Weekly Wonders

Antinished Business

Alex Riggs, Joshua Zaback

ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

Designers

Alex Riggs, Joshua Zaback

Editor

Rosa Gibbons



Necromancers of the Northwest, LLC 8123 236th St SW, Unit 102 Edmonds, WA, 98026 www.necromancers-online.com

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Introduction

Ghosts have long captured the imagination of the living, making for some of humanity's most compelling monsters. Part of what makes ghosts so compelling is that each one is different, keeping ghost stories fresh and imaginative throughout the ages. In the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game, it is easy to simulate ghosts with a wide variety of potent and fascinating powers to provide unique challenges, but once the stats are figured out, it can be tricky to create a fun and compelling ghost to go along with your mechanical masterpiece. Unfinished Business seeks to address this challenge by providing you with five fun, fantasy-themed ghost stories, ready to be adapted to suit your individual needs. These unique tales provide you with everything you need to create your own compelling ghost story, with detailed backgrounds and information on how to put the ghost in question to rest. We leave the rest up to you, allowing you to create customized challenges that suit your group's individual needs in order to provide a rich and rewarding play experience at any level.

Brandon Gordon, the Father

Background: The Gordon family was never rich, or even particularly prominent, but they always had success in small ways and had far more happy days than unhappy ones. They stuck together through any trials that came their way, and through many generations, the parents invested in their children, helping them to succeed and showing them the bonds of family could never be broken. Jerome Gordon was no exception; though an only child, he had many friends in his early days and was regarded by the community as a kind, though perhaps unexceptional, boy. That all changed for him when a plague came to the countryside. This plague was not as bad as some had been in the past, and though many were sick and some confined to bed for some time, only two of the villagers died: Jerome's parents, Brandon and Eva Gordon. But the Gordons looked out for one another, and Brandon Gordon's love for his son was too great a thing for death to keep at bay. So it came to pass that Brandon would haunt his son, looking out for him for so long as he lived.

Ghostly Activities: While he remained behind with the very best of intentions, Brandon Gordon quickly fell victim to the taint of death and grew to be both dangerous and cruel. Like his father before him, Brandon wanted nothing more than to see his son succeed in his every endeavor, but unlike his own father, Brandon could do more than simply offer encouragement or talk to other parents, having greater power to help his son and keep him on the track for success.

It started small enough, with just a little subtle influence here and there to keep things on the right track for Jerome. A quiet whisper with the right answer to a question, a little advanced knowledge about where the best hunting spot would be, a little ghostly assistance in taking down a deer or in doing his chores. And for a time, all was well: Jerome loved his father dearly and having his ghost around when he had thought he was lost forever seemed a blessing. As time went on, however, things slowly began to change. The village's sympathy for the boy who lost his parents eventually faded, and as Jerome's almost supernatural knowledge became more noticeable and began to raise suspicions, he grew increasingly more withdrawn and scorned by the village. This enraged his father, who began to inflict harm on those who would threaten his son's happiness.

Again, it started small; maybe a bully would fall down on his face for no reason, or perhaps one of his son's detractors would have their sheep let loose. But it quickly escalated as these strange occurrences became linked to Jerome and caused villagers to fear him, and isolation became persecution. Coupled with the fact that Jerome, who was a nice boy at heart, wouldn't do anything about the attacks on his character, Brandon felt he had to act. He grew violent and horrifying, appearing as a horrible demonic spectre when Jerome wasn't around, frightening his detractors and demanding that they treat his son better. When the villagers responded with fear and anger instead of blind acquiescence, Brandon kill them in cold blood, and soon the village became a pile of bodies.

When Jerome learned the truth of what his father had done, he became hysterical, demanding that his father go, but Brandon wouldn't have it. Telling his son that he knew best, he used his otherworldly powers to strip Jerome's memories of what had happened, and, possessing the boy's body, moved him to another community. However, Brandon was unable to amend his ways and became ever quicker to resort to violence as a way to solve his son's problems, so that it was not long before Jerome's new home became like his old one. So things have continued for some time, and now Brandon will kill at the slightest criticism of his son, who has gained some awareness of his father's activities and so tries his best not to let him hurt anyone, being as much a victims of his father's twisted love as those who taste his wrath.

Lay to Rest: In order to lay Brandon's sprit to rest it must be proved to him that Jerome no longer needs him. Unfortunately this cannot be accomplished by merely having Jerome tell him so; Brandon will view such a statement as the result of the coercion or manipulation of his beloved son, and will almost certainly react violently. Rather, Jerome must perform a suitably impressive act in order to convince his father to leave him alone and pass on to the afterlife.

Carmen Spana, Thief of Hordes

Background: In a time nearly forgotten, when mankind was still new and witches ruled over the budding humanity, there lived a pair of sisters, Carmen and Isobel Spana, who were said to be more beautiful and more skilled than any others. A cruel hag, who was a queen among witches, heard tales of the sisters' great skill and cunning and decided to test them. She challenged the sisters to a contest of throwing stones and Isobel, being more skilled and bolder than her sister, eagerly accepted. The hag queen cheated, however, and Isobel lost. As was tradition, the victor claimed a prize from the loser, but the hag stole Isobel's soul and placed it within a black sapphire. Horrified at what had befallen her sister, Carmen offered the witch anything she liked if she would return Isobel's soul. The hag had a great lust for wealth and demanded a great ransom in gold from Carmen, who could not possibly afford to pay. Still, Carmen would see her sister set free, whatever the cost, and set out to secure the ransom. In those days, such wealth as the witch demanded could only be found in one place: in the hordes of the great dragons who laughed at lesser beings. So Carmen travelled to the lair of a mighty dragon, whose wealth was legendary, and who she believed might be able to spare a part of his treasure for this ransom.

Unfortunately, as is often the case with dragons, the great wyrm found Carmen's request to be laughable, and he killed her merely for the inconvenience of her question. It was need that drove Carmen to persevere, vowing in the moment of death that her soul would not pass on while her sister's was forced to linger, and she has been attempting to secure her sister's ransom ever since.

Ghostly Activities: Carmen's dying wish was to secure her sister's ransom, and so the shade of Carmen appears wherever great wealth is amassed. Cruelly, for many thousands of years, the only being who commanded such wealth as Carmen required were dragons, and over and over again her ghost was destroyed by dragon-fire. Still, her spirit persisted in its aim, returning for the treasure she sought. Over time, however, Carmen lost sight of her true goal, and like the dragons she so frequently faced, began to simply desire wealth. Madness and hatred began to set in, and an insatiable desire to possess overwhelmed her.

As time wore on, large vaults of treasure were collected by creatures other than dragons, and Carmen began to haunt ancient tombs and the vaults of kings, defending her vaults violently and demanding that visitors add to her ever-growing hordes. Eventually, some hero or another would always come seeking her riches and defeat her, forcing her to flee to some other treasure horde. Though she hates and fears dragons, Carmen especially lusts after dragon gold, and those who possess such a treasure would do well to protect it carefully, lest they find it claimed by her terrible ghost.

Lay to Rest: Carmen can no longer pay the ransom on her sister, as the hag queen who stole her soul is long dead. Further, Isobel's soul was set free thousands of years in the past; ironically, she was freed when a marauding dragon destroyed the gem while terrorizing the countryside. Thus, to lay Carmen to rest, one must prove to her that her sister's soul is free. This is a difficult process, even for those who have the means to conjure sprits from beyond or return the dead to life, not because Carmen is difficult to convince, but because she no longer remembers why she lusts for gold. In addition, because she lived so long ago, information about Carmen's past is hard to come by. Carmen does count as a legendary figure for the purposes of a legend lore spell, which is sufficient to reveal information about her past and may provide some insight into laying her to rest. Additionally, a successful Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (religion) checks reveals that Carmen is attracted to treasure, and that the figure of Carmen is well known among red dragons; any red dragon that is a young adult or older can provide a full and detailed account of Carmen and her exploits while alive and dead.

Lanhua, the Drowned One

Background: It was a dark night, and, as it so often is in the far north's turbulent seas, frigidly cold and perilously stormy. A large passenger ship, the False Oath, was being pitched about the waves amid a particularly rough squall, with her masts broken and her crew being flung about deck. Luckily, the False Oath was skillfully captained and masterfully crewed, and with diligence of those aboard, she eventually heaved her way near to a small rocky island, the only beacon of hope among a wrathful and all-encompassing hell. Though it was far from safe, the captain ordered everyone aboard to abandon ship, taking to the plentiful lifeboats meant to weather storms such as this. Though many feared the short trip in hellish water, staying aboard the False Oath meant certain death, as the shop had cracked and was pitched upon the rocks. All were terrified, but none so much as Lanhua, an 8-year-old girl traveling with her parents.

As the storm reached its zenith and time was running out, she stood trembling, frozen with fear, just a few short steps from her father's outstretched hands as he urged her forward. As it became clear to Lanhua's father that she wasn't moving, he tried to go back for her, but at that moment lighting struck, blinding Lanhua and dropping the boat into the raging seas. It was there, standing on the deck, that this petrified little girl, quivering with fear, fully gave in to despair. Her parents were gone and she was alone on a sinking ship. As the waters reached up to take her, some say Lanhua was drowned not by roaring waves, but by her own tears. The emotion of the moment, the horror of this tragedy, did not end there, however, and over and over again during stormy nights out at sea Lanhua's last horrible day plays out over and over again.

Ghostly Activities: Lanhua's death transformed a helpless little girl into one of the world's most powerful ghosts. She is responsible for a fair share of the world's ghost ship myths, and her tragic end plays out again and again on turbulent seas. Whenever the storms rage, somewhere the ghostly remains of the *False Oath* arise from the depths, its skeletal frame obviously damaged beyond seaworthiness although she sits still and solid among even the worst of squalls. It is this promise of apparent safety that draws even the wariest of sailors away from their own doomed vessels and on to that dread ship.

Once aboard the *False Oath*, even the hardiest of seamen are overwhelmed with fear, as despair reigns over its decks. Skeletons man the ship—the remains of sailors who died at sea or who were killed by Lanhua. While many assume these to be the worst of the ship's hauntings, occasionally the misery which causes Lanhua to manifest brings other undead horrors which lust for the death of the living. Lanhua has no control over these creatures, and unlike her skeleton crew, they can prove highly aggressive.

Lanhua herself can be found on the deck, crying, appearing to be alive and in need of help. She always claims to be a passenger or stowaway from whatever vessel boarders are from. She says she lost her parents and, moaning of being afraid, begs the crewmen to stay with her, especially latching onto whoever appears to be the strongest of the group. For a while, things appear as normal as they can on a ghost ship in the middle of a raging storm, but as the storm nears its end, just as it seems to be clearing, Lanhua tells those with her that the ship is doomed, and it immediately begins to sink. Any attempt to leave the sinking ghost vessel enrages Lanhua, who has become quite powerful in the time since her death. She screams that the crew promised to stay with her; she howls that they don't care, that no one cares. She soon turns her skeletal minions on her foes, as well as conjuring servants from the waters, calling lighting from the storm to strike those aboard her ship. It takes about an hour for the False Oath to fully sink, and Lanhua continues to commit these and other hostile deeds during this time to ensure that the refugees will stay with her: if not in life, then in death During these moments, Lanhua is clearly not a living creature anymore, with the translucent flesh of the drowned and tears of acidic blood streaming down her face, the skin slowly peeling away to reveal barnacle encrusted bones.

Those who do make it off the vessel might survive the hour-long tirade, though sharks, water elementals, and other murderous denizens of the deep tend to frequent the seas near the sinking *False Oath*. Few have lived to tell the tale of the *False Oath*, and most who do describe Lanhua as more terrible than she first appeared and often describe her as older. Some schools of thought believe that it was survivors of Lanhua's terror that led to the myth that women are bad luck on a ship.

Lay To Rest: Lanhua has deep abandonment issues and can only be laid to rest by an act of perfect compassion and loyalty. Nothing short of agreeing to stay with Lanhua while the ship sinks and then going under the waves with her while making no attempt to leave will suffice. Of course, this poses its own risks, as once Lanhua is submerged underwater, her spirit remains for 3 minutes, the time it took for the child to drown—and the seas are filled with peril in the aftermath of a storm.

Larzo Pundi, the Mad Wizard

Background: Larzo was once the royal wizard of the semi-mythical "Beast King," whose name has long been lost to history. Larzo rose to his rank in the usual fashion; though he was a capable mage, he was far from the best caster in the kingdom, but through sheer bluster and shrewd politics, he overcame his rivals for the job. In the beginning, Larzo enjoyed his royally appointed position and performed his tasks admirably and in comfort, always adding a little flair to demonstrate to his lord that he was truly a great and worthy wizard. As time passed, however, the Beast King grew ever more fearful of his own demise, great as he was. Knowing he had a great wizard at his disposal, he commanded Larzo to perform a task which was far beyond his talents: to halt the progress of time.

Larzo tried to explain that such a thing was beyond any wizard, no matter how great, but the king was determined, threatening that if Larzo did not find an answer, he would be put to death and the king would find another to perform the deed. Thus, Larzo began to use potent divinations and ancient rituals, seeking to gain the knowledge possessed only by the gods and such outer forces with which he knew how to commune. Startlingly, he found he was making progress, and he reported to the king that a solution was close at hand.

One of the Beast King's sons overheard that the court wizard would soon make his father immortal, and in a moment of fear and weakness, he had poor Larzo poisoned and his lab destroyed. Of course, Larzo feared the Beast King's wrath more than he cared about his own demise, and he continued to work on his spell as a ghost, though with his equipment and spellbook ruined, progress soon halted. When he went to tell the king this, he found that he couldn't leave his lab, now a burnt-out husk on the outskirts of the royal compound. The Beast King eventually succumbed to the ravages of time, and his murderous son rose to power.

Having heard tales from a cleanup crew that the old laboratory was haunted, the newly crowned king became fearful, believing that the wizard had remained behind to have him slain. After consulting with his own magical advisor, the lab was disassembled by magic and scattered to the four winds. Even this did not truly rid the world of Larzo's presence, however, and to this day his spirit still remains tied to the dusty and age-withered remains of his lab.

Ghostly Activities: Larzo haunts pieces of his lab, his spirit having been partially dispersed across an old chalkboard, a rusty astrolabe, and a chipped vial or two. When manifesting, his spirit does not remain divided, and he is able to rejuvenate at any piece of his lab, should his current anchor be found and destroyed. Typically, Larzo manifests in academic settings or whenever an object he is bound to is held by someone of great learning. In fact, many of the tales of ghosts haunting universities and the like can be attributed to Larzo.

As a ghost, Larzo can be considered to be relatively harmless most of the time, though he does cause his fair share of frosted-over windows, and his presence occasionally causes minor haunts to accrue in and around where he works. Left to his own devices, Larzo endlessly toils, working hopelessly on the spell to halt aging. Over time, he grows frustrated with his lack of progress and worries over the wrath of the—now long dead—Beast King. This pressure tends to manifest in erratic, emotional, and generally dangerous behavior, as he destroys his work spaces, terrorizes passersby for not being to help him, or calling on outer beings for help, only to unleash these otherworldly monsters on an innocent population.

When confronted, however, Larzo is quite friendly, if a little unstable, and is happy to both explain what he is doing and share his vast knowledge of the inscrutable. He will often enlist the aid of any adventurer inclined to seek out lost invocations or bits of mystical formulae, or to contact outer beings in order to find pieces of the puzzle. A character sufficiently versed in magical workings can plainly see that the formulae and incantations that that Larzo is working on aren't what he says they are. In fact, unknown to Larzo, he has been working on a way to send his eternally trapped soul to the afterlife. Informing Larzo of this or offering to help send him along is a sure way to turn him violent. He screams out in a heinous voice, completely unlike his normal tone, that he will never betray the Beast King; unleashing torrents



of magic and ghostly powers in a reckless onslaught, he will attempt to kill his would-be rescuers, likely also destroying himself and his research in the process.

Lay to Rest: In order to send Larzo on to his appointed place in the afterlife, one can complete the spell he is working on; fortunately, it is nearly finished and requires only a few pieces of the puzzle. Characters ignorant of what the spell does are treated to the knowledge as Larzo completes the lengthy invocation and graciously thanks them for their part. However, his happiness at departing is soon replaced by horror as mystical whispers and the dark hands of his otherworldly servants reach out and drag his soul to the places beyond reality.

Another option for laying Larzo to rest involves completing his mission of stopping the living Beast King from aging. However, a simple *resurrection* spell is insufficient to return the Beast King to life, as in death he has ascended to the rank of demigod. Research into the Beast King reveals this information, as well as that his divine realm can be reached through ancient rituals. While the rituals are obscure, a *legend lore* spell can discover them, though most characters will find it easier to simply ask Larzo, who is well versed with the ritual they seek. The Beast King's divine realm is magnificent, and upon entering, characters are summoned before his golden throne. The Beast King himself is moved by Larzo's devotion and consents to be returned to life that they may guide the wizard to the afterlife. With the Beast King in their midst, characters must still convince Larzo that there is a way to keep him forever young; this requires either a fake ritual or spell and good acting on the part of the "casters" (after all, the Beast King is an immortal god and cannot age), or that magic such as *sequester* or *temporal stasis* be employed. Should they succeed in their task, the Beast King carries Larzo's spirit with him back to his divine realm, that the wizard might serve him in death as he did in life. Further, the Beast King will reward those participants handsomely, grateful for their aid in returning his servant to him.

Margret Rose, the Bloody Lady

Background: Lady Margret Rose was born the first daughter of a wealthy merchant noble, living on the border of two prominent kingdoms and beholden to two thrones. A true beauty, Margret was the belle of both kingdoms in her youth and had no shortage of suitors showering her with lavish gifts and endless affection. Unable to make up her mind which of these fine men to marry, she rejected suitor after suitor for many years, watching as ever more worthy men took up the challenge to win the heart of the beautiful Margret Rose. As she grew older, Margret was only ever more adored, and at the height of her popularity, was turning away dozens of suitors each day. The practice became as a game to her, no longer really interested in finding a mate, but simply enjoying watching these proud and noble men flounder about in hopes of securing her favor.

It wasn't until her late twenties, well past the normal age for a lady's marriage in her homeland, that she fell deeply and hopelessly in love with a man she had never met: a great knight from a far and foreign land whose deeds earned him the love of a lady he never knew. This knight, in search of lands of his own, decided to settle near the lands of the great Rose family. Neither king would grant the knight land of his own for fear that the other would assume it was an act against him, and so each advised that the knight marry into a family, such as the Rose family. Eager for his own holdings, he set off to do just that, to the eternal delight of Margret Rose who began anticipating that long-awaited day when she would finally accept a suitor. The knight had heard tales of Margret, however, just as she had heard tales of him, and when he came to call upon the Rose estate, it was not for Margret that he told her father he had come to court, but rather her younger sister Theresa.

Margret was crushed beyond all reason; in her mind, she had been rejected for the beauty of youth. In a rage, Margret took to the kitchens and poured exotic poisons, gifted to her by a wicked man years earlier, into the meal meant for her sister and the man she loved. For a short time she waited in delight at the thought of revenge, but soon her fury and hatred faded, and quivering with guilt, she rushed to prevent the death of her sister the knight. Alas, Margret was too late; not only were her sister and the knight dead by her hand, but her father also lay slain, draped across the table with a half-eaten biscuit still in his hand. Wracked with shame and filled with despair, Margret ran to her room, stared hard into the mirror and began to cry. Over time, sadness turned to anger and she cursed the knight, thinking that it was all his fault: if he had only chosen her, none of this would have come to pass. Fueled by wrath, tears streaming down her face, she believed her life was over: her looks must be gone; everything she knew would change; she would never find love or happiness; she would never wed; her mother's ring would lie forgotten in her father's strongbox. She resolved not to live this horrible and loveless life, trapped forever by her guilt and pitied by a nobility who would always be looking to younger, prettier maidens. To that end, she took her own life, but not before mutilating her face, unable to look herself in the mirror that had long been her friend. Ironically, her guilt and wrath trapped her anyway; her soul could not pass on to on to the afterlife, but was trapped within the mirrors of her father's own estate, where her presence lingers still.

Ghostly Activities: Margret Rose haunts her father's estates, specifically living in the mirrors. Visitors often claim to have seen a stunning young woman looking out at them from the mirrors, if only for a moment. In fact, the ghost of Margret Rose spends most of her days hatefully watching the living that tramp about her home, though she tolerates most people. Handsome young men, however, she

watches closely secretly wishing that each one of them be the love of her life to set her free from this hell of her own making. Young women she hates most of all and are the ones most likely to drive her to action; she hates and envies beautiful women, and when they stare into her mirror she takes the opportunity to strike. Often the last thing these poor girls ever see is the form of a stunning young woman in the prime of life gradually appearing in the mirror, with her face, a bloody mass of knife wounds, materializing last; this ghastly figure then lashes out from the mirror and enters the onlooker. Margret possesses her victims, taking over their lives, believing them unworthy of the youth and beauty they are blessed with. The possessed girls are by and large used to live out Margret's final desires for the love and marriage that she had so long spurned in life. She relentlessly pursues a fine young man, hoping for romance. She is quite charming and uses all the skills she learned in life to make herself irresistible to her targets. At some point during her seduction, she will mention her mother's ring, which she would like to wear. Over time, her advances become more and more aggressive until either than man confesses his love for her or turns her away. Should she be spurned, the fate of the young man is most dire, typically involving a terrifying visit from the bloody ghost that few escape. But even should her advances be well received, confessions of love for the girl she is pretending to be incense Margret Rose, and she will murder the man for loving only her youth and beauty, and then force her poor victim to commit suicide before returning to her misery.

Lay to Rest: In order to lay Margret's spirit to rest, one must grant her what she wants more than anything. This can be accomplished in one of two ways. One can alleviate her loneliness by placing her mother's ring, found in an old strongbox hidden away in her family's manor, upon her finger. Margret's body can be found buried at a local cemetery about a mile from the estate.

Margret also desires forgiveness for her crimes, information about which is easily acquired from locals. A family member must forgiver her. This requires that a blood relative say in her presence that they forgive her for what she did. This can be accomplished either with *resurrection* magic or by tracking down Sir Boris Rose-Wellimon, a minor knight from a nearby county. Permission to copy, modify and distribute the files collectively known as the System Reference Document ("SRD") is granted solely through the use of the Open Gaming License, Version 1.0a.

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Five Spooky Specters

Whether they're monsters, villains, quest-givers, or information sources, ghosts always have the potential to be fun and exciting characters, and few Pathfinder creatures are truly able to blend mechanics and storytelling in quite the same way that a ghost's rejuvenate ability does. But, because ghosts are so much more fleshed out, and have so much more personality, than, for example, shadows or ghasts tend to, they're also a lot more work. This book presents detailed flavorful information on five different ghosts, including their background, the specific sorts of ghostly activities they get up to, and what needs to be done to lay them to rest. Stat=blocks aren't included, allowing you to customize any of these ghosts to best fit your party's level and abilities.

Included are

• Brandon Gordon, a ghost who continues to meddle in his son's affairs even after death.

• Carmen Spana, a ghost who continues to rob from the rich, though she no longer remembers why.

• Lanhua, a ghost of a young drowned woman who searches for someone to ease her fear of abandonment.

• Larzo Pundi, a mad wizard's ghost who cannot rest until his experiment is complete.

• Margret Rose, a ghost who seeks to be forgiven for the crimes she committed in life.

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