

How to Perform the Laundry Ritual— and Keep Your Blacks Blacker than Black *a goth guide to laundry*

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Introduction: Preliminaries and Motivations

The washing machine: a blindingly white, square device located in an all-too-bright room with white walls. An apparatus that can transform your most cherished Bauhaus 1978 shirt, the piece that redefined how black shirts could be, into a stretched-out, grey rag.

Despite what Mundanes (*i.e.* non-Goths) may believe, Goths hold cleanliness in high esteem. Whereas years of dust on our chemise from Great-Great-Grandmother Gertrude, or oil and suspicious smells on the aforementioned Bauhaus tee may seem to lend authenticity to our position of Undead Anachronism, the Goth is a transcendental creature of aesthetics and cultivated taste. Thus, despite what we endure while toiling like Mundanes in the mortal world, we will not be tainted by their impurities. Dust and dirt, sweat and stains, away! Begone!

Therefore, the washing machine must be encountered. But how to perform this frightful, yet essential deed? To protect the timeless existence of your Garb of the Night, as well as ensure you are not shocked into the world of the Completely Dead by the brightness and whiteness of Laundry, I offer this guide to the Laundry Ritual as a humble service to fellow Goths.

Part One: Preparing the Way

Several measures must be taken to protect The Launderer, as well as What-Must-Be-Washed, from the Vicious and Ghastly Machine of Washing.

First, don an appropriate Washing Garment. To combat the stark whiteness of the Machine and the bright void of the Room, the Garment must be black and highly accessorized. To avoid aligning oneself with the bareness of the Room, keep all skin, except the face, covered. Possible Garb may include a long robe, pants, tall shoes, long gloves, and a hat that covers much of the face. To survive the void of the Room, accessorize with rings, bracelets, necklaces, and earrings made of heavy metals and healing stones. Religious jewelry, such as crucifixes, ankhs, and pentacles are highly recommended. It is imperative that no part of the Goth Body comes in contact with the Machine of Washing. Cover, cover! In addition, under no circumstances should the Goth encounter the Bright Void of the Room without proper protection. Accessorize, accessorize!

Then, prepare What-Must-Be-Washed. Turn all items with external embroidery and/or printing inside out, thereby subverting the churning soap from wreaking havoc on your gold-silk fleur-du-mal or lookalike Curtis's "Hate" jacket. Place What-Must-Be-Washed into a large black sack, and twist the top of the sack closed, allowing no light to disturb the Garb Within.

Finally, perform the Pre-Laundry Purification Ritual upon the Room of Washing. For this ritual, you need a lighter, one large black candle and one large white candle (both in holders), a framed portrait of the Goth Protector of your choosing (Reznor and Giger are particularly potent)

and the collected works of Rimbaud (for warmer months) or Eliot (for colder months). Once materials are assembled, the Ritual may commence. Light the candles. With the black candle in your left hand and the white candle in your right, slowly walk from the Room of Preparation to the Room of Laundry. Place the two candles on opposite sides of the Room of Laundry, keeping the flames far from the Machine of Washing—Goth Garb must not catch fire! Return to the Room of Preparation and take up the Portrait and Literature. Holding the Sacred Relics to your chest, make your way to the Room of Laundry and place one Relic on each of the sides of the Room without candles. Now, you should have a candle or relic at all four sides of the room. Return to the Room of Preparation and, grasping the twisted-shut end of the black sack, carry the Garb to the Room of Washing.

Part Two: The Washing

Congratulations, intrepid Child of the Night. The preliminary rituals are completed, and you have entered the Room of Washing with the Goth Self and Garb intact. Now, it is time to wash.

First, while chanting the lyrics to Inkubus Sukkubus’s “Song of the Water Nymph,” turn the Water Temperature to the coldest wash and rinse available. With water chilled to the deathly freeze of the river Lethe, from which the souls of the dead must drink, the black dyes will cling to the fabric and refuse to be churned away into the Oblivion of the Water Pipes.

Second, unfurl the top of the Black Sack of Garb. Hold each item up to the portrait of your Goth Protector, and then place it gently in a loose clump in the washer. Do not stretch the garment around the side of the washer, as the violent agitation will wreak Havoc and Doom upon your Garb. Goth Garb falls into two categories: (1) that which receives much violent agitation (i.e. shirts worn to fierce concerts) or (2) that which must remain as little agitated as possible (i.e. fragile heirlooms from centuries ago). In any event, Goth Garb benefits from as little mechanical agitation as possible.

Third, add the Liquid of Purification. If Garb is new or recently dyed, use one cup of vinegar or salt for regular loads (two cups for large loads). Vinegar or salt will ionize the water, forcing the dye to remain on the garments. For Garb that has previously been washed, selection of Purification Liquid is key. Do not use products with bleach or chlorine, as this will bleed the blackness from your clothes and you will be left with Grey Rags. Use a product that neutralizes chlorine and is formulated for the Blackest of Loads. If possible, use Woolite Dark or Perwoll Black Magic, two Elixirs of Clean available in most supermarkets. Use half the recommended amount of Purification Liquid. This will not result in Garb of Inferior Cleanliness. This will facilitate Eternally-Black Garb.

Finally, let the Washing Cycle begin. Close the lid of the Machine, select the Light Soil Setting, and choose the appropriate level of water. As you intone Cradle of Filth’s “Satanic Mantra” for protection, turn on the Machine of Washing. Once the Cycle of Clean is underway, you must stake vigil. Despite the seeming safety of your Garb once the Machine of Clean is churning, you must remain in the Room until you leave with Washed Garb. Go to the side of the room where the Collected Works rest and sit with your back to the wall. To protect the blackness of your clothes on a psychic level, browse the collected works until the Cycle of Clean has commenced.

Part Three: The Aftermath

As Seether sang, “The worst is over now / We can breathe again.” You, Dark Child, have almost completed the Ritual. All that stands between you and Clean Garb are a few simple tasks.

First, once the Wash Cycle is finished, the Garb must be dried. It is imperative that you do not place your Garb in the Machine of Dryness, for this Contraption of Evil will wilt your Plush Dark Garb into Threadbare Grey Drabness—a fate that simply will not suffice. The Goth Solution is air-drying. Such a method of Garb Drying may occur by placing all Garb on hangers, then hanging the Garb in a well-ventilated area. If space is limited, you may dry Garb by laying the article flat on a smooth surface (i.e. the top of your coffin, ritual table, or floor). If a speedy drying is of the essence, the dryer may be used. Keep in mind that this is only under Exceptional Circumstances, and the coolest temperature and most delicate settings must be used.

Then, regardless of the finer details of how your Drying Ritual occurs, the Garb will benefit from being placed on hangers and remaining unworn for the next 24-48 hours. This Stasis Period allows the Garb to completely dry, return to its original shape, and retain all dye. In addition, the Trauma of Washing can create negative energies within your Garb, a condition that 24-48 hours in your Dark Closet will certainly cure.

Finally, once the Garb is drying, return to the Room of Purification and remove the Sacred Relics, returning these items to their proper places. Descend back into the Cavern of Clean and grasp the white candle in your left hand and black candle in your right. March along the perimeter of the room with the candles, projecting Gothic Gratitude (dark, subtle, and controlled) toward the Room and Machine. Exit the Room of Washing, extinguish the candles, and return them to from whence they came. Thus ends the Laundry Ritual.

Conclusion: Congratulations and Parting Words

Congratulations, Gothic One. Your Ritual is over, and your Garb is Purely Black and Completely Clean. You, like Persephone, have descended into a Frightful Place and emerged with Strength and Dignity. The gods of the Underworld applaud you, and the Moon sends her blessings.

If followed carefully, this Laundry Ritual shall protect your Garb until the end of days, until the Earth spins out of orbit and the world is cast into Darkness, until our society lives only in the whispers of the wind on stony rocks. Go in peace, Child of Darkness, and may your Garb always be the Blackest of Blacks.