

# The Ghoul

You died, but something pulled you back, and now you cannot die again. Not so long as there is blood and meat to sustain you. Death has left its touch on you, making you colder, bolder... hungrier. You remember the person you used to be, but cannot find your way back to that time. Your heart beats again, but it feels like someone else's heart, full of foreign urges. Can you be something other than just another monster, lurking in the dark? Can you be more?

## History

Once, death was held as sacrosanct, a gate which could only be passed in one direction. With the demise of magic, taboos on the Dark Arts slackened one by one, and then fell away entirely as the laws of the old world failed for lack of any with the strength to enforce them. Necromancers tried to uphold the crumbling edifice of the old world with their black magic, and ultimately failed—but in the process their many works weakened death's grip on certain souls. Now, it is not certain that someone who has died cannot claw their way back. Those who do will certainly be changed by the journey.

## Origin

As a ghoul, you died and came back. Some ghouls are drawn back by dark magic, but many claw their way back to life by their own efforts. Here are some possibilities:

- You were cursed by the Dark Arts, which drew your soul back to your body after death. Perhaps you offended a powerful necromancer. Perhaps they thought they were doing you a favor. Now you are a stranger in your own skin, through no doing of your own.
- You didn't want to die. You went into the great beyond in an extremity of terror, with unfinished business: something to do, someone to protect, something to live for. Even as the final darkness closed about you, you kept fighting, and eventually, felt your heart lurch back into motion. But now you are different than what you were. How can you go on with the life that you fought so hard to keep?
- You died far from home, hearth, family, comfort. Maybe you lost those things along with your final breath. Maybe you lost them long ago. For you, death was a lonely place, unendurably lonely. That loneliness drove you back up—from beneath the soil, from beneath the waves, from beneath the shadow of death. But now the fellowship you craved awakens a terrible hunger. What will you do?
- You starved, alone and outcast in the dark. Your limbs grew weak, even as your body devoured itself in agony. In the end, you didn't have the strength to crawl another inch, to fight another day. But the hunger didn't end with death. It swallowed the rest of you. It drew you back. It drives you. It will drive you forever.
- Hate. Hate pulled you back. But even with the bastard's flesh hanging between your teeth, even once your rage finally began to abate, the hunger remained. Who now deserves your undying wrath?
- Something else—a tale of death, return, and oh, the hunger.

## Gender

Choose one:

Man, woman, ambiguous, or transgressing.

Gender has no impact your character's traits. While incognito, you may find both restrictions and opportunities set before you as a result of gender expectations. When your monstrous nature is known, it will be of much greater concern than your gender.

## Name

Select a cold name, a harsh name, an ugly name, or a short name. This is how others will know you in the long cold dark.

## Appearance

Choose one of the following:

- **Cold Beauty:** Death smoothed out your living imperfections during your brief sojourn in the final dark. You have the cold beauty of a classical statue, an inhuman perfection that attracts and chills in equal measure. Yours is clearly a predator's smile, but it draws people in regardless. It can't be anything else, can't do anything else. Natural warmth seems impossible now. Add +3 to rolls to attract, appeal, and seduce. Suffer -2 to attempts to go incognito, pass for someone else, or elicit empathy.

- **Death-Marked:** Anyone can see the mark of death on you at a glance. Perhaps you bear impossible, un-survivable scars from your demise. Perhaps your skin is stretched tight across your bones, giving you the seeming of a corpse. Perhaps you are still bloated from the waters where you drowned, or forever stained by the dirt of your grave. Your appearance unnerves, terrifies. You may not be obviously dangerous, but you are very clearly unnatural. Add +2 to rolls to intimidate, threaten, frighten, and unnerve others. Suffer -1 to attempts to appeal, seduce, blend in, or put people at ease.

- **Haggard:** Anyone can see that a great burden hangs about your shoulders, bowing you under its weight. Perhaps it's your haggard eyes. Perhaps it's your posture, hunger-wracked. Perhaps you died tired and old, and now you will be tired and old forever. Add +1 to rolls to elicit sympathy.

## Mysticism

Dark forces animate you, permitting and permeating your every breath. Though you are unschooled in magic proper, this gives you some instinctive facility with mystical interaction. Add +0 to attempts to enact rituals or operate magical devices.

## The Hunger

The hunger is always with you now. It's worse than that, really—it's every affliction the body can know. It's a gnawing emptiness in the pit of the stomach that can only temporarily be filled with meat. It's a sickness, an aching soreness of the mouth and throat, soothed only by the gush of blood. Its only mercy is that the hunger builds steadily, but slowly. You can sleep perhaps a dozen times before it becomes impossible to deny—less, if you didn't feast to bursting at your last meal.

Not all hungers are created equal. Choose one of the following to describe your own:

- Your hunger can only be soothed by meat, bloody and raw and fresh, but any meat will do. Animal meat only holds the hunger at bay for a day or so, however.

- Your hunger can only be quelled with human flesh, but freshness is no issue. You can consume the most noxious and rotten of corpses with no difficulty, although it only sates your hunger for half as long as fresh meat.

Once your hunger becomes irresistible, roll at +0 each day. On a miss, you *must* attempt to feed on the nearest source of viable meat. On a 7-9, you can make and execute a plan to sate your hunger, so long as it feeds you *today*, and you must execute that plan *immediately*. On a 10+, you can keep the hunger at bay until the following day.

## Details

Choose up to two of the following details for your character:

- **Sleep Like the Dead:** You know one way to avoid the gnawing pangs of the hunger. You can compose yourself as one of the dead—laying down on a bier, burying yourself in a shallow grave, slumping down on a charnel mound, curling up in a mausoleum—and then close your eyes and fall asleep. Within eight hours, you will take on the outwards aspect of a corpse, and you will cease to be aware of the torment of your hunger... though it will continue to intensify as you sleep, and may necessitate a roll to maintain control as soon as you awaken. You can sleep for as long as you desire, awakening at a time chosen in advance when you lay down and enter your deathly state. Harm will bring you up out of your slumber, as will the sound of human voices raised above a whisper. Your deathly, corpse-like appearance persists for an hour after you awaken.

- **Craftsman:** There's plenty of things an enterprising soul like yourself can make out of bones and sinew. You may use certain salvaged body parts after successful hunts to craft special items.

- **Untiring Hunter:** So long as you haven't sated your hunger in the last day, you may go without sleep or rest. Neglecting a day's rest counts as two days passing for the purpose of hunger buildup, though.

- **Graverobber:** You've... collected... a number of curious things in the course of satisfying your new condition. Select a second trinket.

- **Bloodhound:** You can unerringly follow the scent of anything, so long as it's bleeding.

- **Brain Eater:** When you eat someone's brain, you are seized with wracking, painful visions. You can ask the MC one of the following:

~What business did this person leave unfinished?

~What's the last thing this person saw?

~Who did this person care about most in the world, and why?

~Tell me one particular thing this person knew (such as where they hid a particular old book).

- **Corpse Ogre:** When you gorge yourself to fullness on human flesh, you can opt *not* to relieve your growing hunger, instead drawing hideous strength from your meal. Your body becomes hideously swelled and twisted with power, and for the next several hours, you gain +1 to all rolls to accomplish feats of raw physical prowess such as lifting objects or smashing down doors, and add 1 to the harm of the first attack you manage to connect with on each turn in battle.

- **Mystic:** You had some training or at least an academic curiosity in the intricacies of magic before your demise. Mysticism rolls occur at +1 rather than the usual +0.

- **False Dignity:** Perhaps it's the power of denial, or perhaps a boon carried up from the abyss, but your abominable acts leave no physical mark on you. You never need to worry about becoming fouled or streaked with grave-dirt, blood, or the stink of rotting flesh in the course of your meals.

## Method of Murder

A ghoul will eventually kill to live. Even if you haven't done so yet, you must have some means by which to separate meat from bone. Your hunger demands it. Select one weapon from the list below:

- A wickedly curved blade. This allows for one attack on your turn at +2, inflicting 3 harm.
- A pair of sharpened bones. These allow for two attacks on your turn at +2, inflicting 2 harm each.
- A brace of throwing knives. This allows for two attacks on your turn at out to *medium* range at +2, inflicting 1 harm each. You are considered to have enough knives to last out a fight.

In addition to the weapon you selected, gain the following:

- Fangs and claws. You have razor-sharp claws and a mouth full of serrated fangs which may be deployed or banished at will. These allow for three attacks on your turn at +3, inflicting 1 harm each.

You are considered to have access to both your claws and fangs as well as your other weapon at all times during battle, and need take no special action to switch between them, though you may still only attack with one weapon per turn.

## Movement

When in battle, you have a base movement of one range band per round. You can take this movement before or after acting.

## Defense

You already died once, and do not know if you can even do so again. This makes you careless of your safety. Add +1 to rolls to defend.

## Intimacy

When you share a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, you may exempt them from your next hunger roll. If there is no other possible source of meat, you will flee blindly into the dark to avoid attacking them. This clemency is only valid until it kicks in to protect them once; after that, they go back on the menu unless there is a new moment of intimacy to renew the protection.

## Trinket

In your journeys through the endless night, you may have come across an interesting curio. Select one of the choices below to begin the game with.

- **Dragon Hatchling's Fang:** This incredibly old, curved, semi-transparent fang is the size and shape of a crooked finger. It glows from within with a steady orange-yellow light, and may be used to illuminate a small area. If its tip is pressed against a surface, that point will eventually ignite after a few moments.

- **Pyrosphere (x3):** A weapon of the old world, this brass-and-crystal sphere contains within it the volatile essence of fire. It may be used as a weapon, consisting of a single attack at +0 out to *medium* range, and inflicting 5 harm as it shatters and bursts into a brief fury of flames. After one use, the weapon is rendered useless forevermore. Most assume these to have been wizard-forged, but they are in fact a product of the industry of devils.
- **Old Shield:** A battered old shield, bearing the faded heraldry of a long-dead kingdom. Requires the use of a hand in battle. Up to three points of harm may be negated by use of this shield; this negation doesn't have to happen all at once. Once three harm have been blocked, the old shield shatters into useless fragments.
- **Ephemeral Ichor (x5):** A thin vial containing a faintly luminous blue-white slime, which fades in and out of visibility periodically. Tastes incredibly vile if consumed, but renders the imbiber almost completely invisible while not moving for several minutes afterwards. Said to have been carried inland from a haunted shore village.
- **Old Sorcerer-King's Bone:** A femur said to have belonged to one of the sorcerer-kings of old. It is no different than the bone of any other man.
- **Executioner's Gloves:** Black elbow-length gloves made of some heavy, leathery substance. Tradition holds that deeds performed by hands clad in these gloves are invisible to the eyes of death, but no one has ever proved that death judges what it sees in the first place.
- **Nothing:** You carry nothing with you but the hunger. That, you cannot escape.

## Death Moves

When your death clock reaches midnight, choose one:

- Become *badly wounded* and erase all harm. You suffer -1 to all actions, and remain *badly wounded* until you have a period to rest and recover in safety, or are otherwise healed of the condition. You can't choose this option if you are already *badly wounded*.
- Become *feral* and erase all harm. You have no other priorities until you have sated your hunger by gorging until you are fit to burst, as though you missed a hunger roll. You will attack whatever is closest in pursuit of fresh meat, whether that is a monster or an ally, although Intimacy exemptions still apply. If both an enemy and an ally are equally close, roll at +0. On a miss, attack an ally. On a 7+, attack your enemy. You can't choose this option if you are already *feral*.
- You die. Roll at +3. On a miss, you are truly dead. On a 7-9, you come back some time later, in a *feral* state as described above. On a 10+, you come back some time later.

## Savagery

You may select one of the following features of your cursed existence:

### Blood Feast

When inflicting harm on a 10+ at *close* range, add 1 additional harm and erase 1 harm from your death clock as you dart in to tear loose a chunk of flesh with your teeth. This is only applicable if harming something with flesh.

### Blood Riot

Once per hunt, you may give up your movement to act a second time on your turn.

## Grace of the Grave

You find it easy to skitter away from lunging attacks and speeding projectiles. When an enemy begins its attack from *medium* or *long* range, defend at +3 rather than +1.

## The Swift Dead

You came back from the grave swift as a scream, capable of closing ground with your prey in the blink of an eye. Every other turn, you may move 1 extra range band. While *feral*, you enjoy this benefit on every turn.

## Rip and Rend

When attacking with your claws and fangs, if all three attacks inflict harm, you may make a fourth attack. If this attack draws a trap card, it does not negate the previous attacks.

## Blood-Starved Beast

When you roll at least one 12+ on an attack with your fangs and claws on your turn against a living enemy, then at the end of the turn your enemy is left *bleeding*; the next time they suffer harm, the harm is increased by 2.

## Howling Hunger

While *feral*, you get an extra turn at the beginning of every round, immediately before the monster's turn.

## Skitter

Once per battle, you may instantly recover from being *knocked down* without losing your movement. This benefit is *always* active while you are *feral*.

## Riding the Wave

When you are *feral* and must roll to determine who to target, roll at +2 rather than +0.

## Back Away

Once per hunt, when you draw a trap card, reduce the harm suffered by 2.