and the outside wall is about 30' high. There are four large wooden doors on the outside. The doors on west side are sealed tight. On further inspection (DC16 dungeoneering, or DC22 perception) the PCs notice the hinges are welded shut. An DC18 Arcana check reveals runes of binding on the door. A very powerful arcane lock has been placed on it, and no knock spell or arcane key will be able to open it.

The two on the east side appear to be slightly ajar. Once the PCs enter from the east and are all in the blue entry room (area 1), the doors slam behind them. The same arcane binding runes glow on the eastern doors, and the PCs are trapped!

A steeply pitched slate roof covers the top of the structure, and is in need of repair. Several chimneys protrude from the surface. Climbing the surface of the roof would be a DC20 acrobatics check for every round of movement, and the roof is difficult terrain. If a check fails, they slip and have to roll a save to hold on at the edge. If they fail to save they take 3d10 falling damage. Climbing down a slick, soot-filled chimney is very difficult requiring a DC24 Athletics check, a climbing kit reduces this by 10. If they climb down a north chimney they end up in the north courtyard, south chimney, the south courtyard.

If the PCs attempt an extended rest at any time, they gain the benefits of a short rest before a skeleton patrol jumps

them. Skeleton patrol is one boneshard (MM p.235), and 4 minion skeleton soldiers (Open Grave p.77). If a watch is posted during the rest, a passive perception of 16 is enough to hear bones and armor shambling down the halls towards the party from the east.

Concluding the Adventure

Once the plague wraith has been defeated, the western doors are blown open by a final release of arcane energy, the braziers burn out, and dawn breaks through the retreating clouds. Those afflicted by the plague start to immediately feel better. They will still require healing or rest, but are no longer actively bleeding or getting worse.

When the heroes return to town, they are hailed by the townspeople as saviors. The mayor of the town orders a holiday and a great feast is held in their honor. Grateful survivors of the plague shower the party with 100gp per PC!

This is likely a one-shot adventure and not part of a larger campaign. It's possible that the Red Death plague is part of a larger conspiracy of a powerful necromancer or lich to cause widespread death and mayhem. If that's something you want to do, you may want to leave a clue in the final chamber, like a special rune indicating a cult, or one of a lich's many phylacteries.

Area 1 - Entrance Foyer

Setup

10 Skeleton Soldiers (lvl 6 minion, Open Grave p.77)

2 Boneshard Skeletons (lvl 5 brute, Monster Manual p. 235)

1 Flameskull (lvl 8 artillery, MM p. 109)

The PCs are immediately challenged by what is left of Prince Prospero's guard. Sworn to defend the abbey, they fulfill their duty from beyond their plague-ridden death. Perception DC15: The character notices a thin red fog moving into the purple room and a low, wicked laugh.

Read aloud to players:

This room is decked out in blue, with blue tapestries on the walls and once rich blue carpets, now neglected and ragged. As you enter this room the doors slam shut behind you, and are magically sealed. Simultaneously, all the braziers in the courtyard burst in to an unnatural white flame. The glass in this room is stained blue as well, casting the room in an eerie blue light. You can see beyond the archway to what appears to be a purple room. You notice piles of bones rusty weapons and armor along the walls. The bones rapidly form into skeletons, one skull bursting in to flames near the window. The warriors raise their weapons and attack!

History DC16: The warriors of Prince Prospero's guard are still wearing a tattered coat of arms that can be identified as belonging to the prince. If they fail its not a symbol they recognize.

Tactics

Each Boneshard skeleton is a sergeant at arms in charge of three "men." There is one squad along the north wall, and one squad along the south. The Flameskull has four soldiers around it, armed with bows. The north and south squads try and tie up the party in melee while the artillery rains death upon them.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The brazier outside the window casts bright light through the blue glass. Purple light can be seen in the next room, and all is considered to be brightly lit.

Tapestries and carpets: Tapestries and carpets in this room have a 50% chance of catching on fire after a fire attack from the flaming skeleton or the PCs. Tapestries run the entire length of the north and south walls. The carpet is a 6x6 area in the middle of the room. If a fire attack is made (hit or miss) in a square containing either carpet, or tapestry on the wall roll 1d4. On a 1 or a 2 it catches on fire. PCs starting there turn in a square or passing thru a square that is on fire take 1d6+4 fire damage. It doesn't affect the skeletons, as they have very little to burn. PCs can stamp out a fire or smother a tapestry as a standard action, ending the fire in that square, otherwise it remains on fire until the end of the encounter.

Windows: The windows can be broken, and a creature can be forced to move through the window with forced movement. If a creature is pushed through a window, it takes 2d8+5, and is prone in either courtyard they are pushed into. This can only be done once per window. After which it either takes a full move action to carefully move through the window, or a successful acrobatics check of DC21 to treat it as difficult terrain. If the check fails take 1d8+2 from glass shards remaining in the window.

This is true for all windows throughout the complex of rooms.

Total XP: 1380

Area 2 - Cloakroom

Setup

3 Minor Cloakers (new monster)

The fog of the Red Death has corrupted some of the cloaks in the cloakroom, turning them in to voracious magical beasts that ambush the party if inspected. If left alone, they do nothing.

Read aloud to players:

As you enter this room you hear a low chime in the distance ring out 7 times. This room is awash in purple. The windows are stained purple and the floor is laid with purple tiles. Towards the south end of the room, there are three large cloak racks. All still loaded with dusty cloaks. There is a fairly nondescript wooden table in front of the racks. Although dusty, you can tell the cloaks are of fine make, and are clearly from well to do guests.

Tactics

The cloakers only attack if the PCs approach the racks or search on the south side of the table. If the cloakers stealth check beats the PCs passive perception, it gets a surprise round to try and envelop the PC. If other players rush to the aid of their companion, the other cloakers that haven't attacked can use envelop as an opportunity attack once the PCs are in range.

If the PCs are actively using perception before they approach the cloakers, the cloakers must beat an opposed check with their stealth. If the PC wins, he notices a cloaker billowing on the rack, even though there is no wind in the chamber. If the cloakers are

preemptively attacked, or the racks are disturbed from a distance, the cloakers fly and try and envelop the nearest PC.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The brazier outside the window casts bright light through the purple glass. Green light can be seen in the next room, and all is considered to be brightly lit.

Table: The table can be turned on its side and used as cover, or a PC can stand on top of it with a DC10 Acrobatics check. If they fail, they're prone on the square next to the table they were attempting to get on.

Racks: The squares the racks occupy are difficult terrain. Any PC pulled on to one of those squares is considered to be squeezing.

Windows: If a PC that is enveloped with a cloaker goes thru a window, the PC takes half damage, the cloaker takes the other half.

Minor Cloaker

Level 7 Lurker

HP 60, Bloodied 30

AC 21, Fort 21, Ref 19, Will 16

Init + 10, Perception +10, Stealth +11,

Darkvision, Speed 2 (clumsy) Fly 6

(hover)

Traits - Unnerving moan (fear), Aura 1 -
Nondeafened enemies take -2 to attacks

Standard Actions

- Melee basic - Tail Slap - Melee 2 - +11
AC 2d6+7
- Envelop - At-will - Requirement: Cloaker must not have a creature grabbed -
Melee 1 +10 Reflex - Target is grabbed -
while grabbed target is blinded, dazed,
restrained, and takes ongoing 5
damage, until the PC escapes from the

grab. In addition, whenever an attack deals damage to the cloaker while it has the target grabbed, the attack deals half damage to the cloaker and half damage to the target.

EXP: 300

XP: 900 if all cloakers are defeated

Area 3 - Grand Dining Hall

The spirits of the guests must be assuaged before the heroes can continue to search out the source of the Red Death. Poltergeists have taken up residence and are upset at the disturbance of their fitful slumber.

If a PC enters the orange room before the dining hall is appeased roll the following attack every round a PC is in the orange room or any room further west: +11 Fortitude, on a hit the target is stunned and contracts the red death disease. (See appendix) Afflicted characters must roll an endurance check every time the clock chimes. Players can assist with a heal check at this time as well.

Read aloud to players:

This room is an impressive dining room with a long banquet table down the center. Strangely the table is still set, and while the food is long rancid and putrid stink emanates from the table, it looks as though it was left in the middle of a party. Nothing looted or missing, nothing cleaned up.

As you enter this room you hear a low chime in the distance ring out 8 times, seemingly a little bit closer. This room is decked out in green. A massive brick fireplace is in the middle of the north wall. It springs to life with the same eerie white flame as the braziers in the courtyards. In the light you glimpse a red

fog moving west into an orange room. You hear a low wailing of several voices, and the silverware and plates on the table start randomly flying about the room.

Skill Challenge

Difficulty 5:

12 Successes before 3 failures

Scene 1 - Ballroom (Move on after about 4 successes)

Primary Skills: Religion, Bluff, Diplomacy, Endurance, Acrobatics

Secondary Skills: History, Insight, Perception

Perception DC21 - You notice a tortured looking face dancing in the flames and the flames beside it seem to form into two clawed hands. This doesn't count as a success, but warns PCs of going too near the fireplace before the spirits are appeased.

Religion DC15 - You say a prayer to your deity pleading that these souls be granted peace.

Bluff DC21 - You brandish your weapon or implement menacingly, showing you ain't afraid of no ghost.

Diplomacy - DC15 You plead with the spirits to rest, and that you come to free them to an eternal slumber.

Endurance DC15 - You use your shield or weapons to deflect the flying objects away from you and your companions

Acrobatics DC15 - Nimbly dodge the flying cutlery and plates.

History DC17 - You know a bit of the manners and decorum of the people of this area. This allows you to assuage their pain over previous transgressions. Doesn't count as a success but removes a failure. The PC that lost the healing

surge from the failure does not regain the surge.

Insight DC17 - You can tell the spirits are more upset about being trapped on the material plane, and less directly angry at the party: +2 to the next diplomacy or religion check.

If a PC approaches the fireplace within a Blast 3 before the spirits are appeased, the flames lash out: +9 Reflex, 2d6+5 fire damage.

After about 4 Successes: The spirits are appeased, and the dishes and cutlery clatter to the floor. The fire in the fireplace goes out, and a feeling of peace settles over the room.

Failure: The character is bludgeoned by a barrage of dishes and plates. The PC that rolls a failure loses a healing surge.

Area 4 - Music Room

The party is assailed by an unholy cacophony as the souls of the musicians who were in attendance at the festival exact their sonic revenge.

Read aloud to players:

A low chime rings out in the distance 9 times, louder than before. As if on cue, instruments rise up from the south end of the room and begin playing a terribly wailing melody so loud and dissonant it becomes difficult to think. The orange-bedecked room isn't helping your headache. A red fog fills the adjacent white room.

If a PC enters the white room before the music room is appeased roll the following attack every round a PC is in the white room or any room further west: +11 Fortitude, on a hit the target is stunned and contracts the red death disease. (See appendix) Afflicted

characters must roll an endurance check every time the clock chimes. Players can assist with a heal check at this time as well.

Skill Challenge - Scene 2 - Music Room

Primary Skills: Bluff, Religion, Endurance, Arcana

Secondary: Perception, Intimidate

Bluff DC17 - You do your best to whistle along with the tune and pretend to be enjoying yourself. This confuses the spirits and the music gets a little quieter.
Religion DC15 - You plead with your deity to grant these souls, and your ears, a well deserved rest. Upon hearing your pleas, the music becomes less discordant, and a little softer.

Endurance DC20 - You plug your ears with whatever is available. The spirits observe their dirge is not having the desired effect of punishing the living, which confuses them and thus the music is quieter.

Arcana DC15 - You are able to observe the magic behind the curse that plays the instruments, and are able to counteract some of the instruments playing together, which eases the pain.

Perception DC21 - You notice some orange pillows in the corner that have stuffing coming out of them. If PCs take the stuffing and jam it in their ears, they get a +10 to endurance checks, but are deafened until the stuffing is removed.

Intimidate DC15 - You yell at the spirits to knock it off, and shake your fist at them. This distracts them enough that they stop concentrating on their "music." Doesn't count as a success but removes one failure.

If any of the PCs attempt to smash the instruments, an ear-shattering wail assaults them as the spirits scream in agony: immediate reaction +11 Will 2d6 + 7 and the target is deafened and dazed for one round. However, if they hit AC18 with their attack one of the instruments is smashed and it counts as a success.

There are a total of four instruments: Horn, Lute, Fiddle, Drum.
Success: (After about 4) All the instruments are smashed or the spirits are appeased. The red fog moves further west through the suite of rooms.

Failure: The PC's ears are bleeding. Any PC who rolls a failure loses a healing surge and is deafened, save ends.

Area 5 - Cursed Courtiers

Skill Challenge - Scene 3 - Cursed Courtiers

Read aloud to players:

Blinding white light pours in to this white room from the braziers in the courtyard. When you enter the room you are greeted with 10 resounding chimes, very close now. The red fog has retreated to the next room, which looks violet in color. Ghostly forms can be seen dancing around the room to music only they can hear. Most are covered in masks, as if for a grand masquerade.

If a PC enters the violet room before the music room is appeased roll the following attack every round a PC is in the violet room or any room further west: +11 Fortitude, on a hit the target is stunned and contracts the red death disease. (See appendix) Afflicted characters must roll an endurance check every time the clock chimes. Players can assist with a heal check at this time as well.

Primary Skills: History, Acrobatics, Bluff, Diplomacy

Secondary Skills: Religion, Perception

History DC15 - You are familiar with this old style of dance allowing you to follow the steps and navigate the room safely.

Acrobatics DC18 - You are able to twist and dodge through the room without being touched by the apparitions.

Bluff DC18 - You bow to one of the apparitions and feign that you're having a grand time at the ball. This pleases the spirits.

Diplomacy DC15 - You show all your social graces and do your best to bow and honor the spirits and move through the room safely.

Religion DC17 - You plead with your benevolent deity to release these tortured souls from their fate. Your prayers are answered: doesn't count as a success but removes a failure.

Perception DC15 - You begin to notice a pattern to the dance and think you have found a way to safely traverse the room: +5 to acrobatics checks, and to any other PC attempting acrobatics after this PC has done so successfully. If the PC fails on the acrobatics check after the perception check, another successful perception check must be made to get the bonus. If a PC touches or comes in contact with one of the dancers through a failed check, they are drained a healing surge.

Success: The PCs are able to calm the spirits or get to the other side of the room safely. At which time the red fog retreats, revealing the violet chamber to the west.

EXP: 1250 for entire challenge. If failed, 625.

Area 6 - Prince's Chamber

As the party enters the violet chamber the rooms shakes with the reverberation of 11 chimes. The red fog has retreated to the final black and red room. Perception DC11 - The character can make out an outline of a huge ebony grandfather clock in the next room, likely the source of the sound.

If a PC enters the black room before the music room is appeased roll the following attack every round a PC is in the black room or any room further west: +11 Fortitude, on a hit the target is stunned and contracts the red death disease. (See appendix) Afflicted characters must roll an endurance check every time the clock chimes. Players can assist with a heal check at this time as well.

Read aloud to players:

The chamber is covered in violet tapestries and has a grand throne on the south wall. On the throne a limp decaying corpse is slumped in what look like robes of some official office.

The body suddenly animates and greets the party: "So good of you to attend my grand masquerade! We haven't had any new guests in months. I must admit I'm surprised you made it, since I strictly forbid the guards to let anyone else in. No matter. We have another uninvited guest in the next room. I was hoping maybe you could deal with him? He is quite the party pooper, and since you so handily dealt with my guards I'm sure you could handle him?"

If the PCs ask what is in it for them, the prince replies: "Why I'd give you run of the place! I don't have much need for it in my current state. You can't take it with you, you know? Sure it needs a little

cleaning up, maybe an exorcism or two, but it could make a fine base of operations for adventurers such as yourselves! Plus, (and I'm no expert here) I would imagine if you deal with our party crusher the effects of the plague may subside." If the PCs attack the prince, use the stats for a Rot Grub Zombie (MM3 p. 167), and Rot Grub Swarms (MM3 p.166)

Once the PCs either agree to aid the prince, or slay him, the mist starts gathering in the center of the black and red chamber.

Area 7 - Red Death

Read aloud to players:

This chamber is all black, and shrouded in gloom. The windows here are stained blood red. The massive clock on the west end of the chamber strikes twelve times. The red fog you have been following through the chambers starts to gather and take form in the center of the room. The fog gathers inside a burial shroud and takes a vaguely humanoid shape. It hisses in an inhuman voice, "Fools! Bleed and die!"

The doors on either side of the clock are magically sealed, and cannot be opened thru conventional or magical means.

Plague Wraith Level 8 Solo Controller
size large

HP 220, Bloodied 110
AC 23, Fort 19, Ref 19, Will 23
Init + 7, Perception +10, Stealth +11,
Darkvision, Speed Fly 6 (hover) Immune
Disease, Poison - Resist 10 necrotic,
Vulnerable 5 radiant
Action Points 2

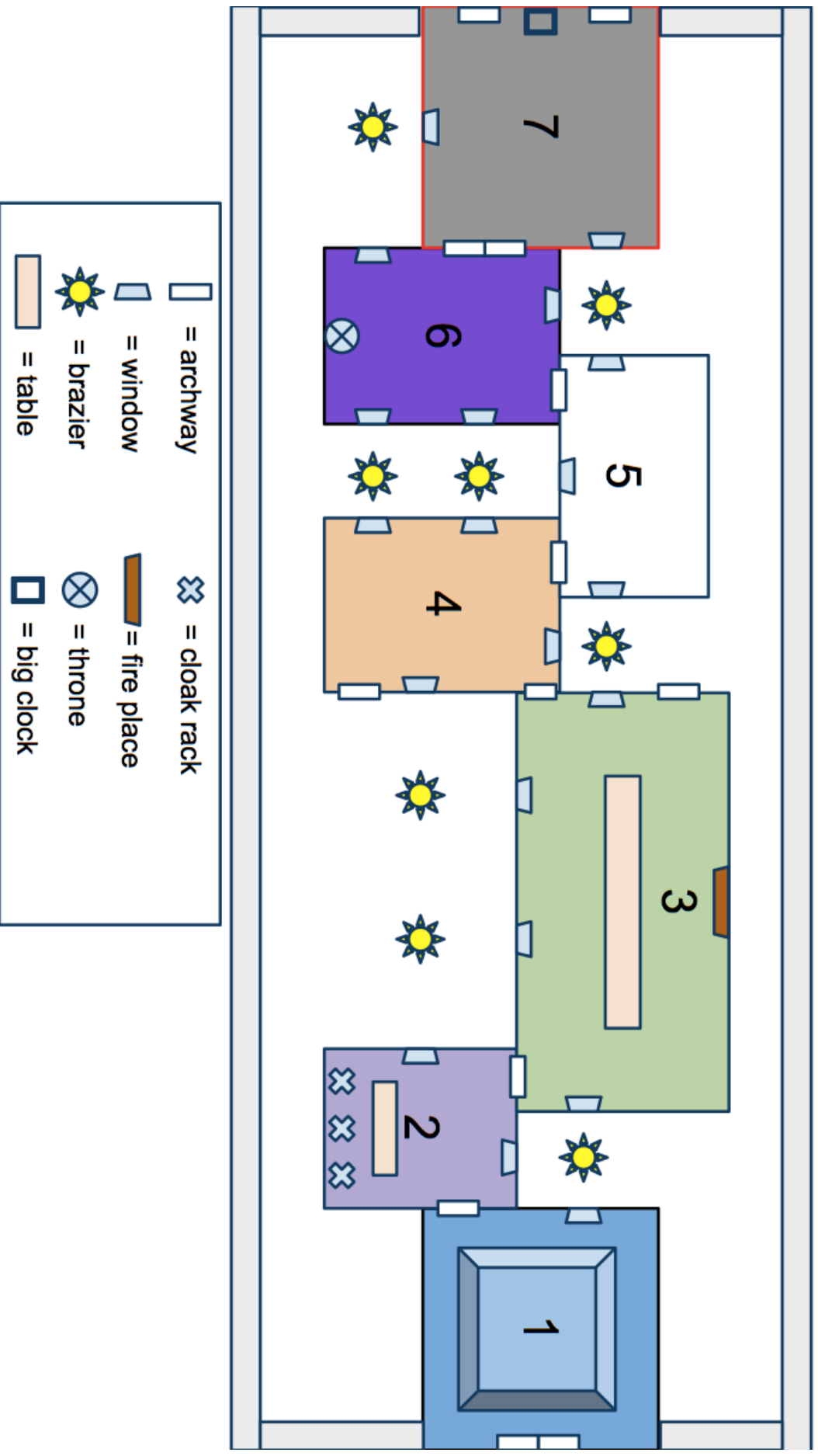
Standard Actions

- Melee basic - Disease Claw - Melee 1 - +11 AC 1d4+7 - exposed to the Red Death plague. Subsequent hits cause the disease to worsen. Heal check as a standard action can combat the disease
- Plague Fury - at-will - two claw attacks against separate targets
- Death beam - range 10 (necrotic) - +10 reflex 2d6+7 and the target is weakened (save ends)
- Plague Fog - move action - recharge 6 or when first bloodied - Plague Wraith becomes insubstantial and may move thru enemy spaces without opportunity attacks. Any PC's space that is moved thru is subject to the following attack: +11 Fort 2d4+7 poison damage, and PC contracts the Red Death. If the PC already has the Red Death it advances one step. Plague Wraith is insubstantial until the end of its next turn.

EXP: 1500

Once the plague wraith is defeated the runes on the doors of the west and east end fade. With a sudden gust of arcane energy the braziers are extinguished, and the doors are blown open to reveal the first rays of sun on the surrounding hillside. Those who were afflicted with the Red Death get one step better after every extended rest. Except those who died, who will need to be raised. Congratulations! Treasure Level 8 magic item of your choice and 100GP (per character)

Masque of the Red Death Map



Appendix

Red Death Disease

Red Death - Level 7 Disease - Endurance DCs - Improve 18, Maintain 13, Worsen 12 or lower

Cured! <---> Initial effect: lose a healing surge, cannot regain it even after extended rest until cured <---> take a -2 to all defenses, lose an additional surge that cannot be regained <---> lose all surges, unable to regain surges, able to use potions to regain HP as if you had surges<---> death.

May be brought back with a raise dead scroll or ritual. Afflicted characters must roll a check every time the clock chimes. Players can assist with a heal check at this time as well.

New Creatures

Minor Cloaker

Level 7 Lurker
HP 60, Bloodied 30
AC 21, Fort 21, Ref 19, Will 16
Init + 10, Perception +10, Stealth +11,
Darkvision, Speed 2 (clumsy) Fly 6 (hover)

Traits - Unnerving moan (fear), Aura 1 - Nondeafened enemies take -2 to attacks

Standard Actions

- Melee basic - Tail Slap - Melee 2 - +11 AC 2d6+7
- Envelop - At-will - Requirement: Cloaker must not have a creature grabbed - Melee 1 +10 Reflex - Target is grabbed - while grabbed target is blinded, dazed, restrained, and takes ongoing 5 damage, until the PC escapes from the

grab. In addition, whenever an attack deals damage to the cloaker while it has the target grabbed, the attack deals half damage to the cloaker and half damage to the target.

EXP: 300

Plague Wraith Level 8 Solo Controller size large

HP 220, Bloodied 110
AC 23, Fort 19, Ref 19, Will 23
Init + 7, Perception +10, Stealth +11,
Darkvision, Speed Fly 6 (hover) Immune
Disease, Poison - Resist 10 necrotic,
Vulnerable 5 radiant
Action Points 2

Standard Actions

- Melee basic - Disease Claw - Melee 1 - +11 AC 1d4+7 - exposed to the Red Death plague. Subsequent hits cause the disease to worsen. Heal check as a standard action can combat the disease
- Plague Fury - at-will - two claw attacks against separate targets
- Death beam - range 10 (necrotic) - +10 reflex 2d6+7 and the target is weakened (save ends)
- Plague Fog - move action - recharge 6 or when first bloodied - Plague Wraith becomes insubstantial and may move thru enemy spaces without opportunity attacks. Any PC's space that is moved thru is subject to the following attack: +11 Fort 2d4+7 poison damage, and PC contracts the Red Death. If the PC already has the Red Death it advances one step. Plague Wraith is insubstantial until the end of its next turn.

EXP: 1500