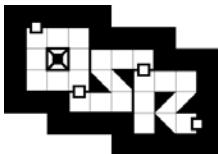




THE BALLAD OF SALLY ANNE

By Vance Atkins (<http://leicestersramble.blogspot.com/>)

A haunted adventure for low-level adventurers in an OSR setting



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This setting and adventure is the junction of two inspirations: A [bluegrass ballad](#) I heard at a show last year; and the floorplan of an 16th Century [English manor house](#) that I discovered while looking for 'found' adventure settings. And, of course, it even comes with its [own ghost](#)....

The song:

"The Ballad Of Sally Anne"

*With love in his heart and flowers in his hand Johnny proposed to Sally Ann
Sally shivered as she said, "I'll love you 'til the day I'm dead"*

*Johnny got married in his one good suit
But the ride from church bore strange fruit
Down by road you can hear her cry
As he hung from a tree, she watched him die*

<CHORUS>

*Who's gonna dance with Sally Ann Who's gonna touch her tremblin' hand
When the fiddler takes the stand Who's gonna dance with Sally Ann*

*Sally attends every wedding 'round here Lookin' for her Johnny dear
You can feel them in the room If the fiddler plays that tune*

<CHORUS>

*Who's gonna dance with Sally Ann Who's gonna touch her tremblin' hand
When the fiddler takes the stand Who's gonna dance with Sally Ann*

*Sail away ladies, Sail away!
Sail away ladies, Sail away!*

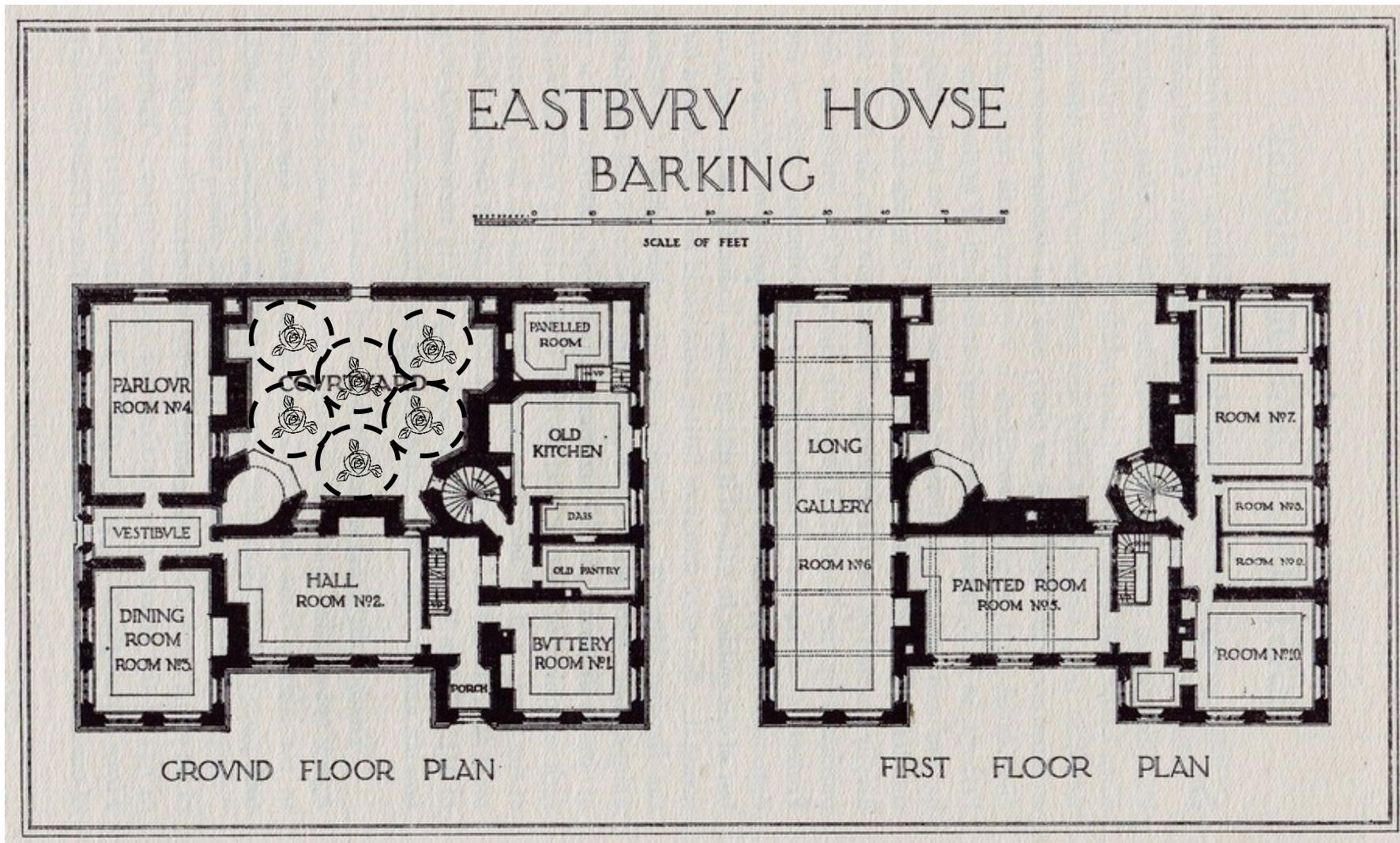
*Darkened shadows cross the floor As ghostly lovers dance once more
When weddin' bells ring in that town A ghostly virgin strolls the ground*

<CHORUS>

*Who's gonna dance with Sally Ann Who's gonna touch her tremblin' hand
When the fiddler takes the stand Who's gonna dance with Sally Ann*

(by Alice Randall, Harry Stinson, Mark O'Connor)

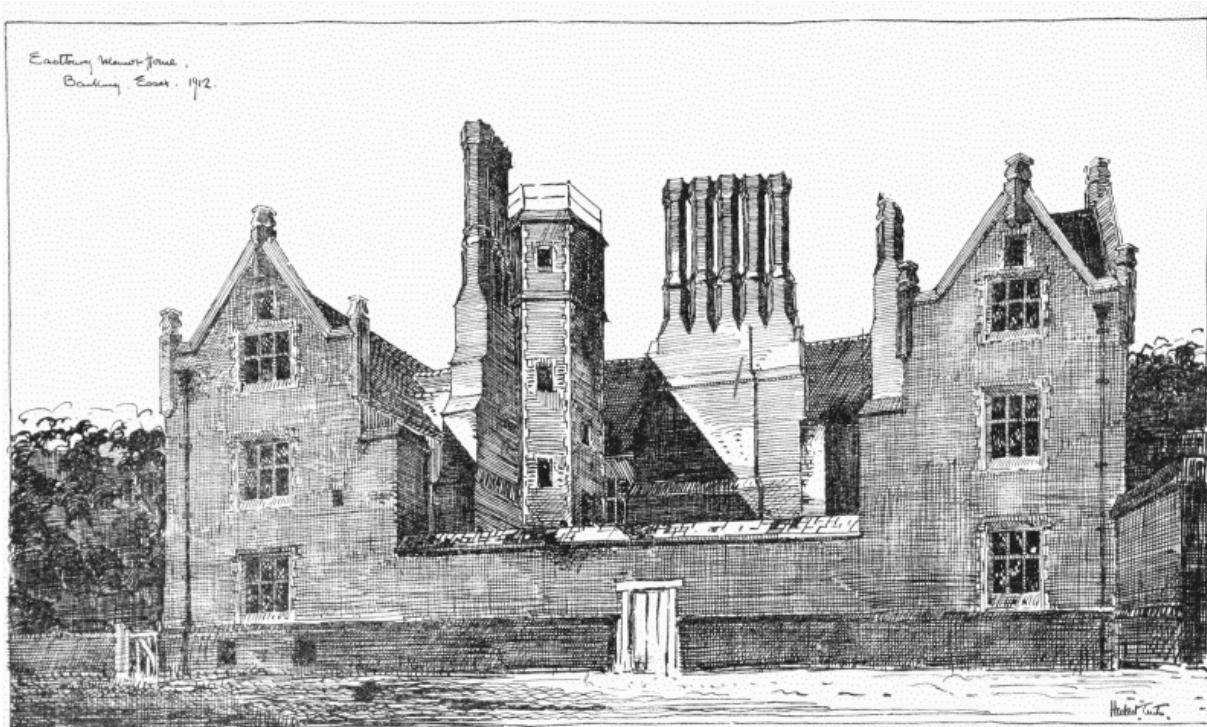
MANOR HOUSE FLOOR PLAN:



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INTRODUCTION:

Two generations ago, a tragedy befell a wedding night. While the bride and wedding party awaited the groom at her family's manor house, the groom was waylaid en-route to the wedding and lynched for unspecified crimes. Stricken by the news of the groom's death, the guests fled in shame and horror while the family sought out his murdered body to put it to rest.

Shattered by that night, the tragic bride lived out her days as a spinster, never to marry or seek new love.

Locally, an engaged couple is married in a ceremony of dance. The married couples of the community dance to a traditional wedding song under the gaze of the priest. After a round, the bride and groom join to dance while a priest blesses the new couple, inviting them to join the married population. Barred from being able to complete her own wedding dance, the former bride was known to linger near area weddings, watching the joyful couples from a distance, and slowly rocking to the strains of the wedding dance.

She eventually inherited the manor, living alone with only a few servants, who each slowly drifted away. The bride eventually passed away herself, but became trapped in limbo by her heartbreak from the unsanctified marriage. With no other family or executors, the manor was abandoned by its last caretaker, who fled as the bride's ghost began to walk the old halls. No one entered the house in the ensuing years, other than a few brave or foolhardy looters, who rapidly fled, or did not re-emerge at all. Vicious overgrowth took over manor soon after her death, blocking doors and windows, as if sealing the sorrow from surrounding area...

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While the locals report hearing the strains of the local wedding dance coming from the house on the anniversary of the tragedy, no one has dared enter, and they are not aware of the events unfolding every year on that night. Over the years, the ghostly bride has annually gathered other ghosts to herself in an attempt to complete the wedding ceremony. And each year, a greater number of ghosts arrive. But to her dismay, they arrive in wedded pairs, and she has yet to reunite with her groom, whose soul seems to have been lost to time...

Each wedding anniversary brings something else, as well. The haunted music brings a particular miasma to the area, killing half the livestock (owners typically attempt to move their animals away prior to the date) and causing rusts to crops. The radius of these effects has been increasing erratically in the recent years, as more ghosts join, amplifying the sorrow.

The locals fear needing to move or vacate their village and otherwise fertile areas surrounding the old manor house. In this environment, the party has arrived on the eve of the wedding anniversary, and have been entreated by the populace to attempt to seek a remedy to their plight...

THE MANOR HOUSE:

The manor house is a two-story brick residence, with a walled courtyard between its east and west wings. Several chimneys are visible in various states of repair, as well as two stairway towers located at the interior corners of the two wings. The eastern tower appears intact, but the western tower is partially burned out and collapsed. The exterior of the house has become enveloped in ivy, vine roses, and other climbing plants, which generally block windows and access. The interior of the house, likewise, will be generally dark from the shading plants.

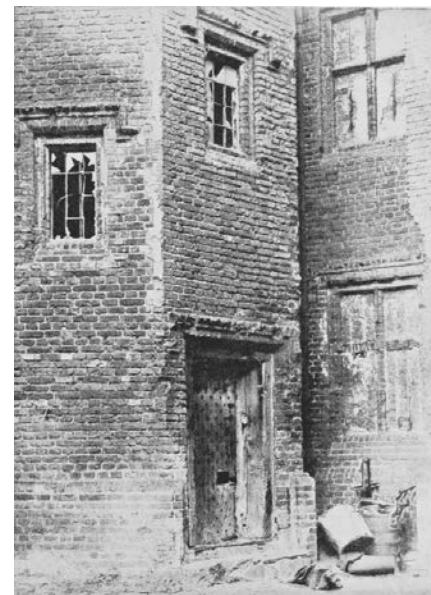
Room descriptions are generally ordered according to the numbering of the floor plan plate (Page 2) and associated labelled rooms.

GROUND FLOOR:

Characters may access the house through four entrances: the Courtyard (North side), the Front Porch door (South side), the Vestibule (West side), or the Old Kitchen door (East side).

Courtyard: An iron gate bars entrance to the courtyard. Although the gate and surrounding wall is encased in thorny growth, the gate has recently been pulled off its hinges by the weight of the plants, and cautious entrants may crawl through the resulting gap.

The approximately 35 foot by 45 foot courtyard has become riotously overgrown, and observant characters will note numerous desiccated small animal carcasses scattered about. Several massive creeping roses with sickly-colored blooms are spaced around the courtyard. The vines are oversized and tumorous, with branches the thickness of a man's wrist.



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The rose vines have become imbued with chaos energy of the sorrow within the house. The vines are competitive and evenly spaced through the courtyard. Opportunists, they normally prey on birds, small animals, and whatever other unfortunate creature entered the courtyard due to the diminished soils and undead energies of the house.

The **predator-vines** (6) will each will extend 2-5 barbed limbs in a 15-foot diameter area (see Floor Plan for plant locations and reach). The plants will engage any creature within their individual reaches that enters through either the courtyard gate or via the East Tower staircase. A successful hit deals 1d3+1 point of strangling damage/round. An entangled victim strikes at -4. Each vine will strike at either a single or multiple targets in range (50/50). Each limb is $\frac{1}{2}$ HD, AC 7/12. Blunt damage is halved, but fire-based damage is doubled. The core trunk of each vine is 1+1 HD, AC 6/13. Destroying it will kill the plant.

The body of a ranger who attempted to penetrate the garden lies desiccated at the foot of one of the vines. His chain armor is shredded and useless, but on his remains are his weapons, a *+1 longbow* (with 12 mundane arrows and two silver arrows) and a battle axe, as well as a gold chain with medallion (280 GP) and *potion of cure serious wounds* (2d6+2 HP).

The ground floor of the manor house may be entered via the East Tower through a heavy riveted oaken door. From the Tower, the party may access the ground floor, entering the hallway between the Pantry and Kitchen, or climb directly to the upper floor. The West Tower burned and partially collapsed after a lightning strike and is impassible.

Porch: This is the former front door to the manor. The door is closed and locked, but in disrepair. No one appears to have attempted entrance for some time due to the haunting, and the area is filled with dirt and leaves. Other than some small vermin tracks, the detritus is generally undisturbed. The door can be levered open by a reasonably strong character, and may fall off its hinges in the process. The door leads to the entrance hall of the home.

Buttery (Room No. 1): This room is still stocked with some bottles and crockery not looted immediately after the bride's death. However, the rise of the ghost prevented more significant looting. Most of the remaining bottles in the room are soured; however, a rack on the east wall contains several (2d12) vintage bottles of up to 50 GP each in value. The ceiling of the room is water-stained, with peeling plaster and rot.



Front Hall (Room No. 2): The tiled floor in the hall has somehow become slick and nearly frictionless. Crossing it feels like walking on smooth ice. Anyone walking across must make a DEX save or take a hard tumble. A fall causes either 1 HP injury, or breaks one fragile thing on the person (vial, bottle, lantern glass, etc.) (50/50). The room may be crossed safely by crawling or sliding across on a shield or similar.

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Dining Room (Room No. 3): The wedding banquet table is set with silver and good porcelain, as if still awaiting the wedding guests. The full set of porcelain is worth 250 GP (although fragile and unwieldy to transport), and the silver setting is worth 150 GP. A **large monitor lizard** (HD 3; AC 5/14; Atk 1 bite (1d8 + diseased saliva (1d6 wasting disease per day until save)) has somehow found its way into the house and lurks under a table. Each round of melee combat has a 25% chance of upsetting a table or furniture and breaking 2d12 GP worth of porcelain.

Vestibule: The house is accessible from the west through a door, barely visible through the vines. Hacking through the vines is possible, although they are iron-hard. The vines can take 50 HP of damage (automatic hits) but each person aiding in hacking their way through will incur 1d4 HP of injury from the thorns and brambles that seem almost animated in their resistance to entry. Like the predator-vines above, bludgeoning has reduced damage, and fire will cause double damage.

Parlor (Room No. 4): The room smells dank with water-damaged furniture and rugs. A few vines have broken windows, arching into the room. Moldy blotches in the carpet look suspiciously like silhouettes. The floor creaks and sags, but is otherwise sound.

Pantry: The Pantry, like other rooms in the house, shows evidence of the houses' immediate abandonment after the bride's eventual demise. The shelves are still stocked, although any foodstuffs have long since rotted or been consumed by vermin. A few rats (normal) may scuttle away upon entry. Under a moldy flour sack is an ornate silver hand mirror (250 GP), possibly secreted away by a pilfering servant and forgotten.

Old Kitchen: The overgrowth has not inundated the kitchen/servant's entrance to the same extent as the rest of the house, and the foliage may be pulled aside to gain access with effort, but without any significant injury.

The kitchen is filled with dust and spider webs. A few silk-wrapped rat corpses are scattered about. Shelves and cabinets are generally empty, some have been toppled. The 'dais' on the south side of the kitchen contains a work area and a small table used by the former servants as an eating area.

A **giant trap-door spider** has made itself at home in the oven along the west wall (2HD, AC6/13, dmg 1d6+*paralysis* (as ghoul)). Anyone within 10 feet of the oven will cause the creature to burst out and attack with surprise (5 in 6).

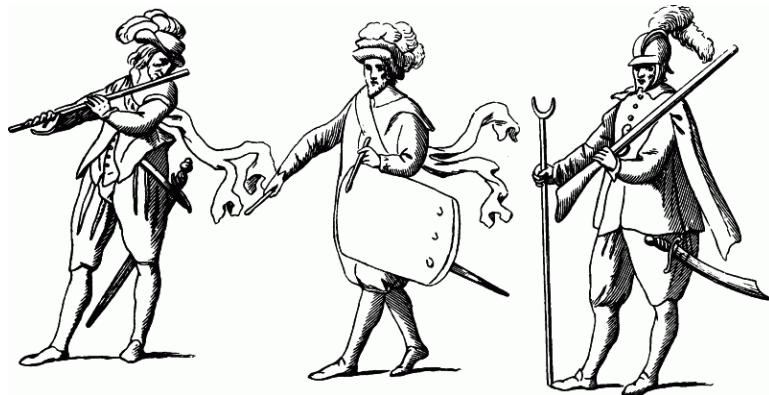
Hidden in a crock among stale and musty spices is a leather bag containing 15 GP and a garnet worth 50 GP. Narrow stairs to the cellar are found behind a door at the northwest corner of the room. The cellar has become flooded and filled with water, and nothing of value is to be found.

Panelled Room: Formerly a servant's quarter, little remains in this room but an unmade bed and empty chest. The last servant in the house packed up and vacated immediately upon the death of their mistress, with no hesitation or looking back.

FIRST FLOOR:

The First Floor is most directly accessible via the East Tower spiral stairs. The West Tower suffered a lightning strike a generation ago, and the stairway is burned out and impassable. The front stairs located in the southeast hallway likewise have collapsed from water damage, although an expedition could attempt to grapple their way to the second floor.

Painted Room (Room No. 5): – The room's walls are lined with full-length murals depicting the family's lands, and scenes of harvests, hunting, and festive occasions. The depicted scenes in the paintings have become 'alive' by the ghostly energies. Anyone viewing the animations must make a save or descend into madness during the time spent in the house (Extremely paranoid, can only defend self if in combat, attack at -4). The madness will fade if the PC exits the house. The paintings will revert to normal upon dispelling of the ghosts (below).



Long Gallery (Room No. 6): At sunset of the wedding anniversary, a total of 13 ghosts appear. These are members of the wedding party, summoned back from their immortal repose on this tragic night. They still wear their wedding finery, but drag clouds of ghostly ash behind themselves. Four compose an incorporeal musical quartet, playing the betrothal anthem repeatedly. Eight are partnered and dancing. The 13th is the bride, her sorrowful countenance requiring a save vs *fear* upon first viewing. She will approach PCs, silently calling for her betrothed.

The ghosts are incorporeal and may not be permanently harmed or turned (treat as if they are a single, high HD undead). Nor will they attack, as they are focused only on their dance. Striking a ghost with a magic weapon (assume AC2/18) will dissipate an individual ghost temporarily, but it will be drawn back to the dance within 1d2 rounds. The music may be heard elsewhere in the house, but will be heard clearly once the PCs enter the room.

Dance with the haunted bride – She will approach PC with highest CHA, who must make a CON check to be successful in dancing with her without retching and fainting. If that person fails, she will approach the next most comely PC (Gender inconsequential). Any PC who 'gets' what she intends and approaches her instead, will make their CON check at +2.



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The pair must dance through one round of the betrothal song, at which time soul of her doomed betrothed will emerge from his own limbo to possess the PC, dancing with her. The PC will have no recollection of this, although any onlookers will see the couple glow with a silver light. At the end of the dance, the party of ghosts will bow/curtsy and disappear. The bride will kiss the 'groom' and the spirits of the two lovers will separate from the possessed PC, dissipating with a sigh.

The bride's dancing partner will receive good 'luck' (+1 saves for a period of one year), and a random necklace (from the dowry chest, Master Bedroom, now freed of its curse) will appear around their neck. A silver key will appear on the floor. Anyone picking it up will feel it pull to Room 7 (below) if the dowry is undisturbed. Otherwise, it will appear as a mundane iron key that will fit no lock in the house.

Master Bedroom (Room 7): The east-center room was the former master bedroom, to be given over to the newlyweds for their honeymoon night. The betrothal bed – still made, is covered in mold and mildew. The bride never slept in it and kept it undisturbed, awaiting her groom. A small locked chest with the wedding dowry is still at the foot of the bed. The coins and jewelry inside are now cursed by the sorrow and death. Anyone touching the chest will feel uneasy. If opened, the chest will be found to contain 196 GP, 319 SP, a sash worked with gold thread (120 GP) and four silver chains with garnet, topaz, jade and alexandrite (110, 90, and 90 and 75 GP, respectively). Anyone collecting the dowry prior to successfully dancing with the bride must make a save or be *cursed* (-1 to all saves). The valuables cannot be exchanged or pawned, as anyone viewing them will see only blackened lumps of tar and feel the same uneasiness. *Remove curse* will also alleviate the issue (if the PCs find the 'dowry' chest after the dance (Gallery, above), the curse will have been lifted).

Side Bedroom (Room No. 8): This was bride's childhood bedroom, still made up as for an adolescent girl. Three childhood dolls, animated by the restless spirit, dart out of the shadows, giggling and cackling as they attack (**animated dolls**, HD 1-1, AC 5/14, dmg 1d3, save vs *fear* or be paralyzed for one round, dolls immune to *sleep* and *charm*). A chess set with jade pieces (170 GP) is on a shelf, along with a few uncommon books of poetry and epics (50 GP total).

Side Bedroom (Room No. 9): The second bedroom, belonging to a long-departed sibling, is bare but for cobwebs, dust, and a ratty badger-hide rug on the floor (no value).

Southeast Bedroom (Room No. 10): The southeast-most bedroom has a water-stained floor due to rain leaking into the building. If two PCs step onto the weakened floor, it will collapse, causing a fall into Buttery (1d6+1 damage per falling PC on broken bottles and crockery).



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