The Candlekeep Compendium

Volume IV

Volume IV

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EDITORIAL

elcome to a special volume of the Candlekeep Compendium . This tome, penned by our scribes, features lore and writings focusing on a much misunderstood, yet feared creature of our beloved Realms - the Dragon!

There are many aspects of dragons, and they often appear in our daily lives in a variety of ways - thankfully, not all first-hand encounters with the beasts themselves.

We start our tome with a few words from a famed scribe who certainly knows his dragons. Take heed, for this will aid ye well. We then begin our journey of dragon lore with the extensive history of the dragons - read this and a sage of dragons ye will be. Next, the Candlekeep Compendium would not be complete without a visit to the planes, and our next article visits none other than the various planes of the dragons, a truly wondrous place. Ye may have heard of a certain famous sage from Shadowdale who penned entries for wyrms of the North - well, here we present ye with the first entry of our Wyrms of the East column - Aaervaloshator. Stepping away from the dragons themselves for a moment, we then read of Shaaan, the Serpent Queen - an evil being with a colorful and deep history. Then, familiar columns return, as we read of how dwarven communities effect and help dragons. Our second installment of the Laborers of Toril focuses on those who have dragon involvement in one way or any other. Of course, where there are rumors, there are dragons, as we hear of our regular gathering of tales, gossip and adventurer enticement. Back to the dragons again, only not the fearsome wyrms of which we hear so much about, but the pseudodragons, in a short case study. Finishing off this fine collection of lore, we read of a book - not just any old book, but a sacred dragon spellbook created by the Cult of the Dragon.

On behalf of all the scribes who have researched for this tome (and hence gone through various stints of dragonfear), I hope ye enjoy these latest installments from the halls of Candlekeep.

- Alaundo of Candlekeep

This volume is dedicated to Richard Lee Byers, for showing us the depth and versatility of dragons of the Realms, and for the exciting journey through the Year of Rogue Dragons.

So, think ye know Dragons? Read on...

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Bringing Dragons to Life

By Richard Lee Byers

or my money, dragons, particularly as presented in D&D and the Forgotten Realms, are as fascinating as any creatures in fantasy. They're beautiful and terrible. Wise and savage. They possess prodigious strength, astonishing magical powers, and come in a diversity of species, each with its own unique abilities and habits, each variously inclined to nobility or wickedness, order, chaos, or the ideal of balance. Best of all, each is an individual, inhuman but with a personality as fully developed and multifaceted as any of ours, with its own particular goals, attitudes, and quirks. What more could a storyteller ask?

My advice to storytellers, be they fiction writers or DMs, is to bear this individuality in mind. A generic, anonymous dragon that simply runs around killing and eating victims and stealing treasure until the heroes slay it in its turn is a cliché, and, worse, a waste of an opportunity to bring some genuine awe and wonder into your tale.

Instead, give your drake a name, a history, and a chance to talk. Consider the possibility that it might have an agenda above and beyond filling its belly and amassing a hoard. Or, even if it doesn't, whether it might pursue the typical goals of dragon-kind via unconventional means. And when the moment comes for it to fight, let it do so in a way that reflects its cunning and the full range of its capabilities.

In short, make sure your dragon is a person first and a monster second.

The articles that follow will help you do that. Enjoy!

Read of the current Realms-shattering event in *The Year of Rogue Dragons Trilogy*.

Book I – *The Rage*
Book II – *The Rite*
Book III – *The Ruin*

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REIGN OF DRAGONS

By Brian R. James

The mighty dragons seldom speak of their past. When they do speak, their histories are often filled with exaggeration and half-truths. Herein, revealed for the first time, is the true history of dragonkind on Abeir-Toril…

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The Dawn Age

"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."

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

Some thirty-two thousand years ago, the topography of Abeir-Toril was much different than it is today. In this ancient time before The Sundering[1], the lands which would one day be identified as Faerûn, Kara-Tur, Maztica, and Zakhara were each but one part of a much larger super-continent named Merrouroboros[2].

The collective lands of Merrouroboros measured more than ninety-five hundred miles from east to west and fifty-five hundred miles from north to south.

None of the dozen or so common races which populate the world today existed in this distant era. Merrouroboros knew none of the civilized folk – elves, dwarves, halflings, or gnomes. Nor did the savage peoples – goblins, orcs, ogres and their kin – inhabit the land. Though humans did exist during this ancient age, they were primitive and ape-like, using only simple tools.

These were The Days of Thunder, the time of the fabled Creator Races[3]. By this time, circa -31,000 DR, the batrachi[4] had ruled land and sea for not quite twenty-five hundred years, but their empire was in decline.

Batrachi-Jotunbrud War
-31,100 to -31,000 DR

For the preceding century, the amphibious batrachi had fought great wars against the jotunbrud[5]. The prize was control of the abundant lands amongst the four vast Inner Seas. Decade after decade they battled, neither side gaining advantage.

The batrachi were unequaled in their mastery of summoning magic. Thousands of conjured creatures lost their lives defending the batrachi against the titans. One such summoned monstrosity, the krakentua[6], stood as tall as a titan with the head of a kraken; its grisly visage sprouting several tentacles nearly twenty feet in length. Not until the coming of Tarrasque would a more voracious and destructive creature roam Toril. Still, the krakentua were not enough to turn the tide of the war.

The batrachi returned to their summoning. They needed something even bigger, something truly terrifying. After months of

[1] A time of elven pride and folly, when High Magic sundered the great continent, killing tens of thousands of innocents.

[2] *Land of the World Serpent* in the language of the Sarrukh.

[3] Five progenitor races native to Abeir-Toril, which include the sarrukh, the batrachi, the aearee, the fey, and humans.

[4] One of the five creator races. Also known as amphibioids, the batrachi were the creators of the bullywugs, doppelgangers, kopru, kuo-toa, locothah, sivs, tako, and other shapeshifting, amphibious, or piscine races.

[5] The name by which the giant races call themselves.

[6] Originally found in module *OA7 – Test of the Samurai* (1989, Rick Swan)

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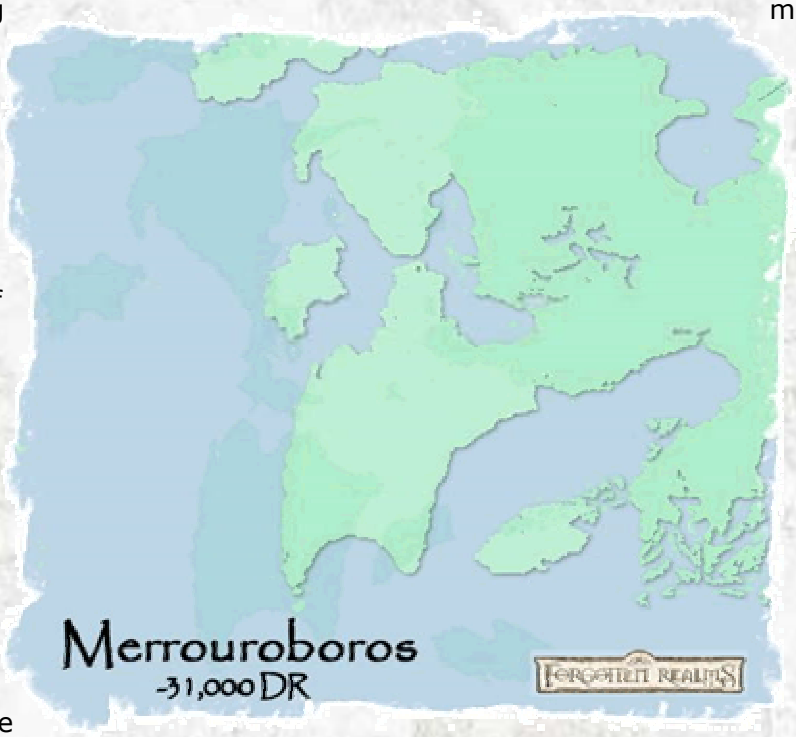
preparation, they succeeded, but were utterly unprepared for the entity that stepped through the gate.

Asgorath the World Shaper

Before them stood a manifestation of Asgorath[7] the World Shaper, a dragon of colossal size. Dragons were unknown on Toril in this long ago age, and when Asgorath extended her mighty wings and roared her indignation, the batrachi knew they had made a terrible mistake.

The fast-thinking batrachi quickly fell to their knees in homage, pleading for mercy. Moments passed, and the mighty wyrm did not attack. To their great relief and surprise, Asgorath asked the conjurers to stand and account for their actions.



Hesitant at first, though growing calmer with each breath, the batrachi mages explained their conflict against the giants and their need to summon minions to fight on their behalf. At Asgorath's insistence, they described their civilization and the history of the batrachi race. Then the dragon asked questions about their faith and gods.

At last, a pact was forged. In exchange for granting her children a domain on this world, Asgorath agreed to aid the batrachi in their fight against the titans.

Tearfall
-31,000 DR

Never subtle, Asgorath desired to make her presence felt on Toril in dramatic fashion.

In the Sea of Night above Abeir-Toril, two celestial bodies shone down upon world. The larger of the two moons was known as Ssharstrune[8], the smaller named Zotha[9] the Crystal Sun[10].

Asgorath stretched her colossal form around the Crystal Sun. Summoning forth great magic, The World Shaper exhaled the emergent magic as a great blast of dragon fire. The small moon sundered under the assault, covering Asgorath with thousands of deep wounds.

Though shattered, several large masses of the ice moon remained. Asgorath then cast the largest fragment at Toril, unerringly toward Lanaxis, the realm of the titans.

This chunk of the ice moon, still the size of a large mountain, struck deep at the heartlands of Merrouroboros, carving a gorge so deep between the Inner Seas that they merged together to form the Sea of Fallen Stars[11]. Throughout the following days, many smaller, though still devastating, impacts occurred throughout the continent.

[7] Creator of dragonkind on Abeir-Toril. Leader of the draconic pantheon.

[8] Named after the sarrukh goddess of magic, creator of darkness and light. Known today as the moon Selûne.

[9] Named after the sarrukh goddess of fire and ice. Its remnants are known today as the Tears of Selûne.

[10] Unlike the moon Ssharstrûne, Zotha was an ice world, consisting primarily of iron and frozen water.

[11] Known as Serôs to its underwater inhabitants.

With her final labored breaths, she closed her eyes and whispered a prayer toward the planet below. Though her life blood trickled away from many wounds, Asgorath knew joy. Her children would populate this world and grow strong. The World Shaper was pleased.

In the wake of the moon's impact, thousands of eggs fell from the sky, peppering the seed of dragonkind across the face of Merrouroboros.

The titans, firstborn children of Annam, suffered massive casualties that day. Retreating into their mountain homes in the far north, it would be another three thousand years before the Colossal Kingdom would rise again.

Though Asgorath fulfilled her agreement with the batrachi, there were unforeseen consequences from her actions. Severe earthquakes rocked the region for weeks afterwards. The crystalline batrachi cities, though reinforced by magic, were unable to withstand the incessant aftershocks. By year's end, the Batrachi Empire had fallen into ruin.

In the weeks following Tearfall, the spawn of The World Shaper began hatching across the globe. These precursor wyrms[12] were not the mighty dragons known today, for they possessed no wings, no magic, and no dragon breath. Nor were they a new species of the great thunderers[13] common in Mhairshaulk[14], for they were warm-blooded and possessed greater intelligence.

A legless variant of these precursor dragons, known as wurms, began hatching in the world's oceans.

The early days on Toril were not kind to the landwyrms and seawurms. An icy chill was in the air. The coming winter would be long, ensuring the deaths of hundreds of precursor dragons.

Seven Turn Winter

The deep impact of the Crystal Sun threw a thick cloud of dust into the atmosphere, obscuring the sun for seven long years.

Without the nutrients provided by the sun, plant-life began to die out across the land. Without plants to eat, many herbivores soon starved, followed quickly by their carnivore hunters.

Only those peoples possessing great magic or divine protection survived the mass extinction. Survivors included the remote giant community of Ostoria, the yuan-ti nation Mhairshaulk, couatl-protected human tribes of the northwest, and the fledgling wyrms of the south.

At the dawn of the new millennium (-31,000 DR), the sun once again shone down upon Merrouroboros, and the land began to warm. Plant life once again flourished, and animal species unknown before Tearfall dotted the land.

The Seven Turn Winter had ended, heralding the age of the avians.

Asgorath's Legacy

On the night of Tearfall, three new demi-powers were born. Birthed from the dying flesh of Asgorath, these three siblings were tasked with the guardianship of dragonkind on Toril. They were Xymor[15], Lord of the North Wind, Yaldabaoth[16], Queen of the Primordial Seas, and Null[17] the Night Dragon.

Null chose to remain aloof from the world, wishing instead to observe and judge from a distance.

Xymor claimed a large western island as his domain. He gathered to his side the landwyrms of the island and sheltered them from the long Seven Turn Winter. Following

[12] A primitive dracoform known as a landwyrm – *Draconomicon* p.168 (2003, Collins, Williams, and Wyatt)

[13] Also known as thunder lizards or dinosaurs.

[14] Yuan-ti ruled nation in southwest Merrouroboros. Legacy of the sarrukh empire.

[15] Also known as Xymor the Justicemaker. A unique extraplanar radiant dragon – *Draconomicon* p.185 (2003)

[16] Also known as Yaldabaoth the Storm Queen. A unique extraplanar oceanus dragon – *Draconomicon* p.181 (2003)

[17] Also known as Null the Watcher. A unique extraplanar tarterian dragon – *Draconomicon* p.189 (2003)

the great winter, the Lord of the Northwind established the Island Kingdom of Myrmidune, naming not himself but the great desert landwyrm Saldhartikani as its first monarch.

Over the next few centuries, Xymor watched over the wyrms, stepping in only when asked by the king. Finally, satisfied that the Kingdom of Myrmidune would prosper in his absence, Xymor stretched his wings and soared northeast to the mainland of Merrouroboros.

There he encountered a local power named Kukul[18] and his mate Maztica[19].

Meanwhile, his sibling Yaldabaoth had claimed the depths of the Black Sea as her domain, calling to her side the many seawurms that inhabited its shadowy depths. Unfortunately for the native batrachi, Yaldabaoth did not see a future for them in her new empire.

Normally docile, the native tako[20] were forced to defend themselves from the encroaching seawurms. From their crystalline cities beneath the sea, these batrachi descendents rallied many races to aid in their defense. Allies included the kopru, kuo-toa, locothah, sahuagin and sivs.

For decades, the batrachi and their allies were able to successfully keep the seawurms at bay. That changed when the tako were betrayed by the sahuagin…

* * * *

Rise of The Avians

"Bird-men once ruled Faerûn? Next you'll be telling me that toads and lizards built great civilizations too!"
–Ector Brahms, Knight Commander

As mammals spread throughout Merrouroboros, the worship of new gods arose in their wake. Two of these new powers were Remnis and Raven.

The elemental Lady of Air, Akadi, had also grown an interest in Abeir-Toril. Her coupling with these avian deities produced two immortal progeny.

The union with Remnis produced Krocaa, father of the aearee-kokra[21]. The union with Raven produced Quorlinn, father of the aearee-kenku[22].

In the vacuum created by the fall of the batrachi, the terrestrial grandchildren of Akadi flourished and multiplied. Within a century, the aearee had spread across the continent, and each race built vast empires.

In the early days of their expansion, the aearee befriended and forged alliances with the many races they encountered. These allies included the mighty giant eagles, the beautiful pegasi and asperii, and the mysterious couatl from the western lands.

The aearee enjoyed peace and steady expansion for nearly two-hundred years. During this period, the aearee domesticated many ground-based species, including the ferocious wyrms.

The kokra claimed the lands from the modern-day Shining Sea north to the Spine of the World and west into Maztica. The kokra named their lands Anchorome, and the great aerie Viakoo its seat of power.

The kenku claimed the lands from modern-day Halruaa, east to Raurin and north into Vaasa. They named their domain Shaar, in honor of their greatest military leader.

Unlike their kokra brethren, the kenku were more callous in the governing of their empire. Instead of forging alliances with their neighbors, the aearee-kenku sought to conquer and enslave.

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[18] Ancient Father of the Gods in the Maztican Pantheon.

[19] Mother of Life, The World in the Maztican Pantheon

[20] An intelligent octopus-like creature – *Oriental Adventures* p.193 (2001, James Wyatt)

[21] Known today as aarakocra – *Monsters of Faerûn* p.11 (2001, Wyatt and Heinsoo)

[22] Known today as kenku – *Monster Manual III* p.86 (2004)

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Lotan the Leviathan
-30,800 DR

While the aearee were expanding across the surface of Merrouroboros, the dragon demi-power Yaldabaoth was busy expanding her influence beneath the sea.

Since her arrival on Toril, Yaldabaoth had been secretly courting a local shark god named Sekolah, eventually resulting in the birth of Lotan[23].

With the urging of Yaldabaoth, Lotan gathered a vast host of seawurms, megalodon, and sahuagin. With this army, Lotan conquered the Black Sea in her mother's name, driving the remaining batrachi west through the Strait of Lopango and into the Great Western Ocean.

Lotan ruled the Black Sea uncontested for nearly four millennia, until her defeat by Azul[24]. Upon her death, the sahuagin assumed control of the Black Sea.

Lammasu Massacre
-30,700 DR

Above the sea, the aearee increasingly came into conflict with tribes of lammasu[25]. In a particularly bloody engagement, one thousand aearee lost their lives to a much smaller force of three hundred lammasu.

Though they were victorious, the aearee vowed to never again pit away their own kind against their enemies. Instead they would to breed a warrior race to fight in their stead, commanding their armies from a safe distance.

The kokra focused primarily on enhancing the abilities of their domesticated wyrms. These trials produced the first winged wyrms, which the aearee named wyverns[26].

The envious kenku experimented with captured lammasu, producing the first manticore. Though cunning and fierce, the kenku found the manticore difficult to train and control. Ultimately this "failed experiment" was released into the wild.

With their new wyvern armies, the aearee continued their empire's expansion.

In a decisive battle, c.-30,700 DR the wyvern armies of the aearee defeated over five hundred cloud giants, halting their southward expansion.

The Celestial Dragon
-30,600 DR

Second born of Yaldabaoth was Serpens, the Beguiler. Unlike her war-bred sister Lotan, Serpens was more subtle and cunning in her ambitions.

Where Lotan wished only to crush and conquer the batrachi, Serpens wished to learn from them. For a time, Serpens transformed herself into the octopoid form, a tako. In this form, she was able to better learn the history and customs of the batrachi.

Draconomicon

Like other creator races before them, the aearee continued the practice of recording the magic of the lesser races. These records were penned by a secret organization known as the Ba`etith on to the *Golden Skins of the World Serpent* (later known as the *Nether Scrolls*).

The most notable addition by the aearee to these scrolls was the inclusion of draconic magic. In later years, during the Age of Netheril, two of the scrolls concerning dragonkind were stolen and secretly scribed into a magical tome entitled the *Draconomicon*.

Among more mundane material describing dragon anatomy and habitats, the *Draconomicon* contains instructions for casting draconic versions of many common arcane spells, including several purely draconic spells. Nondragon spellcasters are unable to case these spells directly from the book.

The *Draconomicon* also contains instructions for constructing several draconic magical items.

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[23] Later known and feared among seafaring humans as the monster Leviathan.

[24] Maztican god of water, rain, and fish. Also known as Calor.

[25] A large creature with the body of a lion, the wings of a giant eagle, and the face of a human – *Monster Manual* p.127 (2000)

[26] A huge flying lizard with a poisonous stinger in its tail. – *Monster Manual* p.186 (2000)

Eventually leaving the Black Sea behind, Serpens traveled on land. Disguised as a human woman, she traveled far and learned much.

After traveling the width and breadth of Merrouroboros for over two thousand years, Serpens was most intrigued by mankind.

During the coming dragon flight against the aearee and the further distant Draco Holy Wars, Serpens gathered many tribes of man and led them to safety, far to the east .

These human tribes[27] came to know Serpens as T`ien Lung, the Celestial Dragon, and revered her as a goddess in her own right.

Brood of the Justicemaker
-30,500 DR

Millennia earlier, following the collapse of their empire, a group of Okoth[28] sarrukh wandered the planes, looking for a new home. The centuries of nomadic life were hard on the proud sarrukh, turning many of their kind inexorably toward evil.

A small group of sarrukh rebelled against this darker path. Beseeching the god Jazirian, they were transformed into couatls[29]. Following a brief war where Jazirian was slain by Merrshaulk, the couatls retreated back to Toril.

With little hope or desire of restoring Okoth to its former glory, the couatls immigrated north and west into lands controlled by Qotal, the Feathered Dragon.

The bastard son of Xymor and the nature goddess Maztica, Qotal shunned his draconic heritage to guide and mold the human tribes of the region.

Qotal's epic battles against his half-brother Zaltec are legendary.

Following Maztica's death at the hands of her son Zaltec, Xymor led a small number of couatls back to Myrmidune.

Upon his return, Xymor discovered the island kingdom at war. In the centuries since his absence, the landwyrms had overthrown Saldhartikani and regressed into bloodthirsty savages.

With Xymor's blessing, his couatl followers used their sarrukh transformative magic on the wyrms to spawn the first metallic dragons on Toril.

The firstborn of this new dragon race was blessed by Xymor and named Bahamut[30], the Platinum Dragon.

The Wasting Plague
-30,400 DR

As with the batrachi before them, the aearee also came into conflict with the children of Annam. During the Aearee-Jotun Conflict, the tanar'ri lord Yeenoghu approached the kenku with a proposition. In exchange for his assistance against the giants, the aearee would hand over the remote eastern reaches of their empire to the gnolls.

Overconfident and naïve, the kenku emperor refused Yeenoghu's offer and instead challenged the tanar'ri lord to combat. The battle was swift, the emperor easily defeated. Incensed, Yeenoghu then commanded his marrash[31] troops to attack the kenku aerie at Shara.

The marrashi attacks were swift and devastating. Wave after wave of the beasts fired their disease-tainted arrows into the fleeing kenku.

Yeenoghu then unleashed a terrible wasting disease upon the kenku. The Inflicted suffered horribly as their wings withered away into ruin over the period of a week.

[27] Ancestors of the modern day peoples of Kara-Tur.

[28] A nation of sarrukh centered on modern day Mulhorand.

[29] A serpent with feathered wings the color of the rainbow – *Monster Manual* p. 38 (2000)

[30] King of all Good Dragons. First to hold "King of Justice" title, now held by the gold dragon Lareth.

[31] An infernal gnoll-like creature with wings – *Monster Manual II* p.145 (2002)

The disease was insidious and spread quickly. Within a year, nearly a quarter of all kenku succumbed to the affliction.

Either unsympathetic or otherwise preoccupied, Quorlinn ignored the cries of his children. The afflicted began praying to the demon prince Pazrael, for relief.

Pazrael appeared among the kenku. To any who swore allegiance to the demon prince, he granted immunity to the disease. Within weeks of his arrival, the Wasting Plague was no more.

The kenku who had suffered the effects of the disease were labeled korbie[32], or *cursed,* in the aearee tongue.

Soon the korbie gathered their numbers and retreated below the earth in shame.

The Pazrael-worshiping kenku took the name tengu[33], and retreated to the east.

The remaining kenku, still clinging to their worship of Quorlinn, fell into barbarism.

Tarrasque
-30,300 DR

Lotan's great victory over the batrachi drew the attention of a local power named Ubtao[34]. Ubtao courted Lotan for nearly a century. Ultimately their union produced Tarrasque[35].

Though capable of breathing underwater like her mother, Tarrasque preferred to explore the land of Merrouroboros with her father.

The Aeraee held no sway in the southwest region of Merrouroboros. This land was still under the control of the Yuan-ti nation Mhairshaulk.

Like her mother, Tarrasque wished to conquer and rule. Assembling a great multitude of thunderers and landwyrms, Tarrasque pushed southward, driving the Yuan-ti east and conquering everything in her path, stopping only when reaching the shores of the Great Southern Ocean.

Human inhabitants named Tarrasque's realm Katashaka[36], the largest land empire ever known on Toril.

Twins of Infidelity
-30,200 DR

Yaldabaoth, seeking to rise above a mere demipower of a backwater world, set her sights on the great draconic power Lendys.

After a brief seduction, their secret coupling produced fraternal twins, Kaliyet and Nagamat.

As third daughter of Yaldaboath, Kaliyet did not have the ambition of her elder sisters or the favor of her twin brother. She was a quiet one, thought of as distant, introverted, and self-centered.

Kaliyet was a master of the psionic arts, and was particularly fascinated with the study of the Inner Planes.

Returning to Toril from a particularly lengthy stay among the Inner Planes, Kaliyet brought with her a half a dozen strange new dragons, claiming them as her children. Kaliyet then established the realm of Sossal in farthest reaches of the icy north, a land where gem dragons rule to this day.

As the years passed, Yaldaboath cared not for the whereabouts of her estranged youngest daughter. It was through her only son, Nagamat, that Yaldaboath sought to fulfill her greatest ambition.

No longer was Yaldaboath content to rule the Black Sea. By conquering the mainland in Lendys' name, Yaldaboath imagined she could supplant Tamara and join the draconic pantheon as a greater power.

Nagamat was the first true chromatic dragon on Toril. Though under normal conditions,

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[32] Later known as Dire Corbies – *Fiend Folio* p.26 (1979)

[33] *Blessed Warrior* in the tongue of the aearee – *Oriental Adventures* p.195

[34] Father of the Dinosaurs and Creator of Chult.

[35] A legendary and ferocious creature thought to be immortal – *Monster Manual* p.174 (2000)

[36] The Tabaxi and Eshowe tribes of Chult trace their ancestry back to the continent of Katashaka.

his scales were a deep forest green, Nagamat could instantly will his scales to change color – from deep black to blinding white, as well as red, blue, and green.

For the first centuries of his life, Nagamat was groomed to rule. He was as strong as Lotan, as cunning as Serpens, and as fierce as Tarrasque. And soon his mastery of magic surpassed even his sister Kaliyet. He was draconic perfection realized.

* * * *

The Time of Dragons

"I do not recall most of the mammal's babbling, but it spoke reasonably well of my power, glory, and reputation, and tendered the few hundred pounds of gems as an offering to my patience."
–Malygris, blue wyrm of southern Anauroch

Thunderers and other ancient, primitive kinds of Scaled Ones were hunted nearly to extinction by dragons, but a few such creatures still survive in remote jungle areas and on offshore islands.

Fall of the Aearee
-30,000 DR

Increasingly, larger numbers of dragons were discovered within aearee-controlled lands. More often than not, the aearee would easily defeat or drive back the beasts, but the increased frequency of the incursions was becoming quite alarming.

The aearee had no defense against the terror that was Nagamat. In the greatest flight of dragons ever known, Nagamat and his chromatic spawn filled the skies of Merrouroboros.

The aeries at Viakoo and Shara were destroyed in the first hour. In less than a week, the Aearee Empire had fallen. Surviving kokra fled west into couatl-controlled lands, where they quickly descended into barbarism. The kenku, having already declined greatly during The Wasting Plague, either fled east to become tengu, or likewise descended into barbarism, like their kokra brothers.

Rise of Tiamat
-29,500 DR

Seeking to counter the undisputed rule of the evil dragons, metallic dragons led by Bahamut wage war against Nagamat and his chromatic armies.

During the conflict, Bahamut and Nagamat engaged each other in a titanic clash over the jungles of Mhair. Ultimately, the Platinum Dragon proved victorious; the lifeless body of Nagamat falling away toward the jungle canopy.

Yaldabaoth flew into a rage when she learned of Nagamat's death. She demanded Bahamut's life in exchange for that of her son's. When Xymor refused, Yaldabaoth attacked. Their epic encounter raged across Merrouroboros and into the Outer Planes. At its conclusion Xymor lay dead, his neck dangling limp from his sister's bloody maw.

Witnessing the murder she had committed against one of their own, the draconic powers stripped Yaldabaoth of her deific powers and banished her from the pantheon. With Null's assistance, she fled Dragon Eyrie[37], seeking refuge in the Infernal Hells of Baator.

Yaldabaoth then underwent a great metamorphosis: her new, bloated form supported five heads, each identical in color and appearance to that of one of the five species of chromatic dragon. The dragon that was once Yaldabaoth took the name Tiamat, and swore vengeance against Bahamut and the metallic dragons.

From her lair in Avernus[38], Tiamat summoned to her side five consorts, the foremost male great wyrms of each chromatic class. Within a few centuries, Tiamat had a large host of dragons and abishai servitors. With this great army, Tiamat swept over Avernus and deposed its ruler.

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[37] The home of draconic pantheon in the Outer Planes.

[38] The first layer of Hell where mighty armies of the baatezu muster and train for the Blood War.

Hell was merely a training ground for the Queen of Dragonkind. Tiamat had no desire to rule or even maintain a domain in Baator. Abdicating her control of Avernus to Zariel, Tiamat turned her focus back toward the Material Plane.

Tiamat found her opportunity on a planet far removed from Abeir-Toril, a world dominated by mankind. There her conflicts with the deity Marduk became legendary. Over time, Tiamat once again became a deity in her own right.

Tiamat had nearly forgotten her life as Yaldaboath on Abeir-Toril, until one day she and the others of her pantheon were approached by the deity Ptah…

The Colossal Kingdom
-28,000 DR

While dragonkind fought among themselves, the giant tribes united once again and spread to cover most of northern Faerûn.

Annam subdivided the kingdom into several regions, one for each of his sons, Vilmos, Nicias, Ruk, Ottar, Masud, Obadai, Dunmore, and Lanaxis. Voninheim was constructed as the Ostorian capital.

During this time of great expansion, Othea, mother of giantkind, pursued a series of unsatisfying affairs with minor deities of the Savage Frontier. The ogre race was born of the union with Vaprak[39], while Othea's coupling with Ulutiu[40] produced four sons: Firbolg, Verbeeg, Voadkyn, and Fomorian.

Tel`Quessir
-27,000 DR

The fey[41] opened new gates to Toril, allowing green elves to immigrate to this new land. These elves worshipped the Faerie gods, not the Seldarine.

Thousand Year War
-26,000 DR to -25,000 DR

An avatar of the draconic deity Garyx led red dragons in battle against the giants of Ostoria. This manifestation of Garyx was defeated by Hjurnur Wyrmrever, a notorious giant hero.

Eventually all of dragonkind was drawn into the thousand year conflict. By the end, both sides had suffered incalculable losses, and were eager to reach a truce.

According to jotunbrud legend, Annam and the dragon god Hlal played a game of *wah-ree* to settle the war, the game ending in stalemate.

The Reign of Giants had come to an end. Ostoria had shrunk to a mere shadow of its former self. The Colossal Kingdom now occupied only the northernmost edge of Faerûn (present-day Great Glacier and the Cold Lands)

Draco Holy Wars
-25,000 DR to -24,500 DR

The celestial messenger Aasterinian declared to dragonkind that Asgorath[42] had been reborn.

As word of Asgorath's return was spread, debate erupted concerning the very nature of the World Shaper. Each dragon species believed that Asgorath shared its principals and alignment.

Warfare soon spread through the ranks of dragonkind, enough to significantly deplete the dragon population on Faerûn and actually threaten extinction. These wars were fought not only between species (metallic vs. chromatic), but also within species.

Following the war, nearly all dragonkind turn away from their gods as belief in their pantheon had nearly led them to extinction.

From that point, the dragons focused their energy inward, becoming more isolated and reticent. The practice of acquiring and

[39] Father of ogres and trolls.

[40] A minor sea god. Creator of the Great Glacier.

[41] One of the five creator races.

[42] Also known as Io or the Concordant Dragon in this manifestation.

hording large amounts of wealth came into fashion during this time.

Fall of Mhairshaulk
-24,500 DR

Dragons launched a concerted attack on the Mhairshaulk Empire. The dragons crushed many of the sarrukh lizardfolk armies, most of which were led by yuan-ti.

Demon Invasion
-24,400 DR

Khaastas[43] tracked the sarrukh back to their home world Abeir-Toril. Unknown to the khaasta invaders, the sarrukh had become all but extinct.

Elf tribes throughout Faerûn engaged the demon lizards, with the aid of the dragonriders.

Following the conflict, Bahamut created the race of Felldrakes[44] to guard the elves against future incursions.

The khaastas scaled back their armies and instead chose to send assassins and scouts to track their sarrukh enemies.

The Sundering
-24,000 DR

Hundreds of High Magi congregated along the shores of the Black Sea at the Gathering Place. Ignoring the lesson learned from the destruction of Tintageer centuries earlier, the High Magi cast a spell designed to create a glorious elven homeland.

The hubris of the Tel`Quessir knew no bounds. As the Day of Birthing dawned, the spell reached its apex. As a result, hundred of cities were washed away, tens of thousands of innocents perished, and the face of Abeir-Toril was changed forever.

Merrouroboros was sundered apart by the unbridled force of the High Magic, driving the shattered lands westward through the Great Ocean. The elves named the largest continent Faerûn.

Unknown to the elves, the last vestiges of batrachi civilization were destroyed during the Sundering, the modern-day lands of Maztica crushing their cities as the continental shelf was driven west by the cataclysm.

[43] Extraplanar lizardfolk native to the Abyss.

[44] Spiked Felldrake – *Draconomicon* p.160 (2003, Collins, Williams, and Wyatt)

Table 1-1: Ancient Draconic Deities

Name	AL	Domains	Portfolios	Weapon
Asgorath (I)	N	Dragon, Knowledge, Renewal, Strength, Travel, Spell	Creation, strength, dragonkind	Scimitar (claw)
Hlal (L)	CN	Chaos, Dragon, Illusion, Trickery	Humor, tricks, messages	Spear
Null (D)	N	Death, Dragon, Fate, Law	Fate, death, judgement	Unarmed Strike
Task (L)	CE	Chaos, Dragon, Evil, Planning	Greed, selfishness	Longsword (claw)
Xymor (D)	LG	Air, Dragon, Good, Protection	Loyalty, wind, wisdom	Heavy pick (bite)
Yaldabaoth (D)	CN	Chaos, Dragon, Storm, Water	Seas, storms, seawyrms	Heavy pick (bite)

Game Mechanics

"I am the Giant Space Hamster of Ill Omen!"
–Wooly Rupert, www.candlekeep.com

Characters who find themselves interacting with dragons or worshiping dragon gods may find the character options in this section useful.

Lore

Characters that succeed on a Knowledge (history Faerûn) check can learn the following information, including information from lower DCs:

DC 10: The creator races ruled Faerûn before the coming of the elves.

DC 15: The creator races are the sarrukh, the batrachi, the aearee, the fey, and mankind.

DC 20: Pre-Sundering, Faerûn was but one part of a much larger super-continent named Merrouroboros.

DC 30: Two moons orbited Abeir-Toril in the Days of Thunder, Ssharstrune and Zotha.

Characters that succeed on a Knowledge (history dragon) check can learn the following information, including information from lower DCs:

DC 10: Dragons, though not a creator race, ruled Faerûn for many millennia before the coming of the elves.

DC 15: Wyverns and drakes were created by the aearee creator race to fight in their wars.

DC 20: Couatl sorcerers, with Xymor's blessing, created the first metallic dragons on Faerûn.

DC 30: Tiamat was once known as Yaldabaoth, a benevolent demipower of oceans and seawurms.

Feats are described using the format described on page 89 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Initiate of Bahamut [Initiate]

You have been initiated into the greatest secrets of Bahamut's church.

Prerequisites: Human, dragon or half-dragon, able to cast 1st-level divine spells, patron deity Bahamut.

Benefit: Add +1 to your charisma ability. Add Sense Motive to your list of class skills.

In addition, you add the following spells to your cleric or paladin spell list.

1st – *know protections* (*Magic of Faerûn* p.104)

1st – *warning shout* (*Magic of Faerûn* p.132)

4th – *backlash* (*Magic of Faerûn* p.79)

5th – *binding winds* (*Magic of Faerûn* p.80)

Initiate of Tiamat [Initiate]

You have been initiated into the greatest secrets of Tiamat's church.

Prerequisites: Human, dragon or half-dragon, able to cast 1st-level divine spells, patron deity Tiamat.

Benefit: Add bluff, intimidate, and spot to your list of class skills.

In addition, you add the following arcane spells to your cleric spell list.

Zero – *acid splash* (*Magic of Faerûn* p.76)

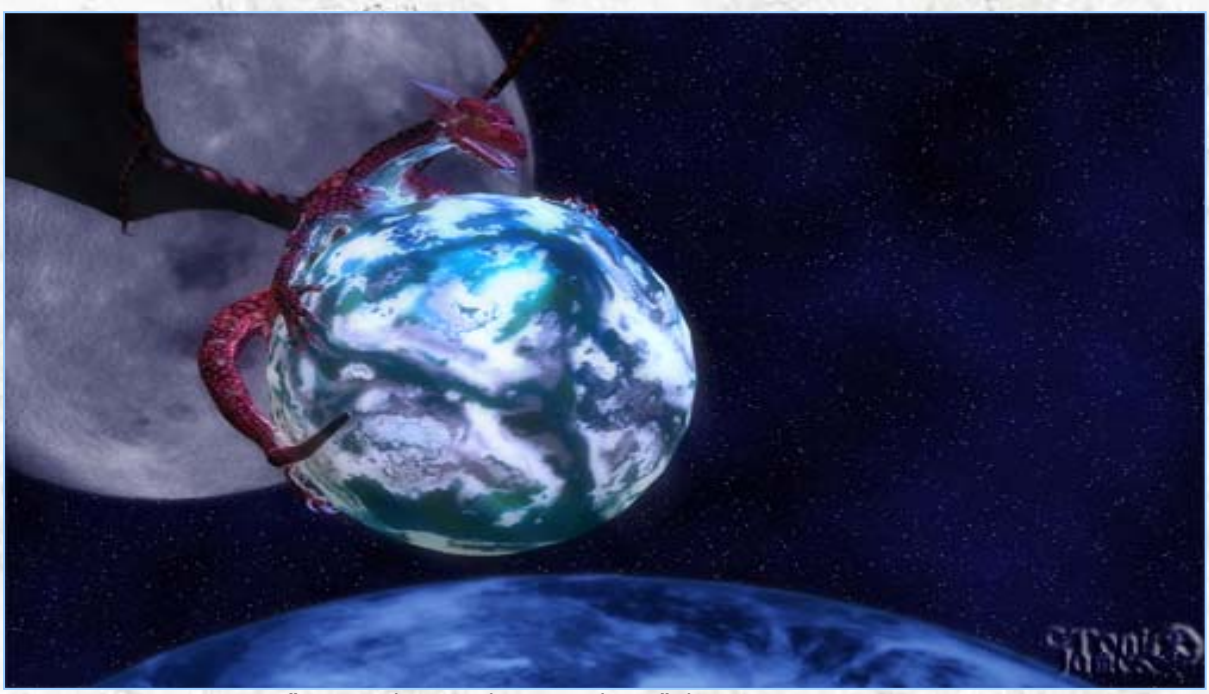
3rd – *Mestil's acid breath* (*Magic of Faerûn* p.108)

5th – *draconic polymorph* (*Draconomicon* p.79)

6th – *imperious glare* (*Draconomicon* p.79)

Web Enhancement

Errata, enhancements or other updates to this article shall appear online at:
http://www.geonomicon.com/reignofdragons



"Asgorath over the crystal sun", by Toni James

DRAGON EYRIE

By Gray Richardson

'Greetings, First Reader Tethtoril, from Grimbuckle the Gnome! I report to you of my recent expedition to the plane of Dragon Eyrie, where the dragon gods make their home and the spirits of dragons prowl the afterlife.'

Yours in knowledge,

Grimbuckle Thurn
Itinerant Planographer

* * * *

have long had a fascination with dragons, as you well know. For I would oft sneak down into the cellars and underways of Candlekeep to converse with Miirym, the ghostly Sentinel Wyrm, who ferociously guards the monastery from intruders. Ever mindful of the notches on the walls which mark the safe points past which her spectral jaws cannot reach, I would sit and talk with her for hours. She would tutor me in Aragrakh, the language of Auld High Wyrm, which proved to be quite useful to me in my future journeys. And I would tell her of my studies and the world above. I believe she came to value me as a friend.

I had always paid strict attention to the marks on the walls, having heard the terrifying stories of thieves and unwary scholars who strayed within her terrible clutches. She has a dreadful reputation for viciousness that is completely unwarranted, unless you would steal or do harm to Candlekeep — and then woe be to him who would trespass!

I never told you this bit before: Once she asked me why I feared to step past the notches and come sit with her. I muttered something apologetic about your rules forbidding it. She smiled in the most unnerving fashion that only a disembodied pair of dragon's jaws can quite effect, as she manoeuvred behind me and whispered in my ear that she had long since scored her own notches in the walls to confound the monks as to the true scope of her territory. She could have crunched me at any time! But she has only kindly thoughts to those who would seek her company and salve her loneliness.

Upon my return to Candlekeep, I shall tell her of my wondrous adventures in Dragon Eyrie — a paradise denied to her by the magics that bind her to the protection of the monastery, long after her material body has died and fallen to dust. Adventures that I shall relate to you now.

I had been trying for some time to travel to the plane of Dragon Eyrie. Years ago, I made a disastrous prior attempt to purchase passage there from Tu'narath, the Githyanki city in the Astral Plane. The Githyanki, by means of the Pact of Ephelomon, have a special relationship with red dragons and maintain ties to Tiamat. I foolishly believed I could ride into Dragon Eyrie on the back of a plane-traveling red wyrm, and was prepared to offer a hefty sum of treasure for the privilege. I nearly paid with my life. Never question that the Githyanki are a treacherous and devious people! I barely escaped with my silver cord intact…

But recently I befriended an oceanus dragon, Melanthorace, who nests within a sea-elf ruin beneath the bay just south of the Cloak Wood. Within her lair is an ancient *portal* to the Sparkling Sea of Arvandor, and from there she knows of a *portal* that links the

The Candlekeep Compendium

realm of Erevan Ilesere to the realm of Hlal (known as Avachel to the elves) in Dragon Eyrie.

I plied her with cartloads of peaches and nectarines, *teleported* fresh from an orchard just east of Baldur's Gate, to seal the deal. She didn't need much convincing; oceanus dragons love to travel the planar waterways. Before long I was cresting the waves above Elavandor as she carried me on her back towards the elven paradise of Arvanaith.

Oh, what a ride that was, First Reader! To see the wonders of Arvandor from dragonback! From the Sparkling Sea she swam up the Silverflow River delta. Branching off into the Evergold, we passed by Hanali's Crystal Palace. We then forked off into the Brandywine River and traveled up its headwaters, past the Crescent Moon Palace of Corellon and Sehanine, beneath the flying towers of Aerdrie's realm, to Lake Goneril, in Erevan's realm, near the root of the World Tree.

The *portal* to Hlal's realm lies within a cave along the shore of Lake Goneril. In the guise of Avachel, Hlal is a boon companion to Erevan. The *portal* links the realms of the two trickster gods.

Melanthorace solemnly intoned the ancient charm to activate the *portal* for me, but I couldn't help but burst out in laughter when I heard it. I think I hurt her feelings, poor dear — but I don't think she knew what she was saying. Yet it seemed like the funniest joke I had ever heard, the humor perhaps heightened by the strange location and it being uttered so seriously in ritualistic fashion from the maw of a sea-serpent the length of ten wagons! From the first sibilant syllable, I recognized the words were ancient Aragrakh as they boomed forth: "KNOCK, KNOCK… WHO'S THERE?"

Then in a flash, a shimmering vortex irised open in the *portal* arch, and before you could say "jack rabbit stew", I was through the *portal* and standing in Dragon Eyrie.

Speaking of jack rabbits, dragons are predators at heart. A tiny gnome like myself makes for an attractive and tasty dragon meal. So a little disguise was in order, ere I

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continued to explore the plane. I donned an *amulet of dragon form* that I won from the Netyarch of Halruaa in a game of *Old Wizard*. (His eminence cheats, by the way… He used divination cantrips to try and see my cards!)

I transformed my body into the semblance of an amethyst wyrm. I chose a form calculated to be as inoffensive and unobtrusive as I could manage, a breed whose company was as acceptable to metallics as to chromatics. Not too large as to be threatening, and not too small as to invite a challenge.

Trying out my new form, I stretched my wings. Extraordinary! Such power! I could feel the wind filling the membranes of my wings, pressing against the webbing, trying to lift me aloft. The feeling was so exhilarating that I took to flight immediately, launching my scaled frame into the skies of the plane. And from my view on high, I was awed by the astounding vistas which lay beyond.

* * * *

The Lower Reaches

From my aerial vantage, the plane spread out before me, a vast and beautiful wilderness. Dragon Eyrie is truly a draconic paradise, in every sense of the word. Some dragon myths tell of how the Eyrie formed from the titanic remains of Asgorath, the all-father god of the draconic pantheon, who died spawning the race of dragons in a fiery cataclysm.

I don't know if the myth is true or not; the plane doesn't look anything like the bones or corpse of a dragon. But just as the All-father is said to encompass all aspects of dragonkind within himself, the plane of Dragon Eyrie contains every environment and every climate that a dragon might hold pleasing or dear.

There are swamps for the blacks, forests for the greens, and arid deserts for the blues and brasses. There are hot lava pits for the pyroclasts, and volcanoes (both active and inactive) for the reds and emeralds. There are snowy peaks and glaciers for the whites and crystals. And there are seaside cliffs for the bronzes and topazes. There are lairs at every altitude of the plane, from the lofty heights of its aerial spires and cloud aeries for the golds and silvers, down to the deepest canyons, crevasses and caverns, for those dragons that prefer the solid sanctuary of an underground lair.

Not unlike Mount Celestia in the House of the Triad, whose seven layers ascend to the top of its shining heaven, so too does Dragon Eyrie ascend in three (well, really four) ever-mounting bands or mountainous layers that peak at Null's Summit, from where he rules the entire crest of Dragon Eyrie.

The first layer, where I emerged from the *portal*, is referred to as The Lower Reaches (well, it is not really the lowest layer, but I shall tell you more on that later). Hlal's court is only a small part of the Lower Reaches. No dragon god's realm occupies an entire layer of the plane — except for Null, who claims the peak.

From this layer, the Eyrie appears not as a single mountain, but as an endless mountain range. A range so large that it seems like it would span the entire breadth and length of Faerûn. In fact, it is said that it goes on for an infinite distance.

I don't know about that, but it certainly has enough room that any dragon spirit may claim as his sole domain a vast territory of a hundred days ride in every direction, containing all the food and sport he needs without ever having to intrude upon another dragon's territory.

Dragons may even claim entire mountaintops for their personal dominion. However, even the mightiest of these mountains are but foothills compared to the ever-looming Eyrie that towers to impossible heights in the sky above.

Most dragon souls are drawn to solitude in the afterlife. They seek perfection of their being, in a manner which is peculiarly draconic. They spend their days hunting, becoming perfect predators. They meditate on draconic ideals, and practice their draconic disciplines. Still others become

torpid and seek the perfect slumber. Especially the oldest of old dragon souls, who sleep away their days and seek the perfect dream, until they fade away and become one with the plane.

The hoarding instinct is much abated in the afterlife, as hoarding is primarily a terrestrial concern. Yet there are a few souls who still collect hoards, even in the afterlife. Many who do so seek to amass the perfect treasure.

Some may choose to hoard not gold and gems, but rather items of personal or spiritual value. It is not uncommon to find a dragon petitioner hoard containing antlers and skulls of valued kills, pelts, nuts, pretty rocks, and found objects that hold some meaning for the dragon.

There are even those who unleash their artistic streak in the afterlife and hoard the works of art they make. But most dragons of an artistic bent are drawn to one realm in particular, the realm of Hlal.

* * * *

Varaskverth — The Realm Of Hlal

Most dragons prefer to spend their afterlife in solitude. However, there are those gregarious dragon souls who desire the company of their kind, and they congregate together in places like Hlal's realm — the realm of the draconic god of wit, trickery, humor, storytelling, music and play of every kind.

Hlal's court is called Varaskverth (draconic: *varask* = brass or brazen + *verth* = mount, from *verthicha* = mountain), often translated into the common tongue as "Brassberg." But it is not just a realm for brasses alone. Dragon spirits of all varieties adore Hlal, and seek the companionship her realm has to offer.

Varaskverth is a series of dry plateaus that rise from the lowlands along one side of the Eyrie's grand slope, escalating to the heights of the Lower Reaches. Hlal's personal lair opens out onto the topmost plateau of her realm. It extends deep within the side of the Eyrie, back through labyrinthine caverns lit by veins of shining brass. This is odd, because brass is an alloy and doesn't occur naturally! But these are the planes, so mysteries abound!

Hlal's mazes contain many mysteries. Filled with mirrors, tricks and traps, Hlal's labyrinths are not merely for amusement, but contain secret knowledge that can help a dragon's soul find its way to the perfection it seeks. There are rumors that some of Hlal's labyrinths connect to the mazes of Parrafaire's realm in the plane of Deep Caverns, where the Naga Prince keeps secrets hidden for the benefit of only the most worthy souls to discover.

Dragons are not known for architecture or the design of great structures. Buildings of any kind are rare on this plane. But Hlal attracts all kinds of artists to her realm, including those who would work in stone. Those few who *are* inclined to architecture or to sculpture have, through the ages, hewn great statues into the cliff faces, erected soaring towers, burrowed sparkling palaces deep into the mountainside, and applied their arts to all the surfaces of the upper plateaus, to create a shining city that is wholly and singularly draconic in its aspect.

The scale of Varaskverth is colossal. It is a "city" of immense plazas, towering column perches, grand arenas and palatial structures. Every enclosed room is cathedral-sized in scale. All the entrances, passageways and arches are more broad than tall — large enough for the largest of dragons to pass through with wings spread to their widest span.

Varaskverth was built with a mind toward flight over foot as the primary means of locomotion. Everything is more vertical than horizontal. There are only a few broad avenues, but many, many balconies, ledges and terraces. Stairways are unknown here, although there are a few rampways to aid the wingless. Most buildings are open to the sky so that dragons may fly in from above. And there are many structures that are completely inaccessible, except by flight.

The cliff-sides of the plateaus are lined with numerous mighty amphitheaters. These are scooped out from the rock, with ledges carved into the cliff faces for thousands upon thousands of dragons to sprawl, bask in the sun, and listen to the songs and sagas of those who perform below.

Cliff faces and walls of structures are likely to be covered in sweeping mosaics of glass and metal, adhered to the stone by blasts of fiery breath. Gems are set into the molten metal and glass. Turquoise, the favored stone of Hlal, is prominently featured everywhere.

Dragons fill the skies above Hlal's realm, flocking en masse like swarms of flies. Some loop in great circles, others cavort in complex aerial dances, many chase each other and play at games. Still others glide high on thermal winds rising up the mountainside, hovering, observing, and contemplating the joy of flight.

Such a population of dragon petitioners requires enormous amounts of food. You might think that spirits in the afterlife are beyond such concerns, and you would be correct: they do not need any physical sustenance. But it still concerns them greatly. They have no need to eat, but they do *desire* to. Dragons' spirits in the afterlife have a voracious preoccupation with hunting and feeding. Fortunately, the Eyrie provides in abundance.

The slopes of the Eyrie are covered with wild sheep, deer, elk, boar, rothé, goats, fish, fowl, and other small game. Not spirits of these animals, mind you, not fiendish or celestial beasties, but actual living animals — probably brought over in ages past from the Prime Material Plane. These creatures flourish in the wilderness of the Eyrie, and in fact are encouraged to thrive by careful husbandry. They have no natural predators on this plane, other than the dragons. It's as much a paradise for the animals as for the dragons — except, of course, for that nasty little bit at the end… I suspect they might even overrun the plane should the dragons fail to keep their populations in check.

Just beyond the borders of Varaskverth, there are prodigious herds of rothé and every kind of food beast that a dragon finds delightful. Certain of Hlal's petitioners, self-appointed rangers, take great pleasure in herding these flocks for the benefit of the realm. Hungry dragons may swoop down and carry off prey from designated areas, and the shepherds will occasionally drive whole herds of animals into the plazas of Varaskverth for feasts and special occasions. For those dragons that prefer to hunt their prey, it is a short flight into the nearby wilderness where they can hunt to their heart's content. But the domesticated livestock close in to "town" must be carefully managed, lest overindulgence deplete the local food source.

First Reader, I spent a great deal of time in Hlal's realm, conversing with the petitioners and making acquaintances, if not friends of a sort. I learned a great deal from them about the realm and the plane surrounding it. I suspect that some could tell that I was different, not an ordinary dragon soul like themselves. But none challenged me on it or gave me any trouble.

The dragons helped me to plot out the rest of my journey, even gave me some pointers that would help me to navigate and survive my journey through Tiamat's and Task's realms. But most of all, I listened to their songs and stories, many of which I have recorded on scrolls for the Library. You will be so pleased when you see all the lore I have for you on my return to Candlekeep!

My Aragrakh lessons from Miirym were quite a boon to me, since Auld High Wyrm is not a dead language in the Eyrie. It is still spoken by the oldest of dragon spirits, who lived before the fall of Netheril, before even the rise of Netheril and Imaskar!

Sadly though, when I asked about events from so long ago, none knew anything of ancient history. They could relate no anecdotes about Faerûn's distant past. Not a single one had any memory of their mortal lives.

Spirits in the afterlife lose all recollection of the years they lived on the Material Plane. They do not, curiously, lose *all* of their worldly knowledge. They remember how to

speak languages. They remember their skills and talents for the things they did in life. But their remembrances of people, places and terrestrial events are simply lost upon their dying.

Some scholars think that this memory loss is a consequence of the "trauma" of death. Others believe that newly dead souls are given a draught of some elixir or immersed in a river that removes them of the burden of their memories. I have seen no evidence to support this notion.

The two most credible theories that I am aware of hold that either the memories lie within the physical brain, and do not travel with the soul upon its departure from the body, or that the memories are siphoned away by the Astral when the soul travels to the Fugue Plane after death. But I shall leave such concerns for scholars to debate. For, likewise, it was time for me to leave this layer and continue with my journey.

I took flight again, relying on the warm thermals that rise up from Hlal's warm plateaus to loft me ever higher. I flew up the mountain slope for almost a day, until Hlal's realm had shrunk and disappeared far below me.

I wasn't sure how or when I would make the transition between layers, but close to sunset I flew up through a wispy string of a cloud and emerged up out of a roiling sea of mist that extended to the horizon as far as the eye could see, obscuring any trace of land below.

Tall and barren crags greeted me, in place of the verdant slopes of the Lower Reaches below. I knew I had arrived at Dragon Eyrie's second layer: the Middle Crags.

* * * *

The Middle Crags

In the middle reaches of the Eyrie, the grand slope of the mountain increases sharply. Much of this layer is composed of sheer, rocky cliffs. Other than dragons, birds and other flyers, there are few inhabitants of these strata aside from the nimblest of goats and rothé.

It feels as if the world was turned sideways on this layer. Looking out from the wall of near vertical crags and cliffs, you see naught but white clouds floating in blue sky. Looking down, the mountain plunges far below until it disappears into a perpetual mist or cloud bank that extends outwards to the horizon like an ocean. Looking up, the mountain ascends into the sky for what seems like forever, the distant snow-capped summit barely visible at the zenith of the sky.

A queasy fear that I might fall to my death was ever-present in my mind while on this layer. Even in my dragon form, I was often overcome by a sense of vertigo.

Among the myriad clouds I could see great clumps of rocky earth hanging buoyantly in the air, in defiance of gravity. Some were hollow, others were flat-topped and covered in trees. I don't know if these were natural or manufactured lairs, but they seemed ideal for dragon nests and aeries.

There is a jotun myth of how the cloud giant Nicias taught the gold dragon hero Larethvaengelix the secret magic of crafting flying lairs by solidifying clouds and elevating mountains aloft. This knowledge was the price of the truce that ended the ancient war between the dragons and giants millennia ago. Of course, dragons tell it differently; the dragons believe they taught the secret to the giants.

In the late evening, after the sun had set, I caught a glimpse of what at first I thought was a brilliant, red star. But as it passed closer, I saw it was an enormous, floating castle, sailing through the night sky. Its crystalline facets gleamed crimson in the moonlight, seemingly carved from ruby or scarlet jewels. And all about its far-away turrets, tiny flashes glinted from the iridescent scales of gem dragons that circled and hovered around the fortress like orbiting *ioun stones*.

I wasn't sure of what to make of this sight. Legend tells of a patron lord of gem dragons — the Ruby Dragon — whose castle sails the

Sea of Night, ever-hidden from the sun. Perhaps because of the gem-dragon form I had chosen, I felt as if the castle were calling to me in my bones. The image would haunt me in my dreams that night, as I lay sleeping, nestled on a windy ledge.

I arose at first light, flying onwards to the west. At least, I think it was west… I flew along the cliffs in the direction that the sun had set, looking for the realm of Task, the god of greed.

* * * *

Task's Realm — The Furnace

This layer is preferred by the more solitary dragons. I saw only a few bronzes and a gold during my entire flight that day. In the late afternoon, the air grew hotter and I could see a hazy smoke in the distance along the mountainside. I knew I was nearing Task's fiery realm.

Task's realm — called The Furnace, because of its fierce heat — lies within a hot zone surrounding a giant volcano in the Middle Reaches. It is one of a pair of titanic craters that together are called the *Nostrils of Asgorath* (it sounds better in draconic), which are the most prominent features on this edge of the Eyrie. The other volcano was once the realm of Garyx, the Firelord, before Task slew him and consolidated their realms and their hoards. Task's greed knows no bounds.

I did not venture into Task's cavern itself. I was wary of encountering this god or his minions. They say his cavern spreads deep and vast beneath the volcano, filled entirely with gold and gems and treasure. Task is the god of greed. They say his hoard is rivaled by none other in the universe. He guards every coin jealously. So I stayed well away from his personal cavern.

Task's surrounding realm is beloved of red and emerald dragons, fire drakes, and smoke drakes. Pyroclastic dragons frolic blissfully in the lava pits that dot this region of the crags.

There is also a sizable salamander kingdom that inhabits the magma lake in the caldera of the Furnace, vassals of Task. In fact, fire element creatures abound in this region. I saw magmin, harginn, mephits (magma, smoke and fire) and even azer toiling to some dark purpose.

Why the fire-dwarves were tolerated by the dragon folk hereabouts was a mystery to me. Perhaps they slave away at digging Task's cavern ever deeper, so he can fill it with more treasure. The constant sound of hammers ringing out through crevices and hollows from beneath the surface, makes me wonder if the azer aren't forging something… Something big.

The region has a dark beauty. Rivers of lava course all about, cascading over cliffs and down the slopes of the Eyrie in incandescent, molten waterfalls. Ash falls gently from the sky like burning snow upon the basalt landscape, collecting in grey-black banks that pile against the fissure walls.

The volcanoes vent huge columns of smoke continuously into the sky. These fumes overhang this part of the plane as a perpetual black cloud layer that blots out the light of the sun, leaving the realm dark and eerily lit by the ambient orange-red glow of the ubiquitous lava. The air is hot and hazy, and the noxious miasma stung my skin and eyes, even with my thick hide covered by dragon scales.

My *torque of vigilant redoubt* — which usually shields me from the extremes of planar climes — was of no use to me here, as it is scaled for a gnome-sized neck. In my dragon form, it would not even stretch to fit round my pinky-claw.

I cautiously approached some of the natives, but the inhabitants of this region have tempers as hot as the climate. Everyone here is on edge. The entire realm is girding for war. Task is smoldering with fury, and preparations ensue for him to attack his nemesis, Tiamat.

It seems the interloper god Tiamat has recently settled in the deep roots of Dragon Eyrie, transferring her realm from the dying Untheric plane of Zigguraxus to the Dragonspawn Pits below the mountain. The chromatic queen solemnized her infiltration

by slaying Zorquan, god of the draconic ideal.

Zorquan was Task's only friend and ally. Of all the gods, Zorquan accepted Task for what he is: the personification of avarice, an integral part of the draconic character. Task feels his loss keenly.

And the Dark Queen compounded her transgression by challenging and slaying Astilabor, the Hoardmistress, god of acquisition. Astilabor was Task's greatest nemesis. He had savored the thought of killing her and taking her hoard through countless ages. And now Tiamat has usurped his rightful privilege and taken the hoard he coveted for so long.

But her greatest affront to Task is that she claims the same portfolio of greed as he possesses — and no two gods within the same pantheon may share a portfolio. Not that the god of greed would ever contemplate sharing anything.

So Task is soon to war with Tiamat. And woe be to Tiamat when that day comes. But then again, Tiamat may yet prevail against Task. This coming conflict will surely burn the skies of Dragon Eyrie and visit dire times upon the dragon pantheon.

It was time to move on from this realm — onwards and upwards to the peak.

* * * *

Null's Realm — The Summit

I emerged into Null's realm, the eternal snow-capped summit of Dragon Eyrie. Everything about this realm is eternal. The layer has a quiet stillness. Sound seems muted. The air is thin and cold.

A few stars are visible in the sky. The light here fades from purple to dark blue, hovering on the edge of night in an everlasting twilight. The atmosphere is austere, yet serene.

When I arrived in the layer, at the very bottom of the crest, I saw a giant silver wyrm, perched on an outcropping of rock. Perfectly still, neck erect, it stared out at the wispy clouds beyond.

I thought at first it might be a silver statue. But then a booming voice rang out in my head — not in my ears, but in my mind. His lips weren't moving, but he was laughing at me.

"What are you doing there, little gnome?" he asked, at least I "heard" him to ask it in my thoughts. He must have had some sort of *true sight* that could see through my assumed guise.

"If it please, sir, I mean no harm. I am come to learn of the great god Null and his realm," I said — in the most deferential and courteous draconic I could muster. I stumbled over the words, trying to remember the highest caste inflection befitting an elder silver wyrm.

The words came out as a whisper in the thin air. The sound dropped away, fading into silence across the void between us. Sound doesn't carry very far at all in this realm. But the wyrm seemed to hear me well enough with his mind.

"Be at ease, little gnomeling," he boomed. "The Death Wyrm has not come for you yet. I am Barussjelaent, Dispassionate Watcher of Null."

We exchanged pleasantries and he quizzed me on my journey so far. I assured him that I was not there to steal or defile anything. And he assured me that he did not plan to eat me. When I told him of what I witnessed in Task's realm, he allowed as that was very useful information to him. To my delight, he agreed to act as my guide on this layer, both for my protection and to make sure that I did not violate any taboos or sacred sites.

I was glad of his company, as my intended exit from this layer lay within the palace of Null, and I was terrified at the prospect of entering Null's demesne all on my own.

The Summit is home to the spirits of silvers, crystals, whites, and shadow dragon petitioners along with a few other dragonkin. There are even draconic undead here too, for

Null is the draconic god of undeath as well as death. There is a sparse supply of rothé, yak, mammoth, yeti, frost worms and remorhaz for the dragons to feed upon. However, my sense of this layer is that many here are prone to torpor or inactivity, and choose not to feed at all. The silvers especially seem content to stand still, watching and meditating on their inner perfection.

The whites, however, are far less contemplative; it's easy to find them burrowing through the snow, hunting remorhaz, and playing their dragon games. The silvers find the whites to be quite irritating, and "encourage" them to keep to the lower slopes to one side of the Summit. But the whites are heedless of their exhortations.

All around the peak lay the tombs of dragon gods, monuments to long-forgotten deities. For Null comes for every dragon in the end — even the gods. And Null has taken many gods through the ages.

In the ancient past, dragons reigned supreme across the face of Faerûn. When dragons ruled the land, their pantheons rivaled the size and power of the current crop of godlings that proliferate among the Outer Planes.

There were once dragon gods of fertility, flight, sleep and rage. Gods charged with the protection of little wyrmlings and unhatched eggs. Deities of subjugation and might and appeasement of hunger. Every breed and color had their own divine patron. There were draconic heroes who ascended to godhood… Their names are all lost. Dragons will even tell you how some of their gods — like Kereska, goddess of magic — came to be worshipped by lesser races and have since recast themselves in name and visage to join the contemporary pantheons of Abeir-Toril.

But here on the Summit of Dragon Eyrie are memorialized all the dead gods of dragonkind. Titanic cairns, mounds, dolmens and menhirs bristle from out of the snow. Null guards them all. Their corpses may lie in the Astral plane, but Null pays homage to the memory of every god he has taken.

Barussjelaent escorted me into Null's Mausoleum, a hulking temple set into the mountaintop at the very pinnacle of the Summit. The entrance hall was carved from pearlescent mica, which reflected the white of the snow that gathered in drifts about the floor. Dragon-shaped shades stood out in stark contrast from the white walls, as their black shadows prowled along the edges of the room. We walked deeper through the halls of the mausoleum. The mica gave way to bones, as we arrived at the Ossuary.

Here Null sleeps upon his hoard of bones. It is a pit filled with relics of every soul the Death Wyrm has taken. Null's treasures are the skulls, teeth, scales and talons of his charges. A grisly hoard, to be sure. And the more vicious wyrms admire him for his trophies. For they view Null as the Reaver, the savage epitome of draconic might, the ultimate victor over every living thing.

But wiser wyrms still admire Null for his *reverence*. For they know Null does not treasure these souvenirs as spoils of conquest, but rather out of respect for the souls he oversees as guardian of the dead.

The wisest of wyrms hope for two things when they die: that Null will meet them on the Fugue Plane to take them to their rest, and that Null will honor them by keeping a part of their souls in his hoard, so that their memory will be cherished for all eternity.

Fortunately, Null was not resting in his lair that day. Barussjelaent said he was off to the Fugue Plane to collect a recently deceased draconic soul.

Some pantheons send their agents, angels or proxies and the like to collect the spirits of the dead from the Fugue Plane. But Null is the draconic guardian of the dead, and he takes great pride in safeguarding every dragon petitioner's passage to the Eyrie.

Null has sworn that no fiend or force will ever divert a dragon's soul from its fated path — and, as far as anyone knows, he has never failed in his duty. Null guides the petitioner through the Astral, his dreaded roar a warning to make way, and a herald that a new dragon petitioner seeks its glory.

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I was greatly relieved that Null was gone. I didn't want to disturb him, or have to explain my presence in his realm, or for the Death Wyrm to take notice of me in any way. But Barussjelaent had promised me safe conduct through Null's hall and I took some comfort in that.

In a grotto at the very back of Null's Mausoleum, I found my exit from this realm: a dark, foreboding pit that descended into the last layer of the Eyrie. I said my goodbyes and thanks to Barussjelaent and took wing, plunging downward on the final leg of my journey — down, down into Azharûl, the Dragonspawn Pits.

* * * *

Azharûl - The Dragonspawn Pits

The last layer of Dragon Eyrie is a vast underdark — a subterranean layer of caverns and tunnels that lie amid the deep roots of the mountain. It is called Azharûl, the Dragonspawn Pits, and here abide the dark fruits of the dragon family tree. Shadow and deep dragon petitioners burrow through these pits, as do draconic undead. Gem dragon petitioners such as sapphires and amethysts are found here; even topaz petitioners make their lairs in the wetter grottoes near underground pools and streams. Dragonkin, linnorms and the occasional ibrandlin all make their way to Azharûl.

Deep rothé, fungi, subterranean fish and kobolds are the primary food sources in Azharûl. All were brought from the material plane long ago, to stock the dark tunnels for those who would hunt.

And, of course, chromatics of every breed choose to nest near Tiamat's realm, in adoration of their dread liege, the queen of chromatic dragons.

* * * *

Tiamat's Realm — The Caverns of Greed

Tiamat's realm is the size of a vast nation. Its warrens and caverns must shelter the myriads of petitioners and fiends which she commands. Her human petitioners also build great ziggurats and temples in her honor, and excavate the kinds of structures that humans prefer when they live beneath the ground.

Unique among the dragon gods, Tiamat attracts petitioners of other races as well as dragons. As part of the Untheric pantheon, Tiamat has a large following of human worshippers. Her cults are popular not only in Unther but elsewhere across Faerûn and among some kobold tribes.

Null will deliver the souls of her dragon worshippers to Tiamat's realm, but he draws the line at lesser races. Tiamat usually sends one of her consorts or fiendish servitors to collect her humanoid petitioners from the Fugue Plane.

Some time ago, Tiamat transported her entire realm here from the lost plane of Zigguraxus, the dying home plane of the Untheric pantheon. Her realm in Zigguraxus was similarly situated in an underdark region beneath the Great Mountain of the East, the largest mountain of her former plane. She left an empty black void there where her realm used to be. Those left behind there have scarcely noticed; the entire plane is dissolving into the Astral from lack of divine support from the defunct Untheric gods.

Tiamat migrated a tremendous population of human petitioners with her from Zigguraxus to Dragon Eyrie. Accustomed to life under the rule of god-kings, her Mulan petitioners make for compliant servants in the afterlife. The most depraved and evil of her human petitioners she transforms into larvae and tosses into the Pit of Maggots for promotion into abishai after a period of "ripening".

Tiamat lairs in her Cave of Greed with her five consorts, a great wyrm of each flavor of evil dragon. The Dark Lady favors dragons from the Old Empires region for her consorts. Below are the most recent consorts, who

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change with the whims and fortunes of the Dragon Queen:

Khalosos is the current green consort, who terrorized the Methwood in the previous century.

The white consort is a half-fiend dragon called Zenakhnidon from the Narfell region. He preyed for centuries on those who traveled the Cold Road. He was known for his great crab-like foreclaws, the legacy of his glabrezu heritage.

The black consort is named Alphandunath, who in human guise amassed a cruel fortune from his mining and slaver holdings in Dalath, before he ran afoul of Gilgeam.

The blue consort, Erksonar, once laired in the Dragonsword Mountains near the Mulhorandi Land of the Dead, from which he poached to craft his armies of undead and hone his necromantic arts.

The red consort, Hothtoralost, was known as the tyrant of Unthagol. In his mountain vale, he bred and ranched a population of human slaves for generations to sate his voracious appetite — before he was slain by Maldraedior in a rare pique for the uncaring Millennium Wyrm.

The Dragon Queen's consorts enjoy a privileged station in her realm. They each have their own stately caves in her cavern complex. They command retinues of servants, including both draconic and human petitioners and abishai. Periodically, she takes them hunting on the Material Plane in great raids. And they, in turn, defend the realm and strive to keep her favor.

Tiamat's Cave of Greed lies just beyond the Pit of Maggots. This vast moat, which marks the border of her realm, is not really filled with maggots at all, but countless squirming larvae. Larvae are the worm-like forms taken by evil petitioners on certain lower planes. Tiamat procures her larvae through her close ties with the planes of Baator, the Blood Rift and the Barrens of Doom and Despair.

Tiamat uses the larvae to create her abishai — draconic fiends who serve her every whim and make her dark will manifest. The abishai come in the five colors of the chromatic dragons, and share many traits of both dragons and devils.

She learned the dark ritual of fiendish promotion through an ancient compact with Dispater, Archduke of the Second Hell of Baator. As part of her alliance, she is obliged to tithe a number of her abishai each year to serve as wardens and torturers in the first and second rings of Hell. But this is no hardship for Tiamat; she never seems to lack for abishai, which fill her realm and infest much of the rest of the layer.

Throughout Timat's Cave of Greed lies her treasure, in copious piles — enough to ransom a dozen kingdoms. One of the many pitfalls of this realm is that it inspires in every soul a powerful greed, an overwhelming avariciousness that makes it nigh impossible to resist grasping something, if only a single coin or a tiny gem. But don't do it!

You may think she couldn't possibly miss one small coin, but Tiamat is the goddess of greed and has an uncanny affinity with every item in her hoard. Taking even a single coin will loose a host of abishai and loyal wyrms to descend upon you and devour you utterly, leaving only your raw soul-stuff for Tiamat to add to her Maggot Pit.

Forewarned, I used my *periapt of wisdom* to help me resist the allure. Even still, it was only through rigorous concentration and herculean force of will that I was able to countervail the pilfering urge.
My exit from the plane was through a *portal* to Dis, located deep within Tiamat's cavernous realm. The *portal* lies in the archway behind a gargantuan pair of rusty, iron doors. The doors are warped, dimpled with large dents and protrusions, and bowed inwards as if they were once battered with some great ram from the other side long ago.

The doors are not guarded. Petitioners cannot escape through the *portal*. Petitioners have what is called "planar commitment" —

they cannot leave the plane of their afterlife. Any effort to use a *portal* or spell to leave just teleports them to a random destination in their patron god's divine realm.

No one cares who passes through this *portal*, except for a nasty, fiendish spider that dwells in the tunnel on the other side of the doors. She is happy to make a meal of anyone who doesn't know the secret of activating the *portal*.

The trick of it is to bow down, you see. You must debase yourself. All who enter Dis must crawl through on their hands and knees. Otherwise the *portal* doesn't activate.

When I triggered the *portal*, a grey-green flash of light shifted me to a barren mountainside beneath a smoky-green sky, overlooking the Iron City of Dis below.

Why did I want to go to Dis? And what did I find there?

Ah! That is a story for my next report!

Wyrms of the East

Aaervaloshator, "The Scourge of Thayd"

By Bradley Russo

ar to the east of the Realms, in the region most consider the edge of Faerûn proper, there are said to be few great wyrms that are more feared than Aaervaloshator. Like many dragons of considerable and advanced age, the fang dragon Aaervaloshator has spent several of the past few centuries watching the events of the world unfold around him. He observes calmly from his mountain lair the various humanoid inhabitants of both Thay and Rashemen, as they plot and plan and war and die, repeating the never-ending cycle over and over, again and again. Somewhat strangely, though, Aaervaloshator has apparently taken a certain degree of fascination (and perhaps joy) from the status of the Rashemi people in Thay. While they are not an oppressed people, Aaervaloshator has long watched over them, acknowledging their strong will as they continue to build a place for themselves in Thayan society, despite the often harsh rule of the Mulan. He has come to respect the Rashemis' collective strength of will and their penchant for making the best of their situation in a country of extreme subjectivity like Thay. There is a deep bond between the Rashemi and Aaervaloshator, an almost spiritual connection that has grown over hundreds of years.

Combat

Because of his great age, Aaervaloshator is often very cautious in approaching combat, and he usually only engages those who directly threaten him, his lair, or the Rashemi tribes he has sworn to protect – after all, a dragon does not live for centuries by acting rashly. When Aaervaloshator encounters a potential threat, he will usually carefully consider his combat options. After that, Aaervaloshator will circle around and land, confronting the target and making a direct physical attack. Aaervaloshator devotes considerable restraint, however, when engaged in physical combat, attempting to keep any valuable magical items the target may possess free from significant damage.

History

Thayan legends suggest that Aaervaloshator was at the side of Thayd when the wizard began his rebellion against Unther and Mulhorand in -1087 DR. It is unknown why Aaervaloshator had chosen to support Thayd, but those sages and loremasters who have delved further into the ancient tales of the region, searching for any type of explanation as to why Aaervaloshator had worked with Thayd, tell us that the great wizard was largely responsible for looking after the fang dragon during its wyrmling stage, just after Aaervaloshator had hatched. A ballad composed by a bardic friend of the conspirators suggests that Thayd is said to have spoken directly to the wyrmling, claiming that it would one day "help him to create a land of great power".

This is all conjecture, of course, tales of fancy that had been interpreted and re-interpreted for nearly a thousand years. Whether there is any real truth to the legends is mostly left up to individual belief. The simple fact is that the original stories were composed in an era now long since passed. Any attempt to explore the true source of the legends themselves will likely be met with some difficulty, given the length of time involved.

What we do know, however, with some greater degree of certainty (the journals of

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various Untherite and Mulhorandi militia officers provide some unique insights into this period), is that Aaervaloshator, by the time the rebellion was in full swing, had grown into a particularly powerful and majestic wyrm. The fact that Aaervaloshator is described as such in these journals suggests that the dragon was actually far older than the previous legends tell us. Aaervaloshator is portrayed as being fully grown and mature, with great power and personal charisma – hardly a fitting description for a wyrm still said to be in its juvenile stage of development.

Regardless, further study shows us a great fang dragon who would always seem to take some measure of delight in ravaging the human forces of Unther and Mulhorand routinely sent to curb Thayd and his conspirators. Whether this activity was the result of Thayd's influence or something more personal, we can never know. It was during this time of conflict that Aaervaloshator, considered a scourge to the people of Unther and Mulhorand, earned the nickname "Scourge of Thayd."

Shortly before Thayd's defeat in -1081 DR, a bold group of adventuring mercenaries, in the employ of Mulhorand, sought out the wyrm's hidden lair. They were tasked with eliminating the dragon, and thus striking a precise and significant blow against Thayd's rebellion. The mercenaries endeavored to stay on the trail of the dragon for weeks before finally learning where the wyrm kept its lair during its periods of inactivity between battles. The mercenaries quickly discovered that the lair was located in the farthest northern stretch of the Dragonjaw Mountains, in what would later become western Thay. The adventurers, deciding it was best to wait until just after Aaervaloshator returned from his next battle before striking at him, began the process of setting up a small camp far below the lair's entrance. Several uneventful days passed, and the adventurers began to grow despondent from the lack of activity. Their efforts were finally rewarded as they watched the great shadow of the dragon sweep over the land, apparently heeding his master's call. Now was the time, and so they prepared themselves for the wyrm's eventual return.

Scaling the mountainside, the adventurers reached the entrance of the dragon's lair in less time than they had originally expected. With this part of their plan successful, the mercenaries entered the dark confines of the lair, intent on completing the next phase of their mission.

Waiting silently in the dragon's lair, the mercenary leader Sirrale Keetavo spent the next few hours preparing his force for action. Preparations had just been completed when the dragon suddenly returned. Drawing on years of combat experience, the mercenaries controlled their fear, settling down to await the exact moment to strike. A few minutes passed as the dragon shifted and rolled, trying to find a comfortable position for its great bulk. Aaervaloshator slowly entered into his usual restorative period, hoping to heal some of the more recent wounds he had sustained in the attacks Thayd had had him conduct against the Untherite and Mulhorandi militias.

With silence now ruling over the interior of the lair, Sirrale moved into position, quietly dropping from a high outcropping above the chamber to the dragon's rear flank where, with a rapid shove, he drove a silver lance into the wyrm's hide. He'd wanted to cripple the dragon's mobility first, following that with a focused attack on the rest of the wyrm. The lance pierced the scales, immediately drawing draconic blood. Aaervaloshator released a sudden bellow and thrashed wildly, before breaking into a deadly torrent of fury. Almost blinded by the sheer surprise and pain of the attack, and momentarily enraged, Aaervaloshator lashed out at the first object he could find – poor Sirrale. With no place to run or hide, Sirrale quickly fell victim to a swipe of the fang dragon’s deadly claws. The rest of the mercenaries, now deep in panic, turned and strove for the cavernous entrance of the dragon's lair, hoping to avoid their leader’s fate. Most of them never even reached the midpoint of the lair – a number of them were struck by the wyrm's great tail or pounded against the cavern walls. Those that did make it to the entrance were so overcome with fear that they forgot about the 100 foot drop outside the entrance. Plunging down the sheer mountain side, the remaining mercenaries tumbled from view.

With the immediate threat to his being now over, Aaervaloshator lumbered back to the rear of his lair, moaning with every step. The great wyrm tried in vain to remove the silver lance still deeply embedded in his left flank. His scaly rear hide was coated with oozing blood. Reaching with his jaw, Aaervaloshator failed to grasp the handle of the lance. Resigned for the moment, the wyrm rested its bulk against the cavern floor, which was now slick with the blood. A few moments of roaring, followed by agonised moaning, was the only satisfaction Aaervaloshator could derive from the pain as he began to formulate different ways of removing the lance that had penetrated his body. Flying to his master for assistance was out of the question, since the lance's strike had also damaged his left hind leg. Stuck fast, the lance would not budge. The Scourge, in deep pain and severely restless, wandered in and out of consciousness.

Time passed, and the next few months were a time of misery for Aaervaloshator. The wyrm was trapped in his lair, mostly as a result of his injured hide and the pain it seemed to inflict in response to his every move. Each stretch or muscle spasm threatened to tear the wound open even further. The lance remained lodged within the dragon's hide – the wound sealing itself around the lance's barbed ends. Unable to move, and wracked with pain from the slightest jolt, Aaervaloshator fell into a painful slumber for several hundred years. As he slept, events of the wider Realms played themselves out – the Orcgate Wars came and passed, Escalaunt was founded, Tchazzar of Chessenta conquered the region known as the Wizard's Reach... And still the wyrm slept, alone and undisturbed, for over 2000 years.

It was, finally, in the Year of Warlords (1030 DR) that Aaervaloshator first awoke from his centuries-long sleep. At first, not realising how much time had passed or why he was trapped in his lair, Aaervaloshator made some effort to move. His body did not respond. Growing concerned, the wyrm tried desperately to flinch and turn, hoping to return some feeling into his body and to shake off the slumber of ages. Still nothing.

Perhaps prompted by his motions, or maybe by his increased level of concern, the lance shuddered slightly. Aaervaloshator stopped shaking immediately, taking note of the lance for the first time in centuries. As he quickly recalled the events that led to his current predicament, Aaervaloshator glanced again at the protruding lance, almost as if expecting it to respond to him.

"It seems as though we are now one." A voice rang through the dragon's mind.

Shocked and momentarily disoriented, the wyrm stopped fidgeting and listened intently for the source of the voice.

"I'm not sure how this has come to pass, but my presence is now as much a part of your form and essence as is your scaly hide and draconic blood."

"What are you?" cried the dragon.

Moments passed, seeming like decades, before the voice spoke again.

"I do not know. Once, I was a person, or rather... a wizard. I'm not quite sure what that now means, though."

"Where are you?" asked the dragon expectedly.

"I am here." A slight tingling sensation from the dragon's rear hide made Aaervaloshator turn and recall the lance, which now seemed to glow slightly with a faint yellow hue.

"You are the weapon that wounded me and kept me trapped here for all this time."

"Yes." The reply was short and to the point.

"Why?" asked the dragon simply.

There was no reply. Spasms of pain surged through Aaervaloshator's form. Exhausted from the exertion, the dragon again fell into an unsatisfyingly long period of unconscious sleep.

In the cold recesses of the dragon's mind the voice again spoke. This time, it felt more

personal, more intimate to the dragon.

It spoke of power and it spoke of glory. It spokes of ages long passed and times of great sorrow. The dragon listened as the voice continued on, seemingly without end. It told the dragon about those past mortals who had also wielded the lance and the adventures it had participated in. The lance even congratulated the great wyrm for his sound victory over those foolish mercenaries who sought his destruction. Over and over, the recitations of facts continued.

Almost delirious from the constant chattering and the growing pain – a constant reminder of his predicament – Aaervaloshator finally awoke again, this time in a fit of rage. Thrashing wildly, the dragon thumped his rear hide against the cavern wall, ignoring the pain that immediately flared through his body in response to each strike against the cavern's wall. He wanted desperately to silence the lance, and he would do anything to purchase that quietness, even if it meant significant pain. Aaervaloshator slammed his scaly body again and again against the cavern's rocky outcroppings. The lance still would not budge. Frustrated and extremely tired, the wyrm relented, and again the chattering of the lance filled his mind.

Aaervaloshator spent most of this time drifting in and out of unconsciousness. It wasn't until one early evening, many years later, that a small golden-skinned boy, having braved the sheer edges of the mountain, entered the dark reaches of the cavern. Immediately coming upon the form of the immense dragon, the small Rashemi boy stood awe-struck. He couldn't believe what he saw. More curious than frightened, the young boy stepped cautiously forward. Observing every detail of Aaervaloshator's scaly hide, the boy noticed the fact that the dragon did not seem to be aware of his presence, even though the wyrm appeared awake. Shaking slightly, and muttering something unintelligible, the dragon was obviously ignorant of the happenings around him, the Rashemi concluded. A quick glance around the expanse of the chamber revealed little in the way of gold or treasure – things these creatures of legend were rumored to hoard in great abundance, or so his father told him in his evening stories.

Perhaps a little too daringly, the curious little Rashemi stepped closer to the dragon. He realised that the shaking of the wyrm seemed to be favoring its left side more than its right. Looking around the dragon's bulk, the boy saw the lengthy protrusion of something shiny and metallic. Instantly fascinated with his discovery, the Rashemi ran around the dragon, taking care not to trip on any rocks that might trigger a response from the wyrm. Standing now just underneath the handle of the protruding lance, the boy studied its position relative to the dragon. It was embedded firmly in the dragon's body, that much was certain. Reaching up, the boy slowly laid a finger on the yellow-tinged handle. Expecting shock or pain to grip him, the Rashemi was surprised when all he felt was warmth, which seemed to radiate from the metal itself. Confident there was no immediate threat; the boy took full grasp of the lance with both hands and pulled, intent on freeing the weapon and taking it to his father as a gift. But the lance would not budge. Angry at his failure, the boy once again gripped the lance, this time with both hands, and planted his feet firmly against the dragon's body – around the wound. Using his full body weight, the boy pulled again and again... Until, suddenly and ever so slightly, the lance moved.

Excited, the boy leap down and gathered his strength, resuming his position a few moment later. On the third pull, the lance came fully loose, falling on top of the boy as he also fell back and toward the cavern floor. Surprised and shocked at his great success, the Rashemi shifted his gaze quickly to the dragon, to see whether his efforts had provoked a response.

Deep within the dragon's mind, the chattering abated.

Certain that the dragon would not immediately awake, the boy turned over and quietly examined his find. The lance handle was intricately carved, with runes the boy could only wonder about in amazement. The lance itself was completely silver, with a vein of gold running down its length to the point. Around half the length of the lance, however,

was a thin coating of sticky dragon's blood. It was drying rapidly in the dry winds blowing in from the northern plains. Satisfied with his acquisition, the boy stood to leave, grasping the heavy lance and hauling it over his right shoulder.

He wondered about how he would descend the mountain side with such a weapon, and continued in thought for many minutes before realising that the dragon, now behind him, was slowly stirring to full awareness.

Its eyes flickered open, adjusting to the decreasing levels of light. The image of a small being stood directly before him, just at the entrance of his lair. It was then that the wyrm realised that the chattering had stopped. Slightly bemused, the dragon shifted, and was instantly surprised to feel no lance protruding from his side. Turning his head slowly, his eyes flickered as he became aware of the reality that the lance was gone. Resuming his study of the small form in front of him, his eyes quickly focused in on the troublesome lance, which was now in the humanoid's possession. Calling upon his reserves of arcane might, the dragon's body slowly began the process of regeneration. The arcane energies flowing through his blood would eventually seal the wound, but it would never completely heal. Aaervaloshator spent the next several minutes considering what had just occurred to him. Obviously this small human had freed the lance from his hide, and with that, freed the dragon's mind from the incessant chattering of the spirit that existed within the weapon.

His strength returning, the wyrm spoke to his young savior.

"Thank you, young one."

The Rashemi lad froze, suddenly dropping the lance; the time for studying the weapon had passed. He turned toward the direction of the rasping voice.

"What... what did I... I mean, what did I do?" the boy asked in a confused tone, his Rashemi accent particularly thick.

"You have freed me from this curse. At last, I am as I once was."

The young Rashemi stared at the dragon for a long moment. Strangely, the fear he had felt earlier had now seemed to pass. This dragon was no threat to him, the Rashemi thought. "I am safe here."

And so, freed from the lance that had nearly crippled him for two millennia, the wyrm and the Rashemi began a friendship that would last until the Rashemi's death nearly seven decades later.

Over the next few months, the boy came and went as he pleased from the lair, the lance all but forgotten in favor of the friendship that was now growing between human and dragon. The young boy, whom the dragon later learned was named "Achi", spent many days telling the dragon the same tales Achi's father would tell him before he would go to sleep. The dragon sat and listened motionlessly, enraptured by all that had happened in the time he had been incapacitated.

It was during this period that Aaervaloshator decided to relocate his lair to some old Raumviran ruins far above the Surague Escarpment of the Sunrise Mountains. Achi was a regular visitor to Aaervaloshator's new lair; the dragon would often return to his old cavern to meet Achi, carrying him across the plateaus of Thay and to his new lair in the east. As time went on, Aaervaloshator found himself growing more and more enchanted with the ways of Achi's people, the Rashemi tribes.

After Achi's death, his family inherited the dragon-bond Aaervaloshator had forged with Achi in gratitude for everything the boy had done.

Today, Aaervaloshator continues the traditions with Achi's family. He meets with young members of the tribes in his old lair in the Dragonjaw Mountains and, carrying them east to his new home, they gather and share tales about their various experiences. Additionally, Aaervaloshator has taken it upon himself to watch over Achi's tribe, viewing them as an extension of Achi's family. He conducts weekly fly-overs across Rashemi lands, always on the lookout for monstrous creatures that threaten the tribe

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or those seeking to disrupt the deep connection Aaervaloshator shares with these people.

Aaervaloshator is an extremely important asset to the Rashemi tribes, even if most of them do not know he even exists. He tries to keep his existence a secret from most Rashemi; his bond with humans, while very strong, is really only connected with those of Achi's blood. As the centuries have passed and the realm of Thay has grown, Aaervaloshator has eradicated many potential threats against the Rashemi. The fang dragon also attempts to conduct what he considers his duty with those Rashemi families of prominence in and around Thay. And so long as the old traditions of the dragon-bond remain, Aaervaloshator will continue to watch over these people, whom he now considers "family".

Domain

Aaervaloshator sees himself as the unopposed guardian of the lands held by the Rashemi in Thay, but more importantly, he considers the Sunrise Mountains his home. He appreciates the strength of the Red Wizards and the Witches of Rashemen, but he also knows that his connection with powerful Rashemi keeps most ambitious Red Wizards in check.

Lair

Due to his wide-ranging activities and unofficial role as protetctor of the Rashemi, Aaervaloshator is rarely found at his mountaintop ruin lair in the Sunrise Mountains. He has spent little time delving into the Raumviran ruins, instead offering such opportunities to his Rashemi friends when they visit.

Deeds

While Aaervaloshator has known great violence and death in his time in the Realms, most of his activities during Thayd's rebellion have been largely forgotten. The centuries the Scourge spent in slumber and at the mercy of the silver lance eroded most of his older memories about his times before the intervention of Achi. Had the lance never been removed, it is likely that Aaervaloshator would have continued on much as he was, until eventually he was driven mad by the cursed lance and forced to unleash a reign of destruction upon the eastern Realms that would have lasted until his destruction.

His primary goal now, however, is the protection of the Rashemi and their lands. Through the family of Achi, the Scourge has made contact with several powerful and influential members of Thay's Rashemi population, and these individuals understand that Aaervaloshator stands committed to assisting them in any of their future initiatives. Other political groups affiliated with the Rashemi probably are not aware that they have such an ally, but those adventuring companies and military groups that are composed primarily of Rashemi know that, should the need be required, their lords can call upon some "special assistance" in the form of the Scourge.

Over the last few years, Aaervaloshator has spent increasing amounts of time interacting with some of the various arcane masters among the Rashemi, expanding his efforts to learn more about the mysterious silver lance that nearly destroyed him. Since his relocation to the Sunrise Mountains, Aaervaloshator has now recovered the lance from his old lair and turned it over to his wizard friends for further study.

Folk of Faerun

Shaaan, the Serpent Queen

By George Krashos

Spoken of in fearful terms by most other wizards, Shaaan ("SHAY-an") is an awe-inspiring practitioner of the Art, known in the Realms as the Serpent Queen. Whimsical and unpredictable, Shaaan is a spell-hurling whirlwind when aroused or enraged, and at least one sage, Amonthalas of Tashluta, has compared her to the legendary Simbul and declared the Serpent Queen to be the mightier of the two. Others, with a view to safeguarding the fabric of the Weave and indeed the very existence of the Realms, avoid such speculations, and beseech the gods to prevent them ever coming within a stone's throw of each other!

Shaaan is believed to have been born in a small village in the Delphin Mountains, south of the Tashtan Coast, to a nondescript human couple who soon sold her off into quasi-slavery as an indentured servant. Her new master, a minor wizard by the name of Glarash, perished several years later in a mysterious fire that ravaged his estate on the outskirts of Sammaresh. Shaaan is believed to have engineered this "accident" and to have benefited greatly from Glarash's demise, for shortly thereafter, she secured a place at Arashoon Tower, a school of wizardry many leagues to the east in Mierskar, after gifting the masters there with several spellbooks and some minor items of magic.

In the halls of Arashoon Tower, under the tutelage of such wizards as Aravalim "the Mage of Storms" and Laethanna "Coldeyes" Vlothil, Shaaan rose quickly in the ranks of the apprentices in residence, exhibiting a thirst for spells and skill for magery that soon outstripped her peers. Her stay at Arashoon Tower was short-lived, however, for in the Year of the Sword's Oath (1142 DR), the lands of Lapaliiya and the Tashalar were thrown into disarray by the Rage of Wizards, described by the sage Horthas of Sheirtalar as a "season-long orgy of spell-battles and wanton destruction". Arashoon Tower was left in ruins, and Shaaan dropped out of sight for several decades.

It is clear that she mastered and completed whatever processes she thought necessary for her own longevity during this time, for she reappeared in the Year of the Gamine (1208 DR) in the city of Innarlith, where she built a tower and received the favor of Haelvar Ildagh, known to all as "Grimskull", the Magister of Mystra. Under his patronage, Shaaan's skill in the Art and spellcraft grew apace with her fierce hunger for power, and she began to exercise her growing ambition to rule and command those around her. This culminated in her seeking to place the ruler of Innarlith, the Ransar Bordragan, in spell-thrall and establish him as her puppet. She was ultimately thwarted by the direct opposition of the Coiled Cabal, a sinister group of yuan-ti spellcasters, who considered Innarlith and other nearby cities, such as Shaarmid, to be within their area of influence.

Following this abrupt reversal of fortune, Shaaan disappeared once again for many years, and it is thought that she traveled east and north, spending time in the land of Thay and coming into conflict with the Cult of the Dragon. It is believed that she also received further tutelage during this time from the incantatrix Ishaera, a senior member of the secretive sisterhood known as the Sorority of the Silver Flame, who sought to mold her into a weapon that could ultimately be used to destroy the Wearers of the Purple and their foul dracoliches. Most sages believe that Shaaan deceived Ishaera,

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using the Sorority of the Silver Flame solely to increase her own personal power and her understanding of the Art. Certainly, she never associated with members of this sisterhood after the Year of Bright Dreams (1261 DR), and is known to have personally slain at least one member, the incantatrix Daerla Melinthar, some five or so winters after that.

In the years that followed, Shaaan dropped out of sight for long periods, covertly slaying this or that powerful or wealthy woman (and rarely, men too) in cities throughout the South, taking their shape and hiding in it. Shaaan would live their lives for a decade or so, then repeat the slay-and-impersonate process whenever she wanted to change "identities". After such periods, Shaaan seemed to have short episodes of restlessness, during which she would take her own shape and name, and engage in bold acts such as spell duels with powerful mages and forcibly making men she "liked the look of" be her consorts (which soon came to really mean her "puppets"). She would also slay nobles, kings and other prominent figures, thereby upsetting balances of power and effecting big political changes, forcing guilds, costers and power groups to do certain things or steering them into open conflict with each other. Her reasons for acting in such a capricious fashion, and her exact aims and intentions, are a mystery to this day.

Shaaan has been described as having cold, deadly, green eyes that gaze out from a face that is seemingly sculpted of white china. She is proud, very beautiful, and projects a sense of menacing power that cows most people. He hair is a cascade of unruly gold locks, tinged with flame-orange, and she is known to wear skin-tight garments that appear to be made of serpents' scales, a green half-cloak and thigh-high serpent-scaled spike-heeled boots. She is never without her *naga crown,* and carries her two magical daggers in hidden boot sheaths. She retains an air of majesty and malevolent power, and causes all but the most powerful who encounter her to fear her regard.

Shaaan's Lair

For many years, Shaaan did not have a lair proper, although she acquired many temporary domiciles and estates while posing as various individuals throughout the South and the Heartlands. In the last decade, observers believe that she has created or discovered a hidden lair of sorts near the city of Ormpur on the Shining Sea. Accessible only by means of a keyed *portal* (just which key is known only to Shaaan), this secret safehold of over a dozen rooms is thought to exist on its own demiplane, and may be a refuge of one of the Archwizards of Netheril who fled that dying realm after Karsus' Folly and the assaults of the phaerimm.

Shaaan retreats to her safehold only when undertaking activities requiring privacy such as creating new spells, to deposit any plunder or booty she has collected in her wanderings, or to 'lay low' for a while and ponder on her many schemes and ongoing machinations affecting various personages, of both high and low station, throughout the Realms.

The Serpent Queen has no attendants or followers in her lair, other than a considerable number of snakes, both venomous and constrictor-types, which hibernate for long periods. It is thought that no one has successfully managed to gain entrance to Shaaan's lair, but if any have, they have not returned to tell wider Faerûn of what lies within it.

Shaaan's Domain

As previously noted, Shaaan has lived in many guises throughout her centuries of life, and is known to have resided in most of the major settlements of the South, and even as far north as Baldur's Gate on the Sword Coast. Shaaan rarely travels north of this city, and avoids Waterdeep after a long-ago confrontation with Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun. Shaaan has not been seen in the lands of the East or the Inner Sea in several decades, thought to be due to her ongoing feud with certain Red Wizards of Thay and Cultists of the Dragon. It is rumored that Naergoth Bladelord, titular leader of the Wearers of the Purple, has placed a 50,000

gp bounty on the head of the Serpent Queen, due to her successful pillaging of no less than three magic- and treasure-laden caravans bound for various dracoliches in the lands bordering the Dragon Coast some fifteen winters ago, just before the Time of Troubles.

When she sheds her various 'hidden' personas, Shaaan is usually observed to spend most of her time in the lands of the Shining South, although she seems to avoid the realm of Halruaa. She is truly a wanderer, rarely staying in one place for any extended period while in her own guise, and even traveling the planes on occasion. She is known to have traveled to Krynn and our Earth in recent years, but a recent period when she was trapped on the Astral Plane has tempered her planewalking predilections for the moment.

Deeds of Shaaan

The deeds of the Serpent Queen echo those of the most fearsome inhabitants of the Realms. She is notorious for her use of "world-shattering" spells, and many tales demonstrate her lack of restraint and uncaring attitude for the lives of innocents who become caught up in her spellhurling fury.

Shaaan's spelldueling prowess is due to her unique spellshield, crafted by means of epic magic in the Year of the Long Watch (1230 DR). Deftly manipulating a circle of Thayan archmages known as the Scarlet Sigil into believing that she was assisting them in tapping the Weave to achieve heights of spellcraft unseen since the days of Netheril, Shaaan instead placed them in spell-thrall, and used them in a ritual of her own, which granted her immunity to all spells (levels 1-9) that targeted her directly (see the epic spell "Shaaan's Spellshield" below). Their usefulness ended, the members of the Scarlet Sigil were all slain, save for Pyrathmar "the Doombringer" Urcrannor of Eltabbar, who survived her treachery due to spell contingencies that whisked him away from Shaaan's reach. He burns with a desire for vengeance against her to this day, even as his mortal body becomes frail and failing. He may yet embrace lichdom to see his quest for her demise brought to a satisfactory and bloody conclusion.

The Serpent Queen is most well-known for her creation of a snake cult in the Tashalar in the Year of the Sighing Serpent (1289 DR). Masquerading as an avatar of Varae, Shaaan deceived many human cultists into worshipping her and actively working to destabilize the region, particularly the ruling class in Tashluta. Her purpose in creating such a cult became apparent in the Year of the Ormserpent (1295 DR), when her followers' increasingly overt activities led to a backlash from the ophiophobic merchant oligarchy of Tashluta. They hired the mercenary Company of the Limping Unicorn to sweep the Tashalar clear of the snake-cultists, and in doing so, the mercenaries uncovered several yuan-ti cells and a small group of yuan-ti members of the Coiled Cabal who had successfully managed to subvert several influential merchants and their operations. This "oumkathuss" of the Coiled Cabal was put to the sword, causing a considerable setback to the Coiled Cabal's schemes, and granting Shaaan her revenge against this group for previous slights arising out of her time in Innarlith, some ninety years previously. This episode indicated the lengths Shaaan was prepared to go to in avenging slights against her, and her long memory for such occurrences.

Another fireside story of the Serpent Queen that grows ever greater with each retelling is her encounter with the Company of the Crazed Venturers, some three decades ago. Shaaan was working magic that consumed the bodies of living folk, magic believed to be linked with Iyachtu Xvim, once a deity and son of the dread god Bane. When confronted by the adventurers, Shaaan teleported to a small island off Mintarn, but they successfully traced her spell and teleported themselves there also. Irritated by their presence, Shaaan told them to leave or be blasted into dust, to which they scoffed. The Serpent Queen then casually bent down and touched the island, disintegrating it and dumping the Company into the chilly sea waves. The Serpent Queen then bid them all fair fortune and teleported away once more, leaving behind only a harsh lesson and the sound of her throaty chuckle at their predicament.

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More recently, Shaaan was thwarted in an attempt to subvert and slay the wizards Elminster, Mordenkainen of Greyhawk and Dalamar of Krynn. The Old Mage of Shadowdale was aware of the Serpent Queen's machinations (he has foiled many of her more grandiose schemes over the centuries, judging her to be a "wanton wizard", a spellcaster who does not respect the Art or its uses) and successfully transported her to the *Floating Helm of Tharados*, a Netherese relic drifting in the Astral Plane. How Shaaan managed to escape the *Floating Helm* is unknown, although her obscure arcane knowledge and mastery of spell-lore make it likely that she was aware of the means or manner in which the artifact could be rendered quiescent. What is clear, however, is that Elminster of Shadowdale looms large in her current plans: plans to rid the Realms of a certain Chosen of Mystra.

Shaaan's Magic

Many years ago, Shaaan eschewed the creation of magic items, believing that such things would be hers by right of spell battle or by other means. In that vein, the Serpent Queen has dominated many mages over the centuries by means of her magic, had them craft items on her behalf and then slain them or left them unaware of her control over them. To the Serpent Queen, magic is a tool to be used to obtain power and the trappings of power. If such magics can be obtained at no cost to herself, then all the better.

Shaaan is also known to specialize in magics that can chain together many spells to a single contingency trigger – what some sages and loremasters would label as "mantles". The magic of mantles is one of the oldest branches of spellcraft in all of Faerûn, and yet much of it remains shrouded in secrecy. It is thought that only those who have studied the magic of the Netherese diaspora or the greater craftings and castings of the Fair Folk have an understanding of such wizardry. Details of Shaaan's mastery of mantles are currently scant. Suffice it to say that she has much magic to reveal to her foes should they come seeking a reckoning.

The Serpent Queen enjoys overwhelming her enemies with swift flurries of deadly spells. Her ability to cast up to three spells almost simultaneously make her a fearsome foe in combat. Those who have observed her in a spell duel state that she routinely takes the offensive in such encounters, relying on her spellshield to defend herself, and crushing her foe with damaging spell after damaging spell. Notwithstanding her lust for spellbattle which she revels in, Shaaan is canny enough to know when she is overmatched or at a disadvantage. In such circumstances, she flees by any means possible, waiting for another day to bring her enemy down. Truthfully, however, it has been many winters since the Serpent Queen has fled a battlefield of her choosing.

Shaaan's Fate

Shaaan's recent conflict with Elminster of Shadowdale may yet bring about her undoing. Her dissatisfaction with their many encounters over the years, encounters where she has come off second-best every time, gnaw away at her like a rot grub on a zombie. Her desire for ultimate revenge may see her rashness bring about her downfall, especially if a spellcaster of power such as the Simbul were to come to Elminster's aid. However, the Serpent Queen continues to cast a long, Larloch-esque shadow over the Realms, which shows no signs of disappearing. If Shaaan's fate is to be determined by the actions of others, it may well be that they judge the sacrifice such a task will involve as too great. What is certain is that if the day comes that Shaaan the Serpent Queen is no more, then the face of Faerûn will be altered forever.

Statistics

Female Tashalan human
wizard 27 / incantatrix 7 (CR34)
CE Medium humanoid
Init +9 **Senses** Listen +8, Spot +7
Languages Alzhedo, Chultan, Common, Draconic, Elven, Giant, Orc, Shaaran, Tashalan, Yuan-ti

AC 25, touch 20, flat-footed 20
hp 198 (33 HD)
SR 18

Immune effects countered by *freedom of movement*
Fort +21 (+23 against poisons), **Ref** +23, **Will** +26

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee *Viper dagger*[Mag] +18/+13 or *dagger of venom* +17/+13
Base Attack +17; **Grp** +16
Special Atk dominate Scaled Ones[SK]
Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 33rd)
Epic – *greater ruin* (DC 26), *mummy dust*, *spell worm* (DC 26)
10th – Maximised *Halaster's Blacksphere* (DC 24)[CoSW], Maximised *horrid wilting* (DC 24), Quickened *prismatic spray* (DC 23)
9th –*energy drain* (DC 25), *imprisonment* (DC 25), *meteor swarm* (DC 25), *power word kill* (DC 25), *shapechange*, *time stop*, *wail of the banshee* (DC 25), *wish* (2)
8th – *discern location*, *greater shout* (DC 24), *lightning ring* (DC 24), *mass charm monster* (DC 24), *maze*, *mind blank*, *power word stun* (2), Widened *disintegrate* (DC 22)
7th – *finger of death* (DC 23), *forcecage*, *greater ironguard*[Mag], *limited wish, power word blind* (DC 23), *spell turning*, *whirl of fangs* (DC 23)[SK]
6th – *acid fog*, *acid storm* (DC 22)[PG], *chain lightning* (DC 22), *disintegrate* (DC 22), *eyebite* (DC 22), *flesh to stone* (DC 22), *gate seal*[FRCS], *greater dispel magic*, *mass suggestion* (DC 22), *Mordenkainen's lucubration*
5th – *ball lightning* (DC 21), *cloudkill* (DC 21), *cone of cold* (DC 21), *dominate person* (DC 21), *feeblemind* (DC 21), *hold monster* (DC 21), *passwall, telekinesis, trait removal* (DC 21)[SK], *wall of force*
4th – *animate dead*, *charm monster* (DC 20), *crushing despair* (DC 20), *detect scrying*, *dimensional anchor*, *enervation* (DC 20), *fang trap* (DC 20)[SK], *ice storm* (DC 20), *shout* (DC 20), *venom bolt* (DC 20)[SK]
3rd – *dispel magic* (2), *fireball* (DC 19), *fly*, *haste*, *lightning bolt* (DC 19), *slow* (DC 19), *suggestion* (DC 19), *vampiric touch* (DC 19), *water breathing*
2nd – *arcane lock*, *flaming sphere* (DC 18), *ghoul touch* (DC 18), *knock*, *Melf's acid arrow* (DC 18), *protection from arrows*, *shatter*, *spectral hand* (2), *touch of idiocy* (DC 18), *web*
1st – *erase, expeditious retreat*, *hold portal*, *identify*, *jump*, *magic missile* (2) (DC 17), *protection from good*, *ray of enfeeblement* (2) (DC 17), *reduce person* (DC 17)
0 – *acid splash*, *arcane mark* (2), *detect magic* (2), *detect poison* (2), *disrupt undead*

Spell-like Abilities (CL 33rd)
3/day – *greater teleport*
1/day – *break enchantment*, bull's strength*, delayed blast fireball* (DC 23)*, *ethereal jaunt*, fly*, owl's wisdom*, protection from energy*, stoneskin*, true seeing**
*: These spells have been prepared with the Craft Contingent Spell feat and may be used as spell-like abilities through use of the Spell Mantle feat.

Abilities Str 8, Dex 14 (20 with *gloves of dexterity +6*), Con 13 (19 with *belt of health +6*), Int 24 (30 with *vestment of intellect +6*), Wis 12, Cha 11 (17 with *cloak of charisma +6*)
SA spells, +2 bonus to caster level checks to overcome spell resistance (*black robe of the archmagi*)
SQ able to cast contingent spells as spell-like abilities, able to cast spells of levels 1-6 as quickened spells, able to cast up to two quickened spells every combat round, regeneration, spell resistance, automatic spell reflection against spells of levels 1-9 that target her directly.

Feats Automatic Quicken Spell (1-3), Automatic Quicken Spell (4-6), Craft Contingent Spell[Una], Epic Skill Focus (Spellcraft), Epic Spellcasting, Improved Counterspell, Improved Initiative, Improved Metamagic, Improved Spell Capacity (10th), Innate Spell (Greater Teleport)[PG], Iron Will, Maximise Spell, Multispell, Quicken Spell, Reactive Counterspell[PG], Scribe Scroll (Bonus), Snake Blood (Regional)[PG], Silent Spell, Spellcasting Prodigy[PG], Spell Mantle[LE], Still Spell, Widen Spell.

Skills Concentration +36, Decipher Script +7, Diplomacy +7, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (Arcana) +33, Knowledge (History) +14, Knowledge (Local: the Tashalar) +13, Knowledge (Nobility & Royalty) +14, Knowledge (The Planes) +13, Listen +8, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +49, Spot +7

Possessions *belt of health +6*, *black robe of the archmagi*, *boots of freedom of movement*, *cloak of charisma +6*, *dagger of venom*, *gloves of dexterity +6*, *ioun stone* (clear spindle), *luckstone*[Mag], *naga crown*[SK], *ring of protection +5*, *ring of regeneration*, *vestment of intellect +6*, *viper dagger*[Mag], various potions, scrolls and wands (collectively worth 20,000 gp)

Abbreviations:
Mag: *Magic of Faerûn*
SK: *Serpent Kingdoms*
CoSW: *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*
PG: *Player's Guide to Faerûn*
FRCS: *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*
Una*: Unapproachable East*
LE: *Lost Empires of Faerûn*

Focused Studies (Ex): Shaaan has given up the school of illusion as part of her incantatrix training; spells of this type are unavailable to her.
Cooperative metamagic (Su): Shaaan may add any metamagic feat she possesses (except Silent Spell, Still Spell or Quicken Spell) to a spell being cast by a willing allied spellcaster. Shaaan must ready an action and make a successful Spellcraft check [see *Player's Guide to Faerûn*] to use cooperative metamagic when her ally begins casting and must be adjacent to the caster.
Metamagic Effect (Su): Shaaan can attempt to apply a metamagic feat to a persistent spell effect that is already in place. She can do so up to 13 times per day and use of this ability is a full-round action that provokes an attack of opportunity.
Seize Concentration (Su): Shaaan can attempt to wrest control of a spell that requires concentration from another unwilling spellcaster within 30 feet by means of an opposed caster level check.
Instant Metamagic (Su): Once per day, Shaaan can apply a single metamagic feat she possesses to a spell without preparing it that way beforehand. She cannot use this ability if the metamagicked spell is of greater than 10th level.

New Spell

Shaaan's Spellshield
Abjuration
Spellcraft DC: 47
Components: V, S, X P
Casting Time: 11 minutes
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

To Develop: 423,000 gp; 9 days; 16,920 XP. Seed: reflect (DC 27). Factors: reflect up to 9th-level spells (+160 DC), permanent (x5 DC).

Mitigating factors: increase casting time by 10 minutes (–20 DC), four additional casters contributing one 9th-level spell slot (–68 DC), burn 20,000 XP per additional caster (–800 DC).

The caster creates a permanent ward against all spells of 1st through 9th level that target the subject. These spells are reflected back on the caster. Spells that affect an area are not affected by this spell.
XP Cost: 20,000 XP.

The Hammer's Stroke

Part IV

By Kevin Liss

"There is nothing so fearsome to a dragon, as a dwarf wielding not a battle axe, but a pick axe."
- Simmauriel, Half-gold dragon sage

Dragon lairs and dwarven holds have much in common. This is likely because the two races find comfort in the world above, yet find a different comfort in the world below. Alternatively, it could be because dragons often lair in former dwarven homes. The color and temperment of the wyrm dictate whether or not this occupation happens through force.

Through the centuries, dwarves have mined, dug, and built great civilizations under the ground. All over Faerûn, excavations mark where industrious dwarves have found precious metals and useful minerals.

Delzoun, Ammarindar, Shanatar - these are but a few of the names of fallen kingdoms of the Stout Folk. Yet there are thousands more mines and holds across the whole of Faerûn. Some have been occupied by dwarves for centuries, some have stood empty for just as long. Some are simple holes in the ground, but there are others with the splendor of Ammarindar that would shame any surface town built by humans, halflings or even elves. When abandoned, they do not stay as such for long. As any adventurer knows, any ruin, dungeon, or mine will be inhabited by… something. Common dungeons, holds, or caverns are usually occupied by lesser creatures, such as orcs or goblins, but truly splendorous caverns are the lairs of dragons. Often, such caverns are the original creations of dwarves.

As the dwarven kingdoms fell and the population shrank, many homes of the dwarves had to be abandoned. Some were bequeathed to dragon allies, or their agents, to use against the ever expanding waves of evil. Others, the majority of them, fell into disuse and abandonment. These quickly became lairs for evil denizens of any race, especially those intelligent or patient enough to overcome the traps the dwarven builders left behind. Sometimes, dragons of any consequence nested in the abodes of dwarven construction, always feeling at home in these secure confines.

Feeling at Home

Some races abhor the light of day. Nestled in the ground, they take shelter in the cool embrace of the earth. Orcs and goblinkind often spend their lives in the darkness, under the earth, venturing forth only for raids on the civilized races. Dwarves and dragons do not shun the light, nor do they abandon the earth for the darkness. Instead, the two races find equal strength and comfort in either environment. Moradin blessed dwarves with the ability to skillfully mine and shape the earth and its contents. They live and work underground, in the caves and passages of the upper surface tunnels of the Underdark. While the evil inhabitants that share these areas always strive to push the dwarves out, the benefits and ties to the earth are too strong for any other race to push them away. The deposits of precious metals are the lifeblood of any dwarven community. However, above the ground they find equal happiness. The light of day does not hurt their eyes, riches are to be made in trade and industry, and some of their neighbors do not seek to uproot them from their homes incessantly.

The Candlekeep Compendium

With dragons, the earth offers protection for their offspring, for their hoardes, and for their slumbers. The cool rocks and the warm tunnels keep a dragon company while they sleep away the centuries. The limited egresses allow dragons to monitor all entry into their lairs with their heightened senses. Any who would seek to steal their possessions would be sensed as soon as they entered the dragon's lair. Finally, the protection of the caves and halls gives the young dragons a feeling of comfort as if they were still in the egg, but as an earthly womb that allows them to mature.

So, dragons often find that the holds of the dwarves are quite comfortable to them. They usually have massive entrances to accommodate the size of even the largest dragons. Though dwarves are much smaller than dragons, they build structures and halls that can host masses of dwarves in their common areas. Living areas usually are avoided by dragons, mostly due to the sheer size difference between the passages in these areas, and other frequented areas. Dragons become familiar with the operation of the traps and defensive operation of lairs made from dwarf hands. The protection of the hoard is of great value to any dragon, so when they are absent from the converted lair, they will know that their wealth is safe and secure. One can also not overlook the intrinsic beauty of the halls of the dwarves. Even the simplest door or wall is shaped with such precision and attention that it is seen as a work of art. Structures of importance are virtual wonders to behold.

The majority of the dragon-occupied dwarven halls were already abandoned when their scaly occupants discovered them. Evil dragons sometimes force clans of good dwarfs to seek new homes. However, if there is any wealth to be mined near the hold, it can be assumed that eventually the architects will someday return. Once a dwarven clan is determined to reoccupy a hold with viable mines, dragonmoots are organized, or a determined force of warriors and miners will return, bent on reclaiming what was once lost to them. With the increase in dwarven activity caused by the Thunder Blessing, many dragons are warily watching the movements of the Stout Folk, hoping that riches in the land near their lairs won't bring the dwarves back.

New Constructions

A weak but determined group of dwarves began worshipping powerful beasts many centuries ago. The Wyrm Cult rarely, if ever, actually came in contact with the objects of their worship. This greedy, self-gaining cult spawned a little known, and very successful, enterprise known as the Stonecutter Adherents. Their worship of dragons took a more staid, sane bent. Instead of changing their form to become that which they worship, instead they seek only to protect them, and along the way they made a small fortune in doing so. Dragons do not trust any creature with knowledge of their lairs. However, dwarves of the Adherents specially craft the passages, traps, and living areas of each dragon that employs them to fit the Wyrm’s abilities and requirements. They do not reveal their secrets, and each team of workers is relocated to work with a new group after each job is finished. Therefore, assembling a full group of Adherents who worked together on any one specific lair would be impossible by any normal means. Since no one group knows all of the secrets of construction, at most a coerced member or team could reveal only a piece of the puzzle of a dragon’s lair.

Each job takes decades, depending on the size of the lair, and there are rumors that a few special ‘clients’ have one team or another continuously expanding and tweaking their lairs after centuries of building. Of course, when one team is done, they are relocated to work another job immediately. Only a handful of dwarves know where all of the teams are, and who they are working for. Yet, even then, these Foremen do not know the specific details of any of the jobs. They only allocate the resources, since most teams are versatile enough to build almost any requested structure.

The Stonecutter Adherents work for pay. A practical lot, they are not fanatical like their founding group, but are instead craftsmen and professionals. Working for dragons has amassed them great fortunes, either through

direct pay or from the rights to mine nearby mineral deposits. They have an impeccable reputation among both good and evil dragons, and will work for either, as long as they are treated fairly. Members of the Adherents know that Faerûn bound dragons are of flesh and blood, and are not the direct focus of their worship. They are revered, however, so they are treated as the Stonecutter Adherents themselves wish to be treated.

The Candlekeep Compendium

Laborers of Toril

Part 11

By Scott Kujawa

First Reader, here is the second scroll of the new project that you asked me to scribe for the records of Candlekeep.

This is the next set of ten laborers. As I said in my last scroll, some of this lore might or might not be true, and I had to distill the details, lest they fill a whole tome. Besides, some of the information given to me was to be kept secret, and I gave my word as a follower of the Binder. I hope you enjoy the ten laborers; I struggled to find ten that have ties to dragons or dragon-kin. I'm tracking down other folk who are willing to let me record what they do to make coin and survive.

Scribe Lythrina Surstyn of Candlekeep

* * * *

Felvhan (CG, Male Sun Elf, Commoner 1, The Seldarine)

Felvhan is a young male sun elf, about a century old. He feeds, washes, and cleans up after Evermeet's draconic allies. When he's away from his duties, he learns reading and swordcraft from Merynshiira, a female sun elf fighter. Because of his youth, Felvhan is not quite physically mature; he's small, lithe, and skinny.

Cethra the Maid (TN, Female Chondathan Human, Commoner 4, Torm)

This young Dalefolk is one of the maids that resides and works in the Arkenneld house in Sshamath. Widowed by Shadowdale's frequent wars, Cethra found herself unable to keep her farm. Susprina Arkhenneld, intrigued by Cethra's tawny skin and long light brown hair, offered the young woman a position in her home. Cethra also told me that "that old windbag in Shadowdale helped sway Susprina's mind."

Cethra did tell me one of her secrets, after I saw her waiting for someone near the eastern part of the Dark Weavings Bazaar. Susprina doesn't know about these meetings, nor that the maid is a spy for a juvenile female crystal dragon that calls herself Saljenaitaines or "Jena," for short. I haven't been able to learn where this dragon lairs, nor have I been able to find out why she is interested in this dark elven family. However, I don't want to research too deeply into this, because it involves dark elves and a dragon.

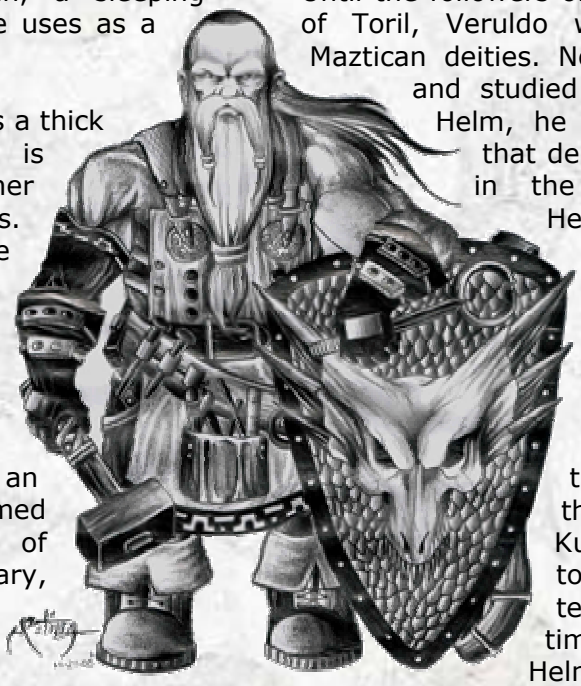
Jaldiir (CN, Male Half-moon Elf, Expert 6, Oghma and Deneir)

Jaldiir is a scribe living in a cottage not far from the Forest of Wyrms, where he researches and writes material about that area's green dragon population. Because of his Calishite mother, his skin has a darker hue than that of the normally pale moon elves. Also due to his human blood, his short blue hair is shot through with dark brown strands.

Why the green dragons have left him alone perplexes me. Jaldiir wouldn't tell me more, and only smiled when I kept asking. Further, he refused to let me read any of his material, causing me to doubt his claims of accuracy.

Durgin (LN, Male Shield Dwarf, Fighter 2/Expert 4, Moradin)

This dwarf is the only smith on the Sword Coast that can turn dragon parts into armor, weapons, and items. He is also a wood carver and blacksmith. Those skills are not as great as his dragon smithing, but they keep bringing in coins. He lives in a small cottage on Belltoll Street in Baldur's Gate, with a large forge dominating the rest of his property. His cottage is a one-story stone building containing a kitchen, a sleeping chamber, and a room that he uses as a sitting room for his clients.



Like most dwarves, Durgin has a thick and luxurious beard. He is usually clad in well-made leather clothing, of varying colors. Scattered about his person are a hammer and other smithing tools, hanging from various loops and fasteners.

The current talk around Baldur's Gate is that Durgin is romantically interested in an adventuring female dwarf named Cyrlyna. A favored soul of Moradin and a mercenary, Cyrlyna appears to have both gold and shield dwarven traits. Why this is so, she can not or will not say, but Durgin believes that it has something to do with the Morndinsammin and their influence -- especially Moradin's influence over his follower.

Shildelgrosendrar (LG, Male Adult Silver Dragon, The Hidden One)

I was walking along Lake Ashane in Rashemen when this silver dragon landed in front of me and started to stare at me. As I stood there and gawked at him, he lowered his head and looked me in the eye. "Human," he said, "you will leave these lands and never return, or I will make sure you never return to your library to the west. But before you leave, I will tell you a tale about one of the vremyonni of Rashemen.

"This male," he continued, "resides with the other males that possess the spark of magic. His skills lie in the creation of jewelry, which he then enchants for the Witches that rule these lands. Now that you know the secret of this vremyonni, it's time for you to be on you way before he decides to make you his snack."

Veruldo (LG, Male Nexalan Human, Expert 7, Helm)

Until the followers of Helm came to this part of Toril, Veruldo was a follower of the Maztican deities. Now that he has learned and studied under the followers of Helm, he has started to worship that deity. The young man lives in the temple of Helm in Helmsport, where he is guided by Kusvim, a male cleric. Veruldo firmly believes that Kusvim is really a gold dragon, but I couldn't learn if this is true or not. Most of Veruldo's time is spent scribing lore that is dictated to him by Kusvim, as the two sit together in a room in the temple. The rest of his time is spent praying to Helm.

Ysmyrlda bint Aleilith (Female Lythari, Expert 3/Pragmatist 2, Zann the Learned and Kor the Venerable)

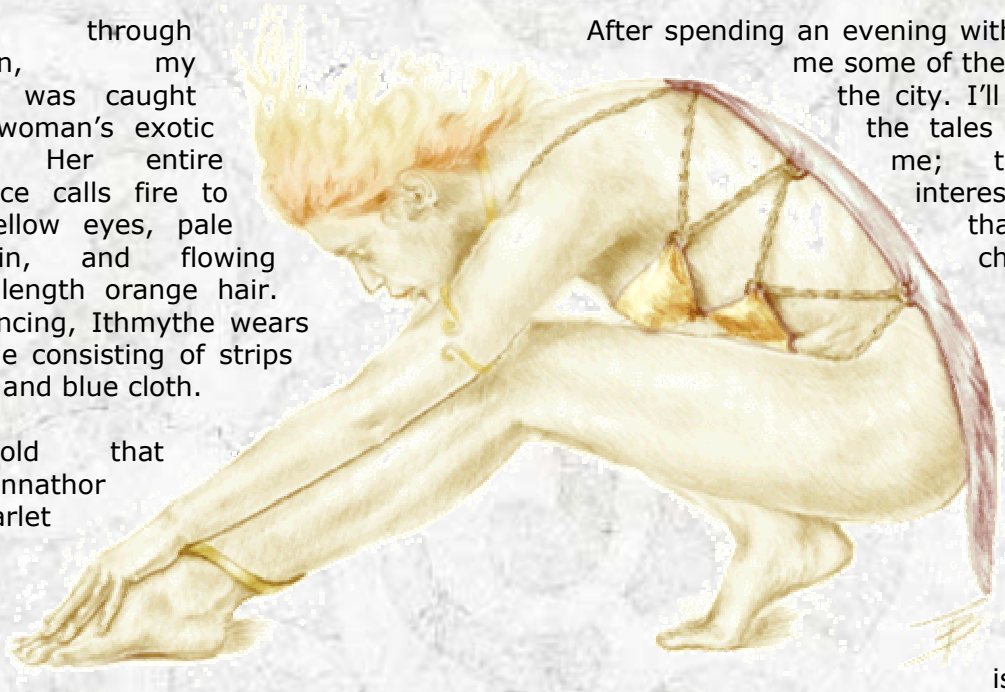
This female is a wandering healer in Zakhara. I followed her for half a tenday, learning much from her as she used her herb craft and magic to help those in need. She looks like a moon elf, with pale skin and silvery hair that is cut to her jaw. The first time I met her I felt the wildness within her, but I didn't understand what it was until a day later, when I saw her turn into a wolf before my eyes! It turns out that she is some strange lycanthrope that is unlike the others I've read about in the libraries. Living in an environment that is mostly sand and heat, she dresses in loose robes, sometimes wearing a veil. When she isn't wandering through Zakhara, she returns to the cottage

that she shares with her adopted brother Kerim ibn Ulzan, a half-bronze dragon.

Jiang Li (Female Shou Human, Adept 8, Shang-ti)

This yellow-bronze skinned female shares a three building compound with a shen lung (spirit dragon) in the wilds of Kara-Tur. Because she works with a magical substance that could explode, she's shaved her hair to keep it out of her way, making her bald as a Red Wizard. Jiang Li and her partner make the smokepowder in the large building, and the filled barrels are stored in a separate, smaller building. A even smaller building is used to store fireworks that she makes with the left-over smokepowder.

Ithmythe the Fire Dancer (NE, Female Fire Genasi, Expert 2/Bard 2, Kossuth)



Walking through Calimshan, my attention was caught by this woman's exotic features. Her entire appearance calls fire to mind: yellow eyes, pale red skin, and flowing shoulder-length orange hair. While dancing, Ithmythe wears a costume consisting of strips of yellow and blue cloth.

I'm told that Charvekannathor the Scarlet knows something about this strange female, and that Ithmythe maintains the dragon's silence with a steady supply of coins and information.

Lylilanthe (LN, Female Moon Elf, Commoner 5, Sharess, Sune, Lliira, and Hanali)

I met this moon elf in Suzail in Cormyr, and, from what I could see, she has some dragon blood far back into her family. The only sign of this blood is her somewhat reptilian-shaped silvery eyes. Her ankle-length blue-white hair is usually curled into flowing waves. Being a follower of four deities, she dresses in a way to honor all of them. Her gowns are usually red, yellow, pink, or white, or some combination of those colors.

Sharess seems to favor her, and cats of all types follow her as she makes her way through the city. Since cats are sacred in Cormyr, Lylilanthe can also be found feeding and taking care of wild felines. Of course her two-story home is filled with felines, and she even has a few tressym.

Lylilanthe has made enough coins as an escort that she owns her own home, which stands close to the docks and the western wall of the city. She also makes her coins by selling information that she learns from her male and female clients.

After spending an evening with her, she told me some of the gossip around the city. I'll repeat five of the tales that she told me; these should interest the scribes that like to read chapbooks or are gossips themselves.

She told me that Lord Giogi Wyvernspur likes to wear leopard-spotted loincloths. His wife, Cat, is embarrassed because Lord Keldast Rowanmantle, one of Giogi's drinking companions, has found out about this, and is using the information to tease Lord Wyvernspur.

Lhodevin, a male wine merchant, likes to dress up in ladies' clothing and pretend that he is damsel in distress. Visiting male escorts are paid to play the part of the male knight that rescues him.

Lylilanthe claims that a small group of mostly female Loviatar worshippers have started to gather in an abandoned building in the eastern part of town, but she isn't sure where that building is.

An erinyes and a incubus have supposedly fallen in love with each other, and are living in a one-story home near the north part of the city. None of the citizens know that fiends are in Suzail because these two have taken human form; Lylilanthe only learned about this from a Purple Dragon that she entertained a tenday ago.

The last tale she told me is about a bard who has been using his voice to arouse the female citizens. The Purple Dragons haven't been able to catch him, yet, because he disappears into thin air each time they get close to capturing him.

Untold Stories

Collection IV

By Chris Jameson (Adventures I – VI)
& Scott Kujawa (Adventure VII - XII)

Being a collection of adventure hooks and starting tales for use in the Forgotten Realms

Adventure Hook I

Lesron, the self-proclaimed "Bright Blade of Vengeance", has decided to increase his personal prestige by becoming a dragonslayer. Despite being somewhat incompetent and bumbling, Lesron has already known some success, having slain a very young green dragon. Lesron encountered the dragon in the High Forest and, with Tymora's generous blessing, managed to overcome it. With his ego inflated by his "glorious" victory, Lesron has chosen to continue "slaying these marauding beasts wherever they lair!"

Lesron has discovered the whereabouts of another dragon's lair. He doesn't know the exact location, but he knows the general vicinity where Salrethendil lairs.

Salrethendil is a reclusive male sapphire dragon. Though he uses psionics and various agents to spy upon the activities of humans and demihumans, he prefers to maintain a solitary existence. Through his agents, he's heard of Lesron's quest. Salrethendil is more than capable of dealing with Lesron himself, but has no desire to leave his lair for such a small matter. Either directly or through his agents, Salrethendil hires the PCs to redirect or stop Lesron, thus maintaining the dragon's solitude.

As an additional angle, perhaps Lesron found Salrethendil's lair with the help of a rival dragon. Who the rival is, and why he set Lesron at Salrethendil, is up to the DM's discretion.

Adventure Hook II

This hook can be used in or near any large city, with the possible exception of Waterdeep. If used in Waterdeep, *Ahghairon's Dragonward*, and Maaril's control of it, must be taken into consideration. See *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*, page 20, for more information on this.

Vaelensaris, an adult silver dragon, recently became a mother. While she does find motherhood to be a fulfilling experience, she finds the antics of one of her children to be quite tiresome.

Vaelensaklyr was one of the first eggs to hatch. Since emerging from the egg, he has proven to be both inquisitive and fearless -- a worrisome combination, for any mother. A few weeks ago, Vaelensaklyr started experimenting with his inherent shapechanging abilities. He mastered the human form quite readily, and frequently assumed human shape to sneak off and spy on unsuspecting people. Vaelensaris tried to curtail her son's expeditions, but it was no use: the hatchling simply became more creative in circumventing his mother.

Last week, Vaelensaklyr snuck off, this time to explore the nearby city of <DM's choice>. He has not returned. Vaelensaris is becoming frantic with worry over her wayward son. She hires the PCs to find Vaelensaklyr and bring him back to her. If possible, the PCs are to do this without revealing his true form, or that there is a family of silver dragons living nearby.

The Candlekeep Compendium

Adventure Hook III

More than two decades ago, in the Year of the Weeping Moon (1339 DR), the silver dragon Alarandalsys was attacked in his lair by evil adventurers. The dragon, guardian of the ancient Imaskari artifact *Andrucar's Gem*, was severely wounded and forced to flee for his life. The adventurers, the Company of the Emerald Griffon, stole most of the dragon's treasure, including *Andrucar's Gem*.

Alarandalsys eventually recuperated, and set about restoring his lost treasure. He recovered or replaced the majority of it, slaying his attackers in the process. Now, only one piece of treasure remains to be recovered, and it is in the hands of the one surviving member of the Company of the Emerald Griffon.

The problem is that the one survivor is the wizard Esalon the Resplendent. Since his encounter with Alarandalsys, Esalon has become a lich, using *Andrucar's Gem* as his phylactery. This has allowed Esalon to use the powers of the *Gem*, in addition to his own abilities.

It was Esalon's spells that did the most damage to Alarandalsys years ago, and the dragon knows he's not powerful enough to fight Esalon now. Alarandalsys hires the PCs to retrieve *Andrucar's Gem*, and return it to him. It must be returned intact, which means the PCs may have to fight Esalon more than once.

Once the *Gem* is back in Alarandalsys's possession, he can use a special property of the stone to cast out Esalon's essence. It may be necessary for the PCs to defend Alarandalsys while he conducts the rite necessary to invoke this power.

Andrucar's Gem is an enormous jewel. The milky-white crystal is oval-shaped, nearly three feet long, and almost two feet wide. Swirls of color seem to appear and disappear in its depths; to anyone studying the *Gem* for an extended period, these swirls will begin to form sigils and words in an unknown language. *Andrucar's Gem* feels cool to the touch and seems a bit slippery, though it leaves no residue. The *Gem* is immune to all translocational magics: it cannot be *teleported*, *plane shifted*, moved through *portals*, or magically relocated in any similar manner.

Despite the *Gem's* size, it is weightless, and it is apparently unaffected by momentum: when the *Gem* is released, no matter where it is or the circumstances in which it was released, the *Gem* will remain floating in place until physically moved. Physically moving *Andrucar's Gem* requires very little effort.

As mentioned above, the *Gem* does have a property that, when invoked, will cast out the lich's essence. Any other powers or abilities of this artifact are left for the DM to determine.

If the PCs don't think of it, the DM may wish to provide them with a means of summoning Alarandalsys to the site of the *Gem* once they've found it and neutralized Esalon.

Adventure Hook IV

Athireniel is angry. The female gold dragon recently lost one of her offspring to the claws of Dergasthik, a black dragon who styles himself "The Onyx Scourge".

Dergasthik is something of a bully: he was more than willing to torment the younger gold dragon, but he fled from the wrath of his victim's mother. For the last several years, he's been on the run, trying to stay one step ahead of his vengeful pursuer. Athireniel has chased him across Faerûn, rarely allowing the black dragon to have more than a few days' rest.

About a month ago, Dergasthik used his magic to assume human form and enter the city of Waterdeep. He is confident that he can at last rest; *Ahghairon's dragonward* ensures that Athireniel can't enter the city without Maaril's consent, and Dergasthik has reached an agreement with the Dragonmage concerning this. For right now, Dergasthik is safe from the enraged mother.

Athireniel knows of the *dragonward*, and of Maaril's control of it. She realizes that she

has little chance of entering the city, and even less chance of doing so without Dergasthik soon learning that she's near. To circumvent this, the gold dragon hires the PCs to go into Waterdeep, grab Dergasthik, and bring him to her outside the city.

For more information on *Ahghairon's Dragonward*, and Maaril's control of it, see *City of Splendors: Waterdeep*, page 20.

Adventure Hook V

Taliana Sundancer has never met her father. The beautiful sorcerer is a half-dragon, the daughter of a bronze dragon and a human bard.

Taliana's mother, Siala, didn't know that her lover was a dragon. When she met him, he was posing as a handsome Cormyrian sellsword named Tannin. Their brief, whirlwind romance ended days before Siala realized she was pregnant. It wasn't until Taliana was born that Siala learned that "Tannin of Cormyr" was more than he had claimed.

Over the intervening years, Taliana has searched for information about her father. She now believes that Tennivarix, a bronze dragon dwelling somewhere in the Sea of Fallen Stars, is her father. She wants to seek him out, but is afraid to venture into the sea alone. She hires the PCs to escort her into the sea, and to help her find her father's lair. To sweeten the deal, she offers each PC a *ring of water breathing*.

Adventure Hook VI

Almost fifty years ago, the Maelkyr merchant family lost its heir. Roringar Maelkyr, uncomfortable with the life of a merchant, had become an adventurer. He was moderately successful, until he and his companions made the mistake of challenging the blue dragon Vhonniserath. They quickly fell to the blue's might, and their bones still lay moldering in the dragon's lair.

A few years later, Roringar returned home -- partially. Strange things began to happen in Arlegate Hall, the Maelkyr's family manor. At first, it was simple, easily explained occurrences, such as odd noises or small objects being moved. But as time went on, it became clear that Roringar's spirit was haunting his family home.

The family has tried numerous times to placate or banish Roringar's restless spirit. Though some of the attempts have worked for a short time, his spirit always returns.

The Maelkyrs are getting desperate. Rumors are spreading, and the family has had to move to smaller quarters, because they can't keep servants in their haunted manor. The family wants to return home, but they know now that the fallen heir's spirit must be laid to rest before they can return to Arlegate Hall.

The Maelkyrs hire the PCs with a simple mission: recover Roringar's remains from Vhonniserath's lair, and return them to Arlegate Hall for a proper burial. The PCs are not being hired to slay the dragon; the current patriarch, Roringar's younger brother Tiron, would be just as happy if the PCs were able to recover the remains by stealth. Failing that, House Maelkyr is willing to pay the dragon for the remains of the lost heir. The PCs are authorized to negotiate with the dragon on the family's behalf.

Additional angles include the possibility of betrayal by House Maelkyr; either they double-cross Vhonniserath and leave the PCs to deal with the angry dragon, or Tiron Maelkyr refuses to pay the PCs once the remains are recovered.

Adventure Hook VII

Two faerie dragons have been causing problems for the Ffolk of Cantrev Horstall. This male and female pair have become more aggressive of late, and Ffolk have been injured by their illusions. In a few incidents, Ffolk have died.

High Queen Alicia and High King Keane are offering a reward to anyone who can supply

information on where these two dragons disappear to after they use their illusions on the Ffolk, or why they are being more aggressive.

Adventure Hook VIII

Senmanthe, a song dragon, is looking for a mate. A follower of Lurue, Senmathe received, from her deity, a vision of the family that she is destined to start. For now, the song dragon is in Silverymoon, where she is spreading word that she seeks a male to help her with her deity-given quest.

The Cult of Tiamat has heard of Senmathe, and they have sent agents to destroy or corrupt her before she has a chance to find her mate or fulfill her destiny.

Adventure Hook IX

Inurar, a middle-aged male human transmuter, has been experimenting on dragons. He resides on the outskirts of the Forest of Wyrms, but he can sometimes be found in Baldur's Gate. While in Baldur's Gate, he tries to hire adventurers to bring him live dragons. He wishes to continue his research, attempting to fuse dragons and hydras to create a dragon-hydra crossbreed.

Adventure Hook X

Cythra, a female human, was born and raised in Phlan. Her devotion to the city is so great that tales of the city's past destruction by dragons inspired her to become a dragon-slayer. She has had some success in this area; thus far, she has slain four dragons.

Cythra recently decided that the green dracolich Dretchroyaster needs to be slain. She is actively trying to find him, knowing that he lairs in the area east of Myth Drannor and south of Hillsfar. The Cult of the Dragon has heard of her obsession, and they will stop at nothing to prevent the destruction of one of their Sacred Ones. The PCs, en route to their next adventure, overhear the battle when Cythra is attacked by a group of Cultists.

Adventure Hook XI

The PCs are traveling when they see a gold dragon and rider fly overhead. Without warning, a blue dragon appears, attacking the gold. After a brief but furious combat, the gold screams in pain and falls from the sky, crashing nearby.

When the PCs investigate, they find that the elven rider is still alive, but has been mortally wounded. Rethiel whispers that he and his mount, Talchyr, were attacked by Sapphiraktar the Blue. Sapphiraktar stole from them the *Diamond Crown of Illefarn,* wanting to add that relic to his hoard. Before the elf passes on to Arvandor, he begs the PCs to retrieve the *Crown* and bring it to Evermeet.

Adventure Hook XII

Calgoze, a male gnome sage, claims he knows where the treasure hoard of Garnet, the good red dragon of Myth Drannor, can be found. He was spouting this nonsense in the Market of Athkatla until a few days ago, when he disappeared right from the middle of the Market.

Only two clues have been found. The first is a red-blue dragon scale. The second is a banner bearing the image of a horizontal oval of twelve twinkling white stars, haloed in purple, and floating in a field of deep forest green.

Some believe that the banner is the standard of Myth Drannor. These folk think the gnome was snatched from Athkatla and taken to Myth Drannor because he really does know where Garnet's hoard is located. Others believe that he didn't know, but that someone or something still wanted to silence him. (Calgoze could have been kidnapped by a number groups or individuals: the Cult of the Dragon, fey'ri, Garnet, Sammaster, Tiamat cultists, or anyone else the DM chooses.)

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On Pseudodragons

By Tyson Howard

An excerpt from the "Treatise of Tiragen Wayniff Regarding peculiarity of the Meta-connections of Magery, Masters and Familiars" penned in 1273 DR

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The pseudodragon is another type of unique Mageservant that can be properly called during the Bonding Summons. The specific ritual for the summoning and bonding of a pseudodragon requires a mastery of the arcane arts that is unfortunately beyond the skill of the more youthful or unskilled of thaumaturgists. This is due, in part, to the complexity of the incantation, and in part because of the nature and pecularities of the Mageservant pseudodragon. As we all know from our basic studies, the type of Mageservant summoned cannot always be controlled. This is because the thaumaturgist's own personality and psyche impose themselves over the Weave energies expended to draw a potential Mageservant to the summoner and fulfill the bonding requirements. This peculiarity manifests itself more fully when one attempts to bind a higher form of creature as a Mageservant. As a result, a brief study of the pseudodragon and its particular role and view as a Mageservant is vital to any mage attempting to draw forth such a fine creature for this purpose.

The reader may ask why this broad study of the pseudodragon is necessary, but be assured, knowledge of these traits and 'quirks' of the pseudodragon are important before a mage embarks upon what may ultimately be a futile attempt to garner the attention of this creature with the intent to bond.

To those of us studying the psychology and dynamics of magical creatures such as dragons, it is common knowledge that the pseudodragon is a unique specimen, albeit one that exhibits behaviors similar to other creatures. Clearly, the pseudodragon is a dragon of sorts. As such, one can easily note traits typically found in its larger and more majestic brethren, the true dragon. pseudodragons are universally attracted to shiny objects such as precious metals and gemstones. These tiny dragons are also highly territorial with respect to their 'property.' Although this covetousness and territoriality are typical behaviors associated with all dragons, the pseudodragon's personality also draws similarities to the common household cat. Although it is generally unwise to state (or even think of) such a reference in the direct presence of the dragon, it nonetheless has been noted in many manuscripts and conversations that mages who take a pseudodragon as a Mageservant observe particularly cat-like behavior on the part of the bonded familiar.

A pseudodragon is particularly aloof to the concerns of its master, unless of course it desires something from the mage in question. The dragon often requires ('demands' is more appropriate), the proper level and display of attention and affection. It has also been noted that the creatures are particularly fastidious about their appearance and dislike mud, dirt and grime.

Perhaps now is the time to provide the reader with an anecdote of some import, explaining why these particular behaviors should be kept in mind. The sage Aralmbar of Amphail was a wizard of some renown, nearly a score winters ago. Although Aralmbar originally chose not to take a Mageservant due to his reclusive nature (and some say it was also due to his financial circumstances), he did eventually decide that a dedicated Mageservant was appropriate for his status as a budding archmage. It should be noted that Aralmbar was quite wealthy with coin, gem, and magical items by the time he decided to enter into the Bonding

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Summons, and also that Aralmbar had recently married a woman who demanded much of his attention.

Aralmbar performed the proper incantations utilizing components commonly known to attract the attentions of a pseudodragon. He was successful in his endeavor, and entered into the Bonding with a pseudodragon of the High Forest, known as Reginia. Delighted with his new companion, Aralmbar proceeded to allow Reginia access to his personal belongings and free run of his household.

Within a week of Bonding with Reginia, Aralmbar entered into a contract to assist an adventuring party in deciphering ancient runes and markings found within a long-forgotten Netherese tomb. It should be noted that Reginia was not thrilled with the prospect of traveling through the wilds of the High Moor during the wet season, but Aralmbar prevailed upon his companion with enticements of interesting locations, the possibility for exploration, and of course, the potential to share in glory and riches. One notes that Aralmbar certainly was quite wise in prevailing upon the pseudodragon's sense of curiosity and dreams of treasure in ensuring the complicity of his newfound companion in entering into this expedition. Clearly, this shows that Aralmbar knew how to gently coerce Reginia into a chosen course of action by playing upon the pseudodragon's known traits and behaviors.

However, Reginia could not be convinced to join the expedition without being assured that the dirt, water, and mud certain to be found along the way would not touch her magnificently groomed scales. In return for her accompaniment, Aralmbar utilized a backpack of his own making that was enchanted with certain extradimensional spaces within its confines. Additionally, the backpack was altered to allow for a living creature to reside in its spaces in comfort without suffering the likes of suffocation. Reginia, convinced that she could pass the time reading and lounging within the pack during the trip's more dirty segments, finally agreed to partake of the adventure.

Although the writer lacks the particular details of the expedition itself, the adventurers and Aralmbar did find quite an extensive collection of gems and a large volume of coin. Of course, Aralmbar's share was promptly deposited into his extradimensional pack for safekeeping and ease of travel. When Aralmbar arrived home and attempted to retrieve his share of the loot garnered from the tomb, he was quite surprised to find that the treasures had been co-opted by Reginia. Apparently, Reginia came to consider the pack her new lair. The new baubles, coins, and multitude of rubies and diamonds deposited by Aralmber into the pack became her hoard. Additionally, certain belongings of Aralmbar which Reginia was allowed access had mysteriously appeared in her hoard, and no amount of pleading or argument raised by Aralmbar would make Reginia release these items to her master.

Now, it was also well known in Amphail that Aralmbar's wife was quite a fine baker of apple pies, known throughout the city for their exquisite taste and texture. It soon came to be that Aralmbar's wife's pies went missing almost every time one was made. Needless to say, Reginia had quietly been requisitioning each pie as it was laid out to cool. These pies were considered by Reginia to be a tithe by the Aralmbar household to its new guardian dragon. Each day, the poor wife was reduced to baking an apple pie for the "dragon" that guarded the house. Over time, Reginia came to think of herself as the master of the household, and of Aralmbar and his wife as its support staff.

Although these anecdotes may sound humorous, one must keep in mind that the traits of the pseudodragon and its particular behaviors must be considered before an experienced mage attempts the Bonding Summons with the objective of garnering a pseudodragon Mageservant.

Spellbooks of Faerun

Primer of the Sacred Ones

By Jared Rascher

"Why are we so obsessed with the spellbooks of others? Because it is so much easier to read a book and learn the mysteries of the Weave than to use spells to shatter and twist a mind until it yields its hidden secrets to us . . . and because one cannot read a broken mind by firelight in the study,"

-- Overwizard Rimardo Domine, The Year of Wild Magic

* * * *

This particular "book" appears as a locket on a fine gold chain, with a clasp that fastens the chain at the back of the neck. The locket itself appears to be two small red scales, each set in a golden frame, joined at the top with a hinge. At the bottom of the locket are two small clips that hold the scales closed. It is very difficult to force these clips apart, unless it is done in the proper manner.

If the command word *"Ulgradamearth"* is spoken while touching the clips on the bottom of the locket, the locket opens and magically expands to become three hand-spans tall and two abreast. The book is bound at the top of the pages, and consists of about fifty pages of high quality parchment, apparently warded against decay and damage from water and the elements.

The first few pages of the book are essentially a checklist of ways to approach a dragon for the purpose of parlay, including the proper wording of phases, postures, and traditional flattery used when addressing a dragon. Anyone taking time to check over these notes immediately before confronting a dragon that is not already hostile and disposed to attack can gain a +2 circumstance bonus when using Diplomacy or Bluff.

The next section of the book details, in very vague terms, the process of becoming a dracolich. This section is not detailed enough for one to actually perform the proper rituals, but it is sufficient to warn a perspective candidate about the consequences of following the process. This section also explains the general powers and abilities of a dracolich, including the growing of new bodies and the disposition of phylacteries.

The final section of this book contains several spells that are of specific interest to dragons and those who work closely with them. The spells *Aura of Terror, Enervating Breath, Imperious Gaze, Razorfang, and Stunning Breath* (all spells found in the *Draconomicon,* pages 76-81) are all found within, as well as the unique spells *Body Pulse, Death Siphon, Draconic Phantasm,* and *Inspired Escape*, detailed below.

This particular book was created years ago by the Sembian branch of the Cult of the Dragon, with the intention being that an emissary of the Cult would approach a prospective Sacred One, detail the process by which they would become a dracolich, and present the Sacred One with scrolls of the spells that were contained within the book itself. The last known emissary to carry the *Primer*, a powerful wizard of the Cult known as the Stormtheer, was killed by Lodrath Kaelvrist, a Harper and sworn enemy of the Cult.

Lodrath did not discover the secret of the locket until months later. Upon opening the book and finding its contents, Lodrath decided to take it with him to Berdusk. He hoped that the senior Harpers there could find something of use within the book, to aid in his fight against the Cult.

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Unfortunately, as Lodrath neared Berdusk, he was beset by a large group of kir-lanan, who took offense at his morning devotions to Mielikki. This event occurred in the Year of Wild Magic, and many Harper agents have since noted an increase in the number of sightings of known Cult agents and dragonkin in the region, leading some to speculate that the book may have also contained coded messages.

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Body Pulse

Abjuration
Level: Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: minutes
Range: Touch
Target or Area: Self
Duration: Permanent until discharge (D)
Saving Throw: No
Spell Resistance: Yes

Once this spell is cast, any physical contact that is maintained for more that a few seconds (a grapple, embrace, restraining hand placed on the chest, etc., but not quick contact such as a handshake or even a physical blow), a pulse of energy shoots through the body of the caster of this spell. This pulse does 1d6 points of either fire, cold, or electrical damage for every two levels of the caster, to a maximum of 5d6 points of damage.

The caster must cast this spell on a gem worth at least 200 gold pieces, and that gem must be in direct contact with the skin of the caster. If the gem is not in direct contact with the caster's physical body, the spell does not expire, but it will not function until the gem is once again next to the caster's skin. The caster must choose either fire, cold, or electrical damage when the spell is first cast.

It is believed that this spell is one of the spells devised by the Wearer of Purple Thautagrill Mauvrick, after viewing the ignominious death of a dragon at the hands of a group of ogres. One of the humanoids grappled the dragon, preventing it from bringing its breath weapon to bear, and enabling the other ogres to hack it to death. Thautagrill, while not overly concerned about the death of the young dragon, thought it a great dishonor to any dragon to be restrained in such a manner, and devised several spells to counter such tactics.

Despite its originally defensive purpose, the green dragon Yaullingaathidrasnost is said to take great pleasure in pinning opponents under his claws long enough to watch this spell discharge into them.

Death Siphon

Necromancy
Level: Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Undead creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

The caster of this spell must make a successful touch attack against an undead target, doing 1d6 points of damage for every two levels of the caster. If the caster is healed by negative energy, they gain a number of hit points equal to the damage that they have caused to the undead. They cannot gain more hit points than the undead creature originally had, and any hit points above the caster's maximum fade after one hour.

If the caster is injured by negative energy, the caster immediately takes the full amount of damage that they dealt to the undead. They gain no saving throw or spell resistance roll against this, since the caster has specifically allowed himself to be affected by the spell.

Many dracoliches keep the animated corpses of their victims around in their lairs, and can drain these servants to heal any wounds that they might have acquired in the course of battle and misfortune.

Draconic Phantasm

Illusion/Phantasm (Fear, Mind-Effecting)
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft +10 ft/level)
Target: One living creature
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will (disbelief if interacted with), then Fort for partial; see text
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell is a specially tailored version of the *phantasmal killer* spell, modified to be especially useful for draconic casters and those who serve them. If this spell is cast with no extenuating circumstances, it functions exactly like *phantasmal killer*. Since the image is always that of a dragon, and not necessarily that of the target's greatest fear, the target gains a +4 circumstance bonus to their saves versus this spell.

If the target is either currently within a dragon's fear aura (affected or not), or if they have been affected by a dragon's fear aura within the last 24 hours (but not if they have been within the area of the aura and resisted it), the target is flooded with the same fear that saturates the aura itself. The victim suffers a -4 penalty to their attempt to disbelief the illusion, and at -2 on their fortitude save to resist the death attack of the illusion.

If the target is wearing a *helm of telepathy* and disbelieves the illusion, it can be turned back on the caster. If the caster is a dragon, they always gain the +4 bonus to their saves versus this returned attack. Against a non-draconic caster, this spell functions exactly like a normal *phantasmal killer* turned toward the original caster.

While this spell is useful to draconic spellcasters, within the Cult of the Dragon many servitor wizards learn this spell to help pick off any seeking to escape from the presence of the Sacred Ones.

Inspired Escape

Divination
Level: Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: minutes
Range: Touch
Target: Self
Duration: Permanent until expended
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

After this spell is cast, the caster has one extra opportunity to escape from restraint. Any time that the caster is constrained, grappled, or entangled in any means that allows for an escape (as per the Escape Artist skill), he can attempt to use the Escape Artist skill. The caster gains an insight bonus equal to +2, +1 per every two levels, to a maximum of +8. The caster immediately sees how to escape his current dilemma with the least amount of effort.

The material component for this spell is a masterwork lock and key that costs a minimum of 200 gold pieces.

This was another of the spells developed by Thautagrill Mauvrick, in order to aid dragons and fellow Cult spellcasters in situations when they might be physically restrained.

Credits

Volume IV of the *Candlekeep Compendium* contains the work of many people, who have put much time and effort into penning these articles of lore. Many thanks to all who contributed and helped on this project.

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We hope you have enjoyed this volume of Realmslore. Any feedback is greatly appeciated. Please email us at **compendium@candlekeep.com** or visit the Candlekeep forum at **http://www.candlekeep.com/forum**

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Volume V

The *Candlekeep Compendium* is a quarterly publication. Keep an eye out for *The Candlekeep Compendium Volume V*, containing new Realmslore and further installments of regular articles penned by our master scribes.