

Ghoul

The gruesome board-game of
BODY SNATCHING
in the Genteel Georgian Age

For 2 - 6 players, aged 10+

by

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Midnight. Inky blackness. The moon the merest sliver of gleaming pearl; and like the very few faint stars, it is obscured by ragged, scudding clouds that stream and tumble across the sky.

In a darkened courtyard, the sound of heavy bolts being drawn back on a stout oaken door. A gang of burdened figures is suddenly illuminated by the light of flickering candles. Quiet words are exchanged; the heavily wrapped bundles are taken inside, each by two servants who grumble under their breath at the weight and awkwardness of their loads. A tall, well-dressed figure hands the leader of the gang a leather purse. The faintest metallic clink betrays the thin silver coins inside. The gang members turn and dissolve back into the night. The gentleman of the house glances up at the moon and shivers. He too turns, returning to the cosy warmth of his fireside and the comfort of the great chair that is set before it.

Across the city, in the sleeping parish of St Anne's, the deep silence is broken only by the rustle of brittle dry leaves, gasping and hissing in the stiff Autumn breeze. Three muffled figures drop stealthily over the dry-stone wall and crouch low, at one with the shadows. A moment later they rise and slip carefully, threading in single file between the gravestones, treading confidently in the darkness, until they arrive at a mound of freshly turned earth. Wordlessly, they cast aside the simple wooden cross that had been planted so sorrowfully at one end of the mound only hours before sunset. Soon their spades bite and bite, again and again, into the soft damp soil. In less time than you might think, there comes a hollow thump as one of the diggers strikes the wooden lid of the buried coffin. He jumps down into the grave. The second casts the end of a length of stout rope down after him. The last, a small, wiry figure, gathers the tools and kneels at the side of the yawning hole.

"This un'll fetch a goodly p..." The scrawny speaker's words are abruptly choked off. His lifeless body topples chaotically down onto his companion below. The second resurrectionist likewise slumps down dead, face first into the long damp grass. The last of the body-snatchers stares up in wide-eyed shock at the rectangle of sky framed by the sheer dirt walls that trap him. With a primal shriek of absolute terror, he cringes as a petrified animal; shrinking tight and quivering into the corner of the grave. Over the yawning pit, a ghastly apparition materialises with hideous menace from out of the empty night...

The game of Ghoul is set in the prosperous city of *Lychester Spa*, at a time when the body-snatching phenomenon is rife. Being a very old settlement, the city's long history includes countless legends of monsters, spirits and mysterious happenings. Consequently, alongside sincere scientific quests, there is also a thirst for knowledge that is not confined to the rational or the natural. There is too a demand for ever more extreme forms of entertainment and sport. Such is the way of the world, that where there is a market, there will always be those (the Players) who will risk all for the the rewards of supplying it.

The object of the game is to raise one's Social Standing, from streetwise *Wretch* to honourable *Gentleghoul*. To do this, Players must earn cash from selling exhumed corpses (*cadavers* in polite medical jargon) and ensnared undead creatures. Players take turns to build a gang of associates and equipment with which to attempt the kinds of captures that their Buyer will pay good money for. Along the way they must brave the dangers of the night - and perhaps even inter-stellar aliens - as they negotiate the extreme hazards entailed in attempting to secure the more lucrative prizes that await in un-quiet rest across the city.