

"New in Town" Monologue from *Skulltenders*, Cohen Edenfield

The following monologue opens the first episode of *Skulltenders*, a narrative D&D podcast taking place in a world and setting of my design. The monologue is delivered by the Mayor of Ghost Town to the listener, who in the framing of the narrative is a newly-dead arrival to the afterlife.

Hello, hello! New in town, are you? Don't worry, don't worry. You have the *look*. No, no need to apologize. I'd be more concerned if you *didn't* look lost. Everyone has a first day, after all. But maybe... let me explain it like this.

Absolutely nothing was meant to last forever, and absolutely everything ends. In the withering march of time, leaves turn brown, mountains crumble, seas dry up, the very stars grow old and red and veiny. And of course, people die. Some die easy and some die ugly, but everyone eventually dies. Their soul leaves their body to be borne along by the great River, their sins and memories washed away. The River carries their soul through the psychic wastelands, to the very edge of the afterlife, where they join the Eversoul. Old souls go in, new souls come out. It's quite a tidy little operation, and it's been going on for... quite some time.

Now, there is a hitch. Those, like you, who don't die easy, those who cling tightly to life, whether by bitterness or tenacity or obligation... well, you're just not ready by the time you get here. You show up dirty and disheveled, burdened by a lifetime of memory, of anger and regret and desire--living notions that would pollute the Eversoul.

And so you need a place. Somewhere to pass the time while you let all those things go and fade away to innocence, ready to join the Eversoul.

You need a town. Ghost Town. My town. The city on the edge of the afterlife.

Let's take a look at it, shall we?

Look! A city by the sea, with impossibly high stone cliffs to the east and west, reaching up high to the edge of everything. A

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great River runs through the middle of the city, stretching from the psychic wastelands to the north down south to Bitter Bay, where the great green Eversoul floats, and waits, for you, and me, and absolutely everyone else.

And around that River, the most slapdash city you've ever seen: saloons and shantytowns, surf shacks and chandelier factories. A pyramid, a crumbling castle, even a library.

And a sad story hangs on every one of them, because every building in Ghost Town is the ghost of a building that was destroyed in some catastrophe in the living world. With the exception of one. It's that one at the north edge of town, you see it? The bright silver one, the only building that reaches across both sides of the River. That's City Hall. That's where I have my office.

You know, I'm reminded of a story that began there. You don't mind, do you? It'll be just the thing to help us pass the time, and help you forget all your troubles.

It was a day very much like this one...