

WALROCK HOMEBREW

# AWAKENED UNDEAD



FIFTH EDITION



# AWAKENED UNDEAD

## CHARACTER RACE OPTION

THE MISTS OF THE VALEHEART WOODS CLING TO the tall, charred pines that dot the landscape. A breeze billows between the trees, making the miasma flow like clawed, spectral fingers, imbuing it with a sinister semblance of life. Locals speak dark legends of this place, cursed with an evil nature that has spanned centuries. Though no two tales are the same, they all agree on one point: how willing the very air of this place is to choke the life out of any foolish mortals that venture inside.

Nevertheless, a gnarled dwarf by the name of Blidwenn gazes into the opaque vapor streaming from the trees, his eyes more accustomed to the dim light of this place than the pure sunshine found in more wholesome lands. Braiding a few errant strands of beard, Blidwenn continues his vigil for well on an hour, tracing the elusive forms in the mist for any sign of living movement. Clasp ing his braid in a ruddy, calloused hand, the dwarf lets loose a sigh and slowly rises to his feet.

His sharp dwarven eyes snap open and he pauses instantly mid-motion. Movement in the mists, shadows, a shape emerging from the woods. His vision traces the outline of a lean, solitary figure, set bone white against the grey fog. With slow, creaking footsteps, the creature emerges from the fog and advances on the steadfast dwarf.

"That you, Clacks?" Blidwenn rumbles, his hammer suddenly finding itself in his large hands, "You see anything in there?"

"Indeed, friend," the approaching skeleton replies dryly, holding aloft a faint, purple gem, "The master's old phylactery wasn't nearly as well defended as he would have us think."

Death comes for all things in a near-infinite variety of ways. So, too, are there many reasons that the dead might return from the grave. Directly-applied necromancy, cursed lands, and unfinished business are but a few, and all leave the newly-undead soul with a mere semblance of the life it had before. All undead carry the physical or emotional scars of what ended their mortal lives, though some may be far more subtle than others.

## DEAD AND REBORN

Typically having no lands to call their own, undead with an awakened sense of self are usually perpetual foreigners, wanders in a land and often a time not their own. Compounding matters, most mortal cultures carry within them an instinctual fear of death and the dead, and many associate necromancy specifically with dark tidings. This forms a wall of (often well-earned) prejudice and hatred



that sentient undead find themselves up against, and many undead choose to hide their necrotic natures behind clothes, masks, and pungent perfumes when journeying into civilization.

Depending on composition, humanoid undead typically range a wide gamut from 20 to 300 pounds, and may possess empty eyes, a colored flame-like magical animus in their sockets, or harrowed, surprisingly mortal eyes burning with an inner fire. Hair (if they have it at all) is usually lank, dark, and wrought with grime and grave-dirt that no amount of cleaning will fully remove.

## SERVICE AND FREEDOM

Undeath is effectively immortality, a strong reason why many mortal spellcasters of a certain moral bent consider it a viable alternative to actually dying. Still, it is not immortality without a price; senses and emotions dull, food and drink no longer have taste, and often an undead state comes alongside a subservience of will and unthinking toil beneath a master who likely does not have the world's best intentions at heart.

Some undead are born into freedom, while others earn it or have it thrust upon them. Regardless, all undead that have freedom greatly cherish it, as the reminders of what could easily happen were they not fortunate enough to possess free will abound throughout history. Many consider it their sacred duty to free other mindless undead, or simply to dispatch them wherever they may be found. The reasoning is straightforward enough: a final rest awarded to all mortals is greatly preferential to eternal slavery to the likes of a short-sighted, megalomaniacal spellcaster.

## FALLEN HOME, FORGOTTEN PAST

For many awakened undead, the past is a distant homeland to which they may never return, holding names and faces now partially-forgotten, and loves and lives as dead as they are. The anguish of this loss is enough to drive many mad, but others use this rage and pain as a source of power and drive, carrying them further on the road to whatever dark destiny awaits.

Frequently, entire countries, customs, and cultures an undead may be familiar with no longer exist, and the

sentient dead behaves or speaks in an antiquated fashion because of this. It may be even more difficult than usual for such undead to relate to more modern mortals, and typically these undead leverage what companions they may have to bridge this epoch-long communication gap.

## UNDEAD NAMES

Many undead that awaken into sentience prefer to keep the names they held in their mortal lives. For others, however, their mortal names are forgotten or have lost meaning. These undead often adopt nicknames given to them by their former masters or present companions, and hold them to be as true as any other creature's birth name.

Examples of names given in this fashion may be seen, below:

**Names:** Rattlebones, Spore, Rotface, Raven, Bane, Carver, Drudge, Rook, Mort, Pale, Minion, Crumble, Shade, Wisp, Clatter, Shiver

## AWAKENED UNDEAD TRAITS

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Constitution score increases by 1.

**Dead Immortality.** You do not age. Given time, the necromantic energies that sustain you will heal most wounds you take at approximately the same rate as a mortal, and your hit dice function as normal.

**Past Life.** Choose another living race besides this one. Before your death, you were a member of this race and appear as an undead version of it. Your size, height, and movement speed are the same as a typical member of that race. You do not retain special movement speeds from this race (such as swimming or flying), and, though you may choose to have formerly been a member of a subrace of a particular race, you derive no benefits from doing so.

**Undead.** Raised from the dead as a being of undeath, you count as an undead creature for all spells and abilities that affect the undead. You are immune to disease and treat exhaustion as if it was one level less. You do not need to eat or breathe, but you can ingest food and drink if you wish. Instead of sleeping, you enter an inactive

### HEALING THE DEAD

While undeath carries many advantages, it also carries significant drawbacks. Notably, many spells that heal living creatures simply do not work when used on the undead.

Spells that work differently or not at all on undead say so specifically within their text. Some spells, such as *goodberry* or *regenerate*, do not specify, and thus work on the undead as normal.



state for 4 hours each day. You do not dream in this state; you are fully aware of your surroundings and notice approaching enemies and other events as normal.

**Darkvision.** Through the necromantic energy animating you, you are able to perceive with greater clarity that which lurks in the darkness. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

**Bloodless.** You are immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition.

**Languages.** You can speak, read, and write Common and one other language, typically one available to the race you chose for your Past Life. If your Past Life has a feature that precludes speech (such as a Kenku's Mimicry), you are still not able to speak and instead gain access to the relevant feature of your Past Life that substitutes speech.

**Subrace.** Five types of awakened undead are available to you. Choose Skeleton, Revenant, Ghost, Ghoul, or Mummy, listed in the following section.

## SKELETON

An animated figure made of dry bones devoid of flesh and muscle, you were likely raised by a necromantic caster or dark, supernatural curse as a simple minion, completely without will and self knowledge. Something changed, however; perhaps your master was slain, the land cleansed, or you merely awoke one day to

fragmented memories of your previous life. Whatever the case, possessed of a fledgling sense of self and newfound purpose, you struck out into the wider world to find a new destiny.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Dexterity or Intelligence score increases by 2.

**Bone Pile.** When you are reduced to 0 hit points but not killed outright, you can drop to 1 hit point instead. If you do, you reduce yourself to a pile of bones, render yourself prone, and are considered to be under a similar effect to the *feign death* spell. While subject to this condition, you are unable to move or take actions other than using an action to end this effect. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

**Bone To Pick.** Whenever both of your hands are free (not including equipped shields), you may choose to use a free hand and a bonus action to remove one of your hands or arms. If you remove an arm, it counts as a weapon with the finesse property that deals 1d6 bludgeoning damage, and you have proficiency with your arm while you wield it. If you remove a hand, it counts as thieves' tools or a similar set of simple tools while you hold it. In either case, removed hands and arms cannot be directly controlled or made to hold items, and may be re-attached to your body by using another bonus action.

## REVENANT

When a brutal murder or an atrocious crime slays an innocent soul endowed with sufficient willpower, there are rare occasions where the victim refuses to stand by and stay dead. You were created not at the whim of a mortal spellcaster. Rather, when you were slain either a god of death, vengeance, or justice, or even you yourself, took enough umbrage at the death to raise you from the grave, typically at least a full day (though sometimes up to centuries, if the revenge is still relevant) after your death occurred. Born again out of an undying thirst for vengeance, you will not rest until the wrongs surrounding your death have been righted. Though you superficially appear similar to a zombie, complete with tattered flesh and sporadic decay, your eyes gleam with an intelligent intent, a burning passionate fury that will lay low all those in your way.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Charisma or Strength score increases by 2.

**Eternal Vengeance.** You know at all times the general direction of and relative distance to a specific intelligent creature of the DM's choosing against whom you seek revenge for your death, even if the creature and you are on different planes of existence. Should this creature die by your hand or that of another, you instantly know, and your DM chooses another creature also responsible for your death for this feature to apply to, should such a creature exist.

**Unnatural Vitality.** When you drop to 0 hit points, you may choose to stay conscious instead of falling unconscious. If you do, you gain temporary hit points equal to twice your total character level. In this state, you may take an action or bonus action on your turn, but not both. You can remain in this state until you deplete any temporary hit points you may have, at which time if you are still at 0 hit points you fall unconscious and begin making death saving throws as usual. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.



## GHOST

Lingering souls of the dead and departed, ghosts are raised as servants by potent necromancers or hold onto the world themselves when there is unfinished business they have yet to accomplish. If a ghost is charged with unfinished business it can take many forms, from protecting a loved one, to keeping a particular item safe, to simple revenge. Ghosts are spectral and luminous, but are usually solid to the touch unless they expend conscious will to be otherwise. Thus, a ghost can interact with objects as mortals do. All ghosts carry obvious and sometimes twisted marks of what caused their death, which are often quite disturbing to all but the most jaded mortals.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Charisma or Wisdom score increases by 2.

**Flight.** You gain a fly speed equal to half your land speed, rounded up to the nearest 5 feet. You hover naturally, and are immune to falling.

**Withering Touch.** Your unarmed strike deals necrotic damage instead of bludgeoning damage.

**Incorporeal Stride.** You can move through other creatures and objects other than physical barriers (such as walls, floors, or ceilings) as if they were difficult terrain. On your turn, you may choose to be able to pass through up to 10 feet of physical barriers (treating them as difficult terrain) as a part of your movement. If you end your turn inside an object or barrier, you take 1d10 force damage and are immediately ejected to the closest available space. After passing through a physical barrier, you must complete a short or long rest before you are able to do so again.

**Intangible.** You have advantage on all checks to resist or escape a grapple.

## OPTIONAL FEAT

If your DM allows the use of feats from chapter 6 of the *Player's Handbook*, a ghost character has access to the following special feat.

### GHOSTLY MAGIC

**Prerequisite:** Awakened Undead (ghost)

Your soul is especially powerful, and you may channel its power into a semblance of mortal magic. Three times per day, you may cast any spell on the following list at its lowest possible spell level: *blink*, *catapult* (*Elemental Evil Player's Companion*, page 15), *charm person*, *fear*, and

*invisibility* (self only). Choose Charisma or Wisdom as your spellcasting ability for these spells when you first take this feat. The spell save DC for these spells is equal to 8 + your spellcasting ability modifier + your proficiency bonus. You regain any expended uses of this ability only when you take a long rest.

## GHOUL

Feral, horrifying, and ravenous, ghouls hunt in packs, driven by an unending hunger for the flesh of the living and the dead alike. Corpse-like with a whip-like tongue, long fangs, and clawlike fingers, ghouls are immune to decomposition and typically retain a corrupted semblance of how they appeared in life. Most ghouls possess even less sense of self than the average undead, but, for better or worse, your individuality has returned to you. The dark cravings that drive you to feed continue, however, and you must reconcile your newfound self-awareness with your compulsion to consume.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Strength or Dexterity score increases by 2.

**Natural Weapons.** You possess both claws and fangs, either of which you may use as an unarmed strike. Your fangs deal piercing damage equal to 1d6 + your Strength modifier, while your claws deal slashing damage equal to 1d4 + your choice of either your Strength or Dexterity modifier. In addition, you may use Dexterity in place of Strength for attack rolls made with your claws, and your claws are considered to be a melee weapon with the finesse property for any ability or feature that requires it.

**Feeding.** Though undead do not need to eat to continue existing, you are compelled through a dark curse to feed. As an action when you are adjacent to a dead or prone creature that is not an aberration, construct, elemental, ooze, plant, or undead, you may render yourself prone as well and attempt to feed on them. If the creature is alive, make an unarmed strike attack with your fangs, dealing damage on a hit as usual. If this attack hits, or if the creature is already dead, you regain hit points equal to your total character level + your Constitution modifier. Once you successfully use this ability, you may not use it again until you complete a short or long rest. You still feel hunger, and may feed on flesh without regaining hit points, however.

**Curse of the Abyss.** Ghouls were created to feed, and suffer a compulsion to do so. If a creature you can see drops to 0 hit points and you have not used your Feeding



ability since your last long rest, you must attempt a Wisdom saving throw with a DC of 15 - half your total character level, rounded down, unless that creature is one of the creature types that may not be fed upon. If you fail this saving throw, you must move to the creature by the shortest possible distance, using the Dash action if necessary. Once you reach the creature, you are compelled to use your Feeding ability with it as the target. You may repeat this Wisdom saving throw on each of your turns, ending this effect on a success or after you have successfully fed upon the triggering creature.

**Paralytic Claws.** When you hit a creature that is not undead or an elf with an attack using your claws, you may attempt to paralyze them. That creature must make a Constitution saving throw against a DC of 8 + your Constitution modifier + your proficiency bonus. If the creature fails, it is paralyzed until the beginning of your next turn. Once you use this ability successfully, you may not use it again until you complete a long rest.

## MUMMY

Forgotten kings, sorcerers, slaves, and criminals of ancient empires, most mummies remain isolated in deep tombs and temples. Embalmed and wrapped in layers of treated linens scrawled with profane sigils, a mummy is gaunt and withered, yet shockingly powerful. The necromantic ritual that imbues a mummy with undeath only sometimes confers intelligence, a luxury almost always reserved for those of high social standing attempting to escape death. Was self awareness given to you with a purpose, or was your awakening an accident born of dark magic? Though usually content to haunt the lost ruins of their past lives, a scant few mummies venture abroad in search of revenge, missing treasures, or sinister motives beyond even their own knowing.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Strength, Wisdom, or Charisma score increases by 2.

**Mummy Rot.** You may choose to make your unarmed strike deal necrotic damage instead of bludgeoning damage, and any creature hit by your unarmed strike is unable to regain hit points. If such a creature is reduced to 0 hit points, it instantly disintegrates into dust, leaving behind any objects, clothing, or items on its person. These effects last for 24 hours, or until the affected creature is the target of a *remove curse* spell or similar.

**Dreadful Glare.** As a bonus action, choose a creature you can see within 60 feet of you. This creature must make a Wisdom saving throw against a DC of 8 + your

Constitution modifier + your proficiency bonus. If it fails, this creature becomes frightened of you until the end of your next turn. Once you use this ability successfully, you may not use it again until you complete a short or long rest.

**Canopic Resurrection.** You have in your possession a clay or ceramic jar weighing 10 lbs. that contains your preserved heart, and possibly other important organs. While you are within 1,000 feet of your heart and it remains outside of your body, treat any result of 15 or above on a death saving throw as if you had rolled a natural 20. If your heart is destroyed, this feature ceases to work unless you restore it to being using a *wish* spell or similarly powerful magic. While within the jar, your heart may not be targeted directly and must first be removed from the jar, or the jar must be destroyed. Your heart has an AC of 5, 25 hit points, and is immune to all damage except fire.

## OPTIONAL FEAT

If your DM allows the use of feats from chapter 6 of the *Player's Handbook*, a mummy character has access to the following special feat.

### TOMB MAGIC

**Prerequisite:** Awakened Undead (mummy)

Perhaps you were a mortal spellcaster in a previous life, or those who prepared you for undeath imbued your corpse with additional power for some unknown dark purpose. In any case, you possess an innate magical power tied to your unearthly animating force. You may cast each of the following spells once at their lowest possible spell level before requiring a long rest to refresh their usage: *bestow curse*, *dust devil* (*Elemental Evil Player's Companion*, page 17), and *inflict wounds*. Choose Charisma or Wisdom as your spellcasting ability for these spells when you first take this feat. For these spells, the spell save DC is equal to 8 + your spellcasting ability modifier + your proficiency bonus, and your spell attack modifier is equal to your spellcasting ability modifier + your proficiency bonus.

### A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

Death doesn't have to be the end for a player character. An interested DM may allow a dead character to rise from their grave as one of the awakened undead, replacing the character's race and subrace features with those listed here, and taking on the character's former race as the new undead's Past Life.

Conversely, an awakened undead character can wish to regain their mortal life. This may only be achieved through the use of the *true resurrection* spell and, again, DM permission. A character returning to their mortal life replaces their awakened undead race and subrace with what they chose for their Past Life feature, loses all features and abilities associated with being an awakened undead and instead gains abilities typical for a member of their new race.

**CREDITS:**

Photoshop & design by Walrock Homebrew

Visit **WALROCK HOMEBREW** for more!

<http://walrock-homebrew.blogspot.com>

Find us on Twitter: @WalrockHomebrew

Or on Patreon: [patreon.com/walrockhomebrew](https://patreon.com/walrockhomebrew)

**Art Credits:**

- Douglas Wright ([dougawright.tumblr.com](https://dougawright.tumblr.com)), cover artwork done as commission
- David Revoy, listed for free commercial use
- Carl Georg Adolph Hasenpflug, Herbert E. Crowley, Vincent van Gogh, Jaroslav Panuska, John Varley II, and Vasily Vereschagin, public domain

Thanks to the kind folks of the Discord of Many Things, reddit, /tg/, and tumblr, to /u/Smyris for their resource pack, and to /u/skybug12 for their Photoshop guide!

