

The cover art is a dark, atmospheric illustration. On the left, a pale, translucent figure of a woman in a white dress is shown from the waist up, her head tilted back and her hands reaching out. Her skin has a mottled, spectral appearance. On the right, a large, close-up of a mouth is depicted, with dark, bloody lips and sharp, white teeth. The background is a dark, textured surface with hints of blue and green light. The overall mood is horror and suspense.

MC BOOK

TRAUMA GAMES PRESENTS:

D. VINCENT BAKER

# MURDEROUS GHOSTS

# TRAUMA GAMES PRESENTS: **MURDEROUS GHOSTS**

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Night Sky Games

## **MC BOOK**

### **Images**

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[murderousghosts.com/playtesters](http://murderousghosts.com/playtesters)

This is the Happy Halloween '11 edition.



# MURDEROUS GHOSTS

## MASTER OF CEREMONIES BOOK

### To play, you'll need:

Another player, called "the other player."  
This book for you, and the player book for the other player.  
30–60 minutes of uninterrupted time.  
A deck of playing cards, jokers removed, shuffled.

**Murderous Ghosts** is the story of an urban explorer trying to escape the haunted basements of an abandoned factory. The other player takes the part of the explorer. You take the part of the ghosts and their environment.

You play your book and your imagination against the other player's book and her wits. You both draw cards as you go, to determine what happens next.

### To win:

You win if you create ghosts so scary that you creep yourself out, and if you leave troubling questions unanswered.

The other player wins if she escapes at the end. These aren't mutually exclusive! You can both win.

You lose if your ghosts aren't murderous. If the other player stops trying to escape and manages to help a ghost find rest instead, you lose.

### The basics:

Take turns with the other player. On your turn, read an entry in your book and do what it tells you to do. It might have you describe something from your imagination, make judgments about what the other player's describing or what you've described. It might have you ask the other player questions or answer the other player's questions. It might have you draw a card, or it might tell you to have the other player draw a card.

Each entry will have you turn to a new entry, or it'll tell you to have the other player turn to a new entry.

Eventually you'll come to an entry that says "the end." That's the end of the game.

### To start:

Read **The Draws**, **The Entries**, and **Before Play**.

If you haven't played before, you can start without reading through the books. Just take the time to read each section fully when you come to it.

If you do look through the books before you play, especially notice entries **3**, **13** and **19**, the "core loops," in this book. You'll come back to those regularly.

## THE OTHER PLAYER'S DRAW

The other player draws cards at turning points in the story of the game, to determine whether the best possible thing happens, a middling thing happens, or the worst possible thing happens.

The other player's hand is always face up.

She starts play with an empty hand.

Before any draw, she may discard her entire hand, if she chooses.

She draws the card from the top of the deck, face up, and adds it to her hand:

**Aces** add 1.

**Number cards** 2-10 add their value.

All **face cards** add 11.

It's the sum of her hand that matters:

The **best possible thing** is a sum 13-20.

The **middling thing** is a sum 6-12.

The **worst possible thing** is a bust: a sum 1-5 or a sum 21 or higher.

When she busts, she discards her entire hand.

When the deck's exhausted, reshuffle.

Count cards if you want, but it's bad form to look through the discards while you're playing.

## YOUR DRAW

You draw cards as the other player moves toward escape, to track her progress.

To start play, draw one card face down into your hand, without looking at it.

Your hand starts face down. Turn it face up when you draw your 4<sup>th</sup> card.

Whenever the other player moves closer to her eventual escape, draw another card into your hand, face down.

The number of cards in your hand keeps track of the other player's progress toward escape. 1 card in your hand means that she's far from escape. 4-7 cards in your hand means that she can escape soon or now.

The number of suits in your hand determines whether the other player can escape:

**4 suits:** the other player can escape now.

**3 suits:** the other player can escape soon.

**2 suits:** the other player might be able to escape soon, but might be lost.

**1 suit:** the other player is lost.

For complete details, see **45** and **47**.

# THE ENTRIES

15

## EXAMPLE ENTRY

A ghost is reacting to the other player's presence.

### option (a)

Choose for yourself whether it looks at her, speaks, reaches out to her, or just stops still.

### option (b)

The other player tells you which it does.

Say what the ghost is like as it acts. Remember the violence that it represents and the menace it carries.

*For some quick ideas, keep your place here and consult **51: what ghosts are**.*

Decide for yourself whether the ghost approaches the other player directly now, or forgets about the other player and goes back to its original doings.

If it **approaches** the other player, turn to **17**.

If it **loses interest** in the other player, tell the other player to turn to **4**.

*Choose for it to approach, unless you have a very good reason otherwise.*

- In this book, all the entries have odd numbers. All the entries in the player book have even numbers.
- Many entries first remind you what's going on.
- Some entries call for you to choose between options (a) and (b). The entry before tells you which: "turn to 15, and choose option (a)," for instance.
- Most entries tell you to describe something.
- Some entries offer you quick ideas or prompting in another entry. The advice entries will help you create your ghosts, especially the first few times you play, so be sure to read them.
- Many entries ask you to judge something or decide something for yourself, or to answer the other player's questions. Use your best judgment and follow your gut. When in doubt, go for what would scare you.
- All entries tell you to turn to another entry, or to have the other player turn to an entry.
- Some entries include gameplay advice.
- Some entries tell you to go back and forth with the other player until one of several possible things develops.
- Some entries tell you to draw. Some entries tell you to have the other player draw.
- Three entries are "core loops": **3**, **13** and **19**. You'll come back to them throughout play. They're the backbone of the MC book.

## BEFORE PLAY

Think of the extensive basements and subbasements of a big abandoned factory.

Some kind of terrible violence happened here. Not just an accident — terrible human violence.

Imagine what kind of violence it was. Bring to it some or all of betrayal, cruelty, madness, fear, revenge, sorrow. You'll come up with more of the story as you play, so feelings and imagery is all you need for now.

This violence and its aftermath created the ghosts that now haunt the place.

Imagine some of the evidence that remains of it. Blood, bones, ruined clothing, things lost and discarded. No need to hide it or make it cryptic. The worse the better.

Imagine scary ghost visuals. Think of the ghosts' bodies, eyes, faces, hands, smell, and voices.

A ghost is a creature of sorrow. A murderous ghost is a creature of sorrow turned to violence. Every ghost here — victim, perpetrator, witness — their world is all violence now. Imagine how they'll carry with them the deadly menace of the violence they experienced.

To start play, draw a card face down from the top of the deck into your hand, and tell the other player to turn to **Start**.

## 1

Describe the space the other player is in.

Describe the evidence of violence that remains here. The evidence can be either real and physical, or supernatural and ghostly, but it should be absolutely apparent to the other player, and the worse the better.

Tell the other player to turn to **2**.

Answer the other player's questions.

Make details up as you need them, following your gut and the imagery you've already thought about. If it scares you, say it!

## 3

### CORE LOOP: NO GHOST, YET

Ask the other player what she does.

Unless something interferes, she's free to move around the space, investigate, handle what's here, whatever she likes. Tell her what she finds and what happens.

Answer her questions. Ask her questions of your own.

Make details up as you need them, following your gut and the imagery you've already said. If it scares you, say it!

Stay with this entry, going back and forth with the other player, until one of these develops:

She **leaves** this space for another. Turn to **5**.

You decide that she's uncovered new **evidence**. Turn to **7**.

*Choose this option only once at most. Otherwise bring a ghost in instead.*

You decide to have a **ghost** enter. Turn to **9**.

If the other player has just helped a ghost resolve its unfinished business and find rest, turn to **43**.

*Remember that if the other player helps a ghost resolve its unfinished business and find rest, you lose.*

## 5

Keep your place here and consult **45: the other player's movement**. (In brief: if the other player's closer to escape, draw a card. If you have 4 or more cards in your hand, check **47** to see if the other player can escape.)

If the other player has now escaped, turn to **41**.

Otherwise, the other player has entered a new space. Briefly describe the transition and the new physical space. Don't describe a stairway or other way to the surface, or the entrance back into the sewers, unless your hand and **47** tell you to.

If you've already said that there's a ghost here, turn to **11**, and choose option **(a)** or **(b)**.

Otherwise, **have the other player draw**:

**13–20**: Turn to **3**.

**6–12**: Turn to **11**, and choose option **(a)**.

**Bust**: Turn to **11**, and choose option **(b)**.

## 7

The other player has uncovered new evidence of the violence that took place here.

Describe it. It must be more complete and more explicit than before. The worse the better.

It can be real, physical evidence, or it can be supernatural and ghostly. If the latter, it can be a ghost in its own right.

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If the evidence is a **ghost**, turn to **11**, and choose option **(a)**.

---

**Otherwise**, tell the other player to turn to **2**.

Answer the other player's questions.

Make details up as you need them, following your gut and the imagery you've already said. If it scares you, say it!

---

*New evidence won't drive the game forward!  
Try to avoid returning to this entry.*

## 9

A ghost comes in, doing what it does when no one else is around.

Describe the ghost. Mention at least two of: its body, its eyes, its face, its hands, its smell, and its voice.

Every ghost here will murder the other player, if she attracts its attention in the wrong way (or at all). Include at least one menacing detail.

*For some quick ideas, keep your place here and consult **49: what ghosts do**.*

Make details up as you need them, following your gut and the imagery you've already said. If it scares you, say it!

### **Have the other player draw:**

**13–20:** Say what the ghost is doing. Tell the other player to turn to **4**. Answer the other player's questions.

**6–12:** ...But when the other player enters, the ghost takes immediate notice of her and approaches her. Turn to **17**.

**Bust:** ...But when the other player enters, the ghost immediately notices and reacts poorly. Turn to **17**. However, when you get to **19**, consider her to already be confronting the ghost.

## 11

A ghost is here, doing what it would do if no one else were present.

Describe the ghost. Mention at least two of: its body, its eyes, its face, its hands, its smell, and its voice.

Every ghost here will murder the other player, if she attracts its attention in the wrong way (or at all). Include at least one menacing detail.

*For some quick ideas, keep your place here and consult **49: what ghosts do**.*

Make details up as you need them, following your gut and the imagery you've already said. If it scares you, say it!

### option (a)

Say what the ghost is doing.

Tell the other player to turn to **4**.

Answer the other player's questions.

### option (b)

The ghost reacts to the other player's presence. Turn to **15**, and choose option **(a)**.

## 13

### CORE LOOP: A GHOST, AS IF ALONE

The ghost keeps doing what it would do if no one else were present. Tell the other player what it does.

Ask her what she does.

Tell her what happens.

Stay with this entry, going back and forth with the other player, until one of these develops:

She **leaves** this space for another. Turn to **5**.

You decide that the ghost reveals new **evidence**. Turn to **7**.

*Choose this option only once at most. Otherwise have the ghost notice her instead.*

You decide that the ghost takes **notice** of her and responds to her presence. Turn to **15**, and choose option **(a)**.

She tries to do something that might attract the ghost's attention, but **hopes** that it won't notice. Tell her to turn to **30**.

She tries to **hide**. Tell her to turn to **32**.

You decide that the ghost has finished doing what it would do, uninterrupted, and **departs**. Turn to **3**.

## 15

A ghost is reacting to the other player's presence.

### option (a)

Choose for yourself whether it looks at her, speaks, reaches out to her, or just stops still.

### option (b)

The other player tells you which it does.

Say what the ghost is like as it acts. Remember the violence that it represents and the menace it carries.

---

Decide for yourself whether the ghost approaches the other player directly now, or forgets about the other player and goes back to its original doings.

If it **approaches** the other player, turn to **17**.

If it **loses interest** in the other player, turn to **13**.

*Choose for it to approach, unless you have a very good reason otherwise.*

---

## 17

A ghost is directly approaching the other player, with its full attention upon her.

All murderous ghosts exist in a nightmare state made of the violence that created them. They can experience nothing else.

*For some quick ideas, keep your place here and consult **51: what ghosts are**.*

Tell the other player to turn to **6, 10, 14** or **16** (choose freely, they're all good).

Keep your place here.

After she draws, turn to **19**.

## 19

### CORE LOOP: A GHOST'S ATTENTION

Weigh what's happened so far. Say what the ghost does, ask the other player what she does, and say what happens.

Stay with this entry, going back and forth with the other player, until one of these develops:

You decide that the other player has provoked the ghost to **violence**. Turn to **29**.

The other player is trying to **get past** the ghost to leave. Tell her to turn to **12**. Keep your place here.

You decide that the other player is **confronting** the ghost. Tell her to turn to **34**.

You decide that the other player has roused the ghost's **curiosity**. Tell her to turn to **36**.

You decide that the other player has roused the ghost's **pity**. Tell her to turn to **38**.

The other player is trying to **hide**. Tell her to turn to **32**. Keep your place here.

The other player has managed to **leave** the room. Turn to **5**.

The other player does something that you feel will test her ability to **stay calm**. Tell her to turn to **6**, **8**, **10**, **14** or **16** (choose freely, they're all good). Keep your place here.

You've said that the ghost **departs**. Turn to **3**.

## 21

*For some quick ideas, keep your place here and consult **51: what ghosts are**.*

---

Is the ghost **intent upon revenge**?

Is the ghost a recurring pattern of action, not an unquiet soul, and its pattern includes **attacking** someone?

Then the ghost assaults the other player. Turn to **29**.

---

Otherwise, in life, was the ghost the **perpetrator of violence**?

Then the ghost investigates the other player, preventing her escape if necessary. Turn to **27**.

---

**Otherwise**, the ghost hesitates, steps back, or withdraws slightly. Describe it. Perhaps it is startled or affronted.

Turn to **19**. However, if the other player immediately makes a move to leave the room — or if she's already doing so — then the ghost will let her go; turn to **5**. Otherwise, consider the ghost now to be on the very verge of violence, so that almost any action provokes it.

---

## 23

*For some quick ideas, keep your place here and consult **51: what ghosts are.***

---

Is the ghost trapped here, but **not intent upon revenge or violence**?

Then the ghost investigates the other player.  
Turn to **27**.

---

**Otherwise**, the ghost's curiosity is fleeting.  
Describe its very brief investigation.

Tell the other player to turn to **8**. Keep your place here.

After the other player draws, turn to **19**.  
However, on a **6-12**, consider the ghost now to be on the very verge of violence, so that almost any action provokes it.

---

## 25

*For some quick ideas, keep your place here and consult **51: what ghosts are.***

---

In life, was the ghost the **victim** of violence?

Then it punishes the other player by murdering her. Turn to **35**.

---

Otherwise, is the ghost NOT trapped here, but instead **staying here by choice**, intent upon violence?

Then it assaults the other player. Turn to **29**.

---

Otherwise, is the ghost an **unquiet soul**, not just a recurring pattern of action?

Then it investigates her. Turn to **27**.

---

**Otherwise**, the ghost lets her go. Tell her so.  
Turn to **13**.

---

## 27

A ghost is investigating the other player.

Describe it. Make it unpleasant.

Tell the other player to turn to **6, 8, 12** or **16** (choose freely, they're all good).

Keep your place here.

After the other player draws...

Ask her what she does, and tell her what the ghost does. Go back and forth until one of these develops:

The other player does something that you feel will further test her ability to **stay calm**. Tell her to turn to **6, 8, 10, 14** or **16** (choose freely, they're all good). Keep your place here.

You decide that the ghost **loses interest** in her. Tell her it lets her go and goes back to its own doings. Turn to **13**.

You decide that the ghost has decided to **assault** her. Turn to **29**.

**Otherwise**, turn to **19**.

## 29

A ghost is assaulting the other player.

Decide how the ghost intends to kill her:

By **direct violence**.

By **environmental danger**.

By **supernatural violence**.

Describe the moment of the attack, when the other player's reaction will or won't save her life.

Has this ghost **already attacked** the other player before? Then it murders her. Turn to **35**.

**Otherwise**, tell her to turn to **40**. Keep your place here.

---

After the other player draws:

In your judgment, will the other player's action realistically let her survive to **flee** the ghost's assault? Then tell her to turn to **42**.

Otherwise, no ghost can relent until it believes its victim dead. In your judgment, will the other player's action realistically let her **survive** the ghost's assault, even though the ghost thinks it has murdered her? Then tell her to turn to **44**.

**Otherwise**, the ghost murders her. Turn to **35**.

---

## 31

The other player has fled the ghost's assault, but has suffered for it.

---

What's the outcome?

If she's managed to **leave** this space for another, turn to **5**.

Otherwise, if you decide that the ghost has **lost interest** in her, turn to **13**.

**Otherwise**, bad luck for her. Turn to **19**.

---

In any case, remember what she's suffered or lost, and bring it back into play at every opportunity.

## 33

The other player has survived the ghost's assault, but has suffered badly for it.

---

What's the outcome?

If she's managed to **leave** this space for another, turn to **5**.

Otherwise, if the ghost has **departed**, turn to **3**.

**Otherwise**, the ghost has lost interest in her, believing her dead. Turn to **13**.

---

In any case, remember what she's suffered or lost, and bring it back into play at every opportunity.

## 35

A ghost is murdering the other player.

If you have not already, decide how the ghost will kill her:

By **direct violence**.

By **environmental danger**.

By **supernatural violence**.

Describe the moment of the attack.

Tell the other player to turn to **46**.

Did you scare yourself? Did you leave troubling questions unanswered? Then you win.

The end.

Thanks for playing!

## 37

The other player has been left for dead by the ghost, because she is dead.

Ask her what she looks like, as a ghost.

Tell her to turn to **46**.

Did you scare yourself? Did you leave troubling questions unanswered? Then you win.

The end.

Thanks for playing!

## 39

Congratulations. You've won the game by frightening the other player into quitting.

The end.

Thanks for playing!

## 41

The other player has escaped unmurdered.

Tell her to turn to **50**.

Wish her a long and happy life.

Did you scare yourself? Did you leave troubling questions unanswered? Then you win too.

The end.

Thanks for playing!

## 43

The other player has helped a ghost to resolve its unfinished business.

Tell her that all's quiet now, and that she can eventually make her way out. Tell her to turn to **50**.

You lose.

The end.

Thanks for playing!

## 45

### THE OTHER PLAYER'S MOVEMENT

By default, when the other player moves, she's moving toward escape. However, sometimes she'll go back the way she came, or try to make her way around something, or take an evident wrong turn.

If the new space is ***closer to escape*** than she's been before, draw a card into your hand.

If you still have 1–3 cards in your hand, draw face down, without looking, and return to **5**.

If this is your 4<sup>th</sup> card, turn your hand face up. Play with it face up for the rest of the game.

If you have 4 or more cards in your hand, the other player might be able to escape. Don't lose your place on **5**, but turn to **47: escape**.

## 47

### ESCAPE

The suits in your hand determine whether the other player can escape.

If your hand shows **all 4 suits**, then there's an access ladder or stairway here, leading up to the surface. Leaving this space, taking that way out, means escape. Return to **5** and include this fact in your description of the space.

If your hand shows **3 suits**, then continue play with your hand face up, until your hand shows all 4 suits, or until it reaches 7 cards. At 7 cards, consider it to show all 4 suits even if it doesn't. Return to **5**.

If your hand shows only **2 suits**, then the other player might be lost. Draw another card into your hand right now. If now your hand shows 3 suits, then continue play, just as above.

If your hand still shows only 2 suits, or if it shows **only 1 suit**, then the other player is lost. Tell her to turn to **52**.

Did you scare yourself? Did you leave troubling questions unanswered? Then you win.

The end.

Thanks for playing!

## 49

### WHAT GHOSTS DO

When a ghost is alone, it moves through the space it's haunting, lost in its nightmare world of violence.

Does it relive its experience here in life? If so, how has its ongoing nightmare ritualized and corrupted its actions?

Does it recreate the violence it experienced in detail, concretely? Does it recreate the violence it experienced symbolically, or in abstract form, instead?

Does it represent only a single person in life? Does it amalgamate the experiences of several people? Does it take different roles as it moves through the space?

Does it use props? Do they continue to exist after they pass from its attention? Does it pantomime with objects that don't appear? Does it respond to entities who aren't otherwise present?

The unfinished business of a murderous ghost is murder, but the other player may be looking for hints that the ghost has unfinished business she can help resolve. Might it be true?

When in doubt, if something would frighten you, say it!

# 51

## WHAT GHOSTS ARE

Every ghost is unique.

A ghost is a creature of sorrow. A murderous ghost is a creature of sorrow turned to violence.

A ghost has no capacity for growth or change. It might be possible to lay it to rest — there's no guarantee! — but it can never learn.

Is this ghost reenacting the horrors that it inflicted on others in life, or will it inflict on others the horrors that it suffered?

Does this ghost see others as new victims, as new embodiments of its tormentor, upon whom it can take revenge, or as embodiments of itself, to be punished for its own past weaknesses or crimes?

Is this ghost a trapped soul, doomed to this nightmare existence, or is it a repeating pattern, an echo of the past, carried by the environment or summoned by the other ghosts here?

Is this ghost staying here by choice, intent upon the violence that is now its only experience, or is it bound here, unreleased by its death?



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D. VINCENT BAKER



2  
PLAYERS



20-60  
MINUTES



AGES  
12+



INTENSE  
HORROR