Old-School Gazette

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This Old-School Gazette gives you all the statistics you need to pit black skeletons, bone sovereigns, dark voyeurs, and inscribers against your players. Also, there are 4 new magic items associated with these enemies. So enjoy the second Old-School Gazette and look forward to many more! Issue 3 of the Old-School Gazette will contain information on spellbooks along with 8 new spellbook security spells.

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BLACK SKELETON

SIZE: Medium MOVE: 120 ft. ARMOR CLASS: 0 HIT DICE: 6 ATTACKS: 2 DAMAGE: By weapon type (usually 1-6) SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below MAGIC RESISTANCE: None **RARITY: Rare** NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-4 LAIR PROBABILITY: 45% **TREASURE:** None **INTELLIGENCE: High** ALIGNMENT: Lawful evil LEVEL/X.P.: 5 / 370 + 6/hp

General information: Much more powerful than standard skeletons, these minions of evil are often employed as guardians or protectors to keep sealed some ancient knowledge best left undiscovered. They are intelligent monsters and are not subject to the mindless commands that can be given to such

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We plan on featuring monsters, magic items, spells, and anything else you can think of relating to oldschool gaming via the OSRIC system in future Old-School Gazettes. Have any ideas? Send an e-mail to josephbrowning@gmail.com and let us know! And yes, it's a paying gig. *smile*

undead as skeletons or zombies. They have a clear mind, and sometimes go against the commands and wishes of those they serve, if it benefits the black skeleton in question. Black skeletons are the remnants of living creatures slain in an area where the ground is soaked through with evil. The bodies of fallen heroes are contaminated and polluted by such evil and within days after their death, the slain creatures rise as black skeletons, leaving their former lives and bodies behind. Black skeletons are intelligent and do maintain some memories of their former lives. Black skeletons wear any clothes or armor they had in life, and some still carry their gear or weapons, but most discard their weapons in favor of two short swords as soon as they can. Black skeletons dual-wield their shortswords without penalty and possess darkvision to 60 ft.

The mere presence of a black skeleton is unsettling to foes, especially when the skeleton shrieks. Creatures within 60 feet and with less Hit Dice than the black skeleton that hear it shriek must succeed on a save vs. magic or be paralyzed with fear (50%) or panic(50%). Panicked creatures flee as fast as possible away from the black skeleton for 2-8 rounds. Creatures that successfully save suffer a -1 to attack and damage rolls, but are immune to the frightful presence of the same black skeleton for 24 hours and need not make another save when the black skeleton shrieks. A creature fails a save is still vulnerable until a successful save is rolled.

Good-aligned creatures hit by a black skeleton (either by a weapon or natural attack) must succeed on a save vs. magic or take 1d3 points of temporary Strength damage. This effect is a function of the black skeleton itself, not its shortswords. A victim heals 1 point of Strength damage per turn. If a creature is drained of all its Strength and reaches Strength 0, it dies and returns as a shadow during the middle of the night of the next full moon.

Black skeletons suffer only one-half damage from sharp and/or edged weapons. Blunt weapons score normal damage. Fire scores half damage. Sleep, charm, hold and cold-based spells do not affect them. Neither poison nor paralysis harms bone sovereigns. Holy water causes 2-8 hit points of damage for each vial which successfully strikes. Clerics turn them as ghasts.

Languages: Black skeletons speak common and their alignment tongue. If they spoke other languages during life, they have a 50% chance of remembering them.

Physical description: Black skeletons looks like normal skeletons with glistening blacken bones that appear almost magically hardened and polished. Small red pinpoints of light burn in their hollowed eye sockets.

BONE SOVEREIGN

SIZE: Large (8 ft. tall) MOVE: 120 ft. ARMOR CLASS: 6 HIT DICE: 4+4 ATTACKS: 3 DAMAGE: 1-8/1-8/1-4 SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below MAGIC RESISTANCE: None **RARITY: Very Rare** NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1 LAIR PROBABILITY: 60% TREASURE: 1-12,k cp (20%), 1-6k sp (30%), 1-4k ep (10%), 1-6 gems (25%), 1-3 Jewelry (20%), 2 magic items or maps (10%) INTELLIGENCE: Low ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil LEVEL/X.P.: 4 / 245 + 4/hp

General information: Usually encountered near the ancient tombs and other fell places that spawned them, these undead creatures are driven by the need to assimilate other skeletal monsters into their own

bodies, feeding off the animating enchantments that bind such creatures in undeath. Since they lack any ranged attack, bone sovereigns favor frontal assaults. Like many undead, these creatures harbor no small hatred for life, and they usually wade into melee combat with a chilling confidence. Bone sovereigns have a measure of intelligence, and though they sometimes attack large groups of lesser creatures, they usually try to avoid monsters larger or obviously more powerful than themselves.

A bone sovereign is able to command undead at will as an evil cleric of a level equal to double its Hit Dice. Skeletons that are commanded by a bone sovereign are drawn towards the creature to be permanently merged into its form. Spawned skeletons are likewise assimilated by the bone sovereign as soon as their usefulness as separate beings is ended. Other types of undead can't be merged with it, but a bone sovereign usually keeps commanded zombies, ghouls and shadows nearby for as long as possible.

When a bone sovereign comes into contact with an animated skeleton under its control, it can merge the skeleton into its form, adding the normal skeleton's Hit Dice to its own. For example, a normal bone sovereign that merges with a skeleton (1 HD) becomes a 5HD bone sovereign. The skeleton ceases to exist as a separate entity and becomes part of the bone sovereign. Merging with a skeleton takes a full round.

Instead of attacking, a bone sovereign can create any number of skeletal monsters from its body in one round. Skeletons spawned by the bone sovereign are under its complete mental control. The Hit Dice of the spawned creatures are deducted from the bone sovereign's Hit Dice, and return to the sovereign when it again merges with the spawn. If a skeleton spawn is destroyed, it cannot be merged back into the bone sovereign; its Hit Dice are lost. Spawned skeletons are treated in all ways like standard skeletons, but are turned as zombies. A bone sovereign can lose no more than half its Hit Dice in one round, and cannot reduce its Hit Dice to fewer than 4 through this process. There is no limit to the number of spawned skeletons that a bone sovereign can control at once. Because spawning makes a bone sovereign weaker, it only does so when it is heavily outnumbered by lesser foes. 1 out of every 10 bone sovereigns possess a thighbone flute.

Bone sovereigns can magically detect all undead within 60 feet and will be aware of their movements even if unable to physically see them. Bone sovereigns have darkvision to 60 ft. Fire scores normal damage against a bone sovereign. *Sleep, charm, hold* and cold-based spells do not affect them. Neither poison nor paralysis harms bone sovereigns. Holy water causes 2-8 hit points of damage for each vial which successfully strikes. Clerics turn bone sovereigns as mummies. Languages: Bone sovereigns speak common and their alignment tongue with a grating, sepulcher tone.

Physical description: Bone sovereigns are amalgamations of skeletons whose animating enchantments coalesced to form a single, self-aware undead entity. A bone sovereign becomes larger and more powerful, with a proportionally increased appetite for necromantic energy as it assimilates other undead. No two bone sovereigns are identical, as each is an accumulation of the bones of many smaller skeletons. Usually they take a bipedal humanoid form, though some resemble demons, dragons, or other beasts, especially if the bones of such creatures have been collected by the monster. As a bone sovereign becomes larger and more powerful, it becomes less recognizable as any one type of creature.

Variants: Some adventures have claimed the existence of a flesh sovereign in function almost exactly as the bone sovereign excepting it deals with zombies. Such is currently unproven and most sages believe this a story told to garner more ale from the easily fooled.

DARK VOYEUR

SIZE: Medium MOVE: 120 ft. ARMOR CLASS: 0 HIT DICE: 4+1 ATTACKS: 2 DAMAGE: 1-4/1-4 SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below SPECIAL DEFENSES: +1 or better weapon to hit MAGIC RESISTANCE: 25% **RARITY: Verv rare** NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1 LAIR PROBABILITY: 100% TREASURE: 1-12k cp (20%), 1-6k sp (30%), 1-4k ep (10%), 1-6 gems (25%), 1-3 Jewelry (20%), 2 magic items or maps (10%) **INTELLIGENCE: Verv** ALIGNMENT: Neutral Evil LEVEL/X.P.: 4 / 245 + 4/hp

General information: Dark voyeurs are incorporeal undead that live and travel in mirrors. A dark voyeur's affinity for mirrors is caused primarily by its link to one special mirror. This "home" mirror commonly reflected the death of the voyeur's living form, and trapped part of the departing soul within its glass. The mirror is always a man-sized or larger glass with an AC of -5 and 5 hit points. All damage inflicted upon a dark voyeur's mirror is also inflicted upon the undead creature itself. Due to the dark voyeur's vulnerability to light, this mirror is always kept in a dark area so the voyeur might rest in it during the day. If its mirror is shattered, the voyeur instantly returns to the broken glass, its body transforming 1d6 shards into exact copies of itself, but only 1 foot tall and with only 1 hit point. These copies must all be destroyed to kill the dark voyeur. If not slain they will each flee to another mirror of their home mirror's original size or larger and will reappear at full size and with total hit points in 1d4 days. If a dark voyeur is laid to rest, its soul continues on to its final destination, but leaves behind in gratitude a magical gift in the form of a *mirror shard*.

A dark voyeur's attacks deal 1d4 points of damage, ignoring any physical armor its target may have. Dark voyeurs may travel between any two mirrors known to them. The mirrors traveled through can be no more then one size smaller then the voyeur, lest they be too small to travel through, and dark voyeurs have a transport range of 1 mile. A medium sized dark voyeur can travel through a mirror roughly 3 feet tall and half that width. A fleeing 1 foot tall dark voyeur can pass through a mirror only 6 inches tall and 3 inches wide. Dark voyeurs may emerge and travel without the use of mirrors, but avoid doing so due to their vulnerability to light.

Dark voyeurs are very disturbing to living creatures. Any living creature that sees a dark voyeur must succeed at a save vs. spells or suffer a -1 to all attack and damage



rolls. A creature that succeeds its save, is immune to this effect from the same dark voyeur for 24 hours.

Dark voyeurs suffer full damage from fire. *Sleep, charm, hold* and cold-based spells do not affect them. Neither poison nor paralysis harms dark voyeurs. Holy water causes 2-8 hit points of damage for each vial which successfully strikes. Clerics turn them as ghasts. Dark voyeurs possess darkvision to 120 feet.

Dark voyeurs are completely powerless when exposed to any form of sunlight, being unable to do anything but move at ¹/₄ speed. They usually retreat to darkness as swiftly as possible when in sunlight. Dark voyeurs trapped in light for 3 consecutive rounds are destroyed.

Languages: Dark voyeurs speak common and their alignment language.

Physical description: Dark voyeurs appear only as dark non-corporeal shapes with two green pinprick eyes. They can become semi-material at will to attack, but spend the majority of their time in their non-corporeal (ethereal) state or inside their mirrors.

INSCRIBER

SIZE: Medium MOVE: 90 ft. ARMOR CLASS: 6 HIT DICE: 5+2 ATTACKS: 1 DAMAGE: 1-4 SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below MAGIC RESISTANCE: 20% **RARITY: Very Rare** NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1 LAIR PROBABILITY: 20% TREASURE: Special (see below) **INTELLIGENCE:** Genius ALIGNMENT: Neutral LEVEL/X.P.: 5 / 370 + 5/hp

General information: Every inscriber was once a living scholar who obsessed over a certain field of study. After death, their lust for knowledge overcame the laws of nature, driving them to search the world for further information. Inscribers use their absorbed information to determine where to search for more. They travel to libraries, monasteries, the homes of experts in their fields, and wherever else they might acquire knowledge. Though they rarely cause harm intentionally, inscribers can bring great misfortune to populated areas, due to the auras of confusion that surround them.

Inscribers do not speak, but understand Common and any languages they knew in life. They are difficult to communicate with, but a creature displaying

knowledge of the inscriber's chosen field has a chance of getting through to what remains of the scholar's mind. When this happens, the inscriber's writing slows, as it lets its focus slip.

Inscribers generally pursue their own tasks, ignoring others and protected by their confusion auras. Inscribers who are attacked or who have their tomes stolen will use any appropriate spell-like abilities they have absorbed on their opponents, and then, if brought into melee, drain their enemies' Intelligence.

All intelligent creatures who come within 40 feet of an inscriber have their minds flooded with images and words related to the inscriber's area of study. An affected creature must succeed on save vs. spells or be overwhelmed by the torrent of information and confused for 2d4 rounds. Creatures who make successful saves cannot be affected again by that inscriber's aura for 24 hours.

Intelligent creatures hit by an inscriber's attack are affected by one of two possible effects (inscriber's choice). The inscriber can either drain1d6 points of Intelligence from the creature, learning all the creature knows about the inscriber's area of study in the process, or infuse the creature with a portion of the inscriber's own knowledge granting a +2 bonus to Intelligence for two weeks. An Intelligence gain also provides the target creature with sage knowledge in the area of the inscriber for the same duration. Drained Intelligence returns at the rate of 1 point per day. Any creature drained to 0 Intelligence collapses and is catatonic until at least 3 points of Intelligence returns.

An inscriber can absorb the text of all written materials within 15 feet if it spends a full round concentrating. By concentrating, the inscriber lifts all writing off nearby surfaces, and the text swirls through the air into the inscriber's mouth. Affected objects are left blank, and the inscriber gains full knowledge of all the absorbed text. Only text written with some form of liquid (whether ink, dye, or blood) is affected. Objects the inscriber is unaware of (such as hidden objects, and objects inside containers) are unharmed. Attended or magical items can be saved if their possessor makes a save vs spells at +4 to resist. If the inscriber absorbs the text of a scroll, the inscriber gains the ability to cast the scroll's spells once each as a spell-like ability. A magic user's or illusionist's spellbook has a +8 to its saving throw against this effect.

At the start of any encounter, a given inscriber is assumed to have absorbed 1d3+1 scrolls. The inscriber can cast each spell from a scroll once. The contents of absorbed scrolls should be randomly determined. The inscriber can also convert any of these spells into legend lore. Inscribers activate these abilities by tearing off the piece of skin where mystic text is written, and holding the scraps aloft. The skin cannot be used by creatures other than the inscriber. Languages: Inscribers speak common, their alignment tongue, and six other randomly determined languages.

Physical description: Inscribers look like corpses on the verge of decomposition, wearing whatever garb they were buried in. Their eyes glow a soft yellow, and their skin is covered with black writing. Many inscribers have a gray cast to their skin, due to the bleeding of the magical ink. The writing is an inscriber's summary and analysis of absorbed texts and memories, and is constantly scrawled over blank flesh as if by an invisible pen. When inscribers run out of room on their bodies, they tear off strips of skin, and press the "pages" into enormous tomes they carry at all times. The skin soon regrows and fills with more writing.

New Magic Items: Below are 4 new magical items related to the monsters in this article.

Inscribers' tome: A typical *inscriber's tome* weighs about 8 pounds and is slightly smaller than a human torso. The text is written in the inscriber's native language, and its style is confusing and opaque at best. Nonetheless, an *inscriber's tome* is an extremely comprehensive and valuable resource on a randomly determined subject. A creature using an *inscriber's tome* for research must make an Intelligence check on 4d6 to understand enough of the text to find useful information, even if they understand the inscriber's language. If the text is understood, it allows the reader to treat the subject matter as a minor field of study. Inscribers will fight to



the death to protect their tomes and will abandon all to recover them. **Experience Point Value:** 500 **G. P. Value:** 3,000.

Mirror shard: When a dark voyeur is finally laid to rest, the shards of its mirror are infused with the appreciation of the spirit finally set free. One of the shards of its linked mirror becomes magical, a *mirror shard*. The possessor of a *mirror shard* can activate it five times before it shatters, becoming mundane once more. Once activated, the shard creates multiple copies of its possessor, mimicking the *mirror image* spell. **Experience Point Value:** 500 **G. P. Value:** 3,000.

Shadow shortsword: Erroneously named after the shadow's Strength drain, a shadow shortsword is sometimes found in the hands of a black skeleton. A shadow shortsword is a +1 shortsword and drains 1 point of Strength from any living creature it hits if the target fails a save vs. spells. This drain is temporary and returns at the rate of 1 point per day. In the hands of a black skeleton, this drain stacks with the skeleton's drain. The blades of shadow shortswords have flaky carbon deposits throughout their length, as if they have survived a strong fire. **Experience Point Value:** 600 **G. P. Value:** 3,000.

Thighbone flute: The *thighbone flute* is an unusual item found in the possession of some bone sovereigns. In the skeletal hands of their owners they can be blown to produce an *irresistible dance* effect (as spell) once per day. In the hands of any other creature, the effects of a *thighbone flute* aren't so powerful, but still beneficial. Once per day, the user can produce a short tune whose effect mimics the *charm person* spell. The possessor of *thighbone flute* can only have 5 charmed creatures at a single time. **Experience Point Value:** 1,000 **G. P. Value:** 5,000.

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