



# GHOSTS OF THE INNER SEA

## EYES OF EMPTY DEATH

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Ghosts need no introduction. Perhaps no other monster carries the sheer cultural heft of the humble phantom, the ability to conjure a vivid image with the simple words “ghost story.” The oldest recognizable literary ghost story in Western literature dates to Pliny the Younger in the 1st century CE, and already includes a mysterious haunting, a spooky house, and an unquiet spirit. Later masters of the form have included Alejandro Amenábar, Charles Dickens, Lafcadio Hearn, Susan Hill, Samantha Hunt, M. R. James, Stephen King, Shirley Jackson, Edith Nesbit, Helen Oyeyemi, and Joe Ruby and Ken Spears (creators of *Scooby-Doo*), as well as Steven Spielberg.

In Golarion, as in most of fiction, a ghost arises when a person dies with some manner of unfinished business, and then continues to haunt until this is resolved—their killer is brought to justice, they guide a descendant to a buried treasure, and so forth. Then, and only then, can the ghost be permanently set to rest.

## Using Ghosts

In Pathfinder, until a ghost’s particular unfinished business is resolved, it can’t be permanently destroyed. This means that ghosts make poor random encounters or nameless minions—other undead such as wraiths are better suited for that role. Rather, every ghost is a unique individual, whether they’re a tragic victim or an evil monster, with a story that the heroes must engage with if they are to permanently deal with the spirit. With that in mind, here are a few elements GMs should keep in mind when creating these stories.

**Remember the Mystery:** A ghost story is, at heart, an investigation. Often, laying a ghost to rest is as simple as a few hours work with a shovel and a short prayer. The challenge lies in knowing where to dig.

What anchors ghosts to the mortal world is usually not immediately obvious, as they are rarely straightforward about their aims in their encounters with mortals. Heroes faced with a ghost usually want

to learn how and why the ghost died and what might be keeping it around. This might involve looking for clues at the scene of the haunting, consulting church or civic records, speaking to those who knew the ghost, or even trying to talk to the ghost directly. It’s not uncommon for ghost hunters to require a couple of attempts to determine precisely what is keeping a ghost around, though GMs should be careful to provide heroes with plenty of avenues for investigation.

**Remember the Tragedy:** Elderly people who die in bed surrounded by loving family rarely become ghosts. A ghost arises because, when the person dies, there is something that they want, a desire they feel more keenly than even the pull to pass on into death. This is very rarely a happy thing.

Most often, ghosts remain because something went horribly wrong. Murder victims are likely candidates for ghosts. People who feel they have been deeply wronged, such as star-crossed lovers or slandered innocents, may also return from the dead. Some ghosts feel that they are still needed in the land of the living, and so remain to watch over their descendants or guard their treasure. The most frightful ghosts are those that were evil in life and know no pleasant eternity awaits them in the Great Beyond. Such a ghost behaves more like a demon than a shade, and will need exorcisms or other extreme measures to defeat.

**Remember the Symbolism:** Ghosts are not logical entities. Jacob Marley from Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* wore chains attached to lockboxes to symbolize his greed and miserliness. Beetlejuice from the eponymous movie wore a shabby suit with prison stripes, symbolic of both his sleazy, con-artist nature and his desire to escape death. Ghosts are driven by emotion, by symbolism, by a sort of thematic poetry that inflects everything they do and everything they are. When designing a ghost, giving it a distinctive style or meaningful bit of symbolism is more important than strict internal logic.

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The following are some reasons a ghost could rise.

- Avenging their death (emphasis can be on justice or on vengeance).
- Obtaining a proper burial (or a reconsecrated grave).
- Protecting a cherished person, place, or thing.
- Reconciling with a loved one.
- Finishing a feud with a rival.
- Clearing their name.
- Finishing a life-consuming task (write a book, complete some significant research).
- Making sure their treasure or prize is found and not lost to the ages.
- Making sure their treasure or prize is never found or taken away.
- Seeking forgiveness for past crimes or sins.

## Ghosts of the Inner Sea Region

The following are some of Golarion's notable ghosts.

**Ammelon VI:** In life, Ammelon VI was the last cyclops patriarch of Ghol-Gan, though by Ammelon's day the once-great land of Ghol-Gan had fallen far. Prophecy and sun worship had given way to mass sacrifice and the invocation of unearthly gods. Ammelon ruled over this blood-maddened faith from the secretive temple complex of Xanthuun, in the present-day Sodden Lands. When he and his kingdom perished during Earthfall, that disaster was merely the final blow.

In life, Ammelon ruled cruelly and covetously; his death rendered him spiteful as well. A shadowy horror with a single, flickering ember of an eye, he guards wonders that brings him no joy, purely so that none may claim to own Ammelon VI's treasure—and the wealth of even a decaying empire is no small thing.

**The Angel of Egorian:** According to a famous story, if one walks by Egorian's opera house at night, one might hear someone singing: a beautiful, high countertenor that enchants the ear. It seems to come from nearby, but nowhere quite in particular, and might seem like one of Cheliox's divas practicing a piece, albeit someone unfamiliar to the listener. But if the listener is wise, they'll leave quickly, for those who linger find that the song never ends. It follows them home, a beautiful but ceaseless sound that drives them to lose themselves and worse.

No one has seen the Angel, but local historians suspect that it to be the ghost of Beacien Persix, a

beautiful young man who died of blood poisoning in 4789 AR, just weeks after being accepted into the opera house's chorus. Opera lover, ex-Hellknight, and Angel-survivor Paracount Damius Julistarc is rumored to have taken an interest in the mystery.

**Geb:** The arch-necromancer Geb has fair claim to be the most powerful ghost on Golarion, by a good margin. Born millennia ago, Geb founded his namesake country, only to lead it in a centuries-long war against his rival, the archmage Nex. In 576 AR, Nex disappeared and Geb seemed to have won, but uncertainty gnawed at the necromancer until he committed ritual suicide in 632 AR. In the years since, Geb has plotted and worried and wondered, chained to the mortal realm until he is certain that he has defeated Nex once and for all.

For most of the last thousand-odd years, Geb was content to leave the lich queen Arazni in charge of his land, but with Arazni's disappearance and signs of Nex's return growing, the arch-ghost has stirred to activity once more. His emissaries travel again to living and dead alike, and every night new horrors make the pilgrimage to the land of the undead, all in preparation for a confrontation that will shake the world.

**The Ghosts of Cosymnos:** Impoverished and obscure, House Cosymnos holds but a single claim to fame among Oppara's aristocracy: its manor at the edge of Westpark is likely the most haunted house in all of Taldor's capital. While a few ghosts, such as the Woman in the Veil, have been reported for centuries, others are more recent manifestations, including the horrific Eyeless Soldier, the violent Bloody Heron, and the silent and drifting Wisp. The Marquis and Marquess Cosymnos are considered either heroes or fools for remaining in the residence.

What few realize is that most of the ghosts are of quite recent vintage, products of a Cult of Shax run by the Cosymnoses. The poor spirits seek only to keep people away from their killers, but are themselves harried by the Bloody Heron, a bound demon of vile temper.

**Kaltia, the Haunter of the Hills:** According to local legend, Kaltia was a young and idealistic dwarven merchant, member of some clan that dwelled in the general vicinity of Lastwall. Seeing the troubles caused by the endless strife between her people and the orcs of Belkzen, she hatched a scheme to bring peace, inviting orc emissaries to her clan. But the horrified elders saw only treachery in her actions and killed both the emissaries and Kaltia, leaving her body unburied in a ditch. A generation later, Kaltia's clan was gone, wiped out by the orcs.

Since then, Kaltia has haunted the hills around Hallein Town and is sometimes driven away, but she's

unable to pass on until she is properly buried. Since Lastwall's fall, the ragged ghost has ranged further afield, though as hostilities with Belkzen lessen in the wake of Tar-Baphon's return, the ghost has grown strange. Sometimes Kaltia attacks, marshaling wind and cold to her cause, while other times she shepherds innocents to safety, as few of the Gravelands' other dead will attack those in her company.

**Duke Pieln Melcat:** For generations, the House of Melcat had ruled over its Archduchy on the shores of Lake Encarthan, until the self-proclaimed living god Razmir came to its lands. Thrice he demanded Duke Melcat's fealty, and thrice he was refused. In consequence the sorcerer destroyed the duke's city of Aerduin with flame and ash. It lies in ruins still, now known as Aerduin's Folly, haunted by the whispers of the dead and tainted by the anguish of the burning.

The Duke of Melcat still walks the fallen walls of his city, drawing lesser ghosts to him by the strength of his will and the power of his hatred. Razmir took Melcat's life, his city, and his people, and the Duke will not rest until justice—or vengeance—is his.

**Sahba al-Koriab:** For years past counting, priests of Aroden maintained a small hermitage atop Arazlant Mox, highest and holiest of all the Kortos Mounts. Sustained in those unlivable heights by a miracle of Aroden, they perished when their god did—and one middle-aged initiate, Sahba al-Koriab, returned. Sahba simply refuses to leave the sacred site unattended and won't allow even the death of her god stop her. The ruined hermitage's few visitors report meeting a pleasant, patient Keleshite woman with a dry sense of humor, not realizing she was a ghost until she vanished when they looked away.

## Special Abilities

Ghosts can select from the following special abilities in addition to those listed in the *Bestiary*. Of special note, several of abilities invoke the ghost's particular circumstances and death and can be used to guide heroes toward new avenues of investigation—possibly in exchange for a good share of their Hit Points.

### BEATIFIC APPEARANCE

When dealing with ghosts, appearances can be deceiving. For every gory specter exists an innocent-looking spirit, their cherubic mien enhanced with magic to lull victims to their deaths.

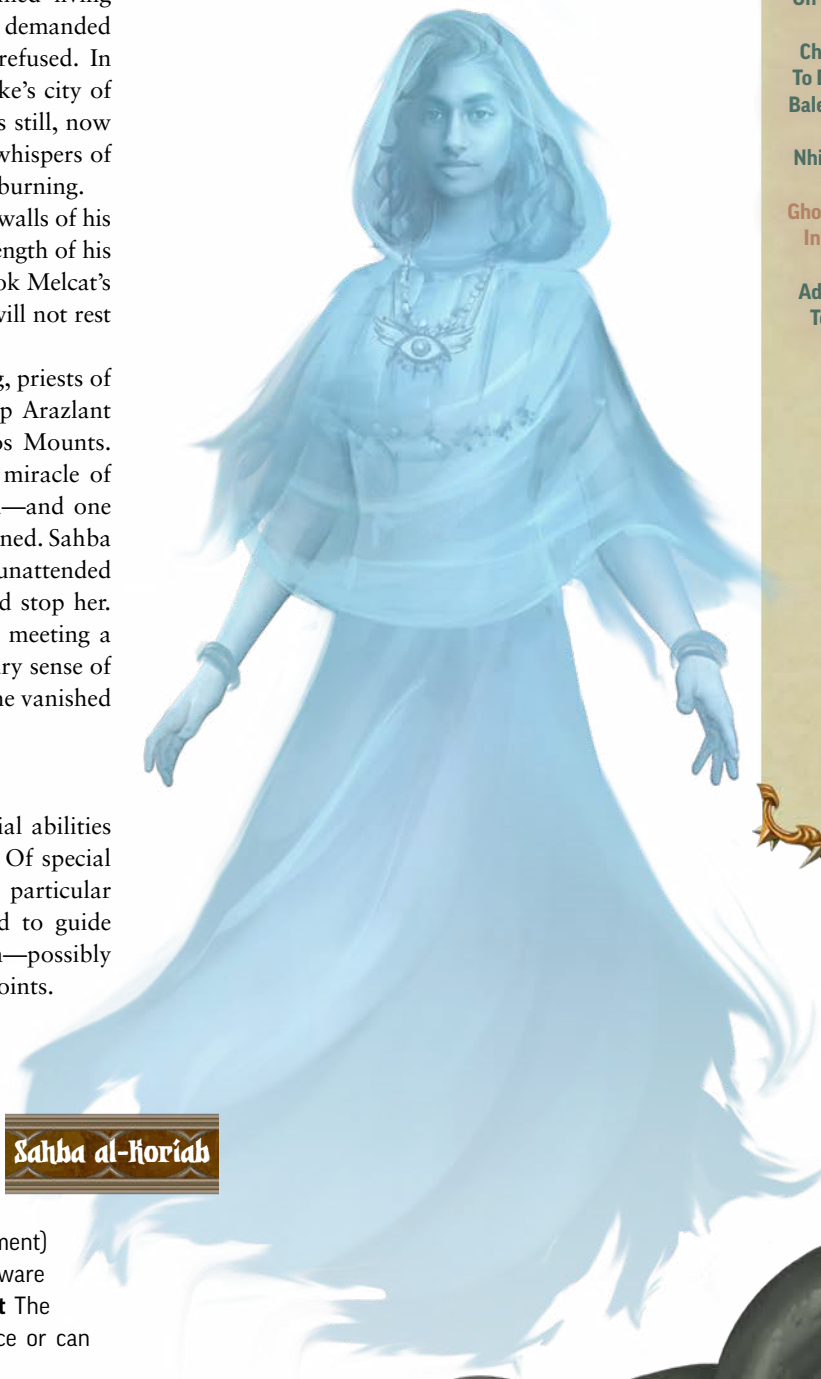
**Beatific Appearance**  (divine, enchantment)

**Requirements** A creature the ghost is aware of targets the ghost with an attack; **Effect** The ghost has an unusually pitiable appearance or can

change its features to look like someone close to the attacker, which causes the target to pull back on its attack. The triggering creature must attempt a Will save. On a failure, the creature takes a -1 circumstance penalty to its attack roll (-2 on a critical failure).

### COLD SPOT

Ghosts are often associated with unnatural cold, and one of the first signs of a ghostly presence is an uncanny cold spot in the air.



Sahba al-Koriab

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### FIGHTING GHOSTS

The heroes may decide not to take up arms against a particularly benign or tragic ghost, but battling a terrifying specter while attempting skill checks to lay it to rest can make for a thrilling climax to a story.

Incorporeal and infinitely variable, ghosts are difficult foes. At the same time, their site-bound nature makes them relatively easy to escape, and you should remind players of this if the heroes get in over their heads. If you expect the heroes to stand and fight, make sure that the party has access to suitable anti-ghost weapons or spells (*ghost touch* weapons, positive energy, or force effects).

**Cold Spot** (aura, cold, divine) The air within 5 feet of the ghost is supernaturally cold. Characters that enter or begin their turn in the ghost's aura take 1d6 cold damage per 3 levels the ghost has (basic Fortitude save).

### CORPOREAL MANIFESTATION

Traditionally, ghosts are thought of as wispy, insubstantial things, but not all ghosts follow this rule.

**Corporeal Manifestation** ◆ (concentration) The ghost loses the incorporeal trait, temporarily increasing its Strength modifier to equal its Charisma modifier. The ghost loses its immunity to precision damage and its resistance to all damage while corporeal. The ghost can resume being incorporeal by using this action again.

### DREAMWALKER

People who encounter ghosts are often plagued by nightmares, sometimes supernatural ones. Only powerful ghosts of 6th level or higher have this ability.

**Dreamwalker** (divine, illusion, mental) Anyone who meets the ghost or visits its bound site can become subject to this effect. The first time the subject sleeps after their ghostly encounter, they're targeted by a *nightmare* spell, with the nightmares being somehow related to the ghost. Most often this means that the subject relives the ghost's last moments alive, but there are other possibilities. If the ghost wishes, it can manipulate the dreams to send messages or even hold entire conversations with dreamers.

### FADE

Ghosts are notorious for appearing and disappearing when least expected.

**Fade** ◆ (divine, illusion) The ghost becomes invisible until the beginning of its next turn.

### FETCH

A fetch is a person's double, often associated with hauntings and considered a mark of great ill omen.

**Fetch** ◆◆ (divine, illusion) The ghost creates an illusory double of a creature. The fetch functions as a 2nd-level *illusory creature*, except that the ghost doesn't control the fetch, and the spell lasts for 1d4 hours instead of needing to Sustain the Spell. The fetch has a rudimentary intelligence and tries to imitate its original (it has a Deception skill value equal to the ghost's highest skill) but comes across as confused or vague. A ghost can have only one fetch at a time. If the creature doubled by the fetch encounters it, the creature must succeed at a Will save or become stupefied 1 (stupefied 2 on a Critical Failure) for as long as they can see the fetch.

### GHOST STORM

Most ghosts can summon a wind to rattle a window or bang a shutter, but some angry spirits can do far worse.

**Ghost Storm** (air, aura, divine, evocation) Wind surrounds the ghost out to a range of 30 feet. The wind extinguishes small non-magical fires, disperses fog and mist, blows objects of light Bulk or less around, and pushes larger objects. Squares in the ghost's aura are difficult terrain and flying creatures are always considered to be moving against the wind (*Core Rulebook* 463). The ghost can dismiss or resume the wind as an action, which has the concentrate trait.

### HAUNTED HOUSE

Ghosts tend to haunt a specific place, remaining for eternity within a tightly bound space. They might haunt their graves or the sites of their death, but either way they rarely venture far. In their home, though, a ghost holds great power.

**Haunted House** ◆ **Frequency** once every 10 minutes;

**Effect** The ghost extends its presence throughout its bound site until the end of its next turn. Within this area, the ghost can extend its senses, gaining the benefits of all-around vision, and can make ghostly hand attacks or use special abilities originating from any part of the area.

### LYNCHPIN

Ghosts are typically thought of as solitary beings, but sometimes their will and rage are so strong that they drag others back from the grave as well.

**Lynchpin** (divine, necromancy) The ghost extends some of its nature to one or more undead of equal or lower level, who are connected to the ghost's story and unfinished business. These undead gain the ghost's Rejuvenation ability and can't be permanently destroyed so long as the ghost exists. If the ghost is laid to rest, all linked undead are likewise instantly destroyed. Linked undead

often, but not always, share the ghost's Site-Bound ability as well. The ghost doesn't have any control over such undead, and indeed the ghost and their partners in eternity may be unremittingly hostile to one another.

### MEMENTO MORI

For most ghosts, death is a traumatic event, and an angry spirit is perfectly willing to share their pain with others.

**Memento Mori** ◆◆ (divine, illusion, mental)

The ghost causes one creature within 30 feet to relive the ghost's death. The target must succeed at a Will save or see and feel what the ghost did, taking 1d4 persistent mental damage per 2 levels the ghost has. All other creatures are concealed to the target until the persistent damage ends.

### PHANSTAMAGORIA

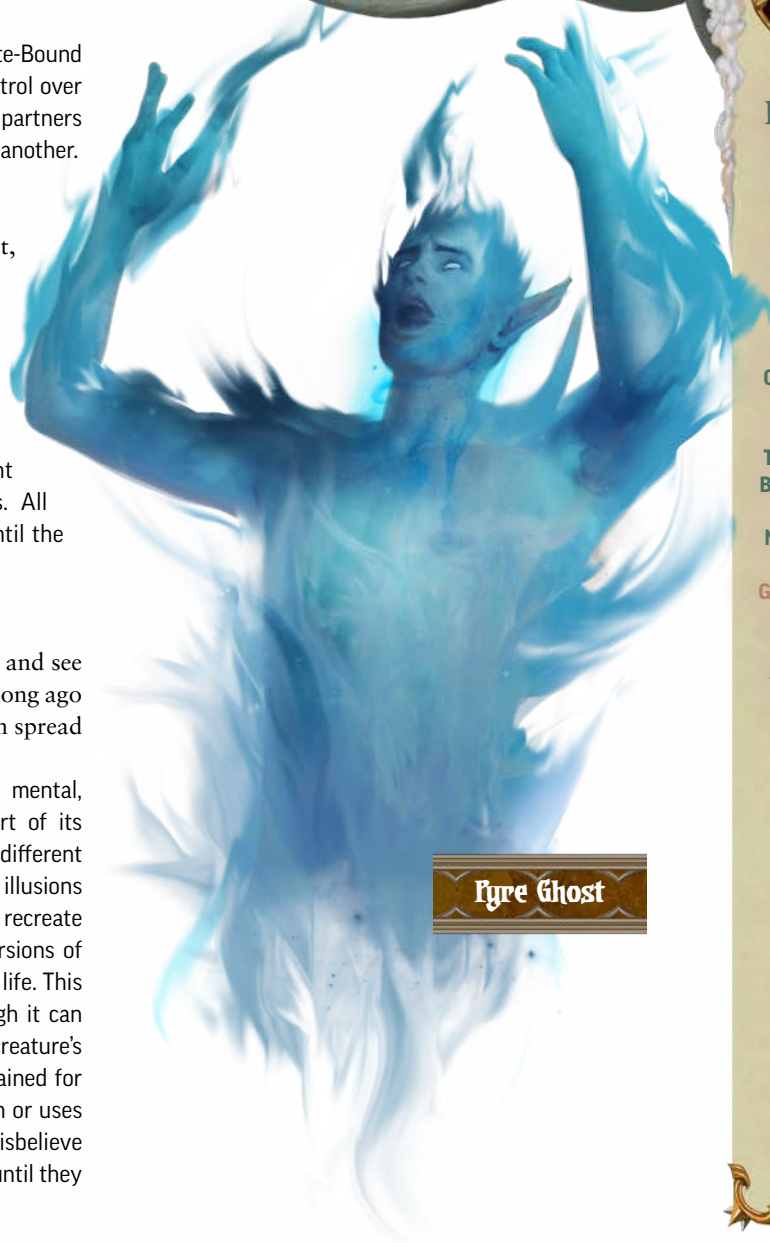
Ghosts are rarely aware of the passage of time and see no difference between the homes they lived in long ago and the ruins they haunt now. Some ghosts can spread that delusion to others.

**Phantasmagoria** ◆◆◆ (auditory, divine, illusion, mental, olfactory, visual) The ghost causes all or part of its bound site to look, sound, feel, and smell like a different kind of place, and can populate it with simple illusions of people or animals. Typically, the ghost can recreate only a handful of images, usually different versions of its bound site as it appeared during the ghost's life. This can't disguise any creatures in the area, though it can cause minor, cosmetic changes (like causing a creature's clothing to appear nicer for a party or bloodstained for a battle). Any creature that touches the illusion or uses the Seek action to examine it can attempt to disbelieve it. Creatures can't leave the area of the illusion until they successfully disbelieve it.

### PYRE'S MEMORY

Burning is one of the most painful ways to die, and ghosts that burned to death are often more aggressive and violent than other incorporeal creatures. Their bound site is often scorched or scarred with some other evidence of fire.

**Pyre's Memory** ◆◆◆ (divine, evocation, fire) The ghost causes great gouts of flame to erupt without warning. The ghost picks three 5-foot squares within 30 feet. Creatures that start in or enter one of these squares take 1d6 fire damage per 2 levels the ghost has, subject to a basic Reflex save. The flames last for 1 minute and don't set other things alight unless the ghost wishes. If the ghost uses this ability again, it dismisses any existing flames.



Pyre Ghost

### REVENANT

Not all ghosts try to possess the living. Some prefer to ride corpses instead, wrenching bodies from shallow graves to serve as their hosts.

**Revenant** ◆◆ or 1 hour; **Effect** The ghost possesses and transforms an adjacent corpse (this requires 2 actions if the ghost is possessing its own corpse; otherwise, it takes an hour). The possessed corpse uses the statistics of a non-incorporeal undead 2 levels lower than the ghost, and the ghost possesses it as if using the *possession* spell. The specific undead is determined by the nature of the ghost and the corpse—ghouls, wights, and dullahans are all common, but almost any undead is possible. If the ghost ceases to possess the corpse, the corporeal undead is immediately destroyed.

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