



The Ghosts of Sleath

By James Herbert

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A reissue of James Herbert's terrifying tale of a psychic investigator whose case makes him fear for his own sanity

Investigator David Ash is sent to the picturesque village of Sleath in the Chiltern Hills to look into mysterious reports of mass hauntings. What he discovers is a terrified community gripped by horrors and terrorized by ghosts from the ancient village's long history.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Veteran horror writer James Herbert brings back the protagonist of *Haunted* to investigate psychic disturbances in a picturesque village in the Lake District of England. It's an interesting mishmash of a novel--not entirely successful, but enjoyable all the same. Herbert's penchant for gorgeously visceral carnage unfortunately clashes with his equally skilled ability to create a subtle mood of supernatural terror. And he throws way too many ingredients into the stew: family secrets, rape, infanticide, necrophilia, the "Black Arts," a moldering mansion, a sinister yellow fog, drowning children, poltergeist pranks, a haunted painting, a tormented vicar, a neglectful doctor, even an evil knight. Yet, as *Necrofile: The Review of Horror Fiction* reports, "None of these flaws are fatal. These days, making a classic ghost story work at all--let alone on the scale of *The Ghosts of Sleath*--requires a daunting level of craft, control, and consistency.... Many of the novel's supernatural elements ... evoke the requisite chills."

From Publishers Weekly

David Ash, the skeptical investigator of supposed psychic phenomenon and the hero of Herbert's chilling ghost story *Haunted* (1988), returns to grapple with an entire village full of spooks in this disappointing sequel. The rural English town of Sleath seems an unremarkable hamlet, but Ash senses "an atmosphere that's conducive to evil" shortly after being summoned there by the Reverend George Lockwood. He discovers that many of the townsfolk are seeing specters of the recently departed. Herbert's usual skill at developing plot through the experiences of several characters fails him here, as it becomes evident that the residents of Sleath exist only to be terrorized by the increasingly malevolent ghosts. Ash proves little help in making sense of the hauntings, getting so sidetracked in his budding romance with Lockwood's daughter that Herbert has to introduce mysterious Seamus Phelan in the book's latter half to explain what is happening. But Phelan's appearance raises as many questions as it answers, including who he is, why he's so knowledgeable about Sleath's dark heritage and why the town's centuries-old legacy has chosen to manifest itself now. The book's abrupt, inconclusive ending leaves the door open for Ash to return; if he does, Herbert will have to spend part of the next novel tying up ends left loose here.

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Review

Vintage Herbert - a classic Daily Mail
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Celia Redmond:

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