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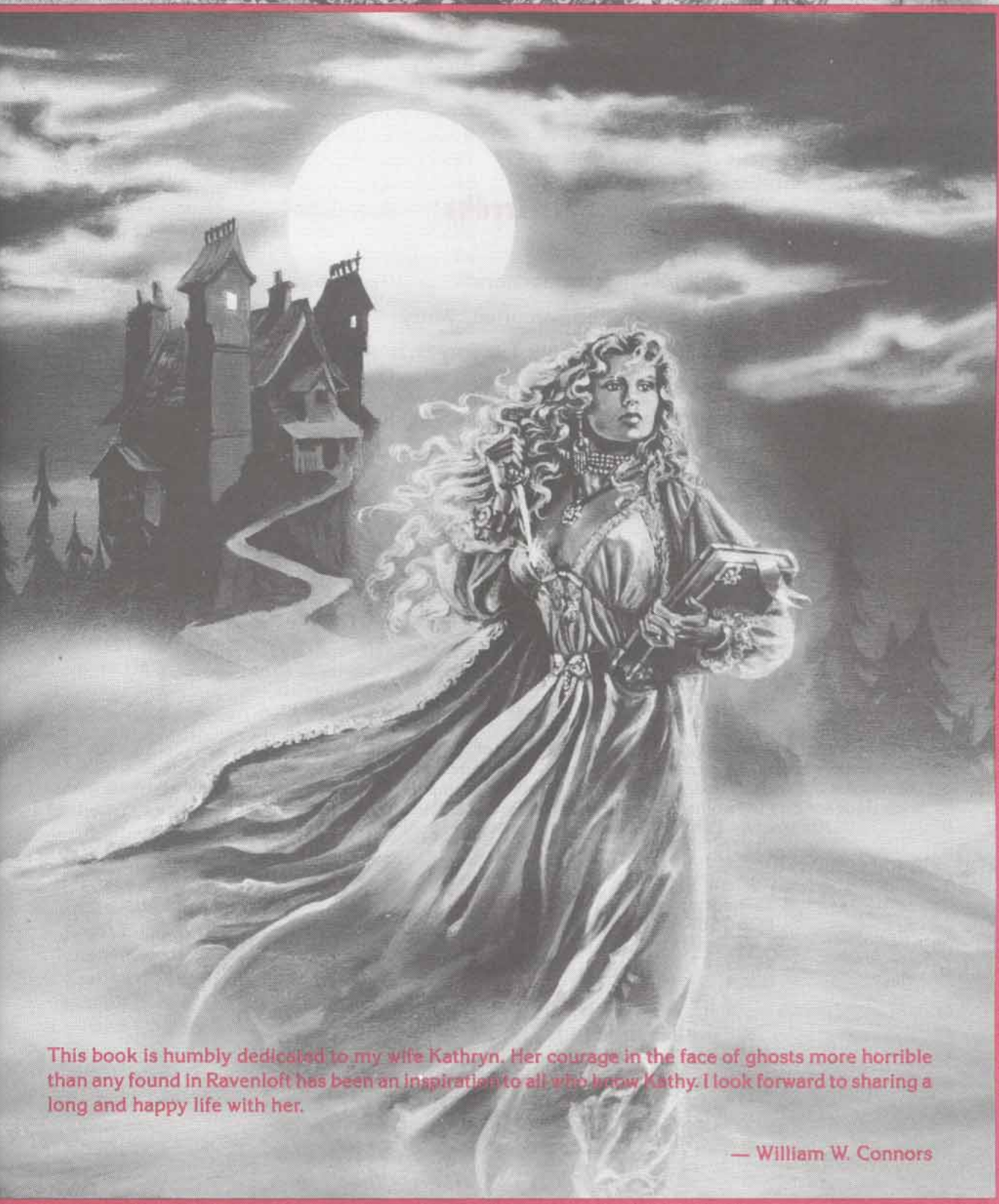
Ravenloft™

Official Game Accessory

Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts



UAN RICHTEN'S GUIDE TO GHOSTS



This book is humbly dedicated to my wife Kathryn. Her courage in the face of ghosts more horrible than any found in Ravenloft has been an inspiration to all who know Kathy. I look forward to sharing a long and happy life with her.

— William W. Connors

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INTRODUCTION



or as long as mankind has kept written records, the comings and goings of spirits have been noted. Some are described as lights or recognizable shapes in the darkness. Others seem to be real, but are nothing more than images of light—as incorporeal as they are unliving. They come in all manner of shapes and sizes. They undertake macabre missions and have any number of motivations. Most are evil, some indifferent, and a few good and kind.

In this work, I shall examine them all. I shall share with you what I can of my sparse knowledge and pray with all my heart that it

may be enough to keep you alive. If it is not, then I pray even more that this knowledge shall be enough to allow you to rest in true death and not to rise and haunt the night as an apparition in our darkened land.

My Life Among the Dead

I have lived a long life. If I am lucky, it shall not end soon. I am in good health, despite all the storms I have weathered. Still, I know that the black shroud of death will one day fall across me. When it does, I will look back upon a life that was long and hard, but not without its rewards. I have done much good—of this I am certain. I shall face the grave with no regrets and but one sorrow. Let me recount it for you.

My first encounter with the undead was with the horrible vampire who called himself Baron Metus. When that fiend stole my beloved son Erasmus and then murdered my dear wife Ingrid, I vowed I should devote myself to the utter annihilation of all his diabolical kind.

The sorrow, of course, is that I have become what I have become at the cost of losing my family. At that time, however, I was a much younger man. I meant only that I should battle the dread vampire in all his shapes—that I

should seek their every lair and see to it that these monsters were destroyed. I did not understand the scope of my quest then. To track down and destroy all the vampires in all the worlds that I now know of is an impossible task—but I have never hesitated.

No single man can do all that I have set forth to do. It is my hope, however, that, by placing what I know in a series of books, I will aid those who would follow me on my quest. If you have seen the eyes of death looking at you, if you have heard a feral hiss in the darkness, if you have known the terror that awaits, then you know the importance of my work. I offer you my heart, my prayers, and—most importantly—my knowledge.

In the three decades that have passed since the death of my wife and child, I have traveled much. I have seen horror in all its shapes. I have faced monsters that could only have issued forth from the deepest pits of evil. In every case I have been tempered by the meeting. Those I destroyed filled me with the energy to continue in my holy work. Those that escaped my vengeance left me the wiser for each such encounter. (Never again, I vowed, would I be as short-sighted in a future meeting.) Those that defeated me—and there have been many despite my undeserved reputation for invincibility—have left me stronger for the wounds inflicted upon me.

How many times have I been driven to death's door by the creatures of darkness? I cannot say. But in every instance I was determined to battle back from the injuries I suffered and to have my revenge. I am a peaceful, merciful man, but such vengeance is sweet indeed.

The Thundering Carriage

How did I, a devoted vampire hunter, come to be an enemy of the incorporeal undead as well? The inclusion was not a difficult one. It began on a cold autumn night in Lamordia. I was close on the trail of a vile

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creature that I call the *child vampire*. The details of my encounter with that dark beast are presented elsewhere (see RR1, *Darklords*), so I shall not dwell on them here. While researching the creature, I happened upon a lonely country inn, the Thistle & Bonnet. The place was so charming and the darkness approaching so fast that I bade my companions stop. We discussed the matter briefly, and then decided to spend the night.

The innkeeper, a cheerful fellow with the unlikely name of Bellikok, saw to our every need. He presented us with a great feast of a dinner, saw to it that our glasses were always full, and never seemed at a loss for some clever comment or anecdote to move the conversation along at a merry pace. In all, a perfect hosteler.

All that changed, however, as the gleaming copper clock on his mantle rang ten. No sooner had the last chime died than a look of concern crept across merry Bellikok's face. I feared that he had grown ill and moved to comfort him. "I am a physician," I said. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

For an instant he seemed taken aback by my concern. Then he allowed a wry smile to cross his face and let out a short laugh. "Would that you could, kind sir," he breathed.

Seeing that my companions were as curious as I about the cause of his sudden change of spirits, I bade him continue. Dropping his head so that he looked only upon the floor and not upon our faces, the innkeeper did as I suggested.

"Do you hear the sound of that carriage, sir? Low and distant, like thunder looming on the horizon?"

I cocked my head and, as he had said, I did indeed hear the sound of a coach in the distance. Still, there seemed nothing unusual about it. Indeed, thinking that it might promise another customer for the night, I offered him that consolation. "Surely you have room for another guest?"

The boundaries which divide Life from Death are at best shadowy and vague. Who shall say where one ends, and where the other begins?

— Edgar Allan Poe
"The Premature Burial"
Tales of Mystery and Imagination

As the sound drew nearer and nearer, he became more agitated. "That conveyance bears no guest I'll have in this place," he hissed. "No, indeed. That carriage rides forth from the gaping maw of blackness itself. I know not where she travels to, but I know what comes with her passing. Here, move to the windows. You'll see what I mean. . . ."

With that, he blew out the lights in the inn and gathered us all about the large window that looked out upon the road. In the distance, we saw an eerie glow moving down the highway toward us. It seemed to be moving at an incredible speed and to be giving off a light such as I have only seen on ships at sea that are wreathed with St. Elmo's fire.

Suddenly the horrific conveyance was upon us. It flashed past our window at a speed I would not have thought possible. I had only the briefest of looks at the thing, but its impression is forever set in my mind. The wagon was large, as bulky as any merchant's coach I've ever

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seen. It was drawn by a team of four great horses from whom all flesh and tissues had been removed. At every step of these skeletal steeds lighting flashed when hoof struck earth. The ebon wood of the coach—carved and etched with evil runes and dark figures—was illuminated clearly by a shower of azure sparks that sprayed away from the wheels as the coach rolled along the road.

As shocking as this macabre vehicle was, its occupants were even more memorable. The coachman was a gaunt and skeletal fellow, well suited to the team he drove. As he passed, I saw him strike at his horses with a whip, the lash of which was composed of pure lightning. When it snapped above the beast, a great crash of thunder roared out and the animals seemed moved to even greater speed.

Through windows set in the coach's doors, I could see the grim passengers of this nightmarish wagon. Gaunt and thin, but these

still draped in flesh, they reached out at us through windows barred with bones. Their faces were pitiful, etched with agony and torment. In the second that they were before me, I felt all of the suffering and anguish that radiated from their tragic faces. These were the damned.

Then, even before I saw it was upon us, the conveyance was gone—racing away down the highway at a speed beyond my comprehension. I was about to speak, seeking to voice my horror, when the innkeep motioned for silence.

Instantly the sky erupted in thunder. Huge sheets of lightning raced from horizon to horizon, shedding a brilliant blue light across the countryside. Rain fell upon us in a mighty cascade, battering the windows with the ferocity of a hurricane and turning the road outside into a morass of mud. The storm, more savage than any I had ever felt before, lasted only for a few minutes, and then it was gone.

"My God," was all I could say.



INTRODUCTION

Overview

In this book, I shall attempt to put forth all that I have learned about the incorporeal undead. I shall attempt to discuss their creation, their habits, their physiology, and their weaknesses. All of this information will, I hope, help others who have chosen to battle the forces of darkness on every front.

I have organized this information into the following chapters:

- **Chapter I: Types of Ghosts.** In the first chapter of this book I will discuss a series of broad categorizations I have made regarding the origins of ghosts. It is my belief that such tools enable us to keep better track of the horrors we must face in this world. By battling them with both the keen sword of ancient knowledge and the powerful arquebus of modern science, I believe we can triumph over the incorporeal undead.
- **Chapter II: Ordinary Powers.** Before one can hope to prevail against the forces of darkness, one must have an understanding of their nature. In this chapter, I detail the common abilities of ghosts and provide some cautionary notes on how one might hope to battle against this supernatural enemy.
- **Chapter III: Extraordinary Powers.** While all ghosts have some things in common, as discussed in the previous chapter, many are unique. Ghosts gifted with special powers can be deadly and must be stalked with great care. In this chapter, I shall examine those powers that make ghosts truly deadly adversaries.
- **Chapter IV: Vulnerabilities.** It is a good thing for us all that even the most powerful of ghosts is certain to have its weaknesses. While some ghosts are among the most powerful of horrors it has been my misfortune to meet, they are all hindered in some way by their past. In my years of battling these creatures, I have yet to

encounter one that did not have some vulnerability that could be exploited in combat. In this chapter, I detail the types of vulnerabilities that one is likely to uncover—and how to take advantage of them.

- **Chapter V: Speak with the Dead.** One of the most valuable tools in the battle against ghosts is information. The old adage that knowledge is power was never more true than when dealing with these ethereal horrors. In this chapter, I shall discuss the spiritualists one is likely to require, guidelines on locating them, and tips on how to spot those who would deceive ghost hunters and make claims of powers they do not have.
- **Chapter VI: Investigating a Haunting.** In this chapter, I shall outline the steps I advocate following in the stalking and destruction of ghosts. I use my experience gained from a most unusual mass hunting to illustrate techniques. It is my belief that failure to follow these guidelines will inevitably result in death . . . or worse.

Editor's Note: The reader will find information directly pertinent to a RAVENLOFT™ campaign set aside in boxed text throughout this book. In addition, there is an appendix at the end of this guide solely for the DM's use. The appendix presents tips for creating ghosts unique to a DM's RAVENLOFT campaign. Also included are a number of helpful techniques for writing ghost-based adventures.

CHAPTER 1: TYPES OF GHOSTS



hosts, spirits, apparitions—call them what you will. They come in many, many varieties. I have devoted a great deal of research to understanding them and the supernatural laws that govern their creation, existence, and destruction. In this chapter, I shall share with you what I have learned about the origins, natures, and abilities of ghosts.

If I were less stern about my desire to know all that I can about the undead—if I were less passionate in my need to uncover the truth about the supernatural, I might long ago have given up my quest. It often seems to me that, as soon as I am

convinced I know all that can be known about these incorporeal creatures, new evidence is presented to me and I must reconsider my most solid convictions. I admit to despair on many occasions—but my yearning to know more is unending and, thus, my work goes on.

Before I continue, I must define an important term: karmic resonance. It is necessary that I do so, for it is at the very core of the subject of ghosts, spirits, and the like.

Supernatural creatures draw power from numerous sources. In my first book, I wrote of the vampire and how the passing of the years allows him to draw more and more dark energy from the Negative Material plane. With each day that passes, vampires become minutely more powerful. Over the course of a month or even a year, this increase is minor. With the passing of a decade or century, however, they can become unstoppable.

But ghosts are not vampires. They draw power not from the passing of time, but from the moment of their creation. At the exact instant that a person's spirit is transformed into a spectral undead, its strength is set and locked by the emotions that surrounded it. I call this lingering energy *karmic resonance*. Thus, the passing of time does nothing to increase the

power of a ghost.

The instant of a ghost's creation is intense. Just as the shock of birth is overwhelming to a child, so too is this sudden plunge into the frigid, black waters of unlife. The intensity of this shock is based wholly upon the emotional and karmic energies of the transformation. In other words, the stronger the emotional state of those present at the ghost's creation, the more powerful the spirit that arises.

Thus, the level of power attained by a ghost is not haphazardly made. Two ghosts, created in similar manners, will be of roughly similar power levels. True, their exact powers are likely to be very different, but the actual danger they pose—their resistance to physical harm, their ability to resist a holy person's attempts to drive them away, or the strength of their special attacks—will be analogous.

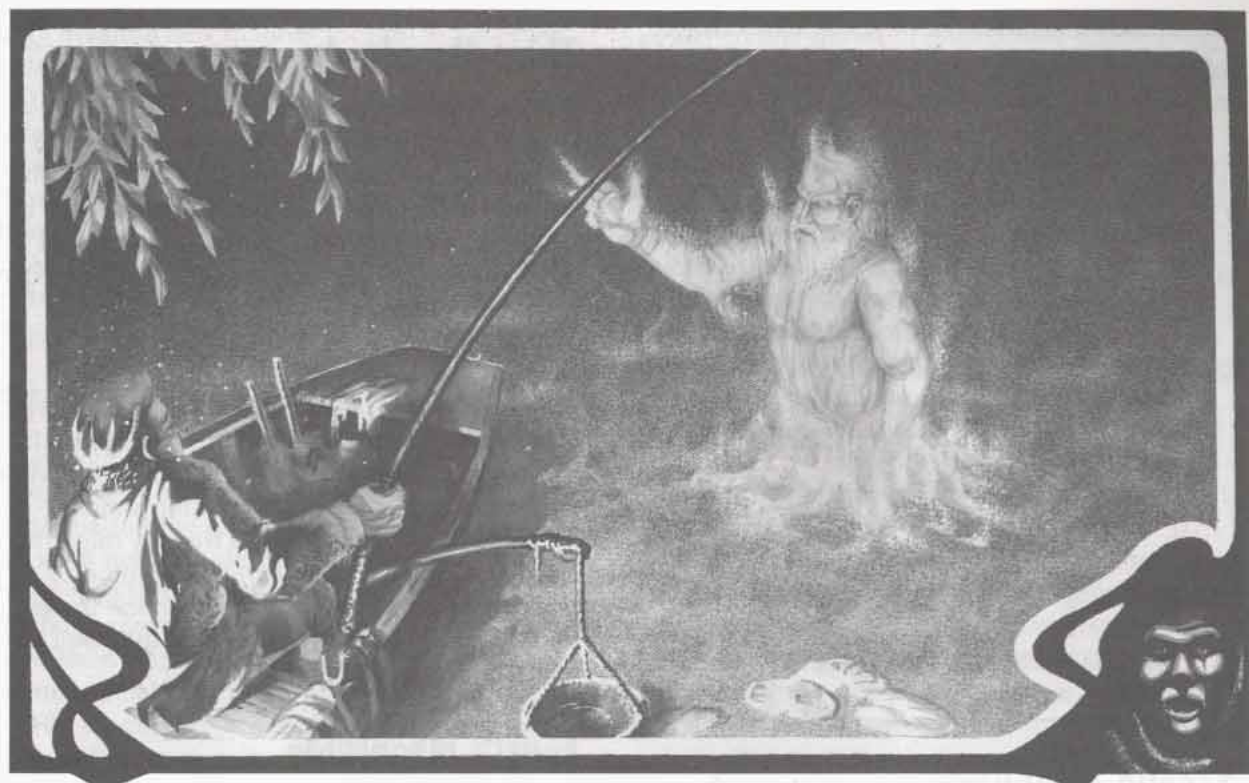
I have chosen to classify ghosts according to six categories: magnitude of power, physical appearance, physical consistency, origin, anchor, and trigger. Please note that there are some ghosts who will have aspects that qualify them for all six categories, whereas others may only fit in a few categories. Note, too, that the distinctions between some of the categories are very fine and may seem confusing to the layman, but this classification serves a purpose and will be helpful to the devoted ghost hunter.

The following text elucidates the terms I use and should prove helpful in any quest to rid the world of ghostly fiends. At the end of this chapter is a simple outline delineating the categories and subcategories by which ghosts may be classified.

Magnitudes of Power

The first category by which I classify ghosts is based on their levels of power, which I call *magnitudes*. All ghosts, regardless of whatever other categories they may fall into, have a magnitude and can be classified by such. (In my previous work, I did much the same with vampires, which I classified

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according to their age. A ghost's magnitude, in this instance, is roughly similar to a vampire's age: The greater the magnitude, the more powerful the ghost; the older the vampire, the more powerful it is.)

The edges of this category are blurred, but I have done my best to describe the magnitudes in a way that will make them useful to those who hunt creatures of the night.

First Magnitude

The least powerful of the incorporeal undead, these creatures are created when there is just enough emotional energy available to empower the transformation. This is, fortunately, the most common type of spirit.

Ghosts of the first magnitude are created the same way as are other ghosts, but they tend to have less dramatic origins. In fact, I have often considered first-magnitude ghosts to be almost boring—their power is weak, their afterlife passive, and their evil subdued.

As an example of this type of spirit, I must present the *Loud Man of Lamordia*—a spirit I found most amusing.

When I was young, I traveled to a small village along the coast. While there, I learned of a spirit who haunted a lake outside town. It seems that those who fished in that lake were occasionally troubled by a ghostly fisherman—a ghost who talked to them about the fine spot he had found for bass, the sudden changes in recent weather patterns, and other trivia. His conversations were so monotonous that it was said to be impossible to avoid falling asleep.

Escaping the spirit's babbling, it seems, was likewise impossible, for the Loud Man would follow the fishermen wherever they went. Only by leaving the lake, and thus abandoning bringing home the evening meal, could one escape this specter. Those who attempted to drive off the fellow found that they could do so easily, but any fish they pulled from the water for the next few months would spoil before it could be eaten.

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The cold stone of the ancient tomb loomed before us. Lifting our lanterns high to light the way, we moved into the crypt. The going was slow, for even the brave dwarf, Geddar Ironheart, was reluctant to intrude upon the resting dead of this ancient place. Bantu, as talkative a swashbuckler I had ever met, was strangely quiet as he strained his eyes to pick out movement in the thundering darkness.

The air, thick and cool, washed around us as if we were wading in a shallow pond. The sounds of our progress—the scraping of cleric Kevlin's boots, the clanking of Geddar's chain mail, and the occasional crunch of a beetle or spider beneath Bantu's shoes—seemed magnified by the shadows around us. I have never suffered from claustrophobia, but I must confess that I felt utterly trapped and isolated in that dark and evil place. . . .

Second Magnitude

Ghosts of the second magnitude are more powerful than their lesser kindred, but they still are usually little more than a nuisance. In addition, they are more aggressive and more easily angered.

In order for a ghost of this type to form, the dying person must be in a state of some emotion. The emotion need not be overly consuming or of great duration, as is necessary for the more powerful spirits to form. For example, someone who dies during a spousal quarrel might have enough emotional energy to attain the second magnitude of unlife, as might an artist who is working on a painting that means a great deal to her. It is sometimes even possible for a man who knows he is going to die—by the hangman's noose, for example—to become a second-magnitude ghost.

The good spirit of the paladin *Kateri Shadowborn*, who is said to haunt a little-visited island domain, is, I believe, an example of second-magnitude spirit.

Third Magnitude

If a ghost's creation places it in the third magnitude of power, it is a much more dangerous foe. Such ghosts are often outright evil and malicious. Their powers are generally such that they can resist much conventional harm, even from magical spells. Often they can cripple or kill opponents with ease.

In order for a ghost of the third magnitude to form, a person must die while in a highly emotional state. Take, for example, a man who is forced to watch his beloved family be cruelly slain by brigands and is himself then killed while still in the grip of his overwhelming anguish. The karmic resonance of this tragedy might be strong enough to create a third-magnitude ghost. Similarly, someone who is in the throes of passion or who is truly horrified at the point of death might attain this status.

Fourth Magnitude

Among the most powerful of apparitions, ghosts of the fourth magnitude are created only through scenes of death that involve great emotional stress or energy. Spirits of this type are generally warped by the power of their emotions, becoming highly aggressive, evil, and cruel. They are almost impossible to drive off or destroy via conventional means, requiring special care on the part of those who would eliminate them.

Rare indeed are the circumstances surrounding a person's death powerful enough to create a ghost of this type. In my travels, I have encountered only a half dozen or so of these evil and dangerous fiends. In each of the cases I came across, the ghost had once been a person who had either 1) embraced death with great fervor or 2) felt himself so powerful that death could hold no sway over him.

The first may be illustrated by the evil *General Athoul*, one of the incorporeal leaders of Darkon's dread Kargot. It is said that his devotion to Azalin was so great that even death

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only meant a new manner for him to serve his beloved commander.

The second is perhaps best illustrated by the infamous *Martyr of the Moors*, a man who sought death as the ultimate step in his devotion to a dark and evil deity, only to find that he had been cursed with an eternal unlife.

As an aside, the reader might be interested to note that the spirit, *Lord Wilfred Godefrey of Mordentshire*, falls into this category.

Fifth Magnitude

The thought alone of these creatures is enough to make any sane man tremble with fear. Fifth-magnitude ghosts are so powerful that I know of not a single case in which one has been destroyed through conventional means. Without exception, ghosts of this magnitude who have been destroyed were done so through some special means of elimination.

The emotional intensity needed to create a ghost of this power is so rare that it happens but once in a very great while. I would dare say that whole centuries might pass without a ghost of this type being formed—something for which we can all be grateful.

Tristessa, the banshee who rules the dark domain of Keening, is one of only two spirits I know who falls into this category. The second is the dread *Phantom Lover*, a spirit who is said to prey upon those poor souls who have recently lost someone beloved to them.

In those cases where this type of ghost is aware of its special weakness (and there are *very few* of this magnitude who are not), woe be the hero who seeks to exploit it, for such a spirit has certainly taken precautions to ensure that the weakness is never used against it. (Weaknesses are discussed in Chapter IV.)

Physical Consistency

The second category into which I classify ghosts is that of physical consistency. Like the preceding category, all ghosts may also be classified according to their consistency.

When one thinks of ghosts, one often assumes that they are intangible things. Indeed, this is most often the case. However, those who assume that it is a strict rule are setting themselves up for a most horrible surprise.

The subcategories below describe the physical nature of ghosts. I must warn the reader that these classifications are broad and, in some cases, as vague as the ghosts they define. I cannot be more clear, for the supernatural often defies mortal understanding.

Incorporeal

This is the stereotypical state of a ghost. Having no physical existence, it moves about unfettered by physical objects such as walls or chains. Such creatures cannot be grappled, for no man can secure a hold on them. Indeed, they are immune to all manner of physical harm—swords and daggers do not bite them, and arrows and quarrels pass right through them. However, magical weapons of lesser or greater enchantment seem able to injure ghosts of this type, as do occasional arms of unique manufacture such as a silver sword.

Such manifestations can obviously pass right through living beings. In most cases, there is no ill effect from such an encounter—although a sense of coldness or apprehension is not uncommon. In rare cases, however, a wholly incorporeal essence may have a profound effect upon an individual as it passes through.

I have myself been a victim of such an attack. As a younger man, I was confident that no incorporeal creature could directly affect me. The reader can imagine my surprise when one of these ethereal beings turned upon me and *flashed* through my body. The instant it penetrated me I was overcome with a feeling of the deepest horror. All my careful plans, I knew, could not prevail against this fiend. I was as nothing. In stark terror, I turned and fled.

It was more than an hour later before I came to my senses. I had been a puppet under the mastery of some fearsome creature, and it had engineered my fear. I can only be thankful that

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the effect of the ghost's passage was not more dreadful—for I have seen the corpses of those less fortunate than I.

Semicorporeal

A specter (such as the bizarre *Strangling Man of Gundarak*) might be seen whose body is largely incorporeal, but who has aspects that are seemingly solid. My experience has proven that the solid areas are not, in most cases, actually *firmer* than the surrounding ethereal body. Rather, the ghost seems able to exert some conscious or unconscious willpower in an almost telekinetic manner. Thus, while a victim of the Strangling Man surely felt the forceful hands of her attacker on her throat, this was a manifestation of a paranormal force and not the actual grip of some solid hand. Were the hands truly substantial, however, the creature would not have been able to pass through walls and doors, as we know it did.

Obviously, this is not a hard and fast rule. I have encountered creatures that did, in fact, seem partially solid. It may be, however, that they were simply better able to manifest this physical force. Whatever the case, these fiends did not seem able to step through solid objects like truly incorporeal ghosts.

The ethereal nature of this type of ghost is such that magical weapons or those of special manufacture are required to inflict any wounds upon the creature. It may be that a blow to a solid area of the ghost would injure it, but such attacks are usually too precise for the average combatant to make in the chaos of melee.

Corporeal

Like ghosts in the shape of inanimate objects, corporeal spirits are far less common than their intangible counterparts. Through mental will or supernatural ability, these creatures have a solid and complete body. Often, the body



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resembles exactly the one they had when alive.

How then, one might ask, do I justify the claim that these are ghosts and not zombies or some other form of undead? The answer is simple: I have seen such creatures myself.

I attended the funeral of a lovely young woman whose resting form was secure in the coffin when a ghost, one who looked exactly as she had, confronted me. We battled fiercely but I held the apparition at bay. Throughout our clash, it was clear to me that this nightmarish creature was as solid and complete a being as I myself, for my enchanted dagger bit into its flesh as cleanly as it would have cut you or me.

In the end, when I triumphed over the creature, the “body” of the ghost (though not that of the girl in the coffin, for I checked) broke down into an elemental mist. The transformation was such that it put me in mind of a vampire. But when a chilling wind howled through the drifting vapors, breaking them up and scattering them freely, I was convinced I had indeed faced something new.

I have since encountered but one other corporeal spirit, so thankfully I believe them to be rare. I can only assume that a spirit of great mental fortitude is required for so concrete a manifestation of the apparition to occur.

Mutable

I would be remiss in my accounting if I did not draw the reader's attention to a type of ghost I can only describe as “mutable.” Spirits of this nature seem able to shift from one form to another with ease. In many cases, this change is only in the state of the apparition. For example, a ghost who has proven itself to be intangible by walking through the wall of a tomb might then become corporeal and lash out at those exploring its coffin.

In many cases, the difference between this type of spirit and its various cousins is very subtle. It could well be, for example, that the aforementioned Strangling Man was able to transform from a semicorporeal state to an incorporeal state—making it a mutable spirit.

Evidence in the case has led me to conclude otherwise, but the point is worth noting.

It has been my experience that ghosts who seem to be of a corporeal nature are, in fact, mutable. They seem freely able to assume an incorporeal state at will. The fact that there are exceptions, however, merits the division of these creatures into separate and distinct categories, as noted above.

Physical Appearance

The third category by which I classify ghosts is that of physical appearance. Like the preceding categories, magnitude of power and physical consistency, all ghosts, too, may be subjected to this classification. A ghost's physical appearance must fall into one of the following subcategories: vaporous, spectral, humanoid, bestial, monstrous, object, preserved, corrupted, distorted, or beauteous.

In my travels and attempts to battle the evil of the undead wherever it may stand, I have encountered so many unusual ghosts that it seems impossible to think of them as variants on a single theme. In most cases, a ghost will look as it did in life or, more precisely, as it did at the time of its death. In some cases, however, the ghost's appearance is transformed—perhaps by becoming vaporous or spectral.

I have found that the incorporeal undead come in a great variety of shapes and sizes. While the typical image of a “ghost” is that of a translucent creature of more or less human visage, it is dangerous to expect this. Yet, for all their dissimilarities, I have found that ghosts share a number of physical characteristics. Thus, I have been able to categorize most apparitions in the ways I describe below.

Vaporous

Many ghosts lack the power or desire to assume a recognizable physical shape. They often appear as a misty cloud or swirling fog. In some, features can be discerned while in others there is nothing so recognizable. Most often,

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those who come into contact with this type of ghost describe it as cold or damp.

Ghosts of this type may have special abilities associated with their form. I recall one man who told me the tragic tale of a vaporous form that descended upon his family one evening in their home. As the mists engulfed them, the air became infused with a foul essence that was unfit to breathe. Gasping and choking, the man dragged himself clear of his home before losing consciousness. When he awoke, he found that only he had survived.

Spectral

Some ghosts appear as a point of brilliance that looks not unlike a will o' wisp or magical *light* spell. These points can vary greatly in intensity, although I do not believe one can always gauge the power of the creature by the magnitude of light it gives off. In some cases, the emotional state of such ghosts is reflected by the hue of the light.

Ghosts of this type are often accompanied by a telltale sound such as a whistling or humming. I have heard tell of spectral phantoms that were accompanied by a most singular ringing said to be much like the tinkling of crystal bells.

Humanoid

This type of ghost is believed by many to be the most common. Humanoid spirits look much as they did in life. They are clearly of humanoid shape, although not always fully defined. Such a ghost, for example, might have a well-defined head, torso, and arms but have legs that trail away as a cloud of vapor.

Stories are told in hushed tones by the inhabitants of Staunton Bluffs of a faceless horror that roams the streets on those nights when thunder rumbles across a cloudless sky. It is said that this horror kills its victims and steals their faces to ease the eternal agony it suffers. I have seen the body of one of its victims, and the sight of the faceless corpse

was—to say the least—ghastly. My best guess, although I have never encountered the creature itself, is that this is a humanoid ghost who has an ill-defined face. I can only assume that some facet of its creation accounts for its unusual appearance and behavior.

Bestial

We have all heard stories of phantom hounds that roam fens and marshes in search of mortal prey. This example illustrates yet another type of ghost—the bestial. I have heard stories of ghost sharks that prowl the Sea of Sorrows, wolf spirits that stalk the woods of Kartakass, and other manners of beastly spirits.

In some cases, bestial ghosts seem to have a kinship with like creatures of mortal nature. The aforementioned wolves, for example, have been reported leading a pack of true canines. Whether these animals followed the creature of their own volition or out of some magical dominance I cannot say.

Monstrous

It is not unreasonable to believe that there are ghosts who stem not from humans or demihumans, but from monsters. Indeed, I have recorded in my journals a number of encounters with such creatures. Without exception, a monster who is transformed into an undead spirit is even more horrible than it was in life. In many cases, they not only retain their past powers and abilities, they gain new ones because of their horrible metamorphosis.

The most frightening creature of this type that I have encountered was a gruesome medusa; I had vowed to help a friend who found it lurking beneath the mountains of Tepest. We had sought out the creature, believing it was as mortal as any of us. By the time we discovered our mistake, half of our party was slain—either turned to stone by its deadly gaze (which it had retained from its mortal form) or drained of life by its chilling touch (which it had gained upon becoming a ghost).

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Unprepared for a battle with such a fiendish creature, we were forced to withdraw. In the months that followed during which we regrouped to prepare ourselves for another assault on the ghost, it began to venture out of its lair and strike at the innocents of that region. By the time we were able to destroy the phantom, nearly two dozen people had been killed—many of them close friends. It was a hollow victory indeed.

Object

As impossible as it may seem, I have come across objects that are, as far as I can tell, actually ghosts. To say the least, they are very rare. I believe that ghosts of this type are formed when an individual is greatly attached to or associated with a physical object. Upon the individual's death, he is anchored to that object so strongly that the object itself is transformed into a ghostly state.

In half of these cases, the ghost object is physically transformed so that it bears the countenance of the individual. Needless to say, this can be a difficult type to identify. In other cases, the object itself appears ghostly.

As an example of the latter kind, I offer the *Phantom Axe of Gildabarren*. Some fifty years ago, a series of murders occurred in an isolated dwarven community in Darkon. I was in the area and joined the investigation. We soon found that the murders were being committed by what seemed to be a magically animated battle axe.

With the aid of a talented spiritualist, however, we were able to uncover the truth: This weapon was imbued with the spirit of a dwarven warrior named Gildabarren.

Gildabarren had been exiled from his community as a young man, and he had returned to haunt it upon his death. His spirit had focused its energy on the axe, which was an heirloom of great importance to his family. The karmic resonance surrounding his tragic drowning death was so strong that the axe itself became, in effect, Gildabarren's spirit. With this

... One by one, we examined the caskets that lay in the recessed burial chambers. Without exception, each and every one of them had been defiled by grave robbers. Keulin muttered a holy vow under his breath, for such sacrilege weighed heavily upon his heart. As he lifted his head from a silent prayer for the dead, Geddar cried aloud.

As one, we swung about—steel flashing in the darkness of the tomb, glinting off the guttering light of our lanterns. A row of spectral figures stood before us, blocking our exit from the tomb. Bantu, ever the proud swashbuckler, stepped forward to defend us should they attack.

Strange and ethereal creatures were they, barely visible as clouds of wispy vapor and twinkling, shimmering lights. As we watched, they resolved themselves into more familiar forms. Bantu cursed under his breath and then stepped forward. . . .

information, we were able to overcome the menace and put this unsettled soul to rest.

Preserved

This is the most common state of an apparition. Ghosts who are in a preserved state are unchanged from their appearance at the time of death. In cases where the ghost's living form died of unobtrusive means (poison, a deadly magical spell, and the like), the ghost will look just as it did when alive. Violent death marks, as from a sword wound or similar attack, will be fully visible. In extreme cases, where death was the result of an overwhelming injury, the form of the ghost may be horribly mutilated. I have seen the apparition of a man who died in a burning house, and it was, I assure you, a most unpleasant sight.

Corrupted

Some ghosts will reflect the appearance of their corpse as it is in the grave. As time passes, the

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ghost will begin to look rotted and decayed, just as the body does. Corrupted ghosts are often so horrible to look upon that they inspire fear and revulsion in the strongest of men. I have seen many of these creatures in my travels and can assure the reader that this effect does not lessen with time—there is something utterly macabre about these unearthly, rotting images that challenges one's reason.

In some cases, where the body has been preserved, the visage remains unchanged though the ghost is, in fact, corrupted. I have heard stories from a reliable source in the distant land of Har' Akir of a ghost who rose from the body of a mummified priest when the rituals surrounding his death and burial were not correctly completed. The ghost was mistaken by many adventurers for a mummy—an error that cost most of them their lives. Only through the efforts of a local priest was the true nature of the creature uncovered. The ghost was returned to a restful death upon completion of the proper rituals and sacraments.

Distorted

Some apparitions have their physical appearance twisted and distorted in ways that can hardly be described. These creatures are nightmarish reflections of what they were in life. I have heard it said that they are aspects of the madness that must surely exist in the tortured mind of a ghost. Whatever the cause, they are horrible to look upon.

Many examples come to mind, but I think that none is perhaps more awful than the dreadful *Baying Hound of Willisford*. This foul creature looked, from a distance, to be a great mastiff or hunting dog. When examined more closely, however, the hound was really a man whose body was warped so that it resembled that of a great canine. The transformation seemed to cause it pain, for it let out such cries of agony that they were mistaken by the locals for the frightful howling that gave the creature its name.

I cannot account for the strange shape of this creature—I merely recount its tale. Its origin remains a mystery to me, as does its fate, for I don't know if it still exists or if some brave adventurers have been able to dispatch it.

Beauteous

Some ghosts assume an appearance that is almost angelic in its innocence and seeming passivity. They take on the guise of the most beautiful of women, the most handsome of men, or the sweetest of children. In most cases, the ghost can still be recognized by those who knew it in life. The creature's appearance, however, is more perfect than it could ever have been in the natural world. All of its less admirable qualities are softened or replaced in ways that make it endearing and alluring.

I remember when I first encountered such a creature and it opened its arms to me. It came in the form of a lovely girl who had raven hair and the dark complexion of the tropics. In a voice so sweet that even now it sends shivers through my body to think of it, the fiend invited me to embrace it. It whispered to me of its desire for me and its love for me. A part of me knew that it lied, but I could not resist. Had it not been for the intervention of a close friend, the thing would have killed me that night.

Such ghosts are uniformly evil, using their veil of illusion to lure victims close so that they may lash out at them. In many cases, spirits of this type are able to *charm* those who knew them in life.

Origins of Ghosts

The fourth category by which I classify ghosts is through their origins. Although most ghosts will fit into one of the subcategories I discuss below, other means of origination should not be discounted.

I have, over the years, collected hundreds of documents that detail (or profess to detail) the origins of numerous ghosts. In many cases, I have been able to assemble a number of papers

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or accounts detailing the creation of a single apparition. One might think that so many references could not help but provide a clear and insightful view of the events leading to the creation of a ghost. Rather, the converse is quite often true.

In those instances where two or more authors chronicle the details by which a specific haunting has occurred, I have found myself confronted with conflicting facts, opposing theories, and assorted conjectures and opinions that cloud the matter as surely as the swirling fogs of autumn hide the face of the moon.

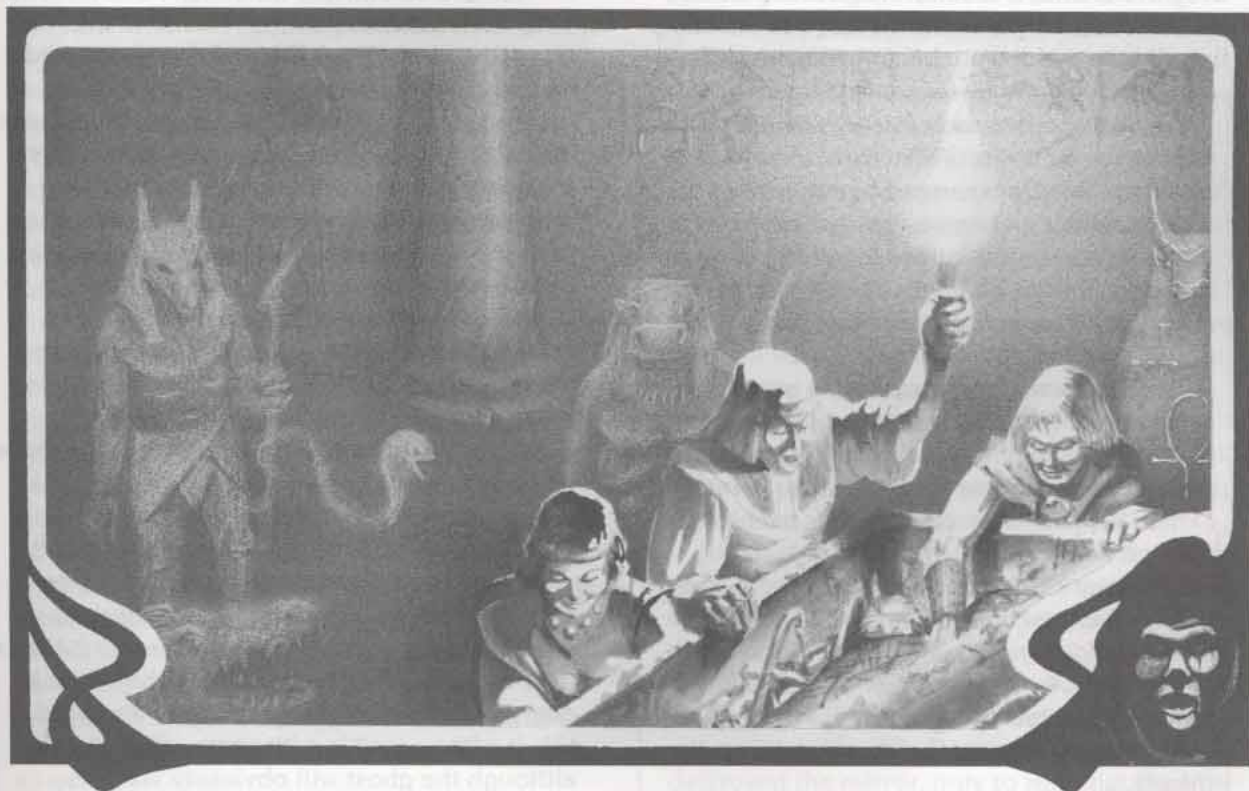
Still, putting aside the doubtful and less reliable accounts, there does emerge a certain pattern. Based on this pattern, I have been able to classify most ghosts according to their origins. In some cases, this involves the manner of the person's physical death; in others, it depends upon the events of the person's life. Occasionally, events that occurred soon after death play a part.

I have come across eight methods or motivations through which ghosts seem to originate: sudden death, dedication, stewardship, justice, vengeance, reincarnation, curses, and dark pacts. There are likely to be other situations through which ghosts may form, but those below seem the most common.

Sudden Death

A ghost can be created when an individual unexpectedly dies. The spirit of the doomed person simply doesn't realize it is dead. Spirits of this type tend to retain the alignment they held in life—at least at first. As the years flow by, however, they become less and less sane. Eventually, either they assume a personality that is hostile to the living world around them or they slip helplessly into madness.

Consider the case of the infamous *Laughing Man* who is said to haunt the Valachan countryside. I have no fewer than five accounts



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of his “death.” While they all differ in details, the important points match perfectly.

The Laughing Man was a hunter who often set traps in the woods near his home. Tending the trapline required him to spend the night in the woods, something many folk—myself included—are reluctant to do in that land. Because of this, the hunter would often go into the woods with several of his neighbors in the mistaken belief that there would be safety in numbers.

One night, the group completed the chores and settled down to an evening of stories around the campfire. While the hunter was consumed with laughter following the telling of a joke by one of his companions, a group of bandits attacked them. The hunter was slain by a single arrow that struck the back of his head.

Magical conversations with the spirit of the Laughing Man reveal he did not know what happened to him by the fire. He watched the massacre, unable to affect anything in any way, as the bandits swept down and killed his friends. Only in the end, it is said, when he turned and saw his own body lying at the edge of the campfire, did the awful truth become clear to him.

. . . The apparitions before us seemed to come from all walks of life. There were common folk (transparent and vague but clearly visible) and heroes, too, of some long-forgotten conflict, clad in armor and wielding swords. I had no idea how long they had rested here before the vandals gave them cause to return.

Keulin raised his holy symbol, a gleaming silver trident that seemed to give off a faint glow of its own, and beseeched his god for protection from these restless spirits. Somehow I knew it wouldn't be enough. This was their place, a domain of and for the dead—we would have no power over them here.

“Van Richten!” called Bantu. “Begin your work; Geddar and I will hold them for as long as we can!” As the brave pair raised their magical weapons in my defense, I opened the leather pouch that we had recovered from the thieves. . . .

Dedication

Some ghosts are drawn from beyond the grave out of devotion to a task or interest. A learned scholar who has spent her life researching ancient tomes in an effort to decipher a lost language might return to haunt her old library if she died before completing her studies.

Dedicated ghosts are almost always anchored (a term I discuss on page 22) to a specific place or item. This is similar to ghosts who are stewards, as noted below.

Stewardship

Among the most fascinating spirits are those I call stewards or sentinels. These ghosts are seldom truly evil, and they seek only to protect something that was important to them in life. In almost every case, these spirits are anchored to a specific person, location, or object—although I have heard reports of wandering spirits that seek to guard over travelers in general or some other less clearly defined group. (See the classification on page 22 for information about anchored spirits.)

Stewards are quite adamant about their desire to protect the thing to which they are anchored. In general, their power is greater than that of other ghosts, for they are strongly dedicated to their task and seem to draw energy from their bond to the material world. I cannot help but pity the rogue who attempts to loot a family crypt that is protected by a sentinel spirit, for it will bend every bit of its will against him and seek to destroy him utterly.

Among the most common stewards are those who appear to guard an ancestral estate. This type of spirit is often at the root of many “haunted house” stories, for they can be quite violent when confronted with trespassers or other unwelcome (by them, that is) guests.

It is seldom possible to remove a spirit of this type except by destruction of the thing that it guards. In the case of a building or an object, this is often possible with some effort—although the ghost will obviously lash out

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sharply in an attempt to thwart this endeavor. In a less manifest focus, such as when a ghost is determined to watch over its descendants, this can be almost impossible to accomplish.

Justice

I have come to the conclusion that this category is distinct from the following one, vengeance, for several reasons. Perhaps the most important of these is the fact that ghosts who seek justice almost uniformly were good people prior to death. Additionally, these ghosts never act upon imagined wrongs and, for the most part, are satisfied with the *correction* of a wrong—even if this means that those who wronged them go unpunished. In short, this type of ghost has a certain nobility as opposed to those who seek only to wreak revenge.

To make this distinction clear, consider the well-known case of the *Headless Gypsy*. Here we have a man who was cast out from his people, the Vistani, for a crime he did not commit. When he returned to them in an effort to plead for reconsideration, he was sentenced to death and promptly beheaded. That night, his spirit returned in the shape of a swirling cloud of sparkling, shimmering dust. This vaporous apparition was able to move freely about the camp and seemed to take great delight in mischief, for it was able to manipulate physical objects to some extent.

As time passed, this ghost became more and more troublesome to the Vistani—valuable objects would vanish or break, horses and dogs would be released and then frightened into flight, and so on. In an effort to stem this tide before it could become dangerous, one of the elder women of the band used her prophetic powers to contact the spirit. Under the Headless Gypsy's guidance, she uncovered evidence that cleared his name of any wrongdoing. As soon as this was done, the ghost vanished and was never seen again.

How sweet life would be if all such hauntings could be so easily ended and all restless spirits so quickly stilled.

Vengeance

Perhaps the most common type of ghost is the vengeful spirit. This is the unrelenting soul of someone who suffered a great wrong in life. Unable to avenge himself in the mortal world, this apparition rises from the grave to harass or destroy those who maltreated him in life.

The desire for revenge burns strongly in such creatures—eventually turning their minds to evil. It seems, in fact, that the desire for revenge is so corrupting that even those who seek an understandable vindication grow evil.

It matters little, I believe, whether the wrong that has caused such a spirit to rise from the dead is real or imagined. Indeed, in many cases the most evil and powerful of these spirits thrive on the belief that they have been slighted when no evidence of prejudicial treatment exists.

A perfect example of this type of ghost can be found in the domain of Tepest. There, several years ago, I ran into a most unusual spirit whom I recounted in my journal as the *Reflection of Evil*.

It seems that there was a young woman named Keni who was prone to jealousy whenever her husband Drakob even spoke to another woman. I have never found anyone who would even begin to suggest she had cause for this, for Drakob was as devoted and loving a spouse as any woman could want.

Her jealousy became so consuming, however, that she was unable to stand the thought of his being gone from their home for more than a few hours at a time. One day, while Drakob was going about his business in the town of Viktal, a fire broke out in their home. Unable to escape the sudden, horrible blaze, Keni died.

As the months passed, Drakob mastered his grief. He eventually wooed a young woman named Zjen and, more than two years after the death of Keni, he remarried.

On Drakob's wedding night, however, the image of his first wife appeared in the mirror on a dressing table. The frantic newlyweds destroyed the mirror, only to find that the one

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they replaced it with was promptly inhabited by the same apparition. Over and over again, they discarded or destroyed mirrors in an attempt to drive this phantom from their life. Eventually, they were forced to flee from their home, for every reflective surface began to bear the image of the dead first wife.

The couple's new house seemed a safe enough refuge for the first few weeks, but soon it was being haunted by the jealous eyes of Keni. When Drakob beseeched a priest from the local church to drive the restless spirit back to its grave, matters grew worse. The exorcism enraged the spirit and, if anything, magnified its power. On the night after the attempted banishment, as Zjen looked down and saw the reflection of the dead girl in a bucket of water, a spectral hand lashed out at her. Although it seemed unable to touch the flesh-and-blood woman, it left a horrible scar upon Zjen's face. The wound was unresponsive to medical care, and Zjen soon sickened and died.

When last I spoke with the widower, Drakob

told me that he was still being haunted by the image of Keni and that he dared not make another attempt to drive it off for fear that matters would become even worse. I do not know what has become of him, but I left him in a state of mental exhaustion that was as close to death as any living man can bear. My heart goes out to him, but he made me swear not to interfere, and I could not refuse him.

Reincarnation

This manner of apparition is extremely rare and is absolutely distinct from the others described in this book. Although I have never encountered such a creature, I have it on the most reliable of accounts that they do exist.

A reincarnation, or descendant, spirit can occur when an ancestor of exceptional willpower chooses to return to "life" by usurping the body of a descendant. The victim of this assumption must be a direct relation, and the importance of blood ties in this

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diabolical relationship cannot be overstated.

Once the ghost has gained control of the host's body, it utterly dominates the descendant's spirit. Unlike other forms of ghostly control, however, the victim is not instantly killed by the domination. He may linger on for some years before finally succumbing to the evil within him. Yet there is hope, for the removal of the intruding spirit frees the body to return to its natural owner. Usually, a dominated individual will have no memory of the events that took place while he (or she) was dominated.

Curses

Ravenloft is a land of the accursed. I cannot say with certainty how it came to be this way, but it is so. There are those who say that each of us lives under the looming shadow of some dark curse. For myself, I can think of no greater weight to bear than the memories of my beloved Erasmus and dear departed Ingrid. Some inhabitants of Ravenloft, however, are cursed in ways unimaginable to the common man—they are shackled by unlife.

Ghosts of this type may be created by a curse that is external in origin. For example, a man may offend an ancient and powerful Vistani woman who chooses to retaliate with the dreaded *evil eye* of the gypsies. Under the power of such a spell, the offender might be condemned to live out eternity at the spot where his misstep was made until the gypsy takes pity and releases him from the curse.

Ghosts may also be forged by a curse brought upon them by wrongs committed during life. These curses are far more horrible than those laid on by an outside party, for there is no quick solution by which the victims may be released from their suffering—suffering they themselves caused. Further, those who condemn themselves in this manner are uniformly evil and seldom repent in the afterlife.

To illustrate the latter type of curse, consider the mysterious *Counting Man of Barovia*. My

research indicates this is the spirit of a wealthy and powerful man who had been miserly and stinting all his life. When he passed away, no one lamented the loss of such a cold, cruel person. On the anniversary of his death, the Counting Man was seen wandering the streets of Barovia, dressed in the rags of a pauper and begging for change. All through the night, the Counting Man roamed the darkness. Those who dropped a coin in the spirit's cup (which seemed, curiously, quite able to catch and hold their money) were left in peace. Those who did not contribute to this ethereal beggar were attacked and driven screaming into the night, aging many years from the encounter.

Dark Pacts

The final method by which ghosts can be formed is something that I shudder to mention. But the truth is that there are those who trade away their humanity for the eternal life of the undead. They make a pact with the dark side.

It is my belief that, without exception, these people cannot even begin to understand the scope of their thirst for immortality. The ramifications of this desire to survive beyond one's own death are staggering. That, coupled with the weight upon one's mind of the centuries of ghostly life that follow, are far too heavy for any man to bear. In the end, madness and destruction loom up to claim he who would barter his life away in so vain an attempt to cheat the master of death.

Of course, entering into a pact with some being or force is difficult, for creatures capable of bestowing the gift (or curse, rather) of immortality in any form are rare. Most commonly, these pacts are made with the vile creatures that lurk in the Outer Planes. Those who seek to strike a bargain with these forces of the supernatural must first locate such beings and attract their attention. This in itself is a dangerous and foolhardy thing to do. In almost every case, dealing with such powerful, evil creatures results only in tragedy and death.

Once someone makes contact with a creature

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capable of granting his wish for immortality, he must offer some payment for the “boon.” In many cases, this favor will take the form of a service, as material wealth means little to fiends of this power. Often, the task will do nothing to further the goals of the beast, but will instead provide the fiend with chaotic amusement.

In order to illustrate this type of origin, I must recount a story that causes me much heartache—for it involves a close friend. When I was a boy, I knew a bright and energetic fellow named Eldrenn Van Dorn. We were close childhood friends, but we were separated when his parents moved to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Years later, I saw Eldrenn again.

At first, I did not recognize him. He was gaunt and pale, looking almost as if he hadn’t eaten since last I had seen him. His eyes were dark and seemed to look right through me when he spoke. The striking contrast between this shell of a man and the robust boy I had known could not have been greater. The fact that he was now a sparkling, transparent ghost seemed of only secondary importance.

We talked. As the hours passed, he told me of his life. He explained that his family had settled not far from one of Darkon’s largest cities and that he had been raised in an atmosphere of happiness and prosperity. As he entered his teen years, his mind began to wander and he looked beyond his father’s tinsmithing business.

He explained that his senses had seemed to him shallow and incomplete, except for the ability to see something *more* than what was there. I nodded, for I had heard of this yearning from others who were called to the magician’s path. Eldrenn was born with the blood of commoners in his veins, but the mystical fire of an enchanter lay in his soul.

Over the course of the next few years, he began to study wizardry. His powers grew slowly at first, but he found he had a natural affinity for the working of magic. Eventually, he became quite powerful. In fact, he found he could learn nothing more from his studies and

set out to contact the only man who seemed a suitable mentor to him—the dreaded Azalin. My poor friend seemed hesitant to say the name, and he was slow in telling me of the foul pact of obedience he swore to the dark lord.

Eldrenn spent months under the guidance of this powerful figure. All the while, he learned more and more—not only about magic, but about Azalin himself. It was through my talk with Eldrenn that I learned the horrible truth about the Lord of Darkon’s true nature.

What Eldrenn did not know, however, was that Azalin was teaching him powers he could never fully contain. In the end, those powers destroyed my friend—consuming his flesh and blood and stealing the magical power he had accumulated in his life. Tragically, death was not a release for Eldrenn. The powerful oath he had sworn anchored him to the servitude of Azalin for all time, even beyond death itself.

Our interview ended when Eldrenn looked past me, out a window, and into the distance. I turned and saw that he was entranced by the distant spires of Azalin’s castle. He bade me farewell, for his master was calling him, and he began to float slowly toward the castle. As he moved, he faded from sight and was gone. It was several hours before I was able to compose myself and force my mind from the dreadful tale I had been told.

Anchors

A fifth category in which ghosts may be classified is whether they are anchored. Many spirits are tied to a specific person or place. Some are found haunting a singular item. I call these *anchored* spirits, for just as a ship’s anchor keeps it in place during rough weather, so do the bonds that these ghosts feel for certain things prevent them from ranging afar. In some ways this is a blessing. Finding a spirit who is known to be anchored to a specific house, for example, is far easier than finding a ghost who roams the countryside seeking revenge for its death.

Anchored spirits can, however, be more

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horrible than their wandering counterparts. Usually an anchored ghost is far more powerful. They tend to be extremely aggressive, often becoming territorial and protective of the region or object to which they are secured.

Spirits can be anchored by one of three things: relationships, places, or items.

Relationship

This anchor connects a spirit to an individual. In some cases, a ghost's relationship with its anchor is adversarial, in others symbiotic, or—on rare occasions—even beneficial.

The majority of personal anchors are formed when a person has served as steward to a family line. If the karmic resonance surrounding the faithful servant's death is strong enough, his soul is transformed into a ghost. His magnitude is dependent upon the emotional energy at the time of death, and he is also a ghost whose origin is that of stewardship. Likewise, in this instance, he is an anchored spirit, for he is anchored to the family he swore to serve.

Occasionally anchored spirits can form from those who seek revenge against a single person. Such spirits are obviously hostile.

Interestingly enough, personal anchors can be passed on. Thus, a ghost who returns to haunt the woman who had wronged it in life might drive its primary victim to destruction and then transfer its obsession to the woman's daughter and so on throughout many generations.

Place

It may be that this is the most common type of anchor, or at least the most well known. Who among us has not heard tales of a haunted grove where none dare travel after dark? Who has not heard of a house said to be home to the lingering spirits of the family who built it?

In most cases, spirits who are anchored to a specific place are stewards. They will not allow any desecration of the region in which they live. Generally, only acts of violence against the

... Geddar brought his axe down in a long, sweeping arc. His blade passed through two of the ghosts, causing them to cry out in pain. In retaliation, one of the other spirits surged forward and reached out its fingers to brush across the brow of the dwarf. He seemed unaffected at first, but then a look of horror spread across his face such as I had never seen in a dwarven warrior. Geddar fell, clutching his chest, and I knew in my heart that we would never hear his booming laugh again.

As I placed the last of the amulets back in the coffins, Keulin began to pray again. He called upon his deity to return these lost souls to the peaceful sleep of the dead.

Too late for our beloved Geddar, we watched as the phantasms began to fade from sight. Then the evil of this place vanished.

— Dr. Rudolph Van Richten
Private journals

region they defend will anger them; in other words, those seeking to pass through the area will not be troubled so long as they show proper respect. In rare instances, the mere act of trespassing upon the soil protected by a specific spirit is enough to earn its wrath—and possibly the trespasser's death.

In the distant and elusive land of Har' Akir, for example, each and every tomb is said to be watched over by the spirits of those who are interred there. Grave robbers who disturb their sleep, it is believed, will bring death and destruction upon themselves for the crimes they are committing against the dead.

While I have never been able to prove this, I had occasion once to speak with an ancient warrior who, although he claimed to be but seventeen years old, was on the verge of death from the frailty of many decades. He assured me that the rumors told of Har' Akir's guardian spirits are true—and I must say I felt moved to accept his testimony.

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Item

Perhaps the rarest form of anchor is that of a spirit's attachment to a singular item. I have personally never encountered such a spirit, but I have heard the tales and read the accounts by sources whom I consider credible. Thus, I include these ghosts in my work.

In order for a spirit to become anchored to an object, that object must have held great significance for the person in life. The case that best illustrates this, at least in my mind, is the tragic yet fascinating tale of the *Gray Lady of Invidia*.

This woman seemed tied to a small cameo she wore constantly. I believe the brooch had been given to her by her young son as a birthday gift. But the boy was killed in an accident that very day, and her mind became fixed upon the item as a last link to her lost child.

When the woman died some years later, her will requested that the trinket be buried with her. Her sister, however, had always coveted the pretty brooch, and she removed it from the body just before the casket was sealed. In the months that followed, she was driven to madness and death by the spirit of the Gray Lady.

Things did not end there, however, for the cameo changed hands several more times. In each instance, it brought grief and destruction. Eventually, a young wizard who had a keen eye discerned the focus of the suffering. He saw to it that the Gray Lady's body was exhumed, and the charm was at last laid to rest with its rightful owner. Once the coffin was again sealed and returned to the earth, the hauntings ceased.

Triggers

The sixth and final category I will discuss is that of triggers. Generally, once a ghost has been created it becomes a permanent inhabitant of the world. It will remain in existence until its goals are accomplished, it is laid to rest by the actions of mortals, or it is utterly destroyed in combat.

Sometimes, however, a *trigger* is involved that links the ghost to appearing at a certain event, time, or under certain conditions. Triggers can be thought of as temporal anchors, if one wishes, for that is essentially what they are.

Time

Ghosts who are triggered by the passing of time can be troublesome to track down and destroy, for one seldom knows where to begin looking. For instance, if a ghost rises every 100 years from a certain tomb, the origin of its curse is soon lost to memory. Furthermore, a ghost hunter might feel he has destroyed the apparition when, in reality, it has simply gone into "hibernation" for another century.

A natural phenomenon may trigger the appearance of some ghosts of this type. For example, the night of the full moon might bring forth the spirit of a slain constable who makes his lonely rounds just as he did on the night he died. And the return of a blood-red comet to the skies above a harbor town might herald the appearance of a ghost ship.

Action

Some ghosts are triggered when a certain action is performed. In a sense, the guardian spirits of Har'Akir might be regarded this way, for they are harmless unless their tombs are violated. Disrespect of the dead is the most common trigger for a ghost.

Generally, the arrival of an action-triggered ghost is violent and immediate. Let us take, for example, the case of a steward ghost who returns to haunt anyone who defiles the home in which it lived. The descendants of the ghost sell the house to a man who wishes to destroy it in order to make room for a larger structure. As soon as the first of the demolition workers begins to practice his art, he finds himself confronted by the misty, howling shape of the house's steward. Hardly a typical day's work, wouldn't you agree?

TYPES OF GHOSTS

Cyclic

Cyclic ghosts are an uncommon type of spirit. They seem, for whatever reason, to be trapped in a repeating loop of time. Their actions are forever dictated by this repetition because they pursue a course in time as unbreakable as the mightiest chain. The tragic bussengeist, a tortured spirit forced to witness one horrible disaster after another as the years go by, is a perfect example of a cyclic ghost.

On a much less dramatic scale, I once read of a spirit who climbed the same set of stairs in a church's clocktower every time the clock chimed twelve. His walk would begin just as the first bell sounded, and he would reach the top step just as the last one ended, only to fade away once he had completed his journey. This apparition was more a curiosity than anything else as long as it was left alone. Those who interfered with its climbing, either purposefully or accidentally, met with a gruesome end: The creature's merest touch caused flesh to run like water from their bones.

Conclusion

As the reader will surmise after reading the above information, classifying ghosts can be a time-consuming task. However, the ghost hunter who has done the requisite research will be equal to the challenge of returning spirits to their proper resting place. One such task is understanding as much as possible about the type of ghost, its origins, and its manner.

The following outline may help the reader classify any ghosts he or she encounters.

I. Magnitude of power

- First
- Second
- Third
- Fourth
- Fifth

II. Physical consistency

- Incorporeal

*Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was white as leprosy,
The nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.*

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge
Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner

- Semicorporeal
- Corporeal
- Mutable

III. Physical appearance

- Vaporous
- Spectral
- Humanoid
- Bestial
- Monstrous
- Object
- Preserved
- Corrupted
- Distorted
- Beauteous

IV. Origins

- Sudden death
- Dedication
- Stewardship
- Justice
- Vengeance
- Reincarnation
- Curses
- Dark pacts

V. Anchors

- Relationship
- Place
- Item

VI. Triggers

- Time
- Action
- Cyclic

CHAPTER II: ORDINARY POWERS



alling any aspect of a supernatural being's abilities ordinary is, admittedly, deceiving. After all, even the most rudimentary apparition, the lowest of first-magnitude ghosts, can do things beyond the ken of mortal science. Thus, the reader must understand that what I mean by *ordinary* is "common" or "typical" (as opposed to the *extraordinary* or unique powers I discuss in the next chapter).

But before I begin discussing these ordinary powers, I must first mention some fundamental truths about our world. These truths will act as a frame of reference for the

reader. However, much of what follows will be difficult (if not impossible) for the reader to believe, but I must beg that this text be treated as truth. For many years I personally did not believe what I am about to reveal, but at last the ideas presented to me began to seem logical.

Over the years, I have become aware of something that, at first, caused me great concern. Interviews with one or two people whom I formerly dismissed as insane have brought me to the inescapable conclusion that our land is not the only world in existence. Nor is it a world in the sense of which most outsiders think. I was long in learning to accept this odd fact, but I must encourage the reader to be more open-minded about such things than I myself have been.

On the fabled world of Oerth, I have heard, it is possible for a man to travel in any given direction and eventually return to his starting point. Further, I must point out that no magic is involved in this. At first, this seems absurd—how can one return to the point at which one began a voyage if one constantly travels away from it, and no enchantment brings one back to that point? The answer, if one pauses to think about it, is fairly obvious: These other worlds are great spheres.

The traveler to whom I spoke seemed to take it

for granted that all worlds are spherical. She found my belief that our land is a flat surface very amusing. I must say, however, that I have traveled from the coast of the Sea of Sorrows in Mordent due west until I came to the easternmost regions of the twisted Nightmare Lands—and I am certain our world is not a sphere.

It seems our land is immediately surrounded by a belt the sages call the *border ethereal*. This border is a transient thing that permeates our land. It is, in fact, as much a state of being as it is a place of existence. It functions as an intermediary between the land of Ravenloft and the Ethereal plane.

Ghosts (and other incorporeal beings) in Ravenloft become nonsolid by entering the border ethereal just as they would a normal world. Curiously, however, they are unable to take the step from the border ethereal into the Ethereal plane itself. It seems that there is some mystical force at work that prevents them from moving beyond the border.

I cannot account for this effect nor even define it clearly. We are all, I believe, prisoners of some greater force in Ravenloft. What motivates or maintains this force, I cannot say.

But enough discourse on the conjectures of sages. The background the reader now has should provide a reference point for the following "ordinary" powers of ghosts: insubstantiality, invisibility, rejuvenation, immunity, racial abilities, class abilities, and creation of undead. Although all ghosts have the first four ordinary powers, the remaining three are dependent upon the individual ghost.

Insubstantiality

A ghost's most well-known power is, without doubt, that of its ethereal nature. Being a nonsolid creature, the ghost is not restricted by physical barriers and can come and go as it pleases. Its movement is limited in some cases by an anchor or a magical border it cannot cross, but for the most part a ghost cannot be constrained physically.

In its insubstantial form, a ghost is immune

ORDINARY POWERS

to harm from normal weapons. Even the mightiest dwarven axe or the purest elven sword will not cleave that which is ethereal. No, only magical weapons can harm the ethereal creature. In addition, those enchanted weapons effective against a lesser ghost may have no power against a greater one, for the spirit's resistance to attack is directly based upon its magnitude.

I must warn the reader, however, that I have encountered some spirits who seemed more resistant to harm than I would have expected from their apparent magnitude. Either these ghosts had some sort of additional protection, or their true magnitude was cleverly concealed.

The ghost's intangible state is, I believe, proof that it exists primarily in the border ethereal. If one were able to enter that mysterious realm and confront a ghost on its own territory, I speculate that it would seem as solid as you or I. It might even be possible to battle the creature with nonmagical weapons and to destroy it just as one would a mad dog.

Mutable and Semicorporeal Spirits

Mutable spirits are able to become ethereal or tangible at will. As soon as these creatures assume a corporeal state, they become vulnerable to physical weapons.

I would be remiss in my charge to instruct would-be ghost hunters, however, if I did not warn the reader that this is not always the case. On more than one occasion, I have heard of the death of someone who found that his nonmagical blade was useless against a truly corporeal spirit. Similarly, those mutable or semicorporeal spirits—who seem able to become partly corporeal while retaining a primarily incorporeal state—do not become vulnerable to mundane weapons.

As I described earlier in Chapter I, these spirits do not actually become partially solid. Rather, they seem able to focus their energies in such a way that they can affect their physical surroundings without becoming a part of them.

As the young woman moved toward Alanik, I raised my crossbow to warn her off. The light of the fireplace danced on the silver quarrel; I felt confident in its power.

To be sure, it was very nearly impossible for me to believe that so fair and innocent a girl could be responsible for all the deaths in town, but the evidence was conclusive. Then, as she moved nearer my companion, I saw her nature plainly in the way the moonlight streamed through her body—she was utterly ethereal.

She reached out in anticipation of taking Alanik in her vile embrace, and I tightened my grip on the weapon and fired. The quarrel cut cleanly through the air, plunged into her breast, and emerged unslowed from her back. As it buried itself in the far wall, my confidence in the silver quarrel was shattered. I knew that no earthly weapon could protect us. . . .

Ghost's Magnitude	Armor Class*	Plus to Hit**
First	0/8	+1/0
Second	-1/6	+1/0
Third	-2/4	+2/+1
Fourth	-3/2	+3/+1
Fifth	-5/0	+4/+2

* **Armor Class:** The first number is the ghost's Armor Class when it is ethereal and attacked by nonethereal foes. The second number is the AC of the ghost when it is either corporeal or attacked by a foe who is also ethereal.

** **Plus to Hit:** The first number represents the minimum plus a weapon must have in order to harm a ghost when it is ethereal and attacked by nonethereal foes. The second number represents the enchantment needed when the ghost is either corporeal or attacked by a foe who is also ethereal.

Invisibility

Another power of a typical ghost is its ability to become invisible at will. Creatures moving about in the border ethereal are not readily visible to those on the Prime Material plane or the demiplane of Ravenloft. Invisibility seems to be a side effect, if you will, of the ghost's ability to exist within the border ethereal.

There are numerous ways to detect a ghost who is not yet visible, although they are almost all magical. The most common means employed is the use of a *detect invisible* or similar spell. I am also told that there are some persons who are able to sense the presence of ethereal creatures by means of innate psionic abilities. And it is said that the Vistani can always sense the presence of the incorporeal, although this may be an old wives' tale.

In most cases, a ghost must become visible (if not tangible) to attack those in Ravenloft. Only the most powerful and deadly of ghosts are able to attack without revealing their presence to their victims.

Nonmagical means of detecting invisible and incorporeal creatures are generally of no use. For example, scattering a fine layer of dust or flour across the floor of a room might well cause a corporeal being who is invisible to reveal itself through the making of footprints. An incorporeal creature, however, would leave no such sign of its passage. Similarly, attempts to discern the presence or location of an incorporeal creature by making sweeping passes with a weapon or other object will generally fail. An incorporeal spirit can be detected in this manner only if the object or weapon used to probe the area is magical and its enchantment strong enough to actually strike the ghost.

Rejuvenation

As strange as it may seem, it is possible to drive off a ghost by physical combat. Doing so, however, often requires a magical weapon or spellcasting abilities. Those

without such tools stand little chance of harming, let alone destroying, ghosts.

Even if one has the physical ability to harm an incorporeal spirit, however, the task is only half-completed. Most ghosts are able to strike down a mortal with but a few blows thanks to their special powers. Conversely, it usually requires a great effort on the part of many individuals to inflict enough harm to a ghost to drive it off or destroy it. I have heard tell of apparitions who were beset by a team of adventurers and managed to not only survive the attack, but to utterly annihilate the party.

This is partly due to a ghost's ability to regenerate itself, though ghosts do not regenerate in the way that vampires and certain other creatures do. This is not to say that a ghost who is badly injured in a skirmish today will be whole and hardy on the morrow—quite the reverse. Rather, there is an important difference in the ways in which a ghost is able to heal itself of injury as opposed to the ways in which other creatures recover from damage.

To heal themselves, ghosts are able to employ a process I call *rejuvenation*. Unlike regeneration, which implies a healing of wounds at a greatly accelerated rate, rejuvenation allows the ghost to absorb the essence of the Ethereal plane that surrounds it, thus restoring itself to full vigor.

This process is taxing and demands the ghost do nothing for some time after the assumption of ethereal matter, rendering it vulnerable should it be forced to rejuvenate during a combat situation. As a rule, a first-magnitude ghost can heal any injuries sustained at any time, but it is then helpless to act for an hour afterward. The duration of this "resting time" lessens with the power of the ghost until, at the fifth magnitude, a ghost need only rest for ten minutes after rejuvenation.

As a word of caution, I must advise the reader that I have, on rare occasions, encountered ghosts who seemed able to heal themselves more rapidly, perhaps by a process I can only liken to regeneration.

ORDINARY POWERS

Ghost's Magnitude	Hit Dice*
First	1-3
Second	4-6
Third	7-9
Fourth	10-12
Fifth	13+

* **Hit Dice:** This lists the range of Hit Dice commonly available to ghosts of a given magnitude.

Exceptions to this range are not uncommon.

Immunity

Being undead, ghosts have a natural resistance to many forms of magical attack. As one might expect, this is a characteristic that they share with many other undead creatures. In the text that follows, I shall examine each of the most common spell immunities.

Magic Resistance

From time to time, a ghost hunter may encounter spirits that are immune to forms of magic. As a rule, the more powerful a ghost the more resistant it is to spells. In general, this is manifested as a blanket resistance to magic of all types. More information on this broader, more powerful, type of spell immunity is found in Chapter III.

Biological Spells

The very nature of the ghost—that of an unliving creature—makes it immune to all manner of magical spells that depend upon life or life's essence for their effects. Perhaps the most well-known example of this resistance is the natural immunity that all undead have to any manner of *sleep* spells.

The list on the following page was compiled with the aid of a powerful magician in the land of Barovia. The reader will find all the spells she has ascertained are useless against the undead because of their unliving nature.



ORDINARY POWERS

Wizard Spells Useless Against Ghosts

Avoidance/attraction*

Blindness

Cloudkill

Contagion

Deafness

Death

Death fog

Energy drain

Finger of death

Haste

Hold animal

Hold monster

Hold person

Irritation

Magic jar

Otto's irresistible dance

Polymorph any object

Polymorph others

Power word, blind

Power word, kill

Power word, stun

Sink

Sleep

Slow

Vampiric touch

Priest Spells Useless Against Ghosts

Animal growth/shrink animal*

Cause blindness

Cause deafness

Cause disease

Hold animal

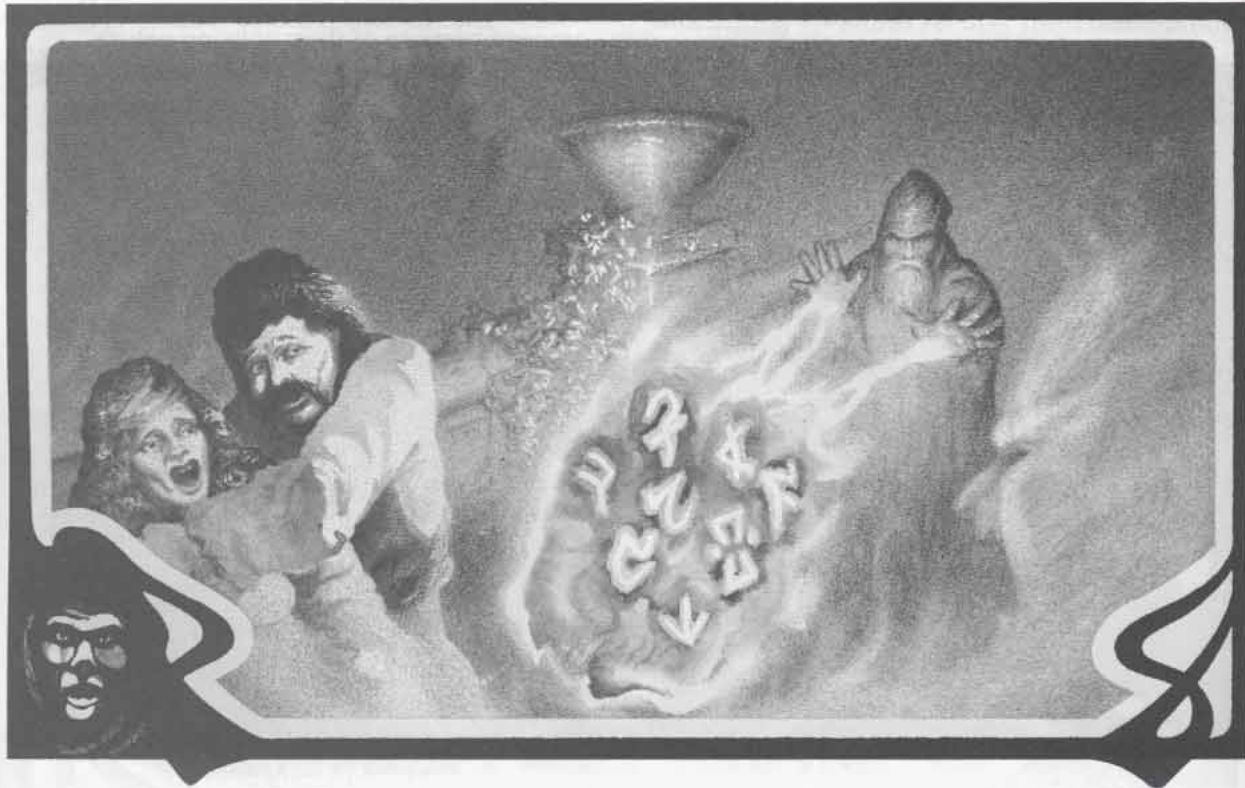
Hold person

Regenerate/wither*

Restoration/energy drain*

Speak with monsters

* These spells are the reversed versions of their more common counterparts.



ORDINARY POWERS

Unique Immunities

In some cases, a spirit's resistance to magic is based upon its origins. For example, I have heard tell of the ghost of a young woman who died when an avalanche of snow swept away her mountain chalet. This ghost was immune to harm from all spells that did not employ cold, ice, or the like as a part of their magic.

Normally, spirits who are immune to some type of magic are more vulnerable to others. In the example presented above, the apparition of the alpine girl was more greatly affected by a spell such as *cone of cold* than would normally be expected. In extreme cases, it might be impossible to drive off or destroy the spirit unless the magic to which it is vulnerable is employed.

Racial Abilities

Although ghosts acquire new abilities from their undead status, a number of spirits also retain the natural abilities of their racial origin. The ghost of a dwarf, for example, might retain its natural infravision as well as its resistance to spells.

Not all spirits retain these abilities, but enough do so that it is important to note this possibility. Racial abilities most likely retained seem to be those intrinsic to an apparition's new life.

Class Abilities

The knowledge that a ghost possessed when alive is seldom lost to it in the transformation to unlife. Thus, many of them retain the abilities of the profession they pursued in life. In the least of these cases, this might include such common skills as cooking or carpentry, both of which have little importance to the incorporeal apparition. Far worse, however, are those spirits who retain their knowledge of formidable magic, innovative battle tactics, or even the mysterious powers of the psionic mind.

... Seeing that my quarrel had not slowed the phantom, Alanik Ray backed away, pulled his leather satchel to him, and began to rummage through it in search of something unbeknownst to me. The phantom beauty turned toward me, confident in the impotence of our defenses. Its slender, pale hands reached out for my throat, and I found myself unable to look away from that angelic face.

Suddenly, Alanik Ray shoved me roughly aside. I slipped and fell. As I watched in stunned silence, unable to move, the foul ghost spread its arms and took my companion instead in its deadly embrace.

To my surprise, the great detective seemed unharmed. Indeed, the ghost threw back its head and let out a scream of agony—Alanik Ray had impaled it on a shaft of gleaming crystal.

— From *The Life of Alanik Ray*
as noted by Arthur Sedgwick, Physician

Creation of Undead

In approximately half of all ghostly cases, an apparition has the ability to cause those it kills to rise as some form of undead, not necessarily the form of another ghost.

If the ghost also has the ability to command undead, then these newly created fiends fall instantly and totally under its control. The type of undead spawned by a given ghost differs greatly from ghost to ghost, but the new undead almost always share something of their creator, notably its powers and abilities.

In general, a ghost is only able to employ this power when it slays someone with its primary special ability. Thus, a ghost capable of draining life energy might have this power in addition to the drain life energy ability. If so, those who died from this ghost's special ability—that is, who died from having their life energy drained away—would rise again as lesser forms of undead.

CHAPTER III: EXTRAORDINARY POWERS



have dealt thus far with the abilities common to most spirits. In this chapter, I will discuss the paranormal powers I have encountered only in specific ghosts.

Over the years, I have battled or researched more ghosts than I care to remember. Often, these creatures were unlike any others I have encountered. Thus, despite my attempts to classify them, I must confess that each and every ghost is unique. One might encounter one hundred wolves in the forest, and although each is different from its brothers in coloration, size, and temperament,

these differences are nothing when compared with the radical differences I have found in ghosts.

On the pages that follow, I have recorded twenty-one of the more extraordinary powers and abilities of the incorporeal dead. (They are arranged alphabetically.) I take heart in the idea that any single ghost usually has no more than one or two of these powers, but bear in mind that there are those who have more. On one truly horrifying occasion, I was forced to confront a spirit who had no fewer than *six* of these extraordinary powers. I barely escaped that encounter. Four of my closest friends were not so lucky.

Accelerate Aging

Some ghosts are able to cause an unnatural acceleration in the aging of their victims. I have seen this process in action—watched as someone's hair turned from brown to gray to silver, seen wrinkles stretch across a previously taut face, heard the cries of pain as arthritis spread through now-fragile bones—but I cannot explain it.

This is, I believe, similar to an ability drain, but this unnatural aging affects the victim's entire physiology rather than some specific

aspect of it.

Some ghosts seem able to manifest this destructive power by a simple touch. The general effect is a rapid acceleration of biological functions such that the victim instantly ages many years.

As one might imagine, accelerated aging can be deadly to those of us who are, well, we shall say "less young" than others. I myself have been cursed by an aging attack on one occasion, and I believe I was fortunate that the blow dealt was not more severe and the effects more deadly.

Other, more powerful ghosts are able to induce this aging in those who merely look upon them. This effect is fiendishly lethal because the ghost is protected by this power while at a distance, safe from many forms of attack. A mitigating factor is that sometimes this power requires the potential victim to make eye contact with the ghost. Discovering the difference between the two, of course, is fraught with difficulty. Thankfully, ghosts of this type are very rare!

Ghost's Magnitude	Priest's Level*	Years Aged**
First	5	5–20 (1d4 × 5)
Second	7	10–40 (1d4 × 10)
Third	9	15–60 (1d4 × 15)
Fourth	11	20–80 (1d4 × 20)
Fifth	13	25–100 (1d4 × 25)

* **Priest's Level:** A saving throw vs. spells is allowed for those affected by this power. Priests at or above the levels indicated are assumed to always make this saving throw successfully. Other characters earn a +2 bonus on their saving throw if they are two or more levels above the level indicated for priests.

Thus, if a 6th-level priest is immune to the aging attack of a given apparition, an 8th-level fighter would make a saving throw against it with a +2 bonus.

EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

**** Years Aged:** This is the number of years a victim is aged; it is determined by the power of the attacking ghost. For ghosts who cause aging simply by being seen, the number of years aged is fixed at the minimum for that power category. Thus, a fifth-magnitude ghost would cause anyone simply seeing it to age twenty-five years. Actually being touched by the ghost, however, causes variable damage as noted in the column. In all cases, the aging is irreversible except by means of certain magical spells as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Cause Despair

Some spirits are able to cause those near them to lose hope and to become convinced that the cause for which they are working is lost, whatever the truth of the situation. Persons under the effect of this aura generally become lethargic and depressed.

In some cases, people affected by this power become frustrated and prone to violent outbursts. I have seen more than one party of adventurers fall to bickering and fail their quest, despite the fact that success seemed in their reach.

In almost every case, this power functions as a simple aura that affects all those within a given area. Fortunately, removal from the proximity of the ghost mitigates this despair. Adventurers quickly return to normal stout-heartedness.

Ghost's Magnitude	Radius of Aura*	Negative Modifier**
First	25 feet	-1
Second	50 feet	-1
Third	100 feet	-2
Fourth	200 feet	-3
Fifth	300 feet	-4

*** Radius of Aura:** This indicates the maximum distance from which despair can be induced. All persons within that area must make a save vs. spells in order to avoid succumbing to the dolor surrounding the ghost. If the save is made, the ghost has no effect upon that character. If the saving throw is not made, the victim suffers a negative modifier, as noted below.

**** Negative Modifier:** The number noted is applied to characters who fail their saving throw; the negative modifier applies to all attack rolls, saving throws, and proficiency checks.

The modifier is in effect until the victim moves beyond the radius of the ghost's aura. A magical spell that boosts morale (including *remove fear*) provides a +4 bonus to the initial saving throw or entitles affected characters to make a new saving throw (with no bonus) to escape the effects of the aura.

Alanik Ray raised his hand and called for us to stop. He turned slowly, looking around the inside of the crypt carefully. One by one, he turned his scrutiny on the members of our party. Every attempt at conversation was instantly met with a cry for quiet by the detective. At last, he turned to face the young mortician, Bartonwood.

"We need explore this dark matter no further," he announced. "The murderer is among us, is he not, Bartonwood?"

I was shocked by Alanik's accusation. I had known the worthy Bartonwood for many years; he was no more capable of so brutal an act than I.

I turned to speak on his behalf, but Bartonwood collapsed. A thin stream of white vapor poured from his open mouth, rising up to take a misty human form. It was clear now that Ray had been correct, but what peril now stood before us? . . .

EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

Cause Fear

Some ghosts have the power to inspire a supernatural fear in those who see them. I have felt this chilling horror myself and cannot find words to describe how all-consuming it is. I shall say only that, although several years have passed since the dark night when this power was used against me, on its anniversary I wake up screaming.

In most cases, ghosts who instill this fear radiate it as a magical aura. They need not touch the victim, look into his eyes, or even know of his presence—the victim's sight of the creature is enough to trigger the effect.

Ghost's Magnitude	Fear Check Penalty*
First	-1
Second	-1
Third	-2
Fourth	-3
Fifth	-4

* **Fear Check Penalty:** Those who see a ghost who has this ability must make a fear check. The check is modified as noted in this column. Failure is treated exactly as described in the RAVENLOFT™ boxed set. If viewing the ghost is such that a fear check would normally be made, the penalty listed is increased by 1.

Cause Paralysis

Some ghosts are able to render their victims immobile. Whether this is due to some supernatural manipulation of the victim's nervous system or the generation of an aura of magical terror, I cannot say.

The paralysis induced by these creatures is generally of a temporary nature. Those affected by it will be unable to move even slightly for a brief period of time. When the paralysis wears off, it generally does so quite quickly, although the muscles and nerves of the victim might well



EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

tingle or ache for a long time afterward.

Generally, the ghost must lash out and strike its victim in order to induce this effect. Some apparitions, however, are said to radiate an aura that causes all those who look upon them to become frozen in motion. In either case, this debilitating power can be truly deadly, for it leaves the victim vulnerable to any other form of attack the spirit might employ.

Ghost's Magnitude	Save Adjust*	Paralysis Duration**
First	Nil	2d4 rounds
Second	-1	2d4 turns
Third	-2	2d4 hours
Fourth	-3	2d4 days
Fifth	-4	Permanent

* **Save Adjustment:** Anyone subjected to the attack of a ghost who has this ability must make a saving throw vs. paralysis or be rendered immobile. The saving throw is modified as indicated by the ghost's magnitude.

** **Paralysis Duration:** This varies depending upon the magnitude of the ghost. In the case of a fifth-magnitude ghost, the victim is unable to move until such time as a *dispel magic* or similar power is employed to remove the magical effects of the paralysis.

Cause Revulsion

Some spirits, particularly those of corrupted appearance, are able to induce a feeling of disgust and revulsion in the living. Often, this is so powerful a revulsion as to cause the victim to become physically ill.

I encountered a spirit of this nature while traveling aboard the *Wailing Maid*, a small merchant vessel that ran from Martira Bay to Mordentshire. We were just out of port when night fell. With the rising of the moon, there came a cry of pain from below deck. Dashing to investigate, I found that one of the sailors had

been crushed by the fall of a heavy crate in the hold. The crew was certain the cargo had been well secured and were at a loss to explain the tragedy, claiming it must have been an accident. I, however, suspected it was not.

My suspicions were confirmed when, the next night, another *accident* occurred. This time, a fire broke out near several barrels of black powder in the cargo hold. Had I not been on hand to smother the blaze, the entire ship might have been destroyed.

As I dampened the last flame, I found myself in the company of a bowlyn, the dread spirit of the seas. Upon seeing that I had thwarted its plan to destroy the ship, the creature swept toward me with a cry. I raised an open vial of holy water and splashed the contents upon the ghost. To my surprise, this did not harm it.

The creature swept past—no, *through*—me. As soon as its misty form came in contact with my flesh, I staggered backward. A wave of intense nausea swept through me. So intense was this feeling that I fell to my knees. When the crew heard the noise and found me, they had to carry me back to my cabin.

I dare say that, had another accident not occurred the next night while I was still incapacitated, I might have been blamed for the mishaps and been forced to face the captain's justice.

Ghost's Magnitude	Nausea Duration*	Negative Modifier**
First	1 turn	-1
Second	1 hour	-2
Third	1 day	-4
Fourth	1 week	-6
Fifth	1 month	-8

* **Nausea Duration:** Apparitions who have this power automatically induce a state of nausea in their victims for the duration noted as per the ghost's magnitude. In general, the ghost is required to physically touch someone in order for this power to manifest itself.

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**** Negative Modifier:** Those attacked suffer a negative modifier to all attack rolls, saving throws (including fear and horror checks), and proficiency checks. Any healing spell, even one as minor as *goodberry*, will cancel the effects of this ability, regardless of the ghost's magnitude.

Cause Wounds

Some ghosts have the ability to wound at a touch, for the power is a simple manifestation of the deadly energies that seethe within them. In order to cause wounds, the ghost simply strikes at someone in the same way it would have in its past, when it was alive. If the blow lands, a portion of the target's life essence is dissipated by the ghost. In effect, the victim dies just a bit. It seems to matter little if the ghost is corporeal or incorporeal, for this ability crosses the line between the planes of existence.

... The misty apparition rose into the air and flew about, twisting and contorting as it went. The entire room became deathly cold and an eerie wailing clawed at our hearts. Suddenly, I saw the earthen floor of the tomb shift and bubble.

Hands, much decayed and long dead, broke through the soil to grab at us. Even as I moved to avoid this new menace, ghastly, animated corpses began to pull themselves free of the soil. We were outnumbered three to one by the walking dead.

Then, as if from a great distance, I heard Alanik Ray call out. "These creatures are not real!" he cried. "Pay them no heed, for they are only illusions!"

I heard his words, and knowing him to be as reliable a source as one is likely to find, I bent my will to the task of ignoring these hideous fiends. Within seconds, they faded until I could no longer see them. . . .

The stronger the karmic resonance of a ghost, the more powerful is its ability to wound. In the most powerful of ghosts, this attack can be lethal.

Those who are injured by a ghost employing this attack will find themselves singularly marked by it. Without exception, the supernatural power of the ghost leaves a blazing red welt upon its victim. In time, the color of the wound will fade, but a wicked scar will remain. I myself am not without these marks of death upon me.

Ghost's Magnitude	Damage Done*
First	1d4
Second	1d6
Third	1d8
Fourth	2d6
Fifth	3d6

* **Damage Done:** In addition to damage, any wound has a percentage chance equal to the points of damage inflicted of reducing the character's Charisma by one point. This reflects both the disfiguring nature of the attack and the damage it does to a person's karmic strength and psychological health.

Those who are reduced to zero Charisma are assumed to have been consumed by despair and to have lost the will to live. Such characters can make a saving throw vs. death. Failure indicates that the victim collapses and dies. Success means that he has been transformed into a "broken one," as described in the *RAVENLOFT™ Monstrous Compendium Appendix* (product 2122).

Charm Animals

Some spirits are able to exert considerable influence over the beasts of the world. The nature of this dark talent is such that most lowly creatures are unable to resist the ghost's will; they must obey its every command.

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This power functions similarly to that of a *charm person* spell, save that it affects only animals and can be used at will. The total Hit Dice of animals that can be *charmed* at any one time by a ghost is generally equal to three times the Hit Dice of the ghost. However, some apparitions may have lower or higher limits.

Charm Persons

Similar to the charm animals ability, ghosts who have this power can exert control over humans and kindred races.

This ability functions the same as a *charm person* spell. The total Hit Dice of persons who can be *charmed* at any one time by a ghost is generally equal to two times the Hit Dice of the ghost. However, some apparitions may have lower or higher limits.

Command Undead

Some spirits have the ability to command other undead creatures to do their bidding. Thus, it is possible for a ghost to surround itself with a legion of lesser horrors that will act on its behalf. These lesser undead are slaves to the creature that commands them, and they are freed from their bond only upon the destruction of their master.

A ghost who has this power can command undead creatures as if it were an evil cleric of a level equal to its own Hit Dice. The number of undead that can be commanded at any one time is usually equal to thrice the ghost's Hit Dice, although exceptions are not uncommon. This limitation does *not* include undead created by the ghost itself as described in Chapter II.

Create Illusions

The power to shape images out of nothing is dangerous indeed. Just as some wizards are capable of making others see whatever they want, so, too, can some spirits alter the perceptions of their victims and thus fill the senses with lies.

The power of illusion ranges greatly in scope and intensity. At its weakest, it is the ability to make simple sounds echo from nowhere or lights flicker hauntingly in the night. At its greatest, however, it can drive victims to the edge of madness as the conviction grows in them that nothing they see is real or trustworthy.

For the most part, ghosts who have the power of illusion are able to produce effects that mimic the spells cast by wizards. There are important differences worth noting, however. For example, these spirits have no need to invoke the magical rituals magicians often must use, and thus can cause the effects they desire to spring instantly into being. As one might expect, the more powerful the ghost, the more convincing the illusion.

It is important that the reader understand the difference between *illusions*, which are created by bending light or manifested by actual sound, and *phantasms*, which are unreal and occur only in the mind of the victim. Fortunately, I have heard tell of only one ghost who was able to manifest the latter power, so this entry defines only the former.

The number of senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste) that an illusion can affect is directly related to the power of the ghost. For each magnitude that the ghost has attained, its illusion may appeal to one sense. Senses affected are determined by the DM when defining the ghost and do not change.

For example, a first-magnitude ghost might only be able to create illusionary

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sounds or lights. A third-magnitude ghost could manufacture an illusion that is visible, creates sounds, and gives off a certain odor. The illusions created by a fifth-magnitude ghost can be seen, heard, smelled, touched, and even tasted. A fifth-magnitude ghost, like a higher level wizard, is able to tap into extradimensional energies in the creation of its illusions, making them quasi-real.

Adjudicating the use of illusions can be quite challenging. Dungeon Masters are encouraged to refer to the various spells of the illusion/phantasm school for guidelines.

Dominate Victims

This power is similar in nature to the ghostly ability to inhabit bodies (see below). It is, however, less vile, for it does not mandate the destruction of the target. It is possible for the victim of such an attack to be subdued and the dominating spirit driven from his body.

Use of the domination ability enables a spirit to assume complete control over the actions of its host. In general, however, there is some special condition that must be met before a ghost can dominate a person.

For example, some ghosts may be empowered with the ability to slowly paralyze a mortal. Gradually, the ghost's victim becomes less and less agile, his dexterity impaired. After several attacks, he is no longer able to move at all. With the victim utterly helpless from the insidious nature of the ghost's paralysis, the spirit slips into the body and dominates it. Note that in order for a ghost to dominate a person, the victim must be in a state of reduced physical and mental ability. Only the most powerful of ghosts can seize control of a fully healthy and alert victim.

Initial control of a body is attained whenever the ghost wishes to and is able to come into direct physical contact with a victim who is in the required physical state. However, a number of magical spells are able to drive a dominating

spirit from the body of its host. When this happens or when the ghost abandons control of the body for whatever reason, the host is generally able to recover fully from the trauma. Thus, in the example above, over the course of time the victim would probably recover his ability to move.

Do not misunderstand: Dominated individuals are able to move and act normally. It is, I have found, impossible to tell from a simple surface examination whether a person is under the control of a spirit. The spirit does not, however, have access to the memories of the victim. Thus, a simple set of questions can often reveal the presence of a dominating spirit. Of course, no ghost will take discovery lightly.

Ghost's Magnitude	Host's Condition*	Duration of Control**	Save Adjust†
First	Dead	1 turn	+4
Second	Dying	1 hour	+2
Third	Debilited	1 day	+0
Fourth	Asleep	1 week	-2
Fifth	Any	1 month	-4

* **Host's Condition:** This column gives a general description of the condition the victim must be in before the ghost can dominate him. In the case of a first-magnitude ghost, the victim is generally restored to life (with 1 hit point) following the departure of the spirit—an unexpected but pleasant side effect!

** **Duration of Control:** This column lists the amount of time the spirit will have unchallenged control over its host. At the end of this time, however, the victim is allowed to make a saving throw vs. paralysis in order to drive off the spirit. This save is modified as indicated in the save adjustment column.

The length of time before a ghost can attempt to dominate the same character again is found by inverting this column. Thus, a first-magnitude ghost could not regain domination of a character it had been driven out of for one month (the time a fifth-magnitude ghost could originally dominate a victim); a fifth-magnitude

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... With the illusory dead no longer a threat to us, Alanik Ray sprang to aid Korrigan, the priest. He helped the woman to her feet and told her something I could not hear above the howling and shrieking of the misty spirit before us.

As they set about preparing for what I could only assume would be an attack upon this evil specter, my attention was drawn to young Bartonwood. The mortician was beginning to stir. Despite the presence of that evil spirit above him, I felt consumed with the desire to aid him. I went to his side, ignoring calls to stay back from Alanik and Korrigan.

No sooner had I reached the young man than an incredible flash of light erupted in the air above me. Korrigan had unleashed some powerful spell at the apparition. I have a dim memory of Alanik's cry of triumph—a cry that was cut short when I fell forward, unconscious. . . .

ghost could regain control of its victim after only one turn (the time inversely noted under the first magnitude).

† **Save Adjustment:** As indicated in this column, the saving throw is modified as per the ghost's magnitude. A successful saving throw roll drives the spirit from the body and prevents it from regaining immediate control. Failure to save indicates that the victim will remain under control of the spirit for the full amount of time listed in the duration of control column.

Drain Abilities

Some spirits have the power to siphon off a person's life force. This is manifested in several ways, but one of the most crippling can be the loss of physical and mental abilities. Generally speaking, a ghost's ability to bleed off a person's strength, intelligence, and the like requires that the spirit touch the victim.

The sensation of this drain has been likened to a chill that causes the victim's bones to ache as if he or she had been immersed in ice cold water. Although the effects of the ghost's touch may begin with minimal loss in physical ability, repeated attacks by the apparition can be crippling or even fatal.

Ghost's Magnitude	Points Drained*	Duration of Loss**
First	1	1 day/point
Second	1	1 week/point
Third	2	1 month/point
Fourth	3	1 year/point
Fifth	4	Permanent

* **Points Drained:** This is the number of points that this attack will drain from a victim based on the magnitude of the spirit. Since all ghosts are different, the DM should decide which ability a particular ghost will drain. Reductions to the ability score are immediately reflected in the character's related characteristics. For example, a loss of Strength might immediately reduce the character's attack and damage rolls.

** **Duration of Loss:** This indicates the general length of time before a single lost ability point is regained. Thus, the victim of a fourth-magnitude spirit will regain lost points at a rate of one per year, and if he lost three points it will be three years before his ability is fully restored. Magic can often quicken this pace, as determined by DMs, for individual spirits.

A saving throw vs. death is allowed whenever a character is attacked by a ghost who has an ability-draining power. A successful save indicates that the character will regain his lost points after the time noted has passed. Failure to make the save, however, means that the ability point loss is permanent. Note that the attack of a fifth-magnitude ghost is *always* permanent, so no saving throw need be made by the victim of such an attack.

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Drain Energy

Without a doubt, the most horrible attack available to any undead creature is its ability to draw forth the life energy of a living being. Some say that ghosts feed upon such energies, but I find that theory implausible.

It is my belief that life energy is simply a result of the ghost's ties to the Negative Material plane—a side effect of the creature's existence, as it were. In many cases, persons who die from a ghost's draining energy attack may become ghosts themselves.

In order to drain a person of his life energy, a ghost must touch him. Fortunately, ghosts who are unable to assume a corporeal or semicorporeal form are seldom able to employ this power.

Ghost's Magnitude	Levels Lost*
First	1
Second	1
Third	1
Fourth	2
Fifth	3

* **Levels Lost:** The life energy drain of a ghost causes its victims to lose experience levels as noted in this column per the ghost's magnitude. Those affected by such a power are reduced in experience points to halfway between the minimum needed for their new level and the minimum needed for the next level above the new level, as described in the section on Special Damage (Energy Drain) in the chapter on combat in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Drain Memories

Some spirits, though thankfully very few, are able to rob a man of his memories via touch. People have lost their recollections of the past few minutes, hours, or even days.

Fortunately, some individuals are able to regain their memories with the aid of magical or psionic healers, but I know of no cure more mundane for so potent an attack. It is said that the mind flayers of Bluetspur can restore a man's past to him if they can be persuaded to do so, but I think there are none foolish enough to seek treatment from them.

Ghost's Magnitude	Period Forgotten*
First	1d10 × 10 minutes
Second	1d10 × 10 days
Third	1d10 × 10 weeks
Fourth	1d10 × 10 months
Fifth	1d10 × 10 years

* **Period Forgotten:** A saving throw vs. spells may be made by any character attacked by a ghost who has this power. A successful save indicates the memory loss is temporary.

Recollection of "forgotten" events will occur gradually over the course of 1d10 days per magnitude of the ghost. Thus, those who are attacked by a second-magnitude ghost and who have made their saving throw will regain their memory in 2d10 days.

If the saving throw is unsuccessful, the memory loss is permanent. Only powerful magical spells, such as a *wish* or *psionic surgery* (if *The Complete Psionics Handbook* is being used), will restore the victim's memory.

The period forgotten is the amount of time indicated up to the point of the attack. Take the example of an eighty-year-old character who is attacked by a fifth-magnitude ghost; she failed her saving throw and lost forty years of memory. She could not choose to have the first forty years of her life forgotten—she would have to forget the latter half of her life. Memorywise, she would again be forty.

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Entrance Victims

Some spirits, especially those of a spectral nature, can cause those who look upon them to become entranced. Persons in this state are helpless to defend themselves against attacks by the ghost or its minions. This paralytic fascination with the ghost retains its hold over the victim until the ghost leaves his sight.

There are some who claim that the trance is simply a hypnotic effect. As such, they insist, it is not truly magical. My research indicates this belief to be incorrect. I have found that the ghost is able to entrance its victims by tapping into their inner fascination with death. All creatures, whether they are aware of it, have a morbid interest in these matters, and the ghost, with its magical powers, is able to evoke that appeal.

Upon first sighting a ghost who is able to entrance its victims, characters must make a

saving throw vs. paralysis. Success indicates that they are able to avoid the ghost's magic and may continue to act normally. Those who fail this save, however, are unable to move or undertake any action, no matter how simple, for as long as they can see the ghost.

Additional saving throws are allowed to attempt to break the trance after the number of melee rounds equal to the magnitude of the ghost has passed.

Thus, a character facing a first-magnitude ghost who fails his saving throw on the first combat round would be able to attempt another save in the second round. If he failed that save as well, he could try again on the third.

On the other hand, if the ghost were of the fifth magnitude, the character would not be allowed to make a second save until the fifth combat round (and the tenth if he failed the second).

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Inhabit Bodies

Many apparitions are able to lash out at victims and invade their bodies. This ability is similar, but not identical, to the physical effects manifested by the magical spell known as *magic jar*. I have, in fact, discussed this similarity with a number of mages over the years, and they are unable to account for the differences. For example, when mages employ the *magic jar* spell, they are required to have a special crystal on hand to use as a container for the life energies to be “jarred,” but ghosts do not. This receptacle, the mages insist, is crucial to the mechanics of the spell; without it, they further insist, the spell cannot work. I need not mention that they are obviously wrong on the latter point.

Under normal circumstances, a *magic jar* spell forces its victim into some sort of receptacle (the aforementioned crystal, for example). Because ghosts do not employ this focus, there is no place for the victim’s spirit to go. Thus, a ghost who is able to successfully employ this power instantly slays the person that it is used upon. I am told there is no more painful way to die than having one’s life force ripped free of one’s body in this fashion. I learned this from a ghost who had died and been formed in just this way, and I cannot dispute it.

Once the ghost has been able to destroy the spirit of its prey, it enters the now vacant shell of the body. It may do this by swooping toward the victim and merging with the still-living flesh. In some cases, however, the ghost simply fades away and no obvious contact is made between the ghost and the body. In either case, the ghost now controls the actions of the body—for good or for evil.

It is possible to drive a ghost from a body it has inhabited. Some spells are said to be useful in this effort (*dispel magic* for example). The most direct way, however, is simply to kill the host body. While this does not destroy the ghost, it does drive it back into the open where

it can be more easily identified and attacked.

I must say, however, that it is horrible indeed to wield your weapons against the body of someone you knew well. I have been in such a situation, and—despite the fact that I knew my friend to be dead and his body to be animated by a fiend—it was almost impossible to strike at him with my knife. When the death blow landed, I watched helplessly as the apparition who had ruled my friend’s body fled the corpse and my vengeance.

This power is handled as per the description of the 5th-level wizard spell, *magic jar* (located in the *Player’s Handbook*). There are some conditions, however, to keep in mind. For example, a ghost who has this ability can freely target a specific individual for attack, unlike a mage casting the *magic jar* spell. Further, the range at which this power can be employed is 20 feet per magnitude of the ghost. Thus, a third-magnitude ghost can attempt to inhabit a victim’s body from up to 60 feet away.

This power allows the potential victim to make a saving throw vs. spells. A method for figuring a modifier to that saving throw is discussed in the *Player’s Handbook*. If the DM prefers a simpler method of determining the modifier, he or she can apply a -1 to -5 die adjustment as per the ghost’s magnitude.

Inhabit Objects

This power is difficult to quantify, but simple to comprehend. In essence, it is the ability of some ghosts to enter a physical object and cause it to become mobile. The purported knight haunts of Krynn are an example of this power, as is a living scarecrow that may arise if a farmer returns to avenge himself.

As a rule, I have found that most spirits tend to inhabit and animate objects that were important or familiar to them in life. Because of

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this, it is necessary to differentiate a spirit using this ability from a ghost who is anchored to an object. Anchored spirits, as described in Chapter II, are fixed and permanent, whereas those spirits who use this power are free to come and go as they please. Generally, a spirit is restricted to inhabiting only a single type of object. For example, if a ghost inhabits a suit of plate mail and that armor is then battered into scrap metal, the spirit may flee to another suit of armor.

This power is most commonly encountered in ghosts who inhabit humanoid-shaped objects (scarecrows, armor, or statues, for example) and cause them to come to life. Occasionally, however, a ghost may inhabit another type of object—often turning something mundane into a deadly hazard. Examples that occur to me include haunted carriages or ships, houses or castles, and miscellaneous pieces of art such as portraits or statuary.

In almost every case of this type that I have encountered, the shape of the inhabited object slowly changes to give it the semblance of an evil face. Most, however, will find this change too subtle to notice until the true nature of the haunting is revealed to them.

Ghost's Magnitude	Typical Object Inhabited*
First	Small objects only—tools, paintings, weapons
Second	Man-size objects—suits of armor, statues, scarecrows
Third	Large objects—carriages, rowboats, furniture
Fourth	Very large objects—houses, bridges, longships
Fifth	Huge objects—castles, large sailing ships, cave complexes

* **Typical Object Inhabited:** This column gives the DM an idea of the size of object that a ghost of a given magnitude can inhabit. These are merely guidelines; the DM should feel free to make exceptions as dictated by the needs of the adventure.

This power is a most difficult one to define. In general, DMs should consider what the ghost might be able to do and then assign values to it based on its magnitude and the type of object inhabited. For example, an animated suit of armor that carries a long sword ought to be able to inflict the normal damage allotted to such a weapon. A ghost who has inhabited a carriage could try to run down someone, leaving the DM to decide exactly how much damage such a mishap might cause.

A good rule of thumb, if no obvious answer presents itself, is to assume that the ghost can cause damage *averaging* 5 points per magnitude of the ghost. Thus, a fifth-magnitude ghost inhabiting a castle dropping a large iron portcullis on someone might inflict about 25 points of damage—3d10 + 10 points. Saving throws and the like are possible, as decided by the DM.

... I was unconscious for several hours. My first recollection was a sensation of great pain in my chest and a pounding headache. I opened my eyes slowly, fearing I might still be in that horrible tomb. To my surprise, the grinning face of Alanik Ray filled my vision.

"Excellent!" he cried, taking my hand in his. "You are awake and all is well."

"You have defeated that vile creature?" The words came out in a croak, for my throat was sorely inflamed.

"Not I so much as our good friend Korrigan. Her magic was more than a match for that apparition, once its true nature was revealed to us."

I sighed with relief and felt my eyes close again. I remember hearing my companion urging me to sleep. I gladly complied.

*— From The Life of Alanik Ray
as noted by Arthur Sedgwick, Physician*

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Keen

Some ghosts, commonly grouped together under the heading of *groaning spirits* or *banshees*, have the ability to release an unearthly howl, scream, or moan. This supernatural keening is so horrible that the mere sound of it can still a man's heart. I have seen the faces of men who died in this way, and without exception each was twisted in a look of horror so dreadful as to cause my own heart to miss a beat.

Although the wailing of a banshee can be heard for many miles, its magical effect fades rapidly as one moves away from the creature. Outside the radius in which the keening is deadly, it is still a chilling sound that can give rise to fear in even the bravest souls.

There is a weakness to this great and terrible power, however. While ghosts of this type often emit a constant cacophony of evil and dreadful sounds, their unearthly keening can only be employed a limited number of times in any given 24-hour period. Further, all but a very few of these spirits lose their keening ability while the sun is in the sky. Thus, they may be attacked without fear of their dreadful wailing from dawn to dusk.

I must caution those who would think these spirits defenseless when their power is unavailable to them, though. These spirits are more than able to defend themselves without keening. Further, in the case of the most powerful of these ghosts, daylight has no effect upon their keening ability at all. Thus, if a mistake is made about the magnitude of the spirit to be confronted, all is lost.

Ghost's Magnitude	Death Radius*	Save Adjust**	Attacks per Day†
First	10 feet	+2	1
Second	20 feet	+1	1
Third	30 feet	0	2
Fourth	40 feet	-1	2
Fifth	50 feet	-2/+4	3

* **Death Radius:** This column gives the radius of a ghost's keening ability, the area of lethal effect. If a character is within this area and fails his saving throw, he dies.

** **Save Adjustment:** Victims of this powerful attack are entitled to a saving throw vs. death in order to escape its effects, with the adjustment as noted per the ghost's magnitude. Any number of characters can be affected by a given keening attack as long as they are all within the area of effect.

Note that fourth- and fifth-magnitude ghosts may also keen during the day. If such a spirit uses its power while the sun is up, however, potential victims have a +4 bonus to their saves as opposed to the penalty indicated otherwise.

† **Attacks per Day:** This column notes the number of times a ghost of a given magnitude can keen per night. Those entries in bold (for fourth and fifth magnitudes) indicate the spirit is able to keen during the day as well.

Lure Victims

Some ghosts are able to send out a magical summons that draws potential victims to them. In most cases, this is done by playing an instrument or singing an entrancing song.

I know of at least one case, however, where the summons was of a very different nature. In Staunton Bluffs, there was a young child who died tragically at the hands of a transient rogue. The child was so horrified by the attack and so ridden with anxiety over separation from her mother that her spirit returned to haunt the meadow where she had been slain.

Every year, on the anniversary of her death, the ghost child would send out a siren's song—a sobbing, pitiful cry. This sound was so mournful that those who heard it would

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approach the child.

Seeking to find comfort, the tortured spirit would embrace its would-be rescuer and draw his or her life force. Perhaps this attack did provide it with some manner of comfort, for the spirit was said to fade after claiming the first person who approached it.

Those who hear the call of a ghost who has this ability must make a saving throw vs. spells or be drawn to the spirit. A character's magical defense adjustment is applied to this roll. A failed roll indicates that the victim will move toward the spirit at his normal walking rate and will allow nothing to interfere with his progress. Anyone who attempts to restrain the victim will be attacked violently with whatever means are available to the lured victim.

Drawn characters who are forced to attack someone to reach the source of the summons will show no mercy, striking at friend or foe alike with equal fury. Once an obstacle is removed, it is instantly forgotten as the character moves toward the lure again. Those who make their saves are immune to the lure of the ghost until their next encounter with it.

The range at which the magical summons can be heard is based upon the magnitude of the ghost. As a rule, the lure is effective to a distance of 100 feet per magnitude of the ghost. While it can still be heard at a greater distance (three times that distance, to be precise), it has no magical effect beyond the initial limit. Often, those who are outside the magical effect hear the lure and move closer to investigate, thus becoming ensnared.



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As soon as I slipped the silver chain over my head, the world changed. Before this transformation, I had been surrounded by the sights and sounds of my companions and the horde of goblins we were battling. All this faded away into vague, ethereal images. Not only was my vision dimmed, but my hearing was muffled as well. I felt swathed in a grayness that dampened my heart and soul.

Conversely, the grinning shade that had commanded these dark legions became suddenly clear and crisp in my sight. My eyes focused on him hungrily, for here was a source of light and vision to soothe my deprived senses.

My strange transformation drew his attention, for he turned to me, leaving his minions to battle my friends without his aid.

"You have the amulet of etherealness!" he hissed.

I did not answer, for the creature was moving toward me with great speed. He seemed to walk through the shadowy bodies of the goblins, caring little for the destruction he caused. The twisted creatures grabbed their chests and fell to the ground. Obviously, his pets meant nothing to him if he could gain possession of the silver talisman I wore about my neck.

As the shade drew close, I raised my sword. The gleam of its magical edge seemed to pain the apparition, for he stopped his approach and let out a low growl of rage. He stood motionless for a moment with his hand outstretched. To my horror, a sliver of blackness formed in his grip. Before I could act, he held before him a sword of purest darkness. . . .

— Anani Mahss
Private journals



Perform Telekinesis

Some apparitions are able to focus their energy on an object and cause it to move. The amount of force that a spirit can exert in this way is limited, although I know of a few cases in which ghosts were able to lift men into the air and hurl them quite some distance.

In many ways, this power is similar to the *telekinesis* spell employed by wizards. The arcane nature of the spirits who employ this power is such that the spirits are instantly able to manifest these effects and are not hindered by any manner of invocation.

It is not uncommon for an object moving under the influence of this power to become surrounded with an aura of pale blue light similar to that known as St. Elmo's fire.

This power is used in the same manner as the 5th-level wizard spell *telekinesis*, with some exceptions. In the case of a sustained, manipulative force, the ghost can affect 5 pounds per each Hit Die it has. Thus, a ghost who has 5 Hit Dice can manipulate up to 25 pounds. Furthermore, a ghost who has this power is better at fine manipulation than are those who perform the *telekinesis* spell.

If this power is unleashed as a single, massive shock of concussive energy, the maximum weight affected and the damage done are the same as those defined for the spell in the *Player's Handbook*.

Resist Magic

To some extent, all spirits are resistant to magical spells. This is manifested as an immunity to specific types of spells (as described in Chapter II). In some cases, however, this resistance is even more powerful.

For ghost hunters, there is nothing so daunting as an apparition who can turn aside spells as easily as it ignores arrows and daggers. In less powerful spirits, this is often

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little more than an annoyance. When one casts a spell upon such a ghost, one can be fairly certain that the spell will function normally. The chance of a mishap is dangerous, to be sure, but it is typically small enough to be countered with a fair dose of caution and common sense.

More powerful ghosts, however, can be so resistant to all manner of spells that adventurers who depend solely upon wizardry in combat will be more of a bane than a boon.

Ghost's Magnitude	Magic Resistance*	Class Bonus**
First	10%	+5%
Second	20%	+10%
Third	30%	+15%
Fourth	40%	+20%
Fifth	50%	+25%

* **Magic Resistance:** This percentage is based upon the ghost's magnitude.

** **Class Bonus:** If the ghost was a spellcaster of any type before its transformation, its magic resistance is increased by the amount indicated in this column. For example, the spirit of a paladin levels 1 to 8 would not receive the bonus, but the spirit of a paladin who was 9th level or higher would (the level at which paladins can become spellcasters). Thus, a fifth-magnitude ghost who was formerly a 10th-level paladin would be 75% resistant to magic.

Conclusion

One may turn pale at the thought of the many extraordinary powers available to ghosts. Indeed, perusing this chapter's information is enough to make even the bravest heart quake at the prospect of facing a ghost who might have, say, three or four of the abilities listed here. Fortunately, most ghosts (even those of high magnitude) usually only have a few of these powers. The ghost I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—the one who had no less than six

extraordinary powers—was a most rare exception. I pray that those of you who read my text with the intent to hunt the undead never encounter such a vile creature.

The following is a short outline listing the many potential extraordinary powers of a ghost. I also list the four common, or ordinary, powers that each and every ghost possesses.

I. Ordinary Powers

1. Insubstantiality
2. Invisibility
3. Rejuvenation
4. Immunity

II. Extraordinary Powers

1. Accelerate aging
2. Cause despair
3. Cause fear
4. Cause paralysis
5. Cause revulsion
6. Cause wounds
7. Create illusions
8. Dominate victims
9. Drain abilities
10. Drain life energy
11. Drain memories
12. Entrance victims
13. Inhabits bodies
14. Inhabit objects
15. Keen
16. Lure victims
17. Perform telekinesis
18. Resist magic

Editor's Note: For game purposes, the DM can either randomly generate the extraordinary powers a ghost may have, or he or she can simply choose the powers best suited for the adventure. As a rule of thumb, the DM can assign extraordinary powers as per the generated ghost's magnitude. That is, if a fourth-magnitude ghost is planned for an adventure, it could have up to four extraordinary powers in addition to the four ordinary powers each ghost possesses.

CHAPTER IV: VULNERABILITIES



hosts often have some special weakness or vulnerability that, if exploited properly, can be used against them when attempting to return them to a place of rest. These vulnerabilities are usually tied to the origin of the creature or its nature.

In this chapter I intend to discuss some of the weaknesses I have uncovered through travel and research; in addition, I will elaborate on weapons that may prove useful.

I cannot help but remind the reader that this information should be considered neither absolute nor binding. Irrational adherence to the

techniques described herein will invariably lead to the destruction of the ghost hunter, for it will not be long before an exception to the rules occurs.

One cannot discuss the subject of ghosts without considering their place in the universal scheme of things. For instance, spirits are mentioned in every culture and religion known to me. Indeed, in some religions ghosts or apparitions are a crucial component—a component without which the very fabric of the people's faith would be greatly frayed, if not simply torn apart.

As such, the reader will find, ghosts are susceptible to the power inherent in simple faith and not necessarily the physical manifestation of that faith. That is, a person who believes in the sanctity of a holy place has a far greater chance of holding off a spirit by that belief alone than one who presents his or her holy symbol in an effort to ward off the ghost.

Although this idea offers no immediate practical application when hunting ghosts, it is something the true hunter should remember. The power of faith is very strong. Indeed, someday it may be all that stands between one and death.

Ordinary Vulnerabilities

I shall begin my discussion of ghosts' weaknesses with information about those vulnerabilities that seem, for the most part, more general or ordinary. Just as the ghostly undead possess certain ordinary and extraordinary powers, so, too, do they possess both ordinary and extraordinary weaknesses or vulnerabilities.

These vulnerabilities are sometimes the only restraint that checks these fiends. Often, the very unholiness that makes them dangerous can also be the key to their destruction. Those brave enough to answer a ghost hunter's challenge and battle these undead creatures should heed well my words that follow, for they contain the germ of truth.

As a primary rule, all ghosts—regardless of magnitude—are vulnerable in varying degrees to holy water, priestly turning, and holy symbols in general. As with any ghost, however, exceptions do exist, particularly with more powerful spirits.

Holy Water

Perhaps the most useful weapon of all for the destruction of ghosts is a vial of holy water. No ghost hunter should be without a ready supply of this valuable liquid. The numinous properties of this wonderful fluid enable it to inflict damage upon the undead even in their most intangible state.

Unfortunately, some powerful spirits seem to develop an immunity over time to the effects of holy water. Thus, a newly formed fourth-magnitude ghost may be vulnerable to holy water, but a ghost of the same magnitude who has existed for more than two hundred years might not be. A ghost of the fifth-magnitude, regardless of its age, is immune to holy water.

It is important to note that holy water must be splashed upon a ghost for it to be effective. In most cases, this means the vial must be

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opened and the contents hurled at the target. Simply tossing a stoppered vial at a spirit will not harm it; the vial will pass unresisted through the body of the ghost and shatter harmlessly on the ground behind it.

It is possible to splash a ghost with holy water by hurling the vial at its base and thus breaking it upon impact with the ground. In almost all cases, the resulting splash will bring the ghost into contact with the holy water. However, there is a margin for error with this method, for the chance exists that the vial may not break. The seconds necessary to throw yet another vial—this time unstoppered—may be all that is left of your life.

Ghost's Magnitude	Damage per Vial
First	1d10
Second	1d8
Third	1d6
Fourth	1d4
Fifth	Nil

An attack roll is generally required in order to strike a ghost with holy water. In such attacks, the ghost's Armor Class is always assumed to reflect its corporeal status.

Turning Undead

Only the most faithful of priests and paladins hold any sway over ghosts. Their holy symbols pose no threat to these undead creatures, but their faith does.

Like other forms of undead, ghosts can be turned away or even destroyed by a priest. The spiritual energy of a cleric's faith can be so overwhelming that it causes the apparition intense pain and anguish. The ghost is forced to flee from the area or risk annihilation. In some cases, the surge of holy radiance a cleric sends forth is enough to destroy a ghost instantly.

Sadly, only the weakest of ghosts can be destroyed this way. Further, the more powerful the ghost, the less effective an attempt to turn

it away will be. The most powerful of all ghosts, in fact, are immune to this ability. The only saving grace is that these ghosts will be unable to attack a cleric who might normally be able to drive them off.

Ghost's Magnitude	Turning Penalty*
First	Nil
Second	Nil
Third	-1
Fourth	-2
Fifth	-4

* **Turning Penalty:** This modifier is applied not only to the cleric's 1d20 roll to see if a particular type of ghost is turned, but also to the roll that determines how many Hit Dice of undead creatures are affected. If the attempt to turn is successful, but the number of Hit Dice affected is below that of the ghost, the attempt fails. In such cases, however, the ghost is unable to directly attack the cleric because of the cleric's power of faith.

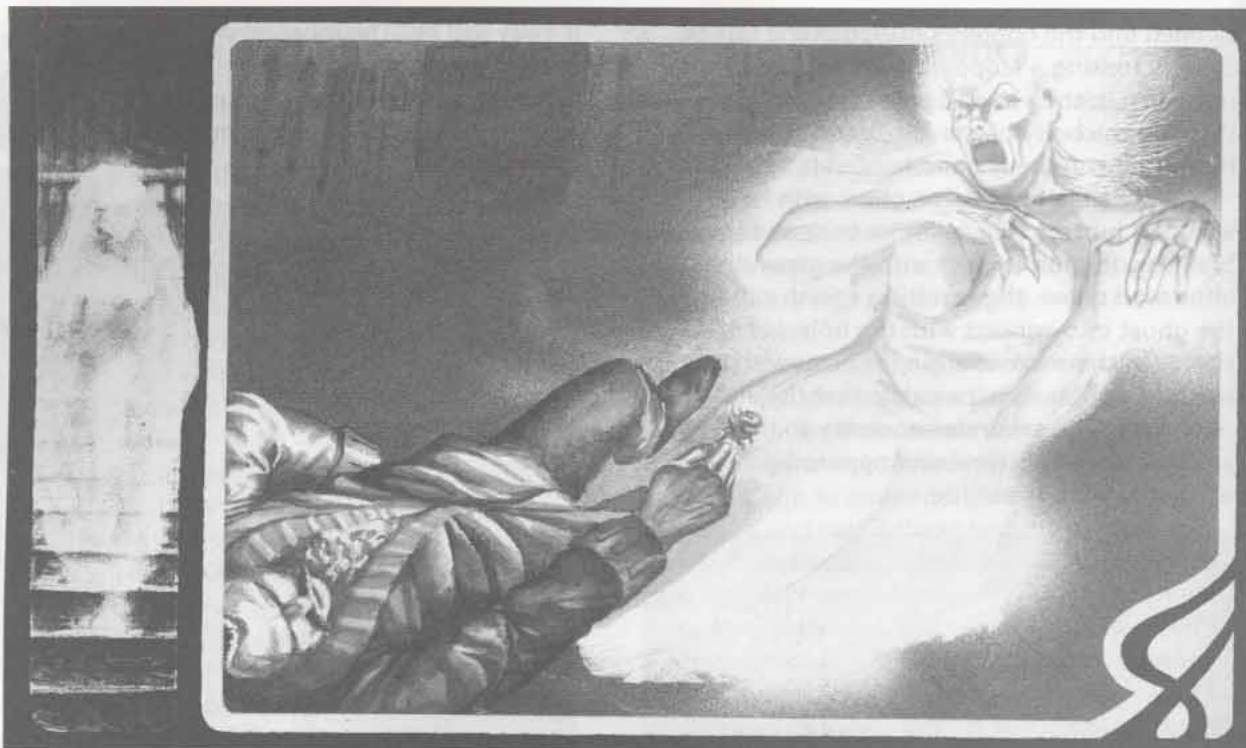
January 15th

We began our ascent of the great slope today. The wind was cold, cutting into us during the whole of the climb. By mid-morning, however, we had reached the first plateau and paused to rest.

We had not been there for more than a few minutes when one of the guides cried out. We all turned to see what had alarmed him—and found he was dead. His face was drawn up in an expression of terror such as I cannot describe. His dark skin was dry and wrinkled, his hair shot with white, and his fingers clenched as if in pain.

While the others searched for signs of some bizarre attack, I did not. I knew in my heart that they would find nothing. Instead, I turned my gaze to the slender lighthouse that stood atop this mountainous island.

We would find our answers there.



Holy Symbols

In my previous work, a study of vampires, I discussed the possibility of holding certain types of undead at bay by the mere presentment of a holy symbol or some manner of blessed object. Unfortunately, this does not work with ghosts and similar apparitions.

As a rule, symbols or objects hold no great sway over the ranks of the incorporeal undead. Although they are often harmed by contact with holy water, ghosts are generally not repelled by holy symbols, restricted from passing through sanctified lands, or harmed by contact with holy objects.

I cannot say for certain why this is, but my belief is that it has to do with the connections a ghost retains to its former life. In the case of vampires and other corporeal undead, the physical body remains intact; thus, the physical ties to the past life remain strong. Ghosts, who have no such bodily link, are less affected by the physical manifestations of man's faith. It may be that the ethereal creature is so removed

from the physical realm of man that the symbols of man's faith no longer have power over it.

I believe this theory has merit. For example, it explains why a holy symbol will not keep a spirit at bay, but a faithful priest or devout paladin can still turn away the apparition through an effort of will.

Although I have never encountered a ghost who could be kept at bay simply by a holy symbol, I am certain that there are those who are repulsed by them. In such cases, I believe, the effect would be similar to that of an *allergen*, an extraordinary vulnerability, which I describe in the following section.

As is so often the case in dealing with the metaphysical, there are always exceptions. When a ghost is vulnerable to holy symbols, I have found that they are almost always burned by contact with them, just as if they had been splashed with holy water. In such cases, it seems, holy symbols are able to strike the apparition even when it is in an incorporeal state.

Extraordinary Vulnerabilities

By definition, “extraordinary” means uncommon or exceptional. The vulnerabilities I describe in the next few pages (allergens, magical spells, and personal effects) are quite rare and specific. While many can be grouped together in certain categories, such as allergens, the exact nature of a given weakness generally differs from ghost to ghost. Thus, look upon the examples I present here as guidelines *only*. Be aware that these *types* of vulnerabilities exist, but never assume a ghost has one of these specific weaknesses until research performed supports a hypothesis.

Allergens

In my previous work on vampires, I discussed the importance of various items in battling the undead. Just as with the dread vampire, there are items that an ethereal phantom cannot bear to see or touch. Called *allergens*, these items are useful when fighting ghosts, though seldom are the items as effective against ghosts as are the allergens used against vampires.

Unlike the vampire, who is almost always strongly repulsed by items such as garlic and mirrors, the ghost is a more subtle creature. One cannot apply a steadfast rule in using allergens to keep spirits at bay because each ghost is absolutely unique. For example, one ghost may not be able to enter a room in which there is a blooming rose, but most other ghosts would not be so restricted.

What constitutes one ghost's allergen will almost assuredly not be another's. Because allergens are so closely related to either a ghost's origin or its nature, they can be nearly anything imaginable and as such are truly difficult to quantify. The ghost hunter must research his prospective prey's past so that he can identify a suitable allergen. I myself have used items as varied as clove oil, pheasant feathers, a teacup, and a continuously chiming clock as allergens. In each instance, the allergen held some special significance to the ghost.

While it is true that almost every spirit is repelled or held at bay by some allergen, the discovery of what that item may be is a difficult or even impossible task. Once again, the exact nature of an allergen is based upon the origin or past history of a ghost.

The blooming rose in the example above might well be effective against the ghost of a rosarian or the spirit of a young woman betrayed by a lover who sent her roses. Against the pilot of a ghost ship, however, the rose is likely to be useless. One may find that sea salt or the ringing of a ship's bell can keep this spirit at bay.

Presenting an Allergen

In general, a spirit is unable to approach someone who is presenting an allergen. Mind you, the key here is presentment. In the case of the blooming rose, for example, it is generally not enough for the victim to simply hold the flower—it must be held toward the apparition in a clear, direct, and courageous fashion.

The effect of an allergen is, as I have said, to keep a spirit from approaching. In general, the distance at which a spirit will be kept at bay is based on its magnitude. The least of spirits seem to be held back a distance of some 50 or 60 feet. More robust spirits are able to move closer to an allergen, with some powerful spirits being wholly unaffected by any form of a ward.

For those who hunt ghosts, keep in mind that it is impossible for a spirit to take *direct* action against the holder of an allergen. But be forewarned: If confronting a truly dangerous ghost, make certain your research is comprehensive enough to ensure that you have discovered the correct allergen, the ghost's one weakness. Many a party has come to grief upon discovering that the ghost whom they are confronting is not in the least deterred by the chosen allergen.

Using Allergens as Barriers

It is possible to protect an entire room or other area with an allergen. When doing so, the item is spread about the perimeter of the room and

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its protective nature forms a barrier through which the spirit cannot pass. In some rare cases, the mere presence of the object is enough to keep a spirit out a room. For example, a ghost who enjoyed the warmth of a fire when it had been alive might be unable to enter a room where a fire has been kindled because the memory of the enjoyment and the loss of it could be too painful for the ghost to bear.

In most cases, however, the presence of the allergen alone is not enough to ensure protection. Special steps must be taken to extract the full value of the allergen. This is best explained through example.

Let us consider a ghost whom I encountered some three or four years ago, the *Valachan Miser*. This spirit was all that remained of a large and powerful man who had, over the course of his life, brought great suffering to many people. He was a merchant noted for greed and treachery in his business practices. When he died, his tortured spirit continued to stand by the counting house where he had conducted his business in life. So strong were his ties to this establishment that no magical force seemed able to expel him from it.

In the course of my investigations, however, I was able to uncover some crucial facts. Among the most important of these was the power of money to this spirit. Not only was the creature *fascinated* (a term I describe below) by a newly minted coin, it was unable to cross a line of such objects. Thus, to protect myself from attack by the spirit while I researched its origins, I would seal every door, window, and vent with a line of coins. Three times this spirit appeared, once at the door and twice beyond the windows, only to cry out in rage when it found it could not reach me.

Using Allergens to Cause Fascination

On the whole, allergens are repulsive to spirits. In some cases, however, they can create a sense of fascination in the ghost. This effect can only be likened to the effect a flame has on a moth. In the case of the *Valachan Miser*, for example, I

found it was unable to look away from a newly minted coin.

Indeed, coins seemed to have so pronounced an effect on this creature that I was able to use this fascination with them to my advantage in its destruction. Through my research, I surmised the creature could be slain by the smoke created from burning its countless volumes of fiscal records. In order to ensure its exposure to these vapors, I lured the spirit into the basement of the counting house and held out to it a gleaming platinum coin. Instantly, the spirit froze. Its eyes, smoldering pinpoints of silver light, fixed upon the coin and would not turn away. Past experience had shown me that this effect was transient, and that I had but a few seconds to do my work.

In the end, I barely escaped the blazing counting house myself, but the spirit was consumed along with its ledgers. I later recovered the half-melted coin and had it fashioned into an amulet. I made a gift of it to my young assistant, Claudia, who had been instrumental in the solving of this problem.

Magical Spells

The power of a wizard's incantation or a priest's invocation cannot be discounted in matters of the supernatural. There have been many spells created for the express purpose of battling the undead. While the majority of them are designed for use against corporeal undead, many are effective against apparitions as well.

In the next few pages, I will discuss selected spells that function (or do not function) in unusual ways when employed against ghosts. Note that those spells specifically intended for use in the presence of undead generally function normally on ghosts. Thus, spells such as *detect undead* are not listed here.

Wizard Spells

I am not a spellcaster myself. I have, however, associated with many a wizard in the past—both willingly and under duress. Some

VULNERABILITIES

have been intelligent and just, others cunning and evil.

The information I present below and on the following pages is a culmination of all that I have learned from both my allies and my enemies. By all means, pass this information on to the wizard in one's party.

Alarm: Even the most minor of wizards is often able to erect a magical barrier around some area that alerts him or her to the presence of intruders. Such wards will not function, however, if the trespasser is ethereal or incorporeal. A ghost will trigger such wards only if it is in a corporeal or semicorporeal state.

Antimagic Shell: Although apparitions are not truly magical in nature, this spell creates a barrier they cannot cross.

Avoidance: This spell (or its reverse) cannot be used to repel (or attract) the incorporeal undead. It depends upon life energies and physical mass to function, making it useless when such creatures are involved.

Banishment: Ghosts can be affected by this spell, although they are not extraplanar beings. Note that a successful abjuration on the part of spellcaster utterly destroys the spirit rather than forcing it to flee from the wizard's home plane. A useful spell, indeed.

Binding: This spell can be employed against the undead, with mixed results. Care must be taken, for only certain versions of this enchantment will function. Spirits attacked with this spell may be *chained* or *hedged* only. Any attempt to use the spell's other powers results in absolute failure.

Blindness: This spell has no effect upon the undead.

Cloudkill: This spell is useless in combating the ranks of the unliving, for it depends upon a biological toxin to slay its victims.

January 16th

I write this beside a small fire that does little to drive off the fears of the night.

Our climb is, at last, complete. We scaled through the night, anxious to escape the thing that killed our guide on the plateau. Our efforts were not without cost, however, for two more of our company died during the ascent. I can only take heart in the belief that we all would have perished if we had remained on the cliffside during the night.

Seeing the dread tower from its own level was an unsettling experience. It seems bent and twisted in an impossible manner. I stood in the darkness trying to make sense of this impossibly tilted structure. No mortal architect could have built it, for the hand of evil shows in its every stone.

Our quest will end there, I am certain. I pray, however, I shall not do the same.

Contagion: This spell, like *cloudkill*, presents no danger to the walking dead, for it is dependent upon the living nature of its targets.

Continual Light: My comments about the *light* spell (below) apply to this enchantment as well.

Deafness: This spell has no effect on ghosts.

Death Fog: As with *cloudkill*, this spell cannot poison those who are already dead. Further, it does not slow incorporeal or semicorporeal ghosts who attempt to pass through it.

Death Spell: This magic is useless against those who are already dead.

Detect Magic: This spell does not detect the presence of ghosts. While they are supernatural, they are not inherently magical.

Disintegrate: Unless a ghost is in a corporeal or semicorporeal state, this spell will have no effect upon it. Indeed, even those ghosts who can be effected by it are usually not even

VULNERABILITIES

dispelled. Note that a corporeal spirit who is *disintegrated* will often return as a wholly incorporeal ghost. Needless to say, this can be quite a surprise to the wizard who thinks he has utterly destroyed a spirit.

Energy Drain: Unfortunately, all manner of undead, corporeal and incorporeal, are immune to this spell. Would that we, too, were immune to this treacherous attack!

Finger of Death: This spell has no effect on the undead. After all, how can one smother the life force of a thing that is no longer alive?

Force Cage: All manner of incorporeal spirits are fully contained by the casting of this spell. Those who are unusually resistant to magic, however, may be able to break free of the cage with some effort, occasionally with spectacular results. A companion of mine once caged a spirit who escaped—and returned in triplicate.

Haste: This spell, which speeds the metabolism of its target, has no effect on ghosts.

Hold (Animal, Monster, Person): Undead, even those who resemble the lowliest of beasts, cannot be affected by these magics. They set up an unnatural physiological paralysis that cannot be employed against the unliving.

Hold Portal: While a physical barrier is generally no obstacle to the passing of an ethereal ghost, this spell prevents them from passing through an enchanted door. This does not, however, mean that they cannot slip through the wall in which the door is set. Furthermore, very powerful ghosts can shatter this spell.

Imprisonment: This spell works only on corporeal spirits, for the wizard using it must physically touch the target. If used by an



VULNERABILITIES

ethereal wizard on an ethereal ghost, the spell functions normally, but the spirit is *imprisoned* on the Ethereal plane.

Infravision: It is important to note that ghosts radiate no heat and are not, therefore, detectable by means of this spell. Indeed, normal infravision, such as that possessed by elves, does not reveal the presence of the incorporeal undead either.

Irritation: This spell has no effect upon ghosts.

Legend Lore: This spell is a wonderful divination! I cannot count the number of times it has revealed a secret weakness of a ghost I have hunted. I would urge all who battle the incorporeal undead to seek access to a wizard who knows such a spell. It is invaluable in learning the history of a spirit, determining what items may pose as specific allergens, and discovering what (if any) actions can be taken to make the restless spirit return to the quiet of its grave.

Light: Unless the ghost has some direct aversion to light, this spell will not drive it off or keep it at bay. Further, it is impossible to blind a ghost with this spell unless it is in a corporeal state.

Limited Wish: It is not possible to destroy a ghost using this spell, but it is possible to greatly hamper it for a time. For example, a mutable spirit might be forced to remain fully corporeal for the duration of the invocation, thus rendering it an easier target.

Magic Jar: While it is true that a goodly number of spirits are able to employ a similar power when inhabiting bodies, most are immune to the effects of this particular spell themselves.

Mordenkainen's Disjunction: This spell does not have any effect upon spirits.

Otiluke's Resilient Sphere: Ghosts and other incorporeal beings can be trapped within or kept out of this scintillating globe.

Otto's Irresistible Dance: In addition to the fact that this spell is one of *charming* (a type of magic to which all ghosts are immune), this spell depends upon biological functions that simply do not take place in the body of the dead. Thus, the spell is useless on ghosts.

Polymorph Any Object: The point I note for the *polymorph others* spell applies here as well.

Polymorph Others: This spell cannot be employed against ghosts. Even corporeal spirits have an innate resistance to this power.

Power Words (Blind, Kill, Stun): The undead are immune to all words of power.

Prismatic Sphere: Ghosts and other undead are prevented from passing through this sphere, even in ethereal states.

Protection from Evil: This spell will keep ghosts at bay, for they can not pass through the magical barrier. However, many spirits may have special abilities that will enable them to reach those hiding behind this shield.

Protection from Evil, 10' Radius: This spell functions under the same restrictions as its counterpart (above).

Ray of Enfeeblement: This spell is unable to affect ghosts who are incorporeal. It is sometimes possible to use it against semicorporeal spirits, however, and fully corporeal ghosts are subject to its effects.

Reincarnation: If the corpse from which a specific ghost has risen can be found, this spell can be used to eliminate the ghost by restoring its body to life. In the case of anchored spirits, however, this spell is useless. Such apparitions

VULNERABILITIES

are too strongly tied to their haunts for this magic to override their newfound purpose in "life."

Remove Curse: Only in the rarest of cases can this spell destroy a spirit or allow it to rest in its grave. Generally, this happens only when it is cast upon a minor ghost, say of first- or second-magnitude, by a powerful spellcaster.

Sink: This spell cannot affect ghosts or spirits, and it is utterly useless against them.

Sleep: This spell is clearly useless against the undead for they neither tire nor sleep.

Slow: Just as the metabolism of the undead is resistant to the casting of a *haste* spell, so too is a ghost immune to the effects of this wizardry.

Solid Fog: This spell does not slow an incorporeal or semicorporeal ghost. Such creatures pass through these dense mists as if they are the common vapors they appear to be.

January 17th

There was only one entrance to the tower, a stout wooden door. We gave it our shoulders and it splintered inward, rotten and brittle after years of disuse. As soon the portal was clear, a vile odor poured out upon us. The air in the tower was heavy with the smell of death and decay. I cannot say I looked forward to exploring it, but I knew that we must.

The six of us moved in and lit our lanterns. As the darkness faded away, I thought I detected an unnatural movement to some of the shadows. Examination, however, revealed it was nothing more than a trick of the light.

I was relieved by this discovery. When I turned back to my companions, however, all feeling left me. Each and every one of my friends was dead—slain by some unknown force of evil.

Symbol: None of the magical *symbols* I have encountered have proven effective against ghosts. I believe the reason for this is simply a ghost's basic resistance to all manner of mind-affecting spells. The unliving nature of the ghost's mind protects it from these spells as surely as it does against *charm* or *sleep*.

Telekinesis: It is impossible to manipulate an incorporeal spirit with this spell. *Telekinesis* can be used on semicorporeal ghosts with haphazard results, and it is generally effective against those spirits who are fully corporeal.

Trap the Soul: This spell can be used with great effectiveness against ghosts of all types. In more than one case, I have seen it used to contain a spirit who was too powerful to destroy so that information could be uncovered that would allow it to be dealt with permanently.

Wall of Force: This barrier is so potent that no spirit can pass through it. To a ghost, the *wall of force* is every bit as solid as a similar construction of stone would be to you or me.

Wish: This powerful spell can, if carefully invoked, be used to *wish* a ghost out of existence. It can also be of tremendous value in deducing the vulnerabilities of a given spirit. Care must be taken, of course, for this spell is notoriously dangerous.

Wizard Lock: This spell makes an effective barrier against ghosts, just as *hold portal* does. Unlike that lesser spell, however, *wizard lock* cannot be broken by powerful spirits.

Wraithform: Those under the influence of this spell are freely able to combat ghosts who are in an ethereal state. It is important to remember, however, that this exposes them to direct attacks by the ghost as well.

Priest Spells

As I said before, I am not a spellcaster, though I confess if I were to become one it would be as a

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priest. Although I have felt the calling, I believe it is my duty to continue my more or less solitary existence to combat evil in its undead form. To that end, I have found the companionship of a good cleric both helpful and heartening. Without these faithful companions and the power of their faith, I would not have survived many an encounter.

The reader can rest assured that the notes regarding the following spells are based on much diligent research by good friends of mine.

Abjure: This very useful spell can be employed to force a mutable spirit into its corporeal or semicorporeal state.

Animal Growth: This spell and its reverse have no affect upon ghosts, even if in animal form.

Atonement: In some cases, this powerful spell is enough to return peace to a restless spirit. It is often difficult to tell, however, if this spell will be fully effective before it is cast unless a thorough investigation of the ghost's origin has been undertaken.

Continual Light: My comments about the *light* spell apply to this enchantment as well.

Cure (Critical Wounds, Light Wounds, Serious Wounds): These spells, and their reverses, will function normally as long as the priest using them is able to physically touch the ghost. With corporeal spirits, this is easy enough to do. With incorporeal or semicorporeal apparitions, however, this can be quite tricky to arrange.

Detect Magic: As I mentioned earlier in the discussion of wizard spells, this spell does not reveal the presence of the undead.

Dispel Evil: This spell can sometimes be used to drive a ghost from an area and force it into its corporeal state. Further, it can act as an excellent ward, keeping the spirit from entering

or returning to the area in which the spell was cast as long as its power remains in effect. In rare cases, this spell is actually powerful enough to destroy a ghost utterly.

Forbiddance: This spell functions normally when applied to the undead, even those of incorporeal or ethereal nature.

Glyph of Warding: It is possible for a priest to craft a glyph that is specifically designed to ward off the undead. If the conditions on the glyph are met by the approaching ghost, the glyph of warding will function normally. Of course, glyphs that are triggered may not always affect a ghost.

Heal: This spell is similar in its application to the various *cure* spells described in the previous column.

Hold (Animal, Person): Undead animals are as immune to *hold* spells as are undead men, making these spells useless.

Holy Word: The power of a *holy word* is indeed great. In fact, this spell can sometimes be used to destroy a ghost. As with the *atonement* spell, this power may or may not work in any given case. In order to ensure its effectiveness, the priest must carefully research the origin of the ghost.

Light: Unless the ghost has some direct aversion to light, this spell will not drive it away. Furthermore, it is impossible to blind a ghost with this spell unless it is in a corporeal state.

Moonbeam: Just as this spell's lunar radiance can cause lycanthropes to transform into their bestial selves, so too can this radiance affect those ghosts who are tied to the moon. For example, a spirit who rises on the battlements of a castle whenever the moon is full and bright might well manifest itself if this beam were to shine upon the keep it haunts.

VULNERABILITIES

Plane Shift: This spell can be used to enter the border ethereal and combat ghosts on their own ground. It can also be used to force a ghost to enter that plane itself if it is a mutable spirit capable of entering an incorporeal state.

Protection from Evil: This spell will keep ghosts at bay, for they can not pass through the magical barrier. However, many spirits may have special abilities that will enable them to reach those hiding behind this shield.

Protection from Evil, 10' Radius: This spell functions under the same restrictions as its counterpart (above).

Raise Dead: This necromantic spell can often be used to destroy an undead creature. It is a truly potent weapon in the war against evil.

Regenerate: This spell and its reverse are unable to affect the undead in any way.

Reincarnate: This spell can sometimes be used to thwart a ghost by forcing it to return to its body and then giving the body new life. I have found, however, that the reincarnated creature in such cases is universally psychotic. The shock of its sudden transformation to undeath and then revivification is too much for any mind to bear.

Remove Curse: Only in the rarest of cases can this spell destroy a spirit or allow it to rest in its grave. Generally, this happens only when it is cast upon a minor ghost, say of first- or second-magnitude, by a powerful spellcaster. I am told it is as difficult to lift the curse of unlife from a ghost as it is to cure a lycanthrope of his affliction.

Restoration: This spell and its reverse (*energy drain*) are useless in battling the undead.

Resurrection: This spell can occasionally be used to remove the threat of a ghost. I would caution the reader, however, to refer to the

notes I have provided for the *reincarnate* spell above.

Speak with Dead: Like the priceless *legend lore* spell, this bit of necromancy is a wonderful tool when dealing with ghosts. If the body from which a spirit has sprung can be found, this spell will often enable a ghost hunter to learn much about the nature of the apparition. I have been able to use information acquired in this way to drive a ghost back into its grave and to help it sleep in peace thereafter.

Speak with Monsters: This spell does not permit the caster to speak with undead monsters. However, the above *Speak with Dead* spell will allow such communications.

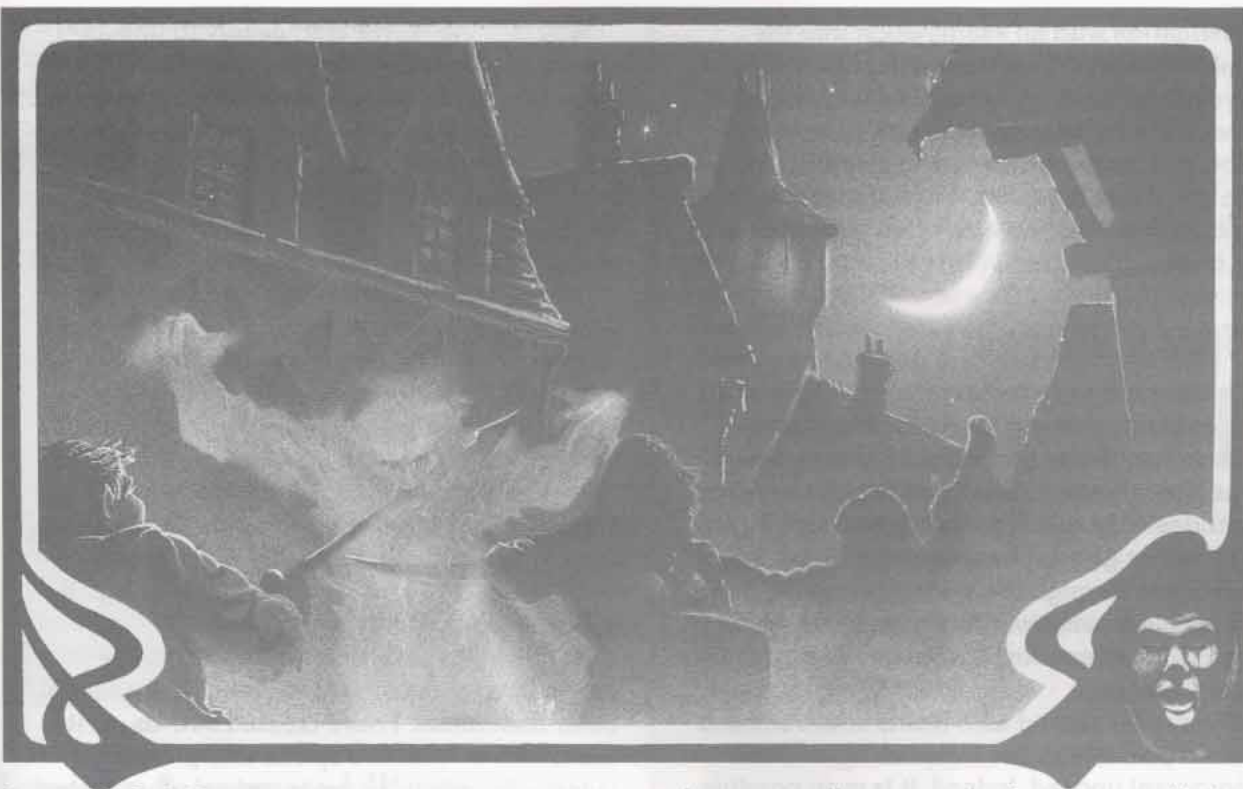
Spell Immunity: This spell can be used to protect against special attacks from ghosts and similar undead creatures. In order to be effective, however, the priest using it must be able to clearly identify the type of attack the ghost will employ. Furthermore, the priest must have been affected by this attack previously in his or her life.

Sunray: This powerful spell is a lethal weapon when employed against the undead. Even ghosts who are not normally vulnerable to sunlight are often pained or even destroyed by this powerful demonstration of faith.

Symbol: None of the priest's holy *symbols* is effective against ghosts. It may be, however, that a special symbol could be researched and created that is of special potency against apparitions of a particular nature. This spell is useful only on a highly singular basis.

Wyvern Watch: This spell will not function as a ward against the approach of a ghost unless cast by a priest who is ethereal at the time of casting. When so cast, the spell will detect the presence of a looming apparition, but not that of a corporeal menace such as a wolf, a bandit, or a zombie.

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Personal Effects

As I have said at numerous points in this chronicle, it is vitally important to carefully research the background of the ghost one confronts. Any group of heroes who charge into combat with their weapons drawn and their wits sheathed is certain to meet a horrible fate. While the final resolution of any haunting often involves the judicious use of enchanted or holy steel, steadfast devotion to such tactics is foolish in the extreme. Only an understanding of the origins and motivations of a spirit will supply the important edge needed for victory.

My research into an individual spirit has often left me with evidence indicating a weapon unique to that spirit. Because these objects are almost always things that were of great importance to the ghost when it was alive, I group them under the broad heading of personal effects. Although they are much like allergens (described above), personal effects may be used to destroy and not merely ward off a ghost.

Let me recall an example. I was once called upon to join the detective Alanik Ray in an investigation of no fewer than a dozen brutal murders. This string of killings was identical in every respect to a series of crimes committed less than a year earlier. It became clear that we were dealing with the ghost of the man who had committed the earlier series of murders.

Because the man had been hung for his crimes, we suspected the gallows might have power over him. Indeed, when we confronted the apparition, Alanik's assistant, one Arthur Sedgwick, was able to toss a noose over the ghost's head. Despite the fact that the creature was semicorporeal in nature, the sturdy hemp bound it securely. From the instant the loop touched it, the creature began to choke and claw at it. Its eyes rolled back in its head, a bloated tongue slipped from between its lips, and its body melted away in a cloud of inky black mist. It was never seen again.

I can offer but one guideline when deciding to hunt the ghostly dead: Begin the

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investigation with an examination into the creature's death. That traumatic moment was perhaps the most important of the ghost's life. Surely, an event so charged with karmic resonance as to create a ghost cannot help but be a good starting point. From there, the hunter will be led down an often twisted path to the truth.

Special Weapons

In this section I examine the use of physical weapons against ghosts. As one might imagine, this is generally a futile endeavor. Even the mightiest dwarf wielding the family's centuries-old axe will probably not harm the most minor ghost. The weapon will pass harmlessly through the spirit, leaving the dwarf vulnerable to whatever foul attacks the ghost might wish to employ. Truly a grim predicament.

The reader should take heart, however, for it is often possible to use weapons against the incorporeal undead. Indeed, it is even possible to destroy them if the skill of the wielder and the power of the weapon are equal to the task.

In general, there are three ways in which a weapon can be made useful against ghosts. The first, and less reliable, is to forge it from some special metal or material that is deadly to a specific spirit. The second, far more sure, method is to have one's blade enchanted in some way. (Even the most powerful apparition fears a magical weapon, for it can often injure or even destroy a ghost. Still, some of the most powerful spirits are so resistant to harm—even by magical arms—that they look with disdain upon those who would wield them.) The final method is through special construction.

Forged Weapons

The most common material used in weapons designed to battle ghosts is silver. Indeed, almost every spirit of the first- or second-magnitude is vulnerable to such blades, so the use of silver weapons is much warranted.

Why is it that silver is so deadly to ghosts? I cannot say. I believe, however, that this wonderful metal has some natural property that allows it to siphon off a portion of the ghost's energy. In essence, then, the weapon might be thought of as a lightning rod. I have heard other theories put forth, and I cannot disprove any of them; they are all as valid as mine.

In rare cases, a ghost will be encountered who is vulnerable to some other metal. In most of these instances, the exact nature of the vulnerability is rooted in the origin of the ghost. I have encountered spirits vulnerable to iron, gold, and even platinum. Indeed, I once battled the spirit of a dwarf in Darkon who proved vulnerable only to mithril weapons. After a long search, we were able to gather enough of the metal to fashion an arrowhead that, I am glad to say, laid the ghost to rest.

It is also not unheard of for a spirit to be vulnerable to weapons fashioned from material other than metal. I have crossed swords, as it were, with at least two spirits who proved vulnerable only to weapons carved of yew wood and one apparition that could be harmed only by blades fashioned from seashells. Discovering the type of material to use when crafting such weapons is a difficult and time-consuming endeavor, but it is often necessary if a ghost is to be battled effectively.

Enchanted Weapons

By far the weapon of choice in any combat situation, an enchanted weapon can make all the difference in a fight when used against a ghost. The aura of power that surrounds and permeates these weapons enables them to strike directly at creatures who are wholly or partially ethereal.

The problem with magical weapons, however, is that it is often impossible to say whether a given blade has a strong enough enchantment to harm a specific ghost. Some spirits are so powerful that lesser blades pass through them as harmlessly as nonmagical ones.

I can offer no solid advice on this matter,

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save that it is better to underestimate the power of one's weapon than to overestimate it. To make the latter mistake may cost one his life.

Ghost's Magnitude	Plus to Hit*
First	+1/0
Second	+1/0
Third	+2/+1
Fourth	+3/+1
Fifth	+4/+2

* **Plus to Hit:** This column lists the magical plus a weapon must have in order to harm a ghost of a given magnitude. The number before the slash is the plus required when the ghost is ethereal and attacked by nonethereal foes. The number after the slash shows the enchantment needed when the ghost is either corporeal or attacked by a foe who is also ethereal.

Specially Constructed Weapons

It is sometimes possible to harm a ghost with weapons that have some unusual characteristic. This could be anything from a specific rune pattern to the location of the weapon's construction. For example, I researched a case in which the spirit of a blacksmith returned to haunt his wife, a woman who had abandoned him during a time of financial hardship.

When the time came to confront the vengeful spirit, we discovered we could harm him only with a weapon that he had manufactured in his shop. As luck would have it, we came into possession of just such an item and were able to destroy the ghost. I should not be surprised to find that there are other apparitions in the world who have similar weaknesses.

It is almost certain that, when such vulnerabilities exist, they are dictated by the origin of the ghost. In the above case, we experimented with several other weapons, each of which seemed a logical choice based upon the particulars of the blacksmith's life and

January 18th

Praise be, the night is almost ended.

My exploration of the tower is complete. I know now why so many ships have broken themselves on the rocks below. This place is in league with the darkest forces. It is a focus for all that is evil in the sea. At this very moment, the foul spirits of the damned are circling me, kept at bay only by the flickering light of my campfire.

I know that I shall not leave this island alive. Once my stock of wood fails me, the shadows will claim me for their own. I cannot make the descent alone, for the foul thing that killed Edjard on the slopes would surely have me, too.

My mind is made up. I shall place the last few pages of this journal in a stoppered flask. At dawn, as the tide recedes, I shall hurl it over the cliff and into the sea.

Then, I shall follow it.

— Unsigned journal
found by a sailor

death, before we happened upon the correct tool. The fact that no fewer than four of my companions were gravely injured in our research is a testimony to both the hazards and importance of such preliminary investigation.



CHAPTER V: SPEAK WITH THE DEAD



This chapter examines a most curious class of people—mediums. These rare individuals are able to break through the barriers binding mortal life and make some manner of contact with those who have passed beyond.

When battling ghosts, the medium can be a valuable source of information. Those able to coax information from the dead can reveal the weaknesses of a particular spirit, the reason it has been unable to find eternal rest in the grave, and the motivation that drives it to roam the land of the living. With such an ally, a ghost hunter can be assured of a much more favorable

outcome in any clash with the undead.

Types of Mediums

The way in which a spiritualist's power manifests itself is very different from the way in which a wizard might cast a spell. While the two may attain similar results, the medium's efforts are generally longer and more draining on his or her constitution than the magician's.

Over the course of this section I shall detail the most common types of spiritualists and give a brief overview of their abilities and characteristic traits. Arranged alphabetically for the reader's convenience, the seven types discussed here include focus, guide, host, regression, sympathetic, and trance mediums. I save the false mediums for last.

Focus Mediums

Focus mediums are an unusual breed of people. They are able to make contact with a spirit and then cause that spirit to enter an inanimate object of some type. The fusion of spiritual essence and unliving matter is unstable, but it can be maintained with concentration by the medium.

Once a focus object has been inhabited, the medium can present questions to the spirit. The spirit responds by causing some reaction in the object. This reaction can be almost anything and is generally different for each medium.

I know of a medium who has constructed a special compass for use in her seances. The natural direction of "north" indicates a neutral state. The other directions refer to more emotional states. A number of runes are arranged in a circle, indicating possible sources of the ghost's anger. When she channels a spirit into her compass and asks it questions, the essence of the spirit is able to swing the needle to point at different directions and runes, indicating its emotional state and its probable cause.

The nature of the focus that each medium of this type employs varies greatly from individual to individual. Almost all of them select a focus that has some special significance. The woman who built the compass, for instance, had a fascination with loadstones that dated back to her childhood. When she began to feel her powers stirring within her, it seemed only logical for her to build something that was based upon these bewitching stones.

The means by which a spirit communicates with a focus medium varies with the nature of the object employed. I have encountered many wonderful examples of this in my travels, ranging from a medium who employed a crystal ball that changed color in answer to her questions to an elvish hermit who could cause spirits to enter the flames of his cooking fire and gesture or dance at his command.

Focus mediums are often able to extract highly accurate information from the spirits with whom they deal. While less powerful examples of their order are able to simulate the effects of a *speak with dead* spell, more powerful focus mediums are able to employ powers akin to a *contact higher plane* or *commune* spell.

If the medium's focus is damaged or

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destroyed while it houses a spirit, that spirit will become trapped in the world of the living. Unable to return to the realm of the dead, it will soon become a malignant force anchored to the scene of its summoning.

Guide Mediums

A guide medium is a unique and powerful individual. These people are actually able to enter the spirit world, the border ethereal, and communicate with a ghost on its home territory. My research indicates this is done in a manner similar to a wizard's *astral travel* spell.

Often, the guide medium must craft some manner of portal or gateway through which he will enter the spirit world. Some manner of ceremony is held, during which the medium goes through a series of steps designed to "open" this portal. When all is ready, the mystic (and a handful of other people) can step through the gate and into the border ethereal.

Once in the spirit world, the medium has a natural understanding of what he encounters there. While I found the entire voyage utterly bewildering and disorienting the one time I traveled with a guide medium, she was never put off by the weird landscape of the spirit realm. When we encountered the spirit whom we sought, it was all I could do to offer even the slightest aid to the medium battling him.

This type of medium is able to invoke powers similar to those harnessed in an *astral travel* spell. The medium also has an almost infallible sense of direction while traveling in the border ethereal. If the mystic is slain during this transit of the Ethereal plane, all of his companions will be left on their own. Finding a safe return to the land of the living can be a very lengthy ordeal, as the spirits that linger in the border ethereal may well want to keep these living creatures for their own or seek to destroy them.

Host Mediums

Host mediums are similar to trance mediums in that they allow their bodies to be used as a conduit through which a ghost can communicate with the living. The host medium, however, gives up absolute control of the body to the visiting spirit. For the duration of the ghost's stay in the host's body, the ghost effectively replaces the host.

Host mediums are useful when the ghost or spirit to be dealt with has some corporeal need to be met that requires a physical body. For example, I was once called upon to look into a haunting at a popular Kartakan inn. I discovered that the spirit belonged to a woman who had been slain by wolves in the countryside nearby. Her death occurred on the day of her wedding, and she and her new husband were traveling to the inn for their honeymoon.

Prognostics do not always prove prophecies—at least the wisest prophets make sure of the event first.

— Horace Walpole
in a letter to Thomas Walpole
February 19, 1785

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The spirit longed to embrace her husband, feel his kiss but once, and know the bliss of his love before it could rest in peace. With a little effort, I located a host medium who allowed the woman's spirit to control her body. The husband and his wife were then reunited, and the ghost was able to rest in peace afterward.

Like trance mediums, host mediums run the risk of domination if they are unable to throw off the spirit that possess them. A host medium must be careful to avoid a sudden shock to his system while a spirit is in control of his body. Any major unanticipated circumstance, such as an attack upon the spiritualist, has a chance of allowing the visiting essence to seize permanent control of the medium's body.

Like trance mediums, host mediums are valuable sources of information. Generally, a host medium can provide more information than a trance medium. These mystics are often able to duplicate the effects of a *legend lore* or similar spell.

In the event that a host medium is subjected to a sudden shock while a spirit is in control of his body, there is a flat 25% chance that a mishap will occur. If the medium is injured by the accidental disturbance, this chance increases by 5% per point of damage sustained. Thus, if a host medium is attacked and suffers 5 points of damage, there is a 50% chance of a mishap occurring. If no mishaps occur, the spiritualist returns to his body and contact with the spirit world is lost. If a mishap occurs, refer to the table accompanying trance mediums for a result.

Regression Mediums

Some mediums deal not with the spirit world, but with the inner world of the psyche. They believe that we have all lived before and that much of the information that we possessed in our previous lives is buried deep within our minds. By inducing a mesmeric trance in their

clients, these talented individuals are able to help a person recall the details of his or her past lives.

I have never been bold enough to undergo this process myself. I suppose that something in my inner nature refuses to accept that I was ever more or less than I am now. This is not to say that I do not have faith in the skills and powers of regression mediums—on the contrary! Rather, this is an indication of my own desire for uncertainty. I have no interest in knowing who I might have been in a past life.

Another talent of the regression medium is the ability to take a person back to previous times in his current life. This I have experienced.

I was asked to watch the dancing flame at the heart of a fine crystal lamp while the medium spoke to me in a calm and relaxing tone. Before I knew it, I apparently fell into a trance and was under his power. With only his voice as a guide, I went back into my own past to relive an encounter with Desmiand l'Strange, a minor vampire in Valachan.

I was convinced the vampire was destroyed in our first encounter, but I had recently seen him moving about in the city of Levkarest. When I was able to experience the scene again from an objective point of view, I saw the means of the vampire's escape. Further details from the scene made clear an as yet undiscovered weakness of the monster, which I then used to utterly destroy him as he fled from me into the woods of Borca.

The first power of a regression medium, that of exploring a person's past lives, is similar to the *incarnation awareness* ability presented in the *Complete Psionics Handbook*. For those not familiar with this product, treat the ability as similar to a *legend lore* spell with one past life being learned per session with the medium.

The second power, that of regression within a given lifetime, can be treated as simply the instilling of a photographic

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memory in the subject. Every detail about a given past event can be examined carefully and closely. Any emotions experienced the first time (such as fear, anger, or love) are sensed, but not experienced. Thus, the analysis of the past event can be far more analytical and logical than it may have been while living it.

If the medium is interrupted in the session, the client must make a saving throw vs. spells (as modified by his or her Wisdom adjustment) to avoid becoming trapped in the previous incarnation or being unable to escape from reliving the past events that he or she was experiencing. Such people fly into madness and can only be cured by magical or psionic means.

Sympathetic Mediums

Among the most common types of spiritualists are those whom I call sympathetic mediums.

These people are not actually able to contact the spirit world or to manifest any form of power over the undead. Rather, they are able to sense the psychic vibrations that surround objects and places.

In rare cases, these mediums can even sense things about people or other living creatures, but their talent functions primarily with inanimate objects.

Every emotional event that takes place near an object or in a place leaves it with a small trace of psychic energy. This energy fades over time, eventually vanishing altogether. The more powerful the emotions involved, the stronger this resonance becomes and the longer it remains. The strongest of emotions can last for centuries and leave a very detailed record in an object.

When a sensitive is exposed to these vibrations, he is able to feel the emotions that linger in a given area. In most cases, this is manifested simply as an awareness of what has occurred.



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I once explored a ruined castle with a sensitive named Hildegren. As we moved into the building, she became somewhat nervous and looked about with great anxiety.

"Many people have fought and died here," she said. "Death and pain linger in every stone." As we moved deeper into the castle, her trepidation became more and more pronounced. When we finally reached the heart of the keep, which was dominated by a massive obsidian throne, she collapsed. This chamber was the seat of power for an evil creature from another plane that had been trapped in our world. So foul and vile were the acts of this depraved fiend that even I could sense the darkness of the deeds that had been done in this place. For Hildegren, who could read the nature of such vibrations clearly, it was enough to drive her unconscious.

The power of a sensitive can take many shapes. Virtually any of the *detect* spells might be available to one, as might the psionic abilities *aura sight*, *object reading*, or *sensitivity to psychic impressions*. In most

Bow your head, Van Richten, for the goodness of fair Paladine has given me the knowledge you seek."

"Praise be."

"Do you have the murder weapon?"

"I do, wise one. Here it is." [Passes spiked spur]

[Pause] "There is much anger within this dagger. There is a hunger here, too. A crimson thirst that rivers of vital blood could not satiate."

"A face, holy one. Can you see a face?"

"Indeed. A dark and sinister face that hides from the furious truth of the sun. The killer is not of this realm. He is darkness."

cases, the sensations that the medium receives are vague feelings. The more intense the emotions involved, the more accurate the information received.

A sensitive can be overwhelmed by the power of the psychic impressions that he is reading. If the psychic is subjected to a severe emotional trauma, he or she must make a saving throw vs. spells (as adjusted by Wisdom) to avoid being overcome. If the roll is successful, the psychic is able to continue functioning normally. If the roll fails, the medium collapses into a catatonic state and can not be revived for 1d20 hours after he is removed from the presence of the intense resonance.

If the roll is a natural "1," however, the medium is driven utterly mad by the emanations. He will take on a personality that reflects that suggested by the psychic impressions he is receiving and will remain insane until magical or psionic means are used to cure him. In the meantime, he will act completely according to his new personality.

For example, let's say Madame Selya, a noted sensitive, chooses to explore the ruins of a vampire's castle. She comes across the chamber in which the creature satisfied its lust for blood, and she might be overwhelmed by the evil that was done here. If she rolls a "1" (thus failing her saving throw), she would take on the evil nature suggested by the vampire's frenzy. She might even come to believe that she herself is a vampire and begin feeding upon the blood of her fellow adventurers.

Trance Mediums

This type of medium must achieve a state of absolute serenity in order to employ his powers. In general, this state takes several hours to achieve, often requiring fasting and isolation. Once a trance medium is at peace, he opens his mind to psychic vibrations of the

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spirit world. If he is successful in his attempt to contact a ghost, the spirit is able to converse with the living, using the body of the spiritualist as a conduit.

My studies of this type of medium indicate that the spiritualist allows the spirit to contact his mind during the trance—granting it access to the medium's senses and control over the his voice. This is a dangerous practice, for not all apparitions are quick to give up control of this living body when the medium bids them farewell. In extreme cases, the spirit can attempt to usurp control of the body just as if it had used either the *dominate victim* or *inhabit body* powers discussed in Chapter III.

The most fascinating thing about watching a trance medium work is listening to the changes in his voice. Each time a new spirit speaks through the medium, it does so in its own native tongue and with its own speech patterns. I have, for instance, seen a spiritualist who normally spoke with a thick Barovian accent suddenly switch to the rolling, flowery prose of the elves when his mind came into contact with the spirit of an ancient elven warrior. I later confirmed the fact that the medium knew, as far as anyone could recall, not a word of Elvish.

Trance mediums are generally able to simulate the effects of the *speak with dead*, *commune*, or other informational spells. When in a trance, they claim to "speak for the spirit world." In order to do this, they establish an intimate mental link with the desired spirit. While the spirit does not actually enter the body of the spiritualist, as it does with a host medium, it does manage to exert control of the mental functions of the medium.

Trance mediums are slow and methodical in reaching their trance states, for the slightest error can result in a catastrophic failure in which the medium is destroyed and his or her body dominated by a restless spirit.

Reaching a trance state requires 2d4 hours. This may be rushed if the medium is

willing, but the end result becomes less certain when this is done.

In order to decrease the time required, a spiritualist must lessen the depth of his trance and, thus, his ties to the spirit world. For every hour that the trance must be rushed, there is a 10% chance of mishap. The time to attain a trance can never be reduced by more than half. If a mishap occurs, check the following table to determine what happens.

Roll	
2d6	Mishap
2	Mental collapse. The medium becomes a "broken one," as described in the <i>RAVENLOFT™ Monstrous Compendium</i> .
3-4	Mental trauma. The medium is unable break free of the trance and becomes comatose for 1d4 weeks.
5-6	Mental shock. The medium is stunned and cannot move or speak for 1 hour. During this time the medium is catatonic. No further trances may be attempted for 48 hours.
7	Trance failure. The medium must rest for 24 hours before attempting any other trances.
8-9	Frenzy. The medium falls under the control of a malevolent spirit and flies into a berserk rage for 1d4 rounds. During this time, the medium attacks the nearest person each round.
10-11	Hysteria. The medium is utterly dominated by an evil spirit. For the next 1d4 days he or she will act in an almost psychotic manner, sowing destruction and havoc wherever and whenever possible.
12	Domination. The medium's life force is utterly smothered by a cruel and cunning evil spirit. That spirit now replaces the medium by taking over the body. The subsequent actions of the spirit will reflect its evil nature in due time.

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False Mediums

The last type of medium I shall discuss is the foul charlatan—those people who take on the guise of a medium in an attempt to lure unsuspecting people near so that they can steal from them. I wish I could say that these people were rare, but the truth is that there are more false mediums than there are real ones.

The type of people who commonly seek out a medium are those who have some need or desire to speak with a deceased friend or relative. A widow about to remarry might desire to know if her dead husband approves of her new love, for instance. These people are generally so emotionally involved with the issue at hand that their logic, which might enable them to spot an imitation, fails them. Thus, the false medium is able to persuade the client to pour more and more money into his coffers while supplying a string of promises and suggestions that "more will be made apparent at our next meeting."

These individuals take on all of the macabre and mysterious mannerisms that they can imagine. Further, they attempt to drum up business by posting advertisements and distributing handbills that promise incredible services at minimal charge. It is not uncommon for them to hire someone to tell others of their so-called skills and powers.

If one has dealt with these vile people before, one can generally spot them with some ease. Still, there are a number of tricks that they are prone to use in the pursuit of their ill-gotten gains. A careful observer can spot the leading questions, research, false prophecies, stagecraft, and props and devices for what they are: items in the charlatan's bag of tricks.

Leading Questions

One of the most common deceptions employed by false mediums is the asking of leading questions. This tactic is simple enough to spot and defeat, but it can be enormously effective when dealing with the uneducated or



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unsuspecting. The key here is to demand specific information from the medium. If he cannot supply it in any manner, then he is most certainly a fraud.

I present you now with an example of the way in which leading questions are employed.

Medium: I sense that you are married.

Victim: No, I'm not.

Medium: Ah, yes, I see that now. But there is a woman whom you are very fond of.

Victim: Yes. There is.

Medium: I sense that she is well-to-do.

Victim: Well, she's quite poor, actually.

Medium: So she is now, my friend, but she will not always be.

As you can see, the medium employs leading questions to get the victim to believe that he knows things he does not. In the above example, the charlatan could almost certainly count on the client to remember this scene with the medium sensing the existence of his sweetheart, even though he was tricked into revealing it. Further, he has been given a promise that this woman will one day come into a fair amount of wealth. Certainly the promise of good fortune will heighten the young man's interest in her, and in the powers of the pretender medium.

A quick way to defeat this ploy is to simply lie. When the medium says, "I sense you are married," simply agree. The fantastic lies such a humbug will weave when presented with so profound a deception quickly reveal his true nature—and may be entertaining enough to warrant the loss of gold.

Research

Just as no ghost hunter can survive without information, so too is the false medium fond of special knowledge. Not only does this eliminate the need to use leading questions in dealing with customers, it also supplies the false medium with a solid point from which to begin exploiting the fears, weaknesses, or desires of his victims.

The type of research that a false medium might do can encompass a number of possibilities. Among the most common, and despicable, is the practice of watching the death announcements for a large town and then contacting new widows and widowers with an offer of help in contacting the loved one they have just lost. The depths to which these fiends will sink is appalling to me, for I can think of nothing so vile as the misuse of something so sacred as mourning.

Another foul practice of these swindlers is the learning of secrets and little-known facts that they claim to have been told by the deceased with whom they are in contact. If the information they have obtained is specific and seems to be authentic, the victim will often believe that there is no way for the fraud to have learned this fact if not to have been privy to a voice from beyond the grave.

False Prophecies

The making of predictions has long been a cornerstone of the false medium business. In order to appear gifted and clairvoyant, the medium makes some prediction about coming events. This can be done in one of two ways.

The first and most common of these tactics is to make a prediction that is so vague and unspecific that it will seem to come true no matter what happens. For example, the customer might be told that he must carry a silver coin in his hand whenever he goes about in public or a horrible fate will befall him. If the advice is followed and no great trauma occurs, the mystic will take full credit for the customer's safety. If a calamity does befall the customer, however, the medium can almost always talk his way out of the guilt for it.

The second means by which a prediction can be made to appear true is more difficult, but far more convincing. This tactic relies upon the medium making a very specific prediction about an upcoming event and then making sure that it comes to pass. For example, the mystic might warn of a robbery in the victim's future and then hire a thug to rob the client, splitting

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the take with the medium. In some cases, this can be quite an elaborate hoax, for some swindlers are truly artists at their vulgar profession.

Stagecraft

Another very convincing process by which customers can be lured away from their cash and into the clutches of the false medium is by the simple acting ability of the fraud. A false mystic who manages to make a living at his craft must, by definition, be a masterful actor. Often these people could earn a more honest wage on the stage, but they are, for some reason, loathe to give up the criminal life.

Props and Devices

In addition to his acting ability, the false medium can create a number of mechanical devices that enable him to mimic the powers of a true mystic. Any number of mechanisms can be employed to deceive the unsuspecting.

For example, the false medium might craft a hollow crystal ball that he can cause to fill with swirling vapors "when the spirits are present." Another common tactic is the use of stage magic to cause a table or some other object to rise into the air or jump and bang about. Strange noises (often produced by a compatriot) are another common tactic.

Smokes and vapors (created when powders, herbs, and chemicals are mixed or tossed onto a fire) are another common trick. I know of one such individual who always insisted that he and his client drink from the same glass of wine before each session. The wine was drugged with a narcotic to which the medium had built up a tolerance. Under its influence, the victim of this deceit would experience realistic hallucinations prompted by the medium. When all was done, the victim was only too ready to believe that he or she had been in the presence of the supernatural.

The section on false mediums is particularly useful when the finding of a

medium is a primary part of an adventure. The Dungeon Master can role-play the part of a false medium for all it is worth, leading the unsuspecting group of adventurers on a merry path.

Locating and Hiring a Medium

Tracking down one of these extraordinary people can be a most difficult and demanding task. True, in some places they openly practice their art, drawing customers just as any other merchant would. Far more frequently, however, they are forced to practice their profession in secret. This section will discuss finding a medium through recommendation, by reputation, through advertising, and by sensing.

Please note that many people liken contact with spirits and the dead with evil and dark magic. I do not share this belief. I have, however, seen enough people corrupted by contact with the powers of necromancy to understand this common fear and suspicion.

A medium will either make him- or herself available to a group of adventurers out of sympathy for their cause or out of a desire for their gold. In the former case, the services rendered cost a minimal amount or may even be free of charge. In the latter, however, the price demanded may be staggering.

If the spiritualist believes his services are vital to the success of a client's mission and that no other avenue of recourse exists for the client, the medium's prices may reflect a moderate increase. I have heard tell of more ruthless mediums demanding a veritable treasure trove.

It is sometimes possible to haggle with a spiritualist when money is not available to meet the stated price. The best thing to offer such people is a period of service. Frequently, a medium will have some investigation that he or she wishes undertaken, for even their powers are not unlimited.

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Acquiring the services of a medium can usually be dealt with in the same manner as hiring an NPC spellcaster. The NPC Spell Costs Table in Chapter 12 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* provides a listing of costs that might reasonably be demanded for the use of a medium's powers.

In general, the spells available from a spiritualist include *augury*, *clairvoyance*, *commune* (500 gp), *contact other plane*, *divination*, *ESP*, *legend lore*, *speak with dead*, and *true seeing*. More potent spells, including *gate* and *plane shift*, are available from more powerful mediums, often at whatever price can be negotiated.

For those campaigns in which the *Complete Psionics Handbook* is being used, the following powers are generally available through mediums (along with the costs associated with their casting): *object reading* (200 gp), *precognition* (200 gp), *sensitivity to psychic impressions* (100 gp), *danger sense* (250 gp), *spirit sense* (300 gp), *probability travel* (7,500 gp + 1,000 per "passenger"), *summon planar creature* (25,000 gp), *astral projection* (1,000 gp), and *incarnation awareness* (1,000 gp).

These abilities are not, as a rule, cast in the same manner that a priest, psionist, or wizard might invoke a spell. Rather, the same effect is created by means of a complex ritual or seance. Furthermore, not all of these spells will be available from every medium. As a rule, these individuals are capable of employing only 1d4 spells and/or psionic abilities. When designing an adventure and creating an NPC medium, DMs should select their powers for dramatic effect and importance to the story as opposed to randomly selecting the powers.

DMs should play up the unusual nature of these NPCs and their powers by making them unusual eccentrics who have memorable personalities and traits. An encounter with a medium should be a wonderful role-playing experience, full of mood and atmosphere.

Through Recommendation

Perhaps the most reliable way to locate a qualified spiritualist is through the recommendation of a trusted friend. In my own profession, I have established contacts with many adventurers and ghost hunters over the years. If I am in a certain domain, I need only contact someone in that area who knows me and tell him or her what services I shall require. As this person is invariably more familiar than I am with the resources locally available, this works quite well.

For those who have not been fortunate enough to establish such a solid network of support, I can offer only limited advice. If an organization can be found to which you might make a claim of membership or fraternity—a thieves' guild or school of wizards, for example—then much can be gained there. It has been my experience that groups such as these can be of great service to their members and allies. Care must be taken, however, in deciding just how much trust one can place in any group of strangers.

"Can you give a name to the vile creature?"

"To the creature itself? No. But to the mortal form it has assumed, yes. It calls itself Dominique l'Mortain."

"What?! Holy one, are you certain? Lady Dominique is well known and respected hereabouts. I cannot take action against her without absolute cause!"

"Paladine does not deceive, Van Richten."

"No, I suppose not. But can I rely upon your interpretations of all that you sense to be accurate?"

"Would you have come to me if you harbored any doubt?"

— Transcript of a meeting between Dr. Van Richten and a medium in Sithicus

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If no manner of professional or fraternal ties can be found, there is always the clergy to consider.

It is often possible to locate a church that, although possibly not representing the exact faith one follows, will be sympathetic to the cause for which we are fighting. If this relationship can be forged, then trustworthy advice is often forthcoming.

I have had occasion to deal with some of the priests who devote themselves to the gods of Har'Akir. While my own faith is very different from theirs, we nevertheless quickly found a common belief in justice and the sanctity of the tomb that was able to bridge the gap between our cultures.

I am delighted to say that a long and true friendship arose between myself and several of the local holy men. Indeed, on at least three separate occasions the actions of these wonderful companions saved my life. Without them, I should not be able to write this missive.

By Reputation

A somewhat less reliable means of locating a medium, although one still not utterly devoid of merit, is by the medium's reputation. An individual who is talented in the art of communication and who chooses not to practice his or her skills in secrecy will eventually become known. In some cases, this reputation can spread far and wide, crossing even the borders of a domain.

A word of caution is vital here, however. In my years of travel I have encountered many, many fraudulent spiritualists whose claims far outweighed their purported mystical abilities. In almost every case, these individuals had amassed a fair reputation that was built around stories of past successes they themselves had fostered.

Earlier in this chapter I discussed such false mediums in more detail. Remember that it is important to note that tracking down a medium by his or her reputation alone lends itself to this



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kind of deception more than any other method. Care is warranted.

Through Advertisement

It is possible to seek out a medium by posting handbills and hiring callers to express one's desire to employ a such a person. This has the distinct disadvantage of alerting all those interested in fraud and deceit to the presence of a possible target for their trickery. Thus, even if someone responds to the advertisement who is qualified and worthy of attention, he or she is often mislaid while the potential employer seeks to sort out the genuine spiritualists from the talented fakers.

I have been forced to resort to this avenue of hiring only once in my life. To my surprise, the first applicant for the position arrived even as the first of my notices was being posted. After a brief interview, I learned she had been aware that a stranger had come into town who was, she sensed, "in need of guidance." Thus, she kept a careful watch on the notice board in the center of town and responded instantly upon seeing my leaflet.

I dare say she would have found me even if I had not posted my notices, but I cannot be certain of this. Over the course of the next few days, as she provided me with all of the information I needed to solve the matter at hand, I was faced with a constant trickle of pretenders and charlatans who all claimed to be the genuine article. Doubtless one or two of them might have had some minor gift for prognostication, but most were simply talented actors trying to land a profitable role—one that might have cost me more than mere gold.

By Sensitivity

I have heard tell that there are some people who can actually sense the presence of a spiritualist in a given locality. Whether this phenomenon is magical, psychic, or divine, I cannot say. I have seen evidence to indicate that it might be possible to attribute such a

power to each of these three sources.

Allow me to present an example. I was traveling with a pair of companions through the strange domain of Sanguinia. My comrades were the fierce and savage desert warrior, Arametrius, and the stern and mysterious ranger, George Weathermay.

Arametrius was a man of secrets, to be sure. He was clearly a traveler from another land, one unfamiliar with much of what he found in our travels. That his native land was one of deserts and hot sun was obvious, for his skin was tanned, and the chilling winds of Sanguinia were almost more than he could bear. He seemed taken aback by the metal objects we used in our daily life. As he did not speak any language I knew, I was never able to understand the wonderment with which he beheld such simple things as iron tools or steel weapons, but I believe the root of his attitude to be religious in nature—perhaps his people used metal only in the fashioning of holy objects.

Arametrius was also sensitive to the presence of the undead or those connected with them. On three occasions, he awoke in the dead of night crying out in fear and grabbing for the bone axe from which he never strayed. Without exception, such nightmares were followed by an encounter with the undead. I was convinced that this was a valuable gift.

When it became obvious to us that our company would require the services of someone capable of communicating with the spirit world, the task fell to Arametrius. He set his powerful mind to work on the matter and, within a few minutes, was able to sense the presence of a supernatural influence. We sought out the woman whom he had sensed—a charming young lady named Claudia DeShanes—and asked for her help.

To our surprise, we found she had no idea what we were talking about. Indeed, she was certain Arametrius was mistaken, for she swore she was not a mystic. I was able to persuade her to attempt some simple experiments under my guidance, and her powers quickly manifested themselves.

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We learned her mother had been sensitive to the vibrations of the spirit world, as had her grandmother. Claudia was not only gifted, she was among the most accurate and powerful spiritualists with whom I have ever worked. After our adventure in Sanguinia ended, Claudia joined me in my battle against the forces of evil. We traveled together for little more than a year before her death in the dread land of Lamordia.

Sources of a Medium's Power

In this section I shall discuss the ways in which a medium might acquire his or her powers. It is important to me, as a man of science, that these distinctions be drawn, for they help quantify that which is mysterious and unknown.

I do not claim to have divined each and every type of medium. I present here only those types that have made themselves known to me during the course of my travels.

Spiritualists seem to come in two broad groups. The first represents all those who have set out to deliberately master their art's

He knew the anguish of the marrow
The ache of the skeleton;
No contact possible to flesh
Allayed the fever of the bone.

— Thomas Sterns Elliot
Whispers of Immortality

abilities. The second group seems to come upon their calling in a more haphazard fashion. I term these groups studied and incidental.

Studied Abilities

Mediums who fall into this group have spent years or even decades in the pursuit of knowledge and power so that they might be able to contact and control the spirit world. In the eyes of many adventurers, these individuals are the easiest with which to deal, for they are often kindred spirits who seek to lay the dead to rest. These mediums derive their power via magical, divine, or psionic means.

Magical Powers

Persons who draw their power from a magical source include all manner of necromancers, diviners, and others who depend upon the weaving of spells for communication with the undead or spirit world.

I know of several magical spells that have been created expressly for use in obtaining information from and about the dead. Among the most common and most useful of these spells are *detect undead*, *legend lore*, *contact other plane*, *sending*, *demand*, and *foresight*.

Magical means of communicating with the dead are quite reliable, but are not typically found within the general public. As a rule, individuals who have these powers will be few and far between. Assuming that an adventurer or one of his or her companions has no ability to cast these spells, a ghost hunter's only access to these abilities will be through a hired wizard. Knowing these mysterious and powerful beings as I do, I can state that finding such an individual and convincing him or her to aid one can be a long, often hazardous, and frequently expensive process.

Divine Powers

If I had to select the type of spiritualist for whom I have the greatest respect, it would be those who draw upon their powers from the

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worship of a deity. As a rule, these individuals have access to highly effective and reliable spells that enable them to draw forth information and to exercise a level of control over the undead that *no magician can match*.

The drawback to this is that sometimes these individuals are in the service of a dark power. As such, they can be among the most dangerous and formidable foes an adventurer is likely to face. The request of communication with the spirit world coupled with these priests' control of the undead can be channeled into a mighty weapon, the likes of which few ghost hunters can survive.

Earlier, I wrote about my trip to Har'Akir and my fondness for several members of the local clergy. There is more to that story, however, and I have saved it to illustrate this point. One of the first people I met in that land of sun and desert was a tall, slender woman with skin the color of polished ebony. She was a priest of some sort, although her faith was unknown to me then. She extended what I thought was the hand of friendship to me and, being alone in a domain I did not know, I accepted. For several days, all seemed well. She fed me fine foods, kept an ample supply of water and wine available for me, and made a great effort to learn my language. She expressed interest in my works and seemed eager to help me in defeating a withered spirit that had pursued me across the dunes. Before long, however, I discovered that this kindness was nothing but a charade.

I learned that this priest, Kharafek was her name, served no force of light, but a power of darkness and evil. Her only purpose in treating me well was to acquire information about the spirit I had been battling. It was her desire to control this ancient evil and use it as a pawn in her effort to crush the temples of more just and righteous gods. I learned of her plans too late, for she had already seized control of the withered shade. I was forced to flee from her temple in the dead of night.

As I ran, Kharafek bent her every will against mine. Spirits rose from the sands to lash out at

my body. I dare say I would have been horribly mauled or even slain by the nightmares that she drew forth from the spirit world if I had not stumbled upon a small party of local clerics, led by a powerful cleric of their own faith. Seeing my peril, they came to my aid. As I described earlier, we soon found a common ground and joined forces against the dread Kharafek.

Psionic Powers

Some people are able to draw upon their own mental powers to establish contact with the spirit world. Such individuals are rare, certainly, but they are often quite powerful. Among the powers at their disposal are such useful talents as *object reading, precognition, sensitivity to psychic impressions, danger sense, spirit sense, probability travel, summon planar creature, astral projection, and incarnation awareness*.

Some of the informational powers employed by this type of person are truly wonderful. The first time I saw someone employ the *incarnation awareness* ability, for example, I was stunned. The information we received was accurate, concise, and decisive in the resolution of a most challenging case.

For some reason, however, psychic spiritualists are almost unheard of within the domains of Ravenloft. Those that I have encountered have almost always been outsiders who traveled into our world from other lands. Curiously, many of them complain that their powers are far less reliable here than in their previous realm. I can only assume that some aspect of our land warps these powers, although I cannot provide any manner of explanation for this most unusual phenomenon.

Incidental Abilities

In rare cases, an individual who has no predisposition to spiritualistic powers can have them granted to or thrust upon him. Without question, these powers (be they accidental, hereditary, or induced) are more potent than those forged out of dedicated study. This may

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not seem fair, particularly to someone who has spent years in the study of arcane lore and mystical incantations.

While these powers are generally more effective in their specific role, an individual gifted with incidental abilities will generally be limited to only a few. Thus, they are typically very restricted specialists who have only one avenue of expertise, as opposed to those who have studied abilities.

Accidental Powers

Some spiritualists have only the hand of fate to thank for their powers. They did not seek out a special ability through study or similar means, and they have no hereditary claim to such gifts. Although powers of this type can spontaneously awaken in a person, it is far more likely that they are triggered through an accident or period of great stress.

I have met one individual, a dwarf who now travels under the name of Koal Shadowforge, whose powers can be traced to an accidental

origin. Like many of his race, Koal had spent years laboring in the mines that surrounded the city in which he lived. One day, however, an explosion occurred in the tunnels, causing a collapse. The shower of rock that fell around Koal knocked him unconscious and left him pinned beneath a heavy layer of stone.

When Koal awoke, he found himself in the company of three of his fellow miners. Like himself, they had been trapped in the collapse and were unable to move. Thus, the quartet was forced to wait until help arrived. They passed the time in conversation and, as dwarves are wont to do, complaining.

Two days later, help arrived. Koal was freed and, luckily, his injuries proved to be minor. To his surprise, however, he found that his companions had all been killed in the initial collapse. The past 48 hours had been spent, he was forced to admit, in the company of three ghosts.

From that point on, Koal found himself able to converse freely with the spirits of the



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recently dead. With the help of a magician in my native Darkon, I was able to test Koal's ability. Our conclusion was that he was effectively able to employ the spell holy men call *Speak with Dead* at any time. He had no need for rituals or incantations, his race's natural resistance to magic did not hinder him, and he made no conscious effort to employ his power. He was simply able to converse with them as you or I might chat with a traveling companion.

In some cases, power acquired in this way can be fleeting in nature. On one of my own adventures, I encountered a small child whose father had been beheaded for a crime he did not commit. When the wronged man's spirit returned to exact vengeance on the people who had falsely accused him, the daughter was able to freely converse with the apparition.

No one else was able to do this without the aid of powerful magical spells. Further, when the ghost had completed its task and returned to a peaceful rest in the grave, the girl was unable to communicate with other spirits. To the best of my knowledge, she now lives as happy and normal a life as anyone in Darkon.

Hereditary Powers

The most powerful of spiritualists are those who have descended from a long line of similarly gifted persons. Most Vistani mediums are of this type, for the powerful magic of the *waking dream* runs strongly in family lines, passing almost without exception from mother to daughter.

Those who have this power are often trained by their parents in the use of their talent. Thus, they are extremely reliable when called upon to undertake a spiritual task. They have a good understanding of their abilities, their limitations, and the risks involved in any endeavor.

It is very rare that someone who has hereditary powers does not receive training from an ancestor or a mentor. When this happens (or, rather, fails to happen), a perilous focus is created. A hereditary medium cannot

help but see into the spirit world. His or her karmic aura is in tune with all that transpires nearby, and this can be most dangerous. With all of this spiritual energy swirling about, an untrained medium acts as a lodestone to pull ghosts, shades, and spirits into the world around him or her.

Often this infuses these mediums with a feeling of dread and paranoia. They sense the looming energies about them and panic. For some, this oppressive karmic weight is too much to bear and they succumb to death. In others, the stronger ones, a psychosis grows in their minds. They feel hunted and pursued by the ghosts around them. They flee. Sometimes they seek isolation in the wilderness, becoming hermits who dwell at the heart of some haunted, dire forest.

More frequently, however, this medium never settles down. Rather, the medium becomes, in essence, a mystical plague carrier who travels from town to town in an effort to stay ahead of the spectral forces that gather around him or her. Everyone the medium encounters runs the risk of exposure to supernatural presences. It is not uncommon for a dozen or more hauntings to spring up following the passage of such a tragic figure.

With the proper training, however, these people can be a great boon to those who would battle the ranks of the evil undead. While the way in which such a medium's power manifests itself varies from individual to individual, one can almost always count on a hereditary medium to be a powerful and reliable source of information. If cooperative, he or she can prove to be a valuable weapon in one's endeavors.

Induced Powers

Some mediums, particularly those from less advanced cultures, require an outside stimulus to awaken their mystical powers. Generally, the stimulus takes the form of a ritual ceremony that surrounds the imbibing of a magical concoction.

The information one receives from these individuals is usually reliable, but of a

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somewhat random nature. Although a general question can be put to such a person, it is seldom felt by the contacted spirits as more than a suggestion. Thus, an answer may be given that is wholly accurate and correct or, more frequently, of a puzzling or only half-useful nature.

I do not mean to discount such individuals. If the only type of mystic around is someone who depends upon a magical tincture or poultice to make contact with an apparition, then, by all means, seek out this person and make use of his or her gifts. I am only saying that some degree of caution is warranted in the wording of questions and in the interpretation of answers.

If one thinks in broad terms when dealing with induced mediums, the reader will generally be safe enough. Ask about the origins of a spirit or its overall wants and desires. If the reader attempts to pin down a specific point, however, he or she will almost certainly be misinformed or disappointed.

Lifestyles of Mediums

The life of a medium is seldom similar to that of a normal person. They perceive the world in a different way than you or I do. Often, they can sense things that we cannot. This section discusses six characteristics (aloof, calculated, morbid, nomadic, reclusive, and unworthy) toward which mediums seem to naturally gravitate. This information will prove useful when attempting to locate a medium.

Aloof

Some mediums choose to remain among mankind, but they retain the feeling of alienation that marks the nomadic and reclusive spiritualists. In order to remain among the living and stay in one place, they adopt an understandable philosophy: An absolute belief in their own superiority over those who have no supernatural powers.

I know of one woman, for example, who claimed to be able to see the world exactly as it was. When I asserted my own belief that I could do the same, she laughed at me. I soon found that she was correct to do so. Her power was in her sight. She saw the shifting winds themselves, not simply their effects upon trees.

Nothing could hide from her keen senses—not even those items under a magical shroud of *invisibility*, for she saw such things normally. Illusions and phantasms were instantly obvious to her, and she could tell whether someone was telling the truth or lying simply by studying the aura surrounding them. She was an amazing woman.

Such keen senses, however, made it impossible for her to live as we do. She could tell at a glance the innermost secrets of everyone she met. Even the famed detective Alanik Ray, whom I have worked with on two occasions, could not match her perception and skill at deduction. She knew that all those around her feared her and her power. They could not stand to be near her, for all of their personal secrets (both benign and malignant) were known to her. I consider myself an understanding and fair man, but even I was taken aback by her powers when we first met.

Individuals who have the aloof personality are seldom wholly good or evil. Rather, they are truly opportunistic individuals who place their own well being and comfort above that of anyone else. They desire only the best and insist that those around them, the lesser ranks of humanity, provide it for them.

Calculated

Some mediums adopt the same mannerisms one might expect from a master crafter. They make no attempt to hide their powers or to disguise them in any way. In fact, they often advertise their abilities and let their past accomplishments be known. They may open a shop or an office, and they often make a fair living by telling fortunes, helping people who come to them with questions about the

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unknown, and answering the occasional question from a worried band of would-be ghost hunters.

They generally take no notice of the feelings others have toward their abilities. They are what they are and seldom regret the powers that fate has put in their hands. Such mediums tend to form a close circle of trusted friends around themselves, and this becomes the whole of their social life. They are often perceived as cold, calculated, and caring for only what might profit them. I believe they foster this notion as a sort of defensive method against those who do not understand them.

Morbid

Perhaps the most disturbing lifestyle commonly found among mediums is that which I term morbid. These individuals feel a strong kinship with the dead because of their powers. As time goes by, these ties grow stronger. The mediums begin to find things relating to death and the dead aesthetically pleasing. In most cases, these individuals live in homes that begin to look as much like a tomb or a mausoleum as they do a living person's domicile.

Individuals who have this outlook tend to have a fatalistic view of their world. They see the living, themselves included, as transient things. We are all, they believe, such temporary things that life and the living are simply an aside in the vast scope of the cosmos. I have listened to their viewpoints and found them all strangely compelling. It may be that all living beings have a trace of this morbid fascination (as I hypothesized in Chapter III regarding the *entrance victim* power), or it may be that my own encounters with death and the undead have left me particularly vulnerable to this fatalistic outlook. Whatever the cause, I can assure you that these people are most disturbing.

In the most extreme cases, these spiritualists begin to believe that they themselves are dead or undead. They become convinced that they

are trapped in the living shell of their body through some mysticism or curse. In a strange way, this mirrors the mentality of many undead creatures who believe themselves to be truly alive, but cursed with death.

Nomadic

Similar to hermits in their belief that they have no place in mortal society, this type of medium travels from place to place. Generally, they devote their life to the study of the supernatural and seek to master their own inner gift. From time to time, this type of medium becomes a traveling ghost hunter who uses his or her abilities for the betterment of all mankind without actually taking an interest in any given town or individual.

D*eepest into that darkness
peering, long I stood there
wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams
no mortal ever dared to
dream before.*

— Edgar Allan Poe
The Raven

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Just as often, however, these individuals become drifting minions of evil. Their powers combine with their resentment toward the living to guide them down a path of darkness from which few have the strength of willpower to return. In such cases, wandering spiritualists can become an adversary as deadly as any ghost or vampire.

Reclusive

Many people who have the gift of spiritual powers quickly become convinced that they have no place in the land of the living. While they do not develop an affinity for all things dead, they do become detached and somewhat resentful of those who are still a part of society.

Once this attitude is adopted, this medium will often leave behind the civilized lands of living men and seek out some wilderness to call his or her own. This person will find some dark glade or twisting complex of caverns and seclude him- or herself at its heart.

I have even heard of cases where the would-be hermit sought and obtained admission into a monastic order, granting him the solitude he desired while allowing him to remain somewhat in the company of other men. With strangers and visitors being rare, the mystic was left free to explore the limits of his or her own powers and establish a good rapport with the minions of the spirit world.

There is a major advantage to this way of life. Recluses spend so much of their time in contemplation and inner study that they are able to harness every last fraction of their mystical abilities. They learn the subtle nuances of their talents and become as knowledgeable in following the paths of the undead as any ranger might be in the tracking of game. As a rule, recluses will be in much better control of their powers than any other type of medium.

The drawback to all of this is fairly obvious as well. Recluses sever almost every contact with the outside world. They often despise the people whom they have left behind and may

actually become violent if forced into meetings with them.

It is always a good idea to approach such mediums cautiously, for they can be quite dangerous. In addition, they often place traps or other wards around their lairs. The most powerful among them will actually call upon the spirits of the dead to watch over their isolation.

Unworthy

Some mediums find the weight of their powers greater than the strength of their will. They begin to feel a sense of depression and anxiety over their abilities.

Such individuals see their gift as a burdensome responsibility and rapidly come to believe they are not worthy of it. They become more and more depressed and apprehensive as time goes by. As a rule, the greater their power, the more rapid the pace of their mental collapse.

In the end, these mediums are often overcome by depression and sink into the inescapable mental disintegration of insanity or complete despair. Those who fall into the latter category are generally found in either a comatose or catatonic state, with no will to live. As might be expected, they often succumb utterly to their mental weakness and die. In rare cases, under the care of a talented hand, they may be nursed back to sanity and, with luck, will adopt a more stable demeanor in the future.

Those who find the strength to avoid despair and cross over the line into lunacy can be terrible and frightening. For some reason that I have as yet been unable to discern, they generally become more powerful upon reaching madness. My speculation is that these people find the ability to draw upon their full reserves of power once they abandon their feelings of inadequacy, but I cannot prove this to be the case.

Such mediums become tools of death and darkness. They have much in common with

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those who are morbid, but they are utterly devoid of compassion for the living. They regard life as an aberration and may do all in their power to end it. As one might expect, so vile a mentality is dangerous beyond words in any case; when linked with the power of a skilled medium, an almost unstoppable enemy is created.

The Uistani

I have no love for the gypsies who travel our land. It was their treachery that saw my son taken from me and made into a night-stalking vampire. Because of them, both my beloved child and my dear wife are now dead. My advice in dealing with the Vistani is simple: *These wild people are not to be trusted at any time.*

Still, my discussion of contacting the undead would not be complete without some mention of the Vistani. These nomadic people have long been an enigma to me. Though I have tried to

study them and learn something of their ways, I remain mystified by them.

Vistani women are all gifted with at least a trace of mystical power, I believe. They seem able to sense things that normal folk cannot, and they live their lives as if they were in constant possession of a sense I cannot define. There are those who say that the Vistani are more than mortal, but I cannot confirm that. I have seen them die as certainly as you or I might, and I believe they are as mortal as we.

The Vistani have a word for their unusual sensitivity to the supernatural: *karatakasta*. This translates into my own language as the *waking dream*. This expression describes all manner of extrasensory perceptions and supernatural senses. To the Vistani, these mysterious talents are so commonplace as to be taken for granted.

The Vistani Plan

There are those who say the Vistani work toward some greater purpose. These people



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claim that all the things the gypsies do are carefully plotted and have some ultimate aim that we cannot fathom. Perhaps this is true, although I cannot support the idea. The belief that an entire race of people could undertake a project demanding absolute secrecy and subtlety on the part of all its members seems absurd (and, at the very least, unlikely) to me.

If this is the case, then I must believe that the great chaos into which my life was hurled following the death of my wife and son is all a part of some grandiose gypsy scheme. I have tried to examine this hypothesis with the cool and calculating mind of a scientist, and I can find nothing in it to make me believe that it is true. I must put this entire idea down as wishful thinking on the part of those who would find a romantic side to these chaotic wanderers.

I will admit, however, that the idea of a grand Vistani plan is appealing, even to me. I would like to think that the death of my son served some greater purpose. True, it did set my feet on the path of vampire hunting and lead, in the long run, to my writing the book you now read (and its predecessor). My efforts at battling the undead have been, I hope, a thing beneficial to all mankind.

Does this show that the Vistani planned this from the start? I think not. Rather, I think that the company of the gypsies who stole my family from me and who so altered my life did so out of a love for the gold promised them by the foul vampire Baron Metus.

Aid to Adventurers

From time to time, the Vistani seem to have an actual interest in helping adventurers. Even I must credit their aid with saving my life on no fewer than three occasions.

In reflection, I can find no steady and reliable method by which their help might be obtained. In those cases where the Vistani have worked with me, I was contacted by them. Thus, I believe the help of a gypsy is not generally available for the asking. If they desire one's help, they will seek out that person.

Still, I do know that it is often possible to hire a Vistani medium for brief periods of time. As a rule, they will provide one or two card readings or similar prophetic sessions for a person before ending contact with him.

When a Vistani does agree to help, their vision of the world is truly remarkable. The *karatakasta* is a most incredible tool for the gathering of information about the present, the past, and the future.

I must again repeat my warnings, however. I do not trust the Vistani. They are too mysterious and secretive for my taste. If they do have some master plan according to which they live, we have no assurance that it is a scheme for the good. Might it not just as easily be evil?



SPEAK WITH THE DEAD



CHAPTER VI: INVESTIGATING A HAUNTING



uring my years as a ghost hunter, I have encountered many unnatural and terrifying spirits. In this chapter, I shall relate the details of one of the most unusual hauntings I have ever come across. In addition, I shall also use this story to illustrate the techniques by which a haunting is typically best investigated (I have set aside these illustrations in boxes). These techniques stress the need for caution and careful preparation when investigating any supernatural occurrence, and I trust the reader will make due note of them.

I have selected the story of *The Phantom Army* for this purpose because it depicts a most horrible phenomenon: the mass haunting. It is very rare and happens only when many individuals share some common bond that links them in death as it did in life.

A mass haunting always centers around some individual. It may be that this person is the only true ghost and that the others are merely reflections of its own curse, dragged into unlife by the power of the central figure. In almost every case, the ghost at the core of a mass haunting is of fourth or even fifth magnitude.

Any successful investigation follows certain stages ("picking up the scent," "stalking the beast," and "making the kill"), each of which contains a number of steps. To deviate somewhat from this plan is acceptable, even mandatory, for each haunting is unique. But to stray too far from the course I describe in this chapter is to invite death . . . or worse.

Before I begin to tell you the story of this particular investigation, allow me to relate the origins of the Phantom Army. Bear in mind that I knew only a small part of this story at the start of my investigation, so some of what I did may seem, in retrospect, illogical. By learning the background beforehand, the reader will better understand the investigation process.

The Phantom Army

The origin of the Phantom Army dates back decades. Nearly half a century ago, a pack of twisted mongrelmen from the dread domain of G'Henna fled from their native land and entered the southern reaches of Darkon. Here, they did their best to melt into the forests and live undisturbed.

Although those who lived near the mongrelmen knew of their existence and avoided them, the mongrelmen kept to themselves and did not harass the common folk. The locals feared the mongrelmen, however, for there were stories that told of their inhumane treatment of prisoners and wild, cannibalistic feasts held under the light of the full moon.

In time, the mongrelmen became the masters of their recently claimed land. They came to know every aspect of their wooded refuge and were able to move quickly and quietly through the trees and brush. Some even said they had mastered the power of invisibility and could render themselves unseen.

Eventually, the dread Kargat took an interest in these intruders. A legion of Darkon's most fearsome warriors journeyed south from Il Aluk and came, at last, to the woods of the mongrelmen. The leader of the legion was a dark and sinister man, a fellow known as Karuk Abjen. His men feared him and trembled at the mention of his name.

Abjen ordered his men forward into the forests. They found no sign of the mongrelmen in the outskirts of the forests, and they pressed inward. They did not know that the mongrels were watching their every move, waiting to learn what these armored men wanted in the woods they called their own.

As night fell, one of the scouting parties happened upon a lone mongrelman and captured him. The prisoner was brought before Abjen and brutally tortured for information about his kindred and their purpose in Darkon. Abjen ranted and accused the pitiful creature of being a spy sent by Yagno into Darkon to learn

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the secrets of Azalin's power. In the end, the mongrelman died from the abuse.

At the instant the creature's body stiffened and went slack, the last vestige of life drained from its broken form, and a long and terrible howl went up from the woods surrounding the camp. It lasted for many minutes, echoing like the lingering cry of some great, wounded beast. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the cry stopped. A sullen, ominous silence fell across the Kargat legion.

Abjen ordered his men to stand ready for battle. All that night, the watches waited eagerly in hope of earning favor with their vile commander by being the first to spot the mongrelmen massing for attack. Dawn came, but still there was no sign of the beastly men who had made the pitiful howling.

The Kargat commander called his men together and gloated before them. Abjen cried out that it was fear of the Kargat and its great lord Azalin that kept the mongrelmen in check. They would not dare to attack, he said, for none who challenged Azalin's powers could survive. Finally, Abjen ordered a company of his men to move into the woods and set it afire—the mongrelmen and the forest they had defiled would be reduced to cinders.

As the troops dispersed, the mongrelmen attacked. But they did not attack in sweeping waves of the horribly twisted creatures; instead they attacked in silent strikes against individuals. The company of men sent to light the fires vanished, never to be seen again by their companions.

At sunset, another ringing cry went up from the mongrelmen. Their echoing howl drifted through the woods, stilling all conversation and sapping the morale of Abjen's legion. His men were on the verge of panic, but the fiendish Abjen would not let them flee. He took command of a second company and forced them into the woods to discover what had happened to the first company. All night long they moved about, searching for their lost companions. At every step, they were met with flickering shadows, sounds of movement, and

lingering traces of the mongrelmen, but never did they actually come across one.

As the pink glow of sunrise spread across the sky, Abjen and his men returned to camp. They had lost not a single man, but neither had they found a single body or seen so much as one mongrelman. To their horror, they found no sign of the dozens of men they had left behind. The camp was deserted. Abjen chose to believe the mongrelmen had struck again, for he had vowed to kill any man who deserted him.

As Abjen ranted and raved at the dark woods around him, another of the mournful cries rolled out through the trees. Morale among Abjen's men collapsed utterly. They scattered and ran, hoping to find some safe passage through the ranks of the mongrelmen.

Abjen himself was captured by the mongrels he had vowed to destroy. It is said that they tortured him for days before he finally died. Those who lived near the woods of the mongrelmen reported that his cries of pain and suffering were heard all through the night, and that his sobbing pleas for mercy and death filled the days. None moved to help him.

In the years that followed, the mongrelmen grew more protective of their forest home than ever before. Those who ventured in simply failed to leave. Azalin either lost interest in the pitiful creatures or decided that he did not want to lose more men in eradicating them. In either case, the Kargat never returned to bother them.

Several months later, a merchant named Corin led her caravan past the edge of the mongrelmen's woods. As the sun set in the west, her party heard the tortured cries of a man in agony coming from the domain of the mongrelmen. Those who were more curious and brave followed Corin to investigate. When they neared a clearing in the wood, they began to come across the bodies of countless mongrelmen. Even their frightening deformities were nothing when confronted with the looks of horror and pain on their inhuman faces.

When the merchant and her people turned to retrace their steps and report what they had

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seen, they discovered their way was blocked. Abjen's men had risen from the grave as fierce ghosts, and the woods were filled with their misty, spectral forms. Each of them was horribly scarred and mutilated, still bearing the wounds they had suffered from the mongrels.

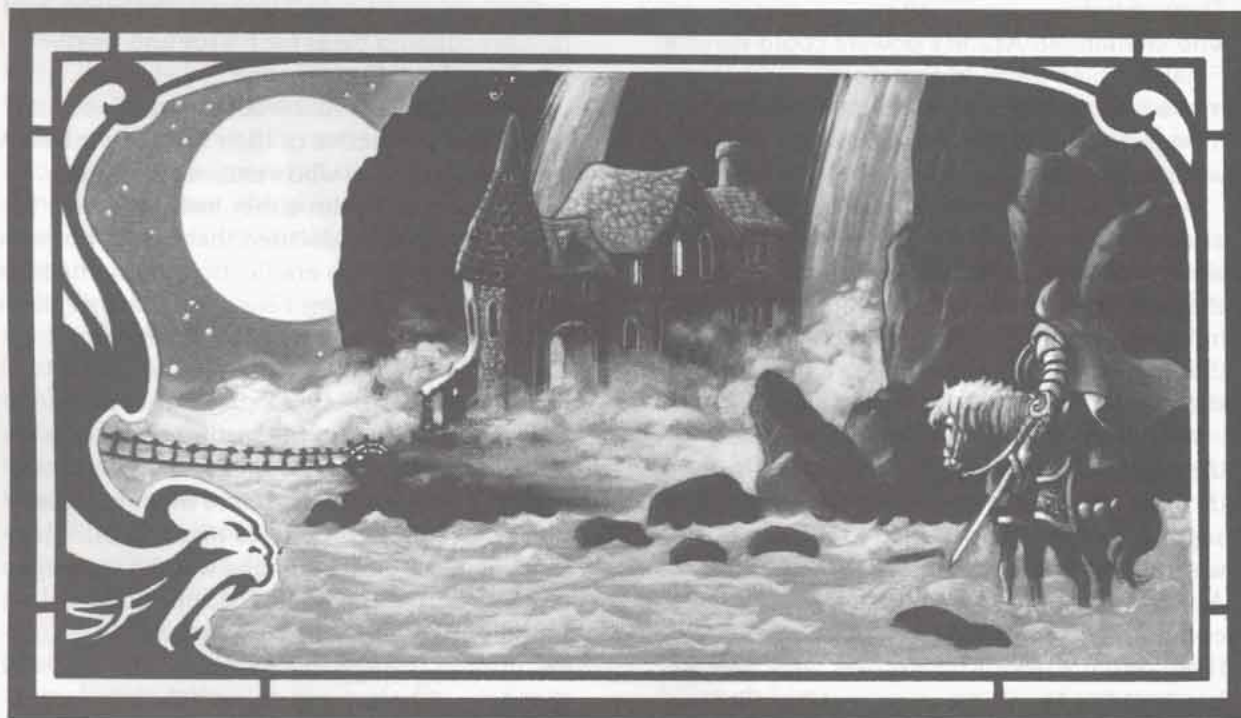
Corin and her cohorts were forced to retreat deeper into the forest. Eventually, they came upon a group of mongrelmen who had escaped the ghosts and were venturing out of the woods to return to the wilds of G'henna. Their travel had been slow, however, for the spirits of Abjen's army were combing the woods looking for them. After some initial distrust, Corin and the refugees agreed to work together to escape the haunted woodland.

For nearly a week, they moved through the dark and evil trees. One by one, their numbers dwindled as the ghosts claimed their victims. Finally, with only a handful left alive, the group came to the edge of the haunted forest and the border of G'henna. A wave of relief washed over

them, but it was short-lived: A dark and ominous figure stepped before them—Abjen had found them.

The company was surrounded by moaning, suffering spirits. Corin, her people, and the mongrelmen pleaded with Abjen to let them pass, but the ghastly general would hear nothing of their entreaties. He announced that they would all be tortured, even as the mongrelmen had tortured him. When only one person remained alive, that one would be released to tell the world that this forest was now Abjen's and that the phantom army would allow none who entered it to leave.

Corin's spirit proved strongest, and she was freed two nights later. Her wounds were horrible and her trauma great, however, and she spent many months on the edge of madness. When she recovered from her ordeal, she did as Abjen had instructed, warning people about the dangers of the cursed forest and its gruesome inhabitants.



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Picking Up the Scent

Clearly, the first stage in confronting a ghost is discovering that the creature exists. This would seem an elementary deduction, but I list it because of the three crucial steps that comprise this stage.

First Report

Often, one learns about the presence of a spirit through secondhand accounts or reports. Only twice have I ever begun an investigation because I happened upon the ghost. Thus, it is safe to assume that you will not be the first person to see a given spirit.

With this in mind, consider those who have seen the spirit before you as sources of information. Remember that the average person is not as intelligent as one might hope. Nine in ten times, a reported *ghost* proves to be nothing more than a natural creature or phenomenon.

Thus, before any serious investigation is begun, consider the credibility of the witness. If it seems reasonable (or even possible) that he or she is telling the truth and has an accurate understanding of what was witnessed, then proceed with your study. Keep in mind that, as of yet, you have no solid proof that you are dealing with the supernatural.

I first heard of the Phantom Army while traveling southwest through Darkon toward Falkovia. I had stopped at a small inn for a bit of supper and a warm bed, for the night outside was growing cold. I told the hostellers my plans to cross through the woods on the morrow. I could not help but notice the unease of the innkeeper, a quiet, older man named Talid, and his wife, a silent, watchful woman named Corin.

I inquired about their distress, offering my services as a physician if needed. The woman simply turned away from me and said nothing. Her husband sat before me, thanked me for the offer, and then told me a tale that made my blood run cold. . . .

Confirmation

At this point in your investigation, it is time to determine the general nature of the haunting. If the witness who first brought the spirit to your attention seems credible, then begin there.

Listen carefully to the person's story and ask for clarification about things that seem unclear. Once you have finished with this witness, move on to another. Although this may seem repetitive, particularly if there are a number of witnesses, the truth at the core of each person's story will provide a solid base from which to begin a successful investigation.

If, in the course of this study, you are unable to find a firsthand witness, you are probably on a false trail. If you cannot find a credible person who can present you with a personal account of his or her meeting with the ghost in question, drop the investigation. You will find nothing more fiendish than superstition.

. . . The tale was one of terror, for it was the story of Corin's escape from the Phantom Army through the very woods I proposed to travel. Although much of it was disjointed, no doubt from the trauma Corin's mind had suffered, the fear behind the words seemed genuine.

When the innkeeper finished, I voiced my own horror at the thought of those woods being filled with such fiendish spirits. But I had heard terrifying tales before that had turned out to be but stories, and so I asked the pair how reliable was their warning.

Corin did not immediately answer, but lowered her head. Talid put his hand on her shoulder, and she seemed to draw strength from his touch. She nodded once, swiftly, and Talid gently eased her blouse off her shoulders and showed me his wife's back. Her skin was still livid with the horrid scars Abjen had left upon her those dark nights so long ago.

I turned away, shocked and outraged that anyone, let alone a woman, should be so brutally tortured. . . .

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Commitment

The last step in the first stage of an investigation is perhaps the most crucial of the initial inquiry. Once you have gathered enough evidence to wholly convince yourself that you are, indeed, in the presence of the supernatural, you must decide whether you have the dedication necessary to continue the quest to destroy this unnatural creature.

Do not answer rashly. The road down which I have traveled has been a long and difficult one. I have either seen many beloved friends slain or been forced to destroy them myself after they became things of darkness. I cannot promise you success or even a sense of accomplishment for your efforts. Indeed, you should expect only misery and hardship.

If you are like me, however, you will find yourself unable to halt once you have stepped upon this path. The desire for knowledge will be too great, the call of vengeance too compelling, and the longing to rid the world of these creatures beyond resistance. If you feel as I do, you will not stop until you or your enemy is dead. I pray it is the latter.

... When I announced to Corin and her husband that I planned to look deeper into this matter, they were shocked. I explained to them the work that now occupied my life and the measure of success I had achieved. Hesitantly, then eagerly, they agreed to help me. I must admit that at first I doubted their resolve. But the memory of Corin's wounds was more than enough to convince me that she would stand by me in even the gravest of situations, and her husband Talid would stand by her. ...

Stalking the Beast

During the second stage of an investigation into the supernatural, there are five important steps to take. Others may employ a slightly different approach, but I believe that the elements outlined below are crucial to any prudent hunt.

Research

Begin your hunt with pure, analytical thought and careful research. Learn all that you can about the ghost before you. Uncover its past and relive its life. Find out the cause of its death, for therein lies the tale of its origin, its desires, and its powers. The more information you amass now, the better your chances later.

Hypothesize

Once you have completed your interviews with witnesses, researched the ghost's past, and learned as much as possible on your own, take time to draw or speculate on some conclusions. Consider the ghost's origin and try to decide if any weaknesses or powers are suggested. It is typically impossible to examine a large pool of evidence such as you have presumably collected at this point without one or two clear facts presenting themselves.

Now is the time to begin classifying the ghost according to the categories delineated in Chapter I. At this step, you will want to make a guess at its magnitude and possible origins. You should, however, be able to determine whether it is an anchored or a triggered spirit.

... I spent the next day pouring over the information that Corin and her husband had given me. I decided that the phantom army had no obvious weaknesses, based on Corin's account, although the nature of the torture that Abjen was subjected to at the hands of the mongrelmen suggested a possible allergen.

Corin and her comrades had suffered from daggers heated by fire and then pressed against their flesh like branding irons. It seemed logical that Abjen would have tortured the mongrelmen the same way they had abused him, so I decided to act on that assumption.

Over the course of the next few days I gathered the equipment I thought I would

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need and, in the company of Corin and her husband, headed into the woods. . . .

Sighting

When you have acquired a solid basis in fact and a supply of ready theories, it is time to view the ghost for yourself. Of course, only a fool would rush into such an encounter without taking some precautions. If you have theories about the ghost's vulnerabilities or weaknesses, make sure you can act upon them!

Your mission in this first sighting is not to battle the ghost, but to observe it. If possible, arrange to see the ghost so that it is unaware of your existence. All too soon you will be standing before the creature and hoping to destroy it before it destroys you—don't let this confrontation happen until you're ready.

Watch the ghost's behavior. Does it show weaknesses or vulnerabilities that you might be able to act upon later? What sorts of special powers does it appear to have? Is it angry and violent or more passive?

In the end, try to further classify the ghost according to the categories noted in Chapter I. Perhaps you will still have to guess at its magnitude, but you will almost certainly be able to note its physical appearance and consistency by viewing it.

Observe

If possible, make several observations of the ghost. On each occasion, ask yourself the same questions you did the first time you saw it. As you progress, you might wish to place suspected allergens at places where the ghost is likely to appear. By observing its reaction to these items, you can often discover a valuable weapon to use in later combat.

. . . We had traveled deep into the forest when we came upon a clearing and set up our camp. Although Abjen was said to appear only at night, we constantly caught sight of

its spectral army as we tried to pass the time until nightfall. We kept a bright fire burning—a fire in which our blades rested until they were red hot. . . .

Preliminary Encounters

After you have observed the ghost, noting its patterns of behavior and its abilities, it is time to test your skills against it. Note that it is *seldom* wise to move in for the kill right away. Too much will remain unknown about the abilities of the spirit. Rather, set up a series of sparring encounters. Have a quick escape in mind and then challenge the ghost with something that may hold it at bay or harm it.

After each of these preliminary skirmishes, examine what you have learned. In all likelihood, you will be able to finish classifying the ghost according to the categories noted in Chapter I. Furthermore, the means with which you will finally destroy the ghost will likely reveal itself during these skirmishes.

. . . When darkness fell, Abjen appeared before us. It recognized Corin instantly and was enraged at her return to the forest. In fact, so great was its wrath that it all but ignored Talid and me. As Abjen moved toward Corin to "reward" her insolence, I slipped on a thick gauntlet and took my sword from the fire.

The blade glowed white-orange from the heat of the blaze, and it left a trail of steam behind it in the damp woodland air. The ghost saw the blade before it struck, and Abjen left out a cry of alarm. As I had thought, the heated weapon affected the ghost as if it were as mortal as I.

Abjen cried out in pain when the blade struck its semicorporeal form; the ghost fled into the woods. I feared that this would see us attacked by the minions of its ghoulish army, but the injury to their leader seemed to have left them without the will to move.

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Uncertain as to how long a reprieve we would have, Corin, her husband, and I hastily retreated to the inn.

I now knew the means by which I could destroy Abjen, but I would need more help. I sent a runner with an urgent message to a former traveling companion who now lived in the town of Zhukar in G'Henna. . . .

Making the Kill

Up until this time, the third stage, you have been frustrated by the slowness of the investigation. You have longed to face this nightmare creature in combat and see it destroyed. Righteous anger burns within you, waiting for release. Everything that is good and holy in you has been restrained, held back for the proper moment. Take care, for the time of reckoning is at hand!

Planning

Everything you have done up to this point has taught you how to devise a workable plan for the destruction of the ghost. As a cautionary note, remember the spirit's special abilities and have some means of countering them at hand. Keep in mind the ghost's psychology. If you know what attracts it and what repels it, you are a long way toward ultimate triumph.

Perhaps the most important thing to consider when drawing up your plan for fighting the spirit is teamwork. Make sure each member of your party understands what he or she must do in the heat of battle. *Everyone* must know that they can count on each other to perform their appointed tasks.

The Time

In many cases, the time of your encounter will be predetermined by the ghost. If a spirit appears each night when the clock strikes one and vanishes when it chimes two, you have only that hour in which to make your attack.

If the ghost's appearance is erratic, you may

be able to arrange this to your advantage. If it is uncomfortable in bright light, then attack during the day. If it spends the night howling and weeping, then attack while it is so engaged that it may be caught off guard.

The Place

As with timing, the place at which you will confront the ghost is often not a matter of your own choosing. If the clock tower ghost mentioned earlier never strays from the park in front of the tower, then you must confront it there.

While there is some validity to the belief that these places you on the ghost's soil and gives it an advantage, this is seldom an important consideration. In most cases, knowing exactly where you will be fighting the battle gives you a more important advantage because it allows you to prepare that area ahead of time.

If the ghost tends to roam or wander, it may be hard to pin it down. In these cases, you must do the best you can to "herd" the ghost toward an area that will give you an advantage over it. Do not depend upon chance for this—make liberal use of the creature's affinities and allergens to force its hand.

The Weapons

Never go into combat against a ghost unless you are fully confident of your weapons. The purpose behind the preliminary encounters you staged earlier was, of course, to test your weapons. If the enchantment on your magical sword wasn't strong enough to harm the ghost during those duels, then you should have obtained a more powerful blade in the interim.

Every item that you employ against the ghost, from holy water to magical spells and weapons, must have been tested against the ghost earlier. *Never* use a weapon against the ghost for the first time during this encounter. It is folly to do so, for if it does not function as you anticipate, you will be killed.

The Escape

Any sensible ghost hunter will have an escape ready before confronting the spirit. There are

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so many things that can go wrong in this war against the supernatural that nothing can be taken for granted. If you are ready to flee from the scene when the battle takes a turn against you, you can use the information you gain from the abortive attack to make plans for a newer, more dangerous assault on the morrow. Do not mislead yourself into believing that retreat is a cowardly act; on the contrary, your wariness and discretion will keep you alive to continue your fight against the undead. That alone requires almost a daily act of bravery.

Act Quickly!

Perhaps the most important piece of advice I can offer you about your final conflict with a ghost is this: *Everything in your plan must proceed as swiftly as possible.* Any delay increases the chance of failure on your part, for it gives the ghost time to adjust to your tactics and weapons. Remember, while you have been studying the ghost, it has been studying you.

Now, I do not mean to say that you should rush headlong into the fray. Far from it. If some element of your attack causes a delay or pause, do not charge forward. Do not move at an imprudent pace, but do not waste any time either. I have seen too many fellows slain when they paused, from fear or mercy or—foolishly enough—to gloat, before they could deliver the death blow.

. . . Within three days my old friend, Emilion Lacousto, arrived in response to the summons I had sent to the town of Zhukar. I told him of the Phantom Army and asked that he join Corin, her husband, and me for our return venture to the haunted woods. After some hesitation, Emilion agreed, and we set out the next morning.

Corin suggested we make camp in the same place as before. We both knew that Abjen might linger there and that the ghost would recognize us immediately. I feared the spirit would not approach us if it saw we had taken

precautions similar to those that had driven it off before. Thus, we lit no fire.

At dusk, the foul apparition returned. Abjen saw us and vowed our deaths would be slow and painful. The spirit did not draw near itself, however, but instead ordered its legion to attack. Fearing we would have no better chance to strike, I called to my companions, instructing them to put our plan into action.

Corin responded quickly, for she was thirsting to avenge herself. We opened several vials of holy water and hurled the contents on the spirits between us and Abjen. The water had the desired effect, and the shades drew back.

Seeing his opening, Emilion sprang into action. He charged forward, drew his sword, and uttered a word of ancient power. Instantly, the blade of his weapon was sheathed in flame—the metal turned white hot. In a single, gigantic leap he bridged the gap between himself and the vile Abjen.

With a great effort, Emilion swung the heavy blade in a wide arch and struck the villain in the neck, instantly beheading it. As the ghostly head landed on the ground, the mouth opened and a cry of absolute suffering emerged.

With the death of its master, the Phantom Army was no more. Each spirit dissolved into vapor. A chill breeze swept through the clearing and carried it away.

Our work was done. Corin had avenged herself and her fallen comrades, and we had defeated the evil in these woods.

When the shouting is over and the wounded have been tended, there is a last task that must be completed before you can claim victory: verifying the kill.

Often, there is some physical phenomenon associated with a ghost—a portrait that weeps or the like. Examine this object for signs that it is no longer under the influence of the ghost. If the ghost was anchored or triggered, be ready for its next few appearances. If it does not appear, your task is, at long last, complete.



In traditional horror, there are few creatures as prevalent or interesting as the ghost. While vampires and werewolves are mainstays of the genre of gothic horror, ghosts are often overlooked by Dungeon Masters as a basis for adventures.

The reason for this, perhaps, is that the former creatures are easily defined. We all know that a vampire is traditionally destroyed by the driving of a stake through its heart. There are variations on this theme (for example, the vampire who is impervious to wood but who can be impaled with an icicle or shaft of silver), but the main theme and premise remain the same.

Ghosts, however, resist such stereotypical classifications. Their origins, powers, abilities, and weaknesses are numerous and varied. These creatures seem as ever-changing as their mystical forms. This makes them challenging to use in adventures, for each ghost seems to operate under different rules. Thus, a ghost often requires far more thought and planning to create than a vampire, werewolf, or other monster. By the same token, however, this gives them a richness and diversity found in no other creature presented in the RAVENLOFT™ campaign setting.

Writing Ghost Adventures

There are four basic elements that make a ghost adventure unique: tragedy, romance, history, and symbolism. Each is equally important and, like the ghost itself, can be dealt with in many different ways to make the story different and exciting. Before a Dungeon Master begins to work on a scenario involving ghosts, each of these elements should be considered and their importance to the story weighed. With just a little extra time and effort, the talented DM will quickly create a masterpiece of terror.

Tragedy

Perhaps the most important element of a ghost story is tragedy. Consider the classic works in this genre and you will almost always find that the ghost is a sympathetic figure. In recent years, this tradition has often fallen by the wayside, with ghosts being nothing more than spectral axe murderers. In a gothic campaign, however, the classic tragedy is paramount to the tale.

The tragedy in a ghost story can stem from many sources. Most often, this depends upon the way in which the ghost is to be perceived by the players.

If the DM desires the ghost to be perceived as a lamentable figure, then the circumstances of the creature's death or the events of its life can be heartbreakingly sad. If the DM wishes to make the ghost's victims seem tragic, then the ghost itself can be perceived as cold and evil while its victims are weak, helpless, and pitiable.

In the case history Dr. Van Richten presented in the previous chapter, there were two groups of tragic figures. The first group was the mongrelmen who fled from persecution in their native land, only to find alienation and eventual destruction in their new home. The second group consisted of the poor fellows who followed Abjen into the woods. It is certainly hard to feel anything but sympathy for them because of the way in which their leader treated them, the pitiful way in which they died, and their inability to escape from Abjen's rule even in death.

If the DM wanted to portray the ghost in that story as a sympathetic figure, then the mongrelmen could easily have been painted as true villains. They could have been depicted as savage animals that slaughtered a legion of brave and noble troops.

Of course, it would be difficult to depict a unit of the Kargat in that light, so the DM would probably have had to change the background of the story a bit to make the army into "good guys."

Romance

In many ghost stories, there is an element of romance that is missing in many other types of horror. Consider the classic story of *Wuthering Heights*, for example. It would be hard to say whether this was more of a ghost story or a love story.

It is important to contrast this with the often passionate and sensual nature of modern vampire fiction. The vampire, which is most often depicted as having retained its physical form, lends itself well to these more tangible moods. Thus, the vampire can often be portrayed as a creature of more carnal desires and appetites than the ghost, which is generally perceived as intangible and ethereal. Because of their phantasmal natures, ghosts can be subjects of love and affection, though not physical desire. The difference, while often subtle, is important.

In designing an adventure, the romance can come from many sources. The ghost itself is a common one, but the victims whom it haunts are equally viable. Consider the case of a widow who, having found herself in a new courtship, seeks to remarry. If she and her fiancé are haunted by the spirit of her departed husband, there are two potential sources of romance.

If the DM desires the ghost to be a sympathetic figure, perhaps the woman still remembers his kindness and love with great fondness and is being forced to remarry against her will. It might even be that the fiancé killed her husband so that he might claim the woman for himself. Conversely, if the ghost is to be depicted as evil and villainous, then it might be revealed that the deceased husband was cruel and overly jealous, vowing that no man should ever have the lovely woman whom he left behind.

An even more unusual twist, but certainly an interesting one, would be to postulate that the villain in the story is the widow. Perhaps she killed her husband to gain his wealth and property and now plans to do the same to her fiancé. The murdered husband might be

returning to warn the man who is about to become the next victim of this diabolical killer. In this case, what at first appears to be a deep and true romance between the fiancé and the widow would turn out to be a cruel lie.

As the above examples illustrate, the idea of romance and tragedy often go hand in hand. In most cases, it is impossible to incorporate romance into a ghost story without also adding some manner of tragedy. Further, the nature of the tragedy is often suggested by the way in which the romance is structured or resolved. Be alert for possibilities to incorporate these elements into any ghost adventure you write.

History

Another important element in many ghost stories is that of history. Because the secrets of a ghost's life often define and foreshadow aspects of its death and damnation, its history is crucial. Romance and tragedy can be built into the history of the ghost with great subtlety, making them even more effective tools in the design of an adventure.

It is almost impossible to create a good ghost adventure without having a solid understanding of the events that made up the ghost's life and brought about its death. Similarly, the ways in which a ghost can be combated and destroyed or laid to rest are often rooted in the past.

A solid history behind a ghost story is important because of the research characters must often undertake before heading out to confront a ghost. If the DM has woven a careful and logical history together, then the players' attempts to uncover clues will be easily resolved. By handing out bits and pieces of lore in response to inquiries, readings, and mystical scrying, the DM can give his or her players the satisfaction of piecing together a puzzle and uncovering the solution to the adventure themselves. Such an accomplishment and the feeling of success associated with it are generally more rewarding than any accumulation of experience points or treasure.

Symbolism

Consider the ghost of Jacob Marley from Charles Dickens' classic, *A Christmas Carol*. In spirit form he was bound with chains, and he carried a heavy burden of cashboxes. "I wear the chain I forged in life," he tells the stunned Scrooge.

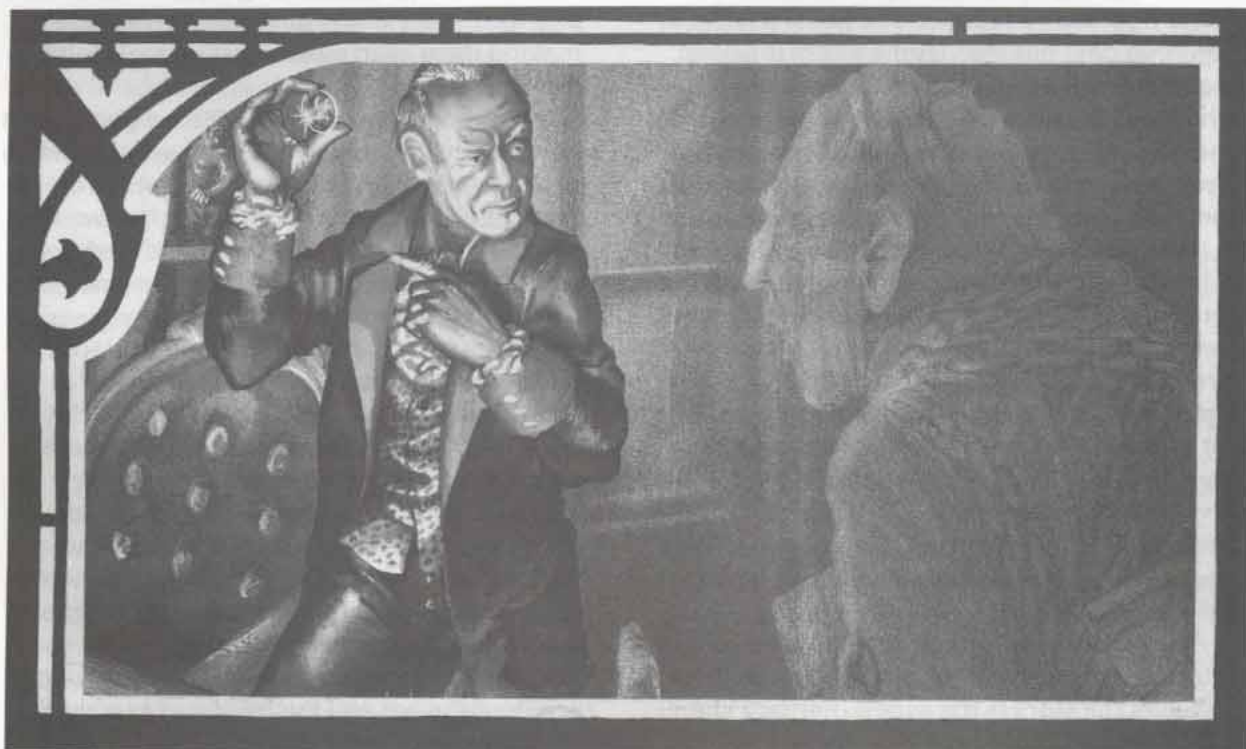
Does this mean Marley spent his free time creating these ghastly bonds and that his corpse was buried with them draped about him? Not at all. Rather, it points out the importance of symbolism in the traditional ghost story. (Another excellent source for demonstrations of appropriate symbolism is Dante's *Inferno*, in which the damned are forced to suffer torments reflective of the sins they committed in life.)

Symbolism is a most powerful tool in the weaving of a ghost adventure. The powers and abilities of a spirit, as well as its physical

appearance, are often drawn from both its history and the important symbolism of its life. Further, the motivations and desires of a spirit, which are crucial in the resolution of almost any encounter with a ghost, are often represented with symbolism.

Consider the example of Marley's ghost in RAVENLOFT™ game terms. If a group of adventurers was seeking to drive off this spirit, they could look to the symbolism shown in its appearance and history. Clearly, Marley was a miser. Perhaps it might be possible to keep his spirit from entering an area by ringing it with gold coins. Perhaps the creature could only be harmed by weapons made from precious metals, with a platinum sword doing its normal damage to the spirit and lesser metals doing reduced damage.

In less combative terms, we can examine the motivations of the spirit. Marley was forced to "go forth in death" because he did not do so in



life. He was clearly repentant and lamented the joy he had passed up in life by being a miser. In an effort to ease his suffering, Marley was compelled to visit Scrooge and convince him to change his ways. It might be that Marley is freed from his curse the moment Scrooge is changed. Thus, a group of players could conceivably return the ghost to its grave peacefully by merely assisting the ghost in its mission to help Scrooge recognize the errors of his ways and abandon the path of greed and avarice he has followed for so much of his life.

Creating New Ghosts

Once the gist of an adventure has been laid out, there are a number of important elements to consider when creating the ghost who will be at its heart. Depending upon the desires of the DM, different responses to these considerations will be appropriate.

Using the Monstrous Compendiums

The various types of ghosts presented in TSR's *Monstrous Compendium* series can be valuable starting points in the design of a ghost. By simply selecting one of the incorporeal spirits detailed in these volumes and customizing it, the DM can quickly create a new and unique villain with which to confront players.

For example, let's return to the characters from the previous chapter of Abjen and his army. His men might be given the same characteristics as shadows or wights, save that they are not free-willed but slaves to the more powerful Abjen. Their commander, however, is clearly a more formidable foe. He might be created with the same basic statistics and abilities of a wraith, spectre, or ghost. By giving Abjen a unique power (perhaps his mournful wailing causes those who hear it to make a fear check), a singular weakness (his vulnerability to hot metal), and a unique personality trait (he tortures his enemies to death with the same hot

metal objects that can destroy him), the basic MC entry takes on a whole new character.

If this sort of short cut is used, it is important to maintain the illusion that the ghosts the PCs are encountering are still wholly unique. DMs should still cling to the old Ravenloft ideal of never calling an orc an orc. If the phantom army is described as "an army of wights led by a wraith," it loses much of its impact. The players would be instantly aware of the nature of the creatures they face and would take appropriate steps to battle them. If the DM refers to the army as apparitions in one sentence and ghosts the next, the players will not know exactly what they are facing.

From Scratch

The alternative to using the *Monstrous Compendium* series as a source for ghost "kits" is to create the spirit from scratch. This takes longer, but the DM has much more control in creating a spirit that matches perfectly with his or her vision for the adventure.

The guidelines presented in the first few chapters regarding powers and vulnerabilities are intended to give examples of the sorts of things that should be considered when designing a ghost. They are simply guidelines and are not intended to be used as a rigid system of categorically defining ghosts. Because of the unique nature of these spirits, DMs should not classify ghosts as "third magnitude" or describe them to players in the analytical terms Dr. Van Richten employs. Rather, they should be used to create a *Monstrous Compendium*-style entry for each ghost to be designed.

The DM will want to keep a file of the ghosts that have been created for past adventures because they can then be used as "kits" from which new apparitions can be created.

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