Exotic Ancestries
Skeleton

Alex Riggs, Joshua Zaback

Credits

Designers

Alex Riggs, Joshua Zaback

Editor

Rosa Gibbons

Introduction

The *Pathfinder Second Edition Roleplaying Game* presents a wide world of magic and infinite possibilities, and so it should come as no surprise that some players want to explore beyond the boundaries of the game's core rules. The game world described in the game's rules and lore includes a wide variety of creatures, some strange and fantastic, others oddly familiar and human in nature, and it's only natural that some players will want a chance to explore the world as one of these creatures, instead of being limited to the handful of ancestries that already exist.

This book presents an ancestry for one such fantastic creature: the skeleton. Although most skeletal undead are mindless creatures bent to the whim of necromancers and other dark forces, the fantasy genre is rife with examples of intelligent, free-willed undead, created by accident, cursed to undeath for misdeeds in life, or sometimes even taking on their undead state to serve as eternal, vigilant protectors. No matter the reason, playing a skeletal undead is sure to provide a unique gameplay experience, and this book provides plenty of options to get you started.

Skeleton

Though many consider them to be merely monsters, and indeed most are, occasionally the undead can find a place in an open progressive society. Free-willed skeletons come into being a number of ways, each with their own story, but all find a world full of hostility and fear awaiting them. The battle for acceptance, and indeed, even existence, is perhaps what drives skeletons to the dangerous fringes of society. Never the less skeletons show a fierce strength and detachment that allows them to rise to great heights.

Skeletons are the animated bones of humanoid creatures, often raised by necromancers or reanimated through foul and poorly understood sciences. Though usually mindless, some skeletons gain a sense of intellect either through accident or design, and must make their way in the world. Because most undead come into being via evil spells or the designs of depraved individuals, skeletons face a stigma far worse than most creatures, and many begin their existence in the service of dark powers. Skeletons typically have a purpose in mind when created, and seek to fulfill that purpose while it remains, but many find themselves lost when that purpose ceases, forcing the skeleton to find a new way to live in the world.

Intelligent skeletons typically fall into two categories: the controlled and the free-willed. To many skeletons, belonging to one of these two states is less important than it is to traditional flesh and blood humanoids. Most skeletons were brought into existence in service to another power, and are generally accepting of the idea that they will serve other masters and causes throughout their existence. Because skeletons do not age and are effectively immortal, they view the world with a dispassion that even the most aloof elf would envy, and are constantly searching for a clear purpose. For some, this purpose can be found in service to another or to a cause. Skeletons often gravitate towards dark and

macabre ideals and masters, either because that is what they know or because they have a genuine hatred of the living. For others, purpose is found in transcending or at least exceeding the purpose for which they were created. Not surprisingly, most who encounter a skeleton see only a horrible undead monster, forcing skeletons to the fringes of society, seeking isolation from their enemies or the power to walk among the living without fear.

You Might...
- Be cold and unfeeling, but relentless in the pursuits of your goals.
- Be exceedingly loyal to a patron or cause, unswaying in your dedication.
- Cruel and vile as those that made you and bent on revenge against the living.
- Struggle against the darkness of your origins and strive to constantly prove your worth in the face of a society bent on your destruction.

Others Probably...
- View you as a monster, more than a person.
- Assume you to be as evil as those who created you and shun you to the best of their ability.
- Prepare for violence when they see you and are highly suspicious of you until proven otherwise.
- See you as a tool to use for their own ends.

Physical Description
Skeletons come in many forms, depending on the bones they were comprised of. A typical skeleton resembles a complete set of adult human bones, usually cleaned and bleached. In most cases, a skeleton is animated from the bones of a single creature, but occasionally they are comprised of the bones of several different individuals, resulting in an odd amalgam of misshapen or unusually-sized parts. Skeletons typically have eyes which shine with a burning crimson light, though eye color can vary or even be absent.

Depending on the circumstances of the subject's death, the skeleton's features could vary wildly. Skeletons animated from a burn victim might be blackened and withered, even years after the event that first marred the bones. A reanimated child has smaller, less developed bones, while a reanimated bugbear would be larger and have a different structure. Whatever the case, skeleton bones rapidly repair themselves and seem to be drawn together, constantly repairing and reforming to return to their original shape. A skeleton can see in the dark through the wicked spells that animated it, and moves as well or better than a living creature, despite the lack of muscles or tendons.

Society
Sentient skeletons are a rarity, and so generally find no society of their own. Because they are generally thought of as monsters and villains by most of civilized society, skeletons are frequently marginalized, ostracized and isolated from regular societies, and have trouble fitting in wherever they go. As such, most skeletons seek out a place far from other people where they are free to pursue their goals or the goals

of their masters. Skeletons under the influence of a powerful caster often fit into society in the capacity of that character's servant, and may be more accepted, depending on that character's status.

Rarely, in societies run by necromancers, evil kings, or even gods of death or the undead, skeletons find a more traditional place for themselves, living in cities and towns alongside the living. In such places, mindless skeletons are usually used as guards or servants, while skeletons with an intellect of their own serve more specialized purposes. In such cases, skeletons often are charged with training and leading troops, operating businesses, and serving as messengers.

Skeletons form the bulk of many necropolises, and, along with zombies, make up the bulk of undead society. Usually these hordes have no will of their own, but there are always a few skeletons with free will among the throngs. Typically these intelligent skeletons form the rank nobility in such societies, well below powerful vampires and liches, but still well respected.

Alignment and Religion

Skeletons are often evil, having been created by unspeakable rituals and heinous spells, and even after escaping the trappings of the mindless malice that infuses most undead when they are created, many skeletons are still inclined towards villainous pursuits. Intelligent skeletons tend towards the extremes on the lawful and chaotic axis. Many find the structure of order to be familiar and comfortable, while others rejoice in their free will and fight fiercely to retain as much freedom as possible. Good skeletons are rare, as society and even good-aligned deities see them as nothing more than monsters; still, skeletons are capable of compassion and can choose to serve the cause of righteousness.

Skeletons often eschew religion, as many gods (especially so-called good-aligned deities) harbor a special hatred for undead. Even the majority of evil deities see undead more as tools for their mortal servants than of individuals worthy of consideration. Usually, skeletons pay lip service to evil gods of death and the undead, and skeletons which came into existence at the will of such creatures can become powerful champions and clerics in the service of such lords. Skeletons hate and fear religions which despise undead, and will go to great lengths to avoid or attack their followers.

Names

Skeleton names can be a complex issue, depending on the nature of their creation. Skeletons rarely retain any memory of their mortal life, as the soul belonging to that body has since departed to be replaced with magical energies, and so usually they come up with a new name. Skeletons are sometimes named by their creator, especially if it was their intention to create an intelligent servant or companion. Some are merely assigned a number or not considered at all, and so are forced, if they are interested, to choose a name of their own. Skeletons which choose a name often choose arcane words associated with reanimation, intimidating titles, or a name that they heard and found pleasing. Skeletons of non-human races are often inclined to choose a name matching their heritage.

Skeleton Stats

Hit Points
6

Size
Medium

Speed
25 feet

Ability Boosts
Dexterity
Free

Languages
Common
Necril
Additional languages equal to your Intelligence modifier (if it's positive). Choose from any language.

Traits
Humanoid
Undead

Darkvision
You can see in darkness and dim light just as well as you can see in bright light, though your vision in darkness is black and white.

While skeletons can be created from male or female bones and sometimes from both, the anatomical differences and inability to reproduce renders the gender of the reanimated bones somewhat irrelevant to the lives of skeletons, and this is reflected in the way they are named. Even so, many skeletons do associate more strongly with a particular gender identity, and may alter their name with flourishes reflecting that or choose a name obviously associated with masculine or feminine connotations to let others, who may not be able to tell by looking, know of their identity.

Sample Names

Alarazir, Belphoranz, Charred Marrow, Esilidae, Galoroth, Insufura, Kill-Guard, Malordal, Necrosavant, Ossiltor, Reaper, Shakes, Violet Skull, Withershins.

Skeleton Heritages

Skeletons come from a wide variety of backgrounds and come to being through unique circumstances that significantly separate one skeleton from another. Though heritage may be a less appropriate term than origin, a skeleton's beginnings shape your skeleton character in much the same way. The following heritages are the most common for skeleton characters.

Amalgamation

You are made up of bones from many different creatures, some of them not even humanoid. You become trained in Fortitude saves. If you are already trained in Fortitude saves, instead you gain a

+1 bonus on Fortitude saves. Because the many different bones don't work well together, you suffer a –2 penalty on Reflex saves.

Humanoid Skeleton

You are comprised of the complete set of bones belonging to a single humanoid creature. Choose another ancestry with the humanoid trait. You can select ancestry feats from that ancestry in place of skeleton ancestry feats whenever you would gain an ancestry feat.

Natural Skeleton

You were animated by some natural phenomenon rather than through the use of a necromancy spell or effect, and you retain a close bond to the natural world. You heal from positive energy and are damaged by negative energy. You become trained in Nature, and as long as you rest outdoors, you recover an additional 1d6 hit points from rest.

Necromantic Skeleton

You were raised by a spellcaster and animated by dark magic. You retain a trace of this magic, which makes you more readily susceptible to both positive and negative energy. You have weakness 5 against positive energy. Whenever you would be healed by negative energy, you heal an additional 5 hit points. Additionally, you gain the *chill touch* cantrip as an innate spell which can be used at will. This cantrip is automatically heightened to 1/2 your level.

Skeletal Guardian

You were originally created to guard a treasure or the domain of another creature. While you have since been freed of this duty, you retain a strong sense of responsibility towards protecting others. You become trained in medium armor and shields. You can use a reaction to reduce the speed of a character moving away from you by 15 feet until the end of their next turn.

Small Skeleton

You are the skeleton of a smaller creature, perhaps a gnome, goblin, or halfling, or even a child that belonged to a larger race. While your small size does make it harder to wield large weapons, it also allows you to easily hide and move around other characters. Your size changes to Small and you become trained in Stealth and Deception.

Ancestry Feats

At 1st level, you gain one ancestry feat, and you gain an additional ancestry feat every 4 levels thereafter (at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th levels). As a skeleton, you select from among the following ancestry feats.

1st Level

Claws   Feat 1
Skeleton

You gain a claws unarmed attack that deals 1d8 slashing dam-

age. Your claws are in the brawling group and have the agile and unarmed traits.

Cold as the Grave   Feat 1
Skeleton

You gain resistance 5 to cold and a +2 bonus to saving throws against spells and effects with the cold trait.

Collapse ❖   Feat 1
Skeleton, Exploration

You collapse into an apparently lifeless pile of bones. You fall prone and suffer 6 points of damage as your bones disassemble. You can immediately make a Deception check against the Perception DC of creatures observing you to convince them that you have been destroyed. You gain a +20 circumstance bonus on Deception checks to appear as nothing more than a lifeless pile of bones, except against characters who observed your collapse whom you failed to deceive. While collapsed in this way, you retain your normal senses, and can take the Hide and Seek actions, as well as any other action which does not require the use of your limbs, such as casting a spell which lacks somatic components. You can spend 2 actions in order to reform your body, ending this effect.

Dread Visage   Feat 1
Skeleton, Arcane

You gain the *dread visage* focus spell. If you don't already have one, you also gain a focus pool of 1 Focus Point, which you can Refocus without any special effort; if you already have a focus pool, increase the number of Focus Points in your focus pool by 1.

Reassemble ↺   Feat 1
Skeleton

Your bones share a magical link with one another, allowing you to pull shattered pieces of your body back together following traumatic impacts. You can use your reaction whenever you are hit by a critical hit or critically fail a saving throw against an effect which deals damage. If you do, immediately after suffering damage from the effect, you can recover 1d10 + your Constitution modifier hit points.

If a part of your body becomes severed from the rest of you, can reattach that body part by holding it in place where it belongs on your body for 1 minute.

Sense Life ❖   Feat 1
Skeleton

You have a special sense that allows you to detect the presence of living creatures. You immediate become aware of the presence of living creatures within 100 feet of you, including the number of living creatures. By spending 3 actions when you use this ability, you can also detect the exact location of living creatures within the area.

Skeletal Resilience   Feat 1
Skeleton

You gain resistance 5 against slashing and piercing damage, but also gain weakness 5 to bludgeoning attacks.

5th Level

Hard Bones   Feat 5

Skeleton

Your bones are far harder than normal, granting you a +2 bonus to your AC whenever you do not wear armor.

Improved Claws   Feat 5

Skeleton

Prerequisites Claws

Your claws count as magical weapons and gain a +1 enhancement bonus to attack and damage rolls, and deal an additional 1d4 points of bleed damage on a critical hit.

Skeletal Shards ↩   Feat 5

Skeleton

Trigger You are hit by a critical hit that deals bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage.

Your bones explode in shards, dealing 2d6 + your level piercing damage to all creatures within 5 feet. A basic Reflex save against your Dexterity DC reduces the damage.

9th Level

Cold Immunity   Feat 9

Skeleton

Prerequisites Cold Resistance

You gain immunity to cold damage.

Frozen Claws   Feat 9

Skeleton, Attack

Prerequisites Claws, Improved Claws

You gain weapon specialization with your claws. Additionally, your claws do an additional 1d6 points of cold damage on a successful hit, and whenever you score a critical hit with your claws, the numbing cold causes the target to become stunned 1.

Integration   Feat 9

Skeleton

Prerequisites Reassembly

You can integrate the bones of another creature into your body, allowing you to repair wounds with "spare parts" you find. You increase your proficiency with Medicine by 1 step, to a maximum of expert. By spending 1 minute integrating the bones of another creature into your body, you can attempt a Medicine check in order to heal your wounds. The DC for this check is 20 and you regain 1d6 hit points. For every 10 by which you exceed the DC, you can recover an additional 1d6 hit points. There is no limit to the number of hit points you can regain from this feat, but it requires access to the bones of recently deceased humanoids. A complete Medium humanoid can restore 5d6 hit points, while a Small humanoid

can restore up to 3d6 hit points. Bones must be in relatively good condition and must have belonged to a creature which died no more than 1 hour prior to using this ability.

13th Level

Skeletal Manipulation   Feat 13

Skeleton, Arcane

Prerequisites Dread Visage

You gain the *skeletal manipulation* focus spell. If you don't already have one, you also gain a focus pool of 2 Focus Points, which you can Refocus without any special effort; if you already have a focus pool, increase the number of Focus Points in your focus pool by 1.

Split ◆◆◆   Feat 13

Skeleton, Arcane

Prerequisite Integration

You can split your bones, forming into two complete smaller skeletons for a short time. When you use this ability, you create two separate bodies which are small replicas of yourself. Only one body has any gear, while the other created body has no gear, but otherwise possesses all of your abilities. These bodies act on the same initiative point. Each of your bodies can take up to 2 actions each round, and when either body suffers damage, you suffer the damage. This effect lasts for 1 minute.

Skeleton Focus Spells

Dread Visage   Focus 1

Uncommon, Necromancy, Fear

Cast ◆◆ somatic, verbal

Area 10-foot emanation; **Targets** enemies in the area

Duration Instantaneous

You become horrible to behold, causing those nearby to become frightened. Each creature within 10 feet must succeed on a Will save or fall under the effects of this spell.

Critical Success No effect and the creature is immune to this effect for 24 hours.

Success No effect.

Failure The creature becomes frightened 3.

Critical Failure The creature becomes frightened 5.

Skeletal Manipulation   Focus 2

Uncommon, Necromancy

Cast ◆◆ somatic, verbal

Area 30-foot emanation; **Targets** all corpses in the area

Duration 1 minute

You cause the bones of all slain creatures nearby to animate and fight for you. For each slain creature within 30 feet, you can summon 1 skeleton. Skeletons summoned this way have a number of temporary hit points equal to your level. Skeletons summoned in this way also have an attack bonus equal to your level –4, but otherwise function as standard human skeletons. After 1 minute, the skeletons crumble to dust.

No Bones About It!

In the *Pathfinder Second Edition* roleplaying game, a character's ancestry matters more than ever before, and because ancestries allow characters to choose from a variety of options and abilities as they continue to increase in level, there are more opportunities for ancestries that represent more exotic and exciting creatures that have normally not been suitable for player characters.

This book presents an exciting new ancestry, allowing players to take on the role of skeletal undead. Whether created by necromantic magic, cursed by a higher power, or unable to rest their bones due to some unfinished business, skeletons are driven by a powerful purpose and unrelenting drive to see it done. Perfect for tragic gothic heroes and brooding villains alike, the options in this book allow players access to unique and exciting skeletal powers and abilities. In this book, you'll find:

• Background information on skeleton characters, including an overview of their physical features, society, alignment and religion, and naming conventions.

• Basic stats for skeleton characters.

• Six skeleton heritages, including amalgamation, necromantic skeleton, and small skeleton.

• Fifteen ancestry feats for skeleton characters, including Dread Visage, Reassemble, and Skeletal Shards.

Necromancers of the Northwest

PATHFINDER COMPATIBLE