

SPOOKY, SCARY SKELETONS

A FRIGHTFULLY FUN 3 – 5 HOUR ONE-SHOT FOR
CHARACTERS LEVEL 5 – 7



By CINDY BUTOR

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A 3 – 5 hour one-shot for characters level 5 – 7

This adventure is intended to be played by 4 – 6 level 5 – 7 characters and can occur in any small town or village. DMs may swap out the Trendy Tressyms for a more well-known faction like the Harpers or the Order of the Gauntlet or simply have the mayor or another authority figure offer the party a monetary reward.

This adventure uses Fear Points, which the DM and/or players can track to determine how frightened they are to be in the house. To learn more, see Part Three: Fear Points.

Part One: Adventure Overview

Hook/Synopsis

You are a group of rough-and-tumble adventurers hoping to join the Trendy Tressyms, the hottest adventuring guild in town. However, their leader requires all initiates spend a night in the Shiver Shack, an old haunted house at the edge of town. If you stay the night, they'll let you join, but if you can't hack it, it's a blacklist from the TTs for life.

The Shiver Shack is actually the lair of a flameskull called Syzygy. Syzygy has lived in the Shiver Shack for hundreds of years, amassing a small army of undead. She finds adventurers amusing and will allow them to enter and explore her domain, periodically sending her undead after them to slowly drive them insane. If they prove that they're strong enough to outlast her initial forays, she'll try to kill them and add them to her undead army.

Unbeknownst to Syzygy, her undead army are tired of going after adventurers. They simply want to sing and socialize, and, so, if they think the adventurers can handle it, they'll encourage them to kill Syzygy, freeing them from her dominion.

Important Characters

- Jukebox-Jams-All-Day, tabaxi **master rogue**: Jukebox-Jams is one cool cat but only wants hardcore adventurers in her guild. She won't tell you much about the Shiver Shack, other than where it is and that she expects to see you on the front porch at dawn.
- Syzygy, flameskull: Syzygy is a 700-year-old **flameskull** from a particularly megalomaniacal

wizard. She controls over 20 undead and is obsessed with proving she's the smartest and most powerful. She likes to toy with people and doesn't listen to her undead at all.

Part Two: The Adventure

Approaching the House

The Shiver Shack is a tall mansion at the end of the road. It has a large, overgrown graveyard in the back with a cracked mausoleum in it and withered trees up front. The first floor has a kitchen, dining room, sitting room, and large ballroom. The second floor is gutted with holes in the floor and bats living in the walls. It has four bedrooms, two with attached bathrooms, a library, a study, and a sitting area. The attic is dusty and cluttered with old, broken-down furniture with an attached turret that houses a wizard's laboratory. The basement doubles as a cellar and dance floor and has a bar and racks of wine along the walls. Syzygy's lair is underneath the mausoleum down a secret tunnel.

As the party approaches the house, they must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, they receive 1 Fear Point.

Shocking Surprises: Exterior

If the party chooses to explore the ruins of the house's exterior, they must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, they receive 1 Fear Point.

Eating or touching any foliage with bare skin requires a DC 12 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the PC takes 3 (1d6) necrotic damage (7 (2d6) if they ate something) or half on a success.

A DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals two intricately carved miniature rooms hidden in the grass by a tombstone -- one of the basement and one of the turret.

Approaching within 30 ft. of the mausoleum from any direction causes *lightning bolts* to shoot out of the tombstones around the mausoleum, forming a protective barrier. PCs must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the bolts. To stop them, PCs must either destroy two out of four tombstones or go to the wizard's laboratory in the turret and deactivate the runes. Tombs have AC 18 and 25 HP. Destroying a tombstone unleashes a level 3 *thunderwave* spell centered on the stone. PCs must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the damage.

If a tombstone is destroyed, six **skeletons** on six **warhorse skeletons** will arrive to try to chase and/or drag away the PCs.

Danse Macabre: 1st Floor

When the PCs enter the house, they must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, they receive 1 Fear Point.

When the PCs enter the house, they find it bustling with a dozen finely-dressed **skeletons**, furiously preparing for a dance. PCs are invited to join the celebration. If they do, they're brought into the ballroom where they must each succeed on a DC 16 Charisma (Performance) or DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to show the skeletons how well they can dance. If PCs try to leave before the dance is over, they must physically fight all 12 skeletons. Once they succeed, the skeletons will let them go. If they fail, they take 3 (1d6) necrotic damage from the house, which reduces their max hit points until they take a long rest.

If PCs don't accept the invitation to dance, the skeletons will then chase them using the chase rules from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Skeletons will start 5 ft., 10 ft., and 15 ft. behind the PCs, and if they overtake them, they will force them to dance. If PCs can get at least 50 ft. ahead of the skeletons, they will give up the chase and return to their dance. The first floor is approximately 120 ft. long and 60 ft. wide.

If the PCs choose to explore the first floor, they can find various treats and costumes. On a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check, they can find a *cloak of many fashions* and *beads of nourishment*. On a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check, PCs realize that many of the skeletons are singing, "Up and down or around and around, kill the skull and we'll be friends!"

Skeletons Won't Leave You Be: 2nd Floor

When the PCs go to the second floor, they must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, they receive 1 Fear Point.

The second floor is filled with a miasma that reduces speed and makes PCs fall asleep. PCs must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw when they enter the second floor and after every 30 ft. of movement (The second floor is 120 ft. long and 60 ft. wide.). If they succeed, they are immune to the effects of the miasma for 24 hours. Every time they fail, their speed reduces by 10 ft. If they go down to 0 ft., they fall asleep. Whenever a PC falls asleep,

four **specters** will emerge to try to throw them out a window, resulting in 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage when they hit the ground. If the PCs choose to take a rest upstairs, the specters will attempt to throw any PC that falls asleep out of the window unless the PCs kill at least one of them.

If the PCs investigate the second floor, they will find several portraits of a gaudily dressed woman with black hair, a diary detailing her descent into necromancy and megalomania, and, if they succeed on a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check, a battered *staff of healing*. Any player with at least a passive Perception of 14 can hear the specters singing, "Syzygy, Syzygy, where are ye; Syzygy, Syzygy, please free me!"

Shrieking & Socializing: Basement

When the PCs go down to the basement, they must make a DC18 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, they receive 1 Fear Point.

The basement is shrouded in an expanded *darkness* spell, which can be turned off by traversing the room and finding a lantern in the middle of it (or by activating the runes in the turret). This requires a DC14 Wisdom (Survival) check at disadvantage (unless the PCs can see through magical darkness).

While the PCs are still in the dark, six **skeletons** will attempt to grab them. PCs must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw at disadvantage (unless the PCs can see through magical darkness). If they fail, the skeletons will steal one item and refuse to give it back unless the PCs agree to kill Syzygy. Even if they don't succeed in stealing an item, the skeletons will plead with the PCs to kill Syzygy for them, promising to invite them to a fabulous party afterwards. If the PCs agree to go after Syzygy, they will tell them where her lair is hidden and suggest they go into the attic to turn off her *lightning bolt* defenses.

Sneak & Scrabble: Attic/Turret

When the PCs go up to the attic, they must make a DC17 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, they receive 1 Fear Point.

The attic is filled with old paintings, mirrors, and furniture, all of them decrepit and covered in moth-eaten sheets. For every party member that chooses to do a Wisdom (Perception) check or an Intelligence (Investigation) check, roll a d4: on a 4, that person will find either two **mimics** or a **rug of smothering** and a **mimic**, who will immediately attack them. On any other roll, they'll find a headless female wizard

figurine, a rusted skeleton key with a skull on its handle, and/or a small ceramic coffin with the figurine's head inside.

To find the hidden lab, PCs must make a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check; if they have already spoken with the skeletons in the basement, they can roll at advantage. On a success, they will find a hidden keyhole, which can be unlocked either with the skeleton key or with a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check using thieves' tools.

The wizard's lab is filled with miniatures of the Shiver Shack and the nearby town of Twobits, though it is quite outdated. A DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check locates a panel of runes. With a DC 15 Intelligence check, PCs can find the rune to switch off the tombstones. Other runes permanently turn off the *darkness* spell in the basement, lift the Fear around the house (thus negating the need to do Wisdom saving throws), and disperse the miasma. A DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check of the shelves reveals a *scroll of fireball* and a *scroll of flaming sphere*.

If the PCs haven't gone into the basement yet, twelve **skeletons** will rush into the attic as soon as they detect any of the runes have been turned off. They will giddily tell the PCs about Syzygy and plead with them to defeat her. If they do, the skeletons will invite the PCs to a big soiree when she's gone. If they don't, the skeletons, four mimics, and two rugs will fight them until the PCs agree to go after Syzygy, though they will try to do non-lethal damage until the PCs kill at least half of their number.

Wake the Dead: Final Battle

Inside the mausoleum are three coffins. A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the middle one is askew and that there is a gap underneath it. PCs can push aside the coffin with a DC 18 Strength check.

Beneath the coffin are stairs that lead into a damp, narrow passageway with empty sconces on the wall. As the PCs move down the hallway, *lightning bolts* begin to criss-cross behind them. If PCs Dash away, they must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 8d6 lightning damage (half on a success). If PCs don't Dash, they must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw.

At the end of the hallway, they find a door. When they arrive, Syzygy speaks into their heads, taunting them. She tells them that she's going to turn them all into her undead minions. PCs must



now make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, they receive 1 Fear Point.

Inside the room is a laboratory with **Syzygy the flameskull**, two **minotaur skeletons**, two **shadows**, and four **zombies**. Syzygy has the following changes:

- 80 HP
- Has the **Legendary Resistance (2/Day)** feat. If Syzygy fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.
- Has three **Legendary Actions (3/Day)**. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only during another creature's turn. She can cast *counterspell*, *toil the dead*, and *greater invisibility* (only on herself) using one action apiece.
- Has **Lair Actions**. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Syzygy takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; she can't use the same effect two rounds in a row and the spells use her spell save DC:
 - A *lightning bolt* shoots from the wall, targeting as many PCs in a line as possible.
 - A *stinking cloud* erupts wherever the most PCs are closely gathered.
 - A *darkness* spell erupts wherever the most PCs are closely gathered.

Syzygy wants to kill the PCs and add them to her collection of undead. PCs can dispel the *lightning bolts* in the hallway by using Syzygy's control panel,

though they must make a DC 15 Intelligence check (at advantage if they already learned how to use the runes in the attic) first to use the panel correctly. Searching the lab reveals spell components for all level 3 and under spells, a partially and poorly constructed **homunculus**, piles of bones, and a battered crown worth 500 gp.

As soon as Syzygy is dead, the other monsters will stop fighting and urge the PCs to stop Syzygy's magical rejuvenation. If they do, they'll start celebrating, and when the PCs return to the cemetery, they will find all the remaining monsters dancing there. If the skeletons have any of the PCs' items, they will return them.

Conclusion

In the morning, if the PCs are still alive, Jukebox-Jams will arrive with a small posse. If the party is dancing with the skeletons, she'll be incredibly impressed and name the PCs "The Party Posse" and give them badges that show they're high-ranking members of the TTs. She'll also give them each a *potion of superior healing* and 100 gp. If they're just waiting on the front steps, she'll warmly welcome them into the TTs and give them each a *potion of healing*, and 50 gp. If they ran away during the night, they'll receive nothing, and she'll have her gang run them out of town.

Part Three: Fear Points

Fear Points stack on top of each other, and a creature suffers the effect of its current level of Fear as well as all lower levels. One Fear Point can be removed by any action or spell that removes a condition; PCs can also remove one Fear Point by taking a long rest outside of the Shiver Shack.

Number of points	Effect
1	You gain advantage on Initiative rolls.
2	You have a 50% chance of hitting an ally the first time you make an attack in a fight (either with a spell or a weapon).
3	You have disadvantage on all Wisdom (Perception) and Intelligence (Investigation) checks.
4	Your speed decreases by 10 ft.
5	You have disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws.

6	You must immediately leave the house; you cannot return until sunset of the next day. If you cannot leave the house, you will take 13 (2d12) psychic damage for every hour you remain in the house.
7	You drop down to 0 HP, though you are stable. You cannot regain hit points until you leave the house and take a long rest.

Resources

Stats for the monsters and NPCs, unless otherwise noted, can be found in the *Monster Manual*. Stats for magical items can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*.

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Biography

Cindy @babble_drabble (Twitter) is a librarian, artist, and content creator from Lexington, KY. She lives with her fiancée Sam and their cat Dinah and spends her time arguing, baking, and playing lots and lots of D&D. She wrote this one-shot because she could not get the Andrew Gold song "Spooky, Scary Skeletons" out of her head.

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