

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons
2nd Edition



Official Game Accessory

DRACONOMICAR





DRACONOMICON

by Nigel Findley, et al.

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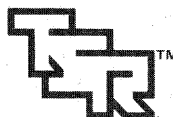
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Terminology

Several new terms are required before one can conveniently talk about dragons.

Throughout this book, the word *dracoforms* is used to refer to dragons and their obvious kin. (Thus a wyvern is a dracoform, as is a gold dragon.) The word *draconic* is used as the adjective for matters relating to dragons (“things draconic”).

Draconic Origins

“. . . The World was still flat, here before the beginning of Time, before Asgorath the World-Shaper folded the cloth of existence into its final form. The World was flat, and above it hung the Crystal Sun that Zotha had wrought before Asgorath cast him down. Asgorath soared above the World and looked down upon it, and she saw that it was good.

“And so Asgorath bent her form around the Crystal Sun, and touched her breath to it. And the Crystal Sun burst into fragments that pierced the flesh of Asgorath, and her blood fell on the World. Where the drops fell, the Powers of the World and the Powers of the Crystal Sun came together, and the Spawn of Asgorath came forth upon the face of the World.

“Red, they were, red that would later depart from its purity. But here before the beginning of Time, their red was the pure red of the shattered Crystal Sun. They spread their wings and took to the skies, circling around the still, cold form of Asgorath. One after an-

other, score upon score, they bent their breath against the body of Asgorath, and the skies rang with their lamentations. Only one of the Spawn of Asgorath withheld his breath. Instead, he pulled a shard of the Crystal Sun from the flesh of Asgorath, and used it to draw blood from his own flesh, and this blood fell upon the face of the World.

“As before, there was movement where the blood fell, but the creatures that came forth from this blood were not of the pure red. Colored like the products of the World they were, like the unliving metals. And the Renegade raised his voice, and his voice was a trumpet: ‘I too have Created.’

“The form of Asgorath began to stir, as the Renegade knew it must. The Renegade spread his wings and flew, and the Spawn of the Renegade followed him into the farthest reaches of the world.”

—from the “Book of the World”

Excerpted from *The Origin Myths—A Treatise* by Dunkelzahn of Candlekeep, 1354 DR

Perhaps surprisingly, there are very few origin myths that relate directly to dragons. One of the few is a tome known as the *Book of the World*. Only one copy of this book has ever been found—and that in the land of Asram, about 100 years ago. The language of the book is Thorass—more correctly, an even more archaic form of Thorass than most samples of this language—but the script used is a simplified runic form. (No doubt the selection of runic script was necessitated by the construction of the book: it consists of 300 sheets of thin, flexible metal onto which the runes

have been scribed with great precision.) This combination of language and script explains the difficulties and delays involved in translating the tome.

From its content and the mythic forms used, it is obvious to scholars that the *Book of the World* is an example of holy literature—that is, it once was at the center of a body of religious beliefs. The nature of some of those beliefs can be inferred from the myths contained in the Book, but there is insufficient cultural context to confidently analyze the belief structure. (For example, it is not known whether the creation myths are symbolic or intended to be taken as absolute truth.)

The sheer volume of mythic material within the Book, and the relatively organized chronological and contextual structure used throughout, imply that it originated from a fairly sophisticated culture. This is paradoxical, since no cultures of sufficient sophistication apparently ever arose in Asram. The possibility cannot be overlooked that the Book was transported from elsewhere and abandoned in Asram, but that theory also has its problems. There is no modern culture that contains even the vaguest mythological or symbolic echoes of the Book’s content. Judging from the oxidation of the Book’s metal pages, the specimen under examination was probably no more than 500 years old. In that time, it seems unlikely that an entire religio-mythic tradition would vanish from Toril. But that seems to be the case here. (The wild speculations that the *Book of the World* did not arise in Toril at all are discounted by most reputable scholars.)

The Book provides a fascinating



origin myth relating to dragon-kind. From a close reading of the text, it becomes obvious that Asgorath the World-Shaper is a dragon. The implication—that a dragon created the universe, and that dragons were the first creatures to exist—is quite fascinating. A further point arises from the sentence that reads, “And so Asgorath bent her form around the Crystal Sun, and touched her breath to it.” In the original Thorass, the word “breath”—normally used as a singular or uncountable noun in this context—has been given a plural suffix (“breaths”). Is this meant to imply that Asgorath is a multi-headed dragon?

The text is clearer when it comes to the “Spawn of Asgorath.” There can be no doubt that these creatures are red dragons. The following sentences hint that this religion holds the red dragon as the most important species of dragon. All others would “later depart from . . . purity.”

When the Renegade (“bahmat” in the original Thorass) duplicates the actions of Asgorath, the dragons that arise are “not of the pure red,” but rather “colored . . . like the unliving metals.” The implication here is obvious: The Spawn of the Renegade are the metallic—and primarily good-aligned—dragons, What the *Book of the World* contains is not only an origin myth of dragons—which makes it important enough in its own right—but also one of the few surviving evil-oriented origin myths.

It is easy to speculate, based on this myth. The plural inflection of the word “breath” might be taken as implying multiple heads; the Thorass word for renegade is “bahmat.” It seems almost too

close a correlation—can Asgorath be Tiamat and the Renegade be Bahamut?

An interesting speculation has recently arisen. It has long been thought that the *Book of the World* represents a body of human, demi-human, or humanoid myth. Is this a short-sighted and humanocentric assumption? The key features of the origin myth—sacrifice, betrayal, and rebirth—are common to almost every humanoid ethos, but in all of those myth-bodies the central characters are anthropomorphic. In other words, humanoid myth-builders create gods in their own image. In the myth presented in the *Book of the World*, there is not a single humanoid character.

Might not the *Book of the World* present an origin myth that was originally developed by dragons—probably red dragons—themselves? At a later date, humanoids adopted the myth, and incorporated it into the Book—for the *Book of the World* is obviously a humanoid artifact.

Dragons have never been thought to be great mythographers. Does this statement tell us more about dragons or about the prejudices of researchers?

(The following is excerpted from an address to the Council of Sages by Kelmara of Arabel, 1346 DR)

Dragonkind represents some of the newest species on the face of Toril. My colleagues and I find the evidence incontrovertible: Dragons, as we know them now, arose no more than 10,000 years ago. (For comparison, our research indicates that humanity—the youngest of the humanoid races—

diverged from the great apes a little more than 17,000 years ago.) It is obvious, then, that the humanoid races once dwelt in a world without dragons as we know them.

How does that fit in with several ancient elvish myths—particularly the Parwiccan Cycle—that deal with “dragons” and “wyrms”? The key phrase is “dragons as we know them.” It is our contention that the creatures described in the Parwiccan Cycle are not true dragons, but dragon precursors. Our evidence indicates that these “pre-dragons” were considerably smaller than modern specimens, with little or none of the daunting array of powers shown by true dragons. In addition, it seems obvious that these creatures were not sentient; in fact, they probably had no more than animal intelligence, and hence the most borderline form of self-awareness. Thus, the “dragons” that figure so centrally in the Parwiccan Cycle are little more than large, winged lizards.

Although these pre-dragons were probably long-lived by human standards, we believe that their life spans were but a fraction of those of modern dragons. If their life span was even as short—relatively speaking—as 200 years, however, a question arises. Evolution proceeds at a rate directly proportional to the life span of the creature—or so our research indicates. How could the pre-dragons evolve into true dragons so rapidly? A climatic or other environmental upheaval of unparalleled



violence would be required.

The Parwiccan Cycle comes to the rescue again, with its talk, variously, of the “month of mist,” the

“seven-turn winter,” and “Tearfall.” It seems clear to us that Toril was struck by one of the large rocks that comprise the Tears of Selune, upsetting the world’s climatic balance. Such a global catastrophe could easily cause the extinction of some species, and the rapid evolution of others.

In response to the environmental upheaval, the pre-dragons quickly evolved into the multiple dragon species known today.

(The following is excerpted from a rebuttal by Verilux to the address by Kelmara of Arabel, 1346 DR)

Kelmara speaks with great assurance about the link between life span and evolution rate. Even if one were to accept fully the evolutionary theory—and I do not—it should be obvious to even the most adde-pated student that life span would have very little relation to evolutionary rate. More important by far would be the length of a generation, which I define as the duration separating a single creature’s sexual maturity and the sexual maturity of that individual’s first offspring. Depending on the species involved, dragons reach sexual maturity not much later than do humans. Thus a dragon generation is little longer than a human generation.

As to my learned colleague’s

speculations concerning a global upheaval, we all know well her liking for apocalyptic philosophies. And depending on the Parwiccan Cycle for substantiation is like walking on thin ice—your support may at any moment vanish from beneath you.

Take, for example, the phrases quoted by my learned colleague. A “seven-turn winter” certainly seems to be evidence of climatic upheaval; seven years of winter would, anyone must agree, be a catastrophe. But a little research undermines the certainty of this conclusion. At the time and in the language in which the Parwiccan Cycle was written, “turn” was used in varying ways by various groups. In some writings, “turn” refers to a circuit of Toril around its primary—a year. In others, however, “turn” refers to a circuit of Selune around Toril—a month. Still others use “turn” to refer to a single rotation of Toril around its own axis—a day. While a seven-month winter might be inconvenient, it could hardly be classed as a catastrophe.

“Tearfall” is a strong, emotive image, and I wish to congratulate my colleague on its selection. Watching your faces as she spoke, members of the Council, I saw the profound effect it had on you. How much would that effect be lessened should I tell you that the original word — *ileleste* — could also be translated as “falling rain”?

Nay, I fear my colleague has failed to convince me of her position. It seems obvious to me that dragons did not evolve on Toril as Kelmara wishes us to believe. They may, perhaps, have arisen from baser creatures, but this transcendence was not under the blind drivings of natural selection.

Their ascent was guided by powers beyond our ken. As evidence of this, take the fact that, in every world and in every sphere, and on every alternate plane we have yet explored, there are dragons. And these dragons differ not one whit from those native to Toril. Dragons are beyond the reach of our biology, I fear—even beyond such far-flung and ill-supported theorizing as that characterized by my worthy colleague.

(Kelmara’s response to Verilux’s rebuttal, in its entirety 1346 DR)

Collops!

(The following is excerpted from An Ecology of the Planes by Garth of Suzail, 1354 DR)

The “diffusion theory” has often been invoked by philosophers to explain why creatures on planes totally removed from each other should be biologically indistinguishable. The most commonly held version of the theory asserts that each creature arose—whether this be by evolution or no—on a single world. Then individual creatures somehow were removed from their home plane and transferred to others, where they thrived. The necessary removal is speculated to occur by various means: spontaneously-opening gates (or “fistulae,” to use the term commonly in vogue), purposeful attempts at “cross-pollination” performed by plane-traveling sentients, accidental transfers (as when a pack animal or a pet escapes on an alien plane), or even divine intervention.

(There is a more extreme version of the diffusion theory that will be

discussed in more depth later in this text. It holds that one single plane is the source of all life, and that creatures diffused throughout the multiverse from this source.) At first glance, it would seem that the diffusion theory can be proved or disproved by close examination of the fossil records of several planes, searching for traces of a certain species. If evidence for the evolution of that creature occurs on one plane but not on others, then surely the diffusion theory would be proven. Unfortunately, however, there is not one explored plane where the fossil record is anywhere near complete. There are puzzling gaps, anomalies, and even apparent reversals of causal events, which make us question how much we will ever be able to learn categorically from fossils.

And here the conversation must turn to dragons, for in these species the diffusion theory seems to be the only suitable explanation for their wide-spread existence. Dragons are the only creatures for which there exist archetypal forms. In dragonkind, these forms are Bahamut, the Platinum Dragon, and Tiamat, the Chromatic Dragon. All of the “core” species of dragonkind—the good-aligned metallic dragons and the evil-aligned chromatic dragons (ignoring for a moment those fringe species like crystal dragons) seem to be pale reflections of their archetypal forms, displaying some but not all of that archetype’s characteristics. For example, a red dragon possesses some but not all of the characteristics attributed to Tiamat, while a gold dragon possesses some but not all of the characteristics attributed to Bahamut. Indulging in mathematical language for a moment, each species

of dragon seems to be a subset of properties belonging to one or other of the archetypes. Or, conversely, each archetype seems to possess a superset of the properties possessed by the appropriate class of dragonkind.

Some sages truly believe this observation to be representative of the truth of the matter. According to this theory, the very existence of the two archetypal forms—Bahamut and Tiamat—is responsible for the existence of dragons throughout the multiverse. In metaphorical language, dragons are the shadows that the archetypes cast across the planes. As shadows are, in a sense, subsets of the creatures casting them—as they must be, since shadows are two-dimensional—so are the “shadows” of the dragon archetypes subsets of those archetypes’ characteristics and powers. (The shadow analogy is actually quite an elegant one. At your leisure, examine the shadow cast by a simple object such as a cube. Depending on the viewer’s orientation to the cube and to the surface on which the shadow is cast, the shadow can take the form of a square, a rectangle, a parallelogram, or more complex polygons. This simple experiment shows how different shadows of the same source can be as different as a green and a red dragon.)

Is it any wonder that many dragons worship the archetypal forms? If this theory of shadows is true, then the archetypes truly are the creators of dragonkind, although the sense of creation is diluted in this case, since it seems to lack the aspect of an act of will.

What are the consequences if this theory turns out to be correct? One possibility arises from a consideration of the analogy used ear-

lier.

Eliminating a shadow—as by shining a light on it—has no effect on the creature casting the shadow. But what is the effect on shadows when the creature casting them is removed from the scene?

(The following is excerpted from Evolution and Creation by Terrance Balancehand of Scornubel, 1356 DR)

The case of dragons has been used as a major supporting point for both sides of the ongoing “creation versus evolution” argument.

The creationist argument wonders how evolution can explain the occurrence of dragons on virtually every known plane, and in virtually every crystal sphere of the universe. The fact that dragons—almost indistinguishable, biologically, from one another—can be found in Realspace, Greyspace, and other spheres *ad infinitum* is only explicable if one accepts that some Unitary Principle (i.e., god or association of gods) created them, simultaneously, throughout the universe. The problems with this position are that there is strong fossil evidence in several spheres for an evolutionary process, plus an undeniable evolutionary tree that explains how various dracoforms diverged from one another.

The evolutionary point of view plays heavily on the biological evidence for the kinship of dragons and dracoforms such as wyverns and drakes, and repeatedly touts





the fossil record that shows “dragon precursors” in various locales. Why would a Unitary Principle actively attempt to de-

clude its “children” by planting such evidence? The problem with this position is that evolutionists are at a loss to explain how dragons that evolved in Realmspace and Greyspace—two significantly different ecosystems—have evolved so convergently that it is impossible by any means (short of asking dragons) to determine their sphere of origin.

And so it is from these contradictory positions that I select dragon-kind as the ultimate support for my thesis.

Evolution and creation are not contradictory and mutually exclusive, as most sages would have you believe. The two are intimately and elegantly linked, two sides—as it were—of the same coin. I believe it is impossible to deny that dragons evolved to their present state in the Forgotten Realms. It is also impossible to deny that the same thing occurred in the world of Greyhawk, and in the many other spheres that have been visited by spelljamming vessels. How, then, can this quandary be solved?

The problem lies in the tendency to view creation as a single act in which a Creator says, “Let there be dragons,” and there were dragons. Such a kind of special creation seems somewhat arbitrary, and far from subtle (and I will admit that I view subtlety as one of the greatest attributes of divinity

in this or any world). How much more elegant for the creator(s) to set up initial conditions whereby the evolution of those very same dragons is inevitable according to the laws of nature, magic and, science? Some readers may be familiar with the game of “pockets,” which reputedly was widely played in the ancient land of Mulhorand. The purpose of the game is to strike a single “key” ball with a stick, in a very precise way, so that it contacts other balls on a table, and causes those balls to fall into holes or pockets positioned around the table. When one views the end result of the game—all balls but the key safely residing in the pockets—the most simple conclusion to draw about how they ended up there is that someone picked up the balls and placed them in the pockets. (This equates, in my mind, to the “special creation” theory.) It is certainly a simple way of reaching the end result. But how much more elegant it would be if—instead of placing the balls individually and somewhat arbitrarily in their eventual pocket homes—the same result were reached with a single striking of the key ball? Theoretically, a powerful and precise enough stroke of the key ball would cause all other balls to end up in pockets, creating a complex and artistically pleasing dynamic pattern as they did so.

Once the key ball is struck, all other motions of the balls are according to the laws of motion known to sages and mathematicians. If one did not actually witness the original striking of the key ball, one could come to believe that the eventual outcome was a result of those laws only, and not involving any act of volition at all.

This is how I view the creation versus evolution controversy. The worlds we live in arose from the act of will of a Unitary Principle. But after that initial act of will, all other developments were according to the laws of the world. Dragons—and elves and humans and orcs and the rest—did evolve, but only because the Unitary Principle created the initial conditions so it was inevitable that they evolve.

This explains how dragons—and other species too, of course—could have arisen in so many different places in the universe. The Unitary Principle—through the original, one-time act of creation—so designed the initial conditions in each of those diverse regions that dragons could not avoid evolving.

Creation and evolution are then, it becomes obvious, not contradictory theses, but merely different stages within the process that is the development of the universe.

(The following is excerpted from an inebriated tirade by Corkitron Allinamuck, member of Halflings Inc., of no fixed address, 1357 DR)

There’s always been dragons, and there’s always going to be dragons, that’s what I think. You want to know any more, why don’t you ask the darned dragons?

Evolution

The following theories related to the evolution and interrelationship of dracoforms are drawn from the writings of a group of sages known only as the “Club of Candlekeep.” These sages, although members of the Order of Candlekeep, are more interested

in exploring the pageant of the past than plumbing the mists of the future through the predictions of Alaundo the Seer.

No one knows the identities of the members of the Club. None of their writings—which have been distributed fairly widely throughout the Realms—claim individual authorship; all are identified only as having been written by the Club.

The writings of the Club of Candlekeep—particularly those relating to dragons—are highly controversial. For each sage who accepts their findings, there's at least one other who claims that the Club members are tin-pot liars, or at least sadly deluded. It can't be denied, however, that the Club's writings do show a level of internal consistency otherwise unheard of in the debate over dracoform origins.

The Fossil Record

When examined closely, and with the purpose of answering certain specific questions, the fossil record of Toril is rife with gaps and contradictions. When viewed with a wide enough focus, however, the story that it portrays is clear and very compelling. The broad picture that it produces is incontestable.

According to this record, dragons as we know them arose some ten million years ago. Before that time, there were no intelligent life-forms on Toril—at least, none that still survive. The most common creatures in existence were the huge reptilian creatures we call dinosaurs. These were, according to the fossil record, larger than virtually any creature alive today—larger, definitely, than any planet-bound form of dragon.

The variety of dinosaurs was truly staggering. Every ecological niche was filled by some form of reptilian creature. There were flying dinosaurs, walking dinosaurs, and swimming dinosaurs; creatures that fed on plants, and those that fed on other dinosaurs. Over spans of millennia, evolution and natural selection experimented with literally thousands of different designs: small, fast carnivores; huge, slow herbivores that depended on size to protect them from predators; heavily armored herbivores; gigantic, ferocious predators. In many cases, these experimental models were carried to totally illogical extremes—for example, monstrosities so heavily armored that they were unable to move out of the way of even the slowest mud-flows. It seems highly unlikely that any of these early creatures had anything close to intelligence or self-awareness.

In the period between 12 million and 10 million years ago, this changed. A single reptilian species arose that showed the rudiments of intelligence. With the ability to anticipate and plan, it avoided the natural disasters that befell its forebears. With the ability to cooperate, groups of individuals were able to survive the predation of creatures that could easily overpower a single specimen. The Club of Candlekeep refers to this creature as *eodraco* (meaning “dawn dragon” in a language whose origin has long been forgotten).

From incomplete fossils laboriously reconstructed, sages determined that *eodraco* was similar in size and configuration to the modern wyvern, averaging 35 feet long, with a 50-foot wingspan. No evidence was found indicating that *eodraco* had the tail sting

characteristic of the wyvern (such details rarely fossilize well, however). Skull size indicated that the creature had a slightly

smaller brain

than the wyvern (which is no great thinker, even today). This was almost an order of magnitude larger than the brains of its contemporaries, however, giving it a huge competitive advantage in the natural selection sweepstakes.

Parallel with the development of *eodraco*, reptilian creatures at the other end of the size scale were developing characteristics that would eventually cause their descendants to be classified as mammals. From these small, scurrying creatures, all mammalian inhabitants of the world today would eventually develop.

About ten million years ago, something catastrophic happened to the ecosystem in which *eodraco*, the pre-mammals, and the dinosaurs lived. (Even the Club of Candlekeep seems divided on the nature of this catastrophe.) Some theories hold that the climate changed due to a diminished output from Toril's sun; other theories—like that promulgated by Kelmara of Arabel—blame an impact on Toril of one of the Tears of Selune. Still others credit divine intervention from some deity who wanted to give intelligence a helping hand. A lunatic fringe believes that a climatic upheaval was caused by certain semi-divine creatures using Toril as a battleground.

In any case, in an almost unbelievably short time—evolution-





arily speaking, of course—the dinosaurs became extinct.

Only the smaller reptiles, the pre-mammals, and *eodraco* survived. (This

isn't intended to rule out the as-yet unsubstantiated—but recurring—rumors that claim dinosaurs still live in various remote and isolated regions of Toril.)

Eodraco was never very numerous. As the larger creatures on which it fed died off, the numbers of *eodraco* diminished even further. There was simply an inadequate food supply to support a large population of 35-foot-long carnivores.

The Descent of Dracoforms

Even, with its diminished population, *eodraco* as a genus (genus because it probably comprised a number of diverse species) wasn't out of the evolutionary woods yet. Evidence showed that the climatic upheavals that eliminated the larger dinosaurs continued for several millennia, putting extreme selection pressure on *eodraco*. It was at this time—according to the Club of Candlekeep—that certain dracoforms diverged from the main stream of dragonkind. Two major examples of such diversion were the wyverns—whose sheer aggression made them viable in a competitive ecosystem—and the various species of drakes and the pseudodragon—in whom diminished size (and hence appetite) proved to be valuable survival traits.

Fossils dating from this period

show an astounding number of other variations which—for one reason or another—proved not to be viable. A strain of winged, multi-headed dragons flourished for perhaps a million years, but eventually died out. (There's some evidence—but nothing substantial—indicating that the hydras and pyrohydras are a surviving offshoot of this evolutionary dead end.)

Eodraco split into two main subforms at about this time. One—which fairly rapidly died out—kept the same metabolic set-up as its dinosaur ancestors. The other developed an ability to regurgitate intestinal gas and ignite it with an enzymatic, hypergolic reaction in the back of the throat. This ability gave this strain of *eodraco*—called *ignidraco* by the Club of Candlekeep—the ability to breathe out blasts of fire.

As with many lines that derived from the pre-mammals, it turned out that intelligence was the most significant survival trait of all, however. Certain derivatives of *ignidraco* began to develop the glimmerings of real intelligence—not the rudimentary, little-more-than-animal thought processes shown by earlier *eodraco*. This was true self-awareness, and perhaps even the ability to perform abstract thought. (It's unknown—and probably impossible to determine—whether the dracoforms began to develop language at this time.) Since it was intelligence, and not randomly-evolved sets of other attributes, that was the strongest survival trait for *ignidraco*, natural selection began to favor longer life spans. (This makes some sense since the ability to effectively use intelligence is acquired and can be passed on to offspring. A long-lived

dracoform can learn how to best use its developing intelligence, and it can train numerous batches of offspring in this effective use. Thus, a semi-intelligent dracoform that lives long enough to learn how to think, and then long enough to train many offspring, will be more strongly favored evolutionarily than a short-lived creature that has one brood of offspring then dies.) The upshot is that *ignidraco* began to grow smarter.

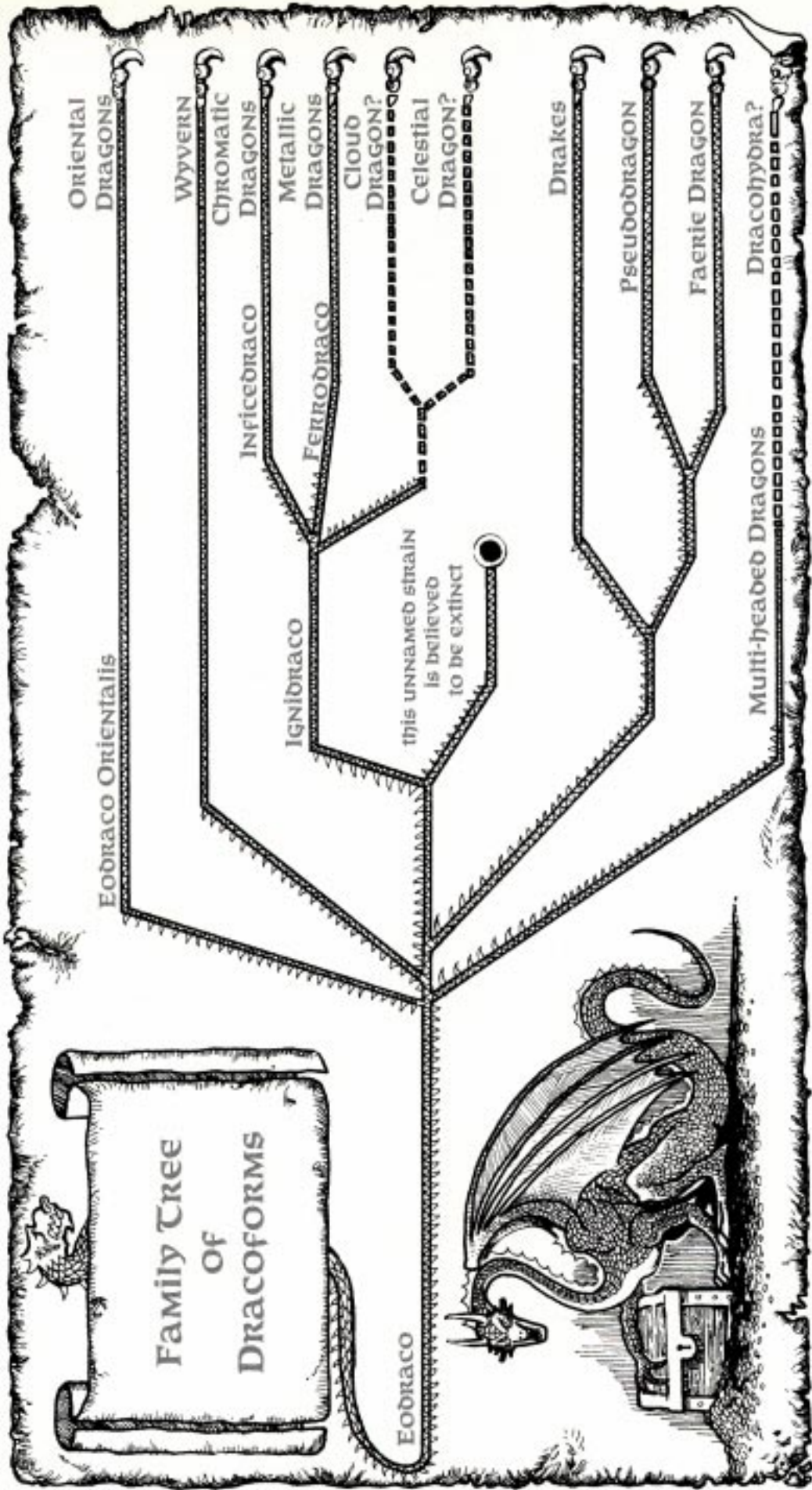
The Club of Candlekeep is unsure exactly when it happened, but at some time in this process, *ignidraco* split into two major subgenera. One genus—labelled *inficedraco*—developed a personality (if such a term can be used) of great ferocity, and became more of a solitary predator. By this time, the populations of food animals had grown to the point where the evolutionary pressure selecting for increased intelligence had diminished somewhat. So “pure, ravening predators” (as one anonymous Club member put it) were once again more viable.

The other offshoot of *ignidraco*—the genus labelled by the Club as *ferrodraco*—tended more toward a cooperative lifestyle. Without the overwhelming ferocity of its cousin genus, natural selection continued to push *ferrodraco* toward greater intelligence.

(While it's impossible to tell from fossils what color a creature's skin was, it's obvious from the names selected that the Club believes the chromatic dragons to be descended from *inficedraco*, and the metallic dragons to be descended from *ferrodraco*.)

Both genera continued to undergo a fascinating series of evolutionary changes. Some maintained the gastrointestinal

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trick that allowed them to breath fire. Others modified their digestive tracts still further, enabling them to spit acid or exhale corro-

sive chemicals (theoretically gastric enzymes). One species—which eventually became the white dragon—developed the ability to trigger a chemical reaction that absorbed heat energy from the environment, having the effect of a blast of frigid air (or so claims the Club).

A Few Problems

Needless to say, the writings of the Club of Candlekeep don't answer all questions about how dragons arose. The Club is conspicuously silent about where in the evolutionary tree certain dracoforms fall. Good examples—which have been seized upon by the Club's detractors—are faerie dragons, cloud dragons, and those rulers of the spaceways, celestial (radiant) dragons. Also, the Club's family tree contains no mention of oriental dragons.

(Some apologists for the Club have attempted to add these missing species to the overall structure. According to these worthies, faerie dragons are highly developed offshoots of pseudodragons (the reason for this rather doubtful conclusion seems to be the faerie dragons' small size). Cloud dragons and celestial dragons are purported to derive from a third genus of dragons that spun off from *ignidraco* at the same time as *inficedraco* and *ferrodraco*. Finally,

oriental dragons are supposed to have descended from a totally different species—called *eodracco orientalis*—which diverged from the mainstream trunk of *eodracco*.

Even with these modifications, there are a few mysteries that still remain. If dragons' breath weapons derive only from modifications to the digestive tract, how can one explain the blue dragon's ability to breathe lightning bolts? (Also, the "heat-absorbing chemical reaction" explanation for the white dragon's breath weapon seems very much like verbal tap-dancing.)

In general, catalogers—those sages who have written the major bestiaries of Toril—have quite happily ignored the complex taxonomy put forward by the Club of Candlekeep, and have grouped all dragons under the genus *draco*. The names of the most common species of dragons—according to these catalogers—are as follows:

Black: *D. causticus sputem*
 Blue: *D. electricus*
 Brass: *D. impudentus gallus*
 Bronze: *D. gerus bronzo*
 Copper: *D. comes stabuli*
 Gold: *D. orientalis sino dux*
 Green: *D. chlorinous nauseous respiratorus*
 Red: *D. conflagratio horribilis*
 Silver: *D. nobilis argentum*
 White: *D. rigidus frigidus*

In their turn, those sages who follow the writings of the Club of Candlekeep refuse to use these names—and, in fact, consider them somewhat gauche and overblown.

The Family Tree of Dracoforms

According to the theories put forward by the Club of Candlekeep—and modified by their apologists—the chart on page 9 illustrates the connection between the various dracoforms.

Magic

One topic on which the Club of Candlekeep has been conspicuously silent is the development of magic among dracoforms. All of the major dragon strains, show some kind of magic use, whether in the form of spellcasting or innate abilities. Where did these abilities come from?

Prospective authorities other than those in Candlekeep have varying suggestions. There are areas in Toril where the land itself seems to have high levels of magical activity, claim some sages. Creatures evolving in such areas with a high background of magical energy might develop magical abilities. Other sages suggest that innate magical abilities are granted by the gods, for their own inscrutable reasons.

Still others believe that innate magical abilities can evolve and be inherited like any other characteristic. Magical abilities—so claim these sages—come from a link with other planes (usually the Positive or Negative Material planes). A creature with such a link can draw energy from those planes and weave it into a certain effect. In the many nonsentient creatures that have innate magical abilities, this interplanar connection and management of the energy flow so generated is totally subconscious. (This theory explains such contin-

uous effects as a *fear* aura.) Some creatures, however, gain a more conscious awareness of—and hence control over—this magical flow. These creatures can modify the effects of the flow, either turning the magical ability on and off at will, or altering the way it manifests in the physical world. This awareness and control would, hypothetically, increase with age, as the creature becomes more used to the flow of power. In the case of dragons, this theory might explain their *fear* aura, their (usually high) magical resistance, and their other innate abilities.

But what about actual spellcasting? The answer here seems to spring from the creatures' extended life spans—well over a millennia for many species, and perhaps even longer for celestial dragons. As these long-lived creatures evolved higher and higher intelligence, they must have seen other intelligent creatures—whether humans and demihumans or extraplanar visitors—manipulate magical energy in the form of spells. With centuries in which to experiment, these early draconic potential spellcasters could eventually have learned—simply through trial and error—how to cast spells. (There's also the very good possibility that these creatures—who were, after all, huge, dangerous, and quite daunting—could have extracted knowledge of magic use from spellcasters of other races.) Over several multi-century generations of experimenting dragons, it is possible that a species could develop a high level of magical sophistication. (After all, how long does it take to research a new spell? Not long when compared with a life span measured in centuries.)

A more extreme theory holds that the dragons of Toril were—millennia ago—taught their magic-using abilities by dragons who had come from elsewhere. (Different variations of the theory identify the source of these dragons as the future, the past, other planes, and other crystal spheres.) Needless to say, this theory is not widely held among reputable thinkers.

The extended life span of dragons raises an interesting question: If these beasts live so long, why aren't they better wizards? After all, with four hundred years at his disposal, a dedicated human mage could devise a pretty potent armory of both common and unique spells. Why doesn't this occur with dragons?

Various sources propose various answers. One answer—possibly the most disturbing—is that this does occur. Among the most ancient of dragons, so this belief goes, the level of magical knowledge is literally incomparable. These creatures have elevated the practice of magic to an almost god-like level. An example of such an overwhelmingly powerful creature is the legendary gold dragon Nexus, reputed to live in magically sustained luxury in the midst of Anauroch, the Great Desert. (The fact that such a draconic “supermage” hasn't been reliably reported simply means that nobody has lived to tell the tale or that the dragon has simply wiped the memory from the minds of any witnesses.)

Less potentially apocalyptic answers abound, of course. Some sages are convinced that the draconic mind is simply insufficiently complex to extend magical knowledge beyond the level of humans

and demihumans. Others dismiss the question as meaningless: Dragons, they say, just don't have the patience or the inclination to dedicate their lives to research.

Continued Evolution

The tale of evolution might not have come to an end with the dragons we know today. Certain sages believe that evolutionary forces still act on dragons, particularly those of evil alignment (the chromatics). Instead of dietary privation or climatic upheaval, however, these evolutionary forces now take the form of adventuring companies and dragon-hunters. Those dragons capable of dealing with or avoiding such predators survive to breed; those incapable of so doing, die out. Is this not also an evolutionary pressure?

The direction in which this pressure is forcing dragons isn't immediately clear, however. Increased intelligence and enhanced magical power are obvious pro-survival traits. Are dragon-hunters merely creating a race of more intelligent and more magically adept evil dragons?

Some experts aren't sure. They think that, while enhanced intelligence and power are useful, one day sufficiently smart and strong adventuring companies will come along to exterminate even the toughest of dragons. What these sages see as a more pro-survival development is an alteration in alignment and outlook—a swing away from the evil alignment that





literally invites heroic adventurers to come calling. According to these experts, as the more aggressively evil of the chromatics are

killed off, the predominant alignment of the survivors will swing more and more toward true neutral. (This is a very controversial position to hold. Most of the more cynical thinkers don't accept this thesis for a moment. If an adventuring company comes along and terminates an evil dragon's kin, is that dragon more likely to become neutral or vengeful?)

The predictions of Alaundo the Seer, collected and studied at Candlekeep, have something to say about the future development of dragons. Unfortunately, these predictions are even more opaque and cryptic than the majority of Alaundo's insights. His writings seem to imply some kind of "transcendence"—a massive change in the place in the Grand Scheme held by dragons—but only time will make sense of these obscure prophesies.

New Dragon Strains

Seemingly new and hitherto unreported varieties of dragons keep turning up in tales throughout the Realms. While many of these new varieties seem to actually be misinterpreted or misreported versions of traditional dragons—for example, a gray-scaled "lead dragon" that actually turned out to be an immature bronze with a dermatological disorder—there are occasional sightings that can't

be explained away easily.

One possible explanation for these nontraditional dragon types is that—under certain circumstances—different dragon species can actually interbreed to form intermediary types. Among the chromatics, this seems fairly common, and the results are easily predictable. Among the metallic dragons, however, the results are unpredictable and often bizarre. Crosses between chromatics and metallics are almost unheard of, but when they do occur, the results are even more outlandish. Perhaps thankfully, the vast majority of these interdragon crosses are infertile. (Refer to Chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion of these crosses.)

Draconic History

The previous—admittedly speculative—sections on draconic origins and evolution will probably have led some readers to echo the earlier quote from Corkitron Alinamuck of Halflings Inc.: "Just ask the darned dragons!"

The problem is that most dragons are not great historians. With the exception of brass dragons, generally the only pieces of information the creatures are really interested in passing from generation to generation are of significance only to dragons. (Brass dragons also have a very dracocentric view of the world, but they do enjoy collecting, disseminating, and retelling bits of gossip.) Even those few dragons who do keep track of what might be called general history are frequently unwilling to pass on the information to nondragons.

There are several reasons for this lack of historical knowledge,

but the main one is that dragon species—with the exception of the golds—do not have a written language. (By assuming human form they can write, but most simply don't care to.) This means that dragon histories are predominately oral—tales told by one dragon to another, and passed on from generation to generation. For creatures such as dragons, who are more interested in the acquisition of wealth than in the acquisition of knowledge, there is little attraction in spending great amounts of time learning and reciting long oral histories.

Draconic oral histories are usually short—particularly when compared to the extensive traditions of human epic poetry—and concentrate on things that matter a great deal to that particular species of dragon. The evil chromatics generally have the shortest oral traditions. There are some religious myths (which will be discussed in a later section), but most histories deal with interesting—and usually unpleasant—ways of dealing with intruders who might want to make off with a dragon's hoard.

The metallics are a little more interested in the preservation of abstract wisdom, but this varies from species to species. The lawful metallic dragons—the golds, silvers, and bronzes—maintain oral traditions that at least partially relate to justice and the preservation of draconic society. (This doesn't mean that they're not interested in passing on unique ways of discouraging thieves, of course.) The oral traditions of brass dragons contain much that sounds totally trivial to humans—gossip, pointless anecdotes, and long, rambling reminiscences—while that of copper



dragons is rich with wit and sophisticated wordplay (leavened with bawdy humor, atrocious puns, and seemingly endless shaggy-dog stories).

The extended clans of gold dragons do sometimes keep written histories, but these generally concentrate on the movements, activities, and acquisitions of individuals. Although legends tell of individual draconic scholars that use their extended life spans to collect and sift through historical information, these worthies are few and far between . . . if they truly exist at all.

Customs and Social Mores

Social norms and ideas of etiquette vary widely between dragon species. The following discussions concentrate only on the more common dragon types, ignoring the unintelligent dracoforms and the infertile interspecies crosses.

Black Dragons

As with most of the chromatic dragons, blacks are solitary creatures. They are highly territorial with regard to other dragons, even those of their own species. Black dragons congregate only to mate and raise offspring, or on those very rare occasions when dire need overcomes their naturally chaotic attitudes and forces them to cooperate to achieve some goal.

It is the female dragon that picks a mate and is the dominant member of a mated pair. Females select among prospective mates based on the candidates' worth as dragons. This is almost always measured by the size of the hoard the male has amassed. For this rea-

son, male black dragons often brag of their wealth to others of their kind—should they encounter them—and even to other creatures, hoping that the word will eventually reach a female seeking a mate. (This behavior has a significant disadvantage, of course: Word of the dragon's wealth might also eventually reach a powerful adventuring company)

Sometimes two or more females select the same male. In such a case, the females fight for dominance, the winner getting the male. These fights normally take place high in the air over the male's swamp lair (so the male can watch and admire from the ground). They're usually nonlethal, with one female conceding and slinking off to seek a mate elsewhere.

Black dragons are protective parents, as long as such protective behavior doesn't threaten their own lives. If the dragons must choose between almost certain death and abandoning their young, the young are simply out of luck. (Black dragons have good memories and a tendency toward vicious revenge, however.)

In extremely hostile environments, or when circumstances threaten the entire species, black dragons sometimes gather into clans. These groups are loosely knit and shot through with political maneuvering and out-and-out fights for dominance. In a group situation, black dragons only subordinate themselves to another dragon if they know that dragon can kill them if they don't obey. (Since most blacks also have a totally overblown view of their own abilities, this doesn't happen very often.)

Even though a clan of black

dragons should, by rights, be a very powerful and dangerous entity, this is very rarely the case. The dragons typically spend the majority of their time wrangling over who's dominant to whom. The only time clans achieve their full potential is when they are led by such powerful individuals that no other dragons in the group want to risk challenging for dominance.

Black dragons have no sense of etiquette. They are totally chaotic in every sense of the word. The idea of personal possession and territory is, for black dragons, defined only by an individual's ability to hold onto such things. A black dragon maxim is, "This is my claw, that is my lair; this is my tooth, that is my food" (translation: "It's mine, and I'll rip you up if you try for it").

Blue Dragons

Like blacks, blue dragons are by nature solitary creatures. Unlike their black cousins, however, blues do form into social organizations on a regular basis. The oldest and most powerful blue dragon in a particular geographical region is known as the suzerain, and all blues within that region pay it official homage. The size of the region ruled by a suzerain varies, depending on the dragon population of the region and on the power of the suzerain. (Obviously, a millennia-old suzerain (a wyrm) can enforce fealty over a larger area and greater number of dragons than could a younger individual.)



While still evil and rapacious, blue dragons are highly lawful, particularly in dealings with the suzerain. All blue dragons within the

territory claimed by a suzerain have three choices. They can submit themselves to the suzerain's will and command, which is the most usual case. Or they can simply leave the suzerain's territory, either moving into the sphere of influence of another suzerain—hopefully one more acceptable to them—or finding an area that has been claimed by no suzerain.

The third option is to challenge the suzerain to a death-duel, hoping to become suzerain themselves. Death-duels are highly structured things. Official challenge must be given and accepted. (The acceptance is compulsory, however. A suzerain refusing to accept a challenge is considered by all other blue dragons to have conceded his authority.) The date and place of the duel are then set and communicated to all other blues in the territory—and sometimes beyond it. In the case of suzerains with high profiles, the duel site is often chosen to be a central location, even outside the suzerain's official territory (the High Moor region is often selected). Dragons from all over the Realms may attend a duel like this.

A duel is a red-letter day for the dragons; and few nearby blues fail to attend for the spectacle. (A duel day is not a good time to stumble into the blue dragons' territory. Such close proximity with others of their kind isn't an easy thing for soli-

tary dragons to bear, and tempers often reach a hair-trigger state.) The position of suzerain is largely ceremonial. While the suzerain officially has the authority of life and death over the dragons within its territory, this authority is almost never used. About the only official duty that a suzerain has to perform is to authorize or deny petitions from dragons who wish to mate. (Should the entire territory be threatened, the suzerain could become the commander-in-chief of a horde of blue dragons who would follow his orders without question. Theoretically.)

For blue dragons, mating is an important matter, constrained by social norms. As well as officially asking the suzerain for permission, the prospective mates must also swear an oath to remain together until the offspring of the union reach the age of 26 (juvenile).

Brass Dragons

Brass dragons are highly social creatures, enjoying contact and conversation both within their species and outside it. Like other dragons, however, they prefer to live alone, within a territory defined by their personal ambitions. The territory of one brass dragon often borders on the territory of another, however, and these neighbors are almost always on good terms. In fact, the contiguous boundaries of their terrain are predominately determined through discussion rather than through the active rivalry common to other draconic species. Such neighbors frequently visit each other, to bask in the sun and indulge in long, drawn-out conversations. (These visits are frequent only in draconic terms, however. Years often pass

between visits.)

Brass dragons are Chaotic in alignment, in that their goals and ambitions are their own, and not determined by any other source of authority. This doesn't mean that they're uncooperative, however. Neighbors usually go to each other's aid, which is just as well, since brass dragons share much the same environment as the more powerful blue dragons.

Sometimes rivalries develop between brass dragons, usually when they can't agree on where each other's territory ends. These rivalries almost never become violent, however, as other brass dragons in the same region usually act as willing arbitrators, helping the rivals to talk out their differences.

Mating is much more of a free-wheeling thing among brasses than is typical for other dragons. They frequently mate simply for the pleasure of it, with no concern over long-term relationships or commitments—unless offspring result. In this case, the parents remain together until the offspring are old enough to fend for themselves.

Brass dragons are dedicated parents. Mates often remain together until their young reach young adulthood. Sometimes parents arrange for other brasses to foster their children. These foster parents take responsibility for the offspring for sometimes up to a decade at a time. The parents see this as a good way of making sure that their young have the widest possible experience of the world in which they live, and the best possible training for survival in a sometimes-hostile world. The dragons who take on the foster duties do so because such a duty raises their status among their own kind. (It



also means that they'll always have someone to talk to.) Both true parents and foster parents make sure that they pass on to the young their oral historical tradition.

Brasses often develop networks of informants and confidants—often with sphinxes and similar creatures, and sometimes even with humans and demihumans—that are elaborate enough to shame the human gossip-mongers who do a lucrative business in the larger cities of the Realms. Dragons with such extensive sources of information gain great status among their kind, and they frequently receive visitors from far away who wish to hear the gossip and legends so collected. One of the most telling compliments among brass dragons is, “He (or she) has an ear to the wind.”

Mutual defense is usually on an informal basis, usually when one brass has learned the whereabouts of a blue and wants help in bashing it. Groups of brass dragons sometimes congregate with the intention of cooperating for some greater, more far-reaching goal. Usually nothing comes of these meetings, however, since they usually degenerate into pointless gab-fests. (As Aurus, the rogue gold dragon, once put it, “With brasses, when all’s said and done, more’s said than done.”)

Bronze Dragons

Although not quite as social as brasses, bronzes enjoy the company of their own kind. They can sometimes be seen swimming and playing together in oceans or lakes, and occasionally gather for pirate-hunting expeditions or shark-feasts. Usually, however, bronzes congregate in human or

demihuman form.

Most human and demihuman cultures have a legend similar to the following: A traveler, shipwrecked on a deserted coastline, comes upon a small group of beachcombers, or perhaps fishermen, who dwell in the isolated region. These beachcombers help the shipwrecked soul, nursing him back to health, all the while asking him incisive questions about his background and world-view. Eventually, they agree to help him find his way home. In most versions of the story, at about this time a group of pirates arrives on the scene with the intention of setting up a base on the coastline. The beachcombers claim to be totally unarmed and incapable of defending themselves, asking the sailor what he intends to do to protect them from the not-so-tender mercies of the pirates. Although vastly outnumbered, the sailor realizes that he must do something to save his pacific benefactors. He plans a heroic single-handed attack against the pirates, knowing full-well that he’s going to die in the attempt. As he throws himself into battle, committing his soul to his god, the sky is suddenly full of bronze dragons who fall upon the pirates and destroy them. One of the dragons—whom the sailor now realizes are the true forms of his benefactors—ferries the sailor home on his back. This is a sign of significant respect to one who subordinated his own survival to doing what he thought was right. (No sage knows for sure whether this legend sprung from a true occurrence or not.)

Bronzes enjoy the company of humans and demihumans, and—unlike the vast majority of dragons—consider the “small races” to

be as deserving of survival and happiness as themselves. They often work behind the scenes to promote the causes of Lawful Good societies.

Bronze dragons are less territorial among themselves than virtually any other species of dragon. Although they’ll never share their hoard with another—or even divulge its hiding place—they frequently live together in fairly close proximity. Bronzes sometimes go on treasure-hunting expeditions together, sometimes in groups as large as six individuals. Most of these expeditions are submarine raids against outposts of sahuagin. At the end of the adventure, the dragons divide the wealth according to the age of the participants: The older—and more powerful—the dragon, the larger its share.

Bronzes also occasionally join human or demihuman expeditions—always in human or demihuman form. At the end of such an expedition, they usually reveal their true nature, and claim the lion’s share of the treasure. (Since they’ll only go on such an expedition with Lawful Good creatures, the division of treasure rarely becomes nasty.)

Bronze dragons have great respect for the power and knowledge of the elders among them. Younger dragons often go on pilgrimages to visit the homes of wyrms or great wyrms, to benefit from the experience of these worthies. Bronzes have a very straightforward attitude toward personal conduct that reflects the human Golden Rule:



“Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” Although this may seem simplistic when compared with the bodies of law

promulgated by other creatures, it seems to serve the bronzes more than adequately. If a bronze is seen to have transgressed this principle, his or her neighbors take evidence of this wrongdoing to the nearest wyrm or great wyrm for judgment. After weighing the evidence, the elder dragon decides on a punishment, which usually takes the form of “proscription”—no other bronze can talk to or have any dealings with the transgressor. The length of this proscription can range from months to centuries, but can be for life, in cases of serious transgressions. Bronzes take proscription very seriously—on both sides of the issue. They never talk with a proscribed dragon, and individuals rarely do anything to warrant such a bleak and unpleasant punishment. (There are some rogue bronzes in the world, but these are rare and unhappy creatures.)

Bronzes show a high degree of parental respect. They visit their parents on a fairly regular basis—perhaps every 50 years or so—and listen to their advice or wisdom. Bronzes do not mate for life—such would probably be foolishness for creatures living a millennia or more—but partnerships do frequently last several centuries. No bronze would enter into such a partnership without first consulting its parents and obtaining their blessing.

Copper Dragons

Copper dragons have been described as incorrigible pranksters who love all forms of humor. They also love being the center of attention. Since humor requires company of some kind, they are fairly social creatures. Unfortunately, they’re also prideful, and hate to be the butt of jokes and practical jokes. The upshot of this is that they must find most of their company outside their own species.

Coppers sometimes get together for joke sessions, but—since this usually leads to jokes at the expense of others in the group, which is not appreciated by the targets—these sessions usually become nasty. This nastiness usually remains verbal, as jokes become more and more pointed and vicious to salve damaged pride, and leads to a quick break-up of the session. There have been tales of dragons fighting—and even killing—each other at such meetings, so more sensible individuals shun these joke-fests as potentially damaging to their health.

A copper dragon will sometimes adopt a group of humans or demihumans, usually in a similar guise. Coppers are almost always fairly tiresome to spend much time with, however. The human or demihuman groups eventually try to expel the prankster, and the dragon usually has to reveal its true nature in order to receive the respect it thinks it deserves. Groups so adopted sometimes make great efforts to keep the friendship—and the help—of the dragon, but almost all such associations eventually break up.

There are only two topics about which coppers never joke: mating and child-rearing. Males are very

serious in their courtship of eligible females—generally those who have earned status in the loosely knit copper dragon community by amassing large hoards—and anyone, of any species, who ridicules their efforts is in for serious trouble. Coppers are dedicated parents, making sure that their offspring are well provided for and protected. The parents maintain custody of the children, and are responsible for all facets of their rearing and maturation until they reach the legal age of majority at 51 (young adult). The children are then encouraged to go forth and live their lives as they see fit. During the rearing process, the parents make sure that the young are well-versed in the species’ oral tradition.

On the 51st anniversary of an offspring’s hatching, the parents throw a celebration to which all copper dragons in the area—and sometimes dragons of other species and even nondragons—are invited. These celebrations take place in out-of-the-way locales—often atop high rocky mesas, well away from interlopers—and are usually riotous affairs. The attendees typically consume huge quantities of a liquor made from a plant called fireweed, which the dragons purchase from humans or demihumans near their homes. Even when the location of such a celebration is known, it isn’t a good idea to drop in unannounced. Interrupting a group of inebriated, prankster dragons is not a recipe for a long and happy life.

After the young have reached majority, the parents usually separate, although there have been cases reported where a particularly well-matched pair of dragons has raised many broods together.



Long-term relationships, however—those lasting longer than 50 years—are very rare, since coppers find it difficult to remain serious that long.

Once mature, copper dragons have no great love for authority of any kind, preferring to be free-wheeling individualists. Apparently, no copper dragon has ever tried to set itself up as ruler of a community (probably for the very good reason that doing so would set it up as the target of more practical jokes than it really cared to deal with).

Some of the more magically-endowed copper dragons are fascinated with spells that affect rock and stone. There is an unsubstantiated rumor that one great wyrm managed—somehow—to create a stone golem that it used as a guardian for its lair.

Faerie Dragons

Faerie dragons —although many sages trace their descent from the pseudodragon, rather than from the mainstream of *eodracō* — warrant mention because of their intriguing habits. These creatures are most like the brasses in outlook—loving wit and humor, particularly in its most physical form—but they don't share their larger relatives' short tempers when they prove to be the butt of well-constructed jokes. They love the company of their own kind, and of other intelligent woodland beings, such as sprites and pixies. They also thoroughly enjoy the company of elves (they find the elves a touch too serious on occasion, and see it as their responsibility to get the sometimes straight-laced creatures to lighten up whenever possible).

Faerie dragons associate in small family groups but, since the creatures can communicate telepathically over ranges of up to two miles, these groups tend to be spread out. Different faerie dragon groups will cooperate in dire need, but such need rarely occurs.

Groups that live in the same region get together twice a year—on the two solstices—to engage in joke-fests, to tell tall tales, and to revel in each other's company. During these times, they feast on various berries and roots that have mildly mind-altering effects on the tiny creatures. These twice-yearly celebrations tend to get a little wild—something like a conference of jesters—and the other intelligent inhabitants of the woods tend to stay well away from them. (This isn't for fear of physical damage, of course, but stumbling into a group of 20 or more inebriated—and highly magical—pranksters can be somewhat disturbing to one's equanimity. . .)

Family groups will sometimes go to great lengths to prepare and execute practical jokes on an epic scale against other family groups. Such jokes usually escalate into full-blown joke wars, but these contests of physical humor never turn nasty. Both the perpetrators and the victims of these elaborate pranks relate the details with great glee to anyone willing to listen.

Unlike the other good dragons, who treat death as a dignified matter, faerie dragons celebrate the death of members of their family group with wild, uninhibited wakes. (Their belief is that they can do no higher honor to their beloved dead than show that their own lives are richer—more uproarious and joyful—for their existence.)

Faerie dragons have no natural enemies—other than evil humanoids, but they're usually able to deal with them—

and this shows in their child-rearing habits. Mating is approached with the same happy-go-lucky and thoroughly enjoyable lack of restraint with which the faerie dragons tackle everything in life. Hatchlings are raised cooperatively by the family group. Since even hatchlings have significant magical ability and resistance, little must be done to protect the young dragons physically. The elders of the group see their responsibility to the young more as a matter of making sure they learn immediately that life is to be enjoyed to the utmost.

Faerie dragons are fascinated by magic, and they collect magical items with more dedication than one might expect from such fun-loving creatures. They feel great kinship toward gold dragons, and they often hang around with the larger creatures, goading and enticing them to speak at length of matters magical. (It must be recorded that the golds find the smaller creatures a little tiresome—and exhausting—to spend time with, but they are too good-hearted to chase the faerie dragons away.)

Faerie dragons have no respect for authority, either within their species or outside it. There is no faerie dragon king, since everyone knows that the attempt to set oneself up as an authority—no matter in how insignificant a sense—



would merely be an invitation to every faerie dragon on the planet to get the “stuffed shirt” to “lighten up.”

Gold Dragons

Gold dragons are the most lawful of dragon species, and they form the most orderly societies. Unlike all other dragon races, golds select one of their number as overall ruler for their species. This dragon—His (or Her) Resplendence, the King (or Queen) of Justice—is assisted by a number of Lords, also selected from the gold dragon population. The King of Justice for western Faerun is currently (1357 DR) a great wyrm named Lareth. Nobody knows for sure where His Resplendence lives, although there are almost as many tales as tellers. His home is a castle deep in the Elven Woods near Myth Drannor, some say; or a citadel in the midst of Anauroch; or a huge cave complex on a magically-concealed island in the midst of the Dragon Sea (how appropriate); or even a floating cloud city that drifts wherever His Resplendence wishes. The gold dragons themselves know where His Resplendence Lareth dwells, or at least how to contact him, but they're not telling.

The King of Justice is usually the oldest and most powerful gold dragon in the region. Although the dragons hold official elections when the position must be filled, these are almost always by acclamation. Only once has it been recorded that two equally qualified

candidates were proposed for the position, one male and one female. Showing the wisdom that always characterizes a (potential) King of Justice, the two candidates settled the potentially divisive matter by swearing an Oath of Concord (the dragon equivalent of marriage) and sharing the responsibilities and authorities equally. Kings retain their position until their deaths, or—more likely—until they decide to step down in favor of one whom they think will serve the race well. There are reputed to be several retired Kings living in remote parts of Faerun.

Unlike most human kings, His Resplendence (or Their Resplendences, in the case mentioned above) never finds it necessary to actively rule. The position of King could just as easily be described as “Elder Advisor.” The other dragons turn to the King for advice and guidance when they must make decisions that could affect the species as a whole or the flow of history in Toril.

These policy decisions often refer to the self-appointed quests that golds often go on. Although the result of a particular quest—say, to eradicate certain evil monsters that are threatening a human settlement—may appear obvious and highly desirable, dragons often consult with the King before undertaking the quest, just to make sure that there are no hidden consequences that the dragon has missed. Are the monsters necessary in the ecosystem, for example, to keep under control creatures that would, if allowed to multiply freely, pose an even greater threat to the human settlement further down the line?

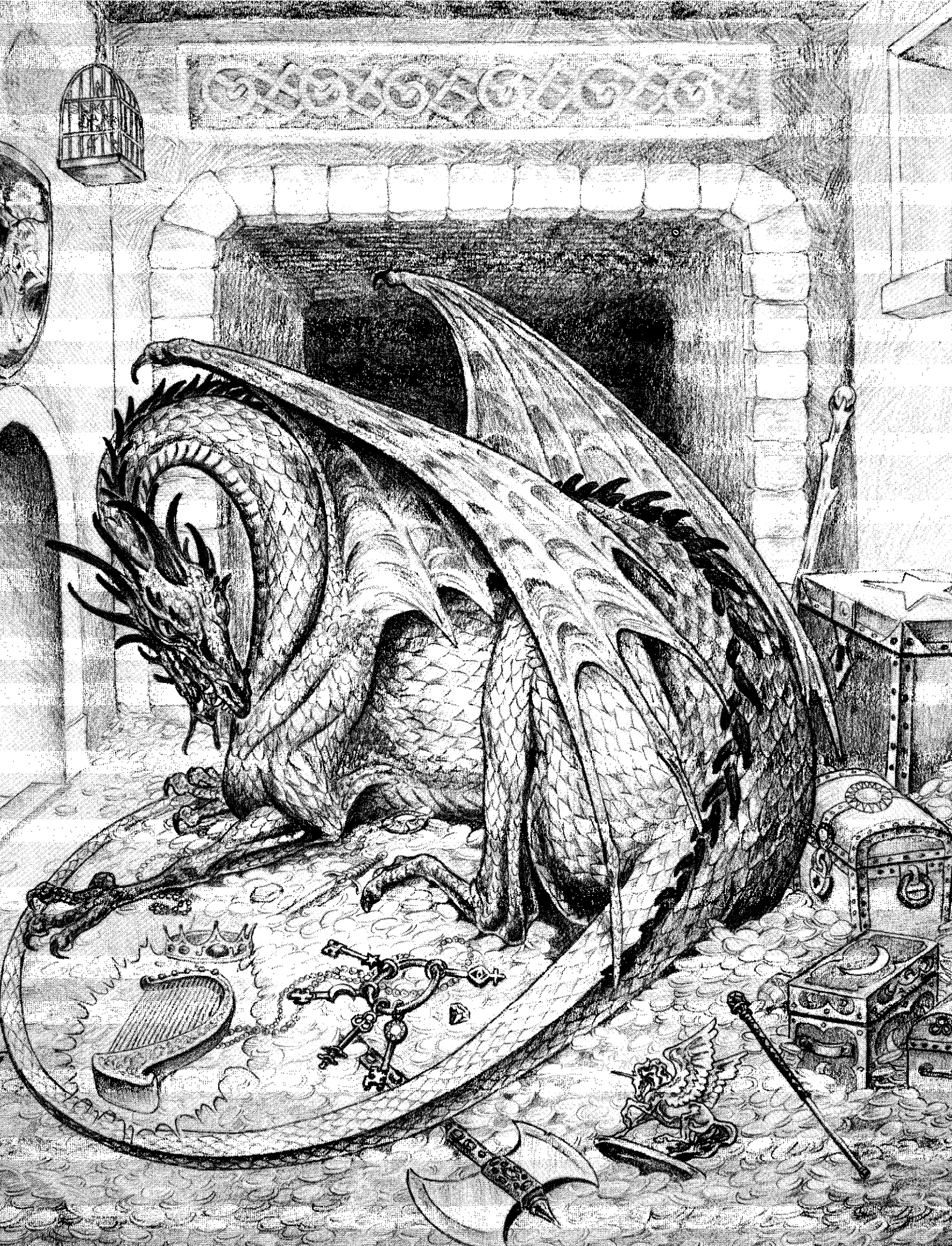
If the proposed quest is one that involves political matters, or the

relationships between two or more human states, the dragon will certainly request advice from the King. His Resplendence will think long and hard before giving it.

As his title implies, the King is also the dispenser of justice in the golds' society. Unlike the bronzes, golds have a fairly elaborate system of laws (which will be discussed in Chapter 3, “Dragon Psychology”). Like the bronzes, they have only one commonly-used punishment: proscription. Gold dragons take proscription extremely seriously.

Golds are social among their own kind—although much more dignified and reserved about it than brasses or even bronzes—and enjoy the company and conversation of the short-lived races (humans and demihumans). (Contacts with these races are usually conducted while *polymorphed* into a less daunting form.) Of all the demihuman races, golds enjoy the company of elves above all. Even though elves are usually much more chaotic and unpredictable than the dragons, their long life span gives them an almost draconic appreciation for the sweep of history.

Golds are unique among dragon-kind in that they have a written language of their own. (They can only write this language when *polymorphed* into human or other suitable form, since their large claws—although dexterous—are inappropriate for holding a writing implement.) They keep extensive written histories that, although detailed, tend to view everything from the draconic point of view, which diminishes their value to human historians. (As an example, a draconic history dating from the time of the battle of Singing





Sands (1194 DR) between Aglarond and Thay was recently discovered. The history deals little with the battle, concentrating more

on the hatching date of the then-current King of Justice's offspring, and on the trial of a rogue dragon—since proscribed, so his name was stricken from the history—who seemed to have provided military intelligence to the forces of Thay.)

Many gold dragons are fascinated by magic; they love to add magical items to their hoards. These they investigate and examine and sometimes even find uses for. Most of the super-mage dragons, wielding almost god-like powers, that are frequently mentioned in legend are golds.

Another way in which golds are unique is that they sometimes mate for life. There is a draconic tradition called the Oath of Concord, which is binding for the life of both participants. Two dragons bound by the Oath are considered "one flesh, one breath, one life." Lifetime unions are rare, but all golds respect those who enter into them.

Gold dragons are devoted parents, nurturing and protecting their young until the offspring choose to leave. This is occasionally not until the younger dragon reaches full adulthood (101 years). By tradition, the first act that a gold must perform on leaving its parents is to visit the King of Justice and offer its obedience. To dragons, this is more a joyous occasion than an onerous task.

Green Dragons

Although generally classified as Lawful in alignment, greens rarely show this trait to any creature not in their immediate family grouping. Green dragons are masters of intrigue, politics, and back-biting, both within their own species and outside it. They will do anything to further their own ambitions: manipulate other dragons or similarly powerful creatures, intimidate humans and demihumans, maim and kill anyone opposed to them, lie shamelessly, promise anything (since they have no intention of ever fulfilling those promises), and generally use every nasty trick in the book.

Making this whole situation more fraught with danger, the goals of green dragons aren't particularly straightforward. Although they love wealth for the status it gives them with other dragons, that isn't the extent of their ambitions. More so than just about any other draconic species, greens are out for power. Not just power over other greens, but power over any other creatures that happen to live anywhere near their territory.

Even though they aren't overly intelligent as dragons go, they have a seemingly innate talent for coming up with nasty schemes that will gain them power—and earn them treasure—without their having to do any work. (This is another way in which greens are unique: no other species of dragon has much interest in setting up business concerns.)

The classical example of a green dragon's double-ended business deal happened in a remote and wooded part of the Realms (the exact locale varies from telling to tell-

ing of the tale). The dragon brought in a large number of arcs—under promises of protection from the elves that dwelt in the woods—who immediately started chopping down the trees and selling the lumber. (The dragon, of course, took a large cut of all profits.) When the elves tried to expel the orcs, the dragon protected her workers. After several profitable months of this, the green dragon sent a human agent—under the power of a *suggestion* spell—into the elven community to offer the help of a (nonexistent) powerful brass dragon in getting rid of the orcs. The brass dragon would expect some kind of repayment, of course. The elves jumped at the opportunity. Under the effect of a *change self* spell—which was just the ticket for making a green dragon look like a brass—the green drove off the orcs, and then it gladly accepted the elves' gold for the services rendered. The green was satisfied since both the short-term lumber business and the payment from the elves had nicely expanded its hoard.

Although greens find it much easier to cheat and manipulate nondragons, they certainly aren't above putting one over on members of their own species. (Humans have a saying that goes, "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me." The green dragon equivalent is, "Fool you once, tough.")

Greens will on rare occasions work together to pull off a particularly nasty score. When dealing with dragons who know them and who have equally crooked outlooks, greens (usually) keep promises that they make, if only out of self-protection.

Among their own kind, green dragons are rude, crass, and loud, the females even more so than the males. There are certain roots that have a mildly mind-altering effect on greens (these are usually poisonous to nondragons). Under their influence, the greens' social behavior is even worse than usual.

The courtship of green dragons—which is initiated by the female—is as coarse and boorish as might be expected. Once two dragons have paired, however, and the female is impregnated, their nature changes. There is strong loyalty between members of a mated pair—a radical departure from normal green behavior—and an immense dedication to the offspring when they hatch. Parents take great pains to inculcate their offspring with the survival skills of manipulation and double-dealing. Green parents will give their lives for their offspring, if necessary, making them unique among the evil dragons. The parents usually continue this level of protection until the offspring achieve young adulthood at 51 years of age.

Once the offspring have left their parents, the paired dragons almost always separate, to find new mates later. No loyalty or responsibility is felt by any member of the family group to any other, once the young have left. (There is a tradition, however, that greens shouldn't double-deal on their parents or offspring . . . unless the opportunity is just too good to pass up.)

Red Dragons

Reds are the archetypical evil dragons: rapacious, ferocious, vengeful, and avaricious. Red dragons recognize these traits in themselves, and they are proud of

them. They believe that they, above all other species, are closest to the ideal of draconic nature and behavior, and that every other dragon race has slipped from this purity.

Although red dragons are not social creatures, preferring their own company, they do go out of their way to gain news about the activities and achievements of other reds in their corner of the world.

If they judge that their own achievements and wealth exceed those that they hear about, they feel smug and self-satisfied, knowing that they hold status in the estimation of others. Should they hear of achievements and acquisitions greater than theirs, however, their jealousy knows no bounds, as they feel they have lost status. Reds who learn such unwelcome news will frequently fly into a rage, going forth from their lairs to ravage the countryside, loot, pillage, and burn until they feel that their own achievements have overtaken those of the dragon that they recently learned about.

During these jealous rages, no one in the vicinity is safe (least of all the messenger who brought the unwelcome news). The bright side is that dragons in such a mood are less cautious than usual, sometimes taking foolish risks or underestimating the abilities of foes they encounter.

The converse of this interest in news is also true—reds often go to great lengths so that word of their power and wealth reaches others of their kind. These lengths include such stratagems as burning only half of a village, or releasing one survivor of an adventuring party to spread the dragon's fame far and wide. The downside of this is that a widespread reputation of

wealth is like a personal invitation to dragon and treasure-hunters.

Reds are highly territorial. Although they will on

rare occasions adopt a patronizing and protective attitude toward creatures that they consider very much weaker than themselves, entering a red dragon's territory is most frequently an invitation to attack. This is certainly true if the intruder is another dragon, even another red. (In fact, the worst territorial battles are between reds, since both combatants are too proud to back down and show weakness before the other. Other species are more likely to recognize a losing position and escape with their lives.)

Reds feel great rivalry with silver and copper dragons, but they save their most vociferous hatred for golds. The word vociferous is appropriate because, while reds will loudly proclaim their eagerness to immediately dispatch any gold they encounter, they often find some important reason why they shouldn't engage a gold in combat. The reason for this is that although they are overbearingly arrogant, reds aren't stupid. They know, deep down, that golds are more powerful than they—even though they won't admit it—and so are less than eager to start a battle they could well lose. (The gods help anyone who points this out to a red dragon, of course.) Pride and their unwillingness to back down sometimes make reds attack wandering golds even when they know that they are outmatched.





Reds despise weakness in their own kind above all. If the word gets around that a particular red has “lost it” for some reason—has been

badly wounded, for example, or is becoming senile and infirm—other reds descend on the hapless dragon’s lair and strip it clean, probably killing the owner in the process. The reds’ rationale is summed up in their saying, “To have is nothing, to keep is all.” In other words, if you can’t protect what you have, you didn’t deserve to have it in the first place (this applies to life as well as to physical wealth).

Courtship among red dragons is initiated by the female. When a female feels the urge to have offspring—which happens perhaps every century or so—she seeks a prospective mate (the selection criteria are, of course, wealth and power). Male reds never turn down the courtship advances of a female, since they gain status in the eyes of other males from such advances. Once the female is impregnated, the male leaves her and returns to his own life.

The female raises her hatchlings alone—or with the help of another female who is either infertile or too old to reproduce—and protects them ferociously against threats. (This protection only rarely extends to the mother sacrificing her life for her young, however.) By the time the young have reached the young adult stage—or perhaps even earlier—the mother’s solitary and jealous nature overcomes her maternal instincts, and she orders

her offspring from the lair and from her territory. Needless to say, there is no loyalty felt between generations of reds.

Reds hate any form of authority. They do not ask their elders for advice or knowledge—even if such would save their lives—since they consider admitting that the elders have something they need is the same as putting themselves under the authority of another.

Silver Dragons

Silvers are highly social creatures, perhaps even more so than brasses. There is a twist to this, however: They seem to prefer the company of humans and demihumans to that of their own kind.

Many silvers feel that dragon-kind has a lot to learn from humans, and a few things to learn from demihumans. Millennium-long life spans are of great benefit, these silvers believe, because they allow, one to take the long view. But they have the disadvantage that it becomes easy to miss opportunities for new experiences because of a feeling that any opportunity you have now will always be available a century or so from now. Short-lived races like humans have so little time that they must seize every opportunity that comes their way, and thus they fill their short lives with a dynamism and drive generally unknown to dragons. Most silvers believe that their kind would benefit if they could learn some of humanity’s drive. With a combination of draconic perspective and human initiative, what could they not accomplish?

Philosophy aside, many silvers form true and lasting friendships with humans. Although most such

friendships start with the dragons polymorphed into a less daunting form, such deception weighs heavily on the silvers, and they almost inevitably eventually reveal the truth. (Since silvers are good judges of character and maintain only those friendships that are true and deep, this eventual revelation rarely has a detrimental effect on the relationship.)

No matter how close such a friendship grows, however, a silver dragon always eventually returns to its own kind for some time. Often, in the cases of really good friends, the silver dragon remains in human society for the entire life of its human associate (which, after all, is rarely more than 70 years—less than one-tenth the life span of a dragon).

Silvers form loosely-knit communities based on extended family groups. This doesn’t mean that the group or clan lives together; it merely means that members of the group feel a higher loyalty and respect toward members of their group than toward those outside it. The eldest member of the family grouping—referred to as “the Senior”—is the patriarch or matriarch of the clan. Group members give great credence to the wisdom and opinion of the Senior, and act against the Senior’s recommendations only after serious thought.

The Senior is also the dispenser of justice for the family group. Silvers have a less formal approach to law than do golds. Like brasses, they have a single major law (although in some groups it is expanded by family regulations and commentary). The silvers’ central law is, “Action that causes harm is crime” (with the unstated corollary, “Action that causes no harm

is one's own business"). Silvers are very careful in the application of this law. Dragons are free to do whatever they like, as long as their actions are totally harmless. (As a human legalist once said, "Your right to throw a punch stops where my nose begins.")

Family groups can grow very large, sometimes numbering in the scores of dragons, scattered around the world. Such groups cooperate with other groups only under circumstances dire enough to warrant it. This kind of cooperation is very rare, however, since a single clan of 40 or more silver dragons is enough to deal with most kinds of problems.

Silvers hate injustice and cruelty, and they gladly help good-aligned creatures in dire need. The difference between silvers and golds is that silvers usually wait for their help to be requested—whether directly or indirectly. They are less likely to go off on self-appointed quests than are golds.

Silver dragons have a deep taboo against mating with members of the same family group. Thus, when they feel the urge to mate, silvers sometimes have to go far afield to find an acceptable candidate. Either sex can initiate courtship. Silvers are civilized in all things, and their courtship rites are very decorous. When two dragons have agreed to be mates, they must receive the blessings of the Seniors of both family groups. (This is rarely withheld, and never without good cause.)

Silvers share the concept of an Oath of Concord with golds, but with a slight difference. A silver's Oath is binding only until all offspring from the union have reached adulthood (at 101 years). Some dragon unions last for centu-

ries, and even for life, as the couple keeps raising broods of offspring.

White Dragons

Whites are the least intelligent species of western dragon, and their behavior shows it. They have very little in the way of either foresight or planning, and their memory is rudimentary and capable of recalling only physical events, not abstract concepts. There's one exception to this: They remember offenses against them, and they have a very well-developed sense of vengeance.

White dragon vendettas are brutal and violent things that more often than not get the creatures into serious trouble. Whites aren't given to planning or considering consequences. Their approach is more of a straight-forward attack. Against foes who are capable of planning—and know the whites' obsession with revenge—this approach puts them at a great disadvantage.

Whites are not social creatures. The only contact with their own kind that they pursue is sexual. Whites sometimes work together, but only because their immediate goals coincide. Cooperation of this kind isn't arranged or planned; it just happens. (Take, for example, the case of two whites who both happen to be settling grudges with the same whaling village on the same day. They'll work together in razing the village, but then they will probably be at each other's throats when it comes time to split up any loot.)

In general, whites are highly territorial with regard to others of the same species (and sex). Border skirmishes between whites are rarely fatal (although the verbal

abuse that accompanies such confrontations is usually stunning in its viciousness.)

Unlike other dragon species, whites mate purely for pleasure. If offspring arise from this activity, so be it, but this isn't the goal of the activity. Should the female become impregnated, the male instinctively stays around to protect her. Once the eggs hatch, however, the two creatures go their separate ways. The hatchling dragons follow one or other of the parents, and the older dragons do not object to the young tagging along. The parents feel no obligation to protect the young, however, and so the offspring must learn to fend for themselves immediately. (The infant mortality rate for white dragons is rather high.)

The time at which young dragons leave their parents and strike out on their own varies wildly. Some leave almost immediately, while others remain for a century. In the latter case, the parent usually drives the offspring away, sensing that it may soon become a rival. (And the parent is sometimes right. There have been cases recorded where a young dragon has killed its parent for the older dragon's hoard.)

White dragons have been described—by other dragons—as "the thugs of dragonkind" and as being "about as subtle as volcanoes." Even those lucky whites that can communicate with an intelligent creature rarely have thoughts worth communicating.





Interspecies Relationships

The following table shows how the various species of dragons feel about each other. These

are only preferences, to be used as guidelines.

Examples

Brass dragons and faerie dragons feel goodwill toward each other. Faerie dragons tolerate coppers, while coppers feel goodwill toward faerie dragons. (These interrelationships aren't always symmetrical.)

Notes on the Racial Preferences Table

- P: The race is generally *preferred*.
- G: Considerable *goodwill* exists toward the race.
- T: The race is viewed with *tolerance* and generally accepted.

- N: The race is thought of *neutrally*, but some suspicion is evident.
- A: The race is greeted with *antipathy*.
- H: The race is *hated*.
- SH: There is a *strong hatred* for the race in question; immediate attack is the rule.

Dragons and Other Dracofoms

In general, dragons react to other dracofoms—such as drakes, pseudodragons, and wyverns—according to alignment. Conflicting alignments usually incur antipathy at best or hatred at worst. (For example, Chaotic Evil reds won't like Neutral (good) pseudodragons.)

A significant exception occurs between silver dragons and wyverns. Silvers greatly dislike the havoc that wyverns sometimes wreak on human and demihuman settlements, and they do their best to prevent such depreda-

tion. If there's any choice in the matter, though, the silvers won't kill the wyverns, but simply chase them off or—preferably—move them to a region where they can live without doing any harm to sentient creatures.

The silvers also try to train the wyverns not to attack humans, demihumans, or their flocks. (Even the silvers have to admit that this training isn't proving overly effective.) The reason for this effort is that silvers as a group tend to think "there but for the grace of the gods go I." In other words, they feel that wyverns got the short end of the evolutionary stick, but—if suitably controlled and tended over a few millennia—they might develop into intelligent creatures that could be swayed to a good-aligned outlook. (It must be said that gold dragons, who usually tend to be more quixotic than silvers, consider this effort to be a total waste of time. It's not in their nature, however, to interfere, or even try to discourage the silvers from their task. Who knows? They

Racial Preferences Table

	Black	Blue	Brass	Bronze	Copper	Faerie	Gold	Green	Red	Silver	White
Black	P	A	H	H	H	SH	H	A	A	A	A
Blue	A	P	SH	H	H	H	H	A	A	A	A
Brass	A	SH	P	G	G	G	G	A	H	G	A
Bronze	A	A	T	P	G	T	G	A	H	G	A
Copper	A	A	T*	G	P	G	G	A	H	G	A
Faerie	N	N	G	G	T†	P	P	H	A	G	A
Gold	H	H	G	G	G	T‡	P	H	SH	G	H
Green	A	A	H	H	H	SH	H	P	T	H	H
Red	A	A	H	H	H	H	SH	A	P	H	H
Silver	H	H	G	G	G	G(T)	G	H	SH	P	H
White	N	N	A	A	A	A	H	N	T	A	P

* Because brass dragons try to steal attention from coppers.

† Faerie dragons find copper humor to be coarse.

‡ Golds pretend to like faerie dragons, so as not to hurt the small dragons' feelings.

might eventually succeed.)

From the other side, the more intelligent dracoforms also react to dragons based on alignment. This is tempered by a realization that even the weakest true dragon is many times stronger than the most powerful pseudodragon. If a smaller intelligent dracoform encounters a dragon with whom it has an alignment conflict, wisdom dictates that it should simply keep its head down until the dragon has gone about its business.

Religion

Like most other intelligent creatures, dragons have enough free will to decide which deities they worship, or if they'll worship any. (In other words, within each species, different individuals may worship different gods.) As a general rule, the more powerful the species in question, the fewer members feel the need to worship gods. (This might be changing in the Realms, however.)

Many dragons who do worship deities follow the same alignment-specific gods as do humans and demihumans. For example, there are many red dragons who worship Bane, Loviatar, and Malar, while a number of gold dragons revere Tyr or Torm. Although it may seem strange that dragons would worship deities who are generally perceived as humaniform, there is a philosophical reason. Many sages—some of them dragons—believe that the gods of the Realms are actually multifaceted forces who appear to their worshipers in forms that those worshipers can understand. Thus, Tyr isn't innately a human god; that's just the way he manifests himself to human worshipers. To draconic wor-

shipers, so the philosophy goes, Tyr would appear as a mighty gold dragon, wreathed in glory; to lammasu he would manifest himself as a celestial lammasu.

There are some specifically draconic gods, but these deities seem to have decreased in influence over the millennia. There are still some dragons that worship these ancient Powers, but such devout individuals seem to be diminishing in number. Most dragons now worship either the human gods—in other aspects, of course—or worship no gods at all.

The Gods of the Dragons

Asgorath (AZ-gore-ath)

(World-Shaper)

Deity of Creation

Greater Power, Home Plane Unknown, Alignment Unknown

Symbol: An unadorned circle (represents totality)

Asgorath the World-Shaper is reputed in myth and legend to be the creator of the universe, and of dragonkind. The true alignment of Asgorath is unknown; each dragon that worships Asgorath—and the god has followers among every species of dragonkind—believes wholeheartedly that the god shares its alignment. (Thus, reds believe that Asgorath is Chaotic Evil—as implied in the *Book of the World* mentioned at the beginning of the chapter—while bronzes believe Asgorath is Lawful Good.)

Asgorath never manifests himself before his faithful. (In fact, myths claim that Asgorath manifested himself only once, during the act of creating the universe.) He makes his existence felt as a powerful, dynamic presence in the

minds of other dragons.

Astilabor (As-TIL-uh-bore)

(Acquisitor, Hoardmistress)
Deity of Acquisitiveness

Greater Power of Limbo, (C)N
Symbol: A 12-faceted gem

Astilabor is revered by dragons of every species, since she is, in a way, an archetype of dragonkind. Astilabor represents the desire to acquire and hold wealth—greed, if viewed in an evil sense, but also the desire to gain status by acquiring wealth. Dragons that worship Astilabor sometimes promise the deity a share of their gains if she'll help them in an upcoming venture, but then they never sacrifice what they promised her. (How, after all, could the Hoardmistress respect them if they gave up their wealth so easily?)

Astilabor manifests as a huge dragon that shimmers with all the chromatic and metallic colors of dragonkind. She is reputed to have a hoard, hidden somewhere in the plane of Limbo, that contains more wealth than that found on all the planets of the universe. She sometimes (very rarely) grants 'boons from this staggering hoard to followers who have pleased her.

Garyx

(GAIR-iks)

(Firelord, All-Destroyer, Cleanser of Worlds)

Deity of Fire-using Dragons

Greater Power of the Abyss, CN(E)
Symbol: A reptilian eye superimposed over a flame





Garyx represents the destructive—or, perhaps, the cleansing—influence of flame. He is portrayed as either the All-Destroyer or as

the Cleanser of Worlds. He is worshiped under both aspects (obviously not by the same individual). In his destroyer aspect, he is worshiped by red dragons. As the Cleanser of Worlds, some rogue gold dragons—who have come to the dark conclusion that the only way to rid the world of evil is to sterilize it and start again—revere him.

Garyx usually manifests himself as a huge dragon the color of fire (sometimes red, sometimes gold).

Hlal (Huh-LAL)

(The Jester, The Pursued)
Deity of Draconic Humor
Lesser Power of Olympus, CG
Symbol: A single flame (“the light of wit”)

Hlal epitomizes draconic wit. Although she delights in sophisticated wordplay and the more dignified forms of humor, she can't resist the opportunity to play a prank on an unsuspecting victim; the more seriously that victim takes himself, the better. Myth has it that Hlal played a particularly elaborate practical joke on Null, and is now hard-pressed to stay one jump ahead of the angry Deathwurm.

Hlal is worshiped by coppers and by faerie dragons, although in neither case is she the only deity

that these dragons worship (there's more to life than humor, after all... namely, treasure).

Hlal appears in whatever form best suits her (doubtless humorous) purposes at the moment. If she's not actually in the process of playing a trick on someone, she usually chooses the form of a faerie dragon that glows with a yellow-gold aura.

Kereska (Kuh-RES-kah)

(Wonderbringer, Light of Magic)
Deity of Magic
Greater Power of Limbo, CN
Symbol: A five-pointed star, the lower two points extended

According to legend, it is Kereska Wonderbringer who first taught dragonkind how to wield the powers of magic. As such, she is



still revered by dragons of all species (more so by the more magically adept, of course). Kereska is able to cast any known spell as many times per day as she likes, and—since she is the font of magical creativity—she can create any new spell-like power on an instant's notice.

Dragons researching new spells often invoke the name of Kereska before beginning. Kereska has the ability to imbue any dracoform with whatever level of spellcasting ability she wishes, and she can bestow new spells and spell-like powers upon any dragon that sufficiently pleases her.

Although she always appears as a dragon, the other details of her appearance—size, color, etc.—change from manifestation to manifestation. She is always surrounded by a pulsating aura of magical power, however.

Lendys (LEN-dis)

(Scale of Justice, Balancer, Weigher of Lives)

Deity of Balance and Justice

Greater Power of Nirvana, LN

Symbol: A sword balanced on a needle's point

Lendys is justice personified. He represents the principle that every action has a reaction, that the universe is like a bookkeeper's journal, and that everything must balance at the end. It is Lendys who ensures that he who does evil receives evil, that he who does good receives good, and that he who lives by the sword dies by the sword. Lendys has no mercy in his soul, nor forgiveness, and he gives no second chances. He is worshiped by the lawful dragons, but they usually try to balance his im-

placability with mercy of their own. (If mercy to a criminal be considered a crime, so be it.)

Lendys appears as a huge, wingless, platinum-colored dragon. His eyes give forth beams of brilliant light from which no one can hide.

Null (NULL)

(Deathwyrn, Reaper, Guardian of the Lost)

Deity of Death and the Dead

Greater Power of Gehenna, LE/LN

Symbol: A circle, divided diagonally into white and black semicircles

Null, the draconic god of death and the dead, is worshiped in two seemingly contradictory aspects. As Reaper, god of death, he is Lawful Evil and is worshiped by many evil dragons. In this aspect, Null enjoys the taking of life, and he blesses others who serve him in this capacity. Null works according to a plan and a schedule, however, which has been set before him by Fate, and so he is not his own master.

As Guardian of the Lost, Null is the Lawful Neutral guardian of the dead. As such, he shepherds the *animae* (souls) of dragons to their respective planes when they die, and he ensures they are no longer troubled by enemies they may have had while alive. In this aspect, Null is worshiped by dragons of all alignments; individuals who've just lost someone close to them will sometimes make offerings to Null to speed the dearly departed's *animae* to its final resting place.

Null appears as a region of impenetrable blackness in the shape of a huge dragon. He is surrounded by an aura of numbing cold, and it

is said that to touch Null is instant death.

Tamara (Tuh-MAH-ruh)

(Her Beneficence, Her Mercy)

Deity of Life and Light

Greater Power of Elysium, NG

Symbol: A seven-pointed star on a field of black

Tamara is the consort of Lendys. She strives ever to temper his hard-edged justice with a sense of forgiveness. The preservation of life and happiness is all to Tamara, and if justice must be somewhat bent to achieve that goal, so be it. Some of the Lawful Good dragons (golds, silvers, and brasses) still worship both Lendys and Tamara, while some brasses and coppers worship Tamara alone.

Tamara appears as a huge, wingless dragon—slightly smaller than Lendys—the color of burnished platinum. She radiates a comfortable aura of warmth and love.

Task (TASK)

(The Taker and Holder, Wrestler)

Deity of Greed

Greater Power of Pandemonium, CN(E)

Symbol: A pile of five coins

While Astilabor is the deity of acquisition (with no stigma of evil attached), Task is undeniably the deity of greed. Task wants it all, no matter how he has to get it, no matter the cost to whoever currently owns what he wants. His followers share his attitudes. Task reveres greed and selfishness, and





he sometimes rewards followers who show these characteristics in good measure (such rewards are never material, of course,

since Task wouldn't give up anything that he owned).

Myths claim that Task's lair in the plane of Pandemonium hides the largest and richest hoard in the universe (followers of Astilabor dispute this). Task is worshiped by the evil dragons—reds most of all—and even by some brasses.

Task appears as a huge dragon whose hide is so studded with gems that it's impossible to tell what color he was originally.

Xymor (ZIE-more)

(Justicemaker)

Deity of Enlightened Justice
Greater Power of the Seven Heavens, LG

Symbol: A reptilian eye superimposed over a square of gold

In the draconic pantheon, Xymor is the offspring of Lendys and Tamara. Xymor combines Lendys's sense of justice with Tamara's love of mercy. Xymor is thus the perfect enlightened Justicemaker, who knows when to temper justice with mercy and punishment with forgiveness. As such, he is worshiped mainly by golds, silvers, and bronzes, although a few brasses and coppers also pay him homage.

He appears as a huge dragon wrapped in a scintillating aura of light so brilliant that it is impossible to tell his color.

Zorquan (ZORE-kwon)

(High One, Greatest Wyrm)

Deity of Dragonkind

Greater Power of the Prime Material Plane, N

Symbol: A black circle superimposed on a larger, concentric white circle

Although Zorquan is often described as the deity of dragonkind, he is really the deity of dragonness. As Corellon Larethian represents the central ideals of elvenkind, so does Zorquan represent the central ideals of dragonkind. He represents power, pride—which all dragons, even golds, have in abundance—and, most importantly, status. Although he is generally classed as neutral, Zorquan's alignment would more properly be described as "any."

Zorquan is totally unconcerned with creatures other than dragons, except when their behavior affects dragonkind. He is the implacable enemy of any who would harm dragonkind—not, you will note, individual dragons. Adventurers who slay the occasional black or blue dragon will never feel Zorquan's wrath. Members of all dragon species worship Zorquan.

He can manifest himself as a perfectly-formed version of any species of dragon. Whatever his form, his eyes crackle with sparks, sometimes spitting lightning bolts that flash and crack around his body. Zorquan is said to live somewhere on the Prime Material plane. Many legends tell of dragons with the temerity to visit his halls, but none give details on how to get there.

The draconic pantheon once contained many more gods, including

deities dedicated to protecting hatchlings, finding mates, and vengeance upon enemies. Over the millennia, however, these deities have been largely forgotten.

All dragons, no matter what deity they follow, believe in a life after death. (The concept of the draconic afterlife will be discussed further in Chapter 9.)

The Holy Wars

Many millennia ago, the dragons of Toril worshiped the draconic pantheon almost without exception. Very rare indeed was the dragon who didn't revere at least one of these deities. During this period, many wars were fought over religion. These wars were not only between species, but also within species.

The worst conflicts were, predictably, between different-aligned worshipers of the same gods. For example, good adherents of Null—in his aspect of Guardian of the Lost—find his worship as Deathwyrm by evil dragons as the ultimate perversion, and vice versa.

One religious conflict is particularly worthy of note, since this divided the usually monolithic gold dragon culture. The consort deities Lendys and Tamara date back as far as mythological records reach. In comparison, their offspring Xymor is a recent addition to the pantheon.

As the precepts and principles of Xymor became more widely known within gold culture, many of the younger golds turned away from the worship of Lendys and Tamara. These younger dragons had never been totally satisfied with the theoretically adversarial relationship between the two dei-

ties. Xymor's consistent approach to justice and mercy made more sense to them, and they tried to win other golds over to their belief.

Hard-headed worshipers of Lendys and Tamara saw this as foolishness—how could so recent a god be as powerful as The Balancer and Her Mercy?—but also as a threat to their own beliefs. Although this conflict of beliefs never degenerated into violence, religious intolerance became quite widespread throughout the ranks of gold dragons, something unknown before or since.

The most far-reaching holy war, however—one that included dragons of every species, and even some other dracoforms—revolved around the true nature and alignment of Asgorath the World-Shaper.

Each dragon, of course, believed

that Asgorath was the pinnacle of its own race, and that the god shared its alignment. While silvers, for example, could—grudgingly—accept the golds' contention that Asgorath was a Lawful Good gold, neither could tolerate the reds' belief that Asgorath was a Chaotic Evil red. Warfare tore through the ranks of dragonkind, and at one time was violent enough to significantly deplete the Tori1 dragon population and actually threaten extinction unless something changed.

Maybe it was the subtle influence of Zorquan, or maybe it was just that self-preservation finally came to outweigh the drives of fanaticism. Whatever the case, the dragons eventually turned away from the war, realizing that to follow their present course would lead to certain death for every

dragon on the planet.

After the war, various dragon philosophers of different species independently put forward the theory that the draconic deities were not the protectors and guardians of dragonkind. Belief in these deities had almost led dragonkind to extinction. How could it then be said that belief was a beneficial thing, either for dragonkind as a whole or for individual dragons?

Surprisingly, the vast majority of dragons accepted this reasoning, and they turned away from the worship of the ancient gods. Needless to say, some dragons never gave up their beliefs or prac-





tices, but most of these hid the fact that they continued to worship.

This enlightened state, where most dragons felt no need of gods,

lasted for some centuries, but slowly dragons have been drifting back toward religious observance. Some have returned to the old gods, while more have begun to worship the common human gods (under different aspects, of course).

Twilight of the Gods

All dragon religions share one belief: That the purely draconic deities are somehow dependent for their very existence on the continued belief of their followers. Should a draconic deity lose all worshipers—in other words, if no living dragon continued to believe in that deity—he would cease to exist. (According to this belief, several of the members of the old draconic pantheon vanished from the multiverse centuries ago.)

This has a significant consequence for those few dragons who do still believe in draconic deities. These dragons feel that it's vital for them to find new worshipers for their gods. (They see the feared possibility that they might be the last faithful dragons in the world, and realize their deaths would mean nonexistence for their gods.) Thus, these dragons are vigorous missionaries, trying to convert members of their species—and sometimes dragons of other species—to their faith.

Another interesting conse-

quence is that a dragon that follows a particularly unpopular god—where the odds are actually quite good that the dragon is the last worshiper of that god—realizes that its death also means oblivion for the god. Such a dragon would do whatever is necessary to stay alive—whether this involves surrender, dishonor, dishonesty, or even loss of its hoard.

A draconic myth known to most species talks of a “turning of the Great Cycle.” When that date—whenever it might be—arrives, any of the draconic deities still in existence will receive a huge influx of new power as believers flock back to them. Dragon philosophers love to quote dates for this “turning,” but there are as many proposed dates as there are philosophers, ranging from last Deepwinter to several millennia hence.

Dragon Worship

Dragons are undoubtedly among the most powerful creatures in the Realms. It only makes sense that certain groups worship dragons as deities in their own rights. This dragon worship typically breaks down into two forms.

The first kind of dragon worship is the primitive belief, usually totally sincere, that dragons are truly divine creatures. There are known to be dragon-worshipping cults among the hill and mountain barbarians of the Far Hills and the Earthrust Mountains, and perhaps others among the horse barbarians of the Ride.

The best example of a primitive dragon-worshipping cult was described in the journal of Larrap of Baldur's Gate. In the year 1352 DR, Larrap traveled with the Keen Edge adventuring company to the

Earthrust Mountains to determine the truth of rumors about a powerful red dragon in a particular isolated valley. When they eventually located the valley, the company discovered that the rumor was true—the valley was home to a mature adult red dragon. They also found the valley populated by an extended clan of mountain barbarians, who called themselves the Lost.

These humans lived in a precarious symbiosis with the dragon. They served the dragon—whom they considered to be a god—by raising herds of highland sheep on which the dragon fed. They also scouted the area to inform the dragon of what was going on in the region. In return, the dragon protected them from invaders.

This arrangement had lasted for almost a century by the time Larrap and her company arrived on the scene. Before the arrival of the dragon, the Lost had been a poor, weak tribe living in conditions that were wretched even by the standards of other mountain barbarian clans. They were often attacked by other clans from nearby valleys, and their continued existence was in serious doubt.

Under the protection of the dragon, however, the frequent attacks against them stopped, and they began to flourish. The Lost quickly increased in numbers, in self-confidence, and in ferocity, and soon they were the ones raiding neighboring valleys. Unlike other clans, the Lost took prisoners—particularly wounded enemies—and left them, bound, outside the dragon's lair as food and entertainment for their god.

When Larrap and the Keen Edge company arrived, the dragon had been forewarned of their approach

by its worshipers, and it was waiting for them. All but three of the company were slain, but the dragon was destroyed.

As soon as it was obvious that the dragon was truly dead, the mountain barbarians fell upon the surviving adventurers and tried to kill them in vengeance for slaying their divine protector. Of those who had survived the dragon's attacks, only Larrap escaped the wrath of the barbarians and returned to civilization.

Needless to say, Larrap didn't manage to carry away much of the dragon's hoard when she made her getaway. A month later, healed up and surrounded by hired men-at-arms, she returned to the valley to rectify that situation. She found the Lost on the verge of extinction. Now that the dragon was gone, the neighboring tribes who'd suffered

under their raids were paying matters back with interest.

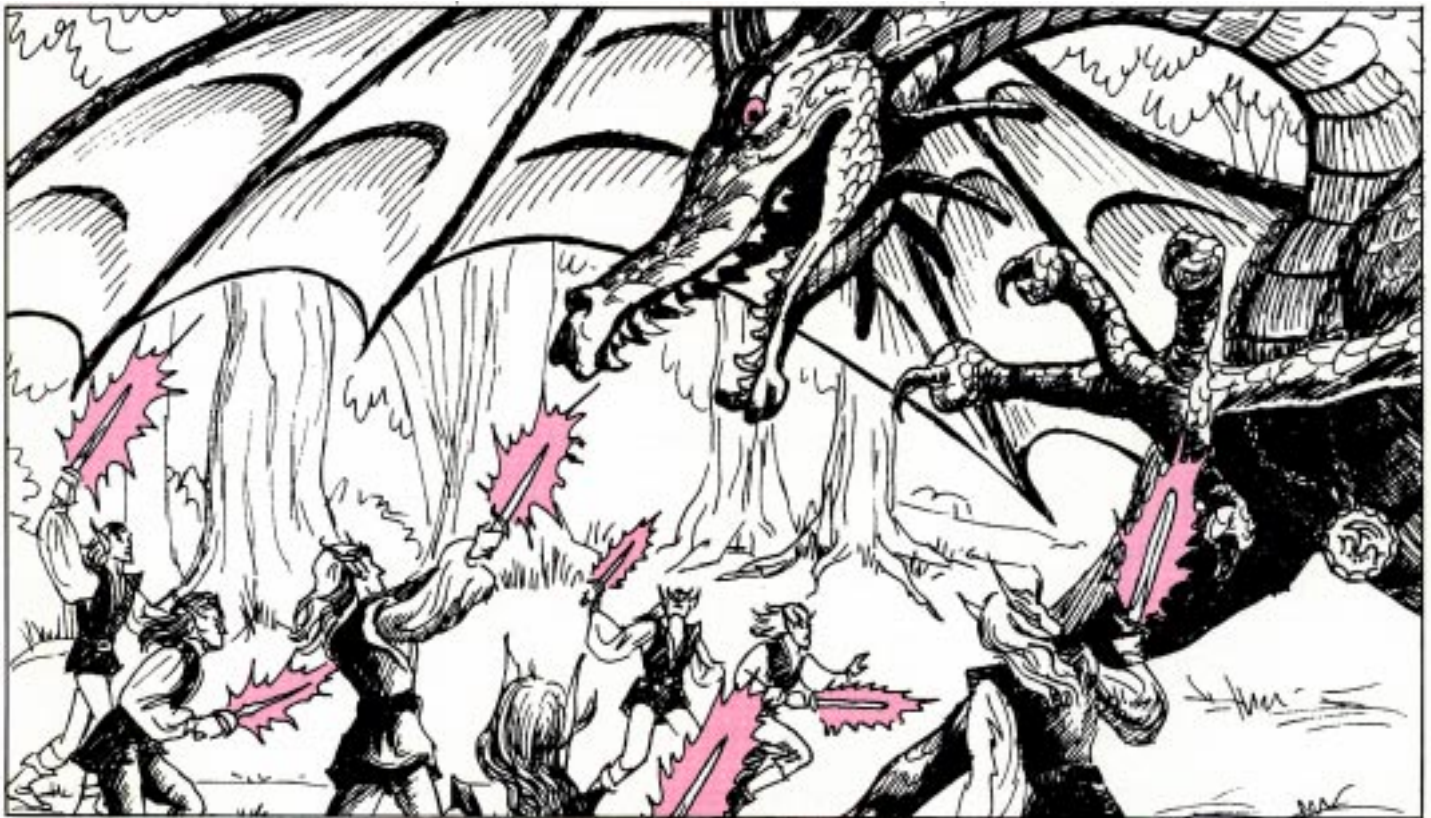
In attempts to attract another winged god to protect them, the Lost were leaving human sacrifices—some of them even volunteers—outside the dragon's lair, and they had build large replicas of the dragon out of wooden frames covered with tanned hides. Remembering the fates of her companions, Larrap was understandably unmoved by the barbarians' predicament. She and her entourage emptied out the dragon's hoard—what was left of it—and returned to civilization.

About a year later, though, Larrap's curiosity caused her to return to the valley. The barbarians had a god again. A young adult brass dragon had installed itself as resident deity, and it was trying to influence the tribe away from a life

of warfare.

Larrap's last visit to the valley was in 1355 DR. The Lost were once again raising sheep—now for their wool—and

were on better terms with the neighboring clans. The brass dragon knew from its human scouts that Larrap had returned. The dragon greeted the adventurer coolly but politely, but quite firmly told Larrap that it would be best if she never returned to the valley, since outside influences would, at the moment, only be destructive to the society that the brass was developing among the barbarians. Larrap agreed with the dragon's judgment, and—al-





though they contain extensive details on everything else—her writings purposely obscure the location of the valley.

Situations like the one Larrap described are rare. Becoming a god who is sincerely worshiped by a primitive people requires a level of restraint that most evil dragons just don't have (and a good dragon would never engage in such a deception without an excellent reason). Rumors talk of a few other such arrangements, however, in the northern mountains, or among the island barbarians of the Sea of Swords.

There are some examples of sincere dragon worship among more sophisticated cultures. These usually take the form of secret cults that believe—for one reason or another—that dragons are worthy of reverence and worship. An exam-



ple of such a group in the Realms is the Cult of the Dragon. This shadowy group is described in detail by Ed Greenwood in DRAGON® magazine, issue #110. (Briefly, the Cult is dedicated to creating a race of dracoliches—undead dragons of great power—that will eventually rule the world.)

Although the Cult of the Dragon is by far the most organized, powerful, and far-reaching dragon-worshiping cult, it's almost certainly not the only one. (The obvious problem with trying to identify these groups is that they always do their best to keep their activities and existence secret.) According to legend, a dragon cult arose near Myth Drannor in the Year of the Tusk. This cult worshiped a small group of green dragons that had recently come to the Elven Woods. The cult was purportedly responsible for many kidnappings (the victims were probably sacrificed to the dragons), and it gave the dragons the information they needed to waylay and pillage merchant companies traveling to and from Myth Drannor. The cult was eventually discovered, its members executed, and the dragons either destroyed or put to flight.

Humanoid Cults

Traditionally, the goblinoid races have been quick to ally themselves with anyone who could conceivably increase their power. Thus, goblins and orcs frequently associate with trolls or ogres. Dragons—being more intelligent—are a tricky business, but there are known to be tribes of orcs and other humanoids that worship evil dragons.

As with the mountain barbarian

tribe described by Larrap, these orc tribes live in a symbiotic relationship with dragons. They supply the dragons with prisoners (food and entertainment), information, and an army, should one ever be required. In return, the dragons protect the orcs, and sometimes aid them in other ways.

The majority of such humanoid tribes worship their dragon patrons . . . or claim that they do. The sincerity of this worship no doubt varies wildly, but all of the humanoids realize that it's important to keep up appearances. It's difficult enough to deal with a dragon at the best of times, and providing the creature with a huge ego stroke in the form of worship can only make things easier.

There are reports that no less than three dragon-worshiping orc tribes live in or near the High Moor. Two worship blues that are thought to be adult or younger, but the largest tribe has as its patron and leader a venerable red. This orc clan and its dragon are believed responsible for destroying or routing an entire dwarven city in the mountains east of the High Moor, just north of the Marsh of Chelimber. This raid took place some two centuries ago, when the dragon in question was only in the very old age category. With two hundred more years of experience and growth, the dragon must now be mighty indeed.



BROWN 1991



Reported Sightings

During the dragon holy wars, the population of the huge creatures in the Forgotten Realms

dropped precipitously. Although the creatures were, for reasons of food supply and territoriality, never that common, they are now considerably rarer. The number of dragons that an average inhabitant of the Realms will probably see in his lifetime is exactly zero . . . and that's just the way most people would prefer it to stay.

When a dragon is sighted, the news spreads with almost supernatural speed. Unfortunately, the accuracy of the report degrades at almost as high a rate. The following sections summarize some of the most recent sightings of the different colors of dragons. While much of the information is probably fairly accurate, the details have possibly been blurred through multiple retellings. This information is current as of the Year of the Prince (1357 DR).

Black Dragons

Since they prefer swamps, marshes, rain forests, and jungles, blacks can be found in most parts of the Realms. Black dragons have been seen in flight over the southwestern margin of the Bay of Chessenta and the southern Chondalwood, and recurring rumors place a mated pair and a brood of several hatchlings in the Forest of Mir. (A hatchling black was seen flying over nearby Sarabush, which lends weight to this rumor.)

Many travelers' tales report that the Jungles of Chult are practically crawling with the dangerous creatures. In some areas of the jungles, the trees reputedly grow their branches so as to create distinct layers of foliage, with each layer forming an almost independent ecosystem. In these regions—so the wilder stories tell—the black dragons actually roost in the upper layer, sometimes crashing down through the branches to feed in lower reaches of the trees.

Miasmatic swamps—like the one between the Shining Plains and the Orsraun Mountains—are frequently home to at least one black dragon. The swamp northeast of Almraven and the one in eastern Aglarond are definitely no exceptions. Farther north, in Sembia, the Flooded Forest is known to shelter four and perhaps more black dragons of adult age or older. Even the Farsea Marshes in civilized Cormyr are reputed to shelter a very cunning—and hideously powerful—black great wyrm. (This dragon, rumored to call itself Shift, is discussed further in a later section.)

Blue Dragons

Blues favor more arid areas: deserts, windswept plains, and hot badlands. Some rumors—admittedly wild and unsubstantiated—claim that several hundred of the creatures dwell in the Great Desert under the rulership of their suzerain, Sussethilasis.

These same rumors claim that the lightning storms that frequently rage along the margin of the Great Desert are actually caused by these creatures. (More reasoned theories for these storms claim that the wind blowing over the sands of Anauroch build up

massive static charges that ground themselves to the desert floor.)

Wild though these rumors may be in their talk of hundreds of dragons, there are doubtless at least a score of the creatures living within the Great Desert.

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are at least two blues known to live in the 'High Moor region. (These two are worshiped by orc clans as gods and protectors.) There are probably more that have kept their existence quieter. Within human memory, the High Moor has been used twice as a site for death-duels between an important suzerain and a challenger. The first of these duels was attended by some 80 or so blues, the second by more than twice that.

Southern Vaasa is reputed to be home to a loosely-knit group of perhaps half a dozen blues. Rumors claim that the suzerain of these creatures isn't a dragon at all. In fact, so the tales go, these dragons all owe fealty to Zhengyi, Witch-King of Vaasa. (A smaller—but perhaps more persuasive—body of rumor claims the opposite: that Zhengyi is preparing to turn his might against the blue dragons and sweep them from his land.)

There is said to be a sole blue dragon—a great wyrm, unfortunately—upon the island of Lantan. The Lantanna's skills of invention and innovation have, so far, been unable to remove this danger from their lands.

Brass Dragons

Enjoying arid, warm climates, brasses share much the same terrain as blues. There are known to be at least a dozen brasses living in Anauroch, and perhaps many

more. Azulbuth (“the Lake of Salt”) is also reputed to be home to more than a handful of the creatures.

The eastern foothills of the Orsraun Mountains, bordering Turmish, are said to shelter a mated pair of brasses. The story is told by an adventuring company of an attack by a red dragon while they were traversing these foothills. Just when the company thought that their death was at hand, two brasses swooped out of the sky and drove the red away. (The story goes on to detail the small-talk in which the brasses insisted the company engage before going about their business.)

Brass dragons have been sighted flying over the Great Gray Lands of Thar, although it is not known whether the dragons live there or were just inspecting the area for their own purposes. Another flight

of brasses recently engaged in combat with a smaller flight of blues over southern Vaasa. The outcome of the battle isn’t known.

Bronze Dragons

With their love of deep water, and their ability to polymorph, bronzes find many parts of the Realms to their liking. A thriving community of perhaps as many as ten bronzes lives along the western end of Dragonmere where the foothills extend down to the water. From there—in dragon, human, or demi-human form—they range throughout the whole of Cormyr and points south. Some of the islands that dot the Sea of Fallen Stars are also homes to bronzes.

Two mated pairs of bronzes have reputedly just taken up residence on the mountainous stretch of the Sword Coast in southern Amn. An-

other dragon has been seen playing in the water near the western end of the Forest of Tethir, where it extends along the promontory into the Sea of Swords. Considering the creatures’ well-known hatred of pirates, it seems likely that these dragons have set themselves up as a buffer between the corsairs of the Pirate Isles and the coastal lands.

A number of bronzes have been reported in and around the Moonsea. Most of these probably live at the far eastern end of this body of water, where the mountains extend right down to the shoreline and huge caves and fang-like eroded rocks are commonplace. At least one, however, is said to live in





or around the ruins of Phlan.

Copper Dragons

Dry, rocky uplands and mountain ranges form

the homes for most coppers. These creatures are most prevalent in the northern parts of Faerun.

The majority of copper sightings are in or around the mountain ranges and chains of hills that border the Great Desert. The air is dry there, and the winds frequently blow strongly through the mountain passes. Many travelers tell of having seen coppers soaring and playing in the updrafts over these mountaintops. The Dragonspine Mountains are also home to at least two mated pairs of coppers, perhaps with broods of hatchlings.

According to commonly recited tales, the mountain range known as the Spine of the World was recently the site of a huge 51st birthday party for a copper dragon. Coppers reportedly came from as far away as the Orsraun Mountains, and the celebration lasted for two full weeks.

Travelers to the southern lands report that a number of coppers live in the Great Rift. Uncharacteristically, these creatures seem to have developed a taste for swimming in the large lake in the center of the rift. (Normally, copper dragons like getting wet about as much as cats.)

Gold Dragons

Golds have no preferred habitat, and they range widely throughout the Realms. Their actual lairs are usually in isolated regions, how-

ever, and often difficult to reach on the ground. The King of Justice, His Resplendence Lareth, ruler of the gold dragons, is reputed to lair in the midst of the Great Desert, or in the Elven Woods near Myth Drannor, or on a magically concealed island in Dragonmere. Certainly, he and several of his attendant Lords have been seen in all of these areas.

Gold dragons have been sighted in various spots around the Thunder Peaks, and in the mountains between the Farsea Marshes and High Horn. A mated pair bound together eternally by the Oath of Concord are said to dwell in the southern reaches of the Desertmouth Mountains. These two have already provided valuable information to the rulers of Cormyr about planned goblinoid incursions from the Goblin Marches. Recurring rumors claim that an entire orc raiding army was wiped out by these two dragons alone.

A particularly powerful gold dragon—a retired King of Justice named Protanther—is thought to live in Novularond, the mountains in the midst of the Great Glacier. (Some people believe that the Great Glacier itself was created by Protanther, and sent south to wipe away the evil of Vaasa.)

Green Dragons

Greens relish subtropical and temperate forests, definitely preferring old-growth regions. Known concentrations of greens live in the Forests of Tethir and Mir, and two were recently reported flying over Arrabar in Sespech. Whether these two—presumably a mated pair—lived in the Chondalwood or in the Winterwood is not known. Another mated pair was seen in eastern Gulthmere.

In more civilized lands, an adventuring company reported encountering a large green—possibly venerable or even older—in the southern reaches of the Elven Woods. They attacked the dragon, wounding it severely, but not killing it. The dragon fled, but the adventurers were unable to find the entrance to its underground lair. They did, however, find what looked like a narrow ventilation tunnel like those that some greens dig to improve the air circulation in their lair. The adventurers cast several *cloudkill* and *incendiary cloud* spells down the hole, but have no knowledge of the result.

Three venerable green dragons are known to live somewhere in the High Forest. These dragons have been seen flying as far south as the High Moor region. The actual locations of these dragons' lairs are unknown.

Red Dragons

Enjoying high hills and soaring mountain peaks, reds find comfortable homes throughout the northlands. There are probably reds living farther south—two have been seen soaring in the thermals over the Sunset Mountains near Yellow Snake Pass—but the creatures' tendency to spread word of their wealth has made it relatively easy for dragon-hunters to track down those living near the more civilized lands.

The majority of the Realms' red dragon population seems to be concentrated in the mountain ranges that border the Great Desert. In addition, reds have been sighted near the Glacier of the White Worm, and one was spotted circling over the towers of Ironfang Keep. Rumors from northern Mirabar claim that a large concentra-

tion of reds dwells in the Spine of the World mountain range, preparing for a coordinated raid on the southern lands. (Most sages claim that the reds' rapacious and selfish nature precludes this kind of cooperation. The survivors of dragon-ravaged Phlan or the Citadel of the Raven might disagree with this, however.)

Silver Dragons

With their ability to dwell in the clouds, silver dragons can be encountered almost anywhere in the Forgotten Realms. Those who choose earthbound lairs, however, live in much the same areas as the red dragons: the northern mountains around the margin of Anauroch, the Spine of the World, and the mountain range surrounding the Glacier of the White Worm. There are also said to be a number of old silvers who dwell in Novul-arond. These creatures are probably the Seniors of various family groupings.

In human or demihuman form, silvers wander throughout the world, sometimes living in cities and building false identities for themselves. (It can only be presumed that their lairs are guarded by powerful magic during these sojourns.)

Although the cloud-based lairs of silver dragons drift with the wind, there is one that remains virtually stationary. This citadel belongs to the great wyrm Gargaroth. It stands on the huge cloud that wreaths the mighty peak White Fang in the Giant's Run Mountains south of Cormyr.

White Dragons

As might be expected from their color, whites dwell in frigid lands

where snow and ice continually cover the ground. Although whites are sometimes found among the snowcapped peaks of the more southerly mountains, these are usually young—and somewhat unwise—individuals that frequently fall prey to adventuring companies from the civilized lands. The majority of the whites live in far northerly climes, well away from concentrations of humanity.

The largest population of mature and older whites is thought to be on or around the Great Glacier. At the very least, some dozen whites have been spotted in that region in the recent past. The glacier to the north of the Spine of the World range is also presumed to be home to a number of the creatures. An exploratory expedition to the region of the Sea of Moving Ice reported seeing many small whites in that area. One creature—a young dragon, no more than 25 feet long including tail—attacked the party, but was driven off without losses.

Lairs

Tales tell of a great number of dragon lairs scattered throughout the Realms. Most of these tales contain no details of value, however; only a few contain information that might be of use to prospective adventurers. (Even these tales are very rarely complete, of course, and many undoubtedly contain errors.)

A black great wyrm that calls himself Shift is rumored to lair in the midst of the Farsea Marshes in northeastern Cormyr. His vast shape has been seen eclipsing the stars as he flew over High Horn. The northern reaches of the Farsea Marshes are overgrown with

gnarled and twisted trees, many of them dead and rotting. Since this is the terrain favored by blacks, Shift probably makes his lair

somewhere in the region. Adventuring parties have so far been unsuccessful in finding this lair, and several report run-ins with surprisingly large numbers of will o'wisps. Some people have even gone so far as to speculate that Shift has somehow gained the aid of the will o'wisps in protecting his lair from intruders.

The great wyrm Sussethilation, a suzerain among the blue dragons, is reputed to lair in Anauroch, the Great Desert. A traveler in the region claims to have heard two blue dragons discussing the great suzerain as they flew over his campsite one night (presumably the rapacious creatures didn't know he was below). One of them mentioned the location of Sussethilation's lair: some 100 miles west of the desert's edge where it bulges eastward into Lost Vale.

The traveler decided to check out the truth of what he'd heard, and headed for the region. His courage diminished as he neared his objective, however, and he soon turned around, but not before spotting what looked like a tree-encircled oasis on the horizon. (Opinions differ as to the reliability of this tale. Although the traveler would have no obvious reason to lie, the dragons whom he overheard might have been aware of his presence and might, for some strange reason of their own, have planted disinformation.)

The ruins of Phlan, on the north-





eastern shores of the Moon-sea, is said to be home to a venerable bronze dragon named Martelle. While some rumors relate that the

dragon has actually moved into the ruined citadel itself, remodeling the place to suit her own purposes—and, no doubt, using the dungeons and crypts to store her hoard—other tales tell that the true lair is a seashore cave outside the ruins. In any case, the large creature has been seen sunning herself on the battlements of one of Phlan's high towers. Presumably, Martelle has chosen this spot as a suitable place to observe the activities of Zhentil Keep: close enough to know what's going on, but not close enough to invite attack.

The location of only one gold dragon lair is known for sure. This is the home of the wyrm Tamarand, one of the dragon Lords that serves His Resplendence Lareth, King of Justice. Tamarand lairs in a huge cave complex beneath the highest peaks near Bloodstone Pass. The area is known also to be home to a clan of storm giants, and individuals of this clan have frequently discouraged visitors and explorers from seeking Tamarand's home.

Some years ago, a powerful raiding party was sent from Vaasa to find and defeat the gold dragon. The result was an absolute disaster for the Vaasan forces. The few survivors reported that, in addi-

tion to the storm giants, they had been faced by not one, but five huge gold dragons. (It seems obvious that Tamarand learned of the planned attack and called on the dragons—perhaps other Lords—to teach the Vaasans a lesson.)

As mentioned above, an adventuring company encountered a green dragon in the Elven Woods, south of Myth Drannor. Although the adventurers found out little about the creature—being more interested in trying to kill it than in talking to it—the news does tie in with tales that date from almost a century ago. According to these tales, a venerable green named Dretch awoke from a century-long sleep and emerged from his concealed lair to terrorize the region.

A large party consisting of several normally independent adventuring companies was commissioned to rid the area of the dragon. The party—the Crossed Swords, as they came to term themselves—found the dragon out of his lair and engaged him in combat. Dretch was grievously wounded, but managed to make his escape. The Crossed Swords were unable to find the entrance to the creature's lair, so well was it concealed.

It seems quite likely that Dretch and the venerable dragon so recently encountered are one and the same. Nobody knows whether two close brushes with death will persuade the creature to find a safer home, or whether Dretch is now resting up in his concealed lair, planning revenge upon those who would harm him.

A red dragon who calls himself

Inferno is known to dwell in a cave high up the northern face of the mountain Angaroth. (This is the highest of the peaks in the midst of the High Forest.) Inferno is a great wyrm, reputed to be almost two millennia old. Rumors—many of which were probably generated by Inferno himself—put the value of the dragon's hoard at well into the millions of gold pieces.

Other rumors claim that Inferno has spent centuries engaged in magical research, and knows more about fire-based magic than any mage in Faerun. He is also purported to have researched a large number of powerful and unique spells, most based on fire or other forms of radiant energy.

Several adventuring companies—including the well-known Hammerfists—have set off for Angaroth, but none have returned.

As discussed in a later chapter, sometimes members of good draconic species become rogues, turning their backs on the ways of their fellows and shifting in alignment to neutral or even to evil.

One of these rogues—a mature adult bronze named Pelath—is reputed to lair on a small island near the Pirate Isles. According to various travelers' tales, Pelath almost never appears in his true form, preferring to live in the guise of a human hermit. Other tales tell of a hermit in the same area who possesses mighty magical powers, and it seems likely that these two worthies—Pelath the dragon and the magical hermit—are the same being.



Hoard-Gathering and Status

No matter what their alignments, all dragons have an overwhelming drive to build hoards of treasure—the larger and richer the better. They gather huge piles of gold and gems, objects of art and of magic, stashes worth thousands or even millions of gold pieces. In almost no cases do the dragons put these hoards to any use: They don't spend their money, they seem to gain no pleasure from art other than as physical wealth, and in most cases they are unable to use their magical items. Why, then, do dragons go to such lengths to gather and protect these huge hoards?

Some sages equate draconic acquisitiveness with the behaviors shown by jackdaws and other creatures that instinctively steal and hoard bright, shiny objects. These creatures are generally unintelligent, and unaware of the value of the items they collect. If dragons followed a similar behavior pattern, they would have no reason to choose a small—but priceless—honey-colored diamond over a large chunk of cut glass (in fact, they'd probably take the glass, since the lustre of a honey diamond is more subdued than that of cut and polished glass). That is obviously not the case.

Dragons are well aware of the value of their possessions, and—while they usually want everything—if they're forced to make a choice, they'll usually take items of the highest value first. Another indication that draconic acquisitiveness is different is shown by the behavior of red dragons. Not only do these greedy creatures maintain an accurate mental in-

ventory of absolutely every item in their hoards, but they also keep a running total of the overall monetary value of their possessions . . . and they boast about it. These are not merely the instinctive actions of "large reptilian jackdaws" (as the sage Duart once characterized dragonkind).

Although some sages hold theories that are more or less bizarre and outlandish, the majority of naturalists agree on one reason for hoard-gathering: status. A dragon's view of its own importance and that of other dragons is based very much on a sense of status.

There are various ways of acquiring status, and these have varying degrees of importance from species to species. Some examples of ways to acquire status include demonstrating power over weaker races (highly important to greens), receiving expressions of respect from other dragons of the same species (considered important by Lawfully aligned dragons), taking on foster-parent duties (significant only to brasses), being approached by many females for mating purposes (a big one for red males), and initiating and completing a significant quest to promote the causes of Good (golds only).

While important to various races, many of these ways of acquiring status are highly subjective and open to interpretation. Which bestows more status to a dragon—receiving a glowing commendation from one's venerable uncle or receiving a polite but personal greeting from His Resplendence himself? Dominating an entire clan of kobolds, or manipulating a handful of hill giants?

This is where hoard-gathering comes in. The size of a dragon's hoard—or, more precisely, its overall value—is measurable and not

open to interpretation.

Either one dragon has a larger hoard than another or he doesn't. For this reason; dragons assign a very high priority to physical wealth when they're concerned about relative status of individuals. (This attitude isn't limited to dragons, of course. A saying among competitive human merchants of Cormyr holds that "Money's always the best way of keeping score.")

Status has value to dragons over and above enhancing their self-esteem (which shouldn't be underestimated as a motivation). Dragons recognized by their peers as having high status enjoy more opportunities to mate, and are approached more often by lower-status individuals for help and advice . . . which further raises their status. (This is true only for the more social species, of course.) Among those dragons that follow the draconic deities Astilabor or Task, the belief is that the higher a dragon's status, the greater their position in the afterlife.

High status has its potential down side as well, particularly among the reds. Not only does bragging about one's wealth attract dragon-hunters, but it also gives ideas to young, ambitious dragons. Challenging and killing a dragon with high status is a shortcut to gaining even higher status for oneself. The victor not only takes over the loser's stash, but gains even further status for vanquishing a well-known dragon.

Thus, dragons that have achieved a certain level of status are occasionally the targets of their



younger, more aggressive fellows. These attempts to usurp status are sometimes semi-official duels, where challenge is given and ac-

cepted (this is certainly the case with blues challenging for the position of suzerain); more frequently, however, they're just a matter of the younger dragon swooping on the elder without warning (this is the way reds and whites prefer to handle matters).

Other Motivations

Even the most Lawful Good gold dragon is concerned about status, and thus with building a hoard. Some dragons have other motivations as well as simply enhancing their own status.

Dragons grow in size and physical power almost to the end of their incredibly long life spans. At some point—and this point varies from species to species and from individual to individual—a dragon's physical strength reaches a plateau. The dragon continues to grow in size and weight, however. The result is that the dragon's physical abilities start to decrease. It can no longer move as quickly, fly as powerfully, or fight as ferociously. (This is simply a consequence of a constant level of strength having to move a body that's steadily getting larger and heavier.)

Great wyrms recognize that this point is approaching, and usually start to avoid actions that involve strenuous physical activity. While they will do whatever it takes to maintain their hoard—and thus

their status—they generally become less acquisitive and more inquisitive.

A great percentage of the oldest great wyrms—those 1,500 years old and up—become more and more fascinated by magic and other activities of the mind. There are tales of the most ancient of gold dragons building up huge libraries and spending their declining years studying the various myths and philosophies of the races of Toril, or other esoteric pursuits.

A fascinating legend tells of Ileuthra, a brass dragon who became enamored with the game of chess. When it could find no mortal players expert enough to give it a good game, it challenged the god Oghma to a match of three games and beat him soundly in all three. Rather than bragging, as might be typical for a brass, Ileuthra courteously thanked the god, and asked him whether he would care to challenge it to a game of his choosing. Ileuthra was elevated to the status of a minor servant of Oghma. Ileuthra now dwells in the plane of Concordant Opposition and still beats The Binder regularly at chess.

The more intelligent species of dragons often become fascinated with the workings of magic and retreat from the world to perform magical research. (This is one situation where the dragons can actually put to use the magical items in their hoards, if only as objects of study.) While the motivation behind this fascination in magic is probably simple curiosity, some sages have a different view. As dragons approach the point at which their physical abilities wane, they look for magic to substitute for decreasing strength.

Reproductive Habits

Long life span has an interesting consequence when it comes to mating behavior. It's quite possible for older dragons to have the opportunity to mate with their own descendants who are separated from them by as many as ten—or even more—generations. The way in which dragons deal with this matter varies from species to species.

The less intelligent dragons—blacks and whites—seem to have no taboo against inbreeding, or perhaps no knowledge of its significance. For this reason, blacks and whites often suffer the consequences of inbreeding: numerous infertile eggs and congenital problems (both physical and mental).

The more intelligent dragons are aware of the problem of inbreeding, and they solve it in various ways. Among blues, the suzerain is responsible for ensuring the appropriateness of any pairing. Reds, and others who pick their mates predominately on the basis of status, know the bloodline of their candidates as part of their reputation. Golds, silvers, and bronzes are very logical about the process, and they discuss all such matters during courtship.

Activity Cycles

Dragons display cycles of activity. At one extreme of the cycle, they are active around the clock, never sleeping, for up to a handful of years. At the other extreme, they sequester themselves off in their lairs and sleep for periods ranging up to decades in length. While the evil chromatic dragons show more noticeable cycles, with wider extremes, than do the metallics, every species of dragon experi-



ences this cyclical behavior.

Among the chromatics, the species that show the most extreme cyclical activities are the greens, the whites, and—perhaps surprisingly—the reds. During the inactive part of the cycle, these creatures seal themselves up in their lairs, often protecting themselves with magical wards, mighty illusions, monstrous guardians, or sometimes just physical barriers (a huge stone rolled into place to block the entrance, perhaps). This phase of the cycle is longest for greens, which sleep for up to 30 years—often emerging as a terrible shock to settlers who have moved into the area in the meantime—but even reds hibernate for up to a decade.

Among the metallics, the periods of hibernation are significantly less. Brasses and bronzes sleep for perhaps five years, while coppers, silvers, and younger golds rarely sleep for more than a year or two. As gold dragons get older, their cycles of activity become more extreme. When they reach the old age category, they may be hibernating for up to five years, while venerable individuals may sleep for a decade. Great wyrms sleep the most, with periods of hibernation lasting 25 years or more.

Dragons also vary drastically in the duration of the parts of their cycles. For example, the active and inactive periods for white dragons are almost the same length: a creature may be active for maybe 20 years, then hibernate for another 20. Golds, in contrast, may be active for a century or more between sleeps.

Outside influences can affect the cycles of some dragons, particularly the chromatics. Normally, the cycles of different individuals—no matter what their species—are to-

tally asynchronous. Some dragons are beginning their hibernation, while others are just awakening, and others are at the height of their active cycle. Every few centuries, however, the cycles of chromatic dragons begin to shift and to synchronize more and more. As this happens, there are years when almost no evil dragons are sighted anywhere in Faerun, followed by years in which dragon sightings are a copper piece a dozen.

When this synchronization becomes perfect, the phenomenon of Dragonflight occurs. Flights of perhaps hundreds of evil dragons sweep down from the northern lands and fall upon the settlements of humans and demihumans. The dragons make no distinction based on alignment—or anything else, so it seems—and cause staggering damage to the civilizations of men before they are driven away. The last Dragonflight occurred in the Year of the Worm, and laid waste numerous cities and settlements, slaying many thousands in the process.

While the metallic dragons have no behavior equivalent to Dragonflight, they too suffer an alteration of their activity cycles during this period. The cycles of metallics never fully synchronize as do those of the chromatics, but they do align more than normal, and become shorter. During the period of Dragonflight, most of the metallics are active, and they feel an edginess that sometimes blossoms into unaccountable flare-ups of rage. Just before or just after Dragonflight, even the most calm and beneficent of gold dragons is not a particularly safe creature to engage in idle conversation.

After Dragonflight, the activity cycles of all dragons almost immediately fall totally out of synchroni-

zation. Some dragons who woke from hibernation just before Dragonflight immediately return to sleep, while others remain awake

for as much as twice the length of their normal active cycle. This is less true among the metallics—whose cycles tend to diverge more slowly—but severe disruptions aren't unheard of.

No human sage knows for sure what causes Dragonflight, although most have their own pet theories for which they argue vociferously. They generally agree on one thing, however: The belief widely held by common folk—that the last Dragonflight was caused by the Cult of the Dragon—is totally wrong. The problem with speculating on Dragonflight is that the phenomenon happens so rarely—once every several centuries. In the time between flights, nations can rise and fall, and records can be lost or destroyed.

Elven sages, with their longer life spans, are better equipped to study the phenomenon of Dragonflight. Elven records show that the period between Dragonflights is not constant, ranging from about 100 years to as many as 700 years. Even with their long life spans, elves have recorded too few Dragonflights to determine whether the interval between them is random, or whether the interval is cyclical in some complex manner.

One group of elven sages—astrologers, predominately—has a theory that makes some sense. Old astrological charts record that a red wandering star named the King-Killer burns in the sky of



Faerun every several centuries, and that its appearances are as unpredictable as the occurrences of Dragonflight. If the ancient

records are accurate, it seems that two long-past appearances of the King-Killer coincided with Dragonflights. (Even if this is true, the astrologers are as much in the dark as everyone else when it comes to explaining how a wandering star can affect events on Toril in such a major way.)

Other theories abound, of course. Some sages blame the draconic deities for Dragonflight, while others claim it's as natural as the 11-year cycle in Cormyr's rabbit population. Unfortunately, there seems to be no way to test any of these theories without witnessing another Dragonflight . . . and anyone who witnessed the last one has no enthusiasm for that.

The dragons themselves seem to be almost as ignorant of the causes of Dragonflight as anyone else. They know it happens, and they can feel the tension building as their cycles alter, but they don't know why, and they have as many wild theories as do humans and demihumans.

There are some exceptions to this, if one believes rumors. Apparently, a halfling adventurer approached the lair of Tamarand the gold dragon after the last Dragonflight and asked for details on why the flight occurred. Tamarand is said to have replied, "Some knowledge is only for draconic ears." When the halfling pressed for further details, Tamarand became angry and chased the adventurer

from his presence. Since nobody who relates this story seems to know the halfling in question, and heard the tale from "my wife's brother's best friend's woman," no one knows how much credence to put in the idea that Tamarand knows something about the cause of Dragonflight.

Rogues

As with humans, demihumans, and humanoids, the alignment of dragons reflects not instinctive behavior but an intelligent choice about how the creatures respond to the world. Certainly, dragons raised in a society with a strong alignment are probably going to share that alignment, but there's no law of nature that prevents a dragon from changing its alignment. (In fact, the consequences of changing alignment are considerably less for a dragon than they are for a human or demihuman. Dragons progress in power depending on their age, so they suffer no direct ill effects from a voluntary alignment change.)

Dragons that voluntarily change their alignments are referred to as "rogues," and they're very rare indeed. Rogues have decided for reasons of their own that they don't go along with the world-view common to dragons of their species.

These reasons can vary widely. A gold dragon might become disillusioned after seeing evil continuing to flourish no matter what efforts are made to crush it. The gold grows tired of what it sees as "beating its head against a mountain," and decides to leave the futile efforts to younger dragons. It has its own life to live, and wants to do it on its terms. This rogue would probably have shifted its alignment to Neutral Good or even

Chaotic Good.

In contrast, a copper dragon might become steadily more obsessed with collecting wealth, while growing less and less concerned with the means by which it is attained. The normally Chaotic Good dragon might shift to Chaotic Neutral or even Chaotic Evil.

Rogue chromatic dragons are even rarer than rogue metallic dragons, but they do occur. A young red dragon might be sickened by the suffering that its older relatives are inflicting on innocent victims. After much soul-searching, it might flee to an isolated area where it can live on its own terms (Chaotic Neutral alignment), or it might try to work to prevent or reverse damage caused by others of its kind (Chaotic, Neutral or even Lawful Good, depending on how it went about this task).

The response to a dragon that turns rogue varies depending on the species involved. Bronzes and golds almost certainly sentence the rogue to official proscription. Silvers might tolerate the rogue as long as it didn't slip over the line into evil behavior. Coppers and brasses generally shun a rogue. If the behavior of a rogue metallic dragon becomes actively evil, other members of his species might be forced to consider more serious measures.

Myths record only one such incident, when a flight of gold dragons hunted down and slew one of their own kind who was engaging in a wild orgy of destruction across the Dalelands. (Most naturalists are convinced that the rogue in this case was actually incurably insane, since most sane rogues would never consider such a wild swing in alignment.)

In the case of Chaotic Evil dragons becoming neutral or good,



their kin respond to them in exactly the same way they would to any other dragon of that alignment: hatred and attack if the rogue intrudes on their territory, general indifference otherwise. Lawful Evil dragons might consider retribution against the rogue, but only if the rogue posed some kind of danger to them or if they saw some potential gain in it.

Dragons and the Ecosystem

Dragons are undoubtedly at the top of the food chain in Toril. Even though they may have natural enemies, these creatures usually kill dragons for reasons other than food. On the other hand, dragons—although omnivores—are highly efficient predators.

Dragons eat a lot, particularly those that prefer a carnivorous diet. One dragon can make a significant impact on the animals in a region; a mated pair and offspring can be catastrophic. Luckily, all species but whites seem to understand this intuitively.

Predatory dragons are aware of the danger of over-hunting an area and of depleting it of food species. For this reason, they often travel far afield to hunt. This is one of the reasons that dragons claim such large territories: smaller territories are simply incapable of supporting them indefinitely. Even the huge territories claimed by reds would eventually be emptied of prey unless the creatures hunted elsewhere and hibernated on a regular basis. (For this reason, certain sages believe that the activity cycle of dragons has evolved as a way to let the prey population of an area build back up again.)

It may seem surprising that Chaotic Evil dragons such as reds

would perform a seemingly good act such as population management. In fact, it's merely enlightened self-interest. Selfish dragons like reds don't like to go hungry, and over-hunting their territories will lead to that eventuality.

Among dragons, the golds, silvers, and bronzes are the most careful when it comes to food management, followed, perhaps surprisingly, by the blues. These species concentrate their feeding on whatever prey species is currently most common in their territory. In this way, they prevent overpopulation and resulting problems (which, of course, could also prove troublesome for the dragons that feed on the creatures). Dragons sometimes feed selectively on creatures higher up on the food chain, giving the lower creatures a chance to increase in population, then feed on these now-replenished lower animals.

Some golds go so far as to raise and tend herds while polymorphed into human form and then later prey on them while in dragon form. (An ancient cautionary tale tells of the messy consequences when a small group of bandits decided to have a little fun with the solitary old shepherd in a place called Dragon Valley) Reds and other chromatics appreciate the convenience of tended herds, but prefer to have humans and demihumans do all the work and then simply attack the herds at night.

White dragons are notable exceptions in these matters. These creatures seem to have no concept of population management; they feed until an area is totally cleaned out of prey. When this happens, they're forced to look elsewhere for food. "Elsewhere" often means another dragon's territory, which

leads to violent battles between the creatures.

Lack of food also sometimes causes whites to head south from their frigid homes and feed in more populous areas (often those already inhabited by man).

This insensitivity to the ecosystem and their place in it probably explains why the active and dormant phases for white dragons are both about two decades long. Without the long and frequent hibernation periods, the creatures would deplete their environment to the point where they couldn't survive.

The dragon population has an even greater effect on the ecosystem than does the population of dragon prey. The more Lawful and intelligent dragons recognize this fact, and monitor their own populations fairly closely. Golds, silvers, bronzes, and even blues manage their birth rates so as to maintain a fairly stable population that isn't too great for the region. Dragon females have the ability to control how many eggs they'll lay (although once a female is impregnated she must lay at least one egg), and these species use that ability to ensure that the birth rate doesn't much exceed the death rate (or the emigration rate, if dragons are leaving the area for other climes).

Even Chaotic dragons generally moderate their birth rates, although for varying reasons. Brasses generally lay only one egg, because more than one offspring would cramp their lifestyle too much, while reds do so because



each offspring could eventually represent competition for the parents.

The exceptions are the whites and, to a lesser extent,

the blacks. These creatures either don't understand or don't care about population control, and they live in a state of continuous catastrophe: population boom, followed by starvation, followed by boom, etc.

In the case of evil dragons, adventurers and dragon-hunters also play a significant role. Particularly among those dragons that spread word of their wealth to enhance their own status, those individuals that would be considered the most attractive mates are also considered the best targets for heroes. Some sages point to this fact as a strong evolutionary pressure on the creatures. When a behavior that enhances the chance of mating also enhances the chance of getting killed, there's significant pressure to either alter the behavior, or change the criteria by which individuals are judged good candidates for mates.

Whichever way evolution takes the dragons, these sages believe that it will select against highly status-conscious individuals. (The rationale is that since status-conscious, bragging individuals are selectively killed by hunters, this tendency will eventually be bred out of the race. Alternatively, should dragons change their selection criteria so status-conscious, bragging individuals are no longer the preferred kind of mate, this will also breed the tendency out of the race.) Needless to say, evolu-

tion moves slowly, and no such change has been noticed so far. Perhaps in a few tens of thousand years. . . .

The Ptarian Code of Honor

This draconic Code of Honor was developed several millennia ago by a golden great wyrm known as Ptaris. Originally intended as a guide to conduct for the Lords who attend His Resplendence, the golden King of Justice, the Ptarian Code has been picked up by other members of the gold species, and even by certain silvers.

The Ptarian Code is similar to the code of chivalry adopted by certain segments of humanity. In its full form, it comprises several hundred lines of elements, nuances, and commentary. The major precepts, however, are listed below:

Justice and Good above all.
Honor and Fealty to the King.
Honor and Respect to Righteous Innocence.
Honor and Duty to the Balancer, to Her Mercy, and to the Justice-maker.
Honor and Protection to the Lesser Races.
Honor and Correction to the Enemies of Justice and Good.
Honor and Forbearance for oneself.

These precepts are fairly self-explanatory, with three possible exceptions. The third precept refers to protection and respect for good-aligned innocents. The fourth precept is a carry-over from the days when more dragons worshiped the draconic deities Lendys, Tamara, and Xymor (The Balancer, Her Mercy, and The Justicemaker).

This precept is kept around more from tradition than to reflect continued belief in these deities.

The sixth precept is also worthy of comment. According to the Code, destroying an enemy of the Law and the Good is a second-best solution. The ideal outcome would be the conversion of the enemy to the ethos of Lawful Good. For this reason, the Lords—and any other dragons that follow the code—always try to parley before fighting, and they always give an opponent a chance to surrender and recant his evil ways.

Among gold dragons, only the Lords that attend His Resplendence are required to swear an oath binding them to the Ptarian Code. Many other golds follow the precepts of the code to varying degrees of exactness, however.

The Talons of Justice

There's a group of silver dragons that has sworn an oath to follow the Ptarian Code. These dragons are of all ages, although most originally swore the oath when they were young and energetic, and refer to their group as the Talons of Justice. No one knows exactly how many Talons there are, but the group probably numbers in the scores. Group members are spread throughout Faerun, many living in human and demihuman form in cities and towns.

The Talons are a well-organized group, with recognition symbols, channels of communication, and long-range plans. They've recognized that they're much more likely to achieve their goal—which is to strongly assist the cause of Lawful Good in the world—if they work under some secrecy. If asked directly, a Talon will never deny its membership in the group, but

Talons rarely volunteer information about their membership.

The Talons sometimes recruit other followers of Lawful Good to help them with particular projects. Although the Talons believe that knowledge of assisting in the Grand Struggle should be reward enough, they know that most adventurers don't agree with them. Therefore, they try to make sure that any nondragons who help them are amply rewarded.

Because they have the long view typical of good dragons, the goals and activities of the Talons are usually subtle. While nondragons can help them in the short term, the lesser races (with the exception of elves) are simply not long-lived enough to see the sweep of the Talons' plans. Without this appreciation of the long-term planning, the day-to-day actions of the Talons are frequently almost incomprehensible, and typically appear disconnected and useless.

The Talons are hated by many

evil-aligned groups, particularly by the Cult of the Dragon. Apparently, several years ago the cult made an abortive attempt to kill off as many of the Talons as they could identify. The cult is still trying to rebuild its membership after this debacle.

Dragons and Humanoids

While all of the good-aligned dragons either like or tolerate humans and demihumans, they view humanoids—here taken to refer to kobolds, orcs, bugbears, and the other goblinoid races—with varying degrees of distrust or out-and-out hatred. Golds are the most tolerant—they realize that humanoids have a place in the Grand Scheme, and they only physically oppose humanoids when the creatures are actively engaged in evil activity. Silvers, surprisingly, are the least tolerant, hating humanoids with a passion. While they, too, only engage in open hostilities

if the humanoids are acting in an aggressively evil manner, individual silvers (not members of the Talons) have been known to goad humanoids

into such actions so the dragons can wreak retribution on them. (This behavior is officially frowned upon, but unofficially condoned.)

Evil dragons view humanoids as they do humans and demihumans. The smaller creatures are enemies, food, subjects for manipulation, or slaves. Chromatics very rarely form close associations with humanoids or humans or demihumans. This is mainly a matter of pride: such a close association could be seen as giving the “races of dirt” equal status to a dragon, and that's clearly unacceptable.





Care and Feeding

Rearing Dragons

Some ambitious PCs might come up with the idea of

acquiring a freshly-hatched dragon and rearing it as a pet, friend, or guardian. While there's nothing innately wrong with the idea, there are some potential problems.

When dragons hatch, they have a strong imprinting instinct that seems to be common to almost every creature. In other words, they consider the first creature that they see after emerging from the egg as their parent, and will—initially, at least—consider themselves to be of the same race as that creature. (Human jesters sometimes go to the trouble of incubating ducks' eggs just so they can be present at the hatching, and have the ducklings imprint on them. From then on, the ducklings follow the jester around as though the human were their mother . . . much to the amusement of spectators.)

There's a significant problem here, however. Even the dumbest white dragon is much smarter than a duck. The imprinting instinct is a short-term thing for dragons, intended to help the hatchlings survive the first month or two of life in a hostile world. After that, their innate intelligence takes over.

Dragons mature mentally at about twice the rate of humans, which means they attain their full share of intelligence and wisdom at about ten years of age. (They're still potentially very naive, of

course, since their experience of the world is highly limited.) Long before this point—probably before they reach the age of five—the effect of the imprinting vanishes, and they'll have realized that they're quite different from their “parent.” How the relationship progresses from here depends on both the treatment the dragon receives and on the nature of the dragon.

Good dragons appreciate kind, respectful, and humane treatment, and feel some indebtedness to whoever provided that treatment. No matter how good the treatment has been, however, the dragons never feel blind loyalty (it's an intelligent creature, after all, quite possibly more intelligent than the people rearing it).

The relationship between a well-reared good dragon and its foster parent closely parallels that between a human parent and child. The relationship can be close or distant, warm or stormy, depending on how closely the world-view of the parent matches that of the dragon (with respect to alignment, particularly). A Chaotic brass dragon in a Lawful environment will quickly begin to chafe at the discipline, while a gold in a Chaotic environment will quickly feel the need for a more organized climate.

No matter how closely alignments and outlooks match, however, the dragon eventually feels the need to leave home and make its own way in the world. Again, depending on how close the relationship was during the dragon's formative years, the on-going relationship between parent and dragon can range from close friendship and mutual respect to complete indifference or even antipathy.

Evil dragons are a completely different story. As soon as the dragon is old enough to recognize its true nature—perhaps five years of age—it starts looking for ways to manipulate the relationship to suit itself. This is true no matter what the alignment of the parent. The dragon quickly starts pushing the limits of any discipline enforced upon it.

Evil dragons don't respond well to the good and respectful treatment relished by their good kin. Evil chromatics would see this as weakness in their parent, and it would tempt them to take over as soon as possible. These dragons respect strength and power, and won't attack parents who are obviously much more lethal than they.

This is particularly true for Lawful Evil blues. They will willingly follow and learn from an evil-aligned parent, as long as that parent remains more powerful than they. As soon as they see the balance shift, however, they'll try to take over. They won't kill the parent if they can avoid it, but they will expect the parent to accept them as the master from that point forward.

Chaotic Evil chromatics feel no loyalty or indebtedness to anybody. The first time they're reasonably sure they can manage it, they'll turn on their parents, kill them, and take everything of value.

Draconic Abilities and Cross-Species Rearing

The behavior patterns and abilities of unintelligent creatures are mainly instinctive (with some exceptions such as species-specific songs or calls). This isn't the case with intelligent creatures, such as humans, demihumans, or drag-

ons. The vast majority of abilities and behaviors must be learned from their parents.

Flight

Take the case of a hatchling dragon being reared in a human household. How is that dragon going to learn to fly? Certainly it can watch other winged creatures, but dragon flight is quite different from the flight of a sparrow. It is very unlikely that the poor creature will ever learn how to get off the ground.

Enterprising characters might somehow get the creature to a high spot so it can glide (which is an instinctive behavior) and perhaps teach itself from there the intricacies of true flight. There are problems here, too, however. The dragon has been raised among flightless creatures (presumably), and won't have developed a dragon's normal indifference to altitude. The problems involved in getting a young gold dragon that is afraid of heights to step off a cliff could be the center of much enjoyable role-playing.

If the characters can overcome this obstacle, it's still not clear sailing. The ability to glide is instinctive, but only to a degree. Dragons are intelligent, which implies that their ability to feel fear is as great as—if not more than—that of a human. That first glide is a potentially terrifying experience, and could cause the dragon to panic, with potentially catastrophic results (ask any novice hang-glider). The chance of a successful first glide is 90% (roll 1d100, with a result of 01 to 90 representing success). If the roll exceeds 90, then the dragon has frozen and plummets to the ground. For each point by which the roll exceeds 90, the

dragon falls 10% of the total height from which it started the glide. For example, say the dragon attempts its first glide from a 100-foot-high cliff (the minimum altitude from which a glide can start). The DM rolls a 91. This means that the dragon almost makes it, but panics just before landing and falls 10 feet (the effects of falling on dragons are discussed in a later section). If the DM had rolled 00, the poor dragon would have panicked immediately after stepping off the cliff, and would have plummeted the full 100 feet.

After an unsuccessful glide, the dragon—assuming it survived—can try again. The experience of the fall was probably traumatic, however, and a modifier of 1d12 is added to the success die roll for the next attempt (i.e., the DM rolls 1d100 and 1d12, adds the results, and compares them to the success target of 90). Although the maximum possible result is now 112, the dragon can never fall more than 100% of the total height from which the glide started.

Needless to say, it will probably be much harder for the characters to persuade the dragon to step off into space for a second time.

As soon as the dragon has completed one successful glide, it never has to make another die roll. From this point on, it can teach itself to fly. This procedure takes 1d4+3 months. A self-taught dragon can never fly as well as one that was raised by those of its own kind. Its maneuverability class is one step worse (Class D), its maximum speed is 75% of what it should be (round fractions up; e.g., a self-taught brass has a maximum flying speed of 23 rather than 30), and it can never perform a wingover maneuver. In addition, all attacks that the dragon at-

tempts while flying suffer a -2 penalty to the attack roll.

A self-taught dragon might later be able to receive instruction from one of its own kind,

but the dragon might already have developed too many ingrained bad habits for the instruction to remove the above restrictions. The chance of the instruction working is 100% minus 10% times the age category of the dragon when it receives the instruction.

For example, say that a brass that taught itself to fly is now juvenile (age category 4). If he now receives flying lessons from another dragon, the chance of success is 60% (100 - (10x4)). The DM rolls 1d100. If the result is 60 or less, the juvenile brass is no longer subject to the restrictions listed above. If the result is 61 or more, the brass's bad habits are too ingrained for instruction to remove them. No matter how much training the brass receives, he will always be subject to flight restrictions. This kind of instruction takes 1d4 weeks.

Magical Abilities

Many of a dragon's magical abilities are said to be innate. In fact, it's the potentiality that's innate. The creature must still learn how to manipulate, trigger, and control that innate potential before it can use magic. This is something that can be learned only from a dragon of the same species. A dragon raised away from others of its own kind will not gain the innate abilities that other dragons develop as they increase in age.





Luckily for these dragons, the ability to tap this potential is easy to learn. Training in the application of these potential powers takes

1d6 hours. This training must come from a dragon of the same species, of any age category.

When the dragon completes this training, it immediately gains the powers that its species normally receives at birth (*water breathing* and *speak with animals* for bronzes, for example). Each time it advances an age category, the creature gains the next group of powers. Note that this means a human-raised dragon can be many decades behind its contemporaries in abilities, and may never catch up.

Take, for example, a bronze that is raised for its first 26 years by a kindly human hermit. At age 26 (juvenile age category), the dragon finally meets another bronze that teaches it how to tap its magical potential. Immediately, the juvenile dragon receives the abilities *water breathing* and *speak with animals* — the abilities usually gained at birth. When it turns 51 (young adult), it receives the next group of abilities (*create food and water* and *polymorph self*), which are usually gained at the young age category. When it turns 101 (adult), it receives *wall of fog*, and so on.

The same thing happens with spellcasting ability. A dragon raised apart from its own kind is totally unable to learn to cast spells until it has received 1d8 days of training from another dragon (this trainer doesn't have

to be of the same species). As soon as the training is complete, the dragon can begin to learn spells. It can cast the number of spells normally allowed to hatchling dragons (none). Each time it advances an age level, its magical ability also advances one step. Note that, if the creature was older than hatchling when it learned the ways of magic, it will never catch up with its contemporaries.

For example, take the juvenile bronze discussed above who met another bronze when it was 26 years old. At the completion of its magical training, it has the magical ability of a normal hatchling; in other words, it can still cast no spells. When it turns 51 (young adult), it gains the magical ability of a normal very young bronze; again, no spells. When it turns 101 (adult), it gains the abilities of a normal young bronze; still no spells. Only when it turns 201 (mature adult) does it gain the ability to cast a single 1st-level spell per day.

Certain magical abilities are truly innate and don't depend on training. These are the immunities shown by certain dragons, such as a bronze's immunity to electricity and a copper's immunity to acid.

Language

Language is also an acquired attribute. Like any other intelligent creature, dragons can acquire a language only from another creature who speaks that language. Thus it is quite possible for a copper dragon never to learn the copper tongue. Dragons raised by humans generally learn only the common tongue, unless their parent is proficient in other languages (and wishes to teach them).

Other Abilities

Breath weapons and other attack modes are truly innate and don't have to be learned from other dragons (with the exception of airborne combat, as discussed earlier).

Draconic Health

Dragons' attitude towards health varies from species to species. While all races of dragons obviously cherish good health, for Chaotic Evil creatures it's much more a matter of survival. A sick dragon is a weak dragon, and others of its own kind or of other species are just waiting to take advantage of any sign of weakness.

Lawful Evil and all good-aligned dragons are much better off, and poor health is less of a catastrophe. These individuals can depend—most of the time—on others to look out for their interests and protect their lives until they get their health back.

Food

Dragon dietary preferences vary, but—with a notable exception—one fact is constant across the species: dragons eat a lot. Luckily for the creatures and for anyone else who has to share their food chain, their metabolism is incredibly efficient and they are able to digest inert matter. No matter how efficient their metabolism, however, dragons have a lot of body mass to support, and they burn a lot of energy, particularly when they're flying.

Food requirements depend on the dragon's level of activity (see Chapter 3). At the peak of its activity cycle, a very young dragon must eat up to 10% of its own weight per day—slightly more if the food is mainly inorganic. Dur-



ing its hibernating, inactive phase, a dragon needs no food.

The 10% figure decreases as the dragon gets older. An adult dragon's food requirements might drop to 5% of its own weight per day, while a great wyrm might only need to eat 1% of its own weight per day, and then only at the peak of its activity cycle.

So how much do dragons weigh? Although length and wingspan figures may imply that the creatures are unbelievably massive, dragons are actually rather slender, sinuous creatures, and their huge wings are composed of light (although incredibly strong) bones and thin membrane. Dragon physique varies from species to species, and from individual to individual, but the following figures should give DMs some basis to go on. (In general, mass is proportional to the cube of the dimensions, so if you double a creature's size, you'll multiply its mass by 8. When you double the length of a dragon, however, you usually don't quite double its width or height.)

Body Length (ft) *	Weight (lbs)
10	90
20	700
40	5,000
80	35,000
100	65,000
150	200,000

* Not including tail.

Here are two examples of food requirements; both assume that the dragons are at the peaks of their cycles. A young red has a body length of 40 feet and a weight of about 5,000 pounds. It typically must eat 10% of its own weight per day, or 500 pounds (three knights,

or a large ogre). A golden great wyrm has a body length of 150 feet, and a weight of about 200,000 pounds. It typically must eat 1% of its own weight per day, or 2,000 pounds (a large ox, perhaps).

Although the above food requirements are discussed on a per day basis, that's rarely how dragons feed. They typically fast for periods lasting months, then gorge themselves into a state of lethargy. A draconic feast can be a frightening thing. Take, for example, the young red discussed above. It may fast for 20 days, then decide to totally satisfy its hunger. To do so, it requires about 10,000 pounds of food (500 x 20)—an entire adventuring company plus equipment. After a similar fast, the golden great wyrm would hunger for 40,000 pounds of food—an entire herd of cattle, perhaps. If that sounds bad, remember that 20 days is a fairly short fast

The brasses are the one species that doesn't suffer from these rather extreme food requirements. These creatures are able—somehow—to gain sustenance from morning dew, which they delicately lift off plants with their long, sensitive tongues. Sages are at a loss to explain how such large creatures can maintain their body mass and vigorous behavior with little to no food.

Some cynics, however, refuse to believe this story at all, claiming it's disinformation spread by the brasses themselves. In fact, these sages claim, brass dragons eat as much as any other dragons, but do it in disguise. When they get hungry, they use magical spells to alter their form—perhaps to appear as reds or blues—and then go and stuff their faces, leaving the other species to take the blame. (The brasses, of course, refuse to dignify

this speculation with a response.)

One further consequence of the efficiency of draconic digestion is that dragons leave very little in the way of droppings. Those that they do leave, they usually conceal.

Disease

Like most creatures, dragons are subject to various diseases. These range from the merely irritating—the draconic equivalent of the common cold—to the fatal (unless cured). Dragon species that can cast priest spells are obviously better off when it comes to dealing with disease. Dragons without such abilities—and unable or unwilling to turn to other dragons for help—must be more careful not to contract diseases. Although it has been tried, curative magic cast by human and demihuman priests is insufficiently powerful to rid a draconic body of disease.

Dragons are quite aware of the means of transmission of the most dangerous draconic diseases. Most are transmitted through bodily fluids such as blood (so it's not a good idea to bite a diseased dragon), while a few diseases are airborne.

Infected dragons usually isolate themselves from their fellows to prevent the spread of the disease. Whites are, again, the exception. When a draconic disease strikes an area inhabited by whites, it often spreads like wildfire through their numbers. These epidemics act as yet another check and balance on white population.



Evil dragons have been known to sometimes use disease as a weapon. It was documented that a red dragon once threw the body

of a diseased blue into the headwaters of a river at which golds were known to drink. Although a few of the golds contracted the disease that killed the blue, use of clerical magic prevented any fatalities. (A raiding party of golds soon put an end to the further ambitions of that particular red.)

Rare individuals suffer from allergies. Most of these are mere nuisances, more akin to hay fever than to serious allergies that cause shock and death (though an allergy that causes sneezing in a fire-breathing dragon can occasionally be more than a nuisance . . .).

Dragons can also suffer from congenital diseases, particularly those species like whites that have no concern for inbreeding. While many of these congenital conditions are mental, some are physical. There is a draconic form of hemophilia, which decreases the efficiency of blood clotting. (In game terms, any wound that draws blood continues to bleed, inflicting 1d3 additional points of damage per round, until the wound is either bound or cured, or until the dragon dies.) This is—fortunately—a very rare condition, since dragons who suffer from it rarely survive their first encounter with a foe that fights back.

There are also congenital growth defects, where dragons fail to grow past a certain point, or grow much faster than normal. There are also congenital forms of

blindness and deafness, and a particularly nasty syndrome that makes it impossible for the dragon to control its breath weapon. (For a dragon with this syndrome, the DM rolls 1d100 every two hours or so. If the result is 00, the dragon lets fly with the full power of its breath weapon in a random direction.)

Physical deformities sometimes occur, although evil dragons immediately kill such unfortunates as soon as they emerge from the egg. Good-aligned dragons try to protect deformed individuals and allow them the chance to gain as much from life as they can, but the hostile nature of the world ensures that these dragons rarely achieve maturity.

Insanity

As described in the sections on breeding habits, dragons that allow significant levels of inbreeding frequently give birth to mentally retarded individuals (as reflected by a decrease in the dragon's Intelligence attribute). Dragons can suffer from other forms of mental disturbance as well.

In fact, dragons can show the full range of abnormal psychology exhibited by humans. There are certain forms that are more common than others, however. Reds are most likely to exhibit megalomania, where the afflicted dragon becomes absolutely convinced that it is the best of everything: the smartest, wisest, strongest, fastest, most attractive, and most powerful dragon in the entire universe. (Golds are by far the most mentally stable of dragons, but, when they do suffer from insanity, megalomania is the most common affliction.) The weaker evil dragons are particularly susceptible to

paranoia—wherein the afflicted dragons think that “they” are always watching them, and that “they” are out to get them. Brasses are apt to become pathological liars. Other afflictions are possible, but not frequent.

Insanity is not common among dracoforms. The more serious afflictions—such as when a hatching black dragon suffers from homicidal mania—usually get the dragon killed off in a hurry. More minor forms of mental disturbance, such as melancholia (wherein the victim suffers from black moods, fits of brooding, and feelings of hopelessness), are tolerated by good-aligned dragons, but considered signs of weakness among the chromatics . . . and weakness is an invitation to attack.

There are a number of natural substances that have mind-altering effects on dragons. (These substances vary from species to species, and are usually lethal to nondracoforms.) Very rarely, dragons can suffer from a mental disturbance whereby they become strongly addicted to these substances (like cats to catnip). While these dragons can be played for laughs, the DM should remember that such addictions are debilitating diseases that will eventually kill the dragons.

Aging

As mentioned in the previous chapter, great wyrms eventually reach a point where their physical strength ceases to increase, while their bodies continue to grow in size and weight. Different dragons reach this point at different ages, and continued vigorous exercise can sometimes stave it off. In general, however, it sets in at an age of $2d100 + 1,700$ years. For each



100 years the dragon lives beyond this point, its maximum flying speed decreases by 1, while for each additional 200 years, its maximum ground speed decreases by 1. (Thus, a black dragon 300 years past this threshold age can fly at 27 and can move on the ground at 11.) In addition, for each 200 years past the threshold, the creature suffers a -1 penalty to its attack roll.

There is theoretically no limit to how long a dragon can live. In real life, however, their decreasing physical abilities put an upper limit on life span. A dragon with a normal ground speed of 12 is unable to move at all 2,400 years after it reaches the threshold age (at this point the dragon is anywhere from 4,101 to 4,300 years old). Long before this point, it will begin having difficulty in catching food (unless it is highly magical, or is willing to subsist on rocks and other inert matter). The word will also get out that the old dragon is losing it. In the case of evil dragons, this generally means that young challengers will arrive to fight the dragon for its hoard.

Decreasing mental capacity is also a problem. Although not all dragons become senile, most do. In game terms, the chance that a dragon will eventually suffer from senility is 75% (60% for golds).

If the die roll indicates that the dragon will eventually become senile, the problem will start at age $2d100 + 1,400$. For each 100 years beyond this onset age, the dragon will lose 1 point each of Intelligence and Wisdom, and will suffer a cumulative 5% chance of spell failure whenever the creature tries to cast a spell (this doesn't affect innate abilities, however). When either Intelligence or Wisdom reach 0, the creature dies,

raving. Especially in the case of evil dragons, the creature's kin will almost certainly have killed it long before this happens.

The more intelligent dragons will usually not let themselves suffer the indignities of aging, preferring to "go out in style." This differs from species to species, of course. While creatures like reds frequently stage one last kamikaze attack against an old enemy ("if you're going down, you may as well go down in flames"), golds, silvers, and bronzes are usually much more dignified about it.

All dragons have the ability to will themselves to die. The process is quick, quiet, and totally painless. It is simply a matter of releasing the link between the dragon's anima and its body. When Lawful Good dragons feel the chill winds of age, they frequently summon their beloved kin to attend them, and then pass on quietly, saving themselves the indignity and their loved ones the sadness of a long, lingering senescence.

This tradition—the "final audience," as the dragons term it—is a highly dignified ritual, filled with respect, love, and a quiet joy that comes from knowing the departing dragon has lived a long and full life. One of the things that makes proscription such a harsh penalty for these dragons is the knowledge that no one will attend the final audience of a proscribed dragon.

Reproduction

The reproductive process for dragons is a strange cross between the mammalian and reptilian. Mating is remarkably mammalian logistically. The physical act of mating causes the female to ovulate—the number of eggs produced depending on the species—and the eggs

are fertilized within the female's body. After fertilization, the eggs are surrounded by a flexible leathery shell, a process that takes $1d10+6$

days. After that, the female lays the eggs, usually in a sheltered area of her lair. The incubation time for a clutch of eggs also varies by species, as shown in the accompanying table.

Species	# of Eggs	Incubation	
		* Period	* *
Black	6	200 days	
Blue	4	250 days	
Brass	4	270 days	
Bronze	3	300 days	
Copper	4	260 days	
Gold	2	320 days	
Green	6	210 days	
Red	4	270 days	
Silver	3	280 days	
White	7	195 days	

* For an average clutch. Clutches can vary by up to 2 eggs in either direction.

* * Plus or minus 10%. All eggs hatch within one hour of each other.

It takes a hatchling 2d20 minutes to free itself from the eggshell. There is a 10% chance that any given hatchling is unable to escape from the egg without help. Chaotic Evil dragons won't help such a trapped hatchling, leaving it to die (any creature too weak to find its own way into the world doesn't deserve to live, these creatures think). All other species will help such an unfortunate. Dragon hatchlings are immediately hungry, and will eat just about any-



thing. They are blind for the first 12-24 hours immediately after hatching.

Reproduction and Aging

Females lose the ability to lay eggs when they reach the great wyrm age category. (They can still enjoy mating, however, and many do.) Males become totally unable to mate at all when they reach the age of 1,200.

Unusual Combat Situations

Dragon vs. Dragon

Many of the intricacies of airborne combat are already discussed in sufficient detail in the *Dungeon*

Master's Guide on pages 77-78. This following section extends these rules to account for the unique tactics, strengths, and weaknesses of dragons.

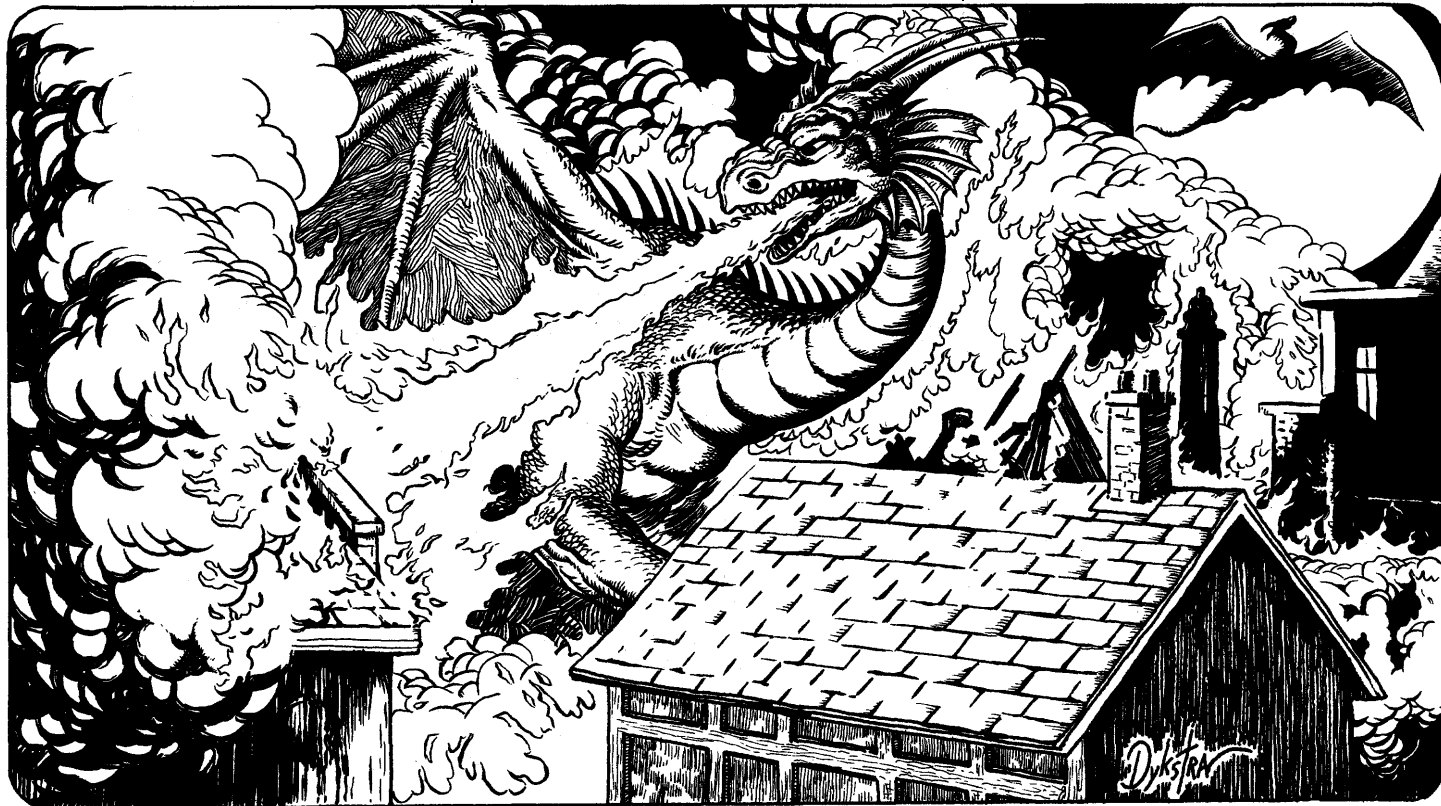
When dragons engage in combat with other dragons, they always do so aloft if that's possible. Their tactics depend on the number of dragons involved, and the relative powers, strengths, and sizes of the creatures.

If a dragon is fighting multiple enemies, or if it is significantly smaller than its enemy, it always chooses some form of ranged combat: spells or breath weapon. If neither is possible, the combat tactic of choice is grappling.

Grappling: To successfully grapple, the attacking dragon must be able to catch its enemy (in a three-dimensional environment, this isn't necessarily easy). The attacker must then roll a successful

claw attack, with a +2 bonus to the attack roll. A successful attack means that the attacker has successfully grappled, and that the two dragons are locked together. (The above procedure is used only if one dragon doesn't wish to grapple. If both creatures want to grapple, they simply fly together and grab onto each other.)

Once dragons have grappled, they're unable to fly, and they immediately plummet toward the ground. Dragons, although they have a large expanse of wings even when they're not flapping them, reach terminal velocity quickly—in fact, in just over three seconds (much less than a combat round). For game purposes, it can be assumed that grappled dragons are immediately falling at terminal velocity, which is about 125 feet per second, or 7,500 feet per combat round.





While grappled, dragons can attack by bite or claw, and receive a +4 attack roll bonus to all such attacks. They can also choose to use their breath weapons, but there's a significant risk that they'll suffer damage themselves because of the proximity to their target. A grappled dragon using its breath weapon on its foe must roll a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon or suffer one-quarter of the damage that the attack inflicts on the other dragon. (Since grappled dragons fall 7,500 feet per round, they've got to start at a pretty good altitude if they want much of an opportunity to put the above attacks into effect.)

The real purpose of a grappling attack is to cause an opponent to slam into the ground at terminal velocity (which would inflict 20d6 points of damage; see the later section on "Falling Damage"). The trick is for the attacking dragon—the one that initiated the grapple—to wait until both dragons are about to hit the ground, then suddenly release its foe and stop its own fall. If the attacker cuts it close enough, its foe won't be able to stop itself before it hits the ground.

The dragon that initiated the grapple can decide at what altitude it wants to release its foe. When it does so, both dragons continue to fall for a period of time before they are back in complete control. The attacker falls for 2d10 seconds; its foe falls for 2d10 + 2 seconds (this reflects the reaction time the dragon needs to realize it's free and to do something about it). Remember that a falling dragon plummets 125 feet per second.

Here's an example: A red dragon grapples an unwilling blue, and both plummet, biting and scratching, toward the ground. The red was the attacker, so it decides

when to release its foe. It decides to cut it really close, and doesn't release the blue until they're only 750 feet above the ground. Both dragons roll 2d10, and both roll 5s. The attacking red continues its fall for five seconds, during which time it drops another 625 feet. The red pulls out of its fall at a height of 125 feet above the ground. (Close!) The blue isn't so lucky. After the red releases it, it falls for another seven seconds (5 + 2), during which time it would fall 875 feet. Since it doesn't have that much altitude to play with, it slams into the ground and suffers 20d6 points of damage.

Things get slightly more complicated when both combatants are willing to grapple. All the way down, neither one of the dragons knows whether it has the initiative or not when it wants to let go. The procedure is as follows: One dragon or the other will decide to let go first. (If they both decide to do so simultaneously, the dragons separate immediately. Both fall for 2d10 seconds; neither suffers the two-second penalty.) The DM rolls 1d6. On a result of 1-3, the dragon does have initiative, and its foe suffers the two-second penalty. On a result of 4-6, however, the dragon wanting to release finds that the other dragon is still hanging on.

This procedure is repeated until either the dragon wishing to release gains the initiative, both dragons decide simultaneously to let go, or both dragons slam into the ground.

There's yet another twist to the tactic of grappling. If, on the way down, one dragon is so badly wounded that it wouldn't be able to save itself from crashing anyway (see the section "Maintaining Airworthiness"), it can choose to hang on and ride its foe all the way

down to the ground. Either dragon can choose this option, whether or not it was the attacker. If its foe wants to free itself from such a desperate dragon, the only option is to kill it in midair. As soon as one dragon dies, the other is immediately free from the grapple (the survivor still falls for another 2d10 seconds, of course).

Pulling Out: When a dragon finally gets itself under control after release from a grappling attack, it's not simply hovering. The dragon has, in fact, pulled out from an uncontrolled fall into a high-speed screaming power-glide. It's currently traveling in a straight line at twice its normal maximum speed. (The dragon can choose the direction in which it pulls out.) It must decrease its speed by 10 per round, until it reaches its normal maximum speed. During this period (probably three rounds), the dragon's maneuverability class is two steps worse than normal (MC E), and its allowable rate of climb is half normal (pulling up too hard will tear the dragon's wings out at the roots).

The difficulties of pulling out become significant in tight spaces—say, in a valley between mountain peaks. While a dragon might have extricated itself from a grappling attack, it might have too much speed and not enough time to do anything with it before it slams into the side of a mountain. A dragon that power-glides into an obstacle suffers 10d6 points of damage.



Falling Damage:

Dragons are much heavier than humans, and thus hit the ground considerably harder . . . sometimes. Be-

cause they have wings—which, even if unusable for flight, make great brakes—their terminal velocity is lower than that for a human-sized figure. Dragons, therefore, suffer 2d6 points of damage for every 10 feet fallen (not 1d6 as for man-sized creatures), to a maximum of 20d6. Any creature hit by a falling dragon suffers a similar amount of damage (successful saving throw vs. staves for half damage).

Maintaining Airworthiness:

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* states on page 78 that any winged creature that loses more than 50% of its hit points cannot sustain itself in the air and must land as soon as possible. The creature can glide safely to the ground, but it can't gain altitude or fly faster than half its normal movement rate. (If it can't find a safe place to put down, of course, it's out of luck.)

For dragons, there's an additional rule. Any dragon that loses more than 80% of its hit points is incapable of gliding. It falls, totally out of control, with the consequences discussed under "Falling Damage." (Since the creature is already grievously wounded, a fall from any significant altitude will almost certainly kill it.)

Ground Combat

Once a dragon is rendered incapable of flying, it will almost cer-

tainly do its best to escape. Few dragons denied the freedom of flight will have any stomach for continued combat.

If a dragon is denied escape for some reason, or if it's so fanatical about destroying its enemy that it wishes to fight on, normal dragon combat rules and routines come into play.

Attacking Settlements

Particularly during Dragonflight, dragons have been known to attack villages, towns, and even citadels. The tactics used in such an assault will vary depending on the dragons' goals, of course, but most such attacks start with neutralizing any organized resistance.

The most powerful weapon that dragons can use against the inhabitants of a settlement is panic. If the appearance of a dragon overhead can get the defenders to flee the settlement or lock themselves away inside their homes, all the better. It's much more likely, though, that the defenders will be too well-disciplined for this. If the dragon can panic the civilians, however. . . . The best-drilled fighting force in the world would find it hard to be effective when the streets and thoroughfares are mobbed with screaming, fleeing people. For this reason, a dragon will often circle over the town long enough to be noticed before it starts its actual attack. (If the dragon can safely fly low enough for its fear aura to take effect, it will certainly do so to enhance the panic.)

Civilians are also terrified by fire and magic. Fire-breathing dragons or those that can cast fire-based spells often use their abilities to ignite the roofs of the town, which are probably wood or thatch. A

fire-breathing dragon will allocate its breath weapon so as to cause the most effect. Three hit points worth of fire damage is about equivalent to a single torch, so a powerful dragon can set off quite a fire-storm without totally exhausting its breath weapon.

If it has the opportunity—in other words, if it's not prevented from doing so by organized defenders—an intelligent dragon will set fires in a cross-shaped pattern over the town. This is the best way of starting a true fire-storm, and of causing uncontrolled panic among the civilians.

As the panic is building to its peak, the dragon will focus its remaining magic or breath weapon on obvious concentrations of defenders. If it can shatter the defenders' organization and scatter them, its eventual victory will be much more certain.

How a dragon proceeds from here really depends on its ultimate purpose. If its goal is simply death and destruction—as seems to be the case during Dragonflight—the creature might simply land in the streets, killing anyone it finds and using its sheer bulk to destroy buildings.

To adjudicate dragons attacking buildings, the DM has two options. One is to use the simplistic system described on page 76 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, using the row for ram, but giving the structure a penalty to its saving throw of 1 times the dragon's age category. (Thus, a hard stone gate house attacked by an old dragon would have a saving throw target of 5, but would suffer a -8 penalty to its die roll.) Alternatively, the DM could use the BATTLESYSTEM™ rules in the *Castles* guide book.

Prisoners

Whether or not dragons take prisoners depends entirely on their ultimate purpose. Dragons in *Dragonflight* certainly wouldn't bother, but at other times they might consider capturing a few unfortunates to ransom, torture for information, or eat.

Dragons can capture a prisoner using a snatch attack. A successful attack means that the dragon has grasped the victim in a claw. (As described in the *Monstrous Compendium*, there's a 50% chance that the snatched creature has its arms pinned.) Although a dragon can automatically inflict claw damage on a snatched victim each round, a dragon interested in taking prisoners can waive this attack. If the creature decides to transfer a prisoner to its mouth, the normal rules apply, but again—once the victim is successfully grasped—the dragon can waive the automatic bite damage.

Cooperation

Again, depending on their ultimate goals, dragons might cooperate on a town attack. Chaotic dragons are much less likely to do so than their Lawful relatives, but even a selfish red will realize that his chances for success and survival are greater if he has several accomplices when he attacks a citadel.

Intelligent dragons will decide

beforehand on a sensible battle plan. A good division of labor might be to have half the airborne force lay fires, while the others concentrate on using their magic or breath weapons to pick off knots of defenders (particularly those who can use magic). The actual battle plan will depend on the goals of the attack and the nature of the target. (Three reds who want to raze a farming village might as well just land in the streets and go on a rampage. The same reds

wanting to reduce a well-defended citadel had better come up with a different idea.)

Less intelligent dragons—specifically, blacks and whites—rarely cooperate. When they do, it's a very poorly organized effort.





Dragons are as interested in keeping track of unique personalities as are humans. The reasons differ from species to species: reds want to

know about potential rivals, golds want to revere mighty defenders of Law and Good, while brasses simply enjoy a good tidbit of gossip.

Following are some of the most famous (or notorious) examples of dragonkind. All of these dragons have the ability to communicate with any intelligent creature.

Aurus

Race: Gold

Age Category: Great Wyrm

Alignment: Neutral

Armor Class: -12

Movement: 12, Fl 40 (C), Jp 3, Sw 12 (15)

Hit Dice: 24

Hit Points: 120

THACO: 5

No. of Attacks: 3 + special

Damage/Attack: 1d10/1d10/6d6

Breath Weapon: 24d12+12

Magic Resistance: 70%

Size: 155' (body), 140' (tail)

XP Value: 20,000

Spells Normally Memorized:

phantasmal force, read magic, blindness, flaming sphere, fireball, lightning bolt, fire charm, fire trap, teleport, wall of stone, chain lightning, death spell, delayed blast fireball, statue, incendiary cloud, cure light wounds, invisibility to animals, find traps, silence (15' r.), feign death, speak with dead, abjure, plant door

Description

Aurus—as he calls himself—is a rogue gold dragon. Before he had reached the age of 500, he'd become cynical about the activities of his elders and contemporaries. They'd been fighting the forces of evil for millennia, sometimes at the cost of their own lives, and definitely at the expense of their enjoyment of the world. But evil was still as prevalent and as powerful as ever. He turned away from the rest of dragonkind. His kin predictably proscribed him, but Aurus couldn't have cared less. The society and friendship of gold dragons held no more interest for him.

Aurus had always cherished his strong sense of curiosity. Now he had a chance to indulge it. He traveled the length and breadth of Faerun—usually polymorphed into human or demihuman form, since he didn't particularly want to rub his one-time kin's noses in the fact that he still existed. In the eight centuries since his proscription, Aurus has spent some time in virtually every part of the Realms, from the Moonshae Isles to the lands of distant Kara-Tur.

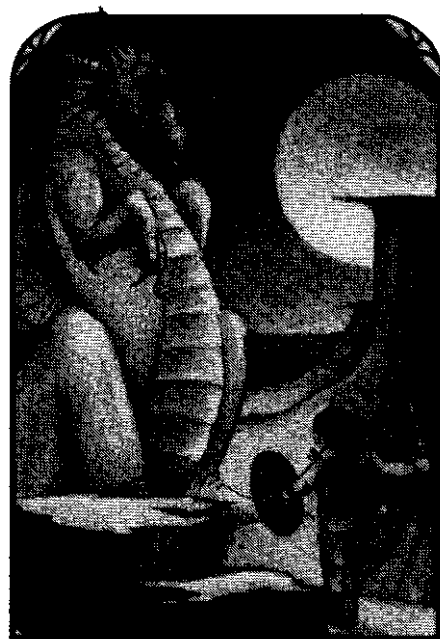
Over the centuries, Aurus has confirmed his conclusion that his kin were wrong in their world-view. He has become a true neutral, believing that the Grand Scheme of Justice as promulgated by His Resplendence is simply a load of collops. It is the Cosmic Balance that makes the world go around—the eternal knife-edge balance between Good and Evil, Chaos and Law—and it is his responsibility to do a small part in maintaining that balance.

When it comes to other dragons, Aurus is definitely a loner. He has come to enjoy the company of humans and demihumans, however,

particularly those who share his world-view. He's enjoyed many friendships in many lands, sometimes staying in one place long enough to share an entire human lifetime with a particularly close friend. No matter how close the friendship, Aurus has never openly admitted his true nature. He maintains the identity of a powerful and highly mysterious traveler.

For the last decade or so, Aurus has changed his behavior. He's settled down in Arabel, and he has started a trading post in which he's a silent partner. No one knows exactly what his purposes are, and nobody who's ever met Aurus would have the gall to ask him.

Aurus's appearance varies, of course, but he usually chooses the guise of a tall, slim man with a bald head, aquiline nose, and piercing eyes. His force of personality is unbelievably strong. Acquaintances have been quoted as equating a conversation with Aurus as "like trying to chat with a volcano that you aren't quite sure is dormant."





Nobody knows where Aurus's lair is. No doubt it's well-hidden and well-protected. Also, there's little doubt that he's moved it since his break with the gold dragons.

His Resplendence Lareth, King of Justice

Race: Gold
Age Category: Great Wyrm
Alignment: Lawful Good
Armor Class: -12
Movement: 12, Fl 40 (C), Jp 3, Sw 12 (15)
Hit Dice: 24
Hit Points: 145
THACO: 5
No. of Attacks: 3 + special
Damage/Attack: 1d10/1d10/6d6
Breath Weapon: 24d12+12
Magic Resistance: 70%
Size: 160' (body), 142' (tail)
XP Value: 20,000

Spells Normally Memorized: *cantrip, protection from evil, detect evil, know alignment, clairaudience, clairvoyance, detect scrying, wall of fire, Leomund's secret chest, magic jar, control weather, geas, power word, stun, prismatic spray polymorph any object, bless, cure light wounds, augury, heat metal, call lightning, stone shape, cure serious wounds, reflecting pool*

Description

Lareth is recognized by the others of his race as the most powerful gold dragon on Toril. Despite the title "King of Justice," Lareth only rarely must truly rule or dispense justice. Most of the time he acts as an elder advisor for any other gold that wishes his advice.

Lareth is a quiet, calm soul with a thoughtful manner. He will consider whatever is said to him—no

matter how ludicrous it may appear on the surface—and he is known for his ability to pull valuable wisdom from even the most trite statements or writings. His dignity and the sense of power that surrounds him makes it impossible to forget that Lareth has lived for almost 2,000 years, and is conceivably the most powerful creature on the planet.

Lareth almost always retains his true form. Only on the few occasions when he wanders the world does he don the guise of another creature—usually a venerable elf mage.

Nobody knows exactly where Lareth's lair is, although conflicting rumors are rife.

Bahamut

Race: Platinum (unique)
Age Category: Great Wyrm
Alignment: Lawful Good
Armor Class: -15
Movement: 12, Fl 40 (C), Jp 3, Sw 12 (15)
Hit Dice: 30
Hit Points: 175
THACO: 5
No. of Attacks: 3 + special
Damage/Attack: 2d6/2d6/6d8
Breath Weapon: 30d12+14
Magic Resistance: 85%
Size: 180' (body), 180' (tail)
XP Value: 28,000

Spells Normally Memorized: special

Description

Bahamut the Platinum Dragon has been described both as the King of all Good Dragons, and as a deity in his own right. Certainly, he is a unique creature who—if legends tell a—right—has existed from the first day that dragons ap-

peared on Toril (or any other planet).

Sages continue to debate the true nature of Bahamut. Is he the archetype of all good dragonkind, the ideal of which all other dragons are merely shadows? Is he an avatar of a greater deity? Or is he a fluke of nature, a powerful, mortal creature who is worshiped by other mortals?

Whatever the truth of the matter, Bahamut is doubtless a powerful being. His physical attack modes are normal for a dragon of the Realms. When it comes to his breath weapon, however, he has several choices. He can exhale a *cone of cold* 80 feet long, which is five feet wide at his mouth and expanding to a width of 40 feet at the far end. His use of this follows the same rules as any Realms dragon (i.e., he can use it as many times per day as he wishes, so long as he doesn't exceed his total allowable damage).

In addition, he has two other breath weapons, each of which he can use four times per day. The first is a cloud of vapor, 50 feet long and 40 feet wide, which causes creatures that fail their saving throws against breath weapons to lose their substance and assume gaseous form for 12 turns. The second is a roar so powerful that it acts as a *disintegrate* spell, literally shaking objects and creatures apart. Creatures that roll successful saving throws against this attack are permanently deafened, and any creature within 100 yards of Bahamut when he roars must roll a successful saving throw vs. staves or be deafened for 3d4 turns.



Bahamut is highly magical. He can use any wizard or priest spells, two per day of each level. In addition, he can shape-change at will.

According to legend, Bahamut spends fully half his time wandering the world of Toril, usually in the guise of a harmless old man. On these trips, he is usually accompanied by seven gold great wyrms of maximum power and hit points, also disguised in some way. (Nobody knows where these dragons come from. Some sages speculate that they are the spirits of dead Kings of Justice, returned to the Prime Material plane by Bahamut to serve him.)

Myths claim that Bahamut

dwells in a great fortified palace “behind the east wind.” Some sages interpret this as being somewhere on the elemental plane of Air, while others believe that the platinum dragon dwells somewhere on the Prime Material plane.

Tiamat

Race: Chromatic (unique)
Age Category: Great Wyrm
Alignment: Lawful Evil
Armor Class: -15
Movement: 4, Fl 40 (D)
Hit Dice: 30
Hit Points: 120
THACO: 5
No. of Attacks: Special
Damage/Attack: Special
Breath Weapon: Special
Magic Resistance: 85%
Size: 185' (body), 200' (tail)
XP Value: 40,000

Spells Normally Memorized: special

Description

Tiamat the Chromatic Dragon is similar in nature to Bahamut; nobody knows for sure whether she is a natural creature, the Queen of Evil Dragons, a demon, or a deity of some kind. She, too, is reputed to have been in existence from the first moment that dragonkind emerged upon Toril.

Tiamat is horrible in appearance: a fat, bloated body supported on stubby—almost useless—legs. She has five heads, each identical in color and appearance to that of one of the five species of evil dragons—black, blue, green, red, and white. She also has a long, serpentine tail tipped with a sting that drips with black venom. Her wings are huge, able to carry her with in-





credible speed and maneuverability for a creature of her size. On the ground, however, her small legs make her clumsy and slow.

Tiamat is a deadly opponent. Although her sheer size prevents claw and kick attacks while on the ground, she can use two claw attacks while flying. These attacks inflict 1d10 points of damage each. She can also use all other draconic attack modes, such as snatch (flying only), wing buffet, and tail slap. In addition, she can use her tail sting (but not in the same round that she slaps with the tail). The tail is sinuous enough that she can attack enemies directly in front of her and to the sides, as well as behind. The sting inflicts 1d6 points of damage, and the victim must roll a successful saving throw vs. poison—with a -3 penalty—or die agonizingly in one round.

The Chromatic Dragon's five heads can operate entirely independently of each other. During any round, each can perform any one of the following actions:

Bite: Each head inflicts damage as though it were a great wyrm of the appropriate color.

Breath Weapon: Each head has a breath weapon equivalent to that of the great wyrm of the appropriate color.

Spell: Each head can cast any two wizard spells per day. The spell levels available vary from head to head, as shown on the following chart:

Color	Spell Level
White	1st
Black	1st-2nd
Green	1st-3rd
Blue	1st-4th
Red	1st-5th

Each head can withstand 16 points of damage before it “dies” and becomes useless. These hit points do not count against Tiamat's total; only hits against her body do so. If all of Tiamat's heads are killed, or if she is reduced to 0 hit points, she immediately plane shifts to her lair on one of the planes of Hell (or, if she is defeated while in Hell, she is destroyed). Her heads and body regenerate fully in 24 hours.

Tiamat is able to travel astrally or ethereally at will.

The Chromatic Dragon's purposes are unknown. She has been known to visit Toril, but such visits are—thankfully—very rare. She has an insatiable greed for treasure, but prefers that creatures bring it to her in the form of gifts.

Nexus

Race: Gold

Age Category: Great Wyrm

Alignment: Lawful Good

Armor Class: -12

Movement: 12, Fl 40 (C), Jp 3, Sw 12 (15)

Hit Dice: 24

Hit Points: 112

THACO: 5

No. of Attacks: 3 + special

Damage/Attack: 1d10/1d10/6d6

Breath Weapon: 24d12+12

Magic Resistance: 70%

Size: 130' (body), 115' (tail)

XP Value: 25,000

Spells Normally Memorized: special

Description

Among gold dragons, Nexus is one of the most famous personalities, second only to His Resplendence Lareth himself. Nexus is around 1,400 years old, and for the past

900 years or so, he has dedicated himself almost exclusively to the study of magic. He still collects treasure, certainly, but he usually uses his wealth to purchase new and interesting magical items, tomes, and spell materials. His lair—reputed to be somewhere in the Desertsouth Mountains—is protected by magical wards and conjured creatures of almost limitless power (including an iron golem, or so legend tells).

The power of Nexus himself has been described as “almost godlike.” Each day he can cast three wizard spells of each level from 1st to 9th and two priest spells of each level from 1st to 7th. He can select each spell at the time of casting from the spell list of the appropriate level, including any unique spells discussed in Chapter 7. (After all, Nexus was the originator of many of these exclusively draconic spells.) This awesome ability to select his spells at casting time was granted him by the goddess Kereska Wonderbringer for his efforts in advancing the magical ability of dragonkind.

Nexus is a font of magical wisdom. For a price, he will identify any magical item brought to him, cast any spell, or teach individuals any spell they are capable of learning. His price is always very high, however: a magical item of great power, or a large number of lesser items. He always requires payment in advance, and his magical abilities make it very unlikely that anyone could dupe him. (If DMs don't want their players to have access to Nexus—who can provide



an excellent way of depleting parties' supplies of magic items in exchange for information—they need simply make it impossible for

the PCs to find his lair.)

Nexus is totally uninterested in the world outside, except when it relates to magic. He is brusque with people who waste his time, but enjoys long, rambling discussions with people intelligent and knowledgeable enough to be worthy of his attention. (Such paragons are, of course, very few and far between.)

Flashburn

Race: Red

Age Category: Venerable

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Armor Class: -9

Movement: 9, Fl 30 (C), Jp 3

Hit Dice: 19

Hit Points: 88

THACO: 5

No. of Attacks: 3 + special

Damage/Attack: 1d10/1d10/3d10

Breath Weapon: 2d10+10

Magic Resistance: 55%

Size: 160' (body), 150' (tail)

XP Value: 18,000

Spells Normally Memorized:

magic missile (x2), *blindness*, *improved phantasmal force*, *lightning bolt* (x2), *ice storm*, *protection from good*

Description

Flashburn dwells in the High Moor region. She has used her power and her surprisingly charismatic

personality to build up a cult of orcs that worship her as a goddess.

Flashburn is exceptionally intelligent for a red, and she has a very good sense of what people want to hear. She is exceptionally persuasive, normally very soft-spoken and reasonable. This is just a facade, however. Underneath she's a typical red dragon: vicious, selfish, and very direct. Much as she tries to control it, she has a very short temper, and is given to furious rages.

Her orc worshipers—who now number nearly 300—follow her devotedly. They've seen her power and realize that they're much better off with her around than they would be without her—even if she does occasionally toast a handful of them in a fit of pique. (Also, of course, they're entirely too terrified to do anything to cross her.)

Flashburn is a good leader; she has a natural talent for strategy and tactics. She's turned a motley crew of orcs into a well-trained and almost disciplined fighting force. Nobody knows exactly what Flashburn's goals are, but they certainly don't bode well for anyone who lives near her territory.



Her lair is presumably somewhere in the High Moor region, but nobody knows exactly where. It is probably guarded by fanatical orcs as well as whatever unpleasant surprises Flashburn has managed to cook up on her own.

Lux

Race: Red

Age Category: Mature Adult

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral
(Good tendencies)

Armor Class: -6

Movement: 9, Fl 30 (C), Jp 3

Hit Dice: 16

Hit Points: 82

THACO: 5

No. of Attacks: 3 + special

Damage/Attack: 1d10/1d10/3d10

Breath Weapon: 14d10+7

Magic Resistance: 40%

Size: 100' (body), 92' (tail)

XP Value: 12,000

Spells Normally Memorized:
magic missile, *wall of fog*, *fog cloud*, *improved phantasmal force*

Description

Lux is the name taken by a rogue red dragon (his real name is Torch). He was always a small dragon, more given to the world of ideas than his contemporaries. He had sometimes questioned what gave him and his kin the right to enforce their will over everyone and everything around them, but had given up that line of thought as basically useless. The world was as it was, and thinking wasn't going to change things.

Lux suffered his crisis of faith some two centuries ago. He and a younger dragon were attacking an adventuring party that had shown the temerity to climb a mountain



peak near Lux's lair. The party was much stronger than the dragons had anticipated. Lux's companion was killed, and Lux himself was so badly wounded that he couldn't fly. They'd left their mark on the adventurers, however: only one—a mighty warrior—was still alive, and he was in a bad way. Lux searched for him, thirsting for revenge.

He found the man in a box canyon, looking for a way out. When the man heard the dragon approaching, he turned. Human and dragon regarded each other through hate-slitted eyes. Both were almost unconscious from pain and blood loss; their muscles quivered with exhaustion. But they faced each other, ready to end the other's life, even if it cost his own.

And that was when Lux looked for the first time into the eyes of the human warrior. Realization hit him with a staggering impact. He recognized the look in those eyes, the thoughts that were running through the brain behind them. "You killed my friend," the thoughts went, "and now you wish to kill me. If die I must, then with my last breath I will spit on your corpse." The same thoughts were running through Lux's mind.

All his old questions came back to him. What gave him the right, he asked himself, to take the life of this man? Was this man, then, entitled by that same right to take Lux's life? Leaving the warrior to slump in amazement over the hilt of his broadsword, Lux turned and made his painful way home to his lair, where he spent many weeks in deep thought.

Eventually he came to an unshakable conclusion. Every sentient creature has a right to survive and to live its own life, he decided.

He turned his back on his old ways and moved his hoard to a lair in the Spine of the World range.

Since then, Lux has been an observer rather than a participant in the ongoing struggle between good and evil. If something should happen to force him to choose one over the other, he would select good. But he has worked hard to make sure that he's never yet been put in that position.

Tamarand

Race: Gold

Age Category: Great Wyrm

Alignment: Neutral

Armor Class: -12

Movement: 12, Fl 40 (C), Jp 3, Sw 12 (15)

Hit Dice: 24

Hit Points: 110

THACO: 5

No. of Attacks: 3 + special

Damage/Attack: 1d10/1d10/6d6

Breath Weapon: 24d12+12

Magic Resistance: 70%

Size: 151' (body), 138' (tail)

XP Value: 20,000

Spells Normally Memorized:

phantasmal force (x2), *blindness*, *flaming sphere*, *lightning bolt* (x2), *fire charm*, *fire trap*, *teleport*, *wall of stone*, *chain lightning*, *death spell*, *delayed blast fireball* (x2), *incendiary cloud*, *cure light wounds*, *invisibility to animals*, *find traps*, *silence* (15' r.), *feign death*, *speak with dead*, *abjure*, *plant door*

Description

Tamarand is a gold dragon Lord in the service of His Resplendence Lareth, King of Justice. His lair is a huge cave complex beneath the highest peaks near Bloodstone Pass. Tamarand is on excellent terms with a large clan of storm gi-

ants that live in the region. They have a mutual defense pact, but this has actually extended into respect and friendship.

Tamarand's main claim to fame is that the odds are good that he will become King of Justice when Lareth steps down. He is a wise creature, knowledgeable in the ways of humans and demihumans. Like Lareth, he weighs every decision before he makes it; unlike Lareth, he can quickly be decisive when circumstances warrant. Although still dignified in demeanor, Tamarand is relatively friendly and open (not around his lair, however).

Pelath

Race: Bronze

Age Category: Mature Adult

Alignment: Neutral (Chaotic tendencies)

Armor Class: -5

Movement: 9, Fl 30 (C), Sw 12

Hit Dice: 17

Hit Points: 73

THACO: 5

No. of Attacks: 3 + special

Damage/Attack: 1d8/1d8/4d6

Breath Weapon: 14d8+7

Magic Resistance: 30%

Size: 65' (body), 57' (tail)

XP Value: 11,000

Spells Normally Memorized:

unseen servant, *wall of fog*, *invisibility*, *misdirection*

Description

Purely and simply, Pelath the bronze was always a selfish crea-



ture. From birth, he chafed under the discipline of his elders and his peers. He found their dedication to the preservation of law and

good entirely too much trouble. The only times he was really happy as a hatchling were when he was swimming the depths of the Sea of Swords by himself. As soon as he figured that he was old and powerful enough to survive on his own, he turned his back on his family, his community, and his species. He looked for a place where he could live the life he wanted.

He eventually found it: a tiny island some ten leagues from the westernmost Pirate Isles. His lair is a large cave in the island's central hill, its entrance concealed and trapped to prevent unwanted intrusion. Pelath spends most of his days swimming with the dolphins of the Sea of Swords. His hoard isn't large for a dragon of his age, but he cares little for status and considers the entire Sea of Swords with all its multitudes of shipwrecks to be his personal treasure vault.

When he's not swimming, he maintains human form, pretending to be a wizard who has chosen the life of a hermit. As such, he can chase away intruders without advertising his true nature.

Pelath—in the guise of the hermit-mage—has some dealings with the pirates who ply this part of the ocean. In return for gifts of money and gems, he “summons” his “dragon familiar,” who helps the pirates with salvage operations (for a share of the take, of course).

Pelath limits his involvement with the pirates to retrieving treasure from ships that were accidentally sunk through the overzealous actions of the pirate crews. He has never actively helped them with actual raids, nor will he.

In the guise of the hermit-mage, Pelath is a sharp-tongued, cranky personality. If he's approached while he's swimming and enjoying himself, he can be quite open and friendly with people or creatures who enjoy the same pursuits.

Havarlan

Race: Silver

Age Category: Wyrm

Alignment: Lawful Good

Armor Class: -10

Movement: 9, Fl 30 (C), Jp 3

Hit Dice: 22

Hit Points: 103

THACO: 5

No. of Attacks: 3 + special

Damage/Attack: 1d8/1d8/5d6

Breath Weapon: 22d10+11

Magic Resistance: 55%

Size: 130' (body), 55' (tail)

XP Value: 19,000

Spells Normally Memorized: *detect undead, sleep, locate object, web, lightning bolt (x2), confusion, Evard's black tentacles, feblemind, teleport, mass suggestion, cure light wounds, pass without trace, detect charm, know alignment, call lightning, cure disease, imbue with spell ability*

Description

Havarlan is the leader (the “Barb”) of the Talons of Justice, a group of silver dragons who have sworn an oath to follow the Ptarian Code of Honor. In her position as Barb, Havarlan has dedicated herself—“life and breath”—to Xymor, the

Justicemaker. In return for this dedication, and for sterling service in the cause of Lawful Good, Xymor has granted Havarlan a number of additional powers that normally are the province of human paladins. (In fact, Havarlan and a handful of other Talons are the closest thing that dragonkind has to paladins.)

Havarlan can detect the presence of evil intent up to 60 feet away by concentrating on locating evil in a particular direction. She receives a +2 bonus to all saving throws. She is immune to all forms of disease. She is surrounded by an aura of *protection from evil* with a radius of ten feet, and she can turn undead, devils, and demons as a 7th-level priest. In return for these powers, Havarlan has sworn an oath to donate fully one-half of all treasure she ever receives to a fund from which the Talons can draw at need.

Havarlan is a dedicated, almost fanatical, opponent of evil. The depth of her dedication and the force of her will give her an effective Charisma of 18 when talking to humans and demihumans who share her Lawful Good alignment. She often travels the world in the guise of a female warrior with shoulder-length silver-blond hair.







Unless otherwise specified, the new dragon species described in this chapter all share the innate properties discussed in the introduc-

tory section on dragons from the *Monstrous Compendium*. These properties include age progression, attack modes, fear aura, senses, flight, etc.

Crosses Between Chromatics

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, chromatic dragons can interbreed. In the vast majority of cases, however, the offspring are infertile (“mules”). The nature and characteristics of the offspring are variable. In two cases of whites breeding with blacks (for example), the offspring might show quite different characteristics.

Here are some guidelines for DMs who would like to create their own chromatic crosses.

Appearance

The color of a chromatic cross will be a blend of the two parents’ colors. For example, a red crossed with a white will yield pinks, while a white crossed with a black will yield grays. The saturation and intensity of the color will vary wildly, even within a single clutch of offspring. (There have been stories about spotted or striated dragons, but no reliable confirmation of such sightings exists. Most sages agree that variegated dragons simply can’t arise, pointing to human skin color as an analogy: a dark-skinned negroid crossed with a

pale-skinned caucasoid do not produce striped or spotted children. Other sages, of course, consider this explanation a load of collops.)

In size, the offspring will fall in a range between the sizes of the two parents. To calculate the size of a chromatic cross, take the upper and lower size limits for the parents at the appropriate age range, and determine the difference. Then roll d100 and consult the following table:

Roll	Size
01-25	Parent A - 10% of difference
26-35	Parent A - 25% of difference
36-65	Parent A - 50% of difference
66-75	Parent A - 75% of difference
76-00	Parent A - 90% of difference

Parent A is the larger of the two parents.

Here’s an example: a juvenile pink dragon (a red crossed with a white). At juvenile age, a red’s body size is 42-61 feet, while a white’s body size is 23-32 feet. The difference in the upper range is 29 feet (61-32); the difference in the lower range is 19 feet (42-23). The DM rolls percentile dice, with a result of 23. This means that the upper range for the pink dragon’s body size is 61 feet minus 10% of 29. Rounding all fractions to the nearest integer, this yields 58 feet. The lower range for the pink’s body is 42 minus 10% of 19, or 40 feet. Thus, the body of this pink dragon will range from 40 feet to 58 feet long. The same technique can be used to calculate the length of the creature’s tail.

Armor Class

The crossbreed will follow the same armor class progression as one of its parents, randomly selected.

Hit Dice and THACO

The offspring will have a base number of hit dice equal to the average of the parents’ hit dice. Continuing with the example of the pink dragon: Reds have 13 hit dice base; whites have 11 hit dice base. The average is 12, thus the pink will have 12 hit dice.

When averaging hit dice, round to the nearest half of a hit die. Half a hit die corresponds to 3 additional hit points. Take a cross between a red and a blue (a purple dragon). Reds have 13 hit dice base, while blues have 14 hit dice base. The average is 13.5 hit dice, or 13 hit dice plus 3 hit points. All modifications for age are based on this result. Thus, a very old purple (+5 hit dice modifier) will have 18 hit dice plus 3 additional hit points, or a hit point range of 21 to 147.

Similarly, a chromatic cross will have a base THACO equal to the average of its parents’ THACOs. Round all fractions up.

Damage

The damage caused by a crossbreed’s claws and by its bite are determined separately. For each kind of attack, roll 1d6. On a result of 1-3, the damage caused by the attack is the same as for parent A; on 4-6, the damage caused is the same as for parent B.

Breath Weapon

The damage caused by a crossbreed’s breath weapon will always be the same as one of its parents



(random selection)—at the appropriate age category, of course. (Thus the breath weapon of a very young red-blue cross will cause either 4d10+2 or 4d8+2 points of damage, 50% chance of either.) The nature of the breath weapon is another matter. The crossbreed can inherit the breath weapon from one parent, or can possess a breath weapon that's a combination of the two breath weapons. To determine this, roll d100 and consult the following table:

Roll	Breath Weapon
01-40	Same as parent A
41-80	Same as parent B
81-00	Combination

It's up to the DM to decide exactly what the combination weapon looks and acts like, but it should come as a complete shock to the players. As an example, a purple dragon might breathe a cloud of flame that's so highly charged with static electricity that mini lightning bolts are crackling within it. Half of the damage caused by the breath results from the flame, and half from the electricity. Thus a creature who is immune to fire (for example) would still take half damage from the breath weapon (save for one-quarter damage) as a result of the electricity. A black-red cross, on the other hand, might spit a corrosive liquid that bursts into flame on contact and burns like napalm.

Innate Abilities and Spellcasting

Crossbreed dragons will inherit their spellcasting ability from one parent and their innate abilities from the other. As discussed in the chapter on "Role-Playing Dragons," the crossbreed must be taught how to access its innate

abilities and its spellcasting skills by the appropriate parent.

Behavior

In the case of crossbreeds, behavior is an acquired, not an innate, characteristic. It will pick up the behavior patterns of whichever parent raises it. Typically the crossbreed will leave the parent ten years before a member of the parent's species normally would.

Crossbreeds are typically asocial-not antisocial, in the sense that they shun other creatures; they simply don't actively seek out companionship. Crossbreeds vary widely in their attitude toward mating. Some seem asexual, having no interest in the activity at all—as though the fact of their sterility made the whole process a waste of time. Other individuals go to the opposite extreme, devoting much of their time to the pursuit of mating opportunities. Most crossbreeds fall somewhere in the middle, sharing the sexual drives of the parent who spent the most time with them during their rearing.

Intelligence is, largely, an acquired characteristic as well. The crossbreed will display the same intelligence range as the parent that raised it, with one complication. If the other parent is more intelligent than the parent raising the crossbreed, then the crossbreed's intelligence will fall at the upper end of the raising parent's range. The converse is also true.

As an example, take a pink dragon (a red-white cross) who is raised by the red parent. Reds are exceptionally intelligent, with Intelligence scores of 15-16. The other parent, the white, is considerably less intelligent. Thus the crossbreed would have an Intelligence score of 15. If the crossbreed had been raised by the white parent, however, it would have displayed an Intelligence score of 7 (the upper end of white dragons' Intelligence range).



Mercury Dragon -
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Mercury Dragon



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate and subtropical/Mountains (preferably volcanic)
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary or clan
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	High (13-14)
TREASURE:	See below
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic good
NO. APPEARING:	1 (2-5)
ARMOR CLASS:	-1 (base)
MOVEMENT:	15, Fl 36 (C), Jp 3
HIT DICE:	11 (base)
THACO:	9 (base)
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3 + special
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d4/2d4/2d10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Variable
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	See below
SIZE:	H (25' base)
MORALE:	Fanatic (17 base)
XP VALUE:	Variable

Mercury dragons are fast, highly-maneuverable creatures with relatively small bodies and long tails. Although basically good in alignment, they are very whimsical creatures, making decisions and changing them at the drop of a hat. Their behavior is almost impossible to predict.

At birth, a mercury dragon's scales are dull silver. As it ages, the scales become brighter and brighter, until at adult age they gain a brilliant mirror finish. Sunlight or other sources of light reflecting off the scales and wings of a mercury dragon can be blinding.

Mercury dragons speak the tongue common to good dragons, but at such a high speed that there's only a 75% chance that any given statement is understood.

Combat: Mercury dragons are as unpredictable when it comes to combat as they are in any other situation. Sometimes they parley before combat, other times they wade right in, and yet other times they do whatever it takes to avoid combat. They are good-aligned, however, and they never attack other good-aligned creatures unless sorely provoked.

Mercuries always use their spells in combat if at all possible. They're very creative, so even if they've memorized nothing but *Tenser's floating disk*, *unseen servant*, or something else not related to combat, they'll figure out some innovative way of using it to their advantage.

In addition to their breath weapon and the attack modes shared by all dragons, they have an additional attack technique. If the illumination in the area is moonlight or brighter (and this includes spells like *light*), they can curve the mirror-bright membranes of their wings to reflect and concentrate the available light into a beam of dazzling brightness. They can aim this beam at one enemy per round—at the expense of not being able to use their wing buffet that round—and the enemy must roll a successful saving throw vs. spell or be temporarily blinded for 1d4+1 rounds. If not using this technique as a weapon, they can use the beam much like a spotlight.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: A mercury's breath weapon is a beam of brilliant, yellow-gold light. The beam is five feet wide and extends in a straight line 60 feet from the creature's mouth. Any creature caught in the beam receives damage from heat (saving throw for half damage). The heat of the beam is intense enough to ignite flammable objects that fail their saving throws vs. magical fire.

A mercury dragon casts its spells and uses its magical abilities at 10th level, plus its combat modifier.

At birth, mercury dragons are immune to fire and all magical forms of blindness. They also receive a +3 bonus to saving throws against light-based attacks (such as *light* cast at their eyes). As they age, they gain the following additional powers:

Young	<i>gaze reflection</i> at will
Juvenile	<i>mirror image</i> three times per day
Adult	<i>polymorph self</i> twice per day
Old	<i>telekinesis</i> twice per day
Wyrms	<i>project image</i> once per day

Habitat/Society: Mercury dragons are loners by nature. Having another creature around would put more constraints on their freedom of behavior than they'd feel comfortable with. Their mating behavior is like that of brass dragons: free-wheeling, fun-loving, and generally irresponsible. If the female becomes impregnated, however, the male's protective instincts take over. Mercuries are very protective of their offspring, and will—if necessary—give their lives to save them. Offspring usually stay with their parents until they reach the juvenile age category, although some break away much sooner.

Because of their unpredictable, sometimes almost irrational nature, mercuries very rarely have close relationships with other creatures in the area. For this reason, mercuries have to depend on magical and mechanical traps and guards to protect their lairs when they're away.

Ecology: Mercuries eat anything, but they prefer to feed on metal ores. Although they have no venom attacks, the flesh of mercury dragons is highly poisonous.

Age	Body Lgt.(')	Tail Lgt.(')	AC	Breath Weapon	Spells W/P	MR	Treas.	XP Value
1	3-6	3-6	2	2d8+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	1,400
2	6-11	6-11	1	4d8+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	2,000
3	11-17	11-20	0	6d8+3	Nil	Nil	Nil	4,000
4	17-21	20-25	-1	8d8+4	1	10%	½H	7,000
5	21-24	26-30	-2	10d8+5	11	15%	H	9,000
6	24-27	30-33	-3	12d8+6	2 1 1	20%	H	10,000
7	27-30	33-36	-4	14d8+7	2 2 2	25%	H	11,000
8	30-33	36-39	-5	16d8+8	3 2 2 1	30%	H, I	13,000
9	33-36	39-42	-6	18d8+9	3 3 2 2	35%	H, I	14,000
10	36-39	42-45	-7	20d8+10	3 3 3 2 1	40%	Hx2, I	15,000
11	39-41	45-48	-8	22d8+11	3 3 3 2 2 1	50%	Hx2, I, X	16,000
12	41-44	48-51	-9	24d8+12	3 3 3 3 2 2 1	70%	Hx3, I, T, X	17,000

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate/Mountains or barrens
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	Special
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	1 (1-4)
ARMOR CLASS:	2 (base)
MOVEMENT:	6, Fl 21 (D)
HIT DICE:	12 (base)
THACO:	9 (base)
NO. OF ATTACKS:	See below
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	See below
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Variable
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	See below
SIZE:	G (45' base)
MORALE:	Steady (11-12)
XP VALUE:	Variable

Dracohydras are hideous, multiheaded winged monsters that combine the worst features of dragons and hydras. No one knows precisely what their origin is. Some sages believe they're ancient off-shoots of the pre-dragons that have been hibernating for millions of years; others believe they're the next step in the evolution of dragons; still others think that they're the result of tampering by supernatural beings—perhaps deities, or perhaps Tiamat the Chromatic Dragon.

Dracohydras have been reported with two to five heads. Twenty-five percent of dracohydra have two heads, 50% have three heads, 15% have four heads, and 10% have five heads.

The creatures are a muddy brown color, ranging to a lighter brown, almost cream, on their bellies. Their eyes are red.

Dracohydras speak their own tongue, a derivative of the language of evil dragons. Dracohydras can understand about half of what evil dragons say, and vice versa. Dracohydras know no other languages.

Combat: Dracohydras share the same attack routines as standard dragons. Each round, each of the creature's heads can either bite or use its breath weapon. Heads inflict 2d8 points of damage per bite. The creature's claw attack inflicts 1d8 points of damage per claw.

A dracohydra's total hit points are divided as follows: half are assigned to the body, and the other half are split evenly between the heads. (For example, say that a three-headed dracohydra has a total of 72 hit points. Its body has 36 hit points, while each of its heads has 12.) When a



dracohydra head has been reduced to 0 hit points, the head "dies" and becomes useless. As soon as all heads are destroyed or the body is reduced to 0 hit points, the dracohydra is dead.

In combat, 80% of successful frontal attacks against a dracohydra damage a head (random selection); only 20% hit the body. For foes attacking from the side, the odds are reversed: 80% of hits damage the body, while 20% hit a randomly-selected head. Foes attacking from the rear always inflict damage on the body.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: Dracohydras spit sprays of concentrated acid, similar to the breath weapon of a black dragon. The acid stream is three feet wide and extends 40 feet in a straight line from the creature's head. All creatures caught in this stream must roll successful saving throws vs. breath weapon for half damage.

Each head is able to use its breath weapon independently, dividing the total allowable damage between as many uses as the creature desires. This means that a five-headed great wyrm is an incredibly daunting foe, since each of its five heads can inflict 12d2 + 12 points of damage.

Dracohydras use their special abilities at 8th level, plus their combat modifier.

Dracohydras are born with an innate immunity to acid. As they age, they gain the following additional powers:

Young adult *wall of fog* twice per day
 Adult *darkness* three times per day
 Old *stinking cloud* twice per day
 Wyrmling *cloudkill* once per day

Habitat/Society: Dracohydras are found in inaccessible mountain areas far from civilization. They prefer snow-covered peaks and mountains around which storms frequently play.

Dracohydras are most like whites in their outlook: rapacious, selfish, and ferocious. Their low intelligence makes it difficult for them to plan or think in an abstract manner, so their behavior is always direct.

Dracohydras are ferocious hunters that often kill other creatures even when they aren't hungry, apparently for sport. The creatures are basically bullies. If faced by a strong foe that won't back down, they often run away. Conversely, they enjoy playing with a weaker foe before killing it.

The creatures are by preference solitary, associating with others of their kind only to mate. Offspring remain with the parents only until they reach the young age category. They then either head out on their own or—rarely—challenge one of the parents for its hoard. Parents protect their offspring, but not

at the cost of their own lives. Should it look as though continued defense might mean death, the parents flee. Any encounter with more than one dracohydra is with a mated pair with one or two offspring of age category hatchling (60%) or very young (40%).

Dracohydras hate all other dracoforms. If they think they can get away with it, they'll attack other dracoforms on sight. Dracohydras also have no love for humans, demihumans, and humanoids. They sometimes enslave these smaller creatures, but the period of servitude never lasts long before the dracohydra gets hungry and eats its slaves.

Ecology: Like other dragons, dracohydras can consume almost anything, including nonliving materials like rocks and gems. (As the famed dragonhunter Smerdiuk Dragonbane once put it, "If it's not on fire, they'll eat it. Hells, if it is on fire, they'll put it out *then* eat it.") The creatures have a continuously voracious hunger, which they much prefer to satisfy with fresh meat.

The main enemies of dracohydras are stormgiants, stone giants, and red dragons—who consider the flesh of the creatures' young to be a delicacy.

Age	Body Lgt.(')	Tail Lgt.(')	AC	Breath	Weapon	Spells W/P	MR	Treas.	XP Value
1	5-14	2-6	5	1d2+1		Nil	Nil	Nil	1,400
2	14-23	6-12	4	2d2+2		Nil	Nil	Nil	2,000
3	23-32	12-20	3	3d2+3		Nil	Nil	Nil	4,000
4	32-42	20-30	2	4d2+4		Nil	Nil	E	7,000
5	42-52	30-40	1	5d2+5		Nil	5%	E, O, S	9,000
6	52-63	40-50	0	6d2+6		Nil	10%	E, O, S	10,000
7	63-74	50-60	-1	7d2+7		Nil	15%	E, O, S	11,000
8	74-85	60-70	-2	8d2+8		Nil	20%	E, O, Sx2	13,000
9	85-96	70-80	-3	9d2+9		Nil	20%	E, O, Sx2	14,000
10	96-108	80-90	-4	10d2+10		Nil	20%	E, O, Sx2	15,000
11	108-120	90-100	-5	11d2+11		Nil	20%	E, O, Sx3	16,000
12	120-125	100-105	-6	12d2+12		Nil	20%	E, O, Sx3	17,000

Steel Dragon



CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate/Cities; rarely, temperate/hills, barrens, or forested hills
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Supra-genius (19-20)
TREASURE:	Special
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful neutral (good)
<hr/>	
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	-2 (base)
MOVEMENT:	12, Fl 30 (C)
HIT DICE:	12 (base)
THACO:	9 (base)
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3 + special
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-10/1-10/3-30
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Variable
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Special
SIZE:	H (25' base)
MORALE:	Fearless (20 base)
XP VALUE:	Variable

Steel dragons love the companionship of humans and demihumans, thus explaining their preference for cities. They are highly magical and intellectual.

Although considerably smaller than many of its kin, the steel dragon shares the strength and robustness typical of other dragons. Its scales are a bright metallic grey reminiscent of brushed steel, ranging to a darker hue—almost like blued gunmetal—on the creature's underside and toward its tail. The membranes of its wings have the sheen of fine silk.

Steel dragons speak their own tongue, the tongue common to all non-evil dragons, and all commonly-used human and demihuman tongues.

There is almost certainly a close relationship between the steel dragon and the Greyhawk dragon of Oerth.

Combat: At heart a peaceful creature, the steel dragon avoids combat where it can. If conflict is inevitable, however, it fights with great intelligence and lethality, using a claw/claw/bite attack routine.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: Three times per day the dragon can exhale a highly potent gas that has an effect similar to the *feign death* spell. Characters exposed to the gas must roll a successful saving throw vs. poison with a -4 penalty, or fall into a comatose state, virtually indistinguishable from death, which lasts for 2d10 turns. The maximum amount it can exhale would fill a cube 30 feet on a side; however, the dragon can carefully meter the amount. The gas is quickly absorbed through the skin, which is just as effective as if breathed. Partial protection can be gained through coating all



exposed skin with lard or other grease, as this attenuates the effect of the gas (the penalty is now only -2). The gas's effectiveness is very short-lived—within two minutes of exposure to oxygen, the gas becomes inert.

In preference to any physical attack, the dragon is likely to use magic. From birth, it can *polymorph self* five times per day. Each change in form lasts until the dragon chooses a different form; reverting to the dragon's normal form does not count as a change. Steel dragons cast their spells and use their magical abilities at 11th level, plus its combat modifier.

As they age, they gain the following additional powers:

Young	<i>detect lie</i> three times a day
Juvenile	<i>charm person</i> three times a day
Adult	<i>suggestion</i> three times a day
Mature adult	<i>antipathy/sympathy</i> twice a day
Old	<i>imbue with spell ability</i> once a day

The steel dragon is immune to wizard spells of 1st through 4th level. Against all other magical effects, it has a magic resistance of 75% (regardless of age). It can use all magical items permitted to the wizard class.

Habitat/Society: Because of its love for and fascination with humanity and demihumanity, the steel dragon often lives polymorphed into human form. Its favored habitat is a large city, where it fre-

Steel Dragon



quently owns a big house. Steel dragons are sometimes the centers of artistic and intellectual gatherings—poetry readings, discussion groups, etc. In their human identities, these artistically inclined dragons are sometimes well-known among the intelligentsia and patrons of the arts. They keep their true nature secret.

Most steel dragons, however, are less outgoing. Although by no means antisocial or reclusive, they limit themselves to a small group of friends and acquaintances. These confidants can come from all walks of life, but they are usually selected on the basis of their access to interesting and hard-to-obtain information. Steel dragons with this outlook often become clearinghouses or brokers of valuable information and intelligence.

Food is usually the creature's biggest problem: Although it might take the form of a man or woman, it must eat enough to maintain its true bulk. Every two weeks or so, it drops out of sight and travels to nearby wilderness areas (where it might claim to own a hunting lodge). Here it hunts, making up for its enforced fast (at least, by dragon standards) in the city. Like other dragons, the steel variety is omnivorous, but it prefers fresh meat. It never eats domesticated herds, preying instead on wild animals—particularly those baneful to humankind.

Steel dragons are very rare creatures. Even the largest city might have only one or two living (secretly) in its midst. Although they take stringent precautions to prevent their true nature from being discovered, one steel dragon can recognize another on sight. Dragons in the same city are usually on good terms, visiting each other's homes, and occasionally going on "hunting trips" together. Every 12 years, a steel dragon seeks a mate. Ideally this mate is from the same city, although steel dragons have been known to range far and wide searching for just the right companion. The couple retires to the wilderness, where they raise a single offspring. Once the youngster is old enough to fend successfully for itself—about 15 years—the parents return to their separate lives, although they will usually remain close; they are always ready to help the offspring if it gets itself into serious trouble. The creatures rarely select the same mate twice.

Ecology: Steel dragons can be found—if they wish to be found—in any large town or city. They are at the top of the food chain, with no natural enemies. In cities, they rarely work as artisans, preferring to act as collectors and disseminators of information (like sages).

Age	Body Lgt.(')	Tail Lgt.(')	AC	Breath Weapon	Spells W/P	MR	Treas.	XP Value
1	3-6	2-5	1	Special	Nil	75%	Nil	1,400
2	6-11	5-9	0	Special	Nil	75%	Nil	2,000
3	11-17	9-13	-1	Special	Nil	75%	Nil	4,000
4	17-21	13-18	-2	Special	1	75%	½H	7,000
5	21-24	18-20	-3	Special	2 1	75%	H	9,000
6	24-27	20-23	-4	Special	2 2 1	75%	H	10,000
7	27-30	23-26	-5	Special	3 2 2	75%	H	11,000
8	30-33	26-29	-6	Special	3 3 2 1	75%	Hx2, I	13,000
9	33-36	29-32	-7	Special	3 3 3 2	75%	Hx2, I	14,000
10	36-39	32-35	-8	Special	3 3 3 3 1	75%	Hx3, I	15,000
11	39-41	35-38	-9	Special	3 3 3 3 2 1	75%	Hx3, I, X	16,000
12	41-44	38-41	-10	Special	3 3 3 3 2 2 1	75%	Hx3, I, T, X	17,000

Yellow Dragon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Desert
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11-12)
TREASURE:	See below
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	1 (1-4)
ARMOR CLASS:	0 (base)
MOVEMENT:	12, Fl 30 (C)
HIT DICE:	13 (base)
THACO:	7 (base)
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3 + special
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d8/1d8/2d8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Variable
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	See below
SIZE:	G (36' base)
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE:	Variable

Although the existence of yellow dragons has long been predicted by sages (based on theories of primary colors), the first specimen was spotted only five or so years ago. The creatures are solitary and secretive, preferring to lay in wait for prey to stumble into carefully-prepared traps instead of hunting actively.

At birth, yellows have soft, tan-colored scales. As they grow older, the scales harden and become lighter in color, eventually reaching the yellow-grey of desert sands. Their scales always have a dusty texture to them, giving them a finish that doesn't reflect light well. Even their teeth and claws have a similar finish. No part of the yellow dragon will glint in the sunlight, thereby giving away its position.

Yellow dragons speak their own tongue, which is quite different than that spoken by other evil dragons. Yellows have no interest in speaking with other races, and so they learn no other languages.

Combat: Although preferring guile to combat and ambush to attack, yellows are fierce and cunning fighters. Even if forced into a situation where direct combat is inevitable, they'll still use their spells and innate abilities so as to mislead, misdirect, and distract their opponents.

A favorite hunting tactic for a yellow is to dig a steep-walled, cone-shaped depression in the sand, and then bury itself at the bottom of this crater with just its eyes and nostrils above the surface. When an unfortunate creature stumbles into the large depression, the dragon begins moving its wings below the surface of the sand, causing the steep walls of the cone to collapse. Trapped in a sand avalanche, the prey tumbles right into the dragon's mouth.



A yellow dragon casts its spells and uses its magical abilities at 8th level, plus its combat modifier.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: A yellow dragon's breath weapon is a high-velocity blast of scorching air mixed with sand (imagine a superheated sandstorm). This affects an area 50 feet long, 40 feet wide, and 20 feet high. Creatures caught within this blast must roll successful saving throws vs. breath weapon for half damage. Regardless of the outcome of this roll, they must make another saving throw vs. breath weapon. A failure on this saving throw means that the abrasive sand in the breath blast has damaged their eyes, blinding them for 1d4+1 rounds.

At birth, yellow dragons are immune to fire and heat, and they can cast *silence*, 10'/radius at will. As they age, they gain the following additional powers:

Young	<i>create or destroy water</i> three times per day
Juvenile	<i>dust devil</i> three times per day
Adult	<i>improved invisibility</i> twice per day
Old	<i>wind wall</i> three times per day
Wyrm	<i>enervation</i> three times per day

Habitat/Society: Yellow dragons love deserts, preferring areas of sandy, windswept desolation. They are most comfortable in daytime temperatures of 105° and up, although they can easily survive subfreezing temperatures at night. (The first

Yellow Dragon



specimen of a yellow dragon was collected in an area of Anauroch called the Anvil of the Gods, where the average daytime temperature is 115°. They share much the same territory as brasses; thus the species occasionally come into conflict.

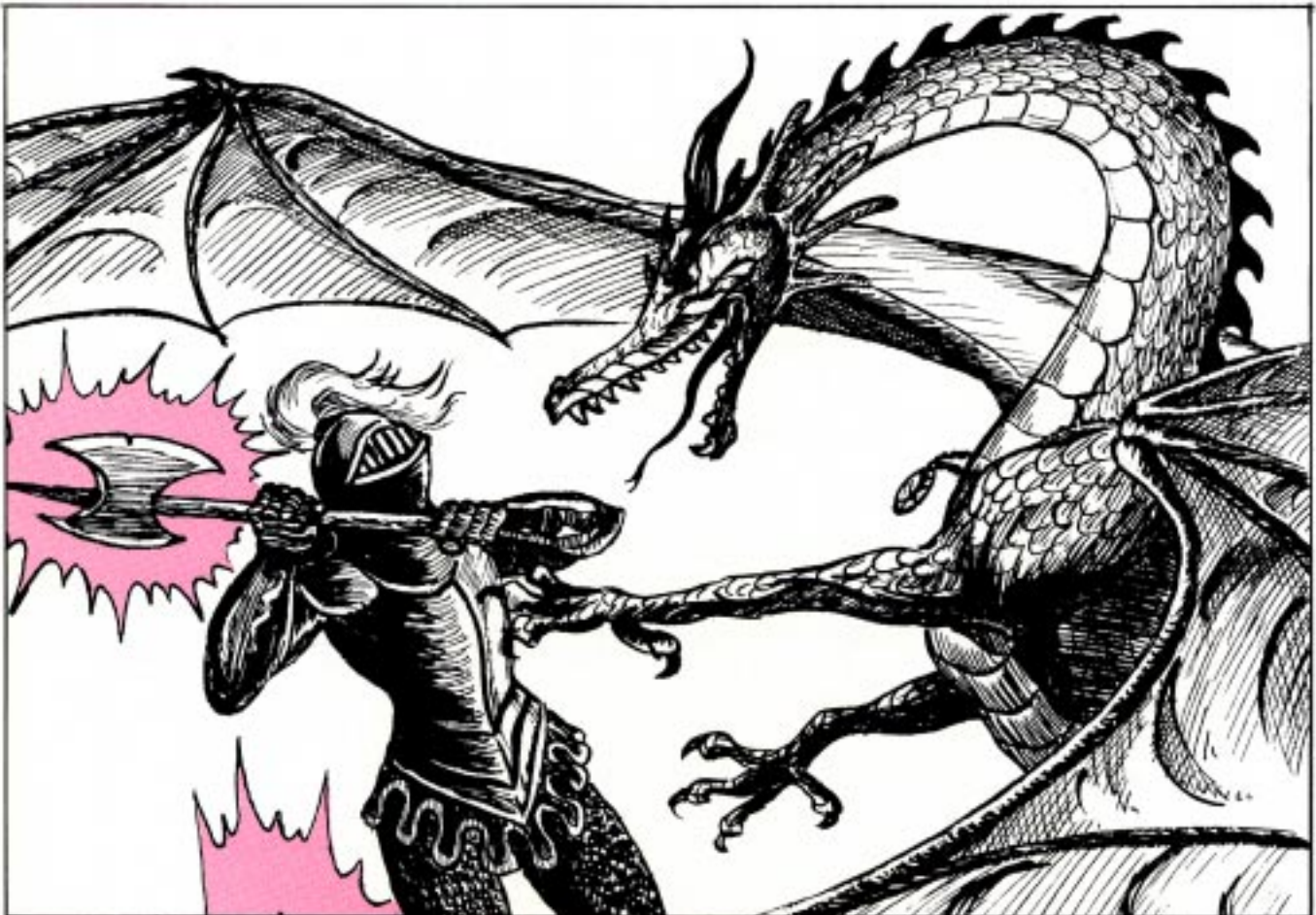
Yellows are solitary, selfish creatures that form no close bonds with any other creature, including other yellows. They are highly territorial; the only time they'll let another yellow into their territory is when it's a member of the opposite sex, and the dragon is in the mood for mating . . . which is actually quite rare. Immediately after mating, the drag-

ons separate. The mother raises the offspring, but won't go out of her way to protect them from attackers. The young dragons usually leave home before they reach the juvenile age category.

The main enemies of yellow dragons are brasses, who will actively hunt and kill the smaller creatures.

Ecology: Although able to eat anything, yellows favor fresh meat. . . preferably still kicking. (Demi)humans are considered a delicacy, as are the unhatched eggs of brass dragons. (Yellows rarely get to enjoy this latter feast.)

Age	Body Lgt.(')	Tail Lgt.(')	AC	Breath	Weapon	Spells W/P	MR	Treas.	XP Value
1	2-7	1-4	3	2d4+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	1,400
2	7-16	4-12	2	4d4+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	2,000
3	16-35	12-21	1	6d4+3	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	3,000
4	35-44	21-28	0	8d4+4	Nil	Nil	Nil	E	5,000
5	44-53	28-36	-1	10d4+5	1	1	Nil	E, O, S	7,000
6	53-62	36-45	-2	12d4+6	11	11	5%	E, O, S	9,000
7	62-71	45-54	-3	14d4+7	21	21	10%	E, O, S	10,000
8	71-80	54-62	-4	16d4+8	2 2 1	2 2 1	15%	E, O, Sx2	11,000
9	80-89	62-70	-5	18d4+9	2 2 2	2 2 2	20%	E, O, Sx2	13,000
10	89-98	70-78	-6	20d4+10	2 2 2 1	2 2 2 1	25%	E, O, Sx2	14,000
11	98-107	78-85	-7	22d4+11	2 2 2 2	2 2 2 2	30%	E, O, Sx3	15,000
12	107-116	85-94	-8	24d4+12	2 2 2 2 1	2 2 2 2 1	35%	E, O, Sx3	16,000



Draconic Spells

Certain dragons have developed a number of unique spells that seem to be usable only by dracoforms. (Many of these were devised by Nexus, the golden great wyrm.) The majority of these spells seem to depend somehow on the unique architecture of the draconic mind. Thus most magic-using dragons are theoretically capable of learning these spells. Nondraconic spellcasters, however, are generally incapable of wielding this magic.

There's no reason why human and demihuman wizards can't research their own versions of these spells once they've seen the effects, however. Should they develop their own versions of these spells, the spells are typically higher level than the draconic versions. (For example, a human

mage trying to develop her own version of *calm* might find it to be a 5th- or 6th-level spell, rather than a 1st-level spell.) In addition, the human varieties of these spells have significantly decreased power, as reflected in area of effect, range, etc. Thus a human version of *breathblock* might create a 10' by 10' shield, rather than the 50' by 50' barrier created by the draconic version.

Calm

(Alteration)

Level: 1
 Range: 0
 Component: V
 Duration: Concentration
 Casting Time: 1
 Area of Effect: Caster
 Saving Throw: None

The spell *calm* enables a dragon to temporarily nullify the effects of its fear aura. While the dragon concentrates, creatures suffer no morale effects from the sight or presence of the dragon. The caster can end the spell at any time simply by ceasing to concentrate on it.

The spell is ended immediately if the dragon suffers any damage, or if it casts a spell of 4th level or higher (the concentration required to cast such a spell disrupts its focus on damping its fear aura).





Hand (Invocation/ Evocation)

Level: 2
Range: 5 yards
per level
Components:
V, S

Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

For dragons unable to polymorph or shapechange into human or demihuman form, the lack of small manipulating digits is a real problem. They can't write, they can't open small jewelry boxes, etc. The *hand* spell solves this problem.

The spell brings into being a faintly glowing area of force similar in size and shape to a human hand. It has four fingers and an opposable thumb. The fingers of the hand are much more precise in their movements than the digits of an unseen servant. In fact, the Dexterity of the hand's fingers is equal to the casting dragon's Intelligence plus 0-2 (1d3-1).

The hand is very weak, particularly when compared to the creature casting it. It can lift objects weighing up to 60 pounds, and it can apply an equivalent amount of force. Thus it can crush only the most fragile of objects. The hand cannot wield a weapon, nor can it throw an object.

The hand can deliver a single slapping attack per round; its THACO is the same as that of the caster. This slap causes no damage, but a successful hit will break a spellcaster's concentration and ruin a spell.

The caster must be in direct line of sight of the hand. As soon as the

caster's view of the hand is blocked, the spell terminates.

Hand is one of the few draconic spells that might possibly be learned by a nondragon.

Find Humanoid Familiar (Conjuration/Summoning)

Level: 3
Range: 1 mile/level
Component: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1d20 hours
Area of Effect: 1 familiar
Saving Throw: Special

This spell is similar to the normal wizard spell *find familiar*, except that the familiar summoned by this spell is a humanoid. Only races of the goblinoid class are eligible to become familiars (i.e., kobolds, goblins, orcs, and hobgoblins).

The humanoid so attracted is unshakably loyal to the dragon caster (morale 20), willingly giving its life for its master. The dragon and humanoid share the ability to communicate telepathically at a range of up to five miles. The dragon gains no sensory bonuses, and it suffers no damage should the humanoid familiar die.

The casting takes considerable time. The dragon must be in a calm, relaxed state, well away from any distractions, and must continuously repeat a monotonous, hypnotic chant until the familiar appears. It's impossible for the dragon to maintain the chant for longer than 20 hours, so if at the end of this period no familiar has arrived, the spell is a failure. A dragon can cast this spell no more than once per year; it can have no more than one familiar at one time.

When the familiar arrives, it is totally loyal to its master. *Find humanoid familiar* is actually a form of charm, however; it grants its victim a similar opportunity to throw off its effects. On a regular basis, the familiar can roll a saving throw vs. spell, this roll suffering a penalty of -1 for each three age categories of the casting dragon. The frequency of the saving throw depends on the race of the familiar.

A successful saving throw means that the familiar has thrown off the effects of the spell and is totally free-willed again. (Its first reaction will probably be to escape.) If the dragon is within five miles of the familiar and awake when it shakes off the influence, it will sense the termination of the telepathic bond, and thus know that its familiar is free. The dragon's response depends on its alignment and mood.

The DM can select an appropriate humanoid candidate depending on where the dragon is casting the spell, or he can use the following table:

D20 Roll	Familiar	Frequency of Save
1-6	Kobold	Every 2 years
7-11	Goblin	Every year
12-14	Orc	Every 9 months
15-16	Hobgoblin	Every 6 months
17-20 *		*

* No humanoid available; spell fails.

Killing a familiar while it is still bound by the spell is not acceptable behavior, and will probably bring down upon the dragon retribution from various celestial powers. (Killing the thing once it has shaken the spell is just fine, however.)

Humanoids, humans, and demi-humans may try to develop a similar spell on their own, but they gain no benefits from any knowledge they have of the draconic version. The spell is too closely aligned to the mental architecture and innate magical abilities of dragons to be translated into a form usable by nondraciforms.

Venomdust

(Invocation/Evocation)

Level: 3
Range: 0
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 month/level
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

The *venomdust* spell enables the dragon to create small amounts of poisonous dust with an incredible degree of toxicity. This dust can then be sprinkled onto objects, where it adheres. Anyone touching an object so treated with bare skin must roll a successful saving throw vs. poison or die agonizingly in one round. Even someone who successfully saves suffers 2d10 points of damage. The caster is totally immune to the toxicity of the *venomdust*.

For each effective level of the caster, the spell creates enough dust to cover an area of one square foot. Thus a red wyrm, which casts spells at an effective level of 20, could create enough *venomdust* to cover a 4' x 5' area.

Venomdust can be detected by *detect magic*, and inactivated by a successful casting of *dispel magic*. The caster can dispel the toxicity of *venomdust* at any time.

Dragons frequently use venomdust to protect the most precious

parts of their hoards. Even Lawful Good dragons sometimes use *venomdust*.

Firetrail

(Invocation/Evocation)

Level: 4
Range: Any
Component: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

Firetrail is a spell developed by an ancient—and long dead—red dragon named Thermal for a specific purpose: setting fire to towns and other settlements that the creature wanted to attack. This is a very rare spell, and only a few evil dragons are aware of it.

Firetrail must be cast by a dragon while in flight. As its name implies, it creates a trail of tiny, fiery droplets in the air behind the dragon. These droplets fall to the ground at a rate of 30 feet per round. When they touch the ground or any solid object, they burst into flame, each burning for only a few seconds but with the same amount of heat as a burning torch. This fire has an 80% chance of igniting anything flammable (usual modifiers apply for wet material, etc.). The length of the trail is 40 feet per effective level of the casting dragon. Thus a red wyrm (effective level 20) could create a firetrail 800 feet long.

While it is still falling, the trail can be disrupted by spells like *gust of wind* or by natural winds. These effects won't prevent the droplets of the trail from reaching the ground, however: they'll just spread it out, possibly enhancing its effects. (The DM must carefully

adjudicate this depending on circumstances.)

Although the spell's main purpose is to put a town to the torch, *firetrail* can also cause

serious personal damage. Anyone under the firetrail when it reaches the ground is struck by 1d20 droplets, each of which inflicts 1d2 points of damage (roll a successful saving throw vs. spell for half damage). Any creature foolish enough to fly through a descending firetrail is struck by 3d10 droplets, each inflicting 1d2 points of damage (roll a successful saving throw vs. spell for half damage).





Wingbind (Evocation)

Level: 4
Range: 40 feet/
level
Component: V
Duration: 1
round/level

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: One dragon

Saving Throw: Special

Wingbind is a highly effective combat spell known to very few dragons. When the spell is cast, it creates a web or net of force that entangles around the target (which must be a dragon). This force net has the same effect as a grappling attack: the dragon is unable to fly and plummets toward the ground.

The target dragon receives an initial saving throw vs. spell to avoid the effects of the spell. At the end of each subsequent round, it receives another saving throw vs. spell, but this time with a cumulative -3 penalty. A successful saving throw means that the dragon has broken free from the net of force.

The *wingbind* spell remains in effect until either the duration expires, the victim successfully saves, the caster is slain or rendered unconscious, the caster purposely releases the spell, or the victim slams into the ground.

The rules for grappling as discussed in Chapter 4 apply to uses of *wingbind* as well. A wingbound dragon falls at 125 feet per second, or 7,500 feet per round. After the *wingbind* spell is terminated—for whatever reason—the victim continues to fall for another 2d10 seconds (250-2,500 feet). If it strikes the ground during this time, it suf-

fers 2d6 points of damage per ten feet fallen, up to a maximum of 20d6. The rules for power-glides (see the section on “Pulling Up”) also apply.

Should human or demihuman mages try to develop their own versions of this powerful spell, they’ll find it to be a 9th-level spell.

Breathblock

(Evocation)

Level: 5
Range: 10 feet/level
Component: V
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 50’x50’ shield
Saving Throw: None

Breathblock is another useful combat spell, although it has its defensive component as well. The spell brings into being an invisible wall of force 50 feet on a side. This wall is totally impassable to all forms of draconic breath weapons. The caster can bring the wall into existence anywhere within the maximum range. He can move the wall instantaneously to any point inside that range.

Used as a defense, the wall of force can be maneuvered as a shield to protect the caster, other creatures, or valuable objects (i.e., treasure).

Used as an attack, the caster can position the invisible shield directly in front of the mouth of a dragon about to use a breath weapon. Since the shield is completely impervious to dragon breath, the breath weapon either reflects or billows back upon the breathing dragon. Unless the dragon is immune to its own attack form—which is usually the case—the dragon suffers half damage from

the breath weapon (roll a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon for one-quarter damage). Any other creatures within 30 feet of the breathing dragon—but on its side of the invisible shield—also suffer one-half damage from the breath weapon (roll a successful saving throw for one-quarter damage).

The most spectacular use of this spell was when the legendary gold Autophon defeated the demon Lash and the red dragon the demon used for a mount. As the red dragon prepared to use its breath weapon, Autophon cast *breathblock*. The red’s fire billowed backward around it, causing the dragon no damage but so enraging the demon that it attacked its own mount. This took the pressure off the gold Autophon long enough for him to slay both demon and red dragon.

Contact Archetype

(Divination)

Level: 7
Range: 0
Component: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 4 rounds
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell is similar to the normal wizard spell *contact other plane*, except that with it a dragon can contact only one of the two archetypes of dragonkind—Bahamut the Platinum Dragon or Tiamat the Chromatic Dragon. Both powers resent such contact, so only brief answers are given to the questions the caster asks. For every three effective levels (or fraction thereof) it possesses, the dragon can ask one question. Contact with the minds of such power-

ful creatures poses the risk of insanity; for powerful dragons, this risk is generally lower than for humans contacting extraplanar beings, however. If insanity occurs, it strikes as soon as the first question is asked, and lasts for 2d10 weeks.

Power	Chance of Insanity *	Chance to Know	Chance of Veracity†
Bahamut	30%	70%	100%
Tiamat	45%	85%	75%‡

* For each effective level of the dragon caster, decrease the chance of insanity by 1 %.

† If the archetype doesn't know an answer, and the veracity roll fails, the archetype emphatically gives an incorrect answer. If the chance of veracity is made, the archetype's answer is "unknown."

‡ Tiamat's chance of veracity is decreased by 15% for each step of alignment the questioner is away from Tiamat's Lawful Evil. (Thus, if the questioner is a Chaotic Good brass, the chance of veracity is only 15%.)

There are rumors that various powerful human mages have developed their own versions of this spell. (These versions are all 9th level.) The rumors continue, however, to relate that any mage who has actually tried casting the spell has become incurably insane.

Death Door

(Necromancy)

Level: 7

Range: 0

Component: V

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 2 rounds

Area of Effect: One doorway/portal

Saving Throw: Negates

Using this spell, the draconic caster can ward a particular doorway or portal so that any creature who tries to pass through the portal without first speaking a word of command is immediately the subject of a modified form of *death* spell. (Here the word "portal" can also refer to a cave opening or tunnel no more than 30 feet in diameter.) A single application of this spell can kill up to 50 Hit Dice or levels of creatures before becoming inert.

Each creature passing through the portal rolls a saving throw vs. wands with a -2 penalty; a successful save means that the creature survives. Even if the creature successfully saves, the creature's Hit Dice or level is deducted from the total power remaining to the warded doorway. If a creature passing through the door has more Hit Dice or levels than remain in the spell, the spell ends and the creature is unharmed.

For example: A dragon has cast *death door* on the entrance into her cave. Three characters try to pass through the portal—a 15th-level fighter, a 16th-level cleric, and a 16th-level wizard. The fighter and cleric fail their saving throws and die immediately; the wizard makes his saving throw and survives. The *death door* spell has expended 47 levels (15 + 16 + 16), which means that only 3 remain. Later, a 4th-level thief walks through the door. Since the thief has more levels than remain to the spell, the spell ends and the thief is unaffected.

Note that only the doorway or portal itself is warded. A character could conceivably smash through or otherwise penetrate the wall next to the door and enter safely. A portal protected by a *death door* spell radiates a strong aura of nec-

romantic magic. While casting the spell, the dragon can choose whether or not the warding is to be visible. If the dragon

chooses visibility, the portal is outlined by a faint blue glow; this glow isn't bright enough to be seen in full daylight, but it is obvious under twilight or darker conditions.

According to rumor, a number of human mages have developed their own (9th-level) versions of this spell. All have suffered highly unpleasant fates when they tried to use the spells, however. Almost half of the mages died during the casting, while the others suffered various degrees of permanent paralysis or contracted terminal illnesses.





Cold Curtain (Necromancy)

Level: 8
Range: 0
Component: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time:

2 rounds

Area of Effect: One doorway/portal
Saving Throw: Negates

This is another defensive or warding spell quite similar to *death door*. Using this spell, the draconic caster can ward a particular doorway or portal so that any creature who tries to pass through the portal without first speaking a word of command is immediately the subject of a modified form of energy drain. (Here the word “portal” can also refer to a cave opening or tunnel no more than 30 feet in diameter.) The portal so warded must be the only entrance into a room or chamber no larger than a volume of 8,000 cubic feet (a cubic room 20 feet on a side, for example).

A single application of this spell can drain up to 30 Hit Dice or levels of creatures before becoming inert. Each creature passing through the portal rolls a saving throw vs. wands with a -2 penalty; a successful saving throw means that the creature is unaffected.

A failed saving throw means that the creature is subject to the full effect of the *cold curtain* spell. As soon as the creature passes through the portal, it loses one level or Hit Die (as if struck by a wight). A monster loses 1 Hit Die permanently, suffering losses in both hit points and attack ability. A character loses a level, a Hit Die, hit points, and abilities perma-

nently (until regained through adventuring, if applicable).

At the end of each round that a creature remains within the area warded by the *cold curtain*, it loses another level or Hit Die (no saving throw against these subsequent losses). This loss continues each round until the creature steps back through the curtain outside the warded area. (This passage from inside to outside doesn't cause another level loss.)

The curtain can affect any number of creatures simultaneously. When it has drained a total of 30 Hit Dice or levels, the spell terminates.

Note that only the doorway or portal itself is warded. A character could conceivably smash through or otherwise penetrate the wall next to the door and enter safely. A portal protected by a *cold curtain* spell radiates a strong aura of necromantic magic, and the warded area has a temperature some 20° lower than the area outside the curtain.

While casting the spell, the dragon can choose whether or not the warding is to be visible. If the dragon chooses visibility, the portal is covered by a faintly-shimmering blue glow that is totally transparent; this glow isn't bright enough to be seen in full daylight, but it is obvious under twilight or darker conditions.

Special Spells

In addition to these spells, there are draconic versions of *resurrection* and *raise dead*, which can reunite a dragon's anima with its body. These spells have the same characteristics as their human versions. Only truly unique dragons have the ability to cast these immensely powerful spells.

Draconic Magical Items

Because they lack manipulative digits—at least, in their true forms—dragons aren't big users or creators of magical items. There are some exceptions, however, and a few of these are definitely worthy of note. Unless otherwise specified, all of these magical items are usable only by dragons. (Tales are common that relate the unpleasant fate—usually incurable insanity or painful death—of humans, demihumans, and humanoids who have tried to wield these devices.)

Orb of Draconic Influence

This is a sphere of deep-green volcanic glass (obsidian) upon which an intricate geometric pattern has been etched, and then delicately filled with gold. By concentrating on the orb, a dragon can alter the behavior of all dragons within a range of ten miles.

This alteration is very subtle (as a guideline for DMs, the user should be able to describe the desired alteration in one word (e.g., “friendly,” “angry,” “attack,” etc.), and is the same for every dragon in range. The DM must adjudicate the use of this item carefully. In general, the orb can shift a dragon's reaction by up to 5 points in either direction on the Encounter Reactions table (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 103).

The orb has other powers as well. Any dracoform that might wish to attack the bearer of the orb must roll a successful saving throw vs. staves to do so. In addition, the bearer cannot be scried upon by any means.

There are a few sages who believe that an *orb of draconic influence* or something similar is responsible for the phenomenon of

Dragonflight. (Many more sages ridicule this position.)

Circlet of the Wyrm

This is a band of platinum or equally precious metal, usually unadorned, that magically expands or contracts to fit snugly around the brow of any dragon that dons it. While wearing the circlet, the dragon receives all the powers of a wyrm of the appropriate species. This includes increased damage from breath weapon, increased Hit Dice, increased combat modifier, and decreased THACO. The dragon automatically receives the innate magical powers that are normally gained by a dragon only when it reaches the age category of wyrm. Finally, the dragon can cast as many spells as can a wyrm (it doesn't automatically learn any new spells, however, so this might not be a significant benefit).

All of this assumes that the dragon isn't already a wyrm or great wyrm. Wyrms are totally unaffected by the circlet, while great wyrms diminish in power while wearing the circlet.

The dragon can remove the circlet at any time, but the mental shock causes the creature to be stunned for 1d4+1 rounds. For each round that the dragon engages in melee combat, there's a (noncumulative) 5% chance that the circlet falls off (stunning the dragon). If the dragon grapples or is grappled by another dragon, the chance increases to 10% per round (noncumulative) as long as the dragons continue to grapple. There is also a one-shot 7% chance that the circlet falls off whenever the dragon executes a wingover.

Dragons can wear the circlet only when they're in their own

form. *Polymorph* and *shape change* spells cause the circlet to fall off, stunning the dragon.

There are legends of a similar *circlet of the great wyrm*, but this magical item has never been found.

Potion of Dragon Breath

There is a different formulation of this potion corresponding to each of the major races of dragonkind. Thus there are *potions of black dragon breath*, *potions of blue dragon breath*, etc.

If a dragon drinks a full draught of one of these powerful potions, it can immediately use the breath weapon attack of the corresponding type of dragon. The damage inflicted is that of a dragon one age category lower than the drinker. (For example, an adult green drinks a *potion of red dragon breath*. It is able to breathe flame inflicting the same damage as a young adult red—10d10+5 points of damage.) This newly-gained breath weapon is in addition to the dragon's own breath weapon.

The formulations of these potions are very tricky, and it's very easy to make a mistake. To reflect this, there's a 20% chance that any given potion is defective. A defective potion can be totally ineffective (50%), can be poisonous (25%; roll a successful saving throw vs. poison or suffer 3d20 points of damage), or can cause catastrophic failure (25%). This horrible consequence means that the first time the dragon tries to use its newly gained breath weapon, the attack form is triggered internally, inflicting the full damage on the breathing dragon (no saving throw allowed!).

The effects of a *potion of dragon breath* last 1d4 hours, or until the drinker has exhausted its newly

gained breath weapon.

These potions are highly toxic to nondragons (roll a successful saving throw vs. poison with a -4 penalty, or die horribly in 1d4 rounds).

Gauze of Appearance

Although this item was created by dragons and is still crafted almost exclusively by them, it can be used by intelligent creatures of any race or class. It takes the form of a small sheet of the thinnest, most filmy material imaginable. It's effectively invisible unless a creature is actively looking for it, and even then the chance of noticing it is only 60%.

To be effective, the gauze must be draped around the top of a doorway or portal so that anyone trying to pass through the portal must brush past the gauze. The gauze immediately makes any invisible creature who touches it visible again. In addition, the creature who touched the gauze is totally convinced he is still invisible, and he is unwilling to believe anyone who tries to claim otherwise.

Gauze of appearance also dissipates any illusions that pass through it, and it strips away the effects of minor spells like *change self*. Even the effects of a *hat of disguise* or similar item are reversed by the gauze.

Dragons frequently drape lengths of gauze around their treasure hoard. Although they can usually detect invisible intruders, any animal guards they may be using might not be so lucky.





(Following are some excerpts from "The Compleat Dragon-Hunter," a manual composed by Smerdiuk Dragonbane,

famed dragonslayer of Arabel. As might be expected for any project so ambitious, other experts are lining up for their turn to poke holes in Smerdiuk's conclusions. In general, however, the author seemed to have most things right . . . although, with any creatures as powerful as dragons, a little ignorance goes a long way. It must also be noted that Smerdiuk left Arabel two years ago on a journey to Mount Angaroth, greatest of the peaks among the High Forest, with the avowed intention of destroying the red dragon Inferno reputed to live there. He has not returned.)

On Finding a Dragon

As all who wander the Realms know, dragons are highly territorial. The problem is often not so much how to find a dragon, as how to prevent the dragon from finding you before you are ready. It is best to be prepared at all times, but there are several unmistakable signs that should serve to set you on your guard when a dragon is in the area.

The scent of a dragon is strong, a powerful musk with an edge to it reminiscent of the scent of the lemon blossom. While it seems likely that the scent varies from dragon species to species, I have found myself unable to differentiate the odors. I can only assume that a difference does exist, but is so subtle that only dragons them-

selves can remark it.

It seems to me that many dragons use their musk to mark the boundaries of their territory.

There may be marks on the ground, such as tracks or the signs of a large object passing by. These signs are rare, however. Dragons are large, but they move with a grace that belies their size. More like cats they are in carriage than lizards. Many, so it seems, can pass through the most tangled forest leaving nary a fallen branch broken underfoot. Then, too, dragons are cunning and will conceal their tracks, or perhaps lay tracks leading in a false direction. Recall that the spoor of a dragon is small considering his size, and it is his wont to hide them in any case. Do not depend on sighting the droppings of a dragon.

The second most vital clue as to where a dragon dwells is, simply put, experience. One must learn to think like the quarry, absorb its likes and dislikes and its prejudices. Red dragon lairs are often near the highest point of the surrounding region, for example, as these fell creatures relish the sense of power this gives them, and the clear view it provides of approaching enemies. Yellow dragons (aye, there are yellow dragons) will lair at perhaps the lowest point of their territory. Their reasoning is that creatures who are lost, wounded, or tired often travel downhill rather than up, even when they are unaware that they do so. Lying in wait at a low spot, the yellow tries to maximize the chances that a meal will stumble by and be devoured with the least possible exertion by the dragon.

Although I may seem arrogant, I can honestly say that I can scan the lay of the land and unerringly pick out the best prospective lairs

for every race of dragon in Faerun.

Short of experience—which, if truth be told, very few people enjoy—the best source from which to learn the location of a dragon lair is from others. Common folk who live in the lands surrounding a dragon's lair, and who typically suffer most under its depredations, frequently know more about the lair's location than the so-called wise. Never ask directly, since the very people you speak with might be under the dragon's sway. But nevertheless lead the conversation around to the topic of nearby terrain. Much can be learned from what people do not say, perhaps more from what they do say. Give everyone your ear. What you learn will surprise you.

On Selecting Your Time

As is well known, dragons are active both day and night. When, then, is the best time to confront them? My own preference is night, or at noontime when the sun stands directly overhead in the sky. My reason is simple. If the sun is sinking low, you will cast shadows, and sometimes these shadows will be even larger than your true form. Dragons know this, and prefer to hunt soon after dawn or before dusk, since at these times the enlarged shadows of their prey make them easier to spot from on high.

If you have magic that enables you to see at night, then an hour or so after the light of the sun has left the sky is a fine time. Those dragons that have hunted at sundown are at their most sluggish.

You should temper this advice with what knowledge you have about the particular dragon you hunt. Remember, the main purpose as yet is to draw near to the

dragon unannounced. If you know that it has under its sway certain animals, then be assured those animals will be set on guard to detect or stop you. Choose your time of approach so that these creatures are at the greatest disadvantage.

On Where to Face Your Dragon

Many self-proclaimed dragon-hunters will tell you 'tis best to face the dragon within its lair. It may be sleeping, they will tell you, and you may be able to fall upon the beast and slay it without cost to yourselves.

Believe them not. Aye, the dragon may be sleeping. But even the basest white dragon will have ringed itself with traps, noise-makers, and deadfalls so as to make a riotous clamor should any approach. Only if you can guarantee that your approach will not be detected—and the only reasonable way to so guarantee is to approach magically, perhaps in ethereal form—should you consider bearding the dragon in his den.

Remember that the dragon knows his den. He has probably dwelt there for as long as you have lived or longer. He knows every nook and cranny, every cave and arch, every pit and deadfall. He will have it warded with magic and poison and beasts with fang and claw. He knows the exact compass of his home, and every avenue of approach to where he lies. You know none of these.

For these reasons I tell you it is best to fight and defeat the dragon immediately outside his den, as he arrives or as he leaves—the latter is the better. Use your wiles to draw near to the opening to his den. As he sets out to hunt, set upon him. With the gods' bless-

ings, he will be surprised and you can strike him grievously from ambush. You must so time your actions, and so dispose your forces, as to prevent him from retreating back within his lair.

Consider the tactics of this. You have chosen the place of combat, you have had time to dispose your forces to your best advantage. Although it is the dragon who chooses the time, you have under your command two of the three major facets of any battle.

On Approaching the Lair

Recall that a dragon's sense of vision is one of his weakest senses, while scent is his strongest. As you approach the opening to his lair, you must do so from downwind. As a guide: if you can smell the musk of his lair, he cannot smell you in your approach. You can disguise your scent by wearing the undressed skins of animals, although this might arouse the great creature to hunger.

Always approach in silence, whether magical or no. Bind all metal on your clothing, as the sound of a metal sheath striking a rock can be heard from a surprising distance. Shun metal armor, or silence it with spells.

On Battling Your Dragon

As any who have seen one will know, a dragon close up is a fearsome foe. He is fast, lithe, and powerful almost beyond belief. For every time you hew him with an axe, he will tear you twice with a claw. He will snatch you in his talons and chew on you like a bone. He will smash you senseless with his tail and buffet you from your feet with his wings. I say to you, close with a dragon only when he

is sorely wounded. Dragons can destroy you from a distance with breath and with magic. You must do all within your

compass to force the beast to exhaust both these sources of power. Feinting advances, particularly by forces immune to the dragon's powers, can turn the tide of battle. If one of your number is protected against fire, have him try to draw the red dragon's attention and his attack. If one is unharmed by lightning, send him first toward the blue. Do what you can to draw the dragon's attacks to those quarters where they do the least damage.

Also, do what ever is needful to prevent the dragon from taking to the sky. As in any form of combat, he who holds the high ground commands the field. A dragon a-wing commands the highest ground of all.

ForeSTALL his initiative. Take up superior positions around the exit from his lair. As he emerges, drop nets weighted with boulders upon him. Entangle him with magic. With archers or spellcasters arrayed on high ground around him, he would have to climb through their concentrated fire to take to the sky, something he may not have the will to do.

These two things above all: exhaust his distance attacks and prevent his flight. Do these two things, and you will probably triumph. If the dragon achieves the skies and still retains breath weapon or magic, unless the gods smile on you, you are lost. Remember, strike him grievously from the outset. An injured dragon cannot fly.





Once he is unable to escape to the clouds and his breath weapon is expended, the advantage is yours. Strike him from a distance, with

missile weapons and with magic. Do not let him close. Engage in melee only if there are no alternatives open to you. Never accept the surrender of an evil dragon; he will not honor it.

On Breath Weapons

There are purportedly ways in which to decrease the effectiveness of your dragon's breath weapon. I have tried none of these, and so I cannot vouch for their veracity.

Wrapping oneself in water-soaked cloth or in green hides is said to mitigate the damage of dragon fire. Some claim the breath of the green dragon will not penetrate hides soaked in urine or in vinegar. Metal pikes driven into the ground before you may divert a blue's lightning. A covering of lard over all open skin reputedly can diminish the torture of a black's breath.

On Dressing the Corpse

The art of dressing a slain dragon is similar to that of dressing a hart, save that the creature is so very much bigger. If you can hang the creature, by its hind legs, do so. If this is impossible, lay it on its back.

Once the creature has been bled and gutted, you may proceed with other matters.

The hide of the dragon can be of

considerable value to armorers. The smallest piece that can be utilized is three feet on a side. This piece must be free of puncture and slash wounds, and must not be burned or otherwise weakened. If the truth be known, I have retrieved in my career enough hide for four sets of armor, no more. The reason is that damage grievous enough to slay a dragon will often make its entire hide unusable.

Though only a fool would hunt dragons for food, their flesh can be eaten if properly prepared, with the sole exception of the mercury dragon, which is grievous poison. This preparation varies from race to race.

The flesh of the black and of the green must be soaked overnight in vinegar, then again overnight in fresh water. This will usually remove the harsher oils from the meat, although it will still have a taste reminiscent of swamp mud.

The flesh of the red must be aged. It must be exposed to the air for at least two days before it is fit for consumption. Eating it before this time is an invitation to cramps and other highly painful complaints. Even after aging, the meat is highly spicy—too much so for some tastes, although I relish it (more so at the time than the next day, however).

The flesh of the white requires no preparation, other than perhaps seasoning. It is tough and generally tasteless.

I have tried many ways of preparing the meat of the blue dragon: soaking, aging, seasoning, cooking, marinating, and charring. Although it is not poisonous, I can find no way to make it fit for human consumption.

As to the flesh of the good-aligned dragons, I have no direct knowledge since I have never

hunted such a creature. From various sources I have heard that the flesh of the gold is reminiscent of finest venison, and that the flesh of the bronze tastes somewhat like chicken (of course, in the final analysis everything tastes more or less like chicken).

I have heard that in the grim and magical south, the offal and other glands of dragons are considered the highest of delicacies. A traveler related to me that a past lord of Mulmaster would dine on nothing but the brains of red dragons, and that another worthy of Chessenta relished dragon tongue. After various experimentations, I will say that such cravings must undeniably be acquired tastes, and that the south is even more decadent than I had once believed.

On Magical Preparations

Dragons are innately magical creatures, and this magic permeates the parts of their body even after their death. For this reason, there are many parts of the dragon's body of use to spellcasters and alchemists. Although I pursue neither career, I have spoken with those who do, and I will try to distill herein what little I could understand of their discourse.

(A Note: If you are a wizard or alchemist, then the remnants of a dragon can be of significant use to you. If you are neither, then you can sell them to those who are. From my experience, however, it is almost impossible to determine beforehand how much you will be paid for these substances. Market forces have as great an effect on the value of such substances as they do on the wages of dragon-hunters for hire. As an example, I once sold a pint of black dragon's blood for 11,000 gold coins to an

alchemist. The next time I slew a black, his blood fetched little more than 200 gold coins per pint.)

Chief among the bodily parts of a dragon is his blood. This is of use in potions and as the material component of many spells. It also finds wide use in the inks used for magical scrolls. In general, the blood is most sovereign for spells that somehow relate to the principal powers of the dragon. Thus the blood of a red would add power to fire magic, while the blood of a blue might find use in magic relating to electricity.

As it was explained to me, the power and applicability of any such substance relates to the symbolism surrounding that substance and the creature it came from. For example, dragons are able to detect objects that are invisible; thus the eye of a dragon might be used in magic that confers the same ability. Dragons are huge and continue to grow throughout their lives; thus the pituitary gland from the base of a dragon's brain might be used in magic that confers growth. There also seems to be a symmetry to this symbolism. If the creature wields a certain power, then his blood or bodily parts may prove sovereign in magic that resists that certain power.

I have come across the resting places of various dragons, and it is obvious that others have learned what I have learned about the bodily parts of dragons. It is obvious because the entire area has become a foul-smelling abattoir. I have also seen—and smelt—adventurers returning to town after killing a dragon and stripping its corpse. There is one thing that these adventurers did not know, but now do.

The blood and internal organs of

a dragon corrupts with almost magical rapidity. Within six hours of the creature's death, the body begins to stink; within eight it becomes literally unbearable. With equal rapidity, the bodily parts removed from the dragon become corrupted and useless unless they are suitably preserved. (The reader will note that this applies only to those parts of the body referred to as glands or offal. The flesh of the dragon, once it has been suitably drained of blood, corrupts no faster than the flesh of any other creature. You will now understand why I explained in such detail the correct procedure for bleeding and draining a dragon.)

Dragon blood can be sealed in airtight containers, stoppered with corks or closed with wax. The air already in the bottle will corrupt the upper finger's-breadth of the blood, but the rest will perhaps remain usable. Solid material must be immersed in biocidal material such as the formalin available from alchemists. This immersion must be almost immediate.

This all poses a problem, as the astute reader will already have surmised. To return to civilization with large

quantities of the slain dragon, the dragon-hunters—and here I use the term loosely—must be so weighted down with containers and preserving liquid that they would be unable to track and slay the dragon in the first place!

On Disposing of the Dragon Corpse

Fire is the sovereign means of destroying the corpse of a dragon. It is also one of the only ways of eliminating the smell of corrupting dragon blood. Anything soaked by the blood should be burned. I have as yet found no efficient way of removing the smell of spoiled dragon blood from the skin of the hunter.





The Draconic Afterlife

As do all other creatures, dragons have a basically dual nature. They

can be said to comprise two components: the temporal—that is, the physical and mortal portion—and the spiritual—that is, the immortal and immaterial part. Depending on what religion the speaker was raised in, the spiritual part of a human or demihuman can be termed the soul or the spirit. The spiritual part of a dragon is known as the *anima*.

When a dragon dies, its *anima* is freed from its body. (Dragons have the innate ability to release the *anima* at any time they so will; in effect, they can commit suicide with a single thought.) Different draconic religions chart diverse courses for the *anima* after this point. Some draconic holy myths claim that the *anima* remains loosely bound to the body—unable to animate the body or otherwise affect the material world, but capable of observing events in its vicinity—until the body has totally decayed away or has been consumed in some other way. Other myths claim that the *anima* travels to the plane occupied by either Bahamut or Tiamat—depending on alignment—for judgment.

Nobody can state categorically what happens to a dragon's *anima* after death; there is simply no empirical evidence. Draconic religious traditions put forward a seemingly self-consistent picture, however. Most human sages, in the absence of any better ideas, accept these draconic

mythic traditions as a working hypothesis—something to hold onto until a better theory comes along.

All draconic religious traditions agree that, in the absence of extenuating circumstances, the *anima* eventually travels to the outer plane appropriate to the creature's alignment while alive. (Thus the *anima* of a Lawful Good gold would reside on the plane of the Seven Heavens with the deity Xymor, while the *anima* of a Chaotic Evil red might join Garyx Firelord in the Abyss.) Unlike the souls or spirits of other creatures, the *anima* of a dragon doesn't remain on the outer plane for eternity, however.

Again, all bodies of draconic holy myth agree. The *anima* stays on the outer plane for a time equal to that of the dragon's mortal life. During this time, the memories, the personality, and the identity the *anima* developed while in the material world begin to fade, or to be peeled away like the layers of an onion. Memories are lost too, in the reverse order in which they were acquired, and at exactly the same rate. One year after its arrival on the outer plane, the *anima* would lose all memories that the dragon gained during the last year before its death. After a century, it would lose memories gained during its last century of life. During this process, these *animae* are available for use by the appropriate draconic deities as servants and messengers.

Note that this has profound consequences for anyone attempting to contact the *anima* of a dead dragon. The longer it's been since the dragon died, the more it will have lost in the way of memory and personality. This also has a consequence for the (incredibly rare) draconic versions of *raise*

dead and *resurrection*. When the *anima* is returned to the material world and bound to a physical body, that body will in all ways be the age to which the dragon *anima* has regressed, with only the memories and abilities appropriate to that age. For example, say that a gold dragon is 402 (old) when she dies. Five years later, powerful magic returns her to the physical world. She is now 397 years old, with all the powers and attributes appropriate to a mature adult gold dragon. In addition, she won't remember anything that happened to her or anything she learned—including new spells—during the last five years of her life. She will also remember nothing of what she experienced while dead. (In fact, it might be hard to convince the old girl that she ever died at all . . .)

When an *anima* has resided on the outer plane for as long as the dragon was alive, it has been stripped bare of all memory, experience, and personality it developed while alive. It is a pure, untrammelled *anima*: the ideal form of a particular dragon species. Now that it's been recycled and purified, the *anima* is ready to be returned to the material world.

All dragons believe in reincarnation, and in their case they're thought to be completely correct. The pure *anima* is reborn in the next dragon of the appropriate species to hatch. At this point, the *anima* can't be contacted via *speak with dead* or any other magic, and the dragon can't be raised or resurrected.

The fact that the dragon population of the Realms has vastly decreased over the past millennia has an interesting consequence: There's a waiting list for pure *ani-*

mae. These pure animae can be encountered on the appropriate outer plane. There they appear as perfectly-formed examples of their species. They don't have the capacity to record memories or anticipate the future, however: the current instant is all that exists for these pure spirits. They react instantly to stimuli in the manner typical for their species, but they have no consistency of memory or behavior—or even self-awareness—from one moment to the next. (DMs who enjoy dabbling in existential philosophy might enjoy role-playing such an anima.)

Sometimes Bahamut or Tiamat will intercept the anima of a dead dragon on its way to the appropriate outer plane. Both dragon archetypes have personal guards, messengers, and servants, as do most deities. Each will select only those dragons that most epitomize

the characteristics of each archetype's alignment—Lawful Good for Bahamut, Lawful Evil for Tiamat. If the DM decides that a dragon that has just died fits the bill—i.e., it embodies the quintessence of Lawful Good or Lawful Evil—there is a 5% chance that the appropriate archetype will select that anima as a servant.

This anima will never reach the outer planes, and thus the dragon can never be raised or resurrected. An attempt to speak with dead directed at that dragon might, at the DM's option, allow the servant to manifest itself on the Prime Material plane for a limited time (no doubt to the abject shock of the spellcaster).

Dragons and Planes

The overwhelming majority of dragons are incapable of traveling

the planes under their own power (except by dying, and that hardly counts). Truly exceptional creatures might be able

to cast spells like *plane shift*, but these will be literally one in a million. Powerful spellcasters of other races might be able to assist dragons in planar travel, however.

Dragons are creatures innately bound to the Prime Material plane. (Excerpts from the *Book of the World*, which was mentioned in Chapter 1, seem to confirm this by describing dragons as “wyrms of the earth, linked to the fundament of all.”) Some of dragonkind's magical abilities are inextricably linked to the Prime Material plane,





and will vanish should a dragon ever travel to another plane.

Should a dragon ever travel to another plane, it immediately

loses its magic resistance, and its bonus to saving throws. In addition, it loses all innate magical abilities. This refers only to the specific powers that dragons receive as they progress in age category, not to spellcasting ability. Thus a juvenile gold dragon somehow transported to another plane would lose the following innate abilities: *water breathing*, *speak with animals*, *immunity to fire and gas*, *polymorph self*, *bles*, and *detect lie*. It wouldn't, however, necessarily lose its ability to cast one wizard spell per day. The use of spells—both wizard and priest varieties—on different planes follows the same rules for dragons as it does for other spellcasters.

From a psychological standpoint, all dragons feel a deep, unreasoning fear of traveling to other planes. Their entire mental makeup and personality are built around awareness of their innate abilities, and the concept of losing these abilities profoundly terrifies them. (This terror wouldn't affect dragons that have been raised by other races—as described in Chapter 4—and have yet to be taught to use these innate abilities. No creature will fear the loss of an ability it never knew it had.)

Spelljamming Dragons— The Crystal Spheres

Some of the excerpts quoted at the beginning of Chapter 1 referred to crystal spheres. This is a concept taken from the SPELLJAMMER™ AD&D® game supplement. The world of Toril and its solar system are within one crystal sphere; the system containing Oerth (the planet on which the World of Greyhawk exists) is within another; Krynn and its solar system are within yet another. All these crystal spheres are part of the same Prime Material plane. As the Chapter 1 quotes implied, dragons exist—and are relatively common—in many different spheres.

No standard form of dragon is able to fly to an altitude of more than eight miles above the surface of Toril. At greater altitudes, the air is simply too thin to support the creatures. Dragons can be carried beyond this altitude on spelljamming vessels of large size. Within the atmosphere envelopes of these vessels, they are able to survive and behave as normal.

Dragons are definitely unable to use conventional forms of spelljamming helms—their mental architecture is simply too bizarre—although they would provide power to a lifejammer, if a large enough one were built. In spheres as yet undiscovered, draconic spelljamming helms could well exist. It's conceivable that dragons could learn draconic versions of the spells that create helms and open portals in the crystal spheres. This is left up to the individual DM.

Fire-breathing dragons are generally terrified to enter the phlogiston (assuming they know what it is). The chance that a stray hiccup or an instinctive reaction could de-

stroy them is more than they really want to face.

Dragons retain all of their innate abilities in every crystal sphere and in the Flow. They are subject to the same rules as normal spellcasters with regard to wizard and priest spells, however.

All of this assumes that the dragons under discussion know about spelljamming and the physics/philosophy behind it. In most cases, of course, this just won't be true. Most dragons are as planet-bound as most humans and simply don't know—or perhaps don't want to know—about what's going on over their heads.

The *Draconomicon*

Many myths that deal with dragons also mention the existence of a magical tome entitled the *Draconomicon* (which translates from an ancient and long-forgotten tongue as “Concerning Dragons”).



Description

The *Draconomicon* has been described as a large tome, almost two feet wide by three feet tall, and eight inches thick. It consists of two covers, each composed of thin hardwood bound in cured and preserved white dragon hide. The front cover bears a symbol of two reptilian eyes set above a downward-pointing flame. This symbol is made of platinum indissolubly attached to the dragon hide. The book has more than a score of pages, each of which is a thin sheet of metal alloy of unknown formulation. The covers and pages are attached by two rings of bronze.

The language of the book is an archaic version of Thorass, but the script itself—which has been graven into the metal pages with great precision—is a simplified runic form. This combination of tongue and script is identical to that found in the *Book of the World*.

Effects

Any human or demihuman who has the *Draconomicon* in his possession for more than 2d4 days starts to experience personality changes. The owner's outlook, personality, and behavior begin to shift slowly until they match the personality of the dragon species with the same alignment as the owner. In other words, a Lawful Good owner will start to behave more and more like a bronze, silver, or gold dragon (random selection); a Lawful Evil owner will start to emulate a blue; a Neutral Evil owner will start to emulate either a blue or one of the Chaotic Evil dragons, depending on the nuances of his alignment.

This personality shift and emulation don't mean that the owner starts to think he's a dragon, tries to fly, or anything like that. A character emulating a brass becomes progressively more talkative, egotistical, and boorish; a character emulating a copper becomes an incorrigible prankster; a character emulating a blue becomes highly territorial and aggressive.

Also, after an additional 1d8 days of possession, the owner of the *Draconomicon* gains those innate abilities that "his" species of dragon gains at birth. At first, the character won't know about these abilities; they'll occur occasionally without conscious effort, and much to the surprise of the book owner. (For example, a Chaotic Good (Neutral) character who has started to emulate a brass dragon might suddenly find herself in deep conversation with a squirrel using a *speak with animals* ability she never knew she had.)

Once these changes have taken full effect, the owner is unwilling to give up the book, or even let it out of his sight. Attempts to remove the book arouse anger, and possibly provoke violence from the owner.

These effects fade away slowly once the book is out of the character's possession. For the first 24 hours after losing possession of the book, the character is morose and melancholy, but this dark mood soon passes. The innate magical abilities are lost in 1d4 days, and the character's personality slowly returns to normal over a period of 2d6 days.

The *Draconomicon* emits a strong aura of alteration magic. Its aura has neither a good nor an evil influence.

Contents

The *Draconomicon* contains instructions for casting draconic versions of the following traditional wizard spells: *darkness (15' radius)*, *flaming sphere*, *mirror image*, *pyrotechnics*, *stinking cloud*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, *wraithform*, *fire charm*, *fire shield*, *fire trap*, *ice storm*, *cloudkill*, *magic jar*, *telekinesis*, *teleport*, *chain lightning*, *move earth*, and *stone to flesh*.

Note that nondragon spellcasters are unable to cast these spells directly from the book, or even learn them for later use. Although their effects mimic those of traditional spells, the mechanics of these spells are specifically tailored for the unique mental architecture of dragonkind.

In addition, the book gives instructions for casting the following purely draconic spells: *calm*, *hand*, *find humanoid familiar*, *venomdust*, *wingbind*, *con tact archetype*, *death door*, and *cold curtain*.

While these spell descriptions would obviously be of most value to dragons, they can also aid human and demihuman wizards. With the *Draconomicon* in his possession, a wizard would find it considerably easier to research his own versions of all the spells contained therein. The time required for research is unchanged—there's work involved in converting these spells into human terms, after all—but the cost is reduced to 75% of normal. See the *Dungeon Masters Guide* pages 43-44 for more details on researching spells.

The many legends concerning





the *Draconomicon* relate that it also contains even wilder spells, including draconic versions of *resurrection*.

One specific

legend also claims that the *Draconomicon* contains the full procedure for turning a dragon into a dracolich. (Refer to Ed Greenwood's article, "The Cult of the Dragon," in DRAGON® magazine, issue #110.) If this is true, then the book would be the ultimate prize for any member of the cult.

History

The first recorded mention of the *Draconomicon* was in a scroll dating from 1278 DR. According to this scroll, the book had been discovered in the ruins of a small keep in Amn by the adventurer Berethond Halfelven. Unable to read its contents, but recognizing that it had some historical value, he returned with it to Baldur's Gate.

The scroll goes on to describe the alteration in Berethond's personality. Normally a somber, almost morose man, he became more and more of a joke-teller and prankster, much to the discomfort of his friends and associates.

When Berethond led the adventuring company the Hammerfists northward in 1281 DR, it can be presumed that he took the book with him. As related in many tales and songs of the time, the Hammerfists met and destroyed a green great wyrm that lived in the forest directly west of Dragonspear Castle. Berethond disappeared during the combat, and was pre-

sumed slain. His body was never found.

The next mention of the *Draconomicon* was a quarter century later, when it was reported to be in the library of the sage Taranel of Waterdeep. Once a student of Elminster, Taranel had years earlier reached a position of some prominence, but her reputation was now fading, and she was sliding steadily toward obscurity. How she obtained the *Draconomicon* is not known.

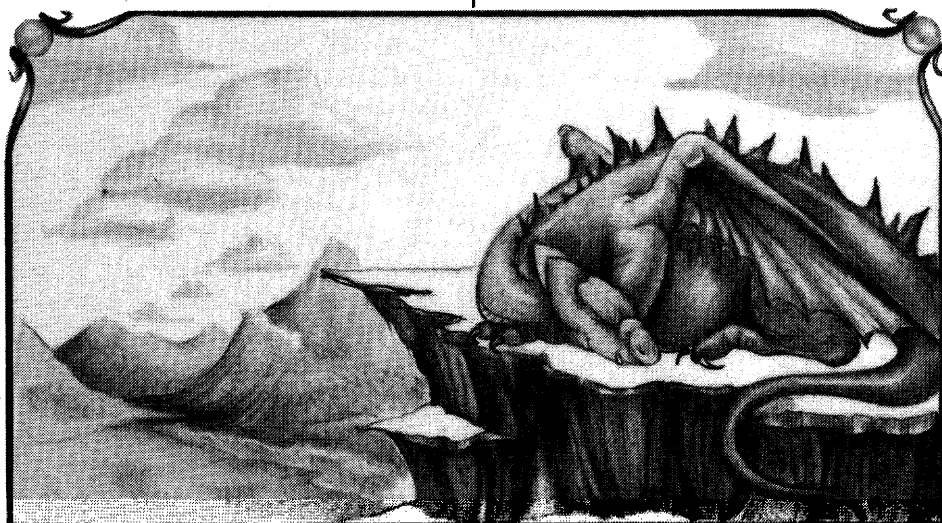
For several years, Taranel studied the book. (Nowhere is it recorded how her personality may have changed in the meantime. There might, in fact, have been no change, since Taranel was always described as noble and fair of mind and demeanor.) During this time, so stories relate, she researched and perfected human versions of two of the spells within: *death door* and *wingbind*. (Other stories tell that she also worked long and hard on *contact archetype*. It is not known whether the temporary mental breakdown she suffered in 1309 DR was a result of success in researching the spell and its subsequent use, or simply from overwork.)

In 1311 DR, Taranel was slain by person or persons unknown who broke into her residence one night and garrotted her as she sat at her reading stand. After the deed was done, the perpetrators tried to cover their crime by setting fire to the place; however, Taranel's home was protected from fire by various customized versions of *affect normal fires*, triggered by a *contingency* spell. Only her study suffered damage, and that was very minor.

When the contents of Taranel's home were checked against the inventory of possessions that she kept scrupulously updated, an interesting fact turned up. Only one item had been taken: the *Draconomicon*.

The common conclusion is that members of the feared Cult of the Dragon have acquired the *Draconomicon*. They knew Taranel had it, and so sent assassins to remove her and to acquire the book.

The current whereabouts of the *Draconomicon* are unknown. If it is truly in the hands of the Cult of the Dragon, the first indication of its continued existence might be unpleasant, to say the least.





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This scenario presents a very unusual great wyrm that can be brought into a campaign in a variety of ways. In this introduction, we'll consider the setting and purpose of the dragon and his lair, offering many options for the DM. This is a versatile scenario, usable with characters of medium or high experience levels.

Game Setting

This scenario is set in the land of Unther in the Forgotten Realms (see FR10, *Old Empires*, for further details). A specific setting has been used because an important aspect of the dragon is his extensive knowledge, and this needs to be anchored in concrete locations within a game world setting. However, it is easy for the DM to relocate him in an alternative location within the Realms, or any other game world.

The Wyrms in Game Play

The wyrm, Maldraedior, can be used in game play in more than one manner. How he is used may well affect the manner in which the PCs are lured into the adventure, as explained in the "Adventure Set-Up" section. Among the DM's options are the following:

1. Slay The Monster!

This scenario is extremely dangerous. Only PCs of levels 11+ can hope to kill Maldraedior, but if they manage it they should certainly feel a terrific sense of achievement.

If the DM uses this adventure option, the set-up should place emphasis on the wickedness and evil of the dragon, or the value of his treasure, as appropriate to motivate the player characters.

2. The Dragon As Consultant

The PCs are forced to seek out Maldraedior as a sage, the only creature that can provide them with the information they desperately require. Exactly what this might be is discussed in some detail later, when the areas of the wyrm's knowledge are presented. In this case, of course, the PCs will have to provide some service for the dragon.

This is suitable for PCs who aren't of sufficiently high level to combat the dragon, but they will probably need to be of medium levels to be able to obtain the magic or other rewards the wyrm will demand in return for its help. This scenario enables the DM to shoehorn PCs into other adventures he has designed without being too arm-twisting about matters.

3. The Dragon As Consultant Version II

This is the same as the version above, with one important alteration. Here, the dragon may be willing to dispense information to the PCs, but they have to prove themselves by fighting their way past his attendants and guards (possibly killing them), and traps to get to his central chamber. Only then will the dragon respect the PCs enough to consider helping them with information, although he will still require services in return.

In this version, Maldraedior is indifferent to the welfare of his

guards either because he can rapidly acquire more (from the other members of the families who guard him) or because he is arrogant enough to consider their protection largely unnecessary in any event. This scenario has the virtue of mixing good combat with the need for careful role-playing in the negotiation with the dragon.

This is suitable for PCs of levels 6-9 (total party strength of some 45-50 levels is optimal) who can give the guards a fair fight but can't risk fighting a great wyrm.

These options do not exhaust the possibilities, but they should offer a wide enough range to satisfy most role-play styles and experience levels.

The Dragon of Dalath

Maldraedior lives in a temple complex beneath the streets of Dalath, a mining town some 40 miles north of the eastern part of the Smoking Mountains of Unther. The existence of this temple is a carefully guarded secret. Maldraedior has lived within it for nearly 3,000 years, and during this time he has been served by members of two families—the Ramahresh and Kalmarak families.

These folk regard the dragon as a deity, and serve him faithfully and fanatically. A father will bring his son to the Great Chamber (area 13 on the map) when he reaches the age of maturity, to be presented to Maldraedior, and the combination of the dragon's fear and awe effects (and use of *charm person* spells) make the impressionable youth a devoted servant of the wyrm.

Maldraedior often sends his servants into the outside world to



gain experience and knowledge (using a *geas* spell to prevent them from ever speaking of him and his lair). A small number of family members have returned to the temple over the years, some of them having grown powerful as fighters or mages. At the current time, the fighter Halmashir has just returned to the temple and provides the dragon with a fearsome bodyguard.

Some who do not return still send gifts, magic, or communications back to the temple. Others remain within the temple and become minor clerics, worshipping the power of the wyrm. Although Maldraedior is not a god, these clerics still gain clerical spells, just as Maldraedior does himself. This is due to his own worship of a draconic deity, as detailed below in the full description of the dragon. It may be that the humans' acqui-

sition of priest spells is in some way a spill-over from the wyrm's acquisition of such spells. Certainly, the fanaticism of their worship of the dragon is strong enough to make this plausible.

Adventure Set-Up

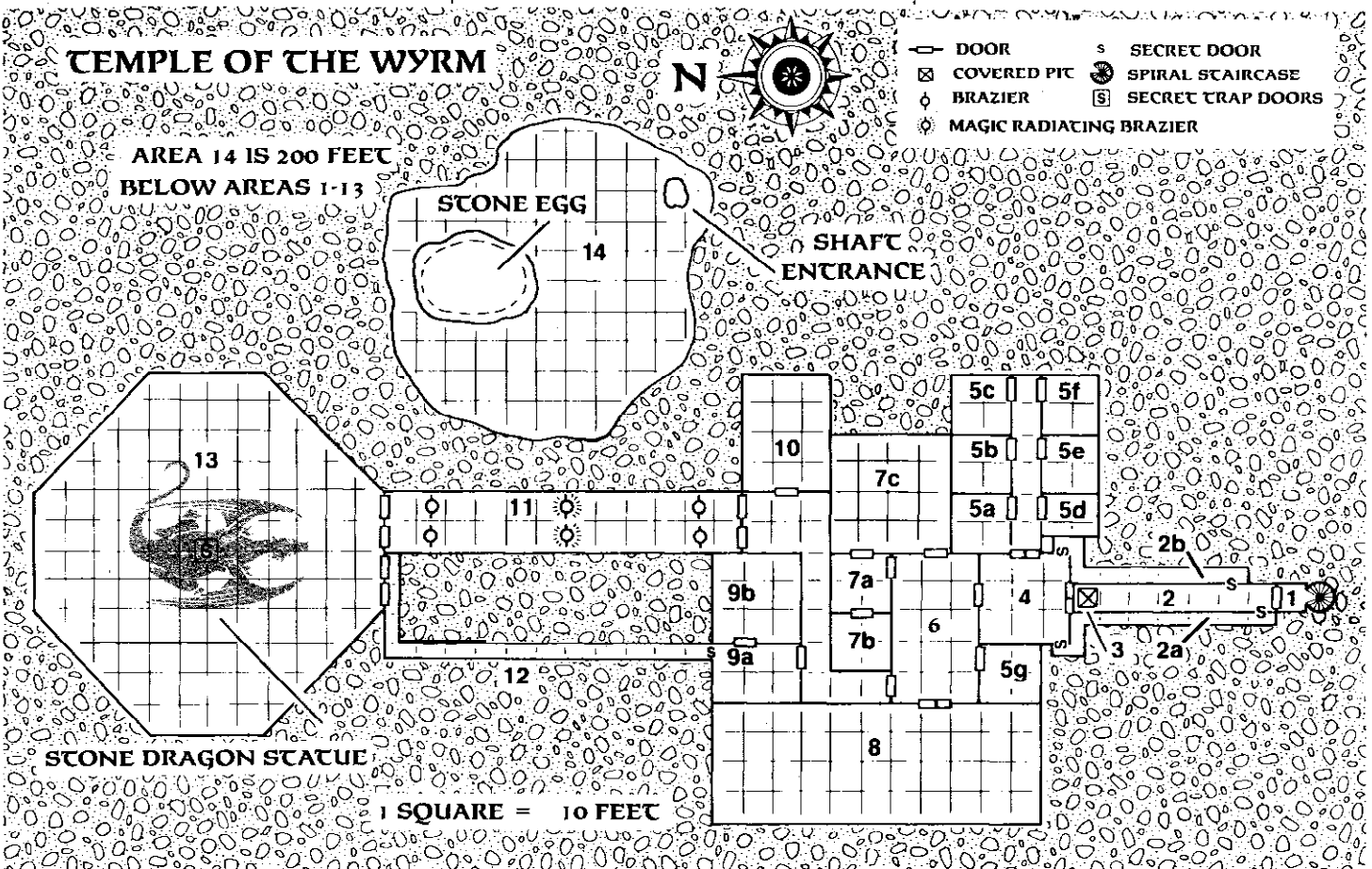
This will depend on the scenario option employed by the DM to some extent, but certain features of drawing the PCs into meeting Maldraedior will be common to any option.

Most importantly, it will be difficult to find the dragon's home. PCs should be channelled toward his lair slowly, by hints, riddles, partial information, and cryptic clues. If they seek information the dragon possesses, they will be told (for example) to look in Firetrees where they will find a clue to visit Kaoll, where a sage may send

them off to Sekras to find the final clue that at last leads them to Dalath.

The PCs can be lured into seeking Maldraedior by finding an obscure tome which promises priceless information—maybe how the God-King Gilgeam can be slain! Or it tells of the existence of a fabulously rich wyrm of extraordinary and unusual nature (no details). Trying to get this information draws them into the net of clues and riddles.

An important specific clue the DM can use to draw the PCs to Maldraedior is that, in the distant past, he was the suzerain of the blue dragons of Unther and Mulhorand. Some 2,650 years ago,





he either abdicated or disappeared, depending on the ancient source consulted. The references the PCs can dig up should be very

mysterious about the disappearance of the dragon. They might even suggest that his hoard is still around (though there's no mention as to whether the dragon is still alive . . .).

The placement of these clues and the pace of the adventure depend on how many skirmishes you want along the way and the patience of the PCs. It should not be easy to find such a rare and fantastic creature as Maldraedior, though, and it is worth a lengthy build-up to meeting him.

Dalath Town

Fuller details of this city may be found in FR10, *Old Empires*, page 43. Briefly, it is a town of 6,000 people effectively ruled by freehold merchants and their stooges. Although many of the merchants are newcomers, the Ramahiresh and Kalmarak families are prominent and powerful. All the adult members of each family know of Maldraedior and his temple, but none can speak of either to outsiders (because of the *geas*).

The DM may well choose to populate the major 'civic posts (Captain of the Watch, clerks, etc.) with members of these families, who will soon take steps to keep surveillance on any outsiders who mention dragons. If these outsiders express any hostile intentions toward dragons, concerted attacks will certainly be made against

them and the temple permanently alerted.

There is but a single entrance to the temple of the wyrm. This is found below a trap door in the basement of Hosnirak's Antiques in a dingy quarter of the town. The proprietor is a member of the Ramahiresh family, and in his shop he has a fine collection of antiques from the lands of Unther, Mulhorand, and Chessenta. He has two large guard dogs (war dogs with 14 hp apiece). Old Hosnirak is a normal man with just 4 hit points, but he wears a *ring of mind* shielding that also negates *charm*, *sleep*, and *suggestion* spells.

If visitors are being admitted to the temple, Hosnirak pulls a small lever carefully hidden beneath the counter of his shop to alert the temple guards (this lever is only spotted if a careful search is made). The PCs may well opt for a covert break-in, by day (disabling Hosnirak with a spell such as *hold person*) or by night (beware the very noisy dogs!). The DM should prepare a sketch map of the ground floor and basement of Hosnirak's shop if the PCs intend a break-in.

A variety of foreign and sometimes secretive folk visit Hosnirak's shop on purely commercial grounds (some of the property is certainly stolen or looted from far-off tombs). This provides cover for the rarer comings and goings of wyrm worshipers from far-flung towns and cities. It requires careful observation to discover that some who visit the shop clearly do not emerge for some time afterward.

The Temple of the Wyrms

Generally, the corridors and rooms of the temple have walls and ceil-

ings of sculpted stone, a ceiling height of 11-16 feet (varying slightly from place to place), and are lit with *continual light* spells which are more muted in their luminance level than usual (hiding in shadows is, however, almost impossible). They are decorated with wall etchings, mosaics, and murals depicting diverse dracoforms. The art is rigidly stylized and formulaic, and it appears to be very old.

There are small ventilation shafts that lie behind stones with grooved holes drilled in them, but these shafts are far too small (around nine inches in diameter) to allow even a halfling to crawl through them. They terminate on the surface near houses in Dalath.

The location details that follow place an emphasis on tactical notes for NPCs who may have to fight. Since Maldraedior can materialize anywhere within the temple, the DM should also be well-prepared for bringing him into the fray as he deems necessary. The DM should also add details to the bare basics given for room locations.

Generic NPC Profiles

Before describing the specific rooms of the temple, the following is a listing of the types of NPC guards the PCs will meet as they wander about.

Junior Clerics (3rd-level): AC 4 (chain and shield); MV 9; C3; hp 15 each; #AT 1; THACO 20; Dmg 1d6 (quarterstaff) or special (mold bomb or spell); ML Fanatic (18); AL LE; SA/SD spells; Spells: *bless*, *command*, *protection from good*, *sanctuary*, *barkskin*, *flame blade*, *withdraw*.

Each cleric has a *potion of healing* and a glass globe containing



enough yellow mold to cover a 10-foot cube.

Fighters (3rd-level): AC 1 (plate mail and shield, Dex bonus); MV 6; F3; hp 20 each; #AT 1; THAC0 18; Dmg 1d8+1/1d12+1 (long sword + Str bonus); ML 17 (Fanatic); AL LE.

The fighters each have a crossbow in addition to their swords.

Fighters (5th-level): AC -1 (plate mail +1, shield +1, Dex bonus); MV 6; F5; hp 35 each; #AT 1; THAC0 16; Dmg 1d8+4/1d12+4 (longsword +1 and Str bonus); ML 18 (Fanatic); AL LE.

Each fighter has a crossbow, two *beads of force*, and a *potion of extra-healing*.

1. Descending Stairs

Beneath the trap door, a circular stone staircase leads down 50 feet to a simple, small square room. Setting foot anywhere within this room activates a bell in area 4. This arouses all the temple defenses unless the bell in Hosnirak's shop was previously rung to give warning of arrivals. Visitors are expected to wait in this chamber until called for.

The doors to the north have a *glyph of warding* laid on them (successful saving throw vs. spell to halve 14 points of fire damage; there is also a *hold person* spell cast at 7th level). A cleric within the temple can speak the name of the glyph to allow safe passage (this applies to all glyphs here).

2. Passage of Chanting

Named for the chants made by acolytes and clerics returning to the temple, this long passage can be a death trap if the temple defenses

are alerted. If this is the case, junior clerics (3rd level) are waiting in the side passages behind the secret doors. When the party passes by, they emerge (almost certainly with surprise) and use mold bombs and then other attacks (see later for details of combat tactics).

3. Trapped Door

Another *glyph of warding* (14 points of chill damage, plus paralysis) is laid upon the door, which is locked, bolted, and barred to prevent a *knock* spell from opening it on the first attempt. A *knock* spell may alert the guards beyond to the presence of intruders if the bolt drops from its frame due to the spell! The pit trap is operated from area 4.

4. Guard Room

There are always two 3rd-level fighters and two 3rd-level clerics on guard here. A wall-lever here opens the covered pit (area 3) outside the door. This is a 20-foot-deep, spiked pit that inflicts 2d6 + 2d8 points of damage.

5. Junior Clerics

The six chambers house nine 3rd-level clerics. Three are asleep at any given time unless the temple defenses are roused. Each chamber has beds, basic furnishings, and minor trinkets and coinage (value 5d20 + 100 gp per room).

6. Living Chamber

This is a general resting and eating room where the guards and clerics meet and relax while off-duty. There are one to two fighters here at any given time, unless the temple is on alert.

7. Temple Guards

These three rooms are occupied by the fighter guards, of whom there are a total of eight (including those listed for areas 4 and 6).

Five of them are 3rd level and three are 5th level. Usually, half are asleep. Each room has coffered coins and a small gem or two, for a total of 5d20 + 100 gp per room.

8. Great Library and Study

This spacious chamber is packed with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, with thousands of tomes on all aspects of the history and societies of Unther, Mulhorand, Chessenta, Thay, and the Shaar. The value of these books alone would be around 100,000 gp. Maps, brass models of the movement of the heavens, astrological charts showing the correspondence of body parts to the heavenly spheres, and similar decorations fill the room.

9. The Wyrms-Priest's Chambers

The senior cleric, the Wyrms-Priest, holds court here. The room is filled with sculptures of blue dragons (Ganafar's own work). Incidental treasure is worth 400 gp.

Ganafar, the Wyrms-Priest: Str 10, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 18, Cha 14; AC -3 (*chain mail* +1, *shield* +1, *cloak of displacement*); MV 9; C7; hp 57; #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1d6+4/2d4+3 (*flail* +2 and Str bonus) or spell; ML Fanatic (18); AL LE; SA/SD spells, magical items; Spells: *bless*, *combine*, *pu-*



rify food and drink, command (x2), fire trap, heat metal, know alignment, resist cold, spiritual hammer, prayer, protection from fire, pyrotechnics, protection from good 10' radius, spell immunity

Ganafar has a scroll with a *flame strike* spell, a flask with two applications of *oil of impact* (adds +1 bonus to attack roll, +4 damage, -1 THACO to stats above), a *cloak of displacement*, a *brooch of shielding* with 53 hp left, and a magical amulet that enables him the effect of a *find the path* spell through areas within the temple covered by guards and wards. This only functions for a worshiper of the wyrm, however.

10. The Wyrm-Blade's Chambers

This title is given to Halmashir, a huge (6'7"), swarthy monster of a man, brutish and bullying. The room is a filthy mess, the remnants of meals, stinking dirty clothes, and the smell of bad wine and acrid sweat befouling the place.

Halmashir, the Wyrm-Blade: Str 18/98, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 8, Wis 9, Cha 5; AC -3 (*plate mail* +3 of fire resistance, *boots of striding and springing*, Dex bonus); MV 9 and special; F13; hp 92; #AT 2 + special; THACO 5; Dmg 1d8+6-9 or 2d4+8/2d8+8 or possible specials (see below); ML Fanatic (18); AL LE; SD may avoid melee blows (boots).

Halmashir wears a giant draconic helm that can breathe a 12-

HD lightning bolt (10 feet wide, 60 feet long), three times per day in the direction of his gaze (the bolt starts five feet in front of his face). This helm, which is powerfully evil (and radiates this strongly) also confers a permanent immunity to electrical attacks on Halmashir.

He employs a *long sword of dancing* that fights independently of him, and a *vorpal bastard sword* +3 (LE aligned), which he uses two-handed except when grabbing the returning dancing sword. He has a *potion of extra healing* and a *potion of invulnerability*

Tactics of the Defenders

If alerted, the junior clerics partly infiltrate the side passages 2a and 2b and use surprise tactics to attack the rear of the party, throwing their deadly mold bombs (treat as grenade-like missiles, ranges 2/5/



9). Any spore cloud released takes 1d4+1 rounds to disperse. A pair of junior fighters also enters the side passages to lead the melee assaults on any PCs emerging from the clouds of mold spores. Other junior clerics fight in area 4 with the junior fighters; they attempt to lure the PCs into the room rather than fight in the doorway. The spell *protection from good* will be cast when the alert is raised; a series of *bless* spells will be cast by different junior clerics, beginning at this time, to make sure that this spell affects all defenders when battle ensues.

The 5th-level fighters use their *beads of force* to entrap a couple of attackers if possible, entering the fray when an opportunity arises.

In all cases, the defenders are well-organized and try to cover for each other so that the wounded can make a fighting retreat to swallow a curative potion if this seems possible. The two major defenders of the temple, Halmashir and Ganafar, aid their juniors in different ways. Ganafar casts defensive spells (*protection from fire*, *spell immunity* [against *ice storm*], *protection from good 10' radius*, *resist cold*), then *prayer* during battle, and then comes out to support the resistance with distance spells (*heat metal*, *flame strike*, *command*). He avoids melee unless the juniors are being overwhelmed; he applies *oil of impact* to his flail before meleeing, if he has time. First melee and spell attacks against him miss because of his cloak; be careful to take all his defensive magic into account.

Halmashir the fighter is a very powerful enemy, brutal and vile. He attacks the weakest target he can see, if possible. He takes all possible defensive precautions (e.g., swallowing his *potion of in-*

vulnerability). He avoids melee if he has the chance to use his draconic helm first. He isn't bothered if a minion gets fried by a lightning bolt from the helm, so long as he gets some PCs as well. Both he and Ganafar try to back off from a fight to recuperate before relaunching an attack.

If necessary, all fight to the death. Maldraedior is first roused when Ganafar or Halmashir suffers a first hit (or is paralyzed, etc.) and a projected image appears within 1d4 rounds to fight. You should determine carefully under what conditions, if any, the dragon offers surrender or a cessation of hostilities.

As an optional complication, you can give juniors the chance to retreat through the temple during battle (along the side passages 2a and 2b), run up the steps, and bring reinforcements to attack the PCs from above. You may determine the number and levels of these (fighter) replacements as you see fit. Do this only if the PC party can take this kind of heat! These reinforcements can't make their way beyond area 10, so if the PCs get beyond there they are safe—until they want to get out, of course.

Note on further locations: Areas 11-13 are covered by a *guards and wards* spell in addition to all other magical effects listed below.

11. Corridor of Elementals

This massive corridor is powerfully trapped. Two braziers on the map radiate magic, simply due to a *Nystul's magical aura* (they are harmless decoys). The other four braziers are dangerous, for each is a *brazier of sleep smoke*. None of them radiates magic, due to a permanent *nondetection* spell cast on

them. The magic mouth cast on the ceiling between the middle pair of braziers also does not radiate magic, for the same rea-

son. When any creature approaches within 30 feet of the magic mouth, it lets out a piercing scream (all within 60 feet must roll successful saving throws vs. spell or be deafened for 1d4+1 rounds). This breaks a small glass globe containing oil within each brazier, and in turn this allows a counterweight to fall, striking a flint to ignite the oil and the incense within each brazier. This results in each brazier summoning a fire elemental (12 HD + 12 hp), each with 75 hit points. The elementals attack immediately.

The doors at the end of this corridor—which is not used by the temple clerics—are powerfully trapped. Each bears a fire trap inflicting 1d4 + 18 points of damage if triggered (roll a successful saving throw vs. spell for half damage). Touching the doorknobs causes a thin, lacquered veneer of wood to fall from the doors revealing a symbol of insanity which affects all looking at the doors.

12. Corridor of Distortion

This corridor appears to be twice its real length, unless a spell such as *true seeing* is employed. In addition to the distance distortion, there is a *conjure elemental* spell that summons a 16-HD earth elemental that attacks anyone not accompanied by Ganafar. The elemental lurks half-way along the length of the corridor. The door at





the end has a *glyph of warding* (14 points of chill damage, roll a successful saving throw vs. spell for half damage and to avoid a *hold*

person effect).

13. Central Chamber of the Wurm

This huge chamber has walls decorated with murals of Maldraedior, tapestries showing the dragon in his full glory, gem-encrusted braziers and sconces (value 15,000 gp), and the like. The ceiling height here is 35 feet. Dominating the room is a huge, 70-foot-long statue of the dragon himself, rising 15 feet into the air, in a half-crouched position as if ready to spring. This is where acolytes are brought to witness a manifestation of the dragon.

There is only one way to get closer to the dragon's actual physical body from here. There are secret doors within the belly of the stone statue. These can be found by crawling into the stone mouth of the dragon and pulling at the base of the tongue (a successful Intelligence check with a -4 penalty enables a PC to see something odd in the stone joint here). PCs can crawl down the neck only in single file!

Below the stone doors is a shaft leading downward some 200 feet to the hidden cavern where Maldraedior's body lies.

14. Hidden Cavern of the Wurm

Maldraedior's real body is sealed inside a 40-foot-diameter stone

"egg," which has four-foot-thick walls. Within the chamber itself is the dragon's treasure hoard, which should be designed by the DM in accord with the needs of his own campaign. If extra magical items are placed, do not forget that the dragon has a *hand* spell with which he can manipulate many such items (e.g., a magical wand). If he can use items, he will! Spell books will be part of the package—Maldraedior doesn't need them for memorizing, but he does need a source of new spells and has collected several spell books. The dragon has an *efreeti bottle* here, and he will loose the efreet if the PCs get here. His *gem of brightness* is also in the main cavern, and it will be activated with a command word to attack the PCs.

Within the sealed egg, *ioun stones* sustain the dragon's shriveled body, and his *mirror of mental prowess* (which has a *continual light* cast upon it) enables him to scry the temple and his many agents. The *staff of curing* here will be used in emergency to heal damage. Note that Maldraedior cannot use the planar travel function of the magical mirror yet, and he badly wants to learn how to do this. A first task for PCs negotiating with him would be to find out how to help him in this respect.

Dragon Battle Tactics

This dragon has so many spells that your imagination is the only limit on what he can do. His highest-level spells can be used only close to his own physical body, but this still leaves many options. Major area-effect spells (*prismatic spray*, *chain lightning*) are usually reserved for use in area 14.

The breath weapon will be used once as soon as possible, but later

usage is carefully saved. Demi-shadow monsters will be used early, to support meleeing guards and clerics if possible (demi-shadow landsharks are a favorite with Maldraedior). Attacks that provide no saving throws (*power word*, *maze*) will be used intelligently—*maze* on a fighter (low Int), *power word* on a wizard (low hit point total). *Chaos* will be used early on. *Screen* is used to prevent scrying of area 14. *Detect* and *dispel magic* will be used to identify a magical effect aiding the PCs and put a stop to it (e.g., *prayer*, *haste*). And so on; Maldraedior has many, many spells to choose from!

Prepare a battle schedule for the dragon, weaving his spell use with that of his servants. Make sure he retreats to regenerate (*ioun stone*, *staff of curing*) well before he is seriously threatened. Maldraedior is a supra-genius. Play him like one. Go out there and kill those PCs. Make them sweat blood to gain a victory here.

If the PCs win, they get a fabulous treasure and a real kick out of their win. Life may be very sweet until the scores of surviving members of the Ramahresh and Kalmarak families begin to track them down for revenge; the wurm was a god to them, after all. The DM can keep the PCs hassled for some time if he should so wish.

But We Come in Peace!!

If the PCs haven't come to kill the dragon, matters are very different. There is nothing to stop the DM from requiring that they kill off the guards and clerics to get to the dragon, of course. But in the event that the PCs come to talk, Maldraedior is prepared to listen if the PCs don't try to go any further

than area 13, they flatter him and bring gifts (but no grovelling), and they look strong and talk smart.

Of course, there will be much subtle mental duelling as the wyrm tests the PCs with covert threats, insinuations, and the like. Information below will help you in deciding what the outcome of parleying will be, and what information the dragon may be prepared to divulge.

Maldraedior (Great Wyrms Blue Dragon): AC -8; MV 9, Fl 30 (C) + special (see below); HD 22; hp 144; #AT 3 + specials (snatch up to L size; kick 1d6+12 feet away; wing buffet 1d6+8 damage); THACO 5; Dmg 1d8+6/1d8+6/3d8+8; AL N(E); INT supra-genius (19); SZ G (40' x 15' x 15' as image); SA lightning bolt breath weapon (3/day, 1 per 3 rounds, 24d8+12 damage), fear within 50 yards (saving throw penalty of -4 for creatures/characters with 12 or fewer HD/levels), spells, manifests through projected images; SD MR 65%, detects invisible within 120 feet, immune to electrical attacks, spells.

Spell-like powers as great wyrm: *create/destroy water* (3/day), *dust devil*, *ventriloquism*, *control winds*, *hallucinatory terrain* (1/day each), *sound imitation* at will, *clairaudience* to 240' within temple, telepathic communication. As a unique power, Maldraedior has the permanent power of *true seeing* within the temple.

Wizard Spells (as 18th-level wizard): *charm person*, *detect magic*, *magic missile* (x2), *protection from good*, *shield*, *darkness 15' radius*, *improved phantasmal force*, *hypnotic pattern*, *hand*; *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *clairvoyance*, *dispel magic* (x2), *fireball*, *slow*, *detect*

scrying, *charm monster* (x2), *minor globe of invulnerability*, *Rary's mnemonic enhancer*, *chaos*, *conjure elemental*, *contact other plane*, *demi-shadow monsters*, *distance distortion*, *chain lightning*, *globe of invulnerability*, *legend lore*, *power word stun*, *prismatic spray*, *spell turning*, *maze*, *screen*, *time stop*.

Priest spells (as 10th-level priest): *command* (x4), *fire trap*, *heat metal*, *silence 15' radius* (x2), *glyph*, *prayer*, *protection from fire*, *free action*, *lower water*, *produce fire*, *flame strike* (x2).

Magical items in lair (area 15): *gem of brightness*, *ioun stones* (clear, iridescent, pearly white; enable dragon to live without air, food, or water, regenerates 1 hp/turn), *efreeti bottle*, *mirror of mental prowess*, *staff of curing* (8 charges). Maldraedior also has spell books here (see area description for details).

Special Notes: Maldraedior's physical form is not capable of combat actions. He appears, and fights, as a projected image that can appear (and be maintained) at will within the temple, three times per day, for up to one hour per projection, or outside the temple (maximum range of ten miles). Such a projected image takes one round to form, and also one round to disappear if Maldraedior wishes to withdraw or manifest himself elsewhere within the temple.

The combat statistics for Maldraedior differ from those of a standard great wyrm (e.g., less physical damage) because of the semi-real nature of his projection. Unfortunately, this also reduces the damage he suffers from attacks. Physical attacks on

Maldraedior's projected images cause only 75% of normal damage if successful, and any damage caused by illusions (such as demi-shadow monsters) is only 50% of normal.

Maldraedior's physical body is a 20-foot-long, half-mummified, shriveled form. It is incapable of fighting or defending itself. Attacks upon it automatically hit. Damage caused to it is added to that inflicted on the projected image forms of the wyrm. If Maldraedior's hit point total is reduced to 0, the body crumbles to dust.

Maldraedior is also slightly restricted in how he may use his spells. His 9th-level spell may only be used in area 14 of the temple; his 8th-level spells in areas 14 or 13; his 7th-level spells in areas 11, 12, 13 or 14; his 6th-level spells only inside the temple; his 3rd-5th level spells within the temple or a five-mile radius; and his 1st- and 2nd-level spells within the temple or a ten-mile radius of it.

Role-Playing Maldraedior

Maldraedior is incredibly old. His rheumy, sunken eyes have seen over 4,000 summers of desert heat, battle, and blood in the warring Empires. He has grown weary, jaded, and cynical. This affects his alignment and his demeanor.

Blue dragons are usually Lawful Evil, but Maldraedior has passed beyond that. He regards Chaos and Law as forces that ebb and flow, and he has become indifferent to their struggle. Good and Evil





he regards slightly differently—he thinks they are irrelevancies drummed up by effete philosophers to waste time.

The values of good he spurns, especially if irritable, although he does not actively follow the values of evil. Overall, Maldraedior is an uncaring creature, sometimes spiteful and malicious. His alignment is best given as Neutral (Evil).

Maldraedior has deep pride in himself, but he also has something very unusual in a dragon—a half-deprecating, laconic sense of humor. He may even crack the odd joke at his own expense (but others had better be more careful!). He despises jesters and pranksters, such as copper and faerie dragons. He responds well to people who have killed such pests. Maldraedior respects people who stand up for themselves. He likes flattery, even demands it, but he hates real grovelers.

Interests and Motivations

Maldraedior has only two real interests: knowledge and magic. Maldraedior has very extensive interests as a sage; these are outlined more fully below. Maldraedior is always interested in the acquisition of magic that can scry, heal, or enable astral or extraplanar travel. He also badly wants to learn how to planar travel with his *mirror*, having been unable to master this function. Maldraedior will be ready to provide information in return for such help.

The Last Faithful Servant

Maldraedior has one absolute passion that he will not reveal save in exceptional circumstances. Maldraedior is the last true worshiper of a draconic demipower, Kalzareinad, minor deity of draconic magic (Neutral [Evil]).

It is a splendid irony that Maldraedior is himself revered by humans who consider him a god, while Maldraedior's only major reason for staying alive is his role as the last servant and worshiper of this all-but-lost demipower. Maldraedior passionately reveres this deity and hopes that by acquiring magic he may contact other dragons (primarily blues) and convert them to Kalzareinad's cult.

He will keep this secret reverence to himself at all costs. Details of this cult can be improvised by the DM if necessary.

Maldraedior's Knowledge

This dragon has been around 4,000 years and has a network of spies, plus powerful magical spells and items for scrying. Basically, he knows anything you want him to know. However, some of his information may be dated and thus partly wrong. In Unther, consider the following possibilities:

1. Treasure Hoards: An ancient wyrm might know the locations of many lost hoards.

2. Genealogies: Maldraedior has first-hand knowledge of the genealogies of nobles in Mulhorand and Unther, where these matters are of major importance. A powerful person exposed as illegitimate or related to murderers or worse would be struck down if the information could be proved true.

3. Special or Lost Magic: Maldraedior has several such magics; but there are some that he doesn't particularly want or need (such as a magical net that can trap and banish a hakeshar) or can't use (class-specific items, for example). This is a special case of the treasure hoard knowledge.

4. The Banespear: Maldraedior knows of a spear, separated into shaft and head and hidden apart, which can slay the vile tyrant Gilgeam with a single strike into the side. Both parts are carefully hidden and protected by monsters and traps of great power and peril. This is suitable only for PCs of high level, and only if you can handle the turbulence caused by a successful assassination of Gilgeam.

5. The Cult of Tiamat: Maldraedior hates this cult. While he would not want to see an ancient wyrm like Guyanothaz (*Old Empires*, page 41) killed, he would like to see the bullying cult put to the sword. With his help the PCs could inflict deadly blows on these Chaotic Evil foes.

6. Clerical Politics: Through his network of spies and sages, Maldraedior is especially well-informed about the cults opposed to Gilgeam. He could furnish the PCs with contacts of fellow rebels against the tyrant. He may, however, balk at helping establish contact with the clerics of Ishtar, whom he regards as intolerably good.



W 70



“Invitation to a Robbery” is an AD&D® game adventure for four to six characters of 6th-8th level (about 35 total levels). The adventure in-

volves a family of black dragons that the PCs must negotiate with. The strength of the party should not be great enough that fighting the dragons is a viable option.

This is an adventure that the PCs stumble into while traveling cross country. The adventure takes place in a desolate swamp called Karatorn.

Swamp Karatorn can be placed in an area that the characters are traveling through for the first time, or the adventure’s location can easily be changed to fit a previously encountered swamp that was not thoroughly explored. Because the swamp is the home of a family of black dragons, it should be set far from major civilized settlements.

For the Dungeon Master

A long time ago, Ralas, a black dragon, was a contented bachelor. He would awaken once every few weeks and leave his lair in Swamp Karatorn to go off in search of food and treasure. After a full day of plundering, he would return home weary and comfortable and sit about his lair for a few more weeks.

Over the decades he amassed a handsome hoard of treasure. When he reached the age of adult, he knew he was ready to take a mate.

Now it is the custom of the black dragons that the female picks the mate in a black dragon pairing.

She makes her selection among prospective mates based on the male’s worth, which for black dragons goes strictly according to the size of his hoard. Since Ralas knew that he was a very worthy dragon with a very large hoard, he waited and waited, knowing that someday a discriminating female of his species would come along and he would be chosen as a mate.

Unfortunately, Ralas had led a very solitary life and had only seen two other black dragons in all the years since he left home to find his own lair. Having become so accustomed to living alone, it took him almost a quarter of a century to realize that a female dragon was not going to be drawn to him unless he got word out to the rest of the world that he had a stockpile of gold and was ready to raise a family. A lazy but crafty creature, Ralas struck upon the idea of having someone spread the word for him.

The next time he went out hunting, he traveled by night to an area he knew was thick with orc bands. He hid himself in a large cave and began readying a *charm humanoid* spell. After eight hours, an orc named Snoggus passed by. Ralas composed a brief proclamation of his wealth, which he had the orc memorize (the most difficult part of the whole affair), and then sent Snoggus out as his herald.

Snoggus did his job well, and soon many people and creatures in the area knew that there lived a black dragon named Ralas in Swamp Karatorn who had a great treasure hoard. Although it took many months for word to reach other members of his species, Ralas had no time to become bored or impatient, for as word of his wealth spread, adventurers from all over came to try to take his life and his money.

It mattered not one wit to Ralas. He was a fierce and terrible dragon and most of the looters lost their lives. Those who managed to escape only spread his glory more. Those who died usually had some valuables, so. Ralas’s hoard grew because of their efforts.

Eventually the adventurers stayed away and the female black dragons finally arrived. Three of them came to fight for the right to mate with Ralas, as is the custom with black dragons. Ralas watched from the swamp below as the dragons flew through the air and clawed at one another in the hopes of driving the other two away. Ralas’s heart swelled to know that he was worthy of this kind of attention. The eventual victor was a young dragon named Ueurwen. Although not as powerful as the other two, she had the will of a dwarf on the trail of gold.

At first Ralas was happy to have a mate, for he thought of it as taking his final step into adulthood. But there was something in the way that Ueurwen spoke that made him uneasy—a kind of shrill, commanding tone. And, of course, there were the things she said: “Go out and get more treasure! I’m here because I saw potential, not a dragon on his last breath!”

Soon after Ueurwen arrived, she and Ralas had five offspring. Ralas raised them as best he could, for he had a place in his heart for them. He silently prayed to no god in particular that as soon as the children were old enough to go off on their own, Ueurwen would decide their relationship had run its course and she would leave. It was not that he hated her, it was simply that he realized he preferred his former solitude.

Three centuries later, it was clear to Ralas that he hated



Ueurwen. He could think of nothing else but plans with which to remove her from his life. At first, of course, he thought of simply killing her. But he realized that if he should do that, word would simply get out that he was an eligible bachelor again. A new mate would come along and he would be in the same bind. He thought of flying off to a distant and secret place, but the thought of leaving his treasure behind caused him so much pain he immediately rejected the idea. He thought of destroying his treasure, but again, he found that letting his gold go would be impossible.

So Ralas, now 586 years old, lives in despair. Ueurwen's constant complaints about his laziness and his lack of worth as a dragon, and her constant movement of his treasure from one chamber in his lair to another so

that he never is able to simply sleep upon the hoard, have all driven him to stomp around the swamp in despair.

Ralas has also become tired of his mate's bragging about his wealth. It only encourages one party of adventurers after another to try to rob him, and he has discovered status garnered from his wealth may not be worth the effort. He is desperate, and he is prepared to take drastic measures to get his life back in order again.

Swamp Karatorn

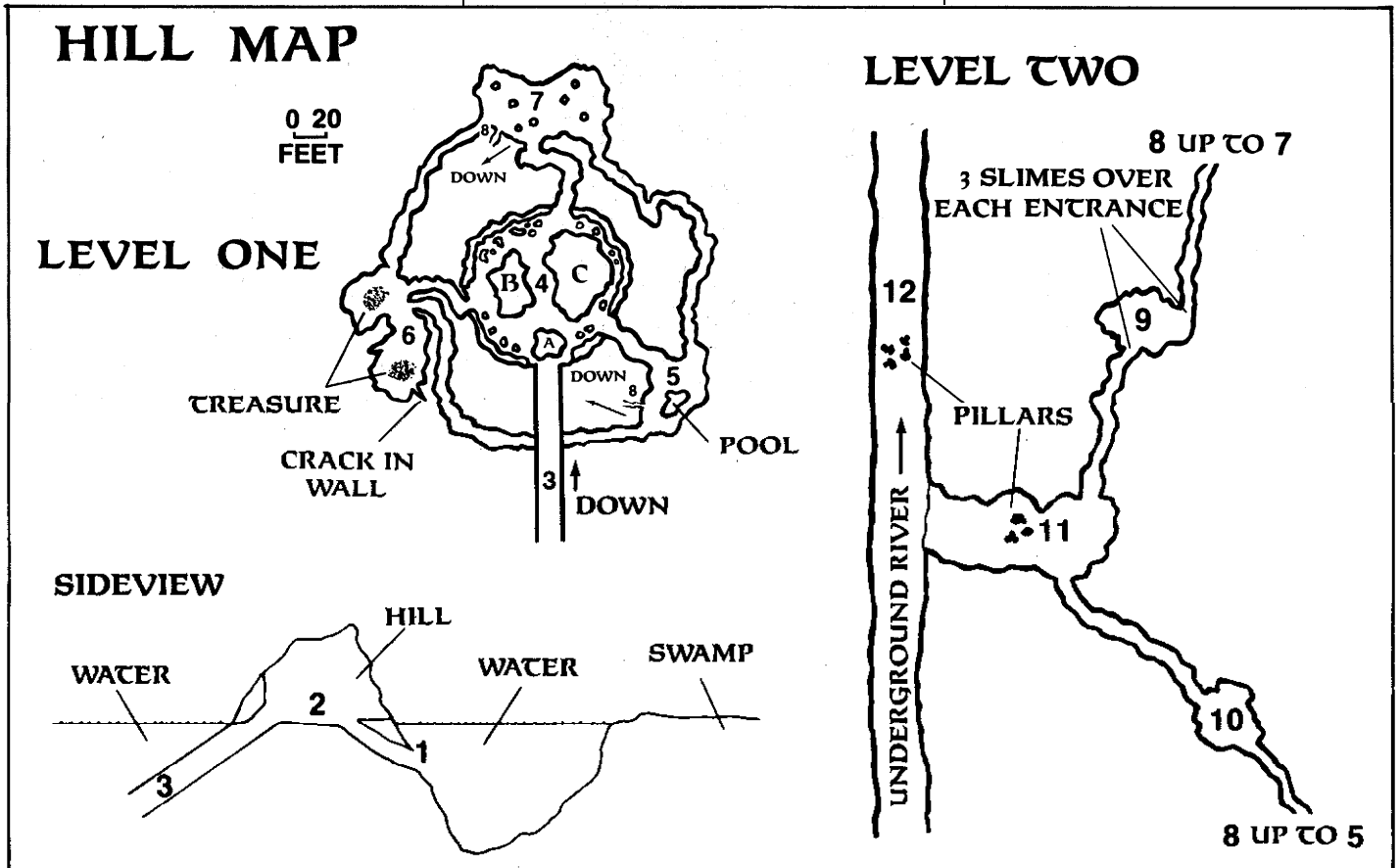
Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

As you travel through the wilderness, your brains puzzle over a debate you overheard in the last tavern you had stopped at. The discussion, held by two

learned sages, concerned dragons and how best to handle the threat of evil members of the race.

Since the slaying of dragons is a potential concern of yours, you listened with great interest to the theories discussed.

The position of the first sage was that all of the heroes running around slaying dragons would eventually bring about the end of human- and demihuman-kind. His reasoning was as follows: Since the heroes only slay the weaker members of the race (obviously the toughest dragons kill off the heroes rather than the other way around), the





adventurers are insuring that only the strongest members of the dragon races are left to mate and

produce off-spring. Since the weak members of the race are not left around to dilute the strength of the race, someday the dragons races, specifically the evil dragons, will evolve into super-dragons.

The second sage disagreed vehemently, going so far as to pour the ale from his mug over his knowledgeable peer's head. This sage's position was that since the strongest dragons have huge hoards that they brag about for the sake of status, it is inevitable that these are the dragons that draw one group of adventurers after another. Eventually probability would dictate that one of the groups would defeat the dragon.

The first sage screamed that his companion was misrepresenting the nature of probability and that if the dragon was stronger, the dragon was stronger and luck had nothing to do with it. The strongest dragons would win and go on to produce heirs of power. The key to stopping the evolution of dragons, he screamed, inches away from the second sage's face, was to somehow stop the evil dragons from breeding in the first place.

When the second sage calmly asked him how he was going to get that to happen, the first sage sat back down and said that he

didn't know, but he was working it.

As you look around at your surroundings, it occurs to you that the wildlife around you has been slowly thinning out and there is now not the sound of a single bird in the air. The ground is wet and soft, and there is a dank stench in the breeze. As you top a ridge, you see that you are at the cusp of a large, shallow cavity in the earth. Within this bowl is a great swamp filled with black and decayed trees, rotted vines, and fetid, standing water. All that you can see clearly is a large hill in the center of swamp.

As you are considering your path, you hear a bellowing cry, as if some immense creature is in pain. The sound comes from within the swamp, not too far from the point where you are standing. You hear the cry again, this time followed by a roar, the falling of trees, and what sounds like a foul oath.

The noises are all being made by Ralas, who is out in the swamp having one of his tantrums. The rest of the adventure rests on the assumption that the PCs will want to investigate the noises coming from the swamp. For this reason, you should make sure the party does not have to be anywhere in a hurry—they should have the luxury to be curious and check out the swamp.

As the group approaches the swamp, have each character roll an Intelligence check.

Anyone rolling under one-half of his Intelligence (round fractions down) remembers that a dragon is rumored to live nearby, but it has not been heard from for some time.

Anyone rolling under one-third of his Intelligence remembers hearing that although the dragon in the swamp hasn't been heard from in some time, the swamp itself is reputed to be a source of young dragons. According to the tales, a swarm of dragons leaves the swamp every 75 years or so.

The Dragon's Deal

Because the swamp houses the lair of a dragon family, there are no other creatures about (dragons have that kind of an effect on the neighborhood). The characters can work their way over the small, muddy areas of land that dot the swamp, or they can simply walk through the water, which is about two feet deep on the average. Finding the source of the noise is not a problem. The PCs need only tromp through the swamp for about half an hour, using the growls and monstrous cries as an audible beacon.

When they reach the site of the noise, they can hide behind a clump of trees and see the following:

A black dragon, about 120 feet long from nose to tail, is thrashing about in the shallow water of the swamp. Every once in a while it stops, looks up at the sky, and howls in pain.

Every once in a while, the dragon mutters something under its breath. By listening carefully, you can hear him talking to himself in the common tongue. "What am I going to do about this?" the dragon grumbles. "I've got to get rid of her. But how? I've got to get rid of my treasure, or make her think it's gone. Make everybody think I'm a worthless dragon. That would

be well worth the price to finally be alone again! But how to do it?"

Such an offer of employment, helping a dragon dispense with his hoard, should intrigue even the most cautious of adventurers. While Ralas continues his futile rage, the PCs need to muster up the courage to approach and offer to help him get rid of his treasure.

As soon as the PCs make their presence known, Ralas whirls around at them, pulls his head back in order to spit his acid, and then stops. He eyes the group suspiciously and asks, "What do you want?" The fact that the group is negotiating with him rather than attacking suggests that they are worthy of interest. Since Ralas is now ready to accept help from almost any quarter, he is willing to listen to the group and to enlist their aid.

He relates to them the information covered in the "For the Dungeon Master" section (leaving out all information about Snoggus). He then offers the group 10,000 gp in exchange for helping him in his plight. He clarifies the statements the PCs overheard him make and explains that he doesn't want to really get rid of his hoard, he just wants Ueurwen to think it is gone so that she'll leave and spread word that he's now a poor, worthless dragon. "I'll still know how much I have," Ralas says, "And that's good enough for me these days."

He has the following conditions that have to be considered before a plan can be devised:

- He can't remove the treasure himself because it's rare that he's in the lair that Ueurwen isn't with him complaining that the lair isn't

dank enough or that the hoard hasn't grown in value for some time.

- He needs at least half of his hoard to be spirited away somehow. The hoard currently contains 22,087 cp, 32,901 sp, 29,876 gp, 1,382 pp, 5,492 ep, ten small chests of gems (each containing 50 gems), a dozen statues, and 18 pieces of jewelry. There are also the following magical items: a velvet-lined box containing a vial of *elixir of youth*, a *ring of clumsiness*, a *ring of swimming*, a *wand of frost*, and, buried in one of the gem chests, a *gem of insight*.

The dragon really does know every piece of his hoard's value down to the copper pieces, and he makes sure the PCs are aware that if they try to make off with more than he is offering, he'll know about it, track them down, and eat them.

His lair is located under the lake that surrounds the large hill at the center of the swamp. To get to the lair, one has to swim under the lake and then enter a tunnel that leads to the lair.

Ralas has the beginning of a plan he cannot complete by himself: The treasure room sits directly under the water of the lake. Ralas has noticed that one wall of the treasure room is currently leaking water from the lake, indicating that the wall could be damaged in such a way as to bring the whole roof in.

In addition, Ralas is aware of small tunnels and chambers underneath his lair. If the lake were to crash in on the treasure room, it might collapse the floor and the hoard would be washed away through the tunnels below. Unfortunately Ralas has no idea where the treasure would end up. If the party wants to pursue this plan, he makes it clear that they had better

come up with a way to control where the treasure ends up. He does not know yet how to get into the level beneath his lair,

but he assumes that there must be a way since the water from his lair seems to wash down into that level.

Ralas wants the characters to do the job without outside help. Too many people roaming around the lair will soon become obvious. Since Ueurwen seldom leaves the lair, and he wouldn't be able to keep her out of the lair for more than a day on a fabricated pretense, moving the hoard will have to take place while Ueurwen is in the cave.

There is a brood of baby black dragons in the cave. The PCs must swear not to harm them in any way. If pressed on the point, Ralas makes it clear that he will raise the children himself if the plan works and Ueurwen leaves.

The group may be hesitant to help a black dragon in any way. The creature is Chaotic Evil after all, and certain members of the party might have conflicts of alignment. If they remember the debate between the sages, however, they'll realize that here is the perfect opportunity to prevent this black dragon from breeding without having to kill it (and killing it is an unlikely outcome). Thus they are helping prevent a powerful dragon from passing on its strengths to future generations.

Also, if a *know alignment* spell is cast on the dragon, it is discovered that the dragon is currently leaning more toward neutral than evil. His years with Ueurwen have





taught him a good deal about pain and the need for compassion. The PCs can easily guess, however, that if Ralas spends too much time

under Ueurwen's tongue-lashings, he could well snap back to evil and become a rampaging dragon killing indiscriminately simply to somehow assuage his frustration.

Finally, if the party refuses to help Ralas; he threatens just such a violent rampage. He is a black dragon after all, and he expects people to be concerned if he says that he cannot stand this anymore.

This threat should be used as a final resort. For the most part, Ralas sees the party as his last chance and is very kind and polite to

them. He only threatens violence if he thinks this last chance is about to leave him.

Once the terms of the job have been agreed upon and Ralas has outlined his suggestions and conditions, the group hears a roar coming from the center of the swamp. Ralas explains that Ueurwen is calling for him and he must leave. He reminds them to be careful and to stay out of sight when entering the lair and traveling around in it.

Into the Lair

Refer to the map when reading the following numbered descriptions.

Once Ralas has bounded off to his mate's bellowing, the PCs should work their way toward the center of the swamp where they discover a black lake surrounding a hill.

Before you is a still, black lake, about 600 yards in diameter. At its center rises a very large hill made up of grey-green rock.

The entrance into the hill is located on the southern side of the hill, 75 feet under the water. This entrance is 200 yards from the shore of the lake.

The Hill

1. Entrance Tunnel

The tunnel is filled with water as dark as the rest of the lake. The following description should be read only if the PCs have methods of producing light that will work under water.

The tunnel is roughly a tube. Its sides are lined with jagged



rocks. It is about 30 feet in diameter. The water is so dark that it is impossible for you to determine how far the tunnel extends.

Although the tunnel is relatively narrow, the dragons can pass through by drawing their limbs in, folding their wings back, and slithering through like snakes. The tunnel is 90 feet long from the entrance in the lake to the dry chamber in the hill.

Rules for swimming and holding your breath are covered on pages 120-122 of the *Player's Handbook*. The characters do not have to swim through the tunnel, however. Although they must hold their breath, they can use the rough edges of rock as hand- and foot-holds and crawl up the tunnel. PCs moving this way move at one-third their movement rate.

If the party has illumination, they notice bones from humans and demihumans scattered haphazardly in the nooks and crannies of the tunnel.

If the party is attempting to navigate the tunnel in the dark, have each character roll a Dexterity check every ten feet (for a total of nine checks) to avoid slamming against the sharp rocks of the tunnel. Any character who fails a roll suffers 1d4 points of damage.

2. Entrance Chamber

This chamber is covered with a one-inch-deep layer of mud that makes walking difficult. There is a tunnel sloping down from this room opposite the tunnel from the lake. Dragon footprints and ruts carved out by the tails of the dragons run through the mud.

The party can use this room to

rest after traveling through the tunnel. If the room is searched, the party finds a small alcove tucked behind some fallen rocks. This area might serve as a hiding place later on. There is nothing else of interest in the room.

3. Lair Corridor

A wide, sloping passage leads down into a dim, red glow. As with the room you are in, the passage is covered with mud and looks as if it is very slippery. However, the surface of the floor is interrupted by bumps and projections that the dragons undoubtedly use as claw-grips. The protrusions are set apart from each other about every two to four yards.

The slick surface of the passage will make it difficult for the PCs to negotiate the slope. Whereas the dragons can reach one of the rough protrusions in a single step, the adventurers will have to travel over several yards of slippery surface to get the next bracing point. Refer to pages 122-123 of the *Player's Handbook* when the PCs attempt to travel down the corridor. The modifiers for the corridor's physical situation total -15% (sloped inward +25%, slippery -40%; the protrusions are not frequent enough to act as a positive modifier). If a character succeeds in a Climbing check, he makes it to the central chamber (area 4) of the dragons' lair without any difficulty. If the roll is failed, the character slides, out of control, down the passage and lands in pool A of the central chamber with a loud splash.

The Lair

The first level of the lair is where the dragons make their home.

The walls, floor, and roof are all made of a soft stone. Most of the lair is covered in a smelly mud. The ceilings in the corridors are 30 feet high.

4. The Central Chamber

This large cavern contains three pools. There are three natural corridors (in addition to area 3) that radiate out from the cavern. A red, phosphorescent moss grows all over the walls and edges of the pools. This moss grows throughout the lair and illuminates the caverns with an unearthly, scarlet light. Water drips down from the ceiling and there are even small streams of water pouring down the walls. There are bones of large animals, humans, and demihumans scattered about the cavern.

The central area of the cavern is, of course, covered with the slimy mud. However, circling the chamber is a natural shelf about a yard wide that is relatively dry. More importantly, the shelf is partially hidden behind boulders and loose stones that Ralas pushed to the edge of the cavern centuries ago when he made the cavern his lair. The stones produce shadows that the characters can use to hide from Ueurwen if she is in the chamber.

The water in all of the pools is foul and thick. Pool A is only three yards deep. If any of the PCs slip while working their way down to area 3, this is the pool they land in. Pool B is 20 feet deep at its center. Pool C is 30 feet deep at its center.





The first time the party enters the central chamber, Ueurwen is in pool C and Ralas is stalking around the chamber.

Ueurwen is nagging Ralas in a draconic language. Ralas, meanwhile, hangs his head down and mutters under his breath. Although the PCs will probably not understand what is literally being said, they will certainly get the gist.

If the characters splash into pool A from the area 3, Ueurwen hears it. Ralas will guess that it is the adventurers and attempt to draw the attention of his mate away from the party. For example, Ueurwen might move toward pool A and Ralas could run to put himself between Ueurwen and the pool, nuzzling her neck in an attempt to get her in an amorous mood so she'll forget about the distraction. The PCs will of course have to scramble to get out of the way as soon as possible in case Ralas's ruse fails. For more information about Ralas, Ueurwen, and how they interact with each other, see the descriptions of the dragons at the end of the adventure.

5. Nursery

This chamber holds the dragon couple's latest brood. The six hatchlings are each about five feet long and still clumsy with their motions. Scattered about the nursery are bones and the remains of creatures that served as food for the brood. The brood will usually be found flopping about in the room's one-foot-deep pool.

Whenever the PCs enter the

room, the hatchlings start to cry out for their parents. The party can pass through the room without being attacked by the hatchlings, but the noise has a chance to attract the attention of Ueurwen (see the description of Ueurwen and Ralas at the end of the adventure for the chance of this happening). The hatchlings do not become aggressive unless the adventurers seem to be threatening them. Simply walking toward a hatchling is perceived as a hostile action.

The noise can be prevented with spells that prevent sound (such as *silence*), spells that prevent the dragons from making noise (such as *sleep*), or, if the players are imaginative, a spell to entertain the baby dragons (such as a *phantasmal force* used to make colored balls dance through the air) and awe them into silence.

There is a crack in the southern wall that leads to a narrow tunnel (area 8) down to the second level.

Black Dragon Hatchling (6): AC 4, MV 4; HD 6; hp 24 (each); (each); THACO 16; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 1d6/1d6/3d6, breath weapon for 2d4+1.

6. Treasure Room

This chamber contains Ralas's hoard. The treasure has been divided into two piles (Ralas was trying to figure out how much treasure he was going to have to give up to drive Ueurwen from his lair). Each pile is about 20 feet in diameter and eight to ten feet high.

When the characters examine the room, they discover that there are cracks in the floor, about one to two inches wide, that reveal a moss-illuminated chamber beneath the treasure room. The

party also notices that there is a heavy spray of water gushing out from the wall behind one of the piles of treasure. The water runs over the treasure and trickles down through the cracks in the floor.

If they examine the fissure that the spray of water pours through, the PCs can clearly determine that the pressure of the lake (which is where the water is coming from) has been eroding the cavern wall over the centuries. If the wall were to be damaged from within, the force of the water would cave in the wall, sending an enormous amount of water crashing into the chamber.

If the lake were to flood the room, the floor of the chamber might collapse and the pile of treasure near the fissure would be washed away. Flooding the chamber would provide an elegant solution to moving such a large amount of treasure quietly and very quickly. Of course, the party will have to explore the room beneath area 6 to find out where the treasure will end up, to insure that they don't simply lose Ralas's hoard.

To bring down the wall, the characters need to inflict 40 points of damage against the wall with picks (or other instruments used for digging through rocks). A *magic missile* spell will cause its normal damage if used against the wall, while a *lightning bolt* spell will inflict only half damage against the stone wall (because the wall is four feet thick). Fire-based spells will not cause any damage at all.

Such work entails two dangers. The first is that Ueurwen will hear the noise. This means that some sort of distraction will be required (for example, getting the hatchlings to cry). The second is that



whoever is near the fissure when the water comes crashing through stands a chance of getting washed away. A successful Dexterity check will be required to make sure that anyone working on the wall is able to leap out of the way when it crashes in. See area 12 for details of damage to characters caught up in the deluge.

Of course, a *transmute rock to mud* spell is a most efficient way of weakening the wall. If the spell is cast upon the area of the crack, the wall will collapse and the water will pour in.

Other than widening the cracks in the floor there is no way to get down to the second level from this room. If the PCs do try to smash their way down, they stand a chance of alerting Ueurwen.

7. Pantry

The tunnels from areas 4, 5, and 6 slope down into the pantry (area 7). As usual, the floor is covered with an annoying, slimy mud.

The pantry is a large cavern filled with water four feet deep. Stalagmites rise up out of the water. About a dozen of them have the corpses of adventurers pierced upon them. The bodies are far enough down the stone stakes as to be in the water, where they are being pickled by Ralas and Ueurwen.

When the party enters the chamber they hear a voice excitedly ask, "Are you here to rob the dragon?" The language is the regional tongue. The voice belongs to the ghost of Snoggus, the orc who found Ralas his potential mates. When Snoggus's services were no longer required, Ralas brought him down to the pantry and slammed him onto a stalagmite.

Although Snoggus is a ghost, his abilities differ slightly from those in *Monstrous Compendium*. Although Ralas's betrayal of Snoggus was a strong enough reason for Snoggus to become a ghost many centuries ago, he's weaker than most ghosts because he's a very happy ghost. Since his murder, he has watched Ralas become more and more miserable because of Ueurwen. Snoggus doesn't consider Ralas's pain complete justice, but it does make him feel better.

Snoggus approaches the party because he wants to know if they are there to rob the dragon. If the party answers yes to his question, he claps his noncorporeal hands together and appears about 20 feet away from them. He then says that he is trapped in this room forever, but if there's anything he can do to help, please let him know.

Snoggus appears as a semi-translucent orc with a green glow. He is dressed rather outlandishly in tights, a cloth jerkin, and a little cap with a feather on it. This is how Ralas thought a herald should be dressed, so this is what Snoggus wore.

If the party attacks, Snoggus fights back without another word.

If they attempt to talk to him, he does not attack and adds his portion of the story to the background information in the "For the Dungeon Master" section. He then describes how he has watched Ralas become more and more miserable over the centuries. He then thanks the group for trying, to cause the dragon more pain and offers to act as a distraction (he can wail up a storm) if the party ever needs him.

If the PCs tell their side of the story, specifically that they are here to help Ralas, the ghost be-

comes very upset and begs them not to do it. He wants them to promise that they are really here to take the dragon's treasure for themselves. If they make the promise, he will help them. If they don't, he will attack them to prevent them from helping Ralas get Ueurwen out of his life.

Because the ghost cannot leave the pantry, the party can simply escape the encounter. However, if they have angered him, every time they pass through the pantry he will attack them or, if he has lost more than half his hit points, begin wailing loudly. The wailing stands a chance of attracting Ueurwen's attention.

Snoggus's Ghost: AC 0 or 8, MV 9; HD 10; hp 40; THACO 11; #AT 1; Dmg age 1d4 years (weakened attack due to generally happy disposition); AL CN; SD hit only by silver (half damage) or magic (full damage) weapons.

There is a passage (area 8) leading from one end of the chamber down to the second level.

8. Passages to Level Two

Both of these passages are about three feet wide. The walls and floor are very rough. The passage from the nursery contains mud and the passage from the pantry contains running water, but the PCs can carefully walk down the sloped passage by using both sides of the wall as hand grips. There is only a 5% chance of falling while walking up or down the passages.



Level Two

The corridors of the second level are only ten feet high. The walls are lined with cracks and narrow crev-

ices. There is an inch of water on every floor on the level. As with the level above, the phosphorescent red moss grows in abundance. Because of the water on the floor, the moss is almost like a thick carpet on the ground. If the PCs examine the moss, they discover that it can easily be picked up off the ground. It is thick and tough and as strong as net made of high-quality rope. However, the gaps in the moss carpet are much finer than those in a net, and sections of the moss could easily be used as a sieve.

9. Green Slime Lair

There are three green slimes over each of the entrances into this room. They wait until someone passes through the door and then they ooze onto them.

Green Slime (6): AC 9; MV 0; HD 2; hp 16, 14, 12, 10, 8, 6; THACO 19; #AT 0; Dmg special; SD see below; AL N

The greens slimes do not cause damage, but turn their victims into green slime in 1d4 rounds. They can be scraped off quickly (if the scraper is then discarded), excised, frozen, or burned. A *cure disease* spell kills green slime. Other forms of attack, including weapons or spells, do them no harm.

10. Scrag Lair

This room is the temporary home of four freshwater scrag trolls that got trapped in the underwater stream (area 12) during a storm several miles upstream. When they came across area 11, they got out of the river to determine where they were. They quickly discovered they were under the lair of a dragon family and are trying to decide what to do next. Unless the party is moving with exceptional silence, the scraggs are prepared to ambush the party when the PCs enter the chamber.

Scrag (Freshwater Troll) (4): AC 3; MV 3; HD 5+5; hp 47, 42, 40, 36; THACO 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4+1/1d4+1/3d4; SD only fire and acid cause permanent damage, limbs continue to fight even if severed; AL CE.

11. Moss Room

This long, narrow room is located under a portion of the treasure room. The red glow of the moss in the chamber above can be seen through the cracks in the ceiling. Water drips down through these cracks. There are three natural pillars in the center of the room that prevent the ceiling from caving in when the dragons walk through the treasure room. The characters also notice that the water in the room flows to the west, toward the sound of rushing water.

The entire floor is covered with a thick carpet of moss. If the characters have yet to examine the moss, have them roll Intelligence checks now. Success means they notice that the moss floats just above the water and is woven together like a fine but strong net.

If the characters want to destroy

the pillars to weaken the floor above, they have to inflict 35 points of damage against each pillar in the same manner as weakening the wall in area 6.

If the pillars are destroyed, the floor holds steady until the wall in area 6 is destroyed and water pours through.

12. Underwater River

This underwater river flows by at a moderate rate. It is only five feet deep and the ceiling is another five feet from the surface of the water. When the characters examine the area, they see that there are four pillars (much like the pillars in area 11), 20 feet downstream of area 11. The characters can use these pillars to anchor a layer of moss across the river. If the party sets up the moss, destroys the pillars in area 11, then brings the lake's water rushing in, the treasure will be swept through area 11 and into the river. The moss will act as a sieve, catching the treasure but letting the water pass through.

A patch of moss large enough to block up the river's tunnel will weigh 280 pounds. The moss will then have to be lashed with rope to the pillars and staked into the sides of the tunnel.

When the water and treasure come rushing down upon the moss net, there is a base 50% chance that it will hold. Every ten stakes adds +5% to the chance it will hold (up to a maximum of 40 stakes). Every 25 feet of rope used adds +10% to the chance it will hold.

Also, for every hour the PCs devote to setting up the net, have them roll Intelligence checks. Any character who succeeds can add the amount he succeeds by to the



percent chance of success. This reflects the PCs' ability to find the best places to spike the stakes and secure the ropes.

Because the tunnels to the second level are so narrow, Ueurwen cannot find out what happened. Ralas will tell her he can only assume that the treasure was washed away into the river.

If a PC happens to be in areas 11 or 12 when the wall in the treasure room is destroyed, or if a PC is in area 6 and gets caught up in the water from the lake, he suffers damage as the water and treasure crash through the floor and sweep through the lower chambers.

A character caught up in the deluge suffers 5d6 points of buffeting damage. He must also use the *holding one's breath* rules given on page 122 of the *Player's Handbook* for 2d4 rounds.

If the moss net holds, the PC ends up in it amidst a pile of treasure. If the net fails, the PC is washed down the underground stream with the treasure. He suffers an additional 5d6 points of damage and lands 50 to 1,000 feet (1d20 x 50 feet) downstream of the pillars. This fate can be avoided if the character is able to roll a successful Strength check to grab the torn remnants of the net or one of the pillars and hang on against the force of the water.

Of course, the party can easily set up the moss net and then bring the wall down after making sure that everyone is out of areas 11 and 12. The only problem then is if someone working on the wall gets caught in the flood. Simply tying a rope around the character's waist and having the other characters hold fast will provide the needed security.

Ralas and Ueurwen

Ralas (Old Black Dragon): AC -3; MV 12; Fl 30 (C), Sw 12; HD 16; hp 88; THACO 5; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 1d6+8/1d6+8/3d6+8, acid breath 6d4+8; SD immune to acid, innate water breathing; AL CE.

Innate spells: *darkness* (three times/day in a 80' radius), *corrupt water* (once a day), *plant growth* (once a day).

Ueurwen (Old Black Dragon): AC -3; MV 12, Fl 30 (C), Sw 12; HD 16; hp 74; THACO 5; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 1d6+8/1d6+8/3d6+8, acid breath 6d4+8; SD immune to acid, innate water breathing; AL CE.

Innate spells: *darkness* (three times/day in a 80' radius), *corrupt water* (once a day), *plant growth* (once a day).

What the Dragons Do While the Party Works

For the most part, the dragons are out in area 4 arguing. To cover any noises the party makes, Ralas is constantly trying to get a shouting match going.

Whenever loud noises are made (the hatchlings cry, Snoggus wails, the PCs pound on stone walls with picks) there is a 25% chance that Ueurwen hears them. If she hears a noise, she'll want to investigate. Ralas quickly tries to stall her. He does this either by being affectionate, yelling at her, saying he'll check it out himself and claiming he saw nothing, and so on.

The DM should play these moments up for tension. For example, if the party is in the treasure room and Ueurwen comes bounding in with Ralas right behind her, she'll start sniffing about while Ralas

tries to convince her she didn't hear anything. As Ueurwen gets closer and closer to the PCs, Ralas tries different methods of

taking her mind off her snooping. Just as she's about to reach the PCs, Ralas succeeds.

If the party is spotted by Ueurwen, they can make a break for the second level, where they'll be safe from the dragons. If Ueurwen sees the party escaping down one of the passages, she'll watch it like a cat at a mouse hole.

Concluding the Adventure

If the party successfully brings off the disappearance of the treasure, both dragons poke their heads down into area 12 and conclude that it was washed away into the river. Ueurwen takes a look at the other half of the hoard and then stalks out of Ralas's life.

The party is responsible for getting the treasure back to area 11, where Ralas can scoop it up into the treasure room through the hole in the floor. Their reward is given in 5,000 gp, a two-foot-tall statue worth 1,000 gp, and five gems worth a total of 4,000 gp.

If the net does not hold and the treasure really is lost, Ralas will wait until his mate has left and then do his best to kill the party.

If the PCs attempt to cheat the dragon and say some of the treasure was washed away, Ralas will merely state that the lost portion of the treasure comes out of their reward.



Introduction

This adventure is designed for six to eight adventurers of levels 9 to 12. It is helpful if the party has at

least one wizard, one ranger, and one priest.

The action takes place in the Elven Woods, the same woods that contain the ruins of Myth Drannor. Recommended adventure starting points are Shadowdale, Hillsfar, or Essembra.

DM's Information

A great green dragon named Little Verthie lives in an area of woods 80 miles due west of Myth Drannor. This dragon is worshiped by the population of Trenahess, a nearby village of humans on the east bank of the River Ashaba.

The humans offer up visitors and their valuables to Verthie. In return, Verthie defends the village from monsters and other communities. Verthie's latest act was the destruction of Caronal, a neighboring village, several months ago.

Caronal and Trenahess were involved in a heated trade dispute, and matters escalated to the point of minor skirmishes. After being repeatedly beaten in a number of these fights, Trenahess called in Verthie. Caronal is now a lifeless, abandoned village. Verthie feasted well that day.

Lately, the humans' acts of devotion have displeased the dragon. The number of offerings has declined. Thus, the dragon has entered into negotiations with a tribe of flinds. The flinds wish a place to

settle down, and the dragon has just the spot: Caronal.

The dragon will allow the flinds to move into Caronal. In return, Verthie has already informed the flinds that they must attack Trenahess for her. Verthie hopes that the cultists will think that the flinds moved into Caronal of their own accord and began raiding.

The flinds have no idea that the dragon is actually using them. In fact, the tribe has agreed to pay the dragon a great amount of tribute annually for the right to use the village and enjoy the protection of the great monster. As a sign of their good faith, the flinds have already paid the dragon a handsome amount of gold.

The cultists will doubtlessly ask Verthie for help when the flinds begin raiding. The dragon will declare that she wants the cultists to kill the flinds as a sign of devotion, for she is displeased with the cultists' level of sincerity in worship.

In Verthie's mind, whichever faction falls is undoubtedly the weaker of the two, and she has no time to deal with weaklings. In either case, she stands to gain a good supply of food, and she gets to keep the flinds' gold.

Little Verthie has sent the bard Lysinthis to the surrounding cities. Lysinthis's job is to lure wealthy, magic-rich adventurers to the dragon's lair or to the town of cultists. The bard has done this countless times in the past, and in return she gets the privilege of selecting one or two trinkets from Verthie's hoard.

When Lysinthis meets the PCs, she speaks of a Zhentish-backed adventuring company lurking in the area in question. Lysinthis claims that the company is there to forge an alliance with an evil power.

The bard also claims that the Zhentish company is hunting for a vast fortune described on a treasure map in their possession.

There is no Zhentish-backed company in that area. The story is a fabrication to lure parties to their doom.

Lysinthis usually targets parties that appear to have overtly good-aligned members such as rangers, paladins, and priests who worship good deities. No good party has ever failed to be moved to action after hearing the word "Zhentish."

More selfish parties are attracted by the words "treasure map." In any case, Lysinthis's story hardly ever fails.

The bard also tells the party about Trenahess, claiming that the village is an ideal place for travelers to use as a base of operations.

Lysinthis does not go with the adventurers, claiming that she has business elsewhere. She says that she is a bard, and it is her place to tell stories, not be in them.

Lysinthis Ficklesong: AC -4; MV 12; Bd 10; hp 50; THACO 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SA spell ability; Climb walls: 75%) Detect noise: 55%) Pick pockets: 80%) Read languages: 30%. AL CN; S 12; D 18; C 15; I 16; W 14; Ch 18.

Equipment: *Bracers AC 3, ring of protection +3, amulet of non-detection, foil +3, dagger +2, cloak of elvenkind, ring of spell turning, ring of fire resistance.*

Lysinthis always carries her spell books, material spell components, and a purse with 35 gp and 12 pp.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: singing, musical instrument (lute), tumbling, appraisal, land-riding, swimming, local history (Dalelands), read/write Thorass, spell-



craft, blindfighting.

Languages: Common, green dragon, elvish, flind, dwarf.

Spells: 1st level — *cantrip, change self, charm person, color spray, jump, taunt*; 2nd level— *alter self, forget, mirror image, scare*; 3rd level — *delude, hold person, paralyze, suggestion*; 4th level — *charm monster, rainbow pattern, shout, wall of fire*.

Players' Information

Torrential rains make this spring Mirtul evening a rather wet one and all are thankful for the warm, dry comfort of an inn's walls. The common room of the inn is packed with such grateful folk.

As everyone enjoys another tankard of their favorite beverage, the front door swings open.

A hooded, cloaked figure emerges from the rainy darkness and into the warm light of the inn's common room. Many of the patrons cast an idle glance at the figure, shrug, and return to their drinks.

The figure lowers its hood, revealing a human female face framed in luxuriously long blonde hair. She removes her cloak and shakes the water out of it by the hearth.

The woman is in her late 20s. She wears no armor, just normal traveling clothes of forest green and light brown. A foil is strapped to her belt, and she carries a lute in a protective pouch slung on her back.

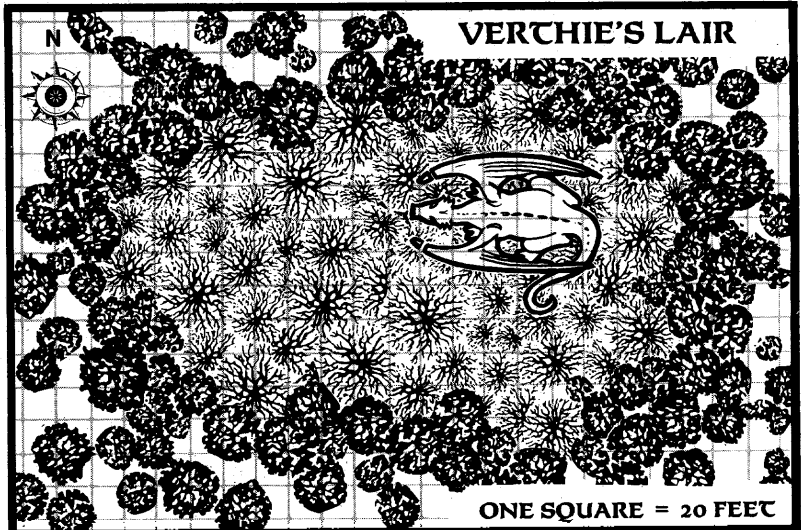
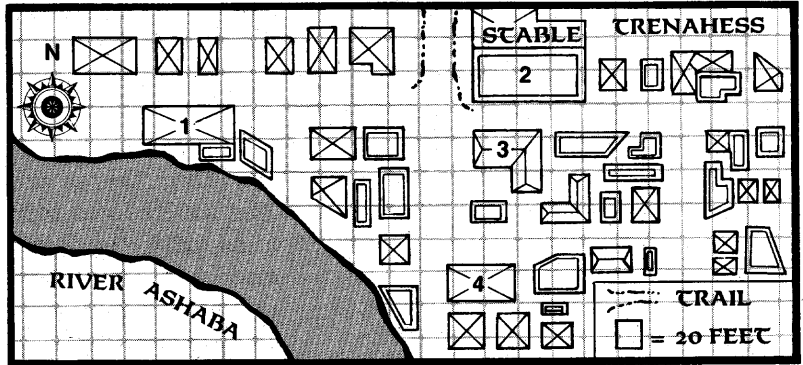
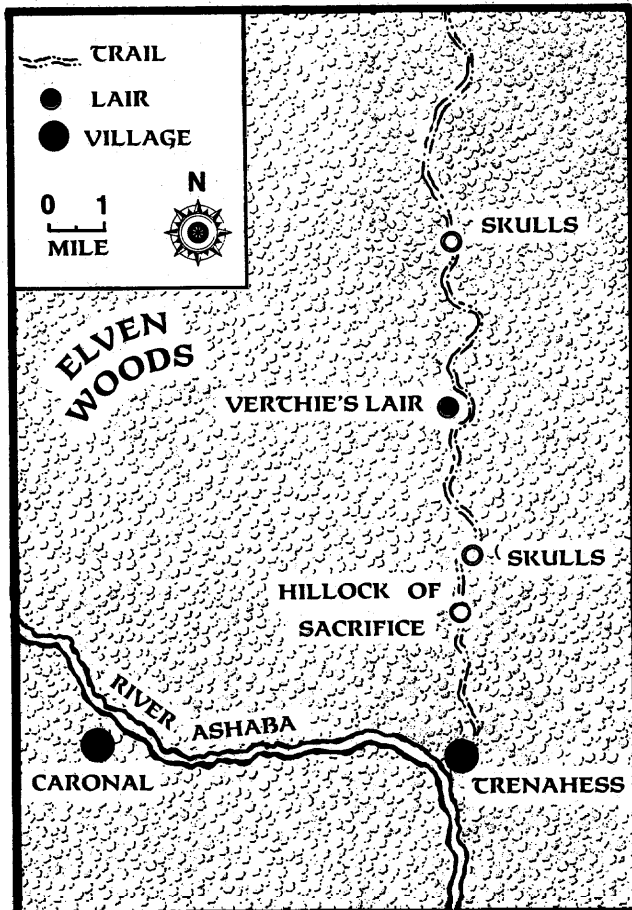
With a wry smile, she unshoulders her lute, tunes it, and addresses the crowd.

"My friends, hail and well met

on this Mirtul night! Indeed, it is most fitting that I meet this friendly assembly on the month of The Meeting, is it not?

"I am Lysinthia of Ravensgate, a wandering minstrel by trade. If it pleases you and meets with the good innkeeper's approval, I shall regale this crowd with songs and tales that will keep the gloom of night at bay!"

The innkeeper, who has been watching the stranger, nods in tacit approval. With no further fanfare, Lysinthia acknowledges the innkeeper and begins her performance.





For the next two hours, the common room crowd is entertained by the lovely songstress's music. She

sings cautionary tales of adventurers dying in their attempts to plunder a dragon's lair, recites a humorous poem of the misadventures of a paladin, a maiden, and a unicorn, and at last leaves the crowd stomping with a medley of dwarven drinking songs.

Lysinthia ends her performance amid a rain of coins and cheers from an appreciative audience. Even the normally reserved innkeeper is impressed.

The minstrel collects her coins, accepts a large mug of ale, and walks over to your table.

"Hail and well met," she says to you as she helps herself to a seat without being asked. "I hope you enjoyed my music. There are two reasons that I play in common rooms," she explains, after taking a long pull from her frosty mug.

"First of all, I enjoy playing and making people happy. Secondly, it gives me a chance to see if any worthy individuals are sitting in the audience.

"During my performance, you fine folks caught my practiced eye. My instincts tell me that you people are the sort who can empathize with the heroes in my stories, since you no doubt have done such deeds of valor yourselves. Well and good. I have need of the likes of you.

"A force of great evil lies

within the Elven Woods, the same woods that shelter Myth Drannor. I know not its nature, though some say it is a great form of undead.

"During my travels in the Elven Woods seeking more clues about this great evil, I had the dubious pleasure of encountering an adventuring company that has cast its lot with Zhentil Keep.

"This company numbers a half dozen humans. One is a wizard, one a priestess of Shar, three are warriors, and the last a rogue. They called themselves the Blue Talons.

"Because I am a bard, they allowed me to share their camp. I lost many gold coins to the rogue in some games of chance, and I believe that I was cheated out of most of them.

"After I turned in for the night, the group talked about their future plans, though they waited until they thought I was asleep.

"According to what I heard, the Blue Talons were sent by Zhentil Keep to initiate an alliance with the great evil presence in the woods. This presence supposedly lives near the eastern bank of the River Ashaba, about 80 miles west of the ruins of Myth Drannor.

"Furthermore, the rogue claimed to have a treasure map that leads to a vast hoard in the same area, but not necessarily associated with it.

"I do not like losing at games of chance, I dislike cheaters even more, and I certainly do not relish Zhentil Keep gaining a foothold so close to the Dalelands!

"Therefore, I came seeking a group of stalwarts, proficient at spell, sword, and stealth, to stop the Blue Talons and their nefarious schemes.

"My only personal request is that you recover the five hundred gold coins I lost to the rogue. Do you agree?"

If the PCs agree, she suggests that they start in the morning. She also gives exact directions to Trenahess. If they do not agree, she snorts derisively at the party and gets up to leave, wondering out loud how to properly write a song about a group of cowards.

The Village of Trenahess

This tiny village is located on the east banks of the River Ashaba. It is generally overlooked in the travels of most who journey in the Realms. Trenahess is recommended to the PCs by Lysinthia. She stops there often, and she is aware of the village's true disposition.

Trenahess has a population of 400 humans, most being either Chaotic Neutral or Neutral Evil. The "high priest" of Trenahess is an 8th-level fighter.

The citizens of Trenahess worship a green she-dragon that lairs nearby. This worship has gone on for a century. The citizens call the dragon Little Verthie. (The she-dragon's mother was called Big Verthie.)

Big Verthie was a female green dragon that, along with some other greens, was worshiped by a green dragon cult in these same woods centuries ago. Big Verthie, her cohorts, and the cultists were slain by elves in the Year of the Tusk. Little Verthie was over-

looked, and now she carries on the tradition.

The townsfolk sustain themselves by fishing the River Ashaba, raising livestock, and farming. Trenahess boasts a mill, which produces enough flour to support some modest river trade and bring in a small income. Most of the profits, of course, go to the dragon.

The citizens of Trenahess act very friendly toward strangers, hoping to lure them into staying a while. Visitors are unaware that “a while” means “forever.”

Parties of up to eight visitors are subdued by either drugging their food and drink, or attacking them at night while they sleep. These subdued folk are designated as an offering for the green dragon. When the villagers have secured the prisoners, the high priest sounds a magical horn, which alerts the dragon to the upcoming offering.

Offerings occur at dawn. The entire village turns out, clad in green robes, and begins a procession led by the high priest, who wears a green dragon mask.

The procession ends at a hillock two miles north of town. The hillock has two stout, gnarled oak trees at the apex.

The trees have iron bands that are used to secure victims with chains. The immediate area is stained with the blood of past victims.

In return for the offerings, the dragon defends the village from any enemies.

The villagers call themselves the Servants of the Verdant Cloud, alluding to the dragon’s chlorine breath. They never offer up their own people to the dragon.

It is possible that the sins of this village are beginning to catch up to it. The goddess Lathander cursed

Trenahess with barrenness 14 years ago. Verthie can do much for Trenahess, but she cannot cause the women to bear children!

In times of true emergency, Trenahess can muster 50 0-level troops. Rassaloud commands the militia.

Trenahess has a riverfront dock area used to moor fishing boats and to accommodate the few trading boats that visit the village.

The following paragraphs describe the most noteworthy buildings in Trenahess.

1. The Mill: The mill is the biggest employer and source of income for the villagers. The flowing waters of the Ashaba drive the wheels that grind the wheat.

Satkar Miller is the owner of the mill. He is the richest man in the village, and he is considered the mayor. Satkar lives with his wife Areen, and 18-year-old son Satkar the Younger.

The Millers are 0-level humans of Chaotic Neutral alignment.

2. The Sign of the Emerald Iris: Trenahess’s only inn, this three-story structure looks too big for such a small village. It was built centuries ago during Trenahess’s heyday, when many river travelers stopped by.

The Iris is a comfortable place with private rooms, a large common room, and excellent stabling facilities. The food and drink are top rate.

The inn is run by Mother Aggie, a rotund, grey-haired old widow of Neutral Evil alignment. Aggie lives in a set of rooms on the inn’s ground floor, off the main building.

To the unwary visitor, she acts sweet and hospitable, the quintessential grandmother. She is renowned for brewing the best beer in the area. None but the cultists know that she also brews sleep potions.

3. Aloysius’s Goods:

Aloysius is a tall, broad-shouldered man who runs the combination pawn shop/hardware shop/dry goods store. He is the man who appraises items and valuables taken from victimized travelers.

Aloysius lives above his shop. He is a 5th-level thief of Neutral Evil alignment. Aloysius is in his late 20s and is single.

The store sells any equipment found in the *Player’s Handbook* that is base priced at 100 gp or under. There is a 30% possibility that the inventory includes 1d20 trade bars or small gems valued at 25 gp each. Aloysius sells his wares at a 25% mark-up.

Aloysius: AC -2; MV 12 (9); Th 5; hp 26; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SA backstab; Pick pockets: 50%; Open locks: 42%; Find/remove traps: 40%; Move silently: 40%; Hide in shadows: 31%; Hear noise: 20%; Climb walls: 90%; Read languages: 25%; AL NE; S 10; D 18; C 13; I 13; W 15; Ch 12.

Equipment: *Bracers AC 5, ring of protection +2, dagger +4, short sword +3.*

Nonweapon proficiencies: appraisal, blindfighting, tumbling, gem cutting, local history, reading lips, read/write Thorass.

Languages: Common, Thieves’ Cant, dwarf, orc.

4. “High Priest” Rassaloud’s house: Rassaloud is the leader of the cult and, some would say, the true leader of the village. He is a cruel man who can hide his viciousness behind a mask of charm and civility.





Rassaloud has no real job. His position as cult leader keeps him well-off. Rassaloud's house is the biggest private residence in

the village.

Inside Rassaloud's house, an intruder can find Rassaloud's green dragon mask, a ledger with a careful listing of all waylaid victims ever offered to Little Verthie (he inherited the book from his father, the previous high priest), and a large chest.

The chest lies under his bed and contains 450 pp, 350 ep, eight emeralds worth 1,000 gp each, a *portion of longevity*, a *portion of super-heroism*, a *Bucknard's ever-*

full purse, a *serpentine owl*, and a *dagger of venom*.

Rassaloud: AC -5; MV 12 (9); F8; hp 75; THACO 13; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon; AL NE; S 17; D 12; C 16; I 11; W 14; Ch 15.

Equipment: Silver dragon hide armor, *shield* +3, *two-handed dragonslayer sword* (attuned to silver dragons), *rod of lordly might*, *wand of magic detection*, *ring of regeneration*.

Nonweapon proficiencies: tracking, blindfighting, land-riding, aerial riding, local history, religion, read/write Thorass.

Languages: Common, green dragon, elf, orc, silver dragon.

Rassaloud's pride and joy is his armor, fashioned from an adult silver dragon that he personally slew. He also carries around a horn

carved from one of the horns of the same silver dragon.

Rassaloud uses the horn to talk with Little Verthie. One blast means there is an offering at dawn, two blasts means "come quick, we are under attack."

If Little Verthie is summoned by the horn, it takes her 2d8 rounds to arrive. She will be in a very foul mood, for she hates to be summoned.

Militia (50): AC 7; MV 9; HD 1-1; hp 4; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; ML 10 (15); AL CN or NE.

Twenty militiamen are armed with short bows and daggers, 20 wield pitchforks and clubs, and ten have spears. The militia's morale increases in sight of the green dragon.





Cultists (350): AC 10; MV 9; HD 1/2; hp 3; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg varies; ML 8 (13); AL CN or NE.

Cultists gain a morale bonus in Verthie's presence. The youngest cultist is 14 years old. There are no children in the village younger than this.

Arrival in Trenahess

The actual entry into Trenahess is an uneventful affair. People seem friendly enough and gladly give directions to the inn or equipment shop. Asking villagers about the alleged great evil reveals nothing.

Little Verthie instructed Lysinthia to go to Trenahess and coach several folk on some appropriate lies to tell visiting adventurers.

Aloysius and Aggie are the two sources of false information. In the course of conversation, they will gradually release the following information.

- A group of evil creatures dwells to the north. People who have heard the things wail have died on the spot.
- The creatures are probably undead, for they lurk about at night and relish the chill air.
- Prisoners are sometimes used in mysterious rituals. A small hillock north of the village has a set of twin oaks that the undead seem to use to tie up their victims. It seems that the undead dwell north of the hillock.
- The creatures devastated Caronal, a village five miles west of here. The place lies abandoned since that fateful night two months ago. Rumor has it that someone in Caronal had discovered a treasure trove belonging to the fell creatures.

Betrayal in the Night

If the PCs stay the night at the Emerald Iris, Mother Aggie spikes the PCs' food and drink with a potent sleep draught. DMs must secretly roll each PC's saving throw vs. poison, with a -2 penalty. Failure means that the PC sleeps very deeply, not waking up for anything until dawn.

The common room closes down at one in the morning. At three in the morning, the cultists enter the PCs' rooms using Aggie's master key. There are three cultists for each PC, and the entire group is led by Rassaloud and Aloysius.

Any PC who successfully saved against the draught is attacked in his sleep, though the cultists strike to knock him out. Captured PCs are trussed up and taken out to the center of town along with their possessions. Rassaloud blows the horn, signalling to the dragon of the dawn offering.

If all the PCs are subdued and trussed up, read "The Offering." DMs must roll ahead of time to find out when the dragon will appear.

If the PCs won the melee against the cultists, Rassaloud sounds the horn, using the distress call to summon Verthie. Rassaloud himself attempts to return to his home, get his treasure, and leave town until the problem blows over.

The Offering

The light of the first rays of dawn awakens you from your deep sleep. Every joint aches, and your heads feel like they were used as anvils. A sour taste fills your unusually dry mouths, a taste that mingles with the dirt of a filthy rag that gags you.

You are lying down, tied to

wooden pallets. Furthermore, your arms and legs are bound tight.

The pallets are carried by six robed figures, their robes' metallic green exteriors catching the golden sun's rays. Sweet incense fills the air.

It is apparent that you are in a procession. Leading the procession is an armored figure wearing a mask of a green dragon. Flanking the figure are none other than Mother Aggie and Aloysius the shopkeeper!

Trailing the leading threesome is a pair of robed cultists carrying all of your earthly goods on a wooden pallet. The cultists carrying your group come next, followed by a vast throng.

It seems that the entire village, all robed in green, has turned out for the procession. As they march, the people sway and chant praises to a dragon.

If the PCs attempt to break their bonds at any point, they must roll a successful bend bars/lift gates attempt. Each PC may attempt to burst the ropes once per turn.

Half an hour passes, and the procession ends at the top of a wooded hillock. The top of the hillock has two old, gnarled oak trees. Both trees have metal fasteners attached to their trunks. Brown splashes of dried blood are everywhere.

You are all lowered slowly to the ground. The six bearers un-



tie each of you from your pallets, though you are still gagged and bound hand and foot.

Still chanting,

the cultists tie half of you to the first oak tree and the other half to the second tree. You are facing north.

The two cultists bearing your belongings place them 100 feet north of your position.

The chanting grows ever louder as everyone pulls back 180 feet south of your position. All eyes are focused on the northern sky.

If the PCs break free at this point, they get a free round of action. The cultists have never seen victims successfully free themselves. Because of the voluminous robes, each cultist has a movement rate of 9.

After an interminable chorus of chanting, a speck appears in the northern sky. The chanting gets louder and more frantic as the speck grows larger.

At last, the identity of the speck is a mystery no longer. Hovering 240 feet in front of you on massive verdant wings is a huge green dragon of great age. The beast opens its great mouth and addresses the cultists.

“Well done, my ssservantsss! Thiss lot looksss sssucculent! I ssshall keep them alive until I return to my lair! Their material goodsss I also claim!”

Several of the cultists come forward and release you from

the trees, piling each of you on one pallet like so much firewood. The entire group is secured to the pallet with more rope. Stout ropes are also attached to both pallets.

With a final sneer, the green dragon picks up one rope in each claw and takes to the air. With some small effort the dragon wings its way north.

Verthie flies at an altitude of 400 feet. Proceed to the section dealing with Verthie’s lair.

The Abandoned Village of Caronal

The PCs may decide to go in search of Caronal before they spend a night at the Iris. Caronal lies five miles to the west of Trenahess. Formerly a village of 500 people, Caronal was attacked by Verthie two months ago. Since Verthie breathes chlorine gas, the bulk of the citizenry was swiftly gassed to death. As a result, most of the buildings are still standing and intact.

Though the smell of chlorine has for the most part dissipated, each PC has a 5% chance of detecting a few lingering traces.

There are few traces of bodies; human or animal. Verthie took everything formerly alive back to her lair. An occasional bone is found if PCs insist on searching for such things.

Anyone checking for tracks finds numerous fresh humanoid tracks. In fact, the PCs have one chance in six per game turn of running into a patrol of eight flinds while in the village.

Caronal has been stripped of everything of value. Most of the loot wound up in Verthie’s lair.

Mundane items such as blankets, rope, tools, leather goods, and furniture were untouched.

Besides the dust, rust, overgrown greenery, and general wear, it must be pointed out that each house’s larder has gone bad. The result of the spoilage is the creation of many colonies of molds.

Each house in Caronal has a 30% chance of harboring phycoids or gas spores, DM’s choice.

The purposes of many of Caronal’s buildings can still be ascertained. Among the buildings are a temple to Lathander, smithy, general equipment shop, village meeting hall, and, in the center of the village, the Sylvan Respite Inn.

The Sylvan Respite is a three-story inn with a large barn complex in the rear. The buildings are connected. The inn is the only building that has any living creatures dwelling within.

The flinds that Verthie was in contact with dwell temporarily at the inn and in the barn. A few unfortunate episodes with phycoids in the regular dwellings convinced the flinds to stick to these two buildings.

The inn and the barn each house 25 flinds. The flinds have their own provisions and normal equipment, such as backpacks, blankets, tinder boxes, and the like. There are no mounts in the entire camp.

The leader of the flinds is a particularly large and nasty flind named Gnaarph. Gnaarph is the flind who entered into negotiations with Verthie.

Gnaarph bunks in the best suite at the inn. He holds the tribe’s fortunes in a large chest. The flinds’ wealth includes 500 gp, 1,000 ep, six topazes worth 50 gp each, a silver Harper brooch worth 50 gp, two jars of *Keoghtom’s ointment*, a



wand of magic detection, and a *manual of stealthy pilfering*.

If the PCs keep their heads and decide to interrogate Gnaarph, he reveals the following:

“We are the mighty tribe called the Shaggy Renders. For many a tenday we have raided the roads that cut through the accursed Elven Woods. The pickings have been good!

“Our tribe tires of its wandering. We craved a place to settle, but did not wish to lower ourselves to back-breaking work.

“The legendary luck of the Shaggy Renders has held up! We encountered a great green dragon. She destroyed the inhabitants of this village, and gave it to us for a large sum of gold.

“We are supposed to raid a human village for her. It’s called Ten trusses or Tennahis, or something like that. After we get settled in, we’ll do just as she demands!

“The dragon lives to the northeast somewhere. We do not know the exact location, nor do we dare ask the mighty beast.”

Flinds (50): AC 5; MV 12; HD 2+3; hp 18; THAC0 17; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1d6 or 1d4 (weapons); SA Disarm; AL LE.

Gnaarph: AC 0; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 27; THAC0 16; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1d6 or 1d4/1d4 (weapons); SA Disarm; AL LE.

Gnaarph has a *cloak of protection* +5, his prize possession. In a small purse, he carries the key to the chest and 25 pp.

Gnaarph is a pragmatic flind. He realizes that by telling the PCs the truth, he may be rid of Verthie forever.

If any of his tribe has survived the PCs’ onslaught, he personally

leads the remnants after the PCs, following approximately 30 minutes behind them. Gnaarph hopes that the PCs will be weakened after fighting the dragon, whereupon the flinds will attack the PCs and take the treasures for themselves!

On the Way to Verthie’s Lair

A very light trail stretches its way north from Trenahess to Verthie’s lair, though PCs must roll a successful Tracking check once every turn in order to stay on the trail.

Two and a half miles up the trail, at the halfway mark, the PCs spot something hanging on a low-lying tree branch. Initial distance is 30 yards.

Closing in, the PCs find eight human skulls dangling like pendulums from the tree branch. If the PCs step up to investigate the skulls, the horrid things scream:

“Foolish ones! Turn back before thy dooms are sealed! Enter not the domain of the great wurm, lest thy sinews rest in her belly and thy bones dry in the sun! Flee while thy lives are still thine own! Fleeeeeeeeeeee!”

The skulls end their message with a piercing shriek. This trick of Little Verthie’s is a simple *magic mouth* spell set to go off when anyone approaches within five feet of the skulls.

While this parlor trick may not alarm the PCs, each PC must roll a Wisdom check. Those who succeed realize that there are no nature sounds in the area. No birds sing, no squirrels chatter, no crickets chirp. Everything is quiet and unmoving, as if all life that could do so has fled the area.

As the PCs continue their northward progress, they notice that an unusual gray mist swirls about them. For visibility purposes, con-

sider the mist to be light fog.

The air also takes on a chlorine tang.

Any PC rolling a successful Herbalism check, or any druid of

greater than 3rd level, notices that the trees in this region are much older than the ones found around the villages. Apparently, this area is an ancient part of the wood. Some of the oaks grow hundreds of feet tall.

Little Verthie’s Lair

At around the five-mile mark, the trail continues east around a huge clump of massive oaks. The clump of oaks is 400 feet long running east to west, and 180 feet wide north to south.

The massive oak trees tower to a height of 300 feet, their branches intertwining so extensively that it is impossible to ascertain where one tree ends and another begins.

The trail continues north past the oak trees for another two and a half miles, where another talking skull arrangement is set up. It is exactly the same as the skulls in the previous section. The trail stretches on for another 16 miles, then fades out.

Verthie lairs in what resembles a huge bird’s nest, high in the upper branches of, dozens of ancient, gnarly oaks. Verthie has pruned the branches so that the lower 200 feet of the oaks have no major branches growing out of them.

The intertwining branches create an oval-shaped mass of huge proportions. During the spring and summer, the oak leaves conceal the extent of the tight mass. In



the winter, the bare branches present the viewer with a hopeless tangle of wood that looks impossible to move through.

The oaks' trunks are 30 feet in diameter and are spaced about 15 feet apart.

PCs entering the clump of oaks can barely make out the massive tangle of branches 200 feet above them. The ground around the trees is moist, but without a single plant or blade of grass growing. The soil smells of chlorine.

Entering the Lair

The entrance to Verthie's lair lies on the western end of the oak branch tangle. PCs who lack flight must climb up 200 feet of oak tree, then negotiate through 25 feet of tangled branches to the lip of the entrance.

A Climbing check should be rolled each round. PCs who are not secured by ropes fall if they fail.

The entrance is 120 feet wide and 50 feet high. A tunnel leads into the center of the mass of branches. The lair walls are made of a 30-foot-thick mass of dense, intertwining oak branches.

The tunnel interior is extremely rough, hardly surprising considering its construction. DMs using the optional rule for terrain effects on tactical movement should consider the tunnel's floor to be rugged ground.

PC using the hide in shadows skill get a +15% bonus due to the cragginess of the tunnel.

Since the floor is nothing but tightly packed, living branches, Verthie has set up a nasty hidden

trap. She has turned many of the branches into sharpened stakes. Each PC must roll a Dexterity check for each round of travel. Failure means that the PC suffers 1d6 points of damage.

If a PC takes a full 6 points of damage from a stake, he is stuck fast and must be freed. This takes a round, and is hard to do quietly (5% possibility).

The tunnel goes straight into the mass of branches for 240 feet. It ends in a circular chamber 150 feet in diameter. The exterior walls of the chamber are 15 feet thick.

The chamber has an eerie green glow about it, supplied courtesy of two green-lensed lanterns with *continual light* spells cast inside them. The lanterns have shutters, which can be set to either dim the light or shutter it out altogether. Currently, they are dimmed.

The floor of the chamber is covered by a fabulous carpet of coins, gems, and valuable items. The level of wealth is truly staggering.

Curled up like some malevolent green armored cat is Little Verthie herself. She is easily 150 feet long. It is apparent that she is also of great age, possibly a millennium.

Verthie's back is against the northeastern section of the chamber's wall. Behind her lies a clutch of four dragon eggs. If Verthie cast her illusion (see "Verthie's Reaction"), she is in fact in the southeastern corner.

Little Verthie: AC -6; MV 9, Fl 30 (C), Sw 9; HD 19; hp 144; THACO 5; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 1d8+10/1d8+10/2d10+10; SA Breath weapon (20d6+10) chlorine gas, spells, fear aura (40-yard radius, save with -2 penalty); SD Immune to normal missiles; MR 45%; ML 16; AL LE.

Verthie's powers: *water breath-*

ing, suggestion, plant growth, and entangle, all once per day, and *warp wood* three times a day.

Spells (cast at 16th level of proficiency): 1st level — *color spray, feather fall, taunt, wall of fog* 2nd level — *continual light, improved phantasmal force, invisibility*.

Little Verthie's body is 90 feet long, with a wingspan of 95 feet. Her tail is 85 feet long. Verthie speaks common.

Little Verthie has collected the following treasure: 22,345 sp, 33,760 gp, 5,899 ep, 3,004 pp, 8 diamonds worth 1,000 gp each, 20 emeralds worth 500 gp each, 8 aquamarines worth 250 gp each, 8 pieces of jade worth 50 gp each, 12 various art objects worth a total of 34,500 gp, and the two lanterns described earlier, each worth 150 gp.

Verthie's magical items include: a *long sword green dragon slayer, mace of disruption, elven chain mail, plate mail of etherealness +5, bracers of defense AC 5, cloak of elvenkind, staff of curing, wand of paralyzation, ring of truth, medallion of thought projection, horseshoes of speed, and a potion of longevity*.

Additionally, Verthie has bits and pieces of different wizards' spell books. These fragments are scattered throughout the lair and are the source of Verthie's learned spells.

Verthie's four eggs are due to hatch in two weeks. She will fight fanatically to defend them.

Verthie's Reactions

Verthie can hear characters within 200 feet of the oaks if they make noise (e.g., yelling, laughing, or any form of loud magic).

If Verthie hears the group approach the oaks, she flies out of her lair, homes in on the PCs, and in-

flicts as much damage as possible.

If the PCs make it into the grove quietly, but make noise once inside, Verthie casts *invisibility* on herself, then casts an *improved phantasmal force* image of herself in the southeastern corner of her chamber. The image makes growling noises at the PCs, its chest expanding as it draws in a huge quantity of air.

When the PCs attack the image, Verthie makes the image breathe on the party. She maintains the illusion as long as possible.

If and when the illusion is brought down, Verthie attacks the party from behind with her real breath weapon.

Should the PCs actually make it all the way to the chamber without tipping off Verthie, she attempts to engage them in clever repartee. During such talk, she casts *suggestion* on the party's warriors in an attempt to get them to attack the spellcasters.

The suggestion is woven into normal conversation, so PCs have no clear idea that magic is being directed against them. DMs should secretly roll the targeted PCs' saving throws.

Verthie follows up this action by casting *entangle*, hoping to immobilize the remaining spellcasters.

If Verthie has suffered the loss of two-thirds (or more) of her hit points, she lifts her rear feet and stomps on the floor of the chamber with all her might.

This stomping causes the entire chamber floor to collapse. Verthie casts *feather fall* in order to avoid damage and buy herself some time to get airborne. PCs who fall through the floor suffer 20d6 points of damage.

If the PCs were offered up to Verthie, she brings the victims back to her lair. Any outright inso-

lent, obnoxious, or threatening PCs are the first to be eaten (1d6 turns). The same fate awaits elven PCs.

Verthie's conditions for letting the PCs go are as follows: first, she gets to keep two items from each PC, as well as all of the money they have. Second, she wishes the flinds to be disposed of. Verthie will accept no alternatives. Further negotiation is futile.

If the flinds have already been eliminated or driven away, she is satisfied. The PCs (still tied up) are all shuttled to the ground 600 feet south of her lair.

Verthie then takes two of each PC's items for herself (as well as all of their money) and drops the remainder 800 feet south of her lair. Accomplishing this, the dragon wings gracefully back to her lair.

The PCs are not done with Verthie yet, however. The dragon trails the party back to their base city, maintaining a discreet distance. The night the PCs return to the city, Verthie briefly attacks.

During this attack, she loudly proclaims her thanks to the PCs for leading her to such a great meal. Verthie gives such thanks repeatedly, mentioning each PC by name.

What Verthie Has to Say

At Verthie's lair, the dragon says the following, provided she has the opportunity to engage in conversation.

"The name I ussse among humankind is Verthie. My mother was called Verthie, and ssshe and her clan were worshiped in thessee woodsss a millennium ago, until the sstinking elvesss wiped them out in the Year of the Tussssk.

"I wasss but a hatchling at that time, and I essssscaped the car-

nage. Now, I am the object of worssshhhhip, and I ssshhall restore the reign of my kind in thessee woodsss.

"He who iss the sssire of the egsss I protect, a wyrm of larger sssize than myssself, alssso wandersss in thessee partssss. Together, we ssshall rebuild the dragon population! Assss for you, you may either sssupply me with your wealth, or your flesh will be ussed to nourisssh me!"

Conclusion

The potential for further adventure does not end with the death of Verthie. Remember, she has a mate!

Furthermore, the trail that leads from Trenahess to Verthie's lair and beyond could have something at its terminus. Creative DMs can place something interesting at the trail's end.

Finally, if the flinds of Caronal or the cultists of Trenahess have not been dealt with, PCs can be steered to them.





Players' Introduction

Last night you arrived in Suzail, the capitol of Cormyr, and checked in at a local

inn, the Six Candles. After unpacking and washing up, your adventuring party headed downstairs to the common room.

You and your friends then proceeded to consume a large meal, washed down with some excellent Cormyr pale ale. Quiet laughter and fun soon turned into bragging and loud laughter.

Things soon escalated into a wild tavern brawl, with you and your somewhat innocent companions caught in the middle of it. Of course, when the watch finally arrived to break things up, all the local people blamed the whole thing on your party.

Now it's morning, and the rising sun is sending a painful lance of sunlight that goes right to your brain, after it passes through the bars of your cell.

You are soon informed of the total cost of your fines, taxes, and compensation fees for the inn. The sum is a lot more than all of your funds put together. It looks like you might be in prison for a while.

About noon, after a lovely lunch of salted gruel, you are visited by a representative of King Azoun, who offers you freedom in return for performing a small task.

Penniless, you reluctantly agree. You are released and allowed to clean up before seeing

his worshipfulness. You briefly stop at the inn to pick up your equipment.

Instead of taking you to the palace, the guards escort you to the Suzail Royal Theatre, a large building downtown. The guards then usher you into a small room that apparently serves as the office for the theatre. In the middle of the room stands King Azoun, talking to an elderly man with steel-gray hair.

You bow quickly to the King, who accepts your bows with a graceful smile. The King then introduces you to the other man, Ferreous Costello, owner of the theatre and a famous writer of satirical plays and parodies. The King then asks you to sit down while he explains your mission to you.

It seems that Ferreous is a close friend and personal advisor to King Azoun, who greatly enjoys Ferreous's plays. These plays sometimes feature characters that are obvious parodies and caricatures of various important people in the city.

Some of the victims of Ferreous's wit are not happy with his parodies of them. They fear that Ferreous's closeness to King Azoun could taint their relationships with the King.

Apparently a group of these angry people have gotten together and hired some assassins to take care of Ferreous. Several unsuccessful attempts have been made on his life recently.

Tomorrow, Ferreous is supposed to attend some sort of reunion at a friend's mountain lodge, which is a week's travel from Suzail. Azoun wanted a whole company of his guards to

go with him, but Ferreous refused to have the guards accompany him. Ferreous insisted that he and his friends could take care of themselves.

Azoun and Ferreous finally agreed upon a compromise. A small group of competent adventurers would guard Ferreous during the reunion.

You and your friends are to stay with Ferreous until he returns to Suzail. In return, you all get out of jail and receive 5,000 gp for your trouble. King Azoun warns that if Ferreous dies while under your care, you had better ride as far away from Cormyr as possible.

DM's Background

This short adventure requires 5-7 player characters of 6th to 8th level. A wide assortment of character types is highly suggested.

The beginning of this adventure is described above. Unknown to Azoun and the player characters, Ferreous is actually a steel dragon. The reunion he is holding at the mountain lodge is a meeting of some of the last dragon worshipers of the dragon god Hlal, the draco god of jokes and pranks.

After the characters and Ferreous have reached the mountain lodge, the other guests (dragons disguised as humans) arrive. During that night, the mountain lodge is attacked by a small group of assassins hired by Ferreous's human enemies.

The next night, Ferreous and his friends insist on going to the top of the mountain to attend a religious festival. The festival is actually a birthday party for the hatchling of the mated copper dragons who came to the mountain lodge.



Dragon Worshipers of Hlal

Ferreous Costello: An elderly playwright known for his hilarious parodies and political satires, Ferreous is also a steel dragon. His human form is that of an elderly man who is always fashionably dressed. He is a sharp and intelligent man, with a very sarcastic and dry wit.

Argenta Purenote: A silver dragon Argenta appears as a beautiful young female elf with silver hair. She is especially fond of humorous and bawdy songs. She also enjoys dirty limericks and mind-teasing riddles.

Mera Quicksilver: A mercury dragon, Mera appears as a beautiful

Null, the dragon god of death, who has an old score to settle with Hlal, has found out about the party and has decided to use this party to kill a number of Hlal's few worshipers.

It is a well-known fact that the dragons at the hatchling birthday party of a copper dragon get very drunk on fireweed liquor. Null has sent out five of his worshipers, all red dragons, to attack the dragons at the birthday party, while they are all drunk.

On the way up to the festival, there is a chance that the characters and their charges are attacked by a dracohydra, which appears out of nowhere. The dracohydra was sent by Null to take care of the player characters, who are in the way.

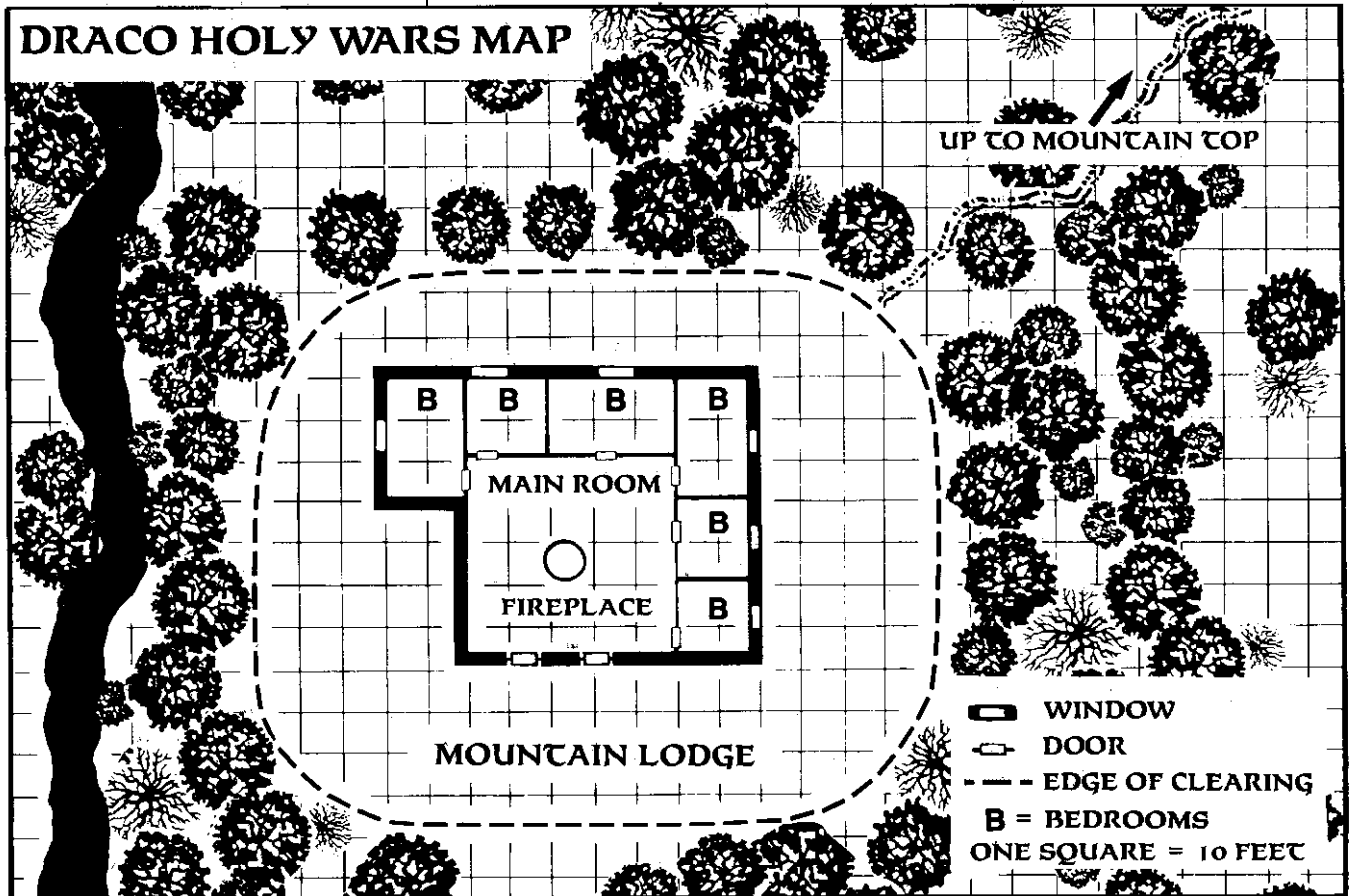
The characters' charges insist that the player characters do not go all the way to the top of the mountain with them; they order

the PCs to stay and guard the only trail up to the mountain top.

Just as planned, after all the dragons have gotten drunk and are helpless to defend themselves, the red dragons swoop down out of the sky and begin attacking the helpless good dragons. Ideally, the player characters save the good dragons (especially the steel one), and defeat or drive off the red dragons.

Casting Call

This section gives the descriptions and statistics of the various NPCs and monsters the characters will encounter during the adventure. Statistics have not been provided for the good dragons, as these are not needed.





ful, middle-aged human with green eyes. Her long hair is red, shot through with streaks of silver. Mera is very whimsical and flighty.

She enjoys jokes, and she loves to play practical jokes. She talks so quickly that it is sometimes very hard to understand her. She will playfully flirt with all the male characters.

Bron Tanse: A bronze dragon, Bron appears as a short young human with a dark tan complexion. His hair and eyes are dark brown. Bron loves to engage in intelligent and lively conversation. He has a wealth of knowledge about old legends and history, especially ones that have humorous endings.

Brazz Polis: A brass dragon, Brazz appears as a short young human with a light tan complexion. His hair and eyes are light brown. Brazz loves to engage in intelligent and lively conversation. Like Bron, Brazz has a wealth of knowledge about old legends and history, especially ones that have humorous endings. Brazz is also an accomplished gossip, and he seems to have tidbits of information about all the important people in the Forgotten Realms

Gorge and Gracy Cooper: These mated copper dragons appear to be an elderly couple. They are both kind and friendly, and they enjoy telling jokes about various relatives. Gracy acts like she is slightly addled, but this act hides a quick and sharp wit. Gorge pretends to get constantly exasperated by Gracy, but he can't hide his true affection for her.

Faye Pixy: A faerie dragon, Faye appears to be a female midget, with glistening blonde hair and laughing blue eyes. She truly loves pranks and practical jokes, and she can barely stop herself from constantly tricking people. She dresses in loud clothing and enjoys flirting with any male player characters (especially dwarves and gnomes).

Twilight Blades (Assassins)

The Blades of Twilight are a group of adventurers that hires out as assassins. The Blades are lead by Nocturnus and Dusk, male human twins who grew up in the streets of Waterdeep. They have trained themselves so that they attack in perfect unison (every round that they both attack one person, one twin receives a +1 bonus to his attack roll, while the other twin gains a -1 bonus to his AC). The other members of the blades are the Mage Infernus (a wizard of Thay), Thantus (a Zhentarim cleric of Bane) and Shadeus (a Calishite thief).

Nocturnus (9th-level Fighter): S 18/50, I 14, W 12, D 12, C 16, Ch 15, AC 2, MV 12, HD 9, hp 88, #AT 3/2, Dmg by weapon type, THACO 12, AL LE

Equipment: *ring of blinking, chain mail of blending* +3, *flame tongue long sword*, 2 daggers, gems (5,000 gp total)

Dusk (9th-level Fighter): S 17, I 14, W 12, D 18 (-4), C 16, Ch 15, AC 2 (-2), MV 12, HD 9, hp 77, #AT 3/2, Dmg by weapon type, THACO 12, AL LE

Equipment: *ring of chameleon power, chain mail of fear* +3, *frost blade long sword*, 2 daggers, gems (5,000 gp total)

Infernus (8th-level Wizard Specialist—Invoker): S 10, I 17, W 10, D 16, C 16, Ch 13, AC 0 (-2), MV 12, HD 8, hp 45, #AT 1, Dmg by weapon or spell, THACO 18, AL LE

Equipment: 2 *oils of fiery burning, ring of fire resistance, wand of fire* (40 charges), *bracers AC 2, cloak of displacement, dagger of venom, dart of homing, gems* (5,000 gp total)

Spells: 1st level — *affect normal fires, burning hands, shield, wall of fog, magic missile*; 2nd level—*flaming sphere, invisibility pyrotechnics, web*; 3rd level: *fireball* (x4); 4th level: *fire shield, wall of fire, fire trap*; 5th level: *Bigby's interposing hand, wall of force*

Thantus (8th-level Priest): S 10, I 10, W 18, D 14, C 15, Ch 10, AC 0, MV 10, HD 8, hp 68, #AT 1, Dmg by weapon or spell type, THACO 16, AL LE

Equipment: *potion of undead control (vampires), scroll of protection from undead, ring of vampiric regeneration, staff of withering* (20 charges), *talisman of pure evil, plate mail* +3, *horseman's mace* +3, gems (5,000 gp total)

Spells: 1st level — *command, detect snares and pits, protection from good, magical stone, pass without trace*; 2nd level — *charm person/mammal, heat metal, hold person, spiritual hammer, silence 15' radius*; 3rd level — *dispel magic, spike growth, summon insects, meld in to stone*; 4th level—*sticks to snakes, neutralize poison (reversed), giant insect*

Shadeus (7th-level Thief): S 13, I 14, W 12, D 18, C 15, Ch 10, AC 4 (0), MV 12, HD 7, hp 45, #AT 1, Dmg by weapon or spell type, THACO 16, AL LE

Equipment: *ring of invisibility, ring of protection* +3, *rod of pas-*



sage (10 charges), *amulet of proof against detection/location*, *boots of striding and springing*, *cloak of displacement*, *dagger of venom*, *short sword of quickness*, gems (5,000 gp total)

Thieving Abilities:

Pick Pockets:	30%
Open Locks:	65%
Find/Remove Traps:	70%
Move Silently:	75%
Hide in Shadows:	75%
Detect Noise:	45%
Climb Walls:	80%
Read Languages:	0%

Dracohydra: AC 0; MV 6, Fl 21 (D); HD 14; hp 80 (body 41, each of the three heads 13), #AT 1-3 and 2; Dmg 2d8 (x1-3) and 1d8/1d8; THACO 7; SA breath weapon for 6d2+6, +6 to attack and damage rolls; SD *wall of fog* (2/day), *darkness* (3/day), immune to acid; AL CE; no treasure

Old Red Dragons (5, led by Brimstone): AC -7; MV 9, Fl 30 (C), Jp 3; HD 17; hp 125; #AT 3; Dmg 1d10/1d10/3d10; THACO 5; SA fear aura 30 yards. breath weapon, +4 to attack and damage rolls, *heat metal* 1/day, *suggestion* 1/day, spells; SD *affect normal fires* 3/day, *pyrotechnics* 3/day, spells; MR 45%; AL CE; no treasure

Spells: 1st level — *magic missile*, *sleep*; 2nd level — *invisibility*, *web*; 3rd level — *lightning bolt*

Trip to the Mountain Lodge

After King Azoun has forced Ferreous to let the characters come along, preparations are made for them to start out immediately. The King provides the characters with supplies and sturdy mountain ponies. The trip to the mountain lodge, which is located just below the timberline of the mountain

(called Copper Top), takes seven days of steady travel.

The first day Ferreous is rather surly with the party, but after that he becomes very friendly and entertains them with various jokes and his dry wit.

The trip is uneventful, since it will take Ferreous's enemies a few days to find a new group of assassins to replace the last group that was killed by Azoun's guards. The new group of assassins, the Blades of Twilight, does not catch up to the PCs until after they have reached the mountain lodge and settled in for the night.

The DM might wish to roll for random encounters during the party's trip to the mountain lodge. If the DM wishes to do this, he should use the following random encounter tables, located in the back of the *Monstrous Compendium*.

First and Second Days: Temperate Forest

Third, Fourth, and Fifth Days: Temperate Rough or Hills

Sixth and Seventh Days: Temperate Mountain

Ferreous does not change into his dragon form. Like most Steel Dragons, he does not want his secret to become known to any humans, especially ones he does not know that well. Also, he believes that he can easily handle anything that gets past his bodyguards, even while in human form.

Ferreous and his draco friends meet at the lodge about once every five years. They choose to meet in human forms so that they do not attract the attention of the various hunters and travelers that move through the mountain range. (Imagine the rumors that would spread if hunters caught sight of a

group of dragons meeting on Copper Top Mountain.)

Also, since they are worshipers of a god of tricks and pranks, they feel that it is suitable to keep up their charade.

In addition to that, they know that the dragon worshipers of the god Null would dearly love to kill them. So, they meet in human form to throw off the evil dragons that might be keeping an eye out for them.

The Mountain Lodge

The following should be read to the players when they reach the mountain lodge, around noon on the seventh day of travel.

After a restful and pleasant journey, you have finally arrived at the mountain lodge. Set just below the mountain's timberline, the mountain lodge rests on relatively level ground. The quaint lodge is a large log cabin that is located in a clearing among the tall pine trees.

Those of you who are not on guard duty are quickly set to work by Ferreous. Some of you help tidy the place a bit, since it has been several months since anyone has visited here. The rest of you help Ferreous unload various food supplies and cooking utensils from the burdened pack animals.

If the players refuse to do any menial labor, Ferreous simply shrugs his shoulders and does it all himself. Later on, any lazy characters



are told that they can eat from their trail rations instead of sharing in the delightful meal cooked by Ferreous.

Ferreous then begins working on a massive meal that would feed a regiment. It soon become apparent that Ferreous is a very good cook.

As the sun begins to sink, Ferreous's friends arrive one at a time, on foot.

Describe these arrivals to the players, based on the information on Ferreous's friends that is given earlier in this adventure.

Description of the Mountain Lodge

The mountain lodge is a fairly large building constructed of wooden logs. It is a one-story affair with the flat roof reaching a height of about 12 feet.

The lodge rests in a large clearing (roughly 150 feet in diameter) among the pine trees that grow on the gentle mountain slopes. The area where the cabin is built is fairly level, but just a little bit behind the lodge, the mountain slope starts rising at a steeper angle.

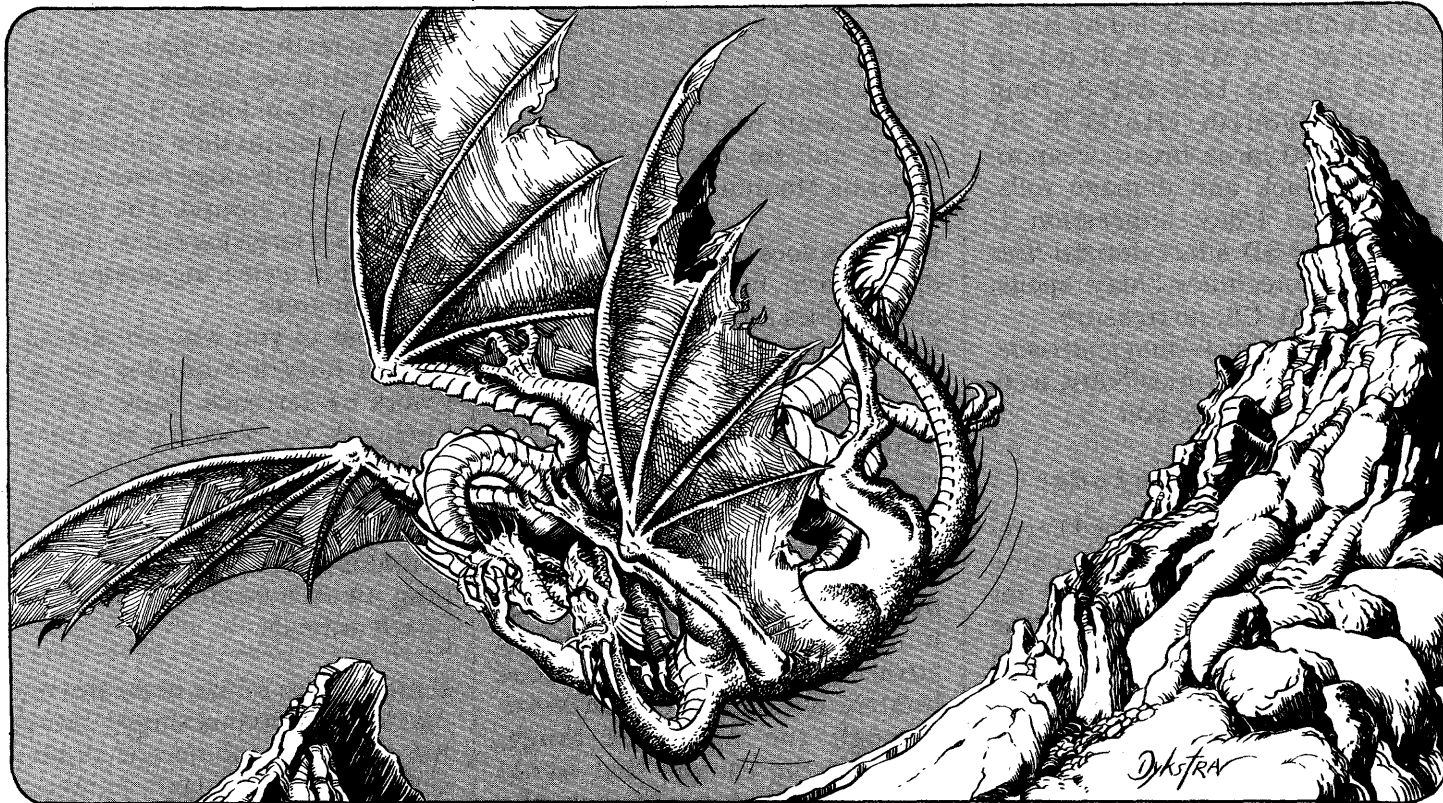
The inside of the lodge is dominated by a 50-foot-square main room. In the center of the room is a huge, specially designed fireplace made of stone and metal. A small number of cooking utensils sit near the fireplace, and a number of cooking supplies, such as spices and some dried and preserved

foods, can be found in nearby cabinets. The fireplace and the surrounding area serve as the kitchen for the lodge.

A number of comfortable chairs and couches are scattered around the fireplace. A few hunting trophies are hanging on the walls of the main room. This includes the stuffed and mounted heads of an owlbear, a mountain lion, and a mountain goat.

The main room has six doors (besides the doors to outside) leading out of it. Each of the doors leads to medium-sized identical bedrooms. Each bedroom is dominated by a huge wooden bed, which has a mattress of the finest goose feathers. Each bedroom also contains a large wooden dresser and cabinet.

The lodge is owned by one of Ferreous's human friends. The friend is a low-ranking noble who





enjoys roughing it in the woods. This is why the lodge is rather plain. The lodge has no bathroom or out-house. The owner believes that roughing it includes answering the call of nature in the woods (look out for poison ivy). A small mountain spring is located a few hundred feet to the east of the lodge.

The rustic noble is not worried about magical attacks, so he has not bothered to provide the lodge with any safeguards against magical attacks or spying.

Ferreous's friend has allowed Ferreous and his draco friends to meet here every five years. The dragons themselves have not bothered to provide the lodge with magical protection, since it might cause the lodge's owner to get suspicious (they also don't know any protective spells, preferring instead to learn spells that help in practical jokes). Also, the dragons believe that their charade has fooled everyone, so they have grown rather complacent and overconfident.

The Guests

Ferreous's guests, whose appearances and personalities were described earlier, arrive in no specific order. Role-play each guest as he or she arrives at the cabin.

All the arriving dragons land and change into their humanoid forms long before they reach the area of the lodge, to avoid attracting unwanted attention.

After all the dragons have arrived., and introductions and greetings have been made, the meal is served. Those on guard duty outside are bought a small platter of food. The platter is bought out by one of the female dragons, who flirts with any male characters on guard duty.

A few minutes after the meal is over, Ferreous politely suggests that any characters inside should join their friends outside, so that Ferreous and his companions can talk privately.

After the characters have left the lodge, the disguised dragons begin talking guardedly among themselves, after they offer a short prayer to Hlal, their god. If any character is foolish enough to try to spy on them (either magically or physically), the keen senses of the dragons quickly detect him before he overhears anything of importance. Here are a few suggestions on what each dragon might do to the naughty character:

Ferreous (Steel): Ferreous steps into another room, safe from prying eyes, and changes into a bee. He then flies outside and stings the character spying on him, probably causing the spy to yelp. Ferreous then quickly goes back inside and changes into human form again, before the offending character has a chance to do anything.

Argenta Purenote (Silver): She uses her control winds ability to whip up a brief windstorm around the spying character. The wind is strong enough to knock him off his feet, breaking his concentration, and 'causing a lot of noise.

Mera Quicksilver (Mercury): Mera uses her *telekinesis* spell to cause the character some discomfort, such as pulling his belt extremely tight, or maybe even undoing it so that his pants fall down. The exact effect is left up to the inventive DM.

Bron Tanse (Bronze): Bron casts *ESP* and then *spectral force*. He will use the *ESP* to read the spy's mind and pluck out the im-

age of the spy's favorite member of the opposite sex.

An image of that person appears, grabs the spy, and begins wildly kissing him. A

round later it turns into a hideous, snaggle-toothed hag. Brons then dispels the illusion.

Brazz Polis (Brass): Brazz uses his *dust devil*, *control winds*, and *control temperature* spells to discomfort the spy.

Gorge and Gracy cooper (Copper): They use their *stone shape* spells to cause the rock in the ground to rise up right in front of the spy. They then change the rock to mud and use a *move earth* spell to engulf the spy in the mud.

Faye Pixy (Faerie): Faye goes into another room, changes into her dragon form, and turns invisible. She flies directly behind the spy and gently taps him on the shoulder. She uses her breath weapon on him as soon as he turns around. She then quickly turns invisible and flies back to her room and changes into human form.

Attack in the Night

Around midnight, Ferreous calls out to the characters and tells them that he and his friends are going to bed. Any characters not on guard duty can sleep in the main room of the lodge. All the bedrooms are used by Ferreous and his guests.

The DM should ask the players to describe any precautions they take and traps they set. The players should also tell the DM who is going to be on guard duty at various times during the night. Each



guard should show his position on the map of the lodge and the surrounding area.

At 3 A.M. that morning, the Blades of

Twilight attack and try to kill Ferreous. Each assassin's tactics are described below.

Nocturnus and Dusk: Nocturnus uses his *ring of blinking* to quickly get close to a guard, especially if he is clearly a fighter. Dusk is also getting closer to the fighter, using his *ring of chameleon power*. They work together to attack one enemy, gaining the special bonus described earlier.

Infernus: Infernus attacks from the opposite direction of Nocturnus and Dusk. He comes from the rear of the lodge, toward the mountain peak. He has cast a *shield* spell on himself and a *wall of fog* to conceal his presence. He hurls his *dart of homing* at a guard, or he may wait until someone comes running out of the house when the twins attack. He also casts *flaming sphere* and sends it rolling down the slope and into the melee. If anyone gets close, he uses his *wand of fire*, *fireball* spells and *oils of fiery burning*. Luckily it has been a wet season, so the trees and the log cabin are too damp to really start burning—they just smolder a bit.

Thantus: Thantus has cast *detect snares and pits* and looked at the whole perimeter of the clearing before the assassins attack, probably detecting any such traps set by the characters. He has cast *pass without trace* and *protection from good* on himself before getting

nearby. He picks a small area just on the edge of the clearing and casts *spike growth* and *silence 15' radius* on it. He has a small pebble (with *magic stone* cast on it) that he will throw at an unsuspecting guard. He hides near the spike growth area and jumps out to attack anyone that gets near him. He uses his *staff of withering* first, trying to hit a weapon arm. He then attacks in normal melee, and he uses any of his attack spells when he can. If he sees a priest, he will use his *talisman of pure evil* on him.

Shadeus: Shadeus uses his *ring of invisibility*, his thieving abilities, and his *rod of passage* to sneak into the log cabin and assassinate Ferreous.

If no PC thinks to guard Ferreous, and no PC detects Shadeus as he moves into the lodge, he reaches Ferreous's bedroom. This does not help Shadeus much, since Ferreous and his friends have already detected his presence. They easily dispatch him with their powers, if no character is nearby.

If a player character is with Ferreous when Shadeus arrives, Ferreous and his friends let the player character take care of the assassin. If the player character has trouble with the thief, or if he is killed or knocked out, Ferreous and the dragons easily dispatch the thief (later saying that it was pure luck).

Dawn

Just as dawn begins to light the sky, the characters and the dragons can finally rest, having defeated the assassins and cleared up the mess. Ferreous tries to persuade the PCs that since the assassins are dead and the danger is over, the PCs can leave now. If the

players follow his advice, Ferreous and his friends are killed by Null's red dragons at the birthday party.

The disappearance of Ferreous causes Azoun to put a bounty on the player characters.

Intelligent players will insist on staying with Ferreous until he returns to Suzail. After much arguing, Ferreous reluctantly gives in to the characters.

Ferreous tells the PCs that he and his friends are expected to attend a private religious service on the top of the mountain that night. Ferreous tells the players that they can go with him and the others until they are almost at the top, but the characters must not go any farther since they are not worshipers.

Ferreous especially aims this comment at any nosy characters from the night before. He warns them that any non-believers will be struck down immediately by the gods if they look at the holy festival and ceremony. He tells them that the pass they will guard is the only trail up to the mountain top.

Ferreous and his friends insist that the players agree not to go all the way to the mountain top. If the PCs do not agree, Ferreous tells them that he will stay at the lodge, while his friends leave and attend the religious festival on the mountain. If this occurs, he pretends to go to bed early. Ferreous then shapechanges into insect form and sneaks out. Allow the players to accidentally find out that he is gone a few hours later. Intelligent characters should realize where he has gone and head for the mountain top.

In this case, the characters do not encounter the dracohydra, and they arrive at the mountain top just after Brimstone and the other red dragons have begun their attacks on the drunken good dragons.

The Mountain Pass

The rest of the day can be spent resting and recovering from any wounds taken during the fight with the assassins. The DM should role-play one or two encounters with the good dragons during the day. Perhaps some of the dragons play practical jokes on one or more of the characters.

After the sun has set, and another succulent meal has been eaten, Ferreous announces that it is time to head out for the mountain top.

The mountain pass is fairly smooth until the group nears the top of the mountain. The moon is full and it is a clear night, so the characters can see where they are going. The pass eventually narrows as rocky walls thrust upward on either side.

Halfway up the mountain, the pass forks. The path that splits off from the main pass is narrower and seems to be a little less rough than the main one. Ferreous tells the party that the two passes join together again near the top of the mountain. The side pass narrows until movement can only be performed in single file, with the tall cliff sides towering above to either side. The characters will probably be suspicious of this path, feeling that it is perfect for an ambush.

Ferreous tells the player characters that he and his friends do not care which route they take. If the characters elect to lead the party through the wider main pass, they will encounter a dracohydra. If they journey up the side pass, the trip is uneventful.

The dracohydra has been mentally summoned here by the dragon god Null. The dracohydra is not happy, to say the least, and it viciously attacks if the group

comes up the main pass. Because of Null's mental commands, the dracohydra attacks only the characters. (Null wants them out of the way so they do not interfere with Brimstone and the others when they attack.)

If the player characters are having a rough time of it, the good dragons secretly aid them with some of their spell abilities. The good dragons only reveal their true natures if all the characters are knocked out or killed. In this case, the good dragons try to heal any characters badly hurt. They try to maintain their disguises if at all possible.

Birthday Party

After an hour of travel, the group is very close to the top of the mountain. The muted sounds of laughter and singing can be faintly heard coming from the top of the mountain.

Ferreous tells the party members that they must stop here while he and his friends go on alone. He once again tells them how dangerous it would be for them to follow and spy on the religious ceremony.

Ferreous and his friends then go farther up the mountain trail, until they disappear from sight around a bend. A few minutes later, the volume of noise coming from the mountain top increases. As the hours pass, the noise from the "religious ceremony" steadily increases as the party gets wilder.

If any character is actually brave enough to sneak up the mountain trail; he finds himself at the lip of a bowl-shaped valley that rests at the top of the mountain. The rock walls of the valley slope down at a gentle angle.

The valley is covered with lush

grass, and a small lake sits in the middle of the valley. The valley is currently inhabited by five copper dragons, plus the dragon forms of Ferreous and his friends.

The dragons occasionally take deep swigs from large barrels that are obviously filled with some sort of substance that affects dragons. All of the dragons are clearly drunk from the potent beverage.

Luckily for the spying character, the dragons are all too drunk to notice him as long as he doesn't go down and try to join the party. If he is stupid enough to do that, he will have a number of angry, drunken dragons to deal with.

The observing character does not have to worry about being cursed because he sees all this. This is actually just a birthday party for Gorge and Gracy's son, not a religious ceremony.

The revelry would normally continue till dawn, but unfortunately some red dragons have decided to crash the party. The red dragons, led by Brimstone, are worshipers of the dragon god Null. Many years ago, Hlal, the dragon god of jokes, played a trick on Null and he has never forgotten it.

Null has found out about the party, and the fact that some of the guests are some of the last dragon worshipers of Hlal (see the section on Dragon Religion). Null has ordered a group of his worshipers, five red dragons, to kill as many of Hlal's helplessly drunken worshipers as he can.

Brimstone and the other red dragons arrive around midnight, while the full moon is high in the





clear sky. Randomly choose one of the characters and tell him that he sees five large, winged shapes moving across the moon toward

the mountain top. Tell the characters that the moonlight "reveals that they are red dragons.

Right after the characters sight the dragons, but before the characters can really react, the reds swoop down and head for the top of the mountain.

No matter how fast the characters react, Brimstone and the others have already made one pass over the valley, breathing fire on the crowd of drunken good dragons. This first run sends the drunken dragons into a panic as they try to regain their befuddled senses. In their first run, the red dragons badly burn most of the good dragons.

Once the characters reach the top of the mountain and witness the carnage, they have to deal with Brimstone, the leader. Brimstone attacks the characters while the other red dragons continue attacking the good dragons.

The characters have to defeat only Brimstone, as the good dragons are just barely able to take care of the other red dragons.

Brimstone centers his efforts on the characters, realizing that they might disrupt the attack on the good dragons. If the characters have an easy time of defeating Brimstone, throw another one of the red dragons at them. The second red dragon has already been badly wounded by the good dragons (down to half his normal hit point total).

The characters can get one free round of projectiles and spells at Brimstone and the others before Brimstone can react. Once the characters have attacked, Brimstone mainly stays in the air and centers his attacks on the characters until two rounds have passed. Then he can breathe fire again, so he swoops down and breathes on the characters.

Brimstone stays in the air and attacks the characters with his spells (*lightning bolt*, *magic missile*, and *web*) as long as possible. Once he is out of spells, Brimstone swoops down at the characters and tries to snatch two of them. Snatched characters are crushed and then dropped from a great height (400 feet).

If the characters badly wound him, Brimstone pretends to fly away. Once out of sight, he casts *invisibility* and then comes back to attack the characters before they can rush to the aid of any of the good dragons.

The characters will have their hands full taking care of Brimstone, the most vicious of the red dragons. The good dragons are barely able to take care of the other red dragons themselves, but they will have killed them all by the time the characters have taken care of Brimstone.

If it looks like the characters might all be killed by Brimstone, have the good dragons finish off the others early and come over to help the PCs.

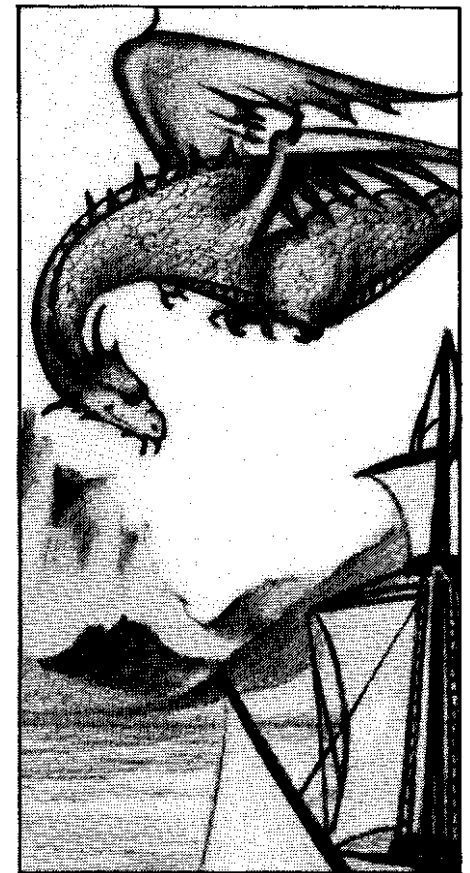
Even with the aid of the characters, the inebriated good dragons have taken casualties. All of the good dragons are badly wounded, and all the copper dragons are dead.

If a priest in the party uses spells to heal one of the dragons, that dragon becomes his friend for life.

If the characters are badly wounded, and the party's priests don't have enough spells to go around, one of the dragons comes over and heals any badly wounded characters.

In any case, the characters have earned the undying friendship of these good dragons. The dragons might be able to help the characters in future adventures, but only if the characters really need them and the situation is desperate. Ferreous asks them to keep his secret. His influence in Suzail, and his friendship with King Azoun, could be a real boon to the characters in the future.

If the characters ever betray Ferreous, they earn themselves a group of powerful enemies that could make their lives miserable for a long time to come.



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2nd Edition



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