

Gregorius21778:

Almanac of
Animated Skeletons



Version 1.0; by Kai Pütz

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The Almanac of Animated Skeletons features 20 variants of the most common, tried-and-true undead creature type since the rise of the dungeon adventure itself: the animated skeleton.

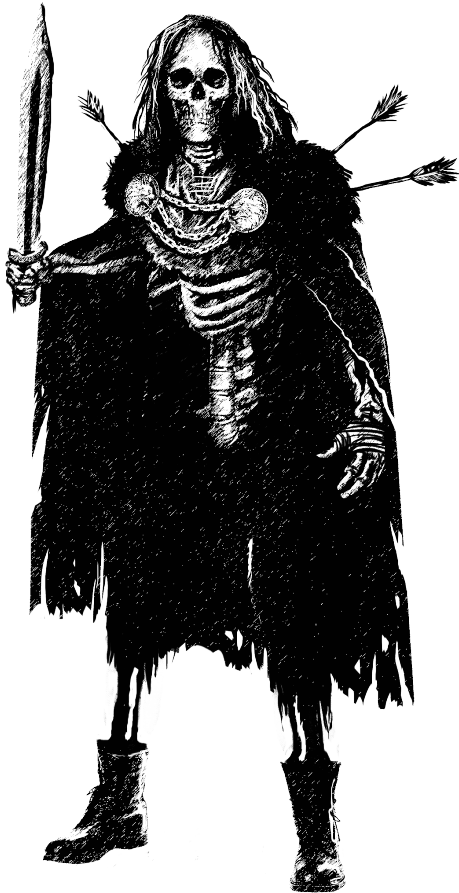
“Them old bones” have seen the front lines of combat encounters so often that they hold no more horror or surprise for the players than a group of bandits that jumps out of the brushwood. Those 20 in here have a little more spice to them, without taking them out of the low-HD range of monsters. Also included is a small list of rules for those Referees who wish to make this unusual undead available for spellcasting characters.

Enjoy!

"Standard" Skeleton

Move:	120'(40')
Hit Dice:	1
Armor Class:	12
Attacks:	1
Damage:	1d4 or as weapon
Moral:	12

Skeletons are unaffected by Charm or Sleep spells. Light weapons and rapiers suffer a -2 attack penalty against them, as it is more difficult to apply the necessary force to shatter bones with them. If clubs, cudgels etc. are an exception to this rule is up to the Referee. Minor weapons, bows, bolts, throwing knives etc. cannot harm a skeleton at all.



01# Charred Skeleton

The bones of this skeleton are blackened and charred, and the air around it glimmers with the heat it radiates. Those undead are created with an infernal ritual that includes human sacrifices who are burned alive and turned into skeletons in the process. Those hellish undead are more powerful (2 HD), move quicker (150' / 50') and their bones radiate the heat of the fires that consumed their flesh. Every character that fights more than 3 rounds against a Charred Skeleton must pass a *Save vs. Death* or will become exhausted (and thereby suffers a -1 penalty to all damage rolls till a turn of rest has been taken).

02# Drybone

These restless undead may occur "naturally" in hot and dry areas that are haunted or a focal point of magic energies. Their bleached bones are the remains of unfortunate travelers who died of thirst under a merciless sun. Those who even come close to one of this *cursed* skeletons will feel how their mouths and throats run dry. At the end of the encounter, each living character must *Save vs. Magic*. Those who succeed will merely feel dehydrated and need to drink half a day's ration worth of water to recover (or suffer a -2 penalty to all damage rolls till the next day's evening) while those who failed will be overwhelmed by thirst and need to drink two daily rations of water or will lose 2d4 hit points (1d4 for each ration) till the end of the day.

A Drybone is a result of a *curse*, and may thereby be laid to rest with a *Remove Curse* spell.

03# Dustbone

"Dustbones" have a grayish coloration, and those who pay close attention may note a fine amount of dust or powder coming off them with every move. Their bones are brittle and break easily (half hit points; rounded up), but once their bodies come undone they release a choking cloud of bone dust. Everyone in the immediate vicinity of a destroyed Dustbone *Save vs. Death* or will become stunned for one round.

04# Werewolf Skeleton

An animated skeleton that has been created from a slain lycanthrope will look exactly as any other similar undead... until it attacks. The magic of the ritual that raised it mingles with the lingering curse and turns the thing into a fearsome opponent. The sudden speed and ferocity (counts as 3 HD, 10 hit points; AC:16) may come as a *Surprise*, as does the sudden elongation of the skull and the growth of claws in the moment of the attack (Claw / Claw / Bite, each for 1d6 points of damage). The bones still carry the curse of lycanthropy, and every character that suffered serious wounds (50% hit point loss) must *Save vs. Devices* or will be cursed to come under the influence of a the *Howl of the Moon* spell (p.110 Player Core Rules), which will set in as it had been cast by a 3rd level spellcaster, during the next midnight hour.

Silver weapons are not necessary to "kill" a werewolf skeleton (they are needed to kill a werewolf, and this feat has obviously been done already).

05# Greenrot Skeleton

The bones of these undead have run partially green on the outside, and once they get cracked there is a foul, moldy tang in the air. Those who were part of a battle where 4+ of them were destroyed must *Save vs. Poison* or get infected with *greenrot*, a kind of fungus infection.

It will take 6 turns to spread over the lungs. An infected character may cough up blood after any strenuous activity (1d4 points of damage, none on a successful *Save vs. Death*). The infected character will need to see a physician or find another way to cure herself, otherwise the infection means death within 2d6 days (CON modifier applies, minimum one day).

06# Dwarf Skeleton

Special rituals exist that will retain the dwarfs resilience inside the reanimated bones. Those undead save as 2nd level dwarfs.

07# Lichbone

The bones of a former lich may be raised as an undead anew by necromancers who know the secret rituals (and are able to get hold of the necessary bones). While the power of their touch is not as great as it was before, a Lichbone skeleton still drains a number of XP equal to the damage it does with its bare bone hands (1d6). To create a Lichbone, not all bones have to hail from a true lich: it is enough to have a few bones, one rather complete Lich skeleton is often enough to create a small group (1d6+2) of Lichbone skeletons.

08# Witchbone

Skeletons usually do not retain any abilities of the person they were in live. Usually. Necromancers are able to do unusual things, and raising the dead is often not the last trick in their hide-bound books. Some know how to raise the bones of a witch or warlock with some residue of their spellcaster abilities. Those Witchbones are able to cast *Magic Missile* (see p.115) once per day and have a saving throw of 15 against spells and spell-like devices. Worst of all, if they are within a group that is the target of *Turn Undead*, all undead count as having passed their saving throw if the Witchbone did. Fortunately, all of their spell-like powers end when their bones are destroyed or laid to rest.

09# Shadowbones

Shadow Bones are the result of more powerful spells of the dark arts, as they do not only raise the dead but bind some powers of the planes of shadow and darkness into them. Their bones are thereby of a dark gray or outright black color. Shadowbones are more dangerous foes than regular skeletons (2 HD), and may use *Stealth* (3 out of 6) and *Sneak Attack* (2 out of 6). Additionally, they are able to do a *Shadow Charge* once per day: this is a regular charge, but just before they meet their enemies, their form frays into shadow and they pass their foes ranks, just to turn and materialize behind them. Not only does this allow them to attack the second row of a fighting formation, but it often comes as a *Surprise* to those that are not aware of this ability.



10# Silverskulls

A Silverskull is less of a special kind of skeleton but a special kind of magical equipment attached to one: it is a (often sculpted) silver helmet that covers both the front and the top of the skull, and is usually permanently affixed to a skeleton. It identifies as "evil" and as a magic item with but one purpose: to break through a *Protection from Evil* (with or without radius). A skeleton with a Silverskull may try to overpower such a magical barrier once per round, and up to two times. Each time, the caster must pass a *Save vs Devices*. If both saving throws are passed, the barrier holds and the Silverskull may never try to overcome the barriers of this character again. If a saving throw fails, the spell is negated and the barrier breaks.

11# Gemglare

A Gemglare is a skeleton with enchanted yellow gemstones resting in its eye sockets. Those they gaze upon must *Save vs Paralyze* or will lose their Agility Bonus for a turn and suffer a -3 to penalty to their Initiative. The gems are valuable (1d6 x50 SP per gem), and victorious adventurers often break them out of the sockets. Little do they know, for to carry those gems on person brings the same penalties as the glare does, but without the chance for a saving throw and for as long as they are carried. The only way to cleanse the gems is *Dispel Magic* or *Remove Curse* (once per pair).

12# Silent One

Silent is the grave, and as grimly silent as the death itself are these undead. They are surrounded by an aura so somber that every living being that wants to raise its voice or whisper a word within 30' of a Silent One must *Save vs. Devices* or is unable to do so in their presence for the next 10 rounds. Silent Ones are always powerful undead (2 HD).

13# Beyonder

A Beyonder is surrounded by a ghostly hallow, half-heard icy whispers and a grave-like cold. Any other creature within 20' that must pass a *Save vs. Death* does so with a -2 penalty, and every magical healing within the same 20' of a Beyonder will only regenerate half as many hit points as usual (round down). [2 HD]

14# Cackler

While most skeletons move in silence and are unable to make any other noise than the grinding of their bones and the clanging of what armor they may wear, Cacklers do what their name implies: they giggle and cackle madly, a feat that should be impossible as they have no tongue nor lips nor vocal cords. But they do: they start with it as soon as they see a living soul (unless their master ordered them not to) and their shrill sounds are more than unnerving. Any character that is exposed to their cackling for at least three rounds must *Save vs. Devices* or will suffer a -1 penalty to all attack rolls due to the unnerving distraction. After a total of 10 rounds, the saving throw must be repeated and a failure either increases the penalty by another -1 or inflicts the initial penalty. If at least three Cacklers are within ear shot at once, the saving throw itself has a -1 penalty, and if there are seven or more, the penalty is -2.

15# Gnawed One

A Gnawed One is a cursed soul that animates its dead remains and is rarely the result of witchcraft. They are the skeletal remains of evil people that were eaten alive, and their restless and vengeful souls wish for others to experience their suffering. They are able to summon up to 3 HD of wild animals or ferocious beasts from the surrounding, and a group of Gnawed Ones is able to pool this ability to summon larger beasts or great swarms of animals. Piles of bones in front of a monster's lair may mean more trouble than an unlucky adventurer already guesses. A Gnawed One may be laid to rest with a *Remove Curse* spell.

16# Boneangel

Boneangels are the ghastly creations of necromantic taxidermy. First, the foul wizards prepares an artificial set of wings from once-living raw material. Those are then attached to a skeleton with wax and sinew before it is raised. The Boneangel is graceless in flight and lags the skill for true aerial combat, but is never the less able to fly at low altitude (150' / 50') and does so without any need for rest. Boneangels thereby make for excellent guardians and patrols, and those who are armed with bows and arrows are nasty opponents for adventurers out in the open.



17# Deathbell

Just like Beyonders, Deathbells are surrounded by a ghostly hallow and half-heard whispers, but where Beyonders are still attached to the other side, Deathbells are about to cut the strings of life the very moment they are released from their existence. Each time one of these skeletons is destroyed, every living being within 20' of them will hear the dire call of a great bell that strikes once, and must *Save vs Death*. If two such saving throws are failed within the same turn, the victim will suffer 1d6 points of damage, and if three in a row were not passed it is 3d6 points of damage. This is due to a curse laid upon the skeleton after it had been risen, and may thereby be negated with a *Remove Curse* spell.

18# Boneknight

Boneknights are not skeletons clad in full armor, nor do they ride on horses. Boneknights are skeletons who wear an "armor" made of the bones of two other skeletons. Skulls act as shoulder pieces, fore- and underarms function as chest plates and ribs add layers of protections at other places. A Boneknight has 2 HD, AC:16 and +6 hit points, but blows that deal 5+ damage to them will smash the bone armor (and thereby reduce its effectiveness from AC:16 to 15, and then from 15 to 14, and so forth till AC is reduced to 12). Those who create Boneknights usually provide them with better armament (medium weapon, 1d8 damage).

19# Runeskull

A Runeskull is another insidious "enhancement" that a warlock may add to a skeleton. A magic rune is written with blood unto the skull, and later burns itself into it. The skull will explode with bale yellow-green flames upon the moment of the skeleton's destruction. Everybody in a 10' radius will suffer 2d4 points of damage. Those who engaged the skeleton in melee will suffer the full damage, other characters may *Save vs. Breath Weapons* (half damage on a success). If the skeleton is destroyed by *Turn Undead* the Runeskull does not trigger, and spells like *Dispel Magic* will negate the effect as well.

20# The Rising

Woeful is the power of the necromancer to raise the dead, but even more woeful are creations of necromancy that raise themselves again and again. The kind of skeletons that are called the Rising will do so 1d4 rounds after their destruction, unless it was by *Turn Undead* or if their skulls have been smashed (1 out of 6 chance for this to just have happened as they were destroyed). Destroying the skull while the skeleton is "down" takes just one round, but counts as an attack. No rolls to hit or to determine damage are needed as long as the weapon itself could crack or split a skull. Foresightful necromancers put helmets onto at least some of these creations.



-- To Raise the Dreadful Dead --

Referees who wish to make the creation of the aforementioned undead available to player characters (or simply want some set of guidelines for their NPC) may use the following rules:

Dustbone, Greenrot Skeleton, Dwarf Skeleton, Lichbone, Deathbell, Boneknight and Cackler are just special variants of the *Animate Dead* spell, and may be learned by any spellcaster that knows the spell with 4d6 days of research (30 sp / day). This is also true for...

Charred Skeleton, Witchbone, the Rising, Werewolf Skeleton and Gnawed One, but the research time is 6d6 days (30 sp / day).

Shadowbone, Silent One and Beyonder follow the same basic rules, but are more akin to summonings in their own right and can only be made by a spellcaster of at least 6th level. The amount of research to learn the rituals is equal to 1d6+2 weeks (30 sp / day).

Silverskull, Gemglare and Boneangel are magic items or (in the case of the Boneangel) procedures that any spellcaster that knows *Animate Dead* may make use of. Their creation takes 1 week of work and 500 sp in materials per skeleton, with the exception of the Silverskull. This profane item is created by a ritual that needs to be learned first (5d6 days and 30 sp/day), creating the item itself takes 1 week and 500 sp.

Runeskulls are the product of the new 2nd level spell *Baleful Skull Rune*: the caster may enchant a number of animated skeletons up to his or her level, the duration is permanent.

Curses (as invoked with the *Bestow Curse* spell) may create some of these skeletons as well.

The Curse of the Punishing Thirst will double a character's need for water in hot climates, and those who die will become a *Drybone* in the end.

The Curse of Gnawed Bones will change the random reaction of any non-herbivore creature that the cursed character encounters: *Neutral/Uncertain* and *Unfriendly* will both turn into *Hostile*, and when the cursed character drops to zero hit points (or less) in combat, he or she will be direly wounded and helpless. The creature will then begin to eat the character alive (unless interrupted), and the remains will turn into a *Gnawed One*.

-- Rules Option: HD-based Creation --

Optionally, the special abilities of the skeletons in this supplement may be treated as special abilities of the skeleton, and thereby paid for in "potential HD" at creation (see *LotFP Player Core* rules, p.89-90).

All might be treated as having a "special power" being bought for 1 extra HD at creation.

In regard to *Dustbone*, *Greenrot*, *Dwarf Skeleton*, *Cackler* and *Bone Knight* it is advised to use a cost of 1 extra HD for every two skeletons of this type to be raised. Compared to another, their effects are not *that* powerful.

For the same reason, it is advised to treat a *Rune Skull* and the *Rising* as special abilities that cost 2 extra HD (instead of 1). Should the Referee fear for the game balance, any number of the aforementioned may of course be declared as "2-HD-Cost" types.

Never the less, a Referee should keep the "material requirements" mentioned in each description. Some might make for nice, player-driven side plots.



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