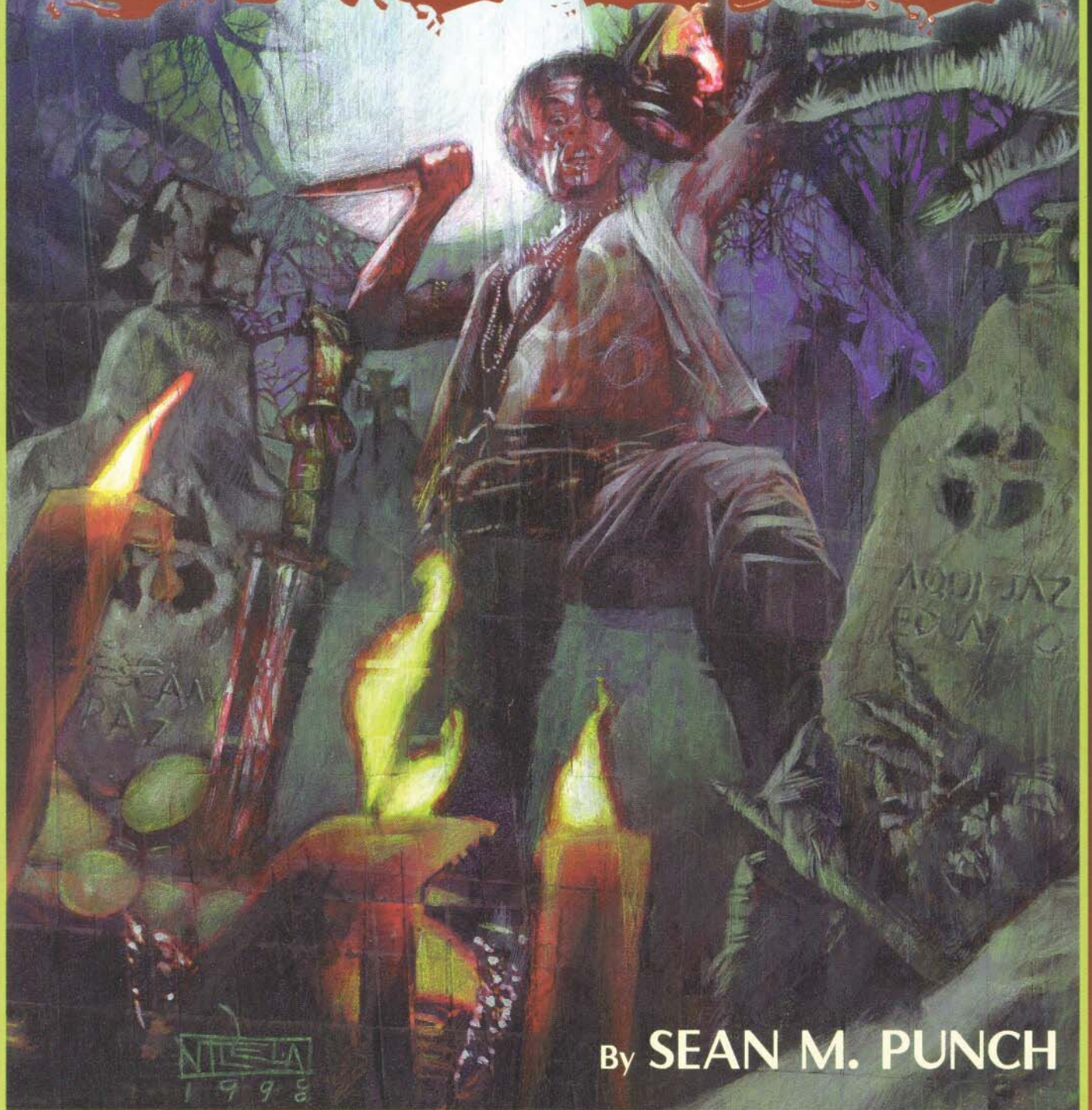


G U R P S<sup>®</sup>

# UNDEAD



By SEAN M. PUNCH

STEVE JACKSON GAMES



G U R P S<sup>®</sup>

# UNDEAD

DEAD SOULS AND WALKING CORPSES

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## ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

*Pyramid* ([www.sjgames.com/pyramid](http://www.sjgames.com/pyramid)). Our online magazine includes new rules and articles for *GURPS*. It also covers all the hobby's top games – *AD&D*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun* and many more – and other SJ Games releases like *In Nomine*, *INWO*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures* and more. And *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online, to see (and comment on) new books before they're released.

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## Page References

See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, for a full list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set*. BE refers to *Bestiary, Second Edition*, CI to *Compendium I*, CII to *Compendium II*, G to *Grimoire*, H to *Horror, Second Edition*, M to *Magic, Second Edition*, P to *Psionics*, PM to *Places of Mystery*, R to *Religion* and VO to *Voodoo*.

Vampires, zombies, ghosts . . . they haunt our folklore, our fiction and now our games. Why are we intrigued with the undead, with those who have passed beyond the veil of death and somehow returned to walk again among the living?

Faced with an absolute like death, it's in our nature to look for a way out. Our folklore suggests many ways to resolve the "unsolvable" problem of mortality, and undeath is one such solution.

Why undeath, though? Why not something less macabre, like an elixir of life or a fountain of youth? Mostly because if a miracle has a high enough price, the mundane status quo will be much easier to accept. In a roundabout way, this is the purpose of undeath: if we believe that immortality comes with a terrible price attached, we're unlikely to lament our mortality. Undeath solves the problem of death . . . by presenting something worse.

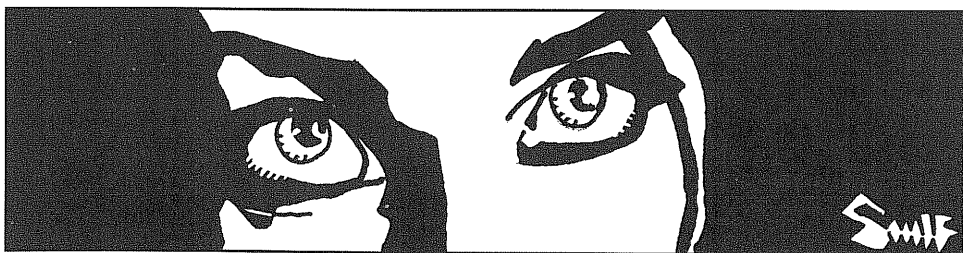
Undeath is immortality at the cost of vitality. Existence without life. Something that's as frightening as it is seductive. It is a "plot device" that we use to put death and mortality into perspective, giving it a depth shared by few other elements of myth. The time has come to plumb that depth . . .

– Sean Punch

## Using this Book

If you want to use *Undead* as a rule book, stop reading and jump right to Chapter 3. To use it as a *source* book, though, try this:

Read Chapter 1 to learn about real-life myths, funerary rites and views of the undead that you can use in your campaign. Move on to Chapter 2 for advice on categorizing your undead creations and suggestions on things like weaknesses. To write it all up in game terms, use the rules in Chapter 3 (you may want to modify one of the ready-made templates in Chapter 4 if you're pressed for time). Suggestions on how to use your creation as a character can be found in Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 will help you fit all this into your campaign.



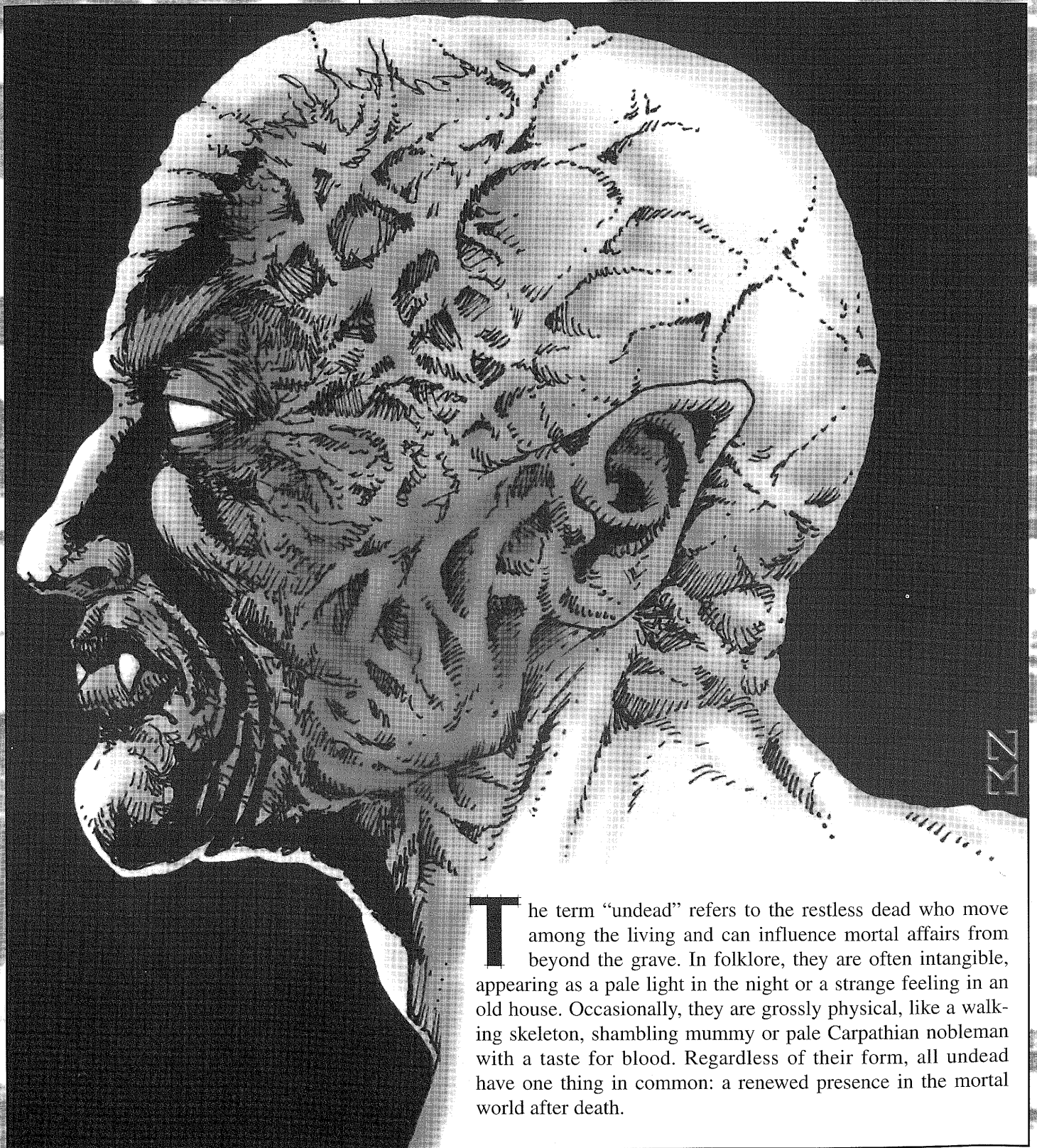
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Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch is the *GURPS* line editor and overall *GURPS* guru at SJ Games. The editor of numerous *GURPS* books, he's also the co-author of *GURPS Fantasy Folk, Second Edition*, the author of *GURPS Wizards*, the compiler of *GURPS Compendium I & II*, and the designer of *GURPS Lite*. Sean has been a fanatic gamer since 1979. His other interests include cinema, military science, tigers and wine. He lives with his wife, Bonnie, in Montréal, Québec. They have four cats and a parrot.

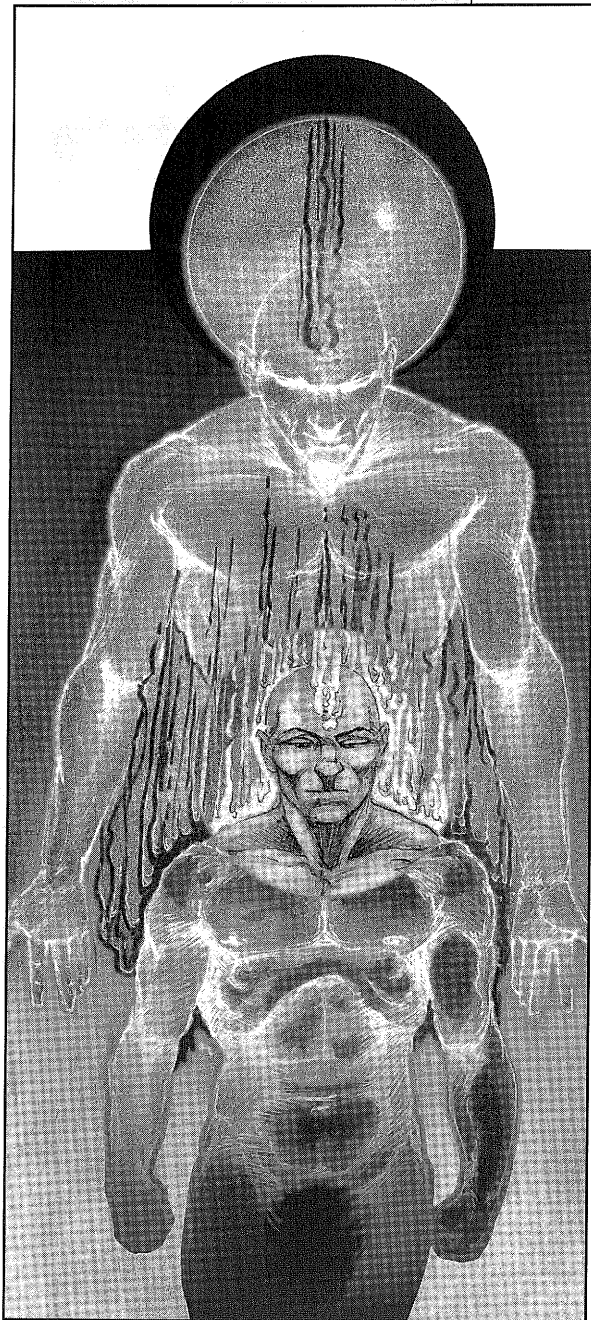


## Chapter 1

# AT THE DOOR OF THE CRYPT



**T**he term “undead” refers to the restless dead who move among the living and can influence mortal affairs from beyond the grave. In folklore, they are often intangible, appearing as a pale light in the night or a strange feeling in an old house. Occasionally, they are grossly physical, like a walking skeleton, shambling mummy or pale Carpathian nobleman with a taste for blood. Regardless of their form, all undead have one thing in common: a renewed presence in the mortal world after death.



## THANATOLOGY

*Thanatology* is the study of death as a physical and metaphysical phenomenon, including such diverse topics as burial rites, cremation, death symbolism, death cults, embalming, gods of death, pathology and tombs, not to mention the impact of death on the individual and society. In short, it is the study of death as it is viewed and experienced by mortals in the mortal world. The ramifications of death for the immortal soul are the subject of a related field, called *eschatology* (see main text). Both are important when trying to understand the undead.

At first glance, it would appear that undeath is immortality, but that's not the whole story. Many beings of myth and legend are immortal: gods, elves and even some heroes. The difference? These other immortals didn't die to earn their immortality, while the undead have pierced the veil of death and emerged – changed – on the other side. The undead have experienced mortality first-hand, and in many ways are far closer to mortals than to immortals. Still, they exist beyond a divide that few mortals dare cross, and it is this contradiction that makes them so interesting.

## Religion and the Undead

The undead are often regarded as magical beings in fantasy, and fantasy magic is often treated like a secular science, but undeath is profoundly tied to religion and spiritualism in the real world. In a historical or horror campaign, formulating a good plot will require an understanding of how this works.

## Spiritualism

Most historical belief systems hold that living things have an intangible component, a *spirit*. Quite often, concepts (like death or disease), places (like valleys, forests or nations) and unliving things (like stones or rivers) have spirits as well. A spirit is a supernatural element that embodies all the mysteries about a given being, concept or object; in a way, belief in spirits takes the place of scientific understanding. Spirits are often personified and given voices. Modern psychologists believe that this is the human unconscious at work, but the religious consider this to be a sign that spirits are actual entities.

The spirit of a human being is called his *soul*. It is responsible for his personality and consciousness, and makes him unique. While the nature of the soul differs from belief system to belief system (see *The Soul*, p. 7), it is almost always distinct from every other type of spirit. In some faiths, the soul is the only type of spirit, and other things are governed by gods: “super spirits” in charge of broad categories of things, like animals, plants or the weather. There are many shadings between “all spirits, no gods” (which is typical of animism) and “souls and gods only” (as in Christian belief).

The most important property of the human soul is that it is immortal. Survival of conscious personality after physical death is common to almost all belief systems, and is usually the ultimate source of myths surrounding the undead.

## Eschatology

*Eschatology* is the branch of theology that addresses the issues of where the soul goes, whether it can return to the mortal world and in what form. (The study of spirits themselves is called *pneumatology*.) It attempts to answer some profound questions:

- ‡ Does consciousness end with death, or do we have an immortal soul?
- ‡ If we have an immortal soul, do we experience spiritual ascension to another realm, or are we resurrected bodily?



‡ If ascension occurs, when does it happen? (“At death” and “at the end of time” are the two most common answers.) What’s the afterlife like? Is there more than one possible destination? Do faith or morality in life play a role in where a soul ends up, or is this predetermined? Who judges these things?

‡ If resurrection occurs, when does it happen? At death or at the end of time? Are we resurrected in the same body or a new one (reincarnation)? Do faith or morality in life play a role in this, or is it all predetermined? Who judges these things?

The answers to these questions differ from faith to faith, and will impact on whether the undead exist and what form they will take. In general, the spectral undead are souls wandering without bodies, while the corporeal undead are dead bodies animated by spirits – usually restless souls. If the existence of the soul is rejected, the undead – if they exist at all – will require an exotic explanation like robotics, strange radiation or bizarre parasites.

Conversely, if the soul does exist, it is likely that there will be some kind of undead. Faiths that embrace ascension lean toward the spectral undead, while those that prefer resurrection lean toward the corporeal undead, but neither tendency is very strong. Some beliefs profess that force of will, powerful magic or divine influence can send a spirit back to animate a dead body. Likewise, those who believe in resurrection often hold that spirits can enter the mortal world as specters when they don’t have a body to inhabit.

The issue of *when* ascension, resurrection and judgement take place plays a stronger role. Faiths that keep souls waiting around for judgement (like early Christianity and Judaism, as well as Zoroastrianism) – whether that will lead to resurrection or ascension – will generally have more undead. The souls have not yet gone to their final destination, so they can be called back as specters, or to inhabit a corpse. Faiths that profess immediate judgement (like modern Catholicism) tend not to leave souls “hanging around,” so they are less likely to have undead.

## Funerary Rites

*Funerary rites* are the rituals surrounding the disposal of a corpse: the means prescribed by a belief system for praying for, mourning and burying the dead. Such rites are found in virtually every faith, and some anthropologists see them as being a prerequisite for religion. The precise origin of funerary rites is unclear.

Some people believe that man disposed of corpses to prevent disease. A rotting corpse can harbor diseases that can infect the living. Man did not know this throughout most of history, but he did notice the association between disease and corpses. Since spirits were blamed for disease, the conclusion was reached that the improper disposal of dead bodies angered the spirits of the dead, and funerary rites evolved to prevent this.

Psychologists, on the other hand, feel that funerary rites came about to give the living peace of mind. They provided an outlet for grief and a much-needed sense of closure. The comfort and predictability of ritual served to mitigate the distress and shock associated with death.

Still others feel that spiritualism came first: man conceived of the immortal soul and disposed of the body properly either out of respect or to facilitate resurrection.

Whatever the origin of funerary rites, their *religious* intention was ultimately to ensure that the soul would go to its proper reward. Thus, funerary rites can prevent the dead from becoming the undead. It is interesting to note that most folkloric methods for combatting the undead stem from funerary rites and the associated symbolism.

## THE SOUL

The soul is a complex concept. Depending on the belief system, it can represent life energy, power, intelligence, will, personality, passion and even divine nature. Some faiths profess the existence of *multiple* souls, each of which embodies a different principle. This solves certain theological problems. For example, a faith that differentiates between mortal and immortal existence may divide the soul into a “life force” that animates the body, but which returns to nature upon death, and an “immortal consciousness” that lives on forever in the spirit world. (This particular belief is held by some North American Indian cultures.) Views of the soul include:

### Greek

The ancient Greeks called the soul the *psyche*: the totality of one’s mind and identity (similar to the modern use of the word). If this came back from the dead, it was likely to be as a shade or a ghost. Such undead were often called *larvae* or *lemures*. The Greeks also believed in the shadowy *keres*: a winged death spirit. This was not part of one’s soul as such, but there was one for every living person, so it had a soul-like nature to it. *Keres* would make ideal undead, although they never seemed to manifest that way in Greek myth. For more on ancient Greek religion, see *GURPS Greece*.

*The graves stood tenanted,  
and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber  
in the Roman streets.*

– William Shakespeare  
*Hamlet*

### Roman

The ancient Romans called their soul a *genius* (for a man) or a *juno* (for a woman). This wasn’t so much a personal soul as a familial one, and was typically associated with the head of a family. Actual spirits of the dead were called *manes*, which means “good people.” This term was also used for the undead. It isn’t at all clear whether undead *manes* were supposed to be physical or spectral, but since the Romans often burned their dead, the latter seems more likely; certainly, Roman heroes always seemed to encounter “shades” (ghosts) of the dead. On the other hand, *manes* also seemed to be capable of burning and strangling the living when their descendants failed to propitiate them with offerings! See *GURPS Imperial Rome* for more on ancient Roman beliefs.

*Continued on next page . . .*

# THE SOUL

(Continued)

## Chinese

Traditional Chinese belief professed the existence of two "souls": the *kwei* (or *k'uei*) and the *shen*. The *kwei* (called the *p'oh* in life) returned to the earth at death and dwelt in the grave. It symbolized *yin*, the feminine principle, and connected death, earth and femininity (see *Death, Earth and the Mother Goddess*, p. 10). The *shen* (called the *khi* in life) lived on as a spirit in the afterlife, although it could inhabit the grave for a while. It symbolized the masculine principle, *yang*. In general, it was *kwei* that became undead; *shen* undead were rare, and usually only encountered shortly after death. Traditional Korean belief is similar, except that the soul has an additional part that inhabits the funerary tablet or token. See *GURPS China* for more on Chinese religious beliefs.

## Aztec

The Aztecs believed in a tripartite soul: the *tonalli* dwelt in the head, and contained vigor, life force and magical energy. The *teyolia* resided in the heart, embodied knowledge and personality, and was the part of the soul that actually entered the afterlife. The *ihilia*, found in the liver, was the evil or animal part of soul, responsible for passions such as hate and lust. In a fantasy game, the *tonalli* is the part most likely to be manipulated by an evil sorcerer (perhaps being used to animate a zombie), while the *ihilia* is more likely to become an evil undead being in its own right. For more on Aztec religion, see *GURPS Aztecs*.

## Egyptian

The ancient Egyptians named at least four components of the soul: the *ka* was the vital life force, and dwelt with the corpse after death; the *ba* was the soul proper, and the part that actually went on to the underworld; the *khu* represented spiritual intelligence, and the *ren* was one's name. Two other concepts may have been related to the soul: the *sekhem*, an embodiment of one's power, and the *khaibit*, one's shadow. It's definitely the *ka* that would animate an undead mummy, but the *khaibit* seems like a prime candidate for manipulation by evil necromancy! See *GURPS Egypt* for more on ancient Egyptian beliefs.

*Continued on next page . . .*

Two methods are almost universally prescribed for properly disposing of a corpse: burial and cremation. Some faiths permit both, but most specify one or the other. Both are heavily steeped in symbolism. Cremation, as practiced by the Hindus, Aztecs and many other cultures, is relatively easy to understand: the body is consumed, converted to smoke and symbolically sent to the heavens. Burial is slightly more complex, and represents a return to the earth, the mother from which all things are born and must return; see *Death, Earth and the Mother Goddess* (p. 10) for more details.

The way a culture disposes of its dead has a profound effect on the nature of its undead. Cultures that cremate their dead typically have few types of corporeal undead. Most of their undead will be spectral. The corporeal undead will be limited to those who have not received proper cremation, and burning will typically set these to rest.

Civilizations that bury their dead are more likely to have corporeal undead, or walking corpses. What forms these take will depend on the precise funerary rites observed. Cultures that make mummies, like the ancient Egyptians or the Guanches of the Canary Islands, may have walking mummies. Those that clean the flesh off the bones of their dead, like some North American Indian tribes, are more likely to encounter animated skeletons. Societies that bury their dead armed and clad in armor, like the Norsemen, may have to deal with undead warriors. These practical consequences are discussed in more detail under *Mortal Remains* (p. 20).

## A Brief History of the Undead

When using the undead in a game, it can be useful to know where the ideas came from. Below is a brief outline of some of the real-life religious, philosophical and artistic developments (in roughly chronological order) that ultimately led to the modern cinematic and fantasy views of the undead and necromancy.

## The Earliest Beliefs

Many notable psychologists (including Carl Jung) have suggested that we *want* to believe that our consciousness continues after death, because it helps us accept our mortality. Neolithic man quite likely felt this need. He was probably mystified by death and had no reason to assume its permanence, since nature is full of constant rebirth. The sun dies each night and appears to sink into the earth, only to be reborn in the morning. The moon dies and is reborn monthly. Plants die, then spring forth again from the same soil. In the mysterious world of our ancestors, the idea that a dead man could be reborn to walk once more might not have seemed strange at all.

Prehistoric burial involved putting a corpse into the ground so that it could be reborn, like the sun or a plant. Burial was probably ritualized out of respect: respect for the life-giving earth, respect for the immortal consciousness of the deceased (his "soul") and respect for the supernatural forces ("spirits") that primitive man blamed for the diseases harbored by exposed corpses. In short, respect for the unknown. Ritualization brought the possibility that improper burial might misplace the soul of the dead or lead to a grotesque rebirth. It's entirely likely, then, that early man invented unquiet wandering spirits and walking corpses.



# Ancient and Classical Beliefs

## The Mesopotamians

The Tigris and Euphrates river valleys were fertile enough that the Mesopotamians (Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians and Assyrians) could support full-time priests. These priests, relieved from practical duties, had plenty of time to think about the mysteries of the universe and come up with elaborate rituals. Primitive mysticism thus gave way to cosmology and theology, and myth cycles were attached to concepts like death and rebirth. This was reflected in religious rites.

Death was an especially important part of early religion. The dead obviously weren't being reborn into the land of the living, so the Land of the Dead was invented. In keeping with the political beliefs of the time, this was a kingdom and required a ruler. Since it was a place of rebirth, and since mothers were associated with birth, this ruler was also a mother: Ereshkigal, Queen of the Dead (called Allatu by the Assyrians).

Ereshkigal kept the dead in the Land of the Dead with her, and their return to the land of the living – while possible – was usually reserved as a threat. In one myth, when the minor god Nergal balked at becoming Ereshkigal's consort, she threatened to "send up the dead that they might devour the living." In other words, the dead *could* walk again, but as terrifying, flesh-eating monsters and not as men. The otherness of the dead is further underlined in the legend of Gilgamesh, a hero who goes into the Land of the Dead to find his dead friend Enkidu, only to learn that Enkidu is now a "shade" (ghost). In fact, Enkidu is one of the earliest ghosts on record.

## The Egyptians

Meanwhile, similar cultural developments were taking place in Egypt, along the fertile Nile valley. In Egyptian myth, the god Osiris was chopped into pieces by another god, Set, then put back together by the goddess Isis. In engineering the rebirth of Osiris, Isis definitely identified herself as the Mother Goddess. Unlike Ereshkigal, though, Isis was not the ruler of the dead; that job fell to Osiris, the one who actually died. Set, of course, became the god of evil.

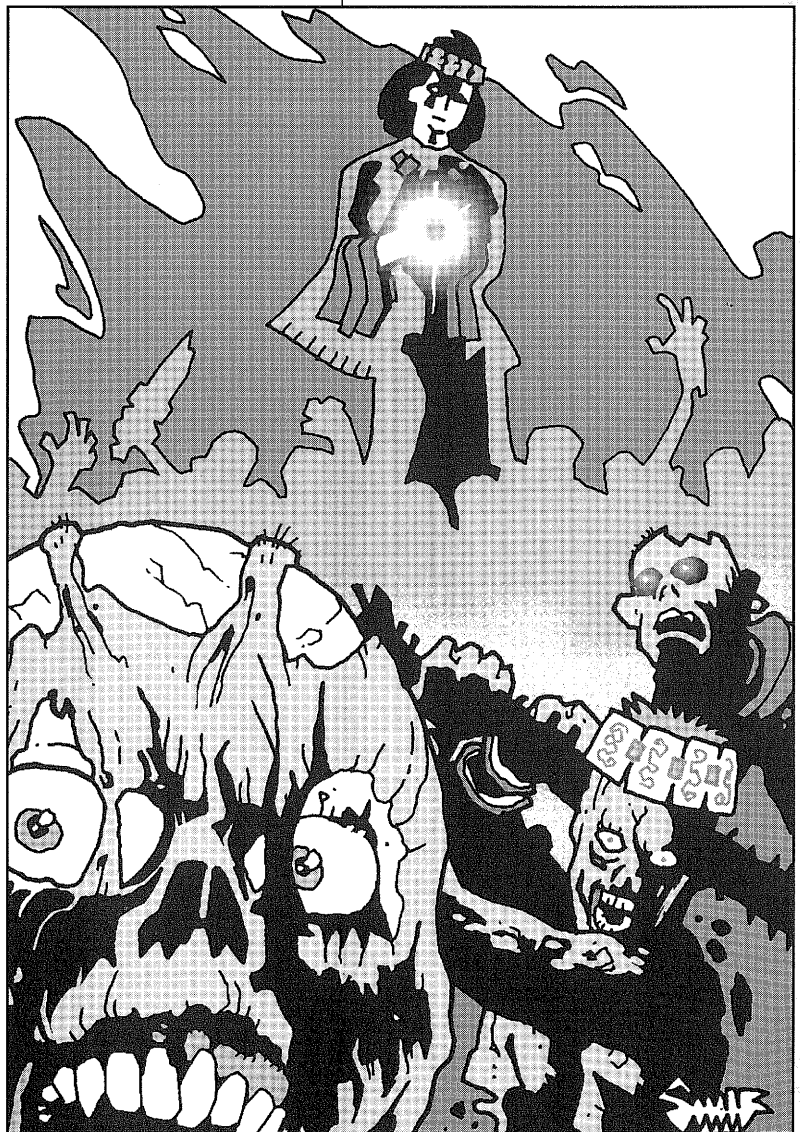
The fact that a rebirth myth was central to Egyptian religion was mirrored in their burial practices, which were among the most elaborate in the world then or at any time since. The Egyptians preserved many of their dead as mummies, built elaborate tombs and had a Book of the Dead (p. 123) which gave instructions on how to enter the afterlife, including the names of beings encountered along the way, protocols for addressing them and spells of protection from beasts, rotting and suffocation. They believed in physical resurrection in the Land of the Dead, so the body had to get there intact. It is these carefully-preserved bodies and magic spells of resurrection that gave Hollywood its undead mummies.

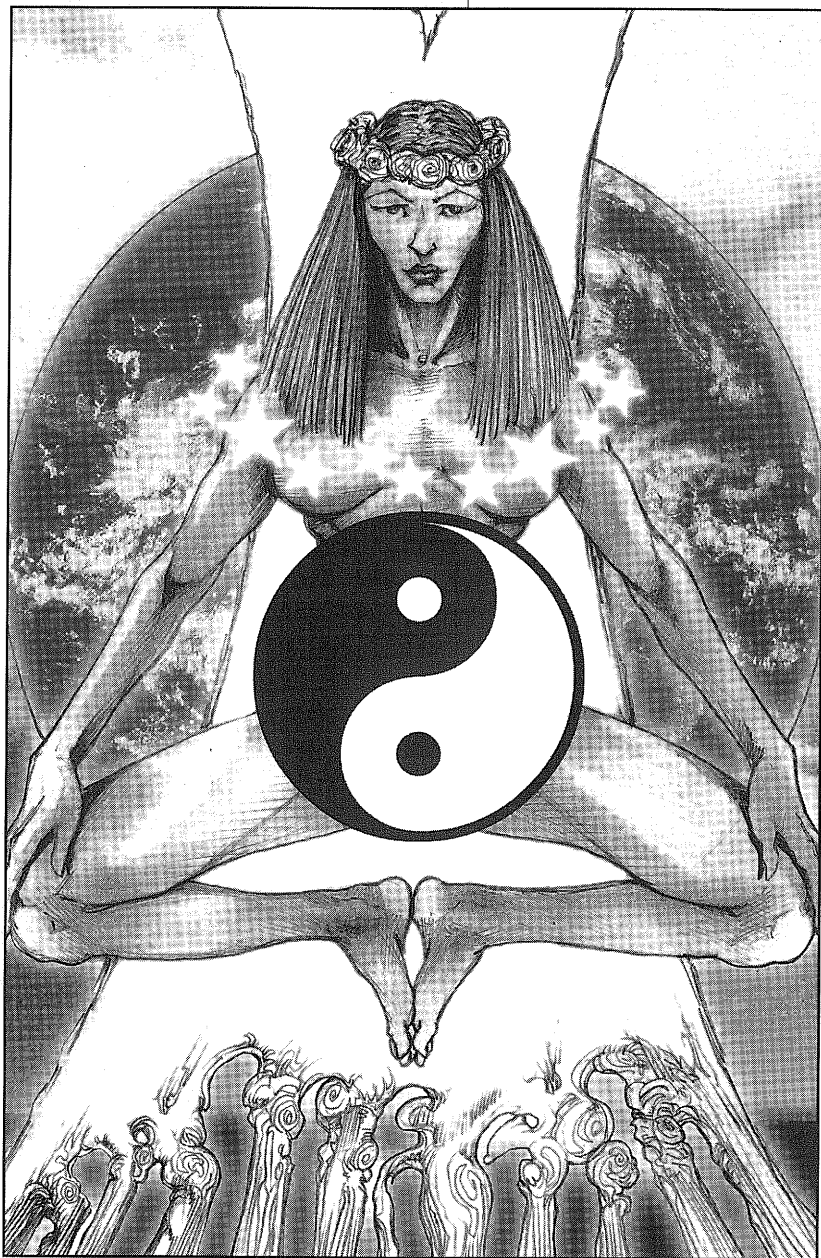
## THE SOUL

(Continued)

### Voudoun

In the Voudoun ("Voodoo") religion of Haiti, one's existence is made up of five parts: *n'âme*, the spirit of the flesh; *z'étoile*, the star of destiny; *corps cadavre*, the mortal flesh; *gros bon ange*, a general life force that is recycled and not unique to each person, and *ti bon ange* (or *petit bon ange*), one's personal essence and the source of one's aura. Only the *gros bon ange* and *ti bon ange* are seen as being part of the soul, but all five parts are regarded as important both in life and in death, so the distinction is somewhat blurred. The *corps cadavre* can be made into a *zombi* (zombie), while the *ti bon ange* can be captured to create a kind of spectral undead called a *zombi astral* (spirit zombie). See *GURPS Voodoo* for more on the practices of Voudoun.





## DEATH, EARTH AND THE MOTHER GODDESS

With the passage of time, growing things spring forth from the earth, die and are born again. They may not be the same plants each time, but they are “reborn” in an abstract sense. This has led many cultures to conclude, independently, that birth, death and rebirth are part of an eternal cycle. Due to the connection between mothers and birth, this cycle is usually associated with a goddess, a divine mother who gives birth to all living things. She is identified with the earth from which growing things sprout and represents the divine feminine principle.

*Continued on next page . . .*

It should also be noted here that the Egyptians probably invented the concept of the *necromancer*: a mortician, priest and wizard who deals with the dead. At this stage, necromancy is a holy function, associated with death (Osiris) and not evil (Set). This will change later on.

### *The Zoroastrians*

Zoroastrianism was a post-Babylonian belief system founded by Zoroaster (or Zarathustra). A dualistic faith, it pitted Ahura Mazda (or Ohrmazd) and his seven *anesha spenta* (angels) against Angra Mainyu (or Ahriman) and his *daevas* (demons). Evil souls went to Hell, ruled by Yima, while souls with a balance of good and evil went to Hammistagan (similar to the Babylonian afterworld), and good souls went to the “House of Song.” Souls stayed in one of these three places until the end of time, when bodily resurrection was supposed to occur.

Zoroastrianism is an important development for those studying the living dead. First, it introduces the belief that the dead are absolutely forbidden to return before the end of time, a belief that later religions would adopt. Second, it introduces the idea that a soul can be fundamentally evil . . .

### *The Greeks*

The Greeks followed many of the ancient traditions: they had a Land of the Dead, called *Hades* or *Erebus*, and it was ruled by a god of the dead, named Hades or Plouton. Hades had a consort, Persephone, who embodied the principle of seasonal rebirth in nature, like earlier goddess figures. Once more, a death goddess did double duty as a fertility and nature goddess.

Greek myths told of encounters between the living and the dead. The bard Orpheus sought his dead wife, Eurydice; the hero Odysseus sought Tiresias, a dead man and the wisest of humans. Both learned that the dead are shades, or ghosts. These particular ghosts were pried from the afterworld through caves, however (the cave at Taenarus being one of them). As a result of these myths, the Land of the Dead became permanently associated with an “underworld” in the Western imagination, and forged a connection between deep, dark places and the undead. This would not soon be forgotten.

The Greeks introduced one other important concept to undead lore: the thirst for blood. The shades of the dead were offered the blood of sacrificial beasts to bring them forth from Hades. Blood represented life, and could give these ghosts temporary substance, a semblance of life. For the first time, the undead were given a reason to crave blood, perhaps even human blood. While the basic idea of the vampire as a monster wasn’t new, the notion of the vampire as *undead* was. This will show up again, much later, in beliefs found just over the Balkans from Greece.



## The Romans

The Roman underworld was similar to that of the Greeks, and was ruled by Pluto (or Dis Pater) and his consort Proserpine. Once more, heroes bravely (or foolishly) entered the underworld to look for the dead: in Virgil's *Aeneid*, the hero Aeneas calls forth the dead and enters the underworld with the aid of a priestess, the Sibyl, at a cave near Cumaea. There is some evidence of ceremonial necromancy here, as the Sibyl uses her holy powers to call forth the dead and protect Aeneas from them (this protection takes the form of a magic item, the "golden bough").

The Romans also inherited Etruscan occultism. Contemporaries of the early Romans, the Etruscans believed that unless the dead were propitiated, they would physically come forth from their tombs to seek vengeance (see p. IR105 for an adventure seed). As a result, the Romans venerated the dead and worried about ghosts. Many believed that ignoring their dead ancestors would bring about an undead plague, and that their semi-solid forms (*manes*, or "good people") would emerge from caves and chasms in displeasure.

## The Gnostics

Gnosticism was a Mediterranean religion based primarily on Greek philosophy and Eastern mysticism. The Gnostics held that the mortal world was created not by God but by a lesser being called the *demiurge*. As a result, the world was imperfect and evil: quite literally, hell on earth. For a mortal soul to transcend this imperfect world, he had to achieve mystical spiritual knowledge, called *gnosis*. When Gnosticism was eventually absorbed into Roman and then Christian culture, it had a profound impact on views of the undead. In particular, the idea that the material world was an evil, imperfect hell let all manner of undead monsters walk the earth!

## The Jews

Unlike many other Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures, the Jews neither worshipped nor hoped to interact with their dead. They felt that corpses were unclean, so they buried them. They called their graveyards *sheol*, which was also the name of their underworld. No strong distinction was made between the two, but since the Jews believed in bodily resurrection (a belief later rejected by Reform Judaism), it's easy to see where this ambiguity came from.

Jewish legend did not include tales of the corporeal undead. Burial sites were regarded as unclean, but they weren't the source of undead menaces. The golems of Jewish folklore were sometimes mistaken for the undead, but the term "golem" actually refers to a wooden or clay automaton animated by cabbalistic magic. That isn't to say that the undead didn't exist at all in Jewish legend. Judaism specifically forbade necromancy, which implies that there were those who believed that the dead could be called upon. Scripture tells of sorcerers who did just that. The best-known of these was the Witch of Endor, spoken of in 1 Samuel 28:7.39, who summoned the shade of Samuel for Saul.

# DEATH, EARTH AND THE MOTHER GODDESS (Continued)

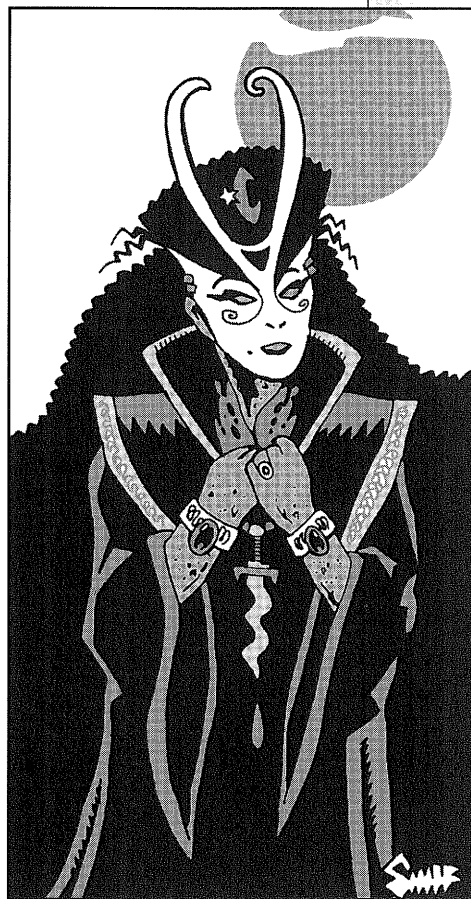
This earth goddess governs the whole cycle of life: not just birth, but also *death*. The association of the Mother Goddess with death is a common one, and is found in more cultures than it isn't. Examples include the Mesopotamian goddess Ereshkigal and the Hindu goddess Kali. The identification of the earth goddess with death plays a vital role in funerary rites (p. 7). Specifically, the burial of the dead symbolizes a return to mother earth, usually with the implicit hope that the dead will be reborn into the afterlife.

## The Goddess vs. the Undead

As the ruler of nature, the earth goddess is often seen as being opposed to unnatural things, including not just unnatural life and death, but also *undeath*. Proper burial in the earth is regarded as a way of ensuring rebirth, and is almost universally believed to prevent undeath. The goddess is the right deity to turn to when having trouble with the undead, and goddess symbols are a useful defense against them.

One of the most important goddess symbols is the moon. The moon dies and is reborn each month, which links it to the Mother Goddess. Furthermore, the human menstrual cycle – itself tied to fertility – is synchronized with the lunar cycle, which serves to strengthen the connection between the moon and the divine feminine principle. The best-known moon symbol is silver metal. It is the color of moonlight, and is seen as sovereign protection against the undead in many cultures.

Quite frequently, the earth goddess has a dark side, often symbolized by the new moon. In her role as the death goddess, she may demand human sacrifices (like Kali), and a few beliefs draw a connection between the blood of these sacrifices and menstrual blood. In some cases, the dark aspect of the goddess can be seen as governing the undead. This means that goddess symbols may control the undead instead of repelling them. Of course, this can make them even more potent!





## DEATH GODS

Evil gods who govern the undead are a staple of fiction, but they don't have much basis in real-world religion. The most logical historical models for gods of the undead are gods who govern death and the underworld, but these deities are rarely associated with the undead in so many words, and aren't usually "evil." As explained under *Death, Earth and the Mother Goddess* (p. 10), the earliest death gods were actually goddesses, and were more likely to be associated with fertility, the harvest and the earth than with evil and the walking dead.

Here are some of the major gods or spirits that ruled over death, the dead or the underworld in various historical belief systems. They can be used as the basis for more fantastic gods who *do* rule over the undead:

*Continued on next page . . .*

## The Early Christians

Disagreement over whether a Jew called Jesus of Nazareth was the messiah (the "Christ") or simply a prophet caused a split that resulted in the Christian religion. The Christian afterworld, Hell, was similar to the Jewish one. It was initially ruled by the angels Uriel and Ezrael, but another being inherited the job from them: Satan, "the adversary," used by God to test mortals in Jewish belief. In later writings, the angel Lucifer challenged the will of God and was cast into Hell for his crime. Lucifer, "the Devil," soon became conflated with Satan, which led to the identification of the underworld and its denizens with evil forever after in Christian belief.

Like the Jews, the early Christians believed in bodily resurrection at the end of time, although they adopted the belief of "immediate judgement" later on. There were exceptions, however. The so-called *Gospel of Nicodemus* (no longer considered canon) tells of figures temporarily risen from the dead, including the sons of the high priest Simeon. Jesus himself, being the son of God, actually returned from the dead in three days! Whether he was undead or not is left to the reader, but early Christianity clearly provided for the possibility of rising from the dead.

## Eastern Beliefs

### India

Hinduism – the dominant religion of India – requires the faithful to observe a spiritual code in life, called *dharma*. Death is to be followed by cremation, which releases the soul to be reincarnated in a form determined by one's degree of adherence to *dharma* (*karma*). This cycle (*samsara*) brings one ever closer to *nirvana*: the end of mortal life and the merging of one's soul with the "universal spirit," Brahma.

Traditional Hinduism had a strong element of mysticism, and took for granted that holy men who were close to *nirvana* could sometimes perform miraculous acts, including reanimating the dead. Hindu undead were usually far more menacing, though. Anything that interfered with *samsara* also opposed the fundamental workings of the universe, the will of the death goddess Kali, and the plans of Yama, lord of the underworld. Not surprisingly, this had dire consequences.

First, the uncremated dead could get up and start walking around as undead called *pretas*. As well, evil spirits called *bhutas* could inhabit and animate these bodies. Worst of all, the demon king Ravana and his *rakshashas* (demons) could reanimate them as rotting, leprous monsters called *pishacas* and *vetalas*. Cremation, however, prevented all of this.

### China

Unlike their neighbors, the Chinese buried their dead. As well, whatever their religion, most Chinese held the Taoist belief that the universe is made up of *yin* and *yang*: a pair of opposing yet complementary forces. The soul was no exception. It had two parts (p. 8): the *shen*, which entered the afterlife, and the



*k'uei*, which was laid to rest in the tomb. This meant that some part of the dead would always be present in the world of the living, which led to many undead myths.

Most Chinese undead were manifestations of the *k'uei*, which could return from the grave if its descendants failed to worship it, if the deceased was named aloud or if the body was left where the moonlight could reach it. An angry *k'uei* would usually haunt in one of two forms: an animated corpse (called *ch'ing shih*), or a magically-created body (just called "*k'uei*"). The incorporeal aspect of the *k'uei*, called *p'oh* in life, could also appear as a ghost and materialize to attack the living. These undead were such a problem that Yen-Wang-Yeh, lord of the Nether World, needed a legion of "ghost constables" to help him round them all up!

## Japan

The Japanese cremated their dead to consign the soul to the afterlife. In contrast to Hindu beliefs, though, undeath didn't result from withholding cremation – although corpses were bad luck, and did attract flesh-eating monsters called *kasha*. Instead, most Japanese undead were evil souls that returned from the grave out of spite, vengeance, etc., even *after* having been cremated. These were spectral, since their bodies had been burned, and included *gaki* (spirit vampires) and *shi-ryo* (ghosts). Okuni-nushi, ruler of spirits, usually kept ghosts under control, just like Yen-Wang-Yeh.

## Tibet

The beliefs of Tibet are intimately linked with Buddhism, a spiritual philosophical system based on the teachings of Gautama Siddhartha, an Indian holy man. Buddhism took root in India, China and Japan, where it became syncretized with Hinduism, Taoism and Shinto, but took on a unique significance in Tibet.

The Tibetan *lamas* – Buddhist holy men and practitioners of tantric magic – held some elaborate beliefs regarding death. They ritualized the act of dying and set it out in the Tibetan Book of the Dead (p. 123) as the "yoga of death." They also engaged in a macabre ritual called *Chod*: chopping up bodies to be eaten by wild animals as a means of returning them to nature. The greatest Tibetan mystics were reputed to have a degree of power over death, and one of these, Milarepa, supposedly walked away from his own funeral pyre and later reappeared to his former students.

## DEATH GODS

(Continued)

**Aztec:** The skeletal god *Miclantéotl* was the ruler of the underworld (*Mictlan*). It isn't inaccurate to depict his priests as being necromancers who engaged in human sacrifice (an important part of Aztec worship). Of all the gods on this list, he probably comes closest to being a god of undeath.

**Celtic:** *Donn* was an early Celtic death god. The Celtic underworld was a joyful place, though, and not associated with the undead.

**Chinese:** The god *Yen-Wang-Yeh* was the judge of the dead. He dwelt in the Nether World (afterlife). Since he strongly disapproved of ghosts haunting the living, he probably shouldn't be associated with the undead.

**Christian:** The underworld was originally ruled by the angels *Uriel* and *Ezrael*. *Satan*, or perhaps *Beliar*, got the job later on. Satan became the devil when he was combined with *Lucifer*, a fallen angel. After that, Hell became associated with evil.

**Egyptian:** *Osiris* was the god of the underworld, while *Isis* was his consort. Isis was mainly a fertility goddess; her role as a death goddess was secondary. A third god, *Anubis*, acted as the guide and guardian of the dead.

**Greek:** The god *Hades*, or *Plouton*, ruled the kingdom of *Hades*, sometimes called *Erebus*. His queen was *Persephone*, who was also a harvest goddess.

**Hindu:** The god *Yama* embodied death and was lord of the underworld. The goddess *Kali* was an earth mother associated with both fertility and death. Kali was worshipped by the Thugs, a death cult that assassinated travelers as sacrifices to her. The servants of the demon king *Ravana* were sometimes blamed for reanimating the dead.

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# DEATH GODS

(Continued)

**Japanese:** In the Shinto faith, the *kami* (spirit) *Okuni-nushi* was the ruler of spirits, and offered protection from ghosts. In the Buddhist faith, *Emma Buddha* (sometimes called *Emma Hoo*) and his sister ruled *Jigoku*, the underworld. The Japanese underworld was also called *Meido*.

**Jewish:** The angels *Uriel* and *Ezrael* ruled the underworld, just as in early Christian belief. The underworld was also called *Sheol*, *Gehenna*, *Abaddon* and *Bor* in Hebrew writings.

**Mesopotamian:** *Ereshkigal*, called *Allatu* in Assyrian, was a goddess and Queen of the Dead. Her consort was *Nergal*, a relatively minor god.



**Norse:** The goddess *Hel* ruled the afterworld, which was called either *Hel* or *Niflheim*.

**Roman:** *Pluto* or *Dis Pater* was the god of the underworld. His consort was *Proserpine*.

**Turkish:** *Cybele* was an early Turkish death goddess, sometimes called the "Queen of Hell." She was greatly feared by the Romans, and would make an ideal fantasy goddess of undeath.

**Voudoun:** Several *loas* (spirits) called the *Guédés* were concerned with death and worshipped by a death cult. These included *Baron Cimetièrè*, who dressed like an undertaker, and *Baron Samedi*, lord of the burial grounds. See also p. VO92.

**Zoroastrian:** The god *Yima* (based on the Hindu god *Yama*) was lord of the dead.

## The Middle Ages

### *The Celts, Norse and Germans*

As Christianity made its way across Europe, it encountered many local faiths, some of them dating back to Neolithic times. Foremost among these were the beliefs of the Celtic, Norse and Germanic cultures of Northern Europe, which had a rich body of folklore that included elves, giants, werewolves . . . and the undead.

Celtic bards spoke of the *sidhe*, supernatural creatures from the Otherworld. Their land was reached via the "hollow hills," probably a term for ancient burial mounds (p. 24). Since the word "sidhe" meant "mound-dweller," it likely referred to the ghosts of the dead buried in those mounds. The arrival of Christianity led to a revision: the *sidhe* became the souls of ancestors who died before the advent of Christianity in the Celtic lands. They were unable to reach Heaven because they weren't Christian, but since they never had the option of becoming Christian, they weren't damned to Hell – they were simply doomed to walk the land. Celtic beliefs are discussed further in *GURPS Celtic Myth*.

The Norse, like the Celts, associated ancient burial mounds with the supernatural. They had mound-dwelling entities called *alvar*, similar to the Celtic *sidhe*, and the difference between these and the undead was tenuous at best. Norse undead were more likely to be corporeal than ghostly, and were collectively known as *draugr*. Other Norse beliefs are discussed in *GURPS Vikings*.

The Germanic menagerie included *wampyrs* or *vampyrs*: blood-sucking monsters. Naturally, the Christians identified these with evil and hence with Hell. Since Hell was connected to the underworld and the dead, it wasn't much of a leap to identify these "vampires" with the undead (although the pagans did *not* make this identification). This view owes a lot to Greek beliefs regarding spirits and blood (see *The Greeks*, p. 10); the Greek philosophers were popular reading among the Christian clergy.

### *The Medieval Christians*

Medieval Christians didn't suddenly forget their pagan beliefs or forsake their psychological need for spiritualism; they simply embodied these things in forms that were acceptable to the church. "Vision" fiction (tales of the afterlife as seen in visions) told chilling stories of death and demons, reminiscent of modern horror movies! Morality plays (or "mystery plays") were also an important part of faith for the illiterate common folk, and often included talking or animated corpses, if only to remind the faithful of their mortality.

In 1253, the Christian church adopted the doctrine of Purgatory, a place where souls of the dead could shed their sins through penance and modest suffering. This made Hell less scary, as it could now be escaped! Meanwhile, the plagues sweeping Europe elevated the fear of death in the general population. These factors conspired to elevate death above Hell as the foremost fear of the Christian. Skeletal, sickle-wielding Death replaced Satan in the art of the period, and by the 15th century, walking skeletons and other animated corpses featured prominently in art.

Purgatory had one other effect on the saga of the undead: it explained how ghosts could walk the earth. While no one could leave Heaven or Hell, the spirits in Purgatory had not yet gone to their final destination and could therefore wander among the living. It was also a common belief that the world of the living and Purgatory actually interpenetrated (a somewhat Gnostic outlook). The corporeal undead, on the other hand, remained in Hell for the most part. John

Milton's *Paradise Lost*, written in the 1650s, presented a medieval view of Hell that contained walking, rotting corpses. It likely influenced all later views of the walking dead.

## Pre-Columbian America

The tribes of North America had many elaborate systems of animistic and totemic shamanism. Spirits were fundamental to all of these. Most of these faiths professed the existence of a bipartite soul, with one part animating the body and returning to nature upon death, and another part living on forever in the spirit world. This let the dead walk and be at rest simultaneously (similar in some ways to Chinese beliefs, p. 8); the idea that a spirit could come back from the grave wasn't seen as particularly strange.

The spirits of the dead returned when they weren't properly honored by the living, or when they were summoned by a shaman. The Pueblo *kachina* was a classic example: an ancestral spirit that demanded constant worship to keep it from returning to haunt the living, but which could be called upon for favors (like making rain) if the proper sacrifices were made. Likewise, the Chinook people believed that saying the name of the deceased aloud could summon his soul – usually not for the better!

Not all American Indian undead were spectral. In some tribes, the skeletons of the dead were cleaned off and preserved, possibly in a mound (p. 24). It was believed that these skeletons could rise from their graves. Sometimes, this was caused by the same things that caused spirits to appear; other times, this was because the burial mound was disturbed. In a few cases, animated skeletons were simply bored with being dead, and wanted to chat, smoke a little tobacco, etc. There is a whole cycle of stories about a “friendly skeleton” like this in Iroquois folklore.

The Aztecs – historical inhabitants of present-day Mexico – were an exception to this. Their faith was a polytheistic religion with gods and priests instead of spirits and shamans. They cremated their dead, and believed in a tripartite soul (p. 8) that passed through may ordeals (wind, arrows, fire, jaguars, etc.) on its way to the afterlife. Since the dead lacked physical bodies, most Aztec undead were ghosts. These were usually harmless (e.g., a cloud of butterflies that represented a dead loved one), but some were dangerous, like the *ciuateteo*, the ghost of a woman who died in childbirth.

## The Age of Reason

As the Middle Ages came to a close, a radical divergence in beliefs about the dead and the afterlife arose in the West. On the one hand, Protestants – especially Calvinists – began to accept predestination: the soul was earmarked for Heaven or Hell at birth, Purgatory was rejected out of hand and the idea of ghosts or other undead was written off as utter nonsense. This was the prevalent view in America, and still is in many places.

On the other hand, the Rationalists of 17th- and 18th-century Europe espoused the free will of man. Everyone had the power to choose his moral path in both life and the afterlife, perhaps even choosing to haunt the living after death. This led to a new faith in ghosts, typified by the work of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). A spiritualist, Swedenborg proposed a world of spirits between Heaven and Hell which interpenetrated with the mortal one. His views inspired 19th-century spiritualists and modern proponents of the near-death experience.



## DEMONS AND ANGELS

Demons and angels are spirits, evil and good respectively, that are more than human but less than divine. They are found only in religions with actual gods, mostly because classifications like “less than divine” aren't meaningful when discussing faiths that have spirits instead of gods. Not all belief systems have both demons *and* angels. In fact, it's quite common to have only demons.

A question that comes up in connection with the undead is, “Are the undead actually demons (angels)?” The answer is “it depends.” In Zoroastrian, Judaic, Christian and Islamic belief, angels and demons are semi-divine entities – probably pagan deities that were absorbed into the faith – and not dead souls. In Eastern faiths, the spirits of the evil dead are tormented by demons, but don't *become* demons. Distinctions like this are found in most major religions, and imply that the undead cannot be angels and demons, simply because angels and demons aren't the souls of dead humans. Of course, that isn't the whole story.

First, every religion has its dissenters. In the case of Christianity, one of these was Emanuel Swedenborg, an influential 18th-century spiritualist. He claimed to have had a vision wherein it was revealed to him that angels *were* dead souls. Mystics like Swedenborg have a long history of associating the spirits of the dead – including ghosts and other undead – with demons, angels and supernatural beings in general.

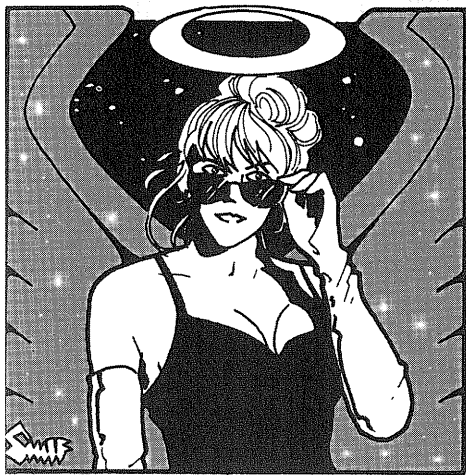
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# DEMONS AND ANGELS

(Continued)

As well, many faiths profess that demons can raise the undead to torment the living. In traditional Hindu belief, for instance, *rakshashas* (demons) were capable of raising dead corpses as leprous vampires and sending them to attack the living. In early Christianity, all unnatural monsters – undead or otherwise – were identified with demons. This belief, combined with Germanic vampire folklore and the Classical theory that dead souls craved blood, led to vampires being viewed as both undead *and* demons! Thus, the demons of certain belief systems can possess or reanimate corpses, making *some* undead demonic.



Fiction has done its part to cement this notion in the popular imagination. Gothic authors often used the words “demon” and “vampire” synonymously. Modern fantasy authors inherited this legacy: Tolkien used demons to reanimate his “barrow-wights,” for example. Movies tend to associate the undead with demons as well, and every other movie about the undead seems to carry around some Satanic baggage.

Angels occasionally get in on the act, too. For instance, the well-known Coleridge poem, “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798), ends with the dead crew of a ghost ship being reanimated by angels. The idea of angels reanimating the dead shows up in the movies as well (e.g., *The Prophecy*).

It is important to realize that the terms “demon” and “angel” are used strictly for convenience. Most belief systems have their own names for these things: angels are called *aneshas* and demons are called *daevas* in Zoroastrianism, the Japanese call their demons *oni*, etc. Note that this discussion doesn’t attempt to address spirits that defy moral pigeonholing, like the *djinn* of the Arab world and the *loas* of Voudoun.

## The Age of Industry

In Europe, Rationalism had two main consequences: a scientific revolution and an emphasis on secular (non-religious) thought. Both had a profound impact on the undead.

Science led to improved technology and eventually industrialization. This resulted in pollution, crowded cities, rampant unemployment and the shameless exploitation of workers. It also created a new middle class that threatened the traditional upper class. Under such conditions, no one of any social class was comfortable. The lower classes lived in squalor, while the upper class was losing its influence and power. This pervasive sense of depression brought the Gnostic view of “Hell on earth” back into vogue, and the 19th century heralded a new fascination with death and dying.

In the New World, the economy relied heavily on slavery on the eve of industrialization. The slaves in question were abducted from Africa, and included a number of sorcerers and priests who brought their animistic beliefs with them. These beliefs became syncretized with Catholicism, resulting in religions like Voudoun. A concept unique to Voudoun was the *zombi*: a walking corpse that served an evil sorcerer (*bokor*). The zombie was quickly added to the undead bestiary and became one of its most prominent members

Secularism, meanwhile, removed the threat of church sanctions, letting writers combine pagan folklore with Christian beliefs to create the Gothic movement. The Gothic tale was fiction for the times. It appealed to claustrophobia and despair, added Classical and Germanic tales of spirits and vampires to the mix, and resulted in a renaissance in fantasy literature. By the late Victorian period, death and ghost stories were staples of European fiction. This reached its pinnacle with Bram Stoker’s vampire tale, *Dracula*, in 1897.

This atmosphere also revived spiritualism (which borrowed a great deal from Swedenborg). Necromancy was cleaned up and moved into the drawing room, where princes, doctors and generals alike participated in séances. Meanwhile, mystical sects became a chic counter-culture. Societies like the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn dusted off old Egyptian, Greek and Near Eastern necromancy and drew intellectuals into their circles.

## The Modern World

In the 20th century, motor vehicles, telecommunications and cheap printing let the media reveal obscure religious beliefs to the world – often inaccurately – where they entered the popular imagination. Meanwhile, the secular atmosphere of the times allowed these things to be openly discussed without fear of reprisals. This allowed an unparalleled degree of syncretization. For instance, the Black Temple cult of Kenneth Grant (a disciple of Aleister Crowley) synthesized its beliefs from Voudoun and the worship of the Hindu death goddess, Kali; its magic was overtly concerned with death and the living dead.

Modern science played a role as well. Psychologist Carl Jung (1875-1961) introduced the idea of the “collective unconscious,” and suggested that monsters and spirits were in the mind, but in *all* of our minds. This tore away the last vestiges of respect for the supernatural and made it fair game for camp humor, yet at the same time confirmed its existence. It’s interesting to note that Jung himself had a death fixation, spoke of a near-death experience and read and believed in the Tibetan Book of the Dead (p. 123)!

In this environment, the Gothic tale fragmented into the modern horror and fantasy genres, each of which interpreted the undead differently. While horror

undead more or less retained their Victorian characteristics, fantasy undead became sword-fodder for heroes, physical monsters without much of a spiritual element. The work of J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973) – who is often regarded as the father of modern fantasy – contained demonically-animated corpses (“barrow-wights”), an undead army (the Dead Men of Dunharrow) and the Ring-Wraiths: dark undead with glowing eyes and a chilling touch, an image that was embraced by many other fantasy authors.

These factors interacted to result in new takes on the undead. Hollywood indiscriminately mixed myths and legends, creating things like Aztec mummies that lurked in pyramids, even though the Mesoamerican Indians cremated their dead and their pyramids were temples, not tombs. Science was also added to the mix, and zombies were as likely to be animated by radiation or chemicals as sorcery! At the same time, some fantasy authors made an effort to return to original beliefs, unfiltered by the Gothic lens. Lucius Shepard’s *Green Eyes* is an example: a zombie story based on Voudoun as opposed to a 19th-century European take on Voudoun – although it manages to work in a scientific rationalization as well.

## Today’s Undead

Most gamers base their expectations of the undead on the books, movies and games they have been exposed to. Popular views of the undead tend to be syncretic, usually because “more is better” sells, even if it is artistically questionable. Why have just zombies if you can have *evil, flesh-eating* zombies, mummies *and* vampires? It’s also important to realize that science has made the world seem a less mysterious place than it once was, which has weakened the grip of superstition and religion. This has led to views of the undead that simply wouldn’t have been possible before the 20th century.

## Cinematic Undead

There have been dozens of cinematic adaptations of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, not to mention hundreds of movies made about ghosts, mummies (starting with Karl Freund’s *The Mummy*, 1932) and zombies (the classic being George Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead*, 1968). In fact, many readers will have learned everything they know about the undead from cinema. The movies make several important contributions to undead lore.

First, movies tend to focus on the most colorful parts of the folklore, when they refer to it at all, and ignore hard-to-grasp theological issues. They avoid spirit phenomena that would be hard to show on screen, sticking largely to the physical. Those whose ideas about the undead come from the silver screen will expect the undead to be tough and to have many special powers. For instance, each retelling of *Dracula* seems to give the Count some new magical ability, while the zombies of the 1990s are far tougher than the zombies of the 1960s, not to mention the *zombis* of Voudoun, which were mostly hapless slaves.

Second, undead in movies can usually be combatted with extreme violence: *The Mummy* (Terence Fisher, 1959) recommends a shotgun firing squad, *Plague of the Zombies* (John Gilling, 1966) suggests burning and collapsing a copper mine on top of the undead and *Dead Alive* (Peter Jackson, 1993) offers an innovative use for a lawnmower. This totally disagrees with folklore, where the undead can only be laid to rest with the proper ritual. Vampires seem to have fared better here, and are still vulnerable to their traditional weaknesses.

## ICONOGRAPHY OF UNDEATH

Many things can symbolize the related concepts of death, rebirth and immortality. In a world where the undead exist, it seems likely that some of them would also be associated with undeath.

### Animals

*Cicada*: A symbol of death and rebirth in Chinese belief, owing to its long life cycle, much of which is spent underground.

*Crow*: Believed to bring souls back from dead. May even steal souls from the living!

*Falcon*: Believed to carry away the souls of the dead, which is a general trait of bird symbolism in funerary imagery.

*Fish*: Fish scales represent the Mother Goddess and rebirth in China.

*Frog (or toad)*: Symbolizes the Mother Goddess and rebirth in China, where it is often carved out of jade.

*Owl*: Has long been associated with dead souls, likely because it lurks in the night and has a forlorn-sounding call.

*Phoenix*: A mythological bird that dies in flames and is then reborn from its own ashes. Symbolizes rebirth.

*Scarab (dung beetle)*: Has the same symbolism as the cicada (above) in Egyptian belief.

### Colors

*Black*: A mourning color, associated with death because it symbolizes the darkness that follows the “death” of both the sun at sunset and the moon on the new moon. Black also makes mourners less obvious, letting them hide from spirits and other supernatural beings during funerary rites. It has become associated with evil because its association with visual obscurity has been extended to obscurity of purpose.

*Brown*: Sometimes symbolizes spiritual death.

*Green*: Symbolizes life, since it is the color of growing things. This links it to rebirth, which is why it is sometimes used in funerary rites.

*Gray*: A mourning color, for much the same reasons as black. Also associated with the ash left behind after cremation.

*Violet*: Represents the Passion in Christian belief: the suffering of Christ during the Crucifixion. As a result, it has become associated with mourning, death and resurrection, especially in the West. This symbolism is arbitrary, and was set out by a cleric named Durandi in the 12th century.

*White*: A mourning color in Eastern beliefs (especially in Japan), most likely because it symbolizes the color of the funerary shroud.

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# ICONOGRAPHY OF UNDEATH

(Continued)

## Materials

**Gold:** Associated with the sun and therefore with life and immortality.

**Jade:** A symbol of the Mother Goddess, life, rebirth and immortality in many belief systems.

**Pearls:** Represent life and immortality in China.

**Shells:** Used as a symbol of life and immortality by the Aztecs.

**Silver:** Symbolizes the moon and the Mother Goddess; see *Death, Earth and the Mother Goddess* (p. 10).

## Occult Symbols

**Cauldron:** A symbolic womb, representing rebirth.

**Eye:** In ancient Egypt, this was the Eye of Horus. It was associated with health and regeneration for mythological reasons, and was used in funerary amulets, where it protected from evil and symbolized rebirth.

**Hourglass:** Symbolizes the finite lifespan of man; i.e., the passage of time, culminating in death.

**Knife:** Represents the sacrificial knife, and therefore symbolizes death.

**Moon:** Often associated with death because it dies and is reborn monthly. This links it to the Mother Goddess, as explained under *Death, Earth and the Mother Goddess* (p. 10).

**Sickle:** Stands for death in the sense of the harvest, and is connected to fertility cycles and the Mother Goddess.

**Skull:** Represents death simply because it's part of a dead body.

**Water:** Symbolizes the womb and rebirth.

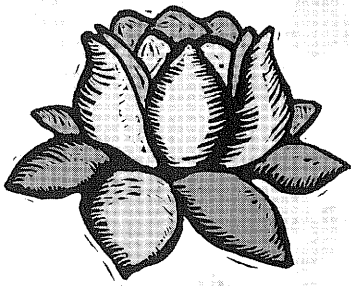
**West:** Associated with death because it is the place where the sun dies.

**Wheel:** A symbol of cycles, and therefore the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

## Plants

**Ginseng:** Associated with life and immortality in Chinese belief.

**Lotus:** A symbol of rebirth and immortality used in Chinese and Egyptian rites.



Third, movie undead are often voracious flesh eaters. Although corpse-eating monsters in folklore (e.g., the Arabian *ghul*, the Japanese *kasha*) are almost never undead, it's a hallowed cinematic tradition for the undead – particularly zombies – to eat human flesh. There's rarely any good reason for this other than to make the monsters scarier. Presumably, a walking corpse that eats brains is more of a threat than one that just lurches around aimlessly, spreading fear and filth.

Lastly, the cinematic undead are typically *evil*. Even though the connection between death and evil is at best tenuous in most traditional beliefs, and although demons are generally distinct from the undead (see *Demons and Angels*, p. 15), movie-makers seem hell-bent on drawing a connection between evil – usually goat-headed, Satanic, anti-Christian evil – and the undead. There are exceptions of course, usually vampires, which have been romanticized since the late 1800s. Ironically, vampires are the only undead that Christianity has unequivocally associated with demons . . .

These things are all connected: cinema portrays the undead as evil, even when this defies folklore. Since flesh-eating is a nasty habit, it is a good way to illustrate that the undead are evil. And since the undead are evil, flesh-eating and nearly invulnerable, extreme violence is both necessary and justified when dealing with them. In a nutshell, that is the essence of the cinematic undead.

## Humorous Undead

One final contribution of the movies to undead lore deserves special mention here: the idea that the undead can be *funny*. This is a direct consequence of suspending traditional beliefs, which associate the undead with sober religious belief and death. Take that away and restless spirits go from being malicious to prankish (examples include *Beetlejuice*, *The Frighteners* and *Ghostbusters*), while zombies, being slow and witless, become shambling buffoons (as in Michele Soavi's *Cemetery Man*, 1995). Many traditional beliefs also seem rather comical when taken out of their original context (the Jewish vampire in Polanski's *The Fearless Vampire Killers* is a classic!).

This is a mixed blessing for those who want to include the undead in their games. On the one hand, it opens up a new subgenre to the creative GM. On the other, it means that some players simply won't be able to take the undead seriously in non-humorous games. Either way, it's important to be aware of the phenomenon; a GM raised on Gothic tales will be out of his element trying to run a game for players who are big fans of Peter Jackson movies!

## Fantasy Undead

The undead figure prominently in modern heroic fantasy as well. As mentioned under *The Modern World* (p. 16), this has its roots in the Gothic tale, which borrowed monsters from folklore and combined them with Christian beliefs regarding the dead and the damned, then spawned the modern horror and fantasy genres. Fantasy puts its own spin on the undead, mostly because realistic beliefs – while interesting – generally don't make for good fantasy.

Minor undead in fantasy are usually the servants of either an evil wizard or a priest, while the major undead are typically men of great evil who have somehow cheated Death. Although most of the undead in folklore are spectral, fantasy undead must generally be tangible to be interesting adversaries, mostly because fantasy heroes swing swords. Likewise, while historical necromancers called upon the spirits of the dead for the purpose of divination, fantasy necromancers tend to reanimate undead servants, and are often undead themselves.



Again, this is mostly to give the heroes something to fight, since a battle between a bookish ceremonial wizard and a swordsman wouldn't be very interesting!

### ***Fantasy RPG Undead***

Fantasy games tend to mix cinematic, literary and folkloric undead freely, assigning them the strength of Norse *draugr* (undead warriors), the bloodlust of Hollywood's flesh-eating ghouls and the glowing eyes and dark cloaks of Tolkien's Ring-Wraiths. The tales of many cultures are tossed together with little regard for the theological conflicts this would imply, and mummies from Egypt, skeletons from Iroquois legend and the zombies of Voudoun can be found lurking together in 8th-century Viking burial mounds.

While there are those who regard this approach as apocryphal, it's important to remember that there's a good reason for it: heroic fantasy is neither realistic nor believable, so it's hard to base an enjoyable heroic fantasy game on characters who live realistic lives in believable, historical cultures. The authors of fantasy games know this and want their games to be interesting, so they draw upon dozens of movies and hundreds of novels, most of which are at best loosely adapted from folklore, and combine all the most exciting and interesting parts into an entertaining whole. Fantasy games are, in many ways, the ultimate syncretism of undead myths.

### **Horror Undead**

The undead of modern horror literature probably come closest to the traditional undead. Many authors go to great lengths to research myth and folklore in order to give their undead an aura of authenticity. This is important, as the essence of the successful horror story is to engage the reader and make him believe that something terrifying *really could happen*. No amount of gore and shambling zombies can achieve this result, but real-life beliefs that have been held for hundreds or thousands of years just might.

As a result, horror undead are more likely to be spectral than tangible. This is because most real-life beliefs speak of shades and spirits, not walking corpses, and also because a non-physical threat cannot easily be dealt with using a shotgun or dynamite. GMs running horror games would do well to remember this! One thing to keep in mind is that ***GURPS Undead*** takes the approach that the undead are characters. Since this tends to take the mystery out of them, some ways of preventing this have been included in Chapter 6. ***GURPS Horror*** is also heartily recommended to horror GMs who want pointers on campaign style.





## THE PATHOLOGY OF DEATH

A dead body undergoes several changes as time passes. These are divided into five general stages: the fresh stage, the bloated stage, the decay stage, the post-decay stage and the skeletal stage.

Within two hours of death (possibly as little as 15 minutes), the skin loses color because the heart is no longer pumping blood; this pallor is more noticeable in light-skinned folk. The body sphincters relax and there may be fecal soiling. If the body is moved, there may be regurgitation of stomach contents.

After a few more hours, depending on the environment, the whites of the eyes will begin to dry, leaving a dark band across the eye called *tache noir sclerotique*. Carbon dioxide accumulates in the body, leading to the coagulation of the blood. Later changes include *rigor mortis*, *livor mortis* and *algor mortis*.

*Rigor mortis* is a general stiffening of the body. It occurs because it takes energy to relax a muscle, so when the muscles run out of oxygen (and thus energy), they freeze in place. They remain stiff until they start to fall apart. In general, small muscles show rigor in about three hours, larger muscles a few hours later. Rigor peaks in roughly 12 hours, lasts another 12 hours, then disappears in about 12 more hours. Double or triple those times in cold temperatures; halve them in warmer ones.

*Livor mortis* is the pooling of blood under gravity, resulting in a reddish discoloration. The early stages may be seen within 15-20 minutes of death, and it's usually quite obvious after two hours. The blood initially pools within blood vessels, but leaches into the surrounding tissue in about six hours. Livor is usually dark red to purple.

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## The Trappings of Undeath

The most appropriate undead for a setting will largely be determined by funerary customs. These will also determine how many undead appear and what they look like. Burial allows for the widest variety of corporeal undead, but cremated bodies offer a few possibilities as well (see *Ashes*, p. 22).

### Mortal Remains

An important factor in determining the abilities of the undead (see Chapter 3) is the state in which the corpse is left after death. Containers for corpses are discussed under *Tomb Trappings* (p. 29).

### Cadavers

Many cultures leave their dead out in the open or practice bodily burial. Unpreserved, a corpse will eventually decompose and be eaten by microorganisms, worms and scavengers, leaving behind a skeleton (p. 22). See *The Pathology of Death* (sidebar) for the gory details. A corpse may be preserved *indefinitely* if it is exposed to the wind or the vacuum of space, or buried in a desert, the Arctic or dry alkali soil, since mummification (p. 24) can occur spontaneously under such conditions.

Corpses preserved by embalming can remain recognizable as human bodies for periods ranging from years to centuries, depending on the process used, the skill of the mortician and whether the body is buried afterward (and where). Beyond simple embalming is mummification, which can preserve the body for *millennia!* See *Embalming and Mummification* (p. 23) for details.

Zombies, vampires and flesh-eating ghouls are usually depicted as being relatively intact. Not surprisingly, these undead are most common in societies that practice embalming and burial. They tend to be physically powerful, perhaps because their muscles are still intact or perhaps because whole corpses have the strongest link to "life energy." It's common but not universal for the process of decay to halt once a corpse rises from the dead. Vampires, for instance, often look much as they did in life, and can last for centuries despite exposure to the elements; the same goes for zombies in tropical Haiti. Ghouls in "zombie" movies, on the other hand, tend to rot at a cinematically exaggerated pace!

# THE PATHOLOGY OF DEATH

(Continued)

*Algor mortis* is the cooling of the body, which occurs at roughly 1.5°F per hour. This is quite variable, and depends on the person's metabolism, the presence of illness and infection, and body weight. Most pathologists confine themselves to the terms "cool" or "warm."

After about a day, decompositional changes start to show. These are of two major types: "autolytic" changes (where the body is losing its structural integrity because it lacks energy and repair mechanisms) and changes due to organisms. After two days, the skin starts to separate from the underlying tissue and the internal tissues start to become doughy. Bacteria from the bowel spread into the abdomen, where they produce gas that causes the belly to bloat up, forcing bloody fluids out the mouth and nose. The face begins to swell at this time as well.

What happens next depends on the environment and on the organisms present. If the environment is cold or dry, the body will mummify. If the body is submerged, most of the fluids will leach out. This leaves only cell walls, which are mostly fat. The soft tissues of the body are thus reduced to a fatty substance called "adipocere," which has the consistency of lard. Otherwise, the tissue will be consumed by bacteria, fungi, insects or larger animals, resulting in a skeleton.

The schedule for skeletonization is extremely variable: in hot, humid conditions with lots of bugs or scavengers (like crabs), it may take only 3 days; in freezing conditions, it can take millennia. For exposed bodies in the presence of carnivores (like dogs), scavenging of soft tissue takes place in 4 hours to 14 days; opening of body cavities and removal of parts of limbs in 22 days to 2.5 months; removal of lower extremities in 2 to 4.5 months; disarticulation (except spinal column) in 2 to 11 months, and total disarticulation in 5 to 52 months.

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**Body Parts:** Bodies are occasionally found in pieces. In the movies, this is usually because some psychopath committed a few dozen murders with an axe or a chainsaw, but real-life killers have been known to chop up their victims as well. More commonly, though, this is the result of an accident; even the best mortician can only do so much with a shredded corpse. Wild animals, grave robbers and vandals have also been known to dismember corpses.

In some cases, dismemberment is carried out for religious reasons. For instance, the ancient Egyptians mummified the vital organs separately (see p. 24). In the *Chod* rite of historical Tibet, members of certain tantric cults (who actually *lived* in burial areas) would chop up corpses for wild animals to eat! Less graphically, the body parts of saints ("relics") are believed to be holy in Catholic belief and are frequently kept in churches, in special containers called *reliquaries*.

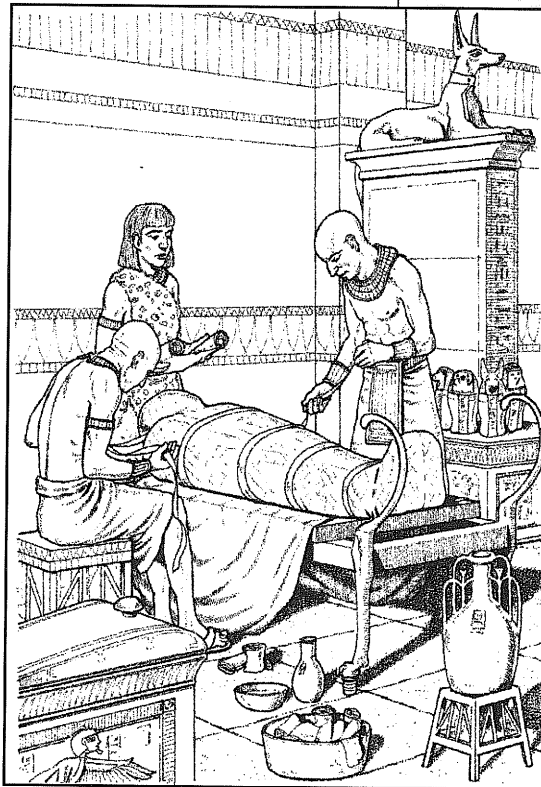
Body parts can often become undead all on their own. Bits chopped off of undead zombies and ghouls are prime candidates, and have a disturbing tendency to remain animated. The most common undead body parts are hands, as depicted in the movie *The Hand* (Oliver Stone, 1981). Animated heads are found in Celtic folklore (see p. CM97); undead bodies can sometimes walk around without heads, such as in the movie *Re-Animator* (Stuart Gordon, 1984), and even vital organs sometimes get in on the act, like the undead heart in Edgar Allan Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart."

## Mummies

A corpse is sometimes preserved in a desiccated but recognizable form called a *mummy*. This preservation process, called mummification, may be spontaneous or the result of various embalming techniques (see *Embalming and Mummification*, p. 23). The resulting mummy can last indefinitely, barring vandalism or exposure to the elements. The most famous mummy makers were the ancient Egyptians, but the Incas of South America, the Guanches of the Canary Islands, the inhabitants of the Taklimakan Desert (China) and many other cultures practiced mummification to some degree.

Mummification is an elaborate and time-consuming funerary custom; therefore, it is usually only practiced by cultures that assign great ritual importance to death, and points to a highly-developed set of beliefs regarding the afterlife. In particular, such painstaking preservation of the corpse suggests that the deceased may need it in the afterlife. One could thus argue that mummies are *intended* to get up and walk around!

Undead mummies are in a class of their own. While ordinary corpses seem to rise as any of dozens of types of undead, animated mummies are usually just that: mummies that walk. The only question is whether the mummy is mindless or willful, a distinction that will be addressed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. The Egyptians associated a part of the soul called the *ka* (p. 8) with mummies, and would definitely have viewed them as being self-motivated; fantasy games tend to depict them as being little more than dried-out zombies.





# THE PATHOLOGY OF DEATH

(Continued)

Burial has a major effect on this. Burial at less than one foot gives access to carrion insects and subterranean scavengers, allowing much speedier decomposition. Soil below three feet is usually sterile, and protects from predation. A deeply-buried body, unexposed to ground water, can last for years. Other factors that affect the timing include embalming, caskets, sealed vaults and whether the body was buried before insects laid eggs on it.

Given the number of variables, it's impossible to provide a timetable for skeletonization. There's one documented case where no trace of a body – not even a skeleton – could be found in a 20-year-old grave in a peat bog. Other graves have yielded up perfectly recognizable corpses 18 months after death. The following guidelines can be used for quick reference, but *aren't* hard and fast:

## **Unembalmed Body – Surface of Ground:**

*Warm climate:* days to weeks.

*Temperate climate:* weeks to months.

*Frigid climate:* weeks to years.

## **Unembalmed Body – Entombed:**

*Enclosed at surface:* many months to years.

*Shallow burial:* months, probably less than a year.

*Shallow burial (wrapped in plastic):* many years.

*Deep burial:* over a year.

*Dry cave (no scavengers):* decades or centuries; may mummify.

## **Embalmed Body:**

*Sealed casket, deep burial, dry ground:* many years.

*Depart from me, O thou that hast lips which gnaw, for I am Khnemu, the lord of Peshennu, and I bring words of the gods to Ra, and I report my message to the lord thereof.*

*– An incantation to prevent apshait (beetles) from gnawing at Khnemu's corpse, from the Egyptian Book of the Dead*

## **Skeletons**

As discussed in *The Pathology of Death* (p. 20), an unpreserved corpse will eventually be stripped down to the bones by microbes and scavengers. Even in the absence of such things, human flesh will undergo slow chemical decomposition in the presence of heat, air and moisture. Ultimately, any corpse that isn't embalmed or mummified will be reduced to a skeleton: a loose collection of bones.

In some historical cultures, the skeleton was regarded as sacred. The bones were routinely exhumed, cleaned and then placed back in the tomb, taking care to reassemble the skeleton properly. There is evidence that this practice was observed by many of the indigenous peoples of pre-Columbian North America, for example. In virtually all cultures, the skeleton is symbolic of death, as it is all that endures after one has died and rotted away.

Animated skeletons are reasonably common in folklore. The walking dead of the Chinese (sometimes called *k'uei*) and the Iroquois were often depicted as skeletons, while the restless dead of the Norse (the *draugr*) were as likely to be fleshless as whole. Dancing, laughing skeletons also featured prominently in the Christian art of the 15th and 16th centuries. Skeletal undead range from mindless monsters controlled by wizards (not unlike zombies) to self-aware creatures like the fantasy *lich* (a Middle English word that means "corpse").

**Skulls:** The human skull, even more than the entire skeleton, symbolizes death. Like the skeleton, it represents decay; at the same time, it evokes the human face, which is strongly associated with personality and identity in life. In short, it is an unmistakable symbol of human mortality.

Skulls have decorated the funerary objects of almost every culture. They figured prominently as death symbols in 16th- and 17th-century European art, and came to represent death in a multitude of forms, from the "Jolly Roger" of 17th- and 18th-century pirates to the warning label used on toxic household chemicals today. Although not a traditional form of undead, animated skulls are common in fantasy as a result of this strong symbolism.

## **Dust**

After many eons, bones themselves may be worn to dust. While this doesn't leave much to reanimate, ghosts encountered in ancient tombs are sometimes described as being swirling clouds of dust. This suggests that even the dust left behind by a long-dead person should be left undisturbed, at the risk of calling forth his shade, which may appear from that dust! Much more common in myth and fantasy are tales of "tomb dust" being used as an ingredient in alchemical elixirs, necromantic spells and magical processes designed to create the undead. See *Ashes* (below) for other ways to use dusty remains.

## **Ashes**

Cremation (burning a corpse in a funeral pyre, furnace or oven) was practiced almost to the exclusion of burial by the ancient Greeks, Romans and Aztecs. The Burmese, the Hindus of the Indian subcontinent and the Shinto of Japan preferred burning to burial as well, and still do. The custom was also known to native North Americans and the non-Christian European cultures of the Middle Ages (like the Norse), who burned their dead almost as often as they buried them. By the late 1800s, cremation had even become acceptable among Christians, after that faith's bias against it was challenged in England (1874) and America (1876) by those who were disturbed by the conditions in graveyards.

Cultures that believe the purpose of cremation is to set the soul free usually cast the ashes into a river (as in India, where the ashes are traditionally poured

into the Ganges) or let them blow away in the wind. The Norse occasionally set their dead afloat on burning boats, which ultimately sank and delivered the ashes to the sea. Similarly, many modern “burials at sea” consist of little more than pouring the ashes of the deceased overboard. Just as often, though, the ashes are kept, usually in urns or other receptacles. In this case, they are either placed in a tomb or kept by the family of the deceased, sometimes in the home.

Obviously, cremation leaves little behind that can get up and walk around, but it's possible that the cremation of someone who would have preferred burial may result in a ghost of some kind. A ghost like this may be assuaged by having his ashes buried; if not, then he's going to be around for a while, since cremation is irreversible. Other possibilities include undead that consist of clouds of ashes, or even animated clay or ceramic statues with the ashes of the dead incorporated into them!

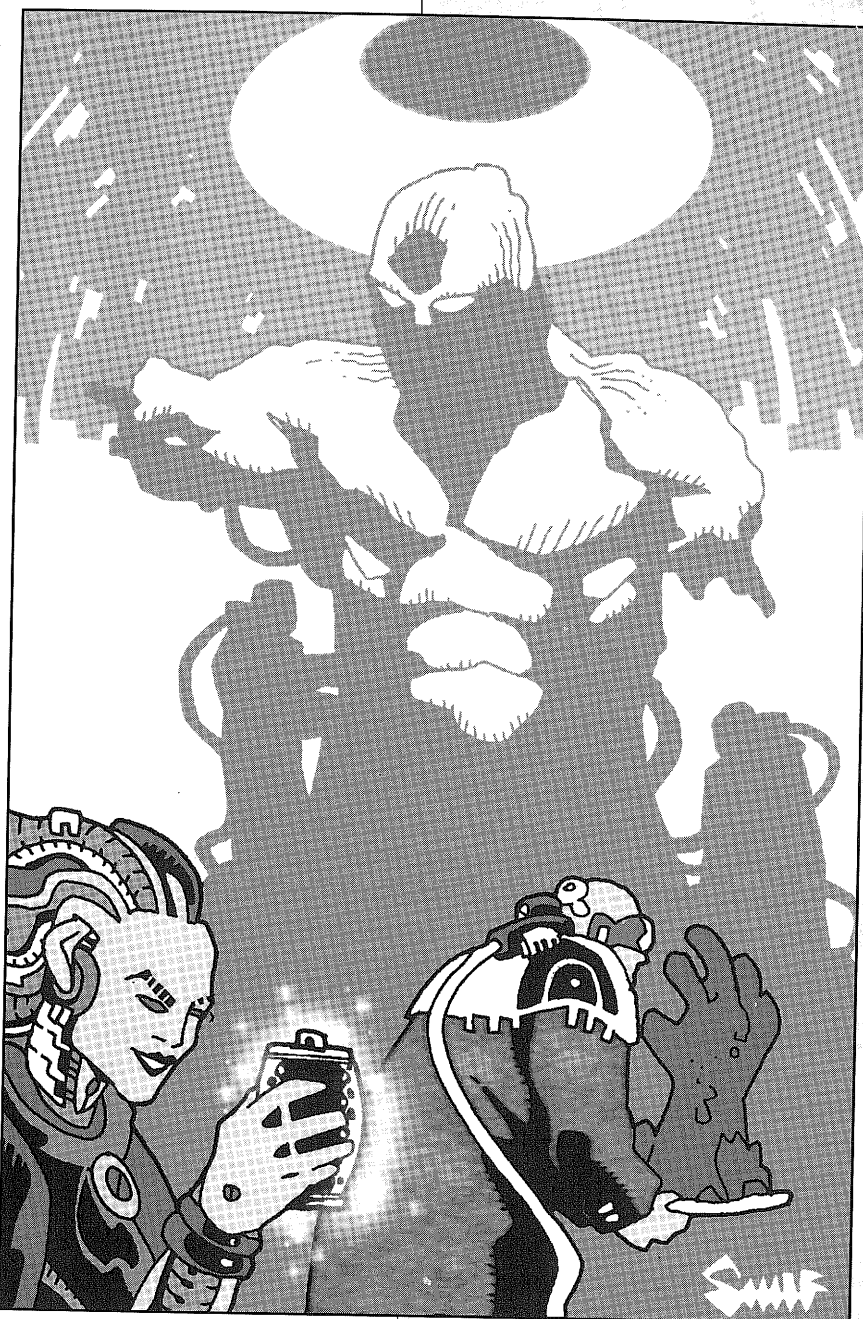
## The Tomb

A tomb is any place where mortal remains – fresh cadavers, body parts, mummies, skeletons, bones or dust – are laid to rest, be that above ground or below. One where ashes are placed is called a *columbarium*. The undead are most often found in tombs, and the type of tomb can determine both the number of undead encountered and their general form. Tombs often contain more than just the (un)dead, too; see *Tomb Trappings* (p. 29) for ideas. Several types of tombs are described here. More can be found in *GURPS Horror* (p. H49), and detailed descriptions of several historical tombs of note appear in *Places of Mystery*.

## Graves and Burial Grounds

The simplest tomb is a hole in the ground: dig a pit, put the remains, their container (if any) and funerary paraphernalia in, then cover it all up. There is a lot of symbolism associated with burial (see *Death, Earth and the Mother Goddess*, p. 10), which is why this practice is almost universal and why the simple grave is the earliest type of tomb.

When a body is being buried whole, its orientation can vary: most cultures bury bodies lying down, as in death, but some prefer to bury their dead standing up, as in life. This was the practice of the ancient Mycenaeans, who buried their dead upright in *shaft graves*: vertical shafts from 15' to 25' deep. The modern Chinese often bury the dead upright as well, although this has more to do with space restrictions than religious beliefs. In the West, a grave is traditionally 6' deep and the body is buried lying down.



## EMBALMING AND MUMMIFICATION

The preservation of a dead body, called *embalming*, is a funerary rite found in many cultures. It usually reflects a belief in a physical afterlife, the continued inhabitation of the body by part of the soul after death, or actual resurrection or reanimation. Sometimes, it's a way of showing respect for the dead and appeasing their spirits. Frequently, though, it's done for hygienic or aesthetic reasons: a preserved corpse doesn't rot, stink or show distressing signs of physical decay, and is unlikely to harbor infection. This is especially important if the body is to be displayed before burial.

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# EMBALMING AND MUMMIFICATION

(Continued)

The most extreme and perhaps best-known embalming techniques were those of the ancient Egyptians, called *mummification* (from *mum*, Persian for wax, pitch or asphalt). The Egyptians removed the vital organs (and as of the 18th Dynasty, the brain as well) and replaced them with linen and resin. These organs were initially preserved separately in urns called "canopic jars" (p. 30), but as of the 21st Dynasty, they were wrapped and returned to the body instead. After evisceration, the body was washed out and pickled in brine for several weeks to remove fat and skin. It was then rinsed off and desiccated with salt. Finally, it was coated in a paste of fat and resin, and wrapped in resined bandages. At various times, wire, packing materials and paint were all used to give the body the appearance it had in life.

Mummification wasn't unique to the Egyptians. For instance, the Guanches of the Canary Islands removed the vital organs from their dead and filled the body with salt and absorbent powder. The Incas of Peru were once thought to have air-dried their dead, but it is now evident that they used a desiccant. Mummification can also occur naturally, due to exposure to dry wind (sometimes combined with extreme cold), hot desert sand or alkali soil. A corpse set adrift in space would also mummify.

Simpler embalming techniques were used by the rest of the world. The ancient Greeks and Romans sometimes preserved bodies by immersing them in honey (although the Romans usually burned their dead). Other ancient methods included packing the body in salt, rubbing it with gypsum and coating it with wax. From the end of the Roman period to almost 1700 A.D., embalming consisted of removing the vital organs, filling the body with preservative herbs, immersing it in spirits, wrapping it in spirit-impregnated cloth and then bandaging it in cloth treated with wax or tar. In the 18th and 19th centuries, bodies were sometimes placed in a sealed casket and simply pickled in brine or spirits.

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Graves can be found alone, but just as often a family, tribe or religious community will bury all of its dead in one area. A collection of graves like this is called a burial ground, graveyard or cemetery. The Hebrew word is *sheol*, a general term for the resting place of the dead. Another common phenomenon is the mass grave: a huge pit where *many* dead are buried, usually with little or no ceremony. Mass graves often contain those killed by plague, war or genocide, or those executed as criminals, and are a prime source of undead.

In general, grave sites are marked. The marker is usually a stone sitting atop the grave, often called a tombstone, which can be just any rock, a particular kind of rock, a cut stone or an elaborate piece of statuary. This practice dates to Neolithic times, and is still used today. Literate cultures tend to engrave tombstones with symbols, prayers, information about the deceased and sometimes a likeness. Mass graves are rarely marked, but a monument will occasionally be raised over a such a grave, often much later on.

The most likely undead to rise from graves are zombies and flesh-eating ghouls in various states of decay, skeletons, ghosts and the occasional vampire. Mummies are rarely buried this way. The undead can rise for a multitude of reasons, but two that pertain directly to the grave itself are improper burial (mass graves and unmarked graves are especially bad) and the disturbance of burial grounds or tombstones. In the case of cemeteries and mass graves, hordes of undead are entirely likely.

## Mounds

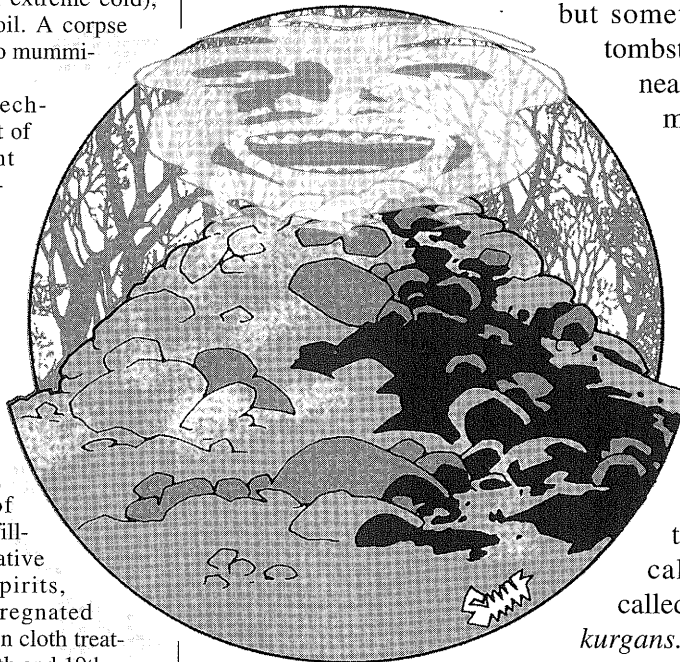
The next-simplest kind of tomb is the burial mound, a kind of artificial hill sometimes called a *tumulus*. This can be a pile of earth, an earth-covered pile of stones or an actual stone structure built above ground and covered with earth.

The remains of the dead are usually within the mound, but sometimes the mound is just an elaborate tombstone: the remains are in a grave underneath. Stone markers are often erected atop mounds, and some of these (like *henges*) have a ritual meaning.

Earth mounds were constructed by the Neolithic cultures of North America, including the Adena, Hopewell and Mississippian tribes. Such mounds usually contain little more than a single burial chamber. Stone mounds, called *dolmens*, were built by the Neolithic cultures of Europe, and are often buried under earth and occasionally stone. Similar tombs built by the ancient Celts are called *barrows*, those of the Norse are called *howes* and those of Siberia are called *kurgans*. Stone mounds can be quite elaborate, and may contain more than one room. When a stone

mound is built over a grave, it is usually called a *cairn*.

The most elaborate mounds of all are probably the *tholos* tombs of the Mycenaeans. These are beehive-shaped stone structures, covered with earth. Built in the 15th to 13th centuries B.C., they can be huge and sometimes contain multiple rooms. They are often richly decorated with sculpture, and may contain valuables.





Mounds are usually quite old, and are often plundered by grave robbers. If they contain any remains at all, these will probably be skeletal, although mummies are occasionally found as well; thus, undead mound-dwellers tend to be either skeletal or mummified. Norse myth calls such undead *draugr*. Tolkien incorporated these into *Lord of the Rings* as “barrow-wights,” which in turn have been absorbed into fantasy games as “wights” (“wight” just means “creature”). Since the draugr were generally undead warriors, buried with weapons and armor, wights are often portrayed as being powerful and dangerous undead (see p. 84).

Mound-dwellers usually only come forth when their mound is violated, but the widespread presence of valuables in mounds makes this relatively common. Worse, multiple mounds tend to be found in an area, compounding the risk. Luckily, though, most mounds contain only one set of remains – and never more than two or three – so wights are usually encountered alone or in small numbers unless an entire field of barrows has been plowed up all at once.

### Crypts

An alternative to building stone burial chambers above ground and then burying them is to build them underground to begin with. Burial vaults of this kind are usually called *crypts*. There are several variations on this theme. One of the simplest forms is the *cave-grave*, used extensively by the Meroë people of Kush (see p. PM77). This is a vertical shaft that turns sideways underground to form an artificial burial cave.

Another possibility is a vault with stone walls and a ceiling, buried underground. Crypts of this kind are used extensively for Christian burial, and are often found under the floors of churches. Vaults like this are sometimes extended into *galleries*: long passages with burial niches carved into the walls. When a series of vaults and galleries is linked together by tunnels, the crypts are collectively called *catacombs*. The city of Rome is built on top of many miles of catacombs, as are several other European cities that date back to the Middle Ages or earlier.

One special kind of crypt is the *ossuary*: a vault for the bones of the dead. A typical ossuary holds dozens or hundreds of skeletons, often just piled there in disorder. The world’s most impressive ossuaries are found under Paris, and are the result of a massive effort to solve health problems caused by overflowing graveyards. Between 1786 and 1860, Paris’ cemeteries were dug up and the skeletal remains of 7-8 million people were moved to the ancient Roman mines under the city. These catacombs were lined with “retaining walls” made of stacked femurs and skulls, and the bones of the dead were piled behind them.

The main advantage of crypts over simple graves and mounds is that they are more secure. First, they are underground, which makes them far more difficult to unearth than mounds are. Second, they usually have heavy stone walls, ceilings and floors, which makes them hard to tunnel into compared to ordinary graves, and which allows them to be fitted with doors, traps and obstacles. Finally, in the case of catacombs, burial chambers can be secreted within a maze of tunnels to confuse and misdirect would-be grave robbers. An extremely secure crypt (sometimes a sealed one) is generally called a *sepulcher*.

## EMBALMING AND MUMMIFICATION

(Continued)

Later methods all involved injecting various preservatives into the blood vessels. This practice dates back to the late 17th century in Europe, but didn’t become common practice until morticians William and John Hunter perfected the technique in the mid-18th century, using a solution of camomile and lavender oils, turpentine and vermilion (a dye). The Hunters preserved the vital organs by removing them, mixing them with a preservative powder and returning them to the body. In the 19th century, solutions of aluminum, arsenic, lead, mercury or zinc salts were used, most of which were highly toxic.

Modern embalming techniques date to the American Civil War (1861-1865). They consist of injecting several gallons of embalming fluid (usually formaldehyde mixed with alcohol, dyes and other chemicals) into an artery at the groin, back of the neck, or under an arm, while simultaneously draining the body of blood through an opened vein. Gases and fluids in the torso are drained using a long needle,

which is then used to inject a disinfectant.

The nature of the physical undead depends directly on the embalming techniques used by a culture; see *Mortal Remains*, p. 20.



### DEEP FREEZE

As the 20th century comes to a close, some people are having their bodies injected with a preservative solution (similar to embalming fluid) and frozen just after death. They believe that future medical technology may be able to revive them. This practice is known as *cryonics*, and is discussed in detail in *GURPS Bio-Tech* (pp. BIO113-115). Cryonically-preserved corpses won’t decay, and would make ideal “raw material” for a necromancer. In an ultra-tech setting, malfunctioning “freeze tubes” (p. BIO115) would have much the same effect, and could conceivably mummify their occupants.

## GRAVE ROBBERY

Many of the items described under *Tomb Trappings* (p. 29) are valuable. Treasures buried with the dead include armor and weapons (often finely-made), fabrics (usually burial clothing), gems and jewelry, incense, magic items (especially amulets and magical writings), paintings, perfumes, precious metals, rare herbs (used in embalming), rare wood (from coffins), statuary, and wine (left as an offering). Items from particularly ancient tombs may be of value as antiquities, even if they have little intrinsic worth.

The remains of the dead can also be valuable. For centuries, mummies were a hot commodity in Europe, where they were used in pharmacy until the 18th century. Necromancers always seem to need bits and pieces of dead bodies for their work, and often pay well and ask few questions. Even lowly tomb dust can be of value to an alchemist, as it is frequently an ingredient in magical elixirs.

In short, grave robbery can be a lucrative profession. It *was*, in many societies; for instance, professional grave robbers in medieval Egypt were common enough to merit a special name (*mutalibun*). Not all grave robbers sneak around and break laws, either. Many archaeologists who legally explore burial sites are seen as thieves by the descendants of those whose graves they're digging up. Even if these descendants consent to the dig, the dead themselves may feel differently . . .

Consequently, grave robbery can be as hazardous as it is lucrative. Aside from the risk of offending the locals, the tombs themselves can be dangerous. Tomb-builders often anticipate theft and build countermeasures into their creations, while priests and wizards sometimes put protective spells on tombs. In a world where the undead exist, the inhabitants of a tomb may even decide to get involved personally. The next few sections address these issues.

### Barriers

The simplest defense against grave robbery is to make the tomb inaccessible. A few cubic yards of hard-packed dirt is enough to discourage the lazy thief; a few tons of stone can blunt the enthusiasm of even the most determined one. GMs who are building tombs for their campaigns should be familiar with the rules for digging (p. B90), breaking things (p. B125) and blowing things up (pp. HT26-27). For quick reference:

*Continued on next page . . .*

Crypts are common to many cultures, but the most elaborate networks of catacombs are found beneath Catholic and Orthodox Christian churches and monasteries. Less elaborate crypts can be found among the more modest graves in Christian graveyards. Crypts frequently contain members of the same family, monks of a single abbey, knights of the same order, etc. They usually contain the dead of many generations, too, and as a result are constantly reopened to inter new corpses. Some crypts even contain chapels where memorial services are held for the dead.

Almost any kind of undead can be found in a crypt. Crypts often contain a lot of bodies, and the undead that dwell in an extensive network of catacombs may outnumber the living in the city above! Moreover, crypts are *designed* to let the living enter to bury the dead and perhaps conduct worship. This means that the undead may find it easy to escape, while living necromancers may find crypts to be ideal hide-outs. Undead-infested catacombs are probably the closest thing to a monster-infested "dungeon" found in real-world folklore.

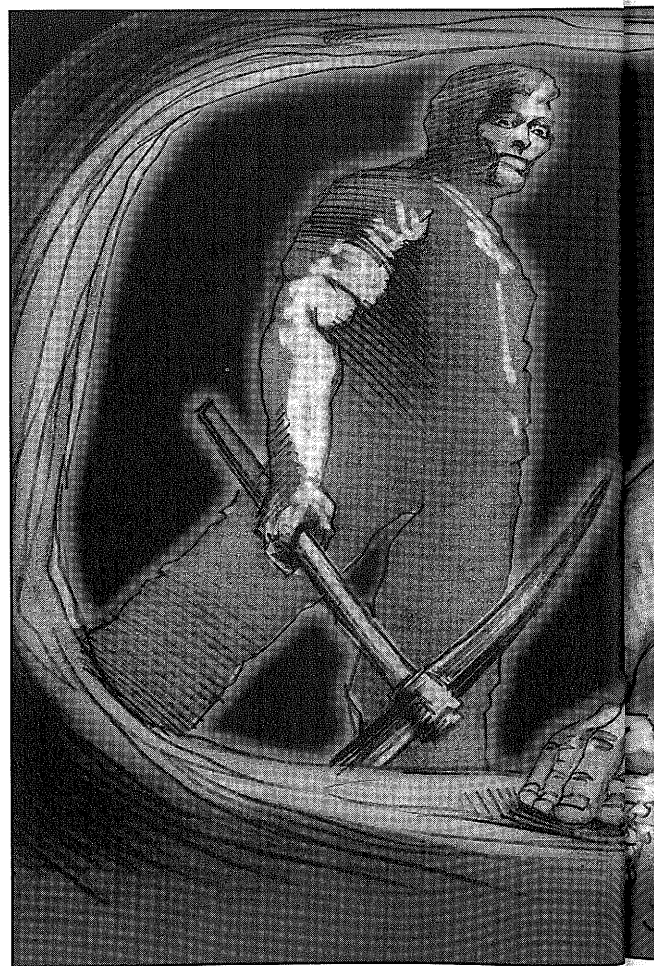
### Buildings

Elaborate funerary complexes can also be built above ground. This is usually done when the deceased is someone of importance and the tomb is intended to serve as a shrine or a monument.

There is no question that the ancient Egyptians were the true masters of the above-ground burial structure. The oldest style of Egyptian funerary building was the *mastaba*, associated with the First and Second Dynasties (c. 3000-2647 B.C.). Usually reserved for nobility, this was a flat, mud-brick structure with sloping sides, erected over the opening to a burial pit. The pit itself had multiple rooms and was intended as a subterranean house for the dead: a comfortable living quarters for the part of the soul that remained in the grave (later called the *ka*).

The best-known Egyptian tombs, though, are the pyramids of the 3rd-6th Dynasties, including the Great Pyramids at Giza. The pyramid was a mystical shape that the Egyptians associated with creation, divine power, the sun and life. In the words of the Egyptian Book of the Dead (p. 123), it "awakens the god who sleeps in the soul." Intended as tombs for the pharaohs, pyramids were too labor-intensive to be built as needed, so they were constantly being built "just in case." Some never served as tombs, and a few historians have hypothesized that they were intended primarily as holy sites or points of power.

The general term for an impressive funerary building



like this is *mausoleum*, a word that originates with yet another great tomb: that of Mausolus, king of Caria from 376-352 B.C. This was a large, temple-like structure of marble, topped with a pyramidal tower and decorated with columns and carvings. It was built at Halicarnassus, c. 350 B.C., by order of Mausolus' widow, Artemisia. It was considered by Antipater of Sidon to be one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

The best-known mausoleum of more recent times is the Taj Mahal, near Agra in India. This palatial tomb was built by Moghul emperor Shah Jahan for his favorite queen, Mumtaz Mahal, and was completed in 1654. It is a huge, domed structure reminiscent of a mosque, decorated with gems and precious metals. The Taj Mahal is often regarded as the most magnificent tomb ever built.

Structures like these are especially suitable for adventures with the undead. Rich and ornate, most mausoleums contain great quantities of treasure. Removing these valuables can anger the dead, however, who will sometimes rise to avenge the theft! Since mausoleums are typically quite large, they take a long time to explore, which gives the undead plenty of time to strike. They also tend to contain secret rooms, traps, sliding walls and other tricks intended to defeat grave robbers, just to make things interesting.

The type of undead found in a mausoleum will depend on who built it; for instance, the residents of Egyptian pyramids are almost always mummies. The importance of those who are laid to rest in an elaborate tomb can also play a role. Rulers who held their title by "divine right" in life may wield great power even in death. If they return to haunt their tomb, they will do so in *powerful* forms. They are likely to be buried with servants or family members as well, and may have armies of undead servants at their beck and call.

## GRAVE ROBBERY (Continued)

A coffin in an ordinary grave is under 4 cubic yards of soil. It would take three ST 10 men (one with a pick, two with shovels) about 1 hour and 20 minutes to expose the coffin. A lone ST 10 man with a pick and shovel would take about 8 hours to accomplish the same feat! It would take an undead character about (130/ST) hours to bash his way out of a coffin and claw his way to the surface.

Modern graves sometimes have concrete liners and caps with DR 4, 60 hit points. Two ½-lb. sticks of dynamite would be enough to blow the cap *completely* away (requires a Demolition roll). A ST 10 man would need about 1 hour and 20 minutes to break up the cap with a pick and remove it; three men (one with a pick, two with shovels) could accomplish this in about 30 minutes. No matter how the cap is removed, the grave must still be dug up, as above.

A 6' tall by 4' wide by 1' thick stone door weighs about 2 ½ tons, and has DR 8, 180 hit points for the purpose of making a hole in it. It takes about 2 lbs. of dynamite (4 sticks) to blast a 3' hole in it; this requires a Demolition roll, and may cave in the tomb. A larger door, or one made of harder stone, will be tougher and heavier.

Some doors are hinged. While they can be opened without the aid of a pickaxe or dynamite, they are usually *locked*. Opening a lock without the proper key requires Lockpicking skill (p. B67). Locks on the tombs of the wealthy and powerful are often of very high quality, and may give a penalty to skill (up to -5); they may also be trapped (see p. 29).

One of the most common real-world barriers is a shaft that intersects the passage that joins the tomb entrance to the burial chamber. This is found in many Egyptian tombs. Shafts are usually obvious: the idea is to make it hard to carry out loot, not to kill people. Use the *Falling* rules on p. B131 if someone stumbles into a pit like this. A typical shaft is 25' deep (8d-16 damage), and is vertical and smooth-sided (-3 to Climbing skill).

Secrecy and remoteness are also effective barriers. Examples include an unmarked grave, a sunken funeral boat, a cave-grave in the side of a cliff and a tomb at the top of a mountain. Reaching a tomb like this may require painstaking research, special tools, specialized skills (Climbing, Scuba, etc.) or native guides (who may desert you or even try to kill you if they disapprove of your mission!).

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# GRAVE ROBBERY

(Continued)

## Tricks

Another common tomb defense is trickery. One of the most effective tricks is to plant false maps of the tomb's location (or interior) where they will be found by potential thieves. Another is to start misleading rumors about the location, contents or defenses of the tomb. False tombs are also useful deceptions. These three tactics are often combined, making it almost impossible to learn the truth about a tomb.

Secret doors and passages are also effective. An entire tomb – either empty or stocked with modest treasures, and perhaps even a real corpse – can be built adjacent to the *real* tomb, which is only accessible through a hidden door. Secret passages like this may be in the floor, walls or ceiling. The entrance may be high off the ground (few thieves will search the entire surface of a 40' wall, never mind the ceiling), doors may be concealed by ornamentation, and "immovable" tomb fixtures like altars may be counterweighted to move aside if a certain hieroglyph is pressed or the right crucifix is turned.

## False Tombs

It is common for the dead to be honored in their absence. Mortal remains can be lost, misplaced, unreachable or in the possession of someone who refuses to relinquish them. Funerary practices like cremation or burial at sea often leave no remains to bury. Occasionally, someone wishes to honor a general class of dead, such as all those killed in a battle or a war, or everyone who was executed by an unpopular regime. Under such circumstances, a false tomb is often erected. A monument like this is called a *cenotaph*, and can be as simple as a stone or wooden grave marker, or as elaborate as a full-fledged mausoleum.

Given that no one is buried in or under a cenotaph, it isn't likely to be associated with the undead. The exception is when the cenotaph is a monument to those who have never received a proper burial, or when it commemorates a particularly violent act, like a mass execution or a massacre. A cenotaph of this kind may serve as a lightning rod for ghostly hauntings.

## Necropoleis

In general usage, the term *necropolis* (pl. *necropoleis*) just means "cemetery" (or sometimes "ancient cemetery"). The literal meaning of the word is "city of the dead," however, and there are many who reserve it for precisely that: a large collection of building-sized tombs organized in tiers or along streets. In short, a city that consists of houses of the dead. Well-known necropoleis include the collections of mastabas and cliff-face cave tombs on the west bank of the Nile near Luxor and Karnak (including the Valley of the Kings), the Shah-Zinda

at Samarkand (see p. PM45) and the Roman burial grounds found beneath St. Peter's Basilica (in the Vatican) in the 1940s.

A necropolis can consist of anywhere from a dozen to several hundred structures, which may include mausoleums, cenotaphs and other monuments, mortuaries (buildings where the dead are kept before burial) and temples for celebrating funerary rites. These are usually arranged along streets, stairways or alleys that allow funeral and memorial processions to

pass. The necropolis is often decorated with statuary, pools, fountains, gardens and paved areas. There may be graves or crypts beneath all this; in fact, the entire necropolis could conceivably be built atop a complex network of catacombs. Finally, it may be walled, with access controlled by gates.

Necropoleis are of particular interest when discussing the undead because they can contain any and all kinds of undead. They may even be true "cities of the undead," with dwellings, gathering areas, parks, places of worship and storehouses (for treasures and other burial items), much like cities of the living. In a tiered necropolis, the residents of higher (or lower!) tiers may be of greater importance. Needless to say, walled necropoleis will be veritable bastions of the undead.



Secret doors (and their triggers) require a Traps or Vision-5 roll to spot. More subtle ones will give a penalty. This will range from -1 for things like a loose wall panel to -10 for things like a pivoting statue of Horus in a niche 35' off the ground, triggered by pressing three hieroglyphs in a certain order in a room 200' down the passage.

*Continued on next page . . .*

# Tomb Trappings

Tombs often contain things other than the remains of the dead. Most of these objects have a ritual significance, but a few are there for practical or aesthetic reasons. As well, the living sometimes ask to be buried with specific items upon death, usually for personal reasons. All of these things can be found with the undead, and some of them may be used in the spells of necromancers who deal with the undead.

## Amulets

The dead are frequently buried with amulets that symbolize life, rebirth or immortality. A few amulets have magical powers; e.g., Egyptian mummies were buried with amulets intended to guard the soul and protect against sorcery. The term "amulet" refers to a ritual object whose power is passive; an active ritual object is called a *talisman*. Talismans are less common in tombs, simply because they require active use, something that isn't always possible for the dead.

Amulets are frequently placed in a corpse's mouth. A cicada carved out of jade was placed on the tongue in China, representing immortality and a return to life. The Chinese also placed pearls – another symbol associated with life – in the mouths of their dead. The *obolus*, or *vail*, was a coin placed in the mouth by the ancient Greeks. It was intended to pay the ferryman Charon to carry the soul across the river Acheron (specifically, the Styx) and into the underworld. Failure to leave this offering would leave the soul of the dead wandering, possibly back into the land of the living. Coins were later placed on the eyes of the dead, possibly for the same reason, but more likely to hold the eyelids shut.

Some other examples of amulets:

*Casket (China)*: A small jade casket was placed on the corpse, often filled with fish scales. This symbolized life and rebirth.

*Frog or Toad (China)*: A jade frog or toad amulet also represented eternal life.

*Medicine Bundle (North American Indian)*: This ritual object represented a shaman's contract with the spirits, and was sometimes buried with its owner.

*Scarab (Egypt)*: This dung beetle-shaped amulet symbolized immortality.

## Adornments

Corpses are often buried wearing various kinds of clothing or jewelry. These adornments are usually intended to give the dead something to wear in the after-life or after resurrection, to serve as an offering to the spirit of the deceased, or simply to make the body easier to look at for the living. A few articles have a deeper significance, however. Examples include:

*Clothing*: Some cultures have specific burial clothing, almost always rich. This is likely to be embroidered with symbols of immortality and decorated with materials associated with eternal life (see *Jewelry*, below). Even in cultures that don't have specific burial garments, it is common to bury the dead clothed in finery, or in clothing that had a special significance in life (e.g., a military uniform).

*Dyes and Powders*: The dead are often ritually marked with dyes (like woad or vermilion) or colored mineral powders (especially ocher, which is used in dozens of cultures). This is one of the earliest corpse adornments. It predates clothing, jewelry and masks, and serves a purpose similar to all of these things.

*Jewelry*: Jade, gold, pearls and shells were associated with life and immortality in the Aztec, Chinese and Egyptian belief systems, to name but a few. As a result of this symbolism, jewelry made from these materials often adorned the dead.

# GRAVE ROBBERY

(Continued)

## Traps

Some tombs are designed to kill anyone who enters them. The usual logic behind this is that a tomb with a reputation for swallowing up thieves will be left alone. Another possibility is that the tomb's architect is a bloodthirsty sadist. In any event, it's a staple of pulp and fantasy stories that dead grave robbers will outnumber the original occupants of any tomb worth robbing.

Many of the nonlethal measures under *Barriers* (p. 26) and *Tricks* (p. 28) can be turned into traps with a few small changes: a thin cover over a shaft can turn an obvious barrier into a not-so-obvious deathtrap, while a loose 10-ton stone lintel can simultaneously crush thieves and seal up a tomb for good. Use the rules on p. B131 for falling objects. As a rule, lintels and gates falling from ceiling height (8-12 feet) will inflict 20d/ton if they simply shift onto someone, or 100d/ton if they fall freely! Not all dropping barriers are designed to crush people; many simply seal their victims inside the tomb, where they die from suffocation, dehydration or starvation. A simple one-way door can serve the same purpose.

A favorite trap (examples of which have been found in China and Egypt) is a weapon powered by springs, torsion, counterweights or the victim's own weight. Traps like this are pre-sighted to strike the person who triggered them: roll against the designer's Traps skill to hit (a random trap will have skill 2d+7). The victim may defend normally, but some traps attack from behind, allowing only a PD roll. Weapon traps always have a ST value (usually no more than TL×5), and inflict damage as per the nearest weapon type. Examples include hidden crossbows (imp thr+4) and dart guns (imp thr-1); statues that swing swords (cut sw+1), axes (cut sw+2) or polearms (cut sw+3 to sw+5), and hidden spears or stakes (imp thr+3) that spring out of holes in the walls, floor or ceiling.

Poison is frequently encountered on weapon traps and stakes at the bottom of pits. Any of the injectable poisons on pp. CII137-146 is possible; curare and animal venom are good candidates. More subtle than this is poisonous dust, either dispensed by a trap or simply lying around where it will be stirred up by thieves. Lime powder (p. CII144) is especially effective in this role.

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# GRAVE ROBBERY

## (Continued)

Most traps are triggered by stepping on a loose stone, opening a door or a coffin, tampering with a lock, or picking up something that is obviously valuable. A few will rely on tripwires and other "brute force" methods. Some will be *very* subtle, and may even be part of the architecture, like a wall that is designed to collapse if a door is opened. Ropes, chains, levers and clockwork will link triggers to traps, and will usually be concealed inside walls and floors. Traps skill (p. B68) is required to spot a trap or its trigger; a second roll is needed to disarm it. One or both of these rolls may be at a penalty if a trap is particularly sneaky or sensitive.

The devious GM should be able to come up with dozens of traps. In a realistic game, remember that old traps aren't likely to be effective. Poison evaporates or decomposes, springs take a set, ropes rot or stretch, chains rust, etc. Hidden weapons will fire only once. Concealed pits will be revealed as their covers decay, and may become clogged with the remains of previous thieves. In a cinematic game, though, a hidden crossbow will work just fine after 600 years, and will mysteriously reload when "off screen." Anyone with a passion for cinematic traps should see all three *Indiana Jones* movies.

### Curses

In the real world, many tombs are protected by fear and superstition. A two-fisted adventuring archaeologist may never get near a tomb if the superstitious locals think he'll awaken the dead or bring a curse down upon them. A curse may or may not be "real magic," but it's definitely *real* if it can summon a dozen natives armed with spears, bows and rifles!

One of the most famous curses is the "Curse of the Pharaoh," associated with the Egyptian pharaoh, Tutankhamun. His was one of the few unripped tombs discovered in modern times and as such became famous out of all proportion to its occupant, who was a minor and short-reigned pharaoh. The Curse of the Pharaoh supposedly struck those who first disturbed the tomb and those who were present later at the opening of the sarcophagus. Lord Carnarvon, who financed the excavations and was present at the opening of the tomb in 1922, died the next year from an infected mosquito bite. The legend of the curse was made much of in the press, but ten years later, only one of the five present at the opening of the tomb – and only one of 22 who witnessed the opening of the sarcophagus – had died.

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*Masks:* These were sometimes made in the likeness of the wearer in life, and thus symbolized immortality. Death masks were often believed to incorporate the spirit of the dead. Other masks protected the wearer from being recognized by evil entities on his journey to the afterlife. A few represented the gods, usually gods of the afterlife.

*Palls:* Pieces of cloth used to cover corpses, coffins or entire tombs. A pall is usually dyed a "mourning color" (see *Colors*, p. 17), and is distinct from a shroud (below) in that it is cast loosely over the body as opposed to being wrapped tightly around it. In modern Western culture, national flags are often used as palls for military men, and symbolize the patriotism of the deceased. Flags are always removed before burial.

*Shrouds and Winding Sheets:* The dead are often wrapped in a piece of cloth, usually during the embalming process (see p. 23). Many thicknesses may be used, and these may be secured with cords, especially if no other burial container (see below) will be used.

### Burial Containers

Mortal remains are rarely just tossed into the tomb as is. Usually, they are at least bundled up in a shroud (see above), and most cultures place the dead in some kind of container to protect against worms and scavengers:

*Coffin or Casket:* A heavy, lidded box, usually made of wood. Metal and glass are also used; a stone coffin is called a *sarcophagus* (see below). Most coffins are somewhat ornate, and are painted, stained or varnished. Some sport woodwork or elaborate engravings, perhaps even a bas-relief of the occupant. A few are made of rare wood. The lid of a coffin may be detachable or hinged, and may be equipped with extras like a lock (intended to be opened from the outside – a potential problem for the undead) or a small door for viewing just the face. Handles and other hardware for lowering the casket into a tomb are common. Coffins are sometimes tied shut with cords before burial; in Eastern Europe, this is believed to keep the corpse from rising as a vampire.

*Sarcophagus:* A stone coffin (more rarely, a metal one; see above). Sarcophagi are frequently associated with Egyptian mummies, but stone burial boxes have been used by virtually every post-Neolithic culture. Like coffins, they are often engraved, painted or otherwise adorned. Some sarcophagi are fashioned from kinds of stone that have a ritual meaning, such as jade (a symbol of immortality). The lid of a sarcophagus is far more likely to be detachable than to be hinged. Sarcophagi sometimes have holes or sockets for poles, enabling them to be lifted and moved.

*Urn:* A pottery or ceramic vase used to store the ashes of someone who has been cremated. Also called a *cinerarium*. Urns can be immense, but some are small enough to be carried in one hand. Many are painted with religious symbols and images of ritual objects. Urns generally have handles for carrying, and most are stoppered with a plug of some kind, which often bears a seal stamped with a prayer or spell. Two related kinds of vessels are:

*Skulls*, which were sometimes used instead of urns by the Neolithic peoples of North America.

*Canopic jars*, which were special urns (usually four per corpse) used by the ancient Egyptians to store preserved organs. These jars were buried alongside the sarcophagus containing their mummified owner.

### Tomb Fixtures

Tombs may be equipped with a number of furnishings. The more common ones include:



**Altars:** An altar in a tomb is almost always used for the worship or veneration of the dead, including memorial and funerary rites. It also serves as a place to put offerings (see p. 32). If it is dedicated to a deity, this will almost certainly be a god of the underworld or afterlife.

**Biers:** A bier is a raised platform where a bundled-up corpse, coffin or sarcophagus can be placed.

**Candelabra and Sconces:** Candles and other lights in the tomb symbolize "light within the darkness of death," and are linked to the preservation of the soul; therefore, candle-holders of various kinds are common tomb trappings.

**Pools:** Water has the same symbolism as burial itself in many cultures: it represents rebirth and the womb of the earth. Funerary pools are quite common as a result. In Chinese tombs, such pools will be oriented to take advantage of geomantic power (*feng shui*).

**Statues:** Statues of the deceased, his associates and the gods are found in the tombs of most cultures. Some are symbolic servants; for instance, the Egyptian *shabti* was intended to serve as a "golem slave" in the afterlife. Others are guardians, like the army of over 7,000 life-sized terra cotta soldiers buried with Chinese emperor Qin Shi Huang Di (221-206 B.C.). A few represent things other than people or gods; e.g., the Egyptians buried their dead with a model boat intended to carry the soul to the afterlife.

**Tombstones:** Stones are usually placed on top of graves or inside crypts to mark the locations of remains (see p. 20). A tombstone can be simple (a smooth rock) or elaborate (a cut stone monument the size of a small building), and is often engraved with prayers, symbols and information about the deceased.



## Tomb Decorations

Tombs are typically quite ornate, and can be decorated with almost any kind of engraving, painting or mosaic. These often adorn the walls of the burial chamber, as well as any objects within it. Even the body of the deceased may be painted or written upon! Tomb art falls into three general categories:

**Images:** These usually depict either the gods or the tomb's resident in life. Occasionally, they represent the deeds of the deceased in pictorial form. Just as often, though, these images are fanciful. For instance, baroque tombs were often decorated with images of corpses, worms and skulls.

**Symbols:** These usually have some religious or magical significance (see *Occult Symbols*, p. 18), and include such things as the lotus (Chinese and Egyptian), the Eye of Horus (Egyptian) or runes (Norse). Symbols may have a meaning all on their own, but often constitute part of a prayer or spell.

## GRAVE ROBBERY

(Continued)

Of course, in a world where magic works, curses are a genuine magical threat. The simplest way to handle a curse is to inflict a disadvantage like Unluckiness (p. B37) or Cursed (p. CI96) upon the grave robbers. This may be linked to opening the tomb, entering it, disturbing the dead or removing something, perhaps a specific item. A curse like this probably comes from the gods, and there will be no warning or resistance roll. Getting rid of the curse will require a Remove Curse spell (p. M63) from a mage, priest or shaman at the very least. At the GM's option, the disadvantage may have to be bought off with character points as well.

Another possibility is contagion: even though the tomb is ancient, dusty and apparently sterile, it somehow harbors a hideous disease. For this kind of curse, the *Contagion* rules (p. B133) are used and the entire tomb is treated as a "plague-ridden area." A list of sample diseases can be found on pp. CII167-174; bubonic plague, jungle fever and leprosy are all appropriate choices. Diseases contracted this way may

be otherwise normal and treatable with medicine, or they may be supernatural and require treatment with the Cure Disease spell (p. M50).

Finally, the Link spell (p. M64) can be cast or even enchanted onto a tomb and used to deliver any number of magical "curses." *GURPS Magic* includes many possibilities: Age, Curse, Great Geas and Pestilence seem especially appropriate. For those who dislike flashy magic, *GURPS Voodoo* includes a number of more subtle (but no less unpleasant) curses; see pp. VO74-80.

## Guardians

Perhaps worst of all, some tombs contain guardians. Not only are most of these creatures dangerous in their own right, but they will know all the secrets of the tomb. They can use secret passages to sneak around and attack from behind. They will try to lead treasure hunters into traps, and may reload or reset "disarmed" traps. It's likely that they will be equipped with any magic items or weapons buried in the tomb. If the tomb contains a powerful undead being, it may even lead the other inhabitants in coordinated attacks!

Continued on next page . . .

# GRAVE ROBBERY

## (Continued)

Tomb inhabitants include:

*Undead:* Almost any kind of undead creature could lurk within a tomb. Sometimes, the dead will only rise if their resting place is disturbed. In other cases, the undead are trapped within the tomb, just waiting for some fool to come along and open the door. A few undead are animated expressly as guardians, especially mummies, zombies and skeletons; failed grave robbers may even join their ranks! Aside from the physical undead, tombs may be haunted by ghosts as well.

*Magical Servants:* Statues like the Egyptian *shabti* or the terra cotta soldiers of Emperor Qin (p. 31) are sometimes put into a tomb to serve its occupants. These should be treated as golems (see pp. M116-117) that are loyal to the tomb's undead master.

*Ghoul:* There are many tales of creatures that live near burial grounds and consume the flesh of the dead. Some of these are degenerate humans. Others are clearly not human at all, like the Arabian *ghul*: an evil djinni (see *Demons and Angels*, p. 15) with unpleasant dietary habits. All are vicious, at home in the dark and have claws and teeth that are specifically tailored for tearing flesh and crunching bone. They are often unclean, and may even carry tetanus (p. CIII73). They rarely fear humans, and will attack on sight.

*Necromancers:* Occasionally, a wizard or an entire coven will take up residence in a large tomb complex. These necromancers may be animating the dead or just hiding out; either way, they probably don't want to be found and are likely to react poorly to treasure hunters. At the GM's option, the mana in a tomb may be death-aspected (see p. M94), making the necromancers particularly dangerous.

*Priests:* Fanatical clerics may protect some tombs; they may even live there (like certain tantric monks in historical Tibet). The tomb is likely to be consecrated to a death god, making the priests' magic particularly potent.

*Tomb Police:* Professional watchmen may be employed to patrol tombs, look for signs of tampering and apprehend grave robbers. Such "tomb police" really existed in ancient Egypt. In fact, the tomb of Tutankhamun (p. 30) was entered in ancient times, but the tomb police found out, inspected it and resealed it.

*Vermin:* Tombs, especially newer ones, are liable to house swarms of unpleasant creatures. While not bloodthirsty by nature, such creatures will attack if cornered or disturbed, and may carry disease, including rabies (p. CIII71). Rules for bat and rat swarms can be found on p. B143; additional swarm creatures (including mosquitos, scorpions, snakes and spiders) can be found on pp. BE49-50.

*Writings:* These may include magical spells or prayers, the life story of the person in the tomb (or praise for him), or instructions to the deceased on how to conduct himself in the afterlife. The intended reader may be the deceased himself, future generations or even the gods. The script is typically calligraphic, while the language used may be a secret or liturgical one known only to priests or wizards.

## Personal Possessions

Since Neolithic times, people have buried their dead with items for use in the afterlife. These are sometimes intended for personal use, but just as often they're a kind of bribe or offering to be presented to supernatural entities encountered during the soul's journey. Tools (usually those used by the deceased at his former profession), weapons and armor are by far the most common items buried with the dead. The Mycenaeans are especially known for this practice, but almost every culture has engaged in it at one time or another.

Of course, some people are simply eccentric or materialistic, and ask to be buried with favorite possessions for reasons that have little or nothing to do with religion. You may not be able to "take it with you when you die," but that doesn't stop people from trying!

## Offerings

In many cultures, perishable items are placed in or on tombs by living ancestors, friends and holy folk as offerings to the dead. These may be strictly commemorative, but are often used to "pay" the dead to intercede with the divine on the part of the person making the offering, or simply to keep the spirits of the dead from becoming angry. Offerings are among the earliest known tomb trappings, and may include:

*Drink:* Sometimes water, but more frequently alcoholic beverages – which the dead seem to have a taste for in many belief systems. The Romans offered wine, while rum is common in Voudoun. Such offerings may be poured on the ground above a grave, or left in bottles, cups, urns, etc., in or on the tomb.

*Flowers:* One of the most common offerings, these were strewn in tombs in Neanderthal times, and possibly earlier. The Romans offered flowers in broken pots to their ancestors. Some American Indian tribes worshipped their dead by decorating their tombs with flowers. Laying flowers on the grave is also a common Christian practice, even today.

*Food:* Intended for consumption by the dead, food was used as a tomb offering by the Romans, Pueblo Indians and countless other cultures. In some cases, these offerings were actually taken and consumed by priests!

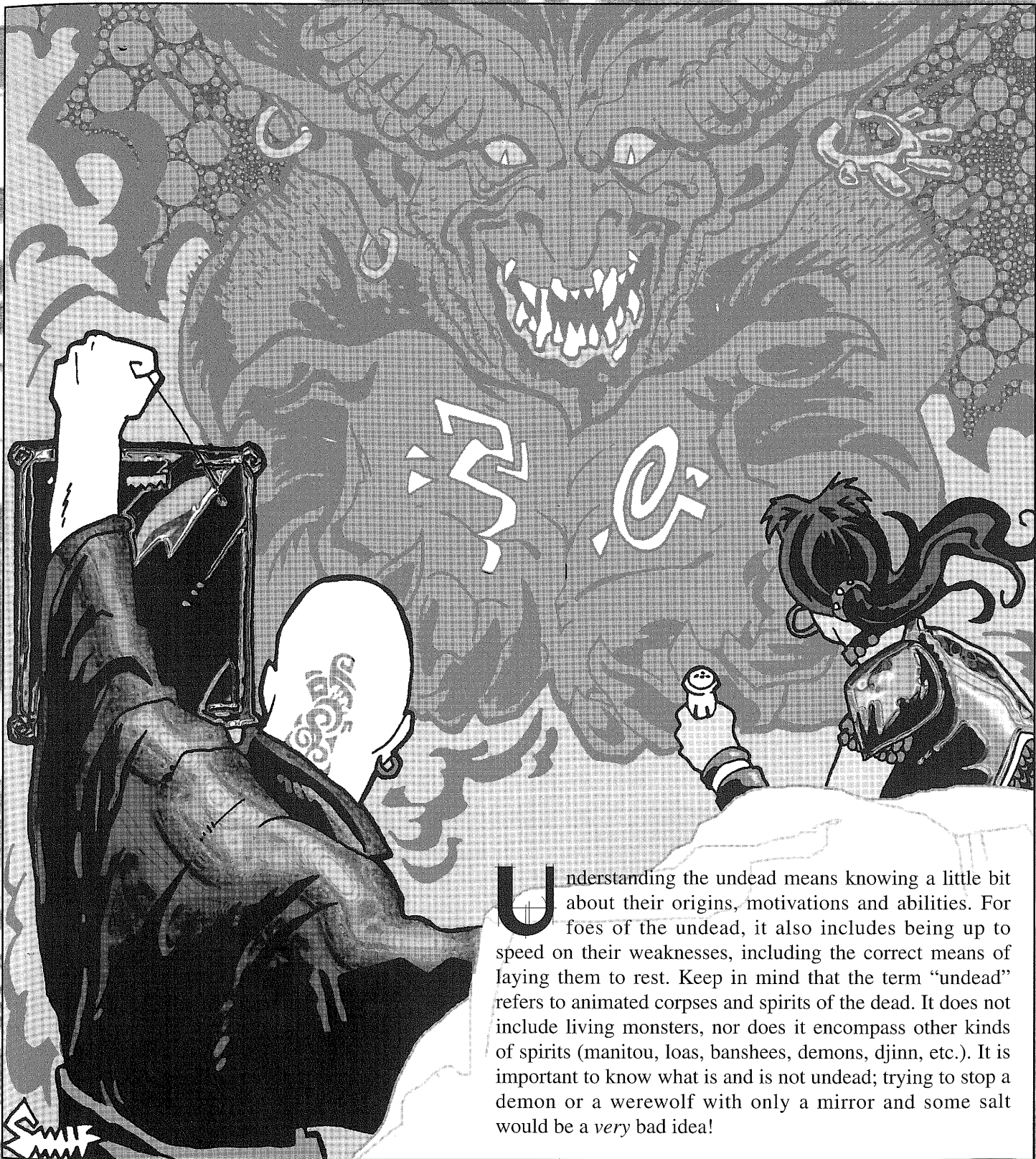
*Incense and Perfume:* These are usually offered to propitiate the dead. As well, the smoke of burning incense is often believed (e.g., in Shinto) to carry prayers to the spirit world. It can also symbolize the transmigration of the soul. Symbolism aside, dead people and dank tombs don't smell good, so perfume and incense are liable to be taken into a tomb for purely practical reasons . . .

*Symbolic Goods:* The Chinese have an industry dedicated to making symbolic paper goods (appliances, computers, etc.) to be burned on the grave. The smoke is supposed to carry the offering to the dead, who can use it as though it were real. Symbolic money ("Hell Bank Notes") is intended to let the dead bribe their way out of hell.

*Tobacco:* North American Indians frequently offer tobacco to the dead as a sacrifice and a gift. This rite is also observed in Voudoun. Traditionally, tobacco was offered in a dried, loose form, but cigars and cigarettes are far more common today.



# DEALING WITH THE DEAD



**U**nderstanding the undead means knowing a little bit about their origins, motivations and abilities. For foes of the undead, it also includes being up to speed on their weaknesses, including the correct means of laying them to rest. Keep in mind that the term “undead” refers to animated corpses and spirits of the dead. It does not include living monsters, nor does it encompass other kinds of spirits (manitou, loas, banshees, demons, djinn, etc.). It is important to know what is and is not undead; trying to stop a demon or a werewolf with only a mirror and some salt would be a *very* bad idea!



## RISING FROM THE DEAD

The GM may wish to give sentient beings who die during the campaign a chance to become undead spontaneously, without magical aid. This can only occur if undeath is compatible with the outlook held by the deceased in life (player's call for a PC, GM's option otherwise; most people prefer final rest to undeath) or if he was Cursed or Unlucky. If so, roll vs. Will, modified as follows:

### *Circumstances of Death (choose one):*

Natural death .....	-5
Accidental death .....	-4
Honorable death in combat or duel....	-3
Lawful execution .....	-2
Dishonorable death in combat or duel .....	-1
Murder, suicide or wrongful execution .....	0

### *Age at Death (adjust for nonhumans):*

Under 18 .....	+1
18-49 .....	0
50-69 .....	-1
70-89 .....	-2
Over 90 .....	-3

### *Funerary Rites (choose one):*

Final Rest spell (p. 47) .....	Roll fails.
Full .....	-5
Hasty or partial .....	-3
None .....	0
Willfully denied.....	+1

### *Other Modifiers:*

Relevant Obsession ..	+1 per -5 points*
Stubbornness disadvantage .....	+1
Unfinished task .....	+1 to +3*
Weirdness Magnet disadvantage .....	+3

\* At the GM's option.

The GM should apply an additional modifier that reflects how common the undead are in his campaign. As it stands, the chart above is suitable for semi-realistic campaigns with the occasional undead. A +1 or +2 will make the undead *very* common, while a -2 or more will essentially eliminate them.

If the final, modified Will of the deceased is 2 or less, he cannot rise. If it's 3 or more, roll 3d. On a success, he becomes undead! There is often a delay between death and undeath. The traditional three-day delay of Christian myth makes a good general rule, but the GM is free to vary this delay to fit the setting, or dispense with it altogether.

**Form:** Spontaneous undead are always restless, never willful or enslaved. The wrongfully-slain may return as revenants (p. 73), but most restless dead are ghosts (p. 68). If the body was cremated, a ghost is the only possibility. The GM determines the exact abilities of PC undead, *not* the player!

## Awakening the Dead

Where do the undead come from? Why do ghosts haunt? What makes a corpse get up and start walking around? Myth, folklore and fiction give many possible answers to these questions.

## The Restless Dead: Ghosts, Revenants and Tomb Guardians

In most traditions, dead souls go on to the afterlife, while dead bodies are laid to rest. Some souls become trapped in the mortal world, however, and some bodies won't stay down. These are the restless dead, and probably the most common class of undead in folklore and horror literature. In general, the restless dead have no desire to return from the grave and have not been summoned back to the mortal world, yet they cannot find peace. There are several reasons for this.

### *Untimely Death*

Many people believe that a person's time in the mortal world is preordained. To die before that time is seen as "untimely." Some people believe that when this happens, the dead can wander the earth, often because the gods or spirits won't collect their souls before their allotted time is up. This results in an undead being. Examples of undead like this include Russian *rusalki* (p. RU108), spirits of girls who have drowned in rivers, and Aztec *ciuateteo* (p. AZ104), ghosts of women who have died in childbirth. Many other "ghosts" also fit this description.

Just what constitutes a "timely" death is hard to judge. In general, deaths due to old age are considered timely, as are those resulting from disease or acts of God. Accidental death, murder, execution and death in warfare, on the other hand, are typically seen as untimely. Grisly, violent and criminal deaths are more likely to result in the restless dead than peaceful ones are. Age at the time of death is also a factor: children, who have most of their lives to live, are frequently thought to become undead if they die an unnatural death (like the *rusalki* mentioned above).

Undead of this type usually wander around doing whatever they did in life until their natural time is up. Then they vanish, never to be encountered again. A rare few seem to stay around for much longer than a human lifespan.

Some parapsychologists believe that the hauntings associated with violent deaths have nothing to do with spirits, but are due to the psychic impressions left behind by the dead. Psychic echoes of this kind can take many lifetimes to fade away, but aren't really undead. Those who prefer to treat ghosts as psi residues should see *GURPS Black Ops* (p. BO100) or *Psionics* (p. P49). See also *Psi Phenomena* (p. 43) and *Psionics and the Undead* (p. 105).

### *Unfinished Tasks*

The pressing need to complete a task can keep the dead from their rest. Such undead are similar to those who've died an untimely death, except that they have a specific act to complete, not an entire life to "live out." This act can be innocent, like marriage for dead lovers, or it can be sinister or even *evil*, like murder for an assassin. One of the most common tasks is leading the living to mortal remains so that they can be properly buried; see *Improper Funerary Rites* (p. 36) for more on this.

Not all unfinished tasks allow for closure. Many undead exist simply to carry out repetitive tasks that played a significant role in their life. These tasks can be incredibly banal. For instance, a dead soldier may walk a patrol every night, a dead clergyman may ring a church bell every morning, and a servant of 40 years may continue to sweep the same floor every day.

In almost every case, the motivations of the undead are quite clear-cut, but this isn't always apparent to observers. If enough time has passed, the scenery will have changed too radically to let the average observer figure out *anything*. Consider a priest who falls off the belfry of his church and is killed. If he starts ringing the bell right away, it's obvious what's going on. If he died 400 years ago and a parking garage now stands where the church used to be, he'll seem quite strange, tugging on an unseen rope amid the Toyotas . . .

As a general rule, undead of this type are ghosts, sometimes visible as apparitions, but just as often only detectable due to a strange sound or smell, moving objects ("apports"), a sensation (like extreme cold), or an oppressive atmosphere. They usually haunt a place familiar to them in life. Those with a task that can be completed can be laid to rest by helping them with their task; those with repetitive tasks must simply be tolerated. Like ghosts that result from untimely deaths (p. 34), some people feel these are really psychic impressions and not undead at all.

### Righting Wrongs

Sometimes, the dead cannot rest until a great wrong has been set right. This often takes the form of vengeance upon the living! In some ways, this is a special case of an unfinished task (p. 34), except that these undead are usually physical and not ghostly. The general term for an undead that returns to set things right is a "revenant" (see p. 73 and pp. R18-19).

A revenant is the result of circumstances, not willpower or magic. It usually haunts the scene of a "crime" committed against it. Not all such "crimes" are criminal acts, however. The revenant of a murderer who was legally hanged may rise from the grave and lurk near the gallows, seeking vengeance upon the hangman and perhaps even the entire society that strung him up. As a result, elaborate measures (including decapitation, exorcism and burning) are often taken to ensure that the bodies of criminals will not rise.

Some revenants haunt individuals instead of locations, and will obsessively follow their target to the ends of the earth to wreak vengeance, usually death. Such revenants *can* be avoided by traveling far away. Of course, living in fear and being forced to leave home and loved ones to avoid death at the hands of a walking corpse may be a worse fate for many people.

A good example of a revenant from real-life folklore is the Eastern European *taxim*. The *taxim* is always male and is usually in an advanced state of decay, making it horrendously ugly and rancid. In some tales it emanates supernatural fear as well. The *taxim* seeks vengeance on those who have wronged it, and is strong enough to tear the living apart. It can only be laid to rest with holy words that amount to an exorcism.



## TOMB VIOLATIONS

Whenever a tomb is opened, entered (by someone who isn't supposed to be there), damaged or desecrated; whenever the remains of the dead are disturbed, and whenever a tomb is robbed, there's a chance that the dead will rise spontaneously. The GM can decide this on a case-by-case basis, or leave it to the dice. The basic chance of awakening the dead is a 3 on 3d, modified as follows:

#### *Tomb Disturbed (use highest):*

Opened .....	0
Entered or accidentally destroyed.....	+1
Vandalized or deliberately destroyed .....	+2
Ritually desecrated .....	+4

#### *Remains Disturbed (use highest):*

Touched or tampered with .....	+1
Removed .....	+2
Mutilated .....	+3

#### *Robbery (cumulative):*

Mundane items (any number) .....	+1
Ritual items .....	+1 per item

Roll for the first violation and *each time one of these modifiers increases*. All modifiers for other kinds of violations (even unrelated ones) stand! Enough digging around in a tomb *will* eventually awaken the dead.

*Example:* A party of archaeologists open a tomb. The GM immediately rolls vs. 3. He rolls again when they enter, this time at 4. Opening a mummy case (tampering) forces another roll at 5. Later that night, tomb robbers come along and hack the mummy's hand off, requiring a new roll at 3 + 1 (entry) + 3 (mutilation) = 7. They then steal a ritual amulet, and the GM rolls again at 8. If *any* of these rolls succeed, the mummy wakes up . . .

*Form:* Tomb guardians tend to be ghosts (p. 68), mummies (p. 72) or wights (p. 84), with whatever abilities the GM has decided upon.

## CONTAGION

Victims of the undead sometimes become undead themselves. The usual explanation is that undeath is a curse that can be passed along like a disease. The association of curses with disease is ancient, and dates to the dawn of spiritualism. Those who want a quasi-scientific explanation for contagion are referred to *GURPS Black Ops* (p. BO104), where vampirism is treated as a microbial disease instead.

Undead contagion is usually handled by the Infectious Attack disadvantage (-5 points, p. CI97). The attacker must bite or claw his victim, or drain him of life using a supernatural ability. Using a weapon or pummeling with fists won't work, but ripping the victim apart and eating his brain will – at least for cinematic zombies.

The victim then rolls 3d vs. the amount of damage inflicted by his assailant. Only one roll is allowed per day. If this roll succeeds (3 and 4 always succeed), the victim falls into a death-like state and rises as the same kind of undead as his attacker. The suggested delay is 2d days, but those who like Christian myth may want to make this a flat 3 days.

Undead created by contagion are generally independent of their "creator," but sometimes they are his slaves. To create slaves, an undead being must have the Dominance advantage (p. CI53) instead of Infectious Attack. Minions created this way usually have the Slave Mentality disadvantage (p. CI94), which vanishes if their master dies. In some cases, they have Involuntary Duty (p. CI77) instead (see *Dominated Undead*, p. 56). In either case, the GM may allow the "controlling disadvantage" to be bought off with earned character points.

Dominance costs a base 5 points, plus 15 more per 100 points of undead controlled. This latter cost must be paid by the creator whenever he makes a new slave. If he can't come up with the points, the GM may rule that his "offspring" is free-willed. Points may be saved up in advance for the purpose of "buying" slaves. If a slave is killed or buys off his Slave Mentality, the points spent to dominate him return to this pool and can be used to pay for new slaves.

## Improper Funerary Rites

The main *religious* reasons for funerary rites (p. 7) are to facilitate the soul's journey to the afterworld and to show proper respect for the dead. It follows that if funerary rites are botched or omitted, the dead may become angry with the living, the soul may not reach the afterlife, or both. In most belief systems, these angry or wandering souls are a major source (sometimes the *only* source) of undead.

The angry dead are usually motivated by a desire to take vengeance on the living for failing to properly honor or worship them after burial or cremation. The living can sometimes make amends for this, but the undead will often exact a price. Examples of undead like this are the semi-spectral Roman *manes* and Pueblo Indian *kachina*. Both are ancestral spirits that demand constant worship. Failure to meet their demands can result in mischief and even murder! The *forso* of New Guinea is similar: the ghost of someone whose bones have not been displayed and shown the proper reverence.

Souls that can't reach the afterlife may not be angry; they may want nothing more than a proper funeral. In ancient Greece, for instance, someone's shade can wander if he hasn't been buried with a coin in his mouth (see p. 29), because then he can't pay Charon to ferry his soul across the Styx. Presumably, this can be remedied with a single coin! On the other hand, some wandering souls *are* angry, often because they were denied entry into the afterlife for a reason. For example, the Chinese *k'uei* is an evil soul that takes its frustrations out on the living because it has been denied access to the afterlife.

In many cases, there's overlap between those who have died a violent and untimely death and those who weren't properly laid to rest. Examples include the Hindu *preta* and the Russian *zalozhniy* (p. RU110): walking corpses of those who were violently murdered and not given funerary rites. In most cases, neither worship nor burial will assuage these undead; they will only cease to walk when their allotted lifespan is up.

## Violated Burial Grounds

A corollary to the above is the belief that the dead can awaken if their funerary arrangements are disturbed after the fact. This offense must usually be severe and deliberate: mutilating a corpse, robbing a tomb, excavating burial grounds, etc. In some cases, though, it can be as subtle as walking upon someone's grave. Many of these violations are accidental, like a Neolithic burial site being exhumed by bulldozers 10,000 years later.

Such undead are often animated by dead souls, but these are rarely *wandering* souls. After all, they have received a proper funeral and have been given the opportunity to enter the afterlife. The implication is that these souls return solely because they've been angered by the lack of respect they've been shown. In a few cases, the animating force is a portion of the soul that doesn't enter the afterlife in the first place. Instead, it dwells in the tomb, where it can animate the corpse should the need arise.

Examples of undead like this are the Norse *draugr* (p. VI98) and the undead Egyptian mummy. *Draugr* are walking corpses that can awaken for any number of reasons, almost all of which have to do with their burial mounds being violated. The most common violation is looting. They are usually stubborn, violent and dangerous, and can only be laid to rest by physically defeating them. Mummies exemplify undead that are animated by a part of the soul that dwells in the tomb (called the *ka*; see p. 8).





## Judgement Day

Finally, the undead may be dead folk who have been called before their god to face final judgement (see *Eschatology*, p. 6). While Judgement Day is usually associated with the end of the world, it doesn't *have* to be. In a setting with many faiths and interventionist deities, Judgement Day for one faith may be just another day for everybody else, and when millions of walking corpses or ghosts get up and start walking around, the living will be confronted with an undead plague of astounding proportions. Of course, those who try to combat this plague are liable to incur the wrath of a god . . .

It is worth noting that many religious writings (including the Bible) suggest that time does not pass the same way for gods as it does for mortals. If this is the case, Judgement "Day" may turn out to be Judgement Week – or even Judgement *Millennium!*

## The Willful Dead: Vampires, Liches and Wraiths

Not everybody wants to go on to his next life or the afterlife at death, least of all those who are likely to go to Hell or be reincarnated as ants! Some people have such a strong desire to go on living that death becomes a minor obstacle. A few even *want* to rise as the living dead. Willpower and supernatural forces can occasionally intervene to keep these individuals from departing this mortal coil . . .

### The Evil Dead

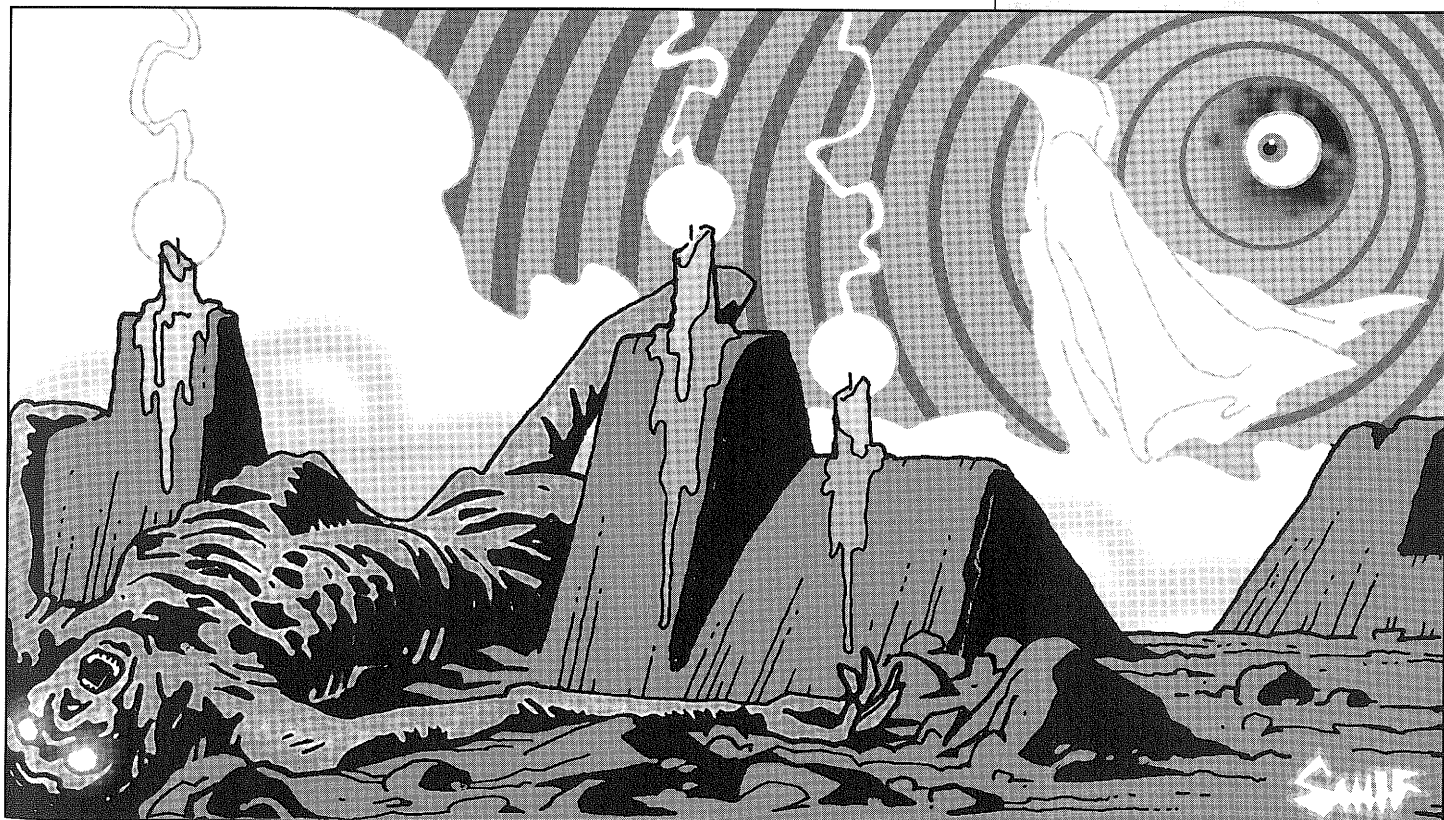
Certain evil folk fear punishment after death so much that they refuse to truly die. Others make pacts with evil powers, before or after their deaths, to secure immortality in return for service. In all cases, they become undead.

## MAKING ZOMBIS

Those who've spent time in Haiti claim that zombis aren't really undead at all, but people who've been put into a coma by a poisonous powder ("zombie powder") introduced into wounds or food by a sorcerer (bokor). According to this theory, the victim is buried alive, exhumed shortly thereafter and revived using other drugs.

The exact composition of zombie powder is a secret. Known ingredients are a gland from the bouga toad (contains the potent psychoactive chemicals bufogenin, bufotoxin and bufotenine), millipedes, tarantulas, the skin of poisonous tree frogs, 4 kinds of toxic puffer fish (contain tetrodotoxin), the seeds and leaves of a bewildering variety of deadly plants (varies a great deal from recipe to recipe) and ground-up human remains. Exhumed zombis are controlled using a plant called *Datura stramonium* or "zombie's cucumber" (contains several narcotic alkaloids, including solanine).

Voudounists believe that zombis really *are* dead. Given the lethal nature of zombie powder, who can say? GMs who wish to control zombie-making can require exotic preparations like zombie powder as magic ingredients for the Zombie spell (p. 41). The proliferation of zombies can be curbed by requiring the periodic use of other ingredients (like zombie's cucumber), which can be made as rare as the GM pleases.



# NECROMANCY

Traditional necromancy is a divinatory art: the evocation of the dead to learn secrets from the afterlife. The basic technique is to bind the spirits of the dead, which either appear as shades or reanimate corpses to speak. Necromancers interrogate these spirits, occasionally using dire threats, then let them return to the afterlife. The actual methods used can vary a great deal.

In the European tradition, for instance, ceremonial necromancy requires a magic circle and wand, St. John's Wort (a plant, genus *Hypericum*) and a lit brazier full of magic ingredients. It is performed in a graveyard, on a battlefield, near a gibbet or at the site of a murder. The dead are sometimes exhumed, but this is unnecessary; blood, bones, bits of shroud and coffin nails will usually suffice.

Necromancy is most effective when conducted in the hour after midnight, and is governed by the planet Saturn. The invocation of powerful spirits is helpful; e.g., the spirit Frucissiere is known to bring the dead to life. Certain magic items can also be useful; for instance, 18th-century necromancers used the magical "Bell of Girardius" to call the dead.

Necromancers have long been regarded as masters of all magic involving death, probably because they speak with the dead. Death spells were often attributed to them, and some believe that King Charles IX of France was killed by such a spell! That said, most necromancers *aren't* demonologists and probably aren't all that evil. Christianity condemns them, but it regards *all* sorcerers as evil.

Most historical necromancers *didn't* create the undead; that's largely the stuff of fantasy games. One of the earliest necromancers was the Witch of Endor, and the Bible claims that she summoned Samuel's ghost only to speak with him (1 Samuel 28:7). This exemplifies ceremonial necromancy through the ages. Even today, necromancers tend to be spiritualists who talk to spirits via tapping, spirit writing, etc.; zombies don't show up at séances very often.

There have been exceptions. The Egyptians clearly expected their mummies to talk, and wrote down spells intended to reanimate them. Ancient Greek necromancers were accused of "making vampires," because they summoned shades using sacrificial animals, giving the dead a taste for blood. In the East, Vyasa, a Hindu holy man, raised the dead from the Ganges for a night, and Milarepa, a Tibetan yogi, animated his corpse on his funeral pyre. Even today, some practitioners of Quimbanda, Santería and Voudoun are thought to be able to create the undead.

The GM must decide whether necromancers are diviners or reanimators. If the latter, some of the ceremonial methods listed above may be required when casting spells like Summon Spirit (sidebar, p. 39) and Zombie (sidebar, p. 41).



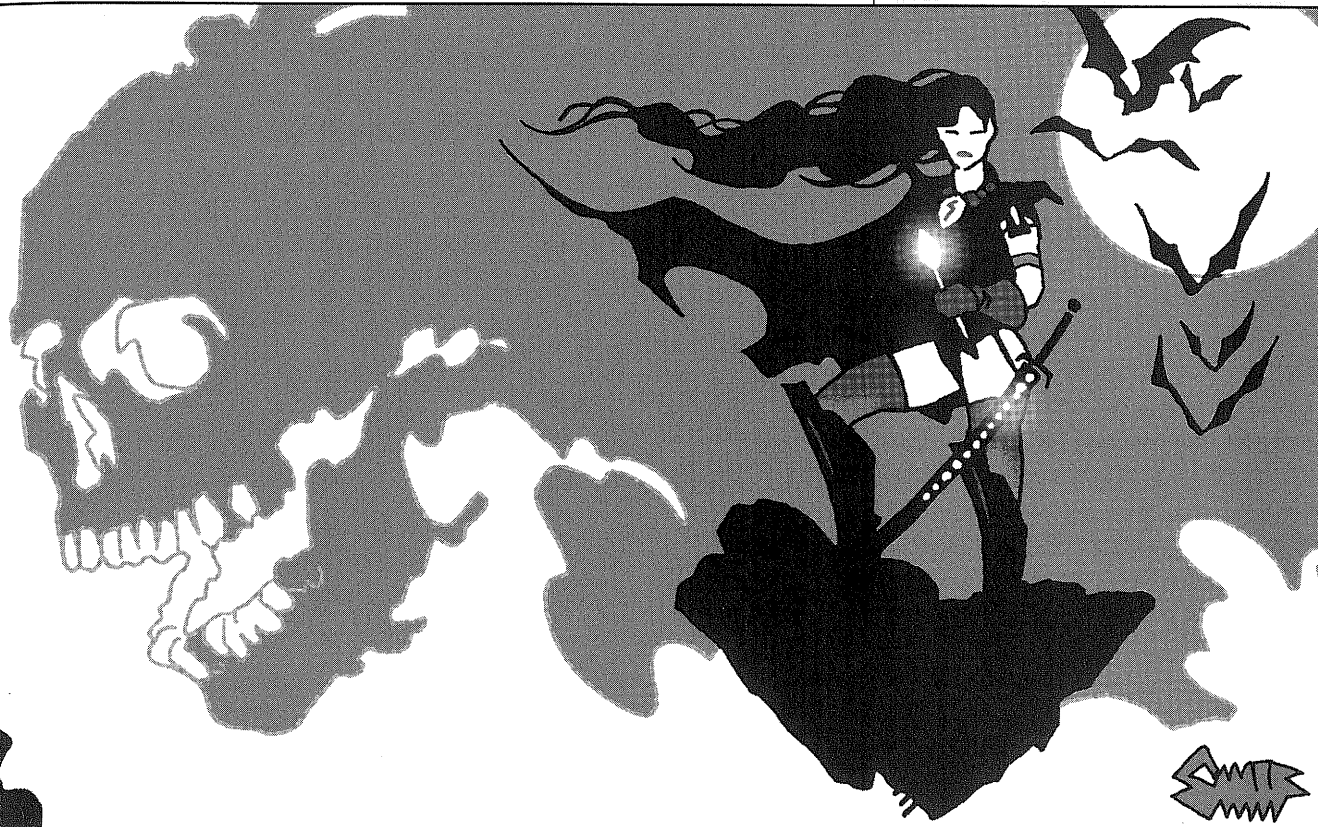
Such "evil dead" are willful, in control of their situation (to an extent) and maintain an ageless, eternal existence by stealing life energy. This is usually accomplished by taking blood, warmth, health or psychic energy from the living using a bite, touch, sex act or magical spell. Regardless of the exact form, this draining inevitably inflicts sickness, madness or death upon the victim. In many cases, a victim killed in this way will rise as a lesser undead under the control of the one that killed him.

Undead like this are generally called "vampires," from the Hungarian *wampyr* or Romanian *vampyr*. This is somewhat incorrect, as those terms did not originally refer to the undead but to a blood-sucking monster from ancient Germanic folklore. Some claim to be able to trace this back through Roman and Greek myths to the Mesopotamian *lilitu*, an evil spirit or demon that drained life energy through sex, blood-drinking or both. Somewhere along the line, this was confused with the unrelated idea that the shades of the dead could assume substance if they consumed blood, linking the undead with vampires forever.

The idea that the dead can maintain a semblance of life by stealing energy from the living is relatively straightforward, and is known to almost every culture. Examples include the toe-biting, bat-like *azeman* of northeastern South America; the fireball- or smoke-like *gaki* of Japan, and the disease-ridden *pishaca* and ghostly *vetala* of Hindu belief. *GURPS Blood Types* covers vampires in detail, and lists dozens of other types!

## Sorcerous Undead

Powerful magic can sometimes keep body and soul together after death. Those who are preserved this way never truly die, but since they aren't really alive either, they're treated as undead. This is rare in traditional folklore: usually, if someone succeeds at using magic (most likely alchemy) to exceed his natural lifespan, he's considered to be immortal, not undead. In modern fantasy, though, and especially in fantasy games, these undead play a prominent role that cannot



be neglected. They generally fall into two classes: sorcerers who have preserved their body through magic, and people (not always wizards) who have been denied both true life and final death by magic.

A wizard who cheats death by becoming undead is usually called a *lich*. This word comes from Middle English, and means “dead body.” It is rarely used in modern English, and has no special occult significance. In fantasy, though, it has come to mean a sorcerer who kills, preserves and then reanimates his own body without his soul departing. This is accomplished using alchemy (for the poisons and preservatives) and spells (for reanimating the corpse). The sorcerer generally remains self-aware throughout this process, and the end result is a preserved, typically skeletal body controlled by a once-human mind.

Beings that live indefinitely because powerful magic won’t let them die are usually called *wraiths* in fantasy. “Wraith” is really just another word for “ghost,” but J. R. R. Tolkien changed that forever when he used the term in *Lord of the Rings* to refer to sorcerers and kings who were preserved by powerful magical rings. His wraiths became standard in fantasy: strong, black-clad figures with skeletal bodies, glowing eyes and magical powers.

There are two main differences between wraiths and liches. First, wraiths are technically living beings that draw sustenance from magic, while liches are dead. Second, wraiths don’t preserve themselves, while liches do. Beyond that, they are quite alike: both are corporeal, self-aware and intensely magical undead. Liches and wraiths aren’t necessarily evil, but since most faiths take a dim view of sorcery, playing with corpses and interfering with the transmigration of souls, and since it’s hard to come up with any selfless, virtuous reason to become a walking corpse, they are usually viewed as being at least as evil as vampires.

Note that “sorcerous undead” aren’t the same thing as dead bodies reanimated by magic; see *Zombies* (p. 40) for that.

## SPELLS FOR RAISING THE DEAD

These spells let wizards raise or command the dead. A few of them have been reproduced from *GURPS Magic*, in modified form. All of these spells are Necromantic; Lich and Wraith are also Enchantment spells. Note that the Magic Resistance of a dead subject works normally, subtracting from the caster’s skill and adding to resistance rolls (where applicable). Spells that create permanent undead don’t count as spells “on” (see p. M10).

### Summon Spirit Information; Resisted by spirit’s IQ

Lets the caster talk to the spirit of a dead person. The subject resists at -5 if he was a friend of the caster. This spell won’t work at all if the subject’s spirit or body is undead, but functions normally once he is truly dead. Exception: this counts as ritual invocation for the spectral undead, who may choose to appear when named (p. 52).

Modifiers: -5 if you don’t know the subject’s full name. -1 if it has been more than a week since the subject’s death, -2 if more than a month, -3 if more than a year, -4 if more than 10 years, -5 if more than 50 years and -6 if more than 500 years.

If the spell succeeds, the subject will

*Continued on next page . . .*



## SPELLS FOR RAISING THE DEAD

(Continued)

answer one question to the best of his knowledge as of the time he died, and one more for every minute he remains. If it fails, that caster (and helpers) may not summon that spirit again for a year. A critical failure means the caster summoned a malign spirit, who lies deliberately.

*Duration:* 1 minute.

*Cost:* 20 to cast; 10 to maintain. Halve these costs if the spell is cast at the site of death or if the subject's remains are present.

*Time to Cast:* 5 minutes.

*Prerequisites:* Either Death Vision and Magery 2 or World Sight (p. C148).

### Command Spirit (type) Regular; Resisted by spirit's IQ

Like Charm (p. M68), but only affects spirits. Each class of spirit (spectral undead, banshees, manitous, etc.) requires its own spell. No version exists for demons (use Summon Demon) or elementals (use Control Elemental). Unlike the subject of a Charm spell, the spirit may try to pervert the caster's orders, just like a demon (see *Summon Demon*, p. M74).

*Duration:* 1 minute.

*Cost:* 1/8 the total of the spirit's four attributes (round up); half that (round up) to maintain.

*Time to cast:* 2 seconds.

*Prerequisites:* Summon Spirit, Turn Spirit (p. 48).

### Bind Spirit (type) (VH) Regular Resisted by spirit's IQ

Similar to Enslave (p. M68), but for spirits. Like Enslave, it allows mental contact with a turn of concentration. There is a separate Bind Spirit spell for each Command Spirit spell. The spirit may interpret its orders creatively, as per Command Spirit.

*Duration:* Permanent.

*Cost:* 1/8 the character point value of spirit (round up). Minimum cost 30.

*Time to cast:* 5 minutes.

*Prerequisites:* Command Spirit (same type), Soul Jar.

*Item:* A spirit may be bound to an item or place. Bound spirits will serve the owner of the item and will not dissipate. Energy cost to create: 4 times the cost above, halved if the spirit is willing.

Continued on next page...

## The Enslaved Dead: Zombies, Duppies and Undead Minions

The will to rise from the grave need not be one's own. At times, the dead are pressed into service by wizards, priests, mad scientists or even other undead. While powerful magic may enslave *any* of the undead in this book, the undead discussed below are almost always encountered as slaves.

### Walking Corpses

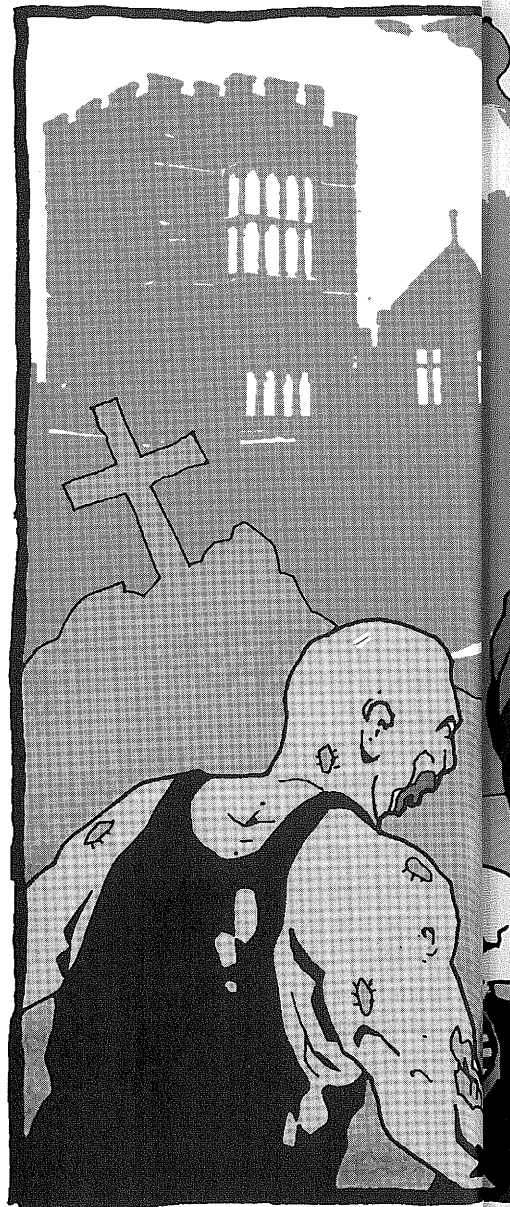
The easiest way to get an undead servant is to find a dead body and make it walk again. The tried-and-true method is to use black magic, but you can also reanimate the body with an exotic technology (chemicals, electricity, nanomachines, radiation, robotics, viruses, etc.). Walking corpses aren't terribly bright, but they make good warriors and manual laborers who won't ask questions. An undead servant of this kind is called a *zombie*, a variation on the Voudoun term *zombi* (see below). This comes from *nzambi*, a Congo word meaning "the spirit of a dead person."

A Voudoun *zombi* is a walking corpse reanimated by a sorcerer (called a *bokor*). It is usually used for manual labor. Those who believe in *zombis* tend to fear being *zombified* more than they fear *zombis* themselves, but *zombis* can also be programmed to do violence. Impartial observers claim that *zombis* are actually living people in a drug-induced trance, but Voudounistas believe that *zombis* really are undead. For more on the *zombis* of Voudoun, see *Making Zombies* (p. 37). See also p. VO80.

In folklore, *zombies* animated by black magic are by far the most common kind. The sidebars on pp. 41-42 present several spells that allow this. Note that mummified bodies and skeletons can also be reanimated, and mummies of this kind should not be confused with the mummified Egyptian tomb guardians discussed under *Violated Burial Grounds* (p. 36).

The next most common way to animate the dead is possession. This is the usual way that demons and evil spirits like the Hindu *bhuta* raise the dead; see *Demons and Angels* (p. 15) for more information.

Various *GURPS* books present numerous other ways to animate the dead, including chemicals (see *Walking Dead* and *Chemical Zombies*, p. H67), electricity (see *Necroids*, p. CN84), parasites (see *Brainsuckers*, p. BO88 and *Breederbugs*, p. BO94) and radiation (see

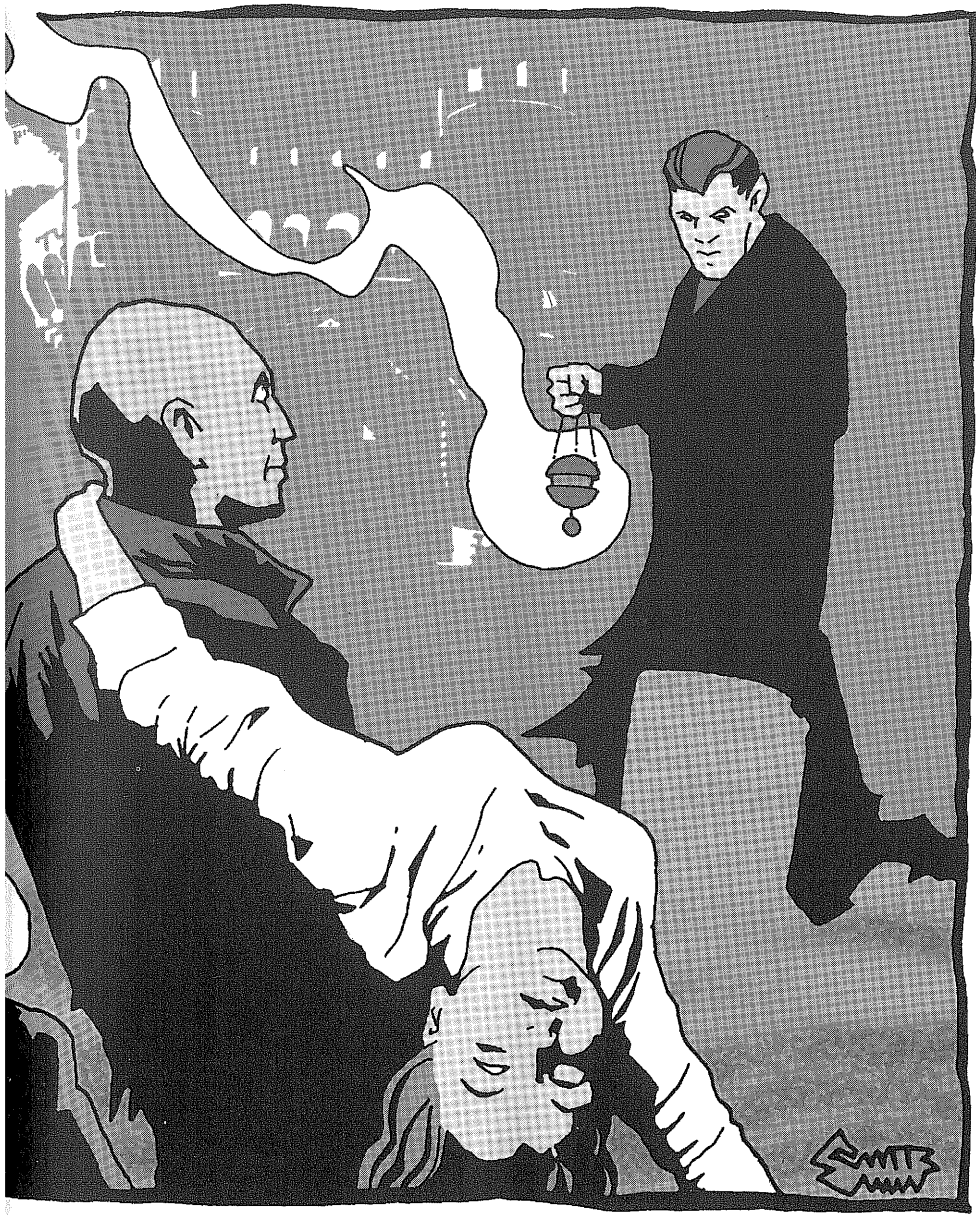


*Human Zombies*, p. AH99). These methods don't always create true undead servants, but there's no reason why they couldn't be adapted to the task.

### **Spectral Servants**

Not all undead slaves are corporeal. The traditional purpose of necromancy is the evocation of the dead in order to force them to reveal secrets learned in the afterlife. This involves summoning and binding a ghost, shade or phantom, in effect creating a temporary spectral servant. The Summon Spirit spell (p. 39) does exactly that. Black magic isn't always needed: in Chinese, Chinook Indian and New Guinean belief (to name but a few examples), merely saying the name of the deceased aloud can summon his soul!

One step beyond binding spirits for interrogation is summoning them as servitors. In the West Indies, it's believed that a ghost called a *duppy* can be summoned by naming the dead repeatedly at a grave site, usually by a relative of the dead. A task can then be demanded of it. The *duppy* is typically sent to attack a victim, causing vomiting by breathing on him or convulsions by touching him. It must then be rewarded with tobacco or rum. A *duppy* is a great deal like a skull-spirit (p. 42).



## **SPELLS FOR RAISING THE DEAD**

(Continued)

### **Zombie**

### **Regular**

The subject of this spell must be a relatively complete dead body. The type of body determines the result: a fresh body produces a zombie, a skeleton produces an undead skeleton, a very old, dry body produces a mummy. The animated corpse becomes an undead servant of the caster.

The zombie's attributes are based on those of the original body, as are its physical skills. It does not have the "soul," mental skills or memories of the living person. See *Custom Zombies* (p. 89) for rules for altering its abilities. *Zombies* (p. 88), *mummies* (p. 72) and *skeletons* (p. 78) are described in Chapter 4.

*Duration:* The zombie remains animated until destroyed.

*Cost:* 8 for a human-sized or smaller corpse; more in proportion for larger creatures, which must be humanoids or animals. See *Variant Zombie Spells* (p. 94) for spells that affect plants, microbes and vehicles.

*Time to Cast:* 1 minute.

*Prerequisites:* Summon Spirit, Lend Health.

*Item:* (a) Cauldron, coffin or sarcophagus. Zombifies any body placed in it at no cost to the user. Works on one body at a time. Energy cost to create: 5,000 if it works overnight; 20,000 if it takes only an hour. (b) Weapon. Anyone killed by it rises as the zombie slave of its wielder in 24 hours. Energy cost to create: 5,000.

### **Mass Zombie (VH)**

### **Area**

Similar to *Zombie*, but reanimates *all* relatively complete dead bodies in the area of effect. *Mummies*, *skeletons* and *zombies* can all be created, and one casting can produce a mixture of the three. A corpse must be lying in its tomb or at its place of death to be affected by this spell; otherwise, it *won't* be animated. Corpses in graves up to 4 yards deep will claw their way to the surface to join their new master.

Undead created by this spell become the loyal servants of the caster. They can only be given orders *en masse*; members of the undead horde can't be given individual tasks. If this spell is cast ceremonially, the leader of the circle is the master. The other mages will be viewed as his lieutenants: their orders will be obeyed, but the master's orders will take precedence. Optionally, the undead horde can be divided up equally among the mages involved in the casting, and each can give different orders to his "troops."

*Continued on next page . . .*

## SPELLS FOR RAISING THE DEAD

(Continued)

In most cases, this spell will raise  $(R \times R)/2$  undead (round down), where  $R$  is the radius of the spell. It would not be unreasonable to halve this number in an upper-class cemetery with stately crypts, or to double it in the case of a mass grave.

Undead created with this spell are identical to those created with the *Zombie* spell. They use the same templates and are affected the same way by magic.

*Duration:* The zombies remain animated until destroyed.

*Base Cost:* 7. Minimum radius 2 hexes.

*Time to Cast:* A number of minutes equal to the radius.

*Prerequisites:* *Zombie*, and at least two levels of *Strong Will* or *Charisma*.

### Mummy's Curse

See p. 72. This spell can only be cast by mummies, and is described as part of the mummy template.

### Skull-Spirit

#### Regular

Summons a ghostly assassin to do the caster's bidding. Requires the skull of an intelligent creature, who must be dead (and *not* undead). Each skull can be used once; it is then destroyed. The skull serves as a magic ingredient (p. M9); the skull-spirit is not the ghost of the skull's owner.

A skull-spirit has a ghostly, vaporous form with ST 0, DX 14, IQ 10, HT 20, Move 6 and Speed 6. It uses no weapons, but strikes with a chilling touch that cannot be blocked or parried – it must be dodged. This touch does 2 hits of damage; armor is no protection. The skull-spirit can sometimes be confused, but will never listen to pleas or negotiation.

To fight a skull-spirit, use *Fire* spells or *Air Jet*; other combat spells are ineffective. Magic weapons do normal damage. Swords, axes and other large metal weapons do 2 hits of damage, regardless of their exact size. Wooden weapons, arrows, bullets, etc., do 1 hit of damage. Beam weapons do no damage at all.

*Duration:* The spirit lasts for 24 hours unless destroyed first.

*Cost:* 20.

*Prerequisites:* Four other *Necromantic* spells.

*Continued on next page . . .*



Finally, a soul can actually be captured and made into a *permanent* servant. For instance, a *Voudoun bokor* can create a *zombi astral* (soul zombie) by trapping the soul of the dead (the *ti bon ange*). This entity is effectively an enslaved ghost.

### Undead Minions

A person wounded or killed by a powerful undead being will sometimes become the undead slave of his attacker. This is most common in the case of vampires (see *The Evil Dead*, p. 37), but other kinds of undead may “reproduce” this way as well. This effect is discussed in detail in the *Contagion* sidebar (p. 36).

### Poseurs

Not everything that looks undead *is* undead. There are many things that appear to be associated with the undead at first glance, but which have more mundane explanations: hoaxes, special effects, rare ailments, Goth kids, people in zombie suits, etc. A few classes of “fake undead” are somewhat more convincing and merit additional discussion.

### Blood-Suckers and Ghouls

In some settings, there are living beings whose behavior makes them seem undead. For instance, almost any blood-sucking creature is liable to be mistaken for a vampire. The bales in *GURPS Fantasy Folk* (p. FF42) are one such example: immortal blood-drinkers who don't leave witnesses behind to confirm that they're living and not undead. Creatures that lurk in graveyards are likely to be identified with the undead as well. Flesh-eating humanoids are prime candidates. *GURPS'* own ghouls (p. FF78) are one example, but similar monsters exist in folklore, including the Japanese *kasha* and the Arabian *ghul* (p. AN98).



## Fetches

A fetch is the “ghost” of a *living* person, seen by his friends or relatives only moments before his death. It can appear over great distances and generally isn't persistent. Since a fetch doesn't belong to a dead person, it isn't really undead. Some people believe that fetches are the result of spontaneous astral projection (see below).

## Psi Phenomena

*Undead* uses the term “ghost” to mean an actual spirit, but some parapsychologists view ghosts as psi phenomena. In addition to psi residues (see *Untimely Death*, p. 34), two *active* psi phenomena are sometimes identified with ghosts: recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis (RSPK) and astral projection.

RSPK, known as the “poltergeist effect,” is sometimes mistaken for a ghost because the observable effects are similar: moving objects, strange sounds, temperature changes, etc. These effects are actually due to the uncontrolled psychokinetic powers of a living person, however, and have nothing to do with the undead. Psi teleportation sometimes produces similar effects.

Astral projection occurs when a person's “psychic self” leaves the body and travels on its own. This “astral body” is intangible, but people sometimes see it and mistake it for an apparition. There are also those who believe that ghosts are astral bodies that have been left wandering after death; Astral Entities (p. CI96) and Beings of Pure Thought (p. CI34) fall into this category. This isn't a universal belief, and many people (especially religious people) prefer to distinguish between souls and astral bodies.

For more on ghosts as psi phenomena, see *Psionic Undead* (p. 104) and *Psionics and the Undead* (p. 105). A full treatment of the subject can be found in *GURPS Psionics* (pp. P45-53).

## Spirits

Some religions hold that the spirits of those who have gone on to the afterlife, especially the most blessed, may briefly return to offer guidance or aid to the living. The Biblical tales of Elijah and Moses – both of whom appeared to the faithful after their death – are excellent examples of this. Such “spirit guides” are celestial beings, *not* undead; nevertheless, they may be misunderstood or cynically labelled as ghosts.

Not all spirits that get mistaken for the undead are benevolent. Demons are frequently confused with the undead, as are demonic monsters like the disease-carrying *grahas* of Hindu belief. See *Demons and Angels* (p. 15) for more information.

# SPELLS FOR RAISING THE DEAD

(Continued)

## Lich (VH)

## Enchantment

Lets the caster become a lich (p. 70). He retains his personality, knowledge, IQ, skills and spells, and all his mental advantages and disadvantages (including Magery), but gains the physical and supernatural traits of a lich, as determined by the GM. The more powerful the form, the higher the energy cost.

To use this spell, the lich's final form and the energy cost are set by the GM. The mage proceeds as for any other enchantment (p. M19), but with himself as the subject. The dice are rolled at the end of this time. Any failure results in 6d damage. On a success, the wizard's body is properly prepared for the next step.

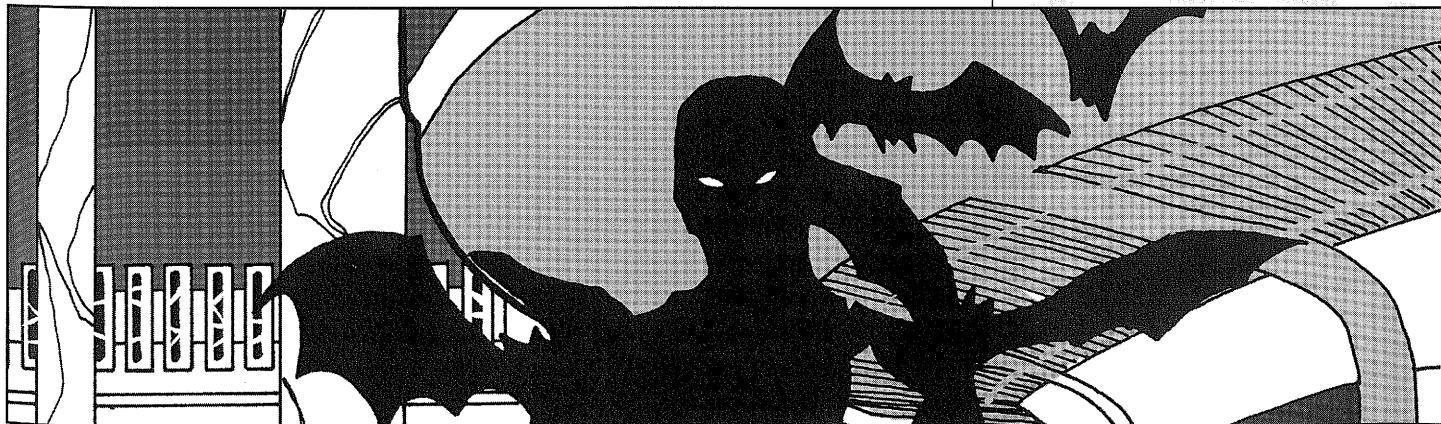
For a wizard under the Lich spell to become a lich, he must drink a special potion and make a HT roll. If he succeeds, he dies, then rises as a lich in 2d days; otherwise, he just dies. Luck, as well as the Bless and Wish spells, *can* influence this HT roll.

The potion used in this spell is called Tiresias. It's prepared with Alchemy skill, learned like any other elixir and used only as part of this spell. Treat it as Thanatos elixir if consumed by someone who isn't under the Lich spell. Its effects are instant and irreversible; even Janus (p. M101) can't neutralize it. It requires \$15,300 in materials, 50 weeks and a skill roll at -6 to prepare. It costs \$31,800, when it's available at all.

*Energy Cost to Cast:* Equal to the lich's point total in his undead form, including both personal abilities and those on the lich template. It costs more for a more powerful subject because there are more abilities to preserve. Minimum cost is 100.

*Prerequisites:* Magery 3, IQ 13+, Enchant, Soul Jar and Zombie.

Continued on next page . . .



# SPELLS FOR RAISING THE DEAD

(Continued)

## Wraith (VH)      Enchantment; Resisted by HT

Enchants a ring or an amulet that will turn the wearer into a wraith (p. 86). It attempts to affect the wearer every time it is put on. The spell is resisted normally by HT. If the subject ever fails to resist (or chooses not to), he "dies" and rises as a wraith 24 hours later.

The exact abilities of the wraith are determined by the GM, but mental traits are preserved as per the Lich spell (p. 43). The wraith always has a Dependency (p. CI81) on the Wraith item (a rare item, required constantly, for -150 points), and will shrivel and die if it is removed or destroyed. This item *isn't* hexed; the victim can remove it and die if he wishes. Only Remove Enchantment can reverse the Wraith spell without harm.

Each Wraith item can sustain one wraith at a time. Once a given item has produced a wraith, it has no effect on other wearers until its wraith has been destroyed. The Wraith spell has no effect on the undead.

At double energy cost, the enchanter can create an item that makes the wraith his undead servant. The wraith automatically has a Reprogrammable Duty (-25 points, p. CI104) to the enchanter in addition to his Dependency, and *cannot* remove the Wraith item himself.



At half cost, the enchanter can create an item that turns the wearer into an undead tomb guardian. The usual form is that of a mummy (p. 72), with its abilities set by the GM. This works exactly as a regular Wraith item, except that the undead has Compulsive Behavior (Remain in tomb and guard it; kill abductors and return if forcibly removed from tomb) [-15].

**Energy Cost to Cast:** 500. Double this if the wraith is automatically loyal to the item's creator; halve this to create a mummy amulet.

**Prerequisites:** Magery 3, IQ 13+, Enchant, Halt Aging and Soul Jar.

**Item:** A ring or funerary amulet, which need not be ornate.

## The Undead Condition

The precise physical and occult ramifications of undeath are at least as important as the origins and motivations of the undead. An analytical treatment of the undead condition is a must for any student of undead lore – especially the undead themselves, who have the advantage of first-hand experience.

### Undead Strengths

The undead are more capable than the living in many ways. There are two main reasons for this. First, they're already dead, so it's difficult to kill them. Second, they're usually motivated by a power capable of reaching beyond the grave, and whether that power is sheer force of will, magic or fundamental metaphysical laws, it is a force to be reckoned with.

#### *Freed of Mortal Fetters*

Since the undead are *dead*, they can get away with many things. The consummate undead advantage is immortality: most undead don't age, and can endure indefinitely provided they are not destroyed or laid to rest. Ghosts are an exception to this rule, as they are often restricted to a single human lifespan, or fade away with time (see *Ghost Weaknesses*, p. 54, and the sidebar on p. PM21). Similarly, revenants generally only last until they have accomplished their goal.

Other abilities depend on the exact form a given undead creature takes:

**Corporeal Undead:** Liches, mummies, revenants, skeletons, wights, wraiths, zombies and the like are *corpses* first and foremost. As a result, they don't feel pain, fatigue, heat or cold. They don't breathe and can't be suffocated. They are unlikely to be affected by "mortal" wounds, bleeding or poison, and while microbes may cause them to decay, they can't really get sick. Since they can ignore pain, fatigue and bleeding, most undead are physically tough, and often immune to any physical punishment short of bodily destruction. A side effect of this is that they are physically stronger than their size would indicate.

Two other abilities are common but not universal. First, many undead don't need to eat or drink. They are sustained by revenge, hate, magic, etc., and require *no* further sustenance at all. Undead that must steal life energy to survive (e.g., vampires) are an exception to this rule; such undead *do* require nourishment (albeit not food and water). Second, most undead don't sleep. On the other hand, some (vampires again) rest for part of the day or cease to function in daylight, which amounts to sleeping.

**Spectral Undead:** Apparitions, ghosts, phantoms, shades, specters and so forth are intangible and can ignore virtually *all* physical restrictions on their actions. They can only be harmed by things like magic and psi powers. Solid objects pass right through them and they can usually pass right through solid objects, too.

#### *A Darker Power*

The forces that animate the undead can provide abilities that can't be explained by their physical condition alone. Traits commonly attributed to the corporeal undead include enhanced senses, extreme physical strength and vicious claws or teeth. In some cases, severed limbs and even heads can function on their own! The spectral undead can usually manipulate physical objects without touching them, materialize themselves, and possess the living. Undead of both kinds often emanate supernatural fear, and many have special attacks that can inflict rapid aging, madness, weakness, sickness or disease on the living.

Most types of undead have unique abilities, too. Vampires, for instance, can generally assume animal form, turn to vapor and shrug off anything short of burning or a stake through the heart. Skeletons are traditionally very fast, presumably because they aren't loaded down with meat. Rusalki and other female undead are often unnaturally attractive to mortal males. Liches, wraiths and similar magical undead usually possess substantial magical powers. The exact abilities of a given undead being will depend on its origin, form and purpose.

## Undead Weaknesses

Of course, the undead are *dead*, and that's a big disadvantage in anyone's book!

### *Physical Limitations*

Aside from any deeper supernatural problems, the undead have a hard time in the mortal world. First, there are the social problems. The undead are unnatural creatures who've cheated death and skipped the afterlife. Many are either evil by nature or have been animated for nefarious purposes. While a given undead may be pure of heart (if he has one) and noble of purpose, most people who see a monster aren't going to stick around to hear his story. The undead suffer from a number of additional, practical problems as well:

*Corporeal Undead:* Most physical undead are pale, lack muscle tone and don't breathe. If they haven't been embalmed (p. 23), they're also rotten, which means that they'll look frightening and smell worse. A corpse can be preserved as a mummy or reduced to a skeleton to avoid this, but that creates other problems: mummies tend to be dry and coated in flammable resin, making them extremely vulnerable to fire, while the bones of a skeleton lack the padding of meat and are susceptible to breakage.

Regardless of how it's been preserved, a corpse is distressing to look at and doesn't fit into polite society. Some undead avoid this by engaging in unspeakable acts to maintain the semblance of life (e.g., vampires drink blood), but this has its own social penalties. Another factor that contributes to the ostracism of the undead is mirrors. Mirrors are widely believed to reflect the soul, and most corporeal undead have either no reflection or a grotesque one. The same logic is often applied to shadows and photographs.

Next, the corporeal undead tend to be missing important body parts like noses, lips, tongues and genitalia, meaning that they're almost always incapable of reproduction (and often sex in general), usually incapable of smelling or tasting anything, and occasionally unable to speak. Undead without endocrine glands should logically be unable to experience strong emotions, too, but this problem seems to be quite rare in folklore.

Finally, some undead have weird problems. While these are usually too obscure to be worth mentioning, at least one of them is too amusing to omit: Chinese *k'uei* (angry, evil dead) *cannot turn corners!* They must move along in a straight line, and can therefore be stopped by simple barriers or a passage with a turn in it.

*Spectral Undead:* While they cast reflections (if they're visible, that is) and rarely smell as bad as the corporeal undead, ghosts are just as scary and even more blatantly unnatural. They can generally only operate in the physical world through a draining effort of will, and when they do manifest, it's accompanied by groans, weird smells and strange sensations that signal their arrival. Ghosts typically lack a great many physical faculties; in fact, the only capabilities most possess are sight, hearing and speech (sometimes only for a short time).

## THE COST OF UNDEATH

There are many ways for a living character to become undead. Since undead forms are often quite powerful, this can result in an increase in point value. The GM must decide how to handle this for PCs. The simplest way is to alter the character's point total and be done with it, but some GMs prefer to make undead PCs pay for their abilities.

When charging a PC for an undead form, first remove social advantages and deduct their point cost from that of his new form; Clerical Investment, Status, etc., generally expire at death. Next, remove conflicting advantages (e.g., the rotting dead won't have Beautiful Appearance) and deduct their cost as well. Any outstanding cost becomes a debt that the player must erase with earned points. The GM should set a percentage of earned points to be spent this way; 100% is possible, but lower percentages allow a moderate amount of character growth, preventing player boredom.

## UNDEAD REPELLANT

The following substances, objects and rituals have been used to send off the undead by one culture or another. This is by no means a complete list! Most undead also fear the things that they're vulnerable to (see *Vulnerabilities*, p. 47) and things that can permanently kill them (see *Killing the Undead*, p. 47).

*Exorcism:* Many undead can be driven off by a religious ritual. This belief is found in Christianity (esp. in Catholic and Pentecostal belief), Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Shinto. This ritual must usually be conducted by a priest, shaman or sorcerer. In some cases, a psychotherapeutic "depossession" is also effective.

*Fire:* A cleansing force and a source of light as well, flame can drive off many undead. This need not be a bonfire! Hot coals, burning incense and candles are all quite effective.

*Garlic:* Discourages the supernatural in many cultures, often for the rather prosaic reason that it has a strong smell. It is especially disliked by vampires.

*Hemlock:* This poisonous plant symbolizes the eternal rest of death, and repels vampires in Eastern European belief.

*Continued on next page . . .*



# UNDEAD REPELLANT

(Continued)

**Holy Symbols:** Symbols of gods opposed to undeath can “turn” many undead. It’s sometimes unclear whether the symbol has to be one that the *wielder* believes in (e.g., Christians should use a crucifix) or one that the *undead* respected in life (e.g., use a crucifix vs. a formerly-Christian undead). The former view is more common, but the latter one can be amusing; just ask the Jewish vampire in Polanski’s *The Fearless Vampire Killers!*

**Iron Horseshoes:** Hung over doorways, these can keep evil spirits out. This probably stems from the early belief that faerie (not undead!) could be repelled by iron.

**Light:** Directly opposed to the darkness of death (see *Colors*, p. 17). It’s therefore universally believed to drive off the undead, in both folklore and fiction.

**Mirrors:** As explained under *Physical Limitations* (p. 45), the undead often have no reflection or a grotesque one, and this fact can sometimes be used to repel them.

**Musical Instruments:** Bells (usually iron or silver), chimes (especially in Asian beliefs) and rattles are all believed to drive off evil spirits and ghosts.

**Peach:** The Chinese world-tree is a peach tree and also a form of the Mother Goddess, so it represents life and repels the undead. The fruit contains “life substance,” which is also proof against the undead.

**Prayer:** Some undead (like the taxim, p. 74), can be repelled by simple prayer or holy words that invoke a god opposed to undeath.

**Rowan:** A magical tree used by the Druids since ancient times to send off spirits. It may be effective against other undead as well.

**Singing:** In Northern Australian belief, this can drive off *mopaditis* (ghosts).

**Thorns:** Wild rose, hawthorn and other thorn plants can repel vampires in several cultures.

**Tobacco Seed:** In the West Indies, this is believed to ward off duppies (p. 41). Tobacco leaves and rum may also work.

**Wolfsbane:** The smell of this herb is thought to repel wolves, and (contrary to popular occultism) vampires as well, at least in Eastern European belief.

**Wormwood:** Another ancient herb believed to possess magical powers. It repels rusalki (p. 34) in Russian folklore and vampires in other parts of Europe.

## Needs

Even though the undead don’t eat, drink or breathe, they often have special needs, usually certain substances that help them sustain their undead form.

The most basic of these needs is a source of holy, magical or spiritual energy. This may be as general as mana (p. B147) in the case of undead animated by spells, like liches and zombies. The sanctity of a properly blessed tomb is another common requirement. More specific needs include funerary amulets (like those buried with Egyptian mummies), magic items (like the rings of Tolkien’s ringwraiths) and consecrated burial garments. Undead that are deprived of such items typically fade and are destroyed in short order.

Most undead have additional needs. Some of these are highly symbolic, like earth from the grave. Others amount to food. This is the case with vampiric undead, who need blood, warmth or some more abstract source of life energy (probably ST or HT, in *GURPS* terms) to survive. Revenants, ghosts and some vampires (like Japanese *gaki*) are thought to subsist on strong emotions like spite, hatred, fear or vengeance, and would fade if they couldn’t terrorize or frighten the living. A few undead have even more exotic or specific dependencies; e.g., some liches need a special magic potion to survive.

## Compulsions and Bindings

The restless dead (p. 34) almost always roam the earth with a specific purpose in mind, usually something like “complete this task,” “haunt this place,” “seek proper burial,” “guard my tomb” or “exact vengeance on someone who wronged me.” This is their sole mission in unlife, and without it they would soon return to the grave. These compulsions severely curtail their free will, and can prevent them from considering logical courses of action, make it easier for their foes to predict their next move, or make them seem even more alien to the living.

Not all compulsions are self-imposed. The enslaved dead (p. 40) owe complete and utter loyalty to their creators: lesser vampires to greater ones, zombies to the sorcerer that raised them, etc. These bindings oblige the undead do their master’s bidding. Since most undead slaves have no will of their own, they will stand around mindlessly, doing *nothing* unless they are ordered to. This behavior is typical of zombies. A few, like vampires, may be strong-willed enough to follow their own agenda in the absence of specific orders.

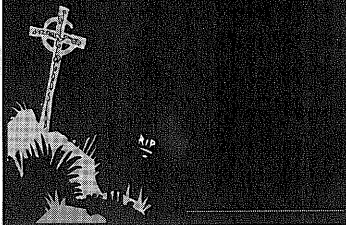
The willful undead (p. 37), often feel neither compulsions nor duties. This doesn’t mean that they’re free of limitations on their actions! Most of these undead are obsessed: vampires with feeding, liches with self-preservation, etc. As a result, they can be nearly as driven and predictable as the restless dead.

## Repulsions

The undead traditionally can be held at bay by specific objects, rituals or substances with occult significance; examples are given under *Undead Repellant* (p. 45). A repulsion like this is supernatural and not psychological, but the reaction is similar, and can range from “mild dislike” (evoking a distasteful glower or averted gaze) to “rabid fear” (causing the undead to flee mindlessly or cower helplessly). The origins of many repulsions can be found in the religious or occult symbolism of the repellant substance. In a few cases, though, this symbolism has been lost: the repellant works, but no one knows *why*.

*Now with magic howlings  
she keeps the swarms of  
the grave before her:  
now she sprinkles them  
with milk and bids them  
retreat.*

— Tibullus, Roman Poet  
circa 48-19 B.C.





## Vulnerabilities

Lastly, the undead can sometimes be harmed by certain substances that aren't (usually) dangerous to the living. Most of the symbolism behind these vulnerabilities is identical to that associated with repulsions (above and in the sidebar on p. 45). Examples include:

**Consecrated Objects:** Items blessed by clerics, like holy water or sacramental oil, are generally believed to be able to burn or otherwise harm the undead on contact. Some priests even bless weapons. To create such an item requires the Consecrate spell (sidebar).

**Holy Objects:** Items that are *intrinsically* holy, like relics (the mortal remains of saints) and the weapons of most gods and their servitors, are probably the most potent weapons of all when combatting the undead.

**Magic:** Those with access to spells and enchanted items can almost always use them to combat the undead. Spells of fire and light are best, but any magical attack is more effective than a mundane one.

**Salt:** In Voudoun, this reminds zombies of their sense of taste and hence of life, breaking the spell. In European alchemy and ritual magic, salt is an essential substance that symbolizes nature, "light solidified," and the "action of fire" (i.e., the ash left behind after burning). It represents light and purification in many other cultures as well, and damages the undead on contact.

**Silver:** A powerful goddess symbol (p. 11), it is opposed to the unnatural and the undead, and can harm them on contact. As well, some undead that are otherwise unaffected by metal (like many vampires) can be harmed by a "magic bullet" made of silver.

**Sunlight:** Represents life, cleansing flame, the power of God and general opposition to the darkness of death. It destroys vampires in European belief. According to 19th- and 20th-century spiritualists, it also damages ectoplasm (the substance of ghosts).

## Killing the Undead

The undead are often encountered as foes. While many undead can be fought and incapacitated through normal physical means, most won't stay down unless they are "killed" properly.

## SPELLS AGAINST THE UNDEAD

Certain spells are useful against the undead. Those listed below are adapted from *GURPS Magic*, *Grimoire* and *Religion*. More rarely, Banish (p. M75), Exorcism (p. M30) and Pentagram (p. M62) are effective as well.

### Consecrate

### Enchantment

The Enchantment spell for clerics. It purifies a given object, cleansing it with the deity's power. The undead are frequently vulnerable to such items.

This spell may only be cast in a shrine, temple, church or other holy place consecrated to the deity, and only by a priest of that deity. Most religions will teach this spell to all invested clerics. For more information, see p. R110.

**Duration:** All sacred objects are permanent until destroyed.

**Cost:** 10 for a single item (arrow, vial of holy water, etc.).

**Time to Cast:** This spell is always done as a ceremony. Casting time is 5 minutes for a single item.

**Prerequisite:** Power Investiture (p. CI42).

### Final Rest

### Regular

Escorts the soul of a dead person into the presence of the deity. This ensures that the soul will rest in peace and may not be summoned, while the body may not be animated or resurrected. It has no *physical* effect on the body. Commonly used for funeral rites.

This spell can be cast any time after the subject dies, though there is a cumulative -1 penalty for each month that the person has been dead, up to a total of -10. Each caster may attempt the spell only once per subject.

This spell has absolutely no effect on a living person, and will not affect the undead who have already risen.

**Duration:** Permanent.

**Cost:** 20.

**Time to Cast:** Minimum 10 minutes. This spell is always done as a ceremony.

**Prerequisite:** Power Investiture (p. CI42) or World Sight (p. CI48).

**Item:** This spell may be consecrated into funerary regalia. Energy cost: 1,200.

### Turn Zombie

### Area

Does 1 die damage to all zombies, skeletons and mummies in the affected area. In addition, roll 1 die for each zombie, etc. On a 1, the zombie turns and flees from the caster.

**Duration:** Successfully turned zombies will avoid the caster for one day.

**Base Cost:** 2. Cannot be maintained.

**Time to Cast:** 4 seconds.

**Prerequisite:** Zombie or Power Investiture (p. CI42).

*Continued on next page . . .*

# SPELLS AGAINST THE UNDEAD

(Continued)

## Turn Spirit

Regular  
Resisted by IQ

Causes a single spirit – including ghosts, poltergeists, djinn, skull-spirits, vampires in mist form, possessed beings and similar entities (but not elementals or demons) – to retreat from the caster. The caster must be able to see the subject. The subject will move away from the caster at its current maximum Move until the spell ends or the caster loses sight of it. The subject cannot attack the caster in any way during this time; this includes the use of special powers and spells.

If the spirit is currently possessing a living entity, Turn Spirit will *not* force it out of its host. Instead, the spirit will flee using the host's body.

*Duration:* 10 seconds.

*Cost:* 4 to cast, 2 to maintain.

*Prerequisites:* Either Fear and Sense Spirit or Power Investiture (p. CI42) or World Sight (p. CI48).

## Repel Spirits

Area  
Resisted by IQ

Repels spirits from an area. The spell resists attempts by spirits (as well as other insubstantial beings, like the subject of an Ethereal Body or Planar Visit spell) to enter the area or to stay in it.

Each spirit may try to enter the area once per hour, rolling a Regular Contest between its IQ and the caster's effective skill (each contest lasts a turn). Once inside, the invader resists with its IQ, and is expelled from the area on its first failure.

*Duration:* 1 hour.

*Base Cost:* 4 to cast, 2 to maintain.

*Time to Cast:* 10 seconds.

*Prerequisite:* Either Banish and Turn Spirit or World Sight (p. CI48).

## Astral Block

Area

No spirit or insubstantial being may cross an astral block's boundaries for the duration of the spell. In addition, insubstantial creatures within an astral block cannot become substantial, and vice versa. Thus, a sorcerer could not cast Ethereal Body within the area of an astral block, while a ghost would be unable to materialize. A ghost *already* in a tangible state could not become insubstantial (but would pay no fatigue to remain materialized).

*Duration:* 10 minutes.

*Base Cost:* 4 to cast, 2 to maintain; 15 per cubic yard if cast on a container, half cost to maintain.

*Time to Cast:* 2 seconds.

*Prerequisite:* Summon Spirit and Repel Spirits.

# The Killing Blow

A common element of undead folklore is that for physical damage to kill the undead, it must strike a specific hit location (see pp. CII52-53) or come from a particular attack form, most often fire. In some cases, this may be the only way to harm an otherwise invulnerable undead monster! The items listed under *Vulnerabilities* (p. 47) may work, but usually one of the following means must be used:

*Decapitation:* Widely believed to prevent a body from rising as the undead. By the same logic, it can lay an undead monster to rest. Beware of cinematic zombies who don't need their heads and undead who can't be harmed by metal blades!

*Fire:* A cleansing force that releases the soul and lays most undead to rest. It is effective against undead the world over, and is found in indigenous beliefs regarding the undead in Australia, Central America, East Asia, Europe, India and the Middle East.

*Head Blow:* A solid blow to the head seems to be quite effective against many cinematic zombies and flesh-eating ghouls.

*Heart Blow:* A wooden stake through the heart symbolizes pinning the body to the earth. This is thought to lay zombies to rest in the West Indies and kills vampires in European folklore. More generally, some undead can be killed by *any* blow that pierces the heart.

# Keeping 'em Down

Once an undead creature has been "killed," it has to be laid to rest properly. *At the minimum*, this involves a complete and proper funeral service, presided over by an invested cleric or shaman. This should include the Final Rest spell (p. 47), if possible. A vigil over the body is recommended before burial or cremation, as few undead can rise while being observed, especially if those keeping watch are also praying.

In cultures that bury their dead, especially effective burial measures include:

‡ Burial at a crossroads. There are always people around a crossroads (most undead prefer to rise unobserved), and undead that do rise are often unable to decide which way to go.

‡ Sprinkling poppy seeds from the soporific poppy onto the coffin. This symbolizes sleep and guarantees eternal rest. As well, some vampires compulsively count seeds, so this will keep them busy counting instead of rising from the grave.

‡ Tying the coffin shut, usually using ropes with knots in them. This represents binding the dead to the grave, and keeps the coffin from being opened. Many vampires compulsively untie knots, and will be distracted by knotted cords even if they do rise.

‡ Driving swords or other spikes point-upward into the soil above the grave. This has the effect of dissipating evil spirits.

In cultures that cremate the dead, none of this is necessary; a proper cremation ritual usually suffices. In fact, cultures that normally bury their dead sometimes prescribe cremation for laying the undead to rest. This has the same symbolic value as destruction by fire (above). Specific instructions are sometimes given for the cremation; e.g., medieval European magicians advised burning the body with quick-lime, salt and sulfur.



# THE MECHANICS OF REANIMATION



**N**ow it's time to make some undead! *GURPS Basic Set*, *Compendium I* and *Magic* are absolutely required to follow this discussion; books that may prove useful are *Grimoire* and *Voodoo*, but neither is required.



## Undead Templates

These rules let the GM create a “racial template” (see pp. CI173-180) that can be applied to a formerly-living character who has become undead. When using a template, most traits are left as they were in life unless specifically modified by the template. If a living character’s abilities conflict with those prescribed by the template, the template takes precedence. Points lost this way may be used to help pay the template cost, at the GM’s discretion.

*Example 1:* A wizard with Handsome Appearance [15] and Magery 2 [25] returns from the dead as a walking corpse. If the GM applies an undead template that includes Magic Resistance and Monstrous Appearance, the wizard loses his Handsome Appearance and Magery. The GM may choose to let him put those 40 points toward the template cost, however.

*Example 2:* An assassin with Resistant to Poison [5] and Social Disease [-5] rises as a ghost. Since the spectral undead are susceptible to neither poison nor disease, both traits become irrelevant, and are deleted.

## Describing Your Creation

Like other characters, the undead need a background story. It’s possible to plunk down some statistics and treat the undead as monsters, but it’s far more satisfying to create undead that have a place in your game world. Those who are new to the undead should read Chapter 1 to get a feel for spirits, dead bodies and funerary rites, then Chapter 2 to get a general overview of the various kinds of undead that are possible.

Once you have a clear picture of your creation, answer the following questions and go to the relevant sections to find out what your answer implies:

- ‡ Is it a walking corpse or a ghost? See *Form* (below).
- ‡ Is it a spontaneous manifestation, a willful and self-motivated entity, or the servitor of a mage or another undead being? See *Motivation* (p. 55).
- ‡ What are its strengths? See *Special Powers*, p. 56.
- ‡ What are its weaknesses? See *Special Weaknesses*, p. 63.
- ‡ What unique twists make it different from other undead? See *Fine Tuning*, p. 66.

The undead can have any number of weird and wonderful traits, but most fall into a few basic categories. To save you time, we’ve grouped together traits that are common to large classes of undead.

## Form

There are two basic undead forms: the walking corpse and the ghost. We’ll call the former the “corporeal undead” and the latter the “spectral undead.” Each class has certain fundamental traits that the GM can add wholesale to undead racial templates.

## Corporeal Undead

As discussed on p. 44, the corporeal undead are tough and immune to most mortal weaknesses. This results in the following traits:

*Attribute Modifiers:* ST +1 [10].

*Advantages:* Doesn’t Breathe (p. CI53) [20]; Doesn’t Eat or Drink (p. CI53) [10]; Doesn’t Sleep (p. CI53) [20]; Extra Hit Points +5 (p. CI24) [25]; High Pain Threshold (p. B20) [10]; Immunity to Disease (p. B20) [10]; Immunity to Poison (p. CI58) [15]; Imperturbable (p. CI26) [10]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood) (p. CI58) [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 (p. CI30) [10] and Unaging (p. CI69) [15].

*Disadvantages:* No Body Heat (p. CI99) [-5]; Pallor (p. CI103) [-10]; Social Stigma (Dead)\* (p. B27) [-20]; Sterile (p. CI84) [-3]; Unhealing (p. CI106) [-30] and Unliving (p. CI100) [-50].



\* Social Stigma (Dead) gives -4 on all reaction rolls (except from other undead), and covers the social inconveniences of being legally dead, where applicable.

This package costs 42 points, and will suffice for undead made from fresh corpses, like vampires (p. 82) and zalozhniy (p. 85). Rotting, skeletal and mummified undead will have some additional features:

### Rotting Undead

These undead are smelly, frightening and missing important body parts. Examples include most revenants (p. 73) and zombies (p. 88). Make these additions and changes:

*Disadvantages:* Bad Smell (p. CI80) [-10]; Disturbing Voice (p. CI81) [-10]; Eunuch (p. B28) [-5] *replaces* Sterile (a net -2); Monstrous Appearance (p. CI80) [-25] *replaces* both No Body Heat and Pallor (a net -10); No Sense of Smell/Taste (p. B29) [-5]. Add the 0-point trait "Will become a skeleton."

This modifies the cost by -37 points, making the final cost 5 points.

### Skeletal Undead

These undead are light and fleet, mostly because they're missing even more body parts than the rotting undead are. They're also quite fragile. Examples include lichs (p. 70) and skeletons (p. 72). Make these additions and changes:

*Attribute Modifiers:* ST -1 [-10] *replaces* ST +1 (a net -20); DX +2 [20].

*Advantages:* DR 2 vs. missiles, beams and impaling attacks (p. CI52) [4]; Increased Speed +1 (p. CI26) [25]; Injury Tolerance (No Brain, Impaling Bonus or Vitals) (p. CI58) [30]; Vacuum Support (p. CI70) [40] *replaces* Doesn't Breathe (a net +20). Remove Extra Hit Points +5 (a net -25).

*Disadvantages:* Eunuch (p. B28) [-5] *replaces* Sterile (a net -2); Fragile (p. CI102) [-20]; Hideous Appearance (p. B15) [-20] *replaces* both No Body Heat and Pallor (a net -5); Inconvenient Size (Skeletal)\* (p. CI102) [-10]; Mute (p. B29) [-25]; No Sense of Smell/Taste (p. B29) [-5]. Add the taboo trait (p. CI176) "Cannot swim" [0].

\* Inconvenient Size (Skeletal) gives -3 ST in slams, halves weight and doubles knockback.

This modifies the cost by -13 points, making the final cost 29 points.

### Mummified Undead

Undead mummies are well-preserved. Their brains and vitals have usually been removed or embalmed, making them less vulnerable to blows. On the other hand, mummies are dry, distressing to look at and tend to go up in flames. Make these additions and changes:

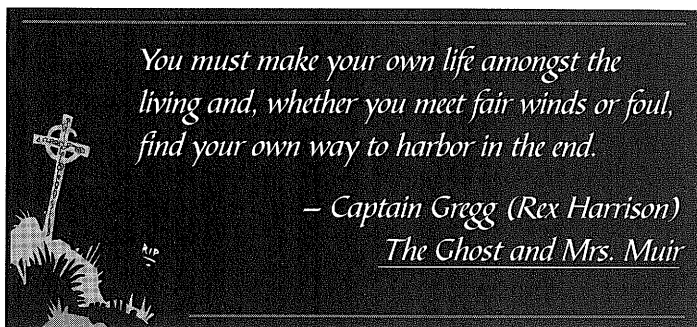
*Advantages:* Injury Tolerance (No Brain, No Vitals) (p. CI58) [10].

*Disadvantages:* Disturbing Voice (p. CI81) [-10]; Hideous Appearance (p. B15) [-20] *replaces* both No Body Heat and Pallor (a net -5); Vulnerability (2d from Fire) (p. CI106) [-20].

This modifies the cost by -25 points, making the final cost 17 points.

## Spectral Undead

The spectral undead deviate so far from the human baseline and have so many special powers that it's simplest just to define them outright. These rules were adapted from *GURPS Voodoo*, and differ from the older rules on pp. H47-48.



### Attributes

Ghosts have the same attributes as humans: ST, DX, IQ and HT. When confronted in the spirit world, these attributes define what the ghost can and can't do.

*Fatigue:* When interacting with the material world, a ghost must spend energy, expressed as a fatigue cost. Fatigue is the most important attribute of a ghost; powerful ghosts may have *hundreds* of fatigue points! The average tends to be closer to the human norm, however: 10-20 fatigue. Ghosts recover fatigue normally (see p. B134).

*Special Sources of Fatigue:* Ghosts can tap into some places or people to obtain fatigue quickly. They can use this siphoned fatigue to replenish their own or to power their special abilities. Places of occult power can provide a ghost with an additional 5-30 energy points per day (as determined by the GM). These include accident and battle sites, places where death or insanity are commonplace (like hospitals or prisons), and the locations of particularly brutal crimes. This energy can only be tapped into if the ghost is in the area; haunted houses occur when one or more ghosts make their home in an energy-rich place.

Acts of worship from a great number of people can allow ghosts to gain 20-100 additional fatigue points per day, depending on the number of worshippers. This worship must be specifically directed at the ghost.



## Ghost Abilities

Ghosts are invisible and intangible to the physical world; only other spirits can sense them without the aid of magic spells or psi skills. Beyond this, they have several special powers:

**Perception:** Ghosts can see, smell and hear normally. Their sense of touch is very limited unless they materialize (see p. 53). They can even taste objects to a limited degree, especially objects that have been offered to them in a ritual.

A ghost's senses go beyond the normal human range, however. All ghosts have the equivalent of the Empathy advantage, and can sense strong emotions in humans by "seeing" their auras. Through the same sense, they can detect mages, as well as demons and other supernatural beings. To hide from a ghost, such beings must win a Quick Contest of their Will vs. the ghost's Sense roll.

Ghosts also have the ability to hear their names whenever they are ritually invoked. This can include anything from a relative reminiscing at a ghost's tombstone, to a medium attempting to channel a departed one's soul, to a sorcerer's ritual of summoning (like the Summon Spirit spell, p. 39).

**Movement:** Move is determined normally for ghosts. Since they aren't bound by physical limits, they can move in any direction, in the air and through solid objects. They can also instantly transport themselves to their place of death and, if they wish, into the presence of someone who is ritually invoking their name (see above). A ghost can also "hitch a ride" inside a vehicle, but this requires 1 fatigue/hour.

Although physical barriers do not impede ghosts, many mystical wards and blocks will keep them out; see *Repel Spirits* (p. 48) and *Astral Block* (p. 48) for two examples.

**Communication:** Ghosts can project their thoughts as speech and hear thoughts directed at them. This process works almost exactly like telepathy, except that communication is not stopped by psionic Mind Shields, and neither the ghost nor the people he's communicating with can read thoughts or do anything other than "speak" to each other. Such communication costs the ghost 1 fatigue per short sentence (a few seconds' worth of speech). Evil ghosts sometimes use this power to "plant" thoughts in a mortal's head. These thoughts can't control a person's actions, but may trigger repressed anger or fear and cause people to do things they otherwise wouldn't.

**Dream Travel:** Ghosts don't sleep or dream, but they can enter the dreams of the living. Entering or leaving a dream requires a Will roll and costs 1 fatigue. From within a person's dream, the ghost can communicate with the dreamer and even alter the elements of the dream to suit its purposes, but nothing the ghost can do in a dream will

affect the dreamer physically. At worst, the ghost can create a terrifying nightmare that causes the victim to make a Fright Check upon awakening. The penalty to the Fright Check will be determined by the content of the nightmare and the victim's personality (GM's call). A severe scare *could* harm the victim, and repeated nightmares could damage his mental stability.

**Possession:** Ghosts have the ability to displace a living being's soul, thereby taking control of his body. This is resolved as a Quick Contest of Wills, and can only be attempted once per day on any given person. If the ghost wins, he gains control over the body for 3d seconds. This costs 5 fatigue points. On a tie, the victim suffers from the equivalent of the Split Personality disadvantage (with the subject in control, not the ghost) for the same length of time.

The ghost can try to extend the possession by taking a penalty to its Will roll and spending extra fatigue. Taking possession for 3d *minutes* is done at -2 Will and costs 7 fatigue. Attempts to possess for 3d *hours* are at -4 Will and cost 10 fatigue. Possession for 3d *days* has a -8 penalty and costs 15 fatigue. A critical success on the ghost's part or a critical failure by the victim doubles the length of the possession. A critical failure by the ghost or a critical success by the victim costs the ghost 3d fatigue (in addition to the normal cost) and renders it incapable of attempting to possess *anybody* for 3d days.

The subject's state of mind and physical circumstances will give modifiers to the possession attempt. If the subject's soul has left his body (e.g., through a near-death experience), the ghost's roll is at +8. If the victim is undergoing a painful or terrifying ordeal (torture, sexual molestation, starvation, etc.), the ghost is at +6. If the target is in an altered state of mind (from drugs, alcohol, fever, etc.), the ghost has a +4. Even a willing person gets a resistance roll (representing an instinctive reluctance to lose control), but the ghost's roll is at +10! Each previously successful possession of a particular subject by the ghost gives that ghost +1 to its roll (maximum +3).

When a person is possessed, the ghost's vital energy infuses his body with greater strength, speed and endurance. The possessed body's ST is raised by  $\frac{1}{2}$  the ghost's ST (not Fatigue), and his DX and HT are raised by  $\frac{1}{8}$  the ghost's DX and HT, respectively.

**The Poltergeist Effect:** A ghost can use some of its energy to manipulate objects in the real world. By spending fatigue, it can move objects, throw punches and perform other physical actions. The fatigue cost is great, however, so most ghosts are only capable of affecting small objects for short periods of time.

Each *action* the ghost attempts will cost it fatigue. The effective ST and DX the ghost applies in the world determine this cost, and *can* exceed the ghost's "natural" attrib-

utes. An action costs 1 fatigue per 2 ST exerted. DX costs 1 fatigue for a base level of 10 and 1 fatigue for every +2 DX. With enough fatigue, a ghost can slam doors, write on typewriters or computers, or even push or punch people. A direct attack does thrust-3 damage based on the ST of the effect.

**Altering Probability:** Ghosts have the power to channel their will to affect the outcome of an event. This requires a turn of concentration. The effects depend on the intended result and the amount of fatigue the ghost spends.

The ghost must first win a Quick Contest of Wills with the target, unless the ghost is trying to *help* the subject, in which case only an unopposed Will roll is required. A positive or negative modifier to any one roll can be applied on a success, at 2 fatigue per +/-1 (maximum +/-10, for 20 fatigue). This includes short actions, long actions or such things as rolls on the Job Table. Activities that are not normally resolved by random rolls may also be affected in this way, but the GM must assess the base probability for success or failure before assessing the bonus or penalty. The chart on p. B45 can be useful here. A ghost cannot use this power to affect the outcome of his *own* die rolls.

Use of this power requires a great deal of imagination on the part of the GM and players. Anybody who's had a bad day knows the myriad of little things that can go wrong in the course of normal life, and can draw upon those experiences for inspiration.

**Materialization:** Finally, ghosts can assume a material or semi-material form. There are three levels of materialization, ranging from sound effects to actual solidity. Most ghosts don't have enough energy to become fully solid. Full materialization is also dangerous for the ghost because physical attacks can hurt or destroy it. The levels of materialization are as follows:

**Sounds:** The ghost uses enough energy to produce disembodied sounds. Simple sounds (moans and howls) are easier than complex noises or speech. Producing simple sounds costs 1 fatigue per 10 seconds. Speech or complex sounds cost 1 fatigue per second, and a Will roll is required to make the right sounds or say the words clearly.

**Visual Effects:** The ghost can cause a visual manifestation of its form to appear. This form has no solidity or weight, and is translucent unless the ghost spends extra fatigue to make it appear solid. This costs 1 fatigue per 5 seconds, doubled if the ghost wants to appear solid.



**Full Materialization:** This effect is very costly, but it temporarily provides the ghost with a material body similar to the one he had in life. The attributes of this body cannot exceed the limits of the ghost's true form, but they can be lower. This costs  $(ST + DX + HT)/2$  fatigue points, rounded up. This energy cost must be paid after each minute.

Clothing appears around the ghost at no additional cost, but other objects (like weapons and armor) cost 1 fatigue per pound of weight, which must also be paid each minute. Dropped objects will vanish after one minute unless recovered by the ghost. The ghost can pick up and use normal material objects, but they will be left behind when he becomes spectral again.

A materialized ghost may resume spectral form instantly at any time, but must pay fatigue each time he rematerializes, even if a minute hasn't passed. A ghost is mortal while fully materialized, and injuries affect him normally. If his material form is knocked out, he immediately fades away and becomes spectral again. If his material form is *killed*, he is irrevocably destroyed.



## Ghost Weaknesses

Next to being unable to affect the material world without spending fatigue, the biggest limitation faced by ghosts is that they have very short lifespans. They don't age (treat as Unaging), but they can weaken and fade. Every month, a ghost must make a Will roll. A roll of 14 or higher is an automatic miss, and any missed roll reduces HT by one. This "injury" cannot be healed. If HT ever reaches 0, the ghost is dissipated forever; nothing can bring him back.

Modifiers (these *do* affect the 14 maximum): +2 if the ghost has a compelling reason to stay on earth; +2 if he stays within 50 yards of his place of death (if it was a traumatic event, like a murder or violent accident) or an area like a "haunted" house, battle site or extremely violent murder scene, for the whole month; +1 to +5 if the deceased is being paid respects and remembered by friends or family members.

If these cumulative bonuses add up to +3 or more, Will rolls to maintain HT fail only on a roll higher than modified Will or a 17 or 18, whichever is lower. If they total +5 or more, the ghost doesn't have to make Will rolls at all that month!

## Becoming a Ghost in Play

A character who is killed during the game may continue as a ghost, at the GM's discretion. See *Rising from the Dead* (p. 34) for the game mechanics and *The Cost of Undeath* (p. 45) for advice on how to handle this for PCs. A new ghost is extremely weak: he starts with 1 fatigue point and regains 1 energy point per day until he is back at full strength, at which point he recovers fatigue normally.

## Point Cost

The package above is treated as a 100-point advantage, called Ghost Form. It can be modified by the enhancements and limitations below. Treat any total less than -75% as -75%.

*Special Enhancement: Audible.* The ghost is normally audible, at no fatigue cost. The advantages (free communication) and disadvantages (the ghost is no longer stealthy) cancel out. +0% if the ghost sounds obviously unnatural (moaning, hollow voice, etc.), +5% if it sounds normal.

*Special Enhancement: Reduced Fatigue Cost.* This must be taken separately for *each* power it will affect (dream travel, materialization, poltergeist effect, possession, probability alteration, riding in vehicles and telepathy). Each level reduces fatigue cost by 1 for *that power only*. +10% per level per power.

*Special Enhancement: Spectral Touch.* The ghost can use "touch-only" abilities while insubstantial by interpenetrating with the target. Any ghost can use Steal HT, Steal ST or the Chilling Touch version of Terror (p. 60) this way, but this enhancement is required to use any other touch-only ability while spectral (like Deathtouch or Wither Limb). +40%.

*Special Enhancement: Unlimited Lifespan.* The ghost doesn't have to make monthly Will rolls to avoid losing HT, making it effectively immortal. +30%.

*Special Enhancement: Visible.* The ghost is normally visible, at no fatigue cost. The advantages (free visual effects) and disadvantages (being visible to normal sight) cancel out. +0% if the ghost is obviously unnatural (glowing, translucent, etc.), +5% if it looks human.

*Special Limitation:* The ghost can't produce the effects listed under *Materialization* (p. 53). -20% for Can't Materialize, -15% for Sounds Only, and -10% for Sounds and Visual Effects Only. Only the -10% level can be combined with Visible.

*Special Limitation: Missing Power.* The ghost lacks a basic ghost ability. Each missing power is a separate limitation: -5% if it can't hear its name being invoked, travel instantaneously to its site of death or summoner, or ride in vehicles; -10% if it can't use dream travel, communicate telepathically, sense auras or tap fatigue from places of power and worshippers; -20% if it can't use the poltergeist effect, possession or probability alteration.



# Motivation

The forces that create and motivate the undead play a pivotal role in how they will act and be perceived by others. The restless dead (p. 34) come about spontaneously due to the circumstances of their death or burial, and are motivated by strong compulsions related to those circumstances. The willful dead (p. 37) have chosen their fate, and are motivated solely by their own stubbornness. The enslaved dead (p. 40) exist only to serve their creator.

## Restless Dead

The restless dead have two special problems: compulsions and bindings. Some have both.

### Compulsions

The restless dead are usually driven by the need to carry out a deed or complete a task. In game terms, this should be treated as either Compulsive Behavior (p. B32) or Obsession (p. CI93), with one special addition: compulsions that appear on undead "racial templates" are supernatural restrictions, not just bad habits, and can't be avoided by making a Will roll. If external circumstances prevent an undead being from carrying out a compulsion, he suffers from the Unluckiness disadvantage (p. B37) until that situation is remedied.

The nature of the compulsion determines which disadvantage is used. For repetitive acts, use Compulsive Behavior. This is the classic "ghost disadvantage," and results in the behavior patterns usually associated with haunting; e.g., materialize and groan in the great hall, open and close the cellar door, ring the church bell or walk a patrol. When the undead entity must accomplish a specific goal, or when his choice of actions is restricted, use Obsession instead. This is typical of revenants and tomb guardians. Examples: "never leave my tomb," "seek out my murderer and kill him," "seek proper burial" and "slay those who enter my tomb."

The point value of either disadvantage depends on the extent to which the actions of the undead being are limited, relative to the living:

*-1 point:* This is a trivial motivation, or an activity that uses no appreciable amount of time, or a restriction that almost never crops up (6 or less during the average game session). He's completely free-willed. This can be considered a quirk.

*-5 points:* This is simply one of his many motivations, or an activity that uses up little (less than 50%) of his time, or a restriction that rarely crops up (9 or less during the average game session). He's largely free-willed and otherwise free to act.

*-10 points:* This is his primary motivation, or an activi-

ty that uses up a great deal (at least 50%) of his time, or a restriction that comes up almost daily (12 or less during the average game session). He'll be unable to do what he wants about half the time.

*-15 points:* This is his only motivation, or an activity that uses up all of his time, or a restriction that's in effect continuously (15 or less during the average game session). He'll be defined by this trait, and won't seem free-willed to the living.

The same behavior can be worth -1, -5, -10 or -15 points, depending on its intensity. For instance, a ghost who has to ring any church bell he sees on a Sunday has a -1-point Compulsive Behavior. If he has to ring a particular church bell once every morning, that's worth -5 points. If he has to ring that bell all night, every night, he has a -10-point problem. If he has to ring it constantly, can never leave the bell tower and is perpetually fatigued from the effort, then his compulsion is worth -15 points.

### Bindings

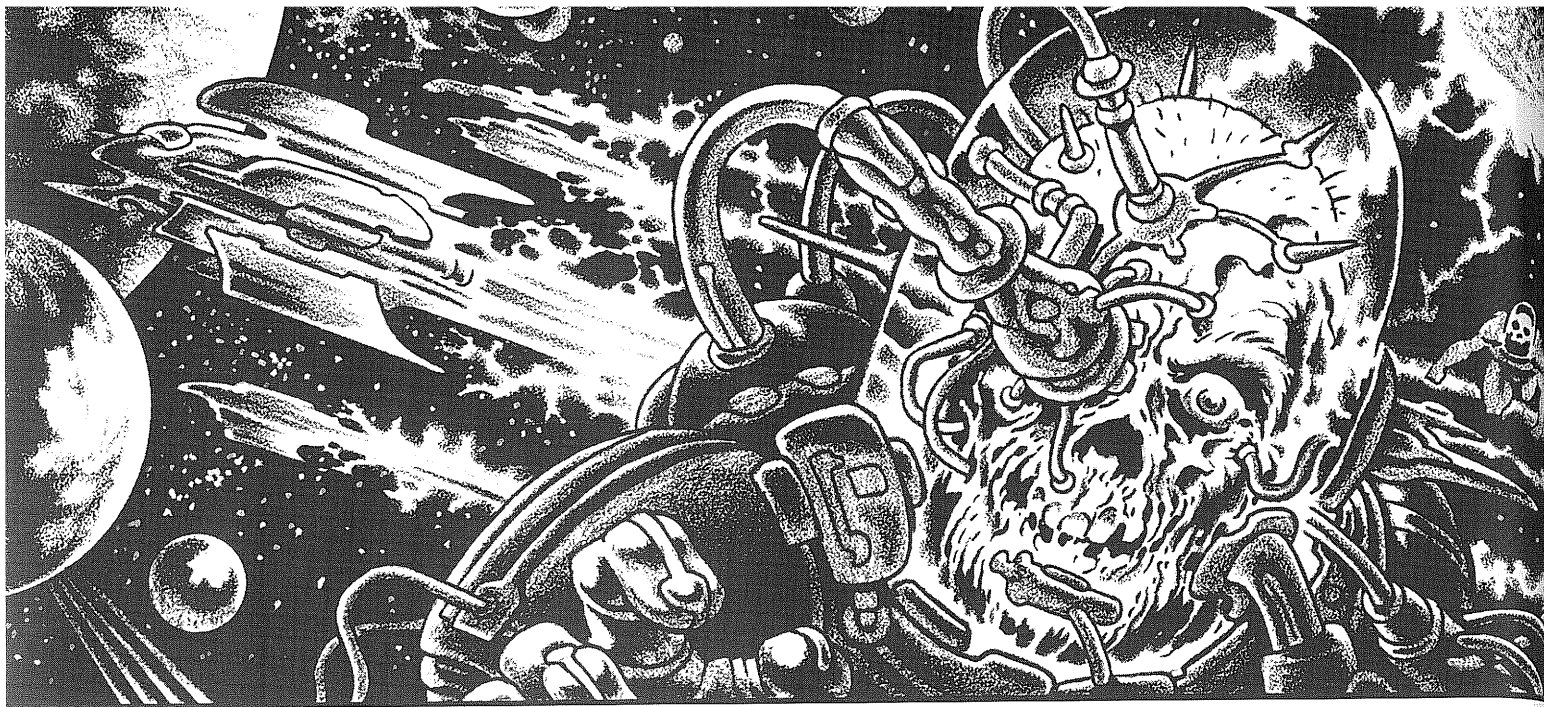
A ghost usually stays near a specific, mystically-charged area because it gets a bonus to Will rolls to avoid HT loss (p. 54) or because it has access to extra fatigue (p. 51). Other undead are bound to an area by a compulsion (above). Certain restless dead haunt an area because to leave means swift destruction, however. Such bindings are treated as a Dependency (p. CI81) on a locale.

For the purpose of bindings, a *specific* death site, tomb or other location is treated as an "Infrequent" substance (base -20 points). *Any* death site, tomb or mystical location is treated as an "Occasional" one (base -10 points). While a specific grave may be "Rare" in the grand scheme of things, and while mystical sites are at best "Infrequent," these things aren't used up, don't cost money and are generally available for the taking. As a result, they are treated as being less rare than they otherwise would be.

Constant Dependency (×5 cost) is common among tomb guardians. Daily (×3) and monthly (×1) Dependency are more appropriate for other undead, and reflect beings that have to return to their tomb or death place nightly or on the full moon, respectively.

## Willful Dead

The willful dead have no required disadvantages as a class; they tend to have a more complex set of special weaknesses (p. 63) instead. It's common for them to have the personal disadvantages Obsession (p. CI93) or Stubbornness (p. B37), though, reflecting the driving urge that made them choose to become undead in the first place. The GM may choose to add these disadvantages to the undead template.



## Enslaved Dead

The enslaved dead are, without question, the most limited of all. Most masters don't want their undead servants to be particularly bright or motivated, and many wish to guard against subversion by their enemies. There are two main types of enslaved dead: mindless undead, like zombies, and dominated undead, like lesser vampires.

### *Mindless Undead*

These are the lowest undead on the food chain: servants that stand around like furniture until called upon. Their complete loyalty is ensured by powerful supernatural forces or weird science. Add the following to all mindless undead templates:

*Attribute Modifiers:* IQ -2 [-15].

*Advantages:* Invulnerability (Mind Control)\* (p. CI59) [75]; Single-Minded (p. CI30) [5]; Unfazeable (p. CI31) [15] *replaces* Imperturbable (a net +5).

*Disadvantages:* Cannot Learn (p. CI86) [-30]; Dead Broke (p. B16) [-25]; Hidebound (p. CI91) [-5]; Low Empathy (p. CI91) [-15]; No Sense of Humor (p. CI92) [-10]; Obdurate (p. CI92) [-10]; Reprogrammable Duty (p. CI104) [-25]; Slave Mentality (p. CI94) [-40]. Add the taboo trait "No mental skills" [0].

\* They are vulnerable to the Control Zombie spell, however.

This package adds -90 points to template cost. Undead with these traits are incapable of doing anything but what they're told, and can *never* come up with new ideas, feel or express any emotions, learn new skills or notice anything they aren't ordered to notice. Needless to say, they make dreadful PCs, except perhaps in humorous campaigns. On the other hand, if a PC dies during an adventure and is

reanimated by his friends, the GM could let the player temporarily play his zombified self.

Those with *GURPS Robots* will notice that the mindless undead have many disadvantages in common with non-sentient robots. That's because they *are* robots; they just happen to be made from dead bodies instead of plastic and metal.

### *Dominated Undead*

These are undead created by a being with the Dominance advantage (p. CI53). As per the Dominance rules, they have Slave Mentality (p. CI94) [-40]. They can be ordered around by their master – and only their master – and have no choice but to obey. They have no will of their own, but may roll vs. Will normally to resist anything that would interfere with their orders (e.g., the Sex Appeal skill of someone they've been ordered to kill). They have no other restrictions on their actions.

GMs who prefer to give the dominated undead more freedom to act should use the Weak Dominance option (p. 57). In this case, the dominated undead have a full-time Involuntary Duty (p. CI77) [-20] instead of Slave Mentality (a net +20 points), and the cost of Dominance is reduced by 40%.

## Special Powers

The main "attraction" of the undead, despite all their limitations, is that they can do things that the living cannot. Most undead beings (with the possible exception of the mindless undead) should have one or two abilities from this section.

# Attribute Modifiers

## Strength (ST)

Many undead are *strong*. Draugr (“wights”), cinematic mummies, vampires and wraiths are all known for their superhuman strength. These undead should have high ST modifiers, priced as per p. CI8. Some common ST modifiers and their costs:

<b>ST Modifier:</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+5</b>	<b>+10</b>	<b>+15</b>	<b>+20</b>
<b>Point Cost:</b>	10	20	30	45	60	110	150	175

**Fatigue and Extra Effort:** The undead have fatigue points equal to ST for powering spells and special abilities, just like a human; Extra Fatigue (below) adds to this “energy reserve.” Being dead, the undead *don't* fatigue naturally, and don't lose ST or Extra Fatigue to hunger, exertion, heat, etc. This is balanced by the fact that the undead can't use extra effort (pp. B88-90) to jump, lift, run, etc.; they are limited to their listed abilities at all times. This is a 0-point feature, common to all undead.

## Dexterity (DX)

The skeletal undead (p. 51) receive a +2 DX modifier because they have no flesh weighing down their bones. Other undead should make do with the DX they had in life.

## Intelligence (IQ)

The mindless undead (p. 56) have a -2 IQ modifier. The GM may wish to eliminate this for mummified undead (p. 51) in order to be in agreement with p. M117 (“the preservation process keeps the brain in better working order”). Other undead should use the IQ they had in life.

## Health/Hits (HT)

The undead aren't necessarily healthy, but they are tough. Many undead have a HT bonus between +1 and +5: +1 is 10 points, +2 is 20, +3 is 30, +4 is 45 and +5 is 60 points.

## Advantages

Certain advantages are quite common among the undead. A few of these require additional notes when applied to the undead.

### Alertness (p. B19)

**5 points/level**

Ghosts add Alertness to IQ rolls to use their Empathy-like ability to see auras. Powerful ghosts often have very high Sense rolls.

### Bite (p. CI50)

**30 points  
+ 5 points/+1 damage**

The consummate blood-sucking vampire ability. Undead with Bite have Unhealing at the -20-point level, not at the -30-point level possessed by other corporeal undead (a net +10 points). Bite includes Sharp Teeth (p. CI67); there's no need to buy them separately.

**Special Enhancement:** No Obvious Effect. You do not leave any visible wound, or can lick the wound shut effortlessly. +20%.

### Doesn't Breathe (p. CI53)

**20 points**

Undead with this advantage don't require oxygen *at all*. They cannot be strangled, suffocated, drowned or affected by gases. Vacuum Support (p. CI70) is still needed to survive in a vacuum, though.

### Dominance (p. CI53)

**5 points + 15  
points/100 pts. controlled**

Undead who can drain life energy from the living and turn them into undead servants must have this advantage. It should be accompanied by some means (Bite, innate Deathtouch spell, etc.) of magically draining life energy from victims. Dominance is usually taken by vampires and other willful undead. Only the basic 5-point cost should appear on the template; the cost of undead servants will depend on the individual character. Undead that cannot control their offspring should take Infectious Attack (p. CI97) [-5] instead.

**Special Limitation:** Weak Dominance. Your servants have a full-time Involuntary Duty (p. CI77) [-20] instead of Slave Mentality (p. CI94). This means that they have initiative, can interpret your orders creatively and don't automatically fail Will rolls. It also means that they need half as many character points to buy their way out of servitude (see *Contagion*, p. 36). -40%.

### Extra Fatigue (p. CI24)

**3 points/level**

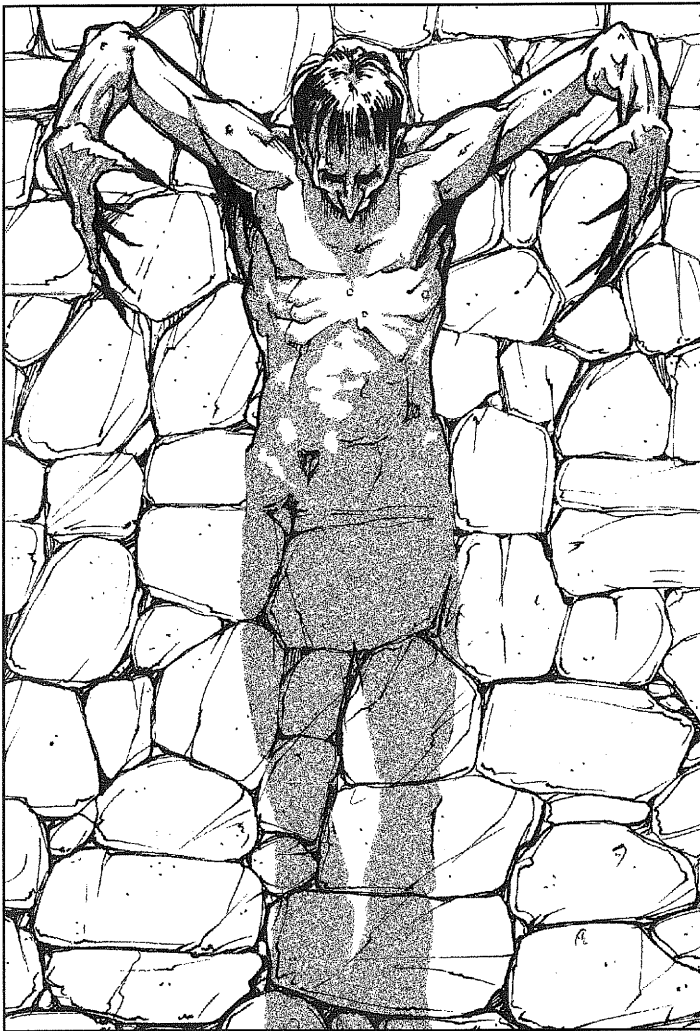
Spectral undead use fatigue points to power many of their special abilities. High levels of Extra Fatigue can therefore be used to create high-powered spectral undead. The undead often have Extra Fatigue for powering innate spells (p. 61) as well. See *ST* (above) for other rules governing how the undead spend fatigue.

### Extra Life (p. CI36)

**25 points/level**

This ability can be used for undead who can possess dead bodies upon destruction: when their current body is destroyed, they simply reappear in a new one, which will have the same abilities as the old one. Undead characters who start with this advantage may buy more Extra Lives in play.





**Higher Purpose (p. CI26) 5 points**

Restless dead with reasonably specific compulsions (p. 55) can be given this advantage. They will get +1 to all die rolls when pursuing their compulsion.

**Insubstantiality (p. CI59) 80 points**

Some powerful corporeal undead can assume spectral form as well. The special enhancements listed for this ability aren't very appropriate for the undead. The spectral undead should use the ghost package (p. 54) instead.

**Invulnerability (p. CI59) Variable**

Corporeal undead are often invulnerable to certain attacks. The chart on p. CI49 should be used to gauge how common an attack form is. Immunity to specific supernatural powers is also treated as Invulnerability, even though these powers may have effects other than damage. Some typical examples:

*Common:* Metal, Non-magical Weapons, Non-wooden Weapons, Unconsecrated Weapons. 150 points.

*Occasional:* Cold/Ice, Magic. 100 points.

*Rare:* Any one Magical College (Body Control, Mind Control, etc.), Nanotech, Radiation. 75 points.

**Magery (p. B21)**

**15/25/35 points**

Undead with innate spells (p. 61) must be given Magery. Dark-, Moon- and Star-Aspected Magery (pp. CI39-40) are especially suitable for creatures of the night, as is One-College Magery (p. CI39) limited to Necromantic spells. Limited Magery *can* be used to meet the Magery requirement for innate spells.

**Penetrating Call (p. CI63)**

**5 points**

This should be used for undead that can produce disturbing sounds (clanking chains, howling, moaning) to frighten the living. These sounds may be produced by supernatural means, but the fear itself is strictly mundane. Undead who emanate palpable fear should have Terror (p. 60) instead.

**Reawakened (p. CI43)**

**10 points**

The spirit animating a corpse isn't always the one that controlled the body in life. Reawakened can be used to justify things like 13-year-old corpses possessed by 1,500-year-old undead sorcerers.

**Regeneration (p. CI64)**

**Variable**

Corporeal undead with this ability must remove the Unhealing disadvantage (a net +30 points). Damage caused by The Draining (p. 64) or a broken soul object (p. 65) *cannot* be regenerated.

**Secret Communication (p. CI65) 20 points**

Undead slaves can be given this ability, which lets their master summon and control them mentally, even when they are out of sight. Otherwise, they must receive their orders verbally.

**Shadow Form (p. CI65)**

**50 points**

Some powerful corporeal undead can become shadows. The special enhancements listed for this ability aren't appropriate for the undead.

**Strong Will (p. B23)**

**4 points/level**

This is one of the most common advantages given to ghosts. Virtually all ghost powers are Will-based, and the most powerful spectral undead will have very high Will scores.

**Undead Invulnerability (p. CI70) 150 points**

*This advantage is called "Vampiric Invulnerability" in GURPS Compendium I. It has been renamed here, but it works the same way; see p. CI70 for details.*

This is often given to powerful corporeal undead, and is most useful when Unliving is removed (a net +50 points). It is sometimes combined with Vulnerability (p. 64). The first level of Vulnerability cancels Undead

Invulnerability with respect to an attack form, meaning the undead can be killed by it. Successive levels add 1d damage each. *Exception:* Basic Vulnerability to fire is built into Undead Invulnerability. Even the first level of Vulnerability to fire will cause an extra 1d damage.

## Other Advantages

The following advantages are common among the undead, but require no special explanation:

Advantage	Point Cost	Page
Claws	Variable	CI67
Cool (natural attack)	15 points	CI72
Damage Resistance	3/level	CI52
Dark Vision	25	CI52
Extra Hit Points	5/level	CI24
Fangs	10	CI67
Flight	40	CI56
Injury Tolerance	Variable	CI58
Lunar Influence	5	CI39
Magic Resistance	2/level	B21
Night Vision	10	B22
Psionic Resistance	2/level	B22
Sharp Teeth	5	CI67
Silence	5/level	CI66
Single-Minded	5	CI30
Unfazeable	15	CI31
Vampiric Resurrection	150	CI70
Venom	Variable	CI71

## New Advantages

### Independent Body Parts 35 points

Your limbs continue to fight after they've been severed. Cinematic zombies often have this ability, which works as follows:

Cutting attacks that would normally cripple a hand or foot (damage over HT/3) will separate it from the arm or leg without injury. Similarly, cutting attacks that would normally cripple an arm or leg (damage over HT/2) will detach it from the torso without harm. The severed limb falls to the ground and starts fighting as the ally of its owner, who *does* suffer the usual crippling effects (p. B127). It may be reattached later (see below). If the limb's owner is killed, the limb lives on as independent undead entity that will pursue and attack its former owner's enemies.

Non-cutting damage, or cutting damage to already-severed body parts, will damage parts normally, but each part is treated as a separate entity. Hands and feet have their owner's HT and  $\frac{1}{3}$  his hit points (round up), while arms and legs have his HT and  $\frac{1}{2}$  his hit points (round up).

Damage to limbs is never applied to body hit points for creatures with this advantage. Other abilities are as follows:

**Arm:** Has its owner's DX. Wiggles along with a Move of ST/4 and a Dodge of DX/2 (round down). It has full ST for striking and strangling, but only ST/4 for grappling or dragging things around. It can attack a foe in its hex (roll vs. Combat/Weapon skill to hit), but can only attack his feet or legs if he is standing. An arm with a hand can punch, grapple or use a one-handed weapon at -2 damage; one without a hand can only club foes (treat as a punch). A disembodied arm is attacked at -2.

**Leg:** A leg with a foot has a DX equal to its owner's DX-2. It hops along at its owner's Move-3 and dodges at his DX/2 (round down). It cannot grapple or wield weapons, but may leap in the air and kick foes, using the owner's unarmed combat skills and damage. Treat a leg without a foot as an arm without a hand (above) and -2 DX. Animated legs are attacked at -2.

**Hand:** Has its owner's DX. It can run along on its fingers with Move and Dodge equal to DX/2 (round down). Its only effective attack is to crawl up someone's body and strangle. Treat this a grapple attempt (p. B111); use the rules for strangling (p. B112) on successive turns. The hand may use its owner's *full* ST for this attack only. Hands are targeted at -4.

**Foot:** A foot has a DX equal to its owner's DX-2. Its Move and Dodge are 1. Its only effective attack is to trip a moving person. Anyone moving through a foot's hex or leaving close combat with a foot must win a Quick Contest of DX with the foot or fall down. A foot is targeted at -4.

When an undead body part is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, it is crippled and can no longer attack. Roll against HT to see if the injury is permanent or not (see p. B129). Body parts can be reattached by holding them in place for 1 minute. Crippled body parts can be reattached if the injury is temporary or lasting, but remain crippled. Permanently-crippled body parts are lost forever.

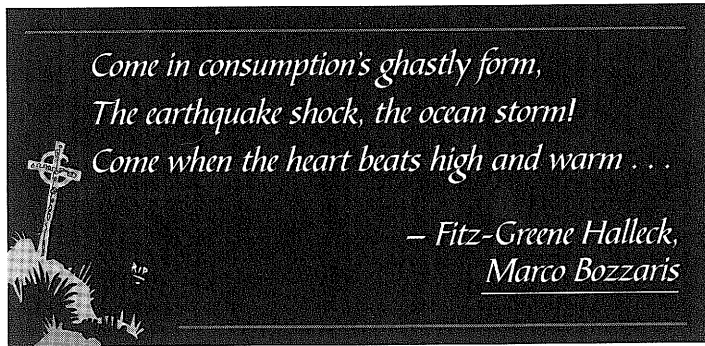


*Special Enhancement:* Detachable Head. You can be decapitated normally (see p. CII53), but you suffer no ill effects and can reattach your head, as above. Your severed head has your DX and HT, HT/2 hit points, Move 0 and Dodge 0. It is targeted at -5 in combat and can bite foes in its hex (see p. B111). Your head is your seat of consciousness; while it is detached, your body fights on as its ally, like a limb severed from the body. +15%.

*Special Enhancement:* Instant Reattachment. You can reattach your limbs as above, but you only have to hold them in place for one *second*. +50%.

*Special Limitation:* No Reattachment. Your severed limbs are animated, but can never be reattached. Cannot be combined with "Instant Reattachment" or "Reattachment Only." -60%.

*Special Limitation:* Reattachment Only. Your limbs can be cut off without affecting body hit points, and can be reattached as above, but are inert and lifeless on their own. -50%.



## Pestilence

**5 points/disease**

Many undead in folklore can infect the living with disease. For the undead, this is a deadly (if slow-acting) attack, treated as an advantage. Living disease carriers should take Social Disease or Terminally Ill (p. CI84) instead. Each disease carried is a separate advantage; see pp. CII167-174 for ideas. Bubonic plague, leprosy, smallpox and typhoid fever are all found in folklore, but the GM may invent more exotic illnesses for his undead to carry.

At the end of a battle involving someone with Pestilence, the GM should secretly roll vs. the HT of each combatant. Modifiers: -3 if wounded by the carrier, +1 if merely touched, +2 otherwise. On a failed HT roll, the victim is infected with the disease, which progresses normally. Out of combat, use the *Contagion* rules (p. B133) instead. Multiple diseases require multiple HT rolls. Immunity to Disease protects completely.

Victims of undead who have Pestilence and either Dominance or Infectious Attack will become undead if their HT ever reaches 0 due to a disease contracted this way.

*Special Enhancement:* Affects Substantial. Lets the spectral undead infect people *without* materializing. Those with Spectral Touch (p. 54) don't need this enhancement. +40%.

*Special Limitation:* Possession Only. As above, but the spirit must actually possess his victim to cause disease. If he leaves, the victim is no longer ill and starts to recover normally, although he can be "reinfected." The victim's symptoms are normal for the disease, but he cannot infect others and can only be cured by exorcism. -20%.

## Terror

**30 points  
+ 10 points/-1 to Fright Check**

Others are smitten by irrational, supernatural fear in your presence. This can take several forms: a psychic compulsion, a palpable aura of despair, a face that looks like that of a dead loved one to all who view it, etc. Anyone who sees you must roll a Fright Check immediately; a new roll is required if you reappear after an absence of at least one hour.

Modifiers: the modifiers on p. B93; +1 per appearance after the first within 24 hours. Penalties can be purchased for 10 points per -1. Multiple beings with Terror cause *one* Fright Check at the highest penalty among them, with an additional -1 for 5 creatures, -2 for 10, -3 for 20, -4 for 50 and -5 for 100 or more.

*Special Limitation:* Chilling Touch. You cause fear as outlined above, but only in those you touch. Spectral undead *can* take this ability, and need not materialize to use it. Neither PD nor DR help against this touch. -20%.

*Special Limitation:* Terror can normally be turned off to let you engage in social activities. If you can't turn it off, you have Horrific Appearance (p. CI80) *instead* of Terror, and suffer a -6 reaction penalty at all times. This is a disadvantage worth -30 points.

## Mitigating or Removing Disadvantages

The disadvantages under *Corporeal Undead* (p. 50) should be given to most physical undead; that's why they're built into the template. Still, powerful undead beings sometimes have lower levels of these disadvantages, or lack them completely. These are effectively "special powers."

### No Body Heat and Pallor

These are tied together, and are often mitigated by feeding in the case of vampires. Vampires who become flushed with life after feeding get -1 point (not -5) from No Body Heat and -5 points (not -10) for Pallor, a net +9 points to template cost. Undead who are indistinguishable



from the living lack these disadvantages completely (+15 points). Grottesque undead should take Hideous, Monstrous or Horrific Appearance *instead*; they still have a weird color and no body heat, but these things hardly matter when you're rotting.

### **Social Stigma (Dead)**

This should only be omitted for undead who don't look dead and who aren't known to be dead (rare in folklore). Eliminating it increases template cost by 20 points.

### **Sterile**

This shouldn't normally be removed. Reproduction is tied to life, making it antithetical to undeath from an occult perspective. Fertile undead are also unlikely from a biological point of view. See the *mullo* (p. 83) for an exception to this.

### **Unhealing**

This *must* be reduced to the -20-point level (a net +10 points) for undead who can heal themselves by stealing the HT of the living through such means as the Bite advantage or an innate Steal HT spell. This also applies to undead who can be sewed or glued back together; such undead gain Reduced Hit Points -1 [-5] for every 5 points of injury they receive to reflect the fact that bits will break off and get lost.

Unhealing should be *removed* (a net +30 points) in the case of undead who can heal normally, for whatever reason. This automatically includes undead with Regeneration!

### **Unliving**

This is a big part of undeath. Removing it (a net +50 points) makes an undead being *far* more powerful. This should be reserved for major undead (like vampires), or for those that can take a lot of damage (like cinematic zombies). In general, undead with Undead Invulnerability aren't usually Unliving.

Less radically, Unliving can be mitigated through the use of magic items, potions or spells. These reduce its point value. This reduction is -60% for an item that can be easily stolen (e.g., a funerary amulet). Potions and spells are worth -60% if required daily, -65% if weekly and -70% if monthly. Potions requiring more than \$100 of ingredients per dose are worth +5% less (e.g., -70% becomes -65%); more than \$1,000 per dose is +10%.

*Example 1:* The GM decides that liches can avoid Unliving by drinking a potion containing a ground-up black pearl worth \$100 once a month. This is worth -65%, reducing Unliving to -17 points (and increasing template cost by 33 points).

*Example 2:* The GM also decides that mummies can



avoid Unliving by wearing a funerary amulet in plain sight. This is a -60% reduction, making Unliving worth -20 points (and increasing template cost by 30 points). A mummy could conceivably survive all the way down to -5×HT with his amulet on, but removing it means he dies at -1 HT (killing him instantly if it is removed while he is at negative HT).

*Knockout and Stun for Unliving Characters:* Unliving beings aren't alive. To reflect this, they cannot be knocked out by blows to the head or vital organs (p. B127), even if they lack Injury Tolerance. They can be stunned normally, unless they have High Pain Threshold.

## **Innate Spells**

Fantasy undead are often magical. Most magical traits are subsumed into the advantages and disadvantages of the undead form, but in a few cases it is desirable to use *innate spells*.

An innate spell is almost identical to a normally-learned spell, except that the caster knows it intuitively; it isn't *taught* to him. Undead templates must include Magery if they are to include innate spells, and cannot include Magic Resistance. Any spell can be innate, but the GM is cautioned against granting the more powerful spells to PC undead through this method.

The minimum cost for an innate spell is the number of points necessary to bring it to skill 12, based on the template's Magery and default IQ. This can never be less than 1 point. Undead whose skill with an innate spell is 15 or higher get the usual reductions to casting time and energy cost.



If an individual has his IQ reduced to the point where his skill with an innate spell would fall below 12, it won't work and is considered "dormant." If he later has his IQ or Magery raised to the point where his skill is 12 or more, the ability activates and he can use it normally.

### Rituals

Since innate spells are intuitive, the undead don't have to gesture or speak magic words to use them. They still require concentration, and take the usual amount of time to cast, but this is spent glaring balefully, meditating, making scary noises, etc.

### Prerequisites

The only prerequisite for the use of an innate spell is a personal skill of 12 or more with that spell. Normal prerequisite spells, advantages and attributes are disregarded. There are certain times when normal prerequisites become important, however:

1. Before the character can increase his skill with an innate spell, he must acquire all the normal prerequisites for that spell. *Example:* a character has the innate spell Panic-13. Before he can raise his skill to 14, he must learn the prerequisite spell, Fear. If a character increases his IQ or Magery, his skill with innate spells rises automatically without his needing to worry about prerequisites.

2. Before the character can use an innate spell as a prerequisite, he must acquire all its normal prerequisite spells. *Example:* a character has the innate spell Darkness. He wishes to learn Shape Darkness, which lists Darkness as a prerequisite; therefore, he must learn the spells Continual Light and Light, the normal prerequisites of Darkness.

3. Before the character can teach the spell, both pupil and teacher must have acquired all the normal prerequisite spells.

### Recommended Spells

The following *GURPS Magic* spells are especially appropriate as innate spells for the undead:

*Charm, Enslave (VH), Great Geas (VH), Lesser Geas (VH) and Loyalty* (all p. M68): Used to dominate the living, especially by ghosts and vampires.

*Complex Illusion, Perfect Illusion and Simple Illusion* (all p. M51): Used by ghosts to tell their stories to the living, or simply to communicate.

*Curse* (p. M63): Curses are frequently bestowed by the undead, especially mummified tomb guardians.

*Darkness* (p. M58) and *Mystic Mist* (p. M77): Often used by the undead to hide their presence.

*Deathtouch* (p. M27): A good way to simulate the "chilling touch" of fantasy undead, especially if taken at level 21+.

*Fear, Panic, Terror* (all p. M65) and *Death Vision* (p. M72): Appropriate spells for the undead, and viable magical alternatives to the Terror advantage (p. 60).

*Permanent Madness (VH)* (p. M67): Useful for spectral undead who cause their victims to go mad.

*Sense Life* (p. M28): Many undead can detect the living by "smell." Sense Life can be used to emulate this ability.

*Shapeshifting (VH)* (p. M25): Being able to turn into a bat or a wolf is a common ability among vampires.

*Silence* (p. M78): Used by some undead to stifle the cries of their victims.

*Steal Strength* (p. M73) and *Steal Health* (p. M74): The most common innate spells, these are alternatives to the Bite advantage (p. 57), both for the purposes of feeding and Dominance (p. 57).

### Inherent Magic (Knacks)

Inherent Magic (p. CI38) isn't the best way to represent undead abilities, which usually work better as innate spells or advantages. A few knacks can be interpreted in ways that have the right "feel" for the undead, however. At the GM's option, these can be treated as new advantages, unrelated to magic.

#### *Icy Weapon* (p. M40)

**15 points**

The chill of death turns every weapon you wield into an icy one at no energy cost. This takes place as soon as the weapon is grasped and ends when it is put down. The effects are exactly as the spell: +2 to final weapon damage that penetrates DR (+3 to creatures of flame).

## **Sense Spirit (p. M72) 2 points/yard of radius**

You can sense demons and fellow undead. This ability is on constantly and costs no fatigue. It *isn't* directional, however; it just indicates that a spirit is within your radius. Spectral undead already possess a power similar to this, and need not be given this ability.

## **Skull-Spirit (p. M73) 1 point**

This is a magical insurance policy. If you are killed and your skull isn't destroyed, a skull-spirit (p. 42) will rise from your remains and unerringly seek out your killer. It will last for 24 hours unless destroyed first.

## **Psionics and Super Powers**

Those with *GURPS Psionics* or *Supers* may wish to create undead with powers from those books. The possibilities are almost endless, so such decisions are left up to the GM. The Psychic Vampirism psi power (p. P16) deserves special mention, however. All the skills in that power group are highly appropriate for vampires and spectral undead. In particular, Steal Energy (p. P17) can be used instead of Bite (p. 57) to mitigate Unhealing (p. 61) and restore HT lost to The Draining (p. 64). It can also drain the living in preparation for Dominance (p. 57).

## **Skills**

For the most part, the undead should use the skills they had in life. Undead in folklore sometimes know a great deal about death and the afterlife, however. If the GM wants this to be true in his campaign, he should consider giving certain undead templates a Group Skill Bonus (p. CI177) that affects Demon Lore (p. CI147), Occultism (p. B61), Spirit Lore (p. CI147), Thanatology (p. CI158) and Theology (p. B62). Each +1 to this skill group costs 6 points; the maximum bonus is +3 (18 points).

As well, some undead are scary, and may qualify for a Racial Skill Bonus (p. CI177) to Intimidation skill. This costs 1 point per +1, to a maximum of +3 (3 points).

## **Special Weaknesses**

The undead usually have some significant disadvantages. Aside from those already discussed, a few specialized restrictions are fairly common as well.

## **Needs**

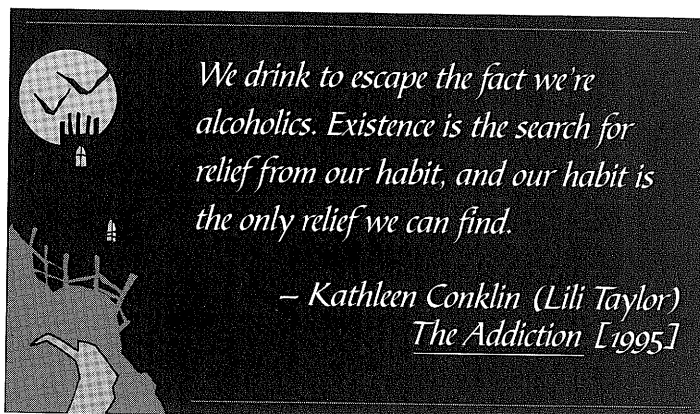
Since they lack life force of their own, many undead draw sustenance from some other source. In a few cases, the undead are *created* with needs so that they can be more

easily controlled by a master. Corporeal undead who must "feed" on blood, etc., due to The Draining or Dependency should *not* have Doesn't Eat or Drink (a net -10 points).

## **Addiction: Blood (p. B30) -15/-25 points**

A vampire's need for blood is usually handled by Dependency or The Draining (below), not Addiction. Recent interpretations of vampire folklore have sometimes likened the need for blood to an addiction, however, complete with the trappings of a drug culture.

At the GM's option, some vampires *are* addicted to blood. Blood is cheap, illegal and (for vampires) totally addictive, making the Addiction worth -15 points. Wealthy vampires can buy blood legally, but owing to the extra cost, the point value is the same. Vampires who are incapacitated after feeding on blood get -25 points for their Addiction.



## **Dependency (p. CI81) Variable**

This disadvantage is widespread among the undead. Some of the usual substances include:

*Rare (-30 points):* Enchanted item (amulet, ring, etc.) that the undead himself could never replace, special potion with rare and expensive ingredients\*.

*Infrequent (-20 points):* His own coffin, death site, funerary item (amulet, garment, etc.) or tomb; earth from his own grave.

*Occasional (-10 points):* Any coffin, death site or tomb; consecrated churchyard; brains\*, human blood\* or life energy\*.

*Common (-5 points):* Burial, human emotions, mana†.

\* May be illegal or contain illegal ingredients, at the GM's option. If so, add -5 points to listed value.

† Incompatible with Mana Enhancer (p. CI40).

Frequency can vary greatly. Some guidelines:

*Constantly* (×5) in the case of mana for magically-created undead like zombies, tombs or churchyards for guardian undead, and magic items for wraiths or mummies. Note that magic items and amulets must be worn at all times to qualify!



Daily (×3) in the case of burial, coffins or grave earth for vampires, and for most feeding habits, including emotions, brains, blood and life energy.

Monthly (×1) in the case of special potions for liches, and anything required at the full moon or new moon.

The additional -10-point limitation that causes aging at 2 years per HT point lost is common for vampires and other relatively intact undead; see p. CI81 for details.

### **The Draining (p. CI97) -10 points**

The classic vampire disadvantage. Drinking blood is only *one* way to restore lost HT. When building an undead template with The Draining, the GM should include an ability that allows the living to be tapped for HT. This becomes the only way to recover HT lost to The Draining, even if a particular individual finds another means of transferring HT.

*Special Limitation:* Only fatigue is lost. -50%.

### **Murder Addiction (p. CI98) -60 points**

A special kind of Addiction, common to the more unpleasant kinds of undead. The GM should carefully consider the ramifications of this disadvantage before adding it to templates that will be available to player characters.

## **Repulsions**

The undead often fear certain objects or substances, usually those that amount to occult symbols. See p. 45.

### **Dread (p. CI97) Variable**

This is the usual way to handle a repulsion. Dread is worth -10 points plus another -1 point per yard of radius in the “forbidden zone.” This is modified for rarity:

*Rare* (×½): Consecrated or holy objects, exotic or archaic religious symbols, full exorcism ritual, spells (e.g., Banish, Exorcism).

*Occasional* (×1): Herbs or plants (e.g., garlic, hemlock, peach, rowan, tobacco seed, wolfsbane or wormwood), iron horseshoes, ordinary religious symbols, prayers, silver, thorns.

*Common* (×2): Fire, mirrors, musical instruments (e.g., bells, chimes, rattles), running water, salt, singing.

*Very Common* (×3): Sunlight.

*A Note on True Faith:* The True Faith advantage (p. CI47) lets the faithful repel the undead with a holy symbol. This doesn’t mean that all undead have a Dread of holy symbols: just as the living get no points for being vulnerable to Terror (p. 60), being vulnerable to True Faith is a 0-point “taboo trait” for the undead. Undead *can* have a Dread of holy symbols; if so, add the radius of their Dread (minimum 1 yard) to the 1-yard “stand-off distance” specified under True Faith.

### **Phobias (p. B35, CI93)**

*Variable*

If a repulsion is more psychological than it is supernatural, it can be treated as a Phobia. Use the rarities given for Dread as guidelines: a Rare substance is worth at best -1 point (a quirk), an Occasional or Common one is worth -5 to -10 points, and a Very Common one is worth -10 to -20 points as a Phobia.

## **Vulnerabilities**

Certain substances can physically weaken or harm the undead, or allow otherwise invulnerable undead to be harmed; see p. 58. The undead *can* have both Dread (above) and one or more of these three disadvantages with respect to the same substance or attack form.

### **Allergic Susceptibility (p. CI96) -5 to -15 points**

Undead who are physically incapacitated (but not injured) by a substance should be given this disadvantage. Use the rarities listed for *Dread* (above) to gauge the cost.

### **Vulnerability (p. CI106) Variable**

This should be given to undead who take more damage than normal from an attack form, or who are injured by an *attack* with a “harmless” item. For items that cause damage just by being nearby, use Weakness (below).

Vulnerability can be used along with Undead Invulnerability (p. 58) to create undead that can be injured normally but *never* destroyed unless the killing blow comes from a specific attack form. In this case, the first level of Vulnerability cancels out Undead Invulnerability with respect to that attack; it does not cause extra damage.

Examples:

*Very Rare* (-3 points): Consecrated weapons, holy water, magic weapons; items listed as “Rare” under *Dread* (above).

*Rare* (-5 points): Fire spells, head blows, heart shots, neck shots and decapitation, silver weapons, wooden weapons; items listed as “Occasional” under *Dread*.

*Occasional* (-10 points): Fire, light (lasers, etc.), magic; items listed as “Common” under *Dread*.

*Common* (-15 points): Sunlight; items listed as “Very Common” under *Dread*.

Cost is per level; use this cost when assigning Vulnerability for the purpose of negating Undead Invulnerability.

### **Weakness (p. CI106) Variable**

This should be used for undead who are actually injured by the mere presence of a “harmless” substance. Use the rarities given for *Dread* (p. above) to judge the cost multiplier.

*External Soul:* Some undead store their souls *some-where else*, usually in an inanimate object or an animal (similar to a familiar). They are subject to a special Weakness: if their “soul object” is destroyed, they take 1d damage per minute and quickly perish. This damage *cannot* be regenerated! This may occur only rarely, but since it’s irreversible, it’s considered an “Occasional” threat, making the Weakness worth -20 points. If the soul object is huge or hard to damage (more than DR 15 or 75 hit points), treat the frequency as “Rare” and reduce the value to -10 points. This cannot be taken in conjunction with a Dependency on the same object.

## Missing Advantages

The advantages under *Corporeal Undead* (p. 50) should be given to most physical undead, but a few lack one or more of these, and will have a lower template cost as a result.

### *Doesn't Eat or Drink*

Undead who must feed to stave off The Draining (p. 64), or who have a Dependency (p. 63) on blood or life force, *do not* have this advantage, a net -10-point change.

### *Doesn't Sleep*

Undead with the Nocturnal disadvantage (p. CI103) don't sleep but have a period of dormancy that is roughly equivalent to sleeping. Those whose Dependency requires them to lie in a grave at least 1/3 of the time also need to “sleep.” Both kinds of undead lack Doesn't Sleep, a net -20-point change.

### *Injury Tolerance: No Blood*

Vampires and other blood-sucking undead steal blood from the living. They need this to survive and will bleed normally if cut. As a result, they lack this advantage, a net -5-point change.

### *Unaging*

Some corporeal undead have a finite time on earth, much like the spectral undead (p. 54). If this is the case, remove Unaging and lower template cost by 15 points.

## Other Disadvantages

Many other disadvantages are common among the undead. On the table below, *psychological* disadvantages are unpleasant or “evil” traits given to undead in fiction, movies or folklore. *Physical* disadvantages are practical problems that result from the undead condition. *Supernatural* disadvantages are more unusual difficulties experienced by certain undead.

<i>Disadvantage</i>	<i>Point Cost</i>	<i>Page</i>
<i>Psychological:</i>		
Bad Temper	-10	B31
Bloodlust	-10	B31
Bloodthirst*	-15	CI96
Callous	-6	CI86
Intolerance (Living)	-10	B34
Loner	-5	CI91
Low Empathy	-15	CI91
Lunacy	-10	CI92
Megalomania	-10	B34
No Sense of Humor	-10	CI92
Paranoia	-10	B35
Reclusive	-10	CI93
Sadism	-15	B36
Self-Centered	-10	CI94
Solipsist	-10	CI94
Stubbornness	-5	B37
Vow	-5 to -15	B37

### *Physical:*

Appearance, Horrific†	-30	CI80
Appearance, Monstrous†	-25	CI80
Bad Smell	-10	CI80
Disturbing Voice	-10	CI81
Eunuch	-5	B28
Mute	-25	B29
No Sense of Smell/Taste	-5	B29
Reduced Move	-5/level	CI103

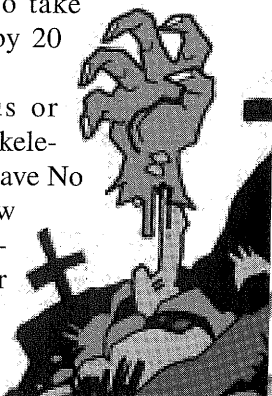
### *Supernatural:*

Cursed	-75	CI96
Frightens Animals	-5/-10	CI97
Infectious Attack	-5	CI97
Lifebane	-10	CI98
No Reflection*†	-10	CI103
No Shadow*†	-10	CI103
Nocturnal**	-10	CI103
Shadow Form	-20	CI104
Unluckiness	-10	B37
Weirdness Magnet	-15	CI100

\* Especially appropriate for vampires.

\*\* Nocturnal undead cannot also take Doesn't Sleep (lowers template cost by 20 points).

† Undead who have Monstrous or Horrific Appearance because they are skeletons, rotting corpses, etc., *cannot* also have No Body Heat, No Reflection, No Shadow or Pallor. These traits are only disadvantages for undead who can pass for human in the first place.



# Fine Tuning

Finally, the undead template should be tweaked to fit its campaign role. Traits can be added or removed to adjust its point cost or to define it more closely, and fine details can be added.

## Taboo Traits and Features

*Taboo traits* are trivial restrictions or limitations that make sense for a given undead creature, but which don't affect template cost; e.g., "Will become a skeleton" for rotting undead, "Cannot swim" for skeletons. *Features* are 0-point "special effects" that don't impose any restrictions, but which change the way that certain rules or traits work; e.g., *Fatigue and Extra Effort* (p. 57). The GM is encouraged to invent other 0-point traits (e.g., "Crippled limbs fall off" for skeletal or extremely rotten undead), but is cautioned against adding too many to a single template.

It would be impossible to itemize all possible 0-point traits, so most should be left implicit to save space. For example, most undead don't sleep, so it's obvious that the Sleep spell won't affect them; this need not be mentioned explicitly. As a general rule, if it would make sense for an undead entity to be affected differently (than a human) by a relatively specialized or obscure effect, the GM should just rule that this is the case and move on.



Some 0-point traits merit additional discussion:

*Affected by Astral Block, Control Zombie, Pentagonagram, Repel Spirits, Turn Spirit or Turn Zombie.* This is worth no points. While humans aren't affected by these spells, and while the effects of these spells can often be severe, the undead are immune to many other spells that affect humans (see *Magic and the Undead*, p. 109). This is considered to be a fair trade.

*Can be turned using True Faith.* This can occasionally have severe consequences, but mortals with True Faith are extremely rare. See *Dread* (p. 64) for details.

*No mental skills.* This is reserved for mindless undead. While it's a major limitation from the point of view of a character who *becomes* undead, it's really only a special effect of lowered IQ and the Cannot Learn disadvantage from the perspective of the template. GMs who are feeling generous can allow players to use the points from lost mental skills to pay some or all of the template cost.

See p. CI176 for more on taboo traits.

## Quirks

Certain minor traits count as trivial disadvantages. Unlike taboo traits, these tend to be things that follow less intuitively from the rest of the template. They are often included for "feel," not because they're a particularly logical consequence of the undead form. Such traits are treated as "racial quirks" (p. CI177), worth -1 point each. Like taboo traits, only a few should be added to a given template. Examples: a mere dislike of anything listed under *Dread* (p. 64), trivial compulsions (p. 55), dislike of holy folk or living beings.

## Ultra-Tech Undead

In an ultra-tech environment, the following additional traits should probably be standard for all undead:

*Acceleration Tolerance* (10 points; p. CI19): Lacking blood, it's unlikely that the undead will black out during high-G maneuvers. The GM may wish to treat this as *total* immunity if the character also has Injury Tolerance (No Blood).

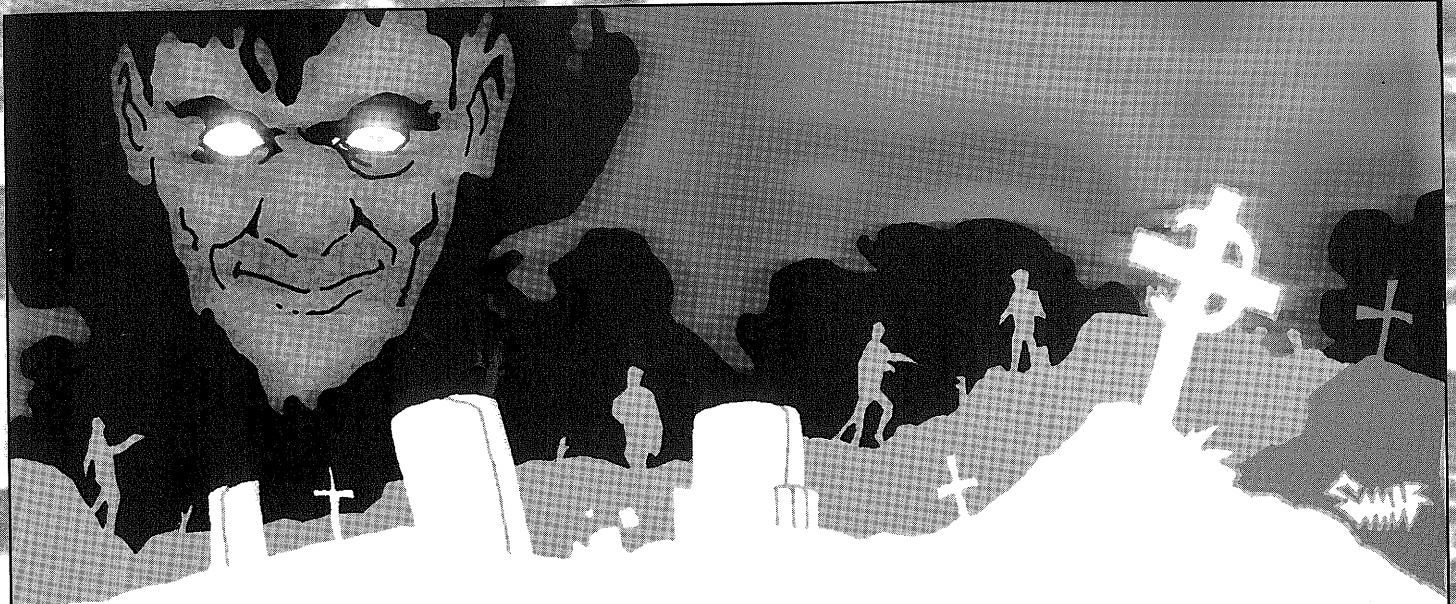
*Cyber-Rejection* (-10/-25 points; p. CI81): Dead bodies generate no neuroelectricity. Since this is how cybernetics are normally controlled, cyberwear will not work for the undead.

*Decreased Life Support* (10 points; p. CI52): The undead don't breathe and don't care much about being warm. As a result, they require little in the way of life support on a spaceship or submarine.

*Zeroed* (10 points; p. CI32): In ultra-tech societies, the dead aren't likely to be listed in the public databanks as anything but "deceased," meaning that the undead are effectively Zeroed.



# Chapter 4 The Mortuary



**P**utting it all together, here are some sample undead. They are treated as “racial templates,” built with the rules in Chapter 3. Each includes:

**Name:** What it’s called. There’s a lot of overlap between various kinds of undead in folklore, and it’s rare to find two sources that agree, so a certain amount of license has been taken. For instance, there is a tendency to call *any* undead entity a “revenant,” but that word has a specific meaning in the context of this book.

**Other Names:** Alternative names. Where applicable, their cultural origins are given in parentheses. The note above applies here as well.

**Form:** Whether it’s spectral or corporeal, and if corporeal, whether it’s intact, rotting, skeletal or mummified. Where there are multiple possibilities, the most common ones are given.

**Motivation:** Whether it’s restless, willful or enslaved, and if enslaved, whether it’s mindless or dominated. Once more, there may be multiple possibilities, so read the whole entry!

**Description:** A short summary of where it comes from, its traits and habits, etc.

**Physical Description:** What it looks like, along with notes on how it may be perceived by those with special abilities.

**Habitat:** Where it’s usually found.

**Statistics:** Its abilities, with point costs listed in brackets []. Where applicable, this includes:

**Attribute Modifiers:** Its attribute modifiers (see p. CI175).

**Advantages:** All its normal, racial and supernatural advantages, as well as knacks (inherent magic).

**Disadvantages:** All its disadvantages.

**Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:** Its racial quirks and 0-point traits (p. 66).

**Innate Spells:** Its innate spells (p. 61). The level listed assumes “racial average” IQ and Magery.

**Skills:** Any skill bonuses (p. 63).

**Template Cost:** The cost to be a member of this undead “species.”

**Variations:** Options, alternative templates and notes on modifications that are needed to fit the folklore of various cultures. Variant templates usually include everything in the basic template plus the cost of any modifications. Where a completely different template is presented, it is intended to *replace* the basic one.

**Sample Character:** Some templates also include a ready-to-use undead character, complete with a background story. Racial packages are listed as a single point cost, not broken down by ability.

# Ghost

*Other Names:* Apparition; Dybbuk (Hebrew), Mopaditi (N. Australia), Shi-ryo (Japan).

*Form:* Spectral.

*Motivation:* Restless (although some very old and powerful ghosts are willful).

## Description

A ghost is the most basic kind of spectral undead: an invisible, intangible remnant of a dead person. Most ghosts walk the earth out of an overwhelming urge to complete a task or carry out a routine, and are unlikely to be malicious unless they belong to people who were evil in life. Unfortunately, many ghosts are the souls of unrepentant criminals, returning to haunt bloody murder scenes or to seek vengeance for having been executed for their crimes. Such ghosts inevitably wish to frighten or harm the living.

In most cases, a ghost will fade over time (see *Ghost Weaknesses*, p. 54), either because its mission on earth is complete or because it runs out of supernatural energy. Ghosts can also be driven off by exorcism rituals (see *Exorcism*, p. 108). This is by no means a sure thing! A strong-willed ghost can be very hard to exorcise. More rarely, a vengeful ghost will be “killed” by mundane means when it materializes to physically attack the living.

Ghosts are most often encountered by sensitive individuals (i.e., those with ESP and people with Awareness, Spirit Empathy or World Sight), when channeled (see *Channeling*, p. CI34) or when called by a medium (see *Medium*, p. CI41). A ghost's presence can also be detected by mundane folk if the ghost uses special powers like materialization or the poltergeist effect. Animals can usually sense ghosts as well.

An encounter with a ghost may not be obvious. Ghosts have been known to use materialization to make their likeness appear on film. These images are often only discovered when the film is developed days or weeks later. Other ghosts use the poltergeist effect and their ability to generate sounds to record messages on tape. Some ghosts even make phone calls that seem perfectly normal until the recipient learns that he's talking to a dead man! In ultra-tech settings, ghosts may haunt computer networks as well. For more on such phenomena, see *Ghost in the Machine* (p. 124).

The special powers possessed by ghosts are described in detail under *Spectral Undead* (p. 51). Feats like phone calls and tampering with tape or film are standard special effects of these powers in high-tech settings, and require no special skill on the part of the ghost.

## Physical Description

When it isn't materialized, a ghost is completely invisible to the naked eye, although sensitive individuals will feel its presence. When it is materialized (an “apparition”), or when it's viewed using magic or psi skills, a ghost looks much as it did in life: it has a reflection, casts a shadow and is rarely horrific. Occasionally, though, a ghost will bear grotesque death wounds or plague sores, or carry its own decapitated head around under its arm.

## Habitat

Ghosts can be found almost anywhere, but most haunt graveyards, tombs, death sites and other psychically-charged areas. Wandering ghosts are rare, with one exception:

*Ghost Ships:* A ghost ship is a vessel that was lost at sea, usually with all hands and often as the result of a violent mutiny, naval battle or horrible wreck. It now sails as a specter, materialized by the will of its ghostly crew. A ghost ship is traditionally silent. It emerges from within a fog bank, sails for a while and eventually vanishes back into the fog. Anyone on board a

ghost ship when it vanishes is either carried away to the land of the dead (becoming a ghost) or left to drown in the cold ocean.

Ghost ships are often Age of Sail tall ships, but there are also tales of ghost warships and U-boats from both World Wars. A *GURPS Space* campaign may even have “ghost spaceships.” See *Undead Vehicles* (p. 92) for rules covering ghost vehicles.

## Statistics

*Advantages:* Ghost Form [100].

*Disadvantages:* Severe Compulsive Behavior or Obsession, which should be chosen by the ghost's player [-15]; Dread (Exorcism) [-5].

*Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:* Affected by Astral Block, Repel Spirits and Turn Spirit [0]; Can be detected by sensitive individuals and animals [0]; Can be turned using True Faith [0].

**Template Cost: 80 points.**



## Variations

**Ghosts in Other Cultures:** The statistics above will suffice for most kinds of ghosts, but in some cultures, ghosts seem to have a predilection for certain kinds of behavior. For instance, the *dybbuk* of Jewish myth likes to possess the living, while the Japanese *shi-ryo* always materializes to attack. This kind of thing should usually be handled simply by roleplaying the ghost appropriately. At the GM's option, a habit like this may be worth from -5 to -15 points as a Compulsive Behavior, Vow or Odious Racial Habit if it's time-consuming, limiting or likely to lead to the ghost's exorcism or destruction.

**More Powerful Ghosts:** Although single-minded, ghosts are not static. They can learn new skills and develop new abilities if they don't fade away. Old ghosts are among the most powerful undead, and can gradually conquer their compulsions to become progressively more free-willed with time. The most ancient ghosts are effectively willful undead. Make the following changes:

**Old Ghost:** Add Unlimited Lifespan (+30%) to Ghost Form [30]. Add Alertness +1 [5], Extra Fatigue 9 [27] and Strong Will +2 [8]. Reduce compulsion to -10 points. *155 points.*

**Ancient Ghost:** Add Unlimited Lifespan [30]. Add Alertness +2 [10], Extra Fatigue 18 [54] and Strong Will +4 [16]. Reduce compulsion to -5 points. *200 points.*

**Primeval Ghost:** Add Unlimited Lifespan [30]. Add Alertness +4 [20], Extra Fatigue 36 [108] and Strong Will +8 [32]. Eliminate compulsion. *285 points.*

**Scary Ghosts:** Ghosts with hideous wounds, horrid sores, no head and the like have the Terror advantage (p. 60), *not* Horrific Appearance. They may always materialize in horrific form, but since they needn't materialize to interact with the living, they can limit the effects of their Terror.

### Sample Ghost: Father Weast (275 points)

Age 550. When materialized: 5'5", 145 lbs., a man with gray eyes and hair, full beard and Catholic liturgical vestments.

<b>ST:</b> 10 [0]	<b>IQ:</b> 14 [45]	<b>Fatigue:</b> 28
<b>DX:</b> 10 [0]	<b>HT:</b> 12 [20]	<b>Senses:</b> 16
<b>Speed:</b> 5.50	<b>Move:</b> 5	<b>Will:</b> 19
<b>Dodge:</b> 5		

**Advantages:** Ancient Ghost [200]; Strong Will +1 (total +5) [4]; Voice [10].

**Disadvantages:** Compulsive Behavior (Say mass in the chapel every day); Pacifism (Self-Defense Only) [-15]; Primitive -4 TLs [-20]; Stubbornness [-5].

**Quirks:** Keeps his old vows (although they don't matter much to a ghost); Likes being channeled for theological debates; Won't use his powers to cause direct harm. [-3]

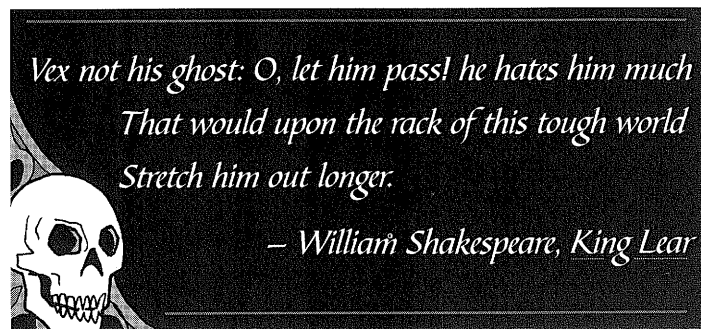
**Skills:** Area Knowledge (15th-c. England)-14 [1]; Administration-14 [2]; Bard-17\* [4]; Diplomacy-14\* [1]; History-12 [1]; Law (Religious)-12 [1]; Leadership-15 [4]; Occultism-14 [2]; Performance/Ritual-17\* [4]; Philosophy-12 [1]; Theology-16 [8]; Writing-14 [2].

\* Includes +2 for Voice.

**Languages:** English (native)-14 [0]; French-14 [2]; Latin-16 [6].

**Description:** Father Weast was an English priest at the time of the War of the Roses. His village's lord was a staunch Lancastrian and well-liked by the villagers. Weast himself was something of a firebrand, preaching the House of Lancaster's divine right to the throne – even though the church generally tried to avoid taking sides too blatantly.

Unfortunately, his village lay across the path of a Yorkist advance. The lord defiantly manned the fortifications of his manor, while Weast preached courage in the chapel. The manor could not stand against an army, however, and the Yorkists put the place to the torch.



Weast and some of the defenders found themselves trapped by the flames in the chapel. Since Weast was proclaiming defiantly that he would “stay forever in the chapel, come what may,” rather than bow before “rebels against their divinely-ordained king,” the Yorkists weren't inclined to offer any aid. When the flames died, Weast found that he was being held to his word, even in death: his punishment for his immoderate and impious final oaths, and perhaps for putting earthly loyalty before peace and humility.

Today, over 500 years later, Father Weast still haunts the old chapel. He can be heard saying mass in Latin every morning and evening. His presence has been discovered by several spiritualists, who enjoy debating theological issues with him, especially those regarding the afterlife. Weast enjoys this contact even more than his channelers do! Should a historian deign to believe in ghosts, Weast would also be an excellent source of accurate information about 15th-century England.

Father Weast would be a valuable ally against the malicious undead in a modern-day **GURPS Horror** campaign, and could serve as a powerful Patron for a group of undead hunters.



# Lich

*Form:* Corporeal (skeletal).  
*Motivation:* Willful.

## Description

Liches are undead sorcerers who have reanimated themselves with necromancy and preserved their skeletal bodies with alchemical elixirs. As a result, they are extremely magical and require mana to survive. Despite this weakness, they are the most feared of the corporeal undead. This is in part due to their potent undead form, but mostly because they tend to be *powerful* wizards. In game terms, the “average” lich should have at least 200 points in IQ, Magery, Strong Will and spells.

The usual motivations for becoming a lich are megalomania and an unwillingness to accept death, although a few sorcerers simply want to be able to study without having to deal with things like eating and sleeping. Liches tend to have the kinds of attitudes associated with melodramatic dark overlords and mad scientists in cinema. While they aren't necessarily evil, organized faiths will likely do their best to portray them that way, since most gods take a dim view of those who cheat death. Between their image problems and appearance, it's rare for liches to be well-integrated members of society. Most take their notes, reanimate a few servants and retreat to a secret hiding place to hatch their plots.

Player-character liches are certainly possible, but liches are reserved as NPC foes in most fantasy campaigns. They are extremely effective in this role. First, they are sorcerers who neither sleep nor age, so they have plenty of time to perfect the most diabolical spells. Next, they are traditionally served by armies of mindless undead, like mummies, skeletons and zombies. Finally, since liches tend to retreat from society, most are faced in their lairs, where they have the home-ground advantage.

See p. 43 for rules on how to become a lich. An alternative to the Lich spell is suggested under *Skeleton* (p. 79).

## Physical Description

The Lich spell (p. 43) withers the body, melting away flesh to avoid decay. The end result is a skin-wrapped skeleton with glowing pinpoints of reddish or yellowish light for eyes. A lich's body is enchanted. A mage can sense this on a successful (IQ + Magery) roll, while both Analyze Magic and Aura will reveal the lich for what it is. Many liches embed a large Powerstone in their body, often in the skull.



## Habitat

To avoid casual harassment by priests and undead hunters, most liches live in labyrinthine tombs or spooky old castles far from civilization. To keep the living out, these lairs tend to be kept in utter darkness and filled with traps, linked spells (see p. M64) and undead guards. Being largely immune to mortal weaknesses, some liches will even locate their strongholds in Arctic locales, or put them under water or in vacuum, relying on the environment to exclude the living.

A lich isn't bound to its death site, tomb or anything else. While it typically remains in its lair, this is a matter of choice. It *can* travel anywhere, even in daylight, as long as there is mana.

## Statistics

*Attribute Modifiers:* ST -1 [-10]; DX +2 [20]; HT +2 [20].

*Advantages:* Dark Vision [25]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; DR 2 (vs. all attacks) [6]; Extra Fatigue 6 [18]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Increased Speed +1 [25]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Brain, Impaling Bonus or Vitals) [35]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15]; Vacuum Support [40]. Being powerful sorcerers, liches always have high IQ, Magery and lots of spells, but these things aren't part of the template.

*Disadvantages:* Dependency (Mana; common, constantly) [-25]; Dependency (Potion\*; rare, monthly) [-30]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Eunuch [-5]; Fragile [-20]; Hideous Appearance [-20]; Inconvenient Size (Skeletal) [-10]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Unhealing [-30]; Unliving (Mitigated by potion\*; monthly, -70%) [-15].

*Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:* Affected by Pentagram [0]; Can be turned using True Faith [0]; Cannot swim [0].

*Skills:* Group Skill Bonus +1 (Demon Lore, Occultism, Spirit Lore, Thanatology and Theology) [6].

\* This elixir is unnamed (it *isn't* Tiresias, p. 43). It requires some rather unpleasant materials (free but illegal), and takes 1 week and an unmodified Alchemy roll to make. It is learned like any other elixir, and has no effect on the living.

**Template Cost: 100 points.**

### Variations

Since the lich is largely a modern-day fantasy construct, it isn't steeped in folklore, although undead sorcerers in general are all somewhat lich-like (e.g., Koschei the Undying, from Russian folklore; pp. RU100-101). This means that it can be whatever the GM wants it to be; the template above is conservative. Some GMs may wish to boost physical toughness by raising ST or DR, or adding Undead Invulnerability. Others will want to elevate the innate magical powers of liches, possibly including higher levels of Extra Fatigue, or replacing mana dependency with Mana Enhancer (p. CI40).

**Becoming a Lich in Play:** Players who wish to turn their characters into liches should start with the template above. Modifications are allowed, but are limited to the abilities in Chapter 3. The final design is subject to GM approval, as always. The more powerful the final form, the greater the energy cost of the Lich spell. Extremely powerful forms may take so long to create that the would-be lich is likely to be interrupted by his foes (most black magicians have them!) before he can complete the casting.

### Sample Lich:

#### **Malothales the Dark (450 points)**

Age 137; 5'9", 75 lbs.; yellowed human skeleton with glowing red eyes, dressed in dingy robes.

<b>ST:</b> 8 [-10]	<b>IQ:</b> 16 [80]	<b>Fatigue:</b> 14
<b>DX:</b> 14 [20]	<b>HT:</b> 14 [20]	<b>Senses:</b> 16
<b>Speed:</b> 8.00	<b>Move:</b> 8	<b>Will:</b> 19
<b>Dodge:</b> 8	<b>Parry:</b> 10	

**Advantages:** Lich [100]; Literacy [10]; Magery 3 [35]; Strong Will +3 [12].

**Disadvantages:** Curious [-5]; Fanaticism (Own cause) [-15]; Megalomania [-10]; Obsession (Become Emperor) [-5].

**Quirks:** Avoids physical labor (uses zombies); Dresses in black; Likes old books; Obsessed with discovering a "death spell"; Reanimates every corpse he encounters. [-5]

**Skills:** Alchemy/TL3-20 [24]; Archaeology-14 [1]; Architecture/TL3-15 [1]; Body Sense-15 [8]; Interrogation-15 [1]; Intimidation-15 [1]; Mortician-16 [2]; Occultism-20# [8]; Poisons-15 [2]; Research-15 [1]; Speed-Reading-15 [1]; Staff-15 [8]; Tactics-14 [1];

Thanatology-18# [6]; Thaumatology-20\* [12]; Theology-15# [1]; Traps/TL3-15 [1]; Writing-15 [1].

**Languages:** English (native)-16 [0]; Latin-15 [1].

**Spells\* (1 point each, except where noted):** Analyze Magic-17; Apportation-17; Aura-17; Blink-20 [6]; Continual Light-17; Control Person-17; Counterspell-17; Curse-17; Darkness-17; Death Vision-17; Deathtouch-21 [8]; Decay-17; Delay-17; Detect Magic-17; Dispel Magic-17; Enchant (VH)-20 [12]; Fatigue-17; Fear-17; Halt Aging (VH)-16; History-17; Identify Spell-17; Iron Arm-17; Itch-17; Lend Health-17; Lend Strength-17; Lich (VH)-16; Light-17; Link-17; Major Healing (VH)-21 [16]; Mass Zombie (VH)-18 [4]; Mind-Reading-17; Minor Healing-17; Mystic Mist-17; No-Smell-17; Pain-17; Paralyze Limb-17; Permanent Possession (VH)-16; Possession (VH)-16; Powerstone-20 [6]; Purify Air-17; Recover Strength-20 [6]; Resist Pain-17; Restoration (VH)-16; Scryguard-17; Seek Earth-17; Seek Food-17; Seeker-17; Sense Emotion-17; Sense Foes-17; Shape Earth-17; Shield-17; Skull-Spirit-17; Soul Jar (VH)-16; Soul Rider-17; Spasm-17; Staff-17; Steal Health-17; Steal Strength-17; Summon Spirit-17; Teleport (VH)-21 [16]; Terror-17; Test Food-17; Trace-17; Truthsayer-17; Ward-17; Wither Limb-17; Wraith (VH)-18 [4]; Zombie-20 [6].

\* Includes +3 for Magery. # Includes +1 for Group Skill Bonus.

**Description:** Malothales is a Megalan necromancer who intends to build up his power and challenge the Emperor for control of Megalos. Obsessed as he may be, he's also quite methodical and sees no need to rush the issue. He knows that it will take him a few lifetimes to accumulate the resources he needs to take on an empire, which is why he has made himself into a lich.

As an unaging lich, Malothales can research death curses and animate his army at a leisurely pace. He has already zombified over 10,000 corpses, mostly fallen soldiers, which he has concealed in graveyards around the empire. He has also enchanted a stockpile of 500 Skull-Spirit items and two rings containing the Wraith spell, which he intends to give to his future generals. With his recent development of the Mass Zombie spell, he hopes to speed things up over the next 50 years or so.

Malothales is, of course, insane. This doesn't make him any less dangerous. While the Emperor may not be in danger, anyone who comes into contact with the lich is. Fortunately, he lives in a subterranean crypt at the edge of the Blackwoods, where few people dare venture. He's most likely to be discovered raising the dead in a graveyard, but is likely to teleport away at the first sign of trouble. Those who decide to track him down are in for the battle of their lives . . .

Malothales is intended to be used as a NPC foe in a **GURPS Fantasy** campaign.

# Mummy

*Form:* Corporeal (mummified).

*Motivation:* Restless or enslaved (mindless).

## Description

Mummies are corpses preserved through desiccation (see p. 24). This is usually intentional, and is practiced as a funerary rite in many cultures. Mummies are often entombed with consecrated amulets and other regalia designed to preserve and reanimate them. This is the default assumption for undead mummies; at the GM's option, mummies without amulets may spontaneously animate as well (see *Variations*, below).

An undead mummy is extremely strong and nearly indestructible. It has only two weaknesses: fire and its amulet. Fire will destroy a mummy in short order, as mummies tend to be dry and bandaged in resin-coated windings. As for the amulet, it is the focus of the mummy's powers. Removing or destroying a mummy's amulet makes it susceptible to injury and dissipates the force that animates it. The surest way to destroy a mummy is to remove its amulet and then set it on fire.

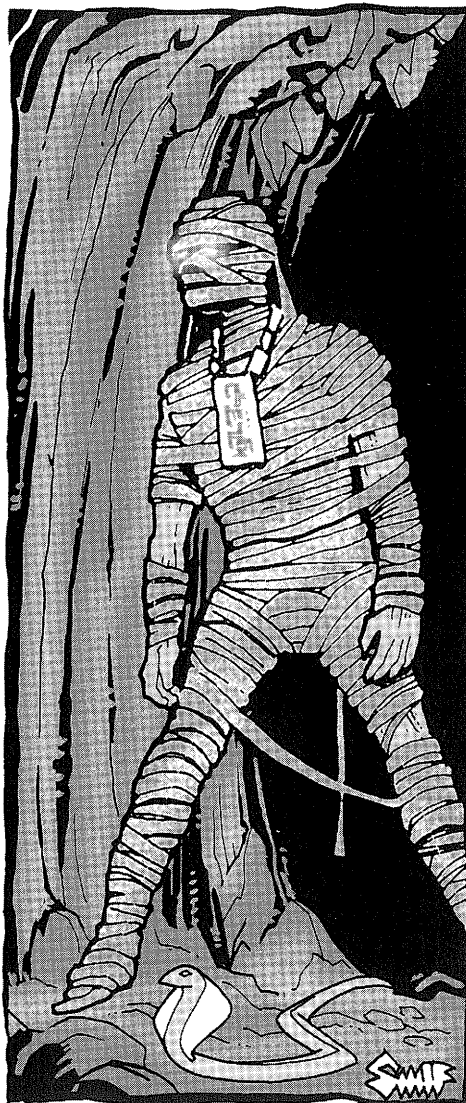
Mummies are protective of their tombs and tend to kill anyone who enters, although they will tolerate priests and those who have come to make offerings. A mummy knows the layout of its tomb well enough to navigate in the dark, and will be familiar with any traps or secret passages. Fortunately, mummies tend to be somewhat slow and shambling, so it is sometimes possible to outrun them.

Wizards who are made into mummies retain the magical powers they had in life. Many know the following spell:

### Mummy's Curse

Caster *must* touch the subject. There is no immediate effect, but the subject must make a HT roll. If he fails, he acquires the Curse. A character under the Curse rolls against his basic HT once per week; a failed roll does 1 hit of damage. If his HT ever reaches 0, the victim will fall into a coma and look very much like a mummy himself. Eventually, unless help is found, he will die, but his body will not decay. He will not automatically rise as a mummy, but any wizard who knows the *Zombie* spell (p. 41) is at +4 to use it on him.

The Mummy's Curse always has a cure, but the GM should keep this a secret. It may be a spell (like *Remove Curse*), an elixir or a rare herb. Different versions of this



spell may exist, each with a different cure. No character may be affected by more than one Mummy's Curse at a time.

*Duration:* Permanent until cured.

*Cost:* 3.

*Prerequisites:* Curse and Pestilence. The wizard must also be a mummy.

## Physical Description

A corpse wrapped in dry bandages, with only its shrivelled eyes peering out (sometimes glowing with magical light). A mummy's body parts are withered but well-preserved, and it smells vaguely of preservative chemicals.

*Amulets:* Most mummies wear a large (c. 3" wide) funerary amulet somewhere on their body, usually around the neck. This is targeted at -7, has DR 4 and takes 12 points of damage to destroy. Smashing it causes the mummy to lose 1 HT/minute and makes it Unliving, effectively negat-

ing its Undead Invulnerability (i.e., it "dies" at -1 HT instead of being nearly unkillable). Not all amulets are magical; some are consecrated items instead, and will not appear to be obviously magical to a mage.

## Habitat

Undead mummies are almost always found in their tombs. In the case of Egyptian mummies, the tomb will be a mastaba or pyramid with many rooms, confusing passages and traps. Other cultures bury mummies in caves, mounds and underground crypts. Mummies are liable to be accompanied by undead servants (such as the enslaved mummies described under *Variations*) or animals (p. 90). Egyptian mummies were entombed with golem-like servants called *shabti*.

## Statistics

*Attribute Modifiers:* ST +10 [110].

*Advantages:* Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Extra Hit Points +5 [25]; High



Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Imperturbable [10]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Brain or Vitals) [15]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Undead Invulnerability [150].

**Disadvantages:** Compulsive Behavior (Remain in tomb and guard it; kill abductors and return if forcibly removed from tomb) [-15]; Dependency (Funerary amulet; rare, constantly) [-150]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Hideous Appearance [-20]; Reduced Move -1 [-5]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Sterile [-3]; Unhealing [-30]; Unliving (Mitigated by funerary amulet, -60%) [-20]; Vulnerability (2d from fire) [-20].

**Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:** Dislikes fire [-1]; Protective of amulet [-1]. Can be turned using True Faith [0].

**Template Cost: 125 points.**

## Variations

**Enslaved Mummies:** Mummies can also be reanimated using the Zombie spell (p. 41). These undead slaves are far less powerful than the willful mummies described above, and always serve a master. They are *not* easily distinguished from their more powerful cousins! Use this template *instead* of the one above:

**Attribute Modifiers:** ST +1 [10].

**Advantages:** Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Extra Hit Points +5 [25]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Brain or Vitals) [15]; Invulnerability (Mind Control) [75]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15].

**Disadvantages:** Cannot Learn [-30]; Dead Broke [≠25]; Dependency (Mana; common, constantly) [-25]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; Hideous Appearance [-20]; Low Empathy [-15]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Obdurate [-10]; Reprogrammable Duty [≠25]; Slave Mentality [-40]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Sterile [-3]; Unhealing [-30]; Unliving [-50]; Vulnerability (2d from fire) [-20].

**Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:** Affected by Control Zombie, Pentagram and Turn Zombie [0]; No mental skills [0].

**Template Cost:** -83 points.

**Spontaneous Mummies:** Mummies without amulets may rise in response to a tomb violation. Use the willful mummy template above, but replace Dependency (Funerary amulet) with Dependency (Own tomb; infrequent, constantly) [-100], delete Undead Invulnerability and the quirk "Protective of amulet," and remove the Mitigator limitation on Unliving, making it worth the full -50 points. Template cost becomes -4 points.

# Revenant

**Other Names:** Preta (India), Taxim (Eastern Europe).

**Form:** Corporeal (rotting).

**Motivation:** Restless.

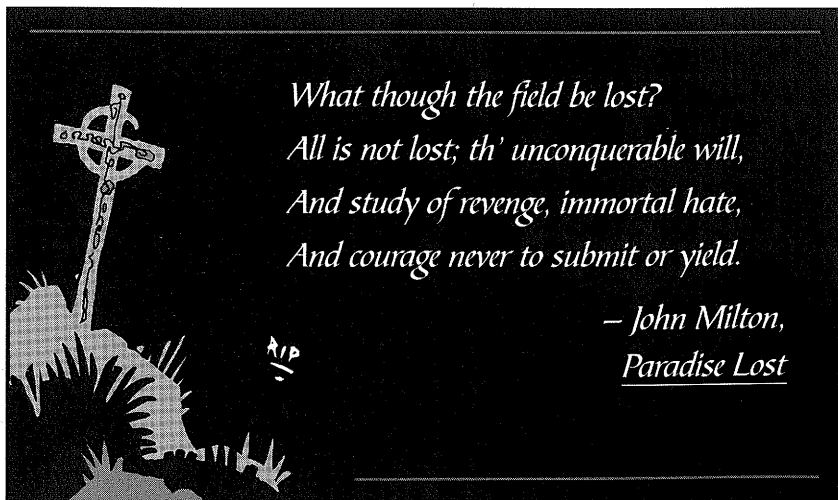
## Description

A revenant is a corpse that has risen from its grave in order to right a wrong. This need only be a "wrong" from the point of view of the dead man; a criminal who gets a fair trial and is legally executed for his crimes may still rise as a revenant. Of course, some revenants were good folk in life, and seek only to prove their innocence or complete some pressing task.

Some revenants haunt sites that were significant to them in life (e.g., an executed criminal may lurk near a gibbet). Others seek revenge against those who betrayed or killed them or a loved one. A few undertake more challenging tasks, up to and including investigating a crime and instigating a retrial to clear their name. In all cases, though, revenants are single-minded to the point of monomania, and rarely interact with the living except to coerce, menace or slay them.

Although not as deadly as liches or vampires, revenants are still foes to be feared. They are vicious, strong, unnaturally tough and always fight to the death. Their appearance is fearsome, their smell is worse, and their rotting flesh and stinking "breath" harbor illness, which is often passed on to those who encounter them. Their insane desire for justice or vengeance makes them even more dangerous.

Unlike most corporeal undead, a revenant *isn't* Unliving. Its mad drive allows it to function even when it's badly damaged. It will collapse if it's wounded badly enough, but that's only temporary. Revenants who are buried (which they often are, given their vile stench) will slowly heal their wounds and rise once more. They aren't invulnerable, and can be destroyed by mundane attacks, but it takes a *lot* of damage to put them down for good.



*What though the field be lost?  
All is not lost; th' unconquerable will,  
And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
And courage never to submit or yield.*

*— John Milton,  
Paradise Lost*

Revenants can't normally be "turned" by religious folk, either. Their will to remain on earth is stronger than the faith of even the most devout zealot, and a revenant will not deviate from its mission simply because a holy symbol is placed in its path. There are some exceptions to this rule, such as when a good and faithful person rises from the grave, but these are extremely rare (i.e., GM's option).

Fortunately, revenants don't last forever. As time passes, those who wronged them die off and those who knew them in life stop thinking about them. Eventually, the force animating the revenant wanes and vanishes. As a result, revenants have only a few decades in which to accomplish their mission. When a player character rises as a revenant, the GM should secretly determine the amount of time he has (10d years works well). Revenants who exceed their time on earth simply collapse; those with a mission to accomplish will collapse upon completing their mission, regardless of how much time they may have left.

### Physical Description

Revenants always seem to be in an advanced stage of decay, although they never quite become skeletons. They are usually hairless, with blackened eyes, teeth and fingernails. Ragged strips of putrescent flesh hang from yellowed bones, and maggots can be seen crawling under the skin, as well as in eye sockets and other bodily orifices. They smell unbelievably bad, and can be detected by scent alone from a dozen yards away. Anyone with Squeamishness must make a Fright Check at -2 when confronting a revenant.

### Habitat

If a revenant is compelled to haunt a location, it will rarely leave the area. Typical haunts include murder sites, gallows and other locations associated with death. Revenants who are out for revenge can be found nearly anywhere, but they will always be relentlessly pursuing their target. Those with other objectives will be found wherever their mission takes them.

### Statistics

*Attribute Modifiers:* ST +3 [30]; HT +3 [30].

*Advantages:* Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Extra Hit Points +3 [15];

High Pain Threshold [10]; Higher Purpose (Pursuing compulsion) [5]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood) [5]; Pestilence [5]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unfazeable [15].

*Disadvantages:* Bad Smell [-10]; Bloodlust [-10]; Compulsive Behavior (e.g., haunt locale) or Obsession (e.g., clear name, hunt down killer) [-15]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Eunuch [-5]; Loner [-5]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Stubbornness [-5]; Unhealing (Heals normally if buried) [-20].

*Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:* Revenants cannot be turned using True Faith unless the GM makes a specific exception.

**Template Cost: 75 points.**

### Variations

*Seeker:* Revenants who hunt specific individuals often possess the ability to track down their prey no matter where he goes. At the GM's option, a revenant may take a special "knack" (p. CI38) version of the Seeker spell (p. M54). He will always know where his prey is and will have an intuitive feel for actions that will take him closer to his victim. This ability is passive and always on. It requires no ritual and has no fatigue cost. *10 points.*

*Taxim:* These are Eastern European revenants. They are identical to "generic" revenants in most respects, but are almost always male. They are also exceptionally strong and emanate fear, and can be dazzled by light and instantly destroyed by an ordained priest using obscure holy words (Occultism-5 and Theology-5 rolls to recall the words, 10 seconds to speak them).

Use the revenant template, but replace ST +3 with ST +5 [60]. Add Night Vision [10], Terror [30] and Vulnerability (10d from holy words said by a priest) [-30]. Also add Allergic Susceptibility (Light) [-15]; while light can't be touched or breathed, exposure to light brighter than a torch will trigger this disadvantage (see p. CI96). *100 points.*

*Unaware Dead:* Some revenants don't know that they're dead. They're driven to pursue a mission related to their death, but can neither explain their compulsion nor recall their death. These "unaware dead" eat, drink, breathe and look just like normal human beings. They have partial Amnesia (p. CI86) [-10] but no special powers. The -30 points of "reserved" disadvantages associated with their Amnesia must include a -15-point Obsession or Compulsive Behavior related to their death. Treat them exactly like living humans in all other respects. *-25 points.*

*I will render vengeance to mine enemies,  
and will reward them that hate me.*

*— Deuteronomy 32:41*



# Shade

*Other Names:* Forso (New Guinea), Imandwa (Tanzania), Kachina (Pueblo), Lemures (Ancient Greece), Manes (Ancient Rome), P'oh (China).

*Form:* Spectral.

*Motivation:* Restless.

## Description

In modern usage, “shade” simply means “ghost.” It is used most often to refer to the ghosts that appear in Classical Greek and Roman literature, however. These entities have certain traits which distinguish them from other kinds of ghosts. Spectral undead with these traits can be found in many cultures, and we’ll use the term “shade” for all of them.

A shade walks the earth because it is unhappy with the way it is being remembered by its family, tribe or people. Perhaps it has been forgotten altogether, or perhaps it feels that it deserves more (or better) worship than it has been receiving. Maybe it desires a specific kind of offering. Whatever its motivation, a shade wants something from the living and has become angry because it hasn’t received it. As a result, it has become dangerous and bloodthirsty – perhaps even evil. It can sometimes be driven off temporarily using fire, rattles, singing, etc., but it cannot be exorcised.

A shade is awakened by neglect or irreverence, but it won’t go away just because someone changes his ways and begins to pray or make offerings to it. Once a shade returns from the grave, it will haunt its descendants or its tribe until it feels it has punished them enough. It may even try to kill them all off! A shade harms the living either by causing bad luck (see *Altering Probability*, p. 53) or by injuring them directly (see *The Poltergeist Effect*, p. 52), never by attacking in material form.

While shades can usually produce sounds and visual effects (like shadowy images), they cannot fully materialize unless they are summoned by a wizard, shaman or priest. This typically requires blood sacrifice, dancing or some other ritual. Shades won’t serve their invoker, although they will sometimes listen to what he has to say. They may agree to stop causing problems if they’re promised worship, sacrifice, etc., but they never *have* to accept such an offer.

## Physical Description

Like ghosts (p. 68), shades are usually invisible and can only be detected by sensitive individuals, although generally not by animals. Even people *without* special powers can sometimes sense a shade as an “evil presence,”



and shades in the distance may appear to be bobbing lights or fires (called “min-min lights” by the Australian aborigines) that vanish when approached. A summoned shade or one viewed using special powers will look dead; it will never be mistaken for a living person.

## Habitat

Shades are free to roam the countryside, but most stay near their ancestral or tribal lands. A few lurk near their tombs, but they don’t have to; in fact, it’s rare for shades to be bound to a physical locale. In Greek and Roman belief, shades travel from Hades to the mortal world via caves, chasms and other fissures in the earth, and can often be found in large numbers there.

## Statistics

*Advantages:* Extra Fatigue 8 [24]; Ghost Form (Unlimited Lifespan, +30%; Can’t fully materialize without being summoned, -5%) [125]; Strong Will +4 [16].

*Disadvantages:* Bad Temper [-10]; Dread (Common item within 10 yards; e.g., fire, musical instrument, singing) [-40]; Obsession (Punish those who haven’t shown proper respect) [-5]; Self-Centered [-10].

*Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:* Affected by Astral Block, Repel Spirits and Turn Spirit [0]; Can be detected by sensitive individuals [0]; Can sometimes be felt or seen [0]; Can be turned using True Faith [0].

**Template Cost: 100 points.**



## Variations

**Forso:** The “bored dead” of New Guinea and the islands to the north of Australia, these shades always menace the tribes they belonged to in life. Their appearance can be avoided by prominently displaying the bones of the dead. A forso can be felt as a supernatural presence, but cannot be seen or heard. Forso attack by causing bad luck with their probability alteration power. Use the template above, but replace “Can’t fully materialize without being summoned” (-5%) with “Can’t materialize” (-20%) for a net -15 points. Template cost becomes 85 points.

**Imandwa:** These Tanzanian shades belong to heroes and tribal leaders who feel that they are no longer being honored properly. They are jealous of the living, and usually cause trouble at night. Imandwa of sorcerers are common and have magical powers. Use the template above, but replace Bad Temper with Jealousy [-10]. Template cost is unchanged.



**Kachina:** This is the Pueblo Indian name for the spirits of their ancestral dead. When the dead are given food at burial, they go on to do good deeds, like bringing rain. Failure to make grave offerings results in an evil shade that attacks towns and murders people. Kachina can be invoked by dancing while wearing sacred masks. The standard shade template applies, but replace Bad Temper with Murder Addiction [-60] for a net -50 points. Template cost becomes 50 points.

**Manes:** These are the shades of ancient Rome. If the ancestral dead aren’t offered food, wine and flowers in broken pots, they rise to seek revenge. Manes use the standard shade template, but their Ghost Form advantage has the Visible (+0%) modifier and they have no Dread, which makes template cost 140 points.

**P’oh:** A Chinese shade. This word also describes the part of the human soul that dwells in the grave after death (see p. 8). Unlike most shades, p’oh can materialize on their own, most often when they attack: remove the -5%

limitation on Ghost Form (a net +5 points). P’oh also embody desiccation, and have Water-Only Magery 3 [22] and the innate spells Dehydrate-15 [8], Destroy Water-15 [8] and Rain-15 [8] (to prevent rain), which they use to curse the living. These changes increase template cost to 151 points.

### Sample Shade: Furia (200 points)

Age 120; 5’1”, 110 lbs.; a dead, black-haired woman in a white tunic, *stola* and *palla*.

<b>ST:</b> 9 [-10]	<b>IQ:</b> 12 [20]	<b>Fatigue:</b> 17
<b>DX:</b> 12 [20]	<b>HT:</b> 11 [10]	<b>Senses:</b> 12
<b>Speed:</b> 5.75	<b>Move:</b> 5	<b>Will:</b> 16
<b>Dodge:</b> 5		

**Advantages:** Common Sense [10]; Manes [140]; Versatile [5].

**Disadvantages:** Jealousy [-10]; Stubbornness [-5].

**Quirks:** Haughty; Likes fire; Methodical; Nosy; Won’t bother those who offer her blue flowers (her favorite). [-5]

**Skills:** Administration-12 [2]; Area Knowledge (Rome)-12 [1]; Beverage-Making-12 [1]; Carousing-12 [4]; Cooking-12 [1]; Dancing-14\* [4]; Hobby (Board Games)-12 [1]; Merchant-12 [2]; Musical Instrument (Lyre)-12\* [2]; Savoir-Faire-14 [4]; Singing-12\* [1].

\* Includes +1 for Versatile.

**Languages:** Greek-12 [2]; Latin (native)-12 [0].

**Description:** Furia is the shade of a wealthy Roman matron, the wife of a minor patrician named Proculus. She was the true master of her household in life, managing its finances and overseeing various social activities. She left politics up to her husband, but he recognized her superior judgement and often consulted with her before making major decisions. Despite her wisdom, Furia was jealous and meddlesome, and an unabashed social climber. As a result, she and her husband stepped on a lot of toes on their way up the social ladder.

Proculus and Furia died natural deaths and received proper funerary rites. They left their wealth and lands in the hands of their son and only child, Tiberius. Their enemies quickly moved to discredit and dishonor him, however. He was ultimately assassinated by a rival family that desired his property. With his death, no one remained to remember the family’s name or defend its honor. Furia could not stand for this and came back from the grave as a shade. She isn’t fond of being seen as a ghost (in fact, she finds her current appearance rather unflattering), so she gets her revenge by setting “accidental” fires instead.

Furia is intended for a **GURPS Imperial Rome** campaign. She could be used as a NPC, but in an all-manes campaign (in Roman belief, manes often appeared in groups), she could also work as a PC.

# Shadow

*Form:* Spectral.

*Motivation:* Willful or enslaved (dominated).

## Description

A shadow is a ghost that comes into existence when an evil person dies and makes a pact with the forces of darkness in order to avoid the afterlife and the punishment that awaits him there. In return for a powerful undead form, the shadow agrees to spread terror and death among the living. As a result, willful shadows are inevitably evil, murderous and hate mortals.

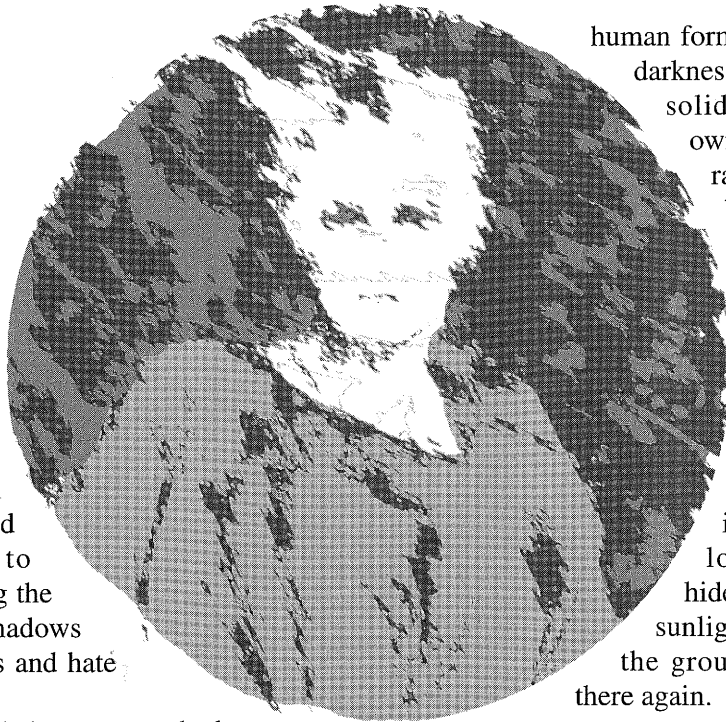
In order to bind them to their contract, shadows have been deprived of the ability to draw upon places of power or willing worshippers for sustenance. While they are as susceptible to fading as any other ghost, they must sustain themselves by stealing life energy from the living, which frequently kills the victim. People killed in this way rise as shadows themselves, dominated by their killer, and so the curse is spread.

Shadows are made of "negative life energy" and are creatures of cold, darkness and death. They can generate dense shadow in which to lurk and have strong magical powers in the dark. They usually prey upon the sleeping at night, often causing nightmares at the same time. When they stalk those who are awake, they hide in the dark, use their chilling touch to paralyze their victim with fear and then steal his life energy with their magic. Even when they aren't feeding, shadows leech the energy from their surroundings, causing a chill and killing plants and small animals.

Due to their ability to terrify and drain the living while remaining largely immune to attack, shadows are among the most feared of the spectral undead. Fortunately, there are two reliable ways to combat them: holy symbols and light. Being fugitives from the afterlife, shadows cannot afford to offend the gods and must keep their distance from religious symbols. As creatures of darkness, they have no magical powers in light brighter than candlelight, cringe from light more intense than torchlight and are actually damaged by sunlight.

## Physical Description

Unlike most ghosts, shadows are always visible but can never actually solidify. They appear as shadowy



human forms, their features obscured by darkness. Since they can pass through solid objects and generate their own darkness to hide in, they're rarely seen unless they want to be. Luckily for the living, a shadow's presence is usually betrayed by an unnatural chill.

A shadow forced out into sunlight looks like a human engulfed in smudgy flames. It trails smoke like that from a burning corpse as it runs around in a panic, looking for a dark place to hide. If it is actually destroyed by sunlight, it leaves a sooty burn on the ground; nothing will ever grow there again.

## Habitat

For obvious reasons, shadows dwell in dark places. Most prefer man-made subterranean lairs like cellars, dungeons, mines and sewers, as these put victims in easy reach, but some dwell in dark caves. A few prefer crypts, where they sometimes coexist with other undead.

The death-tinged aura of a shadow has two effects on its lair. First, a shadow's haunt is always conspicuously devoid of life and never contains molds, fungi, worms, insects or anything else alive. Second, the mana there becomes death-aspected (p. M94). This makes it easier to cast spells of cold, darkness and harm, and harder to cast spells of warmth, healing and light.

## Statistics

*Advantages:* Dark-Aspected Magery 3 [18]; Dark Vision [25]; Dominance [5]; Extra Fatigue 5 [15]; Ghost Form (Visible, +0%; Can't tap fatigue from places of power or worshippers, -10%; Sounds and visual effects only, -10%) [80]; Terror (-6 Fright Checks; Chilling Touch, -20%) [72].

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust [-10]; Dependency (Life energy; occasional, daily) [-30]; Dread (Light) [-30]; Dread (Ordinary religious symbols) [-10]; Intolerance (Living) [-10]; Lifebane [-10]; Weakness (1d/minute from sunlight) [-60].

*Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:* Affected by Astral Block, Repel Spirits and Turn Spirit [0]; Can be turned using True Faith [0]; Causes a slight chill [0].

*Innate Spells:* Darkness-15 [8]; Steal Strength-14 [6]; Steal Health-14 [6].

**Template Cost: 75 points.**

## Variations

An experienced shadow may spend points to have large numbers of servants controlled by Dominance, or to buy more Extra Fatigue and higher levels of Terror. A shadow can *never* buy off the limitations on its Ghost Form or Terror, nor may it remove its disadvantages, except as noted below.

**Greater Shadows:** Over time, a shadow that takes enough lives, creates enough slaves and sows enough terror may be promoted to the personal servitor of its dark master. Replace Dread (Ordinary religious symbols) with Blessed (Evil god) [10], add Unlimited Lifespan [30] to Ghost Form, and increase template cost to 125 points.

**Lesser Shadows:** A newly-created shadow is the slave of its killer, but *isn't* automatically evil and murderous. New shadows should add Slave Mentality [-40], but remove Bloodlust and Intolerance (Living) (a net +20 points). All other traits have a supernatural origin and cannot be avoided. It costs 55 points to play a lesser shadow.

**Shadow Wizards:** Wizards who become shadows retain all their spells and may use them at no penalty, although they may not use spells that require a touch (exception: Steal Health and Steal Strength). Those with Magery 3 keep their unlimited Magery; they *don't* replace it with Dark-Aspected Magery 3. Wizards with Magery 1-2 keep this and gain enough Dark-Aspected Magery to bring their total Magery to level 3. These extra Magery levels only work in darkness! The wizard should record two spell levels: one for use in the dark, one for use in light. In all cases, remember to adjust template cost accordingly.

### Sample Shadow: Lucretia Snow (200 points)

Age 42; shadowy form (c. 5'4" tall) that looks vaguely feminine.

<b>ST:</b> 10 [0]	<b>IQ:</b> 14 [45]	<b>Fatigue:</b> 17
<b>DX:</b> 11 [10]	<b>HT:</b> 13 [30]	<b>Senses:</b> 14
<b>Speed:</b> 6.00	<b>Move:</b> 6	<b>Will:</b> 15
<b>Dodge:</b> 6		

**Advantages:** Acute Taste and Smell +2 [4]; Dominance (100-point lesser shadow) [15]; Extra Fatigue 2 (total 7) [6]; Manual Dexterity +2 [6]; Shadow [75]; Strong Will +1 [4].

**Disadvantages:** Callous [-6]; Loner [-5].

**Quirks:** Fascinated by death and studies it closely; Likes to possess assassins; Moves from lair to lair frequently; Prefers female victims; Uses her powers to start fights among the living. [-5]

**Skills:** Disguise-12 [½]; Gesture-13 [½]; Intimidation-13 [1]; Poisons-16 [8]; Shadowing-14 [2]; Sleight of Hand-12\* [2]; Stealth-12 [4]; Streetwise-14 [2]; Thanatology-12 [1].

\* Includes +2 for Manual Dexterity.

**Languages:** English (native)-14 [0].

**Innate Spells:** Darkness-19; Steal Strength-18; Steal Health-18.

**Description:** Lucretia was an assassin in life: a cold, calculating poisoner who experimented with new toxins and dosages, often at the expense of granting her victims a swift death. She had a rudimentary code of honor that amounted to "stiff the victim, not the client" and some contacts in the Assassins' Guild, but she wasn't a social person and didn't always play by the rules. She met her end when a rival assassin knifed her in a dark alleyway.

When Lucretia reached the gates of Hell, the Devil offered her a chance to kill for him. Lucretia took this to mean demonhood and accepted, only to find herself returned to the mortal world as a shadow. Not one to lament her decisions, Lucretia immediately went to work, hoping to gain the respect of the Devil and earn a promotion. Her first victim was her own killer: she slew him in his sleep and made him into her undead slave.

Since her transition, Lucretia has moved from city to city, hiding in tombs and caves along the way. She likes to use her powers to start wars in the underworld, usually by possessing someone and having him commit a murder. She then stands back, watches the bloodshed and drains the life from the casualties. Although she'll happily drain any victim she can find, she prefers women, as she believes that her personality may be altered if she absorbs too much "male essence."

Lucretia was designed to be used in a *GURPS Fantasy* campaign. She is best reserved as an evil NPC unless the GM is running a particularly twisted campaign, in which case she could be used as a PC as well.

## Skeleton

**Form:** Corporeal (skeletal).

**Motivation:** Enslaved (mindless) or willful.

### Description

Animated skeletons are among the least of the enslaved undead. Light, fragile and not very strong, they aren't all that useful for heavy labor. On the other hand, they're fast and agile, making them dangerous warriors. As a result, most skeletons are used for guard duty. Skeletons are normally animated using the Zombie spell (p. 41); the template below is intended to reflect the abilities given for skeletons on p. M117.

### Physical Description

A skeleton, with pinpoints of magical light in its empty eye sockets. Old skeletons may be discolored, usu-



ally a yellow or black color, while those left outdoors will be bleached white. Those that have been standing still for many years may house nests of insects, spiders or rats in their skulls or rib cages; attacking a skeleton like this can sometimes unleash a swarm (p. B143)! Skeletons make characteristic clicking and creaking noises as they move . . . the sound of bone moving against bone without the benefit of padding.

## Habitat

Skeletons can be found anywhere; all that's required is a necromancer to reanimate them. They aren't sensitive to sunlight and there are no limitations on where they can function. In fact, they can even survive at the bottom of the ocean (although they can't swim) or in space, making them preferable to zombies for sorcerers who dwell in inaccessible places.

## Statistics

*Attribute Modifiers:* ST -1 [-10]; DX +2 [20]; IQ -2 [-15].

*Advantages:* Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; DR 2 (vs. missiles, beams and impaling attacks) [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Increased Speed +1 [25]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Brain, Impaling Bonus or Vitals) [35]; Invulnerability (Mind Control) [75]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15]; Vacuum Support [40].

*Disadvantages:* Cannot Learn [-30]; Dead Broke [-25]; Dependency (Mana; common, constantly) [-25]; Eunuch [-5]; Fragile [-20]; Hidebound [-5]; Hideous Appearance [-20]; Inconvenient Size (Skeletal) [-10]; Low Empathy [-15]; Mute [-25]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Obdurate [-10]; Reprogrammable Duty [-25]; Slave Mentality [-40]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Unhealing [-30]; Unliving [-50].

*Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:* Affected by Control Zombie, Pentagram and Turn Zombie [0]; Cannot swim [0]; No mental skills [0].

**Template Cost: -86 points.**

## Variations

**Enchanted Skeletons:** An unanimated skeleton is considered an inanimate object for magical purposes. Unlike a rotting corpse, it can be safely enchanted because it won't undergo decay that will eventually spoil the spell. Optionally, later animation with the Zombie spell won't ruin enchantments either. If this is the case, it becomes possible to enchant a skeleton *before* animating it. Where energy cost depends on size or weight, assume that a human skeleton is a 1-hex, 75-lb. object.

Useful spells to place on a skeleton include Illusion

*Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones;  
Behold, I will cause breath to  
enter into you, and ye shall live.*

– Ezekiel 37:5



Shell (p. M51, 400 energy), which adds 20 points to template cost if used to remove Hideous Appearance; Invisibility (p. M58, 750 energy), which adds Invisibility (p. CI59) [40], and Voices (p. M78, 20 energy/word), which lets the skeleton repeat a warning over and over. Many other spells are possible!

**Sculptures:** The Zombie spell animates a skeleton with a summoned spirit. This may work because the skeleton contains residual life force or death-aspected mana, in effect making it a magic ingredient (see p. M9). On the other hand, it may be that the spirit can animate anything that looks like the skeleton it had in life. If the GM decides this is true, any reasonable facsimile of a skeleton can be animated.

Building an acceptable mock-up requires a roll against the *lower* of Physiology skill and the relevant Artistic or Craft skill. The material used will determine the skill needed and may give a penalty to the roll; it will also modify the casting cost of the Zombie spell and the abilities of the skeleton.

**Plaster** (e.g., museum model). Skill: Sculpting. Fatigue cost: 4. Add Reduced Hit Points -5 [-25]. Template cost becomes -111 points.

**Plastic** (e.g., modern-day anatomical model). Skill: Professional Skill (Injection Molding). Fatigue cost and abilities are unchanged.

**Soft Metal** (e.g., bronze). Skill: Blacksmith. Fatigue cost: 32. Add DR 5 [15], Extra Hit Points +5 [25] and PD 3 [75]. Remove Fragile and Inconvenient Size (Skeletal). Template cost becomes 59 points.

**Hard Metal** (e.g., iron). Skill: Blacksmith (-2 to skill). Fatigue cost: 40. Add DR 6 [18], Extra Hit Points +10 [50] and PD 4 [100]. Remove Fragile and Inconvenient Size (Skeletal). Template cost becomes 112 points.

**Skeletons as Liches:** As an alternative to the Lich spell (p. 43), the GM may opt to let a necromancer use a skeleton he has animated as the "jar" for a Soul Jar spell (p. M73) cast on himself. If he is killed, his consciousness will revert to the skeleton. Since he can communicate directly with anyone touching his jar, he will be able to give orders to his skeleton and – since it is his slave – effectively take control of its body. As per the Soul Jar spell, he can see and hear normally in this form, but cannot speak and can only cast spells he knows at level 21 or better.

Necromancers in this form use their own IQ, Magery and mental traits. They don't gain the skeleton's Invulnerability or Unfazeable advantages, but do gain its ST, DX, HT and physical traits, including its Dependency and Social Stigma. They have fatigue points equal to their ST in life, not the skeleton's ST. The GM should only assess a point cost for these changes if they look to be permanent.

**Willful Skeletons:** Talking, intelligent skeletons appear in 15th-century European art, Christian "mystery plays" and Iroquois legends. These entities always seem to be wise in the lore of death and largely self-motivated. Despite the similarity in appearance, they aren't lichens. Willful skeletons should use the following template *instead* of the one above:

*Attribute Modifiers:* ST -1 [-10]; DX +2 [20].

*Advantages:* Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; DR 2 (vs. missiles, beams and impaling attacks) [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Imperturbable [10]; Increased Speed +1 [25]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Brain, Impaling Bonus or Vitals) [35]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Vacuum Support [40].

*Disadvantages:* Disturbing Voice [-10]; Eunuch [-5]; Fragile [-20]; Hideous Appearance [-20]; Inconvenient Size (Skeletal) [-10]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Unhealing [-30]; Unliving [-50].

*Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:* Can be turned using True Faith [0]; Cannot swim [0].

*Skills:* Group Skill Bonus +1 (Demon Lore, Occultism, Spirit Lore, Thanatology and Theology) [6].

*Template Cost:* 50 points.

## Specter

*Other Names:* Phantom.

*Form:* Spectral.

*Motivation:* Willful or restless.

### Description

Any ghost can be called a "specter," but the term is used here to mean an evil soul that is summoned when a necromancer botches a spell intended to call and bind a spirit. Souls that are released from the afterlife like this are free to torment the living, starting with the unfortunate sorcerer! A few specters come back on their own instead (see *Variations*, below), but these are no less evil.

Unlike shadows (p. 77) and vampires (p. 82), specters do not hunger for human life essence and aren't motivated by a quest for it. Their mission is simpler than that: they've returned to earth to enjoy the thrill of cruel pleasures after having being cut off for so long in the afterlife. They have

a strong psychic need to cause suffering, which is more like an addiction than an actual hunger. As a result, specters can coexist with other undead, as they aren't generally competing for the same "food supply."

Specters are extremely magical beings, since they are usually called into the world using magic. Even in settings where most ghosts have a non-magical explanation, specters will be magical. If magic doesn't exist, then neither will specters.

The magical nature of specters is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they have a wide array of magical powers. They are powerful mages with a variety of innate spells, and have a large battery of magical energy that they can use to power spells or standard ghost abilities, like possession and materialization. On the other hand, specters are affected by a larger number of spells than most undead, and require mana to survive.

Specters are unusual in a number of other respects, all of which are related to their magical nature. First, they are visible and look much as they did in life, as the energy of the local mana field keeps them partly materialized at all times. Next, mana alone can sustain a specter indefinitely, and as a result it will never fade. Finally, specters cannot alter probability like other ghosts, because magic is too fickle to allow such a fine degree of control.

At the GM's option, a specter appears instead of a demon when an Animation, Summon Spirit or Zombie spell critically fails and an 18 is rolled on the critical failure table (p. M6). There are rumors of a spell that can call specters intentionally, but since they are malign, free-willed entities, it's hard to imagine *why* a wizard would want to summon one.



## Physical Description

Specters look like ordinary living people, but have neither weight nor substance, and rarely speak. They will only seem unnatural if witnessed passing through a solid object, or when an object (like a bullet or sword) passes through them. The spells Aura and Sense Spirit will immediately reveal a specter for what it is.

## Habitat

A specter can dwell in any place that has mana. Since it can travel instantly to its place of death, it will often use this as its home base. As a result, many specters can be found lurking in death-tinged areas like gallows and prisons.

## Statistics

**Advantages:** Extra Fatigue 10 [30]; Ghost Form (Unlimited Lifespan, +30%; Visible, looks human, +5%; Can't alter probability, -20%) [115]; Magery 3 [35]; Night Vision [10].

**Disadvantages:** Addiction (Human suffering; cheap, totally addictive) [-15]; Dependency (Mana; common, constantly) [-25]; Intolerance (Living) [-10]; Sadism [-15]; Vulnerability (3d from Banish spell) [-9]; Vulnerability (3d from Dispel Magic spell) [-9].

**Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:** Dislikes holy items [-1]; Violently dislikes wizards [-1]. Affected by Astral Block, Pentagram, Repel Spirits and Turn Spirit [0]; Can be turned using True Faith [0].

**Innate Spells:** Death Vision-15 [8]; Madness-15 [8]; Pain-15 [8]; Pestilence-15 [8]; Terror-15 [8].

Template Cost: 145 points.

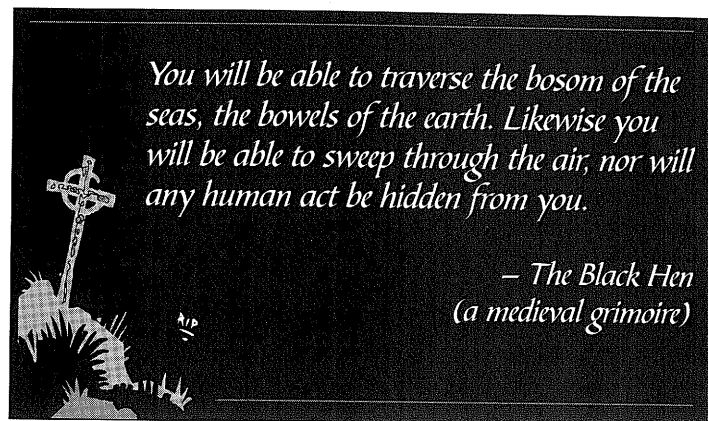
## Variations

Specter characters can purchase Extra Fatigue and Strong Will freely with earned character points. With the GM's permission, they can also acquire the Spectral Touch enhancement (p. 54) [40] on their Ghost Form. This is mostly of use to specters who know many spells, as it lets them attack with Deathtouch, Paralyze Limb, Wither Limb, etc., while safely insubstantial. This is a powerful ability, and the GM may choose to control it or forbid it entirely. No specter may buy off its Dependency or Vulnerability disadvantages.

**Good Specters:** This form can be used for *all* willful, spectral undead wizards, in which case there will be "good" specters as well as evil ones. Good specters don't have Addiction, Intolerance or Sadism (a net +40 points). Quirks become "Dislikes unholy items" and "Violently dislikes *evil* wizards." All other abilities remain the same, but since many of them are unpleasant, a good specter may be loath to use them. It costs 185 points to play a good specter.

**Restless Specters:** A very few specters aren't called by magic. Some extremely evil individuals (especially wizards) may spontaneously return from the grave in this form. Use the template above, but add a Compulsive Behavior or Obsession similar to that of a ghost (p. 68) or a revenant (p. 73).

**Specter Wizards:** Sorcerers who become specters can use their spells at no penalty, but may not use "touch-only" spells (other than Steal HT and Steal ST) unless they fully materialize or have the Touch enhancement on Ghost Form. Wizards who lacked Magery 3 in life are promoted to this level upon becoming specters; spell levels and point costs should be adjusted accordingly.



## Sample Specter: Doctor Haas (225 points)

Age 55; 5'10"; respectable-looking middle-aged man in a white coat.

<b>ST:</b> 11 [10]	<b>IQ:</b> 15 [60]	<b>Fatigue:</b> 21
<b>DX:</b> 10 [0]	<b>HT:</b> 11 [10]	<b>Senses:</b> 15
<b>Speed:</b> 5.25	<b>Move:</b> 5	<b>Will:</b> 15
<b>Dodge:</b> 5		

**Advantages:** Charisma +2 [10]; Specter [145].

**Disadvantages:** Curious [-10]; Delusion ("Torture is good for people, and can cure madness.") [-15]; Obsession (Finishing his perverse experiments) [-15].

**Quirks:** Always asks his victims "How do you feel now?"; Likes asylums, especially old ones; Takes pride in his work; Uses a lot of jargon; Visits his "patients" in their dreams. [-5]

**Skills:** Bard-16\* [1]; Criminology/TL6-16 [4]; Detect Lies-14 [2]; Diagnosis/TL6-14 [2]; Hypnotism-15 [4]; Interrogation-16 [4]; Pharmacy/TL6-14 [2]; Physician/TL6-14 [2]; Psychology-17 [8]; Research-14 [1]; Surgery/TL6-14 [4]; Writing-14 [1].

\* Includes +2 for Charisma.

**Languages:** English (native)-15 [0].

**Innate Spells:** Death Vision-20; Madness-20; Pain-20; Pestilence-20; Terror-20.



*Description:* Dr. Haas was a prominent criminal psychologist before the Great War. A brilliant and well-liked researcher, he was the director of an asylum for the criminally insane in Chicago. When war broke out in 1914, he was called upon to treat shell-shocked soldiers being sent back from Europe, the theory being that his background with violent criminals would be useful when treating men who had experienced soul-shattering violence. Unfortunately, Haas' own sanity wasn't up to the task of dealing with so much horror; somewhere along the line, he snapped.

At first, no one realized that Haas had gone mad. While his patients didn't seem to get any better, post-traumatic stress disorders were a mystery at the time, so people assumed that this was to be expected. Then the son of a congressman died while in Haas' care. An investigation was ordered shortly thereafter.

What the investigators found at Haas' private clinic was sickening. Haas had turned it into a torture chamber, and his patients had been reduced to drooling madmen by crude surgery, massive electrical shocks and sensory deprivation. When Haas was confronted with the evidence, he laughed maniacally, pulled out a small pistol and shot himself in front of his horrified accusers.

This was not the end of Haas, however. In 1921, he was purportedly seen at the asylum by a former patient. This was dismissed as a hallucination by the doctors, but since then other patients have seen him as well and cure rates have gone way down. In fact, even a few of the staff have started to crack . . .

Dr. Haas is a restless specter, intended for use in a Roaring Twenties *Horror* campaign. Of course, if he isn't stopped, he'll still be around for a modern-day campaign!

# Vampire

*Other Names:* Azeman (South America), Broucolaque (Greece), Gaki (Japan), Mullo (Gypsy), Pishaca (India), Vampyr (Rumania), Vetala (India), Wampyr (Hungary), Xixiegui (China) and many others.

*Form:* Corporeal (intact).

*Motivation:* Willful or enslaved (dominated).

## Description

Vampires are undead entities that feed on the vital energy of the living. They have become synonymous with the undead in the West thanks to their popularity in fiction. Ironically, the Western vampire wasn't originally undead at all: it was a bestial monster taken from Germanic myth, and had more in common with Celtic faerie than it did with dead humans. It wasn't until Christianity came along that the European vampire became associated with the undead. This led to the modern view of the vampire.

In Germanic folk tales, the vampire was part humanoid and part nocturnal, predatory animal. It had great strength, keen senses and sharp teeth, and could become a true beast at will. Since it was magical, it could be stopped by substances with magical properties; pagan folklore prescribed garlic, hemlock, wild rose, wolfsbane and wormwood. Most of these traits can still be found in the modern vampire.

Christianity identified vampires with the undead and concluded that they hunger for life energy, which they steal from the living. It also labelled them as evil, which is why they fear crucifixes and can be harmed by "purification" with fire, light and holy water. Finally, because they're already dead, vampires are hard to kill and have the ability to become misty "ghosts" at need.

Of course, early Christians rarely gave up their traditional beliefs, and many traits of the post-Christian vampire have their origins in earlier times, including:

- ‡ *Vampires have no reflection or shadow.* Comes from combining the folk belief that these things represent the soul with the Christian belief that a vampire's soul is in Hell.
- ‡ *Vampirism is contagious.* An extension of the old, folkloric link between vampires and disease to the newer, Christian view of vampirism as a curse.
- ‡ *Vampires avoid running water.* Comes from taking pagan earth symbols (like running water) associated with rest for the dead and applying them to Christian undead.



## Physical Description

A vampire looks just like he did in life, but is pale and cold if he hasn't fed for some time. He has bestial canine teeth and neither a shadow nor a reflection. Those who watch him will also realize that he shuns daylight and religious symbols. If he hasn't fed for some time, he will age quickly and visibly. He can also assume a mist form (looks just like his natural form, but ghost-like) and a beast form (looks like a large version of a normal beast).

In some tales, vampires can seal the wounds they leave after feeding (see *Bite*, p. 57). If this is true, new vampires won't have fang marks on their necks.

## Habitat

At night, vampires can be found wherever there are people to feed on. They are helpless during daylight hours, which is the real reason why they live in secure dwellings (like old castles) and sometimes "sleep" in heavy coffins during the day.

## Statistics

*Attribute Modifiers:* ST +10 [110]; HT +5 [60].

*Advantages:* Alertness +4 [20]; Bite [30]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Dominance [5]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Magery 1 [15]; Night Vision [10]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Undead Invulnerability [150].

*Disadvantages:* Dependency (Blood; occasional, daily, ages without it) [-40]; Dependency (Mana; common, constantly) [-25]; The Draining [-10]; Dread (*One* of garlic, hemlock, wild rose, wolfsbane or wormwood) [-10]; Dread (Religious symbol within 6 yards) [-16]; Dread (Running water) [-20]; No Body Heat [-1]; No Reflection [-10]; No Shadow [-10]; Nocturnal [-10]; Pallor [-5]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Sterile [-3]; Unhealing [-20]; Vulnerability (2d from holy water) [-6]; Weakness (1d/minute from sunlight) [-60].

*Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:* Affected by Pentagram [0]; Can be turned using True Faith [0].

*Innate Spells:* Body of Air-15 [12]; Shapeshifting (Bat or Wolf) (VH)-15 [24].

**Template Cost: 240 points.**

## Variations

Many traits have been attributed to vampires. Compulsive Behavior is common, including "Can't enter a house unless invited in," "Must count small objects (like seeds) whenever encountered" and "Must untie any knots encountered." All are worth -10 points. Other disadvantages include Dependency (Earth from own grave) [-60], Frightens Animals [-5 or -10] and Vulnerability (Decapitation, heart shot) [-5 each]. These traits have been taken from fiction and folklore about the undead (not

always vampires!) and added to vampire lore over the years. With the GM's permission, they can be taken to reduce the cost of the vampire template.

Likewise, some vampires can supposedly cloud the minds of mortals. This has only weak support in folklore, but the GM may let vampires take certain Mind Control spells (e.g., Charm, Daze) as innate spells.

*Dominated Vampires:* Use the template above, but add Slave Mentality [-40]. Template cost becomes 200 points.

*Vampires in Other Cultures:* Vampire myths are quite widespread. In most cultures, vampires were *always* associated with the undead. Examples:

*Azeman* (N.E. South America): A woman by day, a bat that sucks blood from the big toes of its victims at night. The azeman can't cross a doorway that has a broom across it. Add Doesn't Sleep [20]. Replace all Dreads with Compulsive Behavior (Can't cross door blocked with broom) [-5]. Remove Nocturnal, Social Stigma, Sterile, Vulnerability and Weakness. Shapeshifting spell is always to bat form. 400 points.

*Gaki* (Japan): Evil undead that feed on beauty, music, warmth and other things besides blood. Most gaki look like balls of cool fire or clouds of smoke, but some tales give them a solid form that looks like a giant cat. Gaki are vampires, but start with the specter template (p. 80) [145] instead. Their form is visible but clearly inhuman [-5] and they should add Dependency (Common item, daily) [-15]. 125 points.

*Mullo* (Gypsy): A male vampire with an insatiable sexual appetite and the ability to sire offspring. Add Lecherousness and remove Sterile. Shapeshifting spell is always to wolf form. 228 points.

*Pishaca* (India): A rotting cemetery-dweller that carries leprosy and serves a rakshasha (demon). Remove Dependency (Mana), Dominance, Dread of herbs and running water, Magery, No Body Heat, No Reflection, No Shadow, Pallor, Vulnerability and both innate spells. Add Bad Smell [-10], Duty (To rakshasha, 15 or less) [-15], Monstrous Appearance [-25] and Pestilence [5]. 226 points.

*Vetala* (India): A ghostly vampire that must possess a corpse to drink blood. Treat as a shadow (p. 77) [75], but remove Dominance, Dread (Light), Magery, Weakness and all innate spells. Make Ghost Form invisible and change Dependency from life energy to human blood. 122 points.

*Xixiegui* (China): These "hopping vampires" have a Dread of peach wood instead of another herb (garlic, etc.). Remove Dread (Running water), No Reflection and No Shadow. Add Dread (Consecrated incense) [-5]. Their muscles are stiff, so they move by hopping instead of running, giving Reduced Move -1 [-5]; this fades with time, and may be bought off with earned points. 270 points.

See *GURPS Blood Types* for more vampires from around the world.

# Wight

*Other Names:* Barrow Wight; Ch'ing shih (Chinese), Draugr (Norse), K'uei (Chinese), Zalozhnyi (Russian).

*Form:* Corporeal (any but mummified).

*Motivation:* Restless.

## Description

Wights are the unhallowed dead: walking corpses that won't stay down, either because they are displeased with their funerary arrangements or because the afterlife won't have them. Often, the former leads to the latter. They are similar to revenants (p. 73), but aren't fixated on a specific task. Instead, they are spiteful, unhappy and want to kill people. They almost never single out those connected with their death or burial; they're quite willing to take "revenge" on *any* mortal they stumble across (or who stumbles across them).

A great many cultures have a version of the wight. Some, like the Russian zalozhnyi, are intact. Others, such as the Chinese ch'ing shih and Norse draugr, are in an advanced state of decay. A few, including the Chinese k'uei and fantasy "barrow wight," are generally depicted as being skeletal. Despite differences in form, virtually all wights share certain defining features:

- ‡ They are physically powerful and extremely hard to destroy. In game terms, they have very high HT and *aren't* Unliving.
- ‡ They have a strong link to the spirit world, which often gives them the ability to use magic and other supernatural powers.
- ‡ They fear consecrated items. Specifics vary from culture to culture: holy incense in China, holy water in the Christian world, etc.
- ‡ They must return to their resting place daily (with the notable exception of the zalozhnyi).
- ‡ They are vulnerable to a "purifying substance," like fire or light.

Other features depend on the specific entity in question; see *Variations* (below).

## Physical Description

Regardless of form, wights are unpleasant to look at. Some are merely pale, cold and dead-looking, while others are rotting, skeletal or have demonic visages. Wights can always speak, but few choose to, preferring to attack instead. Many wights were warriors in life, and were buried armed and armored.

## Habitat

With the sole exception of zalozhnyi, wights are usually found near their resting places. They prefer to remain there during the day and come forth at night, but even

those that are harmed by light will venture out by day to attack the living, especially those who disturb their tombs.

## Statistics

*Attribute Modifiers:* HT +5 [60].

*Advantages:* Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; DR 2 [6]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Imperturbable [10]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood) [5]; Night Vision [10]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15].

*Disadvantages:* Bad Temper [-10]; Bloodlust [-10]; Dependency (Lie in own tomb  $\frac{1}{3}$  of time; infrequent, daily) [-60]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Dread (Consecrated items) [-5]; Frightens Animals [-10]; Intolerance (Living) [-10]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Unhealing [-30]; Vulnerability (3d from Fire) [-30] *or* Weakness (1d/5 minutes from sunlight) [-30].

*Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:* Can be turned using True Faith [0].

*Intact* wights add ST +5 [60], plus Doesn't Breathe [10], Extra Hit Points +5 [25], No Body Heat [-5], Pallor [-10] and Sterile [-3].

*Rotting* wights add ST +5 [60], plus Bad Smell [-10], Doesn't Breathe [10], Eunuch [-5], Extra Hit Points +5 [25], Monstrous Appearance [-25] and No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]. They also have the feature "Will become a skeleton" [0].

*Skeletal* wights add ST +4 [45] and DX +2 [20], plus DR 2 vs. missiles, beams and impaling attacks [4], Eunuch [-5], Fragile [-20], Hideous Appearance [-20], Inconvenient Size (Skeletal) [-10], Increased Speed +1 [25], Injury Tolerance (No Brain, Impaling Bonus or Vitals) [30], No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5] and Vacuum Support [40]. They also have the feature "Cannot swim" [0].

**Template Cost: 48 points (intact), 21 points (rotting) or 75 points (skeletal).**

## Variations

**Barrow Wight:** A fantasy adaptation of the draugr (below). They are *evil*, not just bitter. Thankfully, they never leave their barrows: dome-shaped hills topped by monoliths, usually filled with weapons and magical treasure. Barrow wights are sometimes found in large numbers.

Barrow wights use the skeletal wight template [75] with Weakness (Sunlight). Add Compulsive Behavior (Guard tomb) [-15], Icy Weapon (p. 62) [15], Magic Resistance +5 [10], Paranoia [-10], Vulnerability (1d from consecrated, magical and silver weapons) [-10]. Template cost is 65 points.

**Ch'ing shih:** A Chinese wight, the ch'ing shih is a dead body reclaimed by the p'oh (p. 8). It occurs when a



corpse is left exposed; the magical catalyst is said to be moonlight. Ch'ing shih have long, claw-like nails and foul breath, and are harmed by fire. They are magical and can hide their soul using the Soul Jar spell. They are often powerful sorcerers.

A ch'ing shih is a rotting wight [21] with Vulnerability (Fire). Add Claws (Talons) [40], Dependency (Mana; common, constantly) [-25], Lunar Influence [5], Necromancy-Only Magery 1 [10] and Soul Jar (VH)-15 [24]. Treat its breath as Venom (Poisonous, 1 level; cloud, +100%) [30]. It costs 105 points to play a ch'ing shih.

**Draugr:** Norse mound-dwellers, usually warriors, who rise to express displeasure over their funeral or tomb. They are no less bloodthirsty than other wights are, but tend to reserve their anger for grave robbers and the like. Draugr are animated bodies without souls. Like zombies (p. 88), they have a static mindset and tend to live in the past and ignore new things. They are almost always found alone.

Draugr use the rotting wight template [21] with Vulnerability (Fire). Add Cannot Learn [-30], Hidebound [-5], Incurious [-5] and Reclusive [-10], and the taboo trait "No mental skills" [0]. It costs -29 points to play a draugr.

**K'uei:** Another Chinese wight. "K'uei" is synonymous with "p'oh," the part of the soul that animates a ch'ing shih (above) or becomes a shade (p. 75). K'uei who haven't earned the right to enter the afterlife can materialize, however, creating bodies that resemble skeletons with demonic faces. Strangely, k'uei must always move in straight lines!

K'uei use the skeletal wight template [75] with Vulnerability (Fire), but Appearance is Monstrous [-25] instead of Hideous (a net -5 points) and they have Compulsive Behavior (Move in straight lines) [-15]. Template cost is 55 points.



**Zalozhniy:** These Russian wights have no tomb, so they wander the countryside, killing the living. They aren't immortal, and cease to walk after a normal human lifespan. Zalozhniy serve evil spirits; if destroyed, they come back as spirits themselves (use the shade template, p. 75). For more on the folklore of the zalozhniy, see p. RU110.

Zalozhniy are intact wights [48] with Vulnerability (Fire). Add Doesn't Sleep [20] and Slave Mentality [-40]. Remove Dependency (Tomb) and Unaging. Treat their ability to return as a shade as an Extra Life [25]. It costs 98 points to play a zalozhniy.

### Sample Wight: Hroald Oddsson (50 points)

Age 50; 5'10", 155 lbs.; a stinking corpse in an advanced state of decay, wielding a rusty broadsword.

<b>ST:</b> 17 [20]	<b>IQ:</b> 10 [0]	<b>Fatigue:</b> 17
<b>DX:</b> 13 [30]	<b>HT:</b> 17/22 [20]	<b>Senses:</b> 10
<b>Speed:</b> 7.50	<b>Move:</b> 7	<b>Will:</b> 10
<b>Dodge:</b> 7	<b>Parry:</b> 6*	<b>Block:</b> 8*

\* Norse fighting style gives -1 Parry, +1 Block.

**Advantages:** Toughness (DR 1, total DR 3) [10].

**Disadvantages:** Code of Honor (Norse) [-10]; Draugr [-29]; Overconfidence [-10].

**Quirks:** Avoids runes; Dislikes daylight; Hates sorcerers; Points instead of speaking; Sharpens his weapons at every opportunity. [-5]

**Skills:** Axe/Mace-12 [1]; Boating-13 [2]; Bow-13 [4]; Brawling-13 [1]; Broadsword-15 [8]; Carousing-17 [2]; Shield-14 [2]; Spear-12 [1]; Spear Throwing-14 [2]; Swimming-13 [1].

**Languages:** Old Norse (native)-10 [0].

**Equipment:** Broadsword (cut 3d, cr 1d+3); Viking shield (PD 4).

**Description:** Hroald was a brave Viking warrior who died in battle at the venerable age of 48 and was properly buried in a howe (mound), along with his weapons and shields. Two years later, however, an evil sorcerer started to dig around near his tomb with the intention of animating the dead or something equally vile. This disturbed Hroald's rest, and his wight took up its sword, ventured forth from its mound and promptly slew the sorcerer.

The draugr is still awake in its tomb today, but since Hroald was good and honorable in life, it doesn't go about killing and making trouble. If its mound were to be disturbed again, however, the wight would not hesitate to attack. It remembers little of its life, so even Hroald's former friends would not be safe from its wrath.

Hroald is intended as a NPC for a *GURPS Vikings* campaign, but could easily be adapted to a *Fantasy* campaign. His statistics could also be used for generic Norse undead in a *Horror* campaign.

# Wraith

*Other Names:* Vorthr (Norse).

*Form:* Corporeal (intact).

*Motivation:* Willful or enslaved (dominated).

## Description

In modern usage, a “wraith” is nothing more than a ghost; however, the word comes from the Old Norse *vorthr*, which actually means “warder” or “guardian.” The wraith of modern fantasy is exactly that: an undead guardian, usually created by magic. This trend originated in the works of J. R. R. Tolkien, whose Ring-Wraiths were powerful undead warriors and champions of darkness. The wraith as an undead knight has since become a staple of fantasy gaming, and is the subject of this discussion.

The wraith is one of the most deadly of the corporeal undead. Intensely magical and physically powerful, it cannot be turned by any force short of the magic that created it. There are tales of wraiths being vulnerable to light, holy water, silver, etc.; unfortunately, most of these are lies – although fire, magic weapons and spells are of *some* use when combatting wraiths. A wraith’s only real weakness is that it relies on an enchantment for its survival, and should the item carrying this spell be removed or destroyed, the wraith will perish.

Wraiths have several magical powers, including an aura of palpable fear, a deadly touch and the ability to repair their undead bodies by leeching the life from their foes. Their semi-spectral forms are extremely tough. They can even become completely ethereal, although they are loath to do so because it means giving up the protection of their armor, which often exposes the magic item that sustains them. Wraiths may have other magical abilities as well, depending on the skill and imagination of their creator.

Since the item that raises a wraith is expensive and requires little-known magical rites, wraiths are rather uncommon except in the service of extremely powerful necromancers (who are often liches). Most wraiths are highly-skilled warriors who have been hand-picked from among their peers, and are dangerous foes in their own right. This combination of skill, supernatural toughness and the resources of a powerful enchanter means that the wraith is one of the toughest opponents on the fantasy battlefield.

## Physical Description

Wraiths have bodies of semi-spectral flesh through which their blackened bones can be seen. Their facial features resemble a hideous death mask and their eyes glow with a cold fire. Most wraiths wear full armor and wield finely-made magical weapons. Elaborate helms, cloaks

and cowls are often used to enhance the wraith’s intimidating image while disguising its most hideous features. Many wraiths were knights in life, and ride upon undead beasts.

*Wraith Items:* A wraith wears an item enchanted with the Wraith spell (p. 44) at all times. This is usually a ring (-12 to hit in combat). It has DR 1, HP 4 if made of precious metal, but for \$10,000 it can be made from rare magical metals, giving it DR 2, HP 8. The Shatterproof spell (p. M60) can double these values. Destroying the ring causes the wraith to lose 1 HT/minute.

## Habitat

Wraiths can be found anywhere their duty takes them. They are often encountered in the strongholds of the rich and evil, usually in the service of a wizard. Wraiths love battle, and can frequently be found heading up the armies of their employers.

## Statistics

*Attribute Modifiers:* ST +5 [60]; HT +5 [60].

*Advantages:* Doesn’t Breathe [20]; Doesn’t Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn’t Sleep [20]; DR 4 [12]; Extra Hit Points +5 [25]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Brain, Impaling Bonus or Vitals) [35]; Magery 1 [15]; Night Vision [10]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Undead Invulnerability [150]; Unfazeable [15].

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust [-10]; Callous [-6]; Dependency (Wraith item; rare, constantly) [-150]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Eunuch [-5]; Horrific Appearance [-30]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Unhealing (Can heal with Steal HT) [-20]; Vulnerability (Magic weapons) [-3]; Vulnerability (Spells) [-10].

*Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:* Loves battle [-1]. Affected by Pentagram [0].

*Innate Spells:* Deathtouch-15 [12]; Ethereal Body (VH)-15 [24]; Steal Health-15 [12].

**Template Cost: 275 points.**

## Variations

As powerful as the wraith is, some GMs will want to make it scarier. Recommended improvements include raising ST and Extra Hit Points, and elevating Deathtouch to 21 (a net +12 points). Since fantasy characters usually have attacks that do no more than 3d damage, it’s a good idea to leave DR at a reasonable level to avoid making the wraith “unkillable,” especially since it will likely be wearing armor as well.

*Animated Armor:* Some wraiths are conjured directly into a suit of rigid armor, frequently magical plate armor, which they animate. The Wraith item is the suit of armor

itself. Since this is almost impossible to destroy or remove, reduce the rarity listed under Dependency to "Common," changing it to a -25-point disadvantage. The armor is treated as equipment; don't charge points for its PD and DR. 400 points.

**Dominated Wraiths:** By doubling the energy cost of the Wraith spell (p. 44), a wraith can be made the loyal servant of its creator. This adds Reprogrammable Duty [-25] to the template but *not* Slave Mentality. While the wraith will do whatever its master asks of it, it is otherwise free-willed and won't hesitate to improvise in the absence of orders. 250 points.

### Sample Wraith:

#### Sir Liam Kindall (525 points)

Age unknown; 6'1", 185 lbs.; imposing warrior in enchanted plate armor, wearing a horned helmet.

<b>ST:</b> 19 [45]	<b>IQ:</b> 12 [20]	<b>Fatigue:</b> 19
<b>DX:</b> 14 [45]	<b>HT:</b> 18/23 [30]	<b>Senses:</b> 14
<b>Speed:</b> 8.00	<b>Move:</b> 6	<b>Will:</b> 14
<b>Dodge:</b> 7	<b>Parry:</b> 11	<b>Block:</b> 9

**Advantages:** Alertness +2 [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Literacy [10]; Strong Will +2 [8]; Wraith [275].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (To master, 15 or less) [-15]; Overconfidence [-10]; Sense of Duty (Anyone under his command) [-10].

**Quirks:** Compulsive duellist; Contemptuous of non-combatants; Dislikes reptile men; Likes fog and mist, and takes advantage of it in his battle plans; Vengeful. [-5]

**Skills:** Armoury/TL3-12 [2]; Axe/Mace-15 [4]; Axe Throwing-16 [4]; Brawling-16 [4]; Broadsword-20 [40]; Camouflage-12 [1]; Crossbow-16 [4]; Fast-Draw (Bolt)-15\* [1]; Fast-Draw (Knife)-15\* [1]; Fast-Draw (Sword)-15\* [1]; Heraldry-12 [2]; Intimidation (fr. ST default)-15 [2]; Knife-16 [4]; Leadership (fr. ST default)-16 [4]; Occultism-12 [2]; Riding (Horse)-14 [2]; Savoir-Faire-12 [1]; Shield-16 [4]; Stealth-15 [4]; Tactics-16 [12]; Two-Handed Sword-14 [2]; Wrestling-15 [4].

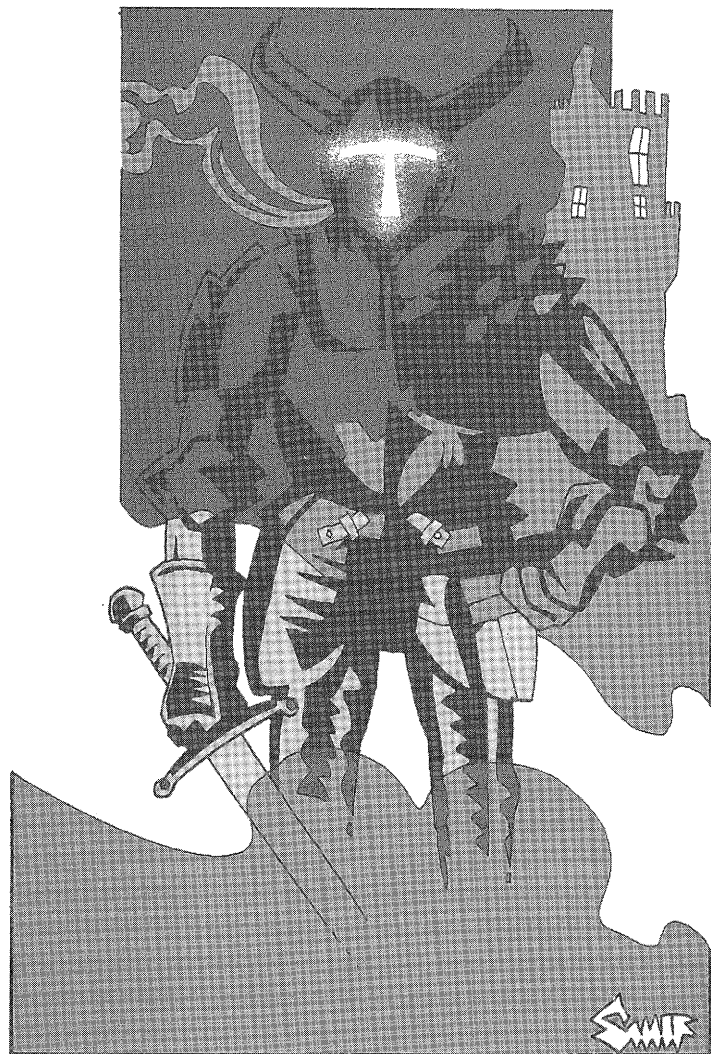
\* Includes +1 for Combat Reflexes.

**Languages:** English (native)-12 [0]; Arabic-12 [2].

**Innate Spells:** Deathtouch-17; Ethereal Body (VH)-17; Steal Health-17.

**Equipment:** Fine thrusting broadsword w. Puissance +1 (cut 3d+4, imp 2d+3); Medium shield (PD 3); Plate armor w. Deflect +1, Fortify +1 (PD 5, DR 7).

**Description:** Sir Liam was a knight of some renown in life. Not only was he strong and unequalled with the sword, but he was also a loyal vassal, a skilled tactician and a natural leader of men. He won many victories against the reptile men, operating out of Ferrier on the western edge of Caithness. Unfortunately, he was also



rough around the edges, prone to duelling and more than a little bloodthirsty. He stayed away from court and openly berated courtly knights for their cowardice.

Liam's insults made him many enemies close to the throne, some of whom eventually got together and had him poisoned during one of his rare visits to Carrick. A healer was brought in to treat him, but to no avail. Then, as Liam lay dying, a shadowy figure came to his deathbed with an offer: a magical ring that would save his life in return for his aid against his old enemies. Liam gave his pledge and donned the ring. He knew what to expect, but decided that undead was a price worth paying for vengeance.

Sir Liam now leads an army of undead in the service of a shadowy archmage who has designs on the throne. He supports his master's vision of Caithness as a fortress state with the steel to stand up to both the Megalans and the denizens of the Great Desert. He sees no wrong in deposing fops who would bargain and treat with the enemy.

Liam is intended as an arch-foe for an extended, high-powered *GURPS Fantasy* campaign. He would be more than a match for most mortal warriors, and is backed by both an undead army and a powerful archmage.

# Zombie

*Other Names:* Ghoul; Zombi (Voudoun).

*Form:* Corporeal (rotting).

*Motivation:* Enslaved (mindless) or restless.

## Description

A zombie is a mindless walking corpse, often found in the service of its reanimator. As discussed under *Making Zombis* (p. 37), the original zombie was probably the Voudoun *zombi*: a corpse animated with black magic. This is the main inspiration for the fantasy zombie created by the *Zombie spell* (p. 41), which is described by the statistics given below. In cinema and fiction, though, zombies are often animated by means other than necromancy. Some possibilities include:

- ‡ *Chemicals.* A toxic spill or secret military chemical causes the dead to rise from their graves as ghouls (see below) with a taste for human flesh. Naturally, anyone they kill will *also* get up and start walking around . . .
- ‡ *Contagion.* The victim contracts a mysterious disease from an animal bite or a corpse in an old tomb. He dies, rises as a zombie and goes on to infect others.
- ‡ *Curse.* Some zombies are animated by magic that works more like the *Mummy's Curse* (p. 72) than like the *Zombie spell*, with the victim becoming a zombie once his HT reaches 0. "Zombie Curses" like this are often contagious!
- ‡ *Drugs.* The victim is poisoned by a sorcerer, dies (or *seems* to die) and rises from the grave as the wizard's undead slave. This is supposedly how Voudoun *zombis* (see below) are made in real life.
- ‡ *Electricity.* The corpse is reanimated by a mad scientist using electrical impulses (see *Necroids*, p. CN84).
- ‡ *Parasites.* Nasty "bugs" infest a corpse and cause it to get up and walk around (see *Breederbugs*, p. BO94).
- ‡ *Possession.* A ghost, demon, angel or other spirit (like the evil *bhuta* of Hindu myth) possesses and animates a corpse.
- ‡ *Radiation.* Strange energies from outer space, the fourth dimension or a nuclear reactor cause the dead to rise and (you guessed it) eat human flesh.
- ‡ *Weird Science.* Advanced medical techniques – brain implants, nanotechnology or the *intentional* use of the chemicals and radiation mentioned above – let the dead get up and walk around.



## Physical Description

Zombies are rotting corpses. They are obviously dead and appallingly smelly. Cinematic zombies are even more vile, their skin crawling with maggots, one eyeball hanging by a strand of grue, etc. Those created by chemicals or weird science have distinctive features like green skin or glowing eyes, while radiation creates radioactive undead, and zombies animated by parasites emit chattering noises and drip bugs.

While not obligatory, it's traditional for zombies to walk around with their arms stretched out in front of them and their eyes rolled back in their heads. They rarely say much, and when they do speak, it's in a disturbing, gurgling voice. Typical zombie vocabulary consists of a wide variety of moans and groans, and the occasional cry of "Braaaiiin!"

## Habitat

Wherever there's a sorcerer, mad scientist or unscrupulous chemical company, there will be zombies. Unlike most undead, they are rarely found in tombs. Instead, those that serve a master will be found in his lair, while wandering zombies can be encountered almost anywhere – but typically somewhere isolated and without a working telephone.

## Statistics

*Attribute Modifiers:* ST +1 [10]; IQ -2 [-15].

*Advantages:* Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or



Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Extra Hit Points +5 [25]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poison [15]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood) [5]; Invulnerability (Mind Control) [75]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15].

*Disadvantages:* Bad Smell [-10]; Cannot Learn [-30]; Dead Broke [-25]; Dependency (Mana; common, constantly) [-25]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Eunuch [-5]; Hidebound [-5]; Low Empathy [-15]; Monstrous Appearance [-25]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Obdurate [-10]; Reprogrammable Duty [-25]; Slave Mentality [-40]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Unhealing [-30]; Unliving [-50].

*Quirks, Features and Taboo Traits:* Affected by Control Zombie, Pentagram and Turn Zombie [0]; No mental skills [0]; Will become a skeleton [0].

**Template Cost: -110 points.**

### Variations

The template above assumes a zombie that's animated using the *Zombie* (p. 41) or *Mass Zombie* (p. 41) spell; see *Mummy* (p. 72) and *Skeleton* (p. 78) for other undead that can be created this way. Other options are offered below.

*Custom Zombies:* Zombies can be created with traits other than those specified above. Changes are restricted to things that make sense for a mindless corpse, and the 0-point features on the template *cannot* be removed. Common changes include adding more ST, HT or Extra Hit Points, other forms of Injury Tolerance, Independent Body Parts (p. 59) and Pestilence (p. 60). The GM should veto inappropriate choices, like adding DR 50 or removing Social Stigma (Dead).

The energy cost to animate a custom zombie is affected by the point cost of the modified template. Add

$0.15 \times [\text{New Point Cost} - \text{Old Point Cost}]$  (round up) to the energy cost of the *Zombie* spell or the base cost of *Mass Zombie*. This *can* reduce casting cost, but minimum cost is 4 for *Zombie* or base cost 3 for *Mass Zombie*. This option can also be used for mummies and skeletons.

*Example:* A necromancer wants to create a zombie with Independent Body Parts [35]. The new template cost is -75 points. Added energy cost is  $0.15 \times [-75 - (-110)] = 5.25$ , rounded up to 6. Total fatigue cost for the *Zombie* spell would be  $8 + 6 = 14$ .

*Ghouls:* B-movie "zombies" are often flesh-eating ghouls created by disease, radiation or chemicals and not magic. They don't serve a master and usually spread their condition to anyone they kill. They are slower and clumsier than fantasy zombies, but considerably tougher; it usually takes a head shot to kill them. Most ghouls fear light and fire, although they don't seem to take extra damage from these things.

Start with the standard template, but remove Dependency (Mana), Doesn't Eat or Drink, Extra Hit Points, Reprogrammable Duty, Slave Mentality and Unliving. Add DX -1 [-10], HT +5 [60], Dependency (Human flesh or brains; occasional, daily) [-30], Dread (Daylight) [-30], Dread (Fire) [-20], Infectious Attack [-5], Reduced Move -2 [-10] and Vulnerability (4d from head blows) [-20]. Delete "Affected by Control Zombie, Pentagram and Turn Zombie." -70 points.

*Non-magical Zombies:* Sometimes, true zombies (not ghouls) are created by mad scientists or space aliens rather than by necromancers. Use the standard template, but remove Dependency (Mana) and the feature "Affected by Control Zombie, Pentagram and Turn Zombie." -85 points.

*Voudoun Zombis:* These are created by magic, but have a few special features: they are slow, can see in the dark and can be laid to rest with salt (only a little salt is needed, but this must be poured into the zombie's mouth to be effective). They are easily recognized by their reddened eyes, nasal voice and slow, shuffling gait. Use the basic zombie template, but add Night Vision [10], Reduced Move -1 [-5] and Vulnerability (4d from salt) [-40]. -145 points.

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## Other Undead

### Nonhumans

Members of nonhuman races can usually rise as any of the undead in this chapter, unless they have a taboo trait that forbids it. Undead and nonhuman races both use racial templates, however, and these templates will often contain traits that prevent them from simply being "stacked." As a result, the GM will have to create a new template for each combination by merging a racial template (e.g., elf) and an undead template (e.g., ghost) into a composite template (e.g., elven ghost).

### Attribute Modifiers

These are always additive. Sum the attribute modifiers of the two templates to find the new attribute modifier. The point cost of this modifier will *not* always be the sum of the two point costs. *Example:* Dwarves have ST +2 [20] while revenants have ST +3 [30]; dwarf revenants have ST +5 [60].

### Advantages and Disadvantages

Include all the advantages and disadvantages of *both* templates except when one of the following occurs:

1. *The traits numerically "cancel out."* Sum them up and list only the net advantage or disadvantage, along with its point cost. *Example:* Kobolds have Weak Will -1 [-8] while shades have Strong Will +4 [16]; kobold shades have Strong Will +3 [12].

2. *The traits aren't compatible but don't "cancel out."* Keep the trait that's associated with the undead template; discard the one that comes from the racial template. *Example:* Ogres have Magic Resistance +2 [4] while vampires have Magery 1 [15]; ogre vampires have Magery 1 [15] and no Magic Resistance.

3. *The same trait occurs in both templates.* If the trait is "all or nothing," (e.g., Bloodlust, Night Vision), the composite template will have that trait as well. If the trait comes in levels (e.g., Magery, Reduced Move), sum the levels possessed by the two templates and include the total level in the new template, subject to usual maxima. *Example:* Elves and vampires both have Magery 1 [15]; elven vampires have Magery 2 [25].

## Other Traits

Using the guidelines given above, the GM should decide on a case-by-case basis which taboo traits, features, quirks, racial skill bonuses and innate spells will appear on the combined template. In general, opposed traits should cancel out while complimentary ones should be enhanced.

## Beasts

Animals and monsters can also become undead, unless the GM feels that they lack some necessary attribute – like an immortal soul – or are protected by magical or divine influence. Those with racial IQ 7 or less can only be made into mindless undead, while those with average IQ 8+ can take on any form that's available to humans. It isn't normally necessary to work out point costs. Use the following guidelines when applying undead templates to beasts:

*Attributes.\** Each +1 to ST, DX, IQ or HT on the template is treated as +10% to the animal's average attribute; each -1 is treated as -10%. Don't apply HT modifiers to hit points yet.

*Hit Points.\** Each +1 to HT and each Extra Hit Point gives +10% to hit points; each Reduced Hit Point gives -10%. Sum up HT and HP modifiers before applying them. E.g., HT +5 and Extra Hit Points +5 gives +100% to hit points; HT +5 and Reduced Hit Points -5 gives +0%.

*Fatigue.\** Works just like hit points, except that ST and Extra Fatigue modifiers are summed to find the total Fatigue modifier. In most cases, a living beast's fatigue points start out equal to its ST.

*Move.\** Treat each level of Increased Speed as +20% to Move; treat each level of Reduced Move as -20% to Move.

*Dodge.\** Each level of Increased Speed gives +20% to Dodge. If modified DX/2 is greater than modified Dodge, use that instead. Maximum Dodge is still 10.

\* Drop all fractions. The modifier is always at least +1 for a template that includes a bonus and -1 for one that includes a penalty.

*PD/DR.* Add the PD and DR specified by the template directly to the animal's natural values.

*Damage.* Determine damage amount from the animal's modified ST using the chart on p. B140. Damage type does not change. If the damage done by a living animal differs from that listed for its ST, apply the same implied damage modifier to the new damage roll.

*Reach, Size.* Unchanged.

*Weight.* Unchanged, except in the case of skeletal animals (where it is halved) and spectral creatures (which have no weight).

*Sense Rolls.* Modify these to reflect the animal's new IQ; e.g., if IQ drops by 1, apply -1 to all Sense rolls.

*Skills.* Natural skills like Climbing, Stealth and Tracking should be modified to reflect the animal's new DX and IQ scores; e.g., if DX increases by 2, apply +2 to Climbing and Stealth.

*Other Abilities.* The animal retains all its natural abilities and gains those on the template as well; see *Nonhumans* (p. 89) for advice on how to handle conflicts. Remember that the undead aren't realistic to begin with. Don't worry about things like whether skeletal birds can fly without feathers or whether zombie cobras are venomous. If you want something to be possible, *it is!*

## Sample Beasts

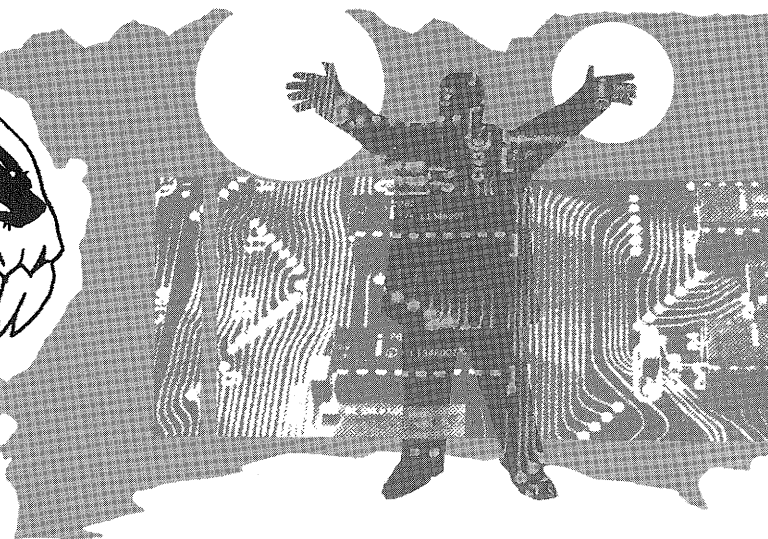
### Firedrake Lich

**ST:** 63+                      **Move/Dodge:** 3/8#    **Size:** 14+  
**DX:** 16                      **PD/DR:** 4/9                      **Weight:** 1,500+ lbs.  
**IQ:** 16+                      **Damage:** 3d imp  
**HT:** 18/108+              **Reach:** R, C-2

# Move on the ground is 7.

The oldest and mightiest dragons sometimes turn themselves into liches. Such creatures are among the most powerful of wizards! They always have Magery 3, know at least 2d × 10 spells at level 21+ and have a minimum of 105 fatigue points to spend on their magic (more in proportion to ST), which they can use as if they were human mages.

A dragon lich has Alertness +2 (giving the average drake a Sense roll of 18) and can see even in total darkness. Despite its skeletal wings, it is a strong flyer, capable of sustained flight at over 60 mph. It can bite for 3d impaling damage or tail-lash a foe in a back hex or any adjacent hex at full DX, inflicting 3d crushing damage. Finally, it



can breathe fire up to 14 yards away for 3d-1 burning damage. Each use costs 2 fatigue, but no roll is required to hit; the only defense is to block or dodge *and* retreat.

Other abilities are as per *Lich* (p. 76).

### Mummified Cat

**ST:** 3-5      **Move/Dodge:** 15/7      **Size:** <1  
**DX:** 14      **PD/DR:** 0/0      **Weight:** 5-15 lbs.  
**IQ:** 5      **Damage:** 1d-4 cut  
**HT:** 13/3-4      **Reach:** C

The ancient Egyptians often mummified cats and placed them in tombs as funerary artifacts. These can be animated normally using the *Zombie* spell. Mummified cats have Night Vision, just like living cats. They have a Sense roll of 14 and the skills Climbing-14, Jumping-14 and Stealth-15.

Other abilities are as per *Enslaved Mummies* (p. 73). Energy cost to animate: 8.

### Tyrannosaurus Skeleton

**ST:** 90-135      **Move/Dodge:** 20/8      **Size:** 13+  
**DX:** 16      **PD/DR:** 2/3#      **Weight:** 2-3 tons  
**IQ:** 2      **Damage:** 5d imp  
**HT:** 15/50-80      **Reach:** C-2

What if that "plaster" *Tyrannosaurus rex* skeleton down at the Museum of Natural History were real? What if an evil cult were to animate it using the *Zombie* spell? An undead *T. rex* would be a truly awesome opponent for a *Horror* campaign!

Skeletal *T. rex* has a PD 2, DR 3 on its body, and DR 4 on its skull; add an extra DR 2 vs. missiles, beams and impaling attacks. Its small forearms are weak (ST 12-13), but its hind legs are powerful and can pin foes with a Contest of ST, inflicting 3d-1 cutting damage. Its bite does 5d impaling damage. It makes Sense rolls at 13.

Other abilities are as per *Skeleton* (p. 78). Energy cost to animate: 104.

## Undead Swarms

The *Zombie* spell can also be used to animate swarms (p. B143) of dead animals. This costs 8 energy for a 1-hex swarm, or only 7 energy if *Mass Zombie* is used. The abilities of an undead swarm are modified by the template used as follows:

**Move:** Treat each level of Increased Speed as +20% to Move; treat each level of Reduced Move as -20% to Move. Round down.

**Damage:** For each +1 to ST, add 10% to swarm damage. For quick reference:

Original Swarm Damage	Damage when ST Modifier is:				
	+1	+2	+3	+5	+10
1d-3	1d-3	1d-3	1d-3	1d-2	1d-2
1d-2 <sup>1</sup>	1d-2	1d-2	1d-2	1d-1	1d
1d-1	1d-1	1d-1	1d	1d	1d+1
1d	1d	1d	1d+1	1d+2	2d
1d+1	1d+1	1d+2	2d-1	2d	2d+2
1d+2	2d-1	2d	2d	2d+1	3d

**Hits to Disperse:** Each +1 to HT or Hit Points adds 10% to this value; each Reduced Hit Point subtracts 10%. Sum HT and HP modifiers before applying them. Round down.

### Sample Swarms

**Zombie Army Ants:** About 1,000 huge ants. Move 2. Does 1d biting damage/turn to any foe that isn't *completely* protected by heavy clothing or armor. Dispersed by 22 hits.

**Zombie Bats:** About a dozen carnivorous bats. Move 8. Does 1d biting damage/turn; armor protects with its normal DR. Dispersed by 12 hits.

**Zombie Hornets or Wasps:** About 1,000 insects. Move 6. Does 1d-1 stinging damage/turn to any foe that isn't *completely* protected by heavy clothing or armor. Dispersed by 18 hits.

## Weirder Undead

The inventive GM may wish to consider some less traditional kinds of undead.

## Undead Microbes

If people, animals and swarms of creepy crawlers can all become undead, then perhaps bacteria and viruses can as well. This is especially likely in situations where undeath is spread by contagion. While infectious undeath is generally treated as a magical curse, it would be interesting if some forms of undeath were actually exotic diseases caused by undead germs! If this is true, then it might be possible to cure undeath or even immunize against it with magical drugs. These would be developed with Alchemy skill, using the inventing rules on pp. CI125-127.

A more sinister possibility is an ordinary disease that has *become* undead. This could be the result of a critical failure with the Cure Disease spell, or simply a side effect of zombifying the corpse of a plague victim. Since the undead are immune to disease and poison, undead microbes would be invulnerable to drugs and possibly even their host's immune system. HT rolls to avoid infection or to recover would be made at -1 to -5, and neither Immunity to Disease nor drugs would give a bonus! It's likely that anyone who died from such a disease would become undead himself.

A final creepy thought: many scientists don't consider viruses to be alive, and viral infections are hard to treat. What if viruses are *already* undead?

## Undead Plants

The animated plants of fantasy are really nothing more than beasts in plant suits. They can become undead just like any other monster, using the rules under *Beasts* (p. 90). But what about undead *mundane* plants?

Undead nuisance plants would be true horrors. Imagine zombie crabgrass or kudzu that's too tough to cut with gardening tools and can't be killed using herbicides. Now imagine *vampire* kudzu that sucks the life out of other plants and slowly spreads its curse across the land! Undead crops would be inedible, perhaps even dangerous to eat, causing illness, death and then undeath. Of course, such plants might also yield useful ingredients for magic elixirs.

Undead wood would be another possibility. Wood is nothing more than a dead plant, and could conceivably be zombified. Like animal undead, this would make it stronger (increase hit points by 50%), but who knows what other qualities it would have? Haunted houses could be nothing more than zombified wooden buildings, and undead wood may be able to expand, contract and contort itself to open and close doors, cause strange sounds and shove things around. It would be just the thing for wands enchanted with Necromantic spells.

## Undead Vehicles

Ghost ships (p. 68) are common in folklore, so perhaps it's possible for vehicles to "come back from the dead" (or at least the junkyard). Those who want to go this





route should start with an undead template and the *GURPS Vehicles* stats for a vehicle, then modify the vehicle with the template:

*Propulsion and Lift Systems:* Each +/-1 ST gives +/-10% to motive power, thrust and lift. These systems are no longer air-breathing (the equivalent of Doesn't Breathe), and power and fuel are no longer required (Doesn't Eat or Drink). Sailing ships use the stats they had in "life"; ghost sailing ships sail with an "astral wind," the intensity of which may be associated with the mana level or psychic charge of an area (GM's option).

*Armaments:* No longer require power, as long as the vehicle's power plant provided enough power to fire them in "life"; otherwise, they don't work. Ammunition is still required.

*Instruments, Electronics and Miscellaneous Equipment:* No longer require power, as long as the original vehicle's power plant was capable of running them.

*Computers:* Each +/-1 IQ gives +/-1 Complexity. This affects the IQ, DX and skills of robotic vehicles. Vehicles without computers can ignore IQ modifiers.

*Environmental Systems:* No longer function. The occupants will have to look after their own life-support needs.

*Power Systems:* Provide exactly enough power to operate the propulsion and lift systems, weapons and accessories built into the vehicle, but neither require air nor consume fuel, and produce no excess power.

*Fuel:* Is no longer required, but the GM may rule that a vampire vehicle needs a tank full of blood, which it consumes at its usual rate of fuel consumption.

*Hit Points:* Body, subassembly and component hit points are +/-10% per Extra/Reduced Hit Point. HT modifiers *don't* affect this. If the template includes Unliving, however, the item in question is disabled at 0 HP and falls apart at -1 HP.

*Armor:* Add template DR directly to vehicle DR. The armor of skeletal vehicles is automatically "open frame."

*Weight:* Empty weight stays the same except for skeletal vehicles, which halve empty weight. Spectral vehicles treat weight normally for performance calculations, but have no weight per se. Loaded weight never includes the weight of fuel, but still includes ammo and passenger weights.

*HT:* Apply HT modifiers directly to vehicle HT.

*Top Speed:* Recalculate speed based on modified motive power, thrust and weight. Skeletal vehicles are always considered unstreamlined. When top speed has been determined, modify this by +20% per level of Increased Speed and -20% per level of Reduced Move.

*Accel:* Work this out like speed, but do *not* apply Increased Speed or Reduced Move modifiers.

*Decel, SR:* Unchanged.

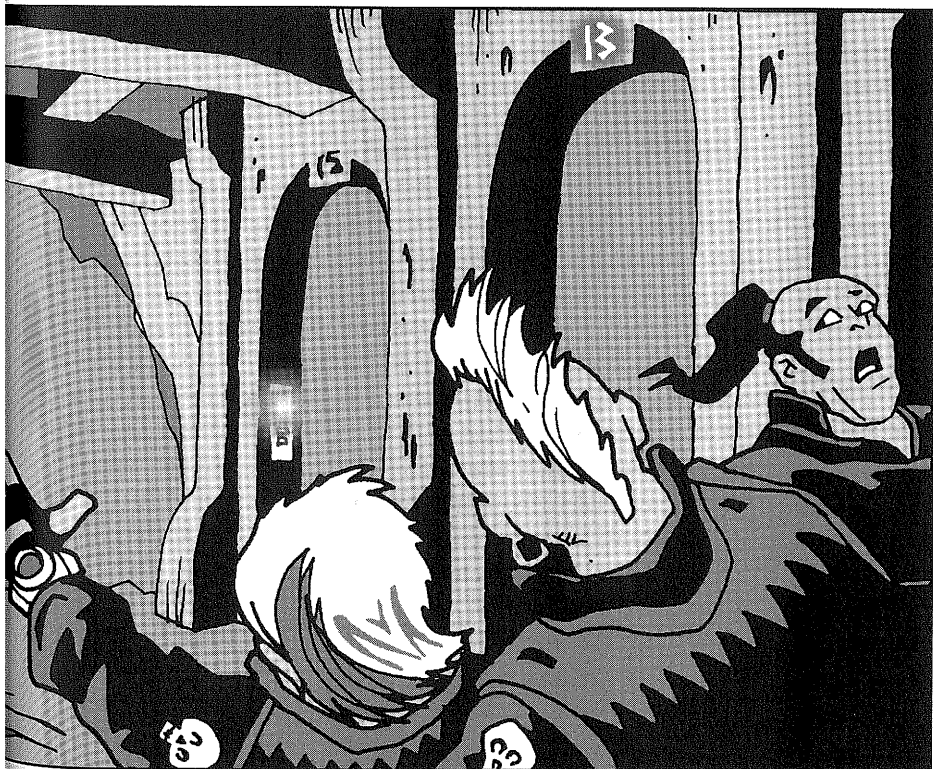
*MR:* For most vehicles, each +/-1 DX gives +/-10% to MR. For winged vehicles only, aMR is +/-10% per Extra/Reduced Hit Point *instead*. Round MR down to the nearest 0.25 G.

*Maintenance:* Undead vehicles don't require maintenance, but repairs will restore lost HP normally. Biomechanical and living metal vehicles with Unhealing cannot repair themselves.

*Other Abilities:* Combine the abilities of the vehicle with those of the undead template, discarding anything that applies to characters but not vehicles (e.g., High Pain Threshold). In the event of a conflict, the template takes precedence. For example, skeletal vehicles can't be sealed, won't float and have no water performance, but will have a submerged performance and unlimited crush depth.

## Ghost Vehicles

Spectral vehicles require some additional modifications: they are normally invisible, can move through solid objects, and must spend fatigue points to materialize and interact with the real world. This energy is provided by the vehicle's occupants, who may be living or undead. The very act of riding in a ghost vehicle is a form of remembrance, and lets the vehicle tap fatigue from its occupants like a regular ghost taps fatigue from worshippers (p. 51).





Spectral passengers can board a ghost vehicle at any time, and pay 1 fatigue/hour to remain on board, just as if they were “hitching a ride” in a normal vehicle (p. 52). Living passengers can only board the vehicle when it is fully materialized, and must pay 2 fatigue/hour to remain there. The vehicle’s operator pays an *extra* 1 fatigue/hour to remain in communication with the vehicle and control it. All fatigue paid by a ghost vehicle’s occupants is stored until it is used for materialization; any amount of fatigue can be stored. Materialization works as follows:

**Sounds:** Sirens, horns, engine noises, etc., can be produced for 1 fatigue per 10 seconds.

**Visual Effects:** A translucent visual manifestation with no solidity or weight can be produced for Body Hit Points/400 fatigue (round up, minimum 1) per minute. For double cost, this looks solid.

**Full Materialization:** The vehicle can manifest exactly as it was in “life,” which lets mortals board it. This costs Body Hit Points/100 fatigue per minute (round up, minimum 1).

Living beings on board the vehicle when it assumes spectral form must choose whether or not they want to go with it. If they wish to be left behind, they must make a Will roll as the vehicle dematerializes. A success will leave the passenger behind in the mortal world (which can be fatal if the vehicle is a sub, plane or spacecraft). A willing passenger, or one who fails his Will roll, dies and becomes a ghost with a compulsion to crew the vehicle.

Normally, the vehicle’s operator controls materialization. A vehicle without an operator will follow a route it took often in “life,” and will periodically materialize to collect passengers and tap fatigue. When it runs out of fatigue, it will spend Body Hit Points instead. If Body Hit Points reach 0 for any reason, the vehicle is destroyed forever.

## Variant Zombie Spells

### **Zombie Microbe**

### **Regular**

The Zombie spell for bacteria and viruses. The subject must be a relatively pure sample of dead microbes, usually obtained by growing a culture then quickly killing it with heat, radiation, the Sterilize spell, etc. When this spell is cast, the culture becomes undead. Harmless microbes will just sit there; dangerous ones will infect anyone they come into contact with. The caster *cannot* control this!

Undead diseases run their normal course, but are unaf-

ected by Panimmunity, Immunity to Disease, antibiotics and similar measures. Nanotech cures work normally. Each time this spell is cast, roll 1d-1. This determines the penalty (at least -1) on all HT rolls made to resist the disease, avoid its effects or recover from it. Anyone who dies from an undead disease will rise as a zombie.

**Duration:** Remains animated until eradicated.

**Cost:** 8 per dose (enough to affect one person).

**Time to Cast:** 1 minute.

**Prerequisites:** Zombie, and either Cure Disease or Pestilence.

### **Zombie Plant**

### **Regular**

This spell can zombify *any* dead plant matter, even a manufactured or processed item like lumber, paper or clothing made from cotton or linen. It also works on fungi and dead vegetable monsters.

Vegetable monsters are reanimated (see *Beasts*, p. 90) and become the undead servants of the caster. Inanimate plant matter simply gains 50% more hit points. While it isn’t animated, it is possessed by spirits and will trigger the Sense Spirit spell. Make a reaction roll every time someone comes into contact with it. On a reaction of Poor or worse, the spirits try to scare him: undead lumber will creak and groan, undead cloth will become clammy and tight, etc. Other effects are left up to the GM.

Undead vegetable matter is unsafe to eat. Those who eat it suffer the effects of a Poison Food spell (p. M48). In the unlikely event that this kills someone, he will rise as a zombie.

**Duration:** Remains animated until destroyed.

**Cost:** 8 per hex or 150 lbs. of inanimate plant matter, whichever is higher; minimum cost is 8.

**Time to Cast:** 1 minute.

**Prerequisites:** Animate Plant, Zombie.

### **Zombie Vehicle Regular**

Creates an undead vehicle. The subject vehicle must be disabled (i.e., 0 body hit points) but have relatively intact motive subassemblies (wheels, wings, etc.). Robotic vehicles must also have an intact computer.

The zombie vehicle is only as “intelligent” as it was before being disabled. A zombie motorcycle simply becomes tough and fast, and still requires a driver to operate it. A zombie starship with an AI brain will become the undead slave of its reanimator, and will be able to operate on its own (but without much initiative).

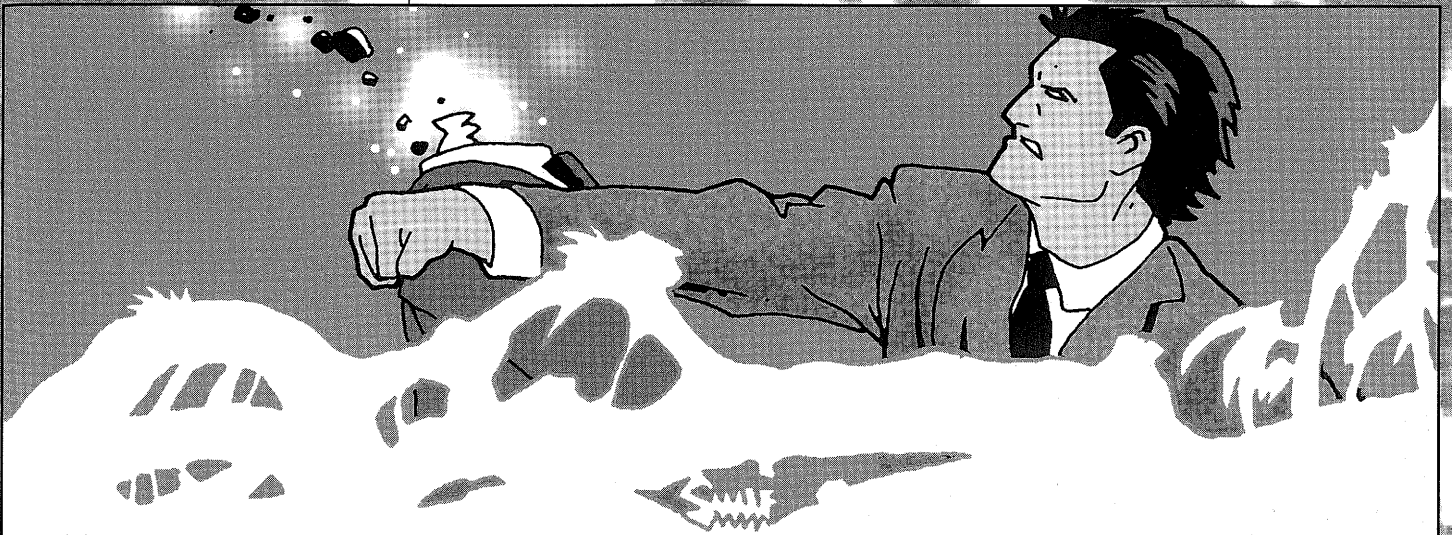
See p. 93 for the effects of this spell on vehicle stats.

**Duration:** Remains animated until destroyed.

**Cost:** 8 per 85 cf of total volume or 150 lbs. of empty weight, whichever is higher; minimum cost is 8.

**Time to Cast:** 1 minute.

**Prerequisites:** Animate Machine (p. G98), Zombie.



In campaigns that involve the undead, certain character types take on a special importance. Templates for a selection of essential character types, both living and undead, are presented here.

## Character Templates

A character template is a list of attributes, advantages, disadvantages and skills that a player can choose from in order to quickly build a specific type of character without neglecting important abilities or getting bogged down in the rules. The point costs of these abilities are listed, and the sum is given as the “template cost.” The player pays this cost, specifies the options he wants, writes those abilities down on his character sheet and spends his remaining points to customize his character (see below).

You never have to choose a template, and it’s possible to mix characters created with and without templates in the same campaign. Templates are just a way of buying many abilities at once; they have no in-play effects and aren’t discount-priced package deals. Characters made from templates are 100% compatible with characters cut from whole cloth, and the abilities on templates can be treated as nothing more than recommendations, exactly like those listed in the *Character Types* sections of other *GURPS* books.

### Skills

On the templates in this section, *primary skills* are skills that are absolutely required, *secondary skills* are

helpful skills that it’s hard to imagine the character not having, and *background skills* are skills chosen for descriptive reasons rather than utility. Skills are listed in the following format:

*Skill Name (Difficulty) Relative Level [Point Cost]-Actual Level*

### Customizing Templates

Once the template has been purchased, the player must customize it by spending his remaining character points. The template does not influence how these points are spent. If the template has fewer disadvantages than the campaign permits, more may be taken, giving extra points to spend. Likewise for quirks, which should always be selected by the player.

### Altering Templates

Templates are *guidelines*, not rules. When customizing a template, the player is free to alter any or all of the items that came with it. Subtracting items from a professional template may result in a character who will be regarded as incompetent by his peers, however.

### Character Templates vs. Racial Templates

Character templates are *not* the same thing as the racial templates of Chapters 3 and 4. Racial templates use attribute modifiers instead of attribute levels, include advantages that are unavailable on a less-than-racial basis, and include disadvantages don’t count against the campaign disadvantage limit. Racial templates also matter in play, and frequently contain 0-point features.

## ADVANTAGES

Certain advantages from *GURPS Basic Set* and *Compendium I* require special treatment in a campaign with undead characters:

### Allies p. B23

Only the willful undead can be bought as Allies by living PCs. Dominated undead serve their creator, but this is handled using Dominance (p. CI53). Mindless undead may be loyal "allies," but since they come only when called, never take the initiative and have very low point values, they don't count as Allies. Necromancer PCs who wish to enter play with *armies* of zombies at their command should see *Ally Group* (below).



### Ally Group p. CI19

Restless and dominated undead cannot form an Ally Group; willful undead can, using the normal rules. Mindless undead are a special case. They cost *no points* to have as Allies or Ally Groups, but in campaigns where PC-controlled zombies are clearly upsetting the balance of power, the following *optional* rule may prove useful:

Mindless undead can be treated as an Ally Group. Since they are typically worth very few character points, reduce base cost by 10 points; i.e., 0 points buys 2-5 undead, 10 points buys 6-20 and 20 points buys 21-100. Since zombies often occur in hordes, the GM may permit larger groups: 30 points for up to 500, 40 points for up to 2,000 and 50 points for up to 10,000. The necromancer is assumed to be constantly replacing losses. If he has access to enough "raw material," he can even increase the size of his group in play; the cost for this is the difference between the cost of his current level and the next one up.

This lets PC necromancers start with a few zombies for free, but prevents them from commanding huge armies of completely-loyal warriors for the price of a point in the Zombie spell.

*Continued on next page . . .*

## Living Characters

Most adventuring parties will consist primarily, if not exclusively, of living characters. While some won't care about the undead, many will be either opposed to them or fascinated by them, and a few will be interested in creating their own!

### Channeler/Medium

**75 points**

A channeler is a person who lets spirits possess his body so they can speak or write messages; a medium is someone who can perceive and talk to spirits. While the two are functionally quite different, they fill roughly the same dramatic role. Both kinds of spiritualists tend to be sympathetic toward the spectral undead unless it has been clearly demonstrated that the spirit in question is evil. As a result, they don't always get along with exorcists (p. 97) and hunters (p. 100).

*Attributes:* ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 14 [45], HT 10 [0].

*Advantages:* Either Channeling [10] or Medium [10], and 15 points chosen from Ally (Friendly spirit, 150 points, 9 or less) [10], Autotrance [5], Awareness [15], Empathy [15], Reawakened [10], Sensitive [5], Spirit Empathy [10] and World Sight [10].

*Disadvantages:* A total of -15 points in Addiction (Hallucinogen) [-15], Disciplines of Faith [-5 to -15], Reputation (As weird or sacrilegious) [-5 to -15], Sense of Duty (Spirits) [-10], Voices [-5 to -15] and Weirdness Magnet [-15].

*Primary Skills:* Spirit Lore (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-16.

*Secondary Skills:* Any four of Autohypnosis (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-13, Dreaming (M/VH) IQ-2 [2]-12, Lucid Dreaming (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-15, Meditation (M/VH) IQ-2 [2]-12, Psychology (Undead) (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-13 and Theology (Eschatology) (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-13.

*Background Skills:* A total of 6 points in Acting (M/A), Bard (M/A), Fast-Talk (M/A), History (M/H), Occultism (Undead) (M/A) and Performance (M/A).

### Evil Priest

**75 points**

The evil priest is a bitter or sociopathic person, usually violent, who willingly serves a darker power. He is the living ally of his master's undead servants on earth, and frequently carries out bloody sacrifice rituals to feed or summon them. In a horror campaign, he will have no magical powers of his own but will be able to call upon his master for assistance. In a fantasy setting, replace Divine Favor with Power Investiture (p. CI42) [10/level] and spells similar to those of the necromancer (p. 101).

*Attributes:* ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 14 [45], HT 10 [0].

*Advantages:* Ally (Evil spirit, 150 points, 9 or less) [10], Clerical Investment [5], Divine Favor (Evil god, 9 or less) [25].

*Disadvantages:* Duty (To master, 12 or less) [-10], and a total of -20 points in Bloodlust [-10], Compulsive Lying [-15], Fanaticism [-15], Intolerance (Religious) [-10], Jealousy [-10], Megalomania [-10], Necrophilia [-15], Paranoia [-10], Sadism [-15], Selfish [-5], Stubbornness [-5] and Vows (usually things like "Must sacrifice a child on the new moon") [-5 to -15].

*Primary Skills:* Performance/Ritual (M/A) IQ [2]-14, Sacrifice (M/H) IQ [4]-14, Theology (any) (M/H) IQ [4]-14.

*Secondary Skills:* Intimidation (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13, Occultism (Undead) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13, Spirit Lore (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13.



**Background Skills:** A total of 7 points in Combat/Weapon skills, Fast-Talk (M/A), Mortician (M/A), Poisons (M/H), Stealth (P/A) and Thanatology (M/H).

## Exorcist

75 points

The exorcist is a holy man who specializes in driving off evil spirits using the rituals and items they fear. He could be a Catholic priest brandishing a crucifix or a primitive "witch doctor" who dances around with a rattle. Either way, he knows a lot about the spectral undead, although this has more to do with knowing his enemy than with academic curiosity. It takes a lot of nerve to stand up to powerful undead entities, so most exorcists are willful, commanding people.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 14 [45], HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Clerical Investment [5], Strong Will +3 [12], and a total of 15 points chosen from Awareness [15], Blessed [10], Charisma [5/level], Fearlessness [2/level], Imperturbable [10], Magic Resistance [2/level], Psionic Resistance [2/level], True Faith [15], Unfazeable [15] and Voice [10].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (To church, 9 or less) [-5], Sense of Duty (Anyone in need of an exorcism) [-10], and a total of -15 points in Code of Honor, Disciplines of Faith or Vows [-5 to -15], Fanaticism [-15], Intolerance (Spirits) [-5] and Stubbornness [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Exorcism (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-15, Occultism (Undead) (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-15.

**Secondary Skills:** Performance/Ritual (M/A) IQ [2]-14, Psychology (Undead) (M/H) IQ [4]-14, Spirit Lore (M/A) IQ [2]-14, Theology (any) (M/H) IQ [4]-14.

**Background Skills:** A total of 6 points in Dancing (P/A), Meditation (M/VH), Mental Strength (M/H), Musical Instrument (M/H), Research (M/A), Singing (P/E; HT) and Thanatology (M/H).

## Good Priest

75 points

The good priest serves a benevolent deity. He's typically likeable and spends his time doing good acts, although he may be a bit officious or self-righteous. He prefers to help the undead find peace instead of treating them as foes, but wields his faith as a weapon against the truly evil undead and will stop at nothing to banish them. Fantasy priests may have Combat/Weapon skills, Power Investiture (p. CI42) [10/level] or World Sight (p. CI48) [10], and spells like Consecrate and Final Rest (p. 47) in addition to the abilities below.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 14 [45], HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Clerical Investment [5], True Faith [15], and a total of 25 points chosen from Blessed [10 or 20], Charisma [5/level], Divine Favor (Good deity, 6 or less) [13] or (9 or less) [25], Patron (Church, 6 or less) [13] or (9 or less) [25], Pious [5] and Strong Will [4/level].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (To church, not dangerous, 12 or less) [-5], -5 points in one of Disciplines of Faith, Sense of Duty or Vows, and another -20 points chosen from those three disadvantages or Charitable [-15], Honesty [-10], Pacifism [-15], Poverty [-10 or -15] and Truthfulness [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Performance/Ritual (M/A) IQ [2]-14, Theology (any) (M/H) IQ [4]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Bard (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13, Exorcism (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-13, Leadership (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13, Teaching (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13.

**Background Skills:** A total of 4 points in Administration (M/A), Diplomacy (M/H), Law (Religious) (M/H), Meditation (M/VH), Musical Instrument (M/H), Occultism (any) (M/A), Philosophy (M/H), Psychology (M/H), Research (M/A), Singing (P/E; HT) and Writing (M/A).

## ADVANTAGES

(Continued)

### Animal Empathy p. B19

The reaction rolls of undead beasts (p. 90) are unaffected by this advantage, and animal empathys *aren't* prohibited from destroying undead beasts; in fact, many will consider it their duty to do so. Animal Empathy is incompatible with the Frightens Animals disadvantage (p. CI97) possessed by many undead.

### Awareness p. CI33

The 15-point level of Awareness lets you sense the presence of the undead on an IQ roll (subject to the long-distance modifiers on p. B151). At the 35-point level, you will also know the nature of any undead being you encounter. An IQ roll will reveal whether the entity is normally corporeal or spectral (regardless of its current form), whether it is willful, restless or enslaved (and if it is mindless or dominated), and whether it is magical. It will also reveal possession by the undead.

### Beast-Kin p. CI21

The notes under *Animal Empathy* (above) also apply to Beast-Kin.

### Channeling p. CI34

Any kind of spectral undead can be channeled at no fatigue cost to either party. Since a spirit must otherwise spend fatigue points to speak (p. 52), it's a good idea for a party that includes a ghost to also include a channeler. This lets the undead PC participate more meaningfully in the campaign.

An interesting alternative is to let spectral PCs take living channelers as Allies or Dependents. With the GM's permission, the player of a spirit may even play the role of his own living Ally. The fact that the actual PC is undead can be kept secret until someone figures it out.

### Clerical Investment p. B19

This gives no special powers when combatting the undead; True Faith (p. 101) is needed to use faith as a "weapon." Clerical Investment does give access to useful skills such as Exorcism, Occultism and Theology, however.

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# ADVANTAGES

(Continued)

## Disease-Resistant p. CI24

This offers no protection against undeath spread by Dominance (p. CI53) or Infectious Attack (p. CI97) if such contagion is a *supernatural* phenomenon. If undeath is caused by a "real" disease, like a mutant virus, this advantage will protect normally. Disease-Resistant has no effect on undead microbes (p. 92), but gives its usual bonus against diseases caused by the Pestilence advantage (p. 60).

## Empathy p. B20

This functions normally with respect to the undead unless the GM rules that telepathy doesn't work on the undead, in which case Empathy won't work either. See *Psionics and the Undead* (p. 105).

## Immunity to Disease p. B20

The notes under *Disease-Resistant* (above) also apply to Immunity to Disease.

## Injury Tolerance (No Blood) p. CI58

Characters with this advantage are immune to having their HT drained by the Bite advantage (p. CI50) and to any other attack that relies upon blood-drinking.

## Insubstantiality p. CI59

In settings where this advantage can be taken by the living (e.g., *Supers*), the GM must decide whether insubstantial characters can interact normally with the spectral undead. While a blanket ruling is possible, this should probably be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the character's story and the "special effects" of his advantage. By default, ghosts and the insubstantial cannot interact and exist on different "planes."

## Magic Resistance p. B21

The dream travel, possession and probability alteration powers of ghosts (p. 52) are considered to be spiritual and not magical in nature, so Magic Resistance normally has no effect on them. At the GM's option, however, spectral undead with Dependency (Mana) are magical creatures whose powers amount to spells. In this case, the victim's Magic Resistance subtracts from the ghost's roll to use these powers and adds to subject's resistance roll.

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## Grave-Digger

75 points

The grave-digger is a standard feature of horror (and some fantasy) involving the undead. He is menacing and silent, often mute or deformed, and always seems to have a heavy shovel in hand. Some grave-diggers assist good priests (p. 97) and hunters (p. 100), and will bash in the head of a zombie at a moment's notice. Others are necromancers' assistants who dig up bodies and silence nosy parkers. Shovels are listed on pp. B212-213; in combat, treat them as cheap-quality great axes (p. B206) that do -1 damage.

*Attributes:* ST 13 [30], DX 13 [30], IQ 9 [-10], HT 12 [20].

*Advantages:* A total of 25 points chosen from +1 ST [15], +1 or +2 HT [10 or 25], Extra Hit Points [5/level], Fearlessness [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Immunity to Disease [10], Night Vision [10], Patron (Priest or necromancer, 9 or less) [10] and Toughness (DR 1 or 2) [10 or 25].

*Disadvantages:* A net -25 points chosen from Albinism [-10], Appearance -5 to -20], Bad Smell [-10], Disturbing Voice [-10], Gigantism [-10], Hunchback [-10] and Mute [-25], plus -15 points chosen from Berserk [-15], Bloodlust [-10], Illiteracy [-10], Necrophilia [-15], Odious Personal Habits [-5 to -15], Short Attention Span [-10] and Uneducated [-5].

*Primary Skills:* Lifting (P/H) ST [4]-13, Two-Handed Axe/Mace (P/A) DX+1 [4]-14.

*Secondary Skills:* Brawling (P/E) DX [1]-13, Intimidation (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-11, Wrestling (P/A) DX [2]-13.

*Background Skills:* Mortician (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-8, Scrounging (M/E) IQ [1]-9, Stealth (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12.



## Grave Robber

80 points

A grave robber is a someone who opens tombs to steal from the dead. He may be a respected archaeologist, a dashing mercenary, a sacrilegious crook or simply a vandal. Whatever his basic nature, he must deal with the fact that it's often illegal to rob tombs, and even when it isn't, many people consider his profession to be distasteful, if not evil. Grave robbers face many challenges (see *Grave Robbery*, p. 26), among which are the undead, angered at the violation of their resting place.

*Attributes:* ST 10 [0], DX 13 [30], IQ 13 [30], HT 10 [0].

*Advantages:* A total of 20 points chosen from 3D Spatial Sense [10], Absolute Direction [5], Alertness [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Comfortable Wealth [10], Danger Sense [15], Luck [15] and Night Vision [10].

*Disadvantages:* One of Curious [-15], Greed [-15] or Kleptomania [-15], plus -10 points in Cursed (Divine Curse) [-5 or -10], Enemy (Angry religious or cultural group, 6 or less) [-10], Excommunicated [-5 or -10], Overconfidence [-10], Reputation (As sacrilegious) [-5 or -10] and Secret (Grave robber) [-5 or -10].

*Primary Skills:* Area Knowledge (any) (M/E) IQ [1]-13, Orienteering (M/A) IQ [2]-13, and 8 points in Climbing (P/A), Demolition (M/A), Filch (P/A), Lockpicking (M/A) and Traps (M/A).

*Secondary Skills:* A total of 2 points in Boating (P/A), Driving (any) (P/A), Hiking (P/A; HT), Powerboat (P/A) and Riding (any) (P/A), plus 6 points in Combat/Weapon skills, Fast-Talk (M/A), First Aid (M/E), Language skills, Navigation (M/H) and Survival (any) (M/A).

*Background Skills:* A total of 6 points in Archaeology (M/H), Architecture (M/A), Cartography (M/A), Geology (M/H), Merchant (M/A), Paleoanthropology (M/H), Streetwise (M/A) and Thanatology (M/H).

## Groupie

30 points

Groupies are people who think the undead are "cool," or at least admirable. They are usually flaky intellectuals, and most of them are also thrill-seekers, drug addicts, nutcases, misunderstood artists or members of rock bands that misuse umlauts. Groupies tend to dress up as vampires, join strange religions, hold séances and hang around cemeteries and haunted houses. In fantasy settings, they are sometimes recruited by liches and other powerful undead who need living servants (or more zombies).

*Attributes:* ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 12 [20], HT 10 [0].

*Advantages:* Ally Group (2-5 groupies in the same rock band, coven, writers' circle, etc., 12 or less) [20].

*Disadvantages:* Delusion ("The undead are my friends.") [-5], Obsession (Anything to do with the undead) [-5], and another -15 points chosen from a higher level of those two disadvantages or Addiction (Laudanum) [-5], (LSD) [-15], or (X) [-5], Chronic Depression [-15], Gullibility [-10], Impulsiveness [-10], Lunacy [-10], Necrophilia [-15], Weirdness Magnet [-15] and Youth [-2 to -6].

*Primary Skills:* Occultism (Undead) (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

*Secondary Skills:* Any three of Hobby\* (Gothic Fiction, Horror Movies or Recreational Drugs) (M/A) IQ [1]-12, Performance/Ritual (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11, Spirit Lore (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11, Thanatology (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10 and Theology (any) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10.

\* Hobby skills are taken at half price; see p. B54.

*Background Skills:* A total of 8 points in Acting (M/A), Artist (M/H), Carousing (P/A; HT), Dancing (P/A), Make-Up (M/E), Musical Instrument (M/H), Poetry (M/A), Research (M/A), Singing (P/E; HT) and Writing (M/A).



## ADVANTAGES

(Continued)

### Mana Damper p. C140

As explained under *Magic Resistance* (above), undead with Dependency (Mana) are magical creatures. At the GM's option, their special powers – ghost abilities, Terror, etc. – cannot affect a character whose Mana Damper advantage reduces his personal mana level to "none."

### Medium p. C141

Spectral undead do not have to pay fatigue to be seen or heard by a medium. Note that the medium's presence does *not* automatically make it possible for others to perceive the spirit.

### Mindlink p. C141

This functions normally with respect to the undead unless the GM rules that telepathy doesn't work on the undead, in which case Mindlink won't work either. See *Psionics and the Undead* (p. 105).

### Panimmunity p. C128

The notes under *Disease-Resistant* (p. 98) also apply to Panimmunity.

### Plant Empathy p. C129

The reaction rolls of undead plants (p. 92) are unaffected by this advantage, and plant empaths *aren't* prohibited from destroying undead plants. Plant Empathy is incompatible with the Lifebane disadvantage (p. C198) possessed by many undead.

### Psionic Resistance p. B22

The dream travel, possession and probability alteration powers of ghosts (p. 52) are considered to be spiritual and not psionic in nature, so Psionic Resistance normally has no effect on them. At the GM's option, however, spectral undead may be psionic creatures, and their victim's Psionic Resistance will subtract from all rolls made to use their powers.

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# ADVANTAGES

(Continued)

## Resurrection p. C164

This potent advantage overrides Dominance (p. C153) and Infectious Attack (p. C197). If an undead entity with one of those traits wounds or kills you, you won't rise as undead; you'll simply come back to life normally. Note that if Resurrection fails for any reason (insufficient points, a limitation, etc.), you *will* be infected and become undead.

*Special Enhancement:* Ghostly Continuity. You become a ghost between lives. Replace Resurrection with Ghost Form [100] (p. 54) during this time. You start out with full HT but only 1 fatigue point, like any other new ghost. When your body is repaired, you resume corporeal form and regain Resurrection. If you are "killed" in ghost form, though, you're truly dead; even Resurrection can't save you. +10%.

## Hunter

**100 points**

The hunter is a professional undead slayer. He seeks out vampires, zombies and other corporeal undead, then does whatever it takes to lay them to rest *permanently*. He's well-versed in undead lore, and knows how to use things like holy water, religious symbols and silver weapons. The stereotypical hunter is a tough hombre who isn't afraid to go toe-to-toe with creatures that could tear him apart and eat his soul for a light snack. Most hunters are motivated by a personal code of behavior, but a few work for hire.

*Attributes:* ST 11 [10], DX 13 [30], IQ 13 [30], HT 11 [10].

*Advantages:* Any *one* of Awareness [15], Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], True Faith [15] or Unfazeable [15], plus 10 points chosen from +1 ST [10], +1 HT [10], Alertness [5/level], Fearlessness [2/level], Higher Purpose (Slay all undead) [5], Imperturbable [10], Magic Resistance [2/level], Night Vision [10], Psionic Resistance [2/level] and Strong Will [4/level].

*Disadvantages:* Either Greed [-15] or Obsession (Slay all undead, or die trying) [-15], plus another -15 points chosen from Bloodlust [-10], Guilt Complex [-5], Insomniac [-10 or -15], Intolerance (Undead) [-5], Nightmares [-5], Overconfidence [-10], Pyromania [-5], Stubbornness [-5] and Weirdness Magnet [-15].

*Primary Skills:* Armoury (Occult Weaponry) (M/A) IQ [2]-13, Occultism (Undead) (M/A) IQ [2]-13, and 10 points in Combat/Weapon skills.

*Secondary Skills:* Stealth (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12, Tactics (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12, and 6 points in Demolition (M/A), Electronics Operation (Sensors) (M/A), Exorcism (M/H), Fireworks (M/H), Throwing (P/H), Tracking (M/A) and Traps (M/A).

*Background Skills:* Any *two* of Mental Strength (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11, Mind Block (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12, Psychology (Undead) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11 and Thanatology (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11.

## Mortician/Undertaker

**30 points**

Morticians prepare corpses, arrange funerals and generally take care of the dead in the period between death and entombment. Most are honest professionals who prefer to see their work stay in the tomb; in many societies, the mortician is blamed if a corpse starts walking around. Still, some are secretly allied with necromancers (p. 101), and help them procure dead bodies or prepare corpses for reanimation! Morticians often have a grave-digger (p. 98) they can call upon if the going gets tough.

*Attributes:* ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 12 [20], HT 10 [0].

*Advantages:* A total of 10 points chosen from Ally (Grave-digger, 76-100 points, 9 or less) [5], Comfortable Wealth [10], Disease-Resistant [5], Immunity to Disease [10], Pious [5] and Sanctity [5].

*Disadvantages:* A total of -15 points in Bad Smell [-10], Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Greed [-15], Honesty [-10], No Sense of Humor [-10], Secret (Assists necromancers) [-10], Sense of Duty (Families of the dead) [-5], Social Stigma (Untouchable) [-5 to -15] and Workaholic [-5].

*Primary Skills:* Mortician (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-14.

*Secondary Skills:* Diplomacy (M/H) IQ [4]-12.

*Background Skills:* A total of 5 points in Carpentry (M/E), Flower Arranging (M/E), Make-Up (M/E), Performance/Ritual (M/A), Savoir-Faire (M/E), Thanatology (M/H) and Woodworking (P/A).



## See Invisible p. C165

This advantage can be purchased separately to let you see spectral beings, but Medium does the same thing for fewer points. In order to make See Invisible competitive, the GM may elect to group competitive invisibility with either magical or psi invisibility and allow a single type of See Invisible to work on both.

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## Necromancer

150 points

A necromancer is, strictly speaking, a wizard who tells the future by speaking with the dead. In horror and fantasy, however, he is a black magician who deals with the *undead*. The classic necromancer is a gifted mage, a bookish scholar and either mad, grotesque or both. He lurks in a castle or haunted manor, far away from anyone who would object to his profession. While necromancy is usually regarded as distasteful, it will only be considered "evil" if it goes against the tenets of an influential local religion.

**Attributes:** ST 9 [-10], DX 10 [0], IQ 15 [60], HT 12 [20].

**Advantages:** Magery 3 [35], Strong Will +2 [8], and a total of 20 points chosen from Ally Group (Horde of 20 zombies, 9 or less) [10] or (100 zombies) [20], Disease-Resistant [5], Extra Fatigue [3/level], Immunity to Disease [10], Imperturbable [10], Night Vision [10] and Single-Minded [5].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -30 points in Appearance [-5 to -20], Bad Smell [-10], Curious [-5 to -15], Disturbing Voice [-10], Excommunicated [-5 or -10], Loner [-5], Odious Personal Habit (Disrespectful of the dead) [-5], Paranoia [-10], Reclusive [-10], Reputation (As evil or dangerous) [-5 to -20], Secret (Necromancer) [-20] and Skinny [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Occultism (Undead) (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-16, Spirit Lore (M/A) IQ [2]-15, Thanatology (M/H) IQ [4]-15.

**Secondary Skills:** Alchemy (M/VH) IQ-2 [2]-13, Mortician (M/A) IQ-2 [½]-13, Thaumatology (M/VH) IQ [1]-15\*, Theology (Eschatology) (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-13.

**Background Skills:** Archaeology (M/H) IQ-3 [½]-12, Exorcism (M/H) IQ-3 [½]-12, History (M/H) IQ-3 [½]-12, Poisons (M/H) IQ-3 [½]-12, Research (M/A) IQ-2 [½]-13.

**Spells\*** (one point each, except where noted): Control Zombie-16, Cure Disease-16, Death Vision-16, Decay-16, Fear-16, Lend Health-16, Lend Strength-16, Major Healing (VH)-15, Mass Zombie (VH)-17 [4], Minor Healing-16, Recover Strength-16, Seek Earth-16, Sense Emotion-16, Sense Foes-16, Sense Spirit-16, Shape Earth-16, Skull-Spirit-16, Soul Jar (VH)-15, Steal Health-16, Steal Strength-16, Sterilize-16, Summon Spirit-16, Test Food-16, Turn Spirit-16, Turn Zombie-16, Zombie-17 [2].

\* Includes +3 for Magery.

## Occultist

60 points

An occultist is someone who studies the supernatural and paranormal. He doesn't necessarily believe in any of it. While he could be a raving cultist, he could just as easily be an impartial parapsychologist who seeks hard evidence and statistics; he could even be a professional skeptic. Most fictional occultists are either observant, trained investigators or sheltered, eccentric academics. An occultist is indispensable in any campaign with lots of undead around.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 14 [45], HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 20 points chosen from Alertness [5/level], Awareness [75], Common Sense [10], Danger Sense [15], Intuition [15], Second Sight [5], Serendipity [15], Single-Minded [5], Spirit Empathy [10] and Tenure [5].

**Disadvantages:** One of Curious [-5], Delusion ("All tales of the occult are true!") [-5] or Odious Personal Habit (Annoying skeptic) [-5], plus -15 points chosen from Absent-Mindedness [-15], Curious [-5 or -10], Light Sleeper [-5], Reputation (As weird) [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Weirdness Magnet [-15] and Xenophilia [-5 or -15].

**Primary Skills:** Occultism (any) (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-15, Research (M/A) IQ [2]-14.

## ADVANTAGES

(Continued)

### Sensitive p. C130

The notes under *Empathy* (p. 98) also apply to Sensitive.

### Special Rapport p. C146

This ends when either character dies. It does not normally endure in undeath, but restless undead who come back for reasons that have to do with a loved one may retain their Special Rapport with that person. At the GM's option, Special Rapport can even be treated as one of the mystical causes of restless undeath, giving +1 to +3 to the Will roll to return as undead (see *Rising from the Dead*, p. 34).

### Spirit Empathy p. C146

The +3 reaction bonus granted by this advantage applies to the spectral undead. Undead with Intolerance (Living) will tend to avoid you and attack someone else, but they won't befriend you. Corporeal undead that are animated by spirits (including undead plants, vehicles, etc.) will also react at +3.

### Tree-Kin p. C131

The notes under *Plant Empathy* (p. 99) also apply to Tree-Kin. Tree-Kin does not reduce the difficulty of the Zombie Plant spell (p. 94).

### True Faith p. C147

This advantage lets you repel the undead using a religious symbol (see p. 46). Not all undead will be affected. Specifically, revenants (p. 73) cannot be turned. Neither can mindless undead; they aren't "malign supernatural beings," they're just following orders. Undead who serve a deity, including undead priests of that god and bodies animated by servitor spirits like angels and demons, *cannot* be turned by the symbol of the god they serve.

### Wealth p. B16

Characters who become undead in play should be permitted to keep the Wealth advantage if they have taken measures to keep their fortune accessible. In a fantasy campaign, this can be as simple as stashing a bag of gold in a hollow tree; in a modern-day game, it may require more complicated arrangements, like a forged identity and a blind trust. Of course, intact undead may be able to hide the fact that they're dead! All this applies only to the willful undead; the restless undead don't usually care about money, while mindless undead are treated as Dead Broke.

## NEW ADVANTAGES

Chapter 3 introduces three new advantages for the undead: Independent Body Parts (p. 59), Pestilence (p. 60) and Terror (p. 60). The following new advantage can only be taken by *living* characters:

### Covenant of Rest 1 point

You have promised a god or spirit that you will carry out good acts in its name. In return, it has vowed to cast a Final Rest spell (p. 47) on you when you die. This will make it impossible to summon, animate or resurrect you – unless your patron wills it – but *won't* prevent resuscitation by conventional medicine. This pact can only be made by those who are “good” or “holy” (GM’s opinion), and will be broken instantly by sinful or sacrilegious deeds. Fantasy races are sometimes favored by the god that created them, and may have this advantage on their racial template.

## DISADVANTAGES

A few disadvantages from *GURPS Basic Set* and *Compendium I* require additional interpretation in a campaign that includes the undead.

### Bloodlust p. B31

Even when your foe is clearly undead, you must take extra time to make sure he stays down, unless he turns to dust or goo before your eyes (as per Unliving). This means doing whatever you *think* you need to do to “kill” him: staking his heart, chopping off his head, setting him on fire, etc. This disadvantage is common among undead hunters.

### Dependents p. B38

Only willful undead worth 50 points or less can be taken as Dependents. Enslaved undead under your control can only ever cost you points, as per Dominance (p. CI53) or Ally Group (p. 96). Restless undead cannot be Dependents.

### Enemies p. B39

If a spectral undead Enemy is exorcized, this disadvantage must be bought off or the spirit will eventually return, however successful the exorcism seemed to be.

### Frightens Animals p. CI97

Undead beasts (p. 90) are unaffected by this disadvantage. This is why undead warriors often choose them as mounts.

*Continued on next page . . .*

*Secondary Skills:* A total of 8 points in Detect Lies (M/H), Electronics Operation (Sensors) (M/A), Forensics (M/H), Interrogation (M/A), Photography (M/A), Psychology (M/H), Spirit Lore (M/A) and Writing (M/A).

*Background Skills:* Any *one* of Conspiracy Theory (M/VH) IQ-3 [1]-11, Psionics (M/VH) IQ-3 [1]-11, Ritual Magic (any) (M/VH) IQ-3 [1]-11 or Thaumatology (M/VH) IQ-3 [1]-11.

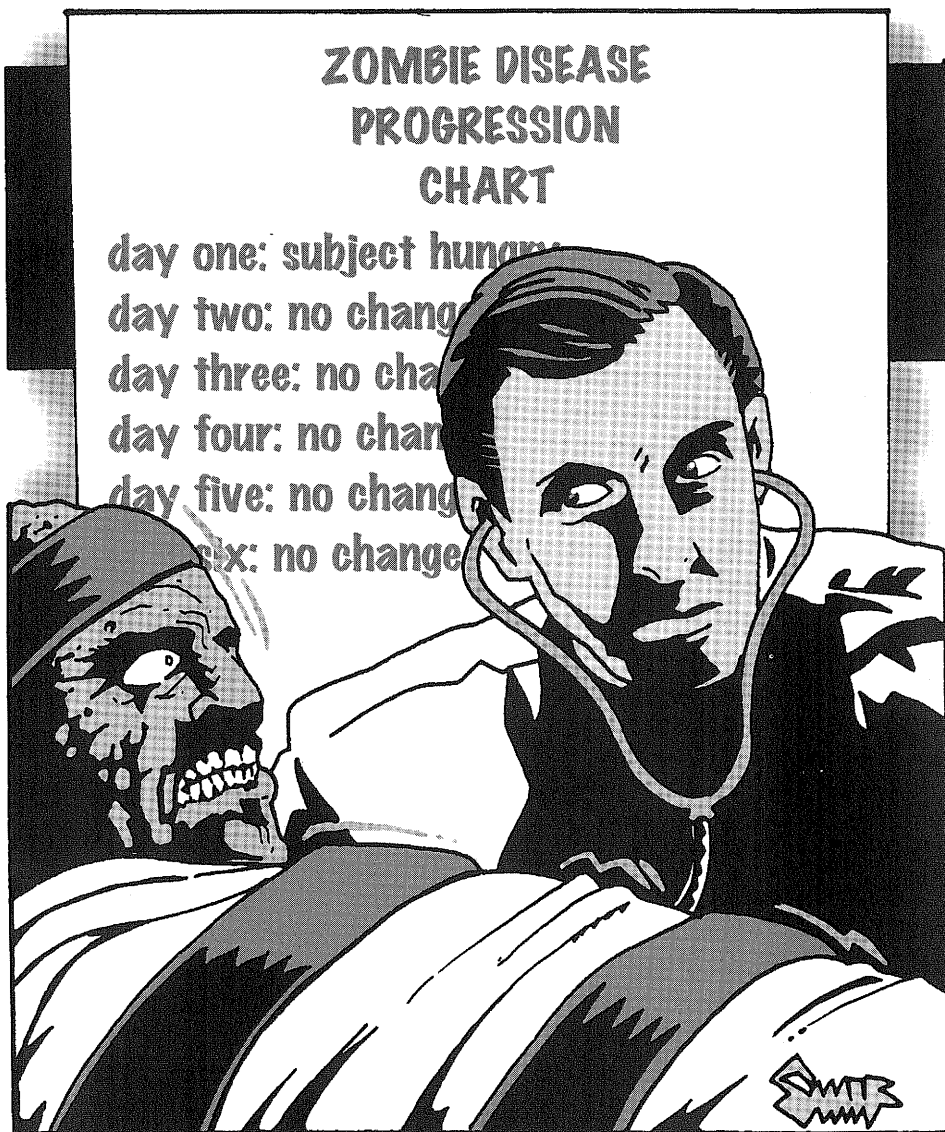
## Pathologist

75 points

A pathologist studies tissue, blood, etc., with a view to learning what’s wrong with a living person or what killed a dead one. In a campaign involving the undead, the latter will be far more important, so most pathologists will be coroners or medical examiners. A pathologist is often the first to discover an undead plague, usually when a body turns out to have been dead for a lot longer than the police report says – or when a corpse gets up and *walks* out of the morgue!

*Attributes:* ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 14 [45], HT 10 [0].

*Advantages:* A total of 17 points chosen from Acute Vision [2/level], Comfortable Wealth [10], Contacts (Police; skill 18, 9 or less, completely reliable) [9], Disease-Resistant [5], Intuition [15], Less Sleep [3/level], Manual Dexterity [3/level] and Status 1 [5].



*Disadvantages:* A net -15 points chosen from Addiction (Stimulants) [-5], Curious [-5 to -15], Honesty [-10], Insomniac [-10 or -15], Obsession (Learning the truth) [-5 to -15], Truthfulness [-5] and Workaholic [-5].

*Primary Skills:* Diagnosis (M/H) IQ [4]-14, Pathology (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-15, Physician (M/H) IQ [4]-14.

*Secondary Skills:* Forensics (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-13, Physiology (M/VH) IQ-1 [4]-13, Poisons (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-13, Surgery (M/VH) IQ-1 [4]-13, and either Chemistry (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-12 or Electronics Operation (Medical) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13.

*Background Skills:* One of Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13, Photography (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13 or Writing (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-13.

## Victim

0 points

The victim is a vital element in undead fiction. He has a knack for being the first to become a zombie, get bitten by a vampire or discover that an abandoned house is haunted. He often accompanies more-adventurous characters, walking alone near the back of the group and going into dark, dangerous places without telling anyone. Victims are naive, unlucky or both. The abilities below can be used for "comic-relief" PCs or for "instant victims" created by the GM.

*Attributes:* ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 10 [0], HT 10 [0].

*Advantages:* A total of 10 points chosen from +1 [10] to any attribute, Attractive Appearance [5], Charisma +1 [5], Fashion Sense [5] and Pitiable [5].

*Disadvantages:* A net -20 points chosen from Clueless [-10], Combat Paralysis [-15], Confused [-10], Gullibility [-10], Impulsiveness [-10], Indecisive [-10], Klutz [-5 or -15], Mundane Background [-10], Necrophobia [-10], Overconfidence [-10], Squeamishness [-10], Unluckiness [-10] and Weirdness Magnet [-15].

*Primary Skills:* Professional Skill (any) (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-12.

*Secondary Skills:* Area Knowledge (Home Town) (M/E) IQ [1]-10 and either Hobby\* (any) (M/A) IQ+1 [2]-11 or Sport (any) (P/A) DX [2]-10.

\* Hobby skills are taken at half price; see p. B54.

*Background Skills:* One point in any of Computer Operation (M/E), Scrounging (M/E), Cooking (M/E), Typing (P/E), Games (any) (M/E), Driving (any) (P/A) and Savoir-Faire (M/E).

# Undead Characters

## Buying Undead Racial Templates

When a character becomes undead, it is likely that some of the traits he had in life will be incompatible with his new form. These will be lost when he rises from the dead. Adjust his point value for these lost abilities, then again for template cost. If this results in a net loss, his point total goes down. If it results in a net gain, his point total goes up and the GM may require him to pay off his "debt" with earned points, as explained under *The Cost of Undeath* (p. 45).

Traits that are unlikely to survive the transition to undeath are listed below. Some of these are completely inappropriate for the undead, while others are merely superseded by standard undead features. For example, all undead have Immunity to Poison, so Addiction (to drugs), Alcohol Tolerance, Alcoholism, etc., are no longer appropriate and Immunity to Poison as a personal advantage become redundant.

# DISADVANTAGES

(Continued)

## Lecherousness p. B34

Regardless of how desperate you get, you'll never turn to mummified, rotting or skeletal undead for romantic liaisons. Intact undead and materialized ghosts are another matter, especially if they're attractive; if bad make-up can be overlooked, then so can Pallor. Those who wish to explore these issues further should see *Necrophilia* (p. 104).

## Lifebane p. C198

This has no effect at all on undead vegetation (p. 92) or insect swarms (p. 91).

## Necrophobia p. B35

Characters with Necrophobia must make an immediate Fright Check at -6 whenever they are confronted with the undead. If the entity in question also has the Terror advantage (p. 60), a second Fright Check must be made for this. If the Fright Check for the Phobia succeeds, the one caused by Terror is made at -2 (-3 for a severe Phobia); if it fails, the second Fright Check is made at -6!

## Pacifism (Cannot Kill) p. B35

This does not apply when fighting foes who are obviously undead.

## Voices p. C194

This is sometimes caused by malevolent spectral undead. Even when such an entity is taken as an Enemy, the GM can choose to game it as Voices instead, using the point cost to judge severity. If the victim manages to exorcise the ghost, he must buy off the disadvantage with earned points or it will eventually return.

## Weak Immune System p. C185

This does not make one any more susceptible to Dominance (p. C153), Infectious Attack (p. C197) or undead microbes (p. 92). It *does* affect rolls to resist Pestilence (p. 60), however, which are made at -3 to HT (maximum effective HT 9).

## Xenophilia p. C195

This has no effect on encounters with the undead, or on Fright Checks caused by undead with Terror or Horrific Appearance. The undead aren't aliens, they're just plain dead!

*Continued on next page . . .*

# NEW DISADVANTAGE

## Necrophilia -15 points

You suffer from an irrational sexual attraction to the dead. While the dead are unlikely to object, most living people consider this filthy, horrifying and immoral, and the *undead* may take exception to your advances.

Whenever you encounter an intact corpse of the sex you find attractive, you must make a Will roll (at -5 if the dead person was Beautiful in life, -10 if Very Beautiful). The GM may give you a bonus of +1 to +5 if the corpse is in bad shape or if you know it's infected with a deadly disease. On a success, you resist the urge. On a failure, you'll do nothing immediately, but you'll do everything in your power to return to the corpse – or perhaps even steal it – so that you can have your way with it when no one else is around. If that's impossible, you'll become morose and useless for 3d days.

You must also roll vs. Will (with the same modifiers) whenever you encounter intact *undead*, like vampires. Once more, failure means that you give in. You will usually just make a "pass," but this may have dire consequences. You are also at -3 to resist mental control attempts made by *undead* you are attracted to!

Necrophilia does not manifest often, but anyone who finds out about it will react to you at -3.

## SKILLS

Some skills from *GURPS Basic Set Compendium I* have additional applications or restrictions when it comes to dealing with the *undead*.

### Animal Handling p. B46

This skill is useless when dealing with *undead* beasts. Only the person who animated such creatures can control them or command them to obey someone else, and *undead* animals tend to fight as ordered, not according to instinctive patterns. To "calm" or "tame" *undead* beasts, use Control Zombie (p. M73).

### Armoury p. B53

In campaigns where occult menaces like demons, lycanthropes or the *undead* are a common and well-known threat, the GM may allow the specialty "Occult Weaponry." This covers general expertise with consecrated weapons, holy hand grenades, holy water pistols, silver bullets, wooden stakes, etc., even when they would otherwise fall under another specialty.

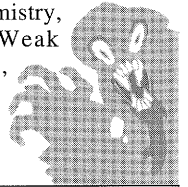
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## Advantages:

Academic Status\*, Administrative Rank\*, Alcohol Tolerance, Allies\*, Ally Group\*, Alternate Identity\*, Animal Empathy, Bardic Immunity\*, Beast-Kin, Breath Holding, Cast Iron Stomach, Claim to Hospitality\*, Clerical Investment\*, Contacts\*, Deep Sleeper, Destiny†, Diplomatic Immunity\*, Disease-Resistant, Doesn't Breathe†, Doesn't Eat or Drink†, Doesn't Sleep†, Extended Lifespan, Extra Life†, Familiar†, Favor\*, Filter Lungs, Gills, Heir, Immortality†, Immunity to Disease†, Immunity to Poison†, Interface Jack, Karmic Ties\*, Legal Enforcement Powers\*, Legal Immunity\*, Less Sleep, Light Hangover, Longevity, Merchant Rank\*, Metabolism Control, Military Rank\*, Mundanity, Neural Cyberdeck Interface, No Hangover, Oxygen Storage, Panimmunity, Patron\*, Plant Empathy, Rapid Healing, Reduced Sleep, Regeneration†, Religious Rank\*, Reputation†\*, Resistant to Poison, Resurrection†, Security Clearance\*, Status\*, Tenure\*, Tree-Kin, Unaging†, Undying, Universal Digestion, Very Rapid Healing, Wyrd†.

## Disadvantages:

Accelerated Aging, Addiction†, Age, Albinism, Alcohol Intolerance, Alcoholism, Cold-Blooded, Cyber-Rejection†, Delicate Metabolism, Dependent\*, Destiny†, Dis-owned\*, Duties†\*, Dying Race, Enemy†\*, Epilepsy, Extra Sleep, Extremely Hazardous Duty†, Gluttony, Hemophilia, Horrible Hangovers, Increased Life Support, Insomniac, Involuntary Duty†, Karmic Ties\*, Killjoy, Light Sleeper, Migraine, Motion Sickness, Mundane Background, Nervous Stomach, Obnoxious Drunk, Prefrontal Lobotomy, Reputation†\*, Scalped, Secret Identity\*, Self-Destruct†, Short Lifespan, Sleepwalker, Sleepy Drinker, Sleepy†, Slow Eater, Slow Healing, Slow Metabolism, Social Disease, Social Stigma†\*, Space Sickness, Status\*, Sterile†, Susceptibility to Poison, Terminally Ill, Tourette's Syndrome, Unhealing†, Unliving†, Unusual Biochemistry, Vampiric Dependency, Weak Immune System, Wyrd†, Youth.



\* Social traits are usually lost at death, but evil overlords and the like may be able to retain them, at the GM's option.

† These traits end at death, but can sometimes be taken again *after* death.

Most of the guidelines listed under *Nonhumans* (p. 89) can be applied to personal advantages and disadvantages. E.g., someone who gains Magery upon becoming *undead* will lose any Magic Resistance he had in life.

## Magical Undead

*GURPS Undead* assumes that spirit phenomena are not magical. Some people find this distinction artificial. At the GM's option, *undead* with Dependency (Mana) can be treated as "magical creatures," which affects them as follows:

Magical *undead* cannot cross the border of a Pentagram spell, but can pass through a Force Dome as if it weren't there. They can be detected by Detect Magic, Mage Sense and Mage Sight. As well, their special powers – like Terror, materialization and possession – require mana to work, and rolls made to use these powers receive a bonus in death-aspected areas and a penalty in life-aspected ones (see p. M94). Finally, their abilities are affected by spells that block magic and by the Magic Resistance (or Susceptibility) of their victims.

## Psionic Undead

*GURPS Undead* also assumes that spirit phenomena are unrelated to psi powers, but some people feel they're identical. If the GM wishes, the spectral *undead* can be treated as psi entities, using the following rules:

Ghosts exist on the astral plane and interact normally with astrally-projecting psis. They cannot enter the area of effect of a psi Screamer, and will lose HT at the same rate as psionic Power when attacked with Neutralize (p. P10) or Steal Power (p. P17). All of their special powers are considered to be psionic: empathy and dream travel are a kind of telepathy, the poltergeist effect is a kind of psychokinesis, etc. Their powers can be detected with Psi Sense (p. P24), leave a residue that can be found using Signature Sniffer and will be affected by their victims' Mind Shield (p. P22) and Psionic Resistance.



The GM can also apply these modifications to corporeal undead that feed using Psychic Vampirism (pp. P16-17).

## Psionics and the Undead

It's up to the GM whether the undead can be affected by psionics or not. Invulnerability (p. CI59) to all psi powers is an advantage worth 150 points, but in settings where psi powers are rare (like classic high fantasy), this can be reduced to 75 or even 50 points.

An interesting alternative is to assume that living and undead minds are on totally different "wavelengths." Living telepaths can only affect the living, while undead telepaths can only affect the undead. This option doesn't cost *anybody* points; it's simply a campaign decision about the way psi powers work.

By default, psi skills work as follows on the undead:

**Astral Projection:** A psi may be able to use Astral Projection to interact with the spectral undead and Astral Sight to detect them. The points made under *Insubstantiality* (p. 98) and *See Invisible* (p. 100) apply here as well.

**Electrokinesis:** The undead have no electrical impulses in their brains, and are unaffected by Confuse.

**ESP:** Anyone with ESP Power 5+ (i.e., Danger Sense) can sense the presence of spectral undead on an IQ roll. Psychometry can be used at the sight of a haunting to divine the personality and motivations of the ghost.

**Healing:** Healing works normally on Unhealing subjects, but won't restore HT lost to The Draining and can't cure contagious undeath. Sense Aura picks up *nothing* from the undead.

**Psychic Vampirism:** The undead possess no life force, so they are immune to this power for the most part.

**Psychokinesis:** Corporeal undead can be affected normally by PK, but spectral undead are completely immune to it.

**Telepathy:** Mental Blow, Mental Stab and Mindsword can be used to injure the spectral undead. Mind Shield *doesn't* block the psi-like powers of the spectral undead unless the GM rules that they are psionic in nature (see p. 104). Mindswitch only works on corporeal undead. Mindless undead are immune to "mind control," including Aspect, Illusion, Mindwipe, Suggest and Telecontrol. Sleep is ineffective against *all* undead.

## Special Powers

Since the undead are powerful spiritual, magical or psionic entities, the GM may opt to give them more latitude when choosing their personal abilities. Subject to GM approval, the players of undead characters may select any of the advantages suggested for the undead in Chapter 3 as personal advantages, except where such an ability would be inappropriate (GM's decision). In particular, most undead can justify Dark Vision (p. CI52), Penetrating Call (p. CI63), Silence (p. CI66), Terror (p. 60) and the natural attack Cool (p. CI72). Most corporeal undead can also justify Independent Body Parts (p. 59) and Pestilence (p. 60).

To compensate for the additional limitations imposed on them, magical and psionic undead (see above) should be allowed to take magical and psionic powers respectively. The GM may also let them buy racial and super advantages (pp. CI49-71) that emulate spells or psi skills. Finally, GMs with access to *GURPS Bio-Tech*, *Supers* or *Voodoo* may wish to permit abilities from those books as well. Abilities that are completely antithetical to the undead (e.g., fire powers) should be strictly prohibited!

## SKILLS (Continued)

### Body Language p. CI132

This skill can be used when fighting the undead, but there is an extra -4 to the roll because the undead often lack muscle tone, facial expressions . . . perhaps even eyes! Body Language can never give better than +1 on defense rolls vs. the undead, and cannot be used like Empathy or Detect Lies when dealing with the undead out of combat. At the GM's option, these limitations may be reduced or waived for undead that are indistinguishable from living humans.

### Detect Lies p. B65

This skill is used at -4 vs. the undead, since they tend to have unexpressive voices and faces, forcing the listener to judge the truth solely on the basis of logical consistency. As for Body Language (above), this penalty may be reduced or waived for beings that aren't obviously undead.

### Disguise p. B65

Apply the total reaction penalty due to undeath-related Appearance, Bad Smell and Pallor to skill rolls made to disguise the undead as the living (e.g., a zombie with Bad Smell and Monstrous Appearance would give -7 to Disguise skill). Overtly supernatural traits like Frightens Animals, Lifebane, No Reflection or No Shadow *can't* be hidden. While these things won't penalize Disguise skill, they will give a bonus to any IQ or Occultism roll made to notice that something is wrong.

### Dreaming p. CI139

A ghost who wants to enter the dreams of someone who has learned this skill must win a Quick Contest of Will vs. Dreaming skill to do so. On a failure, he spends fatigue normally but is shut out of that dream. Dreaming can also replace Will when making Fright Checks that result from ghostly meddling in your dreams.

### First Aid p. B46

This skill cannot be used to patch up the injuries of undead who have the Unhealing disadvantage.

### Hand of Death p. CI140

This works by manipulating life energy (*chi*). It is therefore completely ineffective against the undead.

### Hypnotic Hands p. CI141

This doesn't work on the undead; see *Hypnotism* (below) for why.

*Continued on next page . . .*

## SKILLS (Continued)

### Hypnotism p. B46

The undead don't sleep; even those that "rest" for part of the day aren't sleeping, they're simply unable to act due to the supernatural limitations of their form. One consequence of this is that they cannot enter a trance. Since inducing a trance is crucial for Hypnotism, Hypnotic Hands (above) and Invisibility Art (below), none of these skills will work on the undead.

### Invisibility Art p. CI141

This doesn't work on the undead; see *Hypnotism* (above) for why.

### Lucid Dreaming p. CI142

This skill can be used just like Dreaming (p. 105) to defend against ghostly dream manipulation.

### Mental Strength p. CI142

This skill can replace Will when resisting the possession and probability alteration powers of ghosts.

### Muscle Reading p. CI143

Since the undead lack muscle tone, this skill won't work on them. A successful skill roll will reveal only that the subject is undead. Even if the user has no idea that undeath exists, he will know that he is dealing with someone *unusual*.

### Occultism p. B61

This is the skill to use when trying to deduce the strengths, weaknesses and powers of an undead entity. There will usually be a modifier, from +5 for folk wisdom about the more common kinds of undead in the campaign (e.g., "ghosts can walk through walls") to -5 for particularly arcane knowledge (e.g., "the Hopei version of the lich potion requires *Eomecon chionantha*, picked at midnight on the winter solstice"). The GM determines these modifiers when he designs an undead template.

In campaigns where the undead play a major role, the GM may wish to make rolls like this against Occultism (Undead), a specialty that defaults to regular Occultism at -4 (and vice versa).

### Physician p. B46

This skill cannot be used to patch up the injuries of undead who have the Unhealing disadvantage.

*Continued on next page . . .*

## Undead Character Templates

The majority of undead characters are unique and hard to classify. As well, since many of their abilities are specified by undead racial templates, even the most general suggestions must be scrutinized carefully on a case-by-case basis. In light of this, be sure to look out for combinations of repeated or conflicting abilities when using these character templates with undead racial templates.

### *Evil Overlord* 225 points + undead template cost

The evil overlord is a classic fantasy bad guy. A powerful, willful undead entity, he revels in undeath and uses his powers for evil. Evil overlords in fiction are stereotyped as power-hungry and crazy. While some are quiet and menacing, many are so "over the top" that it's humorous (in a dark way). Most evil overlords dwell in fortified strongholds full of traps and undead flunkies; heroes will have to fight their way past these defenses before they can do battle with the master himself.

*Suggested Undead Types:* Lich, Shadow, Specter, Vampire or Wraith.

*Attributes:* ST 12 [20], DX 12 [20], IQ 16 [80], HT 12 [20].

*Advantages:* Filthy Rich [50], and 50 points in Ally Group (Horde of zombies; see p. 96) [0 to 50], Charisma [5/level], Divine Favor (Evil god, 9 or less) [25], Multimillionaire [25/level] and Strong Will [4/level].

*Disadvantages:* Fanaticism (Own cause) [-15], Megalomania [-10], and -15 points in Bad Temper [-10], Bloodlust [-10], Disturbing Voice [-10], Extravagance [-10], Glory Hound [-15], Greed [-15], Intolerance [-5 or -10], Jealousy [-10], Lifebane [-10], Lunacy [-10], No Sense of Humor [-10], Obsession (Almost anything!) [-5 to -15], Overconfidence [-10], Paranoia [-10], Reputation (As heinous evildoer) [-5 to -15], Sadism [-15], Self-Centered [-10] and Stubbornness [-5].

*Primary Skills:* Area Knowledge (His realm) (M/E) IQ [1]-16, Intelligence Analysis (M/H) IQ [4]-16, Intimidation (M/A) IQ [2]-16, Strategy (M/H) IQ [4]-16.

*Secondary Skills:* Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-15, Leadership (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-15, Tactics (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-15, and 6 points in Demon Lore (M/A), Occultism (any) (M/A), Sacrifice (M/H), Spirit Lore (M/A), Thanatology (M/H) and Theology (any) (M/H).

*Background Skills:* A total of 4 points in Accounting (M/H), Chess (M/E), Combat/Weapon skills, Interrogation (M/A), Poisons (M/H), Streetwise (M/A) and Traps (M/A).

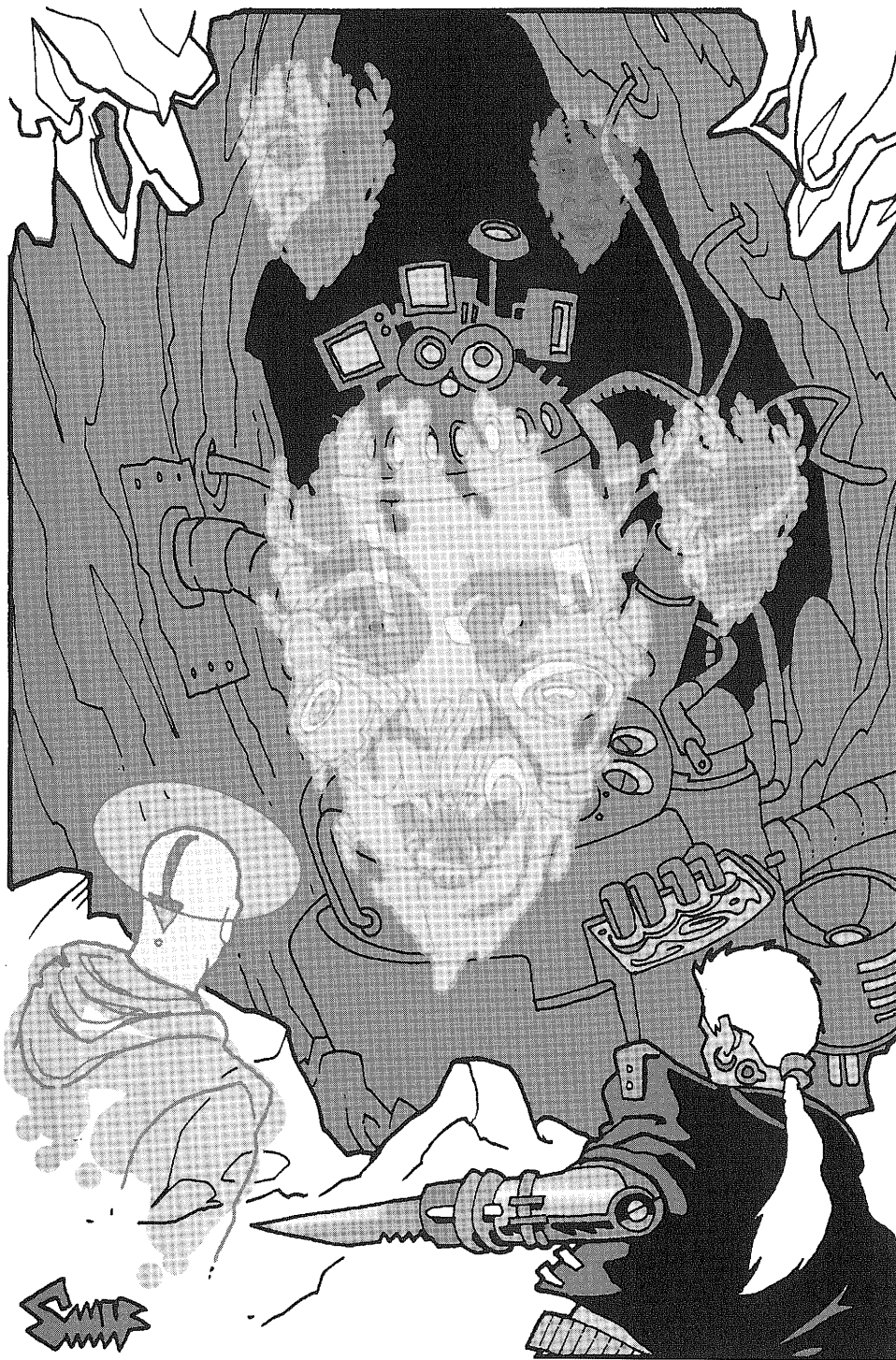
### *Guardian* 100 points + undead template cost

A guardian watches over a temple, tomb, ancestral burial ground or other place of spiritual or holy importance. Not all guardians are compelled to do guard duty; many serve willingly. Guardians are most often encountered by grave robbers (p. 99) who violate sacred ground. They cannot usually be negotiated with: if you're not supposed to be there, then they *will* try to drive you off or kill you. Some guardians have been instructed to ignore those who bear a certain symbol or know a secret password.

*Suggested Undead Types:* Ghost, Mummy, Shade or Wight.

*Attributes:* ST 12 [20], DX 13 [30], IQ 11 [10], HT 11 [10].

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes [15], and a total of 15 points chosen from +1 ST [10], DX [15] or HT [10], Acute Senses (any) [2/level], Alertness [5/level], Danger Sense [15], Higher Purpose (Guarding) [5], Night Vision [10] and Peripheral Vision [15].



**Disadvantages:** A net -30 points chosen from Bloodlust [-10], Code of Honor (Soldier's or guard's) [-5], Duty [-5 to -15], Intolerance (Living) [-10], No Sense of Humor [-10], Paranoia [-10], Sense of Duty (Other guardians) [-5], Stubbornness [-5] and Vows [-5 to -15].

**Primary Skills:** Area Knowledge (Tomb or burial ground) (M/E) IQ+2 [4]-13, and 12 points in Combat/Weapon skills.

**Secondary Skills:** Intimidation (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-12, Tactics (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-12.

**Background Skills:** Detect Lies (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-10, Interrogation (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-10, Savoir-Faire (Military) or (Servant) (M/E) IQ-1 [½]-10, Stealth (P/A) DX-2 [½]-11.

## SKILLS (Continued)

### Pressure Points p. CI144

This is useless against the undead, who neither feel pain nor have life energy that can be interfered with.

### Pressure Secrets p. CI144

This skill does not work on the undead, for the reasons given under *Pressure Points* (above).

### Psychology p. B62

Death definitely changes one's outlook on things. Undead psychology is quite alien, and those who wish to understand it *must* specialize in Psychology (Undead). This defaults to regular Psychology at -4 (and vice versa).

### Spirit Lore p. CI147

This skill can be substituted for Occultism (Undead) skill (see *Occultism*, p. 106) when attempting to answer questions that pertain to the spectral undead.

### Thanatology p. CI158

In a realistic campaign, a roll against this skill will give some insight into the purpose of an item found in a tomb, the significance of a funerary rite, the method used to embalm a body, etc.

In a campaign where the undead are a fact, a thanatologist will also know the names of most undead beings, be able to deduce what the death myths of a culture imply about its undead, and be able to guess what sorts of undead are liable to be found in a particular kind of tomb. In that case, Thanatology defaults either way to Occultism (Undead) and Theology (Eschatology) at -4.

### Theology p. B62

When dealing with the undead, the most important speciality of Theology skill is *eschatology* (p. 6): the study of the soul and the afterlife. Eschatologists usually ponder weighty issues like predestination and the role of good acts and free will, but this skill can also be used to explain the religious significance of funerary rites and to shed light on the factors that would allow a soul to return to the mortal world. Theology (Eschatology) defaults to Theology (any other) at -4 (and vice versa).

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## NEW SKILLS

### Exorcism (Mental/Hard)

#### Defaults to IQ-6 or Theology-3

*Note: This is not a "new" skill, but is sufficiently vital to GURPS Undead that it has been adapted from p. CI153.*

To drive a spectral undead being from its haunt or someone it has possessed requires an exorcism. This has no effect on the corporeal undead. A character without Clerical Investment takes a -4 to his Exorcism skill or default when performing the ritual; he may understand the ritual, but he lacks a priest's holy support. A NPC clergyman will usually perform this ritual for free, if the players can convince him that the person or location is actually possessed.

Exorcism is not a magical skill; it is a complex religious ritual that takes (15 × spirit's HT) minutes. Upon completion, the exorcist rolls against his Exorcism skill or default value. Some undead will wait patiently through the ritual, anticipating the combat to come; others will try to distract or disable the exorcist before the ritual can be completed. Undead with a Dread of exorcism *cannot* approach the exorcist to distract him!

If the Exorcism roll fails, the spirit remains, and the exorcist must wait at least a week before repeating the ritual. On a critical failure, the exorcist rolls on the Fright Check table (see p. B94), adding 10 to his die roll. Furthermore, even if he keeps his sanity, he may never attempt to exorcise this particular spirit again.

A critical success automatically banishes the spirit. On a regular success, the exorcist and his opponent meet in a Quick Contest, pitting the exorcist's (Will + Exorcism) against the spirit's (ST + IQ). When combating a spirit in a living host, the exorcist adds the (ST + Will) of the possessed subject to his total, as the victim tries to "push" the spirit out (this is not applicable to dead bodies and locations).

If the spirit wins, it remains and the exorcist may not repeat the ritual for a week. A successful IQ roll after a failed exorcism may reveal something about the spirit that will help the exorcist in his next attempt to banish that foe, however, giving him a +2 on later skill rolls. Only one such +2 bonus is allowed.

If the exorcist wins, a restless spirit will be laid to rest, while an enslaved one (like a Skull-Spirit) will be dispelled. A willful spirit will lose its hold of the possessed person or body and will usually flee in humiliation. Make a reaction roll for the spirit. On a reaction of Poor or better, it will flee, but on a Bad or Very Bad reaction, it will immediately use whatever resources it has to take vengeance on the exorcist and those nearby.

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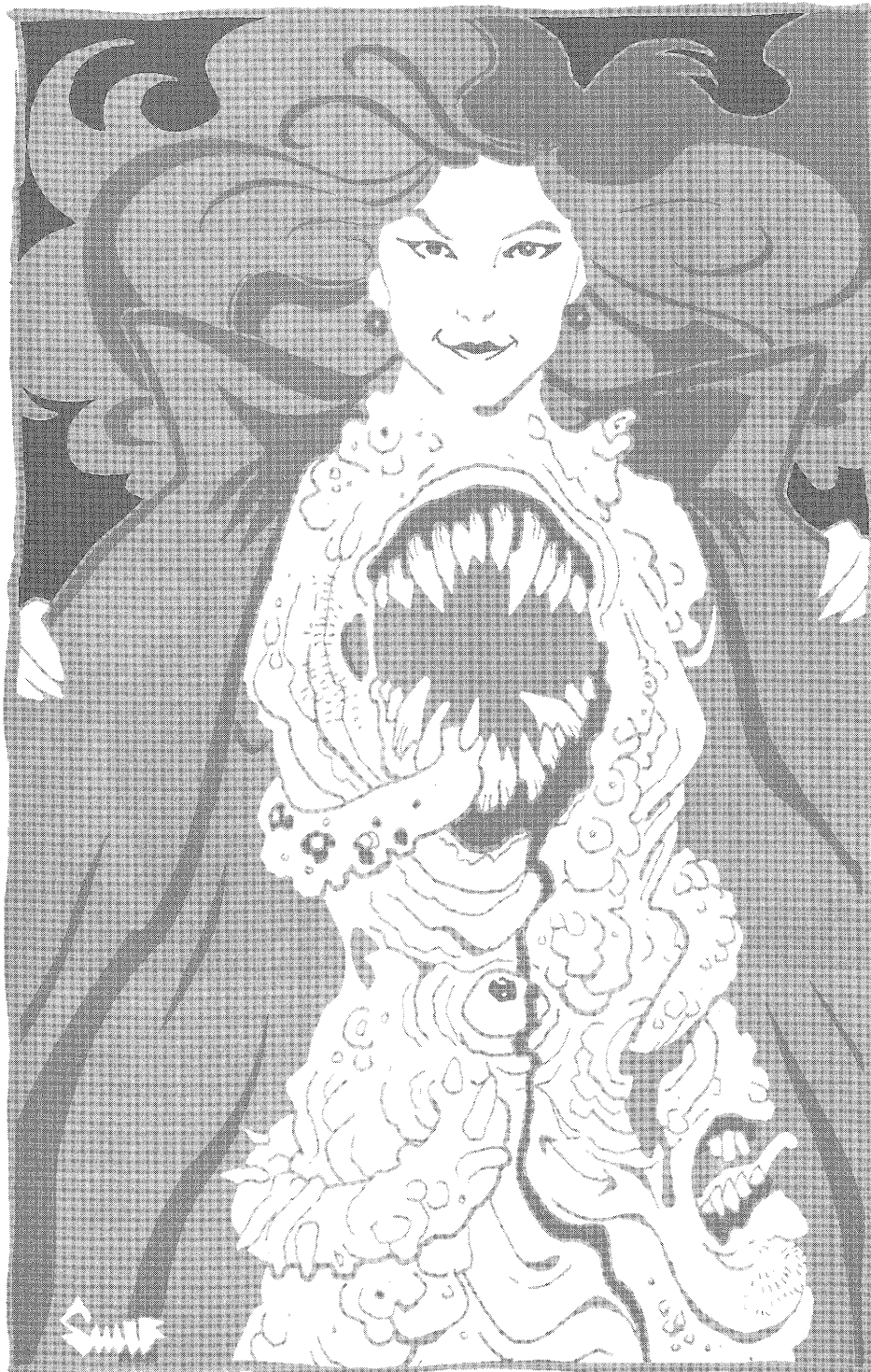
## Joker

## 80 points + undead template cost

A joker is an undead being who thinks it's *great* fun to "freak the mundanes," probably because he's bored and can't see the point of being immortal if he can't have fun. Spectral jokers use the poltergeist effect and probability alteration to wreak havoc, and are often known as "gremlins." Corporeal jokers usually have to resort to grotesque physical humor. Undead jokers sometimes overlook the frailties of the living. This often gives undead humor a dark side, which is sometimes intentional, sometimes not.

*Suggested Undead Types:* Ghost, Specter, Vampire.

*Attributes:* ST 10 [0], DX 13 [30], IQ 13 [30], HT 10.





## NEW SKILLS (Continued)

### **Mortician (M/A)** **Defaults to IQ-5, (other Mortician)-4** **or Thanatology-5**

The professional skill of preparing a dead body for a funeral. It includes practical knowledge of the embalming, burial and cremation techniques of your culture, as well as familiarity with common kinds of burial containers and tombs. It also includes an understanding of the etiquette, taboos and legalities associated with death, corpses and funerals. A separate version of this skill must be learned for each society.

Aside from letting you embalm corpses and direct a funeral, Mortician skill can stand in for other skills on funeral-related issues. Examples include Architecture when discussing tombs, Carpentry when dealing with caskets, Make-Up for the purpose of dressing corpses, Savoir-Faire for conduct at a funeral, etc.

### **Pathology/TL (M/H)** **Defaults to IQ-7, Physician-5 or** **Surgery-5 Prerequisites:** **Physiology-12, and Chemistry-12** **(TL6-) or Electronics Operation** **(Medical)-12 (TL7+)**

The branch of medicine that deals with the structural and functional changes to the human body brought about by illness and death. It differs from Diagnosis in that it bases its conclusions on laboratory tests and exploratory surgery, not symptomatology. A successful Pathology roll will let you determine the presence and progress of a disease in a living person, and will let you conduct an autopsy to assess the cause and time of death of a dead one.

*Modifiers:* -5 if the disease or cause of death is rare or unusual; -5 without a proper lab (for a diagnosis) or surgical tools (for an autopsy).

## MAGIC AND THE UNDEAD

The following spells work differently (or not at all) on the undead. Spells that aren't explicitly mentioned below work as usual.

*Animal Spells:* These spells do not work at all on zombie animals.

*Body Control Spells:* These spells work normally on the corporeal undead, but can only affect the spectral undead while they are materialized.

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*Advantages:* A total of 30 points in +1 DX or IQ [15], Daredevil [15], Luck [15 or 30], Penetrating Call [5], Rapier Wit [5], Terror (p. 60) [30] and Versatile [5].

*Disadvantages:* Odious Personal Habit (Practical joker) [-5], and -25 points chosen from Bully [-10], Compulsive Lying [-15], Frightens Animals [-5 or -10], Impulsiveness [-10], Jinxed -1 [-20], Kleptomania [-15], Overconfidence [-10], Pyromania [-5], Sadism [-15], Short Attention Span [-10], Trickster [-15], Unnatural Feature [-5] and Weirdness Magnet [-15].

*Primary Skills:* Intimidation (M/A) IQ [2]-13, Psychology (M/H) IQ [4]-13, Stealth (P/A) DX [2]-13.

*Secondary Skills:* A total of 8 points in Acting (M/A), Disguise (M/A), Fast-Talk (M/A), Holdout (M/A) and Sleight of Hand (P/H).

*Background Skills:* A total of 4 points in Electronics Operation (any) (M/A), Mechanic (any) (M/A), Mimicry (any) (P/H; HT), Pickpocket (P/H) and Ventriloquism (M/H).

### **Loner**

### **30 points + undead template cost**

A loner just wants to be left in peace. He may be shy, embarrassed about his appearance, ashamed of his undead status or simply reclusive by nature. Whatever the reason, though, he has no interest in the affairs of the mortal world and will react poorly to those who disturb his rest. Note that it's very hard for undead who must feed on the living to be loners! While they may *want* to be left alone, they usually have no choice but to live among mortals if they don't want to perish.

*Suggested Undead Types:* Ghost, Wight, Specter or Wraith.

*Attributes:* ST 10 [0], DX 12 [20], IQ 11 [10], HT 10 [0].

*Advantages:* None.

*Disadvantages:* Reclusive [-10], and -20 points in Agoraphobia [-10], Bad Temper [-10], Chronic Depression [-15], Demophobia [-15], Intolerance (Living) [-10], Low Self-Image [-10], Manic-Depressive [-20], Paranoia [-10], Shyness [-5 to -15], Solipsist [-10] and Supersensitive\* [-2/level].

\* For spectral undead only; works via ghostly empathy (p. 52).

*Primary Skills:* Area Knowledge (Lair) (M/E) IQ+3 [6]-14, Stealth (P/A) DX+2 [8]-14.

*Secondary Skills:* Intimidation (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-12, and 8 points in Combat/Weapon skills.

*Background Skills:* A total of 4 points in Camouflage (M/E), Disguise (M/A) and Traps (M/A).

### **Predator**

### **100 points + undead template cost**

The predator hunts mortals, either because he enjoys doing so or because he must feed. This makes him the most feared undead character type, as he poses the most direct, physical threat to humanity. Predators give other undead a bad name, and are the main reason for the existence of hunters (p. 100). Note that a predator doesn't have to be evil and voracious; in principle, he *could* confine himself to a small number of deserving victims. In reality, though, this is rarely the case.

*Suggested Undead Types:* Shadow, Specter or Vampire.

*Attributes:* ST 11 [10], DX 13 [30], IQ 13 [30], HT 11 [10].

*Advantages:* Alertness +1 [5] and a total of 15 points chosen from Acute Senses (any) [2/level], Alertness [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Extra Fatigue [3/level], Fit or Very Fit [5 or 15], Night Vision [10], Silence [5/level] and Single-Minded [5].

# MAGIC AND THE UNDEAD

(Continued)

**Communication and Empathy:** Spells that amount to "mind control" won't work on the mindless undead; this includes Compel Truth, Control Person and Persuasion. The various possession spells will work on the corporeal undead. Sense Life cannot detect any kind of undead.

**Elemental Spells:** Spells that do damage by exploiting a human weakness (e.g., Dehydrate, Destroy Air, Frostbite) have no effect unless the entity in question is specifically vulnerable to them (e.g., a vampire has blood, so Dehydrate will affect it).

**Healing Spells:** These spells work normally on Unhealing subjects, but HT lost to The Draining cannot be healed with magic. Cure Disease has no effect on contagious undeath.

**Light and Darkness Spells:** Infravision won't detect most undead, but will reveal vampires who have recently fed and undead that emanate cold. At the GM's option, See Invisible may be able to detect the spectral undead; the discussion under *See Invisible* (p. 100) applies here as well.

**Meta-Spells:** Dispel Magic won't end the Zombie spell or any other spell that creates a lasting or permanent undead creature. Pentagram excludes magical undead (see p. 104). Remove Curse may be able to cure contagious undeath if the GM so rules.

**Mind Control Spells:** These spells are useless against the mindless undead. They affect other undead normally, but Fear, Panic and Terror will have no effect on Unfazeable creatures.

**Movement Spells:** At the GM's option, Ethereal Body may let the subject interact with the spectral undead; the discussion under *Insubstantiality* (p. 98) applies here as well.

**Necromantic Spells:** Death Vision works, and causes the undead to experience their death all over again! Control Zombie and Turn Zombie only work on undead created with the Zombie spell. Soul Jar only works on willful, corporeal undead. Summon Spirit can't be used to summon spectral undead, only souls in the afterlife, but counts as ritual invocation and lets a ghost appear if he chooses to. Age, Pestilence, Steal Health, Steal Strength and Steal Youth are all completely useless against the undead.

**Plant Spells:** These spells do not work on zombie plants.

**Sound Spells:** Sound Jet has no effect on the undead.

**Disadvantages:** A total of -30 points in Bloodlust [-10], Bloodthirst [-15], Callous [-6], Compulsive Behavior (Hunting) [-5 to -15], Intolerance (Living) [-10], Loner [-5], Low Empathy [-15], Overconfidence [-10], Selfish or Self-Centered [-5 or -10], Solipsist [-10] and Trademark (Gory mutilations, etc.) [-1 to -15].

**Primary Skills:** Area Knowledge (Hunting ground) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14, Stealth (P/A) DX+1 [4]-14, 10 points in Combat/Weapon skills, and either Shadowing (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14 or Tracking (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Psychology (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12, and either Streetwise (M/A) IQ [2]-13 or Survival (any) (M/A) IQ [2]-13.

**Background Skills:** A total of 6 points in Camouflage (M/E), Fast-Talk (M/A), Orienteering (M/A), Running (P/H; HT), Sex Appeal (M/A; HT), Tactics (M/H) and Traps (M/A).



## Righter of Wrongs

10 points + undead template cost

The righter of wrongs has come back from the grave to take care of unfinished business. He is usually motivated by a debt of honor or a promise. While some undead mindlessly pursue such goals owing to a mystical compulsion, others have consciously chosen to give up the afterlife until they see things set right. This undead personality profile is well-suited to "good" undead, as it isn't intrinsically belligerent, predatory or malicious toward mortals; an undead righter of wrongs could even be a true hero.

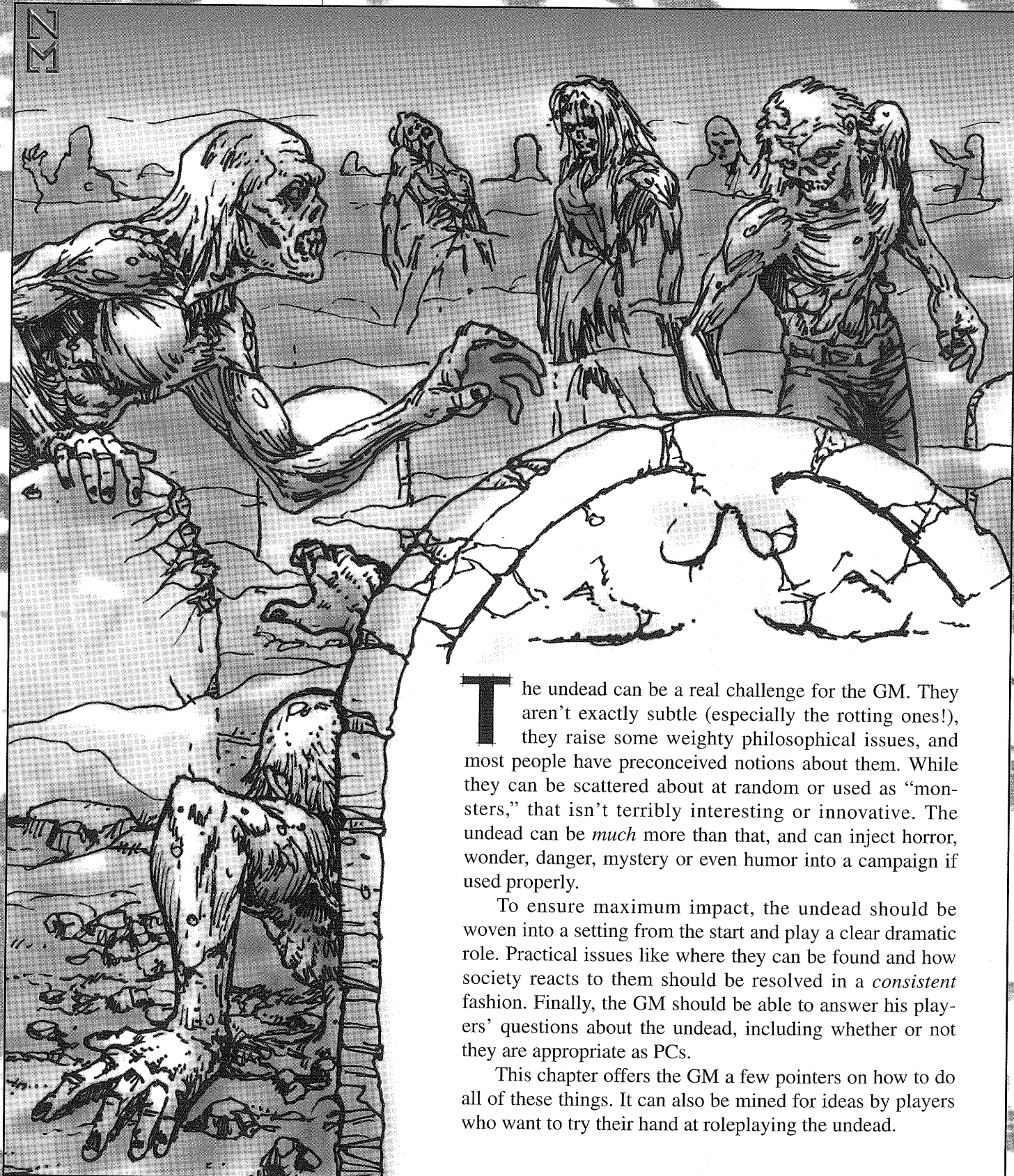
**Suggested Undead Types:** Ghost, Revenant, Wight or Wraith.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 10 [0], HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Strong Will +5 [20] and 15 points chosen from Destiny [5 to 15], Higher Purpose [5], Single-Minded [5] and True Faith [15].

**Disadvantages:** A -10-point Code of Honor, Compulsive Behavior, Duty, Obsession or Vow, plus -15 points chosen from those disadvantages and Charitable [-15], Fanaticism [-15], Guilt Complex [-5], Honesty [-10], Selfless [-10], Sense of Duty [-5 to -15] and Stubbornness [-5].

**Skills:** None beyond those possessed in life. These will usually bear some connection to the character's primary motivation; e.g. an honor-bound knight might have Broadsword, Heraldry, Lance, Riding, Savoir-Faire and Shield.



**T**he undead can be a real challenge for the GM. They aren't exactly subtle (especially the rotting ones!), they raise some weighty philosophical issues, and most people have preconceived notions about them. While they can be scattered about at random or used as "monsters," that isn't terribly interesting or innovative. The undead can be *much* more than that, and can inject horror, wonder, danger, mystery or even humor into a campaign if used properly.

To ensure maximum impact, the undead should be woven into a setting from the start and play a clear dramatic role. Practical issues like where they can be found and how society reacts to them should be resolved in a *consistent* fashion. Finally, the GM should be able to answer his players' questions about the undead, including whether or not they are appropriate as PCs.

This chapter offers the GM a few pointers on how to do all of these things. It can also be mined for ideas by players who want to try their hand at roleplaying the undead.



## DEFINING YOUR CAMPAIGN

Numerous terms can be used to describe a campaign – a few of them specific to campaigns that include the undead. There's power in names: some GMs find that labels give them focus when creating a new campaign, or help them explain their vision to the players. Keep in mind that the distinctions between various genres, modes and backgrounds (and the differences between these things!) are a matter of opinion.

### Genre

Genre defines the style and ground rules of the campaign. It specifies the primary role of the undead and determines whether or not things like magic, psionics or weird science exist. The main genres where the undead show up are:

**Conspiracy:** The truth about the undead is being hidden from humanity by secret masters – usually scientists, wizards or government agents – who want to exploit or suppress that knowledge for their own reasons. In *occult conspiracy*, the undead are keeping the secret themselves, and are members of a cabal that has designs on humanity or the world. The objectives of the undead are unknown, but aren't fundamentally incomprehensible.

**Fantasy:** The undead are magical creatures, often created by necromancers. In *heroic fantasy*, the PCs are heroic and good, the undead are sinister and evil, and the heroes will prevail in the end. In *dark fantasy*, there is more moral ambiguity: "good" and "evil" are relative, and some of the PCs may be undead or necromancers themselves. In *high fantasy*, the fantastic – including the undead – is commonplace. In *low fantasy*, such things are rarer.

**Horror:** The undead are supernatural beings who can't be easily understood, and encounters with them are terrifying. They may be evil, but they can also be frightening simply because their motivations are incomprehensible and alien. Horror often has strong religious or spiritual overtones, with the undead symbolizing human uncertainty about death, the soul and the afterlife, including hell.

**Sci-Fi:** The undead are the result of weird science or superscience (often accidental), or at least have a "scientific" explanation like microbes or nanomachines. Religion, spiritualism and magic are toned down or nonexistent, but psi may be elevated to a pseudoscience and offered as an explanation for the undead. Many sci-fi societies are "culturally advanced," and may be tolerant of the undead, affording them the same status as AIs or robots.

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## Defining the Undead

First and foremost, the GM needs to decide on just what the undead *are* in his world. This will depend on the genre, the supernatural powers at work in the setting and the power level of the campaign.

### Origins

How do the undead come about? The answer to this question will help the GM decide what subset of undead makes the most sense in his campaign and what abilities these beings will possess. It will also have far-reaching implications for the campaign world itself. Approaches include:

1. *The undead are spontaneous phenomena, resulting from ambient spiritual, magical or psionic energy fields.* The GM is admitting the existence of forces such as magic or psi in the campaign. While this doesn't imply the existence of trained wizards or psis, it strongly hints at it, and the players are liable to raise the issue once they figure out what's going on.

2. *The undead are intentionally summoned or created using occult techniques.* This amounts to stating that there are practicing sorcerers or the equivalent in the campaign world. The GM will have to decide if the PCs know this and whether they can learn the techniques in question or even start play with that knowledge. The ability to create the undead is a powerful one; the GM shouldn't put it in the players' hands without first considering the consequences.

3. *The undead are the result of microbes, chemicals or strange radiation.* While this lets the GM off the hook on the supernatural, it raises the specter of weird science. By giving the undead a rubber-science explanation, the GM is making a statement about the laws of nature in his universe. Unlike magic, science – even weird science – is something players expect to be rational and predictable. Should they learn how the undead work, they will want to exploit it for all it's worth.

4. *The undead are the result of sheer force of will.* This dispels the "exploitation" issues of #1-3, but forces the GM to decide whether dead PCs can become undead, and if so, who gets to roleplay them. If dead foes keep coming back to haunt the PCs, the players will want to be given the same opportunity. While the GM could make undead PCs into NPCs, this can lead to resentment. Of course, this isn't an issue if the adventurers are already undead.

5. *The undead are created by the gods.* This avoids most of the problems above, but forces the GM to include interventionist deities in the campaign. This requires a lot of extra work, too; it can be hard to come up with novel yet believable reasons why the gods would let mortals return from the grave.

6. *A combination of the above.* Most settings actually use a combination of these approaches. Fantasy tends to include a mixture of ele-





ments #1, #2 and #5, while horror leans toward #1, #3 and #4. Traditional beliefs are more in line with #4, with the occasional smattering of #1 and #5. All of the above can be used if the GM feels up to the challenge, however.

## Types

Once the GM knows where the undead come from, he has to determine what classes of undead exist in his campaign world.

### Form

The spectral undead are ubiquitous in real-world folklore. They are hard to track down and don't leave a lot of incriminating evidence behind. Their "ghost abilities" (p. 52) let them produce a wide range of supernatural phenomena without revealing their presence, and they cannot be defeated by brute force. This makes them ideal for horror and semi-realistic historical campaigns where the existence of the undead is a mystery and where the GM wants the unexplained to remain that way. The drawback is that these entities require special powers to detect and combat – powers that aren't common in the kinds of campaigns they're best suited to. Solutions include making the undead benign and making sure the PCs can get access to countermeasures.

The corporeal undead are common in horror movies and fantasy. They pose a concrete threat to the living, but can usually be defeated by physical means. This makes them ideal for fantasy and "splatter" campaigns, where the undead are common knowledge and the PCs are expected to splash them all over the scenery with swords and guns. The drawbacks to this are obvious. First, the undead are only scary until the PCs realize that they can be hurt. Second, the GM has to strain his players' suspension of disbelief to keep these undead "unknown," since they leave a lot of evidence behind. Solutions include playing the undead intelligently and making sure that violent encounters occur in isolated locales with no witnesses – just like in the movies!

### Motivation

The restless dead are common in folklore. They work well in historical and horror campaigns, and raise the fewest religious questions. They are probably the only undead that work well in semi-realistic campaigns without sorcery and undead conspiracies.

The willful dead are for the most part nontraditional (except for vampires) and best reserved for fantasy campaigns. The GM should decide *exactly* what spells, rituals and ingredients it takes to become a willful undead being, then decide who knows those secrets. There is no reason to share this with the players!

The enslaved dead are almost always associated with sorcerers in folklore, making them appropriate mainly for campaigns with professional wizards. If the enslaved dead exist, it is important to address the issue of free will and the undead (see *Free Will and the Undead*, p. 119).

### Nature

The undead can be spiritual entities, or they can be magical or psionic phenomena; see *Magical Undead* and *Psionic Undead* (p. 104). This distinction can be made on the basis of individual undead beings, entire undead "species" or even the undead as a whole (GM's option). Magical undead are most common in fantasy settings; psionic undead are usually found in horror games, especially in modern-day investigative campaigns with lots of rubber-science explanations for psi, like *GURPS Black Ops*.

## DEFINING YOUR CAMPAIGN

(Continued)

### Mode

Mode defines the way the genre is approached and the kinds of events the campaign will focus on. Modes qualify genres, and are a lot like adjectives: several can be used at once, unless they negate one another, but it's a good idea to avoid using too many.

*Action:* The focus is on the physical: chases, combat, escaping from death traps, etc. The undead are usually targets, except in action conspiracy games, where the PCs and the undead take turns being targets. Action fantasy is often called "hack 'n' slash."

*Camp or Melodramatic:* The genre's clichés are exaggerated for the sake of humor: fantasy necromancers all have skull-tipped wands and laugh like maniacs, horror vampires all look like Bela Lugosi, etc.

*Cinematic:* The scene is sacred and realism takes the back seat. E.g., in cinematic horror, any graveyard that shows up will contain the undead – even if in reality someone would have noticed before now – because it makes the scene more interesting.

*Dramatic:* The story is sacred. Everything that happens has a purpose and there are no silly excesses. E.g., in dramatic sci-fi, no one laughs at the Professor's nonsensical explanation of the zombie plague, because it's an important part of the story.

*Gothic:* The focus is on an oppressive atmosphere that pits man against man, nature or the supernatural, and the undead have a heavy symbolic value. E.g., in Gothic fantasy, the vampire is an evil count who symbolizes plague and feudal oppression.

*Humorous or Silly:* Nothing is sacred or makes much sense. Skeletons will always be found in closets, mummies will joke about their mummies and vampires will bite Frenchmen and yell, "Yow! Garlic!"

*Investigative:* The PCs are undead hunters, FBI agents, etc., who actively seek out the undead. In conspiracy games, they seek to crack the conspiracy; in horror, they try to rationalize horrific acts and track down the culprits.

*Mystery:* The focus is on the cerebral: piecing together clues, playing mind games, etc. This differs from the investigative mode in that the protagonists need not be professionals; all that matters is that brains are more important than brawn.

*Over-the-Top:* Anything that fits the genre or scene is acceptable, regardless of *how* exaggerated or unrealistic it is. E.g., in over-the-top action fantasy, a martial-arts master can decapitate a vampire with a single karate chop!

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## DEFINING YOUR CAMPAIGN

(Continued)

**Realistic:** Like real life. Since the undead don't exist in real life, the realistic mode is probably inappropriate for an *Undead* campaign.

**Semi-Realistic:** Almost realistic, but exploits strange coincidences to suggest that the undead *might* exist. E.g., semi-realistic sci-fi explains vampirism using a real-life genetic disorder that causes pallor and photosensitivity.

**Splatter:** A concise term for "cinematic action horror." It focuses on violence, overkill and gore. In splatter, the mummy is scary because he can rip your heart out, not because he's 5,000-year-old proof that necromancy is for real.

**Suspense:** The focus is on uncertainty about what will happen next. E.g., in suspense horror, the flashlight always goes out just as the door to the crypt slams shut behind you, and you can never quite see what's making those weird noises . . .

**Traditional:** True to folklore, usually that of a single culture. E.g., a traditional horror campaign might focus on Haiti, Voodoo and zombies, but it would omit vampires, which are from another tradition, as well as liches and other fantasy undead.

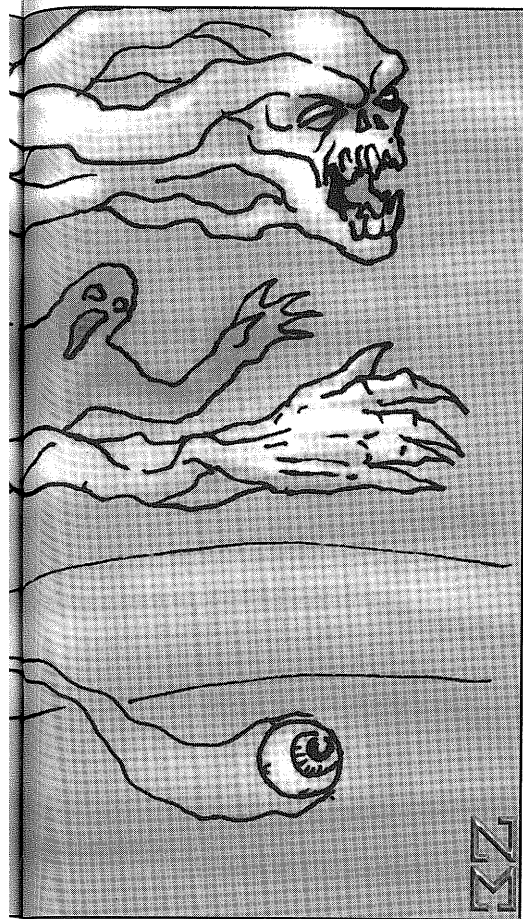
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## Power Level

The relative power level of the undead will also help to determine their role in the campaign. An undead NPC built on the same number of points as a new PC *plus* an expensive undead template will be a major threat. One who is roughly equal in power to a PC *after* accounting for his template will be a worthy foe. Undead with low point values (like zombies) will be seen as cannon fodder by heroic PCs, although they'll still be a match for a party of "ordinary folks."

Points aren't everything, though. Undead templates often include many supernatural and combat-related advantages that are paid for by a long list of disadvantages. Such undead may be worth fewer points than the PCs are, but will often be more than a match for them. Similarly, even weak spectral undead can be a serious threat if the PCs have no means of dealing with them (psionics, magic, etc.). The GM should adjust the power level of the undead downward if the PCs are nonviolent and clueless about the supernatural, or upward if they are a band of "fearless monster hunters."

As a rule, horror campaigns work best when the undead are all equal to or more powerful than the PCs and must be defeated through preparation and cunning, not brute force. Fantasy works better with a mix: lesser undead as sword fodder, PC-level undead as henchmen and greater undead as arch-villains and evil masterminds. Those who prefer an over-the-top, action-movie feel should make the PCs more powerful than even the toughest undead, and accept the fact that the undead won't be scary. Of course, all bets are off if undead PCs are allowed; see *Undead Heroes* (p. 121) for more on this.



## Interactions

The GM should determine whether the self-aware undead are also aware of one another, and whether they interact and consider themselves to be members of a group. Obviously, this isn't an issue for mindless undead (like zombies). There are several options:

1. *Loners.* The undead largely ignore each other, or if they are aware of one another, they don't seem to care much. There are no vampire clans or armies of wights, and haunted houses have only one ghost. The undead are sporadic, unpredictable phenomena, and may vary so much that each one is unique and impossible to classify. This option is good for modern-day "investigative" horror campaigns and offers excellent variety, but doesn't permit undead conspiracies and may frustrate players who like predictability.

2. *Species.* There are several distinct kinds of undead who are aware of others like themselves. This doesn't necessarily make them friends; in fact, predatory undead like vampires may compete violently for food. Still, their needs will be similar,

so there is at least the possibility of collaboration. Of course, Dominance (p. CI53) can result in fairly close-knit "clans" of undead within the species. This approach is common in fantasy, where the undead are often treated just like a nonhuman race.

3. *Associations.* The undead form groups that are bound together by something other than "species"; perhaps they are all dead ancestors of the same tribe, or are all entombed in the same graveyard. These associations may be loose, and may coexist with the notion of species. This borders on an undead conspiracy, and is common in dark fantasy, where the dead tend to oppose the living. It is also similar to many real-life views of the spirit world, and is appropriate for historical campaigns with a mystical or shamanic element.

4. *Cabal.* There's a conspiracy of the undead. While individual undead may have their differences, they also have a common, overriding goal. Each type of undead has a specific task; e.g., lichs are wizards, wraiths are generals, ghosts are spies and vampires are assassins. More often than not, they are ranked by species, with powerful, magic-using undead at the top and minor spirits and zombies down at the bottom, serving as foot soldiers. This view has no basis in folklore, but is reasonably common in dark and high-powered fantasy settings.

5. *Mix and match.* Elements of all of the above are true. Some undead are loners. Others belong to cooperative communities that dwell in graveyards, or are members of close-knit clans or ancestral groups. A few of the most ambitious undead have formed a cabal – or perhaps several, competing cabals. In short, the undead act just like living people, forming families, clans, kingdoms and empires. This works well in a dark fantasy or occult conspiracy campaign, but the GM must be careful, as a campaign like this can degenerate into a "humans in dead-guy suits" game all too easily.

## DEFINING YOUR CAMPAIGN

(Continued)

### Background

Background determines where and when the campaign takes place. This influences the cultures and religions present, which in turn help to define the undead and how they act. Specifics vary, but there are four basic kinds of backgrounds:

*Historical:* The campaign takes place in earth's past. This could be 18th-Dynasty Egypt, 14th-century Hungary, Victorian England, Prohibition-era Chicago or anywhere else. The myths and beliefs of that time and place are used to determine the kinds of undead present, how they will act and how people will react to them. An important feature of historical games is that they aren't complicated by things like surveillance satellites, light automatic weapons and the Internet. This makes it *much* easier to run games in the mystery and suspense modes, but somewhat weakens the sci-fi genre as a whole.

*Modern-Day:* The campaign takes place today, or within a few decades either way. World trade, fast vehicles and ultra-rapid telecommunications open the entire planet up and let the GM mix and match beliefs from almost anywhere. The glut of information and the primacy of science and technology strengthens the conspiracy and sci-fi genres but make fantasy nearly impossible. Modern weaponry and gadgets favor the action and investigative modes, and make it harder to run a successful game in the mystery or suspense mode. Traditional games can capitalize on the current occult revival and fascination with the urban myth.

*Futuristic:* The campaign takes place in our future. Perhaps humanity has branched out to the stars and encountered new civilizations with their own beliefs and legends, greatly expanding the possibilities for the undead. Maybe we have discovered how to reanimate the dead using biotech and nanotech right here on earth. The discussion under *Modern-Day* is for the most part true in a futuristic game as well, but if science becomes sufficiently advanced, we might not be able to tell it from magic. In that case, fantasy becomes an option once again.

*Fictional:* The campaign happens *elsewhere*. Since the undead don't exist in real life, it can be argued that *any* campaign that involves the undead happens in a fictional world, but for the purpose of this discussion, that's just a variant of one of the backgrounds above. Fictional worlds are the creation of the GM, who can mix original, realistic, cinematic and literary elements freely. This greatly strengthens the fantasy and sci-fi genres, but makes it difficult to run a game in the traditional mode unless you want to port a real-world culture into your setting wholesale.



## SAMPLE CAMPAIGNS

Putting genre, mode and background together, here are some generic campaign archetypes that involve the undead:

### Angst und Abscheu

Mortals think we're evil, but sad is closer to the truth: sad and misunderstood. No one with a heart would ask for the chance to watch his loved ones die, or to be feared and loathed by all. No one who knew the truth would want to be a prisoner of the night, an intangible specter or a drinker of blood. That is undeath. We try to take comfort in each other, but even that rings hollow. Love is for the living; the dead have only memories. You think it would be easy just to fade or perish, but we still have our will to survive. Perhaps that's the cruelest joke of all.

**Character Creation:** The protagonists are willful undead from a variety of places and historical periods, with appropriate skills and abilities. They can have whatever special abilities the GM permits. The important thing is that the undead condition has affected them. They aren't just "humans with special powers," and this should be reflected in their disadvantages.

**Power Level:** 300+ points.

**Genre:** Horror.

**Modes:** Dramatic, Gothic.

**Background:** Historical.

**Appropriate Undead:** Ghosts, vampires and wraiths.

### Holy Swords and Dark Sorcery

The land languishes under a pall of evil called down by the Dark Lord, a champion of darkness and worshipper of demons. His undead servants terrorize the living, while his evil priests and necromancers allow the dead no rest. The moon has been blotted from the sky, the sun gives no warmth and mighty legions of the dead are marshalling at the edges of the kingdom, ready to overrun the land and plunge it into final darkness. Only the efforts of valiant warriors, priests of light and white magicians can save the world from a fate worse than death!

**Character Creation:** The characters are all heroic and unequivocally good. Magery, Power Investiture and cinematic abilities like Weapon Master are all allowed. Almost every spell in *GURPS Magic* (and *Grimoire*, if desired) is known, but Necromantic spells are unavailable to heroes. Adventurers can't be undead, and there are no psionic powers.

**Power Level:** 150-250 points.

**Genre:** Heroic high fantasy.

**Modes:** Action, cinematic.

**Background:** Fictional.

**Appropriate Undead:** Liches, mummies, shadows, skeletons, specters, vampires, wraiths and zombies.

Continued on next page . . .

## Using the Undead

Once the GM has decided on the basic nature of the undead in his world, he must put them in place, deciding how many there are, how often they'll be encountered and where they can be found.

### Quantity & Rarity

The GM should decide on how common the undead are in his campaign world. To be true to folklore, they should be fairly rare; encounters with the undead are traditionally noteworthy incidents. This doesn't mean that the undead can't show up in force, though. It's quite traditional for a lapse in ancestor worship to result in a massive attack by ancestral spirits, and for vampirism to be contagious. What's important is to keep the number of incidents low and to leave enough time between undead plagues that no one can *quite* remember how to deal with them.

This "traditional approach" works well for *Gothic* horror or fantasy campaigns, which rely on atmosphere and mystery for their impact. Circumstantial evidence, clues and subtle hints should be used to string the players along and maintain interest. Actual encounters with the undead should be rare and memorable. A skillful GM can forge an entire campaign around the plots and machinations of an ancient vampire, or the quest to depose a single lich.

High fantasy and cinematic horror, on the other hand, aren't nearly as subtle: any graveyard or abandoned building will contain at least a few undead. In these genres, the GM can cut loose. In a fantasy game, every arch-villain will be either undead, served by the undead or both, and every adventuring party will include at least one priest who specializes in dealing with the undead. In an over-the-top horror campaign, each session will feature a new undead monstrosity for the players to cut down with shotguns and chainsaws.

As a rule, the more undead there are in the campaign, the lower their shock value. If the GM expects the players to view the undead as anything but cannon fodder, he should make an effort to make the undead rare, subtle and frightening. Conversely, if the PCs are supposed to be fearless monster hunters, then the GM is better off making sure the undead are tough and numerous enough to be a challenge, as subtlety will largely be lost. A balance between these two extremes is probably best for most campaigns.

### Location

Where the undead can be found is also important, for two reasons:

First, the further from civilization the undead lurk, the easier it is for them to remain a mystery. Unexplored, unpatrolled and unfrequented areas are not subject to constant scrutiny, and can therefore contain the unknown. This is why back roads and lonely moors are effective backdrops for horror, despite being cliched. A hundred zombies in a sealed crypt in the wilderness can remain hidden for much longer than one vampire in the city, because *people are nosy* and start asking questions when a bloodless corpse turns up every day for a month.

Second, the more isolated the site of the encounter, the scarier it will be, because help, comfort and familiar sites will *not* be close at hand. Remember: isolation doesn't always correspond to distance from civilization. An abandoned house in the heart of an unsleeping metropolis will seem quite isolated if the doors slam shut and lock on their own, the windows are boarded up, and the lights and phone don't work.



# SAMPLE CAMPAIGNS

(Continued)

## The Investigators

"The world is stranger than you think, Agent Smith. The senators on this list are never seen outdoors during the day. The troops in these photographs have been guarding that gate for two weeks – yes, I do mean 336 hours. And this requisition form shows that the Navy recently issued silver bullets to a SEAL team.

"We've chosen you for your skill as an investigator. We'll provide you with all the latest kit. We hope you can get to the bottom of this. We figure the nation will either thank us for it or kill us for it. You see, we're not sure who's on our side . . ."

**Character Creation:** The characters are all hand-picked detectives (FBI, police or private) and should have Combat/Weapon, Scientific and Thief/Spy skills. They must be in good health (HT 11+) and have no physical handicaps. Characters can have Magery or psionic powers, but will have no training and no special skill at Occultism or the like. They cannot be undead.

**Power Level:** 100 points.

**Genre:** Conspiracy.

**Modes:** Investigative, mystery.

**Background:** Modern-Day.

**Appropriate Undead:** Ghosts, revenants, specters, vampires, wights and zombies. Maybe others.

## Shoot 'em in the Head

"I ain't sure just when them dead guys showed up, walkin' around, eatin' brains. Prolly has somethin' to do with the chemical plant, spillin' that green gunk into the crick that runs by the cemetery. Or mebbe them radioactive thingies they keep shootin' into space – one came down in Earl's back 40, over by the old churchyard. Anyhow, it don't much matter, 'cause they're here now.

"I ain't no rocket scientist, but I figured out somethin': you can just shoot 'em in the head. A Rem 870 works just dandy, 'tho I'm thinkin' of usin' a chainsaw once I'm out of shells."

**Character Creation:** Everyone is an ordinary citizen in a rural area. Animal and Outdoor skills are common; Agronomy, Guns (Shotgun) and Driving are almost mandatory. Characters cannot have supernatural abilities other than Luck or Weirdness Magnet, and cannot be undead; however, they may be Unfazeable and have skills like Demolition (and access to dynamite) for no good reason.

**Power Level:** 50-75 points.

**Genre:** Sci-fi.

**Modes:** Camp, cinematic.

**Background:** Modern-Day.

**Appropriate Undead:** Zombies, with the odd pre-Columbian mummy thrown in for variety.

Of course, this logic can be inverted to good effect. The most mysterious and frightening situation of all can be to learn that the undead have been lurking near civilization all along without being discovered. This could be the result of a carefully-plotted conspiracy, but it need not be: there's no reason for the average citizen to know that his home town is built on top of an ancient burial ground.

## Scenery

The undead are traditionally found in ruins, old houses, creepy graveyards, ancient forests, etc. This is fine, but the GM should try to avoid clichés. The golden rule is "less is more"; the secret to making a situation seem frightening is to keep things unremarkable except for a few subtle hints or disturbingly out-of-place items. For instance, it's more effective to describe a haunted forest as "unusually silent and lonely" than it is to drone on about the twisted trees, thunderstorms, hooting owls and wind groaning in the boughs. Overwrought scenery is never moody, but it's often boring.

All of the above assumes that the GM wants a moody and atmospheric campaign. In the case of *cinematic* horror, the GM should ignore this advice and use as many clichés as possible!

For more on scary stuff, see *Setting the Scene* (p. 122).

## Society and the Undead

The next thing the GM must do is decide where the undead stand with respect to the various cultures of his world. How much do people know about the undead? Are the undead regarded as evil, unfortunate or perhaps even *good*? Can they be reintegrated into society? The answers to these questions can add a great deal of color to a campaign world.

## Myth, Legend & Folklore vs. Fact

The GM should determine what kinds of undead are known to each major culture in the campaign world and what the average member of that society believes about the undead. The more detailed the information, the more interesting the undead will be. Chapters 1 and 2 contain many real-life examples that can be used "as is" in a historical campaign or borrowed and adapted to fictional worlds. Ideally, this information should include:

**Mythology surrounding death.** Is there a god of death? A god of undeath? Is there an afterlife? Can the dead leave it? Can they return? Are certain gods the sworn foes of the undead? Can they be invoked when combatting the undead?

**Funerary rites.** Are the dead buried, cremated or left lying out in the open? Are they embalmed? What kinds of tombs are used? Are measures taken to ensure that the dead will stay in the grave? To ensure that they will *rise* from the grave?

**Legends about the undead.** Did a famous hero, prophet or demigod ever have a brush with the undead? Are any of the villains or heroes of legend undead themselves? Do the undead figure prominently in folk tales?

**Ghost stories and tales of the supernatural.** Are there rumors about a local tomb, building, gallows or forest being haunted? Do mariners speak of ghost ships? Are certain days (or times of day) generally associated with the undead?

**Folk beliefs about how to combat the undead.** Are certain items (usually common herbs, household items or religious paraphernalia) widely believed to be effective weapons against the undead? Are certain classes of individuals believed to be resistant or vulnerable to undead attack?

## YOU KNOW TOO MUCH: DEALING WITH PLAYER KNOWLEDGE

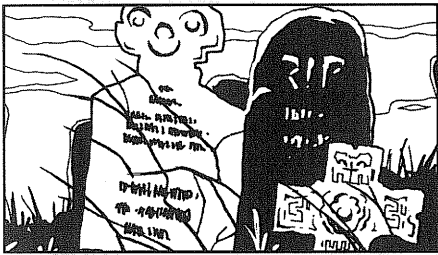
"Gosh, Farmer Jones, how did you know to use salt on that Voodoo zombi?"

Well, he probably didn't, but his *player* did. Gamers are unusually curious about the undead, and often know more about the subject than their characters would. While skilled roleplayers will set their out-of-character knowledge aside, nobody's perfect, and some people just can't resist temptation. This can cause problems, especially in horror scenarios that hinge on mystery, suspense and the unknown.

The solution is to make a few subtle changes. The undead in your campaign don't have to be quite the same as the ones in your players' favorite movies, books, TV or games; even *this* book is just one point of view. The GM should feel free to edit myths, legends and folklore, not to mention the templates in Chapter 4, to keep his players on their toes. Characters must learn the right skills – Occultism, Spirit Lore, Thanatology, etc. – to know the truth. Otherwise, they'll just have to experiment.

Crafty GMs will use their players' preconceived notions about the undead to add to the level of terror in their campaigns. A few slight alterations to the Dreads, Vulnerabilities and Weaknesses on an undead racial template can make all the difference in the world.

"Mmmm. Zombi like salt on brains!"



## USING AND ABUSING PRECONCEPTION

It's likely that the players will naively consider certain things to be safe: light, the day, large crowds, etc. The skilled GM will exploit this "blind spot" powerful effect, making even the most prosaic setting terrifying by adding a simple twist to the mundane.

*Example:* The PCs visit a new city and have lunch at a crowded diner. They return to that diner the next day to find it boarded up and abandoned. Then they learn from city records that it has been closed since the owner died 30 years ago. His photo is on file – and it shows the man who *served them lunch!*

The weird need not be limited to Gothic castles at night.

The myths and legends of major religions and nations will be known to the PCs (or relatively easy to learn); local folklore may take a little more digging. Whether or not any of it is *true* is another matter. The statistics on the various undead racial templates and the choices made under *Defining the Undead* (pp. 112-115) constitute the truth; the GM may choose to base none, some or all of the rumors and legends about the undead on these things. The basic options are:

*Secret Undead:* The undead are completely unknown to mortals and there is no body of undead lore. No one even suspects the existence of the undead, except for a few sages. Skills like Occultism (Undead) (p. 106) or Spirit Lore (p. 107) either don't exist or require an Unusual Background to learn, and won't be entirely reliable at any skill level. Owing to the prevalence of the undead in real-world folklore, this situation is unlikely in horror or fantasy settings, but quite appropriate for futuristic sci-fi settings.

*Rare Undead:* The undead are encountered so infrequently that there is little or no truth to most undead lore. A few gems of truth are buried in the rumors and nonsense, but only those with skills like Occultism (Undead) or Spirit Lore will know what these are. This is the default situation in horror and occult conspiracy campaigns.

*Common Undead:* The undead are known to exist, and the man in the street knows as much about the undead as he does about dangerous animals or (in fantasy worlds) magic or nonhuman races. Special skills will reveal fairly obscure details about the undead, and even skills like Armoury and Tactics may include knowledge of undead weaknesses. This situation is typical of fantasy campaigns.

## Attitudes Toward the Undead

The most important societal issue is the moral light in which the undead are seen. We've presented four basic outlooks, but these *aren't* exclusive; elements of all four will be found in varying degrees in most societies. These views will also vary from one culture to the next in a given campaign world:

1. *The undead are evil.* The afterlife is generally the inviolate domain of one or more gods. Moreover, the natural order of things is determined by the gods, and almost never includes dead things getting up and walking around. The existence of the undead therefore contravenes divine will on two different counts. This makes the undead intrinsically sacrilegious; i.e., they are "evil." This perception will be especially prevalent if the undead suck blood, eat brains or brutally attack people, since theology will then be backed up by a gory body of hard physical evidence.

2. *The undead are victims.* Free will is often regarded as an important part of being human. If someone becomes undead due to circumstances, contagion or necromancy rather than a conscious choice, then he isn't really responsible for his state; instead, his free will has been overridden and he is a victim. His existence is still sacrilegious, but culpability lies with the evil god, spirit or sorcerer who brought him back from the grave. All this assumes that he wants to rest in peace; obviously, those who embrace the undead state are simply evil. See *Free Will and the Undead* (p. 119) for more on this issue.

3. *The undead are unpleasant.* Even in societies with *no* religious taboos against undeath – including those with no religion at all – the undead may be seen in a negative light. Corporeal undead are disturbing to look at, if not downright nasty-looking and -smelling, and can carry diseases. Spectral undead are spooky and have powers that make it difficult to trust them. Some undead also emanate unnatural terror. While the undead may not be viewed as evil, they will still be shunned by most people, and will always be "second-class citizens."

4. *The undead are acceptable.* A rare few societies may actually embrace the undead. In settings where the undead are otherwise regarded as evil, this will generally take the form of an “evil empire” dominated by a malthestic church, an evil god or the evil servant of such a god. Less sinister possibilities are a land governed by a necromancer, death cult or undead ruler, a highly-tolerant secular state, or an exploitative or industrial society that seeks to capitalize on the unique abilities of the undead (see *Zombie Labor*, p. 120).

## Undead Foes

In the majority of settings, the undead – or at least *some* undead – will be the opposition: the bad guys. The following sections address the main approaches to undead foes that are found in fiction and folklore.

### Monsters

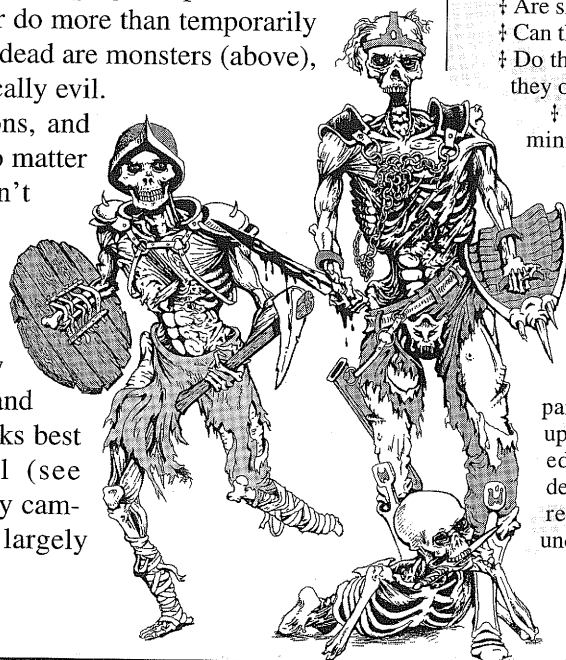
The undead are monsters with the same status as vicious beasts, killer robots or giant radioactive bugs: something unpleasant that gets in the heroes’ way and needs to be blasted. This is the approach taken in B-movies and “hack n’ slash” fantasy. If you choose this route, don’t worry about detailed personalities – how much personality can a brain-eating zombie *really* have? Don’t even bother with character points or detailed character sheets for the undead. All you need to know is damage, DR and hit points. See *Race or Monster?* (p. 121) for advice on how to quickly write up the undead as monsters.

Used this way, the undead expand the GM’s bestiary, let the PCs get target practice and contribute to an overall atmosphere of weird and mindless violence. This approach isn’t conducive to drama or suspense, nor is it especially well-suited to serious horror, fantasy or conspiracy campaigns. Still, there’s absolutely nothing wrong with it in violent, over-the-top settings like *GURPS Black Ops*, where the undead are *meant* to be targets.

### Minions of Evil

The undead are servants of the Forces of Darkness. Their nominal “master” is an evil god or demon that never enters the campaign in person; it’s a primordial force, and mortal heroes can never do more than temporarily thwart its plots. In this mode, the mindless undead are monsters (above), but have a definite purpose and are unequivocally evil. The self-aware undead are essentially demons, and often have highly-developed personalities. No matter how intelligent they are, though, they aren’t truly self-motivated. Even the most powerful undead ultimately serve the cause of Greater Evil.

This approach is ideal for horror campaigns with religious overtones, high fantasy campaigns with idealized versions of good and evil, and occult conspiracy campaigns. It works best if the undead are members of a cabal (see *Interactions*, p. 115). It isn’t well-suited to any campaign where the PCs may be undead, as it largely robs the players of free will.



## FREE WILL AND THE UNDEAD

The coexistence of free will and the undead is problematic. How can people with no desire to come back from the grave become undead against their will?

One solution is that they *can't*. Souls in the afterlife are there to stay. The mindless undead are animated by minor spirits that are to souls what beasts are to humans. Like beasts, they can be tamed and taught a few tricks (like animating bodies), but that's all. Zombies and the like are the possessed husks of the living, although spiritual energy sometimes stimulates the brain enough that the spirit can glean a few of the skills its host had in life. In this case, dominated undead don't exist, and self-motivated undead are all manifestations of either evil spirits (“demons”) or the souls of those who *want* to become undead.

Alternatively, free will exists but isn't supreme. Magic, psi and divine will are all just as powerful, and can subvert the soul. Undeath amounts to a potent curse, comparable in power to destiny or fate. While you can become undead by force of will, you are also subject to the will of those who have supernatural powers. Zombies are prisoners in their own corpses, lesser vampires are the slaves of their creator and not all ghosts *want* to haunt – many are just waiting for someone to set them free.

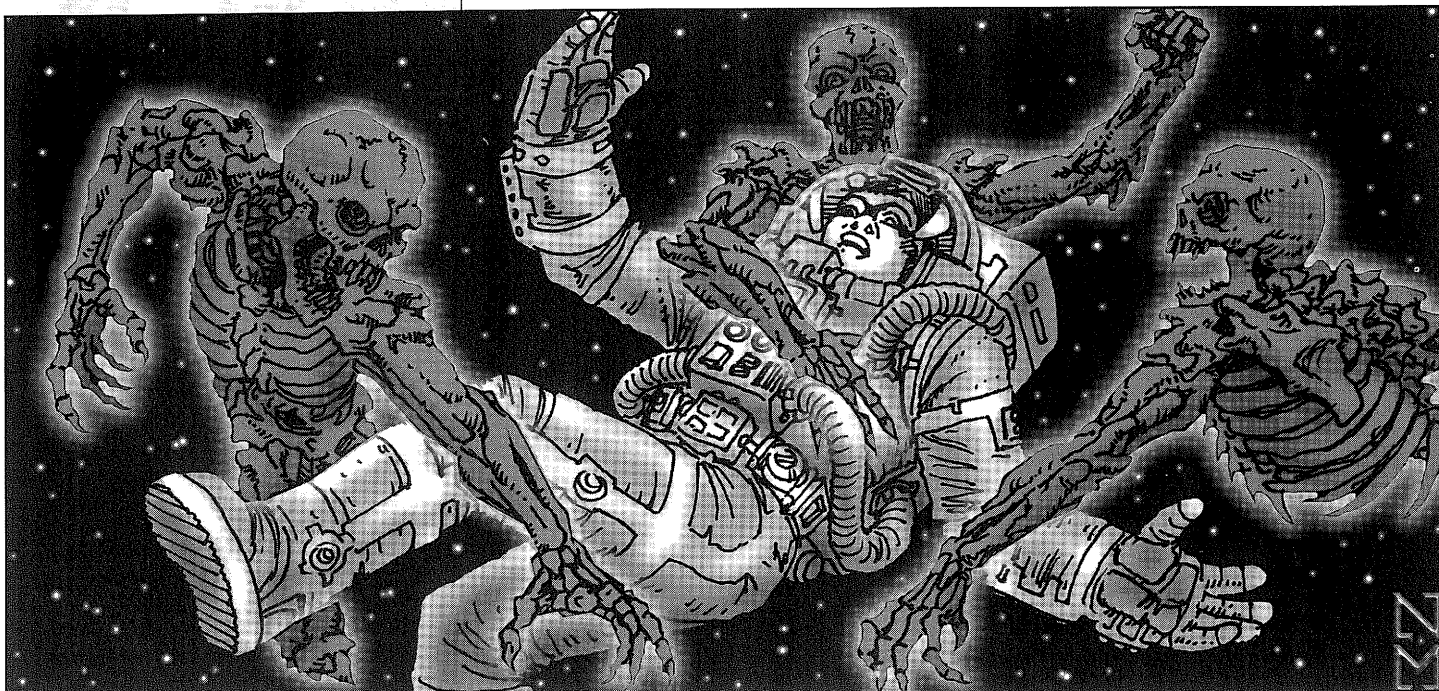
The choice is yours. At least in this life.

## UNDEAD AND THE LAW

In campaigns where the undead are members of society rather than secretive monsters, a number of legal issues will inevitably arise. For instance:

- ‡ Are vampires regarded as the legal parents of their undead “offspring”?
- ‡ Are skeletons, zombies, etc., property?
- ‡ Can the undead marry the living?
- ‡ Do the undead get to keep the property they owned in life?
- ‡ Do the undead have to keep a minimum distance from the living? Stay in a certain part of town?
- ‡ Is it murder to kill someone who's already dead?
- ‡ When is it legal for vampires to drink blood? Whose blood?

The answers to such questions will be very important if there are undead PCs in the campaign; the GM is advised to come up with them *before* they are needed. Those who would rather not deal with such issues may wish to reconsider the decision to have undead PCs in the campaign.



## ZOMBIE LABOR

In industrialized societies where necromancy, weird science and the like are commonplace, the GM must take zombie labor into account. Zombies don't tire, complain about working conditions or require food or water. As long as there is mana, weird radiation, etc., they can work at full strength for 24 hours a day. If zombies are common, this will have a profound effect on the economy!

For one thing, zombies may put a lot of live laborers out of work, resulting in labor unrest and a backlash against the undead... or a utopia where the hard work is done by the dead and the living spend their time dreaming up new spells and weirder science. Alternatively, zombies could augment paid labor, resulting in a huge increase in overall productivity. Zombies could even be used to generate electricity via treadmills or capstans, generating  $(0.02 \times ST)$  kW of power; 10 average zombies (or 2 large zombie horses) could meet the needs of the average TL7 household.

This ideal situation isn't very likely, though. Zombie rights groups and influential religions will protest the use of zombies for labor. The stench and decay of corpses will keep zombies out of certain jobs. The very fact that they cannot learn new skills means that they're limited to untrained labor. Finally, it's likely that zombies will be bought and sold just like robots and power plants, and those who deal in zombies will be required to buy the right to a person's corpse ahead of time (creating a whole new motive for murder). In other words, zombie labor won't be "free," just cheap. Still, the GM can easily justify boosting the total economic output of a zombie-using nation by 10-20%.

## Hunters

The undead are willful, self-interested predators who prey on humanity. There are no restless undead at all, and if the mindless undead show up, they fill the role of the huntsman's hounds and nothing more. Hunters sometimes form alliances among themselves – occasionally *close* alliances – but are motivated mainly by the urge to hunt down humans and (usually) feed, not by a higher power or the political interests of a cabal.

This view of the undead has broad applicability. In unsubtle, violent campaigns, hunters are dangerous and crafty foes, and "fearless monster killers" are liable to become prey if they're not careful. In suspenseful, dramatic campaigns, the slow realization that hunters see humans as cattle or even as playthings can be *chilling*. This approach is common in fiction that tries to present the undead as antiheroes instead of simple villains, and works well in campaigns with player-character undead. Hunters are individuals, often interesting ones, and can be ruthless without being evil.

## Dark Lords

The undead are selfish and manipulative, and use their status as immortals with unearthly abilities to satisfy a personal hunger for power. Their objectives may be as banal as money, as ambitious as world domination, or as mad as control over life and death – perhaps even godhood. Regardless of their exact goals, though, they are arch-villains in the truest sense, and are often found heading up a cabal or leading an undead army. Lesser undead, if they exist, must submit or be destroyed.

This portrayal is perfect for fantasy settings that contain an "evil empire" that provides an endless stream of foes to defeat and plots to foil. It also works well in investigative campaigns, where the undead rarely show themselves in person but leave lots of clues for the investigators to worry about. Dark lords themselves are not all that appropriate for action-oriented games, mainly because they are subtle foes who can't easily be confronted. On the other hand, their underlings make excellent targets!



# Undead Heroes

The undead don't always have to be NPC foes. Unless you've already decided that all undead are evil, mindless monsters, there is always the possibility of undead protagonists. The next few sections deal with the issues of having player-character undead in the campaign.

## Forbidden Ground

The simplest approach is to *forbid* the undead as starting characters altogether and to turn PCs who later become undead into NPCs. This approach preserves the mystery of the undead and is truest to folklore: traditional tales are almost never told from the perspective of the undead, and legends rarely portray them as protagonists. It is also recommended in settings where the undead are largely mindless, or are mystically compelled to carry out heinous deeds. Since the undead are usually quite powerful, this strategy is probably for the best in low-powered games, too.

The main drawbacks of this approach are that gamers used to high-powered settings where the undead are viable player characters may feel "railroaded," and players may feel cheated if the GM takes their dead characters away and then returns them to the campaign as NPCs. To prevent hard feelings, the GM should make an effort to portray the undead as inscrutable, alien or horrific so that the players can understand exactly *why* undead PCs are inappropriate.

## Passing Through the Veil

The "middle of the road" approach is to forbid the undead as starting characters but to allow PCs to become undead in play and remain in the hands of the players. The GM should privately game out this transition with the player, describing how death felt, what happened to his consciousness after death, whether the afterlife was reached (and if so, what it was like), and what his new form feels like. There is a lot of dramatic potential here. A first-hand exploration of mortality, eschatology and spiritual issues offers some great roleplaying opportunities in a serious, dramatic campaign.

The problem with this approach is that undeath may come to be seen as "life insurance," demystifying it, devaluing heroic death and leading to reckless or suicidal roleplaying. The players may also attempt to exploit the rules by creating characters who are prime candidates for undeath or who bare their necks to every vampire they encounter. The solution is to be strict with character point accounting (see *The Cost of Undeath*, p. 45), keep the rules a mystery and fudge things so that undeath occurs only where appropriate. The GM should also make the more formulaic methods of becoming undead (like the Lich spell, p. 43) secrets to be found or researched in play, and require rare and expensive ingredients to make them work.

*Note to the GM:* Not every player wants to roleplay the undead. If a player seems uninterested in or uncomfortable with the idea, then you should not press the issue.

## RACE OR MONSTER?

*GURPS Undead* is written from the point of view that the undead are nonhuman species. This is partly to make it easier to play them as characters and partly so people will realize that they don't *have* to be monsters. In some campaigns, though, the undead *are* monsters, in which case point costs and full character sheets should be ignored. The templates in Chapter 4 can be applied to an average human, and the relevant statistics listed *GURPS Bestiary*-style, followed by a text description of any special abilities. For instance, the zombie (p. 88) might be listed as:

### Zombie

ST: 11      Move/Dodge: 5/5      Size: 1  
DX: 10      PD/DR: 0/0      Wt: 150 lbs.  
IQ: 8      Damage: cr 1d-3†  
HT: 10/15      Reach: C, 1

†Unarmed. Zombies may have weapons, used with a Combat/Weapon skill at level 10-12.

Zombies are corpses animated by magic. Being dead, they are unaffected by disease, poison and extreme temperatures, and don't sleep, breathe, feel pain or bleed. Zombies are always the mindless slaves of some wizard. They are immune to spells resisted by IQ, and can't be distracted or negotiated with. They can be stopped by the Pentagram spell, and are affected by Control Zombie and Turn Zombie. Zombies lose 1 HT/minute in areas without mana.



## SETTING THE SCENE: A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNDEAD IMAGERY

A big part of any campaign that involves the undead is the *imagery*. Scary stuff can be used in moderation to set the tone in suspenseful campaigns, and in excess to create a suitably overwrought atmosphere in campy or silly ones. Here are some “classic” trappings to add to your campaign, with comments on their origins for those who are running traditional campaigns. See *Tomb Trappings* (p. 29) for other ideas.

**Castles:** The undead first appeared in castles in the Gothic tales of the late 18th century, before which they mostly lurked in caves or tombs. These Gothic castles are the origin of the “evil strongholds” of fantasy.

**Caves:** In the *Aeneid* (Virgil, 19 B.C.), shades of the dead were found in clammy caves and fissures. This linked the undead to deep places forever after.

**Chains:** Gothic authors of the 18th and 19th centuries associated shackles with the ghosts of those who died in prison, adding the clanking of chains to modern undead imagery.

**Cold:** The chill of death is a notion that comes from medieval Christian vision literature. Most of these visions were seen by fevered individuals, who probably really did feel chills.

**Cries:** Virgil (70-19 B.C.) was the first author to depict dead souls as noisy. Eerie cries have been associated with the undead ever since.

**Disease:** The early Jews regarded the dead as “unclean,” and the undead were necessarily associated with plague and illness. This view colored most later depictions of the undead.

**Dogs & Wolves:** The *Aeneid* (19 B.C.) is the origin of the now-common connection between howling dogs and the undead. Wolves were added by Gothic authors in the 18th and 19th centuries.

**Dungeons:** In Gothic tales, evil or wrongly-accused prisoners who died in prison often returned as ghosts. As a result, dungeons were associated with the undead – a connection that lives on in fantasy even today.

**Fog:** The *Aeneid* is probably the first place where fog and weird vapors were associated with the undead. Spiritualist Emanuel Swedenborg also made this connection in the 18th century.

**Gloom:** In 16th- and 17th-century art, the undead were always found in dark and gloomy places. This became standard in the Gothic tales of the 18th and 19th centuries.

**Lights:** Strange lights have always been attributed to ghosts by the Australian aborigines. Emanuel Swedenborg popularized the link between ghosts and floating lights in the 18th century.

*Continued on next page . . .*

## Undead, Undead Everywhere

Finally, the players can be allowed to start with undead characters. Not everyone has to be undead (for advice on how to handle mixed parties, see *In the Company of Corpses*, below), but the option is there. Since the undead are powerful for the most part, this works best in high-powered games. Undead PCs should probably be reserved for campaigns where the undead are either completely unknown or where they are known and not automatically viewed as evil (see approaches #2-4 under *Attitudes Toward the Undead*, p. 118). Of course, some groups may *enjoy* the occasional “villains” game!

This kind of campaign must be handled with great care. The GM should only allow players to choose from undead racial templates that he has designed himself or personally reviewed and adjusted for the campaign. He should also make sure that the players of undead characters are capable of roleplaying them. The undead are *not* “humans in corpse suits,” and a player who chooses an undead character just to get access to its special abilities is missing the point. If the GM feels that a particular player cannot handle an undead character, he need not allow it.

## In the Company of Corpses: Mixed Groups

The issue of mixed parties of living and undead characters can be a sticky one in campaigns with undead PCs. A few problems to beware of:

“*I hate dead guys.*” It’s traditional to play living, heroic characters who oppose the undead, and some players won’t be interested in revising their point of view. A few may even be uncomfortable with undead protagonists for moral or religious reasons. To avoid problems, the GM should allow undead PCs only after consulting his players and obtaining general agreement.



"Thanks for the free points!" Traits like The Draining and Unhealing are disadvantages. Living PCs who volunteer blood and cast healing spells may be helping a friend in need, but they are also helping to circumvent disadvantages that balance many powerful advantages. If the GM and players can accept this, that's fine. If not, then the GM should take measures to restore balance; e.g., blood is only nourishing when taken by force, healing spells are only half as effective on the undead, etc.

"These dead guys make us look bad." The undead have a lot of special abilities. The GM should present challenges for the undead as well as the living. Otherwise, the undead will steal the show, since much of what living characters fear or are limited by poses no threat to the undead.

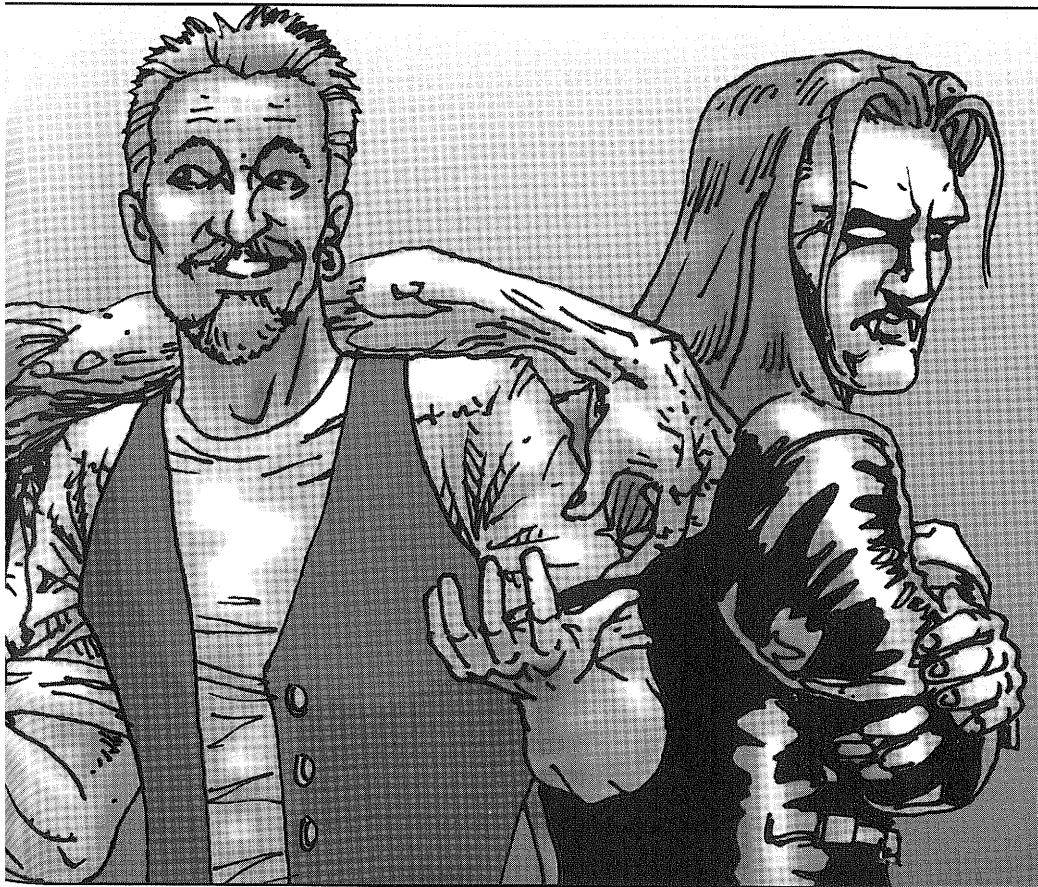
"No, I mean these dead guys make us look bad!" No matter how well integrated into society the undead are, they will still be disgusting or frightening to many. The GM should certainly penalize undead PCs for this; they had a choice, after all. Within reason, though, he should try to avoid extending this stigma to their living companions.

## Using Undead with Other GURPS Books

The undead are addressed to some extent in *GURPS Atomic Horror*, *Black Ops*, *Blood Types*, *Creatures of the Night*, *Horror* and *Voodoo*. Undead has crossover potential with several other *GURPS* books, including:

### *GURPS Autoduel*

The Grain Blight was a virus, but what *kind* of virus, and what caused it? The nuclear missiles of the Russo-American War were destroyed by defenses, but where did the debris land and what would a mutant, radioactive Blight do to people?



## SETTING THE SCENE: (Continued)

**Owls:** These were associated with the dead and the supernatural in Christian art of the 16th and 17th centuries.

**Skeletons:** Death was personified as an animate skeleton in 15th-century European art; Brueghel the Elder depicted ranks of marching skeletons in the 16th century.

**Skulls:** The baroque period (1550-1750) marked the use of skulls in crypt imagery, where they were often depicted as grinning or even speaking, suggesting the undead.

**Snakes:** Linked with evil since Biblical times, this association was extended to the undead by Christian art of the 16th century.

**Storms:** Thunderstorms were a hallmark of the Gothic tale, where they were used to create a menacing and oppressive atmosphere that came to be associated with the supernatural.

**Toads:** Like owls, toads were first used as symbols of the supernatural in Christian art of the 16th and 17th centuries.

**Worms:** Worms eat corpses, and were frequently found with the undead in Byzantine imagery and baroque Christian art.

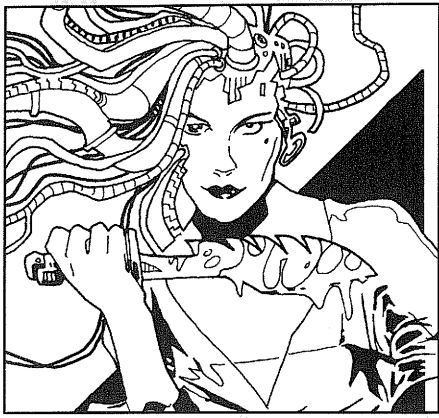
## BOOKS OF THE DEAD

Tales of the undead sometimes mention "books of the dead": ancient tomes that discuss death, necromancy and the afterlife. Such books can be simple scenery, plot devices or grimoires of necromantic magic. Any serious thanatologist or necromancer will be at least somewhat familiar with them. Two real-life examples are often borrowed for the purpose:

***Egyptian Book of the Dead:*** Instructions to the dead on how to enter the afterlife. It names beings encountered along the way and gives the proper protocols for addressing them. It includes spells of protection from monsters, rotting and suffocation, as well as incantations of reincarnation. It also makes the mysterious claim that the pyramid "awakens the god who sleeps in the soul."

***Tibetan Book of the Dead:*** Its name, *Bardo Thodöl*, means "between two" and describes the afterlife state. It ritualizes death as the yoga of dying, and describes the "Bardo-body," an ethereal duplicate of the physical body inhabited by the deceased. Many famous people have read this book and believed in its teachings, including Carl Jung and Timothy Leary.





## GHOST IN THE MACHINE

In some settings, technology may be used to bridge the gap between the realms of the living and the dead. There are real-life precedents for this!

In 1959, artist Friedrich Jürgenson heard faint but intelligible voices in the background on a tape of bird songs he recorded in a remote part of Sweden. This sparked the interest of German parapsychologist Hans Bender and Latvian psychologist Konstantin Raudive, who began recording these “electronic voice phenomena” (EVP) in a number of ways. One of these methods involved setting up a microphone next to a radio tuned to static.

In the 1970s, George Meek and Bill O’Neil developed “Spiricom,” an electronic system designed for two-way communication with the dead in the 29 MHz waveband. Spiricom was reportedly developed with the help of Dr. George Jeffries Mueller, a NASA scientist who died 14 years prior to the development of the system!

Since EVP are very faint and require careful, repeated listening to decipher, many people dismiss the voices as a trick of the listener’s mind. Other theories have been postulated, however:

*Bioelectric Specters:* When the physical body dies, bioelectric energy remains behind, leaving a consciousness that can interact with machinery – particularly radios, televisions, telephones, etc. This theory meshes well with the “global soul collectors” in *GURPS Bio-Tech* (pp. BIO122-123).

*Interdimensional Agents:* A research group in Luxembourg has claimed to be in contact with TimeStream, a group of “spirit-side” researchers trying to communicate with the living via technology. Could this be a ploy by Centrum or Stopwatch (see *GURPS Time Travel*) to block the development of parachronic travel in our timeline?

*Hoax:* Perhaps EVP are simply the result of stray radio broadcasts that appear at random frequencies due to atmospheric effects.

*Something Else:* Maybe EVP are a high-tech scrambling system used by the Illuminati, the Greys or some other group you’re better off not knowing about . . .

*GURPS Autoduel* is an ideal setting for a B-movie sci-fi game that focuses on the undead – especially zombies. The Blight gives you an excuse to play with undead microbes (p. 92), and with a heavy weapon under every hood, *Autoduel America* is tailor-made for a “zombies and chainsaws” campaign (see *Zombies and Chainsaws*, p. 125). Those who are interested should seek out the vintage *GURPS* adventure *Zombietown U.S.A.:* a ready-made example of how to mix autoduellings with the undead!

## *GURPS Cyberpunk*

Those who like to mix the futuristic and the Gothic should consider a *Cyberpunk* campaign. The pollution keeps things nice and dark, while the sprawl is the perfect hunting ground, providing both food and camouflage for the predatory undead. No one in an ultra-tech world is going to believe that a vampire drained a body dry if there are organleggers around. In fact, given what you can buy at the black clinic, who’s even going to notice a dead man walking?

In this case, technology adds to the fear and mystery: unnamed retroviruses and unregulated biotech can be blamed for many new plagues – perhaps even *undead* ones. Nanotech may play a role in reanimating corpses. And how do you tell the undead from the cyborgs? Cold, deadly, barely human . . . who cares which is which?

In a world where life is cheap, the undead can probably pick up some great discounts.

## *GURPS Illuminati*

In an illuminated world, the undead are everywhere and you just don’t know it. No, they’re not reviled by society and hunted down like dangerous animals. They wear suits and uniforms, and you pay their salaries – in fact, you probably voted for some of them. The Army has zombie soldiers, but no one who likes to breathe actually asks about the boys in “Company Z.” The wealthiest men in the nation are vampires; heck, those long-term investments are a real money-maker when you’re immortal. It’s not true what They say about Hitler’s brain, though; it’s his *ghost* They’ve been talking to.

Now you’re going to forget you ever read this.

In an illuminated world, there are no undead. Don’t be silly. Now go answer your door. Don’t worry: those men in black suits are quite alive.

## *GURPS Martial Arts*

When you no longer find the living to be a challenge, you are ready to meet the undead. Martial-arts lore has a long-standing connection to the supernatural. Ghosts bear warnings for the living in many tales. Martial artists who devote more time to fighting than to tending the family shrine often have to contend with the shades of their ancestors. “Immortal masters” are sometimes undead; imagine their skill if they’ve done nothing but train with their tomb-mates for centuries! Supernaturally strong and tough, these may be the ultimate foes. The subject matter need not be so lofty, though: the martial arts are an important part of “zombies and chainsaws” games, too.

## *GURPS Supers*

Supers are supposed to be heroic defenders of the weak and the defenseless, so who else are you going to call in to fight off an undead menace? In a *Supers* campaign, zombies and wraiths would make great minions for villains with supernatural powers, and are tough enough to present the heroes with a bit of a challenge.



Of course, the undead don't have to be the bad guys. A few heroes in the comics appear to be undead, notably Deadman and the Spectre (both © DC Comics, Inc.). An interesting twist would be an entire super *group* made up of undead heroes. Many of the abilities of the undead are so similar to super powers that this crossover is a natural.

## Undead in the Mass Combat System

The undead can serve as troops in almost any setting. These guidelines will let you use the undead with the mass combat system in *GURPS Compendium II* (pp. CII112-129).

Undead troops have several advantages over living ones: they are cheap, loyal and easily replenished. Normally, only corporeal undead are available, although spectral undead can be used as special forces (p. CII120). Enslaved undead make good front-line "grunts," while willful undead are best used as officers. Restless undead who have returned to discharge a debt of honor are common in fantasy, and may even be formed up into units when they appear.

*Troop Types* (p. CII114): Undead troops use the same basic unit types as living ones, but Troop Strength (TS) is modified according to the *Non-Human Races* rule (p. CII115). Cavalry units with undead mounts don't use the standard TS modifiers on p. CII115. Instead, apply the rules for undead beasts (p. 90) to their mounts and assess a TS modifier equal to the mount's (ST + HT + Move)/30, round down.

*Troop Quality* (p. CII116): Undead troops have the quality they did in life (usually Average). Undead with Cannot Learn will never improve in quality.

*Building and Feeding an Army* (pp. CII116-117): The monetary cost of an undead army is equal to its equipment costs plus the wages of its necromancer (\$1,500/month, in a fantasy setting). Enslaved undead never require food or pay! Equipment must be bought normally for an army that is raised from a cemetery or otherwise without equipment, but undead raised on the battlefield are equipped for free (unless looters get to the bodies first).

*Special Circumstances* (p. CII120): The undead are unaffected by forced marches or lack of supply.

*Morale* (p. CII121): Undead with Unfazeable don't make Morale rolls; those with Imperturbable roll at +5. If one side has Exceptional Strength (ES) points (p. CII123) from a wizard capable of casting Turn Zombie, they may spend ES to make enemy zombies susceptible to Morale (determine Morale from troop quality). This costs 1 ES point per 100 TS of troops. Further ES can be spent to modify this roll, as per p. CII124.

At the GM's option, the Morale rolls of living troops may be modified if they are facing the undead. This should be based on the religious and cultural background of the troops in question. Undead with the Terror advantage (p. 60) are especially likely to affect enemy morale.

*Casualties* (p. CII122): Undead units take casualties normally. As with living units, half the casualties are killed or permanently maimed. The other half are merely battered, and can be returned to battle at 50% TS. Since the undead don't heal on their own, magical healing is required to bring these troops back up to full TS.

*Replenishing Losses*: If the undead army holds the field after the battle (i.e., wins) and has access to a necromancer who knows Mass Zombie (p. 41), up to 25% of the enemy's total casualties (i.e., his dead, which account for 50% of his permanent losses) can be raised and added to the undead army. If the undead army consists mainly of undead with Dominance or Infectious Attack, this is automatic. Undead foes cannot be reanimated, however.

## ZOMBIES & CHAINSAWS

Those who watch B-movies will know that the only sure way to stop the undead is to use a power tool in a deadly and brutal fashion. This defines the "zombies and chainsaws" subgenre. Here is a somewhat tongue-in-cheek list of commonly-used power tools. Use them in a realistic campaign at your own risk!

*Buzz Saw (Two-Handed Axe/Mace-3)*: Swing+(1d-1) cutting damage; crippling damage to a limb amputates it! Two-handed, min ST 11. One turn to ready after an attack or parry.

*Chainsaw (Two-Handed Axe/Mace-2)*: Swing+1d cutting damage; crippling damage to a limb amputates it! Two-handed, min ST 12. One turn to ready after an attack or parry. If parried by or used to parry a metal weapon, roll 1d. On 1-2, the person holding the weapon is disarmed. On 3-4, the chainsaw stalls (takes 2 turns to restart). On 5-6, the chain snaps, wrecks the saw and whips the wielder for 3d cutting damage to a random body part.

*Lawnmower (Special)*: A lawnmower is used by picking it up in two hands and holding it in front of you, blade whirling. To attack, you must slam the foe (p. B112). You are at -2 to DX but +2 to ST. If you win the Quick Contest of DX, roll the Quick Contest of ST normally, but your foe takes thrust+(1d+1) cutting damage to the torso regardless of who wins. If you ever fall down, roll 1d. On a 1, the mower lands on you and does 2d+1 cutting damage to a random body part! A mower provides PD 4 from the front and can make a Shield block at -2.

*Nail Gun (Guns (Pistol)-2)*: Treat as a ranged weapon with SS 13, Acc 0, 1/2D 7, Max 14. It does 1d+1 impaling damage. Ammo capacity varies. It can also be pressed against the victim's body and fired at DX-2, giving +1 damage.

*Power Drill (Knife-2)*: Thrust+2 impaling damage. May get stuck (see p. B96), but can be freed in one turn without a ST roll by putting the motor in reverse. One-handed, min ST 8.



These texts were useful when preparing this book. Most of them aren't actually about the undead, but cover related topics.

### General References

- Encyclopedia Britannica*. Extremely useful for general information and filling in the gaps.
- National Geographic Magazine*. Regularly features solid, fact-filled articles on tombs and mummies, as well as on primitive cultures and their religious rites. A good source for those seeking photographs of mummies, ossuaries, etc.
- 'Cassiel.' *Encyclopedia of Black Magic* (Mallard, 1990). Concise treatments of several subjects related to necromancy and the undead.
- Guiley, Rosemary Ellen. *Harper's Encyclopedia of Mystical & Paranormal Experience* (Castle, 1991). A good reference on the occult, covering the subject from an investigative point of view.
- Page, Michael and Ingpen, Robert. *Encyclopedia of Things That Never Were* (Viking Penguin, 1985). A readable reference covering fictional and folkloric material.

### Specialized Information

- Day, David. *A Tolkien Bestiary* (Ballantine, 1979). Good descriptions of fantasy undead from the works of J. R. R. Tolkien, the father of modern fantasy.
- de Givry, Grillo. *Witchcraft, Magic and Alchemy* (Dover, 1971). Translated by J. Courtenay Locke. Lots of information on necromancy and necromancers.
- Lévi, Eliphas. *The History of Magic* (Rider, 1986). Translated by A. E. Waite. Some interesting discussions of necromancy, vampires and countermeasures.
- MacKenzie, Donald A. *Myths and Legends: China and Japan* (Senate, 1994). A fair quantity of information on East Asian funerary rites and eschatology.
- Nivedita, Sister and Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *Myths and Legends: Hindus and Buddhists* (Senate, 1994). Discusses the funerary rites and eschatology of the Indian subcontinent.
- Spence, Lewis. *Myths and Legends: North American Indians* (Senate, 1994). Summarizes several North American Indian tales of the undead.
- Turner, Alice K. *The History of Hell* (Harcourt Brace & Co., 1993). An excellent treatment of death imagery and basic eschatology for non-theologians.
- Waite, Arthur Edward. *The Book of Ceremonial Magic* (Citadel, 1961). Some guidelines on practical necromancy.

### GURPS Supplements

Most of these supplements have bibliographies of their own, all of which are worth checking out.

- Blood Types*, by Lane Grate. Everything you ever wanted to know about vampires.
- Creatures of the Night*, by Scott Paul Maykrantz. Lots of original undead for those who are tired of the traditional.
- Horror*, by J. M. Caparula and Scott Haring. The advice on how to run a horror campaign is worth the price all by itself.
- Places of Mystery*, by Phil Masters and Alison Brooks. An excellent treatment of creepy places like pyramids, barrows and mausoleums.
- Religion*, by Janet Naylor and Caroline Julian. Covers the afterlife and contains lots of information on symbolism.
- Voodoo*, by C. J. Carella. Everything you ever wanted to know about Voudoun, especially ghosts and zombies.

### SUGGESTED READING

These works, while not used as core "research material" for *GURPS Undead*, may appeal to fans of the undead.

### Fiction

- Anthony, Piers. *Crowl Lye* (Del Rey Fantasy, 1984). A dead hero must live as a ghost until his body is repaired.
- Cook, Glen. *Shadows Linger* (Tor, 1984). Mercenaries must deal with body thieves, necromancy and a castle built of undead corpses.
- Costikyan, Greg. *Another Day, Another Dungeon* (Tor, 1990). A silly fantasy novel that features a necromancer, her lich sidekick and a swarm of zombies.
- de Lint, Charles. *Mulengro* (Ace, 1985). Gypsy necromancer and ghosts commit murders in modern-day Canada.
- Dozois, Gardner and Williams, Sheila (editors). *Isaac Asimov's Ghosts* (Ace, 1995). Twelve tales of the spectral undead by Connie Willis, Jack Dann, Terry Bisson and others.
- Dozois, Gardner and Williams, Sheila (editors). *Isaac Asimov's Vampires* (Ace, 1996). Eight vampire tales by Pat Cadigan, Tanith Lee, Connie Willis and others.
- Hamilton, Laurell K. *Guilty Pleasures* (Ace Books, 1995). The first book in the *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* series, which includes *The Laughing Corpse*, *Circus of the Damned*, *The Lunatic Cafe*, *Bloody Bones*, *Killing Dance* and *Burnt Offerings*. This series takes a stab at the legal and social issues of having the undead living openly in society.
- Herbert, James. *The Ghosts of Sleath* (Harper Collins, 1994). Psychic investigator looks into hauntings in a small English town. All kinds of hauntings are described - including ghosts haunting other ghosts!
- King, Stephen. *Pet Sematary* (Doubleday, 1993). Animals buried on an Indian burial site get resurrected, and a grief-stricken father wants to bury his dead son there.
- Lackey, Mercedes. *Children of the Night* (Tor, 1990). Psychic detective deals with a Japanese gaki in New York.
- Lee, Tanith. *Kill the Dead* (Daw, 1980). Professional exorcist battles ghosts and eventually confronts a city of the undead. Set in a medieval fantasy world.
- Lovecraft, H. P. *Herbert West - Reanimator* (Homebrew, 1922). Available in *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* (Arkham House, 1987). Mad scientist uses injections to resurrect dead bodies.
- Matheson, Richard. *I Am Legend*. (Tor Books, 1997). A virus makes everyone into a vampire except one man. He becomes the monster for seeking out vampires and killing them.
- McDonald, Ian. *Terminal Café* (Bantam Spectra, 1994). Nanotechnology lets the dead be reanimated, but they rise in servitude to their corporate reanimators.
- Newman, Kim. *Anno Dracula* (Pocket Books, 1993). Queen Victoria takes Dracula as her new consort in 1888. An interesting treatment of "socially acceptable" vampirism.
- Powers, Tim. *On Stranger Tides* (Berkley Publishing, 1987). A tale of Caribbean zombies and ghosts in the age of piracy. Suggests that supernatural forces may have survived longer in remote areas than in civilized lands.
- Pratchett, Terry. *Reaper Man* (Gollancz, 1991). Several of Pratchett's humorous Discworld novels feature the undead, including mummies, ghosts, zombies and vampires (see *GURPS Discworld* for details), but this novel gives them a central role.
- Preiss, Byron and Betancourt, John (editors). *The Ultimate Zombie* (Dell, 1993). A collection of 23 zombie stories, covering every sort of zombie imaginable.

Rice, Anne. *Interview with the Vampire* (Ballantine, 1977). A reporter interviews a vampire and gets a vampire's-eye view of history.

- Shepard, Lucius. *Green Eyes* (Ace, 1984). A book about free-willed Voudoun "zombies," complete with a lot of pseudoscience to explain it all.
- Stableford, Brian. *The Empire of Fear* (Simon & Schuster, 1988). An alternate history featuring a vampire-ruled society and a fairly rigorous biological explanation for vampirism.
- Steakley, John. *Vampire\$* (Penguin Books, 1990). The story of a team of vampire hunters funded by the Vatican. Great characters and truly deadly and evil vampires.
- Stoker, Bram. *Dracula* (Signet, 1992). The classic vampire tale of the undead Count Dracula and those who oppose him.
- Wharton, Edith. *The Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973). A collection of turn-of-the-century ghost stories.
- Yoshimoto, Banana. *Amrita* (Grove Press, 1997). Illustrates ghosts as psychic phenomena and modern Japanese ideas about spirits.

### Comics

- Ostrander, John. *The Spectre* (DC Comics, 1992-1998). Comic book about the ghost of a dead cop become the Wrath of God incarnate, charged with exacting retribution on the guilty.
- Takada, Yuzo. *3x3 Eyes* (Dark Horse Comics, 1995). The adventures of a three-eyed immortal girl and her zombie boyfriend on a quest to become human.

### Nonfiction

- Davis, Wade. *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (Touchstone, 1997). The true story of an exploration of the roots of Voudoun and a scientific explanation for zombies.
- Jung, C. G. *Psychology and the Occult* (Princeton University Press, 1977). Notable especially for the essays "The Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits" and "The Soul and Death."

### FILMOGRAPHY

These films influenced the author. The list is by no means exhaustive!

### Ghosts

- Beetlejuice* (Tim Burton, 1988). About a ghost with a wicked sense of humor. Shows that the undead can still be funny.
- Frighteners*, The (Peter Jackson, 1996). A film about an undead hunter. Darkly humorous, with plenty of apparitions and poltergeist effects.
- Ghostbusters* (Ivan Reitman, 1984). Another humorous film about professional undead hunters, often regarded as the pinnacle of the "humorous ghost film" subgenre.
- Gotham* (Lloyd Fonvielle, 1988). A fairly spooky romantic ghost story. Superbly illustrates the undead compulsion to haunt.

### Mummies

- Mummy, The* (Terence Fisher, 1959). An undead mummy seeks vengeance on the archaeologists who defile its tomb.
- Mummy, The* (Karl Freund, 1932). The classic on which the 1959 version was based.

### Revenants

- Crow, The* (Alex Proyas, 1993). A crow carries a soul back from the afterlife so it can get revenge. Goes overboard with the "modern Gothic" feel, but treats revenants well.
- Night Breed* (Clive Barker, 1990). Lots of revenants (or demons, or something) live together under a graveyard. Worth seeing for the make-up and effects.

### Vampires

- Addiction, The* (Abel Ferrara, 1995). An existential vampire movie that likens vampirism to heroin addiction.
- Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1992). Not everyone liked it, but this romantic take on Bram Stoker's novel is stylish and designed to appeal to the modern viewer.
- Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Fran Rubel Kazui, 1992). A cheerleader is chosen as humanity's defender against the undead. Tongue-in-cheek treatment of hunting the undead.
- Cronos* (Guillermo del Toro, 1994). A really creepy tale of gadget-assisted vampirism. Is it magic or weird science? Who knows.
- Fearless Vampire Killers, The* (Roman Polanski, 1967). A camp treatment of vampires and undead hunters. Look for the classic scene involving a Jewish vampire and a crucifix. Great fun!
- From Dusk Till Dawn* (Robert Rodriguez, 1995). Disturbing and darkly humorous movie about Aztec vampires. The first half doesn't look that way, but don't worry: you have the right film.
- Hunger, The* (Tony Scott, 1983). A story about vampires who need blood to avoid aging. Has a 1980s pop-culture gloss to it.
- Innocent Blood* (John Landis, 1992). A gangster movie involving vampire Mafiosi. Addresses the important issue of garlic in Italian food.
- Lost Boys, The* (Joel Schumacher, 1987). A modern vampire movie featuring undead California beach punks with bad hair. Breaks with tradition when it comes to fire and garlic.
- Nadja* (Michael Almereyda, 1995). Yet another of those existential New York vampire movies. Vampirism is likened to AIDS this time. Look for the *Dracula* references.
- Near Dark* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1987). A flick about undead trailer trash trekking around Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Shows an interesting cure for vampirism that's never quite explained.
- Omega Man* (Boris Sagal, 1971). The last man on earth battles "vampires" created by a bioengineered plague. Based on Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*.

### Zombies

- Army of Darkness* (Sam Raimi, 1992). Humorous movie featuring chainsaws, shotguns and armies of zombies. A real "zombies & chainsaws" movie!
- Cast a Deadly Spell* (Martin Campbell, 1991). Set in an alternate earth circa 1948, undead abound and zombies do all the manual labor.
- Cemetery Man* (Michele Soavi, 1995). Existential Italian movie about a man who lives in a graveyard with his undead girlfriend and a deformed grave digger. Yes, you read that right.
- Dead Alive* (Peter Jackson, 1993). A contagious zombie plague results from a cursed monkey bite. Lots of gore, animated body parts and violence. Learn how to use a lawnmower in combat.
- Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero, 1968). The classic zombie B-movie! Flesh-eating ghouls created by radiation vs. good ol' boys who want to shoot 'em in the head.
- Plague of the Zombies* (John Gilling, 1966). Voudoun zombies are at work in a mine in England. Naturally, it takes a long time before someone actually notices this.
- Plan 9 from Outer Space* (Edward D. Wood Jr., 1956). An inadvertently (?) silly zombie movie that has space aliens creating zombie servants using advanced technology.
- Return of the Living Dead* (Dan O'Bannon, 1985). Braaaaaiii!
- White Zombie, The* (Victor Halperin, 1932). Possibly the first dramatic zombie movie, although modern viewers will probably find it humorous. Deals with Voudoun zombies in Haiti.

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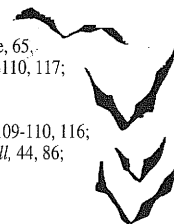
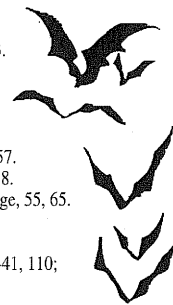
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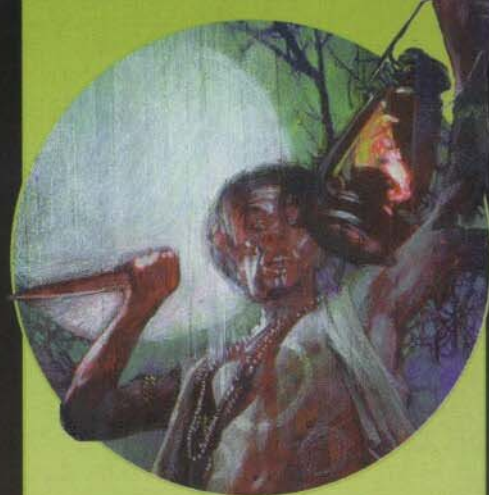
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