

R E V E N A N T

by Clark Ashton Smith

I am the specter who returns
 Unto some desolate world in ruin borne afar
 On the black flowing of Lethæan skies:
 Ever I search, in cryptic galleries,
 The void sarcophagi, the broken urns
 Of many a vanished avatar:
 Or haunt the gloom of grumbling pylons vast
 In temples that enshrine the shadowy past.
 Viewless, impalpable and fleet,
 I roam stupendous avenues, and greet
 Familiar sphinxes carved from everlasting stone,
 Or the fair, brittle gods of long ago,
 Decayed and fallen low.
 And there I mark the tall clepsammiæ
 That time has overthrown,
 And empty clepsydræ,
 And dials drowned in umbrage never-lifting;
 And there, on rusty parapegms,
 I read the ephemerides
 Of antique stars and elder planets drifting
 Oblivionward in night.
 And there, with purples of the tomb bedight,
 And crowned with funeral gems,
 I hold awhile the throne
 Whereon mine immemorial selves have sate,
 Canopied by the triple-tinted glory
 Of the three suns forever paled and flown.
 I am the specter who returns
 And dwells content with his forlorn estate
 In mansions lost and hoary
 Where no lamp burns;
 Who feasts within the sepulcher,
 And finds the ancient shadows lovelier
 Than gardens all emblazed with sevenfold noon,
 Or topaz-built towers
 That throng below some iris-pouring moon.
 Exiled and homeless in the younger stars,
 Henceforth I shall inhabit that grey clime
 Whose days belong to primal calendars;

Nor would I come again
Back to the garish terrene hours;
For I am free of vaults unfathomable
And treasures lost from time:
With bat and vampire there
I flit through somber skies immersurable
Or fly adown the unending subterranean;
Mummied and ceremented,
I sit in councils of the kingly dead;
And oftentimes for vestiture I wear
The granite of great idols looming darkly
In atlantean fanes;
Or closely now and starkly
I cling as clings the attenuating air
About the ruins bare.