

Ballad: Haunted

"The earth holds here a social case, Haunted in life by too much surface."

In this chapter, we're introduced to a man haunted not by the traditional ghosts of folklore but by the specters of social obligations and faux pas. The author engages us with a portrayal of hauntings of a peculiar kind—ones that society bestows. From Black Monday and its associated dread of school days with their loathsome routines, to the haunting memories of a love lost at seventeen to an "elderly Colonel," the narrative unfolds the man's life as a series of eerie visitations from the past.

These ghosts are not of the supernatural realm but are the remnants of embarrassing, painful, and regretful moments of social missteps; from the fiasco of a first smoke leading to family disputes, a disastrously addressed judge in court, to the low points of his career with rejected manuscripts and failed investments. Each ghost represents a milestone of societal failure or embarrassment, a tapestry of the man's social and professional misadventures rather than supernatural encounters.

Reflecting a lifetime beset by these metaphorical hauntings, the author closes with a reflection on the protagonist's desire for an epitaph that acknowledges the unique burden that plagued him—not ghosts of lore, but the all-too-real specters of social expectations and missteps. Through clever wordplay and evocative imagery, the ballad delves into the notion that, for some, the most haunting experiences are those we live through in the light of day, among the judging eyes of society. The protagonist's life, marked not by spectral visions but the ghosts of social faux pas, offers a poignant commentary on the real horrors that pervade human existence—the unseen, often unspoken anxieties that follow us through life.