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Sketches: Keening Banshee

Magic Arcana
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Welcome to a *Halloween Special* edition of [Sketches](#)! Today we take a look behind the scenes of one of Ravnica's creepiest moonlit denizens, the **Keening Banshee**. This wailing, soul-draining spirit haunts opponents as well as Ravnica's rooftops. But first, some background on the artist, Robert Bliss.

Artist Portfolio

Artist [Robert Bliss](#) is a particularly good choice for a Halloween Sketches, since he contributed such creepy work such as [Skulking Ghost](#), [Reanimate](#) and [Cannibalize](#) back in the *Mirage* and *Tempest* block days. Even Robert's famous *Mirage* version of [Pacifism](#) features a zombie! He returns to **Magic** illustration with *Ravnica*.

Art Description

The first step of the creation of a card's art is its art description. The art description tells the artist what the card will do, what its flavor is, and what the mood of the illustration should be. Here were the instructions given to Robert for **Keening Banshee**:

Color: Black (non-guild)

Location: Night sky

Action: Show a banshee, the ghost of a young woman who died prematurely, floating through a moonlit sky. The banshee is screaming, and the scream is enough to drive anyone mad.

Focus: The banshee

Mood: Beautiful and madness-inducing

The next step is for the artist to submit sketches of his or her vision of the art description.

Sketches

Here is Robert's first concept sketch submitted for **Keening Banshee**.



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Keening Banshee sketch 1 by Robert Bliss

This sketch shows the ghoulish scream the art team was looking for, and the trademark Bliss macabre-creature feel. It also captures the moonlit sky in the art description, but the sense of a flying spirit is lost here -- there's no feel that the banshee is airborne without more context.



Keening Banshee sketch 2 by Robert Bliss

A terrific improvement -- here we see clearly that the banshee is flying, by the trees going by beneath her. And we see that she's a spirit by the eerie curls that form at the ends of her legs and clothing. However, there's a setting problem here -- can you spot it?

Final Art

It's the trees! Ravnica is an unbroken urban sprawl -- there are no areas of forest as seen in that second sketch. Robert submitted this final art, replacing the trees with the rooftops of buildings.



Keening Banshee final art by Robert Bliss

Finished Card

And here's the card in its final state, as you can see in booster packs of *Ravnica: City of Guilds*. Creep out your opponent (with a little help from Robert Bliss) with **Keening Banshee**!



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