

AS THE SPIRITS MOVE



being a compilation of the restless dead
their works and relics
and those who truck with them

O1
PALESLIVER GATES

The fearful say there's only one Palesliver Gate.
The fearful are fools.

Any door, any arch, any crossroads—any verge
between one place and the next—may Gate when
the passage is right.

The shadow of iron-briar leaves opening flickers
over, and

between breaths

the next step carries you to the still lands
beyond all life.

To call the Gate, they say, touch bone or mourn-
cloth or true grief to the threshold and walk
without turning back.



02
SIR MICHEL

Whatever these shattered walls once were, one
thing remains:

A greatsword, plunged deep into one crumbling
wall.

A murmur, if touched:
Do not free me. A price is paid.

Freeing the sword frees its captive—and Sir
Michel does not come gently.
A black-bone knight in shattered steel, keening
for loss of honour, pride, the chance to repent,
he is relentless in his wrath.

If Michel is put to rest, the blade gleams, now
proof against the fallen.



03 SOULFIRE

“Oh sweetie, now, don’t back out.
“This is what you wanted, remember?
“Did you think you’d make them feel your pain
all on your own?”

Of course. All is unjust. But it will be worth it.
You just need to do it once.

Just once.

The luminous wisps of the trapped ghost have
weight as you swallow them.

It feels strange.
But that’s fine.

Until the ghost fades, that fluttering glow
will wrap your spells in truly grave torments
when they strike.



04
THE FROZEN

There are lost ones out there.

Sometimes they scratch at the windows and tap at
the door, softly, insistently,
like snowfall against glass.

Sometimes they howl in fury, a storm of thwarted
life and endless terror.

Sometimes they merely drift just out of sight,
a moment's wistfulness for what could have been.

No matter their form, do not respond.
Nothing you can offer can warm them now.

But they will ask it of you, oh yes.

Please

It is so cold



THE LADY IN GREEN

Through new-sown fields walks
the Lady in Green.

She nods in greeting if you call, but doesn't stop
for you; the living are not her concern.

The Lady walks to see the crops prepared—and
the bloodgift doing their work.

Fields that pass her test grow well,
life sprung from death.

A cry of neglect from the soil
brings down her wrath in famine.

The Green Lady, they say, was the first.

Perhaps that's why the leaves in her hair are red.



06
JOYEUSE

In sunshine and warmth, who wants to think of
lost ones?

Some do. With all their heart.
As do the dead.

Sometimes you just want to reach out—from
either side—somehow.

That's where the Veil works.

Joyeuse is one of them, a youth with an easy
smile and a quick cold blade and a satchel sealed
up close.

Letter for a loved one? Warning? A moment's
glimpse, veil parted? Joyeuse can arrange it.

And don't try to nick his satchel. Bad idea, that.



07
HUNT-HEART

Do not be greedy, nor wasteful, nor cruel
when the leaves turn and the hunt begins.

Take what you need, and do so as swiftly, as
cleanly as you can.

A swift end, delivered without malice.
And thankfulness, in necessity, for what they
render unto you.

Else you may find yourself stalked
by your own prey—bone and chill wind
and withering relentlessness,
they have nothing to fear from you now.

And they will hunt you to the ends of the earth.



WANDERING STONE

No one knows who moves the Wandering Stone.
A generous spirit or two,
or itinerant devotees, or even the Veil.

It doesn't matter. It's there; that's important.

The Stone is towering, pitted with niches;
a broad dolmen strung with ribbons, paper
ornaments and cloth streamers, its niches filled
with cakes, notes, old toys, flowers, carvings.

A place to leave things for those with no name,
no grave-place.

Many grateful dead follow in its wake.



ROYAL EDGE

It is royal, yes; the ancient crest, with crown
above, is yet visible on the dagger's worn blade.

And worn indeed, from blade to the browning
ivory of its grip to the faintly greening copper
rivets holding all in place.

Draw your blood with it
and she appears in milky mist, half-armoured,
wry smile on her colourless lips.

Royal Edge claims a year from your blood;
but that is enough for the Ember Sage Prince
to answer your call for one night.



10

THE BONE GARDEN

Once upon a time there was a gardener whose joy
was a magnificent mazy path of tenderly shaped
cherries and lovingly trimmed roses.

Folks came from all the land to wander the
twisting paths and lose themselves in the arching
boughs and dizzying blooms.

Then came conquest, and death. The garden,
blood-soaked, was torched.

The next new moon it rose again, a labyrinth of
bloodwood and bone.

The gardener walks its paths, wailing.

Will you enter?



RAVEN'S CHARGE

Without warning, on moonless nights, a sudden rising thunder of defiant shouting—and in an eyeblink the road, the meadow, the courtyard is filled with the spectres of fighting soldiers.

Another blink—
Taillevent, Raven Knight, leads his dead cavalry through the living and dead in a hopeless, wheeling charge.

It doesn't matter.
The Raven still takes an arrow in the throat.

An endless cycle.

Unless one can reach the Raven Knight, and...



12

LILY & MARIA

Lily walks the roads, searching for her sister
Maria.

She's quite alive; no fainting maiden, either, she
wears a sturdy leather jack and carries a wicker
pack and a stout staff bound in iron.

Maria is with her when night falls, a faint
silhouette of pale shadow.

It's Maria's bones that Lily searches for along
the roads, in gutter, canal and brook—
and any aid is gratefully accepted by both sisters,
favours promised in return, alive or dead.



13

RED OCHRE HILL

Red Ochre Hill isn't a hill at all, they say.

True, it's covered in grass, topped with birches,
and the like. But once, too long ago, it wasn't.

Dig into the Hill and come away with blood-red
sticky ochre and clinging clay, oddly pearly,
unearthly and warm.

Dig in the right places and find veins of crystal
pebbles in shattered chalk.

Taste the latter and hear eternal whispers,
but be healed—

The last a dead god, they say, can do for mortals.



14
PILLAR OF VICTORY

Victory is declared by whoever lasts;
never more poisonously, ironically true than the
reign—brief as it was—of Roland II.

King Ironsoul, so-called, put his rivals (and there
were many) to the sword; in victory having a
great bone pillar, faced with their skulls, erected
in his court as a reminder, a message to all.

A year and a day, and the king disappeared.

The castle collapsed; the Pillar yet stands.

Now they only wait to be freed.



LIAM MANY-HANDED

It's not easy, being a mediocre mage, a piddling necromancer at best; at least, that's what Liam believed, until his midnight cordial-fueled revelation.

Those corpses don't need their hands anyway.

Now Liam has a legion of scuttling bony "help", and he's doing better with petty theft and creeping spookery than he ever did casting spells for hire.

What he doesn't know, is what his last "donor" was—or what his boneclaws do when he's asleep.



16

MOORE CASTLE

It fell centuries ago, if it ever stood—there are
those who doubt the Castle ever was. They call
the ballads fairytales, the histories fancies
penned by romantic scribes.

But then who is it thronging like armoured
moonlight
in a phantom castle
for three nights at the turn of the year?

Who are the shades offering honour and glory
to any who accept their quests
to bring new favour to a fallen land?

And—
the Castle fades, but tokens do not—



17
THE CAVE MAN

He's been waiting a very long time.

So long, his shade looks like no one who lives
near this dark cold cavern;
not for centuries, millennia, more.

But he's still waiting.

Waiting for someone to climb down, down...

Past the skulls far larger than any wolf in
memory.

To the place where his bones, and shell palettes,
and fur brushes, rest on the clay.

Waiting for someone to finish the painting of
deer, of horses, guided by old cold hands.



18
HENRY

Henry is a duck.

Henry...was a duck?

No duck should live—could live—as long as
Henry.
If Henry is alive. And that part is highly dubious.

Some folks, spooked to their bones, say Henry
has eight round beady eyes on one side.
Some folks say you can see straight through him.

Everyone says he quacks like a human laughs,
like a madman laughs.

He likes to follow folks around...
And you never see him arrive.

Maybe Henry wasn't always a duck?



19

BINDING MIRROR

Oh, it's not what it sounds like; no restless dead
is pinned or trapped by the Mirror.

It's more useful and more dangerous than that.

Hold your Mirror up, see the spectre in its face;
see the slender shackles of longing, silver and
rose and blood and black, writhing around them?

Look, until the Mirror shows you exactly what it
is that keeps the spirit from rest—

Of course, a secret is a secret.
The shade may not appreciate the intrusion.



SPIRITIST'S NET

It looks like silk gauze while it's folded, so fine it
could be drawn through a finger-ring.

In truth it's even finer, fine as spider silk once
unfurled, and nearly as difficult to see.

Spread across a doorway or any surface, it can
hardly be detected.

A drop of blood renders it nonexistent for all but
the donor—and wandering spirits, who leave
dewdrops of plasm behind as they pass.

A way to identify shades?
A way to glean their power?

Yes.



BELLS OF THE DEAD

The chiming of bells drives away the dead,
the story goes.
And, it's true enough – but what many stories
don't say is how it can't be any old bell.

An iron bell repels the passion-bound.
A silver bell, the malicious dead;
a golden one the lost and wandering;
a bronze those looking to possess a living host.
A wooden bell, echoing and hollow, to drive off
the haunts of animals.

A crystal bell will call the departed to you like a
gentle beacon.



THE VOICELESS DEPARTED

It's not always strange gates, crossroad slips or
bloodied ceremony.

Sometimes, all that's needed is the right place,
the right time, and to want it enough—and the
dead can reach out to the living without calamity.

But it's not perfect.

Even if they can see each other, even if there's a
shiver of sensation as spirit touches flesh, no
sound can pass between them.

A safe meeting, unaided, for both sides;
imperfect, but it can exist.



LADY ROSE

For her first century, Rose was a monster.
She justified it with her own grisly death,
her dishonoured burial,
her horrible freedom from it—
none of which changed the horrors she caused in
turn.

For her second century, Rose was a bloodstained
penitent, learning control.
She walked away from hermitage
with a wise dead heart and tempered hunger.

For a century, now, Lady Rose is a dire guardian.
A single drink is all she asks of her supplicants.



24

THE GHOST HOWLER

Whether wolf or man or beast between
it's always the same.

He stalks roads and hallways, forests and farms,
market squares and city blocks,
a snarling, howling tangle
of agony and rending fangs.

Only the silver spike
thrust through his buried ribcage
keeps him from hunting across the entire land.

And destroying those bones will not end him.

Only returning his pelt,
flensed from him with silver and spite,
will put an end to his rage.



25
MRS. DAWN

This time it'll work. This time for sure.

Every new moon, that's what she's said to herself, to her workrooms, to the new corpse laid out neatly on a marble table while she worked feverishly.

But this time—
Alas, no. Not this time.

The dead rise; but not with new life.
And a restless soul trapped in dead flesh was not what she wanted.

Another new moon wasted.
She sighs and lifts a holy blade to end yet another experiment.

Next time.



THE TINY ONES

Not every ghost and haunt and spectre brings
great harm, or takes over one's body, or pines
from a mirror's reflection.

Honestly, most of the dead have nowhere near
such power, for good or for ill.

So they do what they can,
the best way they can.

A shiver of coolness against hot skin.

A knife skitters concerningly across the table.

Candles flutter when they shouldn't,
in answer to whispers of fear or hope.

Faint nudges from unseen souls.



PEONY

“Why, certainly.
“You’ve come all this way, after all.”

Peony’s tiny cottage at the end of the twisting
paths is no prime travel destination;
so if someone is at his door, he pushes grey curls
from his face and gets up to greet them.

And Peony has what they come for:
philtre to speak with spirits?
incense with afterlife visions in its smoke?
Bone-knives?

Yes, yes. All of that, for a favour or a kiss.

But if malice is afoot, he knows;
and taints his gift.



BLOODY TEARS

The origin of these deep crimson gems is unknown—are they a spectre’s crystallized trauma, the tears of a truly grieving vampire, the congealed mourning of those who lost their most-beloved? All? None?

Impossible to say.

Three things:

They cannot be faceted nor carved.

Owners of a Tear say they bring a gentle ennui that sustains one through one’s own pain.

The unliving will not harm one who carries a Tear.

Rumours of curses are unverified.



29
THE DOVES

There's a wandering hunter
who answers to Dove.
He's been around a long time, never aging.

Dove comes to the market square at evening-
time with a brace of birds or other such, trades
for small sundries.
He'll help if you ask him.
Quiet, not wild.

Except when his eyes burn bright and pale and
he shies from the graveyard.

He'll still help. Bloodier help, then.

And say it's the other Dove who's too gentle for
the work, and that was the end of him.



30
DEAD-KINDLING

The dead are tied to the living world.
And that tie is a weakness—
But not as much as being forgotten.

To truly be rid of the dead?

Purge them. Tear down their monuments.
Burn their works, their images, their name
into ash.

Listen to the pitiless sounds of destruction;
know that for every single one
there's a wail of despair on the other side.

The second death's not pretty.

And you, you'll be remembered by others for it.

Don't you worry.



THE EBON SERAPH'S BOOK

It's the work of a dozen lives—or an exemplar
created by a cold hand under duress.
Or neither.

The Ebon Seraph's Book—though that title is
not found on it—is a tome of deepest black,
both cover and pages,
its delicate notations in bone-white
and crimson and silver.

Boneservants?
Vampire alchemy?
Becoming a living ghost?
Spells of blasphemy nestled next to purity?
All here.

Just a drop of blood on the clasp.
There you go.



2023 E. A. Bisson
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