

Graveyard



*Stranger, stop and cast an eye,
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, so you will be.
Prepare for death and follow me.*

—Tombstone Inscription

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Graveyards are places of death, mourning, and somber reflection. And, more often than not, zombies.

Use the following tables to generate an unnerving graveyard for your PCs to explore.

FUNERAL RITES

Burial grounds vary based on culture, religion, and economic status of those interred. Graveyards are reflections of funeral rites on a mass scale. *Roll 1d12 or choose one.*

1. **Burial at Sea.** For seafaring cultures, there is only one place to put a corpse. Bodies are usually wrapped in linens or seaweed, weighed down with stones. They are then pushed overboard to sink into the depths. In some cultures, corpses are buoyed by light organic matter, to drift over the waves or to attract sharks. For the highest ranking, the dead are set to sea in small wooden boats. Then they are lit ablaze until the vessel descends into the darkness.
2. **Burial.** Burial is the most common method of corpse disposal. Corpses lie deep enough that they do not stink up the area (usually six feet), and some have coffins to rest in. These plots are usually marked with tombstones. This is to prevent accidental discovery and to provide a place to mourn.
3. **Cremation.** Where space is a premium, a disease is a concern, or return to a burial ground is unlikely, cremation is the method. The actual burning itself can take place in a made oven or atop a ceremonial funeral pyre. Flame provides an element of finality that burial may not. The ashes are either interred into the ground or given to loved ones to distribute or keep as they see fit.
4. **Endocannibalism.** Endocannibalism is the practice of eating a person's body after they have died. Even if the practice stems from a lack of nutrition, the ceremony is usually solemn and spiritual. Endocannibalistic cultures see the practice as a proper funeral rite. The bones are either buried or crushed into a mash that they eat with stew. Unfortunately, endocannibalism is an excellent way to spread disease throughout a tribe.
5. **Mass Grave.** Mass graves are open or covered pits in which hundreds or thousands of corpses lie. These bodies receive no special preparation. The arrangement is usually one of convenience rather than tradition. Mass graves are often for paupers, or for atrocities in times of war. Yet, some tribal cultures fling their dead into an open mass grave. In this way all corpses are with one another after death.
6. **Mausoleum or Crypt.** Mausoleums are stately, often extravagant structures meant to house many corpses. They are well made, with every sign of wealth under the pretense of mourning. Mausoleums usually house entire families, though some have a single wealthy individual. Most mausoleums are amid smaller tombstones. In this manner their inhabitants can lord over their lesser even in death.
7. **Measures Against Undead.** In cultures where the undead is a real threat more protections are necessary. The heads of corpses are severed from their bodies, or staked in place with wooden spears. The coffins have iron bandings to prevent anything from escaping. These graveyards appear as traditional burial graveyards, but many hold potential undead.
8. **The World Beyond or Mummification.** The spirit is a reflection of the body, or so some cultures believe. The corpse must receive a preparation to endure the journey to the next life. This always involves burying the corpse with some sort of payment for the gods below. Payments include a coin on the tongue, a hundred servants, or a terracotta army. Such bodies are preserved using mummification or other tactics. The idea is to prevent that they fall apart before their journey is complete.
9. **To the Air.** To cultures that live high in the mountains, the lowlands may as well be another world. Some tribal cultures throw their dead off a sacred cliff. The ritual is either one of convenience or simple necessity, but the result is the same. The base of the cliff has thousands of human remains.

10. **To the Animals.** Sometimes the natural ways are the best ways. Hyenas, vultures, or other scavenging beasts receive corpses. This is so because people consider them semi-sacred psychopomps. As animals devour the corpses, the dead enter their next life (and abandon this one).
11. **To the Stone.** To many underground cultures, simple burial isn't enough. In these civilizations, corpses receive a treatment. Then, magma or tar pools disintegrate them. These corpses "return to the stone", according to what the housewives believe. As such, their spirits may crystallize into gemstones in the following years.
12. **To the Wood.** In many elven cultures (and some human cultures), a return to nature symbolizes the beginning of a new life. Corpses or cremated ashes lie with seeds, which then grow into magnificent trees. Some cultures even inter bodies within the trunks of living trees. While most wood burials happen in a forest, some cultures keep orchards of grave trees. These orchards yield rich and nourishing fruit year over year.
6. Not all corpses rest as they should. Bones and teeth emerge from the soil.
7. The ground is black and muddy, though there is no obvious source of water.
8. Dead leaves and flowers are on the ground, which crunches underfoot.
9. The iron gate, though rusted and broken, has spikes and reinforcements as if to keep something in.
10. There seems to be little respect for space in this graveyard. Tombstones lie on top on one another, and new plots overlap with old plots.
11. Thick grey vines cover large sections of the graveyard. Shriveled fruit hang from their boughs.
12. Upon closer inspection, repurposed gravestones from ages past form this well-worn cobblestone path.

OTHER ELEMENTS

A graveyard is more than a collection of tombstones. Other objects, creatures, or auras add to the mood. *Roll 1d12 or choose one.*

1. A gnarled tree stretched bare branches over the graves. The twisted bark almost seems to cry out in agony.
2. A thick, pale fog envelops the graveyard. This foul smelling air is suffocating and deadens all noise.
3. An ancient well sits at the center of this graveyard. What madness drove these people to corrupt a water source with corpses?
4. An icy mist swirls around the tombstones in violent crystalline drafts.
5. Hundreds (if not thousands) of ravens perched on the graves. They are silent and immobile unless provoked, at which point all take wing in a cacophony caws.

CAUSE OF DEATH

Sometimes an explanation leaves only more questions. The following inscribed causes of death may lead the PCs down a strange path. *Roll 1d12 or choose one.*

1. Buried Alive at Her Husband's Request
2. Burned for Witchcraft
3. By Suicide in a Fit of Madness
4. Dead for the Careless Hand of a Doctor
5. Dead on the Order of the King
6. For the Curse Could Not Be Lifted
7. Hanged for Heresy
8. Interred for the Second Time
9. Left to the Elements by a Loving Family
10. Murdered by a Coward Whose Name is Not Fit for This Stone
11. Of an Empty Belly, Surrounded by Friends
12. Of Unnatural Illness

TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTIONS

Most tombstones give a name, span of life, and cause of death. Some have taken it upon themselves to add a bit of somber or humorous poetry to the cemetery. *Roll 1d12 or choose one.*

1. All things happen for a reason
2. Always loving, always loved
3. Damn, but it's dark down here
4. DO NOT EXHUME
5. Gone, but not forgiven
6. I am not today what I was yesterday
7. I was somebody. You need not know more.
8. Let's go home
9. May his memory be eternal
10. Once met, never forgotten
11. Step with care, a dream lies buried here.
12. Tears cannot restore her—thus I weep

THE RESTLESS DEAD

What would a cemetery be without a few angry undead? *USE* the following descriptions to add flavor to a roaming zombie, skeleton, or ghost. *Roll 1d12 or choose one.*

1. A white apparition opens her eyes and mouth in a noiseless scream. Her ethereal hair floats in all directions as if underwater.
2. Burning motes of flame show eyes in a humanoid shadow. Waves of hunger and rage emit from the wraith in equal measure.
3. Rotting flesh does not hide the terror etched in this creature's face. This man died in absolute pain and overcome by fear.
4. The corpse bubbles and putrefies as it moves, thick black fluid running from a dozen sores.
5. The corpse must be recently dead. Only its white eyes and staggering movements give it away as unnatural.



6. The ghost takes hovering steps with elegance and purpose. She must have been a noble in life, or else death bestowed her with unnerving grace.
7. The jaw of this poor corpse hangs by a single stretched tendon, rotten away to almost nothing. It clacks from side to side with every step.
8. The mindlessness of zombies has never been so clear. This corpse's face is limp and blank, rotten eyes half-closed beneath blackened lids.
9. The skeleton moves with loud, clumsy, and quick strides. Though it lacks any grace or uniformity in its steps, its speed is frightening.
10. This corpse wears a long black dress of mourning. The dress looks pristine despite the rotting corpse within. Her long, thin hair hangs almost to the ground.
11. This creature is so long dead that even its bones are rotting, and not an inch of flesh remains. Black silk threads keep its structure together.
12. Though the corpse has an almost regal finery, it's head has completely decomposed. Only a jaw and neck remain.