

A D&D Christmas Carol

A 2nd-level adventure for 2 PCs.

by Steve Johnson

inspired by Charles Dickens

Introduction

This 4E D&D adventure for two 2nd level players is a retelling of the classic Christmas story A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. Because the holiday season often inadvertently interrupts usual gaming sessions that consist of 4+ players, this adventure was specifically designed so that those that were still available could still play and it would not impact the continuance of a regular campaign. DMs can easily adapt the NPCs for higher level players or even when more players show up. The adventure does have a lot of text that tells the story, but don't let it bog you down. Paraphrase when necessary. In short, DMs please feel free adjust the adventure to the needs of your players - and have fun!

Prologue

Read the following:

You have been in town for a few days and you have been observing what the locals call Christmas. The holiday consists of giving presents, celebrations and hospitality, among other things. It is strangely familiar to you on a spiritual level, yet different from winterfeast, or which ever winter festival you are accustomed.

As you make your way in the snow towards the tavern to partake in the Christmas Eve festivities, you notice a peculiar sight at a large house on the edge of town. Through a second story window you see a glowing translucent figure waving its arms wrapped in chains and the muffled sounds of someone whimpering. As the glowing figure slowly moves further into the house, an old man shuffles to the window.

Spotting you he calls out, "Help!" He quickly disappears back into the darkness and a short time later he appears in the doorway of that same house holding a lantern.

"Lo!" the old man yelled across the courtyard, visibly shaking and looking around. "I need your help. Come, let us go inside quickly. I have a job for you."



If the PCs go inside, read the following:

The old man continued nervously, "A ghost of a long dead acquaintance of mine, a certain Jacob Marley, appeared in my bed chamber this evening and threatened me, telling me that three spirits will visit me. I am an important man and I do not wish to perish this night. I wish to hire you two as my bodyguards and of course I will pay you both handsomely."

The old man offers 300 gold pieces to each of the PCs in the morning if they protect him. If the PCs decide to haggle with him, he will go up to 400 gold pieces each but he will only be

able to give them a total of 50 gold pieces until the morning when he can get it from his office.

If the PCs inquire about whom the old man is:

“My name is Ebenezer Scrooge, but you can address me as Mr. Scrooge. I am a businessman in this wretched town and if I didn't own half of this place I would have left here long ago! And now I have to contend with this, this Christmas every year! Bah, humbug!”

Present Scrooge as a dour old man who values money more than anything. He should insist that he be called ‘Mr. Scrooge’ and nothing else. As the adventure progresses his demeanor should become more personable and apologetic.

Act 1 – Ghost of Christmas Past (250 XP)

Read the following:

As the hours pass Mr. Scrooge decides to go back to bed as you stand guard just outside his bed chambers on the second floor. As the clock strikes the hour you both hear a stirring inside the chamber. Suddenly Scrooge bursts out from inside the door.

“Who are you?” Scrooge screams, pointing inside the bed chamber. “Help me!”

As Scrooge backs up, a lone glowing female eladrin strides forth from the chambers, eyeing you suspiciously as she passes.

“Ebenezer Scrooge, I am the ghost of Christmas Past,” says the eladrin. “Let us begin our journey.”

The luminous eladrin suddenly whips her cloak around and quite plainly appears as a little girl, bearing some resemblance to Scrooge.

“Fan?” Scrooge mutters. “My dear sister, Fan. She always tried to cheer me so. Alas, she died in childbirth. But now I have such a wonderful nephew.”

With a nod the young girl whips her cloak once again, spinning around until there stands a great sized man with a powdered wig upon his head, well dressed in a suit and jovial, nonetheless.

“Why, it's Mr. Fezziwig – and alive! I apprenticed under him for years! He always had such grand Christmas parties for his employees and all of his friends! Oh, the dancing and the singing! Such great times! And it was just a bit of his money he used to make those times so -” Scrooge trails off, looking down at the floor.



Mr. Fezziwig smiles graciously and whips his cloak about again and in his stead stands a beautiful young woman, teary eyed. You notice Scrooge and the ghost are making their way down the staircase and into the foyer.

“Belle! My beautiful Belle!” Scrooge exclaims, and then sighs heavily. “Why must you show me these things, Spirit? She left me. I made her wait too long to marry and she left me, all because of my pursuit of fortune and coin. I alone... and her married, happy now, with children. Oh, Spirit! Why do you torment me so?”

(Have PCs make a Perception check against DC 13, those that fail are surprised the first round of combat. Those that succeed can act normally during the round.)

“Your torment has only started, Scrooge!” Belle answers, suddenly drawing a dagger and grabbing the old man. “You old fool. All the research was worth it! You will come with us and empty out your coffers.”

The woman shakes out her hair and her countenance turns from a young woman to that of a grizzled, bearded man. Behind them the door and a couple windows open and five thugs in grey cloaks step inside.

“Aiiiiie! Save me!” Scrooge yelps.

ROLL INITIATIVE!

Scene: Large room (16 x 16) with dual staircases (2 squares wide and 6 squares long each) on each side of the room leading to a landing (6 x 2, 10 feet up) at the top of the staircase. There is a door and two windows opposite the staircases.

Placement: PCs are at the top of the stairs on the landing, Scrooge and the ghost are in the middle of the room, three thugs are at the door and one thug in each window.

Tactics: The ghost will try to drag Scrooge out through the door while the thugs cover their escape with crossbow fire. After the second round of combat, Scrooge will break free and

run his speed up one of the staircases. The ghost and thugs will chase after Scrooge.

If the PCs lose, Scrooge is taken and his office is cleaned out of coin, furniture, everything. He is never heard from again. The PCs are assumed to have been in on the kidnapping and taken to the castle dungeon (Hook Alert!).

If the PCs win, read the following:

Once the fighting subsided, you look down at the defeated ghost and notice he has changed once again, this time into a gray-skinned humanoid with muted facial features – a changeling! The Watch arrives and tells you these thugs are part of a small band of woodland thieves new to the area called the Grey Foxes. Apparently they have been searching for ways of financing their expanding operations and decided that old Scrooge was to be an easy mark. Too bad they ran into you.

Act 2 -Ghost of Christmas Present (250 XP)

Read the following:

After an hour or so (PCs receive the benefits of a short rest) the Watch leaves and the clock strikes the hour, Scrooge said, “Looks like there will be no more ghosts for me. You both did very well this evening. Come back in the morning for your payment. But first walk me to my bed chamber, I still feel weak from all the excitement.”

You walk Scrooge back up to his chambers and as he opens the door he says, “Thank you, you may let yourself –“ Scrooge stops short and blinks. Inside his bed chamber was a sight to behold! The walls and ceiling were hung with an abundance of greenery, so much that it looked a perfect grove. Leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light and

such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney. Heaped upon the floor forming a kind of throne, were all sorts of meats and foods - turkeys, geese, poultry, great joints of meat, suckling pigs, links of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, chestnuts, red and green apples, oranges, and steaming bowls of punch. Resting upon this couch sat an impressive giant, who bore a brightly glowing torch, and held it up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he stood in the doorway. His bright green robe, trimmed with white fur, reflected both the light from the torch and the blazing fireplace and a holly wreath sat upon his massive head.

“Come in, come in!” said the giant with a broad smile.

“What? Who are you?” Scrooge stammered as he shuffled inside.



“Why, I am the Ghost of Christmas Present!

Who else would I be?” the spirit chuckled jovially.

“But, but – weren’t the ghosts those thieves?” Scrooge looked back at you confused.

“Thieves? What is this you babble about?” the ghost said, just as confused. “No matter! Come Scrooge, we have much to see this evening! Grab my robe and we shall be off!”

Absentmindedly, Scrooge grabs onto the giant’s robe. The two disappear and so does the fantastic scene, revealing only the old worn wooden furniture of Scrooge’s bed chamber.

SKILL CHALLENGE

PCs must provide 6 successes before 3 failures and can use any skill only once. They must succeed against DC 13 five times and a DC 20 once. The goal of this skill challenge is for the PCs to find Scrooge and continue to protect him. They could use Arcana or Perception to see where the pair went, Athletics or Acrobatics to get there, Endurance or Insight to battle the intense arcane energies (if the PCs thought quickly enough to grab onto the ghost’s robe like Scrooge). If they are having trouble, throw in a couple of scenarios such as gathering information from locals (Streetwise) or thwarting another attempt by the Grey Foxes to kidnap Scrooge (Perception). Let the PCs be creative in using their skills and guide them to their goal.

If the PCs fail the skill challenge, they lose one healing surge from exhaustion. If they have none left from the first encounter, they will be -2 to all damage rolls in the final encounter.

Whether or not they fail, the PCs finally find Scrooge and the ghost outside of a small hovel.

Read the following:

You finally catch up with Scrooge and the ghost looking in the window of a small simple cottage. You see a family preparing to eat their Christmas feast of a goose and potatoes. One child sticks out among the group – a boy with a wooden crutch.

After staring silently into the window, Scrooge broke the silence, “Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.”

The ghost replied, “I see a vacant seat, in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.”

“No, Spirit. Tell me it isn’t so!” Scrooge pleaded, then hanging his head low. “Poor Cratchit.”

The family raised their glasses for a toast with the father, Bob Cratchit, toasting, “Merry Christmas to us all. God bless us.”

“God bless us, every one,” little Tiny Tim said meekly.

“And to Mr. Scrooge, the founder of the feast,” Cratchit offered.

“The founder of the feast indeed! I wish he was here right now. I’d give him a piece of my mind to feast on, and I hope he’d have a good appetite for it!” exclaimed Mrs. Cratchit.

“My dear, the children - Christmas Day,” Cratchit warned solemnly.

“It should be Christmas Day, I am sure, on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stinging, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert. Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow,” Mrs. Cratchit said.

“My dear - Christmas Day,” Cratchit said.

“I’ll drink his health for your sake and the Day’s, but not for his. Long life to him. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. He’ll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt,” Mrs. Cratchit said sarcastically.

Scrooge turned and started walking down the street towards the old graveyard, with the spirit beside him.

“I see. Even in the toughest of times and through sickness they celebrate the season. And yet they mock me and feel sorry for me as I refuse to,” Scrooge ponders. “Spirit, take me home.”

“I wish that I could, but my time here in this world has come to an end,” the ghost said as the town clock chimed. The ghost had faded from view by the last chime.

“My fellows, please take me ho –“ Scrooge stopped abruptly, looking past you both.

Act 3 - Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come (250 XP)

Read the following:

Standing in the graveyard was a shadowy cloaked humanoid. No features were visible except for one outstretched bony hand. It was as if the night itself had wrapped itself in a cloak.

“The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come,” Scrooge muttered, wide-eyed as he shuffled towards the graveyard.

“Spirit, it is you I fear the most. You are to show me the things I do not want to see,” Scrooge said.

The ghost said nothing.

“I know what must be done, let us be done with it. Lead on, Spirit,” Scrooge resigned.

The ghost said nothing but opened his cloak wide. Materializing within the cloak was a scene of the town, somewhat familiar but different. The scene zoomed in on a conversation between a group of businessmen.

“He died?” asked one man.

“Aye, and it took forever, did it not?” another asked.

“I wonder what they did with his money?” another asked greedily.

“Who is going to his funeral?” the first asked.

“I will only go if they serve lunch. Otherwise I needn’t go,” the second laughed as the others began to laugh with him.

Suddenly the scene zoomed away to another location in the town, a sort of rundown basement hovel. Inside was a shifty looking fellow welcoming several others bearing wrapped parcels.

“I have these to sell; boots, a sugar spoon, some garments, and linens,” one woman presented.

“And I have these bed curtains, rings and all!” another woman exclaimed.

“All from his house? Very bold, indeed!” the shifty looking fellow said, drawing on his pipe.

“Aye, he won’t need it in the grave,” the first woman noted.

The shifty eyed man produced several coins from a bag and gave them to the women as the scene from within the cloak shifted once

again to that of a bed chamber. On the bed was a sheet draped over a body, cold and unmoving. Scrooge seemed quite uncomfortable and tried to reach out to pull back the sheet, but thought better of it. The scene quickly shifted again, this time to the Cratchit home. Quiet and calm, the home did not seem to be the same. Something, or someone, was missing. Scrooge gasped when he noticed a wooden crutch propped against the wall.

“No, Spirit, not Tiny Tim,” Scrooge was overcome, his eyes welling with tears. “I cannot bear any more. This wretched creature that these people speak of, who is it?”

Silence.



“Who, pray tell me, Spirit,” Scrooge begged. The ghost closed his cloak and pointed a bony finger towards an adjacent gravestone, partially covered with vines. Scrooge leaned over and traced the letters with his fingers.

“EBENEZER SCROOOOOGE!” a voice boomed.

“No, Spirit. Oh no, no. Spirit, hear me. I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been before. Why show me this, if I am past all hope. Good Spirit, your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, changing my life. I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone,” Scrooge begged and pleaded as he backed away from the ghost.

The dark form of the ghost paused for a moment and seemed to be looking through Scrooge and seemingly into his soul. The ghost slowly shook its head and opened its cloak once again. Dust and pebbles all around the cloaked creature began to rise and fly into the shadowy billowy cloak. Scrooge braced himself and clung desperately to a nearby gravestone.

ROLL INITIATIVE!

Scene: Graveyard (20 x 20) with rows of tombstone providing difficult terrain for every other square.

Placement: The ghost is in the middle of the graveyard with Scrooge 2 squares away from it. The PCs start 2 squares from Scrooge. There is also a fountain located 8 squares from the ghost that dribbles with healing water. Drinking the holy water will let a PC spend a healing surge and gain an additional 1D6 hit points. There is only enough water for one drink.

Tactics: The ghost will try to suck Scrooge and the PCs into his cloak with dark vortex. Once it envelopes a creature it will swat at any

others with its boney claw. The escalating vortex will get larger and larger, pulling the PCs closer as they try to get away. Make the PCs feel as if their life force is being sucked out of their bodies. If the ghost envelopes Scrooge for two full rounds, he is consumed by the cloak and dies. Anytime the PCs are adjacent to Scrooge, they can grab him and slide him 2 squares as a minor action, essentially throwing him around. Strangely, Scrooge is unaffected by the necrotic damage of the dark vortex but continues to be pulled by it.

If Scrooge is consumed by the ghost, the PCs have lost. If the PCs perish, Scrooge and the PCs are consumed by the ghost. What happens then? (Hook Alert!)

If the PCs win and keep Scrooge from being devoured, read the following:

As you deal the last mighty strike on the ghost, bands of darkness unravel and dissipate into the night air. Scrooge lays unconscious before you, exhausted. You scoop him up and carry him back to his home and bed chamber. You decide to go to the tavern and wait until the morning to come back for your payment.

Epilogue

Provided the PCs save Scrooge, read the following:

As you are finishing your morning meal and preparing to head back to Scrooge’s house, a local bursts through the door of the tavern.

“He’s gone crazy I tell you! He’s giving away pouches full of gold pieces!” he exclaimed. The whole tavern stood up at once and headed for the windows to see what all the commotion was about.

Passing rather quickly by clad in his coat and hat was old Ebenezer Scrooge, trailed by a young boy struggling to carry a huge turkey.

“Let us hurry, my good man! We must make it to the Cratchits as soon as possible! Boy, will they be surprised!” Scrooge smiled, rubbing his hands together. He then suddenly stopped and looked at you.

“You two...” Scrooge pointed at you, confused. “You look very familiar to me, but I am not sure where I know you from – like in the dream I had last night. It seemed so real. Oh, no time to worry about it now! I am on a mission! Here! Catch! Merry Christmas!”

He tosses each of you a small pouch that clinks with the sound of gold coins as you catch it. Scrooge hurries off down the street telling each and every person he passes, “Merry Christmas!”

Rewards:

Each PC receives a pouch containing 250 gold pieces. If they negotiated with Scrooge in the Prologue, they should have 50 more gold pieces to split.

Experience points should be awarded below only if they completed the encounter:

250 Act 1 – Ghost of Christmas Past

250 Act 2 – Ghost of Christmas Present (skill challenge)

250 Act 3 – Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

126 Minor Quest – Protecting Scrooge

876 experience points maximum to be split amongst the PCs.

Hook Alert!

Here are some adventure hooks that could be included in an existing campaign:

From Encounter 1 – The Grey Foxes:
Do the thieves just fade away into obscurity? Do they plot their revenge on the PCs? Have they infiltrated the Watch or town leadership? Do they hatch a different plot that the PCs stumble upon?

From Encounter 2 – The Holly Wreath:
What if the Ghost of Christmas Present’s holly wreath fell off as he disappeared? What powers could this item have? Does another being find out about the wreath and want it for themselves? Do the PCs decide to go about finding how to return the wreath back to the spirit, which in turn leads them to the Feywild?

From Encounter 3 – The Shadow of Death:
Perhaps Scrooge has lived longer than he should have by buying potions and brews to keep him alive much longer than his peers. Since his passing is overdue, maybe Death still wants him or does she try to recruit them to finish the job that they hindered? Does she now want the PCs instead?

Credits

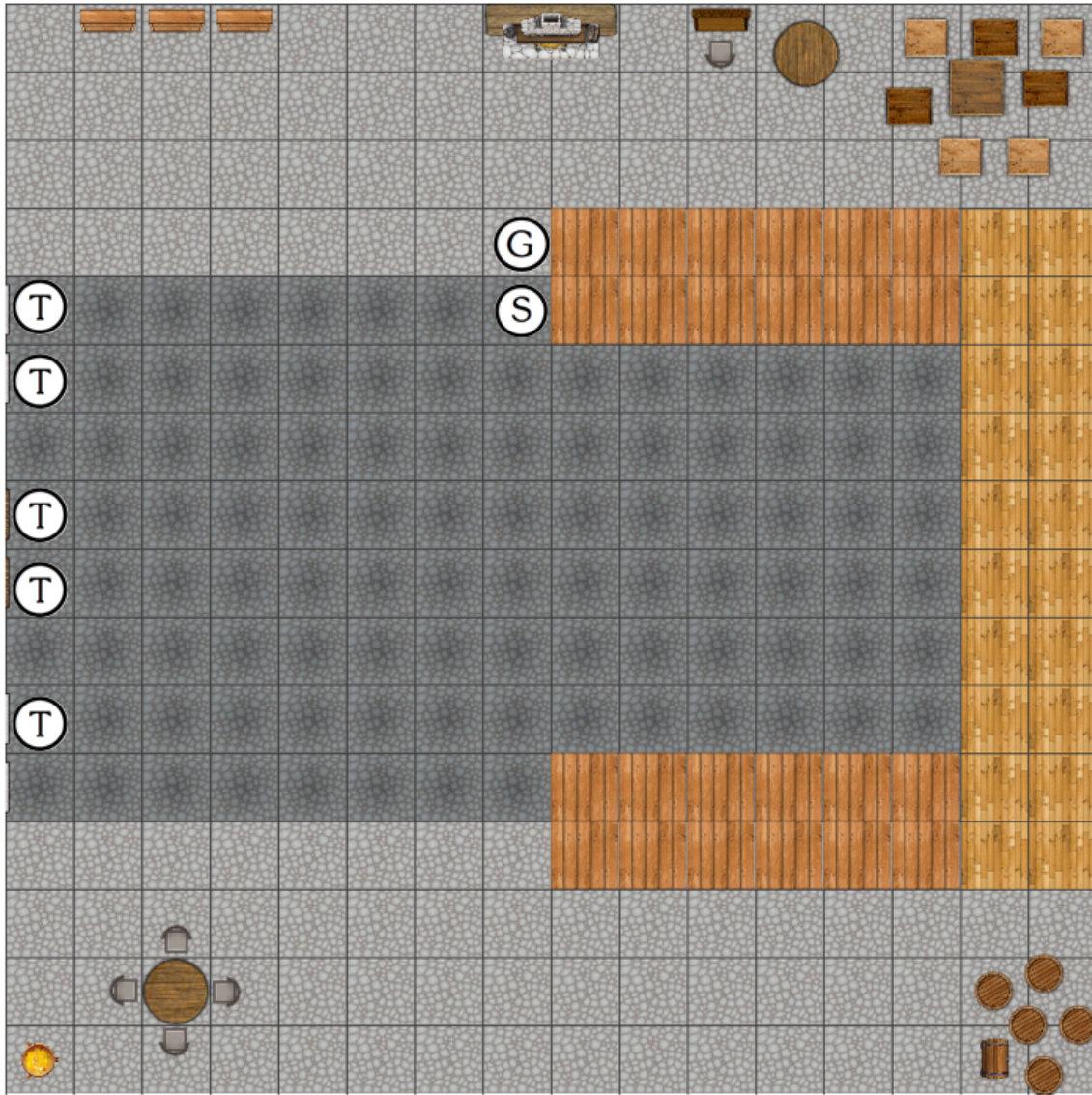
Encounter and Enemy Design - Steve Johnson
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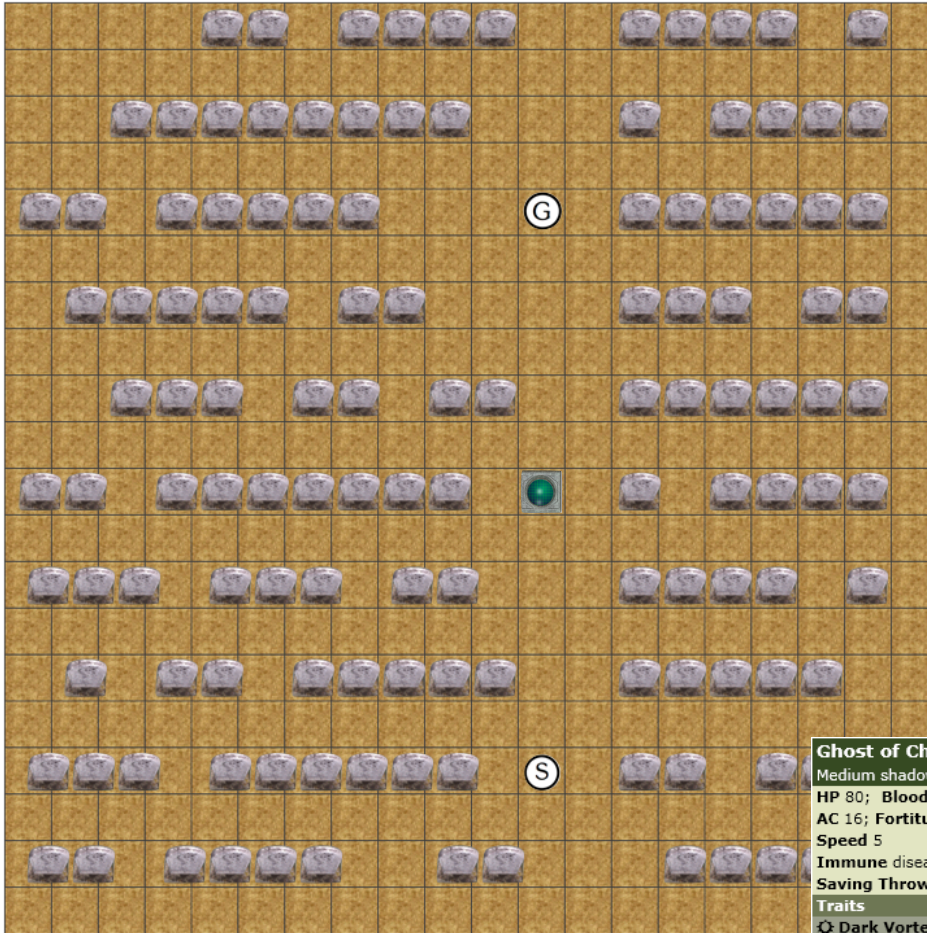
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Ghost of Christmas Past		Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger)		XP 125
HP 37; Bloodied 18		Initiative +6
AC 16; Fortitude 13; Reflex 15; Will 14		Perception +2
Speed 6		
Standard Actions		
⚔ Dagger (weapon) • At-Will		
<i>Attack:</i> Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
<i>Hit:</i> 1d6 + 5 damage, or 2d6 + 6 if the ghost has combat advantage against the target.		
Minor Actions		
🔄 Change Shape (polymorph) • At-Will polymorph		
<i>Effect:</i> The ghost alters its physical form to appear as a Medium humanoid until it uses change shape again or until it drops to 0 hit points. To assume a specific individual's form, the ghost must have seen that individual. Other creatures can make a DC 30 Insight check to discern that the form is a disguise.		
⚔ Shapeshifter Feint • At-Will 1/round		
<i>Attack:</i> Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex		
<i>Hit:</i> The target grants combat advantage to the ghost until the end of the ghost's next turn.		
Skills Bluff +8, Insight +7, Stealth +9, Thievery +9		
Str 11 (+1)	Dex 16 (+4)	Wis 12 (+2)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 10 (+1)	Cha 15 (+3)
Alignment unaligned		Languages Common
Equipment dagger		

Ghost's Thug		Level 1 Minion Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human		XP 25
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +3
AC 13; Fortitude 12; Reflex 14; Will 12		Perception +1
Speed 6		
Traits		
Sniper		
If the thug misses with a ranged attack while hidden, it remains hidden.		
Standard Actions		
⚔ Dagger (weapon) • At-Will		
<i>Attack:</i> Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. AC		
<i>Hit:</i> 3 damage.		
🏹 Crossbow (weapon) • At-Will		
<i>Attack:</i> Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +5 vs. AC		
<i>Hit:</i> 4 damage.		
Triggered Actions		
⬅ Scattering Thugs • Encounter		
<i>Trigger:</i> The thug drops to 0 hit points.		
<i>Effect (No Action):</i> Close Burst 3 (ally minions in the burst); ; the target shifts 1 square as a free action.		
Skills Stealth +8, Thievery +8		
Str 13 (+1)	Dex 17 (+3)	Wis 12 (+1)
Con 13 (+1)	Int 8 (-1)	Cha 8 (-1)
Alignment unaligned		Languages Common
Equipment leather armor, dagger, crossbow, crossbow bolts x10		



Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come Level 2 Elite Controller

Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 250

HP 80; **Bloodied** 40 **Initiative** +2

AC 16; **Fortitude** 14; **Reflex** 16; **Will** 14 **Perception** +1

Speed 5 Darkvision

Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 3 all; **Vulnerable** 3 radiant

Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

☞ **Dark Vortex** • **Aura** 1

Whenever an enemy begins its turn in the aura, the enemy is pulled 1 square and takes 3 necrotic damage.

Standard Actions

☞ **Boney Claw** (necrotic) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 1d6 + 3 necrotic damage, and the target gains vulnerable 2 to all damage until the end of the ghost's next turn.

☞ **Deathly Grasp** (necrotic) • **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d6 + 2 necrotic damage, and if the target is Medium or smaller, it is enveloped. An enveloped target is stunned, blind and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends), and no creature has line of sight or line of effect to the target.

Special: The ghost can envelope only one creature at a time.

Minor Actions

☞ **Escalating Vortex** (necrotic) • **Recharge** at the start of any turn when dark vortex is aura 1

Effect: The dark vortex expands to aura 3. At the start of the ghost's next turn, the dark vortex expands to aura 5. At the start of its following turn, the ghost makes the following attack.

Effect: Close Burst 5 (enemies in the burst); +5 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 1d8 + 3 necrotic damage, and the target is immobilized, blinded (save ends both) and pulled 2 squares.

Effect: The dark vortex aura reverts to its original state and size (aura 1).

☞ **Shadowy Cloak** • **At-Will** 1/round

Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex

Hit: The ghost pulls the target 2 squares.

Triggered Actions

☞ **Terrifying Visage** (fear, psychic) • **Encounter**

Trigger: The ghost is first bloodied.

Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close Blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +5 vs. Will

Hit: 1d6 + 2 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Miss: Half damage.

Str 10 (+1) **Dex** 12 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+1)

Con 14 (+3) **Int** 17 (+4) **Cha** 14 (+3)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** —