

CASTLES[®] & CRUSADES

DRAGONS OF AIHRDE

LEECH WYRMS



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DRAGONS OF AIHRDE LEECH WYRMS

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LEECH WYRMS

Dragons are creatures like all creatures. They have suffered as all things have suffered, by the whims of the world and the power of nature. Some have thrived in the present condition, powerful beasts unaffected by the world's changing. Others have evolved to new circumstances, growing greater than they ever were, or descending into myriad forms and creatures less than their ancestors. Some few dwell unchanged, lost in an ever changing world and still others have failed and died out entirely.

INTRODUCTION

For eons, dragons have dwelt in the world. Whether they live in deep caves, dwell at the bottoms of wide lakes, or stalk the sandy dunes of the deserts, dragons have been a part of the landscape of men, elf and orc. They are feared and loved, revered as gods or vilified as nightmarish creatures of the world's dawn. Their size and stupendous power, their accumulated wealth and even the value of the scales, bones and teeth have meant that they are only able to dwell upon the fringes of the kingdoms of the world. They restrict themselves to hidden places, far from the concerns of mortals. But there are those who dwell closer and interact more with men.

Some are the progenitors of the whole species, remnants of a time before the dragons were the masterly lords they have become. Still some others have forgotten what they knew and descended from the power of their ancestors. They have become less than their mighty forbearers. They are every bit as magical, sometimes intelligent, but above all else they are dragons and dangerous creatures to cross or malign. Indeed, some would account these lesser drakes as far more dangerous, for they are driven by primeval forces, forces far greater than those conjured by the wise. They are driven by hunger, the need to protect their territory, by instinct and they feed on the fear of men.

These lesser drakes take many shapes and sizes, and they have many abilities, but they can be classified by their primary method of attack. Herein are presented the leech wyrms, those foul dragons whose habits are more reminiscent of the undead, than the fire breathing habits of the greater dragons of legend and lore. With vampiric lust they haunt quiet dungeons and forgotten pathways, waiting for a warm, ichorous meal to come within their grasp. Whether through hollow fangs or barbed tongues they drain the blood of their victims. From the brutally violent Maegle Wurm that grinds its prey to pulp or the far gentler Iris Dragon that paralyzes and feeds upon its victim for days, these dragons are creatures from our uncertain nightmares.

LESSER DRAGONS

Like all dragons, lesser dragons are powerful creatures with magical abilities and uncommonly long life spans. These dragons however, are every bit as cunning, but not as intelligent, as their more commonly known kin, their magic is weaker, and in some cases benign. They are smaller as well, few growing to over 20 feet in length. Too, they are more animal in nature, less discerning in their actions, more concerned about hunting or breeding than hoarding treasure unraveling the philosophy of men. They can be good or evil, but many are simply neutral, once again, closer to animals than magical beasts.

Lesser dragons also depart from their cousins in that many of them have no love of treasure, nor do they keep static dens, but rather

hunt in the wilderness, marking out territories and defending those territories against encroachments of any kind. Where other dragons may use their abilities to gather treasure, outwit those who possess it, or weave magic, lesser dragons use their abilities, magical and mundane to improve their ability to hunt. This makes them far more dangerous than one might suspect, for they possess the natural cunning of all dragons and combine it with their magical abilities and animal instincts.

Age: Lesser dragons do not possess the long life spans of their cousins, and they are not immortal. Some may live for a thousand years, but if they do, it is an anomaly and not the norm. Most die as in the early mature stage, killed off by one of their own kind or unable to keep up the hunt as they were before. Hatchlings grow quickly, emerging from the egg fully formed, aggressive and able to exist apart from their mother. They eat tremendous amounts of food, mostly insects, rodents and the like. They grow very fast, becoming young adults within a few years of hatching.

Bonus Saves: This is the bonus to all saving throws that dragons receive. It increases as they age.

Category	Type	Age	Bonus Saves
1	Hatchling	0-3	+1
2	Young Adult	4-50	+2
3	Adult	51-100	+3
4	Mature	100-200	+4

Size: A lesser dragon's age determines its size. Hatchlings are always small. Young adults are always medium size. Lesser dragons of all other age categories are large. Like normal dragons, a lesser dragon continues to grow as it ages, though its growth slows somewhat.

Hit Dice: All lesser dragons roll a d10 for their hit points regardless of age or size.

Move: Lesser dragons in age category 1 move at half the rate listed, and those in age category 4 move 1/2 more than the listed rate.

Languages and Magic: All dragons can speak their own tongue and the common tongue. All dragons have some spell-like abilities, as detailed below for each dragon type. Some few lesser dragons, upon attaining a higher age category, can make an intelligence check against a difficulty of 12. If the check is successful, the dragon is able to speak and understand any language, and also possesses dragon magic, as detailed below for each breed. If the roll fails, a new check can be made when the dragon reaches the next age category.

Experience: The experience point award for dragons varies according to type, age and ability. Castle Keepers should consult the experience point award chart given on page 6 of the Monsters & Treasure book. Dragons should be extremely difficult to slay and should therefore be awarded a generous amount of experience.

2 CASTLES & CRUSADES

DRAGONS AND COMBAT

Like their larger kin, lesser dragons are ferocious and able to fight with a multitude of weapons. Though they are not as agile as larger dragons they are able to launch multiple attacks, though usually not against several different opponents.

Special Rules for Dragon Combat: Lesser dragons do add their full hit dice when making attack rolls and they do add their full hit dice to saving throw rolls, plus the bonus set forth in the age chart.

Breath Weapons: Most lesser dragons have at least one breath weapon. Each breath weapon is different and explanations are given in the monsters descriptive text under the appropriate heading.

Damage: Dragons grow at a rapid rate, however smaller dragons are not able to deal the potent damage dealt by older, more experienced dragons. Dragons in age category 1 do 1/2 of the listed damage and those in age category 4 do 1/2 greater than the listed damage.

Bite: Bite attacks deal the indicated damage plus the dragon's damage bonus listed in each chart (DB).

Claw: Claw attacks deal the indicated damage plus 1/4 the dragon's damage bonus listed in each chart (DB).

Wing: Some lesser dragons can slam opponents with its wings, even when flying. Wing attacks deal the indicated damage plus 1/2 the dragon's damage bonus listed in each chart (DB).

Tail Slap: Some lesser dragons can slap one opponent each round with its tail. A tail slap deals the indicated damage plus the dragon's listed damage bonus (DB).

Tail Sweep: This special attack allows a dragon of at least large size to sweep with its tail. The sweep affects a half-circle with a radius of 10 feet from the tail's base. Only creatures 1/2 the size of the dragon are affected. A tail sweep automatically deals the indicated damage plus the dragon's damage bonus. Affected creatures can attempt a dexterity save to take half damage.

Grappling: Lesser dragons do not favor grapple attacks, though their crush attack uses normal grapple rules. A dragon can always use its breath weapon while grappling, as well as its spells and spell-like abilities.

Windblast: While flying, a dragon is able to create a wind blast with its wings that can knock people over and blow small items away. This is generally used to stir up dust, deflect missile weapons, knock out magic users, and the like. Affected creatures of medium size or smaller should make a dexterity check to see if they are knocked prone by the blast. Dwarves and other stout creatures add +4 to their dexterity saves.

Camouflage: Some dragons have the ability to camouflage. They use this ability to conceal themselves from others. A successful check means that the dragon is hidden so well as to be almost invisible. All checks are made with a +2 bonus. The dragon can move up to one-half normal speed and remain hidden. Hide checks suffer no penalty in this circumstance. At more than one-half and up to full speed, the dragon suffers a -5 penalty (cumulative with the bonus) to the check to remain hidden. It's practically impossible (-20 penalty) to hide while running or charging.

If the dragon is being observed, even casually, they cannot hide. If observers are momentarily distracted, though, the dragon can attempt to hide. While the observer averts its attention from the character, the dragon can attempt to get to a hiding place. This check, however, is at a -10 penalty because the dragon has to move quickly to the hiding place. A dragon cannot hide if there is nothing to hide behind or conceal oneself with.

This ability allows a dragon to move so silently that others cannot hear the movement. The dragon can use this ability both indoors and outdoors. A dragon can move up to one-half its normal speed at no penalty. At more than one-half and up to the dragon's full speed, the dragon suffers a -5 penalty. It's practically impossible (-20 penalty) to move silently while running or charging.

Dragons can hide and move silently at the same time.

Frightful Presence: Unless otherwise noted, lesser dragons do not gain frightful presence.

Immunities: All dragons are immune to sleep and paralysis effects.

Spell Resistance: As lesser dragon's age, they become more resistant to spells and spell-like abilities, as indicated in the tables below.

Keen Senses: A dragon sees four times as well as a human in shadowy illumination and twice as well in normal light. They also have darkvision out to 80 feet and the Scent ability. They have superior hearing as well and are able to pinpoint almost any opponent unless the target is magically hidden such as with an invisibility spell.

ECOLOGY

Lesser dragons inhabit most climes. As with all dragons they are immune to most temperature variations, though some prefer warm and some prefer cold climes. Some are adaptable, but most have already developed specialized traits which limit them to certain types of environment, such as the nakal, which finds itself limited to jungle and forest terrain. All of them are meat eaters and either trap their prey or stalk it.

LESSER DRAGONS AND DRAGONS

Dragons are intelligent beasts and have little to do with the lesser drakes for they see them as little more than animals or magical beasts, fit perhaps for eating, but nothing else. The lesser dragon's lineage is so corrupted or ancient and so far removed from the first hatchlings that dragons abhor their company.

FAMILIARS & MINIONS

On occasion men or women of valor are able to subdue a dragon and bind it to the master. This is impossible for any adult or mature lesser dragon that does not have some rudimentary intelligence. If it is able to speak one can appeal to its vanity, pride, or fears, but otherwise one cannot. Like any animal however, if captured when they are hatchlings, training lesser dragons is possible and not uncommon. Of course like any wild beast, these wyrms can turn on their masters in a moment and the master find out what it means to be a dragon's meal.

THE WYRMS

DRAGON, IRS WYRM

NO. APPEARING: 1-2

SIZE: Special (see below)

HD: Special (see below)

MOVE: 20 ft.

AC: Special (see below)

ATTACKS: Tail (1d8), bite (1d10)

SPECIAL: Fear Aura, Paralyzing Touch

SAVES: P

INT: Special (see below)

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

TYPE: Dragon

TREASURE: Special (see Chart below)

XP: Special, (see below page 24)

These offspring of the greater irs wyrms are foul wicked beasts that feed upon the hopes and dreams of the unaware. They are ugly, squat creatures, with thick bulbous bodies. They look something like a toad, but the pustules that cover their hides constantly seep with poisonous ichors. They are colorless, and almost witless, settling into an area where they begin to feed. Thousands of tiny sharp teeth line their wide mouths; these constantly fall out and grow back. They have thick legs, short webbed toes and almost no claws. Their tail is short and crowned with a knobby growth that they drag behind them unknowingly.

The irs wyrms are born of the ichor that seeps from the greater irs wyrms. The hatchlings fall from their parent to sit upon the ground. They are witless, only possessed of a great hunger when born, a need to take what other creatures possess. Many die beneath the crushing bulk of their sire, as it rolls to one side or the other, grinding them to pulp. But some move away, if slowly, leaving the parent without thought or remorse.

Flight is beyond them as they have no wings, and no magic to lift them from the dust. They move slowly, hopping from one spot to the next, resting for awhile, seeking any prey that they might dine upon. They frequently settle in the cities of men, deep dungeons, or any abode that offers them plenty of food and an easy place to hide.

Being immortal an irs wurm never dies, unless slain by someone's heroic actions. Even if they go unfed for eons they live on, dwindling some, but feeding off their own spite. But they cannot grow unless they feed, and when they feed, they can grow to enormous proportions, become greater wyrms in their own right.

COMBAT: The irs wurm is inherently fearful, avoiding direct combat whenever it can. They hide near their prey animals, settling in their stench, burrowing into mounds of their own filth. Once settled they emanate their aura of fear and begin "feeding" upon those who pass near. The creature is very slow in melee combat, always losing initiative. It fights primarily with its tail, turning on its heels to batter something with the massive knob on the end of that appendage, or immobilizing them with its stench. The tail however has a small brain of its own and often does not act in concert with the creature, swinging randomly or not swinging at all. The lesser irs wurm has no breath weapon.

Fear Aura: Any creature within 100 feet of an irs wurm is subject to the aura of fear that surrounds the beast. This aura causes feelings of dread, hopelessness, and fear of the unknown to overtake the victim. Those who succumb lose their drive to carry on and often settle into a morose state of inaction. Those creatures within range must make a successful charisma save or suffer the debilitating affects of the aura. At this point the irs wurm begins feeding and the victim loses 1 point of charisma for every melee round they are held by the fear aura. The damage is not permanent unless the victim reaches a 0 charisma, at which point they become catatonic and require powerful magic, such as a *heal* or *restoration* spell, to rouse them. If the victim remains in the vicinity of the irs wurm, within 24 hours, they waste away to a hollow skin covered skeleton.

Paralyzing Stench: When a creature comes within 20 feet of a lesser irs wurm they encounter its powerful stench. The victim must make a successful strength save or be immobilized. The victim suffers 1d4 hit points of cold damage regardless of the saving throw's outcome. This paralysis is permanent unless magically countered or dispelled or the wurm is slain.

Age	Size	HD	AC	DB	SR	Int	TR
1	5'	3	9	—	—	4	4
2	15'	6	12	1	—	4	7
3	20'	9	15	2	—	4	10
4	25'	13	18	3	—	4	14

IN AIHRDE

The irs wurm's origins lie in the mind of Inzae. When that mother of all dragons settled upon the mountains of Aihilde to bargain with the All Father she laid in a nest of her evil intent. This evil seeped from her and settled in earth. From it came all manner of creatures but one of the greatest and most feared were the irs wyrms. Little more than a cloud of hate in their beginnings, over time they took the shape of creatures they thought were like Inzae. In this they failed, for they looked little more than beastly, puss ridden toads. In the early days the goblins paid homage to them but even they abandoned them in disgust, realizing that they were little more than giant parasites.

The irs is a horrid creature, reviled by all other living things, whether good or evil, lawful or chaotic.

IRS WYRM ENCOUNTER

This encounter is designed for a party of 1st – 2nd level adventurers. If the CK desires to change the level of the encounter, simply increase/decrease the age of the dragon. If the HD of the dragon changes from the listed encounter remember to adjust the damage it does as well as the treasure the encounter yields.

Upon a windswept hilltop lie the ruins of a once prosperous farmstead. Here a yeoman farmer carved a living from the earth; he cleared the land south of the hill for pastures and to the north and west for crops. The pastures were fenced in with split rail fences. A large house, walled to keep out intruders, a huge barn, several out building and a number of pens and the fences marked this yeoman

as a very prosperous, hard working soul. But now all lies in ruin. The house has collapsed in on itself and little more than a grass covered heap of old timber and some walls. Only the chimney juts up from the grass with any sign of endurance. The barn too is all but gone, laying flat on the hill, where it fell, crushing several outbuildings in its demise. There is little sign of life anywhere upon the hilltop.

Two years previous an irs wrym entered the area, settling in the pasture near the cattle. Its presence killed the several cows and stampeded the rest. Once it had sucked the life from those unfortunates, it moved across the pasture to the house area. Where it settled in a small ditch near the house, unknown to the inhabitants. The farmer, his wife and children were all murdered in their sleep by the irs, their life essence drained by the life-consuming monster. The creature grew fat on the yeoman family and has not moved since. Any and all trails or signs it might have left are gone except where specifically described below.

The characters approach from any direction. They see the split rail fences first. They are in a terrible state, weeds have grown up around the posts, and many of the rails have fallen down or rotted away. The pasture within grows wild. They see the hilltop and the ruins upon it. The ruins are obviously several years old as they are covered in grasses and small scrub. There are no signs of a struggle. The barn did not burn down, nor did the house. Within the yards around the fallen structures are several small wagons or carts, decayed but unharmed. Tools also lie here and there about. A pick and shovel next to a post hole, half finished and with a post lying on the ground next to it.

There is a well placed between the barn and the house.

The whole place looks abandoned.

PASTURE

If the characters pass through the pasture or look into it they find several dead cattle lying in the weeds. The bodies are little more than bones with their skin stretched over them, as if they dried out. There are not signs of decay, wounds, carrion, or even worms. The bodies look as if they simply dried out. Touching them causes the bodies to crumble into large pieces; repeatedly touching them causes them to dissolve into dust. There are five of them in all.

A detailed check of the pasture by a ranger might reveal a little more. With a successful ability check (CL 5) the ranger discovers a place on the south-west corner where something heavy sat. It killed the grass where it sat, had four legs and heavy feet. Close inspection reveals the exposed earth to be very dry and lifeless. There is no trail as noted above.

BUILDINGS

As noted the buildings are all in ruins. Searching them reveals all manner of tools, most in a high state of decay due to age and lack of care. As the party approaches the main house they must save versus fear due to the proximity of the irs wrym.

Within the house lie the bodies of the family. The main room is largely covered in debris but a bed is plain to see; it lies beneath a huge portion of the roof. On that bed are the bodies of three children. They are in the same state as the cows, dried out husks with no signs of carrion or insect damage.

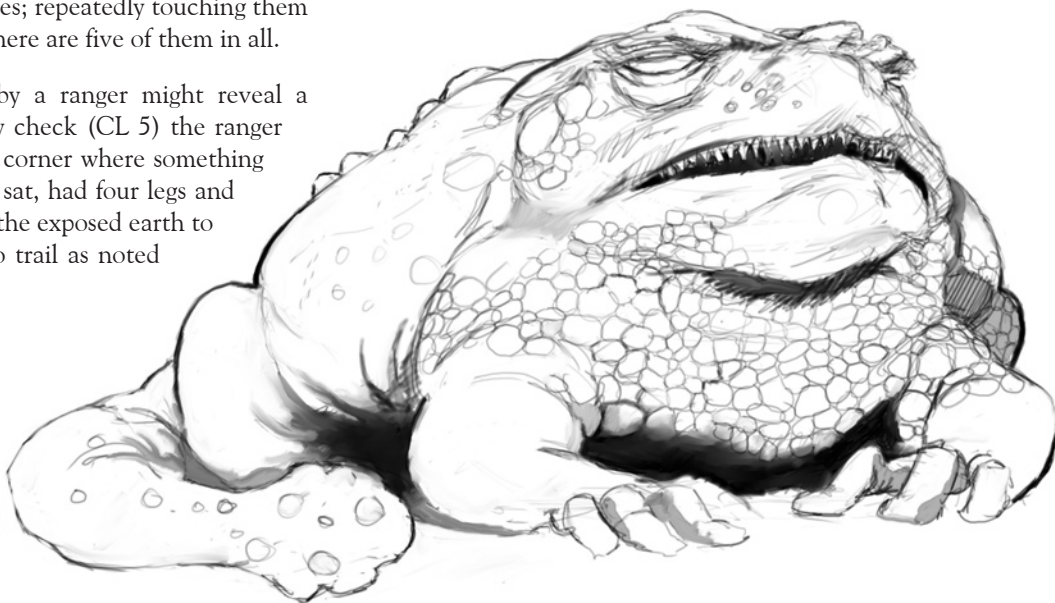
Next to the main room is a largely intact room though its roof has also collapsed. Against the west wall, facing east out what must have been a window, stands one large bed. Two figures are in it. Both bodies are dried out husks. One is a man, lying with his head on the pillow. His hollow eyes stare up at the ceiling. The other is a woman; she is sitting up, with her hands grasping the head board as if she tried to pull herself up. There are deep claw marks on the wall above it where it seems she tried to claw her way out of the wall.

The irs wrym is in his squalid ditch just outside the window. As the character rifle through the room they must make a save versus paralyzing stench.

Finding the wrym and killing it are the next obvious choices. The wrym does not attack the characters unless they attack it. If they do not, then the wrym is content to suck their life essence out.

IRS WRYM (This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 3, AC 9, HP 16. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a tail swipe for 1d4 points of damage and a bite for 1d6 points of damage. They also have a paralyzing stench and a fear aura attack.)

The creature has no treasure, but inside the farmer's house the characters find a lock box with 2pp, 23gp, 89sp. A golden ring worth 25gp and a magical necklace that emanates a protection from evil spell.



DRAGON, RING (INETH)

NO. APPEARING: 1

SIZE: Special (see below)

HD: Special (see below)

MOVE: 20ft., 40 ft. (fly)

AC: Special (see below)

ATTACKS: bite (1d10)

SPECIAL: Camouflage, Diminish Attribute

SAVES: M

INT: Special (see below)

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Dragon

TREASURE: Special (see Chart below)

XP: Special ((see below page 24)

Ring dragons are small fragile looking creatures. A dozen legs, with slender, black clawed feet, line their long, sinuous bodies. With four interlocked wings they are highly mobile and very fast. A long neck tops it all with a slender head and jaws lined with thousands of tiny teeth. The ring dragon ranges in color, depending on the environment.

The ring dragon is wickedly evil. It stalks its prey and slowly feeds off of it, draining it of its life essence. It is able to do so up to 50 feet away (see below). These dragons are rarely seen, keeping themselves at a distance, drawing the essences from the victims slowly, over several days time. Often the victims don't even know they are feeding the dragon, assuming that some illness has overtaken them and is wasting them away.

These dragons are very capable stalkers, able to blend with their environment much like a chameleon. But more than those fated lizards the ring dragon is able to change the color of his skin in patches. Each portion of its body reflecting the terrain it's in, so that it can lay half in the shade and half in the sun, allowing its body to be both dark and light at the same time. This makes the beast even harder to see and allows it to follow its victims over a great distance, changing as does the terrain.

The ring dragons prefer elf above all things and particularly relish devouring them.

After a ring dragon's victim has died the creature lingers to eat it. Once the victim is alone, buried or not, the ring dragon retrieves the body and devours it, bones, and all.

The ring dragon is highly adaptable, living in almost every clime and terrain. They dwell in small dens but range far from their homes in search of prey. They are never found in pairs but for a very brief period when they mate.

Like all dragons they have a great love of shiny things, so they do keep treasures they find and bring them back to their lair.

COMBAT: The ring dragon stalks its prey, remaining unseen, until the prey goes to sleep. The creature positions itself within 50 feet of the victim, but where the dragon can see the prey, and settles into a trance. Linking with the victim the dragon begins to breath in the poor creature's life essence. It does so slowly, over time. It usually takes 3-4 days to drain the creature. The ring dragon has no breath weapon.

Camouflage: A ring dragon can conceal themselves exceptionally well in any environment. When concealed and motionless, they receive a +5 bonus to hide checks, and +10 to surprise checks.

Diminish Attribute: Whenever the ring dragon is within 50 feet of its victim it is able to feed off of the creature's life force. It must be undisturbed for 1 full round, at which point it enters a trance and begins its feeding process. The victim must make a successful constitution save, or suffer a loss of 1d4 points of constitution. This attack is almost always done while the victim is sleeping. The dragon only attacks once a night, becoming satiated on the creature's life force. It continues to feed until the victim reaches a constitution of 0, at which point the victim dies.

Age	Size	HD	AC	DB	SR	Int	TR
1	1'	1d8	12	–	–	13	–
2	3'	2d8	14	1	–	13	1
3	5'	2d10	14	2	1	14	2
4	5'	3d8	15	3	1	16	3

IN AIHRDE

Ring dragons owe their origins to the peculiars of happenstance. As the learned are aware the Language of Creation is the source of all magic in the world of Aihrde. The Language represents the holy words of the All Father and understanding it and its use is a task that only the most ambitious of wizards and priests pursue, and aside from a precious few, no one is able to grasp. But use of the Language is not uncommon amongst the very powerful, but neither is its misuse. In their attempts to grasp the Language words are twisted, turned upon themselves, or even wholly misspoken. These words are dangerous to the users, but tend to linger in the world as curses and malevolent forces that forever hound the Kingdoms of the world.

The ring dragons come from just such misspoken words. When evil priests, wizards, and their ilk attempt to use the Language and fail, then often the words tumble to the earth like solid things. These words are powerful curses and they remain dormant, until such time as the world moves them. On rare occasions these dormant curses are touched by the undead, when this happens the curses evolve, springing to life as mimicry of the dragon-goddess Inzae, whom the All Father met upon the Great Empty. These dragons are of course ring dragons, very rare, but deadly.

In Aihrde they are highly prized by wizards of all make, for some believe that they possess tidbits of the All Father, being physical manifestations of his magic, even if misspoken.

RING DRAGON ENCOUNTER

This encounter is designed for a party of 2nd level adventurers. If the CK desires to change the level of the encounter, simply increase/decrease the age of the dragon. If the HD of the dragon changes from the listed encounter remember to adjust the damage it does as well as the treasure the encounter yields.

This encounter takes place on a broken trail. Place the adventure in a forest, jungle, scrub land, hills, rocky landscapes, or anywhere that the ring dragon is able to hide itself while it is feeding upon

the characters. The terrain should be very difficult to pass through, cutting movement rate. The encounter takes place over several days as it takes that long for the dragon to kill its victim.

Upon the trail lies a body. It has long since decayed and there is little left but for the bones. It lies where it fell, face down in the dirt. Small grasses (clumps of snow, or whatever the Castle Keeper determines) grow in and around the bones. The bones themselves are perfectly intact. No animal has gnawed on them, nor have they been scattered. It appears to be human. If the characters lift them they find that the bones are no longer connected and the skeleton falls apart. Beneath the skeleton is a small hollowed out hole. It appears as if the earth was pushed aside and out from under him, perhaps by a mole or some other small animal.

A detailed examination of the area may yield more clues to the peculiar nature of the bones. With a successful wisdom check (CL 3) the characters can find two small stones lying on either side of the trail. These stones have small glyphs etched on them. They face inward toward the trail. They possess no magical qualities.

Several years past from when a priest of the old gods etched these rune stones in an attempt to cast a spell of summoning on the trail. He garbled his words and the spell misfired, spilling to the earth as a curse. The garbled words caused the priest to go mad and he killed himself, becoming something of a revenant until even the misspent life force dissolved into a distant memory. But the cursed words evolved into a small ring dragon. Who, once grown, rose from the dirt and settled in a hiding place not far from the trail.

The ring dragon has hunted this stretch of trail for several years, consuming anything that passed. All the local animals avoid the trail, or at least this portion of it due to the ring dragon.

As soon as the characters enter the area the ring dragon takes note and begins stalking them. At first it keeps its distance but as soon as night falls the ring dragon closes to within 50 feet, searching the party for the weakest member of the group. Once it has selected its target it begins feeding.

When the ring dragons approach, assuming that the characters are keeping guard, then the watchmen has a chance of detecting the creature. Once it settles in they have little chance. Refer to the monster above.

The victim begins moaning in their sleep as if having a bad dream. When the wake they are tired and sore and assuming they failed their appropriate save they have lost some constitution. This event is repeated until the dragon is slain or it kills the character. Every morning the characters should have a chance to detect where the dragon was lying to 'feed;' this check is made at a CL 4+1 per age category.

If the dragon is attacked it defends itself.

RING DRAGON (*This chaotic evil creatures vital stats are HD 2d10, AC 14, HP 15. Its primary attribute is mental. It attacks with a bite for 1d10 points of damage. It has the ability to camouflage as well as diminish attribute.*)

The creature's treasure lies in its lair back by the priest's body. It consists of a ring worth 125gp, 2 magical silver coins that impart 1hp of healing a day when they remain together.



DRAGON, SPIKE TAIL (TULMAT)

NO. APPEARING: 1

SIZE: Special (see below)

HD: Special (see below)

MOVE: 30 ft., 80 ft. (fly)

AC: Special (see below)

ATTACKS: 2 claw (1d6), tail (see below), bite (1d12)

SPECIAL: Breath Weapon, Tail Spike (poison)

SAVES: M

INT: Special (see below)

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Neutral

TYPE: Dragon

TREASURE: Special (see Chart below)

XP: Special ((see below page 24)

The tulmat, or spike tailed dragon, is a large creature with a body some 20 feet long and a tail and neck of equal length. When fully mature the creature can range up to 70 feet long and have a wing span even longer. They are light green creatures, with a hint of orange in the membranes of their wings. Their eyes are sharp and narrow and sit astride a fang filled snout, the end of which is capped by a boney aperture that looks a little like a horn. Its hind legs are long and thin and it has no forearms. Unusual for dragons, its belly is armored as much as its backside, though its spine is lined with thick plates. Behind its head, long hair-like feathers grow and its tail ends in a knob of small spikes.

The tulmat dragon nests in high mountains, or on occasion in very tall and large trees. They range over a vast swath of country, hunting for prey. They do so by floating on the updrafts, much as does a normal bird of prey, watching for movement. They have extraordinarily good vision and are able to detect even slight movements at great distances. Being intelligent they are also able to discern what exactly they are looking at. They do not shy away from attacking large parties, knowing that their breath weapon is able to kill creatures quickly. They are not vengeful however, and eat only what they need. If during a combat they have immobilized their prey animal and the opportunity to seize it and carry it off presents itself, the tulmat does so, carting the unfortunate victim to its next to be devoured.

They are solitary creatures and are only seen with others of their own kind when they are mating. At such times they are very aggressive. They give birth to live young, usually during flight. The young quickly adapt to flight or die. They build nests much as do birds from woven branches, sticks, and similar debris. These are usually very tall and deep as they renew them each year. Here they keep their treasures as the tulmat wyrms are particularly inclined to take gems, jewels, magic items, and even gold when the opportunity presents itself.

The tulmat are intelligent, able to speak the Vulgate clearly. They do not think like most other creatures so they often are not able to understand them or get their own points across.

COMBAT: The tulmat wyrm hunts its prey from the heavens. It takes flight from its nest, flying in broad circles, searching for its prey. It is discerning. When it chooses its prey it swings wide behind it, keeping very high. Once in position the beast drops

into a steep dive, attempting to surprise the prey from behind. Once directly behind and over the victim it breathes a blast of poison gas upon it, swoops up and takes to the air once more, giving the breath weapon time to incapacitate the creature. If it does not seem to be working, it takes a second swoop at them. Once the prey is down the dragon swoops in and secures the kill by either carrying it off or landing on it and making sure nothing else claims it. It rarely eats where it has killed, but rather carries the unfortunate victim off to its nest to be devoured.

Breath Weapon: A tulmat dragon's breath weapon is a caustic vapor that once breathed kills the hemoglobin in the victim's red blood cells. Hemoglobin carries oxygen to the brain, without it the victim dies. The victim must make a successful save versus breath weapon, if they succeed the gas has no affect. If they fail, the gas attacks the victim's hemoglobin, destroying it. After 4 rounds the victim begins feeling light headed and becomes unable to concentrate on things like spells, weapon usage, etc. After the initial 4 rounds pass the victim's brain begins to starve and the victim begins to take physical damage from oxygen deprivation. They are no longer able to take any action. The gas continues to attack the hemoglobin dealing 1d4 points of damage per hit die of the dragon fore every round after the initial 1d4 until the victim dies. The affects of the gas last for a number of rounds equal to the dragon's hit dice. It can be stopped by a ranger's *neutralize poison* or any similar spell or action.

Tail Spike: Tulmat wyrms possess scores of tail spikes. A caustic poison laces the spikes. It is very similar to the creature's breath weapon. When they swing their tail, and score a successful hit, spikes break from the tail and lodge in the victim. The victim must make a successful constitution save or suffer the same affects of the breath weapon, though it takes 1d8 rounds to take affect and only deals 1d2 points of damage per spike. The creature only has 12 spikes and it takes several days for them to grow back. It uses them sparingly.

Age	Size	HD	AC	DB	SR	Int	TR
1	10'	4	15	1	—	12	4
2	25'	8	16	2	—	12	8
3	40'	12	17	3	—	14	12
4	70'	18	28	4	—	15	18

IN AIHRDE

The tulmat wyrm has long haunted the skies of Aihilde. Originating in the deeps of the Zuala jungles as an off shoot of the more powerful green dragons, they spread rapidly into the north so that that they are now common in all climes and regions.

During the long wars between the Dwarves and Goblins, when the kobold peoples first came to Aihilde, they encountered the tulmat wyrms before all other creatures. It is said by the learned that the tulmat wyrm the kobold's first encountered took pity on the small creatures largely because his belly was full; it is not entirely known why the dragon did not feed upon the kobolds. They lived for a great while in the shadow of one another, working in concert on occasion.

8 CASTLES & CRUSADES

The kobolds tell of a time when a tribe of men pressed their peoples living in the northern mountains. The war dragged on for several years when the expansion of the men began to threaten the hunting grounds of several of the tulmat. These creatures attacked the men so fiercely that the kobolds came to them with promises of gems and jewels if they would help them drive the men from the plains. This arrangement began a century's long alliance between these dragons and the kobolds. Eventually the dragons allowed the kobolds to ride them, but only with promises of saddles studded with jewels and gems of wondrous beauty. Even today the powerful kobold tribes live near tulmat dragons, feeding them and working with them on their long hunts.

TULMAT WYRM ENCOUNTER

This encounter is designed for a party of 6th level adventurers. If the CK desires to change the level of the encounter, simply increase/decrease the age of the dragon. If the HD of the dragon changes from the listed encounter remember to adjust the damage it does as well as the treasure the encounter yields.

A kobold warlord has taken flight upon his tulmat wrym. Together they are on the hunt. They are flying very high, several thousand feet, and the kobold is relying upon the dragon's vision to spot a notable victim. When the dragon spots the party it decides that the characters are perfect targets. Soundless the beast goes into a dive, the kobold registers what is happening and lays very low on across the dragon's neck, hiding behind its head. It does keep its bow in hand.

The dragon gains speed and whether the party detects him or not thunders upon them, engulfing them with its fetid breath. As the characters struggle to recover the dragon circles and the kobold raises up and begins shooting arrows at the party. He picks the wizard or priest or any similarly dressed character as a primary target, not because of their threat, but rather because they represent the hated shamans of his own people.

The dragon fights until it has killed at least one character. It then attempts to escape with that body. If the kobold is killed the dragon becomes enraged attacking whoever slew the kobold and fights to the death.

(For information on the kobold warlord and reference to its relationship with the tulmat wrym and for better descriptions see below "The Peculiar Story of the Kobold.")

TULMAT DRAGON (*This lawful neutral creature's vital stats are HD 8, AC 16, HP 40. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a bite for 1d12 and 2 claws for 1d6 points of damage. It has a poison tail spike attack that reflects its breath weapon.*)

KOBOLD (*This lawful evil creature's vital stats are 5d4 HD, AC 17, HP 14. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a +1 magical bow and has a magical quiver that always has 12 arrows in it. The magic of the quiver is ruined if it ever touches water.*)

The creature's treasure lies in the bone saddle that the kobold fashioned for her. It is studded with gems of all stripes and alone is worth 12,000gp. Breaking the gems out and selling them separately yields only about 8,000gp worth of gems. The kobold has a magical +1 bow and a magical quiver.



DRAGON MAEGLE

NO. APPEARING: 1-6

SIZE: Special (see below)

HD: Special (see below)

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: Special (see below)

ATTACKS: 2 Claw (1d4 each), Bite (1d8)

SPECIAL: Breath Weapon, Crush, Disease

SAVES: M

INT: Special (see below)

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Dragon

TREASURE: Special (see Chart below)

XP: Special ((see below page 24)

The maegle dragon is a brute of a creature. Thick of body and limb it drags itself along the ground, tearing up vegetation, moving rocks, grinding things beneath it. Its torso is wide, fat beneath the plated scales of its hide. Its legs are short, topped with wickedly thick claws. It has a very wide mouth, with disjointed fangs, that protrude in every direction. Oft time these fangs grind into the creature's gums or jaws, bruising the flesh so much so that the jaws are always a discolored purple or dark red. It has a broad flat tongue as well. Its thick tail is lined with plate-like apertures that change color when the beast feeds. Normally a deep blue, these turn red when the creature is fed or while its feeding. The creature is a deep yellow-brown color.

The maegle dragon is rather unintelligent, unable to speak any languages or comprehend any. It has no magic using ability and little ability to empathize with any other creature. Its overriding drive is to feed and sleep. When they are famished they are very aggressive, but after a meal they care little for any activity and are almost docile.

When they do feed it is a horrific process. They take their prey into their mouths and through the force of their jaws grind the victims to a pulp. They grip the tattered remains of the tenderized flesh in their mouths where they suck the blood from the morass. It's a sloppy, brutal process. When all the nutrients have been sucked out the mangled corpse is dropped and the beast moves on.

The maegle dragon travels in small packs, usually up to six or so. They lay their eggs in warm vegetation, sand and the like. They leave their young to hatch and fend for themselves. The maegle is found in many climates, but generally warm and hot subtropical or desert environments. They are particularly adapted to swamps and wetlands.

COMBAT: The maegle dragon does not stalk its prey; rather it lies in wait until something passes near. Once something is close it launches its attack, attempting to grab the prey in its jaws and hold it still and crush it. It holds on to its prey, not retreating, nor dropping it even if attacked (see Crush below). It holds and grinds the victim until it can eat it. It is able to blend with its environment fairly well.

Crush: Any victim suffering from the maegle dragon's bite risks the crush attack. In the following round they automatically suffer 1d10 points of damage each round. They can attempt to break free but this is almost impossible as the maegle wurm does open its

mouth, shift is grip or anything else. A successful strength check (CL equal to the dragons HD) must be made to break free. If the dragon suffers 50% of its hit points in damage it spits the victim out; it then uses its breath weapon to defend itself.

Disease: Small cuts and abrasions riddle the maegle dragon's mouth, mostly from its own teeth chewing into its gums, but also from the struggles of its victims. These wounds play host to a highly contagious disease that weakens the body's ability to defend itself. Unless a successful constitution save is made, the victim's natural healing is reduced by 75%, and curative spells are reduced by 50%. For instance, it takes 4 days for the victim to naturally heal one hit point and a cure light wound spell would only cure 1d4 points of damage.

Breath Weapon: The maegle is able to cough a gout of acidic breath upon its victims that is really little more than an extension of its disease-ridden mouth. Those caught in the cone of gas and acid suffer the same effects as from the creature's bite. A successful constitution save negates the clouds effects.

Age	Size	HD	AC	DB	SR	Int	TR
1	3'	4	17	1	—	3	4
2	6'	8	19	2	—	3	8
3	12'	16	21	3	—	3	16
4	18'	20	23	4	—	3	20

IN AIHRDE

This beast is often associated with Thorax the Red Duke, lord of chaos and evil. Seeing one is believed to be the sign of the red curse, a blight on the viewer who has somehow garnered the attention of the Duke and must suffer his wrath. Slaying the beast is the only way of removing the curse as this cuts the bonds between mortal and immortal.

The Crna Ruk and other assassins often seek out the maegle dragon. They use their saliva as a potent poison that retards people's abilities to heal and makes the assassins job that much easier. For years the Crna Ruk hired and trained rangers to hunt the beasts, subdue or kill them, and extract the poisons from their gums and teeth. Generally a small vial of the toxin costs between 100gp and 500gp.

MAEGLE WYRM ENCOUNTER

This encounter is designed for a party of 1st – 2nd level adventurers. If the CK desires to change the level of the encounter, simply increase/decrease the age of the dragon. If the HD of the dragon changes from the listed encounter remember to adjust the damage it does as well as the treasure the encounter yields.

Upon a natural curve of the highland trail are several large fissures. These holes are nestled in and around huge boulders, and look out upon the trail, lie above it and below it. Water crosses over the trail from high above, trickling down from melt off in the mountains. The water runs almost all year long. Below the trail and on it the water is very stagnant and colored with a reddish hue that appears like rust. The whole area smells horrible, much like the fetid stench of sun bleached corpses.

Bones litter the path and the slopes below it. They are ground and chewed, gnawed and splintered. There is no rhyme or reason to their placement, but rather a wholly random pile of chaos.

The maelge dragon dwells in one of the larger fissures. It claws its way into the fissure backward until its whole body lies in the shadows. As soon as a creature passes in front of the fissure the maelge dragons strikes, launching out of the fissure with amazing speed. It attempts to bite the victim, hold it and grind it to dust. If the creature struggles the maelge wurm comes fully out of the fissure, using its huge bulk to pin it down and keep it from breaking free.

From within one of the fissure a monstrous creature lunges. It looks as if it were some eldritch lizard, with a squat, broad body and head and a long tail. The tail is lined with plates that shine blue once in the open air. An overpowering stench cascades across you as the creature opens its toothy maw. Filth, rotting flesh, fingers, and ground muscle hang from the jagged rows of teeth. The beast's gums are bloody where its own teeth have lacerated its skin; puss from countless infections oozes from these wounds spattering about the trail as it leaps from the earth.

Characters should make the requisite surprise rolls to see if the maelge wurm surprises them.

If the wurm scores a successful hit, the maelge dragon grabs a hold and does not let go; it immediately begins grinding its jaws and crushing the victim. The victim can defend itself if their arms are free. The maelge wurm continues to grind its prey until it is dead. Even then, it keeps grinding it until the pretty turns into a pulp the dragon can swallow. It swallows everything--swords, armor--anything that the prey possesses.

If the character do over 50 hit points of damage to wurm it spits out the victim and begins retreating back to the fissure, coughing up its bile breath weapon as it does. It then defends itself if attacked.

MAEGLE WYRM (*This chaotic evil creature's vital stats are HD16, AC 21, HP 96. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with a bite for 1d8 or 2 claws for 1d4 points of damage. Its bite is poison and infects victims with disease. Its special abilities are crush for a 1d10 points of damage and a breath weapon.*)

Treasure: the maelge wurm has killed many creatures, but most of what it has slain it has devoured. Laying about the ground is one pouch with 45pp in it. But within the fissure are several items that survived the eating process: a *ring of force shield*, *wand of illusion*, *orb of storms* and a +2 *mace*.



DRAGON, IAHNEAL

NO. APPEARING: 1
SIZE: Special (see below)
HD: Special (see below)
MOVE: 40 ft., 60 ft. (fly)
AC: Special (see below)
ATTACKS: 2 claw (1d2), bite (1d8), tail (1d6), and wing (1d 4)
SPECIAL: Bewilder, Breath Weapon
SAVES: M
INT: Special (see below)
ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil
TYPE: Dragon
TREASURE: Special (see Chart below)
XP: Special ((see below page 24)

The iahneal dragons are large beasts, more like traditional dragons than most of the lesser wyrms. Their forelegs are shorter than their hind legs, and their bodies squat toward its tail. The tail itself is very long, mounted with small plates that range up the beasts spine to the back of its head. Their scales are a deep, very dark purple color, though the underside is tinted blue. They have broad wings and are able fliers. The wings themselves are blue like the beasts underbelly. They have a long snout with a barbed horn at the end of the upper jaw that smacks into the lower jaw with a clacking sound when the beast closes its mouth.



12 CASTLES & CRUSADES

These large beasts range throughout the known world. They nest in rocky crags, hills, and abutments, anywhere that they can use stone as their bed. They build their nests as high as they can; mounding stone up until pillars of it surround their den. Here they hoard their treasure, nurse their young and sleep.

Iahneal dragons are very intelligent, calculating beasts. They enjoy watching other creatures suffer and spend a great deal of time torturing them.

COMBAT: In battle the iahneal dragon attacks first by rearing up upon its hind legs and stretching its wings to their full extent. Their wings exude a magical scintillating aura that serves to stun their victims into inaction. As the victim is responding to this attack it launches into a vicious melee combat. Its breath weapon is very limited and it saves this for the victim it chooses to bring back to its den as a trophy or as food for its young.

Bewilder: The iahneal's contain several scintillating color patterns which cause the viewer to become bewildered or mesmerized for 1d6 rounds. If the victim fails a wisdom save they are unable to act, but rather stand idly by. The affect lasts for several rounds (1d6), even if the dragon is not displaying its wings.

Breath Weapon: The dragon's breath weapon is a small cone of gas barely 2 or 3 feet wide and 4 feet long. It directs it very specifically at one target, attempting to engulf them. The breath weapon acts in all purposes as the *flesh to stone* spell.

Age	Size	HD	AC	DB	SR	Int	TR
1	5'	2	12	-	-	12	4
2	15'	4	14	1	-	12	6
3	20'	7	18	2	4	12	9
4	30'	11	20	3	4	15	13

IN AIHRDE

These beasts were part of the original clutch of eggs that Inzae brought to the world of Aihrde and gifted the All Father for his gift of trees. The iahneal are much like that grim goddess, evil and intent on destruction. It is said by the learned that they know well the Language of Destruction as imparted by the Dragon God but that they will never reveal it until the time she returns to the maelstrom and unmakes the world. Then the iahneal promise is to join her and bring about the end of all things. They are worshipped by various cults through Aihrde, an in particular are held in high regard on the Isle of Koth where the Dragon People dwell. The beast of course does not return the worship and holds all creatures in disdain, using these cults from time to time to feed their young or garner riches from them.

IAHNEAL DRAGON ENCOUNTER

This encounter is designed for a party of 3rd – 5th level adventurers. If the CK desires to change the level of the encounter, simply increase/decrease the age of the dragon. If the HD of the dragon changes from the listed encounter remember to adjust the damage it does as well as the treasure the encounter yields.

The hard mountain climb yields to an amazing site. Upon the rock covered slopes the characters spy a large barren patch. In a spot where the mountain levels off lies a huge mound of rocks. Boulders and rocks of all sizes have been heaped and piled on high in the middle of the clearing, forming something of a pyramid. It is obviously not a natural formation; removal of the rocks caused the many holes and gaps in the ground. Something has dug and piled the stones on high.

That something, of course, is an iahneal dragon. The creature has settled upon the slopes of the mountain and established a den. Finding few caves to its liking it has culled the earth of the stones about and piled them in such a way as to create its own den.

The dragon itself is not in the den. He is perched upon rocky escarpment overlooking the whole area. He spied the characters moving through the rough country some time ago and has contemplated when to attack them. Deciding that waiting for them to enter the den is the best way to trap the meal and keep it from escaping he waits to see if they succumb to his trap.

The characters have a small chance to notice the dragon on his high perch. If they are actively scanning the mountain side they must make a successful wisdom check (CL 12) in order to spy it. The creature is lying down in the rubble about a mile from the clearing.

THE DEN

The den itself is large, about 100 feet in radius, and about 60 feet tall. It is virtual heap of rocks and very where the rocks are stacked and laced together. The entrance is about 20 feet high and about 15 feet wide, though very rough. It extends only 30 feet in when it widens up to the much larger den. Here there are mounds of bones heaped in the corners, animal, and monster and human; in the center is a mound of sparkling treasures.

The dragon waits for the characters to enter the den. As soon as they do it takes to the air and circles wide around the whole area to see if they are indeed all inside. It then launches its attack.

The dragon glides silently to the earth and alights just beyond the entrance; it does not close its wings, rather it opens them to their full extent. He immediately attempts to get their attention by making guttural growls. When they are subject to it's bewilder ability. The dragon then attacks the party.

IAHNEAL DRAGON (*This creature's vital stats are HD 7, AC 8, HP 42. Its primary attributes are mental. They attack with 2 claws for 1d2 a bite for 1d8 and a wing slap for 1d4 points of damage. Their special abilities include a bewilder attack and a breath weapon.*)

Treasure: the iahneal wyrm has amassed a large treasure over the years. Lying in the center of the huge den is a pile of treasure. There are 50pp, 500gp, 1500sp, and 3000cp; there are two magical potions (Castle Keeper's choice), 2 magical scrolls (Castle Keeper's choice), a +1 longsword, +2 glaive, and a javelin of lightning and cloak of elven kind.

DRAGON, FRILLED

NO. APPEARING: 1-6

SIZE: Special (see below)

HD: Special (see below)

MOVE: 60ft., 80 ft. (fly)

AC: Special (see below)

ATTACKS: 2 claws (1d4), tail (1d4), bite (1d6)

SPECIAL: Breath Weapon,

SAVES: M

INT: Special (see below)

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Good

TYPE: Dragon

TREASURE: Special (see Chart below)

XP: Special ((see below page 24)



Friiled dragons are long, sinuous drakes, adults ranging up to 20 feet in length. Their tails are almost as long as their bodies and end in two long twin spikes. They have large bluish black scales ranged down their back sides, with broad banded reddish segments on their bellies. Their wings are broad and thin, with a span that equals if not exceeds their body length. The undersides of their wings are blood red, the outer side bluish black. They have a long, thin snout with razor sharp teeth, its head crowned with short boney spikes. Behind its jaw line are long webbed spikes that the creature (this like a friiled lizard) which when the creature is agitated open wide and spread out, the connecting skin being a reddish orange with deep red veins throughout. All four legs are the same length, with long claws.

These intelligent beasts travel alone or in pairs, rarely are they found in large groups. They are unique in that they have long been allied with elves, usually living in or around elven communities. Further they have a distinct distaste for most humanoids, hunting them wherever they encounter them. Friiled dragons are highly predatory and very reactionary, attacking threats before they communicate with them.

The friiled dragon dwells mostly in wooded environments, old growth deciduous forests and the like. They lay their eggs in nests of bramble on the ground. They take little precaution in hiding the nest as the female spends the whole of the egg's gestation time nearby. They attack anything, good or evil, that approaches their nest. They are intelligent and highly reasoned.

COMBAT: The creature attacks by rearing back, opening its webbed neck membranes wide and blasting a cloud of toxic gas upon its foes. The membrane serves to make the dragon look much larger than it actually is, though serves no other purpose, defensive or otherwise.

Breath Weapon: The friiled dragon has an extremely potent breath weapon. A blast of clear gas engulfs the victim, and any who breathe it in and fail the necessary constitution save suffer the affects. The gas causes the blood to clot and the clots cut off the blood flow to vital organs which lead to catastrophic damage. It takes 1d6 rounds for the gas to take affect, after that, the clots form and cause 1d6 damage for every hit dice of the dragon. This clotting lasts for a further damage causing 1d4 rounds. A *cure disease*, *neutralize poison*, or similar spell cures the victim.

Age	Size	HD	AC	DB	SR	Int	TR
1	5'	1	15	–	2	13	1
2	10'	2	17	–	2	14	3
3	15'	4	19	1	3	15	5
4	20'	8	21	2	3	16	10

IN AIHRDE

The friiled dragon came to Aihrde not through the gift of Inzae as many of the dragon kin did, but rather through the gates to the Seven Rivers, those lands where the elves first dwelt. This realm the All Father fashioned only in his dreams and it came to be when he succumbed to the machinations of the Goblin Lords. When his mind splintered and the gates to these worlds opened, the elves came to Aihrde and with them came the friiled dragons. These dragons have dwelt in harmony with the elves in Aihrde even as they did with in the land of Seven Rivers.

They range far and wide, but are most common in and around the Channel Lakes where the elves built their first elven homes. They have an unusual hatred for orcs and upon sight, or even scent of them, attack with an extreme hatred. Their lives and memory are long and they remember the wars in and around the Marl so many years ago.

In some wild elf lands, the elves use the older friiled dragons as mounts. They are very swift and able.

FRIILED DRAGON ENCOUNTER

This encounter is designed for a party of any level adventurers. If the CK desires to change the level of the encounter, simply increase/decrease the age of the dragon. If the HD of the dragon changes from the listed encounter remember to adjust the damage it does as well as the treasure the encounter yields.

The forest is particularly thick and the trail dwindles to nothing. After some time the characters find themselves hacking and chopping through a deepening overgrowth. Even as the frustration mounts the forest track yields to an open roadway. The cobbled road stretches north/south through the large oaks, cutting a path through the undergrowth. The road is not however a clean path for the cobbles are old an in a state of disrepair. Grass grows up between the blocks of stone, weeds crowd the edges of the road way, and even here and there small saplings or bushes have eked a toe hold in the masonry. It goes several miles in both directions until the forest close in on it.

Those who built it no longer use the road. Whoever they were their society has long since decayed and their citizens vanished from the earth. However, the road is used. A tribe of wood elves have taken u residence in the forest here and frequently use the road in order to travel from one camp to another or to get through the forest quicker. The road also serves as something like a net for wandering monsters, adventurers, and the like. The road offers relief to the choking undergrowth of the forest and usually anyone who finds it happily takes to traveling on the road.

When they do the elves take note and send out a patrol to investigate. This patrol usually consists of several elves mounted on friiled dragons.

No matter which direction the characters take, or whether they set up the camp the elves are alerted to their presence and immediately dispatch 12 warriors accompanied by 2 chiefs mounted on friiled dragons. They approach cautiously though with no overt signs of aggression or hostility.

The ground begins to shake just a little, a small vibration. Even as your minds take this into account an amazing sight greets you. Running down the road are two large dragons. Their tails are almost as long as their bodies and end in two long twin spikes. They have large bluish black scales ranged down their back sides, with broad banded reddish segments on their bellies. Their wings are broad and thin, with a span that equals if not exceeds their body length. The undersides of their wings are blood red, the outer side bluish black. They have a long, thin snout with razor sharp teeth, and head crowned with short boney spikes. Behind its jaw line are long webbed spikes.

But more amazing are the two elves riding the dragons. Both are decked out in heavy scale mail with shields and long spears. Their helms are long and conical, with cheek guards and nothing more.

The dragon riding elves approach to within 100 feet and then reigned in. One of the dragons rears back and spreads the spines behind its head until they are perpendicular with the creature's snout; the spines are connected by a thin web like membrane that pulsates with reddish colored veins.

The lead elf speaks in a thin, melodious voice, "Who are you and why do you travel on our road?"

The elves are not particularly aggressive and do not offer to fight or tax the characters. They are genuinely curious as to why they are passing through and if they offer a threat to the forest or the elves. Unless the characters are particularly aggressive the elves leave them in peace as soon as they find out their intentions. They offer to help the characters with directions if needed.

This is a perfect opportunity for the CK to offer the characters any interesting information that might facilitate the adventure the characters are on.

Of course, if the characters are very belligerent or offer to attack the elves they fight, calling on the dozen warriors in the tree line.

Note: no stat blocks are provided, as this encounter is not designed as a combat encounter.

DRAGON, IRIS

NO. APPEARING: 1-10

SIZE: Special (see below)

HD: Special (see below)

MOVE: 20ft., 80 ft. (fly)

AC: Special (see below)

ATTACKS: Bite (1d2), Blood Drain (1d2)

SPECIAL: Blood Drain, Breath Weapon, Camouflage, Paralysis

SAVES: M

INT: Special (see below)

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

TYPE: Dragon

TREASURE: Special (see Chart below)

XP: Special (see below page 24)

The smallest of dragons, the iris wyrm is light green in color, thin and lithe. Broad, leaf-like scales cover its long form; its legs shaped like vines, and its head, long and thin is yellow. It has small claws, used to cling to the sides of trees, branches, or rocks. The iris dragon's tail, long and thinning to a small taper, serves a similar purpose. It has razor sharp teeth that deliver a stinging bite, but its real weapon is the dew claw it possesses on each forward claw. This long appendage, several inches longer than its other claws carries potent venom.

The iris dragon is able to camouflage itself extraordinarily well. To the casual viewer the creature looks more like a vine snaking up the side of a tree or rock than a dragon. It moves slowly as well, using its ability to blend into the environment to hide it from the creature it is stalking. They prey primarily on humans, demi-humans, and humanoids. They feed through a tubular protrusion that lies beneath their tongue. When a victim is gassed or paralyzed the dragon settles on them, the tube is driven into the victim and their blood drained.

They dwell in tropic, sub-tropic jungles and temperate deciduous forests. They are very social, pack oriented dragons, and travel in family groups of up to 10. The creature is moderately intelligent and the older ones able to speak elf, the vulgate, or any other tongue with which it has had long exposure.

COMBAT: The iris dragon takes up residence near water or cave entrances, trails and the like; anywhere that creatures may stop to find food or shelter. They take shelter in the trees and shrub, disguising themselves as plants. When their prey enters the area, they wait for it to come within range of one of its forefeet, using the claw they attempt to nip the victim. They wait until the paralysis takes affect and then come into feed. If discovered or disturbed the whole pack of them launch in a very aggressive attack on any and all targets in the area.

Note: The iris wyrm feeds on the paralyzed victim, so long as the victim is alive. If at any time the victim is viewed as dead by the iris wyrm it stops eating it. For instance, the monk's ability to feign death would stop the dragon from devouring the character.

Blood Drain: Whenever an opponent is bitten, the mouth clamps down and the dragon holds on. This hold automatically inflicts 1d2 points of damage from blood drain on each successive round, unless the hold is broken by a successful strength save. The dragon drains blood until it reaches 2 x its own hit points, or when it becomes satiated and stops. For instance, if it has 7 hit points it drinks 14 hit points worth of blood.

Paralysis: The iris dragon's unusually long claw is tipped with potent venom able to cause paralysis in the stoutest individual. Any living creature that is clawed by an iris dragon must make a strength save or be paralyzed. This paralysis lasts 1d6 turns, or until a *remove curse* or *remove paralysis* spell is cast upon the victim.

Breath Weapon: The iris dragon breathes a small puff of gaseous spores. These tiny particulates are actually bacterial parasite that attacks the victim's nervous system. Anyone who the dragon breathes upon and fails to make a successful constitution save collapses, shaking as if from seizures. The affect lasts for the number of rounds equal to the dragon's hit dice.

Age	Size	HD	AC	DB	SR	Int	TR
1	1'	2	12	–	–	9	2
2	3'	2	13	–	–	9	2
3	4'	3	14	–	–	9	3
4	7'	3	15	–	–	10	5

IN AIHRDE

The iris dragon is a favorite of wizards and illusionists as they are able to use the wyrms as guardians in and around their towers. In old Aenoch the practice of creating elaborate gardens of walkways, bridges, lawns, beds of flowers, etc. was common amongst the nobles; for a great while the fad of peopling those gardens with the iris wyrm allowed the creature to spread into most of the Lands of Ursal and beyond. The creature suffered greatly during the long winter dark and their numbers dwindled. The people of Aufstrag saw the iris wyrm as a delicacy and served the creature with mounds of butter and gravy in their great feasts.

To this day the Aenochians are very partial to the iris wyrm and the people of New Aenoch have revived the practice of making gardens to house the iris wyrm and the small dragon's numbers have increased, if only moderately.



IRIS DRAGON ENCOUNTER

This encounter is designed for a party of 1st – 2nd level adventurers. If the CK desires to change the level of the encounter, simply increase/decrease the age of the dragon. If the HD of the dragon changes from the listed encounter remember to adjust the damage it does as well as the treasure the encounter yields.

The twisted tangled vegetation has something of a shape to it. As the characters enter this quiet stretch of the forest it becomes quickly obvious that what they have stumbled into are the ruins of an ancient building. Some stone work remains in the guise of tumbled walls, vines cover most of it, but it is plain to see. The ground is flat as if unnaturally leveled, and if the party takes even a few moments to look over the area they denote several interconnected squares in the forest growth; rooms of yesteryear. The area is very quiet and still, even the wind seems motionless.

The ruins are actually the tumbled edifice of a long deceased noble. Though the house is now in ruins and nothing remains but a shadow of the impression of it, the noble once sported huge gardens, and these gardens he people with a small horde of iris dragons. Though the lord is gone to dust and even the memory of him has passed from the world, the iris dragons he so carefully cultivated have not. They have lived on, dwelling in the ruins and watching them as they slowly decay and dissolve.

There are 5 of these creatures in the area. Two of them are older mature dragons, three are young hatchlings. None of them are particularly aggressive but if the party offers themselves up as an easy meal they attack.

If the party discovers the dragons however, they may attempt to befriend them; offering them food is the easiest way to pacify the dragons. The oldest of the five possesses distant memories of his life in the gardens and the constant source of food. Feeding the creatures encourages the dragon to return to its previous behavior.

The dragons keep their treasure hidden beneath a large flagstone in the main building. Any attempt to approach the treasure or even to steal it provokes an instant attack. The dragons do not leave the area no matter what inducements the characters may offer.

IRIS DRAGON (*These neutral creature's vital stats are HD 3, 3, 2, 2. AC 15 and 13, HP 24, 22, 14, 12, 8. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack with a bite for 1d2 points of damage. They also have a blood drain special ability and a breath weapon).*

Treasure: the dragons have gathered a decent treasure over the years; all of which lies hidden beneath a propped up flagstone in the main building area. Stumbling upon it is difficult as it is hidden in the grass, but anyone who does may detect something odd about the stone (CL 12). Beneath the stone is 14pp, 120gp, a pouch of 200 silver coins; a broach worth 25gp; two magical +1 daggers and a scroll (Castle Keeper's choice).

DRAGON, KURLET (BONED)

NO. APPEARING: 1

SIZE: Special (see below)

HD: Special (see below)

MOVE: 30ft., 80ft (fly)

AC: Special (see below)

ATTACKS: 2 claws (1d4), tail (1d4), bite (1d8)

SPECIAL: Breath Weapon, Spell-like Abilities, Immune to non-magic weapons (+1 or better to hit)

SAVES: P

INT: Special (see below)

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

TYPE: Dragon

TREASURE: Special (see Chart below)

XP: Special (see below page 24)

The boned dragon's name is a contrast to its appearance. The beast is a winter dragon, normally only found in northern climates where there is snow or ice year round. It is long, roughly 25 feet when fully grown, but unlike its traditional relatives it is thick, its scales broad, resembling overlapping plates. These plates are super sensitive to the temperature, especially sun light, absorbing as much of it as they can. The beast's long neck ends in a broad, fang filled mouth. Its tail is long as well. Upon the end of its tail are long, strands of hair. This hair ranges up the side of the creature, running its full length, where the back scales meet the under scales, all the way to the head. Here they hang, resembling whiskers, though they do not stand out on the face like a cats, rather they shroud the head from behind. The beast is bone white, hence its name, its eyes a deep blue.

They are solitary creatures that dwell in deep caves, sometimes hollowed from the icy landscape they call home. They horde treasure like other wyrms and are clever to understand the world of men. They speak the common tongues of men and dwarves, elves and halflings, orcs and other creatures with which they have come into contact. The boned dragon is immortal.

They are terrible in appearance, filled with a cunning and hatred that they exude. They are unforgiving and very destructive. They are cunning in the hunt, lying for long periods of time under the snow, waiting for prey to pass near. Alternately they take to the high, thin clouds looking for creatures traversing the icy landscape, waiting for them to become exposed on cliff faces, ledges and the like. At which point they swoop in and attempt to knock them from their perch the ground below.

COMBAT: The boned dragon attacks by rising with a blast of its fetid, cold breath that drains the souls from men. It follows by ferocious attack with claw and fang. It keeps airborne as often as it can, swooping in to dispatch the incapacitated victims from which life has been drained.

Immune to Non-Magic Weapons: It requires a +1 or better weapon to hit a boned dragon.

Spell-Like Abilities: The boned dragon casts *wall of ice* (1/day).

Breath Weapon: The boned dragon breathes a blast of frigid air in a cone shape (determine the size of the dragon for the size of the

cone, consult the Monsters & Treasure p. 20). A boned dragon's breath drains the life energy of the victim, whether through pure fear or by draining the victim's psychic force. The breath literally takes years off of the victim's life. Humans and half-orcs age 1d10 years, halflings and half-elves 1-20 years, and dwarves and gnomes 1-40 years, and elves 1-60 years.

Age	Size	HD	AC	DB	SR	Int	TR
1	5'	3	12	-	1	8	3
2	10'	5	14	1	2	10	5
3	15	9	18	2	2	12	9
4	25'	12	20	3	2	15	20

IN AIHRDE

For the greatest while, the boned dragon dwelt in the high reaches of the world, in the lands of Engale and northern Aenoch. Some few migrated to the peaks of the Marl or other mountains. Dwelling far from the haunts of man they remained unknown, and little spoken of in the lore of the dragon scholars. But with the coming of the Dark, things changed, suddenly their range opened up and the whole world became their hunting grounds. They spread south and learned the joy of hunting men in the open country. They learned to love the taste of elf flesh and to serve the dark. The boned dragon became a favorite pet to the Lords of Aufstrag and its population and influence spread across the world of Aihde so that this terror of the frozen wastes became known all to well to the kingdoms of men.

When the Winter failed and the horned god fell from the world into the abyss the boned dragons found their range greatly reduced. But they adapted quickly, retreating to the high mountains and hibernating in the warm months, but awakening in the winter to return to the plain and forests and hunt their favored prey, humans. They remain a terror and the most ardent rangers know that to drive them from the lowlands you must hunt them in their dens and slay them in the mountains.

BONE DRAGON ENCOUNTER

This encounter is designed for a party of 6th – 8th level adventurers. If the CK desires to change the level of the encounter, simply increase/decrease the age of the dragon. If the HD of the dragon changes from the listed encounter remember to adjust the damage it does as well as the treasure the encounter yields.

The cool fall evening suddenly changes as the temperature drops. Heavy dark clouds command the sky, lumbering from the south and offering plenty of precipitation. A wind picks up, also from the south, carrying the hint of ice in the air. It slices through the small village of West Brook, cutting skin with its icy fingers. People quit the streets for their homes and the lusty tavern where the warmth of big fires dispels the promise of a long, bitterly cold storm. Even as they do the rain begins to fall, cold and strange; it turns to ice and sleet soon thereafter and by the time the sun retreats and the last warmth of the day extinguished a heavy snow is falling. It rolls in, whipped to a turmoil by the frigid blue wind. By midnight the snow mounds up against fences, walls, outbuildings, wagons and

wherever else it manages to grasp a hold. The cold pounds at the door of the Lusty Wench, the night creeps about, ever seeking entrance to the warmth of the blazing fire within.

The characters find themselves either on the road headed to West Brook or in the Lusty Wench tavern. There they find warmth and camaraderie, protection from the freezing elements. Here people eat and drink, sing hearty songs to keep the wolves at bay and tell stories of the grand father's and the cold of the Winter Dark. The storm matches the tempo of the merriment in the tavern. Songs break out and drink flows freely as people celebrate the warmth of the tavern and taunt the cold of the evening's storm.

The thundering wind rocks the walls and blows across the roof. The building groans in face of the storm. A sudden hush falls over the tavern as everyone looks up, fearful the roof is about to come off the building. The wind dies suddenly and a deafening silence prevails; but only for a moment. From beyond the walls and in the darkness and cold comes a grinding sound. Something is twisting, screeching as its shape is being malformed until suddenly it explodes in a deafening rending of wood. A scream, long and terrible rips through the night but the thundering wind returns, crashing like a wave over the night's dark, wrenching the scream from the throat of the unfortunate sufferer, stretching it into a long hollow sound of terror. The cord breaks and the scream ends and the wind thunders and beyond it, above it, comes a roar unnatural, filled with a primordial power that withers men's souls.

A boned dragon has come on the cusp of the storm and fallen upon the West Brook. It delivers its rage on the first house it finds, tearing it apart with its huge bulk and tail; quickly devouring the inhabitants. It then turns its attention to another house, moving with deliberate concentration across the main street of West Brook, thundering a challenge with a deep roar.

The villagers in the tavern are terror struck and seek to flee to the cellars; the crowd the entrance, pounding at one another in their maddening fear. Some turn to the characters for succor. "Save us!" they cry. "We implore you, for all that is good and merciful in this world deliver us from this beast!"

BONED DRAGON (*This lawful evil creature's vital stats are HD 12, AC 20, HP 82. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with 2 claws for 1d4, a tail for 1d4 and a bite for 1d8 points of damage. Its special abilities include all dragon abilities plus a breath weapon and spell-like abilities. It can only be struck by +1 weapons.*)

The creature is not near its den and as such has no treasure. But if the party rescues the town of West Brook the grateful villagers offer them free room and board whenever they are in town, as long as they live, and to resupply them with food and normal equipment (no weapons or armor).

It is now up the characters to combat the dragon.



THE WIERLINGS, THE DRAGON RIDERS

In the far north, in the lands of the Aathuk were cities of alabaster that graced the heavens. These mastered all manner of flight, crafting magical ships that could sail the airs of the heavens even as men plied the waters of the sea. They steeped themselves in magic, mastering the arts of sorcery far more than any other folk, except for perhaps the people of Koth. They derived their knowledge from a deep seated interaction with the heavens, even venturing beyond the darkness and into the Great Empty.

Tall and thin, with features somewhat elongated when compared to those of normal men, the Aathuk held themselves aloof from the machinations of the world. Because of this their power waxed and waned unnoticed in the annals. They wore elaborate clothing, armaments as decorative as they were beautiful, and wielded weapons both fantastic and magical. Pale and golden haired, these tall men built a sprawling realm across their frozen lands, but extended it into the heavens and beyond, rarely spending the time to conquer their fellow man. Though in truth they fought with other creatures of the world, it was rare. For the lands of Aathuk lie in the distant north and the landmass itself is inhospitable. In the south there are great conifer forests, rich in ox, deer, elk and the accompanying predators, giant bear, huge packs of wolves and the like. In the north are huge mountains, complete with active volcanoes and the land is covered in mist for most of the year for there is an abundance of water and the volcanoes are forever belching forth burning rock and magma, creating hot springs everywhere. The Aathuk do their part in maintaining the mist, controlling the wind and weather in order to keep the lands to the far north hidden. For here are the tall mountains of Pas, and upon these heights are their homes constructed.

It is here, in the Pas Mountains, that the Aathuk met the first of the Dragon Kin. As is told elsewhere the dragon goddess Inzae gave a clutch of eggs to the All Father in exchange for the knowledge of creation and how to bring trees to her fledgling world. The All Father cherished these eggs and saw to their hatching and early care. The first born of the Dragon Kin, Frafnog, came into the world red and filled with a hunger for all things. But others came of the eggs as well, and one, a white dragon, filled with the rage of its kind drifted north. For long years it warred with the gods as the dragons did. She spread her seed throughout the world of Aihrde, but eventually, heavy with egg, she settled in the northlands, in the mountains of Pas. There she hollowed out a cavern and made it her home, laying her clutch of eggs in a mountain of uncut gold.

For many long years she dwelt in her cavern, sleeping off the depredations of her youth, until at last she woke to the clamoring of her hatchlings. Taking to wing, she set them loose upon the land, but for herself she feasted to sate her hunger and returned to her golden hall to sleep again. Her children scattered their own evil across the land until the white dragons were plentiful and known to all who dared visit the snowy wastelands and mountaintops.

The greatest of her children, Holthoth, dwelt in the lands of his mother, the mountains of Pas, and first encountered the Aathuk when they came there as a young people. Even then they waxed great in their power, fashioning mighty armaments with their

sorcery. Holthoth himself was in the prime of his youth and full of the vigor that always characterized the race of white dragons. He fell upon the Aathuk and maligned them for many years, hunting their people and feeding off their livestock. They made sacrifices to him, giving him maidens to keep him at bay and from their towns and houses. This worked for a time, but Holthoth grew tired of it and commenced his depredations once more.

One of the men of Aathuk rose in rebellion against the slavery of fear and swore to slay the beast or bring it to heel. He fashioned a hauberk of mail and took up the shield of his father. He adorned his arms with an iron hammer, huge, long, and crafted with many spells. These weapons he took into the wilderness and called Holthoth to come to him and meet him on the field of battle.

The dragon obliged the man and came to him on the icy slopes of Mount Vicseral. The dragon rose on the winds of snow and landed upon the pack before the man. Rising to his full stature, he towered over the man, his bulk radiating undulating waves of cold evil. The fur of his scales hung low and the dragon bore many scars from his countless battles and struggles. "What do they call you manling, so that I may bring news of your destruction to your people?"

"My people call me Ta and I have come to slay you, beast."

"You are brave for a manling Ta, I will give you that, for none of your folk have ever stared me in the eye."

So the bewitching of the dragon began, though neither man nor beast understood what was happening. For in those days it was not fully understood the love that dragons possess of beautiful things and their deep, almost uncontrollable desire for power and wealth.

The dragon laughed, craning his head and neck to the heavens. His voice fell across the windswept snow as a cold breath and the sound carrying even to the bottoms of the mountain. On sudden he swept his head down and through massive jaws sent a blast of frigid air across Ta. Long moments passed and Ta fell to his knees, beaten it seemed by the dragon's potent breath. But at last the dragon's lungs emptied and Holthoth took a moment of respite. Ta launched forward, raining a heavy blow upon the beast's chest. And the fight exploded upon the snow capped mountain.

For hours they hurled themselves upon each other. The man forever wrapped in a twisted coil of the dragon's body and the dragon suffered repeated blows upon his armor plates. All this while the man sang songs of his people first but then of his family and last of himself; he sang of the powers of his people, and the wealth of his family and lastly he sang of how great he was and unconquerable. Holthoth suffered the blows as dragons will, and delivered stinging breath coupled with fangs and claws; his tail wrapped Ta many times, lifting him and smashing him to earth until the man's armor was rent and torn. But ever the song of Ta came to the dragon and the blows he suffered until at last Holthoth's mind grew clouded and he could not think of his purpose.

Both beast and man fought, filled with pride, over weaned on their own prowess, but the man's pride proved the greater and

the beast strangely yielded. It seemed to the dragon's mind that ever the more he fought this creature that he lost wealth and true power slipped through his claws. In the end Holthoth held his might from Ta and fell back. For his part Ta only half understood the beast's reaction. Torn and mangled he had little fight left in him and only sought now to sell himself dearly. But he saw then in the eyes of the dragon a fear of loss and he called out to the beast to lay off the fight or suffer the indignity of death.

At this dragon crept nearer and wondered aloud what power Ta could bring him and what wealth there was in the wide world. Ta caught on immediately and promised the dragon for his service that the warrior of Aathuk would bring him riches that his dragon kin never knew. And Holthoth consented to allow the man upon his back to track the road of his wealth.

So the first dragon came to be a servant of the men of Aathuk and the knowledge of subduing dragons came into those distant peoples. The Dragon Riders were born of this battle.

SYMBIOTIC CREATURES

WEIRLING

The weirlings, or Dragon Riders, are the last of the Aathuk that carry the desires of their ancestors. These are the curious few who take to the skies and travel the world or beyond. They are rare, but bold and brave adventurers. Wealth and power do not generally motivate the weirling; rather they yearn to be free, and to follow the paths laid down, but abandoned by their ancestors. Anything that removes them from the opulent silk laden beds and perfumed dormitories of their people draws their attention. The weirling longs to drink from the cup of life, and to suffer its indignities as well as its triumphs.

When a very young one chooses to join the ranks of the weirling class, he enters the service of an older weirling, usually referred to as the Dragon Master (10th level). The Dragon Master teaches the young weirling all they need to know to master dragons, from subdual to flying the great beasts. They do not reward the apprentice with a dragon however; this is something that the young weirling must gain for themselves.

Because of their background the weirling has no fear of magical creatures or sorcery of any kind. If they do not have a personal experience with a particular brand of magic they understand the nature of, they do not fear it. Extra-planar creatures hold no fascination over them and they are rarely surprised when encountering such creatures. Far more surprising would be a world where magic is not the cornerstone of all things and the mundane rules; in such an environment the weirling must be a little confused and feel out of place.

For weapons, the weirling prefers long slashing blades, pole axes, glaives, and similar arms when mounted on their drakes. When fighting from the backs of dragons it is better to have a slashing weapon with length, for dragons do not charge into combat as might a normal steed. In personal combat they use thrusting weapons, preferring the sword above all else. They are master swordsmen as they train from a very early age.

For armor the weirling prefers heavy mail, such as plate or splinted, elaborately made with decorative reliefs. Lighter mail, such as chain, is uncommon, but used when nothing else is available. Their preference is so great that when they are not wearing armor they feel exposed. Their shields are generally shaped in a quarter moon or possess some indentation that allows them to see a little better. For helms they prefer a wide variety, but the lords are always decked out in bright colors.

Weirlings are dragon riders; however as noted above they do not begin the game with a dragon-mount. They must hunt down and subdue their own mounts. As such it is unusual for a low level weirling to possess a mount; it is usually mid-high level weirlings who possess dragon mounts. The mounts range in type and age, from lesser dragons such as the tulmat to the greater wyrms such as the blue dragon. Many never gain their mounts, falling to the very dragons they attempt to subdue. The weirling often views the mount as just that, a mount, unless the weirling possesses an empathetic link (see below). Even in worlds where dragons are very rare, such as the world of Aihrde, the dragon itself is not viewed as anything special by the weirling; it is little more than a magical beast that can be tamed for flight. This of course does not preclude any character from developing a deeper bond with the dragon.

DESCRIPTION: The weirling comes from the Aathuk people. They are tall and limber folk with long arms and legs. They are generally quite thin, with elongated faces, narrow, thin noses and shallow cheeks. Their skin is very light, pale or yellow, due to their long exposure to the high mountain air. Their eyes are deep pools of calm, and belie a hidden wisdom, all this decked in long silver, white, copper or golden hair. The men are slightly taller than the women are, but are equally as thin. The women are very striking in their beauty.

They dress in ornate clothing and armaments. They decorate their armor with reliefs of their past lives, favorite monsters, events or what have you. The ornamentation does not stop at the armor but carries over to the shield and helm and even the blade they choose. They use gold, silver, and platinum in these decorative reliefs as well as gem stones, carved wood, and the like. Their lords always wear long, colored plumes in their helms. In battle they prefer long cleaving weapons, pole arms, and pole axes.

PERSONALITY: The Aathuk are a morose people, quiet, and calm. They live long lives in opulence and power. Considered in their choice of words they carefully control their emotions. Generally the weirling follows the racial norm, however there are the few who stand out and therefore often exhibit personality traits more akin to other humans.

RACIAL AFFINITIES: There is no code or alignments that govern the weirling, some are petty and mean, others are given to understanding; they are all however, given to a certain belief that their race is greater by far than any of the other people's of the world. Even the elves are seen as lesser creatures with an imperfect understanding of their immortality.

ENVIRONMENT: The weirling's normal environment is the cold wastes of the distant northern mountains. They are accustomed to breathing the thin air of the high altitudes and while flying atop

the dragon's back. They do not dwell anywhere but the Mountains of Pas, but are occasionally encountered wandering the worlds of men. They live in tall palaces, towers, and manor houses built with sweeping stair cases, narrow corridors and long but narrow rooms, all designed to cling to the tops of mountains. They build their homes right at or above the cloud line.

ABILITIES

DETECT THOUGHTS: The weirling are able to read the surface thoughts of any creature within 60 feet. This allows the creature to know general feelings, ideas, and notions, but does not give the weirling complete access to the victim's mind.

MOUNTED COMBAT (dexterity): The weirling learns the skills necessary to fly dragons when they are very young. Though they do not start their career with a dragon, and must capture and subdue their own mount they are taught by their elders how to ride and even how to subdue dragons. When flying on the backs of the dragon the rider is able to master a number of combat maneuvers. Without the need for an attribute check, weirling can saddle, mount, ride and dismount; they can fight from a dragon during combat (melee and ranged) without penalty; control the dragon in combat; guide a dragon with simple mental commands; and stay in the saddle while the dragon is doing aerial acrobatics. When fighting from a dragon a weirling can direct the mount to attack and still make his or her attack normally.

With a successful check, and by foregoing any attack or other action, weirling may direct their dragon-mounts to perform the following actions while mounted: cover and deflect.

DEFLECT: This entails the weirling maneuvering the dragon-mount between the opponent and the weirling or positioned to offer maximum cover for the weirling, while at the same time allowing the mount to avoid blows. This maneuver gives a +6 bonus to the weirling's armor class and a +4 bonus to the mount's armor class.

COVER: A weirling can drop and hang alongside a mount, using it as three-fourth's cover. This grants a +10 bonus to the knight's armor class from those on the opposite side of the horse. The knight cannot attack or be holding anything while using this ability.

SWORDSMEN: Every weirling is able to wield a sword with great effectiveness. They gain a +1 to hit and +1 to damage on any type of sword that is a thrusting sword.

DRAGON SLAYING: The weirling is an able beast master who spends much of his early years learning about dragons of all stripes and colors. They are able to locate and take advantage of a dragon's weak spots. When they achieve 5th level they are able to put these skills to use. At 5th level they gain a +1 in combating or subduing dragons. Every four levels after that they gain a further +1, so that at 9th level they have +2, at 13th level they gain a +3 and so on.

SPELL-USE: At 7th level the weirling's natural affinity toward magic allows them to cast spells. They must first choose a class for which they have a spell affinity: cleric, druid, wizard, or illusionist. Once they have chosen their affinity they cannot change it and can only draw spells from that class's spell list. The spell use is always limited. Intelligence does not affect the number of spells they can master.

WEIRLING SPELLS PER DAY

Level	0	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th
7	2	1			
8	3	2			
9	3	2	1		
10	3	3	2		
11	3	3	2	1	
12	4	3	3	2	
13	4	4	3	2	1
14	5	4	3	3	2

DRAGON FAMILIAR: At 10th level the weirling can attempt to establish a familiar-like bond with his dragon-mount. The weirling must make an intelligence save (CL equal to the ½ of the dragon's hit dice) in order to successfully create the bond. If successful the weirling and dragon develop an empathetic and magical bond between each other. The basics of the spell *summon familiar* apply except that the dragon's hit dice is not doubled. Each familiar dragon is unique; and the Castle Keeper determines its details and special abilities, and which of those abilities are shared with the master (if any). If the dragon has spell like abilities these combine with the weirlings, and the weirling's with the dragon's spells. They are extremely loyal.

PRIME ATTRIBUTE: Intelligence

HIT DICE: d10

ALIGNMENT: Any

WEAPONS ALLOWED: Pole axes, glaives, slashing polearms, any sword, and any dagger.

ARMOR ALLOWED: Any (heavy armor preferred).

ABILITIES: Esp, Mounted Combat, Swordsmen

LANGUAGE: Aathuk, Vulgate.

SIZE: M

MOVEMENT: 20 feet

ATTRIBUTE MODIFIER: +1 intelligence, +1 wisdom



THE PECULIAR TALE OF THE KOBOLD

In the long days of long ago there lay a beastly creature in the slime of the world's creation. Large, bloated, and blind, this beast lived far beneath the earth in the pits of the caves of Gitenar. A salamander of peculiar proportions the beast had grown beyond its domain, devouring its kindred so that in the end it lay in the dark, in its own filth, alone. The creature listened to the world unfold above him; it heard rumors of the rumblings of things in distant places; it heard of the sun and moon, of rain and the weather; it heard of the gods as they passed the world over. He learned the speech of things and thought he knew what passed as living from the rumors of the dark.

In time of years there came a creature to its deep hole. She was beautiful, possessed of a wondrous power, calling upon the dark for guidance for she was lost. When she came to the beast she spoke to it, calling upon it for aid, for she could not see to find her way out.

"Noble creature, I can see in you that you have knowledge of the world I have late come from. I implore you to guide me back to it. I am sorely wounded and must return to my mistress ere I die of my sufferings."

"Come close that I may heal thee little one, for your blood stains the water that is my bed." So the salamander spoke. He had no power of healing however, only a great hunger.

"How can I trust you oh lord of the dark." She was weak for loss of blood and fearful that her mind played tricks on her. "But do I have a choice?"

She approached the beast with fear in her eyes. And her fears were justified for the beast lunged upon her and devoured her whole.

In time the beast grew heavy; its belly distended and bloated more than ever it had been before. The beast languished in pain and agony, twisting in its cavern to relieve its agony. At last it grimaced and burst asunder, its gut splitting and spilling across the slime covered floor. It groaned in agony, but could not move for its bulk was too great for the cave. But from the ooze of its belly a creature came forth; small, covered in scales, with a long tail. It had long claws on its feet and hands and a snout filled with fangs. Its eyes, though the eyes of an animal, reflected a deeper cunning. It moved forward the length of the dying salamander, coming at last to its snout and head.



The beast lying in its death agony blurted one word only, "Kobold."

The kobold watched for a minute only before it took up a stone and finished off the salamander, eating a great part of it in the bargain. At length the kobold left the cave, following the long passages to the top of the earth.

So the kobold race came to the world of Airhde.

This first of the kobold peopled the caverns of his home with his own kind. They remained hidden from the world for a great while, feeding upon the fish and other creatures that dwelt in the deeps and their own young. As their numbers increased some bore the powers of the salamander god they worshipped. These shamans ruled their fellows through their sorcery. They summoned fire and with it brought a great host of invention to the kobold under the mountains.

In time they grew less fearful of the world and ventured forth from their mountain fastness. That possessed no weapons but their claws and fangs, no armaments or clothes. The summer sun greeted them, and basking in the quiet of the hills they left the deep caves to dwell along the banks of fast moving mountain stream. So they dwelt for a great while; retreating to the caves in the cold but returning to the warm valley when the temperature rose.

This is where the tulmat wyrm found them. They fled their valley in fear at first though the wyrm offered them no harm. Eventually they came forth again to see the beast. For its part it watched in growing curiosity at these strange creatures. When a great host of them gathered the wyrm leaned forward and snatched one up, grinding it to pulp before swallowing it. The kobold watched, curious and less fearful. It seemed one of their own kind in many ways. They accepted it into the valley without malice; upon the first day after the full moon which the kobold mark as a new calendar they sacrificed one of their own to the wyrm. For his part the dragon settled into the valley in comfort, digging a den for itself and ranging to the south only occasionally.

They lived for a great while in the shadow of one another, working in concert on occasion.

The kobold kingdom grew and their numbers increased; eventually they spread to the south, small enclaves breaking free from the main host and striking out on their own. They began digging in the earth too, mining for precious stones and ores. They fashioned weapons for hunting and tools for digging and building and their realm grew under the mountains.

The dragons multiplied with them; eventually the dragon laid a clutch of eggs and they hatched in the midst of kobold enclave. Together they spread throughout the Pale Mountains. The dragons continued to feed upon the kobold but they hunted as well, ranging far into the south in the search of fresh meat.

The kobolds tell of a time when a tribe of men pressed their peoples living in the northern mountains. The war drug on for several years when the expansion of the men began to threaten the hunting grounds of several of the tulmat. These creatures attacked the men so fiercely that the kobolds came to them with promises of gems and jewels if they would help them drive the men from the plains. This arrangement began a century's long

alliance between these dragons and the kobolds. Eventually the dragons allowed the kobolds to ride them, but only with promises of saddles studded with jewels and gems of wondrous beauty.

This gave birth to a whole industry for the kobold peoples; saddles and all manner of riding accoutrements. They worked in bone, gathering the remains of dead beasts, men, monsters, kobold, and anything else they could find. Shaping it and strapping it with leather they fashioned saddles for the dragons. But more than the bone or leather was the gems that studded the dragon's bridle and saddle. These the dragons loved more than anything else for it awakened in them that ancient lust of Inzae for precious things. In time the dragons grew to look upon the kobolds as more than an easy meal, but rather as an indispensable servant.

For their part, a powerful warrior class developed around the kobold dragon riders. The best of their lot, the bravest, strongest, and most able rose to be dragon riders. The warrior quickly attracted other kobold of like minds so what warrior clans formed throughout the kobold world. These warlords and their clans eventually vied for power with the shaman and their following.

In these latter days shamans rule the kobold people at the side of the warlords. Often they work in concert, but as often they vie with one another for power over their tribe and fight wars one with the other, deep under the earth. Though they are very rare people in the wider world fear and detest the kobold warlords for they are evil and very malicious.

KOBOLD WARLORD

The kobold warlord is as the kobold presented in the Monsters & Treasure book with the following exceptions: HD 5d4, AC 17.

The tulmat dragon mount is not particularly loyal to its rider; however, the dragon is very aware that its wealth in gem studded saddles comes directly from the kobold and the beast goes to great length to keep the kobold alive, often intercepting blows meant for its rider. Any time a creature launches an attack aimed at the kobold rider the dragon attempts to interfere. The dragon must make a dexterity save in order to intercept. The dragon adds its full HD to its save. If successful the "to hit" roll is made against the dragon's AC and not the kobolds.

These mounts are notoriously aggressive. If the rider is slain the dragon becomes enraged and attacks the responsible party until that party is utterly destroyed.

On rare occasions the tulmat wyrm becomes confused in combat and in the action wheels back and snaps at the rider. If the kobold dies the dragon at that point goes insane with rage attacking everything near it, allies, and foes alike. The Castle Keeper should check periodically, perhaps once per combat; roll a d20 and a result of 1 results in the dragon attacking the rider.

MAGIC ITEMS

TULMAT SADDLE: These saddles are rare, fashioned by master craftsmen in the kobold tribal lands. Centuries of refinement have gifted the kobold with the ability to shape and bind bone in a way that makes the saddle itself seem as if it were made of leather. The saddles are very hard, made out of a variety of bones that have been melded together. They have a high back rest and pommel in order to give the rider better stability on the wild flying dragon.

Gems, carefully cut and set, decorate the Tulmat saddles. Some are carefully laid out in geometric patterns, others are more random; the pattern reflects the tastes of the dragon it was originally crafted for or those of the craftsmen who created it. Some kobolds lace their saddles with strands of silver, gold, or platinum making them even more valuable and beautiful. All of the saddles are works of art that serve the warlord in battle.

Anyone mounted in the saddle cannot fall out of it. The magic of the saddle keeps them upright even in the most violent conditions. If the rider is killed the magic releases them and they fall. If the rider is knocked unconscious that saddle releases them as well.

The saddle can be used on any mount, dragon, horse, hippogriff, griffon etc; its peculiar nature allowing it to fit snugly no matter where.

These saddles can bring up to 50,000gp in the common market. They are very rare however; and are not normally found in town squares and the like.

INETH STONES: These small stones are very rare and very evil. They are the misspent spells of evil priests, wizards, druids, illusionists, rune masters and the like. When a spell is cast using the language of creation and the words are jumbled, sometimes, though not always, the words fall to earth as physical things. At first, they are impossible to see or detect, and even the caster is unaware of them. But after awhile they coalesce into something more physical.

In appearance the ineth stone is small, no larger than a good silver coin. They are smooth, without the flaw of texture. They weigh absolutely nothing. They range in color depending on the nature of the spell cast, but generally they are deep blue or green. They have no markings but radiate an intensely powerful magic.

The stone possesses a number of magical properties. Simply possessing one affects the wielder's abilities. A stone, or group of stones, grants the possessor a +1 to all attribute checks. The powers are not cumulative, owning one stone is the same as owning several.

The stones do however come with a price. Their nature is corrupt and as such they are chaotic. This chaos spills over to the wielder. Once a week, at the Castle Keeper's discretion but generally during highly stressful situations, the wielder must make a charisma save (CL 5). If they fail the wielder's primary attributes are reduced to secondary for 24 hours as the stone draws out the life force of the wielder. The attributes return to normal after the 24 hours has expired.

MONSTER EXPERIENCE POINTS

HD	BASE	PER HP	I	II	III
1	5	1	2	4	5
2	10	2	5	7	10
3	20	3	10	15	20
4	40	4	20	30	40
5	80	5	40	60	80
6	120	6	60	90	120
7	180	7	90	135	180
8	250	8	125	200	250
9	400	9	200	300	400
10	600	10	300	450	600
11	750	11	375	550	750
12	950	12	425	650	950
13	1200	13	600	900	1200
14	1500	14	750	1100	1500
15	1900	15	900	1400	1900
16	2100	16	1000	1500	2100
17	2300	17	1200	1800	2300
18	2600	18	1300	2000	2600
19	2900	19	1500	2200	2900
20	3250	20	1700	2500	3500

EXPERIENCE PER HIT POINT: A monster's hit point total influences the amount of experience it confers. To calculate this, simply multiply the number of hit points by the hit dice of the creature. For example, a 5 (d10) HD creature has 25 hit points, the base is 80 experience points plus 5 experience points per hit point. 125 extra experience points would be awarded for this creature, for a total of 205.

SPECIAL: There are three categories of special abilities, designated in the chart by the Roman numerals I, II and III. A given monster's total experience value increases by the amount of special abilities it has. All special ability experience points are added to the base experience for the monster. These special ability experience points stack. For example, Skagg (4HD) has four attacks per round, a category I ability, and he can use 1st level spells, another category I ability. Skagg's base experience points (40) are increased by 40 points (20 XPs for each special ability) for a total base of 80 XPs plus 4 XP per hit point.

SPECIAL I: This category includes three or more attacks per round, spell use of 1st–3rd level (or equivalent spell-like abilities), and unique abilities such as tracking, hiding, or back attacks.

SPECIAL II: This category includes 5 or more attacks per round, damage of 4d6 or more for a single attack, spell use of 4th–7th level or equivalent, and extraordinary powers like invisibility or etherealness.

SPECIAL III: This category includes death attacks, petrification attacks, and spell use of 8th level and higher (or equivalent)

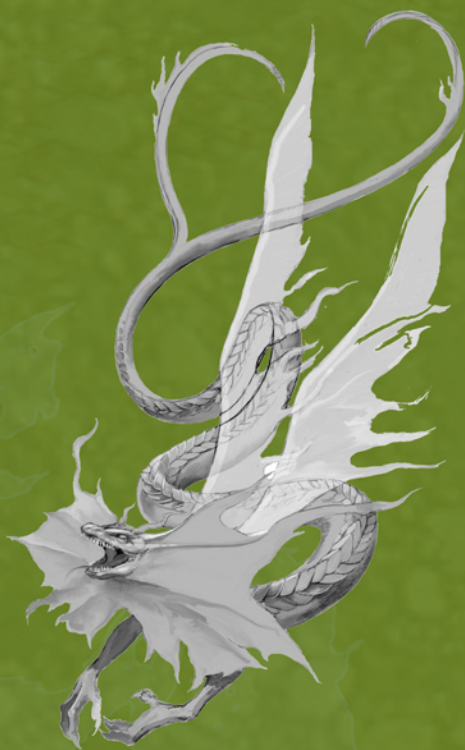


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