

Skeletons

Corporeal Forces: 2 Strength: 3 Agility: 5
Ethereal Forces: 1 Intelligence: 0 Precision: 4
Celestial Forces: 0 Will: 0 Perception: 0

As corporeal creatures (more or less) skeletons have the equivalent of Vessel/2, -2 Charisma. Also, the gradual drying out of the bones will result in one level of Vulnerability (crushing attacks) per ten years of 'age.'

Body Hits: 12

Skills: Dodge/4, Fighting/3, Large Weapon/3 (various), Move Silently/3, Ranged Weapon/3 (various)

Gear: Skeletons usually have a simple hand weapon (usually axes or clubs) and shield (+1 to Dodge), or a bow and 30 arrows. They can wear armor, but at a -1 to Protection (minimum 1) unless it's been explicitly designed to fit a Skeleton.

Skeletons fall somewhere in that nebulous area between Constructs and the Undead. While created through the

dark arts of necromancy, they are not really 'human,' even if one expands the term to include things like Zombis.

Creating a Skeleton

Obviously, first you need a complete skeleton: the fresher, the better. The bones have to be reasonably clean of external matter, but not the pieces have to be from the same donor, although they usually are at least from the same species. Anything with a recognizable skeletal structure can be converted into a Skeleton.

To create a Skeleton: first, the bones need to be somehow reattached to each other. The traditional method involves a special type of clay (created with Necromancy roll at +1, and some very nasty ingredients). This clay is then used to mystically stick each bone together (requiring a successful Necromancy roll at -2 and a successful Knowledge: Anatomy roll). The actual ritual itself (*Create Skeleton*) is straightforward and boring: the roll to activate is (Necromancy + Enchantment), with a cost of 6 Essence, and a minimum casting time of 8 hours. The Skeleton will activate at the end of a successful ritual.

Not being quite Undead, Skeletons do not require a suitable Need to fuel their dark vitality. They instead run on Essence: one note of Essence will power a Skeleton for

one hour. Skeletons have a capacity of 3 notes of Essence, which is *only* for activation purposes. Lacking sapience, Skeletons may not learn or use Songs, and cannot use their Essence to improve their skill rolls.

The perceptive will note that Skeletons seem fairly easy to disable, thanks to their relatively low number of Body Hits (12). It is true that two or three good hits will disassemble one: indeed, Skeletons are *designed* to be disassembled. The trick is to **keep** it disassembled. If the pieces of a Skeleton are scattered, the various bones will reassemble themselves within five minutes. *Any* bones empowered by the above ritual can be reused to create a new Skeleton.

The solution to this is to actually break the bones, instead of just sending them flying. A successful Strength roll at -2 will cause (CD/3) permanent Body Hits to the Skeleton per round: however, the character may not do anything else during that round (including Dodge), which will be a problem if there are still Skeletons active, and in the fight.

Skeletons are not free willed creatures: they are always under the orders of their creators. There are precisely four commands that can be given to one: 'Attack', 'Wait until someone comes close enough, then attack', 'Stop attacking' and 'obey [Insert name here] as you would me'. In the medieval period (the great first heyday of Skeletons), they were usually used as endlessly patient

guards. These days, they exist mostly as curios, accidents, or pure kitsch: there's a few demonic Tethers that keep them along for the look of things, and of course they make a nice addition to any Forgotten Temple. Other than that, frankly modern weaponry can make mincemeat out of them.

Of course, if you simply *must* have them, there's always

SKELETECHONS!!!!

Yes, Vapula.

Corporeal Forces: 2	Strength: 6*	Agility: 5
Ethereal Forces: 1	Intelligence: 3*	Precision: 4
Celestial Forces: 0	Will: 0	Perception: 3*

*Denotes 'bought-up' Attribute

Vessel: Vessel/4 with +2 Toughness and -2 Charisma

Body Hits: 48

Skills: Dodge/4, Fighting/3, Large Weapon/3 (Chainsaw), Move Silently/3, Ranged Weapon/3 (Shotgun), Tactics/3

Gear: Integral Shotgun, Integral Chainsaw, Kevlar Armor that *is* designed to be worn by a Skeletechon.

This is a Skeleton after Vapula has finished playing with it. Not that the original design wasn't clever, in its own way, but there were so many improvements to be made.

First, obviously, this clay nonsense had to go, instead, there's an intricate internal titanium frame (+3 to Strength, +1 Toughness and +2 Vessel). Next, well, a dedicated internal computer and integral targeting scope/vision suite, backed up with a virtually bug-free - for Vaputech, at least - AI program seemed appropriate (+3 Intelligence, +3 Perception and Tactics/3). Granted, the AI isn't very bright, and isn't quite up to mimicking true sapience, but that's for the next generation.

It *is* capable of determining when to expend Essence - which is why they also come with a dedicated Reliquary/2 (which extends their maximum operating time to 5 hours). After that, there really was nothing left to do except to replace one arm with a chainsaw and the other with a shotgun. Luckily, having them built in allowed for better accuracy (+1).

Problems with the design? Well, you have to understand that these things come with a tradeoff. Unlike their

prototypes, Skeletechons cannot reassemble themselves when their bones are dispersed. Vaputech is working on the problem. Then there's the unfortunate detail that Skeletechons lack fine manipulators, thus making them fairly useless if somebody rips out their integral weaponry. That cannot be helped. And, true, their appearance makes it difficult to use them too publicly - but that's *society's* fault, not the Skeletechon's.

There's also the power supply issue. Personally, Vapula himself isn't too sure whether having the computer, sights, and chainsaw be powered by a highly volatile plasma battery is either a bug, or a feature. On the one hand, when the battery is breached by an energy or fire-based attack (10+ points of damage in a single attack), it tends to explode (on a 1 or 2 CD of the attack roll), causing 4d6 Body Hits to anyone within 10 yards of the explosion. On the other hand, when the battery is breached by an energy or fire-based attack, it tends to explode, causing 4d6 Body Hits to anyone within 10 yards of the explosion.

All depends on your point of view, really.

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