

Lost Lore:

Headhunter

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By Jeff Erwin



Credits

Author Jeff Erwin

Developer John Ling

Copy Editor John Ling

Art Direction Charles A. Wright

Layout and Typesetting Charles A. Wright

Cover Art Andrew DeFelice

Interior Art Andrew DeFelice

Playtesting

Spencer Robertson, James "Slash" Quigley, Dominic "Malachi" Amann, Kevin Garlick, Stephanie "Kewlkat" Amann, Dave Kirk

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The Headhunter

Headhunters are warriors who decapitate their foes — during or shortly after combat — and carry their heads as visible proof of their triumph. Some headhunters, the greatest among them, can trap a little of their victims' essence in their heads, and can use it to replicate their foes' unusual capabilities.

History

The premier headhunters of the Lost Lands are the Ognari Riders of the Haunted Steppes. One of the many tribes of Shattered Folk eking out a precarious existence on the arid desolation of the steppes, starvation and competitive pressure from other steppe-rider tribes ultimately forged them into a fearsome tribe of horse warriors, forcing them into battlefield atrocities to survive. Five generations ago, the charismatic headhunter Ognar the Awful managed to organize them into a mercenary force and sold their services among the larger and more successful of the Shattered Folk tribes who would turn a blind eye to the riders' battlefield scavenging. They have swarmed across numerous fields of battle bearing many heads to their khan's great, moving Castle of Skulls. The Riders are a profane and impious lot; the most sacred thing in the world is the head, and they abjure all gods, speaking of great and possibly apocryphal heroes who have taken the heads of demigods and planar lords. Though they do not kneel before deities, they do take stock of them, and have a deep interest in matters of life, the soul, and death. At gatherings, the greatest headhunters sometimes use skull masks to act out their encounters with the foes they feared, admired, or hated most

Heads are bulky and unwieldy, particularly from larger creatures. Hence headhunters often tie their collection, once they have mastered the techniques that allow their prizes to remain active, to the saddles of their mounts, festoon their chariots or carts with them, or hang them from their packs. Others, however, drape their bodies with many heads, desiring to display their strength or plagued by a festering paranoia that others of their ilk will steal their trophies.

The Ognari care little for gender or birth; the true measure of a person's worth is his ability to kill, and there can be no better proof of that than the heads one has cloven from the fallen.

Headhunting can be a crucial survival skill among nomadic and primitive cultures because many of the techniques of crafting magic items, potions, and weaponry are restricted by costly trade items, the necessity of a well-stocked forge or laboratory, and other advantages of civilized and static peoples. For this reason, parallel practices have sprung up all around the world, though not as visibly.

Headhunting is a quasi-mystical practice, into which one is initiated by its masters; among the Ognari Riders, according to brave students of human culture that interviewed the nomads, the headhunting cult shows signs of an ancient, peaceful religion of ancestors and the dead that it subsumed long ago. Elder hunters among the Ognari sometimes whisper prayers of thanks to the heads as they invoke their power, and nod respectful not just to headhunters, but to the many craniums dangling from their panoply. The bone rings handed out by chieftains serve as mystic protection to their followers in the absence of clerics.

Ambitious headhunters usually meet their demise seeking out unusual or dangerous prey — hoping to gather up some unique power to give them a battlefield advantage. Some, infirm with age, deliberately die in combat with their students or their own children, granting them their own head as a final gift.

Not every society accepts headhunting. Typically, headhunting is done by warrior societies that venerate heads, sometimes offering them to the gods and even carrying the heads of their dead friends

Carrion Bearer: Headhunting and Social Encounters

Headhunting can elicit a visceral reaction among many; for this reason headhunters must reckon with violence and anger if they practice their art in public. At best, headhunters are viewed as grisly bounty hunters and mercenaries, and will seldom gain the trust of outsiders. Initiates of headhunting must weigh this probability against the secrets they will learn. Some civilized folk have successfully learned headhunting secrets yet conceal the heads as they move among their own kind, but no proper headhunter of the steppes would deign act so cowardly.

Starting Attitude

The following table shows default attitudes if one is openly carrying a head:

Circumstance	Starting Attitude	Modifier
Creature's enemy	Indifferent	+5
Stranger	Unfriendly	-5
Tribe member or acquaintance	Hostile	-10
Friend or family member	Hostile	-15

Conversations and Detailed Interaction

The above modifiers affect Bluff, Intimidate, gathering information using Diplomacy, and other social interactions, including Perform. Negative modifiers become bonuses if used with Intimidate, but the reverse is not the case. The worst modifier appropriate for the heads displayed is always applied first, with an additional +1 or -1 based on further heads. A failed roll usually results in combat.

Example: Odgar the Awful, a lesser descendant of the great Ognar, has four heads hanging from his saddle when he rides into town. One belongs to a local warrior, whose brother he encounters. The other three heads belong to the warrior's spear-carrier and two monsters he killed that had been plaguing the area. The modifier to his Bluff check is -15 for the warrior, -1 for the spear-carrier, and +2 for the two monsters. Odgar has a -14 to his Bluff check to explain his possessions. If he attempts to Intimidate the man, he gains a +15 for the warrior, +1 for the spear carrier, and +2 for the monsters, or a +18 to his roll.

and family. Some headhunters will train apprentices in the art in exchange for a gift of heads taken freshly in battle, using secrets that allow them to assume ownership over the offering.

Most headhunters come from martial classes. Pious headhunters would do well to worship gods with an expansive view of how the dead are to be treated. The ranks of this class include impassive and sinister warriors, cruel and boastful reavers, and young bravos, their armor decorated with the skulls of legendary monsters. The Ognari Riders are often coarse cavaliers, rangers, barbarians, and fighters. However, headhunting is also often used by bards, witches, oracles, and other magic-using classes to augment their abilities.

Role: In many ways, the headhunter exemplifies the practice of looting the dead. In this way they are model adventurers. However, headhunting may cause conflict: with the kindred of the dead, with other adventurers who endanger the headhunter's kill, and with civilized folk who object to the carrying of remains in a disrespectful way. Headhunters prefer melee combat, so they can kill their foes and gather their remains quickly. Missile kills may allow opponents too much of an opportunity to recover fallen comrades before the victim's head can be severed.

Alignment: Headhunters can be of any alignment; it is how one headhunts that determines one's morality, not the act of doing so. A good headhunter might carry the heads of dangerous or evil monsters; a lawful headhunter might be a bounty hunter or executioner; a neutral headhunter may seek to honor and emulate his foes; and an evil headhunter might revel in the desecration of the dead, and mock the grief of his enemies.

Hit Die: d10

Requirements

To qualify to become a headhunter, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5. **Skills:** Intimidate 5 ranks, Craft (taxidermy) 5 ranks. **Feats:** Cleave, Iron Will.

Class Skills

The headhunter's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Wis), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Ranks at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Headhunters gain no weapon or armor proficiencies.

Carrion Bearer (Ex): As a practitioner of an art that requires maltreatment of the dead, the headhunter suffers penalties (and some slight advantages) in social interactions, such as Diplomacy for the headhunter and her party, if the target of the check might be offended or disgusted by the headhunter's practices, such as if the headhunter carries a head of a tribe member or that of a venerated being. These effects are detailed in the sidebar.

Decapitator (Su): At first level, the headhunter begins harvesting the heads of those she kills along with a portion of their power. The headhunter must execute the killing blow to use this ability, and must remove the head of her dead or dying foe within 10 rounds of doing so. The victim must have been living (neither undead nor a construct) and be both corporeal and have a discernable anatomy. The head must be mostly intact, and if it has multiple heads, all must be collected.

After severing her foe's head, she selects one of that creature's class or special abilities, extraordinary, or supernatural abilities, including feats (regardless of prerequisites), but excluding spells, spell-like abilities, and abilities that provide growth points, summon monsters or other creatures, or create undead spawn. So long as she

is carrying that head, she may use that ability as if she was the slain foe, whereupon the head rots away or withers and is useful only as a grisly trophy. Abilities triggered from a head use a standard action to activate and the head must be wielded in the headhunter's hand.

If the ability utilized has an indefinite duration it lasts after activation for a number of rounds equal to the headhunter's total character level at the time of harvesting the head.

Example: A headhunter cunningly slays a medusa. She carries the severed head in a bag at her waist, and retrieves it to use the head's petrifying gaze ability. As an 8th level barbarian/5th level headhunter, she is able to use the ability for thirteen rounds before the briefly animate serpents and clouded eyes of the head fall lifeless. The effects are still permanent, as per the medusa's special ability.

While active, a head exudes a faint aura of necromancy.

A headhunter may carry up to half her class level (minimum of one) in active heads at a time. A head may be discarded, but the headhunter does not regain the ability to carry a new head until the appropriate time has elapsed. A head lasts as long as the headhunter's Craft (taxidermy) roll in days, whereupon it becomes inert, as if used. Heads not in the headhunter's personal possession decay after a number of hours equal to her roll or the balance of her roll. Heads stored in an extra-dimensional space such as a portable hole are not considered to be in the headhunter's possession.

Example: A headhunter decapitates a sorcerer, selecting one of the spell caster's bloodline abilities, and rolls a Craft (taxidermy) check of 12. She carries the head for 7 days, but is wounded and the head is transferred to another character while she is carried in a litter. It remains active for a further 5 hours, then becomes inert. If she had remained active and carried the head she could have had its abilities available for up to 12 days.

Gentle Repose (Sp): At 2nd level, the headhunter may cast gentle repose as a spell-like ability, using her headhunter level as the caster level, a number of times per day equal to her Charisma bonus. Bodies continuously preserved with gentle repose may be utilized at any time (not simply 10 rounds) to craft a head, bone ring, skull mask, or skull cup.

Headhunter Secrets: Sometimes the heads one takes teach one things, or one learns new techniques by observation of rival headhunters. At 3rd level and every other level thereafter, a headhunter may learn a new secret, giving herself the ability to refine and expand her art.

• *Boasting Trophies (Ex)*: While visibly carrying heads (typically tied to a belt, pack, or around one's shoulders) the headhunter is fearsome indeed. The headhunter knowing this secret adds a cumulative +1 circumstance bonus for each active head to her Intimidate checks.

• *Corpse Defiler (Su)*: Even the unliving are subject to this headhunter's collecting. Headhunters using this secret to gather the heads of undead beings may not select spells, create spawn, dominate, or rejuvenation, as an ability attached to the head, but may select any other racial or class ability possessed by the creature.

• *Fetish Head (Su)*: If this secret is learned by the headhunter, she may use a single spell or spell-like ability known by the fallen foe (as if a scroll), like any other ability allowed by the decapitator ability. Alternatively, if the headhunter is capable of casting spontaneous spells, she may use a spell of a level equal to or less than her own caster level known by the victim so long as the head is active. The headhunter must have an open spell slot to use this ability. If the headhunter uses a spellbook or has a familiar which stores spells, and the spell is usable by her, she may transcribe it into her spellbook as if it was a scroll or learn the spell, storing it in her familiar.

• *Head Missile (Su)*: The secret of using lime and other preservatives to create a murderous missile weapon from a head is known to some headhunters. Instead of acquiring an ability, the head becomes a thrown weapon that affects individuals belonging to the same tribe, family, organization, or sect as if it was a *bane* weapon. The base damage and range increment is based on the source of the head's size. Once a head missile is used, it is destroyed.

Head Missiles

The range increment here assumes a Medium headhunter. If a headhunter is Small, Large, or some other size, adjust the range by the difference; that is, a Huge headhunter throws Medium heads at the same range increment as a Medium headhunter throws Tiny heads. Normally, a Medium headhunter can only target something with a Gargantuan or Colossal head if they occupy the same square.

Size	Damage	Range Increment	
Fine	1	30 ft.	
Diminutive	1d2	20 ft.	
Tiny	1d3	20 ft.	
Small	1d4	10 ft.	
Medium	1d6	10 ft.	
Large	1d8	5 ft.	
Huge	2d6	2 1/2 ft.	
Gargantuan	2d8	O ft.	
Colossal	4d6	O ft.	
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Head Pet (Su): A headhunter who learns this secret may substitute the head of an arcane spellcaster they have slain for their familiar. The headhunter must already have the ability to acquire a familiar through a class ability or feat. The targeted victim gets a Will save at the moment of death versus the headhunter's caster level. If the slain spellcaster succeeds, the head is created but becomes freewilled (retaining 2 HD). A severed head familiar counts as one of the headhunter's active heads but does not decay or become inert. While a severed head familiar can be dismissed, and hence become free-willed, it still counts against the headhunter's maximum number of heads until it is destroyed. If the severed head familiar's master dies, the severed head becomes a free-willed undead creature. See the Severed Head sidebar for the appropriate template. Creating a severed head familiar is an evil act.

Bone Ring (Su): Upon reaching 4th level, the headhunter may create simple *bone rings* from the corpses of her enemies, which can be worn on the hand or pierced through a nose or ear. A *bone ring* holds a number of temporary hit points equal to the foe's CR, and becomes inert, except as a curiosity, after a number of days equal to half the headhunter's Craft (bone carving) check, whether or not they have been presented to an ally; these temporary hit points are used to absorb any hit point loss by the wearer during that time, crumbling to dust once they have expended all their temporary hp. *Bone rings* take up a ring or head slot when worn. *Bone rings* remain active within 60 feet of the headhunter and hence may be used by followers and cohorts; if they leave that range the temporary hp disappear at a rate of 1 per hour. Only one *bone ring* may be created from a single foe, and the foe must have been living and have had a discernable anatomy.

Skull Bearer (Sp): At 6th level, the headhunter may, as a spelllike ability, cast *ant haul* on herself or her animal companion, with the caster level being equivalent to her headhunter level, a number of times per day equal to her Charisma bonus.

Skull Mask (Su): Upon reaching 8th level, the headhunter may choose to create a skull mask rather than an active head from the body of her foe. Wearing a skull mask allows the headhunter to take on the form, mannerisms, tactile presence, and odor of the foe as if using the *veil* spell as a spell-like ability (caster level equal to headhunter level). As with *veil*, the wearer of a skull mask makes a Disguise check upon donning it, with a +10 circumstance bonus.

Those viewing the headhunter wearing such a disguise may make a Will save to discern the illusion. The form taken is always that of the fallen foe, and lasts so long as she wears the mask, which may not be worn in combination with a helmet or other head slot item. Skull masks while worn provide a finite number of hours of this disguise, equal to the headhunter's class level, but the headhunter need not use these hours consecutively. Masks, when not in use, must remain in the headhunter's possession as if they were an active head, and remain usable so long as they have not left her possession for more than a number of hours equal to her Craft (bone carving) roll. A headhunter may have only a number of masks in her possession equal to half her headhunter level, and may wear only one mask at a time. Excess masks become useless, as if used up, in order of age.

Master Decapitator (Su): At 10th level, the headhunter selects two different abilities possessed by her foe when severing his head, and the head does not become inert until both are used or the duration of the Craft (taxidermy) check expires.

Skull Cup (Su): Upon reaching 10th level, the headhunter learns to share out the powers of a head by carving the brainpan into a wide cup. Creating a skull cup is a lengthy process using the Craft (bone carving) skill (DC equal to the victim's CR +20), and the headhunter may create and possess only one skull cup at a time, selecting an ability at that time as if using her decapitator ability and headhunter secrets. When a skull cup is used, it may be shared among a number of allies equal to the headhunter's Charisma bonus (minimum 1) within 10 rounds, before it becomes inert. Each person who imbibes a liquid placed into the cup by the headhunter in that time gains a single ability from the fallen foe, which was selected by the headhunter as if creating an active head. A skull cup stays active until used and does not decay or become inert. After it is used, it becomes simply a ghoulish trophy, and the headhunter can go on to create another cup. If the ability placed in the cup is a spell (such as from the Fetish Head secret) the drinkers must still be able to use the spell as normal.

Saddlebows Skull (Ex): The headhunter may transfer her heads to an animal companion or cohort, or a cart or other transport tied or carried by the same, and they are treated as being in her possession and resistant to decay, so long as the bearer and the head remain within 60 feet of her. The headhunter must still retrieve and wield the head to activate its power.

Singing Head (Su): The heads carried by the headhunter sing along with him or provide a suitable rhythmic chant, creating a grotesque chorus. The headhunter's bardic performance rolls are granted a +1 morale bonus for each head currently active and in their possession. A headhunter must first learn the speak to head secret before selecting this secret.

Skillful Skull (Su): Knowledge of this secret allows the headhunter to use a skill as if it was a class or racial ability, understand and speak one of the victim's languages, or a weapon or armor proficiency (for a number of rounds equal to the headhunter's class levels), as per the decapitator ability.

Speak to Head (Su): A headhunter who learns this secret may speak to the heads she accumulates (so long as they are still active) as if using the *speak with dead* spell. The corpse's dismembered condition does not affect the spell's efficacy.

Steal Head (Su): Headhunters who master this secret may take heads from other headhunters as if they slew and created the head themselves, with the heads remaining active as if their opponent still retained possession. The other headhunter, if they are still alive, may not replace the stolen head until the lost head is used or becomes inert. This secret is sometimes used by older and experienced headhunters as a means of payment for teaching the class to potential students, as the transference does not have to be unwilling. More skilled headhunters sometimes shame their less experienced apprentices for mistakes or insufficient deference by subduing them and seizing their single head.

Store Head (Ex): The headhunter may store heads in a suitably dry and vermin-free location for as long as their Craft (taxidermy) roll indicates in days, or on her person in weeks (or the balance of their roll).

Creating an Animated Severed Head

Animated severed heads are a product of shamanistic and magic-using headhunters experimenting with the creation of familiars. They are a gruesome parody of the dead arcane spell casters they are made from, possessing rudimentary intelligence and personalities. Some severed heads are liberated by the death of their masters, and persist as nuisances or guardians in their owners' former sanctums or tombs.

Creating a Severed Head Familiar

"Severed Head" is an acquired template that can be added to any living Medium creature possessing arcane spell casting levels, referred to hereafter as the base creature.

Challenge Rating: A free-willed severed head created by a failed attempt to create a familiar receives a CR of 1/2. If

emancipated by the death of its master, a severed head familiar receives a CR equal to 1/8 of its

master's character level or HD.

Size: The severed head's size is Tiny. **Alignment**: A severed head retains its original alignment.

Type: The creature's type changes to undead. It retains any subtype except any subtype that indicates kind. It does not gain the augmented subtype.

Hit Dice: All Hit Dice gained from class levels are lost. The severed head's Hit Dice changes to 2, and its racial hit die changes to a d8; severed head familiars have half their master's hit points modified by the Toughness feat; a freed former familiar receives half his former master's Hit Dice. Severed heads use their Charisma modifiers to determine bonus hit points (instead of Constitution). A severed head's base attack is equal to 3/4 its Hit Dice.

Saves: Base save bonuses for a free-willed severed head are Fort $\pm 1/3$ HD, Ref $\pm 1/3$ HD, and Will $\pm 1/2$ HD ± 2 . Familiars and emancipated severed head familiars retain their old master's base save bonuses, modified by their ability scores.

Defensive Abilities: Severed heads lose their defensive abilities and gain

all the qualities and immunities granted to undead creatures. **Speed**: A severed head gains a 30 ft. fly speed (clumsy), or may roll on the ground for 5 ft. per round as a move action. The severed head loses all other movement types.

Attacks: A severed head loses all natural weapons, manufactured weapon attacks, or weapon proficiencies of the base creature, except for any bite attacks. The severed head gains a bite attack if the base creature did not possess one, with damage determined by size and Strength of the original creature (see *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, Table 3-1: Natural Attacks by Size). The bite attack of a Medium creature is 1d6.

Spell-like Abilities: At the time of creation, the severed head

retains one 0-level cantrip the base creature knew as a spell-like ability, usable once per day, with a caster level equal to half his master's caster levels, or 1, whichever is greater.

Special Attacks: A severed head retains none of the base creature's special attacks.

Abilities: Wis –4, Cha –4. The severed head receives a Str of 2, and a Dex of 8. A severed head has no Con score. A free-willed severed head retains the Intelligence it would have received as a familiar to its former master.

Skills: A severed head has 8+Int modifier in skills. Any skills it retains that it had as a living being are considered class skills. A masterless severed head familiar does not retain access to its former master's skill ranks.

Feats: A severed head loses all feats possessed by the base creature. It gains Toughness and Weapon Finesse as bonus feats. A former familiar does not retain feats it gained as a familiar.

Special Qualities: A severed head loses all special qualities possessed by the base creature. A former familiar loses all special abilities granted by being a familiar when it becomes masterless.

Example

Jaquel was a village midwife and herbalist — as well as a semi-professional witch, in a village raided by a gang of headhunters. The headhunter shaman slew her and took her head as a severed head familiar as part of a rite of passage, but he and his tribesmen were wiped out by a band of adventurers; the still partially free-willed witch's head escaped and now dwells in a burned out shepherd's hut nearby and some of the other denizens of the hills nearby mistakenly believe her to be a will-o'-wisp. She is quite insane, but not malevolent. Jaquel's Head is derived from a 2nd-level witch, and she belonged to a headhunter with 6 sorcerer levels, 3 barbarian levels, and 3 headhunter levels.

> Jaquel's Head CR 1/2 XP 200 N Tiny undead Init +3; Perception -3

> > AC 14, touch 11, flatfooted 14 (-1 Dex, +3 natural, +2 size) hp 21 (6d8-12 plus 6) Fort +1; Ref +1; Will +2

Speed 5 ft., fly 30 ft. (clumsy) Melee bite +3 (1d8–1) Space 2-1/2 ft.; Reach 0 ft. Spell-like Abilities (CL 3rd):

1/day—dancing lights

Str 2, Dex 8, Con -, Int 8, Wis 5, Cha 6 Base Atk +4; CMB -4; CMD 6 Feats Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Toughness⁸, Weapon Finesse^B Skills Heal +2, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (nature) +4, Spellcraft +4, Stealth +7

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Weighty Matters

Heads are weighty, solid things. Carrying a half-dozen preserved heads on one's body is no easy feat.

Size	Weight	
Diminutive	1/2 pound	
Tiny	1 pound	
Small	5 pounds	
Medium	10 pounds	
Large	50 pounds	
Huge	100 pounds	
Gargantuan	500 pounds	
Colossal	1,000 pounds	

The GM may make appropriate adjustments; i.e., the head of a centaur weighs the same as a Medium creature.

Headhunter Archetypes

Not every member of a headhunting tribe or roving adventurer wishes to suffer the full initiation into the headhunter cult; some either incorporate head hunting beliefs into their mystical praxis, or adopt some of the fighting secrets of the brotherhood into their combat training. That said, there are those who learn some of these paths as a preparation to becoming a full headhunter, and should they survive, are numbered among the elite.

Barbarian

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Face-marking Warrior (Archetype)

The face-marking warriors tattoo the features of the heads they have gathered upon their own as marks of pride and humility, in their legendary deeds, and in respect of the foes they faced and honorably slew. Every mark — crude, intricate, delicate, or rough — is a story; truly, these warrior's lives may be read in their ornamented faces.

Victor's Mark (Su): Face-marking warriors tattoo their faces to exemplify their deeds and victories. Each time the barbarian conquers a foe they admire or fear, they add some memento of their victory to their face, though its meaning may be apparent only to themselves, and the individual warrior's skill at the needle or brand and aesthetic style is irrelevant to the effect. Some face marking warriors are covered in complex and beautiful patterns, while others simply add hatch-marks or words. When a barbarian would normally gain a rage power, he may instead select the abilities of a foe slain within the last year that does not require an action to activate (such as DR, SR, or darkvision), and gains the use of that ability during rage. This ability replaces each rage power ability through 9th level.

The Rage of the Slain (Su): The face-marking warrior eventually masters greater abilities stolen from his foes. At 10th level, he may select any class or racial ability (excluding feats) that does not require concentration to activate to be linked to his rage, and may do so each time a rage power is gained thereafter. If the stolen ability matches a previously stolen ability that scales, the barbarian may scale the ability up by one bonus or one die, so long as the newly slain foe had attained that ability. Scaling abilities are often referenced by the elaboration or completion of an existing tattoo or scarification marking, rather than a wholly new design.

The Headhunter

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+1	+0	+1	Carrion bearer, decapitator
2nd	+1	+1	+1	+1	Gentle repose
3rd	+2	+2	+1	+2	Headhunter secret
4th	+3	+2	+1	+2	Bone ring
5th	+3	+3	+2	+3	Headhunter secret
6th	+4	+3	+2	+3	Skull bearer
7th	+5	+4	+2	+4	Headhunter secret
8th	+6	+4	+3	+4	Skull mask
9th	+6	+5	+3	+5	Headhunter secret
10th	+7	+5	+3	+5	Master decapitator, skull cup

Fighter

Head-taker (Archetype)

The head-taker gathers the heads of his enemies, but instead of concentrating on their mystic powers, she concerns herself with the art of clean cuts to the neck. Pragmatic and practiced, head-takers see the head less as a cult object, and more as the most vulnerable part of the body.

Neck Piercer (Ex): Skilled in targeting the vulnerable chinks in armor surrounding the neck, the head-taker can seriously injure the neck and head of her foes. The opponent must have a discernable anatomy and a head or heads. The head-taker makes an attack as a full-round action at -4 against her opponent. This attack triggers an attack of opportunity because it necessarily opens the fighter to counter attacks. Hitting the neck or head using this ability leaves the target sickened for 1d4 rounds. If the head-taker's neck piercer attack is a critical, the victim takes 1d6 points of Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma damage, rolled separately, and becomes staggered for 1d4 rounds. A successful Fortitude save (DC equal to the damage inflicted) prevents the staggered effect. The target also becomes sickened for 1d4 minutes. This ability replaces the bonus feat at 2nd level.

Neck Slicer (Ex) At 15th level, the head-taker can slice through the trachea or crush it and nearly sever the heads of her foes with a single fearsome blow. If her attack is a successful critical the target may roll a Fortitude save against the head-taker's attack roll; if the target succeeds, the effects of the neck piercer ability are applied instead. Otherwise, the head-taker severs or blocks the throat of her victim, preventing him from using any ability (including spells) that has an audible component, or requires swallowing or expectoration, such as but not limited to using any form of verbal action, breath weapons, consuming potions, extracts, mutagens, or using bardic abilities. The victim further suffers 1 point of bleed damage for every 10 points of damage done with the successful attack, each following round. Creatures with multiple heads remain capable of executing these actions with their uninjured head(s). Removing these effects requires the *regenerate* spell, the regeneration ability (once the damage from the critical is recovered), or careful surgery (Heal check DC 20+damage dealt) followed by healing all the initial

damage from the critical. Cure spells (including *heal*) do not restore the victim, though they do stop bleed damage and recover hit points. Without these interventions, the victim will eventually die unless they can receive some sort of nourishment without swallowing, and will become permanently mute. Slain foes injured by the neck slicer ability magically regain their ability to speak or take verbal actions if they are created into head pets by a headhunter or headshrinker shaman, or living heads by an oracle of the head. This ability replaces Armor training 4.

Called Shots

The abilities of the head-taker archetype are simplified from the optional called shot rules presented in *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat*. You won't need that source to use the archetype, however, as the head-taker's very specific use of these rules is fully described. The rules there do describe some corner cases (and restrictions) that don't come up very often, but may be applicable to the headtaker's abilities at the GM's discretion. Generally speaking, a called shot has a -2, -5, or -10 penalty to the attack, with additional effects and conditions applied based on whether it does normal, critical, or at least half the creature's total hit points. Many of these mimic the effects of the optional critical deck.

You'll find that the head-taker archetype is notably superior to a normal character at making the equivalent of called shot attacks to the neck, and that the neck slicer ability differs from a called shot's critical effect by being more precise and brutal. This makes the archetype viable even in campaigns utilizing the rules in full. The headtaker's abilities are not called shots, which are simply a kind of attack, like a full attack; they are class abilities, and not necessarily subject to all of the additional rules provided in *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Combat*.

Oracle

Mystery of the Head

The Oracles of the cult of the head have a mystic relationship to the skulls and faces of their adversaries, as well as those of their dead kin. Unlike the arrogant headhunter warriors and the sinister headshrinking witches, the worshippers of the severed head are grim and somber. The preservation and collection of heads is both a tribute to the universality of the humanoid face and its symbol as a shell for the immortal soul.

Class Skills: An oracle with the head mystery adds Disguise, Intimidate, Knowledge (history), and Survival to her list of class skills.

Bonus Spells: *comprehend languages* (2nd), *touch of idiocy* (4th), *guards and wards* (6th), *lesser geas* (8th), *feeblemind* (10th), *geas/quest* (12th), *sequester* (14th), *insanity* (16th), *soul bind* (18th)

Revelations: An oracle with the head mystery can choose from any of the following revelations:

Brain Drain (Su): You can take a standard action to violently probe the mind of a single intelligent enemy within 100 feet. The target receives a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level plus your Charisma modifier) to negate the effect and immediately knows the source of this harmful mental prying. Those who fail this save are wracked with pain, taking 1d4 points of damage per oracle level. After successfully attacking with this ability, you may use a full-round action to sort through the jumble of stolen thoughts and memories to make a single Knowledge check using the victim's skill bonus. The randomly stolen thoughts remain in your mind for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma bonus (minimum 1). Treat the knowledge gained as if you used *detect thoughts*. This is

a mind-affecting effect. You can use this ability once per day at 1st level, plus one additional time per day at 5th level and for every 5 levels beyond 5th.

Castle of Skulls (Su): You summon forth a swirling barrier of bone and withered flesh, shielding you from attack. This revelation creates a mobile *wall of bones*, as the spell, that persists for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma bonus (minimum 1) that surrounds you, but moving with you and forming a 20-foot diameter globe of clattering skulls, with a thickness equal to 1 inch per oracle level. Like a standard *wall of bones*, it is possible to force one's way through the barrier using a Strength check (DC 20 + 2 per inch).

Fearful Gaze (Su): Your malignant eyes can make a single target creature within 30 feet to become shaken for one round. This effect is negated by a successful Will saving throw (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level plus your Charisma modifier). At 8th level you make the target frightened instead, and at 16th level you makes it panicked. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. A creature affected by this revelation cannot be affected by it again from the same oracle for 24 hours.

Monstrous Insight (Su): An oracle of the head can identify the nature, the weaknesses and the strengths of creatures he encounters. As a standard action, the oracle may make a Knowledge skill check to identify any creature he sees (using the appropriate skill for the type of creature) with an insight bonus equal to his oracle level. Whether or not the check is successful, the oracle gains a +2 insight bonus to his AC against the creature's attacks made against him for 1 minute. This ability may be used a number of times per day equal to 3 + her Charisma modifier.

Natural Divination (Su): An oracle of the head can consult the severed head of a creature to gain an insight bonus equal to her Charisma modifier on one saving throw. Alternatively, by listening to the whispers of her heads or observing the death twitches of dying creatures, the oracle may apply a +10 insight bonus to any one initiative roll. These bonuses must be used within the next 24 hours and you must declare you are using the bonus before the check or save is made. Making a natural divination takes 10 minutes. You may use natural divination (in any combination) once per day plus one additional time for every four oracle levels you have gained.

The Kindest Stroke (Su): Through an hour-long magical operation, the oracle may sever the head of a living but helpless victim, keeping their soul imprisoned within it, except that the undecaying head remains conscious and is capable of speech. The victim may resist by a successful Will save against the oracle's caster level plus Charisma modifier. On a success, the victim dies. The living head no longer requires food, drink, or oxygen, and retains their free will, though they possess only a natural bite attack. The oracle must compel his living head using magic or persuasion if they wish to command them or converse with them. Victims of the kindest stroke are capable of casting spells possessing only verbal components. The body may be reattached to the head through greater restoration, though only within 24 hours; otherwise resurrection recovers the body of the victim. Victims of the kindest stroke may not teleport, disincorporeate, or become ethereal; their Strength and Dexterity change to 1, and their Constitution is reduced by 10 points (minimum 1). Unfortunately, the living head gradually goes insane, suffering 1 point of Int, Wis, and Cha drain per week. An oracle of the head can create and carry only one of these living heads at a time.

Lore Keeper (Su): The oracle of the head learns through hearsay, tales, and the pillaged minds of the dead. You may use your Charisma modifier instead of your Intelligence modifier on all Knowledge checks.

Seat of the Soul (Su): You can prevent the resurrection, raising as undead or some other restoration of life or unlife of a being whose head you possess, save through a *true resurrection* or a *miracle* spell.

Voice of the Grave (Su): You can use *speak with dead*, as the spell, for a number of rounds per day equal to your oracle level. These rounds do not need to be consecutive. At 5th level and every 5 levels thereafter, the dead creature takes a cumulative –2 penalty on its Will save to resist this effect.

Final Revelation: Upon reaching 20th level, you become

acephalic, and able to remove your own head without dying, or even to have your own head removed by violence harmlessly. No ability that derives its power from possession of your head can be used by another creature. Your head becomes capable of hovering with a speed of 30 ft. (clumsy), and takes a quarter of your hp with it; the head can travel up to one mile from the your body, and retains command over both itself and the headless body, which is still conscious and motile, and aware of the surroundings around its body as if using the scrying spell (caster level equals the oracle's class level). An acephalic oracle may cast spells from the location of her head, and if the body is slain or destroyed, the hovering head continues to exist. Destroying the head (and the head alone) slays the oracle. You must still satisfy your body's physical need for sustenance, unless these needs are provided for otherwise, and hence you must reattach your head for to provide for these, according to the rules for starvation and thirst in the Core rulebook. If the body is destroyed, the oracle's head needs an alternate means of feeding itself to remain alive. Acephalous oracles who cannot do so become free-willed animate severed heads after their deaths, as per the description under the headhunter class, with the oracle's former hit dice and abilities being used to calculate the undead head's statistics as if the oracle had been its own master.

Shaman

Head-shrinker (Archetype)

Head-shrinkers take the heads of the slain and turn them into shrunken, grotesque trophies, infused with malefic power. As other shamans, head-shrinkers are focused on the natural world, though they focus on its sinister side. Head-shrinker shamans often serve as the guardians of a tribe's mobile reliquary tent, constructed from the skulls of spent magical heads.

Shrunken Heads (Su): Shrunken heads, which are preserved in a particularly foul manner, are potent apotropaic symbols and shield their carrier from hostile magic and spirits. Once per day, a head-shrinker may create a shrunken head fetish from a slain living enemy possessing a discernable anatomy and at least one head. The shrunken head may be sacrificed to act as a *dispel magic*, cast as a counterspell (not as a targeted dispel), with the dispel check substituting the slain foe's CR for the head-shrinker's caster level. This counterspell may be used on spell-like abilities. A head-shrinker may carry a number of heads equal to one third of their caster level, plus 1. This replaces the shaman's spirit magic ability.

Severed Head Familiar (Su): Head-shrinker shamans may use a severed head familiar (as if possessing the head pet headhunter secret). Their prior spirit animal is slain and its knowledge transferred to the new severed head, which must be created as normal, from the corpse of a slain arcane spell-caster. This replaces the shaman's Wandering Spirit ability.

Headhunter Equipment

While the chief tools of any headhunting group are bladed weapons, desiccants and preservative salts, the threat of losing one's head and empowering one's foe has spawned a unique magic item, the *torque of Blade-turning*.

TORQUE OF BLADE-TURNING

Aura moderate abjuration; CL 8th Slot neck; Price 20,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

Societies plagued by headhunters (including the headhunters themselves) have created these torques, usually made of cold iron or precious metal, to deflect the maiming strokes of the nomads. A torque of bladeturning prevents the wearer from being subjected, alive or dead, to effects that require the severance of a head, called shots to the head, or the neck piercer or neck slicer abilities. Only a willing and conscious target can surrender a Torque of blade-turning. A torque of blade-turning cannot be removed from a corpse until one day has passed. If a corpse wearing a torque of blade-turning is raised or rises as undead, the torque remains affixed, and the body of the undead creature must be destroyed to remove the item.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *stoneskin;* **Cost** 10,000 gp

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