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Fat Goblin Games Presents **SIDEBAR #30**



Skeleton Tricks

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THE SKINNY ON SKELETONS

Skeletons are the most basic of undead: More sanitary than zombies, less dangerous than ghouls and wights, mostly only useful as part of an undead horde; razing a village without mercy or guarding an ancient miasma choked tomb.

Or are they? Because of the simplistic nature of a skeleton's design, they can be modified in many subtle ways to make the optimal use of their bony frames, and their light forms make them very easy to put in places that you wouldn't expect, making them even more versatile.

Make no bones about it, any aspiring necromancer would not want to pass up trying these skeletal modifications. Your enemies will hate them a Skeleton.

New Feat: Modify Skeleton

You possess the ability to modify Skeletons in ways in order to make them more suitable for specialized tasks.

Prerequisite: Intelligence 14, ability to cast *Animate Dead*

Benefit: You can make any of the modifications to a skeleton listed below so long as you meet the other requirements for it.

Skeleton Tricks

In addition to the prerequisite skills or feats listed, you must have the Modify Skeleton feat to use these tricks. Unless otherwise noted, these modifications last until they are triggered.

Animal Lure Skeleton (Handle Animal 5 ranks or Animal Affinity feat): The Skeleton has been stuffed with special plants that attract certain animals. Any animal that comes within 10 feet of the

skeleton must make a will save (DC of 10 + The Skeletons Hit die) or be fascinated by the skeleton as long as it exists. Animals with a special magical bond (such as familiars and animal companions) are immune.

Beast Headed Skeleton (Handle Animal 5): You have replaced the skeleton's normal head with that of an animal. The Skeleton gains a 1d6 bite attack. This counts as a primary attack form.

Blackbones (Stealth 5): Your Skeleton has been painted black, giving it +10 Stealth in shadow or dark areas.

Bonespur (Climb 5 ranks): The Skeleton's feet and hands have been modified to allow ease of climbing. Reduce its base speed by 10, and the skeleton gains +10 to climb.

Caltrop loaded Skeleton (Craft (weapons) 5 ranks): The Skeleton has had parts of their frame removed and replaced with caltrops. When the Skeleton is destroyed, Caltrops are spread into the five foot range where they were standing.

Cask Skeleton (Brew Potion Feat): The skeleton contains a makeshift potion flask in their head or chest cavity. This can store a single use of a potion of your choice.

Dancing Skeleton (Perform (Dance) 5 ranks): The Skeleton has been programmed and specially modified to allow it to dance. For each Dancing Skeleton which dances to a musician's music, that musician's perform check gets a +1 bonus, to a maximum of +5 with 5 skeletons. This can also apply to Bardic performances. For this reason Dancing Skeletons are usually created en masse.

Decoy Skeleton (Ability to cast *Alter Self* and *Cause Fear*): The Skeleton has been affixed with a magical trap that disguises it with a veil that makes

it appear human (usually as you or another ally). When the Skeleton is destroyed, the disguise melts away, revealing the skeleton's true form. The one who strikes the killing blow is then affected by a *Cause Fear* spell (Save DC equals 10 + the skeleton's hit die).

Disguised Skeleton (Disguise 5 ranks and Deceitful feat): The Skeleton has been specially prepared with fake plaster skin and clothing to appear as a living humanoid. The disguise is rather poor (the Skeleton has an effective disguise skill of +1 per racial hit die) and the skeleton is still a mindless undead, but they can be mistaken for human at a distance or at night.

Dusty Skeleton (Craft (Alchemy) 5 ranks): The skeleton's skull is filled with itching powder. If the Skeleton is struck with enough force that it deals damage, it releases the dust in a cloud 5 feet around it. The skeleton carries a number of doses of dust equal to its hit die.

Exploding Skeleton (Craft (Alchemy) 5 ranks or Bomb Class feature): The Skeleton has been filled with powerful explosive chemicals that will cause it to explode when struck. Any attack that deals damage to the skeleton will cause it to explode, dealing 1d6 damage to anything within 10 feet (Reflex save DC 10 plus the Skeleton's Hit die for half). The Chemicals that make up this bomb are highly volatile, each hour there is a cumulative 10% chance that the skeleton bomb will either explode unprovoked or become inert (50% chance of either happening).

Featherbones (Acrobatics 5 Improved Initiative feat): The Skeleton has had its bones hollowed out, making it more agile but also extremely fragile. They gain double the benefit of their Improved initiative feat, but only have half the hit points they would normally possess. The Skeleton also gets a +10 bonus to acrobatics checks for the purpose of making long jumps.

Flaming Skeleton (Craft (Alchemy) 5 ranks): The Skeleton is coated with Alchemists fire and can be set ablaze from a distance. Anyone attacking a burning skeleton with melee attacks takes 1d6 fire damage. The Skeleton itself takes 1d6 damage per round until destroyed once set ablaze. At Craft (Alchemy) rank 10, the Skeleton has been pre-treated to make it fireproof, not only does it gain fire resistance 5, but it also now burns without being damaged (the fire itself only lasts an hour though, but a skeleton can be used again and again with more applications of alchemist fire).

Folding Skeleton (Stealth 5 ranks): The Skeleton has been designed with specialized joints that allow it to fold up, in exchange for its durability. The Skeleton loses its damage reduction, but can be folded into and fit into a space as though it were two size categories smaller than it is. The skeleton can unfold into its full size as a move action.

Goldbones (Appraise 5 ranks): The Skeleton has gold and treasure plated onto their body. At least 500 GP worth of wealth per hit die. This gives the Skeleton an AC bonus equal to half its hit die (rounded up). The treasure is dropped when the skeleton is destroyed.

Hypnotic Skeleton (Diplomacy 5 Ranks with Hypnosis unlock (See *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Occult Adventures*)): The Skeleton has been painted with psychedelic colors and affixed with strange swirling lights. Anyone who observes the skeleton for 1 minute must make a Will save DC 10 plus the skeleton's hit die or be fascinated for one round per the skeleton's hit die. Anyone who succeeds this will save becomes immune to that

Ironbones (Craft (Armorsmithing) 5 ranks): The Skeleton has heavy iron plates bolted onto their body. Improve their armor class by +5.

Messenger Skeleton (Ability to cast *Magic Mouth*): The Skeleton can be used to record a message that it will repeat when it meets a designated target (Either a specific individual or someone in a broad group, such as an “Intruder.”) The message can be no longer than 10 words per skeleton’s hit die. The skeleton can be ordered to repeat the command once, or to repeat it endlessly. It can also be ordered to repeat a one time message once if prompted by the recipient of the message.

Plague Bones (Heal 5 ranks or ability to cast *Contagion*): The Skeleton’s hands have been coated with dung, as a result its claw attacks or natural weapons can now transmit filth fever.

Screaming Skeleton (Knowledge (nature) 5 rank): The inside of the skeleton has been laced with spores from the shrieker mushroom, and miniature versions of this mushroom now grow inside of it. If anyone comes within five feet of the skeleton, the fungus begins shrieking. It is not enough to deafen like the full grown shriekers, but the sound can be heard up to 500 feet away.

Scroll-eton (Scribe Scroll feat): You have inscribed runes onto the skeleton, effectively turning it into a mobile scroll. A Skeleton can only support a spell of a level equal to its hit die. When the spell is cast, it destroys the skeleton.

Skeleton Ball (Craft (Trapmaking) 5 ranks): This requires several Skeletons, at least twenty hit die worth of medium sized or smaller skeletons. These Skeletons are tied together into a massive ball and programmed to lie in wait. When a victim the Skeleton ball activates and begins rolling itself across a predetermined path, moving 80 feet per round. Anyone in the path of the Skeleton balls movement when it passes by takes 4d6 Damage and is knocked 10 feet away by the force of the Skeleton balls momentum (Reflex save DC 14 for half damage and no knock back). A Skeleton ball will fall apart when it takes damage equal to the number of Skeletons that make up its body, at which point the

separate skeleton’s will attack the nearest living being. Otherwise a skeleton ball will continue to roll on a predetermined space indefinitely.

Skeleton Survival pack (Survival 5 ranks): The Skeleton is loaded with special rations and water skins. As long as the Skeleton is on hand, you have a +4 bonus to survival checks. A skeleton can store enough food to last one day per hit die.

Skeleton with a gun for a hand (Gunsmith class feature or Amateur gunslinger feat): One of the skeleton’s arms has been replaced with a Blunderbuss, which the skeleton can fire as a full round action upon command, using their base attack bonus. The Skeleton cannot reload the gun on their own.

Spinning Skeleton (Power attack feat): The Skeleton has been modified so its upper body can spin on a pivot. If armed with a two handed martial weapon, the Skeleton can spin around and execute a power attack as a full round action.

Swarming Skeleton (Handle Animal 5 Ranks): The Skeleton has been set up with a swarm of insects or other vermin living in their bones. This modification can only be placed on a large sized or bigger skeleton. When the Skeleton is dropped to half its hit points, the swarm will emerge to defend its home. Roll on the following table to determine what kind of swarm it is:

1d4	Swarm Type
1	Centipede Swarm
2	Crab Swarm
3	Rat Swarm
4	Spider Swarm

Sword Skeleton (Craft (Weaponmaking) 5 ranks): You have worked a Longsword (or another nonmagical One handed Martial Melee weapon) into your Skeleton’s body (possibly replacing the spine or part of a limb). You or another who is aware of this weapon (Perception check DC 15 to

spot it) can remove the weapon with a standard action (If the Skeleton has been instructed to fight one who is trying to remove the weapon, they must make a Combat maneuver check to do so, provoking an attack of opportunity doing so). Once removed, the weapon can be used normally. Removing the weapon from the skeleton destroys it instantly.

Wand Skeleton (Use magic item 5 ranks, or Craft Wand feat): The Skeleton has a Wand incorporated into their form (The maximum spell this wand can have is equal to the Skeleton's hit die.) The wand can be removed from the skeleton similar to the Sword Skeleton trick. In addition, The Skeleton can be ordered to use the wand on a target with a move action. Being mindless, the Skeleton will use the wand on the same target again and again each round till the target dies or moves out of range, or the wand runs out of charges, at which point the Skeleton goes into standby and waits for new orders.

Woodbones (Knowledge (Nature) 5 ranks): The Skeleton's rib cage is filled with dirt and a small tree has been planted in the back, creating an unusual symbiosis with the plant. The Skeleton counts as a plant as well as an undead when determining what spells can affect it. The skeleton also takes half damage from Positive energy damage.

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