

THE CANDLE SPECTER



Written by Steven Dawes

Based on an illustration by Kent Burles

“...I lay sprawled in the alleyway, sunk in a drunken stupor, barely conscious, when I became aware of a figure slowly moving, almost gliding towards me. The figure moved closer, ever closer, and then bent down to place a candle it had been cradling in its hands, at my feet. The very appearance and demeanor of the figure filled me with horror, even as it began to move away from me, and I staggered upward determined, at the very least, to sweep away the cursed candle at my feet. But my hands, so bent on the destruction of the candle, suddenly were powerless, and fell to my side. And now the candle gutters fitfully at my feet, and I await the return of the specter, and the fate it intends for me ...”

There are libraries of documentation amongst the members of the Lazlo Society (and therefore the inner Lazlo Agency) that has yet to be fully catalogued or even translated and made digitally accessible. Amongst these vast libraries there are a few interviews and reports that detail the folklore of a specter or an apparition said to wander the world, searching opportunistically for human prey. Once a victim's selected the specter first gives, or leaves the victim a luminaire (most often a candle) and then leaves him, only to return later to consume their “life energy” or “spirit”.

Many of these documented stories, interviews and reports had only recently been compiled by Jordie Kravitz, Psychic Medium and a linguist intern at the Lazlo Agency who recognized a pattern in the folklore while translating various documents in different languages. Throughout the process of compiling the folklore Jordie discovered a common name for this apparition: the Candle Specter. Translating and gathering these stories, interviews and testimonies into one file should have been the end of it for Jordie; but one fateful night and a Candle Specter had more in store for him.

No one will ever know if the timing was coincidental or intentional. What is known is that Jordie was awoken in the middle of the night by the blue-green light of a candle clutched in the gaunt hands of a Candle Specter. Its actions were exactly as described in the folklore Jordie had just been working on a week earlier; it quietly glided across his bedroom and placed the candle on his nightstand. A wave of terror washed over Jordie as he tried to put out the candle, but was unable to move from the instant he tried.

For hours Jordie lay in his bed, fully awake and fully aware of his situation and staring at the candle, knowing that the Specter would return for him eventually. Leslie, his Spirit Guide conversed with him and kept him company, promising to be with him until the end. Late afternoon arrived and the candle had melted nearly to the bottom when the phantom odor of heavy incense wafted into the room; the Candle Specter had returned! Helpless and at the mercy of the Specter, Jordie awaited his fate. His bedroom door opened.

Jordie's roommate came in looking for him, and seeing Jordie in such a state had come to his aid, helping him up. The assistance of another person seemed to snap Jordie out of the paralysis. But when he looked to his nightstand, Jordie knew it wasn't over; the candle was

still there. The candle returned to its original length, but it was still there, and was still lit. Perhaps even more surprising, his roommate couldn't see the candle; only Jordie could.

Being fortunate to be part of the Lazlo Agency, Jordie called and arranged for an emergency meeting to relay what he'd experienced to several members of the Agency and to prepare for dealing with the Candle Specter. On his way to the meeting, Jordie was shocked and alarmed to spot the candle in various places along the way. He spotted it in the reflection of a mirror or a window, only to not see it when he turned around. He saw the familiar blue-green glow around the corner of a hallway, only to blink out the moment he rounded the corner as if the candle were snuffed out. The candle, and therefore the Specter were haunting him.

Once Jordie got to the Agency he would spend the rest of the night detailing as much information about his experience as possible. Ironically Jordie provided the most recent and best detailed account his Candle Specter file contains to date. From there, they all waited.

In the early morning hours the Candle Specter came again for Jordie. Only Jordie, a fellow Psychic Medium, a Ghost Hunter (via his Ghost Goggles) and a Sensitive who could see the invisible could see the specter coming. All attempts to communicate with it were met with silence as the Specter seemed only interested in Jordie. It silently approached him and began to leech the life right out of him, and would have succeeded if it hadn't been for the group effort of his colleagues attacking all at once and destroying it. It fought back in various ways and threatened the lives of everyone in the group, but in the end Jordie lived and the Candle Specter was no more.

This encounter has given the agency a greater understanding of the Candle Specter and how it operates. For example, it provided an understanding as to why there are so few reported encounters; unless the paralysis is interrupted by a third party the victim lies helpless until the Specter returns to feed on him. On the other hand this encounter has also left the Agency with more questions than answers. What is the purpose of the candle? Why can't anyone but the intended victim see the candle? How does the candle seem to follow the victim wherever he goes? Or does it follow the victim? Is it a hallucination or illusion of some kind? Why does the Specter leave and return to feed on its chosen victim hours later?

It's also become apparent that there may be other groups or societies that know the answers to these questions, but so far have no intention of answering them. There may be cults and secret societies that have much better understanding of the Candle Specter; or at least enough of an understanding in that they can summon and control them.

Secrets and Habits: (known to characters with **Lore: Entitles and Ghosts** and either **Lore: Magic** or **Lore: Cults and Secret Societies**): Depending on what the Candle Specter is wearing, one can know the intentions of the entity. If one is only wearing hooded shrouds then it's simply choosing its targets as opportunity permits. If one is decorated in chains,

medallions and magic related objects, it's been summoned and/or commanded by someone or something; most likely to haunt or kill a specific person.

The Candle Specter

Note: Is referred to as *Candle Specter* or *Luminaire Spirit* in every known language.

Alignment: Miscreant; a self-serving haunter.

Attributes: Not applicable. It's intelligent and strong willed enough to be a devious haunter in every sense of the word, equal to an I.Q. of 11. Has a speed of 44 (30 mph/48 km) and is invisible and intangible as an energy being.

Armor rating (A.R.): Not Applicable in energy form.

Hit Points: 1D4x10+15, add 1D4+1 per level of experience.

Discorporation: Only people who can see the invisible or have been presented with a candle can see the Candle Specter. Their natural state is invisible and appears as a floating tongue of flame (resembling the flame of a lit candle) when not assuming the appearance of a gaunt old man under a hooded shroud. When destroyed, it vanishes in a puff of smoke, as if a flame that was suddenly snuffed out.

Threat level: x4; Haunter.

Horror Factor: 7 in its tongue of flame form, but 15 in the form of the shrouded man presenting you with the candle. The unexpected appearance of the strange floating apparition and the aura of impending doom that comes from the candle is a truly frightening experience. Those who don't know that trying to put the flames out immobilizes them and fails to save vs. Horror Factor are compelled to snuff out the candle.

Size: About the size of a golf ball as an ethereal tongue of flame, but looks nearly seven feet tall as a full torso apparition.

Weight: Not applicable.

Average Life Span: Immortal until destroyed. Legends of these beings go as far back as recorded history.

P.P.E.: 1D6+6.

Natural Abilities: Ethereal and intangible by nature, meaning it can float through solid matter. Its natural state is invisible and it cannot make itself visible except to those who it's presented a candle. Only those who can see the invisible can otherwise see the Candle Specter.

Not adversely affected by the light of day. Can hover, float and fly (see attributes). While it does not speak (is either incapable or has no reason to) and is unresponsive to any attempts at communication via Telepathy, it seems to understand all languages (at 60%).

Special: Paralyze/Immobilize Victim: When the Specter presents a candle to its chosen victim, the victim becomes immobile (no saving throw) if they make any attempt to put it out.

Aura of Terror: The Candle Specter emits an aura of terror when presenting its victim with a candle, creating a Horror Factor of 15. If the victim fails his horror factor, he's compelled to put out the candle and is immobilized. If the victim saves and flees the area instead of putting out the candle, both the candle and specter vanishes instantly (and searches for other prey).

Bond to P.P.E.: Once immobile, the specter has bonded with its victims P.P.E. and can find or track him wherever he goes. Even if the victim tries to hide its conscious via entering the Astral Plane the Specter will find him. The candle may be a symbolic of the specter bonding with the victims P.P.E. in some way, and when the candle melts and gets close to the bottom (within 1D8+4 hours) the Candle Specter returns to the victim to feed on his life force.

Drain Life Force: Upon returning and within twenty feet of its victim, the Candle Specter begins to drain the life from its victim, doing 1D6+1 Hit Points per action! This is automatic and can be performed while the Specter is doing other things (like dealing with attackers). If the victim is immobilized he can do nothing but feel his life draining away, his vision darkening until all he can see is the light of the candle... and then nothing at all.

If the victim's immobility is broken (via a third party) he can try to flee from the specter, but is weakened and slow. He loses any initiative and two actions per melee round, is -3 to all combat actions and -15% to skills. If the specter stops draining the victim's life force (is destroyed or gets out of reach) he recovers from his weakened state after 1D4+2 minutes. Hit Points recover at twice the normal rate.

Recover Hit Points via Drain Life Force: If the Candle Specter is injured, feeding on its victim recovers lost Hit Points on a 1-to-1 basis (Example: draining 5 H.P. recovers 5 H.P.)

Vulnerabilities: 1. All magic and psionic attacks. They're impervious to physical attacks, energy, gases, drugs, poison, cold, heat, fire, and most everything else that can harm a physical being.
2. Exorcism, Banishment, Constrain Being, and Summon Lesser Being are all excellent means of controlling or discharging the Candle Specter (at least temporarily).

P.C.C. Notes: Diviner: It's always possible that the Diviner can be tipped off that a "Specter" or ghost is nearby and on the prowl for selecting its next victim, or is actively haunting one. Most often this insight will be revealed while looking at a flame, a fire or smoke of some sort.
Fire Walker: A Fire Walker will instantly sense the Specter's candle when within 100 feet of it. However, it will feel "different" or "strange"; its vibe is cold and unnerving. Even more alarming, if the Fire Walker is presented with a candle and attempts to extinguish, part, draw, eat, fuel it or interact with it in any way he will become immobile and at the specter's mercy. While a Fire Walker can see and sense another target's candle, he's limited in his actions with it. He cannot extinguish or control it in any way (its strange nature prevents being affected) with one exception. A Fire Walker CAN break the hold a Candle Specter has on another target by casting "Fuel Fire" (if he has the ability), causing the flame to suddenly grow in size and intensity, melting down the candle and wick quickly, snuffing out in a matter of seconds. With the candle exhausted, the Specter's hold on its target is broken. Note: The Candle Specter cannot drain the victim's life energy without the candle and will probably flee if the candle is destroyed, seeking a new victim elsewhere.

Latent: May have a precognitive dream that warns them of a Candle Specter. The dream is simple but effective; the Latent is surrounded in darkness, but then a tongue of blue-green fire springs up in front of them, illuminating an old man in a hooded shroud. The psychic tries to run away but can't as if he's rooted firmly to the ground. The hooded man will close in on him until all the psychic sees can see is the flame before waking up in cold sweat.

Nega-Psychic: Nega-Psychic's are never presented with a candle and cannot see the specter.

Psychic Medium: Like most entities, the Candle Specter may stop, listen and consider what the Medium has to say to it, but they're not compelled to obey or do anything asked of them (and probably won't). Its phantom smell is heavy incense, with a particularly smoky tinge to it.

Sensitive Psychic: Some Sensitive abilities useful when dealing with a Candle Specter:

-Using the *Empathy* ability will detail that the person being haunted by a Candle Specter is obviously and genuinely terrified for their lives.

-Using the *Clairvoyance* ability can get a flash of insight that the victim is being haunted and how soon it will come for him and may get a brief vision of the Candle Specter presenting a candle to the victim.

-The *Dispel Spirits* ability will not work on the Candle Specter, nor will the *Mind Block* ability protect the sensitive from the *Life Drain* attack.

-*Psychic Invisibility* is ineffective against a Candle Specter.

-*See the Invisible* will enable the sensitive to see the specter, but not the candle (unless the sensitive is currently being haunted).

-*See Aura* will be the most interesting ability to use on the victim of a Candle Specter haunting. His aura will appear strange; the field of the aura will appear shrunken and flickers like that of the tongue of flame on a lit candle. And while there's no presence of a Possessing entity, their aura will have what looks like a strange aberration that's similar to the presence of magic energy, but more interwoven into their aura.

-Using *Sense Magic* will reveal a slight magical energy that's surprisingly noticeable, almost as if it's designed to be noticed, or easily traceable or trackable.

R.C.C. Skills or Equivalents (does not improve with experience): Land Navigation 80%, Streetwise 70%, Tracking (people) 75%, Tailing 85%, Anthropology 30%, Psychology 40%

Equivalent Level of Experience: 1D4+3

Attacks per Melee: Four psionic, magic or physical attacks per melee (**Drain Life Force** is performed automatically and does not use actions/attacks.)

Damage: By psionics only

R.C.C. Bonuses: +2 to Dodge as an energy being, +2 to save vs. magic, +3 to save vs. psionic attacks, +10 to save vs. Horror Factor.

Magic: None beyond its natural abilities.

Psionics: Needs a 12 or higher to save vs. psionic attack. Base I.S.P. is only 30, but it can draw on the I.S.P. around it to perform psionic feats (the same as other entities detailed between pages 244-252).

Limited Psionic Powers: Mind Block (4), Presence Sense (4), See the Invisible (4), See Aura (6), Sixth Sense (2), Telekinesis (varies), and Ectoplasm (6+). All Equal to its level of experience.

Special: Can perform the magic spell **Life Drain** (page 114 of BTS1) as if it were a psionic attack for 20 I.S.P.

Enemies & Allies: None per se.

Habitat: Anywhere, but believed to be rare due to the lack of eyewitness reports. Then again, most of its victims may be immobilized and drained before someone can snap them out of it, so Candle Specter attacks may be more frequent than we know.

GM Eyes Only: This specter best serves as a haunting to deal with while dealing with other problems/situations. If all is quiet and a Candle Specter chooses a victim and the victim is snapped out of his paralysis the group can simply wait for its return and deal with it at an advantage.

However, if a PC or NPC is selected as a victim in the middle of an ongoing investigation or while under an enemy threat, it could show up at the most inconvenient of times (such as in the middle of a firefight, casting or countering a spell, or dealing with cultists, monsters, ghouls or worse at the time) to begin draining the life of a PC or NPC right under the party's nose.

On the other hand, if the group locks themselves up in waiting for a Candle Specter's return, unfortunate events may happen while they're away, enemies may see their hiding as a sign of weakness and strike or taking advantage of their absence elsewhere.

Paranormal Investigation Notes:

Electronic Surveillance: The Candle Specter does not show up on security cameras or similar forms of surveillance. Carefully studying the video footage of where and when a Candle Specter is known to have been reveals nothing more than bursts of static and distorted footage.

Crime Scene Investigation: Due to the immobilization of the victim and the intangible nature of the Candle Specter, the scene of their death will have no real evidence to offer forensic investigators and scientists.

Forensics: Forensic evidence will also be hard to come by due to a lack of physical interaction on the part of the Candle Specter. The adrenaline level in the victim will be extremely high, which will be noted as unusual considering the circumstances. This likely means that the victim was conscious when he died, but there's no evidence to support having a heart attack or similar cause of death typical to this situation. The cause of death of a Candle Specter victim is commonly ruled "Sudden unexpected nocturnal death syndrome" (SUNDS) or "dying in their sleep", although there may be note that the victim may have experienced a nightmare before they died to explain the extremely high level of adrenaline in their system.