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T O M Y P E E R S & E Q U A L S

Brothers and sister of the land of Barsaive, Mountainshadow, the Far Scholar, Master of the Dragon Mountains, Of the Egg Clutch of All-Wings, Holder of one of her All-Seeing Eyes, Keeper of the Jewel of Memory, and Master Speaker, bids you greetings in the Name of the Hundred Virtues and of the Fifteen Venerations.

My peers, I bid you turn your attention to the documents I have provided. They represent matters of great importance to us and to the future of Barsaive. They relate directly to decisions made at our last two Councils, and speak volumes in regard to how intently we must scrutinize our own security in these years to come. The first is a compilation from the Great Library of Throal written by our brother Talespeaker. This treatise on the nature of our race provides much information to the scholars of Throal and anyone else who chooses to peruse it, including information that has long been kept secret.

I understand Talespeaker's desire to enlighten the Young Races about us, and indeed I share it, but it is hardly the ideal time for us to reveal ourselves, with war looming so close on the horizon and Theran agents working to gather even the smallest crumbs of knowledge about us and our plans. While Talespeaker does not disclose our greatest secrets, he treads far too closely to some for comfort. I have spoken with him and he offered the Rite of True Deeds in return for his liberties, so the results are his and his alone. No more need be said of it.

Read his work carefully and keep in mind that this is what the Young Races now know about us. Consider also what they may infer from this knowledge. Perhaps it will do as Talespeaker hopes, and enlighten the Young Races about us and our ways, giving some would-be slayers pause before they set out on a fool's errand.

Of greater importance is the second document, which presents grave concerns about our plans in Barsaive. Our most recent Council concerned the actions of the Impertinent Ones and their capture of the girl Aardelea. As a result of decisions reached at that Council we have begun to act against the Theran Empire, as we did in years past when their actions interfered with us directly.

Mistweaver has captured a number of Theran airships, giving us the opportunity to examine them more closely. I believe we are making progress towards finding a means of powering them without the use of crude methods such as slaves and blood magic. In fact, the technique which shows the most promise owes its inspiration to another Theran trick, and Vast Green is pursuing this course even as my servant writes these words. If we can offer Throal and its allies a means of using captured Theran vessels, then we may tip the balance of power without having to act directly.

Reports from our agent in the Twilight Peaks, one of Doll-Maker's drakes, suggest that all goes as planned in the home of the crystal raiders. Her prophecies and advice to certain important Name-givers have helped to prepare the trollmoots for the coming conflict and the next stage of our plan. Troll airships are targeting Therans with increasing frequency, making the route between Sky Point and Triumph a hazardous one. The attacks anger the Therans, who are responding in kind, escalating the conflict. It is only a matter of time before the Empire decides to repeat their mistake and assault the moots—moots that still howl for Theran blood to avenge their ancestors. The raiders will be drawn into the conflict by their hatred of Thera rather than any desire to help Throal, but help Throal they will, according to our design.

The work of our eastern cousin in Cara Fahd also proceeds apace. He reports that the tension between the orks and the Therans is rising, and Theran slaver and merchant caravans have found it near impossible to travel unmolested. The newborn nation is growing in strength as Krathis Gron stabilizes the social order of her people through their belief in her great vision. The orks are a passionate people, and they are fighters. With Cara Fahd located between Vivane and Sky Point and the rest of Barsaive, there is no doubt the ork nation must come into conflict with Thera, as we have foreseen. The orks hold ties, however tenuous, with Throal and have none with the Empire, so it will be a small matter to bring them to Throal's aid when the time is right. Our cousin there has also brought word from Cathay that the Dragon Council there approves of our plans concerning Barsaive and Thera.

As for the elves of Blood Wood, their aloofness and separation from affairs in Barsaive has served us well until now, but it is time to bring the wayward children back into the fold—they too can further our plans. I have made preparations to ensure this will happen when the time is right, but it is premature to discuss it in any great detail here. Rest assured that the Elven Queen will find reason to turn her legendary ire against those she has forsworn in the past.

More important than any of these preparations is the liberation of the girl Aardelea from the stronghold of our enemies in Creana. The Impertinent Ones were clever to hold the girl in the one place where none of us dare to go, but they failed to realize that a tiny needle can do as much damage as a great talon, provided it strikes the right place and is





tipped with the right poison. Adepts in our service have found Aardelea and they are bringing her back to Barsaive, where she will be placed in the care of the Name-givers who live in the villages under my protection, as I originally suggested (with respect to your intentions, Doll-Maker). There I will be able to study her and monitor her development. I will inform all of you immediately when she arrives. Then, perhaps, we can consider how we will proceed once she is safe and I have learned more about her unique hybrid nature, to ensure we do not repeat mistakes of the past.

With Aardelea removed from the grasp of our enemies, and our plans to strike a blow against the Impertinent Ones well under way, I believe we must turn our attention to a new threat which concerns us, an ancient error come home to roost. Such is the reason for the second document of this collection, taken from hands of the Denairastas Clan of Iopos.

The ruling family of Iopos has long wished to rule all of Barsaive. Many Name-giver nations have entertained such dreams, which take entire generations of the Young Races to accomplish. Not so with the long-lived Denairastas, who have the advantage of time in which to plot their conquests. We took steps to correct the balance in permitting Doll-Maker to pass on his gifts to the kings of Throal, giving them the benefit of the long view as well so they could plan the destiny of the dwarf kingdom, much as the Denairastas plan theirs. For a time, it appeared sufficient, but it is no longer.

Iopos has taken bold steps with the assassination of King Varulus, setting Throal and Thera at each other's throats while they lurk in the shadows, plotting their next move. While the fates of nations do not concern us—they rise and fall in the time it takes to hatch out an egg—the violation of our ancient traditions and the breaking of our law most certainly does. Examine the second document and consider, as I have, how the knowledge within may affect the plans of the Denairastas Clan. For while we deal with the Thera Empire and our wayward children, history is preparing to repeat itself in the form of the Denairastas and their Outcast progenitor. We must not allow that to happen, or a new Empire may rise to replace Thera, or, worse yet, rise to challenge both the Impertinent Ones and us.

We are dragons, the first and most ancient Name-givers, the only ones to Name ourselves. Ours is a heritage of magic, power and prestige, but it is also a heavy burden of responsibility and guilt—yes, guilt for what we in our 'wisdom' allowed to happen. In our pride and arrogance, we forever changed the fate of the world. That is a fact. We cannot change what is done, we can only change what happens next. We must intervene again to prevent our mistakes from further altering the course of Nature, and hope that our interference can undo some of the damage before it is too late.

Consider the documents before you, my peers and equals. They represent the sum total of what the Young Races now know about us. We are the oldest and most powerful creatures of this world, and we believe that knowledge and memory are the greatest treasures there are. Consider your actions carefully, because what we do now may decide our fate and that of the Young Races in a future even we find challenging to predict.





CONCERNING THE NATURE OF DRAGONS

[The following work is transcribed from the words of Vasdenjas, the Master of Secrets, a most noble and intelligent great dragon with whom it has been my privilege to work as a scribe and scholar for these past seven years. It contains the dragon's thoughts and reflections on the nature, culture and history of his race, the dragons. I have endeavored to leave the great dragon's words untouched, merely organizing his thoughts and dissertations in a logical order for ease of use and reference. Otherwise, I have included all of the information as he relayed it to me.]

—by the Hand of Tiabdjin the Knower, Scribe of the Great Library of Throal and First Scholar of the khavro'am]

The Master of Secrets Speaks

To the Young Races of Barsaive, Vasdenjas the Master of Secrets extends his most cordial greetings. I have long enjoyed the works of the scholars of the Great Library of Throal, and wish to repay the amusement I have gained from reading your various works by contributing some of my own vast knowledge to your collection. I began this task with the masterwork entitled *Creatures of Barsaive*, a tome which corrected a great deal of misconceptions and false assumptions on the part of less-informed scholars and scribes about the fauna of this land. (I must say I am quite pleased with the presentation and binding arranged by the Library for that volume, although I believe there are a few improvements that should be incorporated into this new text. I have asked Tiabdjin to draw up the various particulars and enclose them along with this manuscript.)

This latest volume springs from my reading the collection entitled *Denizens of Barsaive*. While I found the descriptions and stories of the various Young Races quite amusing, I was shocked to discover no volume concerning my own ancient and noble kind! After a brief bout of ire (and I apologize once again for the singeing of your beard, noble scribe) I realized that no scholar from the Young Races could possibly have written with authority anything of substance with regard to my kind, and the scholars of the Great Library wisely declined even to try, knowing they could not possibly do us justice.

Therefore, I have decided to take it upon myself to once again impart my wisdom to the Young Races, this time concerning my own kind, the dragons of Barsaive. I hope this document will help to clear up many misconceptions and rumors about our noble and ancient race. As a sign of our goodwill towards the Young Races, I have asked for this volume, upon completion, to be placed in the Great Library of Throal alongside the other volumes of *Denizens of Barsaive* so that all of the citizens of Throal can be enlightened about the true nature of dragons. I am sure the scholars of the Great Library will treat it with the reverence and serious attention it deserves.

Of Form Most Noble

The dragon is the most noble and perfect creature to grace the world since the very beginning of time. We possess many abilities which make us the strongest, wisest and most graceful beings in existence; one of which is the form and function of our bodies. (Yes, Tiabdjin, if you are patient, I will get to all of the questions I see written on your face.)

Dragons are found in different forms and types throughout the world (I will speak more of this later) but we share many traits that define us as dragons.

The first is the strength and power of our physical form. Adult dragons grow larger than most airships, far larger than any of the little folk of the Young Races. A great dragon such as myself dwarfs even the greatest airship of the Throalic fleet (if you will excuse the pun, my dwarf friend).

You small folk are born into the world naked, soft and helpless. Even the scales of a t'skrang are too soft to turn aside the claws of a wild cat. The obsidimen do have some natural armor of course, but their elemental nature is quite a different matter. Coming as they do from a single Liferock they... ah, but I digress.

At birth, we dragons possess sharp teeth and talons, with hides able to turn aside the little injuries that threaten such as you. Why, I've seen newborn hatchlings kill and devour several bears with no more difficulty than a dwarf dispatching a few rabbits. We also recover quickly from any injury we do sustain, using the power of our magic to knit damaged flesh and bone anew. These natural defenses are sorely needed because, as you will see, the life of a dragon can





be a harsh one compared to those of the Young Races. We are challenged by Nature in many ways—ensuring that only the strongest and most able of us survive.

The other distinguishing trait of dragonkind is our keen intellect and magical nature. You Young Races call yourselves Name-givers, and rightly so, as you share with us the unique ability to give Names to what you see. We dragons are Name-makers, because we are the only race to choose our own Names, rather than having them bestowed upon us by others.

But what of trolls, Master? They choose their Names upon reaching adulthood.

Eh? Oh, that. You speak of reNaming, my dear Tiabdjin, something any Name-giver can accomplish, given sufficient knowledge. Even then, the reNaming that occurs among trolls is not true reNaming. Nonetheless, I am speaking of knowing your own Name before it is spoken by any other. Did you know your Name before you parents told you what it was? Does a newborn troll know the nature of his Name? I would say not.

Now then, our magical nature is born into us as surely as our knowledge of Naming. Dragons are in touch with the primal forces of what you call astral space, the wellspring of all magic in this world. We can see the astral patterns of things around us, the astral imprints of livings, and the ebb and flow of astral energies around us.

Magic is to us like air is to you: it is our natural environment, our very essence. While your people have learned to understand and control a tiny amount of magic, they have only brushed the surface of an ocean deeper and more mysterious than the Selestrean Sea itself. Like our own Names, we know the depths of these mysteries, know the powers of magic, from the very time we are born. Astral space is the pool from which we draw our magic and our very life.

Our knowledge of the currents of astral energies allows us to affect the outcome of events, to tip the balance of Fate towards a desired end. For most dragons, this ability is an expression of will and magical power, affecting only our own actions. For the more advanced and capable (such as myself) we can work our wills to change the fates of other creatures as well as ourselves.

On the Life Cycle of Dragons

The life of a dragon is not unlike that of one of your people, Tiabdjin, or of any of the Young Races. We are born, we grow, we mate and produce young. These are things all living creatures understand. What you must know is the unique way we dragons follow the path of life and how long our road is compared to your own.

On the Rite of Mating

Like most living creatures, a new dragon begins with a mating. Unlike most other creatures, a female dragon controls when she is ready to reproduce. Female dragons choose the times to mate during the adult stage of their lives, and most females mate more than once, perhaps every hundred years or so. The process of mating and laying eggs is quite draining, and most females prefer not to leave themselves in a weakened condition very often.

When she decides the time has come to mate, the female seeks out a suitable male. Usually she chooses a potential mate on the basis of traits she wishes to pass on to her offspring. Females only rarely mate with the same male twice, preferring to seek out a different mate each time. In this way, we add diversity and strength to our offspring, mixing the most desirable traits from many dragons.

Once a female has found a desirable mate, she approaches him and performs the First Rite of Mating. In this Rite, the female informs the male that she has chosen him and asks the male to prove his worthiness to father her young. If the male does not desire the mating, he may perform the Rite of Refusal with no shame to either party, and the two dragons simply part. There are some stories of spurned female dragons becoming vengeful, but these stories have grown in the telling, I can assure you. Unlike the Young Races, our mating practices do not consume all of our thoughts and feelings.

If the chosen male desires the mating as well, he must respond with the Second Rite of Mating, in which he describes the valuable traits he has to offer the female and pass on to her offspring. This Rite is accompanied by the Dance of Courting, where the candidate male demonstrates his worthiness through grace of movement as well as words. Many young males perform foolish and extravagant stunts during the Dance to show off to the female. Age and experience soon show them that females are more impressed by signs of wisdom, strength and maturity than youthful foolhardiness. I, for example, mated many females in my younger days who were taken with my clear wit and great intelligence, rather than how many clever aerial tricks I could perform. Now I see just as many young males performing for a female's attention like giant, silly birds as ever before. It is sad, the state of youth today, Tiabdjin.





Again, during the Second Rite, if the female decides she does not want the male as a mate, she may refuse him without recrimination. Many females are quite choosy, and prefer to perform the Second Rite with many males before deciding which one will be her mate. Males have been known to compete with each other for the attention of an especially desirable female, hoping to humiliate their rivals by defeating them in battle. Our legends tell of the great battles that were fought long ago for the affections of the mighty All-Wings, she who was the pinnacle of female dragonhood. Males killed each other in duels to prove their worthiness as mates.

Yes, the competition between males for the attention of a female sometimes invokes the rarely used Ritual of Battle. The male candidates fight to determine who is the most worthy of the female. Such a struggle is not only a test of physical prowess, but of cunning, intelligence and magical might, all traits a female might consider desirable. The winner of the Ritual is considered the most worthy, although the female may still choose to reject him. The Ritual is not always to the death, but it often results in such. The ire of a dragon is a mighty thing, my friend. Once roused, it is difficult to end a battle without the death of one side.

Once the first two Rites of Mating are performed, and the female and male are both satisfied with their choice, the two retire to a secluded location to perform the Dance of New Life. It is a ritual lasting for many days in which the two dragons prepare for the moment of mating, and the female begins her cycle that will culminate in readiness to conceive. I have heard tales of other Name-givers witnessing the Dance, without knowing what it was they were seeing. Some believed the two dragons were locked in combat, and some parts of the Dance would seem that way to outsiders. Others believed they found two dragons in love, although I would never ascribe such an emotion to mating rites.

Oh no, we do not mate for life, as many of the Young Races do. Mating is, for us, a practical thing, the creation of new life, not a permanent bond. As I said, a female will mate with many different males during her life, and a male will likewise perform the Dance with many different females, if he is worthy. Once the mating is done, the two dragons perform the Rite of Separation and take their leave of each other, the male always leaving the place of mating first and returning to his home. The female will lay her eggs in time, usually three or four at once, and then pass them on to be tended for and raised by the proper guardian of such new life.

On the Care of Eggs

Dragon eggs are cared for by great dragons. We are the elders of our race, and so the most fit to protect and educate the young. A female dragon with newly-laid eggs will come to a great dragon and perform the Petition of Caregiving, humbly asking the dragon to become the guardian of her eggs. The female describes her offspring in the most flattering and complimentary way, telling how they will bring pride and happiness into the great dragon's life. She speaks of the sterling qualities that make this great dragon her choice. If her petition is accepted, the female places her eggs in the great dragon's care and departs, most likely never to see them again. The parents have no further role in the lives of the young from that moment on. Indeed, most dragons never even know who their parents are. They know only the care of the great dragon sire who raised them.

After hearing the female's Petition, a great dragon may refuse to care for the eggs. No reason need be given for such a refusal, and the female has no recourse but to seek out another great dragon to care for her eggs. There are many reasons one of us might refuse to become guardian for an egg clutch, such as having too many young to care for already, receiving many different Petitions at once, and other matters which demand our attention and prevent us from giving the eggs the care they require.

The Hatching

[It was at this point that I asked Master Vasdenjas if he himself had eggs he was caring for. The Master of Secrets said yes, he did, and I was given the singular honor of being perhaps the first Name-giver to see the Egg Chamber of a great dragon. I was bodily carried, blindfolded, into the depths of Vasdenjas' lair, to a small cavern barely large enough to accommodate the great dragon's bulk. The cave was warm and dry, the floor covered with hot sand. Half buried in a shallow pit in the center was a collection of great speckled eggs large enough that a dwarf could have stood up inside one quite comfortably. I counted a dozen such eggs, many of them in slightly different shades and patterns.]

Having heard tales of adepts finding dragon eggs—specifically, a number of eggs under the care of Icewing—I asked about the size of the eggs before me, as they were considerably larger than those that were described to me. Vasdenjas replied that, unlike the eggs of most other creatures, dragon eggs actually grow during their incubation, starting as small as one foot in diameter, and growing as large as the eggs I saw here. He also reminded me not to place too much credence on the stories of adepts, as they are prone to exaggeration.





Vasdenjas showed me how he used his fiery breath to heat the stones and sand of the cave to keep the eggs warm. Indeed, it was quite hot in the cave, and I was sweating profusely, while the dry air seemed to draw the moisture away from my body like a sponge. I watched as the great dragon examined the eggs with the greatest of care, gently turning them in the sand with his talons and narrowing his eyes to examine each shell with his sharp senses, watching for something that was likely far beyond my limited perception. It was then that the most amazing thing happened.

Vasdenjas withdrew from the eggs, but made no motion for us to leave. After waiting for long minutes in silence, I began to ask the great dragon what we were waiting for, but the Master of Secrets silenced me with a look that sent a chill through me, even in that sweltering heat. I was certain if I spoke again it would be the last thing I ever said. So I waited with the dragon in silence, making myself as comfortable as I could.

I cannot say how much time passed, hours perhaps. I may have fainted from the heat for a short time, it is difficult to say. I recall my attention being captured by a noise and a sight I shall never forget for as long as I live. One of the eggs in the sandpit began to tremble and shiver. Then a flickering light lit the egg from within, visible through the thick shell. It did so again twice more before there was a loud snapping sound, and a crack appeared in the top of the shell. A set of powerful claws emerged from the crack and slowly began to widen it, enough to allow a thin trickle of smoke to leak out. Then, with a mighty heave, the shell split and a long, serpentine head emerged with a mewling cry. The shell split cleanly in half, revealing a dragon hatchling.

The newborn hatchling was an amazing creature. It was a full twelve feet in length, much like a serpent, with a pair of leathery wings folded tightly to its body and a stubby pair of legs below. I saw no sign of forelimbs, and the head was considerably more blunt than a dragon's snout. I did, however, take note of the barbed tail that lashed about, tipped with some kind of stinger as sharp as a dagger. I have no doubt that, were Vasdenjas not present with me, the hatchling would have killed and devoured me only moments out of its shell.

As it was, the Master of Secrets approached the newborn and fixed his gaze upon it. I cannot say for sure what passed between them, but I felt an overpowering sense that an exchange of some kind took place. Almost immediately, the hatchling curled up in the warm sand with a contented growling sound and Vasdenjas guided me out of the Egg Chamber before excusing himself to get the hatchling something to eat. He explained that a newborn is usually exhausted by breaking out of its tough shell and needs rest, food and warmth above all else. It was some time before he returned, but I hardly noticed, so engrossed was I in writing down these very words before the incredible experience of seeing a dragon born could be forgotten.]

On the Stages of Draconic Life

Much like other Name-givers, Tiabdjinn, we dragons pass through stages of our lives, from birth through adulthood, to great age and wisdom. You have already seen how a dragon is born. Now allow me to explain to you the other stages of our lives.

Hatchling

A newborn dragon is called a hatchling. It generally takes about a hundred years or so for a hatchling to be ready to emerge from its shell. Dragon eggs have very strong shells, not like the delicate eggs of birds or even t'skrang. The tough outer shell can resist even blows from a sword, much like a dragon's armored hide. Indeed, both shell and scale are formed of the same material. The production of the tough eggshells is what most depletes the female during her egg-laying time. When the hatchling is ready, it uses its dragon breath (a natural ability possessed even in the shell) to weaken the shell from within. This quickly heats the inside of the shell to great temperatures, so once it has begun to try to break out of the shell, the hatchling must be successful or else it will die, cooked alive within its shell. Such unfortunates—along with eggs that are not successfully fertilized—are eaten by the guardian dragon in the Ritual of the Quintessent Feast, taking into ourselves the substance of life unfulfilled and gaining, perhaps, some small part of the uniqueness that has been lost.

You're looking a touch pale, Tiabdjinn. Do you require anything? Something to eat perhaps? No? Very well, then.

Once the hatchling has broken out of the shell, its guardian greets it. We use dragonspeech to welcome the new life into the world and to impress our guardianship upon it. For that moment on, the hatchling knows its sire as its mentor and protector. [For information on dragonspeech, consult the section **On the Many Types of Communication.**]

During the first few years of their lives, hatchlings learn the basics of flight, as well as how to hunt and survive. Upon reaching the age of 20 years, they begin to learn the basics of understanding and using their magical heritage, including such abilities as dragon breath and spellcasting. I always feel a sense of pride in watching a hatchling char its prey for the first time. The Rite of the Second Fire celebrates this time and reminds the hatchling of the trial by fire it survived to come into this world.





By the age of 50 years, a hatchling's education moves beyond learning about its various powers and abilities, to include instruction concerning dragon society. Hatchlings are taught about our traditions and customs including mating, the use of Names, proper etiquette and all of the other Rites and Rituals we use. A hatchling can be allowed to speak in the presence of another dragon only after this time, lest some offense be given. It is rare for a hatchling even to be allowed in the presence of another dragon apart from its sire, of course, but it does happen from time to time.

During the first 100 or so years of their lives, hatchlings live near their caregiver's lair, and the range of their activities tends to be limited to within roughly 4 days walking (as measured by you small Name-givers) of the lair. They are allowed short flights to hunt and explore, but are carefully watched and spend much of their time being instructed and taught by their guardian. It is extremely rare for outsiders to encounter hatchlings during this time. We great dragons take care to prevent other Name-givers, and even other dragons, from encountering our hatchlings at such a young age. When hatchlings engage in activities outside the lair, their guardian is always close by. You may wish to ask your readers to keep this in mind, Tiabdjin, if the idea of attacking a hatchling should ever come into their minds.

By the age of 100 years, hatchlings become much more self-reliant, able to strike out on their own for brief excursions. For the next 100 years, the hatchlings are encouraged to learn on their own, but still within the confines of their guardian's territory. It is during this time that most young dragons begin to really develop their powers. Sometimes their youthful experimentation can get out of control, like the time when a hatchling under my care set a large area of the forest aflame. The other Name-givers in the area blamed me for the fire when they saw me flying overhead after retrieving the youngster and sending her back to my lair. As if I would set fire to an area of virgin forest for no reason! I tell you, this is how one gets an undeserved reputation.

When hatchlings reach the age of 200 years, it comes time for them to leave the care of their guardian and strike out on their own for a time. We perform the Rite of Separation at that time, and the hatchling is left on its own to begin the next, brutal, and thankfully briefest, stage of its life.

Adolescent

In reading works from the Great Library of Throal and speaking with many Name-givers, I have noticed something else dragons have in common with the Young Races. There comes a time in the life of every young Name-giver, somewhere between childhood and adulthood, when the forces of natural growth become even more rapid and seem to overwhelm the Name-giver's reason, turning the child into an irrational, irritable and most unreasonable creature, neither child nor adult. You call them adolescents, which is the Name I shall use here.

A dragon adolescent is as far beyond an adolescent of your kind as a dragon adult is beyond an adult of the Young Races—which is to say, a great deal. While you might find your adolescents irrational and emotional, they are nothing compared to a young dragon on the verge of adulthood. It is a period of madness, when primal urges and drives take hold and send the youngling into a state where it is little more than a beast.

When a young dragon reaches this stage, it secludes itself in the wilderness, sometimes close to the lair of its guardian but often quite far away. There it lives, occasionally gathering with other adolescent dragons, for as long as a hundred years, hunting and sleeping, its thoughts (if such they can be called) consumed with nothing more than the need to survive. Adolescent dragons are just as territorial as adults, perhaps even more so. They also lack the reason and etiquette necessary to settle their disputes properly, so they often find themselves locked in struggles to the death with other young dragons, even their own egg-mates. As many as two-thirds of them will die in these struggles. Few survive to pass on to the next stage.

In fact, it is not unknown for young dragons to attack even an adult dragon who threatens their territory. While a single youngling is no match for the might of an adult, a flock of them can bring one down, which is reason enough for us to give our adolescents a wide berth. None of us has any wish to kill our own young unless we are forced to.

Fortunately for other Name-givers, an adolescent dragon has not yet come into its full powers or mature state. These creatures lose the use all of the magic they learned as hatchlings, blotted out by their savage drives, and have only an animal cunning to aid them. They still have their strong scales, sharp teeth and powerful talons, capable of rending any Name-giver to bits. It is also at this time that the young dragon's venom begins to flow. The sting of its tail can bring a painful death and young dragons learn to use their venom against prey at this time.

Your pardon, master, but I noticed that the hatchling had only a pair of wings and hindlimbs, but no forelimbs as adult dragons do. How does a creature like a hatchling become so different as an adult?

Patience, Tiabdjin, patience. I am coming to that stage, which comes immediately following adolescence.

Then an adolescent dragon appears much like a hatchling, only larger, with a poisonous tail barb?





Yes...

Then they appear much like wyverns, do they not?

I did not say so! Why, I never said anything of the sort!

But Master Vasdenjas...

Silence! Wyverns are not dragons! They never have been, and they never shall be. You will not speak of this again! How dare you! Get out, get out of my sight!

[It was at this point that I withdrew, quite fearful for my life. Never before had I seen Vasdenjas so angry, even when he learned of my publishing the story of his brother Vestrivan in the Creatures of Barsaive tome in the Great Library. I retreated outside the dragon's lair and it was some time before the Master of Secrets calmed down and invited me back into his presence. He apologized for his outburst and asked that the whole matter be forgotten. I never did get an answer to my question, however, and I have thought the better of raising it again.]

Metamorphosis

The time of adolescence is fortunately the shortest in a dragon's life, lasting only 50 to 100 years or so. When it is done, the madness that gripped the young dragon begins to lift from its mind and it is generally drawn back to the place of its birth and raising, there to begin the great Rite of Change that will begin its journey to its adult form and status.

The young dragon enters the realm of astral space like a bird returning to the forest where it was born. There it uses magic to weave a cocoon of astral threads around itself where it will sleep and undergo the transformation. These cocoons exist only in astral space, and cannot be seen or detected from the physical world. It is during this time that the dragon's True Pattern changes and its body changes as well, taking on the adult form that is familiar to the Young Races of Barsaive.

The Horrors' corruption of astral space during the Scourge poses a serious threat to young dragons undergoing The Rite of Change. For this reason, the astral cocoons are nearly always located in astral space high above the ground, usually near the lair of the young dragons' guardian so they can be watched and protected from any harm. Astral regions polluted by the Horrors are no more suitable for the Rite of Change than waters fouled by pollution are suited to the birthing of fish.

Master?

Yes, Tiabdjinn?

Please forgive this humble inquiry, but the cocoons you describe sound similar to legends of Verjigorm, the Great Hunter, trapping dragons within astral cocoons. [I am sure I flinched a bit, waiting for a rebuke, or worse, a blow for my question. I thank Mynbruje that neither came, only a deep sigh from the Master of Secrets.]

The cocoons of the Great Hunter are in no way related to those of the Rite of Change. Rumors and legends linking the two are nothing but fabrication and unwarranted assumption by less learned minds. The Rite is entirely natural and normal for my kind, while the... other practice is a foul and unnatural abomination. Now, let us continue.

Once a young dragon is safely ensconced in its cocoon, it remains in astral space for some five to ten years while the transformation takes place. The youngling's Pattern slowly changes, causing changes in the physical body as well. When the time is right, the new adult dragon emerges into the world to take its Name.

Adult (Named)

The Rite of Emergence is one of the most important in a dragon's life. It is when a young dragon, after centuries of learning, preparation and survival, takes on a Name and becomes an adult. You see, until a dragon reaches the time of Emergence, it has no Name. Hatchlings and adolescents are Nameless; we do not Name our young as other Name-givers do, imposing a Name on a child without its knowledge or consent. We Name ourselves upon becoming adults. Your people are Name-givers, but mine are Name-takers and Name-makers as well.

Excuse me Master, but if young dragons have no Name, how are you able to communicate with them or identify one young dragon from a group?

Why do you insist that something have a Name in order for it to be identified? Are Names truly necessary for communication? To answer your question, it is through dragonspeech, we are able to communicate with our young, in ways far more efficient and effective than mere speech. Tiabdjinn, though you are indeed a most learned scholar, there are times when you think entirely too much like a dwarf. May I continue? Thank you.





When the new dragon Emerges from the cocoon, it has the form known to the Young Races. Nearly all Name-giver descriptions of the various types of dragons I have heard and read are based on the adult form, and only a very few members of the Young Races besides yourself have ever seen a dragon hatchling.

The Emergence of a new dragon is a time of great pride for the dragon's former guardian. Like seeing the hatchling emerge from the egg, we watch the adult come from its astral cocoon. There, the new dragon declares its Name for the first time, announcing itself to the world with a mighty roar. From that time on, the dragon is a member of our society and no longer a ward of its guardian great dragon.

The new adult will first seek a domain to claim as its own, and set up a lair. Each of us requires a large area in which to hunt, and we are territorial by nature, defending our domains fiercely. Many dragons find unclaimed areas and make them their own, while others will seek out another dragon and conduct a Ritual of Challenge to take its lair. Many young dragons die in this way, fighting for control of territory.

Once comfortable in a lair, dragons settle into a life of contemplation and development. During adulthood we refine our mastery of the magical arts and our own natural abilities, advance our knowledge of the world and begin to gather and collect mementos and keepsakes to remind us of our past in the years to come. Adulthood is also the time when we mate to produce young, beginning the Dance of New Life again to continue our kind.

An adult dragon may continue in this way for thousands of years, longer than the entire history of your Kingdom, Tiabdjin. We live a very long time indeed, compared to the brief lives of you small folk. Even elves rarely live longer than it takes for one of us to grow from hatching to adulthood.

Also, unlike the Young Races, dragons never stop growing. A new adult dragon is fairly small by our standards, perhaps half my own size. As the centuries pass, we continue to grow larger, stronger and more powerful where other Name-givers quickly reach their peak and start to become smaller and more feeble with each passing day. Not so for dragons. We grow in body, mind and spirit with the passage of the years; gaining in power, knowledge and, hopefully, wisdom.

Eventually, if the dragon lives long enough, it grows sufficiently to reach the last stage of life, becoming a great dragon.

Great Dragon

We great dragons are the elders of our kind. It takes a long time for an adult dragon to become great, some 2,000 years. Most dragons never accumulate enough power and wisdom to survive long enough to become great dragons. Perhaps one in every four makes it this far. The others are slain by Horrors, dragon-hunters or even other dragons, or else fall victim to their own poor judgment and die in accidents or similar misfortunes. It is for these reasons that we great dragons are so rare. Indeed, in all of Barsaive there have never been more than a dozen great dragons at any one time, and I dare say there never will be.

Your Great Library has numerous tales and legends of the Rites we must undergo to become great dragons. I have read them all with considerable amusement and shared them with many of my fellow great dragons. They found the accounts as insightful as I did, although not all found them as humorous.

Great dragons are above the concerns of our younger relations. It is our duty and privilege to guide our race. We are the guardians of the past and the future. We are keepers of lore, history, tradition and custom from throughout our ancient past. We are also the caretakers of the eggs and the hatchlings that ensure the future of our kind. We understand the flow of time and the eternal march of history better than any other creature because we have seen it all pass before us.

It falls on us to use our wisdom and experience to guide our race through the dangerous waters of time. We always strive to learn from the mistakes of the past, so we will not be doomed to repeat them in the future.

On the Rites of Death

All things die in their time. Even among dragons Death is not a stranger. Most of the eggs you saw in my Egg Chamber will not survive. Of the hatchlings that will come forth, many will die. Many more will be lost as adolescents and only a tiny fraction will speak their Names and become adults. Perhaps there is even a single future great dragon or two among those lives in my care, one to take its place among the eldest of our kind. Who can say?





We dragons know death well. We are hunters and predators at heart. No amount of lore or learning can change that. We hunt and kill to survive, and I know of no dragon, no matter how old, whose heart does not quicken at the thrill of pursuing prey.

The death of a great dragon is a sad event for us all. There are very few of us, and the loss of any dragon diminishes us all. We perform the Rites of Death for all great dragons, and for notable adults who have fallen. It is one of the few occasions when we put aside our territorial nature and gather together in a single place.

The Rites of Death are many, including the Dance for the Fallen and the Rite of Succession. The Dance is performed in the air above the fallen dragon's lair or place of death. It honors the life of the fallen as each dragon expresses their thoughts, feelings and memories through the movements of the Dance. It is a time to put aside all differences in the face of Death.

The Rite of Succession is an altogether different matter. Dragon custom dictates that the strongest and most worthy should inherit the possessions and domain of the fallen. Often, it is clear who the successor should be. The Rite determines matters in cases where it is not clear. It is a ritual combat to decide who among the gathered dragons has the greatest right to Succeed the fallen and claim what was once theirs. The Rite is rarely to the death, but again, we are competitive creatures, and willing to struggle until the very end.

After the successor has been chosen, he or she conducts the Ritual of the Cleansing Fire. The remains of the fallen are burned in dragon breath until only ashes remain, to be taken by the winds and the Earth, returning the fallen to the elements from which we spring. It is unfit to leave the body of any dragon to simply rot and be torn apart by scavengers. The Cleansing Fire sends the light and smoke to tell all Name-givers that a great event has taken place, that a great dragon has died.

Of Culture Most Polite & Complex

We dragons are creatures of passion, capable of extreme temper and savagery. Our traditions, rituals and customs are like a complex web of incredibly fine spider silk that holds those primal urges in check. They are the means by which we survive and keep conflict among ourselves to a minimum. They serve as a reminder of who and what we are in this world.

There was a time when this was not so. In the beginning, when the world was young and dragons first flew in the skies, when the Young Races had not even laid the first stone of their first nation, we were without the culture we have today. Dragons were little more than savages, more like mindless adolescents than civilized adults. Our hearts ruled our minds, and our great intellects were focused on our rivalries and warfare. We fought amongst ourselves and with any other creature that challenged us. In those battles many dragons died, and the Earth shook from the fury of our conflict.

Then came the great dragon Logolas, the Lawgiver. He was one of the first great dragons, a wily and intelligent creature who survived using his superior wit rather than his brute strength. Logolas had a vision in which dragons turned their fierce cunning towards constructive, rather than destructive, ends, and he worked to spread that vision to other dragons. He was able to convince two of his fellow great dragons to meet with him, setting certain rules for the meeting and binding them with a powerful Oath—the very first Rite of Greeting among dragons.

The results of the meeting spread like dragonfire. Logolas and his allies began to create Rites and Rituals to overcome our natural aggressive and territorial tendencies. These allowed them to work together to achieve common goals, and to resolve disputes without the death of one of the parties involved. In time, other dragons began to realize the benefits and to see the wisdom in the Rites and Rituals Logolas and the others created. If the dragons were able to adopt to this new culture of cooperation, they gained numerous allies, a form of relationship without precedent among our kind. If they continued on their own, they risked the wrath of more than one enemy. To attack one member of the new society was considered a crime—another new concept—something the society as a whole could act to punish.

From those early beginnings the greatness of dragon culture flowered. Reason came to rule emotion, and we found our powers virtually limitless when focused and no longer distracted by war. Our newfound cooperation allowed us to work together to achieve great a pinnacle of civilization as yet unrivaled throughout history. Our society also instilled a great pride in all dragons across the world, a loftiness which ultimately proved disastrous. But like so many other races, we've come to learn from our mistakes.

[Vasdenjas refused to elaborate on the above statement, saying only "it is best to let some things be the mysteries that they are." Much of what he related here and elsewhere in this volume supports legends of an Age of Dragons long ago, when dragon civilization was at its peak and dominated the world. What became of this great civilization we can only guess.]





On Proper Etiquette

Among dragons, proper behavior is most important. Without the support of our customs and codes of conduct, our society, like any other, would crumble into chaos and neverending conflict. It is the rituals we observe that allow us to live in relative peace and harmony.

Dragons are creatures of ritual. We have rituals for everything: meeting, parting, cooperation, disagreement, mating, birth, death, transformation and communication. Every aspect of life where we interact with another of our kind is governed by some kind of ritual, telling us how we should behave and telling others what they can expect of us. To not follow proper etiquette is a serious offense among my kind, and often leads to conflict and struggles to the death when our predator nature comes to the fore.

For example, if you wished to visit a friend in one of the inner cities of Throal, you would go to your friend's home and knock on their door. They would answer and invite you in, perhaps offer you some refreshment, and you would talk of things of importance to you. You would not enter someone else's home uninvited, or abuse their hospitality, without risk of offending them.

If I wished to visit one of my fellow dragons, I would travel to their lair and perform a Rite of Honored Greeting (of which there are several). The specific Rite of Honored Greeting I would perform would depend on the status of the host, of course. To do otherwise would be considered a challenge to that dragon's domain, a challenge he or she would be required to answer, or else appear weak. A Rite of Challenge is a serious affair, since it may result in the death of one of the challengers.

If the other dragon did not wish the confrontation, and I can hardly think of any dragon who would wish to Challenge me, he could choose to perform the Ritual of Humble Veneration, assuming the Second Posture of Formal Regard and thereby acknowledging my superior strength, avoiding the need for a challenge.

Once mutual goodwill is established, it is considered proper to conduct affairs promptly. We do not concern ourselves with the chatter you small folk seem to love so dearly. No words are wasted on unnecessary conversation between dragons. Our rituals ensure precision in both speech and action. They provide a dependable medium for the exchange of ideas, resources and news among dragons while keeping our conflicts controlled.

[While Vasdenjas speaks of promptness and brevity here, I also learned that some dragon rituals take many hours or even days to perform. Readers should keep in mind that the meaning of "prompt" is different for creatures who measure their lives in many centuries.]

Master Vasdenjas, before you go on, I have a question.

Of course you do Tiabdjin, it seems to be your way concerning this work.

I understand that the Rites and Rituals that you use are passed from a great dragon sire to the young, but do you have among your kind a dragon who maintains the dragons' traditions, etiquette and protocol? For that matter, do you have archivists of any sort, to record and maintain the history of your kind?

Actually, yes we have those among us who are responsible for both these duties. For though young dragons are taught both the history and the Rites and Rituals of dragonkind, events in our past have shown us the wisdom of maintaining and recording both the customs of our kind, and what you might refer to as a written history of our kind. Among the dragons of a given region there is chosen one who is known as the Loremaster. This is the dragon who ensures that proper Ritual and tradition is adhered to at dragon gatherings, and is also the dragon responsible for recording the history of the dragons of his region, and for ensuring that our history is maintained even after his death.

Gatherings? Under what conditions or circumstance do dragons gather?

Suffice to say that on occasion there are times, only a scant few in this most recent age of magic I might add, when events require the gathering of great dragons, in order that a course of action or actions be discussed and agreed upon. We refer to these gatherings as Councils, and they are a most serious matter among dragons. Councils are not convened casually, nor are the issues discussed at Council to be dismissed. To ignore or disobey the edicts of a great dragon Council is among the most serious of crimes among my kind.

What would be the penalty for disobeying the edicts of a great dragon Council? Has there ever been a case of a dragon who did so?





I expected you'd ask this. The penalty is harsh indeed, though I will spare you the specifics. There are some secrets which should remain so. As to your second question, only once has a great dragon defied its fellows, and that dragon has paid a terrible price indeed.

Has paid? But... ?

No more questions my friend. I've said more than I should already. Let us move on before you ask the many questions I know you have in your mind, as I cannot answer them.

On the Importance of Names

Anyone in Barsaive knows that Names are important. The ability to Name and use Names is what makes us Name-givers, after all. For dragons, Names are particularly important. Since we Name ourselves, rather than being Named by our parents or guardians, we understand the power and value Names have. To know something's Name is power, to Name something is an even greater power.

Dragons have many Names. For example, I am Vasdenjas. I am also the Master of Secrets, the Terrible, the Eater of Cities, the Master of Mount Wyrmspire, and many other things. Those Names all describe me and who I am. Some are more accurate than others, perhaps, but all of them are mine. As a dragon goes through life, he accumulates Names. The more Names a dragon has, the older and more powerful he tends to be.

Because we have and use so many Names, we dragons also have rules and rituals about which Names we use in which situations. For example, another dragon—hatchling, adolescent, adult or even great—does not address a great dragon by his chosen Name. Such is considered a grave insult. Dragons address great dragons by other Names to show their respect. We great dragons even use these other Names when speaking of a great dragon to other Name-givers. To do otherwise is considered the same thing as addressing a great dragon by his chosen Name. Conversely, other Name-givers must address us by our chosen Name or a proper title, since to use the same Name that other dragons do in addressing us would be to suggest an equality with other dragons, a breach of etiquette that could get someone eaten.

The improper use of titles can be trouble for even a Name-giver. I know of one rather foolish diplomat from Travar who met with Firedancer, an adult dragon dwelling in the Dragon Mountains, regarding the passage of airships over his domain. In an effort to be polite, the diplomat began "We ask you, O Great Dragon." Firedancer was quite offended that the diplomat should address him by a title he had not earned (being a relatively young adult). He perceived it as a mocking insult, suggesting he was inferior, so he ate the diplomat in a fit of pique (younglings can often be quite emotional). It was some time before Travar chose to send another envoy, and Firedancer found himself fending off dragon-slayers and champions from Travar for several years.

As a general rule, if you are uncertain how to address a dragon (either because you do not know its Name or are confused, as small folk often are) it is always proper to use "noble dragon." I do not recommend addressing a dragon by Name unless it gives you leave to do so. Improper familiarity may insult dragons more sensitive to matters of protocol.

Master, I have a question about this subject.

Yes, what is it Tiabdjinn?

Why do some dragon Names, such as Mountainshadow or Icewing, seem to be taken from Throalic, while others, such as your own Name, are far more exotic and unusual?

An excellent question, but alas, one that is not so easily answered. As I've told you, dragons Name themselves upon reaching adulthood. However, there are no rules or standards by which dragons choose their Names. All I can tell you is that dragons who choose what you refer to as more exotic names, such as myself, most often take Names from the dragon language (yes we have one, though we don't find much use for it save for the most formal of occasions), while the "Throalic" Names, as you call them, are likely chosen to inspire the very images that the Names you mentioned instill when you hear them.

On the Many Types of Communication

You have asked many questions about our language, Tiabdjinn, and I would like to answer them, but first you must understand that dragons use means of communicating other than simple speech and written words. Our "language," if such it may be called, is far more complex and subtle than any Name-giver tongue.





Speech

Dragons can speak, of course, or else I would not be talking to you now. We learned to master the languages spoken by the Young Races long ago, including Throalic, Sperethiel, trollish, orkish, and even the t'skrang's tongue. I myself speak more than fifty Name-giver languages, including some belonging to civilizations that were dust before Death's Sea was fire. With our keen minds and magical power, learning and speaking a new language is a simple matter. In fact, I know some dragons who collect languages as often as they do new items for their hoards.

We consider it polite to speak to other Name-givers in their own tongue, and so we learn your languages, even though they are not our natural method of communicating. Our natural magic allows us to speak aloud, but the dragon mouth, tongue and throat were not designed for the use of your words. For us, the mouth is better used as a place to put food or produce fire. We have natural vocalizations of our own, but they are usually limited to hunting, battle and mating. Primal sounds to convey primal emotions. Not proper things used to convey thoughts or ideas.

Dance and Gesture

The most basic component of our own language is the subtle communication of movement. You small folk have some crude similarity in using gestures when you speak. You nod your heads to indicate agreement, or lift your shoulders and furrow your brows to show confusion. Many Name-givers gesture vaguely with their hands while they speak, a muddled and distracting habit, I must say.

Movement is very important in communication among dragons. How we stand, the position of the head, the motion of talons, wings and tail, all of these things speak volumes about our mood, our intent and our thoughts. Dragons are taught proper posture and movement from the time they are hatchlings. There are hundreds of different Poses and Postures used to communicate different attitudes. The Postures of Formal Regard demonstrate respect, for example. The Pose of Aggression, with wings spread wide and head held high, shows anger and forcefulness. It is quite similar to the Pose of Command, except the wings are held closer in the latter. Nearly every movement we make has meaning to us.

Even more complex than our many gestures are our Dances. A Dance makes use of the basic Poses and Postures, combining them in a flowing display, much as you combine spoken words to make phrases, sentences and whole stories. A Dance tells a story, with traditional forms used for different purposes. The Dance of New Life honors the act of mating and tells of the power of passion and creation. The Dance for the Fallen speaks of the life of a dragon who has died and honors their spirit. Most of our dances are best performed in the air, allowing for the greatest freedom of movement. If you are ever fortunate enough to see a dragon's dance, Tiabdjinn, I advise you to take the opportunity. There are fewer things in this world more beautiful or graceful.

Dragonspeech

Even with its significance and importance, movement is only the first part of our true language. The other is the power of dragonspeech. Our minds are more in touch with the forces of astral space and with the ebb and flow of all living things. This allows us to send out our thoughts with our minds like you send out words with your lips and tongue. Like this.

[It was only then that I realized the Master of Secrets had fallen silent while speaking to me. I heard his voice, not with my ears, but with my mind. It is almost impossible to describe, like an illusion or phantom of a voice speaking from within you. It is a most disturbing sensation at first, which is why dragons tend not to use dragonspeech with other Name-givers, so as not to unsettle them.]

Dragonspeech allows us to communicate with each other with more than simple words. We can also speak in thoughts, images and ideas. Spoken language is crude and imprecise by comparison. You can place multiple meanings in words, and your poets and artists amuse themselves with double entendres and word games, but we can describe multiple layers of thought and meaning in an instant through our own form of communication. Combining movement and dragonspeech allows us to describe an entire experience or concept quickly, clearly and easily.

The power of dragonspeech is used from a very young age to begin educating our hatchlings, and is another important role of the guardian. Great dragons are the experienced elders of dragonkind. Using dragonspeech, it is possible for us to pass on our wisdom and knowledge directly without needing to try to express the customs and traditions of millennia in words. It would take more volumes than your entire Great Library to hold such knowledge. I often think this vastness of our own language is the reason why dragons are so adept with Names. We see the deeper meaning of a Name all at once, understanding, experiencing the whole of it rather than breaking it into word, sound and meaning.





In general we prefer to use dragonspeech among ourselves because it is less cumbersome than spoken language. So many of the concepts of our language cannot be conveyed by the spoken word, so it is nearly impossible to learn to “speak dragon,” as so many scholars have attempted. Parts of our language can be written down or translated into spoken words, but many concepts can be expressed only through thought and movement.

Dragonspeech also has the advantage of being silent, allowing us to communicate with each other without fear of being overheard. If you see two dragons engaged in a whirling aerial dance, they may be carrying on an entire conversation using their thoughts and their motions without anyone the wiser.

Normally, dragonspeech is only the projection of thought; one mind sending its ideas into another. However, many of us learn to listen as well as speak with our minds. Yes, this allows us to see into the minds of others, Tiabdjín, and know their thoughts and memories. What? No, I didn’t do it just then. For the most part, you Young Races are open books to anyone with an observant eye. It didn’t take the power of dragonspeech to know what your next question was going to be. Our knowledge of movement and gesture alone is generally enough to read the intent of any creature clearly.

Still, there are dragons skilled enough in the use of dragonspeech to pluck thoughts from your mind as easily as you might pluck a single flower from a hillside. We have learned a great deal about other Name-givers in this way; seeing the world as they do, knowing what they know. This experience has inspired many ideas and experiments among my kind, some more successful than others.

Writing

Like speech, we have learned and mastered the many systems of writing used by the Young Races. I can read any of the books in your Great Library, and I have enjoyed many of the obscure volumes you have collected over the years. I find books a fascinating idea. They are so small and fragile, but they contain a certain artistry I find compelling. Other Name-givers have spoken of the pleasure of holding and reading a fine book, and I confess a certain understanding of the sensation.

We ourselves do not create books; they are generally too small, and our talons can make neither paper nor ink. On rare occasion we write on parchment, but usually with the help of a scribe (such as yourself Tiabdjín). Additionally, we do sometimes scribe symbols and runes derived from our movements and dances onto surfaces like stone or metal to serve as messages to others, but such things are rare. As with dragonspeech, our natural form for storing information goes far beyond simple writing.

Memory Crystals

To record important knowledge, we dragons use magically prepared pieces of living crystal we call memory crystals. The crystalline structure of living crystal serves to capture and hold the thoughts, memories, images and ideas projected into it, freezing them like an insect caught in a piece of amber, maintained as they are, unchanging with the passage of time. Once such information has been placed within a memory crystal, dragonspeech can be used to retrieve the wisdom placed within the crystal. In this way we preserve important knowledge so it is not lost.

Small memory crystals, no larger than the tip of one of my talons, perhaps large enough to fit in the hand of a dwarf such as yourself, can hold only a single message or piece of complex information; we would use them to send messages and correspondence to others. Larger crystals contain correspondingly greater amounts of information. Some memory crystals are as large as you, my dwarf friend, or even larger.

Memory crystals can take many forms. Some are rough-faceted and unworked, while others are shaped by skill and magic into works of arts. Many of the jewels you see in my own hoard are more than pretty baubles, they are memory crystals containing dragon lore older than your nation, or any nation of this Age. To those of you foolish enough to consider looting a dragons lair, beware, the beautiful gemstones you set your greedy gaze upon may contain treasures beyond your feeble imagination, and may carry with them the retribution of all of my kind.

[I inquired about the similarity between memory crystals and the message stones we use to carry messages. Vasdenjas gave a rumbling chuckle and told me that memory crystals were far different from simple message stones. The stones use elemental air to trap sounds, like the sound of a voice, and simply repeat the sounds at a later time. Memory crystals trap thought and memory itself. The knowledge in a crystal is only accessible through the power of dragonspeech, although the Master of Secrets did concede that other magic might theoretically be able to retrieve information from a memory crystal.]





On Dragon History & Beliefs

As you have already seen, our lives are long and we have much time to contemplate the mysteries of life. This has led dragonkind to develop an awareness of the nature of the Universe and our role in it unrivaled by the Young Races. The full body of dragon understanding and knowledge is vast, enough to fill many large memory crystals. Since I know the impatient nature of you Young Races, Tiabdjinn, I shall keep my comments on the fascinating and complex tapestry of our beliefs simple and brief.

The Origin of the World

[This tale is similar to the origin of dragonkind told by Icewing in the Horrors collection. I note that the Master of Secrets spoke the Name of the Great Hunter with considerable trepidation and did not wish to elaborate further.]

Dragons were the first Name-givers, indeed the first creatures to understand the power of Names. When we appeared, long, long ago, we gave Names to ourselves, separating us from the Nameless and formless mass of the world. It was a very different world then, a world of darkness, pain and suffering. Black clouds blotted out the sky and the land was covered in foul mists, the waters dark and bubbling. It was into this world that the First Named came.

It was the Age of the Dark One, the sole creature that lived in the world. Then it had no Name as we know it. It simply was, a creature of unimaginable foulness and corruption. The Dark One created spawn, called horoi, in its image, creatures of darkness and endless hunger that fought battles on the land, in the sea and in the sky above the world for their master's amusement. The Dark One reveled in the slaughter and the rivers were filled with the toxic ichor of the slain horoi.

In time, the Dark One gave rise to a horoi that was not like all others. It possessed a spark, a vital essence no other creature had. Instead of joining in endless battle, the horoi fled to a distant part of the world the Dark One and its minions had not touched. There it Named itself and became Nightslayer, the First Named.

Nightslayer stood on a rocky pinnacle overlooking a great ocean and was overcome with joy at the beauty of the world. Nine tears fell from its eye and became creatures where they splashed upon the Earth. The first of those creatures was the First Dragon, Dayheart, who proudly proclaimed her Name. The others did not have Names of their own, so Nightslayer gave them Names. They became the progenitors of the Young Races, who even now lack the ability to Name themselves and must be given Names by others.

When the Dark One discovered what Nightslayer had done, it grew furious. It raged and brought forth armies of horoi to kill Nightslayer and its new creations. But the First Named stood strong against the onslaught. With the power of Naming, it forced the horoi and the Dark One to flee from the world into the depths of the netherworlds. The Dark One swore that day, "I will hunt your children for the rest of time. I will slay every last one of them, and my minions will feed on their pain and terror. But I will not give the mercy of death to your favorite—the Dragon, the one you created in your image. As you betrayed me, the children of the Dragon's line will betray you. I will corrupt them, twist their souls and make them my own. Then I will return and reign over all the world."

The Dark One fled, hurling a ball of fire at Nightslayer as it departed. The First Named gathered its children under the protection of its mighty wings. There was a sound like a thousand roars. The earth and sky trembled and a great cloud filled the sky. When the rumbling stopped, Nightslayer's children lived, but the First Named was no more. They gathered by its great head and mourned its passing, honoring the sacrifice of Nightslayer so that its children might live. Since that earliest time, all dragons are consumed by fire in death, echoing the sacrifice of the First Named for us.

In time, the children of Dayheart, the First Dragon, grew many and strong. They learned the secrets of threads and patterns and gained wisdom in the ways of the world far beyond that of the short-lived Young Races. They laid the foundations for our civilization that continues to this very day, and we wait for the return of the Dark One, the Great Hunter, Named Verjigorm.

The Role of Dragons

If you were to ask one of your kind what reason dragons have to exist, they would likely answer that we exist to terrorize you little folk and to provide heroes with enemies to hunt and slay so they may have songs written of their glorious deeds. Despite the millennia we have existed alongside the Young Races, most of you still do not understand the importance of dragons in the scheme of things. I hope this document can correct those misconceptions.





As the oldest of all Name-givers, we are living history, a link to the past. We understand the complex nature of astral space and the warp and weft of the tapestry of fate. It is our burden to understand all of these things and more. To understand, to watch, to learn and to gather experience as we gather treasures and trinkets. Yes, it is a heavy burden.

Much as a parent watches over a growing child, so do we watch the progress of the Young Races, as you stumble through your first steps toward civilization, towards an understanding of the world and its mysteries. And like that experienced parent, we can guide, we can test and we can strengthen you through our wisdom, but we cannot walk the path with you. A child must be allowed to fall many times before it learns to walk, or to fly. So do your people fall into war, upheaval, and folly. The orks say “tell me and I hear a tale, show me and I see a vision, fight me and I have an experience.” Such is the way with all Young Races. We can tell you what we have learned, but you must experience things for yourselves before you truly understand.

The Young Races have left the carefree time of childhood for the turbulent time of adolescence. Like all adolescents, you are belligerent, stubborn and willful. You do not heed the wisdom of your elders and you rebel against all that seems strange or confining to you. You make your own rules, you seek your own path. Sometimes you strike out against us. It is strange that the people of Throal consider themselves so superior for their abolishment of slavery, for their affirmation of the rights of all Name-givers, but no court in Throal would consider the murder of one of my kind a crime. Instead, it is a legend to be celebrated in song and story. Consider that when you next hear tales of a brave band of dragon-slayers.

The Passions

Oh, we dragons are not without passion, but not the Passions as you know them. We do not worship the things as the Young Races do. Name-givers call upon Thystonius for strength in physical endeavors, on Astendar for help in matters of love and even on Mynbruje to aid intellect and insight. We rely on no one but ourselves. It is understandable that the Young Races might wish to believe in something greater than they, powers they can entrust to aid and guide them. We have no such need. We acknowledge the power of the Passions, but we have seen Passions change many times over the years. If you could live to be as old as I, Tiabdjinn—or any other dragon—then you would have a very different view of the Passions, I assure you.

Strange, is it not, that Name-givers of the Young Races revere the power of the Passions, look to them for strength, guidance and wisdom, but at the same time turn away in fear from the same qualities in dragons? Only an enlightened few (like your good self) seek us out with their questions rather than crowding the temples and praying in solitude. Perhaps because the Passions wear more comfortable masks. It is easier for Name-givers to seek what they need from beings cast in their own image than from creatures so different from them. No matter that I have looked upon the true faces of the Passions and can tell you with certainty that they are no more like you than I am, less so in fact. Perhaps because dragons do not seek your worship, our knowledge is considered less pure than the insights offered by unbound Passion. Who can truly say why you small folk do anything?

If dragons can be said to worship anything, then we worship the Universe itself. We honor the beauty and majesty of all creation in our thoughts and our dances. We revere the primal mystery that gave life to all things, allowing us to live and experience. Some of my kind have said that the Universe is the only thing grand enough to awe even a dragon.

On Relations with other Name-givers

As you have seen, the relationship between dragonkind and the Young Races is not unlike that of a distant parent and wayward child. For the most part, we choose to remain uninvolved in the activities of the Young Races. We stay close to our own concerns and leave your affairs to you, and only when other Name-givers impinge upon our lives do we take action. That has been the way of things for longer than your nation has existed, and will continue for some time to come, unless something happens which requires our attention.

In general, we dragons have few relations with the Young Races. Most of you small folk are too fragile, too short-lived and too impatient to appreciate the nuances of dragon culture, and far too many of you consider dragons nothing more than creatures to be slain or bowed to in abject fear. It is difficult to have a conversation with a Name-giver who is either cowering in terror or trying to hack you to pieces.

On rare occasions we do find Name-givers (such as yourself) who are willing to converse with us, or to petition for aid or advice. I know many of my kind who have no interest in speaking with other Name-givers whatsoever. They live in isolation from the Young Races and consider them no more than an occasional light snack when there are no cattle





or other food available. In their view, the Young Races are a waste of our time (although why they worry about the loss of a few days out of a life span such as ours is beyond me).

There are some among us, such as Doll-Maker (known to you as Icewing) and myself, who view themselves as representatives of our kind to yours. We go out of our way to make out lairs accessible to those of you in need of our wisdom and insight. Be forewarned, however, our attention rarely comes without a price.

So, conversations such as this one are exceedingly rare, as you might imagine. Only true seekers of knowledge and intelligent discourse seek us out and capture our attention as you have done, Tiabdjinn. For that reason, we tend to deal more often with the Young Races given to scholarship and contemplation, such as you dwarfs or the obsidimen. The cultures of orks and trolls tend to be too violent and too wrapped up in their endless raiding and wars to consider us anything more than another enemy to fight. Windlings are often too flighty, and I sometimes wonder if humans will ever realize they are not the sole center of all creation. The t'skrang have had their dealing with my kind, and they understand some of what it is to be hatched. The elves I will speak of shortly.

The Kingdom of Throal

The Kingdom of Throal is the only great power of Barsaive to have significant dealings with dragonkind. In addition to myself and the great works I have bequeathed to the Library of Throal, the dwarf kingdom has had relations with my fellow great dragon Doll-Maker in the past, as well as crossed paths with Root Protector (known to you as Earthroot), the dragon-king of the Pale Ones, who lives in the subterranean depths of the Throal Mountains. And then, of course, there is young King Neden's encounter with Far Scholar (known to you as Mountainshadow) in his childhood. Indeed, Throal seems to have attracted a great deal of attention from us in comparison to the other kingdoms of Barsaive.

Before you or anyone else interprets this as some kind of special favor towards the dwarf kingdom, let me say that our dealings with Throal are not favoritism, nor biased in any way. For the most part, they simply stem from the fact that Throal is a great power in Barsaive, and one willing to entertain the notion of civilized dealings with my kind. The other nations and city-states of this land consider dragons a threat, but I believe Throal is beginning to recognize and understand our true nature. We are no threat to that which does not threaten us.

The Blood Wood

The elves of Blood Wood take every opportunity to slander dragons and express their distrust of us. They claim one of my kind, the great dragon Elfbane (known to you as Alamaise), was responsible for the death of their Queen Dallia. I will not dignify their tales and rumors with a response, except to say this: if the elves outside of the Elven Court could understand a tenth of what really happened to their Queen, and why, they would not be so quick to condemn us.

The Blood Elves, especially, are hardly fit to pass judgment on any other Name-giver, given what they have done to themselves and their once-beautiful home. I prefer to have no dealing with them whatsoever. Swallowing one up is a painful proposition, at least without first roasting them so that their thorns turn to char. Even then, they are so riddled with corruption that they leave a foul aftertaste long after you swallow them, like a bitter root.

The Theran Empire

The dealings of dragonkind with the Theran Empire are well known. In the years before the Scourge, when the Therans spread the word of the coming Horrors, some dragons sought to offer our knowledge to aid the Young Races. The techniques we use for creating our lairs are not unlike those of the kaers offered by the Therans, although vastly superior. When we generously offered our help to the Young Races, how was it received? The Theran Empire began a program of persecution and execution against any dragon who tried to undermine their monopoly on protection against the Horrors. We were given no choice but to defend ourselves.

After the first few Therans died, the Empire wisely chose to leave us alone. We, in turn, withdrew our offer of aid to the Young Races and allowed the Therans to go about their business. In the end, the separation and servitude the Empire forced on provinces such as Barsaive backfired. During the Scourge, Throal realized the folly of the Theran way and chose its own path, as have other places once loyal to the Empire. Now Thera tries to reunite their scattered Empire through the power of spell and sword. They have clearly learned nothing since their dealings with us long ago.

Of the Theran Empire's current game of brinkmanship in Barsaive, I shall say only this: the Empire discovered once what happens to those who challenge us. Let us hope they have learned their lesson.





On Worship and Service

There are those among the Young Races who recognize the ancient power and wisdom we possess. Some of these Name-givers choose to devote themselves to our service, helping to improve relations between us and the Young Races through their work. I have known many over the years, and they are devoted folk, although sometimes a bit too devoted.

It is quite understandable, you see, that some Name-givers consider us objects of worship and veneration just as others consider us objects of fear. Reverence and dread are closely related, Tiabdjin. To please us, these Name-givers offer us devotion and service. We, in turn, can offer them our knowledge, our protection and a sense of purpose in life. Not all dragons choose to accept the supplication of others. Most of us prefer lives of solitude and to choose or make our own servants as needed.

Others of my kind, however, thrive on the attention and love of the Young Races. Far Scholar, for example, came to the aid of many Name-givers before the Scourge, offering them shelter in his vast lair in the Dragon Mountains. The descendants of those people consider the great dragon their savior and treat him like one of the Passions; offering him homage and continued loyalty. Root Protector, a fellow great dragon, is the king of the Pale Ones, an extended tribe of t'skrang living in deep caves and underground rivers beneath the Throal Mountains. The presence of his small nation of t'skrang allows Root Protector to carry out his activities through many servants, and to have eyes and ears throughout his underground domain. For their part, the Pale Ones treat Root Protector as both king and patron Passion of their people.

I have heard of other dragons who permit Name-givers to serve them. It is an ancient tradition, after all. Nevertheless, most dragons prefer solitude over the recreation of past glories.

A Dragon's Life

So, you ask, what is it that dragons do? I have told you of the grand scheme, of the cycle of life from birth onward, but what of the daily business of dragonkind? What things make up the routine of a dragon? Worthy questions, deserving of answers. Attend and you shall learn how we spend our time.

Lairs

The most important place to a dragon is her lair, much as the home of a Name-giver is central to his life. We spend much of our time in our lairs, and we try to make them as comfortable and pleasant as possible. The similarity with the homes of other Name-givers ends there. A dragon lair is as different from a simple dwarf stone house as is a t'skrang tower deep beneath the waters of the Serpent River, or the Palace of the Elf Queen, growing from the very trees of the Blood Wood.

The most common type of lair used by dragons is a cave located high in the mountains. We dragons are creatures of flight, soaring high above the Earth, and we prefer our homes to be in suitably aerial environs. Some dragons prefer more earthly homes, like the depths of a dark forest or swamp, or even a subterranean den, but most of my kind live close to the sky.

Mountain caves are well-suited to our needs for a number of reasons beyond this, however. They are dry and comfortably temperate, remaining cool in the heat of day and warm in the chill of night. The stone in many caves is worn smooth, making it pleasant to lie upon (although some rough spots are wonderful for scratching one's scales against when they become dry and itchy).

We do not require furnishings like you small folk—what chair could hold a dragon, after all? For us, the flat surfaces of our lair are enough to lie upon, and many dragons gather their belongings close for their repose, curling around a cool pile of metal and crystal.

Likewise, we do not need most of the tools the Young Races surround themselves with. We eat our food raw, or sometimes prepare it first with dragon breath. The refuse is cast outside the lair, and serves as a warning to other predators (and Name-givers) not to approach too close without invitation. We get water from underground springs, mountain lakes and the power of our own magic as needed. We have no use for the other trinkets Name-givers fawn over except as suits our hoard, a topic I will explain shortly.

Our inherent understanding and sensing of the astral world and its effects upon the material world allow us to choose our lairs with great care, ensuring a place safe from the taint of the Horrors, where we can work our magic freely. I am sad to say that such places have become increasingly rare since the Scourge. Only the dragon lairs which remained





sealed throughout the Scourge have avoided any touch of corruption. New lairs are becoming harder to find, and young dragons have been known to fight for control of a prime lair, or even to settle for lairing in more questionable territory, restraining much of their magic to avoid the notice of the Horrors.

A dragon's lair is more than just a home, however. It is a place that, over time, becomes a part of us, like an extension of ourselves. We can sense the presence of unwanted visitors in our lairs just as you might feel a bug crawling across your skin. We also use magic to create various wards and traps to protect our lairs, just as many Name-giver magicians protected their kaers and shelters from the Horror during the Scourge. But whereas most traps Name-givers make are intended primarily to prevent entrance or to injure their victim, our traps also alert us to the presence of trespassers in our lairs. Any Name-giver who thinks to surprise a dragon in her lair is in for a rude awakening.

Shal-Mora

We spend most, in fact nearly all, of our time in our lairs in a state we call shal-mora. It has no translation in any other Name-giver language, but it has some similarities (albeit vague) to the state the obsidimen call "the Dreaming" among their own kind. It is a trance-state somewhere between sleep and deep thought, nearly indistinguishable from sleep to non-dragons. A dragon in shal-mora is at rest, usually curled up on the floor of its lair, and to most onlookers appears to be slumbering. In truth, dragons do not sleep or dream nearly often as the Young Races do, perhaps only once a month or so. The rest of the time, our minds are active in shal-mora.

While in shal-mora we think and contemplate things—many, many things. Our long lives give us more memories than I suspect could even fit into the minds of the Young Races, so we always have something to think about or consider. The shal-mora shuts out minor distractions and worldly concerns, allowing us to focus inward and make the most use of our considerable mental faculties. It is not a complete ignorance of the outside world, however—quite the opposite. Shal-mora has the effect of opening up our consciousness and putting our minds in a state of hyper-awareness, so that thoughts and sensory input flow with increased speed. A dragon in shal-mora can rouse instantly at the first sign of trouble or an intruder in its lair. Many would-be dragon-slayers have taken the shal-mora to mean that dragons sleep constantly, and can therefore be taken unawares. They have learned their mistake when their prey surprised them with sudden wakefulness.

Hunting & Eating

Outside of our lairs, we dragons spend a good deal of our time hunting. As you might imagine, we require a great deal of food to sustain us, being so much larger than other Name-givers. Although we can create food magically when needed, most dragons prefer our food as fresh as possible. Several sheep or cattle can make a decent meal for a dragon, as can any number of succulent creatures like cave crabs or dyres, or even some horsemeat or mountain goat when the mood strikes.

[At this moment, the Master of Secrets realized he was quite hungry and excused himself for a time to go hunting. He returned an hour or so later with a slightly charred ox clutched in his foreclaws, which he dropped on the floor of his lair and proceeded to tear into as he continued his narrative. Although he offered me a share of the meat, I politely refused; partially cooked beef has never been a favorite of mine.]

Now, as I was saying, dragons are primarily meat-eaters. We eat greenery occasionally, to supplement our diet and aid in proper digestion, but our diet properly consists of prey. The type of animals eaten depends on the individual dragon's taste, much as certain dwarfs may like mutton while others prefer chicken or turkey. I have known other dragons to eat the most disgusting or unpleasant things, such as saurals or sea snakes.

Contrary to tales I have heard, dragons rarely eat members of the Young Races. It does happen from time to time, of course, but I know few if any dragons who regularly hunt other Name-givers for food. After all, it is far easier to hunt prey that doesn't carry a grudge as you small folk do. A dragon who too often indulges in a meal of Name-givers quickly finds itself the target of endless would-be dragon-slayers, and can even bring the wrath of an entire nation down on its head. It's altogether easier to stick to simple beasts and eat only those Name-givers foolish enough to violate one's lair uninvited. This maintains good relations, and helps you small folk by weeding out the most stupid of your kind, hopefully before they've had an opportunity to breed. Personally, I find most other Name-givers only vaguely satisfying; t'skrang are too tough and salty, and eating orks tends to upset my stomach. Trolls are entirely too crunchy for my taste, and dwarfs... Tiabdjin, you are looking quite pale, are you well? Oh, I see, perhaps we should turn back to hunting, yes?





The hunting territory of a dragon is considered part of the dragon's domain. As you might imagine, we require a very large area in which to hunt. An individual dragon may claim an area of about a day's flight from its lair (somewhere in the area of 4-6 days walking for most Name-givers by my calculations). Any intrusion into the territory of another dragon is considered a serious offense unless the visitor performs the proper Rites, such as the Rite of Visitation, and has business with the master of the domain.

We hunt for a portion of each day. Usually we find a decent meal early or late in the day, and spend much of the remainder of the day resting in *shal-mora* while the food settles. During times when we are more active, such as while you and I have been working on this document, we eat smaller meals more frequently. This helps maintain a feeling of lightness and wakefulness.

Correspondence

We dragons are not as social as the Young Races; we do not build cities or habitations to live together. Once a young dragon leaves the care of its sire, it finds a lair of its own and has little direct contact with other dragons outside of mating. We value our solitude and prefer to keep conflicts between us to a minimum.

Still, there are many reasons for a dragon to keep in touch with others. We have siblings, egg-mates and even friends among our own kind. Does that surprise you? Additionally, we exchange ideas, thoughts and news of importance to our fellow dragons.

Most of this correspondence is not conducted in person. As I said, eye-to-eye meetings among my kind are rare, since they tend to cause struggles for dominance and provoke our predatory nature. Instead, we conduct our business through messengers, usually servants such as drakes or summoned spirits able to quickly carry messages across the great distance between our lairs. From time to time we entrust messages to other Name-givers, servants or hirelings, much like you might employ a courier to deliver something to a distant city.

Short messages can be entrusted to the memory of a servant to deliver (drakes have excellent memories by design). Longer correspondence and important ideas are placed in memory crystals to be delivered to the other dragon or dragons. Only rarely do we make use of written documents as the Young Races do; such pages tend to be too cumbersome and fragile for our use. I remember—yes, yes, little one, I see you. What may I answer for you now?

Drakes, Master?

All good things in time, Tiabdjîn. I'll explain drakes later; suffice it to say for now that they are servants of dragons created in our own image.

Hoarding

In addition to hunting, and conducting business with our fellow dragons, another activity that takes up much of our time is hoarding. I use the term because it is common among your own scholars and legends, a more appropriate word for it might be "gathering" or "collecting."

You see, dragons are creatures with very long memories. Our lives may last longer than the history of one of your nations, and we have many experiences and times to remember. We hoard things of value to help remind us of the different stories and tales that make up our long lives. For example, the jeweled hilt you see sticking up over there is the Sword of Hallad the Bold, an ork warrior who lived in Cara Fahd long before the Scourge. He tried to slay me over some piddling quarrel involving some cattle and a nobleman's daughter. I keep the sword as a reminder of our battle. He fought quite well, but underestimated me in the end, which is invariably fatal. Each of the other items here has a similar story.

We also retain items such as memory crystals containing useful or valuable knowledge. I have even known some dragons to find and keep books and scrolls written by other Name-givers. Some make a habit of hoarding the bones of worthy enemies and prey, while others I know keep collections of certain kinds of metals, jewels, armor and other such things.

If my hoard seems large to you, just think of the vast number of things you small folk accumulate over your short lives and compare it to the store of a dragon such as I. When you think about it, you'll see we dragons are actually quite frugal. If I had kept every bauble and coin that fell into my talons since I Named myself, I would need a lair many times the size of this one, just to keep it all in! Time forces us to choose to keep only the things which have the greatest meaning and use, the rest is used to pursue various interests, given away or used as the owner sees fit.





Personal Interests

The remainder of time not spent hunting, hoarding, communicating with our fellow dragons or resting and contemplating in shal-mora is spent as we please. Dragons indulge in a variety of activities to pass the time and expand their personal knowledge and experience. Often times a particular activity will seize a dragon's heart and the dragon will follow it with great devotion for a few years, perhaps even as long as a century, before losing interest and moving on to something else.

I, for example, was fascinated with the Andevin school of music in the ancient kingdom of Landis before the Scourge, and I spent many years secretly patronizing the musicians of that school before the fall of the kingdom. One of the greatest tragedies of the Scourge was the loss of such fine and wonderful music.

Dragons have personal interests as broad, if not more so, than any race. Dragons can become interested in nearly anything, and our long lives give us the opportunity to experience many different things. The various arts most commonly capture our interest, ranging from philosophy to poetry to sculpture and music. Some of us have even been known to become secret patrons of Name-givers artists who catch our attention, as I did with the Andevin School.

Of course, the greatest art among us is magic. We often spend a great deal of time contemplating the twist and turns of the astral fabric, learning new techniques and methods of magic. Magical experimentation can be a tricky business, even for us, so it is undertaken with great care. Accidents do happen, but such things are never allowed to get out of control.

Master, I am curious; how do dragons experience many of these things you speak of? You say you patronized the Andevin School in secret, but I would think the presence of a great dragon at a performance of a group of troubadours would draw no small amount of attention.

Quite so, Tiabdjin, which brings me to an important and little-known facet of our nature.

[So saying, the Master of Secrets lifted up his long neck, his eyes flashing with magical power, and vanished.]

Walking on Two Legs

[In Vasdenjas' place stood a dwarf of most noble stature and bearing. He was quite tall for a dwarf, towering easily a full head taller than me. His hair and beard were a sandy color, with golden highlights gleaming in the light of the cavern, and his eyes were the most unusual shade of amber. I could not say for sure how old he appeared; somewhere in the vague age between maturity and old age. He wore the fine clothes and cloak of a dwarf gentleman, right down to a high polish on his black leather boots and a pair of fine calfskin gloves tucked into his belt. Gold gleamed on his fingers and one of his ears, and mischief twinkled in his eyes as he regarded me, sitting quite in a state of shock. I opened my mouth to speak, but no sound came forth, the strange dwarf threw back his head and gave a laugh that echoed in the suddenly large and empty cave.]

You should see the look on your face, Tiabdjin! Ah, I have not had such amusement in some time. Why so shocked, my dwarf friend? I have told you that we are creatures of magic, with powers equal to those of any magician. With spellcasters able to take the forms of birds and bats and illusory beasts, I would think a dragon able to take the shape of your people would not be so surprising. The magic used for both are not so different from one another.

I suppose not, Master. It's just the idea that a great dragon would wish to take dwarf form never really occurred to me. And why should it? Why, you might ask, would a being as great and powerful as I wish to take on the shape and bearing of so small a creature as a dwarf?

Listen carefully and I shall explain. Since the very beginning, we have studied the nature of the Young Races to better understand you. At first it was to care for you and help guide you as an elder race should, and later, to understand and observe as you made your own way. We learned much through the power of dragon-speech, reading memories and experiences directly from the minds of certain Name-givers, and this inspired in some of us a desire to understand the nature of your kind first hand. These dragons developed the skills necessary to alter our natural form into one resembling yours. Over time, we learned to use magic to assume the form of any of the Young Races, and some dragons became quite adept at the art of form-changing. It allowed us to move among the Young Races unnoticed, to experience life as you small folk do, and to see things without the response offered to a mighty dragon.

There is a legend among your people of how King Varulus the First would disguise himself as a commoner using illusion magic and walk out among his people. He desired to hear their opinions and concerns, and to debate important issues with them without the separation of king and commoner. I can tell you he got that idea from us (from





Doll-Maker, to be specific). We already knew the value of seeing the world through another set of eyes. Our knowledge of form-changing also allowed us to give our drake servants the inborn ability to assume Name-giver form, blending the most useful aspects of the Young Races with draconic resilience and strength.

It is quite an experience to see the world through other eyes. Your forms take some getting used to, as they are quite soft and small and fragile. You lack talons and fangs to fight with, and have no armor except what you make for yourselves. Your vision is dim and blurred compared to ours. Even the heatsight that dwarfs possess lacks clarity to my eyes. Your hearing is likewise muffled and your senses of smell and taste nearly nonexistent by dragon standards. I was pleasantly surprised by the sensitivity of touch possessed by many of the Young Races; soft and supple skin has its advantages, I suppose.

However, your skin must be covered and protected against the heat, the cold, the sun, wind and rain. The sensation of wearing clothing is a very strange one. Never would a dragon have thought of wrapping itself up in a fabric. Yet it is not unlike the comfort of being back in the astral cocoon again. Before I experienced clothing, I had no idea of the feeling of different textures of fabric sliding over skin (and of course, the sensation of having skin rather than scales was still new to me as well). Clothing also comes in such a bewildering variety of styles, shapes and colors. It allows you to change your plumage to suit the occasion, a most interesting idea. I have experimented a bit with different styles of Name-giver clothing, and have found that the clothes one wears can radically alter how others interact with you. Most curious.

I also quite like your hands.

[Here Vasdenjas, still in dwarf form, held out one hand and flexed it, turning it over and looking at it like something he'd never seen before.]

Name-giver hands are remarkable things. We dragons have a fair amount of dexterity ourselves, but nothing quite like the small, clever hands of the Young Races, so well suited for making and using the tools you love so much. So very sensitive, able to tell many things by touch alone. I have quite enjoyed using hands to wield both pen and sword, using tools as you might use them. That is the whole reason for the experience.

Assuming the form of one of the Young Races allows us to understand you more fully. We can know what it is to eat, sleep, speak and move as one of you in a way that even dragonspeech cannot fully convey. I know that many of my kind consider other Name-giver forms weak and unpleasant, and I confess that I would not wish to spend the whole of my existence trapped in a form such as this, but there is so much to experience from other perspectives it is quite compelling. Eating and drinking as an ork, running and hunting as a human, swimming as a t'skrang, mating rituals...

Excuse me, Master, did you say mating?

What? Oh, yes. Yes, I did.

Then you have... ?

Coupled with other Name-givers? Yes, on occasion. Your customs are so different from ours, the experiences proved most interesting.

I see. Could anything ever come of such a coupling of a dragon and another Name-giver?

[The words had barely left my lips when Vasdenjas' brows crouched low over his dark eyes and his dwarf form began to stretch and flow like water, growing larger and reassuming his true form, towering above me mere seconds later.]

Certainly not! It would be quite impossible. Coupling with other Name-givers is something we once did out of curiosity, a passing fancy, but it is no longer permitted. No dragon among us bothers with it any more, I'm sure. In fact, we rarely assume Name-giver form these days. It was something of an experiment once, but we prefer to keep to ourselves now, so most dragons do not invest the time or effort in learning the necessary magic any longer.

[After this point, any further attempt at discussing the matter with the Master of Secrets was met with tangents and stories of other things, so this work cannot further illuminate the experience of dragons taking Name-giver form, other than to say it is clearly possible. But we can speculate on the possibilities.]

Vasdenjas' words reminded me of the t'skrang legend of the founding of the line of House Syrtis. The Syrtis claim their ancient ancestress mated in secret with the Dragon of the Moon to produce their line. Many scholars have taken this tale as apocryphal or symbolic in some way, but perhaps there are Name-givers, such as the Syrtis, who are literally descended from the union of a dragon in Name-giver form and another Name-giver. Certainly, the Shivalahala Syrtis is one of the greatest magicians and seers in all of Barsaive. Do her unique talents (and perhaps, even her well-known eccentricities) stem from this unusual heritage? I cannot say with any certainty, and the Master of Secrets remains silent, almost suspiciously so, on this matter.]





Dragon Magic

Dragons have practiced magic since long before the Young Races understood the power of Names and patterns at all. Magic is woven into our very beings, as natural to us as breathing or flying. Over the millennia, we have gained a great deal of knowledge and wisdom in the Art. Adult dragons have magical skills rivaling some of the greatest magicians among the Young Races, including even the famed Heavenherds of Thera, while we great dragons have magic unrivaled by any other creature.

Innate Magic

Dragons are born with certain insights and abilities of magic that take Name-giver magicians years to learn. We are natural spellcasters and possess dragonsight, allowing us to clearly perceive the weave of astral space in a way almost incomprehensible to others. I will try to make clear the natural advantages we possess.

First and foremost, dragons have a natural astral sight ability not unlike that possessed by windlings, though far superior. We can see the astral images and patterns of everything around us through an act of will. Other Name-givers learn to perceive astral space so they can learn to use magic, but dragons are born with the ability to do so. Right now, Tiabdjinn, I can see your astral image as clearly as your physical body. I can see the complex threading of your Pattern and the many subtle shadings of your thoughts, feelings and history woven into it. Given time, I could study your Pattern to learn more about it. Our ability to do so is the basis of our magic.

However, since the Scourge, dragonsight has become something of a mixed blessing. While it allows us to see the areas of astral space warped and corrupted by the presence of the Horrors, and thereby avoid those places, it also causes us to see the damage done by the Scourge to astral space, damage that has not healed like many physical scars the world bears from the passage of the Horrors. Few Name-givers remember the sublime beauty of astral space in the time before the coming of the Scourge. To view it as it is now is a great tragedy.

You will recall my saying how dragonspeech allows us to express thoughts and ideas in a way other languages do not allow. The power of dragonspeech also allows us to speak to the Universe in words it understands. Our true language is the language of ideas, concepts and patterns. Using the power of dragonspeech, it is possible to express any pattern we desire and manifest that pattern in astral space. Magicians of the Young Races call this process "spellcasting:" the creation of a pattern which expresses a particular effect, charged with astral energies to bring the effect into the physical world.

Once, this ability allowed us to cast spells in a way no other Name-giver could emulate, then or now. We merely focused our desire on the patterns of astral space and, through the power of our will, brought that desire into being. We used no grimoires, no codified spells. They were not needed.

Master, I am no magician, but the process you describe sounds much like what we call "raw magic," something Name-giver magicians have known of for centuries.

Tiabdjinn, I thought you were paying more attention. Our natural magic is indeed much like what you Young Races call raw magic, with one important difference. A magician may cast any spell he knows using raw magic, but he must first learn the spell's pattern and know how to call up that pattern in his mind's eye to cast it, even with raw magic. We do not need to learn patterns, we create raw spell patterns at will. Using natural magic, a dragon can cast any spell that exists, or create a new one on the spot. Anything we could imagine, we could do with sufficient effort and strength of will.

Spell Magic

As it has done to so much of our world, the Scourge and the tainting of astral space changed our use of magic. There had always been those among us who studied the ways of the magician, creating more complex and codified forms of spell magic. But the coming of the Horrors made the use of our natural spellcasting abilities dangerous even for creatures as powerful as we. The damage we caused ourselves by use of raw magic was previously so minor it was hardly noticed, not the risk weaker Name-givers take when they allow the energies of astral space to surge through their frail forms. Still, the warping damage one suffered in places where the Horrors passed was great enough to make even a dragon wary. Even so, that was not the greatest concern.





The most serious threat is the danger of being marked by a Horror. Yes, even dragons fear the danger a Horror mark poses. Given our innate skill and understanding of magic, no dragon dares risk becoming a victim of the Horrors' ability to corrupt from within. To allow such power to fall into the hands of the Horrors might well cost the world much more than we lost during the Scourge, and so most of us abandoned use of our innate spellcasting except when we were assured of safety, such as in our own lairs. In its place many of my kind took up the study of spell magic as other Name-givers performed it, using spell matrices to protect them from the pollution of astral space and the notice of the Horrors. These techniques allowed us to use spell magic safely, even though it requires more time and learning than the abilities that come to us naturally. Because of the limitations of Name-giver spell magic, not all dragons bothered to learn these techniques. Many of them suffered for their lack of foresight, I can tell you.

We study the spells of the various disciplines much as you Young Races do, although we have no need for grimoires to record spell formulas and patterns. Such formulas and patterns are quite simple to memorize or impress in a memory crystal to pass on to others. We also invent our own spells quite often. I have heard many legends of Name-givers stealing a dragon's grimoire, and I can tell you there is no truth to any of them. Even if a band of adventurers were to find a memory crystal used by a dragon to store spell patterns and lore, and remove it from the dragon's lair, there is no way known for any other Name-giver to make use of the information without the benefit of dragonspeech.

There is some truth to tales of dragons teaching spells to Name-giver magicians. A spell pattern is a spell pattern, after all, and some rare magicians are clever enough to learn some useful spells from a dragon with the patience to teach. Magical lore is not given away cheaply, however, and it is frowned upon for a dragon to teach any magician secrets that might later come back to threaten us.

Most adult dragons choose to learn the spells of a particular discipline, such as elementalism or wizardry. As they grow older, most branch out into other disciplines. Great dragons generally know spells from several different disciplines, although some can be single-minded enough to focus solely on a single discipline for centuries. These dragons often develop considerable finesse in their use of spells, using more complex techniques to make their spells harder to dispel, or to create spell-traps for their lairs.

The process of using spells is the same for us as it is for any other Name-giver. We do have certain advantages over the Young Races, of course, such as our natural talent for using spells, our faster thought processes and a knack for understanding and recalling spell patterns. These allow dragons to cast complex spells far more quickly than any other Name-giver magician.

Thread Magic

Dragonsight gives all dragons the ability to see the patterns of things. From the very earliest times, we understood the importance of Names and patterns and learned how to use them to our advantage. Weaving connections to the True Patterns of other things and beings is an ancient art among my kind.

We use thread magic in some of the same ways as other Name-givers: tying threads from our True Patterns to the patterns of other creatures and places via Pattern Items, in order to enhance our abilities in dealing with them. It is a common practice, for example, for a dragon to weave a thread to its lair. The thread's magic can be used to enhance one of the dragon's abilities within the lair or—more commonly—to enhance one of the lair's own properties; making its defenses stronger or its traps and wards more difficult to detect, for example.

Dragons also weave threads to other beings, but rarely. We do not usually concern ourselves with the Pattern Items of other Name-givers, although some dragons have many Pattern Items in their hoards. We guard the nature and location of our own Pattern Items very carefully indeed. I know one dragon who nearly allowed one of his Pattern Items to fall into the hands of other Name-givers, a mistake which might have spelled his downfall if it had not been recovered. Pattern Items have great power, even over us.

There was once a practice of weaving threads to the True Pattern of a trusted and valued Name-giver servant or champion. A dragon would show favor to the Name-giver by weaving threads to his or her pattern, providing magic to increase the champion's abilities. This practice has nearly died out in this age, as few Name-givers are willing to entrust a dragon with one of their Pattern Items, and our other servants are best left as we have made them. Still, a dragon with possession of a Name-giver's Pattern Item is in as much of a position to help them as to hurt them.

Unlike you small folk, we do not weave threads to things very often. We do not use the magical devices and equipment that form the basis for so many tales and legends among your kind, so we have no need to weave such threads. Occasionally a dragon possesses a Named item of sufficient magic and power to weave a thread to power it, but most dragons I know do not bother with such things.





Our dragonsight and intimate knowledge of patterns does allow us a certain insight into magical items few magicians or other Name-givers can match. Adepts have been known to bring items to a dragon to ask for aid in deciphering the object's pattern so they can use it. Doll-Maker often entertains such audiences in exchange for a suitable gift, but I prefer to keep such unwanted visitors away from my lair. Such Name-givers are better off to learn some true scholarship, in my view, rather than look for quick answers from their betters.

Spirit Magic

As a general rule dragons do not traffic with spirits as often as the magicians and adepts of the Young Races do. Perhaps it is some inherent need on the part of you small creatures to command other beings to do your bidding, I cannot say. We dragons have servants enough without the need to surround ourselves with a flock of stubborn and strong-willed spirits, who are often more trouble than they are worth.

Not that spirits don't make useful servants. I frequently employ tasked spirits to carry out minor errands such as delivering messages to my noble associates elsewhere in Barsaive, tidying up my lair and keeping watch over the goings-on in my domain. These are tasks suited to a spirit. So is more specialized work, like calling on an earth spirit to dig a new tunnel into the mountain, or a water spirit to provide a new spring for drinking. For any of these things, I can call forth a spirit, set it to work and dismiss it when the task is done. For longer, more precise tasks requiring a level of intelligence, drakes are far more useful and agreeable. Spirits tend to become rebellious and quarrelsome over time.

Despite my above words, however, there are great dragons who make frequent and effective use of spirit servants, most often elemental spirits. Most often a great dragon will use spirits native to the terrain of their lair as guards and servants. I leave it to your delightfully curious mind to ponder which great dragons use which types of spirits, as there are some secrets which need remain secret.

The one area of spirit magic we know best is tied to life magic, which I will explain in a moment.

We also have our dealings from time to time with spirits that are not our servants. Most of them steer well clear of us, as even powerful Named spirits know not to offend a dragon. We can see spirits where they are normally invisible to other Name-givers, and our powers are sufficient to deal with any upstart spirit that gets out of control. The mere sound of a dragon's roar is enough to send lesser spirits scattering like dead leaves before a gale wind.

Blood Magic

Dragons do not practice blood magic as other Name-givers do. Indeed, for the most part we do not practice blood magic at all, since it is a practice that is both dangerous and unnecessary for beings at our level of magical power and sophistication. Unfortunately, you Young Races have not yet learned the wisdom to handle blood magic properly, and your ignorance of its power and danger has done nothing to curb your usage of it. I sometimes think the Scourge taught you nothing.

The use of blood magic to empower spells and items (such as charms) is unknown among dragons. We have no need for the tiny power offered by blood charms, which some among the Young Races use to imitate dragons, giving themselves claws, armored skin and astral sight. I recall the first time I saw a Name-giver laden with these charms, which turned his whole body into a crude imitation of our most noble form. I was nearly paralyzed with mirth at the sight, although my good humor was cut short by his attempt to stab me with a spear. I demonstrated most eloquently the superiority of our natural abilities over his magical add-ons. In fact, I think I still have his stone-covered hide here somewhere. Perhaps I can show it to you later.

Likewise, the use of blood drawn from other creatures for magic is forbidden among dragons. It is a corrupt practice that cannot be tolerated among any Name-givers. That the Therans continue to use the sacrifice of slaves by the thousands to prop up their tottering Empire is another example of their corruption and ultimate road to doom. How little some learn from the mistakes of the past. Such a short-term gain in power is not worth its cost a short way down the path.

Two forms of blood magic are known and used among my kind. The first is what you Young Races call "life magic," a far more apt Name in my opinion. Life magic is a personal sacrifice of some kind to support an act of magic. It is used to create and seal oaths and to work powerful magic, and can also be used by us in the creation of new life. Dragons can and do use life magic for the creation of blood oaths among us, although such an oath is always a very serious matter. A blood oath may bind one of us for centuries, even millennia, so a dragon makes no promise lightly, especially one sealed in blood.





A kind of life magic is also used in the creation of our drake servants. Life must always come from life in some way, so the creator of a drake must make a sacrifice to spark the new creation's life force. The process is long and laborious, similar to spells and rituals employed by some nethermancers, but far more sophisticated.

Ritual Magic

Most of the magic I have spoken of until now is used by the Young Races in one form or another. We dragons may have more skill and experience, but the most capable of your magicians can duplicate many of the same feats of magic I have described. However, there is magic known only to dragons, magic beyond anything any other Name-giver race has ever accomplished.

I have told you of our Rites and Rituals, how they serve to maintain good relations between dragons. What you do not yet know are the rituals of great magical power, rites that allow us to cooperate not only socially but magically as well. Name-giver magicians have means by which lesser talents support greater ones; apprentices lending power to their teacher, servants to their master. The rituals we work allow us to cooperate as peers, equal powers combining to perform magic far greater than any individual dragon could accomplish alone. In fact such magic is so powerful that I question whether any one individual or group should ever wield such power at all.

With the power of our magical rituals, we can change the face of the world: level mountains, flood plains, dry oceans and sink islands. We can change the course of the heavens, shake the foundations of the earth and even alter the very course of history forever. It is the power to reweave the most primal patterns of existence into new forms, to speak to the Universe and be obeyed.

As you might well imagine, it is not a power to be used lightly. We once used our great power without the wisdom or foresight needed to wield it properly, and terrible mistakes were made. We have since learned restraint and the need to judge our every action in light of what might be the consequences. In the whole history of your kingdom, no ritual like I describe has been performed. It is difficult at best to gather enough dragons together in one place, to gain the cooperation needed to perform such a ritual is rare in the extreme. Since all of those who take part must agree fully that the ritual is necessary, it is an often debated and rarely settled issue. If we are fortunate and Fate is kind, this Age may never see the full power of dragon magic. However, it is my experience that Fate is rarely kind.

[Like so many topics he discussed in the course of dictating this essay to me, Vasdenjas refused to elaborate on his cryptic comments concerning ritual magic. I thought to try to learn more by asking questions related to ritual magic, hoping to gradually shift the conversation to my true goal. I should have known better. Vasdenjas anticipated my every question, and every attempt to learn more was met with a quick and subtle rebuke. He finally convinced me to cease my efforts when, after assuming dwarf form once again, he looked directly into my eyes and said to me "Tiabdjinn, you might believe that I and my kind fear nothing, and that there is nothing we would not dare attempt. In truth, there are things that even great dragons dare not meddle with. Ritual magic is one of them."

I needed to hear nothing further.]





CONCERNING THE DIVERSE TYPES OF DRAGONS

[The following material contains Master Vasdenjas' musings on the differences among various types of dragons, including types of dragons that are not at all well-known within the boundaries of Barsaive. These dragons hail from distant lands, such as Cathay and Indrisa, and Araucania, far across the Selestrean Sea. Though these dragons are only rarely (if ever) seen in Barsaive, based on Vasdenjas' stories and lectures on these other types of dragons, I believe Vasdenjas (and, perhaps, the other great dragons of Barsaive) had or have regular contact with others of their kind in remote places.]

Dragons come in as much variety—if not more—than the Young Races. We have unique colors, shapes and features all our own, as distinctive as your own colors and textures of hair and skin, your facial and body shapes and other things Name-givers use to distinguish themselves from each other. No two dragons are exactly the same, any more than two other Name-givers are exactly the same. (And before you ask, Tiabdjinn, twins are exceedingly rare among my kind, since we are not born as you are, but hatched. I can recall but one instance of identical dragon twins in my entire life—not egg twins—but that is a tale for another time.)

Although there are many individual variations among my kind, dragons can be broadly divided into four main types. In some cases the type is related to the areas where they usually dwell, in other cases, the type is identified by other factors. You small folk have your own Names for these types of dragons already, and so I will use them, despite the fact that they are often erroneous and even rather clumsy. Such is to be expected of your language, I suppose. Among ourselves, the four types of dragons are thought of in relation to four of the elements. Beyond these four types are the great dragons, who remain distinct and separate from our younger brethren.

The four types of dragons are separate races in much the way that elves are not the same as humans, who are not the same as t'skrang, yet they are all Name-givers. In the same way, although the different types of dragons often appear quite different from each other, even in having different limbs and bodies, we are all dragons, all part of the same line that began with Nightslayer and Dayheart so long ago. All dragons share a tie of blood and history that cannot be denied.

Common Dragons

I will begin, of course, with the dragons best known to the people of Barsaive. Since the type which I and the other great dragons—with the exception of Root Protector—sprang from is the most common in this land, you have given us the Name “common” dragons. Depending on which dragon you ask, this a matter of either great humor or great displeasure among my kind. As if any dragon, even the smallest hatchling, could be considered “common!” I was quite shocked to discover the word used in some of the scholarly texts in your own Library.

Though I understand the resistance to change among Name-givers (including dragons), I strongly advise both your fellow scholars and the people of Barsaive to seriously consider using a different word for the dragons you see most often. At the very least, do not call any dragon “common” to her face if you wish to avoid becoming her next meal. Although I would tend not to devour a Name-giver merely for the mistake of ill-informed scholars and poor language, most of my kind are not nearly so merciful or understanding of your ways.

To the people and dragons of Cathay, we are known as “western dragons,” a name I find considerably more polite than “common dragon.” But then, the people of Cathay have always shown more of the proper respect for my kind than any of the other Young Races in this world, as I shall explain in due time. Among ourselves, the so-called “common dragons” are known as Dragons of the Earth, because we are closest to the nature of the elemental of Earth and stone: solid, strong, sharp, filled with inner fire and deep wisdom. Thus our great resonance with places of earth and stone like mountains and caves. For our purposes here I shall avoid giving credence to the mistakes of the past, so I shall use the Cathay term “western dragon” to refer to what you might call “common.” Perhaps the idea will catch on and we can put this “common” nonsense to rest once and for all!

Western dragons are, in fact, the most common of all dragons in Barsaive. We are what Name-givers in these regions think of when you mention the word “dragon”: creatures having long, powerful bodies with fore and hind limbs, a pair of wings, long neck and tail. Our heads are topped with horns and possessed of sharp teeth, and we have a most attractive ruff about the head, leading into a stretch of spines down the back.

Other than those traits, western dragons differ greatly in appearance. Our dragon scales come in all the colors of the Earth itself: from nearly black to deep green, brown, golden, silvery or deep blue. Most are a single color, and are





usually darker towards the back and paler towards the belly, underside and wings. A rare few dragons are multiple colors, or decorated with patterns of stripes or even spots.

On some occasions, I have known young dragons to decorate themselves in this way intentionally, though for the most part, dragons keep their natural coloration as a matter of pride, since it demonstrates lineage and character. Eggshells are usually similar in color to the hatchling that will emerge. A great dragon with much experience in caring for eggs, such as myself, can often tell at a glance the parentage of a particular egg.

Horns are a very common trait among Dragons of the Earth, although some western dragons have quite small horns, little more than nubs, and others sport very large, curling horns like those of a ram. It is quite rare for a western dragon to be born without horns at all. Females often consider a male's horns a very attractive characteristic, perhaps one of the reasons horns are so common.

Face and form come in many varieties, as with other Name-givers. Some dragons are large, others small. Some are thin and others fat, although few dragons reach the extremes known to the Young Races. A western dragon who allowed himself too become skeletal-thin or too obese to easily move would not survive for very long. Like other Name-givers, individual dragons very often have their own unique features. I was shocked to discover other Name-givers, even some respected scholars, consider color the primary means to tell us apart. You might as well say you can tell an obsidian from a troll only by the color of their skins!

Most of what I have already told you about dragons as a whole: customs, traditions and physiology, applies to western dragons, since that is my own experience. We are the solid bedrock of dragonkind—strong, vital and dependable.

Leviathans

As western dragons are Dragons of the Earth, the next most “common” of the dragons in Barsaive, though still only rarely encountered, are leviathans, the Dragons of the Water. I spoke a small bit on leviathans for your Creatures of Barsaive collection and, upon reflection, I realize I did not entirely do them justice. (Of course, had all of my comments been included, rather than being edited for length by those without one-hundredth of my experience and insight... but, no matter.) Long, long ago, Dayheart, the First Dragon, gave birth to eight eggs, which in turn hatched into eight hatchlings, four male and four female. In time, the four pairs of hatchlings grew to claim their right of rulership over the world from which Nightslayer banished the Dark One and his spawn. Following their Naming, Dayheart gave the young dragons dominion over four of the elements. To my ancestors went the earth, and to the leviathans, the sea. In the sea, there are few creatures able to fight a leviathan and win, and the sea dragons hunt the greatest krakens and whales as their prey. They are as much kings of the sea now as then.

On the Form of Leviathans

Untold years of life in the depths of the sea has changed the leviathans. They are smaller than western dragons, perhaps half the size on average. Their bodies are sleeker and more slender, not unlike the bodies of Cathay dragons (of which I shall speak shortly). Their scales tend to be smaller and more tightly overlapping, giving leviathans a wet, iridescent appearance, even out of the water. They tend towards oceanic colors of blue-green, with some paler and darker colors known. I have seen at least one leviathan with black scales and another white as pearl.

Having largely abandoned both the sky and the land, leviathans have no wings and only small, stubby limbs that are little more than vestigial. Yes, I do recall your insightful comments, Tiabdjinn, about how a leviathan can tear apart a ship with their “vestigial” limbs. Indeed they are still useful for such crude tasks, but otherwise possess virtually no dexterity. I suspect, as time passes, with less and less use, these limbs will begin to disappear entirely. Despite their lack of wings, however, leviathans can fly, albeit for only short distances at a time, perhaps as far as a dwarf might walk in a few days. Leviathans fly with a motion like swimming through the air. They are only rarely seen flying, as it is very tiring, and the air is not their natural element. Nonetheless, their ability to fly allow leviathans to move about Barsaive, most often from body of water to body of water, without resorting to travel on land, something they are quite adverse to. A leviathan forced onto land is severely limited in its mobility, and can move only a fraction as fast as it can in water. This is not to say that leviathans cannot survive on land; they can breathe air just as easily as they do water. They simply prefer to remain in their natural environment whenever possible. The ability to survive on land is one of the lesser-known facts about our water-born brothers, and something that many so-called “leviathan hunters” learn too late.

A leviathan's jaws are generally larger than those of a land dragon, with long, sharp teeth. They are capable of swallowing entire schools of fish, or fishing boats, for that matter. A leviathan's bite is its strongest attack, for they lack





powerful talons and wings such as my kind have. Some also strike with their whip-like tail, a blow powerful enough to smash a small boat. I have encountered some leviathans with venom nearly as strong as that of a land-dragon, including ones who retain a powerful stinger in their tails, not too dissimilar to that found on wyverns.

Leviathans are born of eggs like all other dragons, raised and cared for by great dragons (great leviathans, I should say). I know of only a handful great leviathans living in the depths of the Aras Sea, partly due to that sea's limited space, a factor that also restricts the mating and breeding practices of the leviathans who make their homes there. They are allowed to mate and breed only when the great leviathans grant them permission. This prevents overpopulation and unneeded conflicts between them. Most Barsaivians think of leviathans as found only in the Aras Sea, but there are legends of leviathans in the Serpent River lakes (though I highly doubt this). Leviathans are far more plentiful in the Selestrean Sea and the Sea of Storms that borders the province of Indrisa. In these and other larger bodies of water, leviathans mate and breed as they will, like most other dragons.

When leviathans reach adolescence, they leave the care of their great leviathan sire and swim out on their own. It is at this stage that most leviathans are encountered by Name-givers, particularly sailors and the so-called 'leviathan-hunters.' The younglings are bestial and entirely without reason, often attacking boats and Name-givers without any knowledge or awareness of what they are doing. Name-givers often hunt and slay the young leviathans without any awareness that they are hunting a Name-giving creature, although I doubt that would sway most of the heartless mercenaries who make their living selling leviathan corpses.

Those few who survive the harsh years of madness at sea weave cocoons for themselves at the very bottom of the ocean where they undergo their development into adulthood. Leviathan adults are nearly identical in appearance to hatchlings, save for size, and their transformation does not take very long. I have heard it is in the area of ten to twenty years or so, after which, upon Emergence, the leviathan finds its Name and takes its place as an adult of its kind. In some rare instances, adult leviathans have relocated to other bodies of water to find their lairs.

On Leviathan Culture

Compared to western dragons, leviathans lack a sophisticated understanding of the surface-world and of other Name-givers. Most leviathans in my experience tend to be quite parochial. They have no interest in the customs, traditions or history of the Young Races. They strictly maintain the traditions and ways of dragonkind. For example, few leviathans deign to speak aloud to other Name-givers, leading you to consider them mindless beasts. They usually use only dragonspeech among themselves, and rarely bother to speak to other dragons. This is not a lack of ability—I know leviathans who can speak many different languages—it is more a lack of desire or interest.

As they do not concern themselves with spoken language, leviathans have even less use for writing. Paper and similar materials are useless in the watery depths, and even more durable materials can be worn away by time and tide. What lore leviathans do keep over the years is stored in memory crystals kept in undersea caves and grottos known only to them. I have heard interesting tales and legends of sea dragons cultivating beautiful forms of living crystal and unique coral for their memory crystals, but have never been privileged enough to see one.

Beyond these differences, leviathans are not too unlike their earth-bound brothers. They make lairs, gather mementos (mostly from the ships they encounter at sea), study magic, hunt for food, and spend a great deal of their time in the shal-mora, perhaps even more than most western dragons. The reasons for this are unclear to me, but I suspect their underwater habitats result in very little contact with the outside world, thus freeing them from the tiresome interruptions that many dragons must endure.

The underwater dances of the leviathans are as beautiful in their own way as the aerial dances of my kind. Leviathan mating rites are especially involved, and woe betide any other Name-givers who come upon a mating pair of leviathans near the surface of the sea. If the intruders are fortunate, they will manage to leave without attracting notice. Otherwise, they are certain to become part of the Rite of Feasting, along with the other local sea-life.

On Leviathans and Name-Givers

As you might suspect, leviathans tend towards solitude even more than most dragons. This is true even with regard to their fellow dragons. Leviathan society is almost completely separate from the rest of dragonkind. They contact us only when circumstances demand it, an event that has occurred only once in my memory, long before the Scourge.

Leviathans rarely welcome any Name-givers into their watery realm. Even other dragons are treated with grudging respect, and a leviathan is quite likely to invoke a Rite of Challenge on any dragon so foolish as to disturb its





domain unbidden. Fortunately, they have no concern about the skies over the sea, and other dragons can soar high over the waters without offering insult to the kings of the sea, provided they do not hunt or seek to collect goods the leviathans consider their own. In general, adult leviathans do not attack ships on the surface without provocation—usually only when their domain is threatened. The same is not true however of adolescent leviathans, who are quite likely to assault any ship or creature that gets too close.

Despite their usual preference for isolation and general dislike of most Name-givers, there are leviathans who have shown interest in surface-dwellers. One great leviathan in particular, whom I know as Wavedancer lairs near the city of Urupa on the Aras Sea, and has been known to welcome visitors from Barsaive. Twice since the Scourge this dragon has invited a number of visitors to her lair (likely only one of several lairs) to a small festival of sorts. (Leviathan's lairs are often air-filled grottos, Tiabdjinn.) These gatherings last several days (I've heard anywhere from 2 to 7 days) during which the dragon invites troubadours to perform for her and her other guests, and where contests of skill and strength are held between the visitors and Wavedancer's servants. I have been unable to discern the reasons for these festivals, though some stories I've heard suggest that Wavedancer uses them to find suitable adepts to serve as her agents in Barsaive, acting as her eyes and ears on land. If these stories are true, then perhaps this points to the end of the centuries-long isolation of the leviathans of the Aras Sea.

On the Magic of Leviathans

Yes, the sea dragons use magic. Though I would say leviathans are the least magically skilled of all dragons, their command of the element of water is unrivaled. Nearly all sea-dragons use their magical gifts to study the discipline of the elementalist, and only a rare few show interest in any other sort of magic (Wavedancer being the one exception known to me, she having also studied the illusionist discipline). Still, a sea-dragon sorcerer can call up water spirits, stir the seas into a raging froth and command storms into being to serve their needs. Their undersea lairs may contain great magical lore in elementalism, but I would urge caution on any Name-giver foolish enough to seek out a leviathan's lair.

In addition to their spellcasting, many leviathans have developed their dragonspeech to allow them to communicate with the creatures of the deep. They rarely use this power to aid in hunting, but can raise a virtual army of angry sea-life against surface-dwellers who intrude on their domains. Many leviathan-hunters have faced sharks, sea snakes, selachi and worse under the control of a leviathan.

The magic powers of great leviathans far surpass those of adult leviathans, just as the magic of great dragons surpasses that of adult dragons. Great leviathans share many of the abilities of other great dragons, including the ability to assume Name-giver form and to create drake servants.

[Having some experience with leviathan-hunters, I can say these creatures are sought mainly for an organ in their body which gathers True water from the seas the leviathan swims in. This organ is worth thousands of silver pieces on the open market. Vasdenjas did not mention this organ, so I can only speculate as to its purpose. Perhaps the elemental water provides some form of nourishment or protection for the leviathan. It may also be vital to the sea dragon's magic in some unknown way.]

Cathay Dragons

In the lands to the east of Barsaive, far across the Aras Sea and far beyond the borders of Indrisa, are dragons as different in spirit from leviathans as day is from night. These dragons of far Cathay are the Dragons of the Wind.

When the hatchlings of Dayheart chose their domains, one pair chose the endless blue sky. They traveled to the east and used the clouds to build their immense palaces and lairs. To the people of the eastern lands, they are known as the "celestial ones," the "masters of wind and storm," and "kings of rain." The people of Barsaive call them Cathay Dragons—a far more respectful name than "common," wouldn't you say, Tiabdjinn? The Young Races of Barsaive are apparently more reverent towards exotic, foreign beings than to the wonders living in their own lands, it seems.

On the Form of Cathay Dragons

Cathay dragons are similar in appearance to leviathans in that they have no wings and long, sinuous bodies, but the similarities end there. Cathay dragons have small, iridescent scales in a variety of colors. The most common is green with gold highlights, but blue, red and predominantly gold are also known. They have a fringe of whiskers along the chin and back of the head, as well as a pair of handsome horns. Cathay dragon limbs are not the tiny, weak things possessed by leviathans, but quite well developed.





In fact, the forelimbs of Cathay dragons have considerable dexterity. I have seen a wind-dragon hold a delicate vase in its claws without so much as chipping it. I suspect their love of fine and delicate things has helped to cultivate this careful sense of touch. Cathay dragons likewise have sharp senses of sight and smell, having large eyes and even larger nostrils compared to us western dragons.

Your pardon, Master, but how does a Cathay dragon fly if they have no wings?

I was coming to that. You are so impatient, you small folk.

Cathay dragons swim through the air by magic as the leviathans do, though much more gracefully. They tuck their legs up close to their bodies and move with an undulating motion, allowing them to fly quite quickly. While western dragons appear to float aloft in the sky when they fly, Cathay dragons are not so sedate, constantly moving about, swirling through the air, a testament to a mastery of the winds undisputed among dragons.

Cathay dragons love the freedom of the air, so they have their lairs in high places exposed to the air, such as mountain peaks. Many Cathay dragons use elemental magic to sculpt "cloud islands" high above the earth, lairs the likes of which are unheard of in Barsaive or anyplace else in the world! Cathay dragon lairs are usually elaborate structures, unlike the simple network of caves associated with most western dragons. The Name-givers who serve these dragons build them great palaces and halls and help to see to their comfort, and the process of building often goes on and on as the dragon continues to modify it over the centuries. Personally, I find all of the decoration and delicate building excessive, but at least the Cathay dragons and their creations are appreciated by the Young Races in their domains, very much so in fact.

On Servants (and Slaves)

The Young Races in Cathay give dragons the reverence we deserve. They respect the wisdom, age and magical power of the Cathay dragons, and consider them close to the Passions in terms of respect. (A considerable error, confusing a dragon with something as... flighty as a Passion, but still, it's the thought that counts.)

Most Cathay dragons have Name-giver servants and slaves rather than drakes, and seem to prefer it that way. Most of the Young Races in that part of the world consider it a great honor to be taken into the home of a dragon. Many of the heroes and legends of distant Cathay and the Lands of the East have been taught by wind-dragons, or inspired by them in the very least. For example, there is the tale of Mi Ling, the Dragon's Daughter.

In the land of Cathay, long, long ago, there lived a human champion by the Name of Feng Po, who was somewhat akin to what you might call a swordmaster; a daring warrior greatly skilled with a blade. Feng Po fought many creatures and explored many places. While traveling into the highest mountains in the land, he chanced upon a wondrous palace, the likes of which he had never seen. Entering the palace, he found few people in its vast halls and rooms. The first person he encountered was a beautiful woman, who looked at Feng Po, such a strong and dashing human, with great admiration in her eyes.

She told Feng Po that her Name was Mi Ling. She had lived her entire life to that point in the palace, which belonged to the great dragon Luung. Except for the palace servants, Mi Ling had never before seen another human, and she was quite taken with Feng Po.

Just then, the master of the palace chose to appear. The great dragon Luung filled the great hall and towered over Mi Ling and Feng Po. The daring hero found himself struck with fear at the appearance of the mighty dragon, who asked why Feng Po violated the privacy of his palace. Fortunately for him, Feng Po kept his wits about him and remained polite and showed the master of the palace the proper respect. (A lesson other Name-givers in Barsaive would do well to learn!) He apologized most abjectly for entering the dragon's home unbidden, and requested the right of guestship in the palace, as the high mountains were harsh and night was fast closing in. Ever the gracious host, Luung agreed and invited the human to dine with him.

That night, a fine feast was presented for Luung, Feng Po and Mi Ling. Luung had assumed the form of a human, and the three dined in a manner more lavish than Feng Po had ever imagined. As they ate, Feng Po told tales of his travels and adventures, and Mi Ling's admiration for him grew and grew. The hero also found himself increasingly drawn to Mi Ling's flower-like beauty. By the end of the evening, Feng Po asked the dragon for permission to court the beautiful lady.

"If you would court my daughter," the great dragon said, "you must prove yourself worthy." Luung tested Feng Po with many strenuous challenges, from obtaining a majestic pearl from the depths of the sea, to learning and committing to memory a library of ancient lore. After many tests and trials that have become legends among his people,





Feng Po proved himself to the Dragon Master of the Wind and married Mi Ling, giving rise to a great family line in his homeland.

Was Mi Ling truly a dragon, then? If she was Luung's daughter...

A figure of speech, of course. As if a great dragon—from any land—would allow a true child of dragonkind to marry and mate with a human! Why, the very thought is ridiculous! The truth of this is based on ancient Cathay dragon traditions handed down from a time long since past. Where dragons of some regions of the world chose to enslave Name-givers as servants, the dragons of Cathay followed a different course, that of adopting Name-givers as children from time to time. This practice allowed the Cathay dragons to avoid the unpleasantness other dragons faced when their servants rebelled, as these adopted children grew to honor and respect their dragon elders in a way that has caused many dragons the world over to envy the wisdom of their Cathay brothers.

In fact, the appellation “Son (or Daughter) of a Dragon” is well-known among the great nobles and heroes of Cathay. Mi Ling’s parents were loyal servants of Luung who died serving their master. The great dragon took the infant and raised her with the aid of his other servants, protecting her from the dangers of the outside world. When the time came for Mi Ling to be married, Luung made certain her potential husband was worthy of her. His honor demanded no less. Cathay dragons are very honorable creatures.

But did you not say that Cathay dragons keep slaves?

Ah, yes, the Throalic bias against slavery. Does doing so make Cathay dragons without honor in your eyes? I see that it does. One day you and yours will learn that the world is not so simple, not so black and white, so good versus evil. Simply because the dragons of Cathay keep slaves is no reason to liken them to the slavers of the Theran Empire. For while the Therans capture slaves to keep their Empire alive and running, Cathay dragons enslave only those who are deserving of such treatment.

It is true that many Cathay dragons make slaves of members of the Young Races, but you will find that these slaves are thieves and brigands who sought to rob the dragon’s home or otherwise stole something of value to the dragon. Rather than killing them outright as most dragons (or even some other Name-givers) would, some Cathay dragons choose to enslave such criminals instead. The wrongdoers save their lives through serving and entertaining their dragon masters. If they please the dragon, these criminals may eventually earn their freedom as well, and leave considerably older and wiser than when they first entered their master’s service. It is a considerable mercy on the part of the Cathay dragons who are—as I said—most curious and honorable creatures.

On the Culture of Cathay Dragons

Although they interact with the Young Races more often than most of my kind in Barsaive, Cathay dragons have not left behind any of the traditions or beliefs of dragonkind (as some maintain). Quite the contrary, they are staunch traditionalists in most ways, making even the most traditional dragons of Barsaive seem unconventional by contrast.

Cathay dragons follow the same cycle of life as other dragons. Their eggs are cared for by the eldest of their kind, hatched and cared for while the young learn how to survive in the world. Cathay dragons appear to mate quite infrequently, although that may simply be because so few of them make their way this far west of their homeland. I have not been to Cathay for quite some time, so perhaps Cathay dragons are more populous in lands further east.

What of the ancient tales from Cathay I have seen recorded in the Great Library, tales that speak of the Cathay dragons descending from the stars long ago?

Oh, those. Hyperbole on the part of the Cathay dragons, I’m sure. When the first of them chose to settle in the Lands of the East, they flew there to take up residence. To the Young Races living in those lands at the time, the arrival of the Cathay dragons, flying through the night sky, must have certainly made it appear as if they had descended from the heavens themselves. It is a tale the Cathay dragons have done nothing to discourage, and even quietly encourage from what I have seen. Indeed, some Young Races in the east call Cathay dragons “the starborn.”

Adult Cathay dragons choose lairs for themselves and usually gather servants to build and maintain their palaces. Many such dwellings are created using magic, indeed, some can exist only through the power of magic, as they take forms quite impossible to build otherwise. I have seen palaces of crystal, ice, water and mist built by Cathay dragons. They are quite skilled artists, with a fine appreciation of beauty.

As part of that appreciation, Cathay dragons collect many diverse items that capture their attention. The hoard of a Cathay dragon is a sight to behold, containing artworks and fine things from far and wide. Cathay dragons are less interested in the memories captured by particular items—although they do collect such things—than in its sheer artistic





value. They love beautiful and delicate things in particular. A Cathay dragon collects things no other dragon would bother with: fine sculptures in jade and agate, painted scrolls, pottery more thin and delicate than a Name-giver skull. I know of few other dragons who could even hold such things without breaking them. Cathay dragons not only gather them, they carefully organize and display their treasures in a variety of pleasing ways.

Creatures of strict protocol and tradition, Cathay dragons adhere to the many Rites and Rituals we dragons use in our social encounters. They demand similar politeness and etiquette from other dragons as well as from the other Name-givers who choose to visit them. Should you (or anyone who reads this text) ever have the opportunity to speak with a Cathay dragon, exercise your most polite and precise manners, and you may be invited to dinner as something other than the entrée.

I suspect the main reason Cathay dragons are so frequently gracious to the Young Races is because of their fascination with stories and lore. Like myself and a few others of my kind, most Cathay dragons are scholars and desire a sharing of knowledge. I suspect they would find many of the volumes in your Great Library most amusing, but Cathay dragons prefer to hear stories from the mouths of others, rather than reading them from texts. There are many cases of Cathay dragons taking in Name-givers to hear their tales and rewarding them if the story is good enough.

On the Magic of Cathay Dragons

As part of their interest in lore and knowledge, nearly all Cathay dragons study and practice the arts of magic. While not all dragons in lands like Barsaive choose to hone their natural magical abilities to greater levels, most Cathay dragons do. They are particularly skilled in elementalism, especially the secrets of the winds. Cathay dragons know how to raise storms, command rain and create thick mists to hide their mountain homes, or cloud banks to conceal their sky castles.

They also use illusion magic, often weaving complex spells to enhance the appearance of their homes and conceal them from prying outsiders. When dealing with a Cathay dragon, nothing is entirely as it seems. They delight in puzzles and complex mazes of words and images to fool the unwary.

More than most other dragons, Cathay dragons traffic with various spirits, mostly air spirits they use as servants, messengers, spies and guards for their homes. Cathay dragons summon and command other elemental spirits, particularly water spirits. I am quite sure elementals are used to create some of the more elaborate palaces I have seen and heard about. Cathay dragons have little use for nethermantic spirits of any kind, and rarely bother with such things.

As is the case with all dragons, great Cathay dragons practice magical skills far beyond those of their adult brethren. In fact, great dragons of Cathay are among the most magically skilled and powerful of all dragons, far surpassing the power even of some of Barsaive's great dragons. Like other great dragons, those of Cathay are skilled in the creation of drakes, and in assuming the form of other Name-givers. In fact, many great dragons of Cathay prefer to appear in Name-giver form when entertaining visitors. Though I have never dared ask their reasons for this, I believe they adopt this strategy to make themselves appear more like their Name-giver subjects than they truly are. While most great dragons prefer to remain in dragon form, allowing our imposing size and stature to convey our strength and power to visitors, Cathay dragons are supremely confident in their abilities and power, so they rarely resort to such tactics. They prefer lulling their subjects into a false sense of security, revealing the true scope of their power only as needed. Whether this approach has contributed to their success with their servants and subjects is uncertain.

[After completing his discourse on Cathay dragons, Vasdenjas excused himself and left for a few hours in search of food. While he was out I compiled and read through his comments, preparing them to be eventually transcribed into the document you are now reading. As I read through my notes, I noticed something that made me quite curious, and I planned to inquire about it upon Vasdenjas' return.]

The dragon returned a few hours later with a pair of his favorite delicacy, cave crabs. As Vasdenjas roasted one of the crabs, I asked him about some of his comments, specifically about his use of the term subjects when referring to the Name-givers who visit the great dragons of Cathay. His only response, which he made with a distinct tone of voice and mannerism that told me to pursue the topic no further, was that the relationships between Name-givers and dragons are not the same everywhere. Where the dragons of Barsaive tend to remain aloof from the affairs of Name-givers, the same is not necessarily the case elsewhere.]

Feathered Dragons

The remaining children of Dayheart chose to dwell in the hot, sunlit lands of the south. They are the brightly colored Dragons of Fire, known as feathered dragons by your scholars and those of the Theran Empire. They are the





rarest of dragons in this part of the world, rarer even than the legendary Cathay dragons. Feathered dragons are most often found quite far from Barsaive, in the warm, tropical lands across the great ocean, near Araucania, where they are called Quetzal by the native Name-givers. Feathered dragons are also known to live in the warm regions closer to this land, such as Indrisa, and in the central and southern regions of Fekara near the ancient Nuboz Empire.

No feathered serpents make their home in Barsaive, and only on the rarest of instances have they visited this land. Barsaivians are unlikely to encounter a feathered serpent without traveling very, very far. I myself have only met two feathered serpents, and then only because they were invited to join us at a great dragon council in the time before the Scourge.

On the Form of Feathered Dragons

Feathered dragons are quite unlike any other dragons in form and appearance. They are thin and sinuous like Cathay dragons, but are smaller, and more serpent-like. They have a powerful pair of wings and a single pair of small limbs they use to walk rather clumsily on the ground. In fact, feathered dragons are quite similar to dragon hatchlings in shape, having smaller limbs and a slightly thinner body.

The greatest difference between feathered dragons and others is also the source of their name—they are covered in brightly colored feathers along their entire body, including a ruff of feathers around the head and a tuft at the tip of the tail. The wing feathers are the largest and brightest, while the body feathers tend to be small and similar to brightly colored scales. The feathers are predominantly green and blue, but vivid wing and head feathers may be crimson, yellow, white or purple.

Feathered dragons have sharp, venomous fangs and a dagger-like tail spine which is likewise venomous. They often coil around prey to stab with their tails and bite, or they simply crush the life out of their prey with their powerful bodies. Their compact shape makes feathered dragons well-suited for life in the brightly colored jungles of the south, where they wind their way through the tree-tops. A feathered dragon at rest in the upper limbs of a strong tree can be difficult to spot in the jungle foliage. They enjoy the warmth of the sun and love to lay draped across a strong tree or an outcropping of rock to soak up the heat.

On the Life and Culture of Feathered Dragons

Feathered dragons are not born feathered. Their hatchlings look much like those of other dragons, covered in fine scales, with membranous wings and smaller hind limbs. They are raised and cared for by the great feathered dragons, taught life in the harsh jungle and shown how to hunt and fend for themselves. Eventually, they live for a time on their own in the jungle, where they struggle to survive against countless other predators there, including their fellow dragons. Life in some of the southern jungles can be truly harsh, not unlike the jungles of Barsaive. Only a few young feathered dragons survive adolescence.

It is during the metamorphosis from adolescent to adult that feathered dragons take on their true nature. They weave fantastically colored cocoons in the depths of astral space, where they undergo the change into their adult state. When they emerge from astral space, they shine with their new brilliance. The new adult then takes its Name and its place among other adult feathered dragons.

Like us, feathered dragons tend to be solitary beings. They establish their own domain in their jungle home and defend it against intruders. Unlike other dragons, feathered dragons tend to be shy and prefer to conceal themselves from strangers. They will often watch intruders into their domain carefully for a time before taking any action, using illusion magic to allow them to get quite close without anyone the wiser.

Feathered dragons are quite skilled in the use of illusions, and they have a mischievous sense of humor as well. Name-givers who dwell near feathered dragons sometimes become the subject of elaborate pranks or deceptions. Some among my kind consider this to be little more than our feathered brothers playing with what they consider their toys, but I believe the feathered dragons have other, more honorable motives. Feathered dragons have been known to aid members of the Young Races who become lost in the jungle, subtly guiding them to safety while protecting them from jungle hazards. Only when the visitors are outside the jungle confines do they look back to see a brightly-feathered form vanish back into the foliage.

Beyond this, feathered dragons have little to do with other Name-givers who live nearby. In fact, most Name-givers in lands that are home to feathered dragons consider them little more than large, dangerous creatures, and do not afford them the same respect and awe dragons are shown elsewhere in the world. These members of the Young Races do





not realize that the feathered ones are vast fonts of knowledge and wisdom, and avoid them. I believe it is this misunderstanding that drives feathered dragons to treat other Name-givers in the manner described above. Those Name-givers should see that surely any beings who enjoy playing pranks and aiding lost travelers are more than mere beasts.

For all of their humor and quiet nature, feathered dragons are fierce enemies of anything that threatens their home. I have heard tales of a feathered dragon who became locked in aerial combat with a Horror twice its size. They fought for hours, each struggling to overcome the other. During that time the dragon never faltered. Even though the Horror dealt it grievous wounds, the feathered dragon fought savagely, with all of the fierce strength of the Dragons of Fire, and overcame the Horror in the end. Such is the fate of all enemies that violate the homeland of a feathered dragon.

Beyond the differences in physical appearance, and the different relations between feathered dragons and Name-givers, they share many similarities with other dragons. They have lairs, usually hidden deep within the jungles, or near waterfalls alongside rivers. They hoard treasure and mementos as other dragons do, and hunt and study just as we do. Given their natural habitat, feathered dragons spend considerable time studying nature and the abundant flora and fauna. They are masters of animal and plant magic, and have developed abilities that allow them to experience the world through nature's eyes, seeing, hearing and sensing life through the plants and animals of the jungle. It is this ability that makes approaching a feathered dragon's lair so difficult, even for the most subtle. I believe it is also because of this ability that feathered dragons allow trespassers to get so close to their lairs before confronting them, as they are able to closely observe and study the trespassers before chasing them off.

On the Magic of Feathered Dragons

Feathered dragons are the only dragons to make any significant use of blood magic, specifically the more powerful and dangerous forms of blood magic that you know as death magic. They understand the fire that flows in the veins of dragonkind and, to a lesser degree, within all creatures. In their own lands, feathered dragons have used blood magic to heal the damage done to the land by the Scourge, repairing scars and making the jungles fertile once again. The elves of the Blood Wood could take some lessons from the feathered dragons in using blood magic to enhance growth without twisting the land and its creatures beyond recognition.

There is a definite split among the feathered dragons concerning the different uses of blood magic. Some feathered dragons are strongly opposed to death magic—that is, blood magic used solely for power. These dragons consider death magic inherently wrong, and suggest that it partakes of the power of the Horrors, and can only prolong the presence of those Horrors remaining since the Scourge. While they understand and appreciate the value of life magic, used to aid and restore life, these dragons see the two forms of blood magic as inextricably linked, and fear that use of one type leads to use of the other. The second group of feathered dragons believe all forms of blood magic, whether life magic or death magic, are, like all magic, merely power—a tool beyond good and evil, to be used for whatever ends they see fit. They argue that if any beings are powerful enough and wise enough to use blood magic safely, it is the dragons. It saddens me that there are some among my kind who have failed to learn the lessons of the past. Perhaps most frightening about the feathered dragons' use of blood magic is their propagation of its use to other Name-givers. There are some feathered dragons who teach and encourage the use of blood magic, specifically death magic, among the Young Races that live near them. I do not understand the purpose of this practice, and I fear its ultimate consequences. Fortunately, this practice is not widespread, and most feathered dragons oppose passing such potentially dangerous knowledge on to others.

What began as a philosophical argument has grown over the years to become a serious rift among feathered dragons (good enough reason to leave blood magic alone, in my view). I have heard tales from the hot lands of the south of feathered dragons fighting and even killing each other over the matter of blood magic. Some suggest there may be a Horror at work, corrupting some feathered dragons through the use of death magic. I cannot say, but I hope that reason prevails and the feathered dragons are able to settle their differences according to our tradition rather than repeating the mistakes of the past.

Along with their knowledge of blood magic, feathered dragons make considerable use of other magic, as I have mentioned. Many are spellcasters of considerable skill, particularly with illusion magic. Others practice elementalism and study the forces abroad in their jungle homes, in particular the different types of elemental spirits and animals. Some few feathered dragons also study nethermancy, particularly those with a strong interest in blood magic as well. These dragons have a great understanding of the netherworlds and astral space, perhaps too great an understanding for the comfort of others, as there are many things in the netherworlds that are best left alone.

Like the great dragons of Barsaive and Cathay, great feathered dragons are masters of magic far beyond that practiced by adult feathered ones. Great feathered dragons create drake servants just as we do, though not as often.





Drakes are used by feathered dragons primarily as their eyes and ears in the cities and lands of other Name-givers, and are less often used to pursue a particular agenda. As you might expect, these drakes resemble small feathered dragons, as our drakes resemble us. As with other drakes, they can assume Name-giver form if necessary.

Great Dragons

We great dragons are not a race as the other types of dragons are. All types of dragons have great dragons among them. Any dragon who lives long enough and gains the wisdom and experience that comes with great age can join the ranks of the great dragons. Still, there are things about great dragons that make us unique and worthy of consideration as a separate type of dragon. The most important differences between great dragons and younger dragons are our physical and magical abilities and our important role in draconian society.

On the Abilities of Great Dragons

Dragons continue growing throughout life, so great dragons, as the oldest of our kind, are also the largest. Some of us are easily twice the size of an adult dragon, with a corresponding increase in physical prowess. Our teeth and talons are longer, sharper and harder than those of a younger dragon as well. Unlike you Young Races, our teeth and bones do not become weaker as we age, they become stronger. Likewise our scales become toughened by the rigors of life. The armor of a great dragon is strong enough to resist almost any attack.

As our physical abilities increase, so do our mental and magical powers. Our long lives give us a great deal of time to hone our abilities. Great dragons are adept at the manipulation of magic to levels far beyond any other Name-givers. We all know many spells, often from many different magical disciplines, including spells no Young Race magician has imagined. Beyond these, we also create new spells to serve our needs, though most of these spells are of a type not suitable for use by Name-giver magicians.

The magical powers of a great dragon include improving our inborn gifts as well. My breath can flame targets with much greater power and range than in the years of my youth, and I have learned to use it in ways no young dragon could match. For example, the hides on which you sit I cured with puffs of flame, where a youngling would have incinerated them. We also use dragonspeech and dragonsight to our greatest advantage, to understand the nature and patterns of both Name-givers and of the world, for it is in our nature to seek understanding of the universe around us.

Perhaps the greatest ability of a great dragon is the knowledge and experience that comes from living a long life. I have seen nations of Name-givers rise and fall. I have witnessed the performances of great artists, both of my kind and others, heard more tales than are recorded in your Great Library, and hunted every manner of beast in this land. I have battled Name-givers, spoken with them, even dwelled, worked and played with them over the years. I have seen eggs hatch, and hatchlings grow and change and become adults to take their place among our kind. All of this and so much more have I witnessed. It is those experiences that make me great and give me the responsibility to use my knowledge for the good of dragonkind.

On the Role of Great Dragons

Great dragons are the rulers of dragonkind. We do not rule like your kings or first governors; we do not share your idea of "government." Each adult dragon governs himself or herself for the most part, in accordance with our customs and traditions. This is why our youngsters are so deeply steeped in our customs, so that they may know correct behavior. Great dragons might be thought of as the overseers of dragonkind. We lead by example and teaching, and when we must intervene, it is the great dragons who decide what is best for our kind.

The first duty of a great dragon is to look to the future. We care for the eggs and the young who hatch from them. The future of all dragonkind is placed in our care. Young are quite rare among dragons. We mate only once in one of your lifetimes, and the hatching of an egg requires another dwarf lifetime or the passing of perhaps five or more generations of orks. While you Young Races breed rapidly (so rapidly that it's a wonder there is room enough for all of you), we dragons do not. Every new life is precious to us, which is why only the most experienced and learned among us are entrusted to guard and raise the young.

I have seen how you Young Races deal with your children. Anyone is permitted to be a parent simply because they feel the need to mate. Some parents are loving and raise their children well, but many are foolish or uncaring or simply unprepared for the responsibility. In fact, many care nothing for their offspring, casting them aside, while others treat children as no better than pets or possessions. Your vast numbers seem to make you value a single life far less. Why





be concerned, when there will always be more children, more Name-givers? I suspect it is the cause of much of the social unrest among your kind.

We use our wisdom to decide the best path for our kind, and endeavor to learn from errors we have made so as not to repeat them. Yes, we make mistakes—I believe that is part of being alive—but we remember the lessons from each and every one, and our triumphs as well. Thus we are prepared for those rare times when we great dragons must decide the future of dragonkind, for what actions we take will set the course of events for some years to come. The need for such decisions is rare, but they have become more frequent in recent years. It is at these times that we convene the Great Dragon Councils I spoke of earlier.

The second duty of a great dragon is to protect and recall the past. One reason great dragons are best suited for raising the young is because we have so much to teach them. Only those as experienced as we are can pass on a true understanding of the history and lore of our kind. As each generation of dragons learns from the great dragons before them, the wisdom and experience of our race grows with the passing of the millennia. I know lore that stretches back to the time of Dayheart the First Dragon, those who follow me will know all that and more.

We are the guardians and upholders of our culture and traditions. Younger dragons seek us out to hear our wisdom regarding their conflicts over tradition, and our decisions shape the future of our culture. We are the lawmakers and judges of our race. Without law and tradition, dragons would have no means to live together in harmony. Our culture allows us to control our predator nature and exist as civilized creatures. It is up to great dragons to protect and sustain such precious knowledge.

There are those of us, myself included, who believe we also have an obligation of sorts to you Young Races. Dragons are the oldest of all Name-givers, and great dragons are the oldest of all dragons, making us the most ancient and the wisest creatures in this world. As such, we have a duty to try to enlighten and educate the Young Races when possible. Such is the reason for this work that I offer to the Great Library, a collection of knowledge that may help some of your people to understand us and to pass that knowledge on to others.

On Dragon-Like Creatures

[In addition to the information he provided on the different types of dragons, I prevailed upon Master Vasdenjas to provide more information on some of the various dragon-like creatures living in Barsaive. These include drakes (shape-shifting servants of the dragons), hydras and (at my insistence) wyverns. Some of the information below is most intriguing. See my commentary that follows.]

There are some creatures in Barsaive that resemble dragonkind, but they are not dragons, nor should they be considered as such, any more than you would consider a pangolus or a blood monkey related to your good self, Tiabdjinn. Still, these beings, specifically drakes and hydras, share some of our nature and abilities, through design in both cases, the first brilliant and the second tragic. This does make them worthy subjects for this tome.

Drakes

As I have said, some dragons are served by members of the Young Races. Most great dragons such as myself, however, prefer to avoid becoming entangled with the culture of other Name-givers. Given this, there remained the matter of who would serve us in the society of the Name-givers. To solve the problem, we created the drakes to be our eyes, ears and hands in the world, so we would not need to trouble ourselves with minor details and trifling tasks. Drakes have been the finest servants we could ask for, far better than those of the past, in my opinion.

Servants of the past, Master?

Don't change the subject, Tiabdjinn.

Drakes are not Name-givers. They are not born from others of their kind, but made using powerful magic. The enchantments used in creating a single drake are complex, lengthy and involved, far beyond the understanding of any of your people. These enchantments are so complex that they are beyond the skills of even most adult dragons, never mind magicians of the Young Races. The enchantments are also quite exhausting, for the spark of life to create the drake must come from its maker. Drakes are our magical children, in a manner of speaking, rather than children born of mating. Once the drake is formed, it is given a Name of its own.





Since the process of making a drake is so involved, we create fairly few of them, just enough to see to our needs. Only the most powerful dragons create drakes as servants, and our traditions define a limit on the number of drake servants a dragon may create as a matter of rank and status among us. Great dragons are generally the only dragons with the power and prestige sufficient to have more than a single drake. Adult dragons have but one, if any, and most make do without drakes at all, having Name-giver servants or no servants whatsoever.

Apart from their unique origin, drakes are much like Name-givers in all other respects. They eat, sleep and require air just like you do (although drakes do not require as much sleep as the Young Races, part of their dragon heritage). In their natural form, drakes look like miniature dragons, perhaps seven to eight feet in length. They resemble the type of dragon who created them, so my own drakes appear as western, Barsaivian dragons, with a coloration similar to my own. A knowledgeable dragon can tell a drake's creator and master at a glance, without ever having seen the drake before.

Cathay dragons and feathered dragons tend to create drakes far less frequently than western dragons, the former preferring Name-giver servants. Leviathans only very rarely create drakes, so nearly all drakes resemble so-called "common" dragons. (By Nightslayer's Maw, Tiabdjin, you small folk practically have me using that ridiculous Name!)

The most useful quality of drakes is their ability to assume Name-giver form. A drake can assume the form of any of the Young Races, except for windlings (too small to imitate) and obsidimen (a mix of flesh and elemental earth). Not only does this ability give drakes an understanding of your different races, it allows them to interact with Name-givers and move through Name-giver society without provoking the sort of fear and distrust you generally reserve for my kind (as well as others different from yourselves). This makes drakes useful agents in the world outside our lairs.

In Name-giver form, a drake is identical in appearance to a normal Name-giver, but loses its dragon-like physical abilities. They retain their magical powers, however, which can prove quite a surprise for those unaware of the drake's true nature.

Magical beings to their very heart, many drakes follow adept disciplines, and use those abilities when in their Name-giver form. Like their creators, drakes have a gift for magic, so many of them follow the magician disciplines, while the rest tend to follow fighting disciplines like the way of the warrior or swordmaster, or stealthy paths like the thief or scout. They learn quickly, and many advance quite far in their chosen discipline, some even taking on Name-giver students (with their master's permission, of course).

Drakes live far longer than the Young Races, another gift of their dragon heritage. Barring accident or death in battle, a drake can live for centuries. Their lives are finite, however. Upon death, drakes return to the base matter from which they sprang, decaying far more swiftly than other creatures until they are little more than pools of dissolved flesh and bone.

False Drakes

The so-called "false drakes" of Blood Wood are in fact drakes, only they lack the shapeshifting ability of true drakes. The false drakes have the form of a small dragon, which is their only form (so far as I know). Their creator disdains the usefulness of the Name-giver form and prefers drakes which lack that "weakness" (as he puts it). It is clear that false drakes are not nearly as intelligent or capable as true drakes. Since they lack insight into the nature of the Young Races, false drakes tend to be rather flighty and even playful, more like dragon hatchlings than full-grown adult Name-givers. Still, they are more than capable of rending an opponent with their teeth and claws and no doubt make useful, if limited, servants.

[Vasdenjas refused to say who the creator of the false drakes is, other than indicating it is a male dragon, most likely a great dragon. The Master of Secrets also had very little to say regarding the culture or traditions of drakes (if indeed they have any). Likewise, I could not pry from him any information about how drakes are created apart from what is given previously. The great dragon claims such magic is beyond our comprehension, and perhaps so, but it is also possible it is simply considered too valuable or too dangerous (or both) to fall into the hands of "the Young Races."]

I find it curious that even a great dragon like Vasdenjas can speak so easily about magically creating life from nothing, a feat only the most powerful magicians can accomplish. When we first talked years ago, while compiling the Creatures of Barsaive collection, Vasdenjas spoke often of the "tampering" Name-giver magicians performed on the natural development of certain creatures, experiments which led to the creation of things like the naga and the hydra.

"We dragons did not create hell hounds," Vasdenjas said, "nor do we keep them as pets — certainly we have never indulged in any kind of dubious magical experimentation to produce these creatures; as far as I know, only your races subject other living beings to such butchery."





"The naga is one of far too many creatures that seem to owe their existence to barbaric magical experiments with innocent living things," he began on another occasion.

And on another occasion, he stated "The will o' the wisp began as a magical construct — why you smaller races insist on bothering with unnecessary tinkering, I do not understand. We dragons do not use our magical abilities so frivolously."

Clearly, Vasdenjas looks upon the magical alteration of living creatures as wrong, yet he and other dragons use their magic to create drakes—which are clearly intelligent, thinking creatures who are used as little more than slaves. I find it difficult to reconcile these apparently contradictory attitudes. Is creating and enslaving an entire race better than altering what already exists? Apparently so for dragons. Is expending great effort and magical power on the creation of a single servant better than using the same energy to recruit many Name-giver servants? Again, apparently so by the standards of the dragons of Barsaive (although not those of other, distant lands, like Cathay).

The only explanation I can offer for this behavior comes from the words of Vasdenjas himself. The Master of Secrets spoke many times in our talks about dragons of "the mistakes of the past." He never made clear what these mistakes were, only that he and other dragons were determined not to see them repeated in the present. Perhaps dragons once performed magical experiments of the kind Vasdenjas now speaks of with such disdain. They realized the error of their ways and instead chose to create life, tailored to their design, rather than altering it. It is also quite possible that the creation of hydras (described in the following section) embittered all dragons against any tampering with existing life.

If any of the above is true, I can only offer this speculation to the magicians engaged in similar work. Is tampering with the fundamental Patterns of Life truly worth the risk? Do we want to be the ones to repeat the very mistakes the dragons seek to avoid? And if we do, how will the great dragons respond?]

Hydras

Knowledge is a most powerful kind of spirit, Tiabdjin. Once it is free from confinement, it can never be imprisoned again. Years ago, I told you the origin of the hydra so you could record it in your tome on the fauna of Barsaive. It was a secret my fellow dragons did not want revealed, and many were not pleased with me for telling it. Now that the secret is out, even they cannot confine it again. No further harm (and perhaps a great deal of good) can be done by spreading the knowledge.

Not long ago (about 600 years), there lived in Barsaive a great dragon Named Thermail. She was fairly young for a great dragon, having only recently achieved great status. Thermail mated for the last time not long before becoming a great dragon. When the time came to lay her eggs, Thermail was already a great dragon and she chose to do what no other dragon had done since the time of All-Wings herself: care for her own eggs. It is a decision that always seems to come to tragedy.

Thermail was a great friend to the Young Races at that time; she encouraged visitors to come to her lair and talk with her of art, history, philosophy, music, magic and a great many other things. Her wisdom and advice were legendary, and many Name-givers sought her out. Thermail received them all with graciousness and great trust—a trust that was betrayed only once, but most grievously.

When it came time for Thermail's eggs to hatch, she withdrew from the world into her lair and accepted no visitors for many years. Not even she would allow other Name-givers to see her hatchlings. Thermail's clutch was an exceptionally large one, and she chose to remain isolated to devote her time to the hatchlings until they were ready to leave the lair. However, her protective measures were not enough. A magician of Thermail's acquaintance, a human who had spent much time with the dragon, snuck into her lair and lured away seven of her ten hatchlings.

No one knows the magician's Name (may his spirit writhe in agony for all time), or the reasoning for what he did with the stolen hatchlings. Using powerful magic, the thief merged the seven hatchlings into a single monstrous creature with the heads of seven dragons, the first hydra. Worse still, he magically caused another hydra to be produced from the first, and mated them so now the foul creatures can be found all over Barsaive and in many other lands.

When she discovered what had happened to her children, Thermail went mad from grief. She flew over the lands of Barsaive, burning villages and razing cities, killing any Name-givers who stood in her way. Still, no matter how many she killed, she could not find the thief who caused the awful metamorphosis, nor could she bring back her lost children. Finally, to end her pain, she impaled herself on the pinnacle of a high mountain, which other Name-givers called Mount Wyrmspire—the same peak under which we sit, Tiabdjin. Thermail was one of the finest of our kind, and I honor her memory here in my lair Named for her, not me.





Despite our efforts to wipe them out, hydras still exist. They are hideous creatures, perhaps half the size of an adult dragon, roughly 40 feet in length, with seven dragon-like heads springing from a central body. They are wingless, and nearly mindless as well. The melding of different dragons used to create the first hydra gives the creatures sporadic dragon-like abilities. No two hydra necessarily have the same powers. Some breathe flames, while others are lethally venomous or capable of freezing their prey in place with terror. There is no way of telling what powers a hydra might have, so it is always best to assume the worst. No hydra has the intelligence to use spells (thankfully), nor can they speak in any way, including dragonspeech. They are mindless beasts, not Name-givers.

Hydras are not dragons, though they were made from dragons. They are hideous abominations of life that never should have been. Should any Name-giver with sufficient strength encounter a hydra, I recommend you kill it immediately and spare it the pain of such a tortured existence. All dragons kill hydras on sight as quickly and cleanly as possible. They are abominations, but they did not ask to be created, nor did they choose their terrible existence.

Wyverns

[It was only with great reluctance that Vardenjas agreed to speak any further on wyverns. I very carefully avoided my earlier blunder in comparing wyverns to adolescent dragons, but I remain most curious about the similarity between the two.]

I can hardly imagine why you persist with such an interest in wyverns, Tiabdjinn. They are savage, bestial things that hardly bear discussing. Not nearly as interesting as, say, magma beasts, or even prisma... oh, very well, if we must.

I have said it before, and I will say it again. Wyverns are not dragons. They are not even Name-givers. They are nothing more than mindless beasts, driven entirely by instinct and a savage nature. Any resemblance between wyverns and dragons is pure chance—or perhaps a mocking joke on the part of the Universe—nothing more.

That said, wyverns do somewhat resemble small dragons, growing as large as thirty feet from head to tail. Unlike dragons, they have only two powerful hind legs in addition to their wings, and no forelimbs of any kind. The tops of their wings are tipped with claws that allow them to climb trees and cliff-faces, and to rend their prey limb from limb. The legs are also tipped with sharp, tearing talons. Their bodies are quite slim, covered in overlapping scales. Their heads are rather small (they don't accommodate much in the way of intelligence), but their jaws are quite large, capable of swallowing a dwarf in a single bite. Their long, muscular tail ends in a wickedly sharp, barbed stinger.

Their stinger contains a wyvern's greatest weapon, their deadly venom. They usually try to sting prey with it and allow the venom to do its work while the wyvern continues its attack. They often sting multiple times, and I have seen wyvern sting prey even after it is dead.

Just because they are stupid beasts, wyverns should not be underestimated. They have considerable cunning, and use it in hunting prey and staying alive. Sometimes a group of wyverns will cooperate to bring down larger prey, and others have been known to take advantage of the natural features of the terrain, especially long drops into mountain canyons and valleys, to overcome flightless prey.

Wyverns tend to live in isolated areas, usually heavily forested or mountainous regions, and they defend their territory fiercely against all other predators. If you stumble into a wyvern's hunting grounds, likely it will find you before you find it. Wyvern fly rather quickly and can move through difficult terrain with surprising speed and agility. Their snakelike bodies can coil around high trees or on top of rocky ledges and the like, to offer some camouflage while they hunt. They favor surprise attacks.

Wyverns are built to be hunters, and they are well-equipped to overcome and kill their prey. They hunt nearly anything, although they usually restrict themselves to prey the same size or smaller than themselves. Still, a wyvern or a small group of them have been known to attack larger prey, yes, even dragons. If wyverns can bring down a creature as powerful as one of my kind, you can imagine what they can do to creatures as small and frail as the Young Races. To all those would-be wyvern hunters, I say it is suicide. Wyverns are death-machines better left alone.

[This was all I could learn. Vardenjas said nothing about wyvern mating rituals, how they are born, how long they live or anything else about their life cycle. Having done some research, I can say that no Name-giver has reported seeing wyvern young or eggs (if indeed they lay eggs) and, while dead wyverns have been found, they always die by violence, no old wyverns are ever seen. As far as anyone can tell, wyverns spring from nowhere fully grown, then die in battle or vanish, never to be seen again.]

Although the Master of Secrets describes wyverns as stupid and savage beasts, he speaks quite highly of their combat abilities. If I did not know better, I would almost think he was exaggerating the threat posed by a wyvern to make them seem more fearsome. They are deadly creatures, to be sure, but wyvern hunters manage to kill them fairly often. One would think the great





dragon wished to give other Name-givers a reason not to hunt wyverns. Unfortunately, I have no facts to offer, only the speculations and musings of a humble scholar.]





DRAGONS OF BARSATIVE

To my peers and equals, brothers and sister of the land of Barsaive, greetings;

It is with no small amount of concern that I bring this second collection of documents to your attention, because it poses a far greater threat to us all than Vasdenjas' penchant for loose speech. The materials collected here were acquired by an agent of mine in the palace of the Denairastas Clan of Iopos, one of the so-called "scales" of the Orichalcum Guard that protects the members of the Clan and their families. While the Holders of Trust are skilled enough in keeping the various enemies of Iopos from infiltrating them, I have been playing such games long before their city or family line was even founded. My agent has spent some time infiltrating the Holders of Trust and gaining the trust of the Denairastas in order to watch for any indication that the Outcast might violate the rulings of the Council at which he was Banished. These documents are proof that he has chosen to do so, and they mean dire news where the Denairastas are concerned. I have placed my own comments in your copies of the documents to provide what insight I can. Read them with care and see if you come to the same conclusions as I have. If so, I believe we must convene another Council to consider what should be done about this. In any event, I recommend taking precautions immediately.

My Children...

You have done well. My faith in your abilities is truly justified. But what you have achieved so far pales in comparison to what you will soon achieve with my help. You will take your rightful place as the stewards of the land and its people, guiding them with a firm hand to greater recognition of your glory. Your victory shall be a monument to the sacrifices I have made to prove my faith in you.

Although you have achieved much, now is not the time for congratulations or complacency. There remain many challenges in the path ahead for you, and many enemies who will seek to topple you from your high pinnacle, to crush and burn our dream and reduce it to bitter ashes, scattered on the wind. Throal and Thera remain at each others throats and a war between the two nations now seems certain, but there are other enemies older, wiser and far more powerful than the dwarf kingdom or even the mighty Thera Empire. These enemies are the dragons of Barsaive, particularly the Great Dragons and their many servants.

The dragons are unlike any challenge you have faced before. There are many reasons for this, the primary being that they do not follow the conventions and laws of any nation; they do not follow any rules or traditions but their own. They are supremely powerful, especially the great dragons, but they are also scattered and diverse, with their own goals and desires, much like the various nations and city-states of Barsaive you have maneuvered so well. To learn more of your heritage and move on to the next stage of the great game, you must learn to understand and play the dragons as skillfully as you have the Name-giver nations of this land.

To that end, I have created these documents. They describe the great dragons of Barsaive, along with some of the most powerful and influential Named dragons who might place themselves on the field of the game. Take this knowledge and study it carefully. Know your enemies as I know them, as deeply as possible, for when you know your enemies' thoughts and goals as well as you know your own, you are prepared to strike at them where they are most vulnerable. A battle against the dragons cannot be won through force of arms or even powerful spells. It can only be won when you learn to think like a dragon, to beat them at their own contest of deception and guile. I know this can be done. Just as I have come to think like humans, so too can you think like dragons. It is your family heritage.

The first lesson in conceptualizing as a dragon would is to think long, in a life measured not in years or even centuries, but in millennia, in the rise and fall of Name-giver nations and empires by the hundreds. Consider the implications of each act as they unfold throughout history and learn to sacrifice a lesser goal to serve a greater purpose that may not come to light for years to come. You have already applied this technique to good effect, but now you must adjust it for the span of creatures born before your line began.

You must understand the superiority of dragons above all other Name-givers. Understand the power granted by scales stronger than any armor, teeth and claws more deadly than any sword, eyes sharper than any bird's and other senses aware of more than most other Name-givers can imagine. Understand the power of a vast life and the knowledge and learning that comes of it. Understand the power of a harsh life where at every step you are tested for your fitness to survive, tested and made strong by the trials you undergo or else culled from your kind to prevent your weakness from contaminating others.

Though the dragons are powerful—the most powerful creatures in the land—they are not united, and often fight among themselves. They are bound by traditions more ancient than any Name-giver nation, and the ties of those





traditions can become a noose with a little careful weaving. They are often slow to act, vulnerable to the swiftness and skill that other Name-givers can apply to life. They do not understand and value the immediacy of other Name-givers as I do. Each year that passes in Barsaive is little more than an eyeblink to them, and, with the conflict between Throal and Thera drawing their attention, you can act before they are even aware anything is amiss.

The long thought and careful planning of dragons is unhurried and laggard at best by your standards, and they are seldom quick to react. You can easily press to gain the initiative against them. They claim to have learned the folly of acting too swiftly or too rashly, and the fear of another such mistake cripples them, forcing them to act methodically and carefully, behind the scenes, weighing every move. Dragons are patient hunters, as patient as the mountains and trees, and they will wait until time claims an enemy if nothing else. Use their patience against them and lull them into waiting for an opportune time that will never come. Before they realize it, it will be too late.

Read carefully the knowledge I have provided and see the patterns of age-old alliance and conflict between the great dragons of Barsaive. With some careful manipulation of the threads of the dragons' history and destiny, you may yet weave a pattern that will suit our goals—then nothing will stand in our way.

Glory to the Denairastas line, and your coming victory.

Your Sire,

Denairastas





MOUNTAINSHADOW

[Despite the opinions of those who accused me of self-aggrandizement at our recent Council, I believe I can be forgiven the questionable vanity of placing my own description first. I do this because I am concerned at the volume and accuracy of the Outcast's information about my resources, my abilities and even my goals. His nature gives him insights into our kind that few others can match, but his information about me is surprisingly current considering the circumstances... which leads me to believe that the Outcast may have innovative methods of gathering intelligence on each of us. With this in mind, we should strengthen our defenses and take steps to root out any spies (willing or unwitting) among our servants. I have already begun to do so, and I recommend that each of you do the same.]

Mountainshadow, one of the oldest and most powerful great dragons of Barsaive, is a meddler—more so than any other among all dragonkind. Some even call him a visionary, though I dispute that title for one so limited to his own view of things. He wants to know everything, and very nearly does. He is known among his fellow great dragons as Far Scholar for his tireless pursuit of knowledge in this world and others. His age gives him enormous influence, which he rarely chooses to exercise, but which he does not hesitate to use when he feels that the interests of dragonkind (as he defines them) are threatened. He is a small-minded tinkerer who collects lore as other dragons collect baubles, but he is a great dragon first and foremost. Never forget that, or make the error of underestimating him. Such a mistake is invariably fatal.

Mountainshadow shows great interest in the Young Races and has countless Name-giver servants in places where no one would expect to find them. The recent incursion of the Theran Empire into Barsaive has roused him from his endless studies and experiments, and moved him to take action with the formation of what the Therans refer to as the Dragon's Network. His Name-giver servants make up a significant part of this vast net of spies and lackeys, enhancing his influence even more among the dragons of Barsaive.

Mountainshadow's Nature

Mountainshadow was hatched long before the founding of any kingdom in Barsaive, from an egg clutch protected by the mighty All-Wings, greatest of the great dragons. To be of the clutch of All-Wings is to be a prince among dragons, with a proud and noble heritage, and a heavy burden of responsibility. All-Wings taught her hatchlings the traditions and history of dragonkind and raised them to become wise and fierce beyond all other dragons. And so they were, and so they remain to this day. Unfortunately, the surviving descendants of All-Wings are not worthy of their illustrious foremother. They may have her power, but cannot claim her wisdom or clarity of vision.

Many of her clutch did not survive their first centuries of life; competition between them was fierce and often lethal. As the last clutch of All-Wings passed through their wild years into adulthood, the greatest of dragons was struck down by the treachery of Name-givers and her own arrogance. Mountainshadow and his clutch-mates are therefore the last dragons hatched and raised by All-Wings, and Mountainshadow and his brother Icewing are the two I know of who have survived and prospered through all the centuries since. Through overwhelming strength and all the guile at his command, Mountainshadow remains first among his kind.

Mountainshadow's size is as immense as his age. His vast body is longer than an air galley, his jaws capable of crushing a troll in a single bite. His silvery-blue scales shimmer in the light like polished armor. Many have seen him soaring high above his domain in the Dragon Mountains or, more rarely, flying out over the Badlands or the nearby Servos Jungle. (He has a lair hidden in the depths of the Badlands, a place so blighted by the Scourge that even many dragons shun it. That Mountainshadow dwells there is testament to his fearlessness; the most dangerous denizens of the Badlands pose no threat to him.)

Mountainshadow is one of the few dragons who pursues knowledge above all for its own sake—indeed, he is obsessed with collecting every scrap of lore he can lay talons on. (To act on his knowledge is another thing entirely; like most of Barsaive's dragons, he prefers talking to doing. Only those who threaten to cross him feel his swift wrath.) Lost magic, ancient legends, scraps of history concerning every Name-giver race in addition to his own... all these and more, Mountainshadow prizes as another might prize a rare and precious pearl or a fine living-crystal sword. He also eagerly consumes the latest news and gossip from the far corners of the world. His many servants are his eyes and ears throughout Barsaive and beyond, bringing him the knowledge he craves. Dragonspeech enables Mountainshadow to perceive the experiences of his servants directly from their memories, and he often relives their experiences in this manner. He knows a great deal and can discover even more. Given enough time, no secret is safe from him—not though





it be ringed with a thousand allegedly unbreakable enchantments. Remember this in dealing with him, and seed your misinformation carefully.

Mountainshadow's genuine interest in the Young Races makes him unusual among our kind. Most dragons regard other Name-givers as lesser creatures valuable only as servants or as a source of food or sport. Few recognize the value of other Name-givers to dragonkind, much less the hidden potential you possess. Mountainshadow dimly understands these truths, though he still regards the Young Races as lesser beings. His interest in your kind has led him to involve himself in the affairs of younger Name-givers in the past; during the Scourge, he sheltered many in the Dragon Mountains against the Horrors' onslaught. I still have not fathomed his reasons for doing so, as he is otherwise opposed to mingling with the Young Races. He prefers to watch over them from afar, seeing to their welfare (as he defines it) through intermediaries.

Curiosity drives Mountainshadow more than any other motive, to the point where it might be considered one of his few weaknesses. His thirst for knowledge apparently cannot ever be fully quenched. This means he might be tempted with offers of lore—even bits of trivia meaningless to other Name-givers have value for him. His desire to know everything outweighs all other desires and considerations. I have known him to spare the lives of Name-givers who offended him merely to hear their life stories and understand the reasons for their actions. Often this indulgence buys the offenders only enough time to tell their tales before Mountainshadow devours them. Others, lucky enough to amuse their captor sufficiently, are allowed to live. How Mountainshadow judges which shall live and which shall die, I cannot say. Therefore, I advise caution in any dealings with him, no matter how far removed those dealings may seem from any direct link with you.

The Dragon Mountains

Mountainshadow and his brood live in the Dragon Mountains in south eastern Barsaive. His frequent flights amid those mountains, no doubt meant to display himself as a distant wonder to other Name-givers, gave the mountains their Name. High and steep, the Dragon Mountains provide a natural fortress for Mountainshadow and his servants. His dragons and drakes can soar with ease over the jagged peaks and deep valleys, while Mountainshadow's other servants control the few narrow passes that lead into the heart of his territory. Name-givers traveling to this place from elsewhere face untold hardships and hazards; they are almost certain to be stopped, and even likely to be slain, before they come anywhere near the great dragon's lair. If Mountainshadow himself does not dispatch them, his loyal drakes or other minions will. And because they are so numerous and vigilant, to avoid their attention takes great care.

Like other great dragons, Mountainshadow guards a clutch of eggs deep in his lair. Some of his hatchlings roam the Dragon Mountains; other Name-givers who dwell there consider them sacred and protect them from harm. I know of three adult dragons who lair in the Dragon Mountains, all of whom are surely onetime hatchlings of Mountainshadow's—and there may be more yet unknown to me. I have also seen many wyverns there, which suggests that Mountainshadow did not shelter only other Name-givers during the Scourge. He seems also to have cared for many young dragons and dragon hatchlings, who are now approaching maturity. (Mountainshadow now cares for few eggs in his lair and refuses to take any others. Doubtless his attention to other affairs in Barsaive has taken precedence over his much-vaunted sense of responsibility toward his own race.) The wyverns claim many of the mist-shrouded valleys, defending them ferociously against all challengers. Mountainshadow's lackeys know well enough to avoid these places and leave the younglings alone. Because so many creatures live in the lush valleys and on the slopes, no wyvern hunts Name-giver prey except to defend Mountainshadow's domain.

Mountainshadow's lair is as vast and ancient as its principal inhabitant—a veritable maze of caves and tunnels that reach deep into the heart of the Dragon Mountains. Should you succeed in getting so far, you will recognize it first by the broad plateau above which it sits. During the Scourge, its chambers and tunnels served as a vast kaer of sorts where the Young Races sheltered under Mountainshadow's protection. Some of these Name-givers live there still, though the great dragon's actual resting place remains barred to all except those with Mountainshadow's express permission to set foot within. Mountainshadow summons Name-givers into his presence from time to time, but rarely grants audiences in his lair to any save the Young Races who live in the Dragon Mountains. He prefers to deal with others through his various servants (another example of his hypocrisy regarding other Name-givers; he condemns direct action among them as evil, but sees nothing wrong with meddling in their lives by indirect means).





The Badlands Lair

I have yet to discover Mountainshadow's other lair in the nearby Badlands, the place from which he aided young Prince Neden and J'role the Honorable Thief during the Death Rebellion in Throal. The Badlands are an inhospitable place even for a great dragon, and so Mountainshadow rarely spends more than a month or so there at any given time. Afterwards, he always returns to the Dragon Mountains. He does not hunt in the Badlands, instead flying some distance to seek prey in the Servos Jungle or along the banks of the Serpent River. Since the arrival of the Theran behemoth on the shores of Lake Ban, Mountainshadow has curtailed his visits to his Badlands hideaway. I suggest you take advantage of his recent absence and redouble your efforts to find it.

Mountainshadow appears to be studying the effects of the Scourge on the Badlands and similar places. In the first years following the Scourge's end, he displayed unusual concern over the corruption of places like the Badlands, the Wastes and the Poisoned Forest. Many other dragons believe these places will revert to their former states in time, but Mountainshadow fears otherwise. I cannot say why. His concerns do not, however, appear to outweigh his desire to meddle in the affairs of Barsaive and the Theran Empire. His ever-expanding network of minions spends far more time spying on the Therans and on other Barsaivian powers—including your own city—than in attempting to solve the riddles of Horror-tainted regions.

Treasures

Mountainshadow's personal chamber holds his most valuable treasures, particularly his precious library of lore and mementos collected over the centuries. He possesses abundant memory-crystals that hold knowledge hoarded since long before the founding of Thera, Throal or any existing Name-giver kingdom. These gems hold the first-hand knowledge and experience of many beings, frozen in the crystal but accessible through dragonspeech—a far more efficient and accurate method of preserving knowledge than crude written or spoken languages. These gems, priceless to any number of Name-givers, lie under the ever-watchful gaze of their owner, warded with magical traps and guardians created by Mountainshadow.

The most precious jewel in Mountainshadow's collection is an Eye of All-Wings, cut from the body of All-Wings her-self and contained within a crystal sphere. The other Eye is in Icewing's possession. The two Eyes are magically connected, allowing Mountainshadow and Icewing to speak to each other in times of need even though they are separated by a distance of many days' flight. The Eyes of All-Wings also allow them to scry distant places and even gaze into the depths of the netherworlds. Powerful magical wards can shield places and people from the Eyes, but the greatest protection is to not be where the Eyes turn their gaze. However, this formidable magic has a weakness—namely, the limits of its owner. Even with the Eye of All-Wings, Mountainshadow cannot watch all of Barsaive at once, especially given his preoccupation with recent events concerning the Theran Empire. Provided you take care, you may accomplish much without Mountainshadow suspecting.

Mountainshadow's Powers

Like any dragon of his venerable age, Mountainshadow is powerful of tooth and claw, but the true source of his strength is his vast store of arcane knowledge. Mountainshadow knows more mystic secrets than anyone else in Barsaive, perhaps more than anyone in this part of the world. Your own knowledge, wide-ranging and formidable though it may be compared to that of ordinary Name-givers, is mere child's play against Mountainshadow's magical wisdom. He is a potent spellcaster, the most capable I have ever seen. Though I have created many spells since I last encountered him, I can say with certainty that he knew every spell and ritual I knew then, and many others besides. His command of the arcane arts allows him to ward his lair and create magical traps and servants whenever he requires them. His extensive library contains magical lore unknown to other Name-givers, powerful enough to shake mountains or reduce cities to smoking ruins. When you hear Mountainshadow's honeyed words, remember the power that underlies them. And remember also his willingness to act against those who stray from his vision of what the world should be. His power brought about my own fall from grace (as Mountainshadow might put it) because I dared to disagree with his notions of a dragon's proper place in the world's affairs. If he could do what he has done to one as powerful as I, imagine what he might do to lesser enemies... and be cautious accordingly.

Along with his mastery of the mystic arts, Mountainshadow is especially skilled in the use of dragonspeech and dragonsight. He has refined the ancient arts of touching the minds of others and sifting through their memories like a





heap of gleaming gems to find exactly the one he seeks. He once spoke of experiencing life from the view of the Young Races, and how vastly different the world looked through their eyes (as I could have told him ten times over, but no matter). With dragonspeech, Mountainshadow can pluck the very thoughts from inside your head. His gaze is like a viper's, paralyzing in its intensity; while you stand helplessly pinned by it, Mountainshadow slithers through your mind and takes whatever he desires. He can also bend your mind to his will, planting ideas, feelings and even memories. The crafting of such thoughts, which subtly tug at the threads of a Name-giver's pattern until they change it, requires time and concentration, but can be a more powerful weapon than flame or claw.

Mountainshadow used dragonspeech to enter the mind of Prince Neden when he lay dissected and dying, healing the dwarf prince and restoring him to wholeness. Who can say what seeds of thought the dragon planted then, or how they might blossom now that Neden is King of Throal? And what does Icewing think of Mountainshadow's interference with the dwarfs, whom Icewing likes to think of as his playthings? The answers to these questions are worth discovering, for they may aid you in your designs. And when you move against Mountainshadow, as you inevitably must, you will need all the help you can get.

Like his other abilities, Mountainshadow's dragonsight is as sharp as his talons. He understands patterns and the delicate threads that make them, especially the power of patterns to create and destroy.

[Something the Outcast understands as well. I advise all of you to keep close watch over your Pattern Items and those tied to anything you value. The Denairastas have shown skill in exploiting Pattern Items already in Throal. Do not underestimate them.]

In the Badlands, he appears to be studying the land's pattern to learn how it may be rewoven, thereby restoring the land to health. But what can be woven can also be unwoven, as you know yourselves. Mountainshadow will not hesitate to turn such formidable knowledge against you, should you openly declare yourselves his enemies.

Mountainshadow's Servants

Mountainshadow has more Name-giver servants than any other great dragon, save perhaps Earthroot and his underground kingdom of t'skrang. He appears to lack a significant number of drakes, though some of Mountainshadow's Name-giver servants may be drakes in disguise. The recent loss of some of his drakes in the distant province of Indrisa may have opened a potential weakness in his network of spies.

Drakes

The only known drake who serves Mountainshadow is Rosper, a young drake actively involved in Mountainshadow's spy network and its operations against the Theran Empire. Rosper has the impulsiveness and fire of youth, only somewhat tempered by his master's guidance. With the right prodding, you might trick him into taking rash action. Rosper wishes to please his master, as most drakes do, but this desire is matched by his fury toward the Theran Empire, and (like most drakes) he lacks the patience and wisdom that centuries of living can bring. Rosper wishes to act against the Therans soon, rather than playing his master's waiting game. As the great dragons tighten the reins on their drakes, a rift between master and servant may appear; be watchful and ready to exploit it.

[Our enemies may well try to turn our servants against us. I know others say that a drake cannot betray its creator and master, but I must respectfully remind everyone that we believed the same thing of our servants once before and were proven tragically wrong. We should not make the same mistake twice.]

Three of Mountainshadow's other drakes disappeared recently while on an errand for their master far from home, in the Theran province of Indrisa. They will prove difficult and costly to replace, and so Mountainshadow must either manage without their service or expend the time and effort to create new drakes. He may even attempt to find the lost ones, which may leave him vulnerable in other ways.

[I fear that the disappearance of my other drakes is related to Denairastas "exiles" calling themselves Broken Keys, living in Indrisa and serving its Overgovernor as mercenaries. These Broken Keys may well be agents of the Holders of Trust. It is possible, though unlikely, that they have captured and questioned my missing drakes. If so, they may be the source of some of the Outcast's information. However, I still do not know how the Outcast learned the rest of what he knows about me.]





Name-givers

Of greater concern than Mountainshadow's drakes is the multitude of Name-givers who serve him. Many of them are descendants of those he sheltered from the Scourge, safe behind formidable magical wards and protections. As a price for his aid, Mountainshadow required each Name-giver village to keep a record of its history throughout the Scourge and also to compile its previous history as far back as anyone remembered. The villagers presented their histories to the great dragon after the Scourge, when the Name-givers left Mountainshadow's lair for the outside world. As with so many things this dragon has done, I cannot fathom his reason, apart from his obsession with collecting knowledge of all kinds. Perhaps it gives him pleasure simply to know what others do not, so that he may believe himself wiser than all other living beings. What he expects to do with the histories of insignificant villages populated by the very Young Races whose lives must not be "tampered with," I cannot imagine.

Following the Scourge, those who sheltered with Mountainshadow chose to remain in or near the Dragon Mountains. They worshipped Mountainshadow as their savior and protector, and remained near him to retain his protection against the dangers that the Scourge had left behind. The hundreds of Name-givers who live in these mountain villages revere Mountainshadow and do his bidding without question. I have tried to shake the loyalty of more than a few, and failed. This only proves what I have always believed, and what so many of my fellow dragons refuse to believe, about the true potential of other Name-givers. Those who have learned to serve well are more valuable to us than any type of servant our magic can create.

Until recently, Mountainshadow made little use of the Name-givers at his command. They remained in the Dragon Mountains, sustaining their own isolated existence under their protector's watchful eye. But the renewed activity of the Theran Empire in Barsaive has prompted Mountainshadow into the very action he has always pretended to disapprove—he has organized his Name-giver servants into part of a huge network loyal to Barsaive's great dragons, intended to coordinate operations against the Therans and possibly even ally with some of Barsaive's other great powers. (Needless to say, he does not include Iopos among that number.)

Many of Mountainshadow's Name-giver servants are adepts, some of them quite skilled. He may have taught the spellcasting adepts among them himself, though certainly he has not taught them any of his greatest arcane secrets. He is as reluctant to part with truly valuable lore as he is enamored of collecting it.

[Not so, as this collection proves. I simply prefer not to interfere with the training and development of adepts in the villages under my protection. They learn the skills and talents of their Disciplines quite well on their own.]

Dark Tooth

One servant of Mountainshadow, a human Named Dark Tooth, deserves particular attention. Dark Tooth is Mountainshadow's primary envoy and messenger to the world outside the Dragon Mountains, and he carries word from his master to other servants of the dragon scattered throughout Barsaive. Dark Tooth also occasionally hires adepts and adventurers to carry out important tasks for Mountainshadow that cannot—for various reasons—be entrusted to the other Name-givers serving him.

Dark Tooth is a human male, slight of build and unassuming of feature, the sort of human to whom few give a second thought. His hair is dark and he wears a hooded cloak to conceal his features much of the time. He is not known to follow any Discipline, nor has he openly displayed any talents or spells, but the ease with which he appears and disappears and his long years of service to Mountainshadow suggest that he is certainly an adept, perhaps even a drake in human guise. This latter possibility is strongly suggested by an incident said to take place several years ago, when a thief living in a village near the Dragon Mountains decided to follow Dark Tooth one night after the messenger had left the village. The thief's remains were found the next day scattered across the village green—the slaying was clearly not the work of an adept. Most Name-givers heeded the message, and will not pry too deeply into Dark Tooth's affairs. If you wish to learn more of him, you will need to resort to other means than simple questioning of local folk. They rightly fear him and his dragon lord, and will tell you nothing freely.

If Dark Tooth is a drake, he must be an old and experienced one, making him a valuable asset to Mountainshadow and a danger to us. Dark Tooth may very well be the coordinating agent behind Mountainshadow's network of spies, carrying the commands of his master all across Barsaive. Certainly, command of an operation as large in scope as this network of spies is beyond the capabilities of a young drake like Rosper. Gather all the information you can about Dark Tooth and his activities, and you may discover a way to use Mountainshadow's most trusted servant against him.





[I wish our friends luck. Dark Tooth is far cleverer and more capable than the Outcast imagines.]

Allies and Enemies

Mountainshadow has his share of friends and foes among his fellow dragons and the other Name-givers of Barsaive. Some of these relationships may be useful to our cause; others pose potential threats to our enterprises. Use subtlety and wisdom in exploiting the former; watch carefully for the latter, and lose no chance to strike a blow where you can.

Among the great dragons of Barsaive, Mountainshadow is on particularly good terms with his brother, Icewing. The two share similar interests in the affairs of Name-givers, and between them form the core of the so-called Dragon's Network opposing the Therans. Being dragons, they cooperate only within carefully prescribed boundaries and rituals, but they regularly exchange information and aid when needed and are the two most closely allied great dragons in the province. Through the Eyes of All-Wings, they can communicate swiftly from their respective lairs and observe a great deal of what happens throughout Barsaive.

The only great dragon that might be called an enemy of Mountainshadow is Usun, the master of the Liaj Jungle. The two have disagreed on almost every aspect of dealing with Name-givers in Barsaive and with the Theran Empire in particular. Though wise enough never to oppose Mountainshadow directly, Usun holds no love for his elder; indeed, he has lately taken to openly expressing disdain for Mountainshadow's tendency to make pets of the Young Races. He has shown similar contempt for Icewing's involvement with the Kingdom of Throal. Of course, Usun hates me as much, if not more, than he does Mountainshadow, but his enmity toward the master of the Dragon Mountains could prove useful.

I would hope such a transparent ploy had no hope of success. Though we have numerous disagreements, I would certainly not consider Usun an enemy, and would prefer to see us all work together to deal with the threat posed by the Impertinent Ones and the Outcast and his spawn.

It is not only his fellow great dragons that Mountainshadow can call friend. Other dragons of his brood living in the Dragon Mountains look to him for guidance (as they have always done), and will doubtless come to his aid should he ever call upon them. The eldest is a male Named Thunderwing, who lairs high atop a peak in the central Dragon Mountains. Thunderwing has dark gray scales, shading to a deep blue on his chest and wings. He is a proud and imperious dragon, with little understanding of Mountainshadow's interest in the Young Races, but he respects his elder and bows to his will. He hunts to the north and east of the Dragon Mountains, often ranging toward the Aras Sea.

The other two of Mountainshadow's brood known to me are Firedancer and Smokeweaver, a male and a female from the same clutch. Firedancer has dark brown scales with reddish highlights that gleam and ripple, as if flames were flickering across his hide. He lairs in the spur of the Dragon Mountains near Death's Sea and sometimes soars high on its thermal currents. He shares his egg-parent's curiosity and spends much time studying Death's Sea and portions of the Badlands. Firedancer also occasionally attacks mining ships over Death's Sea—whether from youthful pique at having his domain invaded or simply for amusement, I cannot say.

Smokeweaver has dark gray scales, and holds herself more aloof than Firedancer from other Name-givers and their doings. She lives in the depths of the Dragon Mountains, sometimes flying southward into the wild lands beyond Barsaive to hunt and explore. Smokeweaver is of an age to find a mate and breed, but has refused Thunderwing's advances. She knows that she must entrust any eggs she lays to a great dragon other than Mountainshadow, who refuses to care for more. To all appearances, however, this refusal to be bothered has not altered Smokeweaver's loyalty toward the dragon who raised her.

Unlike Icewing, Mountainshadow is not directly involved in the affairs of any Name-giver nation—he prefers to pull the puppet strings from somewhere out of sight, so that none may accuse him of unseemly meddling in the Young Races' affairs. He does, however, have strong ties to two important Name-givers in the Kingdom of Throal: King Neden and his advisor, J'role. During the Death Rebellion years ago, Mountainshadow helped J'role the Honorable Thief find the missing Prince Neden, who was being held by the Theran nethermancer Mordom in a secret lair in the Badlands. After J'role and his allies defeated Mordom, Mountainshadow used his dragon powers to cleanse the dwarf prince of the nethermantic taint and restore him to health.

Now Neden has become king and J'role the leader, or as he is known in Throal, the Senior Gatherer of the Eye of Throal (another large network of potential enemies). The gratitude both feel toward Mountainshadow for his blatant interference in the young prince's life means that they owe him a debt, one that he will doubtless call due whenever it best suits his purposes. In effect, the Kingdom of Throal is at the beck and call of Mountainshadow and Icewing, both of





whom are likely to consider Throal an ally against the Theran Empire's incursion into Barsaive. If Mountainshadow and his brother come to Throal's aid, and if they convince Barsaive's other great dragons to do the same, they are likely to tip the balance of power strongly toward the dwarf kingdom. Needless to say, agents of the Theran Empire will do almost anything to prevent such an alliance against them. Think on this, and consider carefully any possibilities it may open for advancing our own interests.

[Ironical that the Outcast can see the viability of my proposals, even if some of my peers cannot. Throal's enemies clearly fear an alliance between us because it threatens them. I ask you all to consider the possibility of alliance with Throal once again in light of this information. Shall we support Throal against the Empire, as wisdom dictates, or sit idly by when so much is at stake?]

Mountainshadow's Goals

[As always, the Outcast retains a clear head for tactics, despite being blinded by self-importance and disregard for our traditions. His analysis of my goals is accurate enough to cause us all concern. Read what he has written—and then, if you are wise, you will consider altering own your plans to account for it.]

Mountainshadow has many goals, especially since the arrival of the Theran behemoth in Barsaive's heartland. I offer you only the uppermost of his many plots and schemes. Use these writings not merely to know what he intends next, but also to understand how he moves the pieces spread out on the game board of Barsaive, and you may begin to anticipate his moves in advance. Only through such application of intelligence and guile will you have any chance of succeeding against Mountainshadow; for even as powerful as you have become, he is as far beyond you in power and sheer cunning as a windling is beyond a flying insect. He can be thwarted; did I not know this to be true, I would not have set down these words. But never forget that among all the Name-givers of Barsaive, we great dragons are the oldest and strongest and canniest—and that among great dragons, none is older or stronger or cannier than Mountainshadow. Remember this, and you may yet win out against him.

To Gather Knowledge

First and foremost, Mountainshadow seeks to know. He is compelled to study whatever he does not understand, and to gather all the knowledge he can about it before acting. Mountainshadow's immense network of servants exists primarily to bring him information on everything from the vital to the utterly trivial. This means that Mountainshadow will often delay his actions until he believes he has enough information to fully understand the situation. Through obfuscation, falsehoods and hiding important facts among an avalanche of trivia, you may keep him occupied until it is too late for him to move effectively against you. Keep in mind, however, that Mountainshadow has the accumulated knowledge of millennia at his disposal. Assume that he knows your plans in advance, and act accordingly.

[Much as I dislike it, I must concede the possibility that this entire document was written solely for our benefit, and that it mixes lies and half-truths with genuine information about the Outcast's knowledge, opinions and plans. By all means, take whatever steps you feel are necessary to confirm facts revealed here, as I am already doing.]

To Deal with the Theran Empire

For the past several months, Mountainshadow has been ceaselessly agitating for action against the Theran Empire because it threatens Barsaive's freedom. This agitation was most recently demonstrated by a Council convened by Mountainshadow. I know not the outcome of this most recent Council, the first since the end of the Scourge, but trust when I tell you that the consequences of this Council will soon reveal themselves. Great dragons act slowly and reluctantly, but once they decide upon a course of action, they are rarely subtle, and act swiftly and brutally.

The great dragons and the Empire love each other little, and so the dragons are inclined to look favorably on aiding Throal simply because the dwarf kingdom likewise hates the Therans. The threat currently posed by Thera provides ideal cover for our own activities, until it is far too late for anyone to stop us, provided we use our opportunities wisely. However, a common enemy such as Thera may also unite the disparate, squabbling factions of Barsaive before our plans have borne fruit. Be watchful of such a development, and do whatever is necessary to sabotage it.

To Explore the Minds of the Young Races

The thoughts, feelings and fleeting lives of the Young Races fascinate Mountainshadow, and he continues to use his pet Name-givers to explore these races' necessarily limited experience of the Universe. In many ways,





Mountainshadow is closer to the Young Races than any other great dragon. Icewing may see outsiders in his lair more often, but Mountainshadow touches the minds of the Young Races almost constantly—especially since the formation of his spy network. This means that Mountainshadow understands the feelings and motivations of Name-givers better than most dragons, because he is involved with so many. Such strong connections to the minds of others may cause Mountainshadow to lose his perspective; more practically, we can use it to feed him false information.

To Protect the Inhabitants of the Dragon Mountains

Mountainshadow vigilantly guards all the Name-givers in his domain. No sky raider or Theran slaver is foolish enough to trespass in the skies over the Dragon Mountains when easier prey is available. An immediate threat to the inhabitants of his domain may distract Mountainshadow's attention from other matters, forcing him to turn his gaze closer to home and leaving the field freer for us to operate.

To Discover the Fate of his Lost Drakes

The disappearance of his drakes in Indrisa greatly concerns Mountainshadow, and he is certain to investigate what became of them. Doing so, of course, means committing resources that he might otherwise have sent elsewhere. With so many of his Name-giver servants deeply entangled in his monitoring of Theran activity, Mountainshadow is likely to send Dark Tooth to engage a group of adepts for this enterprise rather than commit his own people. This presents an opportunity to learn more about Dark Tooth and perhaps gain access to him through Mountainshadow's chosen agents.





ABAN

[Though I sometimes chafe at Mistweaver's isolation and the difficulties it imposes upon communicating with her, it has served us to some degree as an impediment to the Outcast's espionage efforts. His knowledge of her activities seems somewhat uncertain and replete with conjecture, though his skill at deduction and tactical analysis has helped him fill in many gaps in his knowledge.]

Aban, the enigmatic mistress of the Mist Swamps, is an intriguing mixture of contradictions, an unusual state for a member of a race that has thousands of years in which to decide how to look at the world. Though she supports the great dragons' philosophy of non-interference, upon occasion she takes a direct hand in shaping events in Barsaive, perhaps acting more directly than any other of her kind when she chooses to act. Though she usually seems distant as the stars, she sometimes rouses herself to heights of passion and fury that make even others of her kind pale at the thought of confronting her. Though she claims active dislike for most of the Name-giver races of Barsaive, she often chooses to frighten away interlopers into her domain, rather than slay them. Perhaps these things are due to the fact that she is among the youngest of the great dragons and has not had the same time that others have to solidify her opinions. Despite this, never think of her as fickle or erratic, for such will inevitably lead you to underestimate her. Her decisions always carry the full force of a draconic will.

Whatever the reasons for her vacillations, one thing about Aban remains constant and unchanging. She allows no one to reach the heart of the Mist Swamps. Her vigil over the ancient, elusive ruins of Yrns Morgath, the city long lost in the depths of the swamp, is eternal and unceasing. Only other dragons may approach that ancient place without raising her ire, and she takes a dim view of those who prevail upon her too often or who do not show the proper deference when seeking audience. As you will understand, the nature of the place in which she keeps her lair and the vigilance with which she protects it makes it difficult to gather information about her and her doings; much of what I know comes from past associations.

Aban's Nature

Of the great dragons of Barsaive, Aban is the only one not born during the Age of Dragons. Aban was among the very first dragons hatched under the care of the mighty Cloudtamer during the first century of this magically-endowed age. Cloudtamer was a warrior among dragons, the fiercest of the fierce. Though his magical skills were not insignificant, he greatly enjoyed physical conflict and developed magic that augmented those capabilities above any other. As impatient as a great dragon may be said to be, he typically sought direct and violent solutions to his problems.

Cloudtamer was a harsh sire, even by the standards of a race that deliberately culls the weak from its numbers. He deliberately exposed his brood to perils whose descriptions would blacken the pages upon which I write, and he often pitted his hatchlings against each other in physical contests. The slightest weakness earned reproof, and consistent failure meant exile to the wilderness or death at his talons. Aban's gender earned her no lenience, for female dragons must, if anything, be stronger than males, the better to protect themselves when they carry eggs. Little wonder, then, that Aban is so hard and fierce.

Cloudtamer met his end shortly before the beginning of the Scourge, at the hands of the Theran Empire. A proud symbol of the strength of dragonkind, he was identified as the first target of the Theran behemoths when the Empire sought to discourage the great dragons from revealing magic that would protect people from the Scourge. Legendary though his strength was, his direct method of solving problems was not sufficient to the task, and he was destroyed. While few dragons retain lasting emotional attachments to the great dragons who raise them, Aban deeply respected her sire for his lessons and the strength they engendered. When the Therans killed Cloudtamer, they made of Aban an eternal and implacable enemy, a fact that the commanders and crews of airships in the region above and around the Mist Swamps have begun to learn personally.

[Alas for the loss of Cloudtamer. As disrespectful and short-tempered as he was wont to be, his willingness to fight at the shedding of a scale would be of use to us now. His strength and prowess were undeniable, and his fire might have roused us to action before now. I take comfort that one of his brood should have grown into a strength so like to his.]

Aban was taught to thrive in a world that slew nearly all of those born with her, and her strength and aggression led her into adulthood earlier than is common. She is the only great dragon among all those born in this age. Her relative youth works against her in many ways. First, she is but newly admitted to the society of the great dragons. Her voice is accorded little influence among the older dragons at Councils, who consider themselves far wiser than she (though to





ignore her reveals the lie behind that opinion). She fanatically adheres to custom and ritual, especially the Rite of the Fifteen Venerations, as a way of assuring that she is given the respect that is her due. Second, she has not the same depth of experience as the other great dragons, a fact that sometimes leads her into what passes for impetuosity among her kind. She has not the same control over herself that most other great dragons have, and her rage sometimes gets the better of her. Third, she has not the degree of mastery over her powers that great dragons of the likes of Mountainshadow and Icewing have. Do not believe that she is not formidable in her own right; the experiences of those who have sought the lost city of Yrns Morgath prove otherwise.

Physically, Aban is larger than most other dragons of her age, perhaps only Mountainshadow is larger. Despite this, she has no difficulty moving about the Mist Swamps completely unseen; she can appear from the gloom of the swamps suddenly and without warning, a fact well-described in journals left at Throal's Great Library by those who have survived encounters with her. The same tales that agree so completely on this account differ greatly on another, however—that of Aban's coloration. In one book she is described as having scales the deep red of old blood and eyes as black as the midnight sky, while another tome paints a picture of her with greenish-black scales and unsettling yellow eyes. When I knew her, her scales were a glossy black that ran with subtle hints of deep blue, while her eyes were the clear blue of the long-frozen ice at the tops of mountains. Whatever the reason for it, be it the effects of living in the Mist Swamps or some deliberate magical change, Aban's coloration can vary. Rely not on the color of her scales to identify her.

Keep all of this in mind as you plan the next stage of your conquest of Barsaive; always consider where she may stand and how she may affect you. Though she remains largely in her lair in the Swamps, she might come forth at any time. Remember her upbringing, her strength and her aggression. If she sees you as an enemy or you earn her anger, she will strike, and decisively. Watch for your chance to take advantage of the beginnings of a schism between Aban and the remainder of the great dragons of Barsaive. Be subtle, though, for the division is as yet so small that the dragons themselves are likely not aware of it, and efforts not guided with the utmost of care might draw their attention to it and destroy its usefulness. Never forget the enmity Aban bears the Therans. As the hostility between the Empire and the Kingdom of Throal grows more heated, her antipathy toward the elves may prove useful in keeping the Therans off balance and prolonging the conflict long enough to weaken both sides until they have no power to resist your own advances.

[Here the Outcast reminds me that his purpose is not only to warn the Denairastas of our strength, but to point out ways in which they may attempt to use us as weapons against each other, dividing us in much the way they hope to divide the other forces of Barsaive, so that none may resist them. I doubt that they have any hope of achieving such a goal, but it behooves us to remain vigilant against such machinations, so that our confidence in our ability to see and resist them does not prove to be the weakness that allows them to succeed.]

Mistweaver, though I dispute the Outcast's claim that your words were held in less accord than those of your elders at our recent Council, I offer you the Rite of Transgression as an apology for any perceived slight on my part.]

The Mist Swamps

Aban makes her lair in one of the least hospitable locations in Barsaive, the Mist Swamps. It is here that the Serpent River divides into hundreds of smaller streams, creating a huge marsh that rolls into Death's Sea and becomes a sweltering, simmering expanse of steam and mud. Those few brave or foolish enough to venture into the swamps and fortunate enough to return report difficult and life-threatening conditions. Endless clouds of steam obscure vision and leech the vitality from the hardiest of explorers. The water is universally hot, simmering in some places and boiling in others. You might expect such a place to be wasted and devoid of life, but the swamps teem with living dangers, creatures ready to leap upon unwary travelers with claw, fang and venom.

The perils of the place form a formidable wall that shields Aban's lair from the prying eyes of all but the most insistent and skilled of searchers. Though tales abound of Aban attacking and devouring those who intrude upon her solitude, the number of people who die at her claw is far smaller than the number who perish in the hazardous swamp before ever seeing her. Though some explorers describe seeing Aban soaring above the Swamps or flying low through the mists, those who reach the heart of the Mist Swamps never see its most powerful resident until too late. She always appears suddenly, spraying searing liquid upon the unfortunates as she rears up from the water or stepping out of tattered curtains of mist that moments earlier completely concealed her from view.





The Lost City

At the heart of the Mist Swamps lies Aban's lair, the ancient lost city of Yrns Morgath. Some who have reached the deepest parts of the swamps have written of finding remains of ancient structures, be it a stretch of stone wall, a pitted archway with faint remains of ancient carvings or a short flight of stone stairs climbing up into the air toward a raised floor that no longer exists. All who reach this point encounter Aban, a meeting that ends either in the flight of the intruders or their death, for Aban grants no audiences. This ancient place has long since surrendered to the ravages of time and their harsh environment, not to mention the efforts of pre-Scourge treasure-seekers, yet it still holds artifacts of power and tomes of lore that hearken back to the Age of Dragons. It may be that tales of these lost treasures are what entices the Thera Empire to brave Aban's wrath, for they still send search parties and airships into the swamps, despite the fact that Aban tolerates no Thera presence anywhere in her domain and attacks both airborne and land-bound explorers with daunting ferocity.

Treasures

Though some remnants from the Age of Dragons remain hidden within the tumbled ruins of Yrns Morgath, many such treasures were taken from the city before Aban made the place her lair. Adepts in search of tools with which to build their legends took some, while others were claimed by the servants of other great dragons, seeking artifacts they created in the olden days before the progeny of their folly rebelled against their so-called beneficent rule. The bulk of the magical treasures that Aban claims as her own she collects in the Hall of Trophies, items taken from Name-givers bold enough to invade her lair and daft enough not to leave at her insistence. These treasures run the full range from common threaded items to unique legendary treasures.

Such treasures do not explain the Thera persistence, however; no magical sword, no matter how powerful, could engender such strength of effort. It may be that the Thera Empire knows of the greatest treasure hidden in Yrns Morgath, a treasure that Aban has protected since before the Scourge. Secreted away somewhere in the ruins that are the heart of the Mist Swamps, protected behind magical barriers of such power that only a great dragon could create them, lie the remains of the hero Naaman Y'ross.

[It seems here that the Outcast is placing far too much faith in the words of the recent Thera report on the so-called Secret Societies of Barsaive (which regrettably contains a startling amount of accurate information about our own operatives and agents in Barsaive). One of the reports in this collection suggests that the remains of Naaman Y'ross are in fact within the ruins of Yrns Morgath in the Mist Swamps.]

Aban's true reasons for protecting these remains are unknown to me. I do not understand her fascination with this arrogant elf, for she holds the Therans in such grand contempt. Perhaps she sees this stewardship as an opportunity to thwart the Empire, by preventing the Therans from somehow returning their ancient hero to the living world. I do know that she believes that Naaman Y'ross yet has some part to play in the future of Barsaive, though what she expects that role to be is a mystery. If she knows of a way by which he may be returned to life, then it may be that she plans to use him to tip the scales of the balance between Thera and Throal. If this proves to be true, then winning such a hero to the cause of the Denairastas would prove a significant victory, indeed.

Mistweaver, if the Outcast's claims are true, I am concerned that we should learn of this from his words, rather than directly from yourself. While I do not presume to suggest that you should keep us informed of all that you do, what the Outcast suggests about the usefulness of Y'ross to our goals may have some merit. Given your hatred of the Empire, I can only presume that either you do not know how to return the hero to life, or that the Outcast is wrong in his claim that the hero's remains are at Yrns Morgath. In either case, certainly you can tell us if it is really the hero's remains that drive the Therans to search the swamps so vigorously, or something more?

Aban's Powers

By virtue of her youth, Aban has not yet developed her powers to the same extent as other great dragons, and she may be considered one of the magically weaker of her kind. Take this not as a slight against her strength, however, for no weakling could have survived the tutelage of Cloudbearer. Her magical might is less than that of her brethren because they have had many millennia to perfect and develop their powers, while she has had only just over two thousand years.

Aban has a great affinity for the magic of the elements, which may explain why she chooses to live in a place where all of the elements come together. She surely knows every Elemental spell known to the scholars of both Thera and Throal, and knows of others that are unknown to those groups. She has proven such an effective master of these





types of magic that her pride in this regard may be exploited, my children; you may prove able to earn some small measure of tolerance from her if you can bring her elemental magic she does not yet know. Do not expect such an offer to mollify her for long, however.

In addition to spell magic, Aban exercises her mastery of the elements in many ways, including the summoning and control of elemental spirits. She often leaves elementals to guard her lair when she must be away from it for an extended time. Through the assistance of these elementals, Aban has attuned herself to the Mist Swamps and every living creature within them, extending her ability to sense her lair to include the entirety of the area. Everything the creatures of the swamps see and hear is known to her; they serve as her eyes and ears. These senses are usually distracted, as though she were listening to a crowd assembled outside a window. Whenever she chooses, however, she may concentrate upon a specific area and borrow the senses of the beasts therein, so as to see everything that occurs.

Aban's elemental powers also give her near-total control over the very terrain of the Mist Swamps. She can quickly change water from boiling to cool and back again. Solid earth becomes thin mud at her whim, and the gnarled and twisted trees of the swamp rearrange themselves as she wills. She can thicken and thin the billowing mists with a thought, no doubt the explanation for why such a huge creature as Aban can suddenly appear without warning before the most observant and perceptive of explorers.

Aban's Servants

Aban's servants are as secretive and as deadly as their mistress. The former fact makes accurate knowledge of their numbers and activities very difficult to obtain, and the latter fact makes the discovery of that information an event fraught with danger for Name-givers frailer than dragonkind. Aban tolerates no weakness or failure, a fact that motivates her servants to great effort on her behalf. Accustomed to surviving in the Mist Swamps, the dangers of the rest of Barsaive present them little difficulty; not even your carefully-watched city of Iopos is immune to their clandestine comings and goings.

Elemental Spirits and Creatures

Within the Mist Swamps themselves, Aban has numerous elemental spirits of all kinds and strengths at her beck and call. Most protect her lair, which explains the accounts of the swamp coming to life and consuming intruders. Others assist her with powerful elemental magic of uncertain purpose. Aban has sufficient knowledge and power to summon a number of Named elemental spirits, and has even called upon Great Form spirits from time to time. Even she bargains carefully with the latter, and the power these spirits give her should give you pause.

Aban's attunement to the Mist Swamps allows her to call upon the creatures of the swamps as she will, in much the way a Beastmaster might dominate an animal's mind to require of it some service. Accounts exist of creatures in the swamps attacking explorers in a fashion that hints at coordination or intelligence, and the will of the dragon is one of the few forces powerful enough to allow control of so many creatures at once. Do not underestimate the tiniest creature in this place, for everything is potentially an extension of Aban's will. And though this connection between Aban and the creatures of the Mist Swamps might at first seem to be an extension of the dragon's natural lair sense, I have reason to believe Aban is able to extend this influence beyond the borders of her chosen lair, up along the Serpent River, perhaps even as far as the southern edges of the Servos Jungle and along the southern stretch of the Tylon River. How she is able to do this is beyond my knowledge, but is something that certainly bears further thought.

Between her influence over the myriad creatures of the marshes, the elemental spirits that roam the mists and her control of the very terrain, any who would attack Aban must literally fight the Mist Swamps themselves before winning through to the dragon, a meeting which becomes more daunting on the heels of the momentous effort required to reach her. Fortunately, these perils are their worst only when actively directed by Aban, and she cannot focus her view everywhere at once. Stealth is the key to reaching the heart of Aban's domain, and you are more likely to succeed when she is busy defending the Mist Swamps from the incursions of Theran forces.

Drakes

The only drake known to serve Aban is a hot-blooded specimen Named Savryn. The last drake created by Cloudtamer before his death, Savryn is as physically imposing compared to other drakes as his mistress is to most other dragons. When Cloudtamer was slain, Savryn chose to serve Aban, for he saw her as the most worthy successor to her





sire. A well-skilled practitioner of the Warrior discipline, Savryn is much like his creator in his preference for physical solutions to problems. As one of Aban's primary servants outside the boundaries of the Mist Swamps, however, he has of late been forced to act in more circumspect a fashion. He chafes somewhat under this "training," particularly because he sees his mistress as being unfaithful to the principles of her sire. His physical predilections mean a skilled eye can watch him with only moderate effort as he moves through the lands of Barsaive. His preference for direct action may also serve as a lever to manipulate him, be it into action that he does not realize is counter to the interests of the great dragons or into direct insubordination.

[Again the Outcast strikes at the connection between us and our drake servants. Mistweaver, though I have not witnessed what he claims about the temperament of this drake, if what he says is true, you would do well to settle any issue that hangs unresolved between yourself and Savryn.]

I know not whether Aban has other drakes that serve her. I suspect that her mastery of the ritual magic of the great dragons is not yet sufficient to the task of creating them. If I am wrong in this and she has drakes in addition to Savryn, then they are not nearly as hot-headed and impulsive as he is, being instead skilled at subterfuge and deception. Should this prove true, I have no doubt that such servants would be nearly as physically powerful as Savryn himself, given the nature of their creator.

The Hand Of Corruption

You are no doubt aware, my children, of the legends that speak of a place called the Castle of Assassins which lies tucked away in the northern stretches of the Mist Swamps, where the waters of the marshes lap against the foothills of the Twilight Peaks. This place is a training ground for the Assassins Branch of the Hand of Corruption, who use it to train their killers to pursue their mad dream of expunging all life from the face of Barsaive and the lands beyond. Here they hone Name-givers into deadly weapons, under the very snout of the great dragon Aban. Why does Aban, who so thoroughly roots out intruders into her domain, tolerate the presence of these madmen on her very doorstep? There can be but one answer.

Since Aban allows only those who serve her to travel through and abide in the Mist Swamps, the denizens of the Castle of Assassins must be her servants. From all accounts that I have heard, they serve her current needs perfectly. They are ruthless and efficient, for only the most fit survive the training and live to carry their agenda into the lands of Barsaive. They move furtively and unseen through the shadows of the lands, executing their violence and escaping again into the darkness from which they spring. Silent and deadly, they carry out the will of their dragon mistress, though they are certainly unaware of her manipulation. I suspect that no more than a few understand that Aban truly directs the activities of the Castle of Assassins and the Hand of Corruption, using them to pull the strings of the province from the secrecy of her swamp lair. The rest go about their work, blissfully unaware that they are dark pawns in a deadly game with far greater reach and consequence than they will ever understand.

[Such claims as these are patently ludicrous, though I am glad to see that at least some of the Outcast's information is widely off the mark. It means that his sources of information are fallible, some small comfort considering the wealth of accurate knowledge he has gathered. He makes no mention of perhaps the most significant of her underlings. This is most interesting as he seems to have stumbled onto all the clues he should need to uncover these most mysterious and secretive of Mistweaver's servants. More importantly, this tale might misdirect the Holders of Trust and the Denairastas into dealing with the Hand of Corruption, useful to us both because it distracts them from us and helps get rid of an infestation that has long needed to be cleansed from this land.]

Allies and Enemies

Among her fellow great dragons, Aban retains a largely neutral stance. Given the complexity of interactions between them, and the generally solitary nature of dragonkind, this is not surprising. Her passion has led her to an occasional entanglement, insofar as mating between great dragons may truly be termed such, and her most recent involvement of this kind was with Earthroot, the king of the Pale Ones who live beneath the Throal Mountains. Though that involvement took place several decades ago, such a span is as a few breaths to a dragon, and the two remain on good terms. What that means in greater terms is uncertain, but remember that dragons rarely allow such things to influence their thoughts.

If Aban may be said to dislike any of the great dragons of Barsaive, it is Icewing. Icewing was the third of the great dragons to be a target of the Theran navy shortly before the Scourge, a target that was not in place when the arrow struck. Though I doubt that Aban begrudges Icewing his life, she no doubt feels that he had the necessary information to





save Cloudtamer from the fate he himself avoided. Had Icewing acted in time, Aban's sire would likely be alive today, a fact that gnaws at her whenever she must deal with him.

In the lands of Barsaive at large, Aban is a sworn enemy of the Theran Empire. Though her opposition to them lacks the enduring burn of ancient betrayal that most of the other great dragons feel toward the Empire, it has the hot fire of youthful anger and desire for vengeance that the other great dragons have not felt in millennia. Aban has recently indulged this anger with quite a vengeance, attacking several Theran vedettes that have braved the skies over the Mist Swamps. By now at least half a dozen ships lie scattered about the swamps, slowly sinking through the mud into obscurity. To my knowledge, no crewmen from these ships have escaped to tell the tale, for Aban hunts them down, an easy feat considering her attunement to the place. I do not know whether the capture of these ships appeases her anger or fuels it, but it is clear that the Therans will not be scared off by the threat Aban poses. If they continue as they have done, however, they may find their entire fleet in ruins beneath the Mist Swamps before they ever find what they seek.

Aban's hatred of the Therans extends to any who openly support them or side with them in the coming conflict. This causes significant problems for the t'skrang of House K'tenshin, whose nine-diamond banners fly on all manner of craft sailing up and down the southern stretches of the Serpent River. K'tenshin ships that stray too close to the Mist Swamps find themselves facing the onslaught of a very angry great dragon, and with each passing week, the definition of "too close" grows farther and farther out from the edge of the swamps proper. Perhaps Aban seeks to destroy the Theran crews manning K'tenshin ships, or perhaps she merely wishes to teach the t'skrang the folly of siding with her enemies. I know not yet whether this will prove beneficial to you, my children. If K'tenshin chooses to fight Aban, they will not have sufficient strength to pressure V'strimon and Syrtis, leaving those Houses free to defend against the advances of your allies in House Ishkarat. If K'tenshin leaves the southern stretches of the Serpent to the dragon, however, then the t'skrang of the central portions of the Serpent will find themselves hard pressed to defend against attacks from both sides. A few words in the right ear from a well-placed advisor could see that House K'tenshin chooses to dedicate their ships to the fight they stand a chance to win.

Aban's Goals

Aban's goals are nearly as thoroughly enshrouded in mystery as the swamps in which she makes her lair are enshrouded in mist. Though she uses her assassins as part of the network of operatives through which the dragons affect the lands of Barsaive, she has a number of personal projects that have nothing to do with the activities of the dragons as a group; it is only dragon nature, after all. Aban agrees strongly with the other great dragons on at least one point, their intent to help the Kingdom of Throal in its conflict with the Theran Empire. The following are some of Aban's goals, those which are most evident from the movements of her servants. Remember that Aban likely has more goals about which I know nothing, given the skill with which most of her servants evade detection.

Destroy the T heran Empire

Few of the great dragons would express their sentiments toward the Therans in terms of such violence and finality, but Aban's anger is a fury that only those who have lost a father might understand. She sees the destruction of the Empire as both the only answer to the antipathy between the Therans and the great dragons and the only redress for the death of her sire. She may very well prove the Therans' least forgiving enemy, for her rage and passion may drive her to continue the fight long past the point at which the other great dragons cease. As it is, I suspect that only the centuries of waiting through the Scourge taught her the patience to take a slow and ultimately more satisfying vengeance.

Guard the Secrets of Yrns Morgath

The Lost City holds many secrets that searchers have failed to pry from its dead grip, and there may be much here that even Mountainshadow does not know. Aban wishes to keep this hidden away from those who would make use of it, especially the Therans, who are always in search of new magical knowledge. Among the secrets of Yrns Morgath are the remains of Naaman Y'ross, whose return to life, were it to happen, could affect coming events in any number of ways.

E arn her Proper Place Among the Great Dragons

Though she sometimes pursues her own interests above those of her fellows, Aban wishes from the other great dragons the same respect they accord Mountainshadow, Icewing, Alamaise and the others. Though she holds no illusions





about them agreeing with everything she does or vice versa, she does wish her words to carry more weight among her brethren than they presently do.





ALAMAISE

[It comes as no surprise that the Outcast would take interest in the history of Elfbane, even though he does not see the lessons in it. Although Elfbane has not been involved in the affairs of Barsaive for centuries and has chosen not to attend our latest Councils, the Outcast considers him important enough to include in this collection. Clearly the intentions of the Outcast and those he sired extend further than taking advantage of the current conflict between Throal and the Theran Empire, and include machinations against the Blood Wood and all the rest of Barsaive as well. To our absent brother—I ask you to consider the danger this poses and call on you to aid our efforts. I hope this collection reaches you and can draw your attention away from your age-old desire for revenge to consider other important aspects of the future.]

If there is any dragon who could understand what I have accomplished, it is Alamaise. But the great dragon known as Elfbane has not been seen in Barsaive since before the Scourge. No one, not even I, knows of Alamaise's true location and plans, but I know well his history, and can imagine what the former master of Wyrn Wood desires.

Alamaise is a foreign dragon, but he has lived in the northern reaches of Barsaive for millennia. He originally hails from a distant land to the north and west of Barsaive, near the outskirts of Vasgothia, where his brother lives still. A conflict between Alamaise and his brother long ago drove Alamaise away from his original home, into the lands that became Barsaive. Alamaise and his brother hate each other and disagree on nearly every matter of consequence. Alamaise often spoke bitterly of his brother, revealing the rivalry between them. I suspect it is that rivalry which shaped Alamaise's nature.

Alamaise's Nature

Alamaise is an old dragon, one of the oldest great dragons of Barsaive. His scales are golden and red, the colors of a fiery sunset, and his tail is tipped with sharp spines. His eyes burn like pits of fire, a bright yellow, and his voice is deep and commanding. Alamaise carries himself with great pride and arrogance, even for a great dragon. He considers all others beneath him and barely worthy of his notice, including other dragons. Such pride earned him few allies among the dragons of Barsaive, but Alamaise earned their respect with his focused power and keen mind.

All dragons possess and wield great force, but Alamaise is one of the few to admit to seeking power. He has always wished to increase his own strength and to extend his rule over the land and the Young Races who inhabited it. To Alamaise, this is his right. The most powerful beings should rule and the less powerful should serve. I always imagined that his plans sprang from a desire to gather enough power to one day challenge his brother and overcome him, although the two have not fought—or even spoken to one another—in all the time Alamaise has lived in Barsaive.

His arrogance is the key to understanding Alamaise's nature. He is assured of his superiority and righteousness. No matter what mistakes he might make, Alamaise will never admit to them—but he will learn from them. Nothing scratches under his scales worse than his own flaws, and he roots out any such imperfections as quickly and ruthlessly as he would dispatch an impetuous Name-giver. If you should have to deal with Alamaise, appeal to his arrogance and use his own blindness against him. Exploit his weaknesses completely and thoroughly—for you will not get another chance—and lay the blame at the feet of his supposed allies.

Alamaise is blind in more ways than one. He is a dragon obsessed with a single goal, that of regaining control of Wyrn Wood and the elves who inhabit it. This goal drives Alamaise to the exclusion of all else. Since the death of Queen Dallia of the Elven Court, Alamaise has not been seen anywhere in Barsaive, even by his fellow dragons. Instead, he has existed in isolation, pursuing his goal. As no kingdom or city in Barsaive concerns Alamaise, apart from the Elven Court, he is not involved in the politics of nations like Throal or the Theran Empire, and so is of little concern to our immediate goals. Eventually, of course, we will have to deal with both the Blood Wood and Alamaise, but for now, so long as our plans do not impinge upon his, Alamaise is likely to ignore us.

[Elfbane, I hope this document makes clear the Outcast's intentions towards your domain. It is only a matter of time before his attention turns towards the Blood Wood, no matter what pleasantries or promises his emissaries now offer to the Elven Court. By helping deal with the Impertinent Ones and their incursion into Barsaive, you allow us to address the matter of the Outcast and his brood before they can endanger your own interests.]





On Alamaise and the Elven Court

Alamaise's involvement with the Blood Wood and the Elven Court goes back several centuries to the very origin of the place. Long ago, after he left his homeland, Alamaise settled in a verdant woodland in the north of Barsaive. He Named it Wyrn Wood and claimed it as his own domain, much as Usun is now master of the Liaj Jungle and Aban of the Mist Swamps. The elves who lived in the wood were his servants and vassals, the center of his own kingdom. It was Alamaise who convinced the Passion Jaspree to plant the seed that became Oak Heart, the living center of Wyrn Wood, and Alamaise who oversaw the growth and protection of the wood.

In time, Alamaise desired servants able to oversee the whole of his domain, and he did not consider the elves—or any of the Young Races—worthy of the task. According to their legends, Alamaise made a bargain with Jaspree and Astendar to allow him to create servants worthy of him, children born of his blood and that of the elves who made their homes within Wyrn Wood. Alamaise took elven form and mated with elven women to bring forth the first of these servants. The first born was Named Caynreth, the First Listener of Harmony spoken of in elven legend. Others followed and became the founders of the Elven Court, the center of elven culture. In this way Alamaise wove the first threads of Wyrn Wood's pattern and laid the foundation of elven civilization as it is now known.

Alamaise taught his children that they were superior to other Name-givers, for they had the blood of great dragons in their veins. However, Alamaise stifled the greatness of his children, rather than encouraging them to reach their true potential, as I have done with you. He failed to encourage their greatness, and so instilled a streak of rebellion in them. (Or perhaps elves cannot help but be treacherous and Alamaise's progeny fell victim to the elven side of their heritage.)

In time, the Children of Alamaise rebelled against him. First in small ways, by shaping elven culture and belief towards their own ends, then in greater acts of betrayal, including stealing magical lore from their creator. Eventually, there was open rebellion everywhere and towards the end of the Age of Dragons, the Children of Alamaise led other Name-givers to overthrow the rule of the dragon overlords. Alamaise himself was grievously wounded by Caynreth, his first daughter. Rather than destroy all he had created, Alamaise fled Wyrn Wood for another lair, where he slept for thousands of years, from the end of the Age of Dragons to the beginning of this Age, all the while slowly healing his wounds, out of the reach of his traitorous children. When last I saw him, long before the Scourge, Alamaise still bore a livid scar upon his breast, and burning hatred for the Elven Court.

It is for this reason that the great dragons forbid the mating of any dragon with the Young Races. They feared the greatness they saw in their wayward children during the rebellion, because they did not understand how much we could achieve together. Rather than encourage greatness, they sought to create mediocrity and mindless servitude.

When he had recovered from the wounds he suffered during the rebellion, Alamaise sent servants to Wyrn Wood to discover what had become of it in the centuries that had passed. His children had built up the Elven Court and established a line of Queens to rule the Wood. Alamaise confronted the Queen Dallia along the road north of Wyrn Wood as she traveled to the elven nation of Shosara. He demanded that her people swear fealty to him again, as creator and master of Wyrn Wood. When Dallia arrogantly opposed him, Alamaise destroyed her and many of her entourage. Enough of them survived to return to Wyrn Wood and tell the tale. Naturally, the people of the Elven Nations knew nothing of their true history, nor the reasons for Alamaise's attack. They knew only that their Queen had been killed by a great dragon. From that time on, Alamaise was known by the Name Elfbane among his own kind, and the Elven Court and the dragons of Barsaive have been deadly enemies in public, as well as in secret.

In many ways, the Elven Court and the surviving Children of Alamaise are like your distant cousins, my children. They have the power of dragons, but they are treacherous and thankless. They betrayed their heritage and turned their backs on their sire. Never trust them and always beware of them.

[It is interesting that the Outcast portrays the events of the creation and ultimate rebellion of the Children as having to do with Elfbane alone. Surely he remembers, and chooses to obfuscate, our participation in these events. The Children of the Dragons do not belong solely to Elfbane. They are all our children, errant though they may be. Indeed, if it weren't for the disaster which followed the rebellion, the Outcast's later actions might never have led to his exile. I wonder why he has chosen to portray these events in this light? Why would he keep the truth from his children?]





Alamaise's Powers

Alamaise was a dragon of great power and knowledge, and I highly doubt time has dulled his powers. If anything, they have likely increased in the centuries since he was last active in Barsaive. Alamaise is old and strong, with mighty claws and teeth. His scales in particular are quite strong, able to ward off any weapon with ease and nigh-impossible to penetrate, even for the talons or flames of another dragon. Still, his First Daughter did strike him a terrible wound using the magic at her command. I suspect the wound inflicted by Caynreth may have weakened Alamaise's armor, leaving a scar which could be more vulnerable than his other armor. Although a slim chance, should you ever be faced with the anger of Alamaise, you must seize every opportunity.

Alamaise knows a great deal of magic, particularly elementalism. He was a master of the element of wood, and is quite adept at encouraging growth and molding greenery to suit his needs. The fantastic palaces and wooden structures of the Elven Court began as seeds in the mind of Alamaise, who taught the elves the arts of wood-shaping and elemental magic. His skill with the other elements is nearly as great: in his day, Alamaise diverted rivers, carved mountains and commanded the rain and the lightning. All of the beasts of Wyrn Wood were his to command as well. He occasionally took on different forms, including various Name-givers and forest beasts.

The greatest power Alamaise possessed was taken from him by Queen Alachia and the magicians of the Elven Court. As the Namer and maker of Wyrn Wood, Alamaise had many threads woven to the Wood's True Pattern. Within the bounds of Wyrn Wood, Alamaise was supremely powerful and no dragon would even think of challenging him on his home ground. His threads also strengthened the pattern and defenses of the Wood, giving it a special magic and sustaining it, even after the rebellion forced him to abandon it.

Perhaps the Elven Queen Alachia believed the magic and the ancient protections woven by Alamaise would preserve Wyrn Wood against the Scourge. Perhaps she is merely touched with the same arrogance as Alamaise, unable to admit error on her part. For whatever reason, the Elven Court refused the protection of Theran magic and decided to turn the living trees of Wyrn Wood into a barrier against the Horrors.

During the Scourge, the Elven Court's wooden kaer failed. In a desperate attempt to save themselves, the elves used powerful magic to alter the True Pattern of Wyrn Wood itself. The Ritual of the Thorns transformed the elves living in the wood into blood elves, their skin pierced with thorns dripping blood. More importantly, the Ritual transformed Wyrn Wood into the Blood Wood. With its True Pattern reshaped, the threads woven to the wood by Alamaise were cut and the great dragon's last connection to his former domain was severed.

Since the Scourge, I have heard only rumors of Alamaise. It would seem the former master of Wyrn Wood has been taken aback by the transformation of his realm. Although Alamaise could reclaim the Blood Wood, doing so would likely require powerful ritual magic, the likes of which haven't been practiced by great dragons since the Age of Dragons. Alamaise's desire to reclaim the Blood Wood may be strong, but he would never face exile and violate dragon tradition in this manner. Even if he did choose to reclaim the forest, would it even be worth reclaiming a domain that is corrupt and dying? I suspect Alamaise has delayed his plans in order to investigate the transformation of Wyrn Wood, to study the new pattern of the Blood Wood and understand its complexities. He watches and waits before deciding his next move in the game.

Alamaise's Lair

I cannot say for certain where Alamaise currently lairs. I do know his lair lies somewhere north of the Blood Wood, between it and Shosara, and it is likely closer to the Blood Wood than any of the elves there imagine. The mountains to the northeast of the wood are the most likely candidates. Some deep cave or forested valley in the region may serve as Alamaise's hiding place, where he plots the downfall of the Elven Court and considers his plans in secret. Wherever his lair lies, it is certainly protected and hidden by powerful magic. I do know that Alamaise has a finely tuned lair-sense. Entering his lair without his knowledge is no easy task.

I am sure the Elven Court in particular would pay dearly to know the location of Alamaise's lair. It is information worth knowing, and I recommend investigating it by tracking some of Alamaise's known servants, such as his lesser drakes. They might lead you back to their master's lair. From there, we might endeavor to gain possession of some of Alamaise's treasures and Pattern Items, then perhaps turn the information over to our elven "allies" to strengthen their trust in us.





Tread softly in dealing with Alamaise. We do not want to draw his anger on us while dealing with so many other plans in Barsaive. For now, Alamaise is no concern of ours. If you can learn more about his plans without risk to your own, then do so, but do not risk everything to learn more about him now.

Treasures

As a great dragon, Alamaise possesses vast treasure, but his most valuable possessions are linked to his interest in the Blood Wood. Since he created Wyrms Wood, Alamaise undoubtedly holds Pattern Items linked to its old True Pattern. Though Wyrms Wood is gone, such Pattern Items may still hold power, and may also be important keys to unlocking the present secrets of the Blood Wood. Alamaise is most certainly using them to study and unveil the wood's new pattern, and it is a possibility that some of these items have become Pattern Items for the Blood Wood itself. If he holds no Pattern Items for the Blood Wood at present, he is surely working towards acquiring them. The Elven Court would pay dearly to learn of such things, and would pay anything to possess such items—though they are much more useful in our hands, they would serve as intriguing bait.

Even more important than the Pattern Items of the wood, Alamaise may possess Pattern Items belonging to members of the Elven Court, perhaps even Alachia herself. The elves would most certainly be interested in retrieving such lost items, as surely as Alamaise would be eager to acquire more. This provides ample opportunities to set the two against each other, even if only by ruse and deception.

Alamaise understands Wyrms Wood better than any being. Such knowledge would be invaluable in dealing with the Elven Court, and would reveal weaknesses we could exploit. If nothing else, proof of the true history of Wyrms Wood could sunder the already quarreling elven nations and divide the Court, making them easy prey. Alachia and her cousins will pay dearly to keep their dirty secrets hidden from their subjects.

Other treasures in Alamaise's possession include ancient elven artifacts (created by the first magicians and artisans of Wyrms Wood), a vast collection of elven lore and history, and other precious materials taken from the wood before Alamaise was forced to leave it. I suspect he also hoards treasures brought from the distant land he first called home.

Servants

Once, Alamaise had many servants, an entire nation at his command. Now, it is difficult to say for sure who or what serves Alamaise except for one certainty: stung by the rebellion of his children, Alamaise trusts no other Name-giver. All of the great dragon's personal servants are mindless beasts, or nearly so—creatures without ambition or betrayal in their hearts. They are also just as incapable of greatness and brilliance. It is sad to see a great dragon the likes of Alamaise surrounding himself with such pets when he could have achieved so much.

Since he once mastered the creatures of Wyrms Wood, I am sure Alamaise has many beasts as his spies and agents, using the power of dragonspeech to command them and utilize their senses. Some of the most innocent-appearing creatures of the Blood Wood may serve as Alamaise's eyes and ears, while many of the more savage beasts may serve as his soldiers.

Lesser Drakes

The other personal servants Alamaise can call upon are his drakes, a variation on the drakes used by other dragons. Called "false drakes" by the elves of the Blood Wood, these drakes are more appropriately called lesser drakes, although what Alamaise Named them is unknown. They appear identical to other drakes—small dragon-like creatures, perhaps as much as nine feet long.

Unlike true drakes, lesser drakes cannot take Name-giver form, nor are they as intelligent as Name-givers. Lesser drakes are more like beasts, which seems to suit Alamaise and his distrust of all Name-givers. Rather than admit his mistakes with his earlier progeny, Alamaise chose to limit the abilities of his new servants. This shows the same short-sightedness I spoke of before, which may prove to be Alamaise's undoing.

The lesser drakes serve primarily as Alamaise's spies in the Blood Wood. They have been seen nowhere else (which is not the same as saying they have not been anywhere else). The blood elves have spotted lesser drakes soaring through the trees of the Blood Wood from time to time, perhaps as a warning from Alamaise to let them know he is watching. The lesser drakes seem to share their master's sadness over the corruption and transformation of Wyrms Wood,





as the few blood elves who have encountered them report feeling a great melancholy afterwards. I believe the feeling is only a shadow-echo of the sorrow Alamaise feels over the loss of his home.

Name-givers

While Alamaise does not trust other Name-givers, it does not mean that he has no Name-givers serving his interests in Barsaive. It is not necessary to trust someone to get them to do your bidding, particularly if you are as skillful and patient as a great dragon. Alamaise, working behind the scenes, may pull the strings of many Name-givers who are completely unaware that they serve the interests of the sworn enemy of the Elven Court.

The most likely candidates to be Alamaise's unwitting agents are those Name-givers opposed in one way or another to the Blood Wood. Living legend cults, such as the Seekers of the Heart, may be influenced by Alamaise, acting as pawns in his game. Various adventurers may be in the employ of Alamaise as well. He is surely as capable of assuming Name-giver form as before (no matter how distasteful he might consider it). This would allow him to hire Name-giver agents in many different forms to serve his needs.

Allies and Enemies

Alamaise cultivates no allies among dragonkind. For centuries he has chosen isolation as he develops his plans. He barely speaks with his fellow dragons, does not attend Councils called by them and has taken no eggs into his care since long before the Scourge. The other great dragons prefer to avoid the Blood Wood and the Elven Court as much as possible. They do not interfere in the Court's affairs, with the unspoken agreement that Alachia and her subjects do not interfere with them. So far, the agreement seems to have held, but great resentment and distrust simmers just below the surface on both sides. It would not take much to fan such embers into a fire to consume the Blood Wood, one or more dragons, or both. Consider the possibilities of such a plan.

Alamaise considers his enemies clear: his wayward progeny and their elven subjects. Elfbane intends to remain true to his Name, to punish the Elven Court for their effrontery and take back control of the Blood Wood. Perhaps he also intends to find a means to restore the wood to its former nature and True Pattern, if such a thing is possible. I know Alamaise will reach no peaceful agreement with the Elven Court, nor will he allow any being to stand in the way of his rightful revenge.

Although we are alike in some ways, I believe Alamaise would consider me an enemy. He was not among the Council which exiled me, but I am sure Alamaise would see what I have done as an insult to him, a repetition of the foolish mistakes he and his fellow dragons made centuries ago. Rather than admit that I have accomplished what he could not, Alamaise would certainly see me destroyed. As much as any other dragon (if not more so), Alamaise will consider you abominations. Do not think otherwise, my children. You will find no sympathy for our goals with him.

Despite his attitudes, remember that Alamaise is ultimately obsessed with his own goal. I believe he would make any alliance to gain control of the Blood Wood, including allying with us, if it were to his advantage. We are the lesser concern by far in his eyes, and that is a fine position to hold, for now.

[Elfbane, I hope you would not consider defying the dictates of our Council by allying yourself with the Outcast or his children. You know better than any other their treacherous nature, and you know what a threat they pose to us all.]

Alamaise's Goals

Although Alamaise's goals appear simple on the surface, they are multi-layered and sometimes contradictory. Consider them carefully and how they can be turned to serve our needs. In particular, note that Alamaise's goals do not run along the lines of his fellow dragons, and may even be made to run counter to them. His isolation from dragonkind can work in our favor. I believe Alamaise is more likely than other dragon to defy the dictates of culture and custom to achieve his goals.

Watch the Activities of His Brother

Although I have not spoken with Alamaise for centuries, I am certain he continues to watch and follow the activities of his brother, as their rivalry has been a driving force for Alamaise since he was young. In truth, Alamaise's





quest to regain control of the Blood Wood and punish the Elven Court is only a small gambit in the larger game he plays against his brother. There are plots within plots where great dragons are concerned, and knowledge of Alamaise's vendetta may help illuminate certain actions that you would not understand otherwise. If Alamaise proves problematic, his brother can be used as a diversion, and may possibly even be a useful ally.

Guard and Protect the Blood Wood

While he despises the blood elves, Alamaise loves his memories of Wyrn Wood and seems determined to make it live again. He does not want to see the Blood Wood destroyed, but restored, so he protects it after a fashion and will allow no further harm to come to it. In an ironic twist, Alamaise may find himself protecting the Elven Court from outside threats which could interfere with his plans. Though they are locked in a struggle, the Elven Court and Alamaise share a mutual desire to protect the wood.

Alamaise's protectiveness is one of the reasons I recommended a treaty with the Blood Wood, to allay the great dragon's concerns as well as those of Alachia and her court. Alamaise will not consider you important as long as you do not threaten his former home. If you do decide to break your agreement with the Elven Court and take the Blood Wood, you will have to deal with Alamaise first. He is far more dangerous than Alachia and all of her courtiers combined.

Study the Pattern of the Blood Wood

If he wishes to control and restore the Blood Wood, Alamaise must carefully study its pattern. Even the greatest elven magicians have not entirely unraveled the secrets of their home's new True Pattern, and Alamaise does not have the direct experience with its changes as they do. However, a great dragon is far more knowledgeable about the nature of True Patterns than any elven magician, and Alamaise has been studying the Blood Wood since its very creation. He may already have discovered useful things regarding its pattern. Once he completely understands it, I am confident Alamaise will take some action, with or without the consent of our fellow great dragons. We must be prepared for that day, which could come at any time. As formidable an enemy as the Elven Court may be, they are nothing compared to the threat of a new Wyrn Wood under Alamaise's rule.

Undermine the Elven Court

To further his plans, Alamaise surely works to undermine the power of the Elven Court through subtle manipulations behind the scenes. Weakening the power of Alachia and her courtiers is crucial to his larger goals.

These operations against the Elven Court must be conducted under great secrecy, since I know of no agents in direct service of Alamaise. Most likely, he backs groups such as the Seekers of the Heart, who wish to restore the Blood Wood, and anyone else opposed to Alachia or the Elven Court. He may have contacts in Shosara and other elven lands to help serve his interests. Perhaps the Shosaran ambassador Jorealla has some hidden ties to Alamaise, or he may have his claws sunk into the t'skrang House Syrtis, who also have dealings with the Blood Wood. These Name-givers are likely unaware that they are being supported and influenced by Alamaise himself, the great enemy of elvenkind, and most would no doubt be horrified if they knew the truth. Our agents in various secret societies must remain alert for signs of any link to Alamaise and his plans.

Reclaim Wyrn Wood

This is Alamaise's ultimate goal. Once all of the pieces are in place, I am certain Alamaise will act to destroy or enslave the members of the Elven Court who opposed him, and reassert his control over the whole of the Blood Wood. Then he can begin to rebuild the domain he lost so long ago. Alamaise must never be successful, as he will become a powerful rival to your rightful rule of Barsaive. He will not remain content with taking the Blood Wood for long, and will soon turn his attention to the rest of Barsaive, including Iopos. That is why Alamaise's plans should be encouraged only so far. You must play the Elven Court and the great dragon off each other as expertly as you have Throal and Thera. Strike a balance where they will weaken each other, allowing you to finish off the wounded victor with ease.





THE MATED PAIR, ASANTE AND NIGHTSKY

[I suspect that many of you will be as surprised as I was to find Asante and Nightsky included in this work. As they are mere adult dragons, I couldn't fathom their significance to the Outcast. This is particularly true when a number of their brethren are older, wiser and wield considerably more influence over the Young Races, as well as within dragon society.

Despite my initial puzzlement at the Outcast's decision to include Asante and Nightsky along with the great dragons of Barsaive, the Outcast clearly has disturbing reasons behind his interest in these two adult dragons, not the least of which is to draw our attention, in particular, to them. As you'll read, the Outcast cites information which, if true, could have grave implications. I have already begun a quiet effort to confirm the accuracy of this report. If the Outcast's claims are valid, then we must consider an appropriate response. Clearly, however, we must handle the matter on our own terms, and not in a manner dictated by the Outcast for his benefit.]

Throughout these documents I describe the strength and power of the greatest dragons in Barsaive. I have described their wealth, their servants, their society and relations with one another, all of this with an eye toward giving you the knowledge you need to defeat them.

Through the entirety of these discussions I have stressed the importance of not underestimating the power and might of dragonkind. But while I have focused primarily on Barsaive's great dragons, do not heed my advice any less for those dragons you know as adult "common" dragons. The word is a misnomer, and aside from invoking the wrath of any dragon called such, the word also has serious consequences to any who are foolish enough to believe the implications. The strength and power of these dragons is still considerable, well beyond the capabilities of the Young Races to tackle in direct confrontation. Though physically, mentally, and politically less powerful than their great elders, do not underestimate their cunning and do not ignore their usefulness as a tool in your struggle. The great dragons of Barsaive often disregard them, and their lesser status in our society may give you an opening to take advantage of—if you are careful.

If dragon society is bound together by the chains of tradition and ritual, then the best place to break that chain—unraveling the culture and spreading discord—is its weakest link. For dragons this link may be the only pair of adult western dragons in Barsaive to remain as mates and partners after breeding: Asante and Nightsky.

An Unusual Bonding

While potentially interesting, the mating customs of dragons are difficult to explain and I will not endeavor to describe them here. It is sufficient to state that it is quite unusual for a pair of dragons to remain together after mating, and even more unusual for that pair to remain together once their clutch of eggs has been laid and sent to one or more of the great dragons for hatching and subsequent education. However, despite the unorthodox nature of this behavior, it is exactly what these two dragons have done. It is unusual enough that when I first learned of these two I began to look for a motive, and I believe that I have found it. The truth behind the matter is a situation that you can exploit to aid your plans for Barsaive.

The essence of the pair's motive, which should become clear by the end of this document, and what makes these two dragons most vulnerable, is their youth and inexperience. Asante and Nightsky are rebellious, immature and naïve. This is particularly true of Nightsky, whose youthful aggression makes him an easy target for your manipulations. He was raised by Usun, in isolation from the other authority of other great dragons, and has not yet matured to the point where he does not rankle under their command. For her part, Asante is possessed of what you might call compassion for the Young Races, as well as a terrible feeling of guilt and anger over events from before the Scourge where she had conflicts with several great dragons. This anger has led her to take actions that can only lead to her downfall, as you will soon see.

Your role is to orchestrate events that trigger the paired dragons' anger and frustrations such that they suspect their fellow dragons of taking actions counter to their own goals and desires. Do this properly and you may have your first pawns in your struggle against the dragons. However, to manipulate a being as powerful as a dragon, you first need to understand the individual and the motivation. Thus I begin with some history.





Nightsky, the Youngest Adult Dragon

Nightsky is the youngest adult dragon I know of in Barsaive today, having emerged from his astral cocoon just two years before Throal sealed itself from the world. Nightsky was the last hatchling of Usun's to emerge before the Scourge. His few brothers and sisters who remained in their cocoons after that year were destroyed by astral Horrors.

Physically, Nightsky is very large for a dragon of his young age, nearly 75 feet long. He is jet black in color with flecks of silver on the tips of his scales and horns. This coloration gives the effect of stars on a moonless night, a key factor in his choosing his Name. His natural coloration also led Nightsky to favor nocturnal hunting, and on clear starlit nights, he moves all but undetected through the region of the Caucavic Mountains that he and Asante claim as their lair.

Nightsky awoke from his cocoon impatient and eager to take on the world, as young whelps usually are. He entered adulthood just as the Scourge began in earnest, and did not have time to construct a proper dragon lair, so he was forced to seek shelter with another dragon. Having arrived too late to remain with his sire Usun, he was fortunate enough to find shelter under the Throal Mountains, where Earthroot took him in. His impatience made the time of hiding particularly long and torturous, preventing him from entering the *shal-mora* as most dragons did during the Long Night. Eventually he could wait no more and left his shelter soon after the Scourge had ended, being one of the first Name-givers to look upon the Scourge-ravaged landscape of Barsaive. Even for a dragon this act was a foolish risk, as many powerful Horrors still roamed the world. Though Nightsky would surely deny it, I believe it was fortune rather than physical prowess that kept the whelp alive.

Mountainshadow, in his research concerning the Scourge, once interviewed Nightsky about his experiences traveling across Barsaive and beyond in the years immediately following the Scourge. I obtained a small portion of this work, and I include an interesting passage for your reference.

It was the fourteenth year after I left Earthroot's lair (1419 TH). I had traveled across Barsaive and into a series of desolate lands far to the south, below what is currently the Theran province of Creana in Fekara. Dusk approached, and I was about to set down for a brief rest when a brilliant flash lit up the horizon. In the distance a burning airship was desperately fighting for its life with a pair of massive flying Horrors. As this was the first sign I had seen of surviving Name-givers, I took wing to investigate and possibly give aid.

As I approached the vessel, I saw the flag of Throal burning along with the sails and much of the deck. Everything the Horrors touched turned to flame. Despite the inferno the crew was fighting bravely, showing no sign of yielding to their foe. I attacked one of the Horrors from above with my own fire, driving it away from the ship, but not before it returned the favor and flamed me. Its fire burnt, like nothing I had ever felt before, but it was no match for my power and after a short struggle it fell to the ground lifeless.

As I turned back to the ship for the other Horror, I saw the troll who was leading the fight on the ship, wearing spectacular living crystal armor, throw the contents of an orichalcum-lined box into the great maw of the terror. As what I can only imagine were kernels of True air came into contact with the creature's fire, they detonated, and a tremendous explosion rocked the valley and echoed off distant mountains. The explosion decimated the Horror, and cracked the mast, nearly tearing it from the ship and killing several crewmen, eventually forcing the ship to the ground.

I include this passage to reinforce the idea that even the youngest dragons are more than a match for the largest and most powerful opponents. The years he spent traveling the world after the Scourge have made Nightsky particularly fearsome in combat for his age. However, if properly focused this youth's aggression can be a powerful weapon against your enemies.

[I recall this interview with Nightsky. What the Outcast has omitted here is that the ship described was in fact the Earthdawn, the Throalic ship captained by Vaare Longfang and tasked to make contact with the various nations of Barsaive after the Scourge. According to rumor and legends it was lost to the Horrors, but this tale, as well as other evidence, suggests otherwise.

Later on in this same discussion, Nightsky informed me that he encountered the Earthdawn once again, this time far from Fekara, still airborne thanks to haphazard and jury-rigged repairs. I am not certain what has prevented the ship from returning to Barsaive, and the ship's ultimate fate is a subject I hope to pursue once our affairs with the Impertinent Ones are concluded.]





Asante's Nature

While substantially older than her mate, Asante's age of eight-hundred years is still very young by dragon standards. In contrast to Nightsky, Asante's coloration is an unusual creamy white, with a much darker tint on her horns and claws. Among dragons she is considered exceptionally beautiful.

Asante's main flaw is that her youth leaves her naïve and unwilling to recognize the power that dragon blood gives her over weaker races. Indeed, her fondness for the Young Races became a weakness that was exploited by cunning Name-givers in her youth, and which later forced her into dissension with her elders. Over the years, she has become more self-righteous in her attitudes, and thus still vulnerable to manipulation.

In addition to her naiveté, Asante does not have the vast resources possessed by many other dragons, even those of her age. Much of her wealth has gone to aiding and supporting Name-givers in need—mostly victims of Horrors—and she rarely sees a return on her investments. Her preoccupation with Name-giver affairs has replaced drives common in other dragons, specifically the hoarding of wealth and accumulation of influence and power. Her attention is devoted to more ephemeral things, and thus unlikely to be suspicious of well-laid plans.

Asante's Ties with the Young Races

Asante was born into the clutch of the great dragon Redwing, a Name not often spoken since the Scourge, and one that is likely unknown to you. Redwing once ruled the Caucavic Mountains, and given his stature as a great dragon, was both powerful and confident, perhaps overly so. His arrogance ultimately proved to be his undoing.

During Asante's youth, she befriended a number of the dwarfs who lived in the dwarf city of Draoglin, in the ancient kingdom of Scytha. Though she had been taught that the Scytha Mountains were the domain of Thermail, her youthful interest in the Young Races won over her better judgment, and she maintained contact with these dwarfs. Redwing chose to ignore this, thinking Asante would quickly grow bored before any harm was done. Unfortunately, he was wrong, and a band of greedy adepts, lured by stories of Redwing's fabulous wealth (from Asante's own mouth), followed Asante back to Redwing's lair, hoping to slay the great dragon and lay claim to his hoard. Though powerful, the group was no match for the might of a great dragon, and the dwarfs were slain soon after they attempted to penetrate Redwing's lair. Their knowledge of the lair did not die with them, however, and soon other foolish adept groups tried their hand at raiding Redwing's abode. Thermail heard of these assaults, and reproached Redwing for allowing Asante to rile the dwarfs up. In anger Redwing banished Asante to the wild and sparsely populated eastern spur of the Caucavic Mountains, where it stretches down towards the Aras Sea. Alone during her adolescence and transformation into adulthood, Asante longed to return to the home of her sire.

When Asante reached adulthood she returned to Redwing's lair, with every intention of apologizing to both her sire and to Thermail for her breach of dragon tradition and protocols. But upon her arrival she was met by not only Redwing, but also Vasdenjas (who had claimed the Scytha Mountains after the death of Thermail) and Icewing. The trio accepted her Rite of Transgression, but Vasdenjas did invoke the Stricture of Forbidden Domain, prohibiting Asante from interacting with the inhabitants of Scytha.

Asante's fascination with the Young Races was too compelling, however, and it was not long before she acted in defiance of her sire and against the orders of Vasdenjas and Icewing. The Scourge was fast approaching, and tensions were running high between the dragons and the Therans, who were angered at dragons like Vasdenjas who were freely distributing the Rites of Protection and Passage. The Therans countered Vasdenjas in particular by agitating among the Scythan dwarfs to defy and attack him. Asante became embroiled in the affair, and became so enraged with the Therans that she ate a fair number of them. The news of this fueled the Theran cause, and they quickly had the Scythan city of Gateway up in arms against the dragons.

When Redwing learned that Asante had disobeyed once again, he sought her out in the Scytha Mountains, and alerted Vasdenjas to Asante's defiance of her elders. But before he was able to find Asante, Redwing was set upon by one of the earliest and most insidious of the Horrors to attack the ancient dwarf kingdom. I have never encountered the likes of this (as yet unNamed) Horror, nor have I heard of it attacking anywhere else in the world save Scytha. Whether the kingdom held some unique interest for this Horror I cannot say. I do know that even the mighty Redwing was unable to withstand the onslaught of the Horror that attacked him, and he fell in battle. Soon after Redwing died to protect them, the Scythan dwarfs of Gateway launched an attack upon Vasdenjas (as elsewhere, the Therans attacked Cloudtamer, Yuichotol, and Icewing).





Learning of Redwing's death, Asante sought out Vasdenjas, to seek help in aiding the dwarfs of Scythia against the Horror that had slain her sire. Having just been betrayed by the dwarfs of Gateway, Vasdenjas cared not for their fate, and Asante found herself alone, completely unprepared to battle the Horror, and unable to stop it from devouring the dwarfs she had so desperately hoped to save.

Most of the surviving dwarfs who fled Scythia headed for the Throal Mountains, but a few went to the Caucavic Mountains, hoping to mine enough orichalcum to seal their great dwarf cities before the true onslaught of the Horrors began. Asante traveled to the Caucavics with these dwarfs, acting as a guardian and advisor, planning on providing them with the knowledge they would need to build suitable shelters against the Horrors. Shortly after arriving, Mountainshadow visited her, telling her of the recent "arrangement" made with the Therans that the dragons of Barsaive would not share their protective secrets with the Young Races. Unwilling to accept her word that she would not interfere, he ordered her into her own lair early. Angry, but unwilling to confront Mountainshadow, Asante retreated into her lair, to wait out the Long Night of the Scourge, while the dwarfs she'd hoped to protect were left on their own at the mercy of the Horrors.

After the Scourge

When Asante emerged from her kaer after the Scourge, she discovered that most of the Scythian dwarfs' kaers had been breached and devastated by the Horrors. I have heard stories that she flew into a rage, and sought to destroy one of the villages Mountainshadow had protected in violation of his own agreement. That Asante is still alive testifies that she did not carry through with her plan. She feels guilty that she was prevented from providing the assistance she knew the dwarfs needed, and angry at the cowardice of the great dragon Council and its dealings with the Therans.

Asante's anger may be your best weapon against the dragons. She almost attacked Mountainshadow once, and I do not believe it would take much to push Asante over the edge to betray the rest of her kind. However, you must be careful to orchestrate her betrayal carefully, as it is a one-time opportunity, and if you fail to take the advantage you will lose a valuable pawn.

On the Pair's Lair and Allies

As stated previously, Asante and Nightsky currently make their home in the Caucavic Mountains, within a vast network of caves located in the Northern Valley. Asante has set aside a portion of this valley as a shelter for a small number (perhaps a few dozen) of Horror-scarred individuals she has found in some of the lost kaers in both the Caucavic and Scythia Mountains. These lost souls support themselves on a small farm hidden at the far end of the valley, and Asante harbors them in the vain hope of protecting them from themselves and society while she works to free them of the ties that bind their minds. Despite her noble efforts, I believe that she has yet to successfully save any of her refugees.

At this time the pair has two groups of Name-givers that might be called allies. The first are the members of a semi-retired adventuring group Named "the Seven of Thystonius." This group of adepts were instrumental in Nightsky's courting of Asante, leading to the two dragons' first (and thus far only) mating over ten years ago. In the years following, this group has carried out several tasks at the behest of the pair and they religiously spread tales of the two dragons in an obvious attempt to grow the dragons' legend. In recent years the group has for the most part retired, and are only occasionally called upon by the dragons.

The free trading company known as the Dream Spire Company, based in Bartertown, constitutes the pairs' other ally. Though the origins of the relationship are unknown to me, Asante and Nightsky have granted Dream Spire exclusive permission to use the shortest and safest airship route through the Caucavic Mountains, one that passes unusually close to the dragons' lair. This pass is a significant link between the cities of Throal and Haven (and Parlainth), one that allows for frequent and fast transport of trade goods between the two cities. Given their abilities as dragons, Nightsky and Asante can effectively shut down airship and caravan traffic through the mountains, forcing caravans to travel around the mountains to reach Haven. If you were to establish an alliance with them (or control over them), you would control this link. This could provide you with the opportunity to recover magic items and knowledge obtained from the ruins of Parlainth, which could then be smuggled back to Iopos, without the knowledge of the dwarfs or the dragons who would oppose you.

The Dream Spire Company has also recently paid a substantial amount for the dragons' knowledge of routes and travel conditions outside the boundaries of Barsaive—presumably they are seeking to open additional trade routes to foreign lands. You may be able to use what knowledge you have of the lands beyond Barsaive as a bartering tool with the Dream Spire Company, or to gain an introduction and audience with the two dragons themselves. Once you have an audience, the next step is to charm your way into their trust and supplant one of your trading companies as their





ally, thus taking effective control of trade through the pass. As both Asante and Nightsky support the dragons' efforts against Thera, you may be able to use the Dream Spire Company's opposition to the war to drive a wedge between them and the pair. Some manufactured evidence of Dream Spire's involvement with the Thera slave trade would only facilitate the matter. If you move carefully you can accomplish this without anyone being aware of your involvement in what looks to the world like a minor trade struggle.

On the Current Activities of Asante and Nightsky

Once you have gained their trust and what strategic advantage you can, you will need leverage to bend the dragons to your will. If my sources are correct, Asante and Nightsky have provided you with the perfect lever.

Asante laid her first clutch of eggs a few years ago, a small clutch of only two eggs. The two dragons made the unusual choice of sending each of those to a different great dragon for rearing. One of the eggs went to Earthroot, the other went to Aban in the Mist Swamps. Earthroot was chosen for his strong relationships to the t'skrang that live with him under Throal. It is Asante's hope that these relationships will give the young dragon born from her egg the contact with other Name-givers that she values so highly. The reasons for choosing Aban are less clear.

More importantly, I have reason to believe that Asante actually laid three eggs, and that Asante intends to conceal the remaining one from the great dragons, raising it herself. This is an opportunity that provides many possible advantages in your dealings with the dragons. The fact that you know of the hidden egg at all gives you leverage against both Asante and the great dragons. Asante and Nightsky will go to great lengths to conceal and protect it, and if the great dragons learn of the egg, the internal strife caused in dragon society might well distract them long enough to allow you freedom to move forward with other plans. A well timed informant's visit to one of the great dragons might even lead to a temporary ally, or at least a favor being owed. This informant's connection to you would have to be carefully camouflaged, but his position would be invaluable to your cause.

It is my opinion that Asante has kept the egg as an act of defiance towards the great dragons. She likely thinks of herself as capable of instructing her offspring in the ways of the world, as she survived on her own at an unusually young age. It is unclear why Nightsky has gone along with this plan, but it is probably out of his interest in Asante. Asante and Nightsky were drawn to each other because of their lonely youths and rebellious natures. They are both of fiery spirit, and undoubtedly feed off each other's energy, isolated as they are from any calming influences. This terrible secret has now bound them together even more tightly against the great dragons.

Ponder this situation carefully, and take note of the risk that Asante and Nightsky have put their egg in by keeping it themselves. Most dragon eggs are carefully hidden and guarded by a great dragon, protected by drakes and magic and trusted servants. This pair does not have the resources of a great dragon, and are much more vulnerable to outsiders. They cannot possibly provide constant protection for their egg, and they are both naïve and easily manipulated, putting the egg at even greater risk. Informing outside parties of this situation may lead to the egg's capture by the Therans, dragon hunters, or perhaps even the Cult of the Great Hunter. If the Therans were inspired to steal the egg, Asante and Nightsky could easily be provoked into taking premature action against the Therans, perhaps triggering the war you have been preparing for, before either side is ready.

On the other hand, consider the potential effects if an ally of the dragons were to steal the eggs. A rift between Throal, or one of its allies, and the dragons would solidify your position and fracture Throal's growing power base. The many opportunities here are obvious, you need only seize them.

[These are the allegations to which I referred in my opening comments. Though I don't want to believe these claims are true, much of the Outcast's other information is correct, giving the accusation validity. However, while Asante and Nightsky may indeed have kept one of their eggs to raise themselves, the Outcast has made at least one factual error concerning the pair's eggs. Their clutch did indeed consist of at least three eggs, and aside from the eggs delivered to Mistweaver and Root Protector, I know that Nightsky insisted that the third egg be given to his sire Vast Green. In any event, we must take action to verify and correct this situation swiftly, lest the young dragons' egg fall into the wrong hands.]





CHARCOALGRIN

[This report reminds me of what Charcoalgrin was like before the Scourge—clever, intelligent, indeed one of the few dragons who cared one whit about the Young Races and their short lives. But always, always a talker.]

The Outcast raises some interesting questions about Charcoalgrin's current allegiances and motivations. If we are to believe this report, she may be financing the dwarf kingdom's military efforts against Thera. She may also be seeking for a way to return Parlainth to its hidden plane. She may be a heartsick dragon, or she may be as greedy and acquisitive as the rest of us. If the first of these is true, it is a testimony to Charcoalgrin's guile and cunning that we learn of this here. This is especially true for both Doll-Maker and Root Protector, both of whom have their talons deep in the hide of the dwarf's kingdom.

As to these mysterious "missing vessels" which the Outcast describes, I must confess a certain disquieting sensation upon learning that Parlainth holds yet more secrets. If what the Outcast says is true—about not only these vessels but also about Charcoalgrin's relationship with Eyripemes—we might wish to consider calling Charcoalgrin before a Council to explain herself in this matter. It appears her involvement with the Therans and Parlainth far exceeds what is acceptable, and she must be held accountable.]

Like most of her kind, Charcoalgrin is arrogant to a fault. By sequestering herself in the moldering ruins of Parlainth, the dragon has assured that she will forever be the biggest fish in a very small pond. Other dragons view her a little more than an eccentric, content to play with the Young Races and creatures who gather 'neath her tattered wings.

It is important that you realize Charcoalgrin is not a great dragon, but merely another of only a few adults I will describe to you. Most adult dragons are of little consequence to your plans, and you need not overly concern yourselves with them. Charcoalgrin, however, is different. Her past involvement with the Therans in Parlainth is enough to warrant our attention, for any dragon willing to defy the Council of great dragons once may well be willing to do so again.

Charcoalgrin is always prepared to speak at great length on any topic one could name. Her favorite topic, naturally, is herself. Those who have gone to Charcoalgrin in search of information usually get it, but at the cost of their lives when they show the faintest hint of boredom at her pedantic delivery.

Despite my best efforts, I was unable to learn any notable information about Charcoalgrin through what would be considered usual channels. Her servants are very suspicious and thorough, and caught and killed many agents I had sent to the ruins of the Forgotten City in search of information about Charcoalgrin. Eventually, I came to realize there is no better way to gather information than to interview her directly. I therefore sent one of my drakes, in a well-masked and enchanted Name-giver form, to pay Charcoalgrin a visit. Normally, visitors are in danger of death by incineration as her story drags on over a period of weeks—without pause, mind you. However, I enchanted my drake beforehand so he would show great interest in Charcoalgrin's story, escape with his life and transcribe the whole of the interview for this tome. What I know of Charcoalgrin comes from this interview.

Charcoalgrin's Nature

The dragon Charcoalgrin is known to anyone who has traveled to Parlainth and Haven in search of adventure and fortune. She is the most powerful creature living in the ruins, except perhaps for Horrors that have not yet been discovered in the catacombs' depths.

Charcoalgrin's story begins before the Scourge, when she was but barely an adult, and when the glorious city of Parlainth had been completed and its wizards and scholars were looking for ways to defend it from the Horrors. Like Mountainshadow, Charcoalgrin was intrigued by the Young Races, and studied the residents of Parlainth at a distance from her lair in the nearby Caucavic Mountains. But where Mountainshadow is wise and maintains discretion in his studies, Charcoalgrin fell victim to the innocence of her youth, and grew fascinated by the Name-givers who created the city. In defiance of dragon traditions concerning contact with the Theran Empire, in particular magicians of the Theran Empire, Charcoalgrin sought out contact with the magicians of Parlainth, and willingly taught Parlainth's magicians mysteries as yet undiscovered by their superiors in Thera.

One Theran wizard in particular fascinated the dragon. This human wizard, Named Eyripemes, was among the magicians leading the city's efforts to protect itself from the coming Scourge. Over time, Charcoalgrin took a liking to this human and revealed to him the secret to hiding Parlainth from the Horrors, a spell taught her by her sire, one that had not been cast since the previous age of magic. She shared with Eyripemes not only this ancient spell, but also the location of a





pocket of astral space, a separate reality of sorts where Parlainth could escape to during the Scourge, sealing itself off from the coming Horrors.

Charcoalgrin also instructed the city's magicians and builders in the creation of vessels that would allow them to move about in this astral pocket if needed. These vessels would allow the Theran magicians of Parlainth to explore regions of astral space unknown to any Name-givers save the dragons. The vessels resembled small stone airships, much smaller than vedettes, capable of carrying only a handful of passengers. Parlainth's magicians were able to build only a small number of these, less than two dozen, before they were forced to enact the spell that would send Parlainth from this world to the next.

Eyripemes was delighted, not only because he now had a way to protect his beloved city, but because he now had access to magic more ancient than anyone had ever imagined. The human devoted his life to Charcoalgrin, and would do anything she said in return for another nugget of wisdom.

As a gift for Eyripemes' devotion, Charcoalgrin transformed the wizard, giving him the shape-shifting ability of drakes, allowing him to take dragon form, and thus greatly extending his life. The relationship between the two strengthened, as often happens between teacher and student, and Charcoalgrin grew quite fond of Eyripemes, right up until Parlainth's disappearance. The day Parlainth vanished was indeed one of the saddest of Charcoalgrin's life.

[Though we were lenient with Charcoalgrin when we first learned of her involvement with the Therans of Parlainth, this transformation of Eyripemes, if true, is a secret she skillfully kept from us during the Council at which she was chastised, and therefore a matter for which Charcoalgrin must be held accountable. The passage of even five centuries does not diminish the gravity of this offense, nor does the fact that Eyripemes has long since died.]

Not even Charcoalgrin was immune to the spell the Therans used to cover their tracks into astral space. She, like all other Name-givers, forgot about the city the moment it vanished.

The years of the Scourge went by and finally the Long Night had ended. The Name-givers emerged from their kaers, and the dragons once again flew in the skies. Charcoalgrin was among them, but was never as animated or clever as she had been before.

Parlainth returned, and with it returned Charcoalgrin's memories of Parlainth and Eyripemes, and much of her former enthusiasm and energy. She flew immediately to the city, only to discover it in ruins, a shattered version of its former self. Rather than going back to her lair in the Caucavic Mountains, Charcoalgrin remained in the ruins, sequestering herself in what remained of the Imperial Palace, claiming the entire northern quarter of the city as her own.

Along with the return of her memories of Parlainth and Eyripemes came memories of the magical astral vessels she had told the magicians to build. She sought out these vessels in the city, hoping they might hold the secret of Parlainth's fall. She was able to find only a handful among the ruins, while a few others remained hidden deep in the undercity, crushed under the weight of tons of stone and rubble. After an exhaustive search, she returned to her lair in the Vaults of Parlainth, convinced that a number of vessels had in fact been jettisoned from Parlainth into astral space.

The notion that some of Parlainth's Name-givers, perhaps Eyripemes, had escaped the Horror-ravaged city in one of these vessels plagued Charcoalgrin's mind. As stragglers and criminals came to Parlainth, she exerted her particularly powerful personality and created from them a devoted army that now exists only to find clues of these missing vessels. Even more interesting is the evidence that Charcoalgrin is in fact searching for clues on how to return the city of Parlainth to its other reality, so she can continue her search for Eyripemes.

Location and Lair

Charcoalgrin is Parlainth's most well known resident, and clearly the most powerful Name-giver in all the city and the surrounding country. I suspect she did not choose to make her lair in the Vaults—specifically, in the promenade of the old Imperial Palace—for light reasons. Perhaps it is the symbolism as the seat of power, or perhaps that are other hidden factors to consider.

Because of the heavy curtains she has hung around the perimeter of the palace, visitors almost never directly view Charcoalgrin. Her booming voice is unmistakable, though, and can be heard throughout the city when she's upset.

Charcoalgrin's lair in the Imperial Palace gives her a strong central headquarters from which she can send out groups of servants, whom she calls Unforgivables, to search the ruins. The roving gangs return with arm-loads of trinkets, and even a few riches, which she has placed in the vaults beneath the palace. There are rumors among the Unforgivables, and even some of Haven's population, that Charcoalgrin has an alliance with Throal, and sends her treasures to the king





to help finance efforts against the Therans. Given her previous friendship with the Therans, this seems unlikely, but still the notion warrants further investigation.

Servants

Undesirables and hangers-on from across Barsaive gather beneath Charcoalgrin's protective wings. Likely they are drawn to her side through some enchantment or trickery, as casualties run high and she must fill out her forces. She organizes the riffraff into bands of Unforgivables, and sets them to patrolling and protecting her territory. Apparently the highest ambition of these Unforgivables is to hassle travelers and poke around the ruins to add to Charcoalgrin's trove. They are terrified of their mistress, but also lazy, so their exploration is erratic and without method.

The treasure they find is secondary to any hints of the missing vessels. Charcoalgrin has given the Unforgivables specific instructions to return immediately with items from a specific and peculiar list she has put together. Though I don't know the specific items on this list, it seems clear that they are related to the vessels. My drake was able to learn of one specific item, something referred to as an astral sextant. Any Unforgivable who finds one of these items, and can describe where he found it, is rewarded with a single selection from the dragon's vast treasures. Besides the immediate reward for returning items from the missing vessels, the Unforgivables are motivated by Charcoalgrin's stories that the missing ship or ships are filled with Parlainth's very finest treasures, not seen since before the Scourge. If this is true, it would explain the discrepancy between the supposed vast treasures of Parlainth and the paltry sums adventurers have been able to find in the ruins.

The Unforgivables are comprised of various Name-giver races, as well as some intelligent creatures such as ogres, griffins and gargoyles. Charcoalgrin's gang patrols the entire Vaults section of Parlainth, capturing or killing anyone who trespasses. The gang is huge, numbering in the hundreds, and they use clay badges to identify one another. Visitors in search of Charcoalgrin who can't convince the Unforgivables of their business frequently have need to steal badges from legitimate gang members. This is a strange and pathetic ritual, of which Charcoalgrin must certainly be aware.

Allies and Enemies

Since the end of the Scourge, Charcoalgrin has sequestered herself within Parlainth's ruins and has made a point of separating herself from the rest of dragon society. Whether this is due to the dragons' criticisms of her actions pertaining to Eyripemes or has some other cause is uncertain. Regardless, I find it ironic that many of my fellow great dragons have so conveniently forgotten they, too, had relationships with other Name-givers in the previous age of magic, some even having sired offspring as I have sired you.

I am uniquely sensitive to Charcoalgrin's predicament. It is likely that we would probably share many feelings on the subjects of Name-givers and isolation. I have sent more agents to discuss the possibility of alliance with Charcoalgrin, although her single-minded dedication to finding Eyripemes may limit her usefulness.

Charcoalgrin's closest, perhaps only, friend is Torgak, the troll warrior who founded the city of Haven outside Parlainth. Both feel territorial about the ruins. Both despise meddling outsiders. And both are content to leave one another alone, surely the mark of a lasting friendship.

Few know of Charcoalgrin's plan to send Parlainth back whence it came, or else she would have garnered far more enemies than she has. Her isolation has kept her from angering too many Name-givers or governments so far, and her self-imposed isolation has kept her apart from the affairs of the dragons. Except for the persistent rumors that she sends money to Throal out of her own gathered treasures, I would say she is certainly an enemy of Throal, especially given her previous association with Thera.

The subject of friends and enemies is the only subject on which the talkative dragon is circumspect. Most of the Names she mentions are hundreds of years old. Charcoalgrin still lives in the past.

Charcoalgrin's Goals

Beneath her pedantic demeanor, Charcoalgrin wants only to know the truth of her missing friend and student. Her every move is based either on gathering more information about the vanished vessels, or reminiscing about the time before the Scourge.





There is a second, although certainly less sentimental, possibility: Charcoalgrin wants the treasures on the missing vessels, not her lost student. Charcoalgrin is perhaps the only Name-giver alive who was directly involved with Parlainth before the Scourge. She is uniquely qualified to describe the city before its disappearance, and indeed seems to know the origin of every treasure her Unforgivables ever bring to her. Her suspicion of the missing vessels is based on the kinds of treasures that are not being returned, or reported by her friend Torgak in Haven. She believes that somewhere, afloat in that pocket of astral space, a number of jettisoned vessels filled with all the treasures and lost knowledge of Parlainth await her discovery, preserved for all time until rediscovered.

Her efforts to journey to the astral pocket would be innocuous enough if it didn't require taking Parlainth back with her. Were the great city to vanish again, the symbolism might likely terrify Name-givers everywhere. Beyond that, the depth of magical secrets hidden in Parlainth have only been scratched. There is much you can learn from the Forgotten City, much of which will likely aid you in the coming months and years. For now, we must ensure Charcoalgrin never achieves her goals, lest her success lead to our failure.





EARTHROOT

[The Outcast's knowledge of Root Protector and his efforts on behalf of the Kingdom of Throal is troublesome, as it reveals the fact that he has learned much concerning the course of actions we pursued after the Council at which we banished him. It has become abundantly clear that the Outcast has not spent the several hundred years since that time in idle indulgences, but has actively utilized his resources to investigate each of us and that which we involve ourselves in.]

As he's done in several of these essays, the Outcast points to potential conflicts within our ranks in an attempt to sow dissent among us. We must take care to remain as dispassionate as possible when reading these words, and keep in mind that much of what the Outcast writes may be nothing more than misinformation and attempts to misdirect our attentions. For the time being, we must remain focused on our immediate goals, and on the plans we developed at our most recent Council. For though the Outcast and his children are of concern to us, we cannot allow ourselves to be distracted.]

You may be tempted to believe that because Earthroot so rarely ascends from his underground home into the light of day, he will take no interest in nor interfere with your doings. Do not make this mistake. The fact that Earthroot lairs beneath the Throal Mountains gives him some stake in Throal's fate. I have discovered, however, that Earthroot's stake in Throal goes far beyond a simple interest in what occurs near his home. For some time, he has actively aided the dwarf kingdom—apparently in collusion with Icewing, who regards the dwarfs as his personal pets. Why Earthroot should go to such lengths on Icewing's behalf remains a mystery to me; given how close together their territories lie, Earthroot and Icewing should be bitter rivals. But for us, the reason matters far less than the fact. Earthroot is yet another dragon ally of Throal, even if the dwarfs do not yet realize it. And he is a powerful ally, gifted with knowledge of elemental and earth magic beyond almost any other Name-giver now living. Before you move against Throal, therefore, you must first deal with Earthroot—or else be prepared to meet him on the field of battle, arcane or otherwise.

Earthroot's Nature

Though a generation younger than Mountainshadow and Icewing, Earthroot has lived long enough to gain considerable wisdom—much of it from far-off Cathay, his native land. He came to Barsaive three hundred years after the death of All-Wings, possibly in search of territory. I cannot be certain, but my drakes tell me of a rumor that a young Earthroot lost a battle with an ancient Cathay dragon Named White Lotus. Soon afterward, Earthroot disappeared from Cathay. It would be prudent for some of your Holders of Trust to ascertain the truth of this tale; if you can find White Lotus and learn from her what occurred, so much the better. This long ago defeat may well reveal a weakness in Earthroot that you can exploit—and in dealing with him, you will need every advantage you can get.

Earthroot favors the dark and secret places of the earth because they reflect his essential self. This love of darkness, of being hidden, lends some credence to the conflict with White Lotus; that titanic battle is said to have taken place above a high peak Named Spirit Mountain, whose snowy slopes were well known to Earthroot and upon whose summit he hoped to lair. The bitterness of his defeat may show in his self-chosen exile so far from Cathay, and in his choice to live almost exclusively underground. Since his arrival in Barsaive, he has shown himself in the open air a mere three times, if the legends of the Young Races are to be believed. I have seen him only once, when he joined with Mountainshadow and the others at the Council in which they declared me Outcast.

Earthroot is exceptionally large, and his scales appear to glisten whether wet or dry. They shimmer in all the colors of mother-of-pearl, from silver to pale green to the rose of the dawn sky. The scales on his underbelly are the deep green of seaweed, and his luminous large eyes are as black as the underground night. Many who have seen him and lived to tell of it are dazzled by his beauty and mesmerized by his gaze; I have heard the latter described as “like falling into a depthless, dark pool.” There may be some magical glamour in his look; take care that your own people do not succumb to it if they see him, or you may find yourselves dealing with Earthroot far earlier than you had planned.

Though he prefers to spend most of his time submerged in underground lakes, Earthroot is as much at home out of the water as in it. Some foolish younger Name-givers think that because he lives so much underwater, Earthroot must be a leviathan rather than a true dragon. I tell you otherwise. A dragon he is, with all of a great dragon's strength, cunning, guile and patience. As with so many of my former brethren, it is a fatal mistake to underestimate him.

Living under the earth, at depths where almost no Name-giver cares to go since the end of the Scourge, gives Earthroot the freedom to act far removed from prying eyes. More so than any other great dragon of my acquaintance, he speaks in riddles and acts in shadow. He is not a constant meddler, like Mountainshadow; but when he does take action, each one is like a stone tossed into a pool. Consequences flow from them like ripples across the water—and for every





ripple you can see, there is at least one deep current you cannot. Highly intelligent like all the race, Earthroot can see far into the future, and routinely lays plans that will not bear fruit for centuries. To give you a single example, his seemingly impulsive act in saving a small band of t'skrang from the ravages of the Scourge has given him an entire society of devoted worshippers and lackeys to call upon. The Pale Ones—primitive t'skrang who live out their brief lives beneath the Throal Mountains, in Earthroot's domain—belong to him, as he intended from the very first word he ever spoke to their ancestors. Through one simple action, he gained a population of servants that many another dragon might envy: willing, grateful and endlessly renewable through means more natural and far simpler than the rites used to create drakes. Even Mountainshadow must have been impressed by this stroke of quiet genius.

Earthroot's magical ability matches his intelligence, and may exceed it. Even I do not know the full extent of his powers; I can tell you only that his long years under the earth have given him an understanding of its magic that surpasses the knowledge of any other great dragon I know (with the possible exception of Mountainshadow, whose drive to learn everything may have kept him ahead of Earthroot in this regard). Among the most unique of Earthroot's powers is one I scarcely believe to be possible, but first-hand accounts by my drake servants make it difficult for me to discount it entirely. According to reports by my servants, Earthroot has the ability to move through the earth itself, merging with earth and rock and traveling through it as easily as you might walk across the streets of Iopos. The only other beings known to possess this ability are spirits, and obsidimen who are able to merge with their Liferock. Given his strong affinity for the elemental magic of the earth, it stands to reason that Earthroot would seek out such knowledge, and it is possible that Earthroot sought out obsidimen from whom he might learn and expand this ability. If the tales told me by my drakes are to be believed, it could explain Earthroot's ability to move about the caverns of his underground lair so quickly and efficiently.

Elemental magic of all kinds is his especial interest—but do not conclude from this that he has seriously neglected the study of illusion, wizardry or any other field of arcane knowledge. Be assured that his magic equals your own in every respect, even with all I have taught you. If you hope to get the better of Earthroot by magical means, you will first need to find a chink in his armor; a head-on battle is one you can only lose. I can tell you of certain ways in which he is using his magical knowledge for Throal's benefit, in the hope that this may provide a clue to its limits. Be wise; do your utmost to discover the true nature and extent of Earthroot's knowledge and power before you attempt to deal with him.

Apart from the Pale Ones and the dwarfs of Throal, Earthroot appears little interested in the affairs of the Young Races. Unlike Mountainshadow, he does not find them objects worthy of constant study or devotion. Only those Name-givers who dwell in or near his domain truly matter to him. He considers them under his protection, and will fight for them with every means at his disposal.

Earthroot's Domain

Earthroot claims territory that stretches for many hundreds of dragon-lengths beneath the Throal Mountains and many fathoms deep into the earth. His vast domain begins beneath Throal, but far exceeds the paltry boundaries of the dwarf kingdom. Wherever the countless underground rivers flow through echoing caverns and tunnels, there is Earthroot's domain. His favorite haunts lie where the deepest-delving dwarf miner scarcely dreams of going; he and his Pale Ones know more twists and turns of the giant, underground maze they call home than there are scales on a dragon's body.

Earthroot's lair lies at the heart of this enormous maze, where the rivers drain into a colossal network of caverns to form underground lakes. Beneath the largest of these, surrounded by a fantastical garden of tree-sized mushrooms, glowing fungi and other plants too strange to Name, is Earthroot's favored resting place. The Pale Ones call it "Shuss Halima," or "glittering home," because of the green-white glow of the fungus that covers the enclosing rock. The cavern that holds this inland sea would take one of you many weeks to circumnavigate—all under the watchful eye of the Pale Ones whose dwellings are carved into its walls.

Regarded as privileged by their fellows, these Pale Ones have the honor of serving their dragon "king" his daily meal: shiploads upon shiploads of foodstuffs, from fresh-caught fish to the daintiest delicacies offered for sale in Throal's Grand Bazaar. (Earthroot is positively gluttonous, though his tastes have become coarsened by subsisting on so much Throalic fare. What the dwarfs call delicacies would scarcely be fit for the lowliest servant in your household in Iopos.) Earthroot indulges his natural taste for fresh meat by eating prodigious quantities of fish, along with an occasional dwarf mining or exploring party for variety (often, like the fish, caught for him by his devoted t'skrang minions). Be prepared to lose any agents that you send down into this realm; assuming they survive the myriad dangers of the under-earth and the quick weapons of suspicious Pale Ones, Earthroot may choose to devour them on a whim. Or he may strike up a





conversation with them, especially if they bring him some tale he has never heard before, or a gift of something edible that catches his fancy. There is no telling with Earthroot. Temperamental to an extreme, he may express his displeasure at being disturbed by eating the disturbers—or he may play the gracious sovereign to the hilt, welcoming outsiders to his “court” and fairly drowning them in hospitality.

Regarding the Pale Ones

As your agents will likely be dealing with the Pale Ones sooner or later, I will tell you what I know of them. In appearance they are paler than the t’skrang of the surface world, most often white or light green; the occasional one has luminous skin. Like their surface kindred, they are canny traders and deadly foes when provoked. Unlike other t’skrang, they can see perfectly well in the dark, and need no light quartzes or torches to guide their way underground. To them, these things merely serve to mark out intruders for attack. Whether they developed this remarkable night vision over the centuries of the Scourge or whether Earthroot somehow gave them this ability magically, I have yet to determine. If the latter, it would be extremely useful for you to discover some method of doing the same. The ability to see will make your own people less easy targets, and might make the difference between victory and defeat should it become necessary to conquer the Pale Ones.

Assuming you have first found a way to deal with Earthroot, you should have little trouble asserting your sovereignty over the Pale Ones. They are fierce fighters, to be sure, and will have the advantage of home ground; however, their small numbers and primitive weapons should ultimately be their undoing. Each of their villages occupies a large cavern, which they call a Great Dome. Most Pale One villages comprise five to six nials, each with thirty to fifty members. Your forces should therefore face no more than three hundred t’skrang in even the most populous village, and even in these, no more than two-thirds will be men and women of fighting age. (Though one of my drakes tells me that even a Pale One child, provided it is past the toddling stage common among the Young Races, can be dangerous. One such mite of a t’skrang nearly stabbed him to death with her tiny dagger while he slept.) If other factors prevent you from making an assault in force, it is entirely possible to weaken the Pale Ones first by manipulating them into a feud. They war among themselves regularly, most often over fishing territory. Though it is their custom to fight ritualized battles and take prisoners rather than to slaughter each other, killings have occurred among them—and if you take care of Earthroot first, they will no longer have their king to mediate when the feud gets out of hand. Under these circumstances, you might be able to thin their ranks enough to conquer the survivors with a token force of soldiers.

The Pale Ones rarely venture up to the surface world, most often only at Earthroot’s command. My drakes tell me that the Pale Ones serve as Earthroot’s principal liaison with Icewing; on those occasions where he must communicate with his fellow great dragon, he sends small parties of Pale Ones to Icewing’s lair with messages. The Pale Ones also serve as Earthroot’s eyes and ears within Throal and throughout the mountain range. They can travel almost anywhere in the Throal Mountains by following the maze of underground streams, which is as familiar to them as a nesting ground to a hatchling. They also know every tunnel and cranny in the dwarf kingdom, including some that its builders long ago forgot. Any agents you send to Throal should therefore be extra wary that their doings are not observed by these silent watchers in the underground shadows.

The Pale Ones did not always love the under-earth so much, however. As far as I have managed to determine, their ancestors came from a large village on the banks of the northern Coil River. Kin to the Shivalahala of House Syrtis, they were charged by her to visit each village in the northern Mid-Reach and bring their fellow t’skrang the vital knowledge of how to survive the Scourge in hibernation so that the long confinement would not drive the t’skrang mad. By the time they finished their task, the Scourge was almost upon them. In a burst of typical t’skrang emotionalism, however, they insisted on going home rather than weathering the Scourge in the last village they had reached.

As might have been expected, they arrived at their home village to find the Horrors feasting on the corpses of fellow villagers within the broken walls of their shattered kaer. They fought the monsters, a foolhardy act that cost many of them their lives. The survivors of that grim battle fled toward the nearest sanctuary they could think of: the dwarf kingdom of Throal.

According to the Pale Ones’ own legends, their ancestors knew of and had frequently sailed down the underground channel of the Coil that leads beneath the Throal Mountains. The fleeing t’skrang took this route, hoping to enter Throal from beneath. However, they were too late; the dwarfs had sealed off every entrance into their safe haven, and the t’skrang were left to the mercy of Horrors that had already begun to infiltrate the mountains’ depths. Still more died in fruitless attempts to fight or flee, until Earthroot found the remnant wandering aimlessly through the maze of tunnels. Ever one to capitalize on an opportunity, Earthroot offered the despairing t’skrang shelter in his lair, in exchange for devoted service ever after. With certain death as the only other choice, the t’skrang agreed. Over the centuries of the Scourge, Earthroot molded them into the perfect unquestioning servants; he did whatever he could to speed their descent





into barbarism, and made them the pitiable primitives they are today. The Pale Ones do not see their fate this way, of course. Their legends speak of Earthroot as a glorious benefactor, a virtual deity of a dragon. They revere him above all other living beings, no matter what hardship his commands impose. He extracts tribute of True water from them, bringing them into conflict with the cave trolls who share the underground tunnels and also crave the precious element; his prodigious appetite and finicky tastes result in vast amounts of the best fish going down his gullet instead of into Pale One bellies; and when he prompts them to bring him one too many parties of dwarfs as a meal, he exposes them to retaliation from Icewing, who does not take kindly to losing too many of his play-things. Yet still they honor and serve him, and will likely do so until this world perishes.

Earthroot and Throal

Neither the occasional friction between Earthroot and Icewing nor the former's appetite for the odd hapless dwarf changes the unpleasant fact that Earthroot fully supports the dwarf kingdom, in ways magical and otherwise. Our plans for the future of Barsaive depend upon understanding the precise nature of the threat Earthroot poses, and devising an effective way of rendering him harmless before making any definite move. But even assuming we accomplish that, Earthroot's actions on Throal's behalf have already made the conquest of Throal a difficult prospect.

Among his most effective measures, Earthroot has been using his immense knowledge of earth magic to shape the building and expansion of the dwarf kingdom. From the height and breadth of the Royal Hall to the precise location and shape of the underground cities built since the Scourge, Earthroot has acted as Throal's chief architect and builder... all without the dwarfs' knowledge, of course. Indeed, many Throalic residents do not even know of Earthroot's existence. He has accomplished his end as he usually does, in a cloak of secrecy too thick for any but the most discerning (such as myself) to penetrate. Even now he frequently visits construction sites in Throal, disguised as a dwarf of unassuming aspect, and offers advice to the workers on precisely how high to raise that wall or how deeply to hollow this rock for a house. He even dictates the design of the streets! And his advice is always taken; all those who recall meeting this "mysterious stranger" speak of his voice as being strangely compelling and his words impossible to ignore. Some building crews have found themselves doing precisely the opposite of what they intended, or tearing down a week's worth of work without a murmur, simply because a man they did not know came from nowhere and told them to.

The purpose of these machinations appears twofold. First and most obviously, Earthroot is making certain that Throal maximizes its physical defenses. Given the stormy relations between Throal and the Thera Empire, he or Icewing (or both) must have anticipated that one day Thera legions would come bearing down on the dwarf kingdom, and so Earthroot has been making every effort to ensure that the conquest of Throal would cost as many Thera lives as possible. Indeed, he may have hoped to make it too costly for the Theras to stomach. Your own soldiers will face similar hardships. Even if Throal and Thera's fighting forces batter each other senseless before you make your move, the armies of Iopos must still cope with the sheer physical difficulties of overrunning a gigantic underground fortress with thousands of tunnels in which rebels can hide, blind corners around which an enemy may shoot, narrow corridors designed as chokepoints in which a few fighters can pick off ten times their number one by one, and so on. No matter how few of them may be left, Throal's defenders will be able to inflict damage far beyond their numbers because of Earthroot's aid. It is well for our plans that the soldiers of Iopos will go wherever a Denairastas tell them; without such blind loyalty, the likelihood of high casualties might cause some of them to reconsider their oaths of service to you.

More disturbing is Earthroot's second goal: the strengthening of Throal's True Pattern by manipulating its physical structure. He appears to be able to direct the flow of the earth's energies in certain directions by the placement of a wall, the alignment of a street, the shaping of a tunnel and so forth, to augment the True Pattern of the dwarf kingdom and to maximize its other magical defenses. Similarly, these physical manipulations appear to channel the magical power of elemental earth veins buried deep within the rock. Several such veins converge near the Royal Hall in the heart of Throal, and their presence enhances the magical abilities of the adepts who constantly guard the Hall and the Royal Chambers beyond. Even worse for our purposes, these elemental energies augment the power of the magical treasures upon which these defenders may call in great need. That your niece Jada managed to bypass these defenses and ritually slay King Varulus III is a testament to the remarkable abilities of your bloodline; but with Earthroot as well as King Neden now forewarned, I doubt that such measures will work a second time. You must therefore bend all your efforts toward discovering the true nature and extent of the earth magic that is strengthening Throal, so that you may devise a method of countering them. I will aid you all I can in this regard.





Alliance with Icewing

The apparent collaboration between Earthroot and Icewing to safeguard Throal, though at first glance an impediment to our plans, may ultimately offer some weaknesses to exploit. Unfortunately, there appears to be no open enmity between the two dragons, as there is between Mountainshadow and Usun; however, all is not precisely tranquil between the pair, either. Regarding aid to the dwarfs, they are utterly in agreement; I fear no wedge can be driven between them on that issue. Their differences appear to be much more personal and petty in nature. It seems that, on occasion, Icewing attempts to dictate to Earthroot precisely how he should aid the dwarfs and when. After all, the dwarfs are Icewing's special pets; added to which, he is older (and therefore, he thinks, wiser) than Earthroot, and native to Barsaive. Earthroot, as the younger and an outlander, cannot possibly know what is best for Throal better than Icewing does, and so should graciously follow Icewing's orders (or so Icewing appears to believe).

Understandably, Earthroot resents this. No great dragon takes kindly to another lording it over him; we are a proud race, and must each do things in our own way even when that way is utterly wrong (witness Mountainshadow's hypocritical and misguided meddlings with the Young Races, while banishing me from the company of dragons for doing no worse). And Earthroot has a temper; of all the dragons save possibly Usun, he is the one least able to bear being patronized or dictated to. He relieves his wounded feelings most often by devouring dwarfs who venture too far into his domain. Often he uses the Pale Ones to procure dwarfs for him; their knowledge of the underground waterways makes them invaluable guides for dwarf miners and explorers, but at Earthroot's behest they will turn on the very dwarfs employing them and deliver them into Earthroot's larder. Sometimes, if he is feeling generous or if Mountainshadow prevails upon Icewing to offer the Rite of Transgression, Earthroot merely holds the captive dwarfs for ransom—usually a Name-giver unlucky enough to anger Icewing, or a minor bauble from Icewing's hoard. Icewing, for his part, allows Earthroot to get away with this behavior... for a time. Invariably, however, he retaliates on an equally petty scale—setting this or that village of Pale Ones against each other, or prompting small bands of dwarfs to avenge their fallen fellows by killing a few of the primitives.

Whenever this little game threatens to get out of hand, Mountainshadow steps in to smooth the ruffled scales. And herein lies our opportunity to put this petty bickering to use. If your agents can escalate the tit-for-tat skirmishing between the Pale Ones and the dwarfs, Earthroot and Icewing will likely blame each other, and raise their disputes to a point where Mountainshadow must intervene. And anything that distracts Mountainshadow is an advantage for us—to say nothing of distracting Earthroot, which will give you a freer hand to observe and explore his domain. Those observations may yet lead us to some breakthrough in understanding the workings of the earth magic so powerful there, or may point to some weakness in Earthroot that we have not anticipated.

I must stress again, however, that Earthroot will defend Throal if it is attacked. No dispute with Icewing, however bitter, would induce him to leave Throal to the mercies of your soldiers. Therefore, you must either take care of him before-hand or be prepared to fight him—physically and magically—before you contemplate such an assault.

The White Tree

There is one other magical peril of which you must beware when taking on Earthroot: the White Tree, which he guards with obsessive devotion. Indeed, it appears to be the reason why he chose to lair under the Throal Mountains and not the Twilight Peaks, the Caucavics, the Thunder Mountains or the Delaris range. You may have heard somewhat of this Tree, though the legends of the Young Races say little more than how it grows beneath the Throal Mountains and is intimately tied to the destiny of the dragons. I will tell you a great deal more, including what dragon legends say of it.

First, what I know to be true: the White Tree sprang from the heart of All-Wings, greatest of all dragons. When All-Wings was slain and her body scattered across Barsaive, a portion of it—including her heart—ended up beneath the Throal Mountains. Upon his arrival in Barsaive three centuries later, Earthroot took up residence beneath those same mountains in order to guard the sacred remains. Soon afterward—whether on his own initiative or another's direction, I cannot yet say—Earthroot took the heart of All-Wings and embedded it in a certain underground lake bed, where veins of True earth and orichalcum met beneath waters laden with True water. The confluence of the two True elements and orichalcum, added to the innate magical properties of the dragon heart, produced the fantastical plant known as the White Tree. The Tree carries within it all the power of the things that made it, and Earthroot guards it to this day. (It is this task that earned him the Name of Root Protector.)

So vast is Earthroot's underground realm that even I have not ascertained precisely where the Tree first began to grow. I have seen it in Earthroot's mind, however. It completely fills the cavern where it first sprang into being, and its roots travel far down the tangle of tunnels that lead from the lake in every direction. It glows the brilliant white of a





thousand light quartzes, and its leaves gleam like rubies, sapphires and pearls. It appears to have half a hundred trunks at least, and its roots protrude from the lake like shimmering white rocks from the sea. I surmise that over time, the Tree has grown many roots, similar to ordinary plants with runner vines, until one can no longer determine which root was the original. Vast quantities of True water are necessary for its survival; every scrap of that element received by Earthroot as tribute from his Pale Ones goes to water the Tree and keep it robust.

I regret I do not know the nature and extent of the Tree's magic—only that it is exceptionally powerful, and that it is tied to the magic of our kind. I presume that Earthroot either has used or will use the Tree's magic on Throal's behalf if necessary; it would be foolish to believe otherwise. It would not surprise me if the Tree is partly responsible for Earthroot's formidable command of elemental magic. One cannot spend centuries in close proximity to a living magical treasure like the White Tree and not learn something of its nature, or fail to be affected by it.

One of my drakes is searching for the Tree even as I write this, and I urge you to send some of your own most gifted magicians to seek it as well. If we can learn of its powers, we may be able to turn them against Earthroot and destroy him—or at least deprive him of those powers so he may not turn them against us. I counsel against attempting to destroy the Tree, however. The problem of finding and obliterating all of its roots is formidable enough, even without the danger mentioned in dragon legend. Our tales say that if the White Tree ever dies, dragonkind will fade from the world. This may be only a fable, but I do not care to test it. Destroying the Tree might give us victory over Mountainshadow and his ilk, but only at the price of our own downfall. If the legend is true, I would no longer be here to guide and guard you as I have done. And though other blood than a dragon's runs through your veins, who knows what the fading of dragonkind might mean for you? Much of your magic is dragon magic, given to you through me; you might lose it, and along with it your power in Barsaive. Or you might fade from the world as well, or sicken and die as your Pattern slowly, painfully erodes away, or become some monstrous things we can none of us imagine.

Earthroot's Drakes

Earthroot has three drakes that I know of, though he may have more (anything is possible with so secretive a dragon). Like their master, they love the water more than the land, though they are equally at home in either place. They somewhat resemble small leviathans, but do not be deceived; they have all the intelligence of true drakes, and are far more than the mere creatures for which some might easily mistake them. When in the form of the Young Races, they most often incarnate as t'skrang—predictable, considering the nature of Earthroot's pets. Indeed, one of the drakes frequently mingles with the Pale Ones, sending "royal commands" to them from their "king" or simply spending time among them for purposes known only to Earthroot. I also have my suspicions about certain t'skrang adventurers who turn up every so often in Throal... but thus far, my own drakes have not been able to confirm them. Compounding the difficulty of tracing Earthroot's drakes, of course, is the unfortunate fact that they are not limited to t'skrang form. They may incarnate as any of the Young Races; the t'skrang simply seem to be their preference.

I have learned the drakes' Names, and a little something of each of them that may prove useful in predicting their movements and actions. The eldest of the three, a female Named Niu, often takes the form of a k'stulaami and flies around the Throal Mountains, spying out the land for her master. She also serves as his liaison to the House of the Spirit Wind, a small community of winged t'skrang in the southern Throal Mountains. These t'skrang, brought to the Spirit Winds by their unwinged kin from nialls all along the Serpent River, maintain those kinship ties and serve as one of Earthroot's links to t'skrang foundations and crew covenants throughout Barsaive. Though the t'skrang in general do not revere Earthroot as the Pale Ones do (indeed, many foundations do not even know he exists), they frequently serve his interests without knowing it—especially when those interests happen to coincide with Icewing's, or with Throal's. As I mention Icewing, I am reminded of recent rumors that suggest that the t'skrang of the House of the Spirit Wing are actually among the servants of Icewing, and are allowed to make their home in the Throal Mountains only with Icewing's permission. I don't know if these rumors are true, but should this be prove to be so, it establishes yet another link between the great dragons and the t'skrang. This is something that bears investigation, should your agents have the time and opportunity.

Another, more direct link between Earthroot and the t'skrang is the drake Golrin, a male of middling years with a special affection for the lizard-men. He often swims down the Coil River to observe the t'skrang villages along its banks, and Earthroot takes full advantage of Golrin's curiosity by using him to watch over t'skrang affairs outside the Throal Mountains. From what my drakes tell me, I suspect Golrin's activities go beyond mere watching. He has appeared on occasion in certain rebellious villages in House K'tenshin territory—the same villages to whom the Kingdom of Throal is supplying weapons, this according to a certain Theran document that recently came to my attention, and one which I shall share with you presently. We can surmise that Earthroot at least knows of the smuggling and uses Golrin to keep an





eye on it. I suspect Golrin is actively involved in the operation, using his formidable magical gifts to assist the dwarfs and t'skrang rebels. Such aid would certainly explain why the Therans have yet to capture a single Throalic agent or t'skrang smuggler involved with the operation, despite their best efforts since learning of it.

Finally, it may be possible to suborn the youngest drake, a male Named Loyang, provided we do so with care and subtlety. Loyang is intensely interested in elemental magic, and Earthroot has been doling out his own knowledge of it to Loyang in scraps. Like youth of all kinds, Loyang is becoming impatient with the pace of his teaching; he wants to know everything, now if not sooner. Though as yet no thought of disloyalty has crossed his mind, we may be able to change that with a few artful promises. I have taught you and yours considerable elemental magic that Loyang may not yet know; offer him some of this lore, along with some pleasant words intended to spark questions in his mind, and you may be able to turn him. You might even suggest that Earthroot has no intention of teaching him the deeper mysteries of elemental and earth magic; the grudging way in which Earthroot has so far doled out his tidbits of wisdom can only serve to bolster such a suggestion. But take care in this as in everything else. Planting a treacherous drake in Earthroot's camp would greatly increase our chances of getting him out of the way; however, to fail the attempt because of ill-considered haste could end all our plans before they have even begun.





ICEWING

The information put forth here by the Outcast regarding my brother Doll-Maker is most disturbing. Despite the flood of misinformation we have meticulously fed him, the accuracy and depth of his knowledge concerning Doll-Maker's goals and plans makes his penetration of Doll-Maker's security most clear. If we have underestimated the Outcast's trickery and subterfuge in this arena until now, we cannot risk continuing to do so in arenas of more importance, and must recognize the Outcast as the most serious threat posed to us in some time.

The dragon Icewing is as much a meddler as his brother Mountainshadow, yet even more dangerous as he lacks what little vision his brother has. As evidenced by his reputation, Icewing has had the most involvement of any dragon in other Name-giver's affairs, and yet he holds his brother's favor, and maneuvers just indirectly enough that the others do not challenge him. Historically and traditionally, Icewing has acted as a "guardian" of sorts for the Young Races, manipulating them in directions he sees fit, with no heed to their own wishes. In his cold eyes, dragons are a superior race who should guide the Young Races with our enlightened vision. He fails to see the value of the Young Races, or to recognize their refreshing viewpoints as something to be learned from. He has suffered for this shortsightedness in the past, when his stature was tarnished by harsh failures and betrayals in the rebellion against dragon rule. These events sparked a transformation in this once shining child of All-Wings, who proceeds now as a belligerent crusader with a vendetta, intent on bringing down the dragons' enemies. Engaged in this passion, he pursues an agenda that borders on direct intervention, drawing many warnings from his kin, but never the censure and exile I was subjected to.

If many of Icewing's supremacist beliefs are similar to Usun's, his methods are not. Icewing is a more skilled puppet-master than Mountainshadow, and he is willing to take actions that are often more direct, visible and rash. In my view he poses the most immediate danger to your family and its goals, as he is a dragon of action and will be first to sally forth in opposition. If you play him right, however, by first wrapping yourself in shadows and then striking like a skeorx when the time has come, his response will be agitated, and thus more visible and predictable than those the others take.

As aged as he is, Icewing's knowledge and skills are as vast as Mountainshadow's, but of a more specialized nature. His primary interests are in the creation and propagation of drakes as well as summoning and communicating with spirits of every hue. His skill with the spirit kind is unsurpassed among our folk, but he lacks the wisdom and will to use it well. It is telling that his most notable achievement with his abilities has been to selfishly create more pawns for his games.

Icewing's History

In order for you to fully understand Icewing's goals and motivations, you must first understand his history.

Spawned by All-Wings, Icewing is an ancient and powerful elder dragon, second only to Mountainshadow (and then in ways nearly indistinguishable to those of the Younger Races). Under All-Wing's tutelage, their brood was raised to be proud and vigorous leaders among dragons, and they were instructed thoroughly in dragon lore and trained to reach the pinnacle of dragon might and wisdom. Few of their clutch have survived the trying times since then, proving Icewing to be one of the more cunning and resilient of All-Wings' progeny. Yet Icewing has been even more impotent in fulfilling this noble legacy than Mountainshadow, and his lesser status among dragonkind surely rankles his hubris. During the Age of Dragons, Icewing was charged by All-Wings herself with overseeing the dragons' relationships and development of those they ruled. In this capacity he became closely tied to the Young Races, and maintained an intimate relationship with the Children of Alamaise, our Chosen Servitors, who administrated our rule. This exalted position was a hollow one, for in his arrogance he underestimated these Name-givers, viewing them as mere toys and failing to foresee the treachery brewing in their hearts. He failed to understand them, to identify their ambition as equal to our own, and allowed them opportunities that were taken advantage of in the rebellion. Thus does Icewing bear a heavy mantle of responsibility for past mistakes, and the cost of dragon lives—especially his sire's—weighs heavily on his ego.

In the many ages that have passed since those dark times, Icewing has eagerly sought to make amends for past faults, and has aggressively pursued research into the creation of a new race to more efficiently serve us and handle our affairs among Name-givers. His knowledge of the workings of spirits was the key to this task, and together with the dragon Yuichotol, they created the ritual known as the Dance of Blue Spirits. Thus were drakes created, and Icewing now has a new selection of pawns to replace those Name-givers who had been lost to him. For this gift to our kind, Icewing earned the name Doll-Maker—representative of his attitude towards his playthings. Yuichotol and Icewing, along with the dragon Named Cloudtamer, wasted no time implementing their new toys in their clandestine war against Thera. The





drakes were used to infiltrate and disrupt the Theran Empire, hindering their orichalcum gathering and spreading their Rites of Protection to those in need. As a result, this trio was singled out and targeted by the Therans, and Yuichotol and Cloudtamer were killed. Icewing watched silently from afar with the Eye of All-Wings as his fierce and potent peers were slain, and the Therans turned to assault his lair. It was a test of Mountainshadow's gift of silken speech to talk Icewing out of a direct confrontation, and withdraw to prepare an appropriate response. Icewing listened, and when the Therans arrived, he was gone, and his lair emptied.

After this, Icewing declared that in order to effectively counter the actions of the Therans and their influence among Name-givers, it was a necessity to aid and support the power blocks among the other Name-givers that would counter the Therans' agenda. He convinced a Council to allow him to give the dwarf King Varulus and his heirs potions of longevity that would enable them to consolidate their control of Throal. Together with Earthroot's foundation strengthening and Mountainshadow's network, he hopes to build Throal into a nation capable of withstanding Thera and uniting Barsaive, and perhaps even bring the battle to the Isle of Thera itself one day. I suspect that his true motivation here is to regain the glory he once held as a delegate to the Young Races, and to absolve himself for the mistakes that cost us so. It was at this same Council that I was held accountable for my transgressions in begetting you, and was Banished, forever labeled Outcast.

Icewing's Nature

As one of the most public and visible of dragonkind, Icewing has learned well how to deal with scrutiny. Many of his plots are buried deeply, under layers and layers of lies and misinformation, spread through various agents and dupes. Dealing with Icewing often means penetrating illusion and deception to even get a hint of the truth. However, he is more impulsive and impatient than his brethren, and frequently intervenes with an overconfidence that reveals an astonishing disregard for protocol and the wishes of his fellow great dragons (that he has faced little reprimand for). This is especially true when his pawns or he himself are directly challenged, in which case he is prone to act aggressively and prematurely against his rivals.

Icewing's views towards the Young Races once contained elements of fondness and nurturing to rival Mountainshadow's, but now are of a more "protective" nature, as Icewing sees his responsibility to guard them from threats generated by the dragons' actions in the past and "guide" them onto a path more in line with his visions. He makes extensive use of Name-giver servants, and his own private network complements Mountainshadow's as the backbone of the dragons' spy network. His primary focus is the Theran Empire, but his agents are spread throughout the world, and he is not afraid to use them, nor as slow to react as the others.

Icewing has an open door policy of sorts toward Name-givers, allowing them to approach his lair on Mount Vapor on the condition that they bring a suitable gift. In his self-appointed role as liaison and advocate, he maintains this policy as a sort of responsibility he feels towards the Young Races. The demand of gifts is a testimony to his belief in dragon superiority, a throwback to the past that he maintains as a lesson. I'm sure that his open door policy has proven beneficial in many ways, as many adventurers and adepts bring him news or items or questions that reveal much about various events in the world. It also allows the dwarfs of Throal and the agents of other dragons to access him if they have need of his assistance.

Icewing has become deeply invested in the dwarfs of Throal, and has done much more than they know on their behalf, including manipulating economic factors and rooting out Theran infiltrators. Icewing and Earthroot together work towards developing Throal as a viable alternative to Theran authority—one that is thoroughly under their claws. As Earthroot works below, protecting the White Tree and using his abilities to strengthen Throal's physical defenses, Icewing is carefully molding Throal into a major political force. He has offered up his counsel to Throalic leaders in person on several occasions, and they have gratefully accepted it, unaware of how he uses them. Many high-ranking officials and dwarfs of influence within Throal are quietly sponsored by Icewing, and subtly induced to further his goals by various means. Through careful channels he has been strengthening their relationships with Cara Fahd, the t'skrang aropagoi, and other major political entities—destroying more than one competitive influence in the process. His agents abroad work feverishly to dredge up support for his pets in the form of trade compacts, exchanges of lore, and aid against the Therans. While supportive of the dwarfs, he views them foremost as tools, and so takes care not to allow suspicion or resentment of Mountainshadow and Earthroot's influence among them to interfere with his plans.

The downfall of Thera is one of Icewing's primary motivations—perhaps symbolic to him in terms of rectifying past mistakes. The very existence of this empire is a thorn under his scales. Since Thera's inception, Icewing has hindered the Empire from both within and without by any means at his disposal. His intelligence regarding their activities is excellent, indicating that he has some very high-placed spies, perhaps even a member among the Heavenherds. He takes





this struggle personally, as he illustrated after the Therans' abortive attempt on his life, when a short time later he was so bold as to appear on top of the Sphinx on the Isle of Thera itself, his presence a warning that preceded a series of calculated strikes that forced the Therans to withdraw from conflict with the dragons. This example shows that Icewing is the most likely to become personally involved in a war against Thera. Likewise, when you choose to move openly against Throal, you will have to deal with Icewing first and foremost.

Servants

Icewing has a multitude of lackeys and spies, forming a personal power base that is quite formidable. As one of the progenitors of the drakes, he holds more on retainer than any other dragon. He also makes use of a number of spirits and spirit allies, as well as Name-giver pawns.

Drakes

I would estimate that Icewing has created more than thirty drakes, all of whom he uses as spies, messengers, and enforcers. Despite his interest in them, he has clearly not learned from the past, and fails to treat or inform them as favorably as he should. To his callous nature they are dolls to be used and discarded—he makes little attempt as I have to understand what he has wrought. Thus I found it easy to discover the one he sent to spy on me, a female Named Skarthan, and to turn the drake against him, for she had not been appreciated or understood by her former master. The key to my success was Icewing's own hypocrisy regarding my banishment for meddling in Name-giver affairs.

[If I may speak on Doll-Maker's behalf, I can attest that he does indeed care for and understand his drakes much better than the Outcast has been led to believe. My brother has in fact engaged the Outcast in an elaborate ruse, to which end the Outcast now believes he has recruited one of Doll-Maker's drakes. This foresight on my sibling's part has given us a position of advantage when we clearly are in need of one.]

Many of Icewing's drakes are well-disguised infiltrators, mostly hidden among the Therans but also among his other enemies, though he has none in Iopos that we do not know of. It is imperative that you be appraised of his more active agents, as I suspect they will soon be set loose upon your family.

Arondry

This drake most often takes Name-giver form as an elf. As an accomplished Seventh Circle wizard, he serves as Icewing's primary researcher into arcane lore, pattern items, and artifacts, and frequently travels afar throughout Barsaive and other lands, in search of knowledge and thread items.

Rathann

This restless drake acts as Icewing's wandering spy and troubleshooter. He is constantly on the move, looking and listening for things of interest to his master. He also serves as Icewing's primary liaison with adventurers and adept groups that Icewing hires (usually without their knowledge) for various missions to further his goals. Rathann most often appears as an elf with white hair, and is known in Throal as a Seventh Circle beastmaster.

Tellanion

Tellanion serves as Icewing's primary messenger to minions and other dragons. Should he be captured, the information that he is entrusted with would be most compromising to Icewing's plans in the right hands. His most common guise is that of a Dinganni human, and he is a talented Seventh Circle thief.

Crispell

One of Icewing's deep Theran agents, currently engaged in intelligence gathering in Vivane. Crispell usually appears as an enchanting Theran elf with red hair, and she is an Eighth Circle illusionist. I suspect the Therans are aware of her existence, but have yet to pinpoint who she is, as she is a master of subterfuge and deception, and uses many faces and Names.

Markik

Icewing's senior agent in Throal, Markik is an aide to the Ambassador General of the Throalic Diplomatic Corps, a position entitled to intelligence reports from the Eye of Throal and close to the King's ear. She takes form as a dwarf,





and is a skilled warrior as well as a negotiator. Were her position as a spy for Icewing to be revealed, it could very well strain the dragon's relationship with the dwarfs, and possibly fracture any trust between them.

Gichu-ta

This relatively young drake is being taught by Icewing himself in the arts of nethermancy. At the moment Icewing has engaged her in aiding the Liferock Rebellion in contacting the elemental spirit of the Ayodhya Liferock. I have reason to believe that Gichu-ta has most recently been in contact with members of a nethermantic order known as the Fellowship of Night, who lair somewhere in the Delaris Mountains.

Other Drakes

I know for a fact that Icewing uses at least two dozen other drakes in various capacities, yet this is not the place to detail them. If the need arises, I shall provide the information to you. I suspect many of them are prone to subversion, and can be turned to support our views and goals once Icewing's faults and hypocrisies are shown to them, as I have done with one already.

Name-givers

Icewing has not fostered communities of Name-giver servants as Mountainshadow or Earthroot has. Instead he relies primarily on a spy network run by an unidentified agent out of Kratas, and an assortment of adventuring adepts that he acts as an anonymous patron for. I am keeping a close watch upon their movements, as Icewing will soon direct some of them to oppose you and your plans. In particular, take note of tales concerning the following Name-givers.

House of the Spirit Wind

I have speculated for some time now that Icewing exerts some influence among the winged t'skrang, but I have yet to unearth evidence of such. I can attest to you that I myself have witnessed such t'skrang being used as envoys to the Throalic dwarfs and others, seemingly on missions that may well have been guided by Icewing's claws. At the least, it is something to ponder and investigate.

The Gilded One

I have yet to discern this t'skrang's Name, but it is important to Icewing's plans. He or she is a double agent of Icewing's within the Theran T'skrang House Carinci, currently stationed with House K'tenshin on the Serpent River. The Gilded One has much influence among the southern t'skrang aropagoi, and is particularly adept at feeding the Therans false information without raising suspicion. He or she has also been passing information on House K'tenshin ship movements and war plans to House Syrtis and V'strimon. I have reason to believe the Gilded One may have the ear of the Shivalahala K'tenshin as well, and is thus capable of some sway within that House.

Spiral

Few victims can Name Spiral as the source of their ailment, so wily and slippery is she. There are few places in Barsaive this windling thief and illusionist adept cannot penetrate. In fact, I suspect her of visiting one of my lairs a short time ago and leaving with a bauble that she mistook for something of value. I am confident that she will be the first pawn that Icewing will move against you, if she is not in Iopos already, having a look through your private vault. As a windling, however, she is cursed with many faults, and when she makes a mistake, I will make a snack of her.

Aechris' Arguers

The Arguers are a group of five ork and human adepts employed by Icewing for several years now, led by Aechris, a grizzled ork scout. They are so Named for their tendency to engage in loud, boisterous arguments, insult trading, and gahad-baiting, purely for the joy of it (and not always with each other). For several years now they have targeted and hindered the Theran slave trade, and they have recently recruited a liberator into the group. While subtle at times, they are frequently rowdy, and their legendary deeds are growing to a point where it shall be easy for you to track them. Currently they are raising a frenzy in Cara Fahd, in preparation for the war.

Brynn's Band

A group of seven diverse adepts skilled at kaer delving and other treasure hunting and exploratory activities. They have penetrated over a dozen kaers in Barsaive alone for Icewing, but they have recently been sent to the Great Isle of Thera, to retrieve a memory crystal known as the Rose Crystal. I suspect they have been (or will be) aided by one or





more of Icewing's agents in Thera, for even the most formidable group of adepts would be hard pressed to make off with such a prize. This item holds powerful significance for the Children of Alamaise, who revolted at the ending of the Age of Dragons. Why Icewing has chosen to attempt to retrieve the Rose Crystal at this time remains a mystery to me, as I see it as unlikely to aid his endeavors.

[Once again, I find myself most relieved that the Outcast is not aware of all our plans, especially our plans for the Rose Crystal. Given the relationship between the Denairastas and the Escalanas ranelle, were the Outcast to learn the truth behind the theft of the Rose Crystal, it would not be long before Alachia would know herself, spoiling our plans.]

Hunters

Recently, Icewing crossed paths with Verjigorm and his Cult of the Great Hunter, as several eggs from Icewing's clutch were stolen by cultists and nearly corrupted. Enraged by this atrocity, Icewing has assembled a coterie of horror stalkers to counter this threat to dragonkind. Their primary agenda is to root out the cult and any dragons or drakes they have corrupted. A bitter human horror stalker Named Aufji is coordinating their efforts. I suspect that Icewing, ever bold and direct and having failed to erase the taint placed upon one of the eggs stolen by the cult, is planning on using the egg to draw out the Cult and destroy it.

Spirits

Icewing has summoned and bargained with a number of powerful Named spirits that do his bidding, including unique spirits the like of which even potent magicians such as your family have never seen before. His strength in this realm should concern you, as their nature and abilities are elusive and difficult to defend against.

The most intriguing of Icewing's spirit allies is the one Named Ghost Scales. I strongly suspect that this is in fact the spirit of the dragon Yuichotol, killed by the Therans before the Scourge. Yuichotol mated with Icewing on more than one occasion, and she was as adept in manipulating spirit forces as he is. Together they enchanted a set of powerful soulstones, similar to those used by the nethermancers of the Hold of Courage in ancient Cara Fahd, so that if one should die, their spirit would remain, trapped within the stone. This transgression of dragon customs has yet to be atoned for. Her current state and powers are unfathomable to me, but I understand he has several magical constructs that allow her to speak and move. I would grieve to discover that one so great as she had sunken to become merely another doll of his.

[I understand there exists a difference of opinion on this matter between Doll-Maker, Ghost Scales and myself on one hand and many others on the other. May I remind you that at the last Council we allotted Ghost Scales a period of peace that she has not yet exhausted. Once that time has ended, we shall revisit the matter.]

Icewing's Lair

As you know, Icewing's primary lair is atop Mount Vapor, in the Throalic Mountains. Reaching the lair is a treacherous and difficult two-day trek up an icy crag. The lair itself is based around an ancient crater containing a field of hot springs, steaming steadily in the high mountain air, giving the mountain its Name. His sanctum is well-protected by layers of defenses, including a dome of elemental air. Foremost are the natural defenses inherent in the dangerous environment. The trail to his lair is hidden, and monitored by his minions, but its secrets have been given to many Name-givers. Without one to guide you, however, you could easily follow a false branch trail that will lead the unwary to certain doom by boulders, ice, traps or heights. Augmenting these dangers are an assortment of guardian spirits that will waylay the unwelcome, turning the mountain itself into a weapon of destruction. A number of wards and spells are also in place to misdirect, confuse, and create barriers to ensnare those attempting to enter his lair, and his drake and spirit guards will hastily descend upon those who run afoul of these traps.

The spirits of the Throalic Mountains themselves do Icewing's bidding, and can easily deter or destroy Name-givers who seek to enter his lair uninvited. Icewing also commands a small army of earth spirits and peculiar spirit-creatures known as crags to protect the lair and see to mundane tasks.

The lair lies only a few days' walk from Bartertown, and the trail is well worn by various adventurers and wisdom-seekers. Because of the dangers of Mount Vapor, few petitioners seek Icewing's lair without a guide; several of which sell their escorting services in the streets of Bartertown. They may be useful sources for information regarding the lair, if they are not in fact Icewing's servants.





Icewing's sense of superiority to the Young Races demands that he expect gifts from those that would approach his lair and speak to him. If a Name-giver cannot provide a token of esteem to Icewing at least one thousand silver pieces in value—a trifling amount to Icewing of course—then they are clearly not important or needy enough to demand his counsel. Those who dare to approach without an appropriate gift for the dragon are given a dire warning to return with one inside of a month, else they are tracked down and eaten by Icewing for offending one of his stature. Remember this, if you should ever need to draw him from his lair.

From Skarthan, his mistreated drake, I have determined the location of a secret lair in the Tylon Mountains. It is there that he now keeps his clutch of eggs, including those that have recently hatched. Icewing actually spends much time here, but when he is away, this lair is watched over by Skybright, a lesser dragon under Icewing's tutelage, and well protected by spirits as well.

Icewing also has at least two other secret lairs, one of which is in the province of Vivane. Determining where the others are would be most useful, as they will be less protected than Mount Vapor, and are more likely to contain information or objects of value, perhaps even pattern items, which can be turned against him.

Treasure

Foremost among the artifacts hoarded by Icewing is the Eye of All-Wings, twin to the one held by Mountainshadow. The Eyes, taken from All-Wings' body and contained within crystal spheres, are linked to each other through dragon magic that allows the two to communicate over great distances. As I explained when detailing Mountainshadow's hoard, the Eyes can also be used to scry distant lands and spy upon events there, and may be used to peer into the depths of the netherworlds. Fortunately, Icewing's gaze is almost certainly turned constantly towards the Therans, as their mobilization concerns him greatly. Keep it focused there, and the less chance he will have to counteract your moves.

In addition to the wealth of gold and jewels, including an impressive collection of memory crystals filled with ages worth of spirit lore, Icewing also maintains in his Mount Vapor caverns a magnificent garden which is home to the Glitterfrost Orchid of t'skrang legend. The bright, silvery-white blooms of the Glitterfrost Orchid are stunning to the eye, and magically dangerous to the most well armored creature. The touch of an Orchid bloom will crack open even a dragon's scales, creating an opening through which a mortal wound may be struck.

Icewing's Powers

One needs only to witness the speed of Icewing's talons and the hardness of his silvery-blue scales to attest that he is indeed a peer to Mountainshadow and progeny of All-Wings. Almost as large as his brother, Icewing is more physically aggressive, and could easily rend an obsidiman in two with a swipe of his tail or claws. His demeanor is hard, callous and fearsome, and his frosty gaze can cause the hardiest warriors to flee him in abject terror. The Therans lost a behemoth when they attacked his mate Yuichotol, and if Icewing had stayed to fight them openly they would likely have lost two more, so terrifying is Icewing with speed and fire and sorcery.

The most dangerous of Icewing's powers is the unique one that gives him his Name. While all dragons can use the mighty force of their wings to fling opponents aside, stunning them and leaving them open for the kill, Icewing can manipulate the elements themselves with his wingbeats. I once watched him from afar as he dueled with another dragon, an adult, who was so foolish as to challenge Icewing's claim to another's hoard. Icewing descended upon his opponent, his wings beating so furiously that they were but a flashing and blinding blur. A whirlwind of ice and snow churned forward, enveloping his foe and encasing him in an icy prison. The dragon immediately began to burn and tear himself free, but not before Icewing was upon him, ripping him open and slashing him apart. By the time the dragon had freed himself, Icewing had grievously injured him, and dispatched him shortly afterwards. Imagine that same power focused upon mortals, and you see its terrible potential.

Allies and Enemies

Icewing is much more comfortable with pawns than allies, but he is quite willing to work with other dragons if they share the same goals. Of late, there has been a flurry of communication between himself and three other great dragons, as they prepare for the upcoming conflict with Thera.





Mountainshadow

The minions of Icewing and his brother Mountainshadow make up the backbone of the dragon's network of spies, and the two communicate and cooperate on a multitude of affairs that they hold common interest in. Mountainshadow does not share the same depth of interest Icewing has in Throal, nor the hatred for Thera, but does not stray far from agreement with Icewing concerning the two. They use the Eyes of All-Wings to remain vigilant of the Therans' actions, and to communicate when necessary. Mountainshadow is more cautious in his approach to Name-givers, and frequently counsels his brother to do the same, though he is more than supportive of Icewing's doll-making.

Of important note is the interest that the pair have taken lately in Aardelea, a young human girl from a backwater village in Barsaive's hinterlands. I have recently learned of her importance, for she has bonded in some way with one of Icewing's blue spirits, and the dragons think now that she may hold the key to propagating drakes in the future. They are excessively protective of her, and even Icewing chose not to intervene as they see it crucial that she develop on her own, without interference. Of course, their secrecy was breached and because of their interest, the Therans have become involved and kidnapped the girl. If she is returned to Barsaive, we should acquire her, as anything of such importance to Icewing could only be useful in our hands.

[Icewing, Skarthan has done well in passing this information to the Outcast. She has clearly passed her latest test, and placed herself further within the Outcast's confidence. It will be most illuminating to see how the Outcast maneuvers in regards to this affair.]

Another thing to note in Icewing's relationship with Mountainshadow is a slight sense of jealousy I have felt in the past on Icewing's part towards his brother. While they have worked closely for ages, within the usual boundaries of dragon etiquette, there is undoubtedly a small rivalry at play—a competition of sorts between the two. In respects to this, take heed to Icewing's relationship with Mountainshadow's drake Rosper, who is currently chafing under his master's cautious and slow agenda with the Therans—Rosper's aggressive attitude fits more appropriately with Icewing, and I would not be surprised to see them drawn together. Under appropriate circumstances, I could direct Icewing's drake who now serves me to approach Rosper and play upon his alienation and anger... .

[The friction between Rosper and me is greatly exaggerated, and in this case, intentionally so. He has been hooked, my brother, time now to reel him in.]

Aban

Icewing and Mountainshadow also have something in development with Aban, and I fear they are looking to the north, possibly in Iopos' direction. Whatever they are discussing, they are being quite careful about it, so prepare for the worst.

Earthroot

Earthroot and Icewing have a mutual interest in the development of Throal as a major force in Barsaive. I have seen arguments flare between the two regarding minor details, but they are essentially allied in their goal, and when Throal becomes threatened by you, they will act in unison to protect their pets. Currently, Earthroot is focused on strengthening Throal's True Pattern by buttressing its physical and magical foundations, with the intent, of course, to protect the White Tree that lies beneath it. He is not so interested in developing Throal outwards, as Icewing is, and will care little if the dwarfs fail to exert a sphere of control, as long as the underground kingdom itself is not threatened. While Icewing will undoubtedly strike out to expand or protect Throal's power, he will not have Earthroot's backing.

Enemies

In Icewing's limited vision, the Therans are the True Foes and represent the greatest threat to him and dragonkind. He has personally seen and felt their power, and has antagonized them enough to make himself a primary target of theirs. They are well aware of his ill intent, and seek to anticipate and block his actions as best they can. Their hatred for each other should be used and exploited by you whenever possible, for the more they focus on their war, the less they will heed you, and the more damage they deal to another, the more weakened they shall be when you strike.

Do not expect Icewing to be consumed entirely in his plans for the Therans, however, for he is highly protective of Throal and will divert some of his attention to any who threaten it, such as yourselves. Expect him to attempt to flush





you out or force your hand soon, and be prepared for it. He is assuredly displeased with your family for assassinating his dwarf puppet king, and will not soon forget. It is to your credit that for some time at least you cast the blame upon the Therans, for that is a ploy that Icewing at least appreciated and possibly even fostered.

Icewing's Goals

Icewing's goals are numerous and varied, and I have touched upon only those that are foremost in his mind. Heed them well, as they each contain fault points that may be used by you to thwart or divert his plans. Icewing is as cunning and dangerous as Mountainshadow, only he will respond more quickly and be more bold in his intervention. Be cautious not to divert too many resources towards countering Icewing, for sure as Icewing will be the first dragon to strike at you, Mountainshadow will be watching and anticipating your moves and will use Icewing to distract you and camouflage his own actions.

Icewing's willingness to act directly and rashly does not endear him to the other dragons, and any mistakes he makes will move them towards cautiousness. If you can draw Icewing out, overextend and foil him, you may gain enough time to accomplish your goals while the other dragons are still pondering the situation.

The Downfall of Thera

This is a personal vendetta of Icewing's, and his endeavors in this area extend far outside of Barsaive. I know for a fact that Icewing has done much to support rebels and dissidents throughout the Theran Empire, even as he builds his own counter power to Thera with the dwarfs in Barsaive. Destroying this empire that his True Foes have built has become Icewing's passion, and he lusts for the means to expedite it.

Strengthening Throal

Having entrenched himself as a patron and advisor to the leaders of this kingdom, and infiltrated their numbers with his servants, Icewing expects to develop and direct Throal as a tool for the destruction of Thera and the recreation of the power structure that lasted throughout the Age of Dragons. The dwarfs are a crucial element in his long-term goals, and he will tolerate nothing that undermines their power.

Propagating Drakes

Icewing's greatest creation are the drakes that he uses so poorly, yet they are his pride. He is more than aware of their limitations and their inability to reproduce, and is still heavily engaged in researching solutions to these quandaries; to this end he is collaborating with Vasdenjas and Mountainshadow on several experiments. The girl Aardelea is of extreme importance to this, which explains his actions regarding her. His work with spirits is also significant to this, and he is still expanding his knowledge in this area so that he may yet pull forth some hints or answers from the netherworlds.

Destroying the Cult of the Great Hunter

Icewing is well aware of the plans the Horror known as Verjigorm has for dragonkind, as his submission to the Throalic book on Horrors details. Icewing is intensely interested in any information concerning the corruption of drakes and dragons by this foul entity and its servants. Having one of his own eggs tainted by this Horror's pawns has brought the danger home to him, and it is a lesson he will not idly forget. Icewing is not the sort to just wait and watch, and will actively spread what information he gains about the horror cult, as well as sponsor adepts and horror stalkers to track them down and destroy them.





USUN

[The Outcast's view of Vast Green clearly shows his strategy to divide us and thereby weaken us. We cannot allow this to happen. Whatever our own differences, we must look to our common enemies—the Impertinent Ones, the Outcast and his children—and remain unified. We must also remember the mistakes of the past and avoid repeating them.]

Usun is one of the most isolationist of all of the great dragons of Barsaive. He claims the Liaj Jungle as his, and woe betides any other Name-giver he catches there. This does not stop some Name-givers (like the legendary Tamers) from living in the jungle, but it certainly makes Usun and his motives mysterious to the outside world. Why does he dislike Name-givers? Why is he so solitary?

Usun is something of an exile himself, although not in the way I am. He firmly believes dragons should rightfully rule the world—and while many fellow great dragons agree with this, Usun has been staunchly opposed in his desire to war against all other Name-givers and subjugate them, as it was in the Age of Dragons. Failing that, he would see the Young Races wiped out, removed from the world so dragon strength and magic can shape it. The other great dragons consider Usun's plans both impractical and unacceptable. The Therans and other Name-givers have developed too much, and are too powerful to oppose in open warfare. Great dragons such as Icewing and Mountainshadow prefer to work behind the scenes, manipulating events to further their plans. Such machinations frustrate Usun, who has thus far agreed to abide by the will of the others and limits himself to the Liaj, where he takes out his frustrations on any Name-giver foolish enough to defy his ban on their entering the jungle.

As you read these words, you will undoubtedly notice certain similarities between Usun and Aban, the great dragon of the Mist Swamps. It is certainly true that the two do in fact share a number of traits, such as a preference for physical combat, use of spirits and creatures as their eyes and ears within their domains, and jealous guarding of their territories. Given these similarities, it is easy to think these dragons are two of a kind. Beware such faulty conclusions, for they could prove disastrous. Instead, I bid you notice the differences between Usun and Aban. They are subtle and not often obvious, but are key in developing strategies for dealing with each of these powerful creatures.

Usun's Nature

Usun is legend among the Name-givers of Barsaive, particularly those who live close to his home in the Liaj Jungle. He is fairly young by great dragon standards, although still older than any nation you might know. His great body is sleek and powerfully muscled, covered with overlapping scales of burnished green, like aged copper. His wings and underbelly are a paler green, allowing him to almost disappear into the jungle foliage. Usun's broad head is topped with a pair of horns twisted like those of a ram, and equipped with a set of powerful jaws with teeth honed by hunting and fighting.

Usun is a warrior and a hunter, known as Vast Green to other great dragons. He hearkens back to the predator heritage of our kind, savage and cunning. Where Mountainshadow or Vasdenjas might use honeyed words or subterfuge, Usun strikes with flame and claw and knows no mercy. The master of the Liaj Jungle has no use for words or diplomacy. He is a fighter who lives for the glory of battle, pitting his strength against the strength of the enemy. Since he has no enemies to fight, and cannot go to war against the Young Races as he might wish, Usun dwells in the Liaj Jungle, home to some of the most savage creatures in Barsaive. There he pits his strength and cunning against them in a daily struggle for life. No doubt Usun finds most of the creatures of the jungle a poor challenge for his abilities.

Unlike other great dragons, Usun has no interest in the Young Races as anything other than prey. While you might intrigue Icewing or Mountainshadow with clever words or tales, not so with Usun. He looks on all of the Young Races as you look upon the animals you slaughter for food, or perhaps more like the vermin you exterminate from your homes. Were it in his power, Usun would likely scour Barsaive with flame and reduce all of its cities to ash and rubble.

His savage warrior nature may cause you to underestimate Usun's cleverness. Do not forget that he is a great dragon, with more experience than has been accumulated by the entire Denairastas family line. Although Usun does not follow the intellectual pursuits of other great dragons, he is no less intelligent because of it. Usun knows much lore, and he collects information on the natural world, giving him a great understanding of the flora and fauna of Barsaive. Greater than that of Vasdenjas, I suspect, except Usun would never share his knowledge with outsiders as the "Master of Secrets" so often does.





The key to understanding Usun is his certainty of the superiority of dragonkind and his belief in the survival of the strongest creature. Do not fool yourself into believing that you can win his respect. No matter how strong you prove yourselves, you will always be lesser creatures in Usun's sight, unless you can overcome him, making the question moot. This is a weakness you can exploit. Usun believes all those who are not true dragons are weaker than he, and therefore underestimates them. Where you cannot win a straightforward battle, you may be able to win through craftiness and guile.

The Liaj Jungle

Usun's home in the vast expanse of the Liaj Jungle is a savage place suited to his nature. In fact, I am sure the presence of Usun has only helped to increase the constant struggle for life in the jungle, strengthening that aspect of its legend and its True Pattern.

The Liaj is a chaotic hunting ground where Usun maintains the old ways of dragon life, as even the strong find it hard to survive there, and very few are fit enough to live long. The great dragon's brood is expected to struggle for survival as the other creatures of the jungle must, and only the most vigorous are allowed to grow into adulthood. By engaging the younger dragons in this ultimate competition, he enhances their ferocity, and makes clear their natural superiority over other forms of life. Usun himself revels in the hunt and chase, as the many scars he bears stand testimony to.

Lying in a lush valley between the western mountains of Barsaive, the Liaj sees few visitors, unlike the Servos Jungle to the east. Few useful waterways or trade routes pass through the Liaj, and fewer Name-givers choose to defy Usun's ban on entering his jungle domain to live there. The jungle is given over almost entirely to the wildlife living there, which is as Usun prefers it. In the Liaj you will find fierce lions, felux, great serpents, bears, wild boar and small herds of jungle cattle that make a fine meal for a hungry dragon. There are also many wyverns lurking in the dark jungle undergrowth or coiled atop the great trees. This is a significant and important matter of which I will speak more of shortly.

Unlike some parts of Barsaive, the jungle has increased its growth since the Scourge. Rains have shifted away from Jerris and more water now falls onto the Liaj and surrounding region, allowing the jungle to spread its growth. This is partly the work of the Wastes and partly (I suspect) the power of Usun's magic. The jungle does not appear affected by the blight of the Wastes or the nearby Poison Forest, perhaps because the worst of the ash-fall is kept to the western side of the mountains and does not reach the jungle. Usun's magic almost certainly plays a role in keeping the jungle protected from such corruption, and few Horrors remain in the region thanks to Usun's hunting habits. From time to time, one of the twisted creatures from the far side of the mountains makes its way into jungle, but like most other visitors to this jungle, it is quickly dispatched by the master of the jungle himself.

The southern expanse of the Liaj is inhabited by varieties of giant insects and their kin. There are ants the size of small dogs, along with giant wasps and spiders as large as goats—or larger. These spiders spin vast, silk-lined lairs in the depths of the jungle and use their webs to capture jungle creatures to feed upon. Even small lions and similar beasts can be entangled in their silky strands, so you can imagine that Name-givers are fairly easy prey for these creatures. The presence of these insects helps to keep Name-givers away from the depths of the jungle, so Usun generally leaves them alone. The silk of the spider dens fetches a high price with the various merchants of Barsaive, being quite useful in the making of fine rope and woven goods. It is being traded primarily by the Overland Trading Company, owned by the obsidimen merchant Omasu. Omasu is, of course, the head of the Liferock Rebellion as well. Considering the harvesting of such silk could only be accomplished on a large scale with Usun's grace, it is not a great leap to discern that Omasu and his Rebellion are being aided by Usun, as they are opposed to the Therans in Barsaive. Considering this boost to the merchant's wealth and the coffers of the Liferock Rebellion, the matter should be investigated more fully, as you will likely cross paths with them soon.

The Tamers

Perhaps the most legendary, and the most curious, inhabitants of the Liaj Jungle are the Tamers. I'm certain you've heard tales of this tribe of Name-givers who live in the depths of the jungle without the use of tools or weapons of any kind. They live almost as animals, hunting and surviving on the strength of their bodies, wits and magic. They disdain all of the trappings of civilization, having their own customs and traditions. Most of the Tamers who are adepts follow the discipline of the Beastmaster, using their empathy with the jungle creatures to help them and their tribe persevere.





Despite Usun's views towards these primitives and his occasional snacking on them, the Tamers have ironically come to embrace Usun's philosophy. Perhaps it is merely coincidence, but the Tamers believe firmly in the survival of the fittest. I suspect, however, that Usun has influenced them, for I have sensed a strange pride on his part towards them. He frequently sets his young upon them, weeding out the weak, but I suspect he is impressed by their perseverance and adaptability. They, in turn, seem to both respect and fear him, as they should. I suspect Usun would not be so condescending towards the Young Races if other Name-givers followed the Tamer's example.

It is also a possibility that the Tamers are some sort of experiment on Usun's part. Their culture is much like what the great dragon would like the Young Races to be: simple, primitive and fearful of him. Certainly Usun's presence in the Liaj has shaped the beliefs of the Tamers, and they could not survive in the jungle if Usun did not allow them to do so. What Usun's plans for them in the future, I cannot say.

Usun's Powers

Usun is a mighty opponent in battle. His scales are more resilient than any armor made by the Young Races and his teeth and talons are sharper than thrice-forged swords, able to rend other creatures apart with ease and tipped with a potent venom. For the most part, Usun is able to rely solely on his physical prowess to bring down even the most dangerous prey. His constant hunting has honed his fighting skills, marking him as one of the most formidable fighters among my kind. Few other great dragons could even aspire to best him.

Do not mistake his brawn for lack of intelligence or cunning, however, for Usun has not neglected his other powers. It is true that the master of the Liaj Jungle rarely makes use of his fiery breath, since the flames can destroy large areas of jungle growth with a single blast. Yet Usun has refined his breath to spew forth clouds of choking smoke that render the jungle as dark as night, or even to breathe flames that burn only what he wishes to burn. A blast of Usun's fire can burn an intruder to ash while leaving the surrounding jungle untouched. Despite this, Usun prefers to face opponents with fang and claw.

Disdainful of Name-givers, Usun rarely speaks in any Name-giver tongue, as languages of lesser races are beneath his stature. He prefers the use of dragonspeech, which has led many Name-givers to believe that Usun does not speak at all. Some Name-givers (mostly windlings) living near the jungle refer to Usun as "the Silent One." Despite this reputation, Usun is more than capable of speaking—in a number of different languages—whenever he chooses, he simply prefers not to resort to such crude means.

As part of his development of dragonspeech, Usun has learned to use it to sense the emotions of other creatures near him—especially those he hunts. Usun certainly possesses the power of all great dragons to inspire fear and unreasoning terror in the hearts of all creatures who see him; the passage of Usun's shadow is said to paralyze other creatures with fear, pinning them to the spot like the passage of a hawk's shadow over a field mouse.

In addition to his empathic abilities, Usun has developed a great rapport with the creatures of the Liaj Jungle. He uses dragonspeech to command the creatures of the jungle and employ them as spies, servants and soldiers.

Usun does not possess the breadth of magical knowledge exhibited by great dragons such as Mountainshadow or Vasdenjas, but he does have considerable mastery of the arts of elementalism. Elemental magic allows Usun to control nearly every aspect of the Liaj Jungle to suit him. He can animate the trees and jungle vines to attack intruders, create rain and fog to shroud the jungle, and wield the powers of fire, ice, and earth as weapons. There is a great deal of elemental lore to be learned from Usun's magic, although wresting such secrets from him may be an impossible task.

Treasures

Like all great dragons, Usun keeps in the depths of his lair a hoard of treasures gathered over the years. Usun's true lair lies deep in the heart of the Liaj, among the ruins of the Name-givers who once dwelled there long ago. His lair is underground, deep beneath the roots of the jungle. There his treasure-hoard lies, consisting of great quantities of coins and jewels, most of them of a style unknown to the people of Barsaive. There are also memory crystals containing mystic lore and other knowledge gathered by Usun over the years. Invading Usun's lair would involve considerable risk for what might be only a small reward. Still, if members of the Tamers or adventuring adepts could be persuaded to do so, we might find things of use to us there.

Usun's greatest treasure, and greatest secret, remains unknown, even to me. All I've been able to learn is that Usun traveled out into the Wastes a number of times and returned with something to the depths of his lair. What it is, I





cannot say. It may be some creature that took Usun's attention, or perhaps something from one of the lost kaers in the bowels of the Wastes. It is unlikely the great dragon braved the hazards of the Wastes for a simple hunting expedition, when such a variety of prey lives within the jungle. Given his goals and attitudes, it is almost certain that the thing Usun sought is something dangerous to the other Name-givers of Barsaive—perhaps even the mysterious source of the Wastes itself.

This mystery, more than anything else, is cause for us to discover what treasures lay hidden in Usun's lair. Our agents need not even know what it is we seek. Let them sate their greed with the gold and silver in the lair, so long as we gain the information we want.

[Again, I am pleased to see the Outcast has not compromised all of our secrets and plans. Usun's braving of the Wastes and his contribution to our plan could come to nothing if the Denairastas discover it prematurely. We must take steps to prevent this from happening.]

Usun's Servants

Usun does not have servants in the way most great dragons do. With his disdain for the Young Races, Usun would not have any Name-giver in his presence, except as a meal. Usun's capabilities outside of his jungle domain are therefore limited, at least in relation to other great dragons and their carefully placed eyes and ears. He has no network of spies in the cities of the province, no Name-giver informants to pass on messages or other information.

Creatures

The majority of Usun's servants are the creatures of the Liaj Jungle themselves. Using the power of dragonspeech, Usun commands the jungle creatures to do his bidding and can even perceive through their senses. In this respect he is much like a beastmaster adept, though one of significant power and ability. Much of the savagery of the jungle creatures may stem from Usun's influence. Travelers in the Liaj who are attacked by jungle creatures may in fact be facing Usun's guardians, seeking to repel or test the intruders at their master's command. You may feel the sensation of being watched in the Liaj Jungle, as many Name-givers do. If so, it is likely the eyes of Usun upon you, watching through the numerous creatures of the jungle. An innocent appearing bird or scurrying creature may serve as Usun's spy. Many of the Young Races say Usun sees all in the jungle, and they are quite correct.

Spirits

Usun is also served by the various elemental spirits at his command. His mastery of the elements allows the great dragon to summon many different spirits to do his bidding. Elemental spirits serve as Usun's prime agents outside of the Liaj Jungle, able to travel swiftly through astral space to perform tasks for their master, such as carrying information to other dragons in the distant reaches of Barsaive or reporting on various events or happenings.

Usun most often calls upon air and wood spirits, less often on earth and most rarely calling on water or fire spirits. Unlike elemental spirits summoned by other Name-givers, Usun's spirits rarely assume a form resembling any of the Young Races. Instead they appear as jungle creatures, made up of the spirit's prime element. Air spirits appear as great raptors, wood spirits as trees or collections of vines. Earth spirits appear as great bears, similar to brithan. Fire spirits take the form of great cats while water spirits appear like serpents. The dragon's elemental servants are usually quite powerful for their kind, enough to give most enemies cause for concern. Still, a skilled enough magician could potentially subvert a spirit controlled by Usun and gain valuable information in doing so.

I have heard tales of Usun commanding powerful Named spirits from time to time, but I cannot say if they are true. I have never seen Usun do so, nor have I encountered a Named spirit commanded by him, but I must concede that it is at least possible. With his command of lesser spirits, Usun may have other powerful spirit allies at his command.

Drakes

For quite some time, Usun made no use of drake servants. Usun distrusts servants, and thus created no drakes to serve for him. The few drakes seen in the depths of the Liaj Jungle were those of other dragons, sent on errands to the master of the jungle. The creatures and spirits serving Usun were enough for him.





However, since the arrival of the Theran fortress at Lake Ban, Usun has reconsidered his attitude towards drakes and has begun creating drakes of his own deep in his lair. Tales have reached me of several drakes in the depths of the Liaj, serving their creator and master. This recent project must have cost Usun a considerable amount of strain, time and effort. Reports of his hunting in the jungle have become increasingly rare in the past months, indicating that Usun is spending time creating new drakes and perhaps working other magic to protect his domain and aid his fellow dragons against the Theran Empire.

Relations with Dragonkind

It can easily be said that Usun has no allies among his fellow great dragons, but that is a dangerous generalization. Usun's views are not shared by most of his fellow great dragons, that is sure, and Usun has little skill at diplomacy or accommodation with those who do not share his views. His beliefs have alienated him from the bulk of dragon society, although not to the same degree that mine have isolated me.

Still, for all his beliefs, Usun is loyal to dragonkind and follows the dictates of the majority. Unlike me, Usun has not been willing to take the final step, to follow through with his beliefs, with all that entails. He knows it would lead to exile and no matter how much he acts the part of the lone rogue, he still needs the support and approval of his fellow great dragons.

As things stand now, Usun is poised on the brink. His beliefs have effectively isolated him from his brethren, and the efforts of the other great dragons have frustrated him at every turn. For many years he has remained aloof from the affairs of the world outside his lair. Now the actions of the Therans and his fellow great dragons may draw Usun out of his jungle world and back into the concerns of Barsaive. That cannot be allowed to happen. Already Usun has been making plans to aid Mountainshadow's spies and operatives against the Therans. If the other great dragons are able to channel Usun's aggression towards the Young Races against the Theran Empire, they will be able to control and satisfy Usun while at the same time gaining an ally against the Therans. This is a dangerous combination.

However, it might be possible to convince Usun to take the extra step, to break with dragon tradition and follow through with his beliefs and his desire to see the Young Races subjugated or else scoured from the face of Barsaive. If Usun can be provoked into rash action against Name-givers of Barsaive (other than the Therans or Iopos), perhaps in the mistaken belief that he is striking at agents or allies of the Empire, then his fellow great dragons will have little choice but to turn against him. They cannot allow such an impetuous force to disrupt their carefully laid plans, so they would seek to exile Usun if he threatened them. Usun will never accept exile. I know him. He is too tied up in the old ways and beliefs and would rather die in battle. If backed into a corner, Usun will strike, forcing the other great dragons to eliminate him. In this way, we can deal with a potential threat and use our enemies to weaken their own ranks by setting them against each other.

[As I have said, I hope such a transparent ploy could never succeed. However, the Denairastas (and the Outcast) are well known for subterfuge and trickery. Such an attempt to turn us against one another could come in many guises and many forms. We must not allow our enemies or our own quarrels to divide us or divert us from the goal of dealing with the Impertinent Ones. We must be careful to address issues and grievances that arise in a principled fashion, and investigate them thoroughly for attempted deceptions.]

Although he has no real allies among his peers, the great dragons, Usun does have allies (and potential allies) among his own kind. To further his agenda of dragon supremacy and to spread his views, Usun has been very agreeable about taking in clutches of eggs to protect and raise. The remoteness of the Liaj Jungle and Usun's staunch defense of draconic traditions have drawn many females to leave their eggs in his care. Usun raises the hatchlings with a clear understanding of dragon history and tradition, as well as a strong belief in their birthright to rule over all other Name-givers. He ruthlessly tests the younglings to weed out the weak and incapable. The rest are the next generation of Usun's followers. Dragons take the long view, and in a matter of centuries, Usun may well become the leader of a powerful philosophy among his own kind.

The Liaj Jungle is known to be the home to many wyverns, the first progeny of Usun since the Scourge to near maturity. Life in the jungle forces the wyverns to be tough, strong and cunning in order to survive. The dragons who Emerge to Name themselves will be warriors and hunters like their guardian. In as little as a few decades, Usun may have a powerful force of dragons to call his own.

[The idea that those dragons raised by Usun will automatically follow his beliefs shows that the Outcast has spent too much time among the Young Races. Although young dragons are influenced by their sire, it is not our way to follow blindly (or else so





many recent events would have gone more smoothly). Each dragon chooses his or her own path, and Usun's guidance in our ways and customs is well known and honored. Let us not be distracted from the matter before us by such misguided opinion.]

Usun's Goals

Take time to consider and understand Usun's goals carefully. They are not like the goals of other great dragons, and are quite unique to him. In understanding these goals, you gain a greater understanding of Usun himself. Use your knowledge to anticipate how he will react and what you can do to turn his reactions to your advantage.

Survive and Prosper

Usun's utmost goal is survival. For Usun, survival is a goal in and of itself. In his view, life is a constant fight for supremacy, and he is therefore unlikely to do anything that will endanger his own survival or his ability to further his goals. Certainly, he will make no great sacrifices in dealing with the Therans or other Name-givers, nor will he seek to aid the Young Races in any way. Usun wants war against the Young Races, and he will gladly destroy the Therans with impunity, but he will not give the kind of aid or advice that Icewing or Vasdenjas are known for. Appeal to Usun's survival instinct and you hold his greatest desire in your hands.

Protect the Liaj Jungle

Like all of our kind, Usun is highly territorial, perhaps even more so than most dragons. He protects the boundaries of the Liaj Jungle fiercely, and scant few intruders manage to escape his notice. Those who do survive often return with frightening tales of Usun's power, and I suspect those Name-givers are allowed to live specifically so they can spread their stories and increase Usun's legend.

Usun also seeks to protect his true lair deep in the heart of the jungle and whatever secrets he may have hidden there. A threat to the jungle or his lair would serve to immediately draw his attention and prevent him from interfering with other affairs. Such a feinted threat or ploy must clearly come from a source other than us if it is to succeed.

Further the Cause of Dragon Supremacy

Despite bowing to the will of his fellow great dragons, Usun has by no means abandoned his belief in the supremacy of dragonkind or that it is the ultimate destiny of dragons to rule over the Young Races once again. He seeks to spread his philosophy among his peers and, more importantly, actively agitates among the younger generation of dragons and hatchlings who may guide dragonkind in the future. Usun is far from agreement with other dragons on what is to be done regarding the Theran Empire and other nations of Name-givers. Supporting Usun's views may lead to a schism among the great dragons and may push Usun towards taking the final step and defying the edicts of his peers. When dealing with Usun, appeal to his arrogance and superiority and you have a way to direct him.

Punish the Enemies of Dragonkind

Usun is a warrior and, like all warriors, he craves battle and seeks to fight those who are enemies of him and his kind. For Usun, the way to deal with all enemies of dragonkind is not through guile or subtlety, but through quick, decisive and deadly action. Usun was a strong supporter of acting against the Theran Empire before the Scourge. When the Therans attacked us to protect their control over the Rites of Protection and Passage (as if stolen magic was their own property), Usun's voice was loudest in calling for retribution.

When the Therans first returned to Barsaive after the Scourge, Usun wanted to destroy them outright, keeping Barsaive out of their hands (no doubt so he and other dragons could control it one day). But at that time, the other great dragons were content to sit by and watch, pulling strings from behind the scenes. The Empire was no direct threat to them at that time.

Now, with war brewing in Barsaive, Usun might at long last get his wish. He has been working arcane magic in the depths of the Liaj to prepare for the conflict he has waited for so long. In addition to creating drakes to gather information for him, I suspect Usun is working enchantments on the jungle itself, and gathering wyverns and flying creatures to attack Theran airships. Usun is a powerful weapon being primed to unleash against the Theran Empire.





VASDENJAS

[I hope the Outcast's profile of Talespeaker might provide the "Master of Secrets" with some insight into how it feels to have your secrets given out to others without your permission. Telling tales and the keeping of lore are important. Providing information to the Young Races is also a worthwhile activity, provided it is the right information, given at the right time. There are, however, some stories best left untold.]

Vasdenjas, the author of **Creatures of Barsaive** and other essays for the Great Library of Throal, is the only great dragon (other than myself) to share any substantial portion of his knowledge with other Name-givers. Apart from Icewing, Vasdenjas is the only great dragon the dwarf kingdom of Throal has had any significant open contact with, and the so-called Master of Secrets is a good deal more forthcoming than Icewing, for reasons of his own.

Vasdenjas' Nature

Vasdenjas, the Master of Secrets, the Terrible, the Eater of Cities, called Talespeaker by dragonkind, is a meddlesome gossip and storyteller, something akin to a dragon troubadour. Vasdenjas is one of the most learned and scholarly of the great dragons of Barsaive. He is the Loremaster of Barsaive's dragons, a very important role among dragons. Loremasters are those who keep records of the history and stories of our kind, passed on from the time of Nightslayer and Dayheart, the First Dragons. Loremasters learn, maintain and pass on knowledge from one generation of dragons to the next. They also serve as Keepers of the Rites, ensuring that the etiquette and traditions the great dragons have developed are adhered to. Since the death of Barsaive's last Loremaster, Thermail, Vasdenjas has performed admirably in this position, and has even taken his role a step further—a step not all of his fellow dragons agree with.

Like Mountainshadow and Icewing, Vasdenjas believes we dragons have something of a responsibility to the Young Races. Unlike Mountainshadow, Vasdenjas has very little curiosity about Name-givers—he knows all that he needs or cares to know about them. Unlike Icewing, he has little patience for meddling in Name-giver affairs. Instead, Vasdenjas believes in passing on knowledge and lore to the Young Races to help guide and educate them in the wonders of the world. He truly loves to pontificate and to hear the sound of his own voice, going on endlessly about nearly any topic. Vasdenjas considers himself an expert on nearly everything, someone who can offer guidance to the foolish and limited Name-givers of Barsaive. He has no interest in learning from them in return, as Mountainshadow claims to do.

Despite his desire to share information with the young races, Vasdenjas is still a traditionalist. He believes other Name-givers should be subservient to dragons and that they should be educated, guided, and controlled like children. Like virtually all other dragons aside from myself, Vasdenjas does not realize (or is not willing to acknowledge) the potential of the Young Races.

At the same time, Vasdenjas is also a hypocrite. He argues and pontificates against the experiments conducted by the Young Races to produce creatures such as hell hounds or nagas and rails against the magician who created the hydra, ignorant of the fact that the magician is in fact one of my first progeny and one of your earliest ancestors. He denounced me for creating what he called an abomination, and joined with the others in casting me out for my terrible crime of daring what they dared not do. Yet Vasdenjas is one of the most skilled in tampering with life of any of the great dragons. He is a master of creating drakes, and even now he is communicating with Mountainshadow and Icewing about the unique nature of the human girl Aardelea. I suspect he is growing eager to exploit her and seek new ways to bend life to suit his and other dragons' needs.

Vasdenjas' greatest assets are clearly his mind and his clever tongue, which he uses to worm his way into the attention of Name-givers. In body he is not the most powerful of great dragons, and prefers to avoid physical conflict when necessary. He talks his way from fights when he can, and is thought by some dragons to be almost afraid of battle, if such a thing could be said to be true of a great dragon. Though he hunts well enough, he claims to be above our ancient struggles and physical conflicts, much as you might expect from a scholar or wordsmith from one of the Young Races.

Still, Vasdenjas is a great dragon, with all that entails. He is larger than any newly Named dragon, as large as a small air galleon. His scales are a dun color, fading to yellow on his wings and almost eggshell color on his belly. They match the colors of the stone where Vasdenjas prefers to rest. His horns are fairly straight, curving slightly back from his head along his neck. Vasdenjas has sharp talons and teeth, although he uses them only to hunt, rarely slaying any intruders in his lair.





Mount Wyrmspire

Vasdenjas lairs atop Mount Wyrmspire, a high peak in the Scythan Mountains in the north of Barsaive, at the eastern edge of the Blood Wood. As you know, that peak is where the great dragon Thermail impaled herself in grief after some of the eggs she was tending were stolen and transformed into the first hydra. Though not known to my fellow great dragons, the magician who stole Thermail's eggs was one of the first of my children. Thermail was one of the strongest proponents of my exile, and she claimed the right to destroy my "misbegotten" children. She devoured them all, your great ancestors, all save one who I had concealed far away. Shortly after my exile, I told him of the fate of his brothers and sisters and, when the time was right, he went to Thermail and worked his way into her confidence. She was fond of telling tales and entertaining other Name-givers, much as Vasdenjas is now, and the two of them were very close once, I believe.

When the time was ripe, your Honored Ancestor made his way into the lair of Thermail and took seven of her newly hatched eggs, those she guarded so carefully. With my assistance, he used those seven eggs to create the first hydra, a true "abomination" for the great dragons to rail against. Thermail showed her weakness by turning against the Young Races of Barsaive, then impaling herself high atop Wyrmspire. It was at this time that the role of Loremaster of Barsaive was passed onto Vasdenjas.

[Talespeaker, before you act, I implore you take heed to caution and restraint. This disturbing claim of the Outcast's must be fully verified before any action is taken, else we fall prey to goading and deception. If it proves true, the atrocity he takes responsibility for affects all of our kind, and should best be dealt with in Council.]

In honor of her, and because of his assumption of Thermail's role as Loremaster, Vasdenjas moved his lair to Wyrmspire, and took in the remaining eggs Thermail guarded to raise them himself. Eventually, he also adopted Thermail's habit of entertaining and speaking with other Name-givers, passing on knowledge and lore to them.

Not long after he settled in at Wyrmspire, Vasdenjas sought to aid the nearby dwarf kingdom of Scythia against the coming of the Scourge. He invited Scythan scholars and magicians to speak with him in his lair, to pass on secrets to them which might allow them to survive the coming of the Horrors. Naturally, the Theran Empire could not allow dragons to freely give Name-givers the secrets the Therans sold so dearly. Theran agents stirred up anger among the residents of Gateway, a city built outside the gates of Scythia (much as Bartertown sits beside Throal). The inhabitants of the city, against the advice of the Scythan King, attempted to drive Vasdenjas from his lair. In retribution for the attack, Vasdenjas destroyed the city and burned it to the ground, and he spoke no more with the dwarfs of Scythia, who all but died out during the Scourge. This show of draconic power, along with the slayings of many Therans and the appearance of Icewing on the Sphinx of Thera itself, dissuaded the Therans from trying anything further against the dragons of Barsaive. If you ever doubt the power Vasdenjas wields, remember why he is called "the Eater of Cities."

Since the Scourge, Vasdenjas has once again permitted Name-givers to visit his lair, particularly those of the Great Library of Throal. One such scholar, Named Tiabdjin the Knower, has all but taken up residence with Vasdenjas, serving as scribe for the Loremaster. It was Tiabdjin who scribed the Creatures of Barsaive tome in the Great Library, and it was he who transcribed Vasdenjas' most recent addition to that library, a treatise on our kind. When he entertains visitors, Vasdenjas listens to tales and lore from far and wide and answers questions for some of the scholars who come to petition him. Some of the information Vasdenjas has revealed, particularly his recent treatise on dragons and dragonkind, has not met with the approval of his peers, although the great dragons have not taken any action against him other than informal rebukes.

Those scholars who wish to speak to Vasdenjas have a difficult journey, since Wyrmspire is a high mountain, and the narrow passes leading to the peak are treacherous, even in the best weather. The mountain lair is also located near the remains of the Kingdom of Scythia, a place most Throalic dwarfs (and many other Name-givers) consider cursed and Horror-touched. As it is, Vasdenjas receives fairly few visitors, but still far more than most other great dragons.

Vasdenjas' Powers

The Master of Secrets is, as his title implies, a scholar and keeper of lore. Though not quite as learned as his elder, Mountainshadow, Vasdenjas is a vast storehouse of knowledge from throughout the centuries, stretching back across the Ages. His store of wisdom is the dragon's greatest power and, perhaps, his greatest weakness.





His physical prowess is considerable, but unremarkable for a great dragon. Vasdenjas can destroy a city if he chooses, but physical conflict is not normally his way, preferring to avoid it whenever possible. The Master of Secrets excels instead in activities connected to his pursuit and love of knowledge: magic and an understanding of Patterns.

Vasdenjas has great magical skills, some of the best among the great dragons of Barsaive. His knowledge is not as great as that of Mountainshadow, but it is far greater than any magician of the Young Races. Vasdenjas knows spells of wizardry, nethermancy and illusion, and perhaps some of elementalism as well. I would estimate his magical power and knowledge rivals my own, if indeed it doesn't exceed it. Like all of our kind, Vasdenjas certainly knows spells and enchantments he keeps to himself, although he may share them with his small brood of younger dragons. Great magical lore, preserved on memory crystals, may be hidden among the jewels and gems of the dragon's treasure hoard, more valuable than any gemstone or coin could ever be.

As skilled as Vasdenjas is in magic, he is even more skilled in the use of dragonsight. He earned the Name Master of Secrets from his ability to see what others would keep hidden, to use dragonsight to penetrate into the deepest and most complex of Patterns and understand them. It is his understanding of Patterns that causes Vasdenjas to be so interested in knowledge. Knowledge is power, and to know something is to begin to understand its Pattern, its true self. Knowledge is the key to unlocking the secrets of a pattern, and Vasdenjas has over the centuries become a master locksmith.

As you might expect, Vasdenjas is quite skilled in working thread magic of all kinds. He is also skilled in more powerful pattern magic. He has become adept at the creation of life, forming new patterns out of the formless energy of astral space. He has spent many years working with Icewing, and has become an expert in the Dance of Blue Spirits. In recent years he has experimented on this drake creating ritual and refined its significantly.

Treasures

Although his treasure hoard is vast, filled with coins, gems and enchanted items, Vasdenjas has only two treasures of any importance to him: knowledge and the eggs under his care.

The lair of the Master of Secrets is littered with memory crystals filled with the lore of the ages—the history, customs, magic and rites of dragonkind, as befits his role of Loremaster. Scattered among the pretty baubles and stones of his hoard is information beyond price. To the eyes of other Name-givers they are no more than gemstones, some of them even less desirable than the common jewels in his lair. In truth, the value of the memory crystals is considerable, and although Vasdenjas' lair may be more accessible than that of some of his brethren, like all dragons, he guards his treasure well. Gaining possession of any of Vasdenjas' secrets will be a difficult task at best.

Vasdenjas also cares for many eggs and many hatchlings in and around his mountain lair, and delights in his duty as guardian of the young. What better role for a dragon who loves to teach to a captive audience? Vasdenjas goes to great lengths to teach the hatchlings under his care all of the lore he can, to instill in them a love of knowledge. He also tries to protect them from the dangers of the outside world for as long as possible, although even he must eventually allow the hatchlings to fend for themselves in the wild. Even then, he tries to protect them, misleading the readers of **Creatures of Barsaive** about the true nature of wyverns and working to dissuade any Name-givers from hunting wyverns by playing up their fierce and deadly nature. It could be that Vasdenjas still feels indebted to Thermail, and hopes to protect other hatchlings as she could not protect hers.

Vasdenjas' Servants

Vasdenjas has no lack of servants, both willing and unwitting. The Master of Secrets knows well that knowledge grants power directly as well as indirectly. The lore Vasdenjas has collected and given out gives him considerable influence over many Name-givers in Barsaive and elsewhere.

Name-givers

Vasdenjas has few knowing Name-giver servants. Still, he welcomes and speaks with more of the Young Races than any other great dragon, with the possible exceptions of Mountainshadow and his community of pet Name-givers, and Icewing, who makes himself available to those offering a suitable price. Those who visit with Vasdenjas invariably pass information on to him, acting as his eyes and ears in the world outside. Travelers speak to the great dragon and





provide him with news, never knowing what trivia might catch Vasdenjas' attention. I know that he has even availed himself of the Great Library of Throal from time to time, entering it in dwarf form to read books and see what the dwarfs have learned.

Those who listen to Vasdenjas become his agents in one way or another. No matter how generous he may appear, the Master of Secrets does not give his knowledge away for nothing. Already his minor efforts have endeared Vasdenjas to the scholars of the Great Library of Throal and thereby to the kingdom itself. The dwarfs turn to Vasdenjas and Icewing for their wisdom and the two dragons can pull the strings they have tied to their dwarf playthings and make them dance to their tune. Dwarf scholars can often go places and see things difficult for a great dragon to investigate personally. That knowledge is often passed on to Vasdenjas, an "exchange of information," as the Master of Secrets prefers to call it. An exchange where Vasdenjas comes out ahead in the end.

Vasdenjas—like other dragons—is also not above hiring mercenaries or adventurers when it serves his needs. Such arrangements are always made discreetly, usually by one of Vasdenjas' drake servants. Such hired parties never even know their true employer is a dragon, and their information is often passed on to Mountainshadow's spy network or to another of Vasdenjas' guests.

Creatures

Although he is fairly knowledgeable about the fauna of Barsaive and other lands, Vasdenjas makes little use of creatures as his servants. He prefers the company and the service of Name-givers and other intelligent beings like drakes over beasts. Usun and Aban's use of creatures to protect their respective domains is a pet peeve of Vasdenjas', who prefers to put on a more "civilized" appearance, perhaps even mimicking the ways of the Young Races he interacts with so often.

He does employ the services of spirits from time to time, generally minor tasked spirits to perform simple errands. From time to time, Vasdenjas will call upon more powerful and complex spirits as part of some experiment in the nature of patterns and life. These spirits may have any number of different powers and abilities as created by Vasdenjas.

Drakes

Vasdenjas is highly skilled in the creation of drakes, melding aspects of the patterns of dragon and Name-giver through complex rituals. One of the prime reasons I believe Vasdenjas sided with those against me in the end was his belief that the drakes are far better suited as servants, as they combine the best aspects of dragon and Name-givers. Perhaps also he fears the lack of control that dragons have over dragon-kin—you are able to reproduce as you wish, where drakes only propagate through magic, and are thus thoroughly under the dragons' sway. Certainly this relates to his interest in Aardelea, but whether he views her as threat, an opportunity, or merely a curiosity, I do not know. All I can say without doubt is that Vasdenjas masters hypocrisy as well as secrets; for one who denounced me so readily, he continues to tamper with life and patterns with impunity.

Vasdenjas has many drake servants, although very few of them are ever seen by other Name-givers; at least, not that any of the Young Races are aware of. In truth, Vasdenjas sees fewer visitors than other people believe. Many of the "visitors" reported entering the dragon's lair are actually drakes in Name-giver form returning to see their master. These drakes are never in evidence when Vasdenjas has true Name-givers visiting his lair, allowing the Master of Secrets to maintain an appearance of solitude and simplicity. Despite their absence, I am certain the drakes remain close by. I suspect they remain hidden in the depths of his lair or else vacate and roam the Scythia Mountains, hunting and exploring.

Vasdenjas keeps his drakes occupied with traveling around Barsaive, often in Name-giver form, gathering information for their master. Much of the lore Vasdenjas acquires comes from these drake spies, whom the dragon calls "travelers." Those who hear him speak of these travelers assume Vasdenjas hears tales from wandering or adventuring Name-givers and think nothing more of it. In truth, his eyes and ears are everywhere, gathering intelligence for their master before journeying back to Wyrmspire.

Discovering the Names and identities of Vasdenjas' drakes would be most useful in learning more about his information network, which has no doubt been helping Mountainshadow's spies against the Theran Empire and all other "enemies of dragonkind."





Allies and Enemies

His tendency to give information freely to the Young Races has not endeared Vasdenjas to his fellow dragons. Still, he does not really have any enemies among the great dragons of Barsaive. The more isolationist dragons, like Aban and Usun, would have preferred a stronger punishment for Talespeaker's lapses in judgment, but they still wish him no malice. Usun might want to see Vasdenjas humbled, but would not wish him harmed. Vasdenjas is no threat to his fellow dragons, merely a loose-lipped scholar.

Other great dragons, like Mountainshadow, Icewing and Earthroot, consider Vasdenjas somewhat careless, but respect his knowledge and the work he has done in creating goodwill between the kingdom of Throal and dragonkind. Vasdenjas' voice still carries weight with his peers, and his opinions are always listened to, even if others do not agree with them. None of these dragons have been especially close allies of Vasdenjas in the past, but the formation of Mountainshadow's spy network may have changed things. At the least, Vasdenjas is quite active in aiding the goals and work of these spies, making him important to future plans in Barsaive.

Some of Vasdenjas' strongest allies are the hatchlings he has raised, particularly Thermail's three remaining hatchlings, saved by Vasdenjas and taken into his lair years before the Scourge. These dragons—all having recently reached adulthood—are staunch supporters of their former guardian. All of them live in the Scythian Mountains and pass on any information they obtain to Vasdenjas.

The first is named Hydra's Bane, a female with dusky blue scales and ivory claws and horns. She chose her Name as part of her desire to rid Barsaive of hydras, created from the bodies of her egg-mates. Hydra's Bane hunts hydras and gathers information about them, perhaps in hope of reversing or altering the magic used to create them. She is a traditionalist and believes hydras to be an affront to all dragons. Although her obsession might make Hydra's Bane subject to the right manipulation, she could become an implacable enemy if she is able to tie the creation of hydras to your clan. Tread carefully where she is concerned.

Greissval is a male with milky colored scales and eyes that are burning pits of reddish fire, a draconic albino. He is known as the "Phantom Dragon" and the "Ghost of Scythia" to some Name-givers who have seen his pale form flying high above the mountains by the light of the full moon. Greissval is taken with studying the pattern of ancient Scythia and the fall of the dwarf kingdom there. He collects trinkets and treasures recovered from the Scythian tunnels, and lairs in a forgotten dwarf outpost high in the mountains. He has been known to hire adepts from time to time to recover items lost in the depths of the ruins or scattered across Barsaive by the Scythian flight before the Scourge. He has considerable skill in nethermancy and the study of astral space.

The last of Thermail's surviving hatchlings is Lotiara, a female who lives in a valley in the southern peaks of the Scythian Mountains. She follows her guardian's example by speaking often with Name-givers, mostly to exchange information and to listen to the stories travelers are able to tell her. Since Lotiara is barely an adult, her wisdom is not sought after like Vasdenjas, but she still has considerable knowledge compared to any Name-giver scholar. Lotiara also has something of a knack for understanding patterns, and many adepts seek her out for aid in unraveling the secrets of powerful or puzzling thread items. Lotiara emulates Icewing by asking for a suitable gift in exchange for the information, although her standards vary widely based on the petitioner and her opinion of them.

Among the Young Races, Vasdenjas' closest ally is the kingdom of Throal. The Master of Secrets has aided the Great Library on several occasions, providing rare and valuable lore to add to their collection. Although his influence over Throal is nowhere near as great as that of Icewing or Earthroot, Vasdenjas does have some hooks planted in the Great Library, allowing him to call upon its resources and scholars for help from time to time. The kingdom is certainly well disposed towards the Master of Secrets, since he has never been anything except friendly and courteous towards them.

There is a tiny fraction of the Throalic population that is not well disposed towards Vasdenjas. The descendants of the Scythians who fled their doomed kingdom still tell stories about Vasdenjas the Terrible, the Eater of Cities. Indeed, I believe it was they who made the title plural—the tales growing in the telling. To these former Scythians, Vasdenjas is a terrible creature, an enemy of all Name-givers. Many believe it was the dragon, and not the Horrors, who cursed and doomed their lost kingdom, or perhaps the dragon working in concert with Horror allies. While I am certain the destruction of Scythia was no fault of Vasdenjas', the beliefs of these dwarfs may be useful in painting the Master of Secrets in an ill light. If one of these Name-givers can be turned fanatical enough to start an anti-Vasdenjas cult or take some other action against the dragon, so much the better.





Vasdenjas has no other allies or true enemies among the Name-givers of Barsaive save the Theran Empire, an enemy all of the dragons share. The Master of Secrets was once well known in the region around Landis in the centuries before Thermail's death and the coming of the Scourge, but all of the kingdoms he once visited are now dust and ruins. Vasdenjas has expressed a certain admiration for the orks who have recently refounded Cara Fahd, and they are certain to seek him out soon for information on their ancient kingdom. The orks are eager to reclaim their past, and Vasdenjas can provide them with a library of leads, tales, and clues to begin their quests with. I suspect that Vasdenjas already has drakes among them, gathering information and influencing Krathis Gron and her followers. If so, Vasdenjas may yet become to Cara Fahd what Icewing has become to Throal, a development that should be ferreted out and prevented.

Vasdenjas' Goals

Vasdenjas keeps his own council where his plans are concerned. The one thing Vasdenjas does not discuss openly are his own goals. Still, I once knew Vasdenjas quite well and his goals are clear to anyone with the eyes to see them.

Gather and Preserve Lore

As Barsaive's Loremaster, Vasdenjas seeks to gather and preserve knowledge, especially knowledge relating to dragonkind: our rituals, rites, history and culture. I suspect Thermail's death affected Vasdenjas especially because both loved to collect lore, and Vasdenjas considered it a great tragedy to see all that Thermail knew lost forever. For when Thermail learned of the fate of her stolen eggs, she flew into a seething rage before impaling herself on the tip of Mount Wyrmspire, destroying most of her lair and the heaps of lore and knowledge she had gathered as Loremaster.

As part of his fascination with knowledge, Vasdenjas entertains Name-giver visitors in his lair. In this, he repeats the mistakes of Thermail. A skilled infiltrator could gain a great deal from a visit to Vasdenjas' lair, perhaps enough information to enter it again in secret. Such an opportunity could yield a vast haul of draconic lore that even I cannot provide to you.

[As familiar as he is with the past, Talespeaker knows not to repeat its mistakes. I believe the wards and protections of Wyrmspire would dissuade any Denairastas spy, but some additional precautions might be in order.]

Study and Understand Patterns

Vasdenjas works to study and understand True Patterns, especially those of living things. To this end he collects Pattern Items, allowing him access to the patterns he wishes to study. He also collects creatures and objects themselves, allowing him to study them directly. The Pattern Items that could be found in Vasdenjas' lair could make the capture of one of Varulus' Pattern Items seem minor by comparison. With control of additional vital Pattern Items, there would be no limit to what your magic could accomplish. Work to discover what Pattern Items Vasdenjas possesses, and guard well your own, lest they fall into his power.

Investigate the Nature of Aardelea

As a scholar and Loremaster, Vasdenjas knows a great deal about the history of dragonkind, and has grown very excited with the possibilities offered by the existence of Aardelea. He has been fascinated with drakes for some time now, and I expect him to actively research how the drake spirit within the Book of Blue Spirits became bound with that of the human girl. He has already proposed to his peers the possibility of recreating the accident that bound the spirit to Aardelea in order to intentionally create a new human-drake hybrid. If this can be accomplished, they might better understand how the drake spirit merged with Aardelea, as well as better understand the nature of the changes Aardelea is going through. The possibility exists that they may pursue it for breeding purposes as well.

Thus far, Vasdenjas' preliminary experiments have met with little success. There is no lack of Name-giver volunteers—particularly among Mountainshadow's villages—who would be honored to become a drake and to serve the great dragons, but the process seems to be missing some factor Vasdenjas has not been able to isolate. So far, all he has created are twisted mockeries of true drakes, which are carefully studied and then destroyed. If we can capture one of these "failed drakes," we may learn more about the phenomenon Vasdenjas is trying to recreate. His techniques may be quite useful to us in dealing with other matters.





[Needless to say, the results of any such experiment must not fall into the Outcast's clutches. Talespeaker, indeed each of us, must exercise great caution with projects such as these.]

Provide Knowledge to the Young Races

Vasdenjas believes it important for him to educate the Young Races of Barsaive. He does this out of a noble obligation and a love of pontificating. As a superior, knowledgeable being, Vasdenjas feels he should pass on some of his great wisdom and help illuminate the less developed Name-givers, particularly in matters pertaining to dragons, which the Young Races know next to nothing about. Much of the information he passes on to the scholars of Throal is similar to things I have told you: lore about the land and its creatures, as well as lore on dragons as a race. However, where I tell you the truth of these matters, Vasdenjas carefully edits much of his information, averring (probably at the insistence of his fellow great dragons) that there is certain information that needs to remain secret.

Vasdenjas' doling out knowledge can prove a double edged sword. In so doing, he may create animosity among his own peers, ripples of dissent that could become waves with the right motivation. He also fires the desire of the Young Races to know more and makes it clear that the dragons of Barsaive have withheld information from them about a great many things, not the least of which is the doings and history of the Theran Empire. Young King Neden has proven impetuous in the past. Perhaps when his dragon allies refuse to give him enough information to clearly defeat the Theran Empire and keep him on the throne, he might turn against them, especially if he can be convinced that the great dragons are only using him as their puppet to strike against Thera, regardless of the risk to his kingdom and his people.

Gain Revenge for Thermail

Vasdenjas does not even know of this goal yet, but should he learn the truth of the creation of the hydra and the death of Thermail, then I am certain the Master of Secrets will turn his resources over to my destruction, and the destruction of you, my children. Vasdenjas makes a resourceful enemy, but I am sure the current circumstances will help to restrain his wrath, if he should discover the truth. The great dragons are concerned with the Theran upstarts and cannot split their attention to deal with us as well. If Vasdenjas were to withdraw his resources from Mountainshadow's network of spies, it would be a serious loss and might even shatter the great dragons' delicate illusion of unity and cooperation. Indeed, it would please me if Vasdenjas were to defy the will of a Council to seek revenge against me. Then he might get a taste of exile himself, giving me the opportunity to meet him claw-to-claw, equally outcast. I shall consider the possibilities.

[Talespeaker, I must invoke the Rite of Authority and remind you to convene a Council if you wish to speak of this matter. Do not be tempted to act rashly by one who has proven his treachery. Remember, the whole of this document may be riddled with carefully chosen lies and half-truths to sunder our unity and set us upon each other for the Outcast's amusement. If the Outcast's words concerning Thermail and the hydras prove to be true, trust that you will not be alone in your thirst for vengeance.]





VESTRIVAN

[It was only after reading the Outcast's words concerning Vestrivan that I realized just how little Talespeaker has shared with us concerning his brother's corruption; little more, in fact, than was revealed to the Young Races in the Throal Library's Creatures of Barsaive tome. There are stories of course, but their "truth" is questionable at best, and they differ vastly depending on the teller of the tale. Indeed, the Name Vestrivan has become legend since Talespeaker scribed his brief tale of this brother's struggle and loss at the hands of the Horror that now possesses him.]

At the time of Vestrivan's corruption, much of our attention was focused on our conflict with the Impertinent Ones, and our response was little more than shock and dismay. Many of us let the blame fall on Vestrivan himself for allowing himself to be seduced. Others spoke harshly of Talespeaker, claiming that he should have seen the consequences of Vestrivan's path and acted to intervene. It is my opinion that while both Talespeaker and Vestrivan must be held accountable for their actions and non-actions, we are all to blame for lacking foresight and allowing such an unspeakable event transpire right under our snouts.

Out of respect for Talespeaker, I have purposely directed my attentions elsewhere, choosing not to endeavor to learn the truth of Vestrivan's possession by the Horror. But where Talespeaker may have thought his brother lost forever to the Horror, if we are to believe the Outcast, it seems that there is still hope to save Vestrivan.

In light of the Outcast's discovery of Vestrivan's dual nature, we must consider the possibility that we may have something to learn from him. If his association with the Horrors has indeed broadened his magical knowledge, Vestrivan could yet be a valuable asset to our efforts, and to those of our Cathay ally Dvilgaynon. The question that remains, however, is whether or not Vestrivan can be saved from what appears to be his destined fate. While his knowledge may aid our efforts against the Impertinent Ones, if he should prove to be too unpredictable, we must be willing to deal with him and his sorcerous followers now, before they become too powerful.]

Few dragons strike such unreasoning fear into the hearts of Name-givers as does the Horror-marked Vestrivan. Despite the failure of my fellow great dragons to recognize Vestrivan as a "great dragon," he is doubtless as powerful—considering the gifts from his "patron"—as most other great dragons in Barsaive.

Vestrivan's story is not merely about his villainy. Indeed, there is a more tragic story in Vestrivan's past, of hubris and power and lost brotherhood with his fellow dragons. For within Vestrivan there are two minds, two distinct beings: The old Vestrivan, broodmate of Vasdenjas and magical scholar, and the Horror that accepted Vestrivan's ill-considered invitation to reside alongside the soul of the scholar. In short, there is more to Vestrivan's story than anyone has suspected.

Vestrivan's Nature

According to Vasdenjas' report concerning his brother in his Creatures of Barsaive tome in the Library of Throal, Vestrivan and Vasdenjas were born in a twin-shelled egg, two apparently normal eggs joined end to end. Such proximity allowed the two to share the same intimate telepathy that a sire shares with his brood. I theorize that such intimacy is what made the two brothers so close, and so identical in mind and spirit. The pair together grew to become two of the greatest scholars of all dragonkind.

It is interesting to note, however, that the brothers approached their shared destiny in very different ways. Vasdenjas was anxious to travel the world and learn from experience, while Vestrivan wanted to delve through the accumulated knowledge of all Name-givers, dragons included, and benefit from the experience of others. This is where the brothers were destined to forever veer from each other's lives.

In their youth, the pair could not be parted from each other. They made their sire, Yuichotol, proud as they quickly picked up the traditions and rituals of my kind. I think the first divisions became apparent during this time, as Vasdenjas sought always to journey as far out from the lair as they were allowed in order to see the world and converse with others, while Vestrivan sought only to dig slowly through the memory crystals Yuichotol had provided for study.

Later in their lives, as Named adults, they stayed close but grew even further apart. While Vasdenjas traversed the lands, conversing and learning of creatures and Name-givers and legends, Vestrivan again kept mostly to Barsaive and the lands near their lair, devoting his mind to learning and studying even more about magic. As they became great dragons, Vasdenjas settled down considerably, but still stayed as active and outgoing as other great dragons. The brothers grew close to Thermail, Loremaster of the time, becoming ardent students, thoroughly exploring her vast store of knowledge. At this time, a competition developed between the two for Thermail's favor, and their relationship became strained and soured. When Thermail chose Vasdenjas for companionship, Vestrivan cloistered himself away, and





shunned most contact with other dragons. Instead, he threw himself thoroughly into his passion and lust for knowledge, eagerly devouring any scrap and tidbit of magical lore in particular. Over his years of self-isolation, Vestrivan came to be an unprecedented wielder of magical power—very few arcane secrets escaped him.

As the Scourge approached, the brothers turned their attention to the study of Horrors and their effects. As always, Vasdenjas scoured the land, seeking tales and information and direct experience. Vestrivan also learned of the Horrors, but from memory crystals and old and musty tomes. Witnessing what he had, Vasdenjas realized the raw, destructive and evil power of the Horrors. Conversely, his brother came to view them as potential sources of magical knowledge. Both were correct.

When Vestrivan had read every magical tome known to the Name-givers, and some unknown and since lost forever, he came to the realization that only one realm of magical learning remained. To fully understand every nuance of patterns, names, threads and blood magic, Vestrivan would have to learn at the feet of the Horrors.

The Transformation

Vestrivan learned of the Horrors from scholarly works penned by races and peoples that have vanished since the Age of Dragons. Those tomes, certainly as old or older than the Theran's Books of Harrow, are supposedly long gone, physically devoured by Vestrivan after reading them and realizing their content. Indeed, one version of the legend of the Book of Scales suggests that the Horrors created the Book to replace the tomes Vestrivan consumed.

Like his brother, Vestrivan proved to be defiantly curious. Anxious to learn the unlearnable—Horror magic—Vestrivan used the knowledge within those devoured tomes and made contact with the Horrors. And the Horrors responded with the greed and hunger for which they are so well known.

Do not be mistaken, Vestrivan was no fool and had prepared himself thoroughly. He was not easily defeated. He is a dragon, after all, even if extremely misguided. Based on Vasdenjas' report, Vestrivan struggled with the formless spirit for at least forty years. At first, Vasdenjas sought to aid his brother, but Vestrivan spurned him, and invoked the Rite of Inviolable Self-Direction. Vasdenjas had no choice but to watch his brother struggle from afar, and slowly succumb.

Eventually Vestrivan capitulated to the Horror, as nearly everyone and everything eventually does to an entity as powerful as it was. But the defeat was not complete. The Horror was either unwilling or unable to completely devour Vestrivan's mind, and in fact was lured and trapped inside Vestrivan's body itself—which they both now share. Based on tales told by students of Vestrivan, this was exactly what he wanted—Vestrivan was able to continue studying the Horrors and their magic, while the Horror gained a form in which to walk through our world.

There are several disturbing facets of this malign relationship, the most surprising of which is the discovery of Vestrivan's dual personalities. He seems to share his body with the Horror, but the two are never both present at the same time. Sometimes the Horror's personality is at the forefront, and sometimes Vestrivan's old persona comes through. Sadly, as time progresses, the old Vestrivan is seen less and the Horror is seen more. One intriguing—though remote—possibility, is that the two might eventually merge into a single being, combining the wisdom and intellect of the dragon Vestrivan with the destructive hunger of the Horror.

Vasdenjas suggests in his testimony that while aware of his brother's struggle with a Horror, he was not aware of any dealings Vestrivan had with the Horrors, and in any case was helpless to stop him. Perhaps. But in the time leading up to Vestrivan's forty year struggle, certainly Vasdenjas could have done something to redirect his brother's passions. I am left wondering if such a powerful great dragon was truly helpless or not. This brotherly competitiveness may prove useful in our plans.

[While intriguing from a theoretical point of view, the prospect of Vestrivan and the Horror that possesses him merging into a single being is terrifying. In contrast to the Outcast's interest, I sincerely hope it does not come to be, for if there is any chance of Vestrivan being freed from the Horror, that hope rests on Vestrivan continuing to battle for control. If he were to merge with the Horror, I fear he would be lost for all time.]

And once again, the Outcast strives to create unrest among us, provoking Talespeaker by suggesting his supposed rivalry with his brother kept him from actually helping Vestrivan. I remind you all, to consider that the Outcast might very well have intended for us to read this, that it might be written to instigate premature action. We must not allow the Outcast's words to incite us until we are ready to strike—and then the Outcast will truly feel our anger.]





To avoid further confusion between the two distinct personalities living within the dragon, from here on I shall refer to the scholar, and Vasdenjas' brother, as Vestrivan, and the Horror which possesses the dragon by the Name he has been called for generations: the Despoiler of the Land.

The Despoiler of the Land

The Name Despoiler of the Land was given Vestrivan by communities of Name-givers in the lowlands of the Twilight Peaks, who remained outside the kaers as long as possible before the Scourge. These people had hoped to harvest as much food from their farmland as possible before retreating to their shelters. Unfortunately, the Despoiler had other plans. As they flew across the countryside, farmland and forests dried up and died beneath them. Anywhere they lingered, the taint of corruption overwhelmed natural life in the area, transforming and destroying it. The lowland farmers found their crops devastated seemingly overnight, and the efforts of their best elementalists were fruitless. They themselves began to fall victim to curious effects, losing their magic and experiencing memory loss. They were chased into their kaers without the food supplies they were depending on, and I'm certain many suffered from starvation and food shortages.

After considerable research, I have concluded that the Despoiler of the Land is somehow a "Nametaker." By this, I mean the Horror has the power to unravel the patterns of Named things—to un-Name them. The Despoiler's power seems to make people forget who they are, what things are called, how they are enchanted. During the early years of the Scourge, the Despoiler was able to un-Name previously bountiful fields, wizards' keeps, rivers and lakes, even a living elemental in one case. Without Names, the adepts were unable to cast spells to rejuvenate the crops and game, and eventually the fields seem to have been forgotten by their very owners.

I suspect this un-Naming magic was part of the magic used to hide Parlainth from the very Horrors that taught its use to the wizards in the first place. If this is true, one has to question the real means and motives of those responsible for the city's disappearance.

Now that centuries have passed and the Despoiler has become more sophisticated, he now un-Names things so he can later reName them to his own taste. Presumably he wants to someday weave his own form of Horror magic into his treasures when the domination of Vestrivan is complete.

Until then, the Despoiler has been gathering an inventory of weapons, art objects, and even abandoned orphans of Name-giver races, and holding them until they can later be Named. Reports of this bounty wildly vary, ranging from an eclectic collection of rare weapons from extinct civilizations all the way to armies of fully grown warriors raised from lost children, held in magical stasis in hidden caves until the time comes when the Despoiler decides to act.

[It is passages like these that give my mind ease. That the Outcast can truly believe any of this is possible gives me great hope that he and his children are not so powerful as we once thought.]

If any of this is to be believed, it surely is not as the Outcast has portrayed it. There is no such magic as un-Naming. The closest type of magic to that described here is depatterning, similar to the effects of excessive blood magic use (most often suffered by arrogant Therans), or perhaps a natural form of the pattern-weakening spells used by nethermancers. Given the connection between nethermancy and Horror magic, I suspect the latter is closest to the truth. Even still, the magic used to send Parlainth to astral space was of a very different type.

Regardless, the Outcast has clearly made an enormous leap in reasoning, one which has led him far astray. To weaken, shatter, or even ultimately destroy a True Pattern may be similar to what we'd expect the results of un-Naming to be, but the two are not the same. Even the most damaged pattern can be restored, often quite easily, as was recently witnessed by Rathann, one of Doll-Maker's drakes. If the tales of the Despoiler gathering items and Name-givers and "un-Naming" them are in fact true, all we need to do is slay the Horror and spend the effort to restore their damaged patterns.]

Location and Lair

Where this dragon lairs depends on which personality is at the forefront. Vestrivan, the scholar, has not been spotted since the Scourge, the reputation of his worse half preceding him throughout Barsaive and even into areas of the Theran Empire.

Despite my best efforts, I still don't know where Vestrivan lairs when the Despoiler is not in control. I suspect Vestrivan does not lair anywhere, instead spending his time racing from place to place and undoing the Despoiler's deeds while avoiding capture and death.





But while Vestrivan's lair, if any, remains unknown, I believe I have found the lair of the Despoiler hidden in the Twilight Peaks. This discovery comes with a terrible price, as several of your agents, members of the Holders of Trust entrusted to me, had been researching rumors of an elite and highly secretive magical school, where arcane arts are taught and forgotten languages are spoken. The most promising rumors led the agents to the Twilight Peaks, where they indeed found such a school, at least according to the last messages I received from them. This school was led by the dragon calling itself Vestrivan. Based on their description of its lair and the sorts of magic being studied, I assume this to be the Despoiler. Unfortunately, fragments of a hand-scribbled note are all I have to work from. Apparently, each agent who went to this school was eventually found out and killed, or worse, by the dragon and his students.

The Despoiler, posing as the ancient sage Vestrivan, has been gathering the most power hungry and curious adepts from throughout Barsaive and beyond. Under the guise of a "school" for sorcery, the Despoiler slowly indoctrinates talented adepts in the strange and alien ways of the Horrors. This makes the Despoiler entirely unlike most other Horrors in that he seems to be building toward some future plan, rather than madly, blindly destroying.

Because the Despoiler must feed on negative emotions such as fear and anger, as all Horrors do, his "school" is apparently a living nightmare to survive. Students are placed in no-win situations and competitive learning environments that always end in the death of at least one of the participants. Their dreams are haunted by promises of power mixed with visions of the Despoiler's origin, on a twisted world located somewhere in the nether worlds. These students are also slowly un-Named by the Despoiler, their essential magical fabric unraveled and remade as the Horror decrees. By the end of their indoctrination, the surviving students are completely remade in the Despoiler's image. There are hints that some students have been traveling Barsaive in the hope of starting additional schools on behalf of their mentor.

Though I know him to be laired somewhere in the Twilight Peaks, I have nothing else concerning the location of this school to share with you. The Despoiler takes great care to protect the location of his lair, and apparently only those the Despoiler intends to tutor learn how to find him. Not even the crystal raiders that reside within the Twilight Peaks know where, precisely, the Despoiler's lair may be; they suspect it must lie on the side facing Death's Sea. If this is so, travelers must either be magically protecting themselves from the Sea's terrible molten heat, or receive protection from the Despoiler, thus ensuring that only the chosen few ever find the lair.

Servants

The Despoiler's students are valuable servants indeed, for they spread the Horror's bizarre un-Naming efforts farther and wider than the dragon could himself. Students travel in groups of 3 to 8, usually a single wizard or nethermancer followed by a handful of warriors. If there is any good news regarding the Despoiler's students, it is that they have apparently lost the ability to weave threads between themselves and other patterns, and thus are unable to use enchanted, Named objects. Their other magical abilities seem otherwise unchanged.

Single exceptional students also travel Barsaive, spreading the word of the Despoiler's elite college. They are unparalleled in their ability seek out and whet the appetite of power hungry and greedy adepts wherever they go.

One of these recruiters of particular interest is an obsidimen wizard named Urgulan. This obsidiman is apparently responsible for most of the thefts of orphans. Urgulan offers to purchase infants born to extremely poor parents, or those left on the doorsteps of houses and fortresses by anonymous parents. Street urchins are naturally attracted to him as well, and often follow him of their own accord when he leaves town. All the children he gathers follow Urgulan back to the Despoiler's lair, even when the trip takes weeks.

Allies and Enemies

Vestrivan, and by extension the Despoiler, has no allies. Few suspect the truth of Vestrivan's inner conflict with his Horror, but even those who do are unlikely to grant him mercy—Vestrivan is far too unpredictable and powerful to allow it. The dragon's enemies are many, not the least of which are the other great dragons of Barsaive. The Despoiler must be a worthy adversary indeed if the combined strength of all the other dragons have been unable to stop its reign of terror so far.

I am tempted to try and contact Vestrivan myself, to at least discuss the possibility of an alliance against the rest of the dragons. He would be a valuable ally, but an alliance with a Horror-possessed dragon may prove too dangerous to pursue.





[Once again the Outcast presumes incorrectly. Why would we consider Vestrivan an enemy? He is a victim of the Horrors, not too unlike the countless thousands of victims who suffered during the Scourge. But where those victims are lost forever, we may yet be able to save Vestrivan.]

Vestrivan's Goals

As with the rest of this report, we must consider both halves of Vestrivan's persona when addressing his goals.

Based on the wildly divergent actions taken by the dragon, it's apparent Vestrivan and the Despoiler are aware of each other. Vestrivan's primary goal seems to be simply to regain control of his body, undoing the evil done by the Despoiler. Vestrivan alone seems to understand the Despoiler's magic, and uses this insight, as well as his vast knowledge of Horror magic, in his lone struggle against that which possesses him. Since Vestrivan is aware of the Despoiler, I can only assume the Despoiler is aware of Vestrivan's wish to be rid of it, meaning that Vestrivan's efforts to thwart the Despoiler may be doomed to fail.

The Despoiler is another case. Because of the difficulty of gathering information and the nature of the Despoiler's magic, I must resort to educated guesses concerning his motivations. We know he is gathering treasures and is training willing adepts in all manner of disciplines and Horror magic. Finally, we know the Despoiler has gathered living beings, Name-givers and monsters alike, to un-Name them for future uses.

Where does all this lead? Simple megalomania or a deeper plan? Whichever the case, it appears the Despoiler is patiently continuing on its present path, awaiting Vestrivan's final fall to the Horror's power before it unveils its ultimate plans.

[Though I once thought Vestrivan forever lost to the Horror, as Talespeaker once did, the Outcast's words have convinced me that we might save Vestrivan from his fate at the hands of the Horror that lives within him. Thus, I have begun research that may aid in this cause. Of significance is the fact that the Horror, referred to as the Despoiler in the Outcast's words, is not Named. The Outcast mistakenly assumes that the Horror's Name is indeed the Despoiler of the Land, when in truth that Name was given only after the Horror had claimed Vestrivan. It is towards discovering this name that I am committing my efforts, for before we are able to battle this Horror, we must first know this Horror for what he is, not for what he has done. Only the Horror's Name can lead us to that knowledge.]

My Peers and Equals, I believe it is our duty to our brother that we endeavor to help Vestrivan, and purge the Horror from him. I have spoken with Talespeaker concerning this matter, and he has agreed to provide us with all he knows of his brother and of Vestrivan's struggle against the Horror inside him. I understand that I am violating protocol and tradition by speaking of this outside the confines of a convened Council, but I cite the Rite of Urgency and ask you to consider aiding in this effort, for surely together we will find a way to free our fellow dragon, enabling Vestrivan to join our ranks once again. I will of course abide by any request to address this matter formally, but urge you to grant my request. I await word from you all regarding this matter.]





GAME STATISTICS

This section provides game statistics for the various types of dragons and dragon-like creatures described in the **Dragons** sourcebook. It also expands the rules on various dragon powers, provides information on dragon magic and how to use dragons in an Earthdawn campaign, and also describes the abilities of dragon-kin, a unique crossbreeding of dragons and Name-givers.

Aside from the **Earthdawn** rulebook, players and gamemasters may find the following **Earthdawn** products useful complements to the material in this book: **Earthdawn Companion**, **Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets** and **Arcane Mysteries of Barsaive** all provide rules for abilities mentioned in the rules that follow. Some of the creatures described in this book appear in the **Creatures of Barsaive** sourcebook, while **An Explorer's Guide to Barsaive** (in the **Barsaive Campaign Set**) offers an overview of dragons. **Prelude to War: An Earthdawn Epic** provides the fictional backdrop for many of the plans and goals of the dragons described in this book, including the assassination of King Varulus III and the disastrous Battle of Prajor's Field between Throalic and Theran forces. In addition, the dragon entries in this book refer to a number of people and places in Barsaive that have been described in previous books, including **The Serpent River**, **Throal: The Dwarf Kingdom**, **The Blood Wood**, **The Theran Empire**, **Secret Societies of Barsaive**, **Crystal Raiders of Barsaive**, **The Ork Nation of Cara Fahd**, and more. These books are not necessary to use this book, but the information in them will help players and gamemasters more fully understand the relationships between the dragons of Barsaive and the people described in these products.

Though the material in this book is presented as fact and should be treated as accurate in terms of FASA's Earthdawn continuity, you are the ultimate author of your campaign. If a fact in this sourcebook contradicts something you have already established in your game, or if you find it inconvenient, go ahead and change it in whatever way you feel will work best for your player group, adventure or campaign.

In the fictional sections **Concerning the Nature of Dragons** and **Concerning the Diverse Types of Dragons**, the great dragon Vasdenjas offers his views and opinions regarding dragonkind. Not everything the dragon has to say is necessarily the complete truth. It is up to the gamemaster to decide on the accuracy of any particular statement about dragons made by the Master of Secrets, and how this information will impact his campaign.

Likewise, neither the Outcast nor Mountainshadow are infallible or above a little deception, and comments made by them may be wrong, half-truths, or outright lies.

Creature Statistics

The following statistics are used to describe each of the types of dragons and dragon-like creatures in this section. In the explanations of each statistic, the term dragon refers also to dragon-like creatures.

Attributes: Each dragon has a step number for the following Attributes: Dexterity (DEX), Strength (STR), Toughness (TOU), Perception (PER), Willpower (WIL), and Charisma (CHA). Use the Action dice for the step number indicated when making tests based on Attributes.

Initiative: Use the Action dice for this step number to make the dragon's Initiative Tests.

Number of Attacks: This number describes how many attacks the dragon may make in each Combat Round. A number in parentheses means that the gamemaster must subtract other actions the dragon takes in that Combat Round from the Number of Attacks. For example, if a dragon with Number of Attacks: (1) wants to cast a spell, it must give up its attack for that round to do so. A dragon with Number of Attacks: (2) may make one attack and cast a spell in the same round.

Attack: Use the Action dice for this step number to make the dragon's Attack Tests. If the dragon can make more than one type of attack, the step number for each type of attack is listed separately.

Damage: Use this step number to make Damage Tests resulting from the dragon's physical attacks. Separate Damage step numbers are provided for each type of attack a dragon can make.

Number of Spells: This number describes how many spells the dragon can cast in one Combat Round. A dragon may sacrifice one of its spells to weave spell threads required by another spell. A number in parentheses means that to use Spellcasting, the gamemaster must subtract an action from the number of attacks or other actions the dragon may take in a round. For example, a dragon with Number of Spells: (1) must give up an attack to cast a spell. Note that dragons occasionally must choose between a physical attack or a magical effect in combat.





Spellcasting: This is one of the most important abilities used by dragons. Use this step number to make tests whenever the dragon attempts to cast a spell or create a magical effect. Dragons also use their Spellcasting Talent to weave any spell threads they need for a spell or magical effect.

Effect: This is the step number of any of the dragon's magical effects or spells. This entry describes the spell or effect that results from the creature's successful Spellcasting Tests. Most dragons and dragon-like creatures don't have a step number listed. Instead, the effects of their spells and magical abilities are based on the specific power or spell the dragon uses.

Physical Defense: This is the dragon's Physical Defense Rating.

Spell Defense: This is the dragon's Spell Defense Rating.

Social Defense: This is the dragon's Social Defense Rating. Characters must be able to communicate to use social talents against the dragon. Battle Shout and other non-verbal talents work on most dragons.

Armor: This is the dragon's natural Armor Rating. A dragon's natural armor is its tough scales.

Mystic Armor: This is the dragon's Mystic Armor Rating.

Knockdown: The dragon uses this step number to resist knockdown. A notation of "Immune" means the dragon cannot be knocked down. A notation of "NA," or "Not Applicable," means the creature cannot resist knockdown; it is knocked down any time the dragon suffers a Wound.

Death Rating: This number represents the dragon's Death Rating.

Wound Threshold: This is the dragon's Wound Threshold. A notation of "Immune" means the dragon cannot be Wounded.

Unconsciousness Rating: This represents the dragon's Unconsciousness Rating. A notation of "Immune" means accumulated damage does not render the dragon unconscious.

Recovery Tests: This represents the number of Recovery Tests the dragon may make each day. Dragons use their Toughness step for Recovery Tests.

Combat Movement: This is the number of yards the dragon can move in a Combat Round while remaining able to attack or take some other action.

Full Movement: This number represents the number of yards the dragon can move if it takes no other action in a Combat Round.

Flight: Certain flying creatures, including dragons, have separate listings for their Flight Movement. The number before the slash is the dragon's Combat Movement when flying. The number after the slash is its Full Movement when flying. The Combat/Full Movement designation also applies to those dragons who can move underwater or underground.

Karma: All dragons and most dragon-like creatures can use Karma to enhance their abilities. See the various Karma-related abilities under **Dragon Powers** (p. 118) for more information.

Powers: This entry lists all the powers possessed by the dragon, including innate powers. For detailed information on how these powers work, consult **Dragon Powers** (p. 118), **New Dragon Powers** (p. 121), **Innate Dragon Abilities** (p. 122) and **Dragon Magic** (p. 125). For those powers that require a test be made when using the power, a step number is also listed. Powers without a step number do not require tests.

Legend Points: Characters receive this number of Legend Points for defeating the dragon. Keep in mind that defeating a dragon does not necessarily mean killing it. A character who outwits, bypasses, or befriends the dragon has defeated it and so receives the full amount of Legend Points.

Equipment: This notation refers to any weapons, armor, magical items and the like the dragon possesses. At the gamemaster's discretion, a dragon may have more equipment than what is listed.

Loot: This notation lists the valuable items or body parts the dragon possesses, including items worth Legend Points. For more information on treasure and Legend Points, see **Earning Legend Points**, pp. 218–220 of **Building Your Legend** in the **Earthdawn Rulebook**.

Sample Dragon Statistics

The following statistics describe an "average" member of each type of dragon or dragon-like creature. However, there really is no such thing as an "average" dragon. Dragons are as individual and unique as other Name-givers, and gamemasters should feel free to vary the statistics and powers listed in these sample statistics as desired. See **Customizing Dragons**, p. 117, for more information on altering the statistics and powers of dragons and dragon-like creatures.

Each of the following dragons and dragon-like creatures is described in **Concerning the Nature of Dragons** (p. 6) and **Concerning the Diverse Types of Dragons** (p. 30). The Commentary section of each lists the page on which the description of the particular dragon appears.





Hatchling

Attributes

DEX: 12 **STR:** 12 **TOU:** 10
PER: 12 **WIL:** 15 **CHA:** 12

Initiative: 13 **Physical Defense:** 13
Number of Attacks: 3 **Spell Defense:** 13
Attack: 13 **Social Defense:** 11
Damage: **Armor:** 8
 Bite: 15, Claws (x2): 13 **Mystic Armor:** 5
Number of Spells: (1) **Knockdown:** 10
Spellcasting: 13 **Recovery Tests:** 4
Effect: See Powers

Death Rating: 70 **Combat Movement:** 40
Wound Threshold: 12 **Full Movement:** 100
Unconsciousness
 Rating: 65 **Flight:** 120/240

Karma Points: 8 **Karma Step:** 10

Powers: Armored Scales, Astral Sight 12, Dragonspeech, Dragon Breath 15, Karma Points, Regeneration 8, Suppress Magic 3, Venom 10.

Legend Points: 800

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Hatchlings of western dragons are described on page 9 of **Concerning the Nature of Dragons**. Hatchlings start at about 12' long, and have only one set of limbs and a pair of wings. hatchlings have slim bodies and size, and their strength and power are nowhere near that of a full grown dragon. Hatchlings of other types of dragons share physical characteristics with their parent dragons, and are described in the individual entries in **Concerning the Diverse Types of Dragons** (p. 30).

These statistics represent a hatchling no more than a few decades old (barely a toddler in dragon terms). Still, a dragon hatchling can be a dangerous opponent for a group of low Circle adepts, particularly when the effects of its magical powers are taken into account. Add to this the fact that hatchlings are usually found in small groups, and that their guardian great dragon is never too far away, and it becomes clear that attacking a dragon hatchling is asking for trouble.

While most hatchlings have not yet learned formal spells, they can still cast spells using Raw Magic like any dragon (**Dragon Magic**, p. 125). The lairs where hatchlings are raised are generally Safe regions for the purpose of casting Raw Magic.

Common (Western) Dragon

Attributes

DEX: 18 **STR:** 25 **TOU:** 27
PER: 19 **WIL:** 22 **CHA:** 20

Initiative: 21 **Physical Defense:** 25
Number of Attacks: 3 **Spell Defense:** 22
Attack: 23 **Social Defense:** 20
Damage: **Armor:** 29
 Bite: 32, Claw (x2): 30 **Mystic Armor:** 14
Number of Spells: (2) **Knockdown:** 27
Spellcasting: 23 **Recovery Tests:** 15
Effect: See Powers

Death Rating: 240 **Combat Movement:** 80
Wound Threshold: 25 **Full Movement:** 160
Unconsciousness
 Rating: 220 **Flight:** 100/200

Karma Points: 25 **Karma Step:** 10

Powers: Armored Scales, Astral Sight 19, Disrupt Fate 25, Dragon Breath 25, Dragonspeech, Fear 25, Karma Points, Lair Sense 20, Natural Spellcasting, Regeneration 10, Spells, Summoning, Suppress Magic 8, Venom 25, Wingbeat 30.

Legend Points: 230,000

Equipment: None

Loot: Magical items and a hoard of coins and gems worth around 300,000 silver pieces. This counts as treasure worth Legend Points.

Commentary

Common, or western dragons as Vasdenjas refers to them, are described on page 12 of **Concerning the Nature of Dragons** and page 30 of **Concerning the Diverse Types of Dragons**. They average 65' in length, the tail is another 55', and their wingspan is 100'. Though they are the most common type of dragon in Barsaive, one of the quickest ways to die in Barsaive is to call a "common" dragon by that Name to his face. Indeed, the Name is a misnomer. Though the people of Barsaive use it because nearly all the dragons they know of are of similar size, shape, and general appearance, they are by no means common. In fact, few people in Barsaive have ever seen a dragon. Common dragons much prefer the Cathay term "western dragons" when referring to dragons of their type.

Common dragons can vary greatly in individual appearance, goals, mannerisms and abilities. Gamemasters may consult the information in the other chapters of this book for ideas on the nature and variety of common dragons, particularly the descriptions of the





Named common dragons Charcoalgrin, Asante and Nightsky, described in the **Dragons of Barsaive** section.

Most common dragons know spells of at least one magician Discipline, and many know spells from more than one. Dragons who know spells of only one Discipline know spells up to and including Circle 9. Those who follow more than one Discipline know spells up to and including Circle 7.

Leviathan

Attributes

DEX: 15 **STR:** 25 **TOU:** 25
PER: 12 **WIL:** 20 **CHA:** 15

Initiative: 16 **Physical Defense:** 25
Number of Attacks: 3 **Spell Defense:** 20
Attack: 16 **Social Defense:** 15
Damage: **Armor:** 25
 Bite: 30, Claw (x2): 25 **Mystic Armor:** 10
 Tail: 15 **Knockdown:** NA
Number of Spells: 1 **Recovery Tests:** 12
Spellcasting: 14
Effect: See Powers

Death Rating: 220 **Combat Movement:** 40
Wound Threshold: 25 **Full Movement:** 100
Unconsciousness
 Rating: 200 **Swimming:** 75/150
 Flight: 50/100

Karma Points: 20 **Karma Step:** 10

Powers: Armored Scales, Astral Sight 12, Disrupt Fate 25, Dragon Breath 25, Dragonspeech, Fear 25, Karma Points, Natural Spellcasting, Regeneration, Spells, Summoning.

Legend Points: 85,000

Equipment: None

Loot: Elemental water collecting organ worth 10,000 silver pieces; treasure hoard worth up to 100,000 silver pieces. The latter counts as treasure worth Legend Points.

Commentary

Leviathans are described on page 31 of **Concerning the Diverse Types of Dragons**. They average 60' long overall, and have four short, stubby legs about 6' long. Leviathans in Barsaive are found primarily in the Aras Sea, but also live in the Selestean Sea to the west and the Sea of Storms near the Theran province of Indrisa (see **The Theran Empire** sourcebook).

These aquatic dragons are the most reclusive of all dragons, only rarely interacting with other dragons or Name-givers, except when their domain is

threatened. When dealing with smaller ships, swimmers, and various other floating enemies, leviathans prefer to swallow them whole. Leviathans can swallow anything that measures up to a tenth of their entire length, and a successful swallowing attack does Step 30 damage to the victim. Against larger creatures and boats, the leviathan often coils around the victim and then tears at it with its powerful claws. To coil around a creature, the leviathan must make a successful Attack Test against the target's Physical Defense; when attacking ships, the leviathan must make a successful Attack Test against the vessel's Maneuverability Rating (see **Ship Combat**, p. 129 of the **Earthdawn Companion**, or p. 93 of **The Serpent River**). Once coiled tightly, the leviathan may then cause Step 25 damage with its claws in every round until it is killed or driven off. The leviathan can even use its twisted tail as a weapon to cause Step 15 damage.

Only roughly one-third of all leviathans can cast spells of any of the magician Disciplines, and nearly all those cast spells of the elemental Discipline. Those who do so generally have mastered the spells of their Discipline up to Circle 6. Leviathans, like all dragons, can use their natural spellcasting ability to cast spells using raw magic (see **Dragon Magic**, p. 125).

Cathay Dragon

Attributes

DEX: 14 **STR:** 27 **TOU:** 24
PER: 28 **WIL:** 28 **CHA:** 25

Initiative: 26 **Physical Defense:** 24
Number of Attacks: 3 **Spell Defense:** 30
Attack: 20 **Social Defense:** 28
Damage: **Armor:** 22
 Bite: 38, Claw (x2): 35 **Mystic Armor:** 16
Number of Spells: 4 **Knockdown:** 27
Spellcasting: 35 **Recovery Tests:** 20
Effect: See Powers

Death Rating: 200 **Combat Movement:** 75
Wound Threshold: 25 **Full Movement:** 150
Unconsciousness
 Rating: 175 **Flight:** 125/250

Karma Points: 40 **Karma Step:** 15

Powers: Armored Scales, Astral Sight 30, Dispel Magic 30, Disrupt Fate 25, Dragon Breath 30, Dragonspeech, Fear 25, Karma Points, Natural Spellcasting, Regeneration 13, Spells, Summoning, Suppress Magic 10.

Legend Points: 340,000

Equipment: None





Loot: Scrolls, books, gems, artwork and precious metals worth around 300,000 silver pieces. This counts as treasure worth Legend Points.

Commentary

Cathay dragons are described on page 33 of **Concerning the Diverse Types of Dragons**. They generally measure about 50' in length, with their tail adding another 50'. Cathay dragons come from Cathay, a land to the far east of Barsaive, beyond even the realm of the Theran Empire.

The most sociable breed of dragons, Cathay dragons often hire Name-giver servants, and have also been known to keep Name-giver slaves. They sometimes invite travelers to dine with them, to entertain the dragons with tales of other places and exciting times. Though sufficiently skilled entreaties can entice them to show off their treasures, Cathay dragons allow no one to touch or have any of their truly valuable possessions.

All Cathay dragons can cast spells of one or more of the magician Disciplines. Most pursue either the illusionist or elemental Disciplines, or both, though some also cast spells of the wizard Discipline. Nethermancy is rare among Cathay dragons. Cathay dragons who know spells of only one Discipline know spells up to and including Circle 11.

Those who follow more than one Discipline know spells up to and including Circle 8.

Feathered Dragon

Attributes

DEX: 18 **STR:** 23 **TOU:** 23
PER: 22 **WIL:** 25 **CHA:** 25

Initiative: 23 **Physical Defense:** 23
Number of Attacks: 3 **Spell Defense:** 27
Attack: 23 **Social Defense:** 24
Damage: **Armor:** 20
 Bite: 30, Claw (x2): 28 **Mystic Armor:** 15
Number of Spells: 2 **Knockdown:** 23
Spellcasting: 28 **Recovery Tests:** 15
Effect: See Powers

Death Rating: 200 **Combat Movement:** 75
Wound Threshold: 25 **Full Movement:** 150
Unconsciousness
 Rating: 175 **Flight:** 110/220

Karma Points: 30 **Karma Step:** 12

Powers: Armored Scales, Astral Sight 22, Disrupt Fate 25, Dragon Breath 25, Dragonspeech, Fear 20, Karma Points, Lair Sense 20, Natural Spellcasting, Regeneration

10, Spells, Summoning, Suppress Magic 10, Venom 25, Wingbeat 23.

Legend Points: 200,000

Equipment: None

Loot: Magical items and a hoard of precious metals and gems worth around 300,000 silver pieces. This counts as treasure worth Legend Points.

Commentary

Feathered dragons are described on page 36 of **Concerning the Diverse Types of Dragons**. They average about 40' in length, with a 40' tail, and a wingspan of 60'.

Feathered dragons originate from a land far from Barsaive, near Araucania (see the **Sky Point and Vivane** campaign set), but are also found in the jungles of lands such as Indrisa (see **The Theran Empire** sourcebook). Feathered dragons tend to avoid contact with Name-givers except in their distant homelands.

All feathered dragons can cast spells of one or more of the magician Disciplines. Most cast spells of either the illusionist or elemental Disciplines, or both, though some also follow the wizard and nethermancer Disciplines, the latter being especially common among those feathered serpents who pursue blood magic. Feathered dragons who know spells of only one Discipline know spells up to and including Circle 10. Those who follow more than one Discipline know spells up to and including Circle 8.

Great Dragon

Attributes

DEX: 19 **STR:** 33 **TOU:** 28
PER: 27 **WIL:** 26 **CHA:** 26

Initiative: 24 **Physical Defense:** 26
Number of Attacks: 5 **Spell Defense:** 33
Attack: 28 **Social Defense:** 29
Damage: **Armor:** 32
 Bite: 40, Claw (x4): 38 **Mystic Armor:** 30
Number of Spells: 5 **Knockdown:** 25
Spellcasting: 37 **Recovery Tests:** 30
Effect: See Powers

Death Rating: 280 **Combat Movement:** 120
Wound Threshold: 30 **Full Movement:** 240
Unconsciousness
 Rating: 240 **Flight:** 180/360

Karma Points: 50

Karma Step: 18

Powers: Armored Scales, Astral Sight 26, Disrupt Magic 26, Disrupt Fate 26, Dragon Breath 30, Dragonspeech, Fear 26, Karma Cancel 26, Karma Points, Lair Sense 26,





Lend Karma 26, Natural Spellcasting, Regeneration 20, Spells, Summoning, Suppress Magic 15, Venom 30, Wingbeat 22.

Legend Points: 450,000

Equipment: None

Loot: Magical items (some quite ancient) and a hoard of coins and gems worth around 500,000 silver pieces. This counts as treasure worth Legend Points.

Commentary

Great dragons are described on page 39 of **Concerning the Diverse Types of Dragons**. Great dragons are not really a unique type of dragon. Rather they are the oldest and most powerful specimens of the other types of dragons. There are great western (common) dragons, great Cathay dragons, great feathered dragons, and great leviathans.

These shrewd, highly intelligent creatures spend their long lives hatching and nurturing their plans for the world. Great dragons often interact with the world around them, but usually work through a web of contacts and agents rather than acting directly. Believing that the world holds powerful enemies, these great creatures apparently prefer to use discretion in their dealings.

All great dragons can cast spells of at least one of the magician Disciplines. Most great dragons can cast spells of two Disciplines, and there are some who cast spells of three, or even all the magician Disciplines. Great dragons who know spells of only one Discipline know spells up to and including Circle 13, those who cast spells of two Disciplines know spells up to and including Circle 10, and those who know spells of three Disciplines know spells up to and including Circle 9. Keep in mind that these statements describe the average abilities of great dragons. Individual great dragons' abilities vary to a degree, some greatly, some very little. See **Customizing Dragons** (p. 117) for more information about adjusting the abilities of great dragons.

Drake

Attributes

DEX: 12 **STR:** 15 **TOU:** 12

PER: 15 **WIL:** 17 **CHA:** 16

Initiative: 15

Number of Attacks: 3 (1*)

Attack: 15

Damage:

Bite: 18, Claw (x2): 19

Weapon: (by type*)

Number of Spells: 2

Spellcasting: 16

Effect: See Powers

Physical Defense: 16

Spell Defense: 18

Social Defense: 1

Armor: 15 (Rating of Armor*)

Mystic Armor: 9

Knockdown: 20 (15*)

Recovery Tests: 6

Death Rating: 62

Wound Threshold: 18

Unconsciousness

Rating: 54

Combat Movement: 100

Full Movement: 200

Flight: 120/240

Karma Points: 18

Karma Step: 10

Powers: Armored Scales, Astral Sight 10, Dispel Magic 12, Disrupt Fate 5, Dragon Breath 12, Dragonspeech, Fear 15, Karma Points, Regeneration 8, Spells, Suppress Magic 3.

Legend Points: 3,400

Equipment: Varies in Name-giver form

Loot: Scales and blood worth D6 x 5 silver pieces. Also counts as treasure worth Legend Points.

** Statistics in parentheses apply when in Name-giver form.*

Commentary

Drakes are described on page 40 of **Concerning the Diverse Types of Dragons**. Drakes are magical constructs created by dragons, primarily great dragons, as their servants. Although there are both male and female drakes, they are not capable of reproduction on their own. Each drake represents the investment of considerable time, effort and magical power, so dragons do not use them casually.

Drakes have two forms. Their "natural" form is that of a miniature dragon about five to seven feet long from head to tail. They can also assume the forms of the different Name-giver races. Drakes cannot assume windling or obsidiman forms because duplicating the special magical natures of those Name-givers would be too difficult. It requires one of the drake's Spell actions to switch between forms.

In Name-giver form, drakes can follow Disciplines and learn talents and skills just like other Name-givers. Most drakes are adepts, and most of them follow one or more of the magician Disciplines. Some drakes follow the Disciplines of beastmaster, scout, swordmaster, thief or warrior. A typical drake will be at least Sixth Circle in its chosen Discipline. The drake's talents and Discipline abilities function only while it is in Name-giver form, although magician drakes can still cast spells in dragon form.

In addition to their Discipline abilities, drakes share many of the powers of their dragon masters, some of which can be used in either form. In Name-giver form drakes can use only Astral Sight, Dispel Magic, Regeneration and Suppress Magic. In addition, while in Name-giver form they have the abilities listed in parentheses above. When a drake switches forms, all of the clothing and equipment from their Name-giver form vanishes into an astral pocket similar to the Nethermancer talent of the same name (see p. 24,





Earthdawn Companion). The equipment returns when the drake returns to Name-giver form.

While working as envoys and agents of their dragon masters, drakes prefer to remain in Name-giver form so as not to give away their true nature. They assume their dragon form only when circumstances require it. A drake in Name-giver form can be detected by someone who examines the drake's pattern in astral space. Detecting a drake's true nature requires an Excellent success on an Astral Sight Test against the drake's Spell Defense. A failure on this test results in the viewer seeing an astral form of the drake's Name-giver form.

Lesser Drake

Attributes

DEX: 12 **STR:** 12 **TOU:** 10
PER: 10 **WIL:** 13 **CHA:** 12

Initiative: 12 **Physical Defense:** 15
Number of Attacks: 3 **Spell Defense:** 14
Attack: 15 **Social Defense:** 15
Damage: **Armor:** 10
 Bite: 14, Claw (x2): 15 **Mystic Armor:** 6
Number of Spells: 1 **Knockdown:** 12
Spellcasting: 12 **Recovery Tests:** 4
Effect: See Powers

Death Rating: 50 **Combat Movement:** 100
Wound Threshold: 14 **Full Movement:** 200
Unconsciousness
Rating: 43 **Flight:** 120/240

Powers: Armored Scales, Astral Sight 10, Dispel Magic 10, Dragon Breath 9, Suppress Magic 2, Venom 5.

Legend Points: 1,865

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Lesser drakes are described on page 41 of **Concerning the Diverse Types of Dragons**. These creatures are most commonly found in the Blood Wood (see **The Blood Wood** sourcebook), but are occasionally found in other areas of northern Barsaive as well. Lesser or "false" drakes strongly resemble true drakes, but they are not intelligent and are somewhat weaker physically. They also do not share a true drake's ability to assume Name-giver form. Though lesser drakes cannot speak, they emit fierce cries of pleasure as they hunt or swoop through the Blood Wood, weaving intricate patterns as they fly around the trunks and branches of the Blood Wood's largest trees.

Lesser drakes use their dragon powers in much the same way as dragons and true drakes. However, a lesser drake's Dragon Breath power produces a thin stream of fiery breath that can strike only one target at a time, similar to the Flame Spout power knack (p. 119).

Hydra

Attributes

DEX: 15 **STR:** 22 **TOU:** 22
PER: 8 **WIL:** 15 **CHA:** 10

Initiative: 15 **Physical Defense:** 12
Number of Attacks: 7 **Spell Defense:** 10
Attack: 17 **Social Defense:** 10
Damage: **Armor:** 25
 Bite: 25, Claw: 22 **Mystic Armor:** 5
Number of Spells: 1 **Knockdown:** 20
Spellcasting: 10 **Recovery Tests:** 10
Effect: See Powers

Death Rating: 150 **Combat Movement:** 50
Wound Threshold: 15 **Full Movement:** 150
Unconsciousness
Rating: 130

Karma Points: 10 **Karma Step:** 8

Powers: One or more of the following: Astral Sight 15, Dispel Magic 15, Dragon Breath 15, Fear 15, Karma Points, Regeneration 10, Suppress Magic 8, Venom 15.

Legend Points: 20,000

Equipment: None

Loot: Up to 10,000 silver pieces worth of treasure hidden in its lair. This counts as treasure worth Legend Points.

Commentary

Hydras are described on page 42 of **Concerning the Diverse Types of Dragons**. They are up to 40' long head to tail. Hydras are magical abominations originally created from the merging of seven western dragon hatchlings. The magician who created the first hydra is one of the ancestors of the Denairastas Clan of Iopos. Only recently was the truth of the hydra's creator revealed, to both Uhl Denairastas and (inadvertently) the great dragons of Barsaive. What, if any, form of retaliation the great dragons plan is not known at this time.

A hydra usually attacks by biting its opponent with its many heads. Each combat round, a hydra can attack with up five of its heads, as well as with its front claws. Hydra armor, like dragon hide, is extremely tough, requiring an Extraordinary success on an attack test to score and Armor Defeating Hit against the hydra.





Unlike the Armored Scales ability, hydra armor does not offer increased mystic armor protection.

A hydra may have any of the dragon powers listed above, but each individual hydra possesses only one of them. If the player characters are more than a match for a normal hydra, the gamemaster may add additional dragon powers to create a very powerful and dangerous hydra sufficient to withstand the player characters.

Wyvern

Attributes

DEX: 12 **STR:** 12 **TOU:** 10
PER: 6 **WIL:** 8 **CHA:** 5

Initiative: 13 **Physical Defense:** 14
Number of Attacks: 3 **Spell Defense:** 8
Attack: 13 **Social Defense:** 7
Damage: **Armor:** 9
 Bite: 15, Claws: 13 **Mystic Armor:** 2
 Tail: 12 **Knockdown:** 10
Number of Spells: 1 **Recovery Tests:** 4
Spellcasting: 8
Effect: Venom (Step 13, see below)

Death Rating: 80 **Combat Movement:** 40
Wound Threshold: 14 **Full Movement:** 80
Unconsciousness
 Rating: 72 **Flight:** 50/100

Legend Points: 600

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Wyverns are described on page 43 of **Concerning the Diverse Types of Dragons**. They average 30' in length.

Wyverns bear a strong resemblance to adolescent western dragons (and are somewhat larger than western hatchlings). Not only do they share the physical characteristics of western dragons, but they also have the fierce, aggressive nature of adolescents. No information is known about the breeding or mating habits of wyverns, how they raise their young, or how old they live, giving some scholars (Tiabdjin the Knower among them) cause to consider the possibility that wyverns are in truth directly related to western dragons.

Wyverns prefer to attack non-flying targets with sweeping flybys, tearing the victim apart with a few slashes of their claws. Each clawing attack causes Step 13 damage. If a wyvern can't cause enough damage quickly, it will land on the ground near its opponent and rear up to its full height. This stance allows the

creature to bring its venomous tail into play. The fast acting venom functions like the Venom power of dragons (p. 120), inflicting Step 13 damage on each turn if the wyvern makes a successful Spellcasting Test against the victim's Spell Defense.

Customizing Dragons

The sample statistics above provide only rough guidelines regarding the powers and abilities of the different types of dragons and of dragon-like creatures. These are intended as a starting point from which the gamemaster can customize the abilities of a specific dragon. Dragons are unique creatures, as individual as any other Name-givers. They are not simple "monsters," but gamemaster characters, with their own personalities and motivations. Two dragons will have as much in common as any two other Name-givers.

Gamemasters should reflect the individuality of dragons by adjusting the various abilities, attributes and step numbers given in the sample statistics, based on the specific characteristics of the dragon in question. For example, one dragon might be more perceptive (having a higher Perception step) while another could be relatively oblivious (lower Perception step). The entries on the Named great dragons of Barsaive each include specific details about the abilities of the dragons described. For instance, both Aban and Usun are described as being larger and stronger than most dragons. This should be reflected by slightly higher physical attribute steps, Attack and Damage step numbers, and by higher Death and Unconsciousness Ratings. Likewise, Mountainshadow is said to be the most skilled at magic, suggesting a slightly higher Spellcasting step number.

Beyond their attributes and characteristics, individual dragons may also have different ratings in various dragon powers, or even powers entirely different from those listed in the sample statistics. Beyond giving a specific dragon different powers or adjusting the step numbers of their powers, dragons can also know a number of different dragon power knacks (see **Dragon Powers**, p. 118) which offer another means of customizing an individual dragon's abilities.

In addition to their game statistics, each dragon has a unique appearance, personality and goals. The gamemaster should take time to consider these unique aspects of the dragon's nature. What sets it apart? How does it act? What does the dragon want? These things help to make a dragon less of a faceless monster and more of an individual. The material in the chapter **On the Nature of Dragons** (p. 6) can provide additional ideas on personalizing dragons of the gamemaster's creation, while the individual dragon





entries can provide additional ideas on personalizing the statistics of the dragons described in this book.

Dragon Powers

Dragons have a wide range of magical powers at their command. All dragons have at least some of the powers listed here, and great dragons often have all of these powers (and more) to call upon. Adult dragons always have the Disrupt Fate, Dragon Breath, and Fear powers, as well as their other innate abilities including Armored Scales, Astral Sight, Karma, and Regeneration (see below). As a dragon ages, it is able to improve its existing powers and to develop and learn more powers, not unlike the modification of an adept's True Pattern over time as the adept improves and learns more talents.

Dragon Power Knacks

In addition to their various powers, many dragons also develop dragon power knacks. These are similar to an adept's talent knacks (p. 18, **Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets**), and allow dragons to use their powers in new and different ways. Some dragons know many power knacks while others know very few. Most adult dragons choose to specialize in learning knacks for a few powers. Great dragons often know many, many knacks for their various powers, learned over their extremely long lives. The gamemaster can decide if a dragon knows any of the power knacks described here and should also feel free to create new power knacks to ensure that dragons and their powers are always an unknown quantity. Example knacks are listed for a number of the dragon powers described below.

Dragon Powers From the Earthdawn Rulebook

The following descriptions expand on and clarify the dragon powers which originally appeared in the Earthdawn rulebook. These power descriptions supersede those in the Earthdawn rulebook.

Dispel Magic

With their power over the forces of magic, many dragons can dispel many types of magic at will. A dragon using this power makes a Spellcasting Test against the Spell Defense of the magician who cast the target spell, or of the creature or character that created the magical effect the dragons wishes to dispel. If the test is successful, the dragon makes a Dispel Magic Test against the spell's Sensing/Disbelief or Dispel Difficulty Number (pp. 166 and 156, respectively, **ED**). A successful Dispel Magic Test breaks the spell.

Like the Dispel Magic spell (p. 183, **ED**), this power can also be used to dispel other magical effects and abilities, such as talents and creature abilities (including Horror and dragon powers) that have a sustained duration. The Dispel Difficulty for creature powers is based on the step number of the power or ability. The Dispel Difficulty for talents is based on the talent rank. Find the step number (or rank, in the case of talents) on the Circle column of the Dispel Difficulty Table (p. 184, **ED**). The corresponding Dispel Difficulty is used for the talent or power to be dispelled. If a creature power or ability step number is higher than 15, add 1 to the Dispel Difficulty for each step above 15. For example, the Horror power Corrupt Reality at Step 17 would have a Dispel Difficulty of 28 (26 + 2).

Disrupt Fate

Dragons with this power can alter the fate of other creatures. To use this ability the dragon spends a Karma Point, which entitles it to make an immediate Disrupt Fate Test against the Spell Defense of a single target character or creature. If the test is successful, the target must immediately repeat the most recent test he made. The new result of the test stands, and cannot be disrupted a second time. Disrupt Fate counts as a simple action; use of this power does not use up one of the dragon's attack or Spellcasting actions. As long as the dragon has Karma Points, it may make as many Disrupt Fate Tests as there are targets.

Note that the Karma Point expenditure entitles the dragon to use its Disrupt Fate ability; the dragon does not roll its Karma dice when making the Disrupt Fate Test.

Dragon Breath

The most famed and feared power of dragons is their fiery breath. Every culture has horrific legends of the destruction of villages, towns, and cities by furious dragons.

Dragon Breath targets everything within a 90° arc, using the dragon's mouth as the arc's center. The distance the arc extends is based on how much Strain the dragon is willing to take, as shown on the table below. Note that if a dragon using this power takes a number of Strain points equal to or greater than his Wound Threshold, the dragon suffers a Wound.

Strain Points Range

1 Strain Point	25 yards
5 Strain Points	50 yards
15 Strain Points	100 yards
30 Strain Points	200 yards

Dragon Breath engulfs every target within the arc. Each arc of Dragon Breath requires one of the dragon's Spellcasting actions. If it has enough actions





available, a dragon may lay down more than one fiery arc per round. To determine which targets within the area of effect are damaged by Dragon Breath, the dragon makes a Spellcasting Test and compares the result to the Spell Defense of each target within the arc. If the test result exceeds the target's Spell Defense, the target catches fire, taking damage. As long as the dragon stands within 1,000 yards of the flames, they cannot be extinguished by normal means. Only a successful Willpower or Dispel Magic Test against the dragon's Spell Defense can put out the Dragon Breath fire. The affected character makes the appropriate test; if the test is successful, the flames stop burning.

A burning target takes damage during each Combat Round that the fire burns. The dragon makes a Dragon Breath Test each round as a Damage Test. If the Dragon Breath attack inflicted an Armor Defeating Hit (p. 194, ED), even normally non-combustible objects burn. Dragon fire can burn anything, including weapons, boulders, bricks, and metal or crystal armor. Burning armor degrades at a rate of 2 Armor Points per Combat Round. Weapons degrade at the rate of 2 steps per Combat Round. These losses are spread evenly among whatever steps or Armor Ratings the object has. For example, a ferndask shield would lose 1 point each from its Armor and Mystic Armor per round when burning, rather than losing both Armor Points from either the shield's Armor or Mystic Armor. Once the object's steps or points are reached 0, the object is reduced to slag.

Dragons have developed various power knacks to control and refine the power of Dragon Breath, such as the following:

Flame Spout: With this knack, the dragon breathes a line or bolt of flame at a single target rather than an arc. The Strain cost of a Flame Spout is half the normal cost (round up) and it causes normal Dragon Breath damage to its target. Dragons can use this knack to strike at a number of targets in one attack with bolts of flame, as long as all the intended targets are spread out to a maximum of 50 yards. The dragon uses this knack as described above, but must also take an additional 3 points of strain for each additional target beyond the first.

Flame Ball: Using Flame Ball, a dragon can spit a bolt of flame that explodes into a sphere of fire on impact with its target, creating an effect similar to the elemental spell Fireball. The sphere has a radius equal to half the range of the bolt, based on the Strain taken by the dragon. So a Flame Ball with a range of 100 yards has a 50 yard radius. The dragon makes a normal Spellcasting Test and compares the result against all the targets within the radius of the fireball to determine who takes damage. Damage from a flame ball attack continues to damage the targets each round as normal for Dragon Breath.

Friendly Fire: Dragons with this power knack have the amazing ability to choose which targets are affected by their Dragon Breath and which are not. Targets in the affected arc whom the dragon chooses not to affect are completely unharmed by the dragon fire. Their clothing and equipment aren't even singed. Other targets take damage normally. This knack is so selective that a dragon can use it to burn a Name-giver to ash while leaving his clothing and equipment untouched (or vice-versa, leaving a helpless and very embarrassed Name-giver).

Smoke Cloud: The dragon using this knack breathes not fire, but a thick cloud of choking black smoke. The smoke covers an arc similar to the Dragon Breath. The dragon makes a Spellcasting Test and compares the result to the Spell Defense of each target within the intended area effect. If successful, the dragon makes a Dragon Breath Test to determine how much damage the targets take from the heat and choking vapors. Targets do not burn, but temporary blindness will cause them to suffer a 3 step penalty to all actions for the next five rounds. A character can make a Willpower or Dispel Magic Test against the dragon's Spell Defense to overcome this penalty; a successful test allows the character to see and removes the penalty from that character.

Fear

Dragons radiate a fearsome aura. Many heroes who try to confront a dragon flee in terror upon seeing the beast. To use its Fear power, a dragon makes a Spellcasting Test and compares the result to the Spell Defense of all characters and creatures within 100 yards. Within this distance, the dragon's bellow rattles the ground, enough to make the most dauntless character nervous. A successful test means the dragon's Fear power affects the characters; its victims tremble, sweat, stammer and exhibit other hallmarks of extreme fright. Having afflicted its victims, the dragon makes a Fear test. The result becomes the Difficulty Number for any attempts to resist the dragon's Fear power. Before an affected character can take any action that requires a test, he must resist the effect of the Fear power by making a successful Willpower Test against that Difficulty Number. While under the influence of Fear, however, he can move, talk, or perform other actions that do not require tests.

Some of the more common Fear knacks include the following:

Awe: A dragon using this power knack does not inspire just fear but more of a powerful sense of awe and respect mixed with a touch of fear. The effects are the same as described for Fear, except victims are less frightened, and more impressed.





Paralyzing Gaze: This knack allows a dragon to focus the power of its Fear on a single individual, rendering that character incapable of any action. The dragon makes its Spellcasting Test normally. If it is successful, the victim is paralyzed, unable to do anything except stare in fear at the dragon for as long as the dragon's gaze is upon him. In order to take any action at all, the victim must make a successful Willpower Test against the result of the dragon's Fear Test.

Terror: The Terror knack allows a dragon to instill blind panic in its victims. It costs the dragon 5 Strain Points. On a successful Spellcasting Test, the victim flees from the dragon as quickly as possible. To take any action other than fleeing madly, the victim must make a Willpower Test against the result of the dragon's Fear Test.

Lair Sense

A dragon makes its lair an extension of itself, and can use Lair Sense to notice intruders anywhere within its lair. Whenever a character makes a test within the confines of the dragon's lair, he triggers the dragon's Lair Sense. Simple movement and quiet conversation tend not to activate this power, though they can on occasion. To use this ability, the dragon makes a Lair Sense Test against the Spell Defense of the character whose action activated the power. If the test succeeds, the dragon detects the character and his location within the lair. Dragons often booby-trap their lairs to take advantage of this power, forcing characters to beat the traps by performing an action that reveals their presence.

Many dragons develop Lair Sense knacks such as the following.

Absent Lair Sense: Lair Sense normally works only when the dragon is in its lair, protecting the dragon from being surprised while in *shal-mora* (p. 22) or otherwise distracted. A dragon with this knack may use Lair Sense to detect intruders even while away from its lair. The Lair Sense works normally otherwise. Characters who wait for a dragon to depart before raiding its lair may still be in for a surprise if they trigger the dragon's Lair Sense.

Identify Intruder: A dragon with this knack not only senses the presence of an intruder, but also gains some information about him. The dragon gets a visual image of the intruder in his mind and knows his Name. The dragon may recognize characters with sufficient Legendary Status (p. 226, **ED**) and will certainly recognize anyone it has encountered before.

Lair Mark: This knack allows a dragon to place an invisible astral "mark" on a character detected by its Lair Sense. The dragon makes a Spellcasting Test

against the target character's Spell Defense. If successful, the dragon is able to know the exact location of the marked character for a year and a day, up to 5,000 miles away from the dragon. The mark does not allow the dragon to affect the character in any way, just to know his location. Many Name-givers who thought that had successfully robbed a dragon's lair have been hunted down using this knack.

Lair Vision: With this knack, a dragon whose Lair Sense detects an intruder can see and hear everything happening at the intruder's location in the lair as if the dragon were physically present. This allows the dragon to see any companions the intruder might have, and to listen in on their plans. Many would-be dragon hunters have been surprised to find their prey waiting as if the dragon was expecting them.

Spells

Dragons are natural born spellcasters, with an inherent knowledge of the workings of magic. They use spell magic regularly. This power refers to the dragon's use of spell magic as practiced by magician adepts (spell matrices, threads, etc.), but dragons also have their own unique form of spell magic. See **Dragon Magic**, p. 125, for more information on dragons' use of spells.

Suppress Magic

With their natural knack for manipulating astral space, most dragons can suppress magic used by other creatures. To use the Suppress Magic ability, the dragon makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, the dragon makes a Suppress Magic Test, reducing the target's use of magic by a number of steps equal to the result. In addition to reducing spells, Suppress Magic reduces the steps of all talents, the damage from magical weapons, and any other magic use. Suppress Magic lasts for a number of Combat Rounds equal to the result of the Suppress Magic Test. If it prefers, a dragon can use this ability to suppress one specific type of magic, such as talents, magic items or spells, instead of suppressing all types.

Venom

Dragons with this power have venomous teeth and claws, and any tooth or claw attack that causes damage to a character also poisons him (No Spellcasting Test is required for a dragon to affect a character with poison—if the character is physically struck and damaged by tooth or claw, they are automatically affected by Venom). After taking damage from a dragon's teeth or claws, a character must make a successful Toughness Test against the dragon's Spell Defense each round for 10 consecutive rounds to resist the effects of the venom. If the character fails this Poison Resistance Test during any of those ten rounds, the





attacking dragon makes a Venom Test for that round to determine how much damage the character takes from the venom. (For more information about poison damage, see **Adventuring in Earthdawn**, p. 207 of the **Earthdawn** rulebook.) Each use of the Venom power lasts only 10 rounds, after which time the poison ceases to damage the character. A single target can only suffer damage from one use of the Venom power at a time.

Some knacks based on the Venom power include the following.

Pain Venom: Instead of causing damage, the Venom of a dragon with this knack causes excruciating pain, rendering most victims unable to do anything except writhe on the ground in agony. The dragon makes the Venom Test as usual, except the result becomes the Difficulty Number for the victim to take any action. The poisoned character must make a Willpower Test against this Difficulty Number in order to take any action. The Venom lasts for 10 rounds as normal.

Sleep Venom: A dragon with this knack can use its Venom power to render victims unconscious, rather than killing them. Damage from the venom ceases to affect the victim once his Current Damage reaches his Unconsciousness Threshold. Venom damage done when using this knack does not kill the victim.

Spit Venom: Some dragons have the ability to spit or spray venom from their mouths. The dragon makes a normal Attack Test against the target character's Physical Defense. If successful, the victim suffers damage from the corrosive venom equal to the result of a Venom Test. Normal armor provides protection from this damage. On an Extraordinary success, the dragon's venom hits the target's eyes, causing blindness for 10 Combat Rounds, in addition to the damage caused by the venom.

Wingbeat

Winged dragons can use their wings to knock over opponents. The dragon using Wingbeat makes an Attack Test, then compares the result to the Physical Defense of every character up to 60 feet away, in a 90 degree arc from the front of the dragon. If the test result exceeds a character's Physical Defense, the dragon's wing hits the character. To determine whether or not the wing actually knocks a character down, the dragon makes a Wingbeat Test, the result of which becomes the Difficulty Number for the Knockdown Test that any character struck by the wings must perform. Any character who fails the Knockdown Test is knocked down and moved backward a number of yards equal to difference between the Difficulty Number and the result of the Knockdown Test. For example, a character whose Knockdown Test result is 11 less than the Difficulty Number would be knocked backwards 11 yards. This

can be especially hazardous for characters fighting a dragon somewhere high up, like the deck of an airship or a mountain top.

Dust Cloud: A dragon using this knack can stir up a cloud of dust, dirt, sand, ash or similar material using the winds generated by beating its wings. The dragon makes a Wingbeat Test and the result becomes the range in yards that the cloud extends in all directions from the dragon. Any character in the dust cloud suffers a 3 step penalty from the flying, stinging dust. The cloud lasts for 5 rounds, after which it settles harmlessly to the ground.

Icewing's Special Power: As described on page 89, the great dragon Icewing has a unique knack based on this power. To use this knack, Icewing makes a Spellcasting Test against the Spell Defense of his target. If this test is successful, the victim is encased in ice, and Icewing makes a Wingbeat Test. The result of this test is the Difficulty Number for Strength Tests to break free of the ice from the inside. The ice can be attacked from the outside, and is treated like a barrier with a Physical Armor Rating of 10, and a Damage Rating equal to the result of the Wingbeat Test (see **Barriers and Structures**, p. 209, **ED**). Each use of this power costs Icewing 5 points of Strain. Icewing can use this knack against multiple opponents, as long as all the intended targets are within an area no larger than 20 yards in diameter. Each additional target beyond the first costs Icewing 1 additional point of Strain. Characters encased in ice are in danger of suffocation. A character may hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to his Toughness Step. When the victim runs out of breath, the gamemaster makes a Damage Test every round, using a step number of 4 + the number of rounds since the victim ran out of breath (see **Swimming**, p. 123, **Denizens of Earthdawn Vol. 1**).

New Dragon Powers

The following dragon powers appear for the first time in this book. These new powers are primarily known only by great dragons, though some adult dragons also use these.

Dominate Beast

This power allows a dragon to control beasts, similar to the beastmaster talent of the same name (p. 102, **ED**). To use this power, the dragon makes a Dominate Beast Test against the Spell Defense of the beast(s) the dragon wishes to control. If successful, the dragon controls the target creatures for a number of minutes equal to its Dominate Beast step number. An animal under the effect of this power will not take any hostile action against the dragon, and will perform one simple task for the dragon that does not exceed the duration of the power.





The great dragons Aban and Usun both have this power, using it to control the various creatures living in their respective homes in the Mist Swamps and the Liaj Jungle. Some power knacks based on the Dominate Beast power include the following:

Beast's Eyes: This knack allows the dragon to perceive through the senses of any beast it dominates. To use this knack the dragon makes a Spellcasting Test against the Spell Defense of the dominated beast. If the test is successful, the dragon can perceive everything the beast perceives. Dragons with this knack, including both Aban and Usun, use dominated beasts in their domain as scouts and spies.

Stampede: A dragon with this knack can cause a group of animals to stampede in a specific direction like the Incite Stampede talent (p. 109, **ED**). Using this knack requires only a single action. The dragon uses its Dominate Beast step in place of the Incite Stampede talent step.

Karma Cancel

Karma Cancel allows a dragon to override another character's use of Karma. The dragon makes a Karma Cancel Test against the target character's Spell Defense. If successful, the dragon may spend a Karma Point to cancel the target's use of Karma. If a target spends multiple Karma Points (such as for the use of the True Shot talent), the dragon must spend the same number of points to cancel them. Karma Cancel does not require an action; a dragon may attempt to Cancel an opponent's use of Karma at any time so long as it still has Karma Points to spend.

Lend Karma

This knack allows a dragon to give Karma Points or lend its Karma step to any other being the dragon can see or that the dragon has woven a thread to (see **Thread Magic**, p. 125). To use this power, the dragon makes a Lend Karma Test against the target character's Spell Defense (a willing target may lower his Spell Defense). For every success level, the dragon can give the target one point of Karma from the dragon's own Karma Points. The target may then spend the Karma Points normally. For example, a dragon who achieves a Good success on a Lend Karma test can give the target 2 Karma Points.

Alternatively, a successful test allows the dragon to give the target its own Karma Step for a number of rounds equal to the success level of the Lend Karma Test. The target must spend her own Karma Points, but rolls Karma Dice based on the dragon's Karma Step instead of her own.

Innate Dragon Abilities

In addition to their formidable powers, dragons have some abilities which are common to all of their kind. Every dragon has these powers in some degree. Some of these abilities have been described in previous Earthdawn products as dragon powers similar to those described above. These abilities are included among the dragon's powers in the above sample dragon statistics. Note that these abilities are not found among all dragon-like creatures. Dragon-like creatures have only those abilities listed under their Powers. This usually includes Armored Scales, Astral Sight, Karma and Regeneration, but rarely any others.

Armored Scales

A dragon's armored hide provides great physical and magical protection against attack. Only attacks that score an Extraordinary success against the dragon's Physical Defense Rating achieve an Armor Defeating Hit on the dragon. A dragon's Mystic Armor protects against magical attack in the same way; attacks against the dragon's Spell Defense must score an Extraordinary success.

Astral Sight

Dragons are naturally attuned to astral space, allowing them to see astral forms at will. To use this power, the dragon makes a Spellcasting Test. If the result of the test exceeds the Spell Defense of any subject within 60 yards, the dragon can see the astral image of the subject. Unlike most Name-givers, dragons do not have to spend Strain to use their Astral Sight. The Astral Sight power is a heightened version of the talent of the same name (p. 98, **ED**). For more information about the use of Astral Sight and other astral sensing abilities, see p. 74 of **Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets**.

Many dragons develop power knacks using their Astral Sight. Any of the Astral Sight talent knacks from **Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets** or **Arcane Mysteries of Barsaive** may be learned by dragons as power knacks. Dragons also have some unique Astral Sight knacks of their own:

Item History: This knack function exactly like the Item History talent (p. 110, **ED**) except the dragon uses its Astral Sight step in place of the talent step, and the dragon needs to study the item for only a day, not a full week. Use the results of the dragon's Item History Test normally for determining an item's Key Knowledges. Some dragons (including Icewing) have been known to perform Item History on especially powerful magical items with high Spell Defense numbers), in exchange for future favors from adventurers.





Matrix Strike: With the Matrix Strike knack, a dragon can attack a magician's spell matrices in astral space, just like the Matrix Strike talent (p. 32, **Earthdawn Companion**). To use this power, the dragon must have first detected the astral image of the target with an Astral Sight Test. The dragon then makes a Spellcasting Test against the target magician's Spell Defense. A successful test damages one of the target's spell matrices (see p. 154, **ED**, for more information). Dragons can attack matrices only with their claws when using this power. The target's Mystic Armor protects against this damage.

Spirit Strike: This knack allows the dragon to strike at opponents from astral space, just like the Spirit Strike talent (p. 117, **ED**). The dragon makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If successful, the dragon causes normal attack damage. The target's armor protects against this damage, but defensive talents such as Avoid Blow cannot be used to avoid a Spirit Strike.

True Sight: Dragons are difficult to fool, and dragons with this knack are even more so. True Sight allows a dragon to see through illusions, like the talent of the same name (p. 120, **ED**). To use this knack the dragon makes an Astral Sight Test against the Sensing/Disbelief Number of the illusion to overcome it.

Dragonspeech

All adult dragons have the Dragonspeech power. It allows the dragon to transmit its thoughts as speech to any being within the dragon's line of sight, by making a successful Spellcasting Test against the being's Spell Defense. The dragon can also send simple images as well as speech through its mental link. A target that wishes to hear the dragon's mental speech can voluntarily lower its Spell Defense, of course, although considering the further probing Dragonspeech can be used for, it is not always wise to trust a dragon. Under normal circumstances, the gamemaster can assume a dragon's use of Dragonspeech is successful, unless the subject has a Spell Defense higher than the dragon's Spellcasting Step (which is 20+ for an adult dragon).

Dragonspeech is the natural method of communication for dragons, and they use it most often among themselves. It is also useful because it transcends language, allowing a dragon to speak to another being whether or not it understands the subject's language. Most dragons hardly bother with Dragonspeech except among their own kind, but some have developed a number of power knacks using Dragonspeech, including the following:

Read Thoughts: This knack allows the dragon to not only project its own thoughts, but to read the surface thoughts of any being it can see with a

successful Spellcasting Test against the subject's Spell Defense. This permits two-way mental communication between the dragon and the subject, transcending language barriers. It also allows the dragon to know what the subject is thinking. A successful Willpower or Willforce Test against the result of the dragon's Spellcasting Test is required to successfully hide a thought from the dragon, or to tell a lie. Dragons with this knack tend to have great insight into other Name-givers.

Learn Language: By touching the mind of a subject using Dragonspeech, the dragon can learn any language the subject knows. The dragon makes a Spellcasting Test against the subject's Spell Defense. On an Excellent or better success, the dragon may learn one language the subject knows, speaking and reading it fluently.

Thought Probe: Thought Probe is one step more advanced than Read Thoughts. It allows the dragon to sift through the thoughts and memories of a subject like hunting through a pile of coin and gems. With a successful Spellcasting Test, the dragon can probe the subject's mind for a particular memory or piece of information. The success level of the Test determines what information the dragon can dig up. An Average success allows the dragon to locate any memory up to a day old, a Good success up to a week old, Excellent up to a year old and an Extraordinary success can locate any memory, even information the subject is not consciously aware of.

In addition to gaining useful information from unwilling subjects, dragons can use this knack to read the memories of willing subjects (such as drake and Name-giver servants). This allows a dragon to reexperience what its servant experienced directly.

Second Sight: Using the knack of Second Sight, a dragon can use Dragonspeech to perceive through the senses of another being, with or without that being's consent. The dragon must first establish a connection to the subject via thread magic (p. 143, **ED**) to use this knack. Once this is accomplished the dragon may, at any time, make a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If successful, the dragon gains access to one of the subject's senses for each level of success. An Extraordinary success allows the dragon to perceive with all of the subject's senses. The dragon does not have any direct power over the subject using this knack; in fact, the subject is not even aware the dragon is eavesdropping, unless the dragon rolls a Poor success on the Spellcasting Test, in which case the subject has a brief feeling of being watched.

Suggestion: This knack allows a dragon to mentally plant a suggestion in the target's mind, similar to a powerful posthypnotic suggestion. The dragon makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell





Defense. If successful, the dragon may implant a single suggestion. This can be something immediate or it can be triggered by later circumstances. After planting the suggestion, the dragon makes a Willpower Test, which becomes the strength of the suggestion. To overcome it, the victim must make a Willpower Test that equals or exceeds the result of the dragon's Spellcasting test. Otherwise, the victim follows the suggestion as if it were his own idea.

Reweave Mind: This is the most powerful and sophisticated knack of Dragonspeech; the ability to tear the fabric of a living mind and reweave it to the dragon's will. The great dragon Mountainshadow is known to have reached this level of ability, but few other dragons can hope to do so. With Reweave Mind, a dragon can mentally reshape the fabric of the subject's mind, altering, removing or restoring memories, changing personality and so forth. The process is not fast, even for the powerful mind of a dragon. Any attempt at Reweave Mind takes at least one hour, longer if the changes are more complex. The dragon makes a Spellcasting Test against the Spell Defense of the subject and must gain an Excellent success or better. If successful, this power allows the dragon to alter the subject's memories and such at will. An Extraordinary success is required to make fundamental changes in personality or vital memories. This power can also literally rebuild a mind shattered by illness or madness.

Karma Points

All dragons have Karma Points they may use to augment any test they wish. A dragon may spend only 1 Karma Point per test. A dragon regains spent Karma Points at a rate of 1 or 2 points per day, until it reaches its maximum. Hatchlings regain 1 Karma Point per day and adult dragons regain 2 Karma Point a day. The more powerful great dragons regain 3 Karma Points per day.

Natural Spellcasting

All adult dragons know how to use spell magic. The ability to manipulate the energies of astral space is inherent. Dragons can use their natural Spellcasting ability to cast any spell as Raw Magic (p. 155, **ED**). The dragon doesn't need to know the spell, it simply shapes the astral energy to its will and the spell happens. This is a natural ability for dragons. For a long time, dragons performed all of their magic in this way, grabbing magical energy and shaping it to their wills.

Hatchlings using this ability must weave all the threads necessary for the spell they wish to cast. Adult dragons need weave only one-half (rounded down) the required threads for any spells they cast in this manner, while great dragons need not weave any threads for spells they cast using this ability. Dragons use their Spellcasting step number for all Thread

Weaving and Spellcasting Tests made when casting spells in this manner. When determining certain rank based effects of spells (especially Duration), the age of the dragon casting the spell determines the rank. Hatchlings cast spells in this manner at the equivalent of Rank 8; adults cast at Rank 12, and great dragons cast at Rank 15.

Despite the versatility and power of this ability, not all dragons exploit the full potential of their spellcasting abilities. With the tainting of astral space by the Horrors, the use of Raw Magic is dangerous, even to creatures as powerful as dragons. For this reason, many dragons have adopted the more complex forms of spell magic practiced by other Name-givers. See **Dragon Magic**, p. 125, for more information.

Regeneration

Dragons can regenerate any damage done to them by opponents. Each use of this power lasts for 10 rounds or until it heals all of the dragon's Current Damage, whichever is shorter. Activating this power costs the dragon 1 Karma Point. While using the Regeneration, the dragon must sacrifice a Recovery Test each round. The dragon makes a Regeneration Test each round during the duration of the power, and reduces its Current Damage by the total.

Great dragons have developed a very powerful knack for this power called Regrowth.

Regrowth: Similar to the regenerative capacity of some reptiles, dragons with the Regrowth knack can actually regenerate lost body parts, so long as the dragon's brain and spine are intact. The lost part regrows once the dragon's Current Damage and Wounds reach 0, at a cost of one Recovery Test for a small body part like a talon, up to five Recovery Tests for a limb. Regeneration takes a number of days equal to the number of Recovery Tests required.

Summoning

Dragons may summon tasked, elemental, ally, and Named spirits by making a Summoning Test. The step number for the Summoning Test is equal to the dragon's Willpower step, with a Difficulty Number equal to the spirit's Spell Defense. The success level of the Summoning Test determines the number of services the spirit will perform for the summoner. On an Average success the spirit performs 1 service, on a Good success the spirit performs 2 services, an Excellent success yields 3 services, and an Extraordinary Success, 4 services. To determine how long the spirit remains, the dragon makes another Willpower Test, with the result being the number of days the spirit remains. Dragons may coerce spirits into performing more services by engaging them in a Contest of Wills, or persuade them with a Charisma Test. For complete





information on summoning spirits, see **Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets**.

Likewise, dragons can banish tasked, elemental, ally, or Named spirits by making a Willpower Test against the spirit's Spell Defense.

Dragon Magic

More than any other Name-givers, dragons are masters of the magic that flows through the Age of Legend.

They are creatures of magic, in tune with the energies of astral space and able to instinctively perceive and understand the warp and weft of the fabric of astral space. This gift gives dragons great magical knowledge and ability to call upon in addition to their formidable powers. This section describes how dragon magic differs from that of other Name-givers, and describes a unique form of Ritual Magic, an earthshaking magical power known only to dragons.

Spell Magic

As mentioned in the descriptions of the Spells power (p. 120) and Natural Spellcasting (p. 124), many dragons make use of the spellcasting methods and techniques of Name-giver magicians. A dragon with the Spells power has learned to use the spells of one or more magician Disciplines. However, because of dragons' considerable skill with magic, the rules for their casting of spells in this manner are slightly different. The following rules also apply to any dragon-like creatures with the Spells power.

Spell Matrix Talents

Dragons with this power have a number of spell matrices equal to their Spellcasting step divided by 4 (rounded up). For instance, a dragon with a Spellcasting step of 23 would have $(23/4 = 5.75)$ or 6 spell matrices. One out of every three of a dragon's matrices are Enhanced Matrices and one out of every six are Armored Matrices. To continue the example above, the dragon would have three standard spell matrices, two Enhanced Matrices and one Armored Matrix. All of a dragon's matrices have a rank equal to 15 or the dragon's Spellcasting step number (whichever is lower). Dragons follow all of the normal spell matrix rules, including the need to reattune their matrices.

Thread Weaving

Dragons weave threads to their spells like other spell-casters. Dragons use their Spellcasting step for all Thread Weaving Tests. A dragon with multiple Spellcasting Actions can use them to weave more than one thread at a time, so a dragon with 4 Spellcasting

Actions could weave three threads for a spell and cast the spell in the same Combat Turn.

Spell Effects

To determine the effect of a dragon's spell, use the dragon's Willpower step. Dragons do not have the Willforce talent, nor do they ever learn it. For effects that are based on Spellcasting rank, such as Duration, assume the dragon to have a rank equal to the highest Circle spell it is capable of casting. For example, a dragon able to cast Circle 12 spells has the equivalent of a Spellcasting rank of 12. This limitation represents the one truly restriction dragons face when using the "primitive" spellcasting techniques of Name-givers.

Learning Spells

Dragons learn new spells using their Spellcasting step instead of the Read and Write Magic talent against the Learning Difficulty of the spell they wish to learn. A dragon generally knows all of the spells for the Circles it has in a Discipline.

Spellcasting Talent Knacks

Dragons may learn any of the Spellcasting or Thread Weaving talent knacks in **Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets** and **Arcane Mysteries of Barsaive** as a knack for their Spells power. Common Spellcasting knacks include Anchored Spell (used for creating lair traps), Forced Spellcasting, Increased Dispel Difficulty and Name Spell. Dragons do not need the Spell Design talent knacks to design spells, their natural sense for magic allows them to do so. Dragons use their Spellcasting step for all tests associated with designing new spells.

Thread Magic

Dragons use thread magic like other Name-givers, using their Spellcasting step in place of the Thread Weaving talent. A dragon can have a maximum number of threads equal to its Spellcasting step, and each has a maximum thread rank of 15. A dragon's hoard may contain many Pattern Items collected by the dragon over the years, and dragons very carefully guard their own Pattern Items. These rules for dragon thread magic apply to drakes as well.

Blood Magic

Although they are able to use blood magic like other Name-givers, dragons generally disdain it in favor of their other magical powers and abilities. Certain feathered dragons are the only dragons to regularly use blood magic. Dragons do not use blood charms or similar items, nor do they generally make use of death magic. They can and do use blood magic to seal oaths,





and blood magic is also used in the Dance of Blue Spirits, the process by which great dragons create drakes. Dragons swear few if any blood oaths in their long lives. A pledge made by a dragon is a serious thing, since it may last for thousands of years.

Ritual Magic

Other than the information given in the chapter **Concerning the Nature of Dragons**, no rules are given for dragon ritual magic. Suffice to say that such massively powerful magical rituals are capable of causing vast changes in the forces of nature, the structure of astral space and even in the very fabric of reality itself. A dragon ritual could certainly destroy a city or an entire nation. They are greater in power than Circle 13+ spells like Call Forth the Maelstrom, Call Forth the Army of Decay or City in a Bottle (see **Arcane Mysteries of Barsaive**).

Dragon rituals take time, effort and the presence of several dragons working in concert. They are magic on a truly epic scope. As such, they are better treated as major events in the history of a campaign rather than simple spells. Keep in mind that ritual magic has not been performed by any of the dragons of Barsaive since long before the Scourge and perhaps even longer before that. These massively powerful rituals are not something that dragons invoke lightly. As Vasdenjas points out in his treatise, the dragons of Barsaive have learned from their past mistakes.

Dragon-kin

Dragon-kin are Name-givers born of or descended from the mating of a Name-giver and a dragon in Name-giver form. They have certain unique abilities as a result of their heritage. Without careful breeding and a regular infusion of dragon blood, most families of dragon-kin become ordinary Name-givers after many generations as the dragon blood is slowly diluted. Dragon tradition now forbids dragons mating with any of the Young Races to produce dragon-kin, and the practice has been banned since the dawn of the Age of Legend. Violating this tradition is one of the few actions that is likely to result in a dragon being banished from dragon society. As a result, the number of these Name-givers in Barsaive is extremely small and is constantly decreasing.

Any Name-giver race can produce dragon-kin, with the exceptions of the obsidimen, who do not reproduce as other Name-givers do. Because of this, dragon-kin are less of a "race" and more of a subspecies of their Name-giver parent race, but also sharing certain characteristics of the dragon side of their mixed heritage. Dragon-kin are capable of breeding with other

members of their Name-giver parent's race, and their children are generally dragon-kin as well, with the trait appearing for generations.

Dragon-kin have the normal racial abilities and modifiers of their Name-giver parent, with an additional +1 to their Perception and Willpower Attribute values. All dragon-kin also have the Racial Abilities of Astral-Sensitive Sight and Low-Light Vision (p. 54, **ED**). Their abilities make dragon-kin natural-born spellcasters, and many of them follow one or more of the magician Disciplines.

Dragon-kin all have at least one physical deformity or trait tied to their dragon blood, sometimes more than one. Common traits include scaly patches of skin, pointed ears, oddly colored eyes, eyes that feature slitted pupils, or eyes that lack pupils altogether. Other traits include webbed fingers and/or toes, a vestigial tail or wings, small horns, pronounced canine teeth, a complete lack of body hair, or bony deposits on the skin similar to heavy scales. These traits make the character recognizable to anyone familiar with dragon-kin (particularly any dragon). Most dragons strongly dislike dragon-kin. Drakes particularly detest dragon-kin, perhaps because they are jealous of their close kinship with their dragon masters. Name-givers unaware of the dragon-kin's heritage often think them cursed or Horror-touched.

The Denairastas Clan of Iopos is the only extended family of dragon-kin currently known to exist, though the great dragons of Barsaive may know of or suspect others. The Denairastas are the children of the great dragon Denairastas who chose to violate dragon tradition by mating with a human female sometime before the Scourge. This dragon, now banished from dragon society, lairs in the Scol Mountains and is one of the most powerful allies of the Denairastas clan. Aside from the great dragons' original servants, the Denairastas Clan are the only known living dragon-kin in Barsaive, perhaps in the entire world. Members of the Denairastas Clan cover their various dragon traits using clothing, makeup and illusion magic. Those children with deformities too severe to be concealed are generally killed, although there are rumors that Uhl Denairastas keeps some of them alive to perform experiments requiring dragon-kin subjects.

Legends among the t'skrang insist that members of House Syrtis are descended from a dragon, but the truth of these tales is not known.

Other families and lineages of dragon-kin may exist in Barsaive, keeping their heritage secret out of fear of persecution from both the dragons and other Name-givers. The gamemaster can introduce such isolated dragon-kin into the campaign as desired. Note however that none of the great dragons described in this book have done this. Violating this tradition is one of





the most serious transgressions a dragon can commit, and none of Barsaive's great dragons would ever consider doing so.

century or more to beings who measure their lives in millennia?

Using Dragons in Adventures and Campaigns

A close look at the statistics and abilities of the dragons in this book should reveal an obvious fact; these things are dangerous! Even the slightest of dragons is more powerful than most groups of adepts, and great dragons dwarf the power of adepts of nearly any Circle. Fortunately, it is (or at least should be) fairly rare that a group of characters will find themselves the enemy of one or more of the dragons of Barsaive, and the power these creatures wield is one that few characters will ever face directly. Nonetheless, using dragons in adventures in any way is a delicate business. It requires careful consideration as to which dragon to use, as well as the role the dragon should play in the adventure or campaign. Before we address these issues, however, we should ask one question. Should dragons be that powerful?

Yes. Absolutely. The dragons need to be as powerful as they are for the simple fact that they are the oldest and most powerful creatures in the world. Their abilities with magic are unrivaled. Even the most powerful and skilled magicians of the Theran Empire pale in comparison to the magical skills of dragons. Even the most mighty of adepts should feel apprehension at the thought of confronting a dragon under any circumstances.

Because dragons are such powerful and important beings, gamemasters need to exercise great care when using them in adventures and campaigns, to prevent dragons from becoming just another monster. Dragons are intelligent Name-givers with their own desires and goals. The descriptions of the Named dragons in this book provide a glimpse into just some of the goals and plans of these dragons, all of which can be used as the basis for adventures and campaigns.

There are two basic approaches to using dragons in Earthdawn adventures and campaigns: as allies, or as enemies. In either role dragons function best behind the scenes, where they can spin their plots and pull the strings of nations and great powers. A great dragon has the power to lay waste to an entire kingdom if it wishes, but dragons tend to restrain their power, preferring to act indirectly.

This—along with the difficulties dragons have with group cooperation—explains why the dragons don't simply descend en masse against the Therans, the Denairastas or anyone else who offends them. They prefer the slow and cautious method. After all, what is a

Dragons as Allies

As noted above, dragons are intelligent Name-givers with their own desires and goals. Sometimes these goals coincide with those of other Name-givers, as in the case of Barsaive's struggle against the Theran Empire. These situations allow gamemasters to introduce dragons as allies or even patrons of the player characters.

A dragon, especially a great dragon, is a powerful ally. Dragons have considerable knowledge and magical power, as well as great wealth. A dragon ally can provide adepts with important information, Key Knowledges of magical items, spells and material resources (including silver!). How much the dragon is willing to give depends on how much it thinks the player characters can advance the dragon's own cause. Dragons are not known for their generosity, and they give away nothing unless it benefits them in some way. A dragon who lavishes gifts on the player characters expects undying loyalty and service in return.

Any alliance with a dragon is likely to be a temporary thing, as that is how most dragons prefer to deal with Name-givers. A typical arrangement might be as follows: the dragon asks the player characters to perform a specific task, perhaps in exchange for some service or resource the dragon has to offer. As an example, adepts might seek out a great dragon such as Icewing in hopes of learning a Key Knowledge or some particularly obscure piece of arcane lore. In return, the dragon asks the adepts to spy on a Theran operation near Lake Ban and report back to him, then he will give them the information they seek.

Gamemasters can also establish more lasting relations between dragons and adepts. A dragon can serve as a patron and mentor for the adepts, who perform tasks and serve as the dragon's eyes and hands in Name-giver society. Organizations such as the Dragon's Network (p. 6, **Secret Societies of Barsaive**) provide an ideal means for gamemasters to use dragons as patrons.

While dragons usually treat their servants well, they are not bound by the culture and beliefs of other Name-givers. Dragons are arrogant and treat other Name-givers much like children or pets. It is not uncommon for a dragon to sacrifice agents like pawns in a greater game. Adepts who are chosen for sacrifice may not take the same dispassionate view of the situation as their dragon master. If they survive, they may choose to seek revenge on their former patron.

One interesting way a dragon can become a patron of a group of characters is if all of the characters





are dragon-kin (p. 126) related to the particular dragon, such as being members of the Denairastas Clan. In this case, the dragon has reasons of its own for defying the traditions of its kind and wishes to aid and support its progeny. Characters in such a campaign will tend to have many other dragon enemies, since most dragon view dragon-kin as abominations. Remember that none of the dragons detailed in this book would have dragon-kin.

Dragons as Enemies

A dragon (especially a great dragon) makes an epic foe for an Earthdawn campaign. Dragons are very powerful creatures, perhaps the most powerful beings in the world, with the possible exceptions of mighty astral entities such as the Passions and perhaps the most powerful Horrors, such as Verjigorm, the Great Hunter. Dragons have great physical ability and magical power, and the intelligence to use both well. A fight against any dragon should never be easy; such a battle should be the climax of a long campaign, rather than a simple clash.

Fortunately, dragons rarely operate in the open where would-be dragon-slayers can come and find them. Most dragons are plotters and schemers, operating through a complex network of servants and informants to carry out their intricate plans. The nature of dragon culture and custom makes dragons aloof and separate from the day-to-day affairs of other Name-givers.

A dragon villain works best as a puppet-master, operating behind the scenes at first. While the player characters are low-Circle adepts, the dragon's presence is virtually unknown; they interact only with its servants and agents. As time goes on and the characters gain Legend Points and advance in Circle, they interact with more and more of the dragon's powerful servants and uncover more of its schemes, becoming a thorn in its side. Eventually, after a long campaign, the adepts may gain enough power to confront the dragon directly and slay it in an epic battle that shakes the earth and is retold in song and story for generations to come. The defeat of a dragon is no small thing, it is the stuff legends are made of.

The very nature of the dragons creates an interesting dilemma for gamemasters. Using any of the Named dragons in this book can easily result in the death of one or more of the player characters. When dealing with entities as powerful as the dragons, character death should not be unexpected. But while character death is undesirable, it is an important element of Earthdawn and one the gamemaster should NOT try to avoid. If every time the characters encounter a dragon they escape unscathed (or at least not dead!), the significance and power of dragons in the world of

Earthdawn becomes diluted. The threat and danger they present to the world becomes less sincere.

So the question becomes, how can a gamemaster use the dragons as enemies, maintain the dragons' true nature, but not kill the characters in each adventure? Below are some suggestions for how to resolve this dilemma, without diluting the essence of the Earthdawn universe.

The first thing to keep mind is that most dragons should be long-term opponents. Some of the dragon-like creatures such as drakes are suitable for single adventures, but most should be used over a series of adventures, in which the characters discover the dragon's plans, encounter the dragon's victims, or witness its powers in use. This serves two purposes. First, it allows the players to encounter the dragon indirectly, as they learn more and more about its influence and machinations. Second, over a series of adventures, the characters will grow in power and experience, and be more ready to deal with the dragon (or at least with its servants and minions!).

Another way to look at this is to consider dragons as campaign level opponents. These are not things you battle once and slay. All dragons are very powerful, and only an experienced group of characters has a chance at defeating any of them. The Named dragons in this book represent opportunities for several different types of campaigns, based on the specific attitudes and goals of the individual dragons. Each of these dragons offers different types of adventures and stories. Also, many of these dragons prefer to use their powers over a long-term period. For instance, you should never plan for the characters to learn about, confront, and battle Vestrivan in the course of a single adventure. This would be a waste of a good dragon.

Another idea to keep in mind is that the characters need not confront the dragon itself right from the start. Many of the dragons work through agents, either willing or not. Willing agents include Name-giver servants (such the Pale One servants of Earthroot) drakes or other dragons. Unwilling agents might be Name-givers who aren't even aware that they serve the dragon's goals.

Adventures featuring the Named dragons from this book also need not conclude with the characters actually confronting the dragon itself. In some cases, characters should consider themselves fortunate to survive any type of encounter with a dragon, direct or not! A series of small, minor victories that disrupts the dragon's plans is a good way in which these powerful creatures can be used without risking the lives of the characters too much. Of course, if a dragon's plans were to be disrupted too often, it might just consider a direct assault on the party responsible.





On a slightly less upbeat topic, remember that adventures in which characters are killed are an excellent reminder for the players (and gamemaster) that the world of Earthdawn is a dangerous one. Adventure after adventure in which the characters succeed against any opponent they face only diminishes the feeling that Barsaive is a very dangerous place, one that is still far from safe. An occasional adventure in which the characters suffer losses of some sort, be it serious injury or death, helps to maintain the proper atmosphere of Barsaive as potentially lethal.

As it is inevitable that one or more the characters will suffer some misfortune, try to work it into the story, and have it be a significant event. When this occurs, try to let it mean something more than that one of the players needs to make a new character. Don't let the death (or other type of loss) of a character happen for no good reason. The characters in Earthdawn are heroes. If they are going to go down, let them go down heroically!

